Introduction to Light Painting

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What is Light Painting?

"Light painting can be defined as the manual movement of light through space, over time, during a long exposure photograph." Jason D. Page

- Types of Light Painting

- What Supplies you Need

- How to Get Started

- Tips for Trying it out!

Light painting is not only photography, but also creating art with light as your paintbrush

Types of Light Painting

Traditional Light Painting
Light Sculpting (see Harold Ross)

Paint objects/background with light, but source is <u>not</u> seen
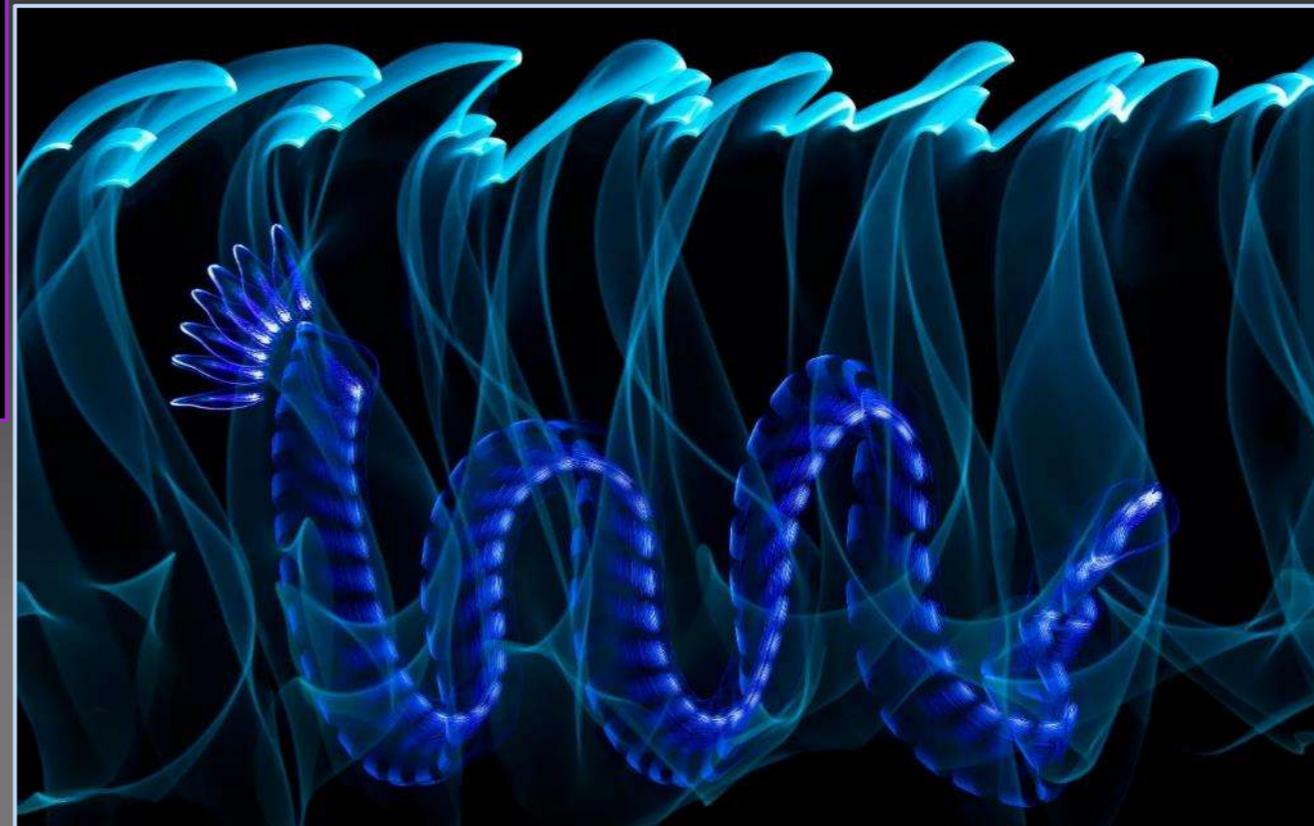
Kinetic Light Painting

Light stays still!
Camera movement / rotation / Lens Zoom *(ICM)*

Light Drawing

Image composed of *Light Only*
Movement of Light(s) by Photographer

Light Drawing and Painting
With Models or Props

Model: @Yelipza_gt

Outdoors
Paint trees and surrounds

Indoors
Incorporate Environment

Table Top

Works well in small spaces
Lensballs, Still life, Silhouettes

Silhouettes

Easy Technique for model and "painter"

Relatively short exposure

Easier for Models to hold pose

Great with tubes or Flutes

Easy to DIY

Supplies for Light Painting

What is Required

- Camera: DSLR, Mirrorless, or Smartphone

- Tripod, beanbag

- Light Source(s)

- Tools for Painting (opt)

- Dark Environment

  — *At least "Blue Hour" dark*

Nice to Have

- Extra Batteries

   - Cold, Long Exposures

- Camera Remote

   - Wireless

- Dark Clothing

- Zoom Lens

- Live Composite Mode (*Olympus*)

Model: @miabroadbberry

Flashlight Options

- Low to High-powered

  - *(400 to 1000+ Lumens)*

- Color Changing (RGB)

  - *Critter BT (Ants on a Melon)*

  - *Multi-Color lights*

- Strobe *(one-touch option)*

- On/Off button on end

  - *Works well with DIY Tubes, Light Painting Brushes Connector)*

Tip! Add Hood (black tape) and Colors (flash gels, cellophane, transparent vinyl, liquid chalk)

