



Left and above: Lawrence Argent and Scott Rella, *Verdant Meadows*, 2008. Ice and LEDs, 17 elements, 9–15 ft. high. Below: Peter Freeman, *Lightwave*, 2007. LEDs, computer controls, and sensors, 55 x 4 meters.

## LAWRENCE ARGENT AND SCOTT RELLA

### *Verdant Meadows*

Vail, CO

Lawrence Argent and Scott Rella's *Verdant Meadows*, a first-time collaboration between the two artists, brings humor and magic to winter in Vail. The project combines Rella's expertise in ice sculpture with Argent's long experience in public art to create a dynamic effect. Argent says, "It was interesting for me to grasp some of what can be done in the material of ice. Knocking around ideas with Scott made me very aware of its materiality and vocabulary." The completed work transforms the snow and ice of a Colorado winter into surprising, towering green plant forms.

The finished works, 17 separate grass-blade sculptures, are illuminated by vibrant green LED lights installed inside their bases. Argent explains that LED lighting was integral to the design process, allowing them to "control the color and hence utilize the medium of ice to both hold and illuminate." Each of the blades, up to 15 feet high individually, is built from nine-inch-tall blocks that catch the colored light at their joins and reflect it throughout the piece.

The artists selected a creek-side location, which gives their meadow an extra air of mystery and implies that the blades sprout from beneath the snow-covered ground. Working with ice on an unstable base of

snow was a challenge for Rella; he "had to create a base for each piece, which we then froze into the ground, to act as a foundation." Rella's particular objective was to make the work feel organic, to give the impression that the forms "belong here. It has a very natural feel... They are part of the landscape until they melt away." The shapes echo the surrounding trees and baffle viewers' sense of scale. The environmentally friendly aspects of the work are also a plus: LEDs stay cool enough for the sculpture to remain frozen, and they use substantially less energy than other types of lighting.

*Verdant Meadows* provides an ephemeral, green environment in a barren season of cold and snow. As Argent says, "Rather than just the placement of objects on the site, it was more about integration and the humor-

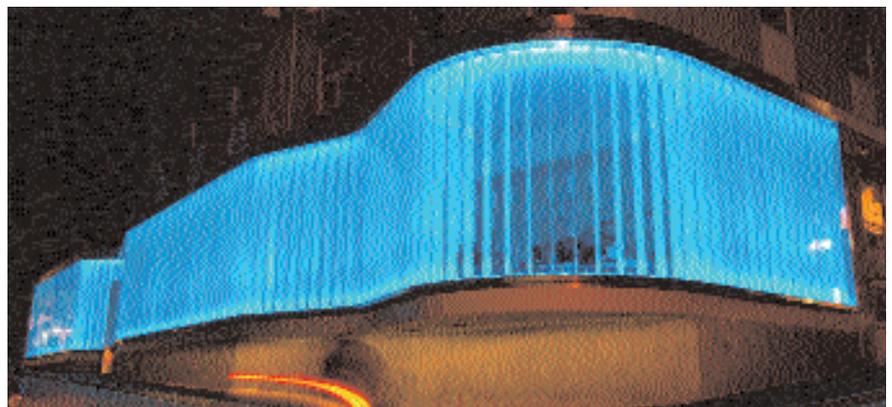
ous juxtaposition of something verdant in this contrasting season." The work is planned to remain on view until the sculptures melt.

## PETER FREEMAN

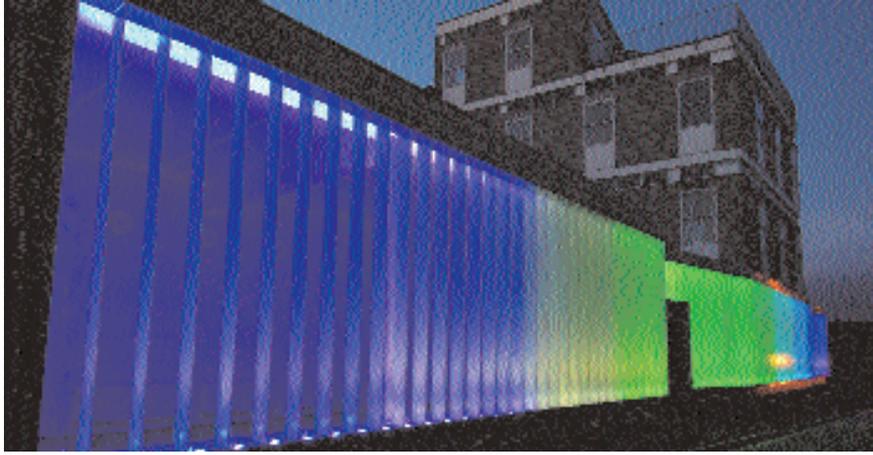
### *Lightwave*

Penzance, U.K.

Peter Freeman's *Lightwave*, an installation that interacts with elements of its environment, transforms the Exchange Gallery's new winding glass façade into a platform for an LED light display. For Freeman, *Lightwave*'s interactivity was central: "I've used interactivity on a number of occasions, and it allows for choice and change in a controlled but surprising way that breaks down some of the traditional barriers of conventional sculpture." This new



ARGENT AND RELLA: PETER M. FREDIN



Above: Peter Freeman, *Lightwave*, 2007. LEDs, computer controls, and sensors, 55 x 4 meters. Right and detail: Simon Watkinson, *Braid*, 2007. Stainless steel and LEDs, 33 ft. high.

work uses motion sensors to track passers-by, triggering a beam of white light that moves through the installation, following the viewer across the length of the piece. Additionally, weather sensors activate several different light patterns for extreme conditions, so the work responds to its physical, as well as its social, environment.

