



Nine  
Trips  
Around  
The  
Sun

Carrie  
Schneider

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Carrie  
Schneider

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# Relativity, or the More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

Julie Rodrigues Widholm



Stills from *Moon Drawings*, 2015. 100' of 16mm reversal film, silent, 3:00 minutes.

**WHILE MAKING A CUP** of tea in a basement office, an astronomer at the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen rediscovered an old box of glass plate photographs of the moon and other astral bodies, taken from the Østervold Observatory in 1895.<sup>1</sup> These photographs allowed scientists to observe any changes to the surface of the moon over time, and, according to the astronomer, one of the most significant finds was a rare “copy-plate from the total solar eclipse expedition to Sobral, Brazil, in 1919. The image by British astronomer Arthur Eddington provided important evidence for Albert Einstein’s theory of general relativity. The bending of the sun’s light was visible in the eclipse, supporting Einstein’s description of gravitation from large objects.”<sup>2</sup> While reading of this occurrence, I immediately thought of Carrie Schneider’s recent images of the moon cycle that explore the many facets of photography—historical, conceptual, material, physical, and technical—and photography’s relationship to time and the self.

Before the invention of photography, scientists would make drawings from observation to objectively record

astronomical imagery. John W. Draper is credited with the first documented photograph of the moon in 1840, a daguerreotype taken from a rooftop observatory in Greenwich Village, New York. While the 19th century marks the beginning of the exploration of photography, and the glass plate photographs of the moon are a rich addition to this history, the exploration of the moon has a much longer history that looms large far beyond scientific research.

The moon, ever present but distantly out of reach, has been a subject of fascination throughout human existence. The ancient pagan myth of the moon-gazing hare is associated with fertility, for example, while ancient Chinese folklore says the moon-gazing hare is looking at his ancestor on the moon. At 4.47 billion years old, the moon long predates human existence and, needless to say, it will be here long after our individual 76 years of expected life on this planet. The moon we see is the same moon our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and distant ancestors saw in the night sky. It is the same moon our children will see after we are gone and their children will see

