

THE PHYSICS ROOM

CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

Projectors, Projectors, Projectors

Erin Kimber on the work of Luke Shaw in *Domino Domino*

Metal Body: Ghost Field is a sound composition created from three distinct tracks recorded in three empty gallery spaces at The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū, which were then synced to form a singular durational piece. The work is a playful interpretation of the circular premise of *Domino Domino*, with the looped recording created by Luke's physical circuit of a guitar run through a variety of effects, an overhead projector (OHP) which is amplified with a contact mic and further effects, and finally a small Vox valve amplifier. The bend and lean of his body as he plays triggers the contact mic. This chain of effects works to manipulate his guitar sound, resulting in a blurred, indistinct drone that sounds at once both organic and tightly composed.

Luke started out using the OHP as a visual tool, suited to his ongoing interrogation into the potential of cinema as a sonic medium. Instead of film, he used the OHP to break down moving images into stills which were projected while he played guitar. The purely pragmatic challenge of playing and presenting images on screen necessitated a change in direction, but having invested so much in the resurrection of the OHP, he couldn't give it up. So the relationship changed; the projector moving from visual prop to sonic tool—becoming another effect, another device in his rig. The use of an outmoded piece of tech like an OHP is a natural extension for an artist known for his interest in the material culture of guitar history. His work explores not just how pedals, amps, and guitars are used to alter sound, but also their qualities as transmissive mechanisms. Luke probes the idea that an item, once obscure and outdated, can become fetishized, and builds cultural capital, transcending its original purpose. The use of the medium may change over time, but the meaning remains as it always has been: coded, indeterminate, and inconclusive.

The installation was accompanied by a kind of non-performance one Saturday at The Physics Room, where Luke played live behind a wall that had been specially constructed for the exhibition. At some point the recorded *Metal Body: Ghost Field* morphed into him playing an improvised drone. The sound is meditative, swaying and swooping, receding then restating itself in a condensed and oppressive wave. The quivering thrum of the guitar is interrupted by a slight metallic grating caused by the creak and whirr of the overhead projector. The overall effect is like floating away, but snagging your jersey on a branch as you go. In the past, Luke has accompanied his sound work with images from road trips, hinting at ideas of escapism and

transcendence. Here his pedals act as equipment to affect an illusion of taking flight; employing reverb, delay, and fuzz to create sounds that are redolent of an outer body experience. Now that the physical projector—the literal metal body—is removed from sight, Luke can perform the metaphysical projection, the next stage in the total psychedelic experience.

Luke's work lives in undefined spaces. It's a performance without direction, giving the audience the choice of how to react. Your awareness of Luke behind the wall gives the work an immediacy that is more effective than, say, listening through headphones or ambient speakers. You are invited to imagine what he's doing back there. The apertures cut into the wall for Phoebe Hinchliff's film seem as if they should act as a peephole, but instead of glimpsing Luke you see only her ominous imagery. This interplay between the (lack of) visual and audio is a riff on the initial proposal of *Sympathetic Resonance*, a show that explored unseen connections between people, objects, and places. Cognisant of the effect the sound could have on the other works in the show, the feedback he creates is positive, amplifying the other two. With no performer to watch, you are given space to consider their work in a different way. In response, Phoebe and Daniel's work emit new vibrations, becoming signposts for the astral journey Luke is taking us on.