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## COSMIC WONDERS BY SILVERPOINT

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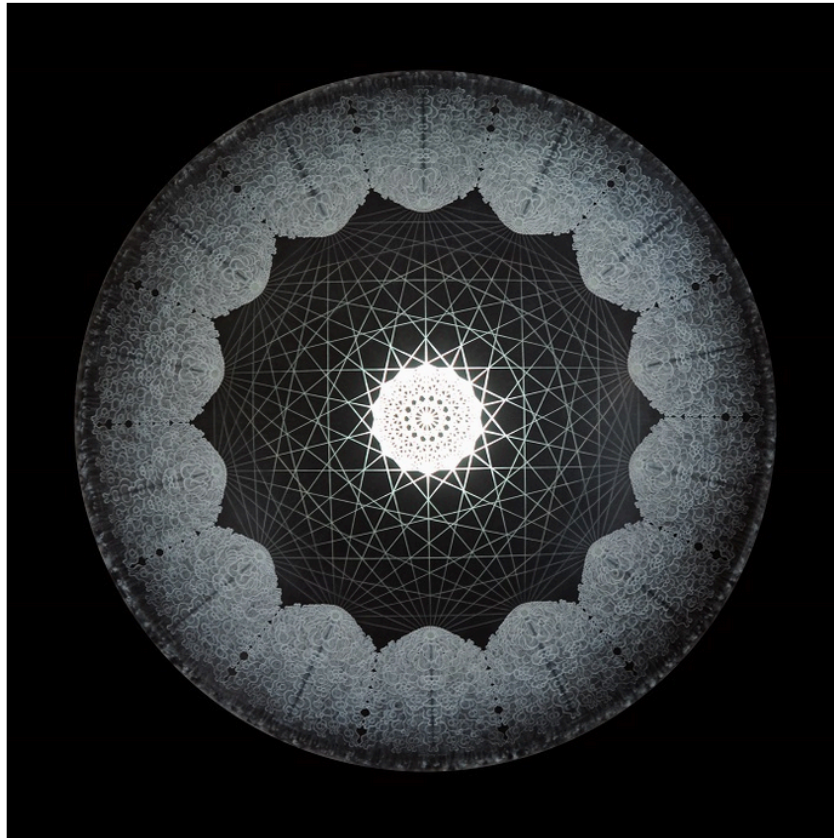


### **COSMIC WONDERS BY SILVERPOINT**

***CAROL PRUSA PROBES THE MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE***

***AND HONORS THE WOMEN ASTRONOMERS***

***WHO MAPPED THE STARS***



*Carol Prusa, Cosmic Web (for the Harvard Observatory Computers), 2018,  
Silverpoint graphite titanium white, mars black, stainless steel pigment with acrylic binder  
on acrylic dome with internal light. Courtesy of the artist.*

# **CAROL PRUSA: DARK LIGHT**

*August 20 – January 19*

*at Boca Raton Museum of Art*

As the world celebrates the 50th anniversary of the first landing on the moon, the [Boca Raton Museum of Art](#) pays tribute to this milestone year by charting a different course that stands out from the rest, with the new exhibition ***Carol Prusa: Dark Light***. On this journey, the artist invites viewers to **honor the women astronomers who originally helped map the stars** as she takes flight across the mysteries of deep space.



Some of the pioneering women astronomers from the 1800s honored in this exhibition (left-to-right):

