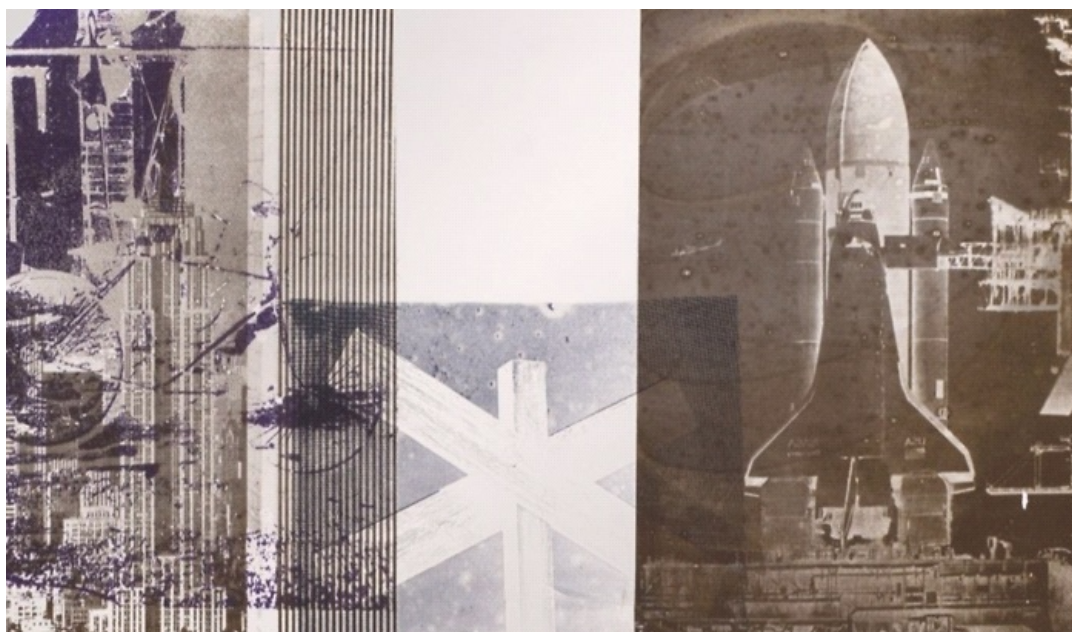


## GROUP EXHIBITION

## SPACE AGE

PARIS PANTIN

27 Sep 2015 - 23 Dec 2015



Cory Arcangel | Richard Artschwager | Jules de Balincourt | Stephan Balkenhol | Philippe Bradshaw | Lee Bul | Harun Farocki | Dan Flavin | Sylvie Fleury | Ilya & Emilia Kabakov | Alex Katz | Anselm Kiefer | Robert Longo | Patrick Neu | Jack Pierson | Robert Rauschenberg | James Rosenquist | Tom Sachs | Sturtevant | Not Vital

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to announce the exhibition *Space Age* that will present historic and commissioned works by 20 contemporary artists in the four vast halls of the gallery in Paris Pantin.

Since the dawn of mankind the sky and outer space have been a field for multiple fascinations, desires, projections and relentless scientific and artistic curiosity. The exhibition explores Daedalus' and one of humanity's most archaic collective dreams: the conquest of the skies and the immersion in the cosmos.

In 2013 we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first expedition of a woman in space – Valentina Terechkova; in 2014 the 50 years of European Space cooperation, while the film *Gravity* just like the Rosetta mission show a renewed interest in outer space adventures. We have invited artists of different generations and practices to contribute with works that are inspired by the notion of outer space, and its multifarious connotations – from science to utopia.

It all started in 1957 with the Russian Sputnik satellites, creating a fascination with space, technology and future social alternatives, which triggered one of the last big utopias of the 20th century. All the industrial and military technologies developed in the previous decades were put into service of the space mission with such an obsession that the whole of society became immersed in this space race.

Rockets and spaceships symbolized, like nothing else, the spirit of the time. Artists like Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Richard Artschwager and Anselm Kiefer lived the moment and felt the need to introduce these powerful imaginaries into their work.

**Anselm Kiefer** was inspired by the futuristic Russian poet Velimir Chlebnikov, who was a great friend and ally of utopian artist Vladimir Tatlin. In Pantin the artist will contribute with the major installation *Das Grab in den Lüften* (The Grave in the Air), based on a poem by Paul Celan. The installation is composed of a high rocket, symbol of a so-called progress, which contrasts with the surrounding large canvas and broken frames evoking the sacrifice of human life to achieve certain ideals.

