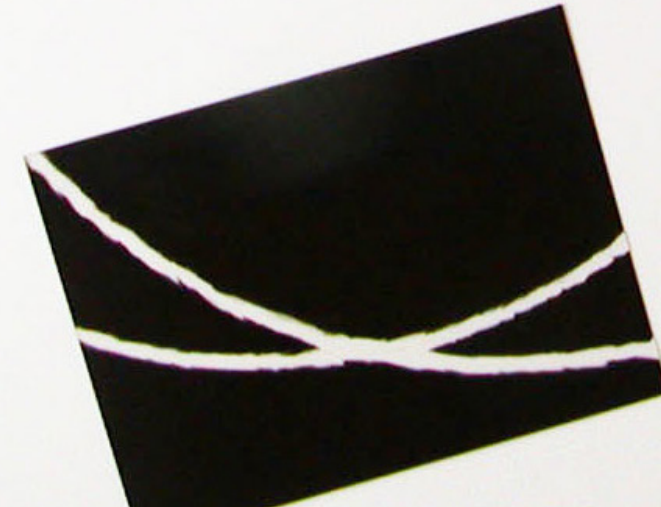
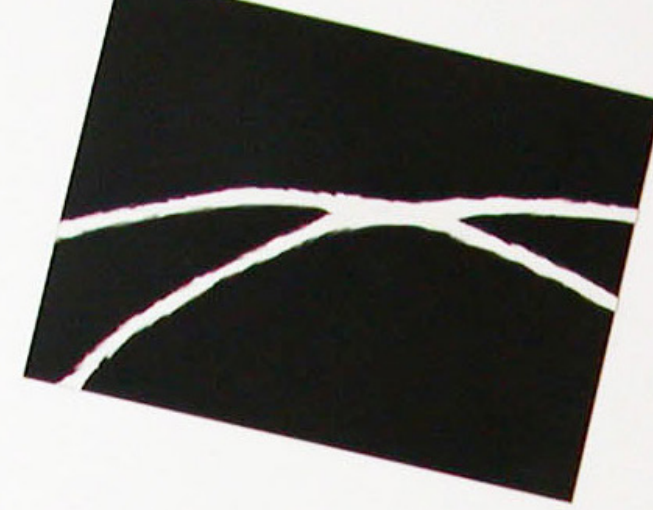




AL WONG





AL WONG: The Nature of Things

My work is a visual expression of the interconnectedness of perceived opposites. For the past 50 years, my work has involved the use of negative and positive space, light, and transparency. I have always been fascinated with the ways in which light and shape are both presence and absence. Past bodies of work bring the foreground and the background planes of the sculpture or installation into one interconnected space. [T]here is a deeper harmony in our environment that we may often overlook. My approach to art has always been to reveal life's true nature in the everyday.

—Al Wong

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

—Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*

Foreword

By DeWitt Cheng

Al Wong, the Bay Area filmmaker and multimedia artist (Guggenheim Fellowship, Flintridge Foundation Grant) and teacher (San Francisco Art Institute, Sonoma State University, California State University Sacramento), was born in 1939 and grew up in a two-room apartment in San Francisco's Chinatown. Like so many first- and second-generation 'hyphenated' Americans, he is the hybrid product of two cultures, and, thus, like Walt Whitman's democratic ideal of the American brother-citizen, complex and contradictory. The resolution or synthesis of opposites is accordingly a longstanding concern in Wong's multifarious work. This might be seen as a kind of aesthetic Taoism, balancing the eternal complementaries of yin and yang, female/receptive/black and male/active/red, each containing a seed of its opposite. The dance between dualities that informs much of Wong's work is nicely encapsulated in the name of a 2013 interview Sunlight and Shadows which he gave for a film screening of his 1977 film *Twin Peaks* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. This seminal work was referred to as "a masterpiece of subtle shifts in light and tone" in the museum's event description.



Stills from *Twin Peaks*. 1977
50 minutes color film with sound. *Canyon Cinema Collection*.

Shadowy presences or entities appear and disappear in many of his films and photo/video installations, consonant with the Chinese traditional respect for ancestors—Wong burns incense at his father's grave twice a year—and incense fumes play a part in several works (including the 1981 installation at San Francisco's SITE Gallery, Circular); with the artist's sensitivity to paranormal phenomena like the phantom 1920s Europeans that he and a friend glimpsed while waiting for a hotel elevator during a Shanghai monsoon; and with his Zen-inspired consciousness of being a kind of floating eye—Gustave Flaubert's and Odilon Redon's "strange balloon"—observing the world, but also calmly, curiously, participating in it through his artistic experiments, though sometimes semi-invisibly, like a bunraku puppeteer (the 1974 film *Moving Still*, and the 1979 films *Shadow and Chair*, and *Moon Stand*).

Wong's five-decade body of work comprises a wide variety of media and approaches. His early moody films in black and white are reminiscent of Jean Cocteau (an acknowledged artist hero who was also entranced by mirrors) and Ingmar Bergman (Wong's macabre 1970 short film *Tea for Two*, inspired by the



Stills from *Tea for Two*. 1970
5 minutes black/white film with sound. *Canyon Cinema Collection*.

young artist's stress at "the frustrations of trying to be alive," with the female actors, artist colleagues and friends, acting as his surrogates). Later multimedia installations instead function as perceptual experiments and experiences (the 2021 video installation, *Fire On Line*, with the artist activating a series of suspended strings installed in his Sunset District garage). Wong was recognized early in his career, in the 1970s, and thus belongs to the generation of experimental artists that paved the way for the pluralistic art world of the present day, although he has been single-minded and independent in pursuit of his ideas. He never made sociopolitical documentaries or promulgated a particular program or vision. He remarks, with wry humor, "I never fit in" with his sociopolitical filmmaker friends, and his being an Asian avant-garde artist made him, in those less culturally diverse times, an anomaly in some art circles. His work remains resolutely low-key, often fabricated from casual materials, yet consistently personal, poetic, and idiosyncratic, in keeping with the Bay Area tradition of aesthetic individualism. Wong encouraged creative independence in his students, exhorting them "to think outside the box"—and the camera—in his Alternative Film class.



Al Wong in the studio working on the *Fire on Line* video installation.

Art is metamorphic and ever-changing, despite our best efforts to define and domesticate it, and art nowadays seems almost as indefinable and elusive as life itself. After a century and a half of aesthetic revolution, everything is permitted. Our anything-goes pluralism began in the late 1960s, when artists found the prevailing styles—painterly Abstract Expressionism and media-based Pop—too confining and too market-driven. Many artists felt that painting had exhausted its possibilities, and everything had been done. If the Abstract Expressionists of the postwar generation decided to reject figuration, symbolism, and narrative to “just paint,” as Barnett Newman stated, the experimentally inclined artists of the Vietnam era decided, conversely, and even more radically, to just not paint. Instead, they explored ideas that defied traditional aesthetics, producing artworks that enlisted the viewer—or ‘receiver,’ in the terminology of conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner—as participants in the work, following the thinking of the Dadaist and father of conceptual art, Marcel Duchamp, whose iconoclastic *Fountain* (1917), a urinal declared to be an artwork (though, as Duchamp



On/Off, 1987
72" x 48", Acrylic, enamel, spray paint, and marker on fiberglass netting, with light bulb and flasher. (View 1 & 2). Exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art. NY, NY

noted, not for its aesthetic qualities), and his enigmatically abstract puzzle piece, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23), served as precedents and permissions for new approaches to art and art-making half a century later.

It turned out to be such an extremely fertile period. It was also a moment of innocence; I think people respond to this work because it’s not about commercialism, it’s not about money, it’s not about fame. It’s for artists to address their friends or each other, and there’s something so wonderful about that that’s really lost now.

—Constance Lewallen, Curator, Berkeley Art Museum, in a 2016 interview

I don't want to sell anything, buy anything, or process anything as a career. I don't want to sell anything bought or processed, or buy anything sold or processed, or process anything sold, bought, or processed, or repair anything sold, bought, or processed. You know, as a career, I don't want to do that.

—John Cusack as teen idealist Lloyd Dobler, in the 1989 comedy, *Say Anything*

The new artworks were often made from unapologetically humble or perishable materials, and decidedly unsaleable by prevailing standards, and thus free from the taint of commercialism. Environmental installations, performances, land art, Minimalism, Conceptual art, video and computer art, institutional critique, relational aesthetics, and social-practice art proliferated, broadening ‘mainstream’ art practice with a plethora of ‘anti-art’ provocations that inevitably later found their way into the expanded, burgeoning art market. The simulations or reality found in traditional and modernist art—of either the real world or the interior world, respectively—were replaced by real objects and elements, situated in real space and time, interacting with each other materially and symbolically; the unified effect sought by earlier artists gave way to postmodernist “complexity and contradiction”; the artist became a kind of “post-studio” group facilitator rather than a visionary; and a spirit of open inquiry replaced the desire for aesthetic closure. Douglas Huebler, in an art-world manifesto akin to John Cusack’s (cited above) wrote: *“The world is full of objects, more or less interesting: I do not wish to add any more.”*

"...why do we require a trip to Mount Everest in order to be able to perceive one moment of reality? Is Mount Everest more real than New York? Isn't New York real? I mean, I think if you could become fully aware of what existed in the cigar store next to this restaurant, it would blow your brains out... I mean, isn't there just as much reality to be perceived in a cigar store as there is on Mount Everest? What do you think? I mean, I think that not only is there nothing more real about Mount Everest, I think there's nothing that different, in a certain way. I mean, reality is sort of uniform, in a way. So that if your perceptions are... operating correctly, it would become irrelevant to go to Mount Everest, and sort of absurd..."

—Wallace Shawn, playing a slightly fictionalized version of himself, in Louis Malle’s philosophical comedy, *My Dinner with André* (1981)

Mirrors should think longer before they reflect.

— Jean Cocteau



Film stills from *Moving Still*. 1974
14 minute black/white 16 mm film with sound. *Canyon Cinema Collection*.

Mel Bochner postulated an ideal conceptual art object with “absolutely no ‘aura,’ no uniqueness to it whatsoever.” The art critic and philosopher Arthur Danto wrote, “... a lot of art today... addresses issues that engage people through symbolic enactments. The issues are often very intimate, and the art very remote... You have to get inside it a bit.”

Getting inside Wong’s works requires focus and attention, but their hey-presto epiphanies, evoked from minimal materials—paper, cardboard, plexiglass, polycarbonate, fiberglass netting, black and white paint, lights, water, tacks, photos, tape—achieve a subtle magic. (One of Robert Ryman’s white minimalist paintings, reflecting and incorporating its surroundings, is “the most fabulous thing I ever saw in my life.”) Wong dislikes the terms ‘film’ and ‘movie’ for their connotations to commercial cinema, and he once asked a curator at a major New York museum why mainstream narrative films were being shown in an art venue along with or instead of art films. “You don’t show a painting and a billboard next to each other.” (The curator had no answer.) While most of Wong’s films are accessible on his website, alwongart.com, some works are licensed, and

available only through film rentals at Canyon Cinema Collection (canyoncinema.com) or Lux Film in London (lux.org.uk), so that the primary experience of seeing the art projected in 16mm on-screen in its original museum/gallery setting is unfortunately rare in today’s pervasive digital culture, for all its conveniences.

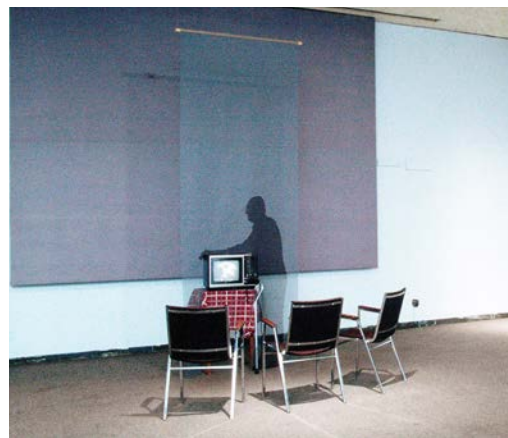
This essay is intended to serve as an introduction to an artist whose work spans film, photography, video, installation, and collage, but has a consistent philosophical and poetic through-line. Wong’s works often exhibit the subversive satirical spirit of Zen koans, perhaps a result of the artist’s devotion to the Bay Area spiritual teacher memorialized in the 1987 installation, Suzuki Roshi, with its silhouetted figure, painted in black onto a suspended sheet of fiberglass netting, paired with a photo of crossed hands, seeming to float before us, removed to another realm, but immanent. Paradoxes and oxymorons occur with some frequency in Wong’s titles: *Moving Still*, a film from 1974, *On/Off*, an installation from 1987, *Empty Stick*, an installation from 2021, *Morning Night*, from 2020, and *Same Difference*, a 1975 film.



Point of View, 2017
Size variable, color digital print & mixed media.

Other recurrent themes are mirrors/windows, shadows/phantoms, shifting planes, and shapes hidden and revealed in figure-ground reversals. Mirrors create a virtual or illusory reality, with left and right reversed: a looking-glass world complementary to everyday reality. In *Red Room Window* and *Studio Window*, both from 2017, the artist mounts life-sized color photographs of his house windows on the wall, but covers those parts of the photos depicting the window’s glass panes with semi-reflective plexiglass, making the viewer part of the artwork—and a kind of self-voyeur; *Point of View*, also from 2017, is a series of photographs, tilted at various angles, of an antique hand mirror; the artist has similarly replaced the photographed mirror with plexiglass that captures the viewer’s likeness; the mirror, incidentally, belonged to Wong’s teacher and friend, the artist Jay DeFeo, who, by having him stop the car so that she could admire the subtle magic of a bush glimpsed near San Francisco’s Presidio, taught him the necessity of perceiving the extraordinary within quotidian daily life. In *Same Difference* (1975), Wong’s subject, the artist and teacher and then studio-mate, Ursula Schneider, sits motionless in Wong’s Potrero Hill

kitchen before a pair of picture windows affording a view of Twin Peaks in the distance. The theme of the indoor spectator of nature is ex-emplified in *Woman at the Window* (1822) by the German Romantic painter Casper David Friedrich; the immobile figure, turned away from the viewers—the Rückenfigur—lost in revelry can be seen as a transposition or metaphor for the viewer regarding the artificial window of the painting. Wong’s live-action version marries his fascination with the natural with the self-awareness of a practitioner of meditation, augmented by the airily resonant soundtrack by artist Terry Fox, produced by ‘playing’ a bowl he had found with a violin bow. In *Twin Peaks* (1977), Wong eliminates the surrogate observer, putting the viewer into the passenger seat. Over the course of a year, the artist drove the figure-8 loop around San Francisco’s landmark hills in his Volkswagen van at a constant 15 mph speed with his camera gaffer-taped to a 2x4 beam affixed to the floor. By covering the left and right halves of the two-panel windshield with black cloth, the artist created a moving-diptych combination view of the landscape, accompanied by the pulsing or respiratory sounds of surf recorded at Baker Beach.



Each Time I See You, I Feel It Could Be the Last Time, 1987
60" x 120" x 24", Acrylic on fiberglass netting with TV set, table, tablecloth, aluminum cane, and lighting. Exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art. NY, NY

“The infinity loop road represent[s] this continuous pattern of life. There are certain sequences in the film where it appears that the parts of the road aren’t meeting, and it isn’t a single road anymore. The road is shifting. Life is like that. It shifts and it makes you feel off-balance at times. You have trouble, and then you try to slip back in. And your breathing is still going.”

