

Mystery, magic and a maze



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Hyperthreads at the Fisher Gallery, Crystal Chain Gang at the New Gallery.

Darkness helps when you want to create magic. And when you are in command of lighting that can make cords glow in that dark and transform a gallery into an intricate maze, then you are in command of a special magic.

When you can confer on the participant who enters the gallery the power to play variations within the theme created by the cords, then the spell is truly remarkable.

The three elements are combined in *Hyperthreads* by **Maureen Lander** and **John Fairclough** at the Fisher Gallery in Pakuranga.

The main collaborative piece in the large gallery combines Maori string-games, black light and sound effects. The black light makes the colour of the taut cords glow vividly and because the cords are tightly strung there is an intricate triangulation in the maze.

This is intersected by screens on which digitally generated patterns are thrown. These are made up of circles and straight lines. The circles are interrupted only by the outline of hands, which provide a human note in the midst of the geometry and are a guide to keypads where spectators can manipulate images.

Whether playing games with the images adds much is debatable. Despite the cleverness of the technology, it shifts the work towards the realm of video games.

Since the work combines Maori and modern, the intricate maze might have led to more than a game.

There is mystery and magic in the installation but the third M, metaphor, is absent, so there is no sense of symbolism that might have involved the spectator on a deeper level.

In the adjoining gallery are simpler but equally effective display techniques. The emphasis is still on traditional string-games illuminated by black light. The variations of the cat's-cradle patterns are shown against a background of mirrors. It makes a fine, informative and clever display. The show is completed by *The Semantic Differential*, a computer that converts words into images.

This kind of work is like photography, in that it is matched in the viewer's mind with commercial work and is shaded by the comparison. The power of a graphic computer such as Quantel's Harry, used by many advertising agencies, is just so much more mind-boggling.