

SHADOW
& SPACE

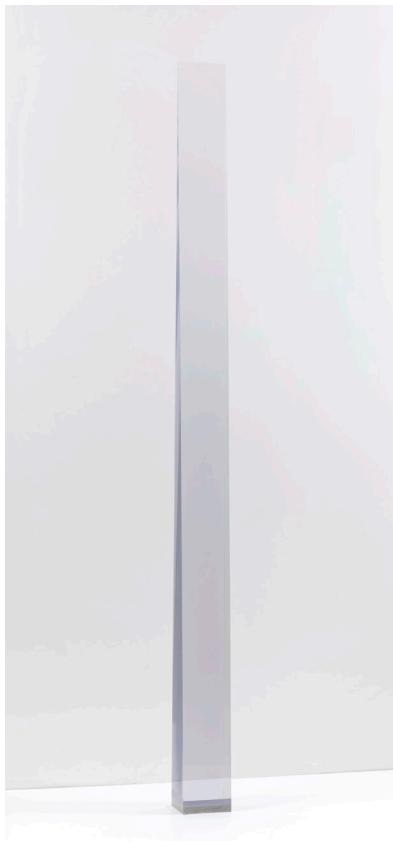
Part 1: Shadow & Space

Shadow & Space brings together painting and sculpture in which artists use unconventional materials to find new forms. Inspired by the Light & Space movement of Southern California in the 1960s, the exhibition dovetails on that genre's innovative use of lighting effects for the purpose of producing optically sensitive content. For the artists in this exhibition, atmospheric phenomena such as ambient light, shadow, translucent plastic, reflected color, as well as industrial materials like nails and moving parts, were used to evolve the expressive range of abstraction.

Because they worked with non-traditional art-making materials and methods, often for the first time, the artists in this exhibition acted as engineers in order to achieve their desired effects. DeWain Valentine and Peter Alexander, for instance, were among the first to cast plastic, and for Frank Stella, Anne Truitt and Manfred Mohr, shaped canvas paintings required the mathematical skills of carpentry as well as the aesthetic dimension of being an artist. The results are precise, light-responsive and liberated structures achieved through inventive systems and processes.

–Jason Founberg, Thoma Foundation Curator

Exhibition runs Fall 2016 through Summer 2017.



© Peter Alexander. Courtesy of Quint Gallery.

Peter Alexander (American, born 1936)

Clear Wedge, 1969

Cast polyester resin

79 x 5½ x 4¾ inches

Peter Alexander is recognized as a prominent member of California's Light & Space movement, and for his innovative use of a non-conventional material—polyester resin—to make semi-transparent sculptures. Trained as an architect, Alexander created tapered wedge sculptures that involve the space around them, seeming to cleave or merge with their surroundings.

This disappearing effect was made possible by what he called an “exotic” material. He reflected, “Art was not made out of plastic in those days. Art was made out of all the things that history has said art is made of. So one of the reasons why I liked plastic was that it was sort of anti-art, so to speak.” Polyester resin, like plastic, is a syrupy, clear liquid that, when heated, hardens. The geometric shape is derived from casting the material in wood molds. As the story goes, Alexander recognized the potential for this material as he repaired a surfboard, for which resin is used, and liked its sensual quality. Alexander quit casting resin in 1972 due to its toxic properties.



