


Benjamin Menschel Fellowship

Exhibition

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2001



The Benjamin Menschel Fellowship Program to support creative inquiry was endowed by a grant given to The Cooper Union by the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation in 1994 to support work in the fields of art, architecture, design, and engineering. This generous grant was intended to provide funding to exceptional students who propose scholarly, independent projects that will in some way provide a culmination to their educational endeavors at The Cooper Union. It is the hope of the Goldsmith Foundation that students designated as Benjamin Menschel Fellows will be encouraged by their awards to complete bodies of artwork, develop scientific protocols, or otherwise further their intellectual investigations in a manner that will provide inspiration and illumination to the community as a whole.



THE COOPER UNION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE AND ART

Benjamin Menschel Fellowship

Cally Iden
Alison Laichter
Aaron Lampell
Donna Peruzzi
Michal Raz-Russo
David Tomlinson
Ryan Toth

Exhibition

November 12–20, 2001
The Cooper Union
Foundation Building

Cally Iden

Photograms use photographic techniques to create images without the use of a camera. My photograms employ any combination of negatives, objects, and different light filtration exposures to produce images on photo-sensitive paper. Making photograms is like painting with light—the combinations of colors, textures, and shapes are inexhaustible.

Contained within each photogram is a unique landscape of marks made by the world. The meaning of each piece rests in the relationships among the images created by the negatives, by the shadows

of objects placed on the paper, and by pure color light filtrations.

What is real? Is the mark on the paper left by an object during one of the exposures more real or less real than an image taken by a camera? The documentary nature of the photogram sharply contrasts with that of traditional photographic images. There is no “decisive moment” in a photogram; rather, the photogram itself represents a process—what I call a physical photograph.

The photogram is a document of its own existence.



Alison Laichter

For thousands of years traditional medicine has prevented, treated, and cured sickness without the use of the synthetic substances commonly used in modern medicine. In the United States, patients have begun to actively seek alternatives to western medicine: the neighborhood pharmacy now stocks homeopathic remedies, almost every gym teaches hatha yoga, oncologists refer patients to meditation teachers, and insurance

companies pay for acupuncture treatments. Americans and their physicians are realizing that health is not a passive condition, but an active pursuit that involves more than the physical body alone.

My curiosity and fascination with this quest to find balance in mind, body, and spirit brought me to India. While living in a naturopathic hospital in Delhi, a mud hut in the Himalayas, a small city in the foothills, and traveling along the Ganges,

I was immersed in a remarkable culture eager to teach the science and art of healing.

With naturopathic physicians, doctors of Ayurveda (traditional Indian medicine), homeopaths, and yoga masters as my teachers, I learned about many different systems and philosophies of healing. I hope to share this knowledge, as well as its practical application, to help others understand how to integrate these ideas into their lives.

HEALTH IS HAPPYNESS
Nature is the Best, Heale



Aaron Lampell

Darkness is the absence of light, just as coldness is the absence of heat. But night is different—night is only the absence of sunlight, not the absence of light.

Bringing light out of darkness is a recurring theme in myth and history. The universe begins as a dark nothingness and then light is added. Humanity sleeps in the darkness of night until fire is controlled and the night is mastered.

