



< In Sutherland, the home of the South African Astronomical Observatory, Neustetter positions himself on top of a tall water tower, this allows him to photograph a group of youth from above, the youth are attempting to recreate the Big Bang by spinning LED rope lights and dancing around one another. The result is a metaphoric image for an ever-expanding universe.

Marcus Neustetter explores archaeological and cosmological mysteries in his quest for meaning. His artistic investigations focus on the spaces in-between, within and between these disciplines. The artist uses light as a medium for storytelling. By inviting audiences from various communities across South Africa to engage with a variety of light-sources, he enables a playful interaction that ultimately culminates in a series of light and long-time exposure photographs and video work. These serve not as art objects in and of themselves, but rather as traces of local encounters in time and space.

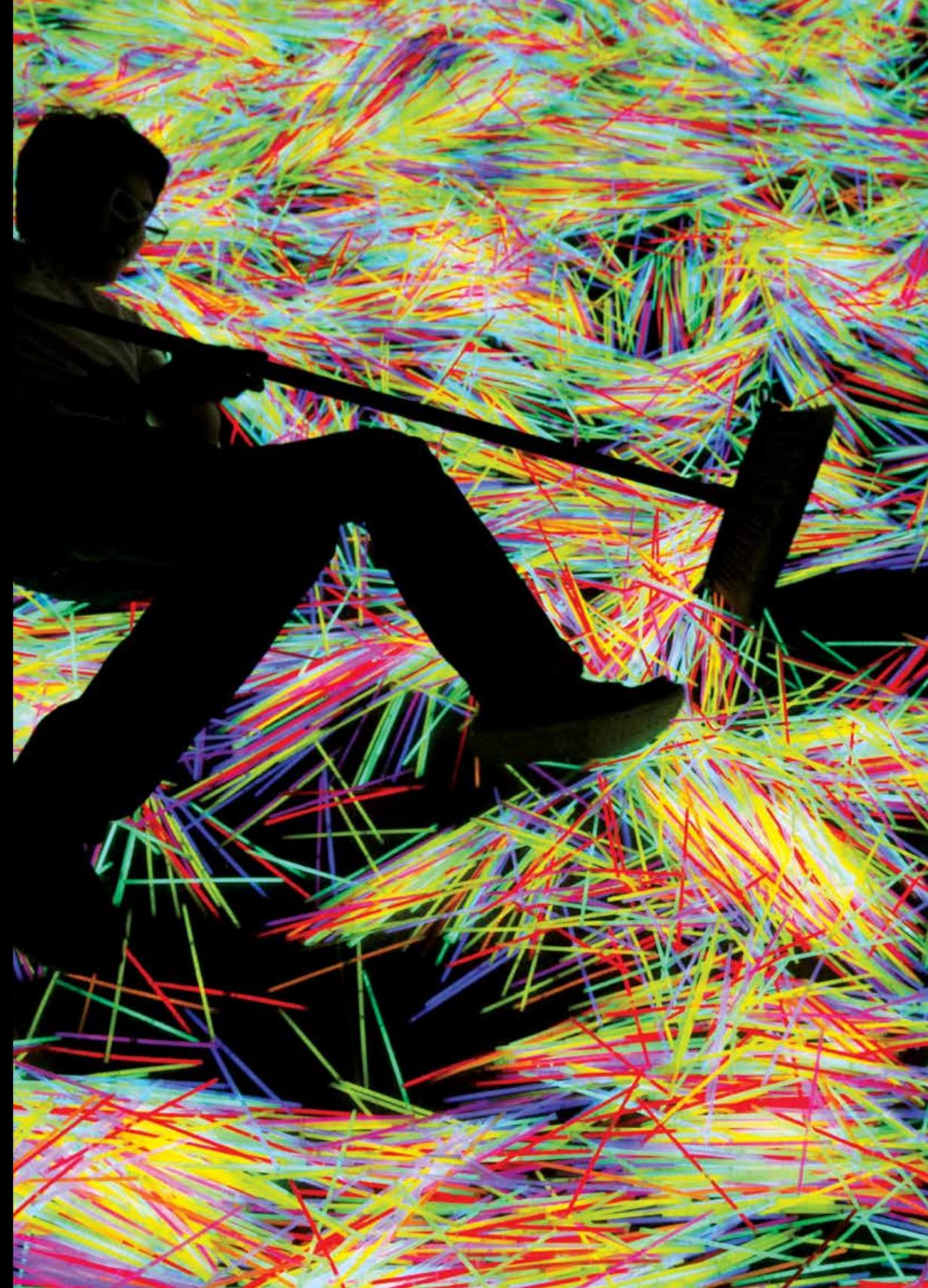
The light-based activations occur in conditions of darkness, this affords the participants near-anonymity and encourages individuals to express their stories physically. By encountering darkness, the references to the depth of time and space become evident. Long-time exposure photography and the resultant distorted imagery and abstraction of the human form allow for an open-ended interpretation. Neustetter reminds us "Darkness, for all its generosity in this instance, also demands a critical

