

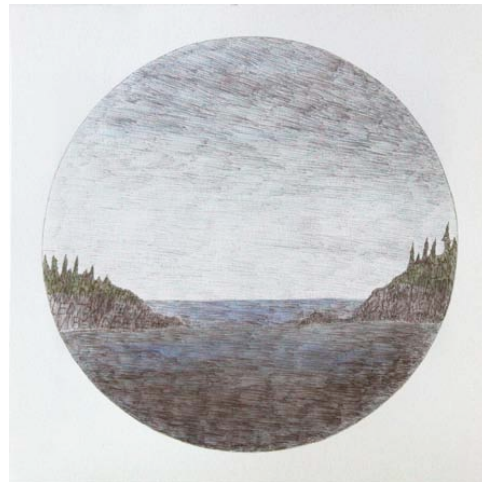
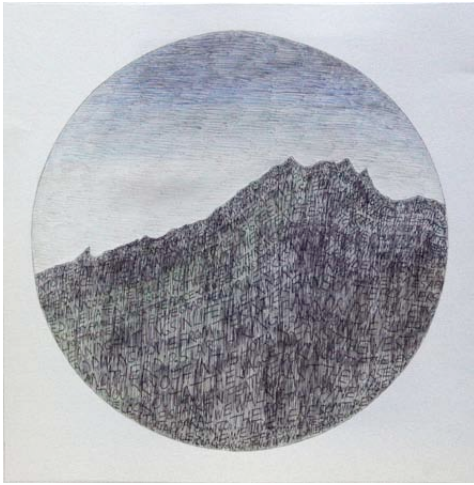
# RUSSELL CROTTY

## Globes, Drawings & Books

MICHEL SOSKINE, Madrid

Michel Soskine Inc. is pleased to present the first exhibition in Spain by Californian artist **Russell Crotty** (San Rafael, 1956). This drawing exhibition will consist of four suspended globes, 16 drawings on paper as well as two books. The inauguration will take place in Madrid gallery with the artist present, on Thursday November 4th.

Our upcoming exhibition will also coincide with the one at IVAM (Valencia) "*Compass in Hand: Selections from the Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection*", where 3 of **Russell Crotty's** works are included. This seminal collection of contemporary art was purchased in 2005 by the Museum of Modern Art in New York and is now touring Europe.



Three passions could identify **Crotty's** lifestyle and enlighten his work: Drawing, Astronomy and surfing. The nights spent watching the sky from his Pacific observatory deck result in sketches of planetary landscapes, notes and doodles outlining the Earth's anatomy, trying to seize the whole Universe. The development of these first sketches into fine drawings and sculptures provide a humanistic approach to a Science that often escapes us, that of Space.

**Russell Crotty's** work brings back into our aesthetic consciousness values of the infinite and the sublime: from ancient times these concepts have been synonymous with "this controlled fear that attracts the soul" (Longinos), and the natural awe provoked by immensity, infinity, silence... Concepts reviewed by Burke and Kant during the 18th c. and which dominated the aesthetics of Romanticism a century later.

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As a child, **Crotty's** eye was trained by sky watching. He learned how to observe and to extract precious information from it, helped at some point by scientific insiders like the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO), of which he was a member for years. Meaningful personalities, such as the *Victorian Gentleman Astronomers* preceded **Crotty's** endeavor. William Parsons discovered in the 19th c. spiral galaxies of which he made wonderful drawings. E. L. Trouvelot drew the stars so accurately that astronomers at Harvard and the U.S. National Observatory invited him to use their telescopes to collect his findings. "*The eye can eke out detail that photographs can't*" (R. C)

**Crotty** starts out his *Skyscapes* with an "earnestly empirical" spirit, as the artist says. Nevertheless, within the creative process, he developed a freer language transcending the rigors of astronomical science. Paraphrasing David Frankel on the introduction to Russell **Crotty's** monograph, the endless time spent observing planets and stars is absorbed in his work, although this work is due to his imagination.

The artist own handwriting in the exhibited drawings offer an additional character to the depictive space: Words and phrases are entwined into rhythmic lines of tiny strokes. Although in capital letters, this personal calligraphy is quite identifiable with the rest of the drawing. Whether phrases or words, their calligraphic shape move around the landscape like water, throwing itself onto a rock or over the sphere of a suspended globe. The meaning of these messages, sometimes mysterious, can also evoke a message of alarm towards the destruction of the Earth, and invite the viewer into feeling the threshold between signifier and significance.



