**Northern Lights**
7 December 1996- 1 February 1997

**Ally Wallace,**
**Wenyon & Gamble,**
**Adam Barker-Mill,**
**Andrew Gifford,**
**Patrick Beveridge,**
**Richard Ellis,**
**James Turrell**

Because of city light pollution, to most of us, many of the night's beauties are veiled from view. The phenomena of the Aurora Borealis, one of the most spectacular and impressive natural displays of light is caused by jets of charged particles emitted by the sun which, when they strike the molecules of the upper atmosphere, initiate reactions resulting in the emission of light. In Scotland this phenomena in known as the 'Northern Lights.'

Polewards of the weakest portion of the Van Allen Belts is a region where the magnetic fields of the earth does not trap or deflect the particles if the solar wind at all. They spiral directly in towards the poles along the lines of magnetic force until they strike the ionosphere. Here they also interact energetically with the thin gases, these invasions of the ionosphere raise its temperature to very high levels. At altitudes of 63 miles, temperatures of 870 degrees centigrade have been measured over the equator, and 1,427 degrees centigrade over the North Pole. The energy pouring into the ionosphere also generated brilliant displays of Aurora Borealis or Aurora Australis, the northern and southern dawn. The similarity to sunrise implied in these names is misleading; aurora displays usually begin a few hours after sunset and are all over by dawn. An observer on earth looking towards the dark horizon sees it begin to glow with a pale greenish light. It brightens rapidly; while rays faintly tinged with magenta and lime green arch high into the sky. This and more rays of light appear; they move, break up and reform in wavering luminous sheets like firelight flickering on the ceiling of the world.

Between sunrise and sunset we can all see the wide range of light atmospheres and effects. Only recently a rare phenomena was observed in Scotland at sunset caused by the presence of ice crystals at a high altitude and creating a spectacularly dramatic effect.

In the sun's light falling on strawberry leaves one can see a reflective iridescence which, in the morning, is particularly stimulating, and as

beautiful as the iridescence of bird plumage or the shimmering green-black armour of a stag beetle.

Light may be exploited by artists through reflection, refraction, diffusion and all artificial electronic means available. It has become the trademark of certain artists such as Bruce Nauman, Jenny Holzer and James Turrell, and has now acquired validity as an artistic medium in its own right. Following on from Charles Ex's *Night Lines,* an exhibition of eleven light installations in the city of Utrecht, in 1992 Edinburgh paid host to a collective light exhibition entitled Lux Europe. This exhibition gathered together artists from all over Europe who are working in light in a mass exhibition in indoor and outdoor locations throughout the city.

*Northern Lights* presents eight British and American artists who are using light to create challenging and innovative new art works. The exhibition centres around an installation by James Turrell, one of the most famous exponents of light-based art, exhibiting for the first time in Scotland. Also included are newly commissioned works by British artists Andrew Gifford, Patrick Beveridge and Richard Ellis, and two works by Adam Barker-Mill. Science-based US partnership Weydon and Gamble will be showing two works made during their residency at The Royal Observatory, Edinburgh, from 1993-4, and Scottish artist Ally Wallace will be installing Green Line, a specially commissioned work in the gallery café.

**Artist in residence**

As part of the Northern Lights Education programme, T*he Fruitmarket Gallery* has organised an artist in residence to work at the Triangle Arts Centre in West Pilton, Edinburgh, during January and February 1997.

**Meet the Artists**

Exhibiting artists discuss their work in the context of Northern Lights.
Saturday 7 December, 2 pm at the gallery.
Admission Free

**Funding**

The Fruitmarket Gallery is grateful to Marks and Spencer for their donation towards the project.

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**The writers, artists and The Fruitmarket Gallery**
**The Fruitmarket Gallery takes no responsibility for information, which is out of date or inaccurate.**

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