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AUCKLAND ART GALLERY'S NEW EXHIBITION SHEDS LIGHT ON ART

Auckland Art Gallery's latest big exhibition, "Light Show," should be a crowd pleaser just because it is vibrant, colourful and playful – all the things that most people expect of art. But the exhibition also explores, expands and explains the nature of art itself without being elitist or obscure.

The show came from London at the Hayward Gallery where it had a sellout season attracting favourable reviews from critics and audiences. This follows on from the landmark exhibition, *Dynamo*, held at Grand Palais in Paris last year which featured several of the artists in this exhibition. Concepts of space, vision and light are present in much contemporary art and light has fascinated artists for centuries. However, one of the crucial turning points in the artists' use of light came with Edison's invention of the incandescent bulb and there is a homage to that creation in the first room of the exhibition with a work by Bill Culbert *Flat Out* (2009), which features an unlit bulb reflected in a mirror as a lit bulb. This refined little work is like a piece of theatre with notions of the real and the illusion. This idea of light as theatre is also present in the big James Turrell installation *Wedgework V* (1975) where the viewer is escorted into a room in which an angular shape is revealed as though in a stage setting, the shape and space becoming clearer as the eye adjusts to the space, colour and light.

Several of the pieces in the show have attracted more attention, with many adults and children relaxing, spellbound before Leo Villareal's *Cylinder II* (2012), which consists of 20,000 LED lights hung in a cylindrical shape like a vast Christmas tree light show. The patterns, shapes and rhythms are constantly changing, resembling the cosmos, meteor showers, a vast glow work cave or a fireworks display. In this work art, the natural world and science collide. One of the most spectacular works is Olafur Eliasson's *Model for a timeless garden* (2011), which has a magical quality.

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We have all been fascinated by the images of a drop of water, the way a photograph can capture the instant we are never able to see clearly ourselves. This installation consists of several small water fountains that are illuminated by strobe lights, which freeze the water flows into sculptural forms. The theory and nature of water and its behaviour are neatly brought together in an eerie black and white landscape of changing forms which are hypnotic as well as disconcerting. One of the larger installations is Carlos Cruz-Diez's Chromosaturation (1965-2014) consisting of three spaces w flooded with red, green and blue light, creating spaces suffused with misty light as though the colour is seeping into one's body. While Cruz-Diez uses multiple lights to create his space, Conrad Shawcross uses one bulb which rotates in Slow Arc inside a Cube IV. The apparatus looks like some sort of spacecraft, with the rotating light tracing out planetary trajectories that create ever-changing patterns on the walls of the exhibition space. Dan Flavin, one of the great American pioneers of light sculpture, is represented by two works, a minimalist set of white fluorescent tubes the nominal three to William Ockham (1963) and one of his beguiling corner works of yellow pink and pink fluorescent tubes in which he blurs the nature of sculpture, architecture and furniture.



SANDRA GERING INC

14 EAST 63RD STREET NEW YORK NY 10065

TEL 646-336-7183 SANDRAGERINGINC.COM

