

*Topics in Astrostatistics - 8 September 2015*

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# The Art & Science of Image Processing

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# Communication and Public Engagement

The screenshot shows the Chandra X-ray Observatory website in a browser window. The URL is [chandra.si.edu](http://chandra.si.edu). The page features a dark blue header with the Chandra logo and the text "NASA's flagship mission for X-ray astronomy." Below the header is a navigation menu with links for Home, About Chandra, Education, Field Guide, Photo Album, Press Room, Resources, Multimedia, Podcasts, Blog, and Research. A secondary navigation bar offers options for "New to the site?" (Start Here) and "Choose the type of information that interests you" with categories: Everyone, Kids, Students, Educators, Planetariums, and Scientists.

The main content area displays a large image of a galaxy cluster (Abell 1033) with a bright purple and blue core. A text box on the right side of the image reads: "ABELL 1033: Chandra Data Suggest Giant Collision Triggered 'Radio Phoenix'". Below this, it states: "A collision of two galaxy clusters located about 1.6 billion light years from Earth. More (26 Aug 15)".

Below the main image is a "Learn About" section with a carousel of images and labels: Chandra, Light, Solar System, Supernovas, and Black Holes. To the right is a "Scientific User Support" section with links for CXC Science, Archive, Proposer, Data Analysis, Data Centers, Calibration, Visit Chandra @ NASA, Future X-ray Missions, and Physics of the Cosmos.

At the bottom, there are two columns of "Latest" and "Explore" news items. The "Latest" column includes: "Podcast: Tour of Abell 1033", "Press Release: Stephen S. Murray, High-Energy Astrophysicist, Dies at Age 70", "Blog: Happy First Light Anniversary!", and "Chandra App for iPhones: Explore recent science highlights from Chandra." The "Explore" column includes: "Chandra 16th Anniversary: News, resources & Images", "3D Files and Resources: Printable 3D Chandra Spacecraft", "Chandra Infographics: Revolutionary X-ray View", and "OpenFITS: Create your own images from archive data".

At the bottom right, there is a "Connect" section with links for "Chandra Mobile: Access Chandra on your smartphone", "Updates by RSS: Click here to receive updates", and "Contact Us: [cxcoub@cfa.harvard.edu](mailto:cxcoub@cfa.harvard.edu)".

The browser's address bar shows the URL [chandra.si.edu/photo/2015/a1033/](http://chandra.si.edu/photo/2015/a1033/).

## IMAGE-PROCESSING TECHNIQUES FOR THE CREATION OF PRESENTATION-QUALITY ASTRONOMICAL IMAGES

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### ABSTRACT

The quality of modern astronomical data and the agility of current image-processing software enable the visualization of data in a way that exceeds the traditional definition of an astronomical image. Two developments in particular have led to a fundamental change in how astronomical images can be assembled. First, the availability of high-quality multiwavelength and narrowband data allow for images that do not correspond to the wavelength sensitivity of the human eye, thereby introducing ambiguity in the usage and interpretation of color. Second, many image-processing software packages now use a layering metaphor that allows for any number of astronomical data sets to be combined into a color image. With this technique, images with as many as eight data sets have been produced. Each data set is intensity-scaled and colorized independently, creating an immense parameter space that can be used to assemble the image. Since such images are intended for data visualization, scaling and color schemes must be chosen that best illustrate the science. A practical guide is presented on how to use the layering metaphor to generate publication-ready astronomical images from as many data sets as desired. A methodology is also given on how to use intensity scaling, color, and composition to create contrasts in an image that highlight the scientific detail. Examples of image creation are discussed.

*Key words:* techniques: image processing

*Online material:* color figures

# What Determines the Aesthetic Appeal of Astronomical Images?

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[capjournal.org/issues/14/14\\_20.pdf](http://capjournal.org/issues/14/14_20.pdf)

## Summary

In the context of images used for education and outreach purposes, this paper describes a set of parameters that are key in determining the aesthetic appeal, or beauty, of an astronomical image.

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# What do I do?

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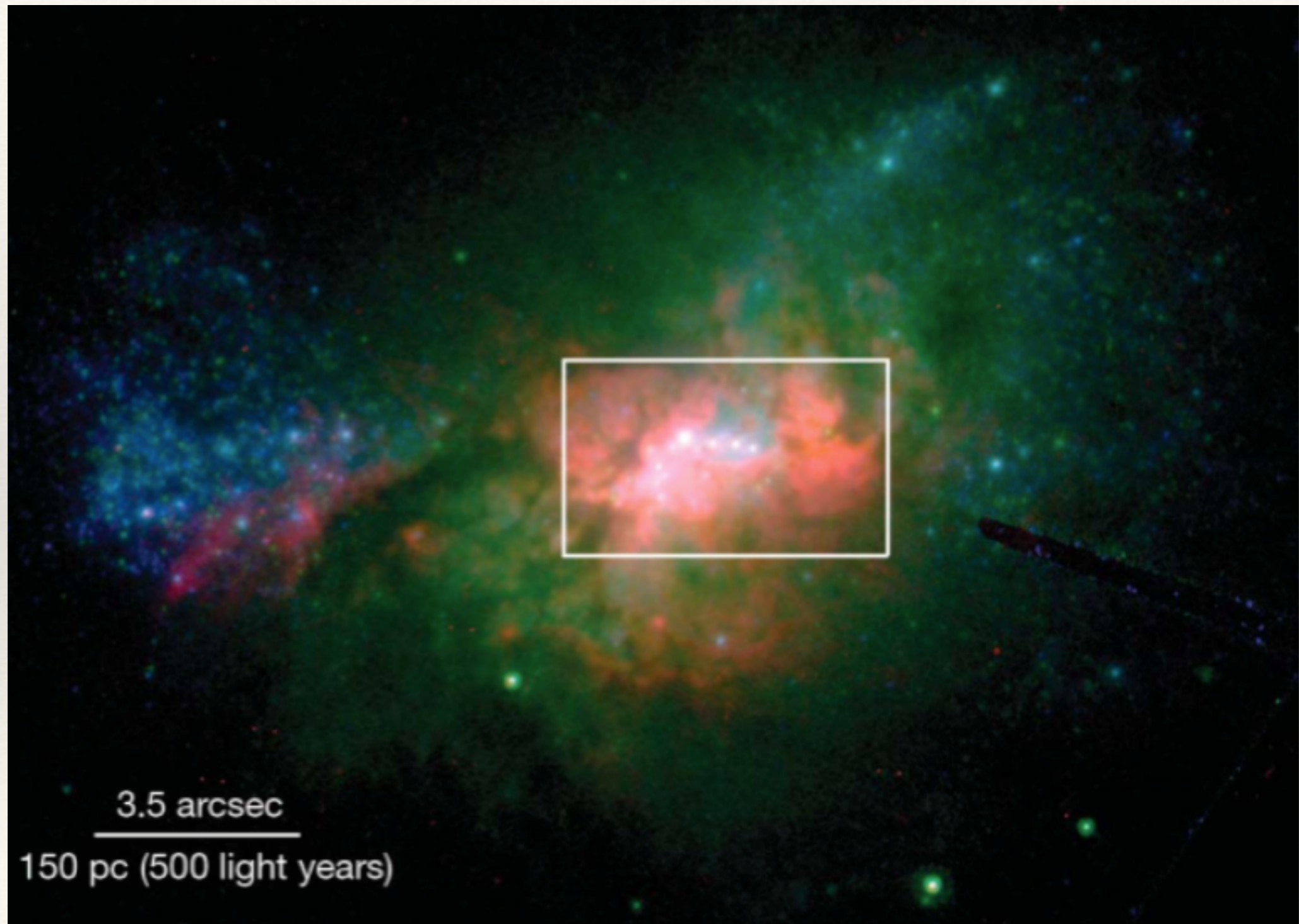
Create the best possible representations of telescope data for public consumption

The images must tell the story of the science behind the data in the most aesthetically pleasing way possible while preserving data integrity

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# What do I do?

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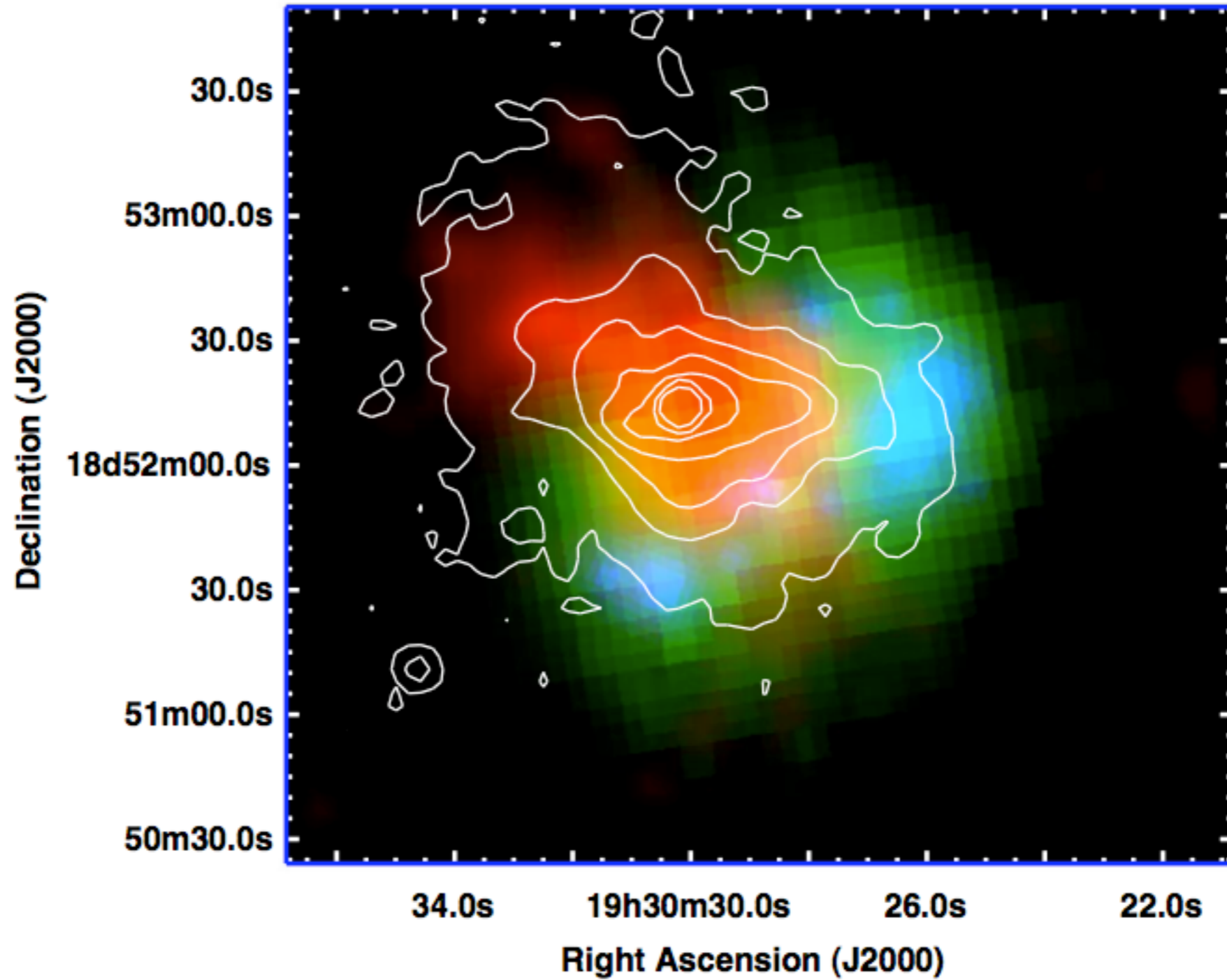
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# What do I do?

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# What do I do?





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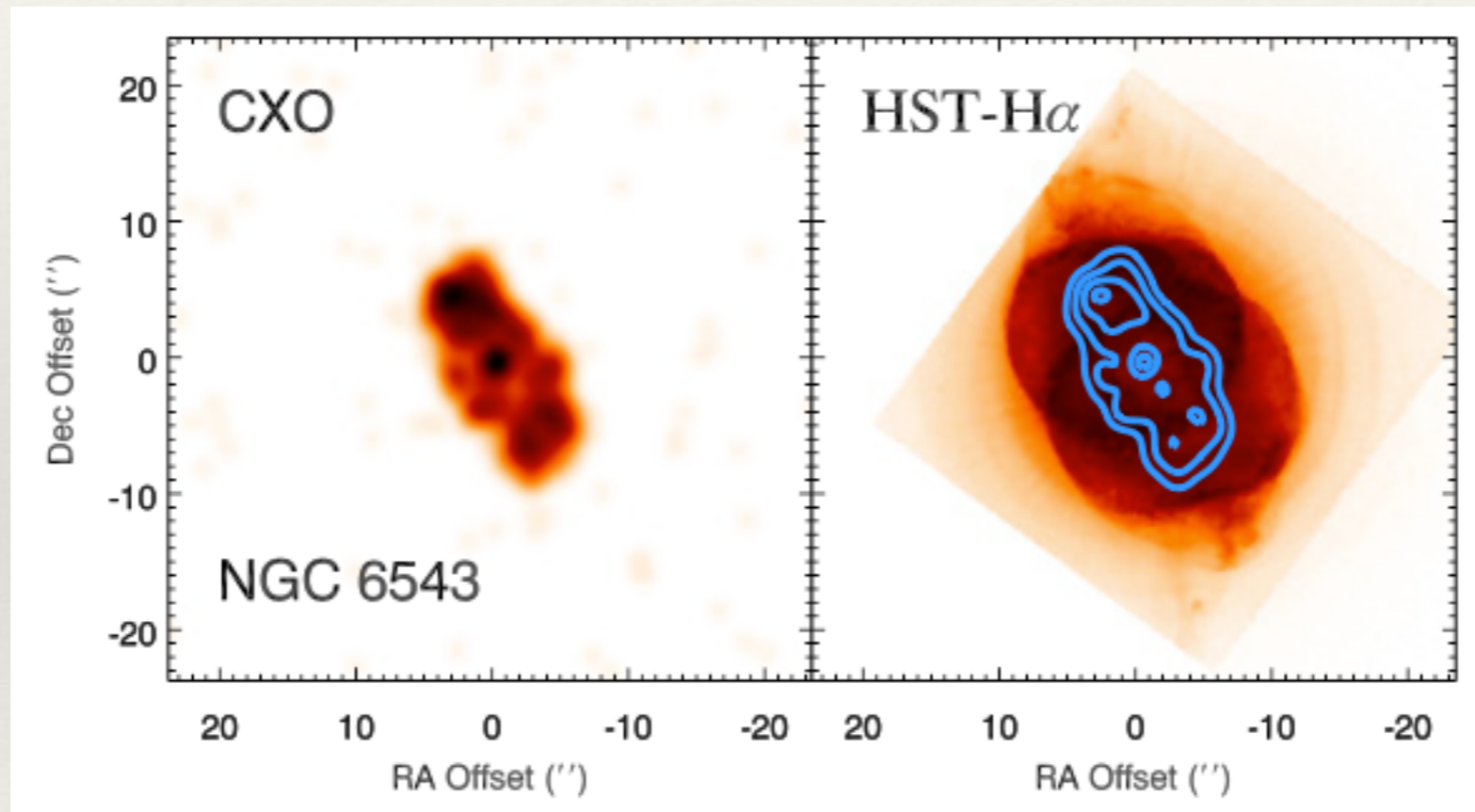
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# What do I do?

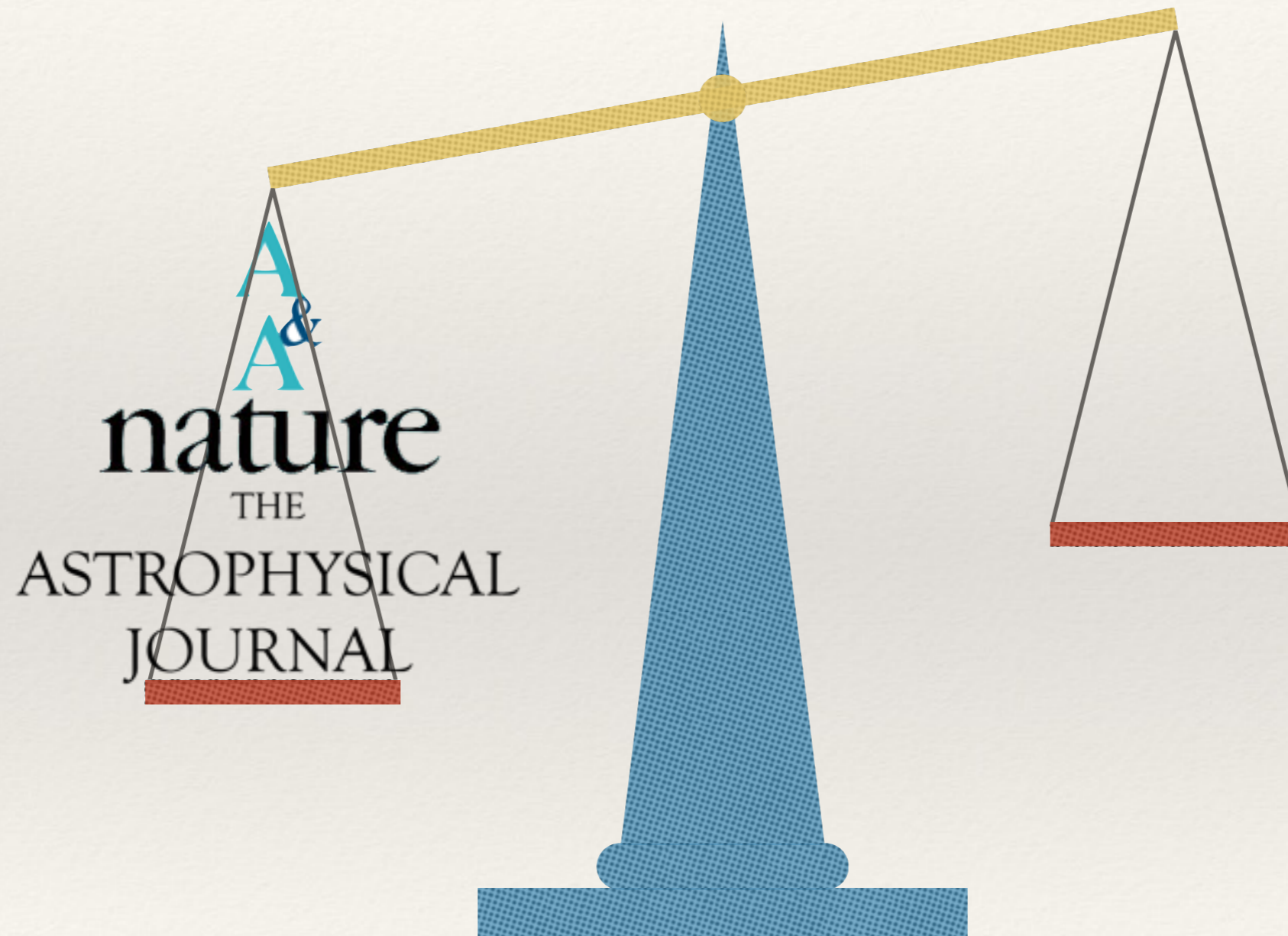




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# Striking a Balance

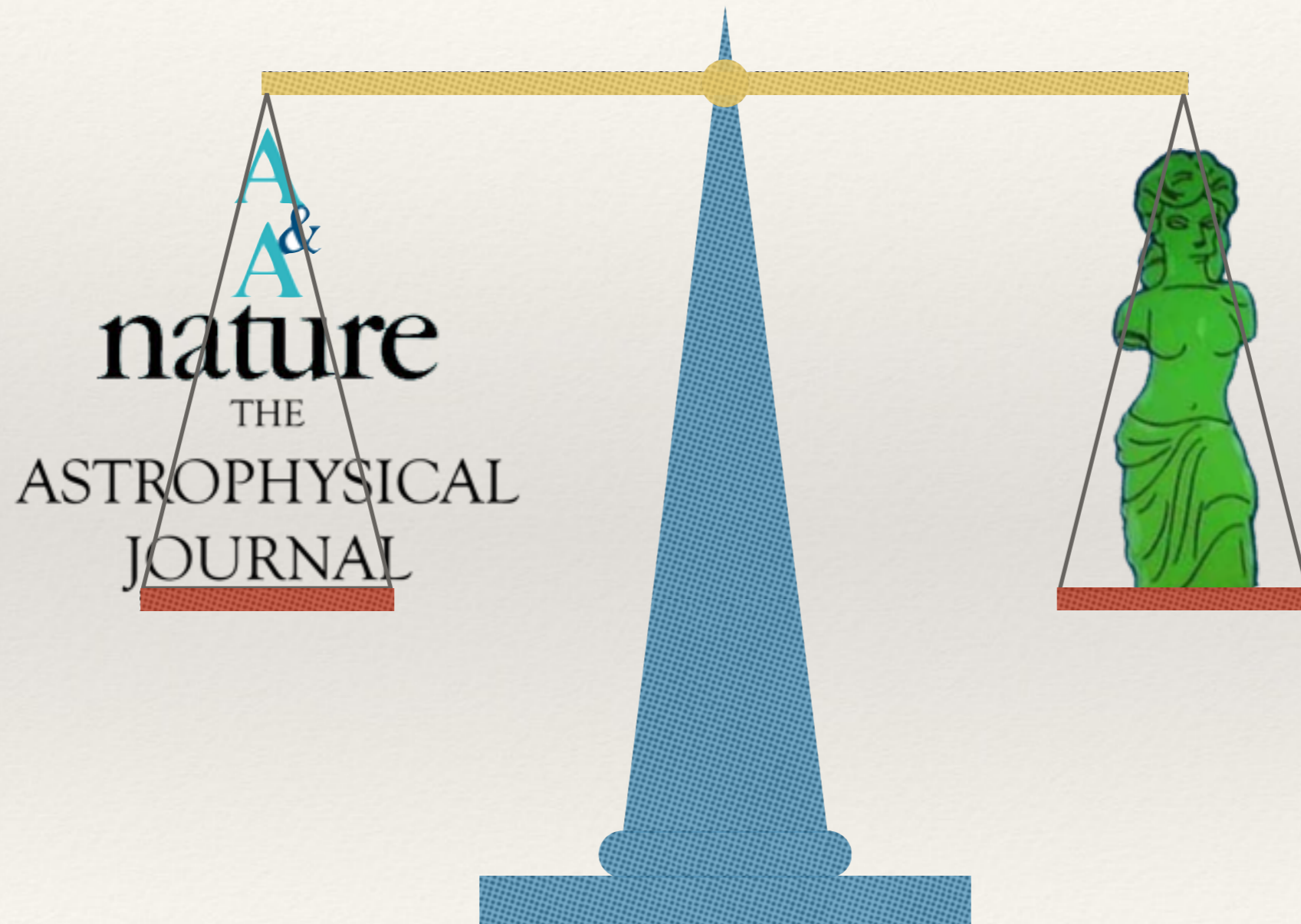
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# Striking a Balance

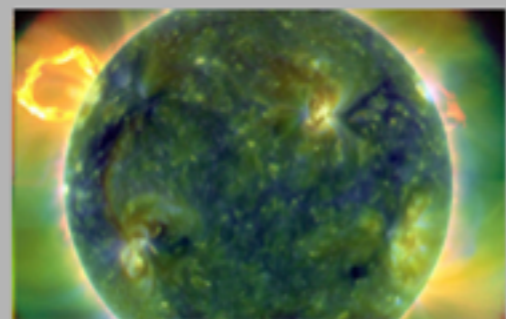
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# Aesthetics & Astronomy

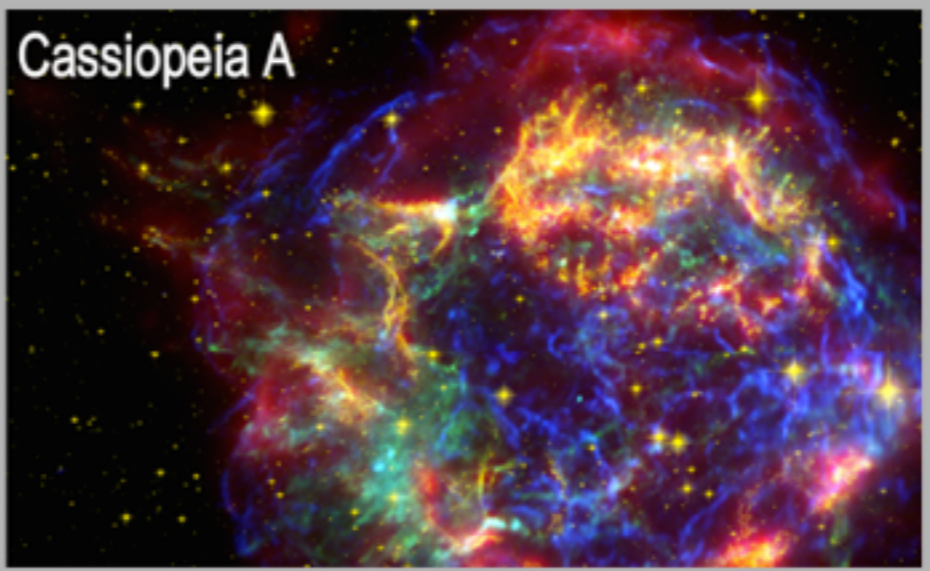


## Home



*Aesthetics from a psychological perspective is the study of all things beautiful whether art or not, and all things art whether beautiful or not.*

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  - [Latest videos](#)
  - [Latest publications](#)
- [Communicator Workshop](#)
  - [Examples, data, resources](#)
- [Participate](#)



Cassiopeia A

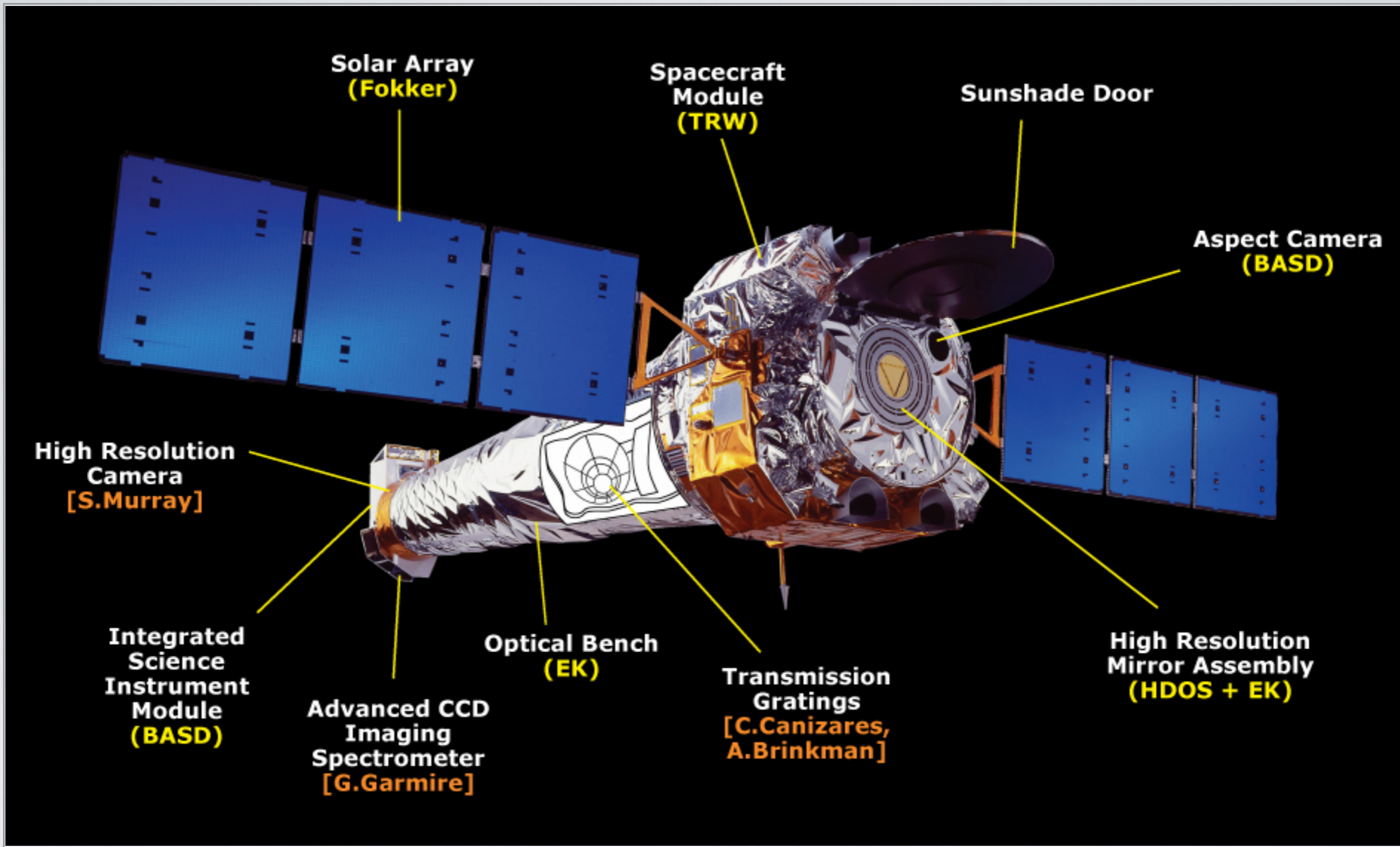
### Studying Perceptions of Astronomy Images

Images of the cosmos provide snapshots of various phases of life and death, different physical phenomena, found in locations across the known Universe. Today, some 400 years after Galileo created his, modern telescopes have enabled us to "see" what the human eye cannot. This new generation of ground- and space-based telescopes has created an explosion of images for experts and non-experts to explore.