# Shooting the Moon: The Tragic Impossibility of Freezing Time

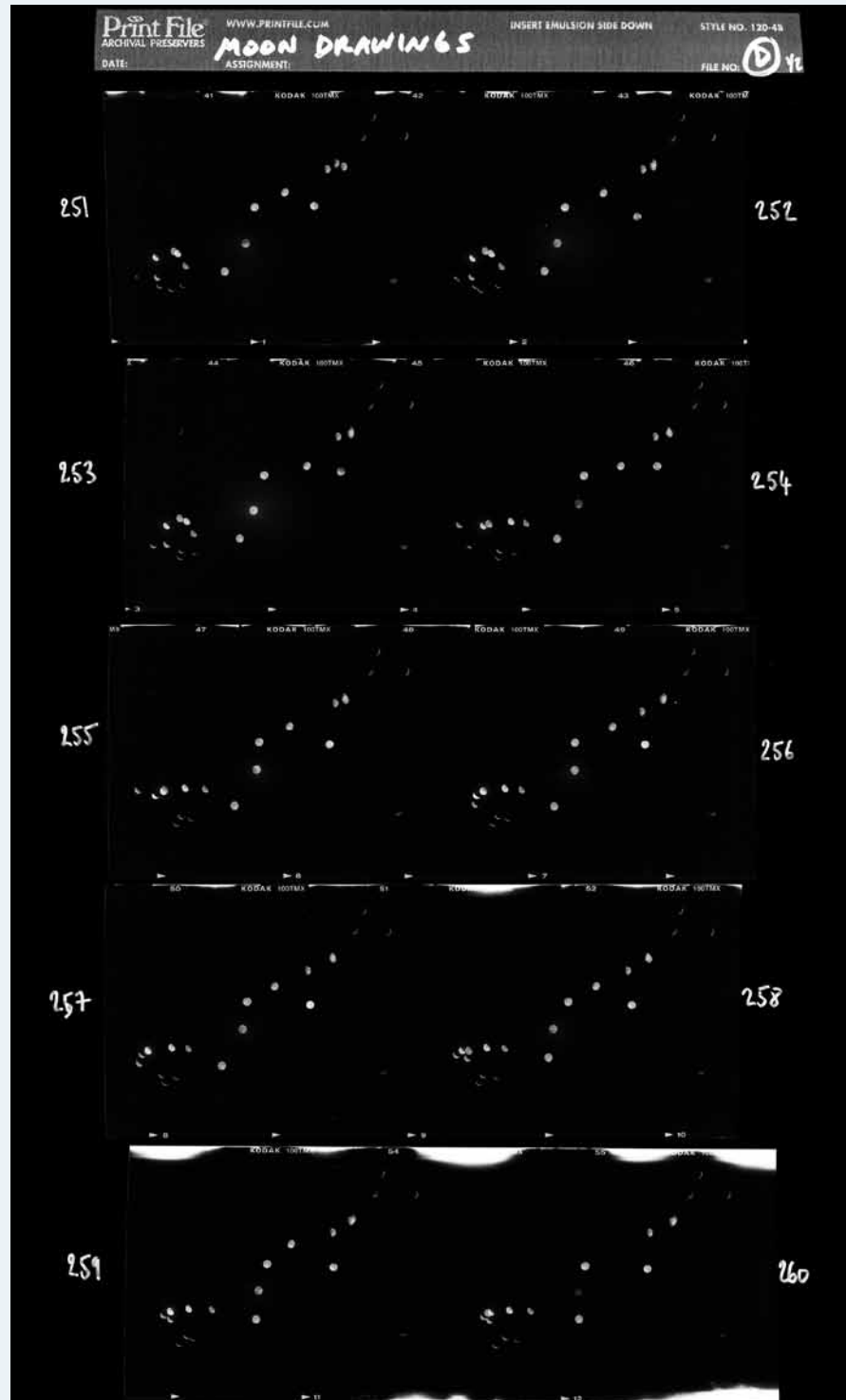
Joanna Szupinska-Myers

THERE MIGHT BE 13, 18, 22, or 30 moons in one of Carrie Schneider's *Moon Drawings* (2015). Whole disks, crisp narrow crescents, obscured by clouds, and occasionally overlapping like Venn diagrams or just barely touching, these moons were captured photographically over the course of one month. Schneider devised a nightly ritual for the duration of an artist residency in North Carolina, using a medium-format camera to photograph the moon with a limited number of negatives, rewinding the film and making multiple exposures over the course of the night. The specificity of each individually captured moment—legible in the moon's fullness and position in the sky—is collapsed into an all-at-onceness in each picture, evoking the dizzying effect produced by an all-nighter. Her process spanned the entire moon cycle. What resulted were 300 unique silver gelatin prints that together bear thousands of views of that most constantly present yet ever-changing galaxy friend.

Over the course of the last decade, the period of production chronicled by this exhibition, Schneider has undertaken a range of inquiries. She experiments with interpersonal relationships before the camera, creates highly staged metaphoric scenarios, inserts her own body into works through performative actions,

and crafts abstract compositions. Like *Moon Drawings*, these projects are articulated in filmic and photographic form. All are ambitious in their production and scope, but on first glance they may share few thematic threads. Let us consider four seemingly disparate projects that span this decade of production. Beginning with the earliest work in the exhibition *Derelict Self* (2006–2007), then contemplating her later project *Reading Women* (2012–2014), and finally considering *Burning House* (2010–2013), may aid a reading of *Moon Drawings*, which were undertaken as late as the period of planning for this exhibition.

