



香港城市大學  
City University of Hong Kong

## The Overview Effect

**Project Number:** 6000667

**Principal Investigator:** Mr. Derwin Scott HESSELS

**Grant Type:** TDG

**Abstract:**

The grant is to explore how satellite imagery and datasets can serve as the foundation for new media art and design to reveal environmental issues. Students will partner with global aerospace organizations to transform overview data into creative projects for public awareness.

CityU's Extreme Environments program is a highly regarded experiment in discovery-based education presented by the School of Creative Media. The program partners students with field scientists to interpret collected site data as art. Since 2012, undergraduate art and design students have visited scientific field research sites in some of the planet's most remote corners including the Mojave Desert, Antarctica, underground caves in Vietnam, and with The Nature Conservancy on the Solomon Islands and the State Key Laboratory in Marine Pollution underwater in the Coral Triangle. In each expedition, students explore a fragile ecosystem and collect data that is transformed into new media artworks like games, interactive artworks, cinema, animations and more to help engage with wider audiences and promote a better understanding of issues affecting the environment.

Since student contribution is required for study tours, students from low-income families have been unable to participate in the past. In 2019, we would like to offer a smaller regional expedition connected to working directly with orbital science agencies and create virtual connections--to satellites, people, imagery and data. Our focus is still creative and alternative data visualization, this time however using remotely collected materials. In addition, the grant will serve as a prototype to re-envision the Extreme Environments program with the expeditions removed yet retaining the core components: art and science partnership, student



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experiential education, community outreach and discovery-enriched learning.

Satellite imagery of earth has a unique connection to art: an emphasis on how perspective informs the message. "The Overview Effect" is experienced by many astronauts as a powerful shift in awareness upon seeing Earth from orbit. The conflicting emotions of seeing our planet's fragility and isolation act as a trigger to encourage actions to improve our environment.

"Earthrise", an iconic photo taken from space in 1968, was hugely influential in global campaigns to decrease pollution and a profound example of the power of media to reach the public. Overview imagery and data assists in understanding the 'big picture' but also strengthens the feeling of being connected. The view from above has the power to unite and inform like no other perspective.

1

Proposal No. TDG17B015

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Our students will utilize overview imagery and data to support the university's global sustainability agenda. By using emerging technologies and creative strategies they will transform critical environmental data into new media artworks. Collectively, the meaningful student projects will address climate change issues and sustainability within both urban and natural contexts and present them to the public through a range of innovative media materials and outreach platforms including exhibitions, publications, social networks, online catalogues, screenings, talks and more.