

**Christopher Wilmarth: *living inside***

February 3 - March 16 and

April 1 - May 18, 2001

*Christopher Wilmarth: living inside*, on view at the University Gallery for the spring semester, presents sculptural and graphic works by an artist who found a way to share his silent conversations with light. He is best known for spare though sensuous sculptures constructed from sheets of plate glass and steel, a combination of materials that he began using shortly after 1971 when he and Mark di Suvero collaborated on a project. Wilmarth had been experimenting with glass since the late 1960s and discovered for himself the process of etching glass with hydrofluoric acid which allowed him a painterly control of the medium. The varying degrees of translucency and the textural effects supplied by the addition of steel had a strong impact on Wilmarth in regard to what he ultimately wanted to achieve—an experience with and of light. “I associate the significant moments of my life with the character of light at the time,” he wrote, and these personal moments were what he attempted to evoke in physical form.

Wilmarth’s work suggests an overlap of two perspectives on the Minimalist approach. The tendency to regard illusionistic techniques, decorative details, and emotional qualities as distractions and to eliminate them for the sake of the material’s integrity is evident in work by such artists as Donald Judd and Carl Andre. A more metaphysical tendency can be seen in the work of Robert Irwin and James Turrell in which illusion, decoration, and emotion are likewise eliminated so as to have forms alternately dissolve into and emerge from an all-over perceptual field. Wilmarth absorbed these two perspectives wanting both to maintain a respectful dialogue with the materials and to incorporate pure perception. His desire, however, was to create a reverberation of feelings full of memory—a symbolist’s soul conveyed through the modernist tradition.

Born in 1943 in Sonoma, California, Wilmarth moved to New York in the early 1960s and received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from Cooper Union in 1965. He was a professor of sculpture at Cooper Union from 1969 to 1980, and also had one-year residencies as a visiting artist at Yale University, Columbia University, and University of California at Berkeley during that same period. Wilmarth was appointed a professor at Columbia University in 1986, the year before his death. His work is in the collections of museums and corporations nation-wide, and has been the subject of one-person exhibitions at numerous galleries and museums including the Wadsworth Atheneum (1974), the Seattle Art Museum (1979), and the Museum of Modern Art (1989).