To create the carefully staged photographs that make up *Derelict Self*, the artist engaged her brother in scenarios performed before her camera. Throughout the series, she uses two distinct modes. In the first, the artist is her brother's shadow manifest, a doppelgänger who not only shares genetically similar traits of face and coloration, but styles herself in his likeness, as if wanting to crawl into his skin to experience the world as he does. In *Restroom*, through the open door of a men's public bathroom, we find the subject of her fascination standing at a urinal while the artist remains just outside the door, inhabiting a similar stance.



Negative contact sheet for *Moon Drawings* 251–260, 2015.

# In Conversation: Carrie Schneider and Kendra Paitz



*Burning House (July, sunset)*, 2010–2011. Chromogenic print, 40 x 50 inches.

**KP** I think it would be interesting to start by talking about your early work, which is lesser-known but served as a strong foundation for what would follow. Would you say that the photographs you were making before graduate school were rooted in social documentary?

**CS** For my work pre-graduate school, I probably wouldn't have said I was interested in social documentary. I was, however, looking at and thinking about the work of New Topographics photographers, probably most specifically Bernd and Hilla Becher, and their creative offspring in the Düsseldorf School. Candida Höfer may have been most influential, particularly her series of Libraries. I was using a formal approach to get at a more human register, and thinking about how systems of power and the need for self-expression are manifested in social spaces and architecture.

Between 2001 and 2005, I made a series of comprehensive surveys of specific social spaces throughout Pittsburgh, where I was living at the time. In *Pittsburgh Public Schools*, I used my 4 x 5 field camera to photograph one fourth-grade classroom from each of the 52 public elementary schools, imagining that the grid of desks would represent a sort of visible graph of the demographics of each neighborhood. In *Pittsburgh*

*Public Pools*, I photographed each of the 31 public pools in the city. There had been a municipal budget shortfall that year, which resulted in half of the pools remaining closed for the summer, and it seemed to me that they were mostly in the poorer neighborhoods. I photographed all of the pools, even those that were closed—a sad contrast to the pools that were open, which were so full of life. For my 88 project, I photographed a pair of houses in each of Pittsburgh's 88 neighborhoods. The names of the neighborhoods were so cheerful, if not downright dreamy—Fine View, Morningside, Summer Hill, Friendship, Point Breeze, Shadeland, Windgap, Chateau, Fairywood—which belied the fact that many of these neighborhoods were long neglected in the hills and valleys surrounding the “revitalized” city center. In every neighborhood I found two houses, side-by-side, that were probably nearly identical at one time, but that over the years became unique social objects that revealed something particular about the people who lived there, while also revealing something specific to Pittsburgh's complicated legacy as a post-industrial steel town.

**KP** It's fascinating to view these three bodies of work together, as evidence of both how your work has transitioned and how early you would develop connections to specific places as we see later with



*Untitled (Restroom)*, from the series *Derelict Self*, 2006-2007. Chromogenic print, 30 x 36 inches.



*Untitled (Woodchips)*, from the series *Derelict Self*, 2006-2007. Chromogenic print, 36 x 30 inches.



*Las Bebidas,*  
2007. Chromogenic print,  
40 x 50 inches.





*Dazzle Camouflage  
(for Peter)*, 2008. Chromogenic  
print, 45 x 60 inches.



Stills from *Slow Dance*, 2009. HD film with sound, 7:30 minutes.



