

"LIKE GOLD TO AIRY
THINNESS BEAT"

GILLIAN FITZPATRICK
& JUSTIN DONNELLY

An art voyage to the
International Space Station
with the Moon Gallery

Launch: February 2022





"LIKE GOLD TO AIRY THINNESS BEAT."

This art piece – designed to fit inside a 1 cm cube – has been selected for an exhibition that will be launched to the *International Space Station* (ISS) in February 2022.

The work emerged from discussions between two people – one with a background in art, the other a background in science – who are both interested in where these areas overlap.

The piece is inspired by the poem *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* written by John Donne around 1612. He wrote this love poem to his wife in England before his voyage to Europe. The central simile of the piece is in the sixth stanza.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

The imagery in the last line evokes the new technology of fine solar sails, which allow spacecraft to be propelled not by rocket engines, but by light itself. Once free of Earth, these vast sails will unfurl to catch the gentle pressure of sunlight and carry new ships across oceans of space to other worlds. These solar sail voyages have already begun. For example, The Planetary Society's *Lightsail 2* currently orbiting the Earth, and the IKAROS spacecraft which flew by Venus in 2010.

Donne's poem also suggests several astronomical references – notably the imagery of one point of a compass remaining static while the other point completes a circle around it. Similarly, this piece and the space station that will host it will be tethered to Earth by gravity while endlessly orbiting.

Here, gold leaf and shell gold combine with the image of a medieval square-rigged ship to echo the age-old hope of the traveller: that while they voyage across vast and lonely distances they will stay connected to what is important to them.

"Like gold to airy thinness beat" (2021)
11 mm × 8 mm × 3 mm.
Wood, paper, gold leaf, shell gold, resin.

ABOUT THE MOON GALLERY FOUNDATION

Moon Gallery: Test flight is an exhibition of 64 artworks from a selected group of international artists that will be integrated into an 8 × 8 grid tray and launched to the *International Space Station* (ISS). In collaboration with Nanoracks, the Test Flight gallery will be carried on board the NG-17 Northrop Grumman Cygnus resupply mission, due to launch on an Antares rocket and arrive at the ISS in February 2022.

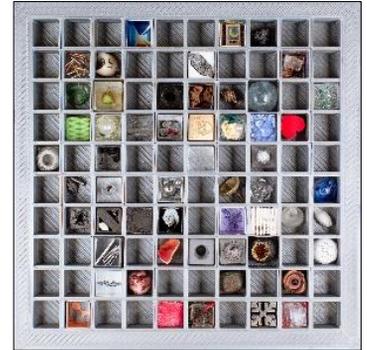


Photo credit: Moon Gallery Foundation

The [Stichting Moon Gallery Foundation](http://www.moongallery.eu) aims to provide a platform for interdisciplinary and international cooperation between art, science and technology. As humanity expands across the solar system, art will follow.



www.moongallery.eu

Ultimately, the Moon Gallery aims to send 100 artifacts to the Moon as early as 2025. This would be the first permanent museum on the Moon.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Gillian Fitzpatrick

Gillian Fitzpatrick is an artist based in Ireland. She works across a wide variety of media. The history of space exploration and science fiction television and films have been strongest influences on her work.

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Justin Donnelly

Dr Justin Donnelly is an academic in the School of Physics & Clinical & Optometric Sciences, Technological University Dublin, Ireland with a background in astrophysics and interests in the visual arts, writing and film-making, and in particular the overlap between art and science.

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A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning
by John Donne

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say
The breath goes now, and some say, No:

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.