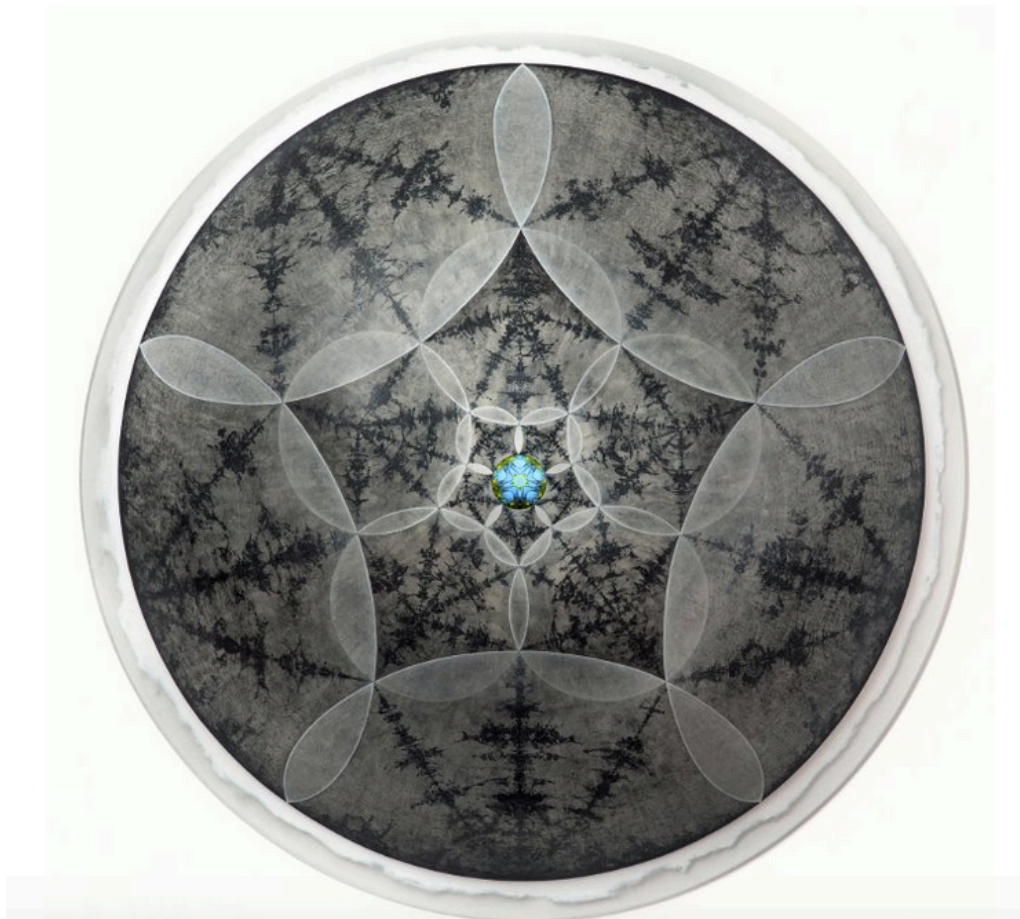
***Maria Mitchell Looking Through a Telescope***, painting by Herminia B. Dassel, circa 1851, and Mitchell with her first all-women Astronomy class at Vassar College.

Her new exhibition is curated by Kathleen Goncharov, the Senior Curator of the Museum, and features never-before-seen works created specifically for this show – meticulous creations handmade by the artist using her signature silverpoint technique. The exhibition **opens August 20 and remains on view until January 19**. The artist, Carol Prusa, lives in Boca Raton and currently teaches painting as a Professor of Art at Florida Atlantic University.



"When we get too distracted by the details in our daily lives, **that is when we particularly need artists like Carol Prusa to expand our horizons into the solar system, into the deeper unknown of dark space.**" said Irvin Lippman, the Executive Director of the Boca Raton Museum of Art.

"As Carol explains, she has always been interested in science and cosmology. In the sixth grade she wondered about the Big Bang and *'how it could be that there was nothing before there was something.'*"





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*Carol Prusa, Quintessence, Silverpoint, graphite, acrylic on acrylic hemisphere  
with lens and internal video player/video, 2019*

Prusa combines surprising materials such as sculpted resin, fiberglass, metal leaf, LED lights, black iron oxide, titanium, and powdered steel with the ancient craft of silverpoint, resulting in ethereal creations that command curiosity. **Carol Prusa: Dark Light** includes silverpoint, graphite and acrylic works on plexiglass and wood panels; light-speckled domes with internal lights and video.

**"Carol Prusa is a visual alchemist whose work harnesses cosmic chaos and makes invisible forces materialize before our eyes,"** writes Logan Royce Beitmen in the exhibition catalogue. **"Drawing with actual silver and painting with powdered steel, Prusa's use of materials defies expectations."**







Prusa created a new series of prints for this exhibition, honoring the contributions made to science and astronomy by women who spearheaded early efforts to map the heavens. She was **inspired by the life and accomplishments of Maria Mitchell, the first woman elected into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (in 1848), and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (in 1850).**



*Maria Mitchell Looking Through a Telescope, painting  
by Herminia B. Dassel, circa 1851*

**Mitchell was a pioneering advocate for math and science education for girls and was the first female astronomy professor.** In 1847, Mitchell was the first person ever to discover a comet via telescope that was too remote to see with the naked eye. Her discovery would be named "Miss Mitchell's Comet." King Frederick VI of Denmark had offered a prize for such first identifications of telescopic comets, and awarded her a gold medal.

She also became famous for leading her female astronomy students on expeditions to see eclipses in Iowa (1869) and in Denver (1878). Their observations would reach a national scientific audience. **Her goal – bold at that time – was to encourage other women into her profession, at the dawn of America's scientific age.** Later astronomers honored her by naming a lunar crater "[Mitchell Crater](#)."



