

Around town



Illustration by Mitch O'Connell

A day of holographic happenings ...

By Rick Kogan

A soft rain started to fall. An elderly gentleman elbowed his way beside us in the doorway of Jasper's restaurant on Ontario Street, determined to share our tiny bit of shelter.

"When are they opening the doors?" he asked.

"At five," we said.

The old man looked at his watch, frowned and banged on the restaurant's doors. A fellow came from the back of the restaurant and, looking first at his watch and then at two people standing in a drizzle, opened the doors.

The old man and I were both at Jasper's for the same reason: to view an exhibit of holographic portraits. We both carried in our hands gold-edged invitations sent to us by the Holicon Corporation.

We stood together and stared at the first image. It was that of Mike Ditka, coach of the Chicago Bears, captured in menacing mien.

"Not bad," said the old man. "It's a copy, of course."

We knew immediately that this man was not a holographic illiterate. A person's first encounter with holograms is generally open-mouthed silence; we have also heard first-time viewers gasp, "Wow" and "Cool." This man had obviously seen a hologram or two

before.

There were five portraits on the wall—Ditka, the 1987 Playmate of the Year, socialite Sugar Rautbord, the Duchess of Marlboro and a photographer. Some of them were for sale; Ditka was top price at \$400.

"Holograms will be the hot business of the 1990s," said the old man.

...means a feast at the museum

A couple of miles away, on a quiet block of West Washington Street, a similar if grander and less commercial show was taking place: An opening reception for Holography '87, the new exhibition at the Museum of Holography.

"There's another exhibit opening today ... at Jasper's on Ontario," said a woman dressed in black. "Isn't that amazing? Two holography openings on the same night!"

We have told you about the Museum of Holography, 1134 W. Washington St. (226-1007) before, but none of our impressions could have adequately prepared us for the wonders of this new exhibition.

"Everything is new," said Loren Billings, who founded the museum in 1976 and is its executive director, as she led us through the three galleries.

There are some 40 works hanging in the museum and they are all so much more complex, colorful, sophisticated, meaningful, "wow" and "cool" than those of the previous show that it was as if holographic technology and art leaped ahead a decade in the three months since our last visit.

"The technology advances so fast and the artists are getting better as they gain more experience," said Billings, pointing out a wonder called "Christine," a white light transmission hologram by John Hoffman, in which a lovely blond woman can be seen drinking a glass of wine.

(A hologram is, simply, "a recording on a light-sensitive medium of the light waves that reflect from an object illuminated with laser light, forming in complete and full dimension an image of that original object.")

Some of the current works

display a social consciousness: "Nightrider" and "Psychohands," two reflection holograms by Walter Spierings, are tough indictments of drugs.

Still, one of the galleries contains enough animals—falcon, lion cubs, python—to pass for a holographic zoo. A "Cheshire Cat" diminishes from full body to sneaky smile as you walk by.

There were many first-time hologram viewers at the museum opening and they lingered long. Meanwhile, back at Jasper's, a couple of people learned that Holicon would make a hologram of a person for \$3,800 (\$1,900 through Oct. 31; call 234-6633).

"Not a bad gift idea," said the old man. "But as a show, this serves as mere appetizer."

For the main course, the Museum of Holography is open Wednesdays-Sundays from 12:30-5 p.m. It's a feast.

Riley makes Monday laughs

In July, Rob Riley wrote a 16-page letter to some friends.

It was addressed, "Dear Fellow Avatars of Satire," and it detailed a week that Riley had spent traveling through Nicaragua. It was a week that convinced Riley that "when I got back to the States, I for one was going to do whatever I could to try to get this contra war stopped."

Riley's letter has inspired a bunch of satirist and comic pals to gather for "Serious Laffs," a one-night-only benefit for Neighbor to Neighbor, a national organization working to stop all aid to the contras.

This column is not, of course, the place to talk politics, but this is a notable event because it not only will reunite members of such comedy gangs as the Comedy Rangers and Reification Company but also will include members of the Unnatural Acts, Friends of the Zoo, Second City and Second City ETC. Rarely will so many sharp wits be gathered together.

The place: Second City, 1616 N. Wells St. The time: 7:30 p.m. Monday. The price: \$25 (\$50 if you'd like to join the 6:30 p.m. reception hosted by members of the show). The phone: 772-7782.

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