—Al Wong

One of the adjustments Wong had to make in this yearlong project was filming at night: because his film required more light than was available, and Wong prefers to use available light, he hit upon an odd and laborious stop-motion still-photo workaround: marking the left front tire so that he could feel when the car had advanced one tire rotation, he would open the shutter for one to two seconds for each revolution of the tire.

Wong said in a recent phone interview, of his sixth sense, “Sometimes I feel like there’s somebody there.” He found a way to evoke the human presence in real space without resorting to traditional illusionism or kitsch by painting life-sized silhouettes of his models, made from slide projections, onto fiberglass screen netting that is suspended from the ceiling. Installations of these elegiac veils of absence/presence were exhibited at the Whitney Museum in 1987, including: *Line Up*, a series of standing figures with heads obscured by photocopied photographs and objects, *Grandmothers*, a trio of female figures individuated with photo portraits, accompanied by the artist’s figure who touches the women on the shoulder, and *Each Time I See You, I Feel It Could Be The Last Time*, with the shadow of the artist’s late father, pipe in hand, amid his real belongings—small table, checked tablecloth, cane), as if paused at home in his Chinatown apartment, casually addressing the son whom he had long ago taught to draw. The artist has made abstract, nonfigurative versions of the theatrical scrims also, in which the geometric forms become human surrogates: *Shadow Works* (1984), *Rectangle Float* (2013), and *Empty Stick* (2021).

The artist’s fascination with reality/illusion shifting frames of reference is memorably captured in his ten-minute video installation (2010), *Three Pines*, on his website, in which the artist performs mysterious actions with sticks and other objects behind a curtain of three vertical pine boards, accompanied by his projected real-time image, projected onto the boards in a kind of virtual/actual Doppelgänger duet. At certain points we realize that the projection is 180 degrees off, and we’re seeing the artist’s back projected on the boards while we glimpse the artist facing us behind the ‘curtain’ through the interstices; at one point, Wong seemingly reaches through the middle board to ‘paste’ a sheet inscribed ‘HI’, backwards, to the leftmost board; it’s a trompe-l’oeil visual conundrum, cleverly executed, accompanied by the percussive sound of a Buddhist wooden fish instrument (muyu), played offscreen, which is utilized to assist with sutra chanting. The spatial ambiguity of *Three Pines* updates Magritte’s *Le Blanc Seng* (The Blank Signature), a 1965 lithograph of a woman riding through a forest, her image partly hidden by and partly projected onto the trees: interwoven with them. Wong further explores the idea of spatial discontinuity

A book which does not contain its counter book is considered incomplete.

—Jorge Luis Borges, *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*



Empty Stick, 2021
Netting and wooden stick
8' x 2' x 16

and appearing/disappearing forms in minimalist works on paper on the wall in which figure and ground dance and shift: black rectangles with portions removed, aligned in a certain way, are completed by the creation of non-existent but implied white shapes by the viewer's eye and brain in *Cross Circle* (2005), *Rectangle* (2005), *Around the Wall* (2005), and *Light Box* (2004). *Framelines* (1998), similarly updates Magritte's transparent-easel idea with its photograph of a dozen empty tabletop picture frames of various sizes, casually arranged, like family photos on a mantel; with elegant minimalism, the artist has drawn the black molding of the frames behind onto the frames in front, creating a spatial maze, neatly counterpointed by the soft shadows of the source photo that appear and disappear like Magritte's aristocratic equestrian. A show at Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, in 2001, took the presence/absence parados into three dimensions, with small sculptural works mounted on small shelves that seemingly depicted illuminated simple geometric objects; the objects, however, were cutout shapes, illuminated from behind the 'background' panels.

The foregoing has been a brief survey—no more than an appetizer—of Wong's varied oeuvre. In the spring of 2018,

the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) presented *Al Wong: Lost Sister*, an exhibition of sixty-four page-sized mixed-media photo collages based on a black and white family photo belonging to the San Francisco multimedia artist. Depicting a family member whom the American-born artist never knew, due to the separation of families during the Cold War, the source image undergoes a series of permutations and variations, all in monochrome, echoing and subverting the passport-ID style, with the portrait cut apart and reassembled. The photos are installed in a long single row, suggesting a sequence, but no obvious narrative is implied. If the images, now in BAMPFA's permanent collection, can be interpreted as symbols of the mutability of identity when subjected to political duress (as Americans might do, reflexively), they might just as well symbolize the human condition here, in the current era of fake news and alternative facts, i.e., convenient untruths; more importantly, they stand for the ability of art to transform morally inconvenient truths into aesthetic experiences—paradoxically, illusions, even from the experimentalist generation—through which we may dare face current realities.

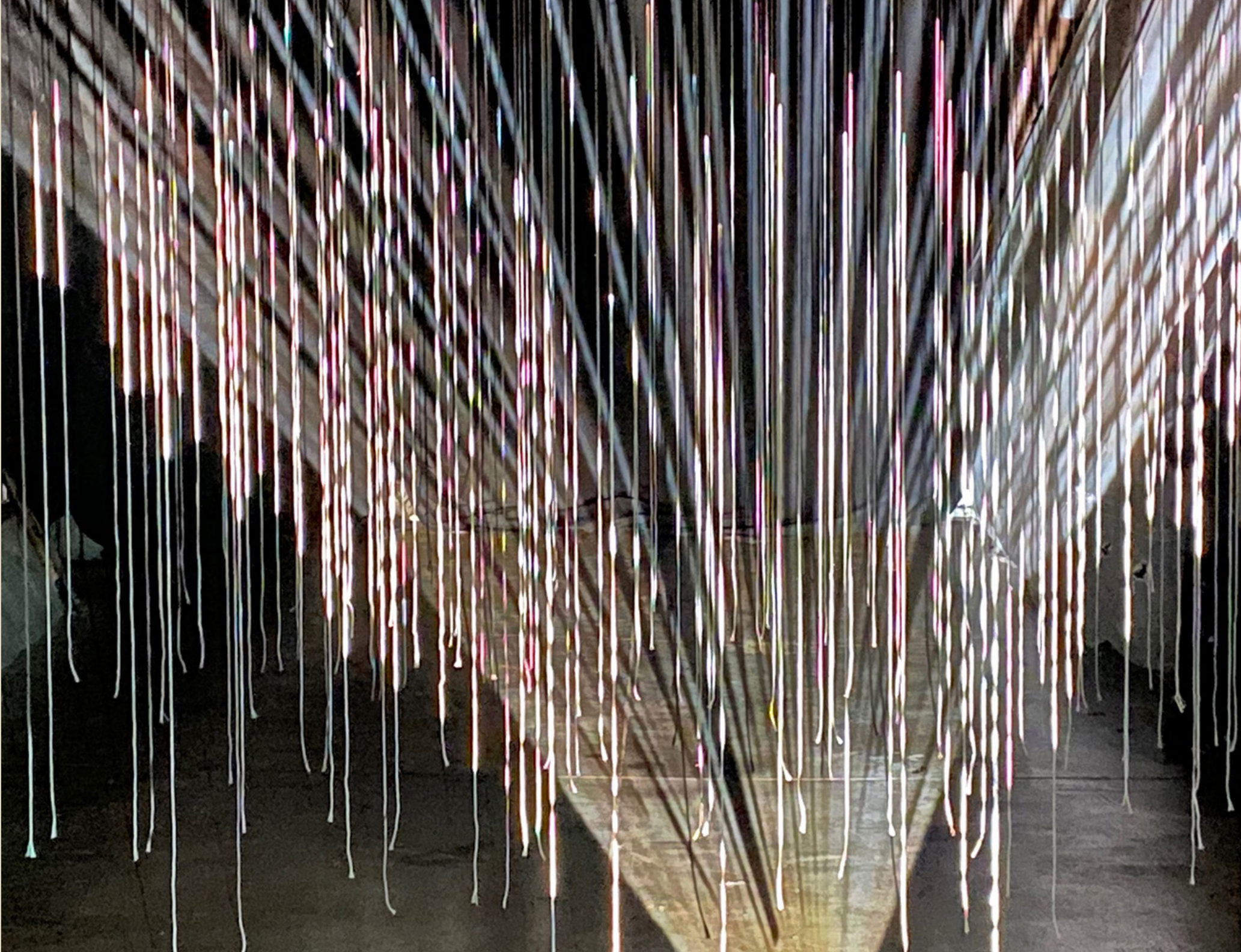
Lost Sister, 2014
15" x 60". (Installation view 1) Series of 64 Photo collages, Exhibited at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Permanent Collection. Berkeley, CA



Al's art spans decades of Bay Area art history, reflecting influences as diverse as Surrealism (a strong current of Surrealism existed in the Bay Area from the 1940s through the 1960s), Conceptual art, Minimalism, Light and Space, and Identity awareness. His early films, from the 1960s, are compelling explorations of the film medium's capacity to capture the paradoxes of time and space. These issues resonated not only with current artistic currents (Conceptualism and Minimalism especially) but also with Wong's engagement with Zen, which he studied at the San Francisco Zen center. It is interesting that one can see in Wong's early films resonances with other Bay Area artists as diverse as the Beat-Surrealist James Broughton and the proto-Conceptualist Bruce Nauman. Other Bay Area artists in his aesthetic milieu would have been Sidney Peterson, Tom Marioni, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha.

While Al is best known for his film, video, and installation work, he considers himself a painter at heart. I believe this is because he feels a strong connection to the visceral aspect of the painting process. This integral, physical relationship to his medium extends to the sensibility of his work in other media, including film. Ultimately, all of Al's work leads back to the perceiving body. He aims to create work that inspires poetic reflection on the nature of awareness and being... Now in his 80s, Al continues to make art that is as formally inventive and conceptually rigorous as ever. He is undoubtedly one of the most important artists working in the Bay Area today.

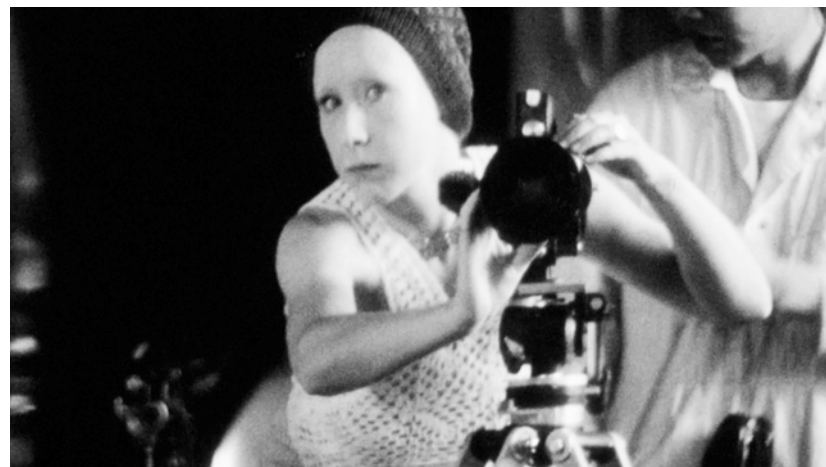
—Lawrence Rinder, Director Emeritus, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, 2021



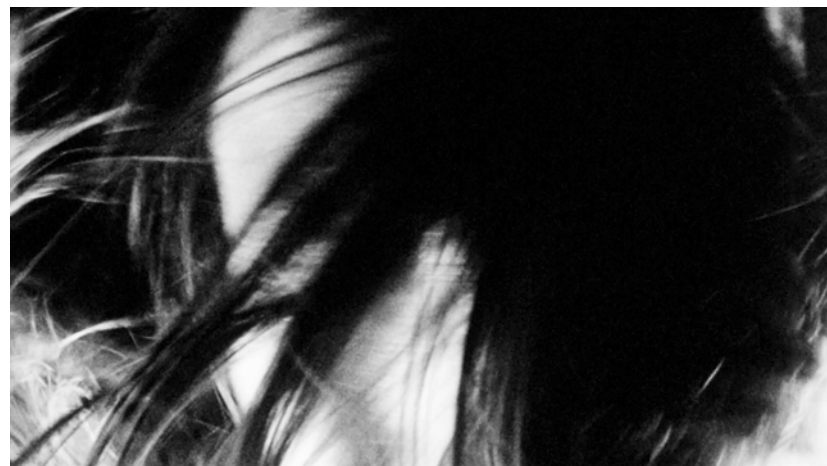
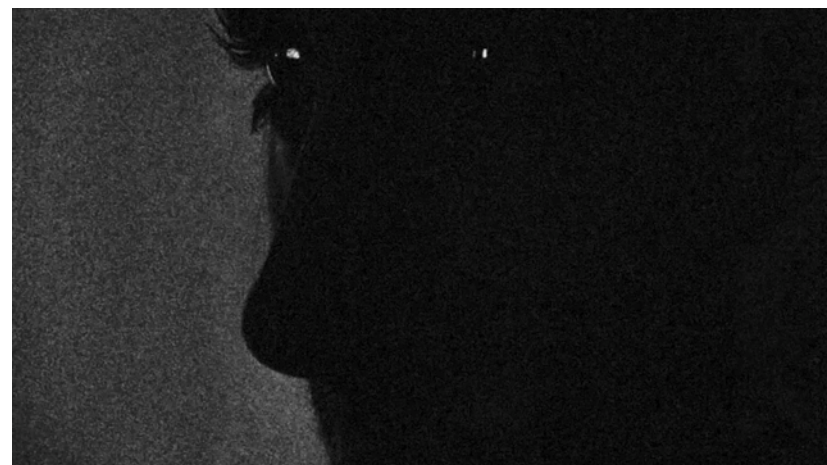


Part 1:

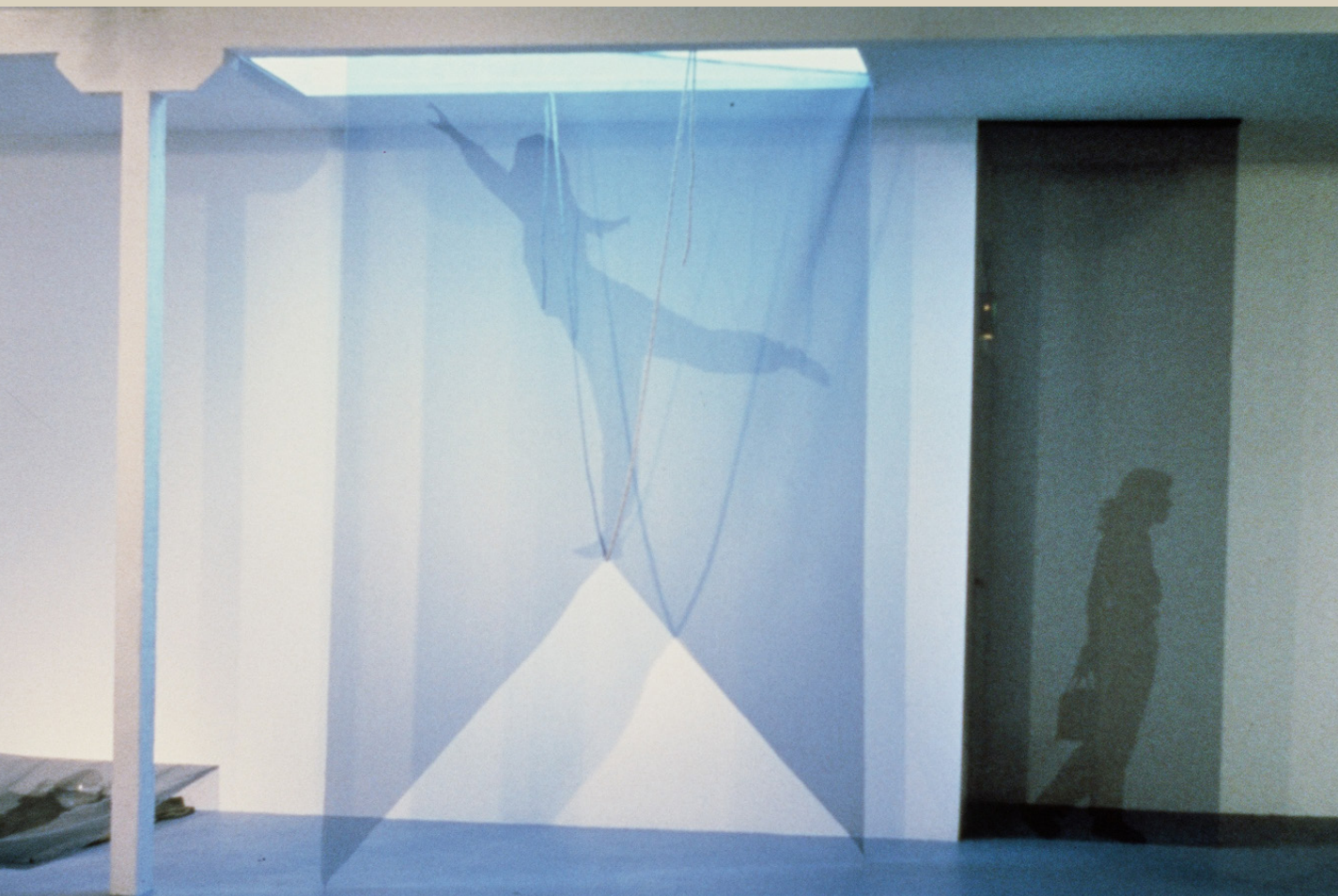
There is movement in stillness.
This work is about changing psychological
states and conflicts within the self.



