

Sculpting the luminous: radical holography

Dieter Jung, probably Europe's foremost hologram artist, talks about the future of Holography, and the interplay of visible light, our built environment and the space around us

It is unusual to include Holography in the composition of either eco-technologies or green art. Sustainable technologies have been identified consistently with alternative energy, agriculture, recycling and a standpoint which has foregrounded resource efficiency above other considerations. Ecological art has mainly concerned itself with the human relation to non-human nature. It often explores our sense of closeness to or disconnection from the natural world, perhaps creating works within nature, out of nature, or by referring to times or places where harmony with the seasons and with patterns of growth can be integrated into the work.

A definite irony of green orthodoxy is that whilst it is willing the emergence of a Solar Age, it displays no interest in the emergence of technologies of light when these don't conveniently fit its agenda. Solar power, for sure, and perhaps a turn to an extra awareness of the Great Year. But as far as the implications of light technologies are concerned, these are beyond the pale.

The Holography crowd, on the other hand, generally doesn't appear to be particularly interested in ecological issues as far as I can tell from my (admittedly limited) interaction with its members. The question is left pretty much hived off, different communities following their different blisses. And ne'er the twain shall meet.

There are, however, two segments within the Holography world which include practitioners who relate fairly clearly to a green agenda. These are: environmental Holography and public space holograms. Quite often Art Holography seems wrapped up in extending the vocabulary of the art world conceits. However, whatever the content of their work,

Holographers often present a particular sensitivity to working with light, so that their work seems to be a doorway into the world of pure colour and light.

Given the artificial nature of integrating pure colour and light into public space and environmental settings, the resulting effect may be unsettling. Yet it offers the possibility of returning a degree of balance to those of us who experience contemporary urban environments as wholly overwhelming and stressful. Public space holograms could be powerful instruments in the possible realisation of different social and cultural tempos.

Various socially conscientious philosophies and critiques of technology could have a field day with Holography, viewing it as having no place within the perceived eco-technologies frame. Even so, the possible synergy between technologies of light and elements of green design could be an innovative hybrid. In a narrow sense you might argue that a solar panel based technology allied to a non-electronic art sphere is the future, but this seems to give no consideration to the fact that other assemblages of technology are already here, do already exist. In an ambiguous world, if one facet of a technology brings promises of furthering ecological goals, although another part of it may at present be ecologically detrimental, it seems worthwhile to investigate how these technologies might be used for artistic and socially based ends.

With this in mind, a perspective on Holography could be turned around to contemplate how it could be used in specific public settings, to help ease a quieting of the speeding mind. Holography could be a window onto a broad spectrum of questions concerning consciousness which in turn is, arguably, closely related to any forward looking green agenda. You might say Holography uses a cocktail of toxic chemicals which renders it unsustainable, but Holography is becoming digitalised rendering those chemicals outdated and unnecessary. Or you might point out that the constituent parts that go to make the machines and materials for making these forms of light art contribute to unsustainable transportation patterns. It is not unimaginable to contemplate alternative ways of organising, say, the making of lasers, and other machinery that the makers of holograms need, maybe as



Image courtesy of Dieter Jung

part of an industrial ecosystem, so that it could be produced locally and as part of any sustainable future.

Within the relatively esoteric world of International Art Holography, the German hologram community has consistently been at the cutting edge during the last twenty years. The main output of work has been generated by hologram artists based near or in Essen and Cologne. Whilst much of Art Holography is clearly unconcerned about public spaces, the emergent possibilities offered by the use of Holography in a built environment have begun to gain recognition. This draws

Holography into the field of design rather than into the art tradition. Outside Essen Thomas Luck and Vito Orazem established from the mid eighties until the mid nineties what they described as Radical Holography. As part of this they exhibited holograms which were integrated into architecture. In Cologne Brigitte Burgmer has explored an environmentally aware Holography. Also in Cologne, at the New Media School, Dieter Jung, one of the best known artists within the Art hologram firmament has produced some of the most stunning, shimmering examples of light art that the discipline has