

bitforms gallery

Jim Campbell
Encoding Light
January 24–March 7

Opening reception: Saturday, January 24, 5–7 PM
Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday: 11 AM–6 PM

bitforms gallery is pleased to present *Encoding Light*, our first solo exhibition with Jim Campbell. Campbell is uniquely recognized for his use of low-resolution moving imagery and sculptural LED installations that explore where visual abstraction gives way to recognition. The artist's exhibition history spans more than three decades, tracing the evolution of his practice from early electronic and interactive works to large-scale LED installations. Early surveys such as *Transforming Time* (ASU Art Museum, 2000) and *Quantizing Effects* (SITE Santa Fe, 2005) established his investigation of time, memory, and low-resolution imagery. Major presentations, including *Scattered Light* at Madison Square Park (2010–11), *Exploded Views* at SFMOMA (2011–12), and *Day for Night* on San Francisco's Salesforce Tower (2018) brought his work to broad public and institutional audiences. In recent years, continued solo and group exhibitions have reaffirmed Campbell's central role in contemporary light and media art, consistently exploring the threshold between abstraction and recognition. A major component of Campbell's practice traces how perception is constructed through visual information. Through the artist's deliberate adjustments to resolution, slowing motion, and dispersing images across space, he foregrounds the human impulse to "fill in the gaps," drawing on memory, experience, and expectation to make sense of what we see. *Encoding Light* situates Campbell's historic works alongside a series of newly produced pieces.

Motion Color Study #6 is from a series of works that Campbell filmed in Claude Monet's garden in Giverny, France. Through the artist's positioning of this site, it becomes a historical hinge between two distinct yet conceptually aligned approaches to image making. Monet's garden functioned as an environment translated to paint through color, light, and atmospheric variation. Campbell's *Motion Color Study* returns to this same landscape through a contemporary, technological lens. Slow-moving footage of the garden is distributed across low-resolution LEDs behind a plexiglass screen, producing a blurred field in which color again becomes the primary vehicle of recognition. The comparison underscores a shared reliance on color as structure rather than ornament, and frames Campbell's work not as a reinterpretation of Monet's imagery, but as a continuation of his perceptual inquiry, translated from pigment to pixel.

Exploded View (Commuters) is a seminal work in Campbell's *Exploded View* series, in which the artist transforms moving images into three-dimensional space using suspended arrays of LED lights. From most viewpoints, the arrangement of over 1,000 LEDs appears as an abstract constellation of flickering points, but from a specific vantage point the lights cohere into low-resolution figures of commuters traversing Grand Central Station. This oscillation between abstraction and recognition foregrounds Campbell's ongoing investigation into how the mind assembles meaning from minimal visual information. By requiring viewers to move through the space to find and lose the image, the work encourages perception to be an active, embodied process that reveals how cognition completes what vision alone cannot fully resolve.

Memory / Recollection is a historic work from 1991 that captures still images of viewers and their surroundings in real time, intermittently storing and replaying them alongside live still imagery. Through a mix of still and live media, Campbell explores the fragile mechanics of remembrance and how images persist as impressions shaped by time, distance, and perception. In this tension between liveness and dissolution, past and present blur.

Together with several newly produced works, *Encoding Light* presents a sustained investigation into perception, memory, and the mechanics of recognition. Through live feeds, slowed motion, dispersed light, and low-resolution imagery, Campbell structures viewing as a deliberate process in which meaning is assembled rather than immediately given. The exhibition positions light not as a tool of representation, but as a material that shapes how visual information is processed. Taken as a whole, the works examine how understanding emerges through duration, movement, and the viewer's active engagement with incomplete images.

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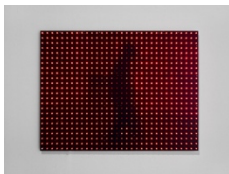
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Jim Campbell's (b. 1956) work has been exhibited internationally and throughout North America in institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; The International Center for Photography, New York; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia.

His electronic art work is included in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the de Young Museum, San Francisco and the Berkeley Art Museum. In 2012, he was the recipient of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's 13th Annual Bay Area Treasure Award.

Previous honors include a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship Award in Multimedia, three Langlois Foundation Grants and a Guggenheim Fellowship Award. He has two Bachelor of Science Degrees in Mathematics and Engineering from MIT and as an engineer holds nearly twenty patents in the field of video image processing. His 2018 piece 'Day for Night' is a permanent LED installation that comprises the top nine floors of the 61-story Salesforce Tower in San Francisco.

