

THE PHYSICS ROOM

CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

A response to *Domino Domino* by Kosta Bogoevski

Tack b

The first time I encountered *Domino Domino* was at the day event, *An afternoon of Domino Domino*, which included a writing workshop led by Daniel, a live performance from Luke, and an alternative viewing of Phoebe's videos. Jamie Hanton welcomed me to The Physics Room and led me around to the back entrance to view *Mush Zone II* in the room opposite the apertured wall. I sat on a stool in the dark room. The luminescence from the exposed projections dropped me into the world of Phoebe's expression. What I appreciate about cinema (and theatre) is the inimical evocation of attention. I felt as if I was forcibly ripped from reality, as if the endured movements I made toward the gallery from where I had come were made in order to be erased: I fully arrived, no thanks to the door that led me in (doubling as my exit to the outside) closing behind me. *Metal Body: Ghost Field* was much louder here.* An absorbing aid. Solemn. A moving image: those balls that hang on power lines, typically in valleys. The movement of the handheld camera exhibits a curious nature. The spiral of the eddy on the other video. The nature of this point of view is still but equally as curious. It indulges in the water's repetitive, cyclical action that is seductive. Both videos could have been filmed on the same misty and grey day. The locales are spectacularly humble; mild, like an intermediate stop on a road trip towards the more desirable destination (not awe-inspiring but a nice break). The power lines on the valley are signs of urbanisation that you haven't yet escaped. Within this viewing is an idle stance, the break, where there is space to daydream; freely associating between and beyond the water, sky, valley, bush, power lines, radio towers, and those balls. The same wandering feeling is encapsulated in the fleeting phrases of Phoebe and Dead Air's, "TWO-WAY".¹

I was led out and welcomed back through the main entrance to The Physics Room. I took part in Daniel's writing workshops. We, a group of participants, were taken through a series of writing prompts that were a practice of recall. He also prompted us to consider our relationship to things. It was gentle and generative. The inspired

¹ Phoebe Hinchliff & Dead Air, "TWO-WAY", in Daniel Shaskey ed., *System to System* (Christchurch: Self Published, 2019), n.p.

sentimentality I felt was almost a solipsistic mire if not for the company of others, who were subjects of their own response. A sobering intersubjectivity. Freely associating again, this time on paper and in quiet, contemplative company.

Then the room rearranged to accommodate a listening party of Luke's live performance. This was a response to the altered exhibition space and his own *Metal Body: Ghost Field* work in *Domino Domino*, which is a response to these three Ōtautahi artists' response to *Sympathetic Resonance* (the exhibition down the bottom of the rabbit hole, where it all began, at the Suter Art Gallery last year).² This is humorous if you consider that Luke's sound response is created through feedback channels and loops. The feedback from a response of a response of a response audibly conveyed communication interference, breakdown, and recalibration. The audience was seated around the periphery of the gallery receiving tones and textures through the speaker to the walls, air, floor, chair, and unto themselves; vibrations. Solemn, again. I wasn't privy to the lexicon of Luke's initial field recordings beyond its ambiguous score outlined in Daniel's fourth *System to System*, "Metal Body: Ghost Field", nor methods of feedback between channels, so I missed how responsive the response was. Consequently the virtuosity I was able to appreciate was of the composite whole rather than of the sense of layering that was enacted. I am certainly dealing with the most ephemeral part of the show by addressing this performance, but I would have liked to have been let into the world, lineage, and logic of the work more. Like how the back doors opened up for an alternative and entire view of Phoebe's work and its poetic accompaniment in *System to System*. Or how the participant's writing from Daniel's workshop became the material that formed the eighth and final chapter, "Sentences on Modulation" to be hung on the kiosk Daniel had constructed to hold *System to System*.

