
DAVID STEPHENSON

STAR DRAWINGS

30 January – 16 February 2008

Press preview week from Wednesday the 23rd January

John Buckley Gallery

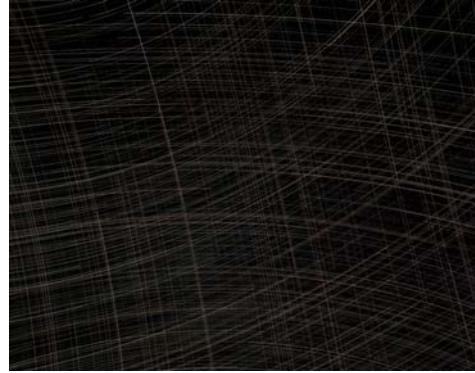
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David Stephenson

Star Drawing 2006/3 (E + SSW + NNW,
20/8/2006, Central Australia), type C photograph,
125 x 160cm, Edition of 5

Press release

*'Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them; the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me... I see them before me and connect them immediately with the consciousness of my existence.'*¹

Kant, 1788

Fresh from the acclaimed 'Cross Currents' at the MCA (curated by the late John Stringer) David Stephenson returns to John Buckley Gallery in February with his latest works from the 'Star Drawings' series. Washington-born, Stephenson currently lives and works in Tasmania. Internationally regarded and well known for his images of the frozen plains of Antarctica and his series documenting the heavenly domes and vaults of chapels, synagogues and mosques of the UK and Europe Stephenson's photographic practice sees him travelling extensively in pursuit of capturing the sublime.

In *Star Drawings*, Stephenson extends his investigation of the sacred and sublime by once again casting his lens upwards to the heavens, this time to the night sky. Stephenson travelled into the heart of the Central Australian desert meticulously recording his geographical bearings as the anchorage point for each image using multiple and long exposures to record stars as they journeyed over the vast desert.

