Unique Planetarium Artwork Comes to Singapore For First Time

Imagine the interior of a 15-feet dome showcasing the amazing spread and movement of aerial technologies, including planes, satellites and even weather balloons!

This is what the public will see when standing within ‘Celestial Mechanics’, a unique planetarium artwork created by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Assistant Professor Scott Hessels. Singapore will be its next stop as ‘Celestial Machines’ is hosted at NTU School of Art, Design and Media's (ADM) main gallery from 29 March to 1 April 2007.

Mixing the science of statistical display and the aesthetics of contemporary art, ‘Celestial Mechanics’ interprets the patterns and behaviours of aerial and space systems to create a stunning visualization of the motions of some of the 30,000 man-made objects in the sky.

Assistant Professor Hessels worked with award-winning designer and programmer Gabriel Dunne, with help from government agencies and the science community, to create 3-D models of the airborne systems. Assistant Professor Hessels and Mr Dunne then led a team of top animators to visualize these models in a style that reflects the chaos, force, and influence of aerial technologies.

For Assistant Professor Hessels, who teaches digital film-making at NTU ADM, a planetarium was the ideal space to show this information. “Computers can now collect massive amounts of data, but our display systems are struggling to keep up. Planetariums give us a way to visualize a complex system without losing the emotion of the data—the awe that large-scale structures inspires.”

Though ‘Celestial Machines’, Hessels aims to show how our lives are intricately tied to the invisible networks in the sky. Wide-ranging industries including the media, communications, navigation, military and safety make use of such technologies, but few people actually consider these machines. Hessels says, “The huge number of man-made systems above us are creating a new artificial universe that is filled with
social and political importance. These forces are shaping our world, so it’s important to visualize them.”

Adds Prof Isaac Kerlow, who heads ADM, ‘We’re very happy to host this artwork created by our own faculty to share with art and technology enthusiasts in Singapore. This project is a fascinating blend of art and science, and one that distinctively encapsulates the mingling of art and technology. This is an edge offered at ADM - Singapore’s first comprehensive professional art school, uniquely situated in a university with strengths in science and technology.”

Since the summer of 2005, ‘Celestial Machines’ has toured prestigious art and technology festivals and museums around the world, including the SIGGRAPH 2005 conference and the Japan Media Arts Festival 2006. It was also previously featured in international magazines such as Wired and Discover.

Ten-minute ‘night shows’ will run continuously from 10am to 7pm everyday. Admission is free. The dome structure is supplied by Immersive Display Studio Inc and Credent Technology Asia Pte Ltd.

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About Nanyang Technological University

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is a research-intensive university with globally acknowledged strengths in science and engineering. The university is located in a garden campus in western Singapore, tracing its roots back to 1955.

NTU has 4 colleges comprising 12 schools. The College of Engineering comprises six schools focused on technology and innovation. Its research output ranks among the top four in the world. The College of Science pushes the boundaries of Singapore’s life sciences initiatives. The Nanyang Business School (the College of Business) offers one of the world's top 100 MBA programmes. The College of Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences boasts Singapore’s first professional art school offering degree courses in art, design and interactive digital media, the Humanities and Social Science School, and the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, a top journalism and media school in Asia.

The 13th school, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, was inaugurated on 1 January 2007. An important component of this autonomous school is the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, long recognised as a world authority on strategic studies and terrorism.
NTU is also home to the internationally-acclaimed National Institute of Education, Singapore’s only teacher-training institute.

NTU has in place multi-country programmes and initiatives with established institutions worldwide. Key partners include MIT, Stanford University, Cornell University, Caltech, University of Washington, Georgia Institute of Technology, Carnegie Mellon University in USA, Peking University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, Waseda University, Indian Institute of Technology in Asia, Cambridge University, Imperial College and Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Europe.

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