

Thomas Erben Gallery



Adrian Piper, Food for the Spirit (Image no.1), 1971
B/W silver gelatin print, 14.5 × 15in.

Art as Consciousness

Anna and Bernhard Blume, Eli Bornowsky, Mike Cloud, Róza El-Hassan, Barry Gerson, Harriet Korman, Mehran Mohajer, Dona Nelson, and Adrian Piper

January 15 – February 21, 2026
Opens Thursday, January 15, 6 – 8:30 p.m.

The increased interest in spirituality, alternate experiences and consciousness seems to be a reaction to the breakdown of scientific materialism from which reality has been constructed since the Renaissance and which seems now incapable of addressing the current multiple and intersecting crises.

In its attempt to penetrate the ever smaller building blocks of our material reality, quantum physics, as most recently ascertained (see the 2022 Nobel Prize), posits that the “universe is not locally real”*. The previously established assumption that “consciousness arises from matter” is thus inverted to a new paradigm where consciousness, rather than matter, is the basis of everything.

From this point of view, reality is now understood as emanating out of an ever expanding field of creativity, confined by neither time nor space and exploring its own potential through individualized points of consciousness that pursue their own trajectories, contributing to the ever evolving richness of what there is.

Traditionally in art, this understanding has been hinted as “the intangible”, with its formal and material manifestation in time and space pointing towards creativity as a charge which is open and unfixed.

The works included in this show, executed in various mediums and over half a century, are seen as exemplary. They are partially drawn from the gallery's program, which has explored art's significance in its broadest sense as a reminiscence or connection to the all encompassing inner realm of consciousness.

It can only be hoped that this redefined understanding of reality will provide a new common basis, a shared understanding of our place in the world as well as of who we are in relation to each other.

I would like to thank Daniel Pinchbeck, whose essay on *Monistic Idealism* provided the intellectual framework for this exhibition.

Thomas Erben

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*In this context, "real" means that objects have definite properties independent of observation—an apple can be red even when no one is looking. "Local" means that objects can be influenced only by their surroundings and that any influence cannot travel faster than light. Investigations at the frontiers of quantum physics have found that these things cannot both be true. Instead the evidence shows that objects are not influenced solely by their surroundings, and they may also lack definite properties prior to measurement.

Scientific American, January 2023