

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

Author: Ms. Aoife van Linden Tol
Feral Events, United Kingdom

CHAOS AND CREATION: THE CONSCIOUS CULTURING OF SPACE

Abstract

My paper for the 2017 IAC asked “CAN ARTISTS AND CREATIVE PRACTITIONERS HELP TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF HUMAN KIND IN SPACE BEYOND DESIGN?” I concluded that it was not only possible but that there was a demonstrable need for their contribution to the development of culture in space.

As humanity prepares mentally, politically and practically to live and work in space more regularly and for longer durations, the space industry is now faced with the responsibility being in the position of a gatekeeper. Holding the keys to the cosmos for all of humanity not just its own industry and its own directives. How the space industry responds to this responsibility will be hugely important in shaping the future of what it means for humans to live, work and visit space, whether in low earth orbit, space stations, the Moon or Mars.

On Earth cultures have evolved over time according to the fluid and complex interactions of historical, social, political and physical environment. All humans have influenced this from every location, class, gender and profession. The development of space culture as life and living 'in space' as distinguished from the culture of working or learning about space on Earth, is largely unaddressed. It is assumed that our activities in space will simply bring Earth culture to space. The space industry do not see themselves as 'culture creators' whereby their activities will dictate a new cultural evolution of human existence in space.

My observations are that space industry sees the value of involving the arts, humanities, and other domains in discussions about the future of space, however, they struggle to quantify or justify the potential benefits in order to allocate meaningful budgets. It is difficult to align this work with existing directives and work flows in order to produce demonstrable outcomes for their respective agencies and organisations.

This paper will review the current situation regarding the need for the space industry to be consciously aware of its role in the culturing of space. It will present the progress, results and findings from my workshops, interactive events as well as the program, Conscious Culture, all designed with the suggestions and recommendations outlined in the conclusion of my previous paper in mind. It will examine how other creative practitioners and space organisations are beginning to engage in the problem and discuss the collective effect of all these efforts.