

Light Is What You See

Outstanding Works Of Contemporary Light Art

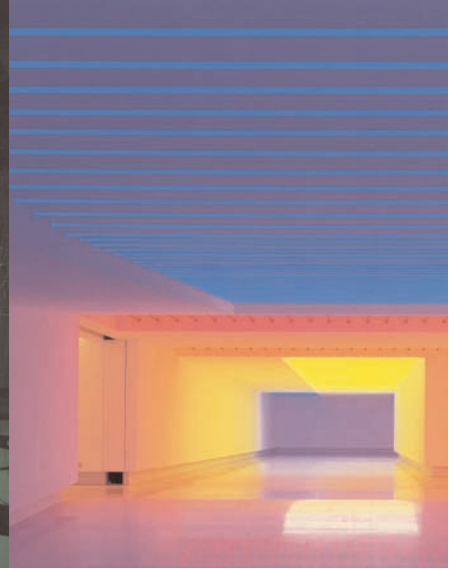
TV Series à 26mins. in co-production with ARTE, Arts and culture



John Armleder



Angela Bulloch



Keith Sonnier

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Format: HD

Light Art

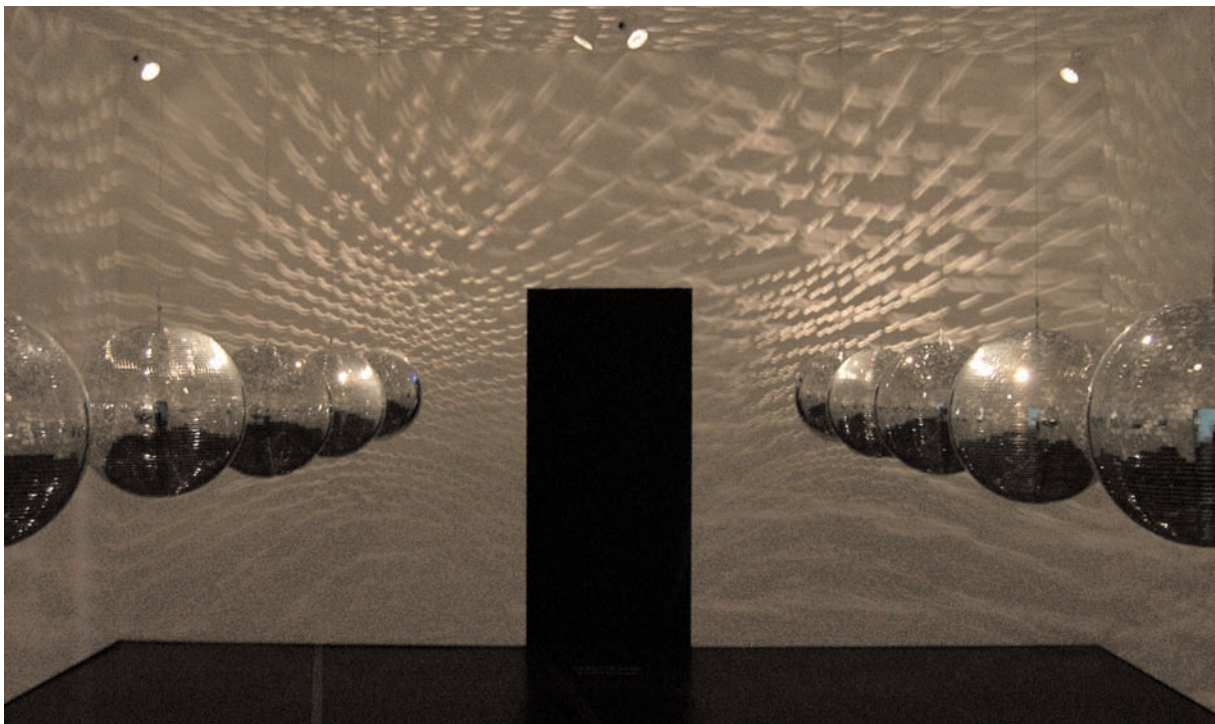
In the last 100 years electrical lighting has revolutionized our world to an extent matched by few other technologies. Since the early twentieth century artificial light has illuminated our streets, shop windows, advertising signs and houses. We inhabit cities and gardens of light, and a paradise of artificial light has evolved in the aftermath of our victory over darkness. As a medium for visual messages artificial light soon attracted the attention of artists, who have worked with light bulbs, fluorescent lamps, neon lighting and high-power searchlights since the 1920s. The focus of art has shifted dramatically from the illusory representation of natural light towards the actual utilisation of artificial lighting. Light is a compelling and spectacular medium, and most viewers are unable to ignore the visual stimulus emanating from light art installations. Playing on the act of seeing, and the patterns and experience of human perception, light art provokes an immediate reaction in its viewers. Artists have illuminated landscapes and created autonomous, luminous objects and spaces. Light ambience, light kinetics, reflection, graphics, logo-culture, and the play of art with natural phenomenon are themes around which gifted international light artists have created works of unbelievable intensity; interior installations on an occasionally grand scale, but in particular installations in exterior settings around a variety of artistic and architectural projects.

