

# CAMERON ROBBINS – FIELD LINES

---

**Exhibition dates: 18 May to 29 August 2016**

**Official opening: 11 June**

**Galleries: MONA B3 Touring Galleries**

Some artists can give us a glimmer of things that we usually can't see. Mona delights in such artists. Cameron Robbins gives nature a voice, but he's not telling it what to say.

—David Walsh

Cameron Robbins' work is based on interaction with natural forces and the elements. He creates structural instruments and devices, such as wind- or ocean-powered mechanical systems, site-specific installations, wind drawings, photographs and sound compositions.

**Field Lines** is Cameron Robbins' first major museum solo exhibition, and will include works created over more than three decades of his practice. In addition, seven new installations will be developed specifically for Mona – many in direct response to the museum's location. A few of these installations will generate work for the duration of the exhibition, providing visitors with a live artistic response to the world outside the museum's walls.

Robbins has devised many ways of producing a kind of collaboration between artist and nature. This is evident in the series of wind-drawing instruments that he has developed since 1990. These mechanical instruments are set up in different locations to collect wind energy and transcribe this, by a connected pen, into the strangely readable format of drawings on paper. The drawings take on the forms of location and time; the marks vary widely depending on the conditions, which range from violent storms to calm stillness, clean laminar winds on a pier to turbulent city windscapes.

This drawing practice has led Robbins to focus on forms generated by natural energy, including the exploration of vortexes, magnetic anomalies in the landscape, tidal movements and astronomical observations. His research into the elemental has also been combined with his musical career on clarinet and saxophone. In this way Robbins is much like a conductor of our surrounding environment: his work gives form to the unseen.

**Field Lines** will feature drawing, installations, photography, sculpture and video.

Several decades of Robbins' drawing practice will be shown, dating from 1991 through to 2016, including works being created on site through the exhibition run. The selection of drawings features site-specific responses from Norway, the high country of Victoria, city rooftops and the Mona site itself.

Of note will be the impressive collection of sixteen drawings from *Wind Section Instrumental* (2013), which are up to 5 metres in length, and were created over a twelve-month period. Accompanying these drawings will be a sound recording of an improvisational performance by Robbins with Jon Tarry and Peter Knight as they responded to the movement of *Wind Section Instrumental* in-situ during Mofo 2014.

The video work *Dissipative Structures* (2012) reveals how energy flows through a vortex. Robbins filmed a water vortex in a 120-litre chamber he created and, he explains, by introducing inks to render visible the intricate flow structures, 'the fractal nature of the universe can be seen, reminiscent of other parts of the natural world – galaxies, exploding stars, cyclones, tornadoes, wood grain, insects ...'

Two distinct series of Robbins' recent work with long exposure photography will be included, many for the first time. The first series is a response to a geomagnetic anomaly from a basalt outcrop in the high country in Victoria. Here *Mt Jim Anomaly, Loops* (2011) and *Mt Jim Anomaly, Star Maps* (2011) trace out the energy lines of this location.

The second photographic series, *Anemographs* (2014–15), includes six photographs created by a wind-powered light instrument that Robbins made and placed at various locations to capture the moving light. Examples of these *Anemograph* instruments will also be seen in the exhibition, along with other portable devices and instruments Robbins has created and used over the years.

Among Robbins' newly created works for **Field Lines** is *Mt Jim Field* (2016), a direct representation of the geomagnetic anomaly as outlined by Robbins in the *Mt Jim Anomaly, Star Maps*. *Mt Jim Field* is a room-sized installation that depicts the geophysical survey as the *Star Maps* do; however, here Robbins traces this with a 45-metre-long neon light on the gallery ceiling and a corresponding floor piece of basalt columns.

Further responses to the Mt Jim site are the series of works *Magnetometers* (2016). These are sculptural instruments which detect the earth's magnetic field lines. And are located in the same room as the other works that depict this site.

Robbins has long wanted to create a piece that responds to the tidal zone of the Mona site. The work *Tide Line* (2016) will do just this. Gathering water from 6 metres below the museum's galleries, powerful hydraulics will push half a ton of water to drive a pigment ink-pen to chart the rise and fall of the tide on a 10-metre-long piece of paper. The paper will be mounted on a 3.18-metre-diameter drum that rotates once per month, in sync with the Lunar cycle. This references David Walsh's infamous prediction that the rising ocean levels will eventually flood Mona.

