

FROM A POINT OF BEING
Time, Space and Light

Wendy Leach

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Abstract

This dissertation outlines my journey through the MFA programme and documents changes in my thinking and practice over the past two years. When I commenced this Masters programme I aspired to make fundamental changes in the essence of my artistic practice. I sought to work from a point of being, seeking oneness with my work. In the dissertation these terms are discussed in reference to my work. Initially investigating concepts of duality, I found that duality permeates all parts of our existence, in a cyclical pattern of interdependence and renewal. My inquiry into duality and binary pairs, led to my interest in space-time, and it is in the dual entity of space-time that I found the stepping-off point that this new body of work evolved from. My studio practice explores movement within time and space by painting with light and recording the work photographically. This dissertation includes discussion of contemporary and historical artists, including Marian Drew, Darren Glass, Anders Knutsson, Kwang Jean Park, Charles Cham, William Kentridge, Len Lye, Judy Millar, Jackson Pollock, David Reed, Eadweard Muybridge, and Gjon Mili in collaboration with Pablo Picasso, to whose concerns and/or aesthetics my practice relates, and theories and ideas that have informed and arisen from my art work. I identify the importance of physicality and mark-making as modes of expression and examine the concept of trace. In art, the trace indicates the presence of the artist and thereby positions the artist within the work. This gives rise to ideas about absence and presence, and how the notion of absence/presence engages the premise of a state of 'being'. My performances of painting with light provide a sense of oneness through the integral experience of painting within the work.

Key Words

duality

cyclical dynamics

oneness

being

space-time

absence

presence

trace

mark-making

painting with light

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Introduction

This dissertation is presented in two chapters. The chapters contextualise different stages of my journey through the MFA programme developing my initial intentions and explorations through discussion of contemporary and historical artists to whose concerns and/or aesthetics my practice relates, and theories and ideas that have informed and arisen from my art work.

I entered the MFA programme as an artist with twenty years of successful professional practice and exhibiting. In the latter part of that time I was working predominantly as a painter of landscapes. I took on the challenge of the MFA to provoke, within myself, a new way of thinking, and to promote a change in my artistic practice. Whereas my work prior to this point was essentially a visual response to my environment, my intention has been to work towards discovering in my work a spirit of place, and a sense of oneness with my work. Ultimately this has led me to a more meaningful and personally relevant artistic practice.

Initially my research concerned the relationship between the persona and the self and my belief that some reconciliation between these two offers greater creative and artistic self-insight. Carl Jung's psychoanalytical theory around the persona and the concept of the alter ego support ideas about the hidden self, the private face. I examined the work of artists Laurie Simmons, Destiny Deacon, David Levinthal, Christopher Lovenguth, Hans Bellmer and Cindy Sherman who have drawn on doll imagery and the relevance of these interpretations to my own work; methods of self-representation by several artists; and the genre of surrogate self-portraiture where the artist's work is autobiographical but the presence of the artist is only represented symbolically. I arrived at the understanding that a persona exists in the

presence of another hidden self, and this circumstance indicates the existence of duality. Through the reconciliation of the two parts of duality comes individuation and the wholeness of self.

From this background, my dissertation commences with Chapter One exploring concepts of duality further, within the human condition but also beyond this into the environment in which each individual exists. My aim is to gain a greater understanding of my place within my environment, both psychologically and spiritually and thereby gain a sense of oneness and a sense of place. In this chapter my interest lies in the cyclical dynamics of duality and binary oppositions, and the balance that is created as a result of dynamic tension. To show some contemporary applications of these duality concepts in art, I investigate three artists who explore their ideas around cyclic energy and duality: Anders Knutsson, Kwang Jean Park and Charles Cham. Chapter One looks to physics, where space-time and mass-energy are two parts of an important complementary duality within the universe, and the basis of Albert Einstein's *Theory of Relativity* (1905). Finally, in my inquiry around oneness and a sense of place, I reference *Takaka; Night and Day* 1948, (Fig. 7) by Colin McCahon, as an example of psychological landscape, where the artist is portraying his 'state of soul' in his landscape (Brown, 1977). It is such a 'state of soul', or oneness, that I seek to explore in my own work.

Chapter Two focuses on the space-time conjoined entity model that emerged out of Albert Einstein's study of the inter-relationship between space and time. My studio practice explores movement within time and space. That is, performance of painting with light, the accruing and layering of marks in time and space, and photographically recording the trace of the performance. The chapter examines, in historic and contemporary contexts, artists whose work has explored notions of time and space, I investigate the works of Marian

Drew (b.1960), and Gjon Mili (1904 - 1984), which explore spatial and temporal outcomes using similar methods. As physicality and involvement of the artist's body is an integral part of my process, I draw some parallels with Jackson Pollock (1912 – 1956), Judy Millar (b.1957) and David Reed (b.1946) who, although they are working in the medium of paint on a surface, all exhibit similar types of gestural and spontaneous performance of painting. Referring to the work of Len Lye, I also identify the importance of mark-making as a mode of expression that engages the artist in a very personal proposition of immediacy and directness. Chapter Two examines the concept of trace, as the only remaining sign of the activity when the event has finished. In art, the trace indicates the presence of the artist and thereby positions the artist within the work. This gives rise to ideas about absence and presence, and how the notion of absence/presence engages the premise of a state of 'being'. Finally, Chapter Two addresses the medium of photography, the historical significance of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and other Bauhaus artists who led the way to a 'new vision' in the 1920s, promoting multidisciplinary thinking and practice and the belief that photography provided a completely new way of seeing the world that the human eye could not (Turner, 1987). This holds significance for me because photography and multidisciplinary thinking – painting with light - have opened the way for a new practice

When I commenced this study I believed I was lacking (yet seeking) a sense of place, a place to be. As a strategy to resolve this, I aspired to make fundamental changes in not only my method, but more importantly the *essence* of my artistic practice, by developing a personal and symbolic foundation; a new threshold for my practice. In my performances of painting with light, the physical dynamic of the performance, along with the darkness of the space, the solitary nature of the activity, and the transient and ephemeral nature of the medium, provide an integral experience of painting

within the work. The photographic trace that remains contains a record of that activity, a moment of being.

Chapter One: Exploring Duality

This chapter investigates the concept of duality. In my earlier research, commencing my study as close to myself as possible, and by exploring Jungian psychology, I arrived at the understanding that a Persona exists in the presence of another hidden Self, and this circumstance indicates the existence of duality. Moving outward from that point, I explore the notion of duality further, within the human condition but also beyond this into the environment in which we exist. My intention is to clarify the meaning of duality for me and investigate its significance particularly in relation to my art practice. In doing so, I hope to gain a greater understanding of my place within my environment, both psychologically and spiritually. Through this, my goal is to gain a sense of oneness and a sense of place, from which I can approach my studio exploration.

This chapter argues that duality exists within the human condition and in all aspects of life, and oneness comes from the synthesis of the two parts of duality. Duality can be seen as two opposite or opposing parts. Friedrich Nietzsche states that the opposites in a duality are complementary to one another. As polar opposites, they have an equal inherent value, and therefore cannot dominate or destroy each other (Huskinson, 2004, p 11). The tension between these opposites plays a fundamental role in the synthesis of the two parts into oneness. As a starting point, oneness is described in popular dictionaries as, for example, “the quality or state of being one; singleness or wholeness. A state or condition of perfect harmony or accord ...” (*The American Heritage Dictionary*, 2006). I, however, consider this term in more depth and specifically in relation to art making and discuss particular artists and art works that I believe embody this idea. I believe that as individuals human beings can be seen as constantly in the process of finding oneness –

that is, some juncture where the two parts of duality can co-exist in harmony. I seek this harmony in and through my studio exploration and art making.

I use the term duality in reference to a state or situation consisting of two parts that are opposed but complementary to each other (Palmer, 1977). The terms 'duality' and 'dualism' are frequently used synonymously, however 'dualism' appears to reference, more specifically, religion and philosophy, and particularly in relation to mind/body and good/evil dualities. Therefore, in this dissertation, the term 'duality' is used in relation to my hypothesis. Duality, as a concept and relationship, covers a vast and diverse range of areas, including religions and cultures, philosophy, mathematics, physics, and psychoanalytical theory. It is the connection and similarity between some of these areas that I address. Western psychology refers to duality in the theories of Jung and Nietzsche, who I refer to in the following paragraphs. Chinese philosophy has the concept of Yin and Yang, which forms an integral part of my argument. My interest lies in the cyclical dynamics of duality and binary oppositions, and the balance that is created as a result of dynamic tension (Huskinson, 2004). By finding balance, comes oneness and the 'state of soul' referred to by Colin McCahon in relation to his painting *Takaka; Night and Day*, 1948 (Fig. 7) (Brown, 1977).

Initially, the focus is on duality in Western psychology, where the interaction between two opposite parts of the psyche is an essential aspect of Jungian theory. The concept of complementarity is introduced; that is the two opposing or opposite parts of duality can comfortably co-exist as two parts of a whole. In the book *Nietzsche and Jung: The Whole Self in the Union of Opposites*, Lucy Huskinson theorises that any two opposing parts of a duality actually co-exist as two complementary parts of a whole, and that because opposites are fundamentally of equal value, one polar element cannot eclipse its counterpart (Huskinson, 2004). Complementarity occurs when two polar

opposites combine to 'complete' each other. Niels Bohr, in his theory of complementarity (1926), addressing what he perceived as a paradox in such dichotomies as space/time, right/left, and observer/observed, found they are reciprocal, indivisible pairs (Schlain, 1991, p.340). "Combining any of these pairs creates a reciprocal duality that together forms a seamless unity" (Schlain). This seamless unity is an aspect of what I refer to as oneness.

The same pattern of complementary opposites emerges in nature. Duality is a fundamental concept that arguably underlies almost all natural phenomena, and this tenet underpins the Eastern philosophical idea of Yin and Yang. I explain the concept of Yin and Yang, and argue that it is through conflict and tension that balance and harmony are achieved. Yin/yang opposites are complementary, and therefore interdependent, and this brings about equilibrium in the duality. Equilibrium is therefore another aspect of oneness. "Opposites support and complete each other, and together, they become one" (Zhang & Woolley, 2000, p.140). There is duality in western science, especially physics, where space-time and mass-energy are presented as two parts of an important complementary duality within the universe, that of space-time and mass-energy – the basis of Albert Einstein's (1879 – 1955) *Theory of Relativity* (1905). This aspect of duality is also discussed and had particular meaning for my art work at the time.

To show some contemporary applications of these duality concepts in art, I investigate three artists who explore their ideas around cyclic energy and duality. Of these artists, Kwang Jean Park and Charles Cham, are from Eastern cultures, and the third artist Anders Knutsson, is a Swedish artist now living in New York. Their works all show strong influence of Yin and Yang. Each artist has a declared interest in Yin and Yang duality and I believe this interest is strongly manifest in their works.

Finally, developments are addressed in my own studio inquiry where I was seeking a personal solution in my art practice that embodied my feelings and beliefs about duality. I believe my artistic and psychological direction lies in developing a personal and symbolic response to 'being', as opposed to 'seeing'. McCahon's *Takaka; Night and Day*, 1948 (Fig. 7), is an example of psychological landscape, where the artist is portraying what he termed his 'state of soul' in his landscape (Brown, 1977). I seek a similar state in my own work.

The word duality implies that the two parts of the duality are invariably totally opposite to each other, and seemingly unable to find common ground. However, it is important to consider that while the two parts are opposite, they are also complementary. As already mentioned, complementarity occurs when two polar opposites combine to 'complete' each other. In understanding this concept, and taking this approach, a new perception is possible – the idea that the two opposing or opposite parts co-exist as two parts of a whole. In my initial research I addressed the issue of the 'hidden' self and the 'real' self (a duality), in an effort to gain understanding around identity (a whole or oneness). The state of oneness or a whole self comes out of achieving harmony between two parts of a duality, which in this case is the hidden and the real self.

Lucy Huskinson refers to the whole self as the "union of opposites" (2004, p.3). She states that, according to both Nietzsche and Jung, "the goal or height of human potential is the realization of the whole self" (p.3), and this is achieved by the "cultivation and balance of all antithetical psychological impulses – both rational and irrational – within the personality" (p.3). Huskinson states that two of the principle oppositions in the psyche are the conscious and the unconscious, and although they are polar opposites, "they are, according to Jung, able to complement one another" (p.35). While

seeming to be in conflict, the contest between two opposite parts in the psyche is a fundamental state, which creates tension and, as a result, dynamic energy (Huskinson). Nietzsche also says that the opposites in a duality are complementary to one another. "According to Nietzsche, opposites have an equal inherent value, so that one polar element cannot dominate and annihilate its counterpart" (Huskinson, 2004, p.11).

From 1873, Nietzsche started accumulating notes that were published after his death as *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. In these notes, Nietzsche uses a metaphorical reference to wrestlers to illustrate this model of the relationship between opposites:

Everlastingly, a given quality contends against itself and separates into opposites; everlastingly these opposites seek to reunite. Ordinary people fancy they see something rigid, complete and permanent; in truth, however, light and dark, bitter and sweet are attached to each other and interlocked at any given moment like wrestlers of whom sometimes the one, sometimes the other is on top (Nietzsche, 1873, as cited in Huskinson, 2004, p.11).

This description of the cyclical nature of any duality of opposites illustrates the tension or struggle that exists and also the role that the tension plays. Nietzsche is positing that when two equal, opposite and complementary forces in the psyche confront each other, there is no ultimate or overall 'winner'. There is conflict and tension, but in my opinion this is a positive thing. It is the tension that creates the dynamic energy and cyclical movement. One is always trying to overpower the other and in doing so they create a dynamic 'whole' of two parts, held fast together, and in perpetual cyclic movement.

Similarly, in nature there is a system based on duality and cyclical interdependence within binary relationships. This is best explained in terms of the duality of Yin and Yang, which originated in ancient Eastern philosophy and metaphysics, where it is the tension between the two opposing but complementary forces in the universe that connects them and thus enables the cycle of transformation to keep renewing itself. The concept of Yin and Yang is based on the relationship of interdependence between two conflicting forces, which can be found in all aspects of the universe (Palmer, 1997).

