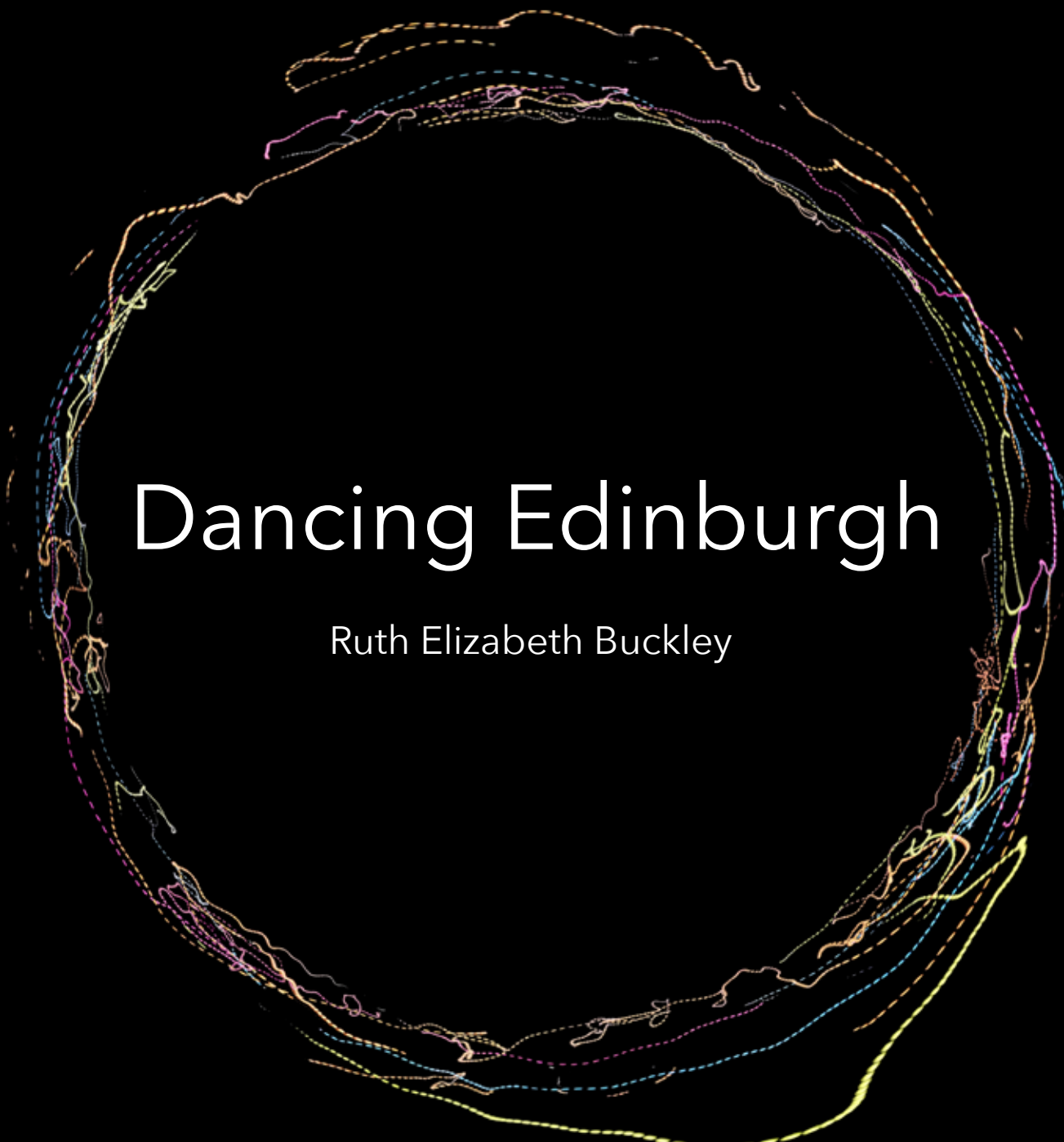




Dancing Edinburgh

Ruth Elizabeth Buckley



Dancing Edinburgh takes light paintings produced by the Edinburgh swing dance community and translates them into sculptural objects.

The following groups and individuals provided vital support, without which, the project would not have been possible.



The technical team at the uCreate Makerspace.
Specifically, Simeon Newbatt, Connor
Anderson and Isabella Inskip.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

The technical and academic team at the
Edinburgh College of Art.
Specifically, Laura Reed, Steph Liddle, Kat
Brocklesby, Calum Main, Jessamy Kelly and Kee
Ryong Choi.



The Edinbop swing dance group and the wider
Edinburgh swing dance community.
Specifically, Murray Wham and Rob Armitage.

Kevin Buckley for photography support and the continued support of partner Samuel Bailey.

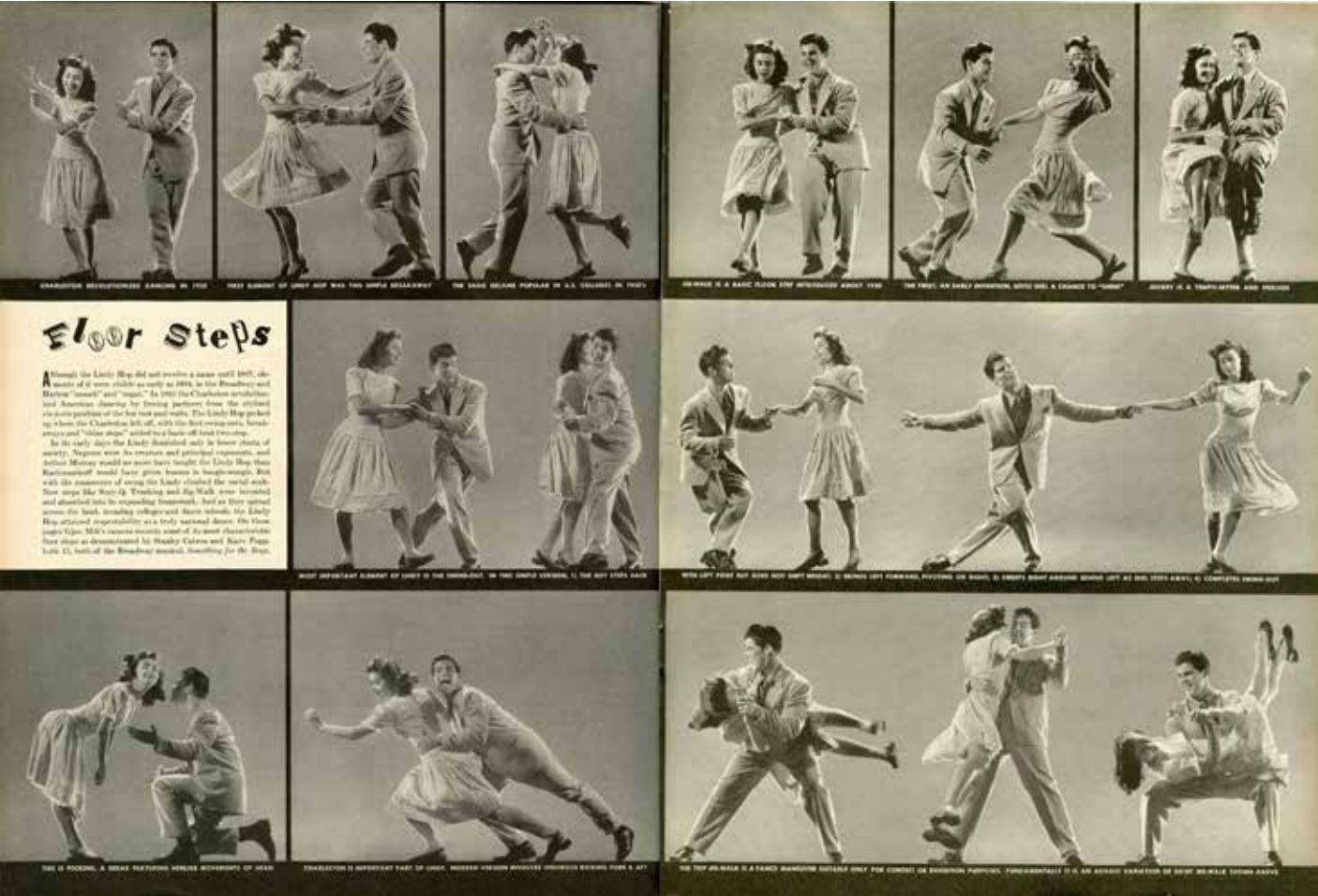
About swing dance.

