



In Vivo: Works by Rebecca Horn, Jon Kessler, Dennis Oppenheim and Alan Rath on view from September 9 through October 20, presents sculptural works animated by mechanical and/or electronic means. The focus of the exhibition is to consider parallels between human and techno-mechanical structures, functions and qualities as well as the ambiguity that can arise from those comparisons. Machineworks in the hands of these four artists are not celebrated solely for the fascination we hold for them, but as metaphoric extensions of the emotional, philosophical and inventive processes.

Rebecca Horn's sculpture and films, the subject of a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, New York in 1993, typically explore the place where dual entities--human and animal, human and machine, male and female, subject and object--meet on emotional and visceral levels. Her works can be described as mechanized hybrids, and, as they seem to embrace both reason and magic, reflect her interest in the historical quest for mechanical marvels.

The works of Jon Kessler are ingeniously constructed and illuminated assemblages that often combine sophisticated technology with discarded or fortuitously found materials. Frequent allusions are made to the artist's brand of theater and to his natural proclivity in creating self-contained worlds that bear a sense of nostalgia. The two Ikebana wall pieces included in In Vivo generally refer to the perception of natural beauty according to a culture's sensibility--in this case Japan's--and how that culture is perceived; Autumn Box causes reflection on our perception of nature.

Notorious for his lack of a signature style, Dennis Oppenheim made his name in the 1960s as a pioneering artist with an offbeat irreverence. An astounding array of works and projects were presented in his 1992 retrospective, And the Mind Grew Fingers, organized by P.S. 1, New York. What remains consistent throughout his experiments with nontraditional media--earthworks, conceptual exercises, body art, video works, machine pieces, installations and performances--is a kind of inventiveness which attempts to reveal invisible forces whether they are physical, emotional, intellectual, or social.

Alan Rath was trained as an electrical engineer and began his artistic career in 1984. He has since become well-known for inventing funny, weirdly animated machines that employ electrical and mechanical components--wires, cables,

conduits, brackets, clamps, etc. Cathode ray tubes that display images of noses, eyes and hands are prominent in most of Rath's constructions, but these are incorporated into the sculptural ensemble. One of Rath's favorite notions is that we tend to build machines in our own image.

The Way Things Go (Der Lauf der Dinge), 1986-87, a 30 minute film by Peter Fischli/David Weiss, will have regular video screenings in the Gallery throughout the exhibition. The film, which took nearly a year to make, shows a chain reaction made out of everyday objects, elements and paraphernalia--water, buckets, tires, wood, fire, etc.--that have been manipulated to make a "living sculpture". Viewers are treated to an continuous sequence of chaos under control with a light-hearted undertone.

On Wednesday, September 27 the Gallery will inaugurate BYOP (Bring Your Own Pillow) Video Nite with The Wrong Trousers (UK, 1995; 30 minutes) an animated short feature by Nick Park, the creator of Wallace and Gromit, who, in this episode, innocently let a pair of "techno-trousers" fall into the mind and hands of a devious penguin. The short will be followed by The Navigator (Australia/New Zealand, 1989; 92 minutes) directed by Vincent Ward. This time-travel adventure begins in 14th century England where the Black Death is decimating entire cities throughout Europe. Led by the visions of a young boy, a group of villagers sets out on a quest that brings them to "the other side of the world" to attempt an act of faith that will save their village from the plague. The video screenings will be held in the Gallery and will begin at 7:30 p.m.

The exhibition and related events have been supported in part by the generosity of the UMass Arts Council and the University Alumni Association.

The University Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held in the Concert Hall of the Fine Arts Center. For further information regarding Gallery programs, please call (413) 545-3670.