Film stills from *Moving Still*. 1974
14 minute black/white 16 mm film with sound. *Canyon Cinema Collection*.



Film stills from *Moving Still*. 1974
14 minute black/white 16 mm film with sound. *Canyon Cinema Collection*.



Part 2:

There is light in shadow as there is emptiness in form. All of these pieces address the illusion of duality utilizing different formal approaches such as netting installation, assemblage and sculpture.



Inner Circle, 1995
8' circumference. Installation with breadcrumbs, rope, and birds. Location: San Francisco Marina district, San Francisco, CA.

These two works involve photographs of windows in my studio. The photographs are installed on the wall with a layer of plexiglass that has a special coating to show light reflection in the same area as the window pane on the photograph.

The viewer when standing in front of the work can see their own reflection as a result. It brings the viewer into the space of the photograph and the viewer and the photograph become one.

You can see videos of this visual effect by visiting:
<https://alwongart.com/photo-installations/>

Red Room Window, 2017
24" x 36", color digital photo & mixed media.



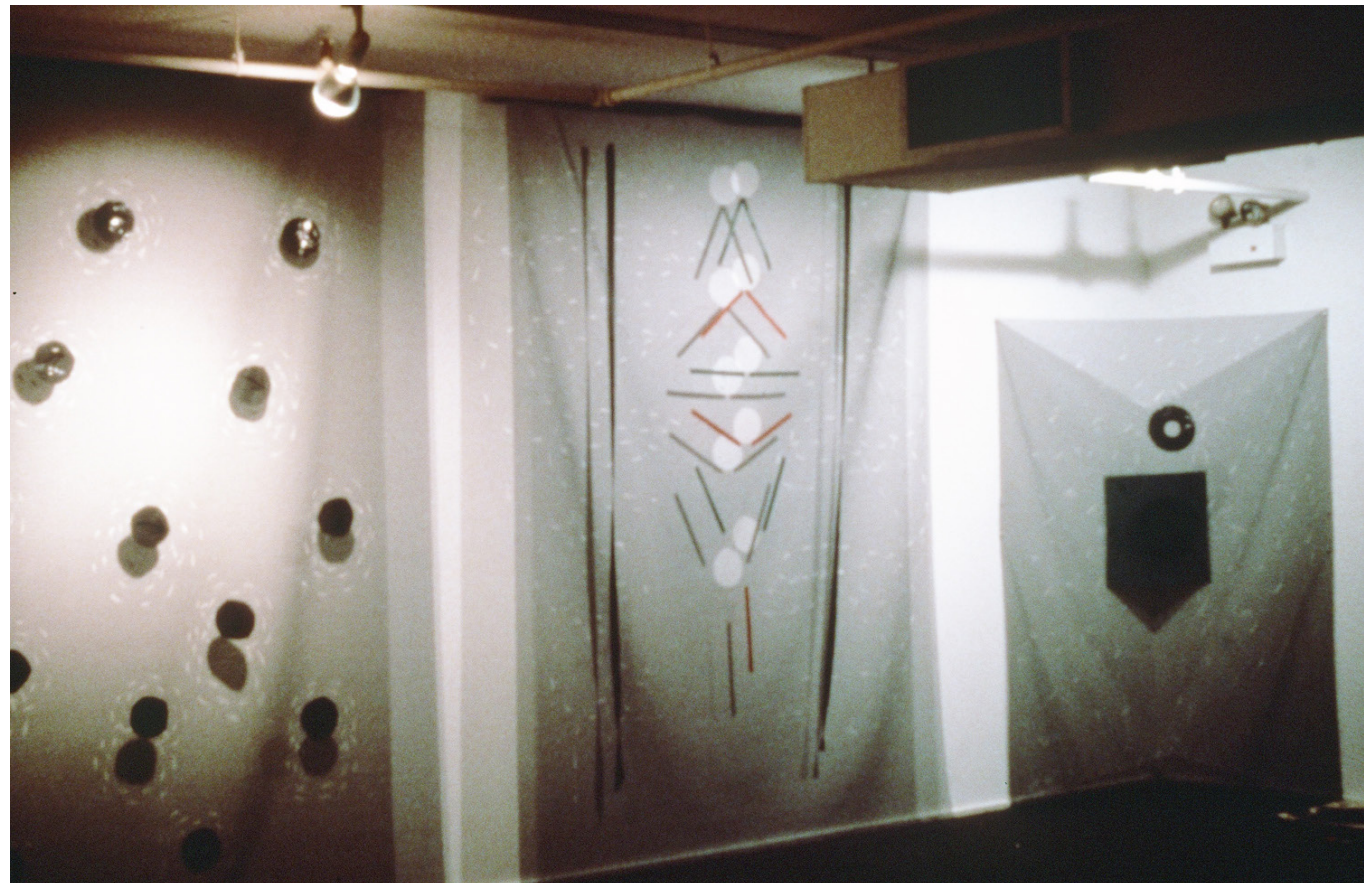
Studio Window 1, 2017
24" x 36", color digital photo & mixed media.



In this installation, I placed incense in an incense holder on the floor. I then placed a ladder which is leaning against an opening in the ceiling which is a skylight. The movement of the air is drawn through the opening in the skylight; this then draws the incense upwards to ascend up to the skylight. The ladder is suggesting descending. The result is a circular visual movement.

Location: SITE Gallery, San Francisco, CA

Circular, 1981
12' x 8'. Incense, wooden ladder, slide projection 35 mm slide film.

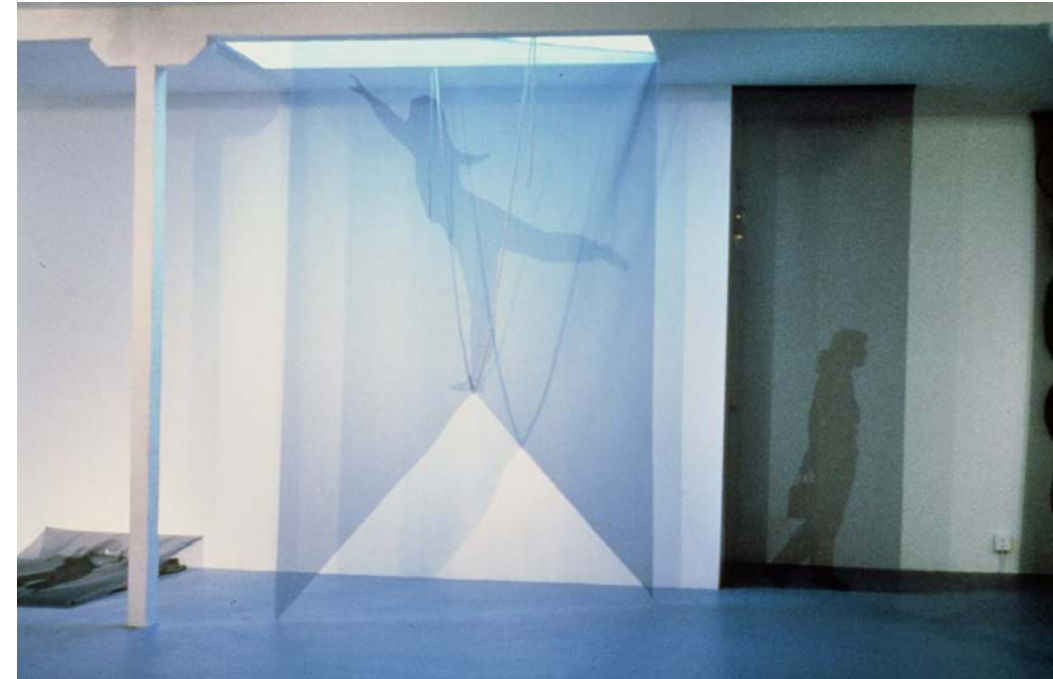


New Museum, 1984 Workspace Exhibition, Installation (one month), New York City.
 AI transferred his studio to the museum space and produced an original piece of artwork every 1-2 days.



Image features AI working at the New Museum on an installation, cutting the netting into shape.

Shadow Works, 1984
10' x 5'. Acrylic on netting.
Location: New Langton Arts, San Francisco, CA

