

Sara Garden Armstrong
Gregory Barsamian
Steven Geiger
Chuck Genco
Ron Kuivila

art
AND
technology

Flash Light
Matthew Tanteri
Doris Vila
Mary Ziegler

September 16 - October 28, 1995

University Art Gallery
Staller Center for the Arts
State University of New York at Stony Brook

INTRODUCTION

As science was originally the domain of the philosopher, so technology led development based on activity in the experiential world. Artist and technologist engaged the transformation of matter, and, hence, of the material world. The Greek word which gave us technology – *technē* – meant “art” or “craft.” That implication changed in the 19th century when science began to lead engineering – reducing technology to its contemporary understanding as science applied to useful, mundane aims – when the physical senses were considered a scientific liability, and the modern understanding of “art,” now divorced from its roots, emerged. Since then, art, joined with theory and criticism, has frequently fetishized its own uselessness, signaling in a modernist way its own ‘strength’ borne of rational inquiry to cover its new habit of begging for table scraps while making claims to be the main course. The fetishization was relatively successful and reached the level of current cultural myth.

The title **art AND technology** is written to help reinscribe the conjunction of that which is past with that which is future – from natural to mechanical and electrical, and from analog to digital – at a time of reexamination of the domain(s) of art. The young artists in this exhibition were raised with the contemporary understandings of ‘art’ but refuse to subsidize one domain with another. Their insistence on the conjunction over subordination is one of numerous themes and complexities in a broad discourse that resists both facile syntheses and assumptions.

Sara Armstrong’s interactive multi-media books are an excellent example of refusal and conjunction: video, light, sound, abstract sculpture, a multi-layered book of images, poems, and narrative. A room-sized installation is enclosed within a book format whose sense of knowledge denies the rationality of linear information by calling on other senses while inscribed within the rationality of technology. Her images and ideas evoke the relations between the concepts of interiority and externality.

Gregory Barsamian and Chuck Genco share a fascination for illusion and transformation. Barsamian uses perception, with its seduction, to assert its opposition. Conjurers rely on the simultaneous truth and lie of the obvious, knowing the “trick” is located elsewhere exactly while it is magically in front of you. With the phallogocentrism of war “toys,” his dream images, kinetically enacted, give us reality’s very solid nightmares.

Both of Chuck Genco’s machines are multi-coded and interactive, using visual fascination to involve you in choices, time relations, and the myriad meanings of transmutation. His extreme craft (*technē*) references the idea of magic as what science has not yet explained, and the literal, primal-now-electrified transforming powers of artists.

Flash Light plays with technology and has it play with us. You can use lights, music, words, and forms in ways excluded from “art.” Games, game theory, and “entertainment” implicitly challenge the lines of exclusion so many of us feel, and many fear, today. When art can be didactic, entertaining, or can occupy the virtual location of software, what now are the domains of art?

Steven Geiger tells us that technology has replaced a great deal in our lives but rather than reification/death, it is a vehicle for human passions perplexed by cybernetics. Is it sadistic to beat yourself? What if a machine does it? What if you watch? What if you aren’t there? What if it’s them, not you? Maybe it is good sense to know that you do, or can do, so! Where/Are you in this loop?

Ron Kuivila uses technology in purposive simple forms to remind us that it, and other aspects of the environment, surrounds us, often beyond our accepted range of discrimination – the basic discourse of science – and frequently in elegant form – the basic discourse of nature. John Cage is home.

Matthew Tanteri is held and holds us by light in all its “techy” forms, from neon to lasers, but referenced to nature and space. His is a quiet, restless, quite passionate study in the variances, discoveries, and delights of a medium that engulfs us. There is a delight in purism here that fills itself with variables – an engineer’s grin.

Doris Vila’s holograms are baroque works of dense layering, beauty, and a magic that is visually seductive, poetic in imagining, and intellectual in reference. Her fragments of images, forms, and words, located within the virtual holographic space, transmit the reality that what is seen depends on our position in the world and is never fully understood. Her works also constitute part of larger interactive installations.

