

LIFESTYLE

Singapore and Japan team up to create art installation 7km in the ocean



PHOTO: Singapore and Japan have collaborated in this groundbreaking project involving artworks deployed under the ocean.



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By AMIERUL RASHID

In 2022, Lakshmi Mohanbabu became the first Singaporean to send her artwork into space.

Fast forward a couple of years and the local artist, alongside tech firm NuStar and Nanyang Technological University (NTU), is part of another groundbreaking project.

This time, she has her art installation headed below the sea, 7km under to be exact.

This makes it the world's deepest art installation and Singapore the first country to have an art installation 7km in the ocean, according to a joint news release on Wednesday (March 19).

The artwork comprises three steel cubes that were installed at the bottom of the ocean, near the Mariana Trench – home to the deepest point known on the planet's surface – off the coast of Japan, on Dec 12, 2024.

They were deployed as part of an early warning system for earthquakes and tsunamis, in collaboration with Japan's Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology.

One of the three cubes was 3D printed with new technology developed by NTU Singapore.

Made using 80 layers of ultra-thin stainless steel fused together, this hybrid 3D printing technology was invented by Assistant Professor Lai Changquan and his team at NTU's Singapore Centre for 3D Printing (SC3DP).

They worked closely with Lakshmi on prototypes before printing the final product.

Assistant Professor Lai noted that this project's success can be proof of the "potential of interdisciplinary research".

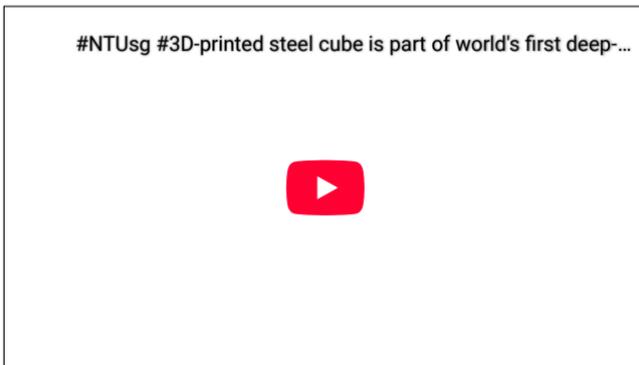
He added: "Creating a piece of art capable of withstanding the immense pressures of the deep ocean is a testament to the versatility and durability of our technology."

As for Lakshmi, this was her third time collaborating with NTU SC3DP, and having had two cubes sent to space in 2022, she has her eyes set for potential artwork on the moon in 2025.

The 55-year-old said: "With these two art installations, Singapore is the first nation to have artworks on the moon and the deep ocean.

"This milestone is also a testament to Singapore's pioneering spirit and tenacity as we celebrate SG60 this year."

The artwork itself



Comprising red and white, ocean blue and orange, and purple and aquamarine blue, the three cubes' vibrant colours signify the earth's changing hues, the ocean's depth and the boundless expanse of space.

The red and white cube holds a deeper significance given the involvement of the two nations, Singapore and Japan, in this project.

Its design draws from the colours of their flags evoking the sun, stars and the moon.