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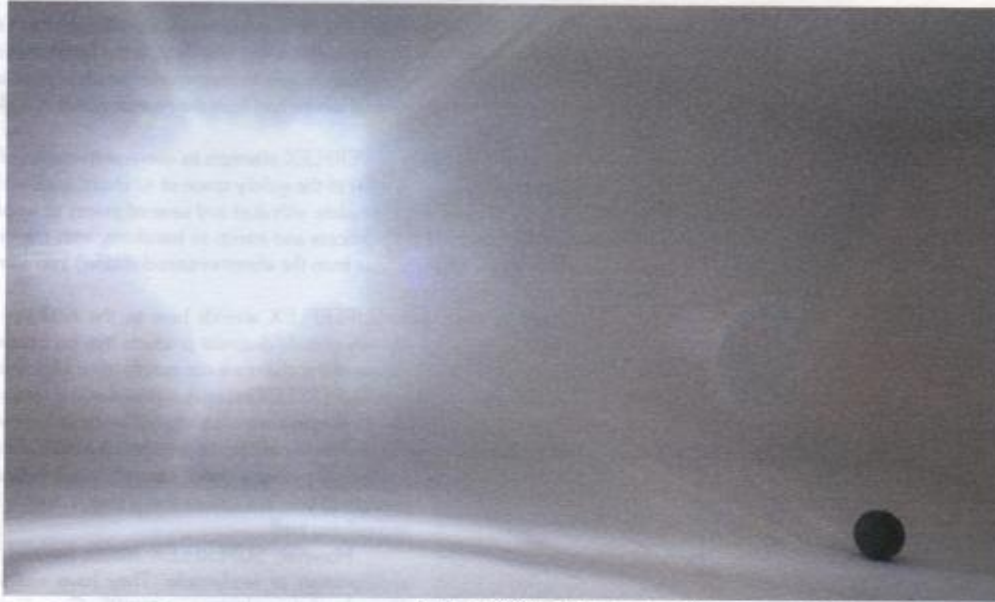
Finel Honigman, Ana. "Terence Koh," *Art Review*, April 2007.

Art Review:

TERENCE KOH

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, NEW YORK

19 JANUARY - 27 MAY



Untitled, 2007 (Installation view, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York).
Photo: Christopher Burke Studio. Courtesy Paces Projects, Los Angeles and Berlin

Terence Koh is a New York City art star. His first solo show at the Whitney Museum consists exclusively of a single movie spotlight perched on a slender tripod projecting artificial daylight and 600 degrees of heat from the lobby's pristine small exhibition space next to the elevator bank. The lamp's light beams across the lobby's flagstones, hitting hard against an opaque white floor-to-ceiling scrim in the opposite window, on which viewers' bodies cast long shadows. A security guard, on duty wearing CIA style sunglasses, herds viewers to the piece, offering them black plastic shades and sternly warning them not to look directly at the light.

The installation is conceptually, but not too obviously, related to an exhibition of Koh's work at the Kunsthalle Zürich last October. In a recent article in *New York* magazine, grandly titled 'Is Terence Koh's Sperm Worth \$100,000?', Koh is quoted as suggesting that his untitled Whitney installation could serve as a satirical commentary on his luminary status. But while some critics have disparaged the piece as merely artificial light squandering energy to generate unnatural heat, they are so blinded by the flash of Koh's persona and the installation's own radiance that they fail to see its true aesthetic and intellectual brightness.

Koh was born in 1977 in Beijing, China, raised in Vancouver, Canada, and now lives in New York. In Koh's bricolage installations, sexuality, death, mourning, race, identity, pleasure and art history are all present. Koh's irreverent and unabashed love of decadence in all of its money-cum-parties glory has earned scepticism and derision from those who prefer their artists to be either earnestly critical or dismissively decorative. Yet unlike artists of the 1990s who perpetually and pedantically called attention to the politics embedded in their work, Koh is genuinely subversive. His body of work as a whole can best be described as a highly potent cocktail whose ingredients include Butoh, minimalism, Duchamp, Studio 54, Bataille, Warhol, Yoko Ono and Ali G. Koh's own identity as an Asian gay artist is omnipresent in his work, yet he never finds it necessary to declaim that he is an artist playing with viewers' cultural stereotypes and expectations. As an individual, Koh is one of the most gracious, generous and genuinely delightful people on New York's art scene, so the teasing to which he subjects the possible prejudices of the viewers of his works doesn't feel malevolent, manipulative or mocking. Instead, the environments he creates are as joyful and sensual as they are thoughtful, challenging and iconoclastic.

Outside the Whitney during Manhattan's bleak winter season, the light coming from Koh's sculpture can be seen for yards along Madison Avenue. Like the kind of healing glow prescribed for sufferers from seasonal depression, it is super-sharp, but its beams appear cleansing and their clarity calming. Fundamentally it is also an illuminating statement by Koh as he playfully tries to clear up, or highlight, the confusion that star status casts on his legitimately brilliant art.

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