

The moment you step onto the concrete floor of the gallery from the REDCAT's carpeted lobby, it begins: a box of battered records, a glassed-in bulletin board of pictures, the doors into the main attraction painted a subtle yellow (which the programme tells me elliptically is the colour of 'Travis's shirt', identified by the curator as one of the perpetrators; a scrap torn from it is propped up on a stick against the wall just to the right of the entrance).

Once inside those doors, it's not entirely clear what's actually happening. There is a play composed of sounds and objects. The platform in the centre of the room is bathed in a spectral light – blue, green, red, lavender – that's kind of cheap and kind of beautiful, like you'd find in a dollar burlesque or a higher-browed theatre. There's a story here, but it's a story like a ball of snow rolling over and across the countryside, sucking up houses and fences and getting poked by trees that are uprooted and pulled in. Though disparate, each of the copious elements feels thoughtfully strange, part of the performance of the sculpture that runs about an hour (with an accompanying playbill-like programme/score). A collage of erumpent sounds and stories is speckered in here and there on the platformed stage, from John Cage being introduced in a decades-past lecture at the San Francisco Art Institute to exhibition curator Aram Moshayedi noodling with a harp during the installation.

Here's a short list of just a few of the many things that make up this staged sculptural tableau: a Mothers of Invention record titled *Freak Out!* (1966) on permanent silent revolution, potted plants and cacti, a shrouded figure hatted with a derby erupting flowers, a stick on the ground that mechanically arcs itself erect in the course of the performance, a battered parasol near a pair of Japanese slippers, sundry photographs from farmers hoeing a field to a bevy of gay porn – my favourite is taped on the back of a sizeable replica of an Isamu Noguchi stone copied from a nearby Lil' Tokyo plaza and pictures a man crouched in front of another fellow's tighty-whities, his mouth pressed against the pouch in front of him while the receiver's hand palms his head with a dirty tenderness.

Sometimes these loose and poetical groupings look like the old jokes of performance art: just pile a bunch of weird stuff in a room and let things happen. But the artist, Vancouverite Geoffrey Farmer, eludes that facile reading with the weird precision of this evocative arrangement and its mechanical choreography. Even with the explicit press-released description of the artist attempting to evoke California counterculture in mind, I like letting the thing mysteriously play, just to watch this performance unfold as I circle the stage, making up my own meaning for what's going on. I feel a part of its liveness, the only living actor in this theatre of sounds and things. *Andrew Berardini*

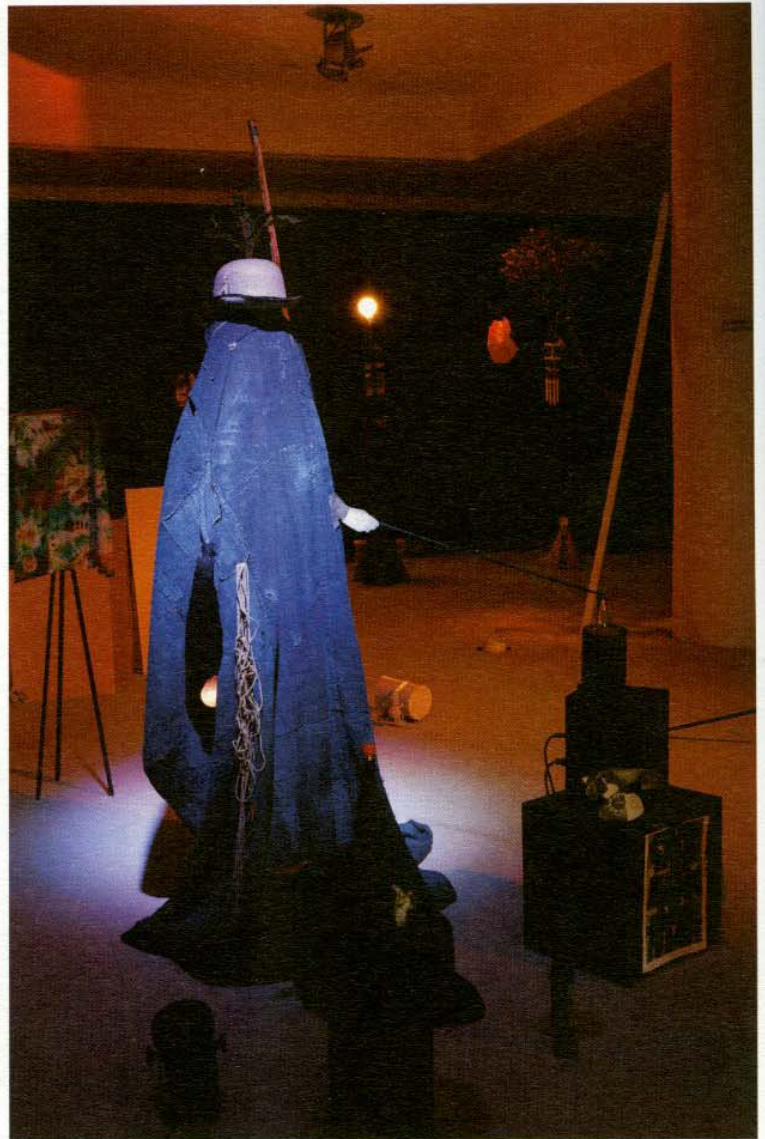
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## Geoffrey Farmer

*Let's Make the Water Turn Black* REDCAT, Los Angeles

18 February – 10 April

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*Let's Make the Water Turn Black*, 2011, installation view. Photo: Scott Grollier. Courtesy the artist; Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver; and Casey Kaplan, New York