

Press Release



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ArtScience Museum explores *The Universe and Art*

Discover humanity's age-old fascination with the Universe through ancient and contemporary artworks

SINGAPORE (2 March 2017) – Embark on an artistic voyage through space and explore humanity's vision of the stars at ArtScience Museum's upcoming exhibition, *The Universe and Art*. Making its debut on 1 April 2017, *The Universe and Art* examines humanity's fascination with the Universe and what lies beyond.

As the subject of dreams, mythologies and artistic explorations, the Universe has been studied by people around the world for millennia. Featuring over 120 artworks, scientific artefacts and manuscripts, this exhibition presents global views of the Universe through the centuries. It weaves a rich constellation of Eastern and Western philosophies, ancient and contemporary art, science and religion, to examine humanity's origins, presence and future in the Universe.

Jointly curated and organised by Mori Art Museum and ArtScience Museum, *The Universe and Art* begins with sacred religious artefacts linked to Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. It continues with masterworks by the most renowned Renaissance astronomers, Galileo, Kepler, Newton and Copernicus, which are on show in Singapore for the first time. New scientific thinking on the Universe is explored in contemporary artworks by Björn Dahlem, MORI Mariko, Pierre Huyghe, Andreas Gursky, Wolfgang Tillmans, SUGIMOTO Hiroshi and more. The exhibition concludes with artworks devised specifically for space, providing unique insights on how art and culture have influenced the way we explore the Universe.

“As a museum that explores the intersection of art and science, we are thrilled to have masterpieces by some of the greatest astronomers who ever lived on show in Singapore for the first time, alongside stunning artworks by leading visionaries within contemporary art. *The Universe and Art* celebrates humanity's age-old fascination with the Universe and its mysteries. The exhibition shows how it has been an object of religious worship, a source of artistic and literary inspiration, and the basis of some of the most revolutionary scientific discoveries of all time. Thanks to extraordinary advances in technology, radical new theories and vast international science endeavours, we are now living through a golden age of discovery in astronomy. This exhibition helps put this in context for us by showing how our understanding of the Universe has evolved over the ages,” said Honor Harger, Executive Director, ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands.

“In essence, the exhibited items are the history of the questions about the reason for one's existence that human beings have always pursued, as well as the trajectory of the dreams and romance we have had with the Universe. In the not-too-distant future will come the days when people travel in space on a regular basis. There might be no answer to the eternal question of where we came from. We hope, however, this exhibition will provide visitors with an opportunity to think about their outlook on the universe and the humanity of the future.” said Fumio Nanjo, Director, Mori Art Museum.

The exhibition narrative unfolds through four main themes:

1. Our Vision of the Universe

The first section of the exhibition focuses on historical cosmologies from around the world. Religious art from the Buddhist, Hindu and Jain traditions show how we conceived the cosmos as multidimensional from the earliest of times. Shown in Singapore for the first time is Kokugakuin University Collection's handscroll of *Taketori Monogatari* (“*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*”), Japan's oldest narrative on space. It depicts an encounter with Princess Kaguya, who was from the Moon. This work and others show visitors how stories and myths helped shape our perception of the heavens.

The birth of astronomy as a modern science is charted through a remarkable collection of artefacts from the East and West, including star-charts from the 7th Century to the Edo period in Japan, and astronomical texts from the medieval Islamic world. Visitors will have the rare opportunity to view numerous unique first edition works by some of the most renowned astronomers of the Renaissance period – Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton.

2. The Universe as Space-Time

In this section, new scientific advances are explored through the works of contemporary artists. Enigmatic cosmological phenomena such as black holes, dark matter and the ekpyrotic Universe are explored through artworks by Björn Dahlem, MORI Mariko and others.

Stunning depictions of new cutting-edge instruments designed to observe the Universe by three of the world's leading contemporary photographers – Andreas Gursky, Trevor Paglen and Wolfgang Tillmans – will also be on display.

3. A New View of Life

The potential for life on other worlds has been a constant source of fascination for both artists and scientists alike. The exhibition explores the origin of life in the cosmos, and ponders whether we are alone.

