Anthropo/Sphere

An art exhibit by Dona Jalufka at IIASA (Laxenburg, Austria), August 2016

Art mirrors science, therefore mining science as a source for artistic material is not new. The blending of scientific themes and imagery with artistic interpretation provides an endless amount of possibilities for the artist to explore. The connectedness to both science and the creative challenges it evokes is in many ways artistic in nature. Because IIASA is home to many scientific disciplines, highlighting the interactions between humans and nature and their consequences, it provides a good base for art/science cross-pollination, and presents the art work in a scientific context, providing a symbol of such an interdisciplinary approach.

I have chosen “Anthropo/Sphere” as the title for this exhibit, derived from the combination of the terms “Anthropocene” and “Sphere”, because it combines two scientific themes that are prevalent in my work and also that of IIASA’s. The first part, “Anthropocene”, is a proposed new geological era, which is suggested to highlight the human influence on our planet and its geological processes. The second part, “Sphere”, recognizes the sphere of influence that humans have on nature (and *vice versa*), as much as the spherical character of many bodies within our reach (such as the Earth or the Moon). Its form is a constant in the natural world, and emphasizes the cyclical nature of many natural and man-made processes.

The combining of these two aspects allows us to look at spherical objects and cyclical processes within our human “sphere of influence” and to investigate, with artistic positions, the influence that we humans have on nature and on our own environment. For example, the beginning of the “Anthropocene” has been linked to the remnants of the first atomic bomb explosions in the atmosphere, but similar, purely natural, forces have formed circular impact craters on the Earth and the Moon.

Geological cycles, both over long periods of time or within our present-day environment, provide the background in the evolution of our planet, through its geological eras, culminating in our present-day “Anthropocene”, shaping the sphere of influence of humans for maybe not just millennia, but millions of years to come. My approach, as an artist, has been to make a link or association with science, specifically focusing on geology, astronomy, climate change, and evolution. In exploring various concepts and perceptions of these and other scientific themes, I seek an artistic link to the ever evolving world of science.

In the following paragraphs I give some examples of the work to be shown within the context of the theme of the exhibit.

Lunataler

A playful interpretation of an old saying that the moon is made of cheese. The wedge shape is universally recognized as that of cheese, and the craters, taken from the “Lunar Orbiter Photographic Atlas of the Moon”, have been painted onto the form. Placed under a glass dome, this sculpture serves as a literal allegory for Moon cheese.

Atomic bombs

Atomic bomb tests produced craters in the same way that meteorites produce craters on Earth; these experiments made unintentional, but very important contributions to our understanding of meteoritic impacts on Earth. Thus a man-made destructive and deadly force also had a positive aspect – their study has been used to help understand the workings of asteroid and comet impacts, which caused to the extinction of the dinosaurs and are a potential hazard to mankind.

Hood: 74 kilotons, Nevada, 1957
Able: 21 kilotons, Bikini Atoll, 1946
Truckee: 210 kilotons, Christmas Island, 1962

Space-Sky-Earth

A minimalist depiction of the cosmos, atmosphere, and a cross-section of the Earth. In considering the infinity of the universe, one must also recognize the finite components that make up our planet, and the fragile atmosphere that separates the two.

Lunar Hare

The juxtaposing of the hare and Moon addresses the special relationship that they have shared throughout history in various cultures, religions, and folklore. In some cultures, different images characterize the surface patterns on the Moon – including man in the Moon and woman in the Moon. However, it is the hare in the Moon that has captured the imaginations of so many peoples. As a lunar symbol, the hare is renowned for its fertility and shape-changing powers. Fertility is the almost universal meaning of the symbol of the Moon and the hare, dating back to ancient times.

Predominantly in East Asian folklore, the image of the hare as an inhabitant of the Moon came to Japan, and to China, from India with Buddhism. The *Jataka* tales, stories of the Buddha's previous lives, tell of the selfless hare in the Moon. In the *Kojiki*, a collection of legends preserved in oral form completed in A.D. 712, the Japanese hare of *Inaba* illustrates the folktale of “The Hundred Beauties of the Moon”. In China the Moon hare carries a mortar and pestle in which she mixes a potion of immortality.

In Aztec and other Mesoamerican legends, codices show the Moon as crescent-shaped vessel full of water in which the outline of a rabbit appears. In the month of May, the fifth full Moon of the year was called “Hare Moon” by colonial Americans.

