

UNIVERSITY GALLERY

Working with Light

The University Gallery's spring season will open with two exhibitions featuring work that — although very different in expression and medium — concerns itself predominantly with the quality of light. *Christopher Wilmarth* presents a selection of sculptures, drawings, and prints by an artist best known for a sparsely sensuous style that marries formal elements with mysterious reverie. *Brenda Zlamany/ Figure Ground: Color Studies of Chuck Close, Evander Holyfield, and John Yau* features this artist's most recent painting series. It marks a further step in her ongoing investigation of color and light as they are translated into psychological content. Both exhibitions will have an opening reception on Friday evening, February 2, from 5 to 7pm.; *Christopher Wilmarth* will be on view for the entire spring semester from February 3 through May 18, and *Figure Ground* will be on view from February 3 through March 16.

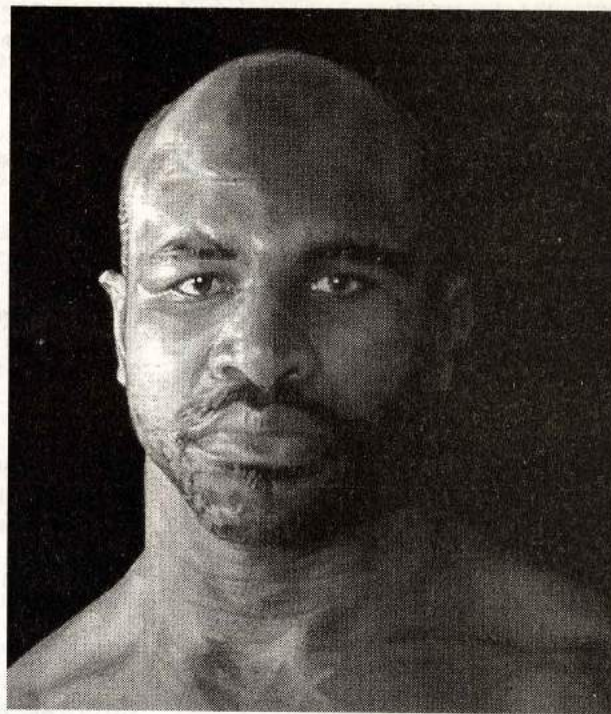
Since his death in 1987 at the age of 44, only two museums have held solo exhibitions of Christopher Wilmarth's work and, given the significance of his vision, it is with great respect that the Gallery mounts this current show. His sculptures are constructed from plates of glass and steel sheets, a combination of materials that he began using shortly after 1971 when he and Mark di Suvero collaborated on a project. Wilmarth had been experimenting with glass since the late 1960s and discovered for himself the process of etching it with hydrofluoric acid which allowed him an almost painterly control of the medium. The textural effects supplied by the addition of steel had a strong impact on him in regard to what he ultimately wanted to achieve in his work—an experience with and of light. "I associate the significant moments of my life with the character of light at the time," he said, and these personal moments were what he attempted to evoke in a physically ambiguous form.

Wilmarth was rigorous about the fabrication of his pieces and yet quite fluid in the breadth of references that gave them a hovering sense of human presence and place. From his awed admiration of artists like Constantin Brancusi and his enthusiasm for such popular fig-

ures as Hank Williams and Tina Turner, to his own long glances and considered thoughts on the most mundane of events—spending an entire afternoon watching the sun's shadow travel across a barroom's wall, for instance—Wilmarth married the modernist tradition with a perceptive understanding that lies just beneath the analysis of thought and the limits of language.

The exhibition will also include several of Wilmarth's drawings as well as a selection of work from his series *Breath* (1979–81) which was inspired by the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé. *Breath* comprises Wilmarth's responses to seven of Mallarmé's poems in a variety of media including his own poetry, and a portfolio of etchings that is considered to be Wilmarth's most significant published work as a printmaker. A catalogue will be published after the exhibition opens and will be available at the Gallery.

Brenda Zlamany's subjects have ranged from portraiture and still life to landscapes. For her new series of portraits, she has chosen three subjects—artist Chuck Close, boxer Evander Holyfield, and poet/critic John Yau—whose identities are explored through a repetition of their respective images on various color grounds. The portrait panels are part-



Brenda Zlamany, "Evander Holyfield"

nered with other panels that hold only monochromatic color, but which signify for the artist the representation of light as physical source and atmospheric storyteller.

"[My work] is an investigation of color and the rectangle," says the artist. "Repetition in contemporary portraiture is often accomplished through mechanical means, like screen printing. Repetition in traditional painting is more challenging. I trace one drawing onto four panels: a gray one and three in primary colors. Each panel require(s) different palettes for the skin tones Changes of background color and an increasing ease in my brushstrokes as I learn [the] face . . . affect the psychological content of the portraits."

Figure Ground will also be accompanied by a catalogue to be produced after the exhibition is installed, and will include a conversation between Mr. Close and Ms. Zlamany, and an essay by Mr. Yau about his experience as a subject becoming an object.

■ The University Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11am to 4:30pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5pm. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held in the Concert Hall of the Fine Arts Center. For further information, please call the Gallery at (413) 545-3670 or visit our website.