Yin and Yang, female and male, cold and hot, moon and sun, earth and heaven – in other words total opposites – do complement each other. Yet their balance, their equilibrium, is not a passive one. They do not lie side by side in peaceful co-existence. Their balance comes from dynamic tension, from the constant struggle of one to overcome the other. Their energy, the very life energy of the universe, arises from contest and combat. They each wish to eradicate the other and be supreme, but cannot do this... as they reach their zenith, they peak and begin to decline, allowing the other to rise (Palmer, 1997, p.vii).

This description is helpful in this debate, as it portrays all of life as a dynamic struggle. It is not a romantic view of balance and harmony. This view promotes understanding that harmony and oneness is not about the absence of tension and diversity, but arises out of constant struggle and balancing difference. Opposites are complementary, and therefore interdependent, and it is this fact that brings about harmony and equilibrium out of duality. Life and nature cannot be seen as separate. Life's patterns usually reflect the same cycle of struggle, decline and renewal. When life surrenders to death, death brings about new life. In everyday life there is strength and weakness, success and failure, affection and hatred, and from these dichotomies come balance and harmony (Cooper, 1981).

There is a connection between these ideas and art and the art-making process. For example, painting utilises the yin/yang pairs of dark/light, cold/warm, soft/strong, transparent/opaque and thin/thick (Zhang & Woolley, 2000, p.11).

Positive forces require negative forces, and energy is released by their balance. Paintings always exude an energy that flows from a harmonious balance of contrasts. Opposites pull and push..... yin/yang theory applies to every element of art – from value and colour to composition and movement. It connects drawing with painting, and makes peace between the separate realms of abstraction and representation (Zhang & Woolley).

In colour theory, complementary hues are directly opposite each other on the colour wheel. They possess naturally opposing but harmonising colour energy, so both excite and balance each other. Although they are polar opposites, complementary colours subdue each other when combined. They form grey when mixed together as paint, and form white light when the two colour rays are blended. Complementary pairs include red-green, blue-orange and yellow-violet (Chiazzari, 1999, p.120).

Chiaroscuro is an Italian art term meaning 'light-dark'. The term "refers to the use of strong contrasts of light and shade for dramatic impact, as in the paintings of Caravaggio and Rembrandt" (*Dictionary of Art and Artists*, 1985, p.76). Chiaroscuro painting demonstrates a strong duality in its values. This contrast between black (yin) and white (yang) is the most basic Yin/yang element in visual art (Zhang & Woolley, 2000). "While the words *yin* and *yang* have many meanings in Chinese, the most common one for yin is shadow, and for yang, light – terms that apply directly to rendering form..." (Zhang & Woolley, p.14). This is of relevance to my own inquiry regarding the self and

my art practice. The black/white duality in painting and photography replicates the duality in Jungian psychology of the shadow and the self, representing the dark and the light in the psyche. The shadow is the absolute opposite of the conscious self, the ego, and represents that which we do not wish to acknowledge within ourselves (Samuels, 1990). Carl Jung referred to the shadow as the domain of the inferior or negative personality (Duffy, 1995). This relates to the painting and performance work of Anders Knutsson who is discussed more fully later in this chapter. In his work the dark represents the 'shadow', and the light represents the good, and he believes we need to accept our shadow in order to become whole (Duffy).

Investigating the notion of cyclical energy and more particularly, binary relationships in the universe, brought me to consider the space-time continuum. In his *Special Theory of Relativity* (1905), Albert Einstein was studying the inter-relationship between space, time, energy and matter.

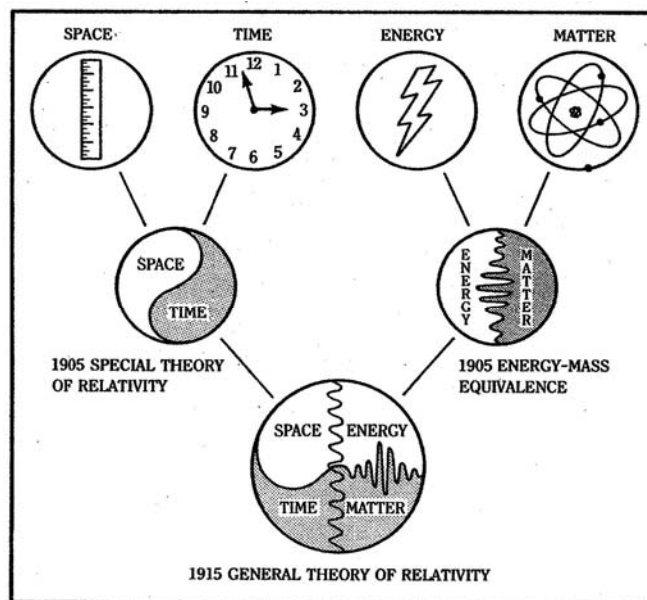


Figure 1 *The mandala of general relativity* Shlain, L. (1991) *Art & Physics: parallel visions in time, space and light*. New York: Morrow

He concluded that the four separate entities were actually two binary entities, which he called space-time and mass-energy. In 1907 he started to consider that these two new conjoined entities were also complementary opposites of each other. While his intuition told him that they were related, it was not until 1915 that Einstein succeeded in proving that the binary pairs of space-time and mass-energy were themselves connected, thereby creating a space-time/mass-energy duality (Shlain, 1991). “The reciprocal relationship between Einstein’s two new entities meant that each *informed* the other about the characteristics it was to exhibit. This complementary duality, the interplay between space-time and mass-energy, results in a force we call gravity...” (Schlain, p.400). It is interesting to note that, in representing space-time diagrammatically (Fig. 1), Shlain uses a symbol similar to the Yin Yang symbol.

Seeking these ideas in contemporary art, the work and ideas of three artists who explore duality, cyclic energy and the tension between opposites, either as the catalyst to their work or as part of their process are considered. These artists are Anders Knutsson, Kwang Jean Park, and Charles Cham. Swedish painter and performance artist Knutsson’s understanding of duality arises from study of the Taoist text the *I Ching*, while Park explores the Taoist philosophy of Ying and Yang, along with light and space, mass and void, and Cham, also taking his inspiration from the *I Ching*, addresses duality and the attraction between opposites.

Anders Knutsson was born in Sweden and moved to New York in 1976, where he studied the *I Ching*, *The Book of Changes*.

The *I Ching* contains practical wisdom on the duality and connectedness of natural forces governing creativity, the self, and the world of phenomena..... The universal principles of change directed through the

two opposite cosmological modes of Yin and Yang reveal how their qualities can coexist with one another - heaven and earth, light and dark, hardness and tenderness.... (Knutsson, as cited in Duffy, 1995).

Knutsson also addresses psychological aspects of duality in his paintings and luminous performances, with light and shadow representing two parts of wholeness. There are parallels here with my own interest in duality within the psyche, and my series of duality photographs portraying my doll as a persona (Fig. 2).



Figure 2 Wendy Leach *Mirror Doll* 2006 Digital photograph 400 x 600mm

Jung referred to the realm of the shadow as the 'unconscious other', the domain of the inferior or negative personality. In Knutsson's work, the dark is representative of the 'shadow', and the light represents all that is good. Knutsson believes we should get in touch with and accept our shadow, our darkness, in order to heal and become whole. Recognition and acceptance of

the dark aspects of the personality as present and real is the essential condition for self-knowledge and integration into oneness (Duffy, 1995).

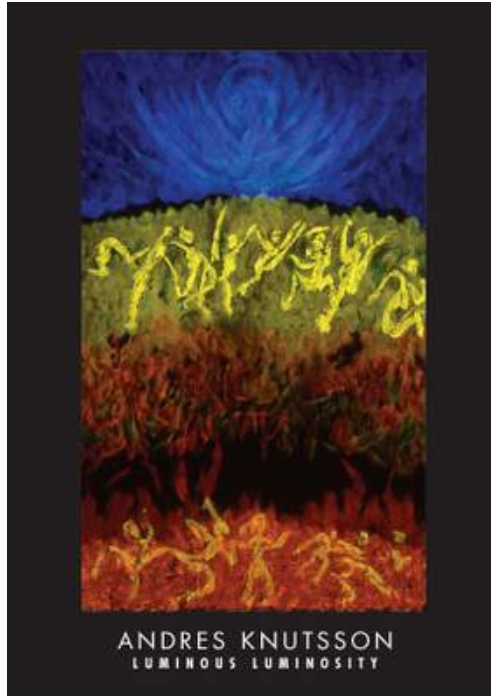


Figure 3 Anders Knutsson *Postcard for luminous performance* 2005. Retrieved November 28, 2006, from: <http://www.andersknutsson.com/performances.htm>

Knutsson uses a luminous paint formula that produces strong glowing images in darkened environments. His most recent luminous performance works (Fig. 4) have been in collaboration with other artists. The performance art revolves around the yin/yang premise that energy is created from the interaction of yin/yang forces - negative and positive, dark and light, stillness and movement, push and pull, and opposing but harmonising colour energy (www.andersknutsson.com, 2005). The performance aspect of Knutsson's work resonates with me because of this duality and interplay of yin/yang forces, and it also engages my interest in painting from a point of 'being'. In his performance pieces featuring luminosity in a dark environment, it seems as if the paint has escaped from his canvas, freeing him to explore movement and light, as well as paint.

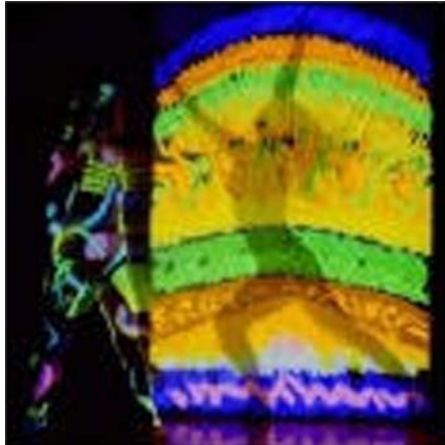


Figure 4 Anders Knutsson *Luminous performance* 2005. Retrieved November 28, 2006, from: <http://www.andersknutsson.com/performances.htm>

Kwang Jean Park is a South Korean artist, who lives and works in Seoul. She exhibits internationally, and while her work sits comfortably amongst Western contemporary art, her subject matter reflects her Asian roots. Her work explores the Eastern Taoist philosophy of Ying and Yang, along with light and space, and mass and void.

Park explores the Taoist concept of the Yin-Yang, or the cyclic and perpetual intermeshing of opposites. She employs binarisms such as 'heaven and earth' or 'light and dark' as metaphors for the more abstract metaphysical Yin-Yang concept, while often literalizing its binary nature by presenting her works in a diptych format (www.andrewbaegallery.com, 2001 - 2006).

Although Park's work looks deceptively simple in her use of familiar geometric shapes such as circles, squares and waveforms, closer inspection reveals layers of technical, visual and conceptual complexity. Her technique has been adapted and combines printing, drawing, painting and collage techniques.

Park uses multiple layers of woodblock printing and then returns to the print with brushes, pigments and pencil to deepen and enrich her image (www.andrewbaegallery.com). Park's diptych *Yin and Yang, 2000.17* and *Yin and Yang, 2000.18* (Fig. 5) shows harmony and balance. In Ying/yang theory, all things contain their opposites (Zhang & Woolley, 2000, p.14). In this work, I observe that each panel is the inverse of the other, and as with yin and yang, each has a part of the other within it. Her transposition of the dark (yin) and light (yang) areas between the two panels, and the horizontal line dissecting the two panels creates a simple yet strong composition representing duality. The artist's planning of the composition, along with the combination of the two panels, is an example of how opposites can support and complete each other, and in doing so, become one (Zhang & Woolley, 2000, p.140).

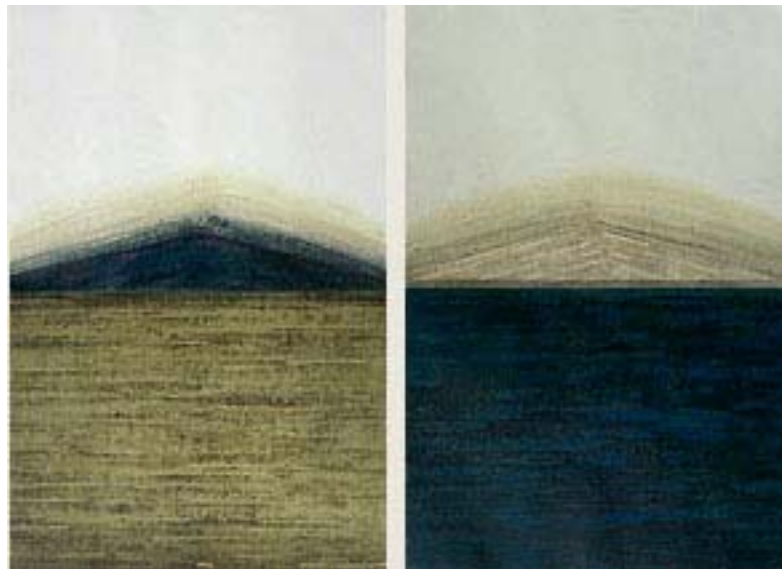


Figure 5 Kwang Jean Park *Yin and Yang, 2000.17* and *Yin and Yang, 2000.18* 2001 woodblock and carbon on paper 44 x 30in each. Retrieved September 8, 2006 from: <http://www.andrewbaegallery.com/exhibitions/pkj/pkj.html>

Malaysian artist Charles Cham's paintings and drawings are also based on the philosophy of Yin and Yang – duality in life and the attraction between

opposites (www.charlescham.com, 2006). His work is energetic and painterly in its technique. He puts as much importance on to his drawings as he does to his paintings. Taking his inspiration from the *I Ching, The Book of Changes*, the Yin and Yang concept is illustrated strongly in his belief that “drawing is thinking and painting is feeling ... As there is no feeling without thinking, there is also no painting without drawing” (www.charlescham.com). This idea around the connection between the two dualities, thinking/feeling and drawing/painting, is useful to my inquiry. Cham believes there is another side to everything, whether it is visible or not. “The Yin and Yang paintings are actually multiple paintings. They are in fact two paintings on one canvas, with each other facing in the opposite direction” (www.charlescham.com). In his painting *The War of Art*, 1995 (Fig. 6), two figures are in rotational movement within the composition, reminiscent of Nietzsche’s words that “light and dark, and bitter and sweet”, are connected and linked together - “interlocked ...like wrestlers of whom sometimes the one, sometimes the other is on top” (Nietzsche, 1873, as cited in Huskinson, 2004, p.11).



