NEWS &NOTES

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FROM THE CHIEF HISTORIAN

Welcome to our annual year-end "theme" edition of NASA History *News and Notes*. This December we are turning our attention to the 2017 Langley Research Center (LaRC) centennial. As you will see in the accompanying articles, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics' (NACA's) first research laboratory not only made major breakthroughs in aeronautics research but also had major impacts on the culture of the organization that would become the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1958. It is little wonder that LaRC will devote 2017 to telling this story in so many ways. We hope that you will enjoy this small contribution to that effort and that you will continue to follow the story throughout 2017.

If you have read the last two editions of *News and Notes*, you may be wondering about the latest developments regarding the history program at Johnson Space Center (JSC). I am delighted to say that the end of the calendar year brings with it a happy conclusion. As you will read elsewhere in this issue, JSC has moved its history program to the Knowledge and Quality Management Systems Office, part of the Office of Safety and Mission Assurance, and has added a civil servant manager, John Uri, to the team. John, Jennifer Ross-Nazzal,

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THE LANGLEY CENTENNIAL: AN APPRECIATION

INTRODUCTION

By Bill Barry

On 17 July 2017, NASA will mark 100 years since the groundbreaking ceremony at what was then the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics' (NACA) Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory. This legendary facility almost did not come into existence in the first place. The creation of the NACA had been tacked onto the Naval Appropriations Act, passed in 1915, and the wording about NACA research facilities was unclear. This was a result of the strong opinions both for and against the idea of a government-owned aeronautics research laboratory. The very next year, after intense lobbying by Charles Walcott, Smithsonian Secretary and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the NACA, Congress voted in favor of adding $85,000 to the NACA budget for the purpose of building a research facility. (The previous year, the entire NACA budget was $5,000.) Among those opposed to an NACA laboratory was President Woodrow Wilson. Despite his opposition, the funding was included in the budget, and work began almost immediately to find a location. By the end of 1916, the U.S. Army and the NACA had agreed on a parcel of land near Hampton, Virginia, for a joint aeronautical research area. The site was named in honor of Walcott's predecessor as Smithsonian Secretary, Samuel Pierpoint Langley.

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arrived at Muroc Army Airfield to establish what is now known as NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center (AFRC), participating in the first NACA transonic and supersonic research flights by the Navy's Douglas D-558-1 Skystreak and the Air Force's legendary Bell X-1 rocket plane. Just a year later, on 14 October 1947, Chuck Yeager flew his rocket-powered Bell X-1 over Muroc Dry Lake (now Rogers Dry Lake), making the first supersonic flight in aviation history. Today, AFRC is the primary hub of atmospheric flight research and operations in the United States, housing some of the most advanced aircraft in the world. Critical to carrying out missions of space exploration and aeronautical research and development, the Center continues to accelerate advances and make important discoveries in the fields of science, technology, operations, and testing. The Center also houses a fleet of piloted and robotic environmental science aircraft that support new developments in the fields of astrophysics and Earth science, fulfilling NASA's goals of enhancing education, knowledge, innovation, economic vitality, and stewardship of Earth.

"Probing the Sky" featured artwork and sculptures borrowed from the Center's collection, detailing the people and hardware that make up the vibrant history of aviation innovation in southern California. Featured works included exhibiting artist Robert Schaar's painted portraits of the NACA/NASA pilots inducted into the Aerospace Walk of Honor on Lancaster Boulevard, as well as various paintings, drawings, and sculptures by artists known for their work in and about the aerospace industry. Schaar is a highly regarded portrait painter who is one of an elite group of artists composing the NASA Art Program; his work was included in NASA's "Visions of Flight" program, viewed in museums worldwide. Schaar's "Walk of Honor" portraits feature test pilots whose aviation careers were marked by significant achievements beyond one accomplishment. Dr. Robert T. McCall's "The Apollo Story" is a suite of five original cold stone lithographs depicting the legacy of the Apollo Moon-landing program. The display incorporated many individual fine art paintings of classic early X-planes such as the Bell X-1, the Douglas Skystreak and Skyrocket, the Douglas X-3 Stiletto, and the Northrop X-4 Bantam. Shown together, these works formed a vivid retelling of some of the most significant figures and achievements in aeronautics.

