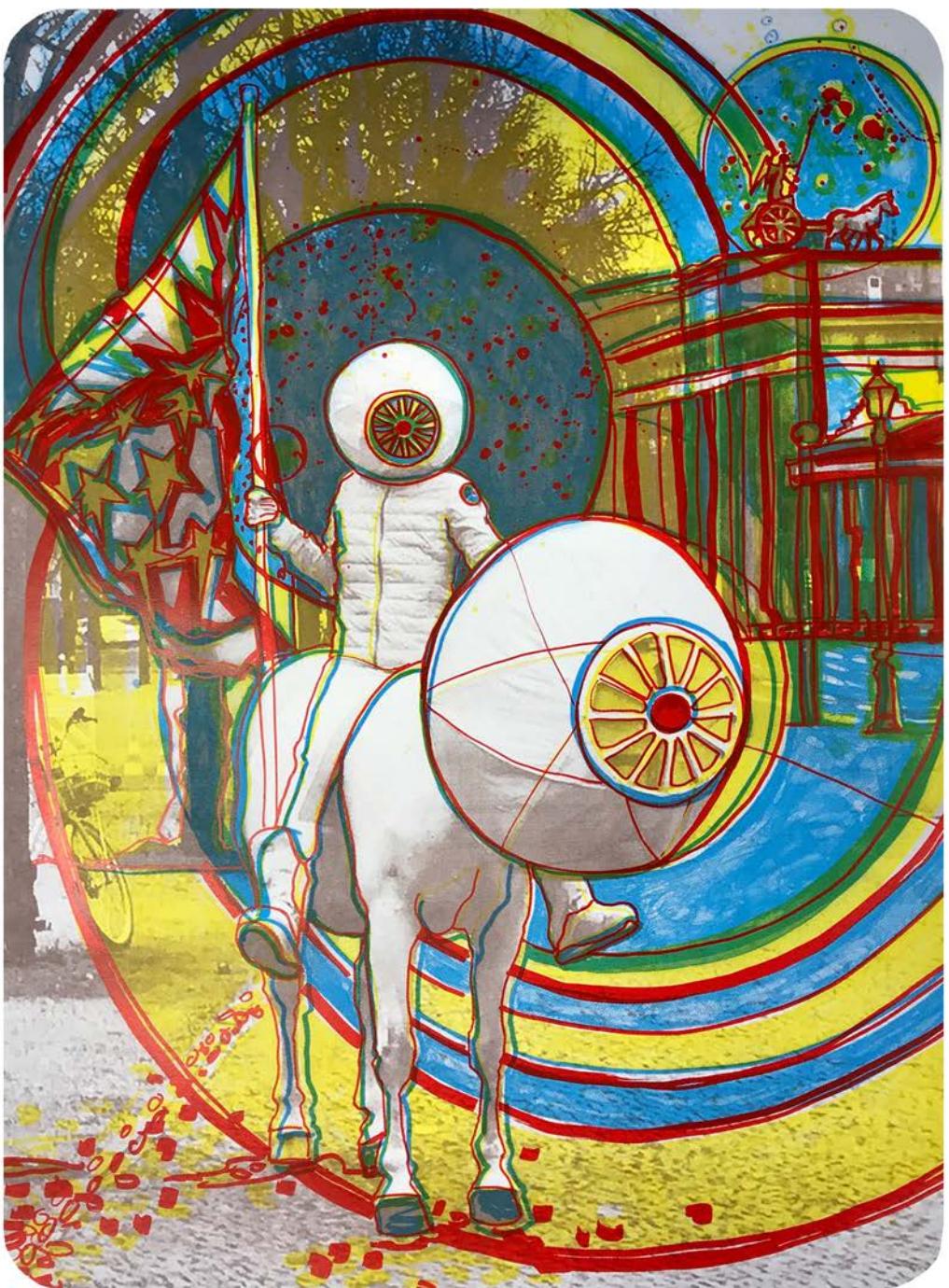


**The SpaceRider Cycle
2020**

Ati Maier



PREFACE:

"Somewhere in the universe, far away from here, there once lived a peaceful star which moved leisurely through the depths of space, surrounded by a group of peaceful planets about which nothing further can be told. This star was very large, very hot, and its weight was enormous.

"And here already we face the first difficulties as reporters. We wrote 'very far away,' 'large,' 'hot,' 'enormous': Australia is very far away, an elephant is large and a house is even larger; this morning I took a hot bath, Everest is enormous. Obviously, something is wrong with our vocabulary.

"If this story needs to be written down, then one must have the courage to leave out all adjectives that try to evoke amazement. Otherwise, one would only achieve the opposite effect—to make the story less complex. Our language is inadequate to write about stars; it seems absurd, as if one wanted to plow with a quill pen."

These lines were written by the Italian chemist and writer Primo Levi and he concluded that neither words nor numbers form a story "in the sense how this story wants to be told," namely such that the story evokes archetypes of our own recollection, as well as pictures of the collective memory.

The collection of the Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg contains two original paintings by the German-American artist Ati Maier. These explore the universe, not with words or numbers, but through images—lines, shapes, and colors to be exact—which bring the universe in her head somehow into the physical realm where they can be seen and felt by the viewer. Whole galaxies are mirrored in her abstract paintings; macrocosm and microcosm conjoined in kaleidoscopic composition. The artist says she wants to "paint places nobody has seen before." The visual intensity of her paintings set associations free and create in the viewers, in line with Primo Levi, their own galactic pictures.

Our gallery purchased these paintings in 2008 in the wake of the exhibition "Perpetual If," which Ati, together with Joe Amrhein, presented here for the first time. Around that time I had visited her on several occasions to prepare the exhibition and I still remember two of her concerns: "I want to be an astronaut on a space horse" and the idea to link everything with everything else. "When I work," she said, "I try to follow the lines, paths, and trails that connect my different ideas onto the paper."

Now, twelve years later, we are showing Ati's "SpaceRider Cycle," a complex video installation which the artist developed out of her spacescape paintings, and which carries her ideas forward through the medium of cinema. Across four films, Ati conjures a kind of mythical world, replete with autobiographical elements and scientific (as well science fiction) references. The protagonist, for example, is an alien-like figure riding around on a live horse, and serves as the artist's alter-ego. (She has worked with horses since childhood.) Yet the greater significance lies not so much in institutional culture, or even personal narrative, but rather in the social discourse which the films engender. Simply put: they deal with everything from metaphysics to community to cultural identity to memory and its effect on our perception of time.

