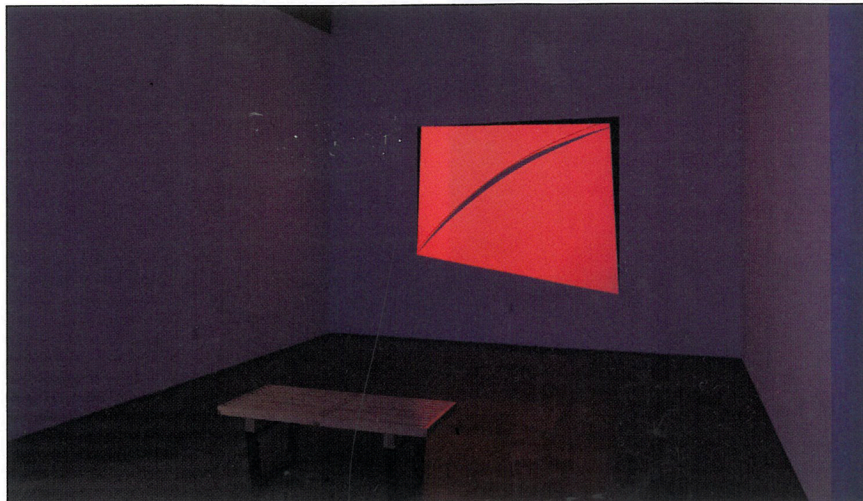


## reviews



"KELLY ARC," 2010, **Hap Tivey**  
PROJECTED LIGHT, GRAPHITE AND ACRYLIC PAINT, 5" X 93" X 6", 9 MINUTES  
PHOTO: COURTESY ELIZABETH LEACH GALLERY

### PORTLAND

#### **Hap Tivey: "Folded Light"** at Elizabeth Leach Gallery

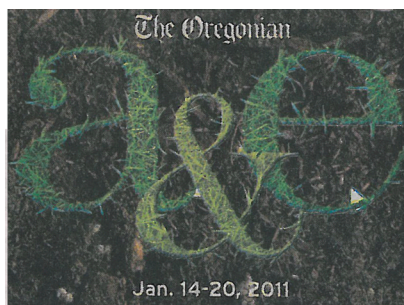
It happens so gradually that if one weren't sitting alone in a darkened gallery one might not notice the moment of change at all. What was a moment ago glowing pale apricot-colored light is now lavender. This is Hap Tivey's *Tilted Horizon*, part of his show "Folded Light: New Light Sculpture" at Elizabeth Leach Gallery. *Tilted Horizon* is a quadrilateral of projected light framed in a wall-painted "frame" drawn akimbo as if it were straight off the set of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. The light form is sliced through with an arcing horizon line, a dark sliver attached on edge directly to the wall, casting a thin curved shadow. The pastel colors slowly shift as in that moment just after sunset over the Pacific when the sky and the water, too, slowly, almost imperceptibly begin to change color. And Tivey gets the pacing just right, slow enough to slow down one's looking, not so slow that one walks away before noticing the evolution of color. The attentive viewer engages

in a fine-tuning of perception, a deep looking akin to the notion of "deep listening" of pioneering experimental musician Pauline Oliveros that emphasizes the intentional act of listening vs. the involuntary nature of hearing. The visual analogue means that unlike studying a busy composition, this looking is one of noticing subtleties, the shape of the shadow cast, the moment between hues. Which is not to say that *Tilted Horizon* doesn't evoke emotion, the familiarity of its colorplay may make you catch your breath. On the facing gallery wall, there is a similar projection, *Kelly Arc*, this one in more vivid colors like coral and rich blue. This, and the sliver that slices through it diagonally from corner to corner, make *Arc* more abstract, more of a color study.

Currently a professor at Bard College in New York, and with an MFA from Claremont Graduate School, Tivey is frequently associated with the Southern California Light and Space movement. Over his 30-year career, he has moved from large-scale light works to works that capture light in an object; recent light box works create form with light using translucent surfaces, pigment, and LED lights. For this installation, Tivey unpacks the light from the box once more, pouring it directly from projector overhead onto the wall. Equal parts visual drama and subtlety, "Folded Light" finds Tivey coming full circle.

—LISA RADON





# Drawn to the light

Two exhibits at Elizabeth Leach Gallery illuminate the psychological and literal meanings

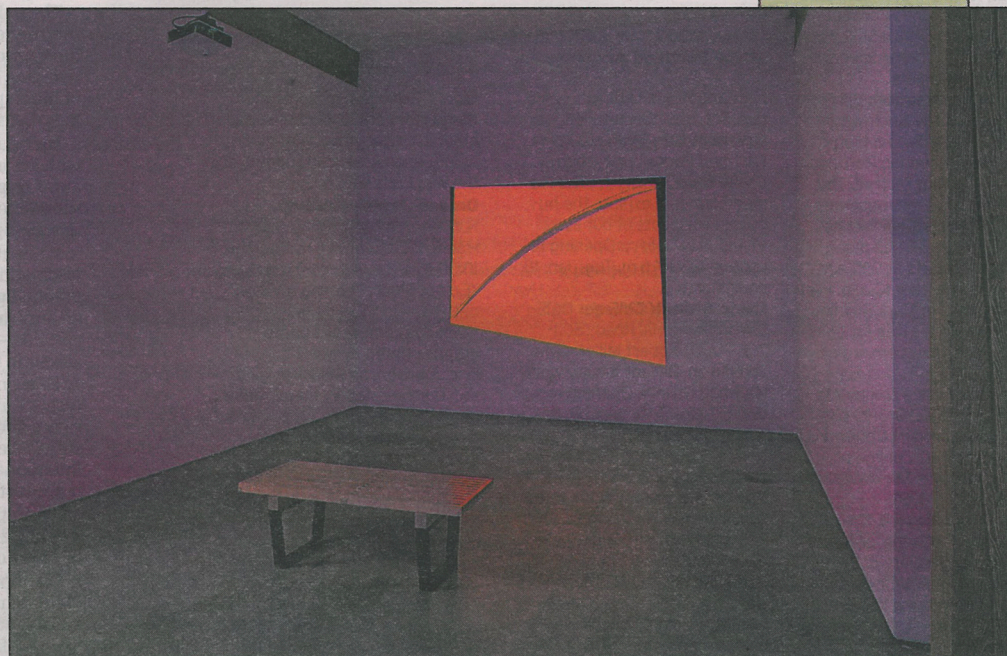


Photo courtesy of DAN KVIKA

The atmospheric light and space installation of Hap Tivey returns the Elizabeth Leach Gallery to its early roots with the light and space movement.

By JOHN MOTLEY  
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

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.

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## review

Anna Von Mertens:  
"Portraits" and  
Hap Tivey:  
"Folded Light"

Where: Elizabeth Leach Gallery, 417 N.W. Ninth Ave., 503-224-0521

Hours: 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday

Closes: Saturday, Feb. 12

Admission: Free  
Website: elizabethleach.com

Continued from Page 37

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.

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.

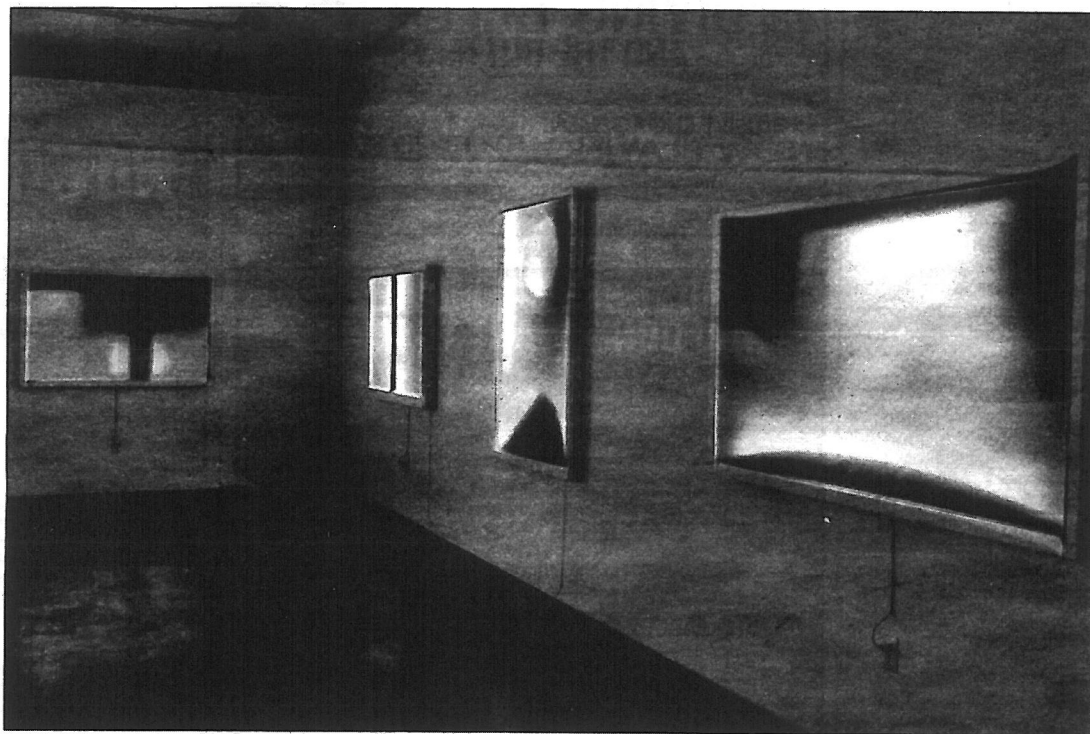
Of course, to luxuriate within the precise context of a work of art's presentation — to surrender to its rules of time and space, and perceive its mysterious energy — is to behold an aura that is real, not just imagined.

