

The background of the entire image is a high-contrast, black and white photograph of crumpled paper. The paper is folded and creased in various directions, creating a complex, organic texture. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a dark, semi-transparent geometric shape, possibly a triangle or a trapezoid, which serves as a backdrop for the text.

ANDREW GRAHAM-DIXON
IN CONVERSATION WITH

ARTIST JAMES DEAN DIAMOND
SCIENTIST DR JON BAXTER
CURATOR SAMIA ASHRAF

THE INTERCONNECTIVITY OF
ART & SCIENCE

JAMES DEAN DIAMOND | STILL POINTS & SEA BEAMS

CURATED BY SAMIA ASHRAF

In *Still Points and Sea Beams* we enter a biomolecular world, a vortex enveloped by a cacophony of undulating, centripetal energy forces - revealed in the suspension of time. Dynamic entwining light photons, simultaneously become a reality, as both, the constructs of a metropolis and the suggestions of cellular activity. Emanating from British artist, James Dean Diamond's research on the dialogue between art, science and politics, this lens-based practice explores the complexity and fragility of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), the basis of life as we know it today. His investigation questions, *what does it mean to be human and how do we repair and rehabilitate our damaged world*.

Diamond and curator Samia Ashraf have completed a four-year artist residency at the Baxter Lab, School of Life Sciences, University of Sussex - an international centre of excellence for research into how DNA is replicated and maintained. It has been a tremendous privilege to collaborate with the genomic scientists and reflect upon ideas relating to life cycles of damage, mutation and regeneration – and to grasp the colossal number of cells generated in each human life: c30-40 trillion (equivalent to 70 bn km) are compressed and coiled into the DNA.

Dimitrios Pandermalis, the late director of the Acropolis Museum, Athens, spoke of the Emyrean as the intersection of art meeting science – its dictionary definition is a conceptual place, the dwelling site of celestial beings, so divine, they're made of pure light – and this notion of light as a representation of hope is a core theme underpinning the work. Our intention is to establish a collective vocabulary through the interplay of the fields of art and science – 'life is re-envisioned through the prism of the imagination'¹, to consider imagination as a resource and art as a catalyst for understanding and exploring these multifaceted issues.

Diamond's art *Still Points and Sea Beams* responds to a battlefield that is DNA – a war zone envisioned through cellular and urban environments. Transcending darkness, a prevailing humanity resides in the work, it is a memorial to people affected by conflict - according to the UNHCR, the number of forcibly displaced people in 2022 exceeds 100 million.

Diamond describes himself as a street photographer using the city as an amphitheatre of light possibilities. Shooting 'in camera' with film and digital capture in London and Athens, Diamond employs numerous methods to expand the potential of the medium. Approaching a scene, he calculates the distribution of light from each surface, with multiple exposures – up to 200 exposures within a single frame. This innovative method destroys the film emulsion, dismantles the city and accumulates highly concentrated marks that coexist in a state of concurrent erasure and construction, in line with characteristics of DNA. The visual language oscillates between the slippage of the physical, abstract and impressionistic – it is a compelling journey narrated through the 52 black-and-white prints, each measuring up to 97cm x 250cm, offering the audience a truly immersive experience.

