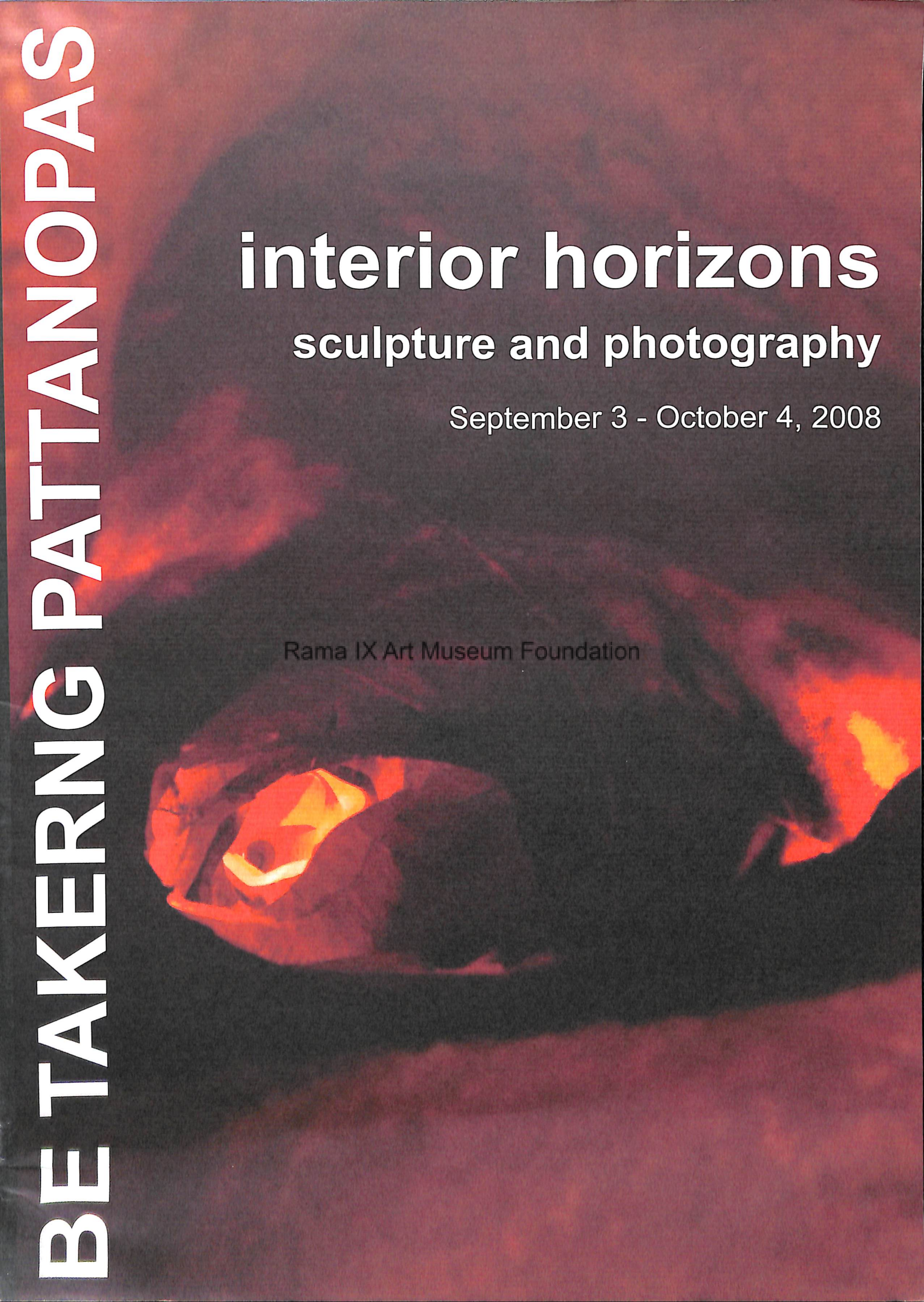




**BE TAKERNG PATTANOPAS**

# **interior horizons**

**sculpture and photography**

September 3 - October 4, 2008

Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

# interior horizons

by lawrence chua

"It is easy, starting with the worm, to consider ironically an animal, a fish, a monkey, a man, as a tube with two orifices, anal and buccal: the nostrils, the eyes, the ears, the brain represent the complications of the buccal orifice; the penis, the testicles, or the female organs that correspond to them, are the complication of the anal. In these conditions, the violent thrusts that come from the interior of the body can be indifferently rejected to one extremity or the other, and they are discharged, in fact, where they meet the weakest resistance. All the ornaments of the head, of whatever type, mean the generalized privilege of the oral extremity; one can only contrast them with the decorative riches of the excremental extremity of apes."

Georges Bataille, "The Pineal Eye," *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1985), p. 88.

I had always considered my body a sort of home until I fell seriously ill. For over a year, all the things in which I believed seemed to fail me over and again: Chinese medicine, Western medicine, and then religion. Time and again my body failed to live up to the logic of these systems to which I had once been faithful. My body seemed so willful and malicious at times, failing me at precisely the moments that I needed it to perform. Just as I thought my body was repairing itself, it would show me just how little I knew of the way that it functioned. My body felt as if it were a strange new country where I could not even discern the fundamentals of the language. Doctors tried to map out this country. Cameras invaded my body and attempted to render it in visual terms. The images that they produced, while textbook-familiar, revealed nothing.

Be Takerng Pattanopas' sculptures remind us of the uncanny spaces that we inhabit in the global capitalist economy. Freud used the term *unheimlich* or "unhomely" to refer to the fundamental propensity of the familiar to turn on its owners, suddenly to become de-familiarized, de-realized, as if in a dream.<sup>1</sup> In Pattanopas's work, what appears at first to be familiar to the point of being mundane becomes something unsettling and strange upon closer examination. While there is much about Pattanopas's work that points literally to the human body, it also rises above metaphor to pose difficult questions about the quality of space in global capitalism.

In *HAL-O 2*, the solidness of the sculpture's steel exterior gives way to a play on depth and perception. The monolithic exterior gives way to a series of sensual folds as the viewer's eye is lead along a series of meandering tunnels. Although the immediate reference of *HAL-O 2* is the enigmatic computer in Stanley Kubrick's film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the series conjures less obvious similarities to aspects of religious architecture as well as contemporary art. Three references that come to mind are the tunnels attributed to King Ku Na at Wat Umong (Chiang Mai, ca. 1380 C.E.); the interstitial spaces of Gordon Matta-Clark like *A W-Hole House: Datum Cut*, 1973; and the way the eye is conducted in Marcel Duchamp's *Étant Donnés*. At Wat Umong, pilgrims enter a series of connected tunnels underneath a hill. While the daily activities of the wat are usually conducted in pavilions closer to the temple entrance, the tunnels themselves remain the key architectural focus and the namesake of the complex. Fragments of paintings adorn the walls; their narrative meanings have faded long ago. In Matta-Clark's work, the interior spaces of common dwellings are opened up to

the exterior, breaking down the boundaries between private and public life. In Duchamp's diorama, the viewer's eye is conducted through a crack in a doorway to a woman's naked torso lying in a field. Invariably, the eye falls on the woman's vagina. One gets the sense that one is looking at something one is not supposed to see but it is impossible to look away.

In all of these precedents, the act of seeing is more than an intellectual exercise. Pattanopas similarly produces an environment in which the act of viewing becomes a sensual exercise. The transitory space of the body is grasped in a compelling, visceral way. The tunnels in *HAL-O 2* are conduits into other, heretofore unseen spaces. These dream spaces, at once familiar and alien, are transitional territories between inside and out, between the solidness of the sculpture's exterior and the curious worlds that inhabit its interior. Susan Buck-Morss, writing about Walter Benjamin's master work, the *Arcades Project*, reminds us that the 19<sup>th</sup> century covered shopping arcades that inspired Benjamin were the precise material replica of the internal unconscious of the dreaming collective. All the errors of bourgeois consciousness could be found there as well as all of its utopian dreams.<sup>2</sup>

Pattanopas's work invites viewers to consider not only the impermanent quality of the human form, but the kind of home such a form might inhabit. What does a home in the world today look like? What are the strange new dream spaces opened up by global capitalism? The history of capitalism has been a process of interiorization. Nearly everything has been brought under the roof of the market place. Global capitalism today demands that our bodies be in many places at the same time. Time and again the body is called on to perform according to this rigorous logic. And time and again it fails. What are these places where the body fails the demands of the market place and instead produces its own logic?

