

# TRANSFORMERS

A Moving Experience



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A Moving Experience



AUCKLAND  
ART  
GALLERY

TOI O TĀMAKI



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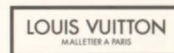
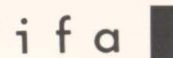
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## Foreword

*Transformers* is about change. It presents art that in some way undergoes or is open to it: art that mutates; art that is mutable. These contemporary works of art transform themselves – in nature or in character – through the viewers' experience or participation. Through the agency of the artist they serve to represent the continuous events that occur in our organic, elemental, scientific and technological worlds.

The premise of *Transformers* is that the visual arts have too long been concerned with durable – if momentarily fixed – images and objects. Through works that displace and suggest the very dynamics of transformation, this exhibition engages states of continuous (if not always apprehensible) change. The very *raison d'être* of the works connected through *Transformers* is that they all rely on principles and processes that would otherwise be unaffected by art.

It is little wonder that artists should seek to respond to the rapidly changing conditions of our lives, given the seamless continuity and flux which surrounds us. We live in an age where our knowledge of the world is continually being tested and extended by science and technology. Life itself, its very pre-conditions, seems to constantly shift under the pressures of experiment and

research. In this context, *Transformers* seems to represent an entirely 'natural' state of art.

The exhibition has been developed by the Gallery's Senior Curator, International Art, Andrew Bogle, who has worked with great dedication to ensure that *Transformers* brings together a group of international and local artists. The result is an exhibition of consistent quality and conceptual interest. I also want to thank the many Gallery staff who have contributed so generously to the realisation of this project.

The Gallery also records its appreciation of the major sponsors and grant providers who have made *Transformers* possible. Their support, and that of numerous other companies and individuals who provided support in kind, has ensured this exhibition's success. The Gallery also extends its thanks to the City Gallery, Wellington and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery who have made possible the touring of *Transformers* throughout New Zealand.

In commending *Transformers* to you, I particularly thank the participating artists, many of whom have travelled considerable distances to prepare and install works for the exhibition. Their contribution is especially acknowledged.

Chris Saines  
Director

## Transformers

*The history of the avant-garde in our century is a history of technological symbiosis, of tools becoming statements, concepts becoming styles, processes becoming environments. The artist-engineer, of whom Leonardo was paragon, is reborn in many and curious guises under the sign of the lathe, the dynamo, the computer.*

– Ihab Hassan

### **Foreground: The Future**

We live in strange times. Nothing seems firm. The ground is constantly shifting. Crystal-clear truths have become murky. Rock-hard certainties are turning to sand, blown by the winds of change. Time is not constant; let alone change. When we fly we change our watches back and forth. Whole days disappear as we cross international datelines. Within a day we can go from mid-summer to mid-winter. Such transformations are commonplace.

Technology and medicine are charting new frontiers. Chemists, by making new molecules or fiddling

with the old ones, can synthesise extraordinary new materials. Turning pine trees into evening dresses and oil into Tupperware were early achievements. Now we have plastics that can withstand an atomic blast; ceramic car engines and liquid crystal sails. Biotechnology, by dicing and splicing DNA, is transforming the organic world. Genetic engineering now gives us the power to create designer bacteria that gobble up oil spills and tropical plants to grow in cold climates. More vexatious is the idea of mixing and matching genetic material from different species. In the service of research, scientists have recently grown a human ear on the back of a rat; a development that may herald a revolution in prosthetics surgery.

The *Jurassic Park* scenario of ancient life forms being resurrected from extinction may be just around the corner. One New Zealand scientist recently proposed to reincarnate the extinct Moa bird by splicing genes from fossil remains with those of the American rhea, an ostrich-like relative of the giant flightless Moa.

Women in their sixties can bear children. A grandmother can give birth to her own grandchild. A woman can conceive to a man who died before she herself was conceived. Even gender is no longer immutable. Surgeons can fashion a vagina from a scrotum, or sculpt a penis from a woman's thighs,



transforming the labia into testicles. With hormones, breasts can be grown where before there were none, or with silicone small breasts can be transformed into large ones. With steroids, a new physique can be bought in a bottle. Plastic surgeons can chisel in flesh and bone as sculptors once did in marble and clay.

The most radical transformational opportunities are proposed by a new theoretical science: nanotechnology. In 1959, Richard Feynman predicted that when physicists can master the matter of moving atoms around one by one, they will have figured out how to synthesise anything. Now this is beginning to happen. Words like 'buckyballs' and 'buckbowls' (after the lateral thinking architect Buckminster Fuller) are part of the new physics lexicon. Arthur Drexler, the guru of nanotechnologists, talks of engineering from the 'bottom up' using infinitesimal robots or nano-assemblers to build flawless products with absolute precision, molecule by molecule, from vats of appropriate chemicals. Imagine the perfect steak from a bunch of grass clippings, or a flawless timepiece from a handful of dirt. The concept that takes the breath away is the rocket engine made from diamond 'grown' like a crystal, an engineering feat that would make space flight less expensive than air travel today.

Drexler predicts nano computers infinitely smaller

than their modern equivalents: 'Half a trillion of them could fit in a cubic centimetre, putting more computing power in a desktop machine that exists in the entire world today'. Nano surgery will use machines so small they can be injected into the blood with a syringe. Once absorbed, they would edit out viral DNA sequences in body cells, search out and destroy cancer cells, or clear away blood clots.

The implications of this new technology for art are mind boggling. Imagine artists making pictures atom by atom using scanning-tunnelling microscopes and whole museum collections stored on the head of a pin. Or protein sculptures assembled with faultless precision using only sunlight to power the process and enzymes to control it. Or perhaps self-transforming sculptures, perpetually re-manifesting themselves – new configurations, new materials, new colours, new textures – on a daily basis. Perhaps the artist will only be present at the beginning of the process, like an absentee parent who is there at the birth but doesn't stick around to see the child develop. Imagine sculptures that the artist would meet years later but only vaguely recognise: in the interim his brainchild would have transformed almost beyond recognition.

If this seems futuristic, consider the advances made in computer imagery and virtual reality in the last

decade. Change is occurring most rapidly in the areas of technology, and technology is transforming our lives – air travel, satellite and cable TV, personal computers, the internet and telephone banking are all changing our patterns of work, our places of work, where we live, our lifestyles, relationships and more. In the light of all these changes it is hardly surprising that many artists have consciously addressed the issue of transformation in their art so it not only reflects the process of transformation but also avails itself of the new technologies.

Fixity, permanence, durability and immutability were properties that made sense in a deterministic world of discrete objects and enduring social structures. Relativity and industrialisation changed that. Now scientists speak not of objects, but events, and everything is seen as inter-related and constantly transforming. Artworks that are non-static, impermanent, changeable, open-ended and interactive reflect this changed thinking. Composition need not be finite – it can be a state of flux.

### ***Centre Stage: The Exhibition***

A colourful demonstration of this changed perspective is the kinetic installation *Simple Division* by Nike

Savvas, which the artist describes as 'a parody of Seurat'. Thousands of brightly-coloured polystyrene balls suspended on near invisible nylon fishing line across the space are agitated by a battery of industrial fans, creating a energised 3-D pointillist effect. Divisionism, Seurat's scientific approach to colour, is updated to the quantum era. At the hands of Savvas the little corpuscles of colour have exploded off the two-dimensional canvas to vibrate in space, interacting like gargantuan molecules in a cloud of gas.

In *Simple Division*, the transformation is powered by wind, generated by electric fans. All transformation is achieved by a transferral of energy. By means of mechanics, electronics, light, organic growth or decay, hydraulics, combustion, melting, vaporisation, audio and video systems and even audience interaction, artists can create dynamic artworks that progress in time in a gamut of ways.

The works in this exhibition variously use the above processes to power their transformations. Eric Orr uses gas, water and ice: all volatile or changeable materials that induce transformation through melting or combustion, vaporisation and motion. Orr's *Auckland Sublimation*, a wall of dry ice, transforms as it vaporises (or sublimates) until after several days it reduces to nothing. The disappearance of the work



completes the (de)composition. Mineko Grimmer also uses reduction to activate her sound sculptures. As ice melts, pebbles are released. Striking instruments below, the pebbles make a serendipitous music. At the opposite end of the thermometer scale are works involving the emission of heat and light. James Angus's modified pop-up toasters use the glowing light of the toaster filaments to recreate a solar narrative. Eric Orr's *Fire Window* periodically bursts into flame.

Of all the works in this exhibition, the one that embodies the spirit of transformation the most succinctly is *A Lot More Bright Ideas*, also by Angus. The tiny filaments of hundreds of light bulbs have been reconfigured as little images – a kiwi, a tiki, a kangaroo, a boomerang – that glow momentarily in a random sequence: a host of bright ideas. Of all media, light is the most transformable. In a cartoonish way Angus's lumino-kinetic assemblage celebrates an everyday miracle of transformation that is so ubiquitous we take it for granted – the act of turning on a light. With a simple flick of a switch we reclaim the invisible instantaneously. Anyone who has flown over Los Angeles at night has witnessed a sublime transformation.

