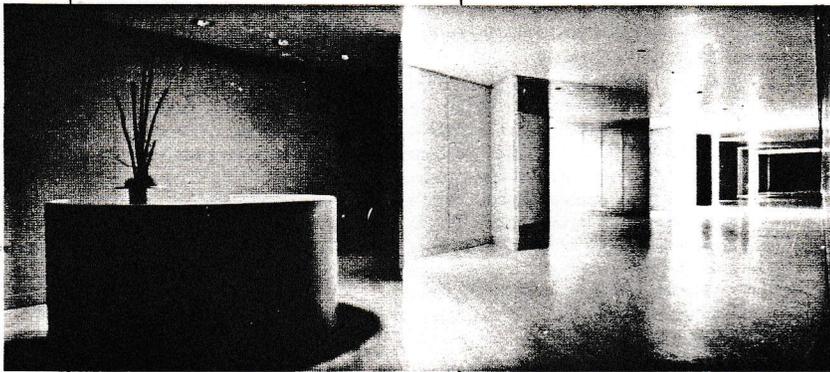


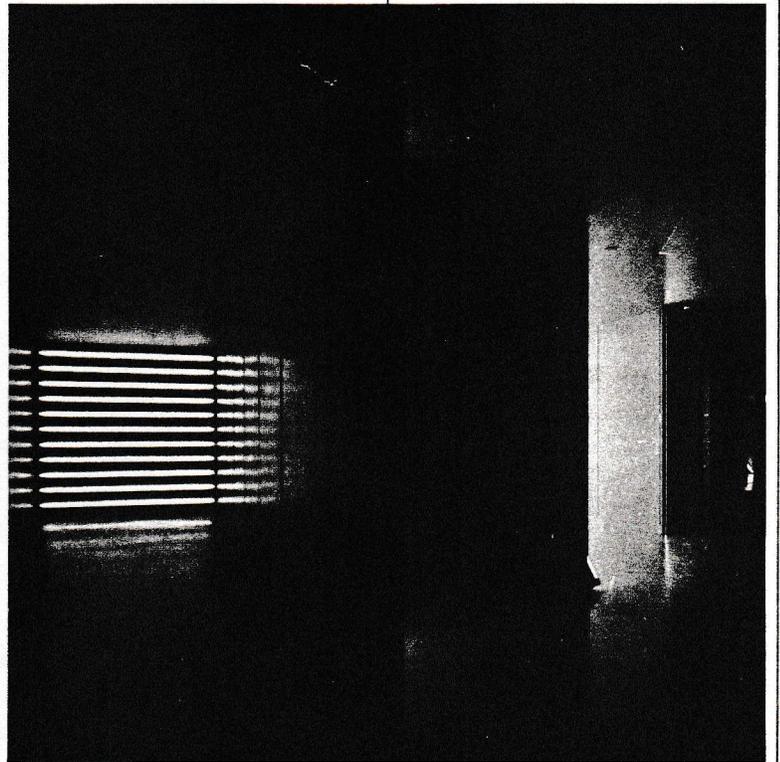
FLAVIN INSTALLATION AT HAUSERMAN

A MUSEUM OF MOVABLE WALLS

by Hunter Drohojaska



Photographs by Toshi Yoshimi



The softly lit word "Hauserman" invites the visitor into a showroom luminous with rainbow auras of light. Neutral walls divide the space into neat geometry providing structure for an environment of fluorescent color. The light, in turn, defines and illuminates the walls. This radiant installation by artist Dan Flavin and Vignelli Associates proves to be an unusual example of corporate support for the arts.

E. F. Hauserman Company, designers and manufacturers of interior wall systems, opened a new showroom in Los Angeles' Pacific Design Center and selected Flavin and Massimo and Lella Vignelli to design the space. Working collaboratively, the artists created a light environment that would draw attention to the company's product—movable wall systems—as well as function as an independent work of art. The concept is a practical extension of a museum without walls, the work of fine art displayed in a popular, commercial space. This idea comes full circle in the near future when a part of the Flavin installation will be donated to Los Angeles' nascent Museum of Contemporary Art.

The environment itself consists of three corridors of light, each standing eight feet square, angling back diagonally to a mirrored wall. The center corridor is open, striped with ice blue fluorescent tubes mounted at 45 degree angles. The two flanking corridors are closed across the middle with tubes of light. The viewer can pass through the open center corridor to see the flanking corridors from two different sides. The first contains horizontal tubes of fuschia light which reverse on the back side to Shell station yellow. The opposite corridor is divided by a screen of vertical tubes of the same yellow backed with acid green. The furthest yellow tube is omitted to permit a wash of green light of escape.

Flavin uses light to recall aspects of painting and sculpture. The barriers of fluorescent tubes have the appearance of an abstract geometric canvas, an early Stella, perhaps. The halos of ethereal, refracted color activate the larger space to create a sculptural surrounding. As the viewer walks about the space, the open and closed corridors produce alternate sensations of confrontation and invitation. The initial seduction by beautiful lights dissipates and one is left both mesmerized and dizzy. The impact is exaggerated by the mirrored rear wall demanding acknowledgement of one's reflection seen bathed in the multi-colored light. The complex experience is ultimately both sensuous and disturbing. It is this tension that

makes the piece more intriguing and compelling than just a roomful of disco lights, an oversized lava lamp.

The Hauserman installation seems an encouraging example of corporate decoration. Rather than purchasing the convenient and conventional paintings and sculptures, the company chose a temporal, site-specific installation. The project thus becomes a collaboration of conceptual as well as material concerns, and a valuable method of integrating sophisticated, ephemeral work in a public space.

*Hunter Drohojowska is Art Editor of the LA Weekly and a contributor to Art Forum and Art in America.*