Swing dance is the umbrella term for a group of social dances originating from Black African-American communities in 1920's and 30's America. It is danced to swing music, which is a form of Jazz. Swing dance and Jazz were born out of a culture of oppression and racism, hugely informed by the segregation that Black Americans faced at that time. A defiant reaction to the oppression and hardships that people were facing, a joyous resistance and expression of freedom.

Examples of partnered swing dances are Lindy Hop, Collegiate Shag, St Louis Shag, Balboa and Charleston. Each dance is characterised by having a different basic step, and they cover a range of music tempos. There are two roles within these partner dances, a lead and a follow. Swing dance is a conversation and both partners contribute equally. The leader guides the couple through the dance, initialising transitions and steps. The follower listens and interprets these signals, while bringing their own individuality and flare.



Caption from LIFE. Improvisation. Gjon Mili—The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images



LIFE Magazine, August 23, 1943 Gjon Mili—LIFE Magazine

About Edinburgh swing dance.

Lindy Hop was first introduced to Edinburgh and Scotland in 1996 with the formation of the Edinburgh Swing Dance Society (ESDS), founded by local dancers Rhona and Niall Davies working alongside Carolene Hinds and Russell Sargeant of The Jiving Lindy Hoppers.

Over time, further organisations formed, including a university society for students (EUSDS) in 1998 and Edinbop in 2006, created by five local dancers to bring a regular social dancing night to the capital.

Today Edinburgh's vibrant swing dance scene includes many classes, workshops and regular social dancing across the city, including big annual weekend festivals such as the Edinburgh Lindy Exchange (ELX), held every September since 2008.

This summary of swing dance in Edinburgh was written by one of Edinbop's founders, Michelle Davies.



ELX 2024, Cheeky Rastall Photography, 2024



Weekly Edinbop social with live music, Ruth Buckley, 2025

About the artist.

Ruth is a designer maker based in Edinburgh. She specialises in ceramics and is a digital making technician at the University of Edinburgh, uCreate Makerspace.

Her work aims to capture the joy and movement of swing dance, translating it into large scale sculptures and installations. She has been a dancer for 9 years, an active member and teacher within the Edinburgh swing dance community, with whom she works closely. Ruth's love of dance stems from its ability to provide moments of connection, the main aim of her work being to create snapshots of the intangible nature of dance and movement. She uses this subject matter to push what digital tools are capable of, visualising the multiple layers of abstraction of the dance in motion. She moves swing dance into the modern era, while preserving its identity.

This work started in 2024, when Ruth explored how 3D scanning could be used to record a pair of dancers, but quickly evolved, with an emphasis on capturing a whole dance community. Her process involves running community light painting workshops and videoing the experience with a 360 camera. The workshops consist of each dancer being handed a light, the movement trails of which are recorded by the camera. Stills are taken from this video and stacked to create long exposure photographs. These photos are digitally translated into 3D forms, which are then 3D printed. The 3D printed forms are hand cast in either ceramic or glass, resulting in the final sculptural forms. With the spanning of multiple disciplines, her practice invites reflection on human interaction.

Her methods allow for digital techniques to be showcased through analogue forms. They highlight how the combining of processes results in otherwise unachievable tactile forms, preserving lost moments. The intangible is made tangible through her sculptural artworks. The use of traditional craft materials for the final sculptures also sparks engagement with digital tools for the viewer, making the digital world more approachable. As a digital making technician, whose desire to teach and break down information exists both in the workshop and the dance hall, this is an important consideration within Ruth's creative practice.

Ruth 's work has been shown nationally within Scotland, and she will present her work at the ELIA conference in the Netherlands in November 2026.



Ruth Buckley and clay head 3D print, Joanna Hobbs, 2024



Save the Fast Dance, Jack Childs, 2026

What does swing dance mean to me?

I started swing dance in 2017, while at university, and it has remained a core part of my life ever since. I began dancing as a way of connecting with people after moving to a new city, providing me with a community and friendships that I treasure. For me, the beauty of swing dance lies in the moments of freedom and fun you are able to create with both close friends and complete strangers.

Dancing is a playground that allows me to just be.

My home scene, like many others, is run by passionate volunteers. We work together to run classes, festivals and socials to keep the scene alive and kicking. I love the openness of knowledge exchange the swing dance community facilitates. The lines remain purposefully blurred between teachers and students.

Everyone is simply a dancer.

I attend local and international socials, festivals and classes, while participating as a teacher and event organiser in my local scene.

Swing dance has allowed me to grow in confidence and I am in love.