Pre-Made Light Tools

- Light Strings *(LED string, EL Wire, fairy lights)*

- Holiday lights *(battery)*

- LED strips, panels *(USB or battery)*

- Kid / Rave Light Toys

- Glow Sticks

- Fire, Sparklers

- Tea Lights
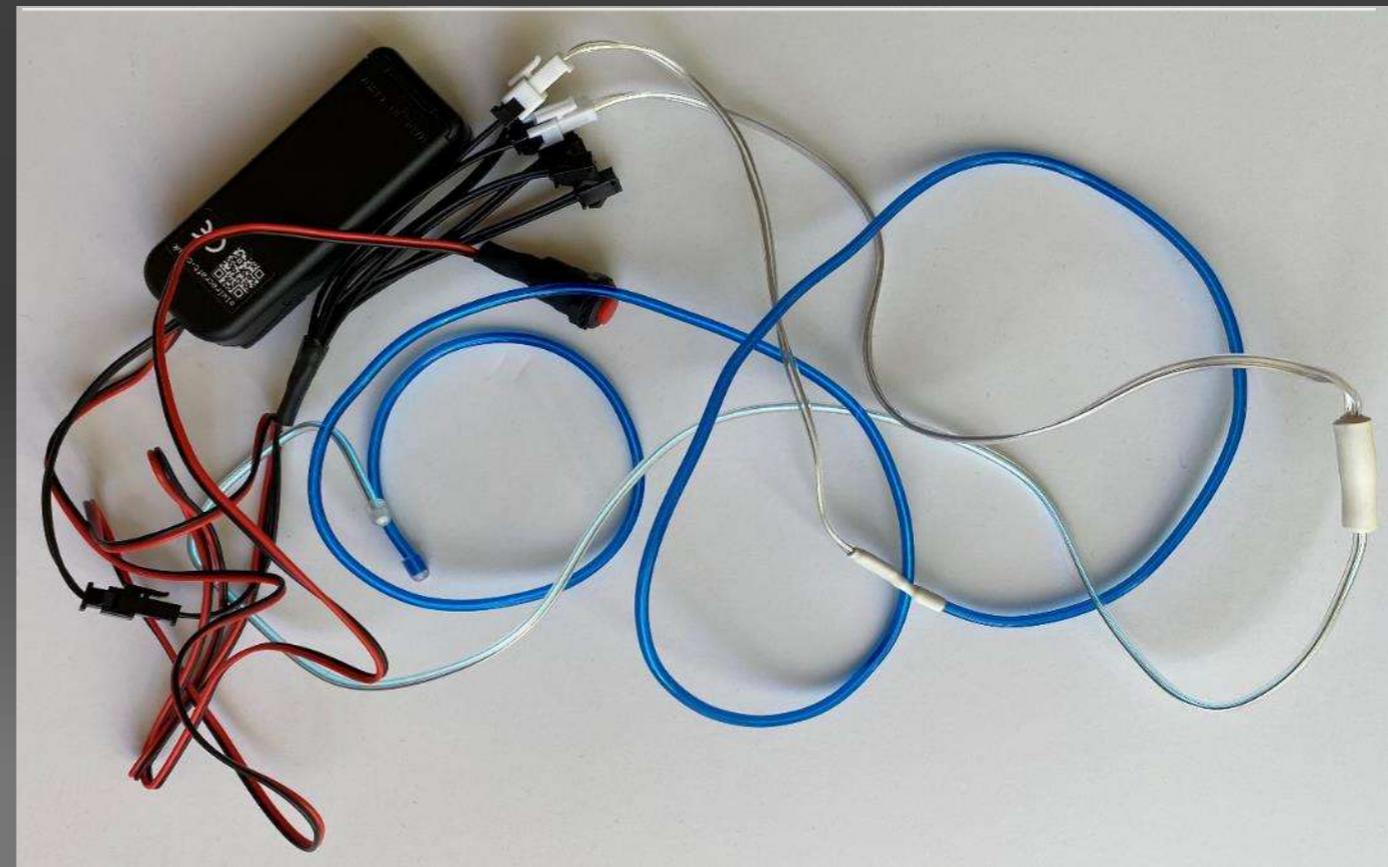
EL Wire

Light Tool Supplies

- Wheels, hula hoops, sticks

- Clear Plastic Tubes / Bottles

- Plexiglass shapes

- Opaque tube / PVC Pipe (add slots)

- Fiber Optic tube/cable (whips, ropes, brush)

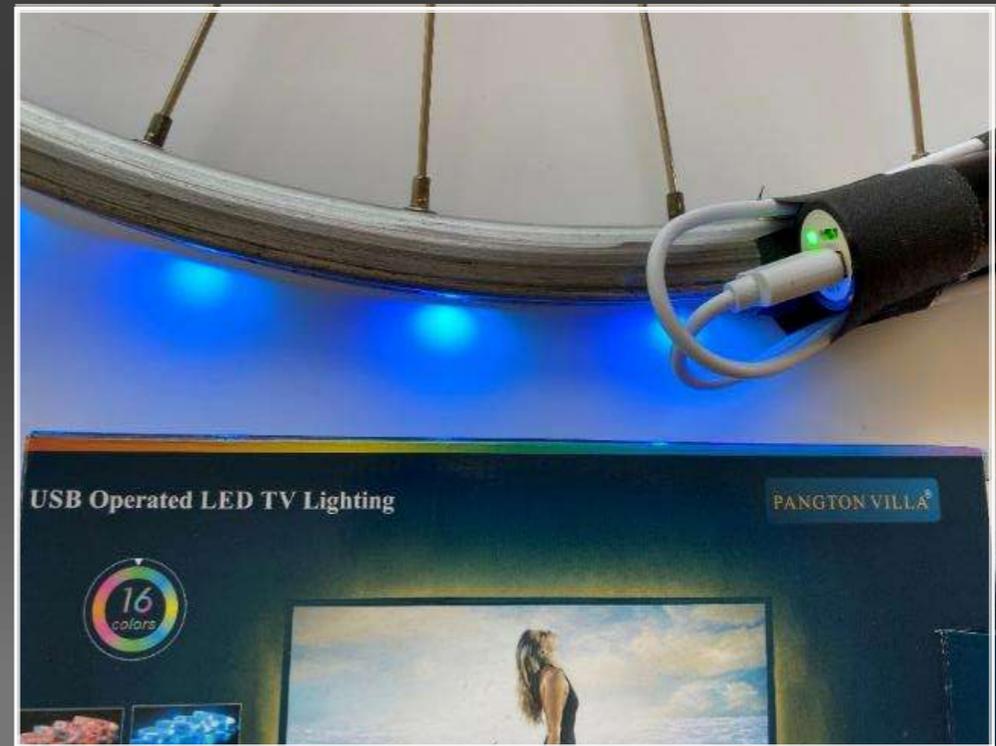*Light "Flute" from PVC Pipe and Drink bottle with Cellophane*

T-8 Fluorescent Tube Guard

Making Light Tools

- Attach tool to a light source with tape, clips, plumbing parts, Universal Connector (LPB)

- Add parchment paper, colored films or gels, holographic paper, liquid chalk marker, permanent marker

Holographic paper square hand-held with flashlight

LED Light Strip on bicycle wheel

Tools Designed for Light Painting

Light Painting Brushes (LPB) *@LightPaintingBrushes*

Ants On a Melon (RGB Critter) *@AntsOnAMelon*
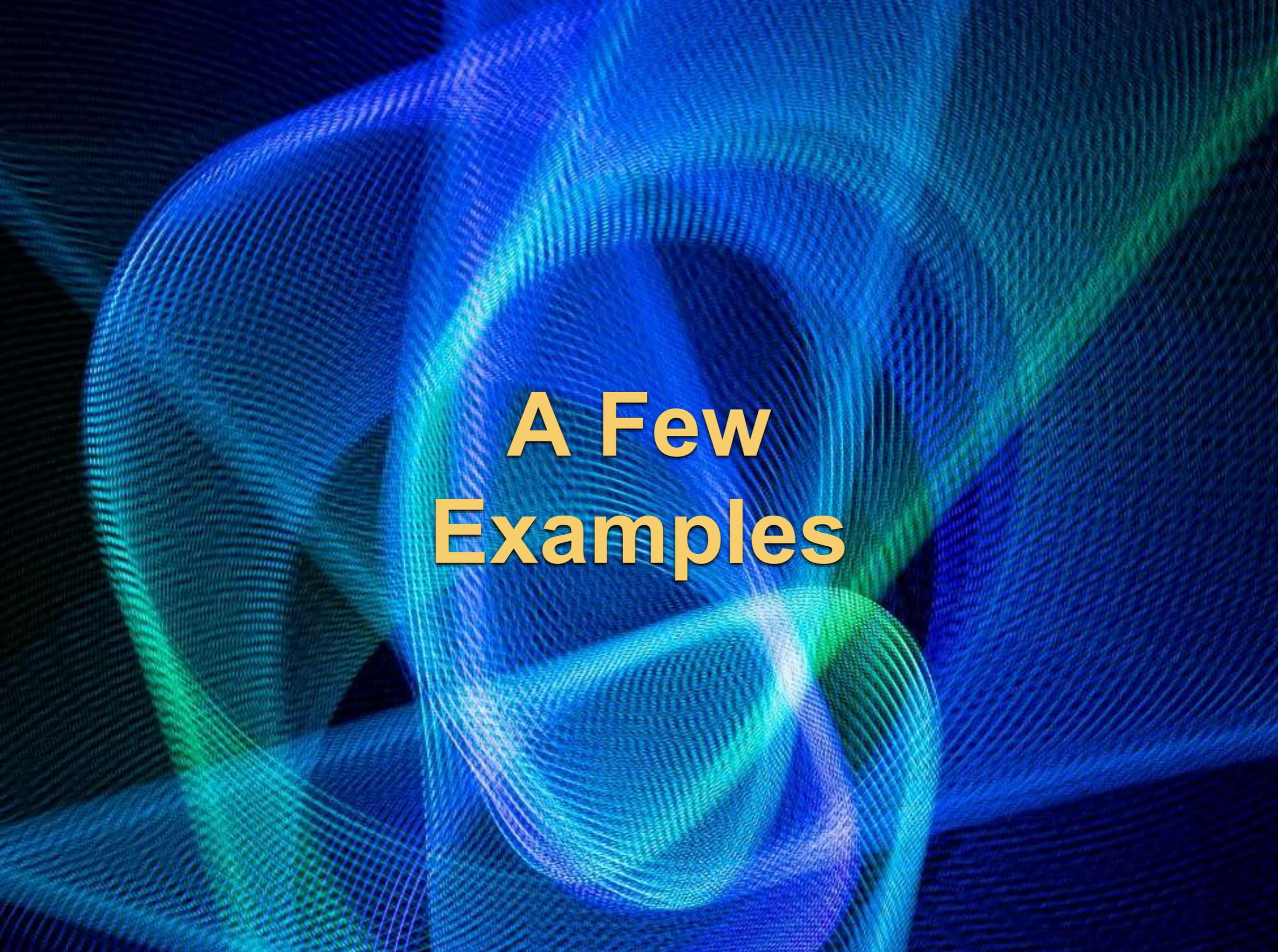
Eric Pare (Tubes) *@EricParePhoto*