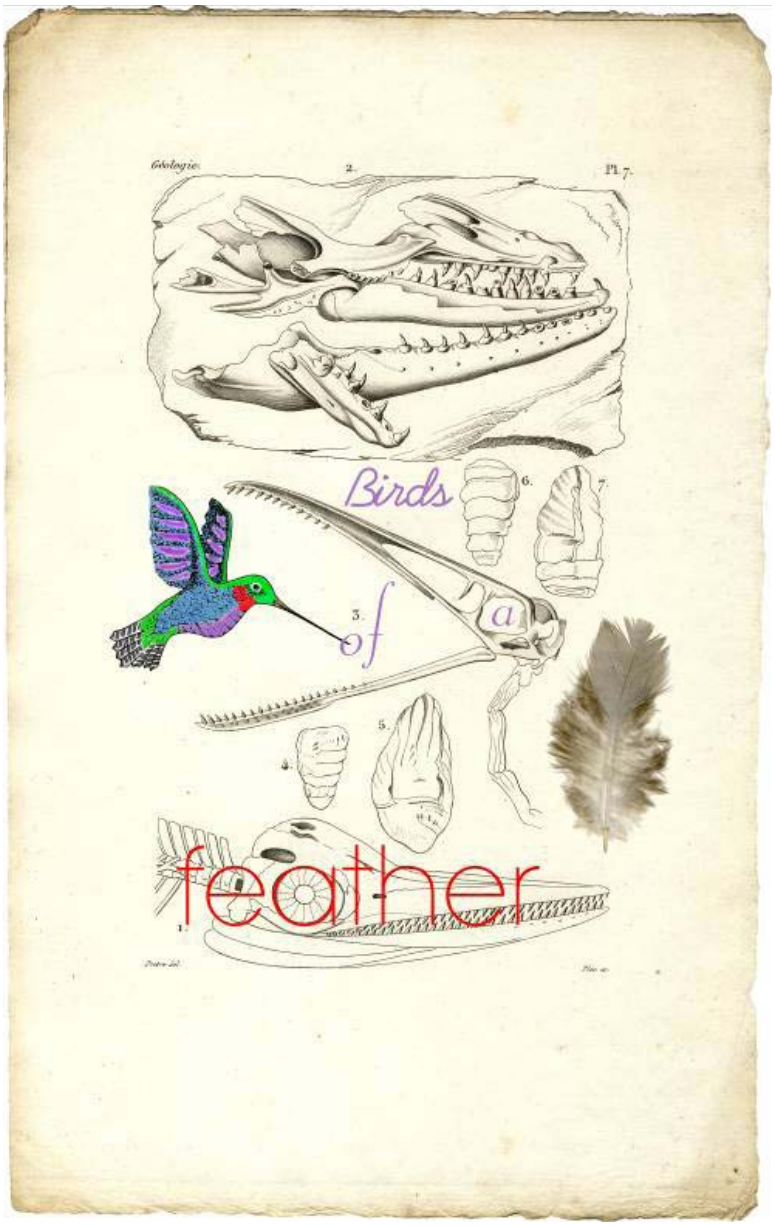
The myth of the hare in the Moon reflects many ancient beliefs. Pagans believed that seeing a Moon-gazing hare would bring growth, re-birth, abundance, and good fortune. In magic and witchcraft, the lucky rabbit's foot was to be taken by moonlight, for the rabbit was one of the Moon's creatures and bestowed lunar energy. The hare is known to be sacred to the Germanic goddess Eostre and eventually became known as the Easter bunny. In Africa there is a story of how the Moon goddess was so pleased with men and women that she sent the Moon hare down to Earth with a promise of immortality.