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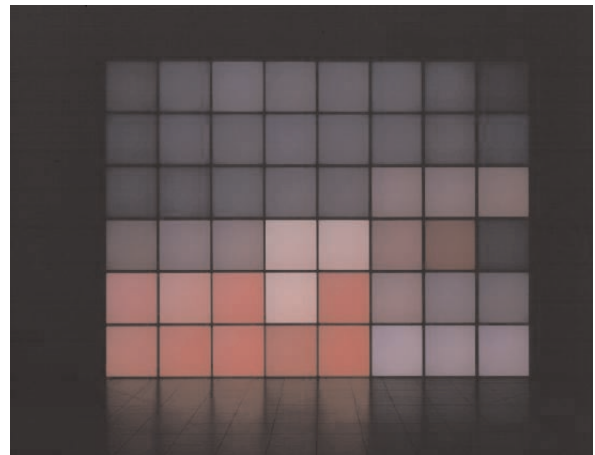
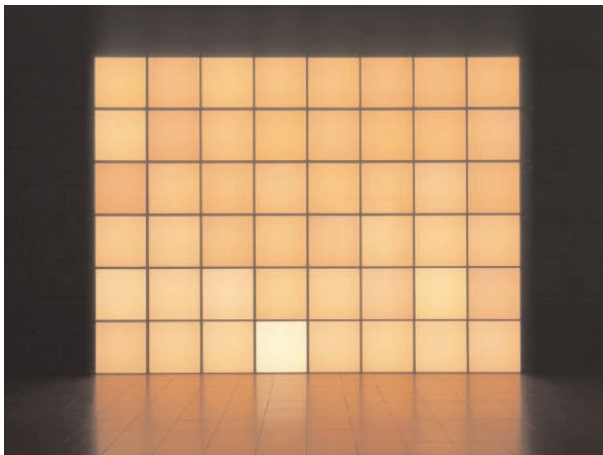
Contemporary light art is currently enjoying widespread attention in galleries and museums throughout Europe. In late 2003 the Kunsthhaus Graz opened its new rooms with an exhibition titled „Imagination. On perception in art“, which was predominantly composed of light art works. The Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (MUMOK) is currently showing an exhibition of light art under the definitive title of „LightWorks“, and in November 2006 the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich will also be opening a retrospective exhibition on the American light artist Dan Flavin, one of the genre's most well known figures. And last but not least; the influential Centre for Art and Media (CAM) in Karlsruhe is also running an extensive exhibition on light art called „Light Art From Artificial Light“. The exhibition is a veritable who's who of light art, with works from well over 100 international artists. The use of artificial light also figures largely in current debates on contemporary art. Reason enough to take a closer look by dedicating a series to the works of these contemporary light artists and their place in art history.

Based in very different contexts and utilising a diverse range of technologies, the contemporary light artists featured in “Light Is What You See” deploy light in a conscious yet playful manner, using the medium to send messages or to unsettle our modes of perception. In his works Keith Sonnier, with whom the series will open, is concerned with our spatial experience of light and architecture. Angela Bulloch works exclusively with the light and colours provided by Macintosh computers. Her works are connected to contemporary debates on Neo-Concept Art. The work of John Armleder resonates with the form and style of the Arte Povera; a movement that critically examined the usage of such cheap new materials as neon lights and their deployment in mass culture, and introduced these materials into the art context.



John Armleder, Global Domes XII

In three programmes the series „Light Is What You See. Outstanding Works Of Contemporary Light Art” offers an introduction to the genre of light art and the staggering diversity of the works created within the field. The series provides coverage of the contemporary works of artists and locates their works within art historical contexts. The featured light artists have constructed virtual laboratories that entice us to investigate our visual perceptions and their susceptibility to manipulation and conditioning. They play freely with materials and forms, and their works examine the complexities of our modern life-style, as reflected in their choice of materials: taillights from automobiles, lasers, strobe lighting and searchlights, and the light of electrical appliances such as televisions and computers. Many of the contemporary works candidly reveal their reality as technical constructions (Jason Rhoades, Yoshiaki Kaihatsu), or create hybrid spaces of sensory perception and scientific experiment (Olafur Eliasson, Carsten Höller). Other artists employ projections to deconstruct the conventions of spatial and temporal perception: John M Armleder literally overwhelms viewers with a flood of optical stimuli, while Björn Dahlem's »Black Hole« (1998) is a representation of anti-matter, whose gravitational pull is so strong that it drags everything, including light, into its centre.



