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Lift off into a floating world of inflatables

A castle in the sky, a balloon laboratory and a floating Moon appear in ArtScience Museum's latest exhibition

SINGAPORE (23 May 2019) – More than 40 artworks, including eight dramatic larger-than-life inflatables, will greet visitors at *Floating Utopias*, ArtScience Museum's new exhibition opening this Saturday.

A visual spectacle, the exhibition takes a playful and poetic look at inflatable objects, showing how they have been used in art, architecture and social activism over the decades.

Presented in five chapters, the four-month long exhibition shows how inflatable objects have opened up new possibilities. 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 invention has shaped the way we understand the world and our place in it.

The exhibition is grounded by a strong political narrative that reveals how inflatable objects were used for ideological propaganda in the 20th century, and how artists countered these tendencies by using them as playful tools of social activism. *Floating Utopias* charts how inflatables created new innovations within architecture and urban planning, and shows how contemporary artists and designers are turning to inflatable structures to help us rethink our relationship with the environment.

"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. This exhibition combines play, poetry and politics to explore the artistic and scientific story of inflatables. It includes powerful and imaginative artworks dramatically suspended in the air inside ArtScience Museum's galleries, and outdoor performances, hands-on workshops and interventions into the city that invite the public to take part and shape their own utopia. Local and regional artists, including Dawn Ng and Momoyo Torimitsu, remind us that inflatable objects have been used across Asia too, including in Singapore's own National Day Parade. Taken together, the artworks and artefacts in the show reveal the impact inflatables continue have on our collective consciousness," said Honor Harger, Executive Director of ArtScience Museum.

"Inflatable objects invite us to be playful and to reclaim public space; they help to forge communities and promote participation. Their disruptive, ephemeral presence challenges power structures, by reminding us that after all, everything is temporary. Inflatables invite us to be playful and to

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reclaim public space; they help to forge communities and promote participation. Their disruptive, ephemeral presence challenges power structures, by reminding us that after all, everything is temporary.” said curators, Artúr van Balen, Fabiola Bierhoff, and Anna Hoetjes of Floating Utopias Foundation



No exhibition of inflatable art in Singapore would be complete without the iconic inflatable resident, *WALTER*, by local artist Dawn Ng. Her large curious rabbit sculpture was designed specifically to be seen outdoors in the cityscape of Singapore. *WALTER* has appeared in local neighbourhoods, such as shophouses, hawker stalls, convenience stores, playgrounds and MRT stations, drawing attention to some of Singapore's inherently familiar, yet overlooked spaces. Like many artists who work in inflatable media, her work acts as a tool to disrupt everyday lived experience, inviting us to reconsider the character and charm of the place where we live.



During their journey through the show, visitors will also meet two giant pink bunnies facing one another within a confined space. The work initially appears to be whimsical and playful, but carries a more unsettling message. *Somehow I Don't Feel Comfortable* (2000) by Japanese

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artist Momoyo Torimitsu is a dramatic artwork depicting two oversized bunnies slumped in opposite corners of the gallery in a sad, lonely manner. For Torimitsu, a bunny is a stereotypical example of cuteness. Supersizing her bunnies distorts and perverts their cuteness, creating something altogether more disconcerting.



Luke Jerram's large inflatable sculpture of the Moon, made using state of the art scientific imagery, closes the exhibition. Installed to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Moon Landing by NASA astronauts in 1969, Museum of the Moon, invites us to contemplate the Moon today, using the latest moon science.

Outdoor Performances and Community Engagement

One of the most important components of *Floating Utopias* is a series of outdoor performances and community engagements that invite the public to take part and contribute their creativity to the show.

Signals 2.0

The first of these performances takes place on 25 May, the evening of the opening of the exhibition, at the Marina Bay waterfront promenade. *Signals 2.0* is a performance devised by the artist group, Tools for Action (Tomás Espinosa and Artúr van Balen), who also have a series of artworks in the exhibition.

For *Signals 2.0*, the public are invited to participate in a unique nocturnal performance that encourages new forms of assembly and communication using 19 large portable inflatable light sculptures. This new version of the performance is choreographed by Tools for Action, working with Singapore-based performer, Susan Sentler. For the performance, students and alumni of LASALLE College of the Arts will communicate with each other using wearable light sculptures. The public are encouraged to join in during two site-specific community performances at 8.30pm and 9.30pm on 25 May.

