Cosmos Express

2023 / 3 ENGLISH # 242



Dear friends Astrophilatelists,

The summer months are usually known as "the calm months," but apparently not in 2023. Not only was the news managed by the numerous natural disasters in southern Europe, in northern Europe, in the United States and Canada, but there was also a lot going on in the space field.

On June 29, Richard Branson brought his VSS Eve over the Karman line with three Italian servicemen, two pilots and a monitor on board : Galactic 01.

Just under a week after that, the last Ariane V was launched from Kourou, V-261.

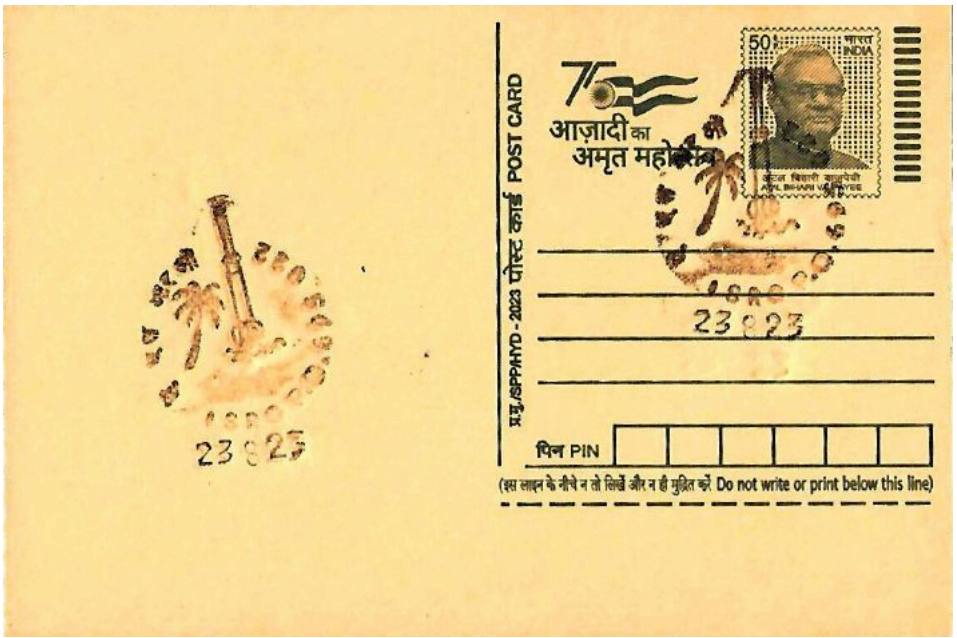
Ten days later it was the turn Chandryaan-3, the Indian lunar lander that was the first to land on the South Pole of the Moon on August 23. Meanwhile, the landing of the Russian Luna-25 had gone wrong ...

Still in August was the flight of Virgin Galactic 02 with 4 space tourists and the two pilots.

The Chinese taikonauts of Shenzhou 16 continued working in the Tiangong space station and made their first spacewalk on July 20.

Activities continue aboard the ISS : on Aug. 1, Cygnus NG-19 (S.S. Laurel Clark) brought cargo to the station, followed on Aug. 23 by a Progress cargo ship. All this is needed to receive the new Crew-7 which departed on August 26 and docked at the ISS a day later. Crew-6 made a safe landing in the Atlantic Ocean on Sept. 4.

>> Continued on page 2



>> Continued from page 1

You won't find much about all this in our Cosmos Express magazine : after all, we are a magazine for astro-philately, i.e. space and philately.

In this issue you can read about some past exhibitions in which our members participated.

We also take you to the already 40 flights of RocketLab and look at the two first real tourist flights of Virgin Galactic, where we already have philatelic material.

We also take a look back at the flight of Axiom-2 without forgetting that the Chinese taikonauts are also in space with Shenzhou-15 (already returned) and Shenzhou-16, with a lot of work going on in the Chinese space station Tiangong.

As always, we try to conclude with some history : our member Marianne Van den Lemmer talks about the first (and only ?) cat in space and why Félicette (finally) got an official statue. Very nice article.

Finally, I invite everyone to attend Cynrik De Decker's lecture on November 9, 2023 "Karel Bossart, father of the Atlas rocket". Yet another Belgian we can be proud of.

Enjoy your reading !

Stefan Bruylants

Kennedy Space Center Post Office closing

Kennedy Space Center, Mail Service Contract (KMSC)
Kennedy Space Center, FL 32899

"The Kennedy Space Center Contract Postal Unit will close permanently near the end of the fiscal year. Any requests sent to KSC needs to be here by September 15th 2023. Requests for cancellations will need to be addressed to Titusville Post Office past that date. Note that they will have a Titusville Post Office cancelation on them, not Kennedy Space Center"

More info in the article from Charles J. Vukovich Jr. In Linn's Stamp News, published on our website :

https://www.bfvcosmos.be/

Index CE # 242

September 2023

Welcome	1
KSC P.O. closing	2
Naposta '23 / Filakortrijk '23	3
Rocketlab	4
Virgin Galactic Flights	7
Axiom Space	11
Shenzhou 15 & 16	12
A statue to Félicette	14
Upcoming Exhibitions	20



KSC-cover - Last Day of Operations
Cover Pete Sarmiento

Next meetings of BFV Cosmos

Sunday	19 November 2023
Sunday	17 December 2023
Sunday	21 January 2024
Sunday	18 February 2024
Sunday	17 March 2024
Sunday	**28** April 2024

Between 10h and 12h

Naposta 2023

From July 20 to 23, 2023, the National Postwertzeichen Ausstellung NaPostA was held in Trier /D.
Two members of our club participated, one in the Astrophilately class, one in the Open class. Both were very satisfied with their results.

I would like to make some remarks:
- The astrophilately was (once again) judged by judges from the aerophilately field (except Ch. Bromser).
- Stephen Lachein changed his collection from Astrophilatelie to Open Class, precisely because of the not too exact judgments during earlier participations in Germany and Austria.

Astrophilately				
Bart Van Oppens	America and the Moon above	7K	75 %	V
Open Philately				
Stephen Lachein	How mankind's dream to reach for the stars became reality	10K	88 %	G

Filakortrijk '23

From August 29 to 30, 2023, the regional exhibition FilaKortrijk 2023 took place at the OntmoetingsCentrum in Marke, Kortrijk. No less than 190 planes were exhibited in a large and well-lit hall, with no less than 36 participants and 49 collections.