Geological Evidence

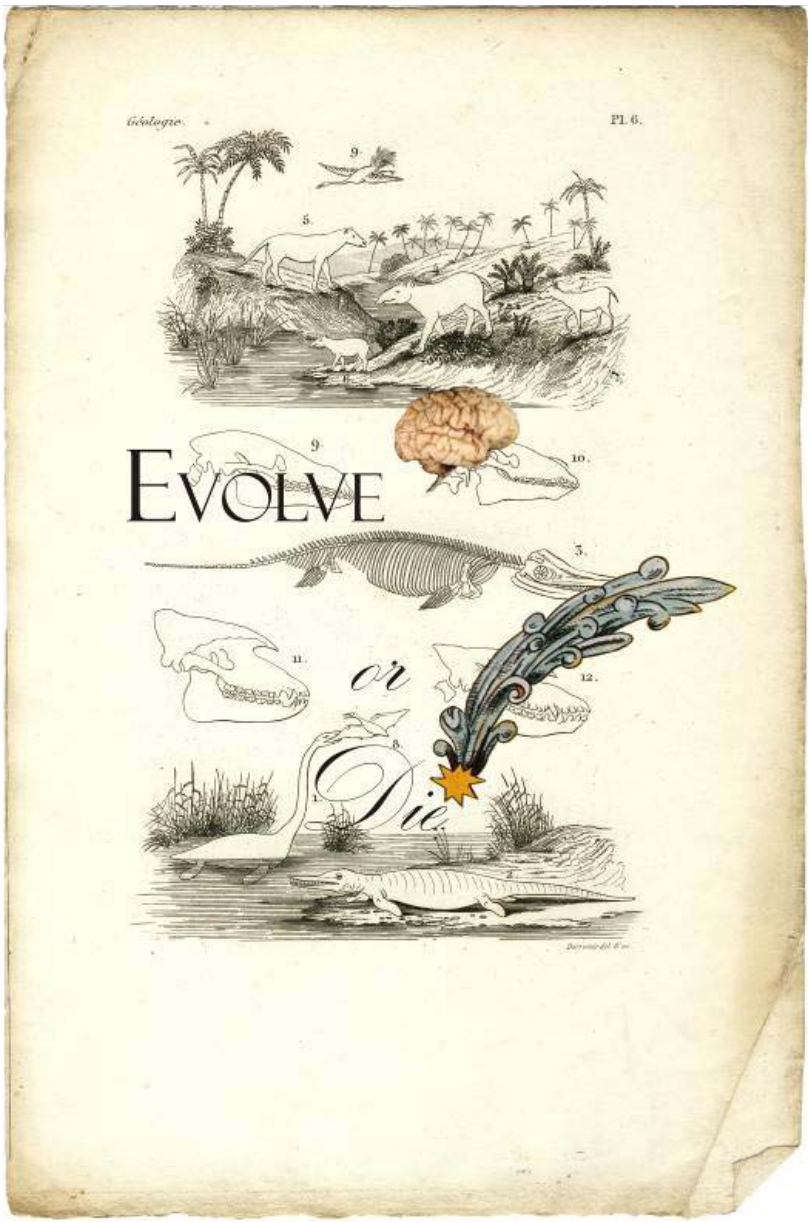
The inspiration for this triptych was taken from geological thin sections of the Cretaceous-Tertiary (K/T) mass extinction boundary. While this is a relatively realistic depiction of what one would see looking through a microscope, from an artistic perspective, it becomes pure abstraction.

Lunar Hare II 2015
oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm

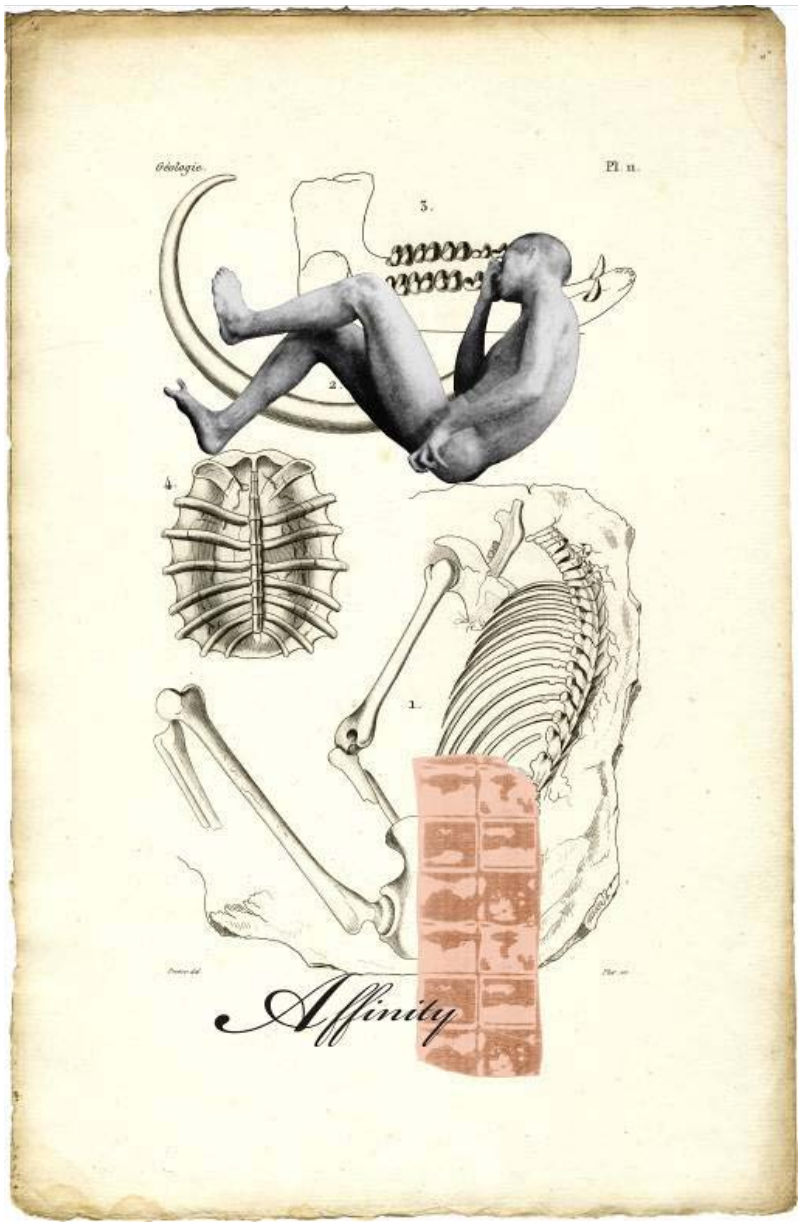
A Day in the Life of Evolution 2006
mixed media on canvas, 74.5 x 20 cm



