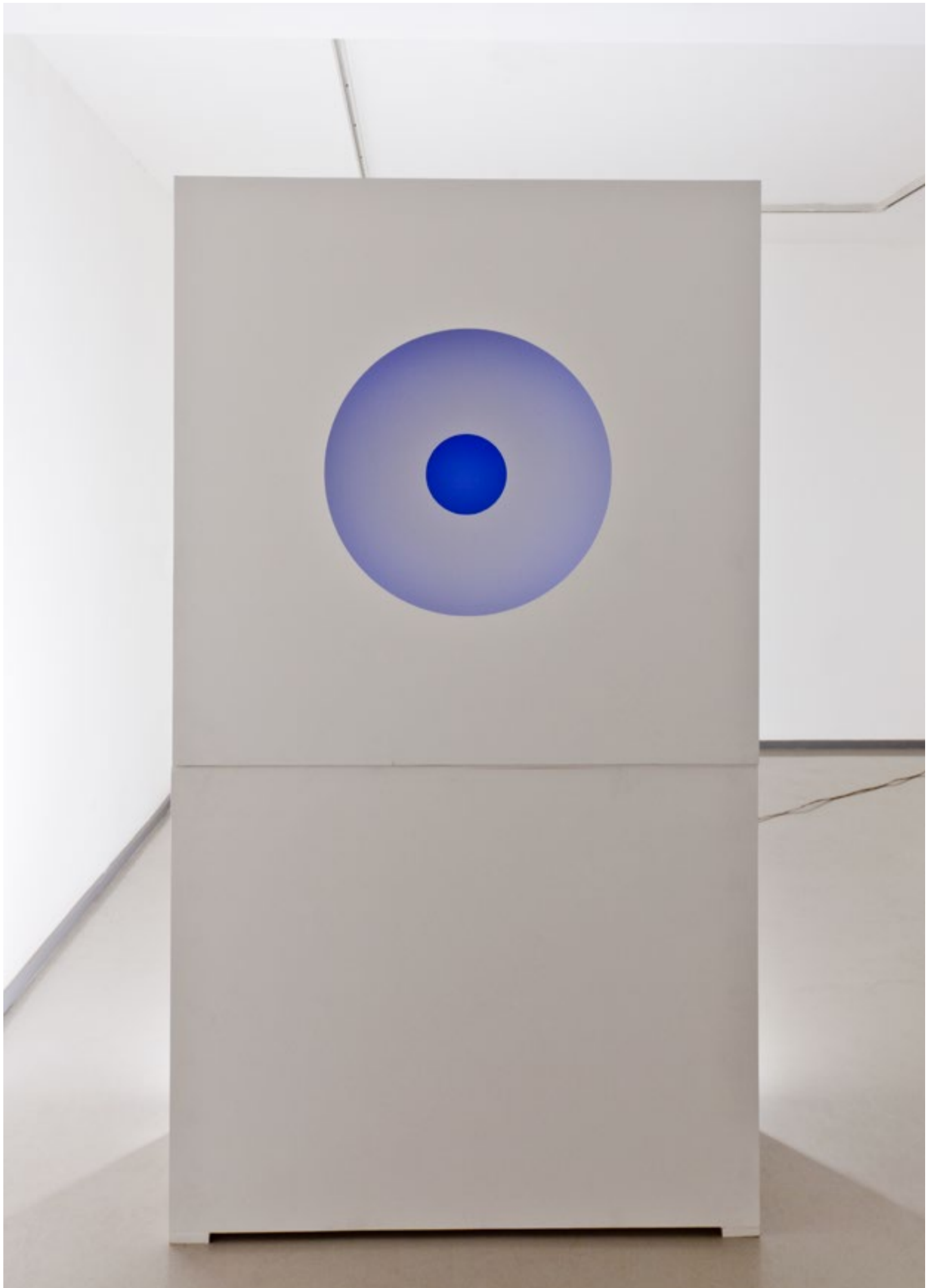
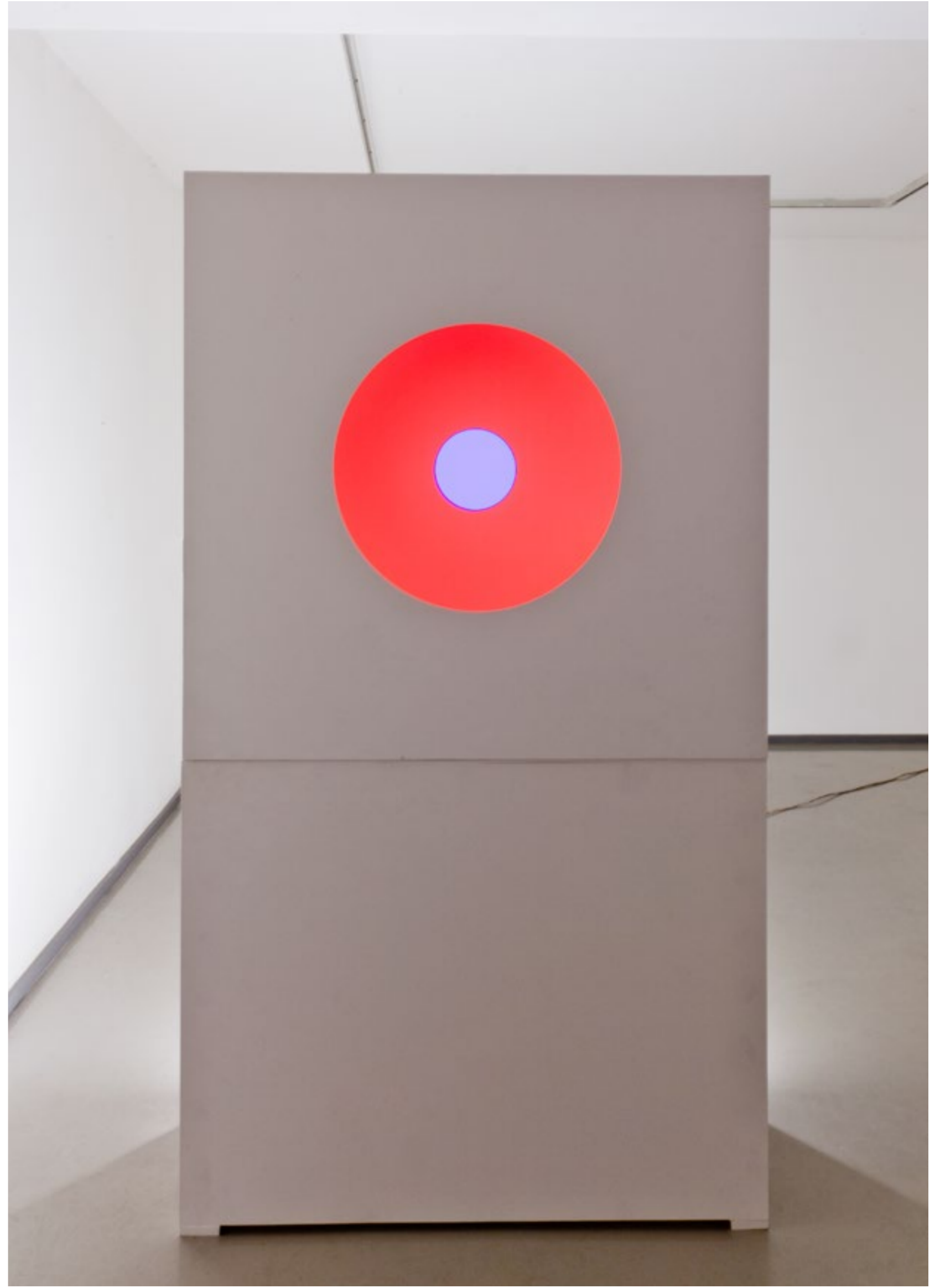
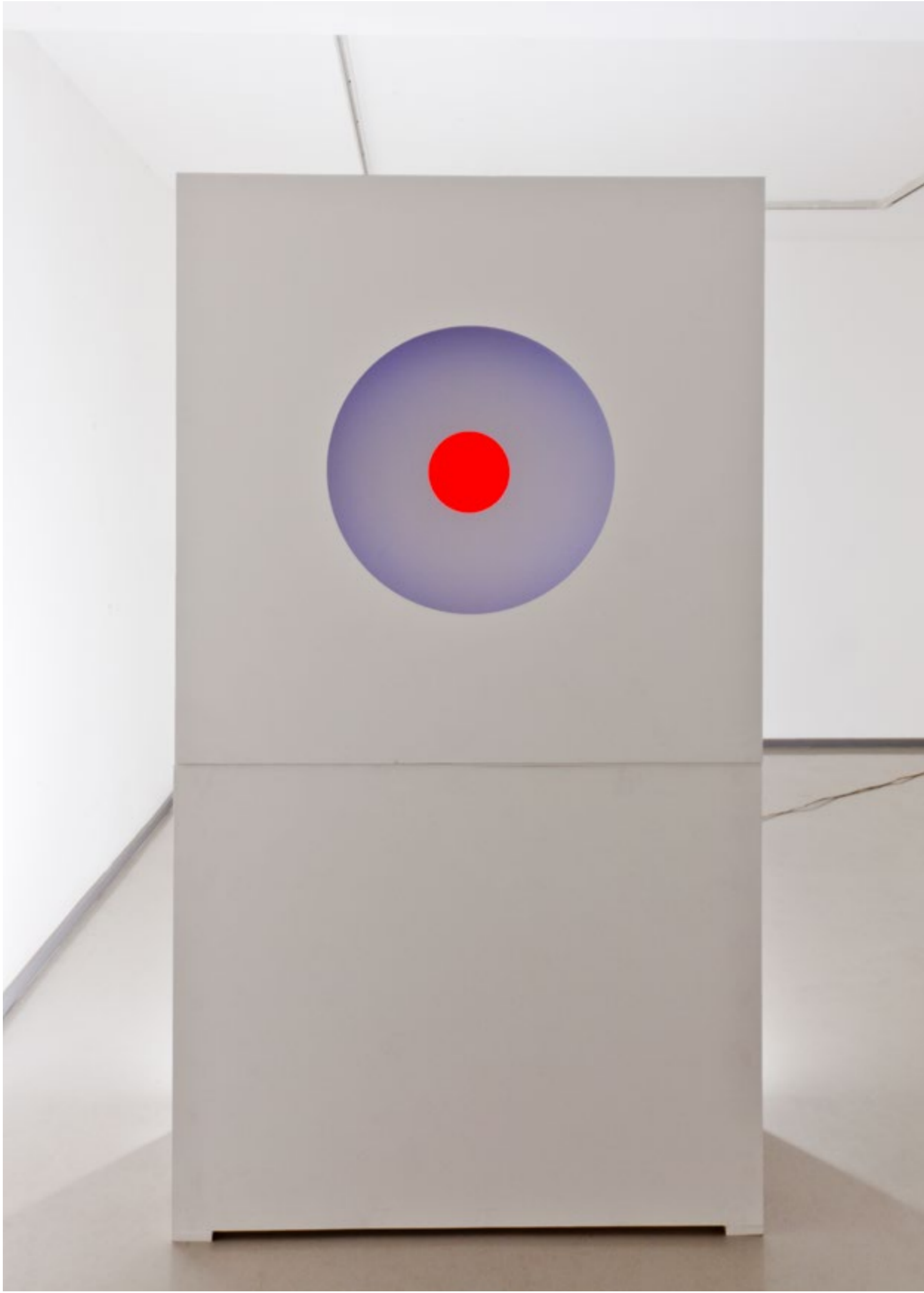
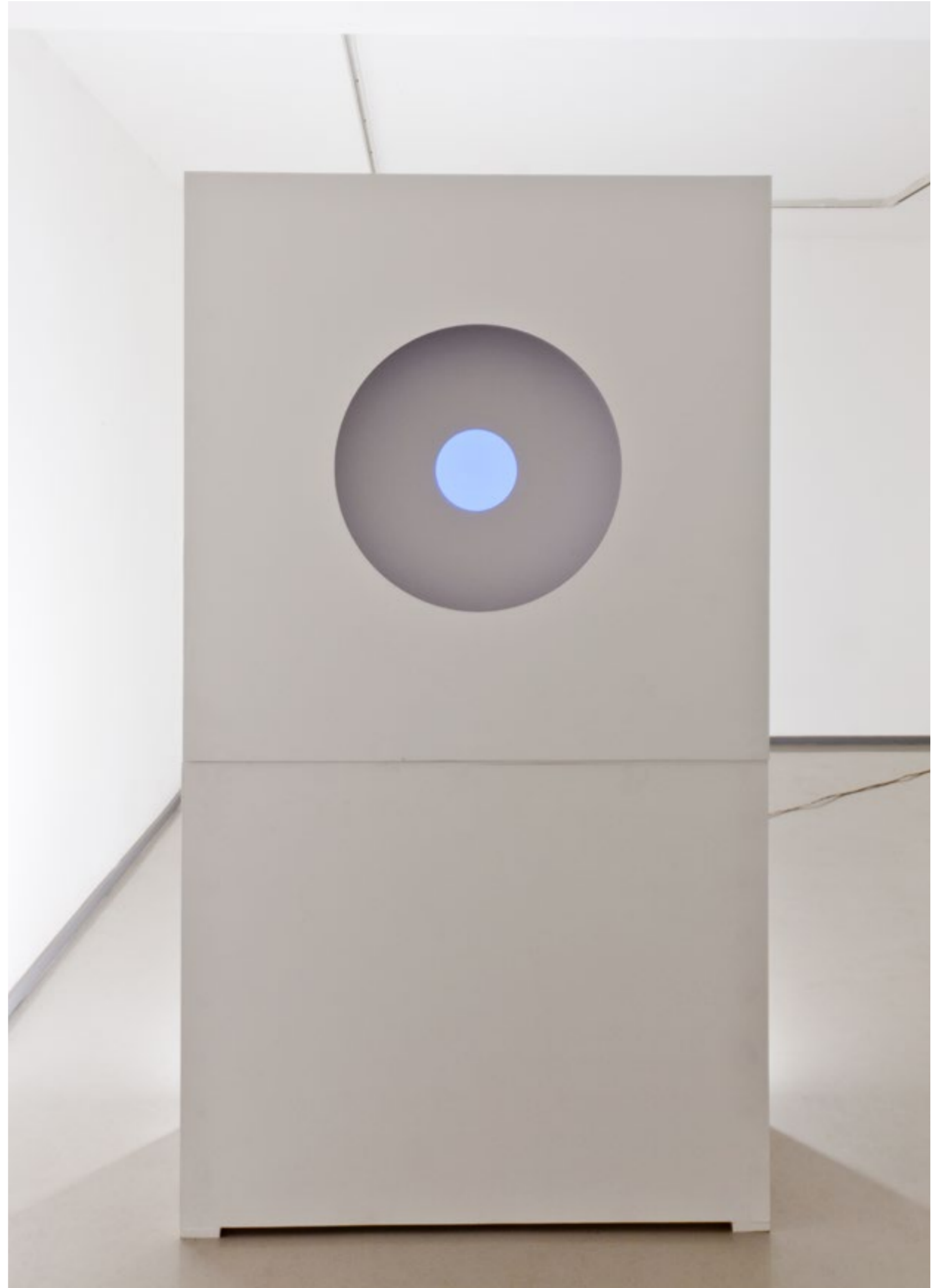
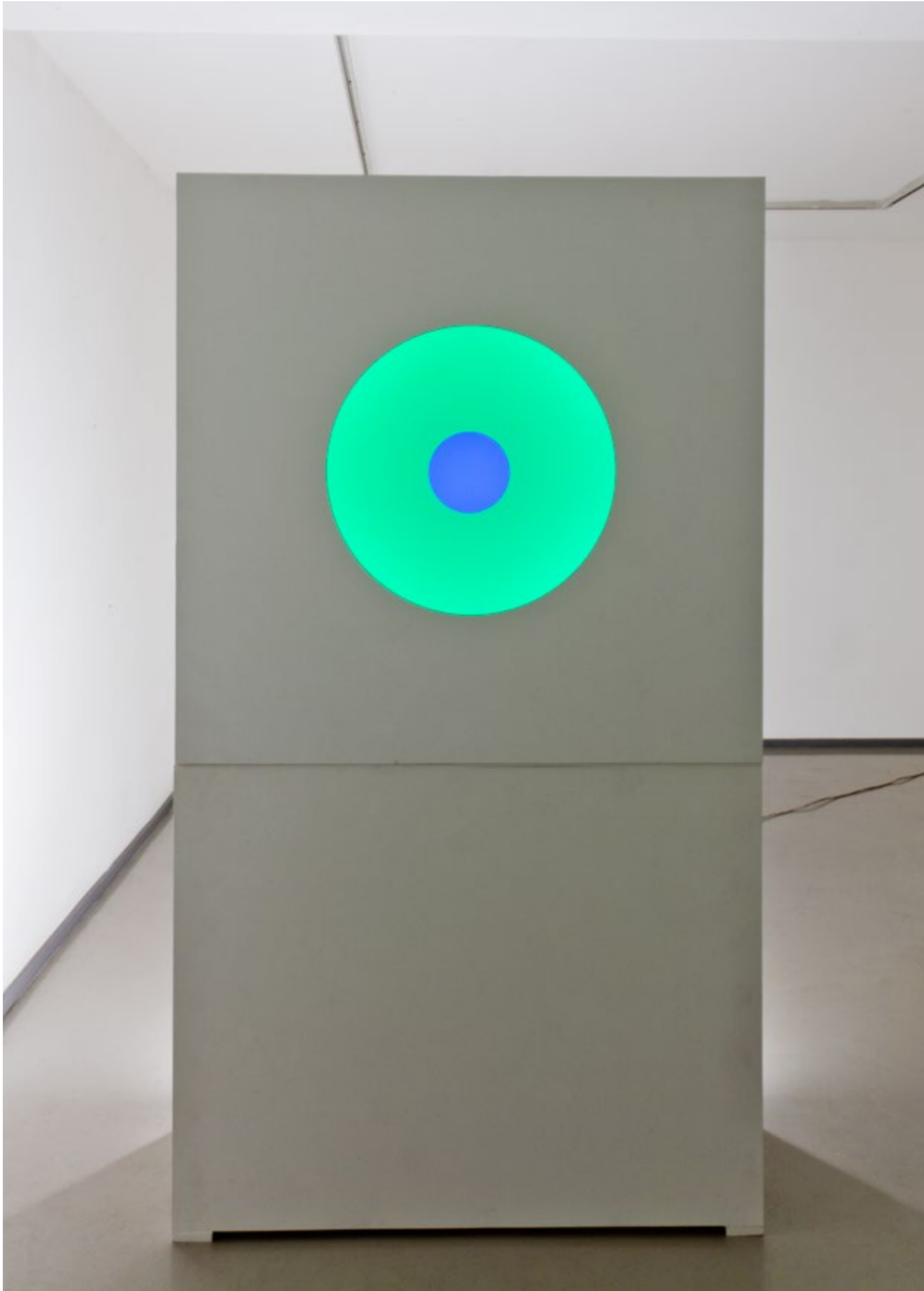


just-noticeable differences
adam barker-mill



Chromat 8





Nature is for our mind, what a body is for light. It reflects it, separates it into its proper colours, kindles a light on its surface or within it, when it equals its opacity: when it is superior, it rays forth in order to enlighten other bodies. But even the darkest bodies can, by water, fire, and air, be made clear and brilliant.^A

Novalis

This is an invitation to an artist long overdue. I've known Adam since opening the gallery in Foley Street, as an artist but also as a collector of art; I can't recall which came first. We had several common friends who were interested in minimal art and comfortable with its silence and simple materiality. Adam was an ace at appreciating a monochromatic painting, something rather rare amongst British-born collectors. He regularly invited me to his Ladbroke Grove studio where I saw his thinking translated into the practice of object-making, principally concerned with colour and light in a very pure way, which I appreciated. We've been delighted to invite him at long last to show new works in Hanway Place. His handling of colour and light to create elegant structures is singularly personal, made with surprisingly simple means. At times there is a mixing of clever bits of electronics and computing for the synchronisation of colour sequences and light density, such as in **Chromat 8** (on the cover), which continued to surprise me despite encountering the installation on a daily basis for the seven weeks duration of the exhibition.

I'd like to thank Adam for presenting us with an outstanding exhibition as well as Rozemin Keshvani for sharing my enthusiasm of Adam's work and for taking on the task of editing all materials for the publication. I'm also indebted to all the writers for their inspired texts, the photographers, Matthew Appleton for his unique design, and especially to Lindsay Gordon in Aberdeen's Peacock Visual Art Centre for his collaborative input and financial support which helped make the printed project possible.

Pushing open the heavy fire door, I enter the gallery half expecting the dimmed lights, tinkle of glasses and gentle hum of voices that characterise the first few moments of a private view. I find myself instead in a space enveloped by near darkness. Shadows reveal what appear to be a large rectangular upright box at the opposite end of the room on the other side of which is a spectre of light. I approach and find myself in fixated by the transitions of colour before me, becoming submerged by the unfolding hallucinogenic realism. Two circles of light, one set within the other, the smaller forming an iris within the larger and framed exactly at viewing height, are indiscernibly, and individually transforming themselves through a seemingly random spectrum of colour; the eye before me appears to respond to my presence. Mesmerized, the work draws me in as if fixed by a centripetal force. Slowly, imperceptibly, I become unable to determine the dimensionality of what I am experiencing; what at first appears flat takes on an enticing depth and I feel myself moving closer, deeper into the source of this mysterious force. Almost involuntarily, I become part of the work, no longer aware of the separation of my body from my mind, of the rift between object and thought, of the space between myself and the dissolving colours before me. For one intense moment all distinctions disappear, and all that was 'I' becomes pure experience, a hallucination of myself, engrossed in a dream that seems to be unfolding within and without my soul. This is how I experience **Chromat 8**, an installation by Adam Barker-Mill featured in his solo show at Laure Genillard Gallery, *just-noticeable differences* Part 1.

