

Artists to take over Mt. Wilson Observatory for science-inspired exhibitions and performance this weekend

By **Carolina A. Miranda**

JUNE 1, 2017, 6:45 PM

The Mt. Wilson Observatory, which sits on top of a mountain peak in the San Gabriel Mountains, is perhaps best known as the place where early 20th century astronomer Edwin Hubble helped compile evidence that the universe was slowly expanding. This weekend, this historic scientific site will be taken over by a group of visual artists who have created a series of new works that pay tribute to the observatory and its history.

Led by artist and curator Christina Ondrus, “[Knowledges at Mount Wilson Observatory](#),” as the show is called, features an exhibition of 10 newly commissioned works, as well as a series of musical performances and other special events.

“There’s something about the work that astronomers do there, the act of observing, that I find connects with art,” Ondrus says. “And there’s also the act of rendering reality.”

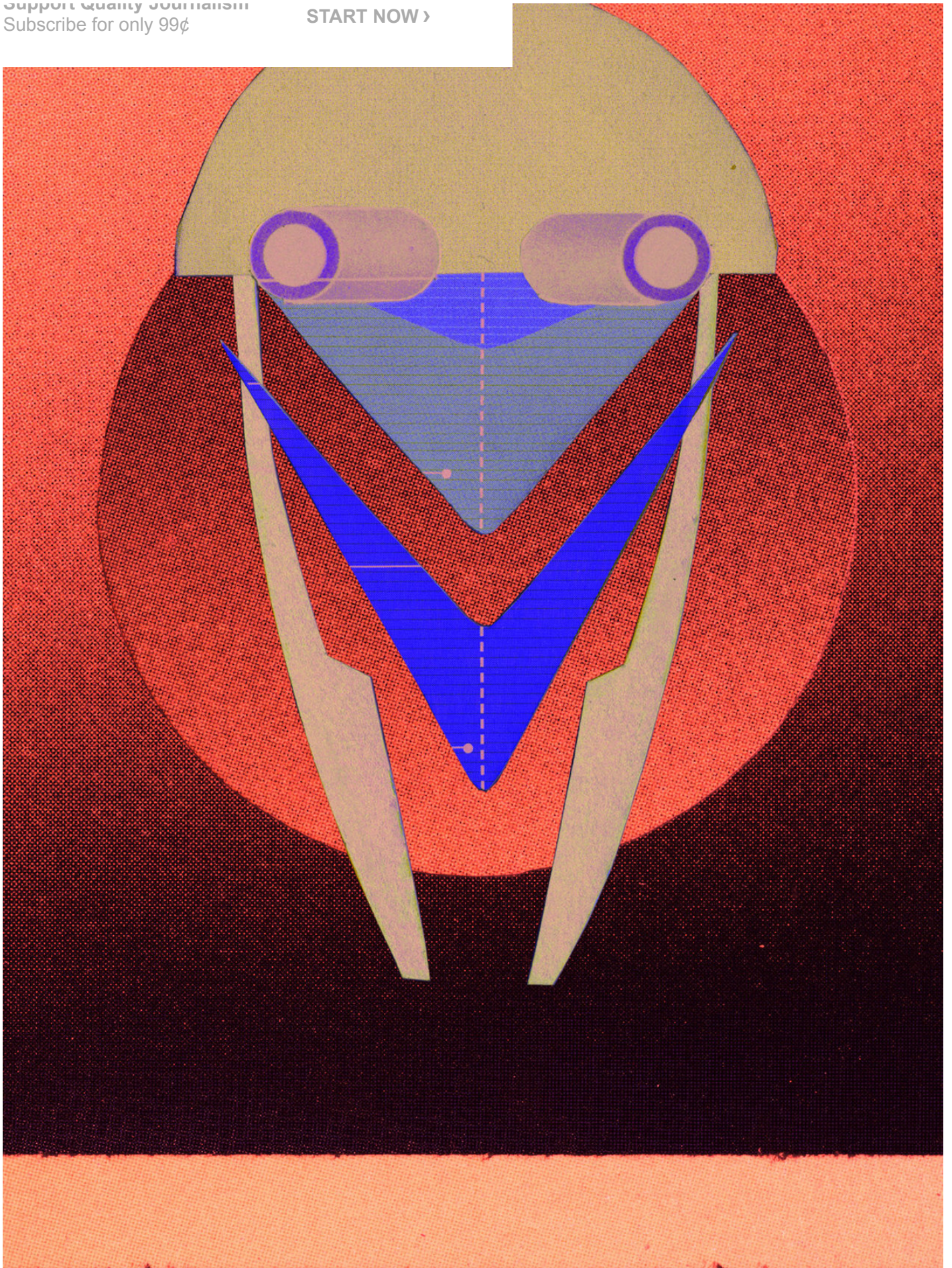
The show will take place on Saturday and Sunday at Mt. Wilson Observatory and will stretch into the night on Saturday, allowing visitors to combine their art gazing with a little nighttime star-gazing — a treat, since the observatory generally closes at 5 p.m.

