

Declaring the Republic of the Moon - Some artistic strategies for re-imagining the Moon.

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Abstract

Sooner or later, humans are going back to the Moon, whether to mine it, to rehearse for a Mars mission or to just live there. But how will human activity there reflect what has happened on Earth since the last moon mission, to reflect the diversity and political and social changes that have happened since? Can artists imagine what it would be like to live on the Moon?

Artists are already taking part in many scientific endeavours, becoming involved in emerging fields such as synthetic biology, nanotechnology, ecological remediation and enthusiastically participating in citizen science. There are already artists in Antarctica. It should be inevitable that artists will sooner or later accompany the next visit by humans to the Moon.

But why wait? Artists are already imagining how it would be to live on the Moon, whether in their imaginations or through rehearsals in lunar analogues. In the recent exhibition 'Republic of the Moon' a number of visionary strategies were employed, from the use of earth-moon-earth 'moonbouncing' (Katie Paterson) to the breeding and imprinting of real geese as imagined astronauts. (Agnes Meyer-Brandis). The Outer Space Treaty and the (unsigned) Moon treaty were re-analysed and debates and even small demonstrations were organised protesting (or demanding) the industrial exploitation of the Moon.

Fortuitously, China's Chang-e mission landed during the exhibition and the life and death of the rover Jade Rabbit brought a real life drama to the Republic of the Moon.

There have been other artistic interventions into lunar exploration, including Aleksandra Mir's First Woman on the Moon, Alicia Framis's Moonlife project and of course the historic inclusion of two artistic artefacts into the Apollo missions, Monument to the Fallen Astronaut (still on the Moon) and the Moon Museum, reportedly inserted by an engineer into the leg of the Lunar Exploration Module. With the worldwide race by the Global Lunar X Prize teams to land a rover independently of any to fly in the government agency by the end of 2015 there must surely be a possibility for a real art project near future. In the meantime artists will keep working to re-imagine the Moon using whatever strategies they can find.

1. Introduction

This paper will summarise the current state of artistic engagement with the Moon and set out some possibilities for future collaborations between artists and lunar explorers.

