



*Moon Studies and Star Scratches, No. 4 June - September 2004*  
Saratoga Springs, New York; Middlesex, Vermont; Johnson, Vermont; Eden  
Mills, Vermont; Greensboro, North Carolina © Sharon Harper

## Noel Rodo-Vankeulen

I've always thought that it was a risky endeavor for a photographer to take the moon and stars as a subject. Not only are the heavens photographically polymorphic, that is, obsessive fodder for the amateur and specialist alike, but in their seductive combination they seem to be an apt representation of the contemporary medium's disingenuous qualities. It is the pursuit of all that is wholly allegoric and sentimental in photography – the light in the darkness. However, for Sharon Harper, whose photograph *Moon Studies and Star Scratches, No. 4, June – September 2004*, which appears to embody many of these notions, her idea that photography can be a form of mediation with the hidden aspects of nature is something which attracts me greatly.

Looking at Harper's work I get the feeling she is at odds with our longing to use the camera to archive or, specifically, to preserve subjects. It is here, in our vain desire for nostalgic understanding, that the medium becomes underutilized and detached from its autogenic power. In a

sense, *No. 4* is our inability to see photographically. In its sublime expressionist pictorial it presents time, place and presence as an intangible truth. Of course it's hard to imagine photographs of the moon without a sense of longing – longing for closeness to a universe so obviously inhuman and longing for the eye of a machine in tune with that time. Harper's negotiation brings me closer to this mystery, where humanity's cryptic lust for collective misunderstanding is so eloquently simple. +

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*Sharon Harper lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts and is an assistant professor at Harvard University. Her work is represented by Galerie Roepke, Cologne and Rick Wester Fine Art, New York.*