

BIG BANG

How can we begin to imagine what the birth of the Universe looked like, at the moment before there was time, before there were eyes to see? More than thirteen billion years ago, a 'Big Bang' deployed not only the dimensions of time and space but everything that is known to us, from light to life. It is our origin story, and as impossible as it is to fully comprehend, it is equally bewitching.

In his work *Big Bang*, Chris Tille makes a bold step towards visualising this singular event. He builds on the stunning scientific developments of American physicist John G. Cramer, who, in 2013, released an audio file of the Big Bang and the following 760,000 years, using data on the cosmic microwave background from the European Space Agency's Planck satellite mission. To say that it's what the Big Bang would have sounded like—were we as humans around to have heard it—is misleading, however. It is an auditory interpretation of data, much like the images of distant galaxies, black holes and supernovae are visual interpretations of data.

Tille works within this tradition of interpreting and visualising scientific data by translating Cramer's audio file of the Big Bang into an image: we see the birth of our known Universe. After two years of experimentation, Tille found a method of translating Cramer's sound waves into light, which he then captured on photographic paper. "I strip down the tone resulting from the frequency and volume into visual impulses, that is, light and dark pixels," he explains. Thus, a loud noise with a low frequency produces light pixels, whilst a quiet noise with a high frequency results in a grey pixel. The result is printed to grand scale for awe-inducing impact: standing in front of the image is a humbling reminder of the space of the Universe. Waves flow out from an unseen epicentre, expanding into the infinite.

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