An essential part of the installation is also the floor art in the center of the gallery. It is a circle with four segments in different colors (i.e. the medicine wheel of Native American mythology). During her stay in the American West, Ati was impressed by insights she gained into the beliefs of the Oglala Lakota Indians, whose philosophy strives for balance and is symbolized by the wheel. It explains both the movements of the celestial bodies and is also the foundation of holistic healing. Heaven, people, animals, the earth—all are interconnected in this dynamic symbol. Ati's installation is therefore spread across four walls which follow the colors and directions of the sky as symbolized in the medicine wheel. Black is the west, where the thunder beings live to send us rain; white is north, from which the great cleansing wind comes; yellow is east, where the light originates, and where the morning star lives to give wisdom to the people; and red is for the south, from which the summer and the strength to grow emanate.

The installation will be presented in the exhibition rooms of the Städtische Gallery in the east wing of Schloss Wolfsburg. Since Schloss Wolfsburg, with its four wings, is aligned to the four points of the compass, the location of the installation in the east wing has walls that exactly point to the north, south, east, and west.

The Map is Not the Territory is projected onto the north wall. This being the oldest work in the cycle, from the year 2013, the SpaceRider essentially follows a line of lights that mark the path of the first-ever human lunar walk in 1969. *The Placeless Place*, produced in 2016, is projected onto the east wall. *Prophecy of the Encounter* (2018) is on the south wall; and the most recent video, entitled *The Nearest Faraway Place*, is displayed on the west wall.

My gratitude goes out to all who helped realize this exhibition and book. Ati prepared herself the conceptual layout for the installation and supervised the book with great commitment. I thank her for her energy and her constant optimism. Thanks to the authors Brian Chidester, Matthew Day Jackson, Gregory Volk, Charley O. New Holz, and Marvin Goings for their contributions, as well as to Klaus Knoesel for his help in preparing the exhibition.

Many thanks also to the Lüneburgischen Landschaftsverband for the funding of the project and to Joel Goldfrank for his generous sponsorship. We also thank Galerie Jochen Hempel, as well as Adventureland Galerie in Chicago, Pierogi 2000 in New York, and Peyton-Wright Gallery in Santa Fe, without whose participation this project would not have been realized.

Susanne Pfleger



Talus Wind Medicine Wheel (2017), seven-color lithograph, 97x97cm
www.landfallpress.com



Twin Peaks SpaceRider (2009), animation video still.

INTRODUCTION:

It was during a trip in 2003 on the Blue Ridge Ranch, outside Worland, WY, that I first conceived of the SpaceRider. I was exploring the Wild West for myself on horseback and looking for new inspirations and discoveries away from modern civilization. Then suddenly it hit me: an orb-helmeted figure sitting on a horse (aka her starship).

The storyboard for my first animation video then came to life while still on that ranch and it was there that the SpaceRider appeared in any work of mine for the first time. The image—a large-scale painting—was titled *Twin Peaks*. I re-drew it in 2009 in a 3-D Maja program with the help of Remi Pawlowsky and we allowed the SpaceRider to roam freely through an imaginary landscape. A narrative angle kicked in around 2014 when I drew a comic book based on the character titled *Houston and the Space Rider* together with George Cochrane; and then from 2012-2020 I wrote and directed the “The SpaceRider Cycle” as four live-action films in which I performed as the character myself. It's come a long way.

The Map Is Not the Territory (2013) was the initial introduction of a live horse into my visual practice. This required a great amount of trust from the horse, given that we both had limited sight while wearing our space helmets, and I was fortunate to have had decades of training with horses, which was necessary for the non-verbal communication between us during filming. That same year I premiered the initial live SpaceRider performance on the fairgrounds in Thermopolis, WY, where I followed the outline of the first-ever (for a human) walk on the moon, e.g. the Apollo 11 mission of 1969. This line was drawn into the sand of the rodeo arena and the SpaceRider then followed it and planted her flag relative to where the astronauts planted the US one on the moon. The same performance will be executed for the first time in Germany in the park of the Schloss Wolfsburg during the opening of the “SpaceRider Cycle 2020” on May 8th.

In 2015 I had a vision that the SpaceRider would encounter the First Nation People on horseback and I joined the Slimmbuttes Riders on the Oomaka Tokatakiya Ride in 2016. One year later I returned to the Pine Ridge Reservation, SD, to shoot *Prophecy of the Encounter* with the Lakota Oglala Horse Nation. This is when I first came in contact with the medicine wheel, which then became the basic idea for the four-channel installation, wherein I show all four SpaceRider films placed in accordance of the four cardinal directions and the four colors of the Lakota wheel.

With the idea of the SpaceRider I finally found a way to combine my art practice with my love of horses and riding—each essential to my life since childhood. As a kid I read comics obsessively, and the *Silver Surfer* made the biggest impact on me, having the ability to travel through space on a surfboard. My SpaceRider has the same basic powers—albeit her intergalactic journey is made on horseback. By now she has become a permanent fixture of my life and art where we travel between the artistic world of my mind and the material world we each inhabit and share.

Ati Maier



THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY (2013)

Performed and Directed: Ati Maier

Production: Klaus Knoesel, FilmKunstKommerz Munich

Director of Photography: Timo Seidel

Postproduction and Special Effects: Patrick Saleh-Zaki

Composer: Andrew Wagstaff and Vostok

<https://vostok3000.bandcamp.com/album/ati-maier-space-rider-soundtracks>

Film Ratio: 16:9 in full HD

Length: 10:29 min

<https://vimeo.com/371421009>

Password: GoldiLock33

Spacehorse: "Rooster"

Helping Hands: Hrafnhildur Arnadottir aka Shoplifter, Brian Chidester, Steven Day, Katja Eilers, Barbara Hammer, Matthew Day Jackson, Julian Rosefeldt

Location: The Blue Ridge Ranch, WY, Badlands, Worland, WY, Red Desert, WY

Special Thanks: Susan Lasher, Chris Noah, Claire Pfister

Medicine Wheel Installation: Direction North-Color White Water-Grandparents-Winter-Night-Wisdom-Transition-Healing-Body

(Next four images are stills from *The Map Is Not the Territory*)

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THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY... but what to say of FOOTPRINTS?

"That's one small step for (a) man, one giant leap for mankind." (Neil Armstrong)

But was it? Really. Was our trip to the moon a giant leap for humankind? Yes, to this day, fifty years later, the Apollo space missions represent the fastest and furthest human beings have ever travelled in the cosmos. So, in a sense it was a "giant leap," but what does this say about the place to which we have leapt?