“All of these major historic discoveries took place there that laid the foundation for other discoveries,” Ondrus says. “It’s astounding to visit there. Einstein visited there. Stephen Hawking has visited there.”



Support Quality Journalism
Subscribe for only 99¢

START NOW >

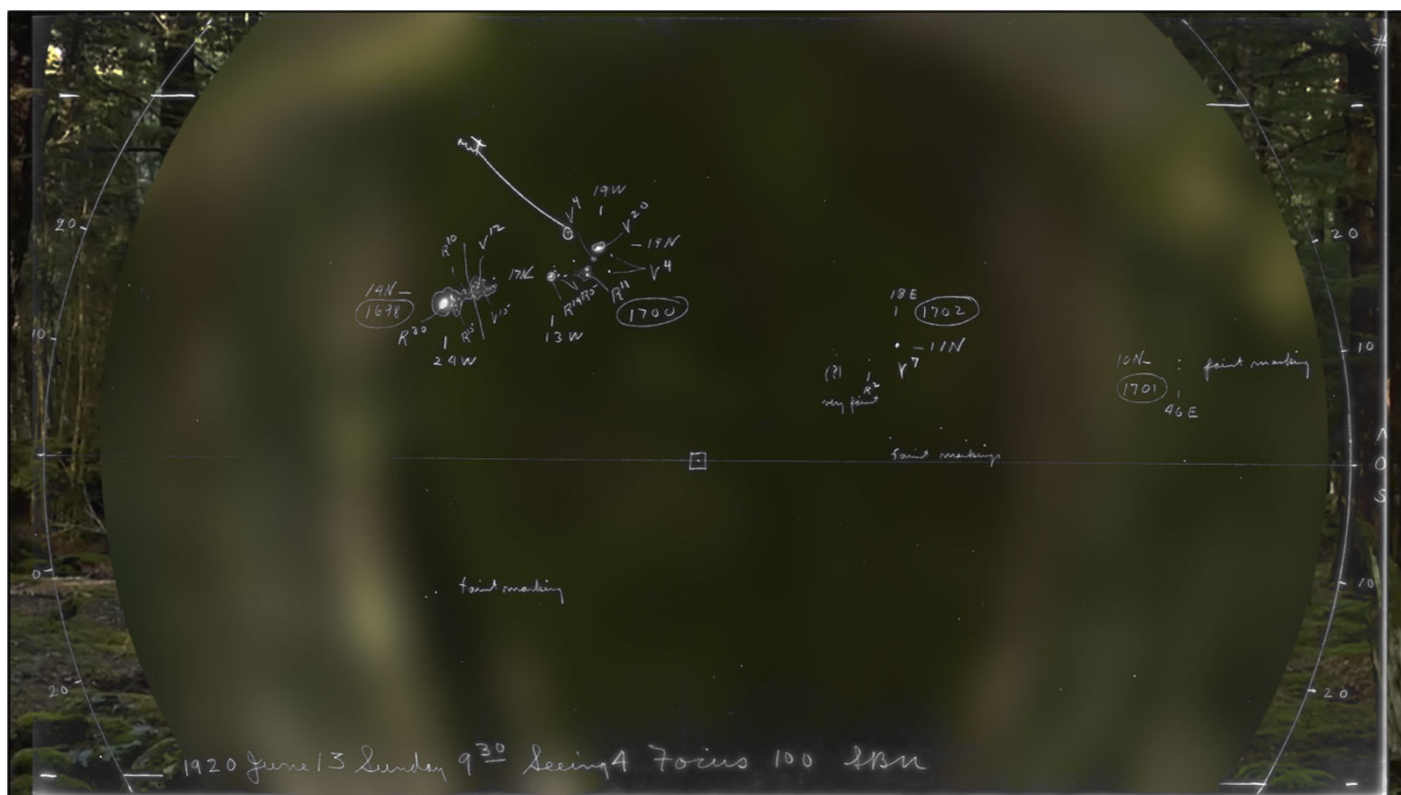


Artist Erik Frydenborg, who is inspired by the art that accompanies science fiction, will rework the entrance to the Mount Wilson astronomical museum. (Erik Frydenborg / Knowledges)

The show, which was made possible by a grant from the Mike Kelley Foundation, will contain works that are directly and indirectly inspired by this rich history.

“The broad focus,” Ondrus says, “is looking at Mt. Wilson as this nexus that has given rise to this huge array of ideas.”

Sculptor Alice Könitz (who currently has an exhibition on view at the [Main Museum](#) in downtown Los Angeles), has created a series of objects that can be employed for solar observation, including a solar tent and natural obsidian lenses. Maintaining the solar theme (Mt. Wilson is home to a solar observation tower) is artist Jeff Cain, who has gathered a century’s worth of astronomers’ drawings of sunspots made at the observatory and used them to create a new video titled “Blindspot.”



A work by Jeff Cain titled "Blindspot" is inspired by scientists' drawings of sunspots — drawings created at Mount Wilson. (Jeff Cain / Knowledges)

“Erik Frydenborg is inspired by the covers of science-fiction dime novels,” Ondrus says. “He has created a sculptural installation that will modify the facade of the Mt. Wilson Astronomical Museum — to make it more shrine-like.”

Other works will include a knitted piece by Channing Hansen generated by a mathematical algorithm and an outdoor installation by Krysten Cunningham that will use spandex to create a constellation amid the trees.

