

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Space Culture – Public Engagement in Space through Culture (9)

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CAN ARTISTS AND CREATIVE PRACTITIONERS HELP TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF
HUMANKIND IN SPACE BEYOND DESIGN?

Abstract

Throughout history, artists have presented visions of utopian societies or proclaimed manifestos expressing demands and desires to change the world. The fact that the Bauhaus school was closed by the Nazis for being too 'socialist' in their ideas, or that Ai Weiwei was imprisoned for apparently fictitious tax evasion charges, exemplifies the awareness governments have of the power of art and design to communicate ideas and ideals.

In an age where technology is racing beyond our ability to cognitively understand its implications, we find that damage limitation measures are often implemented in retrospect. As humans look beyond our perfect habitat to colonise and commercialise the hostile environments of outer space, how important will it be to involve artists in preparing for the cultural, ecological, economical and sociological impact this will have, in advance?

Many artists today are not just multidisciplinary in terms of the materials and media they use to create art, but are practitioners who use creative and critical thinking skills to solve problems and break boundaries across many industries. As an artist working primarily with explosives, the root of my practice with this contentious material lies in highlighting the intention of the individual or collective to choose how to use the physical and societal tools we have at our disposal, including economical, legal, political and social structures.

I am currently artist in residence at the European Space Agency's technical centre, ESTEC, Netherlands and at Ars Electronica Futurelab, Austria. Star Storm will be a series of spectacular explosive performances inspired by my research about the processes and physics of the stars and our Sun. This project will be used as a test case to explore pathways in which artists can influence the future of space culture beyond design. Using its conceptual basis to ask, 'How can we best use our tools to create a positive future in space?', I will look at how creative practitioners have influenced society throughout history and examine the potential power of the creative industries, a \$2,200billion global economy. I will research the structure and underlying objectives which dominate decision making about space colonisation within my resident democratic government of the UK, and publicly funded space organisations such as the ESA. I will engage with existing arts and science forums, and will report my findings on the effectiveness of each pathway to actually shape the future of humankind in space beyond design.