In the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa's 5<sup>th</sup> century commentary on the Tipitaka, the body is compared to a maternity home, a hospital, a charnel ground, a privy and a urinal, a host shared by many creatures who live in dependence on all its parts and organs and feed on them.<sup>3</sup> Be Takerng Pattanopas' work draws out the tension between this view and the ways that global capitalism values the space of the body as something akin to real estate. At once solid and porous, finite and endless, Pattanopas's work is a meditation on the ever moving and ultimately unknowable worlds that continue to open up within us.

Lawrence Chua is a widely published cultural critic and author of the novel *Gold by the Inch* (Grove Press 1999), set in SE Asia. He is currently completing research on Thai architectural history in the College of Architecture, Art and Planning of Cornell University and is based in the Faculty of Architecture of Chulalongkorn University throughout the academic year of 2008-09.

2. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, (MIT Press: Cambridge and London, 1989), p. 39.

3. Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga*, III, p. 121.

1. Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny* (MIT Press: Cambridge and London, 1999), p. 7.

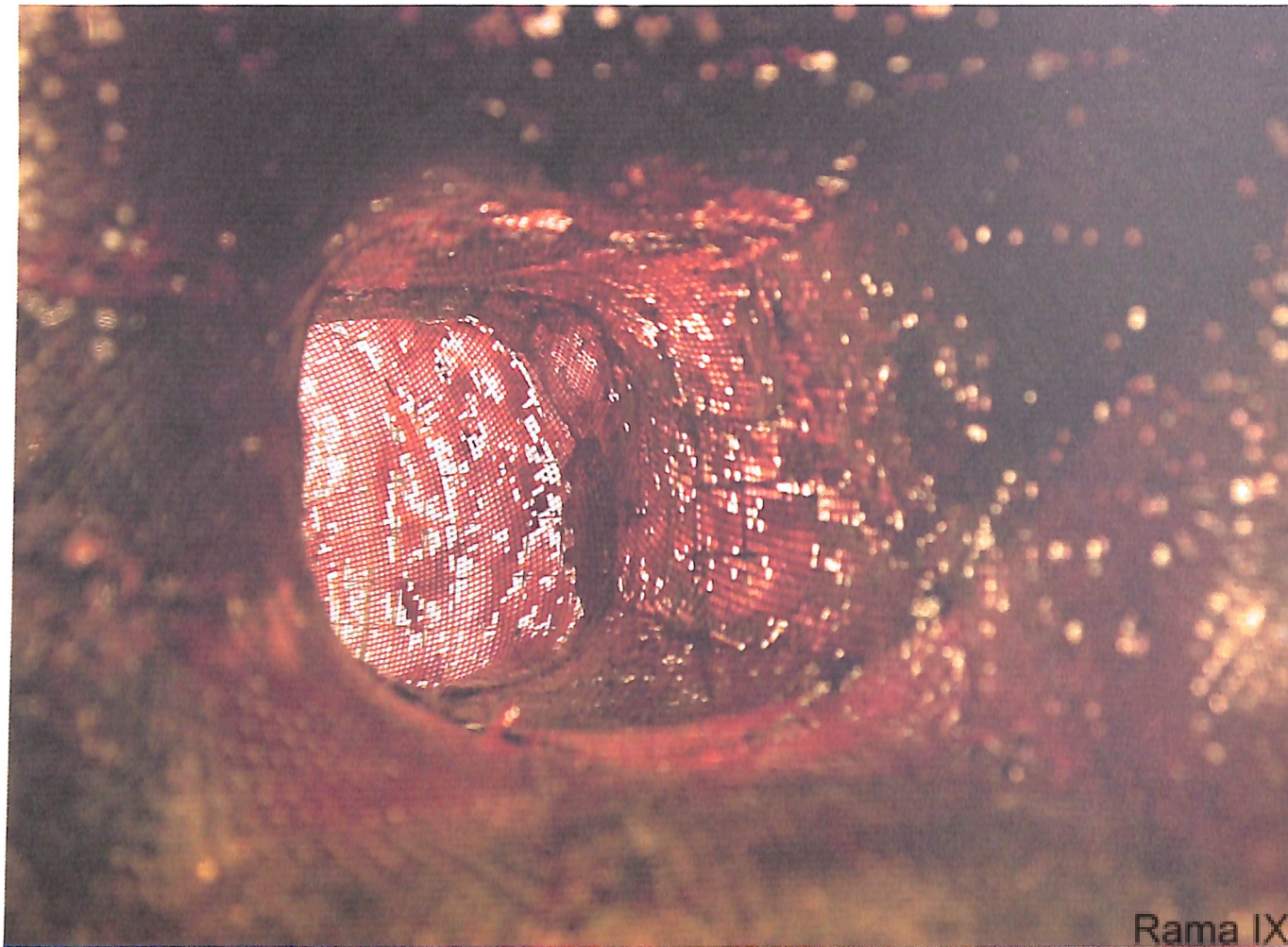


**Dream World**  
2008, mixed media and LED light, 1m40 long  
Exterior view



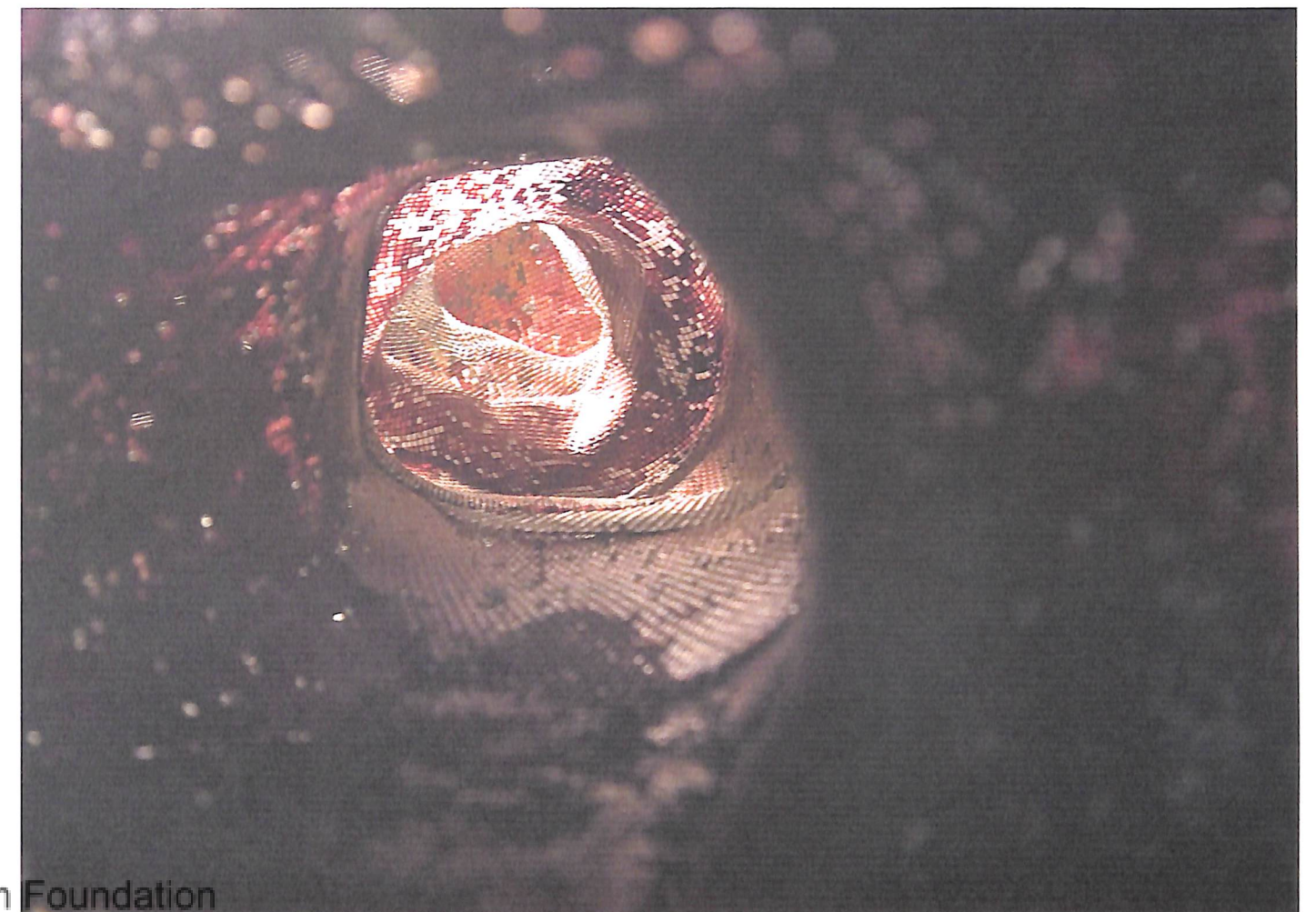
**Dream World**  
2008, mixed media and LED light, 1m40 long  
Interior view





