

WHITE LIGHT

April 27 to May 19, 2001

OPENING RECEPTION

Friday, April 27th, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

WHITE LIGHT is an exhibition project realized by the spring 2001 Curatorial Practice course, part of the interdisciplinary Exhibition Studies area at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. It includes works curated by the class from a larger exhibition of the same name first presented at University Galleries of Illinois State University, Normal. A video produced by Katrin Heidar, Elena Rossi, and Alexandra Wachtel will be shown in conjunction with the exhibition.

Students: Elizabeth Connor, Jorge Felix, Ewa Grigar, Katrin Heidar, Michelle Kaiserlian, Swathy Keshavamurthy, Elena Rossi, Jen Schaaf, Alexandra Wachtel

Instructor: Barry Blinderman

Brochure design: Elizabeth Conner

Thanks to C J Mitchell, Rachel Weiss, Angela Barker, Amber Marshall, Amy Honchell, and the staff of the 1926 Exhibition Studies Space.

A D A M F U S S

C H R I S T I A N G A R N E T T

M A R K G E N R I C H

G R E G O R Y G R E E N

J U D Y L E D G E R W O O D

K A T H L E E N M C C A R T H Y

R A Y R A P P

S U S I E R O S M A R I N

Above: Gregory Green, *Double Flag*, (detail), 2001. Light bulbs, hardware, dimensions variable.
Opposite: Kathleen McCarthy, *Beam*, (detail), 2001. Monofilament, dimensions variable.

1926

1926 EXHIBITION STUDIES SPACE

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Gallery Hours: Wed.-Fri., 3:00-7:00 p.m.; Sat.-Sun. 1:00-6:00 p.m.

THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO



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Gregory Green, Double Flag (installation view), 2001

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Even in our lightning-paced technological age, it is the subtle shift of seasons that serves as a constant reminder of the integral nature of light in our world. The rhythmic flux of the rising and setting sun, the brilliance of a meteor shower against the darkness of the night sky, the prismatic arch of a rainbow after a summer storm sparks in us a sense of wonderment accompanied by an intense desire to create artifacts with and about light. The evolution of light beyond its naturally occurring forms has been a quest of humankind since the discovery of fire. We continue to harness, reproduce, and manipulate the phenomenon of light into various tools and communicational modes (e.g. electric lighting, movie projectors, television, fiber optics) that advance our culture and enrich our lives. The gentle persuasion of light filtered through a stained glass window and the monotonous flicker of a TV screen both have the power to transform an interior space. The startling burst of the paparazzi's flash and the blinding beam of a searchlight both trigger anxiety.

As an essential aspect of our lives, it is no surprise that representations of light have appeared in art through the ages. The portrayal of light has varied in technique and style, most notably in the radiant chiaroscuro of the Renaissance, the dramatic tenebrism of the Baroque era, the delicate interplay of unblended pigment illuminating the Impressionist canvas, and the frenzied energy fields of Futurism. In recent years light has become the central and sole focus of certain artists like Dan Flavin, Robert Irwin, and James Turrell.

By Webster's definition, white light "has the same spectral energy distribution as unobstructed noon sunlight." It is known to be the purest form of light, within which the potential of all color is embodied. This exhibition derives from the idea that white light is a transformative experience known to people of all cultures and times, whether it be in near-death experiences, Western and Eastern religious texts, the liminal state of ritual practice, sci-fi movies, TV advertisements, or alien abduction scenarios.

Left: Christian Garnett, *Untitled*, (detail), 2000. Epoxy panel, acrylic alkyd, oil paint, 60 x 49 inches.

Right: Adam Fuss, *Untitled*, (detail), 1992. Unique cibachrome photograph, 39 x 29 inches.

Through painting, video, and installation, the artists in **WHITE LIGHT** engage the viewer in images of radiance and encounters with the prismatic effects of refracted light. Judy Ledgerwood's luminescent oil painting, *Freddy* (after Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*), enchants the viewer with a mélange of subtly shifting colors. Resembling an electronic screen, Christian Garnett's painting reveals infinitesimal gradations from a blazing white to an intense deep blue. Adam Fuss's photogram consists of a nova-like eruption into radiating golden ellipses. Susie Rosmarin's *Untitled (Stripe Painting)* employs linear color patterning that relies on the viewer's retina to produce intensely vibrant optical effects.

Four installation artists contribute three-dimensional works ranging from the delicately elusive to the intermittently blinding. Kathleen McCarthy's use of translucent monofilament constructs an illusory division of space while also drawing attention to the particular shape of the structure as light passes through each clear strand. Mark Genrich's hanging sculpture of motor-driven prisms casts spectral reflections on its surrounding environment. While McCarthy's and Genrich's installations are ambient in effect, Gregory Green's *Flag* creates a shocking experience of electric light and heat when the foot pedal is depressed. Ray Rapp's video installation, *Feedback*, houses a computer-generated sequence within twin TV monitors.

—Michelle Kaiserlian and Ewa Grigar

Notes on the Video: We are interested less in the subtleties of light than in its extremities, and the use made of this "ecstatic" illumination in art, popular culture, world religions and, by extension, the way we envision birth and death. The trajectory of the video will emphasize ideological continuity within disparate representations of light. We wish to clearly illustrate this theme of the exhibition: the human desire for an experience of light that conjoins the optical, the mystical, and the aesthetic, and how that desire plays out within the cultural context.

—Alexandra Wachtel

