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Space Culture – Public Engagement in Space through Culture (9)

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MEMORIES OF THE MOON AGE. MANKIND'S DREAM OF FLYING TO THE MOON BETWEEN
SCIENCE AND FICTION

Abstract

Abstract: For centuries mankind has been fascinated by space travel and visiting other planets. Long before engineers and scientists took the possibility of traveling to the Moon seriously virtually all of its aspects were first explored in art and literature. The presentation traces a visual cultural history of lunar exploration from past, to present, and future, that is easily accessible for a wider public.

The Moon still serves as object of creative projection and speculation to visionaries across the globe. The presentation offers an equally eclectic and inspiring journey through history that ranges from Ptolemy's early calculations of the distance to the Moon, Galileo Galilei's telescope pen drawings of the lunar surface, to fictional Moon travels from Johannes Kepler, Cyrano de Bergerac, Edgar Allen Poe, Jules Verne, and Stanislav Lem. The presentation also pays tribute to the pioneers of rocket-science such as Max Valier, Hermann Oberth, and Wernher von Braun, the congenial bond of art, commerce and science during the golden age of space travel in the mid 20th century to NASA's Apollo 11 Moon landing, the overlooked female heroes of the space race like the Mercury 13 Lady astronauts-in-training or the numerous, anonymous NASA seamstress of the Apollo space suits, all the way to contemporary enterprises in lunar travel from private entrepreneurs to National space agencies, and lunar constructions from Foster + Partners to Cloud Architecture Office. The current reemergence of the Moon across all media and disciplines is subliminally fueling the public imagination once again and might be preparing humankind for the dawn of a new space age.

Against this backdrop the presentation explores new possibilities of storytelling that speak out to a broader public and that aims to cultivate a heightened sense of contemporary cultural reflexivity towards all topics concerning space travel. The presentation is based on the eponymous book "Memories of the Moon" Age by Lukas Feireiss. Feireiss is also the editor of the book "Planetary Echoes. Exploring Human Settlement in Outer Space", that focuses on our imagination of life on other planets in the arts, literature, and sciences at the beginning of the 21st century. 50 years after humankind first sets foot on the Moon, the presentation explores space travel to the Moon as the ultimate flight of fancy for the human imagination and testing ground for ideas in reality.