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Contemporary Arts Practice and Outer Space: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach (3)

Author: Ms. Yuri Tanaka
Tokyo University of the Arts, Japan, yuri_tanaka@10.alumni.u-tokyo.ac.jp

THE ART OF MEDIATION THROUGH ‘THE UNIVERSE’ – A DIALOGUE BETWEEN AN
ENGINEER AND A DESIGNER AT CERN

Abstract

Over the centuries, collaborative research between artists and scientists has been an ambition, but it still remains an ambition rather than a successful research-mode. An innovative approach that can unite art, design, science, and engineering is needed as a framework for effective art/science disciplinary collaborations.

Assuming that the notion of ‘the universe’ in which we live is a concept that all humans can share, this paper considers how the idea of ‘the universe’ can connect the experts between and across different disciplines. This notion was developed through collaborative dialogue between an engineer at CERN and a designer at HEAD (Haute école d’art et de design), with the primary author acting as a mediator - forming bridges between these two main actors.

This mediated dialogue began with fundamental questions about the universe: “what are the core principles of the universe?”, “how do we perceive this universe?”, - or even “what is the meaning of life in this universe?”. This dialogue created a transformation of our usual perspectives, and it opened up our usual, narrow ways of viewing the world - in other words, we developed ways of looking at the world from a cosmic perspective.

The first, three-month-long, stage of the project was intended as a precursor to future collaborations. The project took place at the R&D platform at CERN called IdeaSquare. During the period of the project, the engineer and the designer together created a proposal for a new artistic practice in public, from scratch, with mediated dialogue as the basic means of a project evolution. The developed proposal was for the creation of a ‘Cosmic Table’ - a public installation in which visitors could feel a connection between the universe and other living beings. A working prototype was experimentally presented at CERN to test its design and functions.

Through the mediated dialogue, this paper explores the possibility of ‘the universe’ as a mutually acceptable idea established through mediation among experts, and examines how this might provoke diverse forms of public art and design that touch on the essence of the universe.