



Dario Robleto

***Survival Does Not Lie In The Heavens*, 2012**

Digital inkjet print mounted on Sintra, ed. 5

Triptych: left 32 7/8 x 32 7/8 inches, middle 47 7/8 x 47 7/8; right 32 7/8 x 32 7/8 inches

A collection of stage lights taken from the album covers of live performances of now-deceased Gospel, Blues and Jazz musicians

Although they resemble stars in deep-space photographs, the lights dotting this triptych are from much closer by; Dario Robleto digitally plucked them from the covers of live albums by now-deceased musicians. Essential to the spectacle of a classic live album (or live performance, for that matter), stage-lights are still secondary to their performers. They're meant to feature the artist, not themselves. In the absence of their subject, however, the lights take center stage.

Robleto has devoted years of his career to investigating the "logic of loss" in circumstances as far-reaching as the American Civil War and the slow melting of ancient glaciers, and ***Survival Does Not Lie In The Heavens*** clearly shares that elegiac mood. The cosmic vacuum around the stage-lights feels even emptier with the knowledge that their musicians are dead. That absence is accented with other, related disappearances: the obsolescence of vinyl records; the widely reported digital "death of the album"; and the memories attached to both the artifacts and the performances themselves. But while this work has its origin in loss, once-peripheral elements rush in to fill the void. As an ardent and long-time music fan, Robleto knows better than most that the relationship between performer and audience is reciprocal. Stardom depends as much on the fans as on the star, and nowhere is that more audibly evident than the live album. Robleto's erasure, while mourning the performer, also celebrates the context in which that performer shone most brightly: a communal moment of empathy, orchestrated perhaps by the musician, but built, felt and sustained by everyone who was there. The stage-lights, which served to

make their star visible, make apt proxies for the audiences that elevated shows to more rarefied experiences.

Robleto himself best summarizes the correlation between his life-long love of music and his life-long interest in astronomy:

“I was as captivated by the peripheral images of light and stage set-up on the album covers as I was by what might lie beneath the haziness of the planetary and stellar images coming from NASA. These early memories become intertwined in such a way that I have always understood the musical stage and outer space as similar cycles of evolution: birth, youth, death, re-birth.”



detail of *Survival Does Not Lie In The Heavens*

Dario Robleto (b. 1972, San Antonio, TX) lives and works in Houston, TX. The artist has exhibited his work extensively since 1997, with recent solo museum shows at the **Baltimore Museum of Art** (November 2014- April 2015), and the **Menil Collection**, Houston in the fall of 2014. Additional recent solo museum exhibitions include the **Des Moines Art Center** (2011); the **Museum of Contemporary Art**, Denver (2011) and **New Orleans Museum of Art** (2012). Robleto was recently appointed 2016 Texas State Artist Laureate.

His work is included in numerous permanent collections, including The Whitney Museum of American Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Baltimore Museum of Art, and many others.