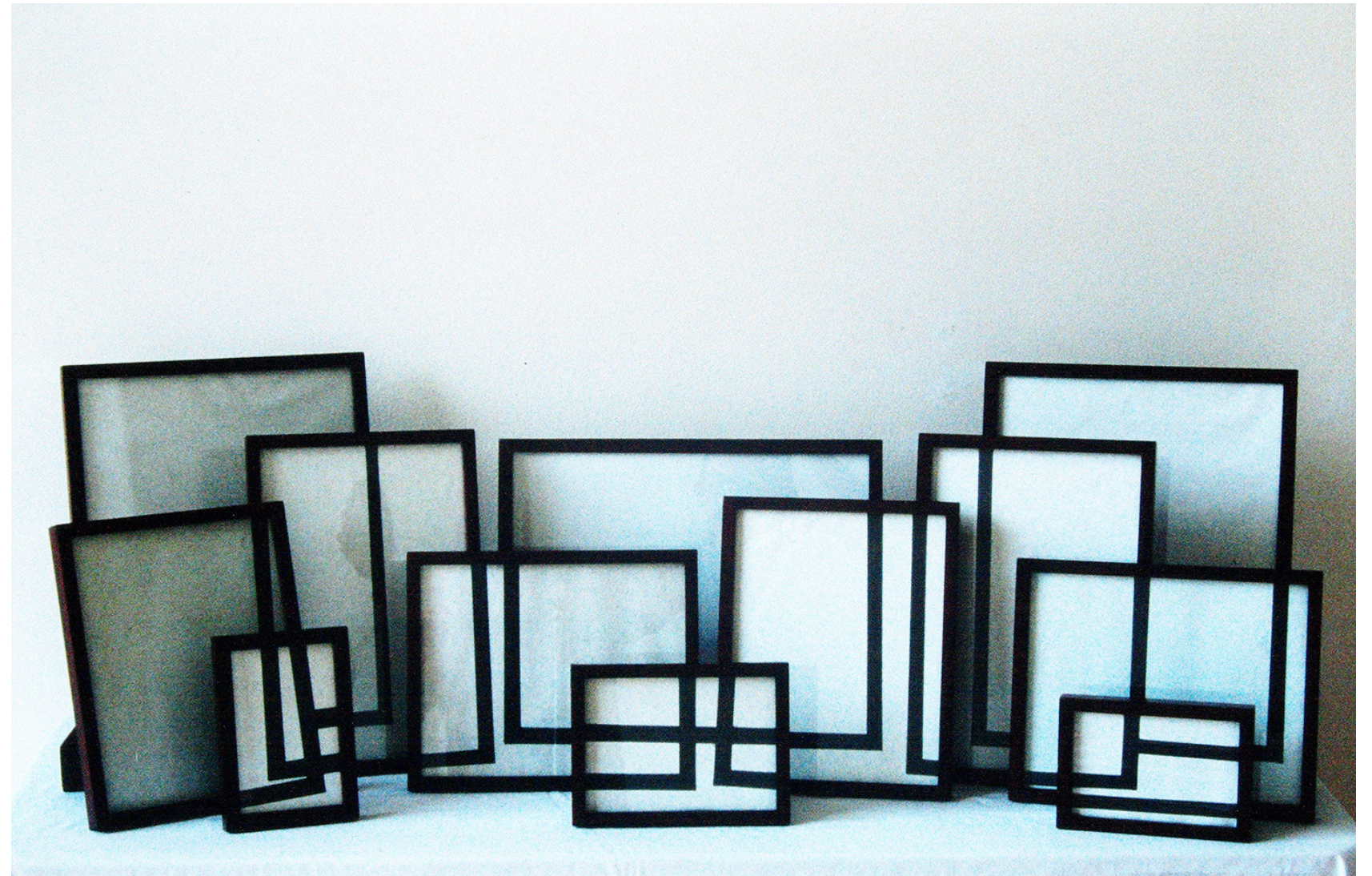


Shadow Works, 1984
Additional installation views



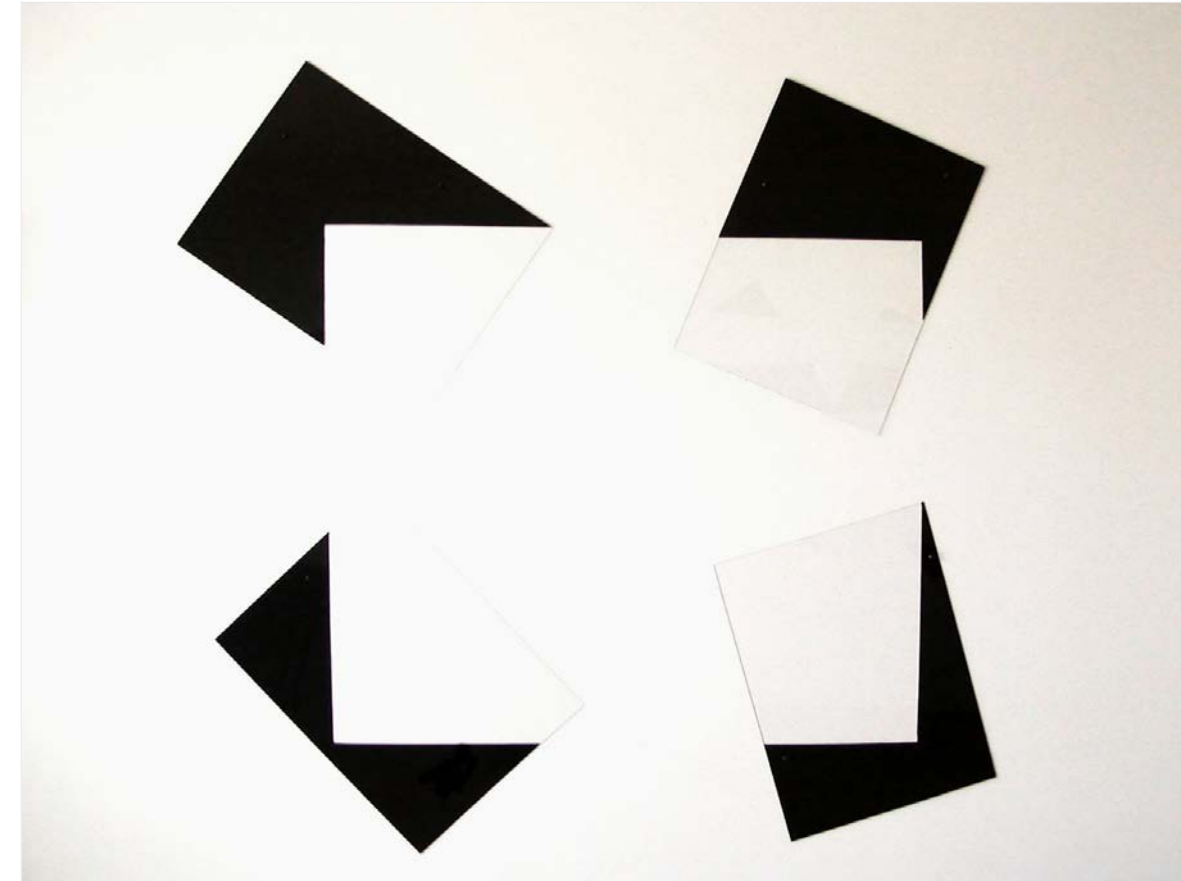
Color Bars, 2012
24" x 18", Plastic, paper, colored tape, and aluminum. (View 1 and View 2 - lit from behind)

Frameline, 1998
5 ½" w x 2 ½" d x 18" h, Picture frames, ink, and paper.





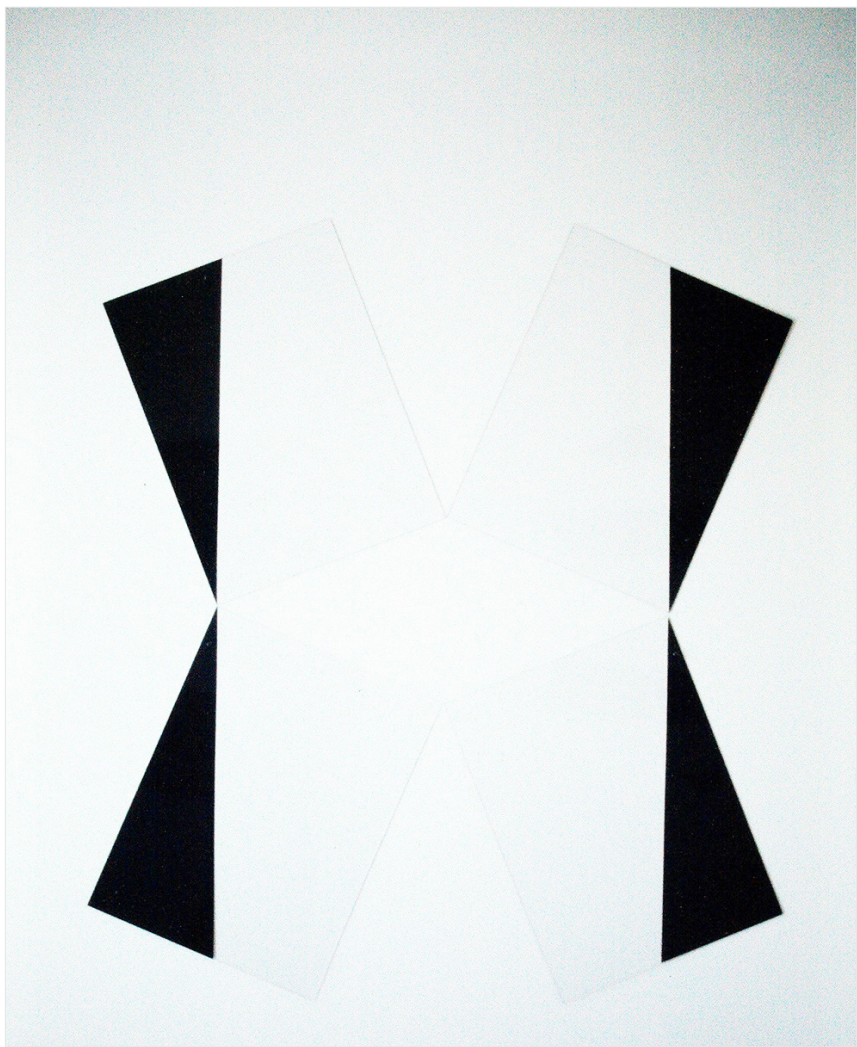
Cross Circle, 2005
6' x 5.25', Plastic and acrylic.



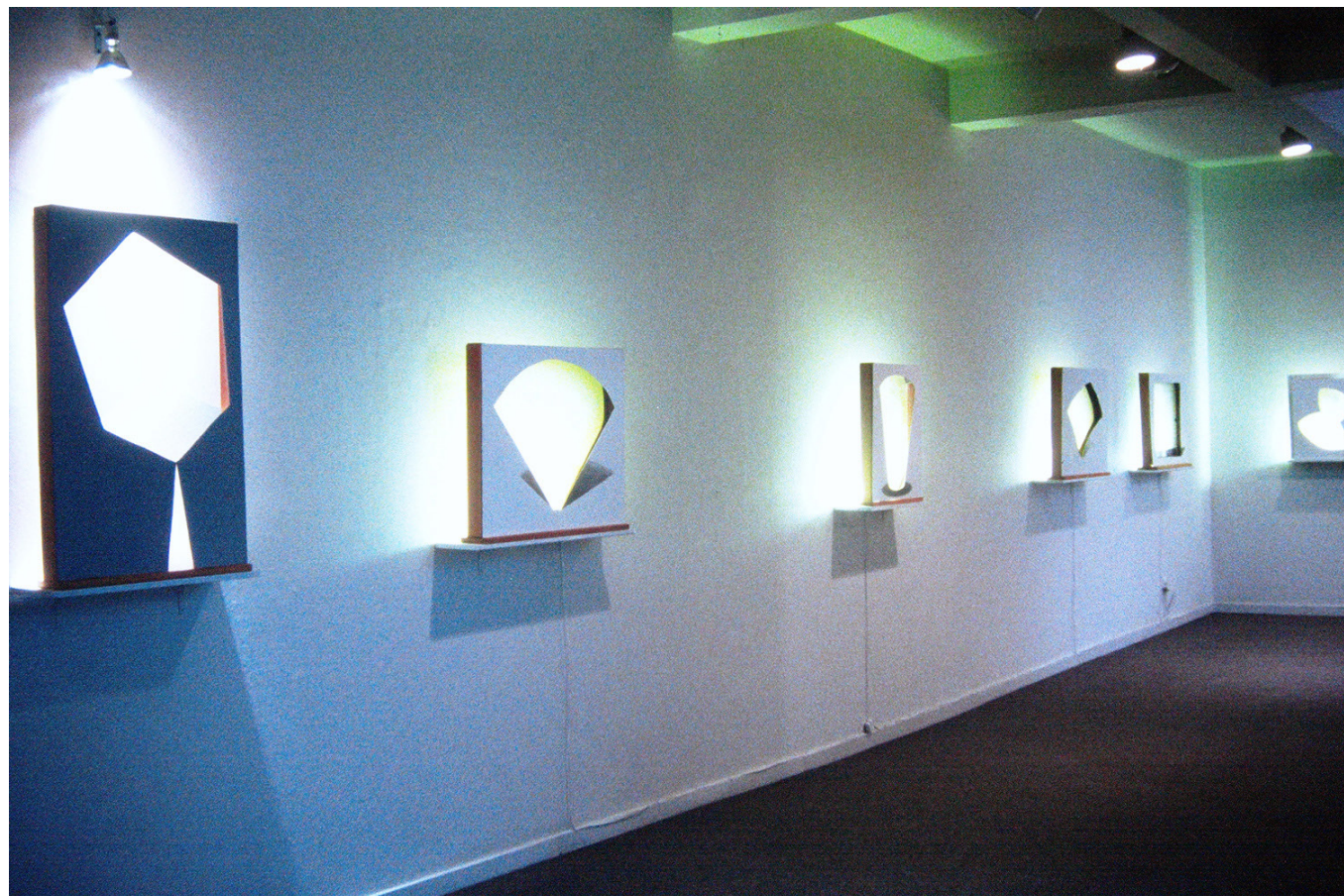
Rectangle, 2005
5'4 x 5', Plastic and acrylic.



Around the Wall, 2005
6'3 x 5'4, Plastic and acrylic.



Light Box, 2004
4'10 x 4'4, Plastic and acrylic.



Installation view of solo exhibition at Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA, 2001.



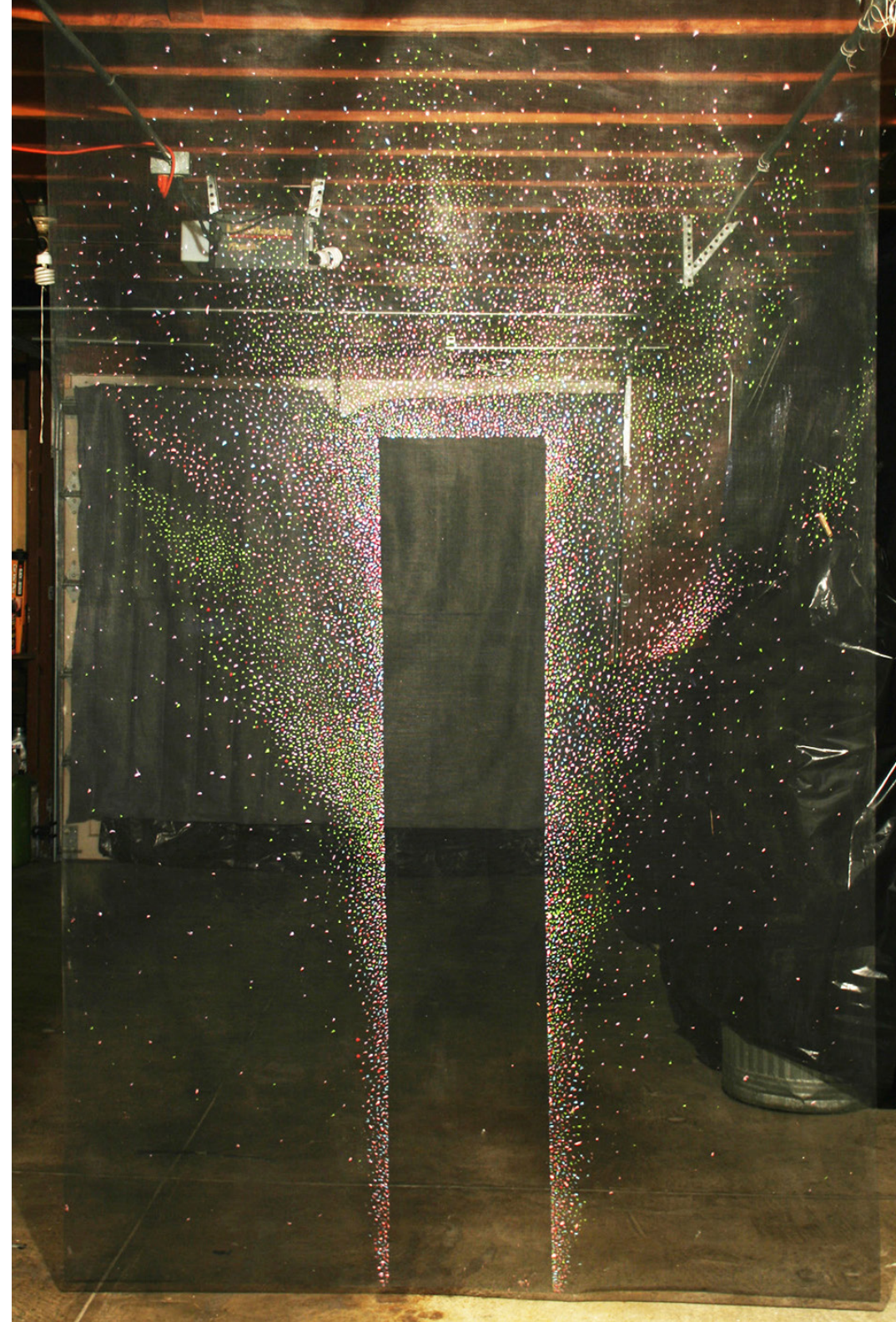
Light Fan, 1999
2' x 2'6", Mixed media.



Tip Toe, 1999
28" x 24", Mixed media.



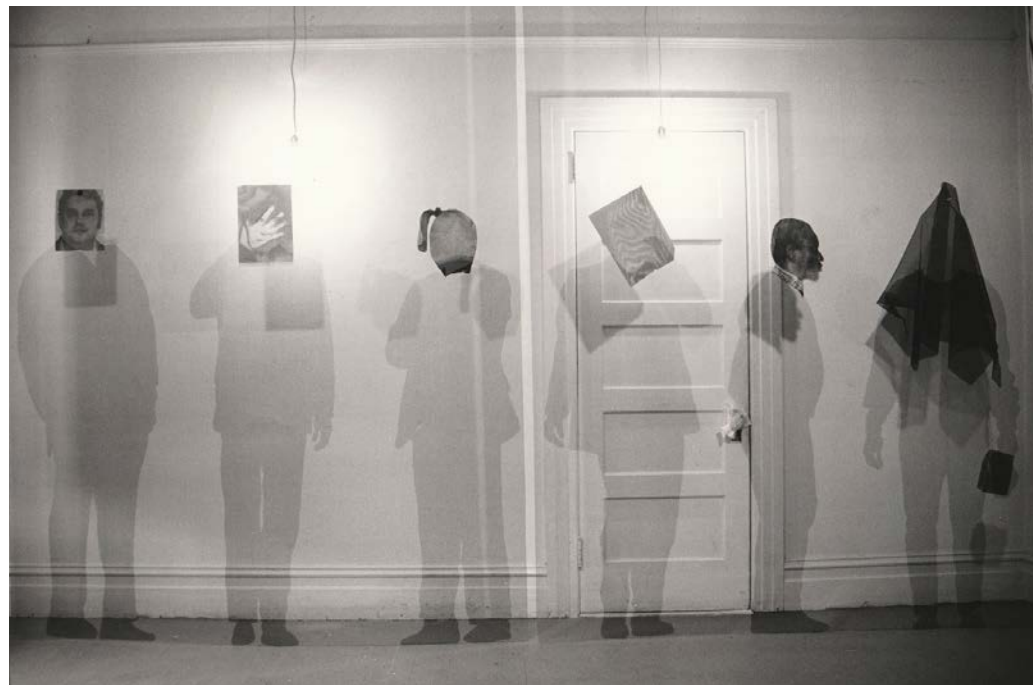
Rectangle Float, 2013
8' x 5', Acrylic on fiberglass netting.



