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Paris Solstice:
a visual art project touching on themes of history, society, astronomy, and technology

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Abstract. *Paris Solstice* is a visual art project touching on themes of history, society, astronomy, and technology. Research and travel for two papers I undertook in 2000 and 2001 were the unintentional beginnings of *Paris Solstice*. This new series of about images in color process, gelatine silver, and digital formats merges two different sets of photographs: views over the rooftops of Paris and photographs of nineteenth century scientific tables. My ongoing interest in aesthetic, documentary, and conceptual aspects of photography is reflected in *Paris Solstice*.

The Paris Observatory's nineteenth century eclipse tables of the satellites of Jupiter render the sky in numerical form according to Paris Meridian coordinates. Views over the rooftops of Paris in the year 2000 during the long sunset of the summer solstice, juxtaposed with these romantically aged data tables, compose the sky through two complementary modelling systems: one observational, one astronomical. The camera imports both systems into the medium of photography.

Research and travel for two papers I wrote in 2000 and 2001 served as the beginning of *Paris Solstice*. I found, in Marcel Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time,* a scene set in a dining room full of puns on the word 'tables' and allusions to astronomy. Among them, the Narrator's reference to 'endless calculations' was especially curious. What could it mean? Eclipse tables of the satellites of Jupiter and Saturn, particularly several editions of them compiled by the Paris Observatory during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, seemed like a good guess. In practice, all data in the Paris Observatory tables is based on the Paris

Meridian, a geo-mathematical line Louis XIV had established in the 1600s along with the Paris Observatory. Both Observatory and Meridian survived the French Revolution, despite their imperial origins. France only relinquished the Paris Meridian in 1919, some three decades after other countries had adopted Greenwich Mean Time. The data in 'Tables écliptiques des satellites de Jupiter' thus refers to an obsolete marker, yet it is still true to this spectral delineation.

Figure 1. Pages of data tables collectively entitled 'Tables écliptiques, J.B.J. Delambre, 1817', from a volume in the public domain. With thanks to Kline Science Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA.
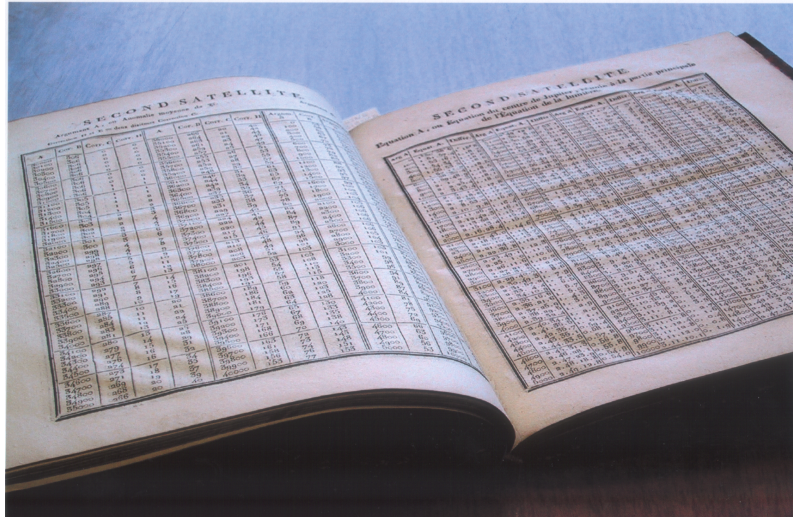
Figure 2. Data tables in 'Tables écliptiques, J.B.J. Delambre, 1817', from a volume in the public domain. With thanks to Kline Science Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA.

Figure 3. *Paris Solstice* photograph. Image rendering, prints, text, and project design, copyright © Deborah Garwood 2003. Photographs of Paris collectively entitled 'Paris at Twilight, June 2000'.

Figure 4. *Paris Solstice* photograph. Image rendering, prints, text, and project design, copyright © Deborah Garwood 2003. Photographs of Paris collectively entitled 'Paris at Twilight, June 2000'.

Figure 5. *Paris Solstice* photograph. Image rendering, prints, text, and project design, copyright © Deborah Garwood 2003. Photographs of Paris collectively entitled 'Paris at Twilight, June 2000'.

Figure 6. *Paris Solstice* photograph. Image rendering, prints, text, and project design, copyright © Deborah Garwood 2003. Photographs of Paris collectively entitled 'Paris at Twilight, June 2000'.