

mary temple

NORTHWEST CORNER, SOUTHEAST LIGHT

A new work in the *Light Installation Series 2002 – Present*

Rice University Art Gallery **3 February – 25 May 2011**



Mary Temple paints directly on walls and floors creating installations that not only trick the eye, but also trigger memory by freezing a fleeting moment of passing time. Upon encountering a Mary Temple light installation, it is common for viewers to stick out a hand in an attempt to block the light they perceive as falling on the wall before them. Yet after a few moments of hand waving, they realize that the shards and patches of light they see are, in fact, painted on the wall. This moment of confusion is what Mary Temple calls

the “not-knowing,” that moment when memory collides with experience causing the viewer to question what is real. Temple has refined her *trompe l’oeil* painting technique to convince the eye, mind, and body that somehow light has been captured, and so it has, in hundreds of thousands of tiny brushstrokes.

With her interest in perception, it is not surprising to learn that before studying art Mary Temple studied psychology. When she discovered painting in college, however, she also discovered artists like

James Turrell and Robert Irwin who along with other artists working in the mid-1960s in Southern California manipulated entire architectural spaces to investigate the most basic ways we perceive space, light, and color. Temple’s first light painting came somewhat out of the blue. “It was an ‘aha’ moment,” she explains. “I had the idea, I went next door to the paint store, bought paint and returned home. I had a houseplant with a lamp behind it, and I very simply painted the silhouette, but painted the light, not the shadow. I love that it is just that simple.”

Northwest Corner, Southeast Light is the largest work in her *Light Installation Series*. Working with a computer, Temple designed the installation's composition of different shapes of light in her Brooklyn studio. She selected images of trees from her vast slide archive and dropped them into the pattern of light she had created. This composition was broken into small, highly detailed sections and slides were made. Meanwhile, the Rice Gallery space was prepared according to the artist's precise plan: the walls were painted with a cool, shadowy hue and carpenters built Temple's design for the floor of unfinished white oak. This floor is inclined, or tipped toward the front of the gallery, so that viewers entering the space can see more of the floor plane. When Temple arrived at Rice Gallery, she projected

her slides onto the floor and walls using an analog projector, and she and two assistants painted the areas where the light fell to form the shadows or silhouettes of the leaves and branches. The trees in the composition are from New York's Central Park, while the magnolias on either side grow around Houston's Menil Collection. Temple and her team worked 8 to 10 hours a day for 3 weeks to complete the painting. It took an additional week to apply multiple layers of sealant and finish to the floor surface.

The title of the work, *Northwest Corner, Southeast Light* is a reference to how the artist imagines a large swath of sunlight might appear in the northwest corner of Rice Gallery. Even on sunless, overcast days,

visitors to the contemplative space may be reminded of certain moments and qualities of light. Temple notes:

People often mention that they feel a sense of equilibrium in the Light Installations. I have thought about that a lot and I think when that happens, it is because the only other time you notice that type of light phenomenon is when you are really relaxed, say, a day off or a moment of calm. In that case, your brain is in a state of repose and can register something aesthetic or beautiful. So later, when you walk into one of these pieces, your body and your mind may associate that image with the feeling of, 'It's my day off, I'm calm.' To be able to create a couple minutes of that for someone is important to me.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Mary Temple received a BFA and MFA from Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, and attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. She has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, New York, and The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut. Her work has been shown in group exhibitions at The Drawing Center, New York; Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Maine; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), California; Western Bridge, Seattle, Washington; MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts; Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; The Jewish Museum, New York, and SculptureCenter, Queens, New York. In 2010, she was the recipient of a Basil H. Alkazzi Award for Excellence in Painting, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Painting, and The Saint-Gaudens Memorial Fellowship. Mary Temple lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP

Rice Gallery exhibitions and programs receive major support from Rice Gallery Patrons and Members, The Brown Foundation, Inc., Houston Endowment, and the Kilgore Endowment. Exhibition catalogues are funded in part by the Robert J. Card, M.D. and Karol Kreymer Catalogue Endowment. The gallery receives partial operating support from the City of Houston. Crave Cupcakes, KUHF-FM, and Saint Arnold Brewing Company provide in-kind support.

Mary Temple thanks Jaclyn Conley, Cat Cox, and Paul Temple. Rice Gallery thanks university carpenters Richard Caldwell, Joe Lipe, Victor Owens, and Nathan Zuege.

HOURS

Tuesday – Saturday, 11:00 – 5:00

Thursday, 11:00 – 7:00

Sunday, Noon – 5:00

Closed Mondays and university holidays.

Rice Gallery will be closed 26 February - 7 March for Spring Break and 22 - 25 April for Easter.

Photos: Mary Temple

Rice Gallery

ricegallery.org 713.348.6069