Standing Bar, 2015
8' x 5', Acrylic on fiberglass netting.



Line Up, 1987
120" x 252", Acrylic on fiberglass netting, with plastic, nylon, cloth, envelope, 3 light bulbs, and photocopies of photographs. Exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY on black wall surface.



Line Up, 1987
exhibited in home in San Francisco, CA with white walls.

I installed a standard piece of lumber and then painted an image on netting that shows the tree branches spreading in shadow. Then the shadow of the lumber is cast on the shadow images of the branches to connect the present and the past states of the tree.



Let Ya See My Fan (Left) 1988
144" x 72" Acrylic on fiberglass netting, with lightbulb, flasher, thread, plastic, photocopy of photograph and wood.

Shadow Tree, (Right) 1988
144" x 72" x 72". Acrylic on fiberglass netting, with wood, nylon and lighting. Exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art. NY, NY



Shadow Tree, (detail)



Each Time I See You, I Feel It Could Be the Last Time, (Left) 1987
60" x 120" x 24", Acrylic on fiberglass netting with TV set, table, tablecloth, aluminum cane, and lighting. Exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art. NY, NY

Rembrandt's Cloth Makers, (Right) 1988
84"x 108". Acrylic on fiberglass netting and canvas, and pencil and ink on plastic, with wood, nylon and lighting.



Each Time I See You, I Feel It Could Be the Last Time, (Detail view)



Holding My Own, (Left) 1986
72"x 48", Acrylic on fiberglass netting, with lighting.

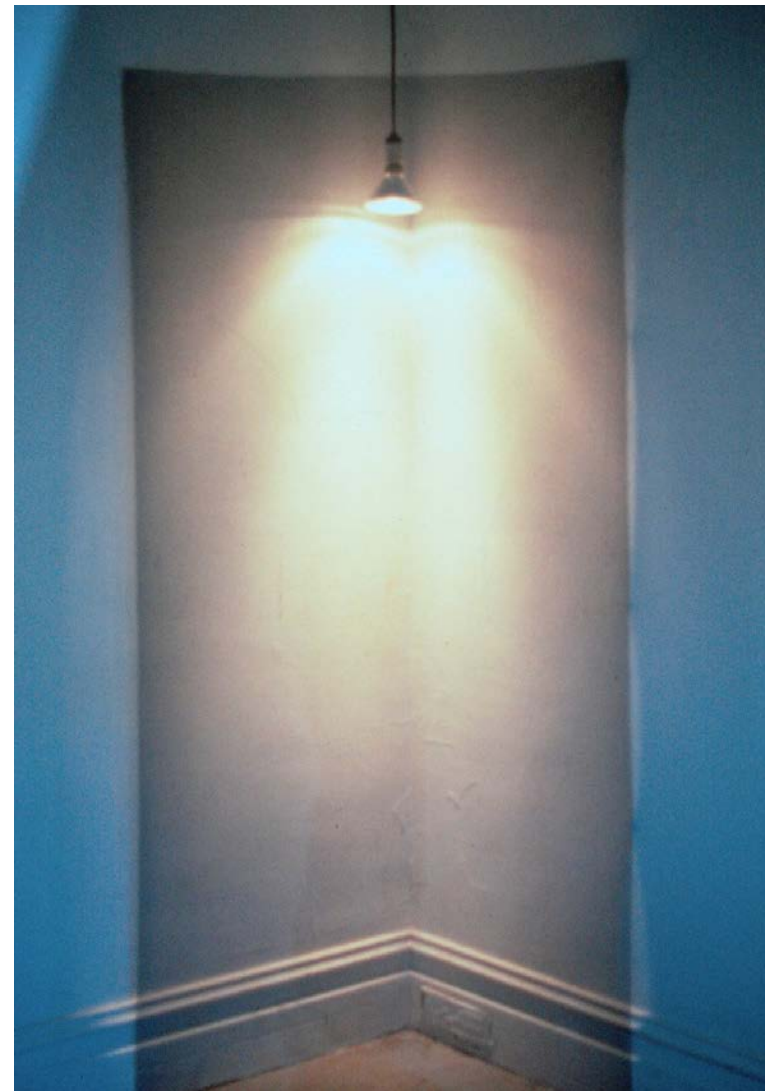
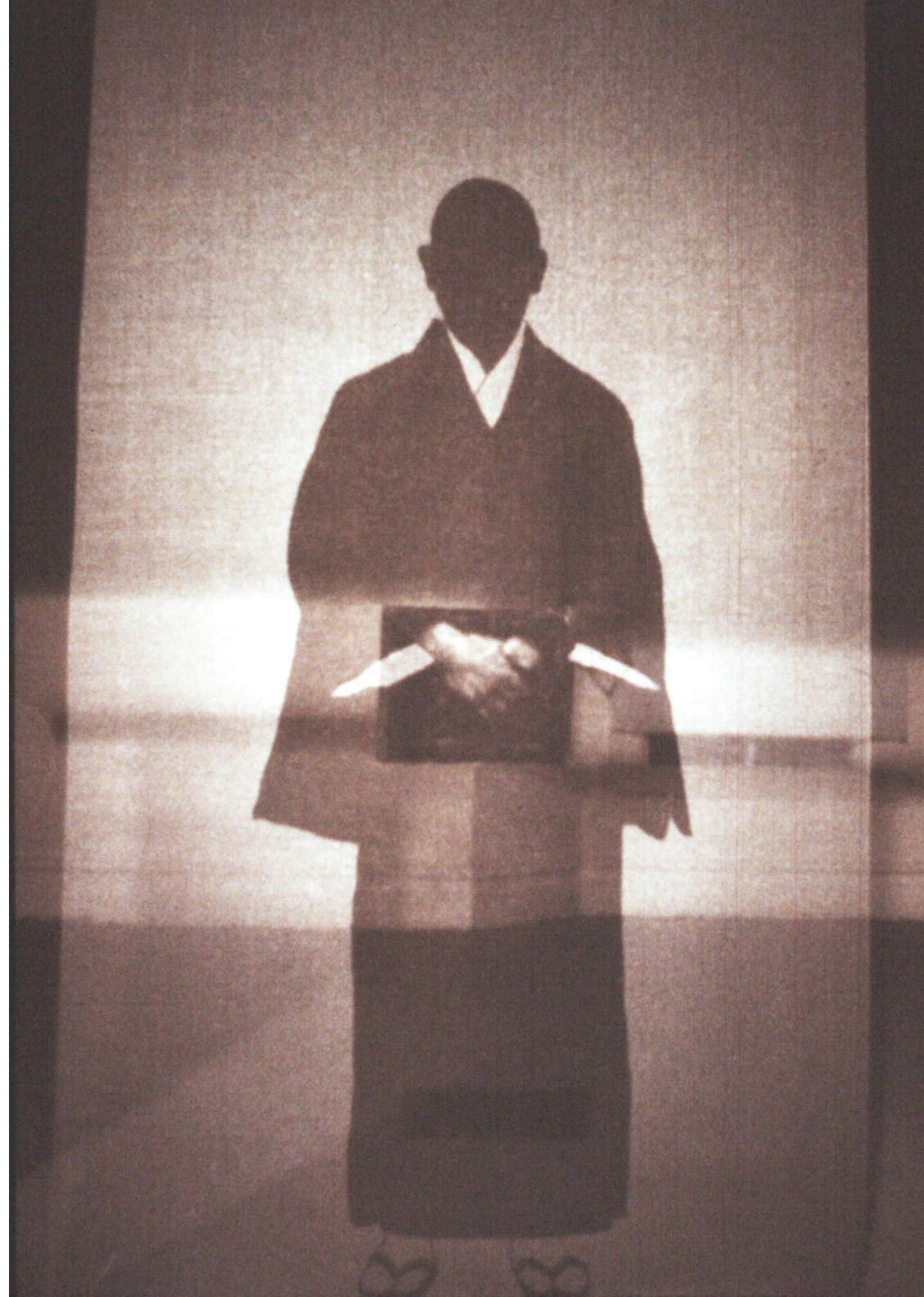
Laura, (Middle) 1986
72" x 48", Acrylic on fiberglass netting, with cloth, nylon, plastic and lighting.

Grandmothers, (Right) 1988
96" x 84", Acrylic on fiberglass netting, with marquissette, plastic, nylon and wood, 5 photocopies of photographs, and lighting. Exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art.



Grandmothers, (detail)

Suzuki Roshi, 1987
72" x 48", Acrylic on
fiberglass netting, with
wood and lighting, black and
white photograph. Exhibited
at the Whitney Museum of
American Art. NY, NY



On/Off, 1987
72" x 48", Acrylic, enamel, spray paint, and marker on fiberglass netting, with light bulb and flasher. (View 1 & 2).
Exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art. NY, NY



Part 3:

Art in public spaces allows for being in community with others. These projects for the City of San Francisco draw inspiration from sunlight, cloud formations and the passage of time.



Governor Edmund G. Pat Brown Building. *Light & Shadow Dome*, 1988 Public Art Installation, San Francisco, CA

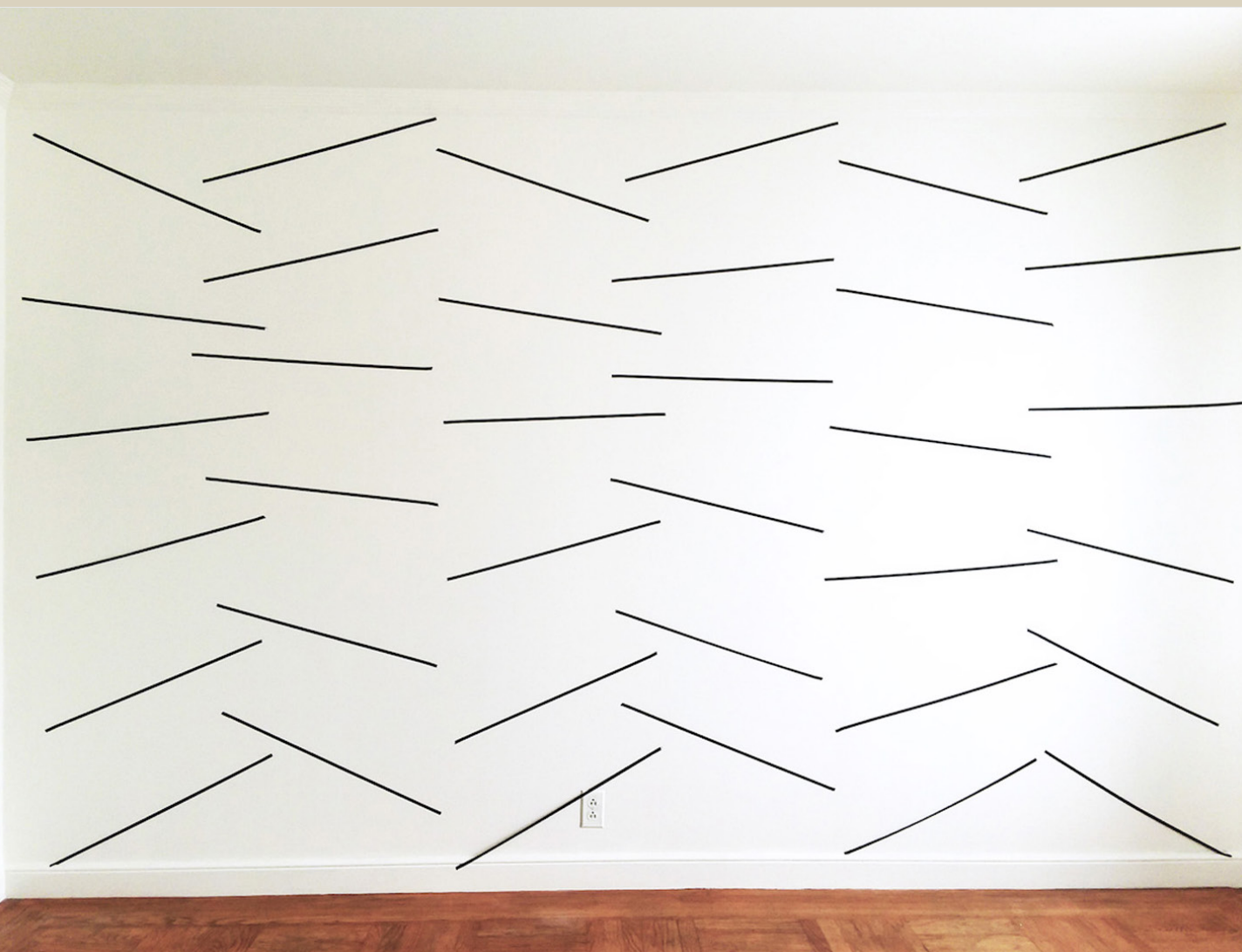


Light Clouds, 1994 San Francisco Fire Station #2,
42'9 x 6'8, Public Art Installation, medium: ceramic frit glass, San Francisco, CA



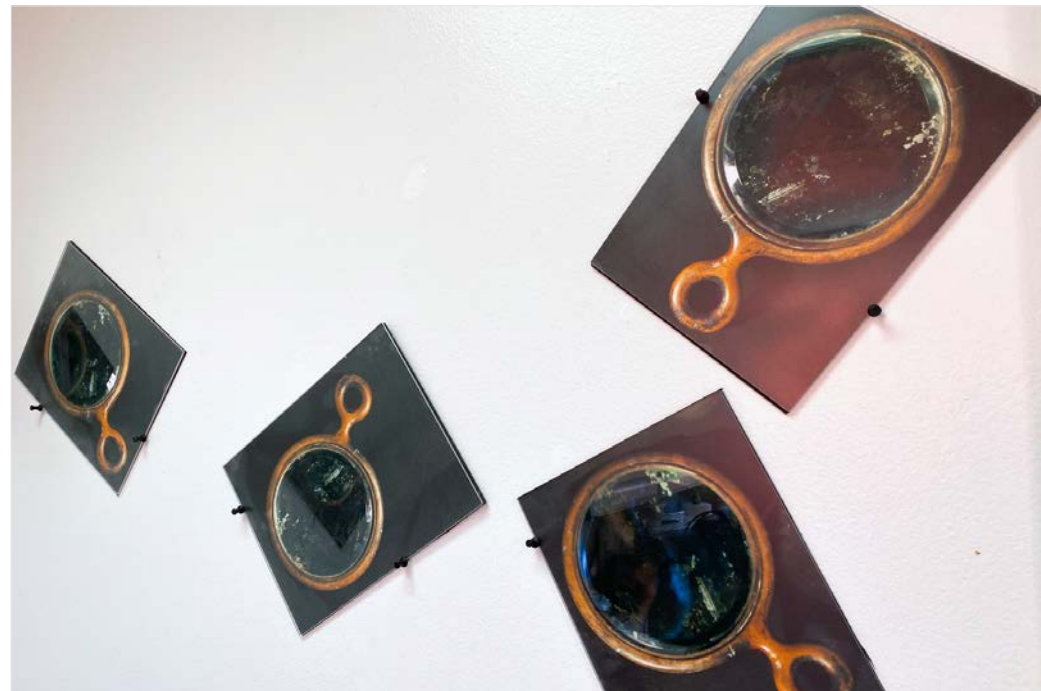
As the earth revolves around the sun, it creates a movement of light that casts formations of clouds that loom from the street up to the firehouse structure. The cloud formations are from the Sung Dynasty which relate to the community of San Francisco Chinatown.





