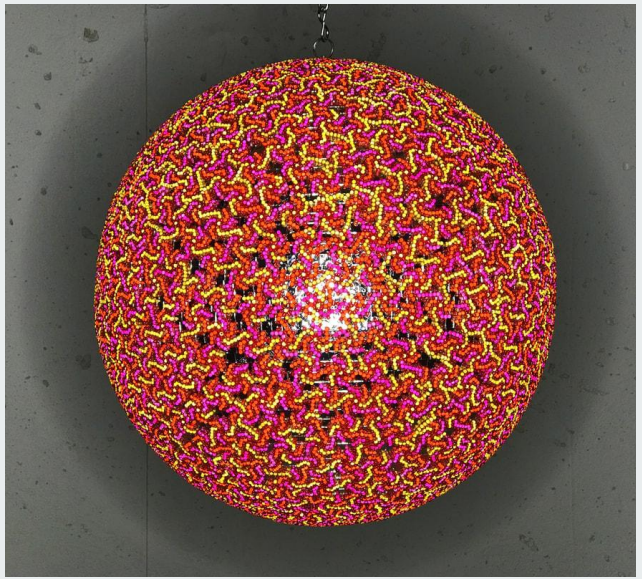
A Look on the Bright Side: The Sunny Side of Art

Sunday, April 18, 2021, 2 pm

Julie Mars



About me

I've lived most of my life in the Chicago area. I'm a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where my main focus of study was sculpture.

When I am not making art, I am promoting it at the Addison Center for the Arts--writing grants, hosting art shows/performances, and producing children's cultural events/workshops. Lots of virtual events lately.

Previously, I worked in museums, galleries, and co-owned an art consulting firm for clients of high-end furniture stores all while making my own art and raising two kids.

I started entering my artwork into shows again about three years ago.

Gurus of chill

I said online that we are going to chill during this talk.

So you are probably expecting a lot of Bob Ross references.

Unfortunately, I'm not a painter…

...what I have instead is the Bob Ross of Science.

That's right!

Gurus of chill

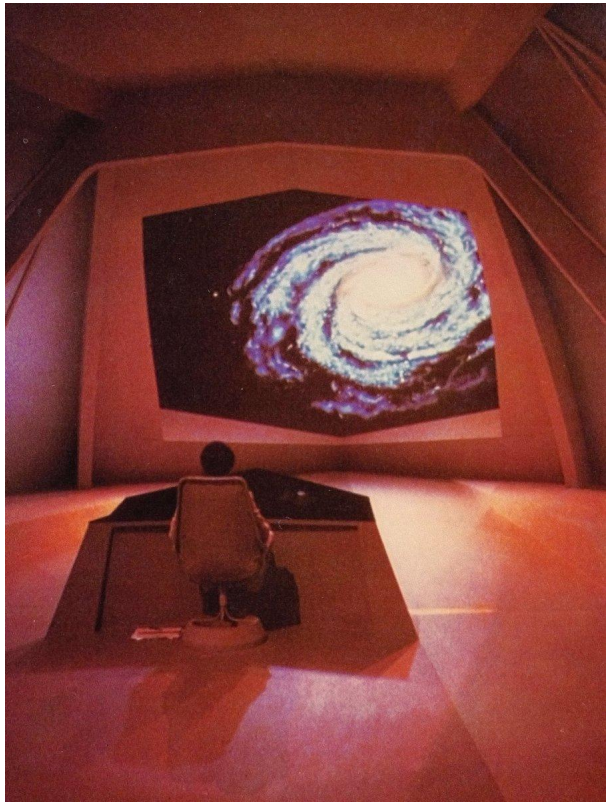
The mind-blowing

Carl Sagan is our guy today

Big Blue Marble in Spaaaace

A very early and continuing influence on a lot of my art was Carl Sagan's "Cosmos." (The one from 1980) He and his collaborators showed us our place in the universe and encouraged us to appreciate and explore it.

We are going to chill and take our own trip on the "Ship of Imagination" today.



Sagan, 2008

Inspired by science and science imagery especially astronomy:

From “The Human Cosmos: Civilization and the Stars” by Jo Marchant

“Beliefs about the cosmos have always influenced art. Just look at how images of the sky have changed through history. Ancient depictions bustle with mythical creatures and gods, whereas after the Renaissance, painters--just like astronomers--replaced celestial beings with points of light. But the connection between cosmology and art goes much deeper than simply how we paint the stars. Changing ideas about the nature of the universe--about the type of space that we inhabit--inevitably shape how artists depict reality itself.”

What Made Me an Artist

I had an awesome dream when I was 18 that has been inspiring me ever since.

In William James' "Variety of Religious Experiences," a lot of people report visions of the world that is more colorful and beautiful than what our eyes can see. It was like that. Utterly gorgeous.

I've been trying to recreate that dazzling experience & feeling of awe since.

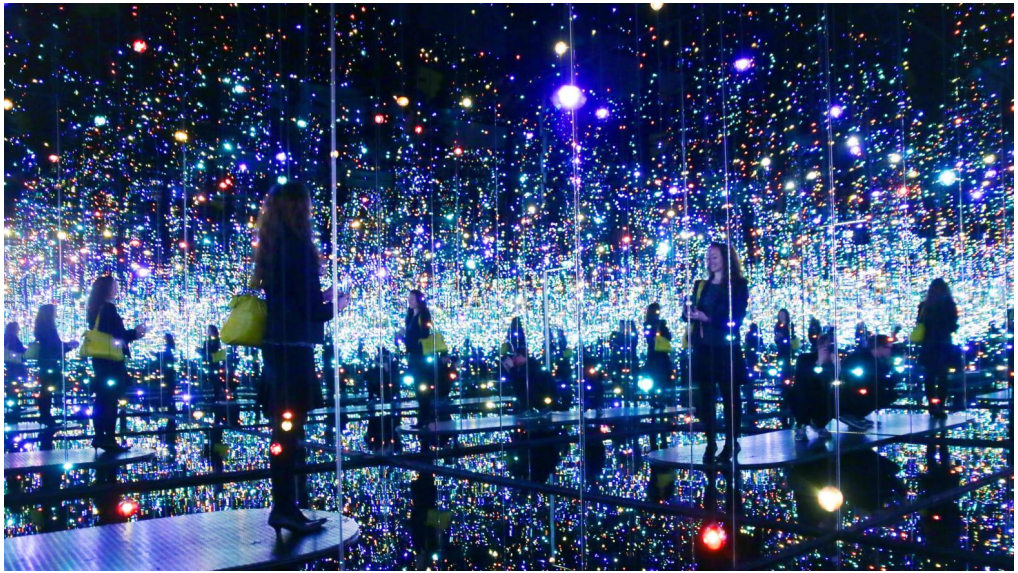
The Spring, 2019

The optical properties of glass get me as close as I can to the visionary aesthetic inspired by that single dream.

Teeming, 2009

Learning from other artists

Alma Thomas, Liza Lou, Olafur Eliasson, Trevor Paglen, Banksy, Dread Scott, Yayoi Kusama, Nick Cave, James Turrell...a ton more.



Very Well, Thank You

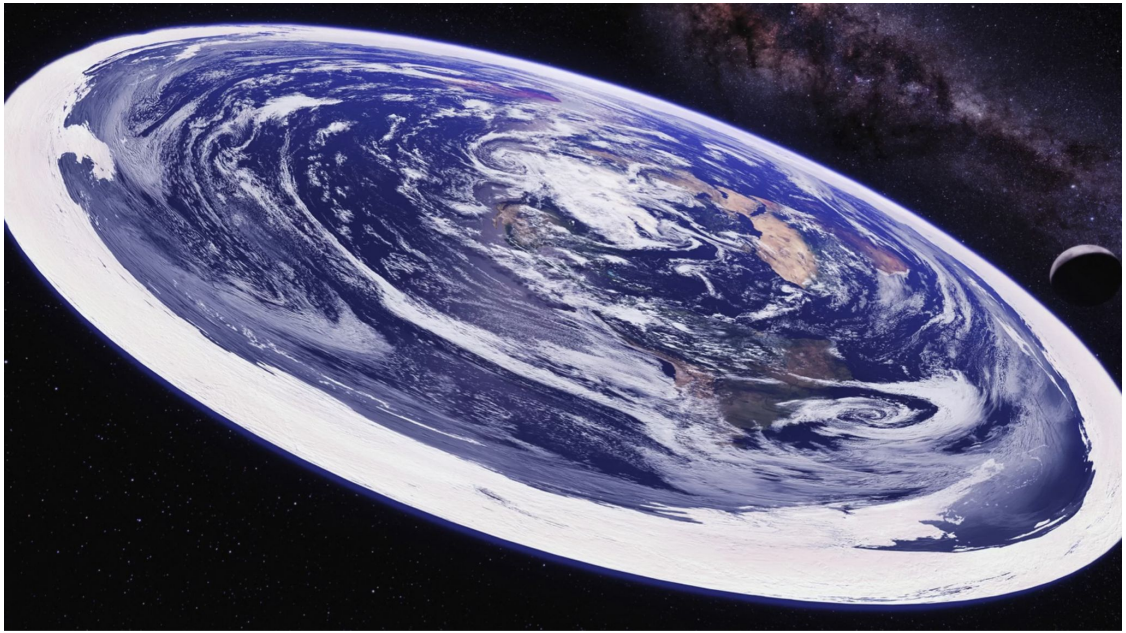
“It is healthy for us to be mindful of our place in the universe and our home world. By doing so we can overcome draining ruminations or mitigate stressful minutiae of our daily lives. We can refresh and reboot our attitude and perspective by periodically expanding our focus and immersing ourselves into the big picture. By seeking to understand and appreciate the sublime vastness of our universe and celebrate our place in it we can lead happier, healthier lives and perhaps be better able to cope with life’s challenges.”