Several of the works in *Transformers* transform

through artificial light. Bill Culbert's *Light Vessels*, powered by 1000-watt bulbs, fill and empty as though the contents of the vessels were being exchanged. Peter Sedgley employs filtered dichroic lights and dimming units to create a vortex of pulsating colours in his *Chromosphere*. Ruby laser light magnifies, thousands of times, a droplet of water in Juan Geuers' *H<sub>2</sub>O*, revealing the dynamic stresses within the transforming droplet. In Helen Altman's *Ark*, hundreds of small tungsten light bulbs glowing inside plastic fire logs transform the lifeless grey simulacra into an unnerving bonfire. Light not only reveals, it also deceives.

Transformation can be constructive or reductive. As Eric Orr's dry ice wall reduces, Garnett Puett's 'apisculpture' grows. The industrious energy of 30,000 bees combing on an armature fashioned by the artist powers an organic transformation in which nature and the creative imagination enjoy a symbiotic relationship.

Some works transform slowly, others rapidly. Charles Ray's *Table Top* surreptitiously transforms as household objects on the table are slowly rotated on concealed turntables by hidden electric motors. On the other hand, Jim Campbell's interactive video installation *Hallucination* instantly transforms the viewer in

real time by engulfing them in nightmarish fire which follows them around the room.

The transformation of the viewer in an interactive situation is effected by several of the works. Juan Geuer's interactive *Face to Face* contrives the superimposition of one person's face with a second person's eyes by a simple but ingenious device: a double-sided mirrored mask. To watch the video of Paul McCarthy's performance *Pinocchio Pipenose*, the viewer is required to don the same Pinocchio costume that McCarthy wears, hilariously splicing fact and fiction.

Other interactive works are The Art Guys' 'drawing boxes' whereby picking up the boxes perpetuates a drawing on the inside, and Darrell Viner's eight black rubber boxes incorporating sophisticated electronics. When picked up, each box transforms tactilely and sometimes audibly. One inflates like an inner tube, another behaves as if its insides were on the move, another lets out a piercing alarm and so on.

Sound is a dimension of sculpture that is acquiring greater currency. In Len Lye's bounding steel compositions the noise is an essential part of the composition. The tinkling of steel rods, the ringing report of a cork ball striking a bounding blade are part and parcel of the work. In Jennifer Turpin and Michaelie

Crawford's *Green Noise*, the dynamic element is the sound of compressed air forced through a kilometre of water-filled garden hose. Greg Evans' self-reflexive *Optimus Prime* borrows a snippet of soundtrack from a *Ren and Stimpy* cartoon. The anguished pleas emitted by the speaker cone when it is picked up by an electromagnet cease when the speaker is released – a sado-mechanistic farce.

Ingeniously self-reflexive too, is Christian Marclay's *Tapefall*. A million imperial feet of quarter inch recording tape are consumed by this hungry work during the three months of the exhibition. An interminable sound of dripping water is emitted as the used tape falls several metres to the floor and piles up into an ever-increasing mound. The way the tottering pile temporarily defies gravity before slumping in defeat is both poetic and poignant.

### ***Background: The Beginnings***

Amongst 18th and 19th century forerunners of transformable art are hydraulic and mechanical automata, fireworks and colour organs which represented a fusion of technological and aesthetic concerns. However, it was not until the 20th century that artists liberated themselves from the aesthetic bonds of

stasis and single-point perspective, leading the way to a truly dynamic art incorporating movement. The Cubists' use of multiple perspectives was an attempt to represent a new kind of pictorial space, implying movement around an object. By painting an object from several angles simultaneously, a time element was suggested. The Futurists' love affair with the machine and its unprecedented opportunities for speed inspired their wish to paint and sculpt it. But, impressive as the Futurists' pictures are, motion represented by congealed paint on canvas is nevertheless anachronistic. For all their revolutionary rhetoric, the Futurists were traditionalists in their choice of media – oil paint and bronze.

The year 1920 was a watershed in the development of kinetic art. Naum Gabo constructed his *Standing Wave* using a motor to vibrate a metal rod with a doorbell attached to its extremity. One of the first artworks in which a motor was used in an expressive way, *Standing Wave* was significant in that it dematerialised the object, creating a virtual volume. This was an important step on the road to an art of motion, although ironically the effect of the rapidly vibrating rod was a standing wave that appeared to be virtually static and unchanging.

In the same year, 1920, Vladimir Tatlin developed his

concept of a *Monument for the Third International*, a corkscrew tower to be built (but never realised) in steel and glass, taller than the Eiffel Tower. Truly revolutionary, its various chambers, configured as a cube, a pyramid, a cylinder and a hemisphere, were intended to revolve about their axes at different speeds, a reference to the ceaseless cycles of the heavens. That kinetic transformation had advanced further in the architectural domain than in the sculptural one at this time is a quirk of history. Tatlin's brilliance seems to have escaped all but a small circle of artists who were inspired by his example, but nothing as daring or dynamic in the way of an architectural structure has ever been built.

Also in 1920, Alexander Rodchenko and Man Ray developed mobiles, although the term 'mobile' was not coined until 1931 by Marcel Duchamp, in reference to Alexander Calder's wind-propelled constructions. In the 20s and 30s, the problem of movement and transformation was keenly investigated by the most innovative artists. Motorised power was an obvious way of ensuring perpetual movement. Duchamp's *Rotary Demisphere* (1925) and Lazlo Moholy-Nagy's *Light-Space Modulator* (1922-29) are examples of early motorised kinetic sculptures.

The problem with motorised movement, however, is



repetition, which is of limited interest. The challenge to kinetic artists was to develop ways of achieving a transforming composition, not simply a moving one. Man Ray's *Paper Spiral* (1920) and Rodchenko's *Hanging Construction* (1920), each of which rotated about an axis, presented a continually transforming profile to the viewer. But the effect was tantamount to the viewer moving around the work. Calder achieved greater success in the 30s because the suspended elements of his mobiles, on multiple axes, made for a complex compound motion of infinite permutations. Calder had early on used mechanical devices to activate the moving elements of his constructions, but abandoned these for an inexhaustible and variable source of motive power—air currents. Gabo also felt that motors were cumbersome and looked to new technological advances to 'permit as yet unpredictable kinetic solutions'.

The period of greatest experimentation in the field of transformable art were the 60s and early 70s. Len Lye, Takis and David Boriani explored magnetism; Gyorgy Kepes used sound-animated gas flames; Tsai used stroboscopic lights; Hans Haacke explored hydraulics and refrigeration; David Medalla explored air pumps and detergent foam. In order to subvert repetition, artists found novel ways to use electro-mechanical

devices. One way was to employ numerous elements. The more elements involved, the greater the range of compositional possibilities. Gerhard von Graevenitz fixed the rotating disks of his kinetic reliefs to an axis on the periphery. Turned by electric motors concealed behind the base, the disks sometimes rotated clockwise, sometimes anti-clockwise. 'The number of possible situations is so great that repetition is very improbable,' he explained. Pol Bury used motors to move multiple elements such as nails, nylon threads and wooden balls at a snail's pace so that 'between the immobile and mobility... the eye is no longer able to trace an object's journeys.' Gustav Metzger's transforming sculptures, predicated on the corrosion of steel through oxidation and chemical pollution, exemplified an even slower kind of transformation. But destruction as a transforming principle was expressed in the most emphatic and entertaining way by Jean Tinguely, who in 1960 exhibited a self-destructing machine called *Homage to New York* that dramatically exploded in the sculpture garden of the Museum of Modern Art.

If destruction as a transforming principle was legitimate then so was growth. The birth of the movement and the awareness of the holistic interdependency of all life forms in the biosphere prompted

artists to address such issues by incorporating living organisms and creatures in their sculptures. Alan Sonfist created living pictures by cultivating mould spores. In an aviary he created inside a gallery, Sonfist effected an extraordinary dovetailing of nature and technology. By supplying nesting birds with a mixture of straw, twigs and other organic materials in one pile, and coloured electrical wire, shredded mylar and other synthetic materials in another, he induced them to weave a nest combining both.

The Japanese artist Yanagi has co-opted the natural impulse of ants to transport grains of sand in his sculpture. Using coloured sand to make a composite image of various national flags, Yanagi created a transforming artwork in which the ants progressively mixed the grains of sand, dissolving the nationalistic distinctions in an undifferentiated or variegated pattern.

Gloria Friedmann's *Pariah* works composed of layers of legumes, seeds, tubers and other organic matter sandwiched between sheets of glass, transform as the materials take root, sprout or decompose to produce organic 'paintings'. Damian Hirst made a painting with chrysalises embedded in the surface: when the butterflies hatched the coloured elements literally took flight. Jeff Koons' giant *Puppy*, composed of

thousands of living plants embedded in a steel framework, is a monumental affirmation of nature and its processes as a field of aesthetic interest.

Less conspicuous are the ice, snow, earth, leaf and flower sculptures of Andy Goldsworthy, often made in inaccessible or remote locations such as Grise Fiord in the Arctic Circle. These creations may last an hour, a day or a week, transforming with the depredations of wind, rain, sunshine and insects. Decomposition or erosion does not equate with deterioration in his sculptures; often it comprises the life of the work. His 'snowballs in summer' only reveal their contents – pine needles, pebbles, twigs, chalk – as the snowballs melt.

