

## Charles Ross: Star Songs

April 13-May 12, 2024

Analog Diary is pleased to announce *Charles Ross: Star Songs*, an exhibition of works by the artist dating from 1966-2022. Anchored in Ross' decades-long pursuit of the visual poetry of light and the cosmos, and the relationship between these phenomena and humanity's lived existence, *Star Songs* presents images captured from sun and star light.

The works included in *Star Songs* represent four distinct series: Prisms, Solar Burns, Explosion Drawings and Pole Star paintings. Using concepts determined by earth-to-star geometries, Ross' chosen media harmonize in a symphony ultimately performed by the natural world of light itself.

The Prism works spread light, omit brilliant spectrums, and conflate spatial volume in optically confounding ways. Solar Burns harness the force of the Sun's light through a large lens, burning its path in smoke and ash on prepared wood panels, leaving traces of ambient factors like cloud cover or uninterrupted sunshine. Explosion drawings depict quantum level, invisible-to-the-naked-eye occurrences – the interaction of two photons, for example – using dry pigments in concert with explosives. In these three series, within each work exists a harmony between opposing predictable and natural random factors. The result is an *oeuvre* that equally describes the specificity of the natural world as it does the inherent poetry of its expression from moment to moment.

Ross' most recent series, the Pole Star paintings, reflect a central element of the artist's ongoing, monumental earthwork [Star Axis](#). Constructed within this architectonic sculpture and naked eye observatory, which is located on a remote mesa in the northeast quadrant of New Mexico, are numerous opportunities for simultaneous observation of past, present, and future cosmological alignments. Ross describes that “all of [Star Axis's] shapes, angles, [and] proportions are determined by earth-to-star alignments pulled down to physical form and human scale, offering a whole-body experience of the star alignments.” The central component of Star Axis, one of its several sculptural elements, is Star Tunnel, an eleven-story tall stairway in precise alignment to the Earth's axis. At the top of Star Tunnel is a stainless steel circular aperture through which all of Polaris' circumpolar orbits can be experienced throughout Earth's 26,000-year cycle of precession.

The Pole Star paintings consider this focused view of the night sky and meditate on our innate internal connection with the celestial pole and current north star, Polaris. Each Pole Star painting reveals the arc of the “moving” cosmos as the Earth pivots on its axis, rendered somewhat like a long-exposure photograph. These works on stretched canvas exemplify a further expression in the evolution of Ross' approach to art-making. The series evolved directly out of the process of building Star Axis, and Ross' time observing the pole star and contemplating the space around it.

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In the late 1950s, as an undergraduate Mathematics major at the University of California, Berkeley, Charles Ross (b. 1937, Philadelphia, PA) enrolled in a sculpture course to fulfill the degree's liberal arts requirement. His world changed irreversibly; during this semester, Ross encountered a world of great possibility in sculpture – one in which he could expand his well-honed background in mathematics and engage this knowledge alongside his existential interests. By way of the exploration such a studio-based class necessitated, Ross developed ways to apply the abstract and esoteric lines of thinking he focused on in his major coursework, eventually employing these modes of thought and understanding to achieve a different kind of aesthetic freedom and creativity. He completed his undergraduate degree in 1960 and matriculated to the University's graduate program in Studio Art immediately thereafter, completing his M.A. in Art in 1962.

In 1961, San Francisco's Dilexi Gallery held Charles Ross' first exhibition. Ross' subsequent work with the Judson Dancers in New York, during a year-long fine art fellowship, and choreographer Anna Halprin, in San Francisco, continued to inform his consideration of space and form. It was Sol LeWitt, who visited Ross' studio in New York while Ross was developing his groundbreaking large-scale prism sculptures, who enthusiastically recommended that storied gallerist and patron Virginia Dwan meet Ross. Dwan Gallery held Ross' first solo exhibition there in 1968 and continued to work with the artist until 1971 when Dwan closed her gallery. Later, in the early 1990s, Ross and Dwan collaborated with architect Laban Wingert on The Dwan Light Sanctuary, located on the campus of United World College (Montezuma, NM) and dedicated in 1996. The Dwan Light Sanctuary is a place of quiet reflection in which Ross positioned 24 large-scale prisms, aligned precisely with the sun to produce large solar spectrums that evolve and move throughout the circular architecture with the passage of the sun.

Charles Ross is a 2011 Guggenheim Fellow, recipient of a 1999 Andy Warhol Foundation Grant, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Eugene V. and Clare Thaw Charitable Trust, Someland Foundation, and McCune Charitable Foundation, to name a few. His works reside in the permanent collections of numerous institutions internationally, including National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; Des Moines Art Center; Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields, Indianapolis; Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe; and The Penn Art Collection, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Notable permanent site-specific works include Spectrum Chamber, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania (2018); Conversations with the Sun, Meiji University, Tokyo, Japan (2004); Spectrum 8, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C. (2004); Spectrum 123, Saitama University, Saitama, Japan (1999); The Dwan Light Sanctuary, Montezuma, NM (1996); Year of Solar Burns, Château d'Oiron, Oiron, France (1993); and Solar Spectrum, Harvard Business School Chapel, Boston, MA (1992).

Notable museum exhibitions featuring Charles Ross' work include: *Charles Ross: Hanging Islands*, as part of the exhibition *Spaces*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (2018-2019); *By repetition, you start noticing details in the landscape*, Bâtiment d'art contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland (2019); *Judson Dance Theater: The Work is Never Done*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2018-2019); *Cosmogonies – au gré des éléments*, Musée d'Art Moderne et

d'Art Contemporain (MAMAC), Nice, France (2018); *Los Angeles to New York: Dwan Gallery, 1959-1971*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2016-2017); *Ends of the Earth: Land Art to 1974*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2012); and *Atlas*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (2010). Ross is included in James Crump's 2015 film "Troublemakers: The Story of Land Art," an official selection of the 53rd New York Film Festival, alongside such other Earthwork artists as Vito Acconci, Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, Nancy Holt, and Robert Smithson.

In September 2024, Ross will unveil a new prism commission, *Spectrum 14*, at the Getty Center, Los Angeles, as part of its exhibition *Lumen: The Art & Science of Light*, produced in coordination with the forthcoming citywide exhibition series *PST ART: Art & Science Collide*. A feature length documentary on Star Axis is currently in production.

*Charles Ross: Star Songs* is on view April 13—May 12, 2024 at Analog Diary, 1154 North Avenue, Beacon, NY. Gallery hours are Friday-Sunday 12-6pm and by appointment. An opening reception for the artist will take place on April 13 from 4-6pm.

For further information, please reach Analog Diary at [info@analogdiary.art](mailto:info@analogdiary.art).