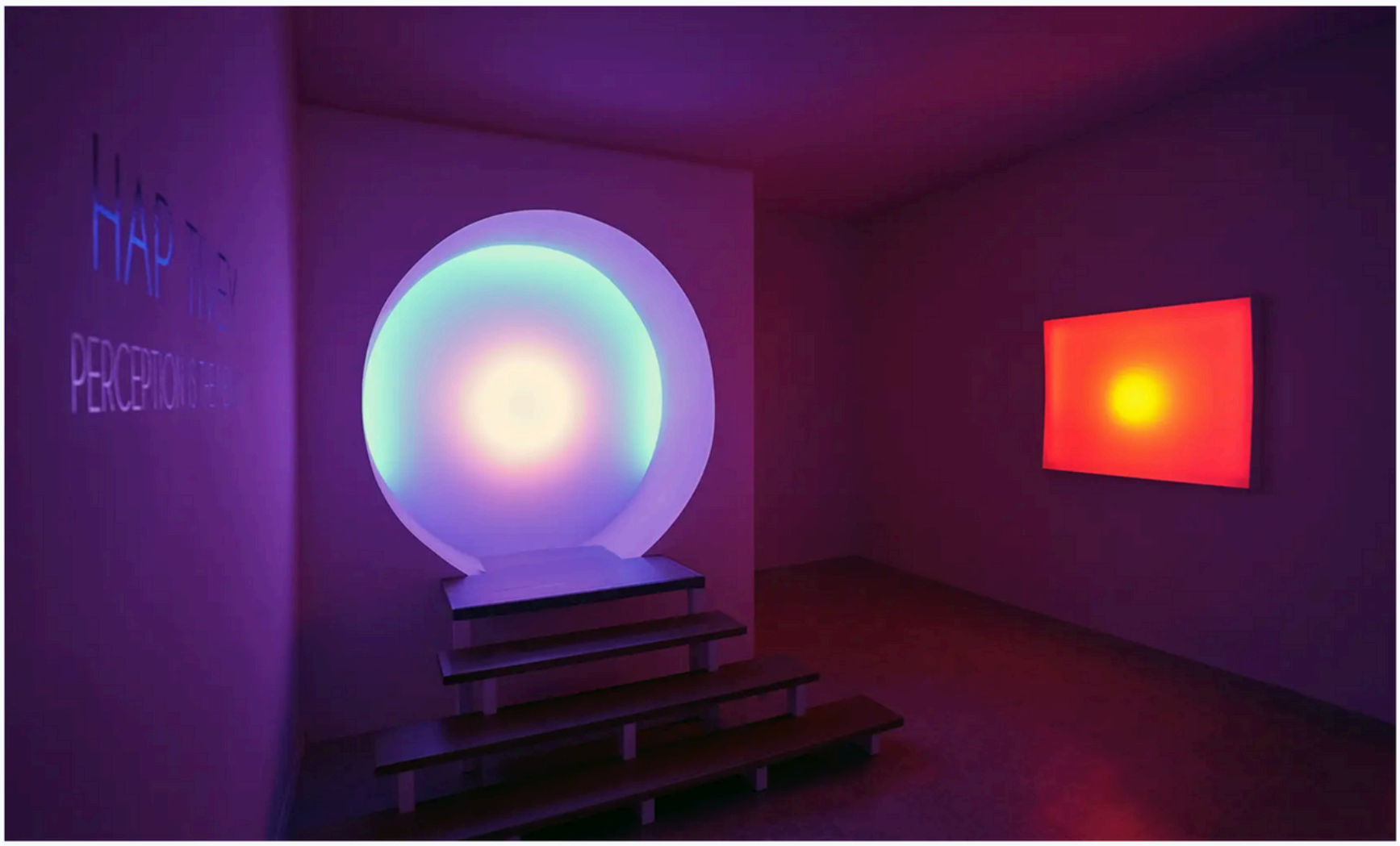
THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE · INDEPENDENT AND FREE

ARTSEEN | DEC/JAN 2024–25

Hap Tivey: *Perception is the Medium*

By Benjamin Clifford

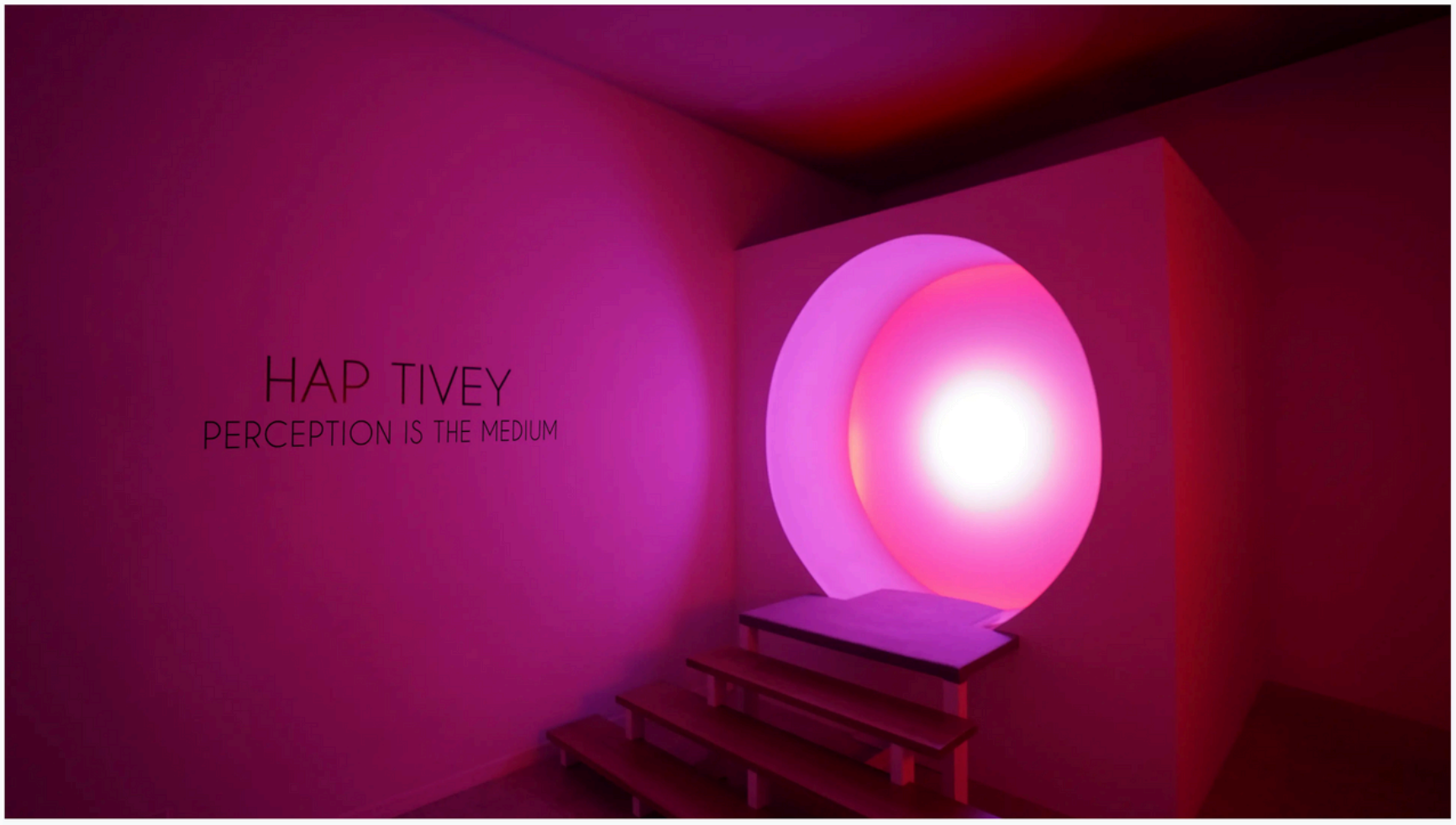


Installation view: *Hap Tivey*: *Perception is the Medium*, George Merck Art Collection, 2024–25, Palm Beach, Florida. Courtesy the artist and George Merck Art Collection.

I sit cross-legged, my awareness of the world shrunk down to almost nothing. A rich blue glow surrounds me, filling my visual field until only the vaguest sense of physical space remains, pushed all the way to the periphery. Those faint traces are blotted out as the color changes, building until it reaches a purple so intense that it seems to exert physical pressure on the mind. At this moment I'm barely aware of my body, perception free-floating in a boundless expanse of color. However it might sound, I am not deep in meditation, nor have I consumed anything psychedelic. But I might as well have… that is how potent I found the experience of *Sunset Enso* (2024), one of two works by Hap Tivey, a master of perceptual manipulation, now on view at the George Merck Art Collection in Palm Beach.

Looking at *Sunset Enso* from GMAC's entrance, it's easy to see why the work of Light and Space artists like Tivey have so often been described as a kind of West Coast Minimalism. Here, a white box of aluminum composite, sheet rock, and wood fills the left half of the project space nearly from floor to ceiling. However, most of its front surface gives way to an 86 by 94-inch elliptical cavity with an optical screen at the back that projects a carefully calculated color sequence lasting around nine minutes. A flat upholstered platform provides a place to sit within this large recess, transforming it into an immersive visual environment, and a series of three elegant steps gives access from the floor. The design of these steps evokes traditional Japanese architecture—no accident, as in 1974 and 1975 Tivey trained as a monk in Soja's Hofuku-ji Zen Monastery. Another work now located in the artist's Brooklyn studio, *Beverly Enso* (2015), emphasizes this connection by staging its own circular cavity behind a sliding shoji screen. *Sunset Enso* has also previously been presented in this way; an image of it installed with a similar screen is reproduced in the announcement of the current exhibition.