Whereas the works in this exhibition lend themselves to indoor display, it is worth mentioning that more and more artists are choosing to practise their art outdoors, using the environment as both their material and their process. The nature of these works places emphasis on the transformation which subsumes composition or decomposition. In the work of Otmar Sattel, who has made fermentation the focus of his sculpture, transformation is an expression of an invisible biological activity which he uses to inflate meteorological balloons and raise and lower

large sheets of glass. The power of the invisible is manifest in harnessed energy.

Some artists are using the process of growing and decomposition to reclaim the environment from abuse and pollution. Georg Dietzler has exploited the restorative properties of the oyster-mushroom which can recultivate contaminated industrial ground. Alan Sonfist has reintroduced urban forests as living monuments to banished nature. Helen Mayer and Newton Harrison have expanded their ecological concerns to encompass whole ecosystems suffering from ill-conceived agricultural and industrial development. Buster Simpson devised large discs of limestone placed in rivers to neutralise the acidity from acid rain. These artist-activists collaborate with engineers, scientists and architects to create an art that can transform our environment.

Perhaps these works, along with the infinitesimal nano-sculptures, will also be the saving grace of our art museums as they struggle to house ever expanding and cumbersome collections of inert sculpture.

*Andrew Bogle*





Nolan Allen

1950-1951

Art 107-10

# TRANSFORMS

*Dimensions of works are variable, unless otherwise stated. Measurements are in centimetres, height x width x depth. In the case of site-specific installations, works similar or related to the ones in this exhibition have been illustrated.*

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## Helen Altman

(United States)

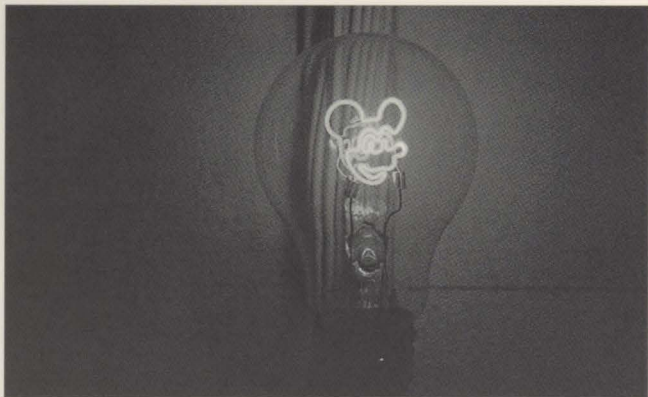
**Ark** 1992-95

*Electric fire logs. Total dimensions 400 x 320 x 320 cm.*

*Courtesy of artist and Barry Whistler Gallery, Dallas, Texas.*

An accumulation of electric fire logs flickers with patently fake flames. Although we recognise the simulacra for what they are, subliminally we are conned: the impression of a glowing bonfire is inescapable. The cumulative effect of these 'flames' is greater than the sum of the artwork's fake parts.





## James Angus

(Australia)

### ***Toast for Oz* 1993**

*Sunbeam toasters, electronics. 220 x 340 x 20 cm.*

*Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth.*

*On loan to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, New South Wales.*

### ***A Lot More Bright Ideas* 1996**

*Light bulbs, electronics. 250 x 400 x 30 cm.*

*Collection of the artist, Fremantle, West Australia.*

*Supported by Australia Council for the Arts.*

In *Toast*, the filament of each Sunbeam toaster has been unravelled and configured as a glowing sun. Together, glowing on and off, they describe an arc above the toasters' 'horizon line'. In *Bright Ideas* light bulb filaments have been configured as simple images, their cartoonish simplicity consistent with the cartoon cliché of a bulb lighting up, symbolising a bright idea or solution.

## The Art Guys

(United States)

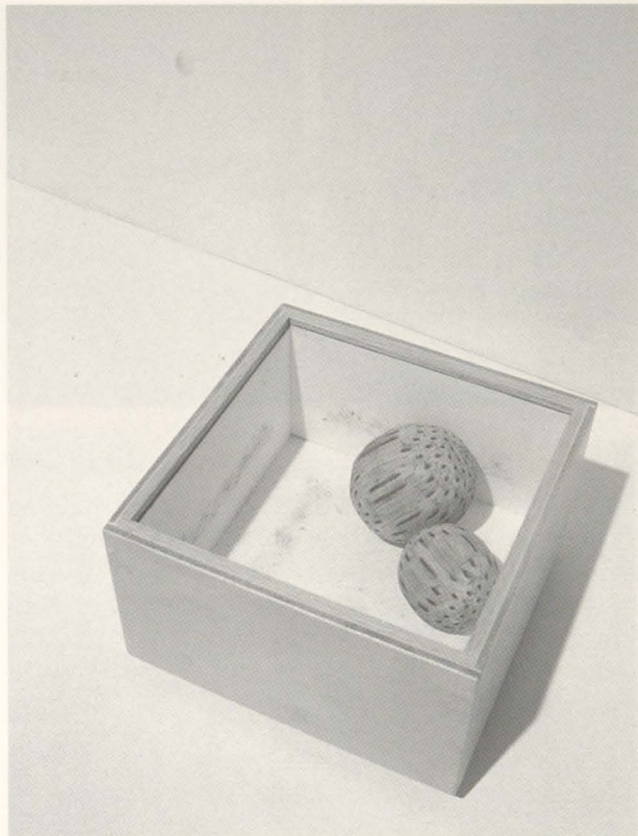
### ***The Drawing Game*** 1995

Wood, glass, paper, pencils, glue. 12.7 x 20.3 x 20.3 cm;

14.2 x 26 x 26 cm; 12.7 x 20.3 x 20.3 cm.

Courtesy of the artists and Barry Whistler Gallery, Dallas, Texas.

Three wooden boxes, each containing a ball made of a cluster of pencil stubs. The boxes are internally lined on five sides with white drawing paper. The sixth side is glass, permitting a view of the interior. One ball has the points facing out; another facing in; yet another in parallel. When a box is picked up, the ball rolls around and marks the walls with a constellation of either dots or smudges. As the pencils wear, the marks change, and thus the drawings transform continually.







## Jim Campbell

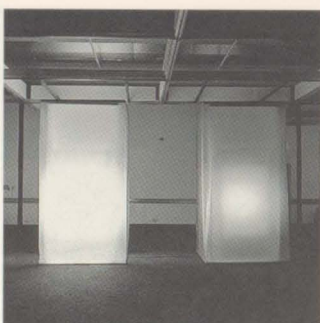
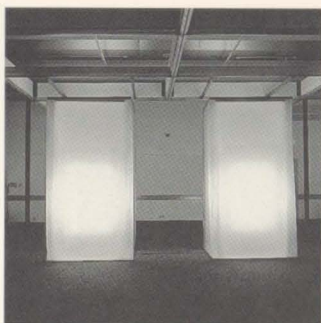
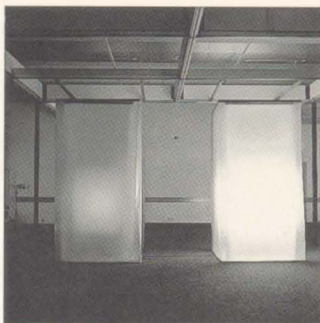
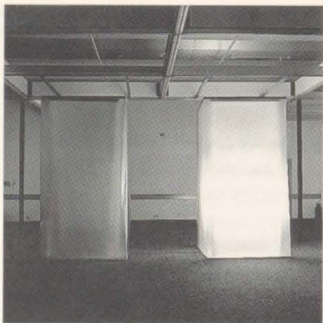
(United States)

### **Hallucination** 1988-90

*Video monitor, two laser disc players, computer, video camera.*

*Courtesy of the artist and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, California.*

An interactive video installation mixing live imagery with images off laser disc and videotape to create a real size, real time 'mirror' effect. The mirror distorts the viewers' self-image by engulfing them, visually and audibly, in flames that follow them wherever they move. The other distortion of reality is a 'virtual' woman who appears to be standing next to the viewer. In actuality she isn't there at all.



