

## **Katie Paterson: *Ideas That Are Out There***

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## Katie Paterson: *Ideas That Are Out There*

Anaïs Castro

**INGLEBY GALLERY  
EDINBURGH  
JUNE 27 –  
OCTOBER 4, 2014**

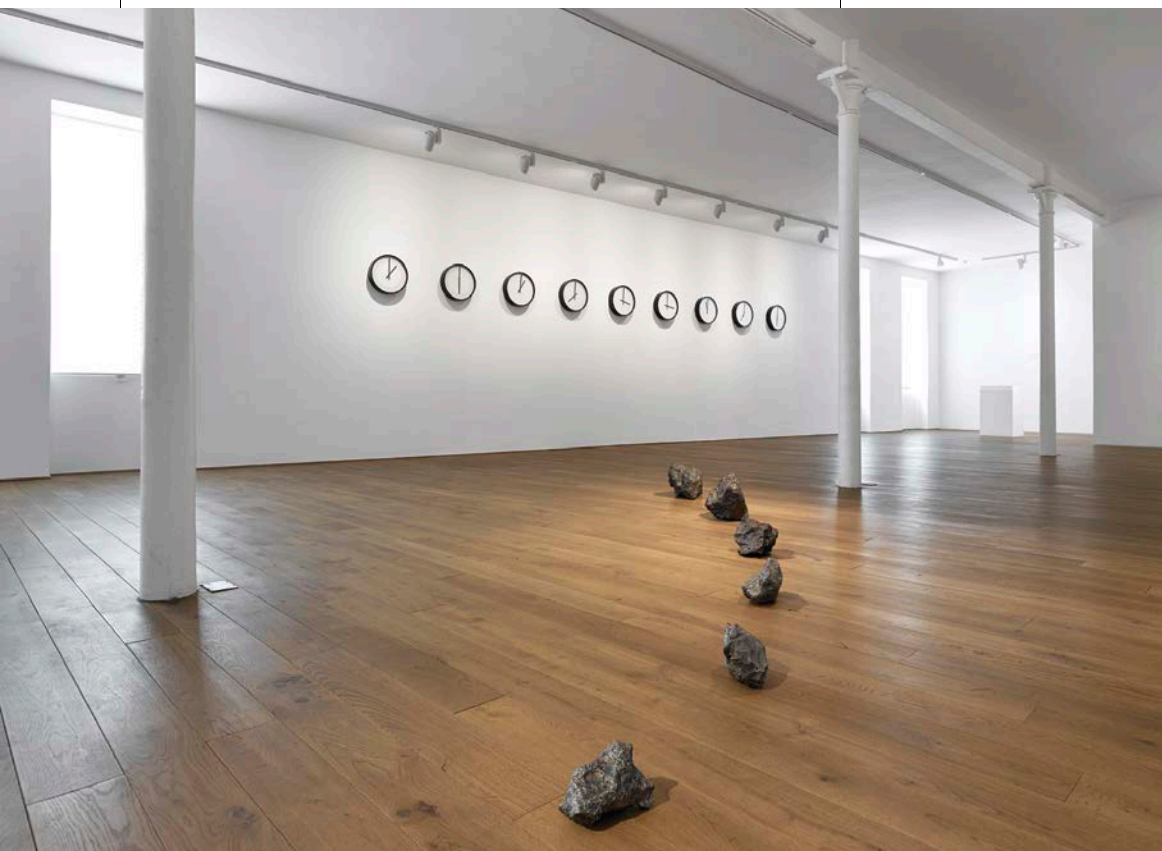
These last couple of months have been quite busy for the Glasgow-born, Berlin-based artist Katie Paterson. Her first major solo exhibition in Britain took place at Ingleby Gallery in Edinburgh from June until October of 2014 with a satellite presentation at Jupiter Artland. Paterson's most recent project, *The Future Library*, is set in a forest growing in Norway. The artist planted trees that will be used in a hundred years to supply the paper necessary to print a special anthology of stories. In the meantime, one author per year will be invited to contribute a story that will be held unpublished until 2114. The first contributor is none other than Margaret Atwood.

Known for her use of historical, geological matter, Paterson's work never fails to impress. She repurposes unusual materials into startlingly poetic works. Upon encountering Paterson's work, however, one rarely knows what one is looking at, for her work generally does not reveal its

meaning on first glance. In fact, Katie Paterson does not make art objects in the formalist sense, but, as the title of her show at Ingleby suggests, she creates Ideas.

In the centre of Ingleby Gallery's large room, six iron meteorites were placed in a semicircle on the floor and organised by size. Paterson has cast these objects, as old as the planet, and then melted them before casting them back into the original shape in which she found them. In a few hours, she flattened billions of years of mineralogical construction and interfered in the history of these extra-terrestrial relics. Another work, *Fossil Necklace*, dominated a corner of the gallery space where it hung from the ceiling like an apathetic garland. This giant necklace was made from 170 carved fossils that span the geological history of the planet and every major event in the evolution of life on earth. Reminiscent of little planets, each palaeolith and neolith pearl forms a sort of secular rosary that testifies to a history greater than humankind, a tangible link to the genesis of our blue planet.