Unfortunately for the moon it is just the closest of far-away things providing a point to measure our success. One could also argue that science gave us the knowledge—before we ever went there—that it was part of the earth and not some alien body. Knowing what it was absolved our responsibility of having to explore its surface. We only had to get there, and in getting there we learned a great deal about technology, and how to use this technology on earth. After all, before the Mercury missions, the Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) did not exist. As for Gemini and Apollo... granola bars, tang, "cordless," the internet, digital navigation...

As long as there have been eyes on earth, even those peering up from some gelatinous blob in a muddy bog millions of years ago, WE living creatures have looked to the moon and stars in wonder. For millions of years this close but distant body has beckoned our curiosity, provided a thread woven into the fabric of our dreams, and played a key role in our mythologies and religions. The fact that we try to make sense of who we are and from whence and where we came forces us onto this strange podium in the animal kingdom. From this point many of us see earth and the space around earth as divined upon us as "resources" and the way we treat this space very much confirms the notion that it was given to us for our USE. The mountains, the seas, the "open" plains, and the air around us have provided for everything we know and carry our footprint in the sense that we have polluted all of it.

Ati Maier—whose work spans video, performance, animation, drawing, and painting—uses the horse not only for its narrative implications in her videos but also as a mark-making tool. The first time I saw one of her works was in Pierogi's Boiler Gallery in Brooklyn. It was called *The Map Is Not the Territory*. Therein Maier played the role of the "SpaceRider" who seemed to me to be a sort of benevolent peaceful being. I say this as the father of boys who are invariably drawn to the banal and seemingly endless stream of superhero films which are so prevalent that they require absolutely no mention. I frequently ask them the rhetorical question which goes something like this: "Who is IN all of those buildings that INSERT SUPERHERO HERE is destroying in order to save humanity?" I liken these films to the pointlessness of the highspeed police chase which is a brew of macho pride and a forced march of the status-quo born in patriarchy. We think nothing of collateral damage in the pursuit of so-called "justice."

But the SpaceRider is a different kind of superhero, one who does not know where she comes from, nor is specific in her mission. She is a superhero without explosions; a police officer without the chase; or for that matter guns (or even the police part). There is instead a somber expression—a desire really

—to make right something which has gone awry. And it is this point that I was initially struck by when seeing Maier's work.

The otherworldliness of the SpaceRider finds power in the symbols the artist uses which refuse to differentiate from some “evil other” within her mythos. She instead actively rights the wrongs of that very specific “evil other”—be it a religious entity or a political establishment—right here, on our earth, in our time. And the power of her expression does not stay merely in her work, but attaches itself somehow to our reality, and to our knowledge of things like the space race, the Cold War, and the continued attempts to land on the moon as a symbolic high mark of nation building. The planting of a flag by the SpaceRider in *The Map* is in direct reference to that of Neil and Buzz; and the path she travels is also the one these astronauts left on the moon in 1969. The heritage of said path and planted flag is considered a pinnacle of power down here on earth. SPACE FORCE. Yet in one fell swoop the SpaceRider reminds us that anyone with a helmet and a flag and a video camera can make the exact same thing happen. It's we viewers who imbue said actions with figural and literal power.

Maier is an amazing equestrian, and even to a layperson like myself she is immensely skilled, perhaps even masterful with her tool. It reminds me of the sort of mastery we see in the painting of Vija Celmins; which is to say it is understated. Maier is of course WAY wackier than Celmins, albeit her tool is evoked calmly, expertly, and without flair, which allows the novelty to feel somehow psychedelic, otherworldly. The control and symbiosis she has with the horse is one which could likely only be appreciated by fellow equestrians. But as an artwork, the expert use of the horse as a tool for mark-making, for artistic expression on film, greatly assists the viewer in accepting this character and the entire world created around her as being very much in place. It could even be likened to great acting where illusion is created by making the commonplace seem strange, and in the case of *The Map Is Not the Territory*, we are on the earth, but because the SpaceRider and the horse are one, it seems relatively easy to accept that earth is simultaneously a distant terra which has yet to find a name or be discovered. I also accept that the SpaceRider travels in the tail of a comet like the Heaven's Gate cult who “hitched a ride” in the tail of the Hale-Bopp Comet when it brushed earth in 1995 and who predicted the next perihelion is in 4380.

Maier trusts the viewer and also makes strong political content without articulating any of it verbally or through formal narrative tropes. Yet it's the wackiness of which I spoke earlier in passing that is the thing most artists are too afraid to entertain. For in the wrong hands it might undermine the authority of their work. Not so with Maier. Structure and expertise, paired with a lived relationship to her tools and willingness to be absurd, is the combination that has empowered this artist to disarm even the most cynical viewer.

Matthew Day Jackson







THE PLACELESS PLACE (2016)

Performed and Directed: Ati Maier

Production: Klaus Knoesel, FilmKunstKommerz Munich
Belladonna Productions NYC: Laura Weber, Hannah Wolfe

Director of Photography: Timo Seidel

Camera Operators: Klaus Knoesel, Patrick Saleh-Zaki

Postproduction and Special Effects: Martin Mayntz, Patrick Saleh-Zaki

Composer: Andrew Wagstaff and Vostok

Film Ratio: 16:9 in full HD

Length: 10:10 min

<https://vimeo.com/371422288>

Spacehorse: "Sponge Bob"

Horse Wrangler: Michelle Nardini

Space Helmet Design: Bruce Busby

Helping Hands: Brian Chidester, Katharina Fecher, Miru Kim, Ernst Knoesel, Erika Nessier