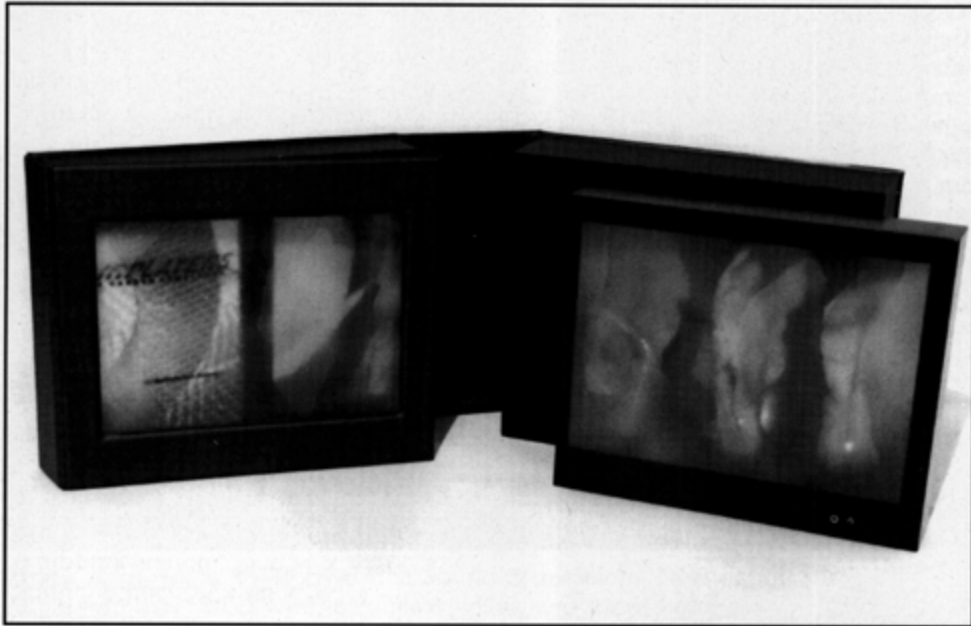
Mary Ziegler has an edge everywhere she turns, or turns us with her mechanic-kinetics. Not satire, but more a set of challenges in which we participate from thoughtful provocation to violence to perversion, made sufficiently humorous to cut so cleanly that you bleed only after you walk away.

Richard Leslie
Guest Curator

The artists and selected images for this exhibition may be found on the Art and Science Collaborations, Inc. (ASCI) Home Page (<http://nttad.com/asci>) during the month of October compliments of Nippon Tel and Tel.

Dimensions are given in inches, height preceding width preceding depth, unless otherwise indicated.

SARA GARDEN ARMSTRONG



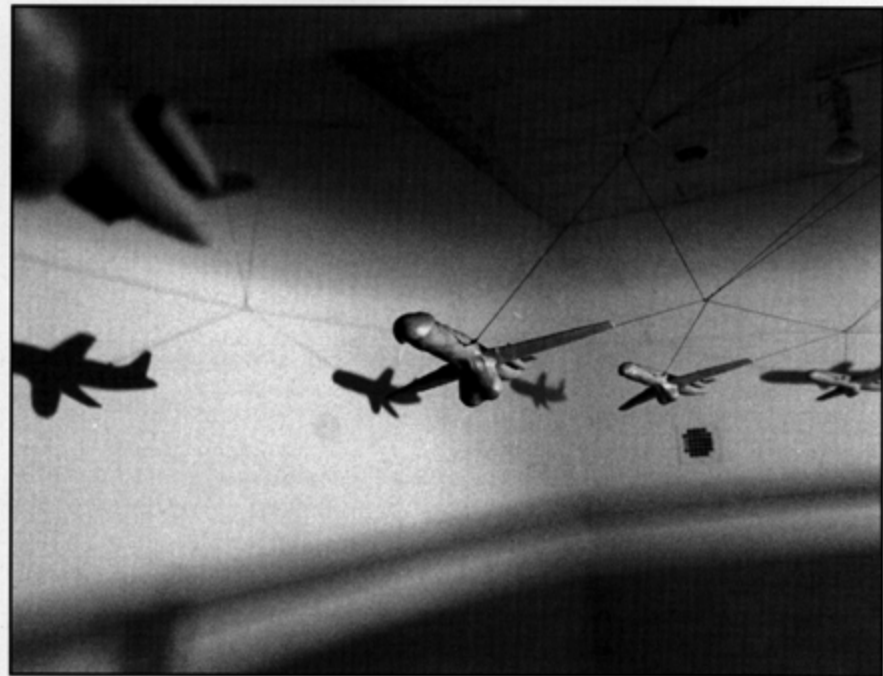
***Airplayers Bookwork*, 1990**, is a translation of site-specific "environments" into a limited edition bookwork with four components: a container, book, video, and a miniature sculptural environment that performs in a 90-second cycle of light, color, and sound; 11 x 13 x 5 1/2"

