

# YOU ARE MADE OF STARDUST

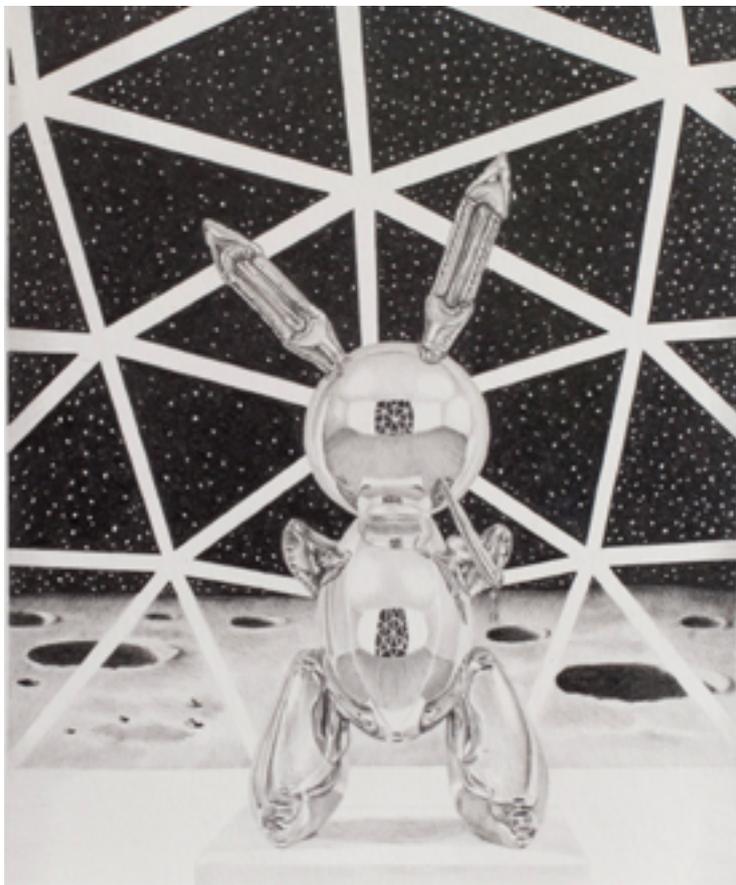
George Bolster

8 February – 20 March 2020

Solstice Arts Centre is delighted to present *You Are Made of Stardust*, a solo exhibition of new and recent work by New York-based Irish artist George Bolster. The exhibition at Solstice Arts Centre features two immersive installations, drawings, tapestry and films, and includes new work shown for the first time. The artist's research-based works were developed during his multi-year residency at the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Institute (SETI), and subsequent interviews with Kepler Mission scientists from NASA Ames in Northern California.

To date, there have been nearly 4,000 exoplanets found by scientists at NASA, and there are over 100 Billion planets in the Milky Way. An estimated 40 billion of these could be earth sized and in the habitable zone that could support life. Bolster is entranced by the possibilities inherent in their search, the possibility of finding life, and new worlds for the long-term survival of our species. The implications of the search are manifold, including the idea that we are not the only life forms, the sheer scale of the universe makes it incredibly likely, that there is life on other planets.

Supported by



*Proposition 2: Museum of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art, Interior with Rabbit, 1986 by Jeff Koons, 2018.* ↑

The exhibition begins with ***Mentor 1: Planetary Protector Margaret Race, 2018*** and ***Mentor 2: Seth Shostak SETI Scientist and Star Trek Cameo, 2018*** talking head style films in the ***Gallery Foyer Area***. Bolster splices together the artificiality of the green screen technique heavily associated with science fiction and a deconstructed documentary form featuring disassociative images to create a sense of disorientation between what we accept as real or fictional in representational terms. He then fuses this with the often bewildering facts revealed by his interviewees, staff from NASA and SETI (The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Institute). On the left, Margaret Race discusses her role as planetary protector for Earth and the importance of her mentor Astronaut Scott Carpenter to her career in science, and on the right Seth Shostak who discusses the search for extraterrestrial intelligence, his radio show *Big Picture Science* and his cameo in *Star Trek*.

***Gallery One*** features a film projection, ***The Moon, McMoons, and the Moon Museum, 2016*** and a new work entitled ***The Only Intelligent Life Yet Found, 2019*** exhibited for the first time.

***The Moon, McMoons, and the Moon Museum, 2016*** is a film (43 mins) that conflates the past, present and future possibilities, suggested by space exploration. Beginning with the first art object to be unofficially sent to the Moon aboard the Apollo Twelve in 1969: The Moon Museum. Multiple narratives run simultaneously through the piece addressing the ideas behind the Moon Museum; a multicultural narrative of human fascination with the Moon; McMoons the archive for the mapping of the Moon in preparation for the Apollo Missions and site of the Lunar Orbiter Image Recovery Project; and the Moon as a solution to the question of how we save our collective human cultural production, in the face of the environmental damage caused to this planet. It features interviews from artist Forrest Myers, and scientists Laurance Doyle, Jill Tarter (both SETI Institute) and Douglas Vakoch (METI) who discuss the Moon from a variety of perspectives. ***The Only Intelligent Life Yet Found, 2017*** asks viewers to reflect on being ‘intelligent life’ and to consider their possibilities as change agents in both the continuing evolution of our species and the conservation of our planet.



