

About, above

Kirsten Bradley

Firstdraft Gallery, Sydney: 2-17 April 2008

About, above is a project that considers the plausibility of making natural systems out of cardboard. Drawing on our enduring fascination with the night sky and the space beyond, *About, above* prods the viewer with gentle questions. The project attempts to explore ideas regarding our emotive reactions to natural systems, and investigate our relationship with natural pattern-recognition and our capacity for wonder, in the face of disbelief.

A project in two parts, *About, above* invites the viewer into a world of lo-fi nature through participatory sculpture and installation. A suite of solar-powered cardboard planetariums in the streets of Sydney, and a camera obscura universe at Firstdraft Gallery both draw in part on early texts and representations of the night sky, as well as ideas of pattern, navigation, simulation, geocentricism and the peculiar nature of light.

About, above aims to consider how we choose to navigate through our worlds, and how we choose what to see.

I look at those [About, above project] images and think of the internalised view of the cosmos we all have now... Monotheism disconnects with the particulars of nature, but still refers to certain cosmic facts, especially those in the night sky (stars, crescents, lunar events)...

I think of this as a riff on 'storage' too. Personal storage; the associations evoked by the cardboard and of the individualised space of the view.

Also of the night sky being the very first storage space for humans. Since all things on the earth are subject to change, humans on every continent connected stories to the constellations, as they were reliably fixed.

- John Power, media artist and writer.

Hipparchus, in the 2nd Century AD, proposed that there were only indeed the seven spheres of the planets contained within the sphere of the fixed stars.

But: a) the spheres' centre was not the Earth but a point in space which circled the Earth (the idea of the "eccentric orbit"); b) the planets were embedded in small rotating spheres (epicycles) whose centers lay on the larger spheres (deferents). By juggling the figures suitably, a reasonable approximation of the planetary movements could be achieved...

- John Grant: Discarded Science - 2006

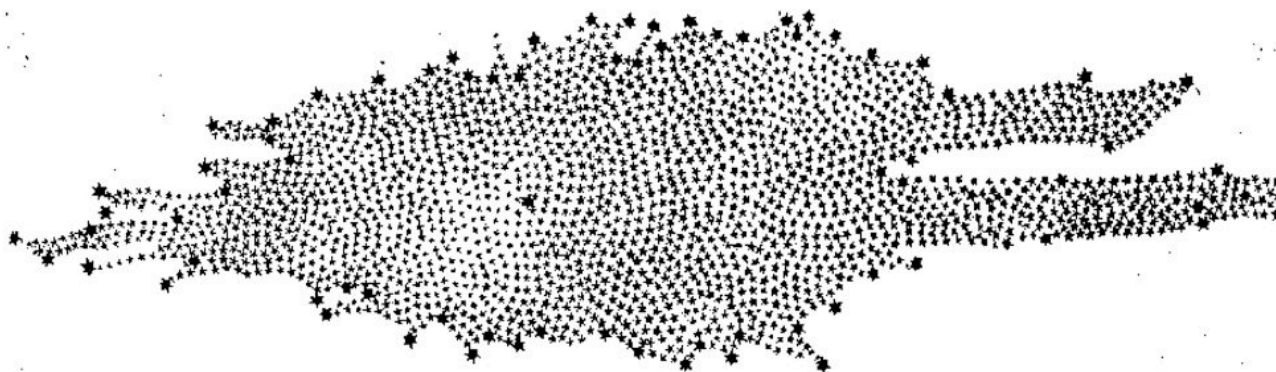
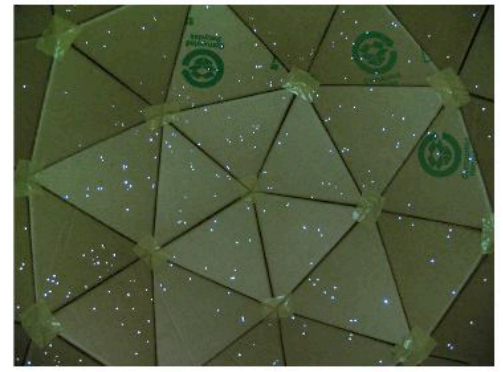


Image: The shape of the Milky Way as deduced from star counts by William Herschel in 1785; the Solar System was assumed near center



Images: Documentation of *About, above* Part 1: Solar-powered cardboard planetaria installed in parks throughout the Sydney CBD, 22-23 March 2008.

He... brought up the Wintu in north-central California, who don't use the words 'left' and 'right' to describe their own bodies but use the cardinal directions. I was enraptured by this description of a language and behind it a cultural imagination in which the self only exists in reference to the rest of the world, no you without mountains, without sun, without sky. As Dorothy Lee wrote, "When the Wintu goes up the river, the hills are to the west, the river to the east; and a mosquito bites him on the west arm. When he returns, the hills are still to the west, but, when he scratches his mosquito bite, he scratch-es his east arm." ... In Wintu, its the world that's stable, yourself that's contingent, there's nothing apart from its surroundings...

- Rebecca Solnit - *A field guide to getting lost* - 2005

Documentation and process of *About, above* can be found at <http://thejunefox.com>

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