

# Amélie Bouvier

## *Stars, don't fail me now!*

### Harlan Levey Projects

65 Rue Isidoor Teirlinckstraat, 1080 Brussels, Belgium

**Opening: Thursday, September 4, 2025, 17:00- 21:00**

Exhibition: September 4- December 13, 2025

The cosmos is a dizzying thought: stretches of time and space that exceed human comprehension. Across centuries we have invented languages to grasp what lies beyond us- myth, science, poetry. For more than a decade, artist Amélie Bouvier has explored how society observes and interprets the sky, examining astronomical imagery through the lenses of history, desire, and imagination.



Amélie Bouvier, exhibition view of "Stars, don't fail me now!", 2025, Harlan Levey Projects, Brussels. Photo: Shivadas De Schrijver

During this time, she has pursued a series of collaborations with leading research institutions, including the Harvard College Observatory, the University of Namur, and the Observatoire de Paris - site Meudon. This exhibition focuses on her work with the archives of the Paris observatory, where she studied fragile glass-plate photographs of the Sun. These negatives paint the Sun as a pale shadow, scarred by fingerprints and scratches accumulated over more than a century.

The exhibition begins with *Calibration #1*, a drawing created from test photographic plates (also known as calibration plates), which were used for focusing the telescope at the Observatoire de Paris – an essential, yet unseen step in the astrophotography process. When reproducing portions of these calibration plates, Bouvier began taking measures of her own image-making: noting the time she spent on each drawing, the tools she used, the variations in her mental state. Here, the drawing introduces the visitor to Bouvier's practice of translating scientific images into an artistic language, while also reflecting on her own methods of observation.

The large-scale textile collages *Astronomical Garden #1* and *#2*, immerse viewers in scenes that unfold like theatrical backdrops. Conceived in the tradition of Romantic stage scenery, each panel functions as a setting in itself. Their title recalls the cultural form of gardens, where, throughout history, human fantasies of Paradise and order have been projected onto nature. In Bouvier's gardens, the earthly plants are replaced with extraterrestrial elements: *Astronomical Garden #1* depicts the surface of the Moon, while *#2* features falling celestial objects, from meteor showers to satellite crashes.

Each collage is composed from a hybrid archive that brings together ancient manuscripts, online databases, and specialized scientific collections. Images are enlarged, redrawn, digitized, printed on cotton, and sewn together, creating landscapes that merge centuries of knowledge and speculation. By borrowing equally from myth, speculations, and hard data, the works question our relationship to astronomical imagery, in a world flooded with stimuli and bent on spatial colonisation. Like gardens, these landscapes are both natural and artificial. They invite viewers to reflect on how narratives shape perception, how reality and illusion blur, and how our visions of the cosmos are inspired by fantasy and mythology as much as they are by science.

Encircling the larger installations, a constellation of drawings from various series punctuates the gallery. *Fragments of Sunlight*, *Solar Dust*, and *Moonlight on the Sun* continue Bouvier's investigation of the archives at the Observatoire de Paris - site Meudon. These works are created through what the artist calls photodessinographie, a process which entangles photography and drawing. In each series, Bouvier moves fluidly between ultra-precise lines and quick, gestural marks, between subtractions and additions, eruptions of color and zones of absence. Solar flares, scratches, smudges, and the blurred traces of handling are all carefully rendered. What once appeared accidental or unwanted in the original plates is given equal weight with the celestial body itself. Through this approach, Bouvier proposes a new role for archival images that are no longer scientifically useful: they become surfaces where fragility and detail invite sustained attention, where the limits of human vision across space and time become perceptible.

The smaller series of rectangular panels titled *Solar Dust* concentrates on fragments of the original glass photographs, where textures and forms collide in minute detail. *Fragments of Sunlight*, a single work composed of six assembled drawings, suggests another way of piecing together dispersed traces of information. This exploration culminates in *Moonlight on the Sun*, where Bouvier returns to the glass negatives of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In these works the Sun is always centered, as in the archival images, yet partially erased by the marks of time. Fingerprints, cracks, peeling emulsions, and chemical dissolves interrupt the cosmic record, at once human and elemental. By redrawing both the Sun and its deterioration, Bouvier emphasizes the fragility of knowledge itself. The immense power of the star (source of both life and eventual destruction) appears diminished, trapped in the fragile panes of glass. Each fissure or blemish carries its own meaning, accidental yet preserved by the artist's hand. The archive emerges not as a static record but as a living entity, shaped by the interactions of those who use, consult, and

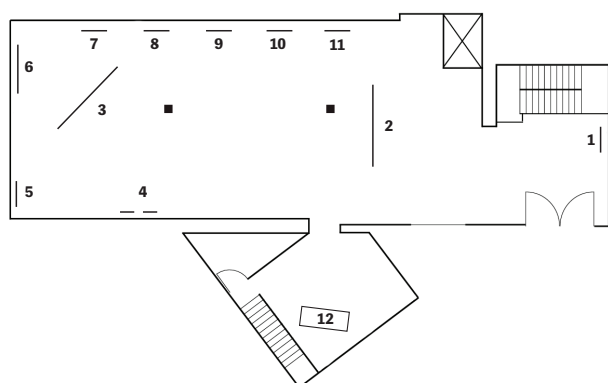
sometimes damage it. Like the Sun itself, these images move through cycles of appearance and disappearance, decay and renewal.

