



Detailed look at Carol Prusa's *Nebula*, silverpoint, graphite, and acrylic on acrylic. / Courtesy of Boca Raton Museum of Art

Boca Artist Honors Women Behind Moon Landing in New Exhibit

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Space is not the final frontier for artist Carol Prusa. It's the beginning of beautifully executed works of art honoring women in science through



"Dark Light," her exhibit at the [Boca Raton Museum of Art](#).



Prusa, an art professor at Florida Atlantic University, was inspired by these women and their work to create an exhibit honoring them and the 50th anniversary of the moon landing. Prusa recently spoke with *New Times* and shared intimate details of the exhibition, the women, and the medium she chose for the exhibit.



***New Times*: What was the inspiration behind honoring the women involved in the moon landing?**

Carol Prusa: In this exhibition, I honor and name the women who took measure of the stars, including Henrietta Swan Leavitt (Leavitt's Law), because their work early on laid the foundation for what we know about our universe today. In researching and reading about these early women, the so-called Harvard Computers, I moved forward in time to the research of recent visionaries such as astrophysicist Vera Rubin, who was instrumental in our understanding of dark energy. My current work is informed and inspired by the work of astronomers and astrophysicists who work on grand unification theories.

As an artist, I seek to distill everything I know about my world into my work, much like a theory of everything. What led me to the early American astronomer Maria Mitchell was reading her journals in advance of the 2017 total eclipse. This led me to follow in her footsteps and head out West to witness the event in the path of totality. Mitchell took a train to Denver with a group of women scientists. I flew to Nebraska and stood on the bank of the North Platte River when the moon occluded the sun, becoming an unsettling sharp black disk, and to my right the sky was night and Venus popped out in midday, and to my left was day. The corona of the sun glowed palladium color. This unsettling, unearthly experience caused me to lose my grounding. I spent the past two years making work about this experience to come to terms with why it gripped me so. In the process, I researched many women astronomers and the critical work they accomplished that informs our current understanding of our universe.



Carol Prusa, who lives in Boca Raton and teaches painting at FAU, says she has always been interested in science and cosmology. / Photo courtesy of Carol Prusa

Describe what it's like working in the silverpoint medium and why you chose it for this exhibit?

Silverpoint is a thin silver wire that leaves a trace of metal when pulled across a prepared surface. The silverpoint is small and generally results in small work. I am known for large-scale silverpoints that are deepened with ground graphite and heightened with titanium white pigment. Working in silverpoint is meditative as it requires small stroke after small stroke. It is a very focused and centering process. In this exhibition, I moved to darker tones, so I included different black pigments, aluminum, and stainless steel to re-create the feeling tone of the light as it transitioned through the eclipse. Using silver offered a subtle luminosity that shifted warm in tone.

How long did it take you to create the art for this show?

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The reading and research on pivotal women in astronomy began more than three years ago (although my interest in science precedes that – I majored in chemistry in college) and

led me to the August 2017 eclipse. That event catalyzed the body of work in the exhibition. The project came full circle when I observed the July 2019 eclipse in Chile. Standing on the shore of the Pacific Ocean helped me resolve the final work for the show.

What do you want the public to get out of the exhibit?

With "Dark Light," I express what it felt like to experience the strange beauty of the eclipse while my mind was steeped in compelling contemporary cosmologies that describe our universe. I hope people find the work quietly beautiful, causing them to consider the vital beauty of our universe. I hope the public takes away an appreciation for the amazing women who measured and mapped the heavens.

"Carol Prusa: Dark Light." *August 20 through January 19, 2020. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday; and noon to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at Boca Raton Museum of Art, 501 Plaza Real, Boca Raton. Museum visits are free throughout August (sponsored by PNC Bank); admission afterward is \$12 for adults and free for students aged 13 to 17 and college students. The exhibition's kickoff reception, set for Tuesday, August 20, is part of Boca Chamber Festival Days, a series of fun events held at various locations throughout August. And Thursday, September 5, from 6 to 7 p.m., Prusa will explore 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; bocamuseum.org. Free for Boca Museum members; nonmember price is \$15.*