

Neither Norwest 1996 International Sculpture Initiative

Rochdale Art Gallery, until 28 September

Rochdale Gallery presents three thought-provoking installations by international sculptors working alongside British artists as part of this year's International Sculpture Initiative. Comprising a symposium, exhibitions, public art and performance the events are attended by artists from ten countries. The focus of all three installations produced for the Rochdale Art Gallery is the 'environment', or things that give a place its particular character or resonance.

All three works are very atmospheric and demand a physical and/or emotional response. Pat Hoffie's 'Teeming' is a laboratory of life-suspended, two stuffed animals in glass cases, a domestic bed in the centre with a large aquarium, with eggs standing delicately at the foot of the bed suggesting the possibilities of fertility. At the back of the installation is a large rectangular tank, the sight of decaying fruit, beetles, maggots and other 'bugs' on a bed of bandages: 'Teeming' is not for the squeamish.

Iskra Dimitrova's 'Thalamus' consists of a small crypt-like room. 'Thalamus' is a grave room, it means 'the bride room' and is a kind of womb into the earth, where the dead enter in order to be reborn. Dimitrova creates an environment inside the confines of an art gallery which can either be a calming, relaxing experience or 'just a bit scary'.

Margita Titlova's 'The Alchemy of Fear and Desire' is by far the most stimulating piece in this exhibition. A spectrum of light makes a trail through a salt landscape. Sharp metal blades are pulled up out of the salt by magnets hanging from the ceiling. Some of the blades touch the magnets, some hover below, not quite touching, holding a tension within the piece. The simplicity of Titlova's portrayal of a magnetism both actual and metaphoric is a piece to be experienced.

MICKELA SONOLA

City Hipe, Manchester, 8.1996