

30 MARCH – 31 AUGUST 2022
ALAN WALTERS BUILDING, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

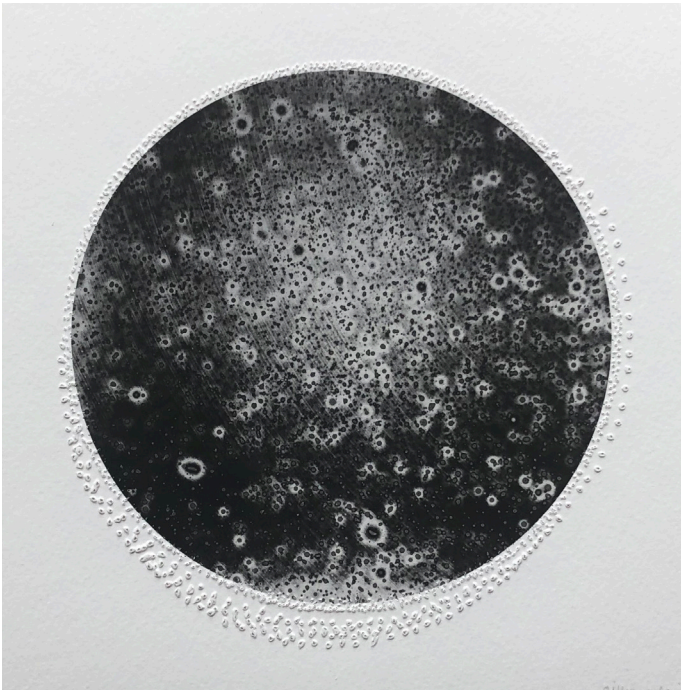
CREATIVITY AND CURIOSITY

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN ARTISTS AND ASTRONOMERS



Creativity and Curiosity is an international art-science project led by UK contemporary visual artists, Ione Parkin and Gillian McFarland, in connection with astrophysicists, cosmologists and planetary geologists including the award-winning astronomer Amaury Triaud (Professor of Exoplanetology, University of Birmingham). This exhibition presents a selection of the artwork produced by Parkin and McFarland in response to the rich imagery of space and their ongoing engagement with space researchers. Through creative enquiry into the dynamic forces of the universe this artist-led project explores the nature of interdisciplinarity within the practice of visual thinking.





“Humans need to express themselves. Some are artists; I am an astronomer. Finding out what lies above our heads and understanding it is essentially my medium. Although our ways of expression may differ, both the arts and the sciences require, above all, curiosity and creativity. All of us involved with the Creativity and Curiosity project are interested in something that transcends our perceptions and explores the realm of what is possible, with the grand beauty of the universe acting as a source for our inspiration.”

Professor Amaury Triaud



Ione Parkin's large-scale paintings express her fascination with the early formation of the universe; massive clouds of cosmic dust and gas; vast webs of colour and shimmering light; solar dynamics; luminous visions of immensity. Her richly textured mixed-media works on paper seem to represent all the possible surfaces of planets, from frozen worlds in the depths of planetary chill, to hot sulphuric young worlds. These tactile pieces resemble geological samples of the undiscovered terrain of distant moons and exoplanets which orbit other stars beyond our solar system.

Gillian McFarland collaborates with the glass-blower, Graeme Hawes, producing multiple 'space globes' that embody ideas of extreme heat, rotation, gravity, expansion and collapse. Her prints reveal surface impacts and the passage of time; her delicately punctured paper works echo the orbit tracking of celestial objects across space. She explores creative relationships to perception and phenomena in the Flat Field's collaboration with Amaury Triaud.



Responses from collaborating astronomers are shown next to the individual artworks, revealing insights into the art-science dialogue. The artists are expressing a lateral, not literal, response to the scientific research – a physical, tactile experience rather than an explanation. Parallels of process have emerged between the artists and scientists – an excitement about uncertainty, ambiguity and anomaly – a desire not just to observe but to look beyond.