Light Painting Paradise *@LightPaintingParadise*

Swords / Sabers, Tubes

Fiber Optic Rope, Whip, Brush, Duster
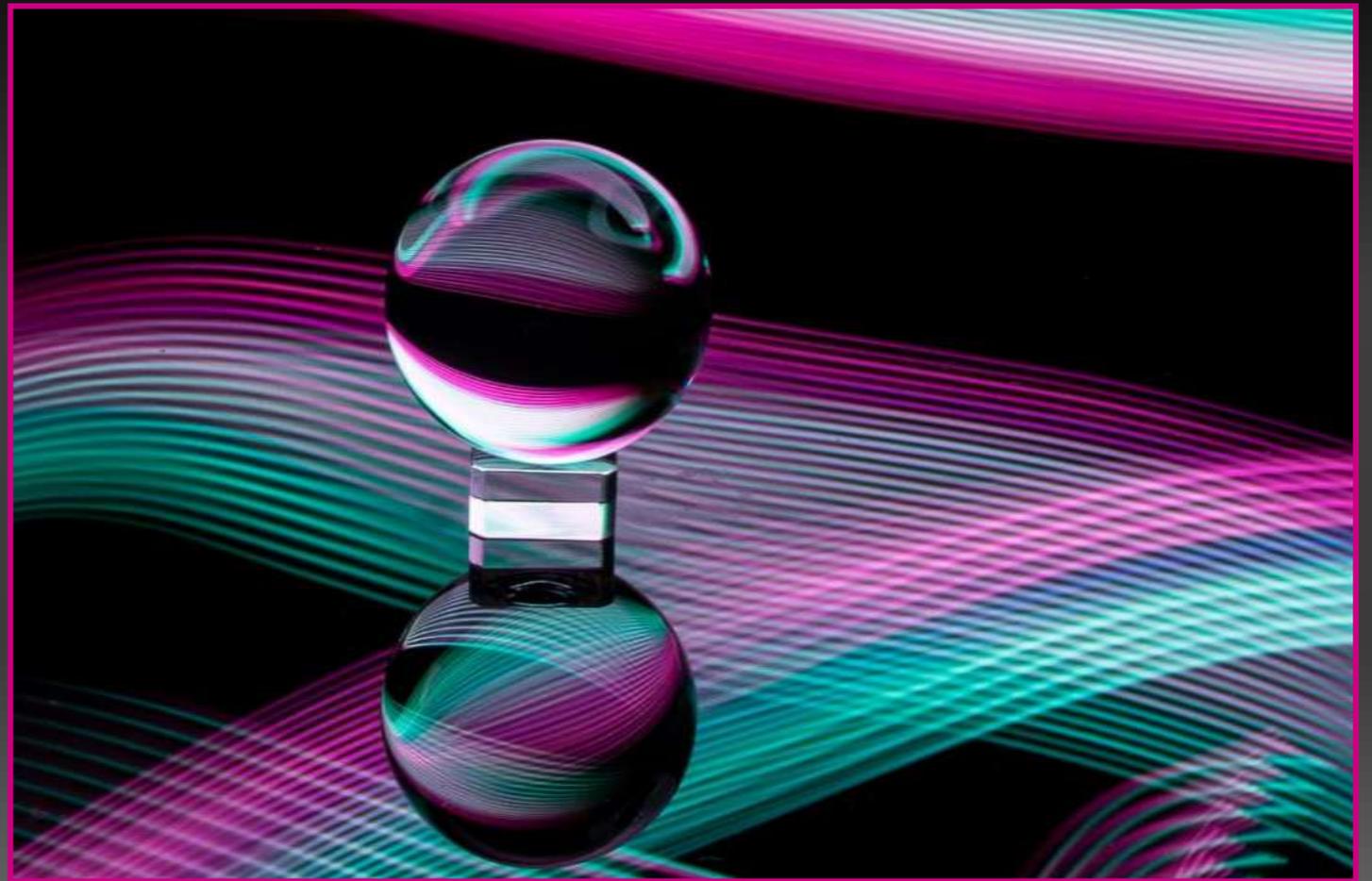
Blades (Plexiglas)