## **Bill Culbert**

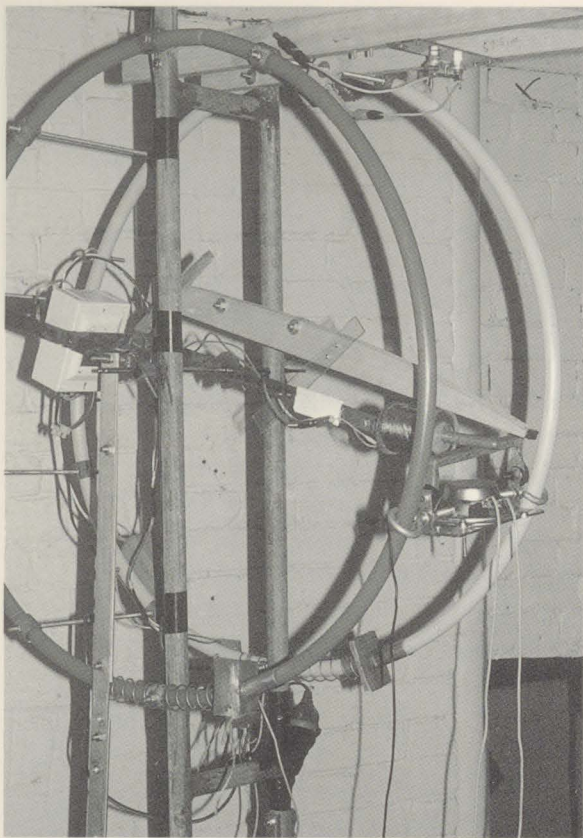
(New Zealand / United Kingdom)

### ***Light Vessels* 1996**

*Lightbulbs, electronics, polyester fabric, wood. 320 x 145 x 145 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland. With the support of The British Council. Fabric supplied and sewn by Promotech, Auckland.*

Two three-metre high translucent boxes, or 'vessels', stand vertically about two metres apart, allowing the viewer to move around and between them. The light gradually 'empties' out of one vessel and appears to 'fill' the other, as if there is an exchange of liquid contents. The time it takes for one vessel to empty and refill can vary from one minute to two hours.





## Greg Evans

(Australia)

### ***Optimus Prime*** 1995-96

Wood, steel, electronics, audio cassette player. 220.5 x 194 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist, Brisbane, Queensland.

A small speaker is lifted by an electromagnet and, as it rises, protests 'let me down, let me go.' The voice is from the soundtrack of the television cartoon *Ren and Stimpy*. As if in answer to the indignant protest, the speaker is released and falls. As the face of the speaker cone is muffled, the cries cease. The action, triggered by the movement of people approaching, repeats ad infinitum: the soundtrack is on an endless tape. Once ironically entitled *Non-Self Referential*, in a previous wall-mounted incarnation, *Optimus Prime* is now free-standing and attached to a pivoting base. As the speaker falls its balance is upset and the sculpture rocks back and forth.

## Lars Fredrikson

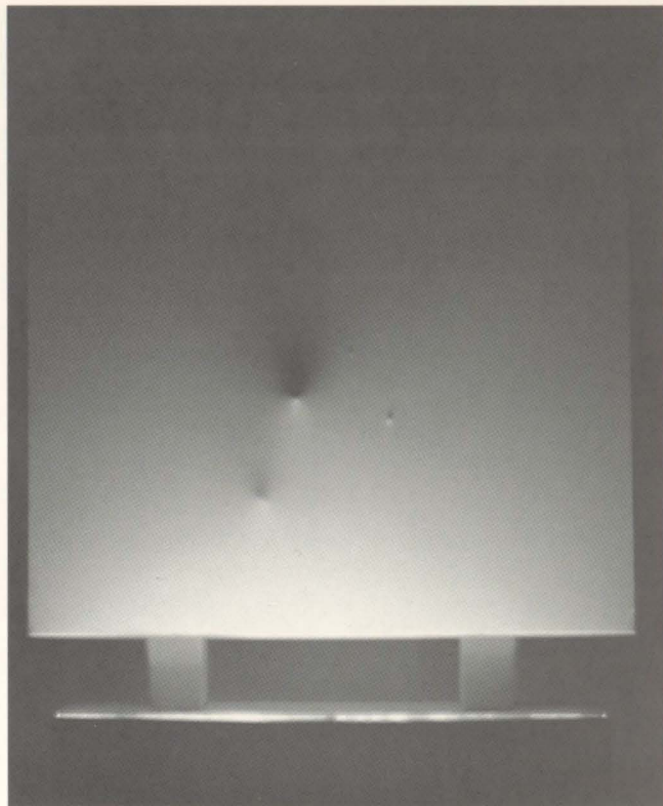
(France)

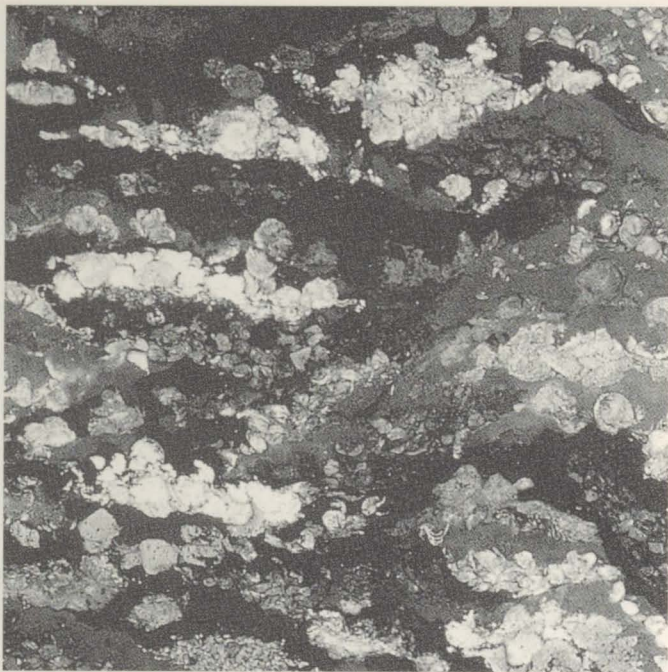
**DZ4E** 1967

*Synthetic polymer fabrics, synthetic polymer paint on wood,  
electric motor, metal armatures. 61.5 x 55.5 x 10.5 cm (irregular).*

*Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney,  
New South Wales. J.W. Power Bequest.*

This monochromatic kinetic painting is bereft of any actual painted mark. Instead, two small points pressed into the synthetic fabric from behind move mysteriously beneath its surface. Discernible only as pressure points, the composition is perpetually transforming. A line is traced by the points but no trace is left in their wake. Like music, the composition is indeterminate and evanescent.





## **Gloria Friedmann**

(Germany / France)

### ***Recycled* 1994-95**

*Video, 34 minutes duration. © Gloria Friedmann*

### ***Pariah* 1996**

*Glass, organic materials (temporal). Courtesy of the artist.*

*Both works supported by AFAA (French Government) and Goethe Institut, Wellington, collectively.*

*Recycled* records nine living pictures (*tableaux vivants*) organised in different towns in Germany and France in 1994/5. One is located in a supermarket; others on an autobahn, in a museum, a factory and so on. All incorporate animals bred genetically (or transformed) for human consumption, such as cattle, sheep and rabbits.

*Pariah* is a set of organic pictures: layered legumes, seeds and fruit vegetables sandwiched between sheets of glass. These sprout, take root, decompose and grow mouldy, transforming the image in the process.



## Juan Geuer

(Canada)

### **Eye to Eye** 1993

*Mirror, steel. Courtesy of the artist, Almonte, Ontario.*

### **H<sub>2</sub>O** 1993

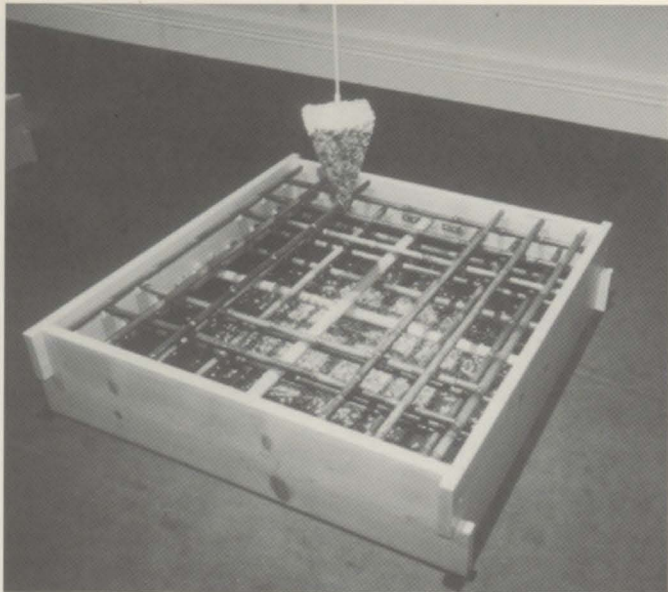
*Laser, water, motor, plexiglass.*

*Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.*

*Both works supported by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.*

When two people stand face-to-face with the mirror masks of *Eye to Eye* between them, each sees his or her own face reflected but, eerily, with the eyes of the other person. In *H<sub>2</sub>O* a laser shines on to a drop of water, projecting a tremendously magnified image of it onto the wall. A small amount of pollen introduced into the water permits the observation of 'catastrophe optics': the agitation of the pollen due to the liquid's random molecular motion.





## Mineko Grimmer

(Japan / United States)

**Untitled 1994**

*Ice, quartz pebbles, wood, wire, brass.*

*Collection Auckland Art Gallery.*

Two suspended pyramids of ice, densely packed with small quartz pebbles, slowly melt. The pebbles fall unpredictably onto two timber trays overlaid with lattices of bamboo, taut piano wire and hung with a brass chime. The erratic music emitted by these instruments is a combination of percussive, plucking, splashing and chiming sounds. Ripples on the surface of the melted ice reflect on to the surrounding walls, providing a visual accompaniment.

