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Contemporary Arts Practice and Outer Space: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach (4)

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A CASE FOR AN EXTREME ART TOOLKIT

Abstract

To boldly go, is 'one giant leap'. To boldly stay, is 'one elegant dance' that we must learn. To develop the imaginative arc required for bold exploration in time with technology transfer, we need not be looking how to follow, but how to lead. This paper presents a case for the urgent development on an eXtreme Art Toolkit for use in space, as a critical step in our adaptation and embrace of space.

Public and private space actors are increasingly preparing accessible and creative interactions including simulation environments and Earth-based analogue training environments for future engagements in space. These facilities enable humanity the opportunity to adapt to, and prepare for, this new domain. Contemporary artists are also creatively exploring the technological and human domains of spaceflight, exploiting simulation and analogue environments and increasingly contributing towards a citizen-space-readiness program in experimental yet significant ways. Historically artists have been critical catalysts and thought-leaders in the development of a global consciousness towards human spaceflight and exploration. Artists today continue to intermesh the state-of-the-art with avante garde aesthetics, politics and societal imaginings building predictive and speculative fictions for new worlds. They do so for example, by exploring data streams, collaborating with science, accessing space hardware and training facilities from ZeroG flights to Neutral Buoyancy Labs. Such interactions offer an opportunity for research, investigation and exchange. There is increasing evidence that artists not only derive inspiration from space, but they also contribute new forms of exploration and discovery through practice-based-research, poetics, aesthetics and innovation. An arts-inclusive approach to space mission architecture and design is therefore logical if not vital for the future of human spaceflight and exploration.

The author presents an overview of the development and demonstration of a prototype eXtreme Arts Toolkit to support this approach. The project is being developed for immediate use on Earth - from Sea 2014 to Summit 2015 - and positioned as a provocative design tool to inspire discussion about further supporting, enabling and encouraging human expression and future creative interactions in space. The longview aim, is to develop the hardware for artistic use at the ISS in 2016/2017.