



Celestial Attraction © Agathe Simon

“Celestial Attraction”: The Unknown Pleasures of Agathe Simon

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“Celestial Attraction”: The Unknown Pleasures of Agathe Simon

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When watching the video triptych *Celestial Attraction*, it is striking to see the extent to which Agathe Simon explores what the images convey, what they become once captured by the camera, and the past—whether collective or imagined—that they bring to the surface, in a quest for meaning, connection, and empathy. All the while, she never strays from what truly obsesses her: the unknown, and the mysteries and incomprehension it carries with it. The French artist-researcher explains.

“Why is there something rather than nothing?” [Agathe Simon](#) says she has thought a great deal about this quote from Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz since her studies in philosophy. She sees in it a way of approaching our world beyond the sciences, a way of testing the limits of reason, and an invitation to return to the root of things. In 2023, the artist-researcher—a graduate of La Fémis and the Paris Conservatory—traveled to northwestern Argentina, at an altitude of 5,000 meters (16,400 feet), to meet Yolanda, a local llama herder, and Beatriz, a cosmologist. Two life paths and two perspectives that, at first glance, seem diametrically opposed on the subject of the origin of the world (one religious, the other scientific), yet united by the same questions: Why are we here? Where did the universe come from? How has it evolved?

At the same time, Agathe Simon—whose work we first discovered in 2025 at the [Safra’s Numériques](#)—is living with Yolanda and her family, sharing their daily life, which she sums up as follows: “Sleeping six to a room where it freezes at night, cooking meals on a small wood-burning stove, fetching water from the river”... She adds: “This prolonged presence was essential for the film to emerge from a relationship of trust and a localized perspective, rather than from a distant observation.”



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One Subject, Many Questions

At the heart of this highly unique place, where a revolutionary telescope designed to observe the earliest moments of the universe (QUBIC) has just been installed, Agathe Simon explores the thoughts that stir the human spirit, questions the role of science—what purpose could it possibly serve if we already had all the answers regarding our presence on Earth? —and, in a single gesture, reconciles religious knowledge and scientific theories.

Thus was born the video installation *Celestial Attraction*, which immediately raises a multitude of questions. “With this work, I explore the question of this unknown—at once hypothetical and haunting. How can we convey something we will never experience? How can we help others understand what transcends comprehension and may not even exist? How do these dizzying questions manifest themselves in the stories and rituals of these two women whom everything seems to set apart?”



Celestial Attraction © Agathe Simon

The Vertigo of the Void

Eager to engage as closely as possible with these multifaceted questions, Agathe Simon conceived *Celestial Attraction* as a nearly fifteen-minute video triptych that plays with forms and elements. Desaturated images, fragmented sequences, and austere landscapes serve here as the raw material for a slow-paced, deceptively contemplative documentary, interspersed with various themes.

Hence the use of three screens, designed to “provide a fully immersive experience, reflecting both the subject (the cosmos) and the setting (a high-altitude desert) of this triptych,” she concludes. “Thus, the screens exist in a relationship of simultaneity and echoes—and at times, dissonance.” Proof that Agathe Simon has truly learned Leibniz’s lesson: *Celestial Attraction* does not set out to answer a specific question or follow a fixed narrative; instead, the work prefers to grapple with abstract ideas and, in doing so, embrace the beauty of the unknown, of vertigo, and of nothingness.

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