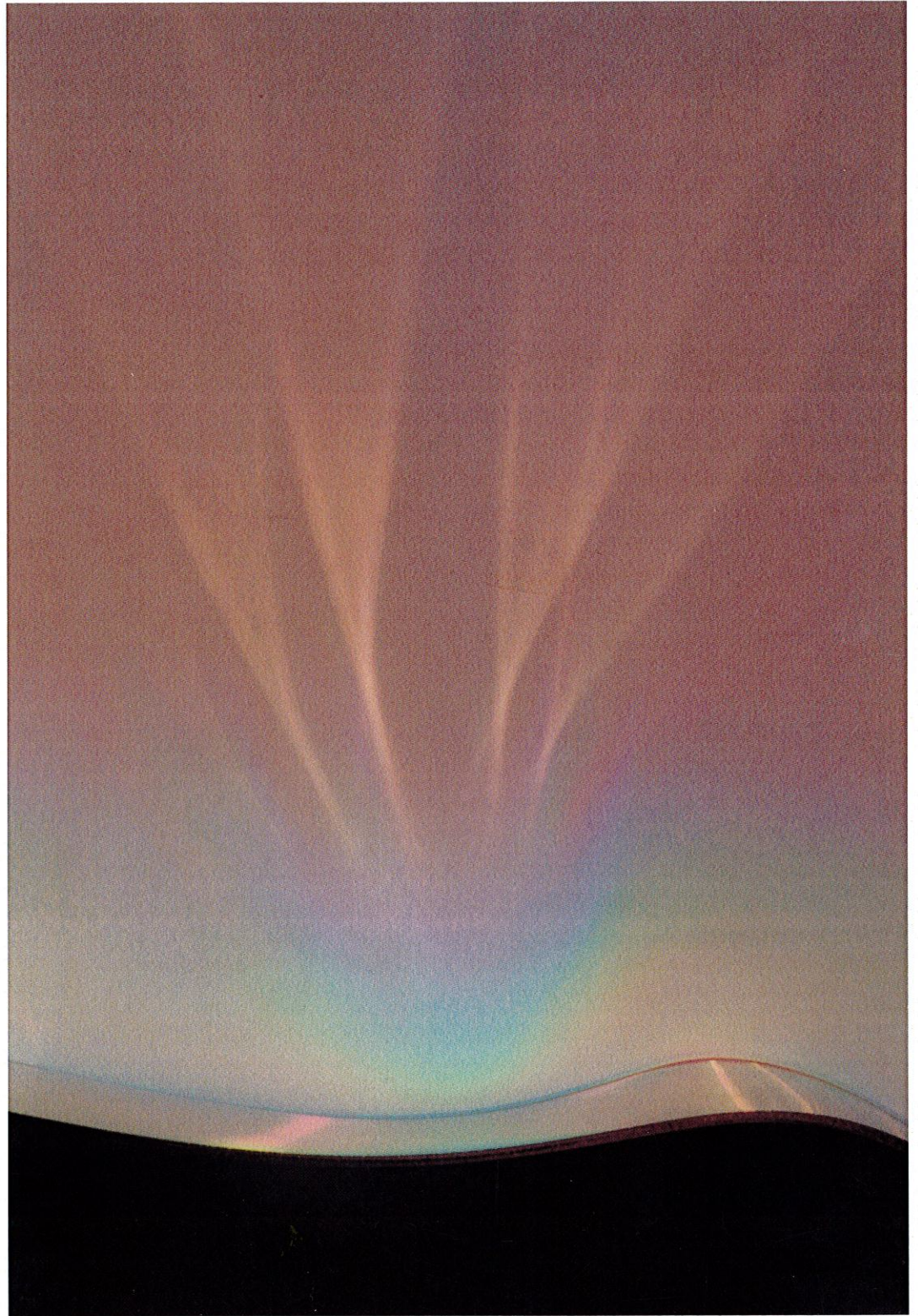


MARIE LANNOO: MAGNETIC FIELDS

August 29 to October 6, 2012



Art Gallery of Regina

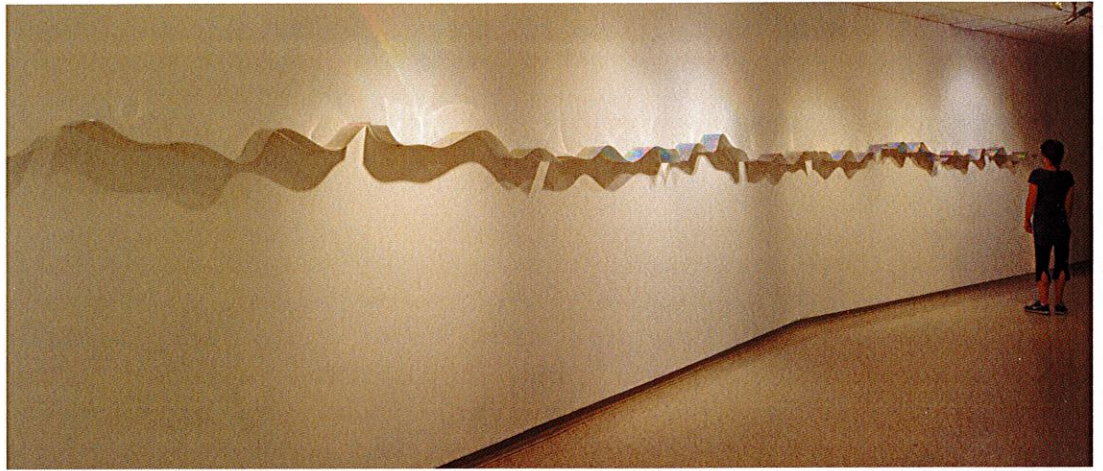


Photo: Shannon Brunner Photography, Saskatoon

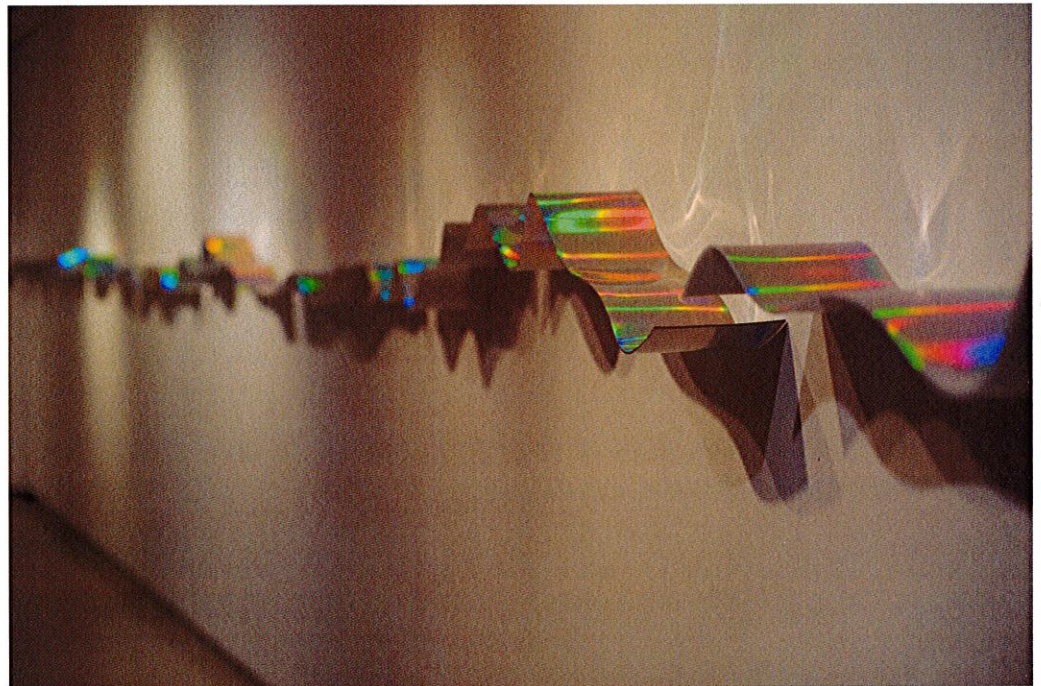


Photo: Shannon Brunner Photography, Saskatoon

Cover and inside images: *Magnetic Fields*, mixed media on acrylic Plexiglas, 48 x 6 x.2 inches each, 2011/2012

Cover photo: Harwood Truscott Photography, Regina

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Making the invisible visible.

