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Art in Review

Tony Oursler

Thought Forms

Metro Pictures Chelsea
519 West 22nd Street

Through tomorrow

Sound Digressions
In Seven Colors

Nyehaus
15 Gramercy Park South, 8D,
Manhattan

Through tomorrow

Tony Oursler has pulled out all the stops with two exhibitions, one for each side of the brain. At Metro Pictures, Mr. Oursler's showmanship is in full cry with three immensely appealing if rather slick video projections. Max Beerbohm's notion of the world's best book review — which he modestly tried to attribute to Abraham Lincoln — seems apt: "Those who like this sort of thing will find this the sort of thing they like."

More than ever, the effect is of silvery phantasms, or streams of consciousness made vividly apparent. Disembodied mouths and eyes are projected onto soft white, rather bulky biomorphic sculptures whose irregularities add further distortions. Muttering or blinking, these features fade in and out of swirling patterns that resemble mercury in "Mercury," dust in "Dust" and water in the especially demonic "Nix," which resembles a paranoid idol or the queen's talking mirror in "Snow White." The works also evoke animated Dalí paintings — especially since you tend to look at them from one side for not very long. Mr. Oursler is now able to extend his projections, so that starry skies, swirls of water or dust appear on nearby walls. The most alluring addition are the shadows that seem to be cast by the white sculptures; they read as beautiful, soft-edged openings — portals to another dimension.

In contrast to the entertaining work at Metro, the Nyehaus show is adamantly cerebral, and stresses Mr. Oursler's avant-garde bona fides. Its main attraction is a sound-video environment featuring seven musicians and sound artists with whom Mr. Oursler has collaborated over the years, including Zeena Parkins, Tony Conrad, Ikue Mori and Kim Gordon. On separate screens, these individuals play computers, electronic equipment or extravagantly eccentric instruments. The sounds they produce coalesce into something that sounds very avant-garde indeed, and is available on CD.

ROBERTA SMITH