

Press Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Inflate your imagination with Floating Utopias

More than 40 artworks, including eight giant inflatable sculptures, will be on display at ArtScience Museum

SINGAPORE (6 May 2019) – ArtScience Museum is inviting visitors to drift away into alternative worlds with *Floating Utopias*, a new exhibition which opens on 25 May.

Ever since the first hot-air balloon ascended into the skies in the 18th century, inflatable objects have inspired the public's imagination, generating utopian dreams of castles in the sky, floating laboratories, and cloud cities. *Floating Utopias* is a playful and poetic exhibition that explores the social history of inflatable objects, showing how they have been used in art, architecture and social activism over the decades.

Visitors can expect a dazzling visual experience, with over 40 artworks by more than 15 international and local artists including Ant Farm, Tools for Action (Artúr van Balen and Tomás Espinosa), Eventstructure Research Group, Anna Hoetjes, Luke Jerram, Franco Mazzucchelli, Ahmet Ögüt, Marco Barotti, Tomás Saraceno, Graham Stevens, The Yes Men and UFO.

The impressive impact of inflatable objects will be conveyed through eight large-scale air-filled sculptures which will be suspended in the galleries, creating a series of dramatic spectacles along the route of the show.

With the invention of the hot air balloon, humanity was able to leave the confines of the ground for the first time and experience the Earth from above. *Floating Utopias* explores how this pivotal invention shaped the way we understand the world and our place in it. It shows how ballooning became a source of mass fascination for the public in the 18th and 19th century, inspiring new modes of travel and communication, and prompting scientific innovation. It charts how a new generation of experimental architects began using inflatable structures in the 1960s, as they searched for new approaches to designing space. And it delves into the work of artists who have utilised inflatable objects in surreal, unexpected or unconventional ways. Throughout the exhibition, photographs, documents, and films show how inflatable objects have been used for political purposes, historically in State parades and spectacles, and in more contemporary times, by activists as tools for protest.

Floating Utopias is an exhibition that, in Singapore, could really only happen at ArtScience Museum. As with many of our shows it combines poetry and politics, pedagogy and play, technological innovation and artistic ingenuity. At its heart, *Floating Utopias* is a series of encounters with breathtaking floating artworks which dramatically occupy ArtScience Museum's striking curved gallery spaces. Sculptures are suspended in the air, compressed into uncomfortable spaces, sloped at unusual angles, and set adrift within the museum. The

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artworks on show variously inspire, disrupt, constrain, and embolden visitors to explore the history of inflatable objects, their social functions and how they have changed the way we look at our world,” said Honor Harger, Executive Director of ArtScience Museum.

“*Floating Utopias* navigates through the broad cultural history of inflatable art and architecture. It reveals the impact inflatables have had on the collective imagination. Throughout history pneumatic objects opened up new technological possibilities, thus becoming a projection surface for utopian visions. Inflatables bear a transformative aspect in themselves: formless bundles of material become instant voluminous spaces. Their light, mobile and ephemeral quality encourages people to be both playful participants and dazzled spectators. The instant, disruptive monumentality of inflatables allows us to question hierarchical power structures by reminding us that after all, everything is temporal,” said curators, Artúr van Balen, Fabiola Bierhoff, and Anna Hoetjes of Floating Utopias Foundation

Key Highlights

Floating Utopias will be presented in five chapters: *Balloon Fever*, *Display and Disrupt*, *Bubble Architecture*, *Solar Sustainability* and *Vertical Exploration*.

Highlights include a dramatic outdoor installation, *Castle of Vooruit* (2012), by Turkish artist Ahmet Ögüt.



***Castle of Vooruit* (2012)** by Ahmet Ögüt
Courtesy of nGbk Berlin (2018); Photo copyright: Luca Girardini

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One of the exhibition's key works is a social sculpture, *Mirror Barricade (2016)*, consisting of 18 silver reflective inflatable cubes, created by the group, Tools for Action (Artúr van Balen and Tomás Espinosa). The cubes can be assembled within seconds to form a barricade.



Mirror Barricade (2016) by Tools for Action (Artúr van Balen and Tomás Espinosa)
Courtesy of nGbk Berlin (2018); Photo copyright: Luca Girardini

SurvivaBall (2016) by The Yes Men is a series of inflatable suits that may look humorous and playful but carry a serious message about how humanity might have to prepare for future climate disasters.