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THE FINAL COUNTDOWN: EUROPE IN THE AGE OF SPACE

By Constanze Seifert, Freie Universität Berlin, *c.seifert@fu-berlin.de*

After half a decade of intense work, the Emmy Noether Research Group called "The Future in the Stars: European Astroculture and Extraterrestrial Life in the Twentieth Century" at Freie Universität Berlin organized their final conference. "Futuring the Stars: Europe in the Age of Space" was a three-day event organized by Alexander Geppert, Jana Bruggmann, and Tilmann Siebeneichner from 17 to 19 March 2016.[1] In 2010, the group set out to investigate the cultural history of outer space between the 1920s and the 1970s in order to gain a new perspective on the history of 20th-century Europe. The final conference featured 13 presentations that examined the ways in which outer space has been used in different, competing visions of the future. The group members and invited guests, many of whom had already taken part in earlier symposia, recalled their collective work on the historicizing of outer space.[2]

1 A more comprehensive version of this article can be found at ***http://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-6621***; for a detailed program and abstracts of all presentations, please consult ***http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/futuring.***

2 Friederike Mehl, "Berlin Symposium on Outer Space and the End of Utopia in the 1970s," *NASA History News & Notes* 29, nos. 2–3 (2012): 1–15; Katja Rippert, "The Sonic Dimension of Outer Space, 1940–1980," *NASA History News & Notes* 30, no. 2 (2013): 17–20; Tom Reichard, "Battlefield Cosmos: The Militarization of Space, 1942–1990," *NASA History News & Notes* 31, no. 3 (2014): 20–21.

Shown is a group of "Futuring the Stars: Europe in the Space Age" presenters and participants. (Photo credit: Bernd Wannenmacher, Freie Universität Berlin, 18 March 2016)

In his introduction, Alexander Geppert (New York/Shanghai) presented the group's main findings and achievements. Having previously coined the umbrella term "astroculture" to analyze and mark interconnections between space-related products and their cultural significance, the conference revisited ongoing questions and challenges behind the conceptualization and periodization of the Space Age and the exploration of outer space in science and fiction. The selection of presentations was intended to address different case studies of political, cultural, technological, and transcendental aspects of space thought and spaceflight.

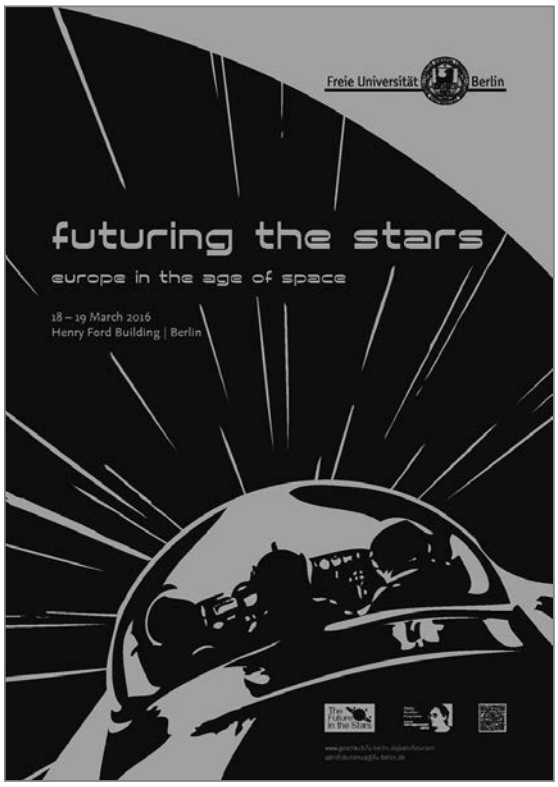
Investigations of the history of astrocultural places and the belief in technological progress were combined with questions regarding the visual history of the imagination and exploration of outer space on the conference's first day. Correlating with the "Raketenrummel," Katherine Boyce-Jacino (Baltimore) drew attention to the history of planetaria and the desire for a cosmic experience in the Weimar Republic. In contrast, Philipp Aumann (Peenemünde) encouraged critical reflection about the belief in technological innovation and the mythologization of the "Heeresversuchsanstalt Peenemünde" as the birthplace of space travel. Following the institutionalization of space research in West Germany after 1945, Daniel Brandau (Berlin) showed how rocketry had lost its utopian characteristics by 1960. Subsequently, Robert Poole (Preston, England) emphasized the influence of space advocates like Arthur C. Clarke in encouraging public enthusiasm for space programs. Bringing the first day to a close, Jana Bruggmann (Berlin) and Natalija Majsova (Ljubljana, Slovenia) compared the influence of iconic space imagery on the rise of global self-awareness, focusing on the visual history of outer space from the 1880s to the 1990s.

