

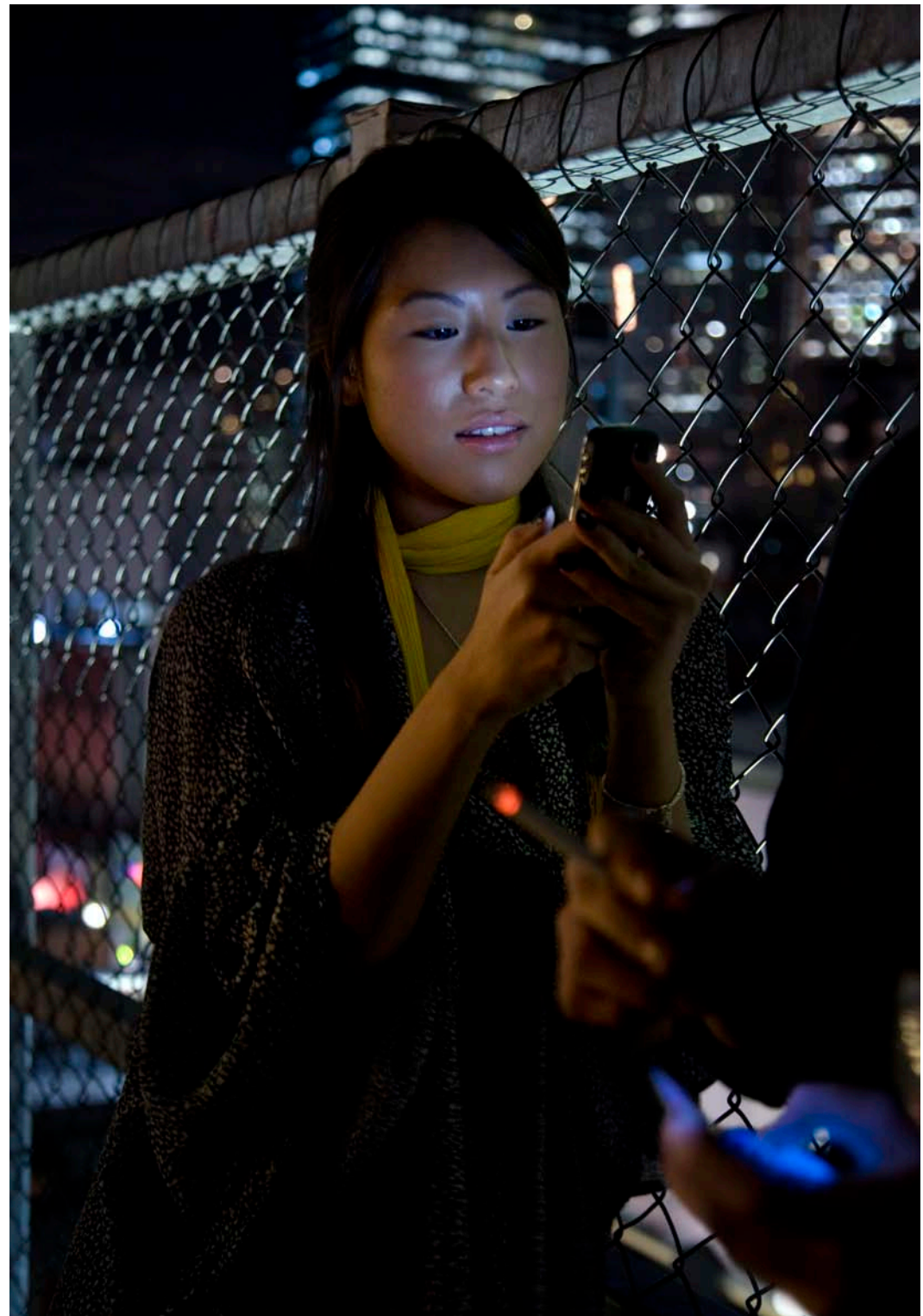
CELL  
ANDREW  
CURTIS



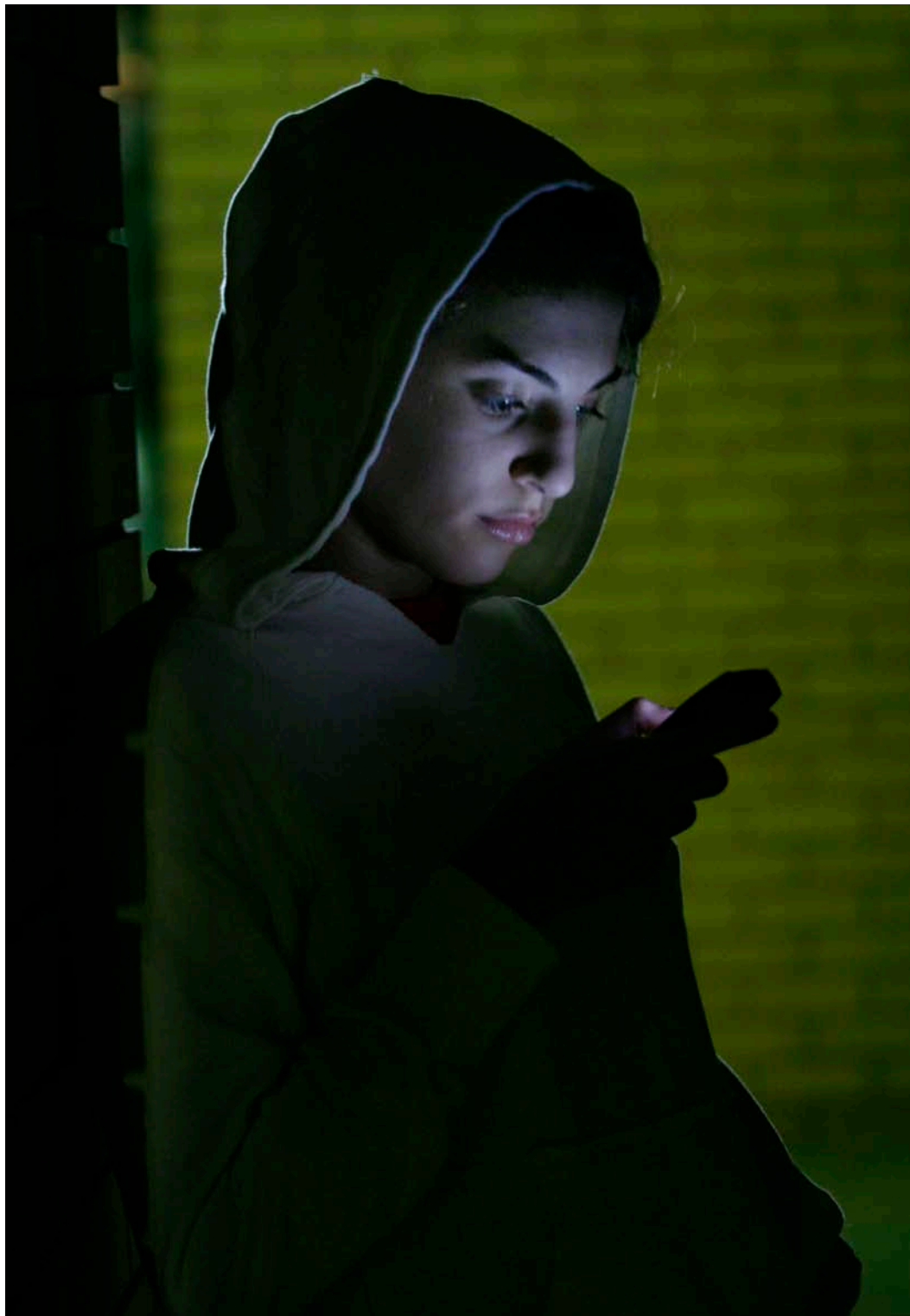


CELL  
ANDREW  
CURTIS

BIANCA



*ALICE*



# THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE

Lonely, I'm Mr Lonely,  
I have nobody for my own.  
I'm so lonely, I'm Mr Lonely,  
Wish I had someone to  
call on the phone.  
'Mr Lonely' Bobby Vinton

The only thing Andrew Curtis shares with rapper 50 Cent (Curtis Jackson to his Mom) is a name. You're unlikely to find Andrew in da club, bottle full of bub'. These days he's got better things to do. But not all that long ago, when the idea for this series of photographs came about, you may have found a then single Andrew at the bar, nursing a lager while staring at girls absorbed in writing text messages on their cell phones.

