

A Century of Robots



2020 saw the 100th anniversary of Karel Čapek's play R.U.R. This groundbreaking play gave the world the word "robot" and ushered in the science fiction genre. The exhibition highlights Karel Čapek's life and works, the play R.U.R., and the resulting mania for robots we have seen in the last 100 years.

First Panel:

Brothers Karel and Josef Čapek were both writers, with Josef also a famous painter. Karel wrote many politically charged works that commented on the social turmoil of his time. R.U.R. is one such piece. Josef is credited with giving his brother the idea to use the word "robot."

Second Panel:

R.U.R. is a 1920 science fiction play that features the manufacture of artificial people created from synthetic organic matter. As a result, they appear to be human and can be mistaken for humans. These robots can think for themselves, which spells humanity's undoing. The robots, content to serve humans at first, revolt against their oppressors and cause the extinction of the human race. The panel includes rarely seen stage set designs and movie stills.

Third Panel:

Droids, Androids, and Cyborgs, Oh my! Just what is the difference between them? Leave it to the fans, where no question goes unanswered. In fact, science fiction fans have specifically defined each term. Which one is Darth Vader, or Star Trek's Seven of Nine? What about the Six Million Dollar Man? The Six Million whatnow? Look at this and find out.

Fourth Panel:

Ok, but what about the history of robots themselves? Where did it all start? Turns out early robots date back as far as the 12th century. Explore a robot orchestra, Leonardo DaVinci's design, and a robotic swan in this story of robot evolution.

Fifth Panel:

And now, robots on the big and small screens. That's right. There's no escaping the inevitable. From Robbie the Robot to the Terminator, the world is obsessed with robots and cyborgs. Many films featuring these synthetic beings explore the possibility of machines taking over the world - circling right back the plot of R.U.R. A real treat for the Doomsdayers.

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Exhibit Rental Information

A Century of Robots is comprised of five retractable panels that tell the story of Karel Čapek's science fiction play R.U.R. and the introduction of the word "robot". The history and first imaginings of synthetic life is explored, culminating with robots in film.

Exhibit Contains:

- 5 panels that retract into a metal base (opened like a roller shade), each housed in a black zippered bag. The opened panels are each 36 x 72 inches in size.
- 1 pole folded in half for each panel (in bag with panel)
- All panels fit into one box (14 inches long, 14 inches wide, 48 inches tall)
- Box weighs approximately 76 lbs

Space Requirements:

- 15 linear feet. This figure is based upon all five panels being set up in a row, but they can be in any configuration within a space.

Time:

- Duration of exhibit is negotiable

Security:

- Periodic checks of exhibit area
- Open to the public only while there is an attendant in the building

Procedures for Booking:

Shipping costs to and from the venue must be paid for by the borrower. The NCSML Traveling Exhibit Coordinator will ship via FedEx and include return shipping labels. The borrower will be billed by the NCSML Finance Director after the exhibit's return to NCSML.

Setting up the Exhibit:

- Remove panel (rolled up in metal case) and pole from bag
- Place metal case on floor with hole for pole as the back
- Unfold pole and insert one into the other at the center point (where the elastic connects the two pieces)
- Insert pole into hole with flat end as top
- Pull up on panel to unroll it
- Attach top edge of panel to flat top on pole

The NCSML traveling exhibition program is generously supported by American Czech Association, Los Angeles and American Sokol Los Angeles.

Questions about this exhibit?

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