

Holy photography, that's holography!

By Franz Schulze

THE people who have developed holography are proud of what they have done, and it is easy to see why. Holograms are laser-produced photographic images carried out with startling three-dimensional effects.

Considering how profoundly other technology has changed the way we see, think and even live, you can appreciate why holographers believe their medium possesses the potential for revolutionary change in communicating imagery and in the making of the visual arts.

So much for the bright new tomorrow. There is a case, however, for caution, and it is based not just on normal human resistance to the unfamiliar. In the 1960s art fell madly in love with electronic technology. We were told to expect an abundance of creations that would light up gloriously, emit noises engagingly, move about impressively.

Yet in innumerable instances the makers of these objects turned out to be the most inept technologists. Their products continually went into shock or simply died. And even when they functioned, they were all too often bereft of imagination. If we have cause to be hopeful of technology's promise to the arts, we have reason as well to be critical.

IT WAS IN this state of mixed emotions that I visited—and came away from—

the exhibition of holography now at Fine Arts Research and Holographic Center,

To say the least, it is an instructive show, and worth seeing; there has never been a larger or more earnest examination of the subject in Chicago. The gallery has filled two stories with holograms of all sorts, plus several installations that feature the glossy visual effects that laser beams themselves produce.

In a few cases the exhibits

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are arresting. The portrait of Nobel Prize-winner Dennis Gabor, who is reported to have made the first hologram in Scotland in 1948, is a chillingly persuasive illusion. But, rather than creating a life-like image, it makes Dr. Gabor look exquisitely embalmed.

There are some pieces by Soviet holographers, who have developed several highly sophisticated types of film that convey—I'm thinking of the gold lion's head—an awesomely precise stereometric appearance, if quite a hackneyed one. Chicagoan Lee Lacy has preserved for posterity Mike Royko's jiggling Adam's apple.

DUE CREDIT to all of these, and to the inventiveness of another exhibitor, physicist



Tung Hung Jeong of Lake Forest College. His name figures importantly in the short but rapid history of holography.

Still, it would be as unfair to holography as to ourselves to omit remarking two liabilities of the show.

The lesser one is that the medium is in its infancy. The majority of the images are crude, perceptible only fleetingly and at the discomfited exertions of the viewer.

A more relevant observation is that, engineering aside, there is virtually nothing on view worth the name of art. As holograms grow more technically sophisticated, they had better evidence livelier imagination if they want to be taken seriously in an art context.

The Daily News' own Mike Royko in glorious 3-D: Viewed from the front (far left), he's straitlaced; viewed from the side, he's full of mischief. (Daily News Photo/Perry C. Riddle)

