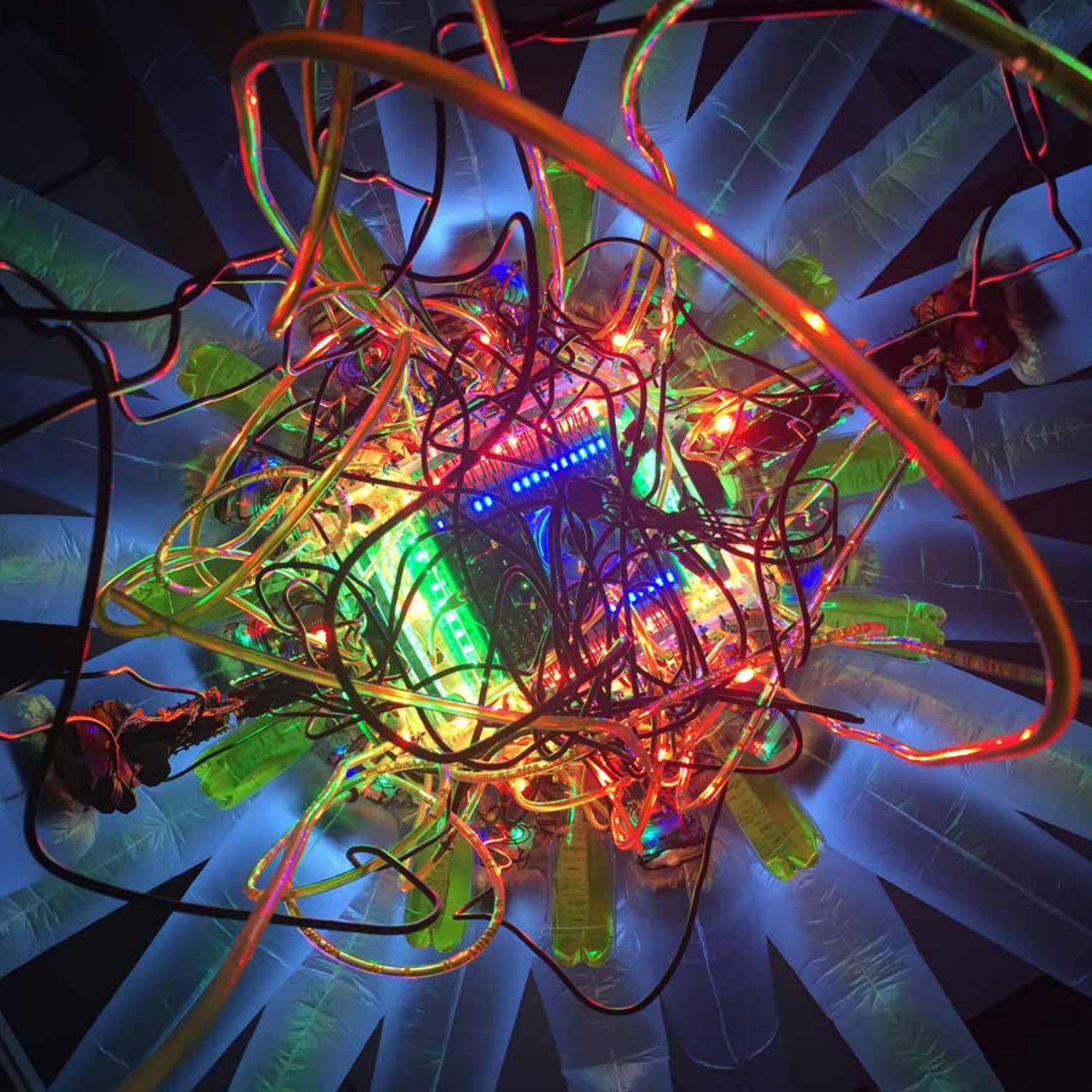




SHIH CHIEH HUANG:
SYNTHETIC TRANSFORMATIONS

SEPTEMBER 16 - NOVEMBER 19, 2016



SHIH CHIEH HUANG AND THE ART OF TRANSFORMATION

Shih Chieh Huang (b. 1975), a New York-based multimedia artist, creates installations featuring interactive sculptures assembled from a variety of materials, including LED lights, motion sensors, computer parts, screens, and mundane objects such as plastic bags and containers. With these humble materials, the artist creates an otherworldly environment populated by sculptures that respond to the viewer's presence with movement, sound, and illumination. Huang's work, which has been exhibited both nationally and internationally, exists at the intersection of art, science, and technology.