*Maria Mitchell poses with the first Astronomy class at  
Vassar College from  
[www.vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/faculty/original-faculty/maria-mitchell1.html](http://www.vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/faculty/original-faculty/maria-mitchell1.html)*

Following in Mitchell's footsteps to witness solar eclipses, **Carol Prusa was inspired to create these new works by the life-changing effects she felt while witnessing eclipses in Nebraska and Chile.**

Prusa's favorite quote by Mitchell captures the spirit of this exhibition: "***We seize only a little bit of the curtain that hides the infinite from us.***"





*Carol Prusa, Totality, 2018, silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder  
on 1/4" acrylic circle. Courtesy of the Artist.*

There were many women astronomers throughout history who led the charge in the field of astronomy, but with little recognition. Prusa's new suite of prints challenges this lapse by honoring these women astronomers: Maria Mitchell, Henrietta Swan Leavitt, Annie Jump Cannon, Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin, Vera Rubin, and Jocelyn Bell Burnell.





*Maria Mitchell (seated) in her observatory at Vassar College, circa 1877.*

*Photo from "Heroes of Progress: Stories of Successful Americans" by Eva March Tappan, 1921.*

The portfolio of new prints by Prusa is called *Galaxias Kyklos* (the Greek term for the Milky Way), and the title page **gloriously depicts Ourania, the muse of astronomy in Greek mythology.**



Carol Prusa, *Ourania*, 2019, from *Galaxias Kyklos*  
(suite of prints in laser etched plexi box with letterpress colophon).

Other artworks in the exhibition are dedicated to women who served as human “computers” at the Harvard Observatory in the 19th century, painstakingly analyzing the many glass photographic plates from observatories around the world to map the stars.

The earnings of these women were substantially less than men in their field, and their labor too went unrecognized. Another woman scientist honored in this body of work is Rebecca Elson. She was a theoretical astrophysicist whose research focused on dark matter who died of lymphoma in 1999 at the young age of 39 and was also an accomplished poet.









*Carol Prusa in Atacama, Chile, where she traveled to witness an eclipse.*

"I am especially drawn to ideas and experiences that unsettle and coalesce in my art," said Prusa. **"Seeing a total eclipse for the first time, I was blown away by a euphoric feeling of floating, I was so moved that I literally fell backward."**

**"When the shadow of the eclipse passed over, the world changed in a way I had never experienced before.** The sun became a sharp black disc, Venus popped out and the sky to my right was night and to my left it was day. **I was compelled to create this body of work to come to terms with this overwhelming feeling,"** adds Prusa.

The ethereal video below is part of the interior of one of the new artworks created for this exhibition: [vimeo.com/353251363](https://vimeo.com/353251363)

## **ABOUT THE AGE-OLD MAGIC OF SILVERPOINT**

**The age-old method has been used by artists, scribes and artisans since ancient times.** The silverpoint stylus itself is a small stick of silver inserted into a wooden rod, similar to a pencil (except silver is used instead of lead). Silverpoint drawings are created by making a mark on a surface with this rod or wire made out of silver.

**The photographer Bruce Weber has proclaimed that Carol Prusa is “one of the most innovative artists working in metalpoint today.”**

Prusa has always been fascinated by science and cosmology, and learned silverpoint technique while teaching in Florence. Some of Prusa's inspiration comes from the sciences of astrophysics, meteorology, and optics. She also incorporates Russian Orthodox and Tibetan Buddhist art-making traditions that she studied in the 1990s.

