Arts & Humanities

Motion Pictures

Designer Edwin Schlossberg '67CC, '71GSAS presents his 11th solo show.

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Edwin Schlossberg ’67CC, ’71GSAS stands straight and motionless before a painting titled *You Without Reflection*. You can almost see the neurons firing as he studies the work.

“It doesn’t have a preferred viewing position,” Schlossberg says. “It responds to your movement and the light in the room.”

Behind Schlossberg’s imposing, finely tailored physique, visitors move about like background actors, walking the scored wood floors of the Ronald Feldman Fine Arts gallery in SoHo and stopping at aluminum panels to view text and image. Others cluster in the center of the room like animated shrubbery. They’re here this spring evening for the opening of At the Moment, Schlossberg’s 11th solo show.

The 22 aluminum works each measure 36 x 48 inches — approximately the size of an MTA bus window. A standing Smith-Victor photographer’s lamp is placed off to one side of every painting.

“Most paintings look good when you stand dead center,” Schlossberg says. “When you move from side to side, you don’t see anything. I want the viewer to move, not the work.” At one angle, the stenciled word You is conspicuous and shining, and at the next, it’s gone — and there it is again.

Schlossberg, who is the founder of the interactive design firm ESI Design (clients include Cleveland’s Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Children’s Museum of Los Angeles), says he took his inspiration from highway signs. “While I was driving — I don’t know what part of the world I was driving in — I saw a sign and thought,

‘That’s so cool, the light floats off the surface.’ My idea was to just re-create that surface.”

He covered the aluminum panels with a Scotchlite film, then topped them with Mylar and baked them. “The Scotchlite surface has thousands of glass beads,” Schlossberg says. “It’s like powder. Acrylic paint works because it grabs onto the surface pretty well.” Most of the paintings are achromatic: silver, dark grey, white, black. A handful contain red, blue, green, orange yellow, and hot pink.

“In an ideal world, I would have those photographer’s lights move,” says Schlossberg. “You could stand still and see, in a certain way, a movie on the surface.”

Among the guests is New York City schools chancellor Joel Klein ’67CC, who guides a visitor between his two favorites, *You Absolutely Certain and You Get Attached*. “It moves a tremendous amount,” Klein says, as he views You Get Attached. The painting has silver lines angling in from the left and right sides, white splashes that resemble dendritic cells, and a few rough beams of black paint spanning the sheet.

Photographers Paul Solberg and Christopher Makos, known as the Hilton Brothers, have pedaled to the gallery on bicycles. They sport knee-length shorts, colored ankle socks, and loud sneakers.

Solberg (blue socks): “I wanted to see the medium, the aluminum, the translucency of the letters.”

Makos (pink socks): “The lighting seems —”

Solberg: “— a second idea of the exhibit.”

Makos: “There’s a wonderful physical inconvenience that reminds the viewer that light is the key. It’s totally an installation.”

It totally is.

“We tested lots of lightbulbs,” Schlossberg says. “We went down to 35 watts, then up to 100, then 75, then 60 worked. A halogen bulb is really nice because it’s really white, which means it has most of the spectrum in the light. A typical incandescent light is much more yellow and drops off the red end and the blue end of the

spectrum. We tested about 10 bulbs at the gallery when we were hanging."

An architect named Stephen Johnson says that the work is "about where you stand and how you understand the words." He adds that he owns a painting of Schlossberg's from the early 1980s that was made with heat-sensitive paint. "When you put your hand against it, the letters of a poem appear," he says. "You can only read the words if you're interacting with the painting."

The same holds true for At the Moment, though this exhibition might be even brainier. Scotchlite and acrylic paint turn out to be the artist's means for interpreting the neural nets and dendrites that he has seen and read about all his life in science journals.

Schlossberg pauses. "The words *neuronal moment* is like bad poetry," he says, attempting to attach a phrase to his inspiration. "I don't even know if *neuronal* is a word."

It is.

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