or the last hundred years or so, modernist expansions and the postmodernist restructuring of value in art have generally undermined verisimilitude's supremacy. Realism as it describes mimetic representation is in fact a form of illusionism practiced by painters. The point of the game is to invoke optical phenomena — a kind of visual magic, so to speak — that can delight perception. By portraying imaginary three-dimensional spaces on a two-dimensional surface, visual fictions become elaborate constructions of the pigment's chameleon-like ability to represent texture, light, color, volume, et al.

Recently, several exhibitions, symposia and books have addressed the ways in which artists, both in the present and in the past, have used various instruments as drawing aids, among them mirrors and lenses, the camera obscura and the camera lucida. The exhibitions I am referring to include Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen, at the J. Paul Getty Museum of Art, the Thomas Eakins' retrospective at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as well as David Wilson's ongoing installation at the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Culver City, California. Why an interest in optics now?

The recent symposium called Art and Optics, hosted last December 1 and 2 by the New York Institute for the Humanities under the auspices of Lawrence Weschler, brought together such academic glitterati as Svetlana Alpers, Jonathan Crary, Michael Fried, Rosalind Krauss, Linda Nochlin and Susan Sontag, in addition to experts and scholars from the museum and scientific worlds: Keith Christianson, Samuel Edgerton, Martin Kemp and David Stork. In the course of their presentations, they reviewed and revived the debate about representational art based on mimesis and its practice prior to the 19th century. All of this was generated as a commentary on David Hockney's thesis (in collaboration with physicist Charles Falco) that the use of optics was widespread much earlier than had been previously thought. Hockney's findings are cataloged in Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters (Viking, 2001).

Although accepted within an aesthetic contemporary complex, working from photographs or opaque
The BROOKLYN! exhibition at the Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art (September 8—November 25, 2001) was born of serendipity. Shortly after I arrived at PBICA from New York to become the institute’s first director, I became aware that many of the people I was meeting were from Brooklyn. The big migration from the “borough of da bums” had not been made just by the Dodgers, but by thousands of other people — all in search of the sun. So it seemed a natural thing to bring the recent art phenomenon of Brooklyn here where so many “ex-pats” now live. From this simple idea was born what turned out to be something of a phenomenon. I teamed up with co-curator Dominique Nahas and we made the trek back north and hit the pavements of Brooklyn in search of the best art we could find. Not surprisingly, there was an abundance of it.

Inclusion criteria were simple: the invitees had to live and work in Brooklyn and their work had to be good — at least in the eyes of the two curator/critics who’ve been trying to ascertain “the good” for about 40 years, collectively. In this regard, we were lucky, what with Vito Acconci, Martha Rosler, Sue Williams, Leonardo Drew and Xu Bing, for starters, just a short subway ride from each other.

It was clear that a certain Whitmanesque spirit was going to embrace the exhibition as well. Brooklyn’s famous poet son, newspaperman, chronicler, walker, lover wrote auspiciously in his 1856 poem, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”: “And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.” How could he know how many would indeed cross these shores, especially if one wind blew? From this simple idea there was born something of the good for about 40 years, collectively.

Among these were an almost obsessive attention to detail and very labor-intensive work as well as a certain “high-tech/low-tech” interest; as Dominique noted, artists were commenting on technological issues in sophisticated, but low-tech ways. This was apparent in the dizzying array of materials on view: everything from brooms and pipe cleaners to old shoes and electric fans.

Add to this mix films, videos and interactive computer performances and you have a good starting point for an idea of the breadth of work here. Installing and dismantling this diverse show gave us equal parts exhilaration and exhaustion. We may not see it again.

Michael Rush was co-curator, with Dominique Nahas, of the exhibition BROOKLYN! at the Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, where he is also director. Mr. Rush writes for Art in America and The New York Times.

By Michael Rush

W illiamsburg, a multi-ethnic, urban, waterfront community in northwestern Brooklyn, across the Manhattan Bridge from the Lower East Side has encouraged a thriving local art scene for a decade now. For that long, I have been a visitor to the area — first to a series of “guerrilla” spaces (usually) organized by curator Annie Herron, and then to Pierogi and Momenta as they became “established” as alternative spaces. Four years or so ago, Roebling Hall became the first SoHo-style gallery in the area.

