

# Palo Alto Daily News: ENTERTAINMENT

## ‘Space Odyssey’ comes to life

**Kubrick’s vision endures**  
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Visitors to San Jose’s Tech Museum of Innovation will soon be able to immerse themselves in an exhibit celebrating the classic science fiction movie, “2001: A Space Odyssey.” The exhibit, “2001: Destination Space,” will showcase a bewildering array of rare collector’s items, as well as interactive comparisons between the technology envisioned in Stanley Kubrick’s 1968 film and the real technology of the new millennium.

The event is happening mainly because of one San Mateo resident’s passion.

### **Shrine to movie**

Upon entering the Ellsworth Street dwelling of exhibit consultant Dennis Gonzales, guests may think the apartment is equal parts shrine and living space. Walking through the narrow hallway, one notices that every available bit of wall surface holds a framed poster, lobby card, or other piece of artwork from “2001: A Space Odyssey.”

Just beyond the hallway, one finds an immaculate little work area where Gonzales assembles models of the movie’s space ships, several of which are proudly displayed on his desk. More impressively, a look around reveals that not only is the rest of the apartment filled with framed “2001” artwork, but even the chairs, tables, and other décor items are period pieces, reflecting the clean, modernistic look and feel of the hypothetical future seen in Kubrick’s cinematic landmark. Gonzales still remembers the exact date when he saw “2001” for the first time: April 17, 1969. Being 11 years old, he was just old enough to be deeply moved by this film which, at the time, was rapidly becoming a cultural phenomenon.

The fruit of collaboration between director Kubrick and legendary science fiction novelist Arthur C. Clarke, the film tells the story of a manned space mission sent to Jupiter to investigate evidence of extraterrestrial life. HAL, the space ship’s murderous onboard computer, soon sabotages the mission. Like the head of some dysfunctional family in a serious state of denial, HAL speaks reassuringly to his crew, refusing to abandon his pleasant tone of voice as he methodically tries to kill everybody. In spite of the machine’s behavior, a surviving crewmember succeeds in making first contact with an alien intelligence.

Hippies, intellectuals, science fiction fans and cinema buffs went back to see the film again and again, hailing it as a revolutionary work. “2001” was well over two hours in length, a 139-minute psychedelic trip using unconventional cinematography and long scenes with no dialogue, speaking to audiences in a unique language of imagery and motion.

## **Decades collecting**

Like so many that were impacted by “2001’s” initial screenings in the late ‘60’s, Dennis Gonzales spent decades collecting memorabilia and anecdotes from the film. A Web designer by trade, Gonzales attributes his ability to create the exhibit mainly to the flexibility that comes with being self-employed. Says Gonzales, “I wouldn’t have been able to do this project if I didn’t work for myself. I risked my career for this because I refused to work full time until it was done.”

Having never created a museum exhibit before, Gonzales first tested the waters in 1998, coordinating for the San Mateo Public Library an exhibit devoted to the ‘70’s era British sci-fi show, “Space: 1999.” The television series, clearly influenced by “2001’s” visual style and plot themes, was a favorite of Gonzales’. Other than an actual uniform worn by one of the show’s cast-members, every toy, model, and piece of art in the exhibit was from his personal collection. He hadn’t expected much of a reaction from his modest, ten-foot-wide display, but “Space: 1999” fans coming from as far away as Fresno told Gonzales it was worth the trip.

The project’s success made it much easier for Gonzales to enlist the aid of the various people and organizations that would help him realize his more ambitious dream of properly commemorating “2001.” When he got to work on creating another library exhibit, a few local businesses got involved, donating or discounting goods and services. These included the University Art Center in Palo Alto along with two San Mateo establishments; the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Kinko’s Copies, and Talbot’s Toyland Hobbies, who shared with Gonzales the tools, materials, and expertise needed to build several very professional-looking space ship models for his second show.

As word got out that he was asking private collectors to loan him rare and valuable items, Gonzales was pleasantly surprised to be given more than he’d dared hope for. When his “2001” exhibit debuted last year at the San Mateo Public Library, the centerpiece was an actual set of futuristic sofa and chairs that had appeared in the film’s “Space Station One” scenes.

The day the exhibit was unveiled, Gonzales received a phone call from the San Jose Tech Museum’s promotions manager, Naida Kendrick, and the upcoming show began to take shape. Not unlike the collectors and business owners who’d previously assisted Gonzales, Kendrick was infected by his enthusiasm. “She worked really hard to sell The Tech on the whole idea.” says Gonzales, “There’d be exhibit at The Tech if it wasn’t for her.”

## **Original props**

Although the futuristic furniture won’t be included, this new exhibit, coordinated by The Tech’s Katherine Whitney, represents a dramatic shift away from mass-produced collector’s items and towards original props used in the movie. These will include an actual HAL faceplate, the key used to disconnect the wayward computer, a space helmet and boots worn by one of the actors, and “a few surprises I can’t tell you about,” as Gonzales says with a smile.

This labor of love has brought Gonzales into regular contact with Arthur C. Clarke and actor Gary Lockwood, who appeared in the film as astronaut Frank Poole. Gonzales provides Clarke with frequent updates on the exhibit’s progress, and he’s currently designing a Web site for Lockwood.

When asked to explain the curiosity this 32 year old movie continues to generate, Gonzales pauses thoughtfully, perhaps remembering his first childhood viewing; “Worldwide interest in the film is growing because we’re rapidly closing in on this date, the year 2001. People are starting to recognize what this film contributed to our literature and what it inspired in our technology. People are realizing what a masterpiece it is.”

*2001: Destination Space will run from February 9 through September 3, 2001 at The Tech Museum of Innovation, located at 201 South Market Street in San Jose. For further information, call (408) 294-TECH.*

*Dennis Gonzales’ online exhibit can be visited at:*

*<http://www.best.com/~elusive/2001.html>*