On the main wall of the gallery, a series of clocks told the time on other planets of our solar system, creating a temporal link between the visitors in the gallery and these distant cosmic masses. They revealed that the passing of time depends on the trajectory of each planet on its relative axis: days are shortest on Jupiter and longest on Mercury, as one could observe. On an adjacent wall, a neon sign lit up a series of numbers: 07757001122, a telephone line was connected to the Vatnajökull glacier in Iceland. People were invited to call the number and be automatically connected to the clamorous body of ice. Nancy Durrant, reporter for the *Times*, remarked that the "cold, clacking



sound” of the glacier was quite pleasant until one began to worry about whether or not the sounds were normal, whether they were perhaps testifying to the otherwise imperceptible changing of the climate.<sup>1</sup>

A few kilometres from Edinburgh’s city centre, at Jupiter Artland, another important work was exhibited, the artist’s *Earth-Moon-Earth* (*Moonlight Sonata Reflected from The Surface of the Moon*). For this piece, the young Scottish artist translated Ludwig van Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata into Morse code and sent the data into space, using radio transmission technologies to reflect it back to earth after striking the surface of the moon. Transmuted back into music that was played on a self-playing piano in the gallery space, it became apparent that the melody was permanently altered. On its journey to the moon, parts of the data ‘leaked’ as though they had gotten lost in the craters of our celestial satellite. Listening to the moon’s *Moonlight Sonata* triggered the desire to fill in the blanks as if it was operating directly on one’s memory, on whether or not one can fill in the voids, on whether or not one has the keys to solve the musical puzzle. This is a doomed enterprise for most of us, but by piercing holes in the composition Paterson allows for the sudden possibility of an endless number of alternate arrangements: each one of us can compose our own version in our mind.

At the core of her practice, Katie Paterson holds a belief in the interconnectedness of all things, and she is committed to bending the boundaries of space and time to make us aware of the amazing miracles that surround us. Her poetic art interventions astonish us with the beauty they reveal about the universe we live in, but also by the mere fact that she is actually capable of accomplishing her startling projects. It is indeed remarkable that we have let this young artist place a telephone line at the base of a glacier, cast and recast meteorites, or hold the literary work of a best-selling author captive for a hundred years. But these small miracles that Paterson’s works make possible are tame in comparison to the great phenomena she makes us so acutely aware of. Paterson’s work celebrates the wonders of nature without ever diminishing human experience. She does not make us feel small and insignificant but rather puts human perspective in the front row of the universe’s spectacle. And the sophistication with which she accomplishes this is as astounding as the materials with which she works.

1. Nancy Durrant, “Katie Paterson: Ideas, Ingleby Gallery,” *Visual Art, The Times Newspaper*, Edinburgh First Night (August 6, 2014).

Anaïs Castro is an art critic and curator. She holds a Master’s degree in modern and contemporary art from the University of Edinburgh with specialization in history, curating and criticism (2012) and a BFA in art history from Concordia University (2011). She has published articles in *Espace, esse arts + opinions* and *Line Magazine*. At present, she is assistant manager of galerie Art Mûr in Montreal.

## Niki de Saint-Phalle : une rétrospective salutaire

Ariane Lemieux

### GALERIES NATIONALES DU GRAND PALAIS PARIS

17 SEPTEMBRE 2014 –  
2 FÉVRIER 2015

Peintre, sculptrice, réalisatrice, Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002) est célèbre pour ses sculptures représentant des femmes dansantes et sportives aux rondeurs accentuées arborant des couleurs vives. En cent soixante-quinze œuvres, la rétrospective des Galeries nationales du Grand Palais à Paris révèle que l’air de gaieté de ses Nanas, qui peuplent depuis des décennies l’espace public, de la *Fontaine Stravinsky* à Paris en passant par les rives de la Leine à Hanovre ou le *Jardin des Tarots* en Italie, font trop souvent oublier leur sens et surtout que son œuvre ne se limite pas à ces dernières.

Organisée selon un parcours thématique, la rétrospective proposée par Camille Morineau et Lucia Pesapane permet d’envisager le travail de Niki de Saint-Phalle dans sa globalité, allant de ses peintures à ses tableaux-reliefs, à ses sculptures mouvantes représentées par ses Nanas et à celles plus figées représentées par la série des *Mères dévorantes*, en passant par ses œuvres à la carabine, les fameux *Tirs*, avant de conclure sur ses projets d’art public. Cet ensemble, qui met en évidence toute la complexité du travail de l’artiste, est donné à voir à la lumière de son engagement pour la cause féministe et de sa lutte contre les conventions et les carcans de la pensée conservatrice des années 1950-1960. Issue d’une famille fortunée, élevée aux États-Unis, Niki de Saint-Phalle fréquente les milieux artistiques d’avant-garde auprès desquels elle trouve un écho à ses propensions anticonformistes. Mariée à un poète américain expérimental, elle quitte les États-Unis en 1953 pour Paris où elle rencontre Jean Tinguely qui devient son second mari et avec lequel elle réalisera plusieurs œuvres dont *Hon*, une femme monumentale couchée sur le dos avec les jambes écartées.

Le point de vue des commissaires est donné avec la présentation d’un documentaire audiovisuel daté de 1960 dans lequel l’artiste exprime sa volonté, à travers son art, de repenser le rôle de la femme dans une société dominée par le pouvoir masculin et sa détermination à renouveler l’image du féminin. Ce travail se réalise principalement à travers ses assemblages et ses sculptures qui ont largement éclipsé ses premières œuvres. On le sait peu, mais Niki de Saint Phalle a d’abord travaillé la peinture. Durant les années 1950, elle réalise des tableaux fortement texturés aux couleurs sombres, mélangeant les effets des matiéristes Jean Fautrier et Jean Dubuffet à ceux des « drippings » de Jackson Pollock. Mais ses tableaux laissent rapidement apparaître une envie de sortir de la surface bidimensionnelle. L’ajout graduel de petits éléments de céramique, de petits cailloux ou de menus objets sont autant d’indices d’une affirmation physique dans un espace à conquérir.