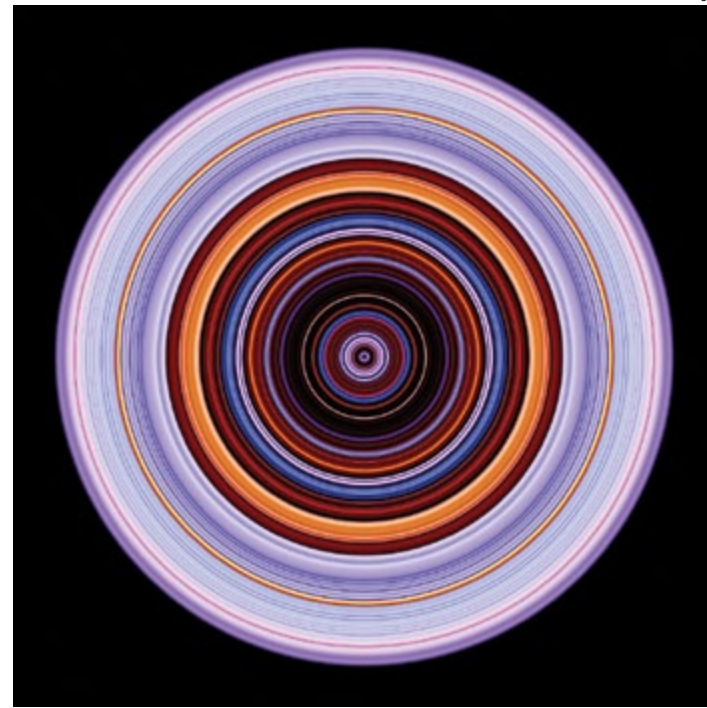


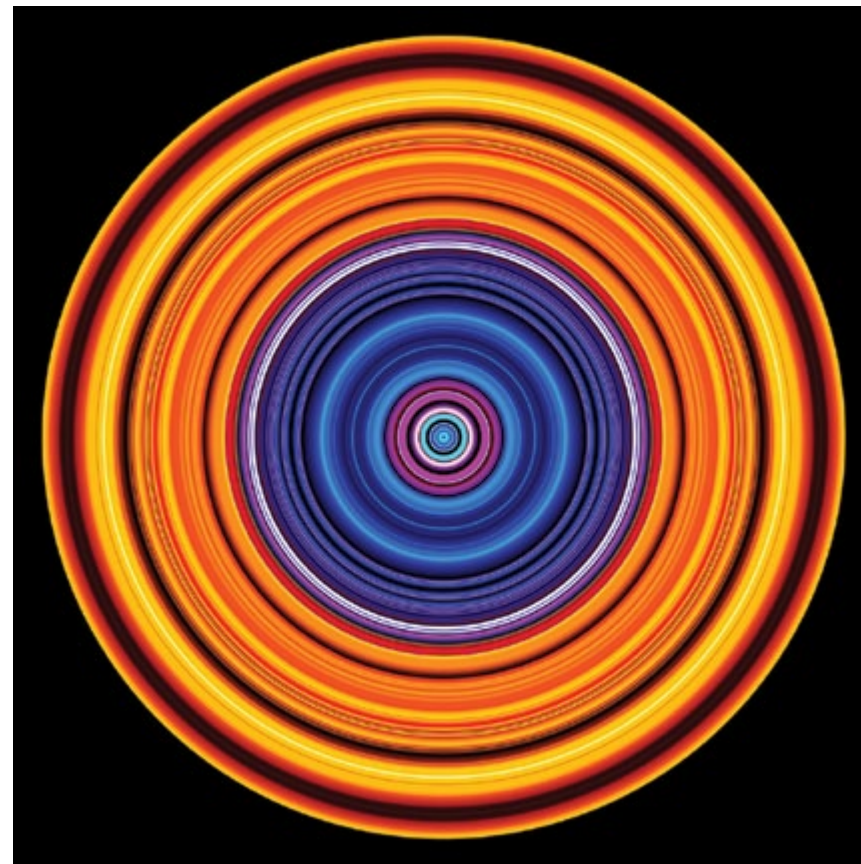
01



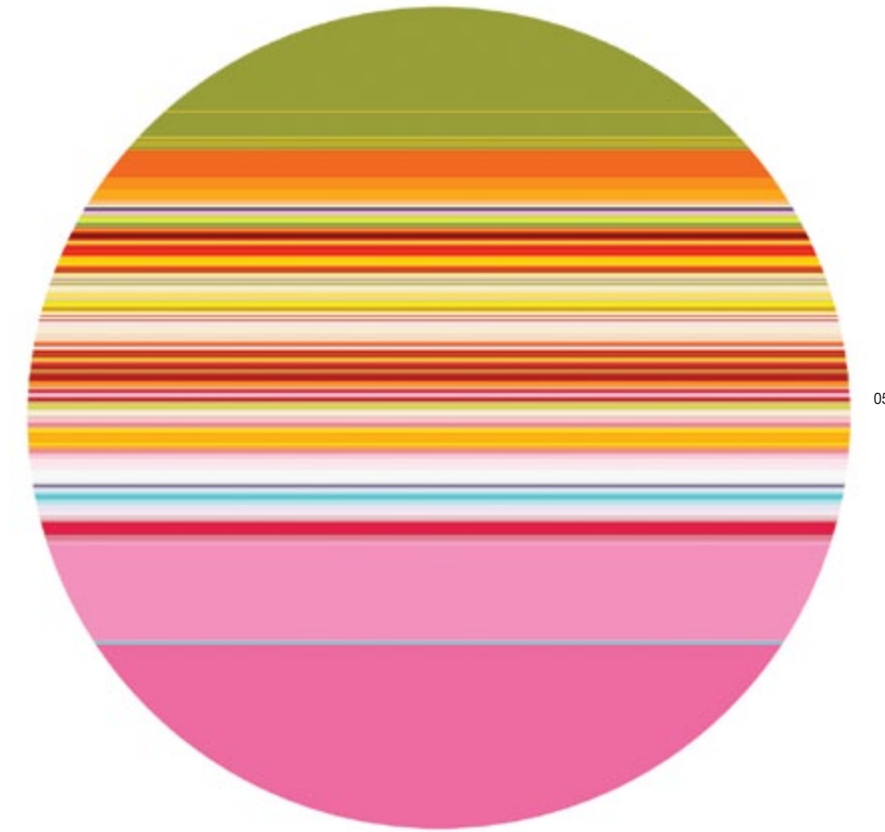