Location: New York City

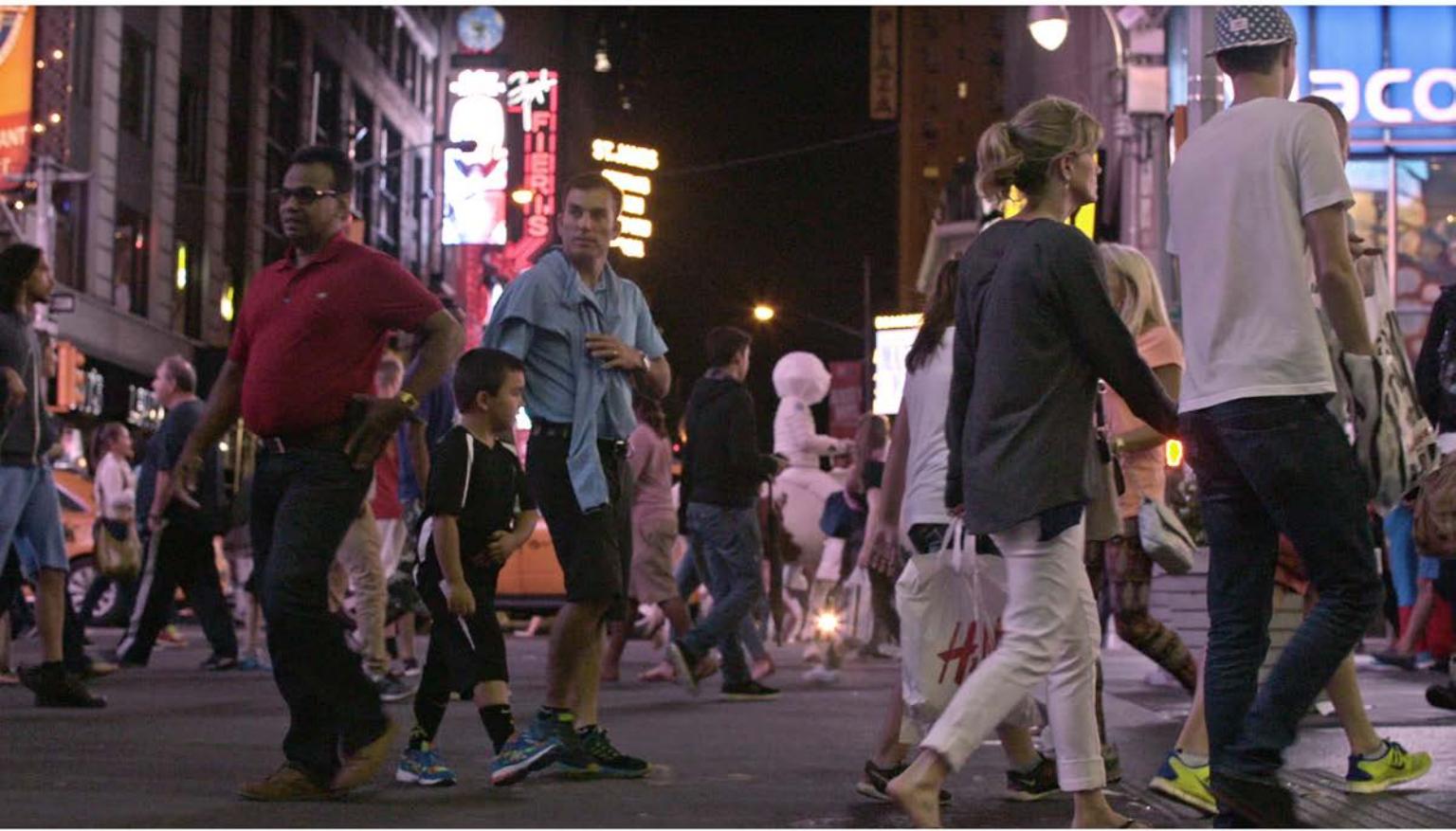
Special Thanks: Silke Abbelien, Nicolette Brause, Jochen Knoesel,

Medicine Wheel Installation: Direction East-Color Yellow Air-Birth-Spring-Sunrise-Beginning-Awareness-Inspiration-Spirit

(Next four images are stills from *The Placeless Place*)

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At a mere ten minutes long, Ati Maier's video *The Placeless Place* (2016)—the second in her series of remarkable SpaceRider videos—feels expansive, even immense. It's an eccentric road movie with science fiction flair, an inquisitive odyssey involving exploration and investigation into alien places, and it opens in a riveting sequence.

A sustained shot of the star-filled heavens leads to a shimmering, horizontal, cosmic body in space, perhaps a remote nebula, galaxy, or galaxy cluster, such as you might see in images section from the Hubble Space Telescope website. This majestic structure slowly morphs into Manhattan's East Side skyline, with its marvelous jumble of buildings arrayed next to and reflected in the East River, which is so placid and glassy that it could also serve as a huge mirror—heaven and earth are conflated. Manhattan is curiously, even astonishingly, empty in this time-lapse sequence, except for occasional darting car lights which echo the streaking meteors seen previously in space. It also seems precarious; a wondrous city perched at the edge of an abyss. The rising sun, glinting off building windows, forms a flickering, enigmatic, ever-changing visual code. Receptors are open and information is being exchanged. The city is communicating with the cosmos and vice versa. Music by the electronica band Vostok adds to the air of mystery, exploration, and suspense.

Then she appears, Maier's horse-riding, space-travelling alter-ego, the SpaceRider, visiting far-flung worlds across the universe. She appears in a very particular place: the forlorn remnants of the 1964-65 World's Fair in Flushing Meadows Park, Queens, including its famous Unisphere, a 12-story, stainless steel globe featuring a map of the world, and the futuristic Phillip Johnson-designed New York State Pavilion, which is now pretty much the rusted entropic ruin of a utopian American dream. She is dressed in a makeshift white space suit with a DIY orb or bulb helmet obscuring her face. (The horse also wears an orb on its head.)

The World's Fair, which began with such optimism and promise, yet was eventually afflicted by declining visitors and economic troubles, heralded a glorious future which had as its chief theme "Peace Through Understanding." Occurring more or less at the advent of the Space Age, it also heralded a future of stupendous technological accomplishments, including ultra-modern, mind-blowing transportation (the United States Space Park, sponsored by NASA and the US Defense Department, as well as the fair, was a major attraction). Fifty-five years later much of the American infrastructure—from roads and bridges to trains, tunnels, and subways—is timeworn at best, crumbling at worst. The World's Fair was also an unabashed celebration of American capitalism at mid-decade, with many of its pavilions and exhibits mounted by some of the top corporations of the day: Lockheed, General Electric, General Motors, Westinghouse, Ford. Yet from today's vantage, globalized capitalism, for all its achievements, has ushered in staggering income inequality, whopping environmental damage, and the existential threat of climate change.

