

In the 1960s, people still wrote songs addressed to telephone operators, about their hopes and fears of making contact with absent lovers. Julianne Swartz's work requires participation from other people. It is about the magic and intimacy of 'getting connected'.

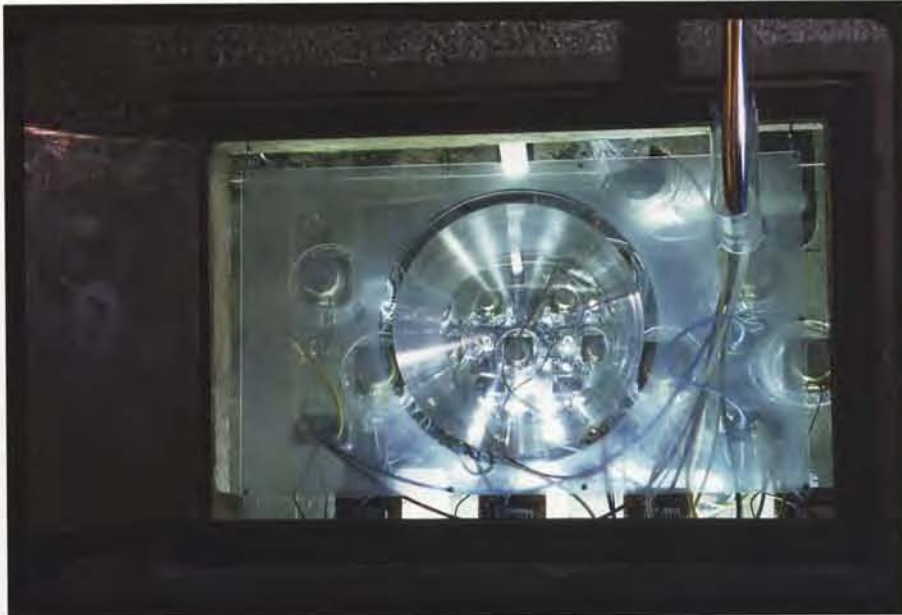
Scientific instrumentation has evolved a great deal since the sixties, but the human desire to use technology to be 'in touch', even in an immaterial way, remains the same. There are no touchy-feely soft toys in Swartz's work – she has a preference for fibre optics and plumbing plastics – but the whole point is that even these unaesthetic materials can be made to sing when animated by the human desire to transcend barriers and make contact with other people. Swartz's insistence on taking us 'backstage' undermines our defences, opens up the potential for intimacy. Just as her clinically technological materials nevertheless evoke the absent but warm and determined person who installed them into their playful, disruptive or transgressive patterns, so her preferred media of sound and light suggest, in their lack of materiality, an absent source, a presence like the sun, somewhere else.

The work has humour, a sense of fun, conjures both emotion and sentiment. Despite its lightness of touch, its legacy is that through disorientation we acquire the potential for re-orientation within a different understanding of our social and structural environment.
Lewis Biggs

Affirmation

We all form relationships with the buildings we inhabit. Everything from their location and design to the positioning of a light-switch conditions the way we think about and interact with them. Yet never is a building given the opportunity to reveal what it feels about us. For the duration of the Biennial Julianne Swartz has allowed the architecture of Tate Liverpool – a converted warehouse reopened as a gallery during the area's regeneration in 1988 – to do just that. Its walls, windows, sinks, ventilators and stairs have been given 'mouths' with which to communicate.

Disembodied voices, some familiar, others less so, address us as we navigate the gallery: 'I don't know your name, but I love you. We've never met, but I love you. We'll probably never meet, but I can still say that I love you...'. The building has come alive and is welcoming us. Initially these sounds slyly invade our subconscious, yet we soon become highly aware of the building as an active presence. The words keep finding us, transgressing the coding of a public space and allowing it to become an arena for private moments. By personalising the public, *Affirmation* reveals and questions the conflicting messages institutional buildings often convey.
Laurence Sillars



Somewhere Harmony, 2004, site-specific installation at Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. 1200 feet of Plexiglas tubing and plastic tubing, lenses, mirrors, fluorescent lights, speakers, 8-channel soundtrack, existing architecture. New York Commission, The New Museum, New York.

Can You Hear Me?, 2004, site-specific installation at The Sunshine Hotel, New York. PVC pipe, mirror, wood, existing architecture, metal sign, participants. 39 x 10 x 15 feet. New York Commission, The New Museum, New York.

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Up to 1 Hour
Up to 2 Hours
Up to 24 Hours
Please do not
leave your
vehicle parked
in this area
without a
permit from
the City of
New York