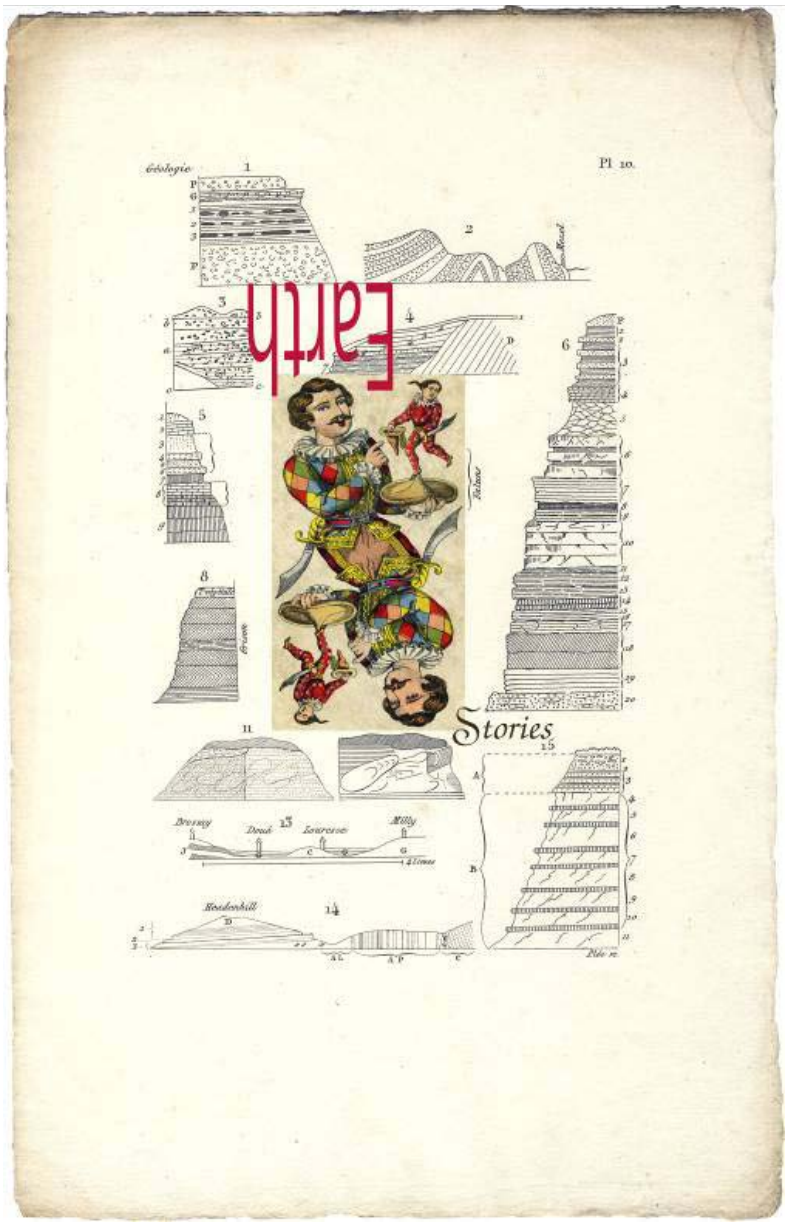
Birds of a Feather 2007
computer-altered mixed media on photo paper, 40 x 50 cm



