

V I E W E D

The Holography Show, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Graham Saxby

This is a travelling exhibition, staged by Michael Wenyon and Susan Gamble, who have for the past two and a half years been running courses in holographic technique at the Holography Workshop, Goldsmiths' College, London. The exhibition consists of some twenty pieces created by staff and former students of the Workshop. The exhibition was first staged last year at two successive venues in Northern Ireland, after which it moved to Cardiff, Bath and now Wolverhampton; later in the year it will visit Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent.

Some of the exhibits were seen at the Workshop's own exhibition eighteen months ago (13 November 1981 issue, p1180). Most of them show a good deal of creative imagination, both as to subject matter and technique. Almost the only 'straight' holograms are Michael Wenyon's familiar spectacles, and the venetian blind (see earlier review), and even these have images that are in front of the plate. Michael Wenyon has also contributed a new hologram on a similar theme, but treated more adventurously. Against a dark background, a pair of spectacle lenses gleams through the slats of a venetian blind, while another pair of lenses hangs eerily in front. The hologram can be flipped through 180° and still show the same image; hence its title 'You Could be Inside or Outside the Situation'.

Susan Gamble has contributed two pairs of holograms. One, 'Waitress's Mirrors', consists of what at first appears to be merely a pair of large hand mirrors facing one another. Indeed, they are mirrors, and they reflect the viewer's face. But they are also holograms: one is of a cake on a plate, the other of a fruit tart on the floor. Further inspection reveals that the backs of the mirrors are in fact wooden fruit plates. Her other exhibit follows up a usually unrewarding technique, that of the single-beam transmission hologram, here with spectacular success. This pair of holograms is entitled 'The Body in Question', partly because their delicate images are in a way reminiscent of some of those which appeared in the TV series of the same name; also to emphasise the visual pun: they are images of lingerie. As the subject matter is on both sides of the plate the images are partly shadowgram and partly photogram; in one, a pair of stockings was draped over the top of the plate, and in the other, to quote Susan Gamble, 'the plate was actually wearing the knickers'. Nevertheless, the lustrous

greenish-yellow ground and black tracery produce a delicate and beautiful effect.

The American holographer Bill Molteni, who spent several months with a visiting Fellowship at Goldsmiths', has given his two miniatures 'Hand and Yo-yo' and 'Broken Glass' to the exhibition (see earlier review). Though only 4 x 5in in size, the superb technical quality of these multicolour images makes their effect out of all proportion to their area. It was also good to see Peter Creswell's formation of paper darts again, this time looking much brighter than they did at the Workshop show.

Bill Culbert has contributed two unusual holograms. The first, 'Window 84490' is an impression of the view from the bedroom of his holiday home in France. The sloping window-frame comes out in front of the plate towards the viewer, and the landscape is seen through it, sloping away. 'Eclipse' is a bright lamp bulb sited directly behind a dark one; the viewer can see the bright one only by moving to one side or standing on tiptoe.

John Wood, who has done a considerable amount of work towards perfecting a method of obtaining animated holograms by multiple exposures has contributed a tour de force of technique. Beside a perfectly sober teapot a pair of scissors cavorts and snaps wildly as the viewpoint changes. The hologram required literally scores of exposures, and took many hours to make.

'The Illusory Web' is the title of a pair of images by Liljan Lijn. The subject is a roll of metal mesh which generates flickering moiré patterns as the viewer changes position. The large Perspex frames are part of the composition: one is bright orange, and the other bears a pink shadowgram of a string net.

When I came across Jeremy Diggle's chaotic three-dimensional collages I wondered if they were deep and enigmatic or just something of a leg-pull; the latter seems, on balance, more likely. 'Memory Wrecks' is a lunchbox containing some very odd articles, including a reel of magnetic tape (get it?) and a hologram of a fish, presumably the lunch. 'Helsinki Box' is what appears to be a small Victorian bathroom cabinet with a glass front (actually a hologram) showing various metal objects behind it. On opening the door the cabinet is seen to contain mementos of a trip to Finland; there is a second hologram of the same subject matter as the first on the inside of the door.

Peter Donebauer, a video artist, has come up with a novel idea, using a large holographically-generated diffraction grating, with a small black-and-white television set mounted above it as a light source. Talking heads, motor racing, detergent advertisements are converted into leaping, flame-like rainbow patterns — just the thing to enliven a dull evening's watching. It would be even

more exciting with a colour set.

The centrepiece of the exhibition is a sculpture by Andrew Logan of such breathtaking vulgarity that it almost succeeds in getting away with it. Called 'Goddess of the Void', it consists of a six-foot-high mock-Oriental statue with a number of arms, two of them holding wands with lamps at their ends illuminating her glass-fronted chest, which bears on its right side a hologram of yet another arm, and on its left side a hologram of a heart. The head is decorated with pieces of glass, Christmas-tree ornaments, a security mirror, a shaving mirror and a hologram of an eye. The statue is painted bright blue.

Apart from such extravagances this is a fascinating exhibition. The exhibitors have succeeded in achieving many interesting, unusual and sometimes beautiful effects, for the most part employing what are basically quite simple techniques.

Along with the exhibition comes the bad news that the Holography Workshop has been forced to close. This is because the original public funding has run out. It was hoped that something could be salvaged by using the facility for Goldsmiths' own students, but unfortunately the educational cuts mean that the College is not in a position to take on the extra staff necessary to run the workshop on its own account. It is to be hoped that these problems will be resolved in the near future. Happily, the holography courses run by Edwina Orr and James Copp are still going strong; anyone interested should contact Richmond Holographic Studios, Foxton Mews, 48 Friars Stile Road, Richmond; telephone 01-735 9100.

Sunil Gupta's 'Tilonia' at the Commonwealth Institute, London

Jozef Gross

'Sunil Gupta? Who's he?' Thus paraphrasing the well-known words of a TV advertisement, a GLC leaflet introduces to the London public the winner of the second prize in its annual competition for photographers of this city. In fact, Sunil Gupta is no stranger to the Metropolis. A postgraduate student at the RCA, he exhibited recently his photographs of the Tilonia Social Work and Research Centre in the Ajmer province of Rajasthan, at the Commonwealth Institute in London.

Backed by a scholarship from Thames Television and Christian Aid he travelled to India between 1980 and January 1983 on three occasions to produce a photo-