Two more new works are *Wind Funnel* (2016) and *Solar Loggerheads* (2016). *Wind Funnel* is a vast structure that invokes the forces of wind within the gallery space, and will be placed in the same gallery as the sixteen *Wind Section Instrumental* drawings as well as the *Anemographs* and other devices. *Wind Funnel* will animate the instruments and evoke the windy landscapes that helped create much of this work.

*Solar Loggerheads* (2016) depicts opposing forces: creation and destruction, and drawing and erasing. Harnessing both solar and mains power, this instrument will function across the duration of the exhibition. The ease of the pencil creating a mark is far outweighed by the sheer brute force required to erase that mark. Robbins has referred to this process as being like an argument between two people.

*Sternen-Achse Declinator* (2016) a device used to measure the latitude of a location, or the angle of variation of a plane from the horizontal. Here it is set to 42.88° – the latitude of Hobart, so in this way it represents the rotational axis of the earth. *Sternen-Achse* translates from the German as 'Star Axis'; the *Sternen-Achse Declinator* sculpture can be adjusted to depict latitudinal points across the earth. Robbins has marked certain points through the drawing series that accompany this sculpture, which includes *Sternen-Achse, South-Pole base* (2016), *Sternen-Achse, Darwin* (2016), *Sternen-Achse, Melbourne* (2016), *Sternen-Achses, Mawson Base* (2016) and *Sterne-Achse, Hobart* (2016).

**Curated by Nicole Durling and Olivier Varenne.**

This exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue.

