

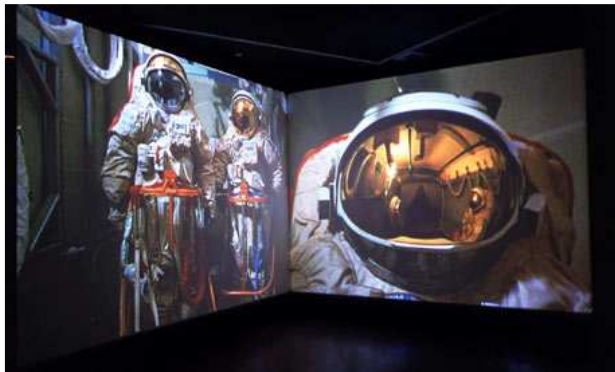
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Another view on Star City: the Future Under Communism

Communist Daoud Hamdani finds plenty to take heart from in this sci-fi take on the Soviet Union



Interview by **Laura Barnett**
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Stellar union ... Jane and Louise Wilson's film Star City

I'm no art critic, but I was fortunate enough to be able to look at this exhibition from an informed, leftwing perspective – and I was very impressed. Named after the Soviet Union's secret cosmonaut training city, *Star City: The Future Under Communism* brought together work by artists (from Russia and beyond) inspired by Soviet visions of the future and the space race.

In one room, Jane and Louise Wilson's film *Star City*, shot on location, is shown on all four walls using four projectors. It's an all-encompassing, smothering experience, symbolising the capitalist state's suppression of the individual for the sake of profit. There's an impressive, life-size replica of Sputnik 1, the first satellite to orbit Earth. The US response to Sputnik blew up on its launchpad, earning it the name Flopnik. That made me chuckle.

The space race wasn't about getting to the moon: it was about who might get control of space, and what that might mean for peace on Earth. The exhibition's main theme is - escapism – both through the space race and science-fiction. I took this to be symbolic of the escape from capitalist barbarism that the Soviet system as a whole achieved. One Polish artist, Pawel Althamer, has dressed residents of his former Soviet tower block in gold spacesuits. What this shows, like all the works, is that life under the Soviet Union wasn't the grey, backward stuff of US propaganda: it was full of life and colour.

What stayed with me most was a quote from the critic Boris Groys, reproduced on one of the gallery walls: he says that socialism can both liberate and control the forces of nature, taking humanity far beyond the miserly alleyways of commodity production. I walked away from this exhibition with a sense of the artists' overwhelming conviction that socialism and communism are still the future. We've had the Soviet experiment. We'll get it right next time.

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