Paper ID: 41960
student

29th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE AND SOCIETY (E5)
Contemporary Arts Practice and Outer Space: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach (3)

Author: Ms. Melanie King
Royal College of Art, United Kingdom

ANCIENT LIGHT: ALTERING PERCEPTIONS OF ASTRONOMICAL IMAGING THROUGH EXPLORATIONS IN PHOTOGRAPHIC MATERIALITY.

Abstract

This practice based research investigates the perception of astronomical images. The concept of the *'cosmic perspective'* is empowered by images such as the "Pale Blue Dot" and "Earthrise". This practice based research considers how recalibrated astronomical images can similarly engender a feeling of the cosmic perspective. How can practice based research rooted in contemporary art communicate the urgency of preserving diverse and conscious life on Planet Earth, by revealing the rarity of life within the timeline of the universe?

My research aims to bridge the gaps between contemporary art theory and scientific imaging, through the production of artworks which utilise photographic processes and illusory techniques. These images are produced from my own field work, appropriated from archives and obtained with the use of equipment within scientific institutions.

This body of research is anchored by my fieldwork within the ULCO Observatory, Kielder Observatory, Boulby Laboratory, Imperial College London and the UCL Space History Archive. The research aims to recalibrate our perception of astronomical imaging, which currently relies upon heavily mediated digital imaging techniques. My research to date suggests that heavily mediated images produced by scientific institutions lead the viewer to believe that they are viewing false and fantastical images.

This research interrogates the construction of astronomical photographs throughout history, combining analogue photography and printmaking techniques with advancements in astronomical technologies which utilise infrared, ultraviolet, gamma-ray and X Ray frequencies amongst others. The title 'Ancient Light' encapsulates all such forms of electromagnetism, considering that these wave forms have been travelling for thousands if not millions of years to reach Earth and its' satellite telescopes. My research utilises scientific equipment and technologies for the production of new artworks, whilst simultaneously energising the field of scientific imaging.