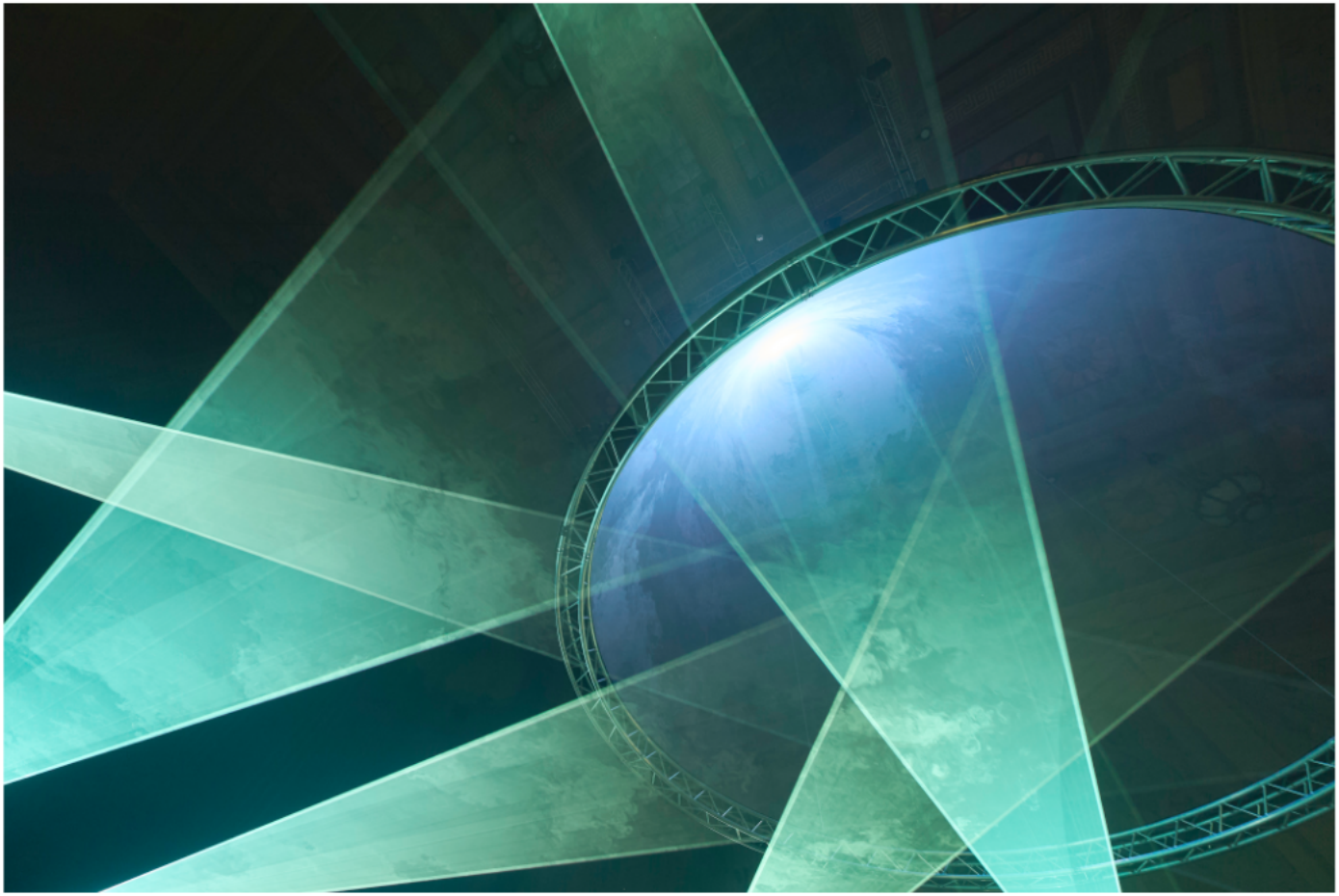
CAMERA NOT INCLUDED

The Photography Zine by Ewen Bell



Edition #9
August 2026

You are encouraged to print a personal copy of this zine for your own enjoyment. Or send a copy to a friend. Sharing is caring.

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EWEN BELL



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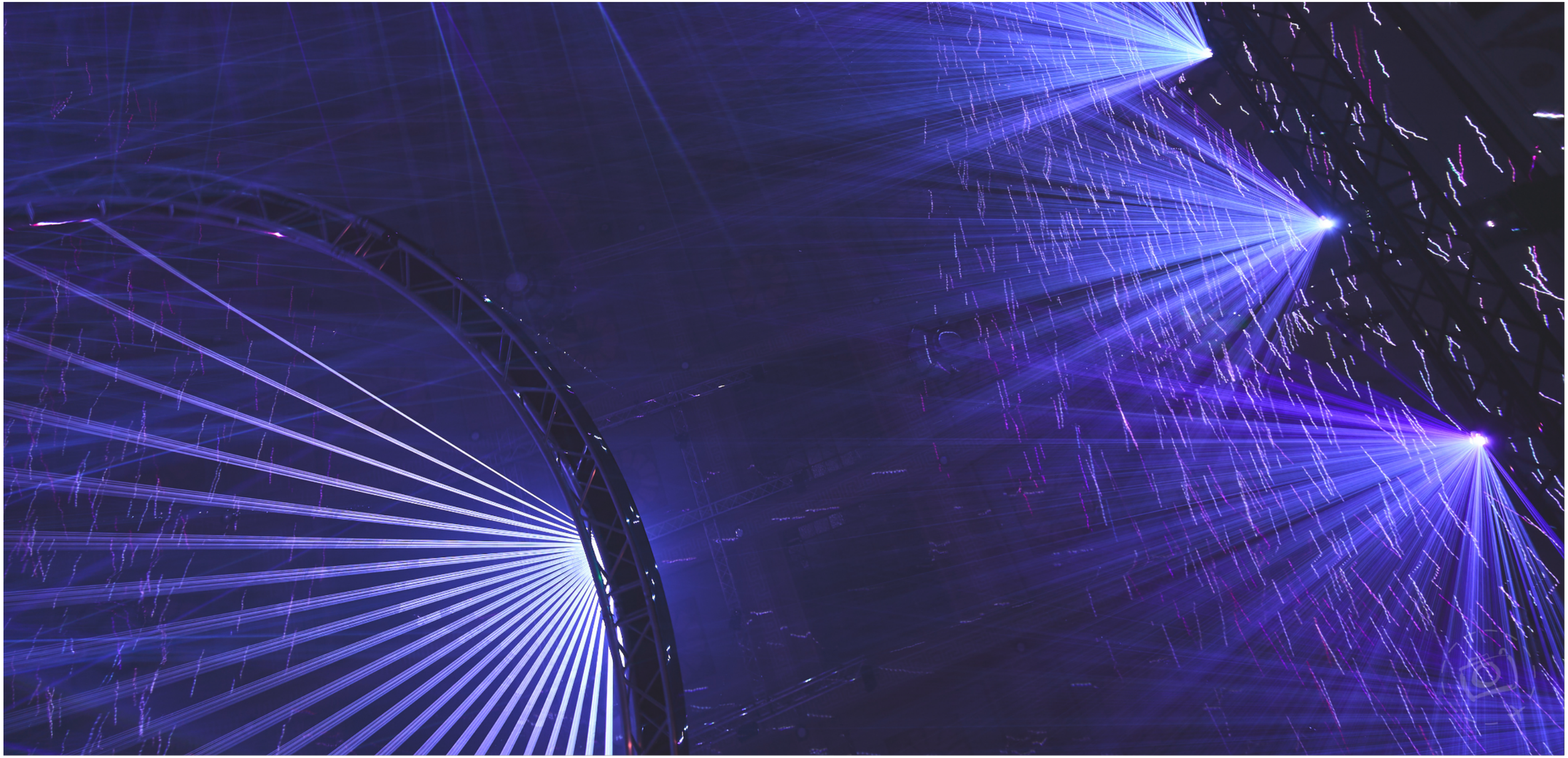