Writers, Hoods, Connectors

A Few Examples

EL Wire
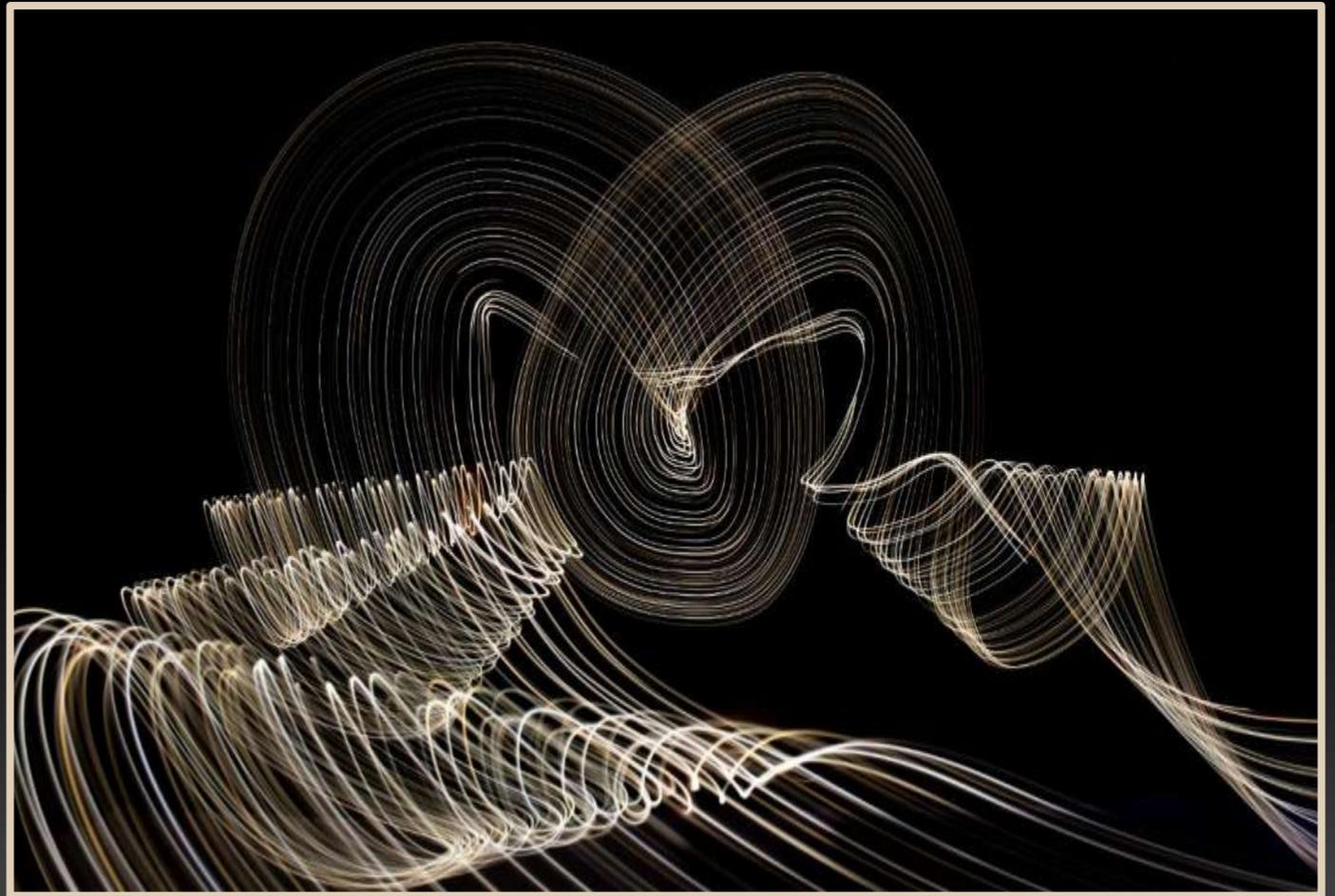
LED Panel

ISO 200, F8, 43 sec, 15mm
Bicycle Wheel

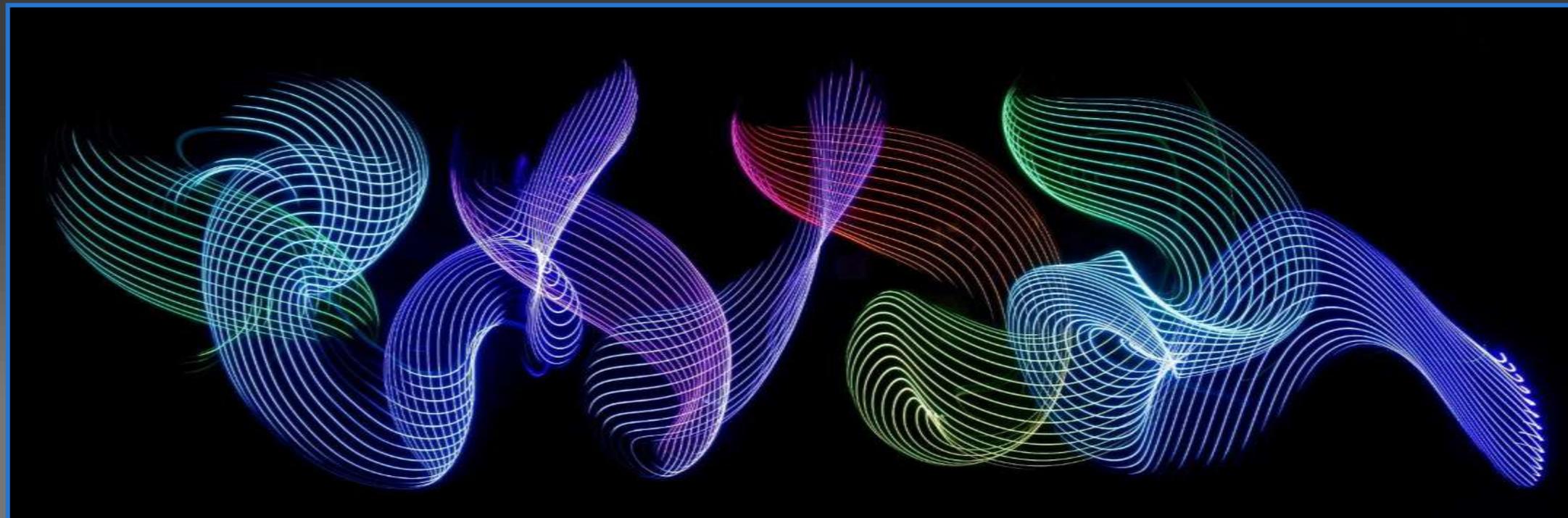ISO 100, F14, 11 sec, 24mm
Lensball