For BFV Cosmos, four members participated in the astrophilately class and one participant in the Open Philately class. The judge was our member Bart Van Oppens.
In the astrophilately class we saw 4 completely new collections that rightly participated in this regional exhibition and all could count on a nice result.

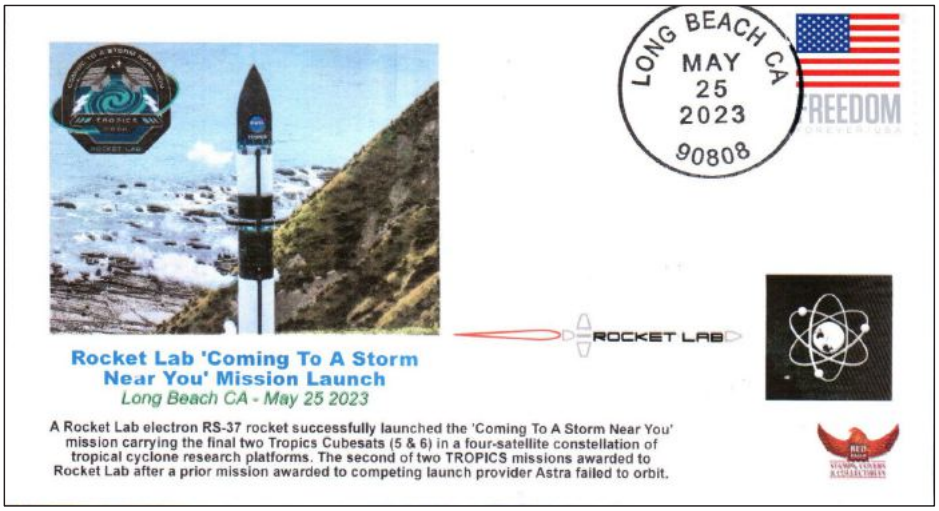
The collection "Women in space" of our member Jeanine Dumont becomes more and more a hit in the astrophilately/ open class and shows again what is possible with study and research.
Congratulations to all participants !

Astrophilately				
Freddy Bogaert	America and the Race to the Moon	5 K	80 %	V
Johan Knockaert	50 jaar geleden … SKYLAB	1 K	78 %	LS
Marc Van Quickenborne	Living beyond the space frontier : Krikalev	1 K	82 %	V
Stefan Bruylants	Japanese Spaceflight	1 K	88 %	GV
Open Philately				
Jeanine Dumont	Vrouwen in de ruimte	5 K	81 %	V

Rocket Lab, Inc. is a publicly traded aerospace manufacturer and launch service provider. The company operates lightweight Electron orbital rockets, which provide dedicated launches for small satellites. The company also plans to build a larger Neutron rocket as early as 2024. Electron rockets have launched 40 times from either Rocket Lab's Launch Complex 1 in New Zealand and at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport in Wallops Island, Virginia, United States.

Rocket Lab launched its 40th Electron mission Wednesday, Aug. 23, after a switch to a recoverable rocket, which was fitted for the first time with a previously-flown engine. The rocket lifted off from the company's privately-owned spaceport on the North Island of New Zealand, carrying a radar-imaging satellite, at 7:45 p.m. EDT (11:45 a.m. NZST on the 24th / 2345 UTC).

The surprise move to a recoverable booster came after two launch scrubs blamed on engine sensor glitches. It was the third planned recovery of an Electron booster at sea, after Rocket Lab abandoned plans to catch returning boosters with a helicopter.



This cover shows the 37th launch by Rocket Lab from Mahia Peninsula, New Zealand.

Since covers from the Peninsula are difficult to obtain, covers are postmarked at Long Beach, California (see next page).

Date is EDT, one day later than the NZ time of launch, May 24th.

Cover Red Eagle / Aquilared

Launch Complex 1 - Mahia Peninsula, New Zealand

The companies Launch Complex 1 (LC-1) is a private orbital launch site located on the Māhia Peninsula in New Zealand. The site consists of a launch pad, a vehicle integration facility, and a range control center.

Launch Complex 2 - Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport

In October 2018, after several months of search, the company announced their selection of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport (MARS) at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility as their second launch site. The site was chosen for a number of factors. First was the speed and ease in which the new pad could be built due to infrastructure readiness. Second was the low number of launches from other companies. Third was the location's ability to supplement orbital inclinations provided by LC-1.

Sources: - Wikipedia, Space.com, Spaceflight
Cover: - Red Eagle covers

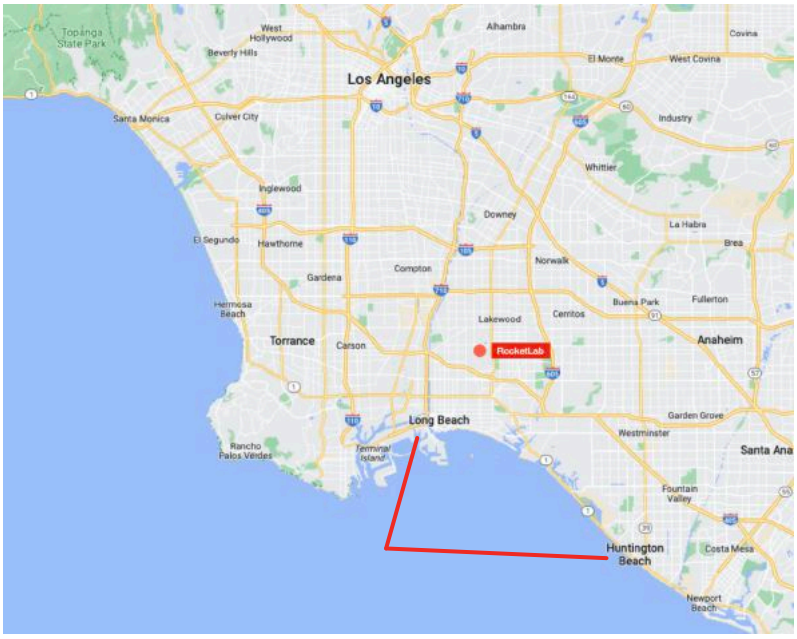
S.B.

What about the Postmarks for the RocketLab ?