THE COVER

Laser Light Installation by Robin Fox

The City of Melbourne knows how to put on a show. This winter they created several installations of light around the city, indoors and outdoors, that were free to anyone to enjoy.

The Town Hall was turned into an indoor laser light show, with a massive cone of light hanging from the ceiling, a rim of lasers lined up above the crowd, plus a tonne of glitter beams sending low powered light into the crowd at various stages of the cycle. The music was loud and heavy, but the lasers were light and evocative.

Robin Fox was the laser artist. He's gone to a lot of trouble to create something unique and enchanting. Naturally I went to a lot of trouble to try and capture some images that shared the experience.



THIS EDITION

What's Your Angle

Not Minolta

Ian Rolfe Goes 6mm

August 2026

This month has been an intense period of shift in my life. Or at least, the realisation of many tectonics that have been rumbling beneath the surface.

For much of 2026 I have been indulging in a process called the "subtractive audit", where you look at all the pieces in your life and decide what needs to be removed in order for your life to be better.

Most of the time we think the answer to a better path forward is to ADD something to our lives. But after many decades, the solution is very often to REMOVE things. And that's been the colour of the month of August for me... with so many things purged from my world over recent months the path ahead looks a little more clear.

I am not getting any younger, so merely the idea of starting something new can be exhausting. Letting things go however, that is empowering. That feels so very very good. And having taken various steps to remove negative burdens from my world, that creative voice hidden deep within can be heard a little more clearly once again.

A quick word of thanks to the sponsors who make this publication possible.

I need to say thankyou for ongoing support from my sponsors. They help to make my life on the road a little easier, and help to keep my photography viable.

I don't want to fill the pages with too many adverts, so please allow me this little reminder that the folks at Peak Design, Tamron and Angelbird have been generous in their support for my work.

A special thank you to all my YouTube subscribers as well. It's great to have you here :)


MELBOURNE
Victoria / Australia

WHAT'S YOUR ANGLE

Looking for Diversity in Your Curation

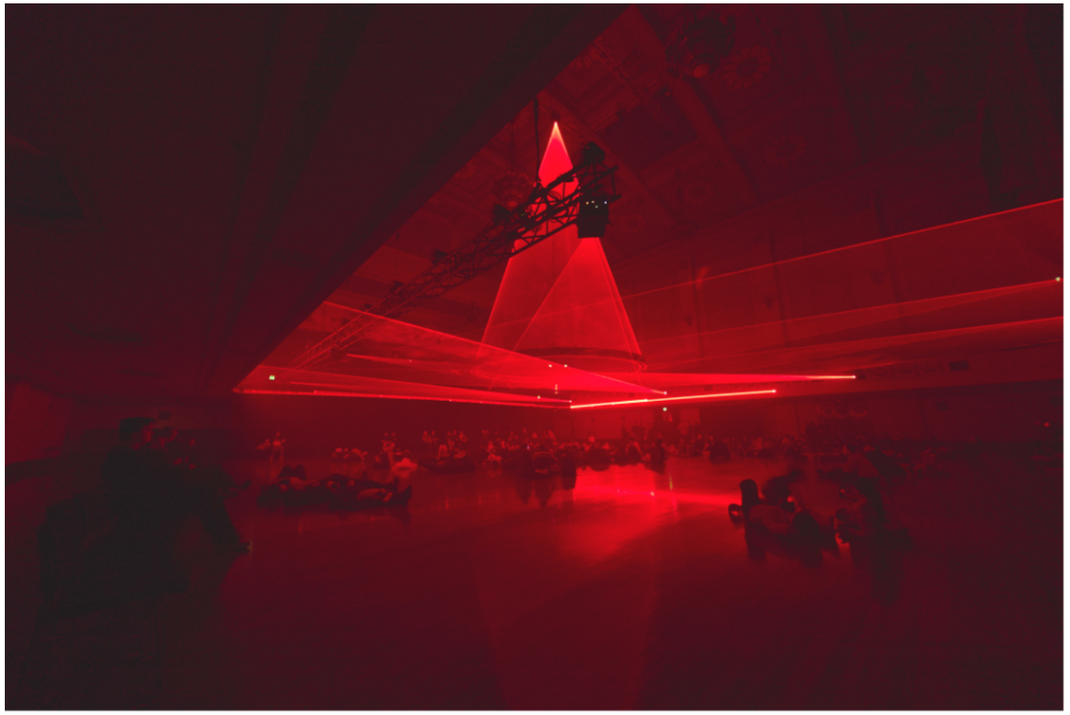
I presented at a camera club this month and did a version of my "Reality + Purpose" presentation. It's heavy on why we take photos, and using that to guide us towards expression and art. Because to me, "everything is art" anyway, so lean into it and have fun.

