

THE PHYSICS ROOM
A CONTEMPORARY ART PROJECT SPACE
ANNUAL 2001

A Physics Room Annual

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A CONTEMPORARY ART PROJECT SPACE

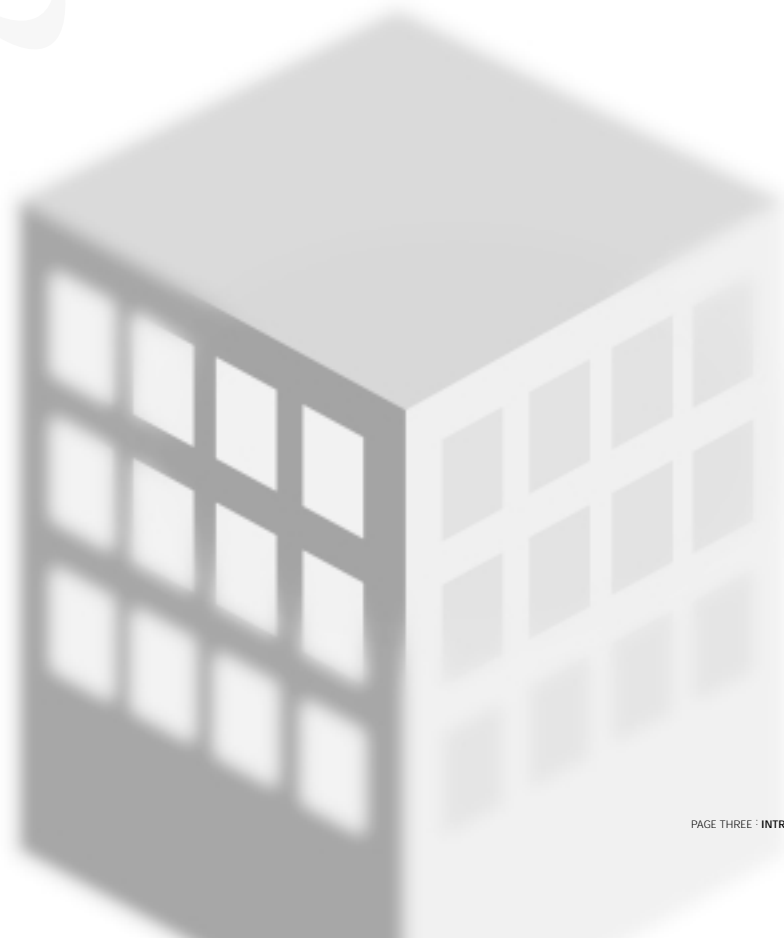
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Every year is a big year for the Physics Room and 2001 was no exception. The Physics Room Annual provides a series of snapshots into our activities during this time, with images, ideas, and (of course!) some official reports as well. Gallery staff, as well as invited writers, offer their thoughts and musings on the exhibition programme, making no attempt to provide you with the definitive exhibition essay, but instead offering their own connection points to the shows - the shows that moved them, that pushed their buttons, that made them think. What did you like?

Emma Bugden General Manager, The Physics Room

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Fresh

A SERIES PROFILING CONTEMPORARY NEW ZEALAND PRACTITIONERS

Continuing The Physics Room's ongoing interest in supporting the practices of emerging and experimental artists, *Fresh* was a series which profiled the work of thirteen of New Zealand's most exciting current practitioners. All recent graduates from arts institutions, both local and international, these artists draw on a vast terrain of medium and criticality's, giving an overview of the diversity and depth of contemporary practice today.

13-24 DECEMBER 2000

A Winter Garden
Dan Arps

Untitled (summer show)
Ella Reed

Moat
Eddie Clemens

21 FEBRUARY-18 MARCH 2001

Epic (2)
Melissa Laing

*Travel Stories VI: Otira/Germany –
Schnittstelle/Interface*
Time Capture Boxes: Oblira
Ina Johann

Cineary
Nathan Pohio

2-20 MAY 2001

Take Out (Sugar Takes Out Candy)
Julaine Stephenson

From Below
Sera Jensen and Brendan Lee

22 AUGUST-8 SEPTEMBER 2001

A Good Tradition Well Maintained
Marcus Moore

Risky Business
Dane Mitchell

Recreation
Paula Collier

Fresh: The smell of newly clipped grass.

Phresh: Put that in your pipe and smoke it.

Fresh: A series of eleven exhibitions held at The Physics Room between December 2000 and September 2001.

Many elements of these shows have long since left my mind for greener pastures. My recollections consist primarily of my personal experiences with or around the shows or artists and musings from a distance on these events and how they may fit under the curatorial banner *Fresh*.

The Physics Room press releases for *Fresh* announce that the series 'profiles the work of thirteen of New Zealand's most exciting current practitioners. All recent graduates from arts institutions, both local and international, these artists draw on a vast terrain of medium and criticality's, giving an overview of the diversity and depth of contemporary practice today.' Very phresh of the Physics Room to say that the series would give an accurate 'overview of the diversity and depth of contemporary practice' when there was maybe one painting (Marcus Moore's intimate watercolour of the Christ's College zebra stripes), no performance (unless you count Eddie Clemens' rescue effort on his show during the opening) and sod all photography. (For the converse reason, some might say the presence of printmaking in *Fresh* was rather baffling).

The positive side of failure on the overview front is that various trends were well illustrated without being repetitive. Trends are all about being fresh, new and innovative, even when they do it in a retro kinda way. I think I want to say innovation requires trends, or trends come from innovation. Freshness is trendy. Always. It's like there is a single overarching trend 'freshness', which is revisited every day, by every artist, in a fresh way. Sometimes it means looking at history and ripping it off. I've been reading Jorge Luis Borges and I'm kind of ripping him off, but I read him in a unique way and now this is coming out of me through a keyboard and eventually into you through a page or monitor in a particular way. And you might be drinking a coffee in your favourite cafe but not only that, they gave you too much change back and you're going through the moral dilemma of whether to tell them or to just buy another coffee and hope it happens again.

Or you're at the Post Shop waiting in line, all you want to do is pay your phone bill and get out but the queue is massive and full of strange requests so you pick this yearbook out of your bag and here we are. The point is you are revisiting these shows in a totally unique and fresh way. Some smart bugger once said the only constant is change. God that coffee was good.

Or maybe then it is all about degrees and intention of freshness, innovation and uniqueness. While every experience may be unique, the innovation quotient of brushing your teeth while listening to Madonna sing *Like a Virgin* may not be high, and your freshness will also be lower than it could be, if for instance, you were standing on your head at the same time.

Anyway, the trends, or sub-trends of the global freshness movement which has been going since records began: Nathan Pohio did some video stuff in *Cineary*, (what a great name) darkened room and simulated cigarettes. Looked like a moving painting to me. A time based medium but used in a way that is narratively irrelevant but conceptually key. Involving the cigarette as a moment to reflect but here, the 'time out' is stretched to go for the duration of the show. A similar thing happened in Melissa Laing's *Epic (2)* piece from the same series. It featured a video loop of the artist coming up toward us on an escalator from a tube station. The idea of travelling (to get somewhere) but never reaching the destination for some reason, in this case the looping of the video, recalls Groundhog Day but also perhaps modern life. Sera Jensen and Brendan Lee's collaborative installation *From Below* used video projections to add texture and meaning. A beautiful Christchurch high cloud and blue sky loop provided the backdrop to a group of clocks incessantly ticking away, setting up a nice juxtaposition between humankind and the environment.

The 'loose' scatter type, readymade installation was also well represented in the series.

Dan Arps was first out of the gates with *A Winter Garden* featuring, among other things, plastic detritus courtesy of The Warehouse and the \$2 Shop, carefully strewn throughout the front room of the gallery. Organised a bit like a city perhaps, complete with a paint-sniffing cherub. Second by a nose, Eddie Clemens' show *Moat* had a similar loose feel about it. Shrink wrapped trays of plastic cups and rolls of toilet paper were stacked into various forms, knocked over and then restacked in an impromptu performance by the artist.

The prominence of ready-mades in these shows, along with the loose scatter installation aided the temporary and reusable feel of the working parts. In fact I think Eddie may have been using those very same plastic cups from his show for the keg at his going away party (He moved to Auckland to do his masters at Elam).

Reusing / recycling keeps the world fresh. This reusable feel contrasted with two other sprawling shows; Nathan Pohio's *Cineary* and Julaine Stephenson's *TAKE OUT (Sugar Takes Out Candy)*, because they inversely featured made or worked objects which would be less useful for serving drinks in.

