

Tech that reawakens awe - Studio Drift's kinetic installations

If the thought of using technology to reproduce the patterns and processes of nature makes you anxious, you haven't come across the glorious work of artist collective Studio Drift.



Dutch artists Lonneke Gordijn and Ralph Nauta. Image supplied.

The multidisciplinary studio, set up by visionary Dutch artists Lonneke Gordijn and Ralph Nauta, is devoted to bringing humankind back to nature with technology, evoking a sense of awe and wonder in the process. Gordijn and Nauta believe that the best designer is nature itself – but their kinetic installations, created in collaboration with scientists, engineers, computer programmers, universities and research facilities, reflect the symmetry and poetry found in the natural world. The result is touchingly lyrical work that allows us to reimagine possibilities in a world of pollution and climate crisis.

What it means to be alive in the 21st century

Whether floating an enormous concrete block ten feet above spectators at The Armory's Show's Pier 94, or having a flock of 300 drones perform a choreographed routine above the Kennedy Space Centre to mark the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission launch, Drift wants us to reflect on who we are and what it means to be alive in the 21st century.

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A flock of birds will always interact with its surroundings. Flylight is programmed in such a way that it makes its own choices. Through sensors the “bird” notices if you are close or not. So if the swarm loses its interest, it will fly away!

A post shared by Studio Drift (@studio.drift) on Jan 30, 2020 at 8:31am PST

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Fueled by optimism and a spirit of discovery, they advocate for a more sustainable world – they recently submitted a proposal to rebuild the fire-damaged Notre Dame Cathedral with plastic recycled from the ocean.

Relentlessly experimental, Drift is adamant that we need not fear technology, provided we use it to engender profoundly transformative experiences. Using data and algorithms derived from natural phenomena – like lights that mimic the flight patterns of a flock of birds – they hope to remind us of the beauty we frequently miss when gazing at our smartphones. Playing with light, movement and space, their installations provide an intimate experience of elements we frequently take for granted.

Poignant portraits of a complex, unsettling, magical world

In their Amsterdam workshop, which also functions as a test lab, Drift conceptualises artworks as diverse as The Obsidian Project (a sleek, synthetic obsidian mirror created out of recycled chemical waste), Fragile Future (a sculpture combining a metallic structure and LED lights), Meadow (a kinetic sculpture of continuously opening and closing mechanical flowers) and Shylight (a sculpture that unfolds and retreats in choreographed ‘self-defence’, much as flowers do). Meticulously designed and faultlessly executed, these projects create poignant portraits of the complex, unsettling, magical world we live in.

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Being in the city of tech at the moment, we're somehow reminded of our Burning Man adventures. Here's then an image of our Tree of Tenere, BM 2017. Hope to see many burners at our opening this Friday! - Mark C Slee And Zachary Smith

A post shared by [Studio Drift](#) (@studio.drift) on Jan 14, 2020 at 11:31am PST

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Passionate about customising works for particular spaces, private or public, Drift has produced work for both homes and galleries – some of their pieces are in the permanent collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the San Francisco MoMA and the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris.

The recipient of multiple awards, Drift recently received the Designer of the Year and Lighting Design of the Year awards at the Dezeen Awards 2019. Follow Drift and Lonneke Gordijn on Instagram: [@studio.drift](#) and [@lonneke.gordijn](#), Twitter: [@studiodrift](#) and Facebook: [Studio Drift](#).

Speaking for the first time in South Africa as part of Design Indaba's 25th anniversary edition, Drift will share their inspiration with #DI2020 audiences. Don't miss their landmark presentation – book now for #DI2020, which will be held at the Artscape Theatre Centre in Cape Town from 26 to 28 February 2020.

Additionally, it will be broadcast live via simulcast to major cities around the country, allowing both progressive business minds and design devotees in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth and Potchefstroom to take part in this must-attend event.

For more:

www.designindaba.com