Tack a

I think, in a facetious way, *Domino Domino* turned The Physics Room into what it's name could connote: *the physics room; an interactive lab for experiential science*. In this exhibition, creative decisions make subtle allusions to quantum mechanics and science fiction. The sleek white space, diagrams, apparatuses, and digitally ambient tones suggest that there are phenomena within this show that beg to be fleshed out, provided we play along and interact.

For a moment, I exercised the theory of panpsychism as I wandered around the room; imaginatively, as a particle with some level of consciousness; viscerally excited by the elements and vibrations in a controlled environment. What natural law, logic, and patterns I am subject to? I felt compelled to interpret myself as such because I am an excitable body that has encountered provocations that are

² The Physics Room was invited to present an exhibition in response to The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū's major biennial contemporary art exhibition, which in 2019 took the form of *Sympathetic Resonance*, from October 19, 2019 - February 9, 2020. See: <https://thesuter.org.nz/exhibitions/2019/10/19/sympathetic-resonance>. For more information about The Physics Room's response, see: <http://physicsroom.org.nz/exhibitions/sympathetic-resonance>.

intended to provoke an altered state of being. I thought about Phoebe's parallel apertures for *Mush Zone II*, as a double-slit experiment for larger bodies to attempt wave-particle duality. I stood between the slits and walked towards them imagining myself dematerialise, diffracting through each opening, and entering the video from a duplicity of perspectives—my gaze as a wave function interfering with itself. *Mush Zone II* consists of two moving images projected next to each other, each video accessible only through one of the two vantage points. I thought about how the visual whole can only be attained after looking through each aperture and internally merging the two videos to coalesce into one cohesive artistic expression. From this perspective, my interaction and comprehension of the work, via the two slits, was a gaze interference.** Daniel Shaskey's directions on the floor (arrows made from red vinyl tape titled *Prelude*) encouraged a similar imaginative disembodiment—arrows suggesting to pass through the walls.

I found *Domino Domino's* iteration of the scientific lexicon (appropriating terminology such as interference) an effective access point into the phenomena of contemporary art.

I moved about the edited gallery. I noticed the longer I stayed the more Luke's sound installation, coming from a speaker inside a smaller, diagonal slit in a bottom corner of the room, steadily forged a heavy (in the sensorial sense of the word) presence like it pressurised the room. I became aware that it had been producing a very serious tone from the moment I entered the gallery. It could have been infinitely ruminative if it didn't also evoke a sense of submarine motion and the sounds from the depths of the sea, namely echo-locative calls from whales. I felt *Metal Body: Ghost Field* was responsible for the cosmic sense of the space. The show is tonally sci-fi when taking into consideration the apparatuses installed in the room and the initial provocation of the exhibition, to "reject time and space as a limitation on producing and creating." Luke's looped sound archives another time and place, yet the digital feedback (in which the organic field recordings are untraceable), creates an out-of-this-world ambience. It sets a tone for Daniel's kiosk which is also presented as a monolith to hold eight volumes of *System to System*. Each volume or chapter is neatly presented as one page hanging from two prongs rowed on either side of the kiosk and dormant creased for the user to take home and fold to the clever shape of a bound book. The first volume, "The Hammer and the Blade of Grass", describes itself as a manifesto and as the voice of the monolith: "I do not aim to provide answers, nor even questions. I simply wish for it to exist in front of your eyes." In *2001: A Space Odyssey*, interstellar beings supersede humankind's own organic evolutionary tract when a monolith's presence forges a leap in our development. Daniel's monolith is innocuous in comparison to Kubrick's ostentatious behemoth. Its entity stands to greet the visitor with mutual respect, almost empathetically. I sense this is the voice of Daniel coming through. The manifesto outlines the "de-hierarchization of material culture" that levels the scale of significance of all objects; consequently undermining the monumentality of the monolith. "A space where all things are perceived equally." The manifesto self-consciously deals with itself as another source of information, among the noise,*** and offers self-reflexivity for those who will pay attention (ironically, to its own insignificance). Still, the kiosk hovers defiantly as I approach and interact with

it because my meaning-making self has now attributed the low, cosmic tones and textures emanating in the room to it. As much as the sound is interpreted as sound, it is equally felt as vibrations in my organs. An omnipresent artifice.