You might hear this phrase when talking to Marie Lannoo about her art. It also sounds like something a mystic or scientist might say about what they do. If you continue talking to Lannoo, you would hear more of the scientist than the mystic for it is the physical phenomena of colour optics that excites her and informs her approach to art-making. ¹ To intellectually understand what she intuitively discovers in making her work, Lannoo reads widely and talks to scientists including those at the Canadian Light Source synchrotron in Saskatoon. References to the physics of colour and neuroscience pepper both her conversation and her enthusiastic commentary about a broad range of contemporary art. Her own approach is aligned most closely with American abstract artists such as Ann Truitt, Robert Irwin and Agnes Martin, or colour and light artists such as Dan Flavin, James Turrell and the Latin American Carlos Cruz-Diez.

For her show at the Art Gallery of Regina, Lannoo has pared down the components of her work to a bare minimum: four repeating forms that, when flipped and inverted, result in a total vocabulary of sixteen elements. These are repeated by the artist to a quantity that fills an eyelevel horizon line of space on the walls around the square circumference of the gallery. The effect is minimal in the large empty space and requires the viewer to pay close attention. Lannoo's emphasis here is not on the individual pieces – they are, after all, subtle variations on a single theme. Rather, she wants us to pay attention to the entire space. The horizontal, curvilinear shapes create a calligraphic frieze around the room, thinly drawn lines that radiate a spectrum of colour. There is almost no material presence here as everything dissolves into light.

To achieve this insubstantial effect Lannoo relies on contemporary, lowbrow materials: thin foil-backed sheeting laminated to eighth-inch thick plastic. That is all. Lannoo has transposed her painterly concerns (evident in her previous work as densely layered pigments, glazes, and interference paints to achieve surprising optical effects in single, unique works of art) to these cheap manufactured materials and to the stage of a gallery that becomes fluid and seamless. As we enter the space we are very aware of our own presence and movement, our process of perceiving. We can take in the entire room at a glance, perhaps startled by its emptiness, and are then drawn towards the wall with its unusual frieze for a more intimate view. Up close we might be puzzled as to what the work is made of; it is mounted perpendicular to the surface at eye level, and a narrow edge of plastic – now white, now dark -- is all we are given. Ceiling lights shine down on these slim pieces so that fans of prismatic colour reflect dynamically on the wall to attract and distract us from the minimal material substance. As we move parallel to the wall we are lured along the gallery's periphery by the linked lines of the work and the startling colour radiations that connect the curved pieces. What we discover is a view that is constantly and subtly changing.

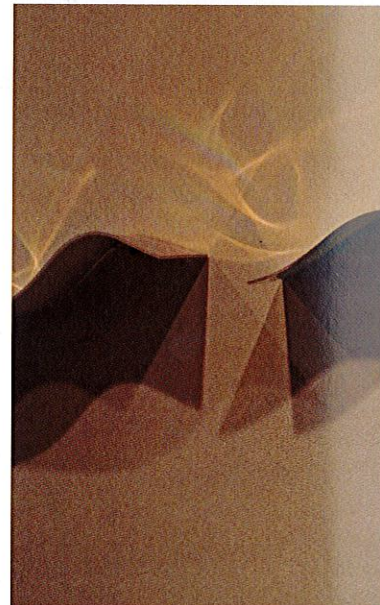
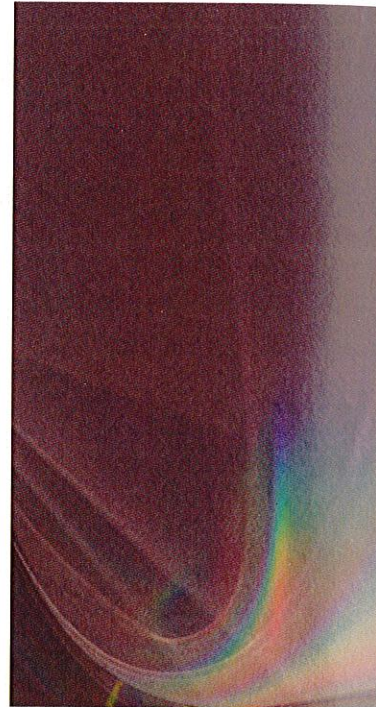
Light is Lannoo's subject. The sculptural materials and objects that form the low-relief lines around the perimeter of the gallery are merely a support for her exploration of colour and light. The prismatic foil that adheres to the surfaces is typically used flat in decorative and industrial

