

Art Now LA  
November 3, 2019

Overwhelmed By Successive Fields of Light

Phillip K. Smith III  
*10 Columns*

Bridge Projects  
October 12, 2019 – February 16, 2020

by Jody Zellen



*10 Columns*, the inaugural exhibition at Bridge Projects is an immersive installation by Phillip K. Smith III. It is an exploration of light and color via programmed electronics. Smith has transformed the 7,000 square-foot space into an ever-changing environment of shifting colors. Human scaled light-boxes, some with mirrored panels, protrude from the sides of ten columns in varying configurations, calling attention to the architecture and dimensions of the vast space. Within the darkened gallery, a glowing aura morphs through an array of colors and tonalities, reflecting both the subtle changes in the transitioning sky from day to night, as well as the sensation of heightened colors due to fire (something familiar to those living in both Southern and Northern California).

Smith's installation calls to mind the perceptual works by James Turrell and Robert Irwin, artists associated with the California Light and Space Movement, who explored transitions within the color spectrum using natural as well as artificial light, often constructing spacial illusions. While Smith has created pieces in situ that reflect the changing light in the natural world, this piece is situated within an empty dark space and focuses on the cadence of programmed LED light boxes and their mirrored reflections.

While some will want to understand the system in play and the algorithm that dictates the color changes, Smith's process is not disclosed. Viewers are invited to sit on benches or wander within the space letting go of expectations in order to be transported into a wondrous world of ever changing, floating rectangles. Smith has choreographed an experience that cycles through gradients of color to infuse the space with different hues, illustrating many principals of color theory including how we perceive colors that radiate, mix and contrast with each other.

At one moment the rooms glow yellow, then subtly shifts to a variance of reds and greens that transition into pinks and blues, only to fade back to a single tone. The eye moves from the light boxes to refracted reflections and then comes to rest on a back wall, still bombarded by afterimages. The eye perceives rectangles within rectangles that hover within the space. Close viewing is not the point, as the eye is overwhelmed by successive fields of light. Rather, why not embrace the experience and indulge in the idea of entering a prism or a kaleidoscope, confronted by constantly changing arrays of color.

Smith's work is simultaneously architectural and perceptual, sculptural and environmental. It is seductive and captivating. *10 Columns* demands time and for those who let go and give in to the sensation, it provides a welcome respite while still referencing the goings on in the real world.

<https://artnowla.com/2019/11/03/phillip-k-smith-iii-10-columns/>