



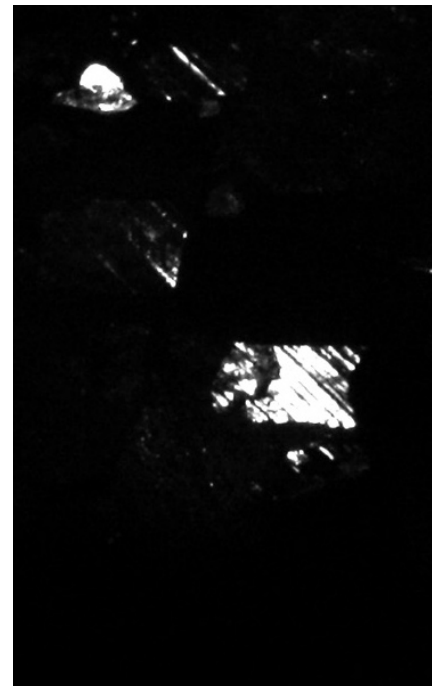
Olafur Elisasson, Minding the World

## 4. The Physics of Presence

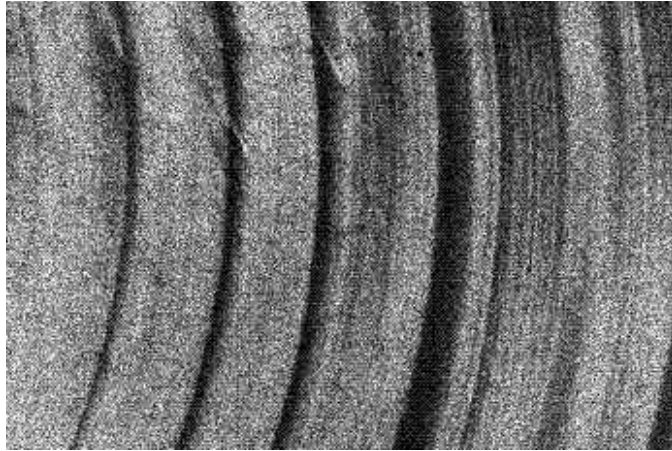
*In scientific inquiry, an experiment (Latin: ex- periri, “to try out”) is a method of investigating particular types of research questions or solving particular types of problems. The experiment is a cornerstone in the empirical approach to acquiring deeper knowledge about the world.*

You are asked to investigate the *physics of presence* of your mineral specimens, experimenting with its matter and exploiting its effects: its specific physical properties, the less tangible phenomena that might be associated with it and the conditions under which they occur. The aim is to develop an understanding of how to control and manipulate these material systems, their potential production of presences and the subsequent relevance of a viewer / receiver within this system.

In geological terms this could investigate such properties as hardness, lustre (the way the surface interacts with light), colour (its appearance in reflected light), fluorescence (its response to ultraviolet light), transparency, striation (having parallel lines or grooves on the surface), cleavage (the tendency to break along preferred planes of weakness), fracture (ways of breaking or splitting) or other phenomena such as reflection, refraction, diffraction or ghosting. Again, you will need to identify a specific method of recording. This is crucial as some effects may be visible to the eye and not the camera and vice versa, some might only exist under certain conditions that you will need to carefully monitor for the recording. Again, try to identify the rules that govern this phenomena as much as capturing its effect. Document both, the set up of your recording as well as the effect you are after.



George Barer, Intermediate Unit 1 2008/09  
Fleeting Light



X-ray Topograph of a solid Body  
Max Planck Institut Berlin

This phase will initiate a broader debate about issues of perception and questions of reality. It should lead to the construction of 'presences', be they physical or immaterial.

### Task:

**1. Record** one selected effect or 'presence' you observed using a method of your choice. Document this in one single high quality image, min A2 size. This should be accompanied by annotated diagrams describing the 'physics' involved.

**2. Re-create** this effect or 'presence' without your mineral and play with it.

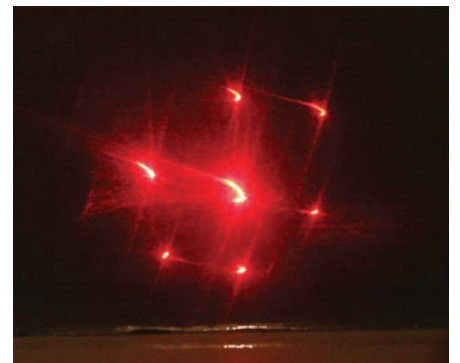


Robert Smithson, Four-sided vortex

### Texts to read:

Olafur Eliasson, '457 words on colour'  
Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Phenomenology of Perception', Part Two: The World as perceived, Chapter III The Thing and the Natural World, §34. & §35. (on form and size, on colour)

Dale Purves and R. Beau Lotto, 'Why We See What We Do: An Empirical Theory of Vision' (unit shelf)



Brian Hwui Zhi Cheng, Intermediate Unit 1  
2008/09  
Light Effect of a Calcite

### Timetable

Monday 16.11.	hand out brief
Wednesday, 18.11.	tutorials, seminar 'Politics of Aesthetics'
Monday, 23.11.	tutorials, portfolio presentation George Barer
Wednesday, 25.11.	tutorials, seminar 'Monoliths and other Autonomies'
Monday, 30.11.	pin up