The conference's second day provided insight into the public reception of European and American space

projects. Ralf Bülow (Berlin) illustrated the spirit of the Space Age in West German television, recalling the first German space documentaries and the 1960s TV series *Raumpatrouille: Die phantastischen Abenteuer des Raumschiffes Orion*. Shifting the gaze toward the post-Apollo period, Tilmann Siebeneichner (Berlin) analyzed media coverage of the first Spacelab flights in the 1980s, showing how contemporary hopes for international cooperation collided with the American Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). A concluding presentation drew attention to a new perspective on outer space history. Thore Bjørnvig (Copenhagen) provoked much debate with his concept of "outer space religion" as an interpretative tool for studying astroculture and different ways of extraterrestrial encountering.

Seeing the making of a globally imagined community and the planetization of Earth, a global consciousness concept coined in 1946 by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, as a direct consequence of the classical Space Age, Geppert argued for a more global view of astroculture, space thought, and spaceflight. Bringing astroculture and the historiographies of the modern era together, Martin Collins (Washington, DC) suggested a more spatial and temporal demarcation. A concluding panel discussion examined the conceptualization and potential characteristics of a European Space Age from the interwar years through the post-Apollo period. This led to different perspectives and periodizations concerning the "transatlantic century" (especially by Molly Nolan, New York). Michael J. Neufeld (Washington, DC) drew attention to the ongoing expansion of space infrastructure and the "New Space Age," while Dirk van Laak (Gießen, Germany) emphasized the lack of public support and enthusiasm in Europe since the 1970s because a future in the stars could not prove its necessity to everyday life.

"Futuring the Stars" was an extraordinary end to an exciting project and uncovered new research directions, like the need for more close readings from other geopolitical areas and movements, as well as further studies about the rise of space powers in Asia. The group created a community of interdisciplinary scholars who contributed to de-exoticizing the study of outer



Pictured is a "Futuring the Stars: Europe in the Space Age" conference poster. (Artwork by Goesta Roever, Freie Universität Berlin)

space and integrating it into mainstream historiography. In addition to the due-to-be-reissued *Imagining Outer Space*, two forthcoming volumes will address astroculture during the conflict-ridden 1970s and its dystopian and "violent" dimension, thus completing a trilogy that documents the research group's efforts and research interest over the past half decade.[3] Their last symposium revealed an atmosphere of gratitude and strong mutual support among the participants.

3 Alexander C. T. Geppert, ed., *Imagining Outer Space: European Astroculture in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); idem, ed., *Limiting Outer Space: Astroculture After Apollo* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Alexander C. T. Geppert, Daniel Brandau, and Tilmann Siebeneichner, eds., *Militarizing Outer Space: Astroculture and Dystopia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

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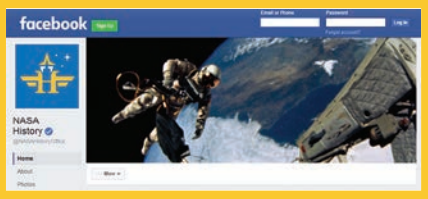

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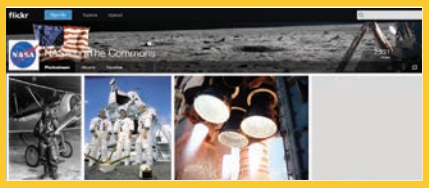

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