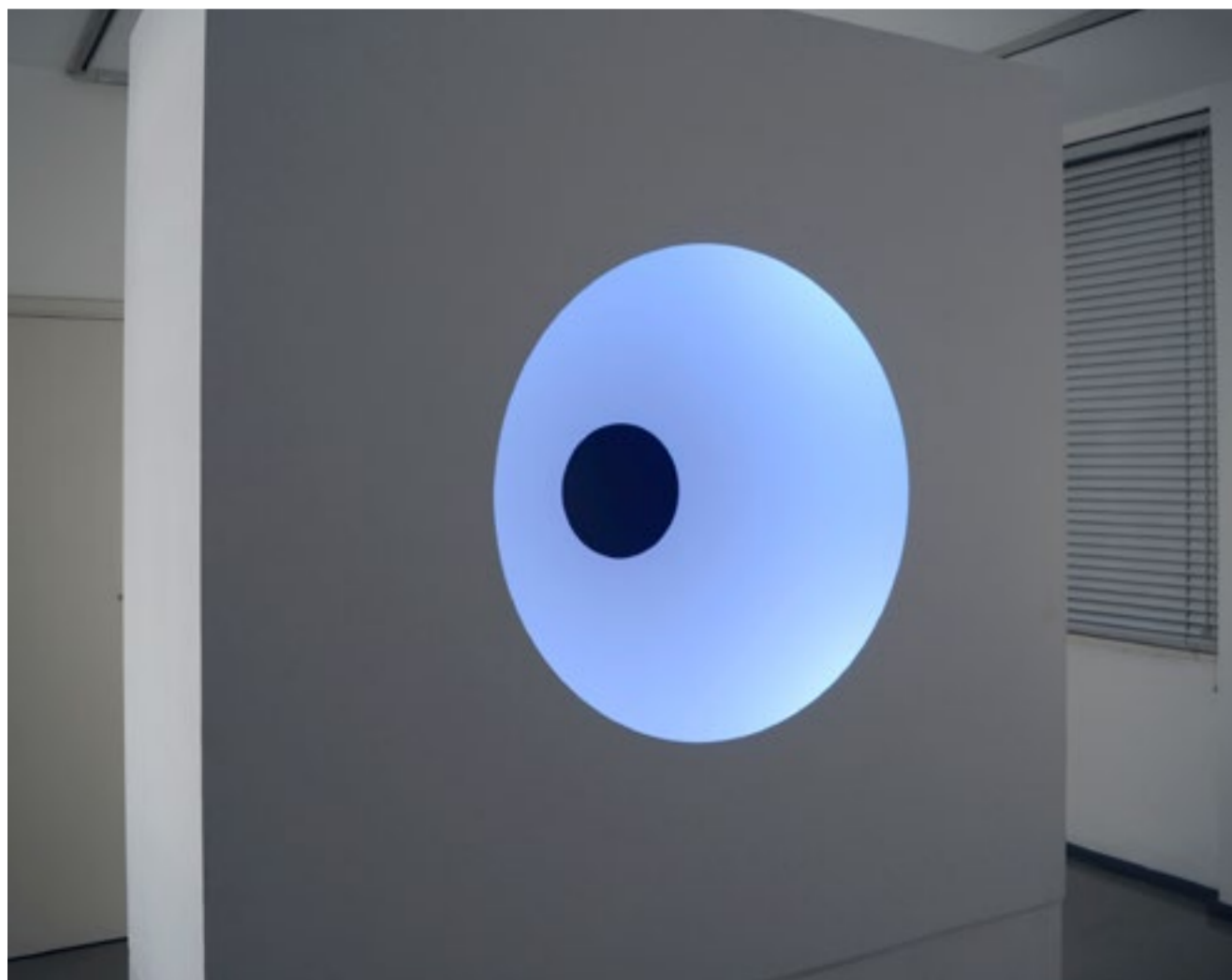
Adam Barker-Mill is an artist who uses light to transform the pictorial medium. His works bridge the purely visual with the sculptural, causing light to acquire a volumetric density. He applies geometric abstraction to transmute the ideals of non-objective painting into the language of sculpture to create time-based installations in which the very tenets of representational art are defied and brought into dramatic focus. By appearing to eschew all forms of materialism and instead concentrating almost entirely on light itself, Barker-Mill's installations often appear to embody the ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* – the all-embracing art form or total artwork, in this case realised, not through an attempt to engage all the senses, but instead, through a hyper-intensive emphasis on the visual, teleporting the viewer to a purely conceptual realm.¹

The elegantly simple construction of **Chromat 8** belies the work's complexity and history. Whereas earlier versions of the **Chromat** series, first exhibited in 1985, projected light onto a two-dimensional, opal Perspex 'screen', **Chromat 8** abandons this fourth wall to stimulate a three-dimensional, submersive viewer experience.

The work consists of a box into which are cut two circular chambers, one set back within the other in which coloured LED lamps are controlled through electronic dimmers to effect differing degrees of intensity and transformations of colour through a cycle of two overlapping sets of identically scored light episodes with differing time-signatures. The inner most cavity is designed to centralise the viewer's focus and here the changes in colour and intensity are most noticeable; the rate of change also being slower than at the periphery. These are interwoven to create a visual canon that gradually dislocates the viewer's spatial awareness. Experience of the putative physical world is thwarted, perspective interrupted. Light itself becomes elevated to pure aesthetic form to produce a transcendental experience that merges bodily awareness with the sublime by opening the field of the artwork to include both the viewer and context.

Barker-Mill's light pieces explore the notion of the 'just-noticeable difference', first expounded by Ernst Heinrich Weber,² to suggest a necessary interdependence between the existence of an event and its perception by engagement of liminal space, an idea mirrored in Deleuze's notion of identity as being the result of repetition and difference rather than one of positive attribution, difference being *a priori* to identity.³ The works on exhibit in the lower gallery provide an opportunity to reflect on the idea of the 'just-noticeable difference'. While **Chromat 8** embodies a kinetic transformation in which the viewer becomes absorbed by the experience of the 'just-noticeable difference', Barker-Mill's **Widescreen 2** (p9) revisits this idea in flattened kinetic space in which the viewer is separated by integration of the frame. Here the frame or armature comprises a horizontally placed rectangle, a landscape of hand-constructed, adjacently positioned wood slats with 102 horizontal openings organised into groups of six. The openings reveal a gradation of electrically generated light passing from deep blue to violet. The work is small enough to be taken in as a totality yet large enough for the eye to individuate each minutiae of difference. In contrast to **Chromat 8** upstairs, here scale and frame permit both a systematic and synthetic encounter with the work. The surrounding space is unaffected. People mill about chatting, sipping wine and reflecting upon their previously private and intense experiences of **Chromat 8**. Rather thoughtfully, like **Widescreen 2, Circle in a Square** (p21), encountered on first descending into the lower gallery permits the viewer a separateness from the work in which dialogic reflection on the idea of the 'just-noticeable difference' flourishes.

Immediately juxtaposing **Widescreen 2** are a series of Barker-Mill's watercolours on paper (pp16-19). These works comprise carefully laid out vertical lines of muted pastels. Their flat planes contrast with light's volumetricity and provide respite from these more highly-charged electrically generated light works, encouraging our deeper reflection on that which is the source of all that the eye can see – light.



Chromat 8



Ibiza



'Paddington: A Photo-Essay' ISIS

Barker-Mill's concern with light and space began as a child. Born in 1940 near Wells, Somerset, he often visited the mysterious Wookey Hole Caves just outside his home. These shimmering limestone caves harboured strange stalagmite/stalactite formations and secret underground rivers. The artist recalls in particular the massive limestone arch which framed a lake sourced from an underground river flowing from a cavern beyond. The lake was lit from this hidden cavern giving off an iridescent blue light as if from a magical source.⁴

Barker-Mill's parents were both artists, and ideas concerning the principles and presentation of light were subjects for dinner table conversation. His father, Peter Barker-Mill (1908-1994) had served in the Civil Defence Camouflage Unit during the Second World War. He trained as an artist, becoming a wood engraver and important post-war muralist. In his later murals, he explored ideas of light and the source of light, burying aluminium, brass and other quasi-reflective materials within terrazzo to create 'a feeling of a buried source of light or heat within the work' in line with the work of German artist Casper David Friedrich (1774-1840).⁵ Adam's mother Elsa Vaudrey (1909-90) was herself an accomplished painter who encouraged her children to take up the medium. The artist's early childhood experiments with gouache depict colourful landscapes where the still-life merges with banal domesticity. Even then, his use of vivid colour and juxtaposed geometric forms demonstrated a precocious awareness of the disjunct between the flat surface of the paper and the illusion of three-dimensional space, while open doors and skylights suggest recognition of the effects of light and the connection between light and freedom.

Adam became familiar with the possibilities of light as a teenager. He spent long hours poring through his *Dictionary of Abstract Art*. At fifteen, he was given a 620 camera, initiating a life-long love affair with photography. He set up his own dark room, first carefully exposing his images under sunlight and then developing the contact sheets himself. One Christmas he was given two lenses with which to create an enlarger made from cardboard boxes, projecting images onto a wall, and playing with the effects of light in the developing process. At seventeen, he was awarded the Winchester College photography prize for his series of landscape photographs.

Barker-Mill won a place at Magdalen College, Oxford to study modern languages (French and German). He was particularly captivated by the 'magical idealism' expressed in the philosophical and aesthetic writings of the German Romantic Georg Philipp Friedrich von Hardenberg (also known as Novalis), exemplified in the novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, whose central character's search for the 'blueyonder' or 'blue flower' in nature and art takes him on an epic allegorical journey into a mysterious geological world, through which Barker-Mill was able to reflect again upon his own childhood experiences in the Wookey Hole Caves.⁶

At Oxford, Barker-Mill continued to build on his knowledge and love of photography through the Photographic Society, and was recognised with a cover feature in the Oxford student magazine *ISIS* for his photo-essay of Paddington Station – Isambard Kingdom Brunel's tremendous iron glazed architectural structure which celebrated the spectacle of both travellers and light.⁷ The camera brought Barker-Mill into direct contact with the qualities and possibilities of light and colour. He wondered whether he might make light itself the subject and source of artistic creativity, rather than simply a tool through which to incorporate or manipulate other media. Art, rather than being created through media which reflects light, might itself be formed through *light's own very being*. The idea remained latent, kindling, percolating, until the artist could find the means and opportunity to investigate his ideas.

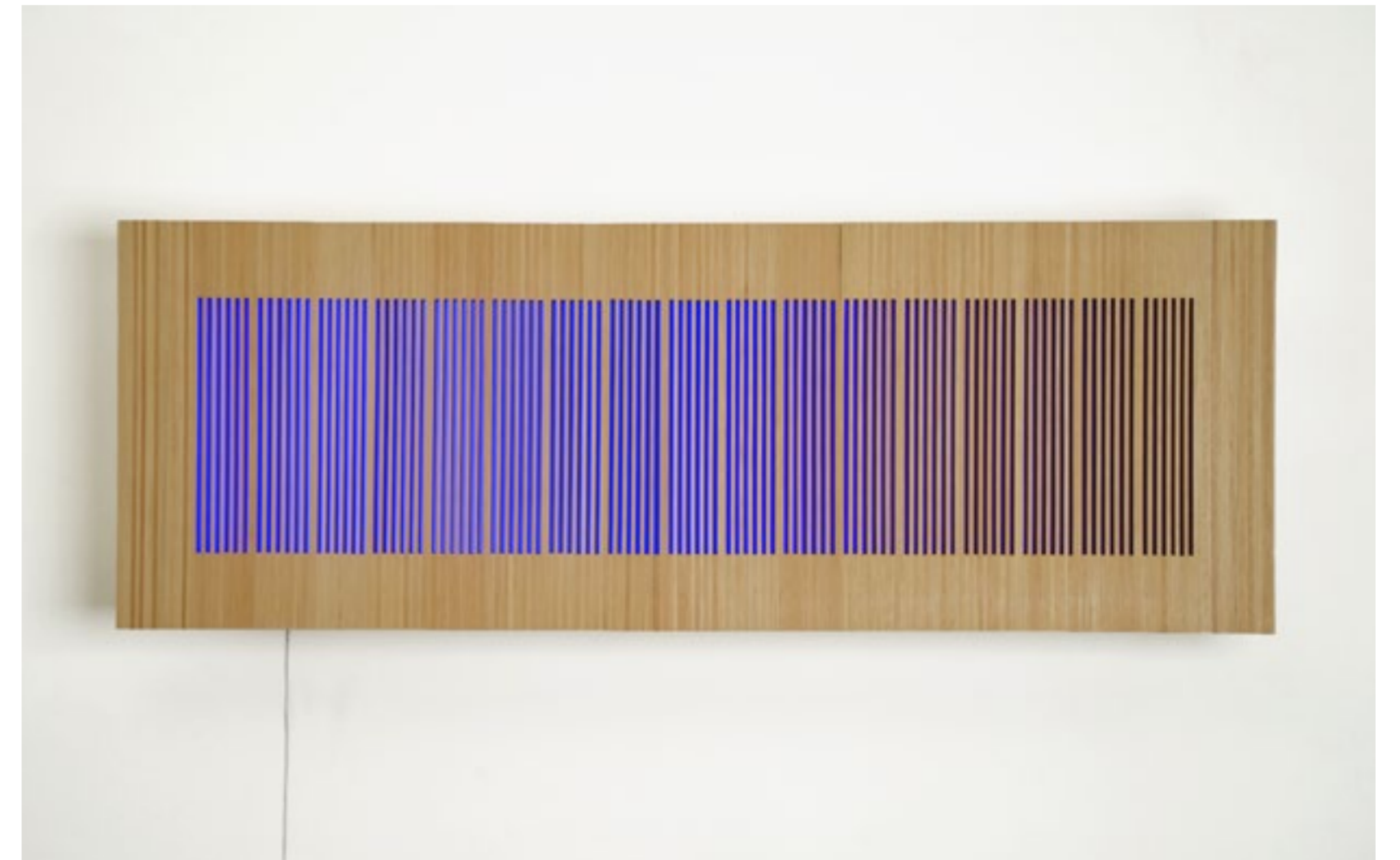
Barker-Mill recalls one seminal incident which took place in the summer of 1962 shortly after finishing his studies at Oxford. Wishing to explore his ideas about colour through painting, he joined his sister and a group of friends who had just finished studying at the Slade for a painting retreat in Cornwall. Here he produced a series of abstract works through which he attempted to examine the properties of colour and it was the experience of failure that led the artist to an epiphany – he couldn't see how to realise his ideas through paint and canvas:

The colour of anything depends on its context, and I just couldn't show that in painting, not even through a series of paintings. Colour is context driven; you can't achieve that kind of change in two dimensions. I wanted to show the context and the fact that a colour was changing because its background was changing.

*Even Monet's Haystack series didn't cut it for me because there are changes over time that cannot be captured with paint. I wanted to include not only the relationship of viewer but also the temporal quality, the changing nature of light and colour.*⁸

Adam Barker-Mill

This conundrum – how to portray the time-based and contextual changes of colour – led Barker-Mill to begin his first experiments with film, deciding that this might prove the way forward. He left Cornwall and went to London where he began his research. Using an 8mm camera, he developed a technique of colour layering by manually rewinding the film in the camera, repeatedly exposing it to light through colour filters. In order to record only pure light, and avoid producing an image, the camera was pointed directly at a skylight with the lens in place but defocussed, so that only light was recorded. Masking the gate of the camera with rectangular stencils of different sizes and progressively opening up and then stopping down the lens while the film was running, the artist was able to successfully record transformations of colour within a stable geometric form, such as two rectangles, one within another; colours would vary in intensity and hue according to their degree of exposure to the light source.



Widescreen 2

By 1964, Barker-Mill had moved to a flat on Old Compton Street in Soho and begun studying film at the London School of Film Technique on Electric Avenue in Brixton. From there he took his first job in a cutting room in Wardour Street as Probationary Trainee Assistant Editor, working on the 1965 documentary *CHINA!* directed by Felix Greene. Barker-Mill reconnected with his childhood friend James Scott with whom he began a long collaboration as cameraman and editor making films about artists. He filmed the acclaimed *Loves Presentation* (with David Hockney); *Richard Hamilton*; *The Great Ice Cream Robbery* (Claes Oldenburg); *Chance, History, Art* and the Oscar winning short, *A Shocking Accident*, as well as the feature length film, *Every Picture Tells a Story*, all directed by James Scott. He also collaborated with director, Barney Platts-Mills, with whom he worked on the films *Bronco Bullfrog*, *Private Road* and *Hero*. For nearly twenty years, Barker-Mill worked full-on as lighting cameraman and in the cutting room, refining his understanding of how the camera and film see the world:

*It was good training for me working with the camera and film, because you need to understand how the camera will see the event, differently from the experience of the eye. Working with light trains the eye, makes you aware of what the light is in a certain space, how the film is going to see the light, and film sees in a completely different way to the way our eyes see. The camera forces you to focus your thinking on how the eye works and how the eye sees.*⁹

Adam Barker-Mill

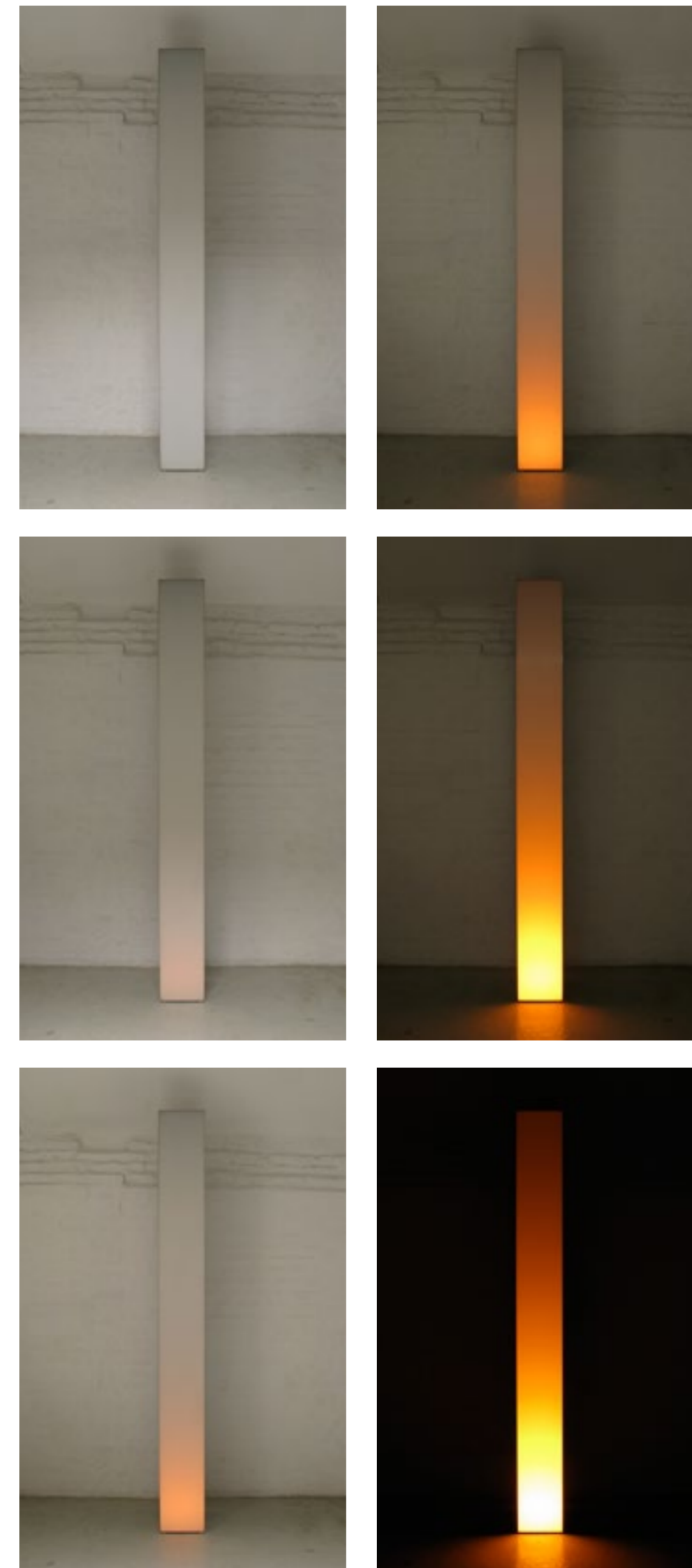
By the 1980s, technologies to manipulate the presentation and intensity of light through electronics became available enabling Barker-Mill to construct the types of work he had envisaged in Cornwall many years before. The cameraman became resolute. He no longer wished to be someone else's eye. He gave up his longstanding career in filmmaking and began full-time to create art based on the source of all visual experience, light itself. The result was his first *Chromat* piece, realised in 1985.

The artist who uses light as both medium and subject of his work enters into dialogue with an entire history of painting concerned with the portrayal of light. Light may be perfectly reflected from the smooth surface of the mirror, yet it is the artist's skill in distorting the canvas's capacity to reflect and absorb the different coloured light rays within white light through use of colour, materials and surface that gives each painting its unique qualities. In a sense, every painter enters into a struggle with light, confronting the question of how to manipulate light's reflective properties to bring about a particular experience in the viewer.

