Other Voices: Other Forms
Yvonne Kendall * Bruce Armstrong * Alex Kosmas

South African Fiona Kirkwood * Sculpture By The Sea: Tasmania * Canadian Todd Spicer’s Everyday World * Fragile Forms: Taiwan’s Tsai Ken * Reviews
As pervasive as technodiscourse is in the art world and as task-driven as humanity has become, artists continue to confront a populace bent on seeking the immediate in art. Last Fall’s collection of "techno-sculpture" at the Catharine Clark Gallery deliberately thwarted this demand for instant accessibility through the work of Heather Sparks, Matt Heckert, Ed Osborn, Neil Grimmer, and the collaborative efforts of
ChanSchatz and Ken Goldberg/Bob Farzin. Personal ontologies and geographies permeate each project, accounting for the exhibition’s title, *Interiors*. Further still, the Gallery’s warren of alcoves housing the installations reinforced the singularity of each artist’s vision.

For all their unassuming ferocity, Matt Heekert’s herd of polished steel machines simulating a flock of (rather large) birds in flight is as much an exploration of the sort of artfulness possible within scientific inquiry as it is a study in biomechanics. Likewise, the push of a button sets off Ed Osborn’s delicate network of rubber-hose-encased cable tendrils, which then drive a set of 20 music box engines to a broken-up rendition of the tune, *The Merry Widow*. Nearly as unrecognizable as the tune is the sperm-and-ovum mythology.


Behind an otherwise whimsical wall piece. A less esoteric mythology underlies Heather Sparks’ *Dis-port*. Sparks’ powerful critique of the scopophilia she believes infects modern culture. A sleek and quirky player mechanism, fashioned out of an ultra-glossy white plastic, dutifully grinds out a chilling melody to the colorful pattern of a microscopic enlargement of her own skin.

Heather Chan and Eric Schatz are more optimistic toward the advances technology has allowed human civilization to make in their collection of images, books, and office equipment that make up Digital System Production. Within this autobiographical space is a wall-mounted lightbox projecting a vibrant reproduction of an iconical database, which in its vast complexity, draws one closer to examine the intricate system of emblems (acting as “desktop folders”) mapping out the duo’s artistic life. For ChanSchatz, constructing the body (whether a body of work or a life) is just as possible as deconstructing it.

Similarly, the work of industrial designer Neil Grimmer and of the Goldberg/Farzin team uncovers the triumph and terror of computer technology—its ability to appropriate and reconfigure information both totally and instantly. Neil Grimmer’s series of “techno-Chakra” machines advance a playful critique of Western consumerism—most specifically its tendency to commercialize the sacred. In each of these devices, a different set of preprogrammed mantras appear on an LCD display activated by the light sensors in a form-fitting chin rest. As you move along from device to device, polished chrome prongs or balloon-clad appendages administer vibration therapy to each chakra point. In a world gone mad, it may just be possible to fold virtuosity into the suburban routine with a set of these units. For the moment, Grimmer has fabricated a critique of technology as incisive as that found in Alan Rath’s *Infoglut* contraptions.

Truth in technology is of primary concern to Ken Goldberg and Bob Farzin, whose Internet-driven black steel cube defies access to gallery visitors. Despite the inviting texture of the cube-shaped component of their piece, *Dislocation of Intimacy*, verifying the contents of the box is possible only through an Internet site (www.dislocation.net — now no longer on-line). Through one’s own Net con-
nection, it is possible to view shadowy images of the box's interior. Meanwhile, gallery visitors hear a fan run gently each time someone has logged in. But, are these pictures live or are they in fact pre-taped and archived for easy retrieval once you submit your lighting selection? And, is it possible to experience art in a gallery when you are physically somewhere else? Gentle is the call for truth, but its implications are as infinite as cyberspace itself. Our dislocated interaction with the box prompts us to examine our appetite for instant, authentic feedback. Yet, these artists gladly hand us the power to turn the Duchamp-inspired art-context debate squarely on its head—now that it is possible to extend sculpture into every Net terminal on the globe.

Interiors did not require a unifying narrative about technology. It would have suffered for having one, considering the varying degree of acceptance, reticence, and disdain toward technology the artists expressed through the pieces themselves.

Susan Marquez