

Eduardo Kac: Inner Telescope

Opening Reception: Thursday March 28, 6-9 pm

Exhibition runs through May 11, 2019

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 11-6 pm

Henrique Faria Fine Art is pleased to present *Inner Telescope*, Eduardo Kac's first solo exhibition in the gallery. This exhibition features an artwork that the artist conceived specifically for zero gravity and realized in outer space with the cooperation of French astronaut Thomas Pesquet. The works in the show evolve from Kac's career-long exploration of visual poetry, an art form that combines language and poetry with pictorial media, to include, what Kac has termed, Space Poetry. Within this new genre, Kac has envisioned the elimination of gravity and gravitational forces to see how feelings of weightlessness and free fall might affect human experience and language. In his "Space Poetry Manifesto" published in 2007, Kac writes, "I call 'gravimorphism' or 'gravitropism' the process through which gravity conditions all forms and behaviors created on Earth, including art and poetry. It may be a truism to state that gravity has a fundamental effect on our sensibility and the physical world and that it necessarily conditions art and poetry as well. However, it is far from obvious to ask what new artistic and poetic forms and experiences can be created if both creators and audiences/participants are free from this constraint." In the works that comprise the series *Inner Telescope*, we see the steps Kac has taken and the research he has done in order to overcome the pull of gravity and realize an artwork in outer space, a liberating act that would behave according to a different set of mechanics.

While Kac's desire to make an artwork that exists outside of the Earth's atmosphere emerged in the mid 80s, in 2007 he began a residency at the French Space Agency where a work could be made in earnest. Kac designed the sculpture *Inner Telescope* with the objective of having the work made in outer space (not brought from Earth). This is significant, Kac states, because "moving forward humans will spend more time in space; a new culture will emerge, and *Inner Telescope* is the first artwork that was literally made outside of our home planet." As writer Eleanor Heartney describes in the exhibition text, "The work is radically concise in form—consisting of two sheets of paper [to be] cut and shaped while floating weightlessly in space to create the three-letter word MOI (French for *me*). [...] Designed to be created] in deep space, the MOI has no up or down and can be focused in any direction. [...] As such *Inner Telescope* provides a model for a gravity-free consciousness, a radically new and different sense of subjectivity." Kac first tested the work on land, as documented in the photographs *Ground-Based Research* (2014) where the artist is seen casting the sculpture into the air against a deep blue sky, as part of the petition process to have his project approved by the European Space Agency (ESA) as one of the duties to be performed by an astronaut during an official tour to the ISS. The supplemental drawings, *Performance for One Astronaut, One Pair of Scissors and Two Sheets of Paper* (2017), were also included in the agency's review as the artist's conception of how the piece would look as it was being realized in the zero-gravity environment. The drawings show the astronaut in a balletic exchange with the floating sculpture, the curves of the body with its outstretched limbs echoed in the transitory shapes the sculpture assumes in flight.

When the project was approved by the ESA and Pesquet was selected for the next Space Station voyage, Kac trained the astronaut and gave him the protocol on how to complete the *Inner Telescope* mission. In the footage from the eponymously titled video (2017), we watch Pesquet create the sculpture amidst a backdrop of cables, compartments and equipment and a soundtrack of the whirring machinery, then set it free to travel the ISS on the currents of air that sustain the living inhabitants of the station. At times Pesquet will manipulate the sculpture in space, but it is mostly left alone, floating and pirouetting, eventually making its way to the cupola of the ISS, providing the greatest, most humbling view of our planet a human being could ever hope to see. As Heartney concludes, "In a world that so often seems mired in turmoil and despair, Kac reorients our physical and mental perspective. His space poetry takes us outside ourselves to a place where "MOI" is part of a much larger universe."

Eduardo Kac is internationally recognized for his groundbreaking and influential contributions to the development of contemporary art and poetry. In the early 1980s, Kac created digital, holographic and online works that were invested in paving the way to the new global culture we live in today, composed of ever-changing information in constant flux. From the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, Kac developed radical telepresence works with remote-controlled robots he created specifically for each piece. In 1997, he sent shockwaves across the world by becoming the first human to implant a digital microchip through his work *Time Capsule*. It was also in 1997, in the context of *Time Capsule*, that he coined the term Bio Art, thus igniting the widespread development of this new art form. In 1999, he created the artwork *Genesis*, in which he encoded an English statement into living bacteria, allowed Internet participants to mutate the bacteria, and then decoded the mutant DNA back into altered English. In 2000, Kac made what many consider his most famous work; entitled *GFP Bunny*, it is comprised of a green fluorescent rabbit called Alba. By splicing jellyfish and rabbit DNA, he originated the first mammal in the history of art. Kac's 2009 work, *Natural History of the Enigma*, in which he created a new flower with his own DNA, earned him the Golden Nica Award, the most prestigious award in the field of media arts and the highest prize awarded by Ars Electronica. In 2017, the *New York Times* published a full-page article about Kac's *Inner Telescope*, a work he conceived for and realized in outer space with the cooperation of French astronaut Thomas Pesquet. His work is part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; the Institute of Modern Art of Valencia, Spain; the ZKM Museum, Karlsruhe, Germany; and the Museum of Contemporary Art of São Paulo, among others. www.ekac.org

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