Museo Aero Solar

One of the key artworks in the exhibition is the *Museo Aero Solar* by Tomás Saraceno, a lighter-than-air balloon sculpture powered by the heat of the sun. Saraceno and his *Aero Solar*

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Foundation have conducted workshops around the world which encourage communities to create their own solar balloons using recycled plastic. The latest *Museo Aero Solar* workshop is situated inside the galleries of *Floating Utopias*. Throughout the course of the exhibition, visitors are encouraged to bring used plastic bags to ArtScience Museum and work together inside the galleries to create a giant, colourful recycled plastic patchwork balloon, which will be launched into the air towards the end of the show. *Museo Aero Solar* shows how a collective creation can emerge from individual acts, transforming a polluting product, plastic bags, into a mind-expanding artwork.

Exhibition Chapters

The exhibition is organised into five chapters.

Balloon Fever explores how ballooning became a source of mass fascination for the public in Europe in the 18th century. Balloon spectacles shifted the public's perception of what was possible, inspiring new modes of travel and communication, and prompting scientific innovation. In the late 1960s, a new kind of inflatable fever caught the public imagination. New synthetic materials and inflatable media led to a new era of construction, encouraging a more fluid, nomadic vision of society.

Display and Disrupt surveys how inflatables have been used in public spectacles. In the USA, floating objects first began appearing in large commercial parades, such as the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, in the 1920s. In the Soviet Union, inflatables were used from the 1930s, in large socialist state parades. This section of the exhibition explores how inflatable objects have served as tools for ideological propaganda, and shows how artists, in contrast, have deployed inflatables in more grassroots contexts.

Bubble Architecture examines how inflatable structures inspired a new generation of designers and urban planners in the 1960s to explore the possibilities of temporary and mobile architecture. It shows how advancements in new media and space technology, inspired radical architects to use inflatable structures to question the conventions of permanent architecture.

Solar Sustainability presents the work of artists who use inflatable media to advocate for a more sustainable relationship between people and the environment. Climate change and biodiversity loss have increased the urgency to fundamentally rethink how humanity can occupy the planet in a more sustainable way. The artists in this section of the exhibition show how inflatable structures can provide lightweight alternatives to environmentally-damaging systems.

Vertical Exploration shows how the invention of the first hot air balloon in the 18th century heralded a new age of scientific exploration. For the first time, the sky could be directly investigated and the Earth could be seen from above. This prompted new approaches to measuring the planet's weather systems, and accelerated the desire to explore the sky beyond the Earth's atmosphere. This urge to leave the planet's surface ultimately led to the space race of the 1960s.

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Public Programme and Education

Further complementing the exhibition are a series of events, hands-on activities and workshops that visitors can participate in:

Event:	Date and time:	Description:	Remarks:
Conversation: Floating Utopias	25 May (Sat), 2pm – 5.15pm	<i>Conversations: Floating Utopias</i> is a half-day conference which gathers curators, artists, sociologists and activists to investigate the historical development of inflatable objects and discuss how they have inspired the imagination of alternative and utopian worlds. Speakers include: - the Floating Utopias curatorial team; - Artists, Graham Stevens, Ahmet Ögüt and Dawn Ng; - Performer, Norhaizad Adam, Artistic Director of P7:1SMA; and others.	Expression Gallery, Level 4 Free admission
Insights Tour	25 May (Sat), 11.30am – 12.30pm; 5pm – 6pm 26 May (Sun), 11.30am – 12.30pm; 5pm – 6pm	Join a curator-led tour and witness how artists use inflatables to examine contemporary social problems and to radically play with form and space.	Exhibition Entrance, Level 3 Complimentary to ticket holders of <i>Floating Utopias</i> .
Public Guided tour (English)	Family Fridays: 31 May, 7 & 21 June 3pm – 4pm Saturdays: 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 June 5pm – 6pm Sundays: 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30 June 5pm – 6pm	Join a guided gallery tour and witness how artists and activists use inflatables to examine contemporary social problems and to radically play with form and space. The tour will travel from gallery to gallery, bubble to bubble, stopping at key works to introduce and discuss key themes, time periods and artists.	Exhibition Entrance, Level 3 Complimentary to ticket holders of <i>Floating Utopias</i> .
Mandarin Guided Tour	Saturdays: 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 June 4pm – 5pm		