During those visits, I have been privy to the birth of a real art scene. One of the advantages of Williamsburg’s galleries is that, from the beginning, they have been managed by ingenious entrepreneurs. These gallery owners (they couldn’t really be called “dealers” at the beginning) were wise enough to keep their spaces open on Sundays and Mondays. Still, very few people went. Often on a Sunday, the only other people in a gallery would be the critics Roberta Smith of The New York Times and Jerry Saltz of The Village Voice. Reviews of galleries would appear probably twice a year, but the galleries hung in there.

Developing in Williamsburg was a distinctive new art scene. It drew from within itself as much as it did from the scene in Manhattan. Aesthetic tendencies emerged. Joe Amrein, who directed Pierogi, established the flat files. You could put on a pair of cotton gloves and wander at will through hundreds of drawings, originally under $200 — now at a much broader price range, but still considerably less expensive than comparable works in Manhattan. His exhibitions were heavily slanted toward conceptualism, toward a realization of the unfinished promise of — especially — Robert Smithson. It was a canny move.

By Monroe Denton
Another type of art historical recovery in Williamsburg was the continuation of Surrealism. Amy Sillman’s drawings, for example, were paradigmatic of the cadavre exquis in their amorphous boundary-less style. Related was a courting of paranoia, as the free-associations of the Surrealists’ parlor games led to chartings of the unconscious. Mark Lombardi was a pioneer in this area, abandoning rather Al Held-type abstraction to make literal the underpinnings of this push/pull space in diagrams of the movements of money through collapsing savings and loans. The drawings also illustrated oil drilling scandals and various offshore bank accounts. The Williamsburg work was homemade, irresolute, more concerned with play than presentation.

A music scene also sprang up. Galapagos took over an old service station and created a reflecting pool in its grease pit, and “new classical” and various hybrid jazz and rock groups found audiences. Soon there were a dozen or more clubs. Restaurants moved from diner food to fusion cuisines of various specialties that had never before been dreamed of, much less attempted. Many were worth repeat visits.

By last fall, Williamsburg had more than 30 galleries. Unlike earlier New York art districts, however, these spaces tend to preserve their funkiness as a badge of honor. The walls may be flat white, but they are not floated plaster. The floors look as if the polyurethane was applied by the gallery owners themselves. Many are in shops that still use the windows for display or to welcome a look into the whole exhibition inside. It’s more a feeling of art in a small town than in the enclaves of the mighty.

People are always asking if Williamsburg will be the next art center. I can’t imagine that it will be. I can’t imagine that the “art center” as such, if it is to survive, can leave Manhattan, but certainly Williamsburg provides a new axis.

The A train has emerged as the most important “art transportation” — linking the Meat Packing District (at the 8th Avenue & 14th Street station near Gavin Brown’s Enterprise, Casey Kaplan, and soon Sperone) to Chelsea and up to Harlem. The same station is an embarkation place for the L train; five stops later, one is at Bedford Avenue, the heart of Williamsburg’s gallery district.

The area is free of architectural distinction, but not charm. And, behind those ersatz-brick facades and within those garages and body shops there are artists, writers and musicians working away to fill the galleries for their own discourse and to open a new direction for the art world.

Monroe Denton writes about contemporary and performance art. He teaches a number of art history courses at SVA including Art and Popular Culture.
A. Eric Arctander, along with four partners, has incorporated Collaborative Concepts, a not-for-profit art-facilitating organization, located in Beacon, NY. The centerpiece of the organization is a 6,500-square-foot building that has 4,000 square feet of exhibition space and two artist-in-residence studios. There is also an outdoor sculpture site. The facility's first exhibition included a major installation by sculptor Grace Knowlton. A planned special project by Susan Wilmarth will take place later this year. Collaborative Concepts has two off-site exhibitions scheduled as well as part of its public art program. Open Wednesdays through Sundays; 345 Main Street, Beacon, NY (tel. 845.838.1516). Mr. Arctander teaches Graphic Imaging: A History and Tribal Art.