The Zen Buddhist aspiration to erase the boundaries that separate self and other is key to Tivey's artistic aims, but his expertise in the science and technology of perceptual psychology is just as important. Indeed, these two orders of knowledge come together seamlessly in his works, which aim to create what he describes as "eccentric mind states" that reframe the viewer's relationship to themselves and to the world at large.[1] The light sequence that plays out in the *Sunset Enso* chamber produces what is known as a Ganzfeld effect, a perceptual phenomenon of absolute visual uniformity and boundlessness. Notably, in the late 1960s Robert Irwin and James Turrell—with whom Tivey collaborated extensively—studied Ganzfeld effects with environmental psychologist Ed Wortz as part of the Art and Technology program initiated by LACMA curator Maurice Tuchman earlier in the decade. Even at the time, Turrell identified a parallel between perceptual psychology and "Eastern thought—their work with meditation."[2]



Installation view: *Hap Tivey*: *Perception is the Medium*, George Merck Art Collection, 2024–25, Palm Beach, Florida. Courtesy the artist and George Merck Art Collection.

Tivey pushes this connection further, deploying Ganzfeld technology to great effect. The artist's fine control of the ever-changing light hues in *Sunset Enso*, for instance, allows him to modulate the intensity of its effect, bringing the viewer to a near-hallucinatory state as the ability to make visual distinctions of any kind is overwhelmed, and then pulling them back to faint awareness of the physically bounded room they inhabit. This creates a kind of dialectic effect, a push-pull that makes the periodic visual crescendos of his light sequence yet more intense. I was reminded of Kazimir Malevich's "white on white" series of 1916 and 1918, in which the artist's attention was redirected from earlier critiques of representation to an investigation of visual perception itself. In these paintings, Malevich used a reduced formal vocabulary and near-monochrome palette to simultaneously define and break down the distinction between figure and ground—the most fundamental structure of visual perception. To Malevich, this was a spiritual project, a way of actively transforming perception to give access to higher, non-material registers of reality. I suspect that Tivey might look at Malevich's aims, although perhaps not his methods, with sympathy.

There are many others in the history of modernist image-making who have approached such perceptual questions in ways that resonate with Tivey's practice. In his "Equivalents" series, for example, Alfred Stieglitz pointed a camera straight up to photograph cloudy skies without the reference point of a horizon line. Although not a uniform visual field, these images nonetheless create something close to a Ganzfeld effect. In fact, a 1976 text on Tivey by Melinda Wortz notes that ganzfeld experimentation has been used to train pilots, who can easily lose their sense of spatial orientation without reference to the horizon and "often unwittingly fly upside down in bad weather."[3] Harold Rosenberg's description of the "abstract sublime," in which the viewing self is dissolved in "boundless" and "inexhaustible" paintings by artists like Barnett Newman and Jackson Pollock, is also a useful and more proximate point of reference.[4] Newman's luminescent, enveloping color fields seem particularly relevant, especially considering his retrospective construction as a Minimalist *avant-la-lettre*.[5]

These associations are brought into clearer focus by the second work currently on view at GMAC, *Helios III* (2023). An illuminated 46 by 48-inch rectangle affixed to the wall, *Helios* seems a much more modest proposition than *Sunset Enso*. But it traffics in the same perceptual effects, projecting a 12-minute light sequence that is just as precisely calibrated as its monumental counterpart. Tivey conceived the "Helios" series as a more accessible point of entry to his artistic project, so it is no surprise that this work presents itself in much the same way as a painting. At the same time, however, Tivey goes out of his way to make it clear that this is an object, not an image. The work extends a full six inches from the wall, endowing it with a weighty, slab-like presence. And its surface ripples, concave across the vertical axis and convex along the horizontal. *Helios III* seems to reach out to you, suggesting an ability to envelop the viewer physically as well as optically. This gives it a genuinely environmental effect.

Part painting, part object, part environment, a work like *Helios III* casts us back to Tivey's formative years in the sixties, when many attempted to find a way past the restrictive formalism popularized by high modernist critics like Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried. The New York Minimalists, often described as having paved the way for Light and Space and the related "Finish Fetish" sensibility on the West Coast, created objects that emphasized the self-evident qualities of the materials they used. In this sense their work was a perversely three-dimensional extrapolation of the formalist emphasis on painting that acknowledges its own material flatness and delimitation. But Tivey and his colleagues have taken a different, more pragmatic approach. Their materials are simply means to an end: an investigation of perception that ultimately stresses the experience of *de*-materialization.[6]

This perspective is one of the many valuable things that directly experiencing *Sunset Enso* and *Helios III* can offer. Even for those of us who enjoy thinking through the intellectual and historical background of this remarkable body of work, the fine distinctions that preoccupied thinkers like Greenberg or Donald Judd must ultimately recede into the background. Inside *Sunset Enso*, as Tivey's colors wash over you, they simply don't matter much. As the title of the exhibition tells us, *Perception is the Medium*.

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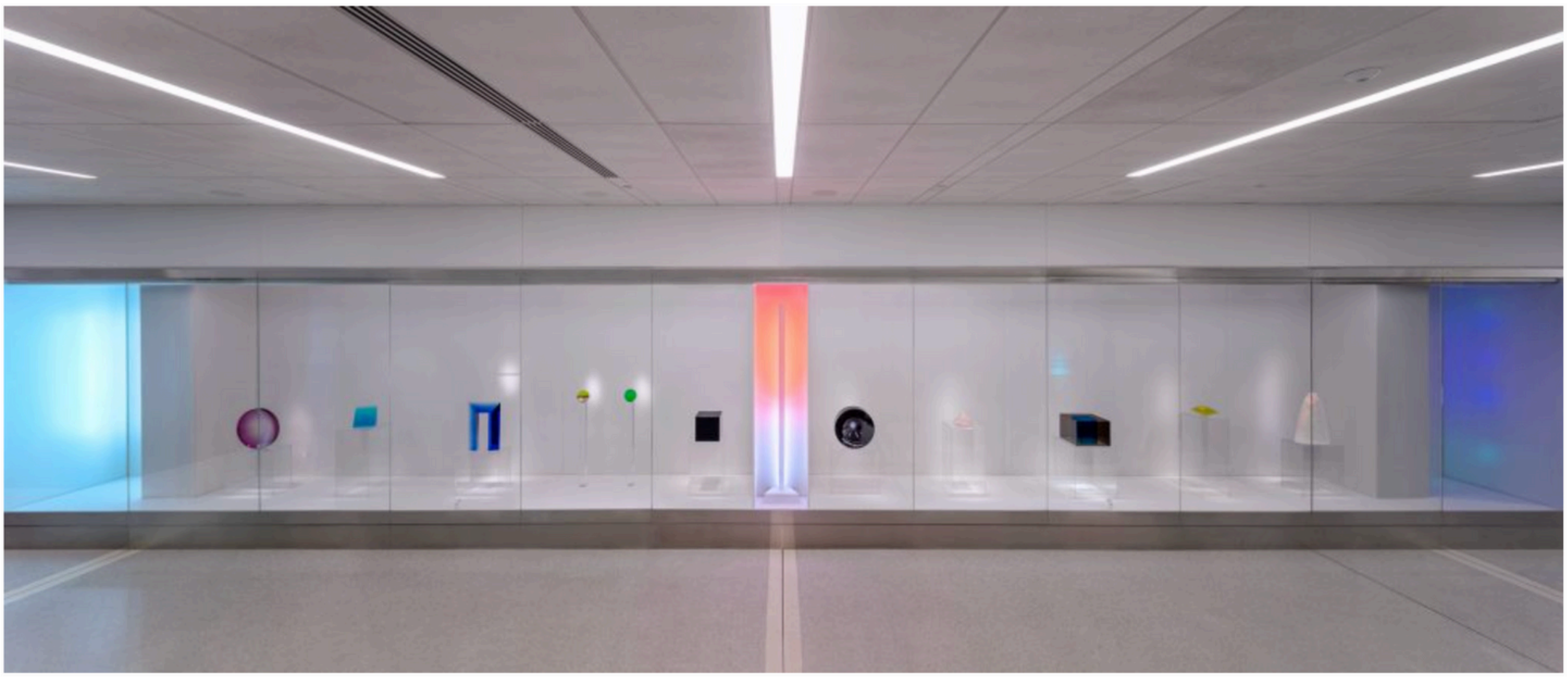
1. Melinda Wortz, Hap Tivey: Fourth Situation (University of California, Irvine, 1976), 123.
2. James Turrell, quoted in A Report on the Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967–71 (The Los Angeles County Museum of Contemporary Art, 1971), 140.
3. Wortz, Hap Tivey, 126.
4. Harold Rosenberg, "The Abstract Sublime," Art News 59 (February 1961): 56.
5. See, for example, Gregory Battcock, "Sculpture at Knoedler," Arts Magazine 44 no. 4 (February 1970): 62.
6. Stephanie Hanor, "The Material of Immateriality," in Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface (The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 2011), 124–149.

artnet

Art & Exhibitions

There Is a Low-Key Light and Space Exhibition at LAX Airport

It features one of Robert Irwin's final works.

