

A sit-down that soothes senses

Posted: Dec. 24, 2006 in the Philadelphia Inquirer

Like speech sprung free from the constraints of syntax, the soothing *Light Showers* display at Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts in Wilmington invites us to sit for a restful experience of meditation and contemplation during the hectic holiday season.

This unusual project evolved from an unlikely blend of cutting-edge technologies. Its designers, Michael Morris and Yoshiko Sato, using these technologies, harnessed them for expressive purposes with video artist Paul Ryan's nature-based images. It is seemingly a contradictory mix of opposites, yet the *Light Showers* atmosphere is a unifier as it spills across the room.

Sculptor-architects Morris and Sato and Ryan, all New Yorkers, have produced a believable setting with seven seats. These are really part of the exhibit, not just seats. Each seat is shaped organically as an egg (or stone) and contains underlying, hidden, pulsating circuitry. Such benches and their supporting platform grid are made from Corian, a solid substance from DuPont.

Overhead lighting with its video projection - Ryan's contribution - captures the patterns of moving water at flood tide. With the platform thus bathed in light and imagery, the swift action sometimes is reversed and slowed to enhance the mood of repose sought by the seated viewer amid the gentle pulsing of the lights and video.

A tie-in exists here with the time-honored American notion of spirituality and nature. The input of Sato's Japanese Buddhist heritage is subtle, limited to advocating the practice of meditation to achieve focused awareness. Clearly this new form of abstract art has a dynamism all its own. A brilliant and resourceful show.

Also at DCCA, a stimulating exhibit, "The Painted Interior," features painters Morgan Craig and Doug Martenson, both of Philadelphia, and Christopher Gallego of New York. Their domestic, industrial and studio interiors are shown in a fresh way that invites closer attention.

Delaware Center for Contemporary Arts, 200 S. Madison, Wilmington. "Light Showers" to Jan. 7; "Painted Interior" to Feb. 4. Tue., Thu., Fri., Sat. 10-5, Wed. and Sun. noon-5; on Dec. 24 and 31, noon-3. Adults \$5. 302-656-6466.

Contact art critic Victoria Donohoe at The Inquirer, 800 River Rd., Conshohocken, Pa. 19428.