

# ART NEW ENGLAND

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## MASSACHUSETTS

Grossman Gallery, School of the Museum of Fine Arts/Boston [www.smfa.edu](http://www.smfa.edu)

### **JESSICA STOCKHOLDER: RAWHIDE HARANGUE OF ACHING INDICES AS TOLD BY LIGHT**

The term “three-dimensional painting” is frequently used to describe Jessica Stockholder’s installation work. Indeed, this installation—an exploration of light, boundaries, and human scale playfully yet substantively expressed through Stockholder’s vocabulary of architectural construction, domestic objects, and paint—imbues the gallery space with a functional multivalency. The gallery contains the artwork, yet it also is the artwork; entering the gallery is synonymous with entering the artwork.

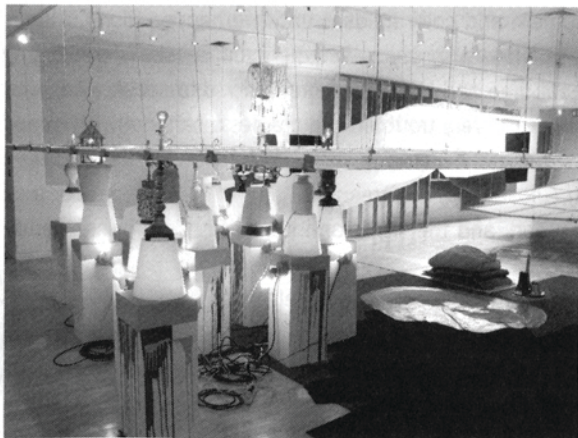
Stockholder rearticulates the gallery space with a constructed wall and two sections of dropped ceiling, which derive their meaning from their situation relative to the existing space. The dropped ceilings, suspended at an angle from the gallery’s “true” ceiling by a forest of cables, simultaneously orient and disorient us by changing the way we perceive the scale of our bodies as we move through the installation. One, painted pink and light blue, is hung low enough to create a mysterious, cavelike space. You feel the scale of your body diminishing as you are compelled to crouch down to investigate, to accommodate yourself to the space. Conversely, looking down on the top of the ceiling gives you a feeling of expansive omniscience. You shift from embodying the perspective of the smallest being on the planet to the largest.

The gallery’s light—both artificial and natural—is the matrix for an exploration of light itself and its effect on our perception of color. The array of track lighting that would typically be used to highlight objects here functions as ambient light. Windows cut into the wall selectively allow in illumination, either daylight or streetlight. Against this backdrop, a tangle of bright green wire and incandescent bulbs hung from the gallery ceiling variously reference a chandelier, a tree, and the sun. A second dropped ceiling—vivid red—is suspended at about eye-level above a human-scaled array of bare-bulbed lamps on upside-down plastic trash cans on gallery pedestals. Some of the glowing red bulbs jut up through rough holes cut in the ceiling; color and light converge to create a feeling of heat and upward growth. In contrast, the dark area under the other ceiling section is softly and unexpectedly illuminated by a grouping of rectangular lights on the floor. Light and color tie together objects, constructions, and architectural space in a dialogue of repeating and shifting color relationships that are mirrored by our shifting emotional responses.

Frank Stella stated that “the aim of art is to create space...in which the subjects of painting can live. This is what painting has always been about.” As viewers entering the gallery, we become not just observers but also participants in the three-dimensional, metaphorical, and emotional world of the installation; there is no boundary between viewer and the artwork. Our participation completes Stockholder’s work. *Mary Bucci McCoy*



Jessica Stockholder, *Rawhide Harangue Of Aching Indices As Told By Light* (detail).



Jessica Stockholder, *Rawhide Harangue Of Aching Indices As Told By Light*, installation.