As an astrophilatelist, once again it was once again a great challenge to obtain covers from the Southern Hemisphere : Launch Complex 1 is situated on the Mahia peninsula, North Island Eastern side.

And the nearest rather big town is Wairoa, about 80 km (50 miles) from the Launch Complex on the peninsula !





Launches for Rocketlab all took place from the Mahia Peninsula and the first 4-5 years there was no possibility to have covers from or near the launch site.

Therefore, launch covers got the postmark of two nearby post offices for Rocketlab in California : Huntington Beach and Long Beach, both South of Los Angeles.

Logical choice ?

Only from Januay 2023 launches started at Wallops Island Facility, Virginia.



Electron launch 20/01/2018 - Huntington Beach
21/01/2018 New Zealand local time (© espace lollini)



Electron launch 8/12/2021 - Long Beach
9/12/2021 New Zealand local time (© espace lollini)



Electron launch 16/03/2023 - Wallops Island



Electron launch 24/03/2023 - Wairoa P.O.

Date	Site	Customer	Mission Name	
25/05/2017	LC1	Test launch	t's a Test	
21/01/2018	LC1	Rideshare	Still Testing	
11/11/2018	LC1	Rideshare	It's Business Time	
16/12/2018	LC1	NASA	NASA ELaNa-19	
28/03/2019	LC1	DARPA	DARPA R3D2	
05/05/2019	LC1	U.S.Air Force Space Test Program	STP-27RD	
29/06/2019	LC1	Spaceflight	Make It Rain	
19/08/2019	LC1	Rideshare	Look Ma, No Hands	
17/10/2019	LC1	Astro Digital	As The Crown Flies	
06/12/2019	LC1	Rideshare	Running Out Of Fingers	
31/01/2020	LC1	Nationale Reconnaissance Office	Birds of a Feather	
13/06/2020	LC1	Rideshare	Don't Stop Me Now	
04/07/2020	LC1	Rideshare	Pics Or It Didn't Happen	
31/08/2020	LC1	Capella Space	I Can't Believe It's Not Optical	
28/10/2020	LC1	Rideshare	In Focus	
20/11/2020	LC1	Rideshare	Return to Sender	
15/12/2020	LC1	Synspective	The Owl's Night Begins	
20/01/2021	LC1	OHB Group	Another One Leaves The Crust	
22/03/2021	LC1	Rideshare	They Go Up So Fast	
15/05/2021	LC1	BlackSky	Running Out Of Toes	
29/07/2021	LC1	United States Space Force	It's A Little Chile Up Here	
18/11/2021	LC1	BlackSky	Love At First Insight	
09/12/2021	LC1	BlackSky	A Data With Destiny	
28/02/2022	LC1	Synspective	The Owl's Night Continues	
02/04/2022	LC1	BlackSky	Without Mission A Beat	
02/05/2022	LC1	Rideshare	There And Back Again	
28/06/2022	LC1	NASA and Advanced Space	CAPSTONE	
13/07/2022	LC1	National Reconnaissance Office	Wise One Looks Ahead	
04/08/2022	LC1	National Reconnaissance Office	Antipodean Adventure	
15/09/2022	LC1	Synspective	The Owl Spreads Its Wings	
07/10/2022	LC1	General Atomics Electromagnetic Syst.	It Argus Up From Here	
04/11/2022	LC1	Swedish National Space Agency	Catch Me If You Can	
14/01/2023	LC2	Hawk Eye 360	Virginia is for Launch Lovers	
16/03/2023	LC2	Capella Space	Stronger Together	
24/03/2023	LC1	BlackSky Global	The Beat GoesOn	
08/05/2023	LC1	NASA	Rocket Like A Hurricane	
26/05/2023	LC1	NASA	Coming To A Storm Near You	
18/06/2023	LC2	Leidos	Scout's Arrow	
18/07/2023	LC1	Rideshare	Baby Come Back	
24/08/2023	LC1	Capella Space	We Love the Nightlife	
19/09/2023	LC1B	Capella Space	We Will Never Desert You	*Failure*

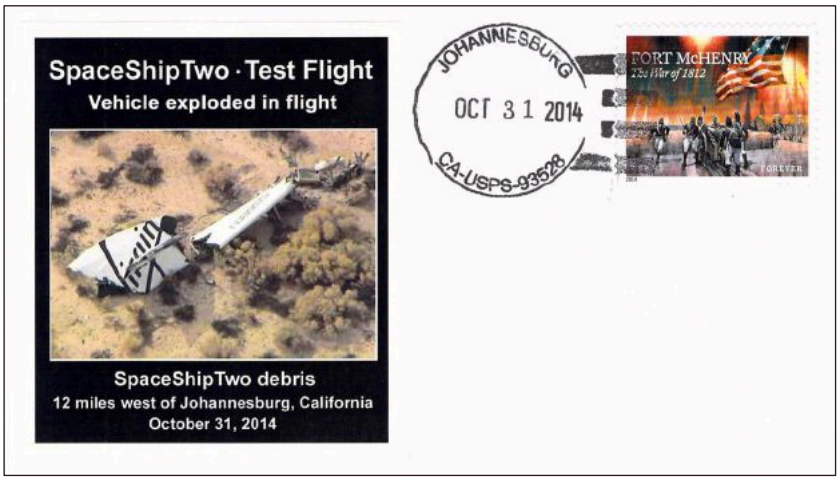
Space Tourism … Space Competition

Virgin has now launched 25 people to the edge of space, several of them more than once, including Masucci, making his fourth flight, and Bennett, making his second.

Arch rival ***Blue Origin***, owned by Amazon-founder Jeff Bezos, has launched 32 people on six sub-orbital spaceflights using its more traditional New Shepard booster and capsule.