Plus, there are the performances: such as a pair of shows by musician Constance Demby on a custom-made instrument she calls the “Sonic Steel Space Bass,” as well as gigs by experimental musicians such as White Magic, Odeya Nini and Money Mark & Secret Circuit.





Sculptor Alice Könitz, whose work "Kiosk," is seen here, has created a series of sculptural works for the Mt. Wilson show that aid in solar observation. (Alice Könitz / Knowledges)

This is the second time Ondrus has gathered visual artists for an exhibition atop Mt. Wilson. The first was in 2012 — and it was inspired by an unlikely chain of events.

“I remember seeing this exhibit at the Museum of Jurassic Technology — the collection of ‘[Letters to Mount Wilson Observatory](#),’” she says. “So I finally took a day trip and I was like, ‘This is right here and it’s amazing!’ I was really smitten with the site.”

She then got to work organizing an exhibition that could convene artists and lovers of science in one of Southern California’s more storied places. Looking at the stars provided a good source of inspiration.

Ondrus recalls a quote by Griffith J. Griffith — on display at [Griffith Observatory](#), which his bequest helped construct: “If all mankind could look through that telescope, it would change the world.”

For an art show, a good place to start.

“**Knowledges at Mt. Wilson Observatory**”

Where: Mt. Wilson Observatory, Mount Wilson Road, Mt. Wilson, Angeles National Forest

When: Saturday, 10 a.m. to 1 a.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Admission: Art installations are free and open to the public throughout the day; performances require advance tickets since seating is extremely limited

Info: knowledges.org

Sign up for our weekly Essential Arts & Culture newsletter »

carolina.miranda@latimes.com

[@cmonstah](#)

ALSO

Datebook: Marisa Merz at the Hammer, artists at Mt. Wilson, the color of art, a sanctuary installation

Sam Durant sculpture of gallows in Minneapolis to be dismantled and ceremonially burned

The naked guy at graduation is just one of Steven Lavine's memories from 29 years of running CalArts