

DIANE ROSENSTEIN

## NEWS & RECORD

**Photography exhibit at the Weatherspoon looks to the heavens, by Bruce Buchanan (February 26, 2015)**



GREENSBORO — Since the beginning of recorded human history, people have looked to the skies not only to learn more about the universe, but also for artistic inspiration.

That artistic tradition continues with “Skyward,” an exhibition on display at UNC-Greensboro’s Weatherspoon Art Museum. “Skyward” brings together the work of four photographers and artists who share a passion for studying celestial bodies.

The exhibition is part of “The Globe & the Cosmos,” a universitywide celebration of the 450th birthdays of William Shakespeare and Galileo Galilei. Weatherspoon director Nancy Doll suggested an art display incorporating that theme and immediately thought of artist Sharon Harper.

“I knew her work, and I started doing research into other artists doing similar work,” Doll said.

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That research led her to Karin Apollonia Müller, Demetrius Oliver and Trevor Paglen.

"I thought they had unique takes on looking at the heavens," Doll said.

For example, Harper uses a telescopic lens and long exposures to create visually striking photographs. One photo features the moon in a variety of positions in the sky. In other photos, which Harper calls "Star Scratches," the long exposures make the stars look like streaks of light and color on the print.

Müller transforms NASA photos into artistic images. One piece is based on a photo of North America. The piece looks abstract at first, but, Doll said, "As you look at it, you can see where the Great Lakes are, where Florida is, etc."

Other Müller pieces look at the distribution of electric lights in space photos taken at night. The light patterns point out population centers like dots on a map.

Oliver is the only artist in the exhibition whose work includes other media, although he also has photos on display. His contributions to "Skyward" include two paintings based on 19th-century constellation maps. He also exhibits three photos of astronomical charts, to which he has added images of animals represented by constellations, such as the bear, the dog and the wolf.

Finally, Paglen's work "is very interested in surveillance," Doll said. His contributions to "Skyward" include two photographs that resemble paintings. But in each photo, there is a small dot — a surveillance drone. Doll said Paglen's work provides an interesting counterpoint to Galileo, one of the subjects of the UNCG celebration. Galileo turned his telescope outward, but Paglen reminds his audience that now there are eyes in the sky looking at us, she said.

Doll said the appeal of the heavens is universal, which explains why it is such an enduring subject for artists.

"Stargazing is something everyone has done in their lifetime," she said.

"Skyward" is on display at the Weatherspoon's Leah Louise B. Tannenbaum Gallery.