



**CULVERCENTER** of the arts  
**SweeneyArtGallery**

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## ***Free Enterprise: The Art of Citizen Space Exploration***

Sweeney Art Gallery,  
University of California, Riverside  
<http://sweeney.ucr.edu>

***Free Enterprise: The Art of Citizen Space Exploration*** will be the first contemporary art exhibition in the U.S. to explore implications of civilian space travel which represents a major political and cultural shift away from sponsorship by the federal government and toward a free-market, private enterprise model. *Free Enterprise* is comprised of several artist commissions, a multi-stage project structure, a variety of public programs, and two publications. It is co-curated by Sweeney's director, Tyler Stallings, and Marko Peljhan, Departments of Art, and Media Arts & Technology, UC Santa Barbara. Major support is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, University of California Institute for Research in the Arts, and the French-American Cultural Exchange Program.

**EXHIBITION DATES:** January 19-March 23, 2013

**CONTEXT:** Sweeney Art Gallery, part of the University of California with its own historic ties to aerospace and NASA, is ideally positioned to host *Free Enterprise* referencing Southern California's premiere place in the heyday of the aerospace industry that culminated in moon landings from 1969 to 1972. *Free Enterprise's* structure of linking artists with aerospace entrepreneurs harkens back to the groundbreaking Art & Technology program at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967-1971 (almost the same time span as the flight years of the Apollo program). It paired artists with high technology corporations of the time in the "hope that new art forms might arise." The program was definitely one of the milestones--with influence to this day--in probing the dense associations of art to technology and science

Recent developments in the aerospace industry mark the dawn of a new space race. Outsourcing of space travel to private business represents a refocus from the cold war mentality of the 1960's in which space exploration was a grand, national assertion of collective identity, and ownership of the "final frontier." In contrast, the U.S. President's 2011 budget emphasizes private development of commercial sub-orbital flight and lunar exploration, signaling a shift from "space" as an abstract concept for exploration into a de-regulated realm, unconstrained, and exposed, to both socialization and capitalization. International artists will explore these untested territories with aerospace experts, engineers, scientists, visionaries and entrepreneurs.

Southern California has been at the center of the world aerospace industry and *Free Enterprise* will explore questions of westward expansion and the frontier spirit; valuing or balancing individual initiative above/with/against the needs or well-being of the collective; the impact of market forces and free enterprise versus those of government protection and regulation. Although the private-public partnership is a somewhat novel model for space exploration, it is not new in the course of Western History. In fact, it has been the prime model for exploration and western expansion: the state sets goals and takes initial risks, followed by entrepreneurs, privateers or venture capitalists, who assume the ongoing burden of exploration. The legacy of this model is technological achievement, but one fraught with the exploitation and destruction of cultures and resources. It is exactly this schism on which *Free Enterprise* is focused, reflecting the current state of privately funded space exploration, and critically considering it from divergent perspectives, leaving room to explore



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utopian visionary roots where the arts and space collide.

**ARTISTS:** While there are a few well known artists who have worked with space imagery, such as Laurie Anderson (who was the first and the last (!) artist in residence at NASA), this exhibition focuses on lesser known artists, yet ones who have a deep engagement with space exploration issues throughout the course of the work. The confirmed artists all work in a process-oriented fashion, optimal for collaborating with scientists, visionaries, and experts outside traditional art making. While the exhibition theme is on U.S. and California developments, international artists will reflect the global affects of these U.S. endeavors.

The following are artists who have been contact and confirmed interest in participating. However, the final list of artists may change.

**1) Center for Land Use Interpretation** (Matt Coolidge, Sarah Simons, et. al., Los Angeles, CA) CLUI is a research and education organization interested in understanding the nature and extent of human interaction with the earth's surface. CLUI's project will evolve out of past, related projects such as *The Nellis Range Complex: Landscape of Conjecture*. [www.clui.org](http://www.clui.org)

**2) eteam** (Franziska Lamprecht & Hajoe Moderegger, New York & Mannheim) is in the business of buying land, whether in physical locations in the desert or virtual ones. Playing off real, huckster sites such as Lunar Real Estate or the Moon Shop, eteam is interested in exploring access to "private property on the moon." <http://www.meineigenheim.org/>

**3) Simone Aaberg Kaern and Copenhagen Suborbitals** (Copenhagen, Denmark) will collaborate for the first time on a project that will expand upon Kærn's exploration of the skies to low earth orbit, but her essential question will remain the same, "Who owns the sky?" From a global perspective, the sky and the airspace are a place of battles – over power, prestige and politics. At the same time, the sky is a place of refuge for individuals, a place onto which each may project his/her own wishes and dreams. <http://www.skysisters.com/>. Copenhagen Suborbitals is a Danish non-profit group composed of designers and developers of spacecraft. They are working fulltime to develop a series of suborbital space vehicles - designed to pave the way for manned space flight on a micro size spacecraft. <http://www.copenhagensuborbitals.com/index.php>

**4) Agnes Meyer-Brandis** (Köln, Germany) will present a project that continues her exploration in both the myths and realities of weightlessness. She will explore "weightless fantasies" imagined by Earth's new breed of space tourists and workers in privatized space exploration. <http://www.forschungsfloss.de/the-moon-geese-experiment/moongoose0.html>.