**For more information**  
cameronrobbins.com

**Full photo set**

<https://www.flickr.com/gp/67221831@N08/4LI673>

## Install Shots & Selected Works

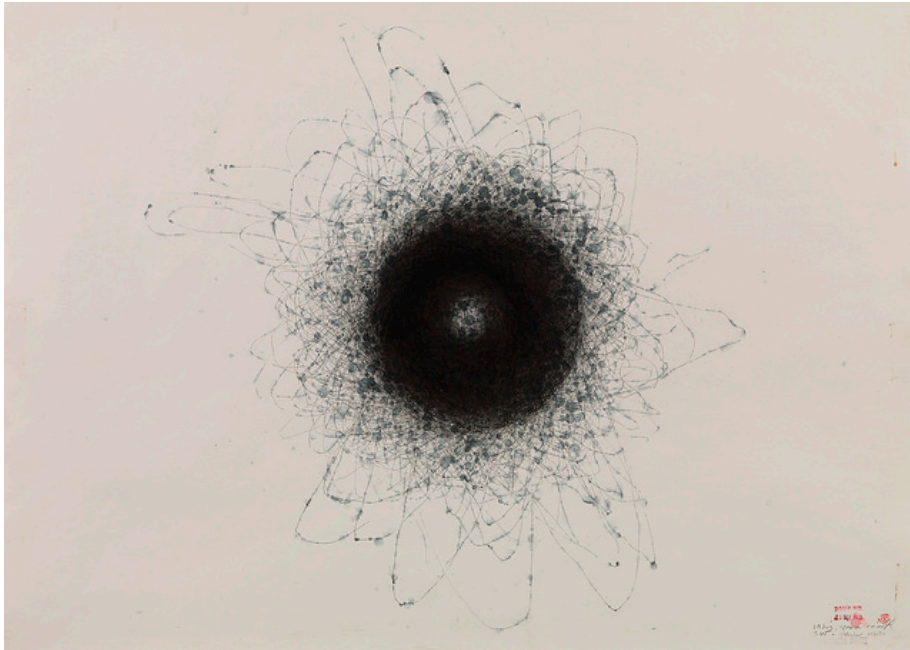
---



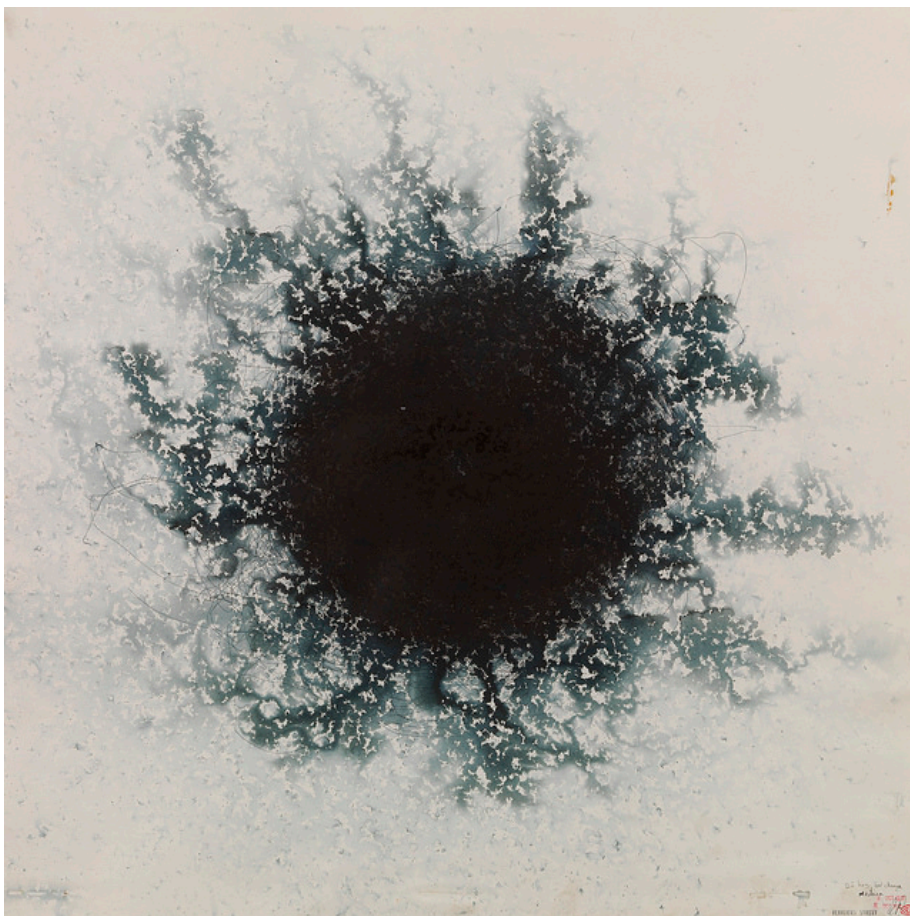
*Anemograph, Lion's Head*  
2014  
Type-C photograph on rag paper  
160 x 100 cm



*Anemograph, Crux*  
2015  
Type-C photograph on rag paper  
160 x 100 cm



Flinders Street Station (Globular Orbits), 21 September 2012, SW, sparse rain  
2012  
Wind drawing, duration 19 hours  
Pigment and water-soluble ink on paper  
58 x 80cm



Flinders Street Station (Medusa), 4-5 October 2012, cool change  
2012  
Wind drawing, duration 26 hours  
Pigment and water-soluble ink on paper  
80 x 80cm





Wild Dog Valley (Moth), 10 May 1991, SW  
1991  
Wind drawing, duration 40 minutes  
Pigment ink on paper  
80 x 80 cm



Wind Funnel Room, installation view



*Portable Wind-Drawing Machine*  
1990-2016

Timber, stainless steel, steel, aluminium, stone, copper, acrylic, hinges, Spectra, shock cord, leather, PU cord, pens, pliers, clips, spanner, screwdriver, allen key, machine oil, Teflon, rubber, ventolin puffer  
Dimensions variable



*Wind Section – Instrumental*  
2013

Weather-powered drawing machine installation

Painted wood, stainless steel, aluminium, ball bearings, shock cord, wire, paper, ink

Dimensions variable





*Wind Section Instrumental, 16–23 December 2013, Snake and Egg*  
2013

Wind drawing, duration 7 days  
Pigment ink on paper  
500 x 90 cm



*Wind Section Instrumental, 1–5 January 2014, Two Hot Northerlies*  
2014

Wind drawing, duration 4 days  
Pigment ink on paper  
500 x 90 cm



*Wind Section Instrumental, 29 October – 7 November 2013, Eleven Smaller Winds*  
2013

