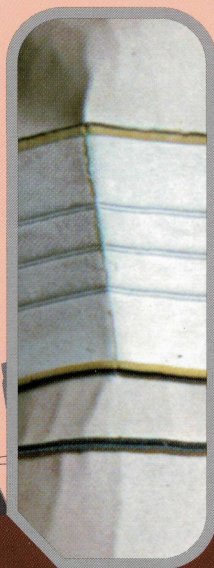
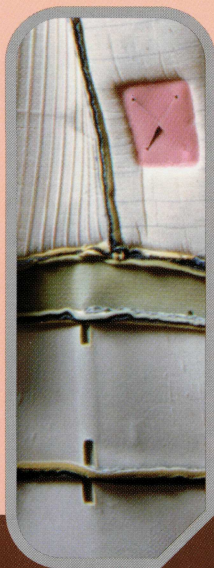


KIT

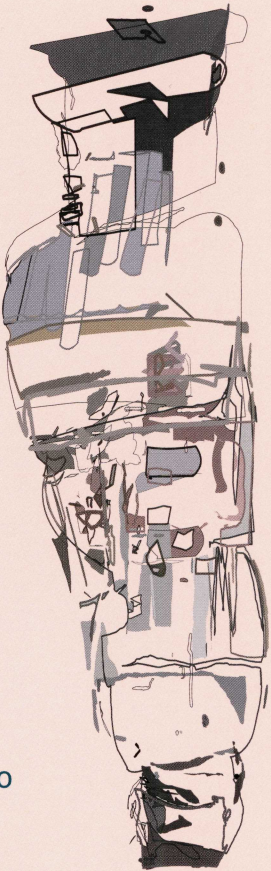


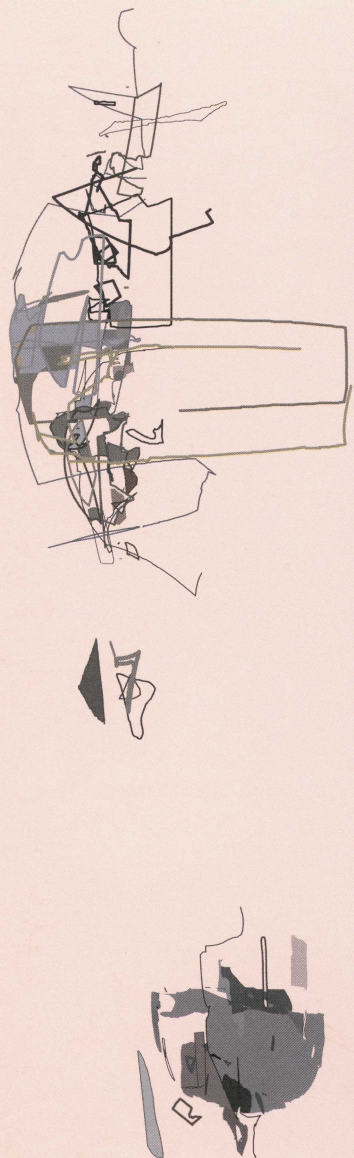
AUTOSKINNING : PASSIVE
ABDUCTION
No. 2



KIT is a composite, a creature which, like one of Félix Guattari's machinic assemblages, incorporates the organic and the inorganic, the subjective, technical, social and psychic, to produce new subjectivities which act in singular ways.⁽¹⁾ Parasitic, it feeds upon the underbellies of globalising systems. It suspends itself from the purlins and dwangs of non-places, exploring crevices left by the imperfect annealings of cyber-dominant functions. It revels in thwarted ecstasies and expiring dystopias. Like the DNA-shifting function of the HIV virus, which moves along a strand to disenable, almost inadvertently, its host, KIT's displaced logics force paradigm shifts, of value if not of cognition. Exploring alternate ecologies, the biochemist James Lovelock's logic found a Gaia whose ethical modalities depended solely upon the balance of chemical elements in the atmosphere. Similarly, KIT's projects deconstruct (in its classic sense) globalisation's systems, yielding progeny that unmask them by returning to them instances of inadvertence and experience. 'We are part of a global collective who seek to reintegrate the body into the material matrix.'⁽²⁾