Figure 6 Charles Cham *The War of Art* 1995 Oil on canvas 91.5 x 91.5 cm. Retrieved September 8, 2006 from: www.charlescham.com/applications/photogallerymanager/inc_photogallerymanagerwork.asp

Cham emphasises his theme of duality in his combination of the strong use of black (yin) for the two figures, with a white (yang) circle at the very centre of the composition, which appears to be the energy source that the two figures are orbiting around. The visual path, or energy, in this painting is strong and dynamic, leading the eye around the composition in circular motion. “Just as negative and positive charges work together to spark the movement of an electrical motor, the opposing forces (yin/yang) governing space and position spark the visual movement in composition” (Zhang & Woolley, 2000, p.18).

My inquiry into duality has led me to comprehend and appreciate the dynamic energy that exists as a result of binary relationships in nature and the universe. It is pertinent that when the pattern of complementarities that has emerged here is considered, there are strong similarities and connection between that which is pointed out by Lucy Huskinson in relation to the psychoanalytical theories of both Nietzsche and Jung (Huskinson, 2004), and that of the Eastern philosophy of Yin and Yang. This is very relevant in my search for direction in my own work. I started out hoping to gain a greater understanding of my place within my environment, both psychologically and spiritually, and to integrate this understanding into a more meaningful art practice. At that stage in my studio inquiry, I was working towards an artistic solution that incorporated my thoughts around complementary duality, tension between opposites, and cyclical energy in nature. My challenge was to arrive at a more personal solution in my practice that embodied my feelings and beliefs.

For example, in painting a landscape this would translate to portraying not so much the place itself, but an experience or feeling relating to that place. Colin McCahon said that his painting *Takaka; Night and Day*, 1948 (Fig. 7), is a “symbol of place and also the human condition” (as cited in Brown, 1977). In

this painting McCahon is portraying more than a visual record of a place, but a personal and symbolic response which combines place, time and feeling. He represents the landforms of the Takaka Hills, in a psychological landscape of brooding light and dark. This is a representation of night and day, and hills and valleys on one hand, but the artist is also symbolically portraying emotions, and this painting is a metaphor for duality in the human condition. Gordon Brown writes of McCahon's painting: "What the artist has produced is a symbol of his feelings, not the feelings themselves... We, the viewers, must interpret this symbolic representation of feeling if we are to understand the artist's 'state of soul', to use one of McCahon's favourite phrases" (Brown).

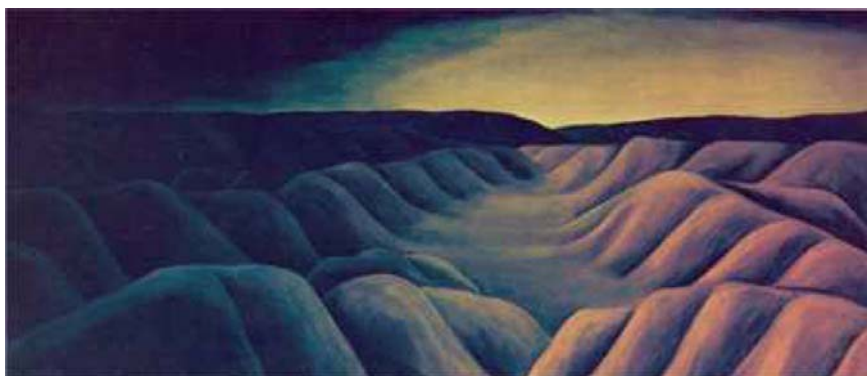


Figure 7 Colin McCahon *Takaka: Night and Day* 1948 Oil on canvas 889 x 2108 mm.
Retrieved September 8, 2006 from:
<http://www.artnewzealand.com/Issues1to40/mccahon08gb.htm>

In my own studio inquiry my quest was to develop a language which would take my art (painting or photography) from simply a visual representation, to a personal and symbolic response to *being*, not *seeing*. I acknowledge that seeing is an important component of being an artist. However, I have relied too heavily on the purely visual in the past. In my current inquiry and practice I have been striving to put less emphasis on visual perception, and draw more on my wider sensory perception. That is, that the way I process what I see and experience be shaped by my understanding of duality or binary forces in

the world, and their underlying energy in life. I believe that to make art with this premise as a foundation would be to achieve what McCahon is speaking of when he uses the expression 'state of soul'. That is, perfect harmony or accord, or oneness.

I have discussed my belief that duality exists not only in the psyche, but also in nature, the universe and in every aspect of life and supported these beliefs with theories from established philosophies and sciences from different cultures – east and west. Oneness exists in the presence of, and through the synthesis of, two equal but complementary parts of duality. My inquiry around duality in these different aspects of life has led me to a clearer understanding of the dynamic energy that exists as a result of binary relationships in nature and the universe. This underlying energy force has been represented in different ways in the art of Charles Cham, Kwang Jean Park and Anders Knutsson. It is significant that a similar pattern of complementarities has emerged in the separate parts of my inquiry. It is also significant to me that harmony comes out of conflict and tension in duality. There are parallels here with the creative state that brings about the art-making process. While this notion might not appeal to the romantic idealist, it is an axiom that can form a meaningful foundation for my studio practice. A connection with nature and the life force that drives it provides me with a 'place within' from which to paint.

Chapter Two: Painting with Light in Time and Space

The intent of Chapter two is to pursue the development of my studio practice and to examine the ideas and histories that inform my work. Further to considerations of duality, of particular interest is space-time, a conjoined entity model that emerged out of Albert Einstein's study of the inter-relationship between space and time. In my studio practice I am exploring movement within time and space. My current inquiry is around painting with light and the accruing and layering of marks in time and space. My practice also incorporates the physicality of the artist's body and provokes consideration of the trace. These inquiries give rise to ideas about absence and presence.

The notion of absence/presence engages the premise of a state of 'being'. Having stated earlier that I believe my artistic and psychological direction lies in developing a personal and symbolic response to 'being' along with a sense of 'place', I explain why I feel that I have reached this point and how my exploration of the cyclical energy that exists in nature has informed my practice, and formed a threshold for my work.

Earlier research explored the notion of duality and in particular the cyclical pattern which exists in duality, which I see as integral to my response to and sense of being and place. This chapter explores, firstly, the background to space-time theory, starting with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who believed time and space to be "modes of perception and not attributes of the physical world" (as cited in Gaarder, 1996, p. 270). The notion of space and time as 'space-time', a conjoined entity and inter-dependent duality, emerged over a century later and forms the basis of Albert Einstein's (1879 – 1955) *Special Theory of Relativity*, 1905. German mathematician Hermann

Minkowski (1864 – 1909) supported Einstein's theory, as did Samuel Alexander (1859 – 1938) from a philosophical point of view, stating that "Space is in its very nature temporal and Time spatial" (as cited in Cleugh, 1937, p.131).

This chapter examines, in historic and contemporary contexts, artists whose work has explored notions of time and space, including the paintings and drawings of Umberto Boccioni (1882 – 1916), and photography by Eadweard Muybridge (1830 - 1904), and Darren Glass (b.1969). Within these contexts, an example of my own work from 2006 is discussed, which addresses the notion that within space-time, time is the fourth dimension, and this can be represented statically by a gyre or coil.

As my current inquiry is using performance of painting with light to create photographic images of temporality within space, I investigate two artists who explore spatial and temporal outcomes using similar methods. Australian artist, Marian Drew (b.1960), describes her work as "making my marks in the space time of photography" (2006. p.87), and Gjon Mili (1904 - 1984) who worked in collaboration with Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973) to create "space drawings" by photographing Picasso drawing with a light "pencil" in darkness (1970, p.15). I address current developments in my own studio inquiry, and discuss examples of my work where I use performance of painting with light.

Physicality and involvement of the artist's body is an integral part of my process. I draw some parallels with Jackson Pollock (1912 – 1956), Judy Millar (b.1957) and David Reed (b.1946), who although they are working in the medium of paint on a surface, all exhibit similar types of gestural and spontaneous performance of painting. I also identify the importance of mark-making as a mode of expression that engages the artist in an intensely personal proposition of immediacy and directness. Along with the physicality

of the work, the spontaneous marks that I make are an integral and fundamental element in my work. The art of Len Lye (1901 – 1980) is an example of a unique spontaneous approach to mark-making: “Doodling was a way of subverting his years of draughtmanship, allowing him to dive below the surface of the mind...” (Horrocks, 2001, p.104).

Emerging from discussion of mark-making, is the idea of trace. Nancy Shawcross (1997) describes trace as the “sense of a physical presence executed or created in a past time but remaining in present time and possibly to exist in future time” (p.16). The trace that remains, when the event and the artist have disappeared, is the only remaining sign of the activity. I focus again on the Mili - Picasso collaboration, where Picasso’s signature drawn in light is recorded on film by Mili as the only remaining trace of the action (Mili, 1970. p.15). The charcoal works of William Kentridge (b.1955) are a process of continuous drawing then erasure, and are a potent metaphor for the political and human rights issues in South Africa during the apartheid years, with the “continual erasures yielding ghosts, traces, stains...” (Ollman, 1999). Marian Drew, rather than documenting the landscape, explains that she intervenes in it, “leaving ephemeral marks or traces...” (Jordan, 2006, p.11).

In art, the trace indicates the presence of the artist and thereby positions the artist within the work. I investigate the notion of absence/presence in relation to Drew’s work *Fraser Cross*, 2006, and discuss some examples of my own photography where I might not be physically present in the work, but my presence is made implicit through the trace of the marks I created within the space over time.

Finally, this chapter addresses the medium of photography. Starting with the historical significance of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (1895 – 1946) and other Bauhaus artists who led the way to a ‘new vision’ in the 1920s, promoting

multidisciplinary thinking and practice and the belief that photography provided a completely new way of seeing the world that the human eye could not (Turner, 1987). My own practice of photography is considered within this context and in relation to Shawcross's contention that: "Photographs are pictures of time: they are this before they are anything else" (1997, p.104). Thus all the significant elements of my current practice, being and place, presence, absence and the body and the medium of photography are addressed.

Human knowledge, argues the Western humanist tradition, is limited by our senses and ability to reason. Enlightenment philosophers, and much of the thinking that followed, posits that humans can only experience and perceive what our senses and reason allow (Magee, 1987). In the latter part of the Eighteenth Century German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) explored this relationship between the senses in relation to space and time. He concluded that space and time are part of the human condition; that is, the world has to fit in with space and time in order for us to comprehend it. We perceive space and time because our reason demands that we do this and experience supports that reasoning. That is to say space and time are perceptual rather than physical conditions external to human beings (Gaarder, 1996, pp. 270 – 271). Humans are innately spatial – we have a physical embodiment, and are innately temporal – we are mortal. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781, Kant stated that:

space and time were empirically real, but transcendently ideal... On the one hand, no one would say that space and time are real, if at all, in the same way that material objects are real. On the other hand, our experiences do seem to be arranged in spatial order, and to be serial in time, so that we should be loath to believe in the possibility of experience that is not in time or space (as cited in Cleugh, 1937, p.86).

A more scientific proposition emerged over a century later from the research of German physicist Albert Einstein. Space and time were combined into 'space-time', a conjoined entity that emerged out of Einstein's study of the inter-relationship between space and time, and it forms the basis of his *Special Theory of Relativity*, 1905 (Fig. 1). This theory argues that relatively, space and time cannot exist apart; they are interdependent. In space-time, events in the universe are described in terms of a four dimensional continuum (Shlain, 1999, p. 132). Alongside Einstein, German mathematician Hermann Minkowski's research was a major influence in the advancement of the Special Theory of Relativity, as it pertained to time theory (Shawcross, 1997, p.92). In 1908, Minkowski stated to the 80th Assembly of German Natural Scientists and Physicians:

The views of space and time which I wish to lay before you have sprung from the soil of experimental physics, and therein lies their strength. They are radical. Henceforth space by itself, and time itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality (as cited in Lorentz et al., 1923, p.75).

The subject continued to interest philosophers, and the notion of space and time being interdependent was addressed by Samuel Alexander, an Australian-born British philosopher, who says in his work *Space, Time and Deity* published in 1920, that space and time "are often thought to be independent and separate ... But a little reflective consideration is sufficient to show that they are interdependent ... Space is in its very nature temporal and Time spatial" (as cited in Cleugh, 1937, p.131). This theory informs my own studio inquiry. Working within the medium of photography, I use performance of painting with light to create images of temporality within space. As I move spatially in three dimensions, the fourth (temporal) dimension is achieved by

the use of an open camera shutter to record the movement through time.

So, in the early Twentieth Century the combined entity of space-time was a concept that was familiar and topical among scientists and philosophers. The new theories and scientific discoveries of Einstein and Minkowski were also radically transforming the disciplines of art and literature. At that time the futurist artists were investigating notions of time being the 'fourth dimension'. While the cubists represented simultaneous views of space, the futurist artists depicted simultaneous views of time, "allowing the viewer to see the past, present, and future in one holistic *now*" (Shlain, 1991, p. 206). Whereas the early futurist painters, including Giacomo Balla (1871 – 1958), were portraying motion and dynamism through the use of repetition, that is a sequence of repeated images, Balla's student Umberto Boccioni rejected this approach and set out to capture dynamism as from within the consciousness of his memory, as can be seen in his ink drawing *Study for 'Dynamism of a Cyclist'* 1912 (Fig. 8).



Figure 8 Umberto Boccioni *Study for 'Dynamism of a Cyclist'* 1912 Ink on paper 152 x 229 mm. Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan. Kaupelis, R. (1980) *Experimental Drawing*. New York: Watson Guptill.

Boccioni was strongly influenced by Henri Bergson's "vitalistic principle of 'duration' in which time is evaluated globally, rather than reduced to a series of frozen moments" (Futurism and the Futurists, n.d.). It is this duration of time that I explore. Working with open-shutter photography has enabled portrayal of time by recording the trace of the duration of movement. The single image portrays movement within itself.