Angela Bulloch, Zpoint

Realisation

On the one hand the decision to focus on contemporary works is of course influenced by a desire for actuality, but beyond this it also opens up exciting possibilities for the programme realisation in TV format: the artists can be visited and interviewed directly in their studios, allowing viewers to participate fully in the creative processes behind light art - from the initial conception of a work, up to the spectacular and often complex installation of the works in public spaces and/or galleries. Viewers will be able to closely follow the complex ideas and technical considerations behind the creation of the featured artworks. The series will feature current exhibitions and work on installations in Shanghai, Lisbon, New York, Berlin, Geneva and Munich. And while artistic forms such as painting can only be adequately presented in TV format with difficulty, the presentation of light art on a TV screen works outstandingly. The glow of the TV screen corresponds exactly with that essential element of the genre - the radiant power of light.

A short introduction to the episodes

KEITH SONNIER

Verbindung RotGelbBlau, Münchner Rückversicherung Building, 2002

Ba-O-Ba, New National Gallery Berlin, 2002

Lichtweg, Munich International Airport, 1989 - 92

Double Monopole, Kansas City Airport, Kansas 2006/07

In the last twenty years Keith Sonnier has carried out numerous public interventions at the sites of historical and contemporary architecture in Europe and America. Some were temporary interventions, such as his work “Ba-O-Ba” at Berlin's New National Gallery in 2002, where he emphasised and extended the strict modernistic vocabulary of Mies van der Rohe's design, providing a new route toward an “understanding” of the architecture. Many other works by Keith Sonnier have been permanent installations, such as the 1 kilometre long “Lichtweg” (Light path) at Munich International Airport, the largest interior installation Sonnier has realised to date. The “Lichtweg” functions as a guide way through the airport, but is charged with atmosphere and constantly plays with the perceptual experiences of visitors and viewers. In 2002 he created a second permanent light installation in Munich; the “Verbindung RotBlauGelb” is a 143 metre long neon-lit corridor in red, blue and yellow tones. Both are interventions in existing architecture, created not as an attempt to simply revitalise architecture through art, but as a functional interaction between art and architecture - in this case the interventions guide our movement. Functionality is an important aspect of Sonnier's work, through which he defines a new role for art in relation to architecture. These two light paths will form the focal point of the episode. We will meet Keith Sonnier in his New York studio and meditate with him in the twilight hours before the backdrop of the Manhattan skyline. In Munich we will also talk to Sonnier about his “Lichtweg” at Munich Airport, and take a ride through the light tunnel on an airport buggy together with him.



Keith Sonnier, Ba-O-Ba

ANGELA BULLOCH

Disenchanted Forest x 1001, currently on display at: CCB, Lisbon, Courtesy Helga de Alvear; Reference: Zpoint, currently on display at: Lenbachhaus, Munich; Reference: Seats of Power - Spheres of Influence, German Bundestag: Paul-Löbe Haus, Berlin, 1998 - 2000.

The Berlin-based Canadian artist Angela Bulloch is undoubtedly one of the most widely known exponents of contemporary Light Art. In autumn 2005 she was one of four artists nominated for the prestigious Nationalgalerie Prize for Young Art, the highest paying award for up-and-coming artists in Germany. In her work Bulloch concerns herself with computer-generated colours and light, and brings these together with the form vocabulary of Concept Art. She has created numerous temporary and permanent installations in recent years. In this episode Angela Bulloch's spectacular light installation "Disenchanted Forest x 1001" will be at the centre of our attention. We will travel with Angela Bulloch and her technician Holger Friese to Lisbon, where her work is currently being exhibited, and there she will explain the complexities of this special work. At the heart of the installation is a raised floor and suspended ceiling, interconnected by over a kilometre of luminescent string. Changing lights and electronic music composed by Florian Hecker create the impression of a controlled climate under constant technological surveillance. In Berlin we will take a look at the people, places and things that inspire her work.

JOHN ARMLEDER

Flash. Flash. Flash, 2004. Courtesy: Galerie Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin, currently on display at: CAM Karlsruhe; Reference: Global Domes XII, 2000. Courtesy:

Thyssen Bornemisza Contemporary Art Vienna, currently on display at: CAM Karlsruhe.

The play of function and meaning, mass culture and glamour, and an ironic perspective on art historical phenomenon characterise the light installations of John Armleder. Cheap everyday articles, mass-produced in Asia, are the fundamental elements of the artistic concept behind Armleder's installation »Flash. Flash. Flash.« from 2004. A former member of the Fluxus Movement, Armleder's Oeuvre ranges from painting and object trouvé, to sculpture and design. His works often reflect upon the utopias of the twentieth century; questioning these visions and the achievements of Modernism from within the context of contemporary art history he develops unique interpretations of our world. His »Furniture Sculptures«, hybrid creations that inhabit a space between art and everyday objects, are exemplary models of his approach. In this episode we will accompany John Armleder on a shopping expedition to Shanghai, where he forages for new lights. While in Geneva, Armleder's adopted home, we will observe the preparations for his large feature exhibition in the MAMCO museum and visit a few of his favourite places.