~Me (not a doctor, psychologist, or member of clergy)YMMV

Our Place in the Universe

Flat Earth, 2018

Intuition, folklore, pseudoscience

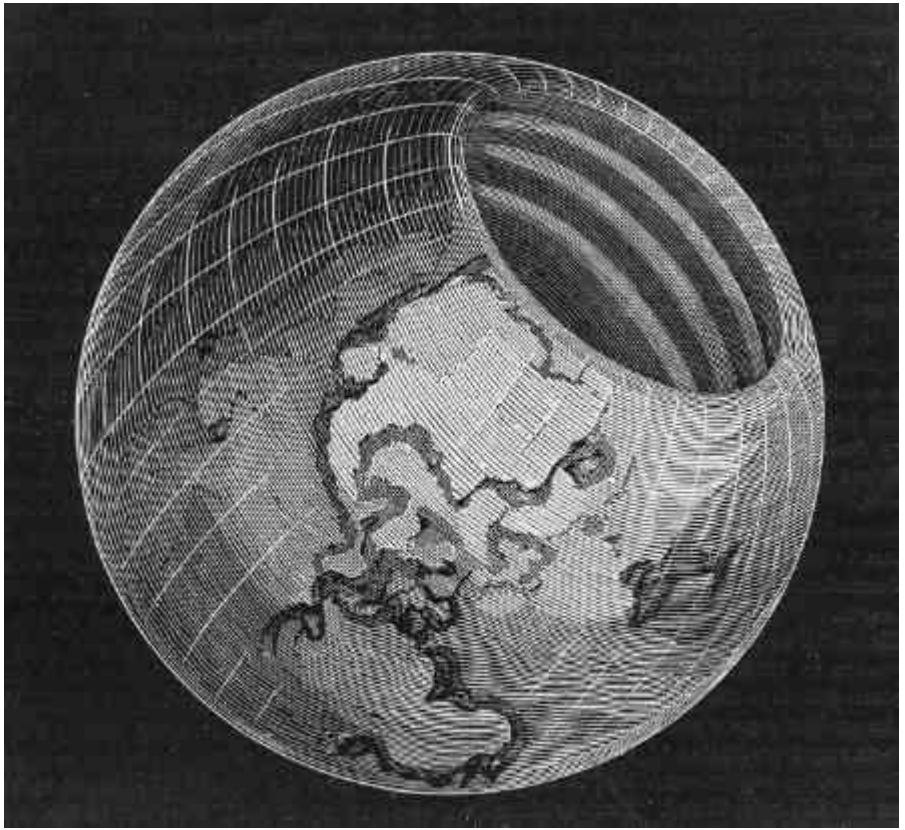


Hollow Earth, 2018

The Earth can be any shape you want it
Any shape at all
Dark and cold or bright and warm
Long or thin or small
But it's home and all I ever had
And maybe why for me the Earth is flat

~The Flat Earth, 1984
by Thomas Dolby

Conception of the hollow Earth folklore or pseudoscience



Abandoned piece: Conception of The Hyperbolic Earth

Someone on the internet had the same idea but with the much simpler hyperbolic shape of a saddle or as he called it “Pringle Earth.”

The Pringle Earth Society is on Twitter @PringleEarth

Let's start Zooming out...
Oceanic Panopticon, 2021

Satellite-sourced Earth image

This image is masterfully processed for clarity and beauty.

Panopticon Series (in progress)

Explores the pros and cons of digital surveillance and massive data collection.

Influenced by Trevor Paglen, Cory Doctorow, Shoshana Zuboff, Michael Mann, Ziya Tong, Rutger Bregman, Olafur Eliasson, Foucault. Many others.

The series explores a desire for our big data tools to be guided away from exploitation and control of each other's behavior and rather toward studying and maintaining our home world to ensure a healthy future for humanity and the rest of life on Earth.

When **we look up into** the starry night **sky**, **we tend to see** reflections of ourselves. — **Trevor Paglen**.

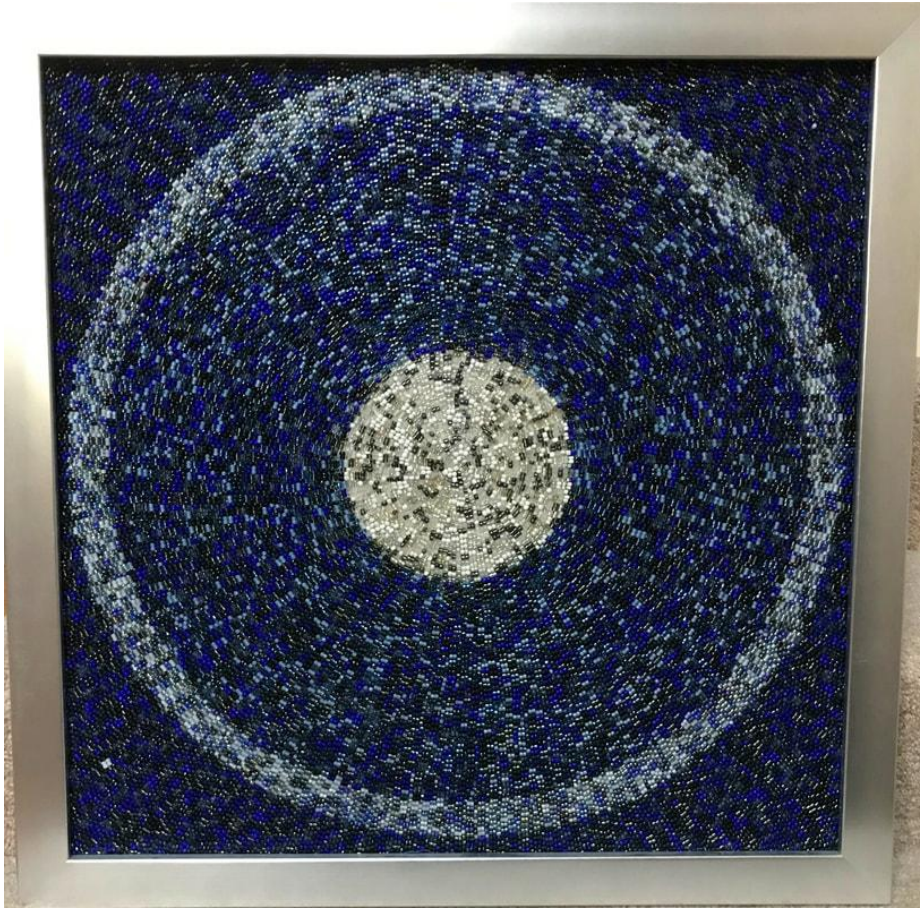
Orbital Reflector is a sculpture constructed of a lightweight material similar to Mylar. It is housed in a small box-like infrastructure known as a CubeSat and launched into space aboard a rocket. Once in low Earth orbit at a distance of about 350 miles from Earth, the CubeSat opens and releases the sculpture, which self-inflates like a balloon. Sunlight reflects onto the sculpture making it visible from Earth with the naked eye — like a slowly moving artificial star as bright as a star in the Big Dipper.

Honeymoon and BlackStar Panopticons

From the Earth to the Moon...

The π Series

Color coded the digits of π to get a rich field of varying color. It was an appropriate choice because I was weaving in the round.



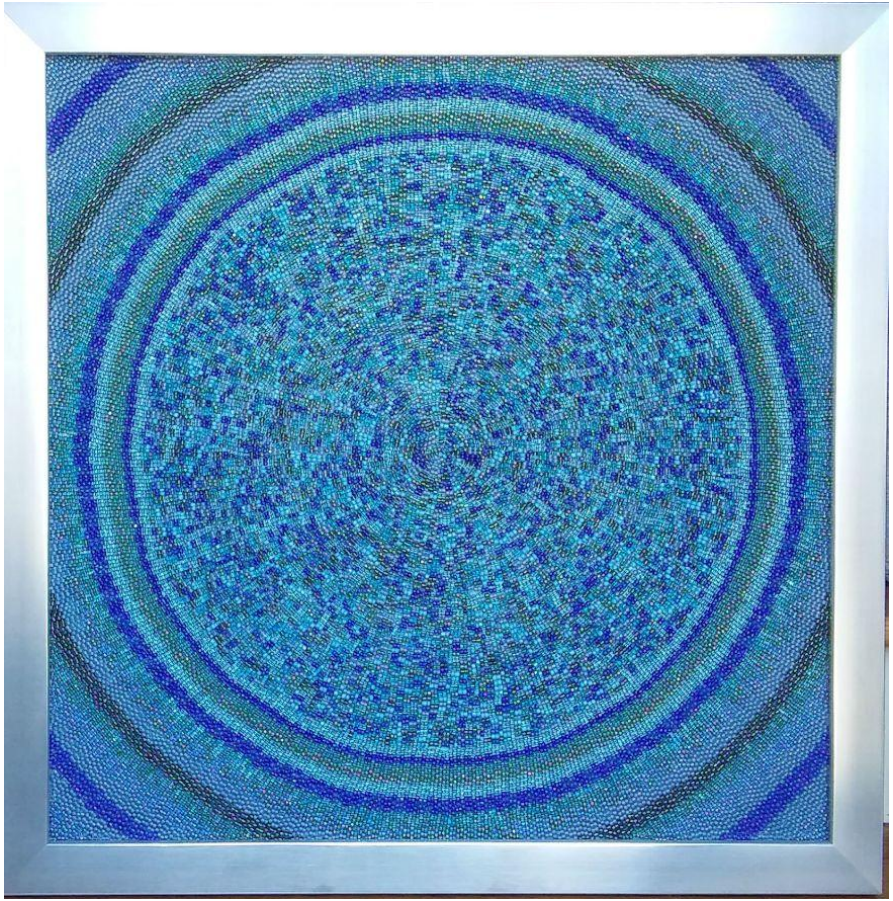
Mark Rothko

Yellow Over Purple, 1956

(Jerry Saltz called Rothkos “Buddhist TV” on IG last week)