I was asked at the end of the night about formats for competitions, keeping in mind that I am not a fan of competitions. I have made videos about that. I wrote an entire chapter in my book about that too. My suggestion was to encourage folks to look for different ways to see the same subject. Set a task to produce "three different images of the exact same subject."

Better still, evaluate the entries on one single criteria: Diversity.

Forget technical details and all that for a minute, and just focus on how different are the three images? Because when i shoot for a magazine, or a client, diversity is my objective. I don't just want one good shot of a subject, I want a dozen.

[Images taken on the Sony ZV-E1 and Tamron 12-20mm F2.8]

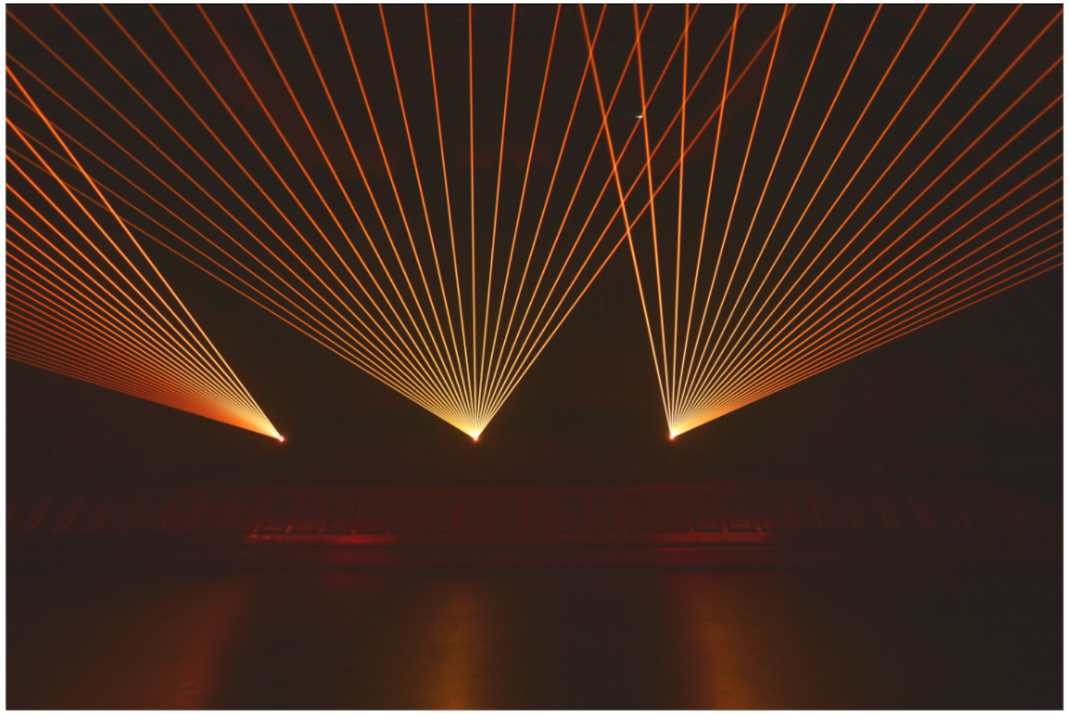


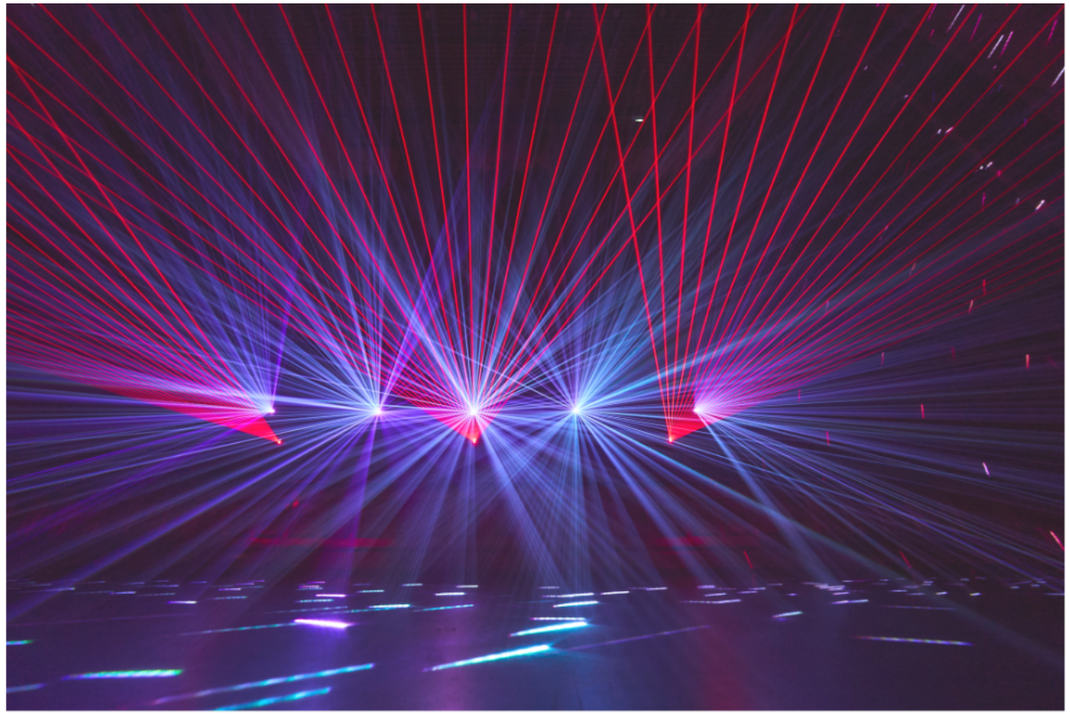
My setup for this laser light show was to shoot with a slow shutter, so there's maximum opportunity for various components of the installation to overlap with each other.

I was using the Sony ZV-E1, which is a 12mp camera designed for video more than stills, but has amazing stabilisation. I can hand-hold this at 1/8th of a second and know that most of my frames will be sharp. This was paired with the Tamron 12-20mm F2.8, which I mostly shot at 12mm.

