

by the focus of the installation. The primary elements include two spheres — one gold, the other black — encased in a glass box and resembling a shrine or altar. Between the two spheres is a long needle that moves between them as if to suggest the infinitely tenuous balance of the universe. Behind the glass encasement is a stratification of ash and cinders. Beneath the spheres the ash is revealed as a kind of burn-out or residue of some galactic conflagration.

In *Analemma* (1988), a long-term installation at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, Jones and Ginzel have again expressed cosmic duality in relation to light and darkness. Using two windows on the north side of the museum, the installation is sometimes bathed in sunlight and other times darkened. The title refers to a graduated scale having a figure 8 configuration in which the sun's declination is shown, thus registering an equation of time for each day of the year. Time is an essential factor in these artists' installations, but that in itself does not explain the symbolism used in their work. Time can mean many things, both subjective and objective. For Jones and Ginzel, the concept of time has many ancient and cross-cultural roots. They are not concerned with mundane time, but time that expresses some form of universal wholeness, some sense of completeness about the structure of the cosmos and how that structure might be used to obtain self-awareness and cognitive responsiveness in what we perceive relativistically as matter and energy.

One might contrast the medieval symbolic function of Jones and Ginzel's installations with a work such as James Turrell's *Meeting*, permanently installed in P.S. 1 in 1987. In this contemplative environmental piece the emphasis is also on time as perceived through both natural and artificial lighting effects. Whereas works like *Apastron* and *Analemma* are significant in symbolic terms, Turrell's *Meeting* maintains a literalness in its use of space and time, a tendency more characteristic of Minimal Art.

Another artist who was represented in P.U.L.S.E. and again in "Interaction" is the Greek-born Takis. For years Takis has been fascinated by electromagnetic structures. In his work *Signal* two lights, one red and one blue, flash on and off at various intervals. Takis has generally worked with a considerable economy of means, and in that sense his work stands apart from other artists in the show whose works seem to depend more on elaboration and complexity. *Signal* operates persuasively as an open signifier more than a sign. To use Charles Morris' semiotic model, there are pragmatic, syntactic, and semantic meanings that one might glean from Takis' work. Its banal quality is something of a decoy. Its technical apparatus is not hidden, but apparent. It is highly charged, metaphorically speaking, yet reserved in its timeliness. The flashing lights have an almost biological rhythm that suggests survival, even exuberance, but also a warning.

Takis relates closely to the Dada artists in the sense that there is something of the absurd in his work. The absurd has certain existential overtones,



as for example in the theater of the absurd, especially the plays of Beckett, Pinter, Arrabal and Ionesco.<sup>11</sup> Duchamp's *Large Glass* was said to have been provoked or inspired by the French proto-Surrealist writer Raymond Roussel, whose absurd novel and theater piece *Impressions D'Afrique* involved lengthy descriptions of fantastic machines. Roussel's work is absurd in its cyclicity. Its static evolution goes nowhere and resolves nothing.<sup>12</sup>

In Takis one senses something of an absurd condition in being a part of this mediated culture where signs and gadgets are ambiguous and references are scattered in many directions creating chaos, conflict, and disjuncture. R.M. Fischer's fantastic machines also appear closely related to the vision of Roussel. The upper and lower segments of Fischer's *Royal Wedding* (1981) reveal an abrupt discontinuity, pitting fake elegance against a makeshift apparatus. *Fountain* (1987), a recent work by Fischer, is also within the tradition of Roussel and closely related to Duchamp as well. William Stone's *Caves of Steel* is yet another example of an aesthetic of the absurd. Instead of light and magnetism Stone deals with water and conduits. In this vertical construction of galvanized pipes, Stone has attached six stethoscopes at various levels of the construction. As water pours from a faucet at the top and descends through the pipes, one can listen to the variations of tones. It is a truly interactive piece that involves the aesthetics of listening. It is a sculptural sound experience in the same way that Duchamp's Readymade *Object with Hidden Noise* (1916) is less about the formal logic of what is seen and more about the isolated contemplation of what is heard.

In *Observatory Tower* (1985) by Alastair Noble, a large, awkwardly shaped obelisk is supported upside down with four armatures that extend from a base resembling Mayan architecture. The pinnacle of the obelisk is constructed in glass and touches the convex side of a Chinese wok. Within the pinnacle, one can see the prismatic patterns of a black and white television moving in various patterns and reflecting on the copper surface below. Noble, who was formerly associated with the Art and Language group in England, is interested in television light as a sculptural medium; that is, matter transforming itself into energy.

In another exhibition in the fall of 1989 called "Forecasts: Visions of Technology in Contemporary Painting and Sculpture" at the Nerlino Gallery in SoHo, curator Gail Levin has included another television work by Noble along with works by Donald Lipski, Richard Thatcher, Cork Marcheschi, Christopher Sproat, and others. In this exhibition the emphasis is given less to the interactive aspects of the new technology than to the effects which technology has produced in defining an extended social view of contemporary culture.<sup>13</sup> Entropy is as much an issue here as science fiction and utopia. Thatcher's pristine and elegant *Energy Container* (1985) is juxtaposed with Donald Lipski's weirdly enervated *Anshe Emet* (1986). The convergence of aesthetic beauty with Neo-Dada absurdity is very much at home in both works.