The Big Idea

A Photography Project // By Jason Xu

Light Painting

Drawing artworks with lights/lasers and by using a long shutter speed can create stunning visuals.

I wanted to recreate this effect as it looked extremely cool and the neon vibes it gave me really made me want to try it out myself.

I just needed a dark room, a torch/flashlight and a camera

Subjects

Recreating the 12 Zodiac signs with light painting each with a different color to represent their values and personality

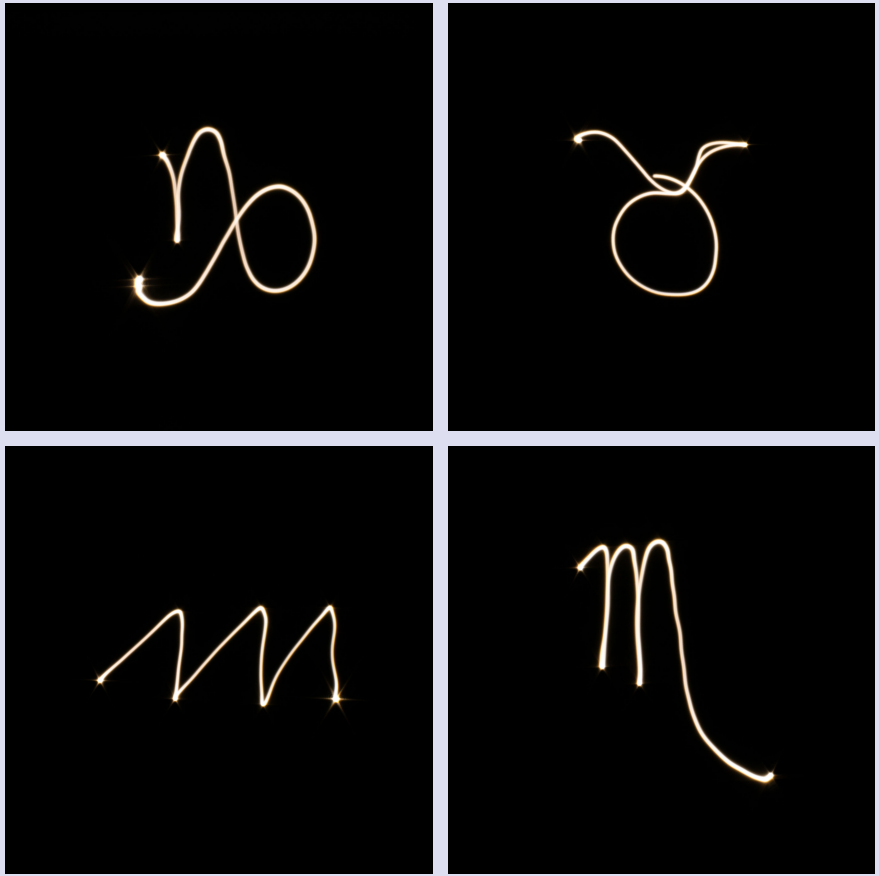
Depending on the element type the color of the sign will change. Eg. air is blue, water is dark blue, fire is red and earth is yellow

Aquarius ♒
Pisces ♓
Aries ♈
Taurus ♉
Gemini ♊
Cancer ♋
Leo ♌
Virgo ♍
Libra ♎
Scorpio ♏
Sagittarius ♐
Capricorn ♑

Taking Photos

To create these neon light paintings, I used a shutter speed of around 5 seconds with my phone torch. By waving the flashlight in specific patterns, this is what I got.

