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Friday, October 8, 2004

## Tribune-Review Entertainment

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### Wood Street Galleries exhibit makes international connections

By Kurt Shaw  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW ART CRITIC

Sunday, November 23, 2003

Who would ever think that entering the second floor of Wood Street Galleries, Downtown, could connect oneself to the other side of the world? But that's just what you can do, if you are so inclined.

For there, at the entrance to Wood Street's latest exhibition, "Replay," visitors will find a computer connected to the Internet with which they can send short text messages to anyone in the world.

But the recipients won't receive the messages directly. The text will be encoded as a unique sequence of flashes -- similar to Morse code -- and sent to the sky above Yamaguchi, Japan, via 20 robotically controlled searchlights on top of the newly opened Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media.

But the recipients will receive an e-mail notifying them that "a message is waiting for them in the sky of Yamaguchi," to which, ostensibly, they can respond by logging on to the Web site [www.amodal.net](http://www.amodal.net) and see the message via a live video feed as it is sent up in flashes over the city.

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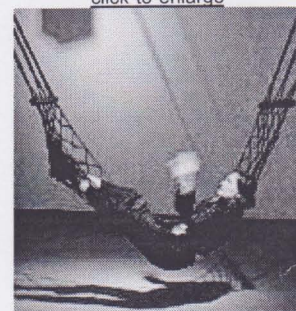
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On a recent visit, some 7,600 messages had been posted, with total hits to the Web site topping 4 million. Not bad for being up for just over a week.

Of course, that many people have not visited Wood Street Galleries since "Replay" opened last weekend. The gallery is one of 27 art and technology centers around the world that have been set up as "Access Pods" for the

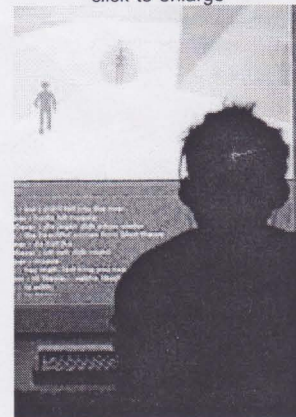
project, and one of only three in the United States -- the other two being MIT's

#### Photo Gallery

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Fabian Winkler's  
"Dielectric"

Philip G. Pavely/Tribune-Review

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Blast Theory's interactive  
game "Can You See Me  
Now?"

Philip G. Pavely/Tribune-Review

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MediaLab in Cambridge, Mass., and Eyebeam, a gallery in New York City.

This large-scale interactive installation, titled "Amodal Suspension," is the latest project by Mexican-Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. Those who have visited Wood Street Galleries earlier this year might recall similar projects by Lozano-Hemmer that were on display in the spring exhibition, "critical\_conditions."

In that show, many of the works were interactive and technologically advanced. Here, in "Replay," nearly all of them are.

In addition to Lozano-Hemmer's project, on the second floor are installations by three internationally acclaimed artists -- Japanese artist Masaki Fujihata; New York's Golan Levin; and Fabian Winkler, an artist originally from Germany who is a visiting assistant professor at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Art.

Titled "Dielectric," Winkler's piece is basically a hammock woven from live electrical chords connected to a generator. On the exterior of the generator, a small arc completes the circuit that runs through the chords. But when one walks by the contraption, one's own personal electric field is drawn into the mix, causing the arc to crackle violently.

If annoyed by the buzz, the best bet, believe it or not, is to sit in the hammock, wherein you will complete the circuit.

Wood Street's director, Murray Horne, insists that doing so is completely safe. "Nobody's croaked yet," he says with a slight grin.

How's that for interactive?

The rest of the works are just as engaging but seem far less life threatening. Levin's piece, "Floccus," gives visitors a chance to make virtual drawings with a stylus, but with the added twist that the cursor of the stylus is digitally connected to a synthesizer. When one begins to scribble on the mousepad, a most interesting soundscape of varied pitch is produced, while the lines that have just been drawn curve, loop and twirl off in relation to the sound.

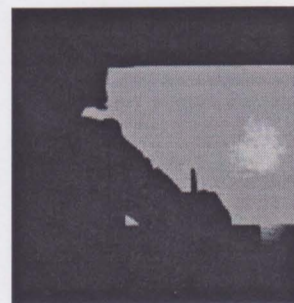
"The pitch is related to the way you move your cursor, and the line is related to the pitch," Horne says. "You don't get one without the other."

Similarly, Fujihata connects visitors to a virtual world through the use of a stylus with which one is able to page through a virtual book. The pages of the book feature common objects such as a stone, apple or light switch. But touch them with the stylus, and things begin to happen. The stone moves, bites are taken out of the apple, and the light switch turns on the very real desk lamp that sits next to the virtual book. It's a dialogue between the virtual and the real that is surprisingly seamless.

The third-floor gallery is dedicated to works by the British artists collective known as Blast Theory, in what constitutes the group's U.S. premiere. This gallery contains three interactive games the group has produced recently, including the most recent, "Uncle Roy All Around You."

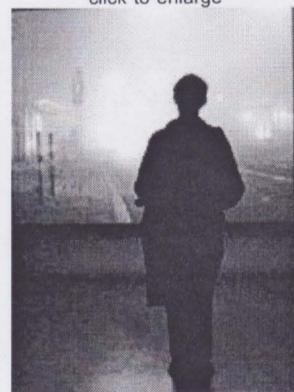
Originally played online and at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in June, this latest game is the group's largest, most complex and challenging to date. In it, actual players roamed the streets of Westminster in London in search of a fictitious character named Uncle Roy, while online players cruised through a virtual model of the same area. Using web cams, audio and text messaging devices, all of the players worked together to find Uncle Roy. Here, in the gallery, visitors can revisit the event through video and audio of the game as it was played out.

The other two games are similarly interactive, but of all Blast Theory's works on display it is the simplest one that resonates the most. Titled "TRUCOLD," it is not a game but a video work shot in predawn hours on the streets of Karlsruhe, Germany, and London.



Golan Levin's 'Floccus'  
Philip G. Pavely/Tribune-Review

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Blast Theory's  
'TRUCOLD'  
Philip G. Pavely/Tribune-Review

#### Details

#### 'Replay'


**When:** Through Dec. 31. Hours: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays


**Where:** Wood Street Galleries, 601 Wood St. (above the Wood Street "T" Station), Downtown


**Admission:** Free


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Remindful of Philip Glass' and Godfrey Reggio's film "Koyaanisqatsi," it features



dramatic footage of nighttime inner-city scenes, but slowed down to a mesmerizing pace.

In these scenes, the city streets are void of pedestrians. The only movement is from the pulsating headlights of slowly passing cars or the shimmering streetlamps that are strangely reminiscent of Diogenes' flickering lantern, which he carried with him as he roamed ancient Greece in a futile search for an honest man.



Like Horne says, "It's really very rare that you get a video that you just want to sit and contemplate and just watch."

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