

Jessica Field

Bio: Jessica Field for the last 12 years creates electronic instillations with dramatic machine behaviours to create theatrical narratives that engage the viewer. She makes robots, automata and uses found objects/electronics to create large instillations and video works. Jessica has exhibited in Sweden, Switzerland, Austria and Canada.

Jessica Field teaches part-time at Ryerson University and does workshops various non-profit organizations. She received her AOCAD at the Ontario College of Art and Design, Toronto, Ontario and her MFA at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec.

Artist Statement: I create immersive installations using theatrical elements that address social issues pertaining to technology and its connection to human behaviours, expectations and desires. My work is driven by my curiosity in exploring and researching how humans define themselves as being more or less than the sum of their parts. More to the point, I am interested in how technology influences and defines how people see themselves and the things they create. It is a medium that is designed to offer the owner contentment in their daily lives by being marketed as essential to their existence by being convenient; a surrogate provider of happiness. Technology is also a great source of wonder; a modern day form of magic used to excite and inspire an audience. I create mechanical wonders that aim to create a sense of magic while at the same time embodies a feeling of humour and an edge of tragedy. My work uses technology to produce allegories that focus on the discontentment inherent in life and our failure to make sense of the world as it rapidly changes around us.

Art Instillations:

Allegory of Pulse: This work is an allegory that displays a number of possibilities in what the term pulse can mean. The pulse signal influencing the piece can be seen on the analog meters on the front and the light that breathes from the bottom of the black structure. The three stages with peepholes are controlled by the pulse and perform their own interpretation of the word pulse.

The work has lit circuit boards that appear to breath and meters that measure the pulse of life. The large black monolith from many stages and peepholes shows an allegory of the machine's presentation of life. The first stage shows in one peephole a Honolulu girl who dances seductively to make the viewer feel uncomfortable peeping on a child's toy. The stage with clown heads, the remains of toys, bob up and down in happy abandonment. The clown is a known figure of humiliation and being headless offers the reality



Figure 1: Allegory of Pulse, 2011

that life is more complicated than happy bouncing. While they bounce, a timing apparatus is always moving forward denoting a time limit. The last stage shows six disembodied doll arms stuck in a hollowed out metal apparatus with lights pulsing in their wrists. The peephole draws attention to the gesture of the creation of Adam.



Figure 2: Death and the Maiden, 2011

Automata Silent Films: This project is comprised of three silent films that are performed by automata actors. The project is displayed with a large blackboard drawing that scientifically isolates the importance of each automata film and draws connections between them to explain a larger view on what they are really about. The second element is the automata characters and sets themselves that are displayed as sculptures so the only proof that they do anything at all is in the films.

The first film is *The Musicians*; it is a spin off of the commercial dramatizations used in the early days of silent film that were played before the feature presentation. The piece that plays on the contradiction between the beauty of handcrafted objects that appear to play music and the limitations of a mechanical instrument in playing dynamic sounds. The second film is called the *Parable of the Strawberry*; it is an automata dramatization of a parable from Zen Buddhism that attempts to explain the behaviours required to live a life of contentment. The work is automated, fake and superficial which begs the question of whether the original meaning of the story is now lost because of the artificial and repetitive quality of the materials used. The last film is called *Death and the Maiden*; it is portrayed in the style of your classic silent film with a piano accompaniment to dramatize the famous story in the history of painting of death coming to take the maiden away.

Field Studies: This project addresses the social issues concerning the commercial creation of artificial intelligence robots that attempt to fulfill human expectations and desires. Field Studies uses video works to create a facade of expectation in the viewer. The videos are idealistic; they depict the robot's in a virtual manner where everything they do is harmonious, orderly and fulfill the desires of the artist by doing everything she desires. The real robots in the exhibition do not embody these qualities: they have their own intelligence and shortcomings quite apart from Field's