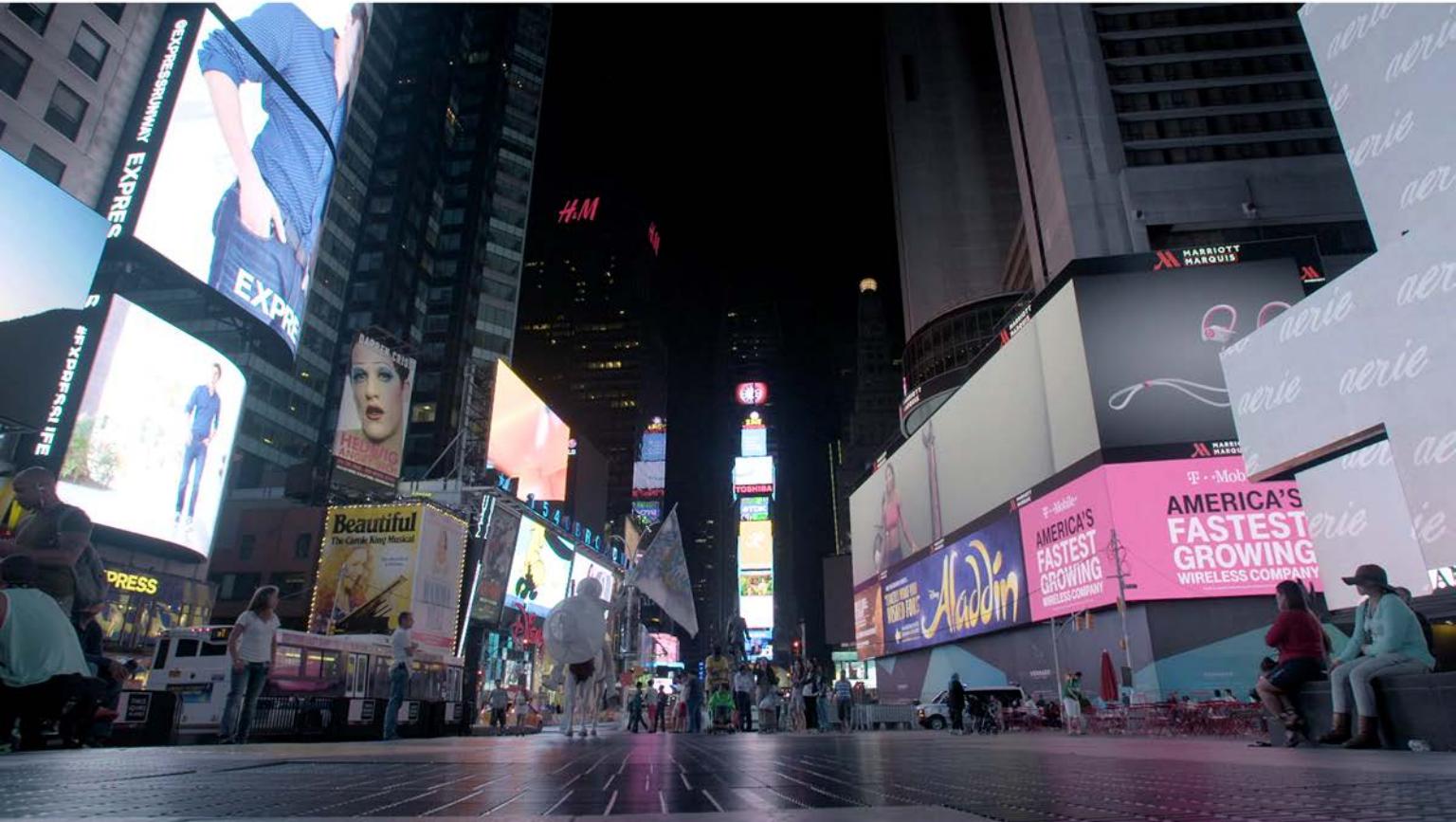
You next see the SpaceRider slowly progressing up the East River Promenade and passing the Williamsburg Bridge; the only other person visible, very briefly, is a jogger. The mood, like so much else in this video, is solemn and thoughtful, the pace is willfully slow. While an outsider, she evokes and repurposes quintessential American tropes (including the horse with all its mythic connotations of freedom and independence). She is a twenty-first century rider on the East Coast suggestive of nineteenth-century pioneers heading west. She is emblematic of a cosmic, space-traveling future, yet also an ambassador from a pre-automobile, pre-subway past, perhaps even an ancient past when

horses were the principal vehicles. She is a stalwart, courageous individual in a country that prizes such figures to the point that they constitute a national mythos, one which, of course, has long since been cheapened and conscripted into alluring consumer products: instead of being an explorer, these days, you can own a Ford Explorer, Nissan Pathfinder, or GMC Yukon. She is a visitor or perhaps an immigrant from a faraway place, just like millions before her in New York, fresh off the boat at Ellis Island. She is a wide-eyed (you imagine because you never see her face behind the helmet) visitor coming to New York City for the very first time—again like millions before her.

And when she finally enters Times Square, the SpaceRider appears decidedly eccentric, a subversive version of a recurring motif embedded in the national psyche from innumerable Western movies: a solitary stranger riding into town. What she encounters is not really a place at all—hence the video's title—but rather an information-packed zone full of pervasive advertisements, invasive electronic signs installed on tall buildings, teeming images, and copious slogans, all hawking products, touting companies, promoting entertainment, and influencing behavior. Life here is dominated by an omnipresent array of manipulative messages persuading everyone to consume, then consume some more, be entertained, and also be patriotic. This is what the SpaceRider observes and navigates through as she attempts to find and claim a place for herself—a neighborhood shorn of its history and transformed into a consumerist spectacle.

She pauses in front of a McDonald's with its golden arches and passes yet another Starbucks location. You wonder how these familiar things might look to a total outsider. "The next big thing is here," a gigantic ad for Samsung's Galaxy phones announces, but this could refer to the SpaceRider as well (an extraterrestrial visit would indeed constitute "the next big thing"). What she carries with her on a staff is her own handmade, painted flag, showing stars, worlds, and herself on her horse; it is a personal emblem, a symbol of her interstellar selfhood and mission. She plants it in a subway grate, instantly recalling one of the most famous American scenes of all: astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin planting an American flag on the moon. This special flag is indicative of her cosmic, unconventional, much-traveling life and it connects as well with Maier's unconventional and much-traveling life as an artist in Germany, New York, New Mexico, and other parts of the American West. It also contrasts so extremely with all the mass culture signs, images, and advertisement texts nearby surrounding the SpaceRider, including another American flag high up on a flagpole.

Gregory Volk



WAYNE
BRADY

BEN
SCRIVENS

BRING
CHANGE
2MIND

Start the conversatio
End the stigma.

ngChange2
anStigma

An
merica
Crisis

azine's
Year!