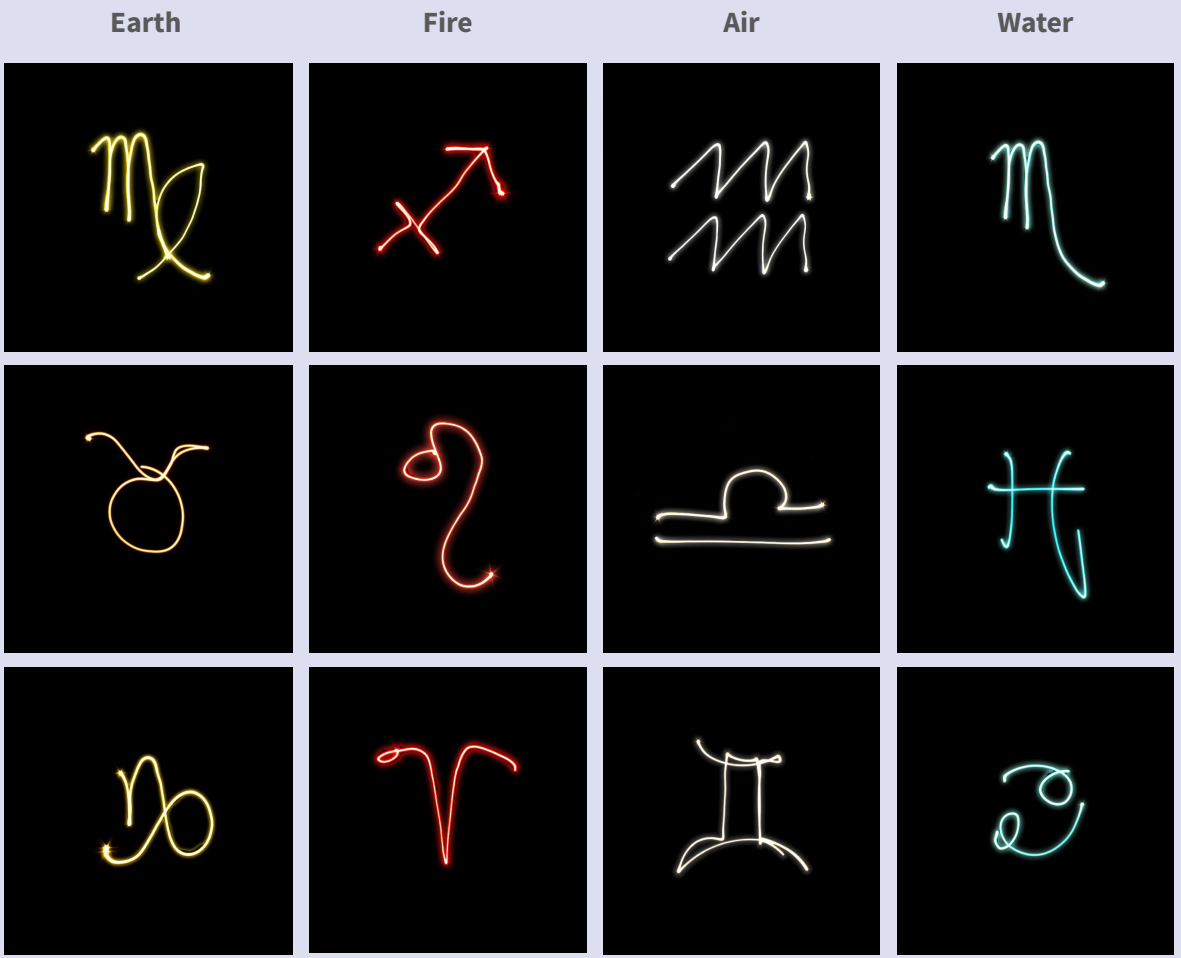
Some photos were only have done because of the amount of strokes required. I later duplicated and edited the incomplete signs in photoshop. For example, you can see only half the Aquarius sign in the raw photo collection.



Final Edits

These are the final light painting photos I captured. I changed the colors by adjusting the hue and adding some glows and color overlays.

By adding specific hues or colors to each zodiac, the colors are based of their element groups; *Earth, Fire, Air and Water*



Extras

For a fun mini creation, I ordered the zodiacs into a circle. It follows Astrology as it begins with Aries on the top and ends with Pisces.

Extension

For extension, I tried to play around with portraits with the star sign above their head. I wanted to match each person to their respective sign which was quite hard. Finding one person for each of the 12 signs was a challenge.