A lot of the work also used humour for various effects. Dane Mitchell's *Risky Business* was part freshman mischief, part playground scuffle gone big time. Basically young Dane stole some study notes and medication from the Gow-Langsford Gallery's rubbish bag sitting out on the street and consequentially it all got out of hand. Marcus Moore's *A Good Tradition Well Maintained* seemed to be at least partly taking the piss out of his own history from his choirboy days at Christ's College, through to his recent forays into macho man kinetic art. Julaine Stephenson's *TAKE OUT* was the second scene in a lurid walk-in 3D cartoon of sorts, featuring hip kids Sugar and Candy wearing the latest threads trying to rip each other to shreds. Dan Arps also pulled some schoolboy pranks in *A Winter Garden*, plastic flies on plastic shit. Somehow I found the paint-sniffing cherub pretty funny too.

Ella Reed and Paula Collier both presented quiet shows, incorporating the gallery as an integral part of the work. In Reed's *Untitled (Summer Show)*, the gallery was taken generically as a location of a specific type of restrained behaviour. Healthy petunias hung in the window, a watering can sat on the floor, and visitors hovered around wondering if they could water the plants. Collier's *Recreation* read as a response to the specific physical space and people flow of the Physics Room Gallery. A wall built up from sheets of glass, interspersed with slabs of wax, was evocative of snow and ice, ensuing that visitors were forced to change the way they negotiated the gallery. Both shows also looked very fresh: fresh flowers and fresh ice.

Museum style aesthetics were employed in Mitchell's *Risky Business* and Ina Johann's *Travel Stories VI: Ottilia/Germany - Schnittstelle/Interface, Time Capture Boxes: Oblira*. The display cases serve to aestheticise and add importance to what may otherwise be considered rubbish. They refresh the tired. The strength of the emotive arrangement of a child's single gumboot in Johann's show, is accentuated by its placement in a clinical display case. The museum style presentation in *Risky Business* prompts viewers to pay an obsessive attention to detail as encapsulated by Dane Mitchell.

Truly phresh art should piss people off. So it is with some fondness that I remember the faint but ever present drone of Drummond devotees regurgitating dismay at the apparent absence of the artist's hand in *A Winter Garden* over the first few weeks of the 2001 year at Ilam. There was a distinct lack of workshop effort and that pissed people off. However, that a show pisses people off does not constitute fresh or good art. That's where ideas and techniques come in, and *A Winter Garden*, and the series as a whole, also featured a distinct lack of overworked clichéd ideas.

Around the same time as fresh kicked off I remember saying something about (the Pauline Rhodes's work) *Ziggurat 2000* being sited in nature and getting a right bullocking from Arps who quite rightly pointed out that Hagley Park was a cultural site not a natural one. This nature vs culture theme rears its head again in *A Winter Garden*. Arps' installation introduced the technique of dumpster-diving into the series, a technique exemplified by Dane Mitchell. I was lucky enough to witness the discovery of one element in *A Winter Garden* one evening walking home from the Victoria St Fish and Chip shop chowing down on some crinkle cut chips with the artist, when he spotted a rather exquisite airbrushed impression of Christchurch landmark, the PriceWaterhouse building. I carried the chips home. This method of accumulating objects for exhibit has been going on for years but is still somewhat phresh when compared to the rather old-fashioned technique of paying for and working materials into a new form.

December 2000 to September 2001.

Seems like ages ago, and the fresh art of today is history tomorrow. Today's innovations are tomorrow's establishment. So Fresh: the series is history, and its fragments left in the minds of viewers will slowly fade.

Lee Devenish







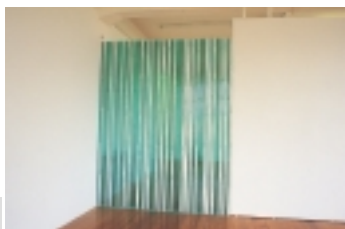
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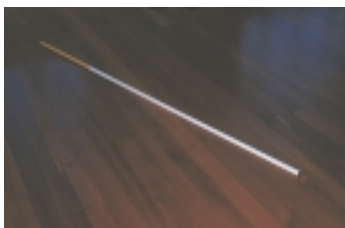
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Neural Notations

Curated by Donna Leigh Schumacher

Elliot W. Anderson, Cheryl Coon, Jennifer Gwirtz, horea, Elliot Ross, Donna Leigh Schumacher, Susan Schwartzberg, Gail Wright : 17 January – 10 February

Strange things, our brains. When the brain runs amok it often does so in a spectacular fashion: a tumor, a paranoid episode, a manic high, a desperate low. The link between creativity and neurology has been made, and continues to be made, the artist as madman proposition having been explored and exploited since kingdom come and Van Gogh chopped his ear off. Sometimes I think this premise is as limiting as illness itself.

There must, however, be ways of talking about such ideas which allow for empowerment, understanding and exploration, without reducing everything to clichés of crazy geniuses and mad painters. The best works in *Neural Notations* danced a beautifully fine line between the personal and the political, being communicative rather than introspective, close without navel gazing. Their power was in a lightness of touch, as much what the works didn't say as what they did. A dark edgy humour was a feature of the show, notably in Gail Wright's work *The First Evolutionary Occurrence of Pain* (1999), a diagram of a snail's primitive pain receptors wired directly into a tiny model diorama of a car crash - funny, not funny. And again, in the sad/funny *Brain Dolls* of Donna Leigh Schumacher, who danced a brave, wobbly dance atop a plinth, their composition equal parts rag doll and serotonin boosters.

Cheryl Coon's work was both beautiful and terrifying, a sprawling constellation of flower or star-like objects, each created from tacks wound into a ball of thread, and thrown as hard as possible at the wall, to protrude precariously from the gibbed wall. Its rhizomic construction was largely random, constrained by the limits of the wall space, and the installing gallery workers ability to throw. Each tiny object contained dozens of piercingly sharp metal tacks which dug into the edge of the wall, shimmering with palatable danger.

Jennifer Gwirtz and her partner John Bauman performed live at the exhibition's opening, against a backdrop of Gwirtz's framed graphs and notes. Their intensely personal compositions were based on transforming ECG scanner readouts into musical scores, utilizing their voices as instruments, bending notes into sounds and shapes rather than 'singing' in the strictest sense. Jennifer's diminutive body stretched and moved against the sound, in one solo performance she performed quirky cute wee hand movements like a chirpy little bird. But cuteness aside, this was both charming and moving, and was the moment in the show which hit me powerfully.

Emma Bugden

Shifting Geometries Liz Coats

17 January – 10 February

The deftly exquisite two-dimensional images Liz Coats creates, whether translucent glass or canvas, completely dematerialise the flat surface into deceptively ordered symmetries that draw both on the fractal mathematics of chance, probability and chaos, and the twentieth century's obsessive tradition of abstract expressionism. Their most charming and perhaps most elusive details are seemingly generated at random by the interference patterns of overlapping rhythms - like ripples on still water - or grow organically and regularly like the crystal of a snowflake.

Carefully imagined combinations of colour and form confuse and merge to engage and delight as strangely familiar yet alien qualia in both sensorium and intellect of the viewer, where the gaze can be neither naive nor cynical. The French have an expression for the sensation: *jamis vu* - the feeling that something is somehow fresh and new no matter how many times it is previously experienced.

The optical illusions dance and suggest keys to their interpretation through the false leads of their own structure. There are infinite possible directions. They are enigmatic hieroglyphs to a quantum religion.

The philosopher Leibniz suggested that the macrocosm of the universe and the microcosm of the human mind are transfused with the same cosmic patterns - a morphic resonance - that encapsulates everything in a single holographic gestalt. Perhaps it is this that appeals in Coats' images; the order suggested in chaos, or mirrors that reflect the viewer's own mind. The viewer, like Narcissus, finds whatever sympathies, harmonies, discords and affinities in the 'sweet disorder' that rise up from the pattern recognition faculty of their own mind - consciously and unconsciously.

Is Coats an artist of colour, form or visual densities? Multiple cases could be made and endlessly argued. One is reminded of the intellectual labyrinths of Jorge Luis Borges or the faith of the devout in the belief that Creation is a design that can only be understood at the apocalypse of its completion. The works, however, remain obstinate in their difficulty, hermetic, hermeneutic and immune to analysis. Their graceful beauty comes from what is hidden, and their truth is to be found in the accumulation of infinite overlapping possibilities.

Andrew Paul Wood

The Waiting Room

Curated by Instant Coffee

A Jin's Banana House video package : 28 March – 20 April

In a recent US version of the *Survivor* series screened on New Zealand television, the most likely person to succeed, Lex, who alternately manipulated, bullied and schemed his way into the top three, *didn't win*, and instead it became a race between the two nicest people on the whole show – Kim, who wanted to help AIDs victims in Africa, and Ethan, who wanted to teach underprivileged US kids to play soccer. Ethan eventually walked away with a cool million, thereby proving, if you want a moral to this tale, that sometimes it pays off if people actually like you.

Toronto based performance artist Jinhan Ko knows this as well as anyone. Deftly referencing both the language of standup comedy, and the role of the storyteller, Ko beguiles audiences with his particular brand of edgy charm, creating a false illusion of intimacy through the representation of apparently private, yet completely banal moments. In the video *Tell Me What You Wanna Hear*, Ko (operating under the exhibiting name Jin's Banana House) stares directly at the viewer, encouraging them continually with enthusiastic comments "that's amazing, wow, that's so fantastic".