From its inception in 1919, the Bauhaus had a profound influence upon the modern art movement. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy was one of the principal artists and teachers in the Bauhaus and he led the way to a 'new vision'. The founder and former director of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius (1883 - 1969), wrote in the preface of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's book *The New Vision*:

The abstract painters of our day have used their creative powers to establish a new counterpoint of space, a new vision..... Today we are confronted by new problems, e.g., the fourth dimension and the simultaneity of events, ideas foreign to former periods, but inherent in a modern conception of space. The artist often senses a coming discovery before its advent. Science now speaks of a fourth dimension in space, which means the introduction of an element of time into space (Gropius in Moholy-Nagy, 1928, p.6).

For the Bauhaus artists and teachers, photography was an exciting and growing new technology, which offered a new medium for exploring and recording space and time.

The capturing of time and motion had been earlier explored by photographer Eadweard Muybridge. In the late 1800s, Muybridge used photography to investigate the motion of a horse galloping, and to find out whether at any point the horse's hooves were all off the ground at the same time (a fact

unable to be determined by the human eye or other senses and thus, following Kantian reasoning knowledge and experience previously beyond the reach of a human being). He used twelve cameras simultaneously with a string attached to each shutter. The strings, which were connected to electric switches, were stretched across the racetrack. As the horse galloped past and broke each string, the electromagnetic control released the camera shutters (Masters of Photography, n.d.). The result was a sequence of photographs entitled *The Horse in Motion* (Fig. 9). The sequence appears to be twelve still frames of a motion picture, creating the illusion of continuous motion and slowed time.

Having measured the space within the moment of stopped time, Muybridge devoted the rest of his life to studying time and motion of objects passing through space. His studies had a seminal influence on the artists of the next generation. He also invented the basis of an entirely new art form -- the motion picture (Shlain, 1991, p.99).

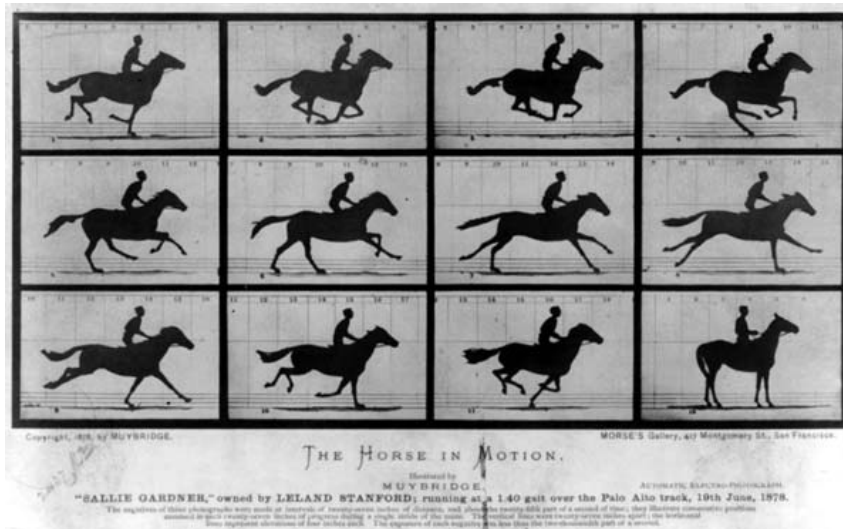


Figure 9 Eadweard Muybridge *The Horse in Motion* 1878 Albumen print, 5 ¼ X 8 in, Oakland Museum collection, A98.0.3. Retrieved August 7 from: <http://albumen.stanford.edu/gallery/johnson/index.html>

Muybridge's approach to photography had an immense influence on the world of art, with ideas about time and motion and their representation and expression changing as a result of his work. His photographic sequencing formed the foundation of modern cinema, and led to the invention of chronophotography developed by Étienne-Jules Marey (1830 - 1904), who developed a method of recording all the movements on one photographic plate, unlike Muybridge who had used several cameras simultaneously to capture movement.



Figure 10 Wendy Leach *Image 0095* 2006 digital monochrome photograph 800 x 1200 mm

In my own practice, as illustrated in *Image 0095* 2006 (Fig. 10), I began investigating the notion that within space-time, time is the fourth dimension, and can be represented statically and metaphorically by a gyre or coil, where linear progress denotes both time and movement within space. In this work I explore spatial patterns, pathways and spatial tensions. Within the ambiguity of illusionistic space there is tension between opposites - push and pull,

inward and outward, convergence and divergence, actuality and possibility, illusion and reality, positive and negative, and light and darkness.

To create this body of work I set up an installation using a large coil of wire. I worked with controlled lighting, which I changed frequently as I photographed parts of the installation. Working in the medium of digital photography, I took a series of photographs of the wire installation. The coil of wire was used solely as a vehicle to explore my concept of representing time within space-time as a gyre or coil. The photographic images that resulted were inverted in Photoshop, and it is the negative images that formed the final works. Although there may appear to be historic references to black and white photography, particularly the work of Bauhaus artists like Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, my decision to restrict these works to monochrome was a considered move to emphasise the dualities of light and dark, positive and negative, and convergence and divergence.

Pursuing my investigation of time and space in my art practice, my inquiry extended into exploring recording light as movement within time and space. The concept of using light in relation to time and space, provides the opportunity to develop and explore a form of 'painting' with light to achieve painterly effects on a 'four dimensional canvas'. That is, using light to make marks in time and space. The combined qualities of light and movement are an exciting combination to be explored. While light itself is transient and temporary, the qualities of light can be used in a painterly manner and recorded photographically. The light then becomes the trace or evidence of my presence and place within the work.

Here there are some parallels with Darren Glass, a contemporary artist who is working with similar concerns of light and movement through time and space. Glass uses pinhole cameras which he makes himself. His cameras take many

forms and they are designed to take photographs of movement. In a recent interview, he describes his current project entitled *Camera Descending a Staircase*, as being loosely based on the painting by Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), exploring the futurist notion of space-time being the ‘fourth dimension’. The resulting photographic image will be the product of a pinhole Body-Cam that will record the twists and turns of movement down a staircase (Strongman, 2005, p.160). Glass said he was strongly influenced by the early photography of Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey: “My photographs are like a conversation with the historic photographers – reactions to what they have done” (as cited in Strongman, 2005, p.161). Of particular interest to my inquiry are Glass’s *Flying Cosmo Disc* (2006) images. #006, 2001 (Fig. 11) is one of a series of photographs that were the product of a frisbee pinhole camera.

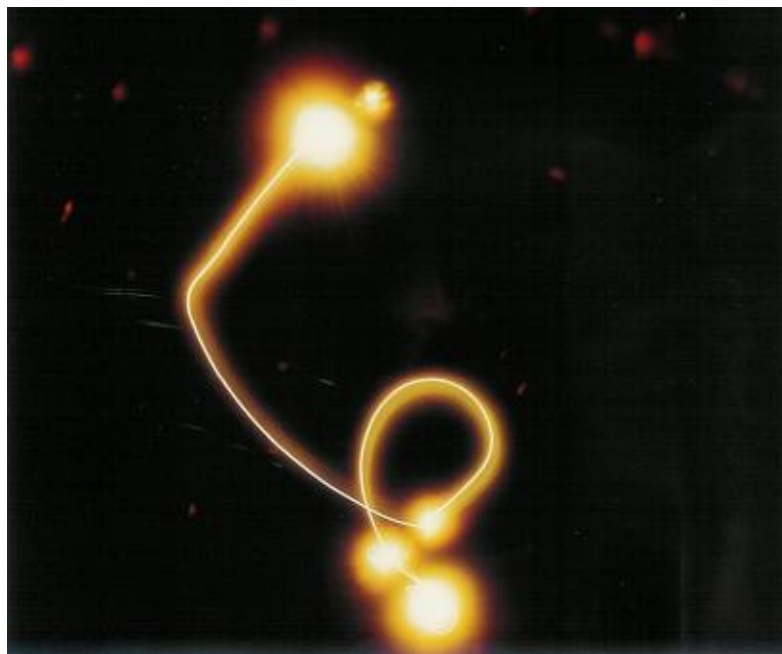


Figure 11 Darren Glass #006 2001 from the series 'Cosmo Flying Disc' C-type print 508 x 610 mm. Strongman, L. (Ed.). (2005). Contemporary New Zealand photographers. Auckland, N. Z: Mountain View.

Described by Glass as ‘experimental’, the frisbee camera records the spinning action of the frisbee and everything the camera sees, before, during

and after it flies through space (Strongman, p.161), thereby recording movement within time and space. I enjoy Glass's approach to his work. He thinks his ideas through and plans and constructs his pinhole cameras, but then allows the final image to be made solely by the movement of the camera. Glass's use of pinhole cameras allows him to explore light and movement in an unplanned and random way. He enjoys the unpredictable nature of the resulting photographs (Strongman, p. 160).

My interest is in the practice of painting and mark-making with light. The primary focus is on the accruing and layering of marks in time and space. The process consists of an (invisible) performance within a blacked-out space, and involves moving with a variety of lights through and around a dark space over an elapsed time period. The event is recorded photographically using a digital camera with an open shutter, with a view to temporal and spatial outcomes. During this process, my role is twofold; I am both the photographer operating the camera and the artist painting within the work itself. My aim is to explore space-time by moving through, and painting within, the space over an elapsed time. The physical dynamic of the performance, along with the darkness of the space, the solitary nature of the activity, and the transient and ephemeral nature of the medium, provide an integral experience of painting *within* the work. The photographic trace that remains contains a record of that activity, a moment of being.

Light Painting 00-75 2007 (Fig. 12) is a painting with light where the spiraling and interweaving marks denote a performance with a series of body and arm movements using red and yellow lights, photographed with an open shutter for 90 seconds. The image portrays temporality within space. The spatial characteristic is amplified by the complexity of the interwoven lines. The expansive gestural marks indicate a painting process involving the whole body.



Figure 12 Wendy Leach *Light Painting 00-75* 2007 Digital photograph 380 x 570 mm

Figures 13 and 14 depict the passage of time as horizontal and circular movement, with the broken line indicating individual moments in time. Each work in this series was an individual performance, which involved moving through the space several times leaving different traces. In Figure 14, the 'split' quality of the white unbroken line is brush-like and adds a subtle complexity and spatial tonality to the line itself. The gestural nature and bodily scale of this mark-making process, seen here in Figures 12, 13 and 14, references the painting of artists like Judy Millar and David Reed, where the body's reach determines the dimensions of the painting and alludes to the artist's presence in the work.

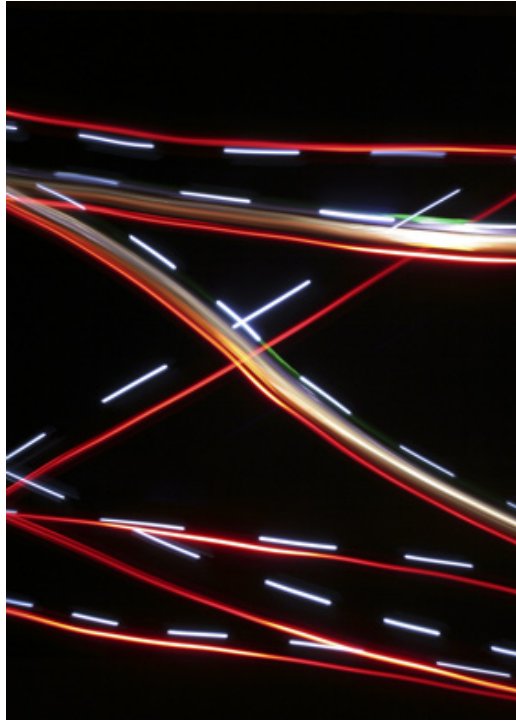


Figure 13 Wendy Leach *Light Painting 02-22* 2007 digital photograph 400 x 600mm

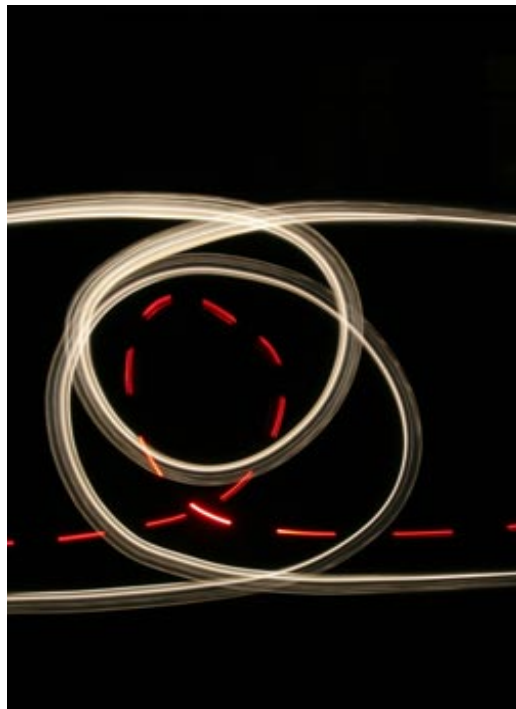


Figure 14 Wendy Leach *Light Painting 01-63* 2007 Digital photograph 400 x 600mm

Roland Barthes said: "The important thing is that the photograph possesses an evidential force and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time" (Barthes, 1981, pp.88 - 89). Barthes went on to say: "Time is engorged..." (p.91) and Nancy Shawcross offers this explanation: "The engorgement of physical time is the method by which photographs are made. Photographs are pictures of time: they are this before they are anything else" (Shawcross, 1997, p.104). My personal interpretation of the use of the term 'engorgement' in relation to time, is that it means a photograph is *filled to capacity* with time, thereby indicating, as Shawcross said, that a photograph is first and foremost about time, or more specifically a given period of time. The shutter speed function on the camera is all-important, as this is how the photographer selects the period of time to be recorded. It is, therefore, time that determines the final photographic image.

The photography of Marian Drew, an Australian artist, engages these propositions. Describing her work as "making my marks in the space time of photography..." (Drew, 2006, p.87), Drew uses the painting with light technique in a variety of ways and presents viewers with images of 'temporality itself':

Painting with light, or rather moving in front of the camera into the frame, applying light to the subject over time and through movement of the body, is an extension of the photographer's gesture which has become clearly integrated into the image (Drew, p.89).

There is a connection here with my approach to photography. The act of moving through a space and making my strong gestural marks in time is an integral part of my own process. The shutter speed, or the duration of the open shutter, is the single most important aspect of the work, as it determines how much of the event is recorded by the camera, and therefore decides how

the final image will appear.