Fairy Lights on a Stick

ISO 100
F8, 15 sec
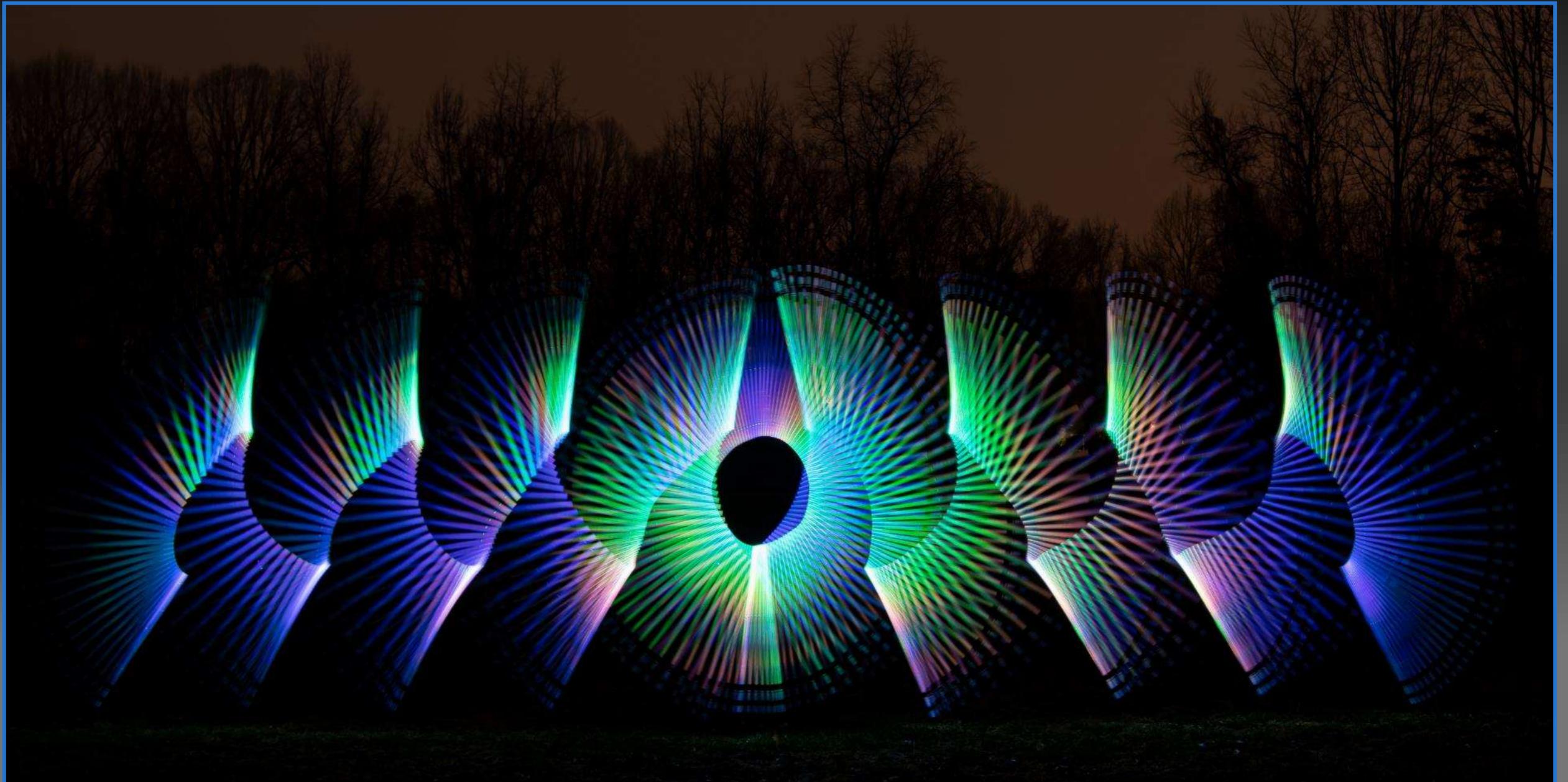15mm

LED Strip on a Wheel

ISO 100
F8, 28 sec
22mm

Light Tubes
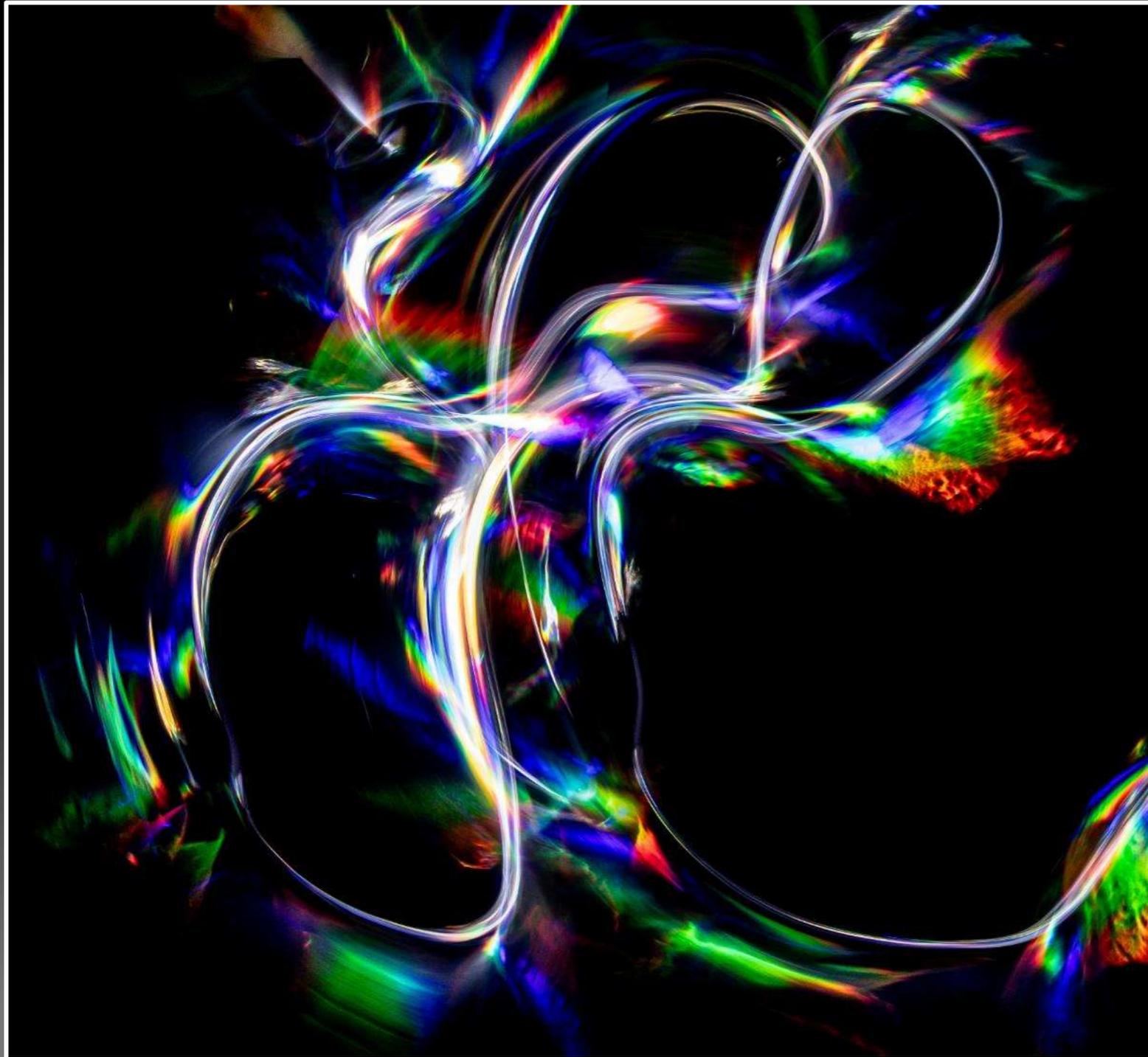
Clear or Colored T-8 Tube
with holographic vinyl

