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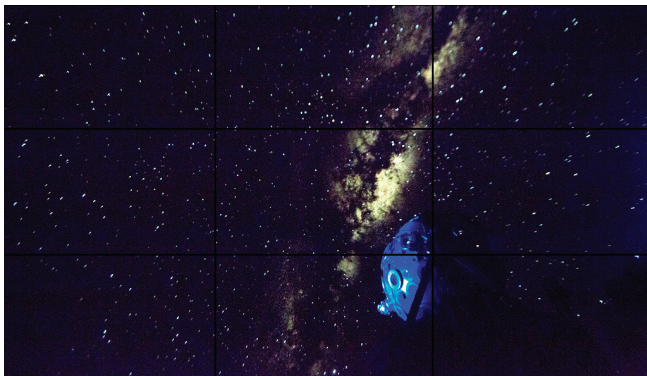
DIANA THATER

Science, Fiction

January 8 – February 21, 2015

Opening reception: Thursday, January 8, 6 – 8 PM

Press preview with the artist: 10 AM



The Starry Messenger, 2014 (rendering)
9-monitor video wall
68 3/8 x 121 x 3 5/8 inches
(173.7 x 307.3 x 9.2 cm)

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by Diana Thater, on view at 533 West 19th Street in New York. Shown here for the first time will be a new type of installation by the artist involving an enclosed video projection, ceiling screen, and light, as well as two new video walls.

Thater is one of the most important video artists working today. Since the early 1990s, she has created a wide range of film, video, and installation-based works whose sculptural forms engage spatial perception in physical, as well as conceptual, terms. Her pioneering oeuvre was among the first to push the boundaries of how new media art is displayed, helping to cement its position in the art world.

Through a combination of the temporal qualities of video and the architectural dimension of its physical installation, Thater's work explores the artifice of its own production and its capacity to construct perception and shape the way we think about the world through its image. Natural diversity, wildlife, and conservation have been persistent themes in the artist's work, and she has dedicated herself to an examination of the varied kinds of relationships humans have constructed with animals. While her in-depth studies of ecosystems and animal behavior propose observation as a kind of understanding in itself, her ethical position is implicit in the work, which, while subtly political, provides views of the sublime in all its incarnations—stunning, beautiful, and simultaneously terrifying.

In her new installation, which like the exhibition is titled *Science, Fiction*, Thater focuses on the dung beetle and the intricate navigation system it deploys in disposing balls of animal excrement, its main source of nutrition. Recent studies have revealed that the species uses the Milky Way to orientate itself at night, currently the only insect known to do so. In an experiment in which the beetles were placed on an outdoor table, they were only able to navigate in their usual straight line with an open view of the nocturnal sky—when their overhead vision was blocked, their movements became erratic and slowed drastically. The same experiment was repeated inside a planetarium, alternately turning the Milky Way on and off, and the animals' path was demonstratively straighter and faster in light of the galaxy.

Thater has created a video projection that appears at once abstract and particular—the sophistication of the small insects' navigation systems becomes visually juxtaposed with the close-up views of their earthy setting in a meditative fusion of macro

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and micro realms. Deploying a new type of installation, Thater presents the footage on a screen attached to the ceiling, projected from within a closed-off, freestanding box. Mirroring the setup of the scientific experiment with the dung beetles, the white square further references the Light and Space movement in California in the 1960s. The exhibition is illuminated by soft blue lights, creating an environment that mimics the evening sky, while the walls of the box themselves are lit from below, which offers the illusion of levitation.

Also on view are two video walls showing the Milky Way, respectively titled *Sidereus Nuncius* and *The Starry Messenger*. Thater shot the galaxy at Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles, positioning her camera beneath the Zeiss star projector. Lit in a bright blue light, the latter resembles a spaceship on a celestial mission and similar models are used to train astronauts how to navigate in space. It further creates a visual connection to the dung beetle and its dependence on the night sky. As the views of cosmic constellations become increasingly difficult to find outside of the confines of a planetarium—due to the rapid expansion of urban areas and the resulting light pollution—Thater's exhibition also contains an underlying message about the future continuation of the insects' time-old behavior. By effectively disposing of other animals' feces, dung beetles are vital in maintaining healthy soil, and disruption to their nocturnal navigation patterns may have consequences that go far beyond their own existence and could affect agriculture in large parts of the world. The "disappearance" of the Milky Way and other astronomical sights, and the inverse introduction of artificial light at night, also impact the natural body cycles of humans, and threaten the subsistence of a distinctive and profound type of visual experience in the process.

Born in 1962 in San Francisco, **Diana Thater** studied Art History at New York University, before receiving her M.F.A. from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California. Since 1993, her work has been represented by David Zwirner. *Science, Fiction* marks her eighth solo exhibition at the gallery in New York. Previous shows include *Chernobyl* (2012), *Between Science and Magic* (2010), *Here is a text about the world...* (2008), *New Work* (2005), *the sky is unfolding under you* (2001), *China, Crayons & Molly Numbers 1 through 10* (1996), and *Late & Soon (Occident Trotting)* (1993).

Thater's recent works will be on view from March to September 2015 at the San Jose Museum of Art in California as part of the museum's *Beta Space* exhibition series. In the fall of 2015, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art will host a mid-career survey of Thater's work, which will coincide with an installation at the Aspen Art Museum, Colorado.

Over the past decade, her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at prominent institutions that include the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2011); Santa Monica Museum of Art, California (2010); Kunsthaus Graz, Austria; Natural History Museum, London (both 2009); Kunsthalle Bremen, Germany; Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen, Germany (both 2004); Dia Center for the Arts, New York (2001); and the Secession, Vienna (2000).

In 2014, Thater was awarded a California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Artists. Other notable awards and fellowships include a 2011 Award for Artistic Innovation from the Center for Cultural Innovation, Los Angeles, as well as a James D. Phelan Award in Film and Video (2006), a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (2005), and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship (1993).

Work by the artist is represented in museum collections worldwide, including The Art Institute of Chicago; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Friedrich Christian Flick Collection at Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin. Also a prolific writer, educator, and curator, Thater lives and works in Los Angeles.

For all press inquiries and to RSVP to the January 8 press preview, contact

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