The weather in Penzance, which is on the extreme southwestern Penwith Peninsula, was itself an inspiration for Freeman, who is interested in light and perception: “The clear air and reflected light between sky and sea...creates an endless variety of color, pattern, and movement. For me, the experience of natural light in the surrounding landscape is subjective. It is intense and uplifting.” LED lighting ensures that the display will be energy efficient. The lights, hidden in the bottom wall just out of sight, beam upward and are reflected in all directions by the building’s metallic surfaces and the laminated glass fins running vertically through the installation. The result is a dynamic work holding “an ethereal glow of intense color.”

### SIMON WATKINSON

#### *Braid*

Blackburn, U.K.

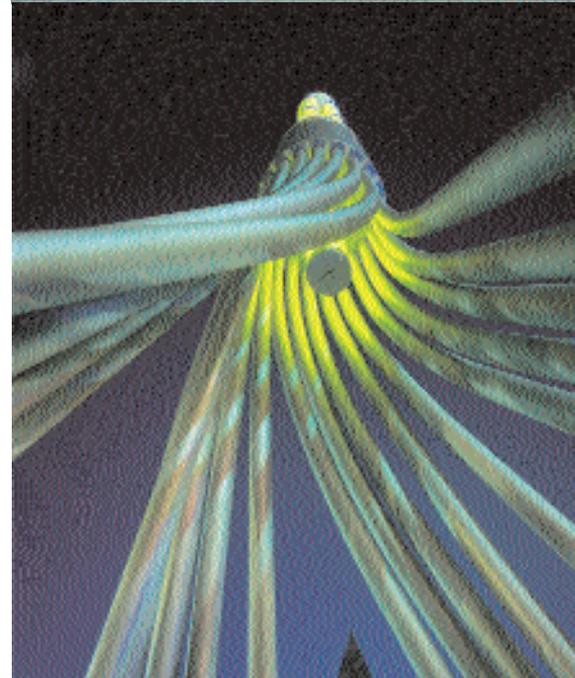
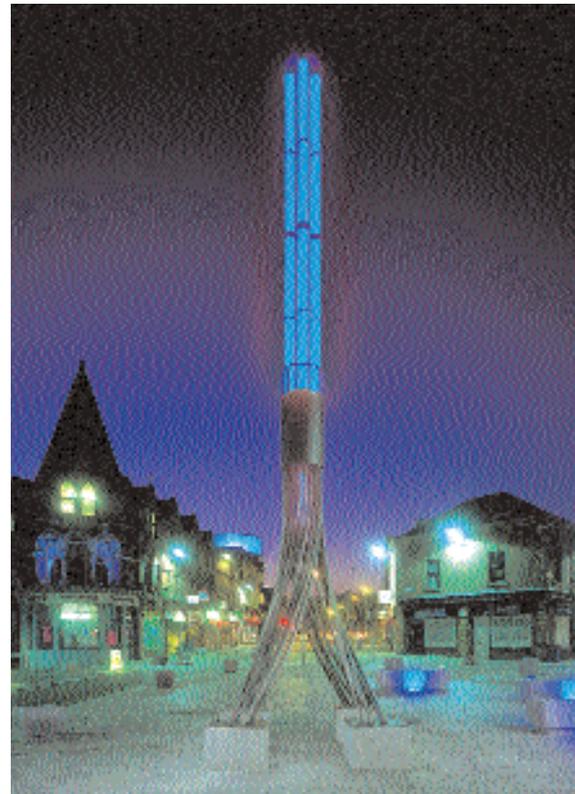
Simon Watkinson’s *Braid* originated with “the notion of a multi-strand element creating strength and dynamism.” His work was commissioned as part of an attempt to revitalize Blackburn, an area with historical ties to the textile industry. The 33-foot-tall work, which uses color-changing LED lights, is the focal point of a plaza at the center of an intersection. Granite blocks and smaller lights are scattered on the surrounding ground, complementing and emphasizing the form. The sculpture itself rises from four of these blocks in lengths of steel-rod

that imply wire connections, frayed cables, or spun fibers. These linear strands, which begin separately, twist toward each other, and eventually join together to form a more substantial upper portion, which houses LED light pipes—large, acrylic tubes lined to create an even, glowing light along their lengths. This upper section continues the theme of interweaving. Watkinson achieved the constantly shifting color by using “light fittings...programmed top and bottom, but out of synch with one other, so the light appears to mimic the rotating strands that form the base.”

Watkinson’s works all “evolve from a consideration of the physical qualities of a space and some element of social history specific to the area, but presented in a contemporary way.” In the case of *Braid*, Blackburn’s history is embodied not only in the references to textiles, but also in the site, which once housed a Victorian lantern. The placement of four light pipes sprouting from four blocks alludes to that lantern’s “four globe lights, being a crossroads.”

*Braid*’s dramatic physical presence is heightened by its near-direct contact with the ground, based on Watkinson’s goal of creating a piece “that appeared to emanate from the floorscape without the need for a mediating plinth.” The LEDs inserted in the surrounding granite add to that effect, “suggest[ing] further strands that have been cut.” Watkinson hopes that *Braid* will contribute to Blackburn’s renewal effort, “drawing visitors and businesses to the emerging area.”

—Elizabeth Lynch



Juries are convened each month to select works featured in Commissions. Information on recently completed commissions, along with quality 35mm slides/transparencies or high-resolution digital images (300 dpi at 4 x 5 in. minimum) and an SASE for return of slides, should be sent to: Commissions, Sculpture, 1633 Connecticut Avenue NW, 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20009.