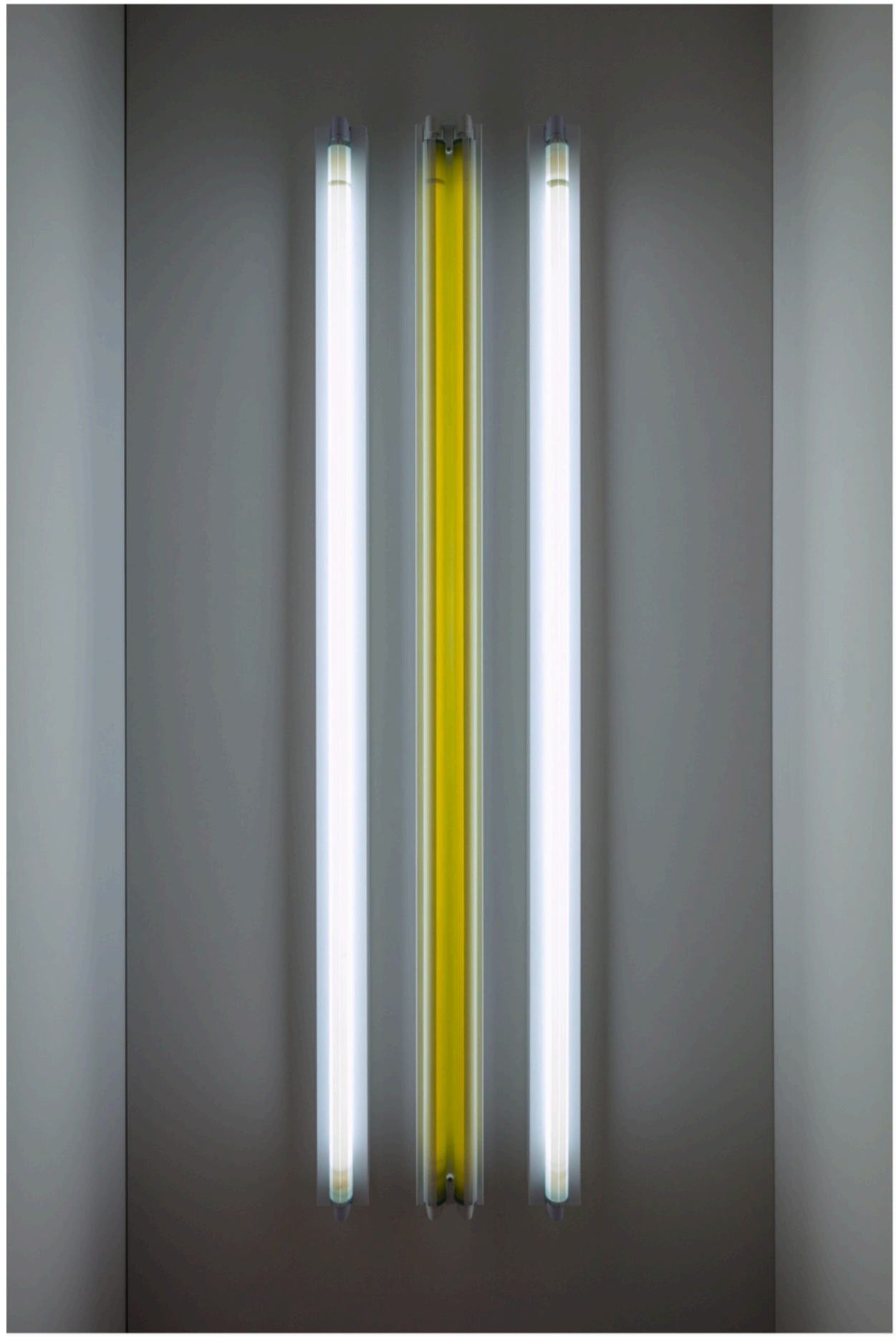


Installation view of "Luminaries in Light and Space." Photo: SKA Studios, LLC, courtesy of Los Angeles World Airports.

by Adam Schrader • July 3, 2024 • **Share This Article**

Amid the bustle of the Los Angeles International Airport, travelers can’t be faulted for missing an exhibition of works by the region’s most prominent artists. “Luminaries of Light & Space” celebrates the loose group of West Coast artists who, beginning in the 1960s, sought to expand perceptual experiences through light, color, and volume.

On view since 2022, the show features works by artists including Peter Alexander, Larry Bell, Gisela Colón, Laddie John Dill, Fred Eversley, John McCracken, Helen Pashgian, Hap Tivey, and DeWain Valentine. A singular highlight is Light + Shadow + Reflection + Color (#3 x 6’ D Four Fold) (2016), one of the last projects by the late Robert Irwin, an installation of his signature fluorescent lights.



Robert Irwin, *Light + Shadow + Reflection + Color (#3 × 6' D Four Fold)* (2016). Photo: SKA Studios, LLC, courtesy of Los Angeles World Airports.

For Laura Whitcomb, who curated the show, LAX serves as a fitting venue for the show because of the ties between Light and Space artists and the aerospace industry. Eversley, Bell, Tivey, Dill, Colón, and Turrell were all children of chemists, physicists, and aerospace designers.

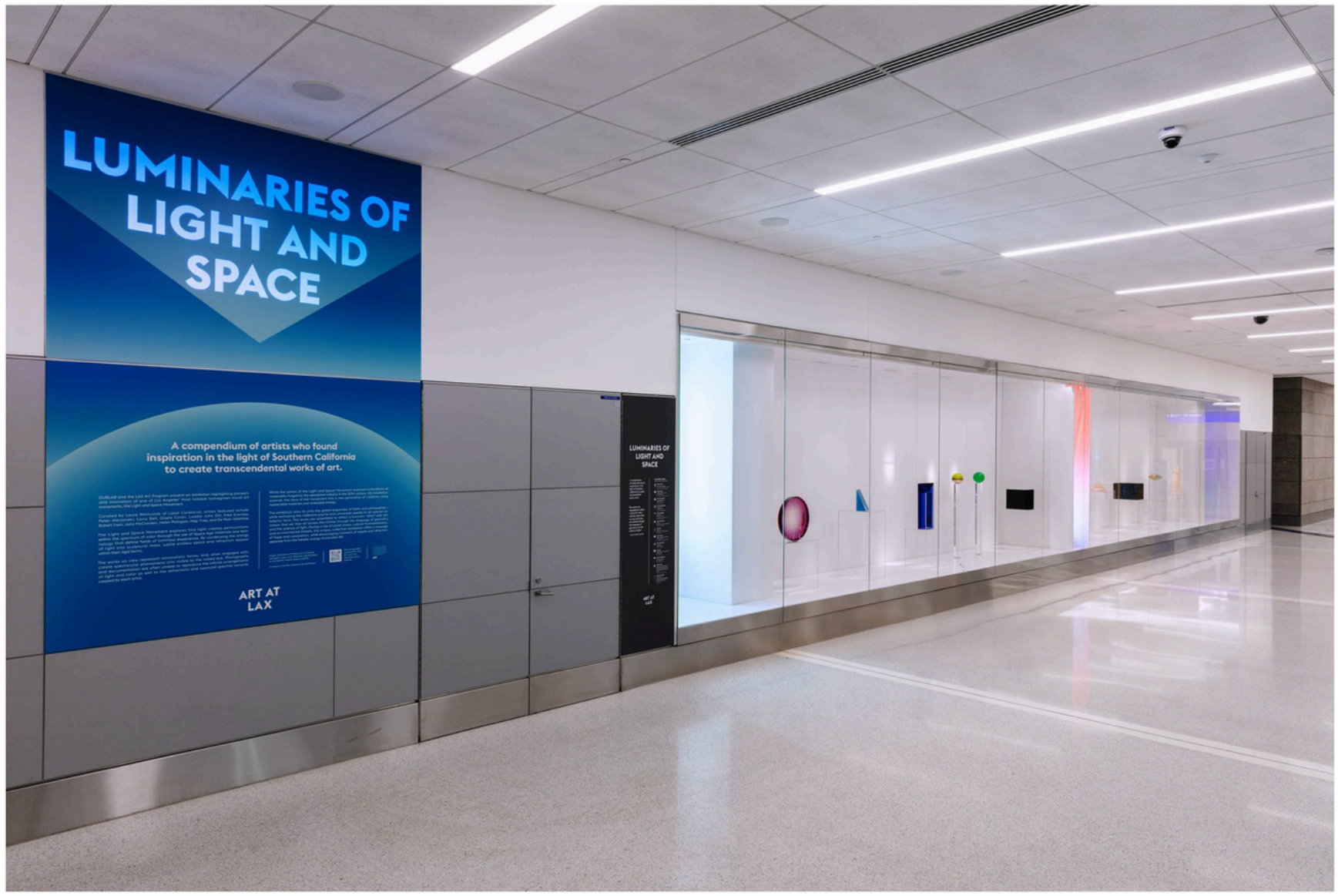
Peter Alexander, *Pyramid* (1969). Photo: SKA Studios, LLC, courtesy of Los Angeles World Airports.