Both **Robert Rauschenberg** and **James Rosenquist** were at the time major figures of the upcoming movement defined as Pop Art. James Rosenquist had a continuous eye on the US space program and the scientific phenomena around it. For *Space Age*, he will show two new paintings that represent a fragmented cosmic view of space, in his very iconic style.

Certain of Rosenquist's interests were shared by Robert Rauschenberg, yet their vision of painting differ, as Rauschenberg would state: "a painting is more like the real world when it is made out of the real world". This idea was perfectly materialized first in the Combines, and in 1986, after a visit to Houston, where he assembled deteriorated industrial ruins to create his famous *Glut* series. Thanks to the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, we will exhibit, among others, *Nagshead Summer Glut Sketch*, a wall sculpture built with airplane parts, a "souvenir without nostalgia" influenced by one of the consequences of the industrial and spatial race: the oil crisis.

Once the moon was reached and after the oil crisis in the 70s, the crashes of the space shuttles in the 80s and the end of the Russian MIR station in 2001, the excitement for endless (imaginary) spaces and utopian visions seem to have declined in society. However, contemporary artists of the last two decades have continued to interact with the universe and the notion of progress, only in a more distanced and complex way. The exhibition in Paris Pantin reflects on the vivid artistic multi-layered interest in the skies after the so-called "End of Utopia".

Korean artist **Lee Bul** will create an installation especially for the exhibition. The commission will be in line with her *Aubade* suspending sculptures inspired by visionary architect Bruno Taut. Lee Bul questions science fiction and cybernetics through gender politics, the notion of collective imagination and the body as monument. This exploration of techno-utopia will resonate with **Dan Flavin's** 'Monument' for V. Tatlin' which references the legendary utopian tower of Russian artist Vladimir Tatlin that would have made possible a new experience of space, in some ways not dissimilar to that of flying.

**Ilya & Emilia Kabakov**, marked by the influence of Russian space programs, have often worked around a desire to be elevated in the skies, the idea of an absurd astronaut's dream, and a series of utopian models, as shown at *Monumenta* in Paris in 2014. For *Space Age* we will present their installation *Fallen Angel*, a direct reference to the Greek myth of Icarus.

**Tom Sachs**, for a long time fascinated with NASA machinery and in a deep love-hate relationship with the notion of progress, will show *The Crawler* a clear reference to the crash of the space shuttle "Challenger" in 1986. Through his medium of scaled down models looking like toys, Sachs suggests that the cutting edge technology of today heralds the disasters of tomorrow. **Robert Longo** will create a diptych of outer space and a female astronaut reflecting into each other.

With her series *First Spaceship on Venus* **Sylvie Fleury** plays with the mainly male obsession with spaceships. The Swiss artist will recreate especially for the show her happily erected rockets in surprising colours. The phallic objects of desire are not flying anywhere but are suggesting

their domestic use and how all this spatial imaginary was introduced and consumed in daily life.

Mainly from the 50s until the 70s the production of books, films, television series, fashion and music was fuelled by the excitement of a science fiction narrative on the conquest of space. Stanley Kubrick's cinematographic trip *2001 – A Space Odyssey*, David Bowie's *Space Oddity* or Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* created some of the haunting images and sounds of this popular Space Age.

American artist **Cory Arcangel** has always been fascinated by popular culture and especially videogames, which he used to create the installation *MIG29 Soviet Fighter Plane and Clouds*. By hacking Nintendo videogames, he created a video projection where all the competitive elements from popular games were deleted, only the digital generated images of the sky and its main protagonists remain along with the famous Nintendo clouds and the Soviet Fighter Plane.

Cory Arcangel's digital manipulation takes us into the work of **Harun Farocki**. Having received a posthumous special mention at the last Venice Biennial, we will display the work *Eye/Machine I-III/Auge/Maschine I-III* which shows how the development of space programs and computing technology were implemented into the Gulf War and used to create "virtual realities" to control civilian life.

From the desire of conquering space, to the contemplation and representation of the skies, *Space Age* proposes a collective view to which artists such as **Jules de Balincourt**, **Stephan Balkenhol**, **Alex Katz**, **Robert Longo**, **Patrick Neu**, **Jack Pierson** and **Not Vital** have decided to contribute following the gallery's invitation, as well as works by **Philippe Bradshaw** and **Sturtevant**. Their direct suggestion of specific works or their excitement to produce newly commissioned work for the exhibition will reflect the artists' ambivalent relationship to the vehicles of utopian dreams and their will to push the boundaries and to take the viewer of today to yet unexplored territories.

A catalogue will be published to accompany this exhibition.

Share your thoughts on social media with @ThaddaeusRopac and the hashtag #SpaceAge