The Aesthetics & Astronomy project studies the perception of multi-wavelength astronomical imagery and the effects of the scientific and artistic choices in processing astronomical data. The images come from a variety of space and ground-based observatories, including NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory, Hubble Space Telescope, Spitzer Space Telescope, the Solar Dynamics Observatory, the Very Large Array, and many others. Evaluation of such data will benefit astronomy across the electromagnetic spectrum of

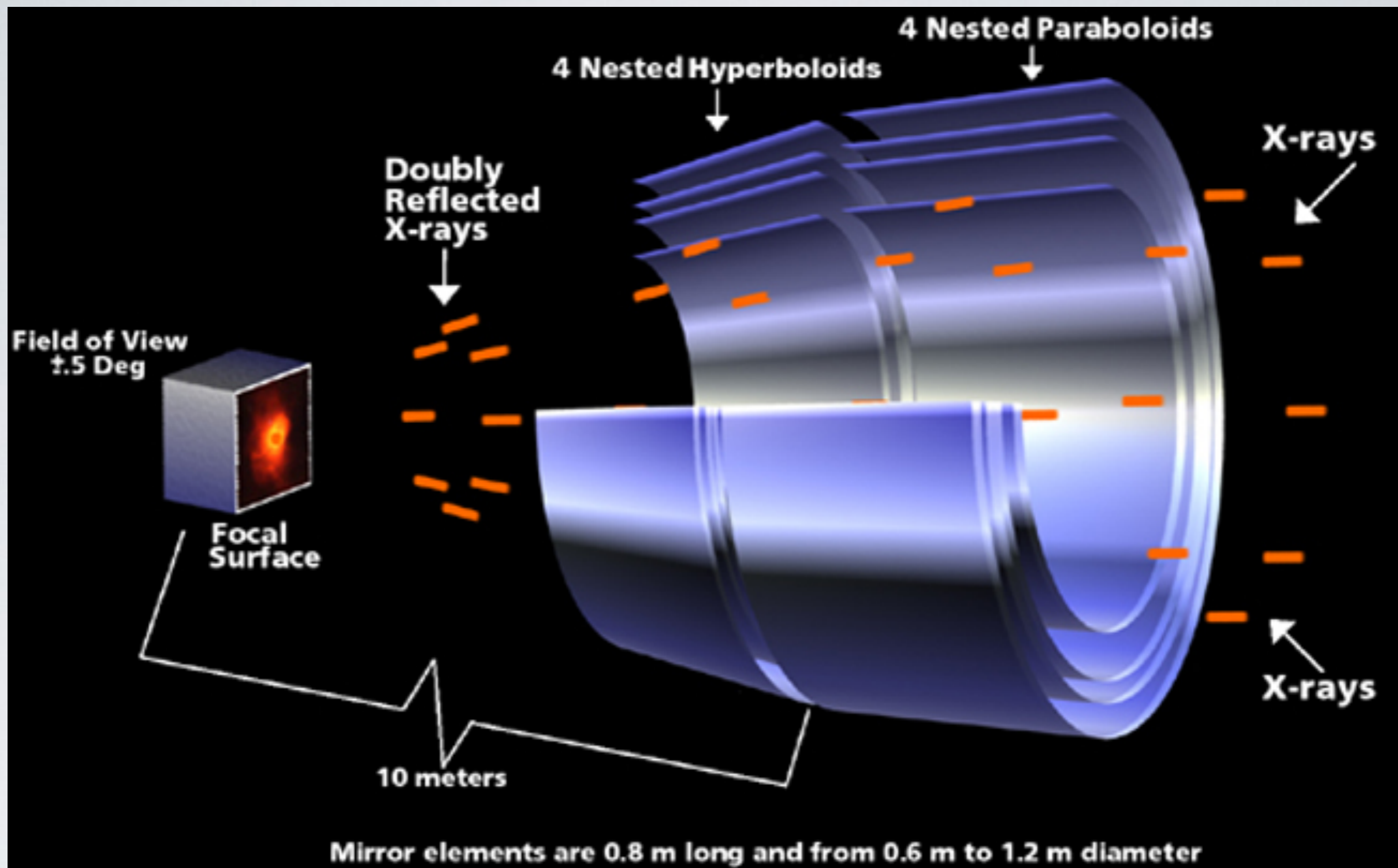


# CHANDRA X-RAY OBSERVATORY



# CHANDRA X-RAY OBSERVATORY





Mirror elements are 0.8 m long and from 0.6 m to 1.2 m diameter

Grazing Incidence, X-ray Mirrors

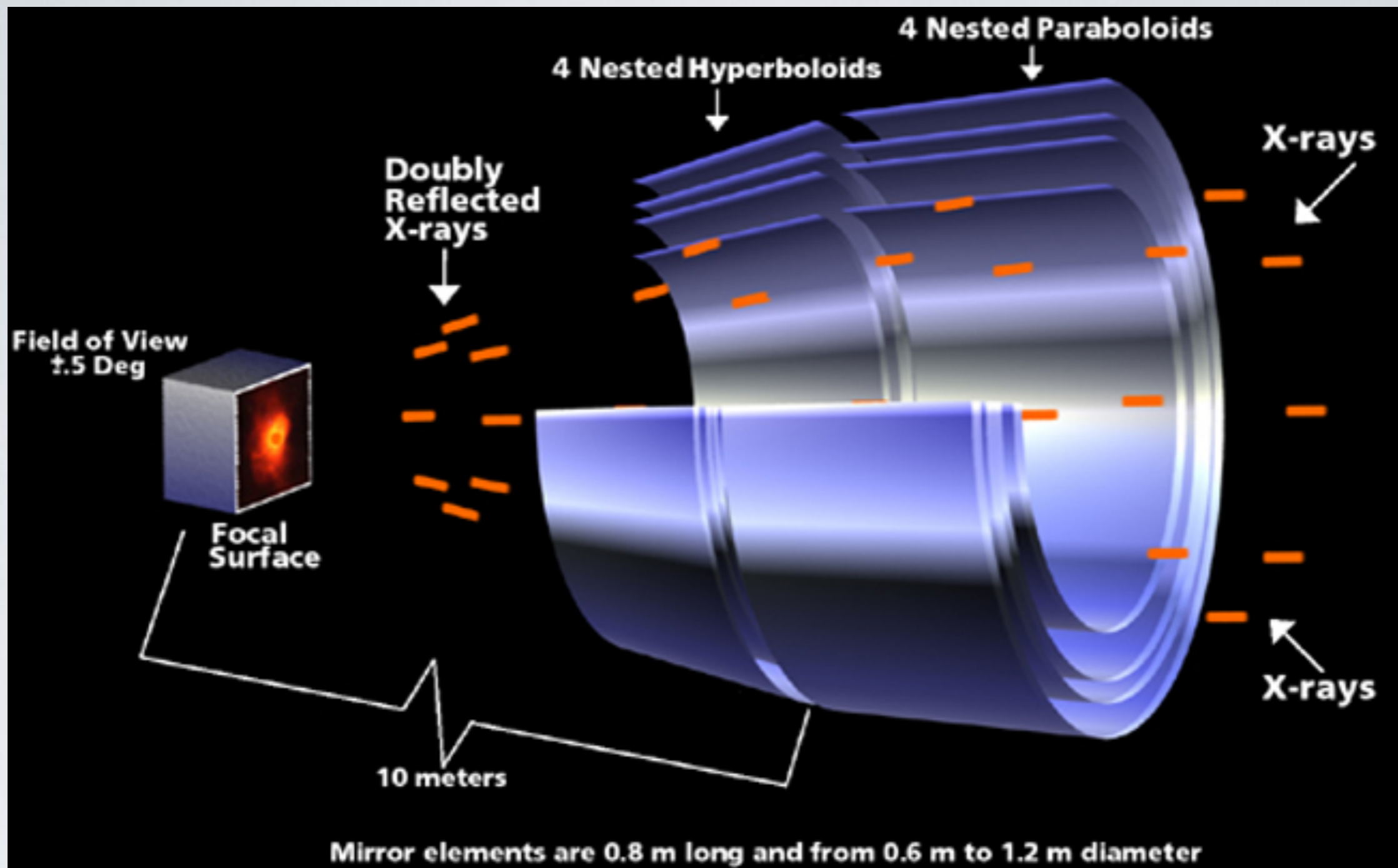
# CHANDRA X-RAY OBSERVATORY



Mirror elements are 0.8 m long and from 0.6 m to 1.2 m diameter

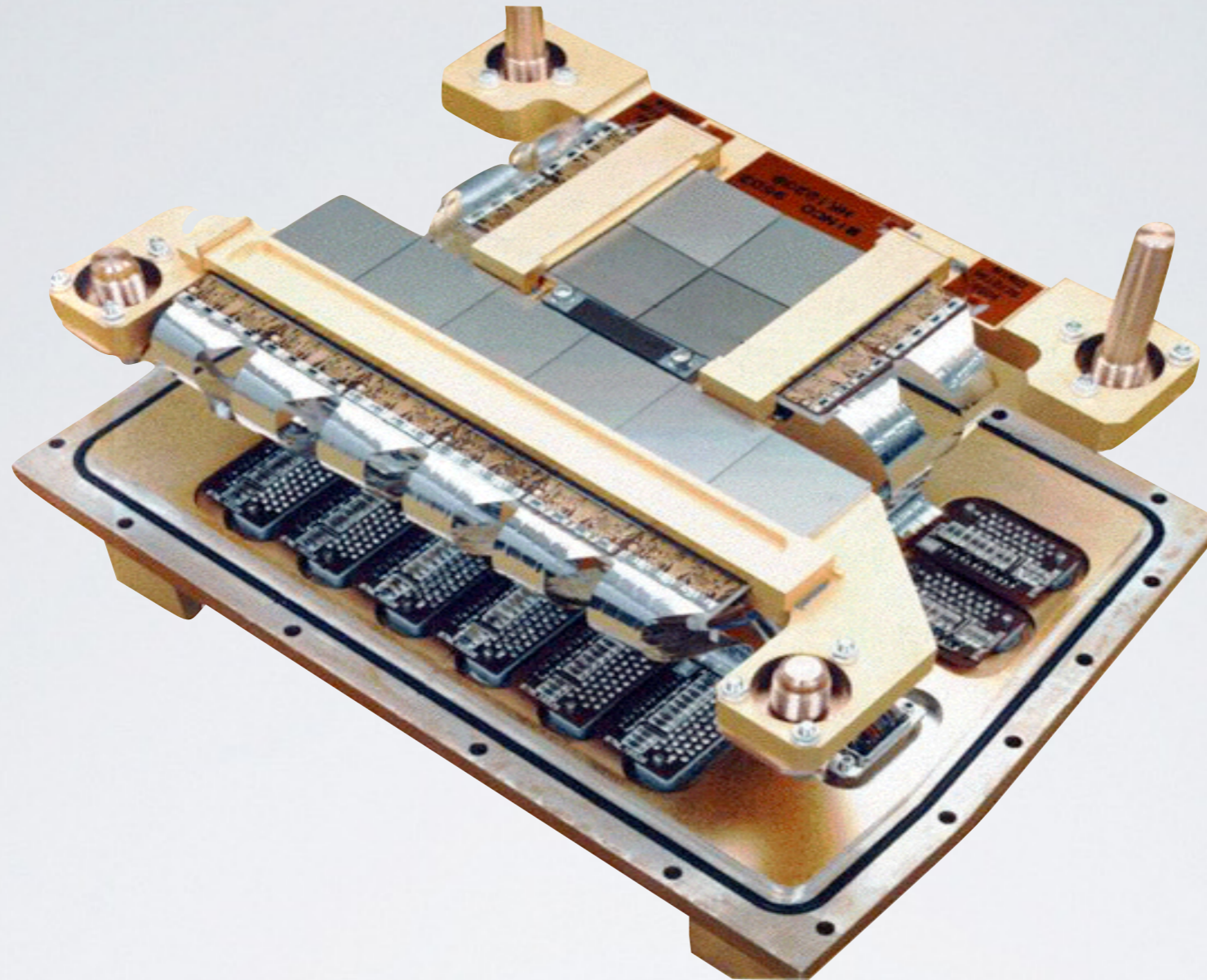
Grazing Incidence, X-ray Mirrors

# CHANDRA X-RAY OBSERVATORY



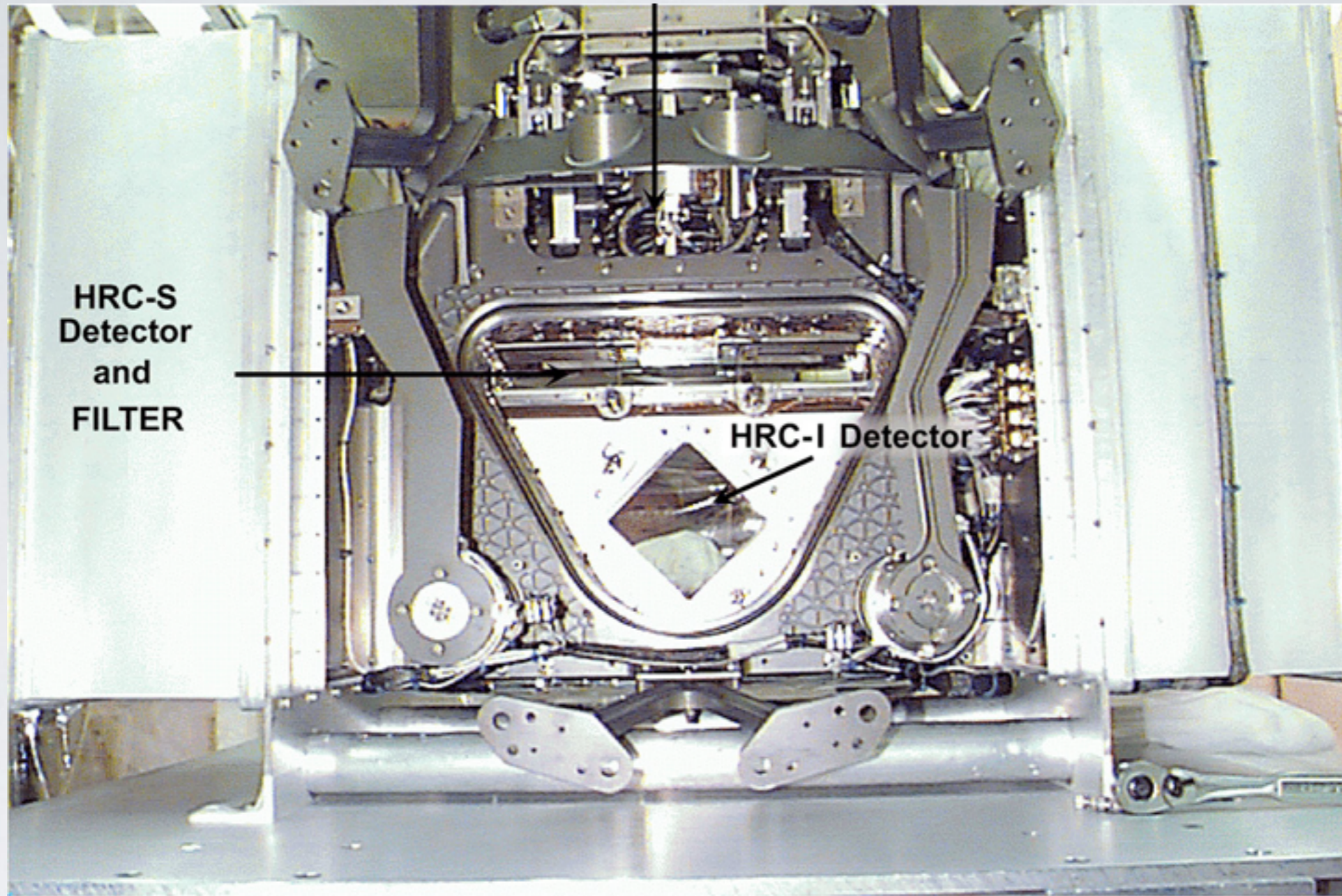
Grazing Incidence, X-ray Mirrors

# CHANDRA X-RAY OBSERVATORY



Advanced CCD Imaging Spectrometer

CHANDRA X-RAY OBSERVATORY



High Resolution Camera

CHANDRA X-RAY OBSERVATORY

# Data Format

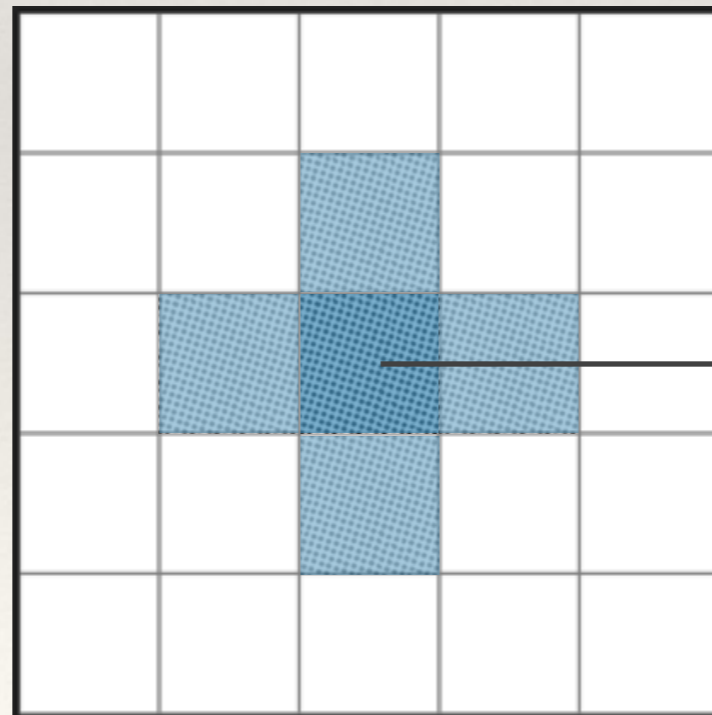
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2	1.995197353739404E+08	7	0	582	237	97	4154	1799	4.1230400E+03	4.5115591E+03	4.4723101E+03	4.2862783E+03	381	378	0	1.7980546E+03	124	11	6
3	1.995197353739404E+08	7	2	582	644	101	4561	1803	4.5295107E+03	4.5065106E+03	4.6760068E+03	3.9344949E+03	1567	1558	-1	7.4039917E+03	508	104	6
4	1.995197353739404E+08	7	1	582	314	104	4231	1806	4.2003442E+03	4.5044873E+03	4.5057979E+03	4.2162456E+03	306	302	1	1.5412102E+03	106	2	2
5	1.995197353739404E+08	7	2	582	568	105	4485	1807	4.4543657E+03	4.5033232E+03	4.6348032E+03	3.9974172E+03	3769	3759	6	1.7601096E+04	1024	22	6
6	1.995197353739404E+08	7	2	582	750	106	4667	1808	4.6357476E+03	4.5018452E+03	4.7263628E+03	3.8408335E+03	257	255	1	1.3026378E+03	90	0	0
7	1.995197353739404E+08	7	2	582	624	117	4541	1819	4.5099131E+03	4.4909370E+03	4.6525903E+03	3.9433569E+03	329	325	1	1.6134098E+03	111	0	0
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18	1.995197353739404E+08	7	1	582	506	214	4423	1916	4.3920146E+03	4.3937993E+03	4.5087993E+03	3.9949307E+03	409	405	-2	1.9092632E+03	137	64	2
19	1.995197353739404E+08	7	2	582	555	215	4472	1917	4.4409473E+03	4.3931128E+03	4.5332529E+03	3.9525408E+03	269	266	0	1.3205133E+03	91	0	0
20	1.995197353739404E+08	7	0	582	50	220	3967	1922	3.9366343E+03	4.3880845E+03	4.2708315E+03	4.3832285E+03	397	393	1	1.8420740E+03	127	64	2

Events List

# Data Format

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7	1.995197353739404E+08	7	2	582	624	117	4541	1819	4.5009131E+03	4.4909370E+03	4.6525903E+03	3.9433569E+03	329	325	1	1.6134098E+03	111	0	0
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17	1.995197353739404E+08	7	2	582	715	207	4632	1909	4.6007339E+03	4.4010044E+03	4.6218096E+03	3.8193052E+03	273	271	1	1.3760067E+03	95	0	0
18	1.995197353739404E+08	7	1	582	506	214	4423	1916	4.3920146E+03	4.3937993E+03	4.5087993E+03	3.9949307E+03	409	405	-2	1.9092632E+03	137	64	2
19	1.995197353739404E+08	7	2	582	555	215	4472	1917	4.4409473E+03	4.3931128E+03	4.5332529E+03	3.9525408E+03	269	266	0	1.3205133E+03	91	0	0
20	1.995197353739404E+08	7	0	582	50	220	3967	1922	3.9366343E+03	4.3880845E+03	4.2708315E+03	4.3832285E+03	397	393	1	1.8420740E+03	127	64	2

Sample event at the pixel scale



x,y position  
time  
energy  
grade

SAOImage ds9

File: e102.200-750eV.fits

Object: Merged

Value: 235

FK5  $\alpha$ : 01:04:00.688  $\delta$ : -72:02:05.01


Physical X: 4188.750 Y: 3782.250

Image X: 281.000 Y: 218.000

Frame 1 Zoom: 1.000 Angle: 0.000

file edit view frame bin zoom scale color region wcs help

about open save image header page setup print exit



0.3 0.8 1.8 3.8 7.9 15.9 32.0 64.3 128.3

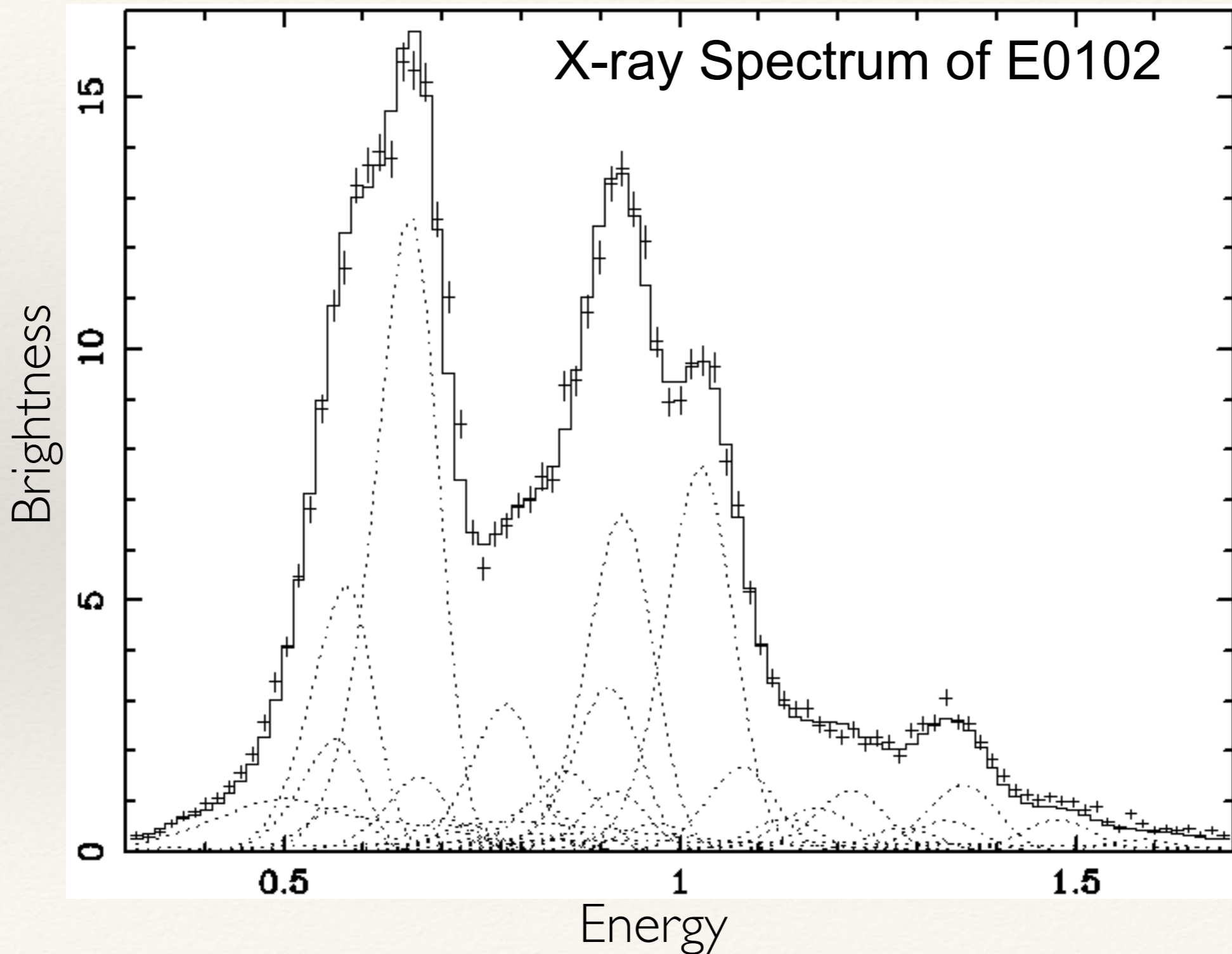
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3	1.995197353739404E+08	7	2	582	644
4	1.995197353739404E+08	7	1	582	314
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20	1.995197353739404E+08	7	0	582	50

corn Pha	energy eV	pi chan	fltgrade	grade	status
140	5	7.0569946E+02	49	80	6
378	0	1.7988546E+03	124	11	6
558	-1	7.4039917E+03	508	104	6
302	1	1.5412102E+03	106	2	2
759	6	1.7601096E+04	1024	22	6
255	1	1.3026378E+03	90	0	0
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263	-1	1.2981259E+03	89	0	0
200	-2	1.0075438E+03	70	0	0
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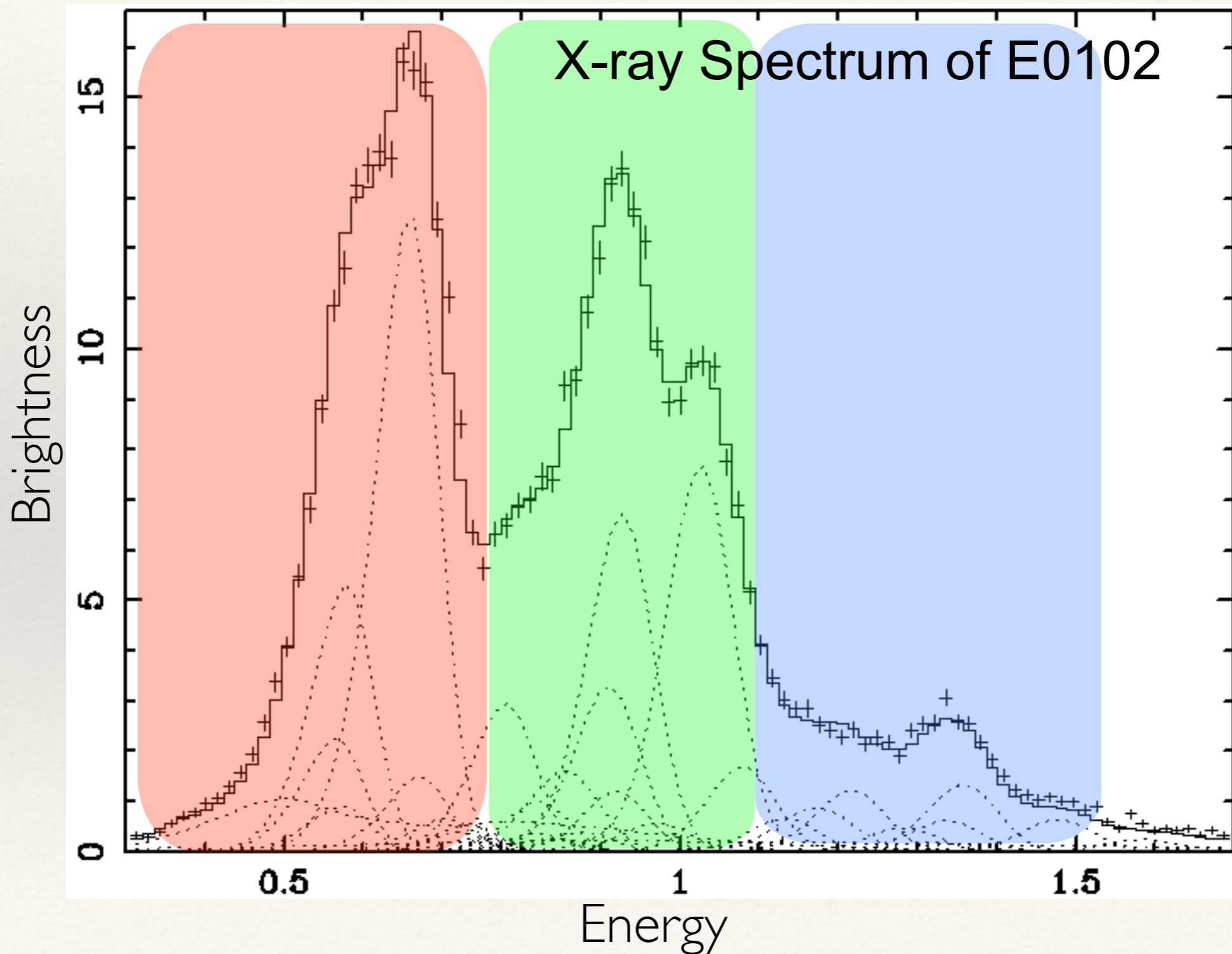
x,y position  
time  
energy  
grade