© Dan Flavin

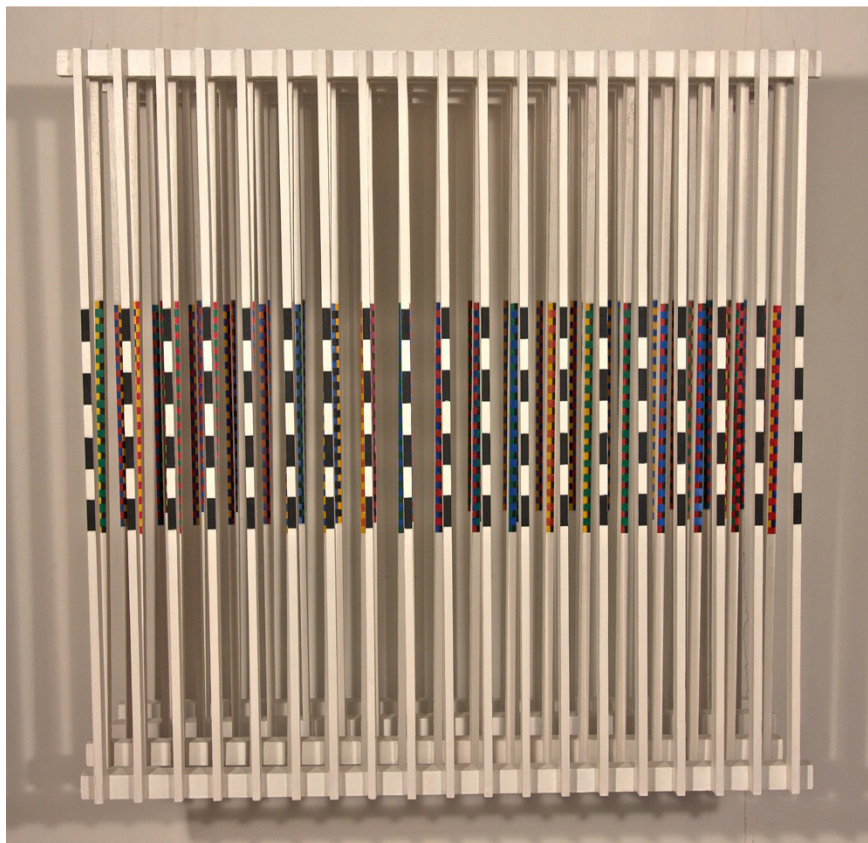
Dan Flavin (American, 1933-1996)

Untitled (in honor of Leo at the 30th anniversary of his gallery), 1987
Red, yellow, blue, green and pink fluorescent light
48 x 48 x 8 inches

While most artists in an exhibition favor to hang their work on clean, brightly lit walls, Dan Flavin saw an opportunity to illuminate the usually dark corners. Many of his fluorescent light artworks, from the 1960s onward, are installed in corners and activate that space.

Flavin used all available colors and all standard lengths of commercially produced fluorescent light tubes. He liked to emphasize the accessibility of his readymade materials, and so his sculptures were often produced in small editions. Flavin considered his true material to be fluorescent light, rather than the tubes themselves. His colleague Donald Judd described them as “neither painting nor sculpture” —a truly innovative approach.

Most of Flavin’s artworks are subtitled in homage to personal friends or revered artists. Here, Leo is the famed gallerist Leo Castelli, who represented Flavin in New York for many years.



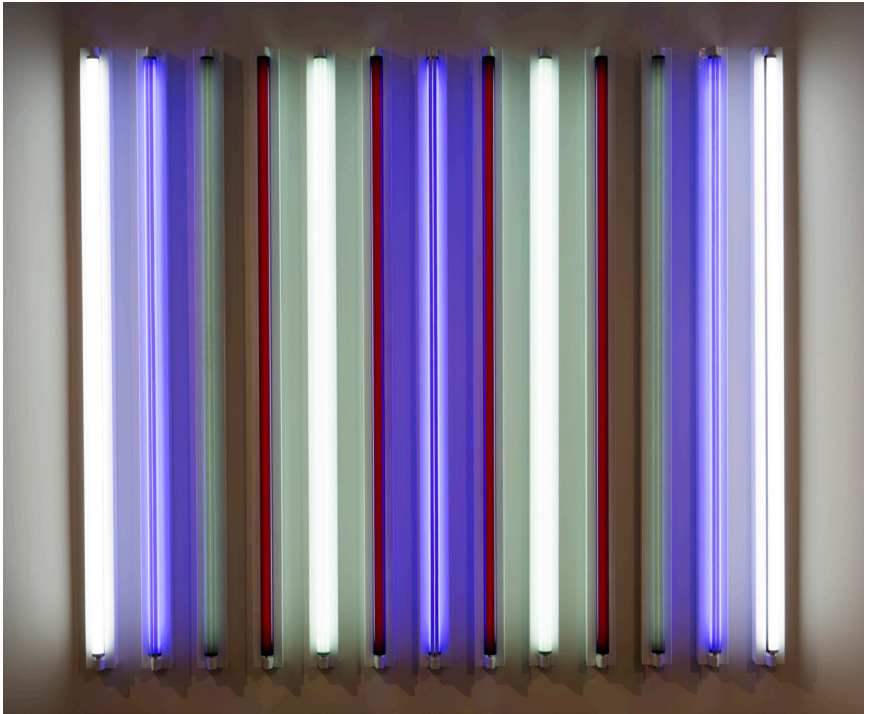
© John Goodyear. Courtesy of David Hall Fine Arts.