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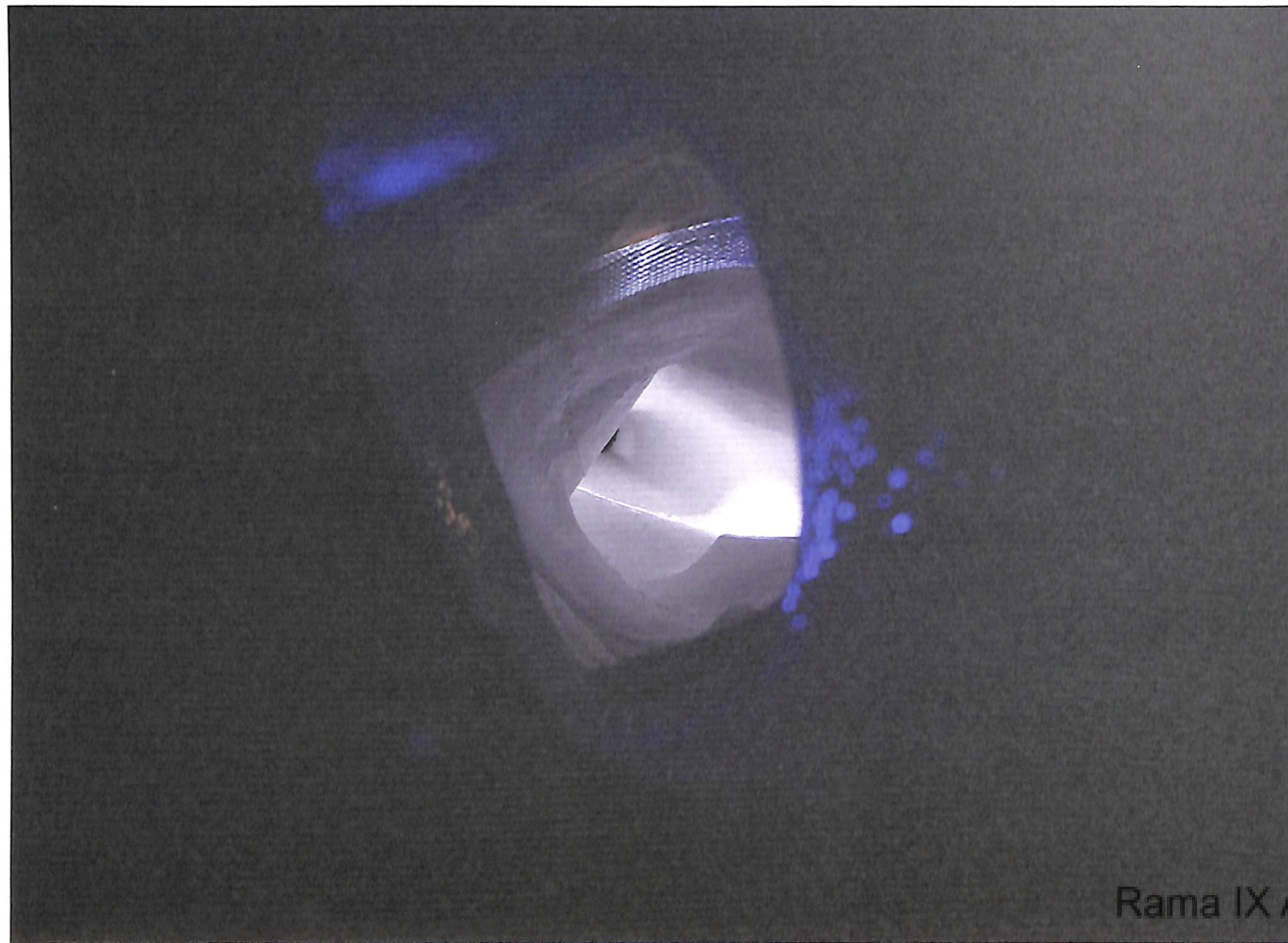
**naut-i 1**, 2008, steel, mixed media and LED light, interior view (detail 1)