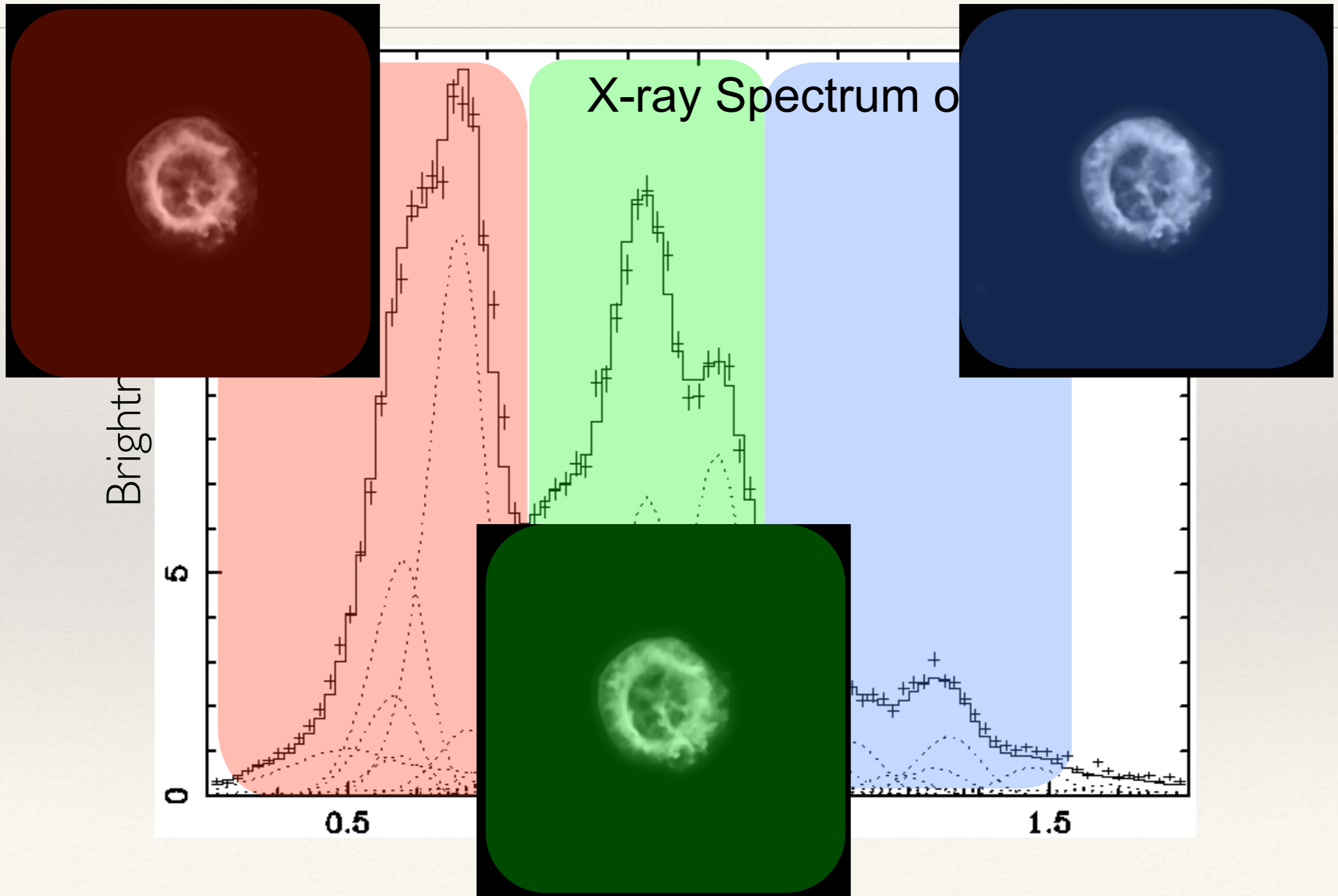
# A Splash of Color



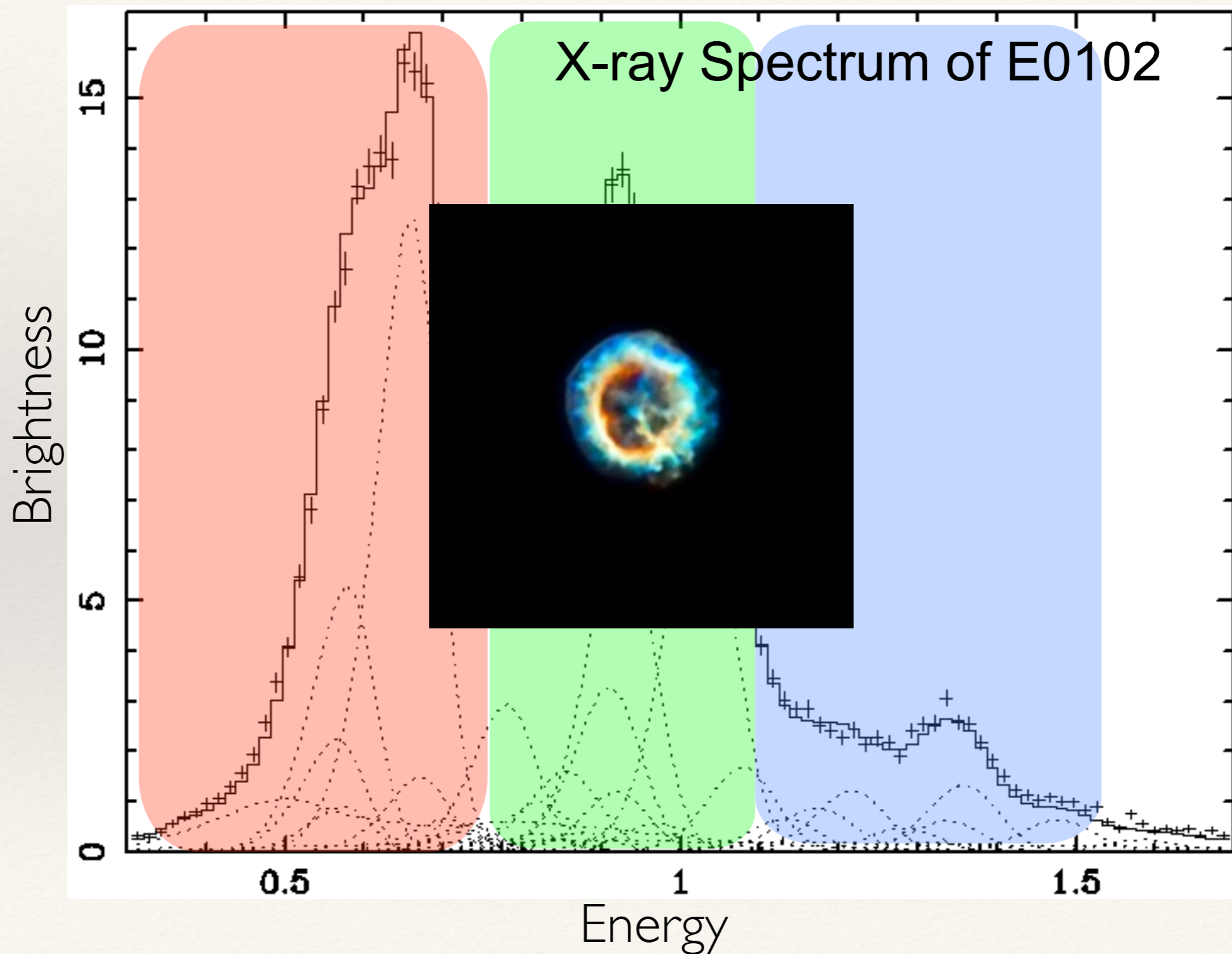
# A Splash of Color



# A Splash of Color



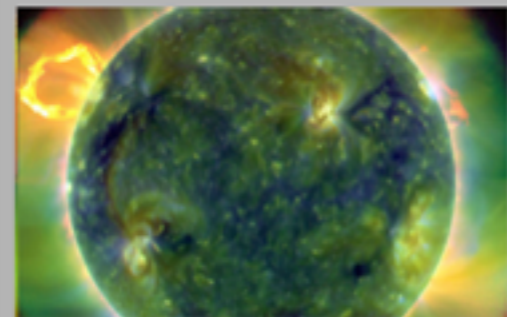
# A Splash of Color



# Aesthetics & Astronomy

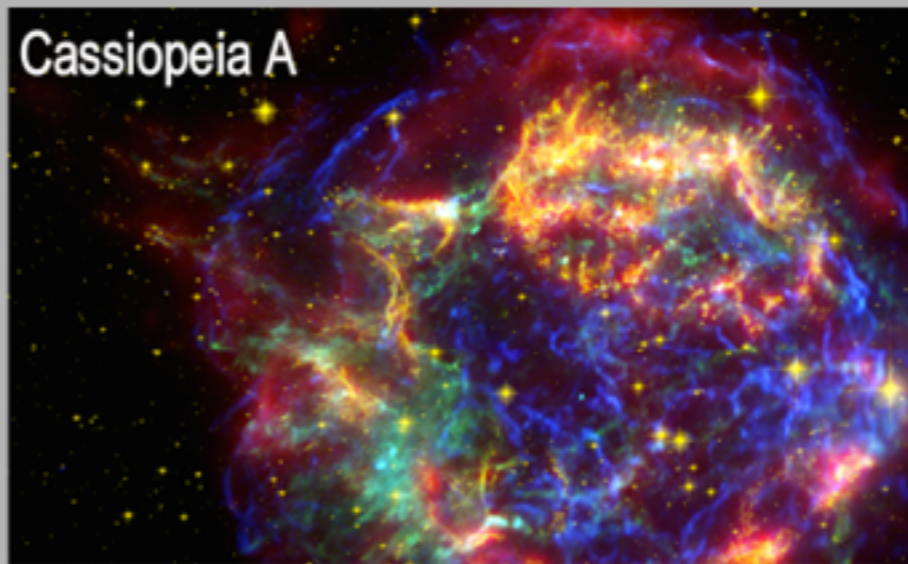


## Home



*Aesthetics from a psychological perspective is the study of all things beautiful whether art or not, and all things art whether beautiful or not.*

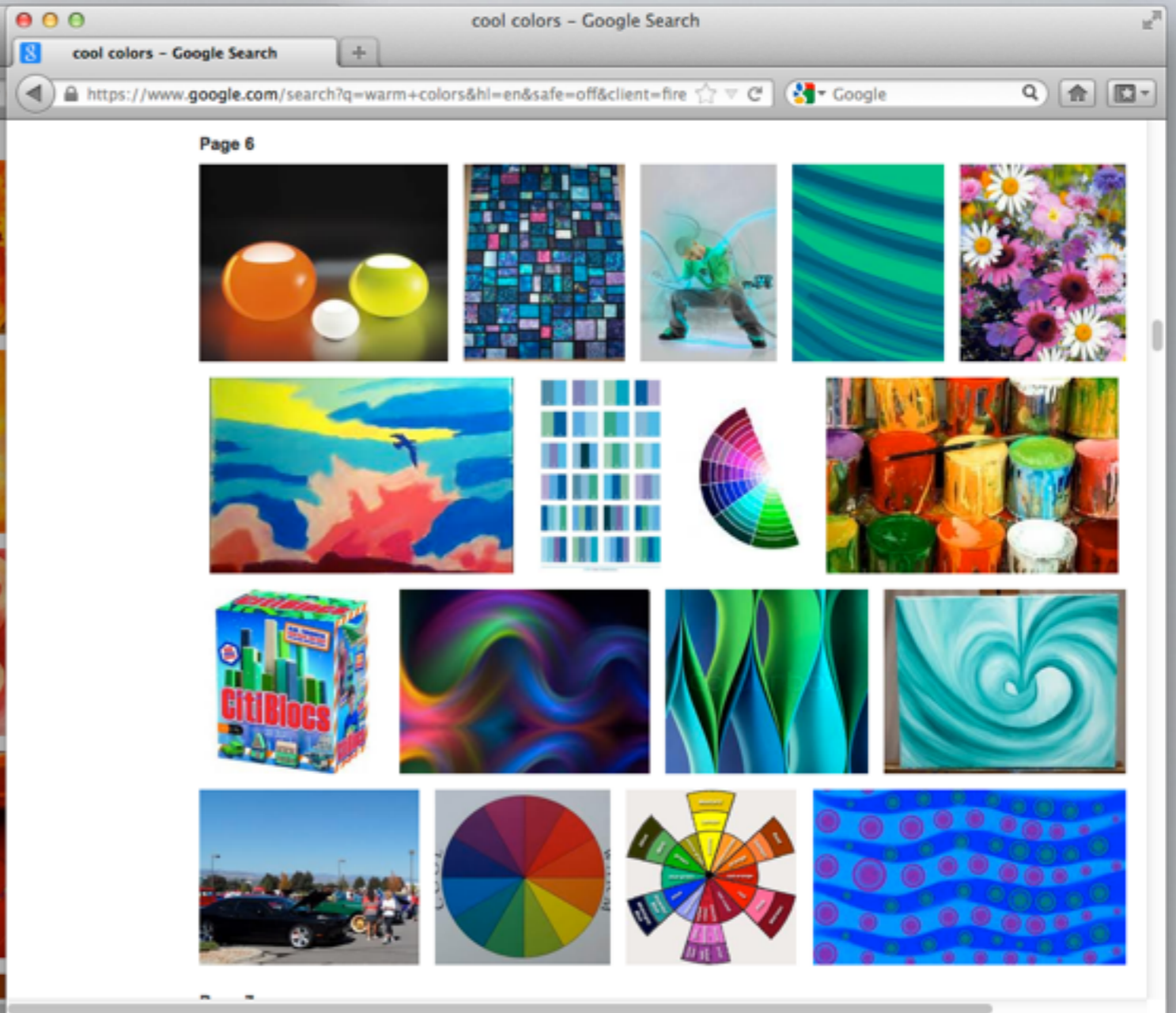
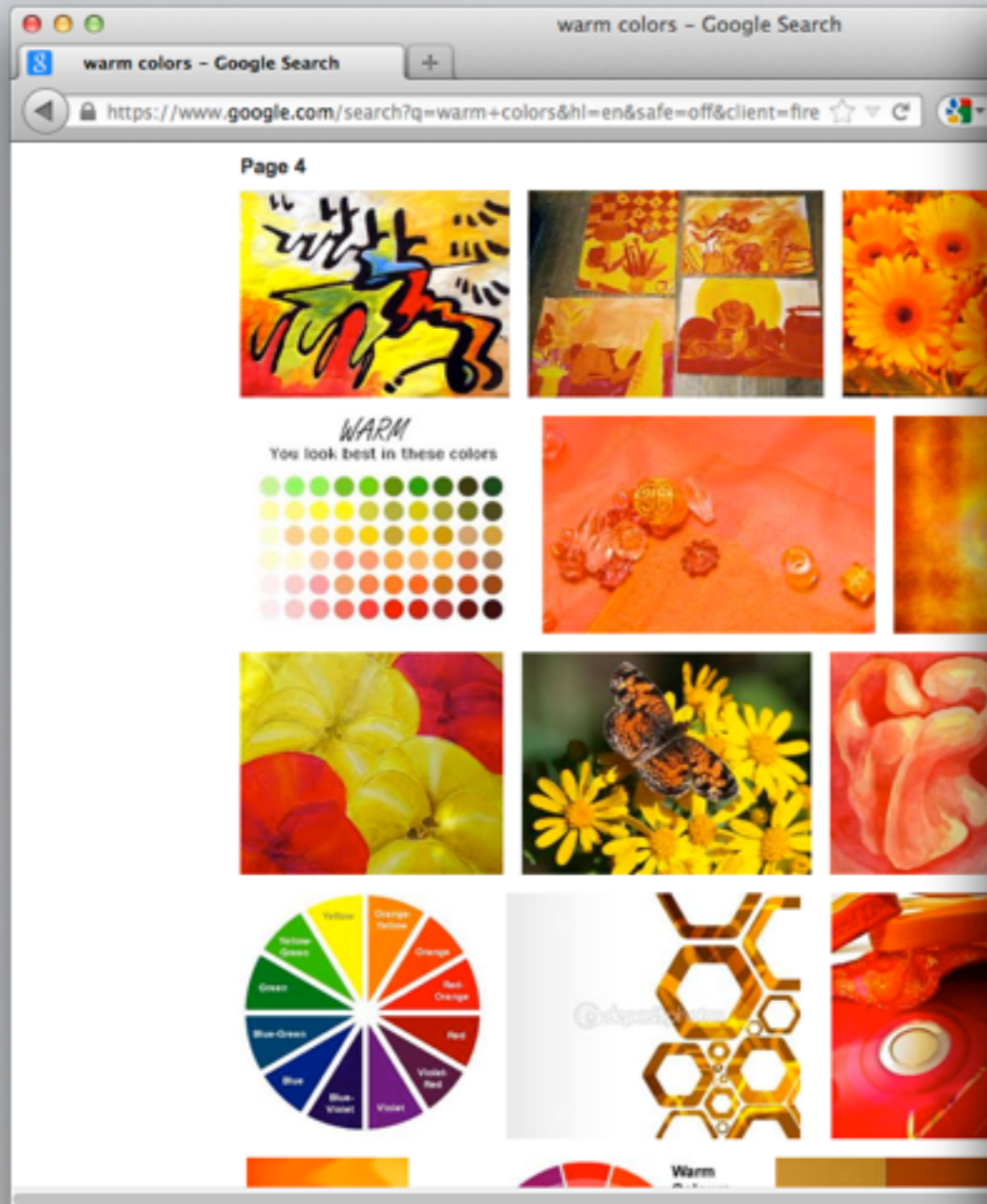
- [Updates from our blog](#)
  - [Latest videos](#)
  - [Latest publications](#)
- [Communicator Workshop](#)
  - [Examples, data, resources](#)
- [Participate](#)



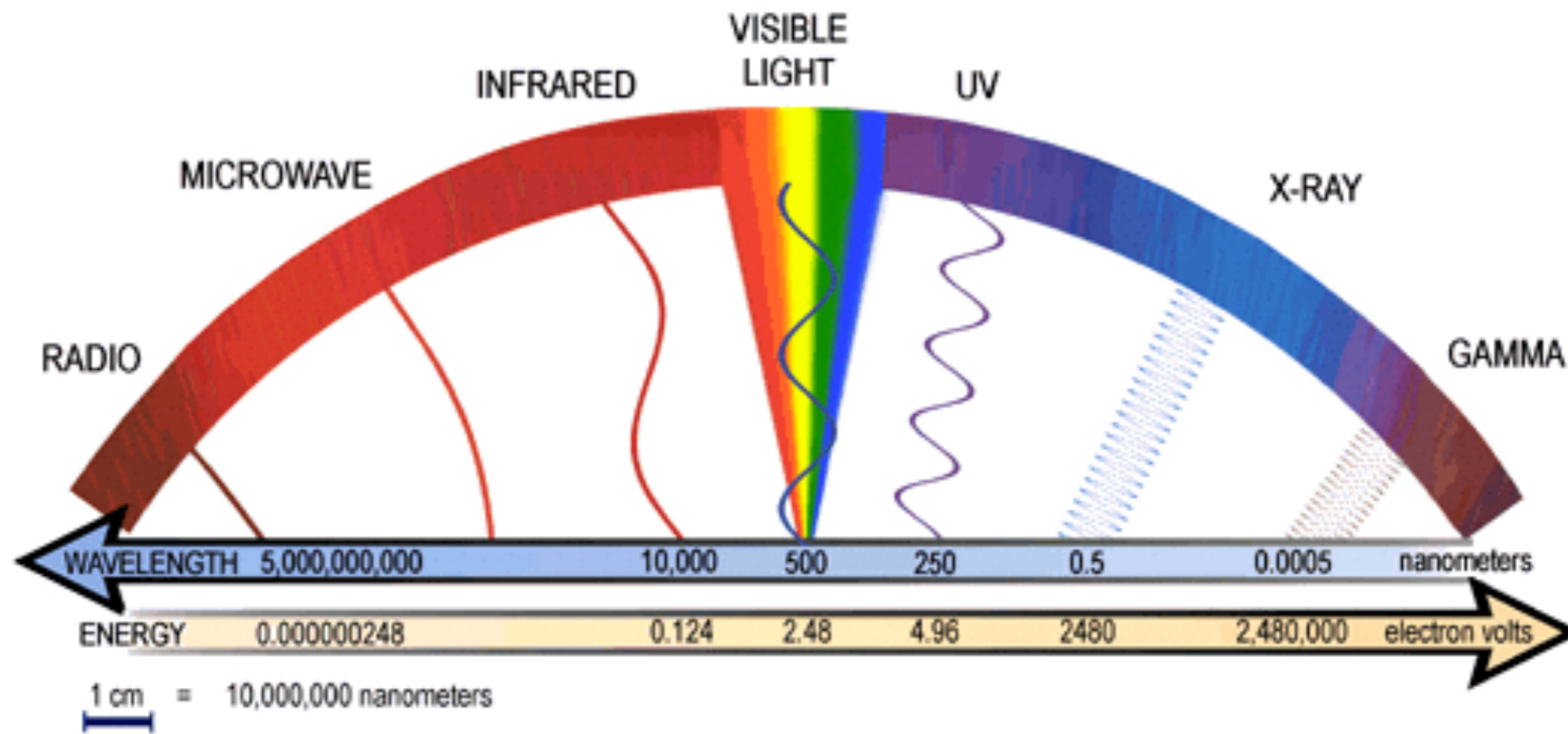
## Studying Perceptions of Astronomy Images

Images of the cosmos provide snapshots of various phases of life and death, different physical phenomena, found in locations across the known Universe. Today, some 400 years after Galileo created his, modern telescopes have enabled us to "see" what the human eye cannot. This new generation of ground- and space-based telescopes has created an explosion of images for experts and non-experts to explore.

The Aesthetics & Astronomy project studies the perception of multi-wavelength astronomical imagery and the effects of the scientific and artistic choices in processing astronomical data. The images come from a variety of space and ground-based observatories, including NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory, Hubble Space Telescope, Spitzer Space Telescope, the Solar Dynamics Observatory, the Very Large Array, and many others. Evaluation of such data will benefit astronomy across the electromagnetic spectrum of

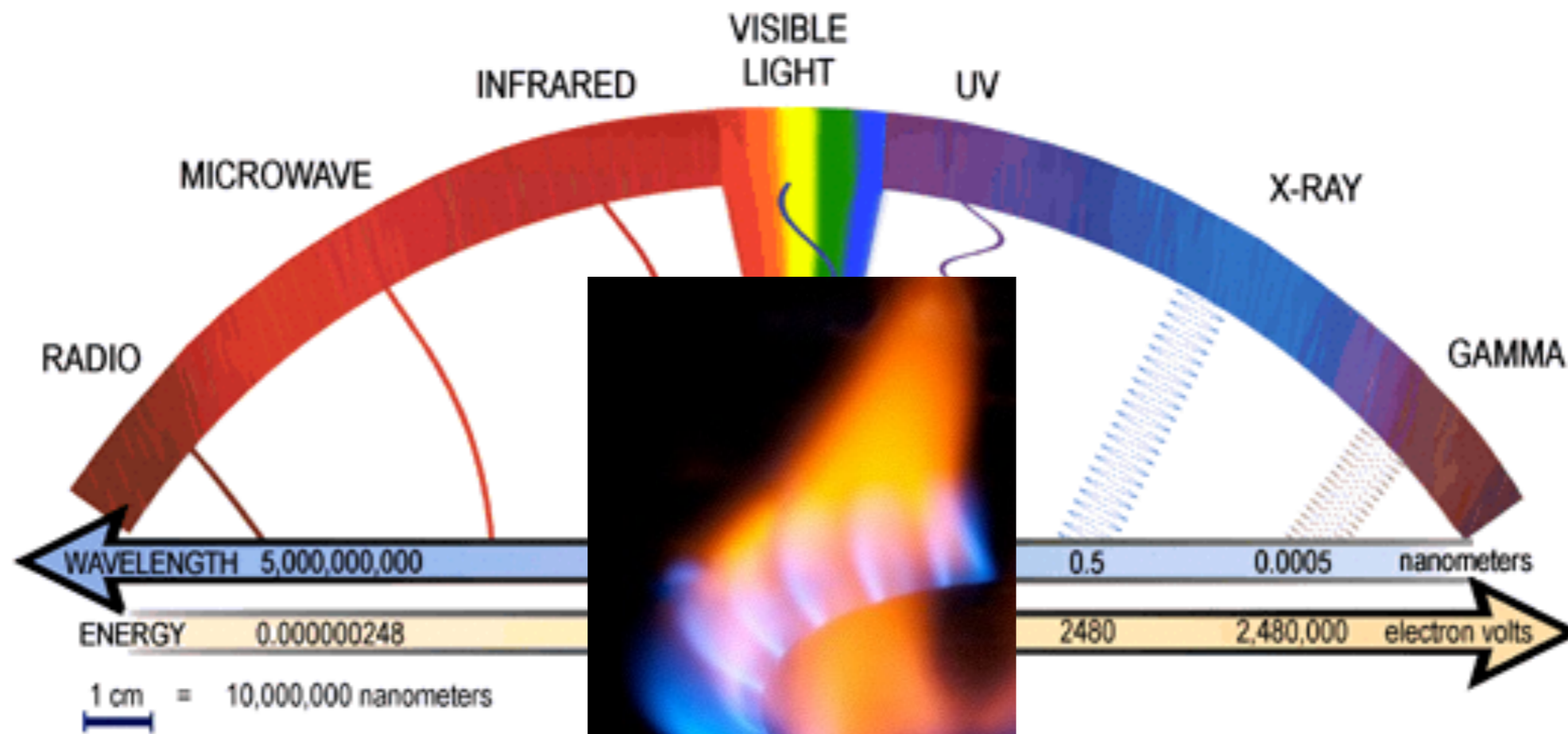


WARM ----- COOL  
COLOR CHOICE



COOL ----- WARM

COLOR CHOICE

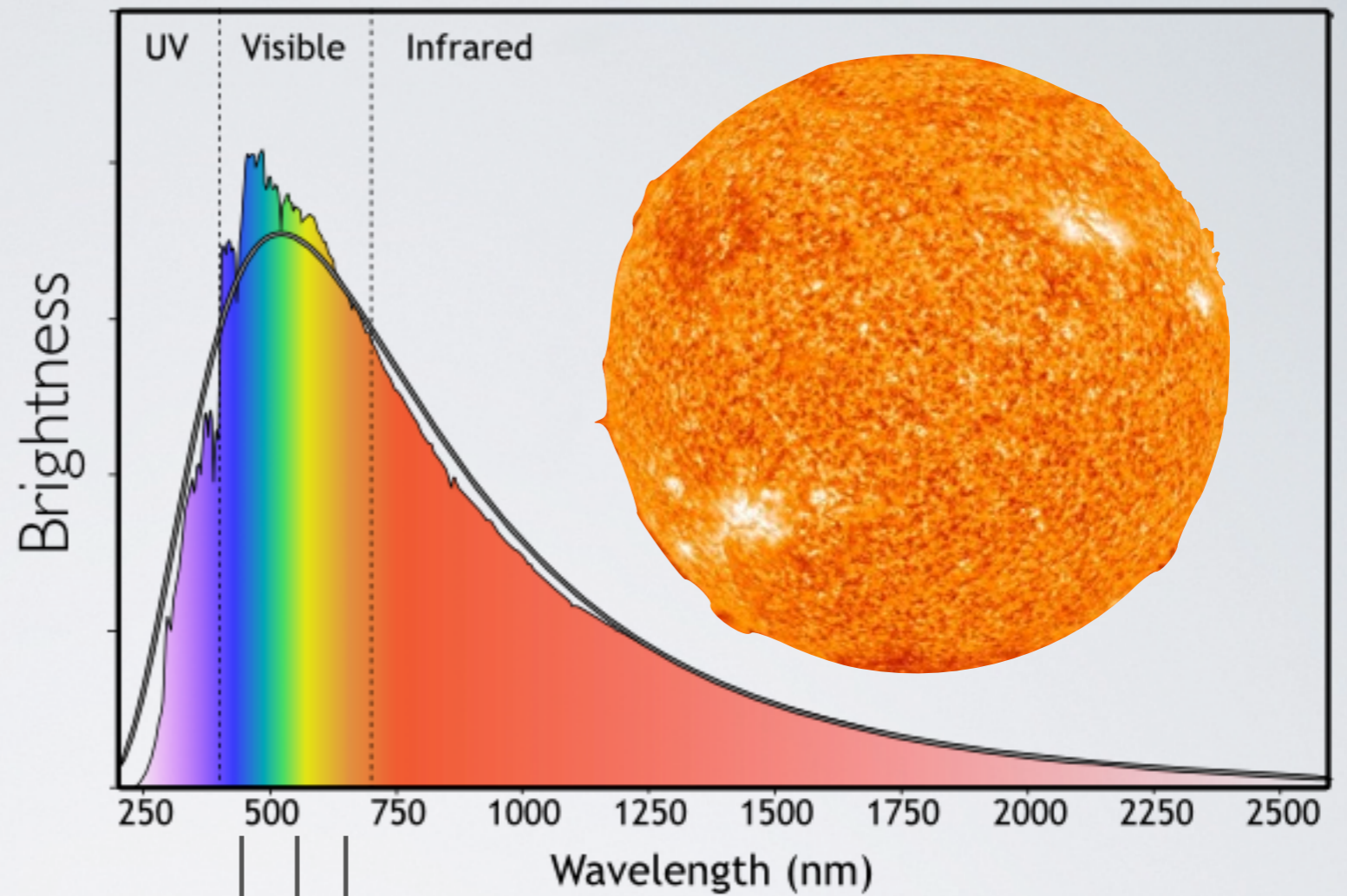


COOL ----- WARM

COLOR CHOICE



It's Biological!



Red = 700 nm

Green = 550 nm

Blue = 440 nm

---

# Core Qualities

---

Photogenic Resolution (Christensen et al, 2014)

$$r_{\text{photo}} = \text{FOV} / \Theta_{\text{effective}}$$

$$\Theta_{\text{diffraction}} = \lambda / D$$

High Signal to Noise

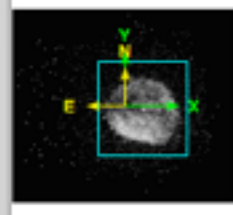
$$\text{SNR} = P_{\text{signal}} / P_{\text{noise}}$$

Clean of Artifacts

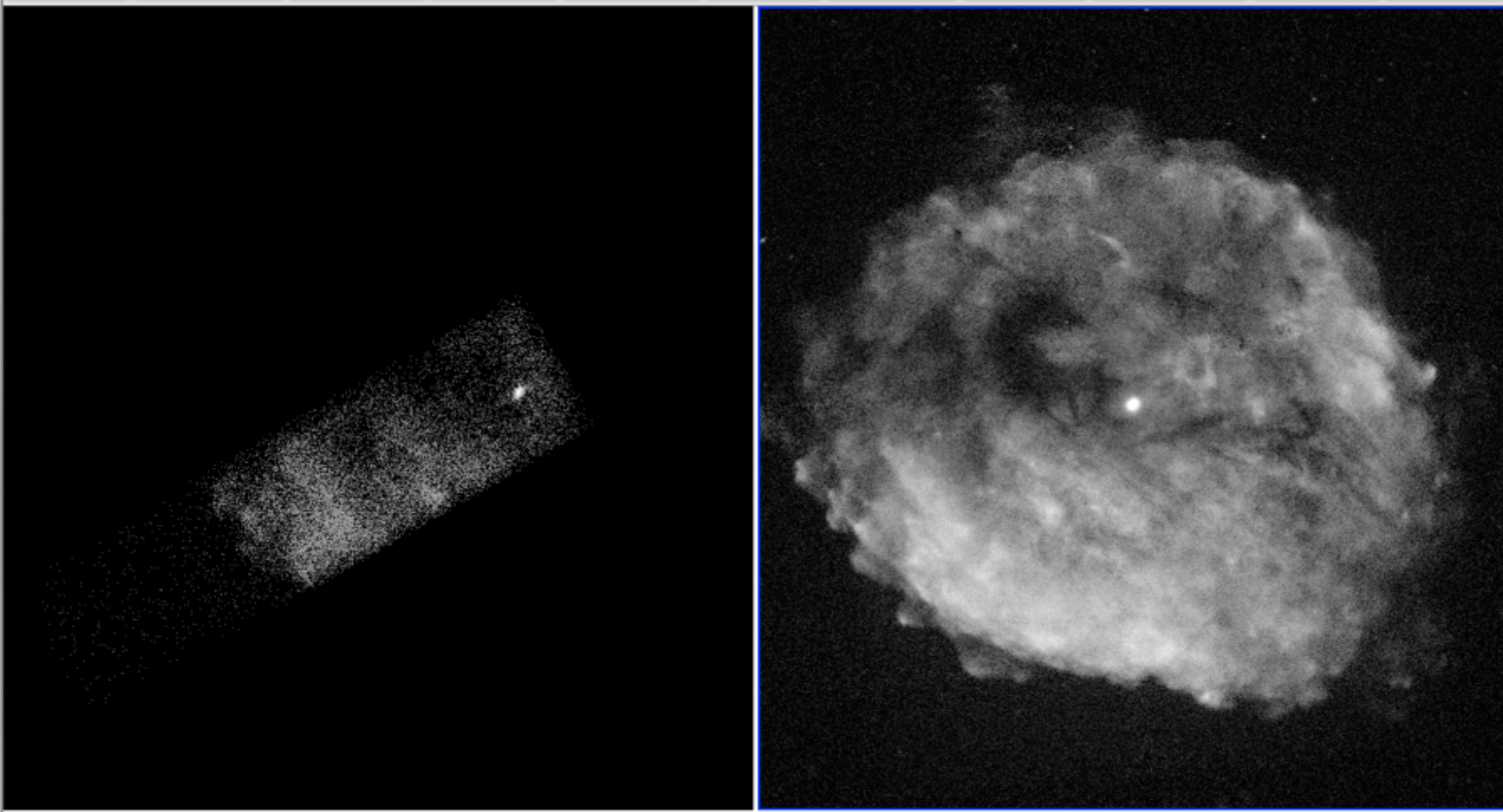
Color / Contrast

Composition

File acisf05595\_repro\_evt2.fits[EVENTS]  
Object RCW103  
Value  
WCS  
Physical X Y  
Image X Y  
Frame 1 Zoom 1.000 Angle 0.000



file edit view **frame** bin zoom scale color region wcs help  
new new rgb delete clear single tile blink first previous next last



1.66e-07 4.98e-07 1.17e-06 2.49e-06 5.16e-06 1.04e-05 2.10e-05 4.22e-05 8.42e-05

# NGC 2207 - an example



# NGC 2207 - an example



---

# Core Processing Concepts

---

Pre-processing

CIAO/IDL  
Python

Image Integration

Image Smoothing (De-noise)