Part 4:

Illusion, memory and present tense have always been elements in my work. These projects involve a wide variety of materials that fully integrate the installations within the given space.



Point of View, 2017
Size variable, color digital print & mixed media.



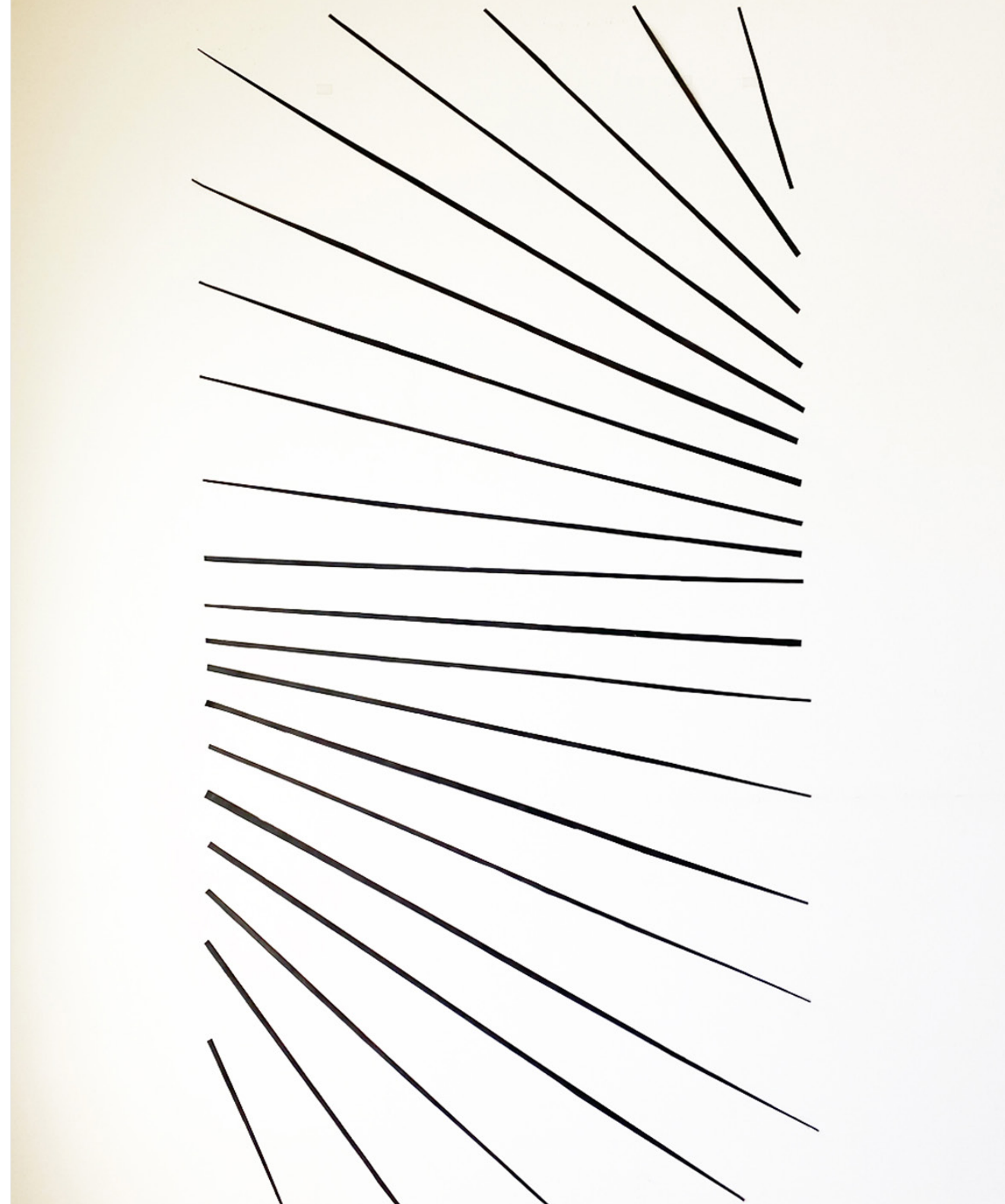
The Light is Up, 2018
8' x 11.5", Photos.



Untitled 2, 2019
8' x 8', Black tape, paper and
acrylic paint.



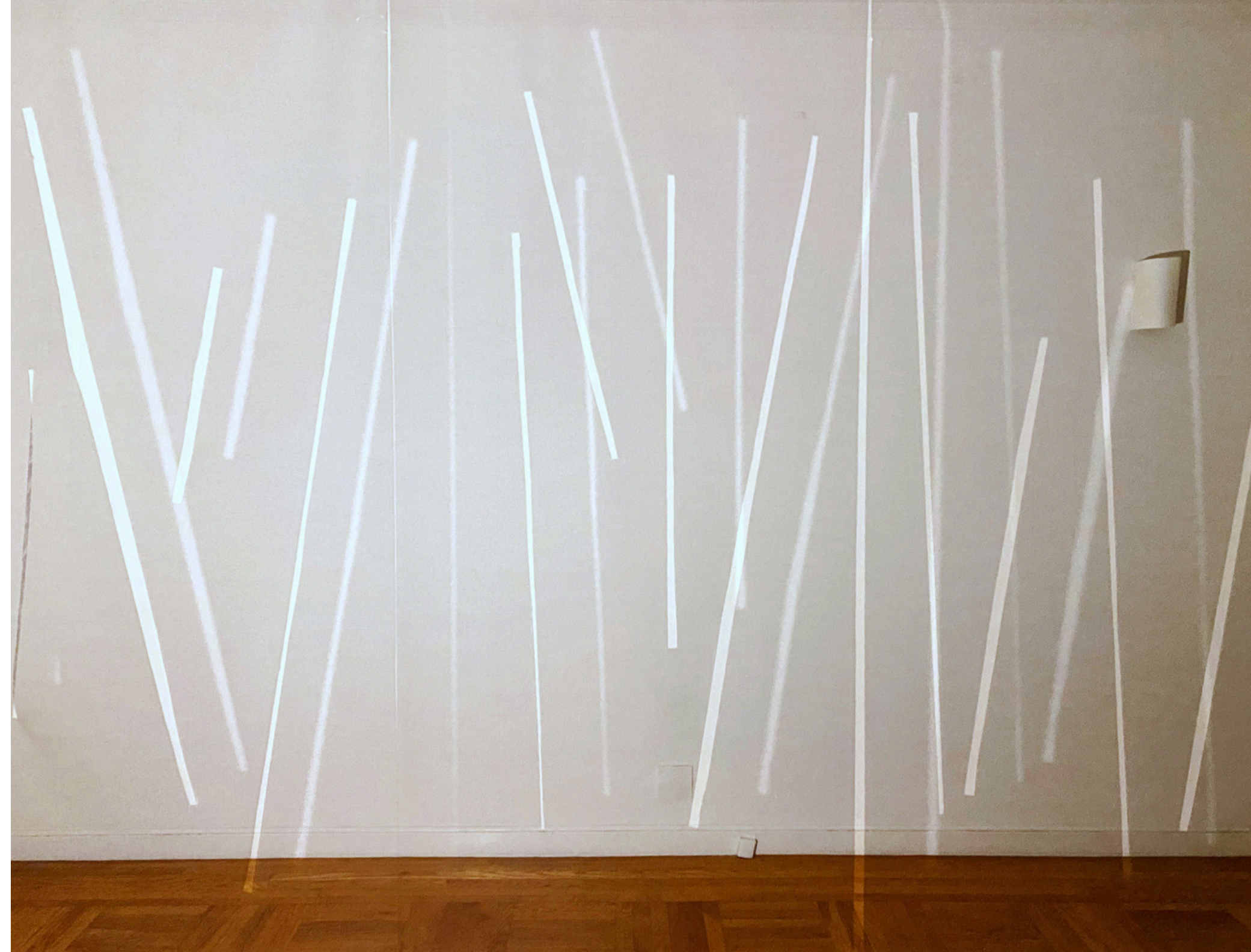
This Way, 2021
8' x 4', Acrylic on film.

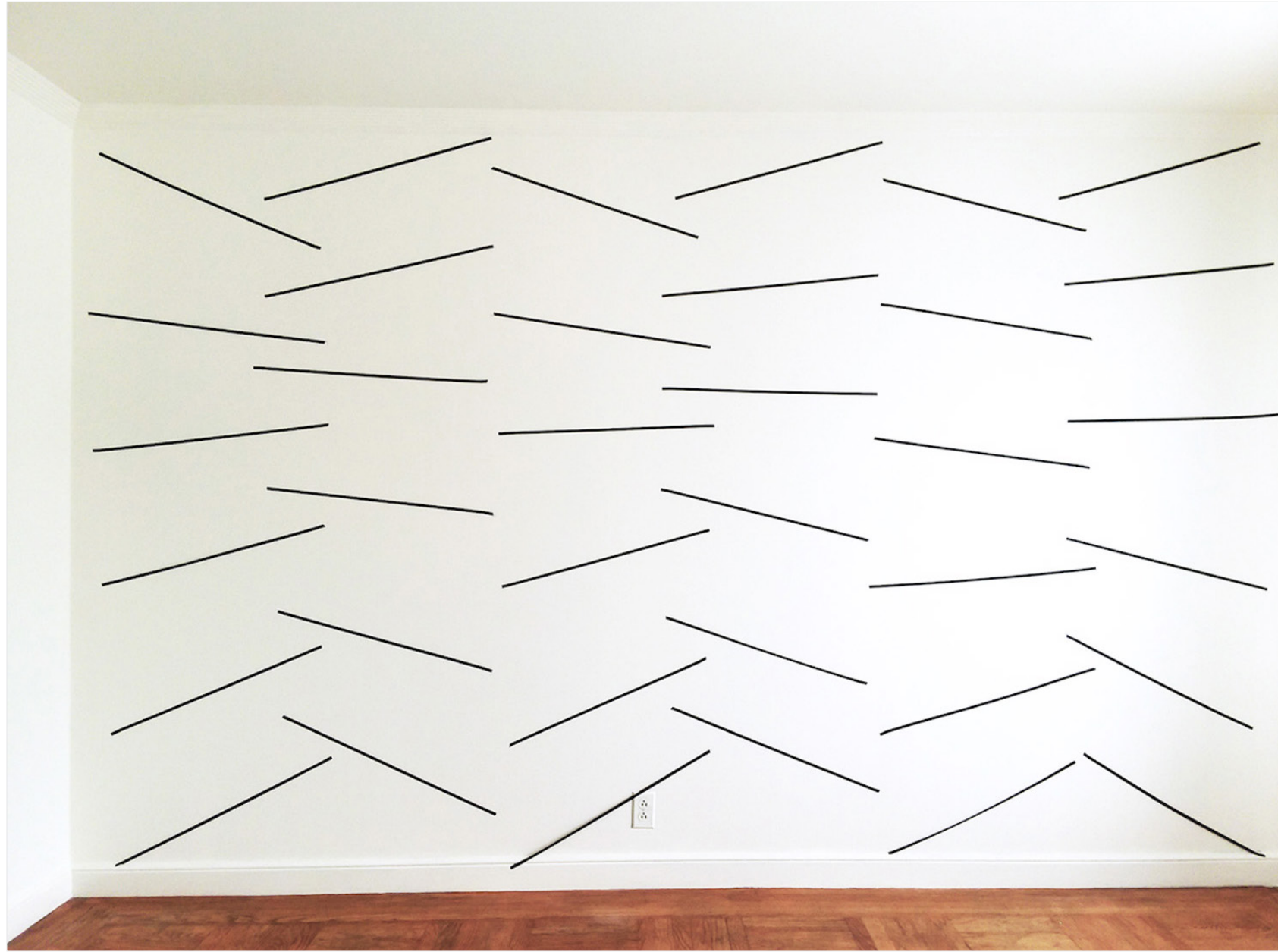




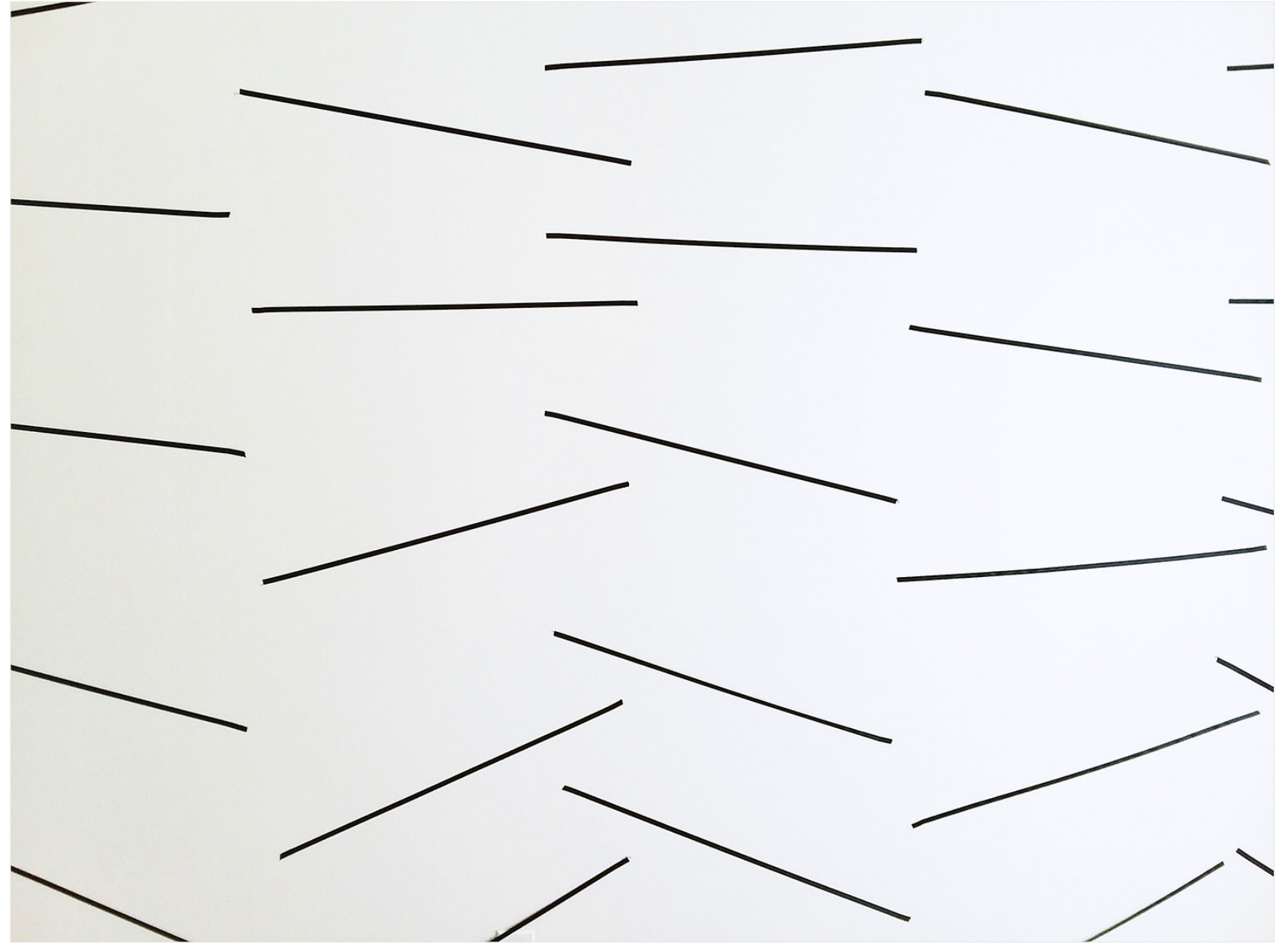
Empty Stick, 2021
Netting and wooden stick
8' x 2' x 16".

