



OUR OBSERVABLE WORLD

ASTRONOMER HENRIETTA LEAVITT AND THE POWER OF ATTENTION IN SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY, ARTISTIC CREATION, AND THE MAKING OF MEANING

ANNA VON MERTENS
Visual Artist and Author

ORGANIZER

Commission for Astronomy of the Austrian Academy of Sciences
Chair: Univ.-Prof. Dr. João Alves

in cooperation with the Department of Astrophysics of the University of Vienna

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REGISTRATION

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Illustration: © Anna von Mertens



Anna Von Mertens has had numerous solo exhibitions throughout the United States including Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute; Berkeley Art Museum; Ithaca College; Boston Center for the Arts; University Art Museum, UC Santa Barbara; Crisp-Ellert Art Museum, Flagler College; Mills College Art Museum; University Art Museum, Cal State Long Beach; University of San Francisco's Thacher Gallery; Headlands Center for the Arts; Elizabeth Leach Gallery; Jack Hanley Gallery; and Sara Meltzer Gallery.

Group exhibitions include The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College; Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College; Kansas City Art Institute's Artspace; Needle's Eye at KODE, Art Museums of Bergen, Norway, which traveled to the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; a 2012 commissioned

work for Ballroom Marfa; Aspen Art Museum; The 2012 DeCordova Biennial; and the 40th anniversary exhibition at the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery.

Von Mertens is the recipient of a 2010 United States Artists Fellowship in Visual Arts and a 2007 Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial Award.

Visual artist and author Anna Von Mertens offers a layered portrait of astronomer Henrietta Leavitt who worked at the Harvard College Observatory at the turn of the 20th century and whose discovery is foundational to modern cosmology. Von Mertens will speak to the reverberations of Leavitt's groundbreaking discovery, her creative methodologies, and the cultural context surrounding her work, as well as how appreciating Leavitt's skill at attention helped Von Mertens cultivate her own. Looking—truly seeing—is an active and inventive process, which requires constant reimagining, relevant to both scientific and artistic practices. Von Mertens's talk will be illustrated with a wealth of imagery: details of artworks the artist made in response to Leavitt's legacy; examples of the glass plate photographs of the night sky Leavitt studied; and historic photos of the unique community of women, now known as the Harvard Computers, who worked alongside Leavitt. Please join us for this lecture recognizing the shared languages of art and science and celebrating the significance of Henrietta Leavitt's discovery and the richness of its inheritance.

PROGRAM

13.15

WELCOME

Univ.-Prof. Dr. João Alves | Chair of the Commission for Astronomy, Austrian Academy of Sciences; Department of Astrophysics, University of Vienna

13.30

LECTURE

Anna von Mertens | Visual Artist and Author
Our Observable World: Astronomer Henrietta Leavitt and the Power of Attention in Scientific Discovery, Artistic Creation, and the Making of Meaning