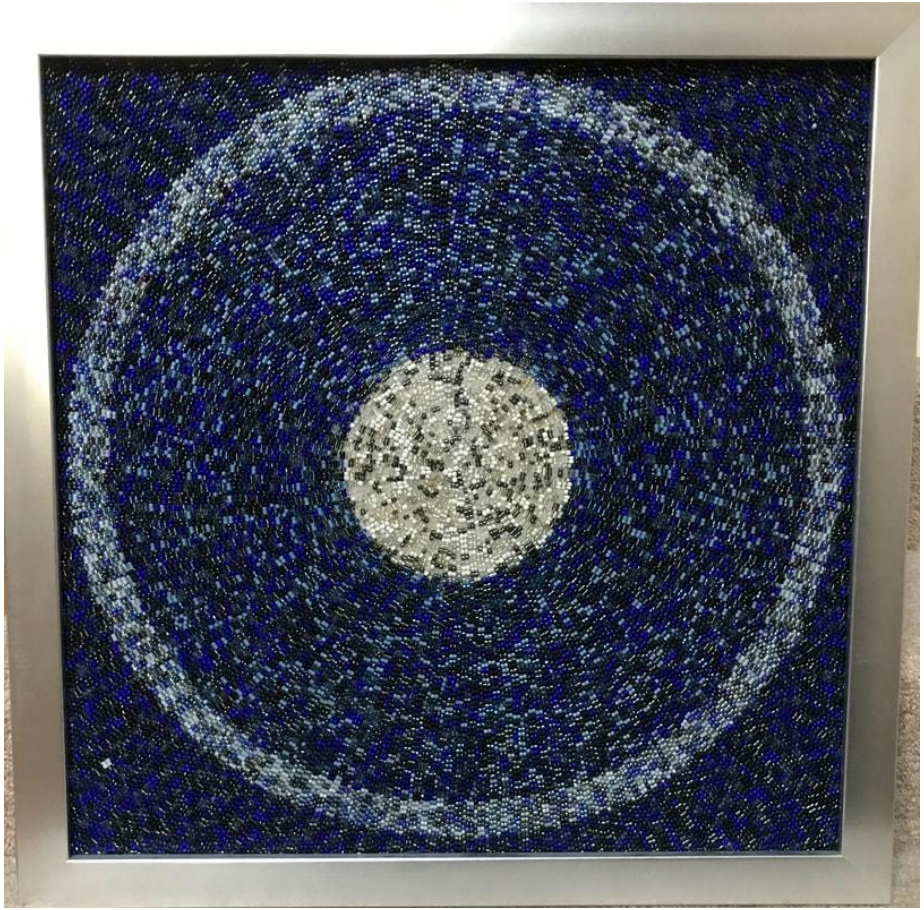
TT Ripples, 2016

Possibly my most Buddhist TV artwork. Inspired by a friend's bereavement.



π NimbusMoon, 2016

22-degree halo around the moon.

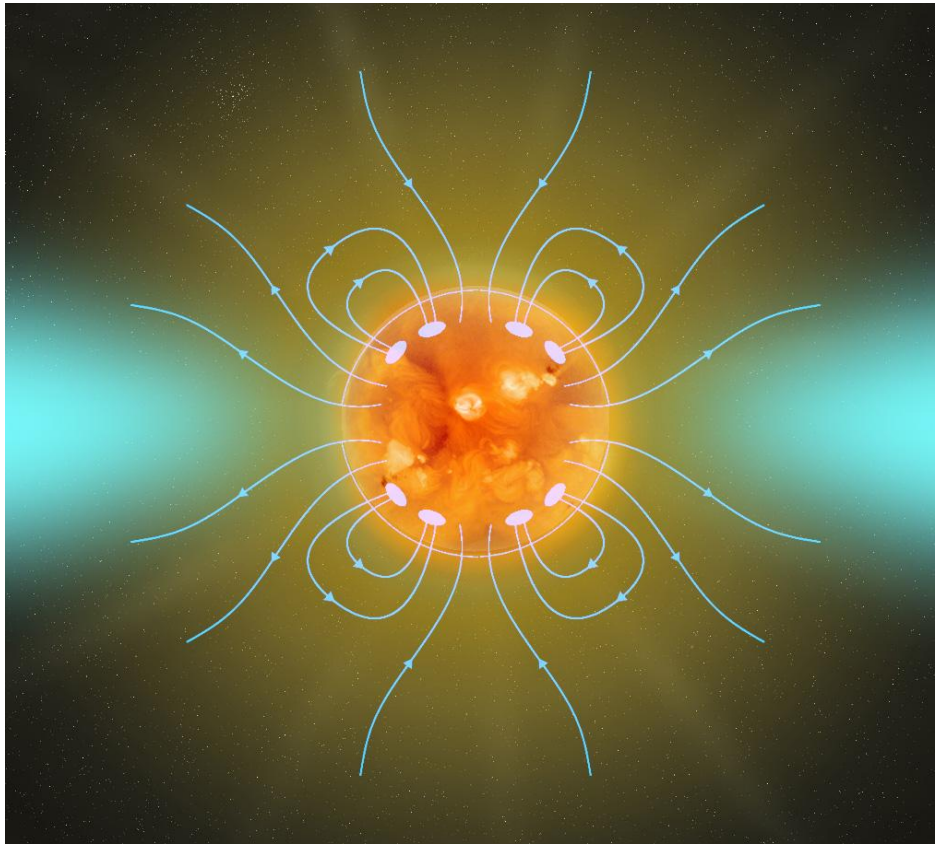


From the Moon to the Sun...

πSun, 2015

Color coded the digits of π to get a rich field of varying color. It was an appropriate choice because I was weaving in the round. I made many orbits.