CLEAR CHANNEL
SPECTACOLOR





PROPHECY OF THE ENCOUNTER (2019)

Performed and Directed: Ati Maier

Production: Klaus Knoesel, FilmKunstKommerz Munich

Director of Photography: Timo Seidel

Camera Operator: Nils Trümpener

Postproduction: Julian Cohn, Diana Moh, Patrick Saleh-Zaki

Postproduction Support: Bastian Berzau, Christoph Troost

Special Effects: Thorsten Binte, Patrick Saleh-Zaki

Layout: Adrian Kaluza

Color Correction: Wilfried Polte

Support Team: Kai Keppner and UFA Serial Drama

Storyteller: Charley O. New Holy

Catering: Julie Goings

Composer: Andrew Wagstaff and Vostok

Film Ratio: 3840x 2160-UHD, 25 FPS, aspect 1,78:1

Length: 14:16 min

<https://vimeo.com/371419280>

Spacehorse: "Rooster"

Location: Pine Ridge Reservation, SD

Thanks: The Slimmbutes Riders, Marvin Goings, Lorrel Goings, Hailey Goings, Norman Two Bulls, Duane Blind Man, Glen Brewer, Beverly Brewer, Kaydence Brewer, Michael Callie, Brian Chidester, MaKenzie Cottier, Kobe Cottier, Kyle Joe Richards, Taylor Charging Crow, Randell Brave Heart, as well as the Smoking 44 Riders: Charley O. New Holy, Viola New Holy, Debra Bird and her baby

Special Thanks: Marvin Goings and Charley O. New Holy for providing the horses, and also to KarLee Goings and Chris Pfister

Medicine Wheel Installation: Direction South-Color Red Fire-Adolescence-Summer-Noon-Growth-Change-Heartstruggle-Soul

(Next four images are stills from *Prophecy of the Encounter*)

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INTERVIEWS (Conducted in August 2019 on the Pine Ridge Reservation)

Charley O. New Holy is Oglala Lakota. His family tree goes back to Sitting Bull. He lives on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and manages the Smoking 44 Riders. He is a storyteller and is the one telling the creation story in the film with everybody sitting around the campfire. He also rode with his wife and family in the film.

Charley O. New Holy: The creation stories that were handed down to us, are part of every day life, cause they teach you a value system, they teach you the history of where we came from and also this history of where we going. In the story it mentions how we came from the stars and one day we will go back to the stars. That is always a hope.

The SpaceRider coming down to earth and observing the people that are here... that is may be part of the inlaying stories of our creation story. There is always that search when we pray to our grandfather, we always look up to the stars, we look up to the sky. On our territory here we have what is called the seven sacred sites. Our people also come from the star system, the Pleiades, which are seven stars. During certain times of the year these seven stars line up with the seven places here on earth within our Lakota territories. Each sacred place is given a certain time to go to and prey and leave offerings. One of them is the Big Horn Medicine Wheel.

The film plays into the part that we are in the future and the SpaceRider comes and there is nothing left here except old people and young kids and they learning how to survive. They learn how to reconnect with the earth that was something forgotten many years ago. They learn how to bring the horses back into their lives and depend on it. We were always depending on it to travel and hunt game and survive.

In our prophecies the (blue) Star will come close to earth in about 2024 and we don't know what will lie ahead of us then. The Star will warm the earth and the world order will change. The stars tell us something and we have to watch the stars like our ancestors did.

In a sense, with this film we have the little girl who makes the connection with the SpaceRider, and they ride together on the SpaceHorse. People talk about alien abduction; maybe they need something from us. We don't know. There are all these theories, what happened to all these missing children and women, you cant find them. There are all these possibilities of impact like the people could have killed the SpaceRider. They maybe had councils and were thinking: what if we kill the SpaceRider and more will come? So in the film they let him observe and may be something good will come from that? This is always the hope because for the Native Americans it did not work out like that.

This film gives you a lot to think about. It's like opening up a Pandora Box.

Marvin Goings is Oglala Lakota and his family tree goes back to Crazy Horse. He lives on the Pine Ridge Reservation and breeds horses. Most horses in the film come from his herd. He is the elder of the Goings family and the head of the Slimmbutes Riders which make up most of the riders featured in the film. His grandson Lorrel Goings and his granddaughter Hailey Goings are the two scouts in the film and also live on his ranch. Ati Maier met him and his family back in 2016 when they took her on the "Oomaka Tokatakiya" Ride. It is Marvin who made this film possible.

Ati Maier: Can you tell me about the importance of horses in your life?

Marvin Goings: The horses are important as they are basically family members. They learn to trust us because we never hurt them in any way. They are a blessing to our family and the youth who come to ride them. It's part of our culture and we teach the youth how to ride and to care for a horse. We also bring children from the emergency youth shelter and let them take the horses on rides. I believe it helps them out in their situation because it gives them something to look forward to in a good way. The horses heal them by just being near them. The rides we take the children on are culturally connected. They show the youth the history of our people and places they have travelled and the deeds they have done. We have the "Oomaka Tokatakiya" where we follow the historic trail Chief Bigfoot walked with his band from the Sitting Bull camp down through ND to surrender at the Pine Ridge Reservation in SD. When they arrived 300 women and children were massacred by US Army soldiers. We have the "Crazy Horse Ride" where he lead his people from camp Sheridan to surrender to General Crook at Red Cloud Agency. Four months later he was killed. We have the "Little Bighorn Ride" to remember the victory of our people over General Custer. We take the youth to these actual spots where history has occurred and TRACE THE PATHS our ancestors travelled.

Ati Maier: What does the horse mean to you, growing up on the Pine Ridge Res?

Lorrel Goings: The horses help us to grow as people and keep us grounded with our roots. They help us remember where we came from and they are also important for the future because we will always have the horses. They really are medicine. When you lose yourself you can get on a horse. They are especially important for the little ones. They all want to learn to ride, and when we take them on the rides, it keeps them away from the bad things in the reservation.





CREATIONSTORIES (as told by Charles O. New Holy)

A long time ago, before this place was created, we came from the stars. Our people were on this star, which left the Pleiades constellation, and it came down to earth. This is how we were born. The way they described it, it was a thunderbird, and it brought us life.

One day this prophet came and told the people he spoke to the stars. He told the people to get ready because there was a time coming where great gifts will be come to us if we lived this way of life. He told the people to gather sacred foods and bring them to the mountain. They did so and prayed. Four days later they saw the star coming, this star was trailing a medicine wheel, and on it was an eagle feather. It just came by and stuff started to fall from the sky and plants started to grow. The people called it the tree of life, because it showed them what to do, how to build the tipis and make clothes. One day, when they were getting too greedy, the creator took the tree of life from them. You have to live with each other. When you pray in a circle as one, whatever you pray for, that's the way it's gonna be.

