

David Cotterrell: The Ostrich Experiments

Venue: Danielle Arnaud contemporary art, London

Curators: Danielle Arnaud

Date: 4th October 2013

Cotterrell's fourth solo exhibition at Danielle Arnaud explored the illusion of chance amidst a dominant culture of reductive choice. The Ostrich Experiments invited participants to consider their actions and reactions within a closed loop of predetermination.

A series of logic systems, some complex state-of-the-art programs, others analogue re-enactments of 1980s gaming, suggests the neutered nature of contemporary autonomy.

Each work developed for exhibition -- including a fruit machine dispensing fortune cookie wisdom, an automated Russian Roulette machine, a cocktail cabinet game of attrition and a semi-intelligent, voice-activated Call Centre -- routes back on itself, creating a death loop or stalemate. The logic of each system, however sophisticated, becomes irrelevant when it is forced to confront its equal opposite number. The recursive systems become impotent and the effect of opponents, combatants or participants is neutralised to the point of obsolescence.

The scenarios of computer science suggest the potential for an Ostrich Algorithm: a strategy of wilfully ignoring potential problems on the basis that the likelihood of their occurrence would be so rare as to negate planning for them. Cotterrell here reveals the realities of such potential narratives, inviting those who interact with them to devise a humane stance that can create new fictions for contemporary battlegrounds.