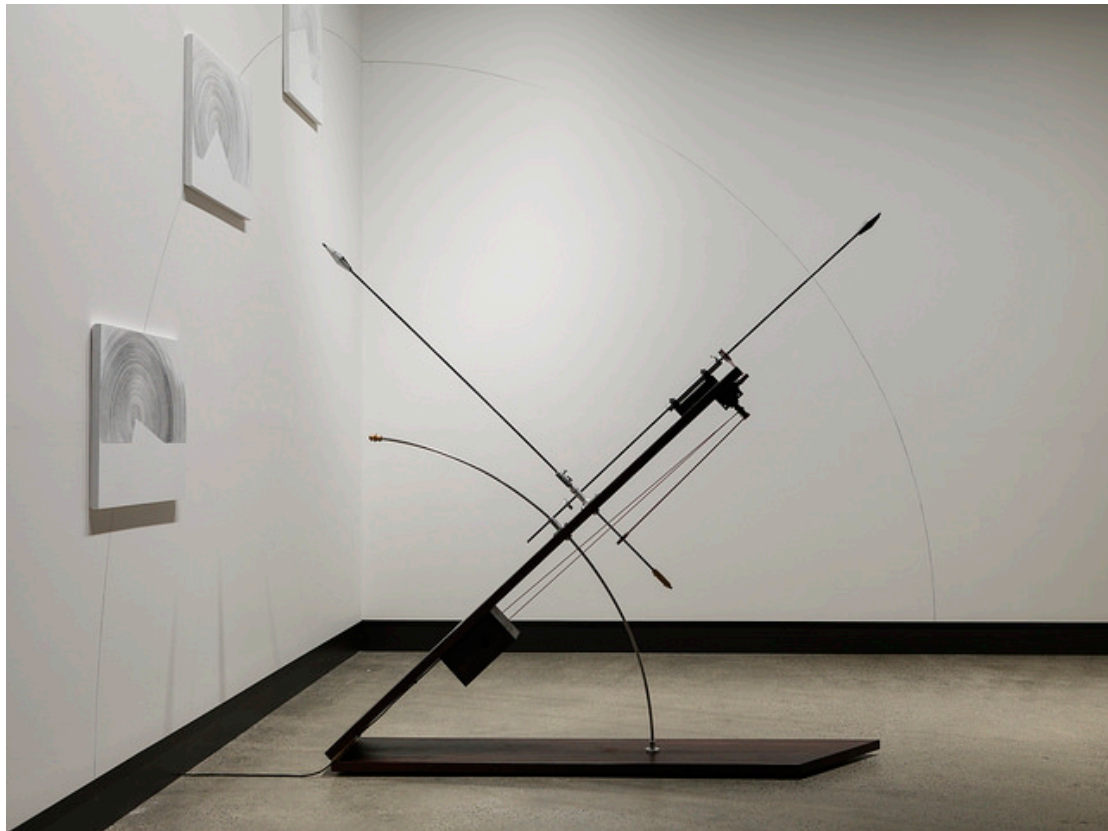
Wind drawing, duration 9 days  
Pigment ink on paper  
500 x 90 cm



*Wind Section Instrumental, 6–15 October 2013, NW Passage*  
2013

Wind drawing, duration 9 days  
Pigment ink on paper  
500 x 90 cm





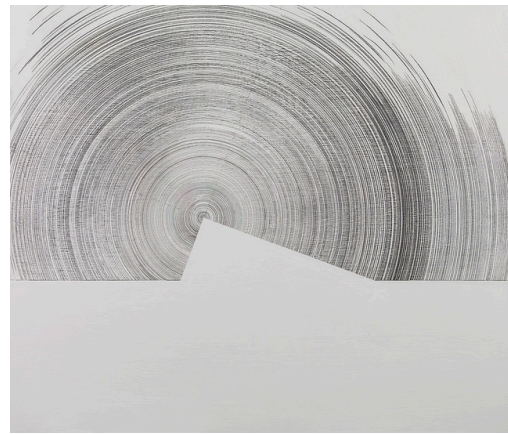
*Sterne-Achse Declinator*  
2016

Jarrah, aluminum, carbon fibre, motor, PU cord, brass, stainless steel, steel  
Dimensions variable



