Centrepiece of the games village

Singapore President and NTU Chancellor Mr S R Nathan officiates the unveiling of a sculpture marking the Yunnan Garden campus as the world’s first Youth Olympic Village.

The cool breeze on the evening of 2 August welcomed guests to the unveiling of the Youth Olympic Village sculpture, The Wind and Wings. The stainless steel artwork is a jewel of a landmark at the heart of NTU's lush garden campus. It was commissioned by NTU to commemorate the University as the home of the world’s first Youth Olympic Games.

At the touch of a button, President Nathan launched the stainless steel work by award-winning sculptor Mr Yeoh Chee Kiong.

Mr Yeoh, 40, explains that the commemorative sculpture aims to instil in future generations of young people the Olympic values of Excellence, Respect and Friendship. Scoring to a height of almost 7m and weighing three tonnes, its form suggests the metamorphosis of a butterfly -- “a symbolic figure for young people” -- to express the transformative experience that young athletes will undergo at the Youth Olympic Village.

Mr Yeoh, who teaches sculpture at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, wanted his artwork to capture youthful exuberance and a sense of wonder and adventure. This is reflected in the changing character of the sculpture. When bathed in sunlight, the “butterfly blossom”, cast in the sculptor’s signature “bubulous” style, reflects everything near it. "Every hemisphere is able to capture your image like a telescope and you will see hundreds or thousands of reflections of yourself in the sculpture," he explains. At night, the sculpture glows with a hundred colours -- from sweet lilac to bright red -- through a lighting system that was customised for it. A rather magical effect is created and must be seen in person, says Mr Yeoh.

The sculpture was assembled and built in two months at a foundry in Xiamen, China. Handcrafted by Mr Yeoh and a team of 10 assistants, it is made of top-grade stainless steel from Finland. The butterfly atop the slender steel beam is formed out of 172 individually-made “bulbs”.

Double celebration

After the sculpture-unveiling ceremony, guests were ushered to the Nanyang Auditorium to attend the university’s annual Convocation dinner.

In his welcome address at the dinner, NTU President Dr Su Guowei said: "Although the sculpture was designed for the Youth Olympic Games, its meaning is equally relevant to our recent graduates. Besides being the world’s first Youth Olympic Village, NTU is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. I hope that during their time in the Yunnan Garden campus, the athletes and officials will learn more about the unique character and heritage of our university, and also about the transformative power of the Nantah spirit that has come to characterise the Nanyang graduate," said Dr Su.

The nature-themed Youth Olympic Village sculpture complements a series of green initiatives at the games village that are part of NTU’s focus on environmental sustainability. Just last month, the university launched GreenLife, Singapore’s first truly green bus, which will ferry athletes and guests around the games village. The hydrogen-electric bus has zero carbon emission as it does not run on fossil fuel. Other eco-friendly measures around NTU include the installation of energy-efficient air-conditioners, motion-detecting sensor lights and fans, water-saving taps, and heat-absorbing garden trellises.

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