production (most familiar to us in the reflections from the surface of a CD disk); Lannoo has attached this foil to curved, six-inch wide strips of acrylic plastic that were heat-formed over wooden templates so they bend and curl. As a result, the full colour spectrum is revealed on the surrounding walls when the lengths are lit from above. Like a prism, the grooved surface of the foil diffracts white light into its component parts. We are offered a seamless continuous reflection of coloured light around the horizon of the room. Here is a beautifully crafted and carefully considered version of the aurora borealis, manufactured from the most mundane of materials and brought inside the theatre of the cubic white gallery. Just as the polar auroras make visible the magnetic field lines of the Earth, Lannoo's sculptures were created to offer us a visual display of invisible phenomena.

The phenomena of light and phenomena of colour are constantly shifting. And that is Lannoo's point. In *Magnetic Fields* we become aware of ourselves moving through space, our eyes tracing the changing lines and pools of colour before us. Pink, yellow, blue, green, mauve. Those of us in northern climates have likely seen the overhead display of the aurora in night skies, startled and awed by the unexpected colours and dance-like movements. Scientists have an explanation for this: plasma dipole interactions create visible streaks of light that line up with the direction of the Earth's magnetic field. ² And there are plenty of explanations of colour theory and optics in both science and psychology. Lannoo is curious about these and informed by them but she is, finally, an artist, a visual poet who translates facts into forms that evoke rather than describe. She points us towards our own first-hand experience and our processes of perceiving, asking us to "allow the act of seeing itself to be felt."³

Despite its rootedness in scientific inquiry, hers is not an art of the intellect nor is it an art of symbolism or expressionism as might be the case for other abstract artists. Lannoo, like Robert Irwin whose work she greatly admires, uses light to dissolve the object itself. We become entranced by the beauty of our encounter with something that has, in fact, no physical substance. Our engagement might induce 'a particular "state of being," an awareness of the *living process*, the deceptively simple fact of our presence in the world.' ⁴ Lannoo's installation at the Art Gallery of Regina is carefully constructed to provide us with this opportunity. When we bring our full attention to an encounter with *Magnetic Fields*, we might be drawn towards the mystical through the lenses of both science and art.

