2016

From Your Body Is a Space That Sees, 2016

Lia Halloran
Chapman University, halloran@chapman.edu

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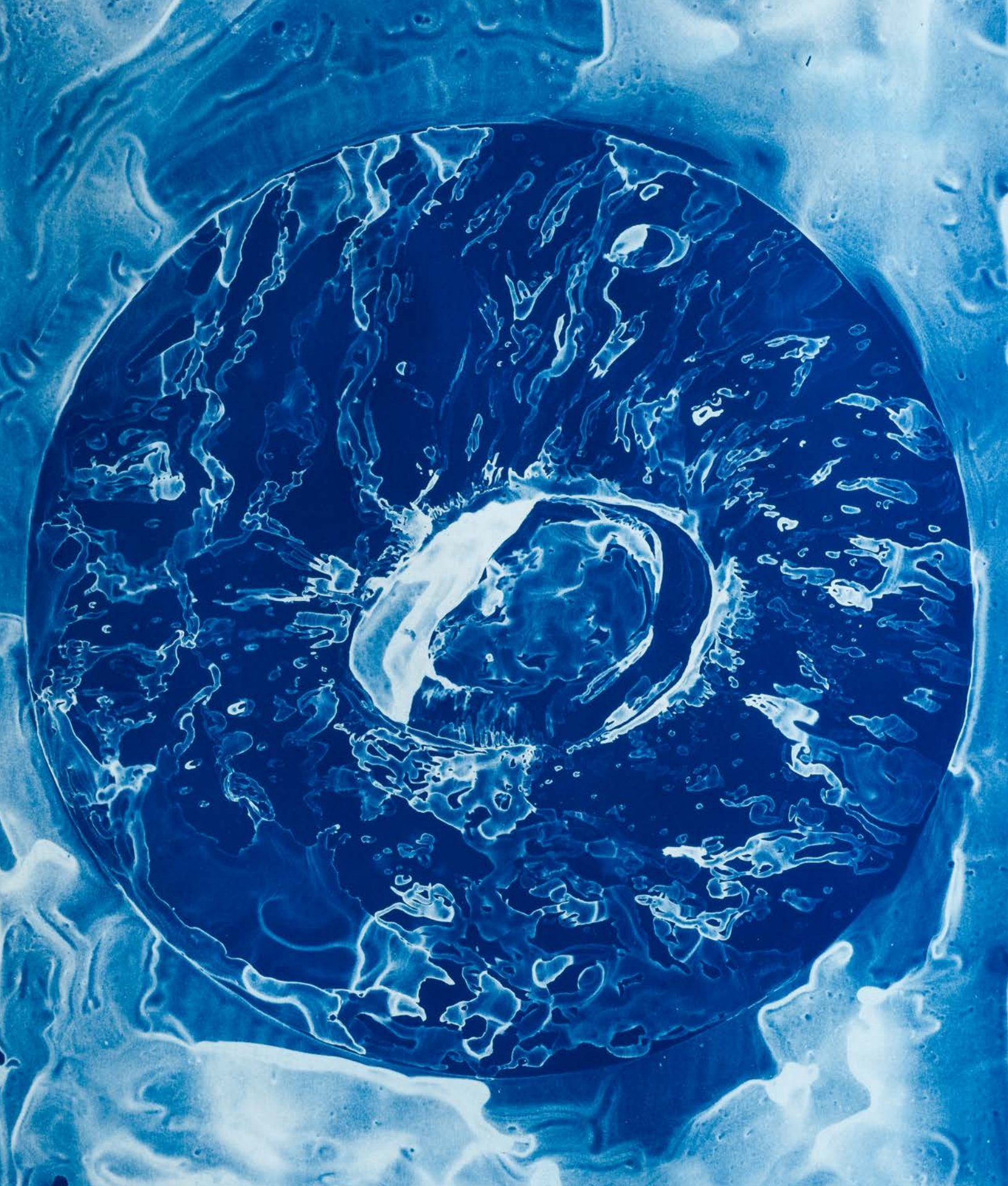
IMAGES >> LIA HALLORAN

