NEW HORIZON

When two black holes collided with one another 1.3 billion years ago, they emitted 50 times more energy than the light emitted by all the stars in the universe. Upon reaching Earth in September 2015, the ripples caused by this gigantic event confirmed Albert Einstein's hypothesis on the existence of gravitational waves, as well as his theory about the curvature of space-time.

It set the world abuzz. Professor Karsten Danzmann, Director of the Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics, said the discovery had ushered in "a new kind of astronomy – one that enables us to study objects and processes that had previously been hidden to science. […] It is almost as if we have been granted a whole new sensory organ."

This event, and the capabilities and vision it unlocks, is the subject of Chris Tille's data-based artwork New Horizon. Tille works with the original recording of the ripples made by the LIGO observatories, and transforms the data into visuals: light and dark pixels represent the volume and pitch of the sound waves.

New Horizon disturbs for its familiar placidity: it resembles the ocean currents in our own seascapes, illuminated by the moon at night. What was in actuality an event of dramatic cosmic proportions appears calmed into the light lapping of water, and while it relates to time at a greater scale than we mortals can fathom, it manages to trigger both the intimidation of the infinite and the comfort of the immediate. As the horizon recedes into the unseeable and unknown, we are given pause with the knowledge of all that is still a mystery about our own Universe, and the discoveries yet to be made.

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