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## Holography at the Butler Institute of American Art

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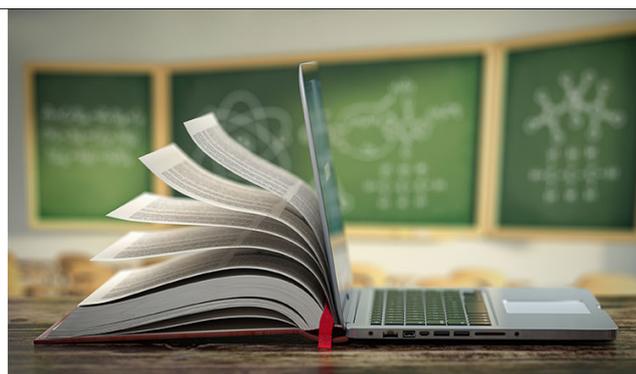
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## Holography at the Butler Institute of American Art

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Rayvel Holographics, CN USA

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**Abstract.** The Butler Institute of American Art is the first museum in the country to focus on American art. Since 2003 there has been a continuous showing of international holographic artists at the Butler Art Institute, perhaps more than any other single museum. This paper will catalog these exhibits with commentary from the artists and staff of the Butler.



The Butler Institute, A Home for Holography.

The Butler Institute of American Art<sup>1</sup> was born of fire. The home of industrialist Joseph G. Butler suffered a fire destroying his nascent art collection. Vowing that this should not happen again Mr. Butler built a museum of marble. His new collection specialized in American art at a time when only European art was considered worth collecting. It thus became the first museum of American art in 1919.

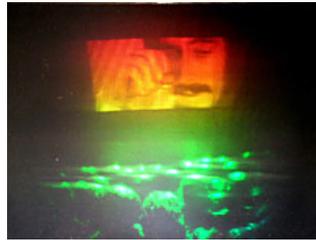
The museum has grown in stages to encompass many galleries (72,000 square feet) and three locations. It houses acknowledged masters through the decades from The Hudson River School through Winslow Homer, Mary Cassatt and onto contemporary artist like Rauschenberg and Paul Jenkins. Director Dr. Lou Zona presided with great vision over much of the museum's growth.

Dr. Zona remarked: "I fell in love with holograms the first time I saw one...not the early images but rather the technology. The earliest images were of course typical of what scientists would choose such as a plastic model of the (Star Trek) Enterprise. Before I became director of the Butler, I assisted Joe Butler who was then director (around 1980). I had visited the Holographic Museum in Soho and saw that a traveling exhibition was available. I talked Mr. Butler into booking it with the idea that it would have to pay for itself by charging an admission fee. The exhibition was crowded every single day and the exhibit did indeed pay for itself. I recall Mr. Butler asking me about my "little light show". The thing about the show was that while it dazzled everybody with the technology, the imagery was not very creative. I thought back then...just wait until serious artists and not engineers were in control of this medium. So when the Beecher Center was built in 2000, there was no question that I would focus on holography."

That first show, *Through the Looking Glass* opened in 1981 at the Butler. This exhibit included many of the works that defined the early stages of art holography; Loyd Cross- *Kiss II*, Sam Moree-*Loose End*, Steve Benton- *Rind II*, William Moltini- *Crayons*, Anait Stephens- *Space Graffiti*, Daniel K Schweitzer- *Movie Theater*. Some 26 pieces were exhibited in all, and it did in deed break attendance records at the Museum.



**Loyd Cross & Pam Brazier**, “*Kiss II*” (1976)



**Dan Schweitzer's** “*Movie Theater*” (1978) 5 x 7 inch

It was not until 10 years later that the second show, “*Future Sight, Innovations in Art Holography*” appeared. Works for this exhibit included: Yaacov *Aram-Holograph II*, Paul D Barefoot-*Canarias Magic*, Melissa Crenshaw-*Levels with Light Blocks*.

Both exhibits originated from the now defunct Museum of Holography, New York and were produced and circulated by Paul Barefoot.