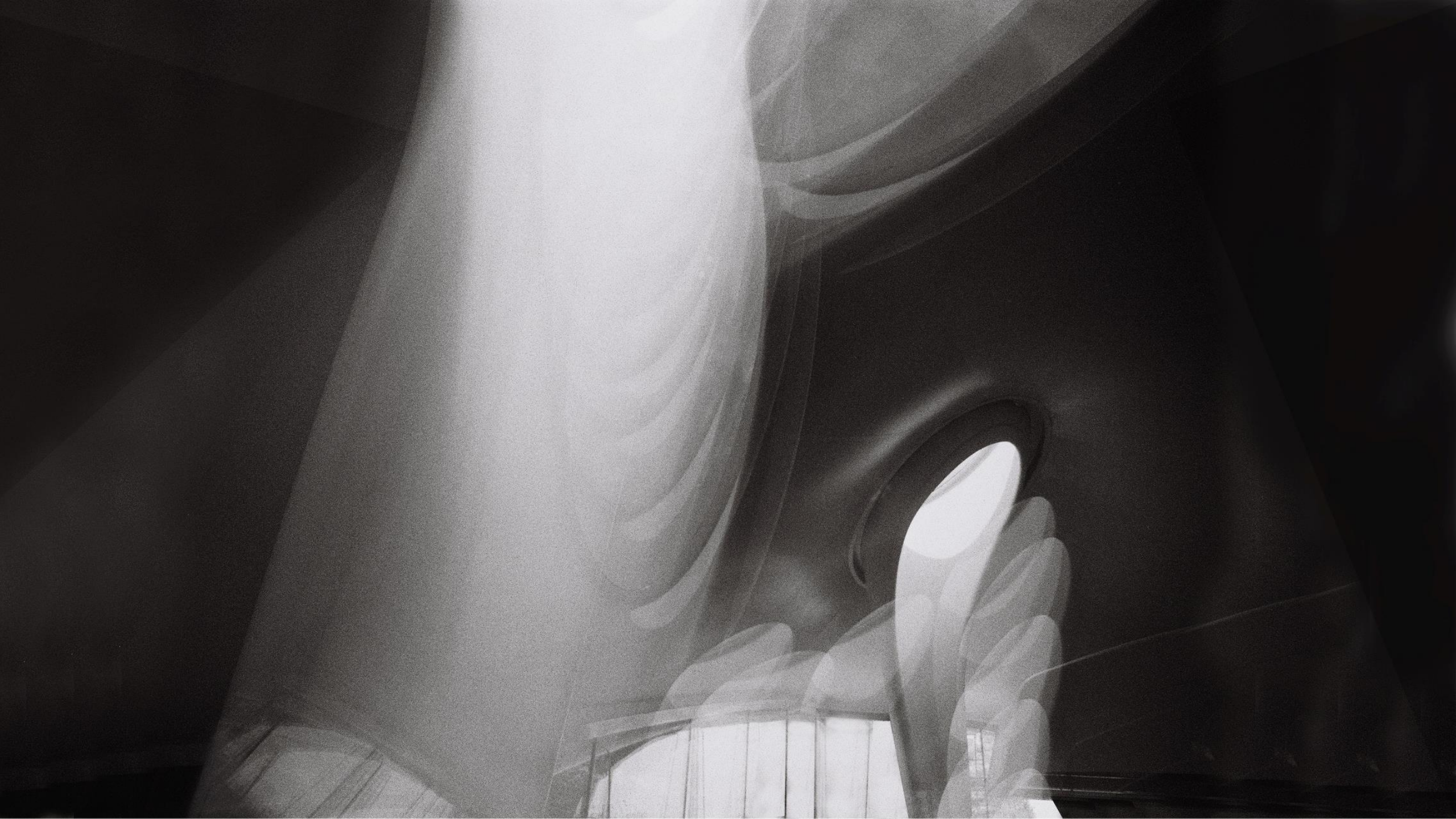
Inspiration is mapped from cultural references, comprising French physicist/Nobel laureate, Antoine Henri Becquerel's (1852–1908) 1896 photograph visualising the deadly radiation emitting from uranium salts – an illuminating example of the medium's capacity to expose the invisible nature of science. Secondly, peregrinating to the destruction of Homs, Syria, to the war-torn images by British photojournalist, Don McCullin. Among the silent debris, the presence of a minaret of a mosque stands erect and largely intact, evoking the continuation of a spiritual plane, the earth as a sacred place. Diamond alludes to the composer/virtuoso pianist, Sergei Rachmaninoff's (1873–1943) symphonic 1909 poem, Piano Concerto No. 3, which speaks of the arresting power of monochromatic imagery.

In seeking to translate the interweaving communication and interaction of the billions of molecules, Diamond's intensely orchestrated panoramas present a place partially known. With a prevailing reality of damage, Diamond embraces the possibility of repair for a future existence and the recognition of the value of circularity on which our world is built – a world of interaction with a history of collaboration.

1. Cecilia Alemani, The Milk of Dreams Biennale Arte 2022, La Biennale di Venezia, Short Guide, p39, April 2022







ABOUT ANDREW GRAHAM – DIXON

Andrew Graham-Dixon is one of the leading art critics and broadcasters of arts television, with numerous landmark series for the BBC and other independent networks. He has a long history of public service in the field of the visual arts and has served on numerous committees; as a member of the board of the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead.