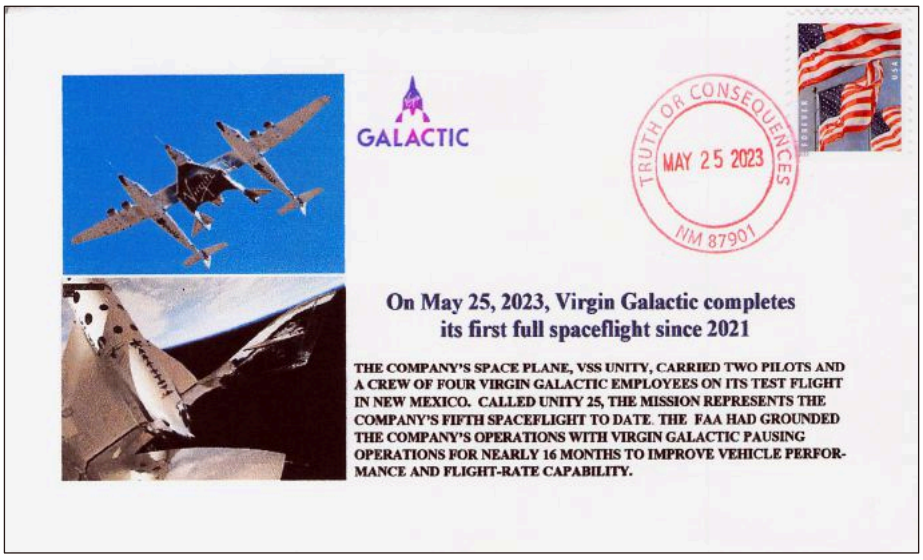
Virgin's first space flight came in 2018 when two company pilots flew Unity to an altitude of 51 miles. That initial launch to space came four years after a catastrophic test flight that destroyed Virgin's original spaceplane, killed the co-pilot and seriously injured the pilot when the feather mechanism was unlocked earlier than planned.

After addressing that issue, Virgin launched four successful test flights in a row before standing down for two years to upgrade the Eve carrier jet and carry out more modifications. A fifth successful test flight on May 25 cleared the way for Galactic 01 launch.



Blue Origin, meanwhile, began commercial operations in 2021. But the company's most recent launch in September 2022, an uncrewed research flight, suffered a booster malfunction. While the capsule's abort system operated as planned and the ship landed successfully, launches currently





Thursday's flight was Virgin's seventh piloted sub-orbital mission since an initial test flight on December 13, 2018. After two more test flights, Branson and a crew of six completed the company's fourth space flight on July 11, 2021, climbing to an altitude of 53 miles.

After standing down to upgrade the Eve carrier jet, Virgin launched a fifth piloted test flight with six company employees on May 25, followed by the Italian research mission on June 29. Virgin plans to eventually ramp up to a flight per month.

Galactic 01 — *First commercial mission to suborbital space*

Virgin Galactic is up and running. The company aced its first-ever commercial mission June 29th 2023, sending four passengers to suborbital space and back. It was a landmark moment for Virgin Galactic, which has big ambitions in the final frontier.

The flight lifted off from Spaceport America in New Mexico at 10:30 a.m. ET (1430 GMT) and reached suborbital space some 58 minutes later. After a few minutes floating at an apogee of 52.9 miles (85.1 kilometers), the space plane then returned to Spaceport America and landed at 11:42 a.m. ET (1542 GMT).

Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic launched its first commercial space flight, sending three Italian researchers, two company pilots and an astronaut trainer on a high-speed thrill ride to the edge of space aboard a winged rocketplane.

"Che volo fantastico [what a fantastic flight]!" Branson tweeted. "An historic moment. Ben fatto [well done]."

VSS Unity manned flights

13-12-2018	VP-03		2 pers.
22-02-2019	VF-01		3 pers.
12-12-2020	VF-02	Aborted	2 pers.
22-05-2021	Unity 21		2 pers.
11-07-2021	Unity 22		6 pers.
26-04-2023	Unity 24		2 pers.
25-05-2023	Unity 25		6 pers.
29-06-2023	Galactic 01		6 pers.
10-08-2023	Galactic 02		6 pers.
08-09-2023	Galactic 03		6 pers.
06-10-2023	Galactic 04		6 pers.





On February 27th 2023, Virgin Galactic moved VMS Eve and VSS Unity from the spaceport in the Mojave desert (CA) to the new Spaceport America (NM). The new postmark is the nearest town "Truth or Consequences" in New Mexico.



The Galactic 01 mission (formerly known as Unity 23) was Virgin Galactic's fifth crewed spaceflight and SpaceShipTwo's first commercial mission. It is a research mission for the Italian Air Force. The crew will consist of pilots Mike Masucci and Nicola Pecile as well as crew members Colin Bennett, Walter Villadei, Angelo Landolfi, and Pantaleone Carlucci representing Italy's National Research Council, began carrying out or monitoring 13 experiments designed to collect data about the effects of weightlessness on themselves and a variety of technological processes.

Amid switch throws and experiment activations, Villadei took a moment to unfurl an Italian flag as he floated above his crewmates.

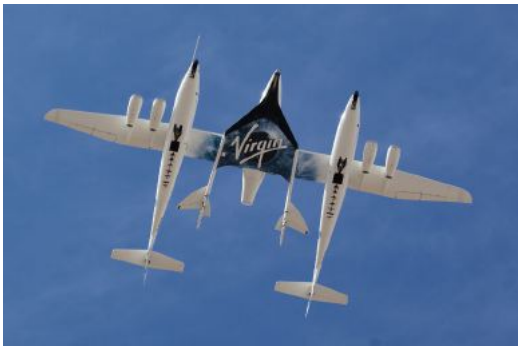
The researchers were assisted by Colin Bennett, Virgin Galactic's chief astronaut trainer. It was the company's sixth piloted sub-orbital space flight and the first to carry paying customers, a milestone that has taken the company more than a decade longer than expected to achieve.

Galactic 02

First tourist mission to suborbital space

Galactic 02, a crewed sub-orbital spaceflight of the SpaceShipTwo-class VSS Unity, was launched on 10 August 2023. It was the second commercial spaceflight and seventh overall spaceflight for American aerospace company Virgin Galactic. The mission was the first to carry space tourists (people who are not working during the flight). The previous flight, Galactic 01, carried astronauts from the Italian Air Force and the Italian National Research Council (who carried out research experiments during the flight).