Spurred into action by the viewer's presence, Huang's sculptural assemblages respond in a way that is far from random. The artist electronically choreographs every movement of his assemblages, structuring a deliberate series of events that can be likened to a carefully calibrated dance performance or symphony. Light, motion, and sound are arranged into elaborate sequences, programmed through the "brain", a DMX 36 channel control system. Each sculptural element in his installation plays a role in the larger production, according to a predetermined electronic script. Equal parts imagination, theatre, and engineering, Huang's sculptures perform within a communal environment that immerses and enchants the viewer.

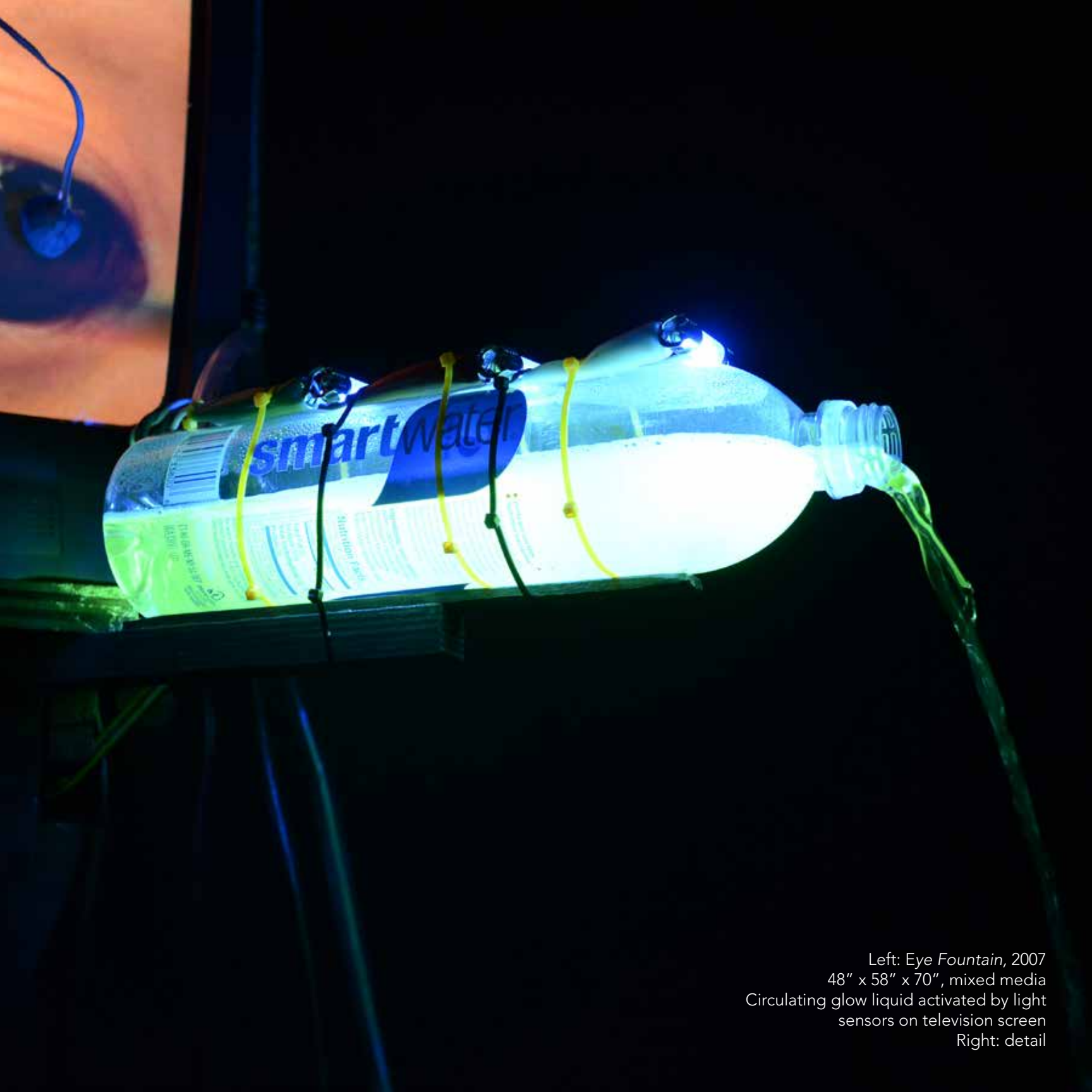
Shih Chieh Huang's key inspirations range from mass-produced plastic toys to mysterious deep-sea creatures. In his studio in Brooklyn, Huang keeps an extensive collection of mostly Asian-made small toys. In addition to occasionally providing parts for the artist's sculptures, these toys exist more broadly as a source of inspiration for the artist. Growing up in Taiwan, Huang was fascinated with the toys for sale at the night market, and was driven to figure out what made them work. At a young age he began disassembling these playthings and re-thinking the use of their parts.