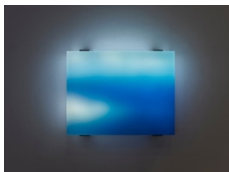
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Jim Campbell

Motion and Rest 1, 2001
Custom electronics, 768 LEDs
22 x 29 in / 55.9 x 73.7 cm
Edition of 2, 1 AP

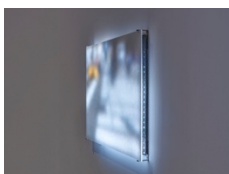
\$ 85,000.00



Jim Campbell

Blur #6, 2026
LEDs, resin, custom electronics
17 x 22 x 6 in / 43.2 x 55.9 x 15.2 cm
Edition of 5, 1 AP

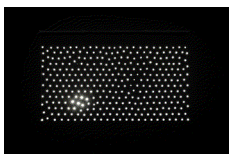
\$ 85,000.00



Jim Campbell

New York 4x, 2026
Custom electronics, 768 LEDs, rice paper, treated plexiglas
17 x 22 x 6 in / 43.2 x 55.9 x 15.2 cm
Edition of 5, 1 AP

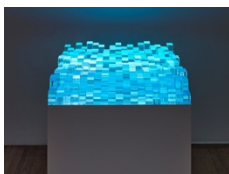
\$ 85,000.00



Jim Campbell

Flat View, 2026
LEDs, painted Delrin spheres, wire, custom electronics
41 x 57 x 1.5 in / 104 x 145 x 4 cm
Edition of 5, 1 AP

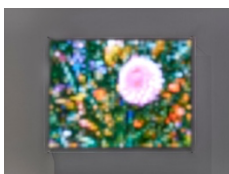
\$ 45,000.00



Jim Campbell

Repixelated #4, 2026
LEDs, treated acrylic cuboids, custom electronics
22-1/2 x 16 x 27 in / 56 x 43 x 69 cm
Edition of 5, 1 AP

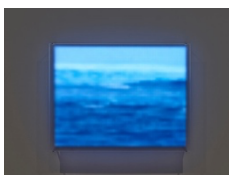
\$ 75,000.00



Jim Campbell

Motion Color Study #6, 2026
LEDs, treated plexiglass, custom electronics
34 x 45 in / 86 x 115 cm
Edition of 5, 1 AP

\$ 110,000.00

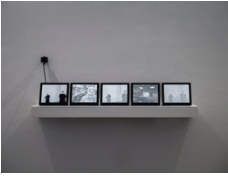


Jim Campbell

Fade to Blue, 2026
LEDs, treated plexiglass, custom electronics
34 x 45 in / 86 x 115 cm
Edition of 5, 1 AP

\$ 110,000.00

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Jim Campbell

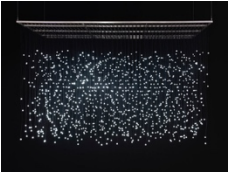
Memory/Recollection Revisited, 1991/2024

