

# Where physical and digital worlds collide

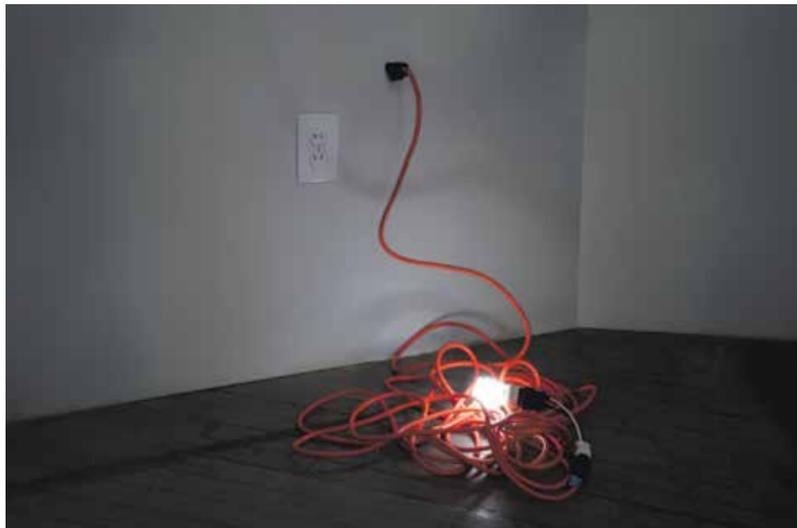
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**An artist uses light to present media and technology in ways that seem to disrupt the established systems and challenge the sense of reality and time**



**Disconnected** Socket, modified extension cable, light bulb, 2015



**Lunar Eclipse** LED and 3D printed parts

By **JYOTI KALSI**  
Special to Weekend Review

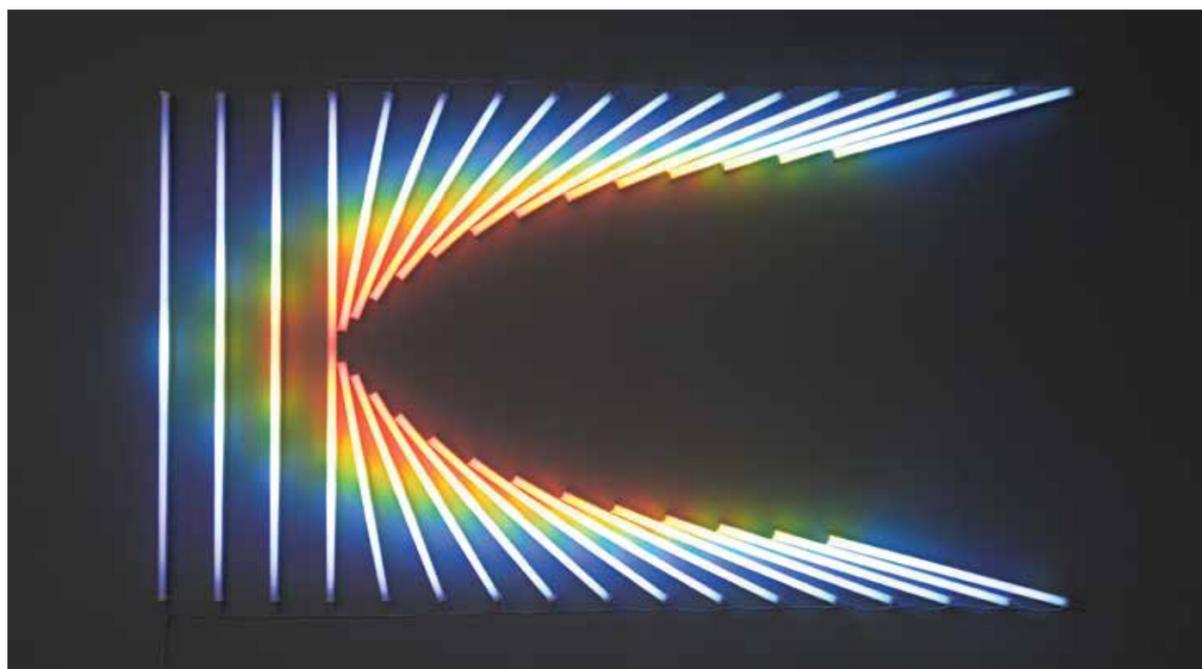
New York-based artist James Clar is known for the innovative ways in which he uses light as a medium in his work. His latest exhibition in Dubai, *Double Rainbow All the Way*, explores the increasingly blurred boundaries between the timeless digital world and the physical world. Through his illuminated installations he invites viewers to contemplate the influence of modern technology on our consciousness, and our perception of reality.

