

Unique photo project to tell the story of

NASA People at Work

Photos by

Guy-Christophe Coppel



JSC has recently agreed to a unique project, that when complete, will hopefully share a different perspective of the nation's space program with audiences around the world.

Free-lance photographer and communications consultant Guy-Christophe Coppel, a native of Brittany, will work through JSC on a long-term photographic project titled NASA People at Work. For three years, Guy-Christophe Coppel will learn the inner workings of the center, observe the processes that make it work and, through his camera, capture the spirit of the people who make space exploration happen.

"As a photographer, it has always been my dream to photograph NASA people," states Coppel in a written statement. "I have always been passionate about space, but also because I am so moved by men and women doing their very best, those who are making the impossible possible, thanks to their commitment, dedication and teamwork."

Coppel's timing could not be better. Only eight days after signing his agreement with JSC, Zvezda was launched, marking a historic milestone for the world's largest space endeavor, the

International Space Station. As part of his plan, Coppel has observed shuttle launches and will possibly visit other NASA centers, but his goal is to capture at JSC "things besides the big picture, spectacular events."

"I want to spend time with people, and really absorb what drives them. Not just walk in, 'click, click' and goodbye," he explains. "I want them to get comfortable with me and I want them to understand my purpose."

So what is his purpose? Coppel says he will strive to "tell the story of everyday life" at NASA and show people there is a lot more to the space program than the launches on the evening news.

"Visitors, even people genuinely interested in the space program, only see one snapshot of NASA," said Coppel. "It's primarily determined by the press. They, in essence, filter what we see of NASA, but through this project we will be able to give the public a more realistic look into NASA. I can show them real technicians, real engineers – people who have given their life towards what they consider important."

collection of his photos taken so far was displayed at Inspection2000.

"I was very proud to participate in this very special event designed for the business guests of JSC. I was proud to have been able to give them a little behind-the-scenes flavor of NASA

people," said Coppel, "It was very challenging, but thanks to the help of many people, the hard work of everyone, especially those in the photo lab in Bldg. 8, the magic of NASA worked for me too! Making such an exhibit in

fewer than six weeks would have been impossible anywhere else except at JSC. It was a real gift for me, specially on the human level through the way I have been welcomed by people everywhere I have been."

Coppel says it was the Original Seven that sparked his passion for the space program. Even at the young age of 9, far across the ocean, Coppel says he was moved by the intrigue and challenge of space flight.

He recalls growing up in Rennes, his hometown and capital of Brittany, and

watching on the sole television station the breaking news of Apollo 13's critical situation.

"That was the one time in my life that I prayed," admits Coppel. "I didn't even know their names but it was amazing how connected I felt to them."

Even now, he marvels at how the Apollo 13 challenge unified humankind.

"No one has ever been able to generate that much concern," says Coppel. "The Pope asked to pray for them, it united people like nothing else – despite religion, despite the Cold War, everyone offered to help. Space was the most powerful mechanism to unite people."

Coppel has always been interested in people, in his own words, "a passionate witness of human beings in their efforts for doing their very best." After studying history and geography at the University of High-Brittany in Rennes while working as a yoga teacher, he finally decided to take again to his cameras and worked extensively for artists and musicians, making CD covers, illustrations, and pictures, before running his own communications agency for 10 years.

A third-generation photographer, he has created two other photographic works that have evolved into numerous exhibitions and have been covered in various publications. Titled "Enez Sun," the first collection focuses on a western island of Brittany. A second titled, "Pennou," which means "heads" in Breton language, is a portrait gallery of leading personalities in Brittany and in the other Celtic countries.

"NASA People at Work gives me the feeling I am doing the right work, with the right persons in the perfect time," says Coppel. "Behind every single picture, there is a story, even several. I'll write it, not as captions, but as a real story."

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“NASA is dealing with a universal dream. It is much more than meeting the Congressional mandates. It is something that touches all mankind.”

— Guy-Christophe Coppel



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“These photos can be a tool to communicate, but also to educate and hopefully inspire, outside and inside NASA,” said Coppel. “They can create a different face, a more personal look, than what is usually given. It is like going inside a family and being with them, not just for the big wedding and the births, but every day – when they are working, cooking, when they are happy and when they are in pain, but always with much love and respect for everyone and what they are doing.” ■

OnDisplay

You can see a second exhibition of Coppel's first **NASA People at Work** photos at a special onsite viewing. The collection will be on display in the Bldg. 11 cafeteria through January 5, 2001.