## Werner Klotz

(Germany)

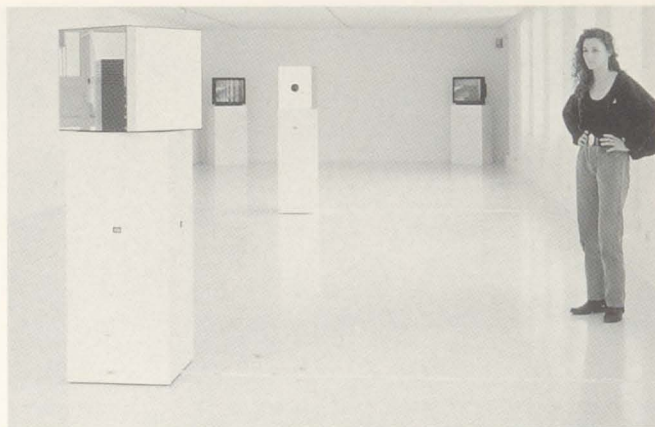
### ***Sisyphus' Flight*** 1995

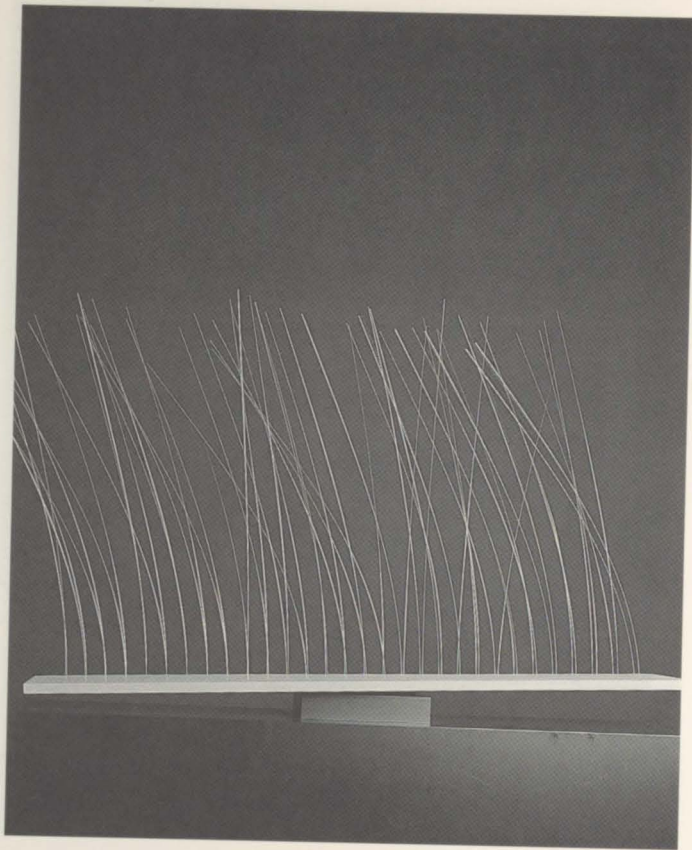
*Video monitors, camera, transmitter, turntable, motion sensor system, mirror, wood.*

*Courtesy of the artist, Berlin.*

*With the support of the German Institute of Foreign Cultural Relations (IFA).*

This interactive video installation simulates Sisyphus rotating around himself, or flying. Four video monitors are placed at the corners of a floor space. Within this square is a video camera on a pedestal which, when triggered by the approach of a viewer, rotates vertically. This camera focuses on a mirrored box on a second pedestal which, in turn, is set into horizontal rotation by the motion sensors. The nearer the viewer comes to the camera, the more rapidly the camera rotates. Viewers see themselves in the monitors. An impression of a 'roller-coaster ride' through the room is created.





## Len Lye

(New Zealand / United States)

### **Grass** c.1961

*Stainless steel wire, wood, electric motor, mechanics.*

*42.5 x 158 x 223 cm.*

*Collection Fay Richwhite and Company Limited, Auckland.*

A rough sawn plank of wood sprouting a thicket of vertical stainless wires rocks slowly back and forth on its fulcrum like a see-saw. The flexible wires wave with a sympathetic rhythm, making a tinkling sound.



## Paul McCarthy

(United States)

### **Pinocchio**

#### **Pipenose Household Dilemma 1994**

*Video monitor, videotape, 10 Pinocchio costumes.*

*Courtesy of the artist and Air de Paris, France.*

An overgrown Pinocchio with a plastic pipe nose gets up to no good with jars of mayonnaise, chocolate syrup and other viscous fluids inside a plywood Wendyhouse. The action is videotaped through circular holes in the walls of the house which, now and then, is abruptly rotated through an angle of 90 degrees. A long suffering life-size Pinocchio mannequin adds to the confusion. But that's not the end of it: to watch the video one is obliged to don an identical costume. With a partypack of ten suits at hand, the whole family can share this experience.





## Christian Marclay

(Switzerland / United States)

### ***Tapefall*** 1989

*Exhibition copy: reel-to-reel tape deck, audio tape, speakers.*

*Collection Eileen and Michael Cohen, New York, New York.*

This poetic evocation of gravity combines the continuity of a stream of recording tape falling from a height with the periodicity of drips of water recorded on the tape itself. A reel-to-reel tape deck is located on a lofty perch, such as the top of a column or amid roof trusses. Two-hour reels of tape, playing an endless litany of drips, are replenished several times a day to ensure a constant stream of ribbon. The discarded ribbon builds up over the course of the exhibition in an ever-increasing mound, like an ant hill.

## Eric Orr

(United States)

### **Teak Water Painting** 1991

Wood, water, water pump, fittings, valve. 162.6 x 17.78 x 4.44 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist, Venice, California.

### **Fire Window** 1995-96

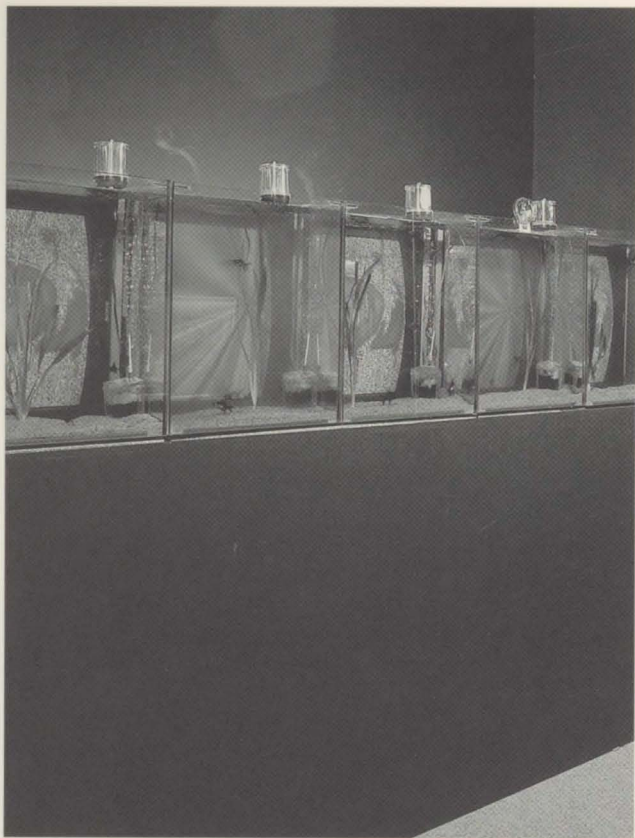
Granite, stainless steel, halogen lights, water, natural gas, fire,  
water pump. 247 x 55.9 x 55.9 cm. Collection Auckland Art Gallery.  
Purchased with assistance of Louis Vuitton New Zealand Ltd,  
through the Public Art Bonus Scheme, 1996. Supported by Enerco.

### **Auckland Sublimation** 1996

Frozen carbon dioxide. 315 x 200 x 15 cm (initially). Supported by  
Air Liquide New Zealand Ltd and V.J. Oliver Bricklayers.

In *Teak* a film of water runs down a horizontally grooved panel, but sometimes appears to run uphill. In *Fire Window*, heated air forms a distorting lens, then ignites. In *Auckland Sublimation*, a wall of dry ice vaporises, gradually reducing itself to nothing.





## Nam June Paik

(Korea / Germany)

### **Video Fish** 1979/1986

*Video monitors, video disc players, aquariums with filtration equipment, goldfish, plants, chipboard. 191 x 100 x 370cm.*

*Collection Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.*

*With the support of Sony; Jansen's Pet and Aquatic Centre, Mt Eden. EHEIM filters supplied by Brooklands VIP Pet Products.*

A row of seven video monitors is placed in parallel with a row of equal-sized aquariums stocked with goldfish and aquatic plants. Through the aquariums one can view a collage of video images (the space shuttle, rock concerts): one glass bowl viewed through another. The fish behave indifferently to their hectic electronic background.