engagement with the very idea of 'light' and the ownership and distribution of energy resources in South Africa and Africa." The power struggle between those that have and those that do not is evident in the access to light and electricity across the globe, the impact of colonial history and apartheid legacy is evident in some of the recorded actions by individuals from the areas with which Neustetter has engaged.

*Into the Light* also premieres Neustetter's newest video work generated out of a series of light interventions and performances made in collaboration with audience members in Merida, Mexico in early 2016. The performances took place at the closing ceremony of the UNESCO International Year of Light. >

< The ever-transforming city of Johannesburg is host to thousands of foreign workers. These individuals are often forced to live and work in the same spaces. Neustetter attempts to capture the on-going quest for 'gold' in the constant navigation of unpredictable landscapes.

A group of Riel-dancing youth from the small Karoo town of Fraserberg dance with small lights attached to their feet inside a light-drawn representation of a pre-dinosaur footprint. This footprint represents an actual paleontological fossil site just outside their town. This act speaks directly to the town's small museum, where displays, untouched for many decades, represent paleontological findings and then skip to white Afrikaner history, entirely ignoring the historical and contemporary presence of coloured communities in the area. >



# INTO THE LIGHT MARCUS NEUSTETTER



*Chinese Map 1390,*  
glow-sticks, string  
and plastic cord,  
2016

*Prosperity Doll I & II,*  
broken lights and  
materials made in  
China, 2016

A selection of African  
art objects from the  
WAM permanent  
collection (middle)



*The Great Wall of China,*  
installation, string and  
used glow-sticks, 2015

Reflecting on power struggles, Neustetter questions a current foreign influence in Africa through his choice of materials, abundantly stocked cheap light-toys and gadgets he purposely sources from local Chinese markets. His seemingly temporary art installations create permanent by-products, in the form of thousands of discarded glow sticks, broken LEDs, plastic casings and packaging materials. These, in turn, are assembled into new artworks to be sent back to China as a form of ritual exchange. This encounter with the 'materiality' of China hints at Neustetter's idea of a place that 'sells' itself as a consumer culture through its food and 'Made-in-China' label. He recycles

