



## Elephant #19

**Summer 2014**

Our special summer issue on outerspace brings you to places beyond the farthest Reaches of your imagination. From Michael Najjar to Trevor Paglen to Cristina Medium, artists are exploring the relationship between space exploration and creative engagement in a variety of ways. We speak to a mix of artists and scientists (such as Zolt Levay, who works at the Space Telescope Science Institute) and find out how they have embraced interactive media in their interpretations of the final frontier. Back on Earth, Margherita Dessanay interviews Carol Prusa about the biomorphic forms that she creates using mixed media. Robert Shore visits the illustrious Philippe Weisbecker in his studio and learns what inspires his sleek architectural drawings, while Grace Banks gets lost in the thriving, riotous art scene in Havana.

### Contents

#### **I – Open Files:**

Xie Lei, Thomas Moor at LISTE Art Fair Basel, David Shrigley, Julian Schnabel, Swiss Art Awards, Ed Atkins, Thomas Ruff

#### **II – Showcase:**

Danful Yang, Sahej Rahal, Raymond Lemstra, Ming Wong, **Carol Prusa**, Antonis Done

#### **III – Research:**

Artonauts: featuring Michael Najjar, Trevor Paglen, Zolt Levay, Aleix Plademunt, Agnes Meyer-Brandis, Cristina de Middel and Larissa Sansour

#### **IV – Encounters:**

Jim Denevan: Surfing with Fibonacci  
Ushio and Noriko Shinohara: Boxing Cute  
Dasha Shishkin: Incomplete Gestures  
Philippe Weisbecker: Archi-Simple

#### **V – POV:**

Gert & Uwe Tobias: Something Is Happening Here But You Don't Know What It Is

## VI – Destination

Havana: Featuring Wilfredo Prieto, Choco, Sandra Ramos, Kcho, René Peña, Glexis Novoa, Carlos Luna, Carlos Martiel and Inti Hernandez

## VII – Curator's-Eye View:

Why Don't We Do It in the Road: Lewis Biggs

## VIII – Journal:

What Would Andy Warhol Think?

## IX – Book Review:

Show Time: The 50 Most Influential Exhibitions of Contemporary Art by Jens Hoffman and ICA 1946 – 1968

Enditorial by Marc Valli

IN THIS ISSUE

Elephant 19

## I – Open Files

- 6 Xie Lei
- 7 Thomas Moor at LISTE Art Fair Basel
- 8 David Shrigley
- 10 Julian Schnabel
- 12 Swiss Art Awards
- 14 Ed Atkins
- 16 Thomas Ruff

## II – Showcase

- 20 Danful Yang  
Interview by Andrew Spyrou
- 24 Sahej Rahal  
Interview by Rajesh Punj
- 30 Raymond Lemstra  
Interview by Amandas Ong
- 34 Ming Wong  
Interview by Amandas Ong
- 38 Carol Prusa  
Interview by Margherita Dessanay
- 42 Antonis Donef  
Interview by Margherita Dessanay

## III – Research

- 50 Artonauts  
Featuring Michael Najjar, Trevor Paglen,  
Zolt Levay, Aleix Plademunt, Agnes  
Meyer-Brandis, ©®, Cristina de Middel  
and Larissa Sansour

## V – POV

- 136 Gert & Uwe Tobias:  
Something Is Happening Here  
But You Don't Know What It Is  
By Rogier Ormeling

## VI – Destination

- 146 HAVANA  
By Grace Banks
- 152 Wilfredo Prieto
- 156 Choco
- 158 Sandra Ramos
- 160 Kcho
- 164 René Peña
- 168 Glexis Novoa
- 172 Carlos Luna
- 174 Carlos Martiel
- 176 Inti Hernandez

## VII – Curator's-Eye View

- 178 Why Don't We Do It in the Road:  
Lewis Biggs  
By Robert Shore

## VIII – Journal

- 182 What Would Andy Warhol Think?  
By Duncan Wooldridge

# Carol Prusa

As a child, American Carol Prusa would lie in bed at night trying to make sense of why things were the way they were. To find the answer, she studied Chemistry at the University of Illinois but soon discovered that art was a freer way of investigating the boundless wonders of the universe.

by Margherita Dessanay



Alysis (detail), 2010, silverpoint, graphite, boronum, white with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with metal leaf and fibre optics, 15.9 x 15.9 x 27.9 cm, courtesy of the artist

## Domes

While teaching art in Florence, I was struck by the worlds that unfolded in the domes of cathedrals and chapels and wondered how one could make art of that magnitude. I decided to use the dome metaphorically as a container holding the best we know, or like a Petri dish where unexpected things happen or, finally, like a cranium housing constructed worlds, like our mind.