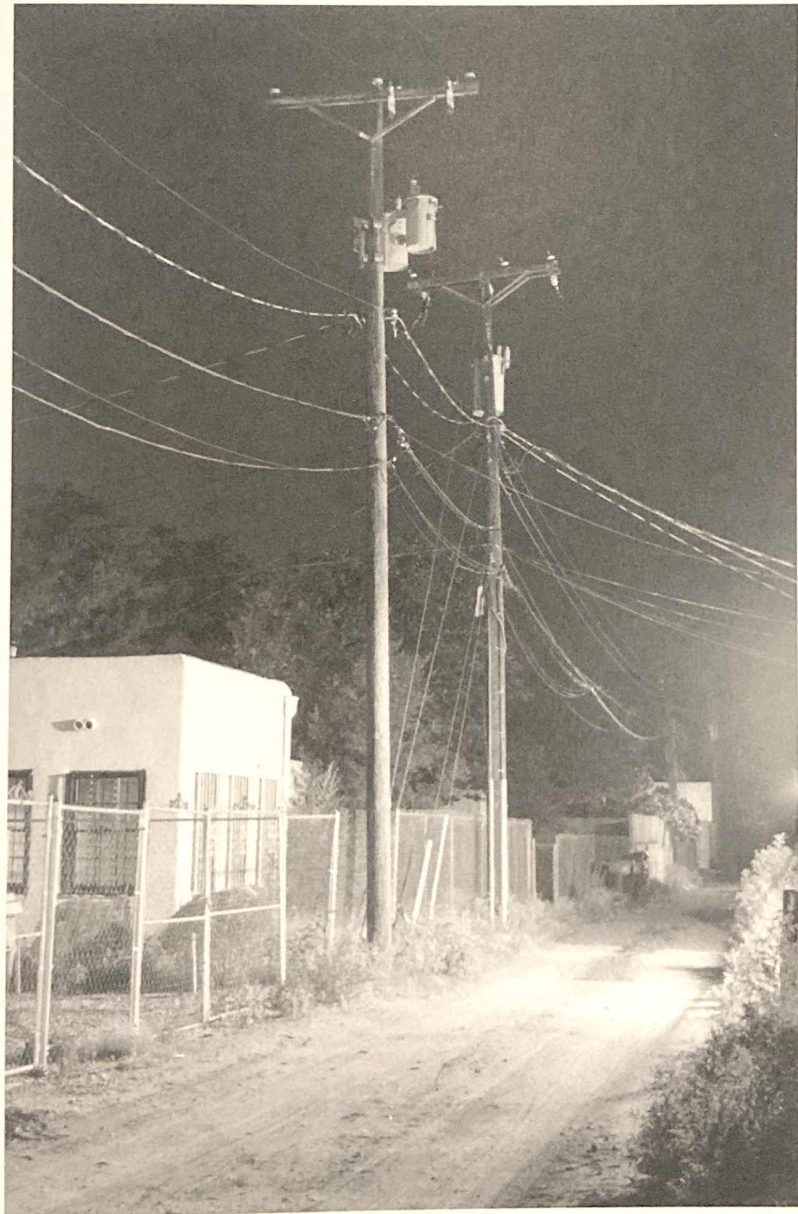
Once light came only from the sky. The sun, the moon, and the stars were

perfect spheres that people once took to be immutable signs of the power of heaven. Now the light of heaven is overshadowed by the lights of humanity. Rooftops and poles pierce the once pristine sky, scarred by wires and cables. We have subverted the sky so that at a glance it appears mundane.

At night buildings are immersed in the light of cities. Houses become luminous containers whose light spills from windows onto the street, like a campfire that

throws light in all directions. In the warmth of the light and the security of its walls, a house shields a family sleeping inside from the dangers of the night, but it also separates its occupants from any experience of the night itself.

At night the world becomes an empty stage, and incidental objects are filled with secret meanings: this is the scene that most of America never sees at night.



Donna Peruzzi

At the first meeting of the new science club I started this summer I asked six middle-school girls from the Lower East Side to “draw a picture of a scientist and what a scientist does.” Most girls drew a white man in a laboratory surrounded by bubbling chemicals—not a big surprise given the way television and movies portray scientists. This was something I wanted to change. I wanted to replace the girls’ media-driven images with pictures of people who looked more like them.

Women have come a long way in a relatively brief period of time, making advances in politics, business, medicine, law, and even the military. In technological fields, however, the number of women trails far behind that of men. A major factor in this trend is the lack of encouragement that girls receive at school and at home.

Studies show that most women in technological fields have a family member or other role model who is also in the field. Unfortunately, the girls

I worked with do not know anyone (aside from myself) who is an engineer or a scientist. As a result, they have no interest in a career in technology because the option is unknown to them.

Attending the kind of school that does not have enough science textbooks to distribute to everyone only complicates the situation. These girls have potential and it is not too early for them to know about all the opportunities available to them.

