

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Space Culture: New Processes of Public Engagement in Space through Culture and Art (9)

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AN ASSEMBLY FOR THE COSMOS: DECOLONIZATION, IMAGINATION AND SPACE
DIPLOMACY

Abstract

Far from declining, the colonialist, expansionist and extractivist vision inherited from the space race led by Western imperialism has recently undergone a dramatic upsurge with the transfer of major space activities to the private sector. This new conquest is accompanied by a culture of space and ideologies that leave little room for other subjectivities and imaginaries in the human relationship with the cosmos.

The SBC Contemporary Art Gallery is an exhibition center whose programs apply extended, alternative and decolonial curatorial research and learning methodologies. The Gallery will present a multi-sited exhibition in Montreal in 2026, divided between two contemporary art venues (Galerie de l'UQAM and SBC), a science of the universe museum (Planetarium) and involving the academic (UQAM), field science (FRIPON) and amateur communities and other partners through the Mexican Consulate in Montreal. In this multiple, inter-institutional North American, Francophone, diasporic and indigenous context, the question arises of the methodologies and approaches used to reflect on the decolonization of space from a curatorial perspective.

This presentation will focus on the practice of four artists and collectives (Jonas Staal, Skawennati, The Otolith Group, Marcela Armas) who place at the heart of their processes and strategies a relationship with the cosmos that rejects the logic of exploitation and appropriation that have prevailed on Earth.

As a curator involved in this research from the outset, I would like to offer some thoughts and answers to the following questions: Can we build intra-planetary and inter-planetary relations that do not reproduce the logic of oppression and anthropocentric pre-eminence?

How can we bring socio-cultural singularities and ancestral, indigenous, communitarian and non-human knowledge to the fore, to turn away from homogenizing logic and activate new imaginaries for the cosmos?

In the formation of these new cosmologies engaged in a transdisciplinary approach, contemporary artists and the communities they activate question how to think of an assembly for the cosmos, what parliament (Latour, 1991) to constitute, what spatial cooperation to apply for a radical egalitarianism (Staal, 2019)? Contemporary artists are helping us to think about radical futures and to ask what cosmic diplomacy we can adopt to avoid repeating historical narratives.

This exhibition marks a unique point in the reflections between contemporary art and the sciences of the Universe in Quebec, from a perspective of the decolonization of space. That is why this exchange will be fundamental to our thinking.