**5) Trevor Paglen** (Oakland, CA and New York, NY) will present work for the first time in Southern California from the ongoing series, *The Other Night Sky*, a project to track and photograph classified American satellites in Earth orbit, a total of 189 covert spacecraft. He has worked with computer scientists and engineers at the Eyebeam Center for Art + Technology to develop a software model to describe the orbital motion of classified spacecraft. Paglen is an artist, writer, and experimental geographer whose work deliberately blurs lines between social science, contemporary art, and journalism. <http://www.paglen.com/>

**6) Carrie Paterson** (Los Angeles, CA) will collaborate with aerospace industry entrepreneurs on the psychology / physiology of the discomfort of space travel creating a time-lapse scent-journey for the space tourist on short flights that gives an added narrative. This kind of environmental storytelling is used in the architecture of malls and amusement parks, which Paterson feels is a corollary to the consumable space journey of a space tourist. Paterson will construct simple beeswax scent carriers to make a home-sick kit that would be designed to quell feelings of unease, panic, or claustrophobia during sub-orbital flights or longer trips. <http://www.cpworks.org/>



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**7) Bradley Pitts** (New York, NY and Amsterdam, Netherlands) started SINGULAR OSCILLATIONS in 2008, an ongoing collaboration with Projekt Atol Flight Operations and the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center (GCTC), using their parabolic-flight aircraft capable of producing twenty-five second periods of weightlessness and double gravity. The project is driven by the impossible desire of experiencing emptiness without affecting it in any way: of being there without being there. <http://bradleypitts.info/Index.htm>

**8) Connie Samaras** (Los Angeles, CA) has dealt with built environments, global capitalism, and future imaginaries in her work for the past decade. For *Free Enterprise*, she will present large-scale photographs that document the construction of Spaceport America, the new commercial outer spaceport being built outside Truth or Consequences, New Mexico near White Sands Missile Range. This port (scheduled to be completed by early 2011) will eventually service both tourists traveling to outer space (currently being pioneered by Virgin Galactic) as well as various future commercial space ventures. This project charts the speculative landscapes and sci-fi tropes of shifting global economies. <http://www.conniesamaras.com>

**9) XCOR Aerospace** (Mojave, CA) is a small, privately-held California C Corporation founded in 1999. The company has evolved from its original four founders, working out of our chief engineer's tiny hangar, to a team of 20 plus highly-skilled, experienced and talented employees housed in a 10,375 square foot hangar on the Mojave Air & Space Port in Mojave, California. The company is the path to the dream of spaceflight for its founders who recognize that the only way for them to get to space is to make it affordable for private citizens. The exhibition will include several prototypes and equipment associated with the development of their suborbital vehicle. <http://www.xcor.com/>

**CURATORS: Tyler Stallings** is the director of University of California, Riverside's Sweeney Art Gallery. Recently, he has organized *Margarita Cabrera: Pulso y Martillo (Pulse and Hammer)*; *Mapping the Desert/Deserting the Map: An Interdisciplinary Response* (with Dick Hebdige), *Intelligent Design: Interspecies Art*, *Your Donations Do Our Work: Andrea Bowers and Suzanne Lacy*, *Absurd Recreation: Contemporary Art from China*, *Truthiness: Photography as Sculpture*, and *The Signs Pile Up: Paintings by Pedro Álvarez*. When chief curator at Laguna Art Museum (1999-2006), notable exhibitions that he organized included *Whiteness, A Wayward Construction*, *Surf Culture—The Art History of Surfing*, and *CLASS C: Ruben Ochoa*. His first exhibition to explore the intersection between artists and outer space was in 1997 with *Are We Touched? Identities from Outer Space*, which coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reported Roswell UFO crash and with NASA's Pathfinder landing on Mars that year. [www.sweeney.ucr.edu](http://www.sweeney.ucr.edu), <http://tylerstallings.com>

Professor **Marko Peljhan**, University of California Santa Barbara, cofounded the Ljudmila digital media lab in Slovenia and is active in numerous tactical media communities. He founded the arts and technology organization Projekt Atol and coordinates the ongoing mobile laboratory project Makrolab, focusing on telecommunications, migrations and weather systems in an intersection of art and science. His work has been installed internationally including the Venice, Gwangju and Johannesburg Biennials, Documenta, and Ars Electronica. He is currently active in the Microgravity Interdisciplinary Research (MIR) initiative, coordinating and flight directing microgravity and space-art related experiments with the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre in Star City. <http://www.arcticperspective.org>, [www.icepac.org](http://www.icepac.org), <http://makrolab.ljudmila.org/>

Both curators are involved with the Leonardo Space Art workshop, sponsored by MIT's Leonardo journal, and the International Astronautical Federation Committee for the Cultural Utilization of Space (ITACCUS), a largely European-based organization that promotes and facilitates the innovative utilization of space by cultural sectors of society internationally.