That same curiosity about process and adaptation drove the artist to study deep-sea creatures, a topic he explored as a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellow in 2007. Drawn to deep-sea marine specimens in the National Museum of Natural History, Huang was inspired by their adaptive ability to produce light in an utterly dark environment, a process called bioluminescence. The light and movement these creatures bring to the dark void of the ocean's depths underpins Huang's "black box" approach to the gallery setting, whereas their larger capacity to transform and adapt parallels the artist's own creative processes.

Huang's work is an excellent fit for the Greater Reston Arts Center, which is positioned within a vibrant technology corridor buttressed by engineering, innovation, and ingenuity. Yet, far from being just a "techie" experience, Huang's work upends our daily experience with technology and household materials, and reminds us of the vast possibilities of both. Beyond that, it illustrates two critical functions of the artist in society: To re-envision and transform the mundane into the magical, and to illuminate the wonder and beauty in the world around us, whether natural or synthetic.

Holly Koons McCullough / Guest Curator

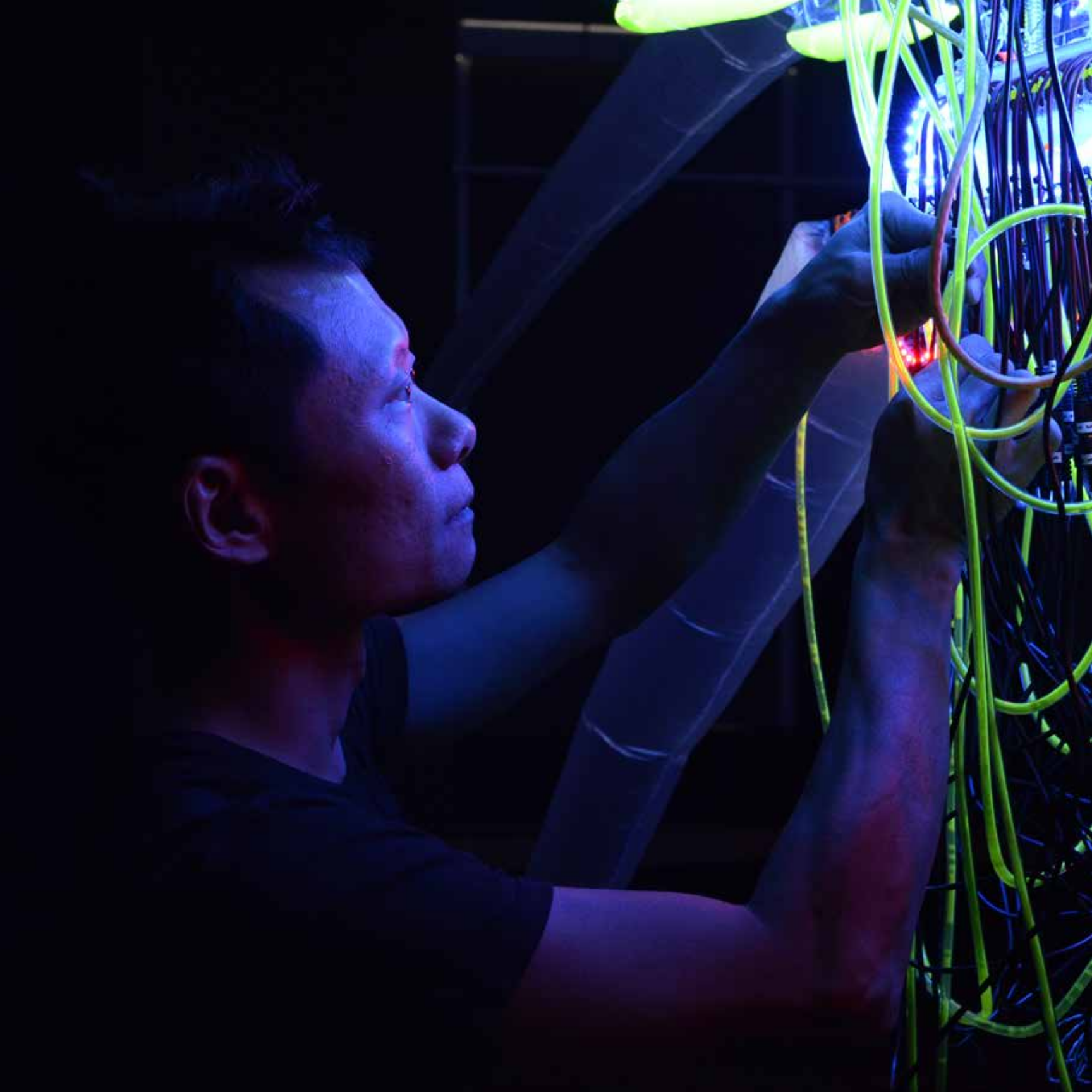


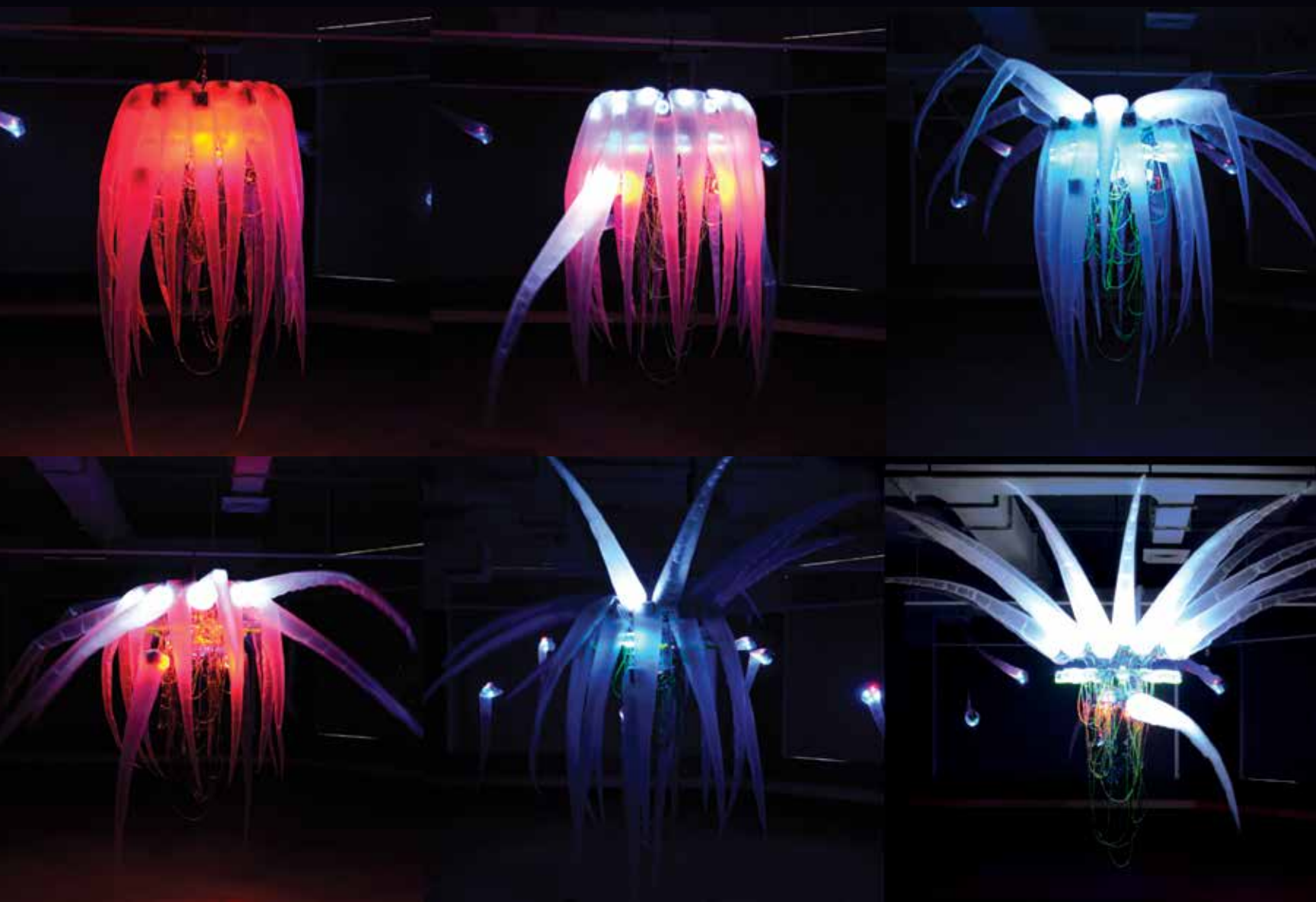


Left: *Eye Fountain*, 2007
48" x 58" x 70", mixed media
Circulating glow liquid activated by light
sensors on television screen
Right: detail

“My work focuses on exploring the unusual evolutionary adaptations undertaken by creatures that reside in inhospitable conditions. I create analogous ecosystems in my installations and populate them with organic living things made from common, everyday objects. I source my wholly synthetic materials from the mundane objects that comprise our modern existence: household appliances, zip ties, water tubes, lights, computer parts, cheap motorized toys, and the like. The objects are dissected and disassembled as needed and reconstructed into experimental, primitive organisms that reside on the fringes of evolutionary transformation. Computer cooling fans are repurposed for locomotion, Tupperware serves as a skeletal framework, guitar tuner is rewired to detect sound, and automatic night lights become a sensory input.”

