

# LightWeight



"The job of physics is not to invent things we cannot see to explain things we can see, but to figure out how to see what we cannot see – to see what was previously invisible, the known unknowns." Lawrence M. Krauss



THE AMERICAN CENTER FOR PHYSICS  
One Physics Ellipse  
College Park, Maryland 20740

## DIRECTIONS

To reach ACP from the Capital Beltway: Take Exit #23-MD 201 southbound (Kenilworth Ave.); follow MD 201 for about 3 miles; turn right onto River Road at light; follow signs on River Road to ACP and Physics Ellipse; will see building on left.

To reach ACP from D.C.: Follow Rhode Island Avenue northbound; turn right onto MD 410 (East-West Highway); turn left onto MD 201 (Kenilworth Ave.); turn left onto River Road at 2nd light; follow signs on River Road to ACP and Physics Ellipse; will see building on left.

Metro: College Park - U. of Md stop on the Green Line.



# LightWeight

MICHAEL BOREK  
CRAIG CAHOON  
ROBERT WECHSLER

Sarah Tanguy, Guest Curator  
18 October 2016 - 14 April 2017  
Reception 18 October 2016  
5:30 - 7:30 pm  
Gallery Talk 6:15 pm

The American Center for Physics  
One Physics Ellipse  
College Park, MD 20740  
For viewing information,  
call Eva Adams at 301.209.3125



ABOVE TOP: Michael Borek, *What Would Sudek Do?* #5373, 2010, archival pigment print, 5 x 7.5"; courtesy of artist  
ABOVE: Robert Wechsler, *The Mendicant*, 2012, pennies collected from wishing well, 5.75" cube; courtesy of artist  
COVER: Robert Wechsler, *The Caryatid* (detail), 2014, 15,000 new 2014 pennies, 84 x 11" diameter; courtesy of artist

Both particle and wave, light permeates our physical world as radiant energy visible to the naked eye, with current research and breakthroughs only wetting the interest of scientists and artists alike. In *LightWeight*, Michael Borek, Craig Cahoon and Robert Wechsler explore the dual nature of light as a transformational force through photographs, paintings and sculptures. While each body of work is visually distinct, the artists share a keen sense of observation and a focus on the overlooked detail. Experimenting with light's inherent properties and phenomenological effects, they bring out their subjects' material presence and reveal hidden mysteries of everyday life with fresh insight.

Growing up in his native Prague, photographer Michael Borek was struck by the simple and beautiful poetry of Josef Sudek's photography and his countryman's ability to elevate the world of his run-down studio and garden. This experience continues to inspire his own minimalist approach where light



Michael Borek, *What Would Sudek Do? #9388*, 2010, archival pigment print, 5 x 7.5"; courtesy of artist

is used as a technical and creative tool. Akin to the paintings of surrealist René Magritte, his enigmatic imagery of urban and rural settings in the United States and the Czech Republic channels the dream-like, semiconscious state of *dorveille*, and creates a travelogue through time and space, whose incongruities disrupt our preconditioned perceptions and invite closer consideration.

In a photograph from Borek's *Wide Asleep / Half Awake* series, the hot condensation on a window diffuses the raking light of the rising sun into a pastel mirage. The ghostly presence of an 18-foot wheeler shimmers in the near distance, and hints of fiery trees beckon beyond. Reflections prove vital to the series, *What Would Sudek Do?* The light turns exquisitely sharp in a close-up of blue painter's tape hovering over its doppelgänger—a magical black shadow cast on worn brown paper backing on a display window, while in another image, a palm tree peaks out from behind the red railing of a staircase, which continues as



Craig Cahoon, *Le Vieux Mas* (detail), 1989, acrylic & oil on 9 canvases, 10 x 10"; courtesy of artist

of ambient light and colors in new places both here and abroad initiates an aesthetic response and shapes his approach to painting. His eye-dazzling abstractions, often drawn from nature and architecture, investigate the variable effects that observer and observed have on each other, and explore how light presses on matter and changes it. Similar to the shadows in Borek's photographs, the reflections in Cahoon's paintings depend on the angle of incidence, the position of the viewer, and the light source, especially when he uses paint that incorporates titanium-coated mica flakes that simulate metallic effects of light reflection, iridescence and interference.

Research into the golden section and the Fibonacci sequence energizes such works as *Light Shifts (Dawn)*, an atmospheric series of 25 paintings. Working with palette knives to add and scrape iridescent pigment, Cahoon gradually builds up thin layers onto primed canvases. This technique brings out an allover pattern of constant vibration and a microcosm of hills and valleys. He then arranges the individual paintings in a grid that numerically spirals outward. Another series, *Le Vieux Mas*, evokes the worn and lichen-covered tiles that he discovered in France during a residency and the speckled rhythm of deep space. By contrast, the square canvas, *Prisma*, features a crystal shape made by extending the lines diagonally of a square in the upper left corner. A reference to Newtonian color theory, the painting bewilders with contrasting mixed and solid colors of interference paint to produce a heightened sense of depth and movement on a two-dimensional plane.

a descending shadow to merge with a trompe l'oeil painting of plants and rocks. Equally confounding is a tableau of a construction site from his series, *And They Make Good Neighbors*, where the honeycomb grid of a chain link fence plays off the screen cover of a man walking along a tree-lined sidewalk.

For Craig Cahoon, extended study

The complex sculptures of Robert Wechsler offer landscapes of another kind—those animating the surfaces of found coins, which expose their secret lives and record their individual histories. The artist seeks to foster play and mischief when re-examining and altering the familiar, be it T-shirts, bicycles or toasters, and views his art a “re-introduction” and “glimpse into the boundless elegance of our world.” The subjects of his recent projects are the U.S. penny and dime, a college interest that has become a philosophic inquiry into their utilitarian function and value. Once common tokens of everyday commerce with a complicated flow of exchange, these coins have grown nearly obsolete, but in his hands lead to multitudinous experimentation and sequencing of lines, circles and symbols.

Meticulously made of notched and joined coins, his geometric compositions create physical structures combining imposing materiality and ethereal passages of shifting light. Through trial and error and a little geometry, he actualizes forms envisioned in his head: using a process similar to crystallization, he assembles multiples of base units in pre-determined patterns. *The Caryatid*, an airy column of 15,000 shiny pennies, riffs on its Greek namesake whose figurative and load-bearing functions seem at odds. Other cubical configurations from his *Mendicant* series bear an uncanny likeness to those of artificial materials being developed with negative refractive-index properties. Exploiting the same mind-bending impact of distance and perspective, they enlist coins from different



Craig Cahoon, *Prisma*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 63 x 63"; courtesy of artist

sources, including pennies minted from steel in 1943 because of copper shortages in World War II. Throughout, slight changes in height and patina generate bold networks of syncopated patterns and active voids.

In *LightWeight*, the artists mine the synergy of the physical and the fleeting to deepen appreciation of seemingly unim-

portant moments in daily experience. Improvising with the effects of light and time, they coax into being intricately nuanced scapes that act as both carrier of memories and generator of epiphanies yet to come.