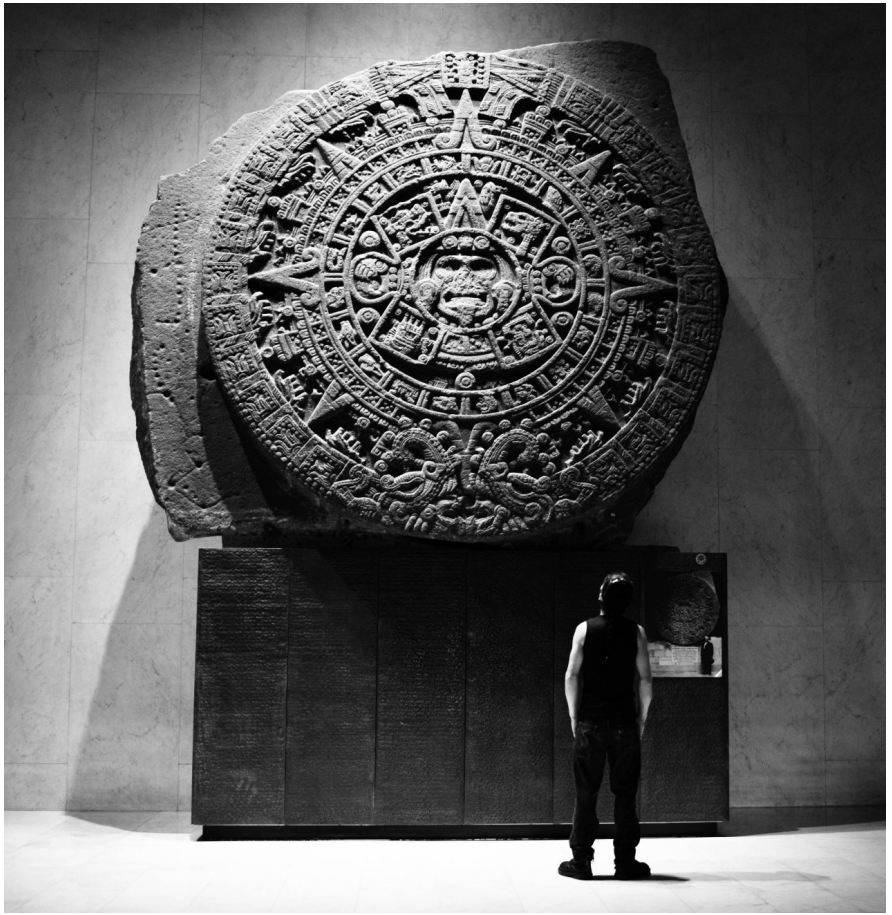
Solar magnetic field diagram



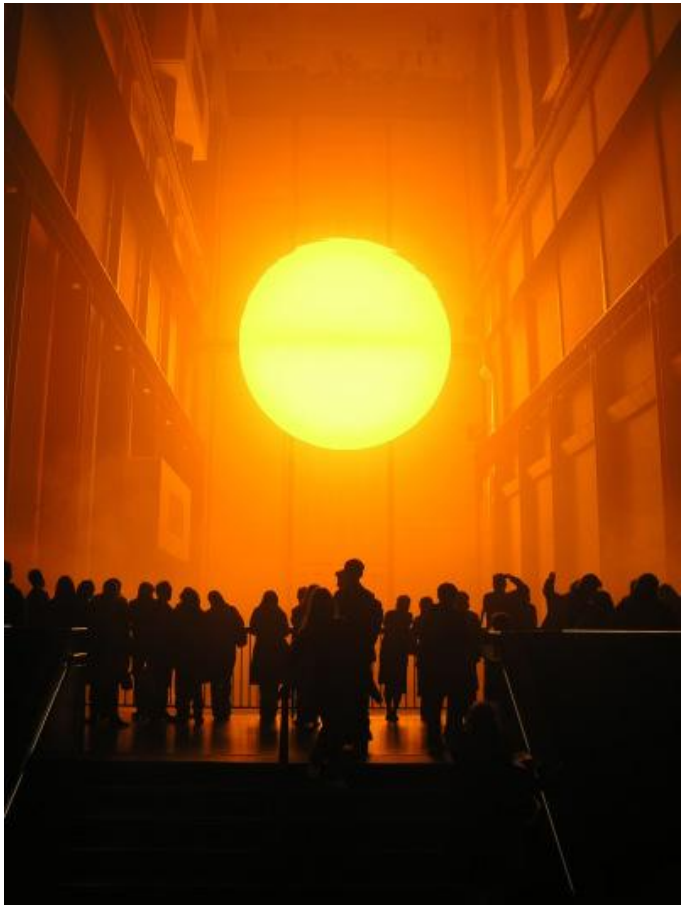
Magnetic Fields, 1990,
Mildred Thompson

Magnetic Fields, 1990,
Mildred Thompson

Aztec Sun Stone



Olafur Eliasson,
The Weather Project, 2003



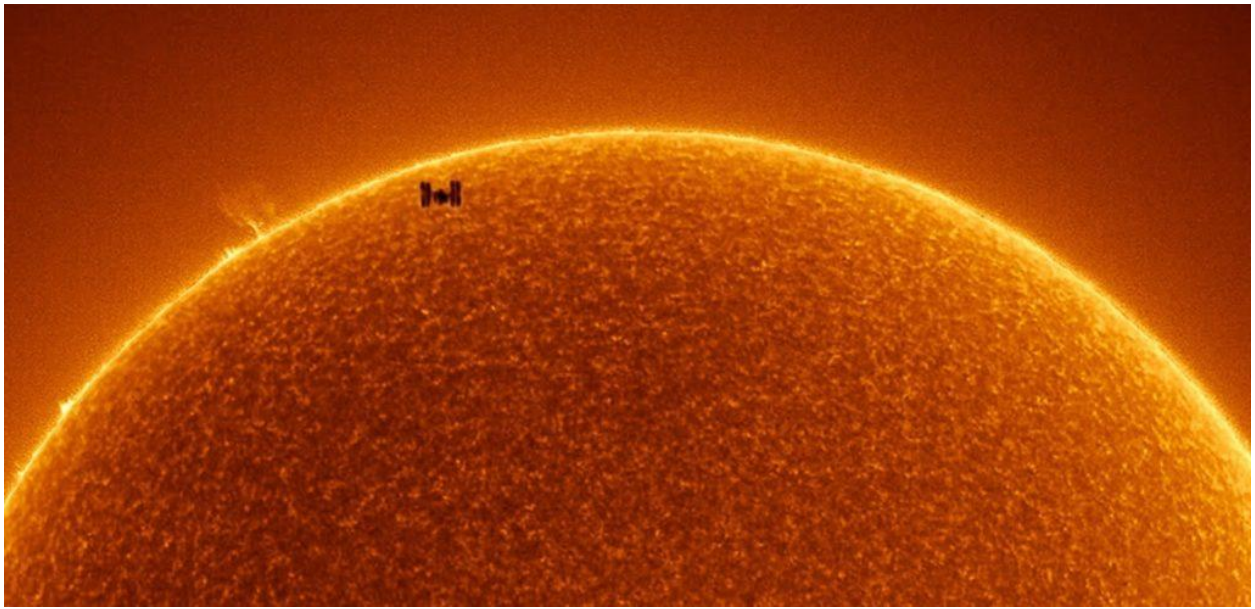
Olafur Eliasson,
Atmospheric Wave Wall,
2021

Back to the Sun…

My next piece--will be a sun panopticon.

Made from a full dome security mirror. I’m trying to make it look like this...

Image by Andrew McCarthy @Cosmic_Background



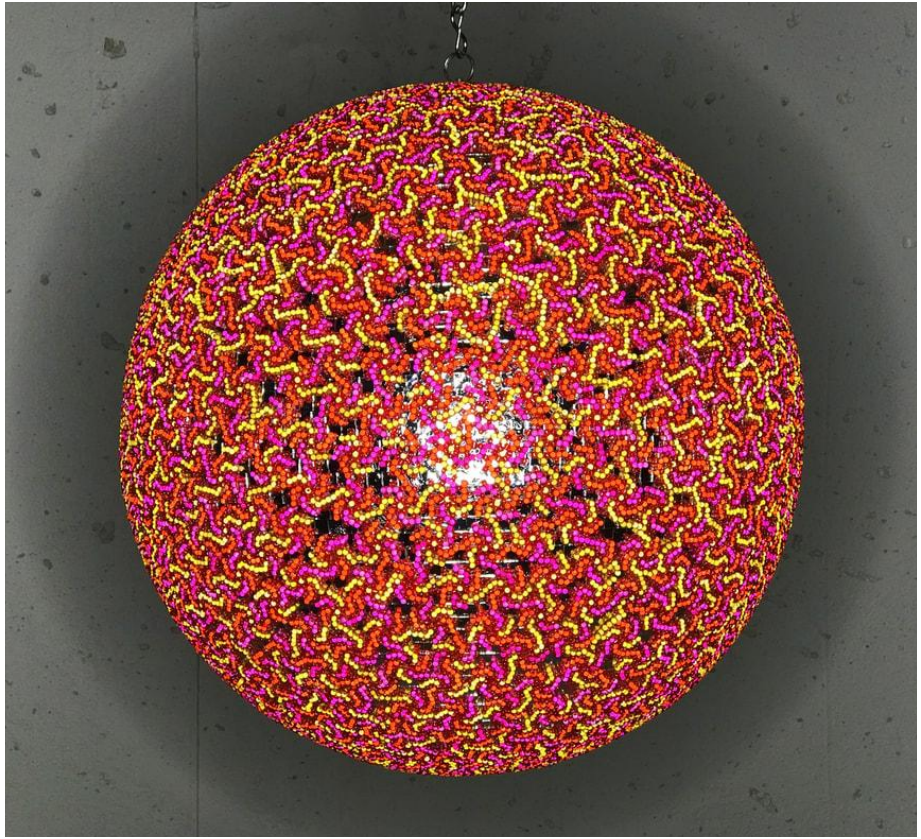
...it currently looks like this because I am taking a short break after finishing Oceanic

Not sure if I am going to do a wall piece or globe like...

Juicy Sunrise, 2020

I am excited about the possibility of fusion and solar energy.

I researched sunny art precedents while developing this piece.



Song of the Lark, 1884
Jules Breton

I wanted the color of a red/pink sun, like a sunset or in this case dawn.

Jules Breton painted the best suns on the horizon.

The Tired Gleaner, 1880
Jules Breton
Cleveland Museum of Art

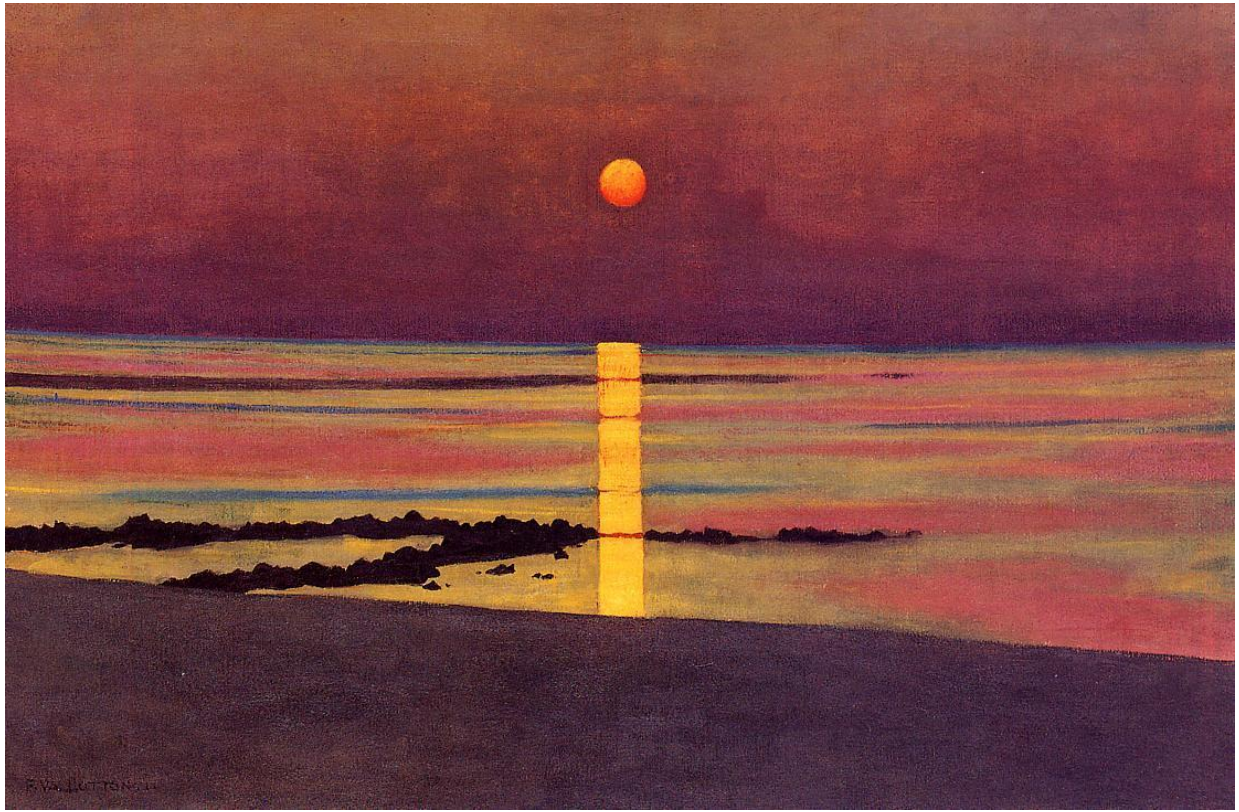
The Weeders, 1860
Jules Breton
Metropolitan Museum of Art

I'm looking forward to the day we're only harvesting the clean power of the sun through solar power or tapping into fusion energy-- the engine that drives all the suns in the universe.