Signed with Lindy love,

Ruth ♥

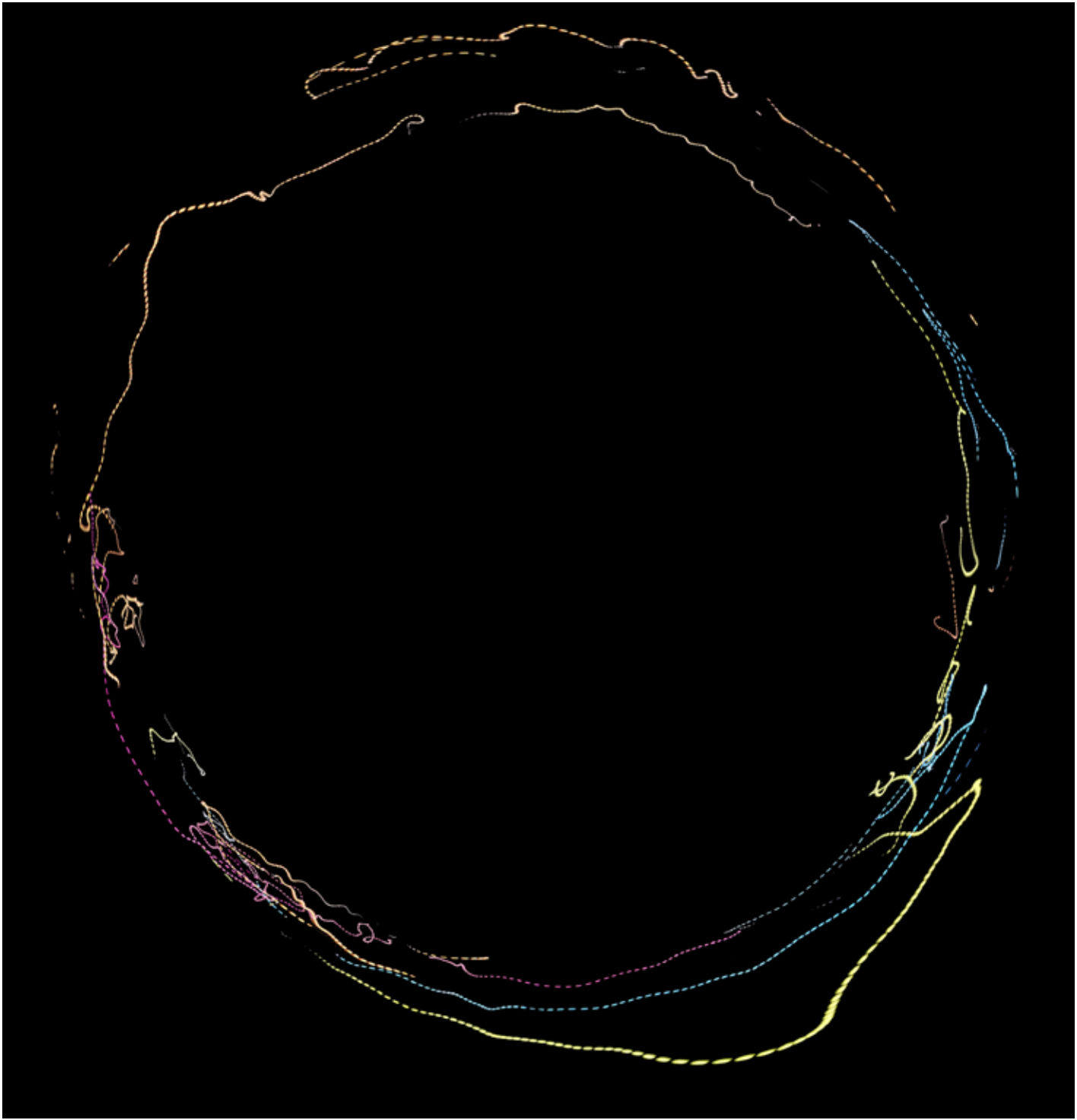
Community light painting.

On Wednesday 20th May 2026, in collaboration with the Edinbop swing dance community in Edinburgh, Ruth ran a community light painting workshop. The workshop took place in St Nina’s Hall in Greyfriars Charteris Centre, during a weekly social dance. The community gathered and participants were given a coloured light.

They danced around a 360 degree camera, capturing their movement through the moving lights. The captured videos were then turned into long exposure images, with each coloured line representing an individuals movement.