Lia Halloran is an artist who grew up surfing and skateboarding in the Bay Area and developed a love of science during high school, at her first job, performing cow eye dissections and laser demonstrations at the Exploratorium in San Francisco. For the past fifteen years, her studio practice has been in dialogue with interactions with science and nature. Halloran's work often makes use of scientific concepts as starting points that interweave concepts related to sexuality, intimacy, and physical movement to produce merged projects that have included astrophysics, magnetism, perception, scale, gravity, giant caves of crystals and ice, cabinets of curiosities, taxonomy, classification, periodic table of elements, skateboarding, and interconnections between these topics. Halloran has participated in several interdisciplinary projects with scientists, artists, and architects including Janna Levin, science resident at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn. She is currently working on a book with physicist Kip Thorne about the warped side of the universe, to include Thorne's poetry and Halloran's paintings. In 2016 Halloran was awarded an Art Works grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for the project *Your Body Is a Space That Sees*, which draws from archival materials to recreate an astronomical catalog of large-scale cyanotypes based on discoveries made by women in the late 1800s. Halloran received her BFA from the University of California, Los Angeles, and her MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale University. She is an assistant professor of art at Chapman University. Her most recent exhibition, *Deep Sky Companion*, which comprises 120 works based on deep-sky objects catalogued by Charles Messier, was on display from June to December 2016, filling four stories at the Cahill Center for Astronomy and Astrophysics at Caltech.

IMAGE: Lia Halloran
CRATER HYPATIA, 2016
Cyanotype print, painted negative
on paper, 40 x 25 in.