Pablo Picasso's many portraits of Dora Maar consider distortions in the travel of light to produce a seemingly paradoxical discussion of the real versus the perceived. The modernist line of progressive geometric abstraction from artists such as Wassily Kandinsky through to that of Kazimir Malevich, Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian might have led, as in the case of Barker-Mill, to the absolute abstraction of light from the flat surface into the three-dimensional world of sculpture. Yet Barker-Mill's obsession with light extends the limits of geometric abstraction, sharing in practice the concerns of artists such as Claude Monet whose desire to depict *time* led him to seek to capture through paint, the fleeting moment, and the transformative effects of light.

The light sources for Barker-Mill's works range from the 'controllable' (electronically controlled artificial light sources, as in the case of the *Chromat* installations) and the 'uncontrollable', (ambient, as in the case of *Rotor*, discussed below). Novalis observed, even the darkest bodies can, through nature's reflective mediums, 'be made brilliant', and it is significant that Barker-Mill's works repeatedly incorporate the forces of nature to subtly reflect and reveal the hidden and buried brilliance of even the darkest objects. Take the fire from a candle. *Candle Piece*, 1996 was exhibited in the *Northern Lights* exhibition at the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh. It consists of a simple translucent Perspex vertical column housing a single lighted candle. The work implicitly references the candle's role in painting where it has come to symbolise both light as time and as source of all being and knowledge.

Consider the paintings of the 17th century Dutch painters Gerard van Honthorst (1592-1656) and Matthias Stom (c.1600-52) whose depictions of Christ employ the flutter and mystery of the candle flame to illustrate the transient nature of existence and God as the one true source. Barker-Mill re-contextualises the candle, removing it from its painterly and religious past, to give it a three-dimensional frame. The light from the burning candle is diffused within the vertical column. Its light fills the void within the column, its intensity weakening as it projects its rays upward. Its diminishing length, having an affinity with our human life, palpably measures the passage of time in the absence of a clock. Unlike the *Chromat* series in which the sculpture is framed by the viewer's total field of experience, here light's meaning is made apparent by a literal incorporation of a frame that enables the viewer to maintain a distance from the work, again permitting reflection and contemplation.



Candle Piece

Light itself is no ordinary material. It consists of photons travelling at a speed of 186,000 miles per second whose electromagnetic properties cause it to fall within a spectrum 'visible' to the naked human eye. Nothing is capable of travelling faster than light. Its beams travel continuously, invisibly, in a straight line to infinity until reflected or refracted through another material. Light travels in the vacuum of space and is only made visible through the existence of another material. Light conjures ideas of unity, oneness and infinity. Through its field of activation, light invokes a certain poetic resonance between the one and the many, being and nothingness, being and becoming known, and between art and perception. Light, it would seem, answers what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call 'the magic formula we all seek – PLURALISM = MONISM'.¹⁰

Barker-Mill's insight into light's volumetric capacity to shape the liminal in architectural space finds reflection in his work *Pool* (back cover). Recalling the words of Novalis, here the artist uses both the frame of the garden and Nature's own mirror to create the illusion of a three-dimensional image on the apparently flat two-dimensional surface of the water, a rather neat inversion on the idea of *di sotto in sù* (seen from below). Uniting architecture with painting, painting with sculpture, *Pool* expands the architecture of the garden into the space beyond; pointing to the garden as an architectural reflection of nature, while absorbing and heightening the eternally-changing nature of context and time.



Pingle Car

Barker-Mill's engagement with material is akin to that of the sculptor who uses the language of assemblage and collage. The artist does not rely on drawings or work from preconceived ideas, but instead engages in experiment, play and fortuitous accident with available materials to quite literally 'invent' his works. His series, *Pingle Cars*, epitomise this ludic, intuitive engagement with material – in this case – an amusing 're-purposing', to use Kenneth Goldsmith's term, of the Innocent Smoothie soft-drink container.¹¹ Here the artist creates an automobile, yet the process itself was accidental. It suggests that ideas, and indeed, form, might be intuited from material through the act of play; material itself might reveal its deeper secrets. *Pingle Cars*, while silently proclaiming their innocence, comprehend childhood and play, but equally and somewhat ominously, point to the packages' inherent use-by-date and hence a society predicated on endlessly expanding consumption. Indeed, even Barker-Mill's most lofty constructions with light are developed through studio-made models incorporating ready-made containers, cardboard packaging, plastic cups and other throw-aways of consumer living.

Rotor, a work in progress, was conceived by Barker-Mill in 2004. The piece underlines not only the artist's playful, experimental approach but equally his power to release the esoteric from exoteric materiality. The artist created the earliest prototypes of the piece by dismantling his bicycle. On its face *Rotor* presents a large vertical foam board disc into which is cut a smaller hole which forms a circular aperture. This disc comprises the work's façade and is placed vertically on one end of an axle supported by two columns of MDF. At its other end is a smaller stronger disc made of wood. The structure hides a dismantled Technics record-player. The rotating turntable is attached with string pulleys via a worm gear to the smaller disc. As the turntable rotates, the smaller disc turns, causing the axle to rotate. The large disc rotates very slowly. One revolution takes three minutes to complete. Behind the front disc is a chamber which is open at one end to create an entry for ambient light. The light is then seen through the disc's central hole. As the disc rotates, so does the chamber. This motion thus provides a 360 degree scan of the space's ambient light over each three minute period.

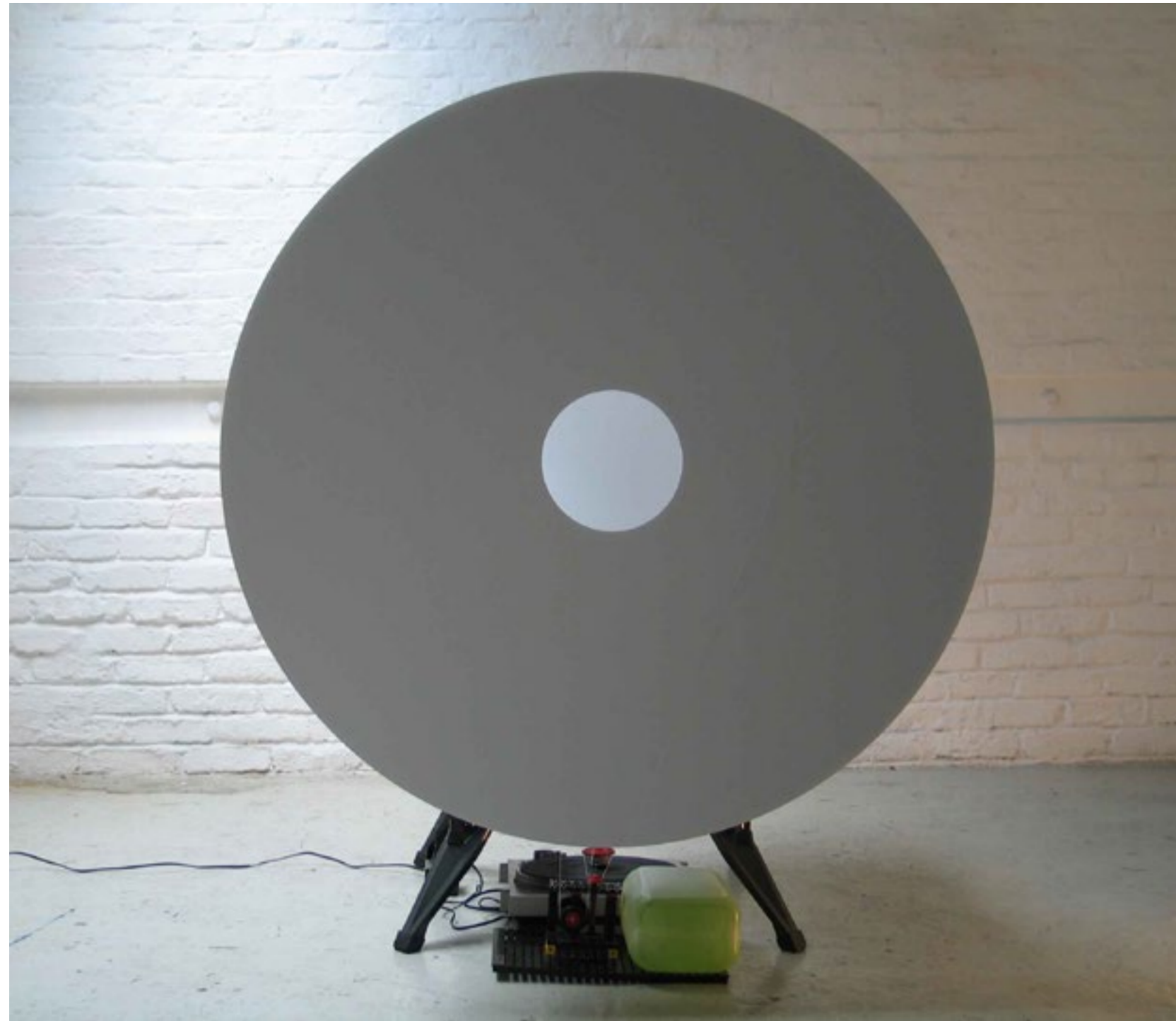
The work's deceptively simple facade houses an infinitely charged idea on the changing nature of light, time and silence. Here time's motion is powered by a soundless unseen force normally reserved for the reproduction of analog sound. Time is silently echoed in the turning of the wheel, whose attendant chamber obediently reflects ambient light as it opens up to the sources of its illumination. Time's passage is shown through the documentation, however temporary and ephemeral, of an object's capacity to register the transition from light to dark, from day to night, recollecting John Cage's statement 'Silence... has only duration.'¹² Context becomes paramount. The work responds differently in each space in which it is located, reinventing and transforming itself in each instance by a continuous and total inclusion of its field of vision, once again echoing the ideas of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In all of this, time's passage, like light, is silent; its index ephemeral; its history non-existent. Time makes no sound.

A Novalis, Heinrich von Ofterdingen: *A Romance*, from the German, (Cambridge: John Owen, 1842, trans. Tieck and Schlegel), Project Gutenberg (online library), release date: April 3, 2010 [EBook #31873], <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/31873> (downloaded 2 April 2014), Klingsohr's reply to Heinrich in Chapter 7.

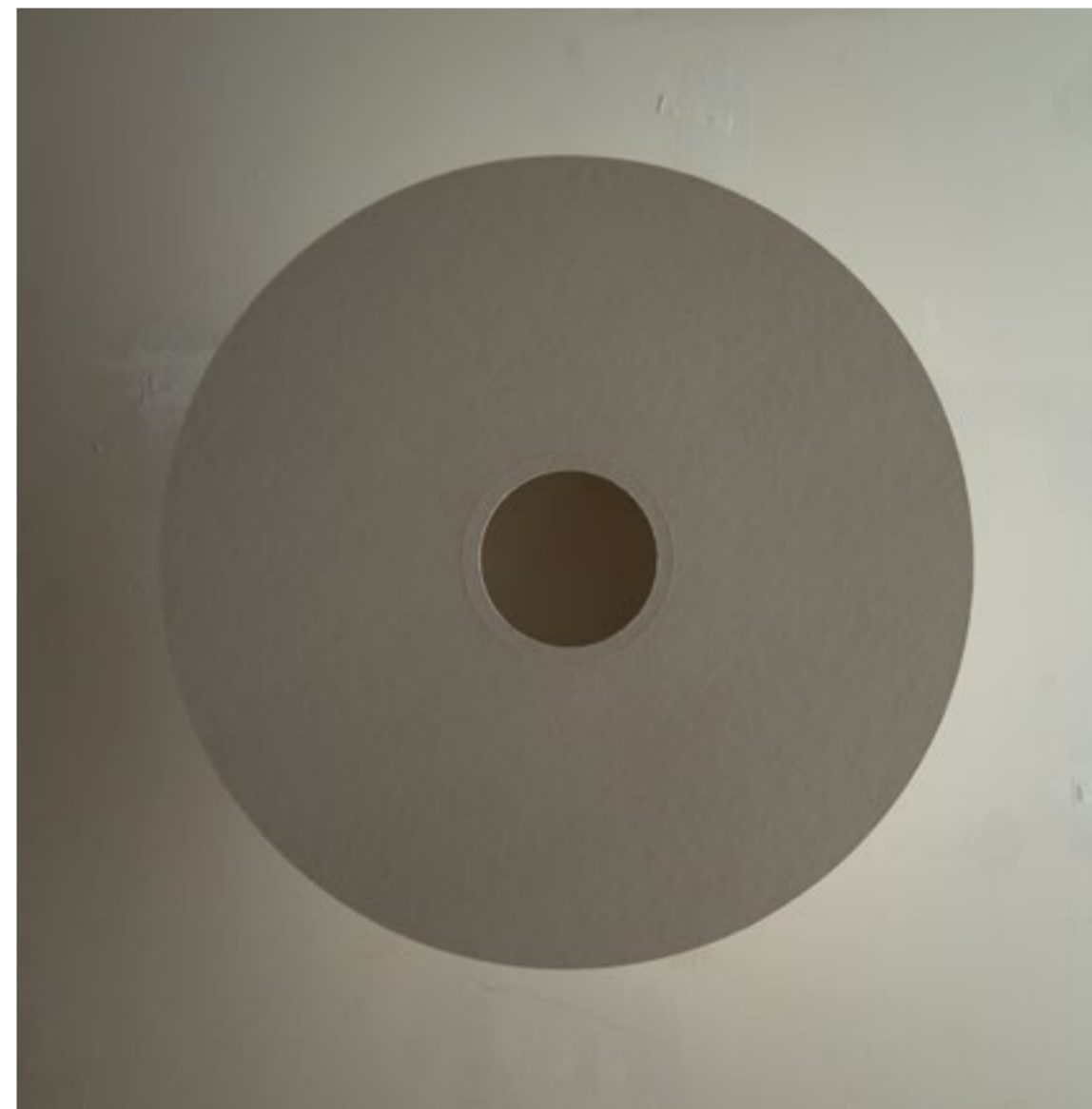
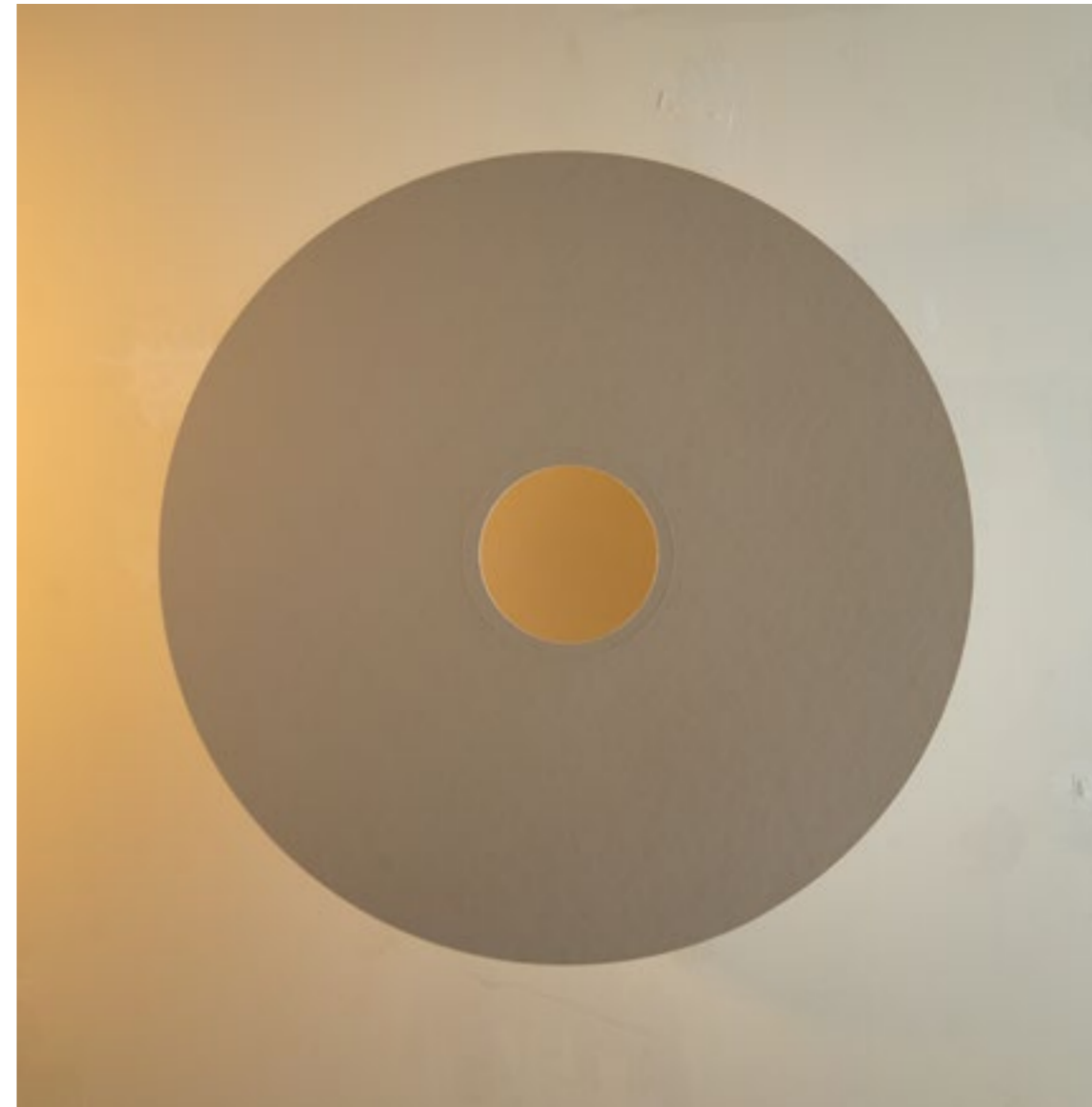
- 1 In fact, Barker-Mill's installations make clever use of materials in a way that causes materials and armature to disappear from the viewer's frame of reference.
- 2 The term, 'just-noticeable difference', was coined by Ernst Heinrich Weber, one of the founders of experimental psychology. Of the just-noticeable difference, he states: 'When noting a difference between things that have been compared, we do not perceive the difference between the things, but the ratio of their difference to the magnitude.' See Ernst Heinrich Weber, *E.H. Weber on the tactile senses*, Helen E. Ross and David J. Murray, editors and translators, 2nd ed., (Hove: Erlbaum, 1996), at 131. It is in effect the minimum difference necessary to distinguish one thing from another. According to Weber's law, an increase in intensity of a stimulus needed to produce a 'just-noticeable difference' grows in proportion to the intensity of the initial stimulus. See for example, Rod Plotnik, *Introduction to Psychology* (Andover, Hampshire: Cengage Learning, 2013), at 123.
- 3 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004, first published 1968).
- 4 From an unpublished conversation between Adam Barker-Mill and Rozemin Keshvani on Tuesday 25 February 2014 at his home in Notting Hill.
- 5 Extracts from a conversation between Peter Barker-Mill and Alan Johnston on Sunday 28 May 1989 at Wookey House, Wookey Hole, Somerset published in *Peter Barker-Mill* (Arncliffe, Bristol, 2 September – 8 October 1989) curated by Barry Barker.
- 6 One of Novalis' characters, a miner, tells a tale of how his employment though humble and difficult, is noble and blessed because in his words: '[Mining] awakens a deeper faith in divine wisdom and guidance, over which preserves the innocence and childlike simplicity of the heart more freshly. Poor is the miner born, and poor he departs again. He is satisfied with knowing where metallic riches are found and with bringing them to light; but their dazzling glare has no power over his simple heart... When changed into property, they have no longer any charm for him, and he prefers to seek them amid a thousand dangers and travails, in the fastness of the earth, rather than to follow their vocation in the world, or aspire after them on the earth's surface, with cunning and deceitful arts' Novalis, *Henry of Ofterdingen: A Romance*, from the German, trans. Tieck and Schlegel, (Cambridge: John Owen, 1842), Project Gutenberg (online library), Release Date: April 3, 2010 [EBook #31873], www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/31873 (downloaded, 2 April 2014).
- 7 Adam Barker-Mill, *Paddington, A photographic essay, ISIS*. 28 February 1962, cover and 15-17.
- 8 From an unpublished conversation between Adam Barker-Mill and Rozemin Keshvani on Tuesday 25th February 2014 at his studio in Kensal Green.
- 9 See 4 above.
- 10 Robinson, Keith. 'Deleuze, Whitehead, and the "Process Point of View" on Perception'. unpublished essay, 2007, at 20, discussed in Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (MIT Press, 2009), at 18.
- 11 Kenneth Goldsmith in his book, *Uncreative Writing*, who bases his thesis on Douglas Huebler's statement 'there are too many objects in the world', argues that appropriation through reusing, repurposing, recopying and reframing are the hallmarks of creativity in the digital age. See *Uncreative Writing* (Columbia University Press, 2011).
- 12 John Cage, *Silence, Lectures and Writings* (London: Marion Boyars, 2009), at 80.