The exhibition concludes with *Quadrivium III*, a kinetic sound installation that transforms a telescopic image of the Swan Constellation (Cygnus) into a musical score. As the instrument rotates, it produces dissonant chimes which fill the gallery. This translation of data into rhythm and light reimagines the sky as a place for song, the machine as a tool for poetry.

Together, these works study scientific imagery to suggest another way of approaching the cosmos: less as an object to be measured than as a vibration to be felt, dreamed, amplified.

**Amélie Bouvier (b. 1982) lives and works in Brussels, Belgium.** Her artistic practice builds from historical research in the field of astronomy to question issues related to cultural memory and collective heritage. Astronomers in particular, and scientists in general, don't only explain the world, they also represent it through the construction of diagrams, illustrations, photographs or equations. For Bouvier, scientific imagery is an extension of knowledge that reveals ideological and ethical frameworks, which risk cloaking aspects of the reality they aim to represent. She is particularly interested in the sky and stars as a landscape that exposes current socio-political contradictions and knowledge gaps. While her work is based on historical facts, data and visuals, she consistently mixes this with speculative imagery, adapting tools and techniques to present alternative potentialities.

Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions including the Pavillon Blanc Henri Molina Médiathèque | Centre d'art de Colomiers (FR); Aomori Contemporary Art Centre (Aomori, JP); Galeria Arsenal (Białystok, PL); CHRONIQUES - Biennale des Imaginaires Numériques (Aix-en-Provence, FR); ISELP contemporary art center (Brussels, BE); and the Museo Patio Herreriano (Valladolid, ES). She has participated in group exhibitions at the Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles (Paris, FR); Le Pavillon Namur (BE); Festival Safran Numériques (Amiens, FR); Sesc Ipiranga (São Paulo, BR); the Verbeke Foundation (Kemzeke, BE); the Museo de Arte Prehispánico Rufino Tamayo (Oaxaca, MX); the Cerveira International Art Biennial (Cerveira, PT); and many others. Her first monograph, *Staring Into the Night*, was published by Hopper & Fuchs in 2024.



**Office** *Moonlight on Five Suns*, 2024 - 2025  
Graphite, ink, Indian ink, and colored pencil on paper  
70 x 350 cm - 27 1/2 x 137 3/4 in

*Calibration #2*, 2025  
Indian ink, graphite, colored ink on paper  
75 x 118 cm - 29 1/2 x 46 1/2 in

- 1** *Calibration #1*, 2025  
Indian ink, graphite, colored ink on paper  
75 x 118 cm - 29 1/2 x 46 1/2 in
- 2** *Astronomical Garden #1*, 2025  
Appliqué cotton on linen  
400 x 300 cm - 157 1/2 x 118 1/8 in
- 3** *Astronomical Garden #2*, 2025  
Appliqué cotton on linen  
400 x 570 cm - 157 1/2 x 224 3/8 in
- 4** *Fragments of Sunlight*, 2025  
Graphite, ink, Indian ink, and colored pencil on paper  
98.5 x 117 x 3 cm - 38 3/4 x 46 x 1 1/8 in
- 5** *Solar Dust #1*, 2024  
Graphite, ink, Indian ink, and colored pencil on paper  
23.5 x 35 cm - 9 1/4 x 13 3/4 in
- 6** *Moonlight on the Sun*, 2025  
Graphite, ink, Indian ink, and colored pencil on paper  
70 x 70 cm - 27 1/2 x 27 1/2 in

- 7** *Solar Dust #5*, 2024  
Graphite, ink, Indian ink, and colored pencil on paper  
23.5 x 35 cm - 9 1/4 x 13 3/4 in
- 8** *Solar Dust #6*, 2024  
Graphite, ink, Indian ink, and colored pencil on paper  
23.5 x 35 cm - 9 1/4 x 13 3/4 in
- 9** *Solar Dust #4*, 2024  
Graphite, ink, Indian ink, and colored pencil on paper  
23.5 x 35 cm - 9 1/4 x 13 3/4 in
- 10** *Solar Dust #3*, 2024  
Graphite, ink, Indian ink, and colored pencil on paper  
23.5 x 35 cm - 9 1/4 x 13 3/4 in
- 11** *Solar Dust #2*, 2024  
Graphite, ink, Indian ink, and colored pencil on paper  
23.5 x 35 cm - 9 1/4 x 13 3/4 in
- 12** *Quadrivium III*, 2025  
Neon light, electric circuits, wood, paper, phototransistors,  
motor, electrical cables, speaker, sound regulator  
40 x 80 x 50 cm - 15 3/4 x 31 1/2 x 19 3/4 in



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