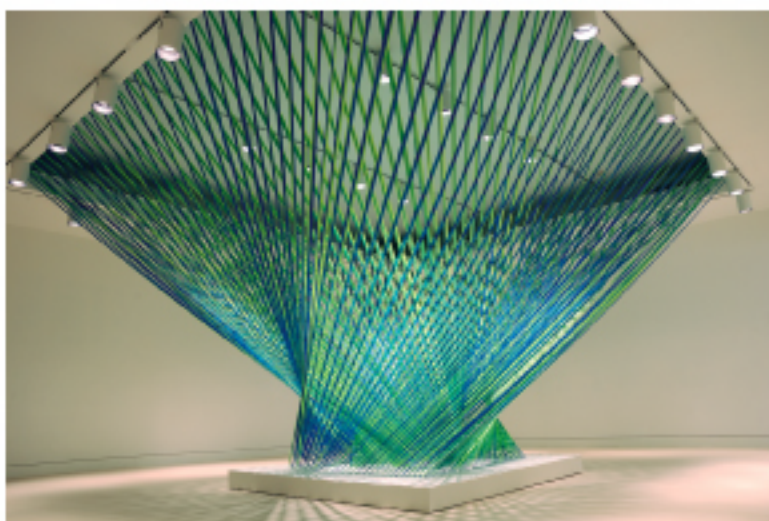


PICKS

LOS ANGELES

Megan Geckler

TORRANCE ART MUSEUM
3320 Civic Center Drive
October 14–December 9



Fill It Up and Pour It Down the Inside, 2006

The brief ascendance of Op art in the United States ended, with a few notable exceptions (Bridget Riley, for example), shortly after William Sietz's 1965 MoMA exhibition, "The Responsive Eye." The work in that show was lampooned by some high-minded critics who felt that optical painting amounted to little more than facile kitsch, more concerned with the rudiments of design and pseudoscientific principles than with the evolving narrative of modernism. Here, Megan Geckler's installation *Fill It Up and Pour It Down the Inside*, 2006, draws on the movement's rich, largely untapped, and still comparatively unfashionable inheritance. Rather than contest the claim that optical art and design share a great deal of common ground, Geckler instead turns the negative implications of this charge to her advantage, creating a dazzling three-dimensional matrix of vibrating chromatic effects that exists at the very intersection of fine art and design. The blue and green mass-produced plastic ribbons that compose the piece are arranged such that the colors that define the outer swirl are the inverse of those used to define the inner one, creating an optical sensation that is both absorbing and deeply disorienting as intersecting planes of color at once soar upward and slide slowly back and forth as one moves around the object. Unlike optical painting, however, which is often baffling and mysterious even under close scrutiny, the literal three-dimensionality of Geckler's work allows—even invites—the viewer to understand how the artist achieved her effect. Geckler's work, then, is not a sculptural extension of trompe l'oeil painting, but rather a site-specific project that extends the influence of Op art into the present while tacitly revising the terms and assumptions scholars and critics have used to understand a movement that has been largely consigned to the basement of art history.

—Christopher Bedford