Black and white video camera, five LCD screens, 3 SBCs, custom electronics

12 x 44 x 8 in / 30.5 x 111.8 x 20.3 cm

Edition of 10, 1 AP

\$ 36,000.00



Jim Campbell

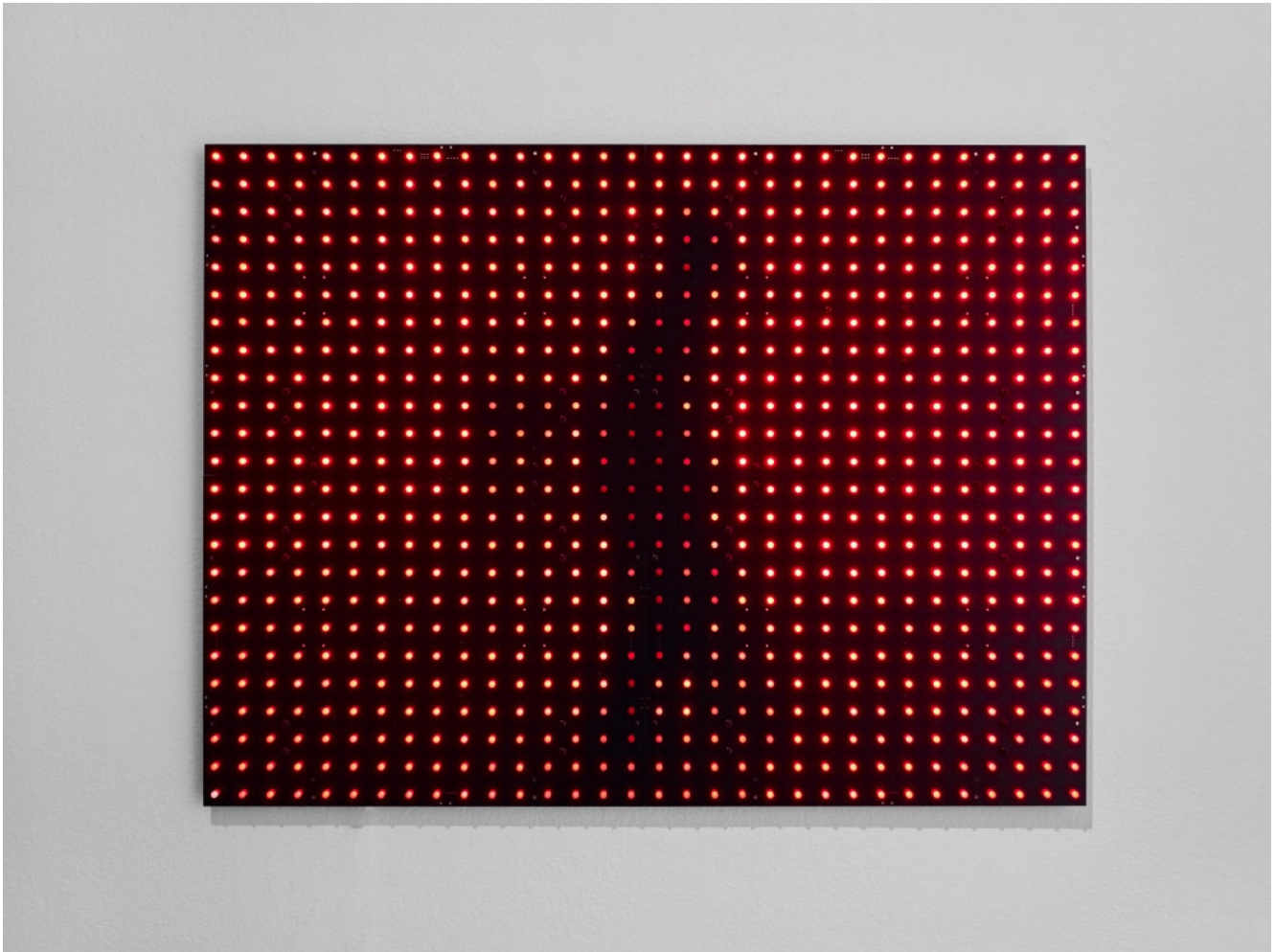
Exploded View (Commuters), 2010

Aluminum frame, LEDs, Delrin spheres, wire, custom electronics

192 x 240 x 132 in / 488 x 610 x 335 cm

Edition of 3, 1 AP

\$ 170,000.00



Jim Campbell

Motion and Rest 1, 2001

Custom electronics, 768 LEDs

22 x 29 in / 55.9 x 73.7 cm

Edition of 2, 1 AP

\$ 85,000.00

Description

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/833818702>

Motion and Rest consists of a black, wall-mounted LED panel in which a grid of white lights forms the shifting outline of a human figure in profile. Created in 2001, it is an early and influential example of Campbell's exploration of low-resolution digital imagery as a means of shaping perception over time rather than delivering instantaneous visual clarity. Referencing Eadweard Muybridge's late-nineteenth-century motion studies and the halftone processes through which they circulated, the work situates contemporary digital display technologies within a longer history of image reproduction. The figure's uneven movement contrasts with ideals of efficiency and optimization historically associated with technological progress.

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Jim Campbell

Blur #6, 2026

LEDs, resin, custom electronics

17 x 22 x 6 in / 43.2 x 55.9 x 15.2 cm

Edition of 5, 1 AP

\$ 85,000.00

Description

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/1157975180?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Blur #6 presents a meditative abstraction of oceanic movement, derived from video imagery shot by the artist on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. Filmed along the island's north shore, the source footage captures rolling waves that are subsequently transformed through the application of thick resin, compressing motion into a luminous, painterly field. As the resin diffuses and refracts the image, the surf's white water emerges as a bright, drifting streak that cuts across the composition, while the surrounding sea deepens into layered, evolving blues.