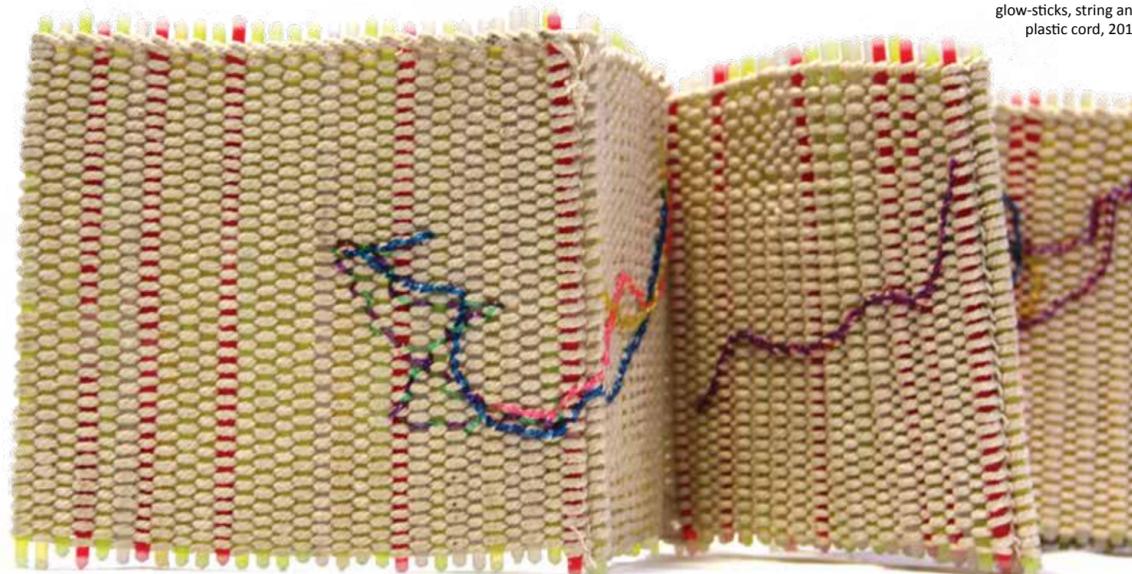
and transforms these disposable materials into objects that allude to everyday references to China; dead glow sticks are stitched together to become the Great Wall of China or melted down and cast into fortune frogs, shark fins and an ornamental dragon. Precisely woven glow sticks and brightly coloured plastic strips are transformed into interpretations of ancient Chinese maps and African trade routes. Neustetter also fashions his own Prosperity Dolls made of broken laser pointers and rope lights, and has selected for display a case of historical African art objects from the permanent collection at WAM that similarly appropriate imported materials.



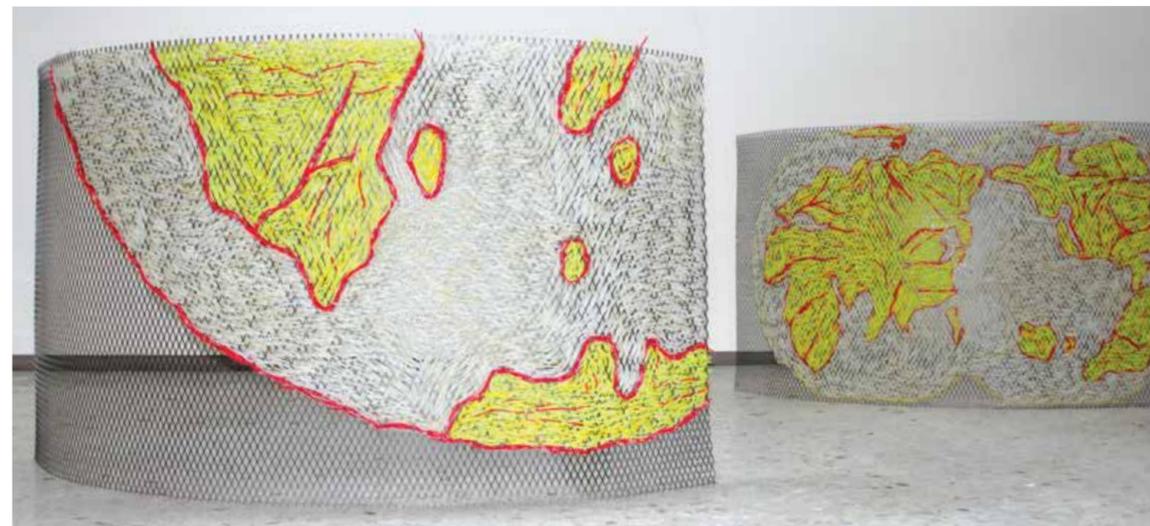
*Shark Fins,* installation of 120 shark fins, cast resin and used glow-sticks, 2016



*Lucky Frog,* cast resin and used glow-sticks, 2016



*Trade Routes,*  
glow-sticks, string and  
plastic cord, 2016



*Contested Chinese 15th Century Maps I & II*  
used glow-sticks and mesh wire, 2016

Artworks featured on *Into the Light* at Wits Art Museum from 26 April to 19 June 2016 are made possible by The Trinity Session, the National Science and Technology Forum and the Department of Science and Technology for the UNESCO International Year of Light 2015.

A selection of works were realised with the assistance of Bronwyn Lace, Stephen Hobbs, the NMMU Sculpture Collective and Paul and Abigail Setate. This exhibition was presented in part at the Bird Street Gallery, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in 2015.



*Dragon,* cast resin and used glow-sticks, 2016