

## MOUTHS OF ILLUSION: BEYOND THE MACHINE

INSTALLATION OF VIDEO — TEXT — SCULPTURE — SOUNDSCAPE

SYDNEY 2024

*Mouths of Illusion: Beyond The Machine* assembles videos, poetic texts, sculptures and soundscapes that searingly **deconstruct** the nature of the **ego-mind**, regurgitating a **language universe** of signs and symbols that generate phantom meanings born of the **'me-it'** relationship.

Compiled over 5 years by artists **Nick Frost** and **Nick Kealey** and first shown at the 2020 NZ Fringe Festival, the work speaks of *Manufactured Optimism* - the relentless meta-narrative of **want** in bright-brave utopias of 'choice' fanned by sensory-emotive-intellectual lures and pacifiers of instant gratification where identities are fabricated in automatising soundbitey **therapy-mantras** out of big-brother faces in ever-subtler loops of self-hypnosis.

*Massive Discontent* is the result - the ogre of inevitable opposites, ironic turnings, upwellings of doubt, scams and diminishing returns of the machine, wounding satires of alienation, the soul's dark night of boredom, victimisation...

Finally, *It's Up To You* - to birth responsibility, catharsis, refuge, sanity - in ageless truths or koans where the materialist, polarising ego-mind dissolves to a **borderless here-now-this awareness** beyond encrusting paradigms of subject-object, self-other, name, form, time, space, cause, flux, birth, death...

**Our Machine** - a porridge of postmodernist deconstruction, Lacanian psychology, Dada, Surrealism, Pop-Art, Bauhaus, De Stijl, Mondrian's 'Neo-Plasticism', abstract expressionism, fantasy art and the alienating sludge of internet culture - speaks of fixation, atomisation, regurgitation, handle-turning in the desire-disillusion Life Wheel born of our basic **'me-other' delusion**. **'Beyond the Machine'**, though severely elusive, points to deconstruction, spontaneity, surprise, unlimitation, emptiness, joy, transparency, freedom, peace, coolness, *oneness*...

**PERSONNEL**   **Nick Frost** writer - actor - videoist - sculptor - sonic artist   **Nick Kealey** videoist - sculptor - actor - sonic artist   **Gabrielle Gazal** marketing director  
**Alicia Grady** co-curator - graphic designer   **CONTACT**   www.mouthsofillusion.com   nfrost@odp.com.au   T: 0450 755 212   0414 414 658

## **MOUTHS OF ILLUSION: BEYOND THE MACHINE**

**INSTALLATION OF VIDEO — TEXT — SCULPTURE — SOUNDSCAPE**

**SYDNEY 2024**

**Nicholas Frost**     **Artistic Director. Conceptual, Video, Sculptural, Sonic Artist**

**Nicholas Kealey**     **Video, Sculptural, Sonic Artist**

**Gabrielle Gazal**     **Marketing Director**

**Alicia Grady**     **Co-Curator and Graphic Designer**

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*Mouths of Illusion: Beyond The Machine* received its first season at the **2020 New Zealand Fringe Festival** in Wellington, running from 29 February to 15 March, over 16 consecutive 12-hour days, attracting **1100 visitors**.

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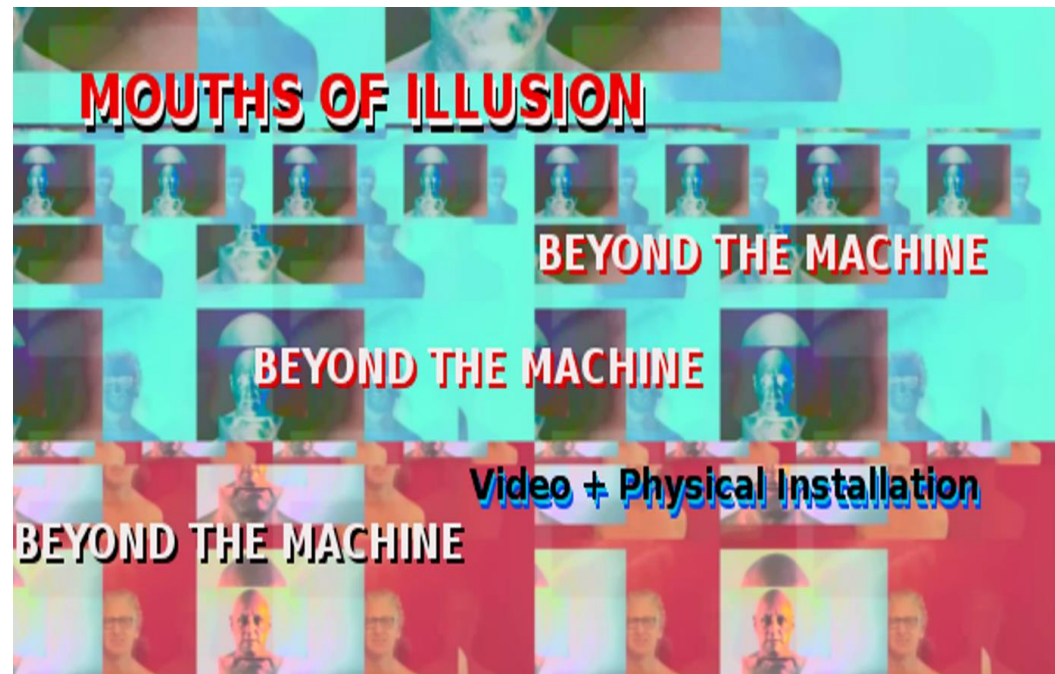
## OVERVIEW

*Mouths of Illusion: Beyond The Machine* is a multi-medial installation of videos, large poetic texts, sculptures and soundscapes that searingly deconstructs the nature of the ego-mind.

The work speaks of *Manufactured Optimism* - our relentless seeding of want within bright-brave utopias of choice, minimal attention span fanned by sensory-emotive-intellectual lures of instant gratification where identities are fabricated in repetitive automatising soundbites and therapy-mantras out of big-brother faces in ever-subtler loops of self-hypnosis.