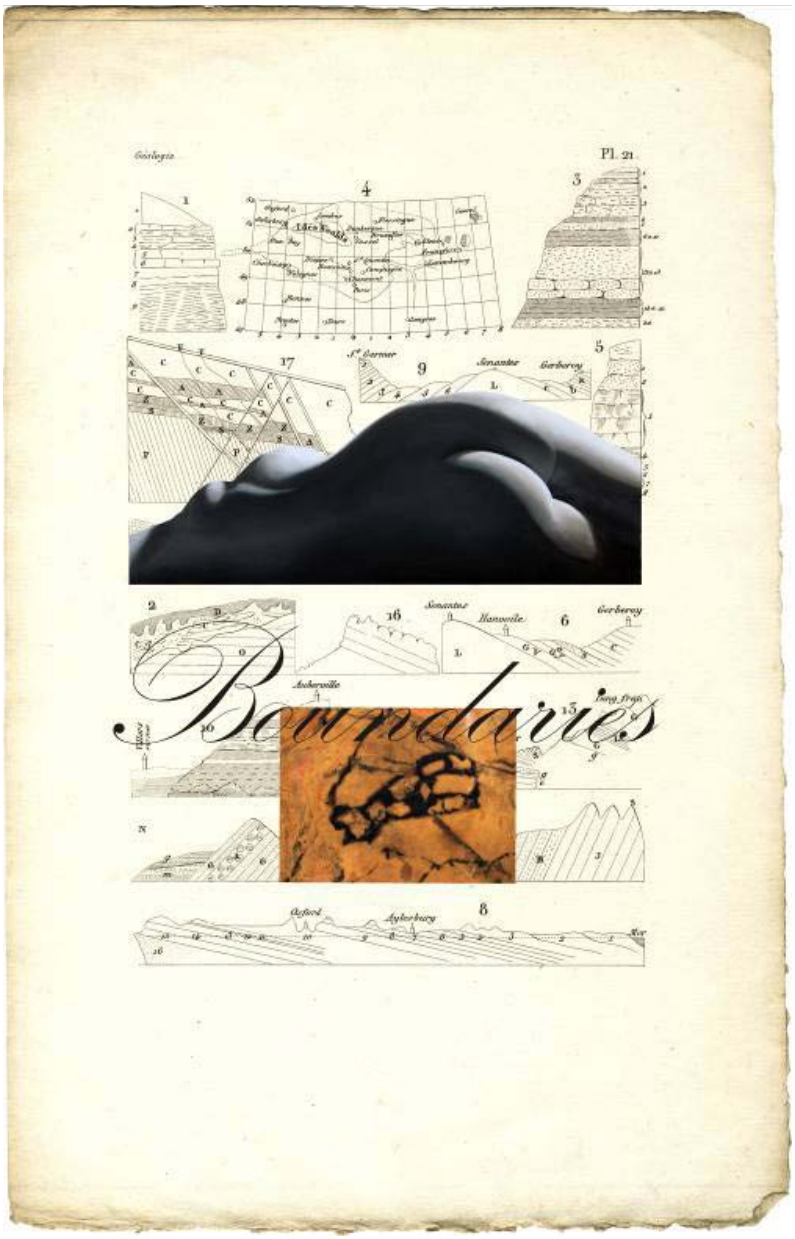
Evolve or Die 2007
computer-altered mixed media on photo paper, 40 x 50 cm



