

JIM HODGES | CRG Gallery

— By KEN JOHNSON

The mercurial Jim Hodges has produced a pair of walk-in installations that create an impressive archetypal duality of divine light and infernal darkness.

First comes the light: 10 vertical white canvases, bearing patterns and semi-abstract imagery made of gold leaf, conjoined into an almost eight-foot-tall circular enclosure. The most striking panels depict roiling clouds and primordial forests cut through by shafts of light; they are like Renaissance woodcut illustrations for the Book of Genesis.

Standing within this bright, gleaming space is not like being in a great European chapel; it's more like a poetic evocation of kitschy ecclesiastical décor. In any case it effectively sets you up for the hair-raising piece called "The Dark Gate."

Pass through a narrow, curtained doorway into a dark gallery, and you come to a small building made from wide planks of untreated pine. Enter through the swinging doors to a narrow space lighted by a single overhead bulb. Here you face a heavy screen made of radiating steel spokes whose sharpened ends frame a central, circular opening. Through this opening you see only impenetrable darkness.

It is visually fascinating — a kind of sculptural Op Art — and it is scary, because it gives the illusion of infinite nothingness beyond the screen. This could be a gateway to hell. A satanic shove from behind, and you could be flayed alive by the sharp spokes before plunging into the eternal void. KEN JOHNSON

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