*Massive Discontent* must follow, in the form of necessary opposites, ironic turnings, upwelling of doubt, anger at the machine's diminishing returns, confusion at shadows, wounding satires of alienation, soul's dark night of boredom, victimisation, suicide thoughts...

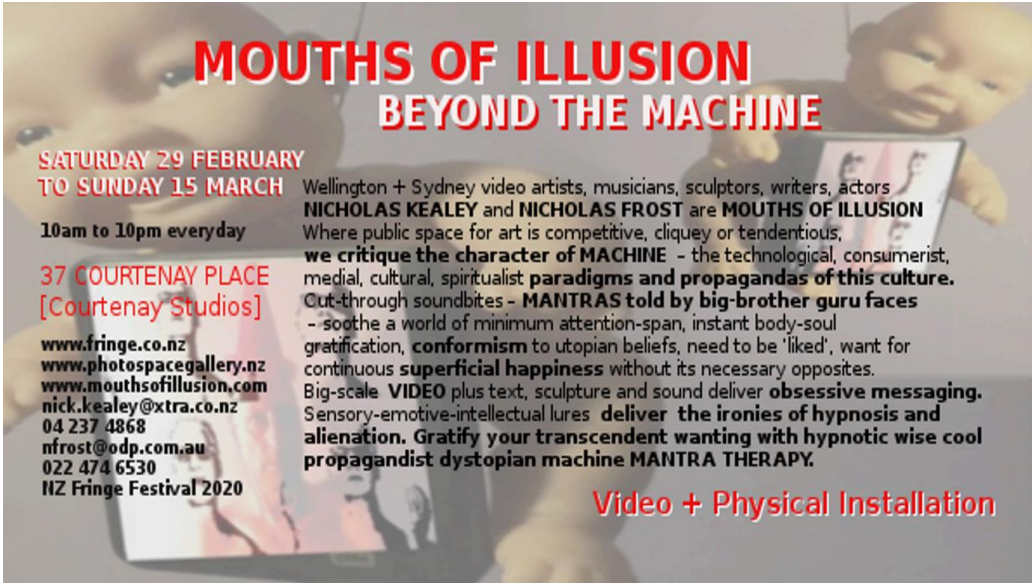
At last we say *It's Up To You*, as we birth responsibility, refuge, catharsis, sanity, in ageless truths and koans where the separative, polarising ego-mind gives way to a borderless awareness beyond encrusted paradigms of name, form, time, space, flux, cause, birth, death...



Video artists, musicians, writers, sculptors and actors **Nicholas Frost and Nicholas Kealey** gain inspiration from the Dadaists, Surrealists, Abstract Expressionists, Pop-Art, Bauhaus, De Stijl, Mondrian's 'Neo-Plasticism', fantasy art, and the obsessive-alienating dynamics of internet culture.

For the artists, '**Machine**' speaks of limitation, atomisation, the illusion of subject-object duality, the desire-disillusion cycle, desire, want, fear, cheap euphoria, materialist demand for quantity, control, repetition, regurgitation, robotism, habit, consumerist prostitution, competition, instant gratification, handle-turning, elitism, fixation, 'living death'.

**Beyond the Machine**, while necessarily elusive, speaks of un-limitation, enquiry, deconstruction, spontaneity, surprise, joy, transparency, emptiness, freedom, peace, coolness, oneness.



**MOUTHS OF ILLUSION  
BEYOND THE MACHINE**

**SATURDAY 29 FEBRUARY  
TO SUNDAY 15 MARCH**

**10am to 10pm everyday**

**37 COURTENAY PLACE  
[Courtenay Studios]**

**www.fringe.co.nz  
www.photospacegallery.nz  
www.mouthsofillusion.com  
nick.kealey@xtra.co.nz  
04 237 4868  
nfrost@odp.com.au  
022 474 6530  
NZ Fringe Festival 2020**

Wellington + Sydney video artists, musicians, sculptors, writers, actors **NICHOLAS KEALEY** and **NICHOLAS FROST** are **MOUTHS OF ILLUSION** Where public space for art is competitive, cliquy or tendentious, **we critique the character of MACHINE** - the technological, consumerist, medial, cultural, spiritualist **paradigms and propagandas of this culture.** Cut-through soundbites - **MANTRAS told by big-brother guru faces** - soothe a world of minimum attention-span, instant body-soul gratification, **conformism** to utopian beliefs, need to be 'liked', want for continuous **superficial happiness** without its necessary opposites. Big-scale **VIDEO** plus text, sculpture and sound deliver **obsessive messaging.** Sensory-emotive-intellectual lures **deliver the ironies of hypnosis and alienation. Gratify your transcendent wanting with hypnotic wise cool propagandist dystopian machine MANTRA THERAPY.**

**Video + Physical Installation**

2

**VIDEOS**

1. **Four video monitors** (1200 mm x 900 mm), projecting 32 original videos in loops (total: 6 hours running time).