Contemporary depictions of alien worlds by internationally revered artists such as Laurent Grasso, Pierre Huyghe and SUGIMOTO Hiroshi, will be shown alongside archaeological artefacts and graphic art, which aim to arouse visitors' imagination of mysterious encounters with extra-terrestrial beings. Artists such as Patricia Piccinini, Vincent Fournier and SORAYAMA Hajime present artworks that suggest how new technology such as robotics, nanotechnology and genetic engineering, might give rise to strange new life forms somewhere within the Universe.

4. Space Art

The Universe and Art exhibition concludes with artworks designed specifically for the environment of space. The establishment of the first space programmes in the 1950s and 1960s marked a new age in the exploration of the Universe. 536 astronauts have since explored the Universe. Artists have been active within space programmes since the very beginning. Highlights of this part of the show include artworks by Arthur Woods and OSAKA Takuro, which have flown to space and exhibited in space stations. Visitors can also see works by Kitsou Dubois and Dragan Živadinov who have devised choreography and theatre for the micro-gravity of space.

Another key highlight of the section is an installation by Japanese artist, NOMURA Hitoshi, titled *'moon' score: ISS Commander – Listening to it on Mars*. Seeking inspiration from photos of the Moon's craters taken by Japanese astronaut WAKATA Koichi, Nomura provided his own interpretation of the rhythms of the Universe through this unique musical composition.

By working hand-in-hand with scientists, artists are helping to shape the way we perceive the Universe now, and in the future.

The Universe and Art is part of ArtScience Museum's ongoing *Art and Science of Space* season. Ahead of the opening of the exhibition, visitors can begin reflecting on humanity's relationship with the cosmos, planets and stars through *Secret Galaxies*. A key component of *i Light Marina Bay 2017*, *Secret Galaxies* is a spectacular, site-specific projection mapping artwork by Singapore audiovisual collective, Syndicate. *Secret Galaxies* will transform the exterior of ArtScience Museum into a dynamic representation of the stars and planets above us. It will take over the museum's iconic façade from 3 to 26 March.

For more information on the exhibition, please visit
www.marinabaysands.com/ArtScienceMuseum

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About Marina Bay Sands Pte Ltd

Marina Bay Sands is the leading business, leisure and entertainment destination in Asia. It features large and flexible convention and exhibition facilities, 2,560 hotel rooms and suites, the rooftop Sands SkyPark, the best shopping mall in Asia, world-class celebrity chef restaurants and an outdoor event plaza. Its two theatres showcase a range of leading entertainment performances including world-renowned Broadway shows. Completing the line-up of attractions is ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands which plays host to permanent and marquee exhibitions. For more information, please visit www.marinabaysands.com

About ArtScience Museum

ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands is Southeast Asia's leading cultural institution that explores the interrelationship between art, science, technology and culture. Featuring 21 galleries totalling 50,000 square feet, the iconic lotus-inspired building has staged major exhibitions by some of the 20th century's key artists, including Salvador Dalí, Andy Warhol and Vincent Van Gogh, as well as major exhibitions which explore aspects of scientific history.

About Mori Art Museum, Tokyo

Mori Art Museum, located on the top floor of Roppongi Hills Mori Tower skyscraper, a noted landmark of Tokyo, is a pivotal and pioneering contemporary art museum that has been introducing diverse artistic practices from around the world. The Museum since its establishment in October 2003 has developed its own distinctive approach to art - by embracing the concepts of "contemporary" and "international" - and is committed to making contemporary art more accessible to all people by presenting a wide range of exhibitions and learning programs that feature cutting-edge visual arts, architecture and design in a global perspective. Its continuing "Art + Life" principle is to realize an enriched society where art relates to all aspect of life. For more information, visit: www.mori.art.museum/eng

Media Enquiries

Dawn Wang: (+65)6688 0042 / dawn.wang@marinabaysands.com
Gladys Sim: (+65)6688 1048 / gladys.sim@marinabaysands.com

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