



Holography, fun but still a side show in the art carnival

By MARY FOX

Step right up folks! What you are about to see will astound and amaze you. Through the magic of the newest, the brightest, the most revolutionary reproductive medium since the invention of photography, we bring you sights and images whose realism will leave you gasping.

See the temptress Luna from not one, not two but three lovely sides. Then, if you dare, enter the jungle of modern science. Navigate 360 degrees around the mysterious hemoglobin molecule shifting and turning before your very eyes. And culture? We're up to our ears in it — a ballerina, Mr. Peanut, the sphinx, Mickey Mouse! Say no more.

The foregoing is an accurate, if somewhat irreverent portrayal of the present state of holography as applied to the creation of art. We are fortunate in Vancouver to have an up-to-the minute look at the development of this medium via the first international exhibition of holography staged at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

The principal sources for this display are

Fringe Research Studios, Toronto, The Museum of Holography, New York, and the Multiplex Corporation, San Francisco. On hand to transform the west gallery into a suitably dark and appropriately appointed space for viewing holograms were Posy Jackson from the Museum of Holography, with Michael Sowdon and David Hlynsky from Fringe Research.

What is a hologram? Most interpreters begin by saying that it is neither a photograph nor 3-D photography. It is what Robert Arn calls a "map or encoding" describing "Relationships of space unencumbered by single fixed viewpoint of natural perspective representation."

A hologram can be made from sound or light waves. In traditional photography, light waves are resolved by a lens into a two-dimensional image. "The holographic recording technique," wrote Michael Sowdon, "captures the light waves directly as they radiate from the subject matter. No lenses are required to focus the image, making it possible to record the scene in true three-dimensional depth."

The light sources used to make holograms are low-power lasers that can be distinguished from other forms of light by having waves all of the same length.

In brief, the process essentially involves splitting a laser beam by passing it through a partially-silvered mirror. The first, called the reference beam, bypasses the subject and strikes the holographic plate. The second, or object beam emits waves which upon striking the subject matter are "rearranged by the irregularities of the surface of the objects that they strike . . ."

The scene is reconstructed wrote Michael Sowdon "by directing a beam of light into the hologram at the same angle that the reference beam originally illuminated the plate." The beam is bent as it passes through the emulsion of the film. Amazing as it may seem, "each point in the developed emulsion on the holographic plate contains a complete view of the original scene." Even if the plate is broken, a fragment can be illuminated to show a complete view but from only one angle.

So much for mind-boggling technology,

though at present it may be the most apt level of discussion. As chief curator Alvin Balkind remarks in his foreword: "Holography, as art, is in its earliest — daguerrotype — phase of development. This ought to be read as an expression of its present accomplishments and its foreseeable impact on the future."

Most of the holograms in the exhibition are of recent production, within the past three years. The earliest is a 1968 transmission hologram called Making Faces. The subject I believe it to be the artist, Bruce Nauman is shown, eyes tightly closed his finger pulling one side of his mouth down. It has an eerie, was museum realism about it, heightened by its position in a black curtained inner room in which the laser transmission holograms are viewed.

A more spectral presence is the Portrait of Dennis Gabor, 1971 engineered by R. Rinehart. Gabor looms almost immediately before you in business suit and glasses that implied solidity vying with the apparent vapourousness of form.

Those two, on loan by or through the Mu-

seum of Holography have a tremendous presence about them which some of the more heavily contrived or simply documentary examples from Fringe Research seem to lack. They are responsible for works like Cigarettes and Goblet, Wine and Cheese, Rose, Daisy and the more sensational, surreal C. N. Tower, Sardine Coffin and Sphinx d'Or. I should mention that each of these pieces has been executed in collaboration with other Canadian artists — Thaddeus Holownia, Stephen Cruise, Vincent Trasov, General Idea, Michael Morris, David Bolduc and Jeremiah Chechic.

One of the more arresting holograms on loan by the artist is Luna by Jody Burns dated 1974. It's a 120-degree Multiplex hologram showing this stunning, nude woman from the back all the way around to the front and with brilliant clarity as well.

Another of the same type, on loan from the Multiplex Corporation is called Kiss. Made by Lloyd Cross and Pam Brazier, it shows a woman, with her hand near her mouth, pucker, blow a kiss then wink.

The exhibition continues until Nov. 1.



LUNA

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