“*Looking Glass*, showed it’s audiences the artistic capabilities and tools available at that time through holography. Most of the "tricks" of the trade were demonstrated. The true artistic breakthrough did not come until Rudie Burkhout’s “*12 Mille Watt Bogie*” that was featured in "Future Sight." That was the beginning of color control and sophisticated imagery that characterized later shows at the Butler. Artistic holography has come a long way since the 70s and The Butler Institute has chronicled the development of the medium through its shows. I am delighted to have participated in that.” Paul Barefoot.

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**Tom Cvetkovich’s** <sup>2</sup>“*Coruscation*,” 1992, was a large installation of a double spiral walkway into increasingly dense sheets of rainbow.



**Tom Cvetkovich** “*Coruscation*” (1992) 60x60 feet, installation with diffraction gratings and reflection hologram. Left: school children and centerpiece. Right: centerpiece, 12” diameter hanging reflection hologram of waves.



The newest wing of the Butler, the Beecher Center for Art and Technology is dedicated to new art forms; digital art, large installations, and technical art of all kinds.

**Fred Unterseher** and **Rebecca Deem**<sup>4</sup> showed a small group of some of their finer work in in the late nineties.



Left **Fred Unterseher** “*Kinetic Mandala 18R*” (1994) 12”x16” Fourier transform lens matrix hologram, silver halide.

Right **Rebecca Deem** “*Three Modes of Knowing*” (1988-90) 22”x22” each custom frames, reflections hologram from pulse master.

“Working with the medium of holography can offer an unusual opportunity to explore the relationships between science and technology as well as art and visual perception. ... The viewer can direct the experience of encountering a hologram and that experience can be different and unique for each of us. The interaction serves as an opportunity for awareness of our participation in the creation and perceptions of our own world and how we share that experience with others.” Fred Unterseher

“Much of my work addresses individual human growth and development to that of human development through space/time (Ontogeny / Phylogeny). Holography has proven to be an excellent tool for this exploration since we appear to be living at a time that continually challenges our concepts of both space and time with nearly instant communications world-wide and breaking physical barriers on earth and in outer space or simply space. The hologram can bring to our attention the perceptions we form of the relationship between immaterial and material.” Rebecca Deem

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In 2000 British collector Jonathan Ross<sup>5</sup>, brought a small portion of his collection to Ohio for it’s first US showing. Artists included; Margaret Benyon, Patrick Boyd, Sue Cowles, Pearl John, Ken Harris, John Kaufman, Ruben Ninez, David Pizanelli, Caroline Palmer, John Milton, Martin Richardson and Jeffrey Robb.

Regarding holography Mr. Ross commented that, “It’s the main thing I collect, having been involved for over 30 years. Holography reaches places other art does not...I really admire the way Lou Zona has run his holography program for over 10 years. A voice in the wilderness! Everyone was so friendly and helpful, I enjoyed seeing the permanent collection and meeting other visiting artists. An enjoyable opening reception too, as I recall. American drinks are so much more generous than European ones.”

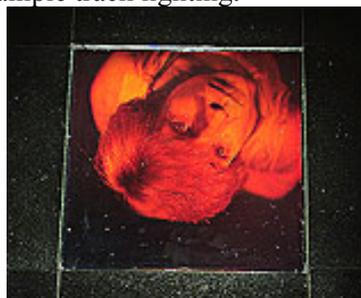
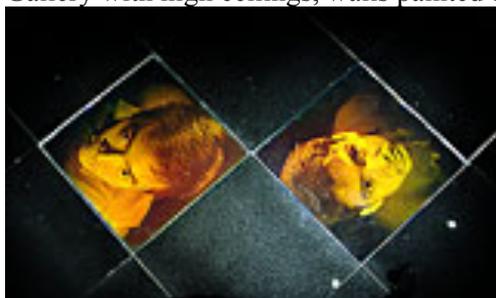


From the Jonathan Ross Hologram Collection, Left: Susan Cowles “*The House of Moons (A stage for the chyncal Theatre)*” (1988) Refelction hologram 2 plates 30x40cm with ink drawing on paper. Center: Jon Milton “*Orgone Accelerator*” (1991). Right: Margaret Benyon “*Tiger Girl*” (1985) 30x33cm reflection

hologram and reproduction.

From 2003 forward the Butler has had a continuous showing of holographic art. That year saw five holographers come to the Butler in rapid succession.

