



New York Hall of Science



CONNECTED WORLDS

Groundbreaking Exhibition About Sustainability at the New York Hall of Science

***Connected Worlds* housed permanently in NYSCI's iconic Great Hall
built for 1964 World's Fair**

Queens, New York – On June 27, 2015, the New York Hall of Science (NYSCI) opened *Connected Worlds*, its exciting and groundbreaking new exhibition on environmental sustainability.

Presented in NYSCI's iconic Great Hall, *Connected Worlds* is a fully immersive, digitally rendered interactive experience where visitors are encouraged to explore the interconnectedness of different environments, learn about the importance of keeping systems in balance, and see how our individual and collective actions can have widespread impact. Through gestures and movements, visitors interact with animated creatures, plants, trees and other objects, and see how human decisions affect the environment.

"*Connected Worlds* reflects what NYSCI is all about – a playful hands-on activity, a focus on problem-solving, and deep engagement with a topic. *Connected Worlds* gives visitors confidence in their ability to effect change, and empowers them within a larger environment," said Margaret Honey, president and CEO of NYSCI. "This leads to passionate learners – a hallmark of the NYSCI experience."

Connected Worlds features gesture-based technologies that generate and project images onto seven massive screens. Six of the screens are more than 14 feet tall and one screen, which shows a digital waterfall, is 38 feet tall. The screens show six different, but interconnected, environments – desert, mountain valley, plains, reservoir, jungle and wetlands – each with their own unique trees, plants and creatures, but sharing common resources, such as water and weather patterns. Some of the animals travel across environments for breeding or to access food. A central reservoir, which is fed by the waterfall and supplies water to the six environments, is projected on the floor, covering approximately 2,300 square feet.

When visitors move through *Connected Worlds*, they affect the environments by using simple gestures to plant seeds, harvest trees, and create clouds. Their decisions determine the health of the environments, which in turn influence which creatures and plants thrive or decline. Through the limited and shared resource of water, the exhibition encourages visitors to work with each other to find a natural balance.

As visitors explore and play in the digital environment, their actions have both short and long-term effects on the digital environments. These effects are based on core concepts of sustainability science including feedback loops, equilibrium in a dynamic environment, and casual links and influences. The result of a collaboration between NYSCI and Design I/O and a team of others (see below), *Connected Worlds* is the largest, most complex responsive environment ever created for a museum.



“The responsiveness of the exhibition is accomplished through a number of technologies,” says Stephen Uzzo, vice president of science and technology at NYSCI. “Although visitors will not be aware of the technologies needed to make *Connected Worlds* come to life, the ability of the exhibition to respond to visitors’ actions in real-time creates the playfulness and interactivity that is at the heart of the experience.”

The exhibition’s simulated environments create continuously changing experiences for visitors through the use of cutting-edge technologies – location tracking, gesture sensing and global environmental and social databases. Other new and emerging technologies will be integrated as appropriate.

The Great Hall – A Tradition of Science Continues with *Connected Worlds*

Designed by Harrison and Abramovitz Architects for the New York World’s Fair in 1964, the Great Hall (then known as the Hall of Science) – with its striking, curved, 80-foot-tall concrete walls embedded with 5,400 blue-faceted stained glass panels – was intended to create an illusion that one was in deep space. Inside, World’s Fair visitors watched *Rendezvous in Space*, which combined a short film with a simulated space docking overhead between a space shuttle and a space station.

The Great Hall has been completely restored and modernized thanks to \$25 million in capital support from the City of New York through the Department of Cultural Affairs, the City Council and the Office of the Queens Borough President. Expanding on NYSCI’s 2004 expansion to create a unified whole that reinvigorates the museum experience, the recently completed restoration, designed by Todd Schliemann / Ennead Architects, makes the Great Hall once again the centerpiece of the museum. Ennead Architects has been a catalyst for change in New York City, enhancing the quality of civic life throughout all five boroughs. The reopening of the Great Hall returns an iconic building to the Queens landscape.

This one-of-a-kind venue will now be home to *Connected Worlds*, allowing thousands of visitors to experience a cutting-edge science exhibition while surrounded by the breathtaking beauty of this architectural treasure.

Collaborators

To create the animated environments of *Connected Worlds*, NYSCI collaborated with Design I/O, a creative studio specializing in the design and development of cutting edge, immersive installations.

Additional partners include Columbia University’s Center for International Earth Science Information Network, Yale University’s Cognitive Science Department, New York University’s Games for Learning Institute, game designer, programmer and conceptual artist Zach Gage, and Big Show Construction Management.



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NYSCI's National Advisory Board includes Dr. Ben Shneiderman, professor of computer science at the University of Maryland; Dr. Mitchel Resnick, professor of learning research and head of the Lifelong Kindergarten group at MIT's Media Laboratory and director of the Okawa Center; Medard Gabel, CEO of Big Picture Small World; Dr. Barbara Tversky, professor of psychology and education at Columbia University; Dr. Andee Rubin, senior researcher for TERC; and Dr. Peter Gloor, research scientist at the Center for Collective Intelligence at MIT's Sloan School of Management.

Connected Worlds is made possible with generous support from The JPB Foundation, the National Science Foundation, Google Inc., and The Nasdaq Educational Foundation, Inc.

To restore the Great Hall, NYSCI and the City of New York's Department of Design and Construction undertook an ambitious restoration project, working with Ennead Architects. Major operating and capital support for the Great Hall restoration is provided by New York City through the Department of Cultural Affairs (Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner), the New York City Council, and the Office of the Queens Borough President (Melinda Katz).

Major philanthropic support for the restoration of the Great Hall was generously provided by American Express.

About Design I/O – Design I/O is a creative studio specializing in the design and development of cutting edge, immersive, interactive installations. Design I/O develops installations for events, galleries, museums, exhibitions and public space and specializes in creating engaging, meaningful interaction with the public. With more than 15 years experience in interactive media, Design I/O and its partners have and continue to push the boundaries of what is possible in the intersection between design and technology. For more information, visit design-io.com.

The New York Hall of Science – The mission of the New York Hall of Science (NYSCI) is to nurture generations of passionate learners, critical thinkers and active citizens through an approach called Design, Make, Play. Design, Make, Play emphasizes open-ended exploration, imaginative learning and personal relevance, resulting in deep engagement and delight in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. NYSCI was founded at the 1964-65 World's Fair and has evolved into New York's center for interactive science serving a half million students, teachers and families each year. NYSCI is open Monday – Friday, 9:30 am – 5 pm and weekends, 10 am – 6 pm. General admission is \$16 for adults and \$13 for children (ages 2-17), college students with valid ID, and seniors (62+). For more information, visit nysci.org or call 718-699-0005. Follow NYSCI on Twitter and Instagram: @nysci, and on Facebook at: facebook.com/nysci.

Media Contact:

Mary Record
New York Hall of Science
718-595-9123
mrecord@nysci.org



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