Projected far larger than life over the gallery wall, his head looks like the top of a giant bobbing Buddha, smiling down benevolently at the viewer. It makes you feel so good. But after continued viewing the positivity of his affirmations are rendered meaningless through repetition, reducing to something like the dull ache of a hangover after the Neurofen has just slid in.

Boredom and expectation emerge as common themes in Ko's practice, he uses these tropes as cunningly and knowingly as do the producers of reality TV and infomercials. The three video works included in *The Waiting Room* all drew on these means to engage, drawing you in well beyond the quick-flick-past-the-screen which is the most much video art demands of you.

In another video a toaster burns in the foreground, whilst just out of range of the camera's eye we can hear the artist conducting everyday events, entering the room, talking on the phone with friends. Potentially juicy revelations somehow don't deliver because the names are unrecognizable, yet something about eavesdropping always gets me excited. The notion that something titillating is just around the corner keeps you there, pinned gaze to gaze to the screen, waiting.

Just as the simulation of reality in *Survivor* is enjoyable precisely because of its over-manipulation of supposedly real events, Ko's work is pleasurable simply because we don't know how much of what we are seeing is real and how much created for the camera. He just seems so nice. When Ko's video works played at the Physics Room, I overheard several young girls say that he was really cute and they wished he was in town for the show.

These works are charming but what is more they *know* they are charming, and the implied knowing wink is all part of the game. Sometimes it just pays to be nice.

Emma Bugden

The Herbal Mixture Areta Wilkinson

28 March – 29 April

Areta Wilkinson describes the objects in her jewellery-based installation *The Herbal Mixture* as amulets for healing. The herbal mixture she took, as part of her recovery from a serious illness, is the central concept for the work, the empty elixir bottles, still bearing labels with the artist's name and dosage requirements ('8ml daily with water or juice'), acting as repositories for ten exquisitely-made silver flowers and branches which spring from their necks. A craftsperson with a fascination for materials, Wilkinson has modelled the plants on the mixture's actual ingredients, including barberry, liquorice and dandelion. This treatment was taken along with orthodox medicine, the combination of scientific and holistic approaches represented in the installation by the presence of a hospital trolley, on top of which the bottles, with their precious contents, are placed.

Jewellery-based installation is a relatively new type of exhibition concept which offers a number of different contexts in which to view work. For example, Wilkinson's description of the objects in *The Herbal Mixture* as amulets is a personal interpretation, one that is not demonstrated in the finished object - as is traditionally the case with talismans - but instead relies on the methods of making and handling as a manifestation of belief.

Seen in the light of her previous and current work, *The Herbal Mixture* continues the artist's investigation into the processes and outcomes of cataloguing through labelling, and colonisation. Her concurrent Residency at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts was an opportunity to study the way in which native flora had been collected by Pakeha, in this case Sir Joseph Banks, as part of the Imperial project. In the gallery context the work attains additional meaning as a commentary on illness, wellness and the often difficult relationship between natural and synthetic medications and conventional and alternative health practices. The diminutive amulets become part of a much larger project involving a combination of other objects which address the architecture of the gallery and the viewers presence within that space. A third setting for interpretation, unique to jewellery, is that of its place on the body. All of the amulets can be individually worn as neckpieces, the wearers establishing their own intimate relationship with the objects. The new meanings they ascribe to them may not necessarily address the concerns illustrated by the installation context and are unlikely to be the same as those imbued into them by the maker, therefore they provide yet another layer of associated korero (stories) which surrounds the work, and its journey through time and space.

Deidre Brown



GLEAM

Curated by Chris Chapman

James Dodd Yoko Kajio Tim Sterling Kate Stryker : 30 May – 1 July

From our town to yours

Settled in 1836 on Kurna land, Adelaide was developed from a city plan devised by surveyor Colonel William Light: a square mile of gridded streets surrounded by a parkland belt. Just over one million people live in and around Adelaide, mostly on a wide and narrow plain that hugs Australia's southern coast, looking across the Gulf of St Vincent to where, in summer, the sun descends into the ocean like the fireball it is, the sea still plenty warm enough to go swimming at whichever stretch of suburban beach you like. Or you can soak up the rays all over, at Maslin Beach, less than an hour from the city, Australia's first legally nude beach.

This is just one of Adelaide's paradoxes. It used to be referred to as the 'city of churches', and Adelaide is still the brunt of jokes about its dullness, or its creepy underbelly (the result of a spate of particularly psychopathic murders throughout the 1970s). At the same time, the State Parliament initiated leading law reforms recognising the rights of women, indigenous Australians and gays & lesbians; and Adelaide has hosted a major international arts festival every two years since 1960. Adelaide is a changing city. Our neighbourhood, the so-called sleazy West End, is being rapidly transformed via City Council and State Government initiatives into a leading arts and education precinct. The Experimental Art Foundation moved to a disused factory in the area in 1987, surrounded by light industry. From our purpose-built premises (opened in 1992) we are now a stone's throw from two major tertiary arts institutions, luxury hotels and apartments, groovy loungebars, pubs, streetwear shops, a skatepark, and an increasing population of students, tourists and workers.

Buddies

Adelaide is also a Sister City to Christchurch. The Experimental Art Foundation has had an informal relationship with The Physics Room for a while. And about a year ago we decided to initiate an exchange project that has resulted in this exhibition of work by new Adelaide artists. In return, a show of new artists from Christchurch, curated by The Physics Room, was shown at the Experimental Art Foundation in June/July 2002.

GLEAM

The original concept for this exhibition was that the works included related to the aesthetics of contemporary design, graphics and magazine culture. The conceit was that the works were self-consciously stylish, that their content was their appearance, that they acted like groovy showreels for themselves.

As curator, I invited a group of artists to exhibit together at the Experimental Art Foundation with the intention of the show being developed and presented via collaboration, it would be workshoped and thinktanked by the team as it were. The artists understood the codes of the visual media landscape, and some of the work engaged directly with it.

Over drinks and informal dinners the project took shape. It acquired a name, a graphic identity, and an attitude. The work trades on a hip appeal but also slices through it.

The artists aren't interested in deconstructing media methodology, but in altering the form via codification and poetics.

Kate Stryker's slide projection work, for instance, translates ubiquitous urban neon signage into abstract imagery more suggestive of a sunset than a supermarket. In the past Kate has photographed details of 1970s fabric, or cream-coloured closeups of domestic interiors so that they appear like minimal paintings. Using basic techniques (like rapidly moving the camera while taking the shot), Kate has produced images that suggest painting with light. Her use of slide projector technology is not to evoke a lo-fi nostalgia, but to suggest a temporal and measured sequence of imagery.

Light is important to Yoko Kajio too. Yoko has used projected light and translucent materials to create environmental works, sometimes involving digital processes. As an exploration of modes of perception, her work might engage the focus involved in looking closely at a small digital print of koi swimming in a pond, or immersion in a space activated by saturating video projection. Yoko's work in *GLEAM* is typically enigmatic: a large-scale video projection shows in closeup a kind of scanning and zooming across sections of photographic film. The imagery suggests digital paradigms: circuitry or synthetic regimes. A glowing pile of photographic strips, materially artificial, is also spookily organic and atmospheric.

Coding is big for Tim Sterling. Using a system of word association, Tim is presented with a range of elements, from which he sources illustrations. He then translates these into objects by meticulously hand-sawing thin sheets of MDF. The elements of his work for *GLEAM* include: a Mongolian hat, a necklace, and various plant structures. These are propped on a base so that it is difficult to discern exactly what they describe, and they become a network of graphic 3d forms. At odds with the systematic approach to the creation of the cut-outs, the object is grounded by a compacted strata of audio cassette tapes, lined up so that the rows of holes form invisible rods.

Two little birds tussle with a length of rubber (like a worm) threatening to destabilise the whole thing. The cut-out elements may be smoke, because the title of the work - BOMB - implies a sense of compressed matter or energy.

James Dodd's enthusiasm for the evolving graphic codes of urban culture have already resulted in the creation of several large scale wall paintings, and numerous graphic and other works that appear across a range of spaces and contexts. James' work draws upon, and contributes to, the localised languages of skate & BMX culture and street art. Add to that an interest in Japanese text and manga forms, and corporate logoism, and his work can be understood as responding to both local and global imperatives. James' hybridised text-forms suggest a future language, or better, an existing one customised by its users.

Chris Chapman

The presentation of GLEAM at The Physics Room was assisted by Arts South Australia. The Experimental Art Foundation is supported by the Commonwealth Government through the Visual Arts Craft Fund of the Australia Council, and the South Australian Government through Arts SA.

This text originally printed in the GLEAM exhibition brochure published by the EAF.

