

## Jonathan K Holden

Jonathan K Holden's project 'Tin Gods' explores our relationship to that ambiguous term 'wellbeing', and the appeal of commercial 'complementary therapies' as the means of achieving physical and psychological equilibrium. Holden has established 'Tin Gods' as a trading company, complete with branding, advertising, listings in the Yellow Pages, and all the trappings associated with a small business. The primary service offered by the company is immersion into a machine resembling a floatation tank or MRI scanner, which offers the user the opportunity to restore their psychological balance. In a gallery situation, Holden's project is shown as an installation as illustrated here, with accompanying plans and drawings illustrating the development of the 'machine'. The person undergoing 'treatment' rests face down upon the connecting platform to be slid into the main vessel. Once inside, their limbs become submerged in cold water in the tray underneath; and their face rests on felt strap. Then they are enclosed tightly, and almost crushed, by blocks of high-density foam. When the monumental steel gull-wing doors are raised, the user is in darkness. We are forced to enquire whether Holden's invention operates as a genuinely restorative one, able to reform its subject; it plays with our ability to suspend belief. He challenges those with faith in the power of such therapies, and also those who imagine works of art should be tools to alter consciousness or objects of veneration.

The artist's attention to detail extends from the choice of language in 'Tin Gods' marketing (clinical without being technical, efficient without being slick) to the powder-coating in fabrication. All lend credibility to the invention. 'Tin Gods' aesthetic combines the clinical and the brutally industrial somewhat disconcertingly, recalling the equipment found in a factory as much as that of a laboratory, or else that from a morgue or a prison. The white aluminum sections certainly resemble the tools of an exclusive spa, though the bank-safe doors recall a penitentiary context. They resemble parts from a cage-like instrument for restraint or incarceration in solitary confinement. Close inspection to the alarming industrial machinery of Holden's invention suggests we may be changed by using the work, but not in ways we might anticipate. Maybe we might see the artist as a renegade social scientist like Wilhelm Reich. 'Tin Gods' does recall Reich's 'Orgone Accumulator' – a six-sided box which pacifies users by enclosing them, to realign their 'energy flow'. Similarly, Reich's belief in a cosmic force akin to 'chi' or 'karma' is echoed by complementary therapies. Holden appears to equate the power of the clinic over its patient with that of the reforming institution over its subject. Holden asks what power relationships we enter into unwittingly. He also asks what devices might yet be invented to alter our consciousness; and whether such new ideas advance the health and reason of the populous or corrupt them from within.