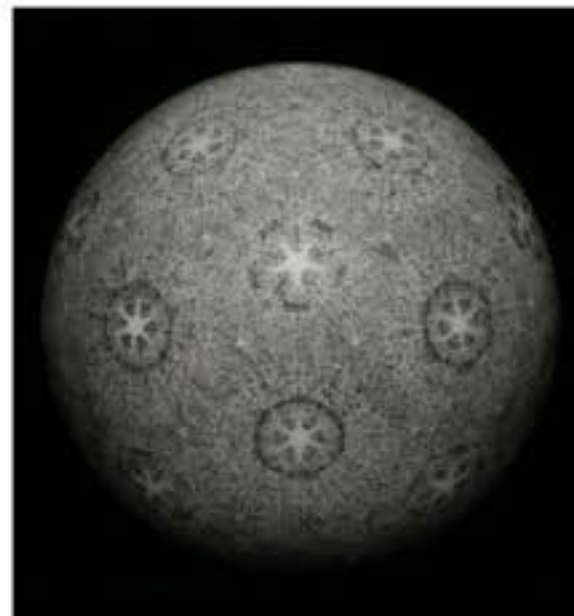
## Ancient Techniques, New Technologies

The acrylic domes are sanded and layered with 12 or more coats of acrylic gesso. This preparation provides a ground for the drawing on the curved exterior. Using a silver wire, I first divide the dome into sensed and measured geometries. I use hatching marks with the silverpoint to realize forms and develop symmetries. The under-drawing is very determined – there is a lot of control. I studied with a Russian iconographer at a Buddhist university and learned fifteenth-century icon-making methods according to which the under-drawing is described as ego-driven because the artist determines it. The next layer in the icon is called a 'float' where pigments are allowed to settle according to their nature, opening the work to new possibilities. In my own work, I grind graphite of different grades and weights to mix with acrylic binder and water, and float it over the under-drawing. This graphite wash allows for new forms to emerge. The final paint layer on the icon is the cosmic light, a light that is not from this world.

My work resolves in intricate silverpoint articulations on curved surfaces (privileging no single perspective) washed with graphite and heightened with white paint. I am interested in complexity and strangeness and reflect that by layering different forms. Video and fibre optics are housed within the domes in an attempt to express the startling phenomena shaping our everyday world.

## Subject Matter

The overwhelming fecundity and strangeness of life; feelings of vibration, entanglement and possibility. I listen to Science Friday on National Public Radio, absorb Theories of Everything proposed by physicists, digest historic cosmologies, and consume poetry and movies to steep myself in metaphor and ideas with the hope that something will emerge from this soup. I need my work to feel like it is coalescing and at the same time that it could dissolve – that in the moment it is becoming it could also just as easily become something else. Daydreaming is where the matrix of possibilities and our systems of knowing cross in compelling ways, linking what I have learned with what I imagine about our universe.



Feast of Symmetry, 2010, 16.5 cm diameter acrylic sphere, silverpoint with graphite and boronum, white pigment and fibrous programmed light emitter (fibre optic), with light at lowest level, courtesy of the artist



Feast of Symmetry, image with light at mid-level



Feast of Symmetry, image with light at high level

Supernova, 2003, silverpoint, gipscrete, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere and rice paper, 38 x 38 x 15.6 cm, courtesy of the artist



**Between Galileo and Paul Valéry**

There is a Galileo quote from *Il Saggiatore* that says: '[The Universe] is written in the language of mathematics and its characters are triangles, circles and other geometric figures.' This resonates with how I know things. I explore symmetry, infinity, the void, complexity and emergent forms as a gateway to creating my worlds. My work references the organic nature of life and connection to geometry. Paul Valéry wrote that 'the Universe is built on a plan, the profound symmetry of which is somehow present in the inner structure of our intellect.' I plumb that intellect for its vital beauty, attempting to visually deliver a 'theory of everything' as comprehensively as a physicist.

Now's Not, 2011, 20.3 centimeter acrylic sphere, silverpoint with gipscrete and titanium white pigment and aluminium leaf, 20.3 x 17.8 x 20.3 cm, courtesy of the artist



April, 2010, silverpoint, gipscrete, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic spheres, 20.2 x 20.2 x 20.1 cm, courtesy of the artist