

In 2010 I was invited to make a proposal for a group show for a prominent New York commercial gallery. I proposed an exhibition entitled 'Illuminations' that - for a number of reasons - never came to be. The exhibition would have brought together artworks - made at very different times, and for very different reasons - that included a light source. The title 'Illuminations' alluded to the tradition in British seaside towns of public light displays presented along the seafront during the out-of-season months. (Imagine a low-fi take on the Las Vegas strip only in a subzero British winter.) I can clearly remember annual family trips in the 1970s to the British seaside town of Blackpool to witness these nocturnal spectacles. For the exhibition I was interested in the idea of 'light' not so much as an illuminating or uplifting force, but rather as a somewhat melancholic, even pessimistic condition.

The current exhibition 'Illuminations' at Richard Telles is not the exhibition I proposed in 2010, but it is informed by and related to it. It also brings together very different works, made by very different artists and for very different reasons. It includes not only works that incorporate a light source but also works that are images of light sources. Central to the installation is Martin Creed's self-explanatory 2001 piece 'Work No. 270 - the lights off'. For the duration of the exhibition the overhead lights that normally illuminate the gallery, reception, office and storage areas at Richard Telles will be switched off. Consequently the exhibition will be lit only by daylight and any ambient light generated by the individual artworks, creating in turn a constantly shifting 'mood' in the gallery, one informed by the prevailing weather conditions or simply the time of day. That all this takes place during a Los Angeles summer is, of course, partly the point. 'Illuminations' might ultimately be thought of as a rejoinder to Southern California's unforgiving flat, Hockney-esque light and to the inherent optimism associated with its relentless blue skies.

- Matthew Higgs, April 2013.

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