GALLERY WENDI NORRIS

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Chris Fraser @ Highlight

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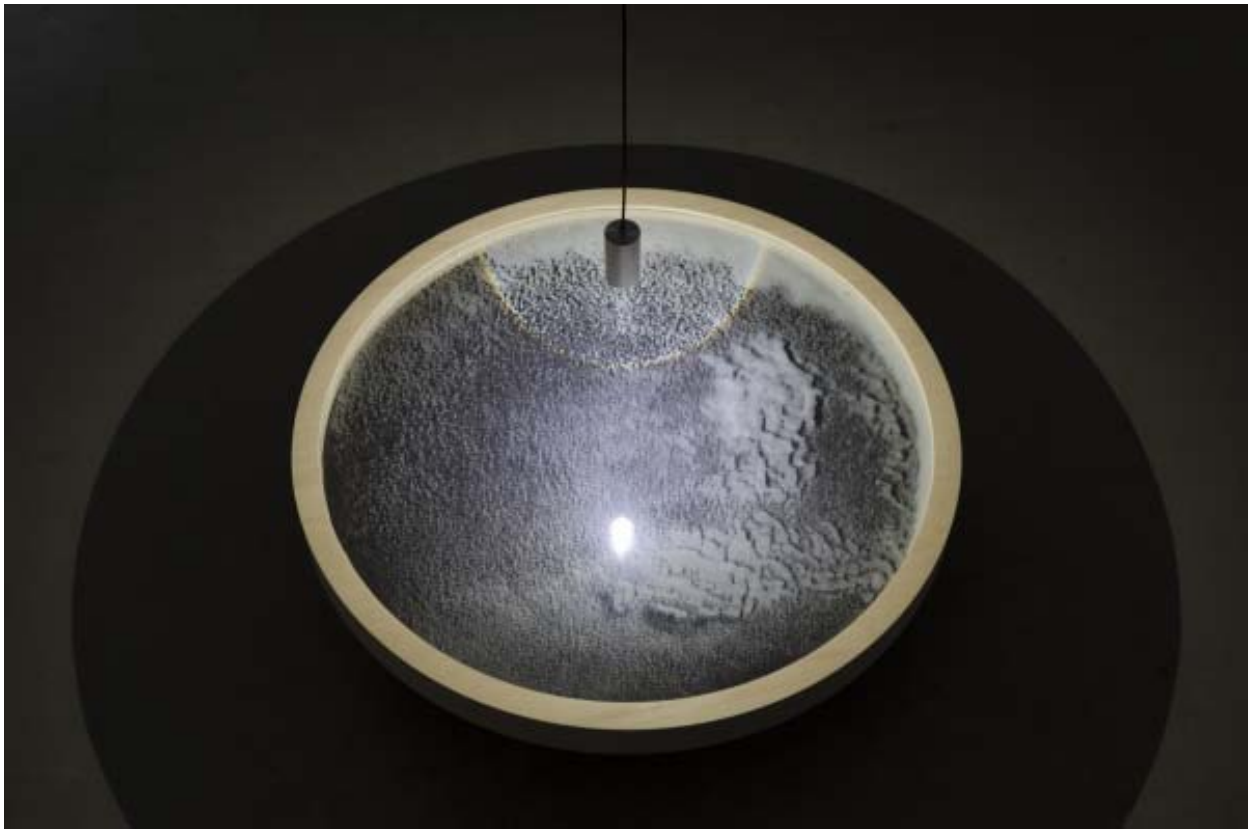

Scry, 2013, glass microspheres, maple plywood, LED pendant, 48" diameter x 1"

Chris Fraser's current show *In Stereo* is an experience. This isn't some hack journalistic turn of phrase. The bulk of his work exists — literally — in an experiential space between you and the objects he creates. His works operate by projecting dimensional halos, the sensation of which falls somewhere between a rainbow seen at a distance and a 3D movie viewed from the front row. Halos, in Fraser's handling, are a perspectival phenomenon; they shift and change shape as you move about the room. The images are stereoscopic. Meaning, they cannot be represented by a photo or a moving image shot with a single-lens camera. It doesn't take long before you notice that the messages received by your eyes fail to match the contents of the room. Fraser's art, in other words, demonstrates how the mind selectively edits sensory input.

Some background: Fraser has been known in the past for his work with camera obscuras. By carefully controlling the light entering a room or an apparatus, he was able to create unique and challenging installations that change hue and shape as light, usually streaming through a window, shifted over time. In this body of work, Fraser does away with the apparatus and fixes the light source, making *you* the agent of change. To a limited extent, Fraser's work resembles Robert Irwin's and that of other Light and Space artists.

But fundamentally Fraser isn't expressing ideas about light; he's grappling with the limitations of seeing. He wants us to notice what we edit out in the mistaken belief we've seen it all before.

Like David Hockney's photo collages and multi-camera "cubist movies," Fraser's works remind us that perception changes with perspective; it adds in some things, subtracts others, but in the end, its default mode is to simplify for survival's sake. Fraser's work reveals the strange consequences. The core components of his works are glass microspheres – the same particles that give crosswalks a reflective shimmer. Embedded in acrylic paint, as in the white canvases of Mary Corse, they reflect light back at its source. Fraser first discovered these properties when a crew of crosswalk painters spilled thousands of them on the pavement. Like raindrops, the unblemished spheres scattered light from the sun in rainbows that appeared on the ground. They were visible, but only at a certain angle. Fraser spent the next six months in his studio trying to recreate and amplify this experience. *Emmanuelle,* a large, slightly curved piece of aluminum with a bowl-like rim, is representative of the works on view. It contains thousands of microspheres, applied like a layer of paint. But they are not, as in Corse's paintings, fixed in any medium; they simply rest on the surface. (A sheet of glass keeps them intact when the piece is hung on the wall.)

Image: Emmanuelle, 2013, 24 x 1"

Activated by a single, focused, white LED light suspended from the ceiling in front of the piece, it projects a halo outward, regardless of viewing angle. Other pieces, like *Cone,* employ more lights, and from them come more haloes still. Anyone who's seen a rainbow has witnessed this phenomenon, but few know why it occurs. Fraser's point is that we spend most of our waking hours looking, but we are rarely mindful of what we're really seeing.

That said, here is a simple prescription for viewing this show: close one eye before you walk into the gallery and keep it closed until you have gotten a good, long look. Once you feel you understand the nature of the objects in the room, open your other eye. The art will change, and it will not go back to the way it was earlier – even if you re-close your eye. Your understanding of the work will have changed, and with it the phenomenon of vision: proof that seeing is composite and mutative.

–MIKKO LAUTAMO

Chris Fraser: "In Stereo" @ Highlight Gallery through January 31, 2014.

http://www.squarecylinder.com/2014/01/chris-fraser-highlight/