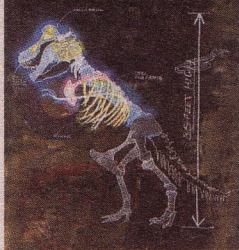


guide

exhibitions

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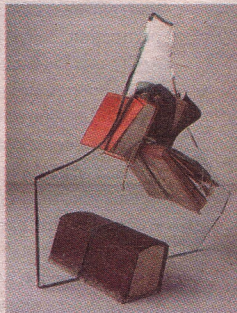


● **Keith Tyson**
London

Shaggy-haired

● **Fusion Now!** London

Art critic JJ Charlesworth turns the green debate on its head, curating a show that has artists thinking less about conservation and carbon emissions and more about positive energy. From the symbolic, courtesy of the late John Latham (work pictured), to the utopian in the flawed

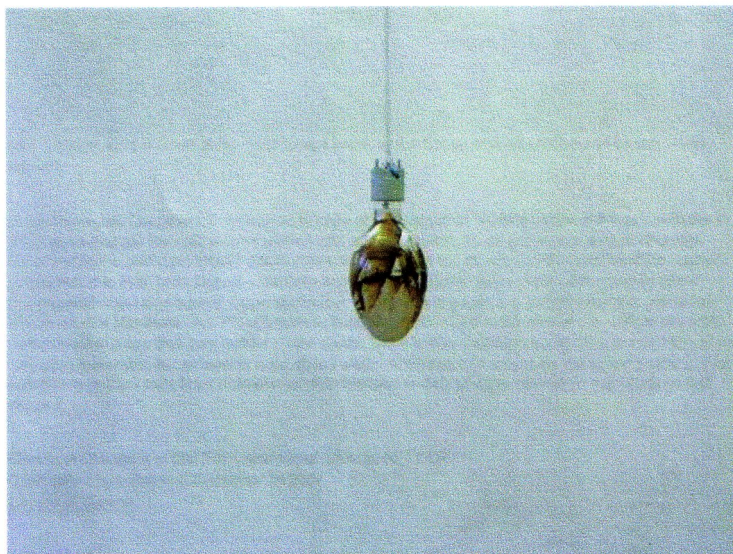


designs of Mark Titchner, artists reflect on society's relationship with nuclear fusion. For those uncertain of the benefits, Laura Oldfield Ford and the satirical self-help organisation With offer solutions to a surfeit of green fever. **JESSICA LACK** *Rokeya, WC1, Wed 21 to Dec 20*



Mark Titchner, Ivy meet Mike, 2007 Image courtesy the artist and Vilma Gold, London

Essentially, though, it doesn't really matter how you choose to package this exhibition (as with many group shows the underlying subtexts of the works are not curtailed by the boundaries of curatorial suggestion; in this case the politics of energy production) for it offers a well-considered glimpse into contemporary art practices. There are artists who spring to mind when reading the brief: Mark Titchner, with his acerbic video works that reveal the shadier issues at the heart of governmental and media messaging, seems the perfect choice. There are no slogans present in Titchner's latest animation, but this footage of hydrogen bomb explosions follows in his hypnotic tradition: optically shifting apertures radiate toxic light like a kaleidoscopic redesign of the sun.



Roger Hiorns, Untitled, 2007 Image courtesy Corvi-Mora, London

Squint all you like at Roger Hiorns's giant light bulb but you will go blind before discovering evidence of the semen supposedly coating its surface. Illusion is also present in the work of the late John Latham: the avant gardist's 1990 assemblage 'God is Great (#1a)' appears to make visible the conceptual crux point between religion, philosophy, art and science yet the glass division between the severed theological tomes shifts depending upon your vantage point. The basement space, meanwhile, has been taken over by quasi-enviro-capitalist group WITH (withyou.co.uk) who seek to profit from "environmental anxieties". This "think base" – full of adhered bits of stationery, doctored polystyrene heads and hand-drawn and video evidence of their pseudo plan to brand water sourced from melting icebergs – parodies the inefficiencies of both the charity and corporate-sector marketing strategy.

Nuclear Fusion and Art's Fission

By mute
Created 30/01/2008 - 4:03pm
By Nuno Rodrigues

In FUSION NOW! is curator J.J. Charlesworth's promotion of technologically – not socially – produced abundance as political as it claims to be, and were the artists on (modernist) message?
Review by Nuno Rodrigues

FUSION NOW! MORE LIGHT, MORE POWER, MORE PEOPLE is no ordinary art exhibition and yet it claims to be a show about 'art's relationship to the political world of the present.' This is not to say that contemporary art is particularly uninterested in the politics of the present day; there are numerous examples to the contrary. The peculiarity of FUSION NOW!, however, stems from the



Laura Oldfield Ford, *Your Decadent Sins will Reap Discipline*, 2007

WITH's work, *g-Part 1: Think-base Artefacts* (2007), presents the process that led an advertising agency to win a spurious brief, concocted by the collective, to 'relaunch its brand of water'. WITH's ironic ventriloquism of corporate 'social responsibility,' with its cool image, associated jargon and advertising techniques, seems to be targeting the blatant transformation of the 'green cause' into a fashionable and expensive, middle class product. The work would appear to address the problem of 'soft' or corrective environmentalism which advocates minute but accurate corrections in (middle

class) consumer habits as a means to 'correct' environmental problems, neatly side-stepping the environmentalism which proposes radical, even if regressive, social change. Furthermore, the aesthetics of 'process' and bricolage deployed by the advertising campaign suggests that contemporary art's interest in makeshift objects and assemblage may also be undergoing a parallel, market oriented appropriation.

The fact that the art exhibited is not adequate to the idea that prompted the exhibition is not a problem in itself. Despite Charlesworth's optimistic description of some of the works, he is not claiming to have found in this art an unconditional ally for the cause of fusion energy. It is nonetheless interesting to see that against the backdrop of technological optimism, art seems to hold the position of prudence and suspicion. What is more disconcerting is that, once these artworks are read politically, art's reserve is grounded on a more or less incisive critique of current capitalism that, positively, does not lead to an optimistic embrace of technological progress and material abundance. The connection between Puritanism and the formation of capitalism is a historic given. On the other hand, in classical economic theory the increase of value is related to the principle of scarcity. But it is also a fact that environmental activism is, in its most radical form, waging war