*Sterne-Achse, Hobart*  
2016

Acrylic paint and graphite on board  
60 x 70 cm



*Sterne-Achse, Darwin*  
2016

Acrylic paint and graphite on board  
60 x 70 cm



*Magnometers*

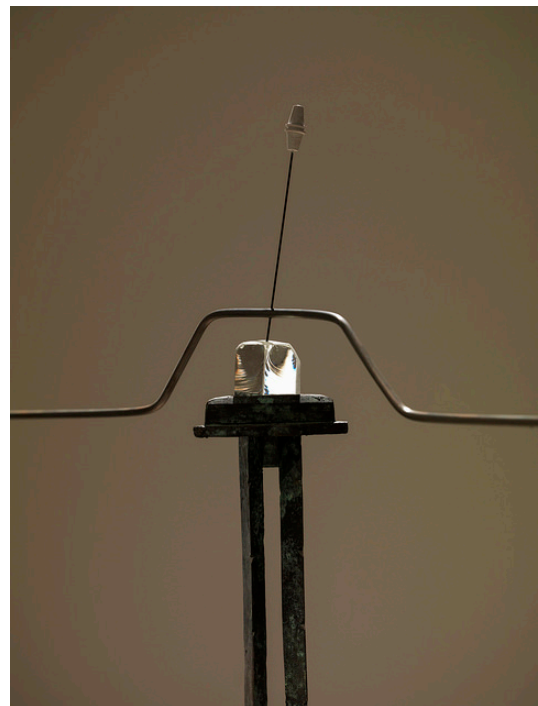
2016

Silicon, bronze, optical glass, tungsten, chromoly, neodymium, magnets, wood, basalt

Dimensions variable



*Magnometers (detail)*





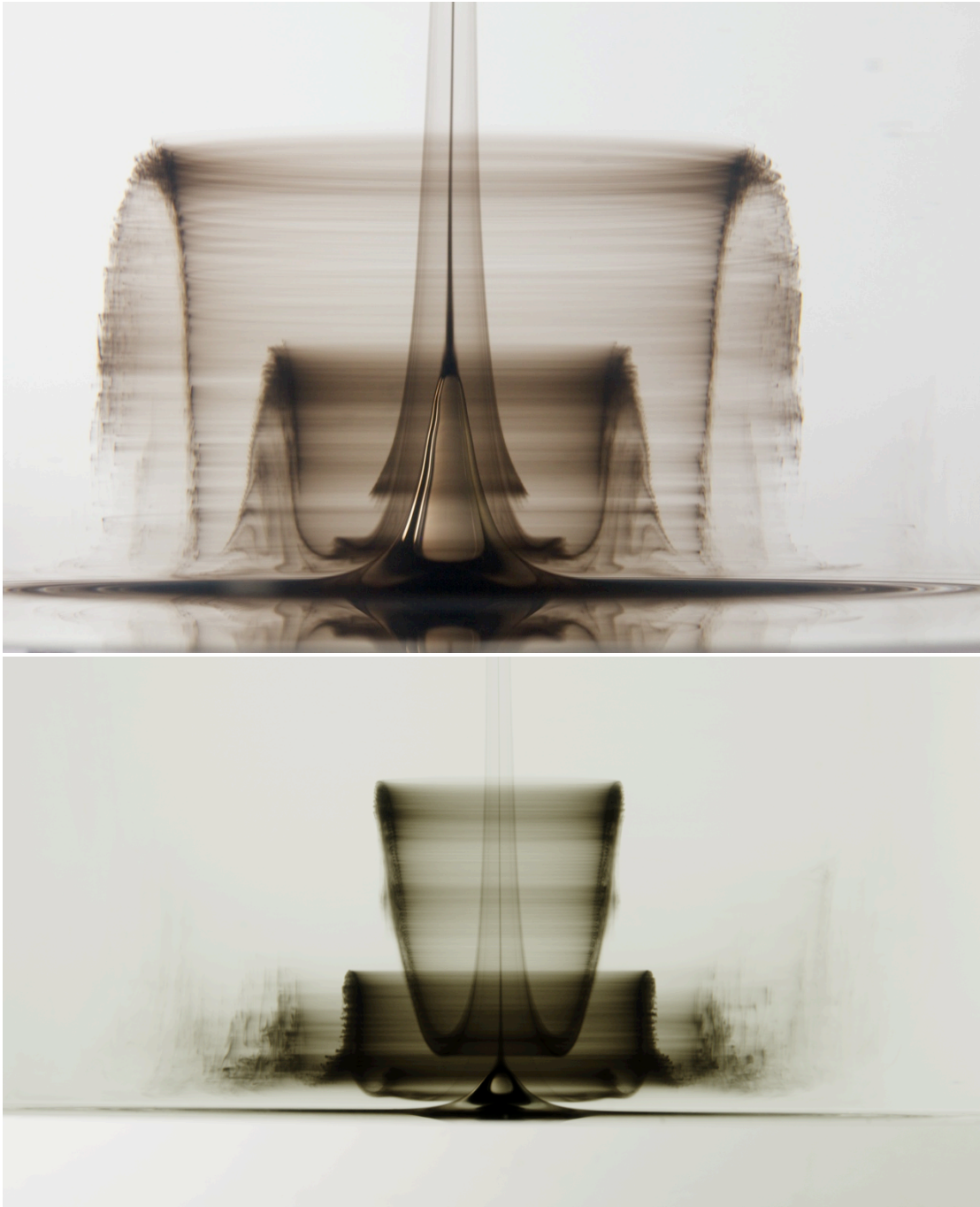


*Mt Jim Magnetic Anomaly, Star Map*  
2011  
Type-C photograph on rag paper  
120 x 90 cm