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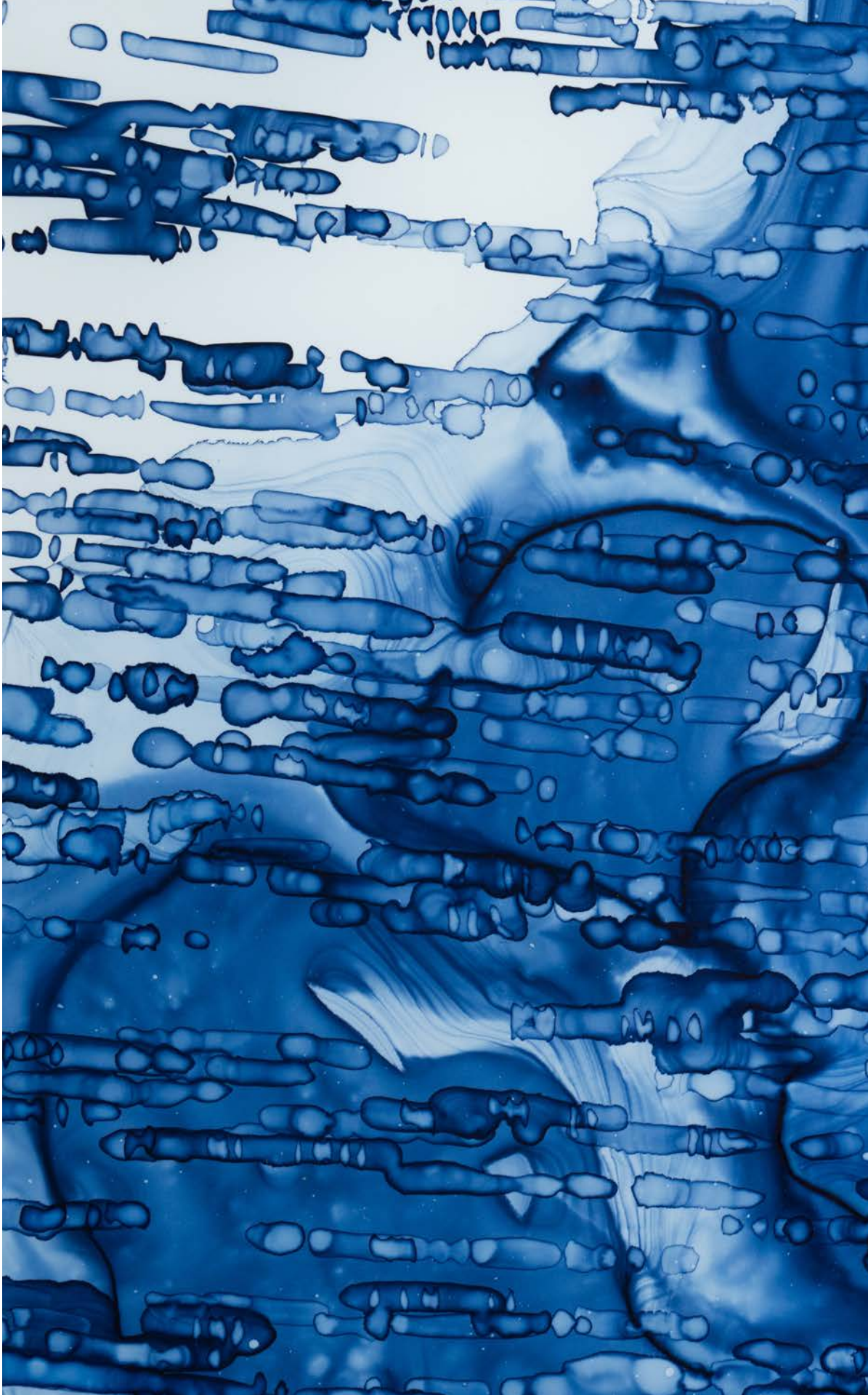
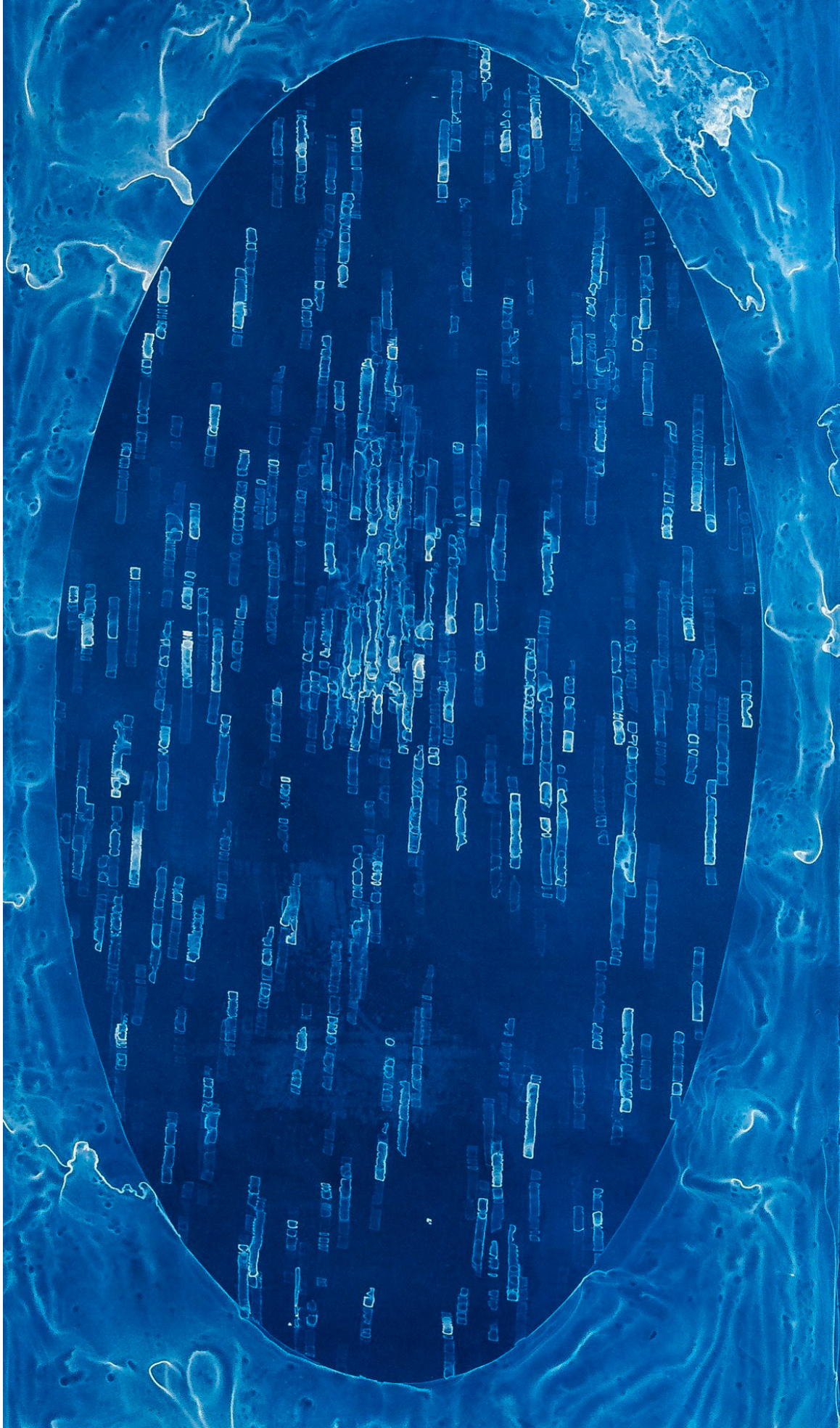
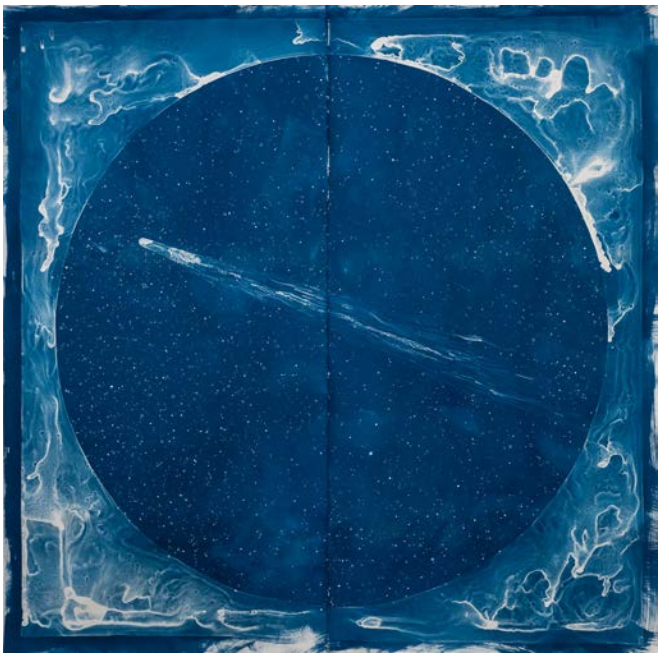


