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|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | Mutant Toy Factory<br>Kahve Society, 2008<br>Toys, workstations, display shelf,<br>drawings, video and book  | 6 | Michael Anastassiades/Dunne & Raby<br>Design for Fragile Persons in Anxious<br>Times: Huggable Atomic Mushrooms<br>(Priscila), 2004 |
| 2 | Robotic Feral Dogs<br>Natalie Jeremijenko, Bristol Release<br>2008<br>Modified toy dogs, video workstations<br>with work in progress                     | 7 | Codemanipulator<br>Codemanipulator's Toybox, 2007<br>Cut out numbers, acrylic box   |
| 3 | Natalie Jeremijenko<br>Robotic Geese and Ducks, Bristol<br>Release 2008<br>Modified decoy birds, pool, pin board,<br>photographs, notes, sound recording | 8 | Unmask Group<br>IU Unmask Dolls, 2007   |
| 4 | Swarm Systems<br>e-puck robots. Algorithm by Jan Dyre<br>Bjerknes. With thanks to Bristol<br>Robotics Lab.   | 9 | Unmask Group<br>UM Unmask Dolls, 2007   |
| 5 | Dunne & Raby<br>Technological Dreams: Robots, 2007<br>Video  |   |   |

See brochure and [www.supertoy.org](http://www.supertoy.org)  
for details of online projects, exhibition  
tours, events and guest robots.  
Further information about the art and  
ideas can be found in the Reading  
Room open Tues - Sun 12-6pm.

## Introduction to the exhibition

### Supertoys: on play, affective machines and object relations

Foyer and Galleries 2, 3, 4 & 5

22 November 2008 - 18 January 2009

#### FOR EXHIBITION LAYOUT PLEASE SEE THE PLAN ON THE BACK OF THIS GUIDE

The title of this exhibition refers to the short story *Super-Toys Last all Summer Long* by Brian Aldiss. It tells the story of a couple whose child is a robot boy called David. The narrative focuses on two relationships: that between David and his mother, and David and his robot toy Teddy. David loves his mother, but his mother finds it hard to love her child. Teddy becomes the sounding board for David's emotions.

People often use toys in this way and strong feelings can emerge, for short or long periods, between children and toys, as they do between parents and their children. These ideas are explored in the theories of 'Object Relations', a type of psychoanalysis which places

relationships at the heart of what it is to be human, focusing on the individuals' development in relation to others, or 'objects'. SUPERTOYS explores relationships between people, toys, robots and others through artwork, technology and experiences.

Supertoys is part factory, part zoo and part play area. As in several recent Arnolfini exhibitions, this one includes opportunities for taking part and contributing to the exhibition. Stewards are on hand to help and advise.

Children and young people have been directly involved in this exhibition: developing ideas for Mutant Toy Factory, documenting events and designing the associated book. At weekends, children and young people will join the Steward team.

ARNOLFINI

T: 0117 917 2300 / 01  
E: [BOXOFFICE@ARNOLFINI.ORG.UK](mailto:BOXOFFICE@ARNOLFINI.ORG.UK)  
16 NARROW QUAY, BRISTOL BS1 4QA  
[WWW.ARNOLFINI.ORG.UK](http://WWW.ARNOLFINI.ORG.UK)

**MUTANT TOY FACTORY** is a place for people of all ages to take apart, examine, re-make and think about toys. The process starts with a pile of unwanted toys and, by following simple instructions, people can make a Mutant Toy for display. **SUPERTOYS: A USER'S MANUAL** is also on hand with examples and advice. The book is aimed at young children and is available to buy in the bookshop for £3.00.

The video and drawings show documentation from an earlier project run by **KAHVE SOCIETY** with children and staff at Headley Park Primary School. Some of the notes and readings by children are from D.W. Winnicott and Melanie Klein, pioneers of Object Relations.