Light Walk, 2021
12' x 9' netting installation.





Black Screen, 2018
8' x 12', Acrylic on polycarbonate.

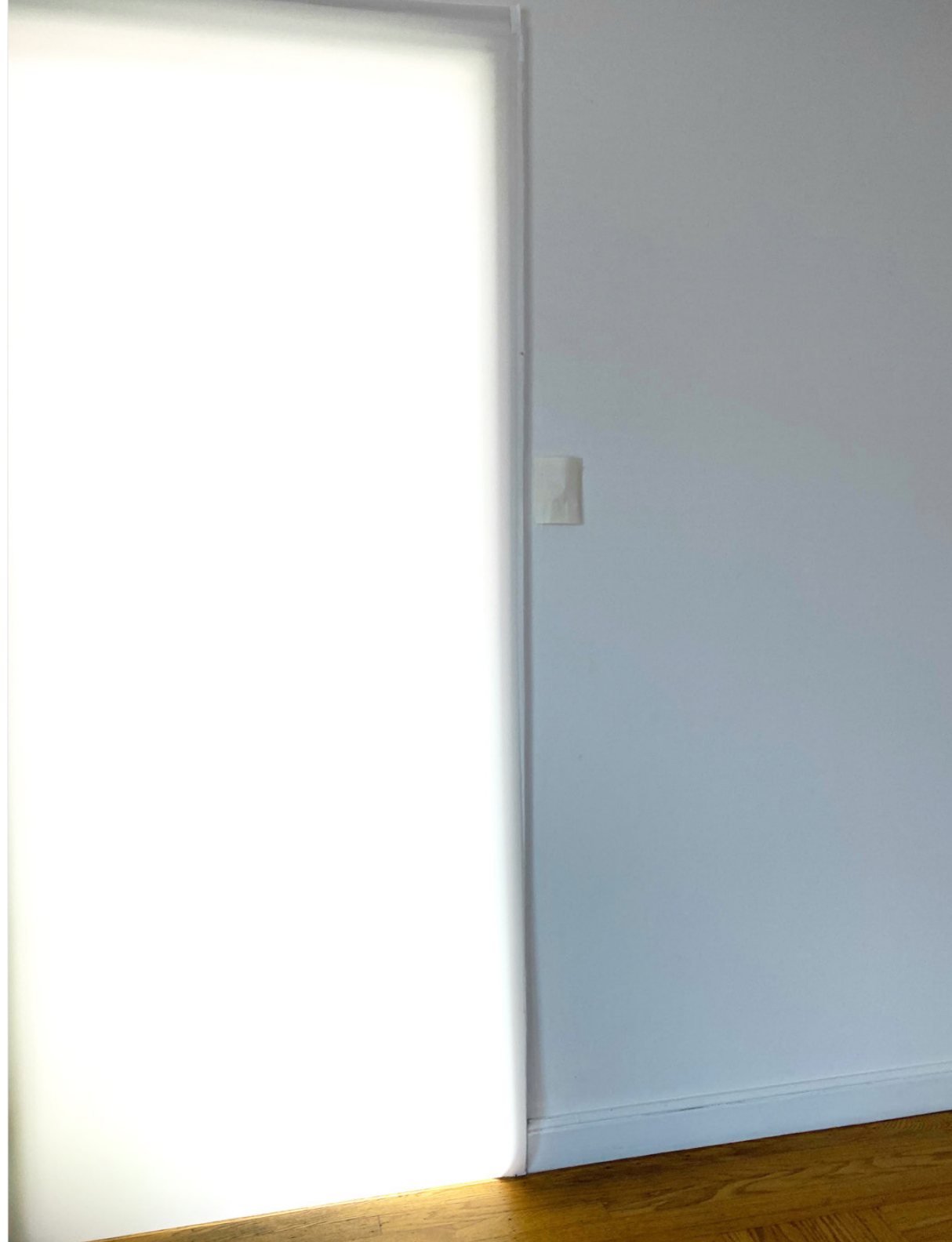


Black Screen, (Detail)

Dark Corner, 2020
7' x 3'. Mixed media.



Morning Night, 2020
7' x 3'. Mixed media with sunlight.





Lost Sister, 2014
15" x 60". (Installation view 1) Series of 64
Photo collages, Exhibited at the Berkeley
Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.
Permanent Collection. Berkeley, CA

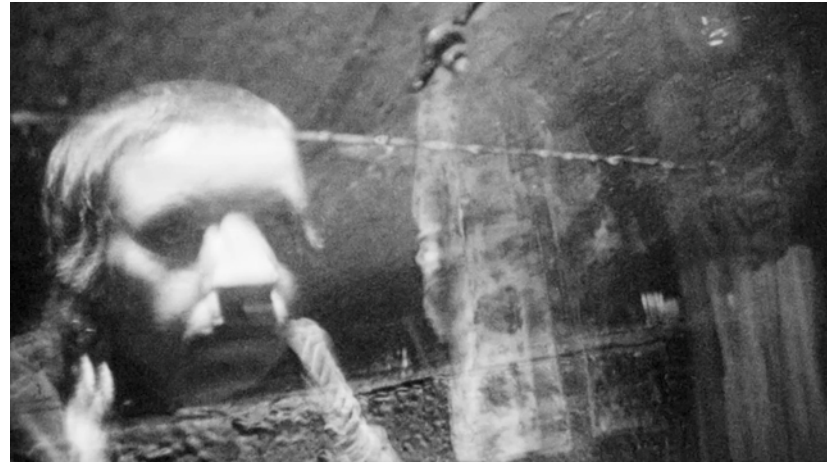
Lost Sister,
(Installation view 2)

Lost Sister, (Detail)



Part 5:

Time-based works and installation have been a continuous thread throughout my practice. These works are both single-screen and installation reflecting a movement towards a direct experience for the viewer. My ultimate goal is for the time and space of the work to be the same as the viewer occupies.



Stills from *Working Class*. 1975
14.5 minute black/white film with sound. *Canyon Cinema Collection*.



Stills from *Same Difference*. 1975
17 minutes color film with sound track by Terry Fox. *Canyon Cinema Collection*.

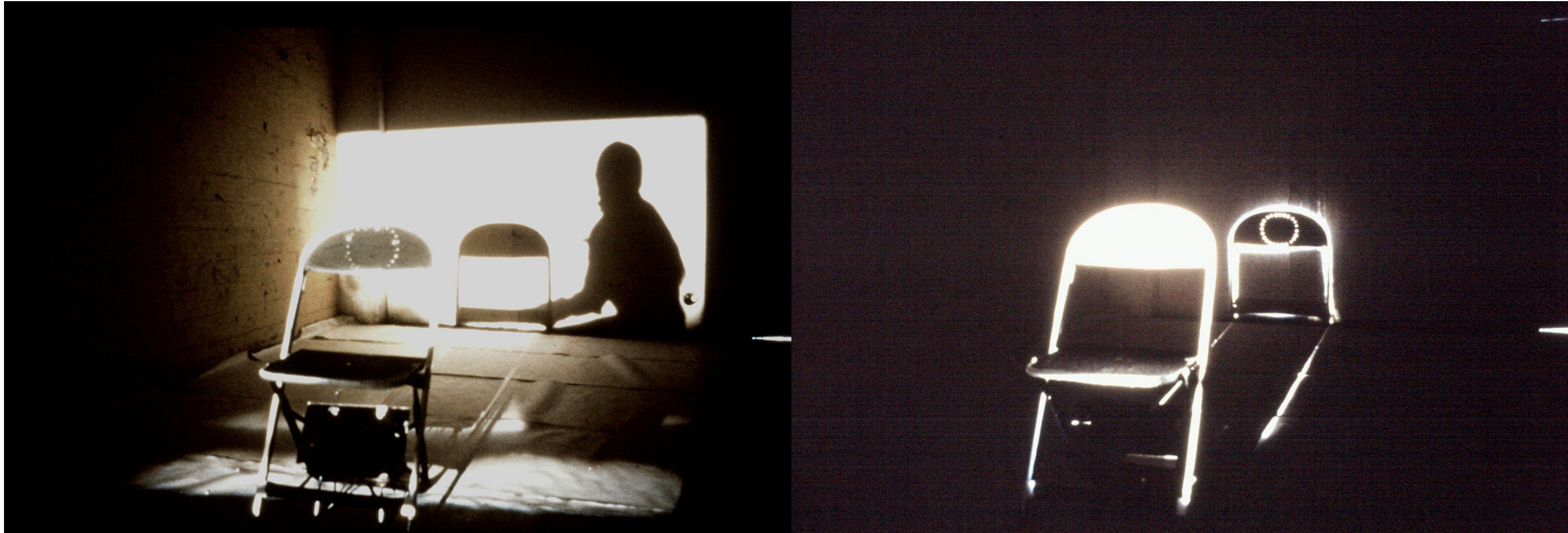


Stills from *Tea for Two*. 1970
5 minutes black/white film with sound. *Canyon Cinema Collection*.



Stills from *Twin Peaks*. 1977
50 minutes color film with sound. *Canyon Cinema Collection*.
Exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Normally, single-screen work is a passive viewing experience for the viewer. My motivation in these installation works is to bring the viewer into a primary experience through the use of ordinary objects like a folding chair. The viewer is free to move around the work and is not placed in the passive role of viewing a movie. They are part of the same time and space.



Shadow and Chair, 1979
10.5 minutes, film installation with sound. 7x 10'
Exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York

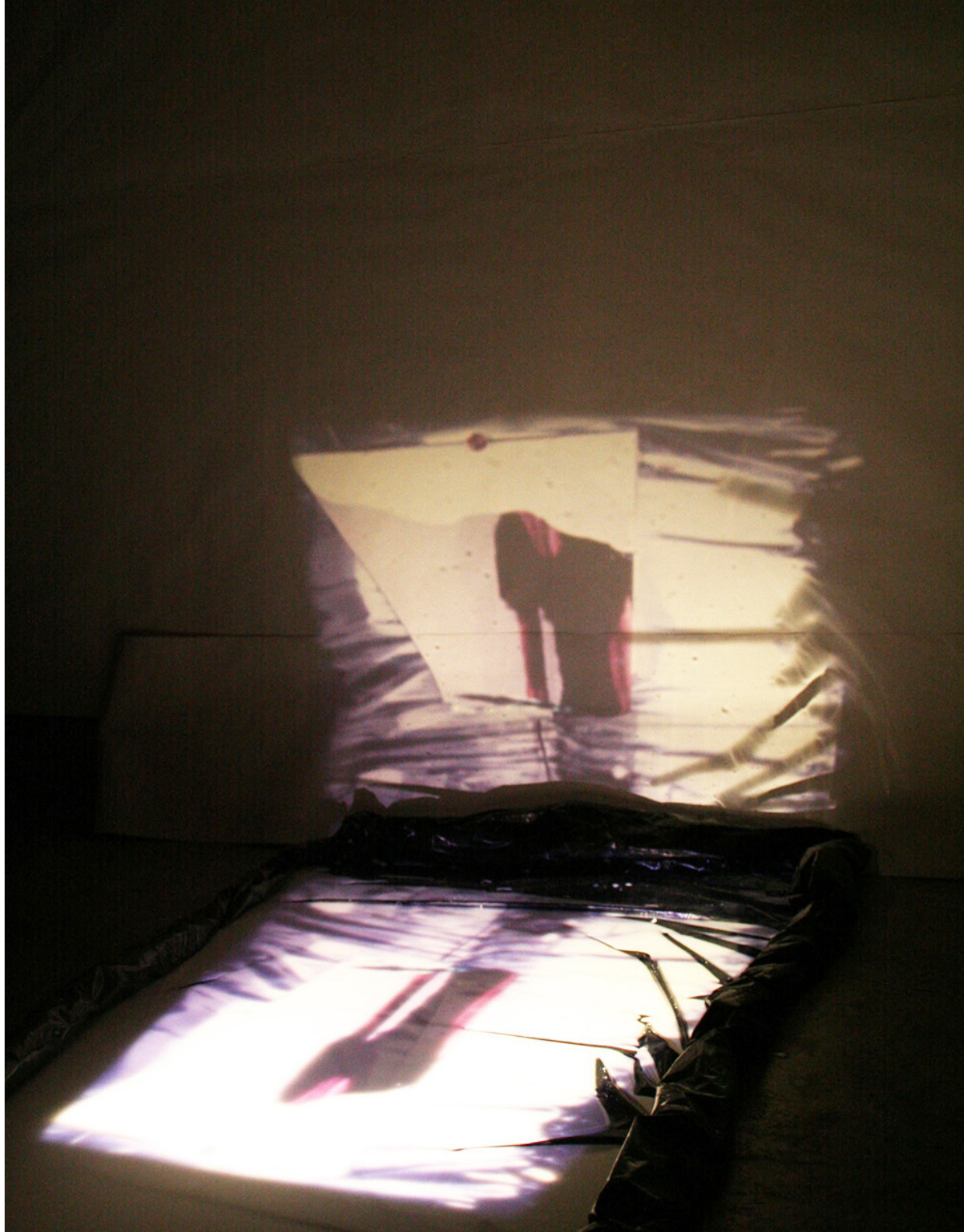


Moon Stand, 1980
13 minutes, film installation with sound.



Philip Whalen, 1981
8 minute black/white film with sound. *Canyon Cinema Collection*.

Puddle, 1982
7 minutes color/film installation
5' x 5' x 10'.

