

MICHAEL THEODORE

organism/mechanism

May 11 – June 15, 2013

Artist Statement: *endo/exo*

Artists have always been interested in emerging expressive possibilities, and therefore have also been curious about the most recent technologies—be they breakthroughs in chemistry that enabled new types of paint, engineering advances that facilitated the precision mechanisms of a grand piano, or the optical science that made photography possible. Technology has always been a material projection of human ideas—an artifact—but recently the projections and the "projectors" have been developing closer relationships. In general, this exhibition, *organism/mechanism*, and the *endo/exo* installation in particular, ask the question: what do new possibilities for art-making look like in a world in which the biological and the mechanical are increasingly enmeshed and entangled?

At first glance, *endo/exo* is a study in stark contrasts. The large gridded exterior (12.5' x 28') is fabricated from hard, industrial materials, features sound-producing mechanical objects, and because it receives no direct light, is seen in silhouette. The silent interior—a volumetric textile membrane—is glowing with intense, continuously modulated color, and is constructed with soft materials that have been worked by hand into a web of amorphous shapes.

Left to its own devices, the installation mimics various natural cycles, such as the winds that rhythmically move grasses in an open field, or waves that advance and recede in ever-changing patterns. The natural world, land and sea alike, lends itself as an inspiration for the artist and as a guide for the viewer to relate to the work. How the viewer interacts with *endo/exo* can be described similarly to interactive happenings in nature. For example, the ghost pipefish, an ocean fish similar to a seahorse, pretends to be plant life, blending into the reef until it is disturbed. In the same manner as the ghost pipefish exists as part of the reef, *endo/exo* exists as part of the gallery space, but responds differently to approaching visitors.

By engaging one of *endo/exo's* sensors (the installation is constantly emitting infrared light, and taking note of how long it takes to return), the observer/participant can elicit a variety of responses, ranging from empathic, mirrored movements to sudden and bemused silence. At this point we realize that not only are we watching the work but it is also watching us. The boundary separating us is no longer absolute, and our presence creates a feedback network, modulating trajectories of sound, motion and light. When a large group of people stands in front of the installation, it will shake and quiver with activity, then "relax" when people walk away.

Therefore, the installation participates in the traditions of kinetic sculpture, sound art, fiber art, and lightworks, while acting as a meditation on the nature of biological and mechanical consciousness. By engaging in a direct dialogue with us, can our artistic artifacts join us in the contemplation of aesthetic experiences?

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