**Cosmic Journeys: 50 Years of Exploration**

When reading the literature on what makes a good visualisation, or on why so many visualisations fail at presenting their data in an engaging way, you can usually expect to see one idea pop up in one of various forms: KEEP IT SIMPLE. LESS IS MORE. Don’t rely on CHARTJUNK.

I chose to explore a visualisation that appears to flagrantly break this rule. There is stuff everywhere. Somehow, though, it conveys its intended message simply and instantly. It has won awards for its data presentation, and people to whom I’ve showed it were amazed at how quickly they grasped the data it conveys.

*Cosmic Journeys* was designed by 5W Infographics, to be displayed in print as a fold-out feature in National Geographic magazine. In a series of delicate lines, spreading out from Earth and forming concentric circles around nearby celestial bodies, *Cosmic Journeys* records every single mission attempted by the various space agencies of Earth, in the last 50 years.

This subject matter has all the potential makings of a bad or boring data visualisation:

* Lots of homogeneous data; 6 space agencies fire rockets toward the same clutch of planets/moons.
* The subject matter is hard to grasp, full of jargon like ‘fly-bys’, ‘soft landings’, ‘gravity assists’
* Outer space is massive and unknowable. So what if Voyager 2 approached Neptune in 1989?

As I see it, the main genius of this visualisation is that it ‘translates’ the data into ways in which we can engage with the content and more easily process its data.

The Solar System is converted from a vast 3-dimensional space into a left-to-right **map**, allowing us to read the Earth as a starting point. From there, *Cosmic Journeys* uses **flow** to allow us to follow these missions as they head into space. We can follow these delicate lines and immediately grasp concepts of ‘gravity assist.

keep it simple - this idea is mainly for beginners. this designer knows what thye are doing

, which can be understood with minimal knowledge of visualisation language.

Maps, flows

Structure of a graphic - Bertin

familiarity of circles- orbits/rings of a tree to show age