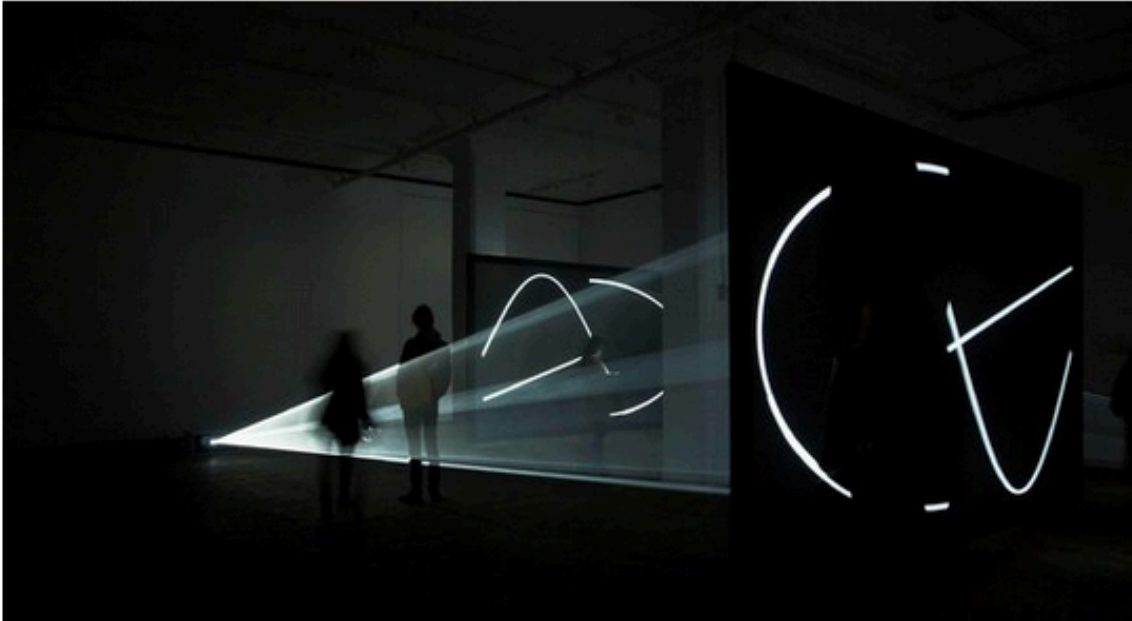


The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

Anthony McCall: 'Face to Face'



Jason Wyche, Courtesy of the Artist and Sean Kelly, New York

Installation view of Anthony McCall's "Face to Face" at the Sean Kelly gallery.

By KEN JOHNSON
Published: March 7, 2013

Sean Kelly

*475 10th Avenue, at 36th Street,
Manhattan*

Through March 23

In 1972 the British-American artist Anthony McCall organized a performance in which 15 photographers, filmmakers and video artists milled about, shooting one another in a room strewn with crumpled newspapers and with a pair of large mirrors on opposite walls.

Four decades later he edited footage from the event into a 35-minute video loop, the centerpiece of "Circulation Figures," one of two philosophically intriguing installations here. The gallery floor is covered by newspapers, and there are large mirrors on opposite walls. Suspended in the middle of the room is a projection screen whose reflected images recede infinitely into the mirrors. The video alternates silent passages showing the photographers in action and freeze-framed moments during which you hear feet stirring the newspaper and shutters clicking.

It is interestingly frustrating to watch: it seems as if the photographers were focused on something of interest — a celebrity, say — but you never see what it is because it does not exist. This suggests that the subject of photography is photography itself. It is an allegory of modern narcissism.

Mr. McCall's other installation, "Face to Face," is a new work from his "solid light" film series, for which he became known in the 1970s. In a dark room, two projectors cast simple, slowly morphing compositions of bright white lines upon two suspended screens. Ambient haze from a fog machine gives the projected rays a spectral, crystalline solidity, as if they were made of diaphanous fabric. As with "Circulation Figures," we ponder the tricky gap between subjective experience and objective reality.