

Freee 'How to Make a Difference'
International Project Space, Birmingham
27 September to 3 November 2007

Freee are often found taking art into spaces where it can find new publics; billboards, bridges, parks, etc. So, 'How to Make a Difference' provided an opportunity for art audiences to catch up with their work. The exhibition consisted of two billboard prints installed as wall pieces, an artefact from an earlier piece of work called *Protest is Beautiful* (2007), from the eponymous exhibition (reviewed at <http://interface.a-n.co.uk>), a sequence of earlier video works on a looped monitor, and three new wall based texts in the *Function* series.

It is still unclear whether works such as *The Economic Function of Public Art is to Increase the Value of Private Property* (2007) are firmly held, stable, declarations of belief, or a dialectical challenge to the established *Debased Bourgeois Public Sphere*, but it is clear that the main drive of Freee's work is to spark critical debate about the current state of spectacular society.

Sadie Plant¹ suggests it is impossible for avant-gardes to position themselves outside the system they oppose, implying that critique immediately sets itself up in a weak position relative to structures of power. However, a minority's relative position of weakness can be a positive attribute as they are then perceived as being courageous, committed, and sincere whenever they challenge the majority view², e.g. institutional functions of art. It is also a necessary requirement for the minority to be an 'in-group', operating within the system it wishes to change³. So, it seems, Freee's *Counter Public Spheres* may be able to have their cake and eat it; to operate within the art world and affect change from within. It remains to be seen what influence Freee's transitional programme of works can exert on the cultural hegemony, but protest certainly seems to be a fruitful aesthetic strategy.

<http://www.internationalprojectspace.org>
<http://freee.org.uk/>

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¹ Plant, S., *The Most Radical Gesture*, 1992.

² Moscovici, S. & Nemeth, C., *Social influence II: Minority influence*, 1974.

³ Maass, A. & Clark, R.D., *Hidden impact of minorities-15 years of minority influence research*, 1984.