**PUBLICATIONS:** A full color book will be published and distributed in conjunction with the exhibition. It will function as both a stand-alone book and a catalog to the exhibition, featuring essays by co-curators Stallings and Peljhan, along with possible other ones from the exhibition's advisory board members, whose names include: Rob La Frenais, curator of The Arts Catalyst in London, England; Rob Latham, UCR English professor and senior



editor of the journal *Science Fiction Studies*; Roger F. Malina, astrophysicist at the Laboratoire d'Astrophysique de Marseille CNRS in France and Executive Editor of the Leonardo publications at MIT Press; Lisa Parks, Professor and Chair of Film and Media Studies at UC Santa Barbara; co-curator Marko Peljhan; and co-curator Tyler Stallings. An **online catalog** will also accompany the project and build upon Sweeney's past efforts to create expansive exhibition websites that support research.

**FURTHER CONTEXT:** The Arts Catalyst in London, U.K., which commissions contemporary art that experimentally and critically engages with science, has initiated the majority of exhibitions with a similar focus as *Free Enterprise*. Since 2001, they have presented a variety of projects that explore sub-orbital space, outer space, the International Space Station (ISS), and more recently, the moon. Projects began with *MIR* (Microgravity Interdisciplinary Research) (2001 to the present), an ongoing project organized by The Arts Catalyst and the co-curator of *Free Enterprise*, Marko Peljhan. The Arts Catalyst curator, Rob La Frenais is on *Free Enterprise*'s advisory board.

One of the main reasons for a lack of such exhibitions in the U.S. and The Arts Catalyst's dedication, and those of other European curators and organizations, to explore space and art can be attributed to a triad of like-minded individuals in Europe. It began first with Roger Malina (on the advisory board), astrophysicist, editor of the Leonardo magazine who held salons on art and science in France, with a special interest in space art, and it was there that Marko Peljhan first presented his work and started a long term dialogue with the group of people gathered around the Malina house salons in 1998. In 1997 Peljhan, during his project Makrolab at Documenta X in Kassel, Germany, started communicating with the cosmonauts of the MIR space station when the station was overflying the area. This started a radio friendship, that resulted in the setup of a video/conference Q&A performance with the cosmonauts of the MIR Kristall mission in early 1998 and in 1999, Peljhan founded a branch of his arts organization Projekt Atol Flight Operations, which worked together with the Slovenian theatre director Dragan Zivadinov on the setup of the first theatre performance in a parabolic flight in alternating gravity conditions in collaboration with the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre in Star City. He invited the art/science curator Rob La Frenais (on the advisory board) to be on the first flight with them and this sparked a longer-term collaboration between Projekt Atol and The Arts Catalyst that resulted in the organization of three more flights and the creation of the MIR consortium (Microgravity Interdisciplinary Research). In the meantime, Projekt Atol Flight Operations became a vehicle through which Peljhan enabled fellow artists, scientists and hybrid practitioners to access the Star City facilities in a series of complex collaborative works.

Only with the 2007 *Space Is the Place*, organized by ICI, New York, exhibition has outer space been the theme of a U.S. exhibition. *Free Enterprise* builds on and expands upon this initial U.S. exhibition by responding to a truly radical political and cultural change: individual access to outer space. For the first time multi-faceted individual engagement with space exploration has been unleashed, exemplified by the Google Lunar X Prize's launching of a competition to land a robot on the Moon by 2014, which, we purport, should involve arts-based research from the start. Timing is crucial to our timeline that runs parallel to several key developments in entrepreneurial access to space.

Co-curator contacts:

- Tyler Stallings, Artist Director, Culver Center of the Arts & Director, Sweeney Art Gallery, both at UC Riverside, [tyler.stallings@ucr.edu](mailto:tyler.stallings@ucr.edu), <http://sweeney.ucr.edu>, cell: 949-300-8907, office: 951-827-1463
- Marko Peljhan, associate professor, Arts and Media Depts., UC Santa Barbara, [peljhan@mat.ucsb.edu](mailto:peljhan@mat.ucsb.edu)

Image, top of page one: *Free Enterprise* artist Agnes Meyer-Brandis on zero gravity parabolic flight, *Making Clouds, or On the Absence of Weight*.

(Updated January 13, 2012)