

Let there be light: Thierry Dreyfus

In his first solo exhibition, Thierry Dreyfus flexes his signature of light as an artistic medium, creating scenes of mesmerising beauty and thought-provoking complexity.

Over the last thirty years, French lighting designer Thierry Dreyfus has illuminated the magnificent Paris's Grand Palais, plunged Notre Dame into darkness and placed a powerful red beam on top of Shanghai's Le Méridien Hotel. He has also offset some of fashion's most prestigious catwalk shows, including collaborations with Helmut Lang, Dior Homme, Calvin Klein and Commes des Garçons. Dreyfus first started experimenting with lighting inside theatres and opera houses, and over the last three decades has found new and innovative ways to sculpt and project light onto various prints, objects, monuments and scenographies.

In a new exhibition at Brooklyn's The Invisible Dog Art Centre, Dreyfus presents a collection of personal pieces exploring light's interaction with objects, sound and space. Cryptically entitled '(Naked) Absence - (Blinding) presence... (Dis) Appearances', this carefully constructed exhibit challenges its viewer to think and reflect, with highlights including aged, textured mirrors that manipulate the image before them and a dark room that gradually lights up to the haunting, anxious sound of Dreyfus' own heartbeat. The artist also presents a collection of photography as a method to record the mood of lighting and provoke a response from the viewer. i-D Online caught up with Dreyfus to discuss his ideas, inspirations and thirty years in the spotlight:

What is it about light that you find artistic? There are materials that exist, such as sound waves and fragrances, which are not applied to, or settle on, any surface, but rather find their echo in volumes. Light is one of these materials. It murmurs, holds back or screams, without ever touching our eardrums.

Light and mirrors are both huge mediums to work with, how do you narrow them down into a single concept? For me it's not a question of concept, but emotion. Concept speaks to the head but emotions are to be shared. Mirrors are nothing but emptiness and fragility but with them you can make a hole within an image and create a distortion of time. Mirrors can be a reflection of what we don't or can't see.

How do you want your audiences to feel when they experience your work? I want them to think of the speed of light: the limit beyond where, according to science, time becomes flexible. Faced with the agitation and acceleration of everyday life, the individual shuts down. He no longer looks inside himself and no longer perceives others. Light can touch the eyes of those who refuse to see. It opens up the space, the range of possibilities and expands time, in contrast to a consumer society that mutilates it. While everything in modern life tends to drown, distance, displace, forcibly direct or detour the eyes, a luminous creation reinvests the moment and confirms it in weightlessness. Whether directed or natural, light is devoid of sound. It creates a silence and the gaze turned upon it brings silence as well.

The exhibition features photography, is this something you've always been interested in? I've been taking images of light for over twenty years, which has led me to create a modern lexicon with it. I have a complete collection of photos representing a series of fluorescent tubes, neons, light bulbs and openings that play with transparency, ceilings, projections and luminous staging. Photography is for me a way to catch the instant and instinctive emotion in an image. Once shared, this emotion is no longer mine but one that visitors can absorb as their own.

How do you feel lighting affects the mood of a catwalk show? Light can change all perception, so I focus on skin tone and textures to bring emotion. Catwalks are to me an amazing nomad laboratory where I can experiment in a thousand ways and possibilities to use, stage and project light. I abstractly or concretely create a specific scenography, like one would create or direct a sight-specific light show.

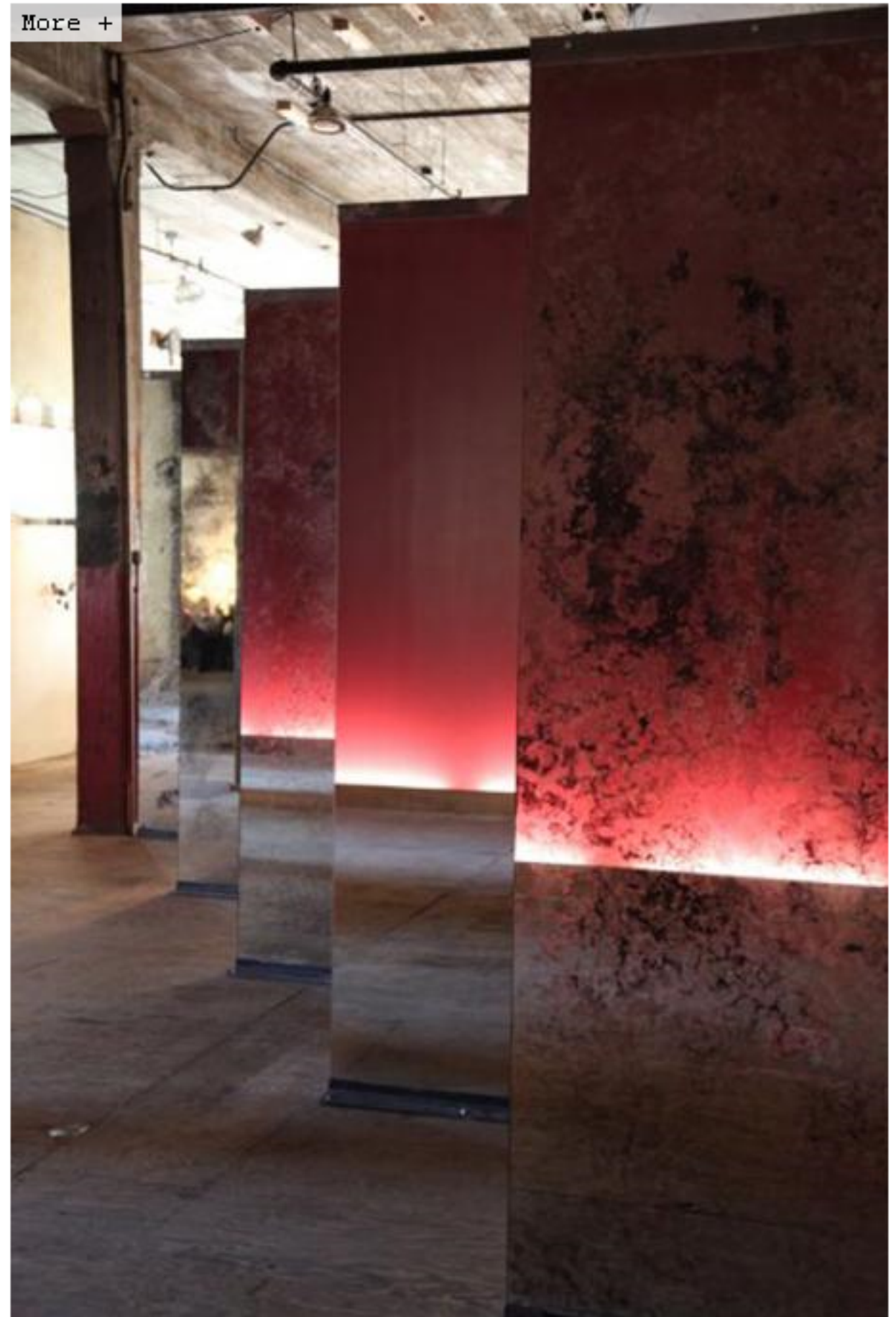
What have been the most memorable moments of your career so far? Everyday is memorable for me.