**naut-i 1**, 2008, steel, mixed media and LED light, interior view (detail 2)

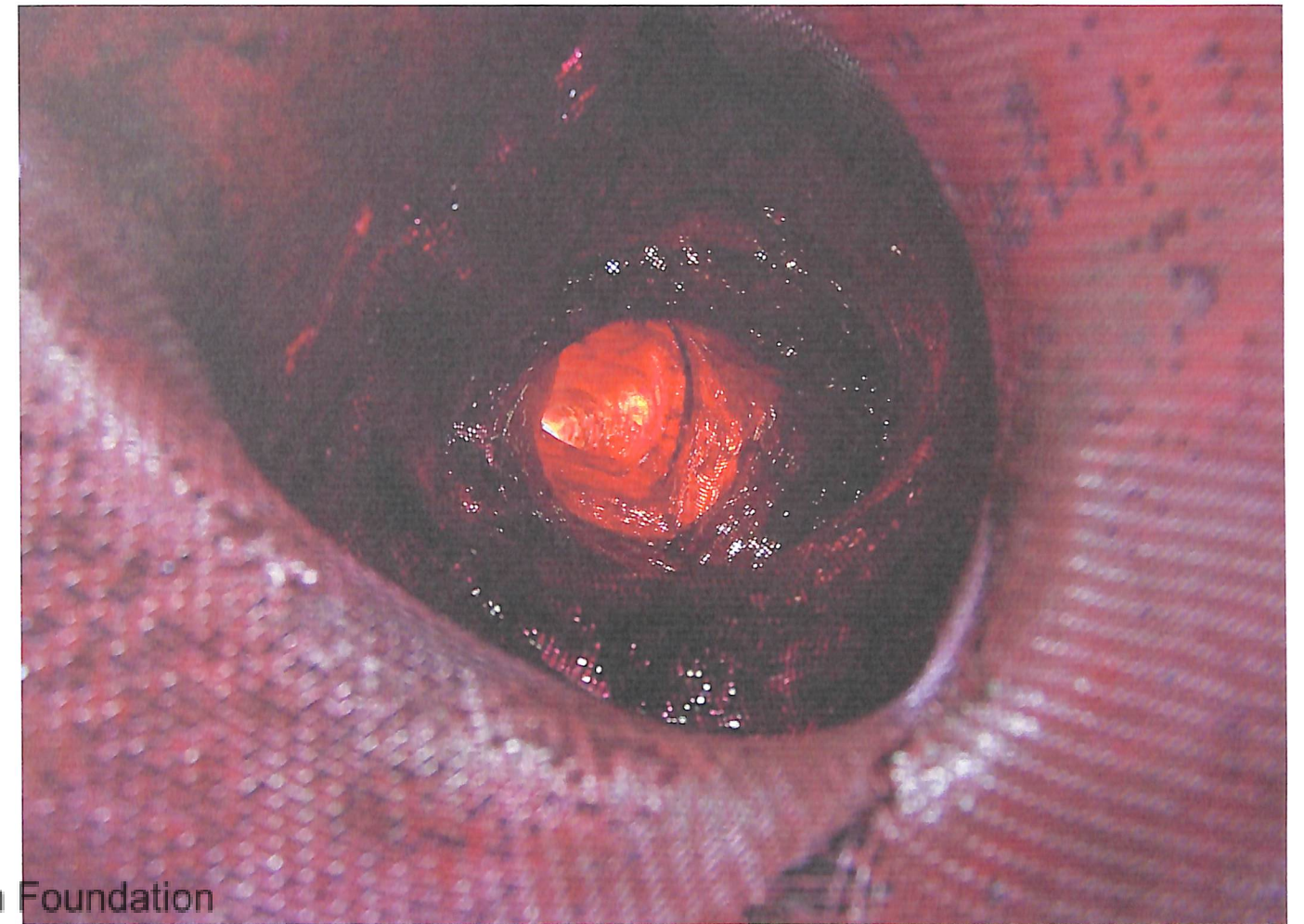


**naut-i 1**  
2008, steel, mixed media and LED light  
0m75 x 0m45 x 0m24  
Exterior view



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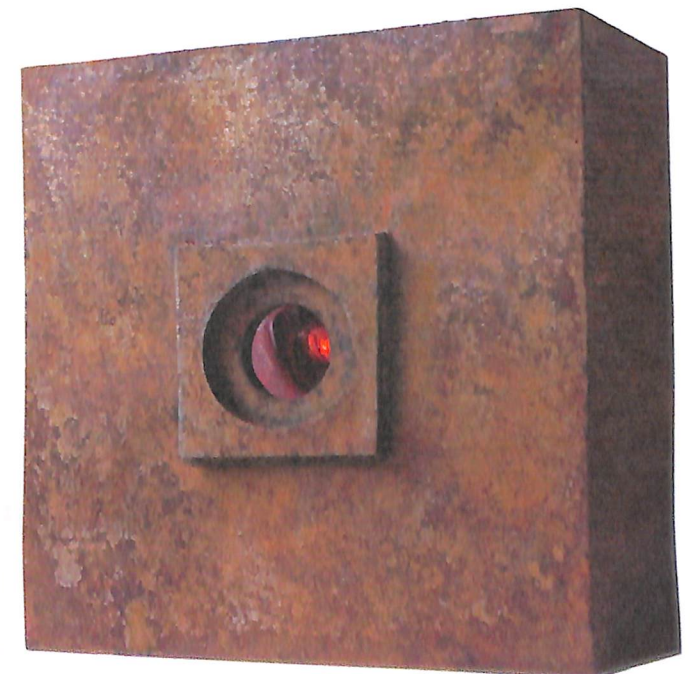
**naut-i 2**  
2008, steel, mixed media and LED light  
Interior view (detail)



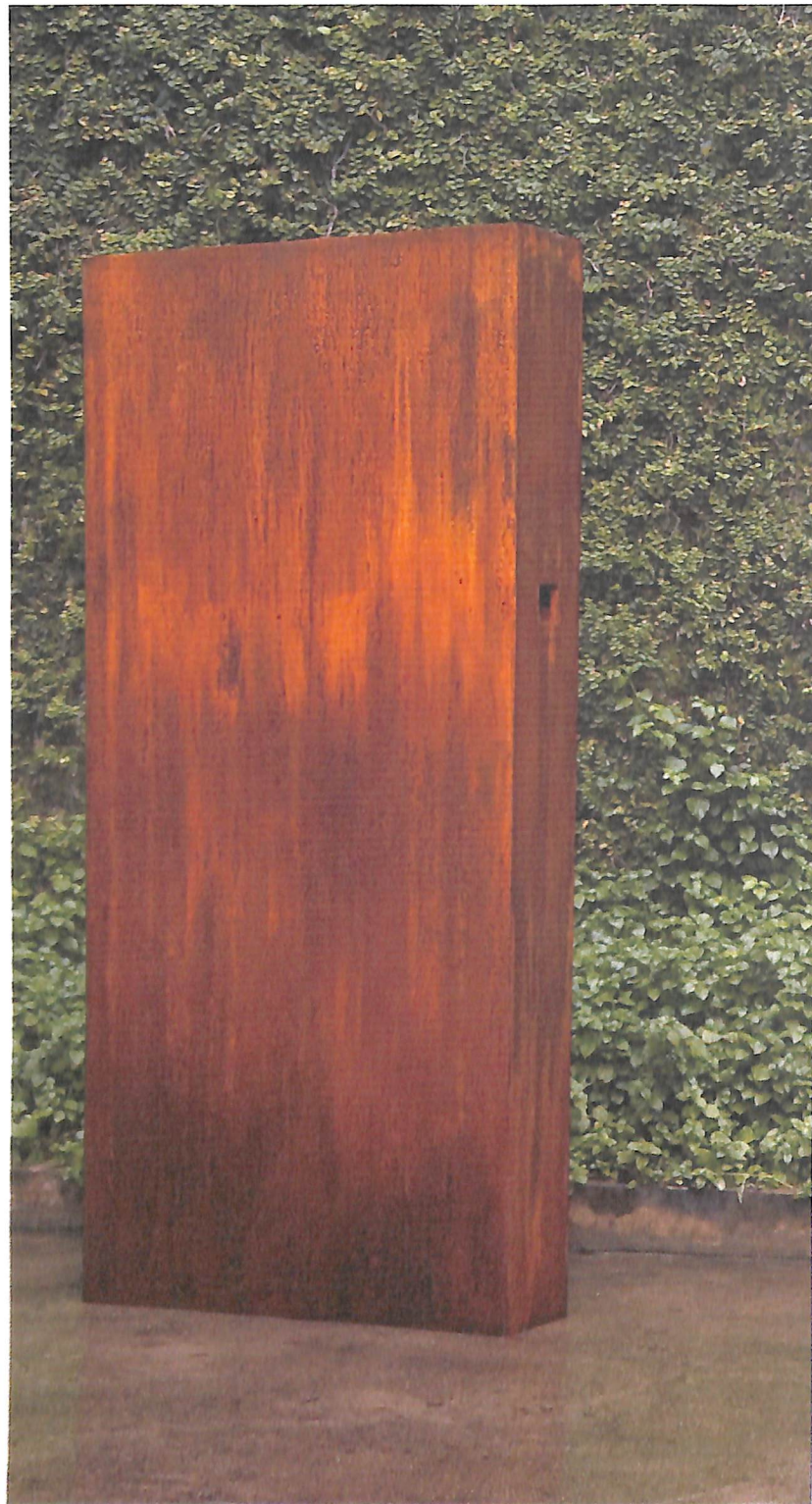
**naut-i 3**  
2008, steel, mixed media and LED light  
Interior view (detail)



**naut-i 2**  
2008, steel, mixed media and LED light  
0m75 x 0m45 x 0m24  
Exterior view



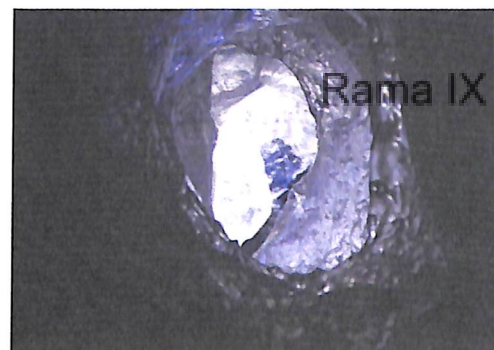
**naut-i 3**  
2008, steel, mixed media and LED light  
0m63 x 0m63 x 0m24  
Exterior view