Shih Chieh Huang

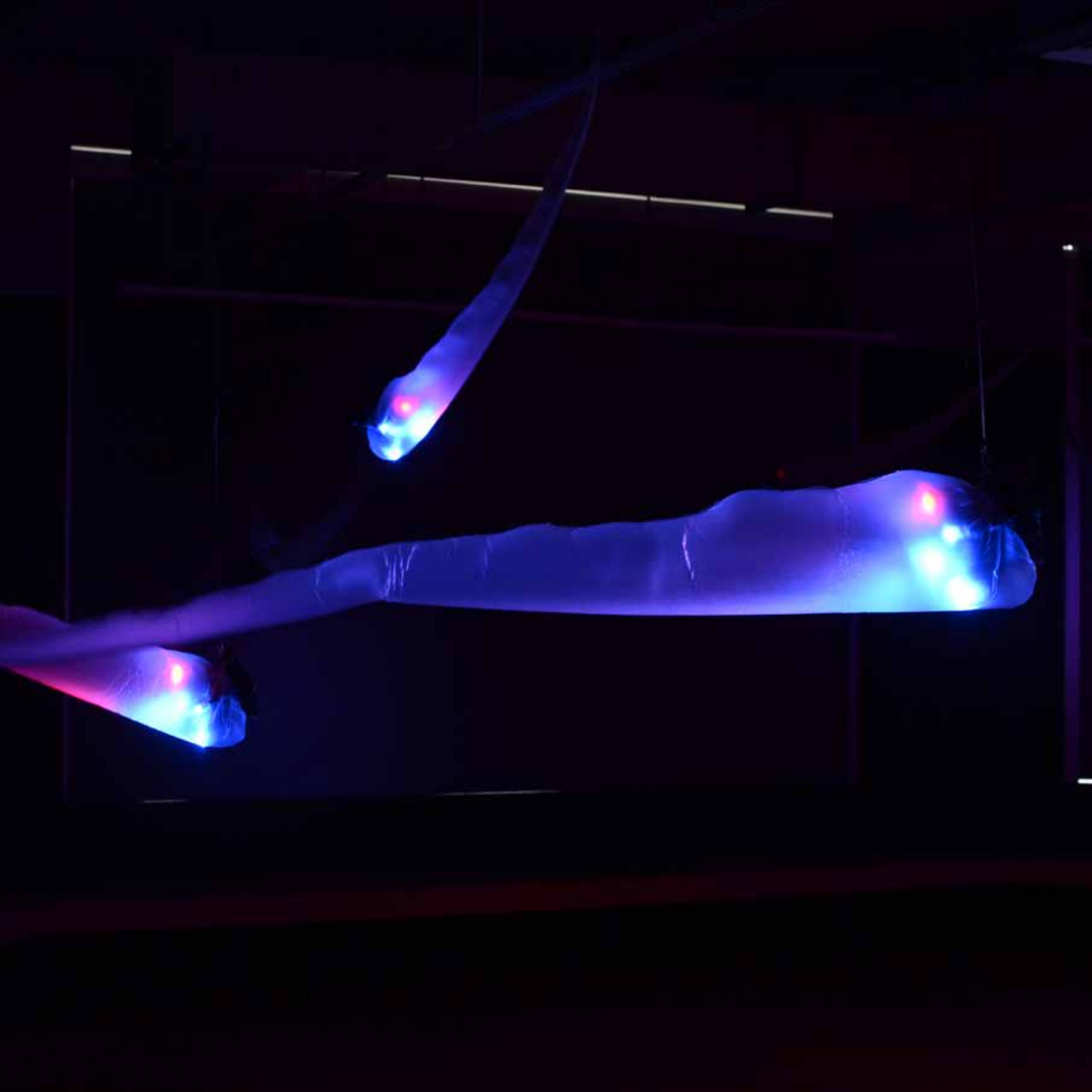




T-24-L and T1
Installation action sequence of inflation, light, and circulating glow liquid