See @EricParePhoto

Strobe
ISO 100
F8, 60 sec
24mm

Flashlight with Shiny Paper

ISO 100
F11 13 sec
22mm

Holographic paper square hand-held with flashlight

Light "Flute"
PVC Pipe with drilled slots or holes

Gels, EL Wire

ISO 100, F8, 38 sec, 12mm

ISO 100
F8, 69 sec, 24mm

Swords, Sticks, and Sabers

LPB Collapsible Sword

LPB Glitter Stick

ISO 100, F8
35 sec, 22mm

AOAM Lumi Saber
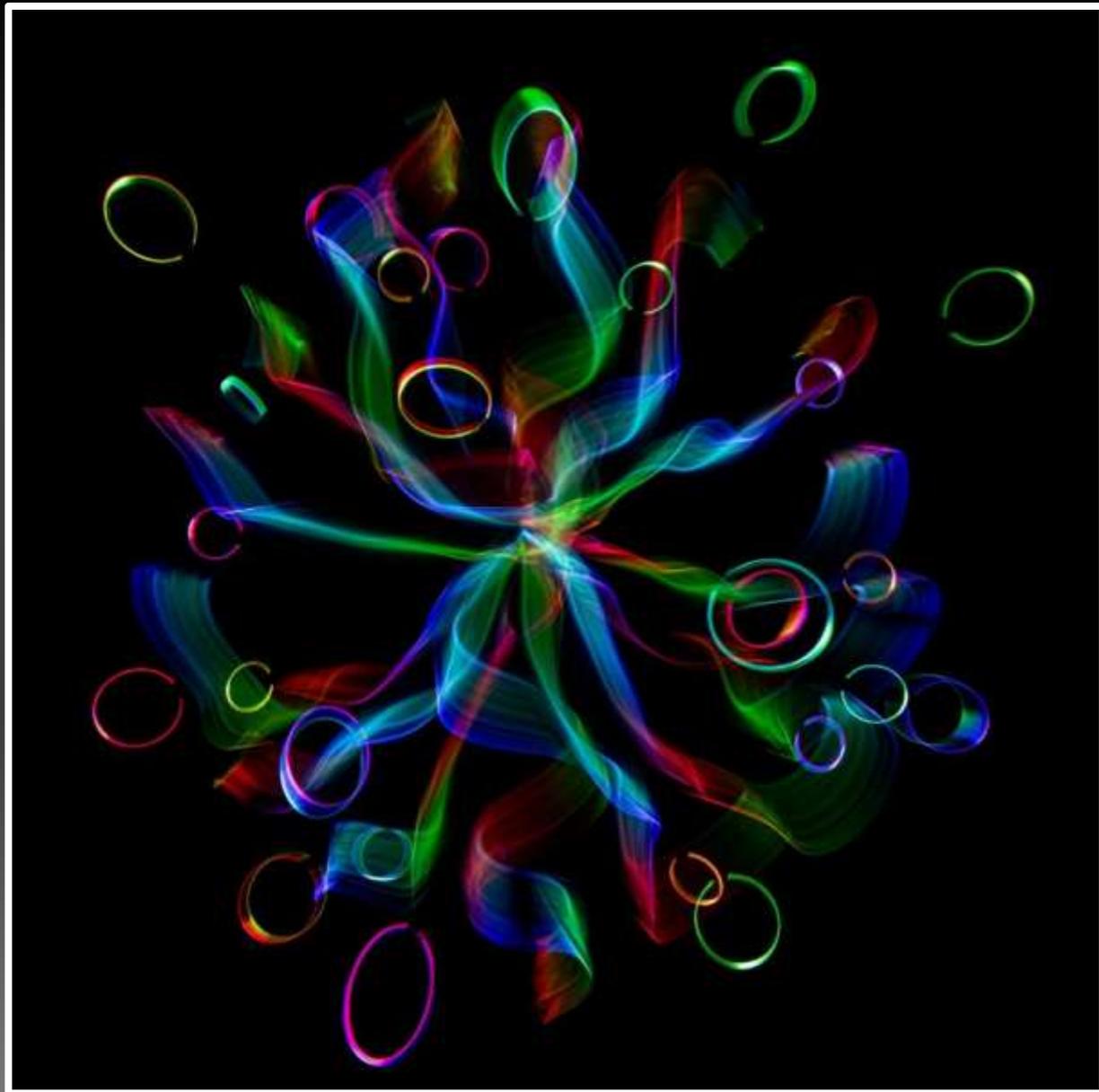& RGB Critter

ISO 100, F8
39 sec, 15mm

ISO 100, F8
25 sec, 24mm
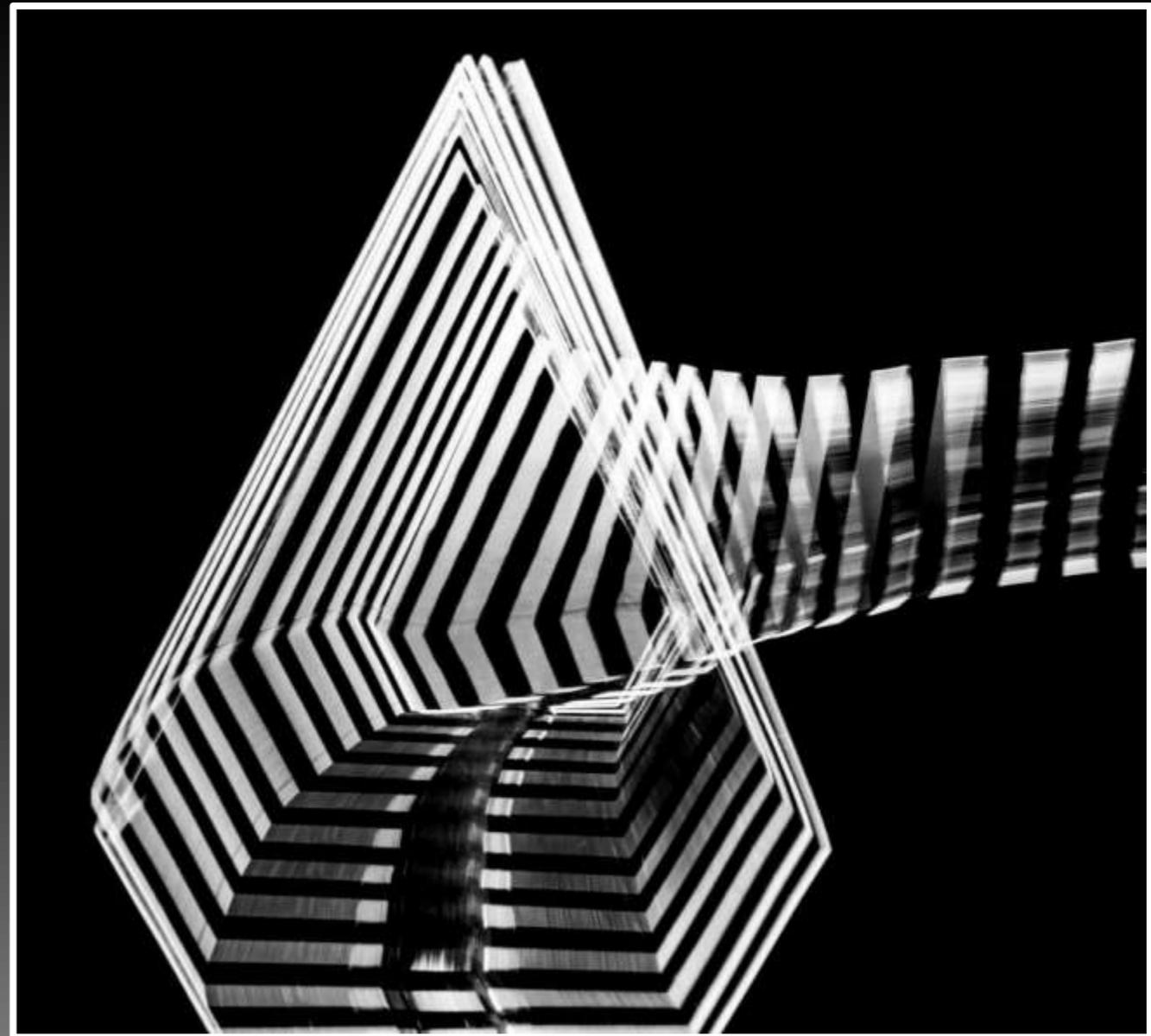
Plexi Glass

LPB Circle Plexi with RGB Critter Light
Smooth Ribbons and Tap Circles

LPB Triangle Plexi with
Strobe Light Pull

ISO 100, F8, 126 sec, 12mm

ISO 100, F16, 14 sec, 17mm
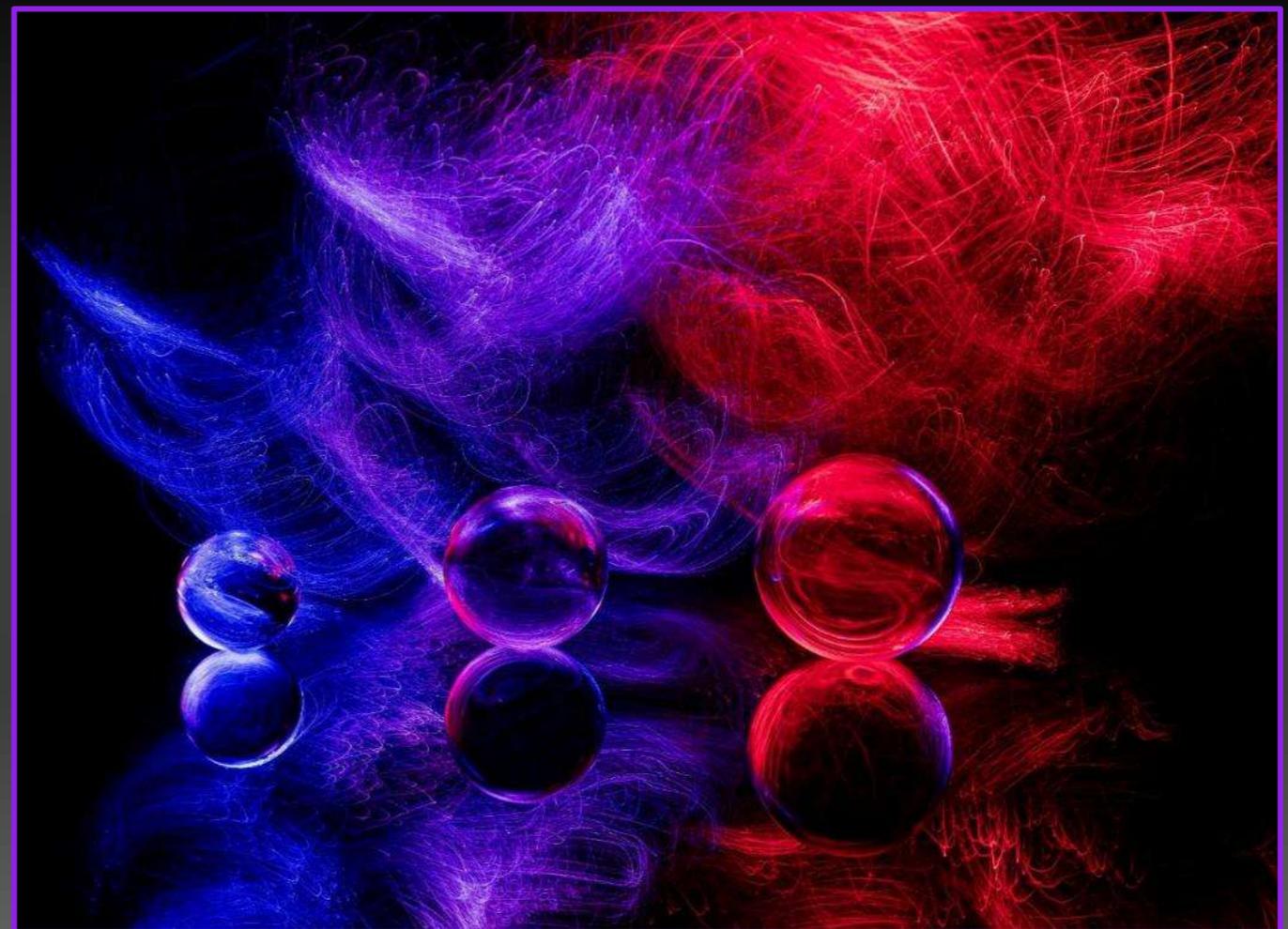
Fiber Optic

LPB Black Fiber Optic
With Orange Filter

AOAM Fiber Optic with
RGB Critter Light
and Lensballs

ISO 100, F8, 57 sec, 28mm

ISO 400, F5.6, 37 sec, 50mm

Use your Phone!
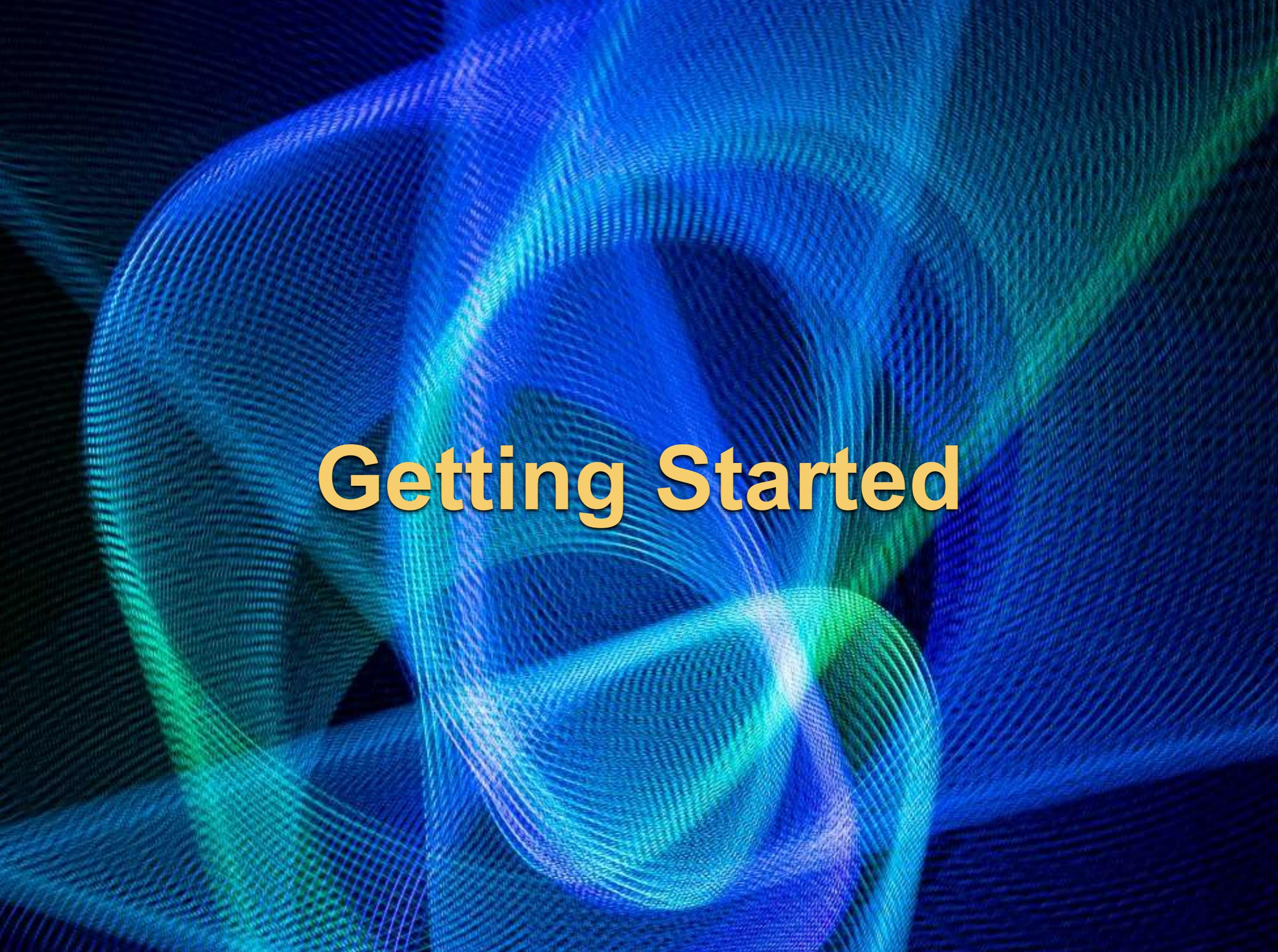# The one tool everyone has!

Pick or find an image
Put it full on the screen
Wave it around

Bright colors work great!

