

Monuments and other reminders

Reuben Moss

30 March – 30 April 2017

THE PHYSICS ROOM CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

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Monuments and other reminders is a mini-retrospective of Portugal-based New Zealand artist Reuben Moss. The exhibition includes works that span over ten years, as well as a new three-channel video installation.

Moss' work is deeply concerned with the urban experience and the systemic economic and political forces that govern how city-dwellers live day-to-day. His work modifying and disrupting computer games and videos speaks back to the top-down power structures that seem to be impenetrable or unchangeable in contemporary society. These actions of resistance are also present in his earlier 'live' works produced when Moss lived in Dunedin between 2005-2010.

There is a dark and dry humour in Moss' work that hinges on the failure of the modernist idea of a progressive utopia - that the more we plan and work at imposing our will on the world around us the worse things become. By cutting and collaging historical artefacts of popular culture, Moss highlights the redundancy and bittersweet obsolescence of both the content and the medium.

Monuments and other reminders is the first of two exhibitions of Moss' work at The Physics Room in 2017. The second exhibition will occur in December and consist of new work made in New Zealand. In the lead-up to this exhibition, Moss will travel to Christchurch to occupy The Physics Room's residency space.

Computer Chronicles (2013)

Video live stream, monitor, Raspberry Pi, internet connection

Computer Chronicles was a weekly Public Broadcasting Service informational show on computers which ran from 1981 until 2002. From the early days of the personal computer through the dot-com boom and subsequent bust. The series, consisting some 561 28-minute episodes, was made publicly available on the Internet Archive in August 2002.

This work consists in re-presenting the entirety of the series through a web-streamed perpetual loop taking 10 and a half days to repeat. The series is a fascinating window into the sometimes humble beginnings of an era of technology which today is fundamental to almost every aspect of our daily lives. Computer Chronicles has become a documentary artifact in its own right and is a stark reflection on the inevitability of redundancy. The series in its entirety effectively presents that inevitability as both a paradox and paradigm of modern design and ideology in the era of unabated neo-liberalism.

The video visible in the space is viewable here <http://giss.tv:8000/compchron.ogg>

Monuments (2009-10)

Reconditioned playground equipment, photographs, framed articles from the Otago Daily Times

Monuments was a series of three public installations which took place without permission around Dunedin between October and November 2009. Three spaces were selected: a roundabout, a carpark, and the site of a demolished building. Three pieces of children's playground equipment were restored and modified as necessary: a slide, a seesaw, and a swing.

Moss first installed the slide into the roundabout between Wharf and Ward Streets. The slide was installed during the afternoon, but before the concrete fully set the slide was removed and carried across the road to a skate park where it remained until it was removed the following afternoon by the Dunedin City Council. The second installation was the seesaw into the Crawford Street carpark. The seesaw remained in place for three days before it was removed by the council, by which time it had attracted a large amount of media attention. The final installation was the swing into an empty lot on High Street. This lot was the site of the first location of the artist-run space, The Blue Oyster, as well as New Zealand's first radio station. The building was demolished to make way for a parking building. The swing remained in place until January 2010, when it was eventually removed by construction workers to make way for the new building.

High Tide Mark (2009)

Reconditioned park bench, photograph, video (4 mins 19 secs)

On 15 October 2007, the New Zealand police carried out unprecedented nation-wide raids arresting 17 indigenous rights activists and anarchists and raiding some 60 different locations. The arrests were based on surveillance and interception warrants obtained under the Terrorism Suppression Act (2002). This was the first time police had used this Act, a law which had been passed immediately after, and in response to, the 9/11 attacks. Of the 17 arrested on 15 October, 12 were Māori, many from the Tūhoe iwi. Tūhoe is known for its long history of resistance to colonisation; they never signed the Treaty of Waitangi.

