

## Sky Light Mind//Danae Valenza

*When I was ready, I opened my eyes. There were all these white dots, so very many white dots. When I looked through the binoculars, there were so many white dots I couldn't possibly count them.*

In the year 2000, Mike May began to write a diary<sup>1</sup> outlining his experience of slowly regaining vision after a stem cell transplant. He had been blind since the age of 3. In his words, he talks about the gradual process of learning to see again. Colours, shape and movement come first. Focussing on a landscape through binoculars, patterns of colourless light obscure his view.

Retinal recognition uses the unique map of blood vessels on a person's retina for identification. Just like a fingerprint, these lines of our bodies stretch like contours on a topographic map. Both are biometric tattoos that harbour worn records of what we have seen and touched.

Split by marrowed forks and contained in skin, the pulse is an omniscient rhythm of the body. Beaded, bright red rushes fill an eye with vision. Soaked muscles pull to open a lid.

A swish of blood. The pupil sucks in.

Colour is a frequency mixed into an optical pulse:

Green: 526–606 THz

Blue: 606–668 THz

Red: 400–484 THz

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2003/aug/26/genetics.g2> 'The trees were a deeper green than I imagined, and so tall' The first paragraph and last paragraph of this essay are direct quotes from the diary of Mike May.

In *Rhythmanalysis* (2004), Henri Lefebvre suggests that spatio-dynamic rhythms can be found within cities, focussing on the movement of inhabitants around regulated time structures and the surrounding natural world. *(There is) nothing inert in the world*<sup>2</sup>

Coastal swill enters the landscape. Quotidian movements of water can determine the cadence of a location. A beat bounces from building to beach, performing a “*dance to this fundamental, cyclical but complex rhythm.*”<sup>3</sup> Land can have a heartbeat of its own.

The moon breathes in.

Tide charts are movements of plotted music, a score. Verse, Bridge, Chorus. The body keeps its pulse, a constant living rhythm, so familiar that it is silent unless touched. The syncopation of person and place overlap at some unknowable fraction.

Looking down from an empty bridge, eyes rhyme with glistening, full water. White specks hit the cornea on the coast of California. Light beams change speed, the way sound does.

These varied frequencies are captured by the eye, through the body. And released.

A brush fills with liquid pigment and laps at a canvas. The iris, a collage of angular, coloured fragments.

Damp fingers follow rocky slits as they peak. Analogue energy is streaming through limbs and quick-pace concentration. Melting, not molten. 37.9

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<sup>2</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2004), *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (London: Continuum).

<sup>3</sup> Cresswell, T. & Merriman, P. (2013), *Geographies Of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects* (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group)

degrees Celsius, then into a 400–484 THz fire in Frankston. Forms breathe out moisture and turn into tawny-gripped stoneware. Glass prisms top the vessels, to contort focus through high and low tide of the lens.

The canvas, long-sighted and flat. The sculpture, short-sighted and round.

The memory of elation – of sublime contact with an environment – cannot be mathematically explained through measurements of light, sound and rhythm. A surgical procedure can repair the eye, but it is harder to explain what heals its vision.

*She asked if I could tell what colour her eyes were and I said only up close... This was a very intimate experience and I can't fathom how sighted people go around seeing each other's eyes without being flustered too.*