

Raphaela Riepl

Peripetie – περιπέτεια

Light is impulsive energy: when it encounters matter, absorption, refraction, reflection, deceleration, or scattering of its countless photons occurs. Photons are born in the in-between – conceived through changes in the states of electrons, they leap from the metaphorical quantum egg. They have no intrinsic mass, yet their angular momentum makes them dynamic balancing particles. For Raphaela Riepl, the dance of photons becomes legible as an alphabet. They turn light into a language that expresses the atmospheric qualities of space and time through rhythmic repetitions of its immaterial motion. Instead of offering rigid, all-encompassing certainty, Riepl's light installations expose us to open, fragmented probabilities whose individual perceptibility depends on us as viewers. Moments of tension and shifts in perspective run through these perception-dependent images of reality, ultimately culminating in the intensity of a turning point – Peripeteia.

Peripeteia (Greek Peripetia, *Περιπέτεια*) refers to a human-made turning point in ancient drama, whose manifestation appears not spiritual but material. The sudden reversal of fate marks the narrative's climax, radiant with contingency: catastrophe and catharsis are, at this point, two sides of the same coin. Riepl allows for both possibilities by extending the moment of their emergence in time and space. Time can be measured: it may be seconds in which viewers approach *Urban Light Radiation* (all works 2025) in a circling movement, or minutes spent traversing *Rural Light Radiation*. It might also be an encounter with *Research, to be continued always*, whose chromatic demarcations shine forth continuously from their dark silk background, symbolically pointing to light emerging from darkness. The time of viewing—and of the works' aftereffects—becomes tangible only within a defined spatial context: the artist creates choreographies and chronologies of movement around and within her installations. While the curved luminous bodies in *Urban Light Radiation* gain structure through multipart chain links, *Rural Light Radiation* features straight light elements arranged in pairs of opposing curvatures, programmed to turn on and off in sequence. Both share a spectrum of natural light colors that evoke sunlight reflections in urban spaces and architectures as well as plays of light on water.

The differing curvatures in the two series may be read as allusions to the general theory of relativity, in which the interactions of space, time, and matter produce spacetime curvature. The viewers' own miniature gravitational fields become equivalents to the massive gravitational forces otherwise required to trigger such curvature. The role of the viewer within Riepl's linguistic system of light thus becomes central, for only through them is diffuse luminosity assembled into a coherent system. In all articulations of the language of light, it is not the materials themselves that glow, but the immaterial in-between that is illuminated. The peripeteia lies in the interaction with things as they are found—in the moment and in the place of encounter. Ultimately, the perceivability of the non-visible is the decisive climax and the core concern of Riepl's artistic strategy.

Andrea Kopranovic

Raphaela Riepl (*1985) knew she wanted to become an artist already as a teenager. It was not the old masters of painting who inspired her career path, but rather the Linz-born artist found early inspiration in Ars Electronica and contemporary art while still a student. Toward the end of her studies in graphic arts with Gunther Damisch at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, she moved to New York City, where she worked in the studio of internationally renowned light artist Keith Sonnier. This encounter with the now-deceased artist remains an important source of inspiration for her to this day and was one of the reasons she stayed on to live and work in New York for five years immediately after completing her studies. During that time, Riepl became acquainted with the Brooklyn art scene and realized numerous exhibitions. At the same time, she acquired specialized knowledge and technical skills in a neon light workshop, where she also earned her living.

Since 2015, Raphaela Riepl has been living and working in Vienna. She realizes permanent and temporary projects in public spaces and architectural contexts and participates in exhibitions both in Austria and abroad.