

Jim Hodges at Weatherspoon Art Museum

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Jim Hodges at Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC. *Sculpture* 24, n.1 (January/February 2005): 75-76

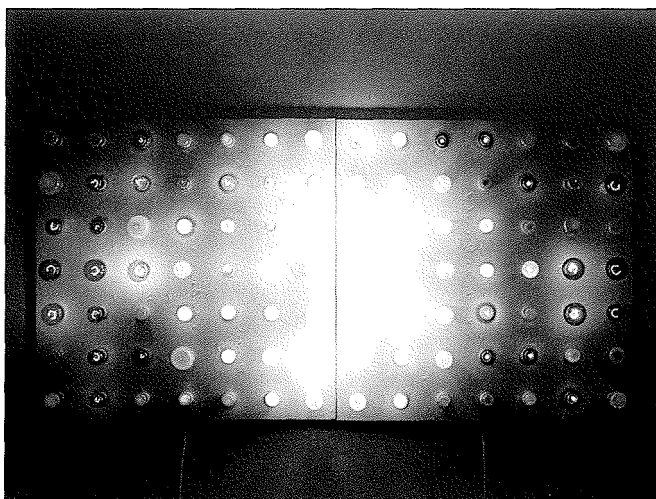
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Article:

Jim Hodges's enchanting, multi-faceted work appeared on the 1990s art scene like a ray of sunshine, his artistic illusions with light and mirrors inverting the often alienating postmodern disillusionment of much contemporary art. Favoring the sensual over the sensible and the infinitely perceptual over the tediously cerebral, his works are all activated by light and thematically allude to landscapes. The work is not simply decadent, as disclosure of deeper layers provides enlightenment through visual pleasure. Hodges's lighthearted twists on art history are charming and inviting to diverse viewers, whose engagement completes the work.

The pieces are humble in their majesty, showcasing the ornament of everyday life. Hodges is like a child prodigy whose playful crafts (in colored pencil, tissue paper, tape, and mirrors) display profound mischief and become works of intricate genius. The work is best arranged with curatorial recognition that every work shares and plays well with others.



Jim Hodges, With, 1999. Lightbulbs, ceramic sockets, and mixed media, 31.5 x 63 x 5 in. Below: J. Lynn Campbell, Model #7, 2003. Stainless steel wire fabric, steel trolley and casters, feathers, acrylic paint, and stainless steel wire, figure 14 x 33 x 50 in.

A highlight of this show is the juxtaposition on opposite walls of *Folding (into a greater world)* (1998), a mosaic of irregularly cut mirror pieces, and *With the wind* (1997), an installation of colorful scarves. Like a disco ball, *Folding* refracts erratic, pixelated patterns. Contemporary notions of image falsity, surface identity, and fragmentation become a non-threatening, expressionist fracturing of lyrical forms. The viewer's self-reflection and spatial orientation visually dissociate into a sea of delightful dislocations and infinite colors, particularly emphasized by the resplendent, impressionistic reflection of *With the wind*. This layered scarf wall hanging resembles a prism, ranging from intensities of deep indigos and violets on one end to a more fluid hanging of warm, fruity pastel fabrics. The overlay of saturated and translucent hues is reminiscent of watercolor painting, and the scarves' graceful, airy movement and casting of shadows create tranquillity. Hodges has commented that the work represents all the colors of the sky, like the brilliance of the sun itself. Subtle patterns emerge from

behind veils, as do surface-sewn flowers and butterflies, carrying on Hodges's characteristic layering of medium and metaphor. Similarly, *On we go* (1996), a glistening multi-layered spider web of chains inhabiting the corner of the gallery, entraps the viewer. Exhibiting Hodges's persistent interest in line drawing, its enigmatic tangles are again irregular, though not unfathomable, and visually captivating.

Hodges's preoccupation with seeking pleasure in the random-- the inexplicably mesmerizing—is spotlighted by wood panels displaying commercial light bulbs in myriad colors, shapes, and functions (many celebrational). The grid patterns and balanced symmetry in these works, albeit sometimes twisted and inverted (*Ahhhh*, 2000), lend a sense of clarity to disorder, emphasizing delight in variety. Unlit bulbs (*With*, 1999) provide respite from intense glowing and heat (again, like the sun), highlighting color elsewhere.

Hodges's background in painting shines through this mixed-media exhibition. He cleverly mirrors art historical traditions and theories, continuously reinventing cultural and personal landscapes. Here, reflecting on one's history, identity, and place in the world, especially with unpredictable loss of grounding and clear-cut meaning, may lead to unbounded discovery and joy.

—Ann Millett