

Artist turns lightning into street light

By Gary Cansell | 21 December 2009



A series of streetlamps starts blinking today in time with lightning strikes across the world.

The art installation at Deal Pier in Kent, which was rebuilt in 1957 after being destroyed by a lightning storm, will receive signals of lightning strikes from as far away as the North Pole and turn them into a flicker of light.

Streetlight Storm, which will be active from dusk until dawn for the next month, was created by Scottish artist Katie Paterson, whose work typically navigates the space between technology, science and art.

The 27-year-old has previously reflected Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* from the surface of the Moon, mapped every known dead star, and set up a live phone link between a gallery in London and an Icelandic glacier where she was stationed – visitors were invited to call her and listen to Europe's largest iceberg gently murmuring as it melted.

"I am interested in the way the ordinary and the otherworldly intersect," she said, "and much of my work uses everyday technologies from doorbells to record players connected with vast and intangible phenomena such as dying stars and the Moon. I hope the work's universal content will ignite the imagination of many."

At any given moment up to 6,000 lightning storms rage globally. *Streetlight Storm* collapses geographical distances and allows its audience to experience some of them in real time, minus the danger (by our reckoning, the current required to power a light bulb falls a shade short of the energy in a lightning bolt).

The artwork is supported by Vauxhall Motors and Albion Gallery, in partnership with Turner Contemporary and Whitstable Biennale, and runs until January 30, 2010