The show is named after a video that went viral a few years ago. The video, posted by a man, is a documentation of a double rainbow that he saw in the early hours of the morning, and his own ecstatic, emotional reaction to the beautiful and mystical sight.

"This video became an internet sensation because of the raw emotion and seemingly absurd reaction this person had at seeing something ephemeral and something he could not really understand. I wanted to put this in context with our fascination with technology, which does seem akin to seeing a magical double rainbow," Clar says.

"Like technology, art is also magic, because artists try to create different visual or conceptual tricks to get viewers to think about things in different ways. In recent years I have merged these two concepts together in my work to reflect our fascination and fear of technology, how it has altered our view of the physical world, and our desire to make sense of it all."

Clar says that working with light "came naturally to me because my background is in film and animation; and technology, which is so ingrained in our lives today, is inherently about controlling artificial light. So, my work is essentially about trying to create new systems for controlling light."



**Horizontal force** LED, filters and wires, 2015

Clar's conceptual works examine media and technology in creative ways that seem to disrupt established technological systems and challenge our sense of time and reality. For example, in *Disconnected* a long electrical cable is jammed into a wall, and not in the electrical outlet on the wall, yet the bulb connected to the cable is lit up. "This work explores the fantasy world of science fiction and the need for artists to be creative, find new sources of inspiration and do something different," the artist says.

In *Horizontal Force* the effect conveyed by the elliptical arrangement of the LED tubes is that of freezing the movement of a bullet slicing through the air. Here

the invisible energy of heat and motion around the bullet is visualised while the physical object — the bullet itself — appears only as a negative space between the lines, thus altering our sense of matter and time.

"Many of the works in this exhibition are about using information that is invisible, and visualising it to create something aesthetic out of the unseen. This again relates to what technology does by allowing us to visualise things that are invisible or do not have a physical presence, such as the internet. This piece is almost like the freezing of an animation, and it is about manipulating light to visualise movement and time," Clar says.

*Lunar Eclipse* is also about our perception of time. This minimalist work features 12 lights symbolising the months of the year arranged in a circle, with the changing orientation of their bright and dark sides representing the different phases of the moon as it orbits the Earth. Once again, the moon is seen only as a negative space between the lights, which visually represent its unseen movement and the passage of time.

In another fun piece, *Teleported, Pixelated and Digitised*, the artist has worked with the light emerging from a pair of shoes, manipulating it to create the impression of a person being digitised and teleported, just like our messages and images are sent across the world via the internet and social media.

In sharp contrast, in a work titled *Tensile*, the artist has used lights as physical pixels to build a three-metre tall architectural structure that references the urban landscape and the tension of city life.

In a new series called *Wonderland*, Clar has used a camera system rather than a computer to create a live animation that he describes as "analogue animation". For this show he has mounted a camera on a snow globe of the Burj Khalifa to project a giant animation of the swaying building caught in a blizzard on to a television screen.

"I am interested in using technology, and in thinking about how we relate with it and how it influences our lives. Because technology is so ingrained in our lives, I believe my work has universal resonance," Clar says.



## Blossoming talent

The talented artists of Mawaheb from Beautiful People — an art studio for adults with special needs — have been working hard during the summer to present their first exhibition for the new season.

The show titled *Blossom* features a series of colourful paintings inspired by flowers. The artworks reflect the beauty of nature as well as the inner beauty of the artists themselves.

Mawaheb, named after the Arabic word for "talent", was founded in 2010 by special needs educator Wemmy de Maaker. The studio, located in the Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood of Dubai, aims to help adults with special needs to discover their artistic potential, and to use art to help them develop life skills.

It participates in various art events, and organises exhibitions at prestigious art galleries to showcase the talent of the artists and to facilitate their interaction and integration with the community.

Blossom will run at the Dubai International Art Centre, Jumeirah, until September 21.  
—Jyoti Kalsi



**Special focus** A work by a Mawaheb artist

■ Double Rainbow All the Way will run at Carbon 12, Al Quoz, until November 7.