**HAL-O 2**  
2008, steel, mixed media and LED light  
0m90 x 1m90 x 0m24  
Exterior view

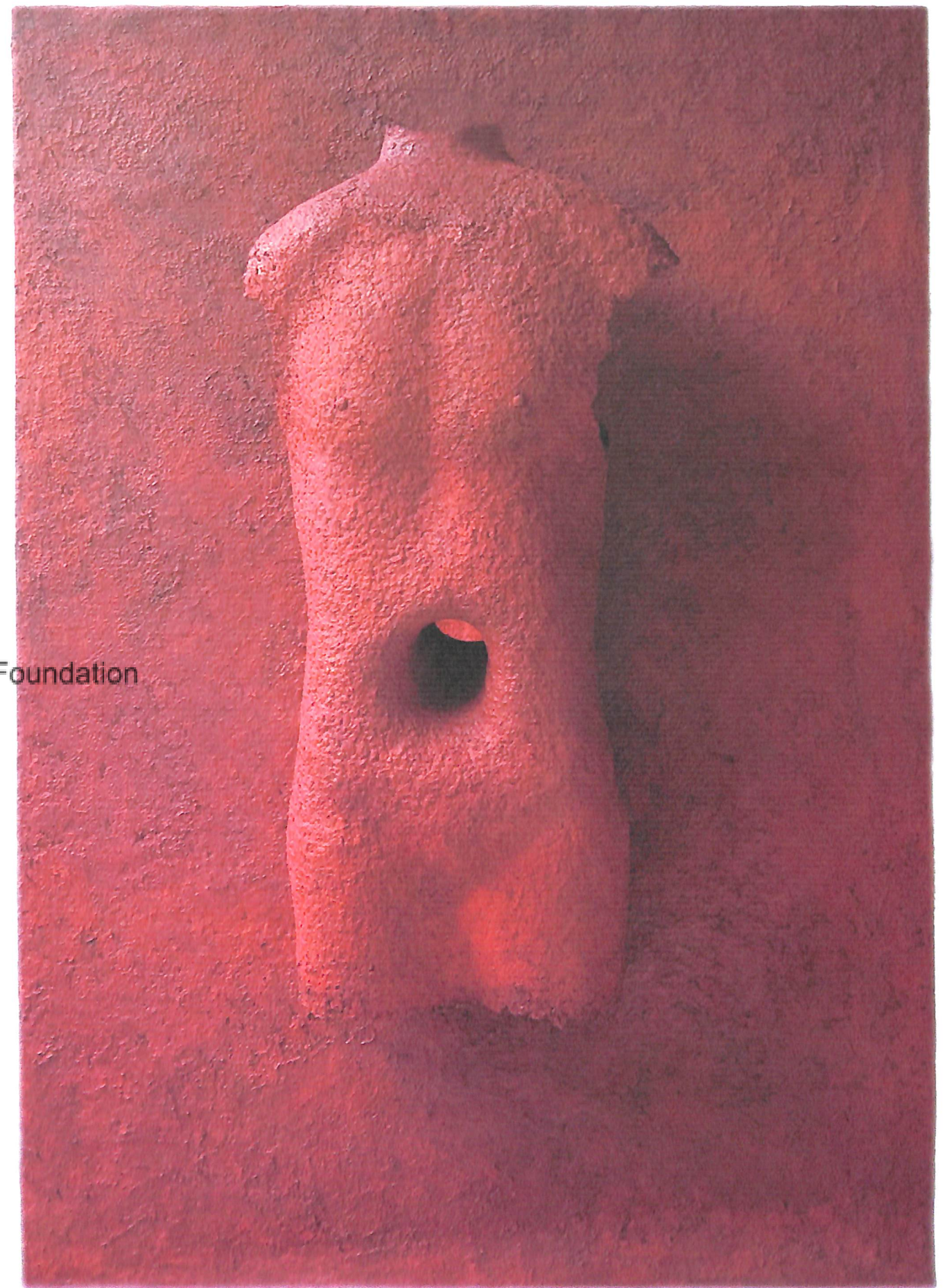


**HAL-O 2**  
2008, steel, mixed media and LED light  
Upper tunnel

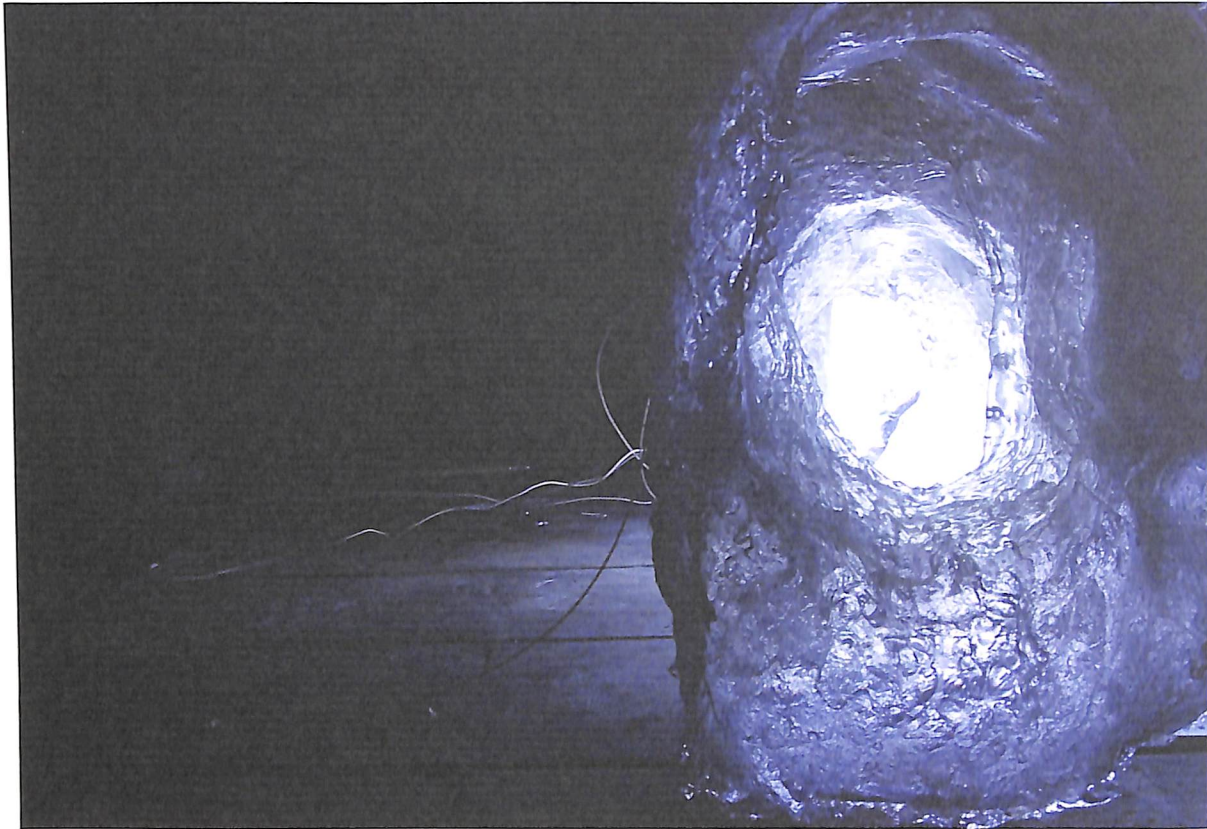


**HAL-O 2**  
2008, steel, mixed media and LED light  
Lower tunnel

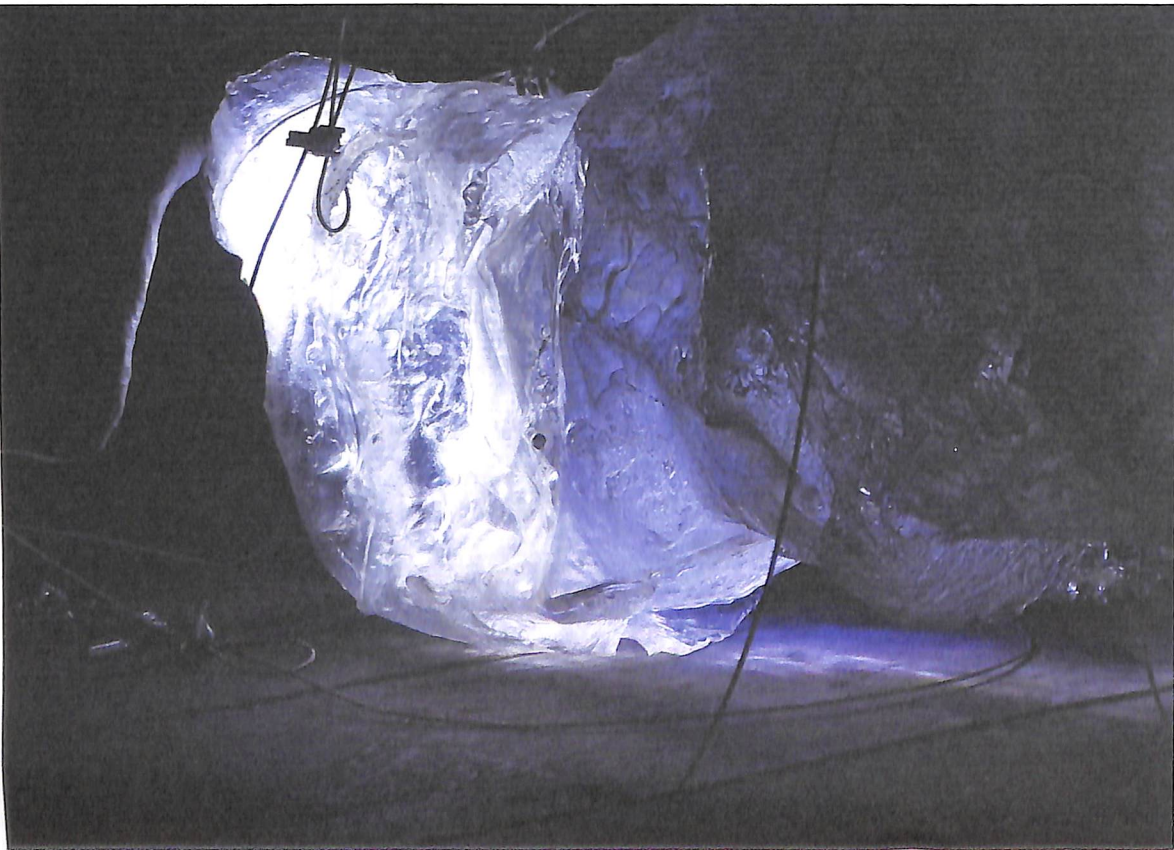
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**u-inverse**, 2008, mixed media, 1m00 x 1m41 x 0m33