Too chicken shit to make a pass, Curtis the photographer is nothing like a hip hop superstar. Which is lucky for us. More full of braggadocio, he might have sauntered over to say hi instead of remaining petrified and transfixed by the way the light from a cell phone teasingly illuminates

a pretty young woman's face and plays over her gloss lipstick. The product of an older single male's loneliness, the resulting photographs are 'perky'. Curtis freely admits it: in fact he relishes the notion.

This perky voyeurism takes on a conscious cinematic quality. Restaging these original encounters Curtis carefully controls his *mise en scène* (especially the lighting) to preserve the illusion of a beautiful girl unaware of our gaze. This obliviousness is of course the necessary condition for our voyeurism. From a Freudian viewpoint it's clear cut: libidinal desire sublimated into aesthetic mastery and control, spheres that Curtis has a long-established and proven ability in. In restaging these scenes he can safely and

pleasurably revisit, and permanently extend, a moment that would have been an unconsciously anxious one in its original, unmediated form.

It's worth noting too that the key light source in these photos – the soft glow of the hand-held cell phone screen – bears comparison with Curtis' signature technique of 'painting with light'. Working in complete darkness, his usual method is to use a hand-held light source to gradually expose surfaces that take on the qualities of a mysterious landscape. Dark *terrae incognitae*, these images also speak of the Id – Sigmund Freud by way of David Lynch.

Painting with light is a useless technique for capturing – **mot juste** – living forms, as they move around. This is almost too poignant! As these cellular lights play over facial surfaces they reveal their failure to penetrate into any real kind of depth or psychology. These obscure objects of desire remain ciphers of the male imagination. And, like so many of the photo-cinematic applications that *Cell* recalls, from fashion photography to film noir, by exposing the unreconstructed machinations of the male gaze the photographer reveals far more about himself than about his subject.

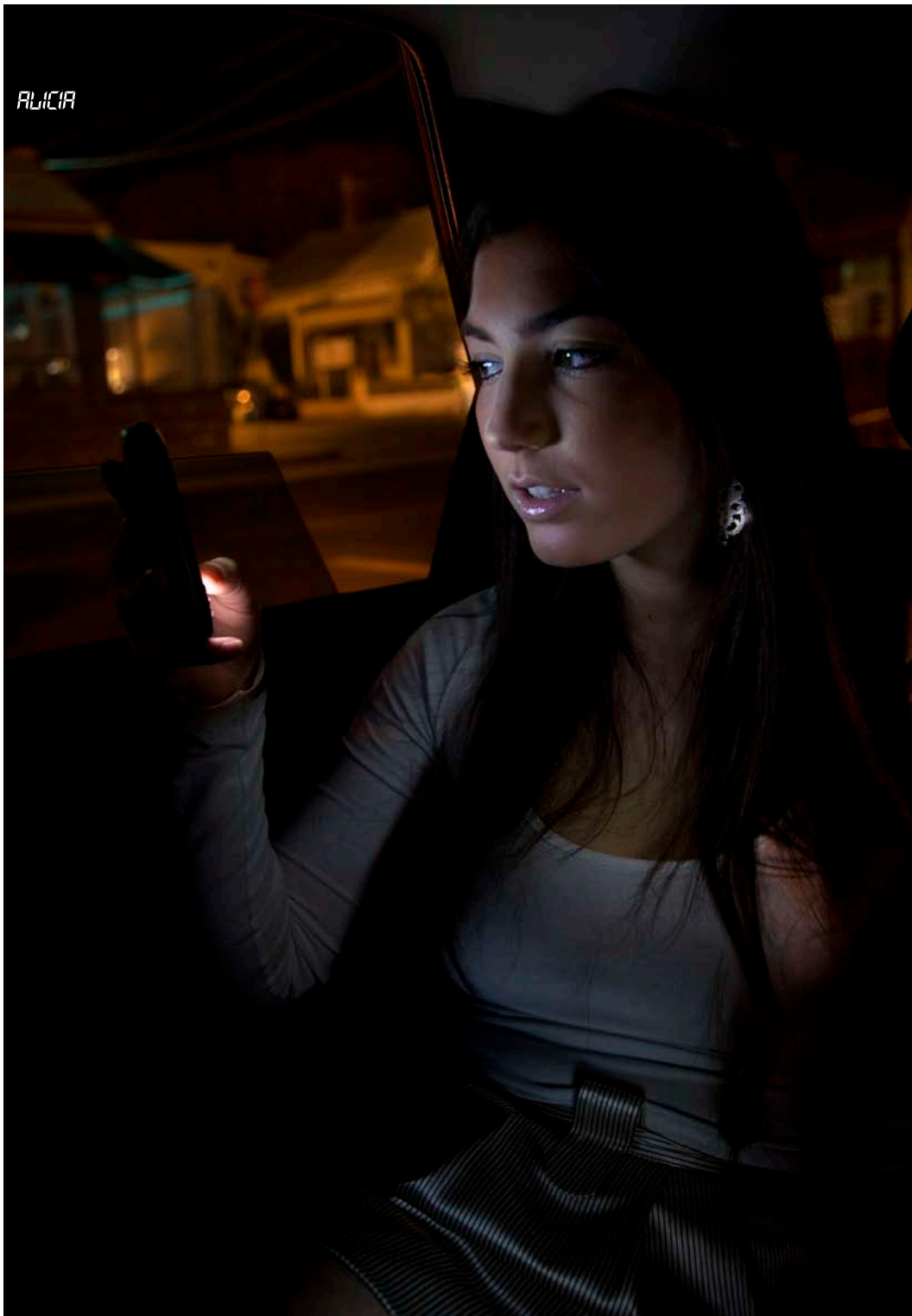
But what of these subjects? What of their loneliness? It is an irony that, in 1989 (and suspending consideration of his disingenuousness for argument's sake) George Bush Sr coined the term 'a thousand points of light' as part of a plea

