

NEWS RELEASE

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New Installation by Philip Beesley to Open at NAS

WASHINGTON – Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences (CPNAS) announces “Sentient Chamber,” a site-specific interactive installation created by Philip Beesley’s Living Architecture Systems Group. It opens Nov. 2 and will remain on view through May 31, 2016, at the National Academy of Sciences.

“Sentient Chamber” explores a revolutionary new kind of building, raising fundamental questions about how architecture might behave in the future. Might future buildings begin to know and care about us? Might they start, in very primitive ways, to become alive? This experimental new work draws together multiple disciplines that include next-generation lightweight structures, interactive robotics, and synthetic biology in pursuit of a kind of architecture that comes close to being alive.

The installation is composed of towering transparent acrylic arches and flexible silicon, creating quilt-like patterns and the sculpture’s composite structure. Custom glasswork vessels and translucent filtering elements expand the skeleton to form hovering surfaces that interplay with shadow and light. Distributed sensors throughout the chamber are programmed with algorithms that mimic curiosity, giving “Sentient Chamber” the power to sense and perceive, reacting to the presence of visitors with delicate waves of light and soft murmuring sounds.

“Sentient Chamber” was created by a group of architects, engineers, scientists, and artists from Canada, the U.S., and Europe working within the Living Architecture Systems Group. From his position as professor at the University of Waterloo in Canada, Beesley leads the group. Installations from their ongoing “Hylozoic Series” have been shown around the world to millions of visitors. The group’s design methods are being used to train the next generation of architects and engineers, providing them with skills to work with complex and interconnected sustainable environments.

“Sentient Chamber” will be on exhibit at the NAS Building, 2101 Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. The galleries are open weekdays between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. A photo ID is required. The exhibition is organized by CPNAS and the National Academies Keck Futures Initiative (NAKFI), with generous support from Ralph J. and Carol M. Cicerone and gratitude for assistance from The Catholic University of America School of Architecture and Planning and Virginia Tech School of Architecture + Design.

Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences sponsors exhibitions, the DC Art Science Evening Rendezvous salon, theatrical readings, and other events that explore relationships among the arts and sciences. For more information, visit www.cpnas.org. The National Academy of Sciences is a private, nonprofit institution that recognizes achievement in science by election to membership, and -- with the National Academy of Engineering and the National Academy of Medicine -- provides science, technology, and health policy advice to the federal government and other organizations.

(Continues on page 2)

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