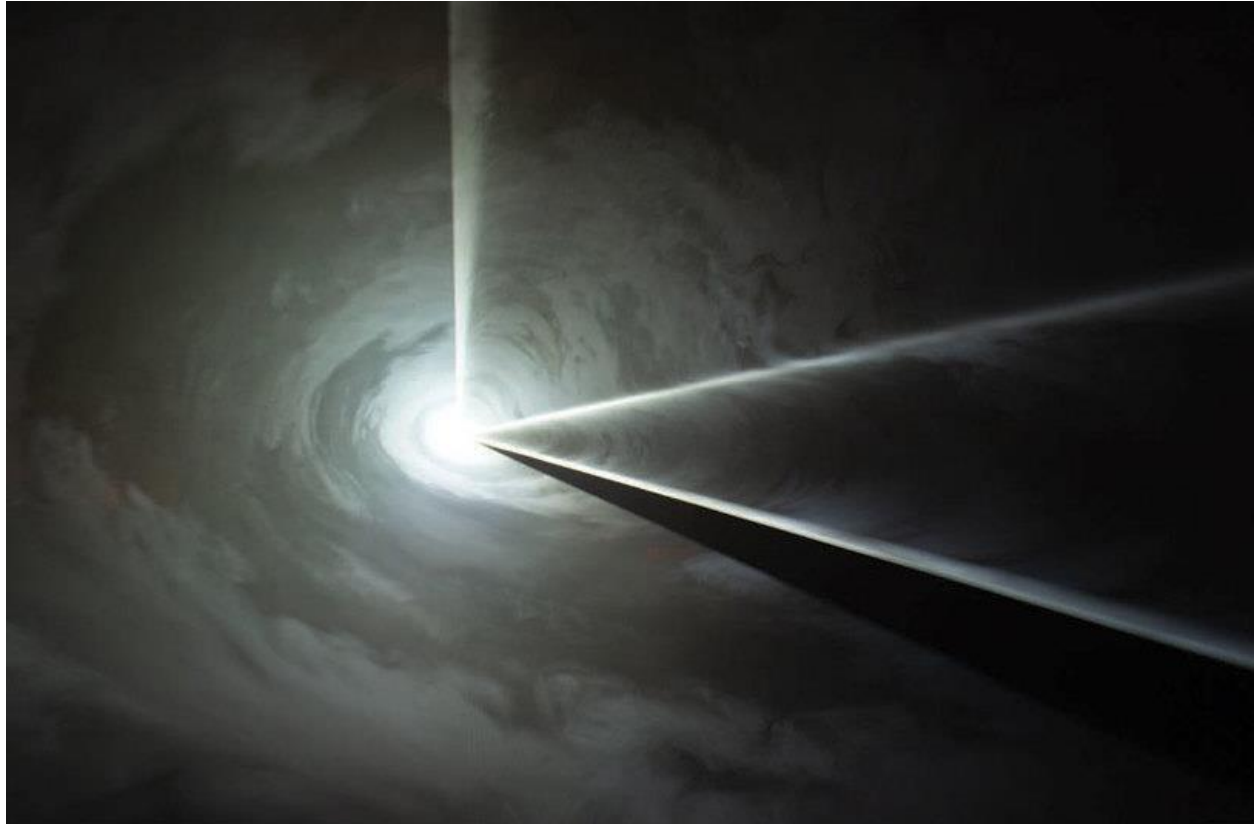


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Sholis, Brian. "Anthony McCall: Albright-Knox Gallery." *ARTFORUM*. December 3, 2019.

## ARTFORUM



*Anthony McCall, Throes II, 2011, video (silent, 15 minutes), haze machine. Installation view.*

## Anthony McCall

### ALBRIGHT-KNOX ART GALLERY

Many artists have a signature style. Few have one that, like Anthony McCall's, also rewrites the recent history of several media. Beginning in 1973 with his film *Line Describing a Cone*, McCall has made "solid light" works that scramble film, sculpture, drawing, and installation. "Dark Rooms, Solid Light," his first solo presentation in a North American museum, deftly contextualized McCall's emblematic works while highlighting their range and potency. Curators Cathleen Chaffee and Aaron Ott took full advantage of the stately galleries in the museum's 1905 building. The exhibition began with the projection of *Throes II*, 2011, onto a freestanding fabric screen. The imagery was of a

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bright white ellipse and waveform—two shapes McCall has worked with repeatedly—whose interactions suggested complex geometries. Only by walking around the screen, further into the darkened gallery, could one discover the full contours of the piece: A slowly mutating field of projected light, here made visible by hovering mist, filled the long, narrow room. After watching the screen and staring at the projector installed in the facing wall, viewers walked through the light—it was impossible not to—and became surfaces for the projection. Though it has no obvious beginning or end, the installation's theatrical reveal and the forms' slow movements emphasize the durational aspect of this immaterial "sculpture."

Five additional galleries contained projections that operated similarly but were of varying shapes and orientations. Their variety revealed that, although McCall made these works throughout the 1970s and, after a two-decade break, resumed making them in 2003, this conjunction of light, mist, walls, and screens remains ripe for further exploration. The most perceptually complex "solid light" film included here was also the newest: In *Split Second (Mirror)*, 2018, the projector is aimed at a mirror. The reflected beam of light created the appearance of a second cone of light; they point in opposite directions and, thanks to McCall's animation, rotate smoothly. The mirror's doubling served as a metaphor for the projection's dual states: as picture and object, as solid and immaterial, as sculpture and film. From "behind" this work, looking through the galleries' open doorways, one could see *You and I, Horizontal*, 2005, another dizzying interplay of light.

In nearby galleries, notebooks, drawings, photographs, and early film and slide-projection pieces clarified the origins of McCall's iconic works. The short film *Landscape for Fire*, 1972, documents the artist lighting a grid of small fires in a field at dusk. McCall, his fellow performers, and the camera crew all appear, presaging his willingness to suspend the illusions of film. After McCall moved to New York City in 1973, he fell in with the city's avant-garde filmmakers and performance artists, including Yvonne Rainer and Gordon Matta-Clark; the latter's architectural interventions in particular resonated with the art McCall was then making. And his volumetric studies and "footprint" drawings (which he has made since 1973 to record specific shapes to be projected) demonstrated his structured working method and intense preoccupation with filling three-dimensional space.

The most dramatic moment in the show unfolded in the sculpture court, the largest room in the museum, which is encircled by classical columns. Two projectors hung from its high ceiling, sending *Between You and I*, 2006, nearly thirty feet to the floor. The two cones of light they created each described moving shapes, including, again, an ellipse and a waveform. The piece was clearly meant to evoke awe—and indeed its solemnity conjured a space of transcendence. McCall's show was the last in this building before the museum embarked on a two-year expansion project. It made a fitting—and often stirring—send-off.

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