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

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PLEADING THE CASE FOR THE ARTIST IN FUTURE HUMAN SPACE MISSION: THE CREW 173
EXPERIENCE AT MARS DESERT RESEARCH STATION.

Abstract

Capturing the human experience in analogue missions is a vital contribution to our better understanding of crew psychology and the impact of isolation on group dynamics for future colonisation of planets and human space exploration. Artists and their work have much to contribute to the deeper understanding of the human experience and should be considered as serious candidates in final crew selection. An international crew of five scientists, engineers, artists and entrepreneurs with different space specialisations were selected by the Mars Society for a simulated Mars mission at Mars Desert Research Station (MDRS) in the Utah high desert in January 2017. Team PRIMA Crew 173 conducted research in 3D printing, hydroponics, and geology as part of their scientific mission objectives as well as an extensive outreach and public engagement strategy. In addition to participating in all crew activities and making their own work whilst at MDRS, the resident artist used video, audio, photography and personal testimony to respond and reflect the shared experience (before, during and after the expedition) and the wider themes of community at the core of this mission. The role of the artist has much to contribute to a better understanding of crew dynamics and such mutually beneficial collaborations warrant further consideration in future mission design and planning.