

**BALLARAT
INTERNATIONAL
FOTO
BIENNALE**

2017

**A FIELD GUIDE
TO THE STARS**

Baker Telescope

Eric William Carroll

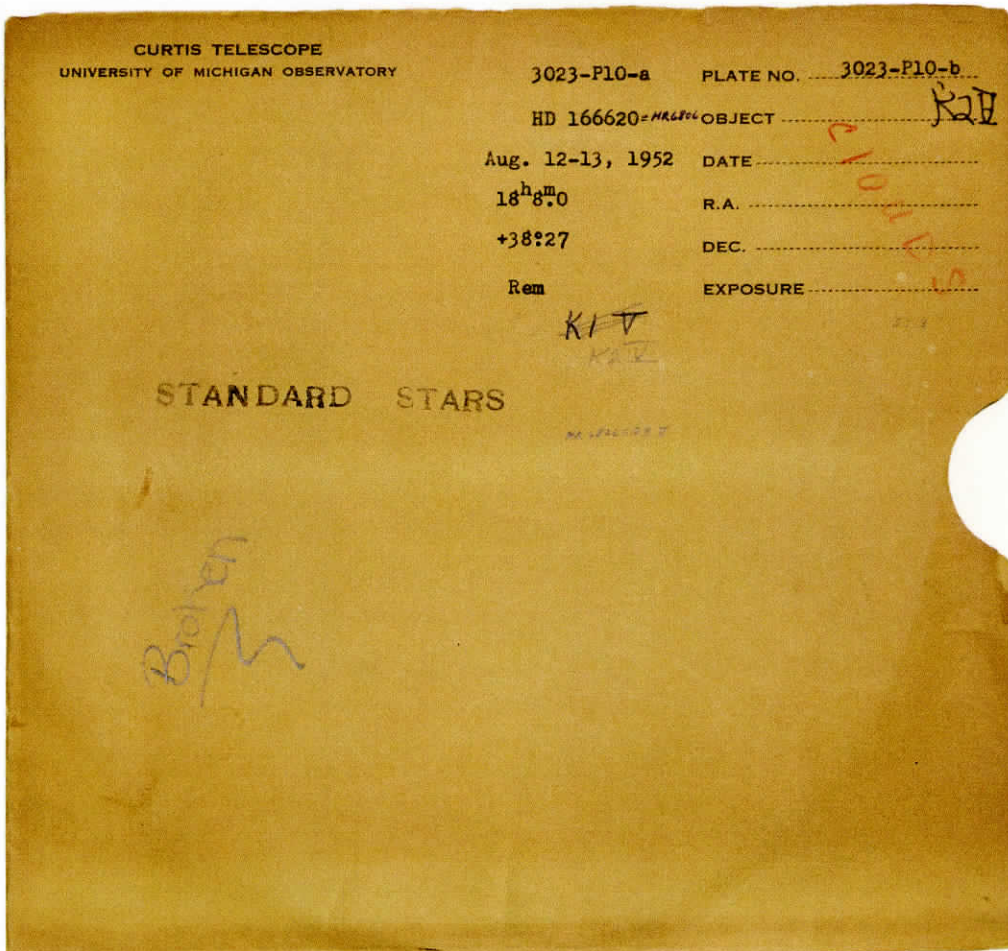
Standard Stars, 2013–2017

Metallic c-print photographs

Standard Stars is a series of photographs created by the artist at the Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute (PARI) in the small town of Rosman, North Carolina, USA. Originally built as a NASA base to assist with the Gemini and Apollo Programs, it eventually became part of the NSA surveillance program. In the 1990s the campus was sold to PARI, a small non-profit that attempts to preserve and maintain the telescopes, satellites, and buildings. One of PARI's missions is to collect and digitise the largest archive of astronomical glass-plate photographs, known as the Astronomical Photographic Data Archive, commonly referred to as APDA. The visual wealth of APDA is unparalleled, as it documents the history of sky photography from the late 1800s until the end of the 20th century via a now obsolete medium.

With just over 1% of the archive scanned, most of the photographic plates sit in boxes and on shelves, slowly deteriorating. The emulsion peels off of the glass plate in a variety of patterns, as if nature is trying to creep back into these scientific studies. The artist composed the flakes of emulsion and made high-resolution scans and photographs of over 500 plates from APDA. APDA represents the human attempt to study, represent, and organise the Universe while *Standard Stars* reveals the fragile and shifting technologies of astronomical archives.

Carroll's exhibition includes photographic ephemera that provides visual context to the *Standard Stars* images, giving viewers a glimpse into the elements and figures that situate the archive. The table display includes glass plate photographs from the Ballarat Observatory's collection, generously donated to the museum by photographer Robert Bell.



Eric William Carroll, *Standard Stars*, envelope, 2016, courtesy of the artist



Eric William Carroll, *PARI049*, metallic c-type print, 2016, courtesy of the artist