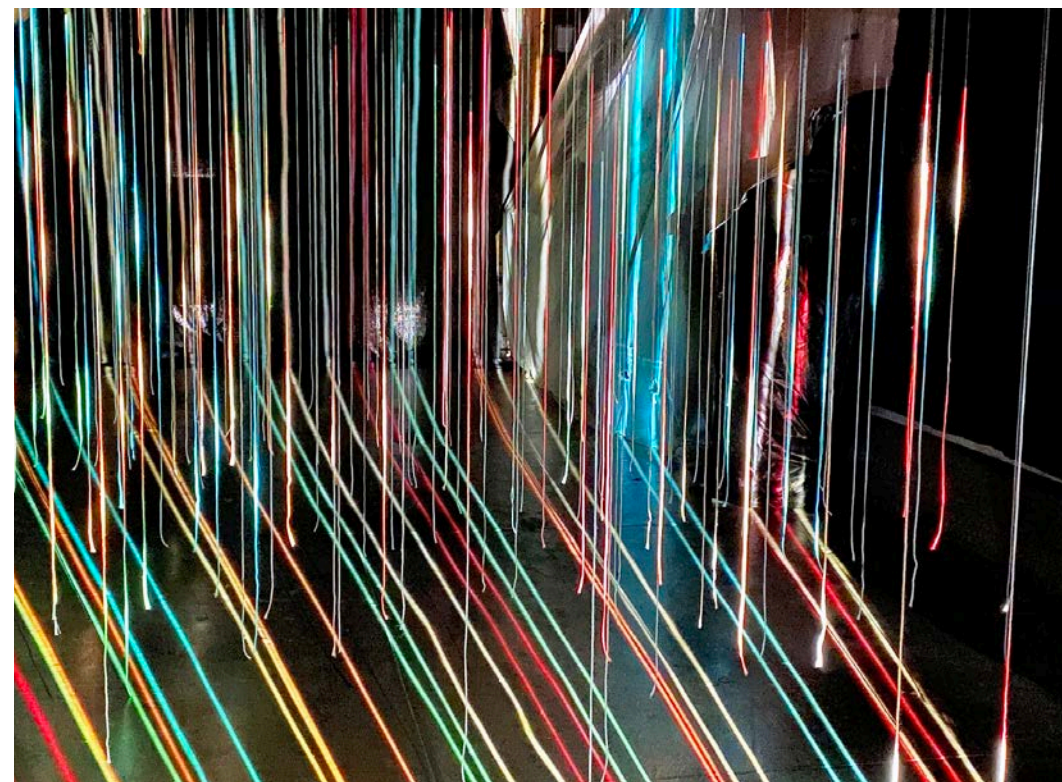
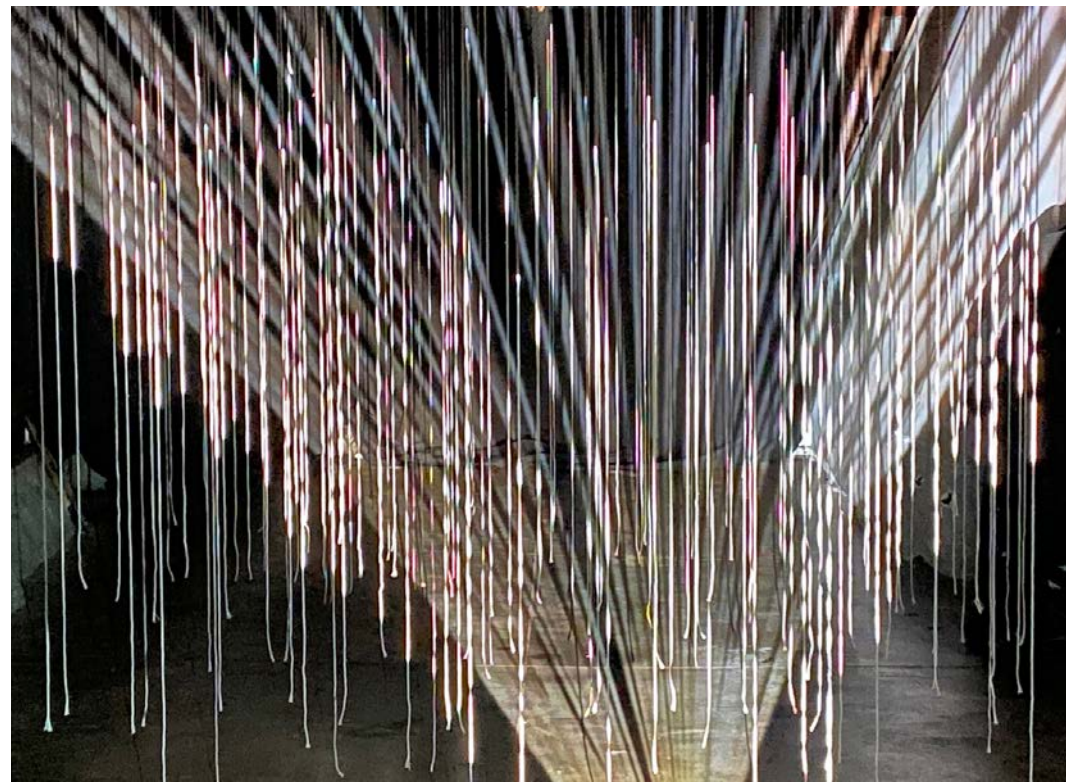




Al Wong in the studio working on the *Fire on Line* video installation.



Stills from *Fire on Line*, 2021
13.5 minute video installation. Projected on to 150 strings. 13' x 7' x 8'.



Stills from *Fire on Line*, 2021
 13.5 minute video installation.
 Projected on to 150 strings. 13' x 7' x 8'.

AI Wong CV

1972 Master of Fine Art, San Francisco Art Institute
1960-62 Additional Coursework, Art Academy of San Francisco

Employment

1975-04 Fine Art Professor, San Francisco Art Institute (Retired 2004)
1990 Visiting Professor, Mills College
1978 Associate Professor, State University of Sonoma, Art Department
1975-77 Lecturer, State University of Sacramento, Art Department

Grants

2021 Lightpress Grant, Interbay Cinema Society
2018 National Film Preservation Foundation & UC Berkeley Pacific Film Archives Federal Grant Winner for preservation of “Twin Peaks”
1997 Flintridge Foundation Visual Artist Award
1986 John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship (for *Light & Shadow*)
1983 National Endowment for the Arts (for New Genres)
1984 Rocky Mountain Film Center
1975 American Film Institute

Advisory Positions & Memberships

1979-94 Zen Center, San Francisco, Member
1982-90 New Langton Arts, San Francisco, Artist Member
1984-86 The New Museum, New York, Artist Advisor Board
1989 Capp Street Project, Artist Advisor Board
1990 California Arts Council, Artist Advisor Board
1992-95 Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, Artist Advisor Board

Selected One Person Shows

1975 F&F Schule Fur Experimentelle Gestaltung, Zurich, Switzerland
1978 Millenium, New York City
1980 The Museum of Modern Art, New York City
Gallery Tamura Nishifukuda-cho 2, Kanda Chiyoda ku, Tokyo, Japan
1981 S.I.T.E., Inc., Film Installation, San Francisco
1982 Nexus Foundation for Today’s Art, Installation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1983 The Cooper Union, Visiting Artist Series, New York City
1984 New Museum, Workspace Exhibition, Installation (one month), New York City
1988 Whitney Museum of American Art, 11 Installations, New York City
San Francisco State Office Building, Light & Shadow Dome, Installation, San Francisco, California
1991 Zen Center, San Francisco
1994 *Light Clouds*, San Francisco Fire Station #2, 42’9L x 6’8D, Public Art Installation, medium: ceramic frit glass, San Francisco, California

2001 “*AI Wong*,” Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco
2013 “*AI Wong; Twin Peaks*,” San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California
2018 “*Lost Sister*,” University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archives
2021 “*Out of the Vault: Twin Peaks*,” Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archives

Selected Group Exhibitions

1967 Expo 67, Montreal, Canada, Representing U.S.A., films by young people
1975 V International Festival of Cinema, Quebec, Canada
1976 Dallas / Fort Worth & San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Exchange DFW / SFO Pacific Film Archive, University Art Museum, Berkeley, California Celebrating Americans Bicentennial, San Francisco Art Institute, An American Essay (OTHERSOURCES)
1977 FILMMUSEUM, Vienna, Austria
LaPAGODE, Paris, France
FILMMUSEUM IM STADTMUSEUM, Munich, Germany
1980 The 1980 Asian American Film Festival, New York City
1981 EXCHANGE Show, Installation, LACE in Los Angeles & S.I.T.E. in San Francisco
1984 New Langton Arts, Film Installation, San Francisco, California
San Francisco Art Commission Gallery, Shadow Drawing, Great Gifts, San Francisco, California
1985 Mini Galeria, Shadow Installation, Zurich, Switzerland Kunst Museum, Shadow Installation, Bern, Switzerland
1989 Museo de Arte Moderno, Cartagena, Columbia, South America

Centro Colombo Americano, Madellin, Columbia, South America
Centro Colombo Americano, Bogota, Bogota, Columbia, South America
Museo Arqueologico La Merced, Cali, Columbia, South America
Centro de Arte Actual, Pereira, Columbia, South America
Mincher / Wilcox, San Francisco, California
1991 The Museum of Modern Art, New York, “25 Years Millennium, Film: Tea for Two
1992 25 Years Millennium, Barcelona, Spain
1995 “Old Glory / New Story: Flagging the 21st Century,” CAPP Street Project, San Francisco, California
“Old Glory / New Story: Flagging the 21st Century,” Santa Monica Museum, California
“Facing Eden: 100 Years of Landscape Art in the Bay Area,” DeYoung Museum, San Francisco, California
1997 “On the Rim,” Transamerica Pyramid Lobby, San Francisco, California
2000 “Light Fantastic,” Walter McBean Gallery, San Francisco, California
2001 “Osaka Triennale 2001,” Contemporary Art Space Osaka, Osaka, Japan
2002 “Wish You Were Here!” A.I.R. Gallery, New York, NY
2003 “Wish You Were Here Too!” A.I.R. Gallery, New York, NY
“20th Annual National Juried Exhibition, Berkeley Art Center, CA
2004 “Wish You Were Here III!” A.I.R. Gallery, New York, NY
2013 “Solid Concept,” Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
2014 “Paris Photo,” Los Angeles Art Fair, Represented by Gallery Paule Anglim, Paramount Picture Studios, Los Angeles California
2015 “RETROSPECTIVE – Paule Anglim (1923 -2015)”, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, California

2016 “Long Shadows: Al Wong / Terry Fox / Gary Beydler,” Artists’ Television Access, San Francisco, California
“LUX Salon: Found Yet Lost – Rare American Experimental Films in the LUX Collection.” Sunday, January 17, 2016, LUX Distribution, London UK

2018 “Bay Way,” University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archives “Bay Way 2,” University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archives

2020 “Congruence,” Summer 2020 online exhibition, I Like Your Work podcast.com

2021 “16th Curated Artist Registry Exhibition”, White Columns, New York, NY

2021 “Sheffield Doc/Fest,” International Film and Arts Festival, Sheffield, England, UK

2022 “*Twin Peaks*,” University of Chicago, Film Studies Center, Chicago, IL

2022 “Gan Jue,” South China Art Museum, online exhibition, Guangzhou, China

Permanent Collections	
1968	University of California at Berkeley, Sound Tape Composition
1970	Yale University, Dr. Walter Brown, Film: <i>Tea for Two</i>
1975	Firenze, Italy, Art Tape/22, Video Tapes of 5 Films
1977	American Film Institute, Film: <i>Twin Peaks</i> , Los Angeles, California John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, Washington, D.C., Film: <i>Twin Peaks</i>
1984	San Francisco Art Commission, Fence 42 x 7, <i>Light and Shadow</i> Installation, San Francisco, California Lyn Gumpert, Former Curator of New Museum, New York, Drawing Ann Hatch, Former Director of CAPP Street Project, Shadow Installation, San Francisco, California
1986	San Francisco Zen Center, San Francisco, California
1988	Ann Walker, Director of Artspace, San Francisco, California San Francisco State Office Building, Van Ness & McAllister, <i>Light & Shadow</i> Dome Installation, 11x15 San Francisco, California
1994	<i>Light Clouds</i> , San Francisco Fire Station #2, 42’9L x 6’8D. Medium: ceramic frit glass
1995	Richard Mendelsohn, member of the Board of Directors, CAPP Street Project, San Francisco, California
2004	Mark Waskow, Private Collection, New York, New York
2017	University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archives (64 photocollage series titled Lost Sister, work on paper Square Burn, and the following 10 films: <i>Discount House</i> , <i>69 Cents a Pound</i> , <i>Tea for Two</i> , <i>Moving Still</i> , <i>Same Difference</i> , <i>Working Class</i> , <i>Screen</i> , <i>Projector & Film</i> (film installation), <i>Puddle</i> (film installation), <i>Twin Peaks</i> , <i>24 Frames</i> .

Bibliography

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University of California Berkeley Museum & Pacific Film Archive, “Present Tense,” April 6, 2018.

Interviews

Zimbardo, T: Sunlight and Shadows: Al Wong in Conversation. SF MOMA Open Space Blog. May 3, 2013.

Valentine, J: Film Out of the Proscenium: An interview with Al Wong on Zen and Film Installation. May 5, 2006.

Reviews and Articles

Frock, Christian: Museum Highlights. SF/ARTS. May 2018.

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive: Al Wong: Lost Sister.

Zimbardo, T: Al Wong: Twin Peaks. SF MOMA film screening announcement.

Sing Tao Daily Newspaper, San Francisco: Article on Al Wong, July 16, 1998.

Chinese Daily News: Article on Al Wong. pg. B4: June 19, 1998.

International Daily News, Los Angeles: Article on Al Wong. pg B1: June 19, 1998.

Sing Tao Daily: Article on Al Wong. pg B3: June 19, 1988.

Solnit, R: Review of a Mincher/Wilcox Gallery show that Al Wong was in. Artweek: pg 3: July 1, 1989.

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Martin, F: Saturday in Manhattan: Two Friends at the Whitney. Artweek: February 18, 1989.

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Hays JB: Drawing Broadly Defined. Artweek: October 13, 1984.

Keller M: Perforated Spaces: Installations on the corner of Film and Art. Bay Guardian After Dark: vol 18: no 42: pg. 22: August 8, 1984.

Savage-Lee C: Expanded Film. Artweek: 1984.

Lissa A: Variations on a Timeless Theme. Artweek: December 10, 1983

Burnham LF: Moon Stand. High Performance: no 5: Spring-Summer 1982.

Savage-Lee and Lipzin JC: Exceptions to Predictability. Artweek: March 20, 1982

Graham, Jr. WC: Performance Tales of Two Towns. Art Com: pg. 26: 1981.

Savage-Lee C: The Reality of Projection. Artweek: August 16, 1980.

Haller R: Al Wong, Victor Grauer, and Frank Gillette. Field of Vision: no. 4: pg. 25: Fall 1978.

Cowan B: Notes from the New Cinema. Take One: no. 6: July 1978.

Michaelson E: Twenty-six Filmmakers – A Polyexpressive Puzzle. Artweek: September 24, 1977.

Ahlgren C: Canyon Cinema Co-operative Welcomes Independent Films. San Francisco Examiner & Chronicle Datebook: pg. 27: February 27, 1977.

Moore P: A Lone Wolf in Filmmaking. The Sacramento Union Newspaper. pg. B7: April 25, 1976.

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San Francisco Art Commission/Centro Colombo Americano (Exhibit Catalog), 1989.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City: 11 Installations, 1988.

Jones, M: Film Installations: Anthony McCall, Paul Sharits, Bill Lundberg, Al Wong (Exhibition Catalog). Akron: Emily H. Davis Art Gallery, University of Ohio, 1987.

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The New Museum, New York: Workspace. 1984.

New Langton Arts: 1985 New Langton Arts (Exhibition Catalog). pg. 24

New Langton Arts: 1984 New Langton Arts (Exhibition Catalog). pg. 21

10 Years of Living Cinema: 1982 (Exhibition Catalog). pg. 37.

80 Langton Street: 1981 (Exhibition Catalog). pg. 29.

New York Museum of Modern Art: Cineprobe; an Evening with Al Wong, 1980.

San Francisco Art Institute: Four and Seven (Exhibition Catalog). Exhibit curated by Al Wong. 1977.

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