Crew	CJ. Sturckow	Commander
	Kelly Latimer	Pilot
	Beth Moses	Astronaut Instructor
	Jon Goodwin	Tourist
	Keisha Schahaff	Tourist
	Anastatia Mayers	Tourist



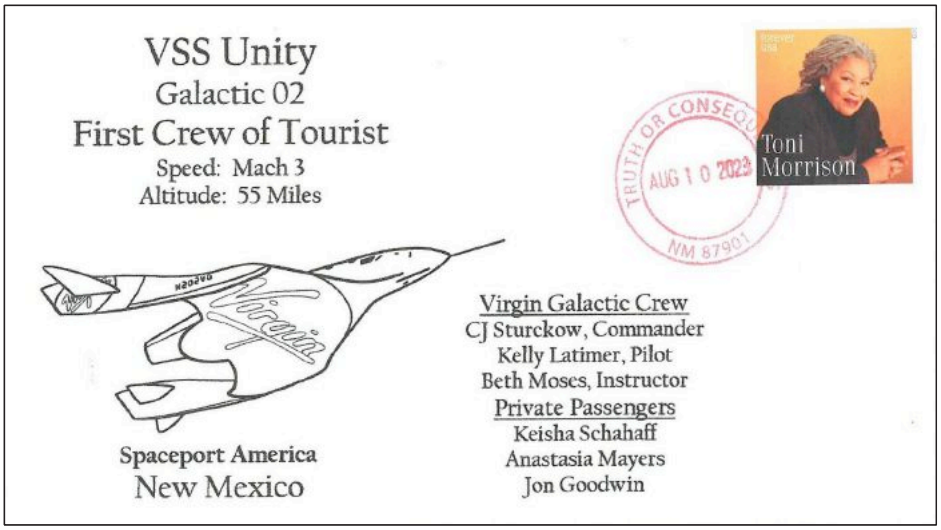
The crew of Galactic 02 included three private passengers and three Virgin Galactic employees:

- Jon Goodwin became the first Olympian and second person diagnosed with Parkinson's disease to fly to space.
- Keisha Schahaff and Anastatia Mayers became the first mother-daughter duo to fly to space.

Mayers (18 years) also became the second youngest person and youngest woman to fly to space, as of August 2023.

Judging by television views from inside the spacecraft as it reached a maximum altitude of about 54.9 miles (88,350 km) – nearly five miles above the 50-mile (80 km) altitude NASA and the Federal Aviation Administration recognize as the "boundary" of space – the passengers were clearly thrilled by the view and the few minutes of weightlessness that comes with a sub-orbital flight.

It was Sturckow's record eighth flight to space — four aboard the space shuttle and now four at the controls of Virgin's spaceplane — while Moses, Virgin's chief astronaut instructor, took her fourth trip aloft aboard Unity. Latimer, Virgin's first female spaceplane pilot, took her first ride, as did the three passengers.



The flight marked a major milestone for Virgin owner Richard Branson, the billionaire entrepreneur and adventurer whose team has been struggling for years to transition from test flights to commercial passenger service, offering brief sojourns in weightlessness for those willing to pay $450,000 for a ticket to ride.

Next flights - Galactic 03 - September 8th 2023
- Galactic 04 - October 6th 2023

Sources: *Spaceflightnow.com, Spacenews.com, Wikipedia*

Cover: *T.A.Chamberlain* *S.B.*

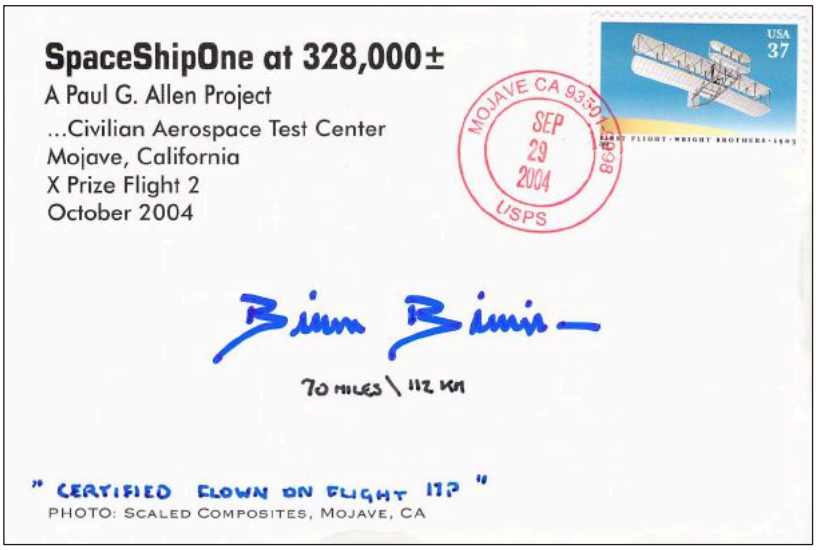
What about the postmarks for Virgin Galactic ?

Virgin Galactic is now active at the Spaceport America in New Mexico (NM).





The early flights of The Spaceship Company, a joint venture between Scaled Composites and Virgin Galactic, began at the Mojave Airport in the Mojave dessert. These were the flights of SpaceShipOne with the carrier plane White Knight, winning the Ansari X-Prize in 2004.



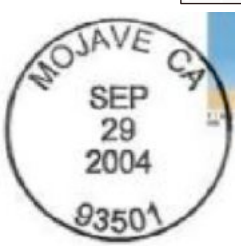
Flown cover on the Ansari XPrize flight with pilot Brian Binnie.

As from 2003 up to 2018, the pictorial postmark of Mojave (CA) was used, as well as the normal postmark.

On February 27th 2023, VMS Eve, the carrier plane, flew from California to Spaceport America in New Mexico, the manufacturing facility for Virgin Galactic since 2021.

First test flight in New Mexico on April 17th 2023 : this event was NOT publicized, so only few covers exist !









Sources: Scaled Composites, Virgin, Wikipedia, own documentation.
Covers: own collection. *S.B.*

Building for Beyond

Axiom Space is the leading provider of human spaceflight services and developer of human-related space infrastructure. We operate end-to-end missions to the ISS while developing its successor, Axiom Station, and building next-generation spacesuits for low-Earth orbit, the Moon and beyond.

Axiom Space is an American privately funded space infrastructure developer headquartered in Houston, Texas. Founded in 2016 by Michael T. Suffredini and Kam Ghaffarian, the company first flew a spaceflight in 2022: ***Axiom Mission 1***, the first commercially crewed private spaceflight to the International Space Station.
The company aims to own and operate the world's first commercial space station in 2025.



Axiom Mission 1 (Ax-1) was a privately funded and operated crewed mission to the International Space Station (ISS). The mission was operated by Axiom Space out of Axiom's Mission Control Center MCC-A in Houston, Texas. The flight launched on 8 April 2022 from Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The spacecraft used was a SpaceX Crew Dragon docking the ISS on 9 April 2022. Undocking on 25 April 2022 and landing in the Gulf of Mexico on the same day.