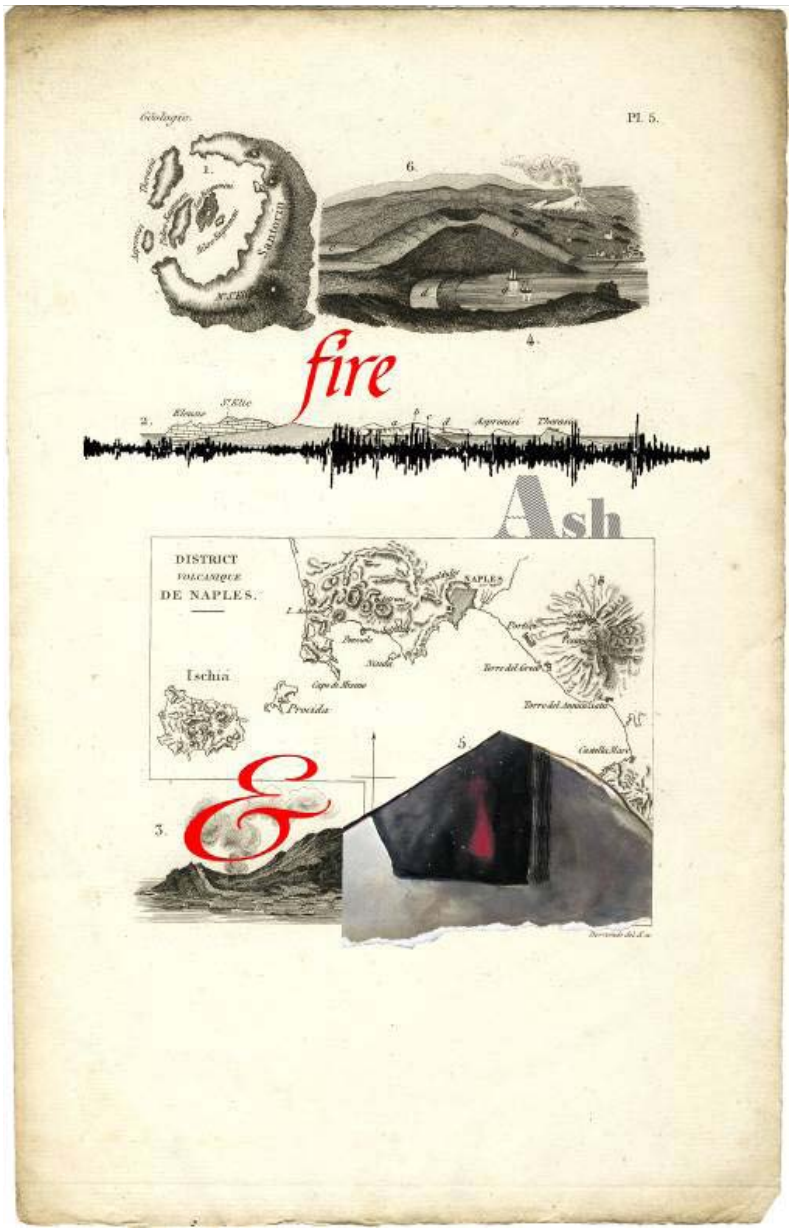
Affinity 2007
computer-altered mixed media on photo paper, 40 x 50 cm



