Tim Forcade

Objects and Entities: Sonic Realizations
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by Garry Noland

"Someday artists will work with capacitors, resistors and semi-conductors as they work today with brushes, violins and junk."

John Cage, 1965

When Cage described Nam June Paik's work in 1965, Kansan Tim Forcade was indeed working with the brush. True to Cage's prediction, the artist's show at the Art Research Center indicates that he is working with electronic materials. It is important to point out however that the exhibition's two light/sound machines and 32 photographs is not an hysterical jump onto the high technology bandwagon.

From the 1960's, Forcade's work has developed rationally and consistently to this point in his career. The artist's early paintings were systematically produced and based on the grid. His tendencies to allow subtle variations within a focused system foreshadows the interrelated programs in today's electronic performances.

In 1968-69, Forcade employed live models, voice commands, strobe lights and cameras in a series of figure studies. The models, responding to his verbal commands, would move about the studio. Their movements were recorded on film in cyclic intervals by timed strobe light flashes. The resulting images recall the photographs of Muybridge and Eakins in the 1880's, the paintings of the Italian Futurists and Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*. The multiply exposed images of models following verbalized instructions again relates to the artist's current study of sound generated images.

In the early 1970's, Forcade experimented with light-producing objects in an effort to work with light itself. The light boxes and panels, controlled by knobs, dials, and meters, created a moody environment by altering the surrounding space. The limiting confines of manual controls initiated the artist's research for more advanced techniques and a more suitable modulator of light. The best, most compatible element was sound.

Tim Forcade, *Shep No. 21-3*
Type R color print, 11" x 14", 1983

Simply put the artistic process begins when Forcade composes his own synthesized music and constructs the electronic circuitry in his Lawrence studio. The sound impulses, translated into visual images by the electronic devices, are displayed on an oscilloscope screen. With time lapse photography the artist records the sound-generated image. Colorized images are created with the aid of a spinning, transparent color wheel placed in front of the screen.

The sound/light processors in the exhibit are tall, black boxes with the oscilloscope screen at eye level. Both screens played *Delayed Pulses*, a 12-minute tape composed in 1983. One screen included the spinning color wheel to romanticize the otherwise whitish glow of the phosphor beam.

When energized, *Delayed Pulses* is a program of minute comma-like shapes, swirling points of light that describe circuitous patterns and looped contours. The combined effect of the melodic, melancholic sound and the cyclonic dots of light is meditative. The sound/light processors refer to the artist's earlier work in at least two ways. Primarily both types of work attempt to create a mood via environmental alteration. Secondly the x and y (vertical and horizontal) axes of the oscilloscope screen indicates the continued influence of the grid.

Without music and movement the photographic prints seem shallow—like a mobile without wind. When viewed simply as ends in themselves however some of the prints are quite interesting. The *Shep* series is the most engaging group of prints. Translucent tubes of color fall from the left edge toward the bottom edge. Smokey fields of colored planes and twisted light warp in

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space defining volume while shooting diagonal lines glow with a neon-like brilliance.

Ironically the photographs are neither abstract or non-objective. Because modern science enables us to witness sub-atomic events and investigate objects in deep space, Forcade's images seem familiar. Perhaps that is because he reveals truths about sound and light, their relationships and their individual roles as types of energy.

As a whole the show presents a dilemma to the viewer. The electronic boxes allows the viewer the luxury (or discomfort) of permitting immediate feedback to the work of art. The viewer is prohibited from retreating to the sidewalk (as is the case with the photographs) and awaiting the reviews to safely make up his mind. Forcade's electronic works cut out the middleman (art critics) securing a more economical and powerful exchange with the viewer.