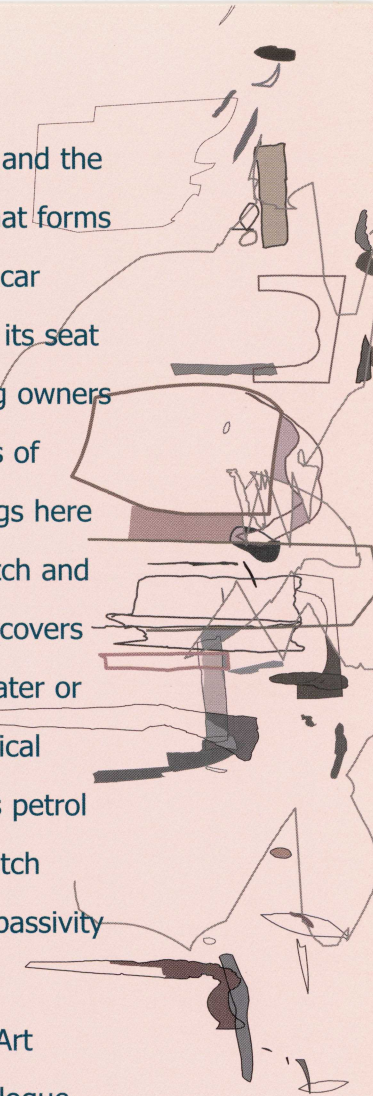
Autoskinning : Passive Abduction No.1 archives the way in which a car's safety systems default to the logic that a car must become obsolescent. KIT's black humour unpicks the ethic of the automobile safety regulatory





systems. Care, here is after the fact; the car and its systems are unnatural-born killers, their natural progeny newer and faster cars and the detritus of their passing. The project began with the proposition that forms altered by impact might offer a new methodology: 'impact art'. So car crashes are seen from the point of view of the car's internal skins, its seat covers and its lungs, the air-bags. While they signify safety, air-bag owners may now switch them off, after estimating the relative probabilities of being poisoned, suffocated or impaled. Airbag and seat-belt casings here provide mouth, lung and limb function for chrysalid forms that twitch and jerk in an enduring death-in-life. Their bodies are made from seat covers that have incorporated their inhabitants' genetic material, to a greater or lesser degree. These objects are beautifully crafted from the indexical traces of events whose relation to such globalising assemblages as petrol companies force us to recognise that somewhere there is an ill match between system and subject. The driver it seems manifests more passivity than control.

Recently, *DRIVE, power>progress<desire*, at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth, New Zealand, took the fast lane, its catalogue cover a detail from David Noonan's *M3* (1998): headlights converging into

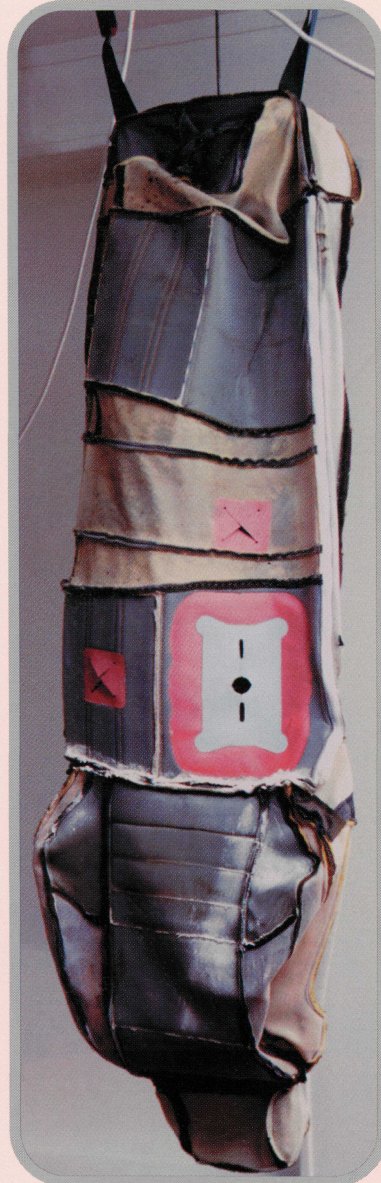
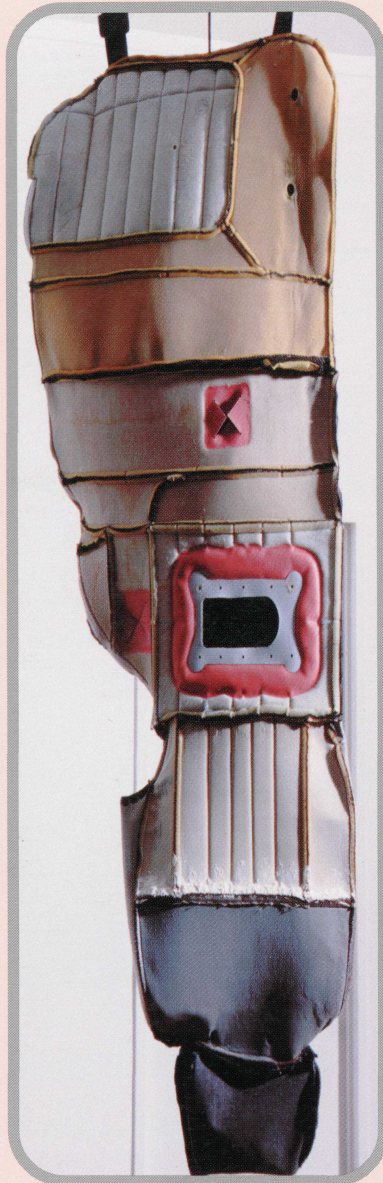


