

The World's Leading Art Magazine Vol. XXXII n° 204 January - February 1999 US \$7 International

Flash Art



Alaïa Restyled
by Pascale Gatzén in collaboration with Thomas Buxó
Digital Information



INTERIORS

CATHARINE CLARK, SAN FRANCISCO

In a land where electronic media is a way of life, a network buzz in the air as tangible as the fog, and bumper-to-bumper traffic to and from Silicon Valley each day, the medium may not so much be the message as it just simply "is." "Interiors," a collection of electronic works by Bay Area artists attests to this difference with a well-mannered denial of Baudrillard's hyperreal and the New York obsession with mass media implosion. These works have been chosen precisely for their adamant physicality and bold affirmation of the here and now. Wings flap, sperm squiggle, flesh directs, metal prongs poke and prod: all combined with a wink and a nod to cyber displacement.

Sheets of unpolished steel become huge reverberating wings in Matt Heckert's *Birds*, called into motion by the press of the green button marked "on," the sort used for industrial machinery of an ominous persuasion. Exposed pistons thrust the metal tube up and down, activating wings into a labored undulation of captured flight. The resultant warble echoes through the space, down

to the toes of the viewer in a visceral hum.

Sound is translated into a writhing school of metaphorical sperm in Ed Osborn's *Night Sea Music*, where black rubber hoses connect an electronic motor to music box innards. An attenuated version of "The Merry Widow," an anthem suitable to the elusive egg, ekes out in a disembodied play of plunks and plinks. In direct contrast to mass media's time/space compression, Osborn has expanded both by opening the contents of his instrument, displayed like a dissection across the wall, each note pushing mindlessly in a vain attempt to reach the promised land.

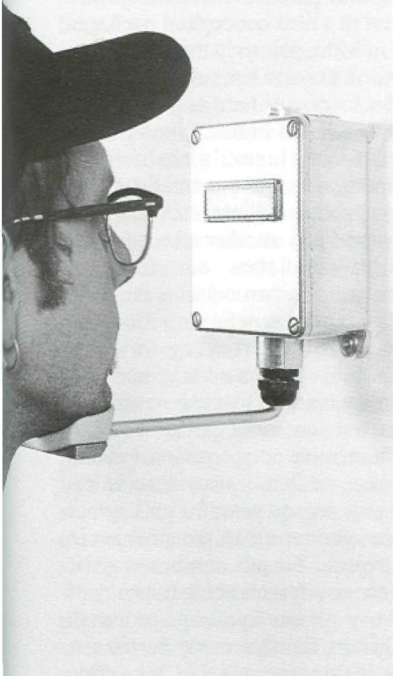
Higher truth has been extracted down to the no-frills, pseudo-medical widgetry of Neil Grimmer's *Meta-Physics: Muladhara (Chakra One to Seven)*. Each soft chin rest invites the viewer to lean in for spiritual enlightenment as rounded steel prods vibrate designated body points. Active involvement (of the viewer) is transformed to passive engagement (of the patient) as the LED flashes. The words literally spell it out for a

motorized no-brainer.

Ken Goldberg and Bob Farzin invert the standard assumptions of simulation and reality with *Dislocation of Intimacy*, a large black minimalist box placed in the small white cube of a separate installation space. The first clue to difference is the exaggerated electronic connection/umbilical cord wiggling over to the power source on the wall. A discreet white business card identifies a web site where the interior can be seen and manipulated. Despite the accessibility of sight from the cyber location (in the comfort of your home) the soft murmurings from the interior attest to the fact that "there" is most definitely "here".

Heather Sparks manipulates the soft skin of the body by "blowing it up," enlarging a sample image into a wide pink ribbon of personal identification.

The varying dots and spots roll through an anonymous off-white machine emitting whispered gurgles of electronica. Sparks' *Dis-ports* dislocates the familiar into the mediated image which no longer resembles the original, playfully contorting it through electronic manipulation. In this as in the other works of "Interiors," electronic media may be the medium, but the message of the primacy of the body remains clear. (Donna Schumacher)



NEIL GRIMMER, *Muladhara (Chakra One)*, 1998.