Michael López-Alegría (USA)
Eytan Stibbe (ISR)
Larry Connor (USA)
Mark Pathy (CAN)



Ax-1: signed by Pathy, Artemyev, Matveev, Korsakov



Axiom Mission 2 (Ax-2) was a private crew mission to the ISS. The flight launched on 21 May 2023 on board a Dragon C212 capsule and sent four people to the ISS. Ax-2 docked with IDA-3 on the ISS at 1312 UTC May 22. The Ax-2 crew undocked on May 30 and landed in the Gulf of Mexico on May 30, 2023.

Peggy Whitson (USA)
John Shoffner (USA)
Ali Al-Qarni (Em.)
Rayyanah Barnawi (Em.)



Ax-2: signed by 11 astronauts on board on 22 May 2023

Shenzhou 15

The mission visited the Tianhe core module following the launch and docking of Tianzhou 5, the fourth resupply mission to the station. In addition, it also marked the first Chinese crew handover and created a record of 6 taikonauts in space at the same time with Shenzhou 14. The mission was launched following the launch and docking of the Wentian and Mengtian modules, in July and October 2022, respectively. There was a 5-day overlap between Shenzhou 15 and the previous Shenzhou 14 mission, while entering the Tianhe core module later on 30 November 2022, as the fourth expedition to the Tiangong space station.



Launch cover of Shenzhou-15 from Jiuquan SLC on November 11th 2022 on top of a LM-2F rocket.

Shenzhou 15 was six months in space and landed safely on June 3rd 2023 in the Gobi desert.

The Shenzhou 15 crew carried out 4 spacewalks, worked on payloads both inside and outside the station, and carried out other scientific work during the 6-month mission:

On 9 February 2023, the first scheduled spacewalk of Shenzhou 15 was carried out by Fei Junlong and Zhang Lu through the airlock of the Wentian lab module, with Deng Qingming assisting the pair from inside the Tianhe core module. Fei and Zhang completed a series of tasks, including installing the stations fourth external pump (Z01-04) on the Mengtian lab module and other tasks related to Mengtian's payload airlock, which allows astronauts to deploy science payloads and small satellites using the station's robotic arms. The spacewalk lasted for 7 hours and 6 minutes, making it China's longest to date.

On 28 February and 31 March 2023, the second and third planned spacewalk of Shenzhou 15 were conducted by Fei Junlong and Zhang Lu through the airlock of the Wentian lab module, with Deng Qingming again assisting the pair from inside the Tianhe core module. The two spacewalkers completed all the scheduled tasks and returned safely to Wentian. No specified tasks, time period or other details were stated.

On 15 April 2023, the crew performed their fourth spacewalk conducted by Fei Junlong and Zhang Lu through the airlock of the Wentian lab module, with Deng Qingming again assisting the pair from inside the Tianhe core module.

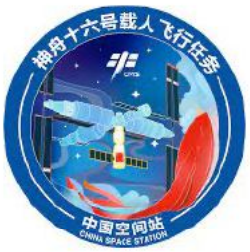




Fourth EVA on April 15th 2023, Beijing Space Center

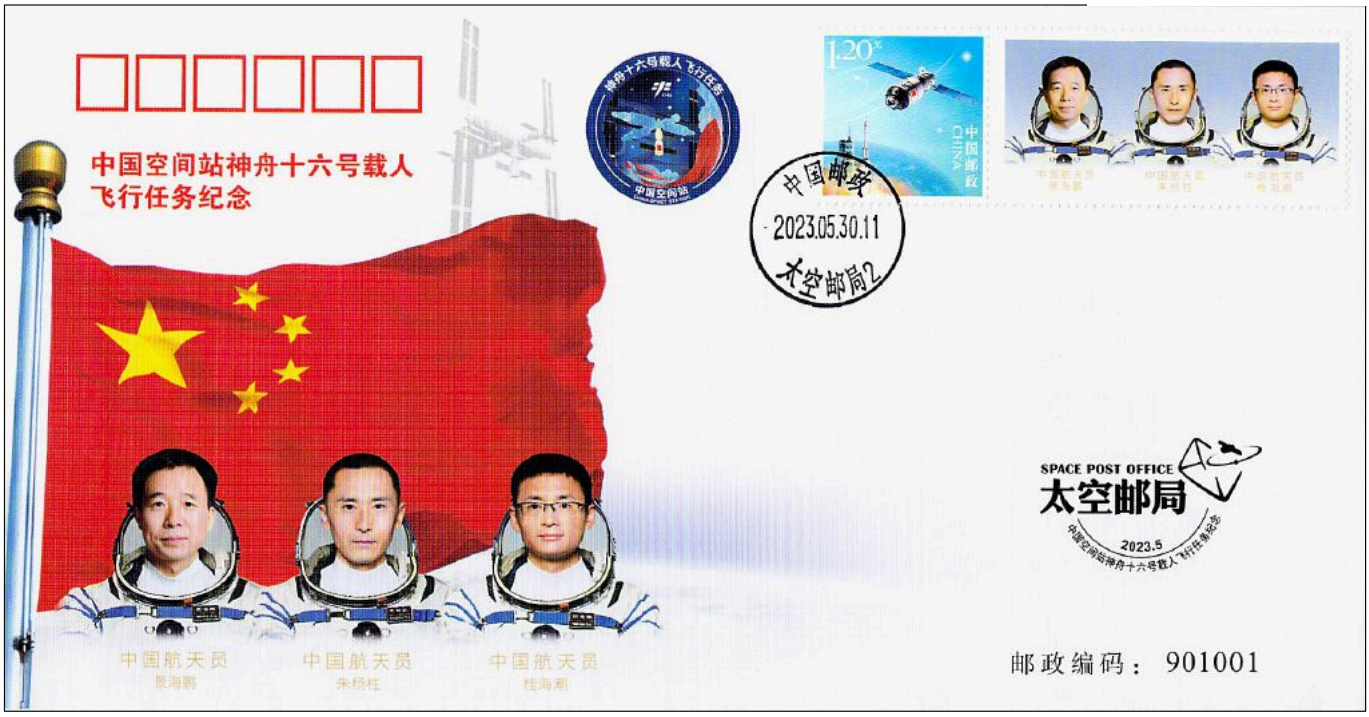
SZ-15 landed on June 3rd 2023 in the Gobi desert.