## Garnett Puett

(United States)

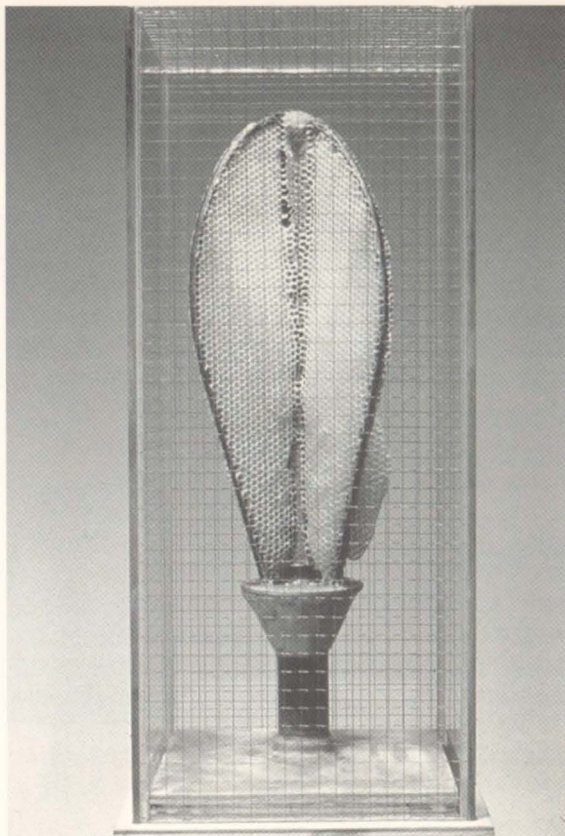
### ***Nature's War*** 1996

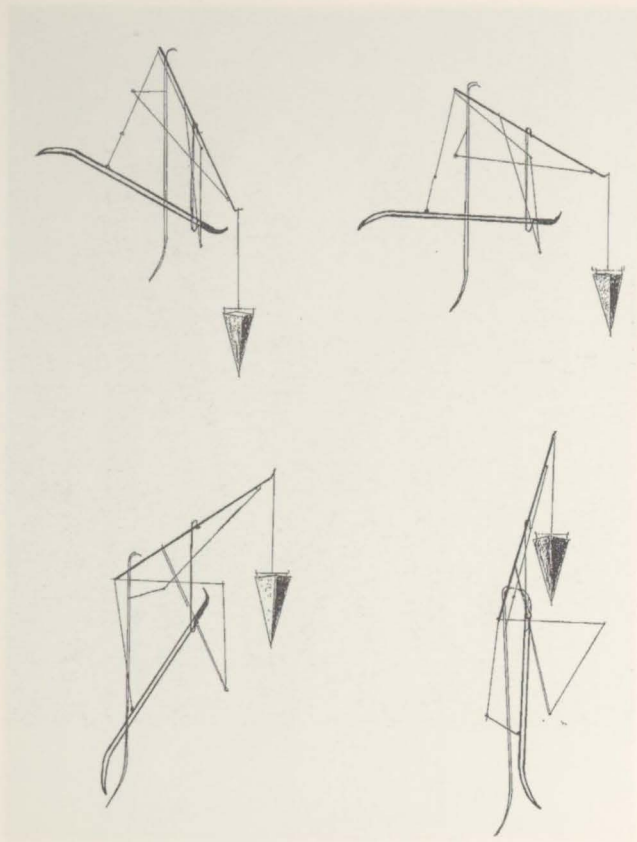
*Bees, beeswax, wood. 83.8 x 61 x 61 cm (initially).*

*Courtesy of the artist, Kona, Hawaii.*

*With the support of Ceracell Apiarists Supplies, East Tamaki;  
Acrylic Creations, Mt Roskill; Mulford Plastics, Mt Wellington.*

A collaborative production made with the help of 30,000 bees, this 'apisculpture' exemplifies organic transformation. Seven weeks prior to the *Transformers* exhibition, the artist introduced a beehive to the armature, stimulating the bees with sugar syrup to supplement their natural diet. The bees combed upon the armature, building up the wax forms that encase it. Several generations of worker bees have contributed their labour to the constantly evolving work. The bees are free to come and go through a tube that connects their enclosure to the outside world.





## Ari Purhonen

(Australia)

### ***Flexor*** 1996

*Stainless steel, nickel-silver, water. 120 x 100 x 13cm.*

*Courtesy of the artist, Sydney, New South Wales.*

### ***Lemon Tree*** 1996

*Stainless steel, lemons. 180 x 40 x 40cm.*

*Courtesy of the artist, Sydney, New South Wales.*

Transformation in *Flexor* is effected by the evaporation of water in a pyramid-shaped container which acts as a counter-balance to an articulated arrangement of appendages. Over a period of weeks the water slowly evaporates, changing the configuration at an imperceptible rate.

*Lemon Tree* is a cylindrical wire cage containing four tapering wire chutes. Lemons placed in the top gravitate downwards as they slowly dehydrate.

## Charles Ray

(United States)

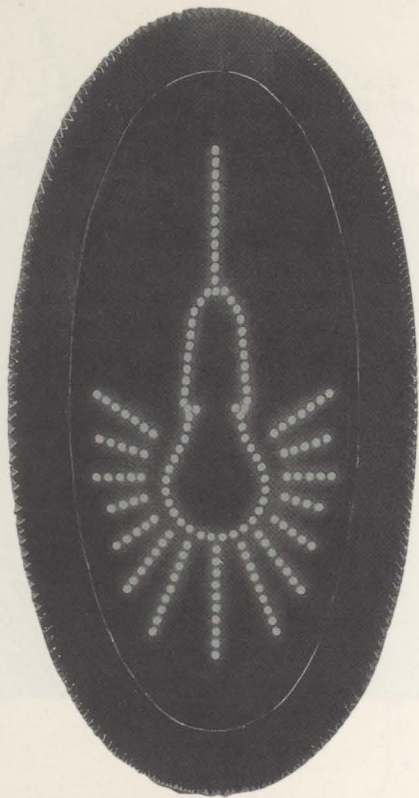
### **Tabletop** 1989

Wooden table, plate, shaker, flowerpot, artificial flowers, plastic glass, bowl, metal jar, electric motors. 114.5 x 113.4 x 89 cm.  
Collection Lannan Foundation, Los Angeles, California.

At first glance, this appears to be a simple wooden table supporting a number of common objects. However, on closer examination one sees that each object is rotated at an almost imperceptibly slow speed by a network of motors concealed beneath the tabletop.

'All of the work I do is slow,' Ray says of this piece. 'I take a very long time thinking about it. At a certain point I got interested in trying to slow down the spectator as well, to make them approach [the work] the way I was approaching it ...incredibly slowly.'





## Peter Roche

(New Zealand)

### ***Harbinger* 1990**

*Steel, electro-mechanical devices. 152 x 244 x 11cm.*

### ***Untitled* 1994**

*Wood, acrylic sheet, light-emitting diodes, electronics. 65 x 35cm.*

*Both works courtesy of the artist and Fox Gallery, Auckland.*

Electromechanical jiggers periodically induce a violent vibration in coiled wire springs, which in turn vibrate against the hollow metal body of *Harbinger* to make a loud noise. In *Untitled*, tiny red LEDs switch on in succession, tracing a glowing image of an everyday light bulb.



## Nike Savvas

(Australia)

### **Simple Division** 1994-96

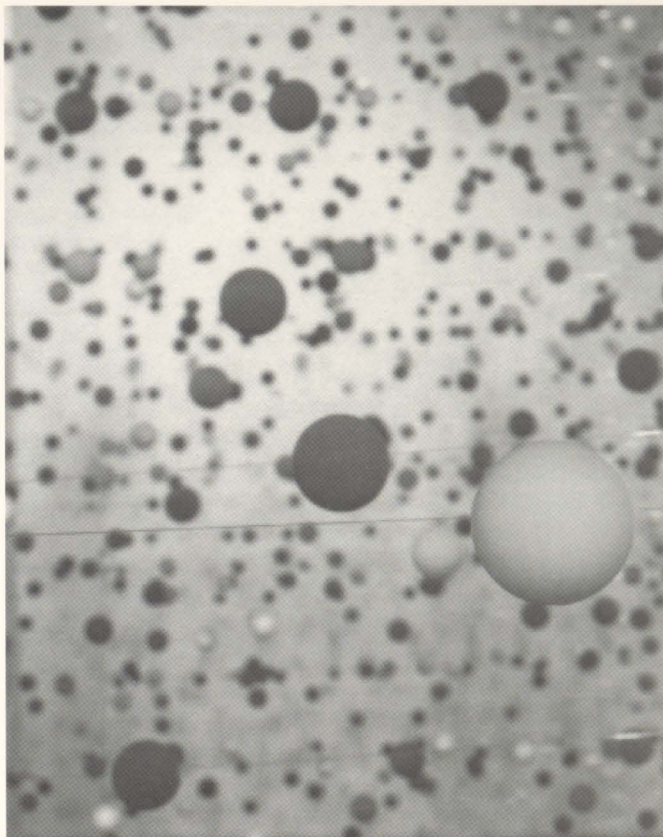
Polystyrene spheres, nylon filament, paint, electric fans, acetate, vinyl.

Courtesy the artist, and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

With the support of the Australia Council for the Arts;

Australia/New Zealand Foundation; and Creative New Zealand.