A couple hundred years later another prophet said the same thing. The stars told him: "One day they gonna come after us and we will not be here no more." But he also said not to fear, another star will come, and when this star comes, it will take us back home. This star is coming so close to the earth that it's gonna warm us. When this star goes by IT IS GONNA SING A SONG.

The next prophet after that said: the stars will send a great warrior. This warrior is gonna appear on a black horse with spots on it (like stars). This great warrior will lead our people into salvation and this horse is gonna bring other horses with him that are gonna be different colors.

There was something that my grandfather told me. He said one day we all gonna go back to the horse. The horse is SACRED and is a relative to our people. Its four legs represent the four directions. The mane represents our people. The ears listen to the creation of life and what it sees is the FUTURE. The back represents the LAND. The tail represents harmony and balance. It has a strong heart and is fearless. Horses can see spirits too—good and bad. When you ride a horse you almost become tranquil. You become ONE.

The creation stories that were handed down to us are part of every day life cause they teach you a value system. They teach you the history of where we came from and also this history of where we going. In the story it mentions how we came from the stars and one day we will go back to the stars. That is always a hope.



Tree of Life (2019), ink on paper, 60x60cm.



THE NEAREST FARAWAY PLACE (2020)

Performed and Directed: Ati Maier

Production: Klaus Knoesel, FilmKunstKommerz Munich

Coproduction: Laura Weber

Director of Photography: Timo Seidel

Drone Operator: David Karbowiak, Timo Seidel

Camera Assistant: Sabine Boehlck, Steven Gülow

Postproduction and Special Effects: Patrick Saleh-Zaki

Postproduction Support: Isabell Mae Reif, Christoph Troost

Color Correction: Wilfried Polte

Location Manager: Philipp Eichhorn

Support Team: Kai Keppner and "UFA Serial Drama

Composer: Andrew Wagstaff and Vostok

Film Ratio: 16:9 in full HD

Length: 18:54 min

<https://vimeo.com/382776728>

Spacehorse: "Ruletk"

Location: Berlin, Germany

Wrangler: Nikole Sinka-Weber and Team

Helping Hands: Brian Chidester, Amanda Coulson, Matthias Hamann, Angelika Pfaffengut, Laura Stromp, Steff Tiefenbacher

Sponsored by:

medienboard

BerlinBrandenburg

Special Thanks: Silke Abbelin, Brigitta Manthay

Medicine Wheel Installation: Direction West-Color Black Earth-Infancy-Autumn-Evening-Harvest-
Insight-Development-Mind

(Next four images are stills from The Nearest Faraway Place)

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www.atimaier.com



If, as the poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote, “The only journey is the one within,” then the challenge for the artist is to externalize that journey in a form that can be shared. This is undoubtedly the aim of Ati Maier’s SpaceRider Cycle which began in 2013 with the heavily-symbolic *The Map Is Not the Territory*. Packed with intertextual references to science, religion, pop culture, postmodern philosophy, and her own autobiography, the film laid the groundwork for an artistic ecosystem that essentially filters modern life through the lens of an absurd alien-like creature who rides around on horseback.

The second and third films introduced topicality to the artist’s mythos and included commentaries on everything from technology and consumerism to identity politics and the de-colonization process. With *The Nearest Faraway Place* (2020), the culminating chapter in the cycle, many of these references are repeated. The SpaceRider follows the outline of the former Berlin Wall, for instance, as she did the Apollo 11 moonwalk in the first film; observes an urban epicenter (as in film #2); and revisits several locations of historic tragedy (as in #3). In the final film the setting begins—following a descent to earth from deep space—with the SpaceRider trotting alongside the last remnants of the old Wall. Given the symbolic implication of walls in today’s political context, it stands to reason that *Nearest* is Maier’s most political statement to date, yet I contend it is about something else entirely: time.

The first indication of this comes about two minutes in when we see the SpaceRider’s long march on horseback against the Wall edited four times using the classic cross-cut device to depict the passage of time. The figure then finds herself in the middle of Potsdamer Platz, the city’s commercial center, where additional Wall slats are encountered. An iconic statuary from the Brandenburg Gate (of the goddess Victory being pulled by four horses) punctuates several long shots of the SpaceRider turning every which direction in what feels like a maze of urban design and nationalistic memorandum. That the figure looks up at this emblem of the past and seemingly relates to its design as a non-terrestrial being could be seen as the artist trying to make some moral sense of her own background as a German (and of what part of that is permissible in today’s context). The answer shall likely remain open to interpretation, even if Maier herself tells us what it meant to her, yet if I had to guess I’d say it is symbolic of the relativity of time as expressed in mythological figures, and hence opens up a topic far deeper to our experience than either history or identity. Bear with me here.

According to Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity, time and space are connected, projecting our universe in four dimensions, otherwise known as space/time. Our experience of past, present, and future are more or less an illusion, and in reality exist simultaneously. Yet unlike spacial dimensions, wherein we seem to be able to move around freely, when it comes to time, we are imprisoned—experiencing it in one direction only, which we refer to as “the arrow of time” or simply “now.” Through the language of cinema, however, and via the ad-hoc “alien” outfit the SpaceRider wears (an almost absurd exemplar of the ease with which we humans are willing to suspend our disbelief), our minds are able to transcend time briefly and experience it cathartically for as long as we watch the film. In fact, if walls are essentially the lies we tell which keep us from being close to each other, then perhaps seeing ourselves outside the space/time continuum can yield some kind of liberating effect.

Once the SpaceRider takes leave of downtown Berlin, in fact, and of the Wall, we begin to experience something of the relativity of time, which gets distorted through the cross-cutting of scenes and locations, strange overhead angles, and the presence of an ominous outdoor structure which may or may not translate immediately to the non-German viewer as the Nazi-built stadium of the 1936

Olympic Games. Outside the arena's back entrance, the SpaceRider rides her horse over an outline of the former Berlin Wall, here reduced to fluorescent pink and orange masking tape—the shape of which, as seen from above, takes on the aspect of a time-keeping device.

If our experience of these locations is merely symbolic or political, then it seems to me we are deprived of something personal, something emotional. Which is why I think the film isn't so much a commentary on German history as it is a shared experience of interdimensionality—one where the SpaceRider provides a kind of antigravitational force that permits us to mine the past for connections which actually transcend time (rather than bind us to it). This is precisely why we hear the voice of an elderly woman speaking in German in the background at this moment. It is a recording of Maier's deceased mother talking, the fundamental message of our hearing it having little to do with the actual words she speaks and everything to do with the way emotions, and in particular love, seem to come from somewhere outside of time (i.e. the lost recording serving as a memory).

