

"Apollo's Muse: The Moon in the Age of Photography"

Metropolitan Museum of Art
3 July – 22 September 2019

"There is no dark side in the moon really. Matter of fact, it's all dark." Pink Floyd, "Eclipse" (1973)

Apollo project appear as the world-historical work of land art that it is.

The Apollo project was comprised of multiple missions, each of which involved a series of artefacts that allegedly remain on the surface of the moon today. If you've never thought to

aluminium plummets into lunar soil. Elsewhere, a pocket-sized photograph wrapped in plastic – proof of the white American family – litters a lunar crater. Fifty years after the first

THE MOON IN REVIEW



View of "Apollo's Muse: The Moon in the Age of Photography", Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2019

It appears that each scientific revolution that succeeded in eliminating a bit more the mysticism of the moon fell prey to a greater portion of its illusion. That the moon is both object and representation, but never a discourse, might explain why the NASA materials currently on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art acquire such an auratic dimension. and make the

place NASA within the Pictures Generation, this exhibition-as-observatory presents the most reproduced images of American nationalism as a vehicle by which earth's own satellite can be apprehended as a work of modern representation.

On the eastern salt flats of the moon, an anthropomorphised hunk of

lunar landing, the Met presents these documents alongside a single minute of deprecated CBS footage – a video that not only represents but effectively *was* the peak of the twentieth century.

Here it becomes evident that the astronauts' natural setting is not outer space, but the television set. Staged on a plinth, the gravity is impossible to

Courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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Above:
Jojakim Cortis,
Adrian Sonderegger
Making of
AS11-40-5878
(by Edwin Aldrin, 1969),
2014
Chromogenic print,
120 x 180 cm



Below:
View of "Apollo's Muse:
The Moon in the
Age of Photography",
Metropolitan Museum of Art,
2019

ignore. So are the particles buzzing violently underneath the surface of a screen tuned to obfuscate the internal politics of the Cold War. As the broadcaster describes the "grainy, flat" surface of the moon to a global audience, the viewer's attention is drawn to the grainy quality of the film itself. Was it real or a hoax? Given that the Apollo

project today would cost upwards of \$125 billion, this exhibition sheds light on terraforming as a medium of political representation: even the highest-projected cost of Trump's proposed US-Mexico border wall would not cost half of that.

"Apollo's Muse" is less a retrospective of photography and more a long

exposure on an object of prehistory that, in both science and art, has come to represent the unattainable. What's visible from the Apollo mission is the fact that there are as many moons as there are modernities – it appears that the moon, like the modern, will always somehow, eclipse the human race.

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