Thrash

A Physics Room touring project

curated by Emma Bugden for the Experimental Art Foundation

Dan Arps, Nathan Pohio, Ella Reed, Julaine Stephenson : 28 June – 28 July

Christchurch is a weird mix of old money, white power gangs and gluebag kids, set against a new influx of rapid migration, largely Asian and Pacific, and the growing strength of Ngai Tahu as a major financial and cultural force. Suffering, as always, from the perpetual drift north (Auckland, Melbourne, London) of a generation of 20 somethings, Christchurch continues to regenerate itself, and its artists.

Pigeon holed as conservative, Christchurch certainly retains close links with its historic, colonial past. Local school kids are taught about the 'first four ships' (ships bringing English settlers to Lyttleton harbour) rather than the Waka we were taught about up in sunny Northland. Enmeshed in a strong painterly tradition, and with more than a nod and a wink to the old Masters, the city's public arts institutions have a distinct regionalist focus. The Physics Room works to broaden connections and dialogue with artists and writers on a national and international scale, providing a conduit for the local arts community, and offering a more inclusive view of contemporary arts and culture which celebrates difference and debate.

Given the geographical location of the gallery the emphasis on electronic and print publications has been imperative to The Physics Room's survival and growth, as have the growing networks of project spaces and galleries throughout the world that we draw on. When thinking about spaces in Australia to work with, Adelaide seems an obvious suggestion, and the Physics Room and the EAF have shared an informal friendship for some time. Often described akin to Adelaide, sharing a flatness in scale, with grids aplenty (same town planner!), and sharing both the civic status of 'sister cities', and a tendency to be the butt of everyone else's jokes, Christchurch and Adelaide seem inextricably linked.

Back to regionalism. Entrenched in Christchurch's art success stories are brooding landscapes, a fascination with the sparseness and barrenness of the plains, and an abiding fixation with the dark, the bleak and the just downright miserable. In contrast, the artists in Thrash mix up humour and satire in generous scoopings, informed by both the stark aestheticism of an art historical minimalism and the throwaway consumerism of contemporary pop culture. Discursive, often oblique or throwaway, their work focuses on the ordinary stuff of lives, finding humour and critique in the everyday matter and transforming the mundane and unseen.

Part scavenger and part hobbyist constructor, Dan Arps creates sprawling installations which colonise space, crawling up walls, hanging off windows and ceilings, and spilling out doors. From meticulous cardboard and paper constructions to warehouse buckets and \$2 shop detritus, Arps gathers material seemingly randomly, yet each installation is painstakingly built up and layered. For *Thrash* Arps has built a kit-set scaffolding, a DIY construction site for the modern art boy. Entitled *The Museum of X and Dolphins and some drawings towards a base for the world*, this work contains elements of his ongoing series *The Museum of X and Dolphins*, which displays a growing archive of artifacts, all containing an 'X' or 'dolphin' theme to them. Rife with references to both museological and art historical practices, particularly seminal proto conceptual art works, the artist has described these pieces as 'poor imitations...executed as directly as possible with simple means'.

Minimal to the point of barely there, much of Ella Reed's work plays on subtle interventions which tease and often perplex the viewer.

Her work in *Thrash* is willfully obscure, a small monitor perched on a shelf in the gallery bookstore, playing movies with a barely audible soundtrack. Offering assistance to those of us so often torn between attending gallery openings and just staying at home to watch the telly, this work slides sideways somewhere between simulation and reality. Mounted high on the wall in the manner of a TV at the chippie, and set at an angle so that both visitors to the store, and bookshop staff can view it easily, videos can be personally selected by individuals to enhance their experience of shopping and art viewing.

Ngai Tahu artist and filmmaker Nathan Pohio's work is infused with an enjoyment of the vagaries and idiosyncrasies of those around him, from his own rally car driving cousins to social smoking in the current political climate. Highlighting bizarre obsessions and quests, his work is a playful celebration of the weird and wonderful in us all. In *Sleeper*, two monitors face off against each other, one showing a close-up of the artist's nephew sleeping, his child's face innocent and unexposed. The other monitor plays a continuous shot of the boy's ceiling view, day glo stars and planets lit against the dark. Capturing a moment in time with his unerring instinct for a gentle yet biting humor *Sleeper* is a work which is playful and touching.

Julaine Stephenson often works outside gallery constraints, the guerilla tactics of her practice including 'the illegal roving bar', a temporary drinking venue located in a condemned Cinema in Christchurch's Square, presided over, and operated by the artist, and a work installed in the warehouse show *Canvass* (Christchurch 1999) where the artist politely glued a \$2 coin onto the floor and watched with glee while visitors to the show tried to pry it off the floor to pocket.

Creating a whimsical tableau of danger and intrigue, Julaine presents a snapshot in the lives of her ongoing saga about soft toy creations Sugar and Candy. In a previous gallery episode Sugar, in a spate of greediness, was found ripping superfluous pieces of body adornment off Skater girl (AKA Candy). Unsatisfied with the recent spillage of blood, the pint sized femme fatale then called in the heavyweights to rid her world of the scourge of Candy. Now Sugar has discovered haute cuisine and the ancient art of the Ta-ke-a-way. Sugar's still out for a piece of Candy!

Emma Bugden

A version of this text was originally printed in the THRASH exhibition brochure published by the EAF.



pHonic Curated by radioqualia

rigasZieds, Audiorom, Arcangel, Lo-ser, <earshot>, zzkt

Part of the Christchurch Arts Festival 2001 : 18 July – 11 August

Adam Hyde talks to Sally McIntyre about (and around) *pHonic* in an interview originally broadcast on Mag.net Arts talkshow, RDU98:3FM, Christchurch.

Sally McIntyre: You state that *pHonic* "investigates how a traditional relationship is deconstructed by artists who reposition the listener as musician", echoing such musician/software designers as Markus Popp (Oval), who contends he is moving on from a musical art that focuses on the audience to one that focuses on the 'user', offering listeners a role change from consumer to producer. Within a world which offers us an increasing immateriality, where instruments have been replaced by software, and whole relationships can be conducted a-physically via communicative technologies, is *pHonic* about finding your place in technology, perhaps through its use as an artform?

Adam Hyde: Your place within technology in terms of the way the computer is actually the interface, and how you respond to it. We've come up against the fact that it's all artificial - icons on desktops have been created; they didn't exist in nature. We've had to work our way through them based on a lineage of understanding that seems intuitive but it's not necessarily the best way to go. Interface is a very important part of constructing the relationship between yourself and the machine, and that's very much what a lot of the works investigate, and some of them are straightforward but surprising, and others are more obscure, but all of them provoke a curiosity about: why do we live with these constructs, why aren't there other investigations going on?

SM: You're interested in a very wide sense in the cultural, theoretical and philosophical issues surrounding technology?

AH: Absolutely, but we're not 'technology heads', we're very interested in the Humanist element of it. For example, the name 'radioqualia': its very difficult to define 'radio', radio is an extraordinary phenomenon and crosses a lot of areas, you can describe a lot of things via the term, it's more of the world than we realise. 'Qualia' is a philosophical term about the qualitative states of our experience. If you see the colour white, it's said that you experience 'white qualia', so radioqualia is 'the experience of radio', but radio in a very broad sense, so it becomes more like 'the experience of Humanist methods for communication'. Those are the kinds of territories we like to explore as much as possible, both within the technology domain, and specifically within the domain of communication.

SM: You've talked about sound as one of the major areas of experimental, innovative work in the arts at the moment. Sound is something we've become used to basing in objects, like CDs, which are then commodifiable. Napster changed that a lot, but I guess radio has always had that aspect. It seems to change the entire nature of listening to something if it's not an object that you buy, but more like a process that comes through this technology.

AH: Well exactly, and I think that's really good, because there's no need to be audiophiles, what's the point in that? What is it that you're actually interested in, and what is the experience? Would anyone really want to abstract to the degree where they're sitting in a blacked out underground bunker to experience pure tone shifts after John Cage? Mostly, music can't be

an academic exercise, that just isn't ultimately very interesting. You have to really get down to just what is it with audio that we are engaging with and it's certainly not purely or entirely the quality of the audio.

SM: It's as much about the environment you listen in, and the subjective experience of listening. With *pHonic* the environment you've constructed in the gallery is very welcoming.

AH: That was Honor (Hargers) idea, she thought, unlike other works that we've done or been involved in, that this audio software is something you want to have time to explore and get to know, and you don't do that if you're having to stand in front of a plinth, and you're restless... so we've created an environment which is very low to the ground and you can sit on pillows, but it still, I think, captures an aesthetic through the whole room which really works together, but the whole premise is to give people the opportunity to spend time in front of the computers without feeling wearied from it.

SM: With monitors in galleries it's sometimes like they're sculptural elements in themselves in a way they probably shouldn't be, so you're looking at the computer as an object, which is actually nothing to do with the art being presented, but you walk away with this impression of white monitors and walls... like when you're watching a laptop musician, there's something a bit untranslatable about the equipment that tends to push the experience toward obscurity.