Setting Sun in the Mist,
Félix Edouard Vallotton,
1865-1925

Yellow Sun, 1913
Félix Edouard Vallotton

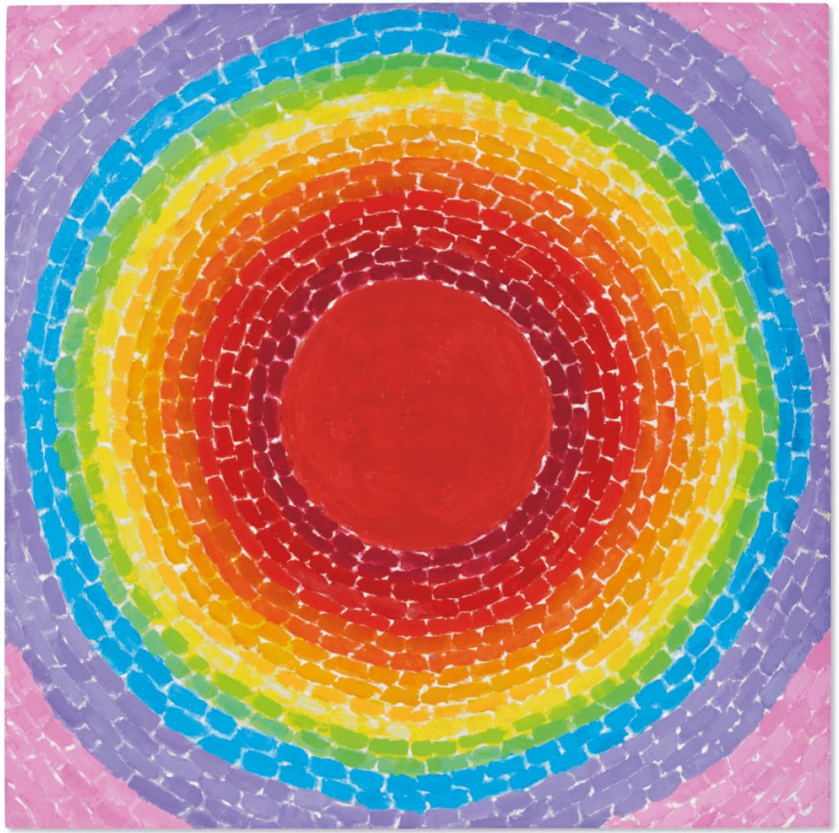
Le Coucher du Soleil, 1913
Félix Edouard Vallotton



Summer Sun, 2010
Dale Chihuly

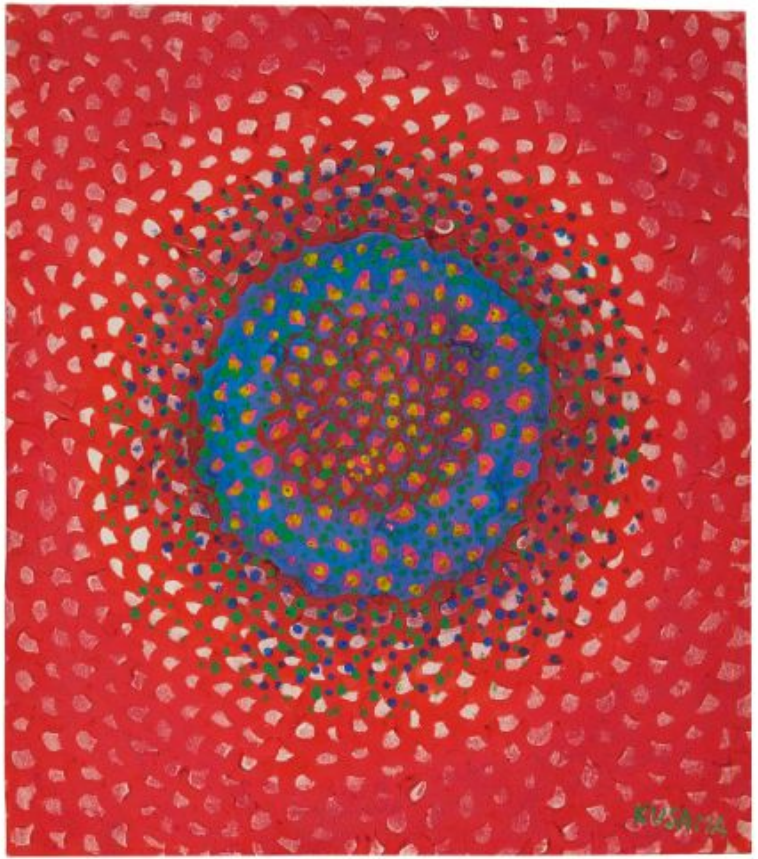
A Fantastic Sunset, 1970
Alma Thomas

She did a series of Fantastic Sunsets.



Sun, no. j.j., 1957
Yayoi Kusama

She did a series of suns..



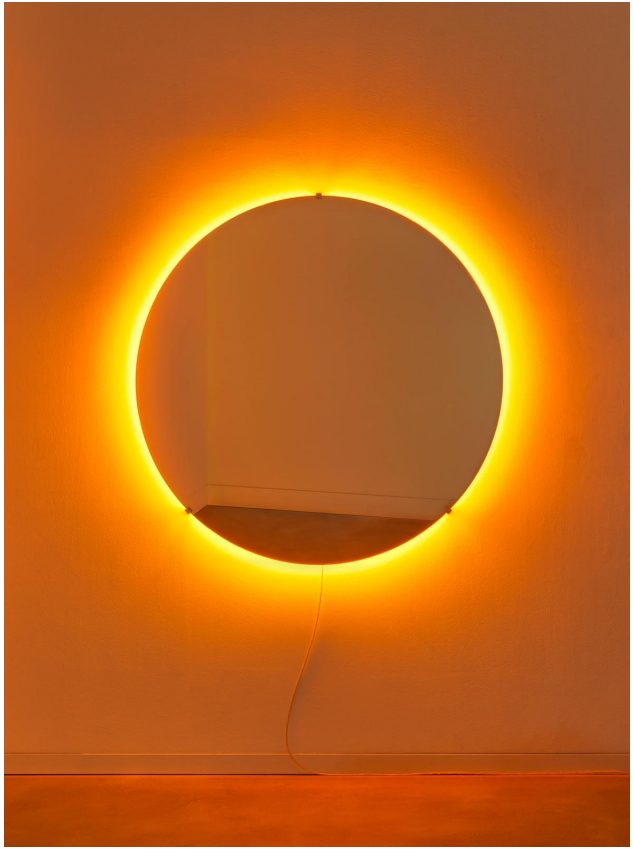
Untitled
Joseph Parker,
active 1962-2009

He did a series of psychedelic suns. I have one of his little paintings.

The following images are from olafureliasson.net.