Image Delinearization

High Dynamic Range Processing

Color Choice

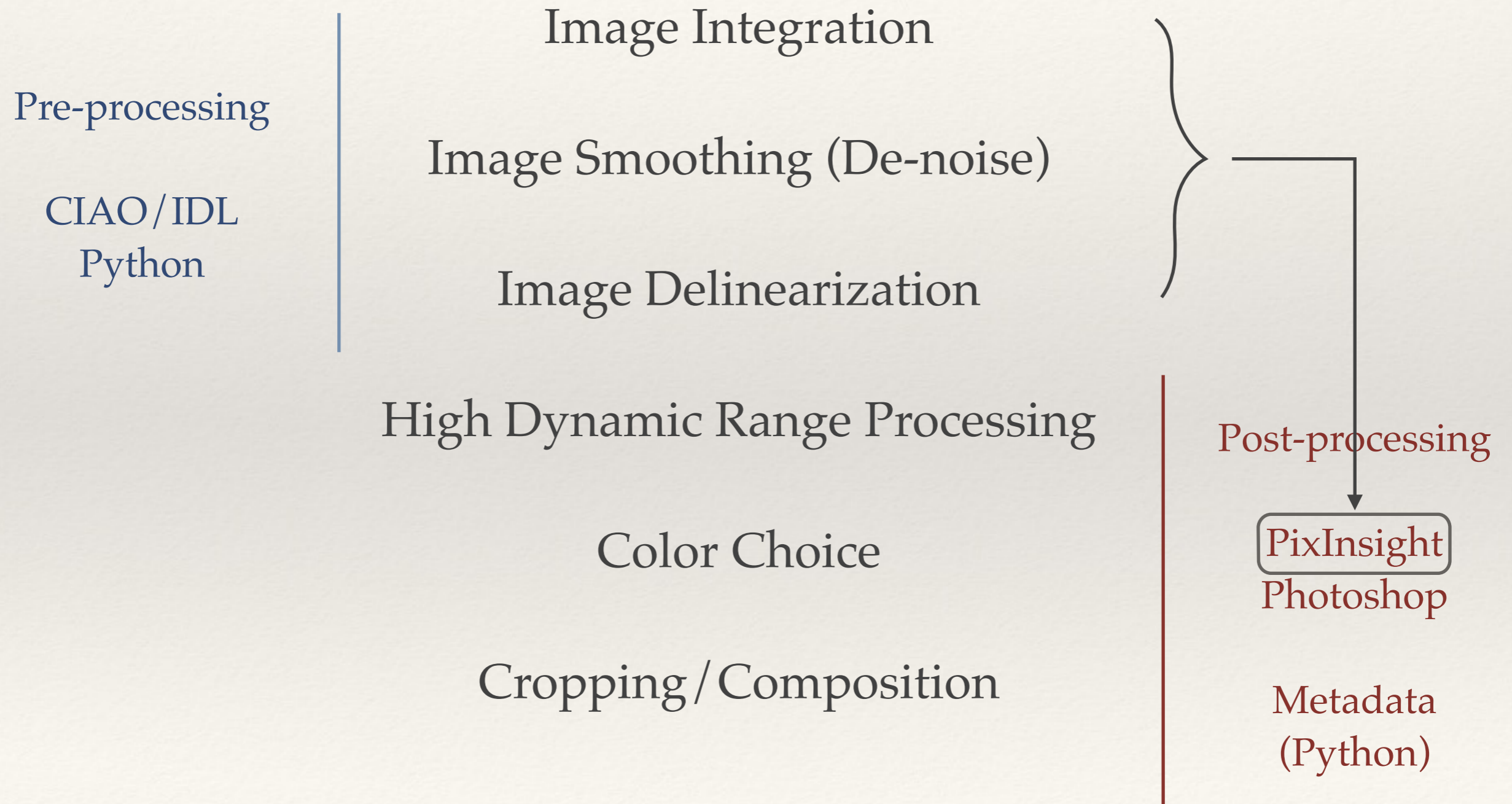
Cropping/Composition

Post-processing

PixInsight  
Photoshop

Metadata  
(Python)

# Core Processing Concepts



---

# Image Smoothing

---

ASMOOTH

Adaptive kernel smoothing

Useful for suppressing noise while preserving real structure  
(signal that is significant at a preset S/N level)

see: <http://arxiv.org/abs/astro-ph/0601306>

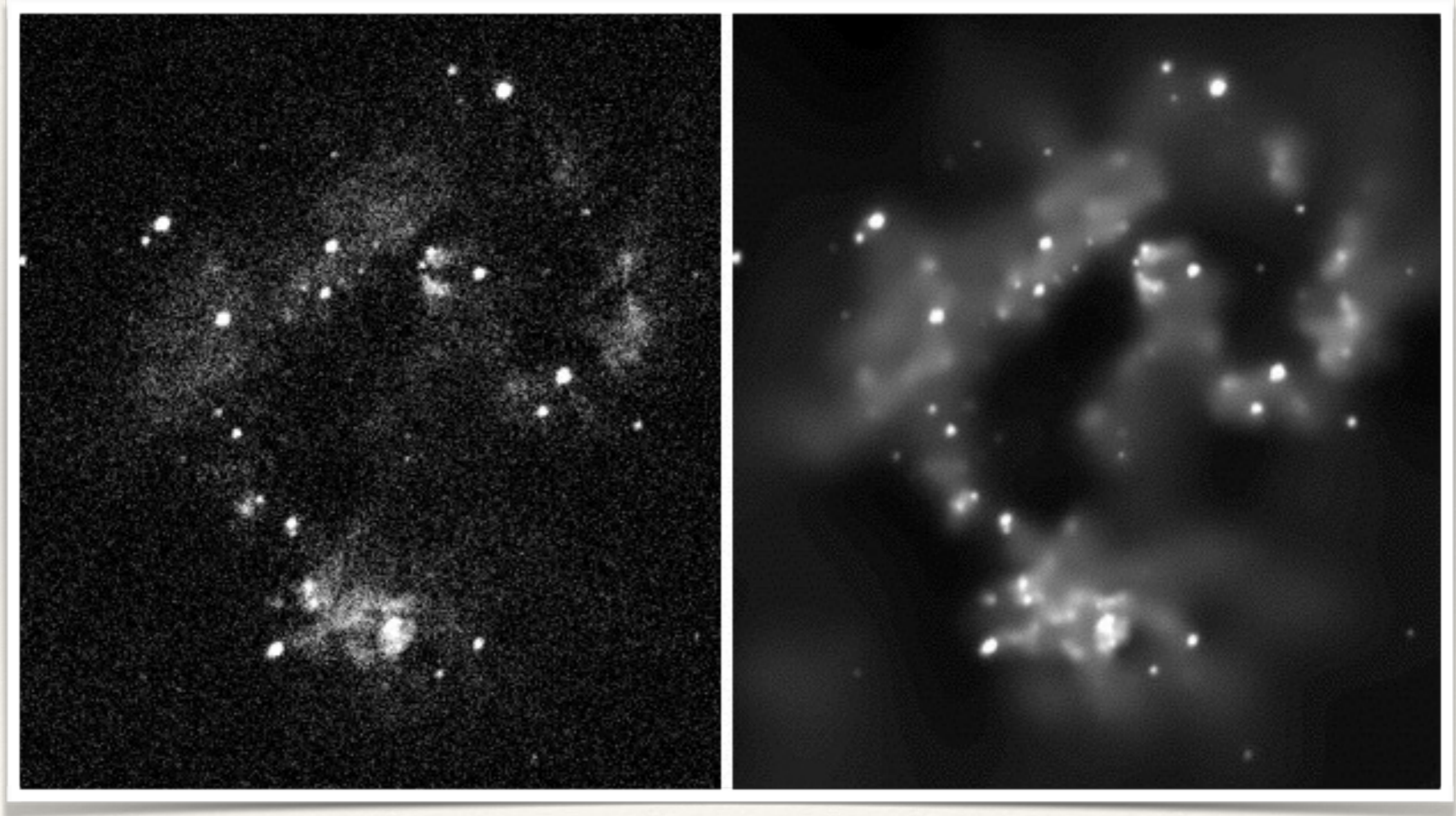


---

# Image Smoothing

---

ASMOOTH



---

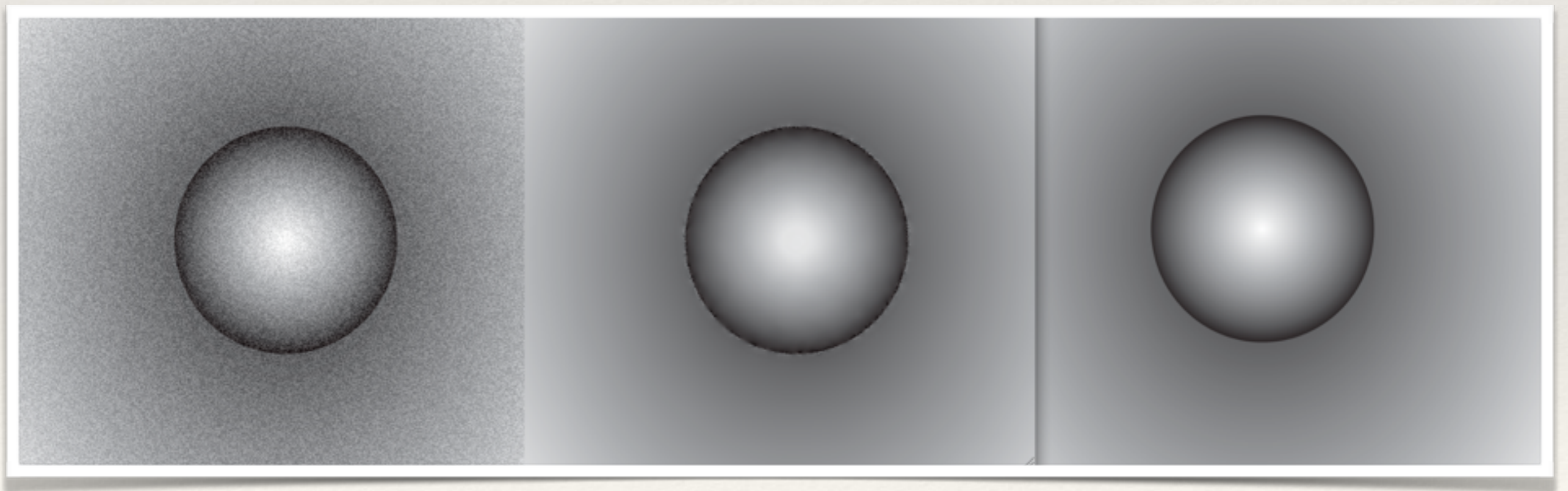
# Image Smoothing

---

GREYCstoration

anisotropic smoothing using curvature-preserving PDEs

see: [https://tschumperle.users.greyc.fr/publications/tschumperle\\_ijcv06.pdf](https://tschumperle.users.greyc.fr/publications/tschumperle_ijcv06.pdf)



---

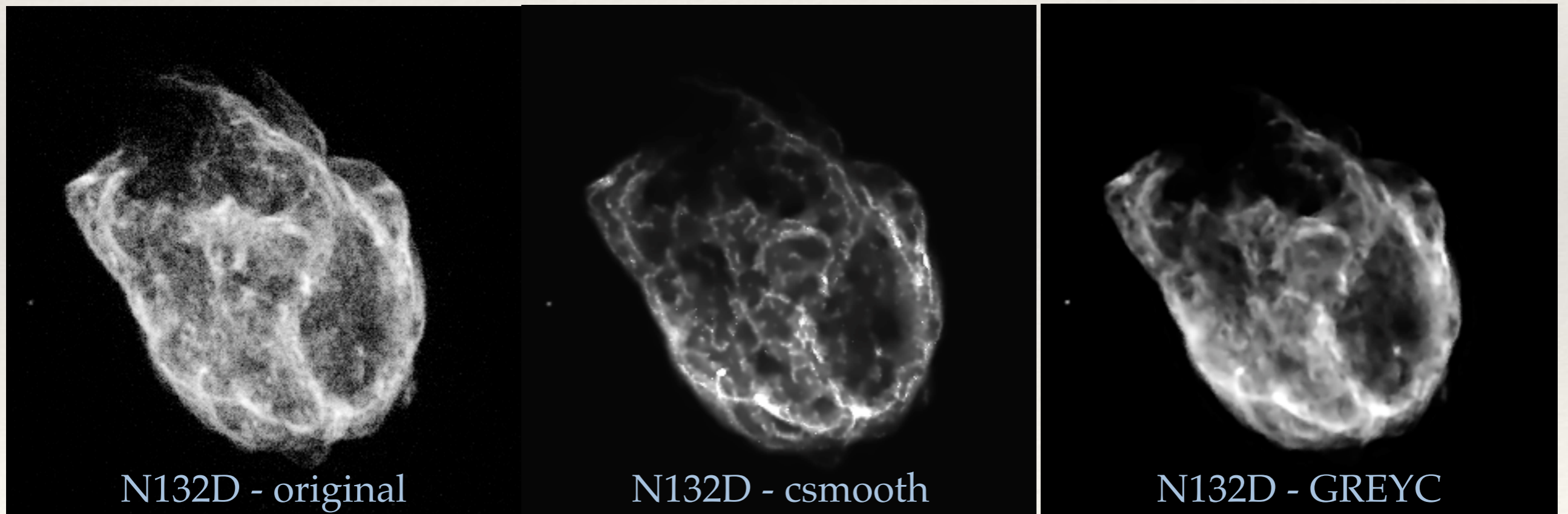
# Image Smoothing

---

GREYCstoration

anisotropic smoothing using curvature-preserving PDEs

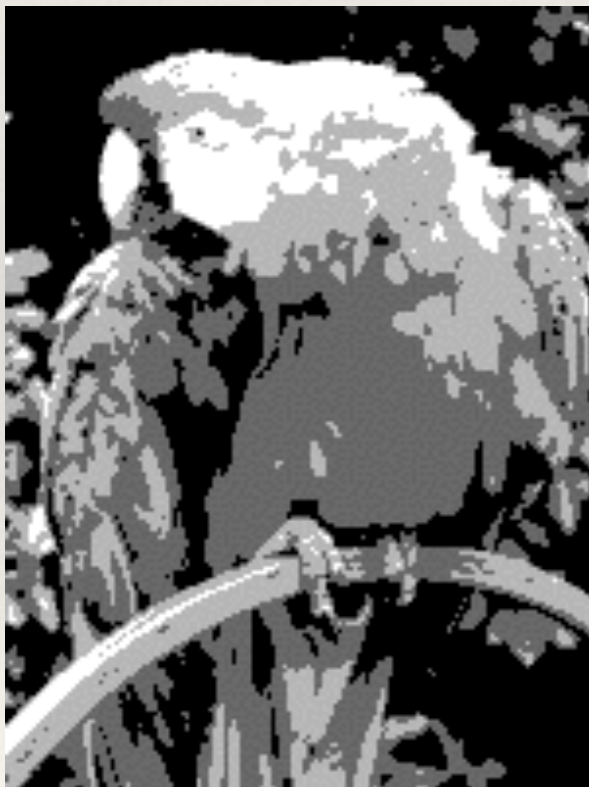
see: [https://tschumperle.users.greyc.fr/publications/tschumperle\\_ijcv06.pdf](https://tschumperle.users.greyc.fr/publications/tschumperle_ijcv06.pdf)



# Intensity Scaling & Bit Values

bits work in powers of 2

A 2-bit grayscale image has  $2^2$  possible values of gray



2-bit

$$2 * 2 = 4$$

00, 01, 10, 11

8-bit?  $2^8 = 256$  possible values

16-bit?  $2^{16} = 65,536$  possible values



8-bit

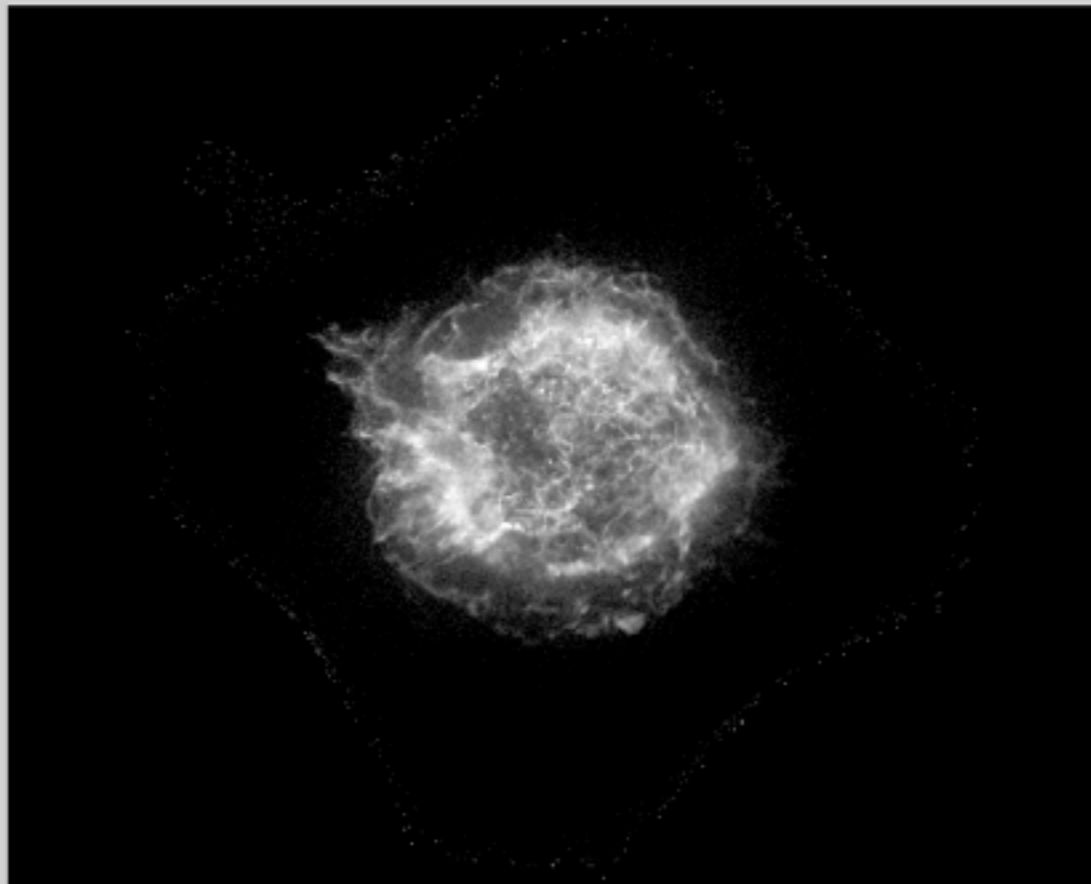
---

# Intensity Scaling & HDR

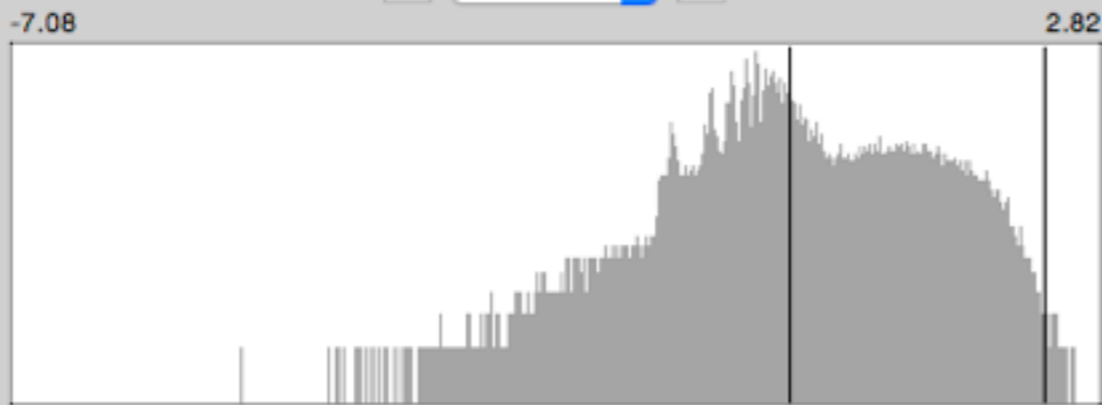
---

FITS Liberator

PixInsight



- 11.84 % +



Black Level 0.00

White Level 2.33

Image 1, Plane 1

Image size

Width: 3107 px Height: 3066 px

Image data

X: 3107 px RA: 350.66  
 Y: 456 px Dec: 58.74  
 Input: 2.88e-08 Stretched 0.00

Image statistics

	Input	Stretched
Min	0.00	-7.08
Max	1.54e-05	2.82
Mean	9.00e-08	1.36e-01
Median	1.54e-11	-5.68e-02
STDEV	3.29e-07	8.86e-01

Scaling and stretch (Advanced)

Stretch function Log(x)

Background level 2.88e-08

Peak level 2.34e-06

Scaled Peak level 100.00

Auto Scaling

Apply

Channels

- 8 bit
- 16 bit
- 32 bit

Undefined values

- Black
- Transparent

Open...

Save As...

Save & Edit...

Preferences...

About

Reset

- Preview
- Flip image
- Freeze settings

Mark pixels in preview:

- Undefined (red)
- White clipping (green)
- Black clipping (blue)

Show image information for:

- Stretched
- Scaled



---

# Intensity Scaling & HDR

---

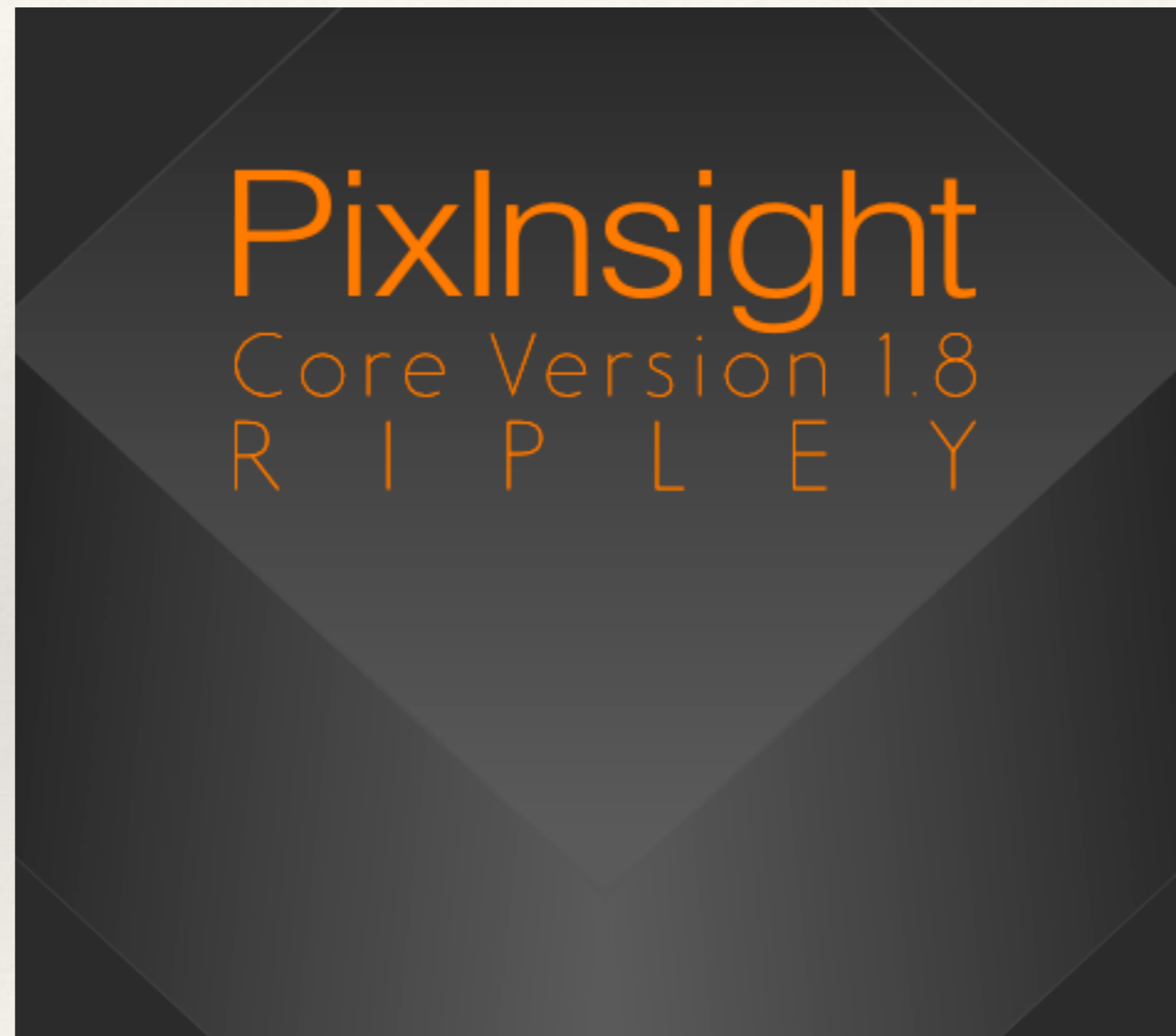
~~FITS~~ Liberator

PixInsight

---

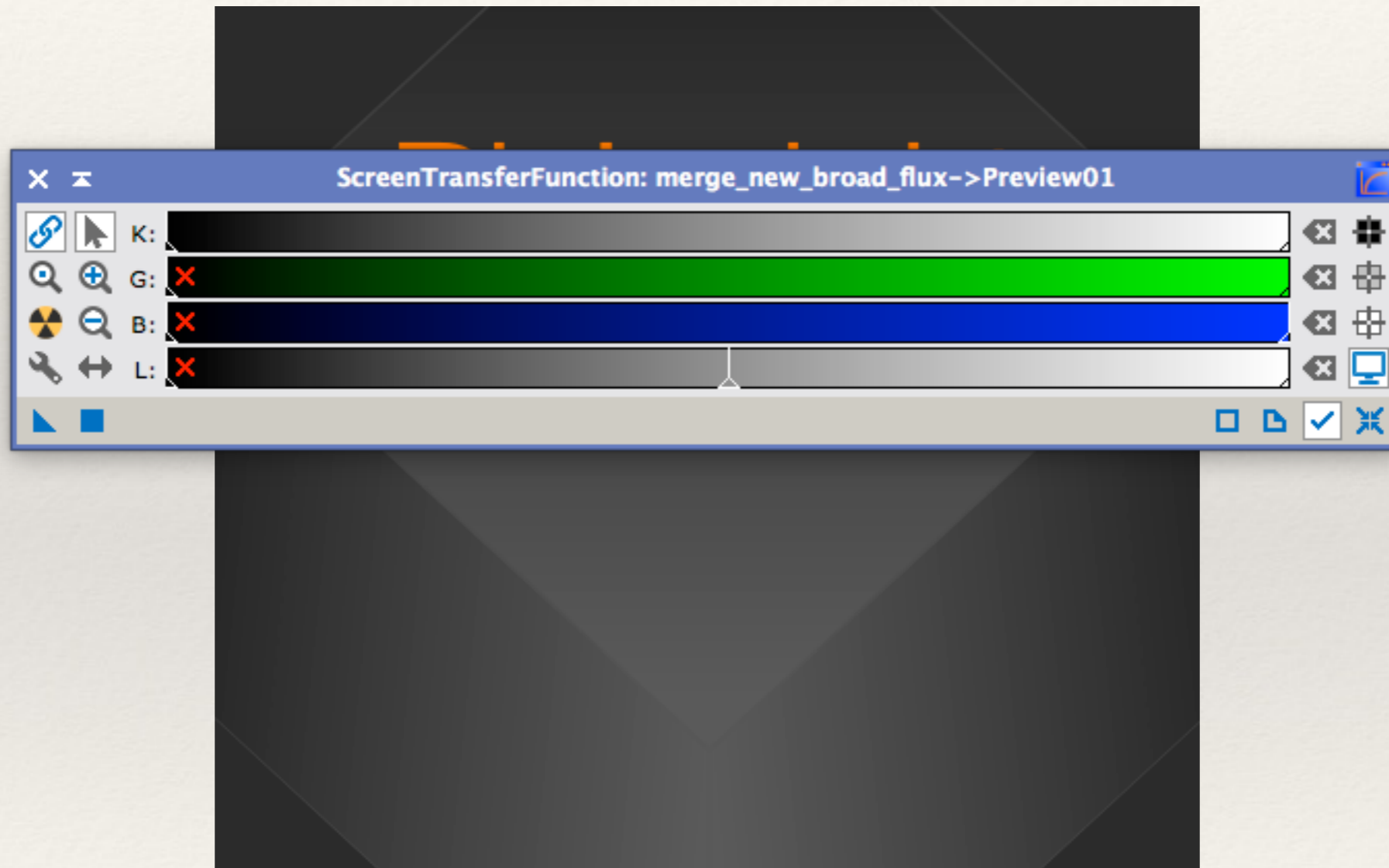
# Intensity Scaling & HDR

---



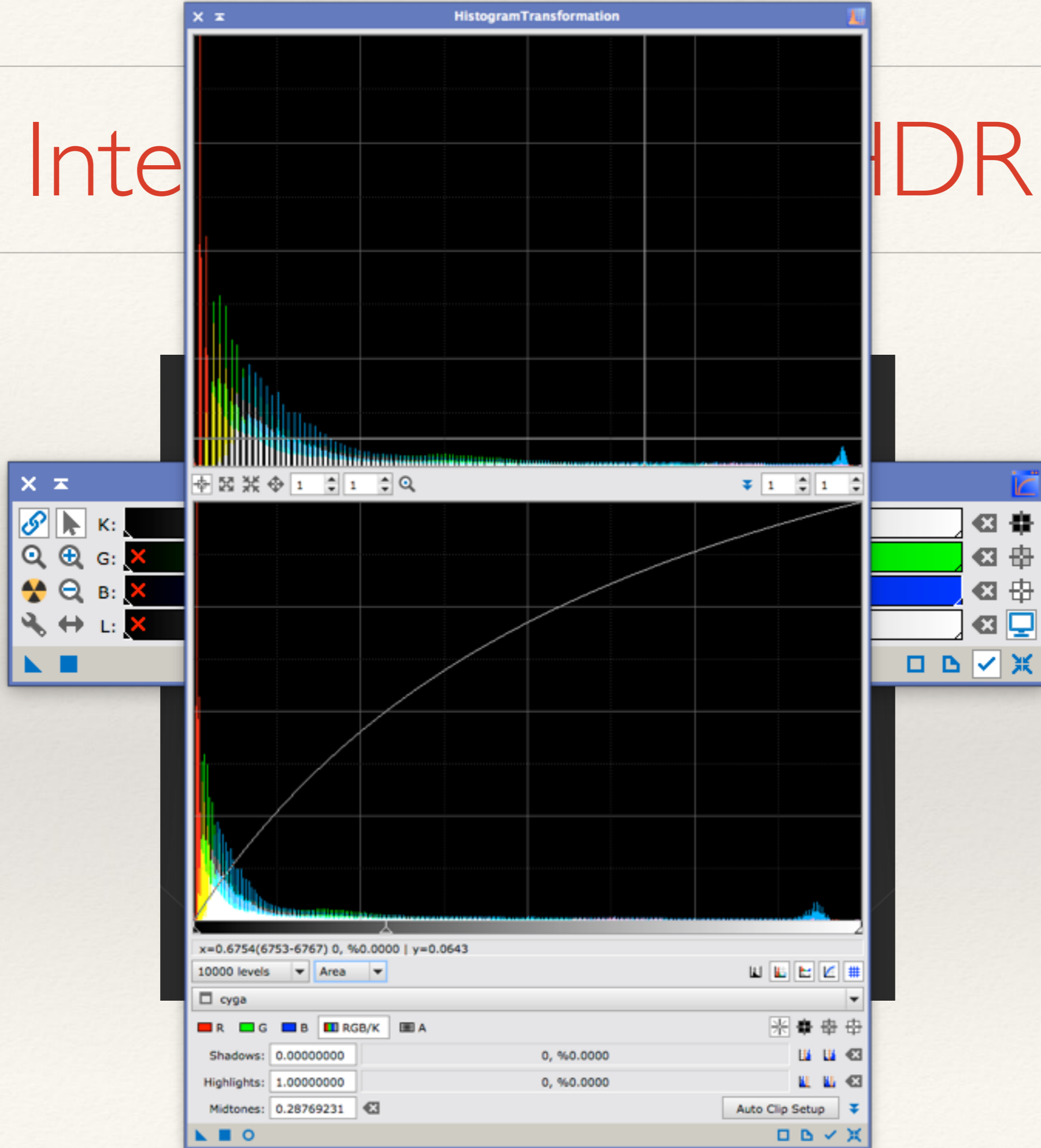


# Intensity Scaling & HDR



Inte

HDR



---

# High Dynamic Range

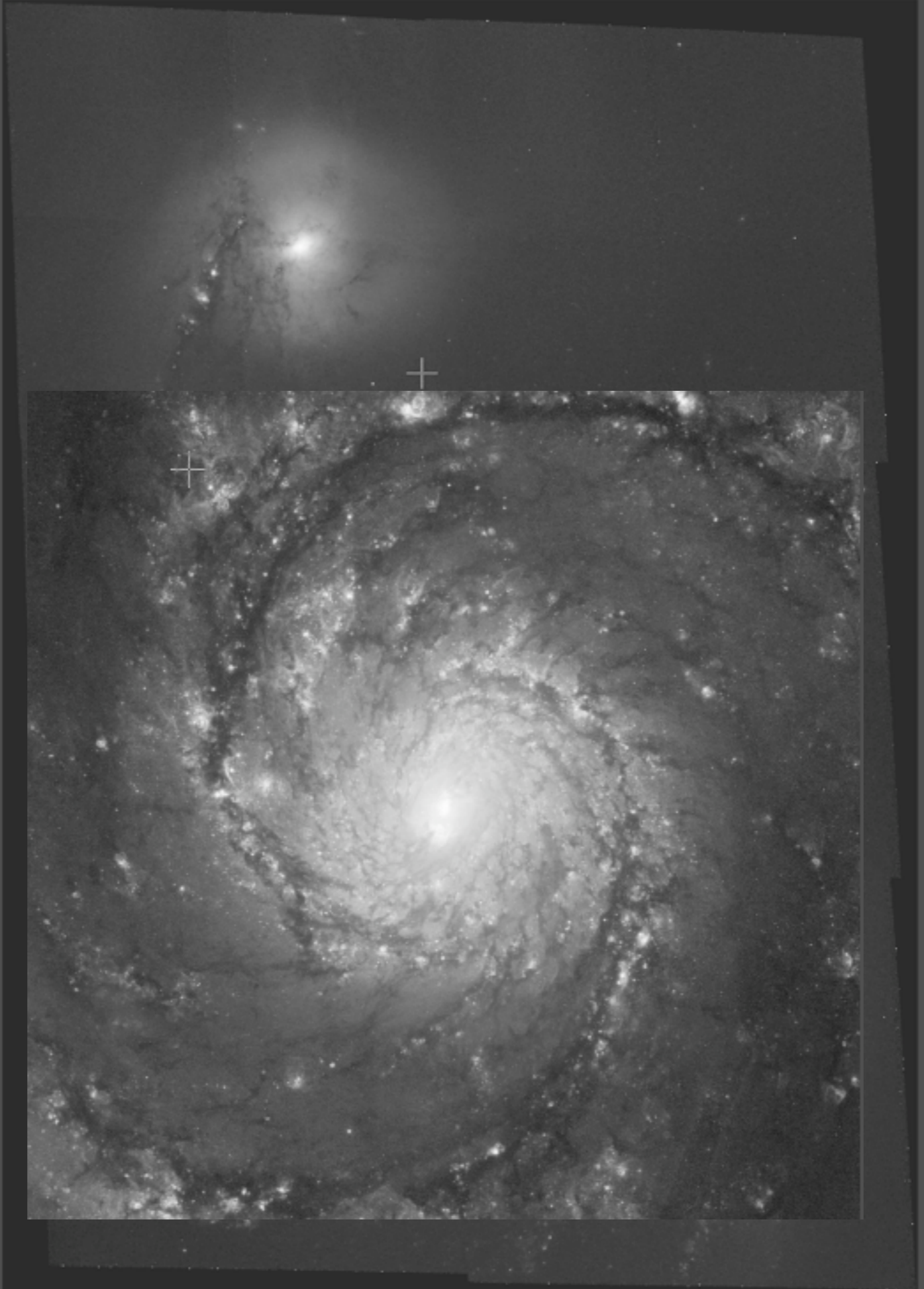
---

PixInsight's wavlet based approach

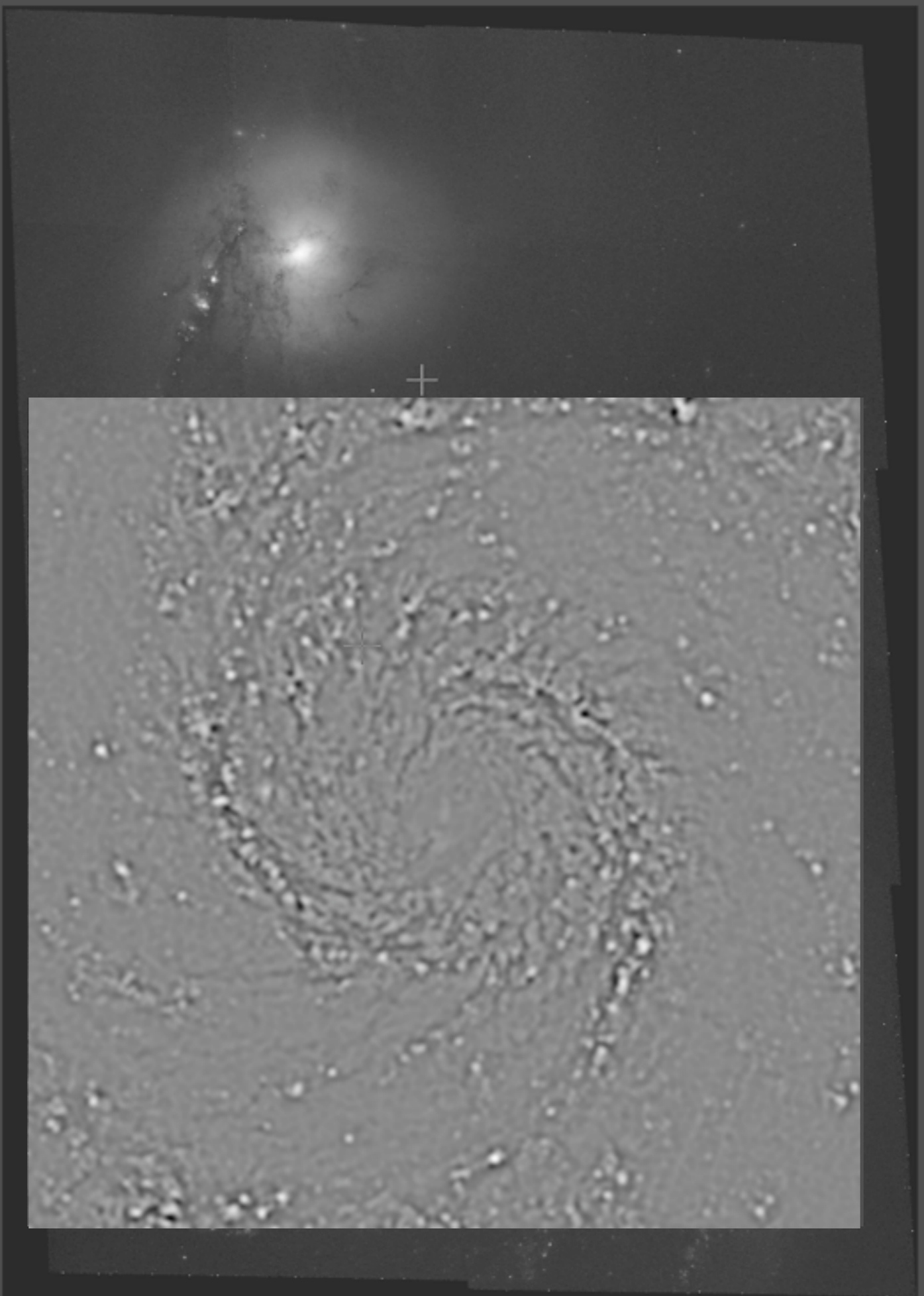
HST\_heritage\_hst\_acs\_wfc\_m51\_f658n\_v1\_drz\_scl



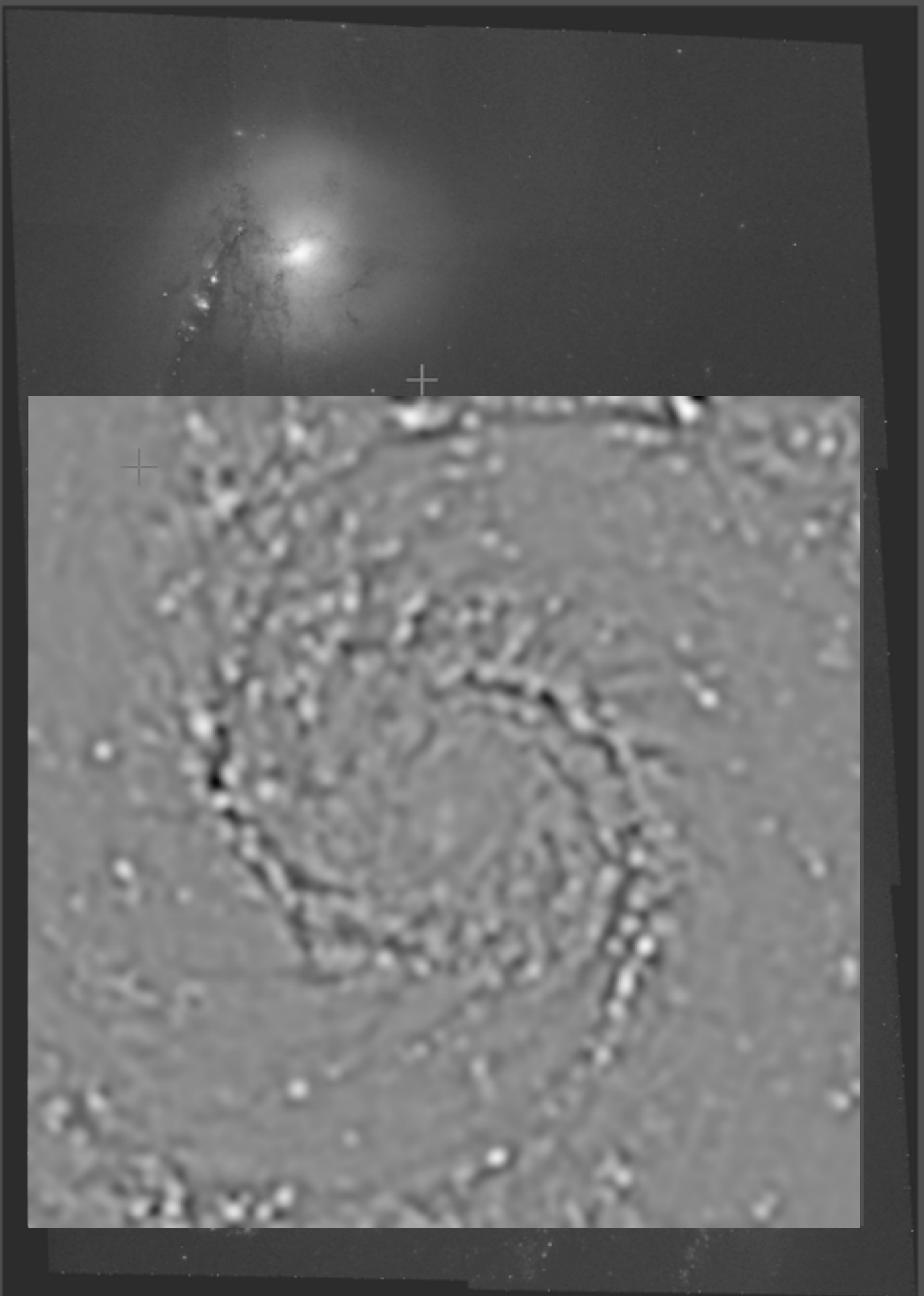
HST\_heritage\_hst\_acs\_wfc\_m51\_f658n\_v1\_drz\_scl



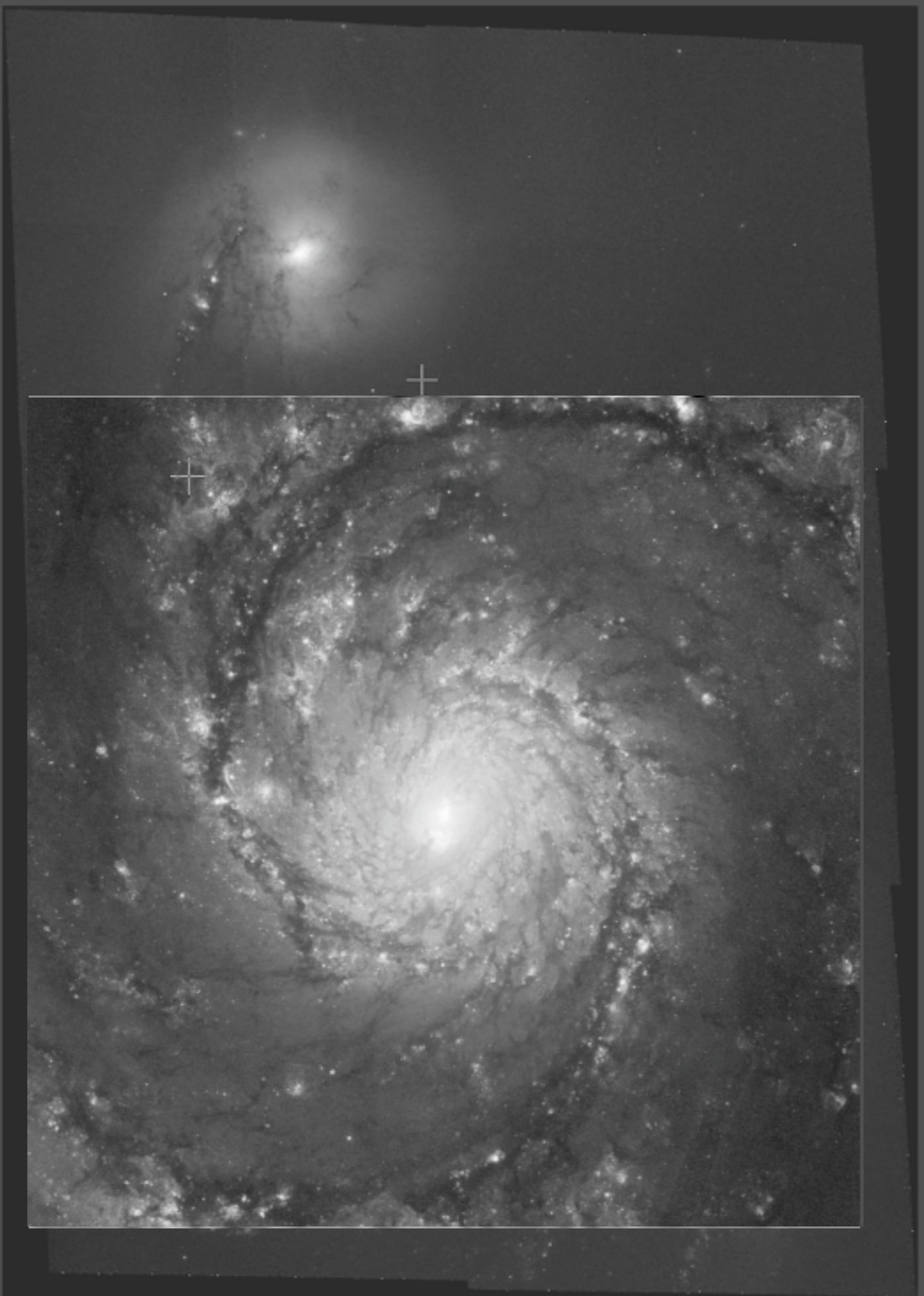
HST\_heritage\_hst\_acs\_wfc\_m51\_f658n\_v1\_drz\_scl



HST\_heritage\_hst\_acs\_wfc\_m51\_f658n\_v1\_drz\_scl

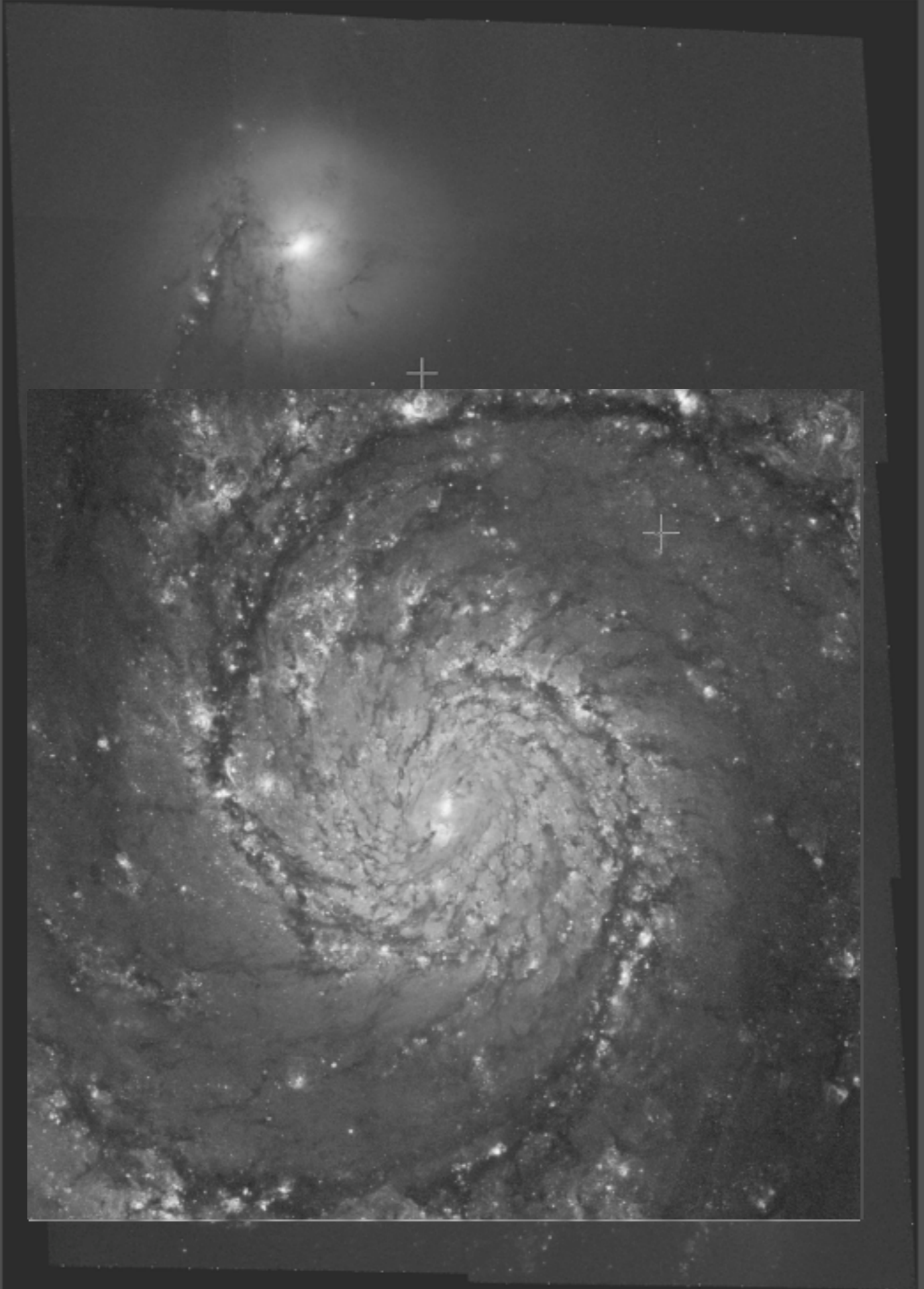


HST\_heritage\_hst\_acs\_wfc\_m51\_f658n\_v1\_drz\_scl

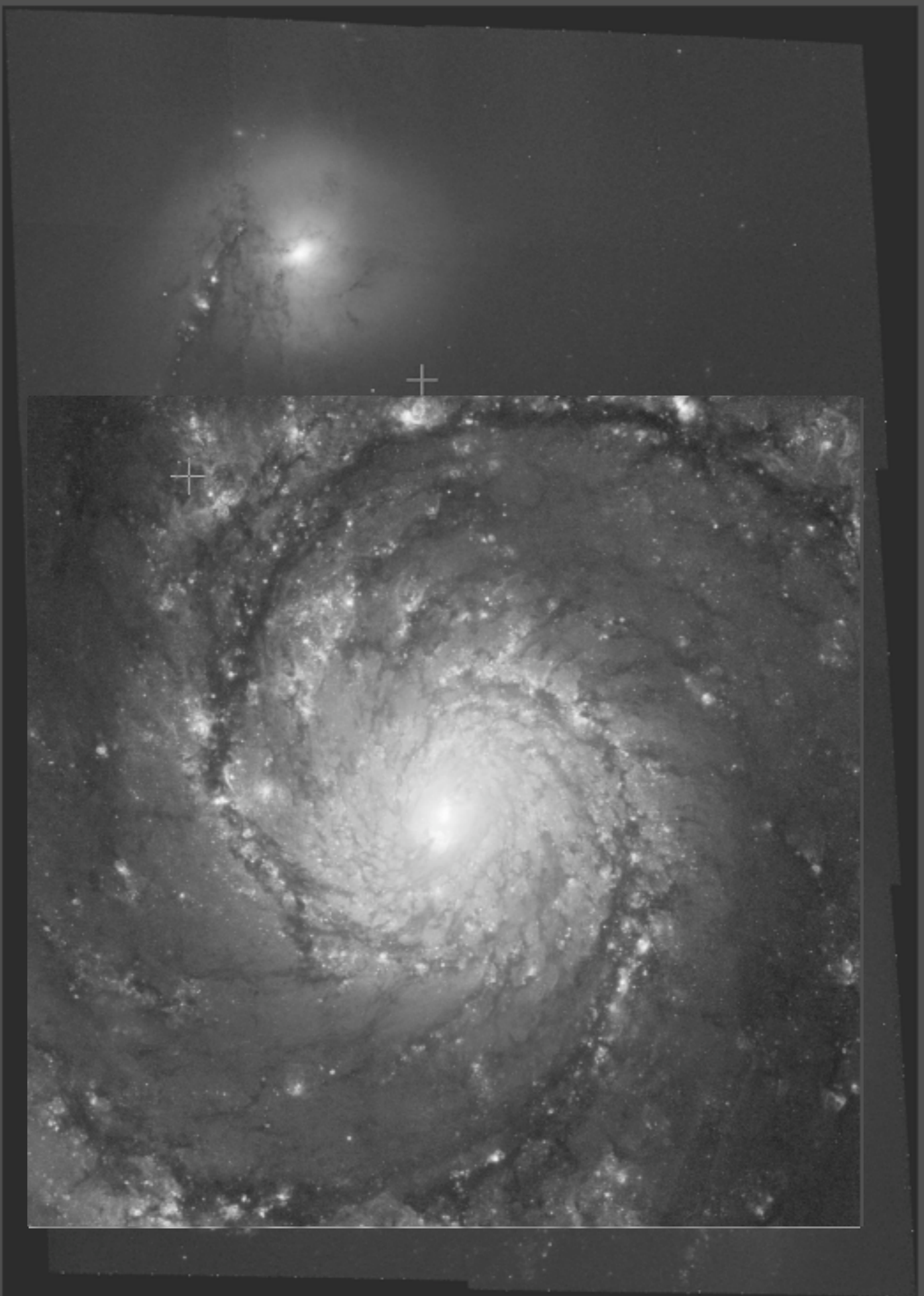




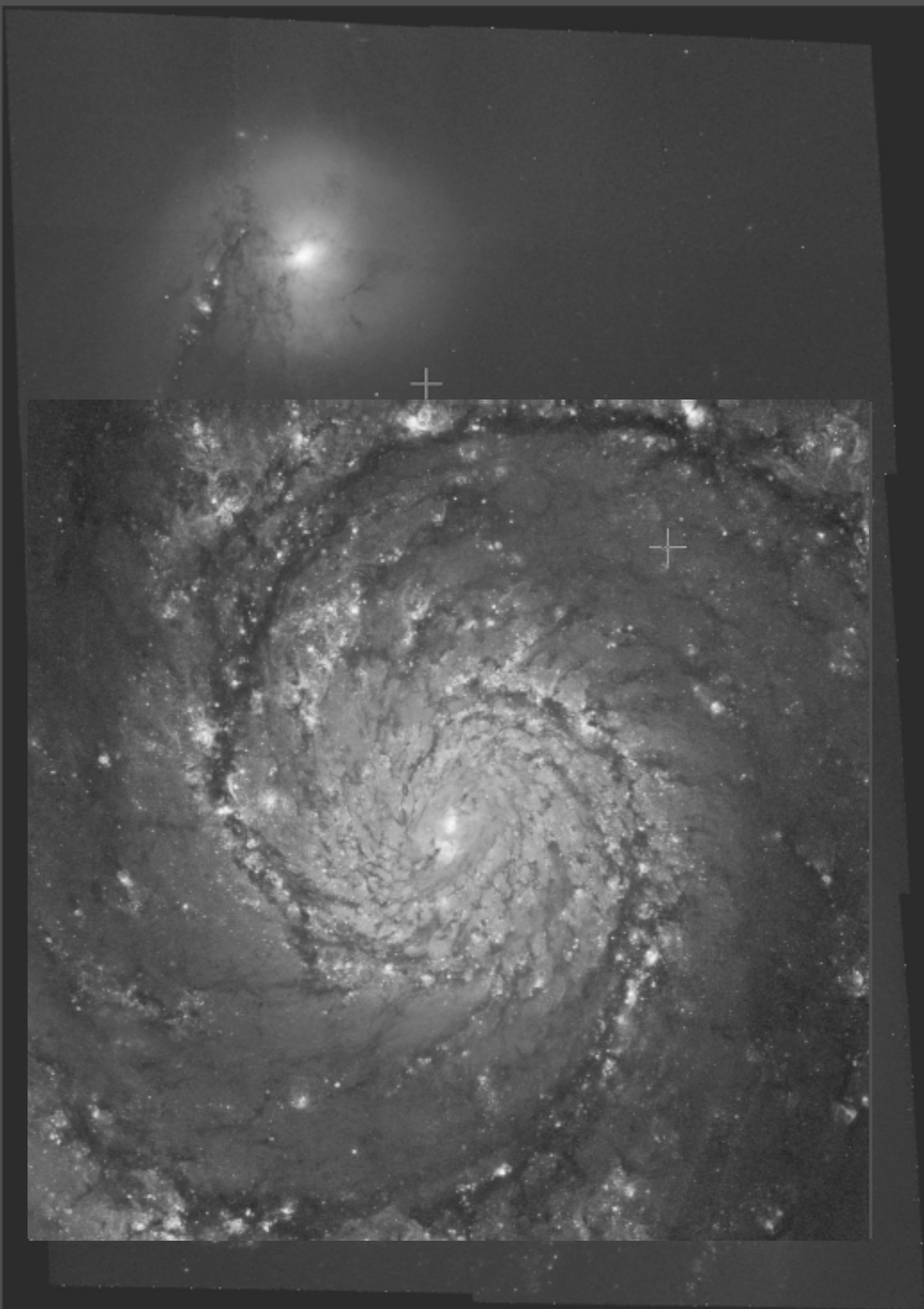
HST\_heritage\_hst\_acs\_wfc\_m51\_f658n\_v1\_drz\_scl



HST\_heritage\_hst\_acs\_wfc\_m51\_f658n\_v1\_drz\_scl

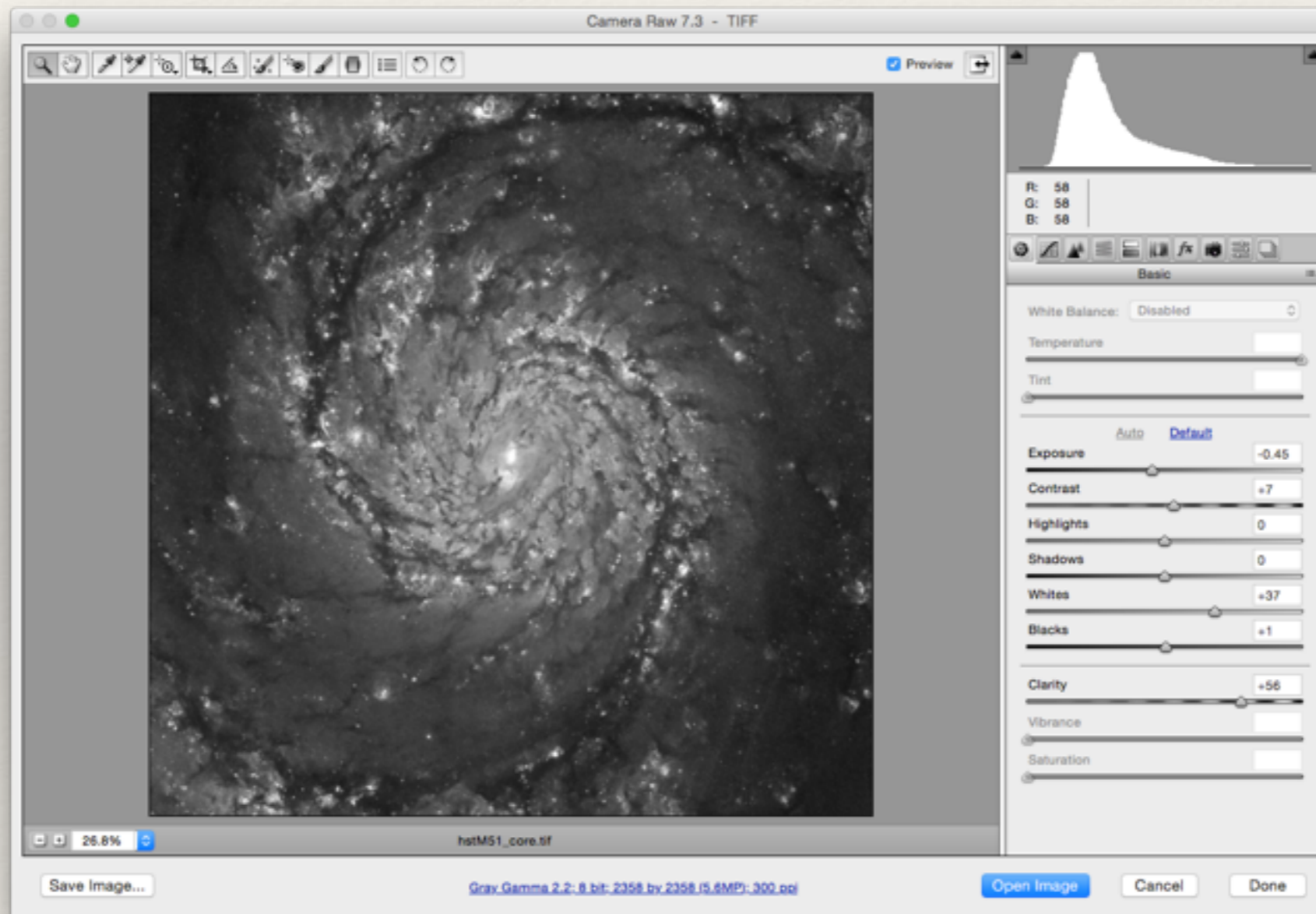


HST\_heritage\_hst\_acs\_wfc\_m51\_f658n\_v1\_drz\_scl



# High Dynamic Range

Photoshop's open as Camera Raw "Trick"  
and HDR Toning tool

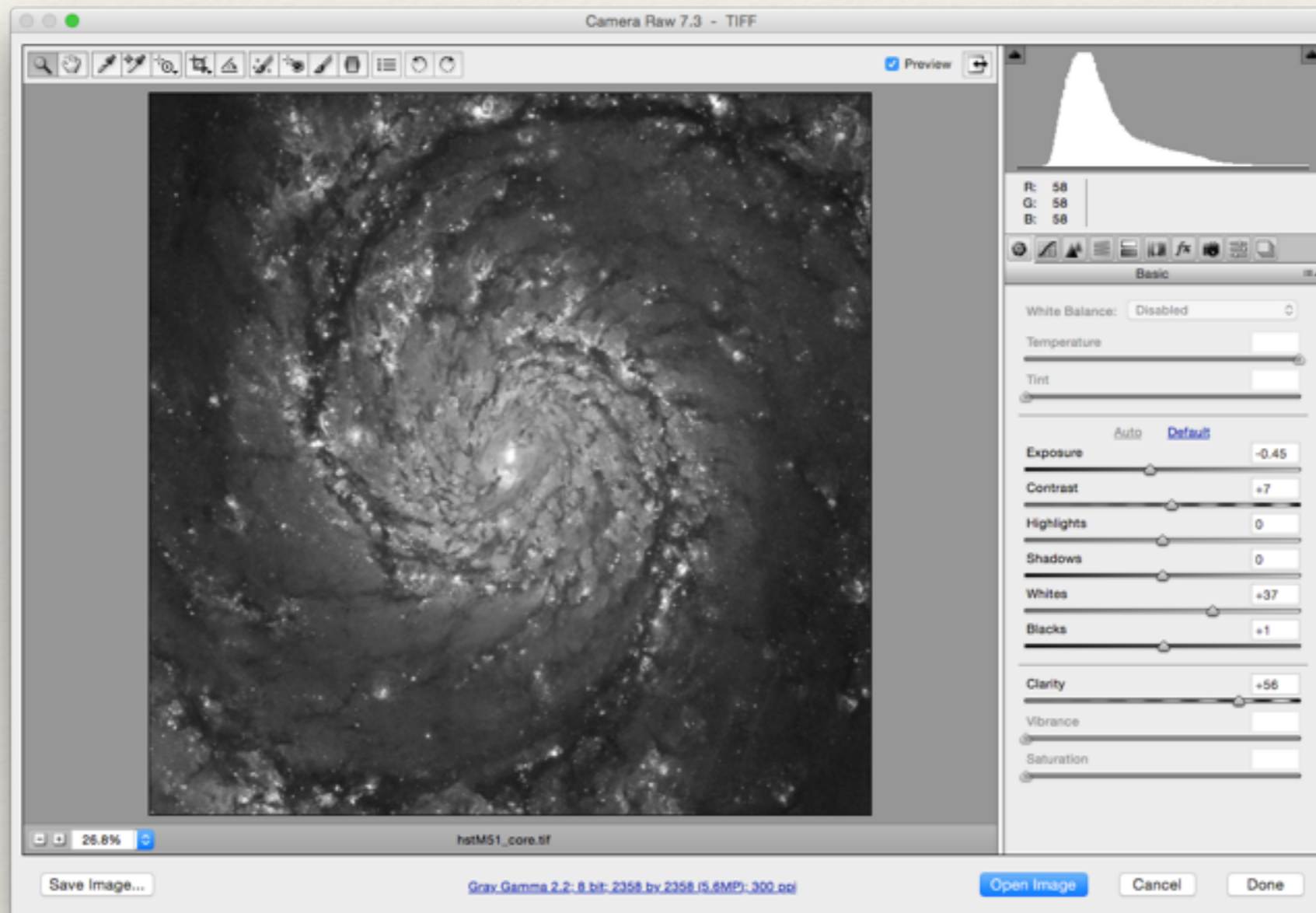


# High Dynamic Range

If you have access to Photoshop:

Start it up, choose File->Open and select a TIFF file

At the bottom of the dialog box, select “Format” and choose “Camera Raw”



---

# Color & Composition

---

Avoiding Color Confusion: Antennae Galaxies



---

# Color & Composition

---

Avoiding Color Confusion: Antennae Galaxies

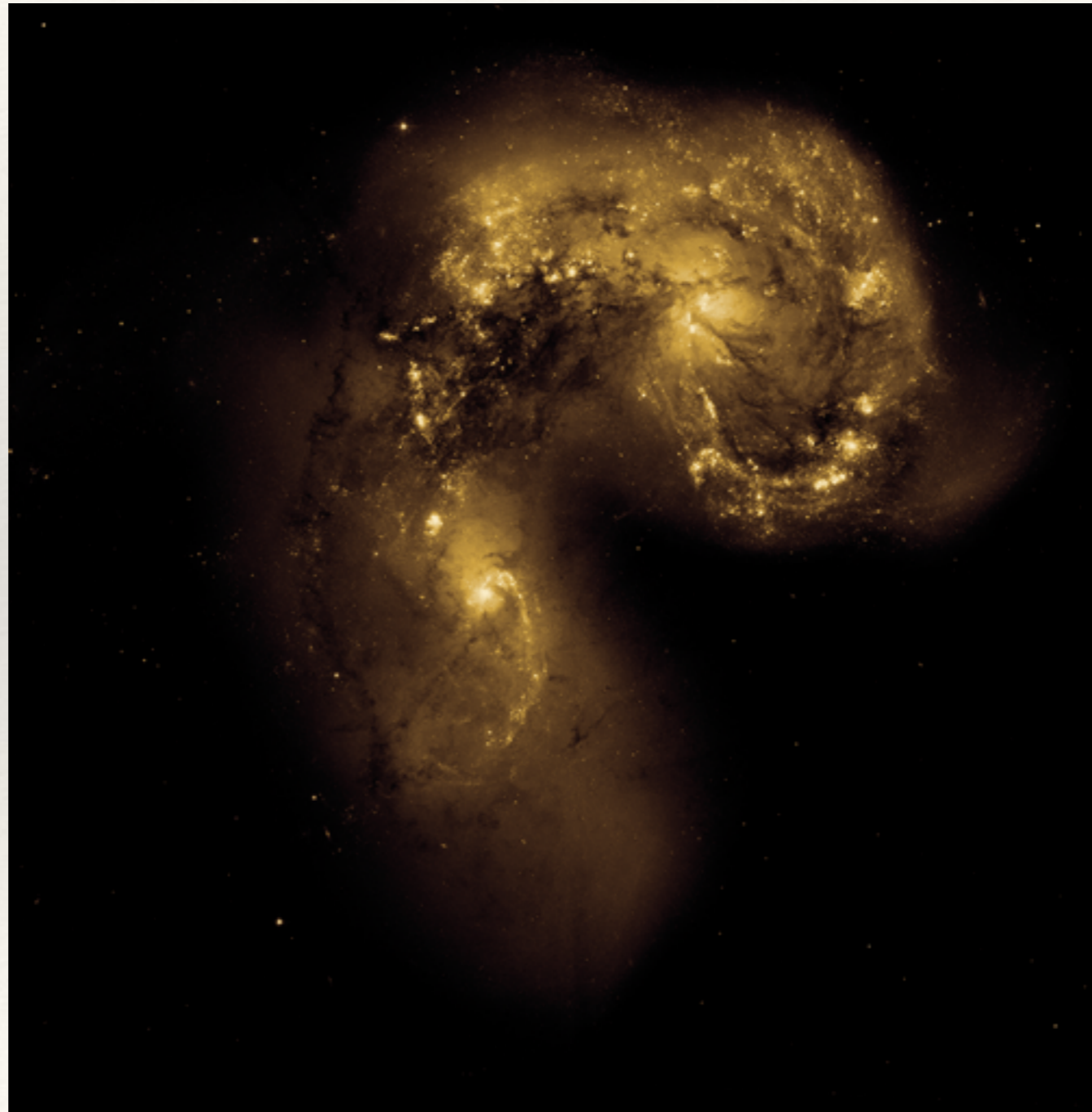


---

# Color & Composition

---

Avoiding Color Confusion: Antennae Galaxies





---

# Color & Composition

---

Avoiding Color Confusion: Antennae Galaxies

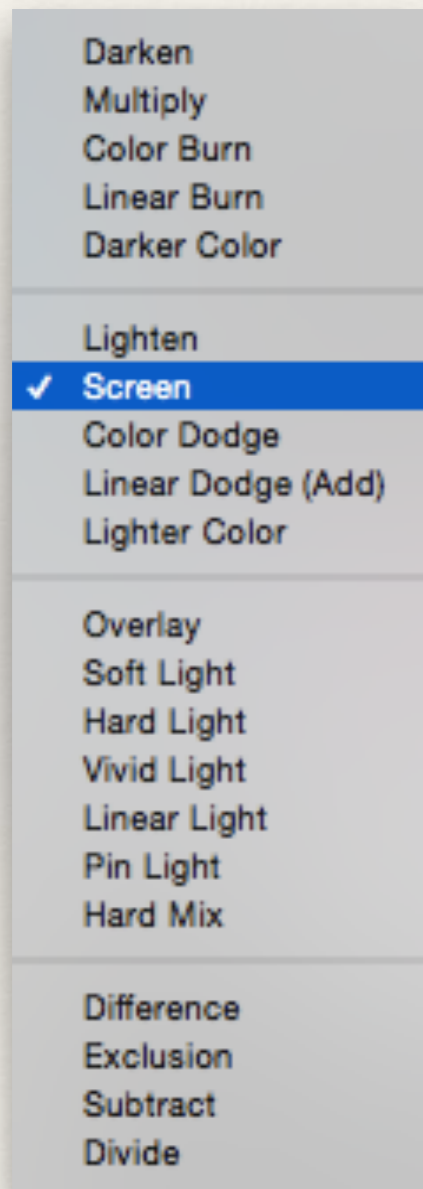


---

# Color & Composition

---

Blending Mode: Screen



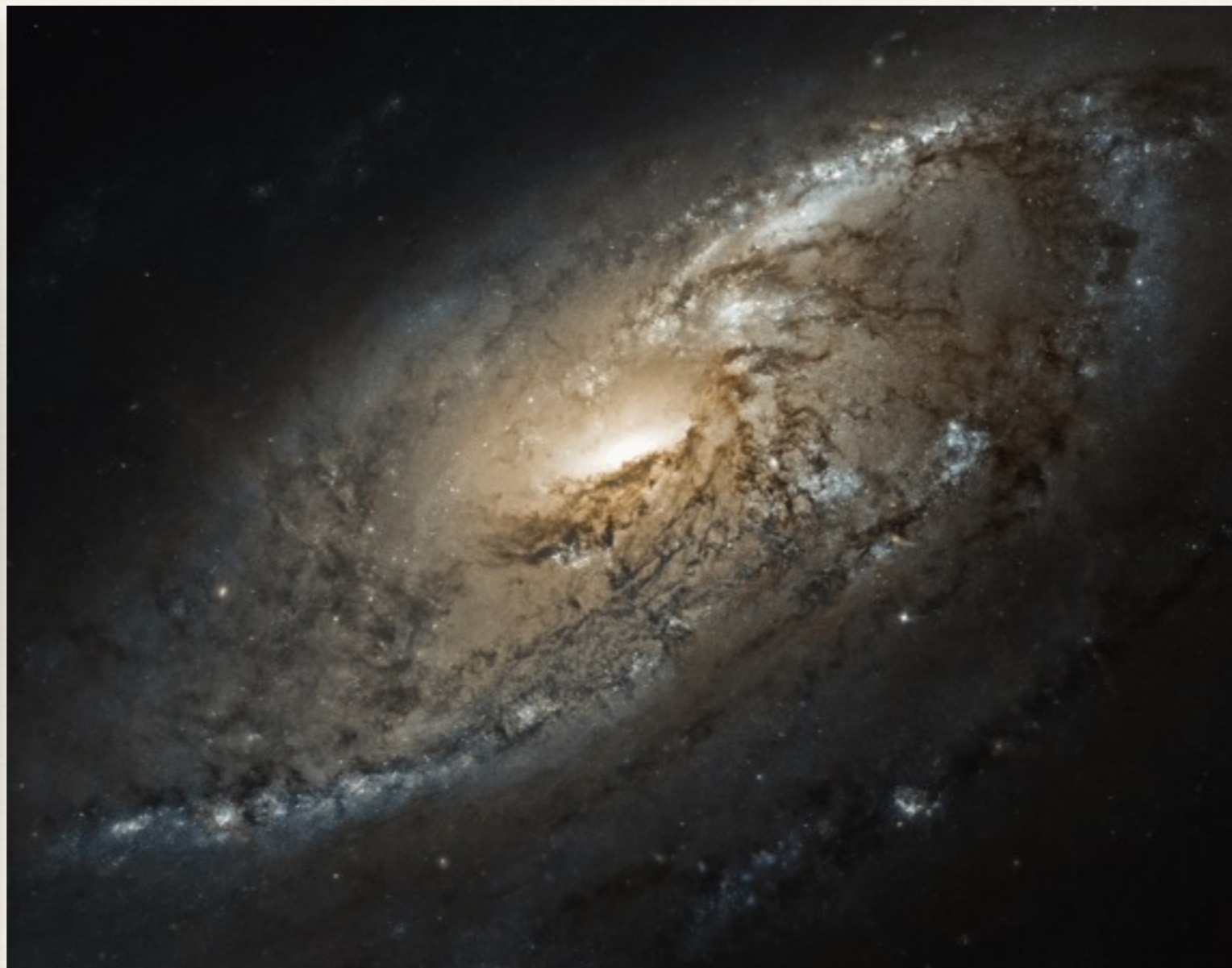
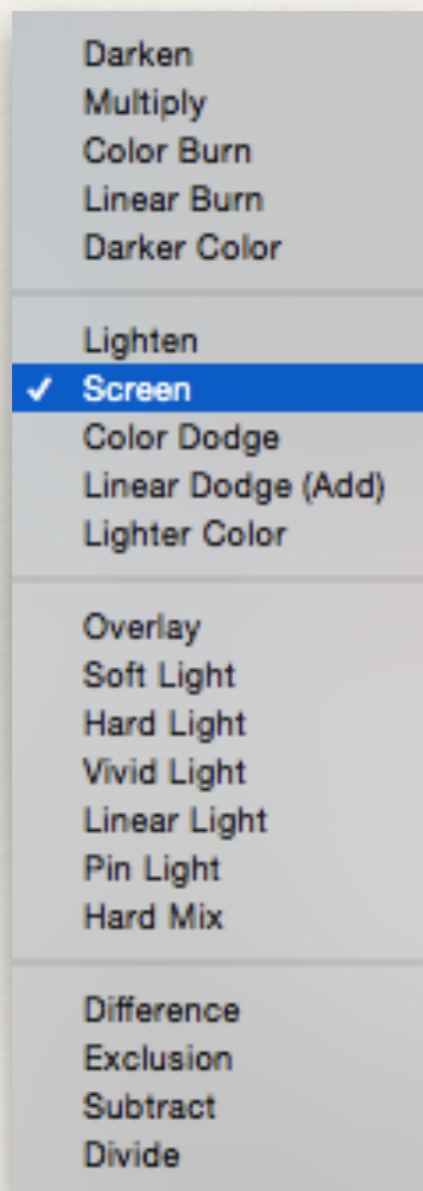
$$f(a,b) = 1 - (1 - a)(1 - b)$$