Daniel's *Prelude* seems like a cybernetic revision to Billy Apple's *The Bridge: An Institutional Critique* situated a block away, at the Christchurch Art Gallery. The "correction" (also in red) has a label that reads, "Billy Apple proposed that the Christchurch Art Gallery straighten its curved bridge to allow a more direct path to the galleries on either side." I am also reminded of Megan Brady's installation, *The prime number few*, in The Physics Room's *Dead Reckoning* exhibition last year which could be treated as the antithesis of Billy's streamlined route, instead plotting a meander of foam "bricks" through the gallery, from door to door.³ Daniel has turned my attention to architecture again, but rather than delineating an alternative route through it, he obfuscates it with incomplete curves, dead ends, and broken, meandering, impossible pathways to expose the causal logic of how we understand ourselves in relation to site. There was a sense of expansion to the room as I was made aware of my volition (the pathways I chose to make) and thus also what I chose not to do i.e. the other routes potentially made in alternate realities. Daniel takes this offsite in volume six of *System to System*, "The First and Second Movements", by mapping out a journey that is all direction, intersections, and checkpoints. I read it, noticing the discrepancy between my stationary posture and transported imagination. In situations like this, I judge my movements within the city that are governed by objectives and errands and whether I should allocate more time to freely wander and explore. I hear my own flippant reminder to "slow down" (in the vaguest sense of the remark), as if its antonym state of mind is the status quo and is synonymous with the subjugation of consciousness; like "the bustle" is not only against my will but subduing it. I am reading into "The First and Second Movements" like a labyrinth, an active meditation as if it should be nourishing for consciousness, yet it is another system like the roads and traffic lights I comply with to bike home.

"An echo in limbo"⁴

I've been thinking about how consciousness is an amalgamation of elements we perceive. Our perception is an active system that converges substances to curate a subjective experience: the components it consists of dissolve to form a composite whole we can comprehend. The network of components is indistinct, making the retrievable feeling of consciousness complex. By continuing a response and moving beyond it, *Domino Domino* ultimately distills not the substances but the bind that is analogous to the phenomenon of sympathetic resonance: our unfathomable connection to things. It has therefore created a synergy between the three artists that can only be felt. The show is the temporal nature of the entire

³ For more information on *Dead Reckoning* see: <http://physicsroom.org.nz/exhibitions/dead-reckoning>.

⁴ Phoebe Hinchliff & Dead Air, "TWO-WAY," in Daniel Shaskey ed., *System to System* (Christchurch: Self Published, 2019), n.p.

show's logic and so it requires the visitor to reciprocate their own kind of feedback loop—a walkabout, attention flicking from work to work—to see how it plays out. I said I found *Domino Domino*'s iteration of the scientific lexicon an effective access point into the phenomena of contemporary art. One phenomenon I can discern is the associative meaning-making which places artistic value on a work's relational resonance to the entire exhibition; its contingent role as part of a bigger project or process or collective goal. It champions collectivity over stand-alone work and effaces "the masterpiece". Another phenomenon: intersubjectivity via the encouragement of individual responses to a common source, reflected in the gallery's prompt to the artist's work to the viewer's interaction.

- * I have been notified that no sound work was playing during the back-of-the-house screening of *Mush Zone II*. I was initially shook. Treat the inaccurate account as a reminder of my gaze interference as the interplay between memories as remembering as writing.
- ** A moment to acknowledge *Mush Zone II*'s double aperture included in the title or the way I like to see it, the eponymous *Mush Zone II*'s "II" that is transcribed into The Physics Room wall as apertures.
- ** The noise of information, news, and social media that characterises this digital era that as I am writing am also self-consciously contributing to. The malaise of its perpetual state. I wonder about the effects this has on creative expression.