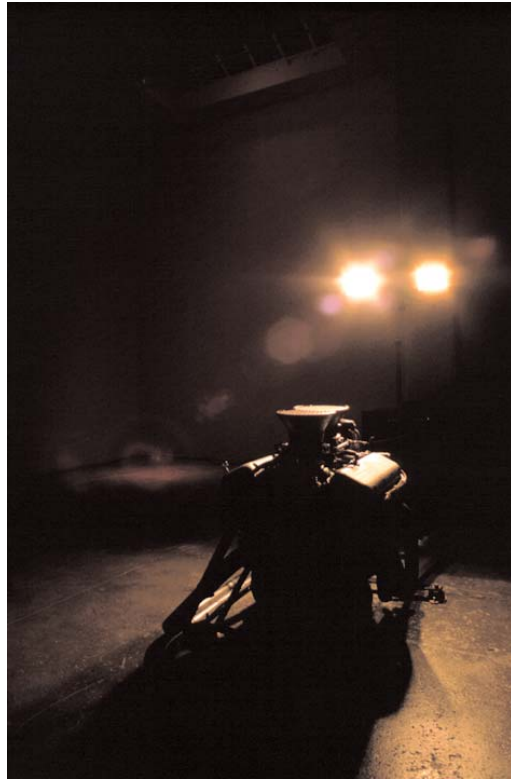


THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET



INSTALLATION

ARTPACE, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS TWO MONTH RESIDENCY
APRIL-JUNE 1996

□ BESIDES THESE THINGS WHICH DIRECTLY SUGGEST THE IDEA OF DANGER AND THOSE WHICH PRODUCE A SIMILAR EFFECT FROM A MECHANICAL CAUSE,
I KNOW OF NOTHING SUBLIME WHICH IS NOT SOME MODIFICATION OF POWER. □
EDMUND BURKE, *A PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY INTO THE ORIGIN OF OUR IDEAS OF THE SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL* 1757

“The engine is a 427 cubic inch General Motors V8 which has between 520 and 600 horsepower. We bolt the thing down in the space on a special stand with neoprene mounts in the concrete. Three days of plumbing, sending exhaust, coolant out and gasoline in through the exterior wall and we are ready. The thunder that we were afraid would overcome us does not. We start tuning the instrument so that the crackling exhaust, glowing hot headers and the roar of recipricating mass . . . begins to scare us.

“The plan is that the engine will start in the dark (punctuated by a red beam of light from an altered skylight) and two quartz lights, like eyes will slowly grow brighter until they reach maximum luminosity at the three minute mark. Then the lights and engine go off. In the meantime, computer controls regulate the engine and rpm’s so that there is a random sense of aliveness to the overpowering din of breathing power. As one enters the intimate space of the engine, one can discern the Edmund Burke quotes engraved on the aluminum valve covers. Burke, an 18th Century political philosopher in Ireland, discerned between the experience of the beautiful (the pleasant and uplifting) and the sublime, (the terrifying witness of power, emptiness and scale).

“It is this sense of autonomic response that has characterized how I deal with installation work. Over the last two years I have abandoned the image for sound and material. Not formal material, but the material of life, electricity, motors, air conditioners, heaters. If the image specifies an “otherness” on the other side of planarity (i.e., the projection surface, photo, canvas, television glass), then the object itself specifies the metaphor of a living body. Regulatory functions like architectural HVAC systems, building echo, stairways, light passages create paths for the body to feel comfort, discomfort, poignancy and joy. Later, in the first week, I spy a woman lying on the floor in front of the running engine, dressed in a polka dot dress. She smiles upon getting up and drawls, ‘There ain’t noth-ing like a big vee-eight.’ ” *

**Text by artist from Tate Magazine, London, Fall 1996*

Lewis deSoto 626 Costa Drive, Napa, California 94558 USA
Telephone 707.257.0969 Fax 707.257.0996
103 Reade Street, Second Floor New York, NY 10013 USA
Telephone 212.267.8299
sotolux@sbcglobal.net