



**NATALIE
JEREMIENKO**
& the Remnant/
Emergency ArtLab

9 November - 10 December 2010

Accompanying public program

Tuesday 9th November

Recent projects introduced by Natalie Jeremijenko from 5-6pm

Sunday 28 November

Remnant/Emergency ArtLab offsite event - see www.remnantartlab.com

Tuesday 30th November

Remnant/Emergency ArtLab participants talk from 5-6pm

Remnant/Emergency ArtLab & The OWL Project launch from 6-8pm

X curatorium members Lizzie Muller, Lian Loke, Tania Creighton, Holly Williams and Jacqueline Shilkoff. In association with the Neuberger Museum of Art, New York

Coinciding with the International Participatory Design Conference at UTS from 29 November - 3 December

Supported by Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, the Australian Academy of the Humanities, the UTS Research Centres for Contemporary Design Practices and Human-Centred Technology Design. The *Remnant/Emergency* ArtLab has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body and QUT Creative Industries.



remnantartlab.com

UTS Gallery is supported by Oyster Bay Wines & Coopers; Media Partner: 2ser



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The unruly nature of Natalie Jeremijenko

It is hard to describe Natalie Jeremijenko briefly. Brief descriptions require simple categories: artist, designer, activist, engineer. Whilst her famously polymathic education and career qualify her as all of these things, her practice amounts to more than the sum of its eclectic parts. The defining feature of Jeremijenko's unruly creative work is that, through sheer exuberance, it relentlessly overcomes boundaries. It overwhelms the distinctions between art and design, between professional and amateur and, ultimately, between human beings and the rest of the natural world.

Her practice is, fundamentally a form of ecological and political activism. But she does not seek to defend nature from humanity, she does not fight for the wilderness, or protect pristine landscapes from human destruction. Jeremijenko fights for an *urban* ecology in which human beings, in their own man-made habitat, are connected, tangibly, viscerally and emotionally, to the rest of nature. Stand in the bush, on a mountain, or even by the beach, and it is easy to feel part of the world. How can we feel that on the highway, in an apartment block, in a restaurant, in an art gallery?

This exhibition is both "X" for experimental design, and "X", for cross-fertilisation, cross-species collaboration and cross-disciplinary exploration. It presents an array of Jeremijenko's inventions, prescriptions, actions and stunts that seek connectivity with nature at both an empathetic and a consequential level. Jeremijenko enters the ecological fray at a moment when scientists concur on the question of causality (yes, human action currently degrades the environment unsustainably), but we are still far from

a consensus of action. Our own lifestyles and dependencies (multiplied through our exponentially growing populations) are the engines of our own destruction. Our resistance to change is propped up by our astonishing willingness to ignore consequences – even as they get closer and closer to home. Jeremijenko's work seeks to burst the anthropocentric bubble of consumption and convenience that will eventually carry us to oblivion.

She has (at least) three main tactics: radical anthropomorphism, deployment of the feral, and last but not least, an instinct for the spectacular. Her anthropomorphic works include *For the Birds* – an installation at the 2006 Whitney Biennial in which birds landing on perches triggered eloquent soliloquies, spoken from a birds-eye point of view, about the connection between the destruction of bird habitats and the spread of avian flu. She has attempted to put fish from the Hudson River on the board of her "OOZ inc." corporation – in order to give them a legal status in deliberations about the conditions of their habitat. Her "cross-species dinners" involve sumptuous feasts, by molecular chefs, that cater equally for the gastronomic needs of humans and other animals. These anthropomorphic stunts short circuit our habitual separatist attitude to other species, but also reveal the absurdity of the legal, moral and ethical structures that are required to maintain it.

All of her works are to some degree feral – on the border between domesticated and wild. They exploit the grey areas between legitimate and illegitimate, between natural and artificial, between human and animal. Her *Feral Robotic Dogs* are homemade hacks of consumer robotic toys that act as human agents – exploring their environment by detecting certain

pollutants. They embody the classically destabilising quasi-identity of the cyborg - somewhere between tool and toy, between machine and pet. Their feral cyborg nature forces us to question, what is *natural* in an urban ecology? They ask us to re-calibrate our perception of natural systems to include technologies positively, rather than straining to maintain distinctions that ultimately cast nature as a victim and technology as a hero or villain.

Jeremijenko's unique brand of participatory environmental action is marked by this seductive blend of DIY technology and amateur science. And it is a carefully orchestrated brand. Whilst her prolific activities may seem dizzyingly impulsive, they are underpinned by an acute understanding of the persuasive power of spectacle. Her own favoured description of her work is *mediagenic*. Her projects are made to look good on video, to sound good in a press release. And Jeremijenko herself is an important part of her brand. The internet is awash with movies of her in a cowboy hat, whizzing around on roller blades, strapped into giant wings, floating on handmade pontoons, hanging in trees. It is all too easy to dismiss such antics as environmentally themed froth, but the power and seriousness of her work should not be underestimated. Whilst other environmentalists may preach abstinence from a pulpit, Jeremijenko is harnessing a wild energy that can capture our attention, overwhelm our orthodoxies and offer arresting alternatives to our habitual relationship to the world we inhabit.

Lizzie Muller

Senior Lecturer, School of Design,
University of Technology Sydney

NATALIE JEREMIJENKO

Natalie Jeremijenko is an artist and engineer whose background includes studies in biochemistry, physics, neuroscience & precision engineering.

Based in New York, her work explores the impact of technology on society and the environment. She has participated in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, Documenta in Kassel, Ars Electronica in Linz.

Her recent survey show 'Connected Environments' was held at the Neuberger Museum of Art in New York, curated by Jacqueline Shilkoff.

A Rockefeller Fellow, she has served on the Faculty of Engineering at Yale University, the Visual Arts Department of the University of California at San Diego, and is currently a Professor of Visual Art at New York University and a Visiting Professor at the Royal College of Art in London.

She was recently named one of the 40 most influential designers by I.D. Magazine and one of the inaugural Top 100 Young Innovators by the MIT Technology Review.