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The Huntly Review

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An online living museum set in the North East of Scotland for the citizens of Huntly and beyond.

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Nina Rhode, Friendly Fire, Dundee Contemporary Arts

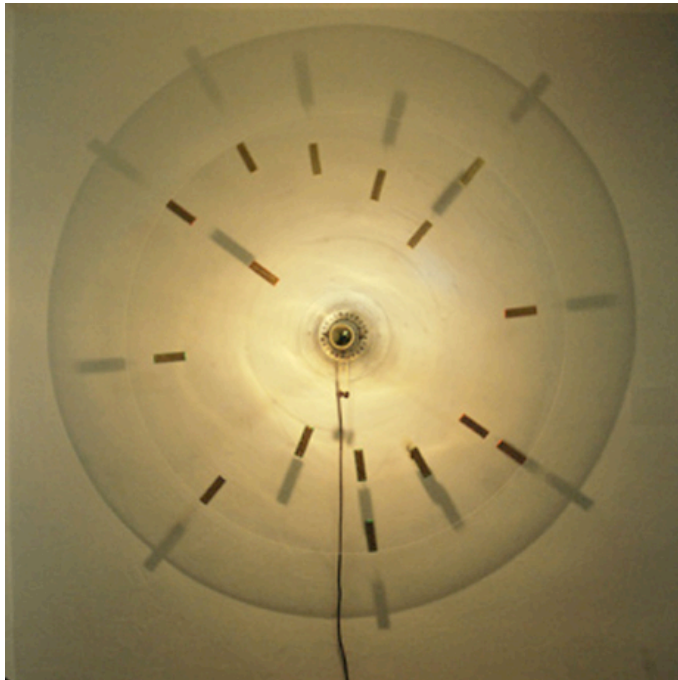


Image credit: Nina Rhode, C Major Harmonica, 2009

Friendly Fire, the first UK solo exhibition by Berlin-based [Nina Rhode](#), shakes you down deep into your internal core, reverberating a resonance that draws you in before it spins you back out.

As the first major survey show of her kinetic and aural workings, *Friendly Fire* is not a culmination of her past projects via monikers like [Ninja Pleasure](#), collectives like [Honey-Suckle Company](#), and collaborations with musician [Chilly Gonzales](#). In some ways the exhibition marks a watershed moment for an artist working undefined across disciplines, making work that tries to answer her own self-affirming question, "If it can be done why do it."

As an artist that has not necessarily made work for a gallery system, Rhode here makes a deft impression of what it means to experience our visual and aural pleasures in a controlled environment. Elements and expectations of alchemy and transformation are inherent throughout *Friendly Fire*, from the melted street bin seamlessly emerging from the gallery floor greeting you upon entry to the undulating sensation of mirages in her combination of motors and mirrors, Rhode conjures up the playful mad scientist efforts of [Roman Signer](#) and [Fischli & Weiss](#) with an awareness of the bodily malaise.

Starting with a gong, or simply titled "Gong", hanging overhead near the entrance of the gallery, a tree trunk embedded with a long thick rope hangs dutifully between two large stone cutting disks inviting audiences to strike the improvised gong. The ceremonial nature of striking such a resonance, often done so to mark a passing of time, especially to your neighbors, is here done so to ring in the activation of your physical senses, to send a reverb through DCA's cavernous space to say we can see, hear, and feel all that is around us.

The call to participate and engage with her works runs throughout, as many of the works require you to manually spin or adjust the speed of light repetition ("3 RAD"). Coming back to "Bin", which was inspired by the street vandalism of the May Day Riots in 2009, an event that reinvigorated the thought for self organization and socially engaged participation, Rhode subtly inquires into the value of participation on all levels of engagement by casting this bin, symbolic of the anti-capitalist riots, and transforming this object into an art object that once gain fits into a capitalist value system.

While every work gave me some level of joy, especially the soundless yet organ-shaped "Procurator" composed of once audible and visually explosive firecrackers and I fell hopelessly for the alluring siren hum of "C Major Harmonica", I was actually most enraptured by the artist's self portrait of "Es It", a photograph of a round head-like mirror over a red arm chair resembling a body in repose. The photograph is stately, as is suggested by its self reference to a throne, and lit naturally by daylight, which was only visible in the mirror along with the artist's face in profile and her one hand, which is holding a half moon mirror, reflecting back the image *ad infinitum*. The photograph is as perfect a self portrait as I have ever seen, as the endless refractions of perception and identity are contained but in a reflection. The viewer is made aware, but only of what we cannot see and what we do not know.

Nina Rhode, Friendly Fire, Curated by Graham Domke, runs 21 May 2011 - 31 July 2011. [Check DCA](#) for further information.

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