CONTEMPORARY SYNTAX

LIGHT and DENSITY

ROBESON CENTER GALLERY
CONTEMPORARY SYNTAX
November 11 through December 23, 1987

LIGHT and DENSITY

ROBESON CENTER GALLERY
Robeson Campus Center
350 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Newark, New Jersey 07102
201/648-5970/5912

Gallery Hours:
Monday through Friday 11:30 - 5:00 p.m.
Tuesday and Thursday 11:30 - 6:00 p.m.
and by appointment

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
RUTGERS
Campus at Newark
There is a dominant concern with the presence of light in all of the work of *Contemporary Syntax, Light and Density*. Light is seen as the content, as a visual element, and as a technological component. Both artificial and natural light are used by these artists to make visual statements that are both symbolic and abstract. Light is evident in several ways. It can be seen in the luminosity that is possible to achieve with paint, in the inherent, reflective qualities of the materials, and in the form of pure light. It can also be seen in the form of both radiant and transmitted light, in light that is ambient and natural or in light that is electronically processed. While there is a range in the mediums used from video and projected imagery to painting and sculpture a consistency in the involvement with light is evident.

The paintings of Emil Bisttram, *Moon Magic and Sailboats and Rope*, both from 1950, contain symbolic references to light, as a transcendental and natural force. The high contrast of the values and the discrete and specific imagery of a moon and cross give the works spiritual overtones. Light is apparent in the luminosity that is possible to achieve with paint, in the inherent, reflective qualities of the materials, and in the form of pure light. It can also be seen in the form of both radiant and transmitted light, in light that is ambient and natural or in light that is electronically processed. While there is a range in the mediums used from video and projected imagery to painting and sculpture a consistency in the involvement with light is evident.

The two paintings by Norman Lewis, *Ovum*, a work from 1961, and *Seachange XV*, works from the latter part of Norman Lewis’s career, contain central forms of light. In *Ovum* a central and brilliant sphere of light is surrounded by markings that suggest dispersed particles, particles of light or of matter. Ovoid white forms float on a dense blue background, in *Seachange XV*, that again suggest and refer to movement of light and energy. Pure and radiant light is used in *Toothache*, a painting by Toshinori Kuga. The fluorescent, black light tube generates a deep ultraviolet light which gives a three dimensional quality to the painting’s imagery while also functioning as a formal, horizontal element. The use of actual light in the painting gives the work an actual metaphorical aura not possible to achieve with paint.

Light Bulb IV, by Ted Victoria, also uses pure light. The filament of the light bulb turns on and off thus letting the viewer know that the light, movement and energy of this work is actual. Victoria uses the most simple optics, eschewing technology, to make this ethereal work, a work that does not have any physical actuality beyond the energy of the light bulb.

A similar subtlety can be seen in the work, *Kerowac’s Road* by Ronald Bladen, a minimal work from 1985 that incorporates aluminum and pine to make a statement about a horizon of light. Bladen’s work gives us an awareness of planar shifts, and seems to reduce the elements of the work to its most essential.

The high contrast of the values and the discrete and specific imagery of a moon and cross give the works spiritual overtones. Light is apparent in the form of a metaphor.

For J.M.W. Turner, *Sensuous Geometry, Planar Researcher and Meditations II, Dragonfly Series*, two paintings by Douglas Craft, have a thinly applied surface imbued with light. A predominant use of white with a restrained use of color and a repetitive linear structuring suggest a visual equivalent for rays of light.

The nuances of ambient light are a concern of Frank Gillette, Nan Hoover, Mary Lucier, and Bill Viola. Light is used to provoke emotional responses to a place. The investigation and recording of the shifts and changes of light over time is a fundamental concern of these works. Again light is used as a metaphor for a transcendental force. The untitled work by Robert Beck has a close relationship to the paintings of Norman Lewis. A field of moving light actively fills the screen and moves through time repetitively. Lewis’s paintings are a metaphor for the light and movement that can be seen in this piece by Robert Beck.

Electronically processed light can be seen in the work, *Artifacts* by Woody Vasulka. The light and the density of the electronically manipulated imagery changes through time and juxtaposes purely abstract imagery with layers of figurative images. Vasulka presents us with slices and fragments of multiple imagery that is manipulated repetitively to make a very abstract statement about the relationship of the illusion to the actual.

The works of Bruce Fordham sculpt with apparent motion, time and light. Fordham’s involvement with kinetic sculpture in the 1970’s has evolved into an involvement with computer technology. This technology is used to create apparent motion rather than mechanical motion, through the sequential patterning of color, light and sound.

In *Pink Progression*, a 1987 work, musical notes are used to reinforce and stress the progression and movement of the light. The rapid movement of the light and shadow relate closely to the movement of light and shadow in Vasulka’s *Artifacts*.

Pure light is used in these works. Light is seen as a clean, technological element rather than an evocative and sensual form.

I would like to thank the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, Alan Brown and Phillip Jones of the Robeson Campus Center and the Office of the Provost, Rutgers-Newark, for their ongoing support of the gallery. I wish to thank my student gallery assistants, Marissa Liberti and Janice Ferrari, and Olga Valle, curatorial assistant, for their continuing hard work and dedication to the gallery.