Dong Zhuang sunpath, 2012
Olafur Eliasson

Midnight Sun, 2017
Olafur Eliasson

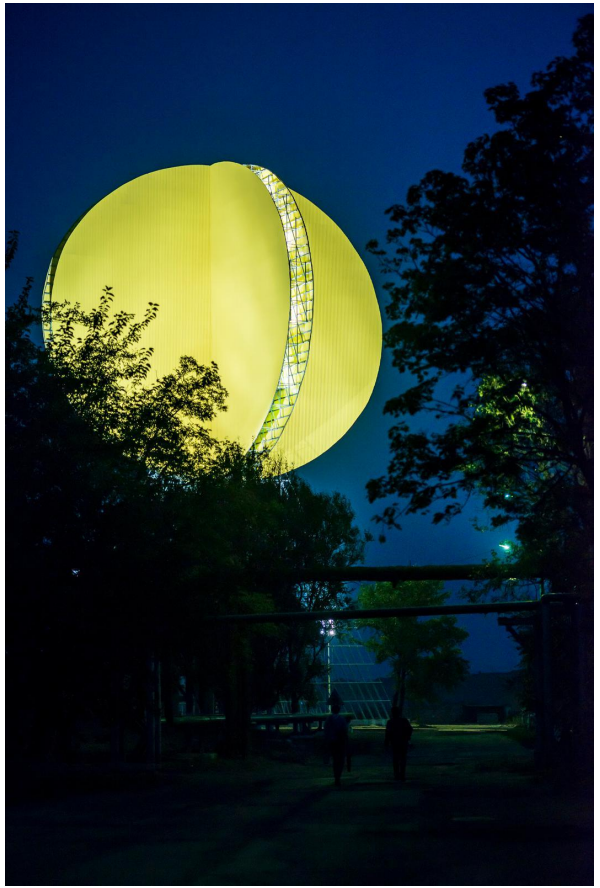


Dnepropetrovsk sunrise,

2017

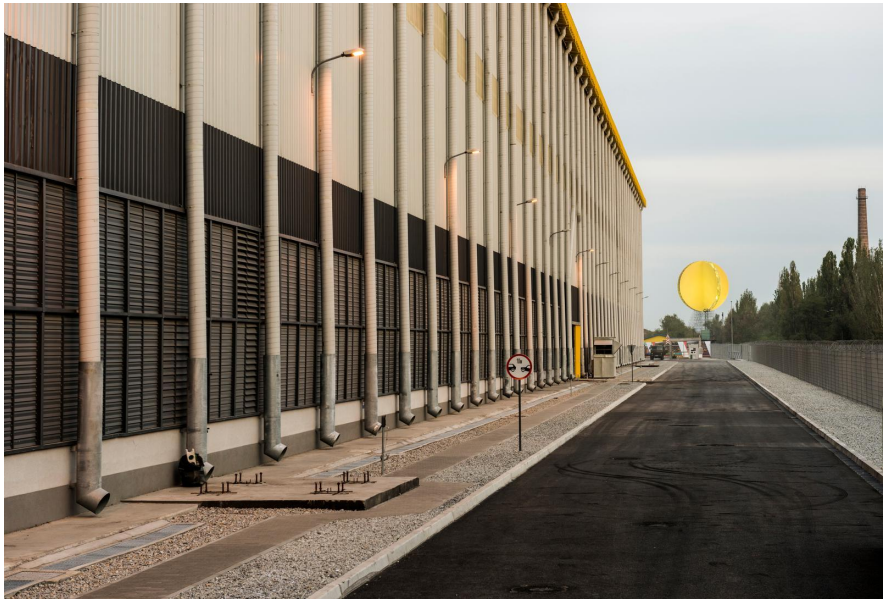
Olafur Eliasson

60m tall illuminated continuous sunrise in a town in Ukraine.



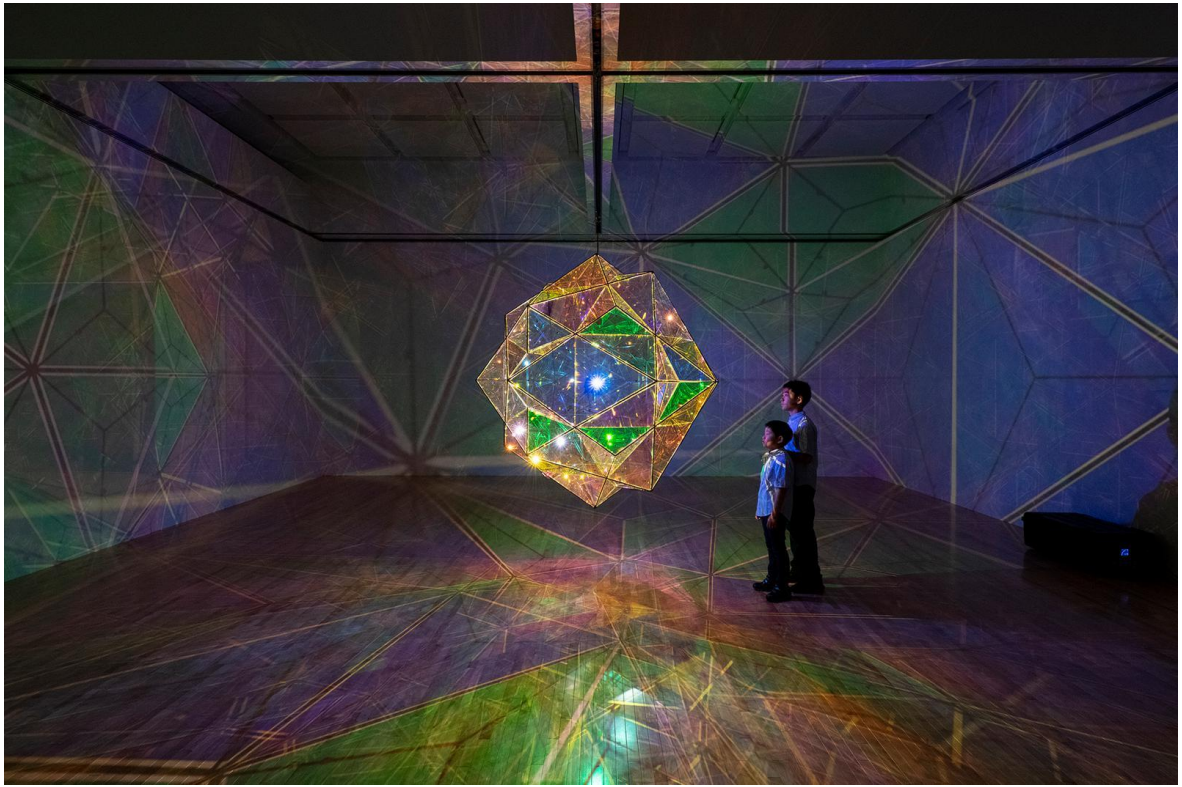
Dnepropetrovsk sunrise, 2017

Olafur Eliasson



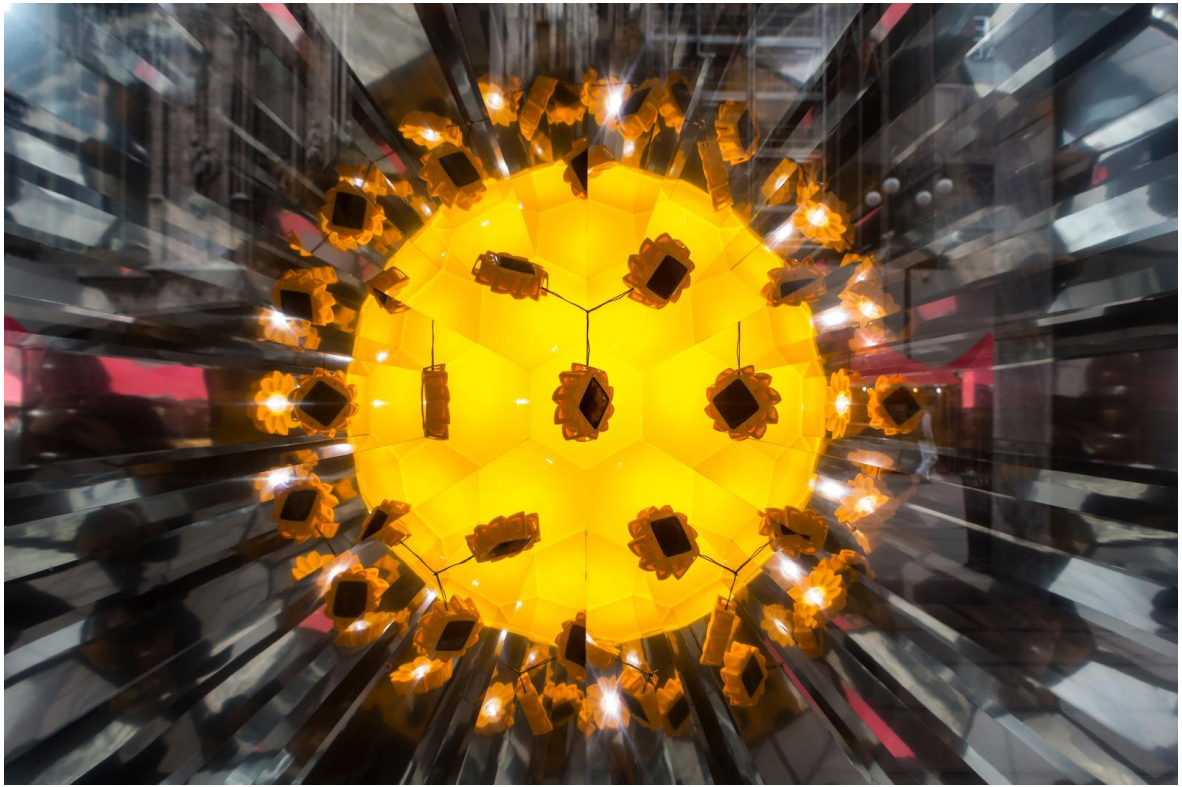
Exploration of the Center of the Sun, 2017
Olafur Eliasson

Fun fact! This piece is powered by a solar panel on the roof of the museum.



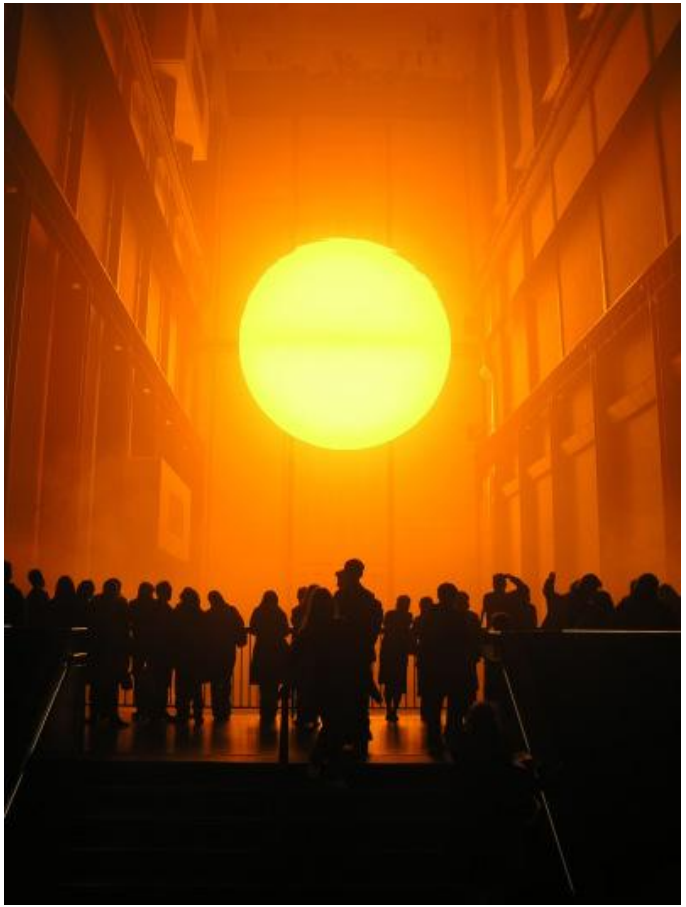
Little Sun, 2012
Olafur Eliasson

Little Sun, 2012
Olafur Eliasson



The Weather Project, 2003
Olafur Eliasson

Are you tired of this one yet?
No. No you are not.



