



L I G H T

PIZZUTI
COLLECTION



LIGHT

In an effort to stave off the darkness of winter, the Pizzuti Collection of the Columbus Museum of Art has installed artwork that takes light as its muse and its material. Galleries have been turned over to ideas about a Texas sunset, neon window advertisements, iconic bar signs, and garish flashing messages. The works in this exhibition use light to consider space, to illuminate ideas, and to question perception. Light becomes the medium to translate experiences and make visible what we discern about our world.

SPENCER FINCH

1. Spencer Finch's *Sunset (south Texas 6/20/03)* takes us to a past moment on a particular day in a particular location: fifteen-year-old sunset, displaced to the third floor of a midwestern museum.

On June 20, 2003, Spencer Finch used a colorimeter, a device that measures the color value of light, to capture data about the sunset he was witnessing. Back in the studio, that data was transformed into colored filters meant to cover five long rows of fluorescent lights. As an artwork, the lights reproduce the colors of that ephemeral moment.

Anyone who has tried to take a photograph of a sunset knows the remarkable inability of most cameras to capture the vastness and diversity of the experience: the movement of the sun as it slips towards the horizon, the passage of clouds, and the deftly changing colors all make up an experience that endures through time. An attempt to capture a sunset becomes a subjective experience full of suggestive moments and personal memories. Capturing such an event is a deeply romantic idea.

Sunset (south Texas 6/20/03) gives us that romance, tempered by scientific data. The colors belong to that far away moment and place. The object has been created through careful and logical assessment to mimic the actual sunset. To be in front of the work means that one has one foot in the past and one foot in the present, an embrace of analytics partnered with Finch's masterful translation of magical ephemerality.

PLEASE GOD MAKE TOMORROW BETTER

2.

CLAIRE FONTAINE

Claire Fontaine is a Paris-based artist collective whose name is drawn from the popular French notebook and stationary brand. Claire Fontaine functions based on their belief that the artist is a readymade (something already created, manufactured, accessible within our commodity-rich Capitalist culture) who appropriates material as their artistic strategy. Their work addresses abuse of power, economic disparity, and political forces through sometimes obscure theoretical and conceptual projects. Their materials are typically pre-existing and assisted in ways that point to tensions and hypocrisies within society and culture.

Please God Make Tomorrow Better 2 is one of a number of neon signs Claire Fontaine has produced, a flashing verbal plea for an improved future. Whether we take the phrase as religious longing or clichéd plea, the work offers both hope and disappointment. It feels like a phrase made for this moment.



3.

JOSIAH MCELHENY

For Viennese architect Adolf Loos (1870–1933), useless ornamentation in the built environment was not only a waste of labor, it inevitably led to social degeneration and impeded the progress of civilization itself. The seductive notion that extraneous elements should be cast away in the service of reducing both form and society to their purest expression would go on to become a central tenet of modern art and architecture. Considering how this rhetoric has historically lent itself to obsessions with racial and national purity, it is worth asking, at what point does modernist purity become meaningless sterility, hostile to those living and breathing in its spaces?

This is a question at the heart of **Josiah McElheny's** *American Flag at the Kärntner Bar, Vienna, 1908*. 3 The work is part of a set of elements McElheny recreated from Loos' "American Bar" on Kärntner Strasse, one of the earliest modern architectural spaces in the Austrian capital. Loos' design grew out of his experience in the United States years earlier, as well as his formative ideas on the corrupting influence of ornament. McElheny's version explores the endgame of Loos' ideas, bleaching everything white to the point of erasure. Without the title of this work, viewers might see only a partially interrupted modernist grid, rather than the stylized American flag of the bar's exterior signage. The luminous white form may be striking—even beautiful—but McElheny also asks us to consider how our most beautiful ideas can turn against us.



4.

ANDREA BOWERS

Andrea Bowers has been addressing human rights as an activist artist for over two decades. Her text-based artworks feature language situated in timely political rhetoric. Utilizing neon, Bowers is able to present contested dialogue in a way that cannot be ignored. These calls to thought are figuratively and literally charged.