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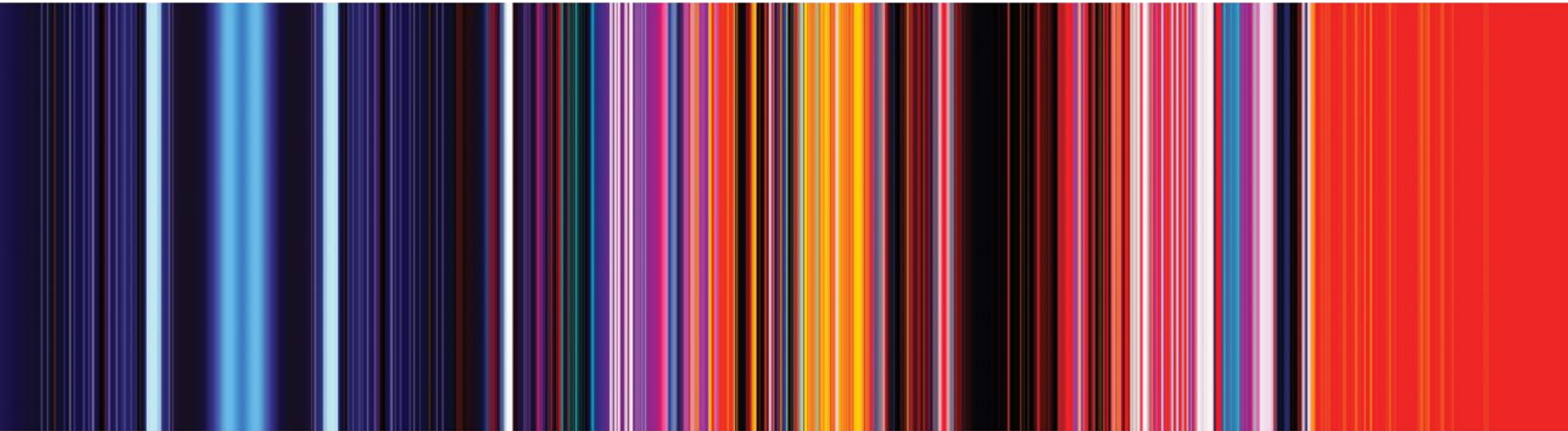
PAUL SNELL

