

Fetish Effigies

“The boundary between collection and fetishism is mediated by classification and display in tension with accumulation and secrecy.”

Susan Stewart, *On longing: Narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*. 1984.

Two musical strands run virtually throughout this short piece, sometimes clearly differentiated, at other times more obscure and confused, but always at some level presenting an opposition between an “organic”, accretional layer and an “inorganic” abruptly changing one. This opposition can operate not only at the surface level—as it does at the beginning, when two highly differentiated instrumental combinations are presented, each with their own characteristic modes of behaviour—but also at a subcutaneous level, when applied to various ways of generating or modifying the basic material.

These concerns form only the *technical* armature and implementation of the piece, of course, and much of the original musical imagery was suggested by Borges' short story *The Circular Ruins*. While giving the obligatory (questionable?) disclaimer about the piece in no way being programmatic, much of the mood and atmosphere of the story was certainly in my mind during the initial sketching stages, and it seems to me that its central conceit—one human dreaming another into existence, by sheer will—is a marvellous metaphor for the act of composition.

Fetish Effigies was commissioned by Stroma with funding from Creative New Zealand and is dedicated to the ensemble's directors and performers.