Shenzhou 16



Shenzhou 16 was launched on May 30th 2023. Crew are commander Jing Haipeng, space flight engineer Zhu Yangzhu, and payload specialist Gui Haichao.

The launch marked a new record population of 17 humans in orbit: 6 in Tianhe and 11 in International Space Station.

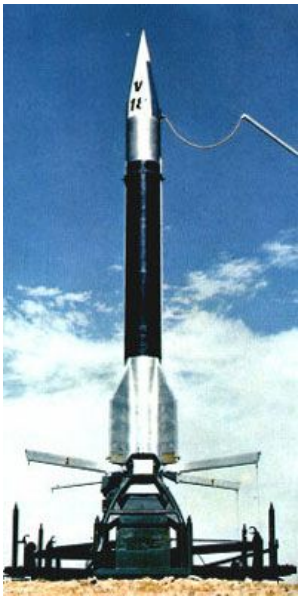


Launch cover Shenzhou-16 , Jiuquan SLC May 30th 2023

On 20 July 2023, the first scheduled spacewalk of Shenzhou 16 was carried out by Jing Haipeng and Zhu Yangzhu through the airlock of the Wentian lab module, with Gui Haichao assisting the pair from inside the Tianhe core module.

Stefan Bruylants / covers SB and china-aerospace

A Statue to Félicette, the first cat in space



On 18/10/63 at 8.09 a.m. a black-and-white tuxedo cat, named Félicette, was sent aloft from Hammaguir for a suborbital flight aboard the rocket Veronique AGI47.

In the special biological container in the rocket's nose cone, the feline was subjected to a force of 9.5 g's during ascent. She achieved a height of 157 km (97 miles), so becoming the first – and most probably the only – cat to experience weightlessness, for 5 minutes to be precise.



Some 13 minutes after the launch the helicopter from CERMA recovery team captured Félicette's little capsule, to happily ascertain that she was fine.

With that successful suborbital flight into the very fringes of space a French cat made history.

It is said Félicette was a stray cat 'rescued' from the streets of Paris by a pet shop owner. She was purchased together with 13 other feline space candidates - all female - by the French government. They were to receive a 'space' training, including spending time enclosed in noisy boxes and whirling around at high speed in the cabin of a centrifuge.

Just like space dog Laika before her, Félicette was chosen for her calm and friendly nature, her endurance, her good general demeanor, and her ability to recuperate from stressful tests. Besides that, she was the only lightweight cat.

During her training and flight the cat was known only as C341. After her glorious return, she was named Felix, after the animation series, and then Félicette, when she turned out to be a she-cat.

The package of electrodes, surgically implanted into Félicette's brain to monitor her neurological activity during her flight was an ugly thing to see, many believe this is the real reason why the story of the 'space cat' is known by so few people. Media were reluctant to use photos showing cute pussy cats apparently transformed into Frankenstein monsters.



Like Laika, Félicette, the little stray, could have become a beloved and happy pet, but faith decided different for her.



tote system, would probably reverse its attitude if it took a fresh vote, because some

charging a tax on each telephone used by s.p. bookmakers for betting.

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Space cat back alive

PARIS, Saturday. — France has successfully sent a cat into space on board a Veronique rocket and brought it back to earth alive.

An Armed Forces Ministry communique said the flight was carried out from Hammaguir

First French space shots with rats were to find the effects of absence of gravity on an animal's nervous system and brain activity.

NEWCASTLE, Sat. — A woman this week gave birth to her second son a few hours after driving a three-ton truck 500 miles.

She is Mrs Pat Miller, 20, wife of the manager of a sideshow company now in Mayfield for the Spring Festival.

She drove the truck, loaded with sideshow equipment and towing a caravan, from Wagga.

When she arrived on Monday she cooked two meals before going to the Mater Hospital at

After her successful flight, Félicette returned to the French space program's laboratory for almost 3 months of further study. Then it was decided to euthanize her, to analyze the electrodes implanted in her brain. The French space scientists thought they would gain priceless information about the effects of space travel on living creatures. But the analyses gave - just like the flight itself - no useful results whatsoever, so the unfortunate kitty space traveller was killed for nothing.

A forever blame on the French space program.

And what about Felix, the cat who ran away just before the flight? Although a popular story, which can still be found in various publications, it turns out to be a persistent misunderstanding. Felix simply did not exist. All trained space cats were females, remember?





Why does Félicette deserve a statue ?

To speak with the words of the initiator and crowd funder for the undertaking, Matthew Serge Guy, a Creative Director working at Anomaly London : “Although other animals in space, such as Laika the dog and Ham the chimpanzee, are well-known within popular culture and have lasting memorials, very few people are aware that a cat went into space at all”.

For a short while Félicette made headlines, but ultimately she was overshadowed by the other space race milestones of the 1960’s.

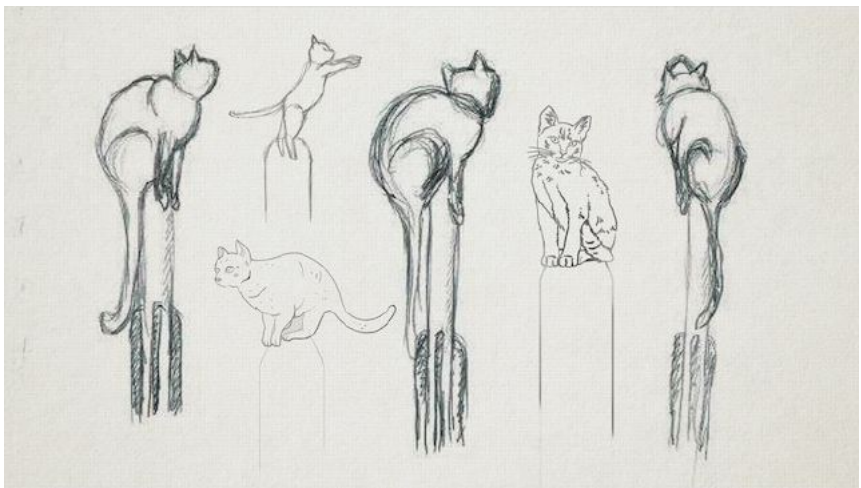
When, years later, a number of postage stamps were issued in honour of Félicette’s flight by former French colonies like Comaro Islands (1992), Chad (1997) and Niger (1999), all assumed it was a male cat, named Felix, since it were men leading the fields of science and engineering. They could not even get the stamps right!





