

Nervous Control Centre

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The technological creature has become mythological, reanimated by its self-grown fictions of mediation. They say that without two eyes we would not have depth perception – and as our surveillance machines grow legs and begin to dance, this prophecy comes true – the flattened gaze of the wandering one-eyed cyclops. Is it any wonder the control centre is nervous?

Christian Kuras' exhibition, *Nervous Control Centre*, has created monuments to a contemporary mythology, golems to a revived technological mysticism. This is why the work speaks so convincingly. Silent tongues of confrontation, gazes turned inward, wired circuitry and flesh, immobilized by technological union. The lesson of technology, the lesson of transparency. What is the fate of the body in an age of machines? Not the site of resistance it is so often held up to be – that much is certain. Maybe not even a site at all.

We tend to understand the body and the machine as two different things – one with agency and personality, the other a site of pure mobilization and creative/productive potential. And we think it is clear which is which. But perhaps not, or perhaps our own thinking is the source of the problem – the fear of entering into symbiosis with technology is perhaps also the fear of symbiosis with ourselves.

Marshall McLuhan always said that technology was an extension of the body. An extension of the human nervous system – and indeed a nervous extension at that – walking nervous systems – or boxed, for brand-name immortality. Without the body, technology becomes lonely, static, bored, unable to communicate with the world around it. But perhaps McLuhan got it wrong, and it is not technology that is an extension of the body, but the other way around?

The body as an extension of technology: that's what happens when the body is maximized – updated psychological and intellectual operating systems, updated potentialities grown of medical and biotechnological research, tweak a gene and live forever. Or more simply with the photographic image, the mirror reflection, or the electronic geography of email, webcams and irc. Or even with language itself – memory and forgetting, thinking and imagining – the technological fantasy is the fantasy of a technology that remains separate, pouting in the corner, passively dominated by the human machine.

Nervous control room presents us with useless machines...and isn't this the opposite of how it should be? The useless machine, relegated to a decorative symbolic state. Lonely machines that cannot quite bring themselves to co-opt the body in a contemporary way. The microscope

that enlarges itself – a technological temper tantrum of system feedback that knows only one way of looking. “Forget the molecular... pay attention to me!” Or the totemic control console, grown arthritic from neglect, to the extent that even its buttons refuse to perform.

And in contrast, the mobilized body, no longer using technology for its own purposes but rather used by technology – natural resource for the reinvention of what can almost certainly no longer be called the body itself. Mightn't one imagine the interview as the speaker-made-flesh, wired sounds arriving from off-stage to introduce the next line of script, delivered in two-tone surround sound? Or the immortal – paradoxically “after” JL Borges, as if to prove its own potential for the reanimation of flesh – returned to eternal incubation, watching, waiting, recording. The technological body grows satellites as if they were an information rash and sleeps in a clinical reanimation chamber – faith in the machine that it will allow us to wake in the morning. And aren't we all, in fact, metaboys – joined at the reflection by the technology of self-conception?

Something happens at that limit of the imagination where science and mythology begin to speak the same language. To call it science fiction is to retreat to the delusion of a life without technological mediation, but it is the mediation of life that was already our technological fantasy. Not prosthetic machines, but artificial bodies with automated thoughts – the reality fiction of separate identities, not bound to the world that has created them. And if we don't back away? That's when we begin to understand that the absurdity of these works is that there is no fiction at play in the exhibition. Reflection rather, of our own technologies of being human, arbitrary lines drawn in the sands of self-conception. And this is not the end point, but just the beginning for Kuras, who states:

... to relate to an outside world, there needs to be an interior world separate from everything else. This division, this amputation of oneself from the world, is the starting point for my practice as an artist.

And so, to enter into Kuras' work is perhaps to entertain that double-edged fantasy for ourselves – to see in his work, our own mediated reflection – to cry with the microscope, to remain in stoic solidarity with the console, and to see our own caricatures in the mobilized bodies of Nervous Control Centre.

Title: THE CONTROL ROOM
Artist: Christian Kuras
Dates: Nov 19 - Dec 18, 2004
Location: Glasgow, Scotland