In 1999, Drew was commissioned to take photographs of the disused Brisbane Powerhouse before it was re-commissioned as a Performing Arts Centre. The building had been abandoned and its chambers were dark and partially flooded. The space was eerie and intimidating. Drew's concept for the work was to reflect on its historical function, its present state and its future role (Jordan, 2006, p.15).

Drew's strategy was to go into the space alone and try to express it organically by registering her movements around it. To do this 'she opened the camera up', that is, left the shutter open to register changes in the image over time. The torch she carried was used to make gestural marks in front of the camera, making manifest her presence and intervention in the watery landscape. For the artist... making marks there were symbolic actions [sic] (Jordan).



Figure 15 Marian Drew *Blue rectangle* 2000 Powerhouse series
Type C print, 1000 x 1250 mm. Marian Drew: Photographs and Video Works

(2006). Bulimba: Queensland Centre for Photography

Drew explains that she was using “the light and the drawing as a way of gently claiming back the space for human habitation” (Jordan) referring to the earlier time when it was a functioning power station, but then lapsed into disuse and dereliction. As the building is to be used again as a new Performing Arts Centre, her comment relates to the absence and then presence of humans in the space. *Blue rectangle*, 2000 (Fig. 15) was one of her photographs from this project. In this work, Drew uses blue light to draw in the space. Although she has physically moved around the space while the open camera shutter was photographing this event, she is not visible to the viewer. She must have been there, but she cannot be seen. This powerful sense of absence/presence in the work is almost tangible. The work is mystical and evocative. All that remains in the room is the square of blue light, the trace, as evidence of the artist’s presence in the work.

Historically, another photographer who incorporated the idea of painting with light into his photography was Gjon Mili. Mili was commissioned to photograph Pablo Picasso at Vallauris in 1949. The resulting photographs were referred to by Mili as ‘Picasso’s space drawings’ (1970, p. 10). The photograph *Centaur* 1949 (Fig. 16) featuring Picasso painting the outline of a centaur in the air with a flashlight, was published in 1950 and exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art.

The photographic effect was created by opening the camera’s shutter while Picasso was in the dark, crouched over to begin his instant masterpiece – this static pose captured by a momentary flash. Again in darkness after this instantaneous flash of light, Picasso quickly draws his centaur image in the air with a “light pencil” (VP Gallery, n.d.).

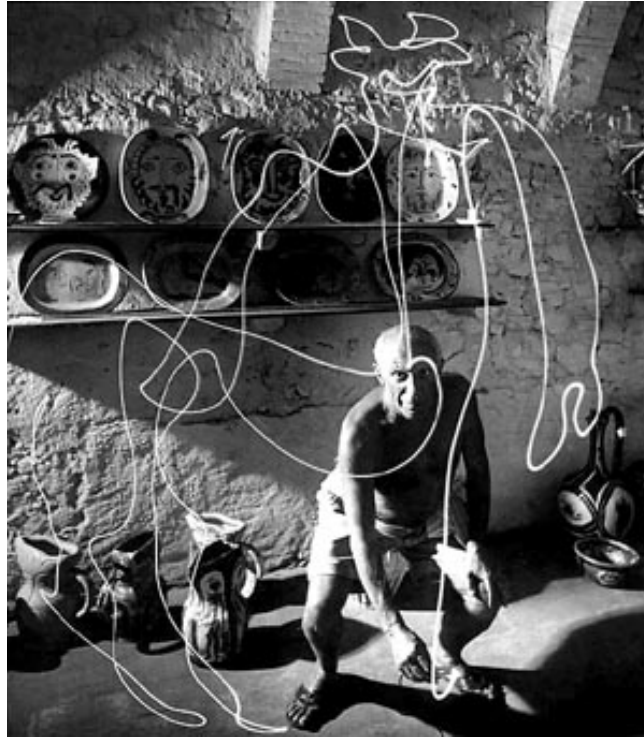


Figure 16 Gjon Mili *Centaur* 1949 photograph 10½ x 8½ in
Mili, G. (1970) *Picasso's Third Dimension*, New York: Triton.

The long exposure of the camera shutter captures Picasso's performance of painting with a torch as a continuous, fluid line of light. "The light drawing, arrested for our eye by the long exposure, only exists at the intersection of photography..... Movement through space and the duration of this movement are arrested and coded by the photograph" (Gross, 2002). In this case, the photograph of Picasso is a collaboration between Mili, the photographer and Picasso, the painter. In his book *Picasso's Third Dimension*, Mili tells how the idea for the space drawings came about. I have included Mili's whole explanation here, in the format that it was written, because to me it is inspirational:

In 1949, on my way to the Riviera for a first encounter with Picasso, I stopped in Paris to meet the artist's nephew, Javier Vilato. During our talk, he mentioned that his uncle was fond of saying,

“If you want to draw, you must shut your eyes and sing.”

The image in Picasso’s aphorism

Brought to mind the notion of drawing in the dark,

But with a light instead of a pencil.

Keeping the camera open during the course of the action

would enable me to record on film

the line of moving light in its entirety.

From a selection which I had brought with me,

I showed Picasso photographs of the light patterns of a skater’s leaps

- obtained with tiny lights on the points of the skates.

Picasso reacted instantly.

Before I could utter a word of explanation,

Sparkling with excitement, he started tracing through the air

One intriguing shape after another with his bare finger (Mili, 1970).

Mili’s photograph of Picasso illustrates clearly the physicality of the performance and the involvement of the artist’s body. In painting his image of the centaur with a torch Picasso is making his marks in space and time. The photograph clearly reveals the relationship between the artist, the painting action, and the space it occupies. This physicality is an important part of my own practice as it relates to my own aim to achieve a sense of being and place. Painting with light is a technique where the action or performance is an integral part of the process. It is the body’s movement through the space, and in and out of the space, which creates the work.

In my gestural work however there is no attempt to illustrate or draw a ‘subject’ as Picasso did. My marks are intuitive and immediate. My focus is on the process, and working with immediacy and spontaneity to avoid

consciously manipulating the outcome. This allows for the unexpected to occur within the work. Although the medium used is not paint, the mark-making process is similar to painting on canvas. However, a crucial difference is that, when painting with light, the artist is not restricted to working on a two dimensional surface. In my work, I move spatially in three dimensions, and the fourth (temporal) dimension is also achieved by the use of an open camera shutter to record the movement through time.

Just as the abstract expressionist artists were known as action painters, painting with light is action painting in four dimensions. The 'whole body' physicality of the process does have similarities to the painting of artists such as Jackson Pollock, Judy Millar, and David Reed. However, after reading Ariane Weisel's essay, *Immediacy: An Impossible Absolute?* I now consider it could be argued that any artist who, by placing his/her canvas on the floor and moving across and around it to paint, thereby occupying the space above and around the painting, is similarly painting in more than two dimensions. Weisel stated: "Jackson Pollock, the major example of Action Art, negated the brush, the easel and the wall to establish a physical contact and directness with the paint, thus allowing him to depict the act of immediacy" (2002). It might also be argued that the mark-making and laying down of paint on the canvas surface is a record of accrued time in space.

New Zealand painter, Judy Millar, shows extreme physicality in the process of making her paintings. She works on very large canvases of which she says:

... I could literally move around within the canvas. It allowed me to make really large gestures ... so it's difficult to see where the paintings stop and the wall begins. Being able to work so generously has liberated the gestures, letting them get out of the skin of the overall painting. It allowed me to find new compositional possibilities, new

connections between thought and bodily movement (as cited in Auckland Art Gallery, 2005).

Millar works in oil paint and turpentine. She applies her paint with brushes, keeping her paint very fluid, and having applied her paint on to the canvas with bodily brush strokes, she then sets about removing much of the paint in large gestural movements. In her March, 2007, exhibition *Judy Millar: Butter For The Fish* at Gow Langsford Gallery her work is described thus: “The aggressive removal of paint from the surface results in evacuated, emptied out gestures that subvert the declared presence of expressionist mark-making” (Gow Langsford Gallery, n.d.). This means it is a type of negative painting, using rags to erase and wipe paint off her canvas, thereby revealing layers underneath (Gow Langsford Gallery).



Figure 17 Judy Millar *Untitled* 2002 Acrylic and oil on aluminium 900 x 800 mm
Judy Millar: *How to paint backwards* (2003) Auckland, N.Z: Gow Langsford and John Leech Galleries

Figure 17 is an example of Millar's work which illustrates her technique. Although Millar works in the medium of painting, there are inherent conceptual and aesthetic similarities to my own work. The physicality of her painting process involves her moving around and using her body and arms to create her marks. She has talked of how her painting often extends beyond the boundaries of the canvas. In my practice, the action of painting with light involves the body's movement in and out of the space, often going beyond the boundaries of the camera lens and the picture plane. While these movements outside of the space are not recorded, they are inferred by the disappearance / reappearance of the marks.

Another artist who uses bodily movements in a very physical form of painting is David Reed. In fact his body's reach determines the dimensions of his painting and the gestural technique and orientation of his paintings offer a sense of movement. His technique of painting is wet into wet, on multi-panel canvases. In the catalogue of David Reed's 2001 exhibition, Kay Siegel writes:

Each stroke was the length of Reed's reach from a single standing position. These paintings are quite literal, measuring the dimensions and capabilities of Reed's body, tracing the touch of his brush and its passage across the canvas. Drips attest to gravity and the fluidity of the oil paint (2001).

Siegel also says that "these paintings mark real time as much as real space: the brush moves, time passes" (2001) although she acknowledges that the divisions between the vertical panels in the multi-panel works do 'interrupt' the works (Siegel). However, there is more of a temporal feel in Reed's wide horizontal works, which are too long to see in one focused glance. It is

necessary to scan these paintings, moving across the surface reading them as if a film, and in doing so it appears that “the paintings themselves seem to move” (Siegel). Reed explains this effect in his painting: “When you look at an isolated part of my long horizontal paintings, the other parts, which you see out of the corner of your eye, seem to move, because peripheral vision is especially sensitive to movement” (as cited in Siegel, 2001). Reed’s earlier paintings are focused around the physical properties and materiality of the paint and the bodily process of applying it, and his later works achieve the same focus, with the emphasis now on the filmic, temporal quality, however “the painting’s material, experiential nature - for both painter and viewer - remain their most significant aspect” (Siegel, 2001).



Figure 18 Wendy Leach *Light Painting 00-50* 2007 Digital photograph, 410 x 615 mm

Alongside the bodily scale and physical nature of Reed's painting, it is also this filmic veiled quality in his later works which indirectly informs my work. As seen in *Light Painting 00-50* (Fig. 18), the 'brush strokes' with which I construct my light paintings often involve several overlays of coloured light, and these layers, accrued in time and space, evoke a filmic and mystical quality. There is a futuristic, sci-fi feeling in this work.

In a contrast of scale, Len Lye (1901–1980) used intuitive and physical actions in his paintings, woodcuts and his 'direct' film-making process which distinctly resembled the approach of the abstract expressionist artists. In his book *Len Lye: a biography*, Roger Horrocks tells us that in using scratched marks to allow light to penetrate black celluloid film, Lye's imagery and his process "were strongly reminiscent of the 'action painting' or abstract expressionism of artists such as Jackson Pollock, with their emphasis on intuition, physicality, gesture and the basic energies of the medium" (Horrocks, 2001, p.265). Mark-making as a mode of expression engages the artist in an intensely personal proposition of immediacy, honesty and directness. Judy Millar, in reference to mark making, stated: "You act out a certain position and it's embodied in a mark. A shy approach will produce a shy mark, and so on. The viewer can read the commitment in a mark so quickly. They can read tentativeness in a mark, they can read confidence" (Millar, as cited in Auckland Art Gallery, 2005). The artist's mark is the most fundamental element, the purest means of expression. In the book *Vitamin D: New Perspectives in Drawing*, Emma Dexter says that the simple drawn line has a primal character as it is "the earliest and most immediate form of image making" (2005, p.1). It is a process that "has remained unchanged for thousands of years ... connects us directly in an unbroken line with the first human who ever sketched in dirt or scratched on the wall of a cave" (Dexter) In this statement Dexter is saying that the temporal quality of a line is not

solely about implied movement, but also about history.

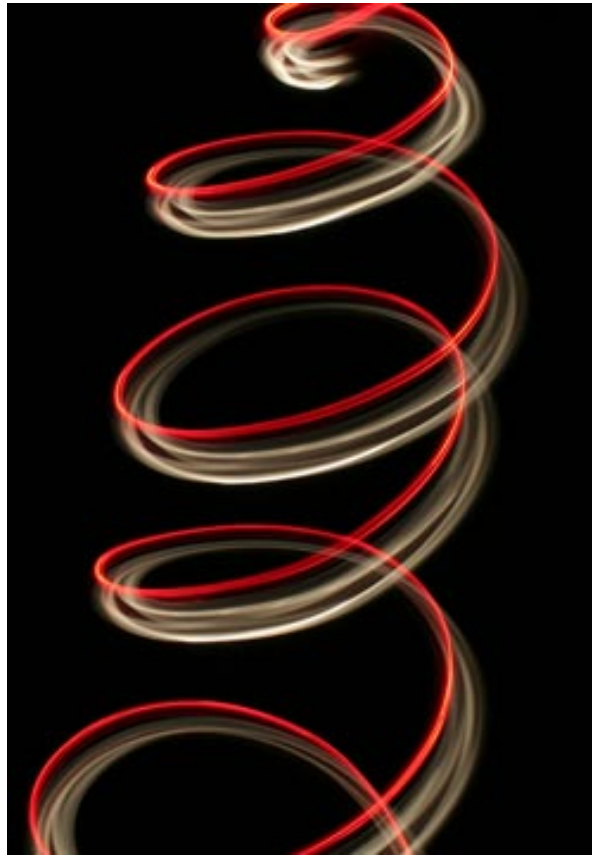


Figure 19 Wendy Leach *Light Painting 02-09* 2007 Digital photograph, 800 x 1200 mm

While exploring time and space, my work is additionally concerned with the act of mark-making. In *Light Painting 02-09* (Fig. 19) my mark-making is a direct and immediate response to the space I am working in. By prolonging a mark through time, it becomes a line, and this work was achieved by moving two coloured lights simultaneously in a coiled line. The mark I have used - the coil - has symbolic significance, as it references my interest in space-time. Here it is used for its repetitive characteristics and the rhythms that result. In this work the mark-making is spontaneous and immediate, allowing for unexpected outcomes. Although the coil is essentially a simple form, the use of more than one light creates a compound and variable line, brush-like in

quality. The sharp/soft contrast and the increased colour density in the forward part of the rotation intensify the spatial–temporal outcome.