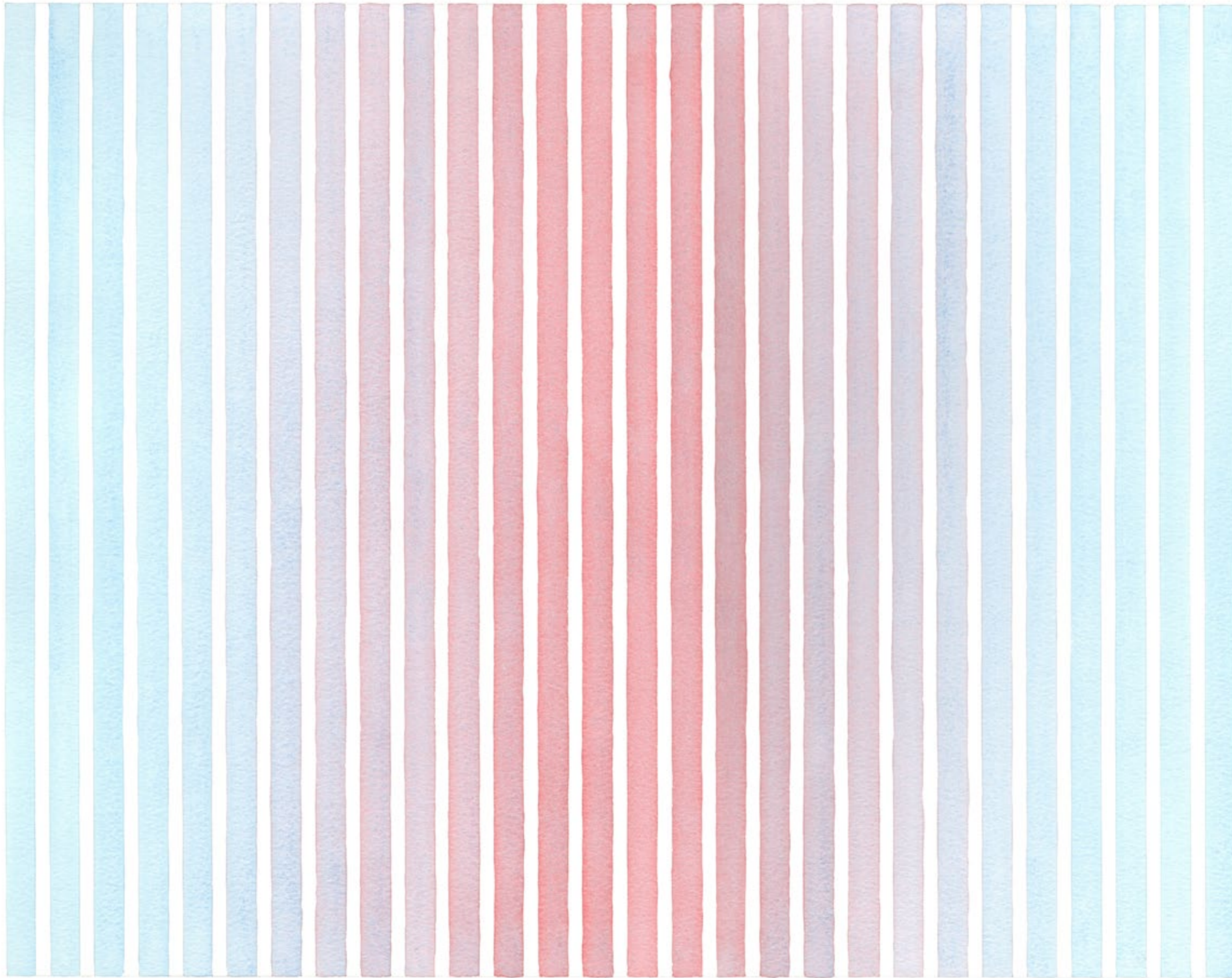
Rotor (prototype)

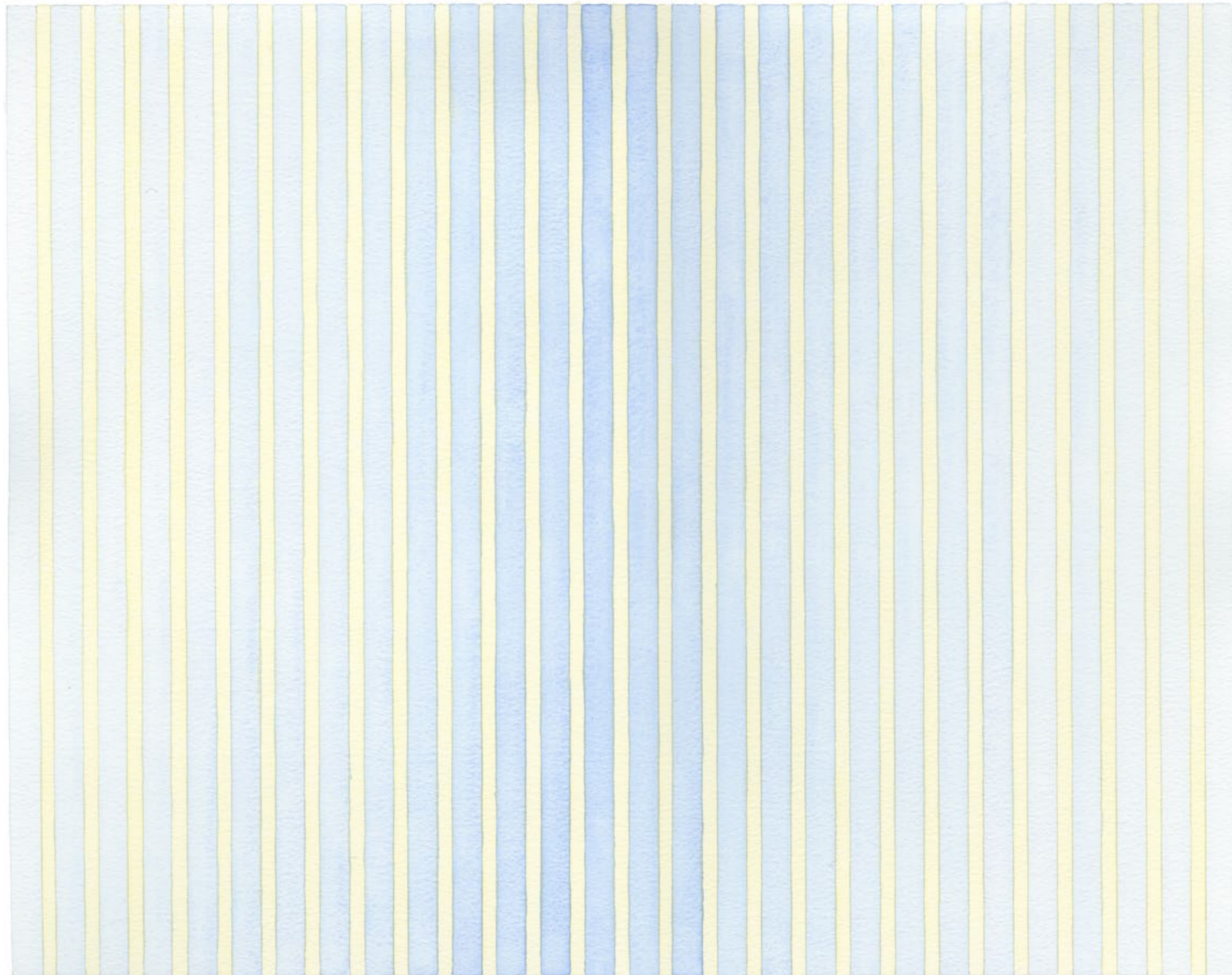


Rotor (version 1)



Rotor (work in progress 2014)





Bathed in the light emanating from one of Adam Barker Mill's works you feel transported back to the source. Mesmerised by the optical effects of the painted light moving through the spectrum like liquid oils, time itself becomes fluid. Silently beside you the maker is playing in his workshop, tinkering with simple technology adjusting with switches to hypnotise himself with his own work. The handmade disappeared in the minimal simplicity of the piece but always reminding you of the human never the machine.

Light as a medium in the hands of an expert, feels as viscous as oil, as spontaneous as acrylic and as translucent as a suspension of water-colour flowing off a sable. A pioneer exploring the range of potential in time and space, his scientific art studies of our retina and iris takes us to a transcendental place with the playful humility of a child.

The artist's drawings expose this simple musing still further. The shuttering of venetian blinds disrupts our vision as if we were daydreaming in an office playing with the sun streaming through the bars of our cell. The loaded brush slowly dispensing its magical light in limpid tone, as the colour reflects back to us like piano keys on our visual spectrum.

Adam Barker-Mill is a home grown James Turrell, reminding us that the volcanic light cathedral can be found in our daily life if we gaze hard enough at the shadows and the dappling, and slow down enough to notice the sun light through the blossom.



Fool's Black



When you mix all the different coloured mineral paints together you get fool's black (a kind of brown). With light when you mix all the different colour's of light together you get white.

Gavin Turk

Adam Barker-Mill was a lighting cameraman. As such the essential concerns, regardless of the movie's subject, are frame, light and movement. Look at the video piece, *Footfall*. Filmed through the window of the empty shop that was the location for *Feature* its subject matter, if viewed as a documentary, could not be more banal. A pedestrianized shopping street on a not particularly busy day, in the background the display windows of a department store below grey brutalist concrete slabs. Pedestrians, mostly unaware of the camera, walk in, across and out of shot. One lingers beside a lamppost, eating his lunch.

Yet looked at formally here are themes that appear in many of the works: the geometric grid of horizontals and verticals, a predefined and static structure, a rhythmic rippling movement across the picture plane and fluctuating layers of space.

In *Long Slat Piece* we must play our part, for if we stand still, so apparently does the image we see, yet when we move the strips of colour change in their intensity and tone. The rhythms become more complex as we distinguish internal sub-divisions where the light is reflecting from either face or edge or rear panel of the box-like structure. Soon we see more movement—an after-image—the complementary colour ripples and recedes along the piece's length. The climax (or anti-climax) is a ghostly ill-defined rectangle of light, free of the structural framework of the rest, thrown onto the gallery's end wall.

Widescreen 3, although smaller is even more complex in its construction, metre and rhythm. Its fourteen vertical strips, through which blue light permeates, are further sub-divided each into five narrow slits. The structure of soft unpainted wood reveals clearly its composition of vertical layers of laminate the width of which determines the width of the smaller slits. Nor is the front simply flat, it too ripples horizontally, concave then convex, provoking, along with the naturalness of the untreated wood, a not unhappy tension between organic form and electronic essence. Here the spectator needs to move less. Even a few centimetres will cause the slits of blue light to change tone, intensity and apparent width.

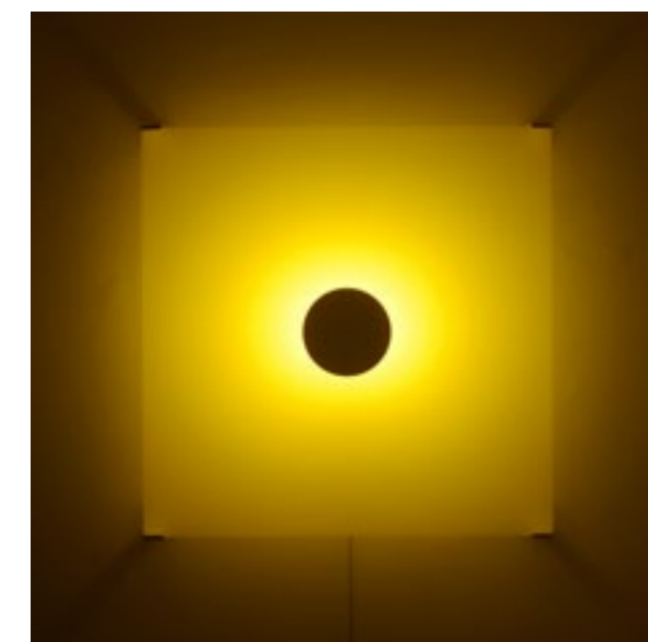
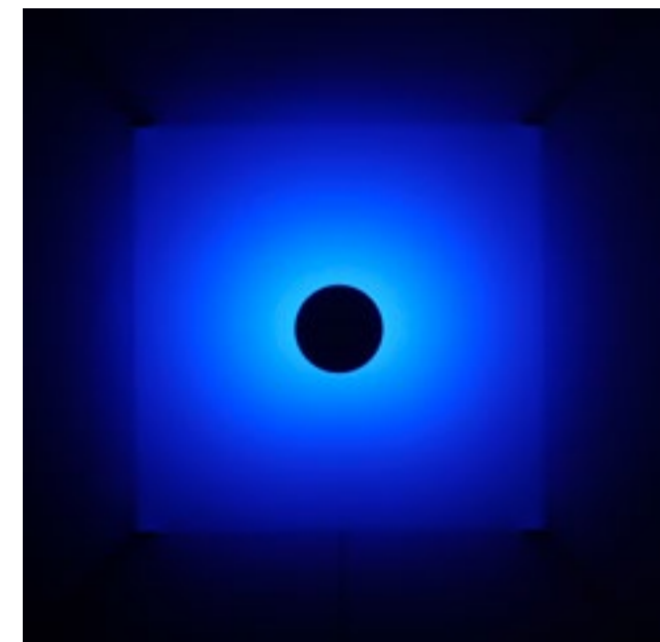
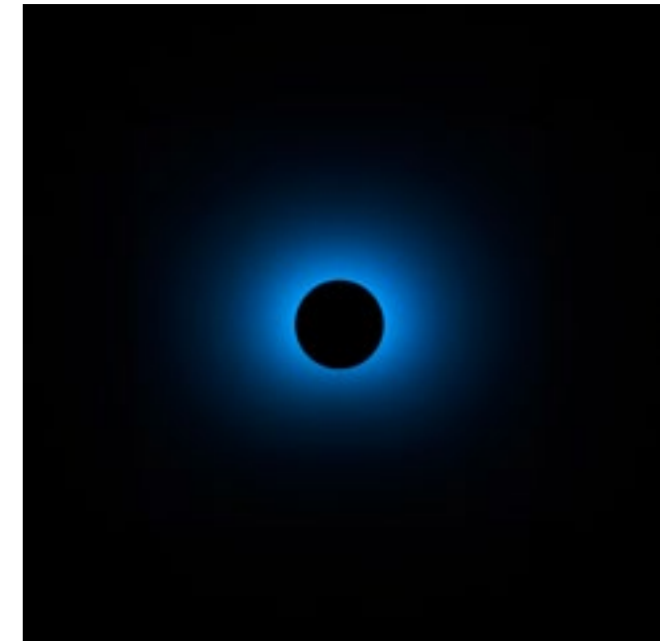
Other pieces use different physical structures (armatures). *Circle in a Square* further explores a geometric duo that the artist has been working with for some time. Here the changing colours with their optical complementarities create fluctuations in and out rather than across as the picture plane seems to shift and the reading of the circle changes from void to object to void again.

Blue Stack is the most apparently three dimensionally sculptural work and is part of a series that includes the large rooftop *Ring-Stack* in Notting Hill. Here again, in a totally filmic way, constructed reality and what the eye sees are not entirely the same thing. The physical object consists of twenty 500mm square sheets of MDF painted white on top and cerulean blue underneath, each with a central circular hole 200mm in diameter. They are stacked each separated with four transparent plastic soup pots, one at each corner, to form a tower 2720mm high.

White light from the centre of the base plate illuminates upwards. The effect in the darkened gallery is of square rectangles moving from the lightest grey-greens at the bottom to dark green blacks at the top and while the round holes below eye level are defined by their lightened edges when above a bright white ring glows around each making the whole piece soar like some great constructivist tower of rings of light. Illusion and reality ripple back and forth with the occasional interruption as the guilelessness of the clear plastic stacking elements proclaims their homely background.

This teasing element, often seen in the recycling of everyday items into structural elements (cardboard fruit boxes are a particular favourite⁸) is at its strongest in *Exit Sign*. Placed above the (real) emergency exit door in the gallery its status as art or utilitarian sign is only hinted at by the fact that its colour-shift sequence is in sync with the neighbouring *Circle in a Square*.

So if, of all the arts, it is with the medium of film that we allow ourselves most readily to accept illusion as reality Adam Barker-Mill has not strayed too far from his beginnings.



Circle in a Square





Circle in a Square; Exit

Since we started talking the light outside has gradually darkened into dusk and inside the objects in the as yet unlit room are starting to lose their outline against the floor to ceiling bookcases, the lettering on the spines no longer discernible. We are discussing the possibility of a new collaboration; the project is for the garden of a concrete factory. Adam shows some of his latest work on his laptop, various stages in the fabrication of pieces for his latest exhibitions – simultaneously – in London and Aberdeen.

I'm fascinated by a short video Adam shows me of his recent temporary light installation, *Feature*, in an Aberdeen shop window. The video is shot by Adam from outside looking in, positioned directly opposite across the pedestrianized precinct, the camera held in a fixed eye level position, facing the slow flow of evolving and dissolving colours in the shop window beyond. The setting is banal, bland and ordinary: two truncated tree trunks, concrete pavers and the movement of shoppers passing by in opposite directions parallel to the picture frame and, in most cases, oblivious to the extraordinary display of the changing spectacle of colour. An occasional plastic bag flutters in the wind. Collars are turned up, heads and shoulders turned down; obviously not a day for window shopping, let alone expect an occasional miracle. Then the window display is spotted by a family of man, woman and child, who by now have turned their back to the camera, their gaze transfixed by the window. Adam, a cameraman by instinct, records the spectators gazing at his work. The artist as 'Peeping Tom'. The situation reminds me of Diego Velázquez's painting *Las Meninas*, or more precisely of Michel Foucault writing about this painting in his book *The Order of Things*.¹ We are held in suspense as to how long the triad of observers: man, woman, child, will hold their gaze watching the work. What are they seeing? Is it envisaged as art or simply as the sensation of pure colour? Now the sulky teenage son becomes impatient. He walks out of the frame only to return a minute later to plead with his parents to move on but, for one more moment, becomes once more transfixed by the unexpected window display. I can see Adam's understated grin reflected on the laptop screen; he rather enjoys the blending of the sublime with the banal. The library room surrounding us by now has turned into a testimony of Junichiro Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows*.

Our first collaboration was for *Whiteinch Cross* commissioned by Glasgow UK City of Architecture and Design Programme, directed by Deyan Sudjic. In our proposals the square is spatially defined by means of two freestanding walls, a transparent galvanised steel frame and a twelve metre high tower of light. The freestanding walls are clad with Cor-ten steel plates; the material reflects on Glasgow's heritage of steelworks and shipbuilding. The colour of the Cor-ten changes according to the weather, ranging from dark iron red on rainy days to an orange in sunny weather.

Adam designed the twelve meter high tower of light. The landmark structure has one vertical slot illuminated from the hollow inside by one centrally positioned blue-filtered light source. The effect is that the length and intensity of the vertical beam of light changes due to the intensity of the ambient light. What appears a pinpoint of light at midday slowly transforms into an intense river of light at night. As such the tower of light is not only a marker of space but also of the passage of time.

The works by Adam liberated from the self-conscious confines of the gallery space allow for opening up possibilities to create small shifts in our way of looking at ordinary things. Alison and Peter Smithson in their book *Ordinariness and Light* proclaim 'the invention of an architecture structured by notions of association.'² When working on Whiteinch Cross, Adam brought a one meter high prototype to the actual site. We were surrounded by a local gang of 'Fried Mars Bar' kids who, bewildered by our on-site experimentation, asked if Adam was using his electric blue light invention to catch the flies from the sky.

David Hume in his *Treatise of Human Nature* observed that colours, like sound, tastes, smells, heat and cold, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind.³ By closely observing and encountering Adam Barker-Mill's light pieces we can read right into the mind of David Hume; the Enlightenment enlightened.

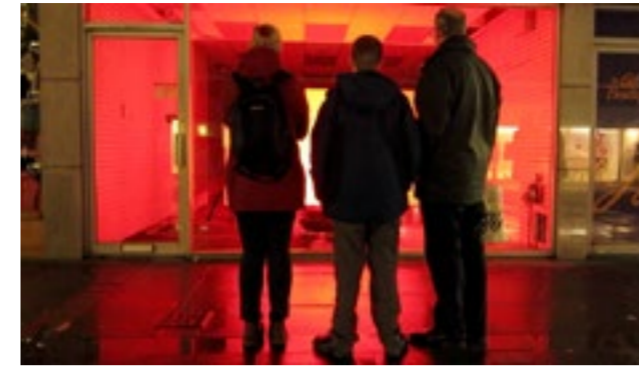
¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (A translation of *Les Mots et les choses* (1966) Part 1.

² Smithson, Alison; Smithson, Peter, *Ordinariness and Light: Urban Theories 1952-1960 and their application in a building project 1963-1970* (The MIT Press, 1970).

³ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896, originally published 1739), Section IV "Of the modern philosophy".