Photo Credit: George Kondogianis

My work concerns itself with boundaries - the intersections of oppositions and contrasts which reveal one to another. Inspired first by the organic world of the material body, I sought to mirror interior systems in contrast and relation to the exterior self. I am intrigued by the human system as mechanical and as analogous to the means of technology, housed within the organic. In turn, I frame the organic with technological means to perpetuate the examination of other interrelationships usually reserved for the organic world alone. Technology is now also part of the organic life cycle of decay and regeneration, of sensuality, sexuality, and even spirituality. Whether this a perversion or ordinary, it is disturbing. My small works, such as the ***Airplayers*** bookworks, emerged from larger installation pieces but now have their own life cycle and generate separate installations.

The video component is available for viewing at the front desk.

GREGORY BARSAMIAN



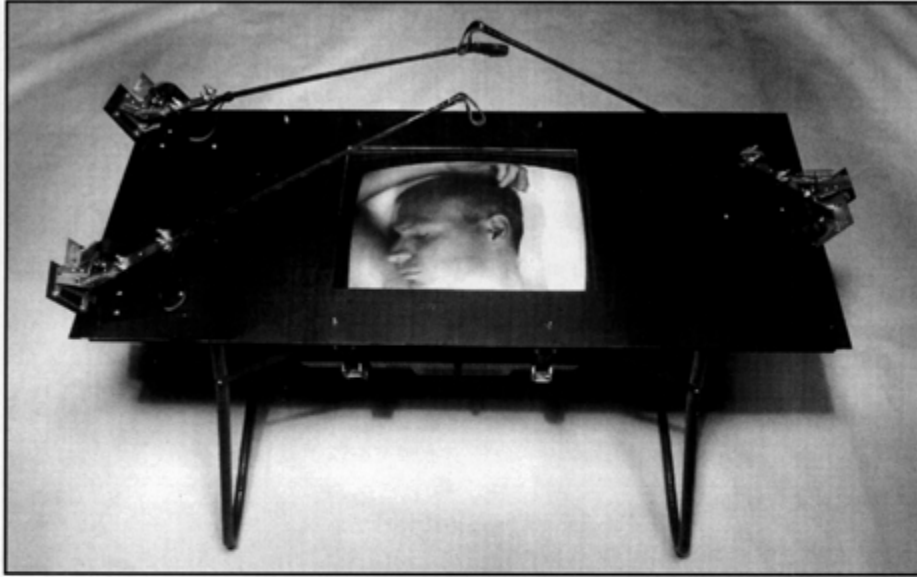
***Shuttlecock*, 1991** (detail)

Motor, aluminum, strobe, and painted foam rubber;
60" high x 168" diameter

Each of these works involves three-dimensional animation. Strobe lights synchronized to sequentially formed objects mounted on a rotating armature confront the viewer with a series of rapidly changing images which, through the persistence of vision, the mind transforms into the illusion of motion.

Sleeping next to a tape recorder allows me to explore and harvest images of the subconscious. These images betray the self-deceptive schemes that comprise our realities. Universal themes can be found in them which unmask our illusion of control and reveal our vulnerability. The animation technique I have chosen allows the viewer to share the same space with these fragments of the unconscious, experiencing them in three-dimensions and in real time. What I offer is a three-dimensional window into the domain of the unconscious where the emotions run free and self deception is an oxymoron.