Process

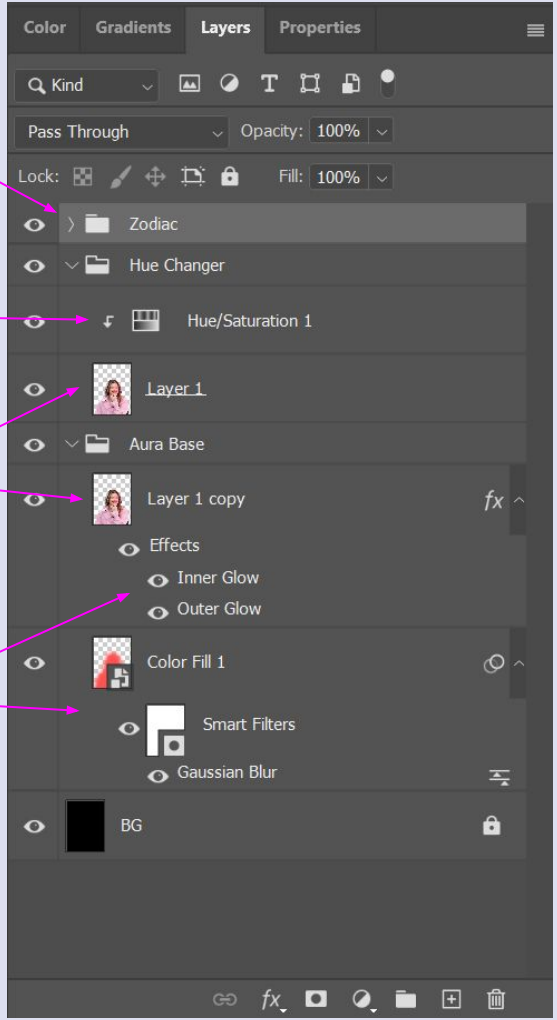
By creating 3 copies of the base image, I was able to create a neon glow effect by filling one image with a pure color and giving it a lot of blur and to reduce its opacity. The next layer I added an inner glow and outer glow to add some depth. For the top most image, it has a hue saturation layer clipped on it with a blend mode to ultimately change the color of the image.

This group is for the different zodiacs. They are layered on the top layer so it can stand out

Changing the hue creates the colorising effect. This layer has a clipping mask on the base image below.

There are two base image layers. The image on top has the blending mode set to soft light to allow for a more gentle effect

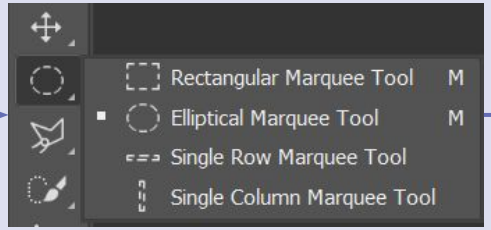
These two layers add a soft inner glow of white and an outer glow with the color that matches. This glow is vital as it creates the neon vibe to the whole piece.