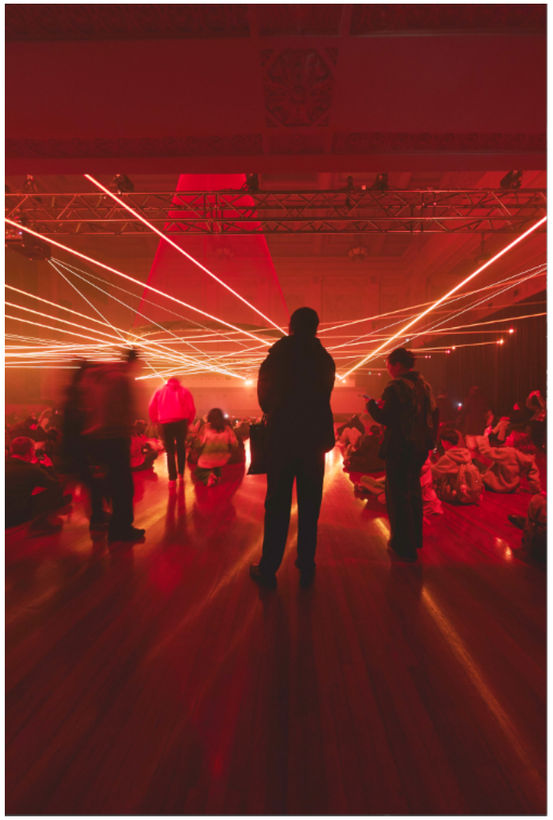
It's a big scene to capture, and 12mm really proved it's worth in this instance. I had the lens on loan from Tamron and have been very very slow to return it! Sorry Tamron, but also thankyou :)











Such a treat to step into a room full of colour and light that changes over and over and over.

Even better, the installation cycles through a routine. So if there's a section you really enjoyed, it's going to come around again. You can have another crack at shooting it.

You get to go again and again and again.





On this occasion I was using my camera to photograph art, and in the process hoping to make new art. How much credit can I take for the photos, when such a large part of each image is created by another artist entirely?

It's not as though the artist who built the laser show was my "collaborator". We didn't work on this together. I'm just rocking up with a camera to see what I can see through the lens.

It's a little bit surreal.



You would think at some point during this event I might have tried a few ICM exposures. Using a super slow shutter to paint with the light. Somehow that didn't cross my mind at the time. Perhaps I already felt there was enough happening inside the frames. There was enough intention coming from the artist who built the light show, and enough challenge for me to capture some of that expression in my frames.

This was a canvas that changed constantly. Always on the move. Always cycling between sections of coordinated elements. I wanted to capture something of what was on offer, more than capture something about myself. ICM feels more personal in this way, it's much more determined by who is holding the camera.



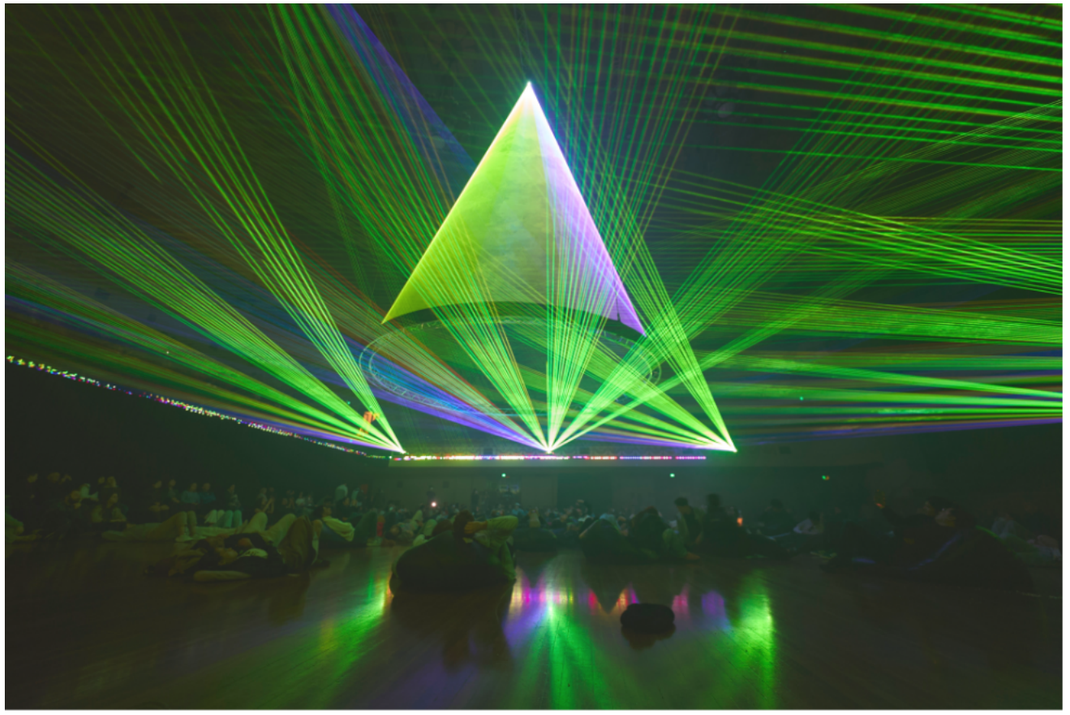
In a way I feel anyone could have taken these images.

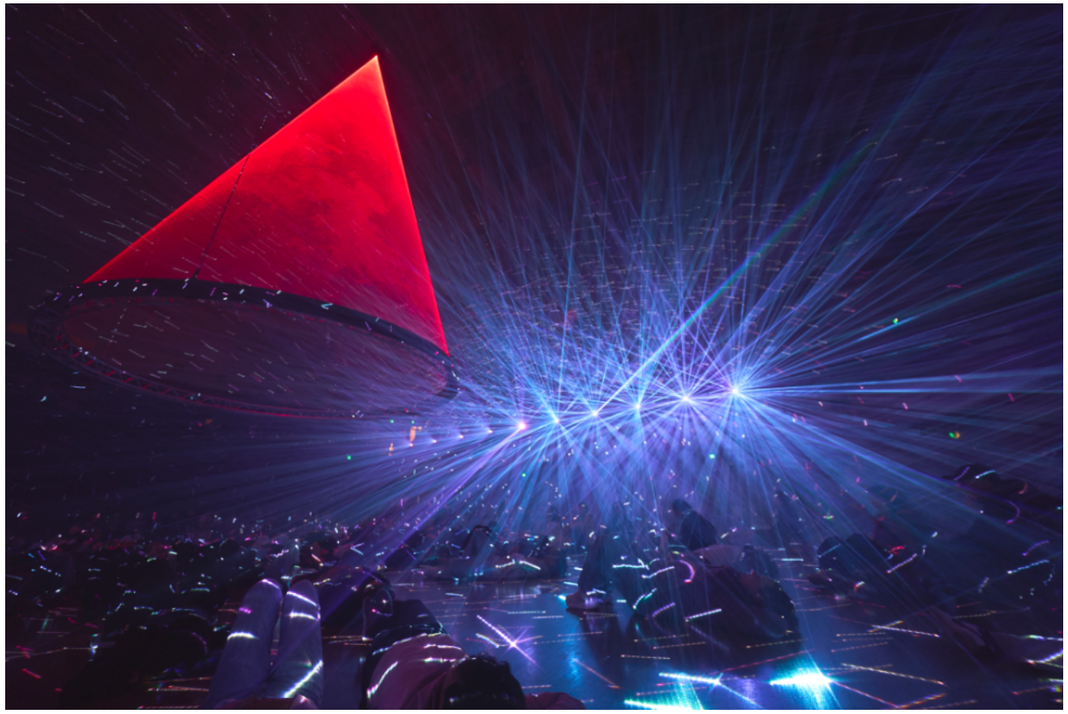
The raw elements were provided to anyone. The hard work took place long before I took my camera out of the bag. I'm just sitting under the apple tree waiting for the fruit to fall.