John Motley is a Portland freelance writer; motley.john@gmail.com



# visual arts

gallery guide | reviews | events



Installation of work by Hap Tivey  
At Elizabeth Leach Gallery

## Light as path to infinity

By BRIAN LIBBY  
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

For anyone who has walked at night past a house with its lights on and shades drawn, wondering what goes on inside, Hap Tivey's exhibit at Elizabeth Leach Gallery ought to feel familiar.

"Sands of the Ganges" consists of several works that are hybrids of painting and light-box sculpture. Most have proportions comparable to a large flat-screen television and similarly give off bright illumination, but are covered with canvas and painted. The effect seems like a series of windows onto an alternate world, one

hypnotic enough to make any viewer stop and stare.

Working since the 1960s, Tivey is considered part of the light-and-space movement that included such fellow Southern Californians as Robert Irwin, James Turrell and Maria Nordman. (Turrell will visit Portland next month when he lectures at Pacific Northwest College of Art.) Aside from inspiring a generation of light-loving artists, these glowing minimalist-futurist, light-and-space works have also inspired the look of Apple computers. New York's Museum of Modern Art even owns work made by Tivey, as

### review

"Sands of the Ganges"  
by Hap Tivey

Where: Elizabeth Leach Gallery,  
417 N.W. Ninth Ave.

Hours: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.  
Tuesday-Saturday

Closes: March 1

does Pablo Picasso's son, Claude.

If his pieces are shaped and emit light like televisions, their effect is quieter and more spiritual. In a Jan. 18 public discussion at the gallery, Tivey ex-

plained that the show's title refers to an ancient Sanskrit text using the Ganges river as a metaphor for infinity. Limitless space can be found in a single drop of its water, the thinking goes, or in the massive volumes continuously flowing between the riverbanks.

Earlier in his career, Tivey favored more subdued, almost waxy colors. In "Sands" he leans toward purer, stronger tones that give off an almost overpowering psychedelic power which nearly overwhelms the senses, like the visual equivalent of a sugar rush. That the lasting effect is still a

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tranquil one is one of the show's surprises. Ultimately, Tivey harnesses even these candylike tones with subtler lighting.

Most pieces include some simple form meant seemingly to hint at representational images within an abstract context. "Sand Grain," in which the title object could also be a mountain-and-moon landscape viewed through green and blue hues, reinforces Tivey's recurring interest in infinity. In "Mahakala, Red Again," the reference may be even more specific, with a curve mimicking the iconic interior columns of Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson Wax Building — only using the scarlet lighting scheme of a hotel room in New Orleans' French Quarter.

Besides manipulating lights, Tivey adds basic three-dimensional forms within these vertically hanging boxes, over which a canvas is stretched. This, along with LEDs as vibrantly hued as Christmas lights, creates an atmospheric silhouette effect. During his gallery talk, the artist briefly unplugged the light sculptures to show that the forms remain visible without illumination. Yet, staring at these artworks, it's the light that makes them feel like a live moment.

The sole work standing alone on the floor instead of hung on the wall, "Rothko Sky," is less representational than most of the other pieces: a fusion of colors that's comparably minimalist in form, just like something by the legendary abstract expressionist after whom Tivey's work is named. Proportioned like a small door, it feels like a portal, a kind of de facto invitation entrance to soulful architectural minimalism that also recalls Houston's Rothko Chapel.

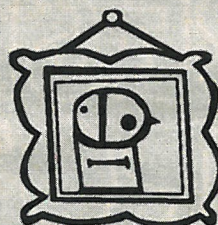
Before this Leach Gallery show, Tivey created a magnificent light installation at a Northwest Portland warehouse during last fall's Time-Based Art Festival. Projecting a circular, movie projector-like beam of white light through surfaces in this vast old concrete space, Tivey produced a dramatic yet intimate experience with the lightest of artistic touches. The genius of the work was its simplicity.

Nothing in "Sands of the Ganges" produces so dramatic an effect, but that's not the intention here. Rather, Tivey gently but persistently invites viewers to soak up the warm glow radiating from these pieces as a cleansing spiritual act — an artful meditation that captures the essence of watching and imagining.



# VISUALARTS

In Hap Tivey's previous solo show at the Elizabeth Leach Gallery, his work was dominated by references to Modernist color field painters such as Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman. But where those artists attempted to articulate sublime tension through tonal shifts in coloration, Tivey emulated those masters using the medium for which he's known: light. Again, *Sands of the Ganges*, his exhibition of new light sculptures, includes two nods to Rothko, the titles of which cheekily play with that artist's name: A totemic lightbox sculpture is titled "Rothkosky" and a wall-mounted piece is named "Marks No Marks." But the rest of the show signals a departure to more directly representational territory, as Tivey populates his panels—in which LED bulbs backlight subtly painted canvases—with celestial imagery.



## VISUAL ART



### Hap Tivey

*Sands of the Ganges*

Elizabeth Leach Gallery, 417  
NW 9th, through March 1

In "Galaxy Particles," an electric blue crescent moon hovers in the foreground, while an atmospheric expanse of orange hues drifts behind it. In the muted palette of "Proton," pink orbs seem to rise over a shadowy horizon line into a steel-gray cosmos. Perhaps the most otherworldly quality to these sculptures, however, are the range in the light's color values—from wincingly brilliant to dully shimmering—and Tivey's painterly juxtaposition of them. No wonder, then, that the sea of emerald greens and violet blues in "Miami Moon" effortlessly conjures the luminous play of the aurora borealis.

Although these new works explore a more pictorial side to

Tivey's work, what is ultimately mesmerizing about his sculptures is the sheer sensuousness of the light as it filters through the canvas. Mounted on the wall as if they were paintings, they cue a viewer to read them as such. It's a disorienting effect to perceive the sense of movement and instability in these works as the LED bulbs flicker behind the canvases. In abstract and amorphous pieces such as "Sand Grains" or "Wavelength of Speech," the edges of shapes appear almost liquid. One half-expects the forms, like those in a lava lamp, to break apart and reassemble in some inevitably fluid motion. Likewise, the intense bouquet of reds in "Mahakala, Red Again" bursts with palpable warmth, revealing just how expressive and affecting such fundamental compositional elements as color and light can be. JOHN MOTLEY





## Hap Tivey and Gregg Renfrow at Elizabeth Leach

Can SoCal Light and Space cure the Portland winter blues?

BY RICHARD SPEER



If you're prone to SAD (and who among us doesn't get a little seasonally affected during a soggy Portland January?), then run, don't walk, to Elizabeth Leach's dream-team double bill of light sculptor Hap Tivey and painter Gregg Renfrow. Both artists were part of the Southern California Light and Space movement of the 1960s and '70s, a movement born of the area's mythic confluence of sea and sun (and perhaps smog): Think sunsets filtered through Malibu haze, vast blue horizons striated with orange and red. Both artists are indebted to the formalist tracts of minimalism and

color-field painting—as well as, obliquely, to Impressionism—but in different ways. Tivey uses canvas, acrylic, and LED lights in works that have neonlike appeal, but with a cooler visual temperature. In the aurora borealislike *Wavelength of Speech* the artist suggests not only the amplitudes of sound waves, but also air and ocean currents, separating and flowing as their viscosities dictate. *Sand Grain*, with its circular form and breastlike shadow, grades downward from blue to green, while *Galaxy Particles* features a striking blue crescent moon, counterbalanced by a shadow bank on the work's opposite side.

At Gregg Renfrow's First Thursday opening, he explained the inspiration behind his polymer-and-pigment-on-cast-acrylic pieces: a kind of rapture he experienced while standing in front of Raphael's *Saint Catherine of Alexandria* at the National Gallery in London. He says he was suffused with "pure pleasure in my body," which he wanted to re-create in the chromatic ambience of his paintings. (Renfrow should get a MacArthur Grant for saying something so unabashedly, unfashionably hedonistic.) The artist succeeds in his goal, his matter-of-fact titles (*Crimson and Carmine with White Center*; *Green-Yellow-Green*; *Maroon over Yellow*) encapsulating the works' simultaneous vacuity and pregnancy. The visual equivalents of the music of Brian Eno, Renfrow's and Tivey's styles posit color as mood as meaning; meteorologic atmosphere as expressionist atmospherics. It is eye candy, wallpaper; it is groovy and shallow and trancy and blissfully nonconceptual, and if it doesn't cure your SAD, you need a soul transplant.

**SEE IT:** Elizabeth Leach, 417 NW 9th Ave., 224-0521. Tivey closes March 1; Renfrow closes Feb. 2.



## Hap Tivey

Hap Tivey began creating light installations and sculptures during the late sixties in Los Angeles. By 1973 he had made dozens of outdoor light works in the desert outside Palm Springs and a complex of interior light spaces that he exhibited in his Pasadena studio. These early creations reflected the influence of L.A. light artists such as James Turrell, with whom he collaborated on large-scale search light structures. During the 70's he produced a large body of light installations in public galleries that invited viewers into large fields of undifferentiated light, where they experienced intensely saturated color with apparently infinite depth. Many of those works produced the impression of looking into deep cloudless skies, and in the case of the Irvine and Spring Street situations, the viewer was literally enveloped by that empty light.

His first commercial exhibition in New York at Blum Helman moved that impression of infinite light into the rectangle and onto the wall with a painting format that presented a surface of light rather than a surface of paint. In this new portable field, the viewer encountered the brilliant saturated colors of earlier installations only as auras that hovered around primary shapes of shifting silver light in a field of darkness. During the eighties, his shows at Blum Helman, Landau-Alexander, Margo Leavin and Elizabeth Leach expanded that palette of light into a full range of colors that maintained a sense of infinite light within a soft matte surface. The luminosity within the paintings was the result of ambient light in the room and would change with the time of day, type of illumination source, and position of the viewer. The works retained the interactive characteristic of the installations on a subtler scale.

