

The Telegraph

Knapton, Sarah, "Heavens to shine with new 'star' as first space sculpture prepares for launch," *The Telegraph*, August 12, 2018

Heavens to shine with new 'star' as first space sculpture prepares for launch



Orbital Reflector - a huge inflatable diamond the length of a football field and the height of a person
CREDIT: NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART

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12 AUGUST 2018 • 12:01AM

Look up into the night sky towards the end of October and you may catch sight of a brand new 'star' twinkling in the cosmos.

The tiny speck of light is not the offspring of a seething nebula, but the world's first space sculpture, which will orbit the Earth for three weeks this autumn.

The length of a football field, and the shape of an elongated diamond, the 'Orbital Reflector' artwork is the brainchild of US artist Trevor Paglen and will be launched on board on one of Elon Musk's SpaceX Falcon 9 rockets.

Floating around the planet once every 90 minutes, 350 miles from the surface, the satellite will be visible in Britain about four times a night as the sun reflects off its shiny surface after dusk and before dawn.

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Trevor Paglen, Prototype for a Nonfunctional Satellite (Design 4; Build 4), 2013.

Mr Paglen, whose work seeks to highlight mass surveillance and data protection, said he wanted people to look up into the night sky with a renewed sense of wonder and consider their place in the universe. It will be the first satellite to exist purely as an artistic gesture.

The idea of putting art in space was originally devised by the Russian artist Kazim Malevitch, who envisaged arking works that would circle the world, which he called 'sputniks.' The name was eventually adopted for the world's first satellite.

The new work, is a reflective, inflatable sculpture affixed to a small satellite that will orbit the earth for several weeks before disintegrating upon re-entry into Earth's atmosphere.



Trevor Paglen

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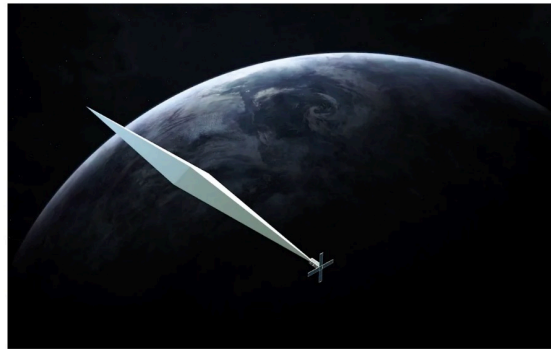
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“It’ll look like one of the stars in the Big Dipper but slowly moving across the sky,” Mr Paglen said.

“It will be in what’s called a sun-synchronous orbit, and will slowly fall to earth from there, eventually burning up harmlessly as it gets close to earth.

“This is extremely logistically intensive project - it definitely isn’t something that an artist can just do in their studio.

“Space is actually really really big, and it’s extremely unlikely that it will collide with anything else. The main thing to worry about is it deploying successfully around other satellites. We’ve been working with the launch provider to come up with a plan to mitigate against any accidents there.”



The sculpture will be seen at dawn and dusk as it reflects the Sun’s rays

The sculpture has been built by Global Western aerospace from a super lightweight material which on launch is packed inside a small box-like spacecraft, known as a CubeSat.

It will be launched by SpaceX from the Vandenberg Air Force Base in California at the end of October.

The rocket will initially dock at the International Space Station where the CubeSat will be taken on board. At the correct time it will be deployed into space, where it will then release the artwork which inflates into a huge reflective balloon.

Back on Earth, people wanting to see it will be able to put their location into a ‘star map’ on the [website](#) to find out when Orbital Reflector will fly over.

Mr Paglen said he wanted to highlight how many satellites are circling the Earth.

It isn’t the first time he has sent a work of art into space. Previously he launched ‘The Last Pictures’ a collection of 100 images intended to represent human history onto a geostationary satellite in 2012.

Orbital Reflector is co-produced and presented by the [Nevada Museum of Art](#). An early prototype of the artwork currently hangs in the museum.