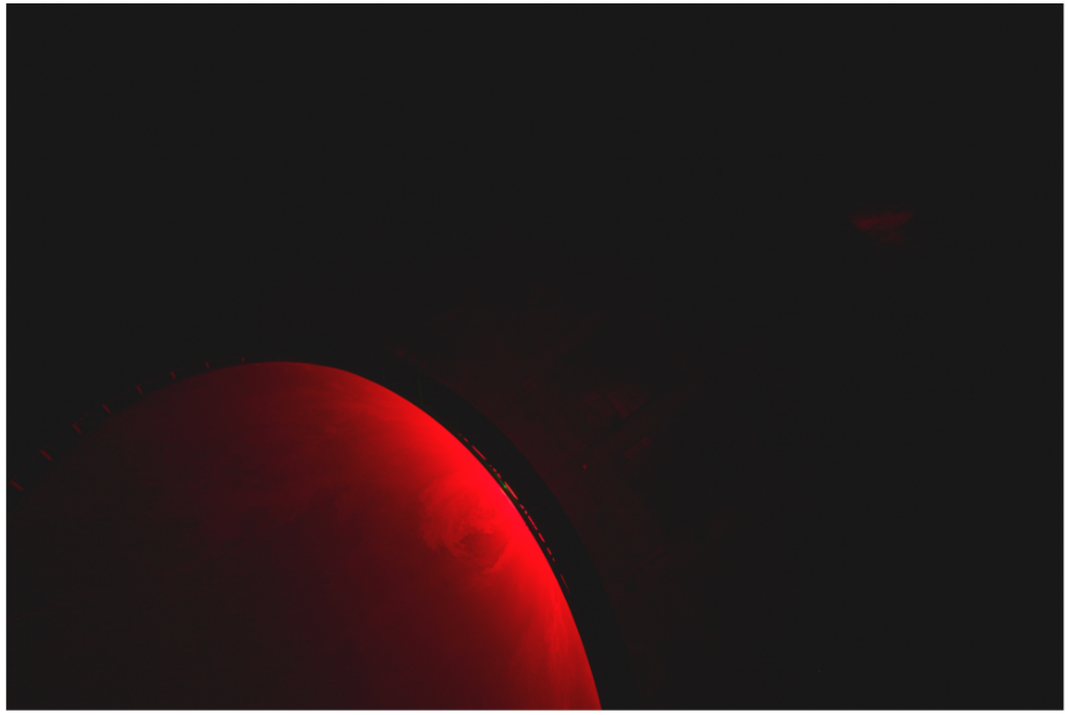
And yet on my social media I mostly saw smart-phone pics, and they were mostly soft and uncomposed. They were obvious images of the cone, people in silhouette, and not much else. They were minimal.

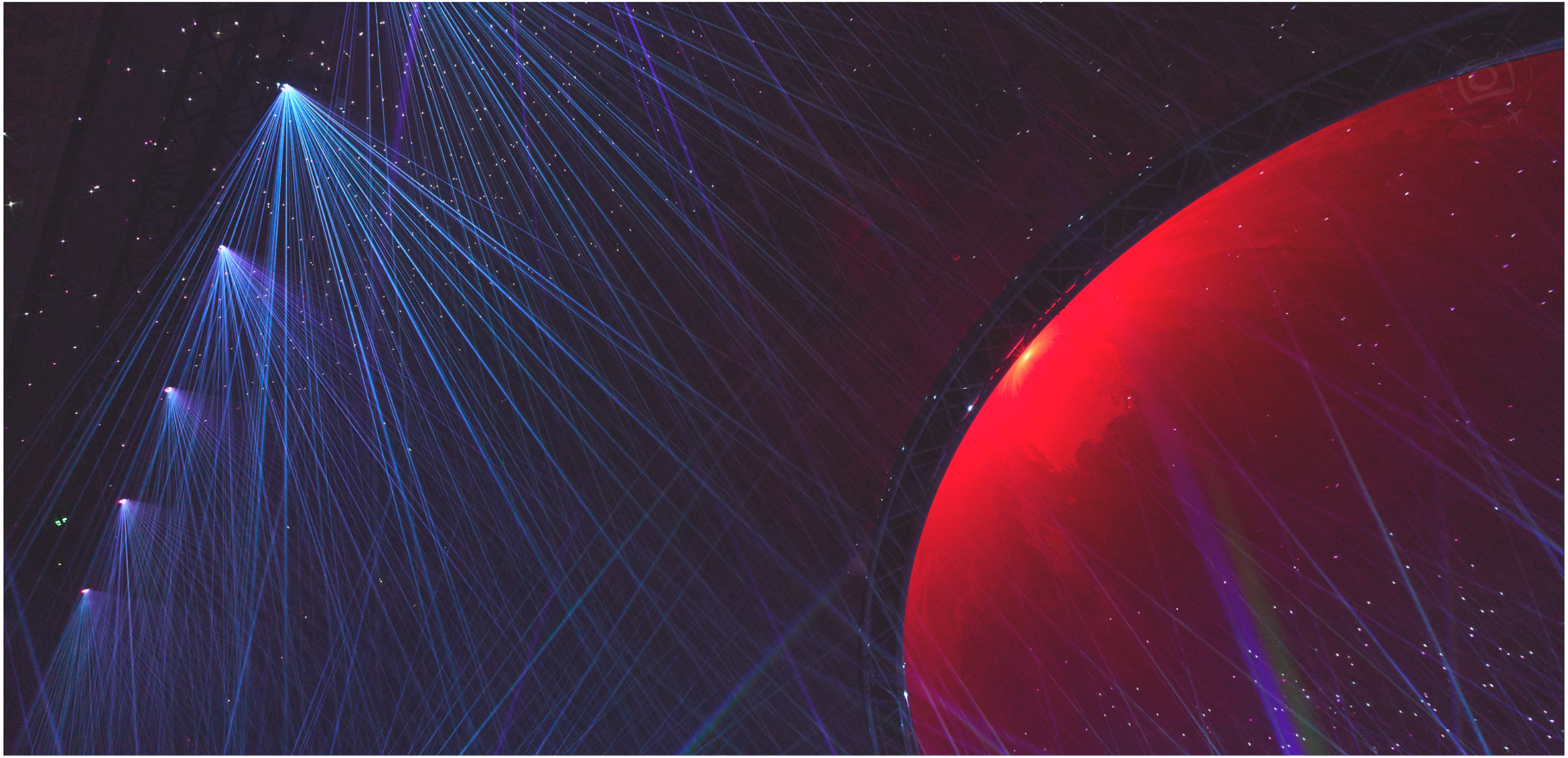
I had the advantage of a 12mm lens though. That was a game changer really. A few times I zoomed back to 20mm to take some "tight" shots, and I didn't like it. I think about what this scene might shoot like with 35mm or 50mm, and I'd be challenged to find inspiration I think.