Following the Museum of Modern Art's acquisition, more of the gallery pieces found their way into shows and collections, and Tivey spent less time making public light installations and focused on creating a sculptural format that used the same materials as the paintings, but included a light source within the structure. Two important installations evolved during that period, the DeMenil house and the Picasso tearoom. The first was a dark light installation created for the ground floor of Christophe DeMenil's Frank Gerry house. It involved columns of light hovering over surfaces of water in a darkened room. The second, created for Claude Picasso in his La Villette studio outside Paris, employed the same surface used on the sculptures for one wall of the room. At particular hours of the day, it allowed sun projections to articulate a sculptural structure embedded in the field of light. The Diane Brown show in New York saw a shift in Tivey's presentation of light from an actual encounter to an abstraction of theoretical light and an illusion of luminosity. The Prudential Collection acquired most of that suite of paintings, the "Myth of the Machine", with the remainder going to Elizabeth Leach and collectors in the Northwest.



Tivey continued the development of light sculptures into the nineties, and as the computer's graphic power evolved, he developed a technique of using pen-plotting machines to create images on light sensitive surfaces. These new images had the interactive properties of the earlier light paintings and sculptures, but like holograms shifting around and through fixed images, the light was pure refracted color, intensely saturated and responsive to the slightest movement of viewer or source. Digital imaging techniques developed during that time led to a series of video installations. The first series, presented in southern France, used a cave that had been sporadically inhabited for roughly five thousand years. Viewers entered the cave and after adapting to the darkness found one wall animated by digital projection. This exhibition continued for four years and evolved into the Origins project that spanned the next five. Origins consisted of almost an hour of animated images visually describing the theoretical beginning and condition of the universe. It presented a video projection on large multilayered screens and was accompanied by a suite of prints.

In 2004, Tivey returned to the format of the luminous painting with an installation at the new Elizabeth Leach Gallery. Since that time, he has created a new body of work that explores the potential of mixing LED sources and paintings surfaces. The new work returns to his early presentation of light as a tangible presence in painting and sculpture. The subdued, almost encaustic colors, of the seventies and eighties have been replaced by purer hues, not as spectral as the digital light, but expressive in a greater range of values and tonalities. The infinite space of sky light dominates this work, but the structures resonate between solid forms and empty fields.

For more than thirty years, Tivey's art has investigated the phenomena of light. In installation, painting, sculpture and projection, he pursued the concrete experience of light as well as the emotional and theoretical implications it holds for the human condition. This last body of work distills many of the techniques and subtleties he discovered during those three decades into simple powerful statements of pure light.



# Reviews

inert reprise of gestural abstraction. It is hard to fathom any reason for repeating what might as well be the same composition three times across. The accompanying note about "experiencing the work over time" through multiplicity, among other devices, is unconvincing, unless it means that Krohn is most interested in the act of painting itself. We also learn from the note that he once produced twenty small paintings per day until he filled a room with a total of three hundred. This suggests a desire to update the well-worn vocabulary of action painting by giving it a process-oriented conceptual edge. Perhaps Krohn would do better to slow down and spend some time taking a hard, editorial look at what he makes.

Bumping up against another kind of retro territory, but with happier results, is *Echo*, the large circular painting by Simmons. With a nod to Kenneth Noland, Simmons has isolated and enlarged one of the radiant, colored circles of his watercolors. While the smaller paintings are set in motion by the effects of luminous, contrasting color, *Echo* displays dark glossy stripes of the kind of color we know from mechanical reproduction on either side of a broad buff-colored band. Both have the look of devices for perceptual experiments, but thanks to its size, the effect of *Echo* is more ominous—suggesting blocked vision or even white blindness.

The accumulation of painted panels, collages, paper cutouts and sculptural objects that make up *Untitled*, by Whitney Nye, were the impetus for this exhibit. Pulled together by a section of wall painted a deep red, these pieces have the look of talismans or keepsakes culled from travels. They were, in fact, inspired by a recent trip to India and are animated by the lively patterns and rhythms of folk art. Wrapped, tied, wired and incised, the assortment has an Alice in Wonderland feeling, as if all of the objects—slightly familiar, slightly foreign—are normal size and it is we, the viewers, who have shrunk. But while the separate pieces hold together in an artful way, the arrangement suffers from being bordered by a large, beaded garland. William Blake once wrote that you never know how far to go until you've gone too far. One gets the feeling that Nye could have carried it farther.

—Pat Boas

*Exponential: 4 Huge Paintings* closed February 15 at the Art Gym, Marylhurst University, Marylhurst.

Pat Boas is a contributing editor to *Artweek*.

## Washington

### 'Luminous' at the Bellevue Art Museum

Recent reports from the frontiers of physics have described how a beam of light (traveling at, well, the speed of light) has been stopped cold in a chamber of super cold gases, and then restarted to continue on its way. Perhaps it goes to show that the laws that govern nature are only slightly less prone to the kinds of willful manipulations and caprices of science as are the governing laws of exploratory art, for today we are engulfed by technological extensions of the luminescent, phosphorescent and incandescent as elements in a work of art.

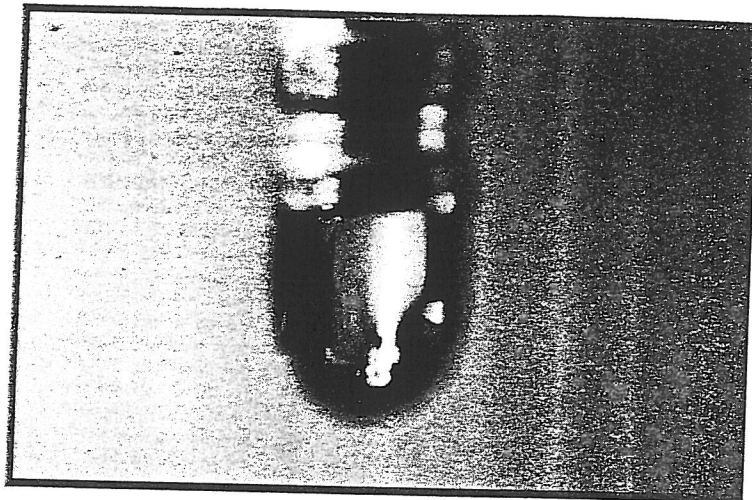
This new scientific discovery came to mind when I looked at the skin-like, translucent photographic panels by Japanese artist Tokihiro Sato in the new Bellevue Art Museum's debut exhibition, *Luminous: Light as Material, Medium and Metaphor*. Sato repeatedly traversed the staircases that bracket the ovoidal atrium of the museum with a hand-held light, as a camera recorded an extended time-lapse exposure. It looked as though the stairs were a cultivating bed for giant, phosphorescent sprouts. I think it's marvelous that the standard for ultimate velocity throughout the universe has been momentarily halted; I think it's just as marvelous that light can likewise behave and still do neat visual tricks.

*Luminous* includes the work of twelve artists of regional to international reputa-

tion organized by Bellevue Art Museum curator Brian Wallace. To quote Wallace, the artworks amplify, complicate or otherwise intensify the viewer's impression of the building that contains them. He acknowledges the fact that a brand-new museum, in this case, one designed by New York architect Steven Holl, is likely to grab the visitor's initial attention. But

relation to the viewer's apprehension of the light, whether a factor inherent to the art or the viewer's relationship to the physical work itself.

The "static" works by the late Dan Flavin and Toronto artist James Carl incorporate luminous intensity in almost palpable ways. From a distance, each has a constant glow: Flavin displays a grid of



Wallace has assembled a diverse and engaging exhibition with a light motif matching that of the host designer, whose structures are characterized by floods and washes of natural and artificial illumination.

It hasn't been that long since we have been able to banish the darkness with more than just sunlight and flame. The appearance of light can vary, but its properties remain consistent. As a vehicle or medium in phenomenological art—embracing film, video and television as well as more static forms—light is emphasized for its consistent quality of indeterminacy. Light is never still, it is never fixed. Thus the essence of an artwork using light rises and subsides in

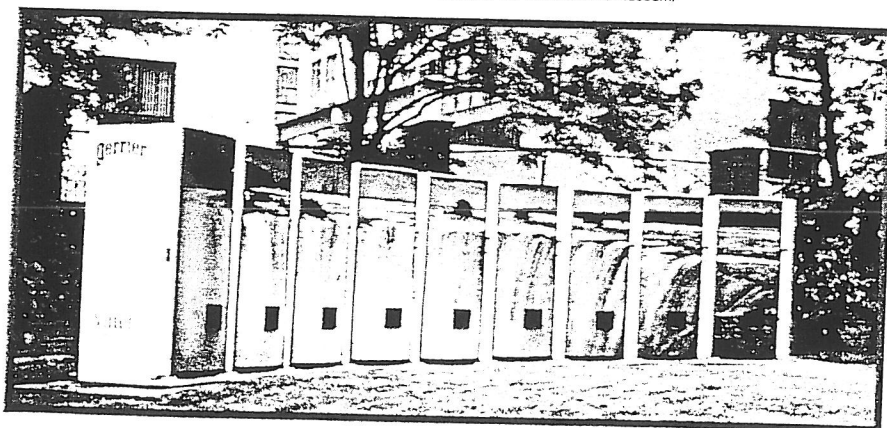
fluorescent fixtures placed in a deep angular pocket of the trapezium-shaped main gallery, while Carl exhibits a gently arching arrangement of beverage vending machines with illuminated translucent photographic front panels. Flavin's grid is part barrier, part container for a dematerializing radiance of color that fills the viewer's range of vision. The photo image on Carl's arrayed machines is of the crest of Niagara Falls, and instills (at least for me) a powerful sense of vertigo and sublimity.

