



Swing time: Space Carousel
by German digital artist
and photographer Justin
Peters. "I want to help
people discover their
own internal landscape
of possibilities or
impossibilities," he says.

LET ME PLAY ME AMONG THE STARS...

On July 16, 1969, Apollo 11 lifted off from NASA's Kennedy Space Center and headed for the moon. Just four days later, crew members Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin landed the ship's lunar module on the moon's dusty surface for the first time in human history. This summer marks the 50th anniversary of the landing, which so famously represented "one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." The vastness and mystery of space has long been a source of inspiration for artists and photographers, but from that day forward we would never look up at the sky in the same way again. The beauty of our galaxy continues to influence photographers and artists today. Like these four, who are creating work that really is out of this world.

Words
JOANN PLOCKOVA

Justin Peters

SURREALIST DREAMER

Based near Stuttgart, German digital artist and photographer Justin Peters assembles his surreal images by combining collected photo material (mostly stock photos) into an imaginative whole using Photoshop. “I try to make every composition as natural as possible,” says Peters. “They don’t have to be realistic—it’s surrealism—but they should look natural in the end.”

Growing up surrounded by design, art, and photography—an uncle is a graphic designer who organized his own design fair—Peters is self-taught, and “learned through trial and error.”

“I started everything as a hobby, investing many hours in experimenting and trying different things until I found my style.” His interest in space—“I question what’s going on a lot and what could exist out there in places we haven’t discovered yet”—began with night photography in early 2016. “It became my favorite type of photography,” he says. “From just staring at thousands of bright stars and being surrounded by pure dark and silence to the process of editing, I started to manipulate my own night shots after a while and this led me to the pictures I create now.”

Inspired by everything from nature and his own musings, to artists such as Salvador Dalí and Kevin Dowd, Peters hopes those who see his work will expand their views. “I hope that the viewer can stop for a moment and perceive a world where everything is possible,” he says.

justinpetersart.com



*A new earth: Many of Justin Peters’s images reimagine our planet in different guises, such as *Care for Earth* (left), *Moonfall* (below left), and *Moonlight* (below).*



Starry wonder: Milky Way Clouds Over Sedona is one of photographer Sean Parker’s personal favorites. His night-sky images are created using a wide-angle lens, tripod, and headlamp.

Sean Parker

ASTRAL ADVENTURER

“It’s not your average photographer story,” says Arizona-based Sean Parker of his career’s origins. It all began one night at the Sky Bar in Tucson, where patrons can view deep space every night via telescopes installed on the patio.

“I was amazed, I’d never seen anything like it,” says Parker, who is internationally acclaimed for his starscapes and time-lapse imagery, and who also leads astrophotography workshops around the world. Parker was equally impressed with the resident astronomer’s photos, which he mistook for images from the Hubble Space Telescope. “He was like, ‘No, I actually took those through

this telescope at the observatory outside of town,” Parker recalls. Keen to go there and try his own hand at taking images, he borrowed a friend’s camera and the rest, as they say, is history.

“As long as I can remember I’ve been intrigued by the stars,” says Parker, who uses a range of different cameras and lenses. “I shoot my deep-space imagery through a telescope so that it basically becomes the lens. And it’s on a tracking device so I can take long exposures of faraway objects without blurriness.” For his images of the Aurora in Iceland he uses the same equipment but changes the exposure due to its brightness.

Parker has pretty much seen it all, but a sighting of a Falcon 9 rocket launch when with a workshop group in the desert was a particular highlight.

“All of a sudden we see this bright thing happen in the sky, almost like a comet. None of us had any idea what it was, and it just kept getting brighter. That was up there,” he says. »

sean-parker.com

"I really like this vision of an astronaut. He's curious about what's happening on this planet, but he's also alone, he feels solitude."
David Schermann

David Schermann

STARMAN WANDERER

In photographer David Schermann's series *Bigger Than Us*, a man in a spacesuit wanders alone on an unknown red planet. "One of my biggest sources of inspiration is science-fiction movies and books, but also the works of [19th-century German landscape painter] Caspar David Friedrich," says Schermann. In some close-up shots the solitary figure rests. In others he appears as a small dot in an expansive landscape. "I really like this vision of an astronaut wandering on an uninhabited planet. He's experiencing different emotions: he's curious about what's happening on this planet, but he's also alone, he feels solitude," says Schermann.

Based in Austria, in tandem with his creative work, the self-taught photographer is nearing the end of his studies in geography and psychology at the University of Vienna. It is perhaps unsurprising then that the young lensman has made a name for himself through evocative and haunting images that blend science fiction and emotion.

"A spacesuit is there to protect you from a hostile environment," he says of the idea behind *Bigger Than Us*, "but if you look at it this way, a spacesuit is a closed system. It's not just protecting you from the environment, it's also stopping you from feeling emotions."

These same themes carry through to his images *If You Fall, I Fall Harder* and *Escaping*, where roses and smoke, respectively, are flowing out of a lone astronaut's helmet. "It is this idea again that the spacesuit protects me," he says. "But I also open up the visor and so, I open myself up to feelings."

His topics often reflect his personal struggles. "I create many of the photos when I don't feel great, which is cathartic," he says. But his goal is to leave them open to interpretation. "That's what is so good about otherworldly settings," he says. "I can say yeah, it's on a foreign planet, or I don't know, maybe not. You decide." »

davidsschermann.com

Altered image: David Schermann uses Photoshop to create effects like those in his *Bigger Than Us* series, which was shot in the Austrian Alps, and *If You Fall, I Fall Harder* (below). "I'm more on the heavy side of editing. It's just the way I work," he says.





High profile: Grey Chow's starscapes include Key Monastery (left), Church of the Good Shepherd (below), and Mount Bromo (bottom). Many have been featured by major media outlets such as BBC News.

Grey Chow

GUARDIAN OF THE GALAXY

"When I am out there taking photos, I see millions of blazing stars in the night sky and am thrilled by just how tiny we are compared to the giant universe," says Kuala Lumpur-based nature and landscape photographer Grey Chow.

A project engineer by day, Chow spends his nights shooting the stars and teaching others to do the same through his workshops. After discovering a passion for photography in 2010 when he got his first camera, Chow knew his subject would be the night sky after seeing a photo of the Milky Way on Facebook. "I was amazed by it. Ever since then, I've been fascinated by night-sky photography."

Capturing his gorgeous starscapes is about timing and finding a good location with minor light pollution. The "best time," as he explains on his website, is relative based on the composition you want to achieve—the Milky Way is constantly moving—and finding the right direction. He enhances the photos using Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop "to bring out more details." For Chow his craft is about "sharing beautiful images and inspiring others to capture their own."

"I like to travel and I really want to share all the beautiful scenery around the world," he says. "Besides that, we are losing our night sky due to light pollution. I hope people can discover the beauty of our galaxy through my photos." ● greychow.com

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