These represent **three Installation phases:**

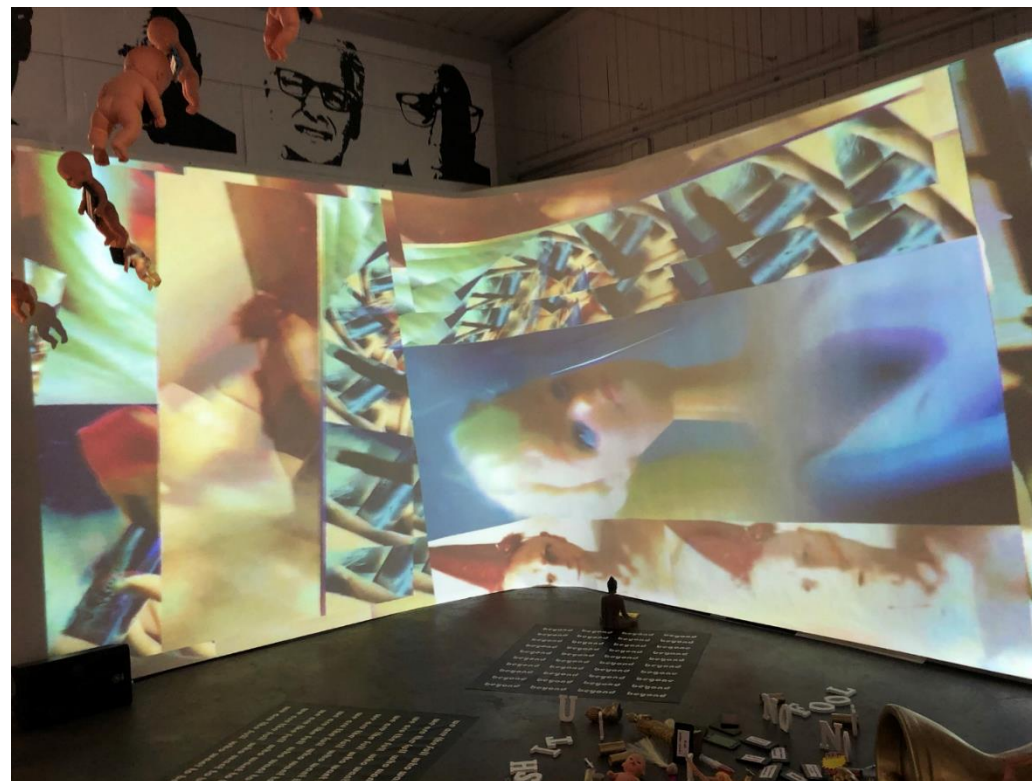
- (1) *Manufactured Optimism* (naïve aspiration and positivism)
- (2) *Massive Discontent* (creative disillusion and hiatus)
- (3) *It's Up to You* (self-responsibility, awareness).

Large faces deliver repetitive mantras and advice, evoking 'mirrors to our psychological needs and fears'.

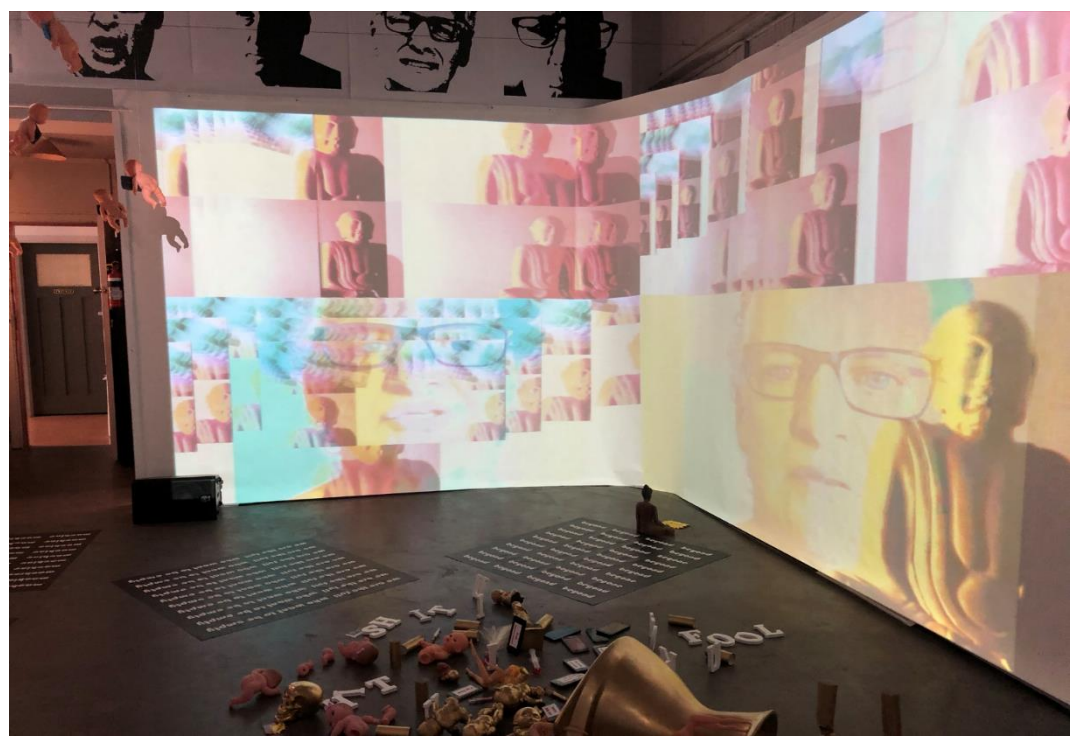
2. Floor and ceiling projections of subliminal natural imagery relate to the Poem in text panels (see **Section 3** below).

3. Short explanatory videos featuring the artist Nicholas Frost.

Visit website [www.mouthsofillusion.com](http://www.mouthsofillusion.com) for a full range of videos.







3

### INTEGRATED POEM IN 37 TEXT PANELS

Through-designed colour text plates in free-hanging panels.  
Several key panels repeated in black and white for entry use.

