

PRESS RELEASE

Republic of the Moon

16 December 2011 – 26 February 2012

(Press view 15 December)

FACT, Liverpool

As the players in the new 21st century race for the Moon line up – the USA, China, India and Russia jostling with private corporations interested in exploiting the Moon's resources - a group of artists are declaring a Republic of the Moon: a 'micronation' for alternative visions of lunar life.

Republic of the Moon challenges utilitarian plans for lunar mines and military bases with artists' imaginings and interventions. Combining beguiling fantasies, personal encounters, and playful appropriations of space habitats and scientific technologies, Republic of the Moon reclaims the Moon for artists, idealists, and dreamers. The last Moon race was driven by the political impulses of the Cold War, but shaped by extraordinary visions of space created by writers, film-makers, and artists, from Jules Verne, Lucien Rudaux, and Vasily Levshin, to HG Wells, Stanislav Lem and Stanley Kubrick. Can artists' quixotic visions reconcile our romantic notions of the Moon with its colonised future, and help us to reimagine our relationship with our natural satellite in the new space age?

Curated by The Arts Catalyst and FACT, Republic of the Moon includes major new commissions by **Agnes Meyer-Brandis** and **WE COLONISED THE MOON**, and works by **Leonid Tishkov**, **Andy Gracie**, **Liliane Lijn** and **Sharon Houkema**.

Agnes Meyer Brandis' poetic-scientific investigations weave fact, imagination, storytelling and myth, past, present and future. In *The Moon Goose Analogue: Lunar Migration Bird Facility Liverpool* major new work the artist develops an ongoing narrative based on the book *The Man in the Moone*, written by the English bishop Francis Godwin in 1638, in which the protagonist flies to the Moon in a chariot towed by 'moon geese'. Meyer-Brandis has actualised this concept by raising eleven moon geese from birth in Italy, giving them astronauts' names*, imprinting them on herself as goose-mother, training them to fly and taking them on expeditions. The artist will build a remote Moon analogue habitat for the geese, which will be operated from a control room within the gallery.

Luring us onto the surface of the Moon, **WE COLONISED THE MOON** (Sue Corke and Hagen Betzwieser) will create an immersive audience experience, *Enter At Own Risk*. For this new commission, the artists are synthesising the smell of the Moon and developing an experimental performance piece, drawing on the entertainment iconography of early astronaut training.

Leonid Tishkov's *Private Moon*, by contrast, brings the Moon down to us. Tishkov tells the story of a man who met the Moon and stayed with her for the rest of his life. In a series of photographs, the artist pairs images of his private moon with verse which describes how the Moon helps us to overcome our loneliness in the universe by uniting us around it. Tishkov and his illuminated moon have travelled the world for almost ten years. He has a dream to fly with her to the Moon.

Transforming the everyday into the mesmerisingly beautiful, **Sharon Houkema's** *M3*, created with characteristic simplicity with an overhead projector and a bucket of water, conjures a moon so tantalisingly close you can almost hold it.

Weaving together artistic metaphor and scientific rigour, **Andy Gracie's** DIY-astrobiology experiment *Drosophila Titanus* attempts to select and breed an organism – a new strain of fruit fly – that might survive on Titan, a moon of Saturn. The artist recreates the environmental and atmospheric conditions found on Titan using everyday materials such as vodka, smoke alarms and a bicycle pump. The first iteration of the experiment was performed by Gracie with Kuaishen Auson, Janine Fenton and Meredith Walsh, in *Laboratory Life*, co-commissioned by The Arts Catalyst and Lighthouse earlier this year.

In **Liliane Lijn's** *moonmeme*, the artist reveals her concept to write on the Moon from the Earth using a laser beam. The word 'SHE' is projected onto the surface of the moon, the meaning of this word being gradually transformed as the Moon moves through its phases, the work combines territorial appropriation, the technological extension of human consciousness and mythologies. *moonmeme* is a symbolic union of opposites and an homage to the feminine principal of transformation and renewal.

The artists in **Republic of the Moon** regard the moon not as a resource to be exploited but as a heavenly body that belongs to us all. Who will be the first colonisers of the Moon? Perhaps it should be the artists.

Republic of the Moon is a touring exhibition and programme curated by The Arts Catalyst and FACT. It has been made possible with Grants for the Arts support from Arts Council England.

* Moon geese named: Neil, Svetlana, Gonzales, Valentina, Friede, Juri, Buzz, Kaguya-Anousheh, Irena, Rakesh, Konstantin-Hermann

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Notes to Editors

1. 16 December 2011 – 26 February 2012 FACT, Wood Street Liverpool www.fact.co.uk
2. **The Arts Catalyst** commissions contemporary art that experimentally and critically engages with science. It produces provocative, playful, risk-taking artists' projects to spark dynamic conversations about our changing world and seeks new ways to involve artists, scientists and the wider public in a discourse about the impact of science in society. The Arts Catalyst, 50-54 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1M 5PS, www.artscatalyst.org
3. **FACT** (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) has been leading the UK video, film and new media arts scene for more than 20 years with groundbreaking exhibitions, education and research projects. It aims to pioneer new forms of artistic and social interaction with individuals and communities.