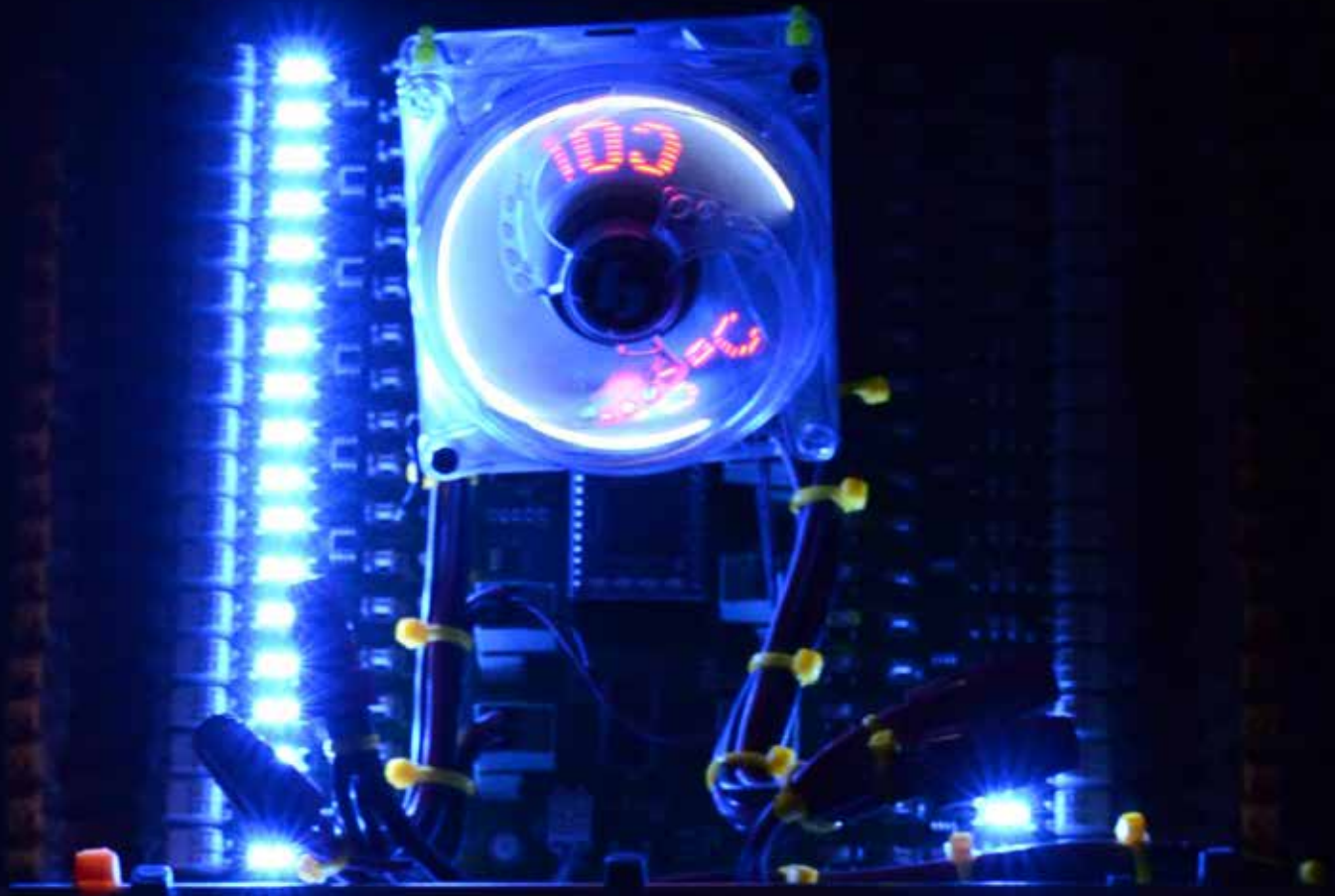


T-24-L, 2016
50" x 39" x 33", mixed media





T1 (installation detail), 2016
6" x 6" x 6" (before inflation), mixed media



Top: Control panel detail, "brain"
(DMX 36 channel control system)



Left: *BTB-Angel Eye Hanging*, 2016
4" x 4" x 4" (before inflation), mixed media
Right: installation view





T-24-L (artist programming inflation sequence with tablet)

The mission of the Greater Reston Arts Center is to enrich community life by promoting involvement and excellence in contemporary visual arts.

We gratefully acknowledge the leadership of our Board of Directors, and the valued support of our sponsors, members, and patrons. We are also grateful to the participating artist in this exhibition, who has contributed with patience and enthusiasm to its implementation.

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All photography by Sofia Blom and Stephanie Booth. Front and back cover: *T-24-L* installation, inside cover: *T-24-L* (detail)

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