

Envisioning Limits: Outer Space and the End of Utopia

Berlin, Germany, Apr 19–21, 2012

William Macauley

The Future in the Stars: European Astroculture and Extraterrestrial Life in the Twentieth Century
Emmy Noether Research Group
Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut
Freie Universität Berlin

Envisioning Limits
Outer Space and the End of Utopia

International Conference
Berlin, 19-21 April 2012

If space exploration is understood as not just one of the twentieth century's most prestigious feats of engineering, but also a central theme in period visions of the future and utopias, then how might we understand the transition from the 1960s to the 1970s, with its emphasis on reduced possibilities and limitations to progress? The conference aims to shift the focus away from explanations of transition framed within the Cold War context and provide more nuanced narratives: from the familiar struggle between two superpowers, namely the USA and the former USSR, to distinctly West-European perspectives, and from political to socio-cultural dimensions of the Space Age. How were limits created, maintained and challenged? In what sense was outer space invoked to transform cultural boundaries? And how were these conveyed to different audiences? The conference will look at utopia not as a socio-cultural objective but rather as a process. Through defining limitless opportunities afforded by outer space, advocates of space exploration not only opened up new possibilities for accelerating or even surpassing human development, but also delineated the historicity and limitations of the imagination.

Conference speakers include Debora Battaglia (Mount Holyoke College), Martin Collins (National Air and Space Museum), David A. Kirby (University of Manchester), John Krige (Georgia Institute of Technology), Roger D. Launius (National Air and Space Museum), Agnes Meyer-Brandis (Universität der Künste Berlin) and Helmuth Trischler (Deutsches Museum).

There is a conference fee of 50 € (concessions 25 €) to cover the cost of food, drinks and refreshments. For further information and to register please contact the conveners Alexander C.T. Gepert, William R. Macauley and Daniel Brandau at astrofuturismus@fu-berlin.de.

– PROGRAM –

THURSDAY, 19 April 2012

09.00 Introduction

Alexander C.T. Geppert, William R. Macauley and Daniel Brandau (all Berlin): The 1970s, Western Europe and the Delineation of Space

09.30 Feature Presentation I

Martin Collins (Washington, DC): Ambiguities of the 1970s. Spaceflight and the Problem of Historically Interpreting the In-Between Decade

11.00 Panel I: Transitions

Chair: Paul Nolte (Berlin)

Andrew Jenks (Long Beach, CA): Transnational History and Human Space Flight

Doug Millard (London): Were the 1970s a Period of Transition for the History of Britain's Exploration of Space?

14.00 Panel II: Pictures

Chair: Thomas P. Weber (Brussels)

Robert Poole (Lancaster): '2001: A Space Odyssey.' Space Travel and the Ends of Progress

Ralf Bülow (Berlin): The X Files. Reading a West German Sci-Tech Magazine from 1969 to 1973

16.00 Panel III: Laws

Chair: Peter Becker (Vienna)

Luca Follis (Lancaster): Beyond Law's Frontier. The Normative Imaginary of Outer Space

Virgiliu Pop (Timisoara): The Moon Agreement and the Beginning of Utopia

19.00 Feature Presentation II

Agnes Meyer-Brandis (Berlin): Space Traveling. A Performance-Lecture Examining Real Utopian Aspects of Interplanetary Exchange of Idea and Matter

FRIDAY, 20 April 2012

09.00 Feature Presentation III

Chair: William R. Macauley (Berlin)

John Krige (Atlanta, GA): Blowback, Lift Off. The Rise of Ariane and the Decline of US Monopoly of Access to Space in the 1970s

10.15 Panel IV: Politics

Chair: Etienne Benson (Berlin)

Matthew H. Hersch (Philadelphia, PA): 'On the Edge of Forever.' 1972 and the New American Space Consensus

Neil M. Maher (Brunswick, NJ): Ground Control. Space Technology, Environmentalism, and Détente Across the Developing World

13.00 Panel V: Texts

Chair: Matthias Schwartz (Berlin)

Florian Kläger (Münster): Reading into the Stars. Cosmology and Self-Reflexivity in the British Novel of the 1970s

Aleksandra Idzior (Abbotsford): Images of Extraterrestrial Life and Designs for 'Out-of-Space' in Poland during the 1960s and 1970s

15.00 Panel VI: Aesthetics

Chair: Claudia Schmölders (Berlin)

Christina Vatsella (Paris): Artworks in Orbit. The Satellite Art Projects

Thore Bjoernvig (Copenhagen): Unlimited Play in a World of Limits. The Lego Classic Space Theme, 1978-80

17.00 Panel VII: Prospects

Chair: Debbora Battaglia (South Hadley, MA)

Philippe Ailleris (Noordwijk): Red Soil, Phonograph Records and United Nations Resolution 33/426. Our 1970s Extraterrestrial Heritage

Janet Vertesi (Princeton, NJ) and Lisa Messeri (Philadelphia, PA): The Greatest Mission Never Flown. Mars Sample Return, Terrestrial Planet Finder, and the Limits of Utopia

SATURDAY, 21 April 2012

09.00 Panel VIII: Habitats

Chair: Thomas Brandstetter (Basel)

W. Patrick McCray (Santa Barbara, CA): Gerard O'Neill's Visioneering of the 'High Frontier'

Gonzalo Munevar (Southfield, MI): Space Colonies and their Critics

11.00 Panel IX: Transcendence

Chair: Helmuth Trischler (Munich)

Peter J. Westwick (Los Angeles, CA): From the Club of Rome to Star Wars. The Era of Limits, Space Colonization, and the Origins of the Strategic Defense Initiative

Roger D. Launius (Washington, DC): Human Spaceflight as Religion in the Aftermath of the Space Race

14.00 Conclusion

Chair: Alexander C.T. Geppert (Berlin)

David A. Kirby (Manchester): General Comment

16.00 End

– CONFERENCE VENUE –

Harnack-Haus der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft

Uhlenstrasse 16-20

D-14195 Berlin

www.harnackhaus-berlin.mpg.de

– CONTACT –

The Future in the Stars: European Astroculture and Extraterrestrial Life in the Twentieth Century

Emmy Noether Research Group

Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut

Freie Universität Berlin

Koserstrasse 20

Arthist.net

D-14195 Berlin

astrofuturismus@fu-berlin.de

www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/astrofuturism

www.limits.geschkult.fu-berlin.de

Reference:

CONF: Envisioning Limits: Outer Space and the End of Utopia. In: Arthist.net, Feb 16, 2012 (accessed Sep 16, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/2718>>.