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Jim Campbell

New York 4x, 2026

Custom electronics, 768 LEDs, rice paper, treated plexiglas

17 x 22 x 6 in / 43.2 x 55.9 x 15.2 cm

Edition of 5, 1 AP

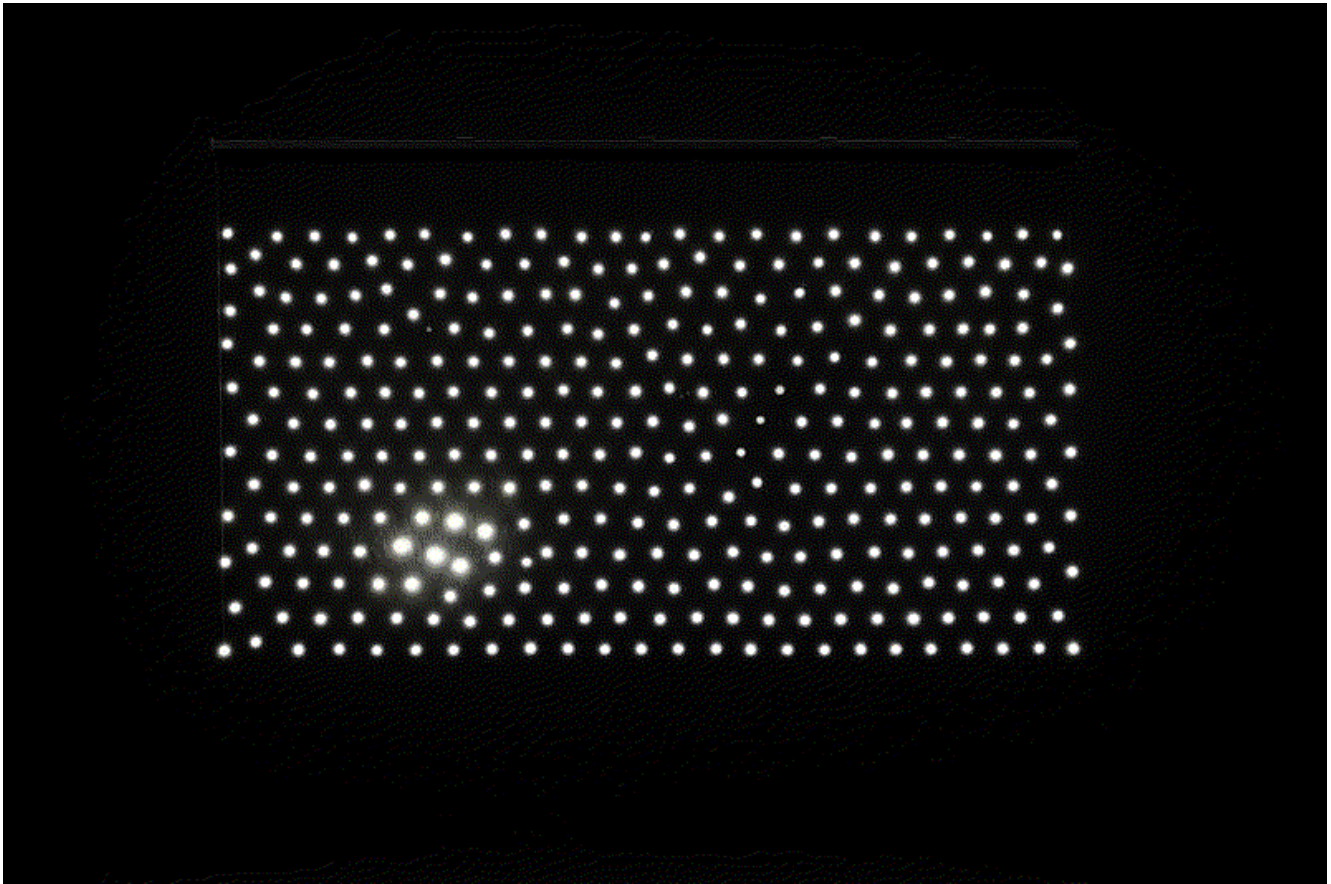
\$ 85,000.00

Description

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/1157978208?fl=pl&fe=sh>

New York 4x is a luminous abstraction formed by video footage of a New York street corner diffused through rice paper-treated plexiglass and animated by an array of LEDs behind the surface. Everyday urban movement—pedestrians, traffic, and ambient light—is softened and fragmented, transforming a familiar scene into a shifting field of glow and shadow. Suspended between representation and abstraction, the piece evokes the pulse of the city while inviting slow, contemplative looking.

