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Preview

Synthetic Surrogate

Sundaram Tagore Starts Wed 10

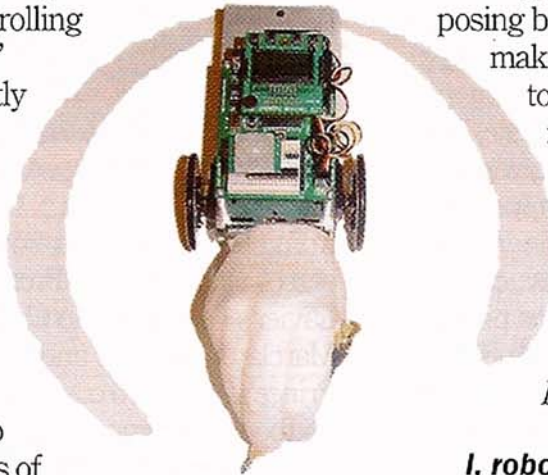
"I tend to do nothing, in spectacular ways," says New York-based artist Barry Freedland of his approach to performance. Consider the example of his last major show: Freedland built a huge robotic machine that hung him upside-down by his ankles. Any visitor to the gallery could use a set of remote controls to dip Freedland's head in a pan of paint and move the artist's body like a brush to compose a painting on a nearby canvas. "It all begs the question," says Freedland, "of who is in control of the art. I'm the only one who ever touched the canvas, but then I was also just hanging there limp, at the mercy of the audience member controlling the machine."

For his hotly anticipated upcoming show at Sundaram Tagore, Freedland will further his use of technology to explore issues of

artistic agency and human identity in our increasingly tech-enhanced world. Freedland has custom-built a small team of worker-bee robots to do his bidding in the gallery space. Incorporated into the machines are high-definition replicas of Freedland's hands and thumbs, which are automated to make detailed pencil drawings and ink thumbprints, leaving the mark of the artist's aesthetic vision and bodily identity all around the gallery. The robots are also programmed to respond to their environment – they might shyly recede from an approaching person, or they could slow down their work in feigned fatigue if the gallery starts feeling too hot. Throughout, Freedland will be

posing behind a curtain in a corner, making remote adjustments to the activities of the machines – present, but conspicuously absent, much like a Wizard of Oz overlord, attending to the bells and whistles of the spellbinding scene of his design.

Patrick Brzeski



I, robot Freedland gets a stand-in