**Annus horribilis 1**, 2008, 0m368 x 0m267, archival print (1/12)

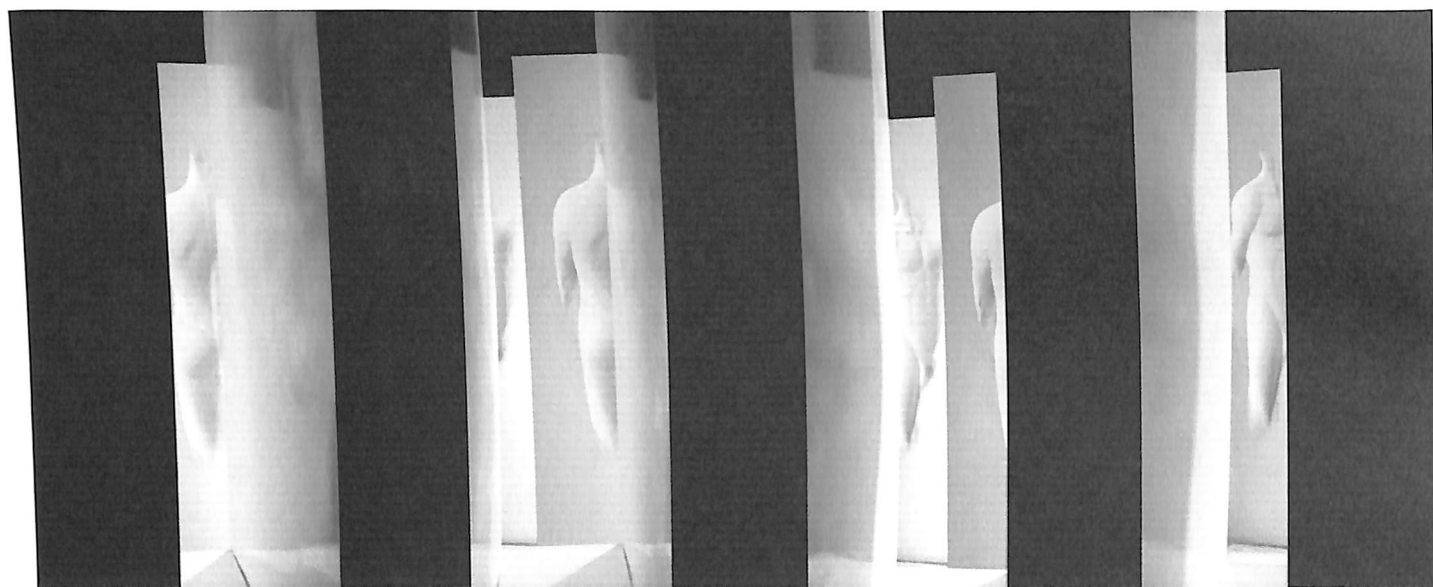


**Annus horribilis 2**, 2008, 0m368 x 0m267, archival print (1/12)

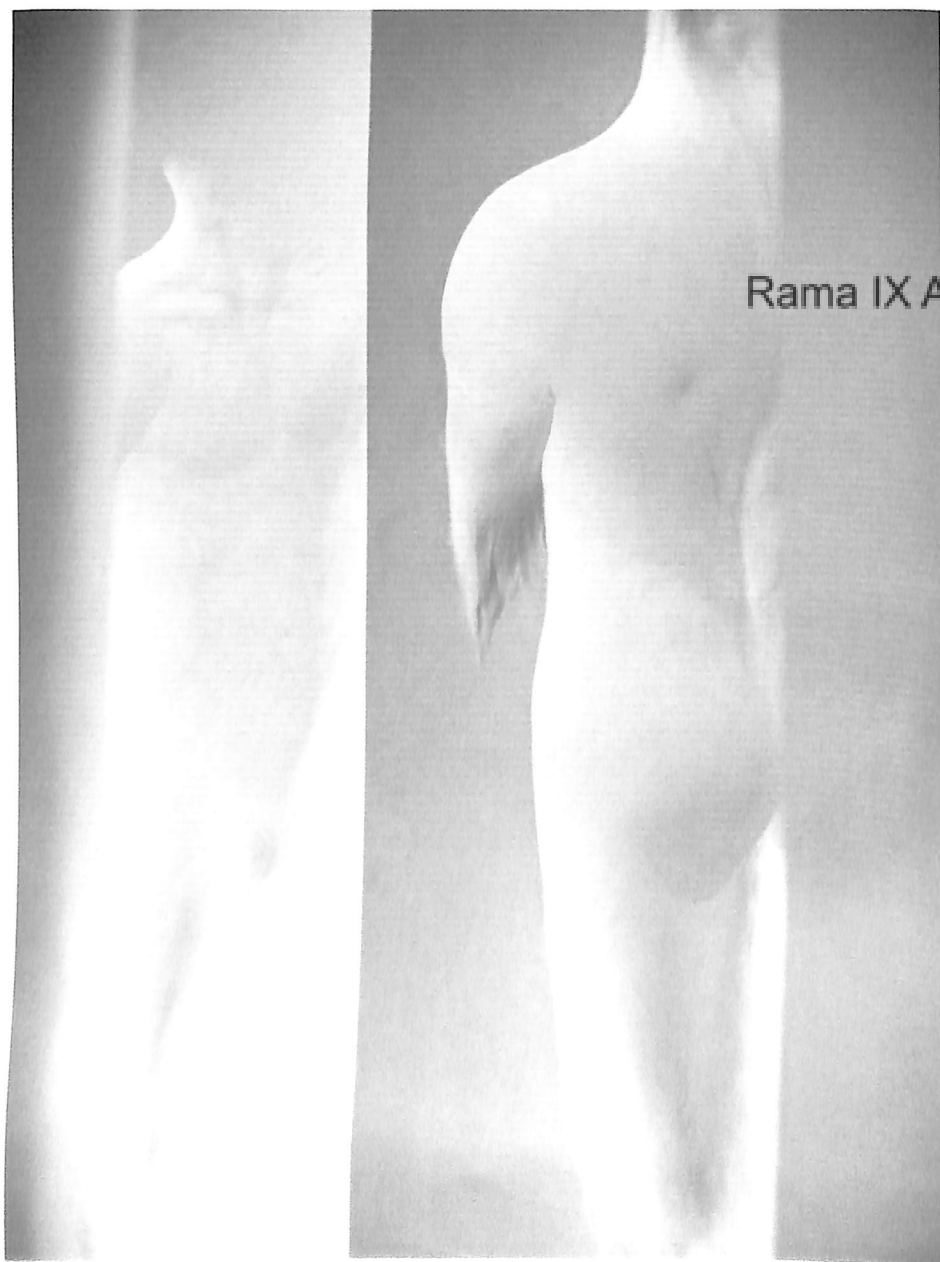
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**HAL-O 1**, (details of the sculpture's upper tunnel), 2006, 0m267 x 0m368, archival print (1/12)