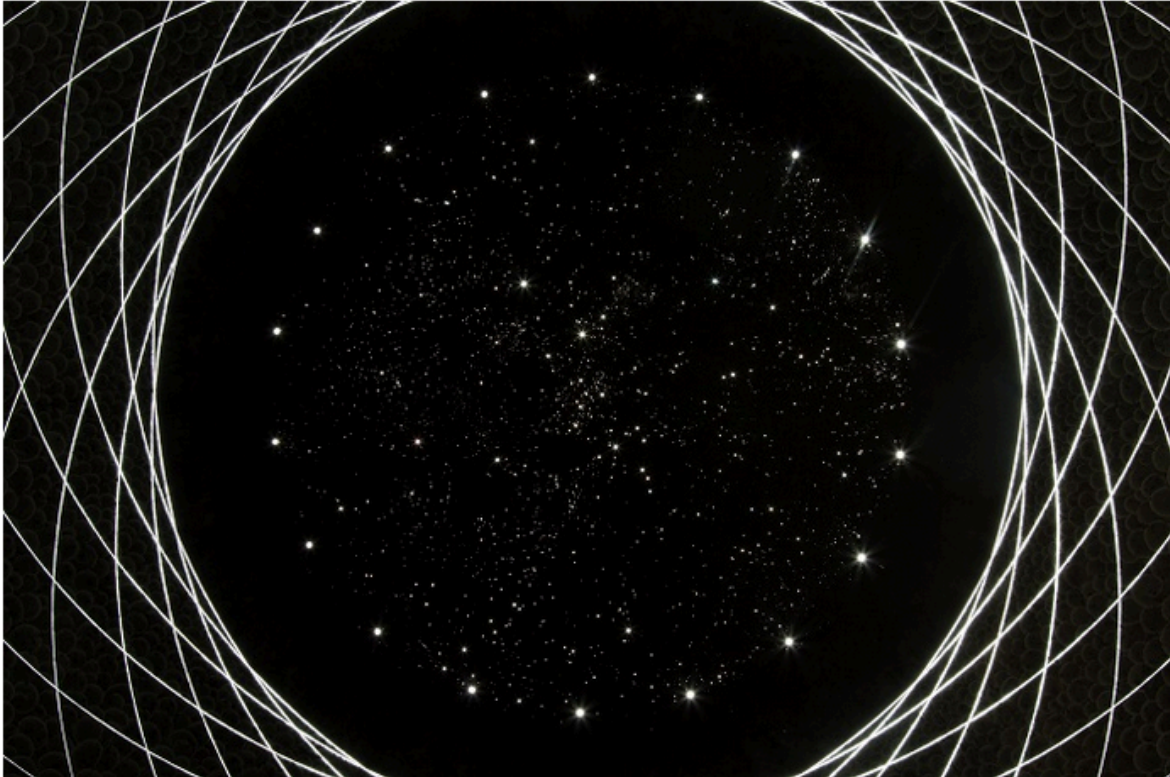
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All of the works in this show have circular motifs, spheres that Prusa intended to spark a sense of infinity for the viewer. Although circles and spherical openings may imply feminine forms, Prusa has also created **embryonic works that represent pure potential not limited to gender – like the pioneer women astronomers who transcended gender bias of their time to help create the maps of space that helped make the first landing on the moon a possibility for humanity.**

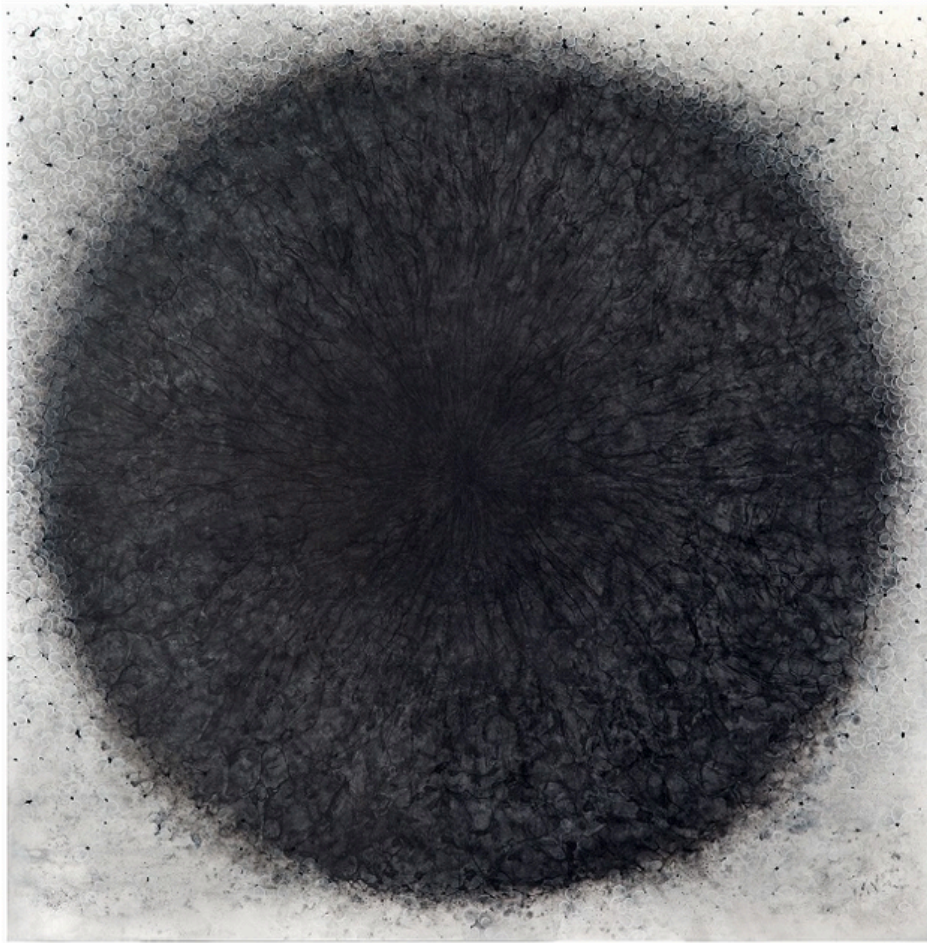


*Carol Prusa, (Detail) Nebula, 2019, Silverpoint, graphite, acrylic on acrylic dome  
with internal light. Courtesy of the artist.*