for renewed community unity, with individuals bound to social groups by shared ideals of duty, sacrifice and commitment. In 2008 a thousand points of light dimly illuminate a thousand individuals, each one with a solitary cell. Oh sure, there's someone on the other end, but isn't it strange how people prefer the remove of text messaging to voice conversations. Limited one-hundred character parcels that make manifest the walls of what philosophers have called the prison house of language. Or, in the immortal words of 50 Cent:

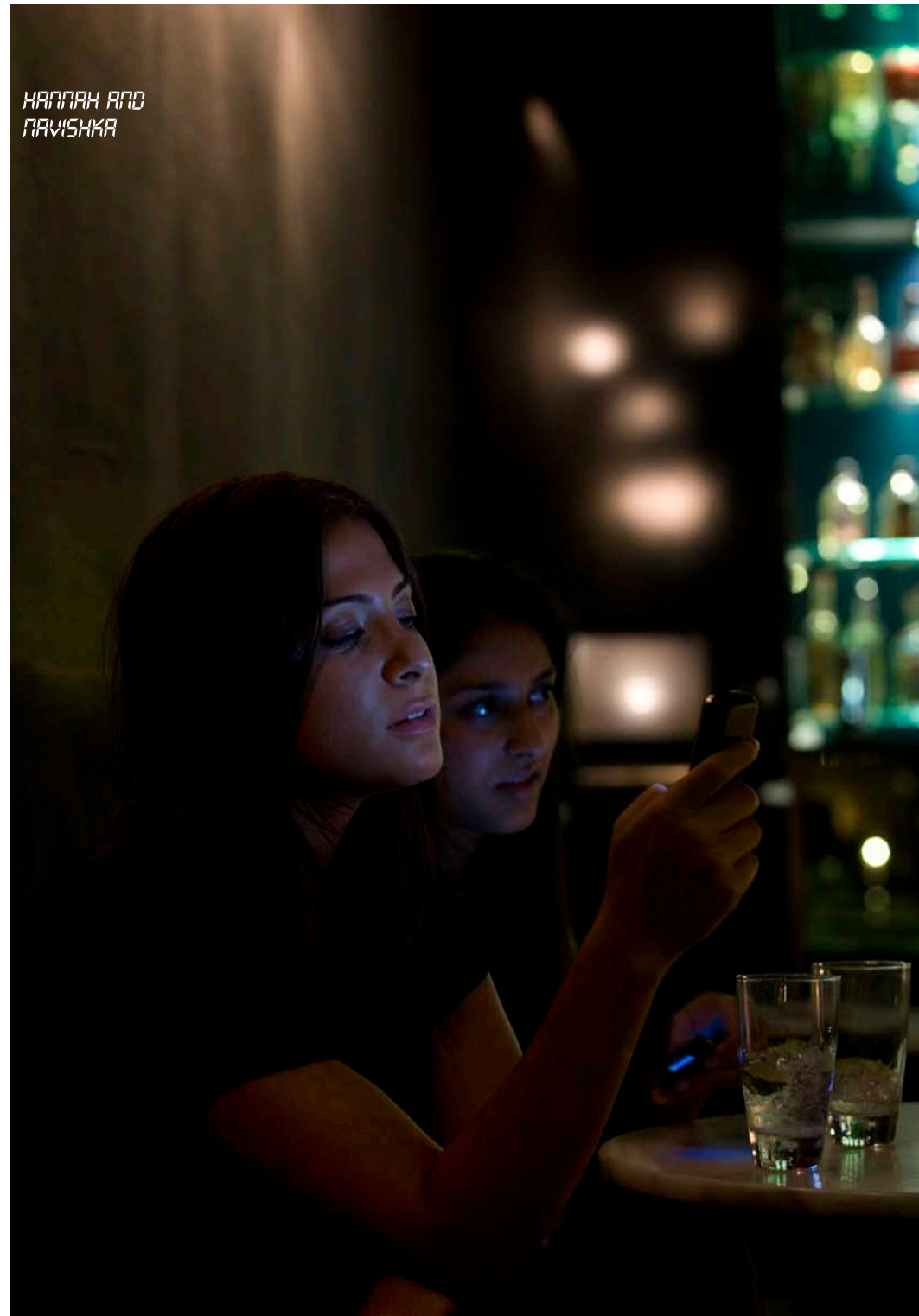
**Ayo! I'm tired of using  
technology, I need you right  
in front of me...**

