

“Katie Paterson is a tour-de-force in the art world. The Scottish-born, Berlin-based conceptual artist has developed a research-heavy practice that sees her collaborating with major international space agencies, leading bio-chemists, astronomers, arborists, and architects. Her works often encompass millennia of time, both past and future, geological and astronomical. The results manifest as monumental installations or unassuming, subtle, and elegant objects.

Much of Paterson’s work is rigorously scientific, but by presenting it through art she manages to bring out the more poetic aspects of the field. Her practice knows no bounds and her ability to achieve many of her lofty goals continually surpasses expectations. By reducing the enormity of the universe and natural phenomena to the human scale, Paterson incites a feeling that is perhaps the opposite of the worn art-historical trope of the “sublime.” Her work renews a sense of connectivity, and lends an aesthetically unparalleled comprehensibility to the lesser-known corners of our world.”

*Alison Hugill, Artsy, 2016*

“The qualities of curiosity and wonder permeate the works of multidisciplinary artist Katie Paterson. Preoccupied with themes of nature, ecology, geology and cosmology, she has a genius for capturing big ideas – global warming, interplanetary time differences, the possibility of communicating with the moon – and rendering them into simple, poetic and lyrical pieces that connect personally with the viewer.”

*Veronica Simpson, Studio International, 2016*

“Katie Paterson works with scales that make the Grand Canyon look like a crack in the pavement: the depths of geological and cosmological time, the breadth of the visible universe, the numbers of dead stars like grains of sand on an unmeasurable beach.

What’s happening here is a sort of domestication of the cosmic sublime: an illumination and illustration of that sense of scale, which neither makes it monstrous nor claims to have tamed it. It’s less a bringing-to-heel than a bringing-indoors – folding all those impossible distances and sizes into everyday objects in the comparative intimacy of domestic space.”

*Paul Graham Raven, New Scientist, 2016*

“Most impressive is the fact that Paterson’s works, though highly conceptual, maintain a close connection between their means and ends. Paterson manages to convey the essence of a concept’s complexity without pushing you away. This is practice-based research *par excellence*, where the process of abstracting complex ideas and transforming them into simple experiences both forms and informs the work.”

*Lizzie Lloyd, Art Monthly, 2016*

“To observe and then to know: that is the goal of science. So, too, with art. With Katie Paterson we have a chance to be that conscious observer. She quantifies, measuring phenomena: *How many dead stars are there?* And she keeps going in spite of the scale of the task, trusting like the astronomer that cosmology is not beyond our grasp and that the measure of things need not be outside our universe but is contained within.

Paterson probes the immensity within and without our being, interdependent phenomena that bring us from Earth to outer space and back again, then take us to the atomic level of our bodies and everything around us. Paterson wraps us into the ever-changing

expansiveness of the universe, while she wraps her head around what constitutes a given phenomenon, making graspable what is beyond our reach.

Hers is an embodied practice and it flows through all her work. Katie Paterson's intent is to be the work. In following that path she helps us understand there are many and wider circles of existence. Her social practice is the compassionate life of society."

Mary Jane Jacob, 2016

"To use a category from aesthetic philosophy, the remit of Paterson's work is the sublime. The Kantian sublime describes the meeting with formless and immeasurable nature: the enormity of the ocean and the endless reach of the desert, as well as chaotic and fear provoking phenomena such as volcanoes, earthquakes and hurricanes. True to Kant, she employs it as a sobering reminder of the limits and finitude of imagination. But this is where the artist and the philosopher part ways. In Paterson, reason wobbles, too. The tables are turned on human cognition and we are reminded of the power of cosmic nature-beyond-nature, and of the ephemerality and conditionality of our cognition and existence. At the same time, Paterson completely strips down the *Sturm und Drang* with which the sublime may be associated art historically, using the sublime as an aesthetic principal whose pathos she reinvests in her global caretaking in order to take stock of all that exists."