"When I started to make this new series about eclipses, I drew upon my powerful memories of what it felt like to witness these astronomical wonders," said Prusa. "An eclipse is dark light."

Black, no matter how dark, still reflects light. I wanted to make black have depth and structure, and to be infinite. The eclipses influenced me in this respect, but this could also be a reflection on the times we live in. **There isn't dark without light — or light without dark."**





*Carol Prusa, Dark Light (Elegy for Rebecca Elson), 2019,  
Silverpoint, graphite, acrylic on wood panel. Courtesy of the artist.*

#### **MORE ABOUT THE ARTIST**



Her work is included in many public and private collections, including the Perez Art Museum (Miami), The Museum of Arts and Design (New York), Telfair Art Museum (Savannah), and the Francie Bishop Good and David Horvitz Collection (Fort Lauderdale). Prusa received a SECAC Artistic Achievement Award in 2017.

**She was previously awarded a Brown University Howard Foundation Fellowship, and has been nominated for a MacArthur Fellowship "Genius Grant."**

She regularly lectures about her work at venues such as Carnegie-Mellon University (Pittsburgh), University of Cape Town (Cape Town, South Africa), and Parsons School of Art and Design (New York). Her work will be shown at the Anne Norton Sculpture Garden and Museum (Palm Beach) in 2020.

Carol was part of the group exhibition *Glasstress Boca Raton* (2017). The exhibition featured more than 30 contemporary artists who do not traditionally work with glass as their primary medium. The Berengo Studio in Murano, which has been the center of glass production in Venice since 1291, commissioned contemporary artists and challenged our notion of glass. Carol Prusa was invited to Venice, to create a glass piece titled *Spooky Action* at the Berengo Studio that premiered at the Museum during *Glasstress*. During her time at Murano, Carol also created a limited-edition of 32 glass pieces that will be on view and for sale at the Museum Store during her new exhibition at the Boca Raton Museum of Art, ***Carol Prusa: Dark Light***.

In 2018, Prusa exhibited alongside Stanford Biggers, Cauleen Smith, Josh Faught, and Lauren Kalmar in *The Future of Craft*, curated by Shannon Stratton at The Museum of Arts and Design (New York), and in *FLAT???*, curated by William Stover. She participated in the 2015-2016 Miami Biennale (curated by Adriana Herrera), along with twelve other artists, including El Anatsui and James Turrell. In 2014, Prusa's work was exhibited in *The Chosen*, alongside Louise Nevelson, Nick Cave, Julian Opie, and George Segal at the Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU.

Other notable group exhibitions include *Luminous Line* (2010) at Scripps College (with Morgan O'Hara, Lucy Pullen, and Marietta Hoferer); *Set to Manual* (2009) at Girls' Club with Vija Celmins, Annette Messenger, Kiki Smith, and Jessica Stockholder; and *Starry Messenger* (2009) at the Louisiana Museum of Art and Science with Vija Celmins and Eva Lee. She participated in a three-month fully funded residency at the prestigious Kohler Artist in Industry.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

### **MEMBERS MIDSUMMER "COSMOS" PARTY & OPENING RECEPTION**

**Tuesday, August 20, 2019 (6:00-8:00 p.m.)** RSVP required by August 13. Free for Members (Non-Member price: \$25.00) Celebrate the exhibition opening of ***Carol Prusa: Dark Light*** with live DJ, light bites, and libations. Members Midsummer "Cosmos" Party is part of Boca Chamber Festival Days – a series of fun-filled events held at different locations during the month of August – and is facilitated by the Boca Chamber. [Purchase tickets here](#)

### **CAROL PRUSA: DARK LIGHT (Lecture)**

**Thursday, September 5 (6:00-7:00 p.m.)** Florida Atlantic University professor Carol Prusa explores the liminal space between knowing and not knowing, a location artists and scientists share. She discusses her artwork in the exhibition *Dark Light* and the research and events that gave rise to this new body of work.