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

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UAE'S SPACE CULTURE FLOURISHING THROUGH ART AND ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY.

Abstract

The UAE is a young country with a young space program. The ambition to go to space was born briefly after the country's birth when Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan, the UAE's founding father and former president, met with three Apollo 17 astronauts in Abu Dhabi in 1976. The country launched its first satellite in 2009 and established its space agency in 2014. Since then, notable growth in the country's vision and space-related policies has been seen. Mainly in establishing different space-related centers and space programs.

Furthermore, the UAE society showed an increased number of enthusiastic amateur astronomers, photographers, and artists inspired by outer space. Art is a depiction, as many artists agree. They use art to depict popular events happening during their lifetime and show their interpretation of these events. Astrophotography is the art and science of capturing astronomical images. It has a relatively short history in the country. The first astronomical society was established in the 1990s, which kickstarted the field of Astrophotography in the country. The launch of the Emirates Mars Mission in July of 2020, which contained the Hope Probe to study the planet's properties, included an "Exploration Imager (EXI)" that sent high-resolution images of the Martian surface. Today, the country has seen significant growth in this form of space art as several observatories were built, allowing professionals and amateurs to photograph the night sky.

In this paper, we plan to investigate this further by looking into the influence of the UAE space program on different UAE-based artists and astrophotographers. We shed light on painters, graffiti artists, cartoonists, and astrophotographers. We also showcase the artistic designs of buildings in the UAE inspired by space. Furthermore, we aim to be the first to document the country's space art and astrophotography practices in a single work.