



## CHINA BLUE

KINGSTON, RI

China Blue's exhibition *Seventh Kingdom* features new multimedia sculptures, or rather, automated systems that combine video, sound, water, and recycled materials to suggest an artificial but realistic landscape [Main Gallery of the Fine Arts Center, University of Rhode Island; March 1—17, 2010].

Installed near the gallery's main entrance, the ten-minute video *City Fish*, 2008, lures us into the small, dark exhibition space. Two goldfish swim back and forth in the small confines of a glass bowl, accompanied by the sound of water bubbling in a tank. Sounds of a screeching car, a barking dog, a gunshot, and lightning soon interrupt this aquatic reverie, causing the fish to freeze—a comical illustration of the contrast between urban and nature sounds.

*Hygro Rhizome*, 2010, comprises six faux-botanical sculptures wired together like a root network. Each features a small light aimed at the center of a water-filled, yellow bulb-like structure. Suspended from these bulb forms, recycled guitar strings suggest active growth. The operation of this work is completely dependent, however, upon water level: any volume reduction or chemical contamination causes the light to dim.

Across the room, *8 Bit Crickets*, 2010, is a more elaborate installation. It features four black, lamp-like structures standing about six feet tall, from which four separate circuits are suspended. The blink of a small blue light convincingly triggers the random sounds of crickets. The piece exemplifies how, as a sound artist, China Blue explores the complexity of audio frequency, focusing on its connection to electrical current.

*E-Rosa*, 2010, the most complex piece in the show, presents three leafy vines with red blossoms. Both plant elements are fashioned out of plastic and appended to a network of copper wires that extends from an electrical energy source above. Two small blue lights alternately illuminate each strand, causing the vine leaves to curl and tremble as if a breeze were blowing. A series of five drawings, installed across the opposite wall, details China Blue's intricate plan to recreate an elaborate floral vine.

*Sonic Primordia*, 2010, is based on Carl Sagan's description of the cosmos, "We are all star stuff harvesting star light." Placed in the center of the room, this large reconstruction of lungs stands below a wall-projection of the galaxy and transmits the sound of a person breathing. A console allows us to alter the pace of breath, which also shifts the projection, suggesting that space and air are synonymous with movement.

*Circuit Cerebellum*, 2010, a much smaller sculpture, is an anatomical model of the human brain covered with electronic components. By suggesting the expansion of human consciousness, China Blue intimates that—one day—we will thrive in an artificial landscape. The seventh kingdom of biology has yet to be identified. *Seventh Kingdom* places sound and electronic frequency on the same level as animal, plant, fungi, and bacteria, thus positing sound as the new, as yet undiscovered, biological taxonomy.

—Jill Conner

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: **China Blue**, *E-Rosa*, 2010, guitar strings, pager motors, recycled anti-static circuit bags, acetate, electronic components, dimensions variable (courtesy of the artist); **Alon Levin**, *Or Why Not Celebrate the Past Before the Future Will Come (accounts of happenings I, II, III)*, 2010, installation, painted wood (courtesy of the artist, Klemm's Gallery, Berlin, and The David Roberts Foundation Fitzrovia, London; photo: Alessandra Chilá, 2010)