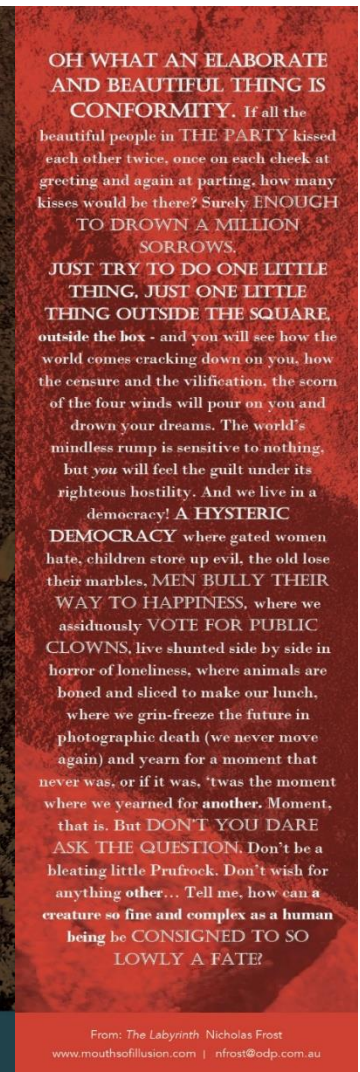
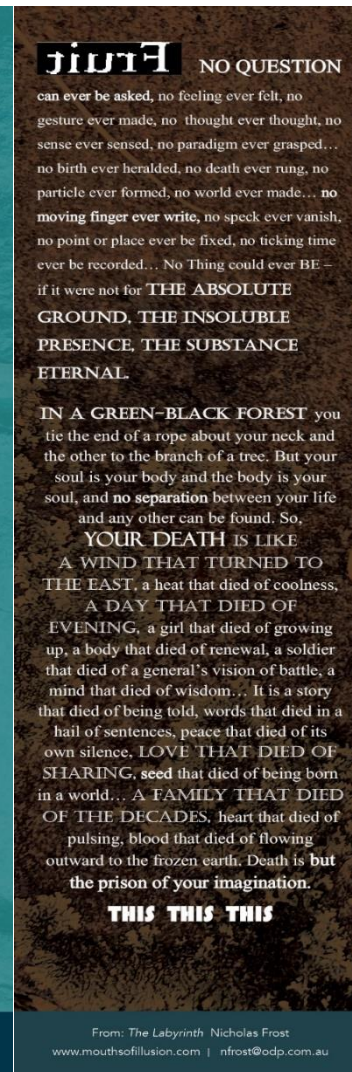
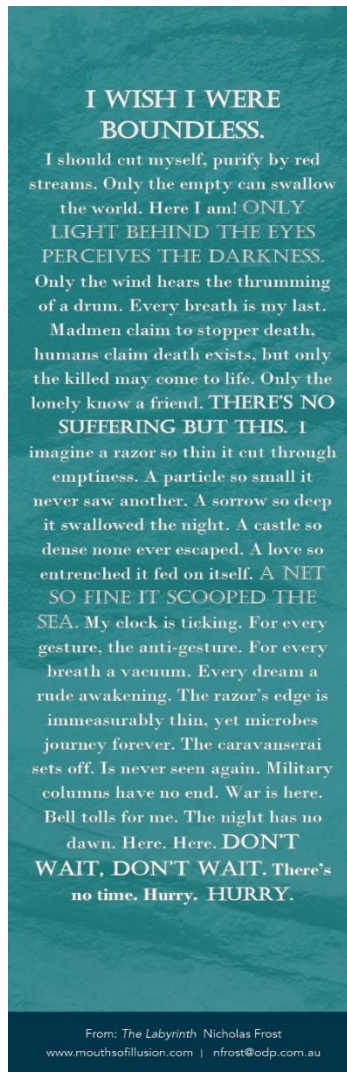
This work forms a **single integrated poem in 37 panels**, titled *Mouths of Illusion: Beyond the Machine*.

The poem constitutes poetry, mantra and commentary according to the three Installation phases.

Intimately linked with the video texts, the poem analyses our collective human experience in seeking 'creative self-awareness' beyond 'reflexive narcissism'.

Sizes: 1200 mm x 900 mm = 37.

Visit website [www.mouthsofillusion.com](http://www.mouthsofillusion.com) for the full poem as a single text.





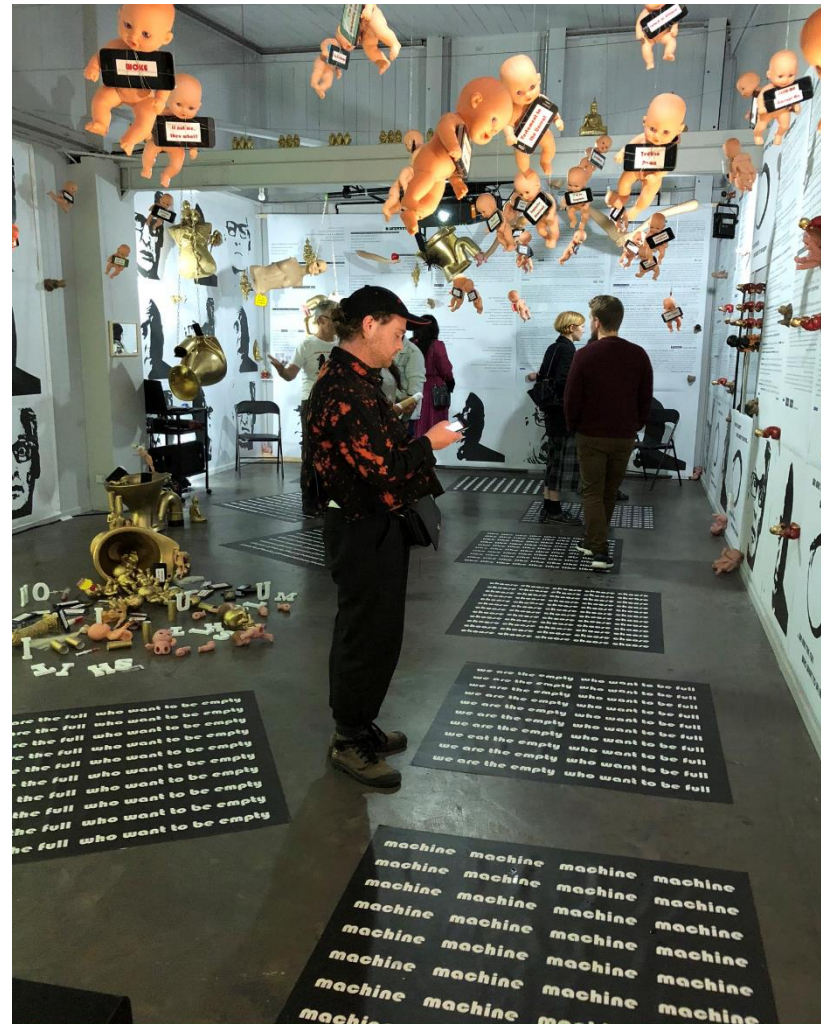
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## FLOOR TEXT PANELS



19 panels of reiterated mantras, forming a walkable circular journey, signifying 'awareness in its modes of densification and expansion'.