STEVEN GEIGER



Auto-Flagellator, 1993 (detail)

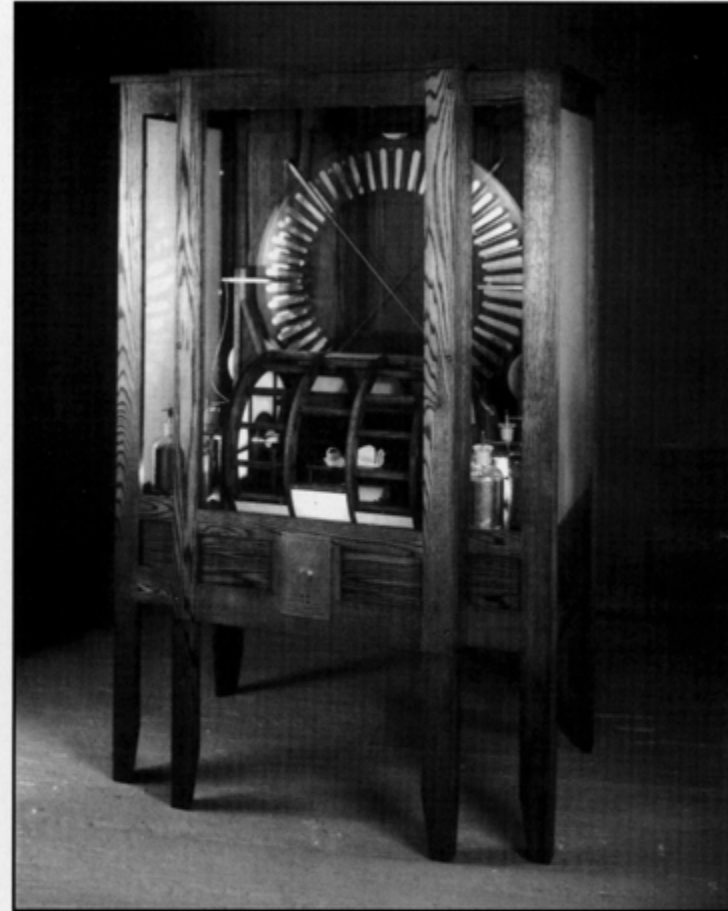
Steel, video camera, video monitor, electric motor, riding crops, canvas, electric components, etc.

Scanning bed: 58 x 88 x 36"

Whipping station: 58 x 51 x 31"

I am interested in art as cultural diagnosis. Using vocabularies culled from the mechanical, the electronic, and the bodily, I explore the relationships between the individual and technology, and the resulting displacement of sensuality. This hybridization relates literally and metaphorically to human compulsions and impulses; mechanics and electronics are transmuted into human gestures and articulations. This methodology also reveals my own fascination with things mechanical within a culture where gadgetry and technology have become the intermediary between ourselves and our environment. I'm particularly interested in psychological manifestations of the current technological and cultural atmosphere. I choose to focus on the territory between instinct and intellect where desire and passion confront self preservation and social constraints.

CHUCK GENCO



Influence Generator/Transmuter, 1987-92

Oak, brass, glass, computer, electrical and mechanical parts;
78 x 50 x 31"

Photo credit: Gregg Martin

In my work, pieces often purport to be something else. As Duchamp co-opted the mass-produced, I've made art in the shape of the manufactured. I have appropriated the look of an industrial furnace, the style of scientific instruments, the shape of the Whitney Museum...I use these pre-existing associations and connections to make the pieces both familiar and mysterious.

