

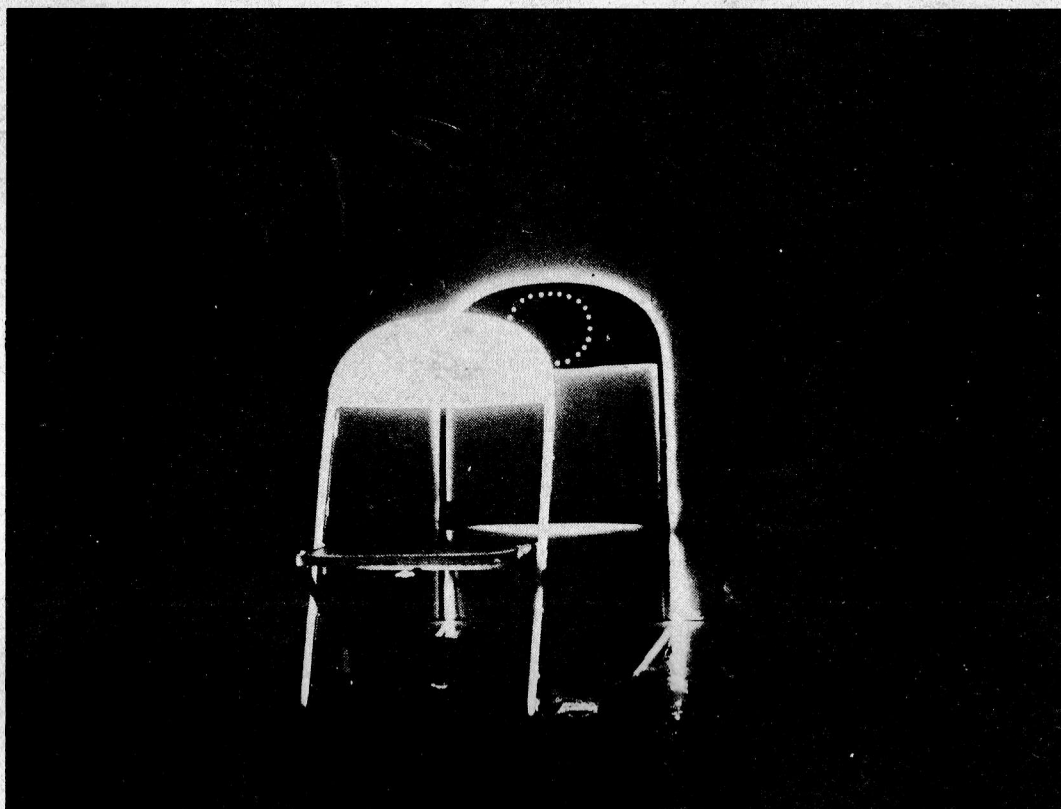
THE REALITY OF PROJECTION

San Francisco / **Caroline Savage Lee**

On July 19, as part of the 80 Langton Street Fifth Anniversary Show presented at the Knights of the Red Branch Hall, Al Wong offered two films that synthesized his concerns with the illusory nature of reality as translated by film and a consideration of the space and surface unique to the hall. His work created a constant interchange between filmed "object-reality" and the nature of filmic projection. The two pieces were taut, unified events that succeeded in removing film from the traditional flat screen in a darkened theater to create a multidimensional experience in an open space with varied projection surfaces and textures.

The first piece, *Screen, Projector and Film*, subtly introduced visual tension between the filmed object and action and the actual experience and perception of the filmed event. A primary component of the piece's structure was the existence of strips of paper on the wall that created a surface onto which a filmed image of similar paper was projected. Tension was enhanced by the interplay between the lines and undulations of the actual screen and the characteristics of the filmed screen. A key turned and spun across the surface, as if self-propelled, with few cues to whether it was illusory or real. Subsequent pourings of water and blood verified the illusion, but still presented a perceptual puzzle. In a final confirmation of filmed reality, the screen was burned and fell in clumps to the ground, thus revealing the actual, white screen intact. The event completed a progression from illusion to reality, from beginning to end. The audience, through Wong's manipulation of their perceptions, was forced to become aware of the spatial configurations and illusions.

Similar concerns were succinctly presented in the second piece, *Shadow and Chair* — a carefully orchestrated event using the space of the hall through



AL WONG: *SHADOW AND CHAIR*, 1980, film installation.

varied light permutations from a single light source: the projector. The image of the chair's shadow and a figure in shadow performing various tasks appeared on the screen. These shadows interacted with an actual chair placed in front of the projector, which cast an additional shadow on the screen. Holes drilled in the chair and placement of a mirror under the chair allowed light to pass through the object and onto the

floor and ceiling. Burning incense made the projector's light beam into a seemingly solid but illusory conical shape. From this complex light and shadow arrangement, the audience became aware of the projector and shifted their attention as their eyes explored the visible elements.

During the event, there was a constant interplay among all parts: the image projected on the screen affected by notions of visible and invisible, reality and illusion, and that powerful agent of sight — light. When the film ended, the chair was revealed to be