John Goodyear (American, born 1930)

Color Stripe, 1964

Acrylic on four redwood hanging slats
24 x 24 x 10 inches

Being drafted to serve in the U.S. military in Japan during a time of peace profoundly affected how John Goodyear made art. While living in a traditional home there, Goodyear routinely opened and closed the home's opaque paper windows, with their varying degrees of transparency, against the changing winds. When he returned to the U.S., Goodyear created interactive artworks that must be set in motion to reveal and hide the layers of color beneath. Says the artist, "Once set into motion, it keeps swinging until it stops. An important reaction to the piece is the difference between how it looks when it's quiet versus what you see when it's in motion." This breakthrough in kinetic optical art was recognized in the 1965 exhibition *The Responsive Eye* at MoMA.



© Robert Irwin. Photo: Claire Britt.

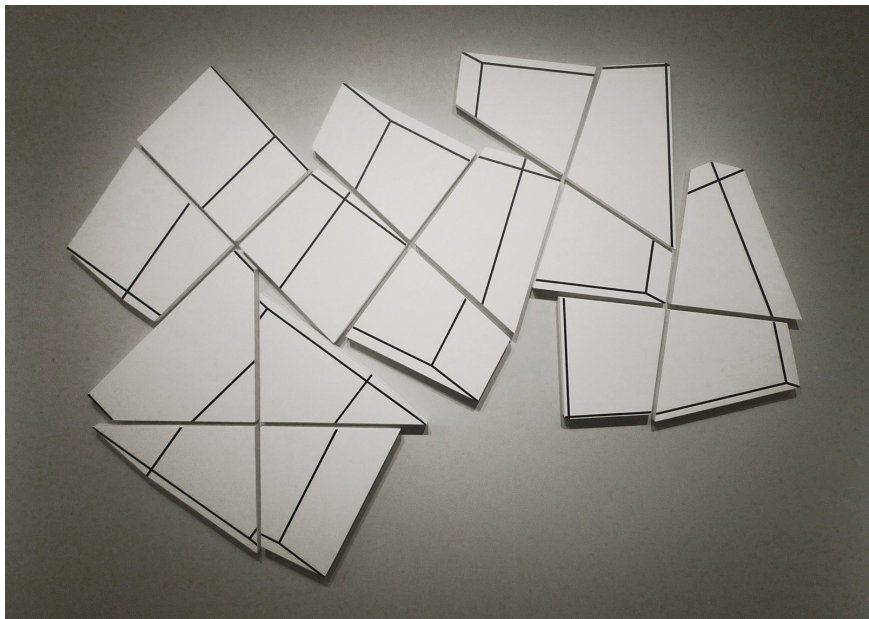
Robert Irwin (American, born 1928)

Lucky You, 2011

Light, shadow and reflection

72 x 81½ x 5 inches

Light & Space artist Robert Irwin is more interested in creating atmospheres than images. A former Abstract Expressionist painter, he began incorporating florescent tubes into his installations in 1970. Here, the thirteen evenly-spaced tubes emit six different colors, with four on/off, user-controlled configurations. The colored filters are named after flora, including jade, violet, orange and avocado, abstracting the artist's native San Diego terrain into a light experience. Irwin's color combinations encourage viewers to see a visual phenomenon rather than an object, evidenced by the artist's preferred medium description: light, shadow and reflection. For Irwin, each viewer's unique perception of *Lucky You* is a truth fundamental to the artwork's meaning.



