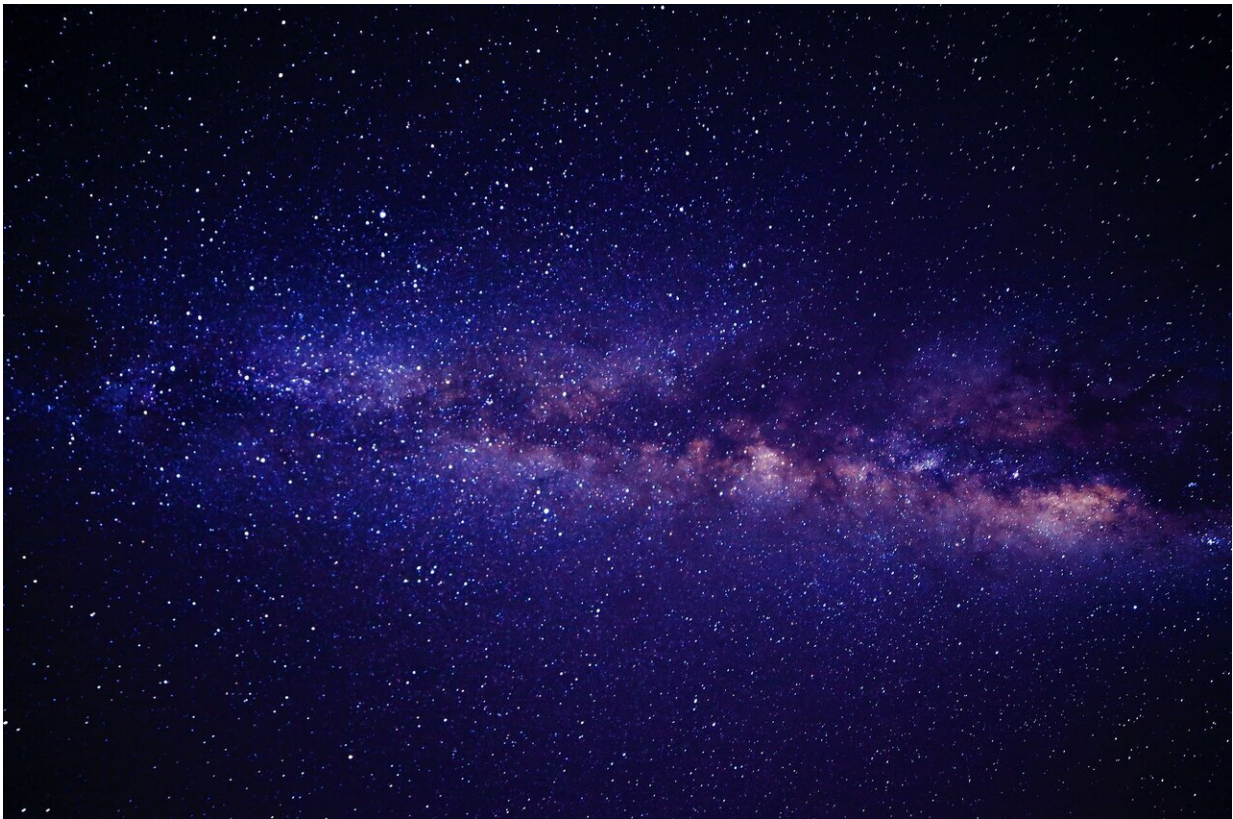


Video: The Fingertip Galaxy: Reflecting Euclid in art

July 5 2022



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

"After Euclid's lifetime, it will just be floating in space. What if future beings found Euclid? How would they know anything about the humanity of the people?" says Tom Kitching, lead scientist of Euclid's

VIS instrument.

The team behind ESA's Euclid mission has come together to create something special—a personal and collective galaxy-shaped fingerprint painting that has been attached to the spacecraft ready to launch into [space](#). The collaborative nature of the artwork reflects the collaborative nature of the Euclid project overall; in both cases, people have come together to build something unique.

The Fingertip Galaxy was created by visual artist Lisa Pettibone and Euclid instrument scientist Tom Kitching. Since the very first fingerprint was pressed down in 2019, over 250 scientists and engineers have contributed to the piece of art.

So why a galaxy? Euclid is a galaxy-imaging machine that will observe billions of [galaxies](#) out to 10 billion light-years to make a 3D map of the Universe. The mission's ultimate aim is to explore [dark matter](#) and [dark energy](#).

"Although Euclid has always been beautiful in concept and materials, it didn't really say anything about the people involved and humanity as a whole. We asked ourselves whether we could do something artistic that would speak to people," says Lisa.

Scientists and engineers involved in Euclid were invited to dip their fingertips in paint and make their mark on a large piece of paper.

"We wanted something authentic, not perfect, and not shaped too much," continues Lisa. "The result is a piece of art with a wonderful energy to it that captures all the energy of the people involved."

The artwork was photographed and engraved onto a plaque using lasers at Mullard Space Science Laboratory—the same lasers that are used to

etch parts for satellites. The plaque was fixed to Euclid and revealed at a 'Goodbye Euclid' event on 1 July 2022, when Euclid left Thales Alenia Space in Turin to head to Cannes for final testing as a complete system.

Euclid's project scientist René Laureijs suggested adding text to the plaque to explain the thoughts behind it. Continuing the artistic nature of the project, poet Simon Barraclough wrote a dedicated poem, from which a short extract was chosen to be etched on to the plaque in a typewriter font that swirls around the galaxy of fingerprints. This video ends with Simon reading part of Since his poem.

Lisa summarizes the Fingertip Galaxy: "It is adding an element of humanity to a dark, vast space, where as far as we can see there is no other intelligent life."

Provided by European Space Agency

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