

>>SHOW

KINETICA ART FAIR 2013

Ambika P3, London

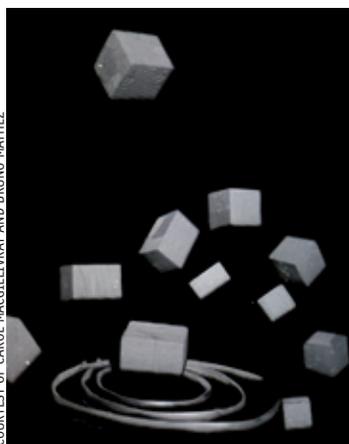
Review by Herbert Wright

Right: John Popadic's *Oddity* allows users to alter the moving LED displays by twiddling three dials on the top of the Perspex boxes

Below: *One, Two, Three*, an animated hybrid installation in a darkened enclosure at Kinetica, has emerged from the work of the *Diasynchoscope* project at Goldsmiths, University of London

There was less digital dazzle than previous years at this showcase of kinetic, cybernetic and light art, with craft rather than processing power underlying the spectacles. Some of Kinetica's usual kinetic stars were there with startling new works – Christiaan Zwanikken's *Exoskeleton*, a boar skull on a robotic extension that you strap on, or Tim Lewis' disturbing *Pan*, a walking animal/machine chimera also featuring a skull. And the ever-mesmerising artform of the zoetrope also reappeared, most notably with Gregory Barsamian's *Die Falle* (1997), a surrealistic installation in which figures rise and transform from dreaming heads.

There's always been an element of boffinry at Kinetica. Xiaofei Dyson

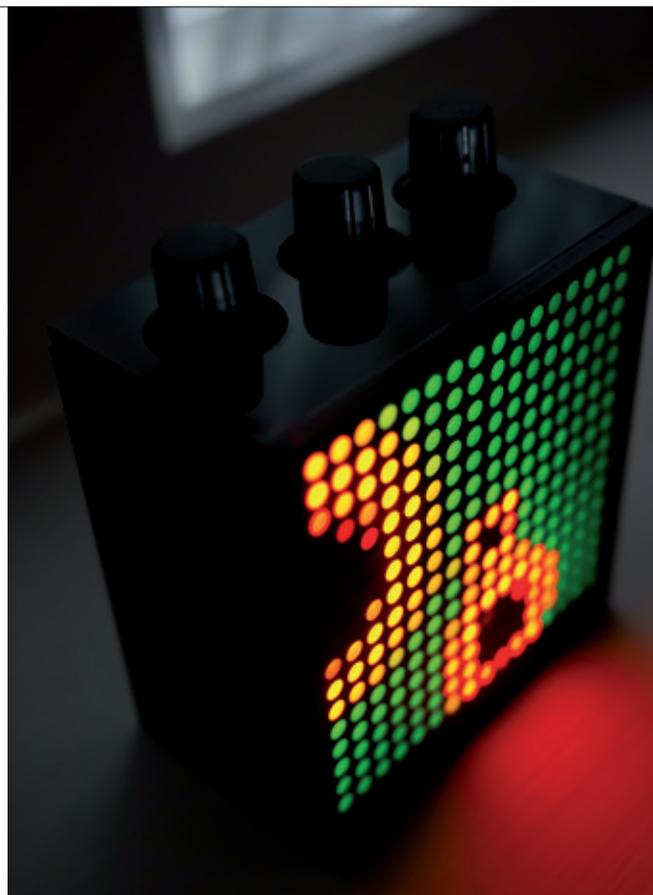


COURTESY OF CAROL MACGILLIVRAY AND BRUNO MATHEZ

exemplified it this year, with a Heath Robinsonesque music-making installation involving strings, balls rolling down tracks and cans, all operated from an old typewriter keyboard. Clive McCarthy, head of interactive design at the University of Lincoln, even looked the part of a boffin, proudly showing his students' modest but charming works, such as a box that sneezes when loaded with tiny paper scraps.

Particular works illustrate how design and craftsmanship still matter in technology-based art. John Popadic's *Oddity* boxes have a 16x16 multi-coloured LED grid, programmed by Harry Denholm to generate changing, fluid patterns, which can be 'tuned' by turning three knobs. 16x16 is nothing on the gigapixel capacity displays technology now offers, but that's part of *Oddity*'s charm – it's a reference to old blocky graphics of the Atari age but in the form of a chill-out tool or just something that can quietly fascinate on a mantelpiece.

