
Harmony of the spheres

Exhibition
Catalogue

Neeko Paluzzi

**STUDIO
SIXTYSIX**

CONTEMPORARY
ART GALLERY

August 21 – September 13, 2020

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a gallery focused
on contemporary,
finely designed,
content driven art.**

**Studio Sixty Six
represents 25
professional,
Canadian artists
producing unique,
thought-provoking
artwork in a wide
variety of media.**

Artist Bio

Neeko Paluzzi

Neeko Paluzzi (b. 1988) is a Canadian artist and educator whose practice focuses on conceptual installation. His images blend the possibilities of traditional, analogue darkroom processes with contemporary photographic techniques, such as 3D scanning and printing. He is the winner of the 2018 Project X, Photography Grant from the Ottawa Arts Council and recently had a featured exhibition at the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival.

Harmony of the spheres



With *Harmony of the spheres*, Paluzzi continues his interest in merging musical tones with photographic tones. Paluzzi draws on the (previously) long-held belief that the visible planets (including the Moon) moved through space while emitting a musical *hum*. Although there have been countless variations of this idea found in many cultures throughout history, Paluzzi focuses on the theories of Johannes Kepler in his book *Harmonice Mundi*, 1619. Within the text, Kepler sets out to explain that each planet sings a series of notes in his/her own “voice.” Paluzzi has turned those musical notes into movements in the darkroom, as seen in his other musical works: *This place is a shelter*, 2018 and *The goldberg variations*, 2019.

Johannes Kepler's Harmonice Mundi: A 'Scientific' version of the *Harmony of the Spheres*

Dr. Bruno Gingras, Department of Psychology
Personality, Emotion, and Music Laboratory,
University of Innsbruck

Today the notion of the “harmony of the spheres” is merely a myth, which one encounters as a metaphor in poems and novels. However, for many centuries philosophers, music theorists, and astronomers took this idea very seriously, to the point that no serious discussion of astronomy or music theory dared omit a section on the “music of the spheres” (Stephenson 1994).

The great astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), who nowadays is known mainly for the three planetary laws that bear his name, but who also wrote extensively on mathematics, astrology, music theory, and cosmology, was no exception. His book *Harmonice Mundi*, published in 1619, is considered the last serious attempt to find musical harmony in the motions of the heavens (Stephenson 1994). In an age in which empirical science was quickly overtaking theoretical speculation, and in which observations that contradicted the opinion of ancient philosophers were no longer dismissed, Kepler sought to construct a cosmological theory that would include all the recent developments in the field of astronomy, of which many were his own discoveries, while at the same time preserving the essence of the ancient tradition of “celestial harmony.”

Kepler is mostly remembered nowadays for having discovered the three laws of planetary motion, while his cosmological theories are known only to a few historians of science. In 1609, Kepler published the *Astronomia Nova*, which expounded his first and second laws of planetary motion, derived from his study of the orbit of Mars. These laws, which are still valid today, state that:

1. the orbit of every planet is an ellipse with the Sun at one focus, and
2. the straight line joining a planet and the Sun sweeps over equal areas during equal times.

However, Kepler had not forgotten about the goals he had set for himself when he began his career, and he “combined his search for physical causes with a vision of the world as a manifestation of divine harmony” (Kepler 1619). In his correspondence, Kepler often alluded to the work of Ptolemy, which clearly had not only greatly influenced him, but inspired him to develop his own theory of the harmony of the world that would take into account not only the recent developments in astronomy, but also those of music.

In the first chord, Saturn and Mars can “sing” G (g in the case of Mars) or h, while Mercury can take G, h, or e at some point in its orbit. The remaining planets, Jupiter, Earth, and Venus, are much more restricted, and can take only one note (h for Jupiter, g for the Earth, and e for Venus). In the second chord, Saturn can take G, Jupiter c, Mars c and g, the Earth g, Venus e, and Mercury can take all three notes.

Kepler notices analogies between the roles of the planets and those of singers in a choir. Jupiter and Saturn cover harmonic intervals and have a distance between them varying from an octave to a twelfth, just as a bass part that makes harmonic leaps, Mars “is free, but proceeds modestly,” in analogy to a tenor part, while the narrow range of Earth and Venus is, according to Kepler, typical of an alto part. Finally, Mercury, which is the planet that moves the fastest and has the largest range, is likened to a Soprano.

Kepler concludes his book with a philosophical epilogue in which he entertains the possibility that the Sun, being the centre of the solar system, and the place from which the harmony of the world radiates, would in fact be the seat of the government of nature, populated with princes and chancellors, and perhaps even spiritual beings (although Kepler is careful about not stating anything that would be contrary to Catholic faith). He also presents his dreamy vision of other planets and their inhabitants, concluding with a prayer to God, who shall be praised by the heavenly bodies, by the celestial harmonies and all those who can perceive them, and finally by his own soul.

This is an edited excerpt from the original article which was published in the Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada in 2003.





