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2009

## Swarm and flicker - exhibition catalogue essay

Su Ballard

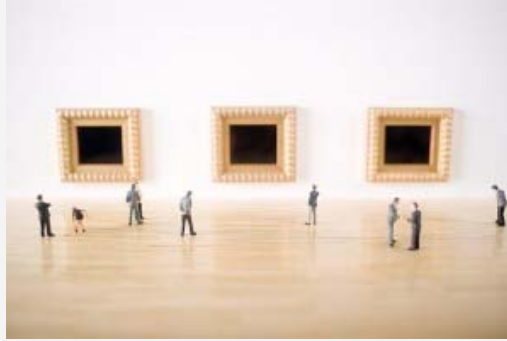
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Nov  
302009 **swarm and flicker**  
Publications\_Talks. ecosystems, Enjoy Gallery, hyper-reality, Max  
Bellamy, miniatures, Networks**Max Bellamy's Microcosms**[catalogue essay written to accompany Max's show at Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington. 19  
Nov 2009 - 12 Dec 2009.]

Locusts have no need for network technologies. For a locust to connect iphones, facebook and twitter are irrelevant. A day can start off pretty normal but in overcrowded conditions suddenly something totally new can be imagined and a swarm can amass momentum. Scientists now think that it is the overproduction of serotonin that causes this transformation and inspires the locusts to become mutually attracted, to gather, breed and eat. I can imagine being amidst the swarm addicted to each other, to movement, to growth. Unable to stop moving, eating, fucking; desire must become exponential and the choreography extreme. In humans serotonin is responsible for the regulation of mood, appetite, sleep, and muscle contraction. In popular fiction serotonin imbalance is often blamed for anxiety, fear, and horror. Bellamy's microcosms are documents, snapshots of these kinds of moments when individual behaviours are tempered by the possibility of collective dynamics. Where a small shift can lead to dramatic and irreversible change. In one work human figures swarm around a screen – its beacon of light suggesting some kind of solace, a break from the hellish world that surrounds them. Other figures are found loitering in a stark white cube. It is a non-space of addictive aesthetic power where civil disobedience is left outside the door and images are viewed through incessantly looping frames. Is there an ethics to this? Is Bellamy suggesting a new model for humanity; a kind of natural history where the proliferation of screen culture gives us, the observers, a chance to exploit a gap in the society of control?

**Here and there**

By its very nature, an online home is a continual work of re- development. Emerging out of the collective myre of time-starvation and obsessive desires for documentation this house sparrow is no different to any other. At one level an archive for the interesting and the familiar, for what I have done and what I might do, it is also a mnemonic, a reminder that I must get back to that. So here it is: a simultaneous clearing house, potential repository and emergent archive.

**Delicious Morsels**

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cyberneticzoo.com » Blog Archive » 1964 – Robot K-456 – Nam June Paik (Korean) & Shuya Abe (Japanese)

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Cybernetic Serendipity - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Seoul: First-time Visitors - TripAdvisor

Artist Dennis Adams Remakes Andre Malraux's "Imaginary Museum" in a New Video | In the Air: Art News & Gossip | ARTINFO.com

Jon Kessler

**Links**

A Vast Machine

Adventures in Jutland

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Museums use the vitrine as a tool to demonstrate something about the fabric of the world. We see the little people and imagine ourselves their size, scratching our names into the surfaces of the caves at Lascaux, or raising a spear in anticipation of a feast later that night. Nowadays museum displays are 'interactive' and authoritative voiceovers tell us how to approach the world spread before us in super-hyper textured 3D. We no longer have to imagine much. Bellamy relocates the human back amongst the scattered remains of the museum. But something is amiss. These vitrines are less about the miniature than about the gigantic. Through their attention to extreme realism Bellamy's scenes turn us into giants. Without directly affecting the system ourselves, we watch as Bellamy (with a child-like perversity) introduces a lethal virus into the box, just to see how quickly it distributes and maps the network effects of infection. And we don't stop him; we sit back and laugh amused at the traces of familiarity hidden within the surfaces of the screens. Every day and without choice we engage the ubiquitous interfaces of the military-industrial complex and more often than not we forget to notice the dramatic transformations this has on us. Like the locust just starting its day, there is potential for violence and there is great harm contained within the environments around us, but for now we are just switching on the lights and grabbing a coffee.

*For more images and documentation of Max's recent work see: <http://www.maxbellamy.com/>*



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The Art Life

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Vague Terrain

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