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## ARTS

### The future of art

BY HELMI YUSOF



**Art lab:** The interactive animation installation *What a Loving, and Beautiful World* (above, priced at \$79,500) is a collaboration between famed calligrapher Sisyu and teamLab which is a "visual poem"; Toshiyuki Inoko is the co-founder of teamLab, a well known digital solutions company in Tokyo; Ben Rubin's witty *Something Is Boiling* (priced at \$37,500) displays a blurry electronic Campbell soup tin revolving on strips of LED lights, a playful homage to Andy Warhol - PHOTOS: IKKAN ART GALLERY

BUSINESSES must "look like art" if they want to succeed beyond their wildest dreams. So believes Toshiyuki Inoko, the crystal ball-gazing co-founder of Japan's most famous digital solutions company, teamLab.

Regarded as a minor visionary among computer geeks, he says that companies must learn to be more "intuitive and artistic" in their approach towards doing business because the sophisticated customers of tomorrow expect an "elegant, artistic" experience when they purchase the company's product or service.

To illustrate his point, Inoko pits Bill Gates against Steve Jobs: "In the 1980s, Bill Gates created Microsoft. Their products were cheap, good and efficient for their time. But most people didn't really like Microsoft. They didn't feel much love for the products.

Along came Steve Jobs, a computer whiz and art lover who passionately studied calligraphy in university, was a great champion of digital arts, and used his mastery of typography and design to help create some of the most iconic machines of our time - the Apple computer, the iPod, the iPad and the iPhone.

"Jobs understood the importance of harmony between design and function. And buyers of Apple products remain fans for a long time," says Inoko.

"In future, the most logical and cost-effective business solutions may no longer be the best. And the Bill Gates of the world may slowly become obsolete."

Speaking through a translator, Inoko is in Singapore for an exhibition of futuristic artworks at Ikkan Art Gallery at Helutrans.

Titled *The Experience Machine*, the exhibition showcases more than a dozen slick and cutting-edge digital artworks such as video art and animation installation.

Inoko's digital company teamLab created two of the artworks on display: One is a stunning interactive animation room where kanji characters float on the walls.

When you touch the various characters, such as wind or butterfly, they explode into beautiful visual representations, allowing you to create your own dreamscape through the combination of various words. Titled *What A Loving and Beautiful World*, the work is priced at \$79,500.

Inoko's teamLab creates digital solutions for various companies - from cool video walls for fashion houses to a

slick search-functionality for a popular ticketing website.

The works by the other artists at the exhibition are equally compelling. Ben Rubin's witty *Something Is Boiling* (priced at \$37,500) displays a blurry electronic Campbell soup tin revolving on strips of LED lights, a playful homage to Andy Warhol's iconic Campbell's Soup Cans.

John Gerard's fascinating landscape "portrait" *Dust Storm* (priced at \$100,000) is a computer-animated image constructed from thousands of still photographs. Using Realtime 3D, the portrait changes from morning to night as a landscape would in real-life, and allows the viewer to get a 360 degree-view of the vista by rotating the monitor.

Many of the works offer a glimpse into the future of art, entertainment and advertising.

*The Experience Machine exhibition is on from Sept 13 to Oct 27 at the **Ikkan Art Gallery** at #01-05, Artspace @Helutrans, Tanjong Pagar Distripark, 39 Keppel Road (directly opposite the road from the old Tanjong Pagar Railway Station)*