I would also like to thank the following for their assistance and generosity in the loan of works for this exhibition: Electronic Arts Intermix, Newark Museum, Ouida Lewis, and Luisa Ross Gallery.

Alison Weld
Gallery Curator
Emil Bisttram
“Moon Magic”
1950
Oil on Canvas
32 x 36 inches
Courtesy of Luise Ross Gallery

Emil Bisttram
“Sailboats and Rope”
1950
Oil on Canvas
45 x 40 inches
Courtesy of Luise Ross Gallery
Douglas Craft
“Meditations II, Dragonfly Series”
1976
Acrylic on Canvas
60 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Douglas Craft
“For J.M.W. Turner, Sensuous Geometry, Planar Researches”
1978
Acrylic on Canvas
60 x 96 inches
Courtesy of the artist
Norman Lewis

"Oron"  
1961  
Oil on Canvas  
50 x 71 inches  
Courtesy of Mrs. Ouida Lewis

Norman Lewis

"Seachange XV"  
1977  
Oil on Canvas  
50 x 72 inches  
Courtesy of Mrs. Ouida Lewis
Robert Beck
"Untitled"
1985
Video
10:00 minutes
Courtesy of the artist

Ronald Bladen
"Kerouac's Road"
1985
Painted and Natural Wood, Aluminum
17 x 101.5 x 10 inches
Courtesy of the Newark Museum, The Members Fund, 1986
Ed Emshwiller
“Sunstone”
1980
Video
3:00 minutes
Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix

Frank Gillette
“In the Creeks”
1984
Video
59:27 minutes
Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix
Nan Hoover
“Light and Object”
1982
Video
20:00 minutes
Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix

Toshinori Kogo
“ Toothache”
1987
Mixed Materials on Canvas with Blacklight
48 x 60 inches
Courtesy of the artist
Mary Lacier
“Birds Eye”
1978
Video
23:00 minutes
Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix

Woody Vasulka
“Artifacts”
1980
Video
22:00 minutes
Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix
Ted Victoria
“Light Bulb IV”
1973
projected image
Courtesy of the artist

Bill Viola
“Chott el-Djerid”
1979
Video
20:00 minutes
Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Beck</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>Video Excerpt</td>
<td>10:00 minutes</td>
<td>This work on loan to the Gallery courtesy of the artist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emil Bisttram</td>
<td>&quot;Moon Magic&quot;</td>
<td>Oil on Canvas</td>
<td>32 x 36 inches</td>
<td>This work on loan to the Gallery courtesy of Louis Ross Gallery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Saltbush and Rope&quot;</td>
<td>1950 Oil on Canvas</td>
<td>45 x 40 inches</td>
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<td>Ronald Bladen</td>
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<td>Ed Emshwiller</td>
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<td>Nan Hoover</td>
<td>&quot;Desert&quot;</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>10:30 minutes</td>
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<td>&quot;Light and Object&quot;</td>
<td>1982 Video</td>
<td>20:00 minutes</td>
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<td>&quot;Return to Fuji&quot;</td>
<td>1984 Video</td>
<td>7:30 minutes</td>
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<td>Video</td>
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<td>&quot;Ohio to Giverny: Memory of Light&quot;</td>
<td>1983 Video</td>
<td>18:25 minutes</td>
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<td>Woody Vasulka</td>
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<td>Video</td>
<td>28:00 minutes</td>
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Bruce Fordham
"Pink Progression"
1987
Computer with Light Tube, Plexiglass and Sound
48 minutes
96 x 20 x 7 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Bruce Fordham
"Mirror, Mirror"
1987
Computer with Light Bulbs, Mirrors, Wood, and Sound
48 minutes
14 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the artist
BRUCE FORDHAM

November 11 through December 23, 1987

Checklist

"Experiments in Light Bulbs, Color and Apparent Motion"  1987
Computer with Light Bulbs and Plexiglass  1.25 minutes  60 x 12 x 9 inches

"Pink Progression"  1987
Computer with Light Tube, Plexiglass and Sound  .48 minutes  96 x 20 x 7 inches

"Mirror, Mirror"  1987
Computer with Light Bulbs, Mirrors, Wood, and Sound  .48 minutes  14 x 48 inches

"Computer Starts In Five Seconds"  1986
Computer with Plexiglass  .50 minutes  20 x 15 x 5¼ inches

"Frozen Memory"  1986
Computer with Plexiglass and Speech  2.19 minutes  20½ x 15½ x 5 inches

"Red System"  1986
Computer with Plexiglass and Speech  .42 minutes  20 x 15 x 5¼ inches

"Watts Governor"  1985
Computer with Plexiglass and Sound  .39 minutes  20 x 15 x 5¼ inches

"System 21 33 19"  1986
Computer with Plexiglass and Speech  1.50 minutes  20½ x 15½ x 5 inches

These works on loan to the Gallery courtesy of the artist.

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