a girl's face at a point somewhere above her molars.⁽³⁾ The image's stilled antithesis, Charles Ray's *Unpainted Sculpture* (1997), which reconstituted a facsimile of a wreck in which a woman had died, was quickly framed as a memorial/monument for the famously crashed. Again and again, images of cars and highways offer conflicted visions of possibility and enclosure, duration and the ever-possible final cathartic moment. As Giovanni Intra points out, instead of catharsis, there is either death or an enduring disability.⁽⁴⁾

KIT's approach to road kill is consistent with their wider practice, which combines imitation and resistance, in a parodic subaltern strategy. Globalising programmes ignore specificities, of individual life or of location. The autopoietic machines of art inevitably clash with such conceptualisations, seeing them as interstices into which they may insinuate destabilising practices. Subjectivities of different orders develop, lived in those other non-places of cyber-space, the video monitor and the CD-Rom; or that privileged space, the art gallery. Like corporate bodies, KIT operates as an entity without individual faces, anonymous and genderless. A meta-contract, between art-event and viewer, recuperates the anonymity of such environments, but remains contained within the subjectivities of art.

KIT's *Greylands* (1999) asked web site viewers to design houses for themselves upon LeBreton Flats, in Ottawa, Canada. This polluted expanse has been grassed





over, a 'green' place in urban space. KIT were represented as housing developers in an onsite porta-cabin. Participants were given an index of the toxins present in the site they had chosen (this type of letting of information almost closed the project down) and were asked to use them productively: to become complicit with them. A klutzy robot disguised as a ride-on lawnmower and programmed using Global Positioning Satellite systems drew the plans onto the surveyed sites, tracing awkward interfaces between the virtual, the ideal and the actual. For these hearth-designing participants, asked to imagine and display their private lives as they might be played out in a toxic waste site, '(t)he very body of the connected witness happens to be the ultimate urban territory, a folding back over the animal body of social organization and of a conditioning previously limited to the core of the old city. In bodily terms, it resembles the core of the old familial *hearth*.'⁽⁵⁾

KIT's strange progeny love places in which deaths-by-hypertechnology are rationalised and ordered. Black Boxes provided sound-tracks for the *C.O.T.I.S.* (Cult of the Inserter Seat) works, such as that in which participants agree to be locked in a black container for ten minutes while the last sounds of air-crew and passengers echo around them.



".... C.O.T.I.S exposes the closed-circuit of mediated mourning, along with the silent satellite witnesses of cathode addiction. The medium may well be the message, but the messenger moves more swiftly when there is the scent of blood and smoke in the air."⁽⁶⁾

In *Autoskinning : Passive Abduction No 1*, KIT's parody of the speed-desire-death equation employs a carnivalesque-subaltern logic, as it both mimics and subverts, doubling submission with resistance. Within the semiotic flux of art, the abject names some limitations of its own.

Bridie Lonie

notes:

1. Félix Guattari, *chaosmosis, an ethico-aesthetic paradigm*, Power Press, Sydney, 1995
2. Dominic Pettman C.O.T.I.S. review, <http://members.tripod.com/~webkit/>
3. Greg Burke, Hanna Scott, *Drive,power>progress>desire*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, 2000
4. Giovanni Intra, "Too autopoietic to drive", pp 62-71, in Burke and Hanna, *Drive, power>progress>desire*
5. Paul Virilio "The Third Interval: A Critical Transition." In *Re-thinking Technologies*, Chapter 1. Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press, 1993
6. Dominic Pettman, C.O.T.I.S. - *The Art of the Accident* (1998) Published by NAI / V2 Organisation

Autoskinning: Passive Abduction No.2
Canberra Contemporary Art Space,
June 9th-July 21st 2001, Canberra, Australia

All photographs from
Autoskinning: Passive Abduction No.1
at The Blue Oyster Gallery, New Zealand 2001. Mixed media

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