

# “Ágora”, by Eduardo Kac, will be the first work of art to orbit in deep space

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Miami, Jul 30 (EFE).- The Brazilian-American visual artist Eduardo Kac finalizes the final details of what is his most ambitious work, “Ágora”, a project that began 37 years ago and that when it is placed in heliocentric orbit will become the first work of art to be exhibited in deep space.

The project consists of a hologram with the word “agora” (Portuguese for 'now') which, as the artist explained in an interview with EFE, functions as a “potential star” because “once illuminated with a laser, the work of art will emit its visual content in the form of light”.

“It looks like a piece of clear glass. The visual information is encoded in the hologram. So when the artwork is illuminated with a laser, the visual content can be seen because the hologram will emit light to reveal its encoded message. This light will be propagated in space, like light coming from a star,” said the Rio de Janeiro-born artist.

For Kac, a contemporary artist whose work appears in the collections of institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, the Tate Modern in London or the Museo Reina Sofía in Spain, “Ágora” is the longest running project in which he has embarked to date.

“It’s very difficult to work in deep space,” explained Kac, adding that for decades he has been trying to find a way to access beyond low-Earth orbit, which he finally got with the future maiden flight of the Vulcan Centaur rocket, from the company United Launch Alliance (ULA).

The firm hopes to be able to launch the first of its new range of rockets by the end of the year, from Cape Canaveral, Florida (USA).

#### A STAR CREW

“Ágora” will be permanently integrated into the Centaur V, the second stage of the ULA rocket and in which the payload sent by the Celestis firm will travel, consisting of some 320 capsules with mostly cremated remains of people (90%) as well as DNA samples (10%).

“We have approximately 70 capsules of participants that will land on the surface of the moon as their final resting place and some 250 capsules of participants that will travel to deep space,” Charles M. Chafer, executive director and co-founder of Celestis, told EFE. Since 1997 it offers funeral services in space.

According to the schedule, once the cargo of the Enterprise Flight, as the company has called this mission, is released, the rocket with Kac’s work will travel beyond the Earth and the Moon, up to about 300 million kilometers from our planet, to orbit the Sun for “billions of years,” as Chafer noted.

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The name of the journey is not random: among the remains and DNA samples that the rocket will transport are those of the creator of the “Star Trek” series Gene Roddenberry, as well as original cast members such as Nichelle Nichols, James Doohan, Majel Barrett Roddenberry and DeForest Kelley.

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In addition to those “crew members” of the iconic ship Enterprise, other human remains that will be part of this journey to eternal rest will be those of Apollo astronaut Philip Chapman and special effects director Douglas Trumbull.

“In a very real sense, Enterprise will include an archive of humanity and no archive would be complete without artistic expression,” said the executive about the inclusion of Kac’s project, who contacted the firm to exhibit his work.

## OUTER SPACE, A NEW PUBLIC SPACE

“Seeing the rocket take off will be a very emotional moment for me,” acknowledged the artist, who, with the Enterprise Flight, will perhaps find a new sense of posterity and permanence that every artist seeks for his work.

But he is also convinced that the flight will open new directions from the point of view of the creation and production of contemporary art.

“The participation of private companies in this new era of space exploration opens up unprecedented possibilities.” “It will stimulate the development of space art,” Kac said.

He recalled, in this sense, that “agora” means “public space, in Greek,” and did not rule out that “outer space is beginning to be considered as a new type of public space.”

Chafer agrees. After all, he said, “all Celestis missions are expressions of humanity’s expansion throughout the solar system.”

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