

A LIGHT HERE

CHRISTIAN McLAUGHLIN OPENS HIS EYES TO THE UNUSUAL ART ON SHOW AT THE SERPENTINE

LET THERE be light. Anthony McCall, prodigal son of British light art, has returned to bask in the rays at the Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens. He slipped into obscurity in the early 1970s, abandoning avant garde film, sound and light artwork for a lucrative career in graphic design and publishing.

Thankfully, his 1973 masterpiece *Line Describing a Cone* – one of the last pieces he did before jumping ship – was hauled back into public consciousness in 2001 at the Whitney Museum in New York, encouraging McCall to take another stab at the big time.

After Dan Flavin's fluorescent strip light retrospective in 2006 and Anthony Gormley's heavenly box of white steam, *Into Blind Light*, last summer (both at the Hayward), the timing could hardly be better.

Visitors have been flocking since the opening in November, entering the smoky darkness of the back rooms of the Serpentine.

It feels like stepping on to the scene of a post-apocalyptic film noir. Bodies drift slowly among charcoal sculptures of light from projectors propped on pedestals.

But as you acclimatise, the reality is more playful. Delighted

children run in and out of the morphing shapes created by the smoke hitting the light. Adults prod, kiss and breathe on the seemingly solid edges that vanish beneath the touch. Looking at light from this perspective makes the ordinary seem fascinating.

It reminds of other unseen processes such as digestion or the passing of time. Your imagination becomes the only limit. Almost like a riddle – what's always there, yet never there – McCall also alludes to unseen nature in two of the films that accompany the show.

In one, wind undulates on white sheets carried through a field by a line of people. In the other,

Landscape for Fire (1972), fire emerges from a pothole gridwork.

The *Wicker Man* atmosphere of paganistic ritual suggests that beneath the simplicity of the videos and light lurks a critical commentary. Is it a stab on the absurdity of religious rituals? Is the beatific light at the end of his tunnels there to remind us how alike we are to mesmerised moths facing candles?

● Anthony McCall is at the Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens, until February 3. Free. See www.serpentinegallery.org

Adults prod, kiss and breathe on the solid edges



BLINDED BY THE LIGHT: You And I, Horizontal



THEY COULD BE TWINS: Deb Shepherd and Tim Harrison pucker up in *What A Scream!*

ARGHH!

PREVIEW

WHAT A SCREAM, CORNERHOUSE

A COBWEBBY bride called Miss Ravishem, a dozen ghosts and ghouls, a butler unwilling to pronounce his own name, and a dog called Shoo-by-Doo, who bears a passing resemblance to a famous crime-fighting canine.

It all adds up to a rollicking evening of fun as Tolworth's cornerHOUSE arts centre celebrates 20 years of performing pantomimes.

The latest production is *What a Scream!*

Written by Les Hutchinson, directed by Jon Constant, and starring Jessica Hern and Peter Harding, it is a spooky, spine-tingling pantomime with original

songs composed by Edinburgh Fringe star Tom Davies.

Les Hutchinson revealed: "I've spent the last few months watching old Hammer horror films and episodes of *Scooby-Doo*, but my true inspiration came from seeing *Carry On Screaming* again.

"This show celebrates everything from Peter Cushing to the original 1922 version of *Nosferatu*, which I was taken to as a child. I can still remember there was a funny woman called Eleanor at the front, playing the piano."

Director Jon Constant added: "The cast have really thrown themselves into the production. One promising actress, Emily Newton, has even dyed her hair purple for the show, and has to put up with people pointing at her when she buys her turnips in Kingston Market."

Over the years the cornerHOUSE panto has raised £34,000 for charity, with the Surbiton-based Landirani Trust benefiting this year. It helps build schools and improve lives in Malawi.

● *What a Scream!* runs from January 30 to February 2 at 7.30pm, with a 4pm Saturday matinee at the cornerHOUSE, at the corner of Douglas Road and Ravenscar Road, Tolworth. There are still a handful of tickets (£7 full price, £5 cones) remaining for Wednesday and Thursday. Turn up, call the box office (020 8296 9012), or visit www.thecornerhouse.org

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