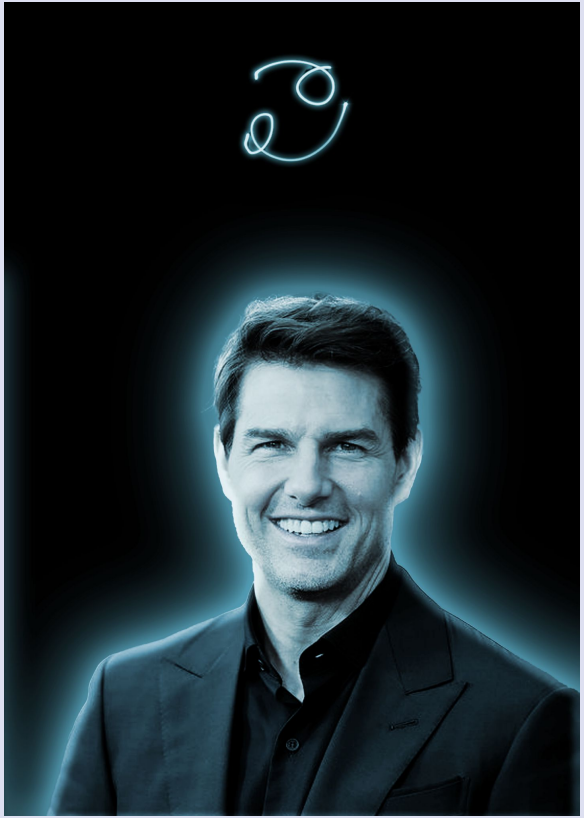
Roadblocks

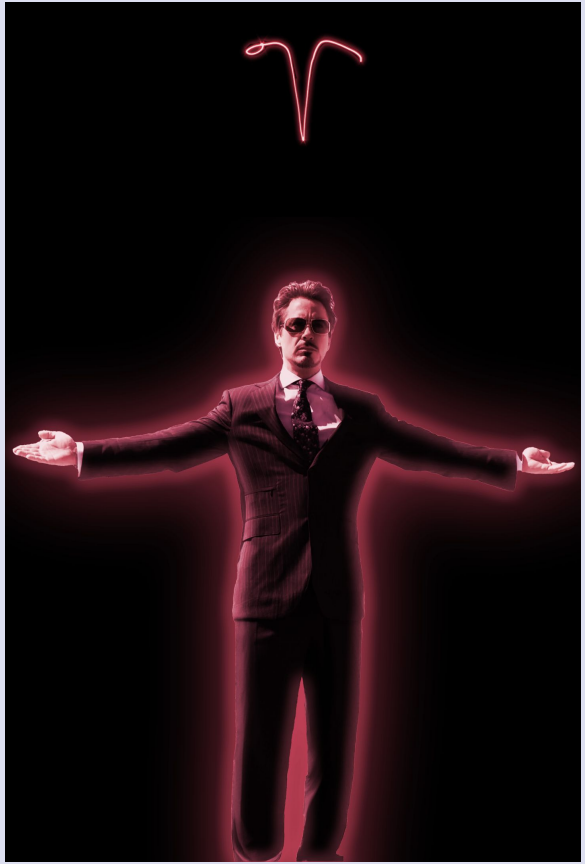
Sometimes the image wasn't perfect or the image that I wanted was terribly cut off. For example, this image of Tony Stark was far too wide and would not look good. However, I used generative AI to make it fit.

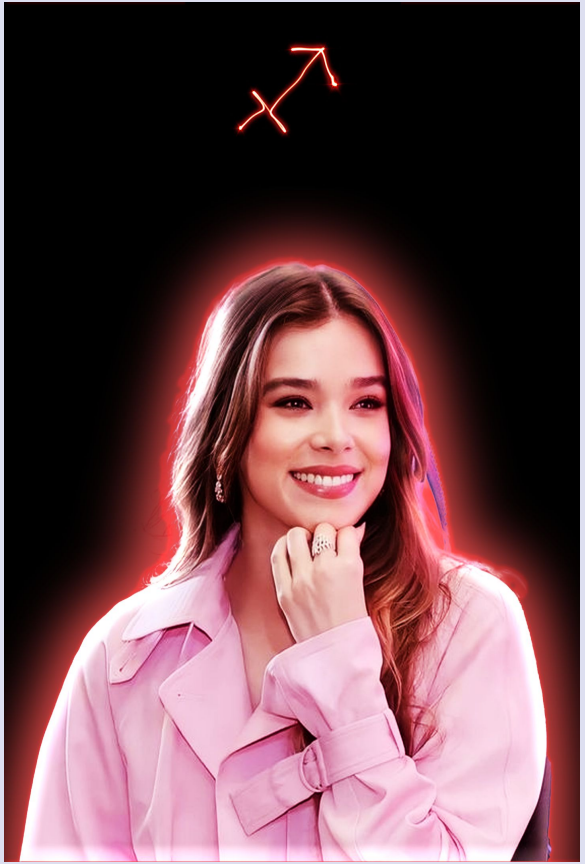
By first using the marquee tool to select the area I wanted to fill, I was able to generate the other half of the photo and it looked seamless.