**Pneuma**, (4 successive views of the installation), 1999, 0m841 x 0m371, archival print (1/12)

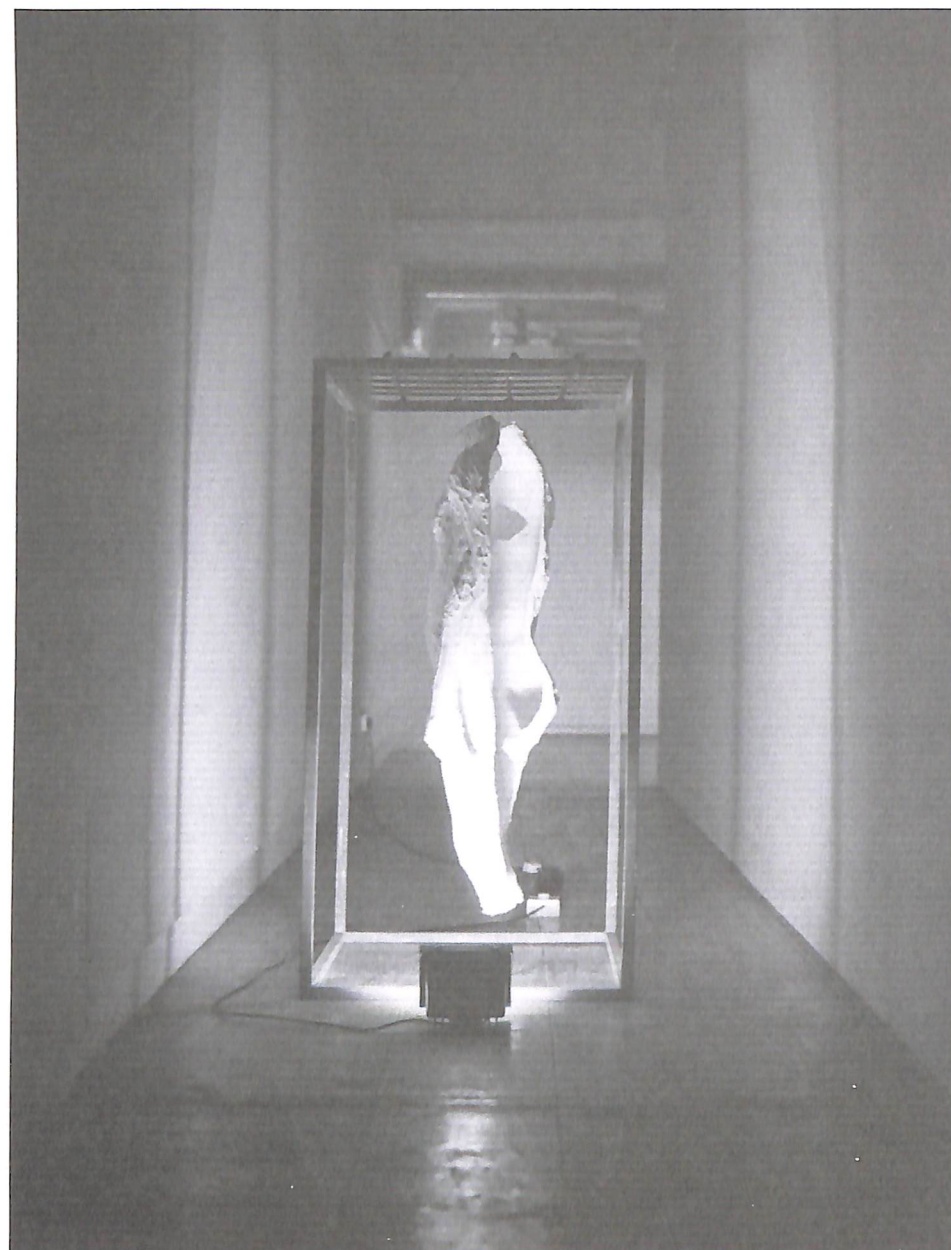


**Pneuma**, (detail)  
1999, 0m267 x 0m368  
archival print (1/12)

Rama IX Art Museum Foundation



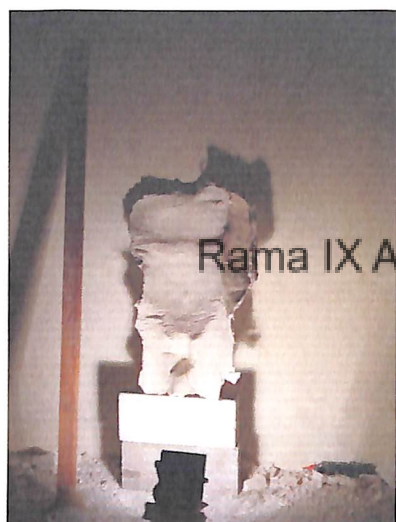
**Metropolis**, 2007, 0m368 x 0m368, archival print (1/12)



**Body's Space**, 1997, 0m267 x 0m368, archival print (1/12)



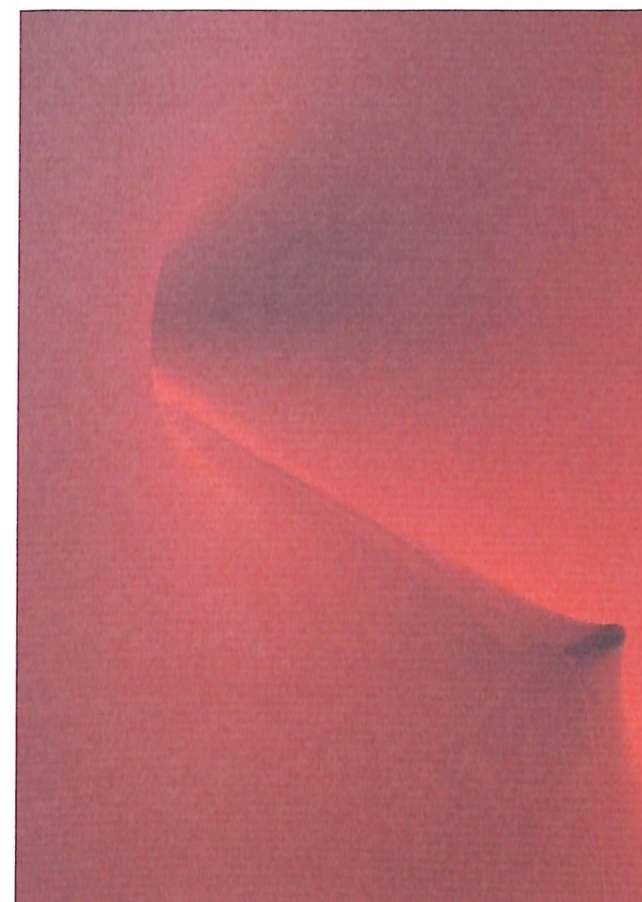
**Body's Space**  
1997, 0m267 x 0m368  
archival print (1/12)



