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## Gravity Fields of Stardust

Tom Fecht - DeepTime  
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*Fin de la terre:* At the edge of the world, where the dark blinking cosmos plummets straight down onto the black foam of the deep Atlantic Ocean, Tom Fecht has found his place. In the spirit of Jean Paul's escapist Giannozzo, who moves "like a bird of paradise" alongside weather and clouds, the artist Tom Fecht anchors nature's planetary and meteorological phenomena in the atmosphere around him.

Ever since 2008, he has been dedicating himself to night photography in its most advanced modes of technology, distilling a unique poetic essence from the patient, long-time observation of light phenomena such as solar eclipses, lunar phases, and the movements of the stars and the sea. Standing in front of the wall-sized prints of his series *Eclipse*, *Electric Cinema*, and *Gravity Fields*, the spectator mutates into somewhat of an awestruck being with a pounding heart.

His compositions of time and light also inspire comparisons to important figures in art history. Hieronymus Bosch, for example, whose three-winged altarpiece *The Garden of Delights* confronted the medieval spectator with their future either in the heavenly Garden of Eden or in hell. Influenced by alchemy, the painter invents the universe as a sphere of glass with the cosmos arching above the earth and nothing but darkness beneath—thus appropriating the perspective of the divine creator, who, according to Christian doctrine, separates light from darkness in order to create land and sea out of this cosmos.

In 2017, an artist once again faces this great mystery of human existence, capturing it in his photographic images. The gesture of bowing in front of sublime nature—which Caspar David Friedrich incomparably coined in his romantic views on natural beauty and the forces of nature—still imagines humans as "flesh striving back to the stars." Tom Fecht, however, depicts the future of the earth for us, when the becoming and vanishing of matter are set to take over, leaving no trace of humans. The confrontation of light and natural phenomena had also defined the work of the artists William Turner and Alfred Sisley. But in contrast to Tom Fecht, their art moves within the Christian tradition, still taking delight in the admiration of a nature attributed to God.

Tom Fecht is not just a photographer, but an alchemist. On the one hand, he searches for magic, capturing the moment of unique truth when a bolt of lightning strikes and he even travels to Ireland or southern Italy for this. On the other hand, with his intricate visual apparatuses, he captures an evolutionary dynamic transcending the time of humanity. Tom Fecht takes on the challenge of underlining the overpowering fragility of human existence, giving a face or Gestalt to the larger picture of the universe. He is aware of his failure, which he shares with other great minds, among them Ludwig Hohl, who asks: "Did anyone ever get the larger picture first, and only then the details? I mean a wholeness that really is serious?"

Fecht is “failing terrifically,” as his touching light paintings bear witness to a passion reaching for the stars.

This is manifest in the residual light of a solar eclipse on the tips of waves at sea in his Eclipse series or a seascape lending its backdrop to a performance of incredibly beautiful lightning bolts in *Electric Cinema*—a sequence of electric sculptures held for a second. And as if from a different dimension, the moon reflects the light of an absent sun. No more, no less. The changing of the tides, the incessant rising and retreating of water masses and of tiniest waves, appear as a chaotic teaming of lights in the large-scale photographs comprising the diptych *Gravitational Pull*. These works by Fecht recall paragons from the laboratory of Otto Steinert and his student Detlev Orlopp. Orlopp’s compressed surfaces of water are disturbingly similar to his images of rocks. Thus, this historic photographic oeuvre connects with Tom Fecht’s contemporary works—elegies on humans as stardust.

In his seascape photography, Hiroshi Sugimoto focuses on the horizon line that divides or connects heaven and sea, potentially offering an opening to the zones of the great mystery lying behind it. But by anchoring his standpoint in the very midst of the water masses, Tom Fecht’s standpoint indicates that the artist understands himself as an inherent part of the surrounding nature.