

# A dream comes true with '2001' display at Tech Museum

By Joelle Sylvia Clark

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As a wide-eyed, impressionable 11-year-old, Dennis Gonzales fell in love with the now-famous film, "2001: A Space Odyssey."

For the past 30 years, his passion for it inspired the San Mateo resident to collect masses of memorabilia. Now Gonzales' wide array of pieces, plus his experience curating some small exhibits, has led the San Jose Tech Museum of Innovation to work with him on a display celebrating the movie. The exhibit opens in February.

"Seeing the movie was really special. I remember it clearly," Gonzales, 42, says. "My family was really poor, but we lived in a middle-class neighborhood. It was my brother's birthday and my father said, 'Let's take the boys to the space movie.'" He still remembers the exact date: April 17, 1969.

"After I saw it for the first time, I would run back to the theater whenever I had the chance. I'd put my ear up to the exit door because I couldn't afford to go in."

The 1968 film tells the story of a manned space mission that was sent to Jupiter to search for signs of extraterrestrial life. Actors Gary Lockwood and Keir Dullea fend off HAL, the elusive on-board computer that secretly tries to sabotage the mission and kill everyone.

Directed by the legendary Stanley Kubrick, "2001: A Space Odyssey" is based on Arthur C. Clarke's short story, "The Sentinel." Remarkable for its innovation cinematography and numerous scenes with no dialogue, the film also put Richard Strauss' "Also Spach Zarathustra" on the popular music charts.

Gonzales began his collecting love affair with a "2001" record album he received as a gift. Now a model of the Arius 1B, one of the movie's three spacecraft, races the work station of his home—the final piece he plans to contribute to the Tech's exhibit.

In 1981, he was hired by NASA to work on their computer systems, which he says "were similar to the computer HAL from the movie." Currently he is self-employed Web designer, specializing in creating sites for large corporations' and small, mom-and-pop ventures. But he hasn't been able to work a full-time job since he began coordinating exhibits in 1998. "If I didn't dedicated myself to this 100 percent it couldn't have worked," he says.

Ever since he saw the movie, Gonzales has dreamed of commemorating "2001" with an exhibit in 2001. He had no experience curating an exhibit; however, that didn't stop him.

To gain experience, in November 1998 he secured a 10-foot exhibit space in the San Mateo Public Library and displayed his collection of sci-fi pieces from "Space:1999," a '70s-era British television show. Friends he made on the Web gave him lots of tips on gathering and exhibiting a collection. "One of my friends owned the space suit from the show and that really helped round out the exhibit. People came from as far away as Fresno to see this display. They told me it was well worth the trip."

His venture proved so successful that commemorating "2001: A Space Odyssey" was easier than expected. Library administrators were anxious to display his new exhibit, which went up in November 1999.

The Peninsula community has been key to the success of the displays, he says. In addition to free artwork and digital art services, Gonzales received substantial discounts from San Mateo's Talbot's Toyland, Kinko's Copies and Palo Alto's University Art Center.

The original Djinn sofa and chairs from the movie, which were on loan from the famous voice-over artist, "Weird" Wally Fields from Wally's Weird Voices, made the exhibit all the more memorable, Gonzales says.

On a suggestion of a friend, Robert Emmett, he sent his "2001" exhibit idea to the Tech museum. His proposal included a six-page spread on his collection that ran in Britain's Sci-Fi & Fantasy FX International in September. Before his "2001" exhibit at the library even opened, Nadia Kendrick, the Tech's advertising and promotions manager, asked Gonzales to help coordinate an exhibit for the Tech.

Gonzales says it was a dream come true. “If it weren’t for Nadia Kendrick, we would not have a ‘2001’ exhibit,” he says.

The Tech exhibit is curated by Katherine Whitney. It will feature Gonzales’ entire collection, accompanied by materials he has secured from other ‘2001’ collectors and interactive comparisons between the film’s technology and that of the new millennium.

“I’m happy that we finally have the space station up in orbit,” he says of the U.S. space program. “It’s not as elaborate as I would’ve liked it to be. I thought that by now we’d be traveling through space. Maybe in a 100 years we’ll get to ‘2001.’ We’re just not there yet.”

The Tech project has taken a lot of time. During the week, Gonzales spends at least four hours a day organizing and preparing for the exhibit, plus the entire weekend. He says his goal for the Tech display “was to get the actual film props. I’ve succeeded, and it’s the first time a collection this size is under one roof.” “My favorite piece is the space helmet that Dave, a crew member, wears in the scene where he disconnects HAL. But the cherry on the top of all this is Robert McCall’s posters for ‘2001.’ They were commissioned by Kubrick himself.”

“2001: Destination Space” runs from Feb. 9 through Sept. 3 at The Tech Museum of Innovation, 201 South Market St., San Jose. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is \$9 general, with reduced rates for children and seniors. For more information, call (408) 294-TECH.

Gonzales also showcases the exhibit on his Web site, [www.2001exhibit.org](http://www.2001exhibit.org).

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