RON KUIVILA

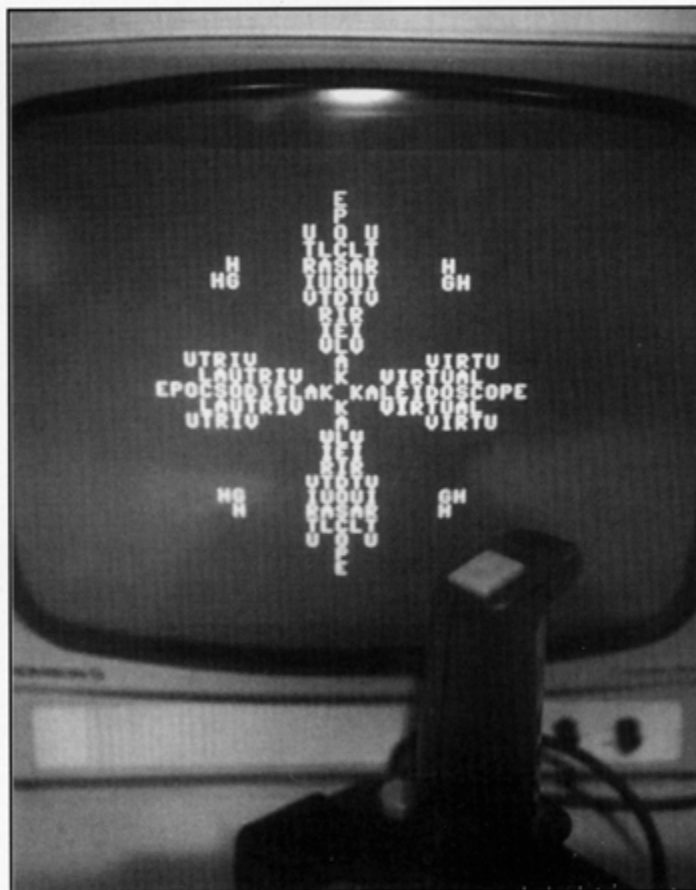


Spark Armonica, 1990 version at Sound Symposium, Newfoundland.
Aluminum tube, steel wire, plexiglass, glass, and transformer;
ca. 12 x 96 x 5-1/2"

An electric spark literally tears the air. It produces a sharp, omnidirectional impulse of sound that possesses a quality of physical presence that cannot be replicated by any loudspeaker. Thus spark sounds cannot be recorded and reproduced; they exist outside the range of the mediascape. That interests me.

The **Spark Armonica** consists of a pair of tuned wires that enjoy a 12,000 volt potential difference. The static attraction of this voltage pulls the wires together, allowing a spark to jump and setting the wires into vibration. Resting on top of the pipe that holds the two wires are wine glasses that act as resonant filters, amplifying selected harmonics on the strings as they vibrate.

FLASH LIGHT



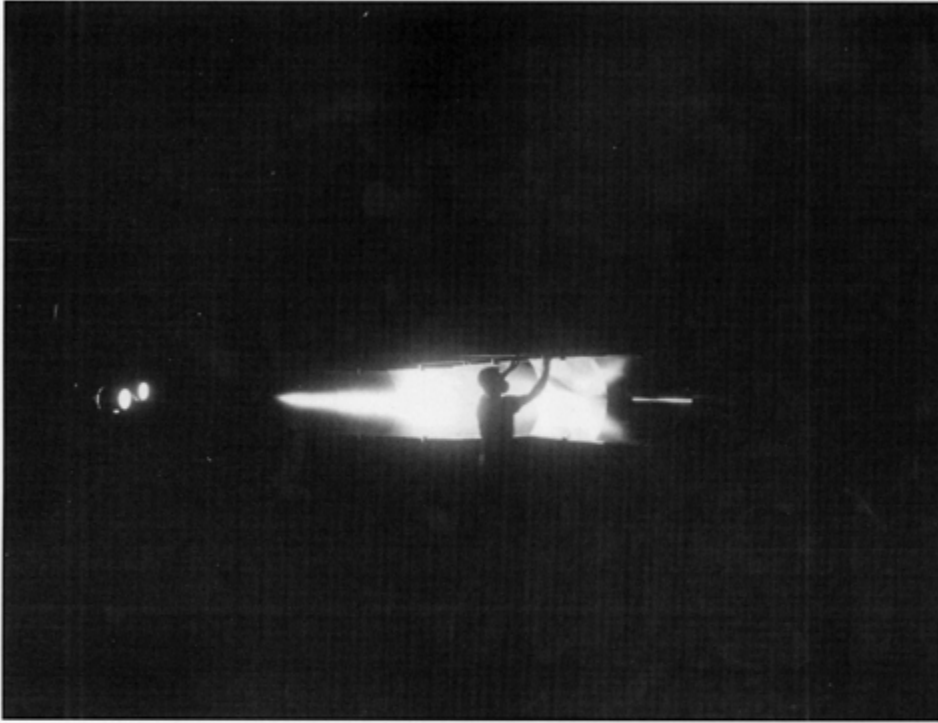
Virtual Kaleidoscope, 1995

Software (C64 Assembler Language), monitor, and joystick;
Size: virtual

In the 60s I began creating interactive electronic art. I wanted to find more spontaneous ways of working with sound and image than cinematic animation offered. My work was handwired and analog until I witnessed the dawn of the digital age. Concerned that the interactive potential of computers was being applied predominantly to war toys and games of destruction, I exhibited the first version of **The Land of Lumia** in 1985 at the Wadsworth Athenaeum.

