

CAN\$6.50/£3.00

WORLD SCULPTURE NEWS

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 1 WINTER 1999



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



...

San Francisco

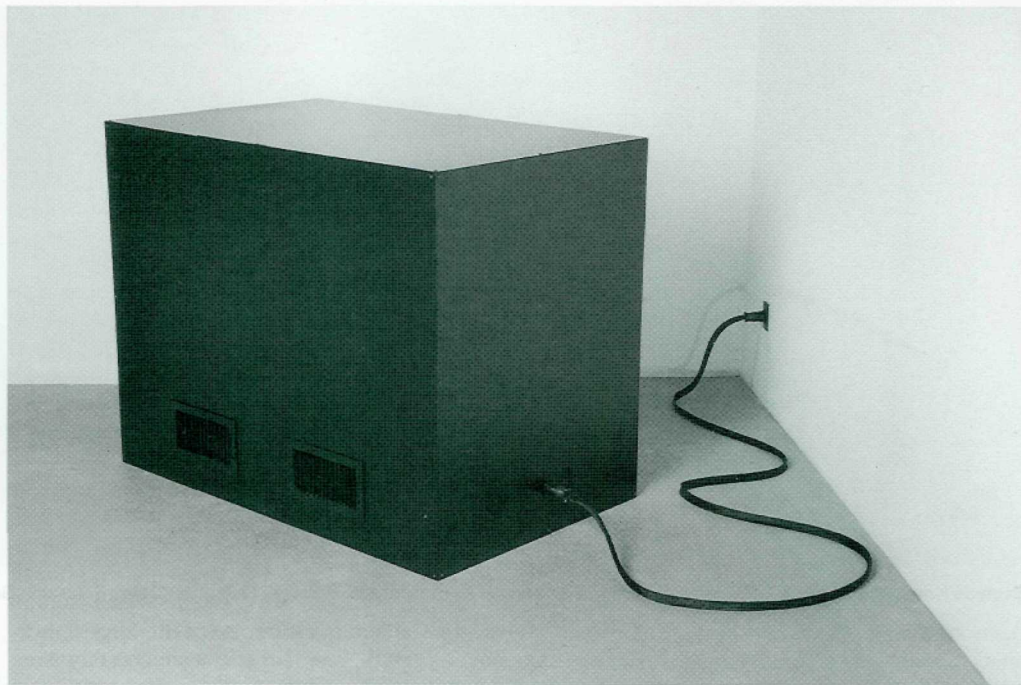
***Interiors at
Catharine Clark
Gallery***

As pervasive as techno-discourse 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

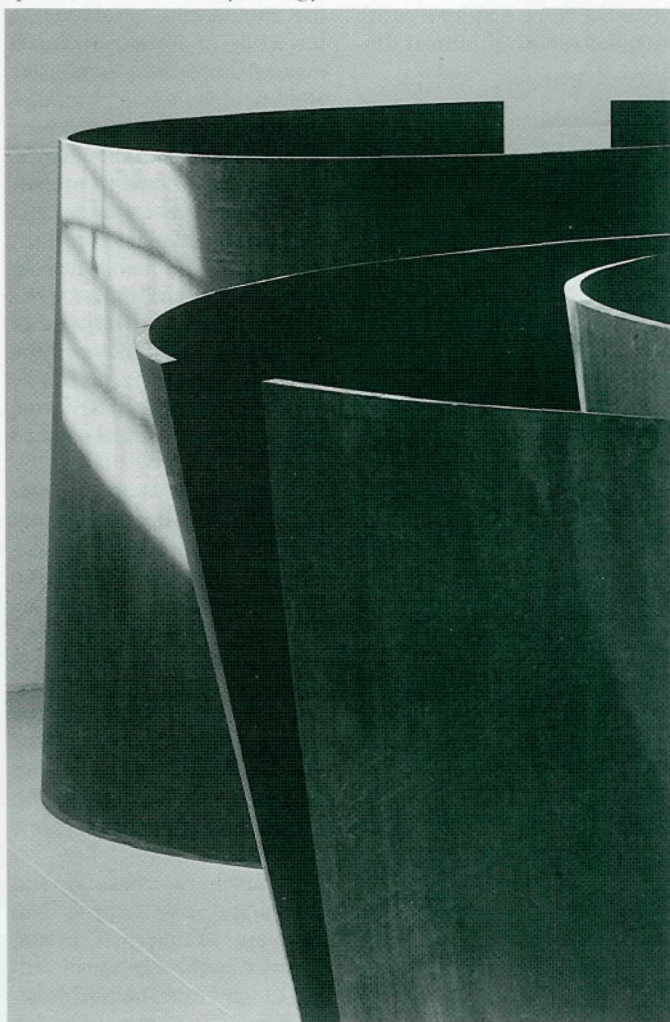
WINTER 1999

ChanSchatz and Ken Goldberg/
Bob Farzin. Personal ontologies
and geographies permeate each
project, accounting for the ex-
hibition's title, *Interiors*. Fur-
ther still, the Gallery's warren
of alcoves housing the installa-
tions reinforced the singularity
of each artist's vision.

For all their unassuming
ferocity, Matt Heckert's herd of
polished steel machines simu-
lating a flock of (rather large)
birds in flight is as much an
exploration of the sort of artful-
ness possible within scientific
inquiry as it is a study in biome-
chanics. 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 unrec-
ognizable as the tune is the
sperm-and-ovum mythology



Ken Goldberg/Bob Farzin, **Dislocation of Intimacy** (www.dislocation.net), 1998, powder-coated steel, custom electronics, 58 x 48 x 38 inches. Photograph: Courtesy of the artists.



Richard Serra, **Double-Torqued Ellipse**, 1997 and *Ellipse II*, 1996, curved cor-ten steel plates, 11 to 13 feet high, 2 inches thick, and weighing approximately 20 tons each. Photographed in situ at the Geffen Contemporary of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Photograph by Dirk Reinartz.

behind an otherwise whimsical
wall piece. A less esoteric my-
thology underlies Heather
Sparks' *Dis-port*. Sparks' pow-
erful 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 en-
largement of her own skin.

Heather Chan and Eric
Schatz are more optimistic to-
ward the advances technology
has allowed human civilization
to make in their collection of
images, books, and office
equipment that make up *Dig-
ital System Production*. Within
this autobiographical space is a
wall-mounted lightbox project-
ing a vibrant reproduction of
an iconic 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 in-
dustrial designer Neil Grimmer
and of the Goldberg/Farzin
team uncovers the triumph and
terror of computer technol-
ogy—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 con-
sumerism—most specifically its
tendency to commercialize the
sacred. In each of these de-
vices, a different set of pre-
programmed 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 ad-
minister vibration therapy to
each chakra point. In a world
gone mad, it may just be possi-
ble to fold virtuosity into the
suburban routine with a set of
these units. For the moment,
Grimmer has fabricated a cri-
tique 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 gal-
lery visitors. Despite the invit-
ing texture of the cube-shaped
component of their piece, *Dis-
location of Intimacy*, verifying
the contents of the box is possi-
ble 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

• • •