“While the artists of the Light & Space Movement explored innovations of materiality forged by the aerospace industry in the 20th century, this installation extends the story of the movement into a new generation of creatives using sustainable materials and renewable energy,” reads the exhibition’s description.

Hap Tivey, *Flame* (2021). Photo: SKA Studios, LLC, courtesy of Los Angeles World Airports.

The show was scheduled to run through November 2025, but plans are underway to extend it ahead of the 2028 Olympics, set to be held in L.A. It's the first cultural installment of "many" planned to enhance flying experience at LAX ahead of the Olympics.

In fact, at the center of the exhibition is a commission titled Torch by Hap Tivey, which already echoes the Olympic flame that traditionally opens every iteration of the games. Whitcomb called it the "stabilizing anchor" of the show, "signifying the center of a futuristic altar where all faiths come together through the language of geometry."



Installation view of “Luminaries in Light and Space.” Photo: SKA Studios, LLC, courtesy of Los Angeles World Airports.

Investing in public art is a big boon for airports. In fact, in a document from the Airports Council International notes that such dedication to public art can be seeded by local ordinances requiring a certain percentage of construction budget to be dedicated to art.

According to Whitcomb, “millions of passengers” have already seen the works on view in the 60-foot-long installation, which is presented with an auditory component produced by Dublab called Orchestrina, featuring 30 L.A. composers.
“By presenting Light & Space on a global stage, the installation underscores Los Angeles’s commitment to showcasing local artistic achievements to a worldwide audience,” Whitcomb said.

While this somewhat fussy conceit raises plenty of fascinating questions -- how the artist interprets the psychology of the sitter; whether art, in fact, contains an aura and, if it does, whether it can be represented visually -- none of them is exactly illuminated for the viewer in the resulting works. That's not to say that they are not lovely in formal terms but that there is an imbalance between the richness of Von Mertens' method and the paucity of substance she manages to communicate. Perhaps unintentionally, it echoes the experience of viewing art in reproduction: Something's missing.

By contrast, Tivey's site-specific installation was refreshing for its guileless presentation, unencumbered by layers of theoretical discourse.

On opposing walls, the artist sketched out a pair of oblique half-frames in black paint and mounted an arching sculptural form (one parallel with the floor, like a horizon line; the other a slashing diagonal), over which a pair of projections cast video of slowly morphing fields of color.

The passage from soft peach and mauve tones to enveloping azures and purples is barely perceptible from moment to moment, but, when the chromatic saturation of the projections peak, the sculptural components of the installation trick the eye, suddenly seeming punched out and deep, not affixed to the wall.

That is, Tivey's installation is entirely predicated on a viewer's presence in the space and his patient faith in a slow-release payoff. Like watching the sun rise or set, the installation reveals its meaning through quietude and stillness over time, nudging viewers to experience the work in a more physical, bodily manner.

OBSERVER

ARTS • ART REVIEWS

New Wave Art Wknd Is Palm Beach's Answer to Miami Art Week

After a whirlwind week culminating in Art Basel Miami Beach, Observer ventured north to the sixth edition of New Wave Art Wknd to explore what the island has to offer.

By Elisa Carollo • 12/10/24 5:08pm

Last weekend, The Bunker Artspace hosted its opening, which was accompanied by a performance by Patrisse Cullors and coincided with the sixth edition of the New Wave Art Weeknd. Photographs by Charles Roussel. Courtesy of New Wave

Just as the chaos of Art Basel Miami Beach began to settle, the sixth edition of New Wave Art Wknd in Palm Beach, spearheaded by local dealer Sarah Gavlak, kicked off. The annual opening of Beth Rudin DeWoody's The Bunker Artspace, in particular, drew an eclectic crowd of collectors and art professionals to one of Florida's most lushly curated enclaves. The city's gorgeous ocean views, verdant vegetation, opulent hotels and charming manicured streets project a surreal blend of luxury and meditative calm that make it the perfect place to lean into post-Miami Basel recovery while still taking in some exceptional art.

Saturday was for gallery hopping

The "A Wing and a Prayer"art panel with guest curators Kyle DeWoody and Zoe Lukov and artists Lita Albuquerque, Brad Kahlhamer and Patrisse Cullors. Photographs by Charles Roussel. Courtesy of New Wave

On Saturday, the day began at The Bunker Artspace with a visit to the exceptional collection of the passionate collector Beth Rudin DeWoody, with a breakfast art panel preceding the highly anticipated annual opening celebration. Artists Lita Albuquerque, Brad Kahlhamer and Patrisse Cullors joined guest curators Zoe Lukov and Kyle Dewoody to delve into the central themes of the current show, "A Wing and a Prayer"—an exhibition showcasing more than 140 works from both the BRD Collection and Kyle DeWoody's personal trove.

During the discussion, Lukov considered the exhibition's core question: how can we continue to find hope in these turbulent times, and how can art serve as a conduit for healing and spiritual resistance? The exhibition brings together symbolic forms and abstract compositions, encouraging transcendence while weaving in recurring images of snakes and other archetypal energies that tap into the collective unconscious across time and space.

The Bunker Artspace's impressive collection has taken on a mystical rhythm, uniting works that reflect ancestry, nature and primordial wisdom with practices that reactivate the spiritual and ritualistic value of art. "We are here, we are humans trying to carry on," Kyle DeWoody noted, highlighting the show's ethos. "We decided to explore works that talk about connections between humans, community, as well as connection with nature."

Installation view of "Snakes" at The Bunker Artspace, curated by Laura Dvorkin and Maynard Monrow, 2024 Photographs by Charles Roussel. Courtesy of New Wave

The exhibition unfolds like a spiritual journey, positioning contemporary artists as modern-day shamans who guide viewers toward epiphanies about the interconnectedness of all things. Lita Albuquerque, whose practice treats sculpture as an entity woven into the fabric of the cosmos, reflected on her process: "You're channeling," she explained. "You need to be an empty vessel so that you can channel and have this body intelligence." Her contribution to the show includes one of her deeply spiritual works from the 1970s, inspired by the vision of a star descending to Earth and the transformative light it brings.

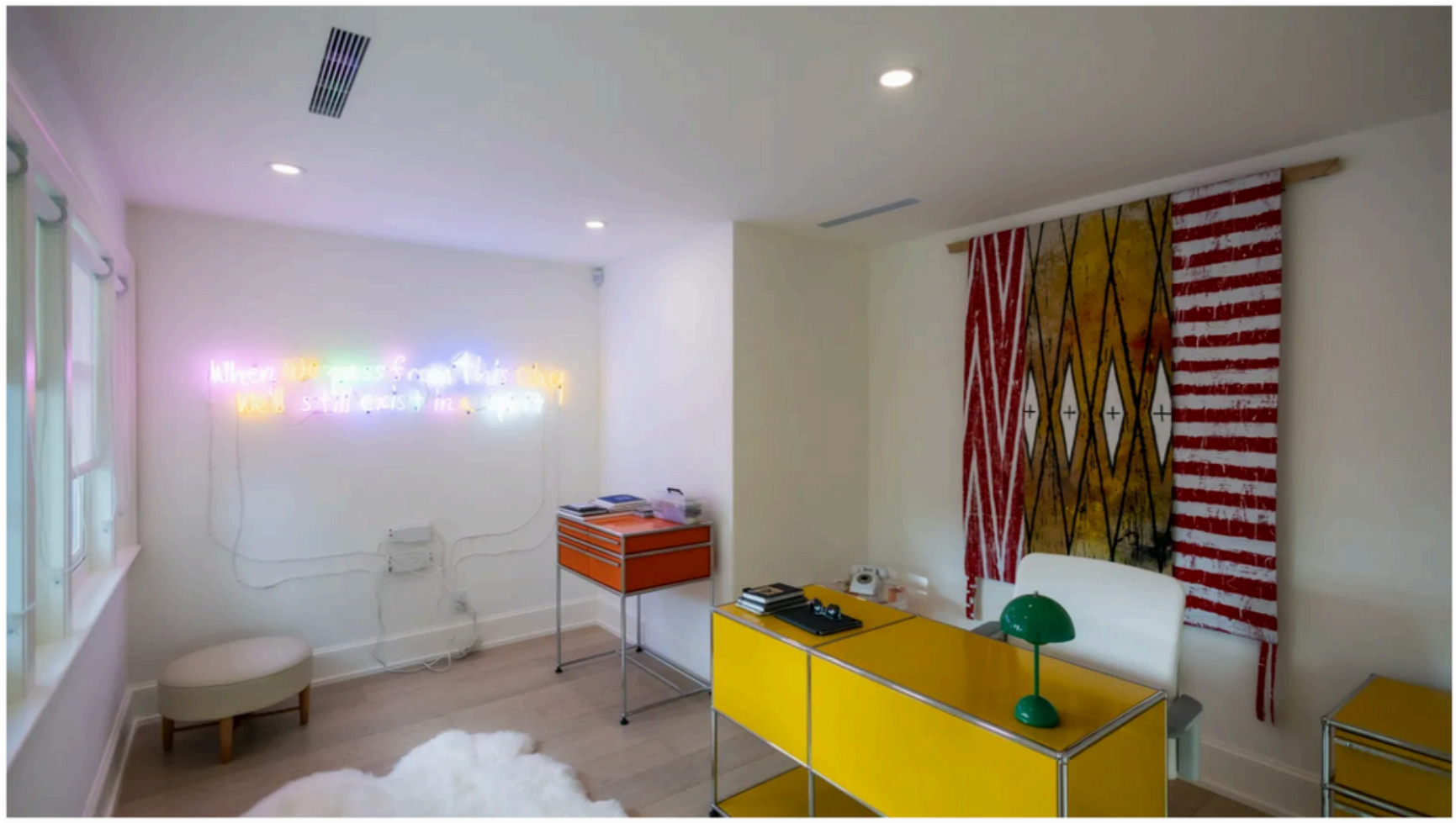
Similarly, artist Patrisse Cullors explored the intrinsic ties between spirituality and artistic practice. “I feel my life is a spiritual practice, which then synthesizes into an object as a whole,” she shared. “I committed to be the whole of myself. When you make art from this deep place of awareness and spirituality, the works are infused with spiritual energy.” According to the curatorial essay, for many of the exhibition’s artists, the act of creation becomes a ritual—a means to channel energy, invite revelation and envision alternative pathways forward. Through their works, these artists use unearthing and unveiling as a method for healing, aiming to ignite a spark of transformation in the viewer.

