

Born Los Angeles, 1943
Resident Venice, California

In the early stages of our planning for A & T, during the fall of 1968, we had several discussions with young Los Angeles artist Michael Asher about doing a project with Hughes Aircraft. Asher had for several months been consulting independently with Hughes engineer Alex Jacobson, of the company's Exploration Studies Department, about making a work involving holography. Asher wanted to create a long strip of light, about three feet high and up to forty feet long, which would seem to hover freely in space; one would not see the holographic plates which produced the image, but merely the image itself. Jacobson had tried unsuccessfully to obtain a commitment from Hughes to finance the project—they needed several kinds of lasers not available at the company at that time, and outside studio space to set up the piece. We made many attempts, also unsuccessful, to obtain Hughes' contracted participation in A & T so that Asher could continue his collaboration with Jacobson. Since this channel was definitely closed, we arranged, in November, 1968, for Asher to visit Ampex. Asher described his ideas to our contact man at Ampex, Dr. Charles Spitzer, and toured their Redwood City facility. Although Ampex is engaged in research on holography, the company did not feel that they were capable of producing the kind of effect the artist wanted within reasonable financial limits. Asher wrote to us in late December,

The proposal that I showed Ampex dealt with a phenomenon which was essentially the same phenomenon we talked about last summer. Basically, this was light floating in space and having the quality of being happened upon or elusive.

The essential reason why Ampex believed they could not handle this project was that they could not implement unknown phenomena. In other words, if I had a project which required syrup to run up a 45° incline, Ampex would supply the pumps that would draw the syrup up but would not have the technical facilities to show me how to make my syrup run uphill. Light in space would be analogous to the syrup running uphill and the light fixtures needed to produce the phenomenon would be analogous to the pumps

I am still most excited (about this idea) and would like to discuss at further length my project with other companies

In March, 1969, Asher visited Jet Propulsion Laboratory and spoke with physicist Dr. Richard Davies. The proposal Asher had in mind at this time was basically an extension of the idea he had developed for Ampex: rather than producing *planes* of light, he presented to Davies the notion of creating a hovering, light-filled *cube*, room-sized, which would be entirely comprised of light; he was adamant that it not be illusionistically created with solid materials, such as glass or plastic. Davies felt that the only way to achieve this would be with the use of dust-particles, smoke, or some sort of vapor or mist, which could perhaps be controlled to occupy a specific configuration in space and illuminated from within or without. Asher felt that such devices would negate the sense he was after of *pure light*, disembodied and unattached to artificially produced matter of any sort.