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## IMAGE CONSCIOUS

Karen Archey's Criticism and Commentary on Art 2.0



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### JODI's Blow Out Performance at Foxy Production



Just as Foxy Production co-owner and director John Thomson began to announce that the following performance by JODI was indeed safe, three large turquoise containers of oxygen commenced hissing, making Thomson's speech inaudible. The containers, bearing an uncanny resemblance to miniature vintage bombs, expelled air blowing in the faces of unsuspecting onlookers. All requisite opening chatter suddenly came to an awed close, and I began to doubt whether Thomson was correct that my safety was guaranteed. Although it isn't often that I enjoy performances in which I feel threatened, JODI did so with a slick brusqueness prompting me to consider myself as a little uptight.

The untitled performance takes place amidst the opening of Foxy's "Highways Connect and Divide," an exhibition focusing on mapping systems of interconnectivity such as the internet and, well, highways, featuring big name artists Cory Arcangel, Kerry Tribe, Tauba Auerbach, Nam June Paik, and Sterling Ruby, among others. JODI, the infamous internet art duo (Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans) decided to present a performance rather than recontextualize work they've made for the internet, although they've staged this performance previously. "After many discussions we trusted them to both present something relevant to the exhibition and safe to our audience" asserts Thomson.

# FOXY PRODUCTION

It may remain a little oblique how exactly the performance works within the rubric of the exhibition, but everyone did leave the gallery unharmed. As one may tell from the above video, by the end of the five-ish minute staging the audience begins to interact with bursts spurting from the cans of air, adjusting to the commanding phenomenological experience. The absurdity of attempting to socialize in an environment created for showcasing art seems heightened, and all attention is demanded by the work. The social forum provided the gallery—which so often overrides the importance or autonomy of a work being viewed—is ripped away by this performance.

But what does it mean to let out a few cans of compressed air in a gallery? “It clearly deals with the repurposing of technology – albeit a very simple one – which is a constant in JODI’s work” follows Thomson, “there’s also a kind of antagonism to the idea of the polite and pleasurable art experience...and yet like a lot of their work it was really quite funny!” Personally, I saw JODI’s performance as a perfect blend of poeticism and politics—it seemed as if the work was literally breathing out into its audience, giving it some sort of life if for only five minutes.

Most thrillingly, for once the art is back in charge.