Black vinyl with white text. Size: 900 mm x 900 mm = 19.

no you no it no between  
no you no it no between  
no you no it no between  
no you no it no between  
no you no it no between  
no you no it no between  
no you no it no between





<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>OUROBOUROS PANELS (Various)</b></p> <p>Panels with the <b>ourobouros symbol</b>, ‘the wheel of life’, evoking ‘the relationship between material and abstract awareness’ through two core mantras, <i>‘We are the empty who want to be full’</i> and <i>‘We are the full who want to be empty’</i>.</p> <p>The panels link and alternate with Persona-Shadow Headshots (<b>Section 6</b>, below).</p> <p>Size: 900 mm x 900 mm = 12. (4 as black vinyl floor panels)</p>	<p><b>WE ARE THE EMPTY WHO WANT TO BE FULL</b></p>  <p><b>WE ARE THE FULL WHO WANT TO BE EMPTY</b></p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>PERSONA-SHADOW HEADSHOTS</b></p> <p>Black and white Mouths of Illusion <b>artist headshots</b> in progressive emotive states, linked with Ourobouros panels (<b>Section 5</b>, above), denoting ‘limiting need and its repressed opposite’, or ‘I’ and ‘It’, under the title: <i>Persona and Shadow</i>.</p> <p>(a) Composite shots: 900 mm square, in black and white = 12. (b) Solo Shots: 900 mm square, in black and white = 12.</p>	

		 <p><b>PERSONASHADOWPERSONASHADOWPERSONASHADOWPERSONASHADOW</b></p>
<b>7</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SCULPTURE ZONES</b></p> <p><b>1. Life-size female mannequins</b>, one recognisably whole but dismembered, crowned with barbed wire and adorned with intrusive labelling, segueing to other limbs hanging in space, evoking Eve, the World Mother as ‘the disembodiment of psychic unity and beauty, as <i>the anima</i>, creator of the shadow, of Other, of disintegrated psychic material, of life as schizophrenic commodification, as Eve as ‘woman as consumable object’ in a debased garden of Eden’ amid ‘incessant labelling as atomised visions of reality’.</p> <p><b>2. A mass of flesh-coloured Eve or Barbie dolls</b>, in numerous positions, mirroring the mannequins in miniature.</p>	

3. A mass or 'forest' of flesh-toned **baby dolls** holding **mobile phones** emblazoned with mantras, flowing from the Eve limbs, hung at head height by wires from ceiling grids. These evoke World Babies, 'the postmodern pleasurable embodiments of incessant commodification'.

The mobile phones' deliver provocative or banal mantras / epithets to evoke 'herd consciousness, the ego as child, narcissism, the unintegrated self'.

The mobile phones are **miniature 'black mirrors'**, reflecting and controlling all social and psychological inputs. They echo the large **Installation Mirrors** (see **Section 8** below), and deliver the video-screen and poem text content in miniature.

4. A mass of **buddhas** (World Fathers), symbol of mature psychic integration – but inverted, askew, disoriented, mirrored, covered in gold leaf.

(a) Classic form, seated in repose or hung.

(b) Laughing form, attached to walls, mirrors and text panels, evoking 'enlightened baby nature'.

The 'sullied' buddhas point to 'abstraction and disembodiment', or a transition from the 'fixated baby state to non-fixated wisdom state' as shown in the videos and texts,



while gold colour points to ‘attractive but debased notions of awakening’.

**5. A record turntable**, continually revolving in the Installation’s centre on a **phallic plinth** inscribed with masculine and feminine **genital imagery**, with a functioning **mirror ball**, cradles World Mother (Eve), World Father (Buddha) and World Baby. The turntable is eternal production: idea / potential / action / object / birth.

From the turntable protrudes a sign with a **core mantra**:

‘FANTASY: There is a separate person who experiences something other. (= Machine)’

‘REALITY: There is no separate person who experiences anything other (= beyond the machine)’ Choose.

**6. Ceramic toilets**, suspended on chains and painted gold, are positioned above and below the turntable, evoking ‘the human churn of *samsara*, becoming’. The toilets are vaginas, narcissus pools of desire (possibility and process) and self-absorption within The New Garden of Eden. Into one end comes the ‘person’, from the other comes ‘the world as objects, symbols, detritus’. Underneath and above the toilets are mirrors, like a big pool advancing forever.

Arrow signs evoke (Lacan’s) unending desire, need, demand.





7. A mass of **gold-painted babies, buddhas and Eve (Barbie) dolls** disgorge from the toilets, evoking ‘slick manufacture, corruption of the innocence of flesh by debased visions of possession’.

8. A **Zone of Detritus**, with piles of gold-painted toilet rolls with scrolled metaphysic messages - **takeouts** (not A.I generated) to be handed to guests. Also, gold babies, barbies, buddhas, solid text, mobile phones *etc*, evoking ‘shocking results of a falsely pacifying materialist vision’.

Here in total is **a vision of the psyche**, polarised as ‘Ego Self versus Other’ - the schizoid mental condition that creates the human World Machine. This ‘fragmentation of limbs’ happens in every child, accompanied by ‘recognition of oneself as a separate being in a mirror’ (according to the psychologist Lacan) who needs to ‘kill’ the father and ‘marry’ the mother (and vice versa) . Yet, for better or worse, ‘we are never separate from what we see’...