The participatory nature of SUPERTOYS continues in Galleries 3 and 4. **NATALIE JEREMIENKO'S ROBOTIC FERAL DOGS** is an ongoing, collaborative project to convert toy dogs into activist tools for exploring local environmental conditions. The workstation shows work in progress on a new pack of **ROBOTIC FERAL DOGS**. On the wall are examples of previously modified toys and a video showing a previous release in New York.

The dogs are designed to explore former industrial sites and seek out chemical waste. Like sniffer dogs, they are modified to move in certain ways when they discover something. As with any data, what they find is open to

interpretation, but the artist's intentions are to shift some control for analysing industrial waste sites into the hands of local, untrained people who are usually kept out of this process.

Natalie Jeremijenko's **ROBOTIC GEESE AND DUCKS** combine decoy ducks with radio-controlled boats. Audio, photographs and notes were made by a group of young people, the New Generation Documenters, as their response to releasing the decoys on Bristol Docks to mix and meet the local wildlife. In this case, Jeremijenko's intentions are for people to observe and consider communication and integration between the local birds and the newcomers.

In **SWARM SYSTEMS**, e-pucks flash red LEDs at their rear, and this flashing is detected by the other robots' infrared sensors. They constantly search for other flashing robots and when they detect one they drive in the direction of the robot they see. This often forms a chain which is sometimes broken and reformed. This group relationship and communication is different from that seen in the robotic ducks, geese and feral dogs, and might affect the way people respond to this swarm-like behaviour.

**DUNNE & RABY'S** film **ROBOTS** shows a series of prototypes for new kinds of robot design and function. Robots are usually made and depicted as

animal, human or domestic products. These robots are simple, sculptural and intended for new kinds of domestic use. For example, the ring-shaped robot will find areas of lowest electromagnetic radiation in any space, so a person can choose to stand within it. Another dark coloured robot demonstrates its emerging behaviour over time. It acts nervously when people are around, and becomes agitated if someone gets too close. Home security might be a good use for this robot's neurosis.

**CHRIS CUNNINGHAM'S** music video for Bjork's song **ALL IS FULL OF LOVE** shows humanoid robots exhibiting arguably the highest emotional form of human behaviour - love.

**DUNNE & RABY'S HUGGABLE ATOMIC MUSHROOM** sculptures have the cuddly appearance of toys. They resemble the shapes of atomic clouds, formed by the heat of the massive explosion. Each cloud form for atomic explosions was given a female name, something common for toy manufacturers and children to do. The shape of this particular cloud was named **PRISCILA** after the 1957 atomic explosion in Nevada. The design is intended to help control individual anxiety about such a threat through rationality, rather than the common responses of paranoia or denial.

In Gallery 4 there are two works which *can* be played with. Like

**PRISCILA**, each resembles a toy, but also questions ideas of what a toy can be. **CODEMANIPULATOR'S TOYBOX** contains zeros and ones which can be played with like any building bricks or shapes, but also have the potential to write (intentionally or otherwise) programming code. **UNMASK GROUP'S** lifesize dolls allow us to project ideas of what traits and identities they might possess. Users can add different features such as teeth or body hair and their gender can be modified at will.

In Gallery 5 on the second floor is **PHILIPPE PARRENO'S THE WRITER**. The sound (clanks, scrapes and whirrs) for this artwork is heard throughout the building. A pen is held by an automaton from the 1700s adapted by the artist to write a phrase which gradually reveals itself. It is an early example of an autonomous machine. The linguistic and visual reference within the phrase is a quote from a Marx Brothers' film and raises again the question of what we see in the artwork – a real boy with intelligence and emotions or a programmed robot with none of these apparently human traits? What might it mean for toys and robots to have emotions and intelligence?

In addition to the works in the building, **ALEX MCLEAN'S BABBLE** is a system for authoring mechanistic sound poetry, commissioned for the Arnolfini website. <http://project.arnolfini.org.uk/babble>