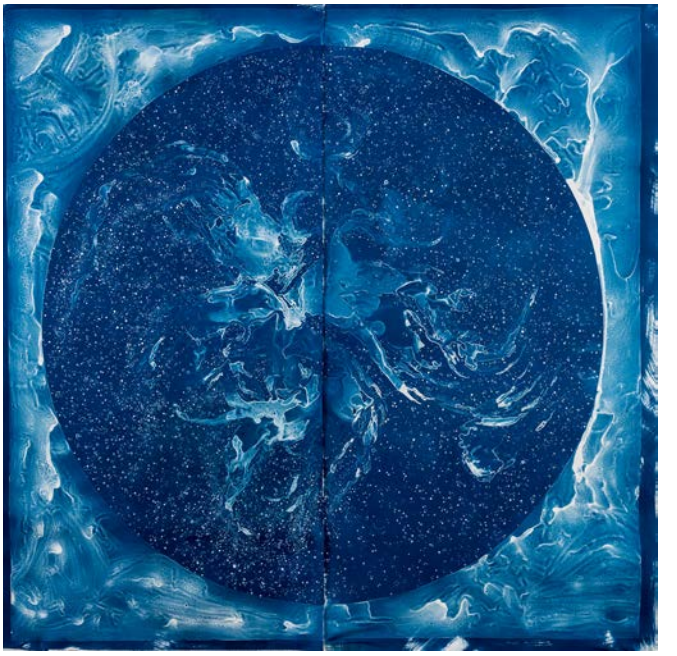
Lia Halloran
SPECTRA, AFTER ANTONIA MURRAY (detail), 2016
Ink on drafting film, 76 x 76 in.

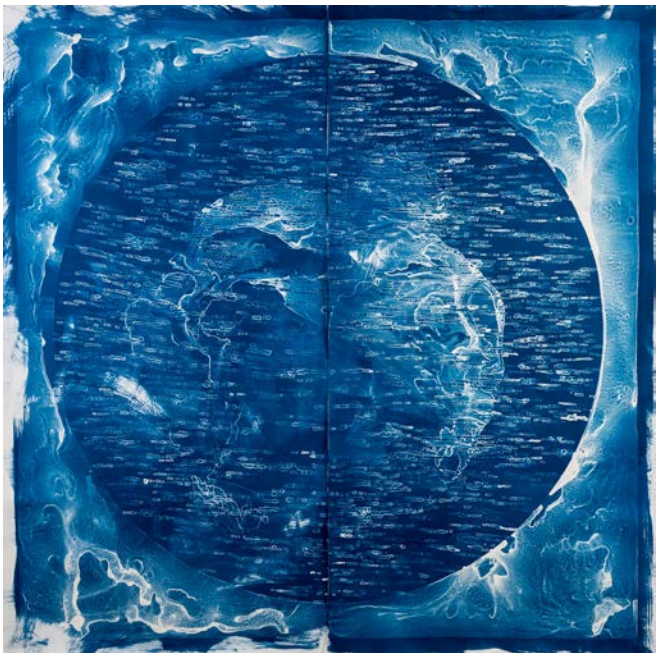
IMAGE (next pages): Lia Halloran
PAPER DOLLS (detail), 2016
Ink on drafting film, 40 x 132 in.



