

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 Slimmbutttes 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