

Mel Alexenberg
Otto Piene



LightsOROT

CAVS / MIT

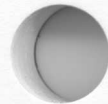
Yeshiva
University
Museum

LightsOROT

Essays and Catalog of an Exhibition at the
Yeshiva University Museum in New York City

by the Center for Advanced Visual Studies,
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

January 31, 1988 - December 31, 1988

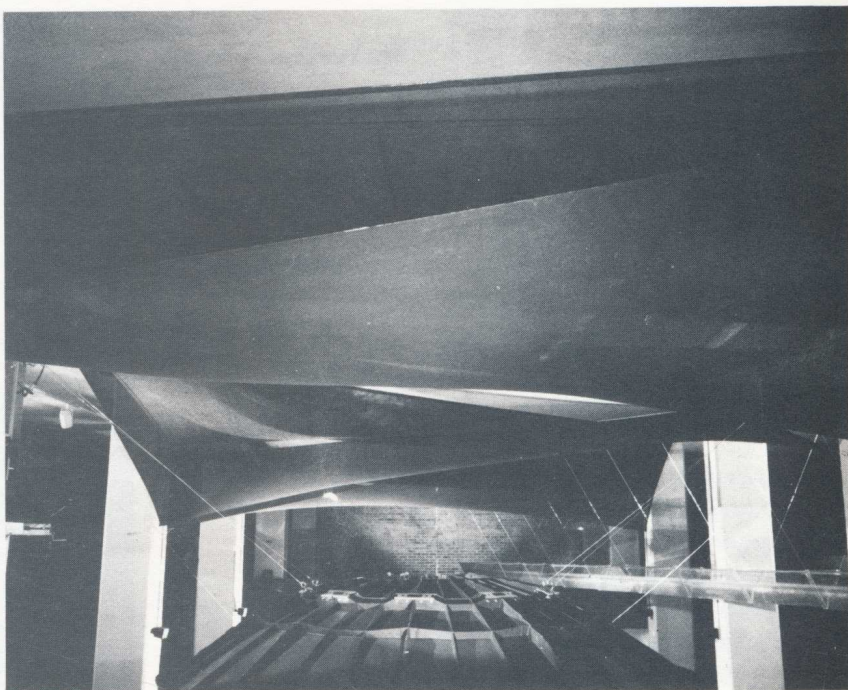


Mel Alexenberg
Guest Curator

Otto Piene
Director, Center for Advanced Visual Studies, MIT

Sylvia Axelrod Herskowitz
Director, Yeshiva University Museum

Beth Galston
"Talis"
LightsOROT
1987
photo: Walter Dent



I remained close to both the Museum and the Center by accepting an invitation to head the Art Department at Pratt Institute in New York City. I became a frequent flyer on the New York - Boston shuttle. During the next two-and-a-half years, I met regularly with Otto and the participating artists both in group meetings and in individual conferences. I worked closely with all of the artists in exploring the interfaces between the conceptual framework for the show and their individual talents and aesthetic concerns. I wrote a document, "Lights of Creation: Sight and Insight," which became a guidebook for the participating artists.

Rabbis with special creative insights were invited to CAVS to learn along with the artists. These rabbis included Daniel Shevitz, Director of Hillel at MIT and organizer of a conference on computers and Judaism; Zalman Schachter, the spiritual leader of B'nai Or in Philadelphia and Professor of Religion at Temple University; and Josef Wosk, a congregational rabbi in Massachusetts and a graduate of both the rabbinical seminary at Yeshiva University and Harvard Divinity School.

The animated discussions between Paul Earls, Lowry Burgess, Joe Moss, Otto Piene and myself helped to develop an overall plan for solidifying fluid ideas into a concrete set of visual and auditory experiences. Joe Moss, a sculptor, environmental artist and art professor at the



University of Delaware, was named Project Director. He was joined by Allan Schwarz, architect, artist and Research Fellow at CAVS. They supervised the construction and installation of the exhibition.

I will begin with the *talit* (prayer shawl) that is spread over the exhibit as a sky, as a firmament and as a tent. Four *tzitzit* (ritual fringes) flow down from the corners of the "Talit Firmament" linking sky to earth. Beth Galston, an artist who has created sensitive environments with the scrim cloth used in theater sets, was invited to create the *talit* from black and white scrim. It was designed as a layered firmament on which Paul Earls' laser animation would be projected. You look up and see stars come into being and Hebrew letters emerging to spell out *berasheit* (in the beginning), *elohim* (God), *or* (light), *rakeeyah* (firmament), *yom* (day), and *lailah* (night).

