

Illuminations

by Robin Newman



Noam Rappaport, #16 (2013) Courtesy Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles

The British-born, New York-based artist and White Columns director Matthew Higgs has come to Los Angeles with an enlightening new curatorial venture. *Illuminations*, a group show held at Richard Telles Fine Art, deals with works that either include a source of light or grapple with the notion of light and its many sources.

Martin Creed's *Work No. 270, The Lights Off* acts as a framing device for the show. The piece has been installed in the gallery by turning off all the overhead lights, causing the space to be illuminated only by external daylight and the ambient light created by the exhibition's other works.

Christmas Tree Fire by Lucas Knipscher and Win McCarthy is a 2013 sculpture composed of wire twisted around candles. Using fire, the primeval source of light, the work sets up a dichotomy between the organic and inorganic, and it fosters an awareness of how sources of light have evolved over time. In these terms, a selection of Jason Meadows' festive, kitsch infused multimedia table lamp sculptures are in marked contrast.

Amy Yao's *Anxiety of Influence* pieces, shown scattered throughout the gallery, are constructed of painted steel pipes that act as lamps for fluorescent bulbs of the same color. These sculptures are playfully comedic yet are also oddly inflected with artisanal gestures such as paint splatters and collage. Their raw edginess borders somewhere between the Dadaist readymade and the spectacle of Pop art.

While much of the work on view uses quotidian objects, Margarete Jakschik's photographs of light bulbs directly address their subject matter without rendering greater visual or conceptual complexity. Also compellingly sparse are Noam Rappaport's unusual structures built to hold bulbs and move light sources to unexpected places. Likewise, Josef Strau uses the ubiquitous flashlight as the central image in one of his poster pieces. Another work by this artist, hung beside it, provides an almost poetic, intriguing piece of text. Strau also leaves a lasting impression by being the only artist in the show to work with projection, itself being a source of light with a history of artistic exploration.

Although Higgs admits that the exhibition premise stems from a past concept, there is something synchronistic in its relationship to the three-museum retrospective of the renowned light artist James Turrell, the Los Angeles component of which is being held nearby at LACMA.

"Illuminations" was on view from June 29 – August 10 at Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles.