

SOUTH AFRICA'S ROLE IN ASTRONOMY

THE SPACE BETWEEN THE STARS

The exceptional stamp series celebrating South Africa's role in the field of astronomy was designed by artist Marcus Neustetter. Marcus, who has a special interest in the topic, did extensive research for this task. Working closely with astronomers, the artist explores the inexplicable in what he entitles, "the space in between". This unusual set of stamps will be issued on 5 June 2012.

"The intention of the stamp artworks is to capture the intangible and magical elements of astronomy and to find a way to illustrate and translate this through visual representation," Marcus explained.

"The individual stamps are however, not just a representation, but an attempt to stimulate the imagination of the public about the wonder that accompanies the exploration of unknown space," he added.

Marcus shares his observations about each of the artworks.



Presented on this stamp is the 26 metre diameter radio telescope at the Hartebeesthoek Astronomy Observatory (HartRAO), located near Johannesburg. Receiving data from space, the sound waves are represented as a pattern of data rain.



This stamp represents the Innes Telescope at the Johannesburg Observatory, as well as an inverted image of a close up of Proxima Centauri that

was discovered by Robert Innes in 1915 while he worked at the Johannesburg Observatory.



The Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) in Sutherland is illustrated here. The key features of SALT captured on the stamp is the large mirror surface made up of hexagonal sections. The artwork also illustrates the building that houses the mirrors, the surrounding Karoo landscape and above all, the all encompassing universe. The latter is represented as an abstract image captured with SALT technology.



The Sumbandila Satellite is presented as floating in front of an image taken by the satellite. Its simplified and fragmented elements read like data packs and parts of a larger image. This stamp celebrates the satellite "leading the way" to new perspectives as its Venda name suggests.



When the Royal Observatory in Cape Town was first completed in 1828 it had two domes which have since been removed. The stamp represents the original intention and design of the build-

ing. The Milky Way, the Magellan Clouds and the stars are taken from artists' illustrations of the sky above the observatory, now the headquarters of South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO). The intention of the artist with this illustration is to remind the public of the building's history and its original purpose.

Technical information will be published in the next *Setempe*.





This stamp celebrates the newly formed South African National Space Agency (SANSA). For the artist, this includes the exploration of the imagination that comes with the study of space. The drawing of the space between the stars shows a starry sky and aims to draw attention to the undiscovered and fragmented elements to be explored. The structure and oval form within it alludes to the mirrors and dishes used

in space observation.



Acknowledging the achievements of the astronomers observing and exploring the night sky, this stamp aims to celebrate their passion in pursuit of a dream

beyond human limitations and borders.

The drawing attempts to illustrate the power of looking through space and beyond.



This stamp shows cosmic radio signals from the universe, illustrated with concentric and linear lines, being received by the Karoo Array Telescope (KAT 7), a precursor to the larger MeerKAT telescope.

The radio signals are processed by supercomputers to reveal information about stars, galaxies and the birth of our universe.

This stamp shows the silhouette of an indigenous southern African, ancestor to today's San, contemplating the stars. Culturally specific readings, navigational maps and mythical and spiritual links layer the night sky in the artistic representation of the imaginary drawing emanating from the hunter's head.



The astronomers who man the SAO in Sutherland and the telescopes they use, are illustrated on this stamp. The sky in the background is filled

with elements of the diagrammatic data collected and mapped through the lenses of the telescopes.



In this image, the artist uses digital traces of satellite imagery of the earth in the background, while in the foreground, two satellites orbit earth. The orientation of earth, seemingly upside down, aims to challenge the viewer to question what we consider the top or bottom of the world, and the accompanying ideas of power associated with these positions. In contrast there is no top or bottom in space. This stamp acknowledges the perspective and insight that has been made possible through SunSat1.



South Africa's role in Astronomy commemorative envelopes.

Please note: Stamp images and date cancellers published in Setempe are from the original artwork and are subject to change.

