

A Collaboration based on Red Sprites

Presented by

Peter McLeish

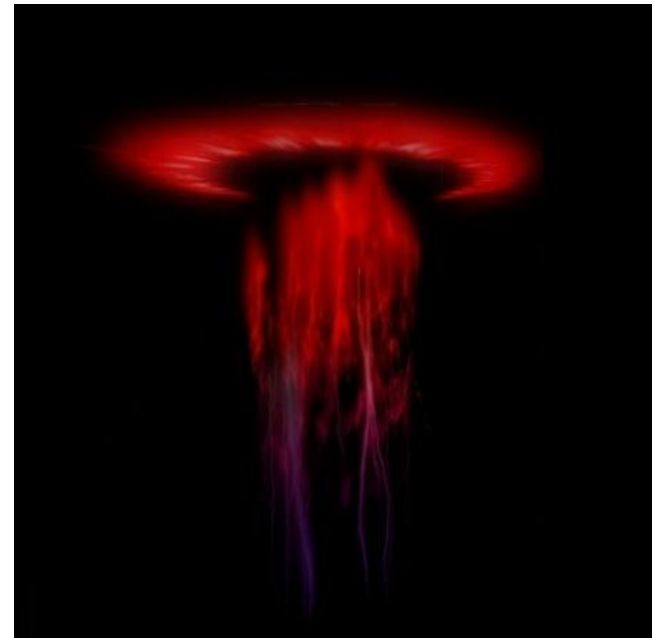
Date & Time: 28 August 2012 (Tuesday), 11:00 am

Venue: LT-11, 4/F

Academic 1, City University of Hong Kong

Abstract

Red sprites are upper atmospheric optical phenomenon associated with thunderstorms that have recently been only documented using low level television. The first images of a sprite were taken in 1989 and from 1990 to 1994 the space shuttle obtained twenty more images. Despite nearly a century of anecdotal reports from airline pilots, most scientists didn't really believe in sprites until the first images were captured on high-speed video. The blink of an eye last 250 milliseconds: sprites often last only ten. Cameras and computer models freeze sprites in time. Red Sprites were considered UFOs by pilots before their discovery.



Peter created the artwork in *The Hundred Year Hunt for Red Sprites* as well as his companion-six minute film titled *Lightning's Angels*. In this talk, Peter will discuss the nature of his collaboration based on Red Sprites. *The Hundred Year Hunt For The Red Sprite* is a 42 minute film which documents one of the most unexpected scientific findings in the atmosphere during the late 20th century. For over a century, people, including well respected scientists, had reported seeing strange lights in the night sky about thunderstorms - and they were. But it remained for a "happy accident" in 1989 when the first such event was captured on a low-light camera's video tape. One researcher exclaimed it was as if Biology had just suddenly discovered a new human body part. Since then, an entire "zoo" of luminous creatures have been found in the thin air above thunderstorms. And the discoveries are still being made. This program shows how the public can become engaged in the search for new thunderstorm related electrical phenomena. This film also discusses aspects of astronomy, space science and meteorology. *Lightning's Angels* is a six-minute film that combines digitally enhanced oil paintings of a Sprite, in various states of transformation which cannot be seen with cameras. This film is accompanied with the song *MISERERE* from the CD *STATE OF GRACE* by Paul Schwartz featuring the Joyful Company of Singers.

Both films have been presented at many major International science symposiums, conferences, media festivals, science film festivals, science & art museums/centres and planetariums all over the world.

About the speaker

Peter McLeish is a Canadian born international multi-media artist, painter, filmmaker and lecturer with a Masters Fine Arts degree. His initial education was in the sciences (physics & advanced mathematics) prior to his training in the visual arts. He has given over 80 solo and group exhibitions and/or film presentations and lectures in over 60 cities all over the world. Peter received over twenty various types of grants and/or awards from different branches of the Canadian and/or Quebec Governments.

Peter believes it is important to promote unity, between art and science in order to create a better understanding of the natural world. Since 2001, Peter has been collaborating with American scientist Dr. Walter A. Lyons (former President of the American Meteorological Society), on multi-media projects based on an upper atmospheric optical phenomenon (associated with thunderstorms) named Red Sprites. This collaboration eventually led to Walter A. Lyons receiving a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant for the creation of the DVD titled *The Hundred Year Hunt for Red Sprites* and interactive website. Peter has also been cooperating with Dr. Colin Price from University of Tel Aviv- Israel on the previous NASA Space Shuttle Columbia's MEIDEX mission. Since 2008, Peter has been developing project and films based on the Polar Regions and other phenomenon.

*** All are welcome. Tea reception will start at 10:45 am ***

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