Here we are also confronted between the ambitious task of representing not only space, but **The Outer Space**, attempting to reach this goal within the limitations of a small piece of paper and a humble rolling pen. Patiently, with short and thoughtful needle-like lines, the Californian artist weaves a poetic aura similar to the night atmosphere that initially inspired his drawings.

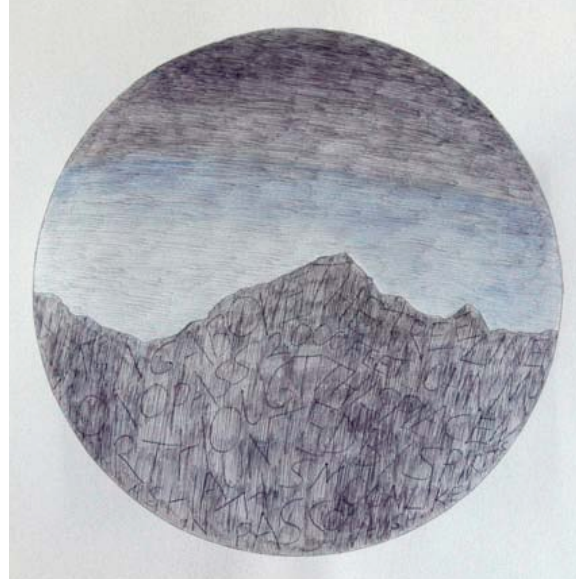
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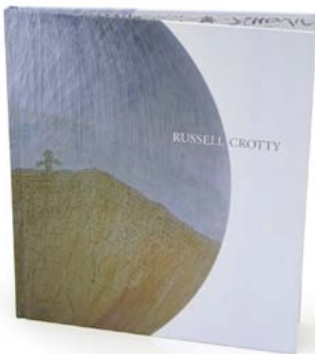
There is a quality of intimacy both in the act of observing the sky through a telescope, as on its paper translation: *"The labor involved in that **skin of ink** gives it a quality that I wouldn't be able to obtain using paint. A skin of ink, a layering process"*... The process is also the artist's decision to slow down, like breathing through the rhythm of nature, as opposed to the frantic pace of our century.

**Crotty** alternates single-sheet papers with books, which can sometimes reach a monumental size. Page after page, landscapes are filled with stars and planets translating the sense of movement and continuity within the Universe. On the wall, each of the 20 drawings hold an image contained within a circle inside of a square sized paper sheet.

In the air, the paper is mounted onto fiberglass globes, a lengthy and complicated process creating a combination of drawing and suspended sculpture crossing the threshold between the two disciplines: A logical leap into a three - dimensional category, from a flat circle to a real volumetric sphere. This format accord form and content, but the choice is mainly related to the desire of transmitting the experience of looking through a telescope: We are looking (into) another dimension, where the coordinates of time and space exceed our ability to understand them.



A telescope, in **Crotty's** thinking, is like a time machine: *"When you are looking at Saturn you're looking at light that's an hour and a half old. When you're looking at some galaxies, you are looking at something 50 million light years away... yet it is something so intimate to look at (...) Deep time passing all around you, The Milky way passing above your head, and yet you are a part of it (...) You get the sense that everything is moving, right down to the subatomic level"*



The exhibition's installation of "**Russell Crotty's Globes, Books and drawings**" has been carefully planned by the artist. In the minimalist tradition that influenced his early work, every piece is aimed at a particular place in space, enabling the final set up to *restore the feeling that everything moves, and even though you are tiny, you're part of that movement.*

Russell **Crotty's** work can be found in public collection such as the **Centre Pompidou** in Paris, The **Whitney Museum and the MOMA** in NY, The **San Francisco Fine Arts Museum** or the **Museum of Contemporary Art of Los Angeles** in California. In addition to a monograph published in 2006 by Marquand Books, Inc., several of his works are included in books on drawing such as *Vitamin D* by Phaidon Press, and the MOMA *Drawing From the Modern* exhibition book.

Please visit the exhibition at [www.soskine.com](http://www.soskine.com) For more information and images request please contact the gallery. Tel +34 91 431 06 03. Tuesday to Saturday, 10:30 - 14:30 / 16:30 - 20:00  
c/ Padilla, 38. 1 º D. 28006 Madrid. [maria-michelsoskineinc@earthlink.net](mailto:maria-michelsoskineinc@earthlink.net).  
The exhibition will continue till December 25, 2010.