Early in his career, he was awarded *Arts Journalist of the Year* for three consecutive years. His journalistic appointments have included chief art critic of The Independent newspaper for over ten years and chief art critic of The Sunday Telegraph. His most recent book is *Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane*. In the course of his career, Andrew has won numerous awards for writing and broadcasting, and his achievements have been acclaimed by many of his most distinguished peers.

ABOUT JAMES DEAN DIAMOND

After an earlier career as an electronics and mechanical engineer, James (b.1968) embarked upon a BA in Photography at the London College of Communication and then an MA in Fine Art from the University of Brighton. James's experimental practice comprises large-scale photographic installations. Shooting in perennial motion across European cities including London, Paris, Zagreb, Athens, Copenhagen, Malmo and Berlin – the work gives visual expression to the flux of energy, by creating environments of ectoplasmic form.

James's solo exhibition *Dreaming Of Le Gibet* was critically received at the European Commission's, 12 Star Gallery London & *Still Points & Sea Beams* was exhibited at Mount Street, Mayfair, London. His work is collected worldwide by private individuals, including the Head of the European Parliament (London office), members of the Tate Modern Acquisitions Committee and members of Yale School of Art, Dean's Council and supported by The British Council.

James is the recipient of several prestigious awards, including a three-year Polaroid Sponsorship Award for Innovation, 'University of the Arts London Student of the Year' and Kodak prize. Commissioned by many leading clients, such as the 'Financial Times', 'How To Spend It', 'Harpers & Queen', 'The Telegraph', Levi's, Selfridges, BMW, DKNY, Hewlett Packard, *Credit Suisse*, *Zurich Cantonal Bank*, UPS, MTV among others. His artworks feature in exhibitions in Europe and New York, as well as in reviews in 'LENSCRATCH', 'Elephant', 'Art in America', 'Creative Boom', 'ArtRabbit', 'Mount Kimbie/NTS Radio', 'Crime, Media & Culture', 'Contemporary' and the 'British Journal of Photography'.







ABOUT DR JON BAXTER

Dr Jon Baxter obtained his PhD in 2002 working with Amanda Fisher on epigenetics in lymphocytes. Following this, he moved to studying DNA replication in budding yeast with John Diffley, a molecular biologist at the Cancer Research UK Clare Hall Laboratories, currently the Associate Research Director at the Francis Crick Institute. This project started a longstanding interest in how DNA topology affects DNA replication and other DNA metabolic processes.

Jon established his Baxter laboratory in the Genome Damage and Stability Centre at the University of Sussex in 2010. Combining classical plasmid replication techniques, yeast genetics and genome-wide chromosome structural assays such as Hi-C, the Baxter lab aims to understand how DNA topological changes influence genome stability during both DNA replication and chromosome segregation.

ABOUT SAMIA ASHRAF

Having trained as an artist at UMASS and Brown University USA, Samia Ashraf graduated from Central St Martins School of Art & Design with a BA Fine Art Printmaking & Photomedia and a MA Museum & Gallery Management from City University London. With extensive experience of working across the visual arts, craft and media sector - as a Mentor at the Crafts Council, a Curator and Professional/Business Development Adviser to contemporary artists, makers, photographers and a leading Photographers/Directors Agent for the London and USA market.

Samia's work extends to the research and management of exhibitions in London, Athens and the UK, as well as contributing essays to various publications. Along with an ongoing 18-year collaboration with artist James Dean Diamond, she curates a programme of work and supports the development of his practice.

As Education Programme Co-ordinator, Samia has worked with the critically acclaimed artist Thomas Joshua Cooper on the MA Fine Art University of Brighton, organised & participated in a Christmas lecture at Ogilvy Health to discuss the intersection of art & science – recently, she led a series of Guest Lectures for the University of Derby, BA Photography.









THANK YOU

Further Enquires

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*All works from Still Points & Sea Beams
© James Dean Diamond*

*Dr Jon Baxter suggests 'Trying to decipher one
of James's photographic works reminds me of
trying to interpret experiments that interrogate
the molecular nature of matter.'*