**Son of Chaos**  
2007, 0m267 x 0m368  
archival print (1/12)



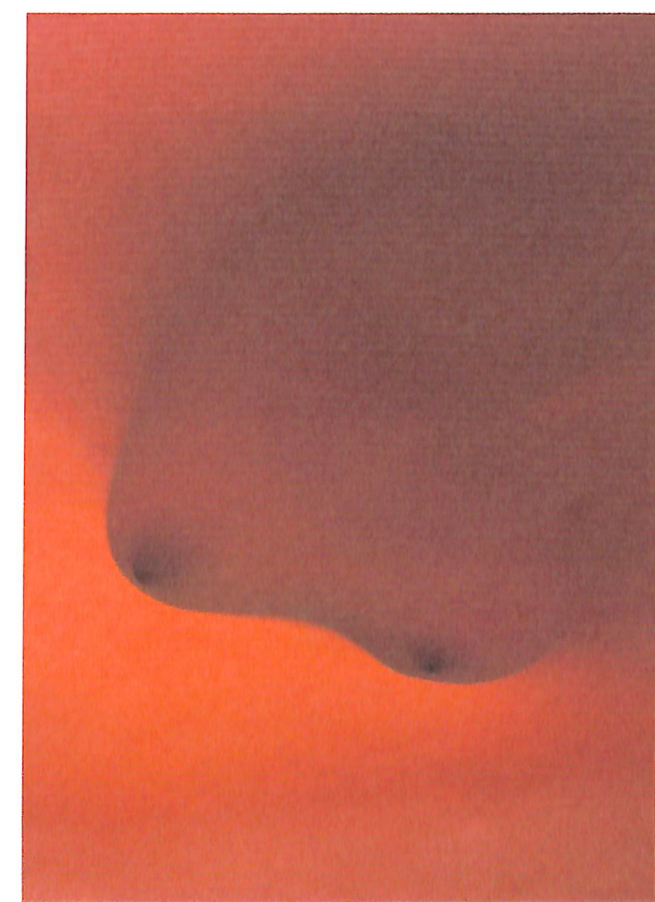
**Ohm**  
2006, 0m368 x 0m267  
archival print (1/12)



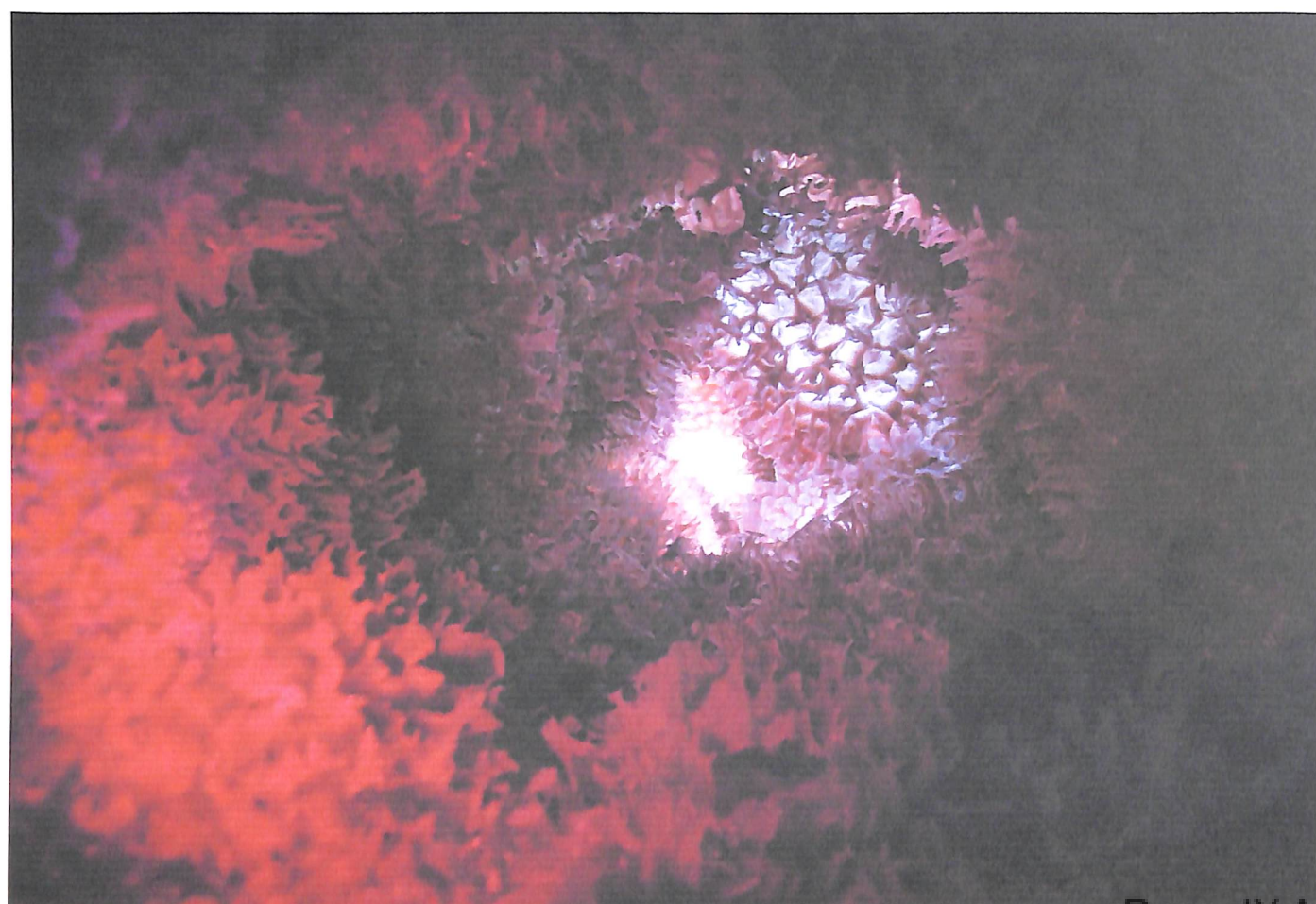
**Erogenous Landscape, (detail 1)**  
2006, 0m594 x 0m841, archival print (1/12)



**Eros Ambiguous**  
2006, 0m841 x 0m594, archival print (1/12)



**Erogenous Landscape, (detail 2)**  
2006, 0m594 x 0m841, archival print (1/12)

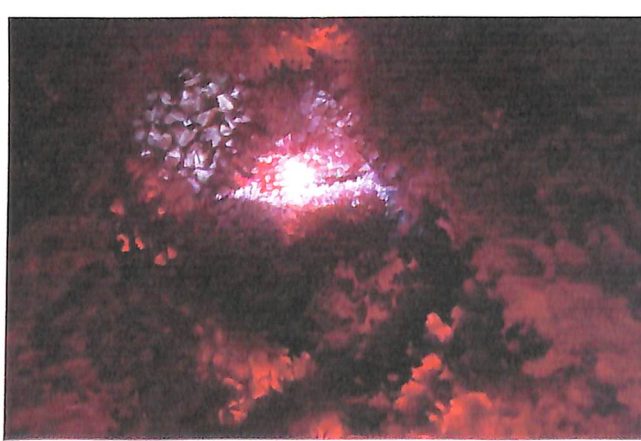


**Annus mirabilis 1**, 2008, 0m841 x 0m594, archival print (1/12)



**Chroma**, 2008, 0m368 x 0m267, archival print (1/12)

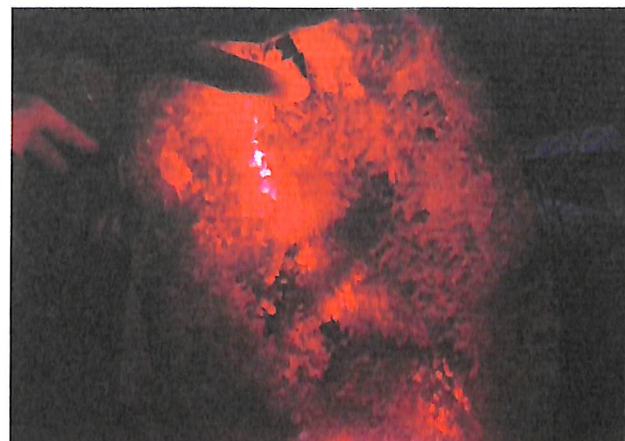
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**Annus mirabilis 2**  
2008, 0m841 x 0m594, archival print (1/12)



**Annus mirabilis 3**  
2008, 0m368 x 0m267, archival print (1/12)



**Annus mirabilis 4**  
2008, 0m368 x 0m267, archival print (1/12)