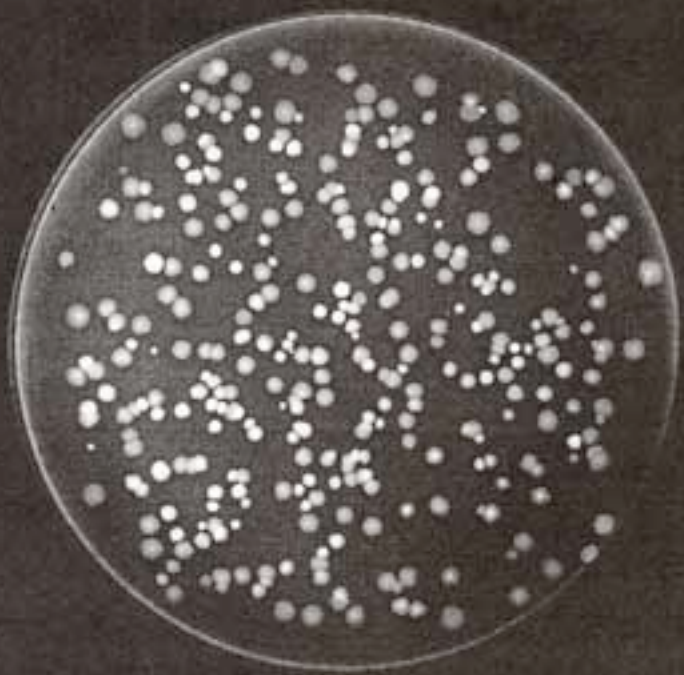


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weekend
MAG

January 19, 2001

Let man have dominion over the fish
of the sea, and over the fowl of the
air, and over every living thing
that moves upon the earth...genesis



Wood Street Galleries gets interactive. See page 22

Eduardo Kac, Genesis

By MARY THOMAS
Post-Gazette Art Critic

So you think all that splicing-of-jellyfish-parts-into-monkeys hanky-panky — which caused such a stir last week — is only going on in some Brave New science lab in remote Oregon? Uh-uh. Artists too have picked up on the genetic manipulation of life forms, giving new meaning to the notion of the creative act. And a prime example is here in Pittsburgh.

The work is "Genesis," by controversial global figure and transgenic artwork pioneer Eduardo Kac, one of four projects in "Interactive Domains," which opens tonight at the Wood Street Galleries. Chicago-based Kac will give a free gallery talk at 1 p.m. tomorrow.

Also showing is a new work, "Playworld.02," by Claudia Hart and the Swinepearls, from New York. Murray Horne, gallery curator and manager, says that of the four, this computer-animated piece comes closest to a "gaming model." Hart draws from arcade games and television to structure her work while simultaneously deconstructing those same influences.

INTERACTIVE DOMAINS
WHERE: Wood Street Galleries, Downtown
WHEN: Opening Reception from 5-7:30 tonight
and Eduardo Kac will give a free gallery talk at
1 p.m. tomorrow. The exhibition runs through
Nov. 10.
HOURS: 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Tues. and Wed.; 11
a.m.-7 p.m. Thurs. through Sat.
INFORMATION: 412-471-5305

a m c a t i n v s
m a t i n s

If a component of Hart's playfulness is parody, "Text Rain," by New Yorkers Camille Ulteback and Romy Achilber, engages through poetry, a quality that won Horne's appreciation.

"It's very, very poetic — a very, very beautiful thing," Horne says. "One of the criticisms of electronic art is that it's cool, technical first, then art. These are all mature artists [who've surpassed that]." Visitors find themselves intervening uniquely in a rain of letters that make up words to lines from Evan Zamroth's "Talk You."

Horne compares Canadian artist Luc Courchesne's "Paysage (Landscape) No. 1" — a room-sized virtual landscape set in a park in Montreal — that won the Grand Prix in the InterCommunication Center Tokyo Biennial in 1997 — to landscapers "in the tradition of Manet and Monet, rich with greens." Exhibition visitors will be able to interact with virtual visitors to the garden.

While each of the artists in the exhibition receive equal billing under the show's theme of interactive work, Kac's arrives serendipitously one week to the day after ANDi, the world's first transgenic monkey, was presented to the world.

This coincidence will no doubt please the artist, who has mused philosophically on the social aspects of his biojects to a broad, multinational audience, and seems invigorated by each new platform. If his isn't a household name yet, it may be because the company he keeps expresses itself mainly in scientific, intellectual and digital journals.

But last year his all-ino "GFP Bunny" landed him in the popular media, including an interview with Peter Jennings on ABC News.

The rabbit, Alba, which was birthed in a lab in France last year, has in common with ANDi a jellyfish gene that emits a green glow when exposed to ultraviolet light. Named "green fluorescent protein" (hence the GFP of Kac's title), the gene is popular in genetic research labs because it's an easily detectable marker.

Rather than scientific applications, however, the value that Kac appears to be after is "shock," as in the other-worldly effect a green sheen can give to a fluffy pet. One of his hopes is that a hen exposed to this biotrick, the equally fascinated and horrified viewer will be prodded to ask, "What next?"

Kac firmly explains his intent when describing the artwork, which he says "comprises the creation of a green fluorescent rabbit, the public dialogue generated by the project, and the social integration of the rabbit."

He sees the project as a "complex social event" that reaches beyond the animal's "formal and genetic uniqueness." His motivation is to spark an ongoing, multidisciplinary and public dialogue about the "cultural and ethical implications of genetic engineering," which he sees as crucial and overdue. Kac suggests that the issues are subtle as well as obvious.

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