In *Womxn-Women*, 4. Bowers exhibits the power of language by positing that just one letter has the ability to invoke inclusivity. "Womxn" is a fairly recent term within the feminist movement. It is meant to negate the idea that women are extensions of men, stemming from the belief that women were born of Adam's rib. This re-spelling also denotes gender fluidity to represent the trans community, who have been historically excluded from many feminist organizations.





6.

ALEJANDRO ALMANZA PEREDA

Alejandro Almanza Pereda's *White Carpet Treatment* ⁵ groups lightbulbs together to form a rug. Lit, the functioning bulbs live next to fellow dark bulbs to form a pattern. It is both beautifully fanciful and delicately ridiculous. The slightest touch can disturb its pattern, indicative of Pereda's consistent fight against the static art object. Pereda projects have resulted in works of striking instability and fragility, as seen in *Untitled (7x7)*, ⁶ where a group of bulbs manage to support the weight of a solid concrete block. Pereda scours flea markets and street vendors for his materials: cinder blocks, plaster sculptures, metal chains, disco balls, suitcases, and more that he arranges in tenuous equilibrium. His works are focused on the present moment, the ingenuity of the makeshift, the brilliance of the stopgap measure that only makes sense for right now.



5.



TIM NOBLE & SUE WEBSTER

Tim Noble & Sue Webster's *Bloody Forever* ⁷ is one of a series of light pieces created by embracing the gaudy vocabulary of carnivalesque signage. A computer-generated pattern makes the individual bulbs flutter, change, and ripple as they spell out the letters of the word "forever." The red color creates dramatic patterns of light and shadow across the wall, underscoring the emphatic nature of the word itself.

Tim Noble has said, "When we talk about forever, we think about it in terms of a human life span, but Stephen Hawking said let's look at infinity – what does that mean? That's another form of forever." Forever's prominent place in the promises we make to each other and the definitions of time we casually and habitually discuss make this work a cheeky reflection on the word's inherent mutability. The title's addition of the word "bloody" suggests an emphatic tone as several bulbs drip down from the word above.

Noble and Webster have worked together since 1996, putting forth an anti-establishment aesthetic with objects formed out of discarded materials, metal, light, and shadow. They play with perception and expectations, making formal gestures out of informal objects and a punk attitude.

Patrick Martinez' light sculptures offer messages of critique and analysis while taking on the forms of shop signage and advertisements. Using cheeky phrases, familiar logos, and the visual vocabulary of sidewalk marketing, these works attract our attention and feel recognizable. Martinez' choice of messages range from protest ("DEPORT ICE") to proactive calls ("INVEST IN THE OPPRESSED") to warnings ("IF THEY COME FOR ME IN THE MORNING THEY WILL COME FOR YOU IN THE NIGHT.") *Free 99 (Hold Ya Head)*, 8, displays the lyrics "Currency means nothin' if you still ain't free" from Tupac's song, "Hold Ya Head." A powerful and timeless meditation on money and power. *Multicultural vs. Western* 9, posits NFL logos against one another. In the center are the Patriots facing the Red Skins (to the left) and the Panthers (to the right). The Washington Red Skins were given their name in 1933 and in the decades since, many have called for a discontinuation of the use of the slur as a team name, and the image of a Native American as the team's symbol.



