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

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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 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 performed a total of 10 times and was seen by 680 audiences and was included in European Space Agency's Annual Communications Yearbook. Since then, the show continues to tour internationally at arts science festivals including Adelaide Fringe Festival (2016), Edinburgh International Science Festival (2016) Edinburgh International Arts Festival (2015). 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.