© Manfred Mohr. Courtesy of bitforms gallery, New York.

Manfred Mohr (German, born 1938)

P-306/350C, 1984

Acrylic on canvas and wood, in sixteen parts
69 x 96 inches

To create this shaped canvas, which consists of sixteen parts, Manfred Mohr employed a computer program to calculate how a cube could fit within another cube. Presented as a fragmented, flattened mathematical visualization, the artwork theorizes a conceptual dimension of space. Mohr has long investigated hypercubes, used by physicists to conceive of parallel, virtual universes, often explained as infinite. As an artistic strategy, the hypercube is a way for Mohr to describe geometry and perception based in scientific and technological discovery. He says, "I don't invent the form; I create the logic which creates the form."



© Frank Stella. Photo: Claire Britt.

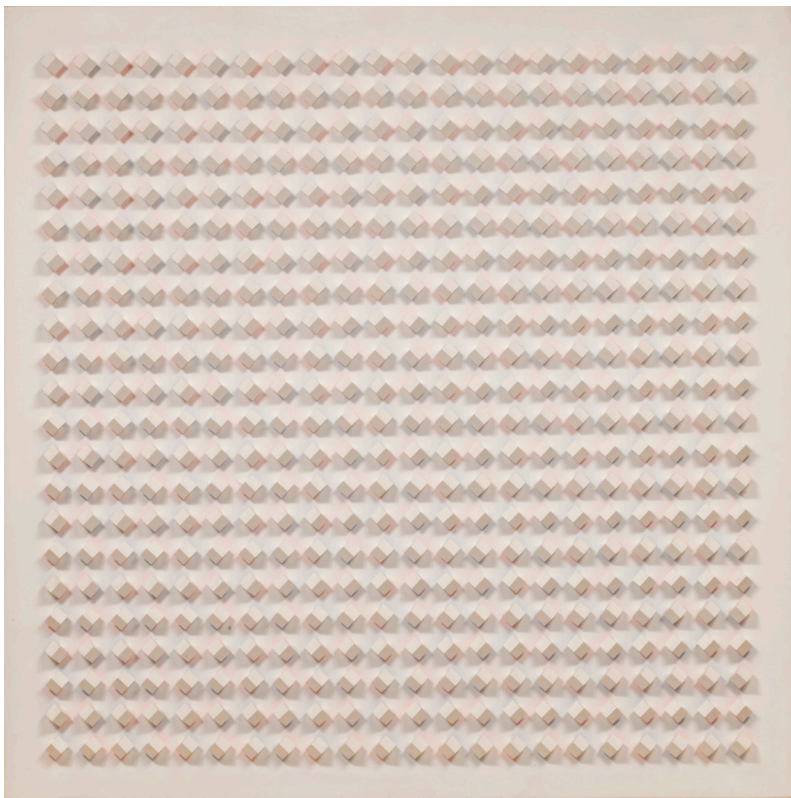
Frank Stella (American, born 1936)

Jabłonów II, 1971

Acrylic and felt on shaped canvas

95½ x 114 inches

With creative woodworking skills, Stella constructed *Jabłonów II* for his *Polish Village* series. Shaped canvas introduced an extra dimension into his hard-edged work during a transitional phase between the formalist, Minimalist striped canvases of his early career and his later sculptural wall-reliefs. Here, he collaged fabric as readymade color, leaving its edges rough to emulate the brushy lines of his previous stripe paintings. The series includes 130 canvases, each referencing a centuries-old wood synagogue in Poland destroyed by the Nazis. For this reason the *Polish Village* series has been interpreted as a memorial artwork. “There’s a sense of romance and strength in those structures,” said the artist, who seems to have been inspired by the synagogues’ carpentry technique, as detailed in the book *Wooden Synagogues*.



