



With(in), Series #3, digital prints, laminated glass, each 120 x 120cm

with(in)

computer-generated images

Kevin Todd
www.toddartist.com

24HRArt | Northern Territory
Centre for Contemporary Art

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With(in), Series #1, digital prints, laminated glass, each 75 x 75cm

with(in)

Kevin Todd's computer-generated images follow from his exhibition *The Organic Rationalist*, which was shown in England during 2004. These new works rely on ambiguity and expression to evoke a sense of intrigue and discomfort with(in) the scientific paradigm for understanding experience/existence. However, there is no false dichotomy in the works and the images evoke the sensitivity required to understand the limits of rationalism.

The consequences of a mathematical/technical relationship to the physical world have unfolded since the Enlightenment to produce spectacular achievements in science and technology. However, another consequence of rationalism has been a mechanistic paradigm for understanding and in this sense it has functioned as a kind of imperialism in relation to reality. Although Todd clearly embraces the mathematical/technical format of the medium employed to generate his work, he is also uncomfortable with the privilege we afford rationalism in our scientific relationship to ourselves and the world.

Recent advances in life sciences have resulted in possibilities for genetic and bioengineering that render the nature/culture dichotomy irrelevant. Nature, as an *a priori* basis or foundation for existence is therefore emptied of its pre-rational meaning. However, Todd is not advocating a return to superstition or to working in opposition to scientific rationalism, he enjoys the technology too much. The discomfort in his works stems from the inadequacy of the scientific paradigm in terms of understanding human existence/experience.

Todd suggests through his work that rationalism and technology are means by which we (he) negotiate(s) anxiety regarding the physical limits of existence. That we primarily use science and technology to try to extend or influence our physical selves is evidence of a frustration with existence and a discontent with the physical. Todd's work, although technological and aesthetically appealing, suggests there is a connection between rationalism and a frustration with death. Rationalism's promise is the illusion of certainty and control but a mechanistic and singular understanding of existence can also shape human experience.

However, these images are not pessimistic as there is life and energy in the works and their relationships. The organic and visceral nature of the forms suggests dynamics and persistence, a kind of eruption or becoming that is ambiguous in its scale. The images are made to engage the viewer and to express something of the intangible sometimes best approached through art. The sense of play, expression and aesthetics in the work is evidence of Todd's statement that "art is an activity" and the title of the show suggests his discomfort with objectivity and the sense of disconnection it engenders.

Samuel Spielman
2007