

Artist's Statement - The Pendulum Project

The idea for this series of photographs first came to me in the fall of 1967 when, as a senior in high school, I had my first physics course. The “double pendulum” is a common textbook exercise that is familiar to any student of physics, but I saw it as an artistic tool. I proceeded to make a number of simple time exposure photographs, looking up at a small neon bulb attached to a double pendulum. These attempts were quite crude, but they demonstrated the concept, and served as inspiration for my thoughts. One of these early prints hangs on the wall of my studio.

The current series of photographs has been in the planning and construction stage for about the past 3 years, and I have just recently begun to experiment with making images. The idea is the same as my 1967 work, but the technique is much more refined. I have converted my barn into a photography studio, and have constructed and installed a 3-meter double pendulum. The pendulum consists of a 40-pound piece of steel I bought on e-bay, suspended by a steel cable. The neon bulb has been replaced with an LED, and the camera is a large-format 4 x 5 inch sheet film camera. Working at night in total darkness, the camera looks straight up, and is focused on the LED. The pendulum is then placed in motion, and a time exposure is made as the LED traces out the pendulum's path. Depending on the way the pendulum is suspended, and on the particular path it is started in, I expect to produce a large variety of abstract images.

I have not yet decided what to call this series, or how to title the various images.

The final exhibition size of these images has not been completely determined, but my current thinking is to produce 16 x 20 inch silver gelatin prints.