Getting Started

Starting Settings

- Save as RAW file

- In Camera Noise Reduction = Off

- Turn OFF <u>VR</u> or <u>IS</u>

- Live View

- Manual Mode

- Manual Focus

- Low ISO (100)

- Aperture (~ F8)

- Bulb or Seconds
  (e.g., 5 to 30 sec)

Model: @nora.dahlberg

Focusing in the Dark

You don't!

- Light subject from a distance with flashlight or outdoor lights

OR

- Place a light on your mark

Focus on your subject or mark, and then set camera to *__Manual Focus__*

Effects on Settings

- Ambient Light

- Brightness / Type of Light Source

- Distance from Light Source to Subject

- Direction or Angle of Light to Subject

- Color of Light (e.g., white vs. blue)

- Speed of Light Movement

Adjusting your Settings

If image is too bright

➢ Adjust to a smaller aperture (larger F-stop number) and/or lower ISO

If image is too dark

➢ Try a larger aperture (smaller F-stop number) and/or higher ISO

Changing Ambient Light

8:32pm to 8:54pm

F8
ISO 100
73 sec

F6.3
ISO 100
74 sec

F6.3
ISO 100
82 sec

F6.3
ISO 200
113 sec
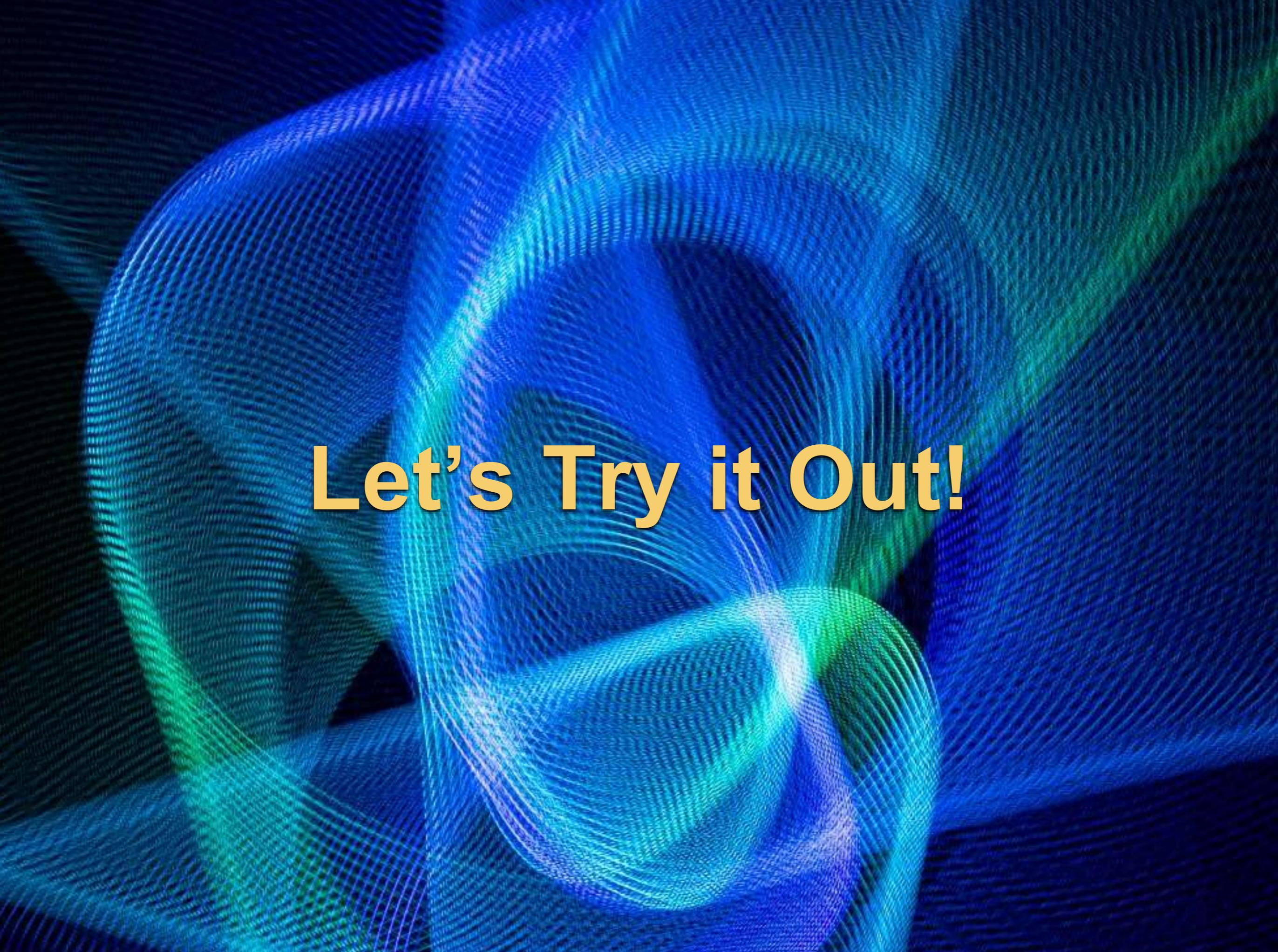
Let's Try it Out!

