



MARK GENRICH

Light Modulating Prism Curtain (installation view), 2001, from "White Light." Mixed media, dimensions variable.

It is not necessary that the power of an artwork derive from the shared repressions of a collective unconscious. One can imagine, for example, recombinant figurative tactics that owe a debt not to Modernist masculinity but to contemporary feminist appropriations of the cyborg. As Donna Haraway has famously argued, the ontological distinctions between animals, humans, and machines have been thoroughly discredited. Hybrids need not be monsters. But perhaps these particular elements of the popular imaginary cannot but reinscribe the heterosexual primal scene no matter how many ways they are rearranged.

Kevin Marzahl is a scorpio-dog.

WHITE LIGHT

HERRON GALLERY
1701 N. PENNSYLVANIA ST.
INDIANAPOLIS, 46202
317/920-2420

"White Light," a quirky take on the properties of light and our perceptions of it, was a welcome visitor to the stable of shows at this university space that struggles to finance exhibitions of cutting-edge work in a community that has relatively few, if zealous, fans of such fare. According to curator Barry Blinderman, this painting, photography, video, and installation incorporates "emanations, traces, or reflections of white light." The show was not about purity, or lightness as it opposes the dark; instead, Blinderman explored

light in all its aspects, including its darkness or so-called transgressiveness. "We are reminded that along with the ecstatic or meditative qualities associated with light," Blinderman writes in the exhibition catalogue. "We also have the invasive, disturbing aspects—blinding searchlights, the interrogator's lamp, the paparazzi's flash."

On entering the gallery, one couldn't escape the obnoxious glare of Gregory Green's *Flag*, a display of 50 light bulbs on a facing wall that the viewer engages with the press of a foot pedal. While their light is jarringly blinding, at the other end of the spectrum we see light as soothing radiance in Kathleen McCarthy's installation *Breath* from 2001. Eight weblike orbs made of monofilament were suspended from the ceiling of a solitary room like static parachutes, their delicate lines arcing and shimmering. The silence here was palpable, and yet the silky threads seemed to call forth disembodied breaths or whispers. But solidity and faint peril are present in this work as well, in the form of the webs presenting snares for unsuspecting travelers.

Mark Genrich's *Light Modulating Prism Curtain* is comparatively benevolent. A hanging array of gently undulating prisms cast images in waves on the far wall, nudging the viewer to grope for associations—a waterless aquarium, a hueless lava lamp, a ghostly elevator moving up and down through space—while allowing us to indulge in the loveliness of gentle gray shadows.

By contrast, in Richard Bloes's overly complex video installation *Night Space*, the images are creepy in their rough abstraction. Something pumps and gyrates amidst flashes in this lengthy, wall-projected

narrative, during which one can occasionally catch glimpses of recognizable images such as a person, a capsule, or a house modulated through a lens. But indistinct blotches of light soon overtake the space, producing a digital white-out. This is light's underbelly, involving technological underpinnings that can wreak aesthetic havoc if we let them—like billboards, or the red lights of Las Vegas.

Finally, there were the two-dimensional explorations of light. Jack Goldstein's *Untitled* from 1983 is a hyperrealistic painting that resembles a photograph of a storm in which skeletons of lightning cast their bony, brilliant white fingers through a pinkish-purple sky. The piece serves to remind us that light's intentions are not always pure even when they're generated by nature.

"White Light" is the third in a trilogy of exhibitions generated in the past two years by this venue, which included "Post-hypnotic" (see *New Art Examiner*, July/August 2000, 41) and "The UFO Show." All of these shows focused on altered mental states as addressed in art, and "White Light" succeeded in its exploration of alternate views as expressed through the medium of light. But, as illustrated by things like billboards and neon that pollute our field of vision, "seeing the light" is not always enriching to the spirit.

Julie Pratt McQuiston is a visual art critic and freelance writer and editor based in Indianapolis.