

## Earth As You've Never Seen It!

The View From Here 31 October 2024

[Ella Read](#)



Credit: Andy Read

### Introduction

Having heard about this unusual artwork of the Earth installed in Southwark Cathedral, London, we were most intrigued.

The view in the picture is on two different levels.

The first is quite simply the view from one end of the Cathedral of the illuminated globe suspended close to the other end. It's not every day you get to see such a sight.

The second is a view of the Earth at the size you would see if you were standing on the moon.

You can just make out the silhouettes of a couple of people on the right-hand side, to give you some sense of the size of this globe. Trust me, it's huge!

It's by the UK artist Luke Jerram, who [used detailed imagery](#) of the Earth's surface from NASA. It's actually a floating globe, which revolves slowly, just as the Earth does in reality.

This is known as the Gaia installation. Why Gaia? Because in [Greek mythology](#), Gaia is the personification of the Earth.

### Figures

Now, here are a few figures behind this artwork. The globe itself is seven meters (23 feet) in diameter and lit internally. It lets you see how our planet looks in three dimensions.

The artwork is 1.8 million times smaller than our Earth. Each centimeter of the sculpture represents 18 km (11 miles) of the Earth's surface. Someone certainly had to make sure their mathematics was correct to make this sculpture to the correct scale!

At this position 211 meters away (692 feet) at the far end of the cathedral by the arch, it's how big the Earth would appear from the moon.

### Aspects

One of the aspects that struck me was that, because we could stand near to it as it slowly rotated above us, we mostly saw the southern hemisphere and the countries and oceans across the equator.

Australia was very clear because there was hardly a cloud over the sub-continent. But North America and Europe were so far up in the northern hemisphere — and much of it covered in cloud — that it was difficult to make out where those landmasses were.

See if you can find your region on the video we took of it:

Gaia installation in Southwark Cathedral — Credit: Andy Read

### Deeper meaning

You might well imagine that there's a deeper meaning to this artwork than mere art. Southwark Cathedral is aiming to become carbon neutral. Their [website states](#) that it is hoped that visitors, who see this Earth sculpture, will:

renew their appreciation of our beautiful and fragile 'pendant world' as we look to move to a more sustainable way of living.

The Dean of Southwark Cathedral [says](#):

*Focusing on the beauty of our planet and the wondrous nature of God's good creation will help us move forward as we seek to play our part in addressing the challenge of climate change. God made all things good; it is we who have caused the damage.*

Finally...

Standing under this illuminated globe certainly gives pause for thought. We do live on a beautiful planet.

Even standing at a distance from it, as if seeing it from the moon, makes you feel awe and wonder at the planet we depend on for life.

This artwork is being shown in various places around the world, [including](#) Charlotte North Carolina, Dublin Ireland, and Ontario Canada.

Have you had chance to see it yet?

We did have a bit of fun while there. My husband and I had a go at posing as if we were holding up the Earth. I think I ended up looking more like I was balancing it on my head! Ah well, we had a good laugh trying.