

Anthony McCall: Swell

The Nevada Museum of Art commissioned New York-based artist Anthony McCall to create a new “solid light” sculpture titled *Swell*, which represents a change of direction for his immersive light installations. Inspired by the movement of bodies of water, this commission draws explicit connections between wave forms the artist used in his earlier digital works, and the liquid motion of floating objects.

A McCall solid light work is best understood as a sculptural object made of light, modified and shaped over time. Each installation begins as a simple line drawing, which is set in motion using an animation program. Once the animation is aligned to a physical gallery space, mist from a haze machine makes the projected light beams visible. The various stages of movement are frozen in sequential “footprint” drawings, a group of which are on view nearby.

Upon entering this darkened gallery, visitors will discover two projected beams of light passing diagonally through the space. The light beams converge as a two-dimensional line drawing on the opposite wall. These intersecting forms,

one a simple flat blade and the other an incomplete cone, create surprising topologies of shifting, translucent, three-dimensional spaces.

British-born artist McCall created his first solid light film in 1973, using 16mm film as his medium. Employing film as a means to create light sculpture, rather than to tell a story, was a radical move for an artist in the 1970s. Understood as “avant-garde cinema,” McCall’s work was not an easy fit within the gallery and museum world of that time. Eventually, he found it necessary to put his art career on hold until the 2000s. Today, McCall’s work is embraced by the art world, shown internationally, and represented in numerous significant collections, including Tate, London, England; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, among others.