Before we move on from the sun, I want to give a shout out to Nancy Holt’s, Sun Tunnels, 1976...

Roden Crater, WIP
James Turrell

The separate spaces in the monument function as pinhole cameras or camera obscura and naked-eye observatory.

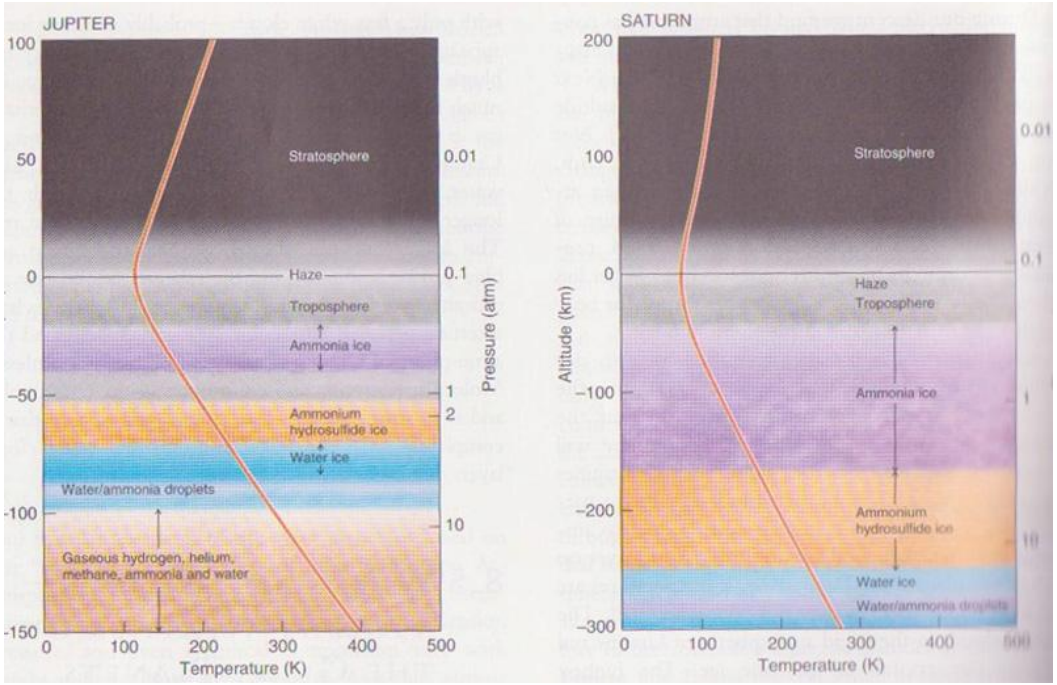
More images on jamesturrell.com

Moving right along…
...we transition from the light of the Sun...out to the Jupiter beyond the asteroid belt…

Drops of Jupiter, 2020

Drops of Jupiter, 2020
detail

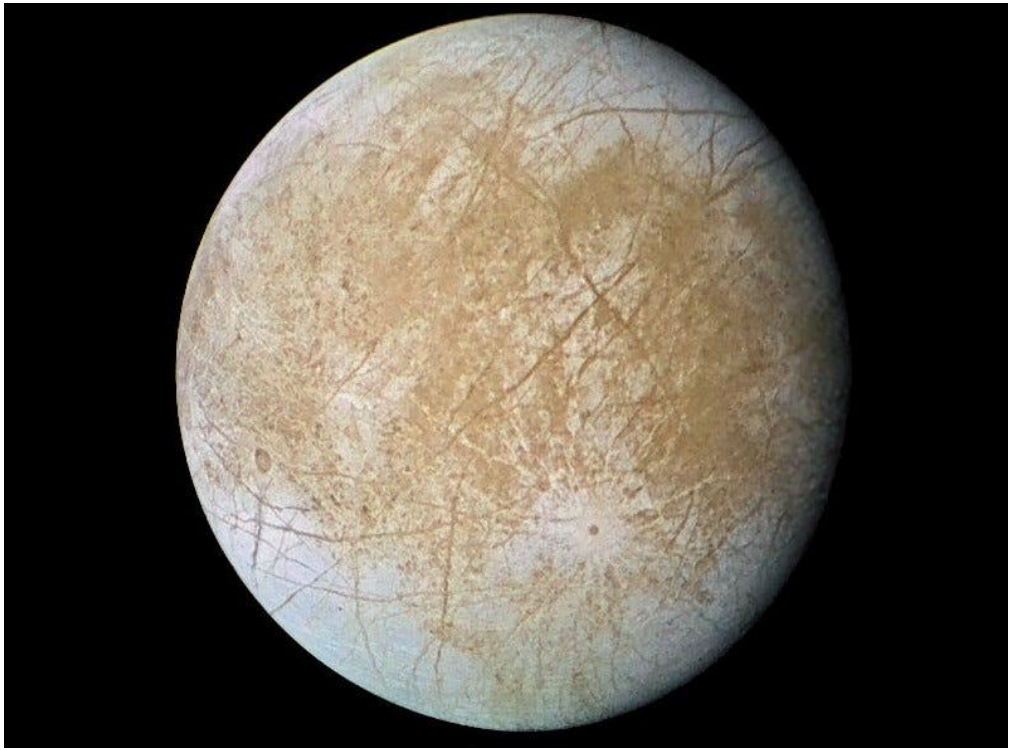
Diagram of the Atmosphere of gas giants



Europa, 2007

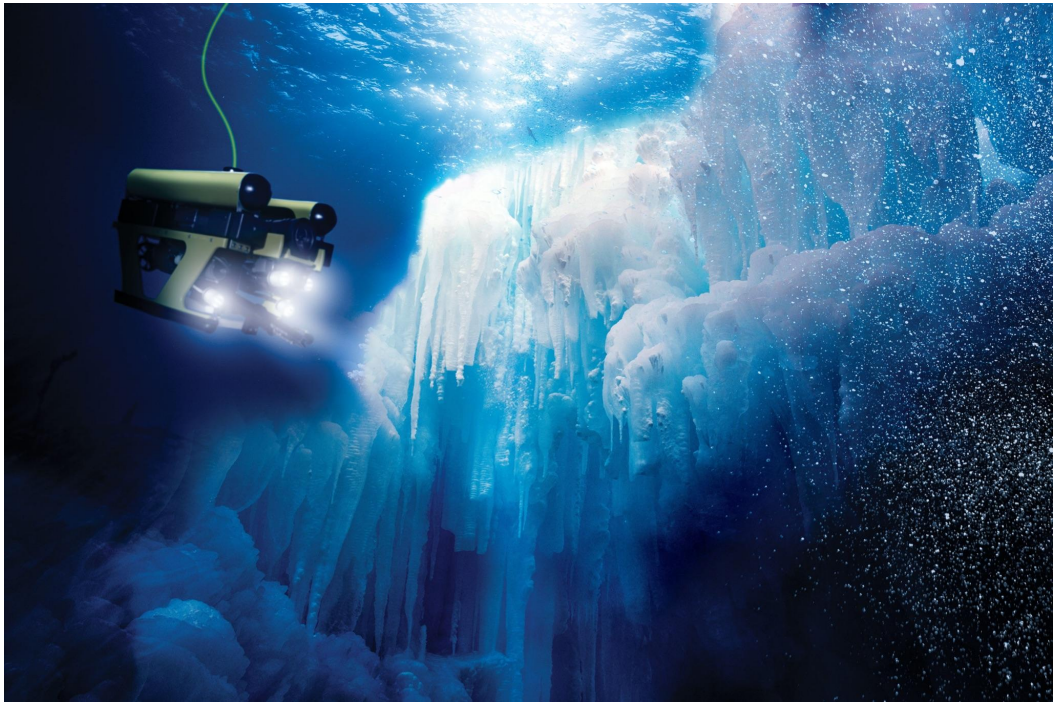
Europa, (interior) 2007

Europa image from NASA



Specimen from Europa (Still attached to the submersible’s porthole), 2018

Rendering of a proposed submersible probe mission to Europa. Image from The Planetary Society.

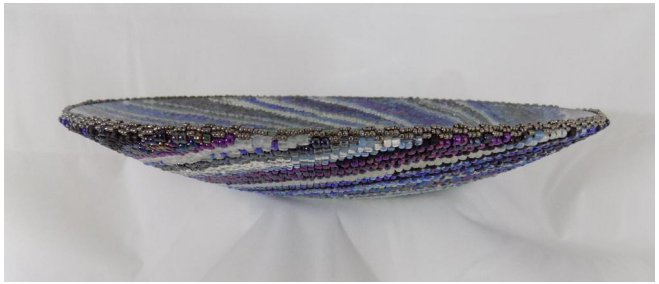


Leaving the solar system…

Exodus, 2018

Zooming out into the galaxy...

