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

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THE CASE FOR ESTABLISHING A MEANINGFUL CULTURAL EXPANSION THROUGH SPACE ARCHITECTURE.

Abstract

Space Architecture has been defined as, 'the theory and practice of designing and building inhabited environments in outer space.' Architecture in this context has been understood to imply more than the organisation and integration of the multitude of complex elements and systems, but to an enrichment of the built environment. On the surface this would appear to be no different to terrestrial architecture, however the severe limitations imposed by the condition of space have thus far ruled out any meaningful and sustained cultural expansion.

This paper explores the case for the establishment of a stronger cultural foundation within future space architecture developments through the vehicle of a recent design entry to an international ideas and design competition that concerned a self-sufficient lunar base/colony. Acknowledging the numerous and irrevocable challenges that, when designing for space, one encounters, this competition entry chose to focus, in a creative way, on the establishment of cultural capital through the institution of lunar infrastructure, in order to explore serious cultural factors. The resulting design entry consciously raises questions concerning aspects of design, history and culture in the context of space architecture, and the meaningful inclusion of these aspects in what have been up until now, largely utilitarian projects. Is it not only important to physically establish humanity off-Earth, but to culturally establish humanity also?