

Astro Art Lights Up Times Square

by Dana E. Rouse

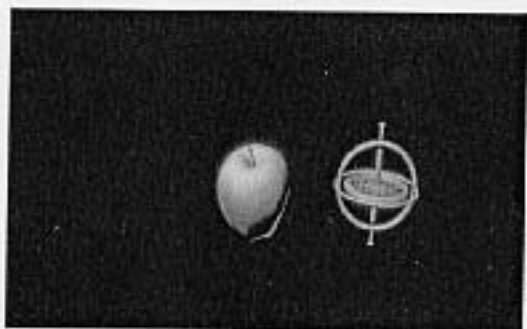
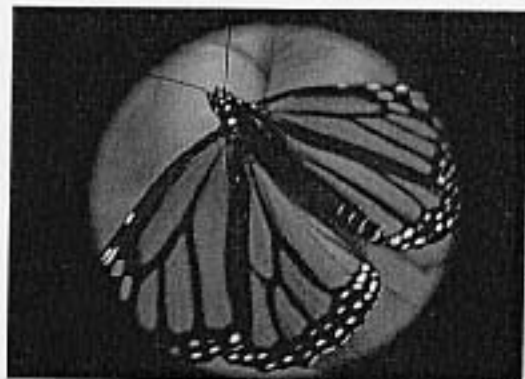
www.creativetime.org

The New York-based nonprofit organization Creative Time is famous for its sponsorship of ambitious art projects in remarkable public places. From inside the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage to Grand Central Terminal to billboards and milk cartons, their most recent project made use of the Panasonic Astrovision in Manhattan's Times Square, where, in partnership with Panasonic, Creative Time presented a video art exhibition called "The 59th Minute." Featuring work by Gary Hill, Mary Lucier and Michael Snow, the program was done in conjunction with the Whitney Museum of American Art's groundbreaking show, "Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964-1977."

Financed through a variety of sources including



Your average kitty becomes high conceptual art when projected in Times Square (above). Above right: A detail from work by Mary Lucier. Right: The art of Gary Hill that explores different notions of gravity.



private donations and corporate sponsorship as well as some city and state funding, Creative Time has repeatedly enriched urban landscape with unusual and innovative art projects that offer artists some very unique opportunities for exposure. They also pay the artists for their work, unlike some organizations who consider the exposure as payment. "Every artist that presents a project with us receives an artist fee," says Kevin McHugh, associate curator of Creative Time. "We believe strongly in supporting artistic practice by supporting

artists' ability to produce their work. Whether it a large project or a small one, every artist gets something for their work."

In this case, Panasonic provided access to its flagship Astrovision, as well as additional resources needed to make the videos possible. Three one-minute videos, which aired on the giant Astrovision the last minute of every hour from 6 A.M. to 1 A.M., preempted only by NBC "Today Show" and "Nightly News." Resplendent with 1.5 million light-emitting diodes (LEDs), the Astrovision can display more than a billion shades of color, and measures almost three stories high and four stories wide, offering a spectacular show in the vibrant, luminous atmosphere of Times Square.

The three artists featured in this program were invited to participate based on their inclusion in the Whitney show. "We contacted artists who were still making moving image works," McHugh explains. "Of those, we selected artworks that related to the theme of sensing time." Gary Hill's *Liminal Object #7* suggests the infinite continuance of time through the objects in his video—a gyroscope and an apple—which invoke associations with gravity (Newton's apple), NYC and the solar system.

"Monarch" by Mary Lucier stars an old monarch butterfly, the universal symbol of the cycles of the seasons, alighting on a human hand unable to hold on. The image is given a circular frame, which adds an impression of solitude, enhancing a feeling of our own fleeting existence in the whole scheme of nature. To meet the one-minute time requirement, Michael Snow made "Fridge" especially for this series. It uses colorful alphabet refrigerator magnets, typical of the 1970s, each letter slowly appearing until the words "one minute" are formed, in a way that illustrates the notion of a single minute being either brief, as the blink of an eye, or glacially interminable, depending upon the circumstance.

The concept for "The 59th Minute" originated with an earlier program featuring the work of Tibor Kalman, who, before he died, had expressed his intention to create an "un-advertising" campaign. To realize this goal, a one-minute segment was prepared from Kalman's work and screened every hour on Astrovision. Thanks to the success of that project, Creative Time and Panasonic instituted a video program to continue giving artists the opportunity to use the screen.

Artists are continually discovering more possibilities with the exploding technological advances, both as methods of making art and for reaching a larger audience. "There is a vast public audience in Times Square that is not looking for art," McHugh says. "Our hope is that their encounter with these videos helps stretch their sense of where art 'happens' and what their experience of public space should be."

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