*Mt Jim Magnetic Anomaly, Loops*  
2011  
Type-C photograph on rag paper  
120 x 90 cm





*Dissipative Structures*  
2012  
Single-channel video work, sound



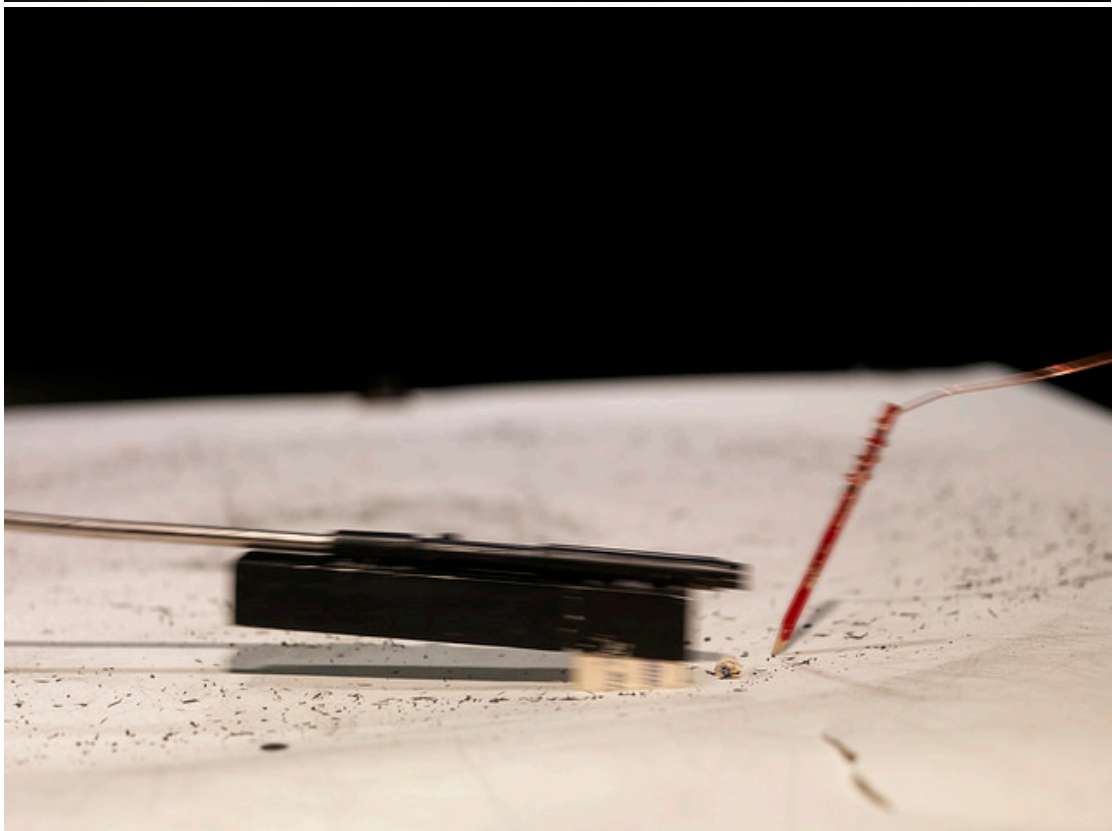
*Tide Line*

2016

Tidal drawing instrument, duration one lunar month

Timber, steel, Colorbond, bearings, stainless steel, aluminium, brass, stone, acrylic, pulleys, Dyneema, polystyrene, PVC float, polyethylene, water, electric motor, PU cord, pen, paer

Dimensions variable, approx. 10m circumference



*Solar Loggerheads*

2016

Drawing and erasing instrument – solar and mains power.

Steel, timber, electric motors, solar panel, stainless steel, brass, aluminium, eraser, whiteboard marker, stone, bearings, glass

480 x 80cm overall, drawing 120 x 120cm





*Mt Jim Field Outline*  
2016  
Neon and basalt  
Dimensions variable