

N E W S R E L E A S E

**SCIENCE FICTIONS**
Works by ORSHI DROZDIK and JON TOWER

Public Preview Reception Friday, February 28, 5 to 7 pm

Artists ORSHI DROZDIK and JON TOWER question the reassuring authority of scientific truth from different, yet complementary perspectives in **SCIENCE FICTIONS**, on view at the MIT List Visual Arts Center from February 29 through April 18, 1992. Both draw on the history of the physical sciences to comment on the allure and transitoriness of scientific paradigms, the sense of loss that accompanies their dismantling and the contemporary difficulty in finding alternative models of reality. Drozdik and Tower use photographs, texts, sculptural objects and installations to expose the agendas implicit in the seemingly objective world of scientific systems.

Drozdik's project titled *Adventure in Technos Dystopium* (1988-90) is a nostalgic journey through three centuries of outmoded Western scientific study. Using the display techniques of the science museum, Drozdik analyzes such practices as Enlightenment physics, Linnaean botany and 19th century medicine. The artist's dystopia, or negative utopia, deflates modern man's optimistic belief in his ability to examine, name, classify and therefore, comprehend and control the physical world, including his own body.

A near romantic longing for the Enlightenment or Age of Reason is manifested in Drozdik's recreation of the *Leyden Jar*, an antique apparatus used to store electricity. This object embodies both the attraction to and obsolescence of the ideas and instruments of a simpler time. The penetration, dissection and dissolution of the human body by 19th medical practice is examined in *Morbid Conditions*, which is, in fact, a study of disease. Images of preserved body organs and severed heads from 18th and 19th century European medical museums and sculptural homages to the greatly romanticized diseases of the 19th century - syphilis and tuberculosis - constitute Drozdik's medical dystopia. *Erythrocyte*, an installation depicting a deviant flow of red blood cells drained of their color and healthy function emphasizes the continued fallibility of medical science into the 20th century.

Jon Tower reveals certain fictions based in science and religion by means of an art that is cool and ironic, while retaining an earnest seriousness of purpose. His work explores the systems and assumptions of the late 19th and 20th century studies of mathematics, chemistry and genetics. He is particularly interested in how the microscope, the unmeasurable and the intangible have affected the way we think about ourselves and our world.

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Tower's *Captions*, 1988 question the presumptions of textbook pages and illustrations and, by implication, larger systems. These works draw attention to the arrogance of the viewpoint that nature exists to illustrate some scientific principle. Tower selects photographic illustrations from didactic texts in a variety of disciplines and adds a handwritten caption. A picturesque view of "Natural Rainbow Bridge" in Utah becomes "an almost perfect parabola" or "an illustration of the 'naturalness' of mathematics". Once we read this inscription it becomes clear that Nature exists for the purpose of this association. More recently the artist has become interested in genetics, the critical arena for decoding and the mysteries of identity and mutation. Tower draws on two types of visual source material to construct his "genetic portraits", actual photographs of quirky chromosomes under the microscope and the schematic representation of the DNA code. For *SCIENCE FICTIONS* the artist adds another dimension to his genetic portraiture by constructing a *Gene Room*, 1992 whose four walls are covered with an unspecified segment of the human genetic code. These visual signs contain enormous amounts of information, yet disclose virtually none of it.

SCIENCE FICTIONS is accompanied by a 48 page illustrated exhibition catalogue including a conversation between Orshi Drozdik and critic Jan Avgikos and an artist's statement written by Jon Tower. It is available at the gallery desk or by mail.

The MIT List Visual Arts Center is located in the Wiesner Building, 20 Ames Street, Cambridge, five minutes walk from the Kendall Square Red Line T station. Parking is available at the corner of Ames and Main Streets. All List Arts Center activities are free and open to the public.

For photographs or further information call Ron Platt at (617) 253-4400.