AH: That's an interesting point being debated at the moment. Lots of shows are investigating new media and Internet based works, and they're coming up against these questions about how to present the works. It's an interesting question because these works were created within an environment, and it's a question of how to re-represent them, and whether you should just go for a straight ahead "well here it is" on a machine once again or whether you try to create another context, and I think it's very much dependant on the individual artist and the works on how you approach that. I think it's sometimes okay to treat the computer as a kind of object in itself, because sometimes breaking it out and putting it onto a plasma screen completely destroys the context: you've made it into something else, and that's not always the best thing for the work, so I think it requires a lot of careful investigation on a work-by-work or installation-by-installation basis.

SM: Well, just a sensitivity to the kind of environments that are going to be produced.

AH: Yeah, exactly, and that's not easy...

REAL DANGER Alex Gawronski

18 July – 11 August

Alex Gawronski's *Real Danger* is deceptively simple in appearance: two trains hugging their tracks at speed, seemingly headed toward the inevitable destruction of collision, only to narrowly escape each time, projected large scale on a screen. Behind the screen - like the Wizard of Oz - is the trainset in reality, recorded real-time by a small video camera.

There are a number of possible references: a kind of Perils of Penelope Pitstop mentality of last minute rescue; late nineteenth century painting/photography/film's obsession with the train as the symbol of dominion and modernity (and the Lumiere brothers' footage of a train phallically entering the Gare St Lazare station, c.1900); the Futurist's phenomenological positivist delight in speed and motion for their own sake; the pleasant sense of false danger in the unheimlich Sublime of Edmund Burke; the romance of steam; Baudrillardian hyperreal simulacra; historical train wrecks; Disneyland and the gap between reality and perceived reality. Such a work comfortably embraces the plurality of Post-Modernism and a kind of Duchampian Retro Avant Garde where the aspirations of the industrial past are so much kitsch in the Information Age.

This is a false perpetual motion - neither train will catch up with the other and although, by careful calculation, they always just miss each other, there always exists the slightest possibility of error in the delicate formula, that chaos theory may tilt the balance of probability mechanics in favour of collision. Even if such a disaster wasn't possible, the illusion is that it might be, and so the tension of the moment keeps building and building with every too-close-for-comfort swipe. It's like wondering if an asteroid is going to strike the Earth any time soon. The probability increases with every near miss.

But why can't we watch the train with our own eyes? The distancing tactic of the camera and screen reminds us that our environment is mediated by our senses and sensibilities. Every medium is edited - even something supposedly as impartial as journalism can be slanted, or even manufactured a la Wag the Dog (thank you Foucault and Chomsky).

It is art at its most ephemeral, defying record. Its lack of permanence and endless repetition of motion is the antithesis of the monumentality of Michelangelo, Bernini, Epstein, Brancusi and Moore. It has more in common with the memento mori and the Baroque fancy for artificial ruins representing Utopian nostalgia for a lost golden age (in our case, when technology could only be seen as a good and benevolent force), while suggesting the absurdity of the attempts of Art and/or Science to save the world.

It could be interpreted as quite an interesting allegory: history as the neck and neck race between Progress and Disaster as they head toward their asymptotic Omega point. This would place it in the same pigeon hole as Walter Benjamin's celebrated and elaborate interpretation of Paul Klee's Angelus Nova as the Angel of History looking backwards through time at human civilisation as a kind of enormous cosmic train wreck: the ultimate modernist perspective.

The work is also contemporary in the best way: playful, ambiguous and open-ended - a tabula rasa for the critical imagination.

Andrew Paul Wood

The Tomorrow People

Curated by Tessa Laird and Joyce Campbell

Gavin Hipkins, Joyce Campbell, Ani O'Neill, Ronnie Van Hout, Saskia Leek, Daniel Malone, Violet Faigan

26 September – 27 October The Physics Room and toured to Lord Mori Gallery, Los Angeles, 5 January – 9 February

The original television show, *The Tomorrow People* hovers on the edges of my memory, with vague images of their resplendent faces, the smooth BBC synthesised computer voice that would make Steven Hawking jealous, and like a lot of my memories, I remember a quality of the light, bright white light that swallows up slim figures clad in stretchy jump suits. I remember that for some reason they thought that they were better than everybody. I identified with that.

In fact I spent a lot of my childhood time staring at inanimate objects in a vain attempt at telekinesis. This lasted into my late teens. Despite the fact that the rocks never lifted off the ground, the spoons never bent, and I could never get those earthworms I cut in half to join up together again, I still knew that I was special and different. I explained this to my friends in a number of ways. I was from another planet. I was magic and psychical. From the future. I could see the true nature of things, my eyes filtering out all the trick subliminal messages that fooled all the other fools. I felt I was always on the verge of shedding my person skin to reveal the splendid humanoid alien reptile that I knew then and still know that I am underneath.

The artists in *The Tomorrow People* are also different: perhaps they too are better than you or I. Homo Superior? Maybe. Do they form words like smooth river stones and drop them one by one in the lakes of each other's minds? Maybe. Have they, finally, in a last ditch effort to communicate something, anything, that doesn't bow to the tyranny of language and might still actually work, even just a little, turned to art? Certainly. Whatever the case they are all tuned to the same psychical radio station.

What is perhaps most remarkable about the artists in *The Tomorrow People* is that despite their disparate forms, techniques, aesthetics and media, their works speak to, nay, babble at one another from across the room. They are altogether convivial and engaging, and relish these connections as much as they revel in the chance encounter – a perfect pastel shade of carpet, or an excellent op shop treasure. Their works weave together cheerily like Ani O'Neill's crocheted baby bonnets but still have a Gavin Hipkinsish critical edginess and the piss elegance of Ronnie van Hout's elegant piss up. The works of Violet Faigan, Saskia Leek and Daniel Malone read, vogue and give shade to one another, and all the works, in their own way, show a world view from an isolated pacific island. Inflected with the fluid dichotomies of regionalism and globalism, their works infect and dissolve into the wider world like Joyce Campbell's images of various substances dissolving into other various substances.

Dan Arps





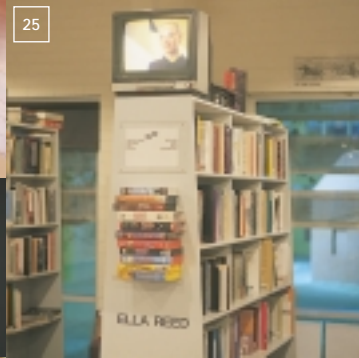
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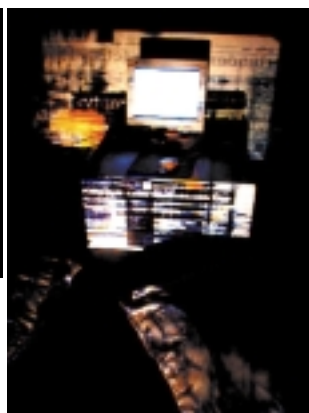
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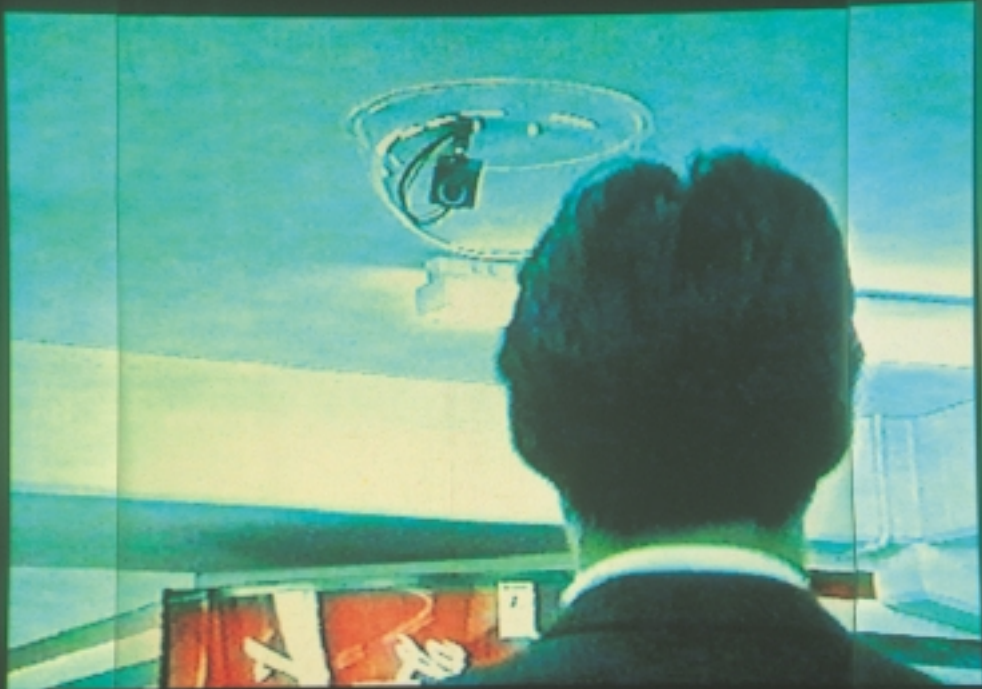
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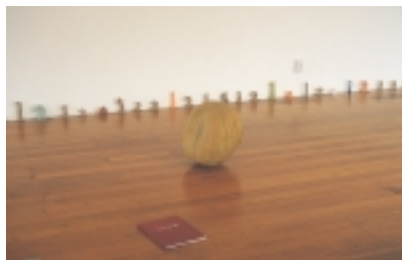