We can infer the source of light from where it falls. It is the indirectness of light that actually makes the work by many of the artists in *Luminous*. Video projections by Seattle artist Iole

Alessandrini and New York-based Hap Tivey (the latter also incorporating translucent screens with dense textural patterns of calligraphy and raster lines) rely upon prepared surfaces—freestanding Plexiglas panels, one side sandblasted, by Alessandrini; folded and hanging scrim by Tivey—to engage moving patterns of colors and visible forms. Bill Viola's installation video *He Weeps for You* (1976) greatly amplifies the refracted light in a water droplet, capturing the fleeting and inverted silhouettes of viewers entering the darkened chamber. It suggests that the intruding figure wears a halo of light which he brings into this unlit space.

No survey of light—scientific, artistic or otherwise—is complete without Thomas Edison's essential

Below: James Carl, *Fountain*, 1997, vending machines, photo transparency, spring water, 72" x 33" x 30'; above: Bill Viola, *He Weeps for You*, 1976, video/sound installation (Photo: Kira Perov), at the Bellevue Art Museum.



invention, the light bulb. The lowly incandescent orb has its moment to shine in New York artist Julianne Swartz's cobwebs of fiber-optic filament cascading from an ordinary funnel suspended below a spotlight, and projecting minute points of light onto the wall at extreme close range. Seattle artist Dan Webb utilizes the two conical light wells in the ceiling of the atrium for his whimsical *The #0 Watt Club Aspires to Stardom*, with telescoping lamp shades greatly increasing in size and moving toward the sun—Edison's technological progeny with grandiose plans to outdo our galactic unit's fiery radiance.

The Bellevue Art Museum has adopted a mandate to embrace science and technology in conjunction with artistic practice. *Luminous* is both a test case and a harbinger of things to come. As intricate, intriguing or fatiguing the individual works may be, due to or despite the complexity or simplicity of the technologies involved, *Luminous* awakens the fact that light is as fundamental to our existence as sentient beings, as fundamental as breathing, sleeping or seeing.

—Ron Glowen

*Luminous* closes June 17 at the Bellevue Art Museum, 510 Bellevue Way NE, Bellevue.

Ron Glowen is a contributing editor to *Artweek*.

## A conversation with Brian Wallace, curator, Bellevue Art Museum

**B**rian Wallace came to the Bellevue Art Museum when it was still located in an upscale shopping mall east of Seattle. Having just completed the curatorial program at Bard, he came to the Northwest equipped with the late twentieth century blend of postmodernist inquiry and a wisecracking, thirty-something response to it. He quickly distinguished himself by an occasionally risky, often canny collection of exhibitions that placed work by regional, internationally acclaimed and emerging artists side by side. Smartly personable, he readily gives credit to others and his conversation flows from literary references to comic book expletives in seamless fashion as he talks about the new building, his curating and Bellevue's plans for the future.

**Artweek** You arrived at the beginning of this new building project ...

**Brian Wallace** My first day on the job was the day that the selection committee chose architect Steven Holl. But it is important to remember that this place

has a fifty-year history. The first [Bellevue] Fair, in 1947, was an outgrowth of someone offering wall space to artists. Offering wall space to artists is what we're still doing.

**AW** Looking at the Seattle scene, it appears as if you, more than most curators, seem interested in breaking down existing notions of what fine art is.

**BW** The ecology of local curators is a pretty muddy thicket. I had a big head of steam here and the museum was completely amazing in giving me so much latitude. This is where the occasionally maligned history of the museum—its past emphasis on exhibits of crafts and so forth—is really a kind of openness. At one time the museum was slammed for “lurching” from baskets to Mike Spafford and back again. I mean, what's wrong with that? Suddenly it's become cool and I'm all hip, whereas the museum was doing that twenty years ago and no one got it.

**AW** Looking at the Explore Gallery's square footage, it seems like the Bellevue Art Museum devotes an inordinate amount of space to so-called family and learning activities.

**BW** Definitely. And it is doing it in a less apologetic form, in a more integrated way. Many museums these days have something like this, but they tend to be banished to the basement, set apart from the sort of sanctity of the galleries—a sanctity which, of course, doesn't exist.

**AW** As usual, there is the complaint by many art patrons that architects don't really like art—that they design museums with an eye on their own agenda, rather than the building's mission. Did you find that to be true with the Holl building?

**BW** Well, it is certainly a series of very challenging spaces; there aren't many default settings.

**AW** What do you mean by that?

**BW** There aren't many spaces that will passively yield to having art put in them. The building is a challenge for everyone to think in new ways about how to display work. But you can—and we will—carve out nice little north lit galleries out of those big spaces.

**AW** What about money for programming? That seemed to be the challenge for the Henry Museum after they completed their new building. I heard someone say now that the Holl building is up, big donors are sending their money to the new Koellhaus library.

**BW** I think the two institutions are really different. The visibility of a building does make things easier. To our advantage, we had the incredible knowledge that the people at the Henry had acquired about the hellishness of opening

a new building. We've engineered a soft landing [and] decided to turn that all around and make the architecture the focus of exhibits and programs for the



Brian Wallace, curator, Bellevue Art Museum.

first couple of months. Hence a show about light. Holl's emphasis for the building was about light, so, boom! It was simple in retrospect.

**AW** What do you foresee yourself doing for future programming?

**BW** I am thinking of a Duane Hanson show. I'm curious about the whole hyper-reality aspect of his work. There are a number of class issues bound up in the work as well as a whole chain of questions and answers about representation. It's work that I am sure Steven Holl never anticipated, which will be totally great.

**AW** Are you going to do what you have done so well in the past, combine Hanson with regional artists?

**BW** Yes, funny you should mention that. A few years ago I was working at the Bellevue Fair with these seventy-year-old, identical twin sisters. They're great. They're dames—dressed really fashionably, made-up to the nines. A number of people came up to them in the course of an hour and asked to take their picture. They always said “Yes,” and they always said, “Send us a copy.” I was like, “Wait a minute—you've been doing this for a long time, how many pictures do you have?” And they said, “We don't know—probably hundreds.” So, doink! It didn't take me more than a week to realize that this was an unbelievable archive of images—a bizarre collection of the uncanny kind of Freudian discourse route. So I invited Wendy Hanson to work with the twins on a project.

**AW** Her work has such a strong presence. I'm thinking of her sculptures made of rose petals. Will she curate the photos?

**BW** She has met the sisters and they have talked extensively. I don't know what she will do.

**AW** Wendy Hanson and Duane Hanson.

**BW** Well, the name similarity is kind of irksome, quite frankly. I'll have to figure out how to play that. But her work does have a presence as does his and they will both be dealing—in this case—with identicality and similarity.

**AW** Any other projects planned?

**BW** I am proud to say that we've received an NEA grant for several artist residencies. I think it's the only NEA museum grant to work with living artists. One person who has finished his residency is John Stammets, an architectural photographer.

**AW** Did you conceive of the residencies?

**BW** No, it was around as an idea and I kind of beat it into shape. We experimented by doing some residencies for the show we did on games and we did some for the Annual.

**AW** That show was great—unusually focused for a juried exhibition. For a while you were coming out with one great show after another, but then there was a few that ...

**BW** It's a personal taste kind of thing. A friend from graduate school was organizing a show about the visual culture of snow boarding. That is the kind of thing that a lot of art people were, you know, “Pffft, give that a miss.” But talk about audience development. It attracted a very different crowd—it was fantastic. The aesthetics of the work weren't mine, but so what? I'm not the guardian of taste even if it is allegedly hip and post-what-ever. That's not my job.

The major negative of this [building project] is that it took up all of my time. So there is a conscious decision on my part to spend less time here and to get back to studio visits. It's exciting to watch someone develop, to make their first or second or third body of mature work. One thing I can do for visitors is to translate that excitement. I've been here long enough now to see some people have a really bad year and then totally get it together again.

**AW** There is the story that when someone criticized a work of Rauschenberg's, he replied, “Well they don't all have to be great.”

**BW** It sounds really arrogant to hear someone say that, but I would agree. I would even say it is true of the shows I do. I mean that *Game Show* was problematic in some ways. These things happen. I'd love to re-do that show.

—Frances DeVuono

Frances DeVuono is a contributing editor to *Artweek*.





# Past Present Future

Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo interviewed by Stuart Morgan

**Scientist, philosopher and collector,**

**Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo**

**is as knowledgeable**

**about Leonardo da Vinci**

**as he is about Conceptual Art.**

**Beginning in the 1950s**

**with Abstract Expressionist painting**

**his acquisitions have spanned**

**nearly every major movement**

**of the last thirty years.**

**STUART MORGAN:** When did you stop collecting?

**GIUSEPPE PANZA:** In 1976, but in the last few years it has started again. Some of the work is by artists we collected before: Dan Flavin, Eric Orr ... Others are new figures, like Robert Therrien.

**SM:** Therrien looks traditional in the light of previous acquisitions like Robert Irwin or Don Judd.

**GP:** He deals with forms like a painter, paying attention not only to the shape but also to the surface of the shape, and how this could be arrived at by using colour and different materials imposed on the basic sculptural form. This is not entirely new; up to the Middle Ages they used to paint sculpture. But it shows a new sensibility. A form develops in different sizes, with various materials — wood, steel, bronze — and colours are applied. Minimal sculpture showed how elements are different however similar they may appear, because of the relationship to the light and the space. Here the changes are of size, form and colour.