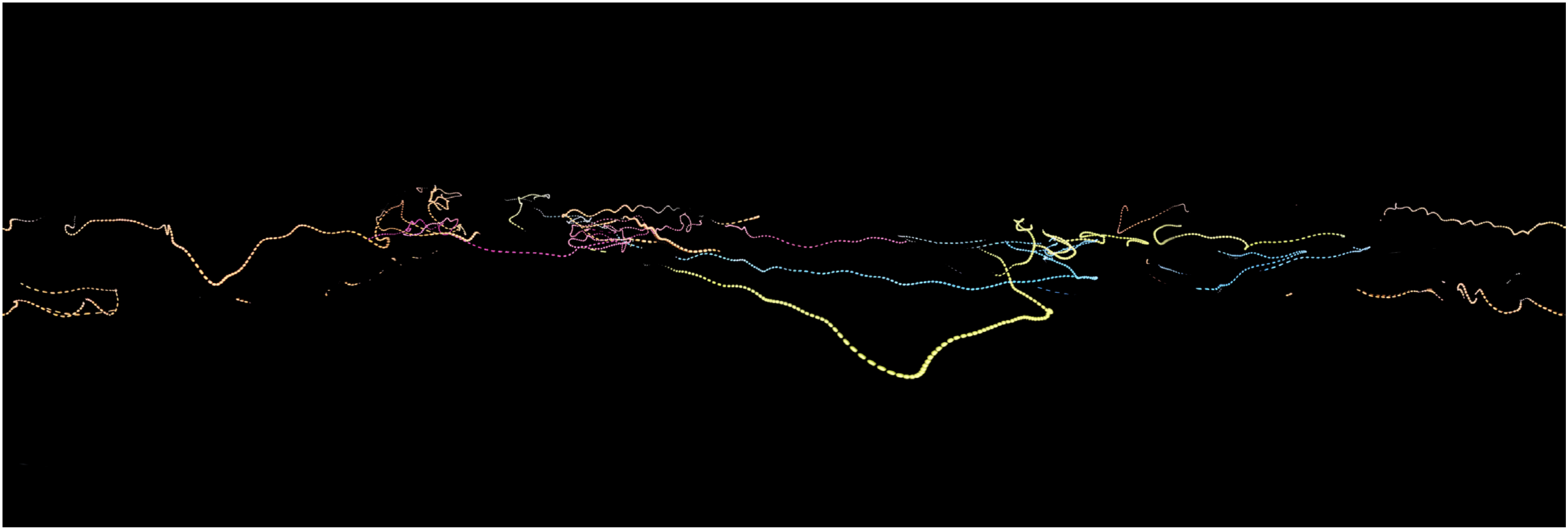


Light painting workshop, Ruth Buckley and Edinbop, 2026



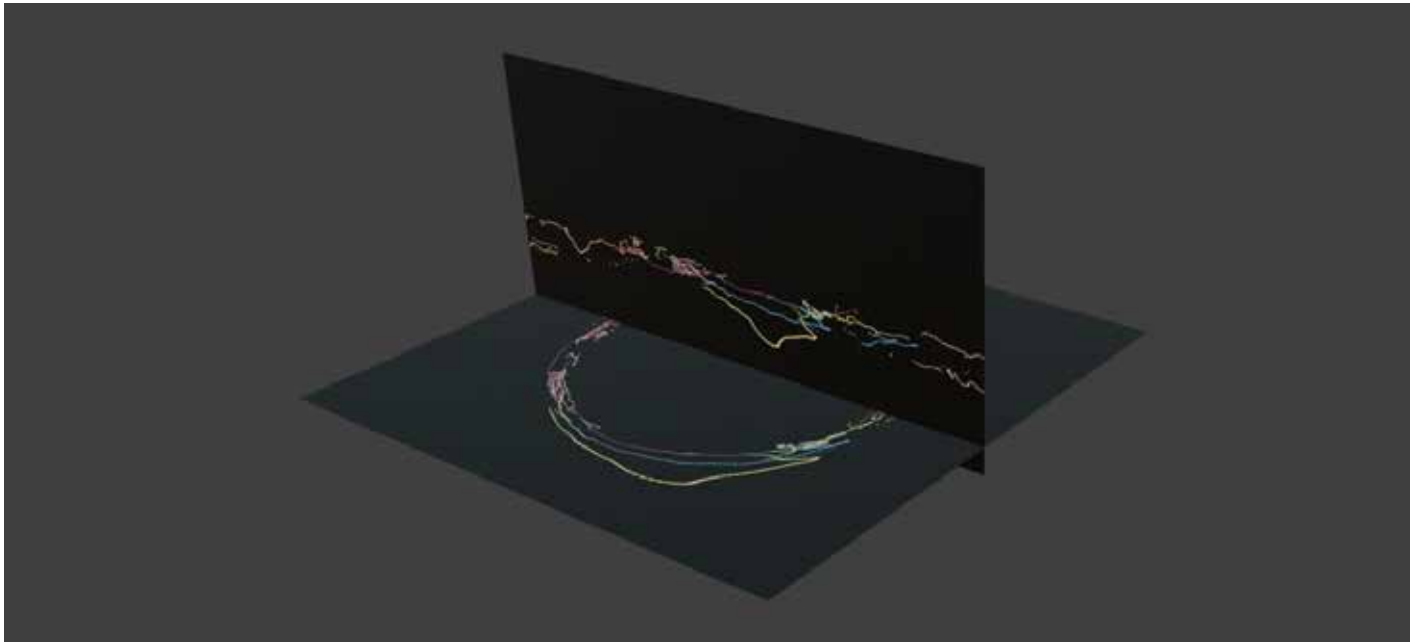
Opposite.
Edinburgh Lights 2. Part of the Dancing Edinburgh series. 6 couples with lights on heads. Polar.
Dancers: Sade Butler, Salem Van der Tiramisu, C. Stanley Wong, Hidhir Mohamed Nasir, Ruth Buckley and anonymous
Time of exposure: 30 seconds
Workshop date: 20/05/2026
Image creation date: 21/05/2026

Following page.
Edinburgh Lights 2. Part of the Dancing Edinburgh series. 6 couples with lights on heads. Panorama.
Dancers: Sade Butler, Salem Van der Tiramisu, C. Stanley Wong, Hidhir Mohamed Nasir, Ruth Buckley and anonymous
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Turning 2D images to 3D forms.

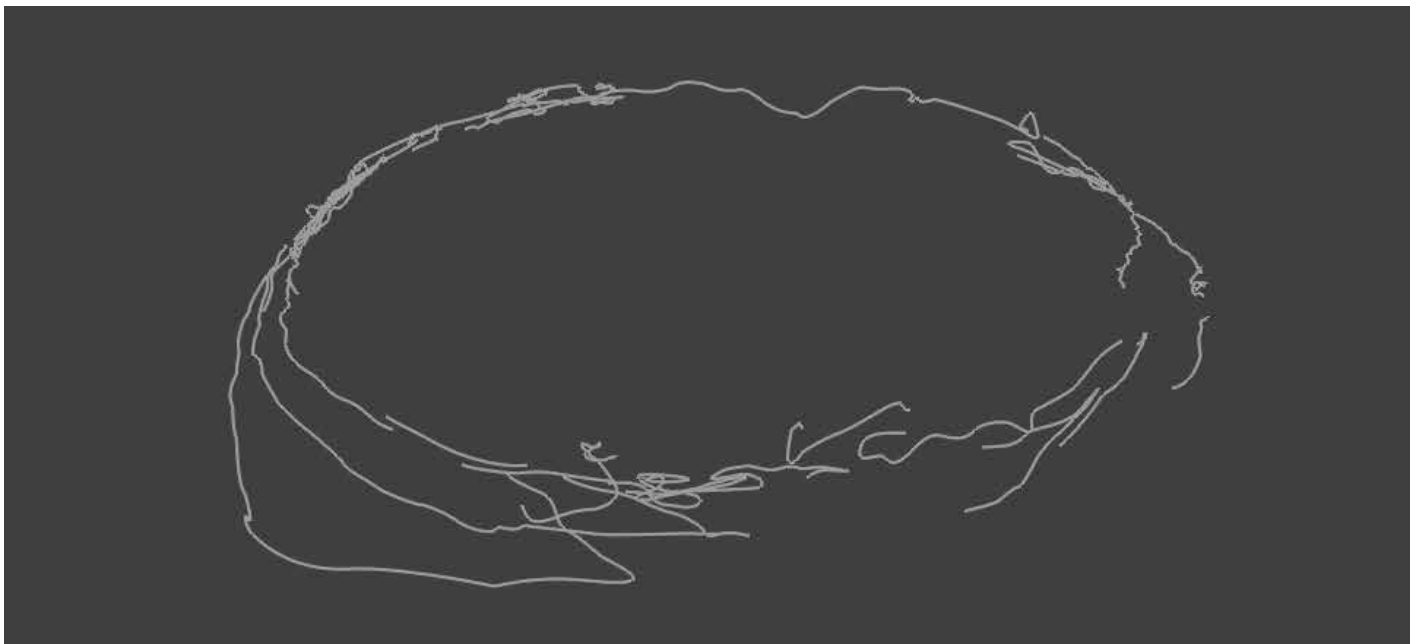
The polar and panoramic images generated from the community light painting workshop are two different projections of the same image. These images were aligned and placed into Blender, ready to be traced.



