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

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'TO SPACE'- THE CREATION OF A LIVE THEATRE PERFORMANCE PIECE ABOUT SPACE EXPLORATION, FORMED THROUGH A COLLABORATION BETWEEN ARTISTS, THEATRE MAKERS, SCIENTISTS AND SPECIALIST SPACE-RELATED RESEARCH CENTRES.

Abstract

A one-woman multimedia lecture theatre performance, entitled 'To Space' about Space exploration, the human cost of space travel, Ireland's involvement in Space and the costs of keeping a life long dream alive was created through a collaboration between CIT Blackrock Castle Observatory, ESERO Ireland, European Space Agency, Science Foundation Ireland and a team of Irish artists and theatre makers. Project awards were received from Science Foundation Ireland's Discover Programme and The Arts Council of Ireland. An intensive research phase was conducted including site visits to research centres and interviews with Space scientists, astrophysicists and astronauts to capture the massive group effort required to put a human in space, reminding us of the frailty of life and ultimately our planet. The research also explored the wider social and cultural implications of Space exploration and the realistic possibility of human colonisation of Mars. This research was crafted by the artistic team, in conjunction with the author's personal archive, improvisation, visual art and dramaturgy to create an informal, cross-curricular

lecture/performance on STEM, Space Exploration and its human implications. The show was initially presented as a 'Work In Progress' event at The Festival of Curiosity in both Dublin (Smock Alley Theatre) and Cork (Blackrock Castle Observatory) venues. The full theatre show 'To Space' premiered at Science Gallery Dublin as part of Tiger Dublin Fringe Arts Festival. Response to the piece was very strong, indicated by audience response, box office sales and theatre reviews in national press and online. In 2014, 'To Space' was seen by a total audience of 680 and was included in European Space Agency's Annual Communications Yearbook. A national and international tour is in place for 2015 including the Edinburgh International Arts Festival. Blending humour, warmth and humanity and positioning science within story is a highly effective public engagement tool in igniting curiosity across many audience types. The nurturing and investment of artists working within these new cross-disciplinary relationships and the establishment of similar initiatives in other research centres should be encouraged and supported to further broaden and develop new methodology in public engagement.