

23rd SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE ACTIVITY AND SOCIETY (E5)
Part 1: The Role of Art in Space Activities (5A)

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FROM BEYOND THE HORIZON

Abstract

If a topic encompasses an entire system or thematic circle, it needs to be dealt with from a vantage point outside of the system. If the system in question is the Earth, the vantage point from which it is observed or operated upon lies in space. In the case of art that deals with the Earth in its entirety, space is the vantage point from which this art is conceived; and space technologies, possibilities, restrictions and data are the tools and materials with which the artist operates.

A range of art projects that deal with the Earth, humanity on a planet and in the universe, and the exploration and application of a wide range of concepts, principles, and materials will herein be presented. Examples range from canceling the Earth's rotation (The Earth turns without me, in cooperation with the Swiss Air Force), the assembly of the first panorama of Saturn's moon Titan (Seven Years From Here, using raw Huygens data), to human-calibrating the view of Earth and the stars from Space (Space from Space, cooperation with NASA moonwalkers and astronauts), and astronomical simulations which generate visual evidence for the truthfulness of Galileo Galilei's claims (Galileo's Missing Argument).

As the new stems from the old, and an integral part of every art piece is its contextual relation, the history of the (sometimes imagined) space-based description and perception of the Earth is a generating agent of such art. Outputs of these projects tend to stress the common understanding of contemporary art, as they are diagrams and fictitious postscriptums to sixteenth-century books (Galileo's Missing Argument), accountant-style forms with astronaut questions answered in handwriting (Space from Space), 852 pixels wide images distributed across the internet (Seven Years from Here), or 13x18 sheet film showing a blurry dot (The Earth turns without me). This kind of artistic inquiry can advance not only the field of art itself, but foster a common understanding of the planet leading to new ways of thinking about humankind, its future and its history.