---

# Color & Composition

---

Blending Mode: Screen

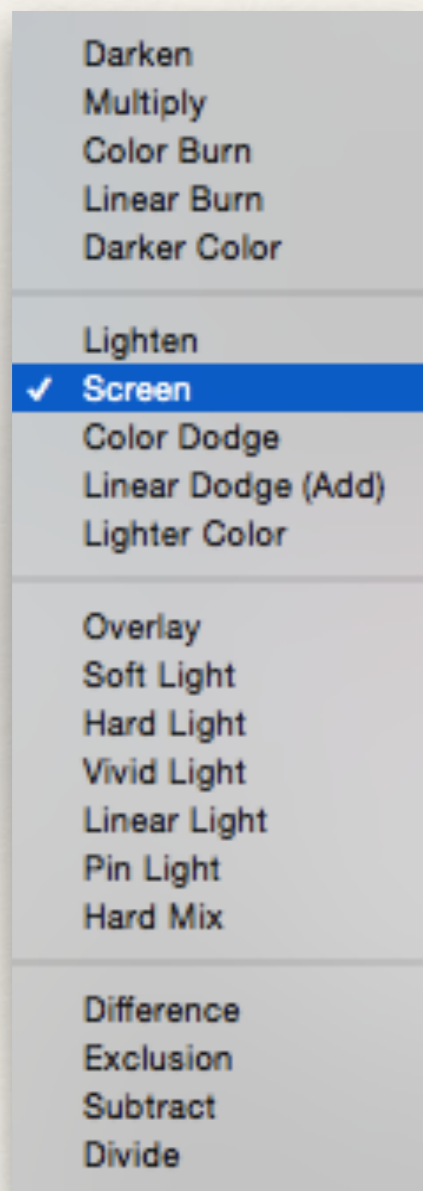


---

# Color & Composition

---

Blending Mode: Screen

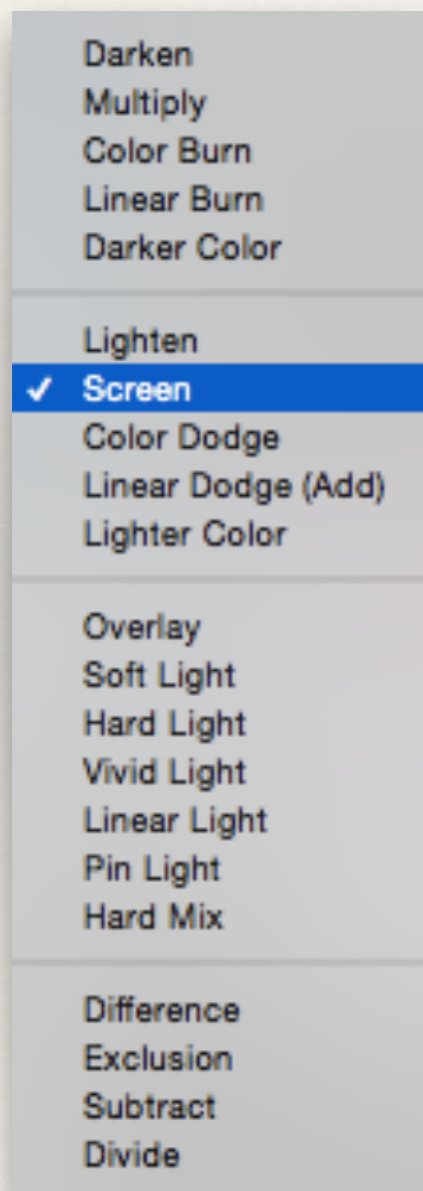


---

# Color & Composition

---

Blending Mode: Screen

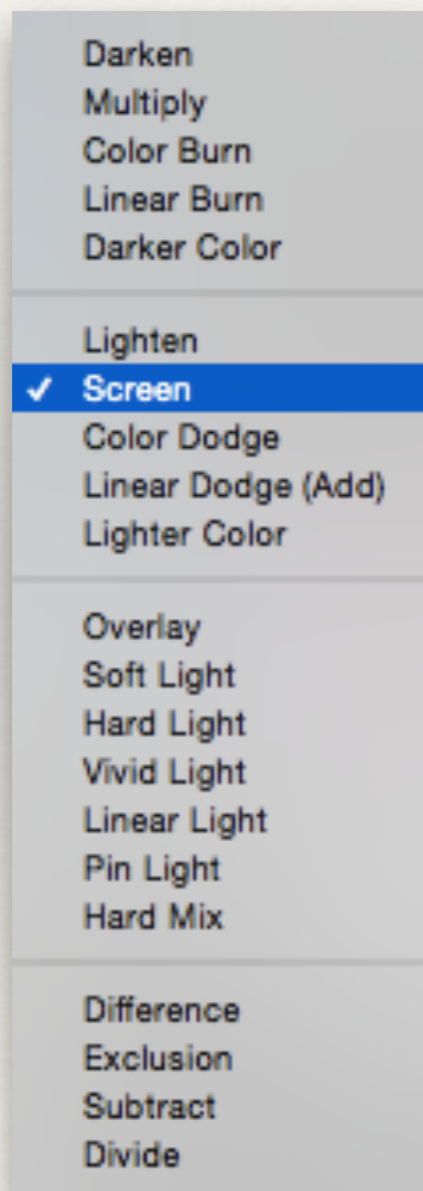


---

# Color & Composition

---

Blending Mode: Screen



---

# Color & Composition

---

Processing example with M106



---

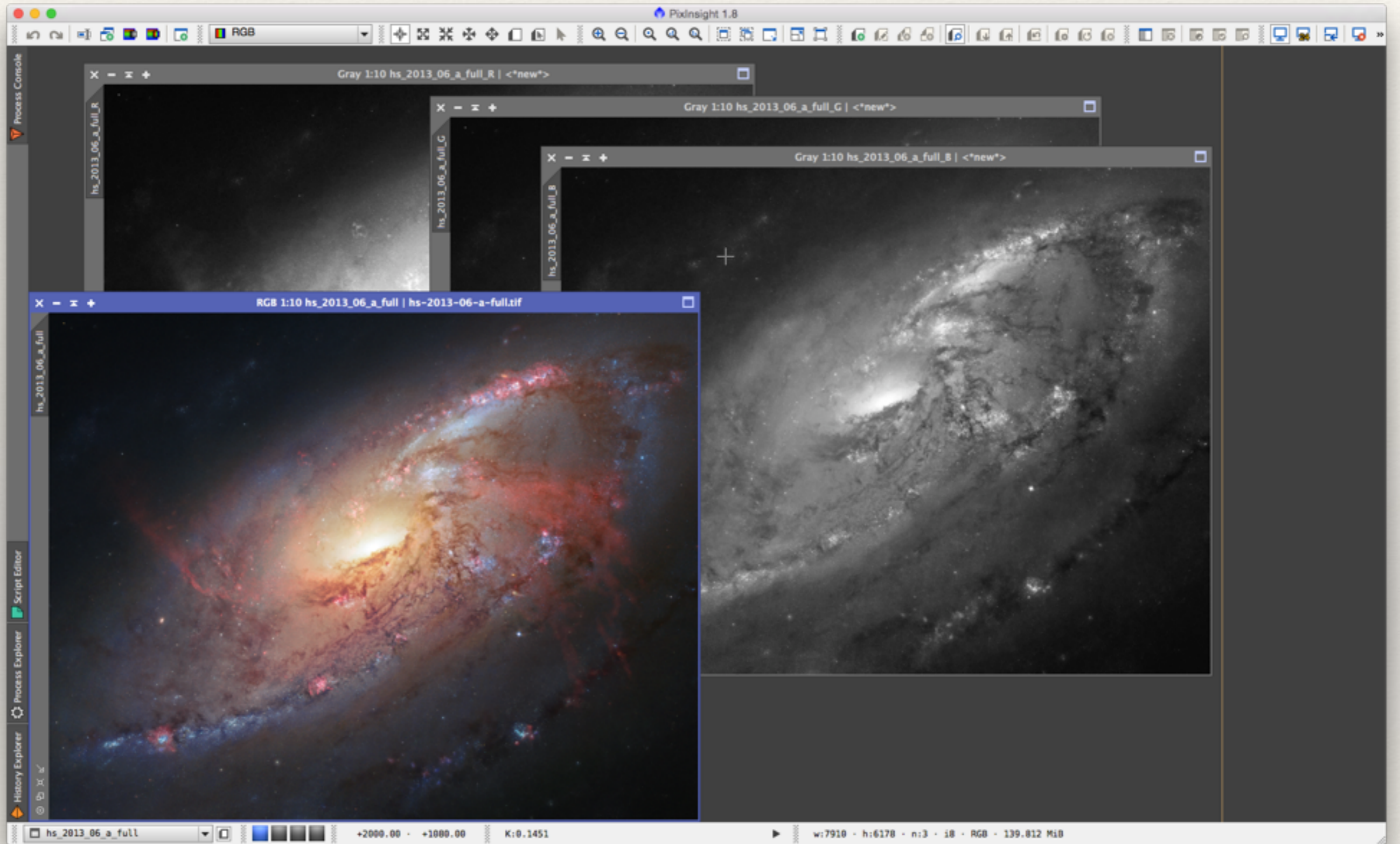
# Color & Composition

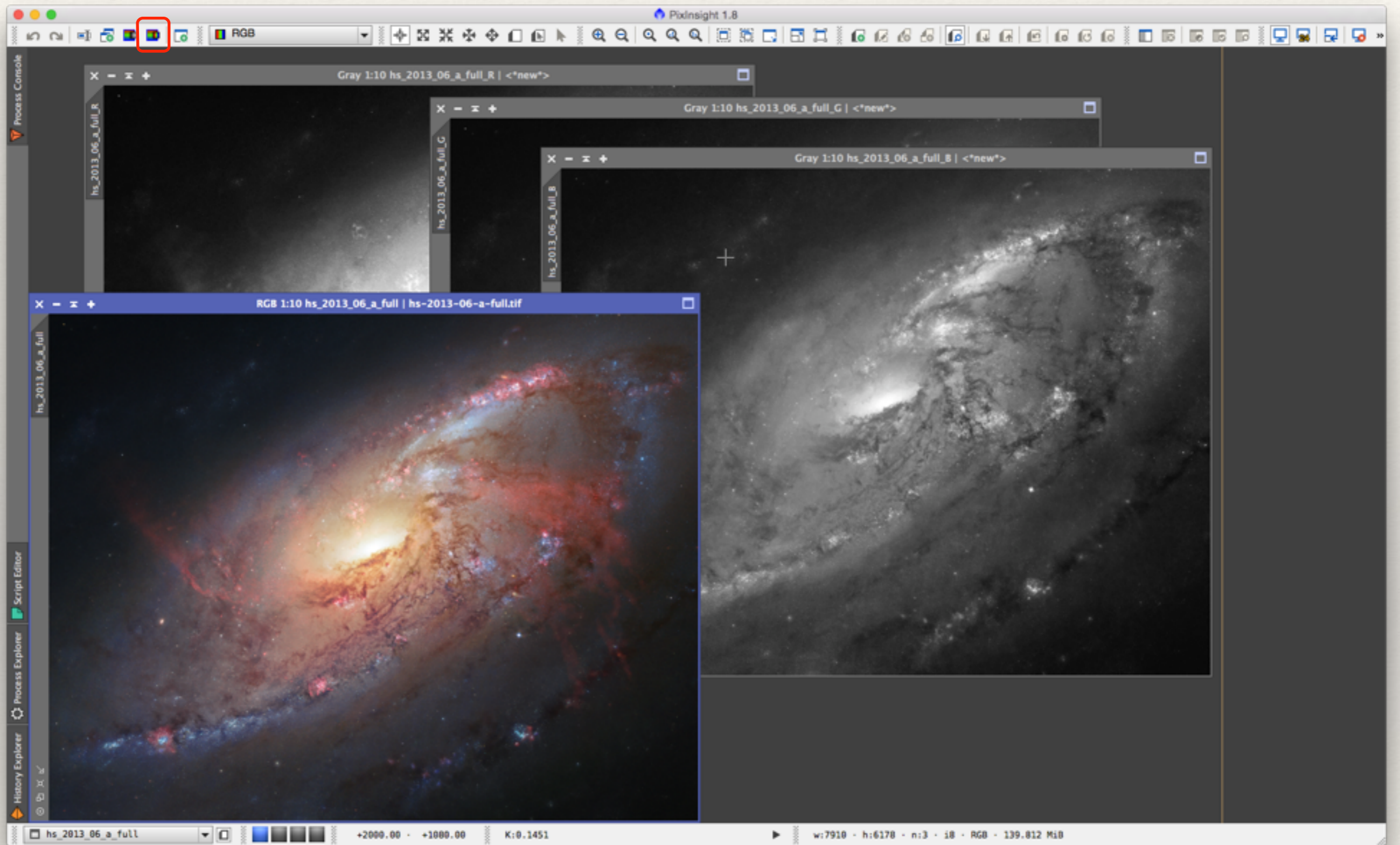
---

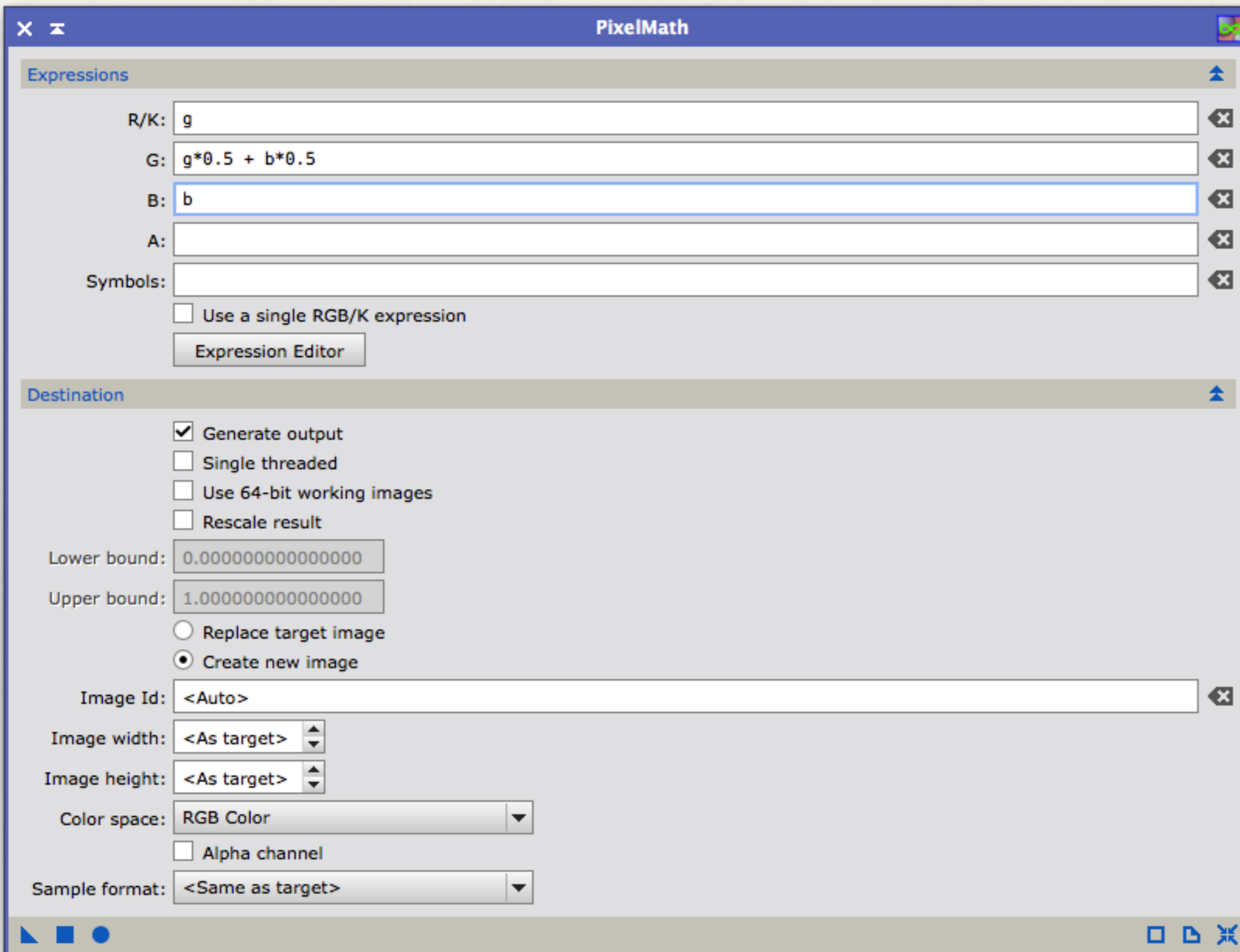
Processing example with M106

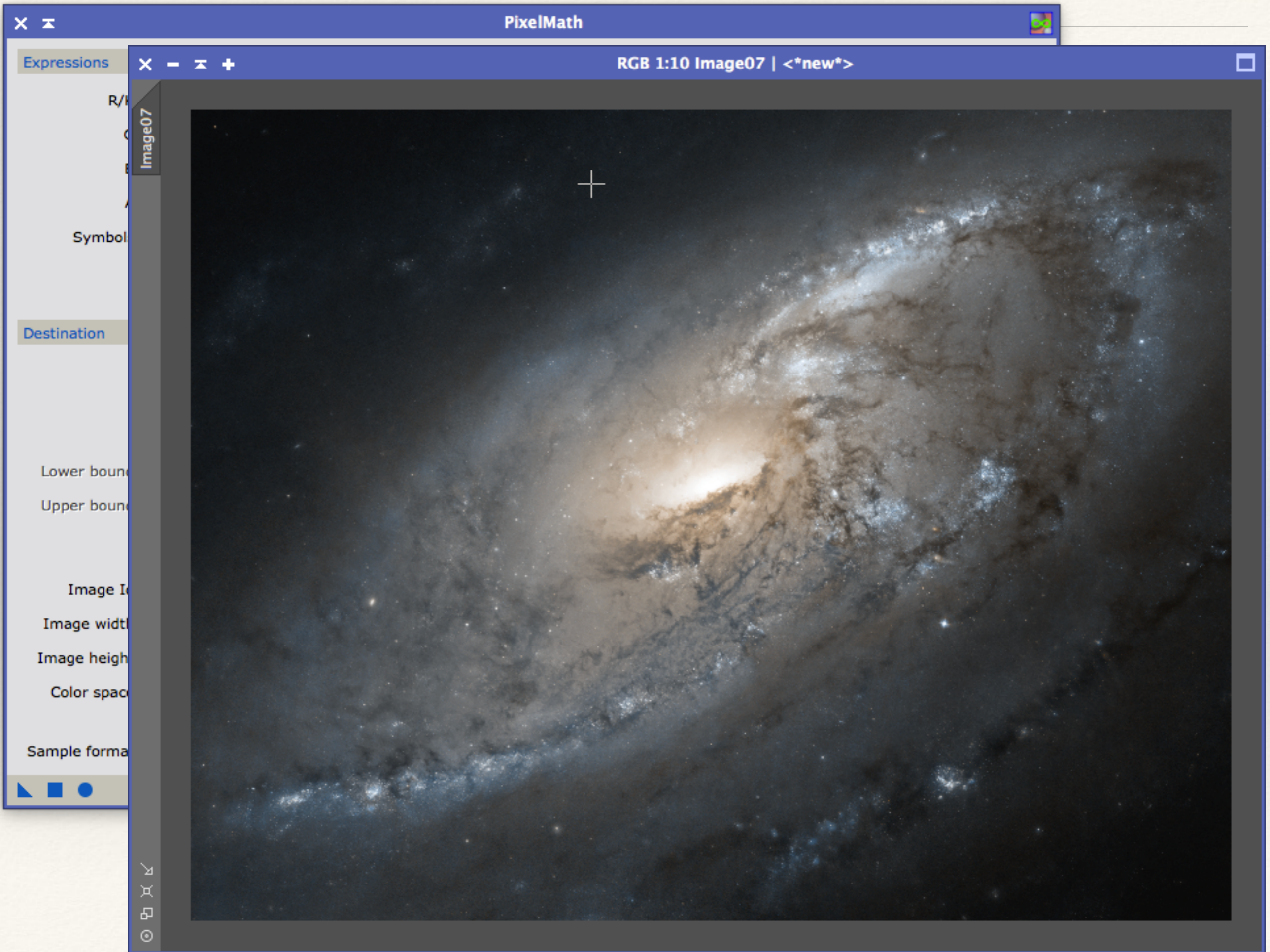


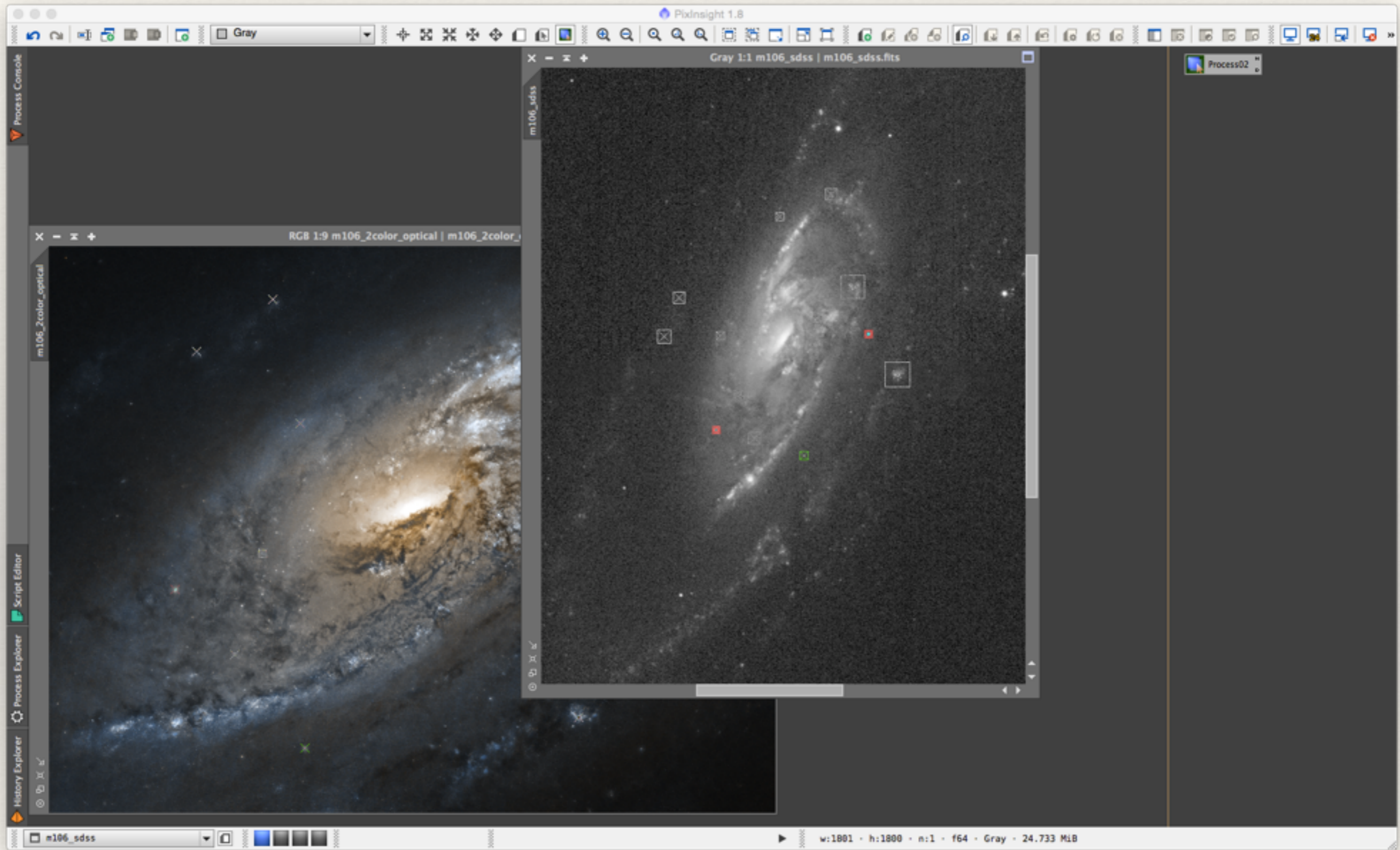


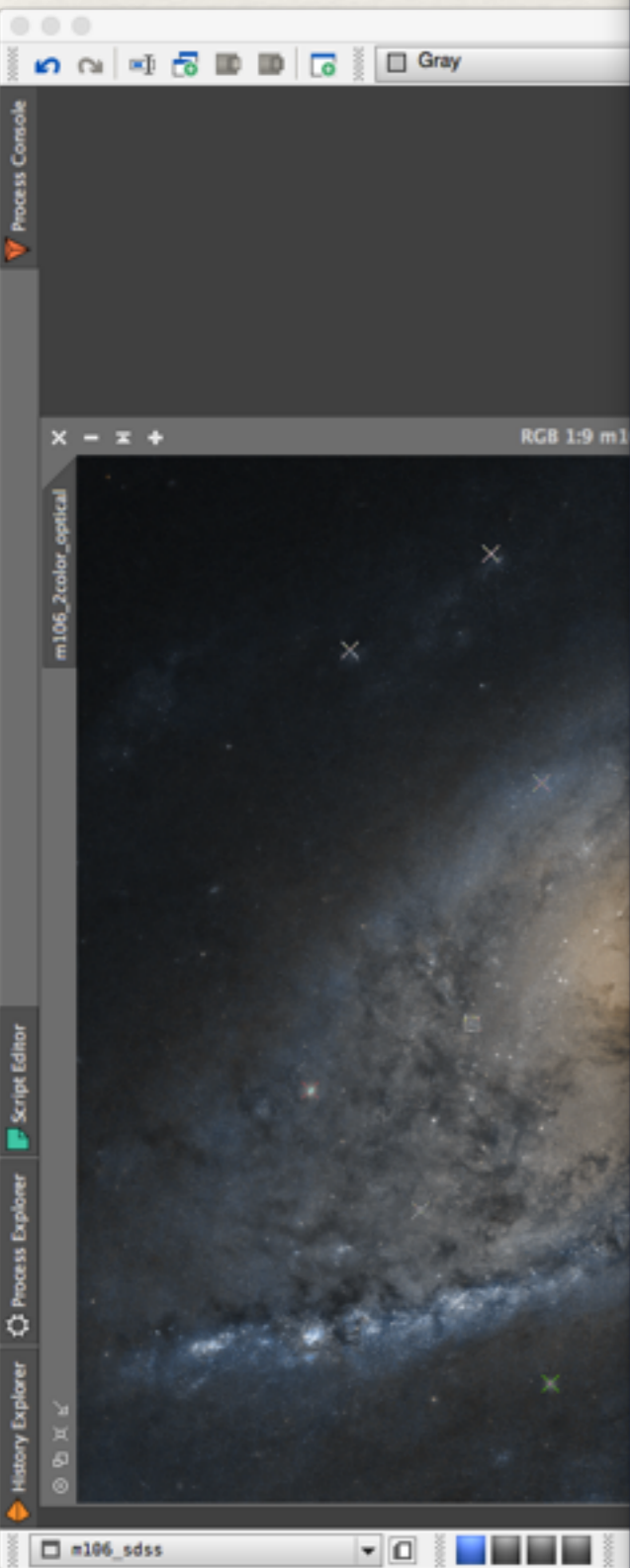












Name	Value	Comment
FOCALLEN	30697.25	Focal Length (mm)
XPIXSZ	7.400	Pixel size, X-axis (um)
YPIXSZ	7.400	Pixel size, Y-axis (um)
OBJCTRA	'12 18 56.809'	Image center R.A. (hms)
OBJCTDEC	'+47 18 04.24'	Image center declination (dms)
EQUINOX	2000	Equatorial equinox
CTYPE1	'RA--TAN'	Axis1 projection: Gnomonic
CTYPE2	'DEC--TAN'	Axis2 projection: Gnomonic
CRPIX1	3955.499957	Axis1 reference pixel
CRPIX2	3089.499892	Axis2 reference pixel
CRVAL1	184.736702706	Axis1 reference value
CRVAL2	47.3011778361	Axis2 reference value
CD1_1	-1.14830641026e-05	Scale matrix (1,1)
CD1_2	7.77761927926e-06	Scale matrix (1,2)
CD2_1	7.74511057465e-06	Scale matrix (2,1)
CD2_2	1.1366941512e-05	Scale matrix (2,2)
CDELTA1	1.38822124639e-05	Axis1 scale
CDELTA2	-1.37418284636e-05	Axis2 scale
CROTA1	145.809957012	Axis1 rotation angle (deg)
CROTA2	145.809957012	Axis2 rotation angle (deg)
POLYNDEG	1	Polynomial degree

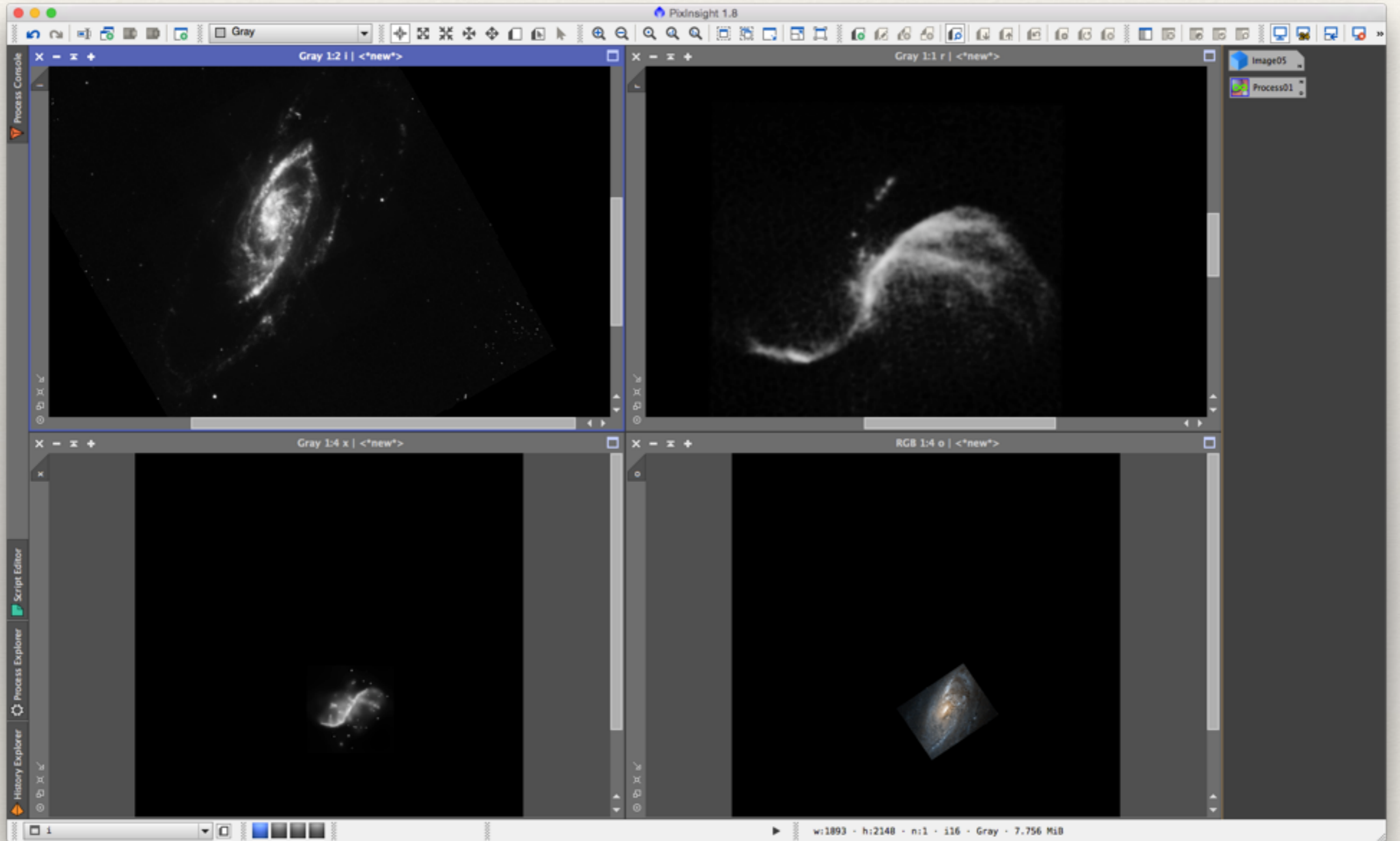
Name:

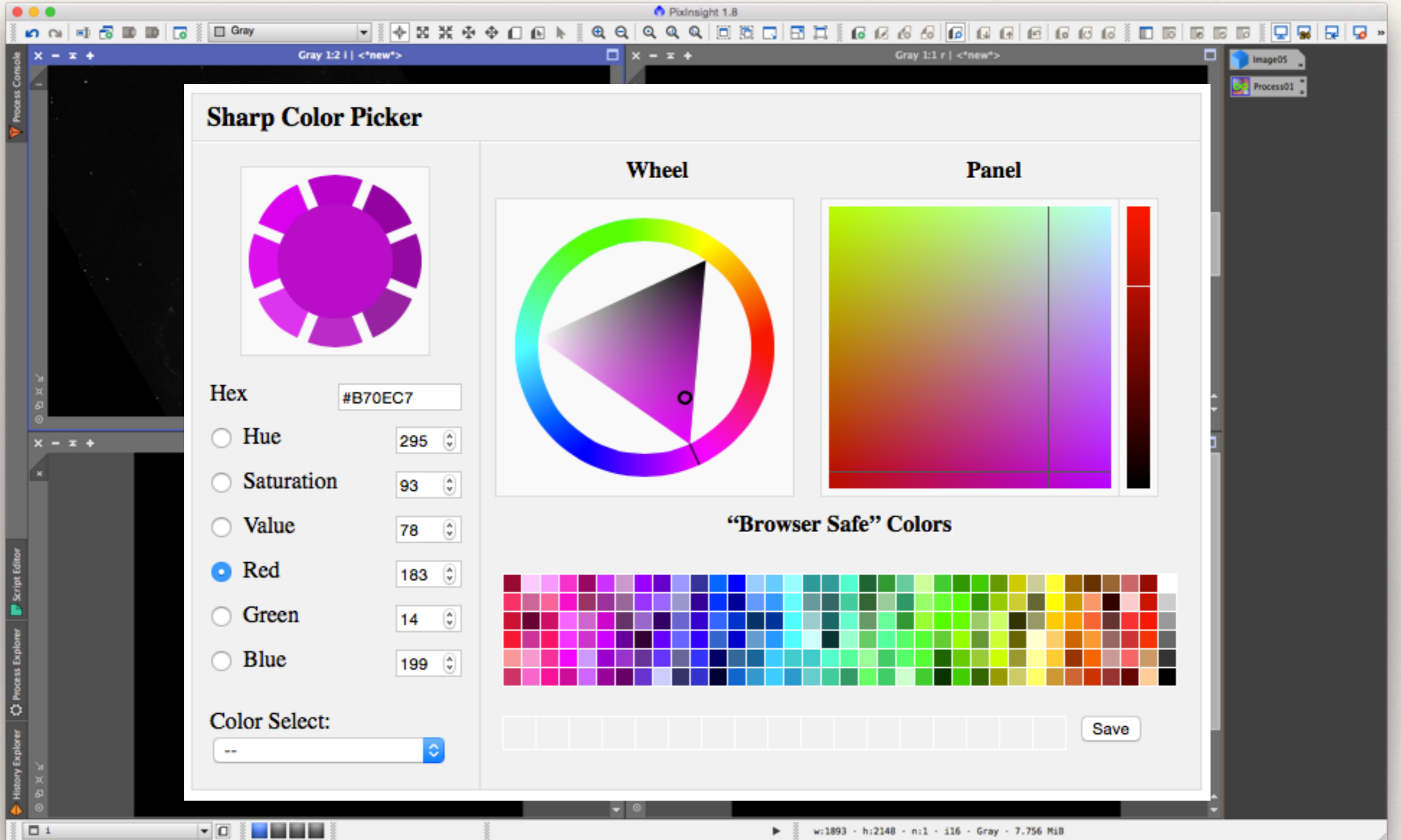
Value:

Comment:

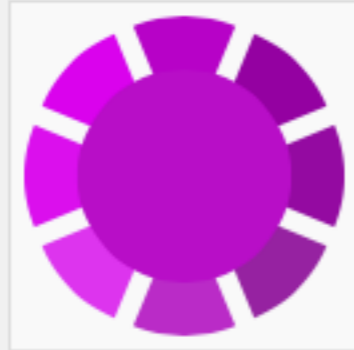
HIERARCH Convention 1/21







# Sharp Color Picker



Hex

Hue

Saturation

Value

Red

Green

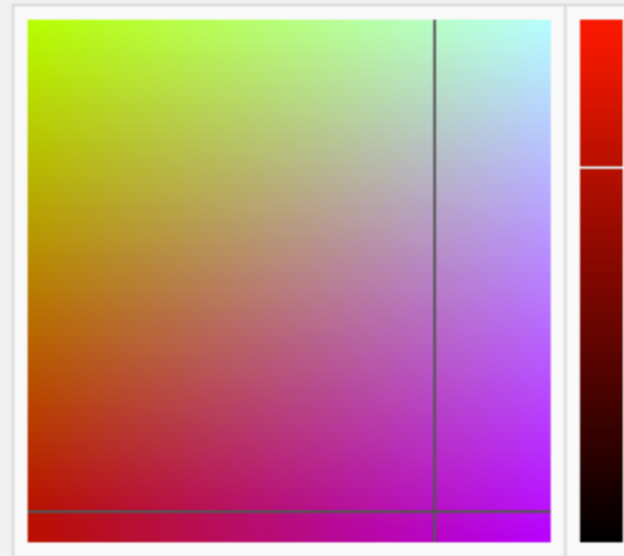
Blue

Color Select:

## Wheel



## Panel

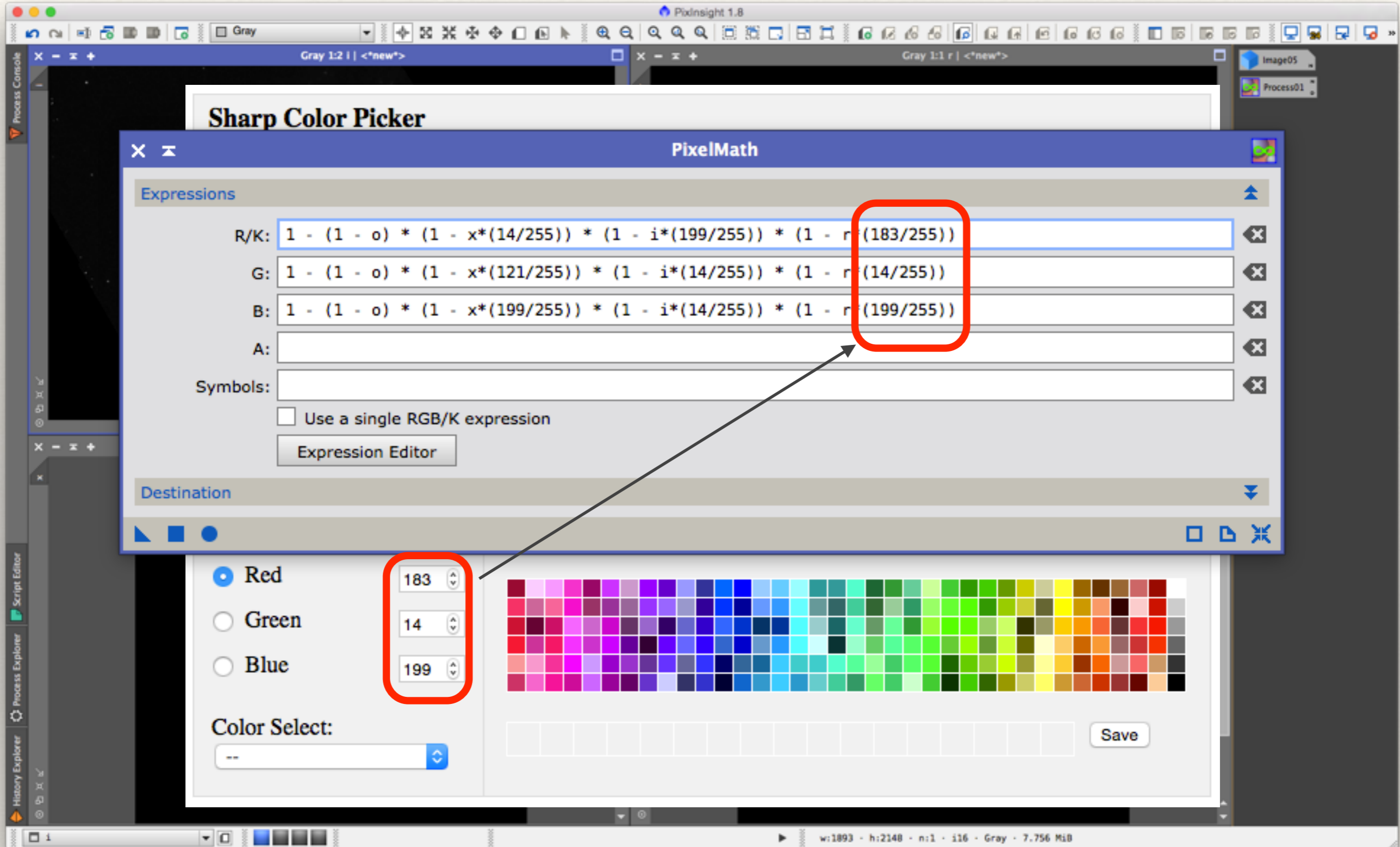


## "Browser Safe" Colors



Save





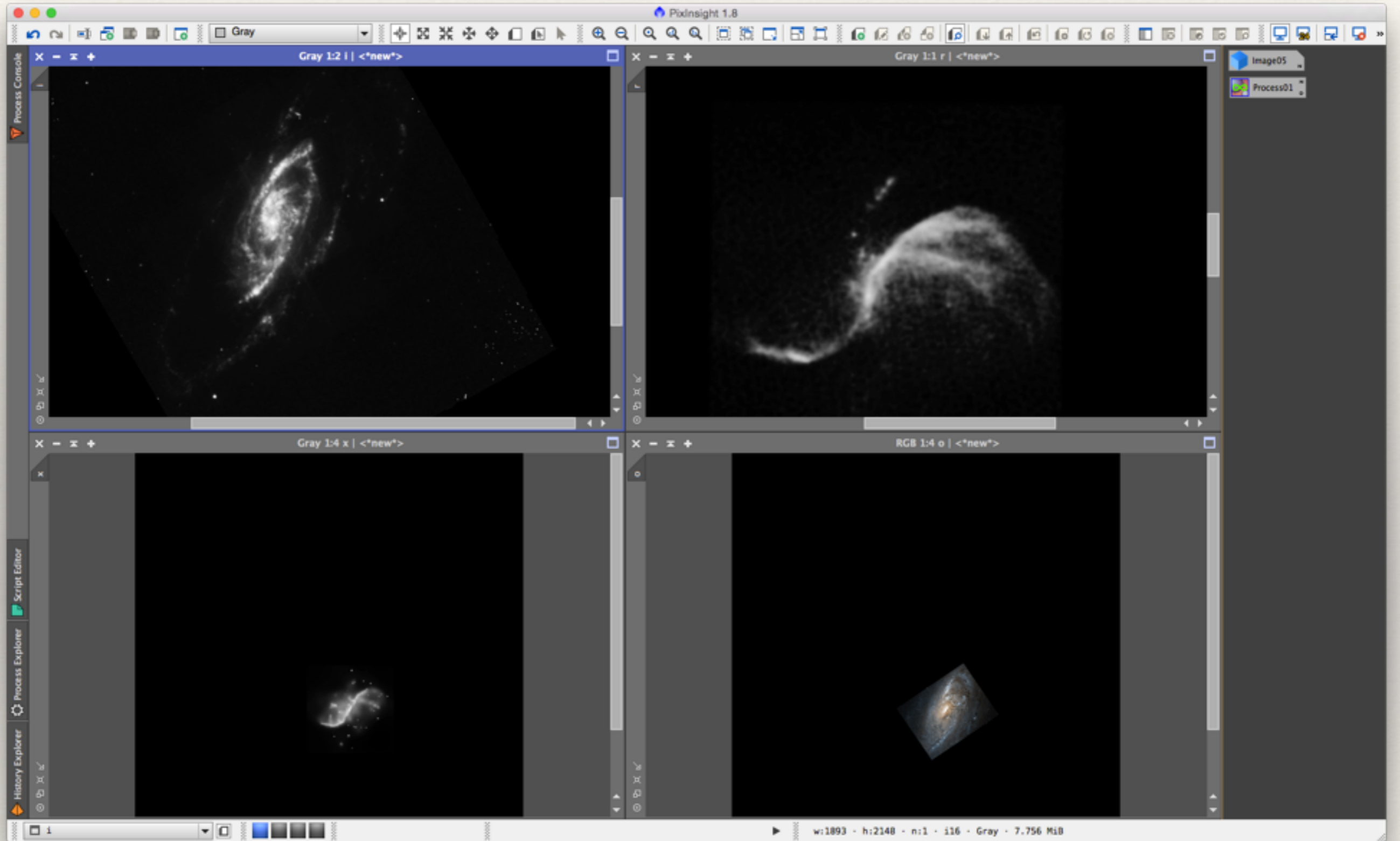
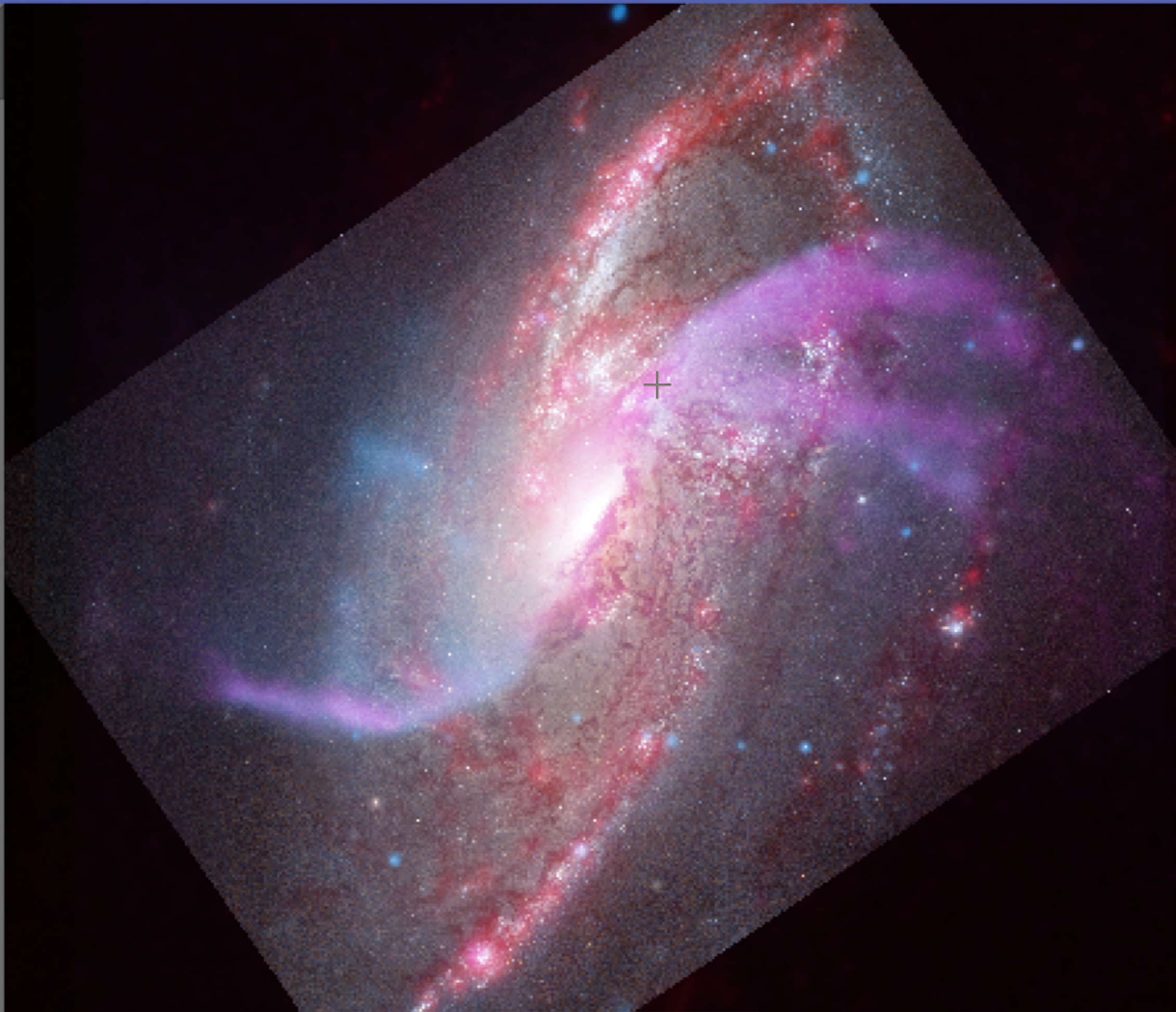