STORY ANNA MADELEINE

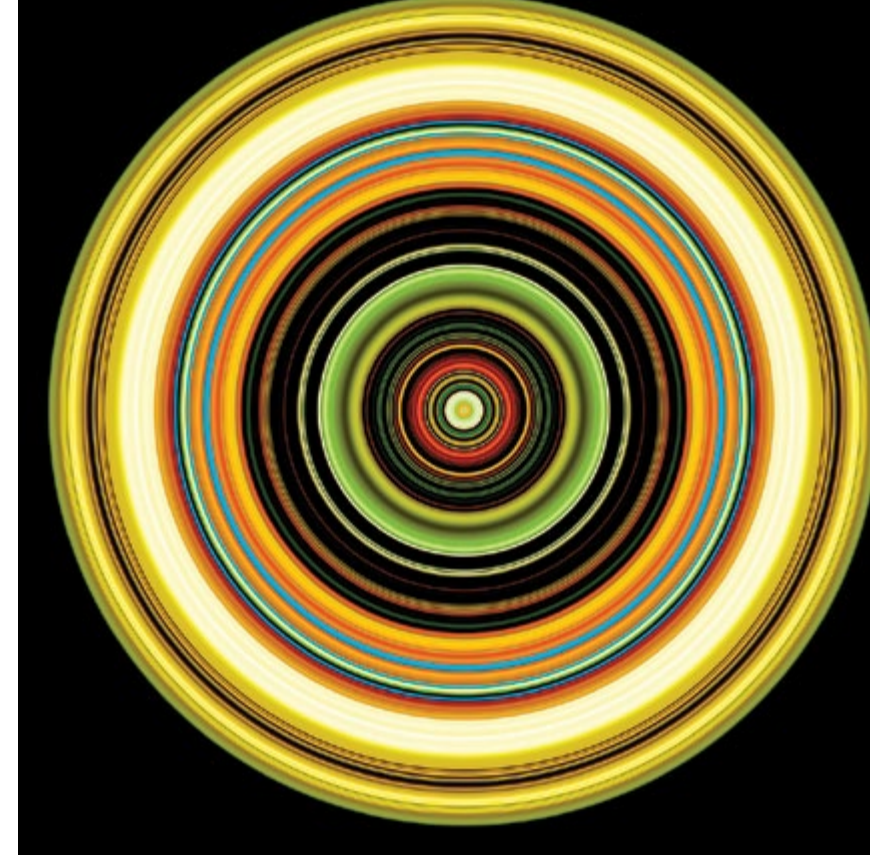
Paul Snell's works are immediately attractive because of their intense vibrancy and luminous material qualities. But beyond this seductive surface, Snell's work is multilayered and complex in its approach to image-making. By using photographic techniques to create abstract, non-representational works, he blurs the lines between making and taking photographs, between painting and photography, and between object and screen. The works draw from digital information and code to uncover the possibilities of photomedia to go beyond its traditional form and create fascinating self-referential relationships between the process of creating and the experience of viewing photographic images.



The title of each piece refers to its geographical location and grounds the work in a certain place, for example 'NY # 40.78N_73.96W'.



07

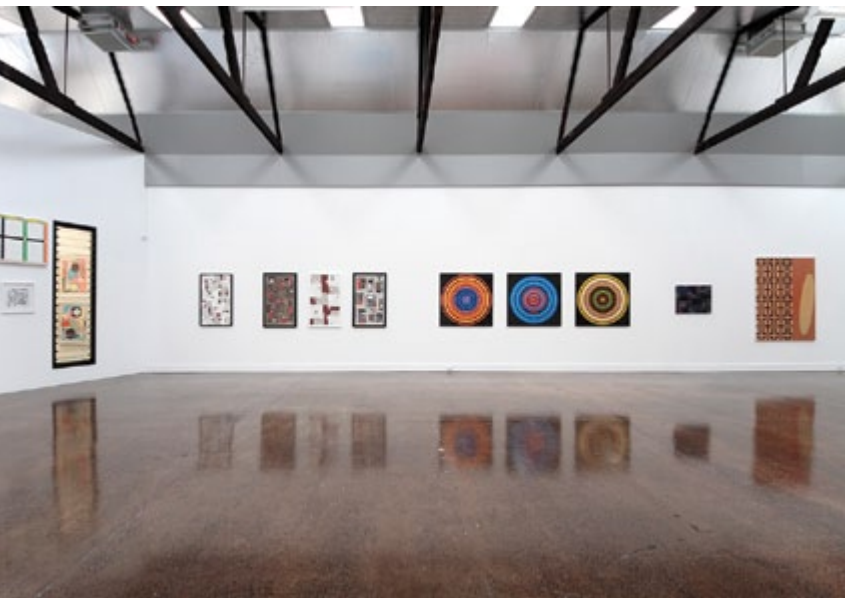


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Unlike painting the colour does not sit on the surface but is embedded within the object and is part of the object itself.