Central to the exhibition is the “Medicine Room,” a sanctified space where healing vibrations reverberate through works by artists such as Kaari Upson, Ana Mendieta, Candice Lin and Judy Chicago. Tangra paintings on found paper from India join the chorus, amplifying the room’s meditative atmosphere.

Lunch at The Whitman. Photographs by Charles Roussel. Courtesy of New Wave

As the panel concluded, attendees moved on to a convivial lunch at The Whitman in the Bal Harbour Shops pop-up at CityPlace. This moment of shared exchange allowed for deeper discussions around the panel’s themes in a relaxed setting. Following lunch, the group visited the Gochman Family Collection, a profoundly thoughtful and structured assemblage of works by Native American artists. The collection, housed in a beautifully curated space, presents many of today’s most recognized Indigenous artists in a dialogue that feels as integrated with the home’s interior as it is intentional in its message.

Rooted in an anti-colonial ethos and centered on Indigenous perspectives, the collection operates on a principle of constant rotation, with a primary goal of facilitating loans to exhibitions. The people behind it, Becky Gochman and Zach Feuer, are also the co-founders of Forge Project, a Native-led initiative located on the unceded homelands of the Moh-He-Con-Nuck in Upstate New York. Forge Project focuses on Indigenous art, decolonial education and fostering leadership in cultural advocacy, food security and land justice.



The Gochman Family Collection consists of a private lending collection of contemporary art focusing on work by Indigenous and American artists. Photographs by Charles Roussel. Courtesy of New Wave

The selection of works on display is as rich as it is diverse, with a site-specific wall installation by Nicholas Galanin, a striking wall painting by Jeffrey Gibson and multiple signature pieces by Beau Dick and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith. Among the highlights is Smith's sculpture, perched on a stone table and positioned to face the swimming pool, creating a serene yet powerful dialogue with the surrounding environment. On the kitchen table, a massive folder brimming with fact sheets offers an insider's view into the breadth of the collection. Flipping through its pages reveals a striking evolution—from a focus on North American Indigenous communities to an expanded scope that includes visionary Indigenous artists from across the Americas, such as Aygoo, a standout from the last Venice Biennale, and Sara Flores, now represented by major international galleries.

The Bunker Artspace opened in 2017. Photographs by Charles Roussel. Courtesy of New Wave

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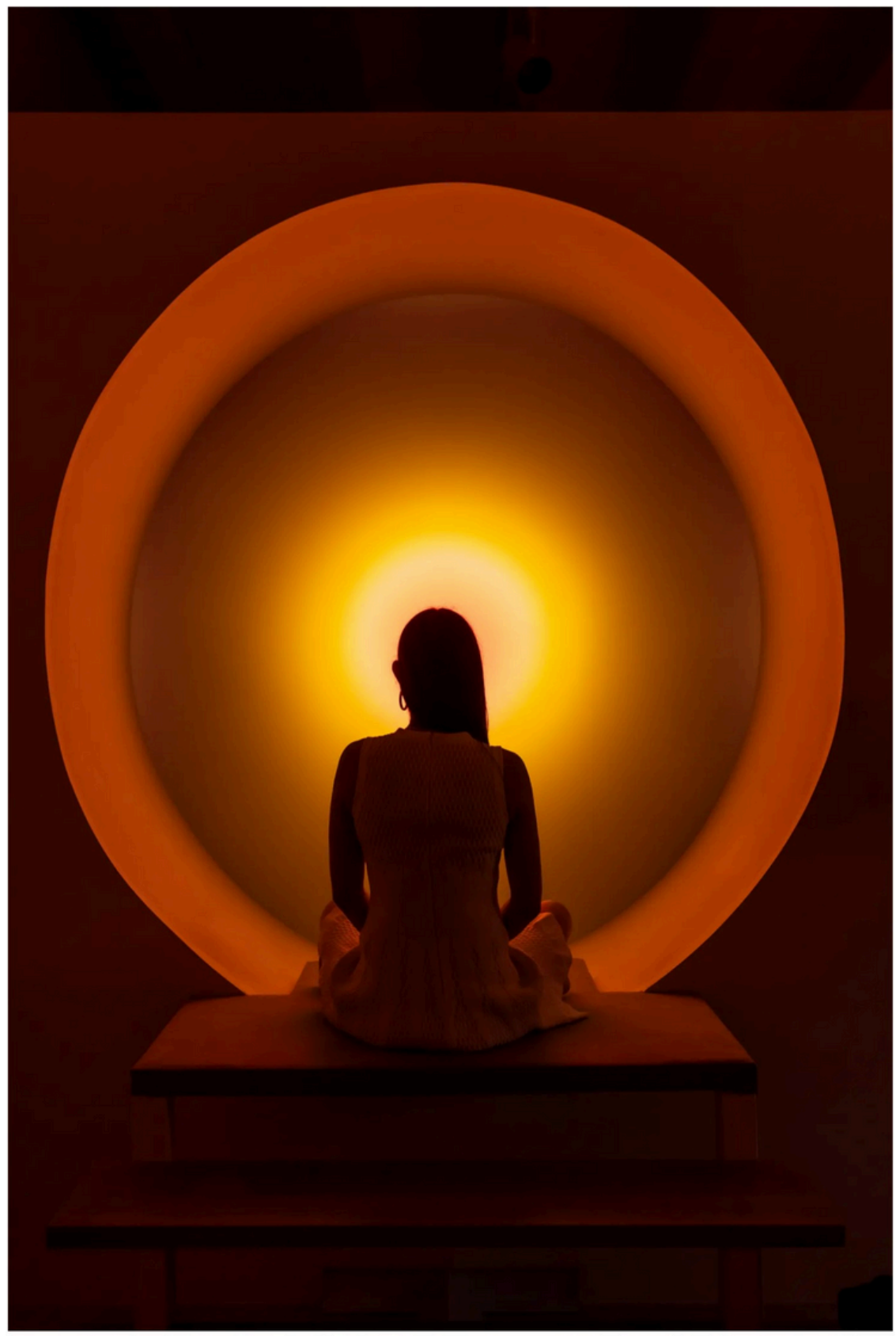
In the afternoon, we headed to the official opening of The Bunker Artspace, where attendees were greeted with caviar-topped snacks and Italian gelato as they waited in line to explore the exhibitions. Inside, the now-crowded rooms buzzed with energy—a vibrant meeting ground for dealers, collectors and artists.

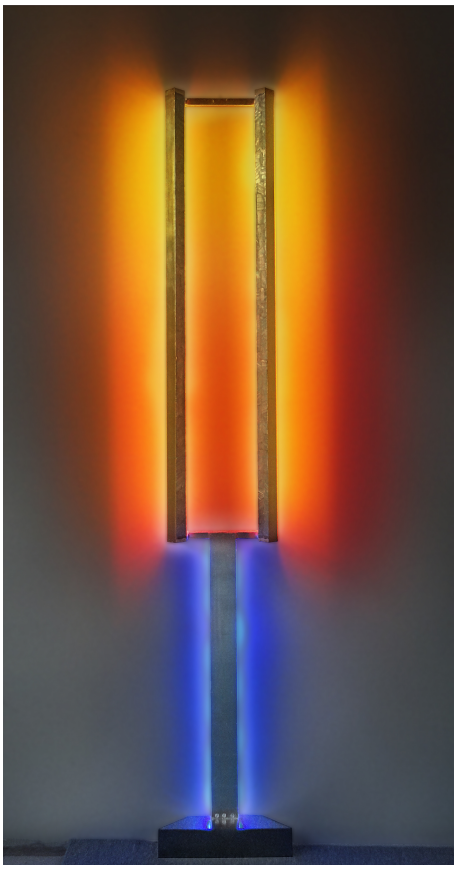
The tour continued in the evening with a gallery hopping between the masterpiece on view at Acquavella and the curated design and fine art selection at Onna house. conclude with GMAC, a new art space founded by collector American collector and philanthropist George Frederick Mead Merck to present curated exhibitions tied to his collection of Light and Space art. **The current show, “Perception is the Medium,” presents a series of newly commissioned works by artist Hap Tivey, welcoming visitors with an extremely Instagrammable portal of light. Tivey’s work Helios III, 2023 creates a mesmerizing interplay of light and energy, resulting in a dense, immersive field that invites reflection and wonder—a perfectly mesmerizing conclusion to a day steeped in art, exploration, and connection.**



An installation view of GMAC’s third exhibition, “Hap Tivey: Perception is the Medium.” Photographs by Charles Roussel. Courtesy of New Wave

visual art source

January 17, 2015



Hap Tivey
Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon
Review by Richard Speer

Continuing through January 31, 2015

Entering this cavernous front exhibition space, you're apt to think you've stumbled into a pagan temple or the set of a Hollywood sci-fi film. Lining the tall, white walls, Hap Tivey's fancifully futuristic sculptures emanate soft glows of intensely saturated color. Tivey is numbered among the original exponents of the Southern California Light and Space Movement, dating to the late 1960s. Like other artists working with light — Robert Irwin, James Turrell, and the late Dan Flavin among them — Tivey is part minimalist, part mystic.