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The first of which was Shu Min Lin's "*Glass Ceiling and other Works*" beautifully exhibited in the Flad Gallery with high ceilings, walls painted black and ample track lighting.



**Shu Min Lin** "*Glass Ceiling*" (1997) reflection holograms from pulse masters, variable installation size on floor.

"My hologram shows images of people from more than 40 different countries, both men and women, and of all ages (between seven and eighty-one). In a way, the piece creates the malicious feeling of walking on someone's head or face. It therefore confronts the audience with a kind of negation of the other, which occurs in human behavior on a physical, as well as on a psychological level."<sup>6</sup> Shu Min Lin

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**Andrew Pepper**<sup>7</sup> showed his, "*UK Spaces, Holographic Drawings, Volumes and Site Specific Installations*" in March of 2003.



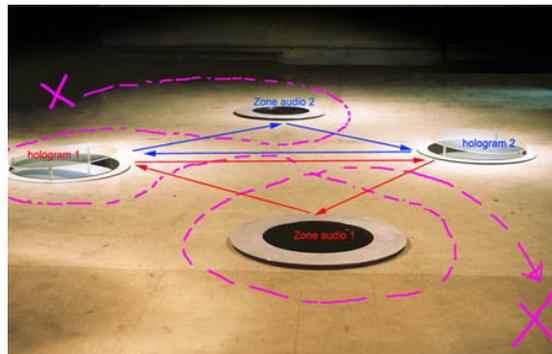
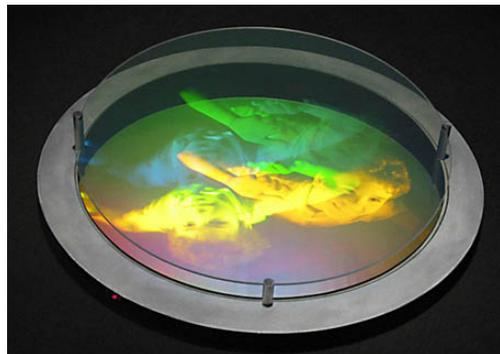
**Andrew Pepper** "*Sight Lines Wall*" (2001) and detail, reflection holograms, variable dimension installation.

"This was an incredibly important venue to show in, not only because of its continuing commitment to creative holography but also being able to exhibit alongside its permanent, academic, collection...By offering the opportunity to release marks from the surface, on which they are traditionally located, the process of holography opens up a series of optical, conceptual and physical investigations which can help to 'put pressure' on our engagement with the 'drawn' mark." Andrew Pepper.

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**Philippe Boissonnet**'s<sup>8</sup> "*Efflorescence and other works*" opened in the September of 2003.

"I was happy to present one of my best interactive holographic installation «In-Between» (from 1997), and a few other smaller pieces, which were all related to the idea of encounter. The encounter between the

eye and the fleeting images of holograms, of course, but also the encounter between the different viewers through the mean of a small ultrasonic motion device that was switching on and off the lights of the 3 pieces within the installation. A kind of conceptual reference to the physical encounter between the two beams of laser lights that are needed to built an interference pattern that registers the 3D light information.”



Philippe Boissonnet “*Efflorescence*” (1997-2003) white light transmission hologram; mirror; aluminum; Plexiglas; electronic sensing device for audio system. Left; detail. Right viewer path.

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**Patrick Boyd**<sup>9</sup> exhibited his unique photo-to-stereo grams and pulse work in October of 2003. These often-whimsical works revealed the trained eye of a professional photographer.

“Holography is so much more than just a 3-D image. It can display time, motion, fantastic colours; it can be interactive and is capable of capturing the qualities of light itself.... My works of meticulously created installations & captured sequences blur the boundaries between two & three dimensions. I try to present a colorful world where real life, narrative, light & shadow connect & collide.” Patrick Boyd



**Patrick Boyd** Right: “*Breakfast*” reflection hologram form pulse master Left: “*Charles Bridge*” animated stereogram with lenticular background.

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Brazilian born **Eduardo Kac**<sup>10</sup> used the Bermat Gallery to show “*Amalgam*” and other works form the *Holopoem* series in November of 2003. Of this series he wrote, “holopoetry: fluidity of the verbal sign and semantic interpolation, i.e., mutability of the actual topology of words in space leading to changes in meaning.”