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HOW DO YOU use photographic media to make non-representational work?

Initially the works begin life 'in camera', as images of objects, places, etc. In some cases this is integral and in essence defines the work.

The initial images contain information and have certain traits that I am interested in, such as colour, depth and focus. These characteristics are much more important than subject matter in defining the final piece. The works then evolve in the post-production process, through the restructuring, removing and refining of the image. They are not reliant on location or subject matter specifically but they are always tied to information provided. Using photo-media in this way is extremely exciting and allows the medium to be taken beyond its traditional constraints.

In many cases the final works contain a multitude of images and it is through a process of disassembling and reconfiguration that these pieces come to life. Much of this is not premeditated and develops over time. It is also during this transition period that the initial ties to photography disappear, or at least seem to disappear.

The idea that the image can never escape its referent is ever present, especially in the New York series. The title of each piece refers to its geographical location and grounds the work in a certain place, for example 'NY # 40.78N_73.96W'. For me the title provides the clue, it is the link between the referent and the final work. I am New York but

not as you know it! Without this knowledge the series aligns itself with the more formal ideas of geometric abstraction. It is this play between the importance of the images and their irrelevance that I find fascinating.

Several of your works' titles refer to 'code'. How do you see the idea of code being conveyed through your work?

The idea of code or decode refers to the digital element of the works, without which the works could not exist. The term has links to a computer programming but also more importantly the idea of revealing something that is hidden, something that has been hidden in code. The initial images are 'coded', tied to reality through time, location and photographic traditions. I am not interested in code as 1s and 0s but the idea that through this transformation into a non-objective image the work is somehow released from its referent into a self-referential object.

The aim of these works is to remove the constraints; they are in a sense 'decoded'. I am inviting the viewer into a space for a contemplative experience with the work that potentially overwhelms or transcends its physicality. The viewers are free to immerse themselves within the colour, rhythm and space that each work offers.

Through removing the referent the works also begin to blur the distinction between the taking and making of the photographic image and in turn erode the boundaries between photography and other media. This exploration into the photographic process shifts

the emphasis from 'taking' to 'making' photography; from what photography is, or perceived to be, to what photography can be.

How do you determine the colours of each work?

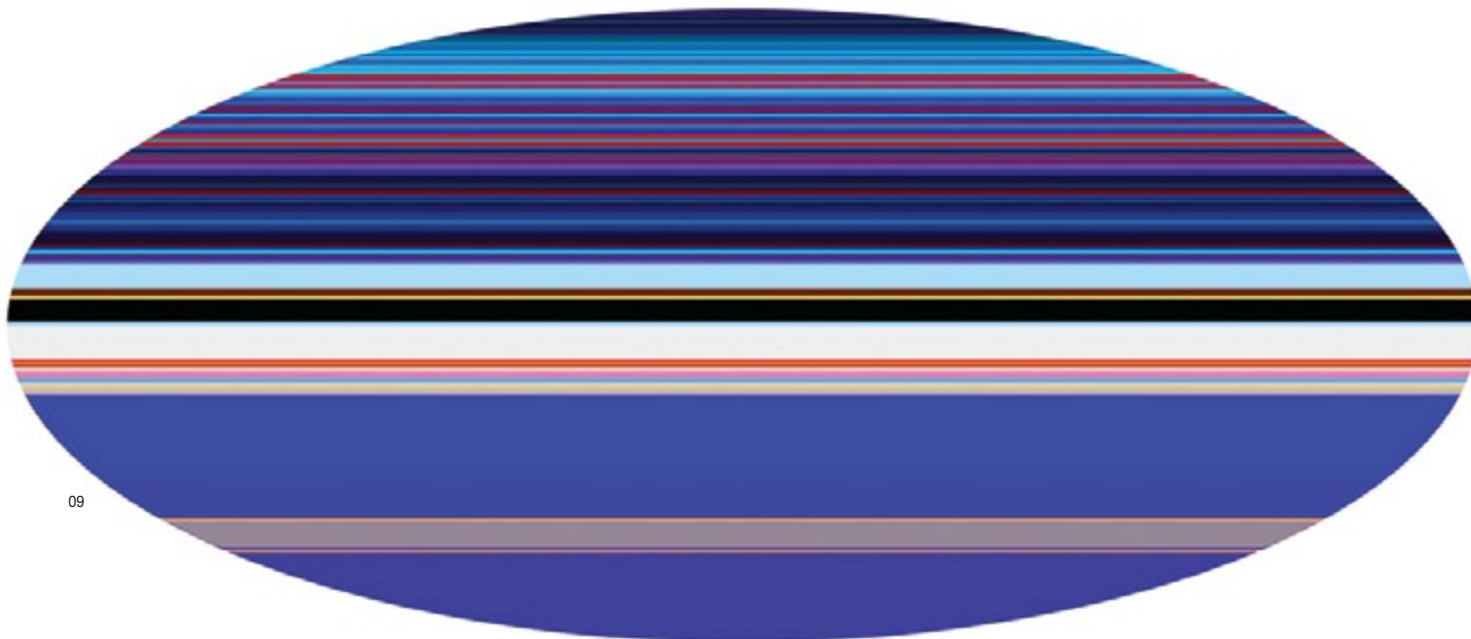
Colour is extremely important in these works; initially each piece is reliant on the colours that exist within the initial images. This is just a starting point, but it does often assist with determining the colour relationships. Colour as surface and colour as sensation – I want these works to seduce! The language often used to describe the works is aligned with painting, however unlike painting the colour does not sit on the surface but is embedded within the object and is part of the object itself. The luminosity of each Lambda print is enhanced by the acrylic in which it is encased.