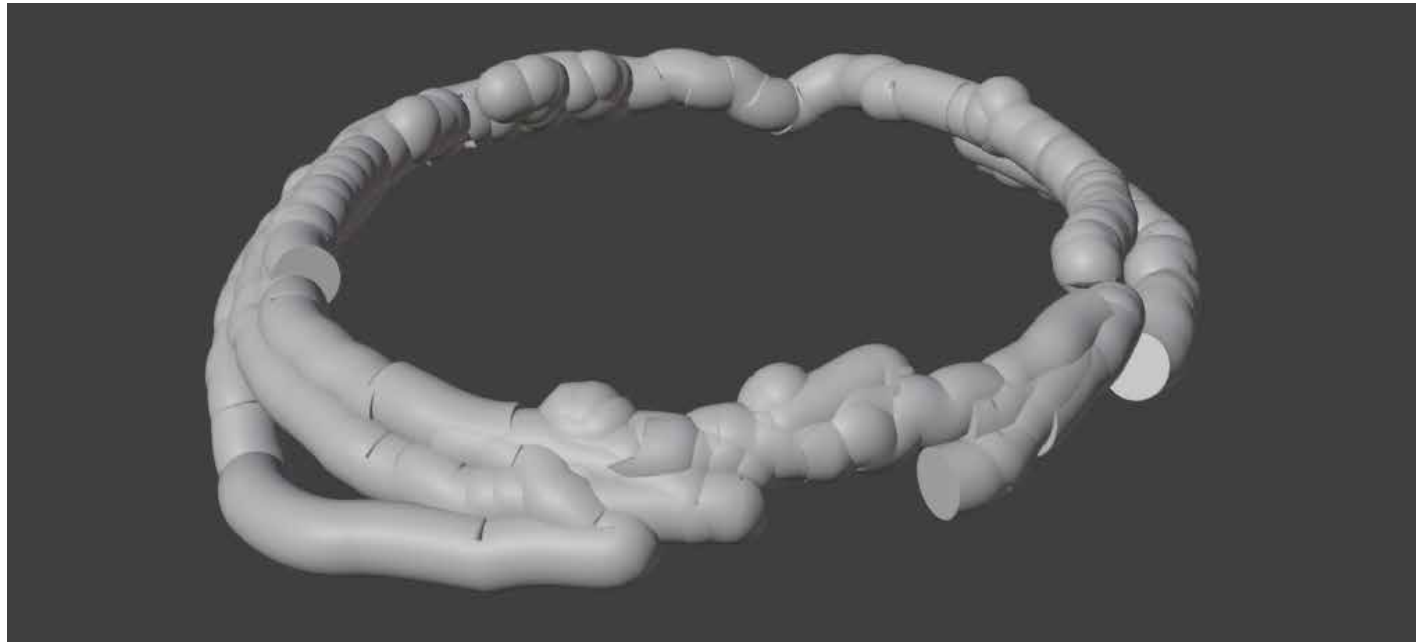
Setting up of Blender document with panoramic and polar images, Ruth Buckley, 2026

Blender, as a node based software, provides the freedom to draw and edit in a 3D space across multiple planes.

The panoramic image was traced and then altered to fit the polar view, creating a 3D line drawing of the two images combined.



Traced light painting lines in Blender - translated to a circular form, Ruth Buckley, 2026



Traced light painting lines in Blender - translated to a circular form with thickness, Ruth Buckley, 2026

These lines were then given thickness, making them suitable for 3D printing.

The thickened lines causing the paths to not only cross but combine, mirroring the connection and coming together of two people as they dance.



3D print of light form, Ruth Buckley, 2026

The model was split into sections and 3D printed in PLA. These 3D printed models provide the forms for turning into ceramic.

The overall dimension of the 3D printed light right is 1200mm, which will shrink to around 1000mm once cast in porcelain.

Dancing to ceramic. Slip casting.

The 3D printed forms were slip cast to create porcelain sculptures. Ruth chose to work with liquid clay, to mirror the free, flowing feeling of swing dance.

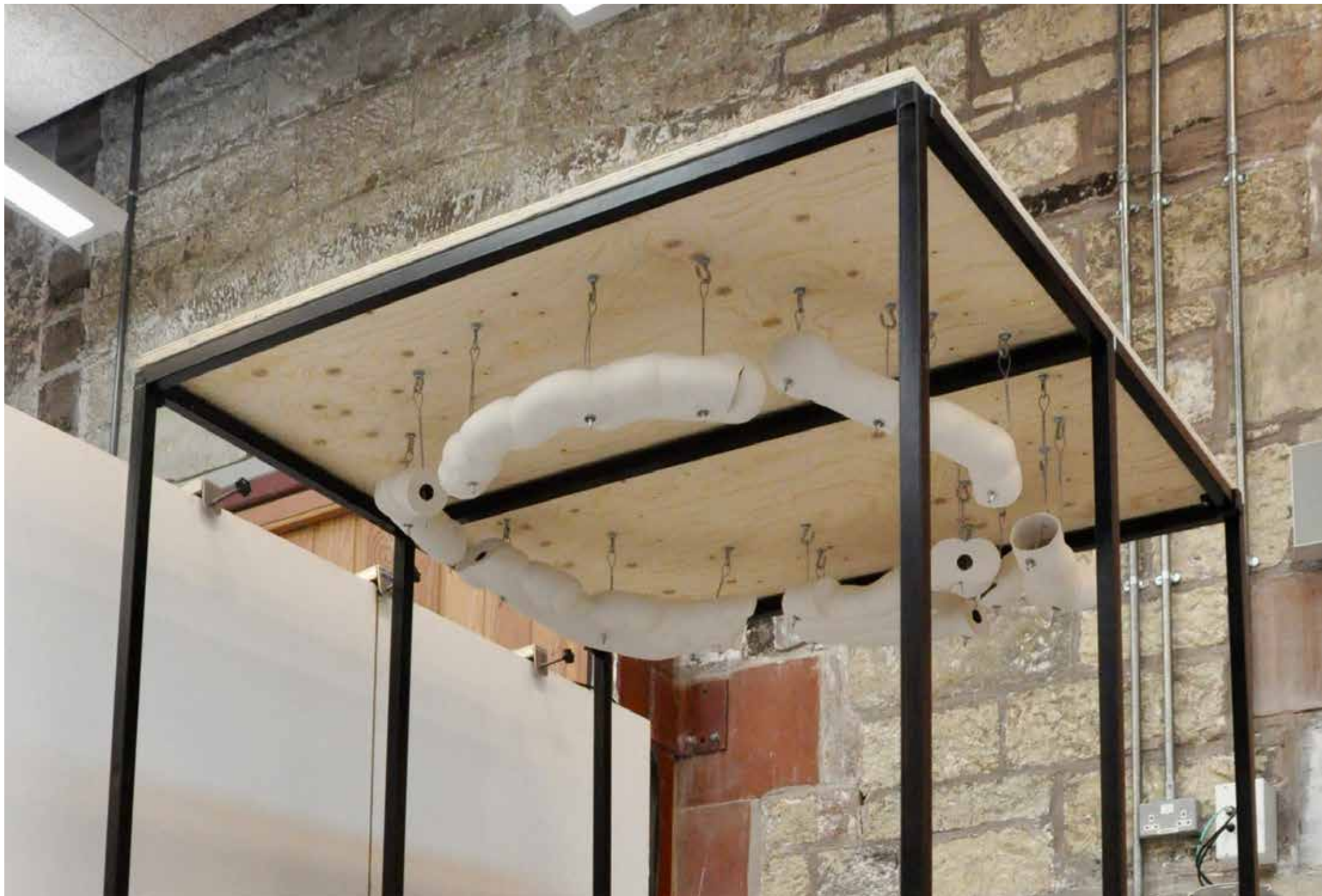
The matt finish porcelain allows the form of the pieces to be their primary focus, rather than any surface distraction. The digital texture of the pieces is visible on the cast porcelain surface, showcasing how the forms were produced.