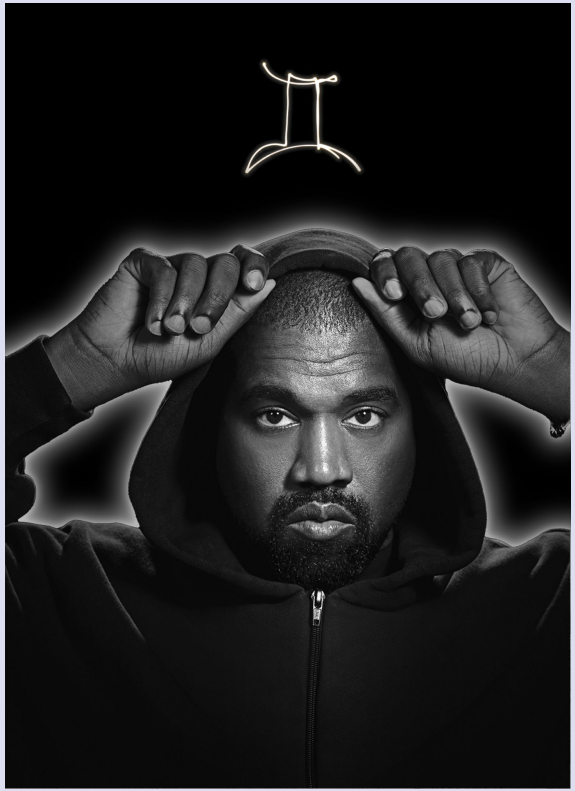
The Final Collection

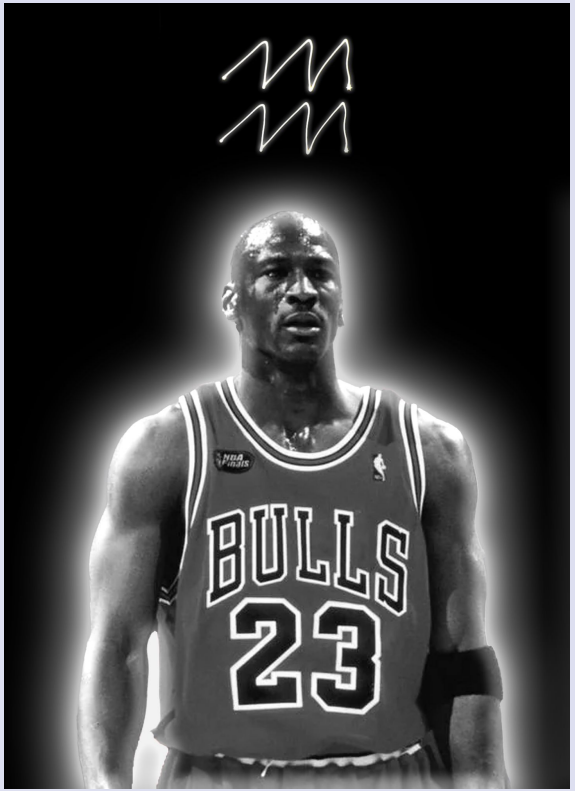






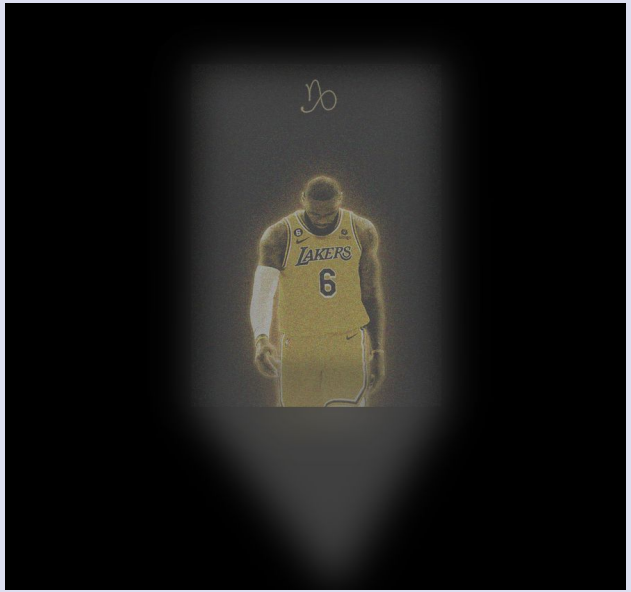
LAKERS
6




BULLS
23

Presentation Ideas

- Projector in a dark room
  - Creative and unique
  - Very cool and dark feel
  - Very hard and expensive to create



- Borderless frame
  - Minimalistic approach
  - Simple, cheap and no clutter
  - Quite cliche

Reflection

What went well?

I really like how my final photoshopped images turned out. By extending myself by adding a celebrity that is born under the corresponding star sign, I really enjoyed myself and found these looking very good.

The neon glows ultimately made the photographs and posters look the best.

What is something to improve on next time?

In this project, I believe my light painting skills could have been better. My lines were not straight and were quite clunky as seen in such symbols like Libra and Sagittarius.

Furthermore, instead of using a phone flashlight, I could have elevated the whole project by using different colored lights as the source of the light painting. This would have made a much clearer glow.