© Luis Tomasetto

Luis Tomasello (Argentinian, 1915-2014)

Atmosphere Chromoplastique N. 400, 1976

Painted wood construction

35 x 35 inches

After viewing the great stained glass windows at Chartres Cathedral in France, Argentinian painter Luis Tomasello says he “was in search of transparent color” for his own artwork. In response he exploited a phenomenon whereby color is transmitted via its reflected light. Part painting, part sculptural relief, the constructions include small wood cubes (here, there are 484), their undersides painted blue and fluorescent orange, thereby making color visible as a soft vibration of reflected light. Tomasello equates this light experience to seeing the moon, visible because of the sun’s reflected light. The artist was occupied with this method for most of his career and produced hundreds of such artworks, including several public murals using the same technique. Tomasello’s work follows the Concrete tradition of geometric, abstract and optical art popular in Europe and South America during the mid-twentieth century.



© Anne Truitt. Photo: Joseph Rynkiewicz

Anne Truitt (American, 1921-2004)

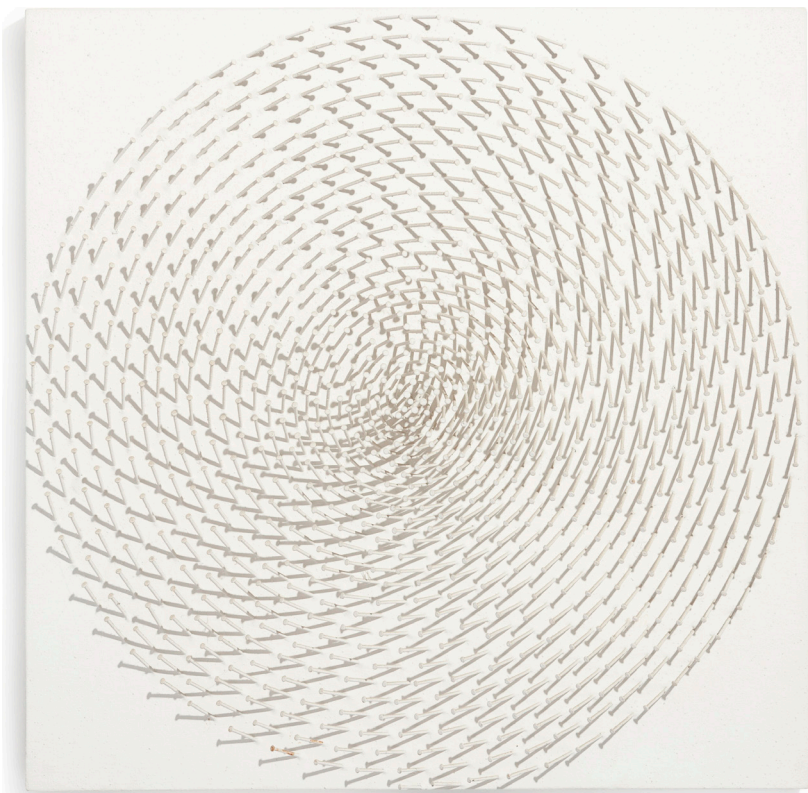
Sun Flower, 1971

Acrylic on wood

72 x 12 x 12 inches

Although Anne Truitt's monochromatic column *Sun Flower* appears like a Minimalist sculpture, the artist instead identified with Abstract Expressionists and the Washington Color Field painting school. Her 1961 viewing of Barnett Newman's paintings at the Guggenheim empowered Truitt to pursue her mature style of totemic wood columns that reference the volume of a human body.