Dylan Rainforth

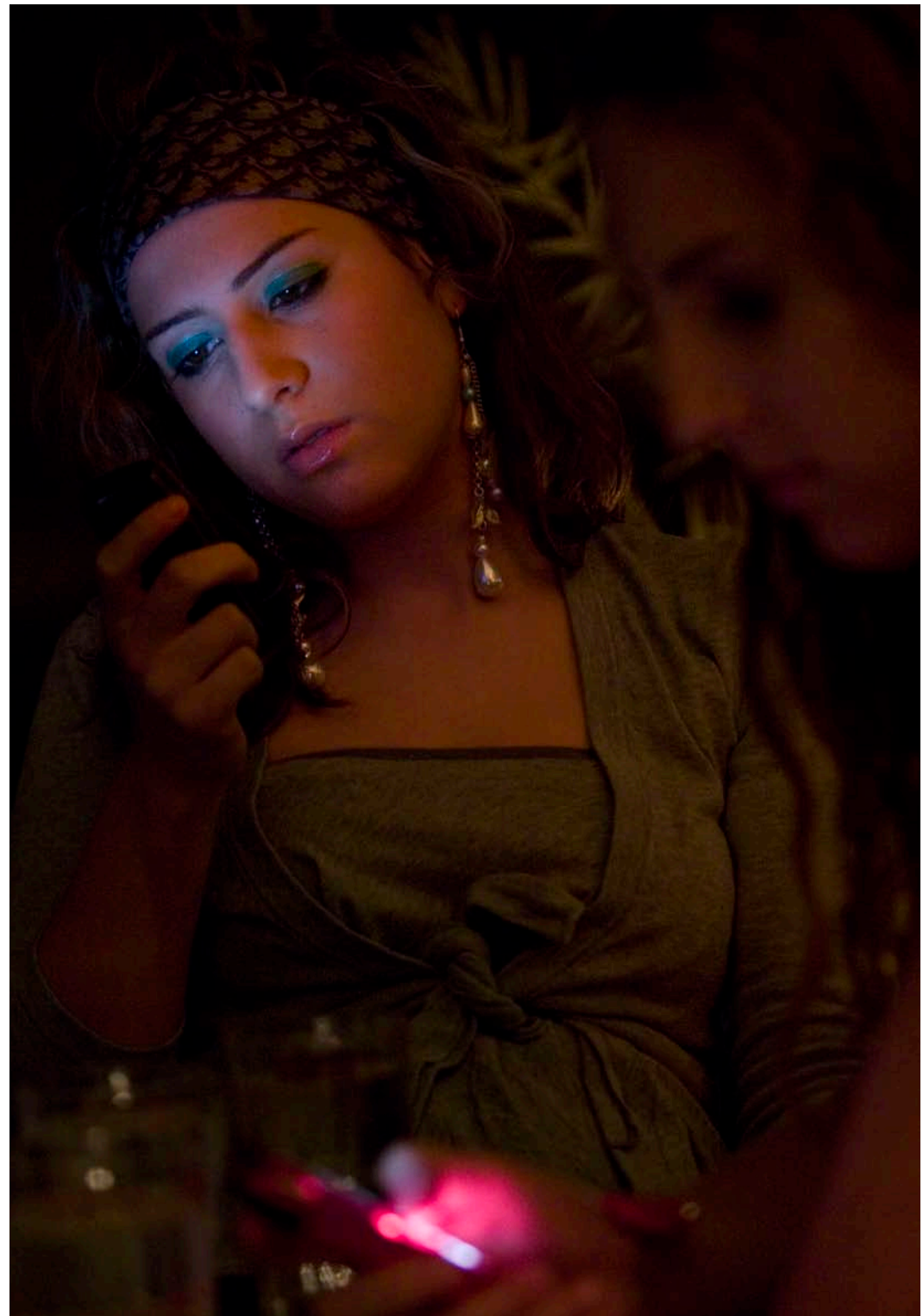
ALICIA

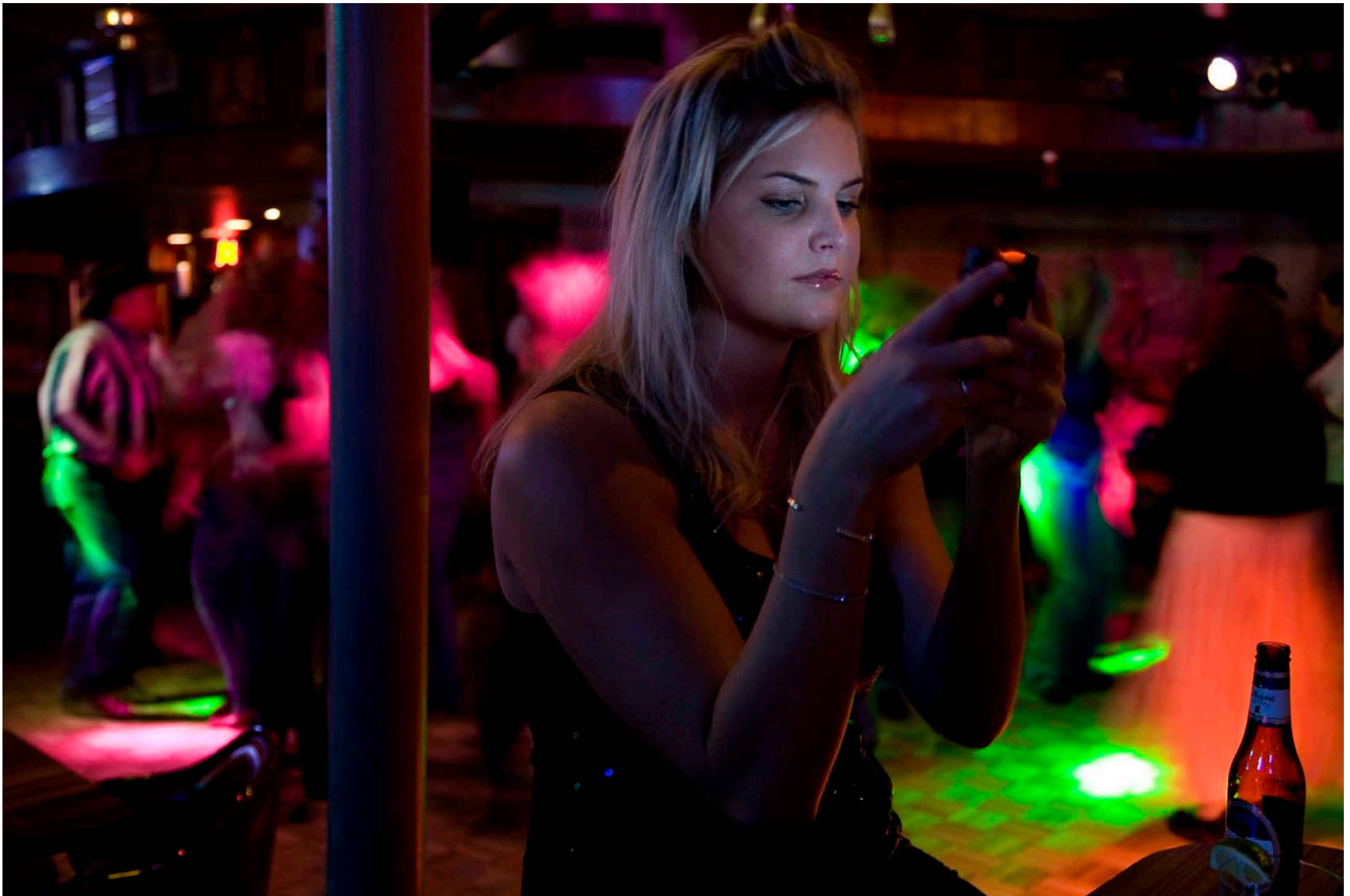


HANNAH AND  
NAVISHKA



HANNAH

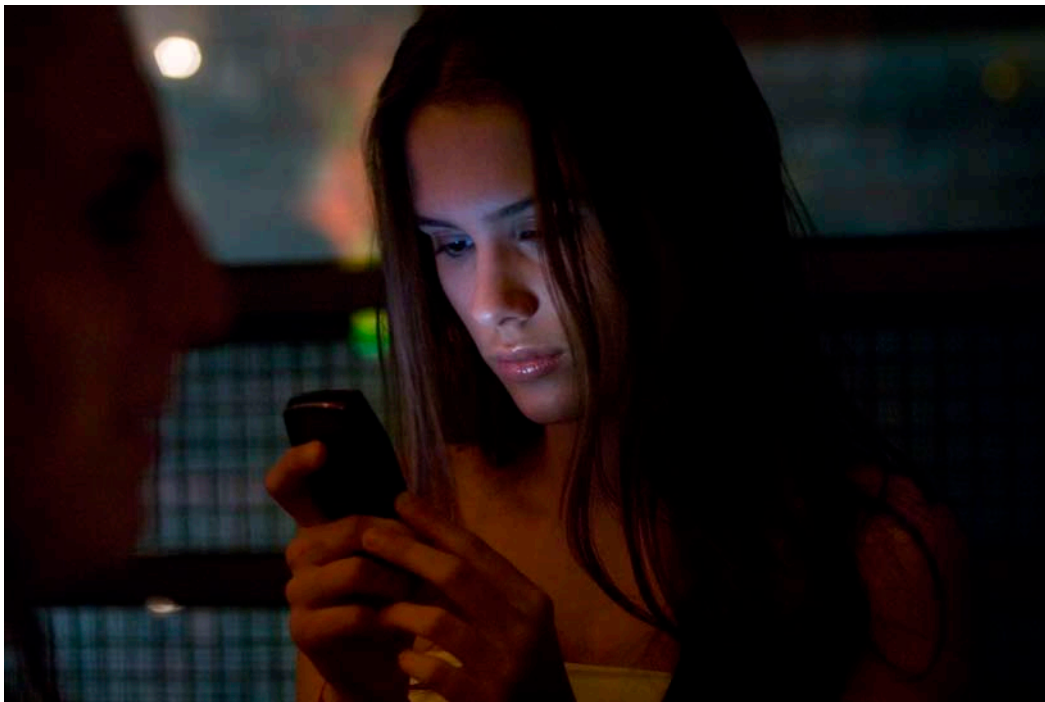




KATIE







SARAH

#### Andrew Curtis

##### Solo exhibitions

**2008 Cell** Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne **2006 Slab/Underpin** Großer Wasserspeicher, Berlin, Germany <-> **Underpin** Criterion Gallery, Hobart <-> **Underpin** Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne <-> **Underpin** Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne **2004 <-> Slab** Criterion Gallery, Hobart **2003 Slab** Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne **2002** Hawthorn Town Hall, Melbourne **2001 Volt** Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney **1999 Volt** Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne **1991 Moving to Florida** Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne **1990** John Buckley Gallery, Melbourne

##### Group exhibitions

**2008 Eastlink: The Art of Urban Design & Construction** Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne <-> **William & Winifred Bowness Photography Prize** Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne **2007 City of Hobart Art Prize 2006 A Man's World** Museum of Brisbane <-> **William & Winifred Bowness Photography Prize** Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne **2004 Recent Acquisitions** Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne **2003 City of Hobart Art Prize 2000 17th McGregor Prize for Photography** The University of Southern Queensland **1999-2002 Striking** Regional Touring Exhibition, Photographs from the Monash Gallery of Art Collection **1992 New Acquisitions** Waverley City Gallery, Melbourne **1991 Stills** Gallery Sydney – Opening Exhibition **1990 Next Wave Festival** The Photographers Gallery, Melbourne **1987 St Kilda Visual Arts Festival** Linden, Melbourne

##### Music released under the name 'Gum' with Philip Samartzis

**2005 Vinyl Anthology** 2CD, 23FIVE Records, USA **1990 Testament** 7" single, RRRRecords, USA <-> **Assemblage 2** 7" single, Korm Plastics, The Netherlands **1988 20 Years in Blue Movies and Yet to Fake an Orgasm** 12" LP **1987 Vinyl** 12" LP

##### Selected collections & awards

National Gallery of Victoria <-> Artbank <-> Monash Gallery of Art Collection <-> Visy <-> City of Boroondara <-> Australia Council 'New Work' grant, 2006 <-> Australia Council 'New Work' grant, 2004 <-> Arts Victoria 'New Work' grant, 2002

##### Selected bibliography

**The New McCulloch's Encyclopedia of Australian Art** Australian Art Editions, 2006  
Tim Walsh **A Man's World** Artlink, Vol 26, No 4, 2006  
Robert Nelson **Modern World Goes Mouldy** *The Age*, February 1, 2006  
Keith Moline, CD review, *The Wire* (UK), #253, March 2005  
Stefano Bianchi **Gum Blow Up** (Italy), #81, February 2005  
Lawrence English, CD review, *Signal To Noise* (USA), #37, Spring 2005  
Kyla McFarlane **A Little Night Music** *The Age*, September 18, 2004  
Interview **The Maker** ABC Radio National, August 3, 2003  
Roger Taylor, Radio Interview on High & Low, 3RRR, July 15, 2003  
Stephen Crafti **Finding Beauty in the Building Site** *The Age*, July 1, 2003  
Csaba Toth **Variable Resistance** San Francisco MOMA, Catalogue Essay, September 2002  
Robert Nelson **Trade** Photofile, Issue No. 65, May 2002  
Robert McFarlane **Simple Pleasures** *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 19, 2001  
Anna Claburn **Striking** Exhibition Catalogue Essay, September 1999  
Robert Rooney **One Hand Makes Light Work** *The Australian*, August 6, 1999  
Mary-Lou Jelbart, Radio Review on Morning Show, 3LO, November, 1991  
Maudie Palmer, Radio Review on Art Rave Today, 3PBS, November, 1991  
Roger Taylor, Radio Interview on Gotham City Gossip, 3RRR, November 16, 1991  
Greg Neville **Moving To Florida** *The Age*, November 22, 1991  
Greg Neville **The Bazaar in Two-dimensions & the Bizarre** *The Age*, June 1, 1990



© 2008 Type C colour prints, edition of 5: Small 52 x 72 cm or 72 x 52 cm Large 83 x 115 cm or 115 x 83 cm

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