Lars Bang Larsen, 2016

"Her most acclaimed project is *Future Library*, which is basically a public artwork that aims to collect one original story by a popular writer every year until 2114. Its inaugural author is none other than superstar author Margaret Atwood, whom recently handed in her novel shrouded in secrecy. If it all seems a bit sci-fi, that's because it kind of is."

The Science of Art, *The Insight*, 2015

"*Future Library* takes one hundred years to come to its first pause from where it can begin to be fixed in language. A century into the future is beyond the life of the artist. It requires a leap of faith and trust in the future. In this future? From this present? It seems unconscionable to do such a thing. This is what is so wonderful about this artwork. It believes, it asks us to believe and to trust that all of the maps set out by the artist will be followed carefully. The process is exhilarating. The strongest artworks keep on wriggling around one's mind long after the time standing beside them. What is the time of art? Can art be thought about in the present? *Future Library* is all in the present, a present that breathes into the future."

Lisa Le Feuvre, 2016

"The bathos of *100 Billion Suns* and *The Dying Star Letters* is marked. As symbolic acts, they inevitably fall short of our emotions. But this shortfall of expression, this incommunicable excess, becomes the silent subject of the works. Perhaps it is because the historical and cultural narratives ascribed to heavenly, inter-galactic and infinite times and places are as varied as the human imagination that Paterson chooses to invoke them through scientific representations. Rather than Greek, Pagan or science-fictional myths of gods and forces, it is technology and data that are her conceptual and aesthetic materials. Her practice acknowledges human aspirations implicit in technologies, and draws the otherworldly within the compass of the individual."

Sally O'Reilly, 2016

“A message in a bottle, a time capsule, a sci-fi leap across time; and at the other end, a window onto the past, an archaeological event, an historical enigma. From the slightly-more-than-human timespan that straddles its alpha and omega, Katie Paterson’s *Future Library* is all that and, in so many ways, a *memento mori*.”

Lars Bang Larsen, 2017

“I don’t know if the purpose of *Future Library* is to incite concrete action, but the project is at least meant to create and support an attitude. Paterson’s work for me is an example of power posing in artistic form, without being insistent or moralising. *Future Library* is not a campaign to make a political point, but an invitation to feel the proximity of nature, to care for the forest and to be aware of life as it evolves, to see the relationship between the natural environment and man-made cityscapes and architecture, and to show confidence that those who will come after us will see the worth in continuing the project’s practical work and artistic content. *Future Library* also allows us to see our life in a temporal perspective that is simultaneously distant and near enough to sense the scale and seriousness of it within our lifespan.”

Arve Rød, 2015

“Civilisation, according to one of those handy Chinese proverbs, is the basking in the shade of trees planted a hundred years ago, trees which the gardener knew would outlive him or her, but which he or she planted anyway for the pleasure of people not yet born. I accepted the *Future Library*’s invitation to participate because I would like to plant such a tree. The project is a vote of confidence that, despite the catastrophist shadows under which we live, the future will still be a brightish place willing and able to complete an artistic endeavour begun by long-dead people a century ago. Imagine if the *Future Library* had been conceived in 1914, and a hundred authors from all over the world had written a hundred volumes between 1915 and today, unseen until now – what a human highway through time to be a part of. Contributing and belonging to a narrative arc longer than your own lifespan is good for your soul.”

David Mitchell, 2016

“There are many mind-boggling things about this exhibition by the young Scottish artist Katie Paterson, not least of which is how she manages to persuade people to let her do any of it. Not, you understand, because it isn’t good, because it is very good – poetic; witty; visually pleasing; encompassing the tiny and the vast, in physical and metaphorical terms; both entirely of and very much not of this world .. It is beautiful, and it all seems impossible. Or perhaps a better word would be miraculous.”

Nancy Durrant, *the Times*, 2014

“...*Second Moon* is the latest of many pieces in which Paterson has brought together the cosmological and the conceptual, the scientific and the poetic, the massive and the minute. She encourages her spectators to push their imaginations to their outermost reaches, to contemplate the mysteries of their place in the universe. She is the artist who transmitted Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata* to the lunar surface and back; installed a live phone line from a gallery to the groaning depths of an Icelandic glacier; mapped the locations of the 27,000 dead stars that are known to humanity (and continues to send a letter of condolence each time another one dies); took a grain of sand and got nanotechnological experts to carve it to just 0.00005mm across before casting it loose in the deserts of the Sahara.

