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THE PROJECT MARS COMPETITION: ENGAGING THE PUBLIC IN SPACE

Abstract

The Project Mars Competition (www.ProjectMarsCompetition.com) was a global video and graphic arts contest for college students and early career professionals to communicate their visual interpretation of the deep space journey from Earth to Mars, focusing on NASA's Orion and Space Launch Systems. The outreach project's goal was to inspire a new audience, rising and talented storytellers, to enter the online competition between October 2017-August 2018. Through a dedicated post-contest tour of the artwork, the project further aimed to engage listeners and viewers with artwork capable of relaying not only the how and what, but also the why of future space exploration.

The project was co-organized by SciArt Exchange (www.SciArtExchange.org) and was an overall success. The Competition received 589 entries from 59 countries. The team of finals judges included film and graphic industry professionals and NASA and ESA astronauts to motivate participants and help with contest messaging. Art, film, science organizations, museums/centers, schools and others worldwide were invited to showcase the top entries to engage their communities in the future of space exploration. Between October-December 2018, nearly 228,000 were exposed in person to artwork from the competition in movie theaters, malls, museums and universities. Additionally, 506,000 drivers saw a U.S. Highway billboard congratulating the top poster winner and acknowledging the Project Mars Competition. In 2019, another 1,500,000 people are expected to see the artwork. Additional events are in definition around the world, with hosts continuing to sign up. Over the course of the project's activities, the team captured information about which communications and event strategies were most feasible and effective to advise future activities.

The nonprofit SciArt Exchange integrates science and technology with art to inspire and educate the international public, promoting a global dialogue about the impact of science and technology on humanity, forming a thriving cross-disciplinary community, and advancing innovation for the benefit of all. SciArt Exchange was conceived based on the Humans in Space Art Program, which invites participants to communicate creatively about the future of space and uses their multimedia artwork in displays and performances that engage others. Through its activities, SciArt Exchange hopes to foster advancement and support for future space exploration, scientific research, and technology development and to rally the global community to solve issues of common interest.