

GLASSY GENETIC CODES



Inner view of the body:
An installation using
4,000 test tubes.



Helga Griffiths

Suspended from the ceiling of an old factory building, four thousand test tubes hang from a net in a spiral formation while Petri dishes are lined up on the floor of the dark room. The laboratory containers are glowing a greenish yellow color, thanks to a fluorescent sodium solution and black light.

Artist Helga Griffiths transforms Schott Petri dishes and test tubes into unusual works of art.

The installation is about genetic codes. The artist, Helga Griffiths, calls her 8-meter-high work "Identity Analysis".

Recently shown at the Galerie des Kulturvereins Wacker Fabrik (The Wacker Factory Cultural Association) near Darmstadt, Germany, a serial line code depicts this so-called 'genetic fingerprint'.

Physical shape, abilities and hereditary human diseases are all contained within this code, which scientists are busy trying to decipher. Griffiths was always fascinated by codes in communication, whether sign language, Braille, Morse code, birds' songs, or the signs and symbols used in the world of fashion and advertising. "With this work, I am now entering into the human realm", explains the artist.

Visitors can "enter" the installation by walking around it, becoming part of the experiment itself. They can see the human body as some kind of room where experimental scientific research is being performed. Here, glass does not only symbolize the body as a "transparent room" or a "storehouse" of information, but it also shows the beauty and fragility of the human body in a thoroughly mechanized world. Owing to the enthusiastic response from both the general public and the art critics, this original installation will be shown again at the "ART Frankfurt" from April 28 through May 1, 2001 ■

- 1959 Born in Ehingen, Germany, on the Danube
1986–1992 Stay in New York
1991 Rutgers University, Mason Gross School of the Arts, New Brunswick, N. J., USA
Bachelor of Fine Arts
1992–1994 Advanced studies at the Stuttgart Art Academy
1994 New Media School of Design, Karlsruhe, Germany

Prizes

- 1998 First prize "Kunst auf Zeit", Graz, Austria
1998 Lichtenberg Prize, Darmstadt-Dieburg, Germany

A selection of shows

- 1992 German Consulate, New York
1994/95 International Symposium "Morphologie der Zeit" [Morphology of Time],
Bauhaus Dessau, Germany
1998 City of Graz, Austria
since 1998 "Box Installation Project" – Museum of Installations, London
1999 Museum of Contemporary Art, London