**SM:** Do you take an interest in simulationism?

**GP:** This an interesting way of continuing the research of conceptual art. My favourite in this group is Peter Halley. Halley is economical; he uses simple shapes and opposing colours to make complex works where every party interacts with every other. That is his great talent.

**SM:** Do you see Halley's writings as a key to the paintings?

**GP:** It is rewarding to read what artists write. But to understand the meaning of the art we have to look at the works themselves.

**SM:** How did you react to the return to painting in the late 1970s and early 1980s?

**GP:** This is a kind of art which was very far from my experience or interest. I never became involved in neo-Expressionism in Germany or the transavantgarde in Italy. Art is important because it is the right expression of a period. At this time no-one knew where to go, so they moved back instead of forward.

**SM:** What about Cucchi?

**GP:** Too easy, too clear. Not interesting.

**SM:** Clemente?

**GP:** He is the worst because he deals with sexuality, a human being's lowest instinct. Art should help people to understand themselves, and live better.

**SM:** How do you explain the popularity of some of the 80s art you so dislike?

**GP:** Bad artists are often recognised immediately, because they are easily understood, whereas good art takes thirty years to be understood. The English radical paintings I collected, by Bob Law and Alan Charlton and Peter Joseph, are still not understood because they need thought. Joseph, for instance, deals not with colour and shape but with daylight, as the weather changes, the paintings change.

**SM:** How do you react to Kiefer?

**GP:** For me Kiefer is only a negative political statement about a people whose goal was power but who were defeated. His art is always about worldly power. This is why it is so sad. People who believe that in losing power they are losing strength are impossible to like. Admirers of Kiefer do not understand this. The same people who destroyed the values of Western civilisation in the last World War are still alive, as the last general elections in Germany demonstrate. People are impressed by Kiefer because it is something they understand immediately. And it is not against Nazism but for it.

This art which deals with politics or the body reveals the situation of a society which has lost its direction. When we don't know what to do we don't try to understand what is new or look to the future. This art is just a documentation of a place where so many new generations lost their souls.

**SM:** Don't you see Warhol and Beuys as political?

**GP:** No. Both of them took a critical view of society because they believed in something important that society was unable to achieve: Warhol was strongly critical of the American way of life, of people who believe only in goods. Beuys made a powerful attempt to reveal a new society very far from a present which is intent on productivity.

**SM:** You once spoke of Beuys as a medieval artist.

**GP:** Yes, he is an artist who reveals the soul of Europe in a faraway past of strong mystical experience with strong oppositions between terrestrial will and heavenly power, between self and sex, between the present and a better life to come.

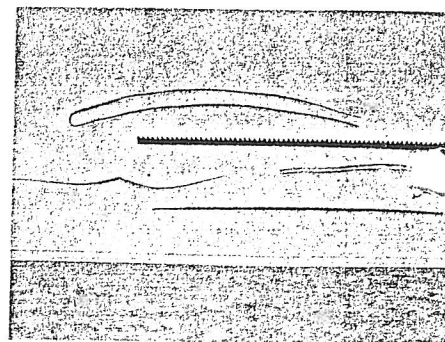
**SM:** Did Warhol feel this tension between good and evil too?

**GP:** Very strongly. Warhol was dominated by the vision of death because he realised that the kind of life we are living brings death; we have deadly goals, not good ones. He was willing to show how success is the only real goal, a success that happens for no reason. By using this system of mythical success we can show how wrong it is.

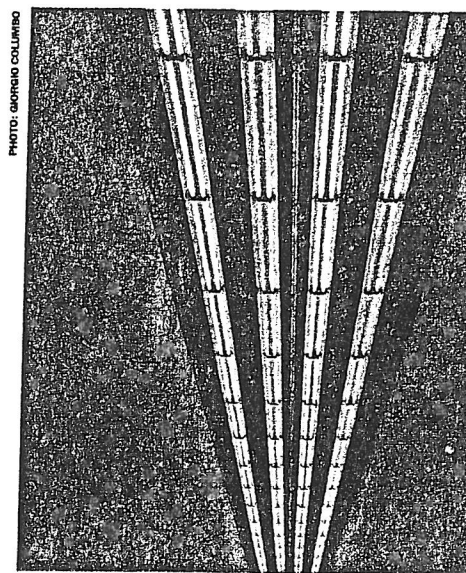
**SM:** Do you still look at the work of Robert Morris?

**GP:** Yes, but I believe the best were made twenty years ago.

**SM:** Yet you have found younger artists who oppose or modify Minimalist tenets.



Martin Puryear *Some Tales* 1977 Installation view



Bruce Nauman *Pink and Yellow Light Corridor* (variable)

Bruce Nauman *Hologram*





**GP:** Certainly. Peter Shelton uses organic forms for making sculpture. Minimalism uses geometric shapes — squares, pyramids, circles — which are strictly intellectual; perfect circles and rectilinear lines do not exist in nature. Behind rational form Shelton deals with the possibility of organic form with a content that is rational but has that richness of the originality of form that nature makes. Another artist I like is Martin Puryear, who started to make sculpture at the end of the 1970s. His forms relate to animals, something alive, a deeper relation to nature. In New York there's Ford Beckman, a young painter who deals with minimal shapes in a way not as intellectual as Ryman or Marden, with strong blacks and dirty whites that seem to have been consumed by time.

**SM:** Over the last few years you have been involved in large projects which have long time-spans. James Turrell's *Roden Crater*, for example.

**GP:** Yes, making the Crater into a work of art has been a long process. My first visit was in 1974, and I've been back many times since then. It is one of the most beautiful places. The Crater needs special attention; it deals with the relation of man to nature. We are destroying our environment; man is getting too powerful and is unable to control that power.

**SM:** When will the work be finished?

**GP:** That's anybody's guess, because it is such a costly operation. The work of making the shape of the crater nearly perfect is almost over. Some earth still needs to be moved, but that can be done very soon. After that we have to build a tunnel from the foothills of the volcano to the centre in order to be able to see the sky. Inside the volcano we have to build entire rooms from which the stars, moon and sun can be seen. Each room costs \$200,000 to make, but the interest in this project is increasing so we hope Turrell will find a sponsor. It is important for our society to realise that nature is a great mother and that we have to love her. Visiting the Crater we feel we are living between the earth and the sky. As we walk on the top of the Crater we feel the horizon around us, we see mountains 200 miles away, we feel clouds coming out of the horizon, we feel that the earth is round, that the moon is large and the stars are very close. The light is clear; it is in an area where there are many astronomical

observatories. You need to go and stay there, detached from daily life.

**SM:** With Walter de Maria, as with Turrell, we are dealing less with works of art than with events.

**GP:** I was also very interested to see the *Lightning Field* made by Walter de Maria with the DIA Foundation. One evening, one night and one morning in that place was a great experience. When we arrived, we could not see the work because the stainless steel poles, six metres high and very thin, are invisible at first, then closer not at all like stainless steel but like light coming out of the ground. At sunset and sunrise this is unique and beautiful. When the sun is gone there is still light because the earth is not completely dark but the poles reflect the light in the sky. This moment when the poles became a range of lights was unbelievably beautiful. De Maria's art always made a relation between the rational and the natural, the earth and the mind of man.

**SM:** You have said on more than one occasion that the future lies in huge large-scale programmes like this.

**GP:** This is the result of the vision of Los Angeles' artists. Especially in the 1960s and 1970s Los Angeles had a culture quite separate from that of New York, with a strong influence from the Far East and artists able to use the products of technology for making art. L.A. is a new city. Eighty years ago it was a small town. Now it is one of the most densely concentrated populations in the world. The emphasis on instability results in a contemplative tendency, a need to feel that individuality belongs to an entity which is above personal concerns.

**SM:** Robert Irwin would be an exemplary Los Angeles' artist.

**GP:** Yes. He explored the relationship between the nature of perception and reality, from the point of view of a man with a strong philosophical background who spent time in Japan. In his work, perception drifted from the object to the space, then to the light, and so that it became less and less material and more and more intellectual, a process which shows that knowledge of reality comes from our memory, not from facts in front of us. Western man is so involved with his relation to things that he loses contact with the real world, which is the inner world. Irwin reveals that knowledge is not in things but inside ourselves.

**SM:** What is he doing at present?

**GP:** Making a work for a public space. He is making a study of how to use the space at Miami Airport.

**SM:** May I ask you about the future of your collection?

**GP:** The goal has always been to make the work available to public institutions for permanent installation. The first part of the collection, from the 1950s and 1960s, is on show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Now there is the possibility of a large space at MassMoCA in Massachusetts and part of the collection of minimal art could be installed there. It is being built now, and I am confident that Tom Krens, the director, will find a solution to all the problems the museum has thrown up. This is the right moment to consider the problem of a space for the art of the last twenty years, because in future the art will be more difficult to find. Existing collections are being dispersed, and the cost of the works will increase in a big way. That would dispose of a large number of the Minimal works, but other parts of the collection are still available: the Minimal paintings, the Conceptual art and the environmental art from Los Angeles still need a space. The collection would fill several large museums. We need buildings with 800 to 10,000 square metres. At the Centro Reina Sofia in Madrid we were offered 6000 square metres, with the result that all the works of Flavin in the collection could be exhibited, in spaces separate from other works.

**SM:** I know that you own many plans for unrealised works.

**GP:** Well, next summer there will be an exhibition at St. Etienne of works by Richard Long and Bruce Nauman, and the plan is to make Nauman works bought in 1971. And discussions are taking place about a big Los Angeles exhibition next year, showing Irwin, Turrell, Doug Wheeler, Maria Nordman and others.