Ruth produced a total of seven moulds, each with three to six pieces.

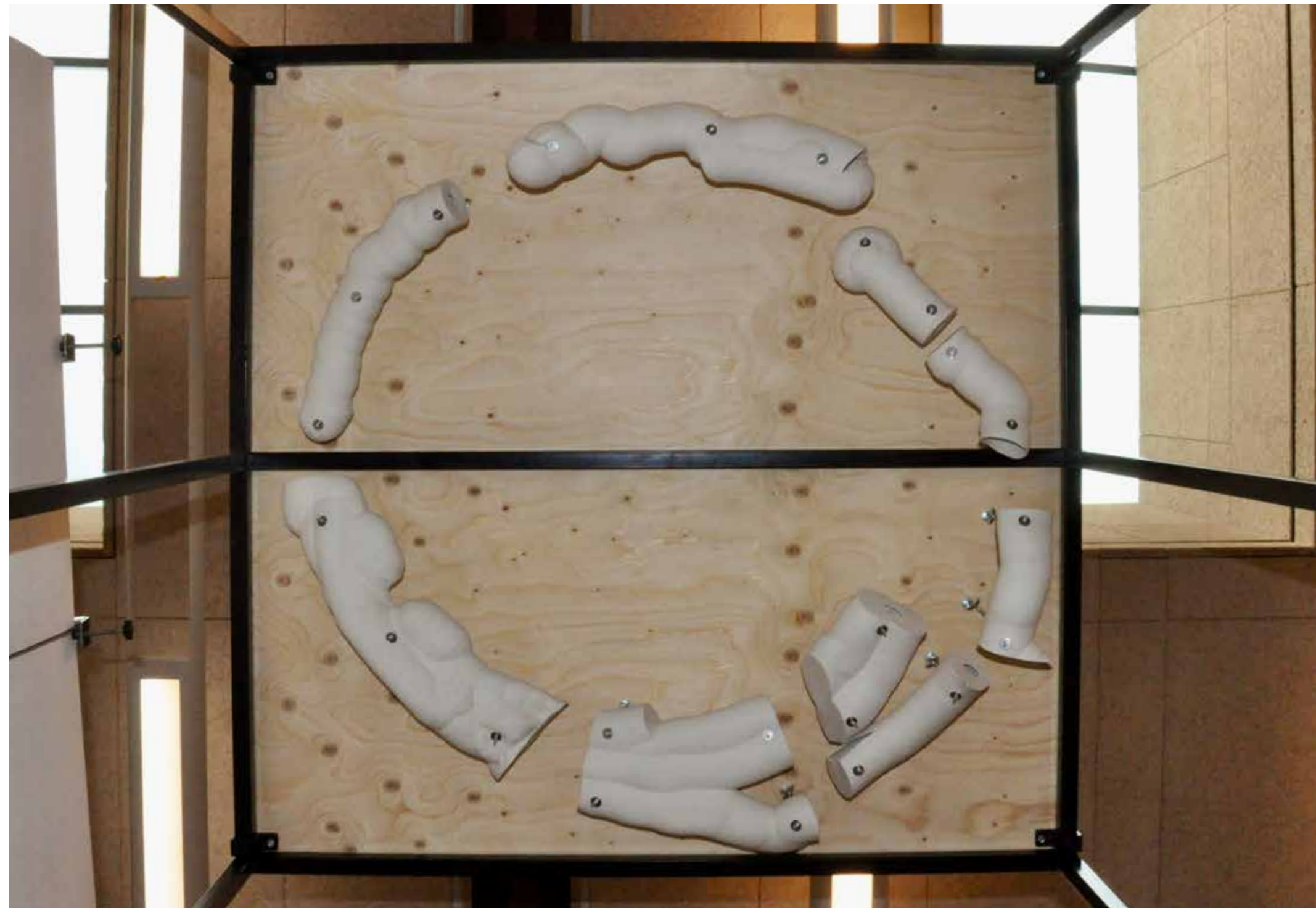
The individual sculptures were hung together to create a ceramic version of the dancing light ring. Hanging the piece allows the viewer to walk around and under the work, being a part of the dance even through simply observing the sculptural work.



Creation of porcelain pieces, Ruth Buckley, 2026



Hanging porcelain piece, Ruth Buckley, 2026



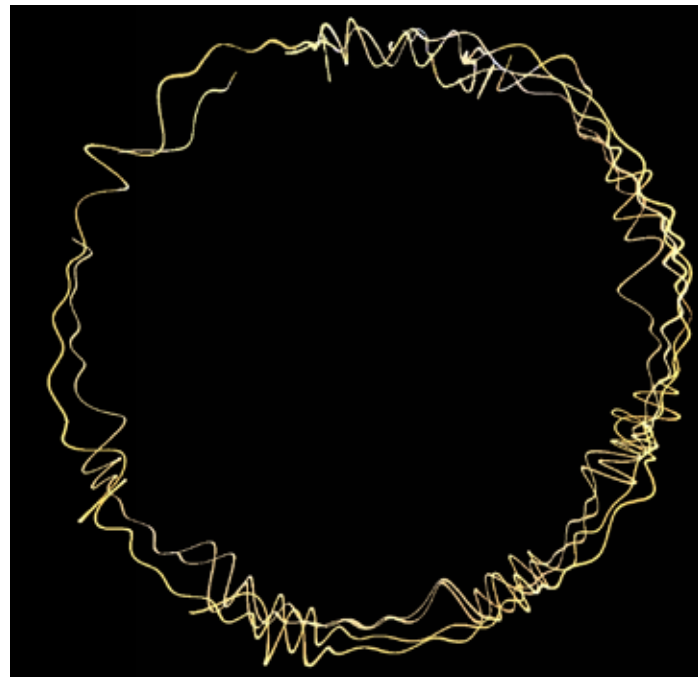
Dancing to glass. Glass casting.

In the lead up to creating the 'Dancing Edinburgh' community piece, the movement to light form process was developed through experimentation with dancer Murray Wham.

To the right, is the first light ring created, translating a long exposure panoramic photograph into a circle. This first successful image captures the dancers individuals movements as well as their connection together through the intersecting lines. It serves as a pivot image and a powerful moment of success for this project.

This light ring was translated into cast glass.

The pieces are displayed standing tall, arranged in a circle, with each piece looking like two dancers intertwined together.