Truitt was methodical in her painting methods. She painted many layers over wood supports, and finely sanded the layers to remove evidence of brushstrokes. Although her artwork appears simple, the process was labor intensive. *Sun Flower* has four subtle hue variations of yellow. These are painted in vertical bands on four sides. "What I want is color in three dimensions, color set free, to a point where, theoretically, the support should dissolve into pure color," wrote Truitt in 1979. The subtle variations in color are revealed in what the artist calls a "narrative" as a viewer walks around the sculpture.



© Günther Uecker

Günther Uecker (German, born 1930)

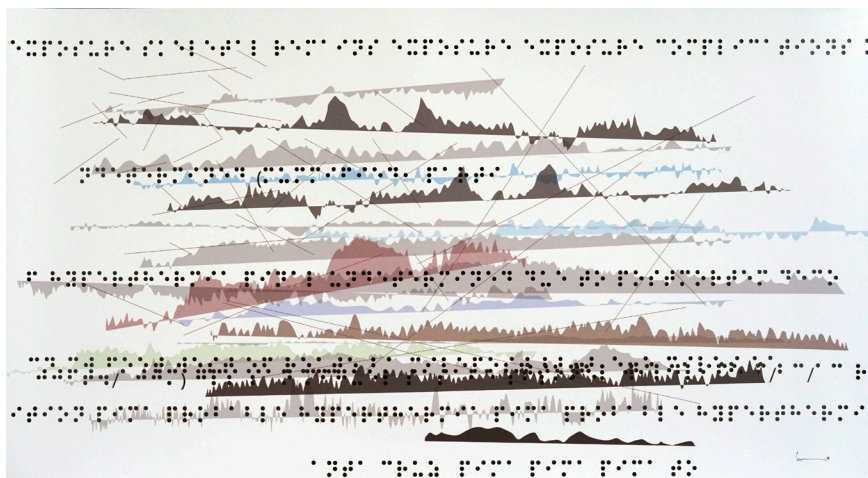
Spirale, 1969

Oil and nails on canvas, mounted on panel
23½ x 23½ inches

"Poetry is made with a hammer," wrote the Soviet author Vladimir Mayakovsky, a phrase that inspired German artist Günther Uecker to make optical compositions with painted nails. The nail metaphor was not lost on Uecker, who, as part of the Zero Group of artists, sought to rebuild post-war Germany's art scene from Post-War ruins. He hammered pure form, pattern and systematic structures from this industrial material. Often interpreted as having religious significance, from the Crucifixion to Tibetan mandala patterns, Uecker's nailed and painted relief sculptures are instead, for him, moments of perceptual and optical geometries "capable of revealing the beauty of movement to us," he said. The gallery's variable light and shadows ensure a different experience of Uecker's artwork every time it is viewed.

Chapter 2: Life After Media

This micro-exhibition of six contemporary digital artworks reveals what happens to obsolete, aging or antiquated communications technologies after artists resuscitate them. The artworks propose that creative interventions in mass media such as the internet, film, television and music recordings can emulate the power structures of mass-media communications, but also their ephemerality.



© Guillermo Galindo. Courtesy of Magnolia Editions.

Guillermo Galindo (Mexican, born 1962)

Waveform Coded Landscape, 2015

Acrylic ink, archival inkjet and laser-cut on paper
24 x 44½ inches

Composer and musician Guillermo Galindo created a conceptual musical score from data collected along the U.S.-Mexico border. This includes people who died attempting to cross the border, their names translated into code that could be read by a player piano. Also included are sound-waveforms from recordings made along the border, such as the Rio Grande river and cicadas. The music of the composite soundscape must be imagined rather than heard. Galindo, who was born in Mexico and now lives in the U.S., also collects found objects along the border, such as a patrolman's flashlight, and turns them into musical instruments, he says, "To enable the invisible victims of immigration to speak."



