

Beam of love

Wenyon & Gamble. Sounds like a soap company? No—they're artists. And they make 'speckle holograms'. NIGEL POLLITT goes laser gazing.

OK, so holograms remind you of something naff, green and glowing. And lasers make you think of exploding satellites? Whatever, the last thing most of us usually associate with the relatively recent art of holography is, in fact, art.

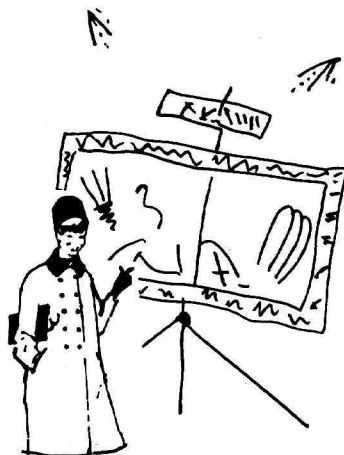
But for Michael Wenyon from Dayton, Ohio and Susan Gamble from Edmonton, Middlesex, holography is nothing else. And to prove their dedication to the pioneer medium—it's got a freedom from art traditions which perhaps early photographers had,' says Susan—they went into full-time partnership.

That was two years ago, soon after they fell in love during the exceedingly long and

horribly boring hours of darkness it takes to make even the simplest picture. But it's those same long hours that now provide one of the best reasons for collaborating. Michael: 'there's the temptation to come out and say, whatever it is, it's great. You need someone to say—"we've got to do this again. It isn't quite right".'

This week a bunch of Wenyon & Gamble's strange, elegant, speckly objects go right into their first full London showing, having already pulsed publicly from Aberystwyth to Indiana. There's an egg whisk called 'Propellor', lumps of coal in an indigo-crimson meteor shower and an illusory concrete floor with a moving hand.

But why holograms? 'We find it really exciting,' says Susan who came to holography from a fine-art/photography background. 'I don't know why. Michael started off in science, built a hologram from textbooks, then wrote a book about



● *Roving gallery-goer and hologram, courtesy Wenyon & Gamble*

it, called 'Understanding Holography''. 'Virtually the first one I saw was my own,' he says.

And how is it all done? Well, in an old gym in a leafy Camberwell street, there is

a vast concrete table floating on car tyre inner-tubes topped with an array of lenses and chemistry stands.

'This is the camera,' says Wenyon. 'You're inside it.' In the darkness there's a pencil-thin shaft of ruby light, glistening with airborne dust. The light hits a chair—the last subject for a picture—and a large sheet of glass where the photographic film goes.

But why's everything speckly? 'It's the Wenyon & Gamble speck... speckleometer,' says Gamble. What's more, it turns out there's real excitement in having a 'population inversion in a resonant cavity'... No wonder 'you never know how it's going to turn out'!

Oddly, *Art Monthly* said this was why Holography couldn't be art. This week, you can make up your own mind. ●

See *Visual Arts: Goldsmiths College South* for details.

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Wenyon & Gamble's 'Speckle Holograms'—should be looked at as art, not viewed with the jaundiced experience of hologram-kitsch. Some of the effects achieved here are dazzling—especially in terms of colour—and in the way that household objects, such as an egg whisk, are given centre-stage. In this respect, their work has links with performance art, or perhaps set design.

Recommended. (until Oct 23)
See *Circuit* for interview.