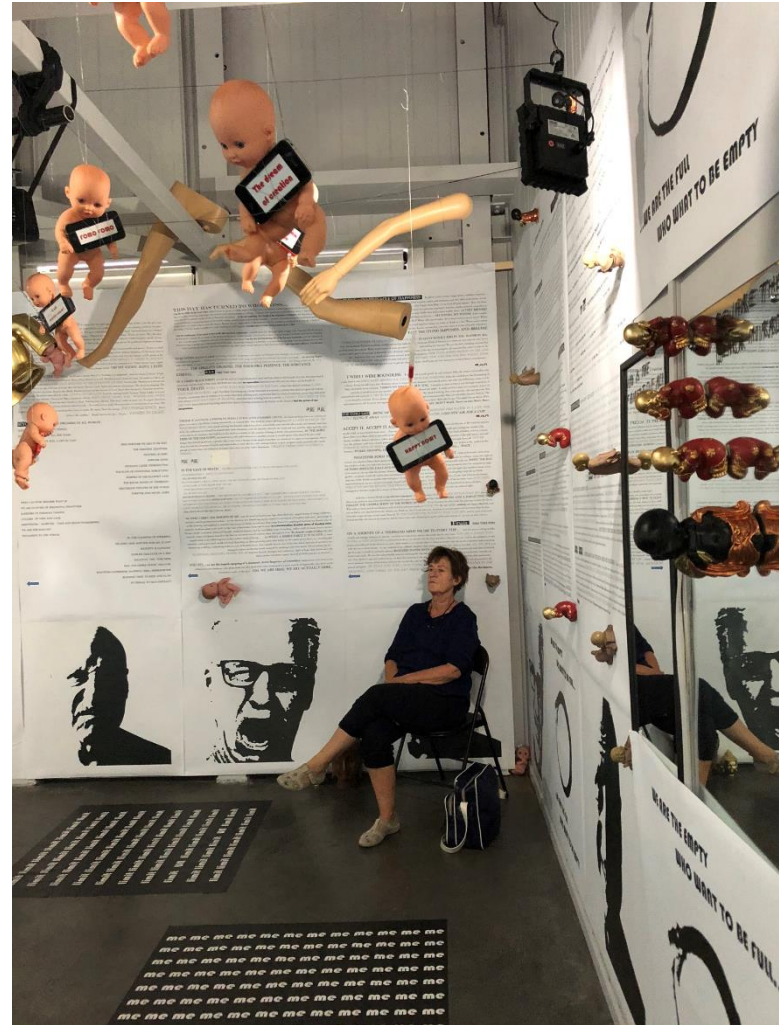
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**MIRRORS**

Placed throughout, **large black-fringed mirrors**, placed vertical and horizontal, and above and below, deliver an immersive-and-alienating, multiplying, self-reflecting-and-‘othering’ Lacanian effect, universalising the ‘black mirrors’ held by the babies.

The big mirrors feature provocative mantras related to the (Lacanian) subject-object psychology of alienation.

Size: 1200 mm x 800 mm. Total 10.



<p><b>9</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ZONES AND PHASES</b></p> <p>The Installation comprises overlapping coloured ‘zones’ that enable a progression in participants’ psychological understanding.</p> <p><b>Floor + ceiling projections and spotlights</b> containing subliminal natural imagery, support materials in the text plates and videos.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. ‘Gold Zone’: materialist machine values and ambiguities within material values.</li><li>2. ‘Blue Zone’: Deconstruction, psychological doubt, turmoil.</li><li>3. ‘White Zone’: Unadorned purity, simplicity, arrival.</li></ol>	
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SOUNDSCAPES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Continuous <b>reiterative mantras</b> within the videos, creating immersive, hypnotic messaging according to the three phases of the Installation.</li></ol>	<p>Visit website <a href="http://www.mouthsofillusion.com">www.mouthsofillusion.com</a> for soundscapes within the videos.</p>

	<p>2. Continuous <b>original ambient soundscapes</b> within the video works, discretely spaced to deliver evocative and hypnotic layers of contrasting sounds.</p>	
<p><b>11</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LIVE PERFORMERS</b></p> <p>Two or more <b>live performers</b> roam the space, iterating fragments of the video texts and poetic texts, in a continuous interactive journey of personal meditation and provocative presentation.</p>	



**12    EXHIBITION-RELATED LITERARY WORKS FOR SALE**

- 1. Large text plates** from the Installation Poem, in two sizes.
- 2. Floor plates** in black and white, vinyl, 900 x 900 mm.
- 3. Published book version** of the 37-plate poem  
*Mouths of Illusion: Beyond the Machine.*
- 4. Published literary works** by Nicholas Frost, supporting the Installation's themes.
  - (1) *Awareness Alone: The Path of Enquiry.*
  - (2) *The Wandering.*
  - (3) *The Labyrinth: Tales of Entanglement, Escape.*

Visit our website [www.mouthsofillusion.com](http://www.mouthsofillusion.com) for full copies of these works.



SEE ALSO MOI POEM BOOK

<p><b>13</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>INSTALLATION LAYOUT</b></p> <p><b>1. Square or rectangular room: minimum 10m x 8 m. 4m in height</b></p> <p><b>2. Scaffolding grid for hanging</b></p> <p><b>3. Vertical surface layering</b></p> <p><b>4. Zones for sculpture</b></p> <p><b>5. Horizontal layering</b></p>	<p>The Installation format is flexible in terms of layout, but for purposes of visualisation, our model here is a c. 11 metre by 8 metre square room of 4 metres height.</p> <p>A basic lattice of scaffolding is placed within the existing ceiling and walls, allowing extensive hanging of installation items.</p> <p><b>Walls comprise the ‘first vertical layer’</b>, likely supporting (a) 4 large video screens at ‘4 points of the compass’, (b) up to three quarters of the text panels, flat or at right angles, and (c) panels of Ourobouros and Persona-Shadow headshots.</p> <p><b>A second vertical layer</b>, at three metres from the walls, may support (a) up to half of 37 text panels, suspended from scaffolding, (b) a series of large mirrors.</p> <p>This forms an <b>‘inner sanctum’</b>, a central area comprising sculpture elements, and accessed by openings. This inner area is focused by the Golden toilets (high and low), turntable and plinth (at centre) and detritus area (on floor), with golden babies throughout. This collection of items anchors the three larger sculpture zones of babies, Eve limbs and buddhas.</p> <p>Three ‘zones’, comprising (a) flesh babies with mobile phones, (b) Eve limbs, (c) buddhas, stretch away from the entrance, evoking three Installation phases: <i>Manufactured Optimism</i>, <i>Massive Discontent</i>, and <i>It’s Up To You</i>.</p> <p>The sculpture zones range in horizontal layers from ceiling to floor, for example:</p> <p>(a) The mass of Babies with mobile phones occupy a zone from waist height to below-ceiling height.</p>
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	<p><b>6. Floor Panels</b></p> <p><b>7. Mandala and floor colour ‘zones’</b></p>	<p>(b) The disembodied Eve and her limbs occupy the entire horizontal range from ceiling to floor.</p> <p>(c) The Buddhas (including ‘inversions’) occupy a horizontal range from waste height to above head height.</p> <p>(d) The Golden Toilets, Turntable Plinth and Detritus Zone occupy a horizontal range from near the ceiling, to head height, to the floor.</p> <p><b>20 floor panels</b> of repetitive mantra text progress in a circular ‘walk’ around the external walls, connecting all zones and signifying a beginning-to-end intellectual journey.</p> <p>Overall, there is the suggestion of a <b>mandala</b>: an outer circle, a square anchoring the circle, a triangle within the square (that anchors the three sculpture zones) and a dot point, anchoring the triangular masses. Floor colour shadings, provided by projections or spotlights, support the three sculpture zones. Lines on the floor support a geometrical vision of the mandala.</p>
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## REVIEWS