Creating the statue …

Matthew Serge Guy : “It is also important to note that Félicette, alongside many other animals that have braved space travel in the name of science, was ultimately an unwilling participant in this experiment. She experienced arduous training prior to the mission and it eventually took her life. In that respect, the statue should serve as a reminder of the sacrifices made by all animal astronauts throughout the Space Race”.





In 2017 Matthew's Kickstarter campaign to fund the design, construction and display of a statue of Félicette raised over 57.000 USD (43.323 Pounds), pledged by 1.141 backers. Depending on their donation, sponsors received postcards, lapel pins, poster prints, and/or tote bags commemorating the first cat in space.

The artist chosen for the creation of the statue is the award-winning British animal sculptor Gill Parker.

The project's founder originally planned to have the cat perched on top of a Veronique AGI rocket, but he later changed his mind because Félicette, after all, was placed into a rocket against her will. Gill Parker then suggested to set Félicette on top of a globe instead. She sculpted first a 20cm maquette, or scale model. These smaller replicas of the final statue, in a cheaper material, were also offered for purchase (and I bought one).

Finally, 2 bronze statues of Félicette were made, the one for display, and another one that went to a big sponsor in the UK, who happens to be a friend of mine.

On 17 December 2019, after 3 years of hard work, and supported from all around the world, the bronze statue of Félicette was unveiled in a ceremony at the campus of the International Space University (ISU) in Strasbourg, France, attended by various dignitaries, including astronaut Helen Sharman.

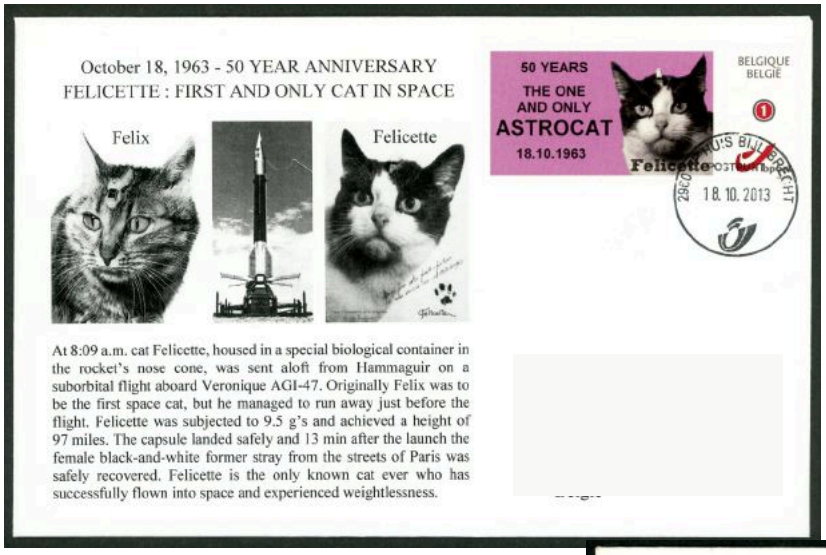
The statue is on display in the Pioneers Gallery, close to a bust of Yuri Gagarin and features a cat sitting on a world globe, staring up into the sky. The sculptor, Gill Parker, did a great job.

Strangely, Matthew was not invited at the statue's unveiling ceremony, even though, without him, there would not have been a statue at all. I think he should have been invited as a VIP guest. Ingratitude is the world's reward.











Special stamp "DuoStamp" at the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the flight of Félicette in 1963, from Hammaguir.

DuoStamps are private pictures, officially printed by the Belgian Post and may be used on letters in Belgium.



Cover from Romania at the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the flight of Félicette.

Shortly after Félicette's mission, on 24/10/63, there was a second catstronaut flight attempt by the French. Sadly that Veronique AGI50 rocket became unstable, veered off course, gained some height, but then exploded, crashing 75 miles from the launch site.

The name of that unfortunate cat was not revealed.

Félicette is the first and (most probably) the only cat who successfully made a trip into space.

But probably one day, who knows how far in the future, people will travel to worlds beyond Earth, and cats will surely accompany the pioneers. One day there will be cats living on the Moon bases, and then… Mars?



Bibliography :

- "Animals In Space : From Research Rockets to the Space Shuttle" (Springer 2007)
- "FELICETTE - The Space Cat" by Stuart Atkinson (Kindle edition Amazon)
- Publications on the Internet by Matthew Serge Guy

Marianne Van den Lemmer / BFV Cosmos


do. 9 november 2023, 20u.
Karel Bossart, vader van de Atlas-raket
lezing door Cynrik De Decker
auteur van 'Voorbij de Maan', België en de Ruimtevaart
Kalmthoutenaar Bossart ontwierp de Atlasraket voor de Amerikaanse Defensie, zodat die atoomkoppen op de Sovjet-Unie kon richten.
Later bewees de raket ook haar waarde tijdens de ruimtewedloop.
Foto: Convair/General Dynamics Astronautics Atlas Negative Collection
locatie: Strijboshof, Achterbroekstw. 69
inkom: €6 leden Cultuursmakers & Df
€9 niet leden
www.cultuursmakers.be/Kalmthout
Kalmthout@cultuursmakers.be

Future exhibitions ...

21-22 October 2023 *Regional Belgium*	Unionphil'23	*C-Lounge 2 Trade Mart Brussels* *Atomiumsquare 1* *Brussel, Belgium*
21 January 2024 *Precompetitive Belgium*	AMIPHIL'24	*Institut Saint-Andre* *Rue du Parc, 6* *6000 Charleroi*
29-30 March 2024 *Precompetitive Belgium*	29-30 maart 2024 Precompetitieve tentoonstelling Antverpia '24	*Antwerp Expo* *Van Eycklei* *Antwerp, Belgium*
16-19 April 2024 *FEPA Exhibition* *FIP Patronage*	EFIRO 2024	*Biblioteca Nationala* *Buccharesti /RO*
7-9 June 2024 *National Exhibition* *Belgium*	7-8-9/06/2024 Brabantfil24.be	*Trade Mart* *Atomiumsquare 1* *1020 Brussels*

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