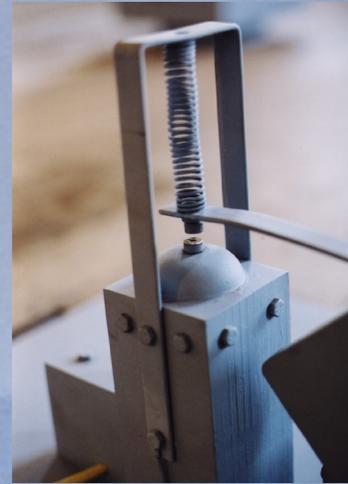


FUNCTIONING FAKES:
Don Hunter



SM
48

SM
48

SM
48

Functioning Fakes; Prosthetic Bodies



Functioning Fakes, as the installation title suggests, presents a conundrum of artificial constructs. Within a monochromatic hum a gang of machines form a hive of tireless activity which appear to feed a life support system of both production and consumption. Tethered by economical lengths of taunt yellow power cord the arrangement suggests a strange and elaborate choreographed dance, momentarily suspended in the act of discovery. Dry-docked and grid-locked the weighty battle-ship-grey vessels appear both banal and comical; hybrids of industrial artefacts and playful commodities. The adage “I work to play, I play to work” comes to mind. The irony of the human condition; the dichotomy of leisure and work in a capitalist economy. This complex system of unnamed entities support extraneous members, tagged on and amalgamated into their bulky forms in a shroud of primer paint suggesting an extravagance of artifice. Rudimentary in form, complex in internal workings, these bodies are interlinked by umbilical tubing and arterial pipes which in turn disappear into the floor, mockingly ‘feeding’ into another space. There are other decoys also, inert prosthetics engage visually with their spurious counterparts in labour, implying a strange sense of mutual dependency yet their relationship remains a mystery. Life-size in scale, the machines express a spatial reality, while shifts of size in the detailed microcosms of activity produced by the mechanics, paradoxically challenge this momentary sense of relativity. Within this large cosmos of networks, the grey bodies weld their own miniature worlds of theatrical activity. One machine offers

a birds-eye view of ant-like workers which drag their metal filing forms around a monolithic magnetic rod in some eternal homage. On another, a black disk, planet like, grazes its orbital trajectory in an endless gesture of wearying fatigue. A hydropower plant is suggested in yet another microcosm where glass rods channel an endless deluge of some undefined product. These restless machines continue to play out their compulsive operations against a continuous blanket hum while a clunky switch rifts the comforting lull. An artificial lung pneumatically operated by an elaborate system of pulleys and switches is malfunctioning. Unreliable in its draw, the shallow and erratic breath denies a certitude of the machines capacity to fully function. The systems minimal and unreliable output contradict the elaborate mechanisms of potential. Like fledgling juggernauts pitched on the verge of redundancy they are barely managing, their existence controlled remotely, the operator absent. The lack of manual control and suggested disfunction reinforces a sense that this is a metaphor of our consumer society; referencing our co-dependency upon the machinery that serves us yet perpetuates our endless servitude upon a system which we have inherited our reliance upon. The unnamed “fakes” with seemingly familiar contours and motions yet unknown and erratic functions, deploy a sense of entropy, triumphing over an otherwise orderly world.

Ana Terry, August 2003

Functioning Fakes, a kinetic installation by artist Don Hunter exhibited in May 2003 at 82 Bond St Contemporary Art Space, Dunedin, New Zealand