SurvivaBall (2016) by The Yes Men
Courtesy of nGbk Berlin (2018); Photo copyright: Luca Girardini

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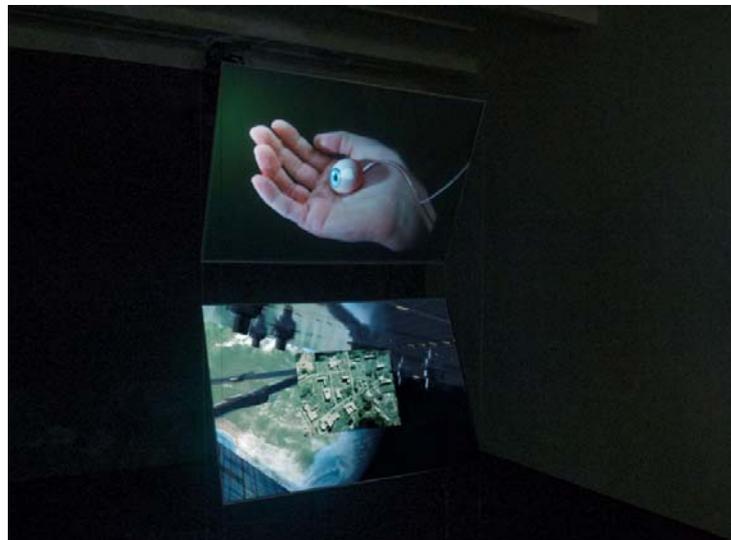


World renowned Argentinian artist Tomás Saraceno is present in the exhibition with the *Aerocene Explorer*, a personal solar-powered flight kit. The installation urges visitors to think about the possibility of environmental-friendly air travel that is energy independent.



Aerocene Explorer (2016) by Tomas Saraceno
Courtesy of nGbk Berlin (2018); Photo copyright: Luca Girardini

Inserting a female narrative into aerospace history is a video installation by Anna Hoetjes, contemporary visual artist, film maker and co-curator of *Floating Utopias*.



Eyes in the Sky (2018) by Anna Hoetjes
Photo credit: Anna Hoetjes

The exhibition culminates with a section that explores how inflatable objects have opened up a new direction for scientific research, sparking mankind's imagination to travel beyond Earth and into space.

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To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Moon Landing in 1969, ArtScience Museum has commissioned UK artist, Luke Jerram to create a new version of the stunning inflatable installation, *Museum of the Moon*. Measuring six-metres in diameter, the massive lunar sculpture features detailed, high-resolution NASA imagery of the lunar surface. The 3D moon will hang just above viewers' heads, compelling visitors to come close and circle the installation as each angle of the moon is different. The earlier versions of this breath-taking art piece were shown in world-renowned spaces and institutions, including Natural History Museum in London, and the Beijing Olympic Water Cube.



Museum of the Moon by Luke Jerram
Courtesy of artist: Luke Jerram

Floating Utopias will run from 25 May to 29 September 2019.

The exhibition is organised by ArtScience Museum and Floating Utopias Foundation, in collaboration with the neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, a German art association.

Tickets are available for purchase from all Marina Bay Sands box offices and website. Terms and Conditions apply.

Ticket prices are as follows:

	STANDARD TICKET (SGD)	SINGAPORE RESIDENT (SGD)
Adult	19	16
Senior (65 years and above)/ Student/ Child (2-12 years)	14	12
Family package (2 kids & 2 adults)	54	45

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For more information on *Floating Utopias*, please visit <https://www.marinabaysands.com/museum.html>.

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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, a theatre and an outdoor event plaza. 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 is a major cultural institution in Singapore that explores the intersection between art, science, technology and culture. It is the cultural component of Marina Bay Sands. Since its opening in February 2011, ArtScience Museum has staged large-scale exhibitions by some of the world's major artists, including Leonardo da Vinci, M.C. Escher, Salvador Dalí, Andy Warhol and Vincent Van Gogh, as well as exhibitions that explore aspects of science and technology – including particle physics, big data, robotics, palaeontology, marine biology and space science. For more information, please visit www.marinabaysands.com/museum.html

About neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK)

The exhibition *Floating Utopias* was originally developed and exhibited by the *Floating Utopias* project group at the neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK) in Berlin in 2018. The nGbK was founded in 1969 as an art organization with a grass-roots structure. Today it's one of Germany's most significant and largest art societies. The unique structure of the nGbK enables its members to directly influence its thematic orientation: exhibitions, research projects, event series and publications are developed in interdisciplinary project groups and supervised from the initial idea to the final implementation.

About Stichting Floating Utopias

In order to allow the exhibition *Floating Utopias* to embark on a global tour, Stichting *Floating Utopias* (SFU) was brought to life in 2018 in Amsterdam by a group of artists and curators. The foundation aims to underline the unique and underexposed social impact of inflatables. With a traveling exhibition, educational projects and a growing archive, SFU brings to light the cultural history and innovative power of inflatable art, architecture & design.

The original exhibition was curated by Artúr van Balen, Fabiola Bierhoff, Alexander Dunst, Anna Hoetjes, Jantien Roozenburg and Hannah Zindel. Today SFU's projects and exhibitions are developed and carried out by Artúr van Balen, Fabiola Bierhoff and Anna Hoetjes.

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(To refer to the press release for the photo credits)