This is definitely one of those times when wider is better.





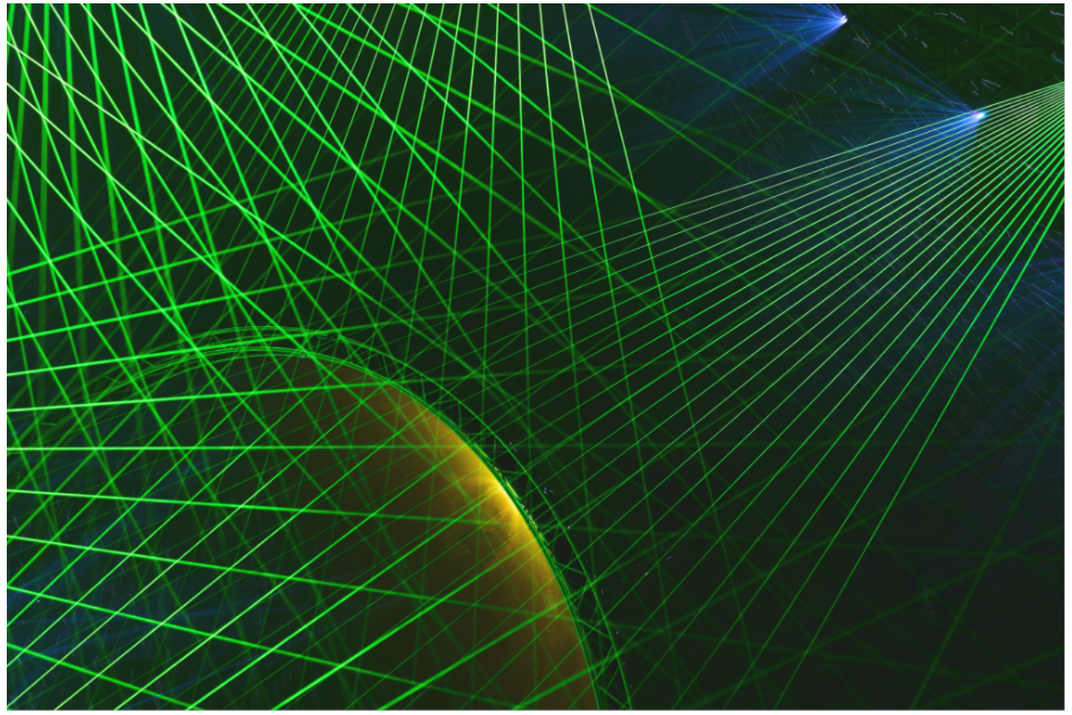




The lasers play games with the screen on my ZV-E1. I look up to the ceiling and I can see arrays of light crossing above me. The camera screen shows me only a few lines in real time, even though the captures are rich and full of action.

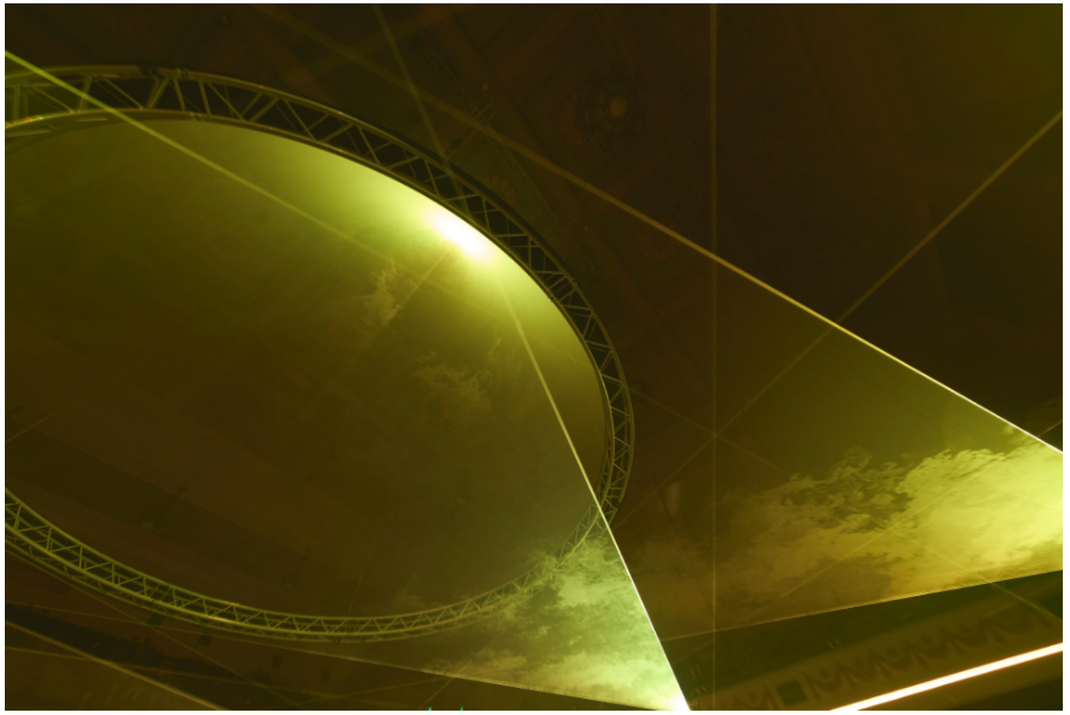
I'm capturing at a slow 1/8th of a second, so the final image reveals much more than the screen does. Indeed, the camera reveals more than my eyes as well. Jaggy flickers transform into solid beams of colour thanks to the slow exposures.