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Jim Campbell

Flat View, 2026

LEDs, painted Delrin spheres, wire, custom electronics

41 x 57 x 1.5 in / 104 x 145 x 4 cm

Edition of 5, 1 AP

\$ 45,000.00

Description

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/1157973552?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Flat View presents birds in flight translated into a single row of glowing LEDs. In contrast to Campbell's celebrated installation *Exploded View*, which disperses imagery across multiple layers of LEDs to create physical depth, *Flat View* intentionally removes dimensional layering, compressing motion into a more graphic and abstract form. Individual birds become pulses and rhythms of light, shifting the focus from recognizable figures to collective movement. The absence of layered depth allows the work to be viewed from multiple angles, maintaining legibility as the viewer moves around it.

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Repixelated #4, 2026

LEDs, treated acrylic cuboids, custom electronics

22-1/2 x 16 x 27 in / 56 x 43 x 69 cm

Edition of 5, 1 AP

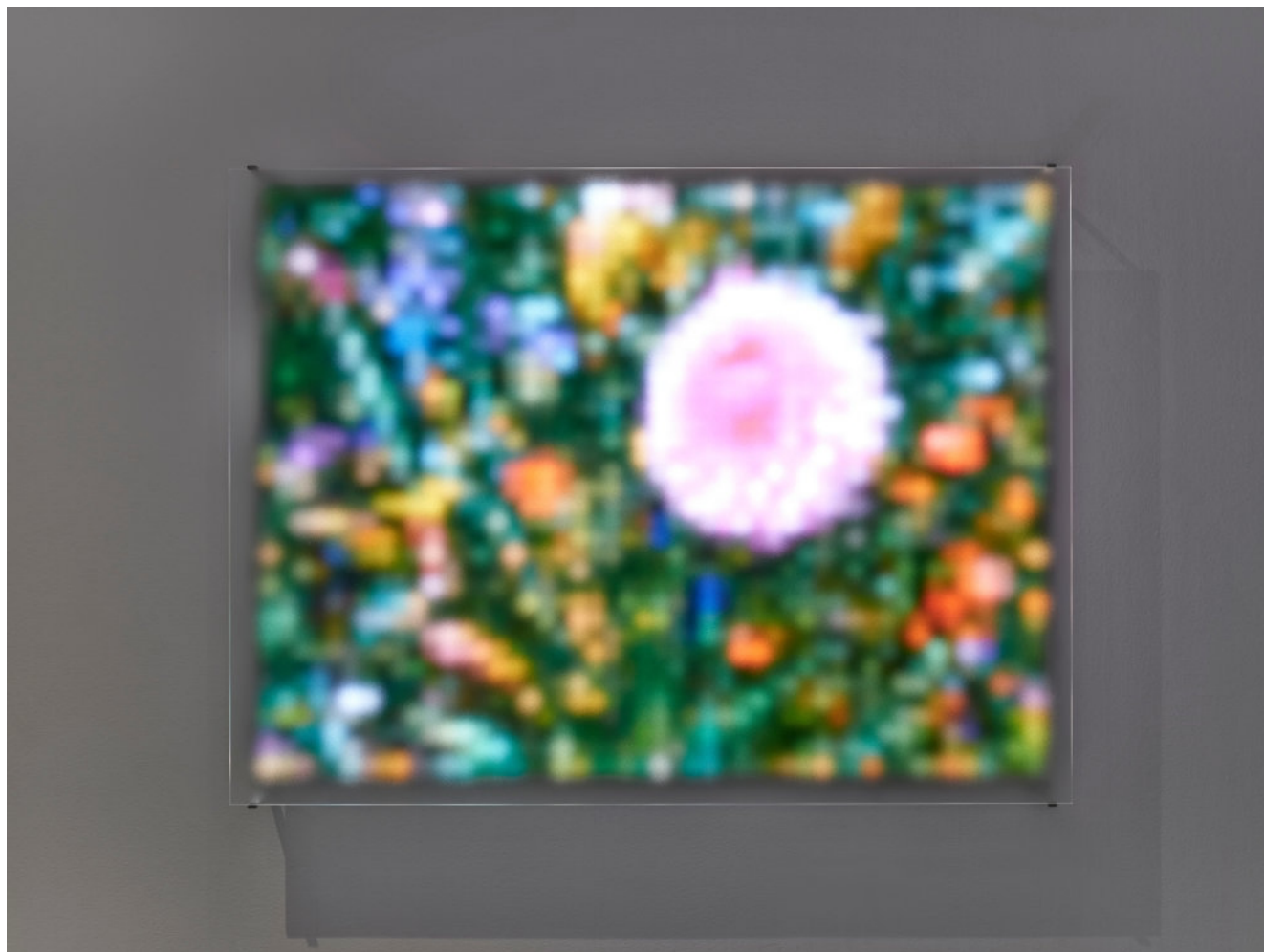
\$ 75,000.00

Description

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/1157970000?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Jim Campbell's *Repixelated #4* draws on the shifting ocean waves of Kauai, Hawai'i, translating moving water, surf, and reflected sunlight into a luminous composition of approximately 300 LEDs viewed through varying sizes of acrylic cubes, glass, and Plexiglas. Each cube functions as a vessel of distilled color—condensing the blues and whites of the sea into discrete, glowing units. Reduced to a low-resolution field of light, the image hovers in abstraction, gradually coalescing through sustained looking. Referencing the ocean's constant motion and the limits of human perception while employing contemporary materials and technology, the work foregrounds vision as an active process shaped by memory, attention, and the experience of place.

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Jim Campbell

