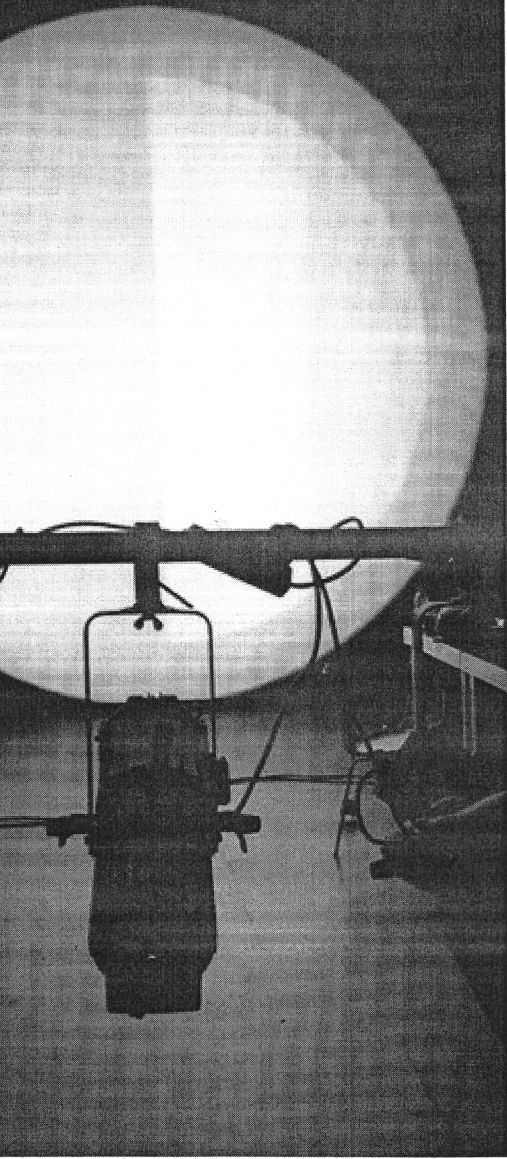


When li



Reflecting Light is a fanzine, fan magazine for those who, like us, are admirers of *light*. Who are we? We are a group of *lighting* designers, working internationally in the performing arts, who collaborate on a

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When light hits the fan

Reflecting Light is a fanzine, a fan magazine for those who, like us, are admirers of *light*. Who are we? We are a group of *lighting* designers, working internationally in the performing arts, who collaborate on a research project at KASK School of Arts Ghent. Our research concerns – as you might have guessed – *light*.

Light is everywhere. It reveals and shapes the world we live in. Everything we see, every colour, form or texture we perceive, the atmosphere of a space, even the mood we are in, it all depends upon *light*. In the arts as well, many (if not most) of the disciplines use *light* as part of their practice. However, the practice of applying *light* to a space (called *lighting* or *lighting design*) is rarely acknowledged as an essential signifier. It seems to be taken for granted. In a wide spectrum of artistic practices *light* paradoxically lacks its own visibility and the theoretical framework to be recognized as an agency that generates meanings.

That is why *Reflecting Light* wishes to build and broaden a living discursive practice around *lighting*. What do we mean by that?

To be able to understand *light* in its full complexity we need to develop a language. A living language that constantly shifts and changes shape, which follows a discursive logic that is not limited to writing or speech, and encourages to discuss *light*, dream about it, draw it, picture it... Building upon the experience of *light* and our practice of *lighting design*, we want to open new collaborative pathways through this shared form of communication.

Light plays a different role and is discussed accordingly in different artforms: It is what allows to imprint an image through a lens in film or photography, it is translated into painting, it shapes spaces for performances and installations, it is projected as an image on walls and objects of all shape and texture in media art... All these practices can inform each other.