Seeking more intuitive and immediate mark-making, Len Lye developed a way to tap into his “old brain” (Horrocks, 1980), which is the part of the brain that developed first in evolution and was perceived by Lye to be his ‘unconscious’ (Horrocks). He had studied Freud’s analyses of doodling and came to understand the process (Horrocks, 2001). He developed doodling as a strategy toward a less mediated drawing:

Doodling was a way of subverting his years of draughtmanship, allowing him to dive below the surface of the mind and to catch consciousness and its preconceptions napping..... To devote your art to aimlessness requires a great deal of faith in the unconscious. Doodling for Lye involved learning to trust the hand to think for itself (ibid, p.104).



Figure 20 Len Lye *Untitled woodcuts* (dimensions unknown) 1940 Horrocks, R. (2001) *Len Lye: a biography*. Auckland, N. Z: Auckland University Press

Lye's use of doodling to free up his intuition is apparent in Figure 20, a set of three untitled woodcuts published by the Surrealist magazine *London Bulletin* in 1940. Lye said in a letter to Wystan Curnow in September 1979: "I always do doodle-type images when I'm fishing for something to kind of feel at most one with myself. I doodle with pen and pencil, or bits of steel I waggle; film I scratch" (as cited in Curnow, 1980, p.50).

In 1957, Lye undertook to produce an animated film by scratching directly and intuitively on to celluloid film. The film was entitled *Free Radicals* and it took Lye eight months of scratching before the film was completed. It was not the first time he had worked directly onto celluloid. Many years earlier, he had used old, discarded film and played around with scratching and painting directly on the surface, and in 1935 he had used this method in his film *A Colour Box*. In *Free Radicals* Lye's marks had many connections with earlier works, including his drawings, paintings and doodlings "with the repertoire of zigzags, asterisks, dots, dashes, and other 'energy signs'..." (Horrocks, 2001, p.265). Whereas his earlier films had been 'painterly' these new images were intended to be very 'scratchy'. The deliberate "scratchiness of his scratches" added subtle tonal quality to the marks and a suggestion of three dimensions (Horrocks). This immediacy and directness of Len Lye's mark-making is something I would like to develop further in own practice. That is, the ability to let the process take over and avoid manipulating the outcome; to welcome the unexpected, and be open to the introduction of variables and lateral possibilities which present themselves. The way that Lye understood and adopted the premise that "doodling was a way of subverting his years of draughtmanship" (Horrocks, 2001, p.104) informs my practice and encourages me to further develop my intuitive aspect and strive for immediacy, thereby 'subverting' my own strongly 'concrete' tendencies. In my practice the emphasis is for the light painting process itself to create the work, rather than a considered and planned approach on my part. This immediacy

and spontaneity is at the essence of the work, due to the time being relatively short and determined by the duration that the camera shutter is open.

In my light paintings, the marks I make are accruing layers in time and space and once the mark is made it remains there, fixed in space-time for all to see. The marks are made in the process of a performance, are recorded by the open shutter of the camera, and remain visible as the only record or trace of the event once it is finished. Popular understandings of trace include: “a surviving mark, sign, or evidence of the former existence, influence, or action of some agent or event” (Dictionary.com, 2007). In his essay *The Subject of Art*, Alain Badiou (n.d.) is more specific: “I call trace ‘what subsists in the world when the event disappears’ [sic]. It’s something of the event, but not the event as such; it is the trace, a mark, a symptom”.

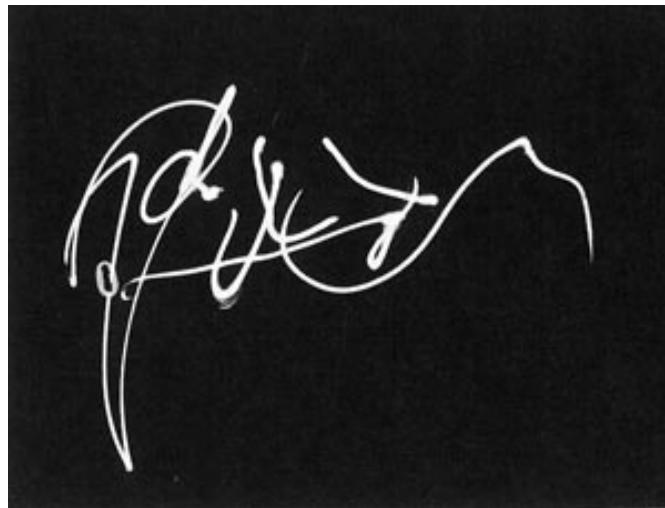


Figure 21 Gjon Mili *Picasso's Signature* 1949 'space drawing' photograph taken at La Galloise Picasso's home in Vallauris (dimensions unknown). Mili, Gjon. (1970) *Picasso's Third Dimension*. New York: Triton

Nancy Shawcross refers to trace's relationship to time: “One of the important qualities invoked by the word *trace* is the sense of a physical presence executed or created in a past time but remaining in present time and possibly to exist in future time” (Shawcross, 1997). This quality of trace is evident in

Figure 21 which shows Picasso's signature drawn in light, one of several 'space drawings' captured on film by Gjon Mili. Mili refers to these drawings as 'instant Picassos' - the only remaining trace of the action of Picasso's hand and body (Mili, 1970, p.15) : "Not unlike doodles in appearance they are unimpeded expressions of the artist's inner visions... they vanished no sooner than born, except for what the camera caught" (ibid).

The 'trace' has a particular significance in the work of South African artist William Kentridge who chronicled the affects of apartheid in short films using animation. His drawings for the films are done in charcoal which he continually alters, by erasing and redrawing, during the filming. "With its transmutations and erasures... Kentridge's work epitomizes the provisionality of being, how becoming necessitates both doing and undoing" (Ollman, 1999). These erasures are the traces of his drawing and register the changes as Kentridge's idea develops and evolves. The significance of the metaphor here is that during the 1980s in South Africa, the 'traces' are the ghosts that remained as people's lives were erased in the state-sanctioned violence (Ollman). Kentridge's process of drawing then erasing, and then redrawing, mirrors the political situation of his homeland:

... (the) continual erasures, yielding ghosts, traces, stains, evoke both memory's natural stoppage and a more calculated form of amnesia..... Kentridge makes about 20 drawings, which undergo continual addition, permutation and erasure, the traces of which are plainly visible, yielding an impression of time and space as viscous, invariably altered by every arrival and departure (Ollman, 1999).



Figure 22 William Kentridge *Bird Catcher* 2006 Charcoal, pastel and ink on paper, set of 4 drawings, 400 x 400 mm each, Courtesy of Galerie Marian Goodman Paris / New York. Retrieved March 29, 2007, from http://www.paris-art.com/image_detail-19913.html

While his technique of drawing and erasing is an appropriate political metaphor, not all of Kentridge's work has been on a directly on a political theme. As illustrated in *Bird Catcher* 2006 (Fig. 22) his technique has a wider application, and has particular relevance here in evoking the feeling of the movement of birds flying, and the trace of the departing birds. This work evokes a sense of absence/presence, and movement in time and space.

There are some similarities in Marian Drew's photography, as she moves into spaces and using projected light, 'paints' marks and symbols on the surfaces within the space. Then she leaves and the event ceases to exist. Her photograph is the only evidence or trace of the event. "The film records my physical involvement in the making of the photograph, but the image does not exist in reality; it is only the light and vision I brought into the landscape" (Drew, 2006, p.87). In 2005 and 2006 Drew was commissioned to photograph Queensland's heritage national parks, as seen in *Fraser Cross*, 2006 (Fig. 23). Drew says she is not particularly interested in documenting the

landscape, but more “intervening in it, working from the inside. Leaving ephemeral marks or traces on it” (p.87).



Figure 23 Marian Drew *Fraser Cross* 2006 National Parks series Archival pigments on cotton paper 7000 x 900 mm. Jordan, C. (2006). *Marian Drew: Photographs and Video Works*. (2006). Bulimba: Queensland Centre for Photography

This trace that remains when the event and the artist have disappeared, being the only remaining sign of the activity, indicates both the presence and the absence of the artist, and places the artist firmly within the work. In *Fraser Cross*, I maintain that the viewer is able to perceive the presence of the artist in the work. Not materially so, in fact it is the absence of the artist that is at first apparent. However, due to the visual evidence there is a strong sense that she is there, or has been there, projecting the cross with torchlight - so the artist is represented by the trace of her marks.

In Drew's photograph, as in my own work, the artist has a dual role. That is, not only is her absence/presence manifest within the photograph as trace, her presence is also identified in the work as the (unseen) photographer, the artist working the camera. The element of absence/presence is a notion

which I address in my photography. Although my light paintings are usually solitary performances, Figures 19 and 20 represent two works in which I worked in collaboration with another person. In *Light Painting 02-09, 2007* (Fig. 19), although I do not appear to be materially present, my presence is suggested by the temporality of the coiled line within the space. The physical presence that is creating the mark is sensed. It is a different case however in *Light Painting 02-27, 2007* (Fig. 24). In this photograph, I am visibly collaborating in a light painting performance. My image is seen twice as my partner illuminates my outline and in doing so, registers my movements in time and space. In this situation the presence of my (invisible) partner is indicated by the trace of the marks he has painted in light. As both photographer and 'performer' in this event, my own presence is well established in the work.



Figure 24 Wendy Leach *Light Painting 02-27 2007* digital photograph 400 x 600mm

In *Light Painting 01-69*, 2007 (Fig. 25), the notion of 'being' is challenged first by the presence/absence of my partner who is visible as a black silhouette appearing almost in the 'negative' state. Space is revealed by the accruing of layers in the work - the painted temporal marks behind and in front of the shape of the figure. As the artist, I am perceived to be absent however my presence is implicated by evidence of the performance of painting with light as the trace of the marks in time and space.



Figure 25 Wendy Leach *Light Painting 01-69* 2007 digital photograph 400 x 600mm

The concept of absence/presence engages the proposition of 'being'. The terms absence and presence describe fundamental states of being, and therefore are dependent on the notion of being (Bell, n. d.). I stated earlier that I believed my artistic and psychological direction lies in developing a

personal and symbolic response to 'being', as opposed to 'seeing'. I believe I was lacking (yet seeking) a sense of place, a place to be. As a strategy to resolve this, I aspired to make fundamental changes in not only my method, but more importantly the *essence* of my artistic practice, by developing a personal and symbolic foundation; a new threshold for my practice.



Figure 26 Wendy Leach *Light Painting 01-03* 2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200mm

My journey has been revealing and challenging and in my current experiential practice of painting with light I am comfortably working with a sense of place/belonging. My art practice has been informed by my exploration of the

duality and cyclical dynamic energy that exists in nature and the universe. Space-time is a manifestation of this cyclic continuum. My sense of being has come through understanding this vital principle, and forms a threshold for my work. Understanding the relevance of time and space to my work has enabled me to find my place within it. Painting with light achieves this (visibly or invisibly) being in the work, in time and space. Finding the connection, between knowledge/understanding and the practice/art event, has been of seminal importance, and in attaining this connection I believe I am achieving praxis in my work. That is, my thinking and practice are coming together.

The Bauhaus movement encouraged the connection between thinking and practice. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and other Bauhaus artists led the way to a 'new vision' in the 1920s. The Bauhaus promoted multidisciplinary thinking and practice, and students were encouraged to move between different fields of specialisation and think across established boundaries. This was an exciting notion in a time and environment which embraced machine-based technology. Photography suddenly had a major role as a 'mechanical' visual art (Turner, 1987). Moholy-Nagy believed that photography provided a completely new way of seeing the world that the human eye could not. As a Bauhaus tutor, he encouraged students to experiment with photography and photographic techniques. Walter Benjamin (1936), in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, also stated that a positive feature of photography is that, with an adjustable lens, it can detect imagery that the eye cannot see. Utilising this fact, I use the camera to record a series of continuous actions and marks made over time as one single static image, whereas the human eye could only record the event as a memory of a moving sequence.

This chapter has discussed the inter-dependency between space and time as it relates to my studio practice, which explores movement within time and

space. Also examined, in historic and contemporary contexts, are artists whose work has explored notions of time and space, and in particular Marian Drew who works with a similar method of painting with light. Some parallels have been drawn with artists who exhibit a gestural and spontaneous performance of painting, most notably the work of Judy Millar, and the importance of mark-making as a mode of expression is considered in relation to Len Lye. Finally, the chapter has addressed the concept of trace, as the only remaining sign of the activity when the event has finished. This gives rise to ideas about absence and presence, and how the notion of absence/presence engages the premise of a state of 'being'.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have set out to show that notions of time and space have been a focus, not only of scientists and philosophers, but also of artists over the past century. My own interest grew out of my study of duality both within the human condition and the natural world, and my need to find a new threshold from which to approach my art practice. In Chapter One I showed how Einstein's theories around space-time have inspired and informed my practice and challenged me to broaden my understanding of the binary nature of cyclical energy in the universe. Chapter Two has offered historic and contemporary examples of artists for whom notions of time and space have been pivotal to their work. Some of these artists were working within the medium of photography. For me, the most inspirational was the 'space drawing' collaboration between Gjon Mili and Pablo Picasso, where Picasso responded to an idea of Mili's and as a result they made a series of photographs recording the trace of Picasso drawing with light. I had no knowledge of this body of work when I started painting with light, so finding these works was exciting. Marian Drew also works with photography and paints with light in a range of ways, leaving the trace of her marks in time and space.

Physicality is just as important in the performance of painting with light as it is in the painting of Jackson Pollock, Judy Millar and David Reed, and I have investigated mark-making as a mode of expression that engages the artist in a direct and honest method of working. Researching Len Lye, I learned a lot from his philosophy of "subverting" his learned technical skills (Horrocks, 2001, p.104) by using doodling to access a deeper self (as cited in Curnow, 1980), which also relates to my own pursuit of a sense of being.