Eduardo Kac, *AMALGAM*, 10 X 7.5 cm, Reflection hologram, 1990



Eduardo Kac, *Andromeda Souvenir*, 1990, 30 X 40 cm, Digital transmission hologram)

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In 2004 the author, **Tom Cvetkovich**, collected a group of hitherto un-shown works as well as creating a number of new ones for the show, "*Presence*." It was a much-appreciated opportunity to whole heartedly engage in holography as art as opposed to commercial holography.



**Tom Cvetkovich** Left: "*Convolutions*" ( 2004) 2.5' x 5' UV curable ink on plastic and detail. Right: (*Light Fountain*) (2004) 18"x 22" UV curable ink on plastic, mirror, silver nickel dot matrix hologram.

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Pulse master holograms created by **Sally Weber** during her Artist in Residence at the Center for the Holographic Arts, New York, 2001, came to fruition with "*Strata Series*" which opened in the Butler's Bermant Gallery in October 2006. The pulse masters were transferred in Sally's holography studio in Austin, TX. Also exhibited were her early water installation, "*Threshold of a Singularity- A Memorial*" and figurative photographs that were the genesis of the *Strata Series*.



**Sally Weber** Left: "*Crevass*" (2006) 29"x 18" third of six images from the installation, "*Descent*." Center: "*Laccolith*" (2006) 27"x 25", fifth of six images from "*Descent*." Both images are open-aperture, pulsed light image, illuminated with LED's. Right: Gallery view.

"I was honored to exhibit in the David Bermant Gallery. I had known David Bermant and his deep interest in light, art and technology. The Butler Institute's Executive Director, Lou Zona, was also a long time friend of David's. Both were very early supporters of the field. Their advocacy for light-based art

and technology continues to be evident in the Institute's collection and its on-going interest in exhibitions dedicated to the field. ...My experience at the Butler Institute was exceptional as is their staff and Executive Director, Lou Zona. It was certainly a privilege to exhibit there.”- Sally Weber

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In August 2008 **Doris Vila**<sup>11</sup> informed us by her title that, “*Every Time I open my Eyes I See Things.*”

“*Chart: Space-Time-Sex-Money Continuum,*” 1988, is a good example of the effective use of projected imagery to illuminate a hologram. (One of several in the show.) Imagery of falling money illuminates the hologram. The money wafts down ward and then appears to get stuck to the hologram, though it is actually an image of dollar bills hitting a floor. A digital projector replaced for the original 8mm projector.

Doris wryly remarked on the work, “Clearly Einstein forgot a few important dimensions.” Other works included the projection feed back of the viewer’s feet standing in a holographic fire, in “*Device for the Lifting of Gravity and Other Serious Situations.*”



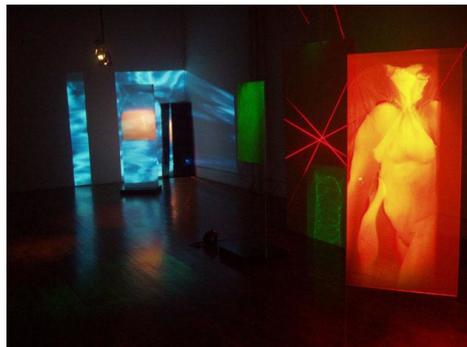
**Doris Vila** Right: “*Device for the Lifting of Gravity and Other Serious Situations*” (originally 1992, 2008 version shown here) reflection hologram with live video feedback. Left gallery view.

“I make holograms of stories instead of things.”

“The Butler suggested a small retrospective of my work. At first, I said "But I'm not that old" to which they answered "yes, you are." The exhibition brought together a sampling of hallmark works, including holographic work with video. It was a pleasure to see threads of thought connecting works that spanned many years.” Doris Vila

“*Body Electric*” was an exhibition of pulse work by the artists, **Ana Maria Nicholson**<sup>12</sup> and **Ikuo Nakamura**.<sup>13</sup>

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As director of the Center for the Holographic Arts, New York, Ann Maria Nicholson is a well know figure in the holographic art world. Some 60 artists from around the world have worked there.