Meanwhile, *One, Two, Three* by Trope Scope is a digital/craft media hybrid installation with a looped cycle anchored in music, with vocals by Minna Nygren. Monochrome cubes appear to tumble down choreographed arc trajectories into ripple-like circles. It has a ghostly virtual reality feel but actually comprises real, solid objects



COURTESY OF JOHN POPADIC AND HARRY DENHOLM

lit in sequences, and the effect is hypnotic. *Trope Scope* is by Carol MacGillivray and Bruno Mathez, active in the *Diasynchoscope* screenless animation project at Goldsmiths.

Elsewhere, Laurent Debraux's sculptures exploiting elemental forces such as magnetism caught the eye. Design group Shari Shari Shari created a Japanese tea-ceremony room of paper screens, tensegrity roof and sensor-embedded floor that controls shadows, in one of the more architectural contributions. As for pure lightworks, David Ogle's *Linear UV Drawing* has a geometric purity like

Naum Gabo line sculpture, but without any sculptural frame or indeed mass. As Ogle commented, 'Light has a sort of volumetric relationship to space... you can scale things up and down that you can't with solid material'

With its diverse displays, as well as a programme of screenings and performances, Kinetica has established a unique position in the London art calendar. Even so, organiser Tony Langford admits that 'there's still some snobbery in art circles that rejects it as art'. That's wrong – within Kinetica may be lurking a Calder or Flavin, if not a Jason Bruges...

>>SHOW

ECOBUILD

ExCeL, London

Review by Herbert Wright

Right: Gabrielle Omar – as seen on *The Apprentice* – of *Tea with an Architect* offers advice and a brew at *Ecobuild*

Where is a Segway when you need one? *Ecobuild* is huge, two vast fields of exhibitors either side of the full 600m-length of its ExCeL venue, so a day here can mean major trekking.

In this annual fair of sustainable building products and services, you recognise familiar trade-show phenomena immediately – the cacophony of trademarks and products, suits hovering hopefully on the edge of shell stands, lanyards and promo bags everywhere... but fewer 'promotion girls' than in times gone by. What else was going on?

For a start, there was an excellent seminar programme held simultaneously in no less than 10 walled pens. *Blueprint* checked out 'Large-scale self-build solutions:

European best-practice'. It may sound dry, but Ted Stevens of the National Self Build Association gave a fascinating case study on what may be architecture's next big thing.

Glitzier events happened in the green-walled *Ecobuild Arena* enclosure, such as Jonathan Dimpleby in conversation with Joanna Lumley, the latter now ambassador for Marks & Spencer's ethical drive. She was passionate, informed, and of course, charming beyond words. 'If I hadn't been an actress, I would have liked to be an architect or builder – it affects everything' she announced. 'I've just been faffing around being Patsy!'

Not everyone may be familiar with *Absolutely Fabulous*, for example the substantial presence from the Chinese solar-power sector. They were reluctant to be quoted about EU anti-dumping laws. Søren Rasmussen of Danish architecture practice Gottlieb Paludan was less gloomy. Specialising in striking eco-infrastructure, he reported that 'frankly, we don't meet



HERBERT WRIGHT

many customers, but the networking is good.' Jason Szpak of Siderise, supplier of insulation, commented that the show 'started off slow, but it's ramped up'. With whom? 'People interested in acoustic design.'

Accusations of greenwash are easy, but sustainable building is now regulated and real. The industry that supports it has followed, whether supplying bathroom fixtures or straw-bale walls, and way outnumbered design exhibitors, institutions, international trade delegations and others. Despite a map, it wasn't easy

to find some exhibitors – *Blueprint* even looked upwards in search of the Bat Conservation Trust, but to no avail.

The friendliest section, among a sea of reps with an instant smile, had to be *Tea with an Architect*. One of the architects was Graham Ford of GF+A, who revealed that those dropping in at *Ecobuild* were people either wanting to know about building eco-homes or retrofitting, or students seeking career advice. Founder Gabrielle Omar organises these accessible, free consultations UK-wide, and 940 architects signed up in one week alone. Have any of them appeared with le Corbusier glasses? *Blueprint* enquired. 'No', she replied, but 'there was one session where all the architects turned up in black!' That was Bristol...

Ecobuild may be a hard day's slog without a Segway, but for all the climate-change doom and zero-carbon hopes, the real business of sustainability is already trading here.