### Rich, Weird, Multi-Layered

Review by Claire O’ Loughlin 1 March 2020 [www.theatreview.org.nz](http://www.theatreview.org.nz)

**Mouths of Illusion: Beyond the Machine** is the kind of confronting, weird, intense, free art installation work I want to see in the Fringe. Located at Courtenay Studios (Courtenay Place: up the stairs past Cha restaurant), everyone should pop in for 10 minutes or however long you want - it is open 10am to 10pm every day until 15 March - and experience this rich multi-media work by collaborators Nicholas Frost and Nicholas Kealey.

When I enter the space, Nicholas Frost and his partner are there hosting, and I learn that, tragically, Nicholas Kealey passed away suddenly two weeks ago. He put his heart and soul into creating this immersive, multi-layered installation, including producing all of the video footage. My entire experience in the work is with the knowledge that this dedicated, passionate artist is no longer with us and that, in a way, this work is his final message to the public.

To me, the message seems to be: confront yourself and society, and move beyond the limitations of both into a place of 'un-limitation', freedom.

The work is meditative, repetitive and intellectual, and too much to process on an intellectual level all at once. Meanings are everywhere - in images, text, figurines, golden toilet bowls, music and film. It is enough just to absorb what you can in the time you spend in there.

Dozens of plastic baby dolls hang from the ceiling on fishing wire, each clutching a cellphone with provocative questions and statements taped on to them. The walls are plastered with giant sheets of printed text of existential poetry and theory. Also stuck to the walls, over the text, are dozens of baby buddha figures - a symbol of peace, but here repeated over and over again, showing how 'peace' in itself becomes consumerist, part of 'the machine.' Further into the room, mannequin body parts hang from the ceiling, some pink-flesh coloured and some painted gold.

A large cyclorama wraps around two walls, with repetitive, mantra-like videos playing. On the floor, there are black mats printed with repetitive text mantras. These are my favourite part of the installation - if I go back to this work (and I do plan to), I would hope to find some time to sit quietly on one of the mats and just absorb the work around me in a sensory way. Because, as they warn in one of the program handouts, it is definitely sensory overload.

The one element of the work that doesn't quite gel for me is the use of Barbie doll figurines and Eve symbolism, in the form of a hanging mannequin arm holding an apple, and also in some of the videos. It translates clearly as a critique of the materialism of young women today, and I do find this symbolism a bit tired and one-sided. Some Ken dolls needed to balance it, perhaps?

Overall though, my recommendation is for everyone to pop in and see this strange, intense work. It's right there on Courtenay Place, super accessible, and it's free. An incredible amount of thought and effort has gone into it. It is clear that for the late Nicholas Kealey, art added huge depth to his life, and the two Nicks together have created a rich, weird, multi-layered offering.

## **Half of surrealist art duo dies in the ultimate 'journey beyond the machine'**

**Kate Green   Dominion Post   Feb 28 2020**

The sudden death of artist Nick Kealey has left his artistic partner and friends reeling, but their planned surrealist art exhibition will still open this weekend. Kealey and Nick Frost spent five years working together, culminating in Mouths of Illusion. Frost's partner Gabrielle Gazal said only weeks ago Kealey had told her, 'The ultimate artistic act would be to leave in front of an audience'.

'And that's what he did,' she said.

Kealey, an American now calling Wellington home, fell sick last week in Paekakariki after a brain seizure, Frost said. He was taken by helicopter to Wellington Hospital, but died the following week. His family flew out from Seattle to be with him and his funeral was held on Wednesday.



‘He was fit, but he had a brain injury 20 years ago which caused epilepsy,’ Frost said.

Born in Wellington but now based in Australia, Frost is a musician, drama scholar, and author. He said Kealey was full of energy, a risk taker and an adrenaline junkie. They met seven years ago through a mutual friend. Kealey couldn't afford to fund his art himself, Frost said, but when they realised their visions were aligned, Frost offered to fund and collaborate on his art.

‘The moment we met we were raving straight away,’ Frost said.

‘It's like he [Frost] lost his other half,’ Gazal said.

The men's work drew on mantras, repeated images, and symbolism to explain the fruitlessness of the wheel of life, and the allure of going ‘beyond the machine’.

Frost had his own health scare twenty years ago. A mental breakdown put him in hospital for three months, paralysed, staring at walls. This experience had changed his outlook on death, and made dealing with this loss easier, he said.

‘To transcend those experiences: that's going beyond the machine,’ Gazal said.

Despite the tragedy, Frost and Gazal said they owed it to Kealey to mount the exhibition, which runs until March 15. The programme was finalised four weeks ago, and they were glad Kealey had seen the finished vision before he died.

‘Our friends said it wouldn't be appropriate to cancel,’ Frost said. ‘Nick would have demanded we carry on.’



Nick Frost stands by Nick Kealey's image in the Installation Mouths of Illusion: Beyond the Machine.

**Neill Sullivan**    [nsullivan@linz.govt.nz](mailto:nsullivan@linz.govt.nz)    Actuary, Wellington, NZ

A powerful, vibrant, sense-surround experience with a driving social message drawing the audience into deep reflection on the chaos of modern living, mixed with the hope of better times ahead, set in an intense and challenging roomscape. A memorable journey of provoking images conjured through the artistic mind of passionate creators.