© Sabrina Gschwandtner. Photo: Claire Britt.

Sabrina Gschwandtner (American, born 1977)

Expanding/Receding Squares, 2014

16mm polyester film and polyester thread on lightbox
32 x 32 inches

This “film quilt” on a lightbox is comprised of 16mm filmstrips sewn into a pattern evoking a quilt motif. The artist received the films from an archive that was disposing of its holdings, so she preserved the outdated technology in a similar way that quilters rescue scraps of fabric. The film scenes are from craft documentaries from the 1950s through the 1980s, including *Arts and Crafts in America*, *Hearts and Hands: 19th Century Women and their Quilts*, and *Hopi: Songs of the Fourth World*. Gschwandtner’s *Expanding/Receding Squares* was created in response to the Thoma collection’s holdings of geometric, hard-edge painting, especially the work of Richard Anuszkiewicz.



© Eduardo Kac. Courtesy of the artist.

Eduardo Kac (Brazilian, born 1962)

Tesão, 1986/2016

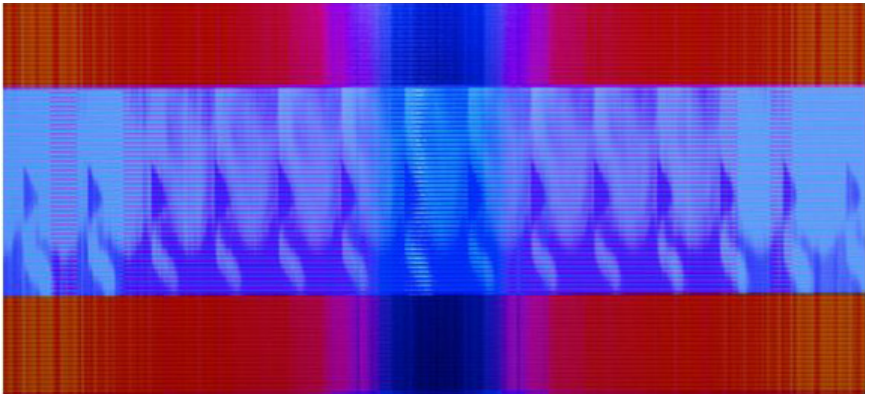
Vintage Minitel terminal and restored digital video

9¼ x 9½ x 9¾ inches

Minitel was the world's largest pre-internet networking service established in the mid-1980s and primarily based in France and Brazil, connecting twenty-five million users through their phone lines. Eduardo Kac was one of the first artists to create artwork designed, accessed and viewed within the Minitel. The terminal did not process data as modern computers do, but acted as a gateway to access information hosted on remote servers. Minitel terminals were offered to the public for free.

Tesão is an animation carried out in three acts that unfold to spell the artwork's title, Portuguese slang for "horny." Created when the artist was twenty-four years old, *Tesão* is a message to his then-girlfriend; the graffiti-like message also challenged the commercial and business applications of the network system. As a work of visual poetry and telecommunications art, *Tesão* extended what was expected and possible within Minitel.

The Minitel network was dismantled in 2012, effectively destroying *Tesão* until a digital art preservation research team in Avignon, France, reconstructed Kac's artwork to play as a video file, matching the color and rhythm of the original as a case study for a PhD dissertation.



© Matthew Kluber. Courtesy of the artist.

Matthew Kluber (American, born 1965)

Electr-O-Pura, 2015

Alkyd on aluminum panel, custom software, computer and digital projection
44 x 96 inches

Matthew Kluber's *Electr-O-Pura* projects a digital animation against the surface of a painted aluminum panel. When the digital animation is turned off, the hard-edge painting exists independently. When turned on, the digital projection is designed to visually interact with its painted substrate, initiating a live optical illusion. Kluber was inspired by a glitch in his computer. He recalls, "It would lock up and crash. There was a beautiful array of horizontal colored lights on the screen. I realized artists had not seen anything like that before computers."