The *Torah* scroll begins with the words, "*Beresheit barah elohim et.*" "In the beginning, God created *the* heavens and the earth." Tradition tells us that the first creation is "*et.*" "*Et,*" which means "the" was created before heavens. "*Et*" is written with the first and last letters of

BETH GALSTON
environmental sculptor



Born
Los Angeles, California, 1948

Education
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York,
BA, 1970
Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City,
Missouri, BFA 1978
Massachusetts Institute of Technology,
Cambridge, Massachusetts, SMVisS,
1981

Current Appointments
Fellow, Center for Advanced Visual
Studies, MIT, Cambridge, 1981-85;
1987-

Selected One-Person Exhibitions
Kingston Gallery, Boston, Massachu-
setts, 1983, 1985, 1986
Mobius Theater, Boston, 1986
Montserrat College of Art Gallery, Bev-
erly, Massachusetts, 1986
MIT Museum, Cambridge, 1987

Selected Group Exhibitions
Tufts University, Medford, Massachu-
setts, 1982
DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, Massa-
chusetts, 1982
New England Artists Festival, Universi-
ty of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1983
Boston Visual Artists Union, Boston,
1984
Northeastern University, Boston, 1984
Rose Art Museum, Waltham, Massachu-
setts, 1984
Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City,
Missouri, 1985
Limelight Club, New York City, 1985

Brockton Art Museum, Brockton, Massa-
chusetts, 1987

Statement

I am a sculptor working with light to
create participatory environments. I use
light and a variety of materials such as
wooden screens, mirrored plexiglas and
translucent fabric.

My light sculptures involve movement
and change, and like architecture, engage
the viewer as an active participant. The
environments are designed for people to
walk through and experience physically.



Work in Lights **OROT**

"Talis"
with Maura Walsh, 1987.

The scrim ceiling, "Talis," is designed from the image of a prayer shawl: a rectangular cloth that bends and wraps around the human form, or creates an overhead canopy.

Black and white fabric is used, as in the stripes of a prayer shawl. The fabric forms create an upward and undulating motion suggestive of light and sky.

Scrim is a gauzelike fabric used in the theater, a transformable 'canvas' which shifts from opaque to translucent in changing light.

Nine bent fabric planes, 12' x 21', tautly stretched on cables, form a three-layered canopy in the central area of the space.

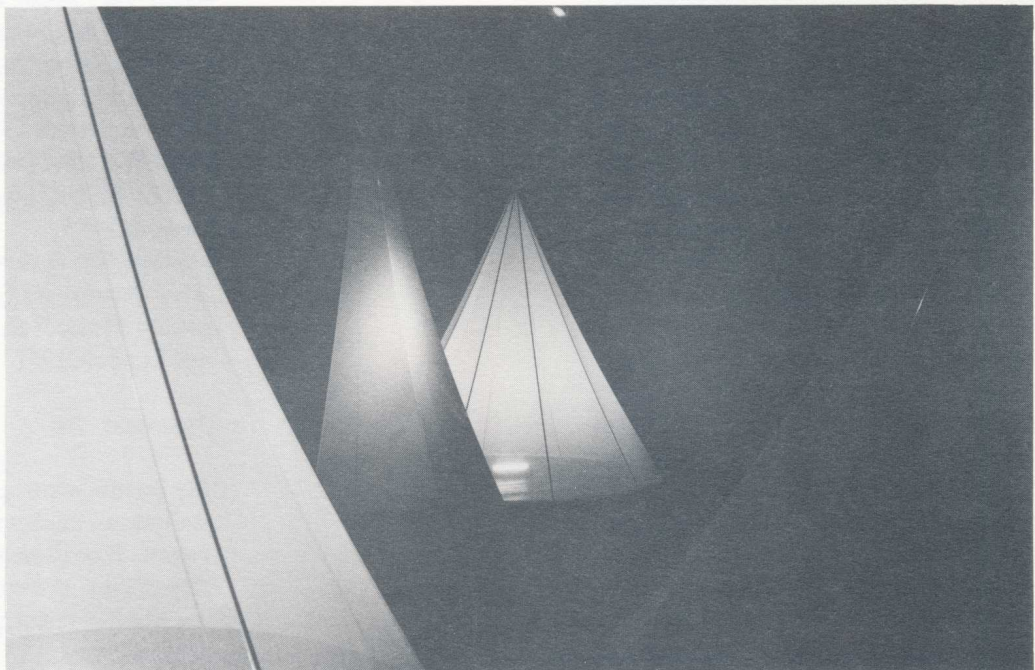
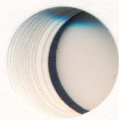
Laser and incandescent light projections on the scrim appear to hover in space, like a hologram.



Beth Galston
"Lightwall"
Kingston Gallery
Boston, MA
1983
photo: Galston

Each installation is site-specific, designed for and in a particular space.

Light is used to create a world of subtlety, illusion, and ambiguities in space and time. My concern is the shifting perceptions of viewers as they move through a space.



Beth Galston
"Tepee"
Kingston Gallery
Boston, MA
1986
photo: Galston