What's the relationship between painting and photography in the context of your practice?

Most of my inspiration comes from painting, especially geometric and hard-edged abstraction. The precession, structure and understanding of space that is present in these forms of painting are ever present in my practice. My works are constructs, a techno remix of the push-pull phenomenology of abstract painting. The language used to discuss and interpret the works is more aligned with painting than photography.

In what ways are the works self-referential?

The works are self-referential in every way! Ultimately it is about the work, with titles like 'Pulse', 'Drift' and 'Trace' there is no narrative,



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it is about what the work is and what the work does. It is image as object and our relationship with that object. These pieces are not representations of certain realities; they are their own reality and involve furthering the concepts of reduction (of form, space, line and material). By developing these concepts I am inviting the viewer into the space for a contemplative experience with the work.

What is the relationship between object and screen in your work?

To an extent the screen is an integral element of its manufacture. The images are taken through a screen, manipulated on a screen and as the images shimmer through thick Plexiglas they very much appear screen-like. The acrylic is not just a framing device but a vital component which emphasises the mechanical properties within each work. The physical property that the acrylic provides gives the image weight (literally) and assists in transferring the two-dimensional images into objects. The image is contained and detached, it exists as pixels through an oversized computer screen. It is an immersive luminous illusion.

What part does movement play in your images? For me, they evoke a moving image like a long exposure or optical illusion.

I have endeavoured to create pieces that have a certain sense of rhythm, shallow and deep. The works have both active and inactive elements, a combination of tight bands of colour that shift and vibrate through to muted tones and large, flat expanses. Visually you are drawn into certain areas while at other times you are pushed back. This is not designed to create any kind of optical illusion but is more about the experience of looking. The viewer is invited to float in an illusionistic, three-dimensional space.

How do you think photography is evolving in the context of contemporary art?

Explorations into photographic processes shift the emphasis from taking to making photography; from the photograph to photo-media; from what photography is, or is perceived to be, to what photography can be; from the camera to the multiplicity of interactions with the materials and apparatus of photography.

In particular what abstract photography loses in representation it gains in pictorial power, free and autonomous from representational limitations. Rather than representations of known realities, they are representations of their own reality. ■

Paul Snell is represented by Colville Gallery, Hobart.

EXHIBITION

AT_Salon2
 Until 22 November, 2015
 Anita Traverso Gallery, Melbourne

www.colvillegallery.com.au
www.paulsnell.com

- 01 Pulse # 201101, 2011, lambda print, face mounted to 6mm, acrylic, 120 x 120cm
 - 02 Pulse # 201313, 2013, lambda print, face mounted to 4.5mm, acrylic, 125 x 125cm
 - 03 Pulse # 201309, 2014, lambda print, face mounted to 4.5mm, acrylic, 125 x 125cm
 - 04 Pulse # 201201, 2012, lambda print, face mounted to 6mm, acrylic, 120 x 120cm
 - 05 Intersect # 201401, 2014, lambda print, face mounted to 4.5mm, acrylic, 118cm (d)
 - 06 Installation view: *Non Objective Present*, 2012, Langford 120, Melbourne
 - 07 NY # 40.75N 73.98W, 2013, lambda print face mounted to 4.5mm, acrylic, 80 x 300cm
 - 08 Pulse # 201021, 2010, lambda print facemounted to 6mm acrylic, 120 x 120cm
 - 09 Elliptical # 201210, 2012, Lambda Print, face mounted to 4.5mm acrylic, 85 x 200cm
- Courtesy the artist and Coleville Gallery, Hobart