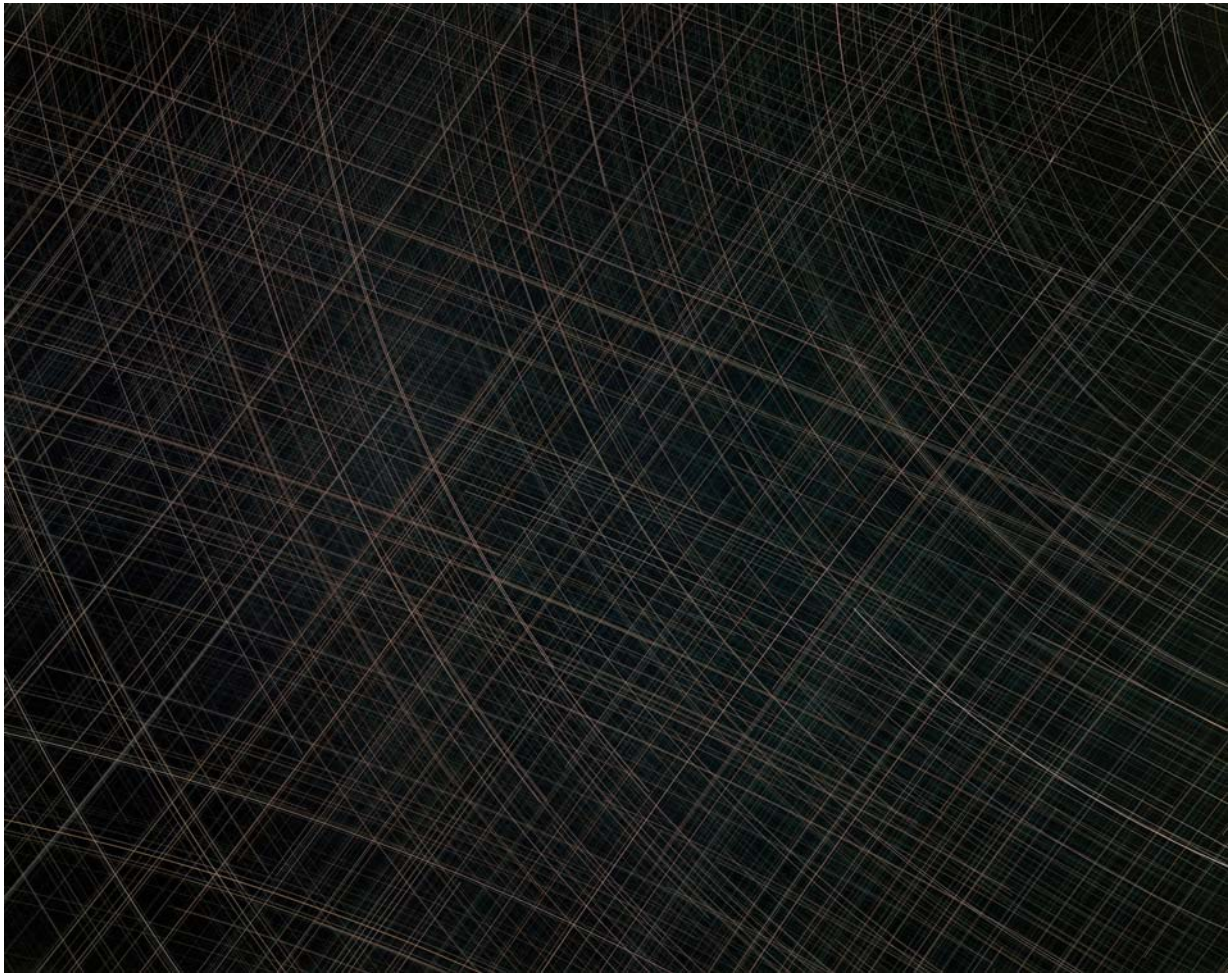
Much like his documentation of the heavenly temples, Stephenson immerses himself in the sacred space of the celestial twilight, using technology to reveal what would otherwise be overlooked by the naked eye. The resulting photographs are dense and delicate collections of scattered lines which hail back to Stephenson's earlier architectural imagery sharing the same visual devices of pattern, repetition and geometric abstraction. In *Star Drawings*, Stephenson suggests a deeper exploration of nature and transient phenomena as many of the stars have died by the time their light reaches us. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the cultural mysticism associated with stars as astrological sooth sayers and divine constellations; as in the words of 16 century Danish Astrologer Tycho Brahe 'by looking up I see downwards'². Stephenson's quiet, contemplative *Star Drawings* proffer the viewer a transcendental experience via the temporal structure of the photographic medium.

David Stephenson heads the photography program at the University of Tasmania School of Art where, after completing and MFA at the University of Colorado (1982), he was awarded a PhD in Fine Art (2001). Stephenson's work is represented in a number of notable collections, chiefly the Art Gallery of New South Wales (Sydney), Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Museum of Modern Art (New York), National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne), Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.), National Gallery of Australia (Canberra), Queensland Art Gallery (Brisbane), as well as both private and corporate collections.

His photographs have been exhibited widely internationally, including solo exhibitions at the Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, Paris (2006), the Art Gallery of New South Wales (1993), the National Gallery of Victoria (1998), and the Cleveland Museum of Art (2001) Stephenson's work has been written about extensively and has been the subject of three major publications, notably *Visions of Heaven*, published in 2005 by Princeton Architectural Press, New York.

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788); cited in Guyer, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge University Press, 1992)

² J. Christianson, "Tycho Brahe's Cosmology from the Astrologia of 1591", *Isis* 59 (1968)



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Top:

David Stephenson
Star Drawing 2006/4 (W + NNE + SSE,
22/8/2006, Central Australia)
type C photograph, 125 x 160cm
Edition of 5

Right:

David Stephenson
Star Drawing 2005/1 (S + SW, 30-
31/8/2005, Central Australia)
type C photograph, 160 x 125cm
Edition of 5

