

Once I spent a whole night with some astronomers. I was in Wales to shoot a film on a community of people who said they had seen UFO. It was a strange night since I thought I was going to interview men of science but in fact before me were a group of grown up children madly in love with their job, namely studying the heavenly bodies and observing the sky. But the most interesting thing was to discover an analogy between their research and mine. We were both scanning outer space in the hope of finding glitches with profoundly believing that there were bound to be yet unrecorded “differences”.

What separated us was the observation field. Mine so close and theirs so far so much so as to lead them to photograph histories and phenomena light years away and finished a long time before - only but the appearance of heavenly bodies extinguished thousands or even millions of years ago. This matter is important though, at least for all those who question themselves on what we constantly happen to see: is what we see real? How can we “record” on film, in a file or in our very memory the image of something that appears before our eyes for the first time? The majority of the things we happen to see during the day belong to a family of things known to us. In truth, though, we do not always observe reality, but we rather recognise “twin” parts of things we already know. This is because observing and understanding reality second by second, image by image would be demanding, painful even, therefore we rely on our private archive of images, which comes to our aid to help us bear everyday encounters with contexts, which are always different. Our ability to tolerate images is abused by reality, images we receive outnumber our potential capacity – images that are often very similar.

Nightshifts puts us before two issues. In the first place it is a unique opportunity to access that marvellous playground of astronomers and to

witness with them an extraordinary first-release. The second issue is a problem: the images are given to us both in their familiar format (a photograph) and in their algorithmic alias. A series of numbers and data which are incomprehensible to us but that are nonetheless the real shape of that picture, the closest image to those heavenly bodies. So once again we cannot make out what we are looking at. Can we believe such a reality? Can a photograph be considered more credible, typical and “true” than its coded version? This, to me, is a very good call not to trust photographs and to therefore use them with new trust, a very good call to search with our eyes every daily landscape no matter how close or far. As the tag line at the end of Howard Hawks’ *The Thing from Another World* warns: “Watch the skies, everywhere! Keep looking. Keep watching the skies!”.