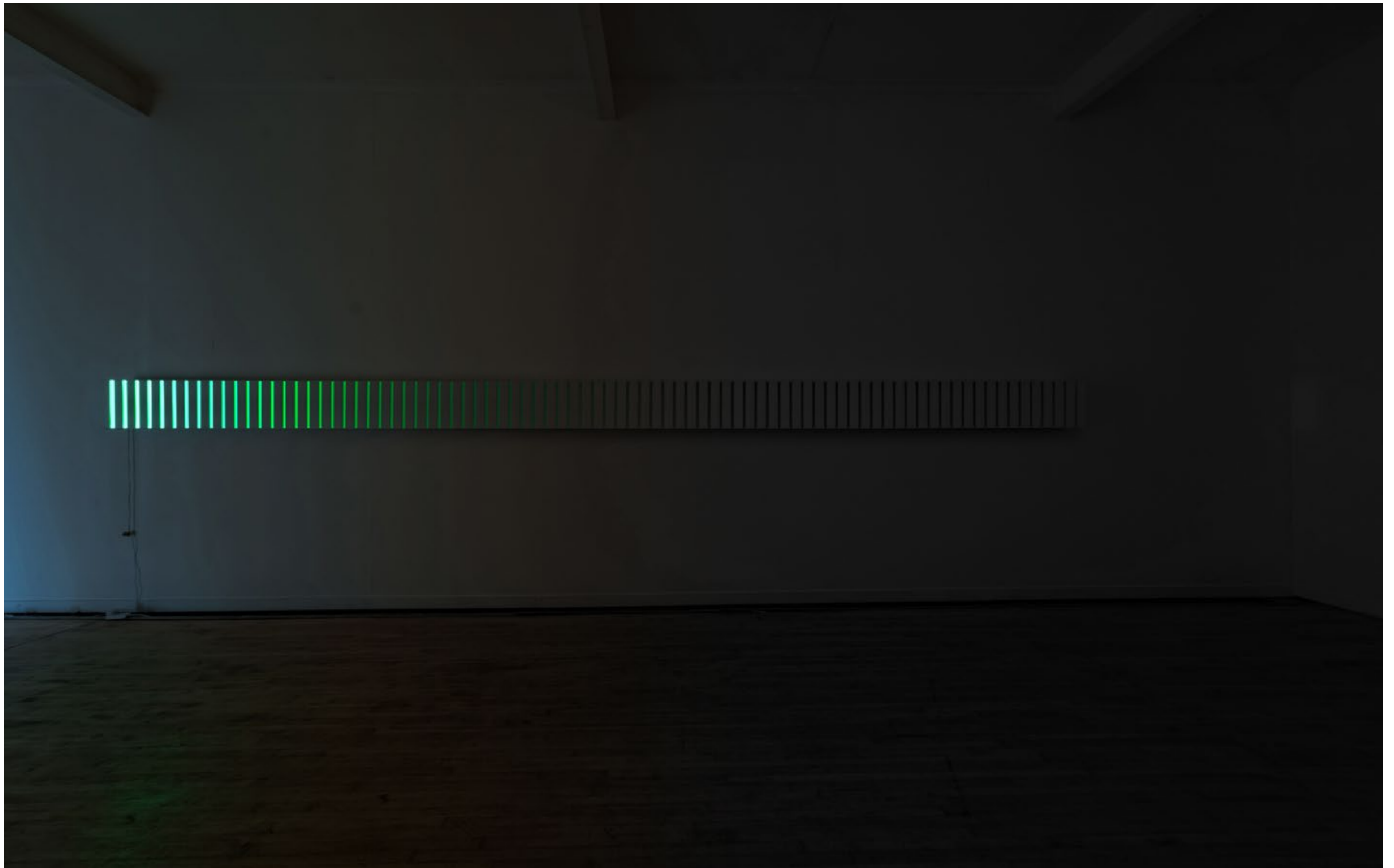
Footfall



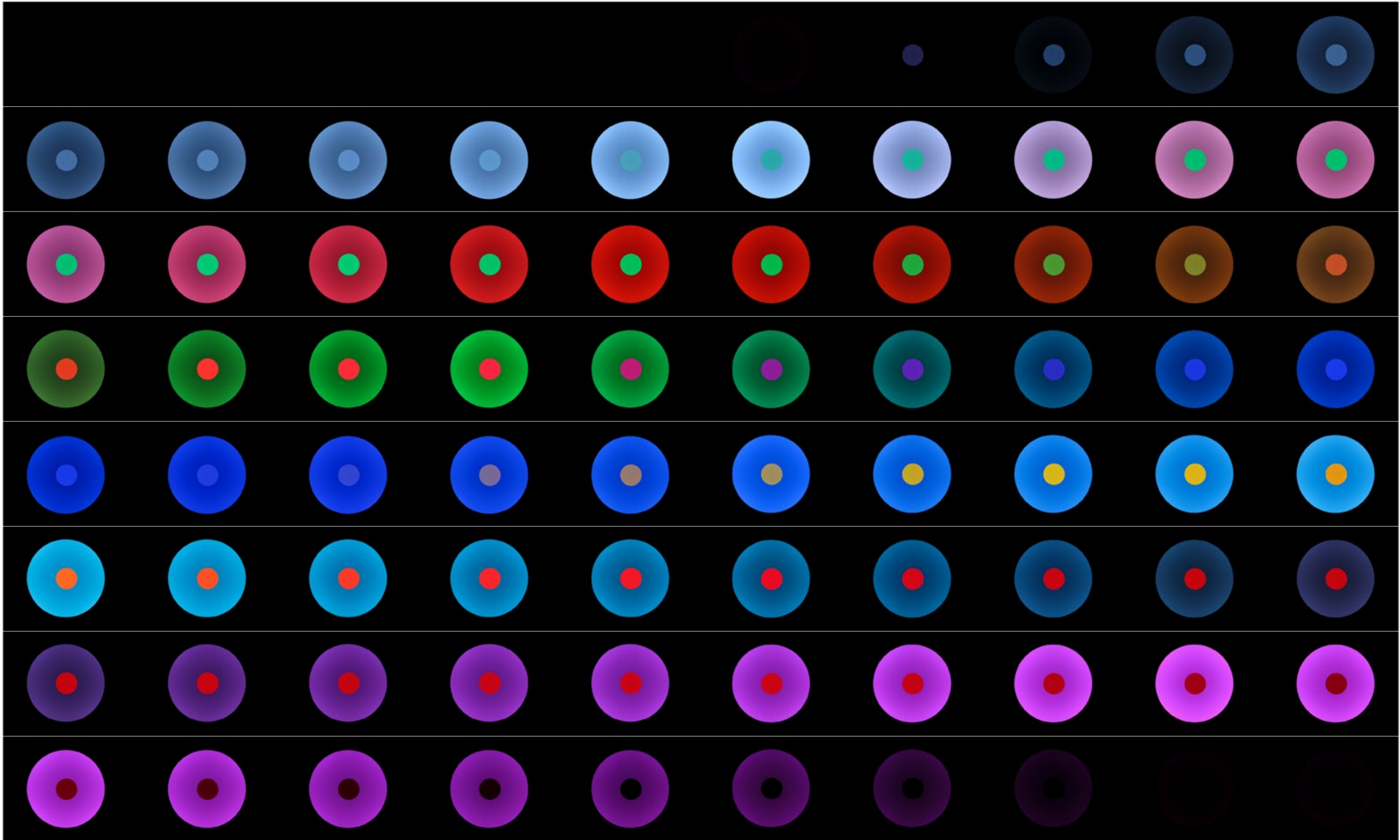
Family in front of Feature



Feature



Long Slat Piece



I have known Adam-Barker Mill for almost thirty years during which time engagement with light and colour has been a clear concern in his way of work. Viewing the works at his recent Peacock and Laure Genillard exhibitions and at his studio in Hampshire,¹ and in a new architectural context in Thailand, brought a sense of a circumspect application where sensibility and form provide a model for a wider reflection. A model in which the nature of reflection itself provides a platform for 'mutual visual experience.' The implications of this in wider terms is of philosophical importance but also suggests an interdisciplinary reading of 'Baukunst'² meaning and form. That form which links Adam Barker-Mill to development in the world of visual thinking.

'This is the only looking-glass by which we can, in some measure, with the eyes of other people, scrutinise the propriety of our own conduct.' Here we find the metaphor of light and the looking glass... and we find that like Smith, Hume too has recourse to the same analogy when he is trying to clear up the relations of language and of consciousness. 'The minds of men are mirrors to one another' ... Ideas are illuminating only in so far as they are accompanied by a reflection, of which custom renders us insensible.³

George Elder Davie on Hume

In Barker-Mill's works light is sensed and subsequently created through various procedures and practices that free us of custom. There is the passive, there is the created. One form the procedure engages with, is 'within and without,' through a series of common geometric forms. Indeed sharing an encasing structure provides an extension of the 'common sense' of geometric form. In the context of the development of the genre of colour as abstract and geometric form, there is a confluent dimension of influence and history. Barker-Mill's work can be held to be a linear development from common concerns as to the very nature of light and colour. That the dialogue between conception and the perception in the process of making these works is a relationship, in which they could be seen and felt in a very cerebral way. Yet that is by no means an indication of a lack of physical engagement in the process. That is in light of George Elder Davie's reflection, where the notions of a tactual geometry bring the actions of hand and eye together to provide a paradigm of visual thought that can exist, within that particular role of form; the form that had been created with that in mind, and hand – a 'Tactile Geometry'.

In the installation at the Laure Genillard Gallery the range of works include watercolour, light transmitted and light collected, providing a range of examples of Barker-Mill's fresh engagement with colour, both in its transitory nature and its role in perceiving, and defining geometry. That this engagement has an architectural relationship and phenomenology is obvious. It is related in terms of ideas to the totality of the Gesamtkunstwerk.⁴ Continuity provides and invokes a clear path and direction in terms of form and application. It can also be seen in both 'created' and 'passive' form within and without Shinichi Ogawa's *Paiboon: Weekend House*, a collaboration realised in Thailand, 2012.⁵ In this project, formed on a high ridge in northern Thailand, Barker-Mill designed two works for the house: an evanescent light piece placed within, and a light gathering concrete structure, without, on the prow of the hill where the house is built.

There is also the reflective nature of the building itself as it shares the closeness of purpose and vision with the theme inherent in Adam Barker-Mill's genre. The contextual reading for these works is of course closely related to Barker-Mill's mission. The architecture of Shinichi Ogawa's *Paiboon* house provides the sympathetic reading of the Gesamtkunstwerk idea as the total extension of mutual compliance in purpose and Ogawa's ideal of architecture as 'formless, form'.

At his recent series of installed light works in Aberdeen at Peacock Visual Art, space is split in functions. Thus the institution provides a possibly adaptive layout, the simple forms of the 'classic' art centre, an almost blandly neutral space sometimes interrupted by a feature not removed or covered. However, the low light levels provide a foil to aid the installation of a very subtle realisation of light. Installed, or more accurately, orchestrated in a related form, both spatially, and in a slowly paced subtle action create a realised kinetic motion of light.

This use of an interior space as a manipulative and subsequently compliant context that is used as support for the arcing reach of colour is a familiar foil for Barker-Mill. The light pervades and defines the space; it is particularly effective in stretching the nature and sense of spatial comprehension. This allows the space, as Shinichi Ogawa infers in his text, to become an unimpeded 'neutrality'. A concept space for the senses, unmarked by features that are irrelevant to the mission of both artist and architect.

Signage in the lexicon of Barker-Mill's visual language is a means to intrigue the eye through a carefully ordered aspect of the artist's visual humour. The exit sign one faces in a mundane corner of the gallery brings reference to a feature of ambivalence in meaning. The ever-changing colours ranging through a series of sequences, have echoes of a Zen 'No'. An 'exit to 'no where'. A terminal in which we are removed from the vulgarity of the senses to a new aleatory, non-structured space. Space itself. Beyond the door in the corner, (a reference to the humble door/exit of a Zen garden hut). A place of blank contemplation. Of 'No' thought.

This 'Void', this deep interest, in Hume's idea of 'insensible' is not of threat, but exploratory and speculative, informing the very nature of spatial conception described so acutely by Vidler. But it is also 'the void' of Sesshu, McLaughlin, Martin, Gunn and also of Pallasmaa:

*All great art is engaged in silence. The silence of art is not mere absence of sound, but an independent sensory and mental state, an observing, listening and knowing silence. It is a silence that evokes a sense of melancholy and a yearning for that absent idea.*⁶

Juhani Pallasmaa

The eye provides in the role of arbiter of colour, space and movement, a role, in which the sensory memory can lose its place and extend the spatial sense out with the empirical place of 'placement'. This place has anonymity, a barely cognizant shadow sense of place. A silent space. Thus it provides an aleatory response to architecture, if response is the correct term. On one level, the fixed remit of working in an architectural context can be predictable, but on another the variety of the possible range is colossal, by extending the sensory applications, by expanding the means of how we perceive. Adam Barker-Mill brings to spatial realisation the experience of colour within a sensibility bound by a limitless yet tactile geometry. The thing that interests me in this context is the acuteness and realisation of visibility, together with the provoked tactility of space. The geometric and the spatial fuse with the tactile, in the way the point makes the line, makes the gray, makes the body, makes the geometry: there is a kind of temporal spread of tactility. One sees and feels the colour.

At the street installation in Aberdeen there is a further engagement with scale and context. The site of work within the diverse space of the building and external site provides an insight into the variety of engagement in Barker-Mill's work. One sees in the response to a diverse architectural environment an imaginative stimulus which provides scope for a range of clearly defined works. The development of the street to form provides a spatial metaphor as 'Baukunst'.

The choice for the artist was a former shop unit, in a neglected shopping mall close to the centre of Aberdeen. The light is tapered carefully to provide a visual flow in a geometrically bound field of reflection. This in the evening provides a crepuscular variation on 'The Northern Lights of Aberdeen'⁷ – creating a poetic reflection on those ideas and themes explored by Thomas Reid, the philosopher of 'The Common Sense', himself born in Aberdeen.

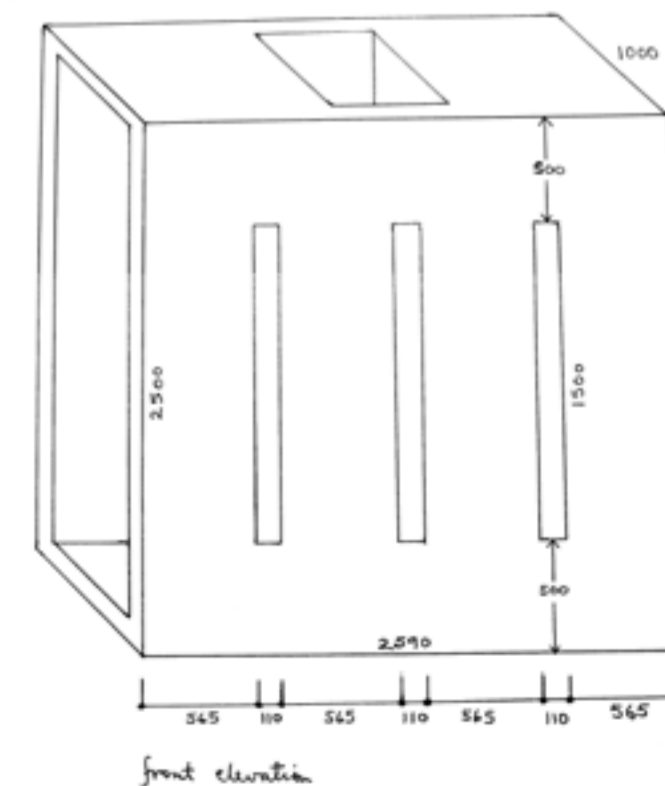
Architecture must be freed from all styles or concepts and be neutral. Existing styles or concepts alone are not enough to produce architectural space. By re-assembling architecture on an abstract level liberated from architectural concepts or vocabularies, space becomes all things yet nothing, thereby acquiring greater freedom.

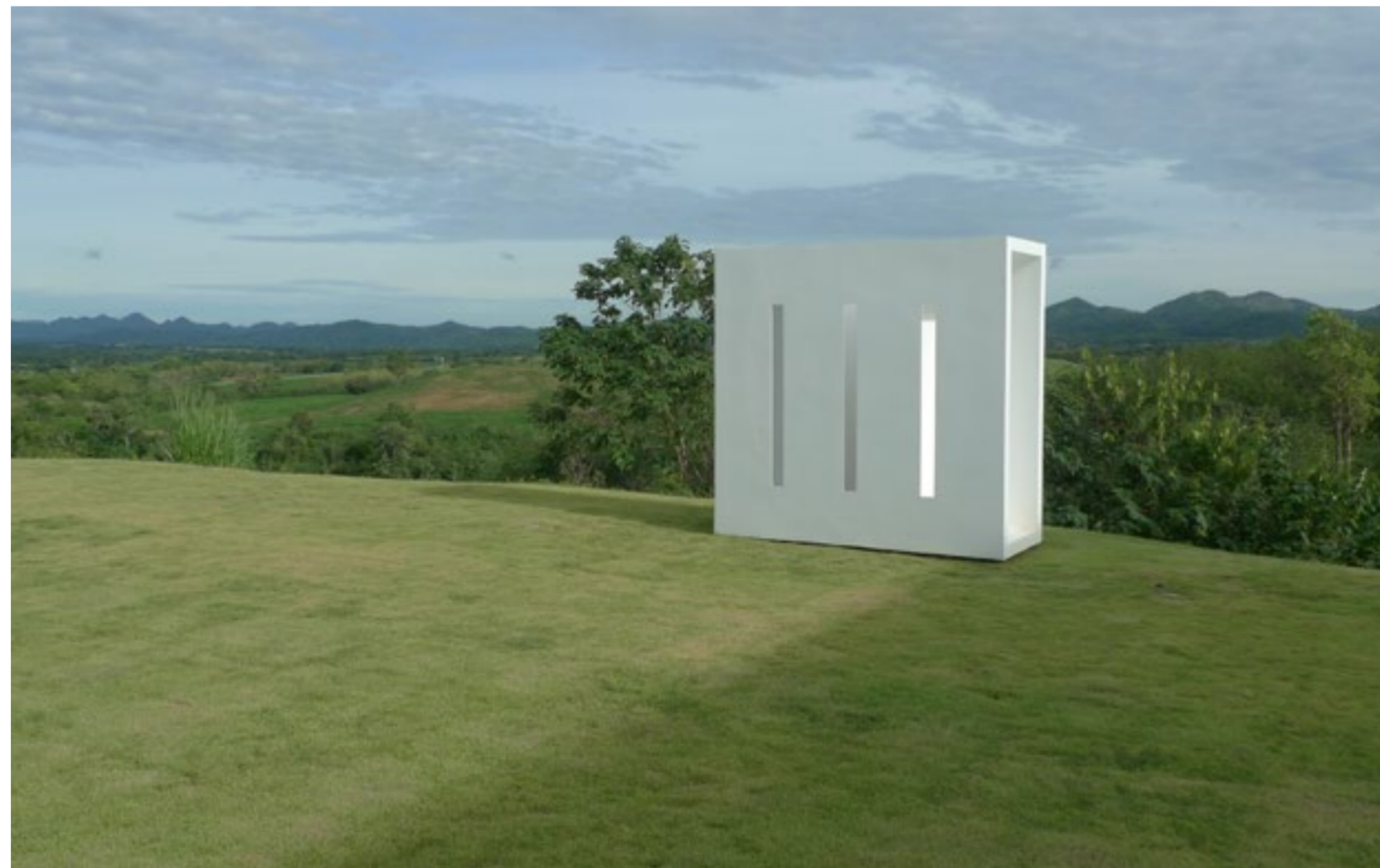
Malevich's Suprematism suggested an absolute non-representational that transcended even abstract painting. It did not recreate anything; at the same time, it presented an unlimited space and universe. It provided a place where space in a liberated condition was generated. Architecture did not assert itself as a thing.

