

Sculpture

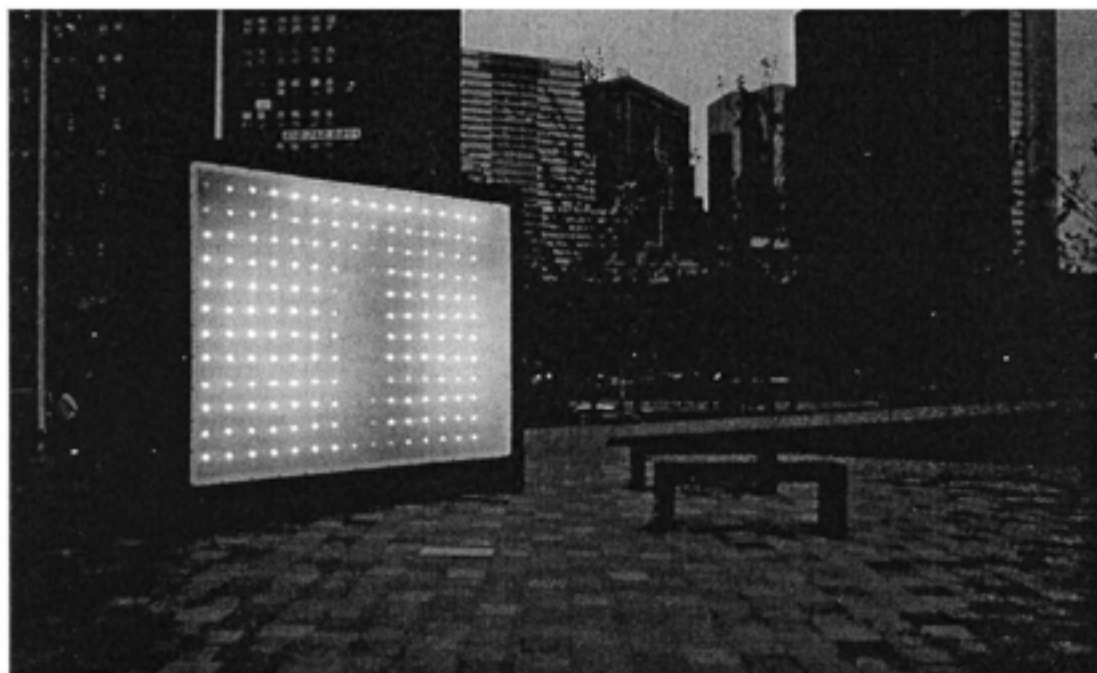
20th Anniversary Year

July/August 2002 Vol. 21 No. 6

\$6 \$8CAN

INTERNATIONAL SCULPTURE CENTER www.sculpture.org

Commissions



Jim Campbell

Primal Graphics
New York, NY

Jim Campbell recently launched his first public sculpture in New York, *Primal Graphics*, on February 20, 2002. He is the first artist to be featured in Art on the Plaza, a new series of site-specific, temporary public artworks installed near the Ritz-Carlton New York, Battery Park. Creative Time and the Ritz-Carlton, in cooperation with

the Battery Park City Authority, are co-sponsoring the series.

Primal Graphics appeared at the same time as Campbell's exhibition at the Whitney Biennial and addresses the same themes on a larger scale. At the Whitney, his red and black LED-based light boards reduced human subjects to shadowy moving figures barely within the limits of our perception. At the Plaza, a 10-by-13-foot grid of 386 light bulbs used the same technology but

increased the scale of the sensation. Campbell records his subjects in digital video, converting live action to millions of pixels. Then he reduces the number of pixels and programs the electrical grid so that the bulbs fade and flash in various shades of gray.

The result is a seamless, film-like scene of a silhouetted man running across a blank screen. The sculpture is "primitive" in the sense that the moving abstraction registers as a human figure only because of our innate ability to perceive human movement. *Primal Graphics* further complicates our demonstrated need to clarify what is vaguely familiar. Trying to gather more information about the image by walking closer results in greater abstraction as the pixelated image dissipates. The scientific principle that the closer we get to a problem, the less we understand it and the Buddhist method of "seeing at a distance" are suggested references in the work. A trained scientist, video technician, filmmaker, and son of handicapped parents, Campbell incorporates these diverse aspects into his sculpture. His moving shadows are simplified, but far from simple.