'(Naked) Absence - (Blinding) presence... (Dis) Appearances' runs until February 20 2011 at The Invisible Dog Art Centre, Brooklyn.

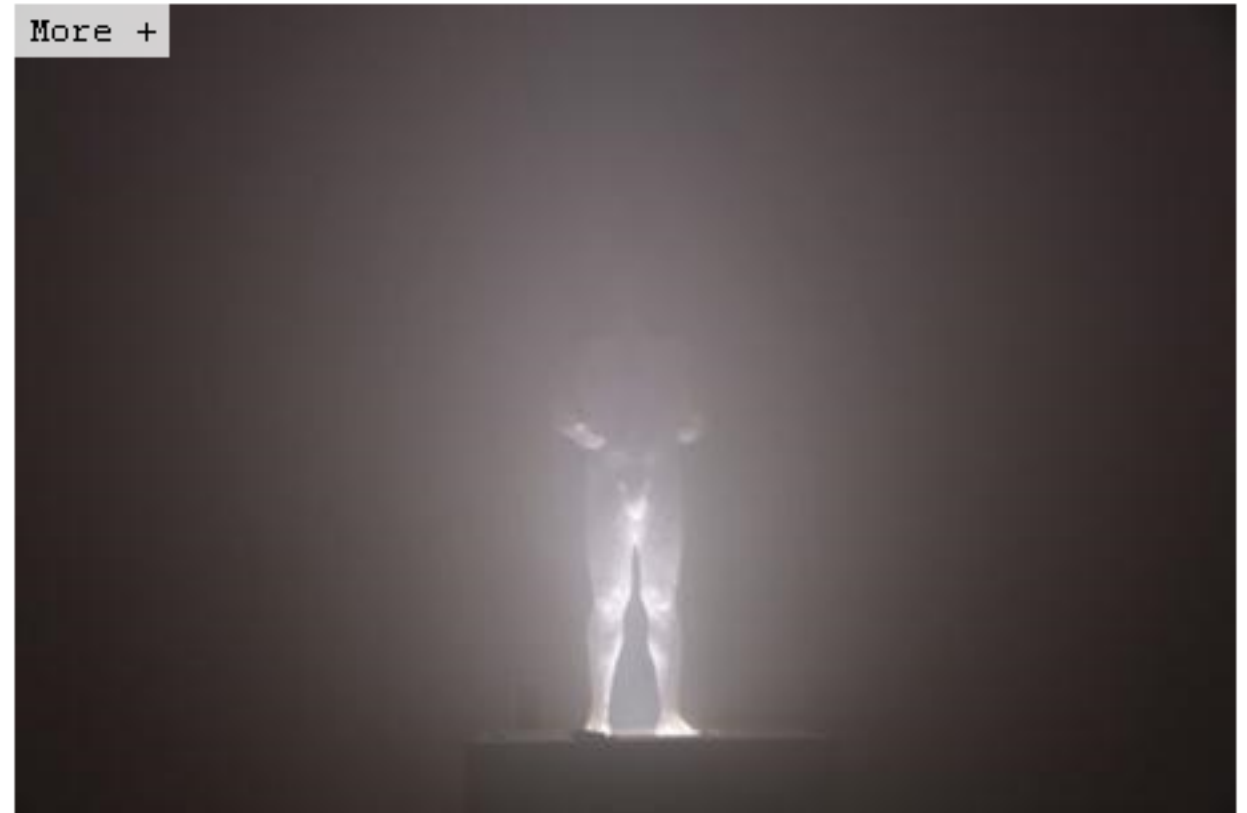
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