**SM:** Meanwhile you continue to look at younger artists. Do you find enough to satisfy you?

**GP:** Certainly. There's Michael Brewster and Meg Webster, in Germany beautiful sculpture by a whole new generation like Schütte, Mucha, Klingelhöller and Förg, and technological pieces by young Italians. Then there's Roni Horn, and Hap Tivey... There's plenty going on.

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

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.



By MATTHEW LICHT

#### HAP TIVEY

Hap Tivey's two drawings at Blum/Helman's very well put-together August group exhibition immediately attracted one's attention: explosions of fierce, lively color in a predominantly black and white show. Placed opposite one of Robert Longo's very large *White Riot* charcoal drawings (in which the supposedly rioting whites seem to have fallen asleep), the drawings, titled *Liberation Reflector* and *Minerva Kite* (both 1982), seemed to burst forth with intensified energy.

Tivey, born in Oregon in 1947, has been exhibiting since 1969. Most of his early works were light installations (*Black Room*, 1971; *Fire Tunnels*, 1972; and *Asians*, 1977). It is especially impressive how Tivey has managed to incorporate his experience in the workings of light into a non-electric medium. Blending raw wax and pigment, he achieves a wonderfully violent luminosity and an impression of great heat. There is something positively solar about the two drawings; composed of jaggedly geometric sparks of some molten substance against a thalo green and cobalt blue background, they radiate like two stars at different stages of their cycles: the one smoldering and dying, the other being born from a concentration of unadulterated energy, blinding and white-hot. To increase the effect of these star-like forms, Tivey carefully belabored their backgrounds, working the wax and pigment in with his hands (finger- and palm prints are everywhere in evidence), creating subtle degrees of color around the burning shapes.

The group exhibition of recent drawings was arranged with great consideration and intelligence; the juxtaposition of certain works by very different artists compelled one to look at them much more carefully. With one or two exceptions, the drawings shown were interesting and well done, but Tivey's, because of their high temperature and great vitality, stole the show. (Blum/Helman, August 3-31)

Light is also a primary formal element in the luminous canvases in which this history is detailed. Glowing projectiles and lines of light float upon Rothkoesque fields. Often these abbreviated forms are streaked with a thin line of metallic paint which is raised slightly above the otherwise smooth surface of the canvas, providing a real reflective surface laid over the canvases with their apparent inner glow.

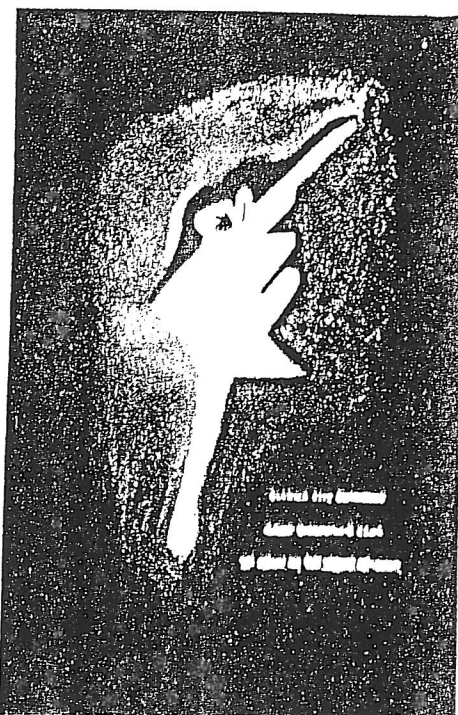
Tivey's earlier work involved an often euphoric celebration of color and light. Here the beauty remains, but it is rendered problematic: light is no longer the harbinger of spiritual insight or the visible manifestation of an ideal world. Instead, it is mere energy, utterly indifferent to man's fate. Contemporary visions of the future tend either to promise Armageddon or to revel nostalgically in the optimistic predictions of our less cynical predecessors. With this fable in paint, Tivey suggests that while it is still possible to entertain the notion of utopia, it is only possible to do so with the total elimination of humankind. —E.H.

## HAP TIVEY

Diane Brown

A FEW YEARS AGO this California artist was involved in Robert Irwin-like investigations of pure perception. He sought the effect of "light without boundaries" through installations that, according to observers, induced a sense of egoless peace akin to that achieved through Zen meditation. With this show, Tivey catapulted from Satori to Star Wars with a set of inscribed paintings, "The Liberation of the Machine" series (1981-84), that chronicle the genesis of a mythical machine civilization Tivey imagines will spring up following the final extermination of all organic life on earth. This parable is enacted within a set of large canvases on which iconic images of the nonhuman participants—the Battery, the Beacon, the Scout, the Tug, the Factory and so on—are overlaid with narrative inscriptions that carry the story from canvas to canvas. Elsewhere in the gallery single paintings reintroduced these unearthly characters accompanied by a salient line lifted from the larger text.

Not that Tivey has lost interest in light. For the nonbeings populating Tivey's world (the "metallies," as he calls them), as for our own carbon-based organisms, light is the vital source of energy that makes life possible. In the beginning is the Battery, rather than the Word, which gathers the energy of a glowing ion wilderness and organizes itself for salvage missions to collect the metallic debris of a lifeless universe. Glowing factories transform this "brute metal" into self-replicating machines whose only reason for being is their own reproduction.



Hap Tivey, *Beacon*, from "The Liberation of the Machine," 1981-84, oil on canvas. Diane Brown.



Hap Tivey, when looking at the red haze above the city that can be seen on a cloudy night, points to it and says, "That's seeing light." Tivey's recent show at Blum/Helman Gallery includes the typical elements of paint and canvas, which immediately place the work in a conventional aesthetic niche. However, they are put to Tivey's behest: to labor at the task of representing light.

Many people, glancing at these works, mistake them for air-brush paintings, for the color has the same smooth, shimmery, satin-like qualities. The pieces could be characterized by Proust's description of a lecture by Ruskin: "Apollonian gold into which have run the colours of the English fog."

Actually, the works are pigment on canvas, stretched and placed in deep frames, over which a "rear-projection" movie screen is then stretched. As the light in the room passes through the screen, the image of the paint reflects back onto the screen's surface.

The controlled illusion of depth in the piece urges the viewer to look simultaneously at the image on the screen and to look through it in order to see what makes the image appear; the viewer might as well look over his shoulder at the track lighting on the gallery's ceiling. The torn viewer preserves a balance between what is perceived on the screen and what exists behind it. Tivey cannily manipulates the full breadth of the viewer's subjective and physiological responses to his work throughout its evolution. This work forbids the spectator to forget the degree to which his subjective responses determine what he views—whether light or a painting.

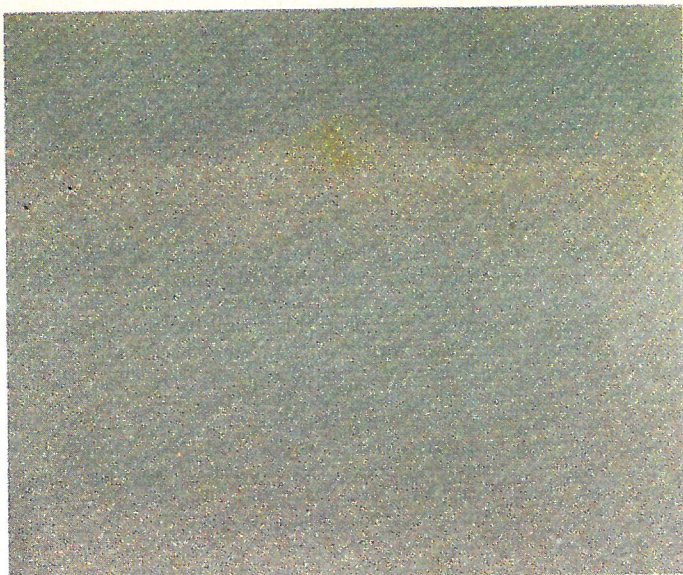
One piece in the show, *Hood*, is a smaller work with an image the shape of a distended volcano—a bit like a stingray seen from a head-on vantage point. The color range is intimately close, the screen itself piquing both the spectator's curiosity and incredulity at the pigment's apparent simulation of screen. The colors are as dense and gray as ice. The light playing on the screen brings out a gray range of luxury: pearls, silver, mirrors, pewter. The viewer moves around the piece, causing subtle changes in the reflected image according to the angle from which it is seen. The viewer is rewarded with the image of this pointed ridge.

In *Hood*, Tivey exploits his medium by conflating screen with pigment. The paint is almost an alibi for the screen, testifying that the image's hues are only a consequence of screen and light. And, in fact, in his earlier boxes (shown in 1978 at Blum/Helman), sheets of aluminum produced the reflected images instead of colored pigment.

In the other works in this show, the paint subordinates the screen, making it primarily a mediator that reflects and dissolves. Aggressive color dominates the pearl-like glow of the translucent plastic screen. Although Tivey had given up painting in 1969, he not only returns to this medium but assiduously involves himself in the manner of a Zen master tending his rock garden. These works thereby demonstrate an Americanism which is so distinctly a combination of the Oriental spirit and Germanic application.

Tivey applied these layers of colors so that the screen reflects the blurred range of radiant hues. The range of changes in color reminds one of the retinal after-images caused by lights used in Tivey's early installations. The colors have the intensity of the exaggerated western landscape where one has massive exposure to them, where darks are lapis lazuli and blues are as deep as a snake's eye. The color has intensity and depth. In fact, the vocabulary of the images are from the American landscape: mountains, rivers, stones, gaps, and bridges—an ethnography of the American prairies and Northwest.