Lia Halloran
SPECTRA, AFTER ANNIE JUMP CANNON, 2016
Cyanotype print, painted negative on paper, 76 x 42 in.







Lia Halloran
SPECTRA, AFTER ANTONIA MURRAY, 2016
Cyanotype on paper, with matching negative ink on drafting film,
76 x 76 in. each

IMAGES (opposite page):

Lia Halloran
top: COMET, AFTER ANNIE JUMP CANNON, 2016
Cyanotype on paper, with matching negative ink on drafting film, 76 x 76 in. each

bottom: NEBULAE, AFTER WILLIAMINA FLEMING, 2016
Ink on drafting film, with matching positive cyanotype on paper, 76 x 76 in. each

IMAGE (next pages): Lia Halloran
GLOBULAR CLUSTER, AFTER CECILIA PAYNE, 2016
Cyanotype print, painted negative on paper, 42 x 76 in.

Lia Halloran
LUNAR CRATER, AFTER CAROLINE HERSCHEL, 2016
Cyanotype print, painted negative on paper, 40 x 25 in.

>> Your Body Is a Space That Sees

Your Body Is a Space That Sees is a series of large-scale cyanotype works inspired by the fragmented history and contributions of women in astronomy. The series offers a visual account and female-centric astronomical catalog of craters, comets, galaxies, and nebulae, drawing from narrative, visual, and historical accounts of a group of women known as "Pickering's Harem" or the "Harvard Computers," who worked at the Harvard Observatory starting in 1879. This little-known group of women made a significant impact in the field of astronomy by using photographic glass plates to catalogue and classify the size, brightness, and chemical content of stars. The key to unlocking the distance of the universe was discovered by one of these women, Henrietta Swan Leavitt, based on her observation of variable stars. Her discoveries provided evidence that subsequently supported Edwin Hubble's expanding universe theories. The important contributions of these women to the fields of astronomy and astrophotography were compensated with wages less than half of what their male counterparts would have been paid.

Women employees of the Harvard Observatory, the "Harvard Computers," Cambridge, Massachusetts, c. 1925.

Photo courtesy of the Harvard College Observatory

Harvard University houses the largest collection of astronomical glass plates in the world—over 500,000, taken between the mid-1880s and 1992, including some of the early daguerreotype of the moon. Research for this series was done in partnership with the archives at the Harvard College Observatory to identify specific plates that were studied and catalogued by the approximately eighty women in the "Harvard Computers" group. These plates serve as a reference for large paintings of the galaxies and stellar objects. *Your Body Is a Space That Sees* offers the experience of the night sky through the discoveries made by these astronomers.

The cyanotype works are created by painting stellar images on semi-transparent drafting film. They are then pressed over paper coated with light-sensitive emulsion and exposed to the sun. The resulting piece is a cyanotype print of the positive image in equal scale to its matching negative: a photographic print created without a camera. This process, which mimics early astronomical glass plates moving between transparent surfaces, is multilayered in meaning and technique: images of stars created by a star (our sun), paintings used to create a painting (light-sensitive emulsion exposed by another painting). Cliché-verre—a method that creates a photograph by painting on a glass plate used as the negative—was popular in the mid-nineteenth century and adopted by French painters including Camille Corot, Jean-François Millet, and Charles-François Daubigny.

www.liahalloran.com

Lia Halloran, installation shot
NEBULAE, AFTER WILLIAMINA FLEMING, 2016 (left);
SPECTRA, AFTER ANTONIA MURRAY (right), 2016
Ink on drafting film, 76 x 76 in. each