

UCSD's Grove Gallery to exhibit contemporary neon art: "NEON III"

September 2, 1994

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UCSD'S GROVE GALLERY TO EXHIBIT CONTEMPORARY NEON ART: "NEON III"

After the discovery of the electric light bulb in the late 1800s, it was only a matter of time before Thomas Edison's brainchild would manifest itself in some other creative form.

At the turn of the century, in Paris, a physicist discovered that by capturing neon gas in thin glass tubes and applying electronic current to attached electrodes, the tubes would glow with a vivid red light. Voila! The discovery of light from neon!

The medium lit up storefronts around the globe until its use waned by the end of the 1930s. These days, however, creative minds are using neon and other phosphors to light up galleries and museums worldwide.

At the University of California, San Diego, some of the country's top neon artists will show their latest neon works--in the forms of wall and pedestal pieces--in a split exhibition titled "NEON III," to take place from Sept. 26-Nov. 5. The art works will be installed in the Grove Gallery and the UCSD Price Center Ballroom Lounge.

There will be an artists' reception at the gallery from 6-8 p.m., Sept. 30. The public is invited to attend. Admission to the gallery is free.

The artists are: Ron Carlson, Solana Beach, Calif.; Brian Coleman, Santa Cruz, Calif.; Tessie Dong, Los Angeles, Calif.; Freddy Elliott, Salina, Kan.; Brian Ferrin, San Diego, Calif.; Michael Flechtner, Van Nuys, Calif.; Maurice Gray, Moreno Valley, Calif.; Karl Houser, San Francisco, Calif.; Kim Koga, Wrightwood, Calif.; Vince Koloski, San Francisco, Calif.; Ben Livingston, Austin, Tex.; Lori Gene M. Mulherin, Decatur, Ga.; Jan Sanchez, Ojai, Calif.; and David Svenson, Wrightwood, Calif.

Many of the artists mix a variety of mediums with neon. For example, Kim Koga combines neon light tubes, ceramic sculpture, acrylic on canvas, and wood to produce a 3' by 4' work she titles, "Noodle Oracle." Koga has fashioned an udon (noodle) bowl from ceramics, from which white neon tubing spills onto a canvas and acrylic palmist's hand below. A Chinese checkers game board, which is integrated into the design, is backlit with white neon light, allowing the light to shine through clear glass marbles affixed to the game board.

Koga's second piece is "Fiesta Udon," a large cast concrete bowl from which white neon tubing and a mass of ceramic beans erupt.

Vince Koloski's wall relief piece, "Synaptic Gap," is a mixture of neon, acrylic and polychromed wood. The wood has been painted green, orange and purple, with a strip of black accent bridging elements in the work. The neon is green, orange and purple. Backlit with neon light in green, orange and purple, the piece "appears to float on the wall," says Koloski.

Ben Livingston's wall work, "Night Stick," is 50" long by 5" wide, and 3-1/2" deep. The neon "sticks," made with a variety of phosphors, argon gas and colored glass, are mounted on a background of black plexiglass. Livingston is a recent recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant.

-The Grove Gallery is open Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and on Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. For information call 534-2021. Admission is free. Parking permits are required and may be purchased at the Gilman Drive and Northview Drive information pavilions.

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