In September 2009, without permission, Moss installed a typical Edwardian-style park bench at the location marked on town planning maps as "Māori canoe landing site"; the corner of Liverpool and Bond Streets. On the maps the site was allocated as a government reserve and was the former high-tide mark of Ōtepoti harbour, prior to land reclamation. On 15 October 2009, the naming rights for a small bronze plaque to be attached to the bench were auctioned in Wellington to raise money for those who were arrested during the October 15 terrorism raids. The naming rights were sold but Moss never received the name or a statement to engrave onto the plaque. The park bench was removed by the Dunedin City Council on 22 October 2009.

Simulations – Depression & Fire (2012)

Recorded digital simulation

Depression and Fire are two parts of a series of three simulations run in a *SimCity 2000* city. The city features models of real world buildings found on the internet created by home users with the 'Urban Renewal Kit' add-on for *SimCity 2000*. The simulated city has a population of 3 million and the socio-economic distribution is based on common Western urban trends.

SimCity (released in 1989) was the original simulation game, giving the user complete control over the design of a city, mitigated by the economic logic dictated by the game's code. Its sequel, *SimCity 2000* (released in 1994) enhanced the game's logic, graphics and added a simulated third dimension: depth. The 'Urban Renewal Kit' add-on allowed users to share their cities and building designs, making *SimCity 2000* user forums and bulletin boards an early online-community. The range of disasters featured

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in the game are based on real-world events such as the Oakland firestorm of 1991; the 1989 Hurricane Hugo in Charleston, South Carolina; the Great Flood of 1993 in Davenport, Iowa; and the 1970s economic recession in Flint, Michigan.

deathmatch: war of attrition between two artificial intelligences (2016)

Realtime software, two computers, two 21-inch monitors

In *deathmatch: war of attrition between two artificial intelligences*, a version of the popular 1998 first person shooter game *Quake 3*, modified by the community into the game *Urban Terror* (billed by the game developers FrozenSand as a "Hollywood Tactical Shooter"), has been further modified by Moss to remove all user specific information including Head-up display, team colours, and end game. Moss then sets two computers to control game characters (or bots) to fight against each other in a never-ending duel which is processed and displayed live in the space on two screens.

Trilogy: Future Factory Future Prison (1 hour), The Existential Crises of the Individual in the Postmodern City (1 hour 31 mins), To Boldly Go (1 hour 24 mins) all 2017

Three-channel video (VHS digital conversion), three 14-inch televisions

Trilogy is a three-channel video work consisting of three separate works produced by recording selected films onto VHS tape until the image becomes sufficiently distorted.

Future Factory Future Prison features the 1981 science fiction film *Outland*, in which a colony of titanium miners on one of Jupiter's moons are administered a powerful and dangerous amphetamine by their employers to compel them to work longer and therefore make more money, recorded over *Prisoners of the War On Drugs*, a 1992 documentary about drugs in U.S prisons. Each film was recorded onto the tape 141 times for a total of 282 recordings.

The Existential Crises of the Individual in the Postmodern City has three films layered over one another: *Short Circuit 2*, the 1988 family film about a weaponized government robot that develops self-awareness and empathy, recorded over *Juice*, a 1992 film about a group of African American youths and the transformation of one of them into 'America's nightmare' an armed black male with nothing to lose, recorded over a 1992 science fiction horror, *Split Second*, in which a police detective hunts down a mysterious killer alien terrorizing a global-warming flooded London in 2008. Each film was recorded onto the tape 88 times for a total of 264 recordings.

To Boldly Go, consists of the 1991 science fiction film *Star Trek VI*, which deals with preconditioned bias and its effect on intergalactic peace recorded over *Straight Out of Brooklyn*, a 1991 independent film which chronicles a young African American's attempt to get out of a Brooklyn housing project and the repercussions on his family. Each film was recorded onto the tape 134 times for a total of 268 recordings.

Reuben Moss (1985) lives and works in Lisbon, Portugal. Recent exhibitions include, *The Hive Hums With Many Minds Part Two*, Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts (group) 2016, *Erre que Erre que Erre que Erre*, C/ Encarnación González 8, Madrid (group), 2016, and *5x5 Catello*, Espai d'art contemporani de Castelló (group), 2013.

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