

Phil Dadson & Micheal Stevenson

3 x 2

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The Physics Room

2 Cents: Participatory Elements

Nick Cain

The third instalment in the Physics Room's 3x2 series, like its two predecessors, pairs disparate installations by two artists of starkly contrasting styles: Philip Dadson and Micheal Stevenson.

Dadson's installation, "Voicings", consists of three television monitors and a set of three lamps, face down and elevated a small distance off the floor. Each of the lamps and monitors emits a single colour - red, green and blue (the basic video colour format). The space is lit by three naked bulbs, also red, green and blue accompanied by three separate soundtracks, which, along with the video content, will change over the course of the show.

Dadson, who teaches time-based arts at the Elam school of Fine Arts in Auckland is a sound/video artist perhaps best known as the founder member of Auckland music/performance group From Scratch.

He intends 'Voicings' in part as a response to the physical environment of the Physics Room. Dadson has never visited the gallery space, and sees his lack of familiarity with it as integral to his installation. "I had no idea of what the Physics Room even looked like. So I requested Tessa [Laird, the Physics Room's director] to make a video recording at the space to give me some context. On the video she gave a very thorough and detailed description, and this will be one of the soundtracks playing.

'Voicings' also has a participatory element. Every Sunday throughout its running time, a video camera will be set to record in the gallery from 12:30 to 2:30 pm, via which visitors can dialogue with the artist. In a handout which accompanies the show, Dadson encourages gallery-goers to interact. "Should you chance by and feel so inclined, please give voice to any feelings about this space, your presence, my absence, what's in it, what's not and what's what...straight onto tape...no fuss, simply voice into the microphone and/or face into the lens...or whatever...your choice! I will receive the tape within a day or two...and so a dialogue may develop across the next 5 weeks. I look forward to talking with you."

Stevenson's installation is participatory, albeit in a rather different manner. Starting out as a pop-influenced painter in the mid/late 80s, Stevenson has since moved into the

realm of conceptual art, and in recent years has proved himself to be one of New Zealand's more intriguing and entertaining artists. His recent work has bitingly satirised other artists and the artworld, a theme which he continues in his contribution to 3x2, entitled 'Let Those Who Ride Decide.'

It comprises two shop riders - motorised mobility chairs with in- built storage compartments, of the kind favoured by senior citizens for movement in and around supermarkets and shopping centres. "They'll be powered up, so the punters are welcome to ride around and decide about anything and everything really" Stevenson explains.

"That's why it's called 'Let Those Who Ride Decide'. The idea is that people ride on them and assume the artist's mantle of bitterness," he continues. "A lot of my work recently has been concerned with bitterness in the art world. Bitterness is the nectar of the artworld. The riders are manifestations of some kind of bitterness. Ronnie van Hout described them as 'vehicles for artists who used to be famous.'"

The vehicles have specially installed pervert mirrors affixed to the footrests. "They're for looking up people's dresses," says Stevenson. "They can be adjusted to the correct angle. They do work - I've tested them."

The vehicles are also loaded up with a range of items, including shopping bags and drums. "Some of the bags are from art supply stores, and some are Duty Free bags," says Stevenson. "Obviously, alcohol and cigarettes are essential for artistic behaviour, which is something I'm very interested in. Duty Free is the main reason why artists travel overseas. It's why Julian Dashper travels so much."