"Go Slow" is my mantra, even for shutters.



The serious lasers are bad for cameras. And human eyes.

They keep them high above the crowd, to avoid any drama. Smoke machines fill the air with enough particles to catch the light, making the impression of something more solid.

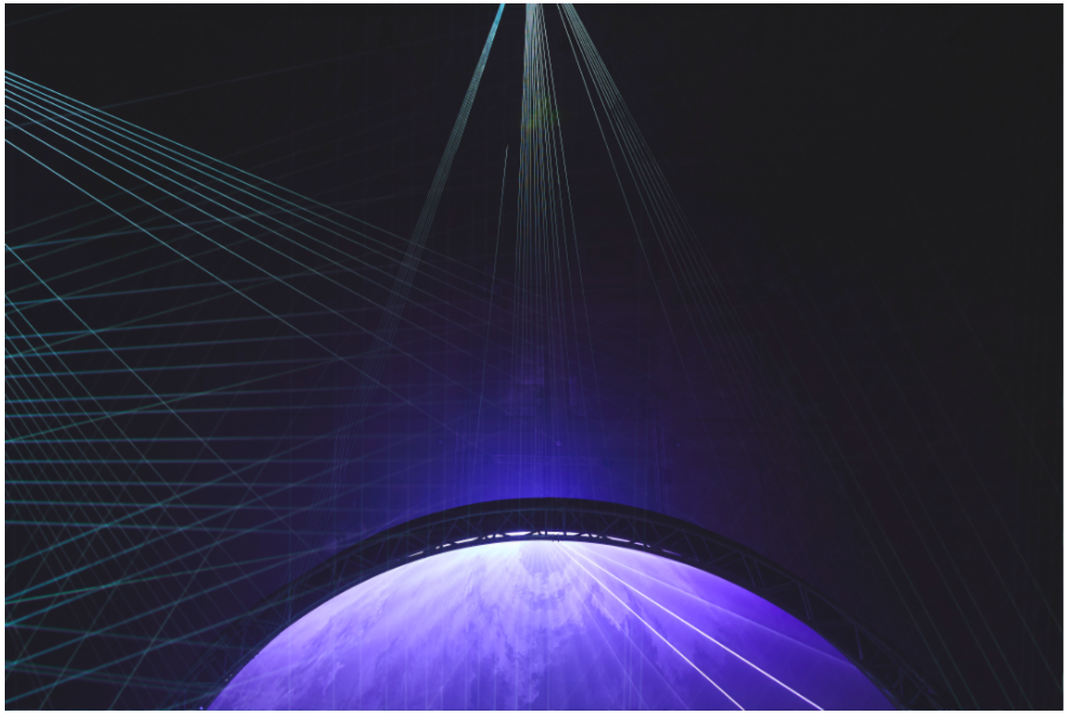




There's a beauty in this kind of photographic subject, in that you can't really "get it wrong".

When looking through the RAW files of this collection, I am amazed at how much is worth keeping. It's hard to delete images no matter how similar they might be to other images in the set.

Pretty close to all of the images look "right" to my eyes. There's something in every frame that makes me want to hold onto it. Which also makes the task of curation very very difficult :)



For most people a light show is a passive experience.

They were sitting on the floor, or even lying down on the floor, and staring upwards at the installation. They are observers, taking in the experience in a reflective or meditative mode.

Holding a camera changes all that. You experience it differently, because you begin to analyse what's happening in the room. You look for patterns, look for how the light moves through the space, how often a pattern is repeated, how the crowd moves, how the visual experience is different from one corner to another.

I wonder what my brain would be like had I never taken up photography?




It's a journey for every photographer to let go of the idea that the camera takes the photo, and embrace that they themselves are in control of what's happening.

EWEN'S WORKSHOPS

Intimate photographic experiences with Ewen Bell

Every year I run a handful of workshops and photo tours in various parts of the world. I have been doing this for twenty years now, and every year I try to find ways to make each experience more rewarding. It's never the same workshop twice.

I run my tours in places I know very very well. I don't outsource my expertise. I care about these places and believe they offer something special to my companions. We learn about the cultures and landscapes, as much as we do photography.

Visit the website for more details.

ewenbell.com/tours

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Thankyou Angelbird

Angelbird make a bunch of high performance memory cards, and some excellent tether cables. My journey with this brand began in 2020 when we started making recipe videos at home. Shellie did the recipe development and styling, and I did the video and editing. We quickly realised that “sustained data rate” was way more important than any maximum speed a card might claim to offer.

Those max speeds you see on the labels tend to drop off after a minute of shunting data onto the laptop.

Back then I scored a killer deal on some 256gb Micro-SD cards by Angelbird, and I've been buying their stuff ever since. My minimum spec for SD cards now is V60, which means 60MBytes/sec (480mbps). This gives me enough grunt for shooting 6K 10bit video, or for high speed continuous burst when shooting birds or festivals.

The best part is they are super fast to download at the end of the day. I can clear my cards and start a backup of the day, and be ready for dinner ten minutes later. I'm super happy to have them as a sponsor of this publication, and for their support in sponsoring my documentary project in Nepal.



DAYLESFORD WORKSHOP

Shellie and Ewen sharing 4 days of delicious photography.

It would be silly of me not to include a mention for our annual food photography workshop. We usually hold this in early May each year, when the air is getting cool and the leaves are changing colours. We rent a farmhouse about 90mins out of Melbourne, and Shellie prepares days and days worth of yummy things to eat and shoot.