Such experiences underpin her multi-disciplinary, essentially conceptual pieces which, at

the same time as they probe the boundaries of scientific knowledge, remain simple. "What you see in my work might be subtle and minimal," says Paterson. "but the imagination has to take a leap and it's where that takes you that matters. Though it is very important to me that what I do is real - that there really was a microphone implanted in a glacier - where the mind can take you is completely open and unlimited."

There is one place, certainly, that Paterson's art should take her, and that is on to next year's Turner Prize shortlist."

*Rachel Campbell-Johnston, the Times, 2013*

"Katie Paterson's work demonstrates the brevity of an individual life; of all human life; indeed of this planet's life in relation to that of the cosmos; it is in no way however about the futility of existence: far from it. Intrinsic to all Paterson's work - often developed in collaboration with scientists - is a celebration of the best of humanity: the power of the imagination. It is imagination that drives people to walk on the moon; to explore the farthest reaches of space; to attempt to capture the beauty and mystery of moonlight - be that in the form of a light bulb, in music or in paint.

It has frequently been said that humanity went to space to discover the Moon but returned having discovered Earth. The image of the Blue Marble in the Apollo spacecraft's rear view mirror captured the imagination of people across the globe, engendering a realisation both of the beauty and fragility of the world they inhabited and stimulating the emergence of environmental movements worldwide. Katie Paterson's work provides that rear view perspective as science continues to discover new territories. It connects us to a time before the Earth existed and to a time when it will be no more. It rekindles our sense of awe at the universe we inhabit and teases our imaginations with that which has yet to be discovered. It reveals a universe of great beauty and infinite possibilities. Her work shows that humanity - all too commonly depicted as wreaking destruction upon the planet - can also be a positive, creative force. Katie Paterson's work reminds us of the value of looking to the stars and gives us hope that the future may not be such a bleak place after all."

*Fiona Venables, Mead Gallery, University of Warwick, 2013*

"..It's this admixture of the galactic and the mundane that properly characterises Paterson's work, and not merely its origins in her scientific collaborators' inquiries at the further reaches of time and space. The word "poetic" is a treacherous one to apply to any artist, but Paterson's is a poetry of knowledge and mystery, cosmicomically rendered.

Paterson's art not only invokes vast distances in space and time; it is fundamentally about the kinds of transformations or translations (that is, metaphors) that distance and time allow. Paterson has produced work that time and again effects a kind of metaphorical conversion or transmutation of some original event or matter: distant flashes of lightning turn into flickers of ordinary street illumination in *Streetlight Storm* (2009), dying stars into multicoloured confetti in *100 Billion Suns* (2011), the same lapsed heavenly bodies into laconic letters of condolence for *The Dying Star Letters* (2011). Among the strangest and most eloquent of these works is *Second Moon* (2013-14), for which at the time of writing Paterson plans to courier a small piece of the moon around the world for a full year, so that it is continually travelling and orbiting the earth once every three days. Among other things, *Second Moon* turns the circulation of heavenly bodies into mundane, everyday logistics or transport. Once again in her work, the movement of metaphor is also a movement of return: physical or astrophysical fact becomes wondrously estranged but is brought succinctly down to earth. The work is ambitiously metaphorical and at the same time oddly literal. Her great metaphorical skill is to make the most sublime aspects of our universe seem at once astonishing, absurd and newly near at hand."

*Brian Dillon, 2013*

“Teleporting us from the humdrum to the epic is something Katie Paterson does very well. One moment she'll have you looking at litter, the next musing on celestial mysteries. This is the case with *100 Billion Suns*, a confetti gun that fires 3,216 paper pieces, each numbered and colour-coded to match the gamma-ray bursts that are known to have occurred in outer space – explosions so intense they can wipe out entire galaxies.