The first light ring, Ruth Buckley and Murray Wham, 2026



Creation of glass piece, Ruth Buckley, 2026



Flat bed glass grinding, Shonah Escombe, 2026



Glass sculpture, Ruth Buckley, 2026

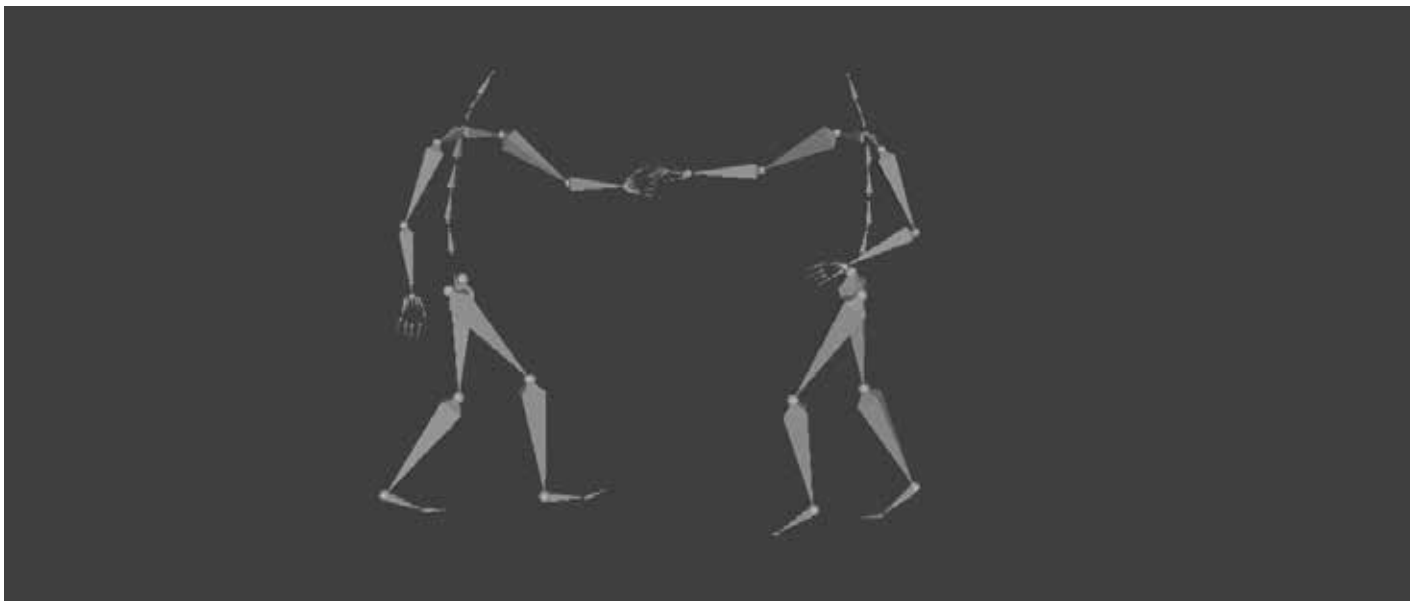


Motion capture.

