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galaxy). Exhibition lighting casts a hard shadow that doubles the tin and candle. The ephemeral traces of yesterday spiral ever forward.

Analyzing light from outer space is central to Spencer Finch's Study for Kepler 186 (2017) (page 101). The artist creates works about memory and perception, often "recreating the experience of natural phenomena through artificial constructions."51 Identifying an analogous relationship between scientific experimentation and artistic process, Finch writes, "Because the experimenter's perception is a little off, the subjective comes into it, which is fascinating to me. It's about the attempt to represent something - and in the attempt is where there's the humanness or poetry."52 In this case, the artist takes inspiration from a catalogued star and provides a luminescent experience via utilitarian materials: a light fixture, fluorescent bulb, and colored filters. A soft glow radiates through pink, red, orange, gray, blue, and turquoise bands as the sculpture "emits the color and light of the star Kepler 186, ... a red dwarf star located in the constellation Cygnus about 492 light years away from Earth."⁵³ Standing in the manufactured light of an unreachable star offers our imaginations a bittersweet journey. Among the countless options, Finch made work about this particular star due to this distinction: "Kepler 186 is famous for its planet Kepler 186f, which is the first Earth-sized planet discovered in the habitable zone of another star."⁵⁴ Red dwarfs, or M dwarfs [like Kepler 186], make up 70% of the stars in the Milky Way Galaxy, and according to Elisa Quintana, research scientist at the SETI Institute and discoverer of Kepler 186f, "The first signs of other life in the galaxy may well come from planets orbiting an M dwarf."55 What does it mean to look for other livable zones as our own planet is destroyed? Does Finch's work offer a hopeful sign of potential discoveries or an urgent reminder to exercise radical care for our home planet?

The Cygnus constellation also appears in **Demetrius Oliver**'s *Messier* (2013), a photograph of a creased star map topped with an unfolded paper clip (pages 82–83). Through combining these two functional objects, Oliver acknowledges astronomers' contributions, emphasizes the geometry of constellations, and explores the limits of our vision. The map is by French astronomer Charles Messier, who discovered more than a dozen comets and started *Messier's Catalog of Nebulae and Star Clusters* in the late 18th century to document "comet-like 'objects to avoid."⁵⁶ (The Messier Objects are shown with hol-



O2.10. Demetrius Oliver, *Messier* (detail), 2013. Digital C-print mounted on aluminum. Collection of The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York, purchased with generous funding from Ann Schapps Schaffer '62 and Melvyn S Schaffer, 2017.

low circles and labels such as "M37.") Physics professor Mary Crone Odekon shares, "What Charles Messier might have guessed but could not have known for sure was the extent to which star maps are figments of our point of view. The night sky is intensely three-dimensional, with some objects trillions of times farther away than others."57 Oliver's un-spiraled clip becomes an open triangular form that projects into the air and mimics portions of the Cepheus, Lacerta, and Cygnus constellations. It also points to Draco, which contains a star named Thuban that was the polestar, or North Star, around 2700 BCE.⁵⁸ Crone Odekon highlights an important connection to another star: "The prototype variable star that led to our discovery of the galaxies and the great depths of space is a star ... just outside the paperclip, separated from the other bright stars in Cepheus."59 Unfolding the clip may seem like a playful gesture; however – through the clip's inability to serve its intended function of collecting or binding, combination with a map addressing humanity's need to visually order the universe, and placement near such a pivotal star for advancing our knowledge - it may also speak to an unraveling of order or time.

Addressing recent human constructions of time, writer Rebecca Solnit laments, "Time ceased to be a phenomenon that linked humans to the cosmos, and became one administered by technicians to link industrial activities to one another."⁶⁰ With *Timepieces (Solar System)* (2014), **Katie Paterson** pushes against that movement and embraces a more expansive approach to timekeeping aligned

with the universe (page 69). Her seemingly institutional black-and-white clocks initially appear destined for a corporate boardroom or international airport; however, the nine oversized and adapted instruments are not labeled for New York, Tokyo, Johannesburg, London, and Dubai, but instead Earth's moon and the eight planets in our solar system. Researched with guidance from astronomers at UCL Observatory, London, and Royal Observatory, Edinburgh, each clock is calibrated to tell the difference in the duration of a day on Mercury, Venus, Earth, Earth's moon, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune – ranging from 9 hours, 56 minutes on Jupiter to 4,223 hours on Mercury. Each clock has varied segmentation, from the expected 12 divisions for Earth, to densely structured lines for Mercury, and sparsely spaced marks for Jupiter. Their continuously forward movement and overlapping ticking sounds offer a sense of collective cosmic progression. Paterson says, "Time runs through everything I make, from the time of a short phone call to a glacier to the centuries of its demise. The time of the light from a dying star to pass millions of years through



O2.11. Astrolabe of 'Umar ibn Yusuf ibn 'Umar ibn 'Ali ibn Rasul al-Muzaffari, A.H. 690 / A.D. 1291. Brass: cast and hammered, pierced, chased, inlaid with silver. Collection of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891, 91.1.535a-h.

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space to reach our eyes. Why I'm drawn to time is hard to describe; it's to do with being outside of myself and being inside a more universal network where distance and time might not even exist."⁶¹

Carrie Gundersdorf situates herself in the universe by making abstract paintings, drawings, and collages based on observing photographs of star trails, planetary rings, nebulae, and other cosmic phenomena. She writes, "The image is a jumping off place for me to think about themes of wonder and discovery. The back and forth between image and material, science and the handmade are ways to keep the work in a questioning space."62 For Saturn's rings with dark band (2017), made the year NASA's Cassini plunged toward the planet's surface, she used colored pencils and watercolors to address the gas giant's mysterious rings (pages 74–75). (The rings were first spotted by Galileo Galilei in 1610 – although misidentified as a "triple planet" until their discovery by Christiaan Huygens in 1655 – and started to receive more study after Pioneer 11 reached the planet in 1979, followed closely by Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 in 1980–81, and Cassini in the 2000s.)⁶³ Gundersdorf focuses on a segment of the rings, painting and drawing curved bands in warm tones – cream, gray, orange, red, purple, fuchsia, and plum - that contradict the originals' icy composition. Her vibrant bands of varying thicknesses extend to, and sometimes beyond, the penciled border, and the black arc through the right side may reference the space between Saturn's A and B rings. Inviting a viewer into her process, the artist includes tiny color swatches and handwritten notations: "poppy red," "Spanish orange," "ginger root," "mulberry" (which is erased), and "buy more p. red," among others. Gundersdorf's decisively hand-madedrawing/paintingonpaperseemslikean intimately scaled rejoinder to massive mid-century abstractions on canvas. (Barnett Newman's "zips," which, according to curator Ann Temkin, he initially referred to as "bands,"64 come to mind, particularly his 1950–51 painting Vir Heroicus Sublimis.) In the distant future, Saturn's rings with dark band, or an image of it, could function as a memorial for the rings. They are slowly disintegrating from the combination of incoming micrometeorites and the sun's radiation, which initiates a process leading to the material's ultimate vaporization in the planet's atmosphere.65

The man who claimed to be from Saturn is central to **Cauleen Smith**'s 2011 video, *Space Is the Place* (*A March for Sun Ra*), which follows a rainy Chicago



09.24. Carrie Gundersdorf, Saturn's rings with dark band, 2017. Colored pencil and watercolor on paper. 22 x 29.5 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Anthony Hamilton.







CREDITS

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PAGES 2–3, 160. Installation view of Rohini Devasher's *Atmospheres* in *An Infinite and Omnivorous Sky.* Photo: Anthony Hamilton.

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