I build machines and robots that I allow my audience to operate. All of my pieces are kinetic. Most are extremely dangerous and incorporate fire. Fire is the ultimate medium and the original paint. It warms, cooks and protects, but it can also burn down homes and kill. These are handmade machines, robots, inventions, crazy contraptions, industrial and Rube Goldberg-like. They are primarily made of steel, found

I re-appropriate technology, improvising with what I can obtain, for there is enough "stuff" in the world. This re-appropriation of materials and technology for application-less engineering attaches a political comment to my process. In addition, the work gains symbolic and metaphorical depth by drawing on the previous histories of the materials.

American culture and society are becoming increasingly passive and risk free. I use technology to put people back in touch with intense real-life experiences. Fear of death brings about social change. As man conquers Everest and disease, he searches for other things, extreme sports, extreme lifestyles (i.e. sex, drugs), extreme scholarship and extreme entertainment to challenge his mortality, to make him feel alive; this is euphoric and addictive. The work is fun and quite sexual. Participation in a piece becomes a rite of passage and theatrical. This ritualized experience siphons off aggressive energies, combating the collective response of fear, hatred and intolerance expressed in war, bigotry and other forms of mass psychosis. I use fear as a medium. I think of myself as a connoisseur of fear, looking for the "right" kinds of fear, fear that leads to transcendence.

The audiences at my performances volunteer to operate and interact with my work. There is a thin line between scaring them off and winning them over. I never operate my work. It is all done by the audience, my own form of telepresence. The volunteers get the experience; THEY become the hero/star of the show for they are the ones who conquer their fears and perform acts of superhuman endurance and fearlessness in front of a live audience. Through technology, fear and the realization that there is something more important than this fear, the event validates and affirms their existence and enables them to get in touch with a mythic reality. The barrier between passive audience and art(ist) is shattered.

So far I have conducted over a thousand such experiments. Ninety-nine percent of the time the audience is clamoring to volunteer. People are quite ecstatic to operate the machines, sometimes running to be first; it is always a celebratory experience. The pieces become a form of interpersonal communication through touch and force-feedback technology, a project to explore intimacy and social interaction. In a
fun, conceptual way my work attempts to generate the kind of enlightenment gained by some after near-death experiences.

In the future I hope to create machines that lure the participant to a spot, then send him/her off on a "journey," i.e. withdrawal-and-startle response. Example: Build a machine with an infinite learning curve and keep building experimental systems to test out these ideas.

I also hope to give machines and robots emotions that respond to their volunteers (audience). To engineer systems that exhibit intelligence, problem-solving skills, cunning, empathy, soul and a genuine interest in one's human condition, that listen and watch, converse and interact in other complex ways.

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