Getting Set Up

- ## Choose your light(s)
  Line up tools

- ## Choose a Prop *(if applicable)*
  Good for practice

  Stays still and is patient!

- ## Choose a Model *(if applicable)*
  Dancer / Actor, Kid / Friend

Tip! Glow tape on Tripod

ISO 400
F11, 47 sec
14mm
(Black brush + Blue filter)

Planning Your Shot

Have a vision or plan of what you want to create!

- Be organized
  - *Lay out tools in order*
  - *Know how to find in dark*

- Incorporate pose, costume, or prop
  - *Light Saber fight*
  - *Creature breathing fire*
  - *Wings*
  - *Magical effects*

Painting/Drawing Tips

- Use smooth, continual, and even movements

  - *Adjust your speed to alter the intensity of light*

- Don't cross over the same space too many times

  - *This will blow out the light and/or muddle the shapes*

- Don't point the light tool directly at the camera lens

  - *Exception: brief flashes at lens to create 'star' effect*

- Keep the light tool parallel to the camera lens

  - *Experiment with changing the angle*

- Think about symmetry (orbs, patterns)

  - *Count light movements to make them even*

Taking the Shot

1. Set a Mark and focus

2. Arrange your prop or model on the Mark *(if applicable)*

3. Start camera exposure (open shutter on Bulb or Timed)

   Exception: Sparklers or light tools without one touch on/off

   - Start and end exposure with light out of frame

4. Turn on your light and paint!

   • *Tip! Start and end light <u>behind</u> your prop or the legs/body of your model*

5. Use light / flash to Illuminate prop or model *(if applicable)*

   • *Sweep up <u>once</u> from bottom to top with diffused light*

   • *OR Use off-camera Speedlight flash (Test button)*

6. Close your shutter for Bulb or complete timed exposure

7. Check your shot in the Histogram *(check highlights)*

   Try Again – It will take lots of Trial and Error!

Light Painting Resources

Tutorials, How to's, Flashlight and Gear guides

- *https://lightpaintingblog.com/*

- *YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@LightPaintingPhotography*

Tools Specifically for Light Painting

- Light Painting Brushes (Universal Connector)

  ➢ *LSW15 (15% off Discount code)*

- Ants on a Melon (RGB Critter light)

- Eric Pare (Tubes) https://lightpainting.store/

Light Painting with Lori

Contact me with questions!

➤ LoriSImages@gmail.com
➤ https://LoriSimages.smugmug.com/
➤ Instagram: @Lo8iS
➤ Blue Sky: Lo8is.bsky.social
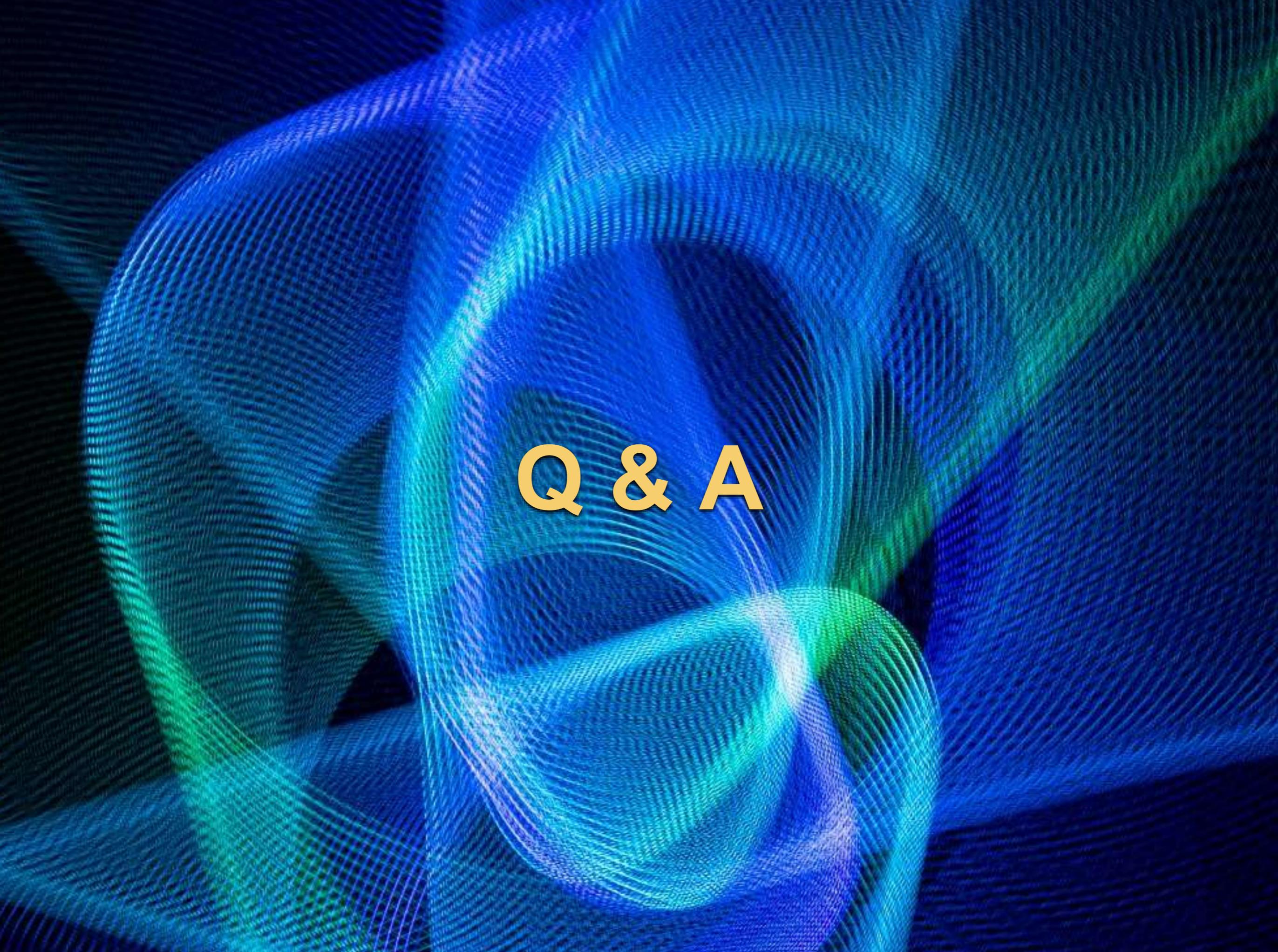➤ Facebook: Lori'S Images

Keep Learning!

In-person instruction with *Capital Photography Center* in 2026

Light Painting as Photo Art: February 15 (2:30-6:30pm), Falls Church

Try it out and share!

- Tag or send you images to me!

- Request to join "Light Painting with Lori" Facebook group
  https://www.facebook.com/groups/1005892924070591

Q & A