She can transform something as prosaic as a box of light bulbs into a meditation on our finite existence, with their wattage engineered to match moonlight and their lifespan of 66 years reflecting that of the average human. Or turn our stomachs queasy simply by burying a nano-sized grain of sand in the desert, bringing home the sheer immensity of things and how small we are.

Paterson's work is inherently Romantic, part of a tradition that goes back to Caspar David Friedrich's lonely wanderer, perched on the edge of an unfathomable chasm. Her use of technology – whether working alongside bulb manufacturers or the many top science departments she's collaborated with – would seem to be at odds with this tradition. But, if anything, they support each other. Take her ongoing project, *All the Dead Stars*, in which she's attempting (with the help of leading astronomers and astrophysicists) to document the locations of dead stars – a highly difficult task given that the universe is infinite, and given the nebulous boundary between a celestial object's life and death. Rather than containing the universe with technology and human ingenuity, Paterson leaves us floundering in an unknowable, unmanageable universe where we are anything but masters.”

*Skye Sherwin, AnOther magazine, 2011*

“Katie Paterson’s art enables us to engage with forces that are too intangible and too immense for us to experience in other ways: she has bounced music off the moon, mapped all 27,000 dead stars known to mankind and set up a phone line to eavesdrop on a melting glacier. By exploring the nature of the sublime, whilst also acknowledging that notions of landscape, time and the universe are merely conceptual abstractions of the human imagination, Paterson’s work has echoes of 19th century Romanticism. However, since her art requires contemporary technology for its realization, these ideas are simultaneously placed in an ambiguous dialogue with science and its claim to objective, empirical veracity.”

*Pryle Behrman, Art Monthly, 2011*

“Paterson, 29, laughs as she talks about her work – and acknowledges that it is finely balanced between seriousness and play. She is a romantic (with the romantic's understanding of futility) and with the patience, curiosity and technical persistence of a scientist. Scientists champion her work: she has recently become University College London's first artist in residence in the department of physics and astronomy. She grew up in Scotland and studied at Edinburgh and the Slade, where her MA involved recording a melting glacier – a work that launched her career but is likely to prove just the tip of the iceberg.”

*Kate Kellaway, the Observer, 2010*

“.. Call the number and you are connected to a microphone plunged in the meltwater of an Icelandic glacier. To hear the cracking and gushing of the polar cap is a sobering and exhilarating experience; that telecommunication can collapse distance and yet leave it ultimately intact is a delicately phenomenal thought. Whilst these works look very much like gallery based art, their implications pull us in all directions – to the moon and back, and then to one of the most alien landscapes on each – making us feel at once powerful and pathetic.

Just as the banal light bulb and mobile telephone harbor weighty notions of life and death, distance and connectivity, the ordinary record players in *Langjökull, Snæfellsjökull, Solheimajökull* (2007) release associations of a remote and sublime landscape. Water collected from Icelandic glaciers has been made into frozen records and pressed with a sound recording of the water trickling and gushing in situ. The records contain the promise of fidelity, but when they're played, their crystalline surface interferes with the recorded sound so that we hear both the distant melting glacier and the grooved ice before us, rather like a painting on the cusp between figuration and abstraction. *Langjökull, Snæfellsjökull, Solheimajökull* is presented as a three channel video installation that concentrates divergent time frames - the human time of the journey to the glacier and the geological time of its ancient presence - into a two hour period over which the records play and melt.

Paterson's themes are immense, and her processes ambitiously connective, yet she wields a sensibility that preserves the human poetics of grandeur without buckling under its metaphysical weight."

Sally O'Reilly, *Modern Painters*, 2009

"At any one time there are around 6000 lightning storms happening across the world, amounting to some 16 million storms each year. Such dizzying statistics are useful to hold in mind while experiencing *Streetlight Storm*, a new artwork by Katie Paterson. For one month on Deal Pier in Kent, during the hours of darkness, the pier lamps will flicker in time with lightning strikes happening live in different parts of the world.

