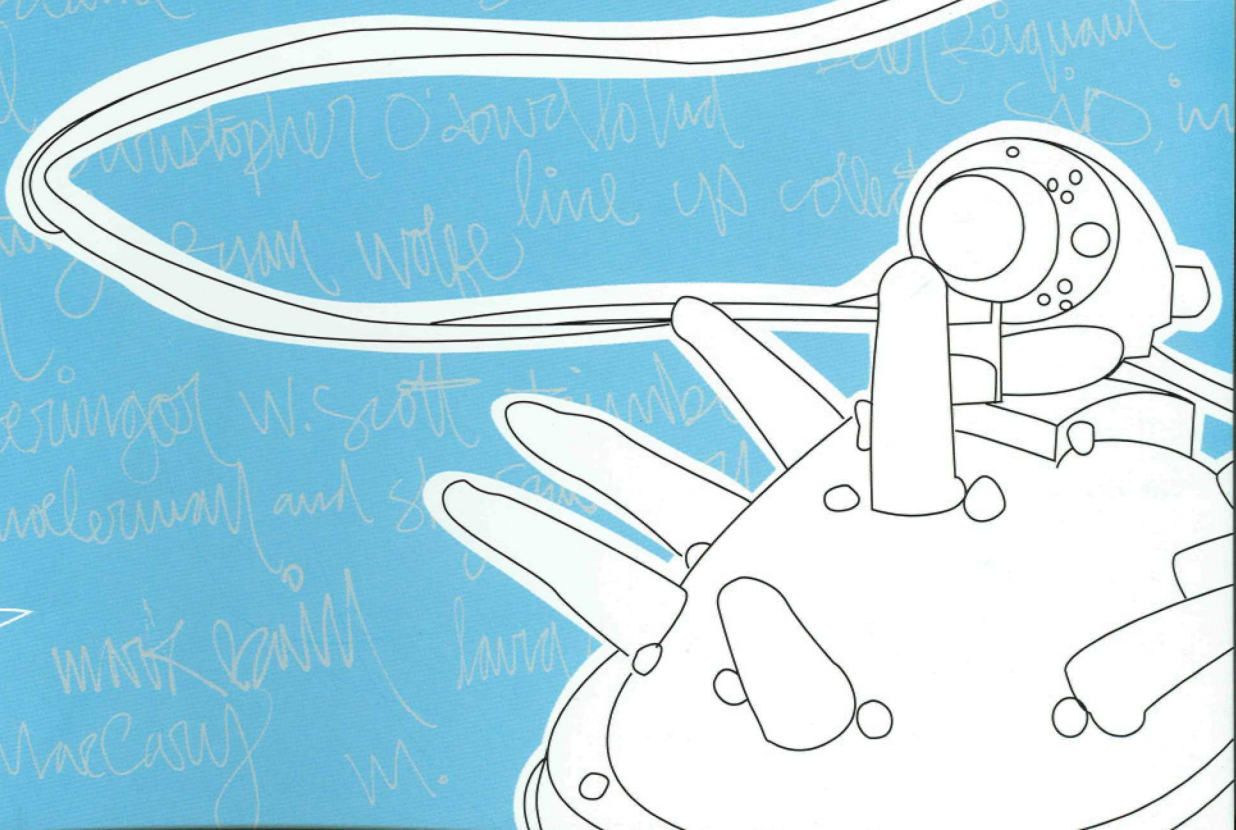
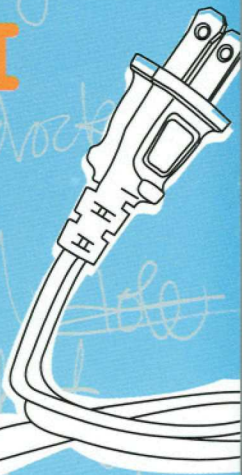


People Doing Strange Things With Electricity II

art using technology | technology making art



Introduction:

People Doing Strange Things With Electricity II

Ken Goldberg

“The electric light escapes attention as a communication medium precisely because it has no ‘content’”.
M. McLuhan

I woke up a few nights ago in the middle of a huge thunderstorm. As performance art, it set the bar pretty high. Let’s face it, there’s still something supernatural about electricity. The ancient Greeks discovered that when they rubbed an amber rod with cloth, feathers would jump onto it (elektron is the Greek word for amber). Two thousand years later, Ohm characterized its basic equation. Like a virus, $V=IR$ irreversibly changed the world. From Maxwell to Millikan to Milgram, interesting things have been done with electricity ever since.

In an age of disenchantment, it’s daring to put on a show that highlights electricity as an artistic medium. Electricity is a broad category, ranging from radio to robots. What are its intrinsic qualities? As McLuhan observed, the electric light is a pure medium: there’s no explicit message to interfere with its powerful yet implicit message. Electricity continues to keep us up at night.

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