

Out There - in light of remote possibilities

Felicity Spear

Felicity Spear *Out There – in light of remote possibilities*

In the city the waste light of industrial modernity blots out the night sky. To see it, in all its clarity, is to realise that our globe is hurtling mindlessly through the immensity of space.

from Galileo *The starry messenger* (1610)

I frequently observed heavenly bodies, both fixed stars and planets, with incredible delight; and, when I saw their very great number, I began to think about a method by which I might be able to measure their distances apart, and at length I found one... I invite the attention of all who are eager for true philosophy to the beginnings which led to the sight of most important phenomena.

Many have looked up at the night sky and projected onto it their fears and hopes. We read in Spear's work a network of cognition, written across the darkness, which scintillates with strange forces, which conceals unknown worlds.

from James Clerk Maxwell *Discourse on molecules* (1873)

In the heavens we discover by their light, and by their light alone, stars so distant from each other that no material thing can ever have passed from one to the other; and yet this light, which is to us the sole evidence of these distant worlds, tells us also that each of them is built up of the same kind of molecules which we find on earth.

Knowledge of these distances arrives on earth in code, as faint signals of light, as x-rays, as radio waves, which convey fragmented knowledge of the intensity, location, and behaviour of objects in deep space. The beauty of these codes is evident in Spear's work, which imagines them as a form of drawing, vibrating across the receptive surface of paper. She adds pointillist abstraction to the complexity of overlaid signals, evoking the noisy process of image capture.

from Jorge Luis Borges *On Exactitude in Science* (1946)

In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it.

These astronomical ciphers build up an image of our universe, forever incomplete, always yet to be perfected. Similarly Spear's work plays with this palimpsest of knowledge — erasing, over-writing, re-writing in order to unveil the dynamism and mystery of the universe.

from Paul Davies *Other worlds* (1980)

Every atom is offered billions of trajectories by quantum randomization, and in the many-worlds theory it accepts them all, so every conceivable atomic arrangement will come about somewhere... Some universes will be all darkness and chaos... while others will be seared with radiation.

The works that Felicity Spear has created for *Out There – in light of remote possibilities*, capture and manipulate a sample of these energy tracks which have appeared in our time, our space. They are speculations on the way in which we comprehend the night sky, a space largely incomprehensible to the full range of our senses.

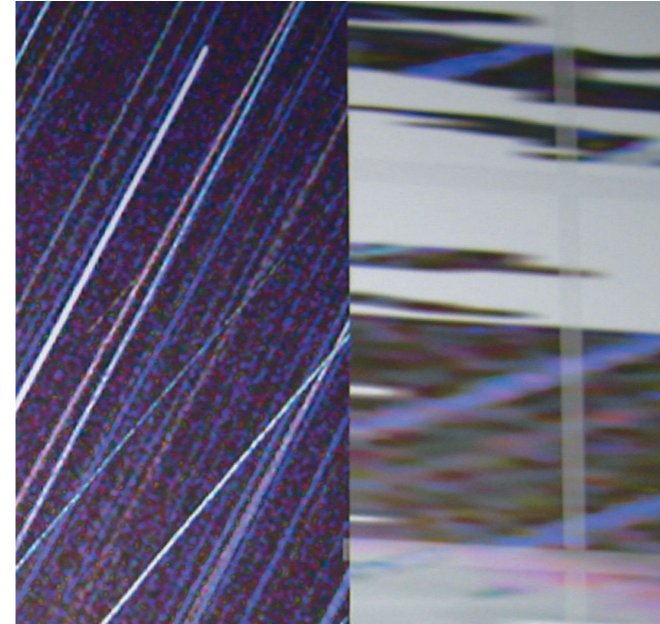
Caroline Durré

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Details: **Deep Field** archival, pigmented inkjet print, 5 panels, soft cotton paper, overall 3500mm high X 5000mm wide

The Artist wishes to acknowledge:

David Malin Images / Anglo Australian Observatory
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 **MONASH** University
Art & Design

Monash Faculty Gallery - Art and Design Building

900 Dandenong Road Caulfield East 3145 Tel. 9903 2882

Melways Ref 68 F1

The Gallery is a two minute walk from Caulfield Railway Station

Exhibition

Friday October 12 - Saturday October 20 2007

Opening

1pm-5pm Saturday October 13

This exhibition is a doctoral presentation

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