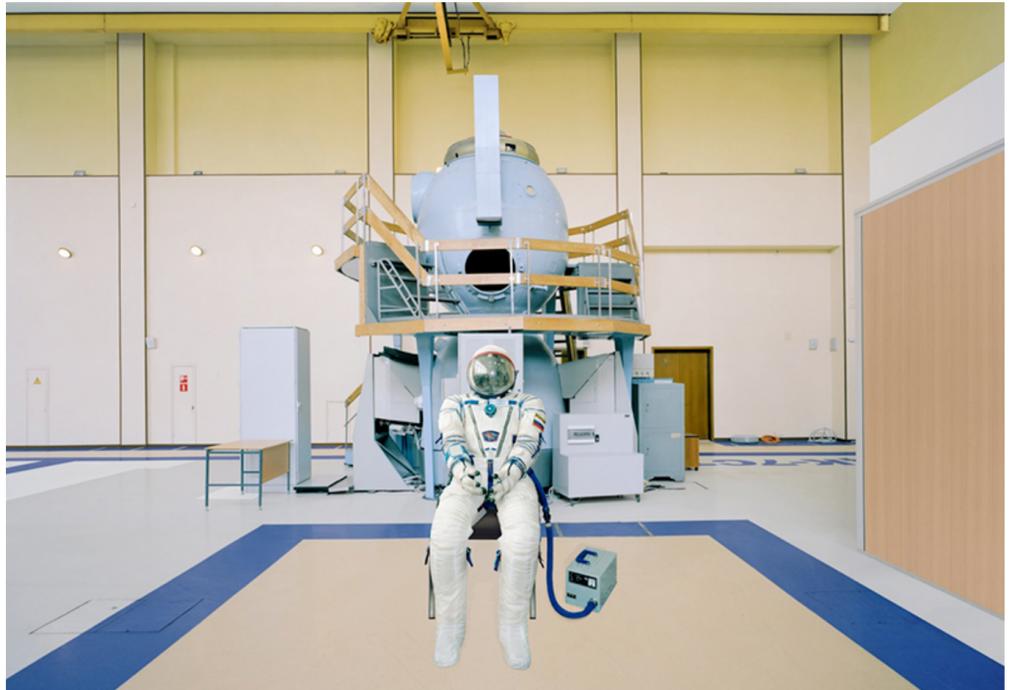


SPACE THROUGH THE LENS

by Jonathan Openshaw | March 5, 2014

EDGAR MARTIN'S LATEST PHOTOGRAPHY SERIES IS THE RESULT OF UNPRECEDENTED ACCESS TO THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY.



The cosmos has always acted as a mirror for human hopes, dreams and fears. Ever since the colonisation of space became a real possibility with the first sub-orbital flights in the 1940s, it has been obsession of individuals and governments alike – fuelling the Hollywood film industry and stoking the fires of Cold War aggression.

These flames have cooled somewhat in recent years, with the global economic climate causing national funding to be slashed, and NASA taking a big step back from the global scene. Private companies such as Space X and Virgin Galactic have stepped in where governments have faltered, but this in turn has sparked concerns over where the future of this industry could be going.

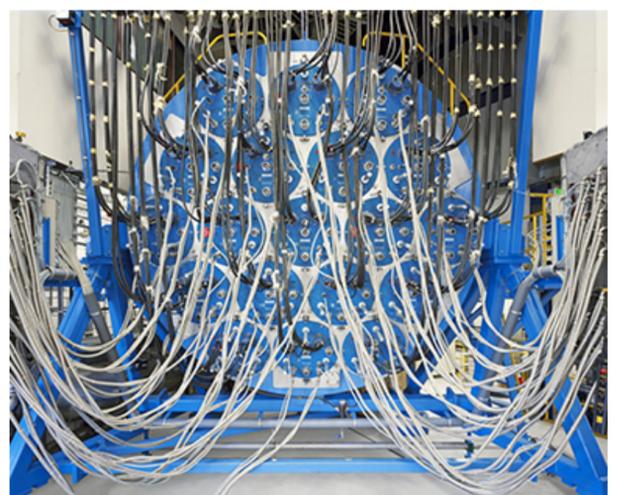
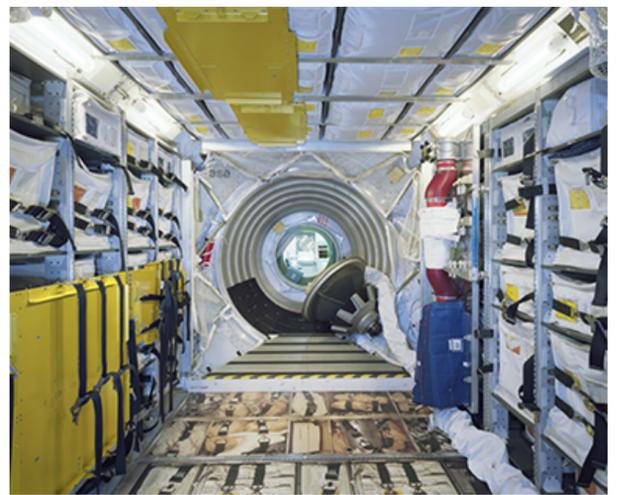
It's against this backdrop that photographer Edgar Martins shoots his most recent photographic series: the 'Rehearsal of Space'. With unprecedented access to the facilities of the European Space Agency (ESA), the series takes in more than 20 locations ranging from Holland to Kazakhstan and French Guiana, including laboratories, simulators and assembly rooms.

"Working on the theme for almost two years reasserted my belief that space exploration programs are of the utmost importance to the development of science, technology, engineering, education and medicine. These have vital economic benefits, often inspiring novel, spin-off technologies," Martin explains.

The resulting images manage to portray the complex anatomy of the space industry with a bold, minimal aesthetic – appearing more as abandoned film sets than working facilities. Humans are absent here, or play a peripheral role at best, but every scene has clearly been willed into life by human imagination and ingenuity.

"The visions that inspired the space age stemmed from collaborative efforts between scientists and artists, and it's only in the past few decades that a gulf has emerged between the two," says Martin, identifying the erosion of the utopian ethos that drove the space program at its peak in the 1960s, when it was as much cultural undertaking as it was technological. "This project tries to bridge this gulf a little, by seeking to establish a dialogue between science, space exploration, contemporary photographic practice and the wider public".

Martin's series taps into a reawakening interest in science and technology amongst the broader public, brought about by the advent of the post-digital age. "Science and technology is all pervasive now. It influences all aspects of life," Martin observes. "These have vital economic benefits, often inspiring novel, spin-off technologies, which in turn inspire all levels of life and the arts". A mistrust of signing over something as symbolic as space to private interest groups seems to lurk behind these images, which quietly celebrate the huge collaborative effort of humanity that has given rise to these locations and artifacts.



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