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SPACE ACTS – A WORKSHOP ON UN-EARTHING AND METEORITES AS PHARMAKON

Abstract

The proposed contribution discusses an evolving workshop format in which I initiate discussions of the Earth-Space complex, specifically aspects of Space Mining. Through performative and bodily approaches towards extraterrestrial material, i.e. meteorites, participants engage in a multilayered storytelling and exchange on human/non-human relations, the colonization and potential de-colonization of space, and how seemingly distant activities in outer space are linked to rather earthly realities. Developed as part of my contribution to the 2021 exhibition “The World is in You” (Copenhagen Medical Museion), *Space Acts* engages a broader public into a dedicated and critical discussion of space. I have held versions of the workshop in various European art and science institutions and community centers in urban as well as rural areas. Through the strategic use of meteorites as readily available extraterrestrial material, and expanding on my own performative and pharmaceutical work with meteoritic material, the workshop has attracted participants beyond exclusive art or science audiences, at the same time stimulating transdisciplinary exchange between artistic research and other scientific fields.

The workshop is based on my continuing work on *un-Earthing*, a transdisciplinary concept I have developed in my artistic research PhD “Space Un-Settlements” (University of Applied Arts, Vienna, 2016-2022). While the original English “unearthing” denotes the excavation of things, mostly from the past, from underground, un-Earthing points outwards, into the future, and refers to the transformations of humans and human cultures by and in space. Informed by the multifaceted interrelations of Earth and space, these processes display a deep entanglement of facts and fabrications on and off Earth. Furthermore, un-Earthing invokes the extraction of natural resources on other celestial bodies, an unearthing of unearthly resources. In past years, the popular Science Fiction trope of asteroid mining has been translated into various national legislations, its narratives attracting investors, scientific funding, and popular imagination alike. Not surprisingly, these narratives swiftly reveal their roots and routes to historical and contemporary forms of colonization and exploitation. Via participants’ physical interaction with small pieces and dust of meteorites (including touching, licking, or tasting), the workshop renders often abstract issues like future interplanetary extraction schemes, or extractivist capitalism on Earth, graspable. Meteorites, understood as a cosmic “pharmakon” (via Jacques Derrida, Isabelle Stengers, Paul B. Preciado), reveal our own complicity as well as agency in re-imagining futures, on Earth and in space.

For details on un-Earthing see <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003280507-35> , for my work with meteorites <https://doi.org/10.25038/am.v0i29.559> .