*Space itself was neutral, and the diverse flows of things and information were unimpeded. The convertibility of functions and forms permits the simultaneous development and parallel coexistence of all things and a high degree of choice. A neutral space becomes the foundation promoting the exchange of human thoughts, emotions and actions and a horizon generating diverse interpretations, viewpoints and functions.*⁸

Shinichi Ogawa

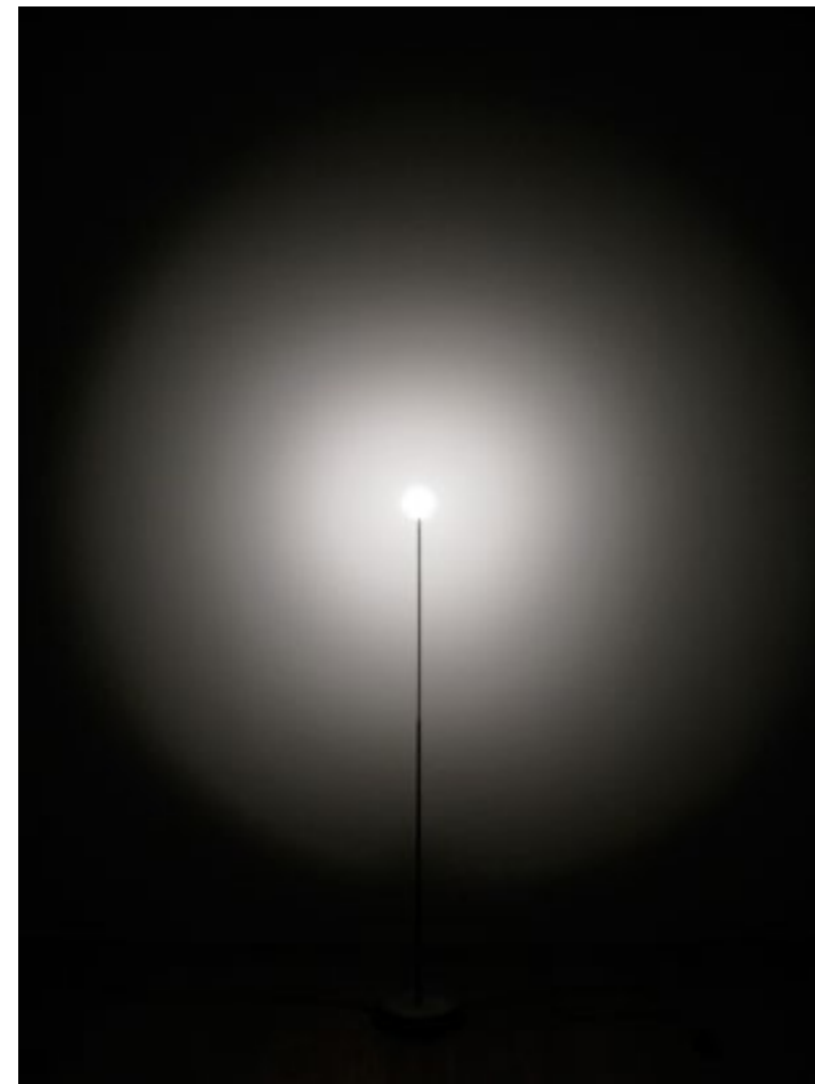
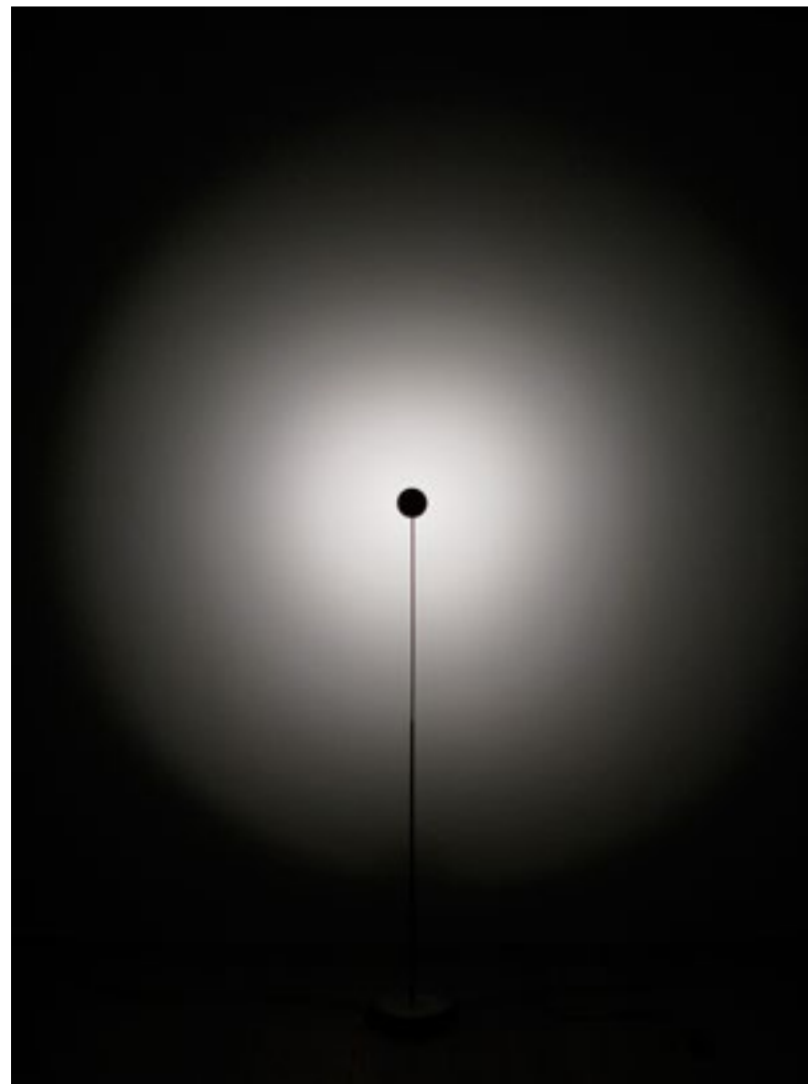
- 1 The studio designed by Adam Barker-Mill relates with works integrated within the structure, to an initial engagement with the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.
- 2 Joseph Masheck, *Building-Art: Modern Architecture under Cultural Construction (Contemporary Artists and their Critics)*, (Cambridge University Press, 1993). As set out in the Introduction: 'The title of the book alludes to the distinction in German between 'Baukunst' and 'Architektur'. Baukunst literary rendered, emphasises the activity, the very real, artful work of constructing something that might not necessarily have become a matter of art at all.
- 3 George Elder Davie, *A Passion for Ideas, Volume 2 of Essays on the Scottish Enlightenment* (Polygon, 1994).
- 4 See, for example, Millington, Barry 'Gesamtkunstwerk', in Oxford Music Online. *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk* is also the title of a 1983 exhibition by Harald Szeemann. See Pietro Rigolo, 'Treasures from the Vault: Harald Szeemann, From Vision to Nail' (June 26, 2013 published online at: <http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/treasures-from-the-vault-harald-szeemann-from-vision-to-nail/#sthash.0aPznExo.29J0uehO.dpuf> at: <http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/treasures-from-the-vault-harald-szeemann-from-vision-to-nail/#sthash.0aPznExo.dpuf>)
- 5 Shinichi Ogawa is the architect of *Paiboon: Weekend House* and collaborator with Adam Barker-Mill. See Shinichi Ogawa & Associates (<http://www.shinichiogawa.com>).
- 6 Pallasmaa, *The Limits of Architecture-Towards an Architecture of Silence*, trans. Michael Wynne-Ellis, *Arkkitehti*, no. 6 (1990), 27; and 'Silence as Place' in Maija-Riitta Norri, *Architecture in miniature: Juhani Pallasmaa* (Helsinki: Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1991), 45-52.
- 7 Here 'Northern Lights' refers both to the natural phenomenon Aurora Borealis in the Northern Hemisphere, and the conference, 'The Northern Lights of Aberdeen' which aims to inspire us to better ourselves and our communities through architecture and design. See <http://www.informatics-ventures.com/pillars/connect>.
- 8 Shinichi Ogawa, 'Transbody/Super traffic 8 Codes' in *Space Design*, Tokyo, Number 6, 1999.





Sunrise / Sunset





Zero

The most disarming feature of the SPACE LIGHT is its use of diffused light from a hidden source. A back-light in the lamp serves to illuminate the frontal disc of opal perspex which is then pitched at varying degrees of intensity.

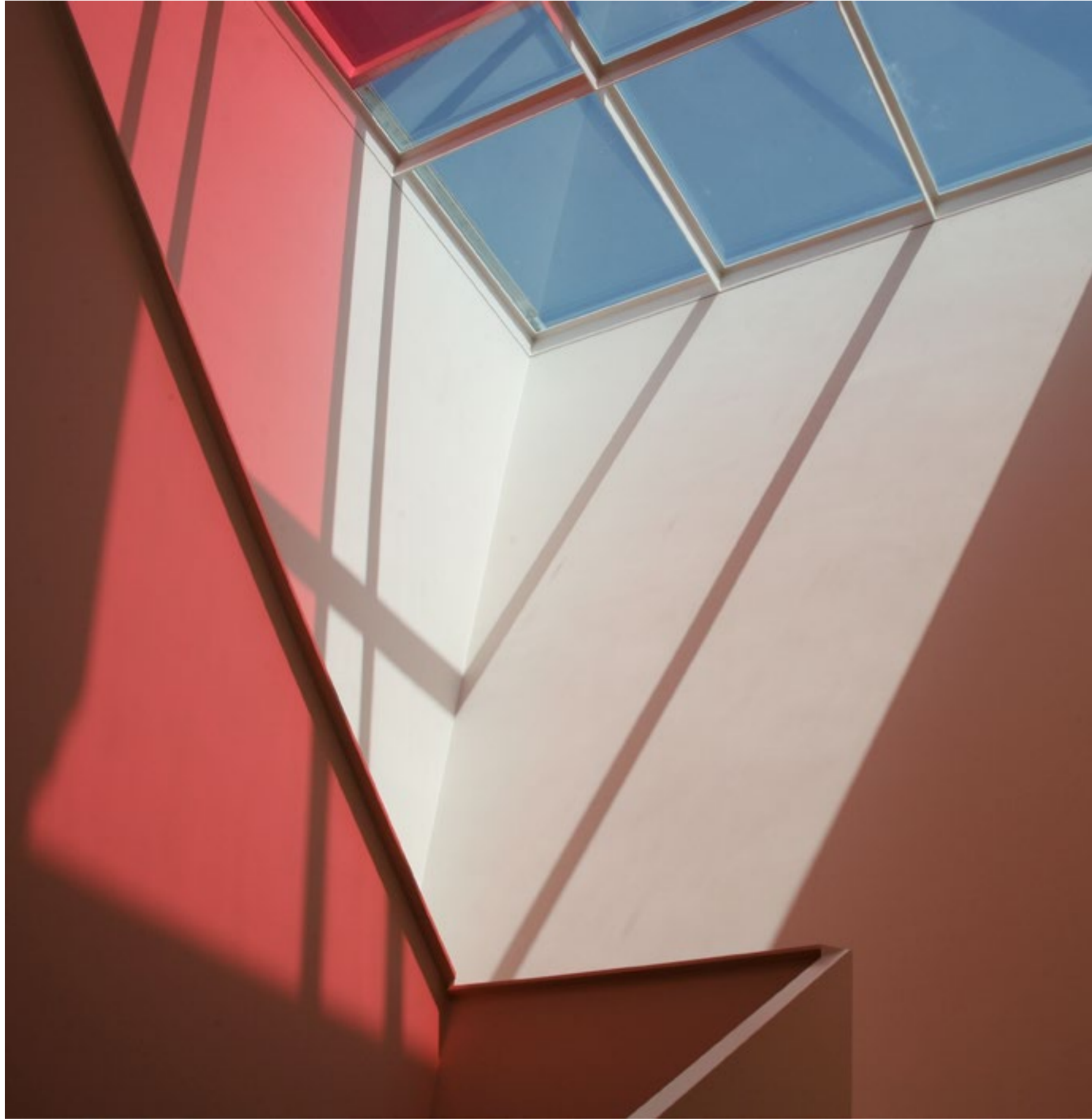
The result is a light sculpture, or a sculptural light, rigorously designed to deny gratuitous style, and offering a conceptual clarity which illuminates as intelligently as the light source it inspires. Its base, cast in obdurate bronze (by the displacement of sand) is a sculptural process, a suggestion of something formed, at one stroke; neither crafted nor manufactured. And the holistic, self-contained "telescope" that forms the light source adheres with absolute simplicity and aesthetic precision to the function it performs.

But the real success of the lamp is that despite its economy of design its function is mutable by separately reversing the strength of light emanating from front and back.

Paul Steen

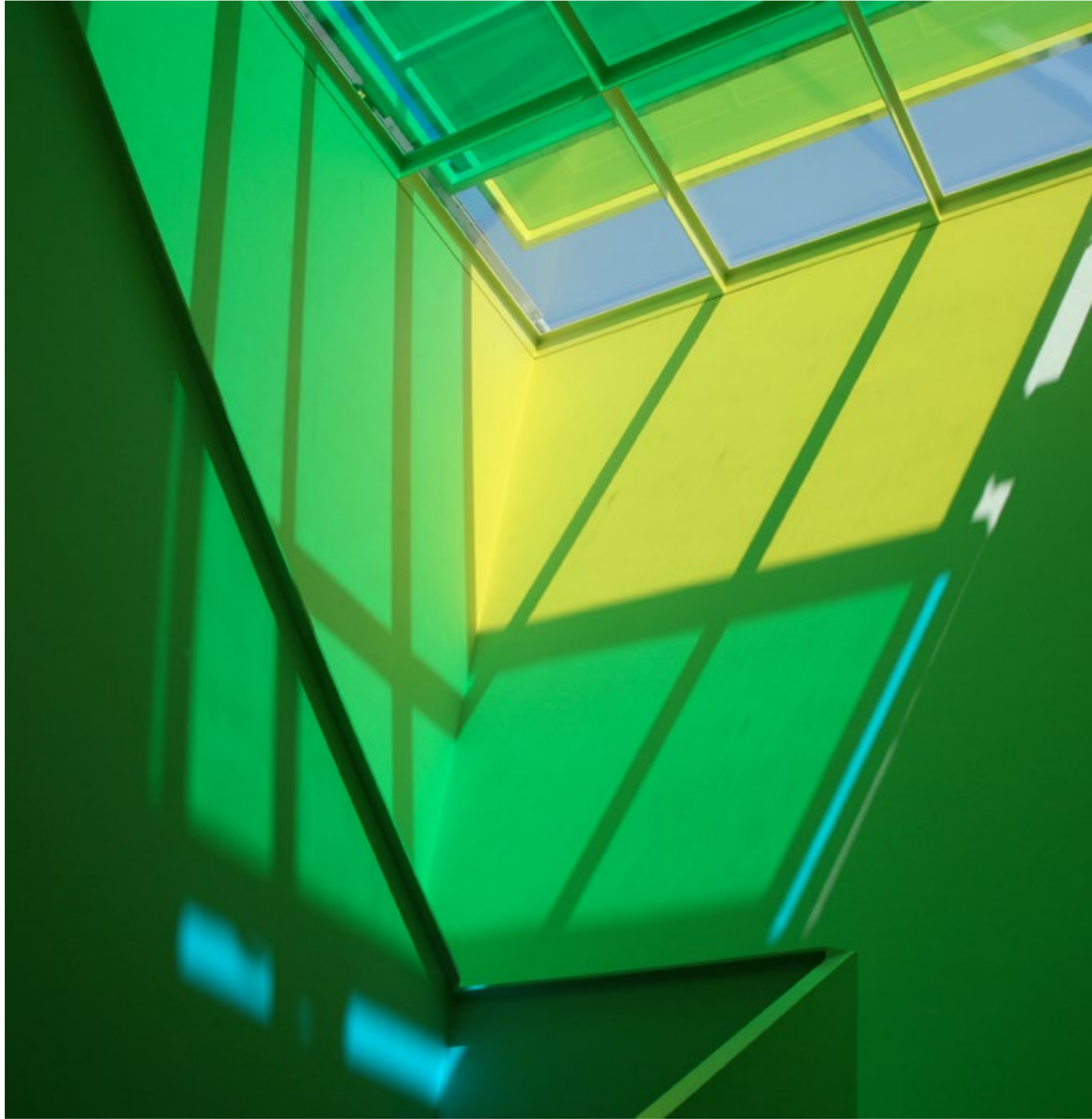
The SPACE LIGHT is a donut in a diner, or a bathtub drain. A living-room light-house, a cyclopean hypnotist, or a mesmeric sentinel. An offence to podsnappery. A mutable, singular, sexless companion. One moment, all form and function, the next uncertain space and light. A generic accident, it mutates despite itself. From torch to fire-fly, from periscope to angler — fish to traffic light. A metamorphic ghost. Oneiric, numinous, an oracular thaumaturge. Or just a domestic lamp-post.

SpaceLight

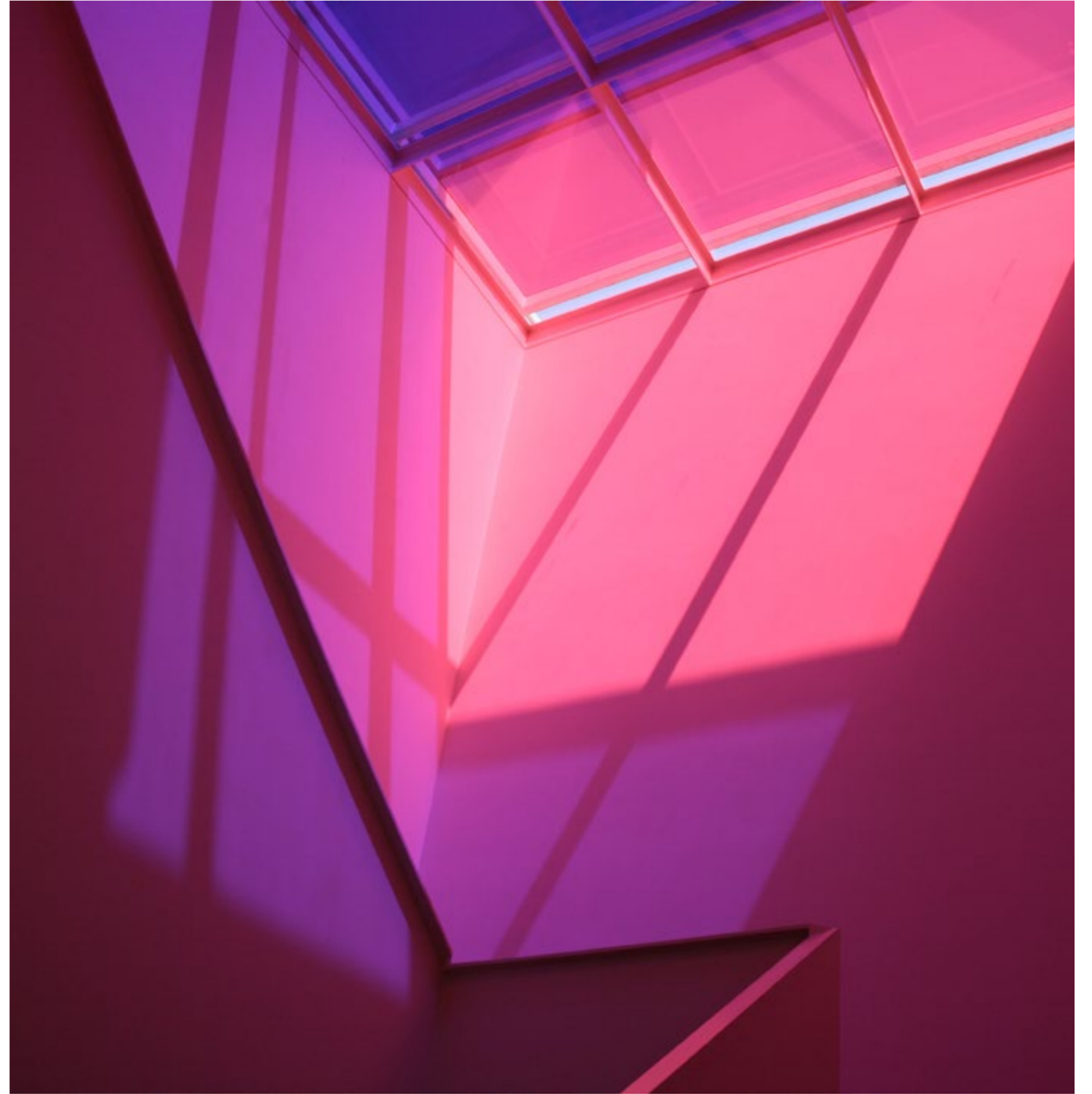


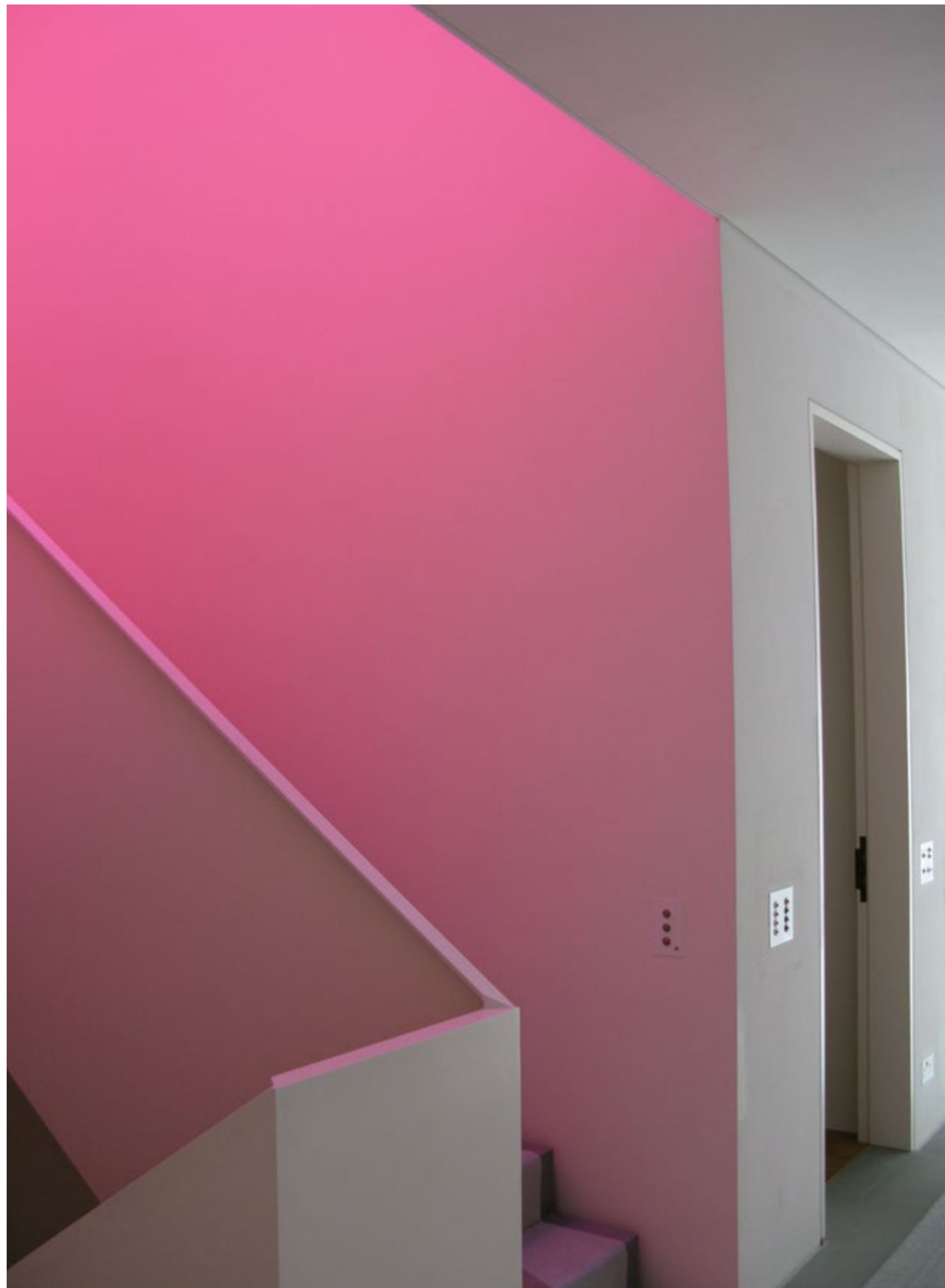
Skylight





Skylight





Skylight

*The light in the world
comes principally from two sources, — the sun,
and the student's lamp.¹*

Christian Nestell Bovee

Barker-Mill employs and exploits an ephemeral, transient quantity, almost entirely without substance, which many would consider a force of nature so universal and fundamental does it seem. This insubstantial force apparently renders objects three-dimensional making their forms and the spaces between them understandable. It gives surfaces their colour. It makes the world visible. Yet light is itself invisible as it is perceived only through its reflection.