His work toys with viewers' perception and, beyond pure opticality, with the ways in which we process light emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. Indeed, there is something that feels sacred about colored light filling a cathedral-like spacem Oen thinks of the chunky stained-glass windows at Le Corbusier's Notre Dame du Haut chapel in Ronchamp, France: a hushed,

monkish interior shot through with lightbeams slanting down through many-hued windows.

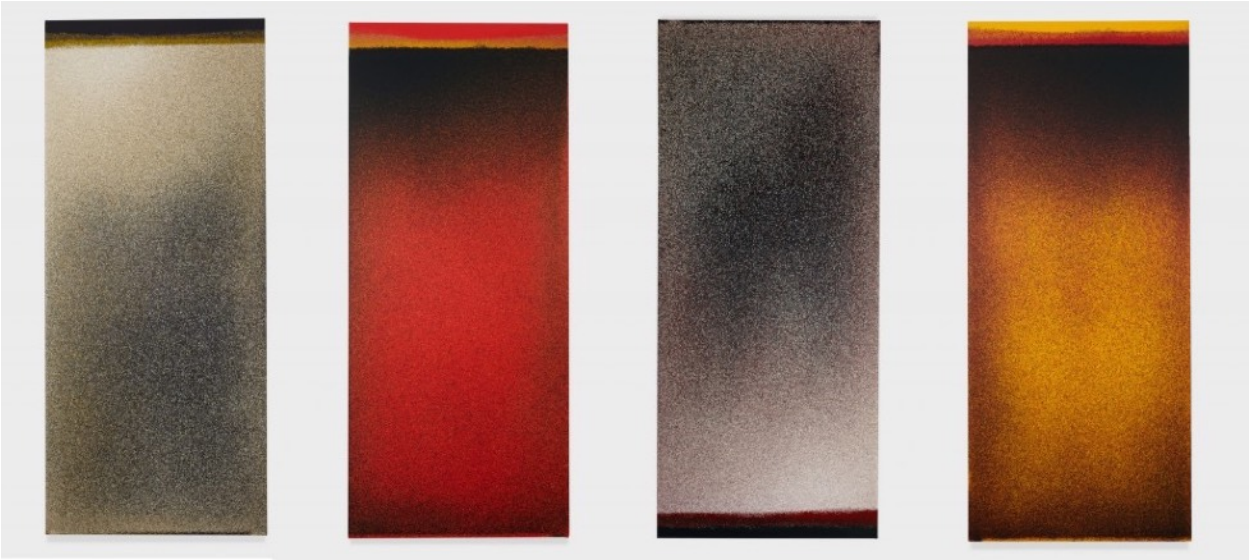
In exhibitions of the early 2000s, Tivey's signature works were screens of diffused LED light behind fabric or plastic sheets, the lights often in shapes that suggested land, sky, sun, and moon. But in this new body of work, only two pieces conform to the artist's classic style. In "RGB Goldbogen" gradations of red, green, and blue, also in LED, are delimited by a black aluminum framing device. It looks like a Color Field painting that somebody plugged into an electrical outlet. In the second piece, "Threshhold" [sic], a horn-like triangular protrubance pokes up from the framing structure.

The remaining works are more sculptural, except that they don't so much have pedestals as they are pedestals, holding up light itself. The metal armature of "Duex Machina" [sic] resembles an oversized tuning fork, while "Tulip," "Cooper Barnett," and "Softgold Corner" are great staffs of color with which one might hail the mothership in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." These works, along with "Pale Barnett," are perpendicular, whereas "Corner Flavor" tilts at an angle, joining with the floor in a triangle.

For all their minimalist cool, the surfaces are not smooth or polished. The metal is often nubby, rough and raw, making for an effective tension between elegant shapes and inelegant finishes. The works' central appeal lies in the interplay between the structures, the LEDs and the space surrounding them. The light glows not only inside the metal forms' contours, but also onto the walls behind them. With tapered fingers the light reaches out from each piece's perimeter, annexing the space surrounding it — art literally spilling over into life.

The viewer is left a bit perplexed, wondering where exactly the object begins and ends. This is the brand of head-scratching illusionism at which Tivey excels. Contemplating light — and let's face it, this isn't any ordinary light, this is light at its most sumptuous — as it encroaches upon one's personal space, after awhile the boundaries between the self and the light diminish, until light ceases being a wave or particle and feels a part of you. If that sounds a little woo-woo, blame it on Tivey's mystic temple, as good a place to find God as any, and better than most.

In living color: UB exhibition explores boundaries of perception



"Stellar Dispersion," a series of abstract paintings by John Knuth, are made with the excretions of hundreds of thousands of paint-consuming flies.

By Colin Dabkowski
Updated 10:12 AM
October 19, 2015

To create his rectangular paintings of luminous color, the Los Angeles-based artist John Knuth collects hundreds of thousands of house flies, feeds them pigmented sugar and confines them to a space barely larger than the canvas.

In that sliver of space, the flies swarm and land, every so often regurgitating a bit of pigment onto the surface of the painting. The result is a sort of pointillist exercise in luminosity – Rothko by way of Seurat by way of "The Fly" – in which millions of tiny dots add up to a sweeping gradient of color.

Knuth's "Stellar Dispersion," a series of four panels created by about 500,000 of his buzzing minions, is on view through January in the University at Buffalo Art Gallery's "Splitting Light," a safe but refreshingly straightforward debut exhibition from associate curator Rachel Adams.

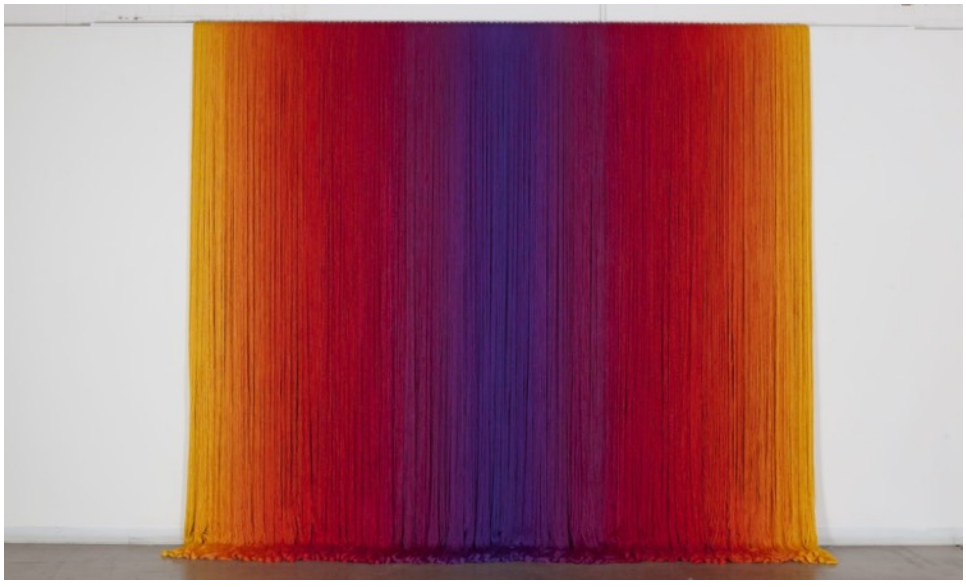
For the show, which explores the ways in which contemporary artists are using color not only as an ingredient in their work but as the main course, Adams has assembled a diverse collection of artists working in photography, painting, fabric and light.

Shiva Aliabadi's "Traces III," made from plastic sheeting and Indian Holi powder, is on view in the University at Buffalo Art Gallery's "Splitting Light."

As an artistic material, color comes in no purer form than pigment, which makes up the essence of Shiva Aliabadi's "Traces III," a minimalist installation created with high-grade plastic wrap and three bright hues of Holi powder – the kind used in Indian festivals. The piece creates a sense of three-dimensional velocity via two-dimensional means, with color seeming either to seep down onto the floor or soak up into the walls like a litmus strip.

In a nearby corner, Aliabadi has papered the wall and floor with reflective squares of gold foil, turning the space into an ad-hoc polygon of the sort you might see in a video game. Her work fractures reality so subtly and politely you hardly realize it's happening.

