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eNlighten

Michael Flechtner, Candice Gawne, David Svenson, Kazumi Kobayashi Svenson, Philip Vaughan

March 12, 2016 – May 18, 2016

Opening reception: Saturday March 12, 2016 6-9 PM

"The blaze of crimson light from the tube told its own story and was a sight to dwell upon and never forget." – Morris Travers upon the discovery of neon.

Lois Lambert Gallery presents "eNlighten", an exhibition of neon light works by artists Michael Flechtner, Candice Gawne, David Svenson, Kazumi Kobayashi Svenson, and Philip Vaughan.

In 1898, two British scientists, Sir William Ramsay and Morris Travers discovered the luminescent red glow produced when neon gas is electrically charged. In the early 1900's, French chemist, George Claude went on to experiment with neon, introducing gases like argon and mercury vapor and glass tubes. In 1910, Claude created the first neon sign for the Paris Motor show. Neon's capacity to grab hold of the human eye spread like wildfire and in 1923, Claude was commissioned to make two signs for a Packard car dealership in Los Angeles. The signs had such a mesmerizing effect they stopped traffic. Neon signs entrenched themselves as architectural fixtures in the visual culture of vibrant cities like New York, Las Vegas and Hong Kong.

Since the 1930's, artists were attracted to the delicate manipulation of glass, light and color of neon fixtures – not as marketing signage for the modern world, but as a vessel of artistic expression. As neon was appropriated from advertisement to art, it continued to captivate but shifted the focus to elicit more evocative responses, sometimes even satirizing the preceding neon-infused adverts.

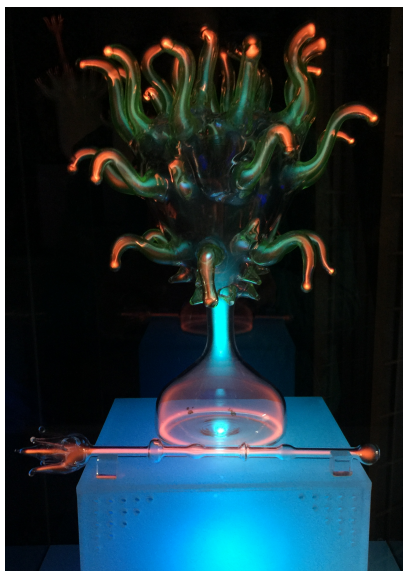
"eNlighten" explores the development of neon as a medium in contemporary art. The neon light works featured in this exhibition range from representational forms conveying satirical humor to conceptualizations of the physical qualities of neon, light and color.



"Moolah!"

MICHAEL FLECHTNER began his career creating sculptures and paintings and transitioned to using neon as his primary medium in 1985. Flechtner creates two and three dimensional neon works, specializing in complex animation and intricate glass bending. Flechtner sees his creative influence stemming from his "fascination with the symbols of language, technology and how they influence popular culture."

Flechtner's work has been featured in over 30 exhibitions. Numerous private collectors and public organizations have commissioned Flechtner to create works. In 1999, Flechtner was awarded the J. Paul Getty Trust Fund Fellowship for the Visual Arts. In 2010, USPS commissioned Flechtner to design his "Celebrate" stamp, which was re-circulated in 2015.



"Fools Cup"

CANDICE GAWNE incorporates glass blowing techniques with neon elements to create sculptures that echo patterns and shapes found in nature, highlighting her fascination with the physical elements of light. "In accord with the laws of physics, natural or manmade light defines form. For me, it also creates a special kind of abstract energy within the space it describes. I use this kind of living light energy coming into the darkness to symbolize transformation. The energy of 'Light Entering the Dark' is at the core of all my work." From the asymmetrical strike of a lightning bolt to the amorphous contours of deep sea anemone, Gawne's neon artwork extols the nature of light.

Gawne's works have been exhibited in galleries and museums in Los Angeles, New York, Washington D.C., Berlin, Tokyo and Taiwan. She has taught art courses at OTIS, UCLA and Cultural Affairs Department of the City of Los Angeles, among other public and private institutions.



"Freefall"

PHILIP VAUGHAN is a sculptor, whose work reflects his passion for architecture, painting, and sculpture. Some of Vaughan's neon sculptures are architectural, solid structures made up of crisscrossing latticework of neon tubes and at other times gestural, like the everlasting strokes of a paintbrush. Vaughan's use of neon is rooted in his interest in the film industry, "In my search for ways to imply motion I became fascinated by the movies and the completely believable illusion of motion that they create out of the motorized passage of a series of still images."

Vaughan was born in France and raised in the United Kingdom. He earned his BA from the Chelsea School of Art with first class honors in 1964. His experience in kinetics emanates from being a research assistant at Northumberland Polytechnic art school in Newcastle. One of his renowned works includes a competition entry and London's first public light sculpture, the Neon Tower, for Hayward Gallery. He continues to create works for public institutions, amusement parks and private collectors.



"Electric Kokeshi #1" and "Electric Kokeshi #2"

DAVID SVENSON is a multimedia artist that primarily works with glass, wood, and neon. Svenson uses neon combined with glass blowing and casting as a medium to emphasize the coordinated sculptural forms. Svenson's 42 years of traditional Northwest Coast woodcarving and his fascination with the technology of neon as a medium coalesce as important transmitters of culture. David teaches classes at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco and holds workshops entitled, "Neon as an Art Form."

KAZUMI KOBAYASHI SVENSON, from Sendai, Japan is a neon artist who has been practicing glass blowing for 25 years. Svenson employs luminous tubing to create two-dimensional neon works that are influenced by subjects ranging from deep-sea life to Japanese folk culture and aesthetics.

David and Kazumi's collaborative work includes their "Electric Kokeshi" series, inspired by hand-carved wooden Japanese dolls of the same name. David and Kazumi's "Electric Kokeshi" works reflect the artists' shared passion for woodcarving in traditional Japanese culture, glass blowing and neon.