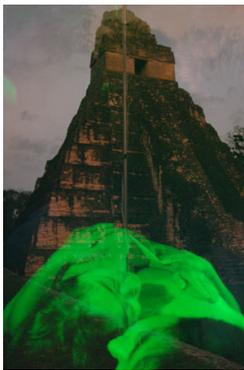
**Ana Maria Nicholson** Left: “*Rebirth*” (2003) 20"x24" reflection hologram from pulse master. Right:

“*Union*” (circa 2003) pulse transmission hologram and “*Water Dreams*” (2000) installation, size variable, hologram 11"x14"

“When I started working in holography I became captivated by the way that the medium transformed the human body. The central theme of my work as an artist has always been the human figure: its beauty, its complexity and its ability to express in gesture and movement the hidden realities that lie at the core of the human spirit and heart. When carefully observed the body is but a thin shield, a permeable membrane that can obscure but not obliterate the psychological and spiritual dimensions.” Ana Maria Nicholson  
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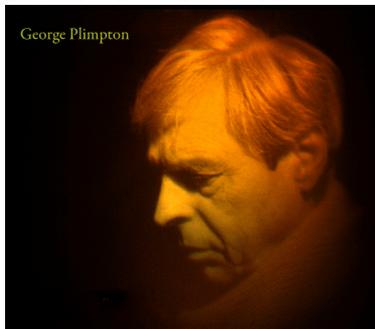
**Ikuo Nakamura** included “*Fossil*,” and the intriguing “*Thera*,” which explores the painting “*Madam X*” by John Singer Sargent in hologram and digital projection, as if the model could undo the social harm done from the fallen dress strap.

“I shot “*Fossiles*” or “*Thera*” as installation work, not as portrait hologram. By presenting the co-existence with holographic space and real object in location, the audience experience Real-Virtual space.” Ikuo Nakamura.



**Ikuo Nakamura.** Left: “*Fossiles*” (1999) 50cm x 60cm laser transmission hologram, illuminated by DPSS laser with original beam expander. Location: front of Temple 1, Tikal, Mayan ruin complex, Guatemala. Date: March 2006  
Right: “*Thera*” (2004) 50cm x 60cm laser transmission hologram with Digital Projection Installation and diode laser illuminated as above.

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**Ana Maria Nicholson** displayed a large selection of her pulse laser work in “*PORTRAITS IN LASER LIGHT*” December of 2008.



**Ana Maria Nicholson:** Reflection holograms from pulse master, Left: George Plimpton (1990) 11"x14" Right: Don Alejandro, (2006) 11"x14"

“The power and impact of a holographic portrait never cease to amaze me. The medium has the ability to capture on film a much deeper sense of the person than a photograph and can reveal the reality that lies

behind the façade of personality.”  
Ana Maria Nicholson

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In 2006 The Butler created a small set of galleries devoted to art works requiring a darkened environment. “*Krishna on the Banyan Leaf*” depicts the Hindu mythology which can be thought of as the last moment of the Universe before it starts anew.”

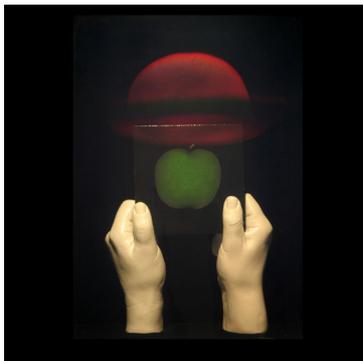
“*Coruscation II*” is a celebration of all things bright and colorful, reminiscent of the near death experience.” Tom Cvetkovich



**Tom Cvetkovich** Left *Coruscation II*; (2009) 10 wide x 15 high x 40 feet deep, digital projection, custom color balanced LEDs and shaped diffraction gratings. Right; “*Baby Krishna on the Banyan Leaf*”, (2005) 14”x 20” inch laser viewable hologram on silver nickel shim.

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**Mary Harman’s**<sup>14</sup> sculpture painting and holograms filled the gallery for her show “*Object and Illusion*,” September 2009.

