They Shall Have Stars

Friday 16 October, 2015

They Shall Have Stars is a group show looking to Space, to what may be the home for the ultimate human diaspora and considering our relative position and direction. The title of the show is borrowed from a James Blish novel, the first of his *Cities in Flight* series in which a new interstellar civilisation occurs. *They Shall Have Stars* is a title with a grand claim imbued with ambition and an inference of inevitability. We live in a time when science fiction continues to become reality: 2015 saw water found on Mars and the discovery of Exoplanet Kepler-452b, Earth's closest twin. Data from deep space is regularly received on Earth and even hover boards are now on the market.

Each artist in the show is thinking about our place in the universe, from communicating with it, listening to it, pressing at its edges or preparing for a new way of life with work by Simon Faithfull, ELK and Cassini Sound, Joshua WF Thomson and Agnes Meyer-Brandis.

The exhibition begins with a chair leaving Earth. **Simon Faithfull**'s *Escape Vehicle no. 6* (2004) shows footage of a domestic chair attached to a weather balloon journeying 30km up into the edge of space. Up, up it goes, the empty chair inviting us to imagine taking the trip beyond the clouds to see the curvature of the Earth and blackness of space only to be ripped apart in the minus 60°C.

Lonely Speck, Cosmic Dark is a collaboration between design studio **ELK and Cassini Sound**. They have synthesised deep space data from NASA into audible and tangible forms. Visitors can listen to sounds of the universe from the droning bass notes of Jupiter to the gentle patter of a lightning storm on Saturn on bespoke MP3 players. For the artists, the sounds are tinged with an uneasy bleakness reinforcing the fact that there are millions of miles of lonely cold, black space between us and the origin of each piece.

In 1977 NASA launched Voyager complete with a Golden Record containing sounds and images portraying life and culture on Earth to anyone, or anything, that might find them. *Platinum Metres* is artist and musician **Joshua WF Thomson**'s reworking of this epic mission. On 4 August 2013 *Platinum Metres* was blasted into Space from the Japanese Tanegashima Space Centre onboard a nano-satellite toward the International Space Station where it docked before being sent into orbit on 20 November 2013. Copies of the record and supporting films about the endeavour are shown at NN so we can share Joshua's love letter to the vinyl format and tribute to the Golden Record.

The final work in the exhibition is the documentary film *The Moon Goose Colony* by **Agnes Meyer-Brandis**. The artist has developed an on-going narrative based on the book *The Man in the Moone* written by 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 astronaut's names, imprinting them on herself as goose-mother, training them to fly and taking them on expeditions and housing them in a remote Moon analogue habitat.

This project is part of NN's Ways to think about diaspora season. *They Shall Have Stars* runs concurrently with the offsite project *Filaments from the Dandelion Clock*.

A series of events will accompany the exhibition including a Science Fiction readings and panel discussion featuring Donna Scott (Writer and Chair of the British Science Fiction Association), Ian Whates (Writer and Founder of NewCon Press) with special guests.

About the exhibition

They Shall Have Stars

Artists: Agnes Meyer-Brandis, ELK and Cassini Sound,
Joshua WF Thomson, Simon Faithfull

23 October–4 December 2015
Opening night: 22 October 2015, 6pm

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NN is a contemporary art space in the centre of Northampton. We work with artists at all stages of their careers to present an international programme of contemporary art. NN's 2015 Diaspora season is programme of contemporary visual art exhibitions and multidisciplinary events in and around NN. For further information about the project and NN visit: www.nncontemporaryart.org

Opening times:
Wednesday–Saturday 11am–6pm
Sunday 2pm–5pm
Free admission
NN Contemporary Art, 9 Guildhall Rd, Northampton NN1 1DP

NN is supported by:
Arts Council England
Northampton Borough Council
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