Investigating mark-making brought me to consider the trace, described by

Badiou (n. d.) as that which “subsists in the world when the event disappears”, in particular reference to the art of William Kentridge, whose evocative charcoal images are a process of drawing then erasing, then redrawing. In some of his works, the trace of the erased mark is a metaphorical reference to the politics of his homeland. Marian Drew’s photography records the trace of her marks with light, and also indicates the absence/presence of the artist in the work.



Figure 27 Wendy Leach *Light Painting 00-32* 2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200mm

The evocation of the absence/presence duality is relevant in my own photography. That is, I am physically present to make my marks in the dark but, unless I choose to be seen in the work, the open shutter of the camera

only records the marks made by the light; the trace of my presence. In some of my works a figure is present, or is represented by a black silhouette, which has the appearance of a negative space, providing another dichotomy around absence/presence. The dissertation also addresses absence/presence as an indication of the state of 'being'. I had been seeking to find a personal and symbolic response to 'being' in my practice. Photography is presented as a medium fundamental to this practice. My understanding of the binary patterns which drive nature's cyclic energy, of which space-time is one manifestation, have provided me with the foundation for my art practice. Finding this connection, together with the practice of painting with light, has been the seminal component in achieving praxis in my work.



Figure 28 Wendy Leach *Light Painting 01-85* 2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200mm

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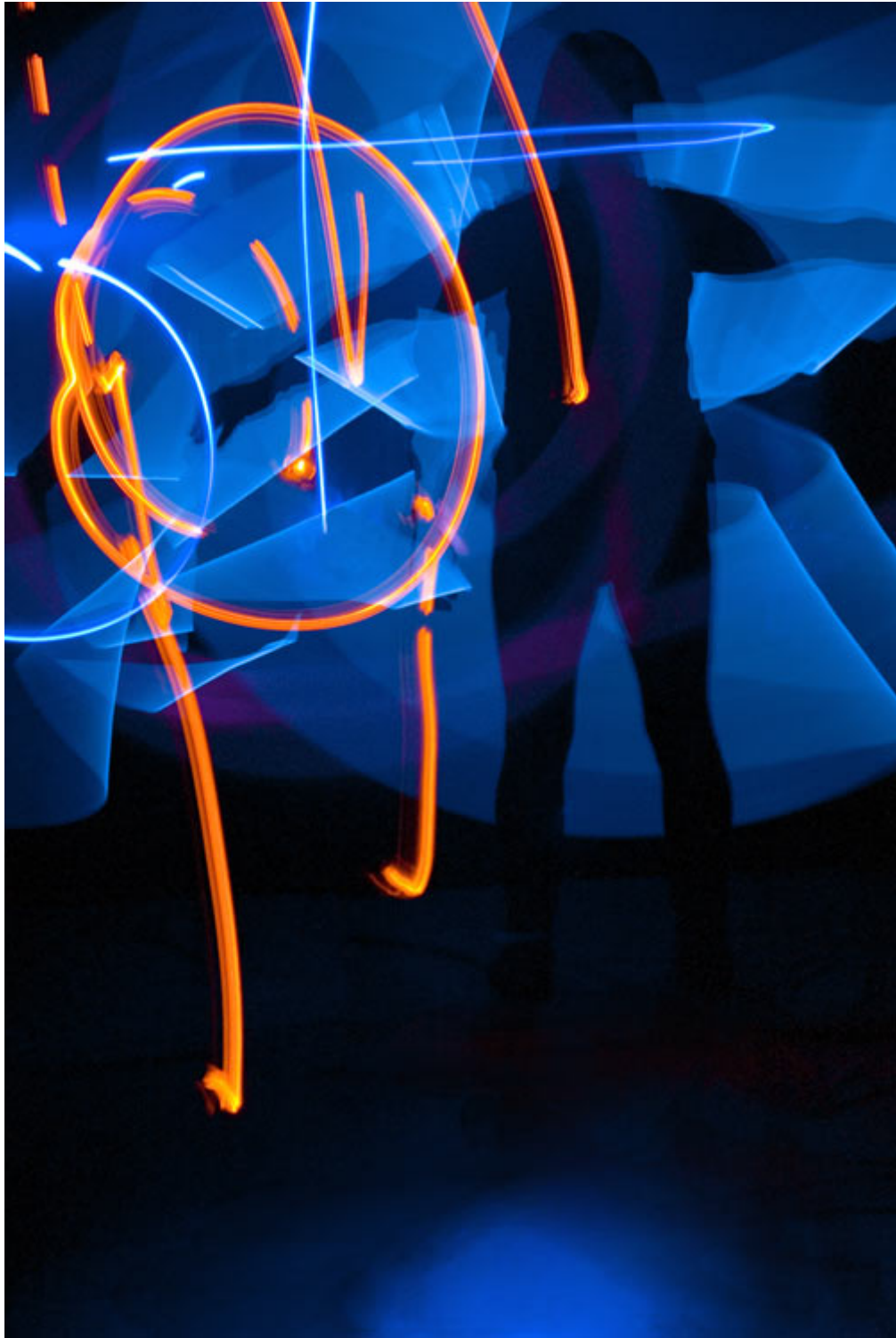
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Appendix: additional images

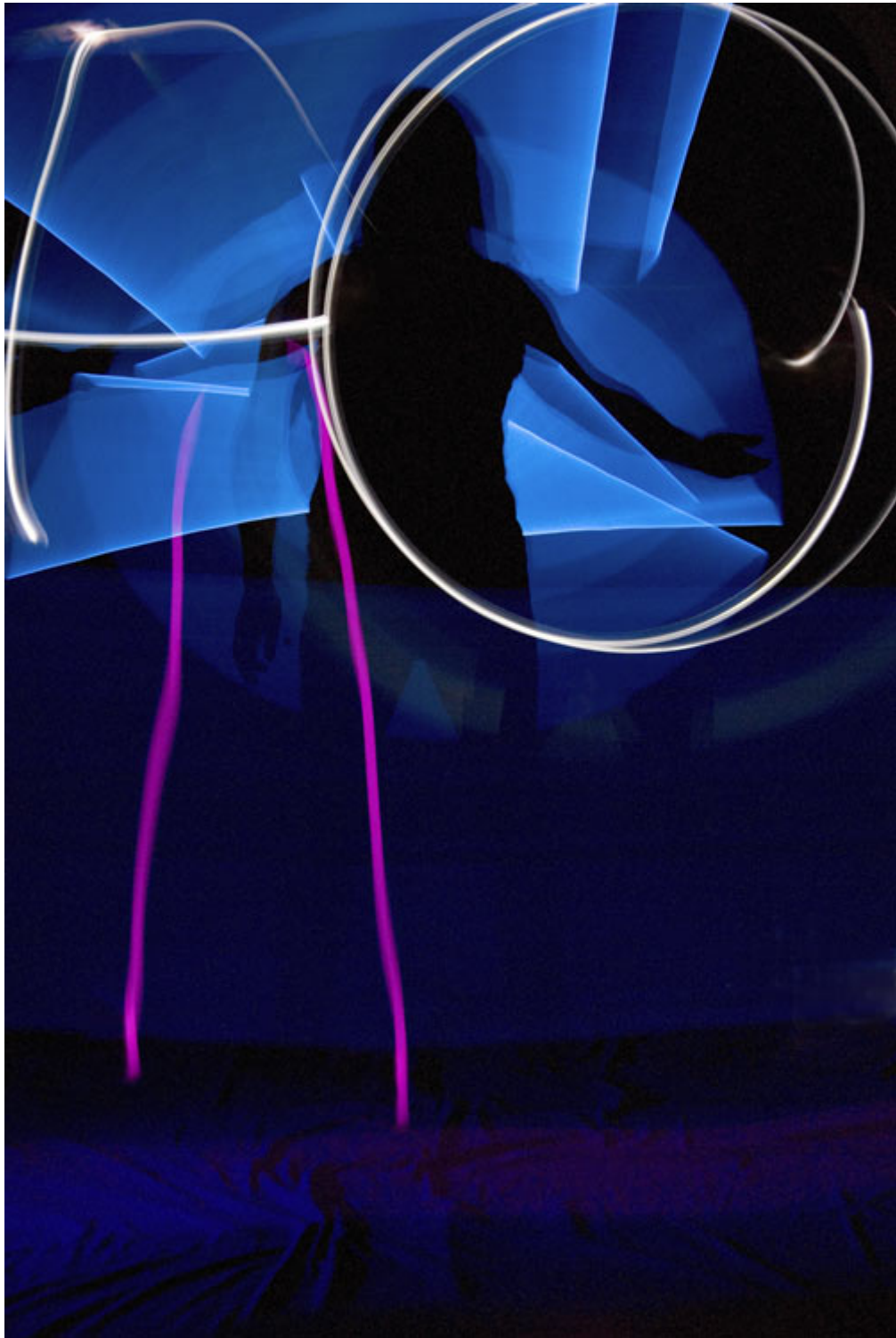
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Wendy Leach <i>Light painting 00-98</i>	2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm	79
Wendy Leach <i>Light painting 01-06</i>	2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm	80
Wendy Leach <i>Light painting 01-11</i>	2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm	81
Wendy Leach <i>Light painting 00-47</i>	2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm	82
Wendy Leach <i>Light painting 23-82</i>	2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm	83
Wendy Leach <i>Light painting 00-93</i>	2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm	84
Wendy Leach <i>Light painting 25-87</i>	2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm	85
Wendy Leach <i>Light painting 25-90</i>	2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm	86
Wendy Leach <i>Light painting 25-64</i>	2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm	87
Wendy Leach <i>Light painting 01-86</i>	2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm	88



