

ROD QUIN

"Section D'Or, A Grey Scale Sunday On The Isle Of The Grand Jatte"

OR Gallery

Rod Quin's most recent installation is mechanically complex: a large, divided front window is drawn elegantly in gold and white with a series of overlapping circles, like Celtic tracery. The size of each drawn ring is determined by the size of the window frame into which it fits. Inside the gallery proper, these window circles are represented by three-dimensional wooden frames, several inches thick. Each frame corresponds to one drawn ring. The frames appear like disconnected gears, a mechanism suspended without engagement.

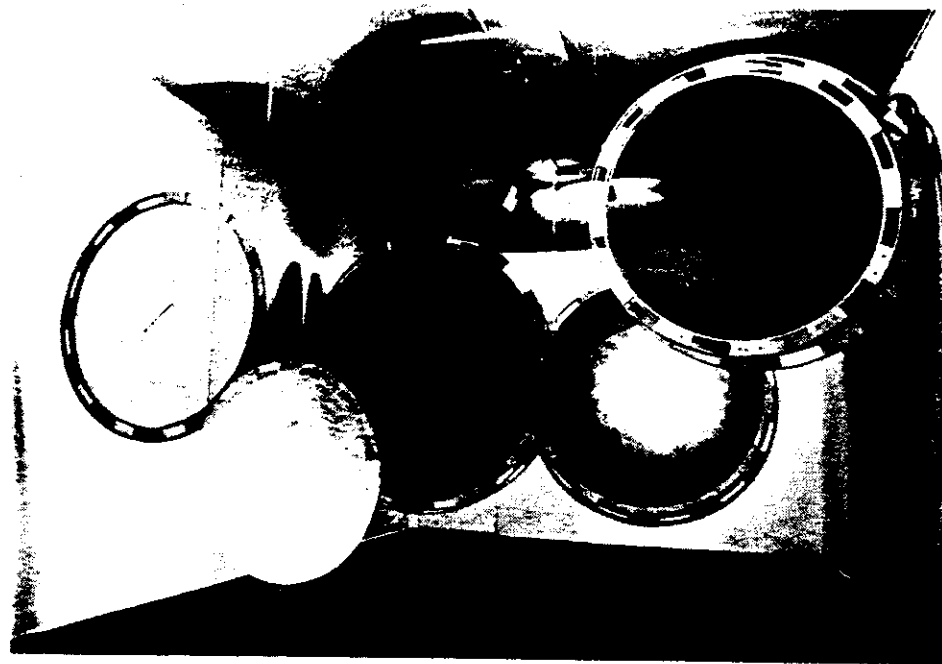
An hexagonally patterned scrim fabric is stretched over the front and rear surface of each wooden frame creating the form of a translucent disk. There is some eroticism in the stretched skin, recalling the coy sexuality of lace veils and stockings (see Weyl's *Symmetry*, pp. 88-89). The disks are visually active, vibrating with diffraction patterns that change with the movement of the viewer. The fabric has a limited color range, shading from

white to black, and the disks are arranged in size from the smallest at the front of the gallery to the largest, a seven-foot disk backed up against the rear wall. An optical effect swells this last disk with an expansive convexity, creating the illusion of a sphere that can be entered. The steel cables that suspend each disk midway between floor and ceiling have a hardware store appearance, their banal strength modifying the translucent ethereality.

From the sidewalk outside the gallery, the spectator can match drawn ring to circular frame, receding within the gallery volume. The installation can be appreciated as a whole from the street: an artwork under glass. When inside the gallery, the spectator is uncomfortably placed under a lens, the gallery environment inevitably formalizing the social behaviour of perception.

Section D'Or functions as a pun in relationship to the gallery title and recalls the 1912 *Section D'Or* Exhibition. The subtitle, *Sunday on the Isle of Grande Jatte*, is a reference to Seurat's most familiar painting. The front window of the Or Gallery is the same size and has the same proportions as the painting.

For Quin, Seurat is an historical symbol, the reification of that spirit of inventiveness characteristic of the early Modern period, a paradigm for the role of Artist-Scientist. As Seurat was influenced by the theories of Helmholtz and Chevreul, interpreting them in the context of Impressionism, so Quin presents himself as an Artist-Scientist, with references to modern physics, interpreted in the light of minimal and site-specific art. We are familiar with this stance from the *Experiments in Art and Technology* begun at the L.A. County Museum in the late 60's. Consider the work of Quin in relationship to a sculpture like James Turrell's *Airum*, 1968, in which insubstantial light is apparently objectified.



Rod Quin: *Section D'Or, A Grey Scale Sunday On The Isle Of The Grand Jatte*; 1987; installation view OR Gallery. Photo: the Artist.

The role of Artist-Scientist fits Quin awkwardly; his work is more pedagogic than most science, almost ministerly and fits rather well within a more visionary tradition associated with mystical illumination. His art suggests a nostalgia for the classical building tradition, a quasi-religious tradition in which building is based on canons of proportion and rules of placement supposedly derived from natural harmonies. This desire for harmonic building informed *Section D'Or* sculptor Raymond Duchamp-Villon in his project for a *Maison Cubiste* (in which, coincidentally, an abstract image of the sun was the central ornament). Quin's *Or* window invites comparison with traditional lotiform or rose windows. His work refers one back to the sculptural, representational forms of Classical building, but succeeds only in the creation of a disembodied, etherealized ghost image of the tradition.

As Brancusi can be thought of as having concretized insubstantial classical myth in sculptures like *Narcissus*, *Leda* or the series of the *Sleeping Muse*, so Quin can be understood to have etherealized the monument. Where the paradigm for Brancusi is folkish carving, Quin's method is to use the symbol of Seurat as an historical paradigm for the etherialization of architecture: architecture as painting and painting as symbol.

This reincarnation of the harmonic building tradition has the characteristics of a nocturne, a vision of insubstantial forms. As an historical metaphor it is the sculptural building tradition seen through closing eyelids, the twilight of form.

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From: C Magazine #14

Summer 1987