Katie Paterson creates poetic artworks exploring landscape, space and time, using technology to bring together the commonplace and the cosmic. *Streetlight Storm* deftly harnesses everyday technology to connect with vast natural phenomena, collapsing the distance between us and remote meteorological events. Lightning signals from as far away as the North Pole or North Africa are received by an antenna on the pier and translated into light. As the pattern of lightning strikes changes, so the pier lights oscillate correspondingly, with a subtlety that contrasts with the power and drama of the storms they reflect."

Sarah Martin, *Turner Contemporary*, 2010

"The Moon has always seemed somewhat melancholic, a wistful object in the night sky that remains a favorite subject of poets, musicians and artists even after it has been demystified by 40 years of probes, manned landings and scientific exploration.

For the young Scottish artist Katie Paterson, it was the Moon's ambiguous distance—far, and yet so close in astronomical terms—that piqued her interest in pursuing her own kind of exploration. Paterson is interested in transmission and reception—the basis of human communication—and in a Zen-inspired quest to know and see what cannot be easily seen or known. An artist deeply engaged in science, she's also interested in exploring the ineffable."

David A Ross, *FLYP*, 2009

"Katie Paterson is an astronomical artist - in the fullest sense of the word. The sky is not the limit for her. It is a beginning. Her champion Cornelia Parker describes her as someone who can "take you out of your realm ... she is so original, engaging and expansive - I fell in love with her and her work. She makes us realise how inconsequential we are in relation to the universe." Her work has involved plotting a map of 27,000 dead stars, bouncing Beethoven's Moonlight sonata off the moon in Morse code and returning the results into a self-playing piano, making an electric light bulb that duplicates moonlight.

More recently, she has become a connoisseur of darkness. In her beautiful, playful, fastidious *History of Darkness*, she has catalogued and dated darkness with the help of telescopes – including the Keck telescope in Hawaii – the most powerful telescope in the world that can look back 13.2 billion light years. Questions that tease us out of thought obsess her: "I like work on the brink of impossibility," she says. She loves immensity – and particularity. One of her works tells the story of a single grain of sand taken from the Sahara desert which, with the help of a nanotechnologist, was turned into the smallest grain imaginable ("I like the idea that it is a sculpture") and then released back into the desert. "The sand is smaller than a blood cell, as close to nothing as you can get but it still exists." Paterson's boyfriend photographed her, in black and white, returning the sand to the Sahara. "I suddenly felt so sad," she said. It was to do with scale – the immensity of the desert and her almost invisible enterprise.

Katie Paterson is rapidly establishing an international career through work that 'reveals the poetic beauty and vastness of the universe'. Katie graduated from Edinburgh College of Art in 2004 and the Slade School of Fine Art, London, in 2007. Her Slade Masters show included *Earth-Moon-Earth*, in which Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata was converted into Morse code, beamed onto the moon as a radio wave and returned to earth. The resulting score, with elements distorted and lost by its journey, is heard on a self-playing grand piano. Since then she has been the first artist in residence at University College London's Department of Physics and Astronomy, where she began *History of Darkness*, a slide collection of photographs of time and space. These are taken with various telescopes, including the most powerful in the world at the W M Keck Observatory in Hawaii.

Katie's projects consider not only what lies beyond our world but the earth itself, offering insight into ideas that are so profound our grasp on them is fragile. Although the works are meticulously planned and realized in collaboration with authorities in various disciplines, Katie's approach enables a human connection that resonates beyond the intellect, taking consideration of the nature of the world and the universe to another level of appreciation."

*Helen Pheby, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 2012*

"Katie Paterson's poetic vocabulary is both simple in gesture and monumental in scope. Treating the cosmos as her playground, her works span vast distances, making connections between disparate points and timescales. For Paterson, the universe is at once a graspable entity and an elastic proposition in a state of continual flux.

