Moon Museum. Curating Outer Space (Vienna, 28–29 May 26)

TU Wien, May 28–29, 2026
Registration deadline: May 25, 2026

Thomas Moser & Magdalena Grüner

Moon Museum:
Curating Outer Space.

As omnipresent as the universe is in the public imaginary, it constitutes a representational paradox: distorted space, warped time, twisted logic. Time and again, scientists, exhibition makers, and artists have grappled with the challenge of mediating the alterity of the cosmos our planet is embedded in. From space art to science fiction cinema, from documentaries to pulp fiction, from planetarium displays to museum dioramas, outer space—its landscapes, denizens, and infrastructures—has been invented and re-invented in myriad ways. This conference turns to the medium of display and considers outer space as a curatorial problem: we approach this field of inquiry from two angles, examining both how outer space was historically exhibited on earth, and how outer space itself has been conceived of as a site of exhibition.

Exhibits of outer space raise questions about how the cosmos was staged at various moments in time, how it mobilized colonial and imperial attitudes, how it served as a geopolitical arena, and how it projected different futures. Conversely, exhibitions in outer space compel us to rethink fundamental curatorial assumptions and categories: what is the meaning of ‘art’ in an extraterrestrial environment? What is a museum, an exhibit, a display without an audience? What might it mean to curate for a non-human or extraterrestrial audience? In bringing these two perspectives together, we seek to offer opportunities for critical reflection and speculative re-imagination of inquiries at the intersections of the cultural history of outer space and curatorial and museum studies.

Free registration: thomas.moser@tuwien.ac.at

Concept & Organization
Magdalena Grüner (USC Los Angeles)
Thomas Moser (TU Wien/NDU St. Pölten)

PROGRAM

>> Thursday, May 28
Room AD 0117 (1st floor), Karlsplatz 13

13:30

Welcome & Introduction
Magdalena Grüner (USC Los Angeles)
Thomas Moser (TU Wien/NDU St Pölten)

14:00
Chair: Mihály András Németh (TU Wien)

Wenjie Su (Princeton University/University of Arkansas)
Curating the Shared Blind Spots: From Traveling Cosmic Machines to Immersive Planetariums in the Eighteenth Century

Alena Williams (Academy of Fine Arts Vienna)
“Earth, Air, and Space”: Imaging Conceptualism at the Hayden Planetarium

15:30 Coffee

16:00
Chair: Florian Bettel (University of Applied Arts Vienna)

Lois Rosson (NASA History Office)
Frederick C. Durant‘s Interplanetary Space Art Emporium: The Provenance of a Cold War Cultural Exchange

Saulesh Yessenova (University of Calgary)
Curating the Space Age: Myth, Empire, and the Politics of Display

17:30 Coffee

18:00
Keynote (Festsaal, 1st Floor)
Moderation: Sandra Häuplik-Meusburger (TU Wien)

Barbara Imhof (University of Innsbruck/LIQUIFER)
Staging Space Futures: Architecture, Agency, and the Planetary Imaginary

>> Friday, May 29
Room AD EG (ground floor), Karlsplatz 13

09:30
Chair: Sophie Ramm (TU Wien)

Ellie S. Armstrong (University of Leicester)
Storying NewSpace Enterprises: The Politics of the Cosmos

Ralo Mayer (Vienna)
“I’m a meteorite licker.” Storying Plots of Un·Earthing through Performative Research

11:00 Coffee

11:30
Chair: Christian Klösch (Vienna Museum of Science and Technology)

Joseph Popper & Lauren Reid (University of Vienna & Leuphana University Lüneburg)
Golden Records, Spherical Telescopes and Mashed Potatoes:
Curating First Contacts and Mediating Alterity in Outer Space

Gudrun Rath (University of Art Linz)
Ticket to the Moon

13:00 Lunch

15:00
Chair: Alexander C. T. Geppert (New York University/NYU Shanghai)

Magdalena Becker (Technical University of Munich)
Crafting Outer Space: Pop-Cultural Imaginaries and
Diorama-Making at the Deutsches Museum in Munich

Clemens Finkelstein (LMU Munich/global dis:connect)
Cosmic Proxies: The Exhibitionary Life of Planetary Analogs

16:30 Closure

Reference:
CONF: Moon Museum. Curating Outer Space (Vienna, 28-29 May 26). In: ArtHist.net, May 3, 2026 (accessed Nov 4, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/52359>.