Version one of **Virtual Kaleidoscope** was first shown in the Municipal Gallery at Hastings on Hudson in 1994. The image appears to be simply an animated kaleidoscopic pattern, but a joystick helps the viewer decipher passages of hidden text. The text, in turn, contains quotes to help decipher the art world.

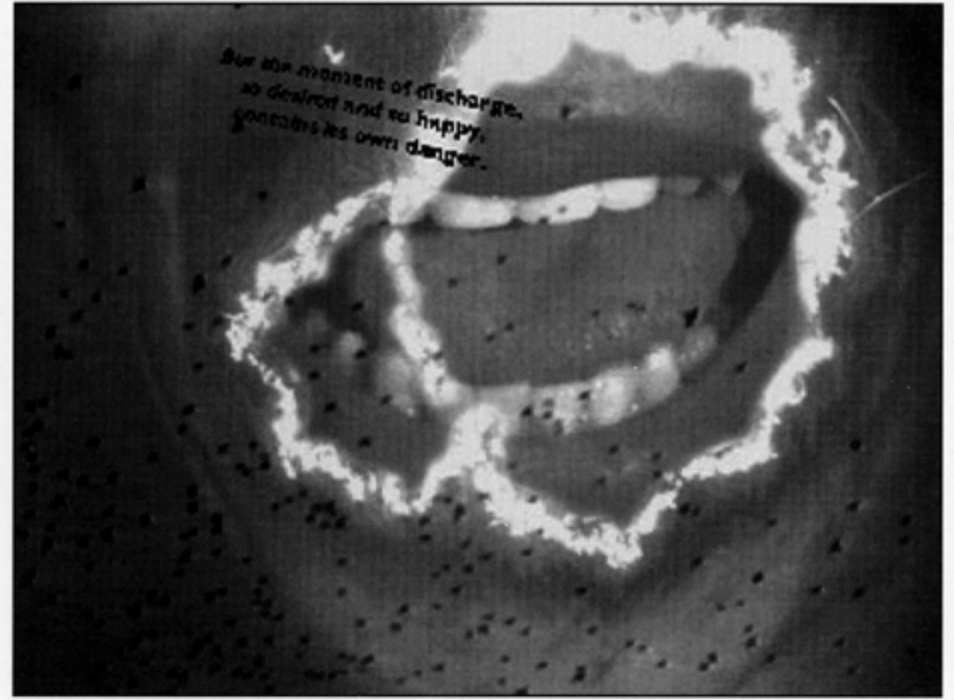
MATTHEW TANTERI



Detail of installation of Horizon at One Main Street, Brooklyn, NY.
Matthew Tanteri © 1992

Horizon 2 is designed to project an intense, chromatic line into the eyes of a viewer. It recreates the moment of day when the sun meets the horizon and spreads. Light sources are located in the ceiling grid at the two foci of the sculpture's parabolic shape. A segmented wood frame holds the sculpture's array of brushed aluminum plates in a precise focal curve. The compound form has two main optical actions. The vertical curvature spreads the circular-shaped light sources into a line which appears to float in front of the reflector. The horizontal curvature projects this line to the two viewer positions (infinity) in the center gallery door and the second floor window. As the viewer approaches the reflector's central axis, it gradually fills with light until it fully "flashes." A brushed finish in the surface of the metal plates spreads and sharpens the linear light projection, lending an iridescent and scintillating property.