*Red Wall*, a large wall-scale piece, when seen through a short hallway and doorway from the gallery's first room, appears to be a whole wall of color: blue, red/black, and green. A distended elliptical white and blue shape spans the top third; a middle zone of red/black-blue then follows. Finally, a white elongated arc with yellow bases at each end crosses the bottom green area. The shapes have the erotic power of lean manneristic limbs. Tivey says, "You are given 'skeletons' or images because people come to my paintings with an expectation for something to be there." The abundant deep scarlet intoxicates; the green is the cheerful color of smiling nature. The scale seemingly comes from Tivey's earlier installation pieces. This piece was con-

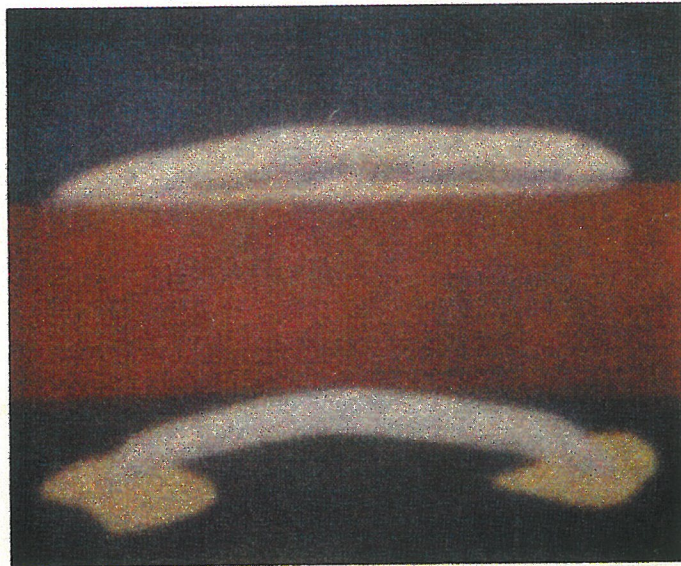


Hap Tivey, *Hood*, 1979. Pigment on canvas, 30 x 36". Courtesy Blum/Helman Gallery.

## HAP TIVEY: APOLLONIAN GOLD AND THE ENGLISH FOG

JANE NISSELSON

Hap Tivey,  
*Red Wall*, 1979. Pigment on canvas, 114 x 138". Courtesy Blum/Helman Gallery.





structured out of a frame with a rear-projection screen stretched over it. Behind the screen were color lights that achieved the desirable aura of great throbbing blue shadows. The scale was that of natural light phenomena: cloud banks, eclipses, tornadoes, sunsets—one easily assimilated by a generation raised gazing through picture windows. Tivey constructed this new piece using the concept of the installation in which sheer size engulfs the viewer. In fact, when the viewer stands closer to the screen, the color is more blurred as if all were in a mist.

Tivey, when approaching the works "with an engineering stance, thinks about the paint and the surface of the canvas and what they present. However, when approaching it as any work of art, he only sees the surface. "You see the color. You don't look at, for example, 'how Rothko paints,' you look at color, unlike in some—early Rauschenbergs, for example—where the thickness of the paint, the accentuated brushstrokes and drips ask the viewer to focus on the formal elements, the material of the work." As Kierkegaard said, "Allow me to be deceived." Tivey restores illusion to painting. The image demonstrates how objects are seen by reflected light. Tivey found his screen-device to be a successful means for achieving what he feels were Rothko's ends: to treat the painting as a surface of light. It is Tivey's intention that the properties of light and color should dominate, making the "thingness," which has been the goal of the past sixty years of painting, subordinate. Tivey adds that perhaps ever since the Cubists rendered objects without luminescence as a method for the means of representation, the object has been the focus of painting rather than light. They, however, form a short period in art history. Tivey's approach, which views painting as light, stands on a long history in which light is used as the metaphor for seeing and representing. Tivey renders familiar light rather than familiar things.

An example of this can be found in the neo-Platonists whose metaphysical interpretation of beauty continually used light as the metaphor for beauty. Ficino defined beauty as "a 'radiance from the face of God' that first enlightens the angels, then illumines the human soul, and finally the world of corporeal matter."<sup>2</sup> And Michelangelo "repeatedly proclaimed that terrestrial beauty is nothing more than the 'mortal veil' through which we recognize divine grace, that we love and may love this beauty only because it reflects the divine,"<sup>3</sup> occasionally saying of his *Night* that he had not really made it but only freed the pure form from the crude mass of stone. But Tivey twists this. To "free the image," Tivey places the pigment inside a box. Furthermore, Tivey's veil is a screen which mediates the image from the pigment—an image which Tivey often expresses a fear of making too beautiful, of making the golds or aquas too fascinating, for such materiality would distract the viewer from the work's other concerns.

In light of this history, Tivey's studies at the Hofuku-ji Monastery in Japan (often alluded to in reviews of his work in reference to its religious and spiritual qualities) should not be seen simply as personal experience. Rather, these qualities evolve out of a greater aesthetic history in which the good is seen in terms of the beautiful and both in turn occasion enlightenment.

The irony is that the return to light as a means of rendering came about as if through the back door of the apparent direction of Tivey's work. Tivey explains that these recent works came to him as a step in "finding some way of getting the same glow with reflected light as with emitted light." Tivey's work actually began as installations which stripped away the viewer's preconceptions about seeing and light. In his installations, as with the "boxes," Tivey worked with the fascination that objects exert on us, playing with both the subjective axis of personal response and the objective axis of science from which the world is observed.

Tivey's light installation at Irvine, in 1976, was called *Fourth Situation*. It was Tivey's first attempt to make the "non-rational experience" which one can have in a private space easily available to the public. In it was a "ganzfeld chamber" that Tivey constructed. These chambers were used by pilots when training to fly upside down in bad weather (originally designed to test physiological and psychological reactions to the perception of space without boundaries). A corridor led to this chamber in which, in one wall, an eight-foot-deep concave shape (the chamber) had been built. Tivey initiated the shift in the percep-

tual axis which the viewer experienced by creating his "inclusive" environments. The height, the totality, the grand scale gave the works authority.

A circuit turned the lights off and on in the following combinations of daylight, green, and natural white respectively: "on-on-on," "off-on-off," "on-on-on," and "on-off-on." But, by contrast, another combination—"off-off-off"—should first be considered, for it allows one to examine the "parts" comprising the piece. Tivey explains: "In the 'off' position, the ground state, the simple object quality of walls and tubes becomes apparent. . . . Usually one notices 'things' or the cognition of 'things' without noticing the means or nature of the mechanism which organizes and converts the external energy into internal coherence."

In short, Tivey's situation illuminates *seeing* and *light* in their raw capacities. At the time of the installation, both the use of electrical light fixtures (Turrell, Bell, Flavin) and the use of systems (LeWitt, Judd, Andre) were very popular. This type of "happening-installation" was still in the air, too, with Chris Burden "aestheticizing the will."<sup>4</sup> But Tivey took the installation a step further. First, he made the experience of light a space-time experience rather than an object one. Tivey dissolved the hardware into a situation of suspicious recognition. The piece was as much a retinal one as an elaborately constructed exhibit.

People sat on a bench outside the chamber in expectation of their private viewing of the ganzfeld. Each person proceeded into the chamber alone. Here one abandoned conventional responses and preconceptions because, like mutinous knaves when confronted by the novel spectacle of glamorous colors, they refuse to aid visual comprehension. The solitary nature of the experience was intended to bring the viewer to a realization of how he sees.

Once inside the room of the ganzfeld chamber, one tried to see the end of the ganzfeld's concave surface. It is a bit like the scene in *King Lear* when Edgar attempts to convince the blinded and doubting Gloucester that he is climbing a slope before the sea when they actually are walking across a plain: "Why then, your other senses grow imperfect / By your eyes' anguish."<sup>5</sup> One does not know whether to trust his vision and see something false or to suspend his usual reactions in order to accept the ganzfeld's illusions. After an initial adjustment period, the viewer usually relaxes and simply observes the visual phenomena: how curved surface affects color, the histrionic pink light pocked with the after-image's green motes, cold whites, bright light greens, and the pulsating soft-edged mauve after-images. Only remnants of a few visual habits and memories of any comparable experience tempered the subjective process of perception which enframes spectacles or objects before the viewer. Indeed, the radiance, like a magnified crepuscular light, the advent of a gale, a sunset, has an overall effect of a nostalgic calm: "A setting sun is beautiful because of everything it takes away from us."<sup>6</sup>

In Tivey's work, retina and light pieced together produce the experience of seeing, dissolving the usual distance that objectifies the "object" and personalizes the subjective viewer. The works belong in a unique aesthetic context because the imagination is occupied with nothing but light. The historically problematic aesthetic subject/object situation is abridged.

Tivey's boxes are ambassadors of effect, representing the works' concern with a heightened experience of light. They begin to articulate a physical language of light. These are the works of art to be found in the rooms of Poe's Venetian aesthete: "The rays of the newly risen sun poured in upon the whole, through windows, formed each of a single pane of crimson-tinted glass. Glancing to and fro, in a thousand reflections. . . the beams of natural glory mingled at length fitfully with the artificial light, and lay weltering in subdued masses upon a carpet of rich, liquid-looking cloth of Chili Gold."<sup>7</sup>

1. Marcel Proust, *Pleasures and Days* (New York: Lear Publishers, 1957) p. 183.

2. Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory* (New York: Icon Editions, 1965) p. 57.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

4. Robert Horvitz, "Chris Burden," *Artforum*, May 1976, XIV, 9, p. 31.

5. "King Lear" (IV:6:115-16), from *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare*.

6. Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre and Its Double," from *Selected Writings*, Susan Sontag, ed. (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1978) p. 270.

7. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Assignment," from *Tales of E.A. Poe* (New York: Random House, 1949), p. 194.