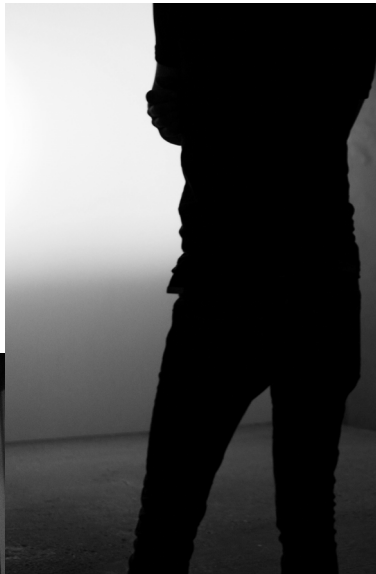
Light needs to be de-mystified. Knowledge about *light* as a phenomenon creates a more accurate appreciation of its true potential. Although it can be nice to be impressed by the magic of *light* and to enjoy the intangible nature of it, we should never consider *light* as a form of sorcery beyond comprehension or articulation. We should understand *lighting* design's wide capacity for artistic expression and dramaturgical structuring.

Understanding *lighting* design as an artistic practice will allow it to become de-instrumentalized, which means that miraculous, cosmetic or technical solutions are no longer at the centre of its practice. Although *light* may be used as a technical instrument for creating strong visual effects, this is not where its quality and dramaturgical agency is to be found. Using, transforming or applying *light* is a complex and shared practice, intimately connected to the creation of spatial and temporal experiences. *Light* itself could be seen as a performer that communicates directly to an audience or spectator instead of merely enabling (human) performers or objects to be seen.

Reflecting Light will be issued every few months and will document the work of this new research group. You are reading the very first issue now: as an introduction and opening of the conversation, we interviewed 7 *lighting* designers involved in this project. We asked ourselves 4 questions about our personal relation to *light*, the answers to which you can read in the following pages.

The second issue – to be released in June 2022 – will revolve around an essay by *lighting* designer Jan Fedinger on *The Ghostly presence of light* and the idea that ghosts, spectres and notions of hauntology, can provide us with a perspective that reaches past the idea of *light* as a simple and passive necessity towards an active attitude in the [co-]creation of art.





How does the light outside (in «the world») for you relate to designed light inside (in the theatre)?

Jan Maertens For me as a spectator, I try to forget about the "outside light world" in order to fully embrace the «inside light world", fully reset from scratch. As a light designer though, I often relate to the "real light world", but mostly in a pretty abstract way. I found out that my personal interpretation of «nature" or even "civil" phenomena - when installing references of it within the light design on a stage - do not necessarily match with how other peers in the creation (or the audience) imagine/interpret similar phenomena done artificially with "inside light". So I tend to keep it abstract, often non-referential or merely on a very personal level. And what interests me the most here is the organicity of "nature" (natural) phenomena in a time based referential frame rather than a more "frozen" pictorial approach... the chaotically dancing aurora borealis while watching with a frozen ass :-)... Or simply the wind making the wheat move in a field.

Henri Emmanuel Doublier I feel there is a strong link between outside and inside light. I spend a lot of time observing natural light, and phenomena like the reflection of the light on the water of a lake or how water spiders make light shine like a diamond. But also the movement of the shadows of a branch of a tree moved by the wind, or simply the quality of the light in a storm or in the fog, or the density of the sunlight at different hours. It gives me plenty of ideas for visual installations that I'll never make. But it stays in my toolbox and at times I go there to pick up an idea when I feel that it could work in a performance.



Is there work you would like to make on your own, not starting from a question of someone else?