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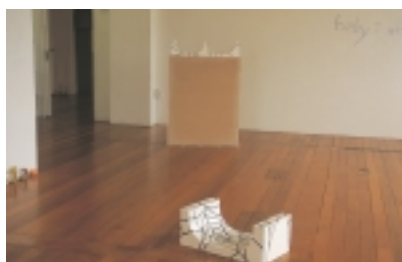
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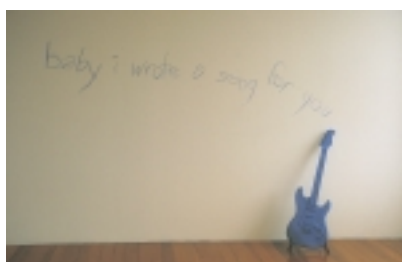
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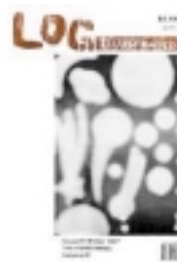
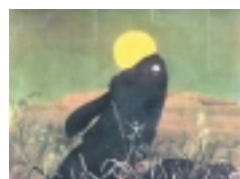
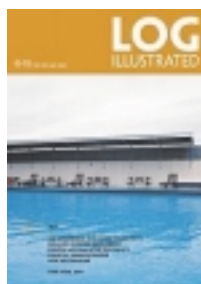
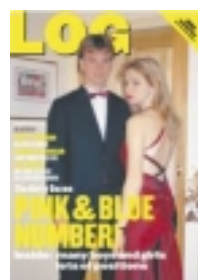
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LOG Illustrated Magazine 1996 - 2002

LOG was begun by The Physics Room in 1996 under the editorship of then Physics Room General Manager, Tessa Laird, and with the assistance of Gwyn Porter, then a curator at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Set up to replace the Physics Room Journal, LOG was established, rather than being strictly about-art dialogue-based, to provide a site for artists and writers to experiment with images and texts in a print format. LOG supported writing-as-art and new pageworks from a variety of art practitioners both from New Zealand and overseas. With each issue thematically based, LOG was able to include in-depth articles, artist's works, reviews, interviews, and the regular regional round-ups. Published tri-annually, LOG was distributed throughout New Zealand, and increasingly, in selected international outlets.

LOG supported not only experimental practice in writing and the arts, but also in design, and Tiso Ross, Caroline McCaw, Sarah Jane Barr, Warren Olds, Jennie Hall, Glen Mossong and Richard Shaw all contributed to the design of LOG over its five-year history. Tessa continued as Editor after leaving the Physics Room and basing herself in LA, and later Gwyn and Tessa switched roles, with Gwyn becoming Editor, and Tessa as Contributing Editor.

After publishing a record fifteen issues, and under the currently challenging financial climate, the Physics Room had to re-evaluate the viability of producing a tri-annual arts magazine. Sadly, issue 15 was our swan song, but this does not mean the end of publications by the Physics Room. From 2002, the Physics Room will publish a range of art catalogues and publications, with a new focus on gallery activities and programmes, but with all the freshness and attitude we celebrated in LOG magazine. Selections of LOG will remain online on our website as an active archive, at <http://www.physicsroom.org.nz/log/>.

Thanks for that

The Physics Room asked LOG Editor Gwynneth Porter three questions on the occasion of it being no more.

PR: For those who were not sure where LOG came from, where did it come from?

GP: I had decided to go to Sydney for a holiday. My then boss, John McCormack, with whom I had been working on Midwest, had decided I should visit the director of the MCA, who was supposedly starting an art magazine because he thought I would be a good writer for him. I dutifully went and while being served weak tea in a lush director's office, I asked the very ill-looking man what sort of magazine it was going to be and if he had seen anything I had written. He said they were going to run "serious art criticism" only. From that moment on I made appropriate noises but was trying to get out of there ASAP without agreeing to anything. I don't think the magazine ever eventuated but was fairly sure he thought I was a bit strange or something. The words Serious Art Criticism continued to echo in my head and I guess something calcified out of a reaction and I knew I did something else and that this was not a bad thing. And that I was not alone. When I got back Andrew Drummond told me that Tessa Laird was going to be the new Physics Room director. I said if she wanted a hand reworking their Journal I would love to help. It was the start of a beautiful working relationship. She is completely wonderful and comes up with things like this in response to our sales figures: "Less than 0.00005% of the world's population read Artforum, while at least 0.000125% of New Zealanders read LOG".

PR: How would you describe LOG?

GP: I am not sure. Main thing was I guess that it was set up to support art writing rather than writing about art. All too often institutions make art writers into art butlers and we wanted a place for people to be able to publish what they wanted to be writing or making as far as page art went. I started to see it as a tree hut sort of community project that was all about family, weird children, drunk uncles and all. Geoff Lowe of Artfan magazine (totally worth checking out - it was done in Melbourne and amassed pieces of writing and transcribed oral reviews of exhibitions from artists, cleaners, children, anyone who was there) contacted me and said "I have read Log a few times and beginning to think it's really great. It's a bit like <hillbilly>." This made me very happy that someone understood its asleep texture. In correspondence, I always used to say it was an arts council-funded art tabloid published in New Zealand until it was not a tabloid really anymore although I always liked the bulletin or noticeboard or newsletter feel of how the mag was originally conceived. I was actually really against the poncy cover thing that was the board's idea. But that is something I always liked about Log being financially retarded. I think in this day and age more people should experiment with and experience money vertigo. You know like wilfully wasting it or at the very least ignoring it until everything falls down and you walk away and something lovely takes its place. I guess that is what happened with LOG. I still can't believe we were allowed to do it for five years. I mean I edited it in my pyjamas for the two years I did it. LOG is the sort of magazine that (to quote someone on breakfast radio) instead of going out and starting a fight stays in and makes a hut in the lounge. We always wilfully ignored the important things. I like the texture of something that just falls together compared to the pointy whittled stick that is the refined and more traditionally useful art magazine.



PR: What do you think should happen next?

GP: I hope that other people will start magazines. It is surprisingly easy and I am happy to tell people everything I learned. It is cheap and fun and rewarding. I think New Zealand should not tolerate its cultural cringers for a second longer and to solidify this, we should change our national anthem to Dam Native's "Behold my Kool Styles". As for me, I intend to sleepwalk my way to the top.

OBJECTION

curated by Tim Silver and Russell Storer

Stephen Birch, Mikala Dwyer, Simryn Gill, David Griggs, John Meade,

Robert Pulle, Paul Saint, Tim Silver : 7 – 29 November

When I was at art school in Dunedin in the mid 90's it was cool to sell your art. There was only one real art space at that stage, called Stupid Street Gallery, located, naturally enough in Stuart Street, in a sagging, creaky old warehouse. Art School kids used to flog off their retro-kitsch cute stuff for \$5 - \$20, probably earning enough per show to buy that week's booze money.

Then every one grew up, realized that art was a 'real' commodity and started making sprawling installation art which now (doesn't) sell for thousands of dollars. Sandwiched between the video projections and the site-specific works making up your average project space exhibition program, *OBJECTION* looked like a throwback to the Stupid Street days, only with real artists, who show at real dealer galleries, for real money. Dozens of gorgeous objects were strung randomly round the gallery, some works spilling into others in a kind of artistic pot-pouri. *OBJECTION* was a salon style presentation of some of the currently more interesting Australian artists, and was both democratic and sensible in its makeup - it was small, portable, enjoyable, looked damn good, and there was something for everyone.

This is not to say that sensible equals boring. No way. This show was less Mum's hard wearing raincoat and more that sexy little number you always wanted but couldn't afford. And this is also not to say that sensible equals non-critical, because to my mind, the kind of 'dealer show on acid' feel to this exhibition was as engaging as any piece of overblown conceptualism. Eschewing the prim and proper layout of any museum protocol much of the work sat happily on the gallery floor, Mikala Dwyer's handmade clay numbers (*Number Sculptures*) marching along one wall in a giant line, and above, perched precariously on the very top of the wall.

Their chunky, homemade feel and their childlikeness drew you in, they begged for interaction and they offered you nothing but charm in return.

A return to childlike pleasures was also apparent in Tim Silver's work (*Untitled (Baby I wrote a song for you)*), an electric guitar cast entirely from crayons, its waxy creamy exterior emitting the smell of a primary school supplies store.