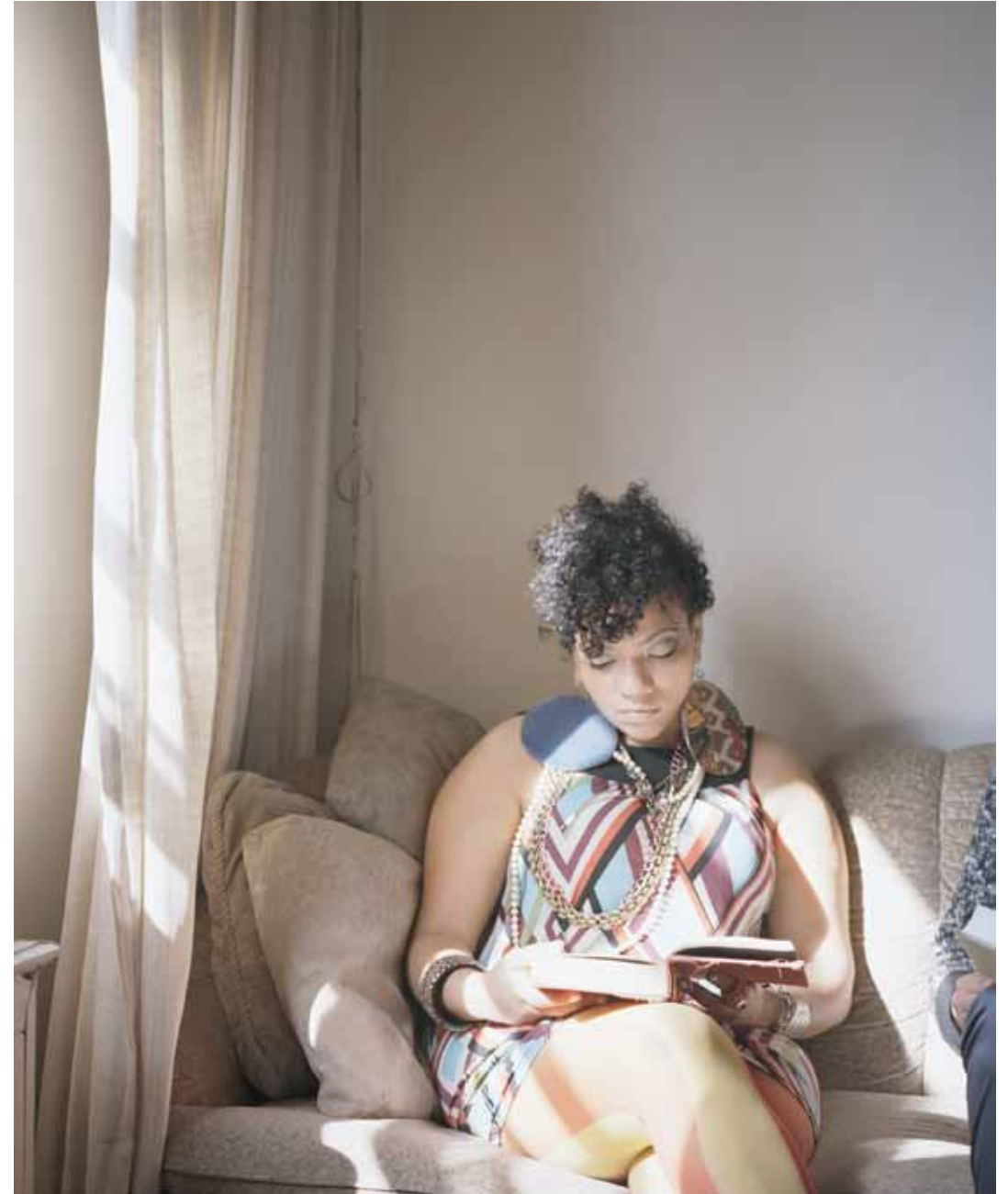
*Burning House (August, daybreak)*, 2010-2011. Chromogenic print, 40 x 50 inches.



*Burning House (August, raining, midmorning)*, 2010-2011. Chromogenic print, 40 x 50 inches.