For sheer sumptuous beauty, it would be hard to beat Gabriel Dawe's "Gateway," a visually overwhelming piece made of hundreds if not thousands of pieces of hanging thread. The thing looks like the poached hide of some otherworldly Snuffleupagus spread out as if to display the full range of its natural beauty. It is anchored by a central spine of deep purple threads, which give way on either side to ochre before tapering off to bright amber at the edges. It's a successful attempt, as Adams writes in the succinct four-page broadsheet that accompanies the show, to materialize light "through texture and dense saturation."

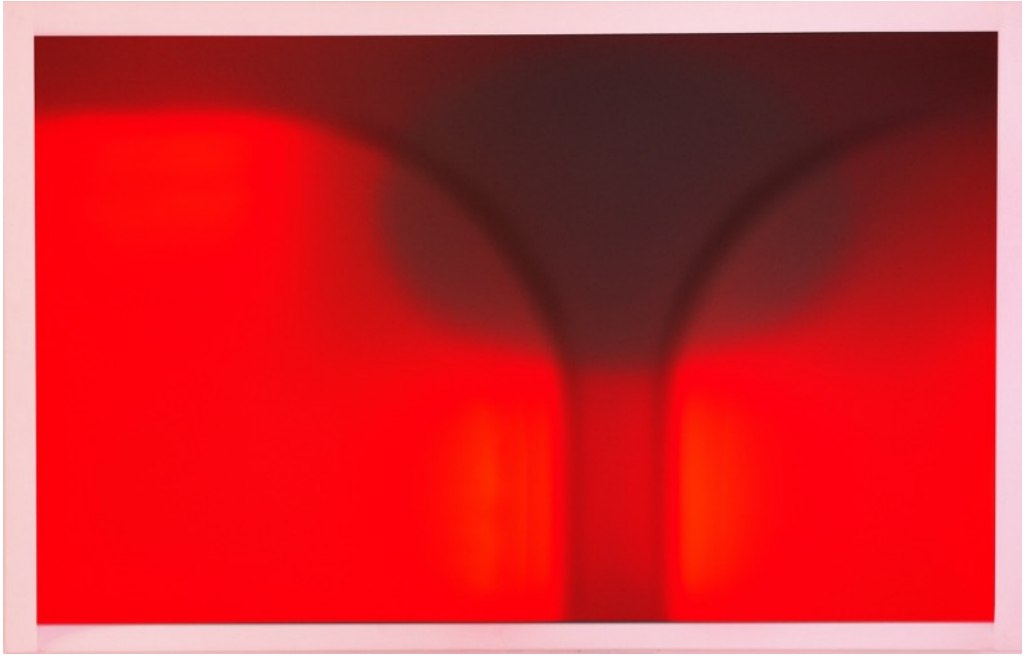


"Gateway," a 2014 piece by Gabriel Dawe, is part of the University at Buffalo Art Gallery's exhibition "Splitting Light".

The photographer David Benjamin Sherry employs color developing techniques to his curiously composed and often disconcerting shots of natural landscape-format camera that allows for crisp and detailed prints. Sherry shows how easy it is to make something familiar seem foreign by confounding our brain's expectations. A landscape of western rock formations, for example, shouldn't have a candy-blue hue. Simply by applying one, he forces the viewer to register new details in an image they might otherwise have passed by without a second thought. It's a big, blunt wrench, but inarguably effective.

There are areas where Adams blurs the otherwise tight focus of the show, including work by artists for whom color is merely one of several important components rather than a central conceit. These include Amanda Browder, whose tall collages of patterned fabric hang in the tall Lightwell Gallery, divorced from their original and highest function of adorning the exterior pieces of architecture. Compared to their earlier installation on the UB Anderson Gallery and the Center for the Arts, the piece's power as an architectural adornment is greatly diminished, even in the vertiginous space where it now hangs.

One of Adams' most inspired selections is Hap Tivey, an artist of lesser renown but no less vision than light art pioneers Robert Irwin or James Turrell. Several of his projections and LED-accentuated paintings are on view in a dedicated room. The paintings are simple constructions – acrylic canvases encased in screens evocative of flat-screen televisions and illuminated by LED lights – that seem to extend deep into the wall. Or maybe into some other dimension.



"Mahakala, Red Again," a 2007 piece by Hap Tivey, is among several light-based pieces by the artist in "Splitting Light."

Tivey's geometric wall projections use lengths of shadow-casting string as dividing lines between two fields of constantly shifting color, demonstrating how simple it is to add a sense of structure to something as intangible as light. This work adds an element of the ethereal to the other artists' concrete, not to say old-fashioned, employment of color in their work.

On a campus where issues of perceived race are currently front and center in the wake of a controversial art project by a UB graduate student, this exhibition also contributes unintentionally to that ongoing conversation.

In its way, it demonstrates that color is a fiction resulting from accidents of perception mixed with cultural associations. It is merely the fracturing of the visible spectrum into things we call “purple” or “orange” or “blue” or “black.”

What meaning it has is imposed from without – by those seeking to maintain old divisions, or, much more promisingly, by artists attempting to stretch our perceptions in new directions in order to render those divisions absurd.

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ART REVIEW

“Splitting Light”

A safe but savvy exploration of artists who use color as a medium. Runs through Jan. 10, 2016 in University at Buffalo Art Gallery, Amherst.

OREGONLIVE
The Oregonian

Review: Anna Von Merten and Hap Tivey

Updated: Jan. 21, 2011, 2:24 a.m. | Published: Jan. 21, 2011, 1:24 a.m.

This month, the Elizabeth Leach Gallery commences its 30th anniversary programming with a double bill that dovetails nicely around the idea of light, both inner and outer.

In the works of the New Hampshire-based fabric artist Anna Von Mertens, she imagines the auras of the sitters in some of art history's most famous portraits, many of which she has never seen in person. Her psychological analysis of these subjects manages to vest familiar likenesses with a more explicit emotional back story than, say, Mona Lisa's pursed lips betray.

In the rear gallery, Portland native Hap Tivey addresses "light" in more direct and literal terms, creating an installation that features a pair of projections of pure color that shift in gradient with slow and moody intensity.

Where Von Mertens' project is inspired by the frequent experience of interacting with works of art in reproduction (i.e. photos reprinted in books and magazines or, worse, pixelated images on the Web), Tivey also focuses on the irreplaceable impact of looking at art in the flesh with an installation viewers must immerse themselves in to fully experience.

At first blush, Von Mertens' hand-dyed and hand-stitched works scan as lovely abstractions: amorphous orbs of hot and cold colors that radiate out of darkness. But they are actually painstakingly representational images, whose imminently recognizable forms have been systematically obfuscated.

Beginning with German theorist Walter Benjamin's notion of "aura" as described in his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Von Mertens began to consider that elusive, spiritual quality that seems to emanate from the greatest artworks when we stand in their presence.

From there, she substituted our modern, New Age-y idea of the aura for the animating spirit Benjamin apprehended, leading her to study the pseudo-scientific practice of aura photography, in which electromagnetic fields are captured as colors and, in turn, interpreted as the psychic makeup of the photographed subject.

Thus, these abstractions are Von Mertens' psychic portraits of art history's masterpieces, from Whistler's mother to Warhol's silk-screened Marilyn Monroes, wringing clues about the sitters from a combination of biographical research and scrutinizing the paintings themselves.

Each aura reading is then meticulously stitched over with the subject's chakra patterns -- apparently, where auras originate -- and spread outward in concentric silhouettes. The effect is akin to a topographical map describing some electric-hued geography.

ARTFORUM

REVIEWS NEW YORK

Hap Tivey

Blum Heiman Gallery

By Tor Seidler

In front of an Impressionist painting the eye differentiates between the individual brushstrokes and the composite picture. At a given distance the painting coalesces. So with Hap Tivey's beautiful shadow boxes. A smokily translucent plastic mat (actually called "pola-coat," used in rear screen projection) is stretched over a frame about three inches in front of the canvas. From a few feet away the eye, presented with the two surfaces, has trouble focusing. This gives the work an ethereal quality: the mat is like a slightly luminous mist clinging to the painting. It is also, in Tivey's words, "a plane that intersects the light from the painting. Any surface is a source of light—some reflection, some absorption. The mat surfaces display the reflected light of the paintings." In some areas this reflected light is intense, in others it shifts as one rounds the shadow box, for on the obfuscated canvas Tivey uses silver and aluminum foil as well as acrylics.

The luminous mist quality is particularly effective in view of the unabashedly Japanese subject matter: for the most part, arched walking bridges and lonely Fujiyama-type mountains. But while the references are obvious, the subjects are transmogrified. The bridge paintings, for example, tend to be no more than subtly arched forms connecting two masses, presumably land or stone. There is nothing extraneous here, or in the simple, sacred mountains rising above plains of land or cloud. They are wonderfully obsessive, the luminous, floating masses of color. Fuzzy and clear at once, they seem to mirror shapes stored deep in our brain, behind consciousness, shapes we know well and not at all, like certain chance-glimpsed configurations of cloud.