Rosemary Erpf recently curated a collection for Metromedia Fiber Networks, which focuses on the theme of communication and creativity in contemporary art. In a symposium at the CUNY Graduate School and University Center on Interdisciplinary Practice she delivered a paper titled “Connectivity: Susan Rothenberg and Performance Art.” Ms. Erpf teaches Modern Art Through Pop.

Deborah A. Goldberg presented a lecture on the sculptor Isamu Noguchi at the Flint Institute for the Arts in Michigan, in conjunction with the exhibition “American Modern: 1925-1940, Design for a New Age.” For the Museum of Modern Art, she designs courses and multi-part lectures for special-needs groups, including the physically challenged, mentally ill and elderly. For the recent Alberto Giacometti exhibition, she taught a course for the blind and partially sighted that permitted them to touch the sculptures (wearing polyethylene gloves), and tactile diagrams. She also recently conducted a touch-tour of the Louise Nevelson-designed sculptural environment in the Erol Beker Chapel at St. Peter's Church in midtown Manhattan. Last fall, she organized and moderated a public poetry program entitled Autumn Rhythm for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Held in the Met's modern art galleries, the program linked the poetry of Frank O'Hara, the music of John Cage and Morton Feldman, and the art of the New York School. Ms. Goldberg teaches American Art and Modern Art Through Pop.

Ellen Levy will chair a panel named Art and Activism at CAA 2002 in Philadelphia. In the altered post-September 11 environment, the panel (which will include Nina Felschyn, Tim Rollins, Nato Thompson and Krzysztof Wodiczko) will explore how artists can be heard outside the confines of the art community. As a CAA board member active in the Services to Artists committee, Levy is conducting a feasibility study, with Marta Teegan, to explore possibilities of a CAA grant program to sponsor international exhibitions. Part of the program's mission would be to preserve diversity of artistic expression. Also, the Fine Arts Department, chaired by Jeanne Siegel, will host Levy's panel, Artists Visualizing Information Today on April 11, 2002. This panel will feature Erica Baum, Nancy Chunn, Johanna Drucker and Matt Mullican. Ms. Levy teaches Art and Science.

Barbara Pollock continues to write for Art News as a contributing editor. Her article “How Can You Think About Making Art At A Time Like This?” (November 2001) reported on artists' reactions to the events of 9/11. Pollock's recent photos and video projects, “Dance Party,” were exhibited at the Esso Gallery in Chelsea last fall, which had been due to open on September 12. She recently completed an artist-in-residency at The Kitchen in New York and a Fellowship at Ragdale, an artists' community in Lake Forest, IL. Ms. Pollock teaches History of Photography.

Beth Rosenberg coordinated a daylong symposium entitled Open Source Architecture: Building Eyebeam early last December. The free event, held at the New School's Tishman Auditorium, coincided with Eyebeam's architectural design competition to build a museum of art and technology in New York. Featured at the symposium were artists Jean-Marc Gauthier, Frank Gillette, Cynthia Beth Rubin and Annette Weintraub as well as curators/critics Dan Cameron, George Fifield, Saul Ostrow and Michael Rush. Ms. Rosenberg co-teaches Mannerism and A History of Women Artists with Lizbeth Marano.

Amy Taubin is a contributing editor to the magazine Film Comment, “a forum for smart idiosyncratic writing about movies” which is published twice a month by the Film Society at Lincoln Center. She has recently written about Godard’s In Praise of Love and Gus van Zandt’s Gerry. She is one of 10 critics included in Film: the Critics’ Choice, a coffee table world history of film edited by Geoff Andrews and published by Billboard Press. Taubin will appear in a documentary directed by Mike Hodges, Murder by Numbers, about serial killer films, to be screened on the Independent Film Channel in February. She will also appear on the new DVD of The Silence of the Lambs in a documentary segment. Ms. Taubin teaches History of the Independent Avant-Garde Film, Development of Video Art, Women Make Movies, and Who’s Looking (The Function of Women in Art).

