

FLY ME TO THE MOON

Glasgow-born Katie Paterson's thoughtful art works tackle complex scientific issues with playfulness and poetry. David Kettle speaks to the woman who broadcast Beethoven to the moon

A fragment of moon rock sent on an 'orbit' of the Earth via airfreight courier; billions of years of fossil history embedded within a simple necklace; Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata sent to the moon and back. Glasgow-born Katie Paterson's startling works tackle some of the biggest scientific questions around – in evolution, cosmology, ecology, genetics – with an astonishing sense of poetry.

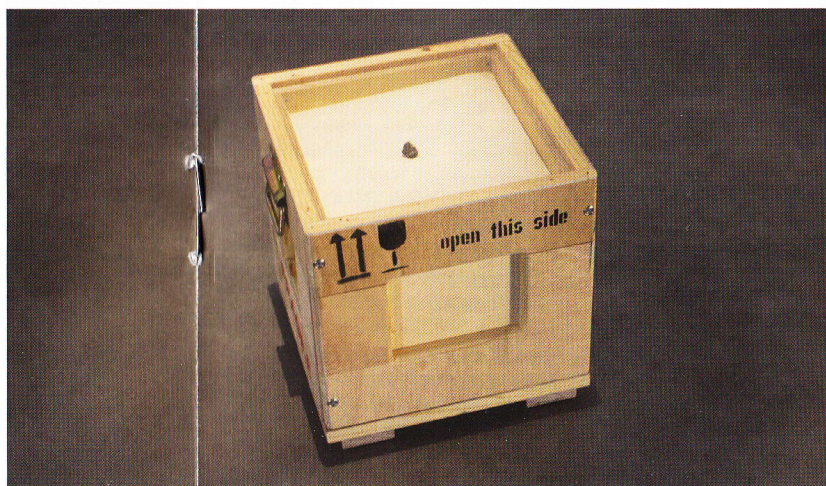
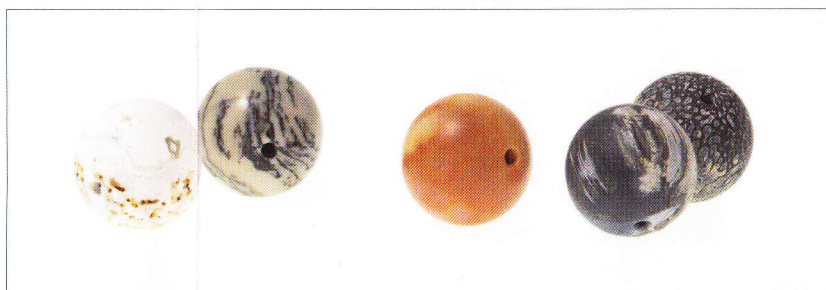
'It wasn't as if I was a science boffin at school – quite the opposite,' she admits. 'My interest came a few years ago when I lived in Iceland, and I got a sense of the expansiveness of nature: the blackness of the sky, the brightness of the midnight sun, the vast landscapes, the energy.' The country itself played a vital role in subsequent works: *Vatnajökull (the sound of)*, for example, invited viewers to call a mobile number to hear the creaking and cracking of the eponymous Icelandic glacier through a microphone she'd submerged in its lagoon.

Since then, Paterson has established a network of scientific contacts throughout the planet to inspire and advise on her work, as well as taking on artist-in-residence positions at University College London and the Sanger Institute, Cambridge. 'I've adopted a very bold approach, so that I find people through their subject areas, and I just contact them directly asking for specific advice on, say, a gamma ray burst.'

For her Jupiter Artland installation, *Earth-Moon-Earth (Moonlight Sonata Reflected from the Surface of the Moon)* (pictured right, top), Paterson translated Beethoven's moody piano sonata into Morse code, transmitted it to the moon's surface using radio waves, then reconstructed a musical score (performed by a ghostly, playerless digital grand piano) from the corrupted, incomplete signal she received back. 'There were plenty of technical challenges, and a network of people involved. Moonbouncers are quite an underground community, but eventually I worked with quite an authority in the field, who sent the signal from Southampton and received it in Sweden.'

Her second GENERATION show, *Ideas*, is an extensive exhibition at Edinburgh's Ingleby Gallery, and it includes her deceptively simple *Fossil Necklace* (pictured right, middle), which captures the history of life on Earth in a single string of beads, as well as *Second Moon* (pictured right, bottom). 'I've posted a fragment of the moon around the Earth, and it's going to be touching down at the exhibition after having been in the air for a year, being shipped around the planet. Almost everything you can imagine has happened with it – it's been stuck at customs, it's been through quarantine, and we're always on the phone to UPS. There's a lot of the absurd in the piece.'

Jupiter Artland, Thu 17 Jul–Sun 28 Sep; Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh, Fri 27 Jun–Sat 27 Sep.



TAKE 5

SCIENCE-INSPIRED ARTISTS

- PAUL CARTER -

Many of Carter's works deal with science and faith: in one project, he sent a message up into space (for extraterrestrials or even God), but there's been no reply as yet.

▲ *Icaro Menippus [X2]*,
Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop,
Sat 2–Sun 31 Aug.

- DALZIEL + SCULLION -

Their work explores mankind's relationship with nature and our interaction with the planet's ecology.

▲ *Tumadh: Immersion, An Lanntair, Stornoway, Sun 6 Jul–Sun 31 Aug; Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh, Fri 1 Aug–Sat 13 Sep.*

- ILANA HALPERIN -

Ancient geology, tectonic plates and the birthdays of volcanoes inform Halperin's works.

▲ *Learning to Read Rocks, An Tobar, Tobermory, until Sat 26 Jul.*

- CHRISTINE BORLAND -

Forensic science informed Borland's early work, and later pieces ask how we establish scientific fact.

▲ *GENERATION: 25 Years of Contemporary Art in Scotland, Scottish National Gallery, Sat 28 Jun–Sun 2 Nov.*

- STEVEN HURREL -

North Sea Hitch explores our relationship to the natural world.

▲ *Timespan, Helmsdale, Sutherland, until Sun 31 Aug.*