The effects of light are everywhere and as a consequence natural light seems prosaic. This is in contrast with very particular, exact and technical uses of artificial light. On the one hand light is general and often almost ignored and on the other it is focused and employed, attracting both attention and disregard. Its status is paradoxical. Adam Barker-Mill's work investigates and exploits aspects of light as distinct from each other as the natural and the artificial, as separate as, on the one hand, the ambient and transitory and on the other the organised and permanent. He re-establishes wonder at natural light and brings new attention to the artificial. Two major works from recent years, *Skylight* from 2008 and *Ringstack* of 2012 demonstrate the diversity of his approach and encapsulate many of his concerns. They also allow us to identify major themes in the artist's work.

An artist working with light as his material and perhaps his 'subject matter' is always faced with the requirement for a frame of some kind. The frame is essential to light and to sculptures concerned with light. The naked flames of candles must be protected from draughts, natural light must be allowed to fall onto a surface in order for it to be rendered apparent and artificial light has an origin and is given a direction. The technical elements required also have to be housed and sometimes hidden from view. *Skylight* and *Ringstack* are both frame-sculptures having much in common in their reliance upon a frame, but in many respects they are almost opposites in function, materials, character and effects. Barker-Mill is concerned not simply with light, but also with the many problems encountered when working with light. His work is, amongst other things, a series of meditations on the nature of the various considerations necessitated by involvement in such work.

*A picture ought to be
looked at the same way you look at a radiator.²*

Jasper Johns

Skylight is, as the title implies, installed as one part of a large glazed architectural aperture fitted into the roof of a private house in Notting Hill, London, where it exists seamlessly with the rest of the building and can pass almost unnoticed, but, depending on certain decisions being made by a viewer on the stairs below, it can also be arranged so as to flood the stairwell with natural light which has been coloured by a series of filters.³ It is architectural in the sense that it is a part of the building. It can only have as its audience those within the private space of the house. Natural light falls through the work onto the people, surfaces and other objects below. The expanse of white walls within the stairwell provides a perfect screen for the coloured light cast there and the stairs and landings themselves provide many points of view from which the effects can be observed. *Ringstack* also has an exact title, for it is a stack of rings, or rather discs, pierced with large apertures. It is the more recent work and is a public sculpture.⁴ Its context is also architectural, but here in the sense that it is publicly visible and distinctly urban in character. As a structure it is comparable to a building and can be seen from street level at almost any angle, especially as it occupies a prominent and advantageous site at a road junction. As its audience it has any one of the numerous passers-by.⁵ It stands on the roof of a three-storey office building, which itself has a dramatically curved façade. The column-like sculpture rises vertically to 7.5 metres above the roof, clearly visible against the sky by day and lit from within its base by a powerful lamp at night, when the work becomes even more apparent. By night the metal discs become 'rings' of light and it is then that the title becomes an exact description of the work.

Skylight incorporates a stack of four separate glazed panels, all set in identical frames and each having a grid of three rectangles, every one of which is fitted with sheets of laminated glass each having coloured inter-layers, or 'gels,' sandwiched in between them, yellow, green, blue and red in descending order. These are divided by narrow fins of steel to make up a framework that is 3 metres by 3.4 metres.⁶ This whole mechanism is a supplement to the skylight aperture itself, which is a nine-panel grid glazed in clear glass and installed exactly above the stairwell of the house, for aperture and stairwell share the same dimensions. The coloured panels are designed to slide horizontally and independently along substantial rails into a position immediately over the skylight aperture by means of a set of electrically-operated machines installed on the roof and built to one side of the aperture. Two electric motors driving ball screw shafts propel each individual panel into place. As a result each panel can easily be manoeuvred into place exactly across the skylight, or halted at any point on its passage from the 'open' position, over the roof, to the locating stops which arrest it in its 'closed' state directly above the skylight. The movements are easily controlled by eight colour-coded electric push-buttons in wall panels placed at the each floor. The whole has the appearance of an elaborate and elegant machine, although it is not intended that it should be seen; from below the means by which the effects are achieved remain mysterious.

Each coloured panel can either be operated separately, or in combination to create fifteen possible permutations of coloured light which fills the space below. However, the potential for the colours thus produced, falling on the multifaceted surfaces within the house includes also the effects of external light and weather conditions.⁹ The cast shadows of pools of rainwater are also thrown onto the surfaces below emphasising that it is aspects of the natural world the work is concerned with demonstrating.

The use of cause and effect within the architectural space and the audience's experience of it are critical within Barker-Mill's work. There is often a clear division between cause and effect. *Stairwell* conceals its cause (or more properly 'causes') and draws attention to the effects. *Skylight* admits its causes and demonstrates its effects as a result of these. By contrast *Ringstack* conflates cause and effect in one object. The mechanisms by which the effect is generated can be complex, mysterious and invisible, while the effects themselves can be dramatic, subtle, straightforward and entirely visible. *Skylight* includes a complex mechanism, but produces simple and dramatic results. *Ringstack* is comparatively straightforward as a structure, but the fall of light and the viewer's perception of the discs, which can appear to grow narrower as they ascend, is not.

The relationship between the object & the event. Can they 2 be separated? Is one a detail of the other? What is the meeting? Air?

Jasper Johns¹⁰

Ringstack is a public sculpture constructed from ten painted steel discs, each arranged horizontally.¹¹ These are 'stacked' vertically and equidistantly, separated by nine sets of three fine tubes welded between each pair of neighbouring discs holding the structure together and giving it rigidity. Each disc has, therefore, the same central axis. The diameter of each disc is identical as is the diameter of its centre aperture. From dusk to dawn a single powerful beam of white light is projected up through this central columnar void forming an exactly vertical column of light.¹² By virtue of the geometry of projection from a single point, and the characteristics of light itself, the light falls upon certain parts of each disc in exactly the same manner in order to create the illusion of ten independent circles of white light floating in the night sky, one exactly above the next and each slightly narrower than the one below it; the previous disc cuts off a part of the path of the light to the next, beginning with a fully illuminated disc immediately above the roof and culminating in a finely-drawn circle of light high above the ground. As the light ascends the circles are attenuated both in size and in the intensity of the lit surfaces.

Ringstack includes a single lamp, a visible structure and a result which is a carefully calculated combination of both the visible and the invisible. Light is projected onto parts of the structure, but it is of equal importance that shadows are cast by parts of that structure and that it is an 'invisible' beam of light which projects out through the centre of the work into the empty space of the sky beyond. The work is, therefore, not simply a light piece, but also a shadow piece. One resides within the other. The shadow merges into an ambient darkness as the light is projected into the night sky. This is a consequence of the focus that such a geometrical projection produces, but it is unusual in Barker-Mill's work.¹³ The exploitation of shadows in order to organise light is also rare. *Skylight* and *Ringstack* are concerned with projected light. In *Skylight* projection is closer to the manner of operation of a camera, or of the *camera obscura*. In *Ringstack* the projection is analogous to that of the projection of an image from a film projector. The two works thus stand at opposite ends of the process of production in cinema, identifying, technically and (by chance here) chronologically, the two principle elements within the process.¹⁴ In *Skylight* light arrives through an aperture fitted with filters and is thus apparently 'projected' onto the walls by the Sun, casting the natural world into the private domain of the house. *Ringstack* projects light through a structure and into space, sending artificial light into the sky, although not in this case onto a screen. One is the 'capturing' of an image, albeit a transient one here, while the other is the projection of an image, although in this case one which partly finds no screen as its target. It is significant, therefore, that Barker-Mill had a career as a lighting cameraman in the British film industry before turning to art. He brings his considerable experience in that earlier profession to his present work. The cinematographer surveys the lighting conditions before him, which will often be a combination of natural and artificial light, while considering how the scene will appear later on, for an audience, once it has been technically registered and transmitted. This had been crucial to *Skylight* in which the results had to be imagined long in advance of its construction and installation. His knowledge of the technical aspects of the projection of film, essentially a geometric discipline, is even more apparent in *Ringstack*.¹⁵



Ringstack



Within cinema the ‘frame’ (and ‘framing’) is fundamental, for there the frame not only creates the image, but ‘the frame’ also refers to the image itself and not simply, as would be the case elsewhere, to a protective and isolating surround for a picture. Cinema is a succession of frames, the movement of ‘stills.’ The frame in Barker-Mill’s work can be a cinematic frame, or one belonging to the ‘static pictorial’ mode. It can cut off a part of the world and present it in such a way that we might easily examine it, even as it changes, in which case the frame may even be invisible, or it presents us with a ‘picture’ created for us, having a very noticeable frame, which is often a part of this picture.¹⁶ Both sculptures use frame to organise light and each achieves a particular balance between the frame as something to be ignored while the light itself is considered and the frame as something to be observed and considered along with the light. This curious tension is the essence of many of Barker-Mill’s light works. The technology employed, which in some works can be hidden and might even produce a mysterious quality in the work, is in other examples quite apparent.

Skylight has as one element within its history a traditional architectural feature, very much that of the everyday, while Ringstack has its origin in a spectacular and unique object having no quotidian function and also in a series of quite ordinary cardboard boxes. The first has its genesis in an object intended to be a permanent solution to a straightforward problem and the second in a temporary object intended to embody a set of complex and tentative notions considered salient at a particular historical moment and also, by contrast, in a series of entirely practical and temporary objects. The origins of each work are worthy of brief consideration.

Barker-Mill’s first published work was a series of photographs taken inside the train shed at Paddington Station in London while he was still a student.¹⁷ They show natural light falling through Isambard Kingdom Brunel’s cast iron and glass roof of the station into the enormous space below and draw attention not simply to the light, but to the structure itself, which divides the natural domain of the sky from the man-made world. Brunel’s design had been influenced by Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace, designed by for the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, which had itself evolved from the greenhouses Paxton had previously constructed in iron and glass. These in turn had an influence over the use of skylights, then known as ‘lanterns,’ in buildings.¹⁸ Skylight is ultimately descended from the artist’s Paddington. A Photographic Essay, a work which now seems a portent of many things to come. Ringstack has as its origins the artist’s recent Lanterns series.¹⁹ These are ‘luminaires,’ as he describes them, varying series of stacked redundant cardboard boxes previously used for the packaging and transport of fruit and vegetables.

The artist cut through the bases of the boxes in order to create a passage for the light, although, of course, the light is also partially interrupted by the remaining parts of the boxes. This intervention has two functions, which may well appear to be contradictory.

Firstly the light is attenuated through the structure, becoming weaker unit by unit as it progresses further from its source. Secondly in the suspended Lanterns the light projects through a circular aperture cut in the base of the lowest of the boxes to form a round pool of light on the floor. In one case light is understood as being progressively reduced in power and in the other it is seen to be powerful enough to escape the structure altogether. (When the Lanterns were shown at the Portobello Pop Up Cinema in Notting Hill they provided the essential degree of background illumination within the cinema for the audience during the screening). The contradiction and its elaboration tells us something about the behaviour of light. Light can bounce around within an enclosed space and both be diminished by that activity and enhanced by it. The artist’s work often shows us that light can have contradictory characteristics such as these.

These experiments were later informed by the artist’s recollection of the *Skylon*, created for the Festival of Britain in 1951, which he had visited as an eleven year old child.²⁰ Distant echoes of *Skylon*, created for the Festival of Britain in 1951, are visible in Ringstack’s height, insistent verticality, dramatic location, a metamorphosis from day time to night time modes and even in its commissioning as a celebratory public sculpture.

The light in Ringstack is ‘graded’ as each disc of the structure is compared to the next and to the others in the sequence just as it had been in the Lanterns. As the light travels through the work each unit is by default given its own light level, making them both individually visible and also making each individual unit separate and distinct. The effect is as if a measuring device were built into the system according to which we are able to differentiate between the light levels. Thus a single structure, made from separate units, can be read as being exactly that; a whole and its parts are understood at the same time. Division and unity in the structure allows for calibration in the eye as it moves from one part of the work to another, or assesses the work as a whole. Ringstack is innovative, forcing the eye to gauge precisely what is before it, but it is also straightforward.

Comparing Skylight and Ringstack allows for the identification of prominent concerns on Barker-Mill’s part. A horizontal day-light piece and vertical night-time piece complement each other, but within this pairing the absolute distinction between the use of natural light and artificial light is also made. In Skylight the parallel beams of light come from the Sun, which is as a light source considered for all practical purposes on Earth to be a point at infinity. Here the light moves from space towards a finite place. A three-dimensional scene is created for the viewer, registering the light. In Ringstack light spreads out from a single (finite) point through a succession of discs which reduce its scope to almost a single beam of parallel light reaching out towards infinite space. Here light moves from a clearly defined place towards space. An abstract point, or a two-dimensional disc, is effectively projected high above the sculpture where the viewer imagines that the light might arrive.

The works are concerned with ‘perspective,’ both in the sense of geometrical drawing concerned with space (and with points apparently placed at infinity) and in terms of an attempt to define the viewer’s role and position with regard to the work. Skylight is a work concerned with the transitory, with the movement of light and shadow, but also with the passage of the viewer up and down the stairs. Both the operation of the sliding glass panels and the viewer’s position within the stairwell will determine how the work and the colour is experienced and how the fall of light will be perceived. Ringstack suggests no movement other than that of the viewer on the ground, who will always have, by night, a very similar experience of the work no matter what their position with regard to the sculpture might be. It is altogether static and constant in appearance, emphasising its reliance upon geometry.

In Skylight impersonal materials such as glass and metal, belonging to an industrial aesthetic, appear as the ‘drawing,’ or the inventive aspect of the work. These produce an entirely personal experience for the viewer, one of a shifting three-dimensional immersion in colour. Ringstack also appears to be a ‘drawing,’ one in which drawing is defined by white light and by a structure, the division being dependent upon geometry, but also on a continuousness. Ringstack projects white light as a beam, which is *drawn*. The two separate out as a transitory work concerned with colour and a permanent work concerned with drawing, demonstrating two extremes in the artist’s work, that of *colore* and *disegno*, as the two were designated in the *paragone* disputes of the Renaissance.²¹

- 1 Christian Nestell Bovee, *Intuitions and Summaries of Thought*, Volume II, Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1862, page 16.
- 2 Jasper Johns *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, edited by Christel Hollevoet and Kirk Varnedoe, Museum of Modern Art and Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1996, page 82.
- 3 Skylight is installed in a private house commissioned from the architectural practice MRJ Rundell Associates, London and designed by the architectural designer Michel Schranz. Skylight itself was conceived by Barker-Mill, but the architectural detailing, and the technical and structural conception, was by Schranz. The fabrication of the work was by Graham Welding Construction (PB) Ltd. The entire mechanism is invisible from the street. See www.adambarkermill.com/project.php?project=88§ion=4
- 4 Ringstack stands upon the roof of the estate agents Marsh & Parsons’ Notting Hill Office at the junction of Pembroke Road and Kensington Park Road. It was commissioned by Tim Burke, Project Director of The Notting Hill Improvements Group, with the support of Marsh & Parsons, ‘as Notting Hill’s contribution to London’s Jubilee & Olympic year celebrations’ and unveiled on 28th September 2012. The structural engineers were Crouch Waterfall & Partners and the fabrication was again by Graham Welding who also installed the work with the assistance of the 800 Group. The jubilee referred to was the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. The sculpture was realised entirely as a result of the support of local people and businesses, without the involvement of the art world. At the time of writing the sculpture remains *in situ*, which may well be one consequence of the circumstances surrounding its commissioning. See www.ms-da.com/projects/ringstack
- 5 The architectural nature of both projects is underscored by the involvement of Michel Schranz in the design of the working mechanisms of Skylight, and its fabrication, and in the design and fabrication of Ringstack. Schranz had already designed the nine panel clear-glass skylight, level with the roof plane and was subsequently asked by Barker-Mill to design the complex set of mechanisms required to allow Skylight to function. Architectural skylights are usually ‘hipped’ (they are raised symmetrically about an axis at an acute angle to allow rainwater to drain off), but in Schranz’s bold and unusual design for a large and virtually horizontal built-in skylight, having the same dimensions as the stairwell below it, Barker-Mill perceived an opportunity for a light work and seized upon it.
- 6 The use of glass is extremely rare in Barker-Mill’s work, which is perhaps surprising given his principal concerns. The use of semi-transparent materials, however, is quite common. In this case the laminated sheets of glass are semi-transparent to a degree and when several panels are closed they combine to produce a ‘substance’ which is more markedly so.
- 7 Three layers of coloured ‘gel,’ chosen from the enormous range available from the Belgian company Vanevea, were required to give the necessary colour saturation without impeding the transition of light, an especially significant factor when all four panels are closed. (This information was kindly supplied by Michel Schranz).
- 8 This sequence of monochrome glazed panels is not, of course, that of the order of the chromatic spectrum. The three primary colours of the spectrum have also been supplemented here with the intermediary value green.

- 9 A sixteenth permutation, that of the skylight without any coloured glass above it at all, is of course also possible. This is the ‘original’ and default possibility. It is the ‘zero’ from which all other possibilities might be compared. A seventeenth permutation is the ‘black’ Skylight, when the work is seen at night, which the artist describes as the ‘minus zero’ default position. Countless further combinations are offered by bringing any panel, or any number of panels, part of the way across the aperture.
- 10 Jasper Johns, note 2, page 49.
- 11 Originally there were twelve discs, but technical problems surrounding the installation of the work, especially those which would result from hoisting a large and finely-wrought structure fabricated and transported horizontally to a vertical position on site, limited the final height.
- 12 In order to work in precisely the intended fashion the lamp employed had to be more carefully chosen and positioned than might be imagined. The lamp had a wide-spread beam, controlled using a ‘snoot baffle’ fitted immediately above the lamp, which directs the light in exactly the desired manner. The baffle also shielded neighbouring windows from the very bright light source. Much adjustment was required during the installation process to the position of the light source and the baffle, in order to obtain the exact result, but the structure itself remained exactly as it had been designed.
- 13 Two recent works, *Circle in a Square I*, (2013) and *Circle in a Square II*, (2013) shown in the exhibitions *just-noticeable differences* Part 1 at Laure Genillard in London and *just-noticeable differences* Part 2 at Peacock Visual Arts in Aberdeen (both 2014), have incorporated an opaque disk directly in front of a light bulb, which functions as a ‘shadow,’ but in these the shadow appears to be coloured and thus has a very different function.
- 14 Projective geometry, which has its origins in Girard Desargues’ theories of perspective construction for use by artists, is the distant ancestor of projection in the cinema as Jean-Luc Godard has so carefully pointed out in his *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* (Chapter 2(a), ‘Seul le Cinéma,’ from 11 minutes 18 seconds), 1997. ‘It took a French prisoner, [Jean-Victor Poncelet] pacing before a Russian wall, for the mechanical application of the idea and the desire to project figures onto a screen to take off in practice, with the invention of the cinema...’ Godard quoted in Richard Brody *Everything Is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2008, page 543. The camera, of course, operates in the opposite direction.
- 15 At a very young age Barker-Mill acted as a projectionist at his school. Much later, while lecturing in film at Bath Academy of Art in 1967, he directed *Regal* (1968), a short film about the work of the projectionist at the local Regal Cinema. The film documents the projectionist’s activities in the course of one morning’s screening, but concentrates to a great extent upon the technicalities of projection.
- 16 The difference between these two approaches is analogous to the distinction between classical perspective construction in painting, which renders the picture a ‘window’ through which the world is seen and the later notion of casting an image onto a canvas, which we might, for example, associate with Impressionism.
- 17 Paddington. A Photographic Essay, in *Isis*, No. 1412, 28 February 1962 (Oxford), front cover and pages 15-17. The photographs were taken at Paddington Station in London and at Madrid’s Atocha railway station in 1961. An anonymous text on the front cover of the magazine draws the reader’s attention to the technical achievement represented by the roof, but also to its beauty.
- 18 The greenhouse epitomises the necessity of having a frame which allows natural light to be organised to a very particular effect.
- 19 Barker-Mill exhibited a number of Lanterns at two locations in London in 2011 and 2012. One group was shown in the Portobello Pop Up Cinema, Notting Hill, which was also an initiative of Tim Burke (see footnote 4) and further examples as part of the exhibition *Then and Now*, at Harris Lindsay Works of Art, St. James’s, which was curated by Adrian Dannatt.
- 20 *Skylon* was designed by the architects Hidalgo Moya, Philip Powell and the structural engineer Felix Samuely. The fine steel form was suspended high above the ground by an elegant and simple system of steel cables connected to a cradle of three slender supports. The frame was clad in aluminium louvres fitted with Perspex and was lit from within at night.
- 21 The word *paragone* refers to the dispute surrounding the relative merits of painting compared to those of sculpture, but within that debate the word also refers to the comparison of two separate approaches to painting, defined by the Italian words *disegno* (design, or drawing) and *colore* (colour), each giving precedence to one of these two. The debates were much concerned with the question of whether the value of a painting lay in the realistic imitation of nature, which was principally achieved through the painterly use of colour, or in an idea, having its origins in the artist’s mind (the invention), explored through drawings made prior to the painting’s execution.