Spiral Disk, 2015



Pinwheel Galaxy NASA APOD from Hubble Telescope

So Long and Thanks for All the Fish, 2011

I’m a big Douglas Adams fan.

So Long and Thanks for All the Fish, 2011 (bottom, interior)

Galaxy Cluster, 2013

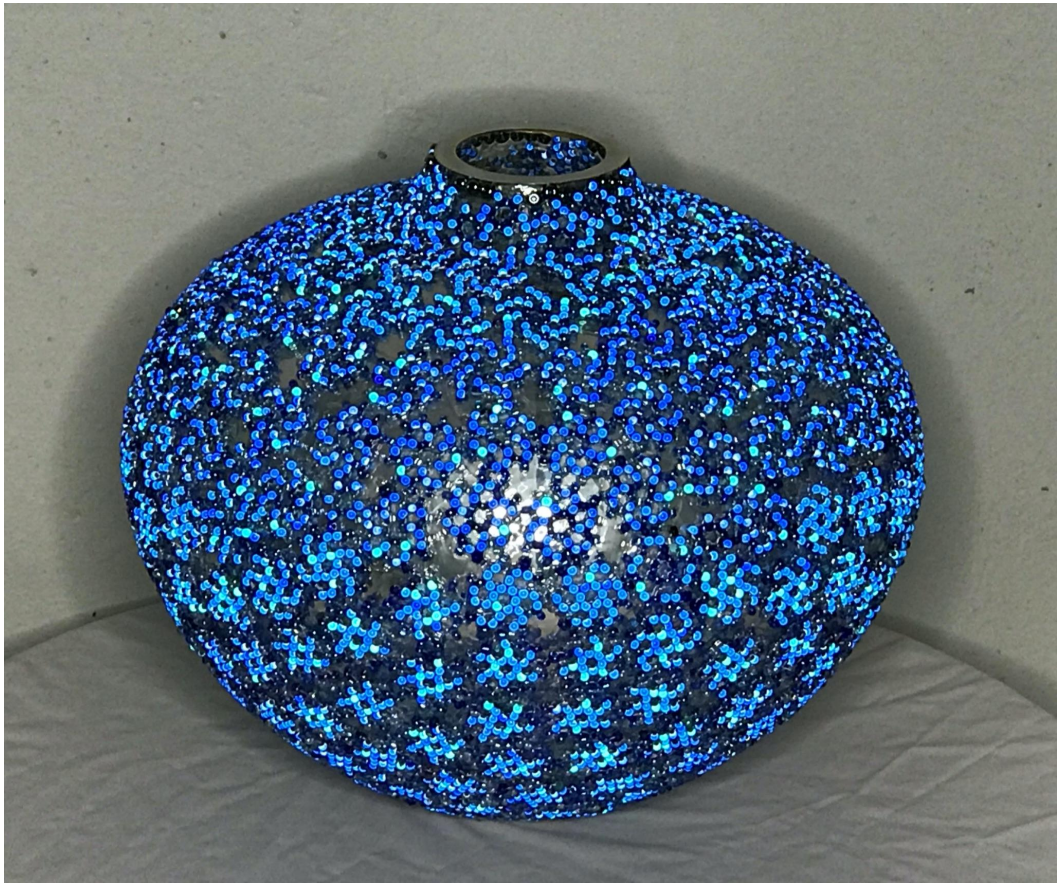
FAST FACTS

- Location:
  Constellation Sculptor
- Distance from Earth:
  About 3.5
  billion light-years
- Size:
  About 5 million
  light-years across

GALAXY CLUSTER ABELL 2744

a hubble image tour

Blue Star, 2019



A NASA APOD from Anglo Australian Observatory and Royal Observatory, Edinburgh

Cosmos, 2012

Contact

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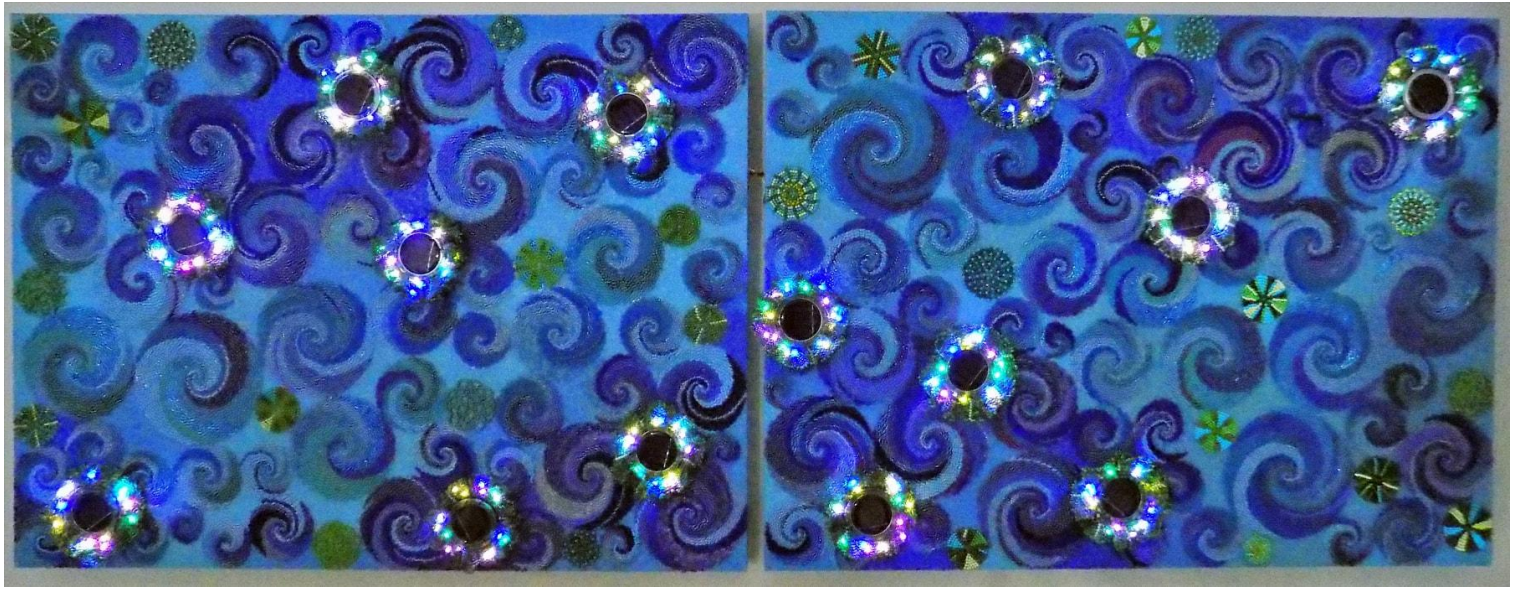

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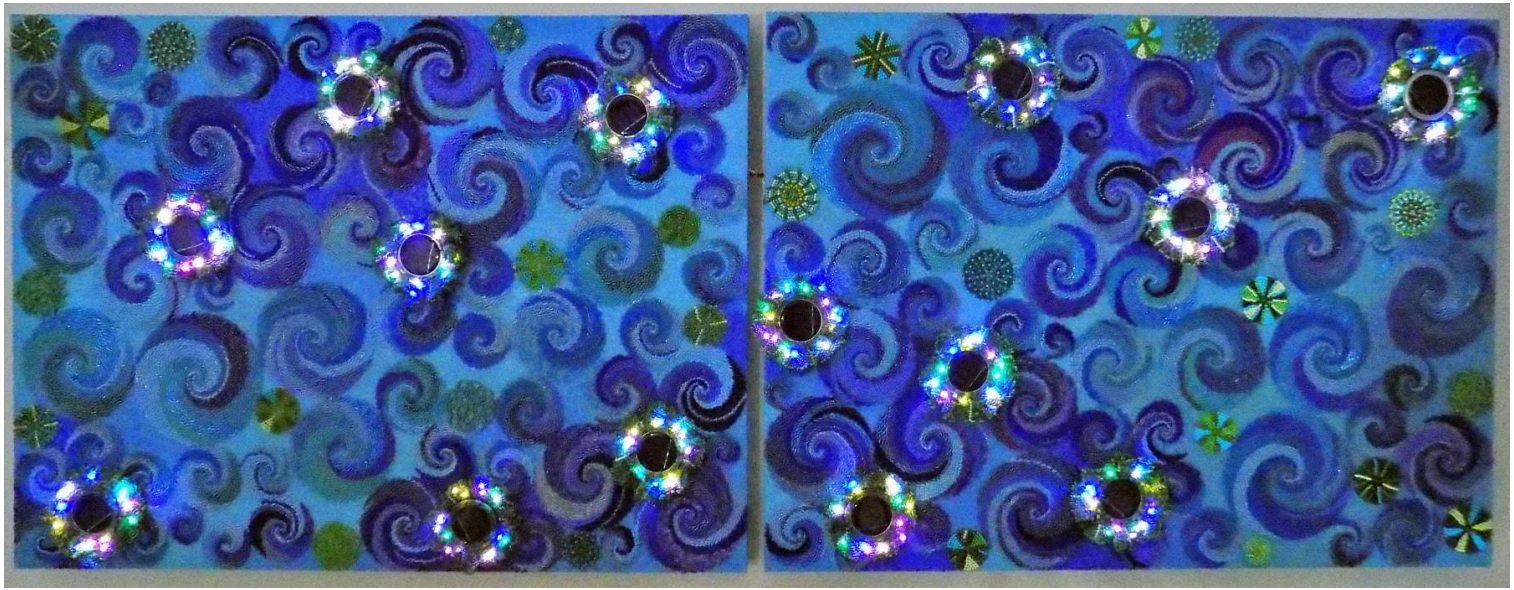
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