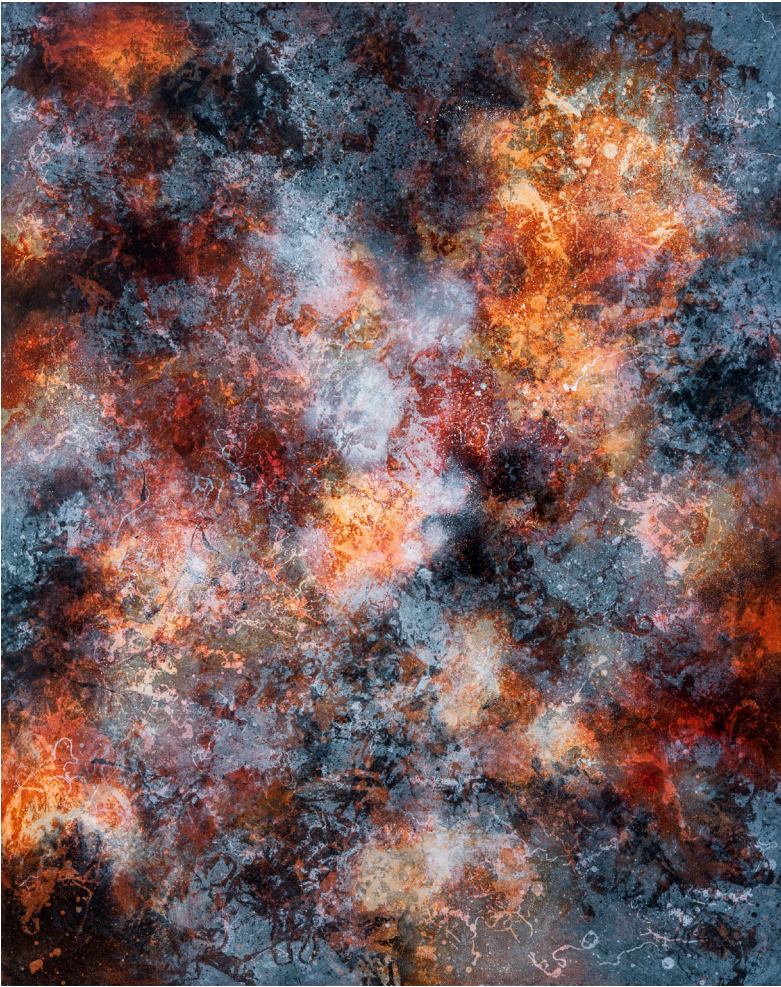
Far left: Ione Parkin, *Otherworlds*, mixed media on paper, 90 x 120cm

Above left: Gillian McFarland/Amaury Triaud, *Flat Fields*, print on punctured paper, 30 x 30cm

Left: Ione Parkin, *Lava Lakes*, mixed media on paper, 54 x 50cm

Above: Ione Parkin, *Ephemeral Form I*, ink & pigment on paper, 51 x 43cm

Right: Gillian McFarland, *Planetary Spin*, glass & nitrates, 20cm



Above: Ione Parkin, *Dust - Gas - Light*,
oil on canvas, 153 x 121cm
Right: Gillian McFarland, *Planet*,
glass & nitrates, 20cm

Lead Artists/Co-Founders:

Ione Parkin RWA – Visual Artist
Royal West of England Academician
Honorary Visiting Fellow, School of Physics &
Astronomy University of Leicester
ioneparkin@gmail.com

Gillian McFarland SSA – Visual Artist
Society of Scottish Artists
Art Therapist/Educator
gillianadairmcf@yahoo.co.uk

Partner Organisations include:

University of Birmingham
University of Leicester
Science Museum
Royal Astronomical Society
University of Amsterdam
Berlin Science Week
Zeiss-Grossplanetarium
Royal Observatory Greenwich
Institute of Astronomy Cambridge
Cosmos Planetarium
Cardiff University
National Space Centre
Glasgow Science Centre
Imperial College London
Leibniz Institut fur Astrophysik

Awards:

Arts Council England
Royal Astronomical Society
Hope Scott Trust
Wellcome Trust (through University of Leicester)

Front cover top: Ione Parkin, *Mars Polar Ice Study*,
mixed media on paper, 54 x 50cm
Front cover below: Gillian McFarland,
Planetary Earth, glass & nitrates, 20cm



www.creativityandcuriosity.com



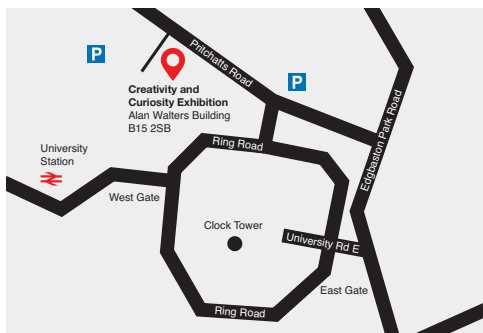
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Exhibitions include:

University of Birmingham,
Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme 2022
An Lanntair, Stornaway,
Hebridean Dark Skies Festival, 2020
Glasgow Science Centre, 2019
Zeiss-Grossplanetarium,
Berlin Science Week 2018
National Space Centre, Leicester, 2018
Cambridge Science Festival, 2017

Presentations include:

Hebridean Dark Skies Festival 2020/2019
National Astronomy Meeting 2021/2018/2016
Association of Interdisciplinary Studies
Conference, University of Amsterdam 2019
Peter Harrison Planetarium,
Royal Observatory Greenwich 2019
Disciplinary Convergence Conference,
University of Notre Dame (London) 2019
Berlin Science Week 2018
Royal Astronomical Society 2018
Road to the Stars Conference,
Santiago de Compostela, Spain 2017
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art 2017



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