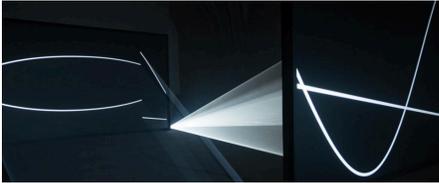


# SEAN KELLY

Nestor, Hatty. "Solid Light," *Frieze*, June 9, 2016.

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## Solid Light



Since making his first film, *Line Describing a Cone*, in 1973, British-born New York-based artist Anthony McCall has worked with sculpture, cinema and drawing. His recent works consider the relationship between artworks and their audience in three-dimensional space. Now 70 years old, McCall's show 'Solid Light, Performance and Public Works' at Fundació Gaspar in Barcelona (until 30 October, 2016) features work from throughout his career, including his newest installation, *Coming About* (2016).

Hatty Nestor Can you first talk through your exhibition at Fundació Gaspar?

Anthony McCall The exhibition provides an overview of my work since the beginning. It is bracketed by two large installations: *Circulation Figures*, an early performance work from 1972; and my most recent solid light piece, *Coming About* (2016). In between there are various performances, represented by films, there is another solid light work, and there is a room of works on paper from 1971 to the present.

HN You have described *Landscape of Fire* (1972) as having influenced your consideration of 'primary' and 'secondary' modes of experiencing performance. Did recording the performance on film alter the way it was experienced later?

AM Performance almost presupposes documentation; but a document like a film is only representing the performance; it is not the performance itself. After making *Landscape of Fire* (1972) I began to wonder if it would be possible to make a film that only existed at the moment of projection, in a present tense shared with the audience. This idea led to *Line Describing a Cone* (1973), made a year after *Landscape for Fire*.

HN You originally worked with 16mm film, and recently have used digital animation. Has this shift in medium changed your approach to the sculptural, cinematic and drawn elements of your practice?

AM Conceptually there is a continuity between film and digital in that both produce structures based on planes of light in three-dimensional space. But the working methods are different. Film animation in the 1970s was quite slow and laborious, and it was only after you had completed and printed the film that you found out if you had made the right decisions; digital animation provides opportunities to see what you are doing and to make changes throughout the animation process.

HN 'Solid Light, Performance and Public works' opens with *Five-Minute Drawing* (1974), a performed drawing. Drawing appears in different forms throughout the exhibition. How do you consider and think about drawing in your practice?

AM Drawing for me has always been central to the way I work and formulate ideas. In the 1970s I was particularly interested in drawing as a durational form; hence the performance *Five-Minute Drawing* (1974) or *Pencil Duration* (1974). These days my working process begins with sketching the three-dimensional installation before going on to the map out the temporal structure, which takes the form usually of 'storyboard' drawings. After that there are the instruction drawings for my programmer. Finally, once the piece is completed and projected, there is the animated line drawing at the centre of the installation itself.

HN Do you feel the orientation of horizontal pieces and the vertical pieces inherently change the spectator's physical interactions with the artworks? Is this orientation different in *Coming About* (2016)?

AM The horizontal pieces, with the spectator, the projector, and the projected form all being about the same distance from the floor, directly reference 'cinema'. However, the vertical works, with the projector ten metres up on the ceiling projecting the form directly down onto the floor, seem to be closer to sculpture, and to me suggest the standing body. The experience of a horizontal work is something like being immersed in water; a vertical work, on the other hand, towering above your head, can be walked all around, and therefore can be occupied. My most recent solid-light installation though, *Coming About* (2016), is neither horizontal nor vertical; it is based on two diagonally oriented forms which converge on the floor. As an experience it is very different from the earlier pieces. I am still figuring out just how this plays, but the converging, slanting beams seem to be disorienting to a surprising degree.

HN Some of the semantic qualities and names of your work such as *Between you and I* (2006) are suggestive of bodies meeting in the artwork. Are they named to anticipate how you would like the visitor to behave in the space?

AM For the past ten years the titles of the works refer to various states of exchange between bodies. For example, *You and I Horizontal* (2005), *Between You and I* (2006), *Meeting you Halfway* (2009) and *Face to Face* (2013). The titles can also be understood as referring to the state of exchange that occurs between a spectator and the work, or even between a spectator and the artist. I'm aware that my relationship to the object is completely different from that of the spectator, but in my titles I like to at least to lay down some suggestions.

HN Do you think that your dark, haze-filled environments further your interest in depicting time? Can you talk about how this alters the participant's relationship to the space?

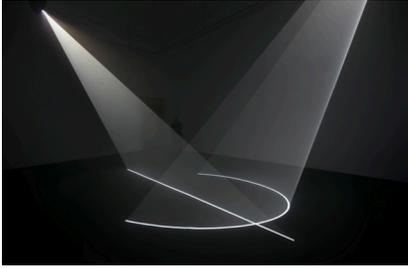
AM The projected forms are sculptural objects. But they are sculptural objects that have been modified by a temporal structure: the forms change and develop over time. It has turned out to be very important that the speed at which changes occur is always slow. This ensures that a spectator will explore the object as a sculptural object, by moving around it. Too fast, and you stay rooted to the spot which would completely frustrate mobile looking. Of course, rapid movement is not a problem with an ordinary movie, but you look at a movie with your eyes, not with your body.

HN After a 20 year break from your practice, in 2001 you exhibited *Line Describing Cone* (1973) at The Whitney Museum of American Art. Did you approach your work differently in the years following this exhibition?

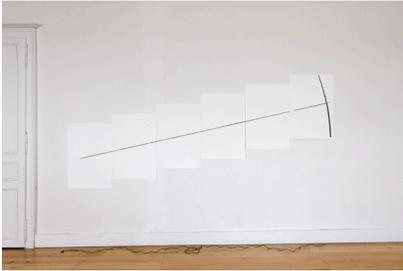
AM Well, I hadn't made any work for 20 years so when I started again, I was really feeling my way. I had to return to the early group of solid light works but I also had to create a new starting place. I started again by drawing, and eventually this led to production. *Doubling Back* (2003) was the first new solid light installation.

HN Does your newer work still attempt to deconstruct cinema?

AM The urge to deconstruct has perhaps run its course. And Cinema, with a capital 'C' has gone. Cinema, with a small 'c' is everywhere: on our portable devices, on the sides of buildings, on social media, in the art world.



Anthony McCall, *Coming About*, 2016, installation view, Fundació Gaspar, Barcelona, Spain



Anthony McCall, *Five Minute Drawing*, 1974/2007, installation view Musée de Rochechouart, 2007



Anthony McCall, *Face to Face*, 2013, installation view, Sean Kelly Gallery, New York



Anthony McCall, *Five Minutes of Pure Sculpture*, 2012, installation view, Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin. From front to back: *Meeting You Halfway*, *Breath III*, *Between You and I*, *Coupling*.