

The Observatory in the Making

MARCUS NEUSTETTER

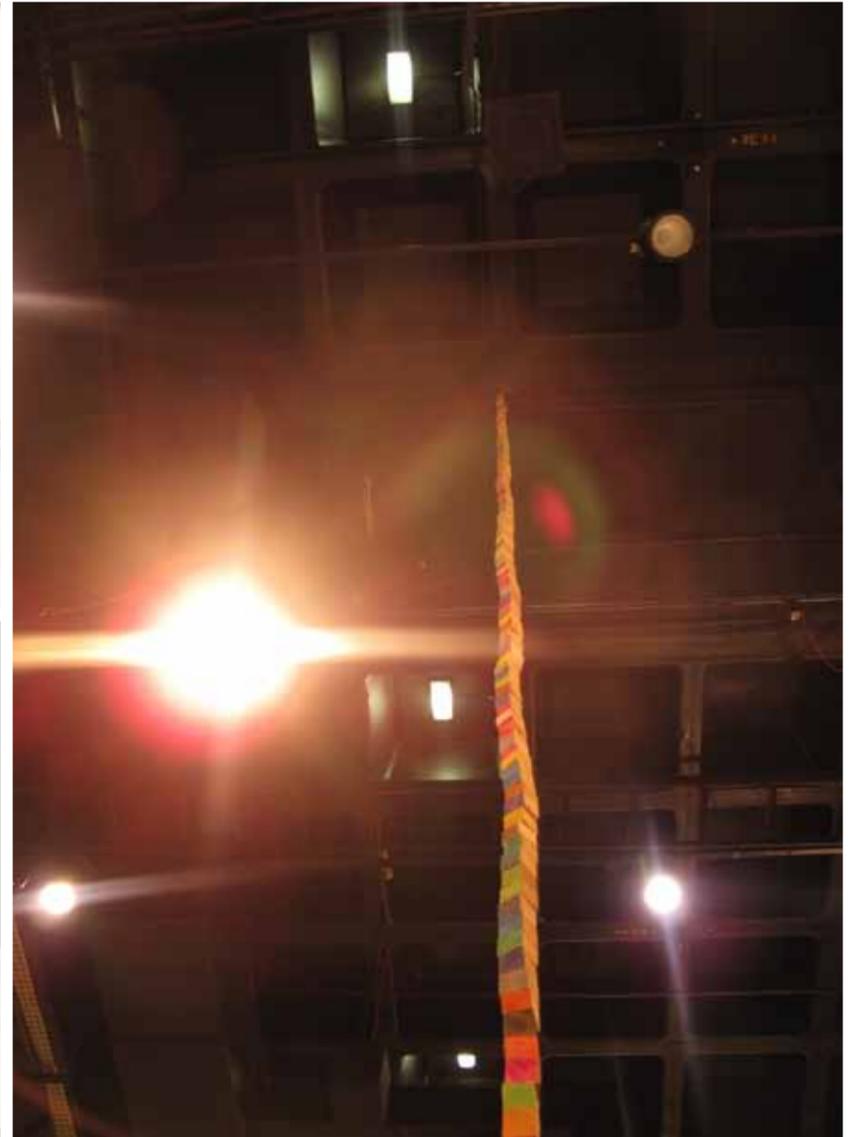
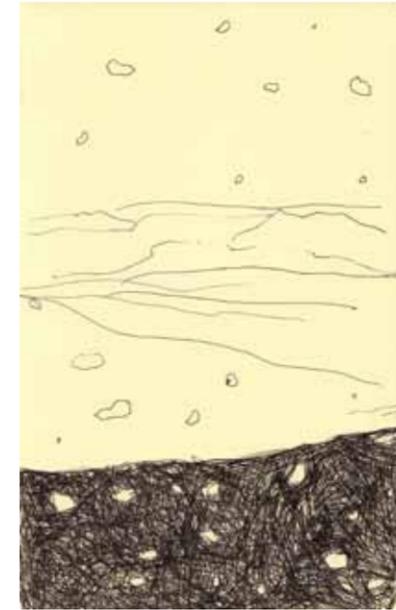
BIOGRAPHY

Marcus Neustetter was born and lives in Johannesburg. He read for his Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, earning his Masters Degree in 2001. During this time he launched sanman (Southern African New Media Art Network) and continued to consult in various international media arts networks. In his artistic capacity, Neustetter has produced site-specific interventions and exhibitions internationally and contributed to publications and conferences. In partnership with Stephen Hobbs, he has been active with The Gallery Premises, and The Trinity Session as well as in their collaborative capacity as Hobbs/Neustetter for the last eight years.

→ **My approach** to investigating a particular subject area is primarily experimental, allowing my artistic process to often be guided by an open-endedness that is not predetermined, but rather exploratory in nature. The process of exploration is often collaborative and responsive to context and audience, and evolves from a seeming randomness of activities to a body of work that informs a particular set of resulting outcomes.

As my interest lies in the crossover of art, science, and technology, the process does not always resemble a purely artistic experience, but rather multi-faceted research with scientific partners and sources of information that are captured and presented with the use of technologies appropriate to the concept, the context, and the audience.

This illustrated trajectory summarises interventions, drawings, laser experiments, and community based workshops to inform the artistic direction and outcome of the artwork titled *The Observatory in the Making* (2009-) and its original manifestation in Sutherland as a structure. The outcomes of this project are yet to be determined and they grow and shift as my experience does. This visual journey is a working document towards *The Observatory in the Making*.



Shifting my gaze upwards and outwards my fascination with the stars and the unknown notion of outer space grew, speculating on our own reflections and aspirations.

On the last evening of my ascent of Kilimanjaro in December 2006, the night was so clear that the lights of the city of Moshi at the foot of the mountain seemed to be reflected in the stars of the sky. The experience of this inspiring vision challenged my sense of perspective and understanding of my relationship to my own

context in Johannesburg. Through tracing Google Earth images, drawing and mapping the aerial perspectives when in flight and investigating my downward gaze onto my context, my process of investigation led me to question my engagement with onto Johannesburg and subject.

In trying to understand the space between the stars and the city lights my investigation and research into scientific practices led me to exploring sites where the two have met. Contemplating meteorite impact craters such as Tswaing and the Vredefort Dome, I tried to make sense of the impact on the site and its meaning today through light experiments with Space School South Africa students. These included recreating orbital motions, constellations and impact re-enactments using long-time exposure photography.

My interest in scientific research and observation informed an ongoing relationship with astrophysicists and astronomers working the observatory in Sutherland. Mapping the stars, drawing the space between the stars and contemplating the night skies sparked interests and aspirations that have developed research towards building an artist observatory structure for framing and contemplating the skies and challenging scientific data-driven pursuits of understanding our perspective and outer space.





The artist observatory to be positioned on the plateau of the South African Astronomical Observatory in Sutherland has evolved through sketches, maquettes and on-site experiments towards finding a structure that is both relevant for the conditions of the site, the needs of the observer or artist and a platform for further practice-led research in allowing it to evolve to a space of contemplation and imaginary projection.