Paterson is best known for her project *Vatnajökull (the sound of)* 2007/8 in which she invited her audience to listen to the sounds of a melting glacier in Iceland via a live mobile phone link. For *Earth-Moon-Earth (Moonlight Sonata Reflected from the Surface of the Moon)* 2007, she beamed Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata to the moon and back via Morse code, its uneven surface registering as gaps in the notation. *All the Dead Stars* continues Paterson's explorations into the celestial realm. Documenting the known locations of over 27,000 dead stars from data supplied by astronomers, supernova hunters, and astro-physicists dating back to 1006BC, Paterson finds a visual means to make tangible the enormity of the universe and our location within it. Our galaxy is indicated by the cluster of dead stars forming a horizontal line across the map's centre. Paterson comments 'the death of stars really is the cycle of life and death in the universe... stars make the heavier elements needed to form planets and build life.'

*Lizzie Carrey-Thomas, Tate Britain, 2010*

"Katie Paterson's work engages with the landscape, as a physical entity and as an idea. Drawing on our experience of the natural world, she creates an expanded sense of reality beyond the purely visible.

For her exhibition in the Lower Gallery, Paterson presents two works, *Vatnajökull (the sound of)*, 2007/8 and *Earth-Moon-Earth (Moonlight Sonata Reflected from the Surface of the Moon)*, 2007. *Vatnajökull (the sound of)* is a live installation. 07757001122, rendered in neon on the wall, is the number for a mobile phone connected to an underwater microphone, placed by Paterson in the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon in Breiðamerkursandur, Iceland. When called, the mobile phone detects and transmits live the sound of Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull, which is currently melting and moving through the lagoon. When Paterson first presented this work in 2007 for 8 days, over 3,200 calls from 47 different countries were made to the glacier.

In the gallery, *Vatnajökull (the sound of)* is a minimal intervention. The work exists in the space created by calling the number and connecting with the glacier. Only one person at a time can connect to the glacier and listen to its underwater movements as a series of 'pops' and 'trickles'. The work invites us to travel thousands of miles to the remote place which is home to this vast mass of ice on its downward journey into the lagoon. Tapping into this geological journey reveals a paradoxical and somewhat melancholy reality. The advances in modern technology, which make it possible for us to achieve such a seemingly wondrous thing as to call a glacier, coincide with the palpable demise of our natural habitat."

*Erica Burton, Modern Art Oxford, 2008*

"Katie Paterson is a seeker and a speculator. She asks questions, endlessly curious. Her work harnesses poetic thinking to advanced scientific enquiry to create beautiful, elegant and profound works of art. Paterson's voice and sensibility are completely original and utterly contemporary - it is difficult to imagine a work such as *100 Billion Suns* (2012) being made at any other moment than the present - yet her work is indebted to, or rather informed by, two important moments from the history of art. Firstly the Sublime, a notion first fully articulated in the mid-eighteenth century, which Paterson both subverts - using humour and absurdity - and exploits, creating a vertiginous sense of human relativity. The second is Conceptual art, a movement initiated in the 1960s in which the idea is the artwork, conceptual content taking primacy over material manifestation. Specifically, Paterson's work forges connections with certain aspects of Land art, a form of Conceptual art that engaged with earth and landscape.

Like Alexander von Humboldt Paterson has taught herself about astronomy and botany, as well as chronometry, metals, light, fossils and forestry. Yet what is so striking about Paterson's work is that knowledge is not positioned as an end. It is a means. The work does not provide answers to the questions she asks, but somehow occupies a space in between the question and the answer. This is, perhaps, the space of poetry."

*Ben Tufnell, 2014*

"Katie Paterson might be a magician. She has the impressive ability to mobilize high level astronomers, space agencies, biologists, arborists, architects, and entire countries in the process of her creative pursuits. Her accomplishments have garnered due attention from across the world, as she outdoes herself annually, creating pieces that span vast expanses of time and space."

*Alison Hugill, Berlin Art Link, 2016*

"Those out of love with contemporary art may find the show challenging - unpublished books, an invisible grain of sand, photographs of blackness. Paterson sees her worlds very differently: interconnected, full of hope and beauty, mysterious and awe inspiring and in its scope utterly universal. Above all, her art shines through, not the science."

*Mike Wade, the Times, 2014*