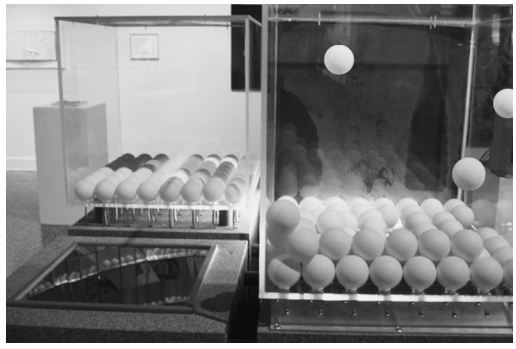
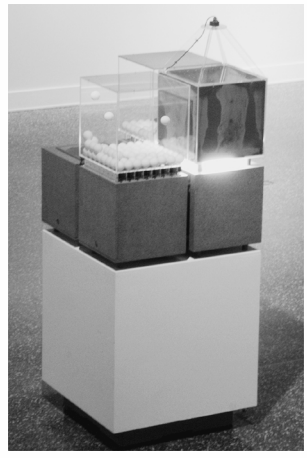
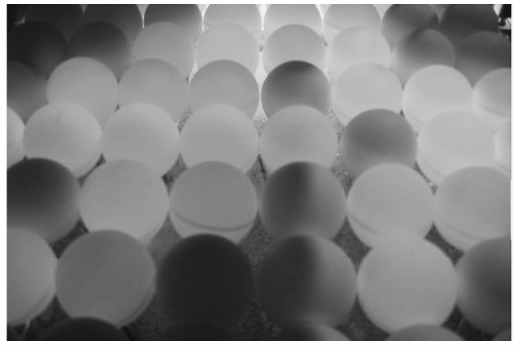


Remo Campopiano, Guy Marsden and Jonathan Schull

Eight-Bit Ant Farm, mixed media, 27 × 27 × 72 in, 2002. (top left) Close-up. (top right) Full view. (bottom left) Red-orange balls. (bottom right) Red balls. (© Collaborative Team of Remo Campopiano, Guy Marsden, Jonathan Schull. Photos: © Guy Marsden.)

Eight-Bit Ant Farm deals with issues of complexity theory, more specifically, with self-referential, semi-autonomous adaptive systems.

We put a camera in the ceiling over the artwork and the art observers and another camera over a glass cube containing a colony of live red ants. One records the changes in the people, the other changes in the colony of ants. The images are digitized every 10 seconds and processed to form a composite image that is shown on a laptop computer. The display screen of the laptop lies at the bottom of a mirror-lined box that reflects this image endlessly out into a curved surface.

Data derived from the change in positions of ants and people is sent to a box of illuminated Ping-Pong balls. Red balls indicate the movement of ants; yellow ones indicate the movement of people. In another box, the ant-movement data also triggers the firing of the Ping-Pong balls into the air.

During the process of creating this piece, we engaged in a three-way e-mail dialogue concerning the meaning of the artwork. Here is an excerpt from this conceptual dialogue:
Schull: This stance is natural and convenient, but it is an illusion. In this artwork we bring attention to this illusion in several ways. For example, our view and our stance when we look down at the gallery are apparently rather similar to our view and our stance when we gaze at the ant colony. "Apparently similar," but deeply different.

Campopiano: Of course, because when we look at the webcam image, we see ourselves.

Schull: Indeed, we see ourselves seeing ourselves.

The complete dialogue can be seen at <http://remo.net/complexity>.

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