Earth Stories 2007
computer-altered mixed media on photo paper, 40 x 50 cm



Boundaries 2007
computer-altered mixed media on photo paper, 40 x 50 cm



Fire & Ash 2007
computer-altered mixed media on photo paper, 40 x 50 cm

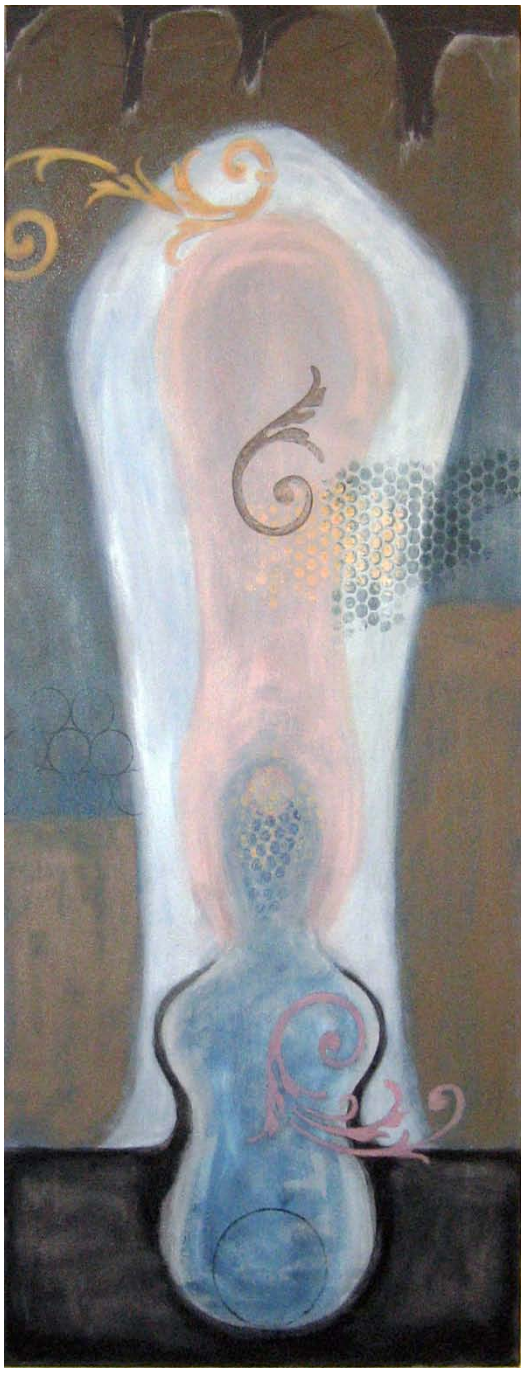
Hood 2009
oil on canvas, 80 x 120 cm

Truckee 2008
oil on canvas, 80 x80 cm

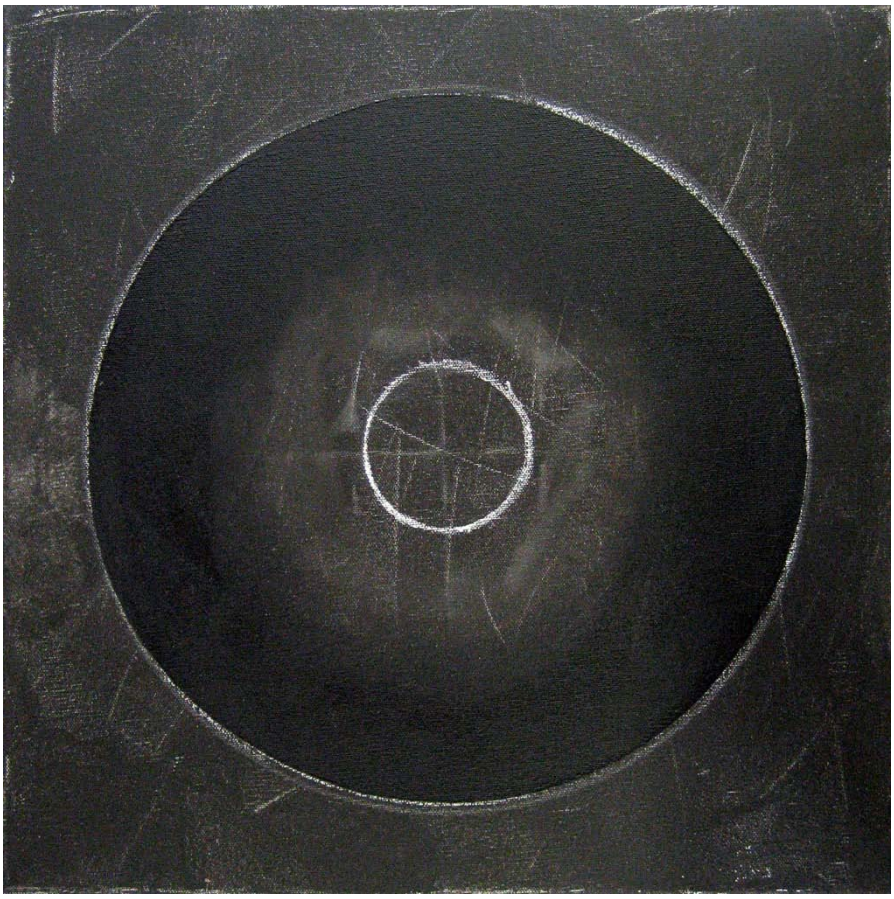
Able 2008
oil on canvas, 40 x 120 cm

Phases 2015
photographic process mounted on Dibond, oil on aluminum

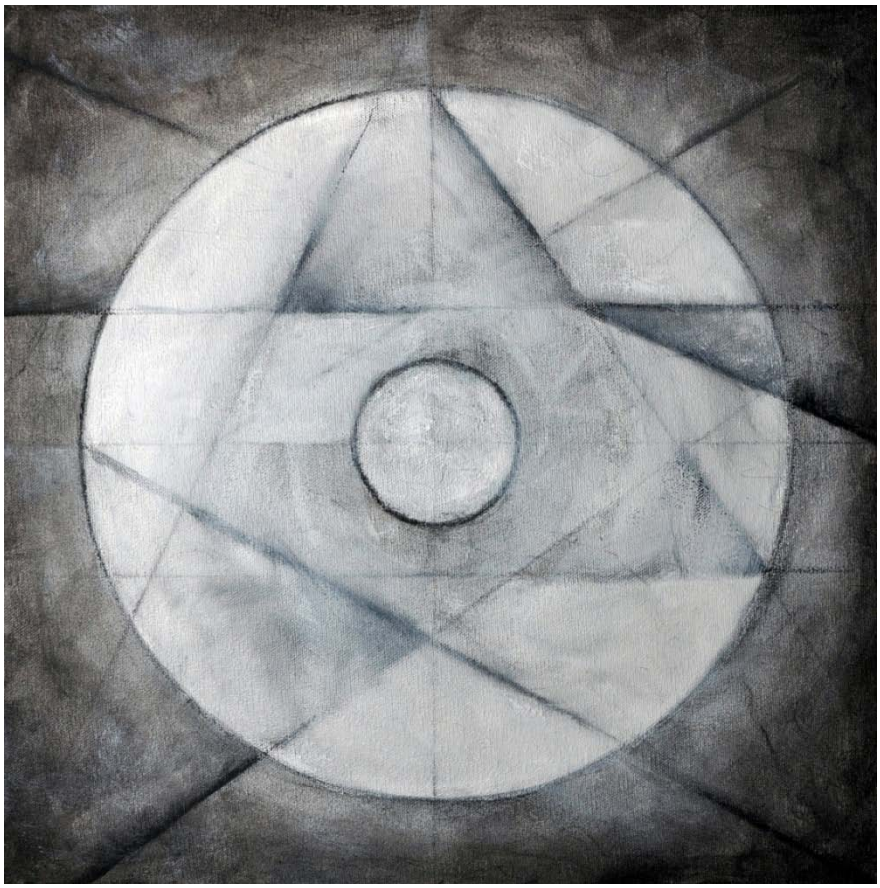
Lunataler 2007
oil on wood, plate, glass dome, 25 x 35 cm



