

Art in America

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CHICAGO

JAN TICHY

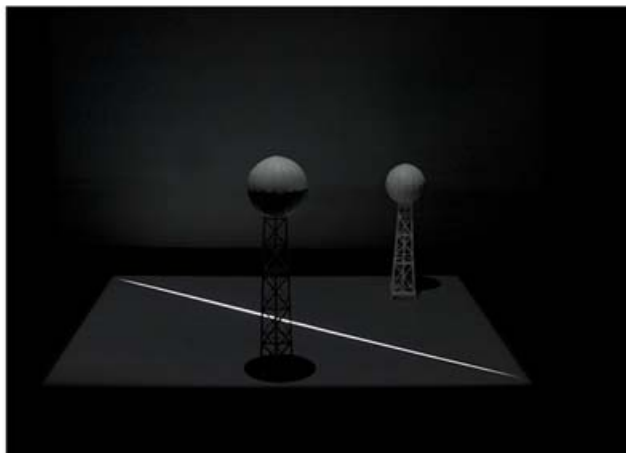
RICHARD GRAY

ON VIEW THROUGH JAN. 9

Jan Tichy's multimedia installations are meditations on landscape and light, ambiguous topologies at once familiar yet haunting and unknown. Although the Czech-Israeli artist, trained at Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, has shown internationally, this was his first major survey. It was presented in the gallery's temporary project space, the 24th floor of the John Hancock Center. The nine works, each sited in a separate area or room, together created a constellational effect, a mapping both spatial and psychological of the darkened interior.

Several pieces combine changing digital video projections and abstract fabricated objects to exploit the plastic and metaphoric potentials of light. In *Installation No. 7* (2009), projected white lines move inch by inch into and out of a corner of the room and across the surfaces of cast porcelain domes, evoking small hills or shelters, clustered on the floor. The lines eventually come to rest on a variety of box forms, also cast in porcelain, hung in a loose pattern on the wall. Suddenly from this configuration issues the video image of a mysterious leaking liquid, followed by flashes of white light that imply danger.

Throughout this body of work, strong contrasts between black and white suggest various natural phenomena or human threat. In *Installation No. 5 (Threshold)*, 2008, three unidentified aerial maps slowly materialize, only to fade to black, within white fields projected onto three walls. Some 100 paper cylinders, each several inches in diameter, are attached perpendicular to the walls, lending the piece an architectural presence. Handcrafted paper models appear in other works—such as *Installation No. 4 (Towers)*, 2008, which features two 3-foot-tall water towers standing on the floor. Bathed in white light, the towers become totems in a flat, empty space devoid of any specific landscape referent. Then a projected black orb engulfs the scene.



Jan Tichy: *Installation No. 4 (Towers)*, 2008. digital video projection with paper objects, 9 minutes; at Richard Gray.

Tichy's syncretic practice succeeds in its fluid integration of diverse media, yet holds its strongest allegiance to photography and to the light experiments of Moholy-Nagy. In several works, photographic images are transferred to video, or video sequences are presented like photographs within framed wall-mounted LCD monitors. Cloaked in darkness, these pictures convey generalized impressions, rather than detailed portraits, of places like Chicago and Tel Aviv.

For the site-specific *Installation No. 8 (Hancock)*, 2009, the artist transformed a corner space into a high-tech imitation of a camera obscura. The inverted silhouettes of three residential towers situated just outside the gallery window were projected inside as digital animation within small floating raindrops on one of the building's diagonal support members. As elsewhere, transitory images became objects, and objects became moving images within measured plays of shadow and light.

—Susan Snodgrass