DORIS VILA

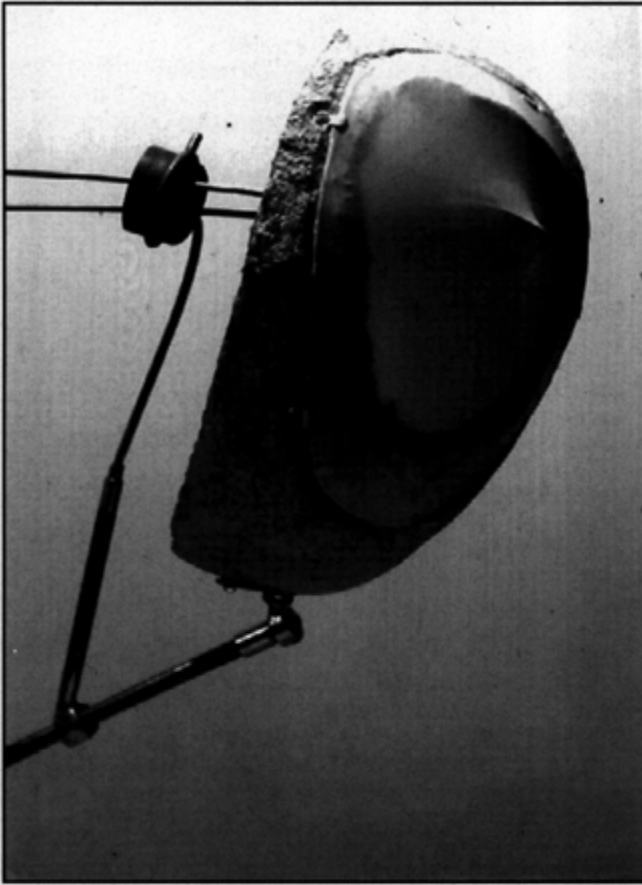


A Flock of Words: still image from a cross-media collaboration with composer Robert Rowe, performed at NYU, 1995. With a text from Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power*, an artificial life algorithm swarms words in and out of readability, triggered by computer music signals. (*Not in exhibition.*)

My holograms and environments concentrate on stories that stretch out in space rather than over time. While many holograms seduce the senses with the image of an object, these are holograms of ideas. Text fragments, multiple images, depths, and colors subvert while exploiting the swindle of the spectacle. Together the elements allow each viewer to construct a personal discovery sequence. A private act of perception immerses the spectator's body and actions in the construction of situations. A teasing relation with science develops a field of layered memories and dreams of latent content.

A video tape of Doris Vila's large responsive installations is available at the front desk.

MARY ZIEGLER



Bob's Synaptic Circus, 1991 (detail)

Paint-mixer, steel, latex rubber, papier-mâché, and wood;
48 x 80 x 21"

My sculpture involves an investigation into our lives as spectacles of balance – one that pits intellect against instinct, reason against reality, and control against the lack thereof. Our unrelenting efforts to resolve these clashes are what fascinate me. They seem only to be achieved by devising a series of convoluted and contorted systems (used with varying degrees of success and failure). They are the fodder for my study in the comedy and pathos of human (dys)function.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to guest curator Richard Leslie, art historian and critic who teaches contemporary theory and photography at New York's School of Visual Arts, for curating this exhibition and contributing the catalogue essay.

On behalf of Richard Leslie, I want to acknowledge the importance of the registry at the Art & Science Collaborations, Inc. (ASCI) and thank their director, Cynthia Pannucci, for her support and assistance.

Thanks are extended to Max Landau for the generous loan of Mary Ziegler's **Half A Dozen of the Other**.

Special thanks are also extended to Susan Edwards, Brenda Hanegan, Jim Packard, Pete Pantaleo, Pat Pickett, and Amy Young, for installation assistance; and to members of the Staller Center for the Arts staff: Ming Chen, Tahra Daniels, Albert Fong, Vera Phillip-Evans, Lisa Kozlowski, and Alexander Trillo, Gallery Assistants; Dennis Borruso, Susan Kendrick, Kimberly Newman, and Lauren Poulos, Gallery Interns; Patrick Kelly, Production Manager, Liz Silver, Technical Director, and the Technical Crew, Staller Center for the Arts, for exhibition lighting; and Mary Balduf, Gallery Secretary.

Most of all, I wish to thank the artists for making this such an exciting and stimulating exhibition.

Rhonda Cooper
Director

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