Thousands of polystyrene balls – sprayed with a full spectrum of Solver brand scenic paints – are strung on nylon fishing line across the Gallery at varying heights. Industrial fans buffet the balls which *en masse* present a chaotic agitated motion, like molecules ceaselessly interacting in a gas. Conceived by Savvas as ‘a parody of Seurat’, the effect is of pointillism liberated from the fixity of the canvas and exploded into psychotropic 3-D.





## Peter Sedgley

(England / Germany)

### **Chromosome** 1967

*Synthetic polymer paint on linen canvas, dichroic lamps with timer and dimming units. Painting 153.0 x 152.4 cm; lamp unit 22 x 106 x 29.1 cm.*

*Collection Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. J.W. Power Bequest.*

This lumino-kinetic painting produces a hypnotic pattern of pulsating circles of colour, drawing the viewer into a tunnel of brightness. Although referring to painting, the blurred 'target' transcends conventional geometric abstraction, dematerialising the two-dimensional surface in a constantly transforming visual experience that seems to take place inside one's head. The effect can be mesmerising, exhilarating or even disorientating. Either way, the viewer enjoys an almost physical relationship with the painting.

## Simon Shephard

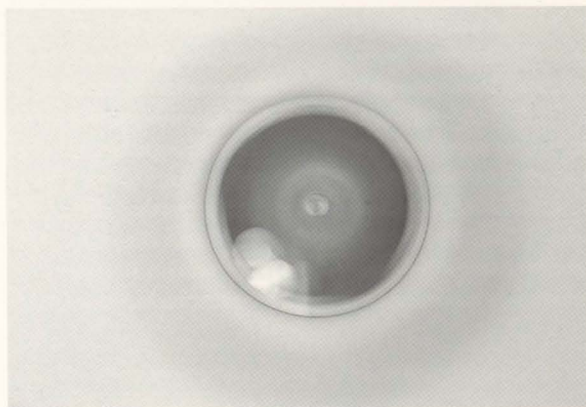
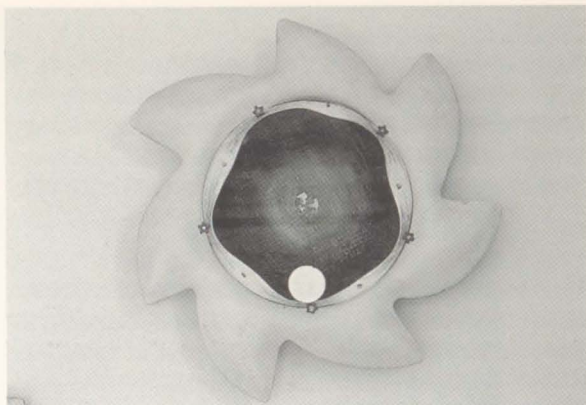
(New Zealand)

### ***Order of the Ancients*** 1992

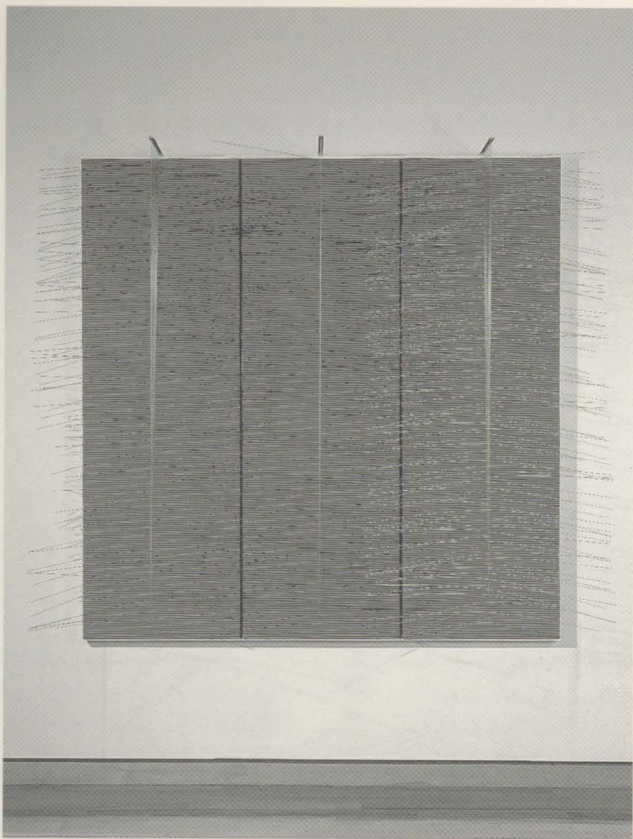
*Wood, glass, mirror, paint, foam sheet, electric motor, proximity sensor. 90cm diameter.*

*Private collection, Auckland.*

Shark teeth-shaped serrations, upholstered in spongy plastic foam, impart a marine ambience to this electrically powered 'mandala'. A planet-like encrustation at the axis is the ostensible focus of the symmetrical composition. But when the ensemble spins, triggered by a viewer's approach, attention is immediately drawn to the irregular motion of a pocket-sized circular mirror running over an undulating track, captive under a plate of glass. Tumbling on an erratic orbit, the mirror reflects the contents of the room. A poetic conflation of domestic and galactic space is effected.







## Jesus Rafael Soto

(Venezuela / France)

### **Blue, Black and Red Triptych** 1977

Wood, paint, nylon filament, wire. 203 x 203 x 50 cm.

Collection Auckland Art Gallery.

Presented by PA Edmiston Trust.

Ladders of horizontal wires are suspended in precarious equilibrium, centimetres from a finely striated panel. The slightest draught of air disturbs their balance, causing them to see-saw about their centre of gravity. This movement induces a perceived optical vibration similar to a moiré pattern. The visual effect is a 'dematerialisation' of the artwork and a highly ambiguous spatial impression.



# Jennifer Turpin Michaelie Crawford

(Australia)

## **Green Noise** 1995-96

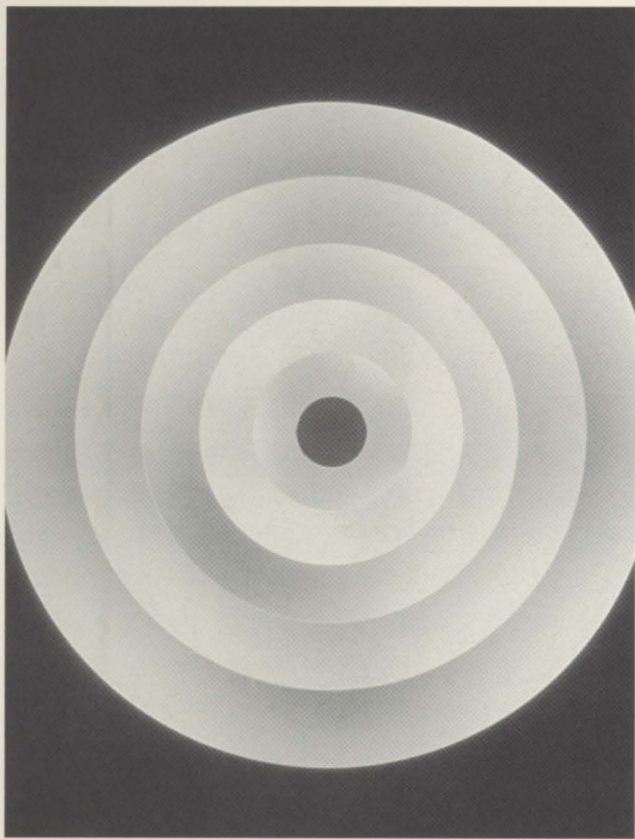
*Garden hose, water, compressor. Dimensions variable.*

*Courtesy of the artists, Sydney, New South Wales.*

*Supported by Nylex (NZ) Ltd and Australia Council for the Arts.*

A kilometre of green garden hose is woven into an organic shape and filled with water. A compressor pushes air through the coils of hose, creating what Turpin describes as a 'quiet waterfall' noise. There is no visible motion, but the sound it generates is quietly dynamic and subtly modulated.





## Gregorio Vardanega

(Italy / France)

### ***Chromatic Circles*** 1966-67

*Synthetic polymer paint on wood, lightbulbs, electrical fixtures and synthetic polymer sheet. 70 x 70 x 36.5cm.*

*Collection Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, New South Wales. J.W. Power Bequest.*

Concealed coloured lights play onto a terraced relief of concentric circles, presenting a transforming visual spectacle. The terraces take the form of a recessed cone, the smallest circle being farthest away. The changing pattern of light and colour confuses reading of the recessed surfaces, creating an ambiguous sense of depth.