Kluber customizes his graphics in the software OpenGL, in concert with the programming language C++. He creates the painting first, then the digital animation in response. For *Electr-O-Pura*, which is titled after a popular 1995 album by the indie rock band Yo La Tengo, Kluber edited a brief video loop of smoke to comprise the artwork's main imagery.



© Jon Rafman. Courtesy of the artist.

Jon Rafman (Canadian, born 1981)

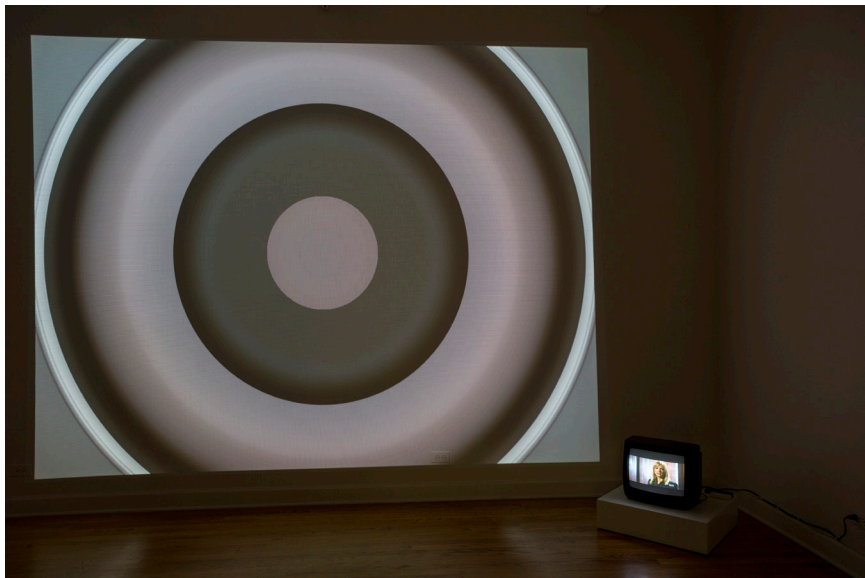
El Lissitzky Video Editing Suite, 2011

Archival pigment print mounted on dibond, in artist's fram
36 x 48 inches

Jon Rafman crafted digital skins or wallpaper from famous Modernist paintings—here, by Russian Constructivist El Lissitzky—to wrap the walls, floor and furniture of a virtual scene with the surface texture of the quoted painting. To digitally model the interior scene, Rafman used design software such as Google SketchUp and Photoshop.

Rafman calls himself an “internet-aware artist,” meaning his work comments on the intersection of digital, networked experiences and real life. As such, his artwork intends to manifest common online behavior, such as browsing and image sharing, as physical objects in lived space. “My process begins with searching the Internet to the point of sickness, where it feels like I’m about to lose my mind sitting in front of the computer for so long,” said Rafman.

El Lissitzky Video Editing Suite has relevance for the Thoma art collection given the work’s content: geometric abstract painting blended with a digital artist’s studio.



© Jason Salavon. Photo: Claire Britt.

Jason Salavon (Canadian, born 1970)

Everything All at Once (Part III), 2005

Live television broadcast, real-time computer program, audio, projector and monitor

Dimensions variable

Everything All at Once uses custom software to convert a live television feed into an animated geometric abstraction. The computer code averages the entire content of the TV screen into a single color, in what the artist calls a “relentless sample rate” of thirty frames per second. The radiating concentric circle pattern develops in real time, and the TV is programmed to change its channels every few seconds. Salavon likens the circular abstraction to the hypnotizing effects of TV and channel surfing.

In 2014, Salavon was the first artist-in-residence at the Microsoft Corporation.

About the Thoma Foundation:

The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation recognizes the power of the arts to challenge and shift perceptions, spark creativity and connect people across cultures. We lend and exhibit artworks from our collection and support innovative individuals and pivotal initiatives in the arts.

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