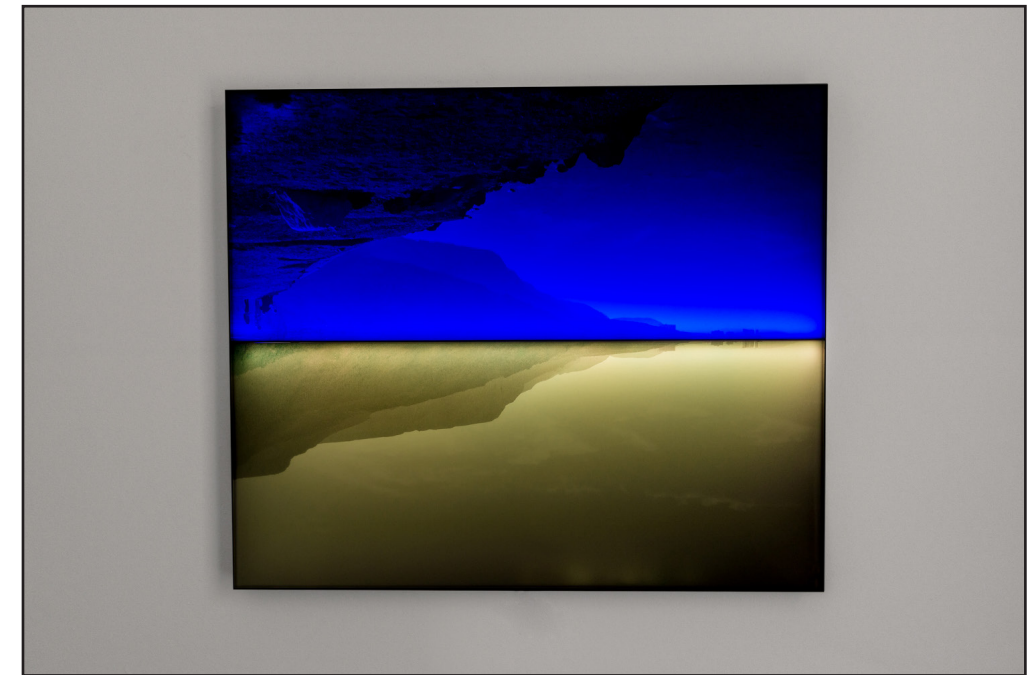




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NEW
ART

ILAN EL
Colours of Light



IMAGES > [Front cover] Ilan El, *Flash* [detail], 2017, transparent and opaque synthetic polymer resin, aluminium, LEDs, electrical component, 80 x 80 x 200cm. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

IMAGES > Ilan El, *Reflection* [installation view], 2022, transparent and opaque synthetic polymer resin, aluminium, LEDs, electrical component, 80 x 100 x 5.5cm.. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

ILAN EL

In conversation with Juliette Hanson

JH: What first attracted you to working with light, and how did you develop your skills in this field?

IE: I studied architecture at Tel Aviv University and completed the two-year apprenticeship required for registration. Soon after, I launched my practice, designing predominantly private houses. A year in, the focus shifted towards the interior design of hospitality venues. While working on a contemporary Japanese restaurant, the clients asked me to design and source all furniture and fixtures. They also asked me to incorporate chimes and other elements required to achieve better Feng Shui.

I suspended over 100 aluminium tubes to answer the brief; each was fitted with a

small light bulb to illuminate the 8 metre long bar underneath. I also positioned an air conditioning vent to blow air and set the flutes in delicate motion. I realised I could only experience their illumination when standing close and looking up. A perforation pattern was the solution. That has become a signature within my designs.

This life-changing opportunity turned out to be my first step into the world of lighting. A simple object can create an amazing emotional reaction, and it has resonated with me ever since. The experimental process of designing an object with a dual-mode of “existence” is fascinating; when it’s off, it’s an object; when it’s on, it comes to life.



IMAGE > Ilan El, *Colours of Light* [installation view], 2022. Image courtesy of the artist.
Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.



IMAGES > Ilan El, *Flash* [installation view], 2017, transparent and opaque synthetic polymer resin, aluminium, LEDs, electrical component, 80 x 80 x 200cm. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

JH: What are some of the most important things that you consider when you're designing lighting?

IE: The ideal way to illuminate a space is by creating contrasts. A multi-dimensional experience of a space is achieved by creating areas of darkness and light. When designing luminaires for a client's home, I first learn and understand how they live their daily lives. What tasks and activities are performed in each space? Which part of each space is used and when? Such insights inform the type of illumination required and its location.

Our business model is based on providing each client with the ability to customise our pieces to suit their needs, wants and desires.

JH: Your show is called *Colors of Light*, how do the works relate to that idea?

IE: The straightforward answer is that all of the works are illuminated with colour. The colours will be interchangeable and will be in constant motion. This relates to an idea that began during my Masters course when I was researching colour and light. I wanted

to enable the user to bring the colour of their choice into their space.

I made a piece called *Ora*, which allows you to select and mix the colours of light. I live with that piece in my living room and I use it every day. I learned so much about myself, for example, which colour calms me, which agitates me, which colour makes me happy. That last one is orange, by the way!

Physiologically we register light and colour on our retina differently, so we can look at the same colour but interpret it differently. The way we experience colour is really linked to emotion and also linked to culture and memories. It is symbolic and carries different associations for different people. So you can't generalise the effect it will have on some-one as that will always be personal.

JH: Can you tell me more about the *Introvision* project? There are a number of works in the show from this new series.