Music of mercury

Silver gelatin print and silver leaf embossed matte in custom frame
22 x 32 in. / 55.88 x 81.28 cm
Edition of 3
2020

\$1215

BUY



Music of venus

Silver gelatin print and silver leaf embossed matte in custom frame
22 x 32 in. / 55.88 x 81.28 cm
Edition of 3
2020

\$1215

BUY



Music of earth

Silver gelatin print and silver leaf embossed matte in custom frame
22 x 32 in. / 55.88 x 81.28 cm
Edition of 3
2020

\$1215

BUY

10



Music of the moon

Silver gelatin print and silver leaf embossed matte in custom frame
22 x 32 in. / 55.88 x 81.28 cm
Edition of 3
2020

\$1215

BUY

11



Music of mars

Silver gelatin print and silver leaf embossed matte in custom frame
22 x 32 in. / 55.88 x 81.28 cm
Edition of 3
2020

\$1215

BUY



Music of jupiter

Silver gelatin print and silver leaf embossed matte in custom frame
22 x 32 in. / 55.88 x 81.28 cm
Edition of 3
2020

\$1215

BUY



Music of saturn

Silver gelatin print and silver leaf
embossed matte in custom frame
22 x 32 in. / 55.88 x 81.28 cm
Edition of 3
2020

\$1215

BUY



The great work

The great work is an ongoing series of abstract pieces created by Paluzzi in which he binds metallic solutions onto bare, steel plates. Alchemy attempted to convert lesser metals into more valuable ones and was the backbone of early science in not only Europe but around the world; many alchemists were attempting to create gold through various stages of conversations, while others were searching for the *elixir of life*.

During the Post-Renaissance period in Europe, however, alchemy was in decline as philosophers and early chemists were abandoning the *mysticism* of alchemy for empirical-based research which became the foundation of modern chemistry. This transition from *faith* to observable-research occurred in parallel with Copernicus and Kepler who reimagined our place in the Universe by distancing religion from science.

Art shares many similarities with alchemy. It is the artist's job to convert lesser materials into something greater, something of more value, and something that will outlive the artist itself. In *The Great Work*, Paluzzi addresses this act directly by planning to create twelve pieces that follow the twelve classical stages of transmutation. Each steel plate in the series is created through chemical conversation by bathing the plates in metallic solutions which layer metal onto metal. Although the finished pieces are abstract, the creation is deliberate and follows recipes from alchemists.



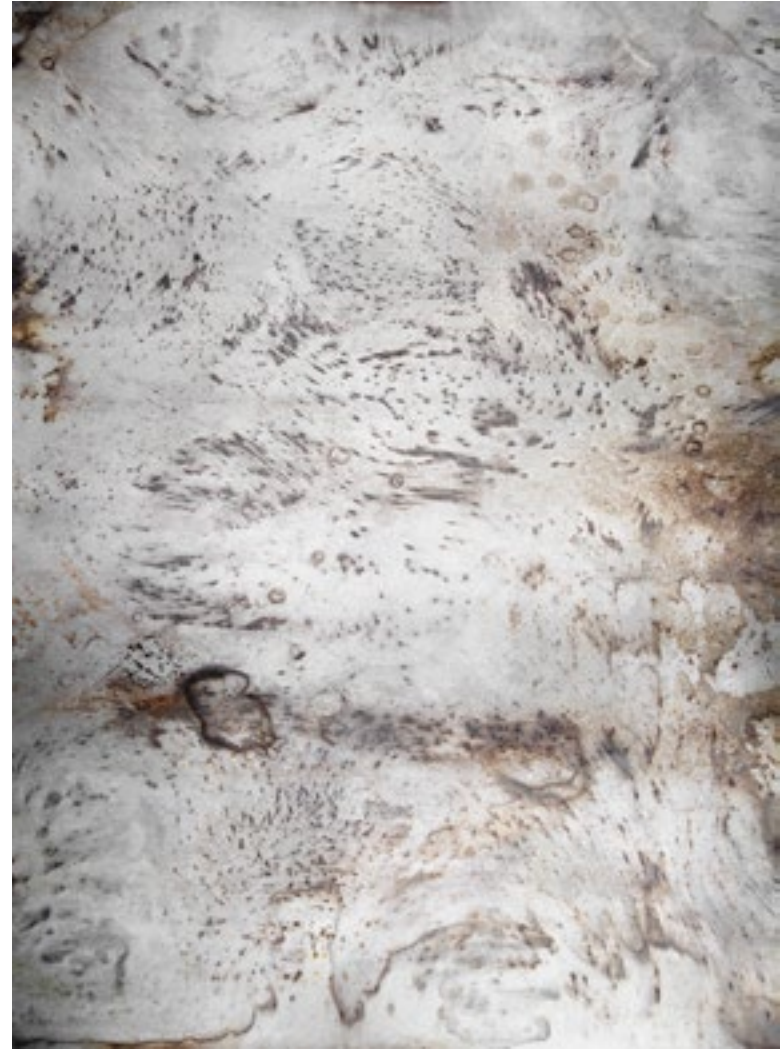


Calcination

Steel plate with silver
29 x 39 in. / 73.66 x 99.06 cm
Edition of 1
2020

\$1400

BUY



Solution (or dissolution)

Steel plate with iron
29 x 39 in. / 73.66 x 99.06 cm
Edition of 1
2020

\$1400

BUY



Separation

Steel plate with copper

29 x 39 in. / 73.66 x 99.06 cm

Edition of 1

2020

\$1400

BUY



Harmony of
the Spheres
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