Temperature and Density 2007
oil on canvas, 40 x 100 cm



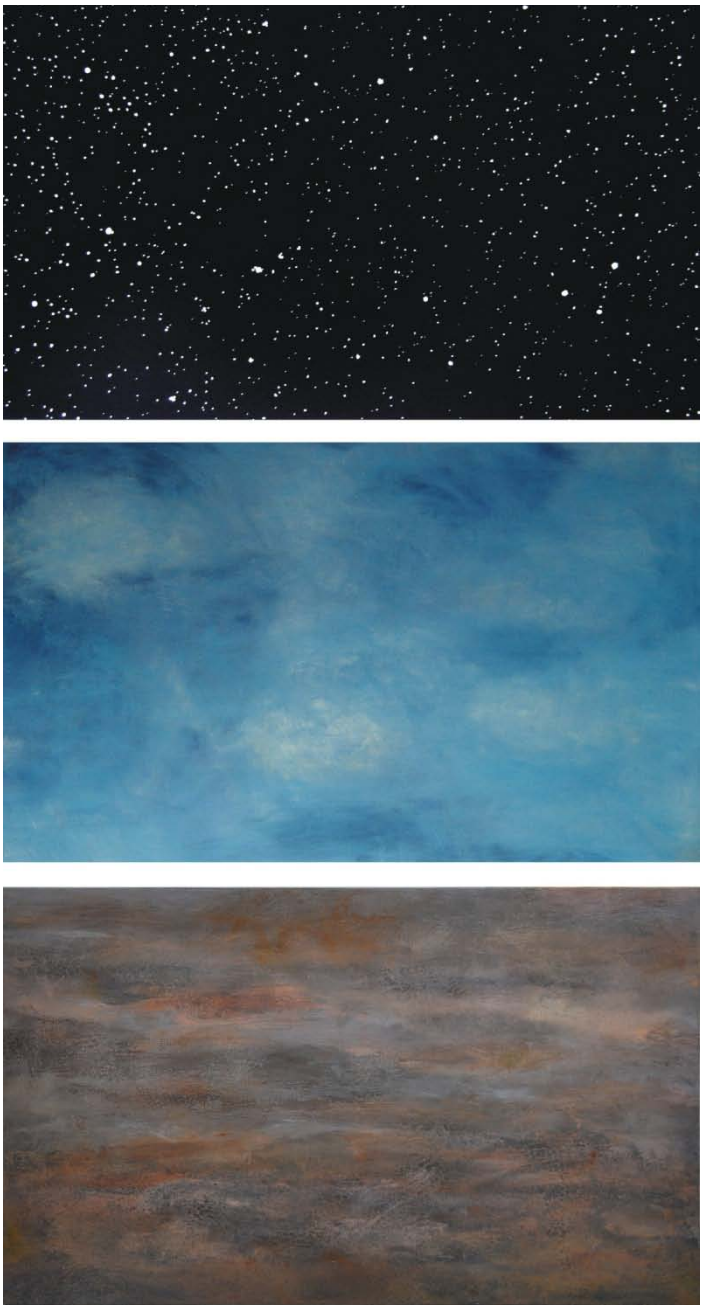
Black Hole 2006
mixed media on canvas, 40 x 40 cm



White Dwarf 2006
mixed media on canvas, 40 x 40 cm

Figure #38 2004
collage, mixed media on canvas, 40 x 40 cm

Geological Evidence (triptych) 2007
acrylic and oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm each



Space, Sky, Earth (triptych) 2007
oil on aluminum, 30 x 50 cm each

Natural Cycle 2014
Atmosphere, Biosphere, Hydrosphere, Lithosphere
photographs mounted on Dibond

Sounds of Impact 2009
photography, graphics on acrylic, 24 x 36 x 1.7 cm each

Caldera 2014
photographs mounted on Dibond