

Wenyon & Gamble

"Alter Image* 1987 transcript

Michael Wenyon Holography sounds like something out of the future, but it would be so easy to overdo the newness, and the "futuristicness" of holography, there's no need to because any hologram you make is necessarily a contemporary object, it's something that's modern because holography didn't exist before 10 or 15 years ago.

Susan Gamble The actual hologram is breaking up the colours that are in the light that's illuminating it. Its absolutely pure spectral colours, pure light, I don't think there's any other medium like it.

MW We want to use some of the peculiarities of holography to create a kind of theatrical production, a theatrical presentation in which we expose the artifice of the medium and exploit it.

SG I think we deal with illusion but we're not always dealing with the illusion of an object just hanging there in space, we're not dealing with the ghost-like illusion we're dealing with illusions of colour and texture and atmosphere, in a hologram such as Coalseam we are recreating the effects of a coal fire, the atmosphere of a coal fire and also in the Water the quality of light through water, and how you get very pure spectral colours.

MW In almost none of our holograms are we trying to make a recording of the object in a sort of documentary sense, we're usually interested in making the image express something about the object, some idea of it of it becoming sort of animated, for example with something like a whisk giving it some life of its own, making it act out a role. In most of our holograms, we are not recording the surface of an object, we are recording its volume in space, which appears black and it's the light, probably from behind the object, which is the subject. Scan is an image of a mop, and in one plate, in one half of the hologram is the head of the mop and in the other plate is the handle of the mop, and in the middle they join, or maybe they don't quite join, as you move around they go out of alignment a bit. The first hologram we made using "speckle", we made this speckle pattern and it reminded us of scrambled egg or omelette, so that was our cue for using the whisk.

SG Speckle is a side effect and if you were a commercial holographer you would probably be desperately trying to get rid of this pattern but this was something that we enjoyed because it had a random reticulation and it was a bit like a painter's mark.

MW Well the early work is simpler it's usually just done with one object or a couple of objects, and for me, I was interested in a lot of the peculiar situations you could set up visually with the hologram and I used a few simple objects that would signal things like spectacles.

SG In Painting Glass if you move up and down you'll see the paint change colour, I was painting onto the plate but I was working in the dark so I was just arbitrarily painting onto the plate and all the colour and pigment is created optically, it's not created by pigment, they are pure spectral colours that you're seeing. The knickers in the hologram The Knickers are actually being worn by the 10"x8" photographic plate at the time of the exposure, and if you look at the knickers, the front of the knickers are holographic, but what you see as being the back of the knickers is in fact a shadow cast on the photographic plate of the knickers in the laser light. The same is true again of the stockings.

MW Antenna is a flying object or an insect. It's got blue wings, and it's sort of beating an atmosphere around it and when you get closer to it what you see is that the wing is actually made up of things like knives and forks and spoons and the legs are made up of whisks and things. In Picket the image is a row of whisks standing like a picket fence or a privet hedge and we're just interested in drawing attention to it by using a background image that would refer to the idea of the hologram. Holography is accepted as an art form by most of the people who get to see good holograms; it's just that it takes time. You can't really tell what a hologram looks like by looking at a book or looking at a magazine, it just doesn't reproduce very well as a photograph.

SG And to most people the idea that somebody should be making holography as an art form is new, it's still something they haven't seen.