The largest and most impressive work in the show is of neither a mountain nor a bridge. Unshown in the usual photographs of the Ryoan-ji garden, one of the best known of the Japanese formal raked-sand and rock gardens, is the red ceramic wall that contains it. Tivey, who lived in Japan for a year, was not only taken by the beauty of the wall but intrigued, as he puts it, "by the idea of the wall being as beautiful, or more beautiful, than the garden itself." This garden wall, along with another with a famous mountain view beyond it, inspired Red Wall. To say that it has a bold central band of red and misty white masses in foreground and background is to say little, for as in Impressionist painting (and perhaps more relevantly, Rothko), it is light, its illusion and allusion, that intrigues us in this and in all Tivey's work. I think it is the quality of the luminosity (the eery glow of the red in Red Wall) that appeals to me most: it is uncanny but never garish. The works of art seem to approach and recede; the surfaces are alive, mysterious, because you cannot quite "get" them.

—Tor Seidler

warmly to both. Fishman is the more painterly of the two, but both have that gestural juice that makes me feel at home. Davis' almost psychedelic color makes Fishman's paintings look drab by contrast, but she gets a lot of mileage by separating her brilliant reds and blues with intervals of black and white. The general structure of her painting is rectangular shapes in apposition; they read as stumbling blocks or stepping stones to the rest of the canvas, depending on your orientation.

The opposing or interlocking rectangles of Fishman's paintings are recalled in her brushwork, where strokes repeat the rhythms of the composition. Arranging the paintings as she does, where structure echoes process, Fishman's work always seems exquisitely scaled. All the spaces across the canvas are active; there's never the sense, as there often is in painting, of afterthought, where shapes are crammed in like the last bit of a message on a crowded postcard.

By using either wax or spare amounts of medium Fishman gets a body to the surface of her work that's very luxurious. There are certain advantages to painting in oil, and richness of color and surface lead the list. The disadvantage of Fishman's work is that she is a nonrepresentational painter in the era of instant content, that her formal accomplishments are eclipsed by the absence of explicit meaning.

It's the ambiguity of the implicit qualities of Fishman's paintings that attracts me to them—how they're so organized but seem so offhand. That she chooses to be a refiner rather than an innovator is not a moral flaw. Without the refinements of those painters who continue to work in the tradition of nonrepresentational modes, how can there be, as Carlyle put it, a tradition of the new? Fishman's work is difficult, forcing the viewer to reexamine the language of expression that motivated the New York School. With Fishman, you're convinced it's not a dead language.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG, that naughty truant from the New York School, in his exhibition of silks collaged on to rag paper (with photo images superimposed by solvent transfer), reminds me of the uroboros worm, who lives by devouring its own tail, constantly feeding on itself. I don't expect that every show by an artist be a hit (.300 is a pretty good average in baseball, and it would be a fabulous average in artball) but this miss is so prominent as to be astonishing—in quite the negative sense of the word.

These are a regurgitation of the *Combines* and photomontages of earlier Rauschenberg, but he used to be tough-minded, and this stuff is dainty. Daintiness is terrific; Rauschenberg's "Hoarfrost" series was full of awe for the veiled mysteries of gauzy fabric, but almost any bolt of cloth in the schmatta district has more allusiveness than these fabric pieces. He has flattened and taken the allure out of the material. The transferred images of the new work are neither graphic enough in form nor meaty enough in content to carry the freight demanded by Rauschenberg's composition. They remind me of nothing so much as a creative bulletin board assembled by a Home Ec teacher, and the nicest thing that can be said about them is that they are pallid homages to Miriam Schapiro's recent work where she uses diaphanous fabric.

Why are these so far afield? Every element is denatured. Fabric isn't draped (Schapiro doesn't drape hers, either, but she layers fabric on top of fabric so there's a sense of density), the photo-images have no resolution, and the compositions have no dynamic. It's a painful show to look at because all the individual elements cloud over and have no staying power.

—CARRIE RICKEY

HAP TIVEY, Blum Helman Gallery; TONI DOVE, Terry Dintenfass Gallery; DANIEL BABIOR, Bertha Urdang Gallery:

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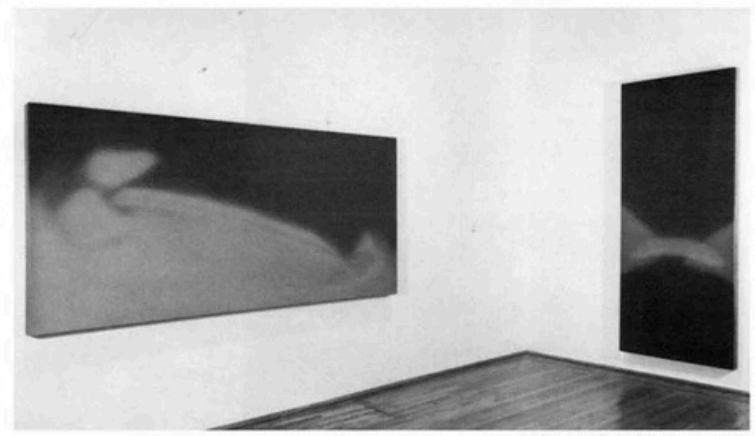

Hap Tivey, Installation view, Blum Helman Gallery, 1979

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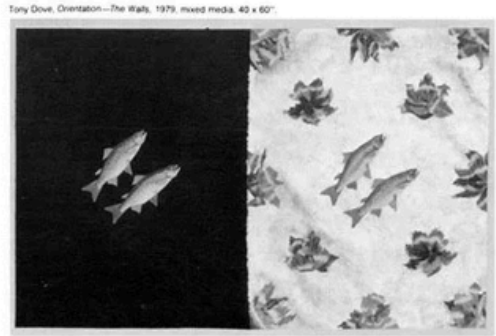
The first painting one comes to in TONI DOVE's recent exhibition is of two fish (trout, I think), placed one directly above the other in the center of a field of pastel blue. The top fish is realistically, even clinically, rendered; the bottom fish, identical in outline, is done in silver leaf. I use the word "field" to describe the background because it is not watery but a dry, brushy blue. The painting is called *Equals*. The top fish (not a fish, we are given to think, but Fish) is not superior to the mere silhouette. The title gave me pause, for the presentation of two such similar images instigates comparison, and my natural sentiments lay with the "real" fish. But is it any more real, Dove seems to want us to ask ourselves, this two-dimensional image made not of fish oils but oil paints? In form, the fish are equal.

This first painting ushers in nicely the complexities of the rest of the work. The paintings are thought-demanding. They all superimpose images from nature—birds, fish, seashells, flowers—on abstract or diagrammatic backgrounds. They all concern and question form (What *is* a fish?), and they all ask their questions dialectically, presenting with each possibility a sort of metaphysical opposite.

Orientation: The Ceiling, like the other two in the series, *Orientation: The Wall* and *Orientation: The Floor*, is divided bilaterally. In the left half of *Ceiling* a strep-throated orchid stares out from a black void. In the right half the identical (again rather clinical) orchid is placed against a dark-blue blend of star chart and oceanographic sections. In *Wall* a pair of fish (now speckled trout) lying in a black void are juxtaposed to the same two fish lying on an opulent gilt and red flower wallpaper. *Floor* gives us a conch against utter darkness and then the same conch on a sort of topographical map, pelted by comicbook slants of silver rain or seaspray and kept company by a starfish and a sand dollar. The natural elements floating in their voids conjure up Plato's theory of forms: an ideal orchid (or fish, or conch), an absolute on which all others are patterned. On the other hand we have the same form made relative to a system, worldly or cosmic. Or if you like, we have a Kierkegaardian dialectic: the absolute versus the universal. The point is, the work asks for interpretation.

Daniel Babior, Untitled, 1979, color photograph.

Tony Dove, Orientation—*The Walls*, 1979, mixed media, 40 x 60".



The largest and most ambitious painting, *Border and Bridge*, is a veritable chart of being and becoming. A primitive-looking mold of a scallop shell in a void girt by a "phases of the moon" chart; starry quadrants of the cosmos supporting three silver slivers and three oceanographic sections; a final area of watery blue with a "normal" scallop, fluted and color-blotched, seemingly just emerged from a broken apart silver silhouette of a shell, itself a sort of halfway house between the primitive-looking mold and the final product. More Plato, an ideal form hatching the real? But there are physical, as well as metaphysical, forces of creation at work: moons, tides, seashells that thrive in tidal waters.

Unfortunately, the symbolically more complex works come off more as interesting puzzles than beautiful paintings. I thought of Tolstoy: "There is no greatness where there is not simplicity." The two simplest—*Equals*, with its double fish, and *Orientation: The Wall*, with its pleasingly startling fish on wallpaper—manage to be lovely without sacrificing anything in suggestivity.

DANIEL BABIOR's color photographs at first appear to be superimpositions, tricks performed in the darkroom to blend urban interiors and urban exteriors. Still, there was something eerily familiar about them; I realized there were no tricks involved. The photographs are of windows on urban streets and of what these windows simultaneously reflect and reveal: the daily fare of any ambulatory city dweller. Glass is a true city medium, cold and hard; but these pictures avoid being either. They have no part of photography's urban etiquette of chilling or awesome surfaces, of grotesque juxtapositions, of the dark or dangerous edges of things. And while they are of the familiar, they manage to be revelatory.

One is of a New York City flower shop. The shop is well lighted, so the interior