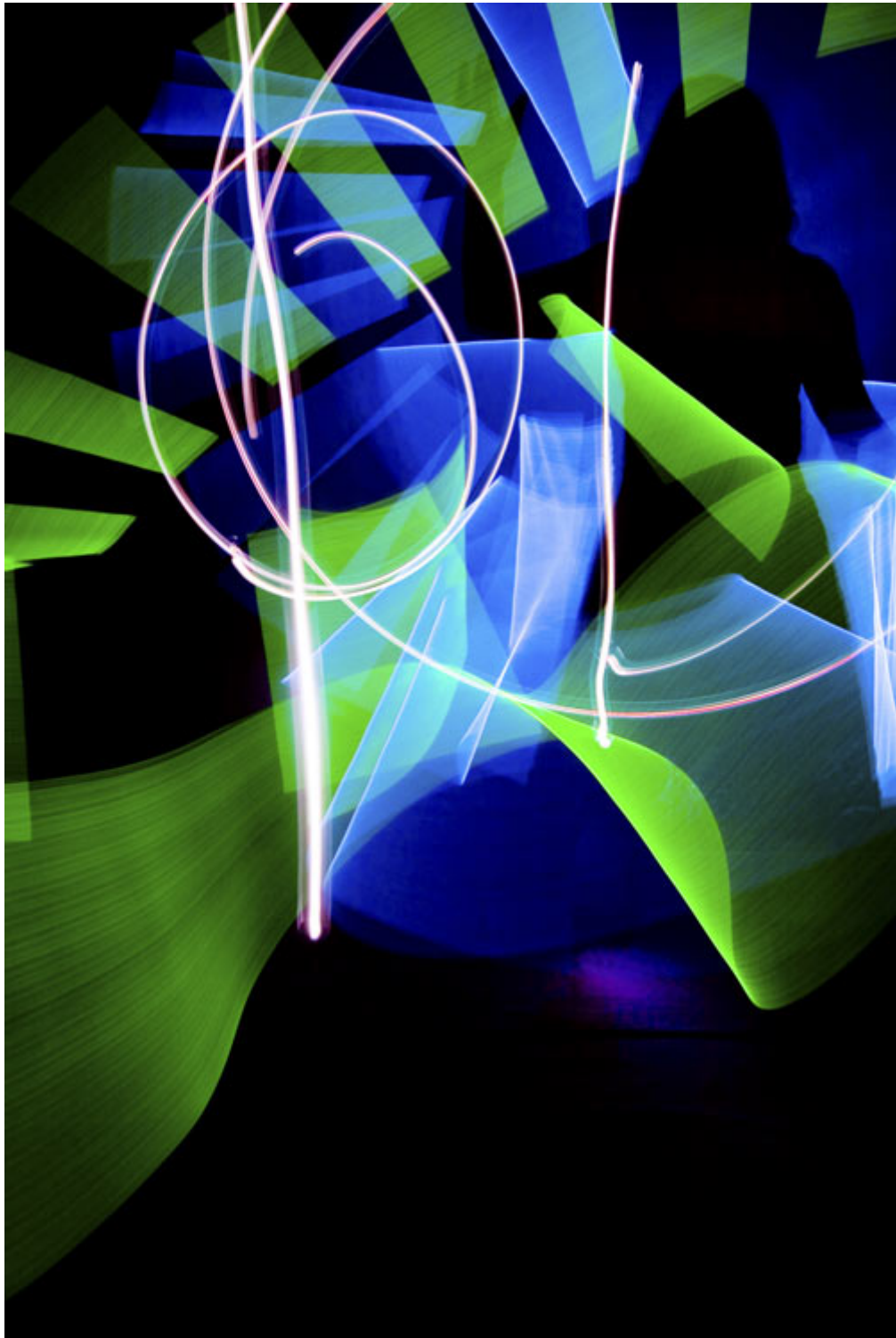
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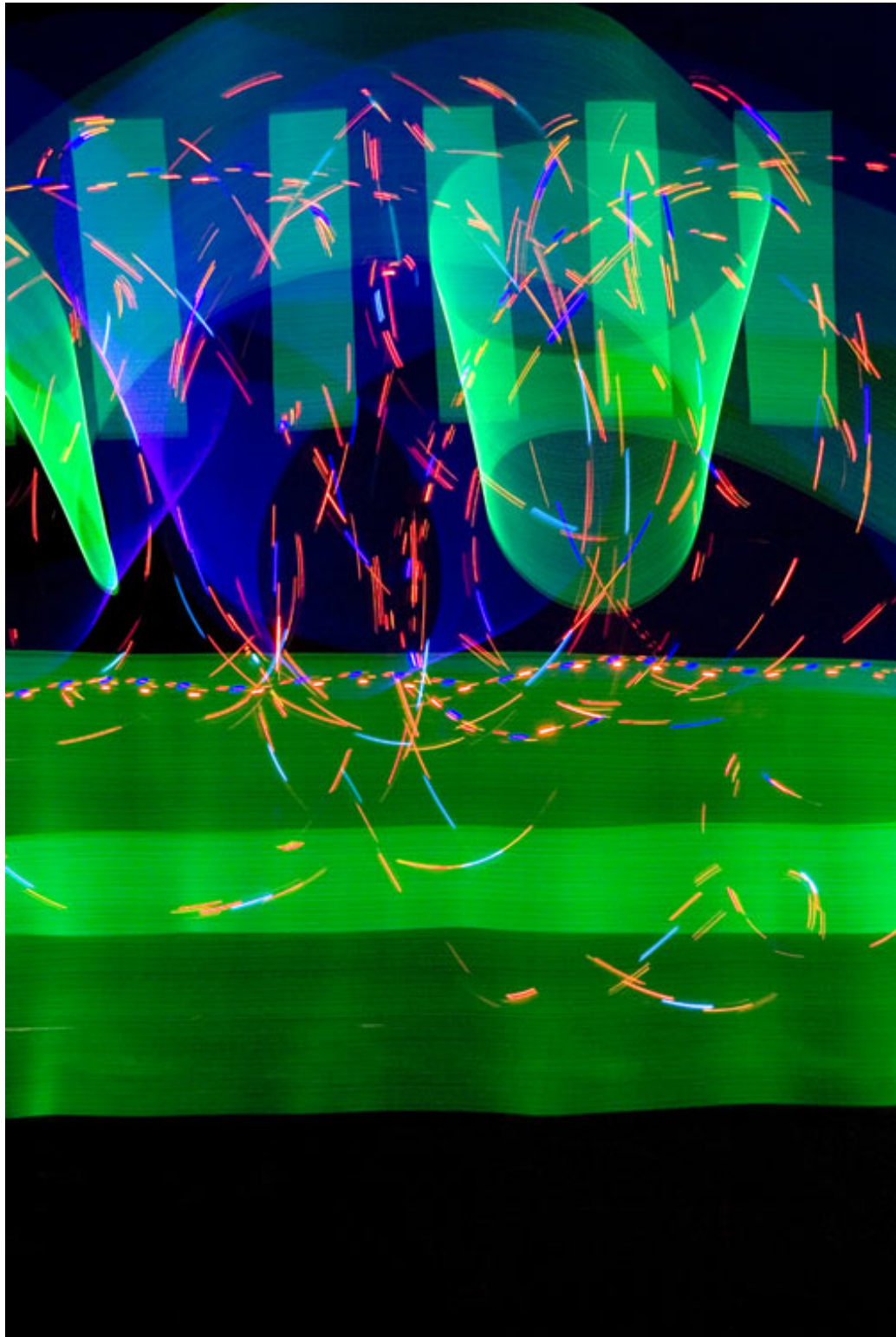
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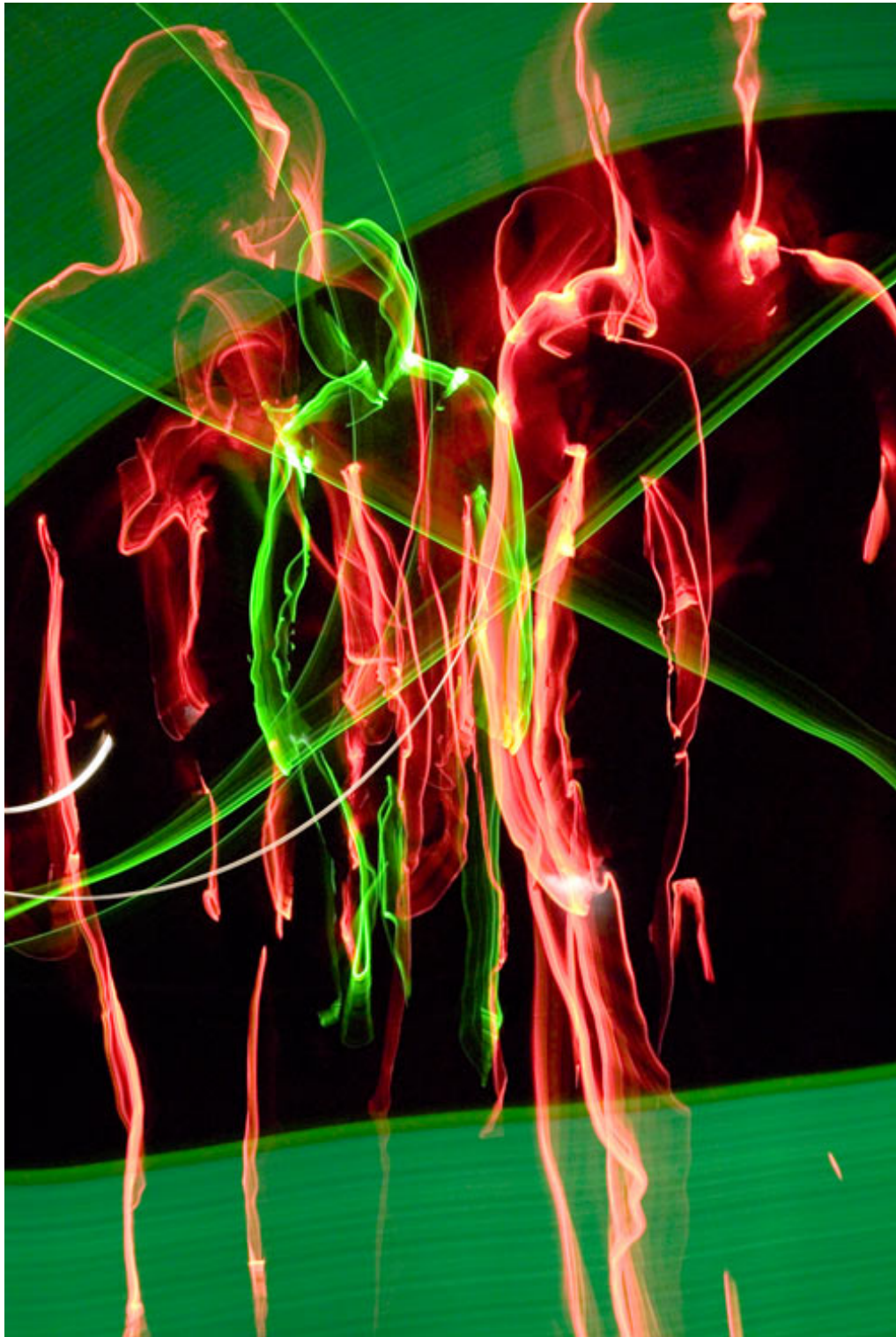
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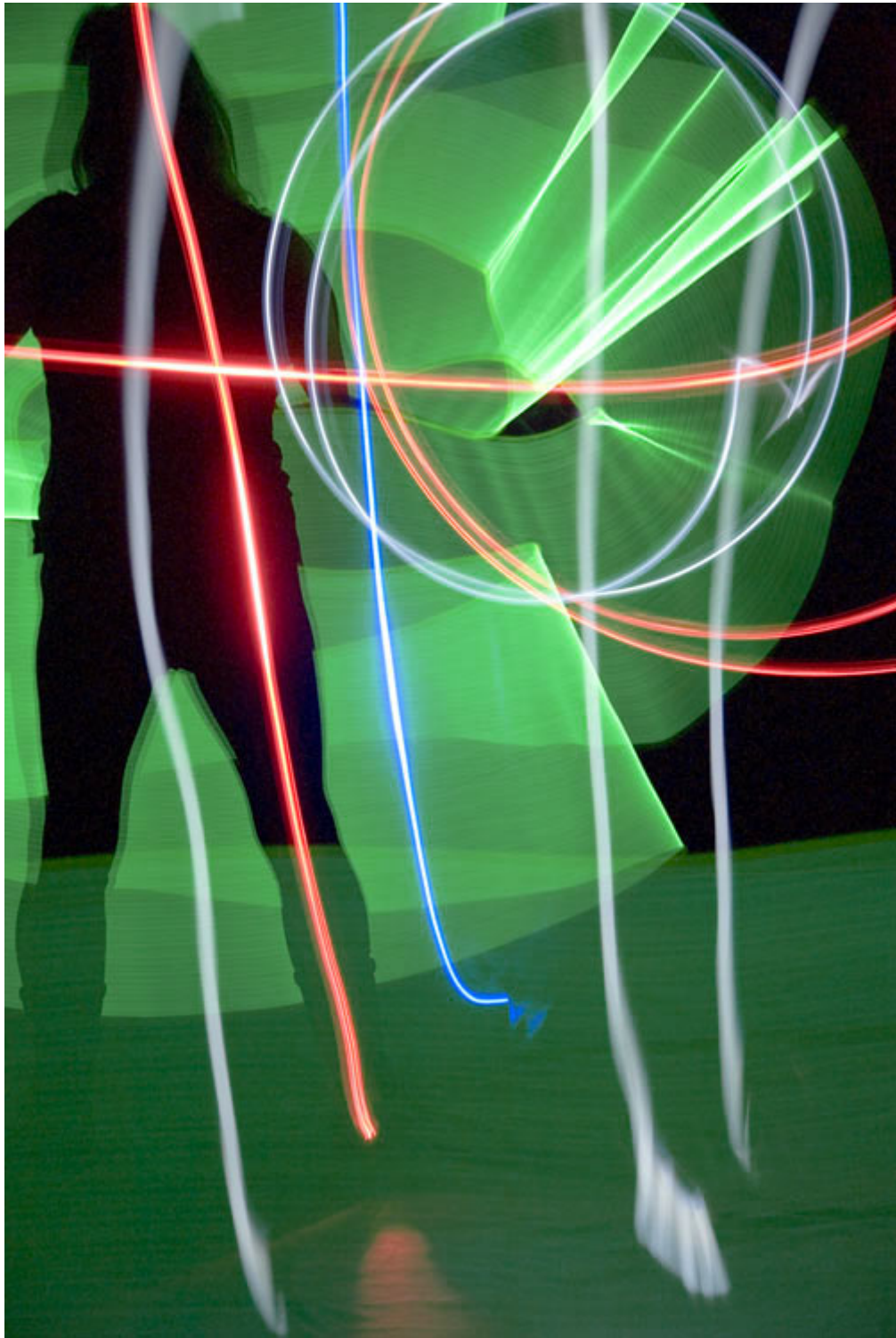
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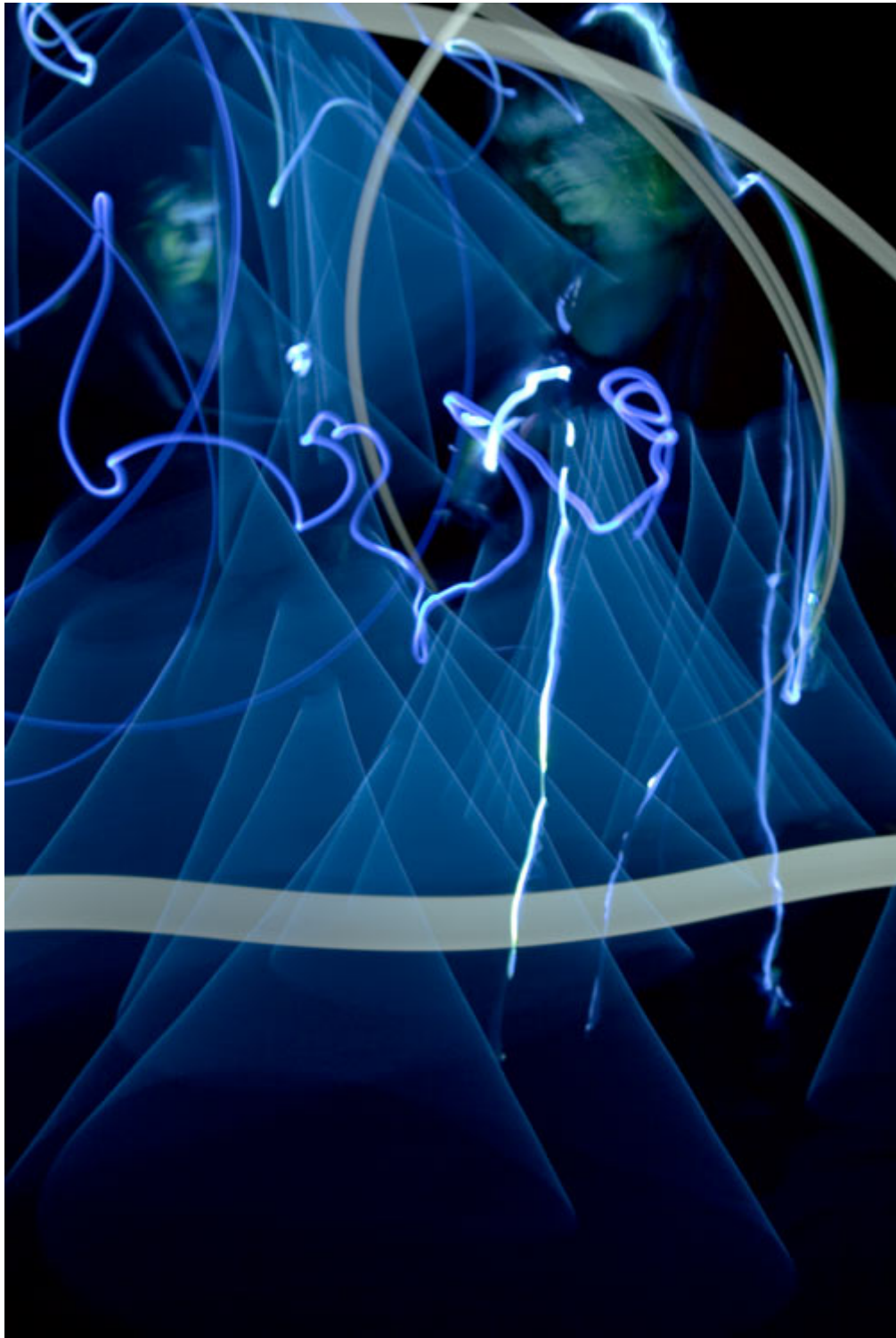
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Wendy Leach *Light painting 25-87* 2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm



Wendy Leach *Light painting 25-90* 2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm



Wendy Leach *Light painting 25-64* 2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm



Wendy Leach *Light painting 01-86* 2007 digital photograph 800 x 1200 mm