Jan Fedinger When

I work with other artists, I always try to be a tangible or experienceable presence on stage together with the human bodies of the dancers. A presence that can be felt and experienced by the audience as a kind of present body with agency. A body of light. In my own work, the work that is initiated by myself, I try to depart from the idea to create solos for these performers. To stay within the logic of a [dance] performance but to give the whole stage to these otherwise 'invisible' forces without the need to share the space with human bodies. A way to describe these non-human performers, would be to see them as an extension of my body as a performer, like a prosthesis or remote controlled force. To follow the thinking of philosophers like Rosi Braidotti this would make them expressions of a [my] 'post human body'. However I prefer to see them as entities that have a life and a will outside of my own. These bodies for me are not limited to light, but can include sounds, moving scenic elements, smells, in short everything that influences the audience's experience. When I bring them together on stage, I of course program, construct and shape their behaviour. But as simple as this might sound, this is far from a one way street and much more a relation of constant conversation, negotiation and compromise, not too different from the relation of a choreographer to the human bodies s/he is choreographing. With these circumstances established I then set out to address the issues that I feel to discuss and share the fascinations I have. The experience of light stays a central and strong subject, as I find that this experience, especially in daily life, tells us a lot about our daily experience of life itself.

Bruno Pocheron Since the

beginning of 2020, I am carrying out a tricky electrical experiment, together with lighting, sound and musician colleagues, in which we directly power low voltage episcopes halogen bulbs (24V 500w) with sound signals (sound amplifiers). The sound signals make the bulbs flare, and the bulbs themselves act like tiny loudspeakers. I find a great beauty in that paradoxical convergence of light and sound in bulbs, that creates some sort of synaesthetic experience.



Tomi Humalisto I do occasionally get visual or conceptual ideas, which could lead to visual art direction, or they might be suitable for stage production. The aesthetics of these Ideas may lean on optical phenomena or otherwise some special quality of light. At the moment I am working on a performance together with another artist. For this work I was inspired by sci-fi, archaeology and non-visible wavelengths of light/radiation. I also have the desire to work with bioluminescence and phosphorus minerals. And to work with diamonds!

What recent optical illusion/effect have you found? What does it do, how did you use it in the performance, and how is it technically done?

Emese Csornai I recently made a loop of 4 different colours that individually pass as white, meaning our eyes can set its white balance on it as base value. The loop itself is very didactically showing the relation of hues, with prompt transition, matched luminosity. Once the loop gets predictable and understood, even boring, I started inserting blackouts, anchoring them on the meeting of two colours. I extended the duration of blackouts from there, in each loop, until the eye and brain couldn't coordinate their references and all colours blinking out of the blackouts looked the same. This was a very nice de-mystification point in the piece.

Henri Emmanuel
Doublier The most recent optical illusion



I found was in October. I was working with a Mexican choreographer, Scheherazade Zambrano, who was working with ice on stage.

I decided to make some filters out of ice for my stage light and to project the light of 6x1kw PC through the ice filter on a white screen all around the stage. (That also made the scenography). To make the projection of the ice filter sharp, I use the big lens of a 2kw PC that I fixed on a wooden floor stand and chose the good distance between the ice filter and the lens. It's like an old-fashioned overhead projector on a big scale. I don't use any other effect in that piece, just the timing of the ice melting and decomposing which creates the time dramaturgy of the performance. It was a long process, because the ice filters had to melt in exactly 52 minutes, so we had to make them in many different sizes and we had to experiment with them in real time. At the end, I colored them in a different kind of blue by mixing in food colouring.

Lighting design has many sub facets, which ones do you naturally focus on?

Tomi Humalisto If we are thinking of how Richard Palmer (1985) considers the functions of lighting design, I feel the following aspects come most natural to me:

- shaping stage and form
- composition of the stage picture
- establishing rhythm.

Outside of Palmer's framing, I have always been interested in dramaturgical structures and questions. This may be reduced to two simple questions: how does light itself change throughout a performance (= dramaturgy of light) and how can light participate in creating a multi-layered dramaturgy of the whole piece? I have also been increasingly interested in the materiality of light and in the kinds of ontological experiences special light qualities can create.



Reflecting Light Issue nr 1 – April 2022 When light hits the fan



Members of the research group: Emese Csornai, Henri Emmanuel Doublier, Jan Fedinger, Tomi Humalisto, Jan Maertens, Bruno Poche-ron Ezra Veldhuis, Bram Coeman & Geert Belpaeme.

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V.u. Geert Belpaeme

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When light hits the fan