

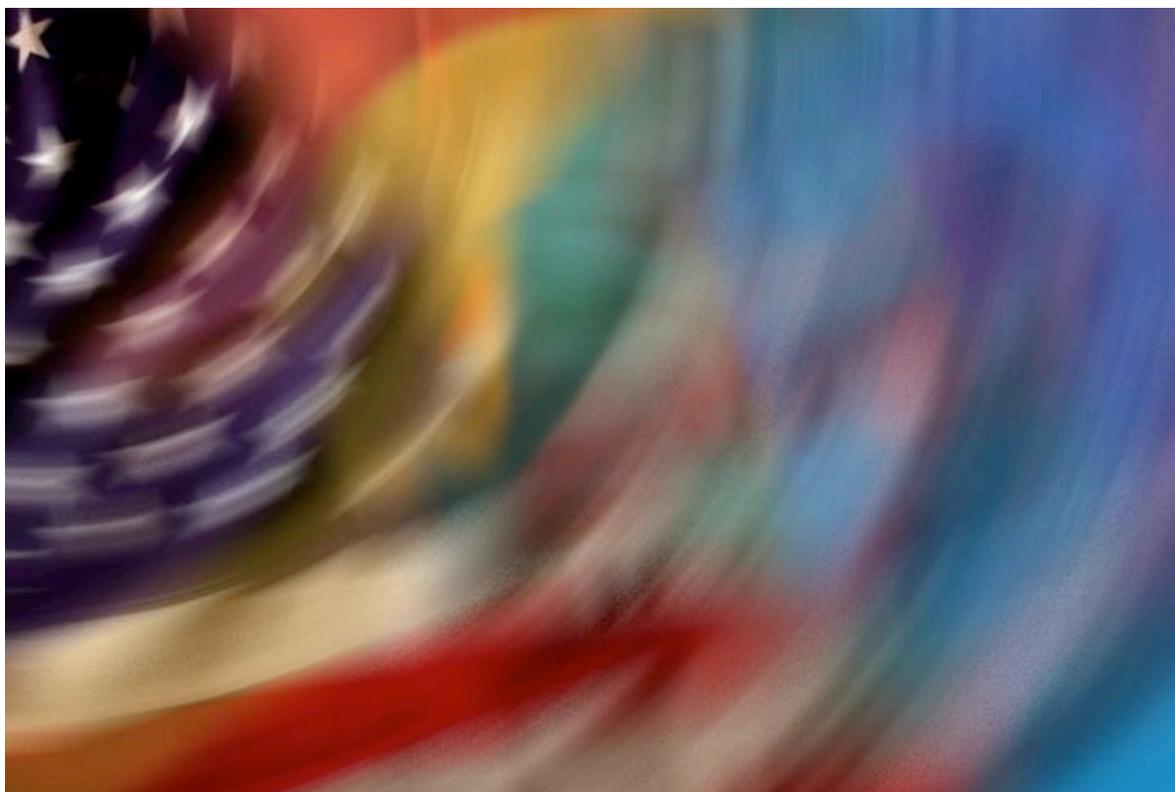
## **FLAGS IN SPACE!**

**Frank Pietronigro, Interdisciplinary Artist**  
**In collaboration with Gilbert Baker, Creator of the Rainbow Flag**

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"Flags In Space!" - Digital Composit, Frank Pietronigro, 2006

## **FLAGS IN SPACE!**

During his second parabolic flight, Frank Pietronigro created Flags In Space! – a microgravity space art situation during which the artist danced with a Rainbow flag and an American flag posited by the artist as an alternative leisure time activity during space travel. This form of dancing originates within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) communities and is usually experienced late at night in gay dance clubs where you can see people enjoying ‘fan-dancing’ and ‘flag-dancing’.

By utilizing the flags, and in this case signifiers of nationalism, it was the intention of the artist that, while dancing in microgravity, the colors of the rainbow flag hybridize with the red, white and blue thus blending all of the colors into a new form.

The rainbow colors represented in the flag, that was actually sewn by Gilbert Baker the original creator of the Rainbow flag, serve as a symbol of inclusion, inferring that all diverse cultures should benefit from and contribute to space exploration including members of the LGBT communities. By dancing with the red, white and blue, Pietronigro flies proudly as a queer American patriot with the situation amplifying his right to celebrate freedom and democracy, liberty, and justice for all. Through the dance the artist honors core American values as values extended to the benefit all Americans including LGBT community members.

By doing this dance in the space of space exploration, this situation presents challenges and opportunities unlike those the artist encounters in his gravity-bound studio. Art created in a space-bound vehicle is public art; thus, the creative act is no longer a private experience requiring Pietronigro to confront significant cultural and political questions such as: “Am I willing to abandon my gay identity in order to escape the laws of gravity? Could I, a gay-identified artist, creatively function effectively in the space exploration industry where one senses a “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy?

Ultimately, Pietronigro decided that he could not allow such policy suppress his creative impulses, which to no small degree have been defined by living in San Francisco as an out gay man since 1977.



Frank Pietronigro, Flags In Space! May 4, 2006



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