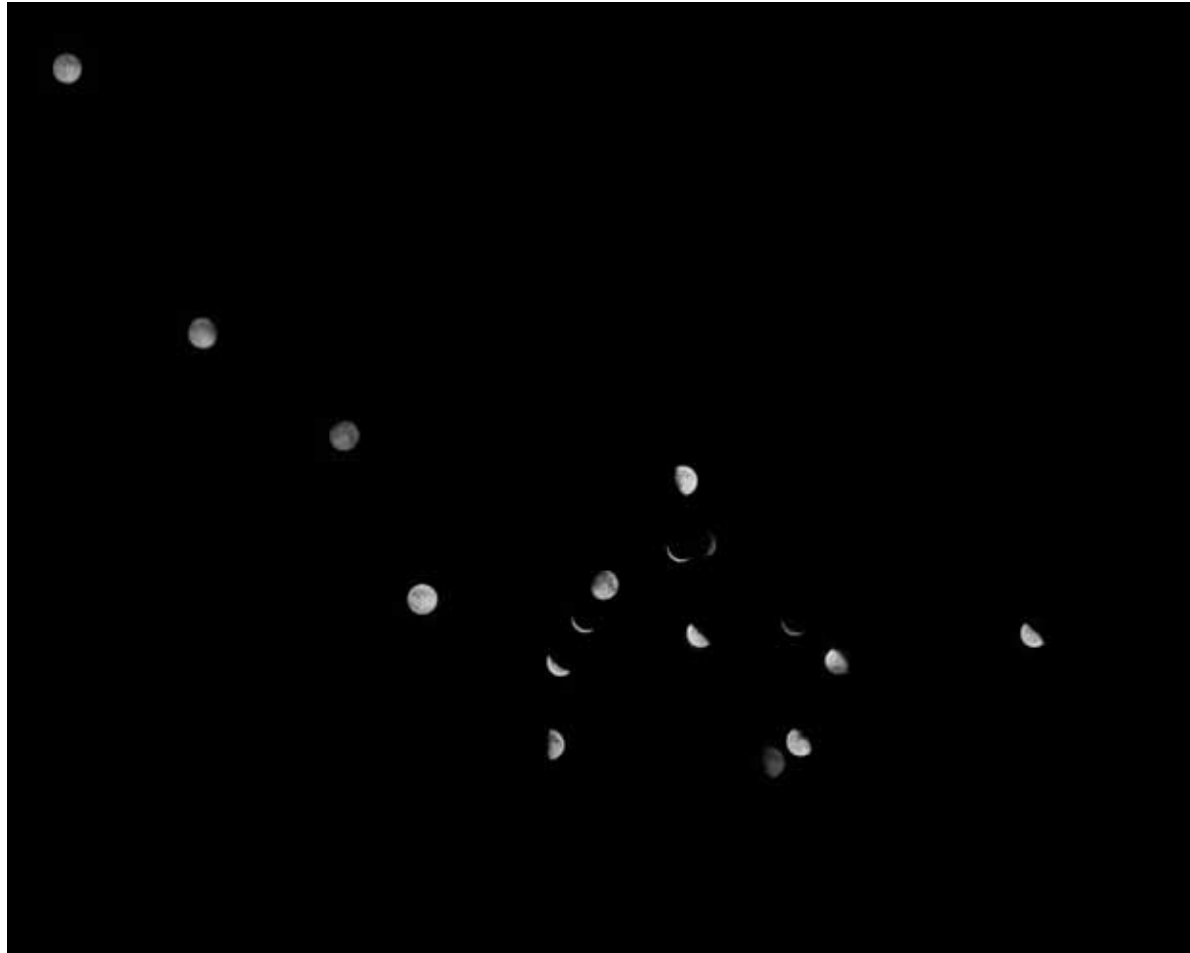
*Bianca reading Sylvia Plath (Ariel, 1965), from the series Reading Women, 2012-2014. Chromogenic print, 36 x 30 inches.*



