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Docu-series from NTU's Earth Observatory to debut worldwide



Cheryl Tan

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A new documentary series by an artist in residence at the Earth Observatory of Singapore (EOS), which explores the impact of climate change on the oceans and coastal communities of Asia, will be available for streaming worldwide.

The premiere last night of Changing Ocean Asia, by Australian film-maker Liz Courtney, focused on South-east Asia, home to more than 70 per cent of the world's coral species.

The series was narrated by Dr Sylvia Earle, Time Magazine's first Hero of the Planet in 1998.

Speaking in a recorded address at the S.E.A Aquarium in Resorts World Sentosa, Dr Earle, 86, an American marine biologist and a member of the EOS Scientific Advisory Board, said: "I have been witness to a dramatic shift from the middle of the 20th century when I began exploring the oceans.

"From a time of enormous prosperity to a time of enormous loss, I have witnessed about half the coral reefs around the world either disappear or enter into a state of decline... exacerbated by a combination of events that are all interlinked, (such as) the rapid melting of the ice sheets, change in ocean temperatures, and the heavy load of carbon dioxide being carried on oceans, deforming crustaceans," she added.

Dr Earle noted that it is projected that by the middle of this century, most coral reefs will be gone if they continue to decline at the current rate, underlining the critical need to make decisions that will support a healthy ocean and planet for the future.

Only about 3 per cent of the world's oceans is protected today, leaving 97 per cent open for exploitation in one way or another.

The series also looks at the challenges and solutions being explored by scientists, governments and businesses, which will be key in determining the fate of Southeast Asia over this decade.

"Scientists here at the Earth Observatory of Singapore are really committed to enhancing the study of coral reefs and the surrounding ocean, (making) the next 10 years really critical," she added.

The documentary was written and directed by Ms Courtney.

She was one of the winners of the Australian 100 Women of Influence awards in 2015 for her work in climate education.

The Australia-based documentary-maker directed the series remotely last year, with footage in places like Singapore, Australia, Indonesia, Hawaii and Greenland.

Several professors from Nanyang Technological University's EOS - including its director, Professor Benjamin Horton, Associate Professor Adam Switzer, Associate Professor Emma Hill and Assistant Professor Kyle Morgan - also feature in the series.

Changing Ocean Asia will air on StarHub TV Ch 422 next Monday at 6pm in Singapore.

The documentary series is also available worldwide on Apple TV, Amazon Prime and Curiosity Stream on the same day.



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