Ann-Sargent Wooster is on the board of directors of New Arts Program, Inc. a nonprofit art service organization and museum, which presents to the public educational opportunities with individual artists from the literary, visual and performing arts. She is one of the organizers of the 4th NAP Biennial Video Festival; in addition, she is one of the festival's judges and is the writer of the notes for the catalog. Screening venues include the Delaware Center for Contemporary Arts, the Philadelphia Art Alliance and the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York. Ms. Wooster teaches World Art Survey.
Artists' Responses and Wider Perspectives
organized: General Perspectives, Scientific theories, five panel presentations were by the practitioners, and what social factors Hockney's position viable? Where are the documentary evidence is sufficient to make Eyck for example, what historical or documentary? Is there such a thing as cheating in art, which itself is a critical fiction? On the other hand, if drawing aids were used in the execution of a painting or a drawing, a sculpture or a photograph? Is a surgeon who employs technologically enhanced visual data any less a skilled performer? Or should the doctor “eyeball” his visual coordinates so as not to “cheat”? Do the ends justify the means? At a time when many artists merely sign their names to works completely fabricated by nameless assistants or artisans, why is the concern about cheating in art back on the critic's drawing board? Is there such a thing as cheating in art, which itself is a critical fiction? On the other hand, if drawing aids were used in the early 15th century, by van Eyck for example, what historical or documentary evidence is sufficient to make Hockney's position viable? Where are the lenses, journals and letters supposedly used by the practitioners, and what social factors were in place to make it necessary to hide their use? Where are the residua of this “secret knowledge”? If Hockney's proposition were true, how would it change the historical record?

To examine and evaluate Hockney's new theories, five panel presentations were organized: General Perspectives, Scientific Voyages, Experts on Individual Artists, Artists' Responses and Wider Perspectives. In General Perspectives, Keith Christianson, curator of Italian paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art cited the kinds of rigorous training a painter like Caravaggio would undergo at the turn of the 17th century. Unlike in today's art school, the student would be required to make numerous preparatory drawings, learn the science of perspective and be trained at a much earlier age. It was during this period, Christianson said, that the public's expectations for works of art went beyond traditional verisimilitude to include theatrical composition and dramatic lighting effects.

Samuel Edgerton, the most noteworthy scholar to focus on this issue, is Italian Renaissance Professor of Art History at Williams College. He elegantly presented the ways in which “the whole science of optics influenced Christian thought during the Middle Ages.” His seminal work, The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective (Basic Books, 1975), has never been cited by Hockney. Edgerton’s brief history of optics begins in ancient Greece where optics was “a branch of Euclidean geometry.” “In the 12th century,” he noted, “the Greek word optika was Latinized as perspectiva, meaning ’to see through.’” He went on to explain how “Christian monks, fascinated by this science, could for the first time reveal how the mind of God works: how His divine grace transmits just like light rays from an illuminating source.” Edgerton made the point that “optical analogies were pervasive to Christian thought” and “that Hockney’s mirror lenses employed by artists were just another aspect of the medieval fascination with optics in general.”

Susan Sontag, in her take-no-prisoners style, critiqued what she called “the larger ideological surround” of Hockney's proposition. She said that the past should be looked at in the context of its time rather than through the values of our mass-produced culture. She also referred to the Hockney/Falco thesis as a “Warholization of art history.” She considered Hockney's suspicion of the great masters’ ability as going back to pride in American know-how. She remarked, “Americans think: if I can’t do it, it can’t be done.”

Jonathan Crary held to his own theoretical position concerning seeing and subjectivity, proposing that an optical apparatus is not neutral, but is a necessary tool in the larger organization of knowledge. He equated seeing with knowing and said that art cannot be understood by science. As an example, he discussed Gericault, who studied journals and factual reports about the shipwreck that inspired his masterpiece The Raft of the Medusa, to prepare himself for the execution of the painting. Mr. Crary’s critical texts, Techniques of the Observer (MIT Press, 1996) and Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture (MIT Press, 1999) on the subject of vision during the 19th century offer an insight into the ways in which models of perception are temporal. As moderator, Martin Kemp led the discussion Scientific Voyages, in which the panelists approached the topic of what constitutes proof from an empirical position.

