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Dissertation

TECHNOLOGY AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE IN 1960s AND 1970s
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation traces the ways in which the emergent countercultures on the West Coast, in parallel with the high-technology industrial complex of Southern California, fostered ad-hoc experimentation with technology in studio and post-studio practices. In the studio, individual artists researched, experimented with, and became self-taught experts on discrete technologies. In comparison, post-studio methods functioned less as a top-down mastery and innovation within a singular craft (as in the initial studio methods), and, instead, involved the creation of immersive, perceptual environments.

The Introduction situates the development of the art/technology phenomenon alongside the emergence of the art scene in Los Angeles, expanding the literature in relation to other more established histories. Each of the first three chapters focuses on one case study—Larry Bell, Mary Corse, and Fred Eversley—to reveal the scope of appropriated technologies and the permutations within various mediums (glass sculpture, industrial lighting schematics, acrylic painting, and polyester sculpture). Chapter 4 analyzes this plurality, focusing on the appropriation of cognitive psychology. As

technological appropriation became more commonplace, and particularly as some artists came to require larger spaces, curators and institutions helped orchestrate experimentation with immersive environments. I explore the range of post-studio practices in the works of Lloyd Hamrol, Tom Eatherton, Michael Asher, Robert Irwin, James Turrell, Maria Nordman, and Eric Orr, among others, and include Hal Glicksman as a key example of curatorial influence. The concluding chapter considers the art/technology legacy alongside themes of dilapidation and obsolescence.

This dissertation demonstrates how art with reflective and/or transparent materials of high-tech industry prescribed movements for viewer engagement—an embodied experience of mobile spectatorship in Los Angeles of the 1960s and 1970s. I correlate these movement patterns, in parallel with light, space, and sourced technology, to the experience of each work.