*Our Life Mirrored by Two Suns: Kepler 16b, 2019* ↑

**Gallery Two** features a large panoramic textile installation and four related textile works. ***Our Life Mirrored by Two Suns: Kepler 16b, 2019*** is a large textile installation in which Bolster depicts an imagined version of the planet Kepler 16b, which was discovered by SETI scientist Laurance Doyle, as part of the Kepler Mission on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2011. Observing that it was circumbinary (orbiting two suns of differing scales), previously thought to be physically impossible, Doyle contacted film director George Lucas, to ask if they could name the planet after Luke Skywalker's fictional home planet *Tatooine* from the film *Star Wars* (1977) which is similarly orbited - Lucas agreed. Bolster's digital image made from a composite of filmed stills became subject to the analog technologies of warp and weft, which reassembled the image in woven form, and have necessarily become subject to approximation and interpretation. Kepler 16b, a planet that could support life, is shown here housing radio telescopes from the Allen Telescope Array in California, which are in part, used by scientists to listen for artificial signals from life forms on other planets. The piece embraces the possibility, that we on Earth are being listened to, as we are attempting to listen to and comprehend others across the gulf that is the visible and invisible universe of space.



*You Are Made of Stardust, 2019* ↑

**Gallery Three** comprises a large mobile from which the exhibition takes its title and two small related drawings. ***You Are Made of Stardust, 2019*** comprises a mobile which adapts a quote by Astronomer and former SETI Director Jill Tarter:

*“We are the products of a billion-year lineage of wandering stardust. We, all of us, are what happens when a primordial mixture of hydrogen and helium evolves for so long that it begins to ask where it came from.”*

In addition to the spelling out of the title the piece, the artist includes a series of pointers for the evolution of our ability to critically look to analyse and conceptualise information. It charts the formation of humans and of astronomy in a condensed way... from the faculty development of critical observation to the technical advances that help us learn more about the universe. Bolster believes that our need to continually look at the past, enables us to reassess received knowledge, and develop a better, more informed future. This is important for everyone, not just for visual artists. The kinetic revolving text in this art work creates a parallel of how the planets and the solar system appear to us.

Bolster created ***Proposition 1: Moon Museum of Architecture featuring The Glass House by Philip Johnson, 2017*** and ***Proposition 2: Museum of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art, Interior with Rabbit, 1986 by Jeff Koons, 2018*** in conjunction with his film *The Moon, McMoon's and The Moon Museum* (Gallery One). These drawings are propositions for museums on the Moon encompassing different cultural artefacts from earth.

## Solstice Café Wall (Ground Floor)

**Proposition 0: Survey of Terra Nullius, the First Colony of Earth, 2017.**

Woven jacquard

This anaglyph panorama by Eric Jones, was compiled —for NASA— from single photographs featuring the Lunar Lander during the Apollo XII mission. The flight that brought the first art object The Moon Museum (1969) to the moon, which is referenced in the accompanying film on view in this space. The original image was made using the Apollo Lunar Surface Closeup Camera ALSCC was used on Apollo 11, 12 and 14. It was designed to capture close-up, stereoscopic images that could be used by scientists to learn how regolith (all material above a bedrock) and small rocks settle on the Moon's surface. When viewed through the "colour-coded" "anaglyph glasses", each of the two images reaches the eye it's intended for, revealing an integrated stereoscopic image. The visual cortex of the brain fuses this into the perception of a three-dimensional scene or composition.

Irish artist George Bolster was born in 1972. His recent solo exhibitions include: *Tatooine: Sci-Fi Becoming Reality*, Sirius Arts Centre, Cork; *Towards A Universal Sublime*, Bratislava, Slovakia (2018); *Amazement Insulates Us All, Memento Vivere*, The Lab, Dublin (2015); *Un/natural History: Drowning Captiva*, Nuit Blanche, Toronto, Canada (2014); *High on Christ*, Chung King Projects, Los Angeles, California, USA (2009); and *sociodesic: a space for the three great loves*, Galway Art Centre (2010). Recent group exhibitions include: *Travelling to the End*, MMCA, Seoul, Korea (2019); *Music +Maker*, Solstice Arts Centre, Navan (2019); *In The Future*, Collyer Bristow Gallery, London, UK (2018); *Making Contact: SETI Artists in Residence*, New Museum Los Gatos, California, USA (2016); *Et si on s'était trompé?*, Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris, France (2015); *Tulca: Seachange*, Galway,(2015); */seconds*, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (2014); *These Days: Elegies for Modern Times*, Mass MoCA, Massachusetts, USA (2009). Recent residencies include: Centre Cultural Irlandais, Paris (2019); Elizabeth Foundation for The Arts, New York (2017); SETI Institute, Mountain View, California (2016-17); and the Robert Rauschenberg Residency, Captiva, Florida (2013). Bolster has been awarded numerous grants from the Arts Council of Ireland, Culture Ireland and the Arts Council of England.

## ASSOCIATED EVENTS

### EXHIBITION OPENING

Saturday 8 February, 2.30 pm

To mark the opening of the exhibition, join George Bolster for an informal chat to discuss the ideas behind his work.

**Fri 21 Feb** - The Gallery as a Classroom (CPD for Primary School Teachers)

**Thurs 27 Feb** -Contact (1997) Screening

**Thurs 5 Mar** – Prints of Stardust Secondary School Workshops

**Wed 11 Mar** – Planetary Pioneers Primary School Workshops