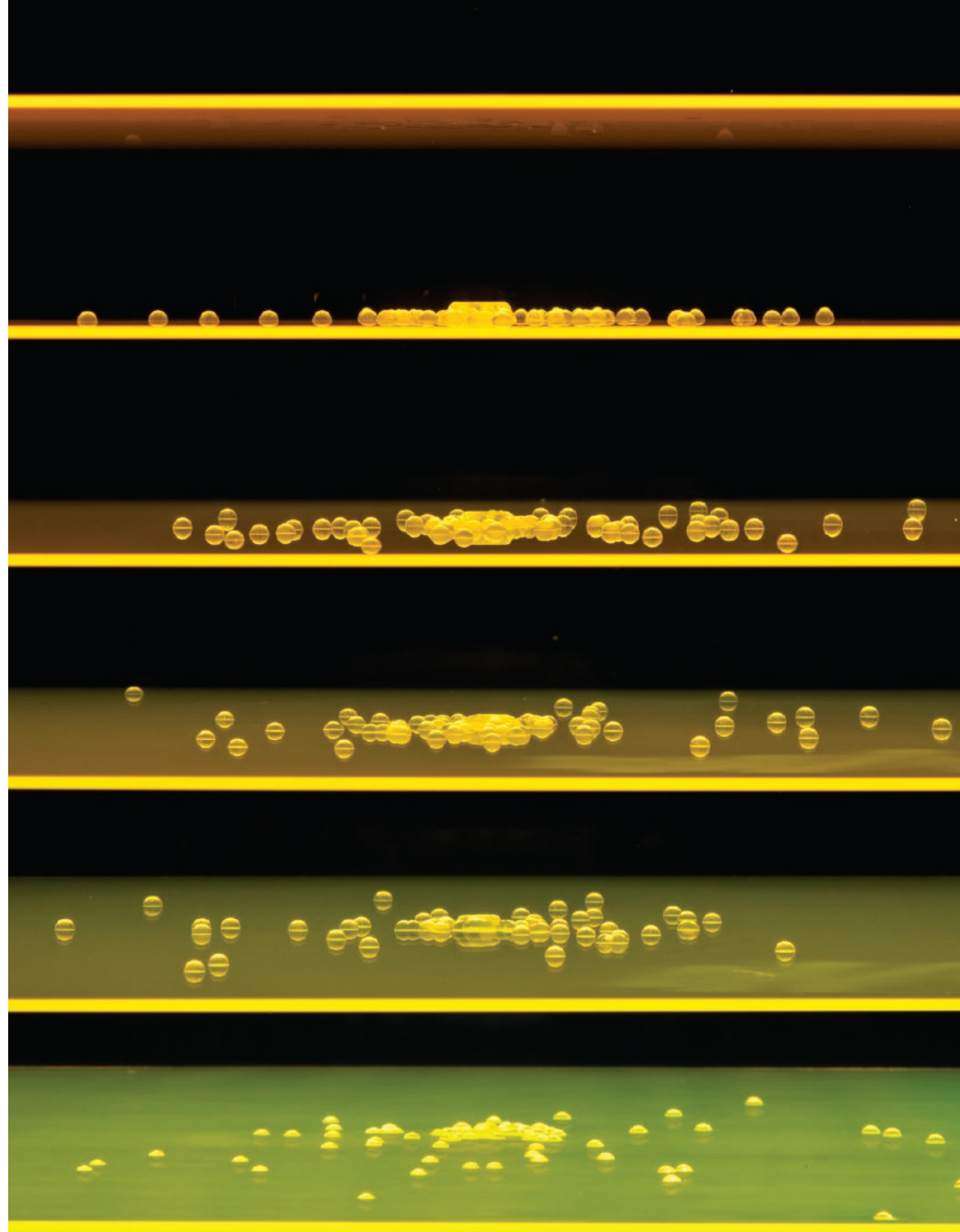
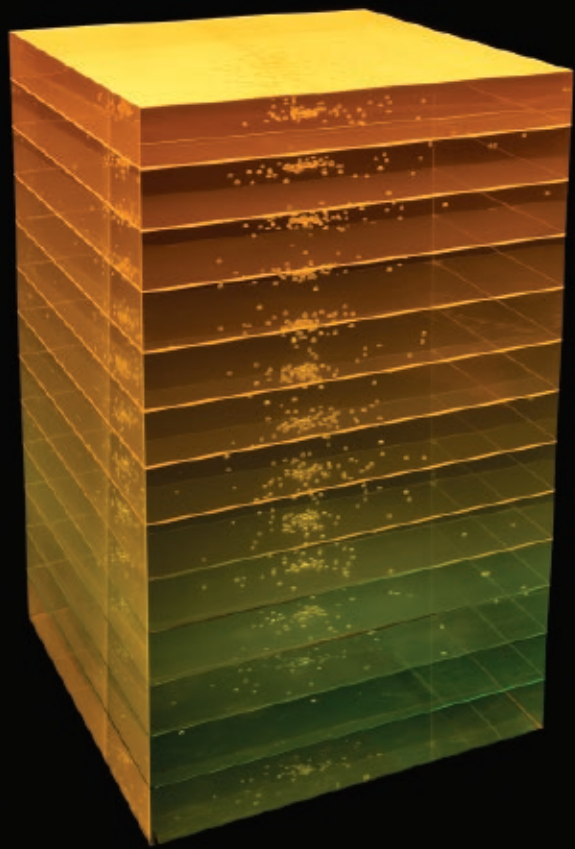
9.