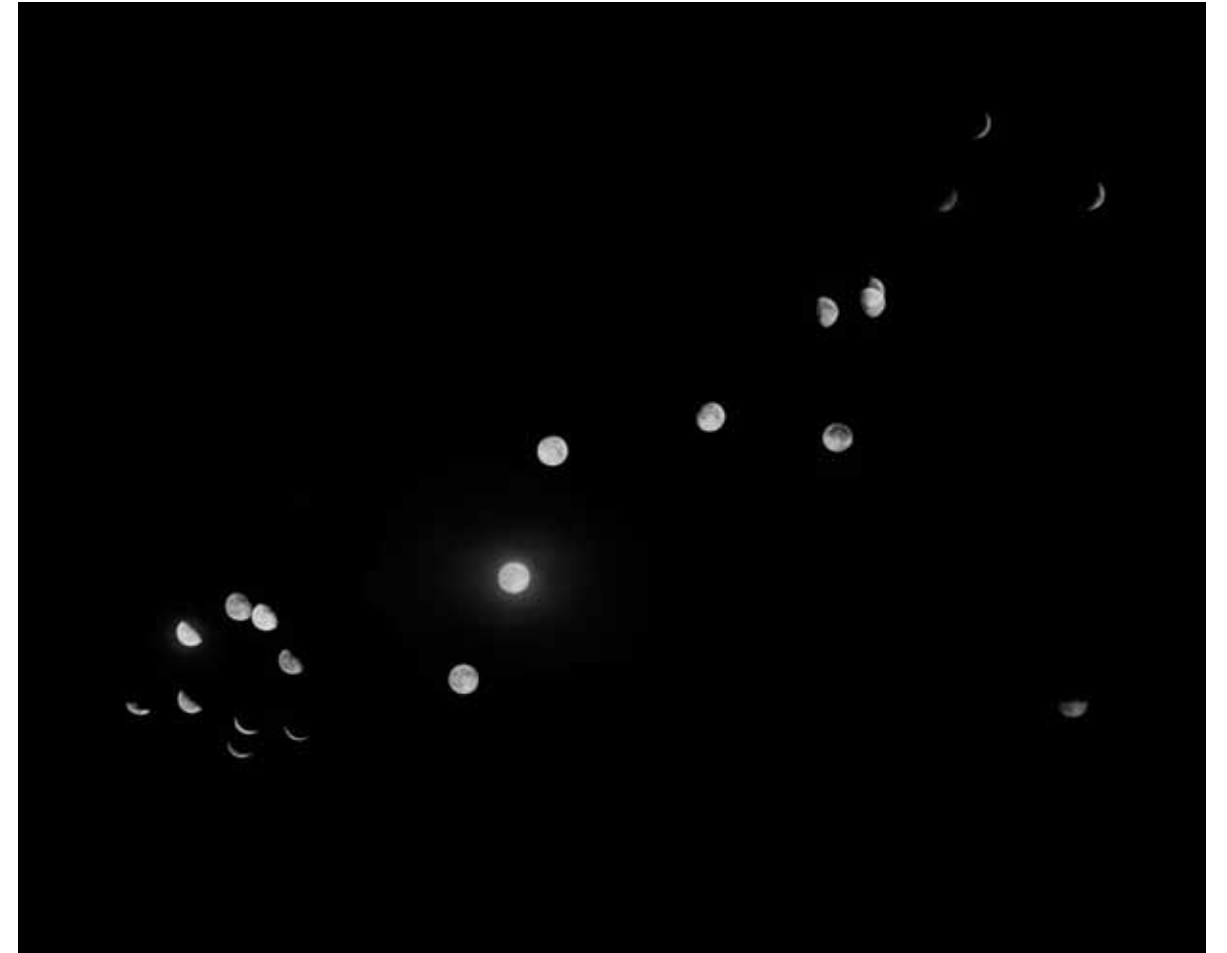
*Abigail reading Angela Davis (An Autobiography, 1974), from the series Reading Women, 2012-2014. Chromogenic print, 36 x 30 inches.*



*Reading Women, 2012-2014.* Chromogenic prints, each 36 x 30 inches.  
(See pages 78-79 for the complete list of titles.)



*Moon Drawing #240, 2015. Unique gelatin silver print made from one negative, 40 x 50 inches.*



*Moon Drawing #253, 2015. Unique gelatin silver print made from one negative, 40 x 50 inches.*