Image05



Process Console

Script Editor

Process Explorer

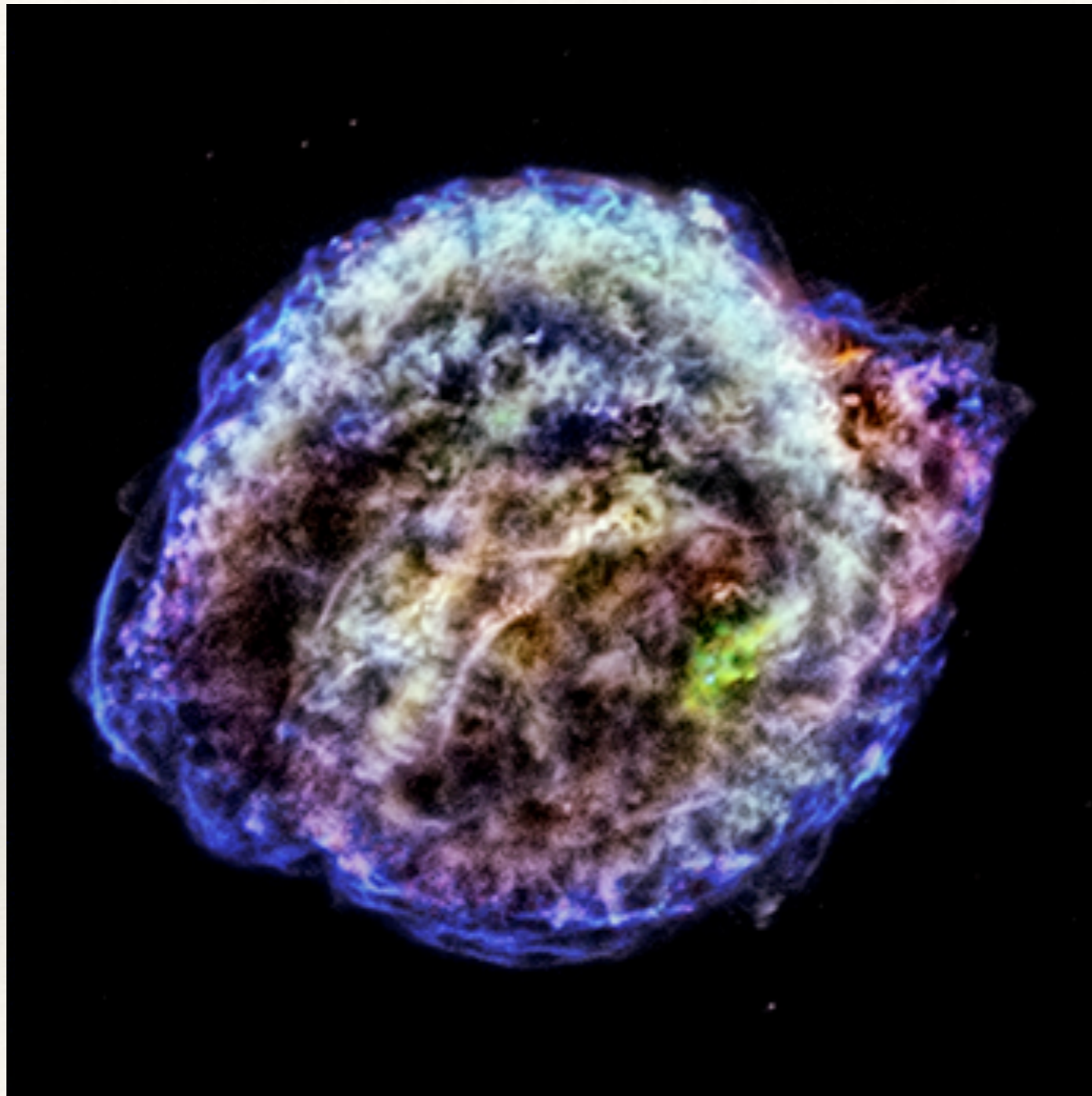
History Explorer

30

---

# Kepler's SNR

---

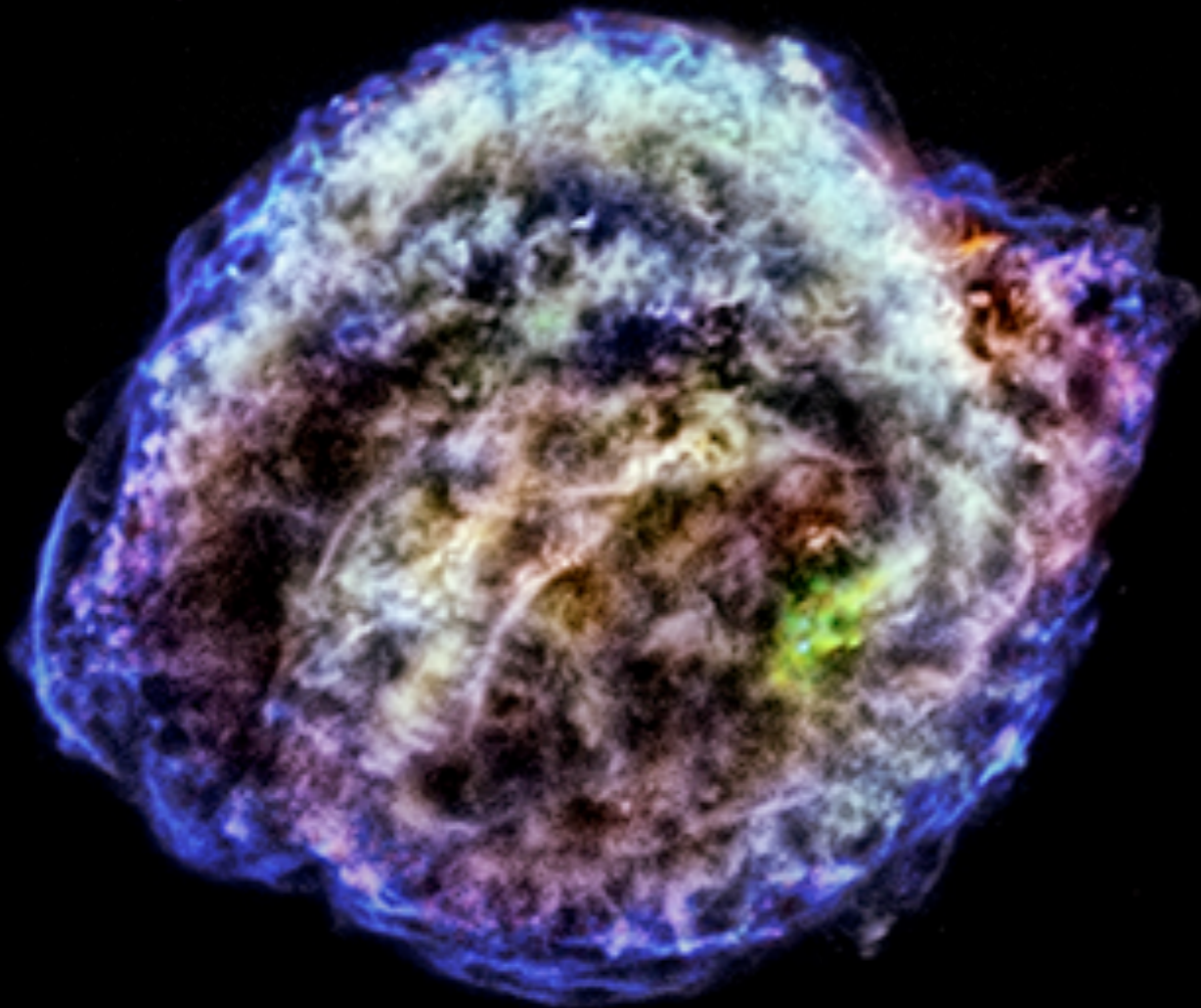


---

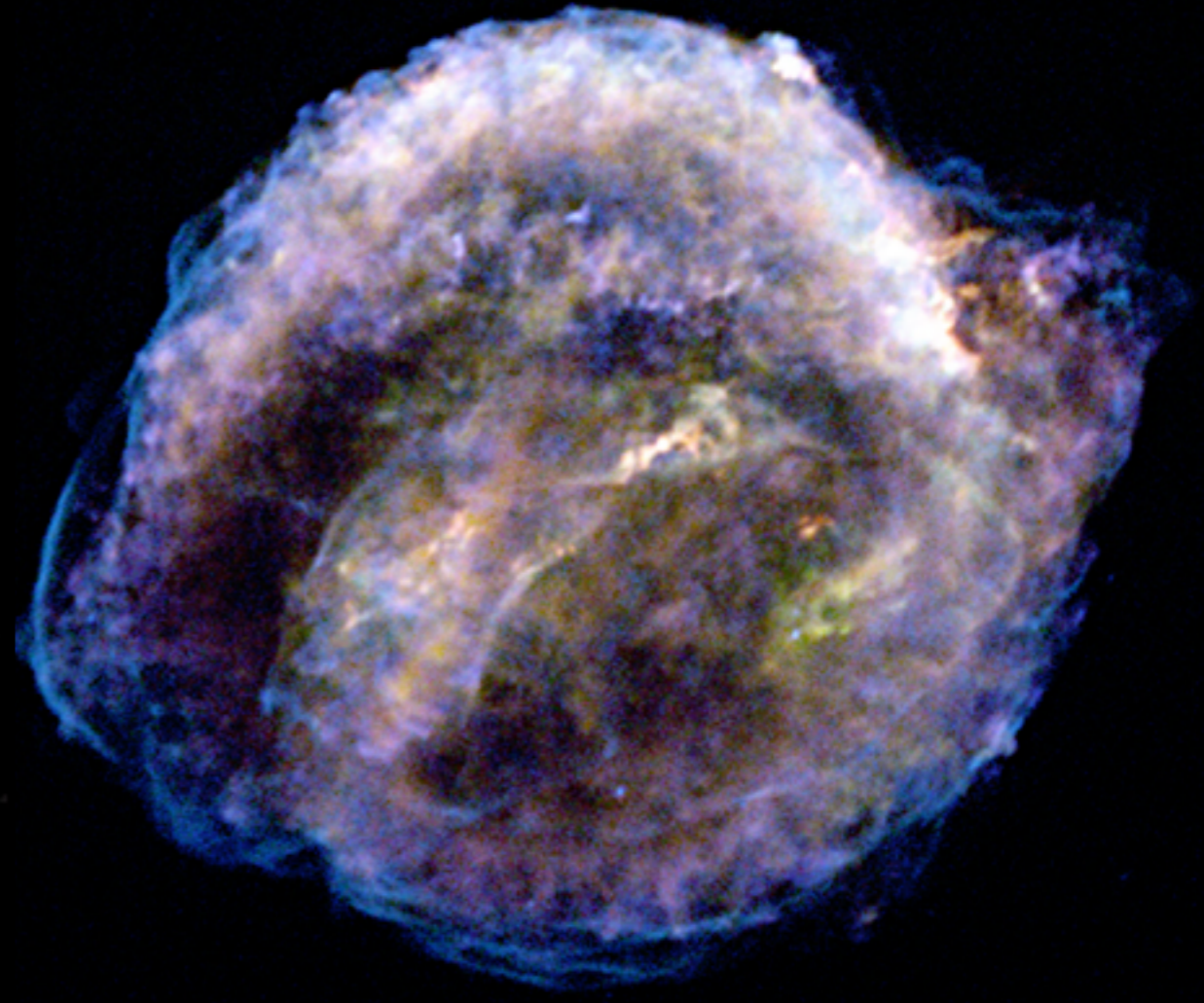
# Kepler's SNR

---

2013



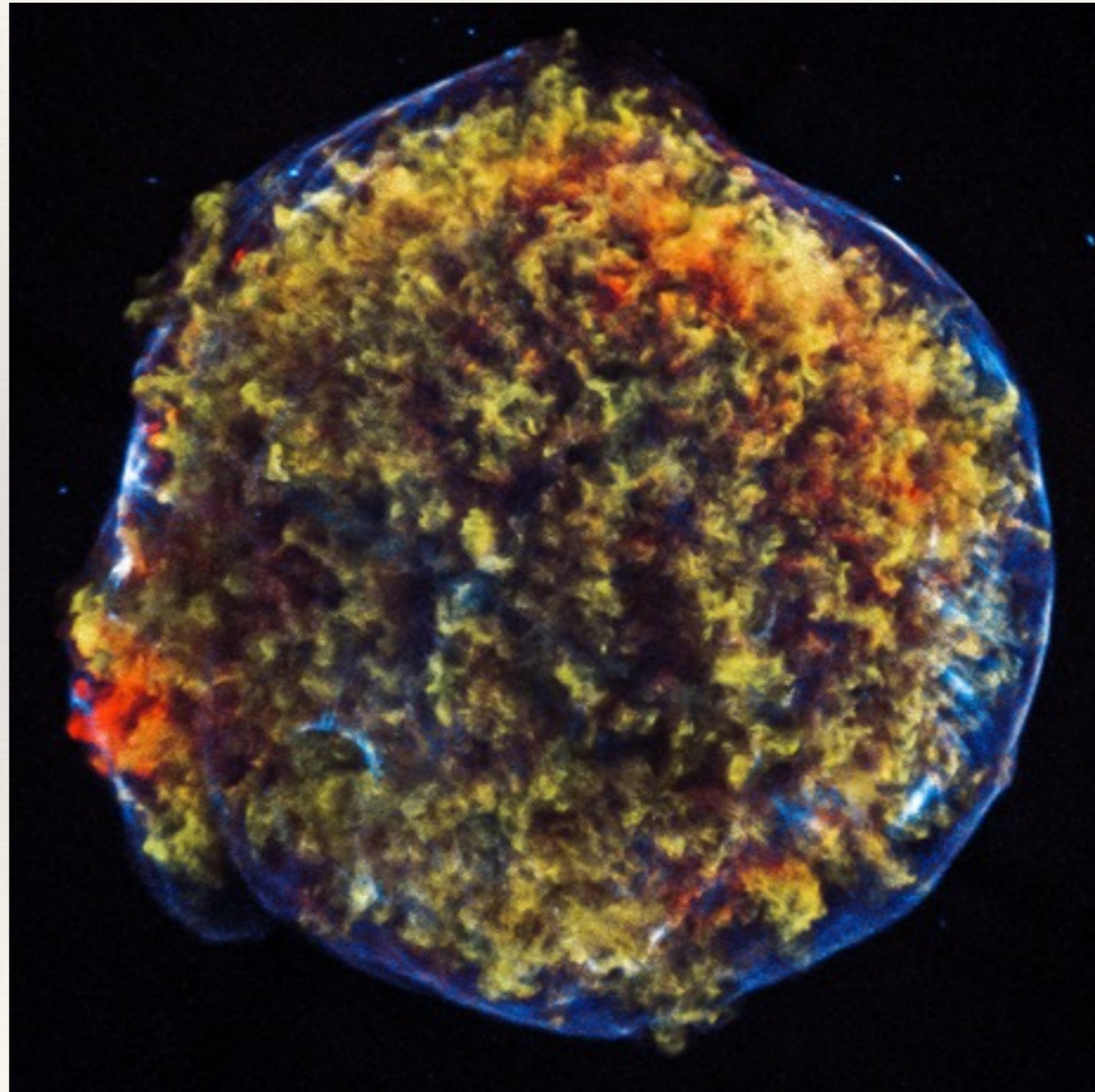
2007



---

# Tycho's SNR

---

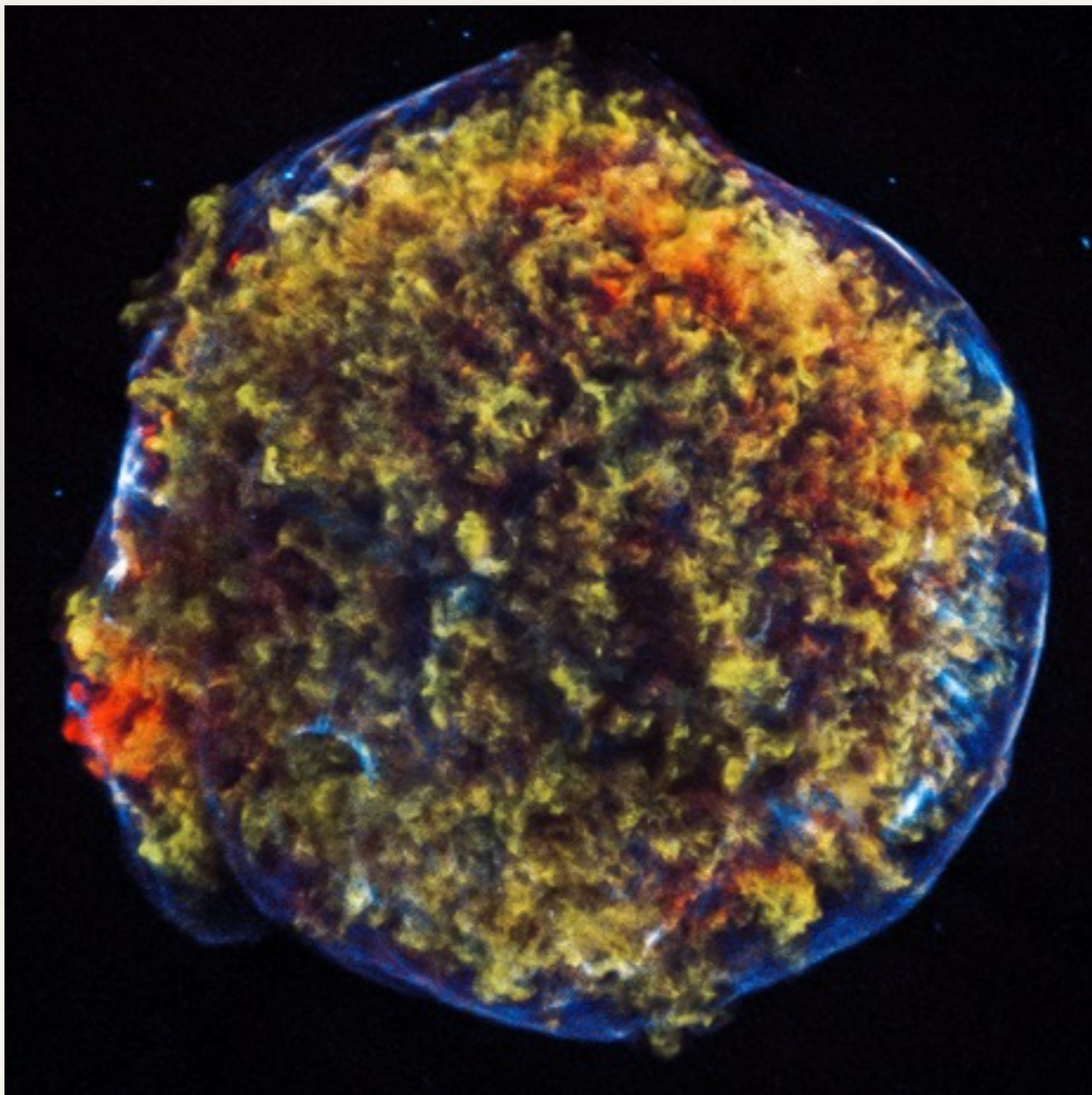


---

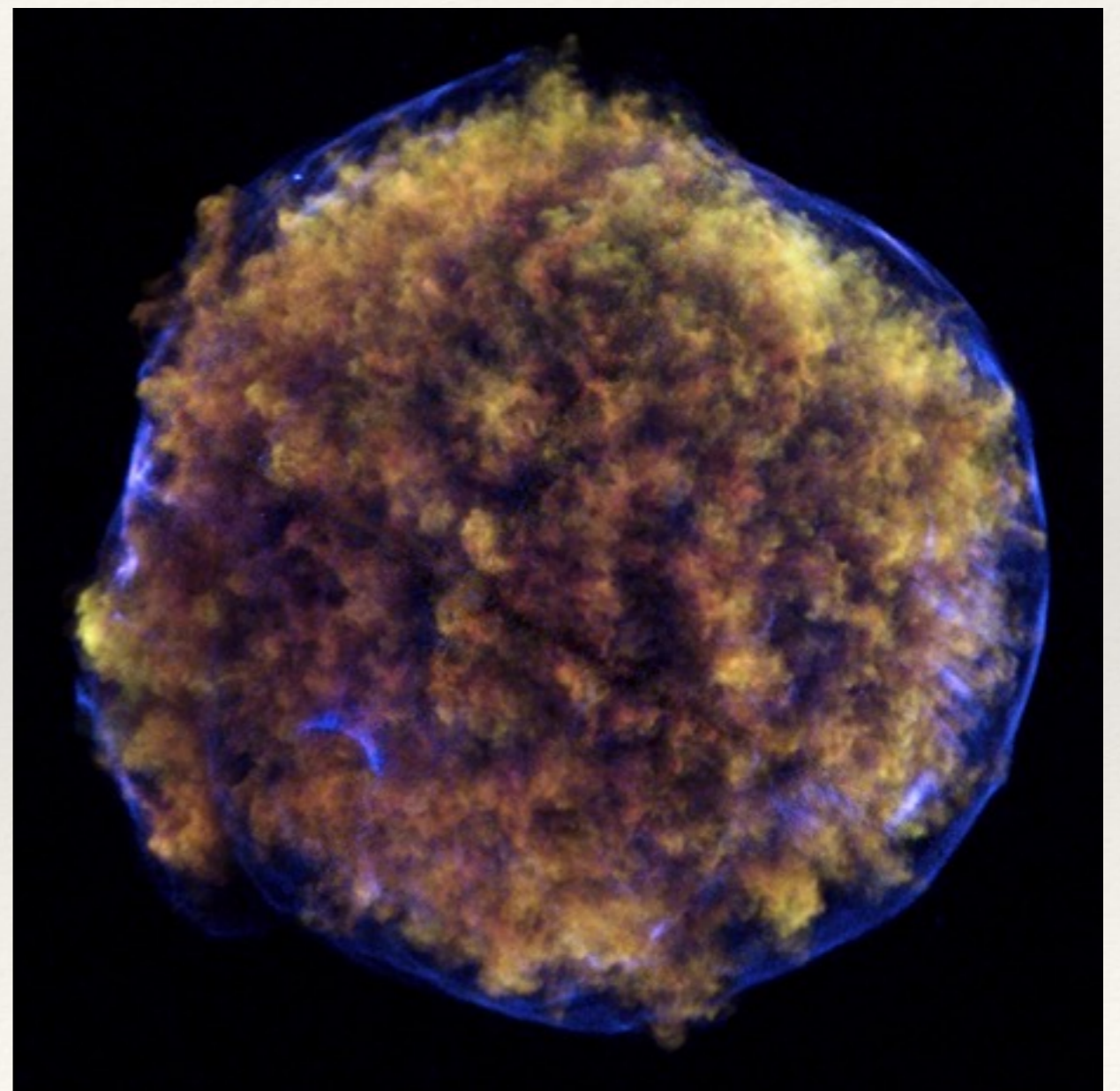
# Tycho's SNR

---

2014



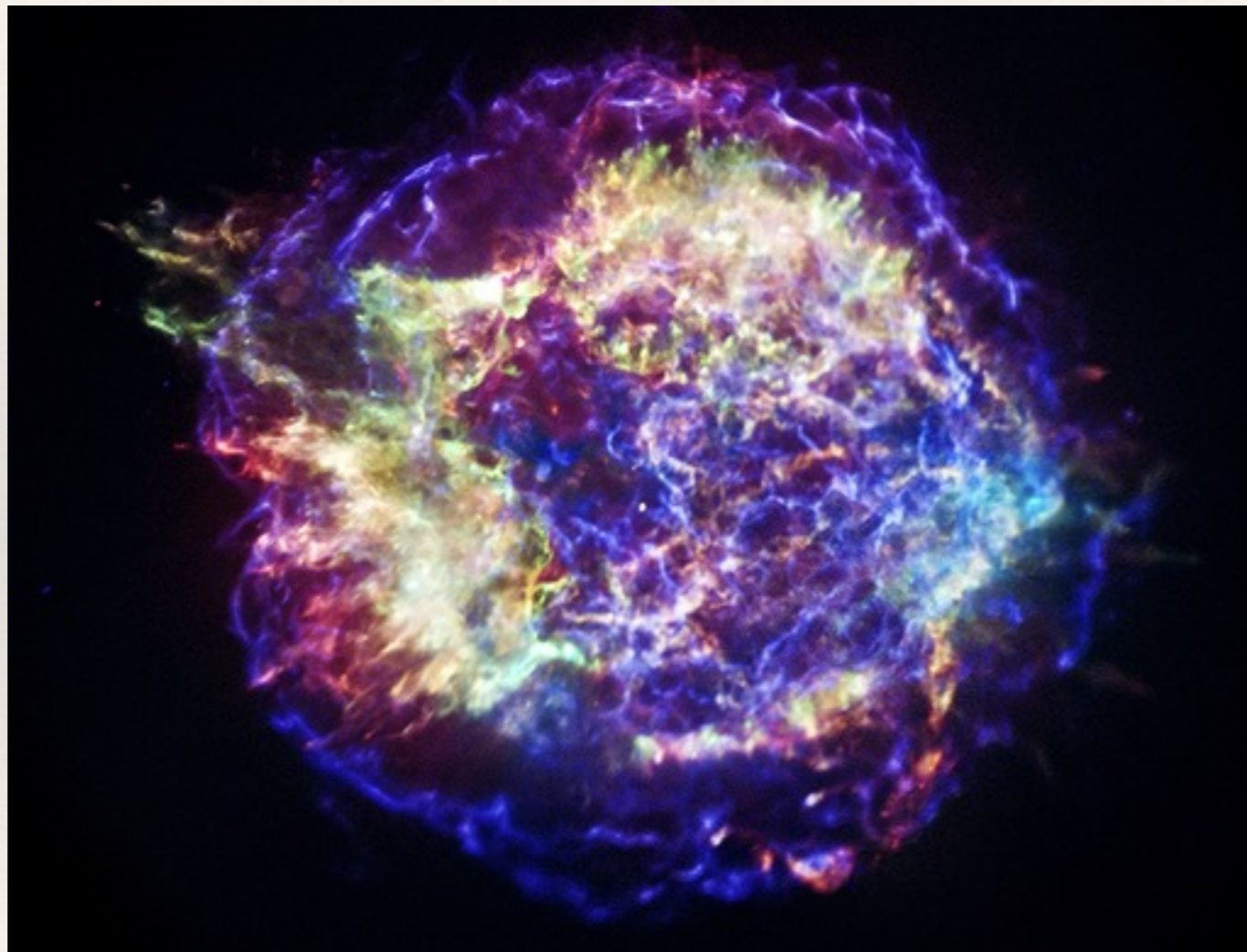
2011



---

# Cas A

---





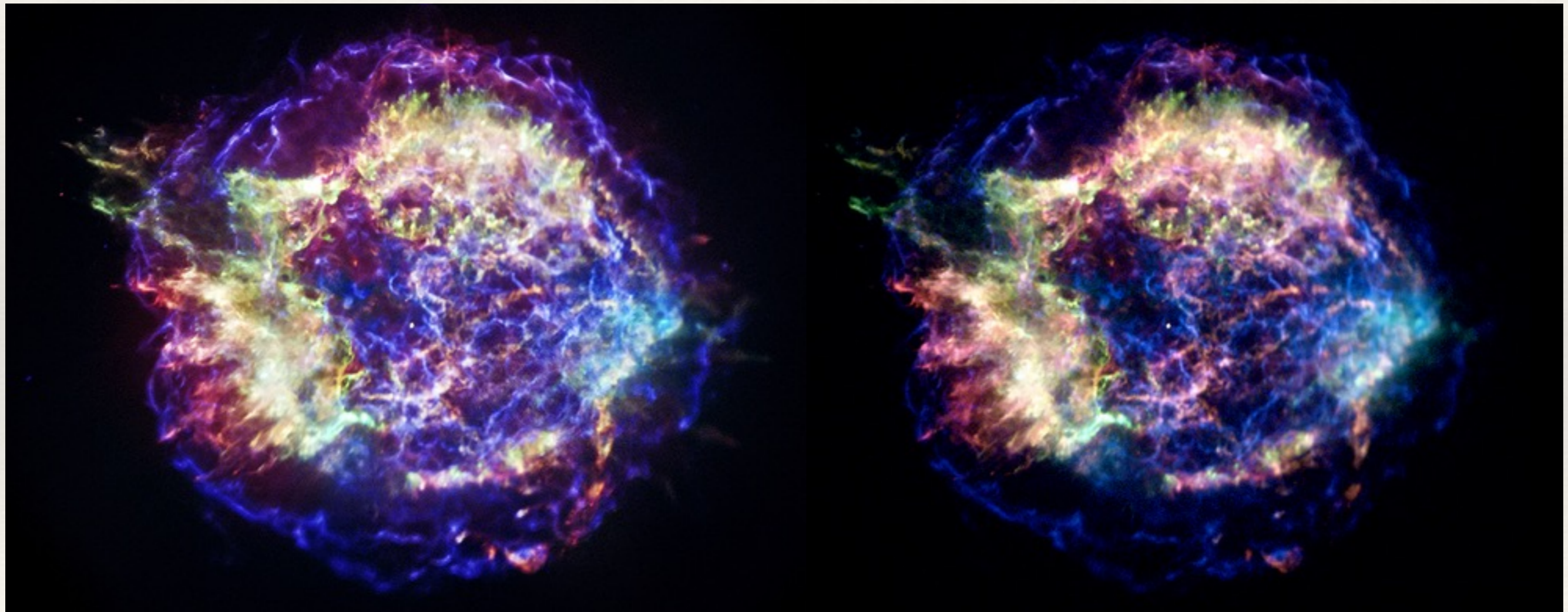
---

# Cas A

---

2013

2011



---

# Moving Beyond “Pretty Pictures”

---

JS9

Image processing via javascript in the browser

<http://js9.si.edu>

## Project Goals:

Automated image registration via WCS

Photoshop-like implementation of layers

Image smoothing

Dynamic range processing (wavlets?)

## Ultimate Goal:

Preserve original source data and track compositional changes (WCS)

Provide ability to revisit source data if/when interesting features are discovered in the image creation process



Thank you!