



For Immediate Release

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Cal Poly Launches Interactive International Display Linking Olympic Arts Festival to Campus

SAN LUIS OBISPO – The Olympic Arts Festival, a component of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, will feature an interactive art exhibit connecting Beijing and Cal Poly June 7-17.

The display is the product of a new major at Cal Poly: liberal arts and engineering studies. The degree program combines the technical aspects of engineering with the creative applications of liberal arts.

Titled “Intimate Transactions,” the exhibit allows people in two geographically separate areas to interact in real time, but only through indirect sensory input. Student project manager Bill Trammel describes the effect as “intimacy despite physical separation.”

The brainchild of Australian artists led by Keith Armstrong, the exhibit is a collaborative effort between the artists and the Cal Poly team that brought the artists’ work to the U.S.

In the interactive art exhibit, two participants are required for each half-hour session -- one in Beijing and one in San Luis Obispo. Participants respond to abstract visual images and tactile impulses transmitted through “smart furniture” to produce images on a screen.

Seated on a “Body Shelf,” each participant is surrounded by nine surround-sound speakers, one of which goes across his/her waist. Participant’s motions are tracked by the Body Shelf, which translates the actions into an onscreen image which is then projected to their collaborative partner half-way around the world.

The public is invited to participate. The exhibit runs June 7 to 17 with four half-hour sessions each night from 6 to 8 p.m. in Cal Poly’s Welding Building, Room 102.

Sanctioned by the Olympic charter, the Olympic Arts Festival precedes the Beijing Games, allowing the host city to introduce its own culture to visitors. Also called the Cultural Olympiad, the festival also features artistic installations from other countries with the intention of enhancing mutual respect between people of different nations.

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