

FREE PUBLIC EVENT TO LAUNCH SPECTACULAR INTERACTIVE ELECTROMAGNETIC CLOUD

- PART OF *NEW VISIONS* CONTEMPORARY ART PROJECT AT THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

- TUESDAY 4 MAY 2004

A free, public event at the National Maritime Museum on the evening of 4 May 2004 will see a 25-metre glowing cloud of a thousand helium balloons and mobile phones floating 60 metres above the Museum's lawns. The event is part of *New Visions*, the Museum's on-going contemporary art project and will take place during a total lunar eclipse.

Visitors are invited to come along from 7.00-9.30pm and enjoy being part of contemporary art in the making. In the unique one-night event - *Sky Ear* - artist and architect Usman Haque will invite onlookers in the grounds and people on the web to dial up the airborne mobile phones to listen to the electromagnetic sounds of the sky and change the colours of the cloud through the manipulation of electromagnetic waves in the atmosphere.

Electromagnetic activity in the air is created naturally by distant storms or is man-made by mobile phones, police and ambulance radios, and television broadcasts. Each of the one thousand helium balloons in the *Sky Ear* cloud will contain sensors and light emitting diodes (LEDs) which will respond to electromagnetic fields by changing colour.

Visitors will also have the chance to watch one of the night sky's most beautiful events, a total eclipse of the Moon. The eclipse will occur when the full Moon is exactly in line with the Earth and Sun and moves into the Earth's shadow. During the total phase, at 20:52 BST, the Moon will darken considerably and take on a spectacular brick-red hue as a result of light from the Sun being refracted onto the lunar surface by the Earth's atmosphere.

Usman Haque said: ‘Sky Ear is about making visible the invisible, giving form to an electromagnetic space that is just beyond reach of our natural perceptions. It encourages people to become creative participants in an interactive performance. The National Maritime Museum and the Royal Observatory, with their related interests in “exploring the unknown”, provide an ideal venue for the project’.

Roy Clare, Director of the National Maritime Museum said: ‘The National Maritime Museum is delighted to be hosting *Sky Ear*, which marks the relaunch of the Museum’s contemporary art programme – *New Visions*. This event invites audiences to look at and think about scientific phenomena in a different and visually stimulating way.’

The event is funded by the Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science and Technology and made possible through the technical support of Seth Garlock, Senseinate, Inc.

***Sky Ear* visitor information:**

Date and time: 4 May 2004, 7.00-9.30pm

Venue: Queen’s House, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

Admission: Free

Further information on *Sky Ear*: visit www.haque.co.uk/skyear or call 020 8312 6565

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Usman Haque is an artist whose multimedia installations and performances draw heavily on his training as an architect. He is founder of Haque Design and Research, a former partner in architecture practice Pletts Haque and teaches at the Bartlett School of Architecture in the Interactive Architecture Workshop. His work has been exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (London), Ars Electronica (Austria), the Hillside Gallery (Tokyo), the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Fabrica gallery, Brighton and Plymouth Arts Centre. More information at www.haque.co.uk

2. Total lunar eclipses occur when the full Moon is exactly in line with the Earth and Sun and moves into the Earth’s shadow. They can be seen wherever the Moon is above the horizon and so, from a given spot on the Earth’s surface, are much more common than solar eclipses, although they are still unusual events. May’s eclipse is visible from Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and South America. The Moon will enter the lighter, penumbral shadow of the Earth at 18:51 BST and the darker umbral shadow at 19:48 BST. It will be completely immersed in the Earth’s shadow (totally eclipsed) by 20:52 BST. At 22:08 BST totality will end as the Moon begins to emerge from the Earth’s umbral shadow and then appears to brighten steadily. By 23:12 BST it will have left the darkest shadow completely. At 00:09 BST on 5 May the eclipse finally ends.

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