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	Sundays: 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30 June 4pm – 5pm		
Japanese Guided Tour	15 June (Sat) 11am – 12 noon		
Stand Up and Speak Out!	31 May, 7 & 21 June 4.30pm – 5.30pm	Stand Up and Speak Out is a hands-on workshop that provides visitors with the opportunity to identify an issue or a cause that they are passionate about, such as climate change. There will be interactive discussions on role models for children who are standing up and speaking out on important issues. Using recycled materials and simple tools, visitors will create an inflatable sculpture and stage a peaceful march inside the Museum to create awareness and spread their message.	Rainbow Room, Basement 2 \$5 per participant. Up to 20 participants on a first-come, first-served basis.
ArtScience on Screen: Up and Away	From 27 May	A family-friendly film programme featuring some of cinema's most iconic balloon adventures. Experience flight, fantasy and inflated balloons as a selection of brave young heroes go on bold expeditions, to make new friends and follow their curiosity. <i>To refer to ArtScience Museum's Facebook Events Page for the schedule.</i>	Expression Gallery, Level 4 Free admission

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

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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For hi-res images, please click [here](#). (To refer to the press release for the photo credits)

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Annex I: Key exhibition highlights

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

Chapter 1

Balloon Fever explores how ballooning became a source of mass fascination for the public in Europe in the 18th century. Balloon spectacles shifted the public's perception of what was possible, inspiring new modes of travel and communication, and prompting scientific innovation. In the late 1960s, a new kind of inflatable fever caught the public imagination. New synthetic materials and inflatable media led to a new era of construction, encouraging a more fluid, nomadic vision of society.

Artists include:
Tools for Action, UFO, Luigi Rados, Momoyo Torimitsu, Eventstructure Research Group, Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, Daniel Vierge, Ahmet Öğüt,

Key highlights



Somehow I Don't Feel Comfortable (2000),
Momoyo Torimitsu
Photo credit: Marina Bay Sands



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

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<p>Chapter 2</p> <p>Display and Disrupt surveys how inflatables have been used in public spectacles. In the USA, floating objects first began appearing in large commercial parades, such as the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, in the 1920s. In the Soviet Union, inflatables were used from the 1930s, in large socialist state parades. This section of the exhibition explores how inflatable objects have served as tools for ideological propaganda, and shows how artists, in contrast, have deployed inflatables in more grassroots contexts.</p> <p>Artists include: Dawn Ng, Franco Mazzucchelli, Artúr van Balen</p>	 <p>WALTER (2010, reproduced in 2019 series 2/3) Dawn Ng Commissioned by ArtScience Museum Photo credit: Marina Bay Sands</p>
<p>Chapter 3</p> <p>Bubble Architecture examines how inflatable structures inspired a new generation of designers and urban planners in the 1960s to explore the possibilities of temporary and mobile architecture. It shows how advancements in new media and space technology, inspired radical architects to use inflatable structures to question the conventions of permanent architecture.</p> <p>Artists include: Ant Farm, The Yes Men, Tanero Oki</p>	 <p>SurvivaBall (2006) The Yes Men Photo credit: Marina Bay Sands</p>

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<p>Architects, and Graham Stevens</p>	
<p>Chapter 4</p> <p>Solar Sustainability presents the work of artists who use inflatable media to advocate for a more sustainable relationship between people and the environment. Climate change and biodiversity loss have increased the urgency to fundamentally rethink how humanity can occupy the planet in a more sustainable way. The artists in this section of the exhibition show how inflatable structures can provide lightweight alternatives to environmentally-damaging systems.</p> <p>Artists include: Tomás Saraceno and Graham Stevens</p>	 <p>Aerocene Explorer (2016) Tomás Saraceno Photo credit: Marina Bay Sands</p>  <p>Atmosfields (1968–71) Graham Stevens Film in loop, 29 min 28 sec Courtesy of the artist</p>
<p>Chapter 5</p> <p>Vertical Exploration shows how the invention of the first hot air balloon in the 18th century heralded a new age of scientific exploration. For the first time, the sky could be directly investigated and the Earth could be seen from</p>	

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above. This prompted new approaches to measuring the planet's weather systems, and accelerated the desire to explore the sky beyond the Earth's atmosphere. This urge to leave the planet's surface ultimately led to the space race of the 1960s.

Artists include: Jakob Kaiserer, Albert Tissandier, Thomas Baldwin, Gaspard-Étienne Robert, Anna Hoetjes, Jean-Paul Jungmann, Franco Mazzuchelli, Luke Jerram



Museum of the Moon (2019)

Luke Jerram

Commissioned by ArtScience Museum

Photo credit: Marina Bay Sands



Eyes in the Sky (2018)

Anna Hoetjes

Film in loop, 8 min 30 sec

Photo credit: Marina Bay Sands