This was my motivation to establish a science club at their school.



Michal Raz-Russo

The first Jewish ghetto in Europe came into existence on 29 March 1516 in Venice, Italy. The place was called "Ghetto Nuovo," from the Italian word *getto* meaning "casting" or "foundry," because it was once the site of the public foundry. Despite the word's origin, in the collective memory of the Jewish people the ghetto has acquired a dual meaning. It serves not only as the ultimate symbol of discrimination, hatred, suffering, and forced physical segregation, but also as a symbol of resistance. In this second

symbolic sense the word expresses the ability of a community to hold on to its traditions and beliefs, and to strengthen them in the process.

The ghetto of Venice was a small, isolated island in an already crowded city, a perfect solution to the economic problems and religious prejudices of the time. It has now become an extraordinary example of an architecture and culture produced by a combination of tradition, necessity, and intolerance. Five synagogues are hidden in the ghetto

inside crowded apartment buildings where the Jews lived. Each represents a different Jewish ethnic group that settled in Venice after being driven out of different parts of Europe. The Venetian Jews were confined to the Ghetto Nuovo from 1516 until 1797, but maintained their culture throughout this period and beyond.

These photographs aim to reveal the ghetto as not only a product of discrimination but also as evidence of a community's strength and commitment to preserving tradition.