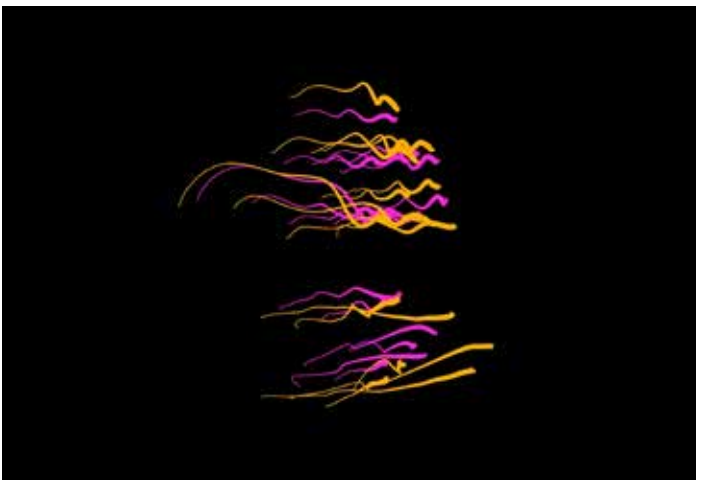
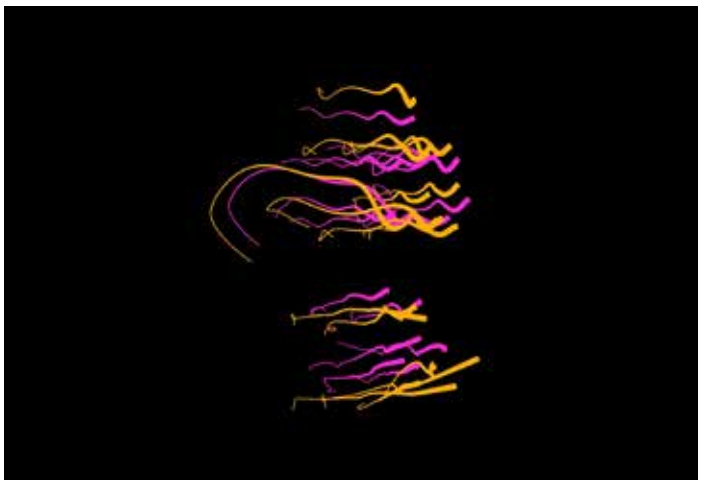
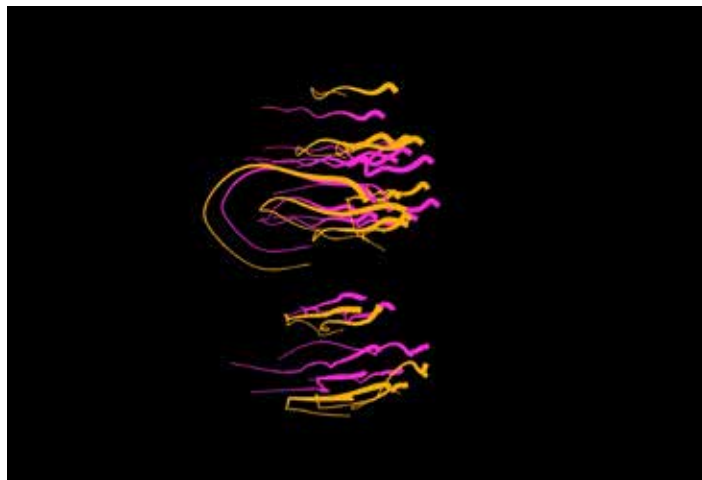
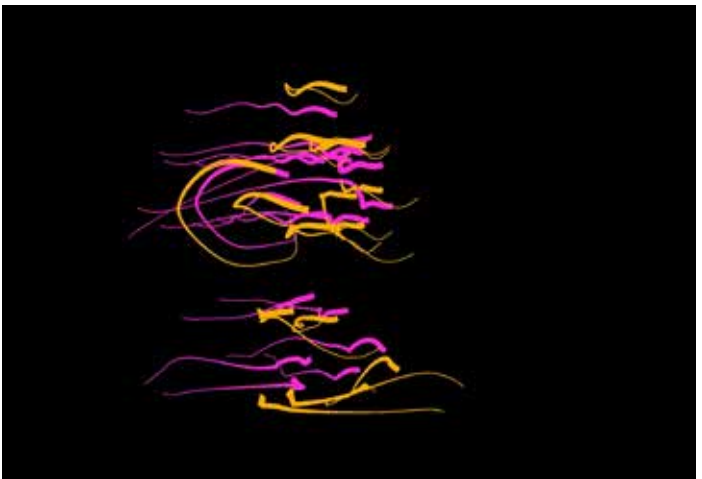
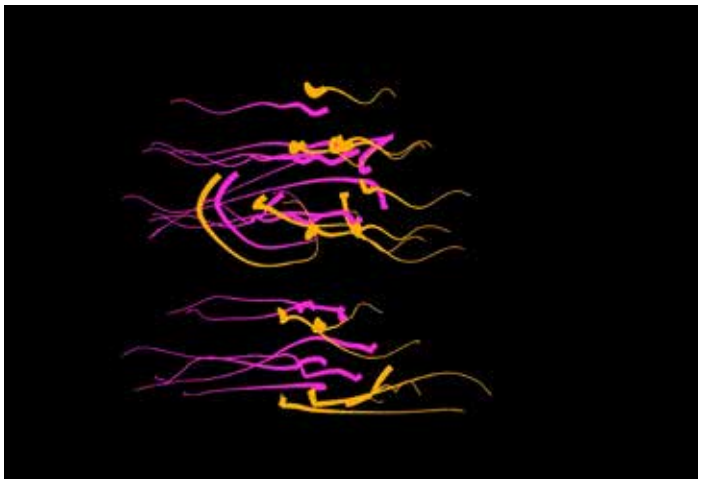
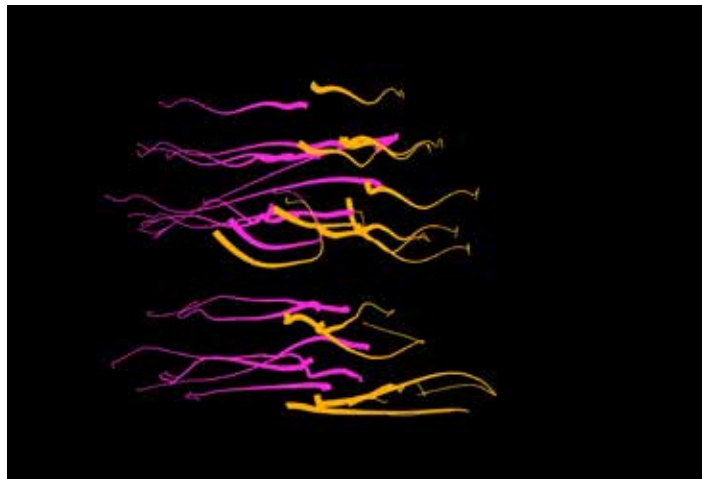
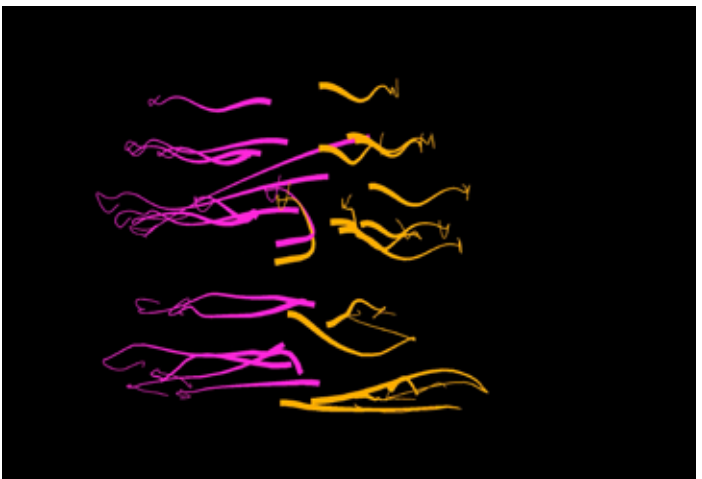
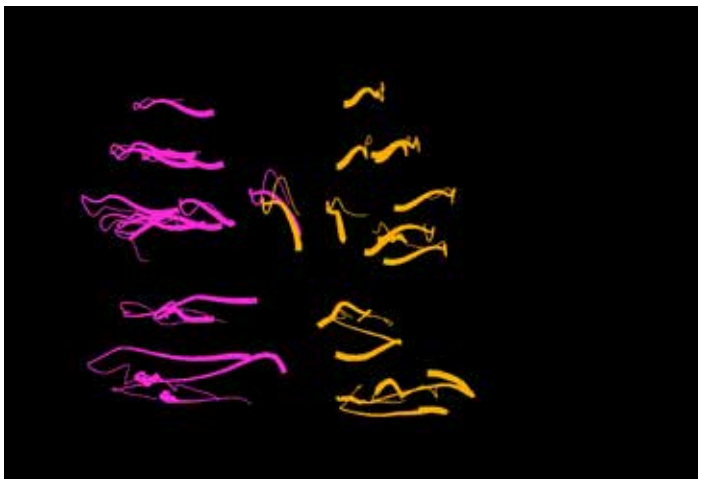
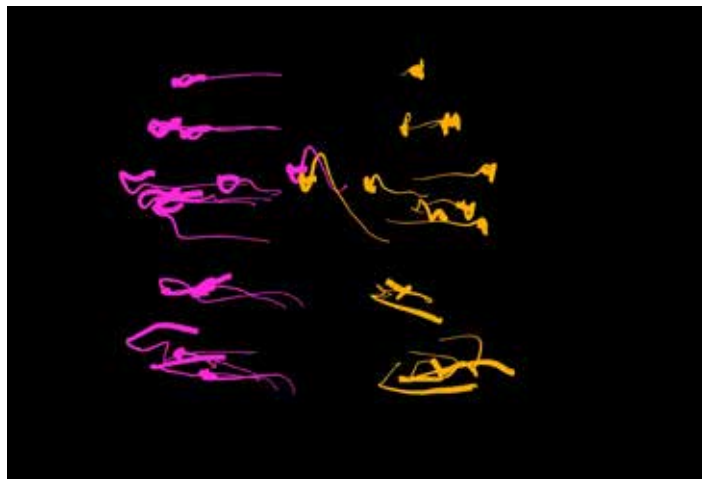
Ruth and dancer Samuel Bailey, in collaboration with Calum Main from the Edinburgh College of Art Immersive Space, produced motion capture animations of swing dance.

The motion capture data was processed in Unity, with key joints given light trails, much like those produced through the community light painting workshop.

These animations were displayed alongside the sculptural work, providing immediate context to the abstract sculpture.



Motion capture, Ruth Buckley, 2026





Community swing dance light
paintings to sculptural objects.

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