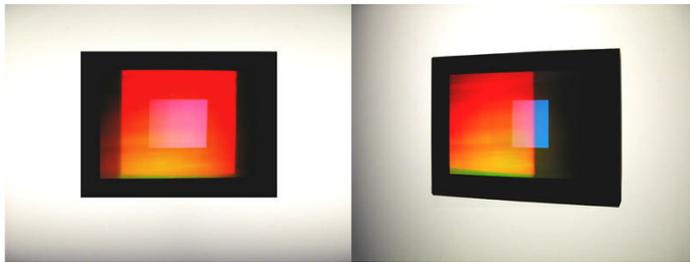
“The philosophy behind all my art seems to be that of a quest to make some sense of the world I live in. That involves filtering information, truth from lie, reality from illusion...My art is about what is real and what is illusion, in both the political and the personal” Mary Harman.



**Mary Harman** Homage to Magritte, 21 ¼” x 14” x 5 ½”, reflection hologram and sculpture. Left: Gallery view with paintings.

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“*About Light: Works from the Butler Collection*” opened in Mar 2011.

This exhibition features light works that utilize a variety of technologies including **August Muth’s** “*Acceleration*.” Included in the show are works by Ray Howlett, Clyde Lynds, Stephen Knapp, Ted Victoria and Alan Rath, as well as recent gifts from the Bermant Foundation.

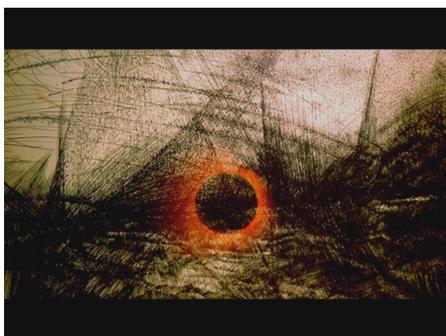


August Muth; "Acceleration" #2 (2010) Holographic emulsion, glass and steel.

"These pieces are part of a body of work that has been evolving over many years. They are recordings of pure light produced by interfering coherent light waves upon themselves. Each piece presents perceptually challenging environments in which neither color nor shape is static. Within each piece is contained a much vaster space as one discovers by physically moving around each one. It is as if someone captured space itself and harnessed it in it's own container." August Muth

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**Georges Dynes**<sup>15</sup> staged "*Genesis;Lux ex Chaos*" with Carole Brisson in Dec 2011. This sweeping exhibit with a multitude of works of various sorts but all related to a creation/environmental theme.

"I consider my work to be monumental, immersive (360° around the spectator), multi media, and developing in time and space). In my exhibition at the Butler, I focused rather on the 2d drawings (on which video images are projected) and 3D drawings in boxes and holophotograms (Earth-Moon)...Also, on the dead black-and-white images of the moon are super impressed coloured holographic events, which symbolizes LIFE on earth. I must add that the enormous quantity of scrap lying underneath the holograms of this series symbolizes the lack of care of many human beings about our earth." Georges Dynes



**Georges Dynes** LEFT: "Eclipse" (2000) Graphite and reflection hologram. Right: gallery view.

#### CONCLUSION.

"Over the years we've been able to show many of the leading holographic artists of the world. It is wonderful to see that the medium is now in the hands of artists although I wish that holography were a little more accessible to an even broader range of artistic talent. The obvious obstacle is that it is so darned technical... But I am not complaining since I believe that many of the holographic artists working today are enormously creative and are showing off the medium to full advantage." Lou Zona

The Butler has also made seventeen purchases of holographic works through the years, often buying an example from an artist's show. Thanks to its outreach program one thousand school children per month visit the Butler. In this way the Museum will continue to champion the still esoteric art of holography.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.butlerart.com/>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tomcvet/>

<sup>3</sup> Photo from Palo Creative for the Youngstown Foundation <http://www.youngstownfoundation.org/>

<sup>4</sup> [deem.unterseher@gmail.com](mailto:deem.unterseher@gmail.com)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.jrholocollection.com/collection.html>

<sup>6</sup> From and interview with Pat Binder of “Universes in Universe.”

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.apepper.com/butler/info.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/uqtart>

<sup>9</sup> <http://boydphoto.co.uk/> and [http://www.peakaybee.com/Peekaybee/Patrick\\_Boyd.html](http://www.peakaybee.com/Peekaybee/Patrick_Boyd.html)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ekac.org>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.vilamedia.com>, photos David S Licht

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.anamarianicholson.com/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://hololab.com/index.php>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.maryharman.com/holograms.htm>

<sup>15</sup> [georgesdyens.com](http://georgesdyens.com)