

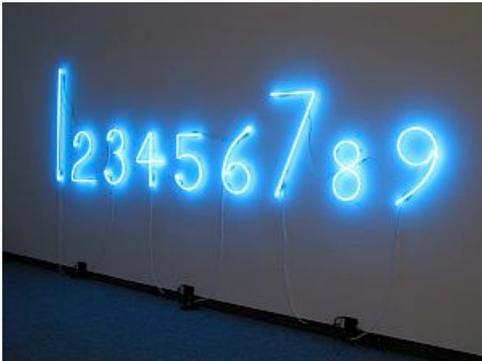


### 18 ILLUMINATIONS: CONTEMPORARY ART AND LIGHT

November 21, 2007 to March 2, 2008

The illuminated spectacle of a snowstorm revealed in a car's headlights on a drive into a winter night works as an immediate metaphor for the techno sublime aspect showing in *18 Illuminations*. Like a chandelier, comprised of many cut crystals, this exhibition makes visible a stunning spectacle of multi-faceted art works that allow the immaterial aspects of light to be realized as an elegant metaphor for the change in centuries.

The sun and stars and the reflective stuff of earth have always fascinated scientific, philosophical and religious thinkers – given that these bright objects are held to be both noble and divine. In alchemy, gold represented Helios the sun god. The 3<sup>rd</sup> century Neoplatonic Greek philosopher Plotinus put forward the theory that the play of light and shadow is an essential part of the contemplative process. Christianity fused the ancient Greek idea of light as philosophical with the concept that sunlight creates and reveals existence. During the Middle Ages light came to signify divine revelation. Halos usually were depicted as gold to signify the light of the sun, which in turn, signified holiness. Like most medieval Christian iconology, all 'signs' were intended to signify on more than one level. The practice of depicting multiple levels of allegory is consistent with the medieval interest in the invisible within the visible world, a device that allows for intimations of the second coming. By channeling light through the high arched windows in church clerestories architects could make light manifest, so that it came to be understood as the representation of "god" himself.



Light is an essential element in the history of art, the source of optical and symbolic substance. We cannot touch or hold spectral light, but sight itself is predicated upon the ability of the eye to see it. The idea of light has many meanings: warding off darkness, revealing what lies in shadow, and offering insight. The materials and contents of the exhibition demonstrate these many aspects: light emits from neon sculptures and glows from within lanterns and cylinders; it sparkles on hubcaps and reflects on glass; it is the essential component that reveals the photographic image. Where there is light there is shadow. Depending on one's position, one sees images that can quickly dissolve. Searching for light includes stumbling through the dark – a shaft crossing a face shows both sides of life: suffering and joy, death and survival.

The works collected in *18 Illuminations* show how light and darkness both reveal and obscure; while a moth risks death we nonetheless understand the yearning of Icarus to reach for the sun and accept that in trying to attain light we must also traverse the shadows. This exhibition has been curated by Corinna Ghaznavi and Carla Garnet, and circulated by the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario

Artists represented in the exhibition: Stephen Andrews, Kenn Bass, Janet Bellotto, Dana Claxton, Tom Dean, Stan Denniston, Sarindar Dhaliwal, Reuel Dechene, Luis Jacob, Bill Jones, Micah Lexier, Bernie Miller, Sheila Moss, Lisa Neighbour, Ed Pien, Chrysanthe Stathacos, Sharon Switzer, and Tim Whiten.



*Exhibition sponsored by the Canada Council for the Arts, supported by John C. MacAulay.*

**Related Programs**

**Art for Lunch**, Wednesday, November 21, 12:10pm  
Exhibition tour with curator Corinna Ghaznavi.

**Art After Dark, Friday, February 22, 8 to 11pm**

Music, drinks, appetizers, and tours of *Subconscious City* and *18 Illuminations: Contemporary Art and Light*.

Images from the top:

**Reuel Dechene**, *Da Da Da*, 2005. Mixed media light wheels. Photo: John Abrams.

**Micah Lexier**, *All Numbers are Equal (Argon)*, 2005. Nine clear glass numbers filled with argon gas. Photo: John Abrams.

**Tim Whiten**, *T after Tom: Level, Square, Plumb Bob*, 2002. Cast and etched glass, brass. Photo: John Abrams.