Motion Color Study #6, 2026

LEDs, treated plexiglass, custom electronics

34 x 45 in / 86 x 115 cm

Edition of 5, 1 AP

\$ 110,000.00

Description

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/1157975948?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Motion Color Study #6 is from a series of works that Campbell filmed in Claude Monet's garden in Giverny, France. Through the artist's positioning of this site, it becomes a historical hinge between two distinct yet conceptually aligned approaches to image making. Monet's garden functioned as an environment translated to paint through color, light, and atmospheric variation. Campbell's *Motion Color Study* returns to this same landscape through a contemporary, technological lens. Slow-moving footage of the garden is distributed across low-resolution LEDs behind a plexiglass screen, producing a blurred field in which color again becomes the primary vehicle of recognition. The comparison underscores a shared reliance on color as structure rather than ornament, and frames Campbell's work not as a reinterpretation of Monet's imagery, but as a continuation of his perceptual inquiry, translated from pigment to pixel.

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Jim Campbell

Fade to Blue, 2026

LEDs, treated plexiglass, custom electronics

34 x 45 in / 86 x 115 cm

Edition of 5, 1 AP

\$ 110,000.00

Description

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/1157968078?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Fade to Blue uses a matrix of LEDs and treated Plexiglas to render ocean waves in a restrained field of light and motion. The image dissolves into a foggy expanse of blue, where movement thins and detail recedes, before returning to rolling ocean. As in Jim Campbell's other low-resolution works, the piece relies on optical diffusion and temporal shifts to move between legibility and abstraction. Here, the cyclical fade emphasizes duration and attention, inviting viewers to register subtle changes in light and color as the primary subject of the work.

