Art in Space: Human Factors Mars Exploration

Annalea Beattie

ph 0420820244
annalea.beattie@rmit.edu.au

In April I travelled to the remote Utah desert to the Mars Desert Research Station where I participated in a study of a simulated space mission to Mars. This was a field trip for me to identify questions and challenges around an arts based project, exploring creative art practice as a strategy for adapting to sensory deprivation and isolation in space travel. I was really there to immerse myself in the immense landscape and to make some art as a way of understanding more about the nature of confinement and extreme environments. While my thoughts focused on issues of habitability, ecology and survival, during the day my senses were overloaded by the physicality of the ancient landscape. At night, in my small room in the hab, I was often awake, wondering how contemporary art, with its emphasis on collaborative practices and inner experiences could offer something new to scientists, something that might be useful for isolated spacefarers confined on long haul space missions. Perhaps daily imaginative work could somehow expand personal space and emphasise autonomy and freedom, conditions often lacking in space travel. My presentation to AMEC is a position paper, overviewing my experiences at MDRS, outlining current art work and future research.