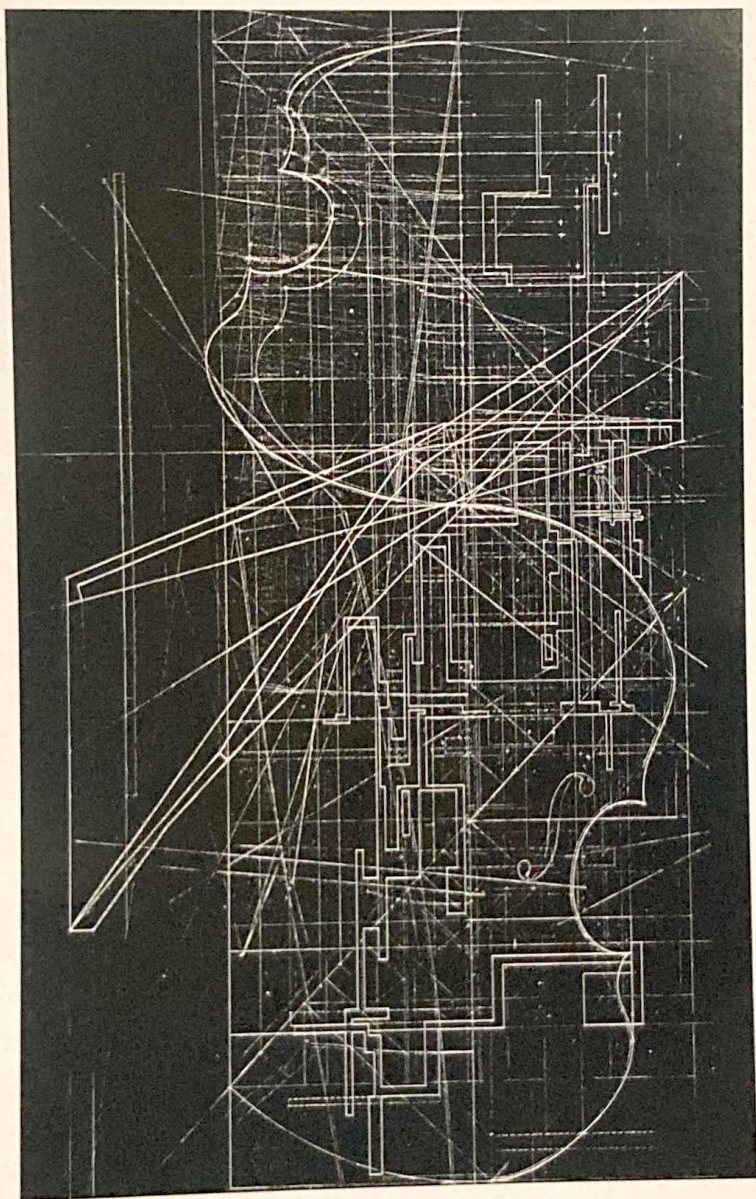
David Tomlinson

The purpose of this project is the creation of an architectural context for the re-presentation of music in performance. The particulars of the space arise out of a process of drawing based on the interaction of three components: body, cello, and music. A written page of music is a system of notation containing certain ideas about structure. A musician interprets these ideas in sound. Likewise, these ideas may also be interpreted spatially. The cello was chosen on the basis of its size, the scale of which corresponds to the scale of the body and suggests an intimate connection between the two.

Three sets of drawings produce a sequence of transpositions: first from music to body; then from body to cello; and, finally, from the interaction of the body with the instrument to architectural form. The drawings developed from the initial documentation of the actual performance of the "Prelude" from Bach's *Sixth Suite for Unaccompanied Cello*. The first set determines the relative positions of the body and the cello, as well as their relationship to gravity. The second set investigates the incidental choreography that arises through the interaction of body and cello.

This set supplements the traditional methods of musical notation with dimensional concepts derived from the discipline of architecture. These drawings, in turn, were worked into a third set that determines the three-dimensional qualities of the space itself.

Finally, a quarter-inch scale model was constructed of the performance space, based on the conceptual site that developed out of the interaction of body, cello, and music. The model is the manifestation of a series of conceptual and corporeal images, as a performance is the manifestation of musical images.



Ryan Toth

My paintings are abstract expressions of my reaction to recent American history, using animal imagery of predator and prey. In my work these two animal types exist together in a restricted, claustrophobic space where shapes are compressed and squeezed, pulled and distorted—and forced to be with one another.

The colors in the paintings are bright and clean, a strategy intended to attract viewers who look at the image only to find that their initial impression gives way when they realize how violent the subject really is. The color slightly

modifies the violence when viewed from a distance; however, upon closer inspection the brushstrokes reveal the struggle between enemies, the drama of aggression and defense.

In one painting, a mother tries to defend her young, but her heavy form seems only to push it further down into the mouth of the predator. In another, an animal is attacked and frozen in the amorphous body of shapes surrounding it. This struggle between the passive and the aggressive is ongoing, with the outcome of the conflict still to be determined.





The 2001 fellows express their gratitude to the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation
for its generous support.

Cally Iden

Alison Laichter

Aaron Lampell

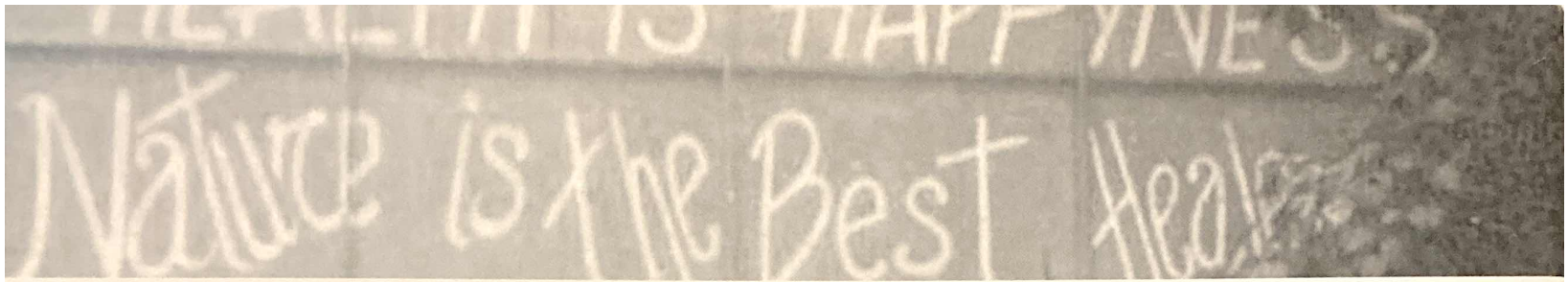
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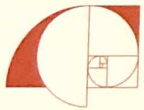
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