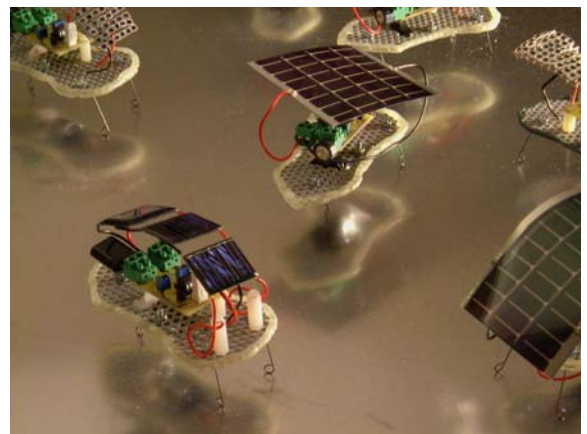


Figure 3: Protozoen Flagellates, 2009 (photo by: Paul Litherland)

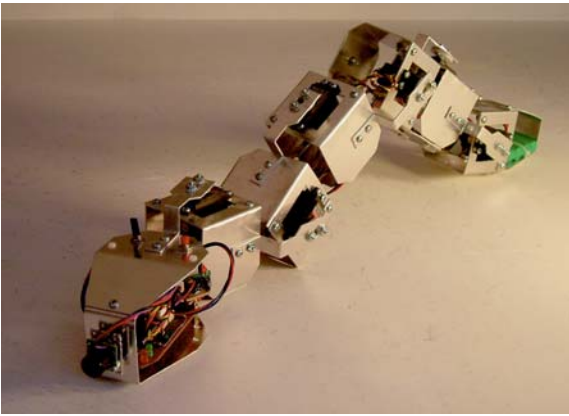


Figure 4: Anthropod: Sidewind Externalreactozoid, 2009 (photo by: Paul Litherland)

expectations and are nearly always out of sync with the video's expectations. The idea of evolution is explored in the presentation of the robots. There are three classes of robots presented: Protozoan Flagellates, single cell robots; Hydrozoans, nerve-net response having no ability to evolve only exist as a first draft; lastly, Anthropods, robots with the ability to evolve that bring to question how many evolutions will it require for these robots to behave as the artist intends.

Maladjusted Ecosystem: This installation is comprised of 4 robot actors that all think for themselves and they all contribute their own part in the creation of a potential ecosystem.

The piece looks at the social implications of having two self-absorbed robots working with two oblivious robots to create self-perpetuating ecosystem. None of the robots have any concept of cooperation or that the others even exist and thus, the result is a debilitated ecosystem. The oblivious robots let their environment guide them leaving all their responses to chance and the self absorbed robots internalize all information to

such a degree that they can't function in their real environment. They look so hard for their goals and desire success to such a degree that they miss what they are looking for. The drama of the work questions whether the robots will ever be satisfied or are condemned by their programmed flaws to participate in an ecosystem that is always failing.

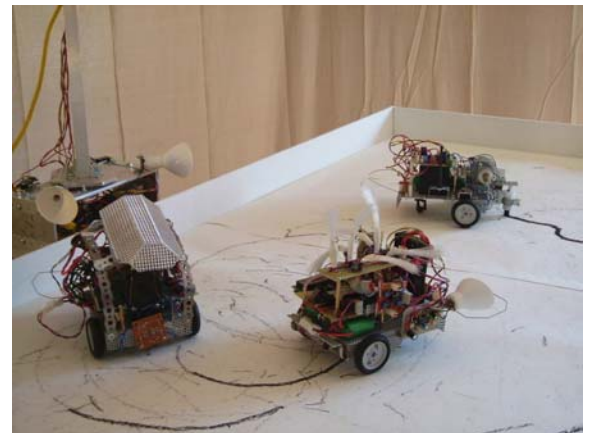


Figure 5: Maladjusted Ecosystem, 2008

SICB (Semiotic Investigation into Cybernetic Behaviour):



Figure 6: SICB, 2004 (photo by: Jowita Kepa)

This installation a real-time theatrical performance that is acted out by two completely self-absorbed robots ALAN and CLARA who both see the world differently. These two robots are programmed to know exactly what the world is like and want the other to always agree with them. Thus, we see a performance that shows all the communicative complications that arise from making unwavering assumptions about the world we live in.