Susan Shantz,
2012

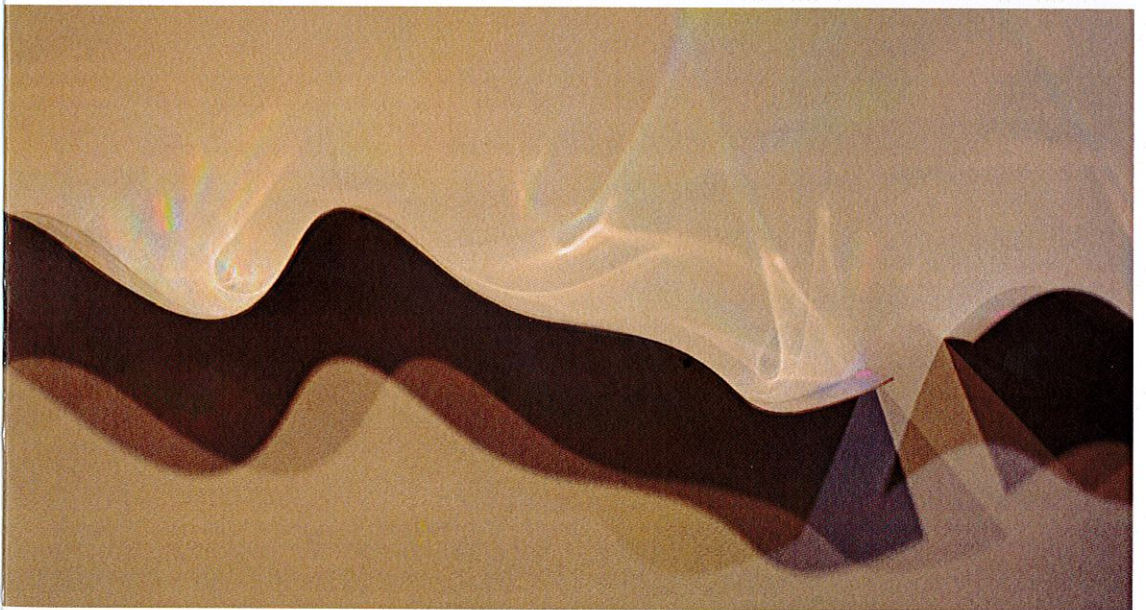
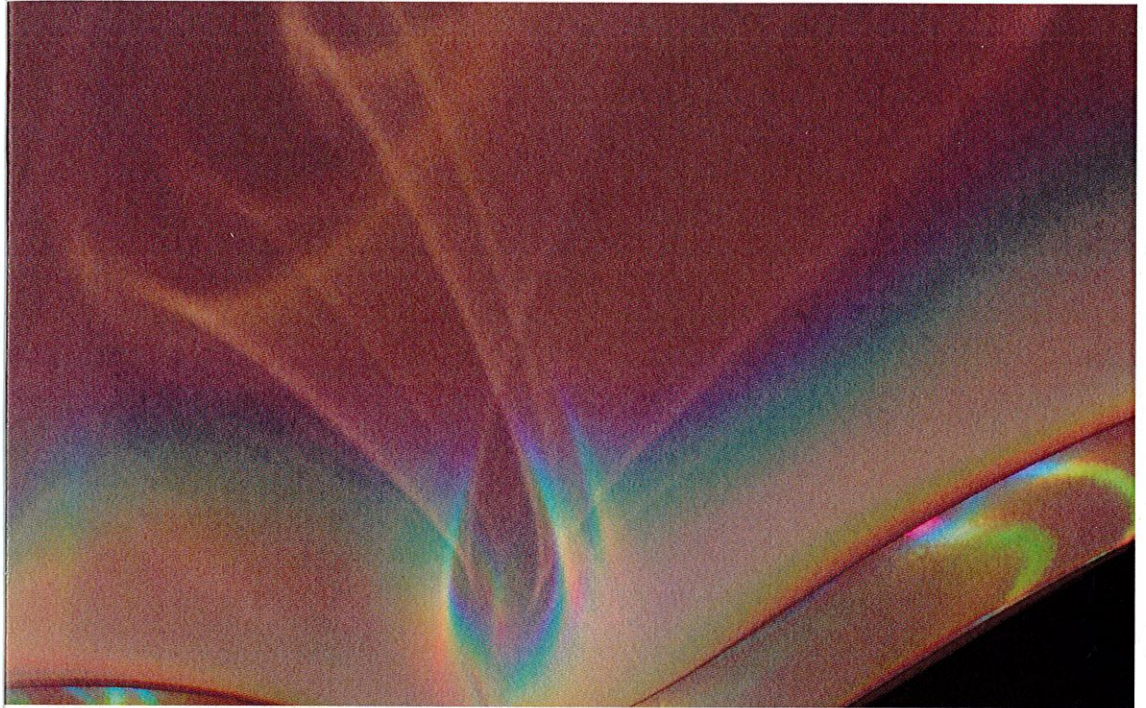


¹ Among the stacks of books in Lannoo's studio is the seminal text on colour theory by the Swiss Bauhaus instructor, Johannes Itten, *The Art of Colour: The Subjective Experience and Objective Rationale of Colour*, (New Jersey: Wiley, 1974; revised edition).

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnetic_field

³ Clare Bishop, "Heightened Perception," in *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 57.

⁴ Robert Irwin as quoted in Alexandra Munroe, "The Art of Perceptual Experience: Pure Abstraction and Ecstatic Minimalism," in *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, (NY: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2009), 297.



Top photo: Harwood Truscott Photography, Regina Bottom photo: Shannon Brunner Photography, Saskatoon

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Raised in Delhi Ontario, Marie Lannoo has lived in Saskatchewan since 1975. She studied at York University, the University of Saskatchewan and the Banff School of Fine Arts and attended several Emma Lake artists' workshops. She has received grants from the Saskatchewan Arts Board and the Canada Council. Her work is represented in public collections including the Canada Council Art Bank, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Mendel Art Gallery, Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Mackenzie Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Alberta and in corporate and private collections in Canada, the USA and abroad. Lannoo's work is included in *Abstract Painting in Canada* by Roald Nasgaard.

ART GALLERY OF REGINA

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