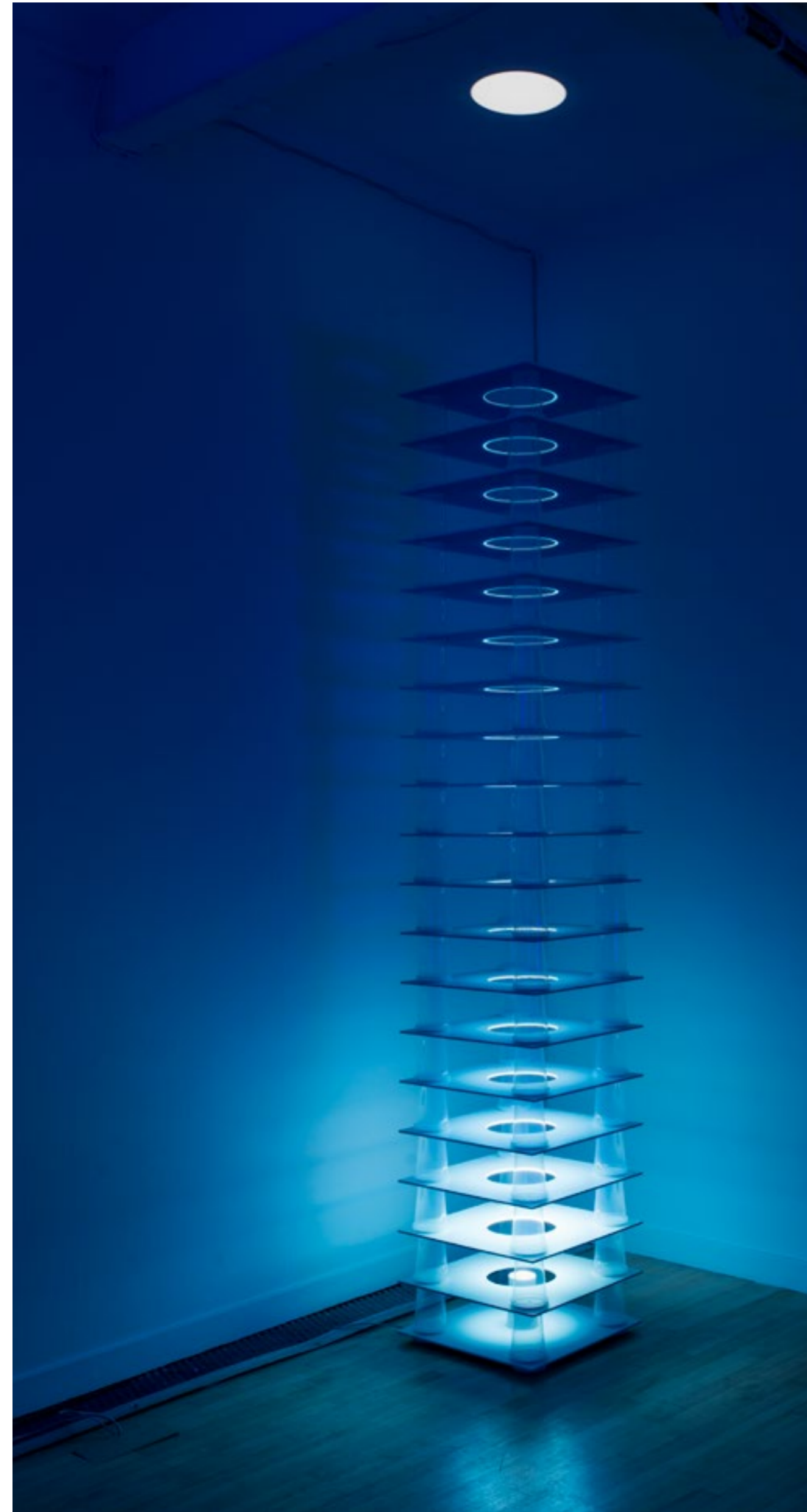
Favorita (l) and (r) Columba (Pop-up Lanterns)



Figs (Pop-Up Lantern)



Untitled (Tomato Boxes)



Stack

Applying some unholy mélange of bibliography, historical research and New Criticism close-reading to the career of an artist as revealed by everything that has been written about them, from, say, a first newspaper review of a student show right through to an academic festschrift, one could establish the precise contours of their public reputation. And in every case the curious result would be the *sameness* of tone, the fact that a certain discourse, a specific vocabulary so soon becomes established and is then employed and redeployed, with artful variation, for the length of their lives. Indeed using the tools of computer analysis so ably developed by Joyce studies to track his vocabulary, one could easily establish a precise listing of the terms that have been used again and again to describe the artist's work, a mathematical chart of which key words have been most deployed, in order of popularity, over the decades. The problem with this critical continuity is that it establishes an increasingly fixed view of the artist, a shorthand approximation of their activities which everyone then assumes they know and understand, as if the entire life and work could be summarised by a handful of adjectives.

However, at a certain later stage, when everything has apparently been already written, there will often come an attempt to provide a radically different reading of this artist, one which amongst all the *répétition* posits a new and even awkward *différence*. This contrary position will deal with everything that has been left out, avoided, hidden or ignored so far, attempting to deploy an entirely fresh vocabulary, a celebration of what might be termed 'minor' (as in Kafka's 'minor' literature) themes in opposition to the established cliché of the 'major' reputation.

Here I would like to propose, inappropriately perhaps, in advance of its time, its broken arm, precocious and perverse, just such an 'alternative' approach to the work of Adam Barker-Mill. Here various terms are absolutely banned from making any appearance, beginning with the word 'light' itself and including such others as 'minimal', 'rigorous', 'sculptural' or even 'space'. I would like to suggest instead an entirely other sort of otherwise artist, but due to limitations of space (*damn!*) and time these will have to be sketched out, approximated, indicated, awaiting the definitive essay in which to expand further upon them. But instead of the Barker-Mill we assume we know, who could be clumsily summarized as a sort of Calvinistic Swiss Constructivist concerned with precise calibrations of computerized effect, I shall attempt to conjour a very English eccentric, rooted in a rural rather than urban aesthetic, who embraces the irrational, the hazardous, the unexpected, and whose work is closer to Dada and Fluxus than to any Californian 'Light & Space' comparison.

Take, for example, the issue of humour which is so easily overlooked in favour of celebrating instead some 'austere geometry.' But much of Barker-Mill's work is actually funny, a perfect example being the use of fruit boxes, cardboard banana cases, stacked as if at some outdoor market in deliberate contrast to the pristine gallery cube or perfect empty interior.

The way these boxes have been gathered from the streets by the artist should be seen in the direct tradition of Schwitters or Rauschenberg, two past-masters in the use of cardboard, along with the fact that they are cherished by him precisely for their imperfections, their battered forms, their everyday failure.

Comparison is also invited with Warhol's stacked Brillo boxes but rather than being a reproduction or simulacra it is the absolute authenticity of these debased products that draws Barker-Mill to their deployment. The fact that these specific boxes are becoming increasingly rare, and the artist now has to deliberately hunt them down, adds another layer of ambiguity to their aesthetic appeal as *objets d'art*. For here it is important to acknowledge that Barker-Mill is not only interested in the pristine surface, the exact millimetre of perfection, but also in the scuffed, the rejected, the *débris* of the street. He has chosen these boxes precisely because he loves the design, the colour and contours of their logos, the fact that they are so amusingly out of place within his assumed aesthetic. This is a 'Pop' artist rather than anything else, who could perhaps be considered in a continuity of English Pop Abstractionists such as Richard Smith, Peter Sedgley, Robyn Denny or even Hodgkin.

But these fruit boxes are also further evidence that Barker-Mill is continually in contact with the visual reality of the street, not least as a bicyclist who must remain exceptionally observant of everything around him, who is in immediate relation with his surroundings and has not a second hesitation in picking up and taking home to the studio any object, however abject, whose appeal he sees. In this context the aforementioned lineage of Dada through to Fluxus, especially as embodied by John Cage and his ideal of chance creativity, of the I Ching and random roll of the dice, cannot be overstated. In the eventual essay that must be written on Barker-Mill as collector, as collector of rubbish from the street as well as of 'fine art', and the relation between those two sorts of collecting, the importance of a loosely affiliated group of artists around Cage, whether David Tudor or Ruth Vollmer or Jaqueline Matisse, provides a clue to his own operative mode.

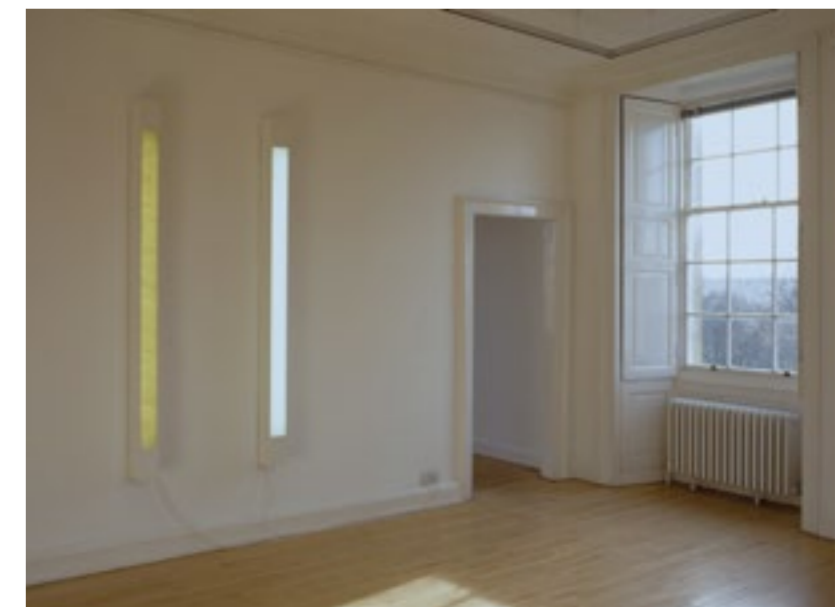
Rather than plotting and planning with mathematical finitude Barker-Mill is rather 'pottering' around the studio, pondering what might go with what, trying things out with amused curiosity, never afraid to make a mistake, to welcome the casual, the chance, into his practice. Let us talk about Cage, or even Heath-Robinson, rather than Max Bill or Larry Bell.

Likewise the artist who creates a special lavatory paper dispenser disguised as a highly refined and elegant wall-sculpture should be celebrated for his wit and sly humour, something that is too often missing from contemporary art but which is central to the practice of masters as diverse as Calder and Duchamp, indeed Calder's approach as a *bricoleur* of the physical world could be read in tandem with Barker-Mill's own aesthetic. This loo roll machine is indeed a beautiful object in its own right, and has in fact been built due to an attraction to the artistic properties of the paper itself, its texture and translucency, but where many might stop themselves, for fear of creating something amusing rather than 'significant' Barker-Mill has the courage of the real artist, who understands that art is made out of every aspect of life, the entertaining and marginal included, to continue. This approach is also allied to Barker-Mill's involvement with design, his knowledge of and interest in the functioning of product design, the engineering of ordinary devices, and his appreciation of how supposedly fine art and industrial manufacturing can interlock and interweave. This way of looking at the world and the specific physical objects which make it up, is both practical and poetic, an entirely level-headed whimsy, and can be seen throughout the career of another artist, Richard Hamilton (a disciple of Duchamp who even produced his own lavatory paper art) with whom Barker-Mill shared some time and collaborative companionship.

The films on which Barker-Mill worked, including a celebrated documentary on Hamilton, are another aspect of his existence that has not yet been fully integrated into the consideration of his 'art' making. In fact amongst a certain closed milieu of cameramen and directors Barker-Mill is still known as a 'filmmaker' rather than visual artist, not surprisingly considering the several decades he worked in the industry. And whilst Barker-Mill himself clearly sees the obvious trajectory between his work as a cinematographer and as an artist, a closer comparative analysis of these two métiers would prove rewarding. After all the 'Director of Photography' is an expert who is specifically concerned with the effects of light, with technical issues of how to minimize or maximize the introduction of daylight, how to use artificial lighting to the best advantage, how to regulate every aspect of colour and tone, a highly scientific yet ultimately artistic activity. Any issue of the trade magazine 'American Cinematographer' is filled with article titles which could just as well be used as names for Barker-Mill exhibitions, nearly all of them deploying variants of that dreaded 'Light' word. Of course Barker-Mill in concentrating, focusing one might say, on the element of illumination in itself, has rejected the narrative impulse of cinema, cutting out all suggestion of story-telling or faintest trace of plot.

I would welcome, as much as the artist might well not, a serious historical analysis of his own work in connection with that of his parents, both of whom were practicing professional artists, the sort of lineage that is never given enough attention when considering artist-families. After all, generational families of artists were once the norm rather than exception, the Breughel clan, one obvious example amongst many, stretching over several centuries, yet even amongst modern examples, such as the Nicholson dynasty, relatively little proper analytic work is done upon their stylistic and intellectual affinities. In this same manner a detailed reading of Barker-Mill's work in the context of the rich chromatic abstractions of his mother, or black-and white engravings of his father, would surely prove rewarding.

But there is not the time nor place for quite so detailed a reflection, there is not even the space—that forbidden word—to suggest some deep connection between the caves of Wookey Hole and Plato's own cave and his theories on art as mimesis, to draw some parallel between the caves of Barker-Mill's jeunesse and the games of shadow and light that the philosopher claimed as the origin of all art making. No, we have not dealt with the issue of Iceland and its secret place in the personal chromatic psychology of Barker-Mill, we have not even touched on questions of Scotland or Southampton, on British Neo-Romanticism or our landscape painting tradition, on alternative histories of electricity and Gurdjieffian energies, all these forbidden topics, marginal notations, clandestine byways, obscure lanes, must await some other, some future conclusion.



Tissue Display

Chromat 8, 2014

MDF painted white, Philips iColor Cove colour-changing LED lamps (4 no. 6" & 4 no. 12"), Philips sPDS-60ca power/data supply unit, Philips iPlayer3 controller + associated software, colour sequence duration: 14 minutes 30 seconds, 2050 x 1150 x 480mm, aperture diameters 560/175mm, installation: *just-noticeable differences* Part 1, Laure Genillard Gallery (25 January – 8 March 2014), front cover photographic series by Simon Brown, photograph on p6, Neil Proctor, pp 28-29 showing time-lapse images (5 sec intervals).

Ibiza, 1954

Gouache and ink on paper, 660 x 457mm

ISIS (cover), 1962

Featuring 'Paddington, a photographic essay', ISIS.1412 (28 Feb 1962) cover, at 15-17

Widescreen 2, 2013

Strip hardwood, fibreglass, MDF, blue LED strip (12v), electronic LED converter, 1370 x 480 x 185mm, installation, 'just-noticeable differences Part 1', Laure Genillard Gallery (25 January - 8 March 2014), photograph Neil Proctor

Candle Piece, 1996

Mild steel, opal Perspex, 1 candle, 2750 x 300 x 380mm
exhibited *NORTHERN LIGHTS*, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, 1996

Pingle Car (3), 2008

Recycled soft drink cartons, carbon fibre, MDF

Rotor (prototype & version 1), 2004

Technics direct drive turntable, workmate bench, Fischer Technik parts, Lego worm drive and gears, pulleys, stainless steel rod, ball bearings, diameter of disc 1500mm

Rotor (work in progress), 2014

Diameter of disc 520mm, aperture 114mm, depth 100mm

Gradation X, 1994

Watercolour on Langton paper, cadmium yellow light, Prussian blue, 406 x 508mm

Gradation XI, 1994

Watercolour on Langton paper, cobalt and crimson, 406 x 508mm

Circle in a Square, 2013

Edition of 2, 5mm opal Perspex, 3mm opaque white Palight, brackets (mild steel, powder-coated white), illumination: 230v, OSRAM STAR DECO 0.5w colour-changing lamp, 800 x 800 x 180mm, diameter 174mm, photographs: Neil Proctor (Laure Genillard, yellow image), Mike Davidson (Peacock Visual Arts, blue and red images)

Footfall, UK, 2014

Video stills, 9 min 57 sec (sound), Quicktime digital file

Family, UK, 2014

Video stills of family observing *Feature*, 9 min, 25 seconds (sound), Quicktime digital file

Feature, 2014

Screen 2840 x 1550mm, Phillips Reach Compact Lamp, Colorblast 12 Lamp, Philips sPDS-60ca Power/data supply unit, Philips iPlayer3 controller + associated software, installation in disused Hallmark boutique in pedestrian precinct, opposite John Lewis commissioned by the Festival of Light, Aberdeen

Long Slat Piece, 2014

MDF, [deal], painted white, Colour-changeable LED strip (magenta, red, yellow, blue, cyan, green, white), colour control unit, plug-in transformer, 3152 x 380 x 270mm, installation, 'just-noticeable differences Part 2', Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen (7 February – 22 March, 2014), photograph Mike Davidson

Sunrise/Sunset, 2011

Concrete, painted white, 2500 x 2590 x 1000mm, dawning Adam Barker Mill, commission for the Paiboon Residence, Thailand, photographs: Alan Johnstn

Exit, 2013

MDF painted white, acrylic, 3 OSRAM STAR DECO 0.5w colour-changing lamps, 400 x 200 x 120mm, installation, 'just-noticeable differences Part 2', Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen (7 February – 22 March, 2014), photograph Mike Davidson

Zero, 1989-2001

(Previously known as *Space Light*), milled aluminium, clear anodised (lamphead), cast aluminium, clear anodised (base), stainless steel (column), 2 x dimmer switches in a handheld unit, 2 x transformers (12v), 2 x 12v, 20W halogen capsules, set of colour filters, 1670 x 90(lamphead) x 270mm (base)

SpaceLight, 1988

Text by Paul Steen, from the flyer for the show *SpaceLight* at ANTA Spitalfields 1988
this rendering of text layout by Adam Barker-Mill, created in QuarkXpress 1991

Skylight, 2008

Technical realisation by Michel Schrantz of MRJ Rundell+Associates, four glass panels (red, green, blue, yellow), electric motors, 3000 x 3000, installation for a private house, Notting Hill Gate, London

Ringstack, 2012

(Shown together with images of model outside studio and testing the aperture in the studio), mild steel welded, painted white, Cyclops 4000 LED spotlight, 7210mm high, disk diameter 1300mm, aperture 640mm, elevation 17,460mm, A commission by the Notting Hill Improvements Group, photograph Murdo Barker-Mill

Favorita, 2012

Cardboard boxes, 230 volts blue LED 3 watts spotlight, 1680 x 500 x 400mm

Columba, 2012

Cardboard boxes, 230 volts blue LED 3 watts spotlight, 2300 x 540 x 385mm, exhibited *Now & Then, an exhibition of Contemporary Art and Historical Objects*, Harris Lindsay Works of Art (11 – 28 October 2011)

Figs (Pop-Up Lanterns), 2012

Cardboard boxes, 230 volts white LED 3 watts spotlight, 450 x 325 x 325mm, exhibited *Now & Then, an exhibition of Contemporary Art and Historical Objects*, Harris Lindsay Works of Art (11 – 28 October 2011)

Stack, 2014

MDF painted white/blue, acrylic pots, 3W LED light source, 2800 x 500 x 500mm, installation, 'just-noticeable differences Part 2', Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen (7 February – 22 March, 2014), photograph Mike Davidson

Tissue Display, 1990

MDF painted white, opal Perspex, fluorescent lamp, tissue: standard or recycled, 1300 or 900 x 130 x 200mm, installation at Inverleith House, 1997, photograph Jason Lowe

Self Portrait with Zero, 1988

Digital photograph

Pool, 1996

Water, reinforced concrete, submersible electric water pump, diameter 2800mm, depth 250mm, installation, Bury Farm, Marchwood, Southampton, UK

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Adam Barker-Mill has something of the look of an Enlightenment portrait, and his work has something of the Enlightenment about it. Combining art and science in balance, it interweaves material and immaterial, creating an aesthetic with its own elegance. Despite (or because of) its deployment of purely physical sensation, the work imparts an implicitly moral understanding of the world around us.

Penelope Curtis



Adam Barker-Mill, Self-portrait with Zero

Published by Laure Genillard in cooperation with Peacock Visual Arts on the occasion of the exhibition

just-noticeable differences Part 1 and Part 2
London: 25 January – 8 March 2014
Aberdeen: 07 February – 22 March 2014

Laure Genillard Gallery
is open Wed/Thu/Fri/Sat, 1–6pm.

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Laure Genillard is a private non-commercial contemporary art space in Fitzrovia close to Oxford Street. Director Laure Genillard has operated her gallery since 1987, bringing a keen eye to developments in abstract and conceptual art internationally, expanding on 1970s minimal art practices and discussions. The gallery became known for its large installations and for allowing artists the freedom to engage directly with the space. Laure has been seminal to the practices of several young British artists, whose work first showcased at her gallery, including Catherine Yass, Fiona Banner, Martin Creed, Peter Doig, Gillian Wearing, Simon Starling as well as many artists from the continent such as Maurizio Cattelan and Sylvie Fleury, amongst others. Relocated in Hanway Place in 2007, the programme for the last three years has been run collaboratively with Hana Noorali and Lynton Talbot.

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Peacock Visual Arts is the main contemporary visual arts organisation in Aberdeen and the North-east of Scotland and is supported by Aberdeen City Council and Creative Scotland.

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Publication design by Modern Activity
Set in Univers Next



Pool