David Griggs' cardboard skate ramps (*Griggs and Murphys Ramp 1991 and 1992*) were mini versions of the big boys playground, etched with painted webbing. One was placed deliciously atop a raw plywood plinth, its plain chipboard exterior a perfect foil for the ramp's sleek surface. Simryn Gill's table of metal implements in the corner (*Untitled*) provided a darker edge to this array of lolly objects; laid out like surgical equipment were all the tools an artist could need; scissors, knives, scalpel, hooks, and, immediately post-September 11, my first thought was that it was the contents of the confiscation file at Christchurch airport. A definite case of less not being more.

Emma Bugden

Flutter Susan Jowsey

7 – 29 November

My earliest childhood memories are set to the backdrop of the cute and quaint farmyard scenes that made up my first bedroom's wallpaper.

The farmers with their wheelbarrows, the geese and pigs were all my little friends, who happily lent themselves as characters in stories as I fell asleep each night. Later on, in new bedrooms, my mother indulged her girlish Laura Ashley fantasies, with wallpaper, curtains, quilts and pillows all adorned in patterns of tiny flowers in complimentary shades of pink and peach.

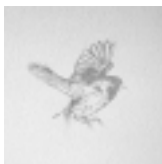
Flutter, by Susan Jowsey, evokes such childhood nostalgia and thoughts of motherly influence. The medium of pale face powder pressed onto the wall is designed to invoke memory by triggering the senses. The pale pink and subtle scent of the feminine is familiar and comforting, domestic and maternal. With the use of cosmetic face powder Jowsey hints towards the learnt/imitated aspects of female identity. The pleasure for little girls (and some boys of course!) that's found in playing dress-ups with their mother's make-up, jewellery and high heels gives shape to our expectations of the feminine and all the cosmetic and illusory trappings of womanhood.

Jowsey extends the sense of surface illusion further, as the screenprinted birds appear to recede into the white of the gallery walls. The birds are repetitively printed throughout the enclosed, quiet gallery space – some in full flight, others apparently resting on a perch that is not quite seen. The muted fleshy tones of these mute birds are so delicate as to disintegrate under the gentle touch of any seduced viewer. Even without any physical disturbance, time alone fades the birds further and further into the distance of vision and memory, leaving just a trace of the images – themselves a trace to begin with.

This temporality is unsettling – the fleeting moment in which a sight is seen or a hidden memory brought to mind, cannot be captured or contained in any pure way. Hence the inherent touch of sadness that comes with reminiscence. The impermanence and subtlety of the birds in *Flutter* also makes us question our trust in the infallibility of seeing. The almost there/ almost not, medium of the face powder allows the subjects to be deliberately printed by the artist to varying degrees of visibility. Some birds are printed strongly, creating a pictorial surface on the gallery wall, while allowing other paler or partially smudged images to recede in our visual perspective. At a cursory glance the birds may remain invisible, if we look further they appear gradually a few at a time, and may eventually surround us. But it would be easy to miss one or two: perhaps smudged beyond recognition or placed below our accustomed viewpoint. This incomplete and varying impression we have of the work reflects the personal experience of seeing.

Jowsey may have captured these birds for us, but they cannot be permanently held by the walls of the gallery, or even be entirely held in our vision. The subjectivity of vision and viewing, the fragile nature of memory and the inevitable loss of childish-wonder are all eloquently echoed in the oh-so-delicate flutter of the pale and powdery birds across the gallery walls.

Rosemary Forde



This lifeless box may be full of energy

Garry Arthur, Christchurch Press, 13 Aug. 1981

Paul Johns : 5 December 2001 – 19 January 2002

Amidst the hectic period of 2001 ending and a new year beginning, Christchurch artist Paul Johns gave us an enigmatic and restful work in the quiet, contained gallery space. Leaning against the wall near the window, Johns had carefully placed his newly completed "orgone accumulator". Resplendent in the natural light, the sheer metallic surface covered a beautifully crafted and polished tongue-and-groove box. Shedding light on this oddly elegant object at the end of the room, was the title of the work and accompanying photograph - both making reference to a Paul Johns' collaborative show *The Emotional Plague* at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1981, and more specifically a subsequent article in *The Press* by reviewer Garry Arthur.

In revisiting this exhibition after twenty years, Johns returned to his interest in orgonomy, as researched and documented in the 1930s by controversial psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich. In both exhibitions, Johns has also engaged a broader ongoing interest in our varied human attempts to somehow transform the body. Reich (like many modern new agers) believed in a unifying principle of life. In his research, Reich found that sexual energy appears to function in the same way as creative energy. For Reich, this energy was equal to the newly quantifiable unifying energy to be found in all life forms. Reich named his discovery 'orgone', and set about ways of accumulating it for healing and energising purposes. Hence, after decades of scientific and medical progress and despite the fact that Reich was jailed after experimenting with radioactive material which didn't heal anybody, the web is today home to many an orgone accumulator site. It seems the concurrent alienation from institutionalised religion in the twentieth century has encouraged individuals to seek out alternative spiritual options.

With a self-confessed interest in altered states, it is no wonder Johns would find intrigue in Reich's research. And having suffered illness for many years of his life, Johns has also been drawn to orgonomy for its reputed healing powers. Building his own energy accumulator for *This lifeless box*..., the artist followed the principles of orgonomy, using the conductive organic materials of wool and steel wool layered upon each other within the metal and wood box. It is apparently this combination of materials that is key in attracting and heightening the positive orgone energy.

Paul Johns' investigations into orgonomy reflect an increasingly common human desire or need to combine spirituality with some kind of scientific basis, as well as current trends in self-healing and a new approach to the health of mind and body. Whether Reich's orgone theory is science fact or not, he remains a figure who devoted his research to optimising positive human energy, with a view to the synchronicity of every living thing. And those ideas, dreamt up in the first half of last century, still hold a certain appeal.

Rosemary Forde

The Dinner

Fiona Gunn and Chris Cree Brown

5 December 2001 – 19 January 2002

In name, *The Dinner* gives knowing reference to the quintessential feminist work by Judy Chicago (1979, SF MOMA), *The Dinner Party*, although in ways which appear more complex than simply in either celebration or critique of Chicago's original work. Chicago created porcelain plates with embroidered placemats to celebrate a range of historically significant women, a mammoth task which took five years and hundreds of volunteers to complete. The work itself has been the subject of continued debate, both for its contribution to a burgeoning feminist art canon, and yet also for its somewhat biologically defining placement of women, each plate depicting, not the woman's face, but her mythical vulva - woman equals body yet again!

Gunn and Brown's nod to Judy Chicago is perhaps in acknowledge of both sides of the argument, yet their work stands in contrast to Chicago's dinner of warm-fuzzies and shouts-outs. The seventies DIY look has been replaced by a strictly traditional arrangement of silver cutlery upon an exquisitely restored antique table; this dinner is a particularly formal event. Wrapped both literally in a web of latticed cord which stretched from floor to ceiling, and metaphorically by the white noise distorting the accompanying soundtrack of party-goers, the artists set up various barriers to distract our participation in the event. A lone chair, sitting desultorily by itself outside the cluster of cords, reinforces our role as observer, a kind of Dickens-like lonely orphan looking in through the window at the bourgeois high jinks within. The sounds of the party overwhelmingly fill the gallery space; the chatter of friends and the tinkle of glasses, drunken laughter soaring at certain points till you wish you were there.

Based in Christchurch, the city of flatness, grids and a tendency to clutch at traditional hierarchies of class and status, one suspects the artists of pointing an unerring finger at the political structures underpinning the city. A humorous yet clinical comedy of manners, *The Dinner* looks like the interred remains of a Court Theatre production, a sort of Roger Hall meets an antipodean Oscar Wilde. One can almost see the various good ladies of Fendallton sitting down for dinner and a chat, and the socio-political drive of this work stings you with its thrust. Yet convexly a kind of lightness of touch, an obliqueness in approach, saves this work from being overly politicized or didactic, creating a work that could be read on many levels, and hovers somewhere between humor and critique. A final link back to Chicago's *Dinner Party* can be seen as well in the discrete inclusion of an antique high chair and tiny, modern toy, perhaps a crisp comment on the fact that, glamour or no glamour, high society dinners or not, somewhere in there lies the (messy) reality of childbearing and motherhood.

Emma Bugden

The background of the page is a light gray with a subtle, abstract architectural pattern. It features a grid of squares, some of which are slightly offset or tilted, creating a sense of depth and perspective. The word "Reports" is centered in the upper half of the page in a large, white, serif font.

Reports

Strategic Plan

A three year plan for The Physics Room Trust spanning 2001–2003

VISION STATEMENT

The Physics Room is the premier organisation for the incubation and development of contemporary and experimental arts in the South Island.

MISSION STATEMENT

We will facilitate the presentation of innovative visual arts programmes, and provide artists with the resources and professional advocacy to develop their careers. We will also foster and grow audiences for contemporary art, developing an educative understanding among the wider public.