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Jim Campbell

Memory/Recollection Revisited, 1991/2024

Black and white video camera, five LCD screens, 3 SBCs, custom electronics

12 x 44 x 8 in / 30.5 x 111.8 x 20.3 cm

Edition of 10, 1 AP

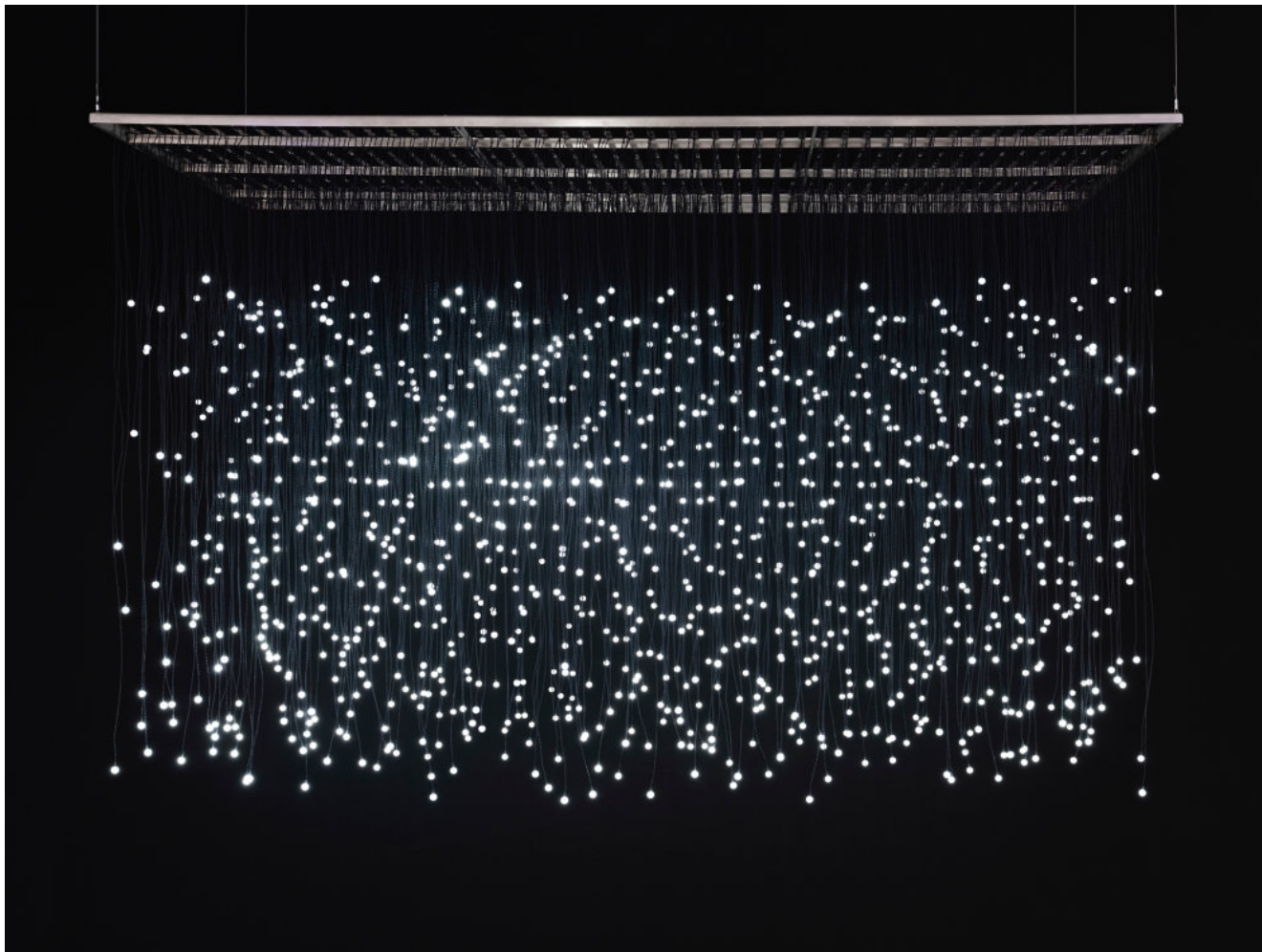
\$ 36,000.00

Description

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/1157974261>

Memory/Recollection is a historic work from 1991 that Campbell revisited in 2024. The piece captures still images of viewers and their surroundings in real time, intermittently storing and replaying them alongside live still imagery. Through a mix of still and live media, the artist explores the fragile mechanics of remembrance and how images persist as impressions shaped by time, distance, and perception. In this tension between liveness and dissolution, past and present blur.

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Jim Campbell

Exploded View (Commuters), 2010

Aluminum frame, LEDs, Delrin spheres, wire, custom electronics

192 × 240 × 132 in / 488 × 610 × 335 cm

Edition of 3, 1 AP

\$ 170,000.00

Description

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/1157972625?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Exploded View (Commuters) is a seminal work in which the artist transforms a moving image into three-dimensional space using suspended arrays of LED lights. From most viewpoints, the arrangement of over 1,000 LEDs appears as an abstract constellation of flickering points, but from a specific vantage point the lights cohere into low-resolution figures of commuters traversing Grand Central Station. This oscillation between abstraction and recognition foregrounds Campbell's ongoing investigation into how the mind assembles meaning from minimal visual information. By requiring viewers to move through the space to find and lose the image, the work encourages perception to be an active, embodied process that reveals how cognition completes what vision alone cannot fully resolve.