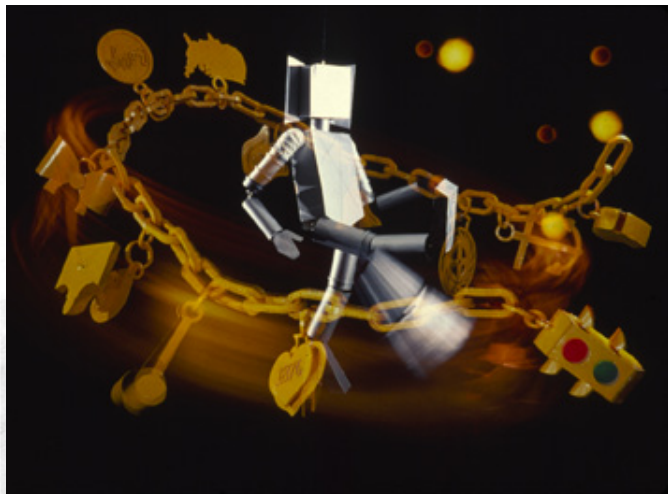


People + Projects



Composite photographs from Erika Beckman's No. 1 Industrial Series (1983)

Building your dream machine

Erika Beckman builds dream machines. Like the images occurring during sleep, her creations don't exist in the real world, although photographs of them were on view at Nature Morte, New York City, in June, and in Los Angeles at the Koplin Gallery, through August 29. Beckman's photos are extraordinarily cinematic, made possible by using a motorized "movement control device," developed by the artist with Stanley Kaufman and robotics engineer Randy Rubenstein, both of Boston. Motion is implied by spinning models, which she builds, on a balanced turntable while

photographing them for long periods of time under low lights with colored gels. Thus traces and trails appear in each print to create the illusions of velocity and depth.

Like the memory bank of a computer, Beckman stores her images so each photograph can later be combined with others. Her machines thereby become remembered "facts" which can reappear in endless permutations, as a result of the artist's use of the Bowers "Illumi-tron" photographic slide projector.

Beckman's work can be compared to space capsules and lasers, the products of another theoretical model which

deals with the tenuous nature of reality: Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity. But while Beckman's photographs are a direct result of her technical and conceptual understanding of film gadgetry, her vision is more nostalgic and less cosmic than that of practitioners of the New Physics. Unlike them, she builds machines that look like gigantic toys, and then, to evoke the lost adolescence of both mankind and of the Industrial Age, she frames them in a dark, romantic haze.—*Claudia Hart*