STRATEGIES

one: We will present high quality innovative exhibition programmes

two: We will provide audiences with opportunities to develop a greater understanding of the exhibition programmes and contemporary art issues

three: We will provide artists with resources and information that will assist them to achieve a higher level of creative and professional development

STRATEGIES

STRATEGY ONE - we will present high quality innovative exhibitions

- To present exhibition projects in the Physics Room's gallery project space, as well as externally when appropriate
- To present exhibition projects by established Christchurch artists of merit working experimentally in the arts
- To present exhibition projects by established national artists of merit working experimentally in the arts whose work is not otherwise accessible to Christchurch audiences
- To present exhibition projects by international artists whose work provides an international perspective to local art practice
- To present exhibition projects by artists who are no longer emergent, but not yet established, and wish to move beyond student and artist-run spaces
- To support the work of curators in conceiving and realising shows within a financially and critically supportive environment
- When appropriate, to present public art projects (external to the gallery space) which engage audiences who are not normally exposed to contemporary art

STRATEGY TWO - we will provide audiences with opportunities to develop greater understanding of the exhibition programmes and contemporary art issues

- We will attract a broad range of audiences to the exhibition and gallery programmes
- We will work to open up, and de-mystify contemporary and experimental artworks to audiences who may feel alienated or unsure about these practices
- We will provide support and opportunities for students of art to gain a greater understanding of contemporary art
- We will produce information (website, wall texts, publications and catalogues) for audiences helping them to access a range of critical writing about the exhibition programmes
- We will present additional lectures and discussion forums for audiences to further engage with issues around contemporary arts practice
- We will develop positive relationships with the arts and cultural media to ensure our programmes reach wider audiences
- When appropriate, we will present New Zealand and Christchurch art externally, to develop relationships with similar spaces internationally, and to present local art to international audiences

STRATEGY THREE - we will provide arts practitioners with resources and information that will assist them to achieve a higher level of creative and professional development


- We will provide artists with a venue to present their work, in a non-commercial and supportive environment, funding and assisting them to create new artistic projects
- We will provide artists with critical writing and discussion about their exhibition projects, through electronic and print publications, and through artists forums
- We will particularly endeavor to promote the work of South Island and emergent artists to wider audiences, both in Christchurch, and, when appropriate, internationally
- We will provide the wider Christchurch arts community with access to advocacy information and professional development opportunities, through workshops, information dissemination, and assistance with resources

General Managers Report

After several years of major staffing, venue and organizational changes, 2001 saw the Physics Room enter a new period of stability and focus. Comfortably settled into our current premises in Tuam Street, and with more secure funding we have been able to generate more permanent staffing and administrative structures. I continued as General Manager, with Rosemary Forde as Programmes Coordinator, under the direction and governance of the Board of Trustees. The Trust's Strategic Plan, which was developed in early 2001, has proved a useful and active document, and an effective tool in communicating clearly to both our audiences, and ourselves the Physics Room's objectives. We continue to place an emphasis on both a strong conceptual basis, to allow experimental and risky creative development, and secure financial management, to ensure the ongoing viability of the Physics Room as an organisation.

In 2001 the Physics Room received a 19% funding increase in our core funding from Creative New Zealand, as a result of the Labour Alliance Government's Cultural Recovery package for the arts. Due to this we have been able to undertake a number of significant changes to our systems, and there has also been a corresponding rise in both our stability and energy as an institution. These changes have included the ability to finally make the General Manager's position a full time salary, and make the Programmes Coordinator's job a permanent position. These gains have been vital to retaining staff experience and skills, and with the addition of part time, WINZ funded, help from Scott Flanagan and Phillip Brown during the latter part of 2001, as well as a growing pool of volunteers, we began to feel quite luxurious!

We have also been able to allocate extra money into publications for exhibitions, with the *Tomorrow People* catalogue released late in 2001. This has been an exciting new change for the gallery, allowing us to build on key individual shows, promoting, and further engaging audiences with them. Our exhibitions over the last 12 months have been strong, with some particularly solid group and international projects, as well as the *Fresh* series, which has proved a really successful way, in terms of generating both media coverage and audiences for the work of more emerging artists, locally and nationally. During 2001 the Physics Room exhibited the work of over eighty different artists, in a total of twenty gallery exhibitions, and twelve external projects. We also presented a range of one-off performances, artist's talks, and provided a forum for over sixty artists and writers in print. The gallery and exhibition projects received a total of 14,662 visitors, and we received a total of 74,190 unique visitors to our website.



We undertook a number of external public art projects during 2001, notably the Kiosk series, which saw the Physics Room curate a six month programme for public art space The Kiosk, a block away from the gallery in High Street. We also presented *Craft* a partnership project with local fashion boutiques Novak and Tango, presenting a one night fashion and art event incorporating three commissioned videos by Christchurch media artists, (with the support of the Community Trust). These videos were subsequently presented along the High Street region in shop windows (Novak, Tango, and Galaxy Records) for two weeks, generating a wide audience for these projects. We presented two Internet projects as well during 2001, the first being the multi-media, multi-venue event *The Picnic*, which provided both physical and virtual spaces for interaction and play. We also presented the project *4 EVA*, a musical ode to fandom and mp3's curated by David Hatcher.

We rely a lot on the goodwill and support of other local organisations, particularly in regards the loans of equipment, and I would like especially to thank the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, the High Street Project, the SOFA Gallery, COCA, the Space Gallery and the College of Art and Design for their support of our projects. Additional funding during 2001 was also received from the Community Trust, Work and Income NZ, the Creative Communities Scheme, the EAF, and the Canterbury Development Corporation's ACE scheme. We also received support in kind from The Package, Montieths, and Bryco.

With a new focus on promotion and audience development we continue to strengthen and widen our audiences, and 2001 saw both an increase in audience numbers, and a doubling of the local media coverage, with regular reviews in The Press newspaper, Canta, Presto, and The Package. International and national coverage was received for several shows, including *Neural Notations* (Asian Art News), *The Tomorrow People* (Pavement), *The Dinner* (the Listener) and *Travel Stories Otrá/Germany -Schnittstelle/Interface* (Art New Zealand). We continued to host educational classes at the gallery, and our gallery membership also increased during this period, with a particular increase in the number of local gallery members.

General Managers Report continued...

Our financial systems continue to be upgraded, with Rosemary Forde, Programmes Coordinator becoming the dedicated book keeper for the gallery, working with our accountant Gavin Shepherd (Miller, Gale and Winter) to ensure our systems become tighter and more accountable. Financially, all programmes at the Physics Room operated within their budget allocations, apart from LOG magazine, which continued to run at a deficit, and sadly, funding for this project was discontinued for 2002. The current financial climate for magazine publishing continues to be difficult, and, as a niche cultural publication, LOG was never really able to meet its advertising and sales targets. This was a difficult decision to have to make, as LOG had been a strong component of our programmes, witty, discursive, critical and compelling. However, The Physics Room will continue to publish exhibition catalogues and this yearbook will become an annual event. Publication sales generally look positive, with the implementation of a new 'mini bookstore' in the gallery; we are now selling not only Physics Room publications, but also a range of other artist's books, CDs, and catalogues.

We have also seen technical and travel costs sharply increase, particularly at the end of 2001, largely as a result of increased airport charges arising from September 11. This will make it increasingly difficult to accommodate international and large-scale projects, so we must continue to source external sponsorship and additional funding wherever we can.

The last 12 months have seen us say goodbye to several longstanding and valued board members, so thank you from all of us to Zita Joyce, Warren Pringle and Margaret Dawson for their input and energy during their time as members of the Trust.

Emma Bugden

Treasurer's Report

The Physics Room Trust continues to operate from a sound financial base. The additional funding provided from Creative New Zealand has aided in ensuring this platform has not been eroded as The Physics Room has worked several new initiatives over the last twelve months.

The Physics Room financial year to 31 December 2001 is summarised as follows:

Statement of Financial Performance for the year ended 31 December 2001

Revenue	172,459
Less Expenditure	(174,920)
Net Operating Loss	\$(2,461)

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2001

Total Capital	\$37,178
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Represented by

Cash & Deposits	36,127
Accounts Receivable	9,524
Fixed Assets	11,878
	57,529

Less

Accounts Payable	18,256
GST Payable	2,095

NET ASSETS	\$37,178
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A Physics Room Annual

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The Physics Room is the premier organisation for the incubation and development of contemporary and experimental arts in the South Island.

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Website maintenance : Paul Sutherland

The Physics Room Trust

Paul Sutherland (Chair)... *Librarian*

Aaron Beehre... *Designer, artist and musician*

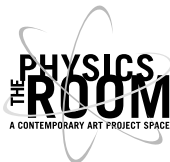
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Eddie Clemens... *Artist*

Barb Eaton... *Freelance arts administrator and artist*

Nathan Pohio... *Film-maker*

Robyn Joyce... *Artist and designer, member of the collectives Op Shop and Crown Lynn*



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