8.

STEPHEN CARTWRIGHT

Stephen Cartwright investigates the fleeting experience of living and the constancy of the physical world. He solidifies his existence by recording detailed information about his life and embedding the data in physical objects. He has recorded his exact position in space and time every hour of every day for more than 20 years. For Cartwright, that practice and the sculpture informed by it capture some of the invisible trail that we leave on our trajectory through the universe. In his Floating Map and Floating Information series, ¹⁰ Cartwright etches his position and other data into layers of acrylic. Light is the perfect medium for this endeavor; it only becomes tangible in its reflections, absorptions, and interactions with other objects.



LIGHT | 2019

1.
Spencer Finch (b.1962, New Haven, CT)
Sunset (south Texas 6/20/03)
2003, fluorescent lights and filters
25 x 336 in.
Edition of 3
Courtesy of the artist.
2.
Claire Fontaine (Founded in 2004)
Please God Make Tomorrow Better
2008, painted neon, framework, transformers, electronic flasher, and cables
113 x 5 x 3 in.
Edition of 5
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Neu, Berlin.
3.
Josiah McElheny (b.1966, Boston, MA)
American Flag at the Kärntner Bar, Vienna, 1908, Adolf Loos (White)
2001, stained glass, painted steel, wood, and electric lighting
24 x 78 x 6 1/4 in.
© Josiah McElheny. Image Courtesy of James Cohan, New York. Photo: Robert Reck.
4.
Andrea Bowers (b.1965, Wilmington, OH)
Womxn-Women
2018, lightbox and neon
60 1/2 x 79 inches
Edition of 3
Photo: Jeff McLane Studio.
5.
Alejandro Almanza Pereda (b.1977, Mexico City, Mexico)
Untitled (7x7)
2010, concrete, tubular light bulbs, and electrical cables
5 1/2 x 19 x 19 in.
Courtesy of the artist.
6.
Alejandro Almanza Pereda (b.1977, Mexico City, Mexico)
White Carpet Treatment
2009, light bulbs, burnt light bulb, porcelain sockets, and electric wire
20 x 36 in.
Courtesy of the artist.
7.
Tim Noble & Sue Webster
(Noble: b.1966, Stroud, England)
(Webster: b.1967, Leicester, England)
Bloody Forever
2011, 325 UFO caps, lamps and holders, stove enamelled aluminum, DMX driven sequencer, and analogue chaser unit
118 x 43 1/4 x 3 in.
Edition of 3
Courtesy of the artists and Blain|Southern.
8.
Patrick Martinez (b.1980, Pasadena, CA)
Free 99 (Hold Ya Head)
2017, neon on plexiglass
30 x 36
Edition of 3
Courtesy of the artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo: Michael Underwood.
9.
Patrick Martinez (b.1980, Pasadena, CA)
Multicultural vs. Western
2017, neon on plexiglass
26 x 60
Edition of 3
Courtesy of the artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo: Michael Underwood.
10.
Stephen Cartwright (b. 1972, State College, PA)
Precipitation, 2005-2016
2017, acrylic and resin
18 x 11 x 11 inches
Courtesy of the artist.

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