**Alicia Grady**    [alicia@struckbyviolet.com](mailto:alicia@struckbyviolet.com)    Graphic Designer, Brisbane, Australia

As soon as I entered the space I was hit with the ironies of modern culture. I loved that the exhibition delved far deeper than the surface vision of how technology has influenced human behaviour. Instead, it unravelled some core truths that have definitely expanded my understanding of this life and my own experience of consciousness.

**Lennox C. May**    [lennoxmayi2i@gmail.com](mailto:lennoxmayi2i@gmail.com)    Artist, Wellington, NZ

My experience with Mouths of Illusion was striking. Entering the Wellington exhibition, I initially experienced a little sensory overload, though I enjoy such experiences. I was struck by initial appearances, most notably by the hanging infant dolls and the warped, full-wall projections of cult-propaganda aesthetic. I met with and enjoyed a long conversation with the charming and intelligent Nick Frost. Quickly finding myself comfortable in the interaction we discussed his artwork, its philosophical ramifications and intent. I soon found that each piece was drenched in subtext, which quickly and tastefully pivoted back and forth from the deeply ironic to the intensely sincere. In the end, Mouths of Illusion's message was a clear critique of modern, consumerist/capitalist/faux-enlightened society, paired with a subtle, subjective conclusion. A way forward, where many modern critiques falter. Most notable, Mouths of Illusion achieved this without becoming at all patronizing. I intensely look forward to seeing what comes next.

**James Gilberd**    [j.gilberd@xtra.co.nz](mailto:j.gilberd@xtra.co.nz)    Photographer and Photospace Gallery Owner, Wellington, NZ

Nick, Gabby and the crew were utterly professional at every stage, from initial discussions and arrangements to installation, running the event, and packing out. They were flexible in accommodating other scheduled events at Photospace Gallery while MOI was running. Nick is a friendly and engaging event host and was instrumental in generating a positive vibe around the MOI exhibition, despite the tragic death of co-creator Nick Kealey a few days before the exhibition opening. MOI engaged the interest of a wide range of people, generating far higher visitor numbers than Photospace Gallery usually gets, which had a positive flow-on for the gallery and my photography business also. I would be happy to work with Nick again and am confident in supporting him for future projects elsewhere.

**Avigail Maggeni**    [avigailmag@gmail.com](mailto:avigailmag@gmail.com)    Wellington, NZ

I enjoyed the exhibition very much. I am writing a Ph.D in philosophy, which confronts similar issues to the ones this exhibition is tackling, about the nature of social existence and the ways we perceive reality. I see this exhibition as an intellectual exercise that encourages participants to actively reflect on the social realities we are so deeply immersed in, and become more aware of important issues like the commodification of happiness. The ability to discuss these issues together with the artist during the exhibition enables participants to engage in a productive dialogue which enriches all who are involved. A highly recommended experience! Always refreshing to look at your reality through a new lens.

**Andrew Ross**   [andrewross002@gmail.com](mailto:andrewross002@gmail.com)   Photographic Artist, Wellington, NZ

The installation was quite fascinating and enlightening, and highly relevant to today's bloated world. Personally I got the most from reading the (accompanying) book that came with the show. The movies were great, very hypnotic. It was really good that someone was doing something like this in the Arts Festival. The current lockdowns just go to show how much we can actually do without, in the consumerist sense, and how the bulk of our culture is just 'digging holes and filling them in again'.

**Sven Genschow**   [sven@streamliner.co.nz](mailto:sven@streamliner.co.nz)   Streamliner Productions, Wellington, NZ

My experience with the Mouths of Illusion directors was really good. We had a first site visit early in the planning process which gave us the opportunity to see what was required to realize your vision. The set-up was a challenge, but working together with you brought this experience to another level. As you created the content, together with your colleague Nicholas Kealey, you had a vision and a clearly-defined goal. You also gave us a lot of space to do our part. We supported with the visual and audio equipment and set up the technical site. We were keen to bring your vision to life and gave the audience the best experience. The content itself transported the audience into another world and one could totally get the message behind it all. Combined with the audio, the sculptures and surroundings, you were able to create a very unique experience.

**Nicola Chandler**   [chandler\\_nicola@hotmail.com](mailto:chandler_nicola@hotmail.com)   Wellington, NZ

I do not usually go to art exhibitions as I just 'don't get it' most of the time. I am a logical person, an analyst and a realist, and I also consider myself to be open-minded. I am very concerned about many ways that society is going. What struck me when I came into your exhibition were several signs and texts that were straight to the point on issues in today's society. The baby dolls and the many signs on the dolls make you stop and think. It means we are all people: the dolls show that it is us, and everyone. Was it to represent what is being passed on to future generations, and what was passed to us? There were many signs that indicated our preoccupation with consumerism, something I truly hate. People want want want and call it a need. It is obscene how people consume and don't seem to consider the costs: pollution, overproduction of plastic, corporate dominance, exploitation of poor workers and children. I hate the idea of people continually taking and posting selfies: look at me, look at me. This message came through. These signals are why I stayed to read the wall texts. I came away from the exhibition amazed at the hard work you both put into this. I think the exhibition was saying: 'See what is really going on. Open your eyes.' I found many parts of the text were right on the money of what this society is doing. I may not have got the full reasons for the artwork, but I am saying what resonated with me. It stood out as meaning a great deal, in fact too much to take in during the hour or so I was there. It did affect me and I am glad that people like Nick Frost take the time to discuss and connect. I find that people these days just don't want to do this. They smile and say hello but there is no depth, no true care or empathy. Nick and Gabrielle made my day by simply wanting to interact. Nick took the time to chat and ask what I thought, and was interested in my responses.

We had an amazing conversation. He is a very intelligent and thoughtful man. It was very sad that his friend and co-artist missed the exhibition, but after talking to Nick I felt his strong connection and influence. I am at that age where I reflect on life and am sad at people's behaviour, and how getting older doesn't lead you to answers as you think it will when younger. Talking to Nick was very valuable to me personally when I normally feel lonely and unimportant. It was a much more valuable experience for me than you guys could have known.