



Guest Curator, Susan M. Canning

Janet Biggs's installation, *Ritalin*, inquires into the construction of social codes and values. Juxtaposing a young boy's incessant drumming with images of horses performing the elaborate footwork of dressage, and enveloped within the electronic haze of techno music overlaid with the rhythmic repetition of the horse trainer's instruction, Biggs immerses the viewer in the frenzied ambiance of control and disorder. As with her earlier work, the artist is interested in the ways society prescribes behavior, even to the point of introducing drugs like Ritalin to conform bodies and minds. Drawing analogies between the training of animals and humans, Biggs calls our attention to the performative nature of social activity where, just like the staged presentation of her installation or the conscripted and contained actions of the prancing horse, behavior is taught and choreographed for public appearance and social acceptability. Moreover, by underscoring the relentless dissidence of the boy's frenetic music making, Biggs also makes the point that social control can threaten creativity. In contemplating the spectacle of gestures both determined and resistant, natural and artificially induced, Biggs offers up an image of adolescence which might not bring music to the ears but most certainly will make us rethink how society inscribes and maintains its power.

Along with Biggs, the artists of *Arrested Development* are not interested in recapitulating popular manifestations of youth culture. Rather by examining this fixation and its presence and importance in contemporary life, they ask the viewer to examine and explore what childhood and adolescence means to them.