

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Rosemary Forde

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The Physics Room began 2002 with a pair of group shows including a little work from a big artist, straight from the Turner Prize podium, Martin Creed. While this shook things up in January, it wasn't to overshadow the year, which saw 19 exhibitions present predominantly new work from 34 artists, as well as a series of 10 performances and lectures. The gallery programme in 2002 reflected The Physics Room as part of a global contemporary art community, with 7 international artist projects and group shows injected into the South Island art arena to complement our support and promotion of 12 local and national projects.

We also took the best of contemporary NZ art abroad with *Tomorrow People*. This group exhibition curated by Tessa Laird and Joyce Campbell (first seen here at The Physics Room in 2001) showed in Los Angeles at the Lord Mori Gallery, 5th January – 9th February '02, where it attracted more than 2000 visitors and received a positive response from critics.

Our publishing programme was reinvented in 2002 – with the final blast from *Log Illustrated* released in February (#15 – the X Issue). 15 issues across five years was a good innings for a risk-taking contemporary art magazine, and *Log* remains forever archived online via The Physics Room website. Gallery and project focused catalogues have now become our forté, with publications designed by Aaron Beehre accompanying Ruth Watson's *Without Parachute*, *Bombs Away* and the *HARDESELL!!* series of solo projects by 8 early-mid career NZ artists.

[www.physicsroom.org.nz](http://www.physicsroom.org.nz) remains a valuable and efficient means of communication with the contemporary art community and wider audience, distributing information and providing easy access to our activities from anywhere in the world. Visits to the site increased throughout the year, with 120,170 total user sessions (as opposed to random hits) in 2002. The comprehensive site is increasingly used as a research tool, with the built-in search function making this even simpler.

In its seventh year, The Physics Room Trust continued to build on the reputation and strengths developed by the many board and staff members who have been involved over the years. Emma Bugden, General Manager since 2000, left the organisation in June, after contributing a massive amount of energy and strong critical leadership. In a smooth transition, I stepped up to the helm and Exhibition Technician Jessica Johnson took on the full time position of Programmes Coordinator. Other members of staff in the first part of the year included Scott Flanagan and Phillip Brown, both continuing on from 2001. In June, Sarah Flanagan was placed with us on a three-week internship through the Waikato Institute of Technology Bachelor of Media Arts.

The board of trustees governing The Physics Room continued to show a great deal of commitment and leadership in 2002, meeting formally every two months and contributing their expertise and spare time to specific areas of the organisation. Former Trustees Barb Eaton and Eddie Clemens both left Christchurch and resigned from the board in 2002. For the remainder of the year the Trust operated with five members, the minimum required by the organisation's deed. New appointments have since been made in 2003.

The board worked on developing its role as a governing body throughout the year, making changes to the structure of the organisation, particularly in terms of curatorial processes. Until 2002, the board was annually involved in setting the gallery programme, alongside the General Manager and with a reliance on proposals received from artists and curators. This process was identified as problematic – the board felt they would be in a better position to assess the programme and govern the organisation if they were less involved in the curatorial process. So from 2002, The Physics Room began to put together an independent curatorial advisory panel to work with the General Manager on the programme, which is then subject to approval from the board. This has been a positive move forward for the organisation and has enabled Trustees to concentrate their efforts on longer-term strategic goals.

Fulfilling an important niche within a relatively small national art community, The Physics Room places an emphasis on working with other organisations and 2002 was a particularly successful year for partnership projects. Cooperating with diverse institutions such as Wigram Airforce World (for Ruth Watson's *Without Parachute*), the Peace & Disarmament Education Trust and the Centre for Land Use Interpretation (both assisted with the group show *Bombs Away!*) and many more. One of our most visible projects of the year, Nathan Coley's 8 metre rooftop construction *The Black Maria*, involved the skills and support of 7 local businesses and was developed in partnership with the Scape Art & Industry Urban Arts Biennial.

With annual funding from Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa continuing to lay the financial foundation for The Physics Room, in 2002 we received \$137 000 from CNZ, representing 71% of our total revenue for the year. While this is a significant percentage, it is much lower than previous years and is an encouraging start in our long-term plan to sustainably decrease our reliance on CNZ funding.

The Physics Room continues to receive a great deal of support in so many ways from the individuals and organisations making up the contemporary arts community. Thanks to all the contributing artists, curators, writers and audience who made 2002 such an exciting and productive year.

Rosemary Forde  
*Director*