IE: Many years ago, I had this idea to somehow illuminate artwork to connect the lighting and the art in a way that also would have a level of interactivity to make it

playful. I decided to use a photograph that I took a long time ago in Tel Aviv. I was sitting on a cliff and photographing the horizon, half of the image was the ocean and the other half sky. I found this place very meditative and at first, this series was going to be called *Introspection*, but as it progressed it became more appropriate to call it *Introvision*, because it is primarily about what you can see.

There are many layers to these works. I have added more texture to the water and more clouds because I wanted to create depth. The image itself is printed on canvas in black and white that is mounted in an aluminium frame with LED lighting strips behind it, one facing up and one facing down. The colours of the lights change slowly and rhythmically creating a meditative ambience. I hope that people will sit in the space and experience these works over time.

JH: What inspired the other works in the *Introvision* series?

IE: I recently travelled to Jerusalem and spent time at the Wailing Wall, or the West Wall. I took a photo and captured wall and

sky equally, and it was a magical moment. The wall is very large, and very powerful. This work is quite different because it has religious connotations but this is not what interests me. The wall itself is magnificent in scale, it's beautiful and in every crack up to two and a half metres, there are millions of little rolled up notes holding written prayers or requests. It's a pretty amazing thing to experience.

Every visit to Jerusalem is beyond words. It's overwhelming sometimes and you feel - I can't explain in words - I don't want to say holiness because for me it's not; it's something different. It's probably the history, the thousands and thousands of years and you walk on those same stones.

Another work uses a photo I took as I travelled back from the Dead Sea, through the desert to central Israel. I was with a friend, she was driving and we took a turn and suddenly the mountains appeared, and the reflection of them on the water of the Dead Sea was incredible. The Sea is full of sulphur and minerals so it's not the water that we know, if you touch it, it's like touching oil, and there were no waves at



IMAGE > Ilan El, *Colours of Light*, [installation view], 2022. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.



IMAGE > Ilan El, *My Pride and Joy*, [installation view], transparent and opaque synthetic polymer resin, aluminium, LEDs, electrical component, 120 x 80 x 5.5cm. 2022. Image courtesy of the artist.
Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

all, so it was like a perfect mirror. I couldn't believe my eyes, so we stopped the car and I took the photo used in the work.

JH: When I came to see you in the studio, you mentioned that there has been a recent shift in your practice, moving from design more into the field of visual arts. I wondered if you could describe this shift in your work.

IE: I think the shift is more between me and me, because most of my clients already regard everything I do as visual or decorative art. Because I'm coming from design, I see it as design first and I use the language of design when I'm creating things, which is very pragmatic and materially driven. Everything has to be safe, easy to use and clean etc.

Art doesn't need to answer to those constraints, it doesn't need to be pragmatic. It doesn't need to produce anything but a feeling. That approach has been important and something that I needed for myself to be truly creative. Design still informs my work in order to create art that will produce an emotional experience for the viewer.

With design I think about where the work will be placed, who is going to use it and how. I don't think about that with art. The experience of the work can be good or bad, it can bring you to tears for example, whereas usually design has to fit a brief, be useful and exceed the client's expectations. A design brief comes from the client's head and heart, whereas the artworks I create come from my head, my heart and my soul. In a way I'm the client and my art presents my own story.

LIST OF WORKS

Western Wall Eastern Sky, 2022
transparent and opaque
synthetic polymer resin,
aluminium, LEDs, electrical
components, 123 x 44 x
5.5cm.
\$6,800

Reflection, 2022
transparent and opaque
synthetic polymer resin,
aluminium, LEDs, electrical
components, 100 x 84 x
5.5cm.
\$7,400

Heavy Light, 2022
transparent and opaque
synthetic polymer resin,
aluminium, LEDs, electrical
component, 100 x 80 x
5.5cm.
\$6,600

My Pride and Joy, 2022
transparent and opaque
synthetic polymer resin,
aluminium, LEDs, electrical
component, 120 x 80 x
5.5cm.
\$8,600

Flash, 2017
transparent and opaque
synthetic polymer resin,
aluminium, LEDs, electrical
component, 80 x 80 x
200cm.
\$8,600

Supernova, 2017
transparent and opaque
synthetic polymer resin,
aluminium, LEDs, electrical
component, 26 x 26 x 187cm.
\$5,800

Prices are inclusive of GST



IMAGE > Ilan El, *Supernova*, [installation view], 2017, transparent and opaque synthetic polymer resin, aluminium, LEDs, electrical component, 26 x 26 x 187cm. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

ILAN EL

Multidisciplinary designer Ilan El was born in Israel, trained and practiced as an architect before moving to Australia in 2005 to join RMIT's Industrial Design Masters program. In 2010 he established ILANEL Design Studio, a product design practice located in Melbourne, specialising in the design and production of bespoke luminaires and large-scale light-based installations. Interested in the experiential quality of light and its potential for positive psychological and emotional effects, El explores the colours of the visible spectrum to develop works with playful, interactive and automated elements.

El's installations and work have been presented at Melbourne Design Week (MDW 17 – Departures, MDW 18 – Decoding Design, MDW 20 – Light + Life, MDW 21 – Wisdom of Objects); Globelight, Melbourne (2013 – 2016); and the National Gallery of Victoria's 2019 Triennial. His large-scale commissions include an interactive lighting installation, '39 Steps' for the Justin Art House Museum, Melbourne (2019), a 13m long multi-tiered chandelier 'Deco Grandeur' for the Royal Bank Chambers, Melbourne (2015), as well as a variety of bespoke luminaires for high-end hotels and private residences across the globe.

<https://ilanel.com/>



IMAGE > Ilan El in the studio with *Stella*, 2021. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Lillie Thompson

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