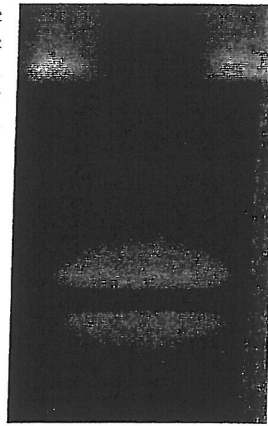


## Hap Tivey: Leukos Transit

ELIZABETH LEACH GALLERY, PORTLAND OR – Dec 1-Jan 21 In unique light-screen paintings, Hap Tivey integrates light and colour with other elements of science and a spiritual interest in the meditative qualities of Eastern philosophy. Like Mark Rothko, Tivey is particularly interested in the way light affects painted colour. He uses LED lights inside structures similar to light boxes to radiate colour from within the works. The misty surfaces are intriguing. The colours are lucid but the ambiguous forms they create appear transitory and weightless. Glowing fields set against serene horizontal lines are reminiscent of sunsets or vast landscapes without actually being representational.

This Portland-born artist is associated with the California "Light and Space" artists. Tivey studied physics, math and art at Pomona College, with subsequent studies at Claremont Graduate School where he was a teaching assistant for James Turrell in 1971. In an early collaboration, Tivey and Turrell created the large-scale *Five Pieces*. These provided a framework for later installations by both artists. During the 1970s, Tivey studied in Japan at a Zen monastery.

Hap Tivey's work has been exhibited internationally and is included in such prominent collections as the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. He created the window installation for the Elizabeth Leach Gallery when it moved to its new space in 2004. *Allyn Cantor*



Hap Tivey, *Arctic Portrait*, (2005) LED light and acrylic (Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland OR, Dec 1-Jan 21)

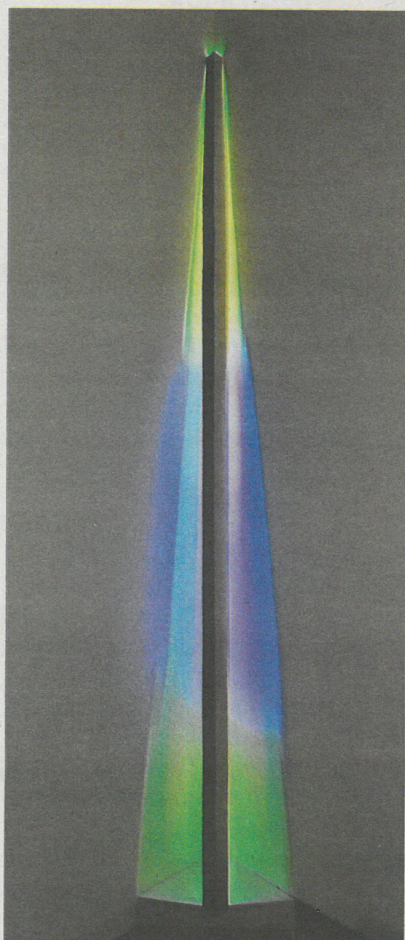


# VISUAL ARTS

JAN. 7-13

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By RICHARD SPEER. TO BE CONSIDERED FOR LISTINGS, submit show information—including opening and closing dates, gallery address and phone number—at least two weeks in advance to: Visual Arts, WW, 2220 NW Quimby St., Portland, OR 97210. Email: rspeer@wwweek.com.



MULTICOLOR CORNER BY HAP TIVEY

## Diane Avio-Augee and Carola Penn

Pictorially, you couldn't get further apart than painters Diane Avio-Augee and Carola Penn, who headline a new two-person show at Mark Woolley. Avio-Augee paints abstractly with a vocabulary of organic shapes, drips and creamy impasto. Penn, on the other hand, paints representationally, often focusing on forest scenes. Her compositions teem with ferns, arcing trees and boldly colored leaves. The painters' visions are so disparate they're strangely complementary, making for a soothing and satisfying double-bill. *Through Jan. 11. Mark Woolley Gallery @ Pioneer, 700 SW 5th Ave., 3rd floor, Pioneer Place Mall, 998-4152.*

## Emily Hanna Wyant: Gotta Make Money to Make Money

Earlier this year, artist Emily Hanna Wyant was pitching her conceptual artwork to local galleries. She kept getting the same polite "no thanks" from gallerists. "We love what you do," they said, "but it's not work we could sell." So Wyant decided to turn the metaphorical lemon into lemonade, creating a body of work critiquing the object- and sales-obsessed gallery system. Tongue firmly in cheek, she has churned out dozens of faux gold bricks, as if to flip galleries a collective bird. This installation, entitled *Counterfeit Gold Bricks*, is comprised of "gold bullion" made out of spray-painted wood and cement. Other pieces, such as *Wu-Tang Clan*, continue the anti-materialist riff via imagery drawn from the bling-flaunting world of hip-hop music. *Through Jan. 16. Nisus Gallery, 8371 N Interstate Ave., Suite 1, 806-1427.*

## Forbidden Fruit: Chris Antemann at Meissen

In a long-overdue follow-up to her delightful installation at the 2011 Contemporary Northwest Art Awards, Chris Antemann stages a rococo bacchanal in the Portland Art Museum. Her porcelain figures fill a mirrored antechamber, engaging in all manner of languid frivolity. In the sprawling sculpture *Love Temple*, they sit around—and in some cases, crawl on—a lavishly appointed dining table, some of them naked, some clad only in the skimpiest suggestion of diaphanous fabric. Antemann accents the figures' white skin with delicate golden lines. Although her revelers, with their powdered wigs and rouged cheeks, are a little too one-note in their appearance to sustain the viewer's attention, perhaps that is on purpose. After all, 24-hour party people, whether in the 18th century or the 21st, begin to all look the same after the ninth or 10th flute of champagne. *Through Feb. 8. Portland Art Museum, 1219 SW Park Ave., 226-0973.*

## Hap Tivey: Surface of Light

You can count on Hap Tivey's shows to generate a lot of "wow!"s, and his new exhibition, *Surface of Light*, is no exception. Using materials such as aluminum, metallic leaf and LED lights, he creates artworks that update the late Dan Flavin's light sculptures with a jolt of post-millennial cool. His pieces fall under the rubric of the California Light and Space movement, exemplified by Tivey's more famous contemporary, James Turrell. You can find one of Tivey's nifty light sculptures in the street-level reception area of the Nines hotel, and another on permanent display in Elizabeth Leach Gallery's window on Northwest 9th Avenue. To see many of his works installed in one place at one time, as in this show, is a treat: an immersion in pure, unadulterated eye candy that

also harbors metaphysical overtones. *Jan. 8-31. Elizabeth Leach Gallery, 417 NW 9th Ave., 224-0521.*

## Passage

There's a new gallery in Northeast Portland called Verum Ultimatum (Latin for "ultimate truth"). It's a humble space open only on weekends (noon-5 pm Saturdays and Sundays or by appointment), but this kind of decidedly nonslick exhibition space is the sort of small gallery that makes Portland so delightfully, well, non-San Francisco. The January exhibition, entitled *Passage*, is a juried show with work by 30 artists. The opening reception is from 6 to 8 pm on Saturday, Jan. 10. So, hey, come out and support a new gallery that's the freshest blip on the city's cultural radar. *Through Jan. 31. Verum Ultimatum Art Gallery, 3014 NE Ainsworth St., 493-4278.*

## The Spaces Between

Painter Elise Wagner curated this group exhibition around the idea of what happens between the conceptualization of an artwork and its execution. She's interested in the ways art materials interact along the continuum between careful planning and unexpected developments that happen while paint is being flung around in the heat of creation. The artists in the show are painters Tracey Adams, Lorraine Glessner and Lisa Pressman; and sculptors Linda Ethier and Brenda Mallory. *Through Jan. 31. Butters Gallery, 520 NW Davis St., 2nd floor, 248-9378.*

## Victoria Haven: Subtitles

For *Subtitles*, Victoria Haven culled thousands of words from her text conversations and sorted them into two lists. Then, using a computer algorithm, she combined the words into random pairings. Finally, she printed the combinations onto inked and embossed paper. The pieces, 100 of them, are hung side by side, wrapping around PDX's walls. "Hey/

Voice," "Please/Happen," "Corner/Narrative." The combinations may be random, but you can't look at them without coming up with little stories to connect the words and give them meaning. And that's one of this show's quirky charms. *Through Jan. 31. PDX Contemporary Art, 925 NW Flanders St., 222-0063.*

## Window: A Dialogue

Windows—and the idea of windows—have been depicted throughout the history of art. They're not just framing devices for artistic compositions; they're also pregnant with symbolism. Behind a portrait subject, for example, they afford insight into the sitter's personality; they're portals hinting at different realities and they turn us, the viewers, into voyeurs. In this month's group show at Blackfish, members of the Blackfish collective tackle the trope of the window across a range of disparate media. Among the artists with pieces in the show are Carol Benson, Sarah Fagan, Ellen Goldschmidt and Mandy Stigant. *Through Jan. 31. Blackfish Gallery, 420 NW 9th Ave., 234-2634.*

## Winter Group Show

In light of the brouhaha surrounding Seth Rogan and Evan Goldberg's film, *The Interview*, it'll be intriguing to see artist Jim Riswold's latest series, which parodies North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. A gifted satirist, Riswold in the past has skewered figures such as Adolf Hitler, Jesus Christ, Leonardo da Vinci and Frida Kahlo in photographs, figurines and diagrams. We can't wait to see what he'll do with Jong-un. Other artists exhibiting in the gallery's winter group show are Mark Andres, Sharon Bronzan, Sally Cleveland, Arless Day, Karen Esler, Trish Grantham, Pamela Green, Jef Gun, Chris Kelly and Sara Siestrem. *Through Jan. 31. Augen DeSoto, 716 NW Davis St., 224-8182.*

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