

stop focussing debate on the technical validity of holographic artworks, or the artists that produce them. Most of us working in the medium have acquired skills and a level of competency equal to the challenge of the work we produce, or know of the resources we need for either educational or production purposes. If an artist chooses to have a technician produce the works that he or she conceives, there is no reason to consider them any less valid, or to feel that the artist's role as conceiver is any less powerful for not having made the work. The most important challenge facing us at this point is the need to develop the vehicles for understanding and evaluating the value of the works we produce from an aesthetic foundation.

It seems apparent to most of us who have worked in the medium for some time that neither the large international group shows nor the technical symposia held frequently are aiding the development of holography as an art medium. It's obvious that the international shows only heighten the image of holography as a technological novelty and are being staged to generate profits for the organizers. Unfortunately, the artists are not

sharing in these profits in the degree to which their contributions to the success of these shows should entitle them. Michael Sowdon, in his paper, suggested that artists strive to show only in established art museums and galleries, a suggestion I strongly support.



The recent technical symposia which have included and encouraged artists to attend have also been disappointing in the amount of time devoted to artistic issues and needs. There is a lot of talk about the links between science and art, but precious few scientists seem ready to engage themselves when it comes time for the artistic presentations at such conferences.

This is not to imply that all scientists

are not interested in the artistic development of holography; we know that is not the case. But if a conference is offered with the intention of devoting a significant amount of time to artistic issues, then that time must be respected as being as fundamentally important to the growth of holography as any technical or economic report might be. If there is going to be an interchange between us, we both have to make it happen.

The artistic growth of holography is at a point where it deserves and needs conferences at reasonable intervals devoted primarily to artistic issues and needs. The weekend symposium only began to point towards what we might be able to accomplish, given a week-long conference devoted to lectures, critiques and exhibitions of art/holography.

The most personally rewarding moment of the entire weekend came on Sunday afternoon when a number of us gathered in the gallery and critiqued each other's work. I think we all had a sense of how much we needed to be there with those works and how beneficial some extended periods of time spent with them might be for all of us. I hope the symposium was a start towards those goals.

THE SIXTIES REVISITED

Perspective By Michael Sowdon

When was the last time you listened to hippies babbling cosmic nonsense? Five years ago, ten perhaps? It came as a surprise, then, to encounter this on two recent trips to Chicago.

But the context did not include visits to an Amsterdam hashish club or a psychic trade fair. On both occasions I was attending conferences concerned with the interface of science, technology and art, sponsored by established educational institutions.

The first was the Second International Symposium of Display Holography, held last summer at Lake Forest College outside Chicago. More recently I was a speaker at a Symposium for the Artistic Development of Holography, sponsored by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Both times, proceedings were marred by the inordinate amount of time spent discussing holocosmology. For those ignorant of its tenets, "it is like wow, man, the universe is just a big hologram" or "we're all just reference beams in the interferogram of life"; in short, a wildly speculative and half-baked philosophy, appealing but unsubstantial.

I was at Lake Forest to hear some of the most important scientists and artists in holography discuss their current work. But the conference suffered from an unfortunate but common occurrence: the people with the least to say took up most of the time. People with virtually no experience in holography rambled on and on, while experts like Nick Phillips or Stephen Benton held their talks to the allotted time. At any conference there will be poor presentations, but what does Tibetan chanting, yogic nonsense, rainbow worship or sacred numbers have to do with what I assume is an electro-optical branch of physics?

I believe the theory of holography is a profound concept with many technical applications in science, industry and the arts. I do not believe looking at holograms leads to total enlightenment, instant or otherwise. I would expect such childish speculation from pygmies given mirrors for the first time. These holographers should know better. Normally, I am most annoyed by makers and purveyors of garish holographic trinkets. But when compared to the "mystics", these

people earn one's respect for their hard-nosed economic realism.

Having so much of my time wasted at Lake Forest was annoying but I thought: "This conference represents many aspects of holography - warts and all. Why not overlook the negative aspects?" The recent symposium at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago was another matter entirely.

Why does a respected school cram all five speakers with credible backgrounds in fine art and holography into the first day, then give most of the second and last day to Fred Unterecher's rambling, disjointed sermon on holocosmology? He may have been around holography for a long time, but he knows little about art, and was totally inappropriate for a symposium ostensibly about the serious aesthetic concerns of holography as an art form.

The most immediate problem with holography's development as an art form is not so much the quality of artworks currently produced, but the inability of conference and exhibition organizers to separate the wheat from the chaff.