INTIMATE SCIENCE

Jan. 21 – March 4, 2012
Guest curated by Andrea Grover
Artists: BCL, Center for PostNatural History, Markus Kayser, Allison Kudla, Machine Project, Philip Ross

Jan. 20, Fri.
Lectures by A. Kudla + P. Ross. Lunch provided.
@ Margaret Morrison Hall #203, CMU. Co-presented by the CMU Schools of Art + Architecture, with support from the University Lecture Series.
Exhibition Tour with Curator + Artists. Meet on 1st floor.
Sponsored by the CMU Human-Computer Interaction Institute.

Jan. 21, Sat.
Mind Reading for the Left and Right Brain Workshop
with Machine Project. Details + registration: www.cmu.edu/millergallery

March 2, Fri.
6pm: Grand Opening of the Center for PostNatural History
4913 Penn Ave, Garfield
The most recent manifestation of artists working at the intersection of art, science and technology demonstrates a distinctly autodidactic, heuristic approach to understanding the physical and natural world. Intimate Science features artists who are engaged in non-disciplinary inquiry; they aren’t allied to the customs of any single field and therefore have license to reach beyond conventions. This kind of practice hinges on up-close observation, experimental learning, and inventing new ways for the public to participate in the process. And through their engagement with “intimate science,” a more knowledgeable public might well be able to influence what research is supported and adopted by the larger culture, and the walls of science can become more transparent.

For four months in the fall of 2010, I worked at a cozy desk in the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry at Carnegie Mellon as a research fellow hosted jointly by the Miller Gallery and the STUDIO. On a daily basis, students, faculty and visiting artists would stop by my front row seat at this frenetic concourse of technoscience dispatches. While my initial line of inquiry was artists embedded in scientific or industrial environments in the 1960s, I began to uncover a new narrative --- a tactile shift in discourse and practice between that moment and this one. While artists two generations ago were dependent on access to technicians, labs, computer time or manufacturers to realize works of scientific or technological complexity, those I was presently meeting had far greater agency to conduct this kind of work themselves. Even ambitious endeavors such as independent biological experiments, materials research and micromanufacturing can be conducted by today’s working artist — and not at a naive or removed distance.

Roger Malina, physicist, astronaut and executive editor of Leonardo, a leading journal for readers interested in the application of contemporary science and technology to the arts, describes this direction as “intimate science.” He writes,

“In an interesting new development in the art world, a generation of artists [is] now collecting data about their world using technological instruments but for a generation of artists [is] now collecting data about their world using technological instruments but for an interesting new development in the art world, a generation of artists [is] now collecting data about their world using technological instruments but for artists both make powerful art and help make science intimate, sensual, intuitive.”

And unlike the rare “Leonardo” polymath of the Renaissance, contemporary artists who operate across disciplines employ and not at a naive or removed distance.

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