It is through time, in fact, that we understand our own mortality; and grief inevitably follows as we pass through time. Against this the SpaceRider gives us not so much science as poetry. Love does not operate according to the arrow of time, and experiencing it through an amalgam of imagery concerned with travel and the sound of the human voice, reminds us that the emotional part of any journey has rarely to do with the spatial aspect of returning home, and almost everything to do with the feeling of separation, demarcated by having lost time with the ones we love. It stands to reason then that the SpaceRider has been drawn to this specific place in time in order to hear an audio transmission that can create the connection her character needs in order to find purpose (i.e. a journey to love).

At this point in the film, the SpaceRider makes an almost inexplicable detour to the top of a mountain, wherein she experiences the silence of life from a distance. This is also where the context of the previous films falls away most extremely and we are left to rely on a single clue for our understanding of its message. The figure enters into a hollow geodesic dome on a mountaintop called Teufelsberg (Devil's Mountain)—an American espionage center from the Cold War era—which matches the shape of the dome the character wears upon her own head (a world within a larger world). The idea of the SpaceRider's helmet as representative of a world aesthetically generated seems to suggest that each dome, or each person's mind, within our world (or dome) functions somehow like a portal, with each one containing other worlds within worlds within worlds. It is a dizzying proposition, I know, and one that goes down better having toked heartily before considering it. Yet if creativity is the bridge by which we engage the porous interconnectivity of the multiverse, then it would seem to me that love is the quantifiable force that allows us to navigate the vast dimension of time. And in that sense *The Nearest Faraway Place* presents us with a version of the SpaceRider which seems to have been transmitting a kind of transcendental message to us all along.

Yet in reality the figure is only a product of the world we actually live in (and has been generated by Maier through the various artistic mediums and icons she imitates). If through the SpaceRider we somehow experience a bit of the timeless, it is only because we have already tapped into that ourselves, having collectively created the languages used to express it. And in that way the orb helmet the SpaceRider wears isn't a piece of interstellar travel gear at all. It's a mirror.

Brian Chidester







OFFICIAL SELECTION

Moscow Shorts
INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

JUNE
2019



WINNER
2019



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MANIFESTO
FILM FESTIVAL
2019



Semi-Finalist
FilmArte Festival
Berlin 2019

OFFICIAL SELECTION
**Best Global
Shorts**
Season 2, 2019

Prophecy of the Encounter (2019), film still with laurels.

FILMOGRAPHY:

2020

- Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, premier of *The Nearest Faraway Place*/four-channel installation of the entire *SpaceRider Cycle*
- Screening of *Prophecy of the Encounter*, official selection and award winner of the American Filmatic Arts Award

2019

- Prophecy of the Encounter*, semi-finalist of the Film Arte Festival Berlin, Germany
- Screening of *Prophecy of the Encounter*, official selection of the Moscow Shorts ISFF, Moscow, Russia
- Screening of *Prophecy of the Encounter*, official selection of the Manifesto Film Festival Wreath, Amsterdam, Holland
- Screening of *Prophecy of the Encounter*, winner of the SFF, Short Film Factory, Bucharest, Romania
- Screening of *Prophecy of the Encounter*, official selection of the Chico Independent Film Festival, Chico, CA
- Screening of *Prophecy of the Encounter*, official selection of Best Global Shorts, Chennai, India

2018

- Galerie Jochen Hempel, Berlin, premier of *Prophecy of the Encounter*
- NMArt Museum, Santa Fe, NM, installation of *The Placeless Place* and *The Map is Not the Territory*
- Screening of *The Placeless Place*, New York Short Film Tuesdays, Brooklyn, NYC

2017

- Adventureland Gallery, Chicago, IL, screening of *The Placeless Place*,
- Screening of *The Placeless Place*, official selection of the Manifesto Film Festival, Amsterdam, Holland
- Screening of *The Placeless Place*, official selection of the South London Shorts Festival, London, UK
- Screening of *The Placeless Place*, finalist at the Ironstar International Short Film Festival
- Screening of *The Placeless Place*, official selection of the Lisbon International Film Festival, Portugal

2016

- The Boiler/Pierogi 2000 Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, premier of *The Placeless Place*

2015

- Galerie Jochen Hempel, Leipzig, Germany, screening of *The Map is Not the Territory*

2014

- Five Points Gallery, Torrington, CT, screening of *The Map is Not the Territory*

2013

- The Boiler/Pierogi 2000 Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, premier of *The Map is Not the Territory*



Silvergirl (2020), ink on paper, 19x19cm.

SELECTED SOLO SHOWS:

“Peyton Wright Gallery Welcomes Ati Maier,” 2019,
Peyton Wright Gallery, Santa Fe, NM

“The Encounter,” 2018,
Galerie Jochen Hempel, Berlin, Germany

“Birdman and the SpaceRider” (Featuring Chris Pfister), 2017,
Adventureland Gallery, Chicago, IL

“The Placeless Place,” 2016,
Pierogi 2000 Gallery, New York, NY

“Parallel Universes,” 2015,
Galerie Jochen Hempel, Leipzig, Germany

“Houston and the SpaceRider,” 2014,
Five Points Gallery, Torrington, CT

“The Map Is Not the Territory,” 2013,
The Boiler/Pierogi 2000 Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

“Space Rider,” 2009,
Dogenhaus Gallery, Leipzig, Germany, Basel Dogenhaus Gallery, Basel, Switzerland

“Perpetual If (Information Friction)” (Two-Person Show), 2008,
Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg, Germany

SELECTED GROUP SHOWS:

“Bringing Together: Recent Acquisitions,” 2018,
NMArt Museum, Santa Fe, NM

“Remote Viewing,” 2006,
Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MI

“Remote Viewing,” 2005,
Whitney Museum, New York, NY

“Markers,” 2001,
Venice Biennial, Venice, Italy



Star Man (2020), ink on paper, 19x19cm.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING THIS BOOK POSSIBLE:

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Spinnereistrasse 7,D- 04179 Leipzig, Germany
jochenhempel.com

Adventureland
1513 N. Western Ave, Chicago, IL 60622
adventurelandgallery.info

Peyton-Wright Gallery
237 E. Palace Ave, Santa Fe, NM 87501
peytonwright.com

Pierogi 2000 Gallery
New York 155 Suffolk St., NY, NY 10002
pierogi2000.com

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Inner Planets (2016), ink on paper, 60x60cm.