This workshop is open to professionals who want to advance their skills, to cafe owners who want to shoot in-house, bloggers and influencers who want to level-up, or amateurs who just want to enjoy learning about light in an especially delicious setting.

Ewen does most of the teaching and talking, and we fill the days with learning and hands-on practice. In the evenings we gear down to share dinner at the farmhouse, and reflect on what we've achieved. It's a lovely experience, and we have room for a maximum of 6 participants each year. Book early!

ewenbell.com/food



LENS LOVE

Rokkor 50mm F1.7 and the Pergear 50mm F1.4



NOT MINOLTA

Pergear 50mm F1.4 for Mirrorless Cameras

Pergear is not a brand I knew much about until recently. They make a handful of manual focus lenses with a strong retro vibe, but this particular model really piqued my interest. It reminded me heavily of my very first lens, a Rokkor 50mm F1.4 that I purchased in the late 1980s.

It was very random that i even ended up reviewing the lens. Someone at Pergear had seen a recent video on my YouTube, and they sent me an email. They didn't know I was a Minolta fan, and I didn't know they were offering a Rokkor styled lens. I had a slot in my schedule and liked the idea of wandering the streets with a manual focus lens for a days.

This lens was simply the right lens for me, at the right time. I needed a reason to slow down and practice being more intentional. A manual lens will do that. This lens was especially nice because it has a tactile design that made me feel like I was 18 years old again. My fingers knew it better than my brain. But this lens is also designed for mirrorless cameras, without an adaptor or clunky extra weight.



This lens is not super sharp when shooting wide open, but not terrible either. Stepping down to F2 is plenty good enough for me, producing minimal vignetting and a clean image. There's just a little character in the glass, although a lot more character in the build itself.

The focus action is super super smooth, with a gentle extension of the barrel and a nice click as you roll through the aperture. But it's the diamond shaped nodules on the focus ring that bring it all home for me. That is the Rokkor styled detail that makes this lens feel so tactile, but also feel like something out of the 1980s.

I love the images it produces. Clean but not clinical.



I also made a YouTube video for this lens. Spending a few weeks shooting totally manual and slowing down my process was constructive for me. I've spent my entire career talking up the benefits of "Go Slow", but it turns out even I could slow down a little more. I'll be exploring that idea a little more in the coming months, so keep an eye out for that in this zine.

But for the Pergear 50mm F1.4, my thoughts are simple. It's a great lens for the price and I love the style, inside and out. This lens gets two thumbs up from me.

This lens is sold for Canon RF, Nikon Z, Sony E and Leica L-mount.

https://youtu.be/njM5UgRMEBM





I've included a few shots taken with the 50mm F1.4 for reference.

I was sent another review by someone who was very critical of the "performance" of this lens, having tested it and measured various parameters. I have no idea what their deal is. I just take photos and decide if I like the look of a lens, or not.

I like this lens.



I've mentioned this before and will do so again in future. I am really excited about the influx of affordable lenses onto the market in recent years.

It's never been cheaper to give a fast prime lens a crack.

Last edition I looked at the TT Artisan 50mm F1.8 Neo, which is the exact opposite of this Pergear. That lens has no manual focus at all, indeed no physical controls on the outside. It's purley driven by AF and aperture control on the camera.

Both of these lenses represent opposite ends of the spectrum for affordable glass, and both are made for mirrorless cameras.

All of the images in my testing with this lens were made with the Sony ZV-E1, a very affordable 12MP full-frame camera that is small and lovely. More designed for video, but actually super cool for stills photography as well.





WINTER LIGHT

Sony ZV-E1 + Pergear 50mm F1.4



MICRO FOUR THIRDS

Laowa 6mm F2 on the OM-1

IAN ROLFE GOES 6MM

Laowa 6mm F2 for MFT

I make YouTube videos in between commercial shoots, magazine trips and running workshops. Most of the time I am the talent, the camera man, the audio engineer and the script writer. But this month I did something special, and spent the morning with my friend Ian Rolfe to film a short video about his latest lens purchase, the Laowa 6mm F2.

Ian and I go way back. I met him at a camera club one night when I was presenting, and we just hit it off. I loved his enthusiasm for teaching the craft, and for drawing others into his world of landscapes with a wide angle lens. All these years later, he's still doing the same thing only this time on YouTube.



I popped down to Mordiallic in the southern reaches of Melbourne for some morning sunshine, fishing boats, and to film Ian capturing with his new 6mm lens. He generously outlined his vision of what makes an ultra-wide perspective so special, and shared a tonne of his photos to demonstrate.

A link to the video is below:
https://youtu.be/FiVYrD4rNmg




MFT 6mm F2.0



The Laowa 6mm F2 is made for Micro Four Thirds, so that 6mm ends up being closer to 12mm on a full-frame camera. That's very very wide. Last month I featured a few sets of images shot with Tamron's new 12-20mm F2.8 zoom, and how much I love that lens. This month, we're looking at a similar wide angle but for cameras like the Olympus/OM and Lumix G series.



I've used a similar lens from Laowa a lot in the past when I used to shoot with Lumix. They have a 7.5mm F2 that gives you roughly 15mm in full-frame terms. It is a great lens and I've used this for auroras and ultra-wide landscapes with great success.

When I found out Ian had bought the new 6mm version, I asked him to help me do a review. In the video Ian walks through some of his theories about making ultra-wide work as a photographer, and some of the traps we fall into when first starting out. It's a great video, and I encourage folks to give it a watch!





A big part of my life these days revolves around making "content" for YouTube. Only for me it's not content at all. Sometimes it's basking in winter light as it kisses the city of Melbourne, or walking down streets I've ignored for my entire life. Or just sharing a battle between seagulls on the Yarra River.

I make reviews and videos and blog posts on things that make me smile. Life is too short to make "content" when I can just be out there making memories.

WHO MADE THIS?

Meet The Author

My name is Ewen Bell and I'm a photographer based in Melbourne, Australia. I've been very lucky in life to had the opportunity to make a career from photography.

Photography has changed my world, so I want to help others find their voice with the camera as well. I love sharing my photos, but also love sharing my knowledge about taking photos. That's why I'm making a zine, in addition to my blog and my YouTube channel.

ewenbell.com



#EWENTUBE

I share a bunch of photos and ideas on my YouTube channel. You can also watch them on the Fediverse via PeerTube for those who prefer ad-free viewing

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