## Darrell Viner

(England)

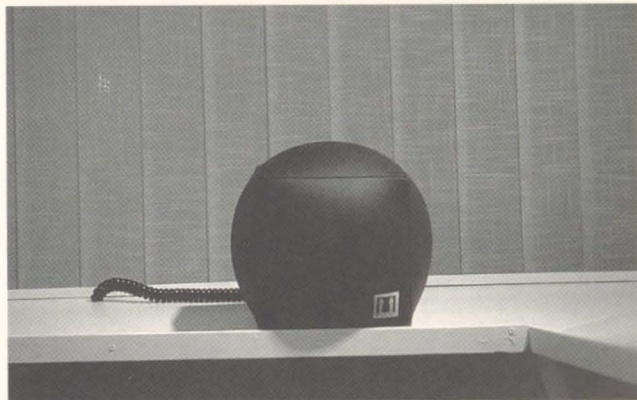
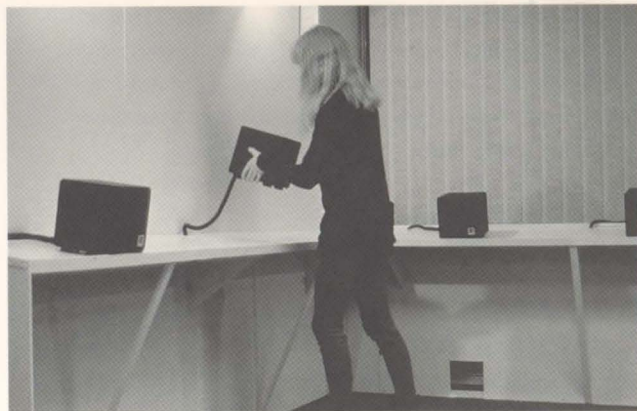
### ***Pig in a Poke*** 1991

*Black rubber, steel, wood, mechanics, electronics. Eight cubes 20cm each side.*

*Collection of the artist, London.*

*Supported by The British Council.*

Each one of these eight cubes transforms in a different way when you pick them up. One inflates in your hand; one appears to change its weight; one kicks; one vibrates at high frequency; one lets out an alarm and one behaves as if its insides were on the move. All activities cease once the box is returned to the shelf.



## ***The Artists***

*Helen Altman*

Born 1958, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, United States.  
Lives in Forth Worth, Texas.

*James Angus*

Born 1970, Perth, Western Australia.  
Lives in Fremantle, Western Australia.

*Jim Campbell*

Born 1956, Chicago, Illinois, United States.  
Lives in San Francisco, California.

*Michaelie Crawford*

Born 1964, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.  
Lives in Sydney.

*Bill Culbert*

Born 1935, Port Chalmers, New Zealand.  
Moved to London, United Kingdom, in 1957.  
Lives in London and Luberon, France.

*Greg Evans*

Born 1972. Lives in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

*Lars Fredrikson*

Lives and works in Cote d'Azur, France.

*Gloria Friedmann*

Born in 1950 in Kronach, Germany. Lives in Aignay-le-Duc, France.

*Juan Geuer*

Born 1917, Soest, The Netherlands. From 1939 to 1947 lived in artists' colony in the Yungas jungle, Bolivia. Emigrated to Canada in 1954. Lives in Almonte, Ontario.

*Mineko Grimmer*

Born Hanamaki, Iwate Prefecture, Japan. Has lived in Los Angeles, California, USA since 1978.

*Werner Klotz*

Born 1956, Bonn, Germany. Lives in Berlin, Germany and New York City, New York, United States.



*Len Lye*

Born 1901, Christchurch, New Zealand. Lived in London, UK, from 1927 to 1951, after which he moved to New York city, NY, United States. Died in 1980.

*Paul McCarthy*

Born 1945, Salt Lake City, Utah, United States. Has lived in Los Angeles, California, since 1971.

*Christian Marclay*

Born 1955, San Rafael, California, United States. Grew up in Geneva, Switzerland. Moved to Boston, Massachusetts in 1977. Now living in New York City.

*Eric Orr*

Born 1939, Covington, Kentucky, United States. Lives in Venice, California and San Anselmo, California.

*Nam June Paik*

Born 1932, Seoul, Korea. Moved to Germany in 1956, then New York in 1964. Currently lives in Wiesbaden, Germany and New York City.

*Garnett Puett*

Born 1959, Hahira, Georgia, United States. Lives in Kona on Hawaiian island of Holualoa, United States.

*Ari Purhonen*

Born in 1953 in Finland. Arrived in Australia in 1966. Lives in Sydney, New South Wales.

*Charles Ray*

Born 1953, Chicago, Illinois, United States. Has lived in Los Angeles area, California, since 1980.

*Peter Roche*

Born 1957, Auckland, New Zealand. Lives in Auckland.

*Nike Savvas*

Born 1964, Canberra, ACT, Australia. Lives in Sydney, NSW.

*Peter Sedgley*

Born 1930, London, UK. Lives in Berlin, Germany.

*Simon Shephard*

Born 1961, Whangarei, New Zealand. Lives in Paekakariki, Kapiti Coast, New Zealand.

*Jesus Rafael Soto*

Born 1923, Ciudad Bolivar, Venezuela. Since 1950 has lived in Paris, France.

*The Art Guys*

A duo who have worked collaboratively since 1983.

*Michael Galbreth* was born in 1956, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States.

*Jack Massing* was born in 1959, Buffalo, New York, United States. Both live in Houston, Texas.

*Jennifer Turpin*

Born 1958, Perth, Western Australia.

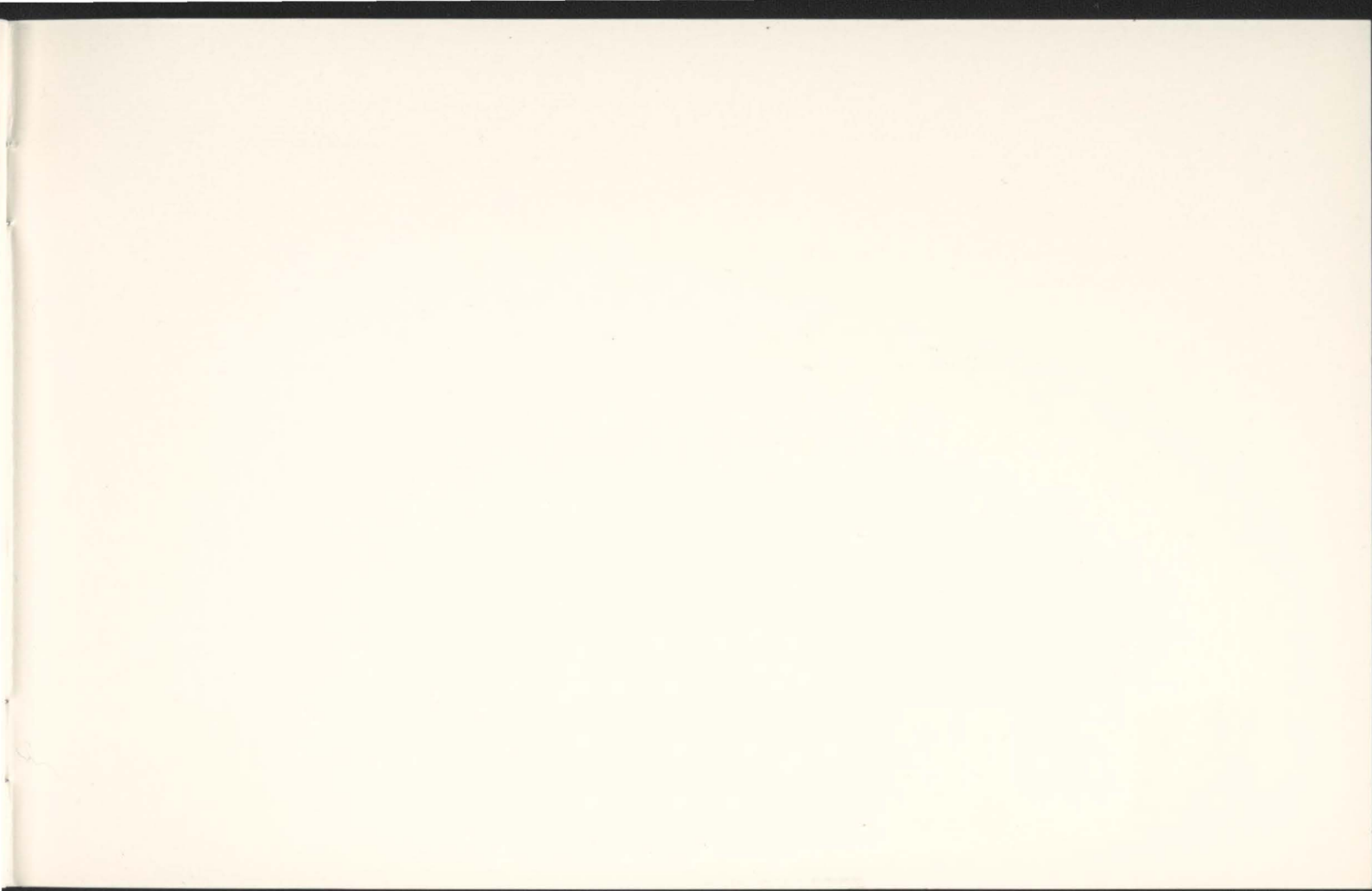
Lives in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

*Gregorio Vardanega*

Born in 1923, Possagno, Italy. Studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Since 1959 has lived in Paris, France.

*Darrell Viner*

Born 1946, Coventry, United Kingdom. Lives in London, United Kingdom.



# TRANSFORMERS

25 April – 28 July 1996



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