Kemp stated that the nature of a proof in science is an act of interpretation based on creative and agile looking as well as theoretical modeling. The nature of the proof is different, however, in science, than it is in history, which, alas, brings us back to C.P. Snow’s famous Reade lectures describing the “Two Cultures,” in which specialized languages cannot communicate. Engineer and computer scientist David Stork hilariously debunked Falco's thesis of textual

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In November 29, 2001, The Mediation of Art and Its Audience in the Age of Mass Culture, moderated by Robert Atkins, was presented in the SVA Amphitheater. The discussion was a critique of current media-driven practices and the changing role of the museum. Emanating from the discussion were such issues as a hype-driven press, non-art exhibitions at art museums, museum curatorial policy, and the ways in which critical inquiry is being threatened by the accelerating development of art as entertainment. Antidotes were seen as being connected to advertising processes itself as well as the role of the Internet and other public forums.

The panelists included:

**Robert Atkins**, currently a fellow at Carnegie-Mellon's Studio for Creative Inquiry; editor/producer of *Artery: The Aids Art Journal & Forum*; he is the arts editor of the Media Channel. Atkins is a former columnist for *The Village Voice* and author of *Artspeak: A Guide to Contemporary Ideas, Movements and Buzzwords*.

**Jeanne Collins** worked for nearly two decades heading marketing and communications programs at museums, most recently at MoMA and the American Museum of Natural History.

**Lawrence Rinder** is the curator of contemporary art at the Whitney Museum of American Art, where he is currently chief curator of the 2002 Biennial. In 2001, he co-curated *BitStreams*, one of the first major exhibitions devoted to Net art.

**Carrie Moyer** is a painter and one half of the public art project Dyke Action Machine. She is represented by Debs and Co. in New York City and is a recipient of awards from the Creative Capital Foundation and the Peter Norton Family Fund.

**Mark Tribe** is an artist, curator and the founder/executive director of Rhizome.org. He recently recently co-curated the computer art section of “Game Show,” an exhibition of artists’ games currently at Mass Moca. He co-created the interface/browser/artwork *Starry Night* with Alex Galloway.

**Jeff Weinstein**, fine arts editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, is the former art and architecture editor at *The Village Voice*. He has written about art, food and cultural issues for *The New Yorker, Artforum, Art in America, and Food & Wine*.

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**FROM THE CHAIR**

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proof through numerical calculations regarding lens sizes and light sources. Neuroscience researcher Christopher Tyler demonstrated the methods of perspective and rules of geometric construction. By employing a perspective tool in Adobe Photoshop, he “corrected” Mantegna’s foreshortened *Dead Christ*, thus demonstrating that the distortions inherent in this “manmade” picture were not derived from a projected image.

Wider Perspectives was not only the final panel, but it was also the most theoretical. Philosopher Richard Wollheim questioned the relationship between representation and resemblance. In his opinion, the use of an optical device was not distinct from “eyeballing,” because he considers the eye and hand as intertwined in a feedback loop. Rosalind Krauss discussed technology’s ability to stockpile natural forces for distribution, in which there is a danger contrary to art, or, in other words, which can make art dispirited. Her position was an invocation of Heidegger’s “The Question Concerning Technology.”

The symposium was a powerful multi-disciplinary forum, analyzing technology’s effects on perception and hence, perhaps, consciousness. Insofar as lenses are incorporated into the history of the visual image, Hockney must be applauded for instigating a complex discussion among experts in their fields. Although the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s brochure for its 2001–2002 season of lectures cites his “extensive and visual evidence that lenses and not mathematics are the true tools of the old masters,” I am more inclined to agree with Bernard Sharrat’s *New York Times* review of Hockney’s book (December 23, 2001). Sharrat exposed the PR spin as such: “What began as an unsubstantiated guess about Ingres has merely been elaborated into a highly marketable myth.” Well, perhaps!

**Suzanne Anker** is chair of SVA’s Art History Department. Her optical installation *Zoosemiotics* was part of *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen* at the J. Paul Getty Museum of Art, November, 2001 – February, 2002.

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