

Press Release



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BIG MACHINE! AMAZING WEEKEND!

The Franklin Is Taken Over By Heavy Machinery Opening Weekend of Newest Exhibit Begins Friday, May 16

Philadelphia, PA May 13, 2008 – The Franklin, the most-visited museum in Pennsylvania and a Top Twenty most visited museum in the United States*, will kick off its newest continuing exhibit “Amazing Machine!” on Friday, May 16 with a celebratory weekend entitled “Big Machine – Amazing Weekend!” The Franklin’s exterior grounds will become the literal stomping grounds for such monstrous machines as a back hoe, two John Deere tractors, a fire truck and more!

Inside The Franklin, this newest addition to the museum allows visitors to experience a machine-like environment featuring little-seen pieces from The Franklin’s renowned science collection side by side with a series of interactive displays that unveil the interest and simple beauty of working machines. The room will be highlighted by three stunning kinetic mechanical art installations by sculptor and architect Ben Trautman.

Everyday machines will be displayed in “exploded” views. Their parts, separated and visible, allow a bird’s eye view of the interior of such workhorse everyday machines as the household vacuum cleaner, power drill and thermostat. Also featured will be over two dozen awe-inspiring and rarely-displayed machines from The Franklin’s priceless collection, including Maillardet’s brilliant automaton, a working model of the first internal combustion engine on loan from Italy and a fascinating model of the famous Strasbourg cathedral clock.

Interactivity will be a central element of Amazing Machine!, with visitors invited to experience universal machine elements – components (gears, cams, pulleys, screws, springs and linkages), power and energy (chemical, electrical and fluid) and control (on-off, rate and sequence)—all presented in a captivating series of hands-on stations designed to bring out the heavy equipment operator in all of us.

Underscoring the exhibit will be Trautman’s iconic and hypnotic art installations, which provide an artistic illustration of major concepts of the Amazing Machine in motion – linkages, gears, escapements and screws. To further immerse visitors, the exhibit will also feature multi-media commentary on the beauty of machines in motion and the various relationships between man and machine as portrayed in classic cinema such as *Modern Times* and *Metropolis*.

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The Franklin has doubled its attendance in the last five years. Upgraded facilities, which range from a re-built *Giant Heart* to a 5,000 square foot store to blockbuster exhibits like *Titanic*, *BodyWorlds* and *Tut*, have generated unprecedented attention and audiences. The sum total economic impact to the Philadelphia region of the three blockbusters has been calculated to be over \$200 million. The museum is currently in a fundraising phase, and has already received \$27 million in funding, with a goal of raising \$60 million for an ambitious series of revitalization efforts. Changes include a renovated Benjamin Franklin Memorial and new ongoing programming and exhibits. Additionally, the museum recently announced plans for a building extension, which creates space for a signature neuroscience exhibit, featuring climate control capabilities and other features that will allow the museum to remain competitive in drawing blockbuster traveling exhibits to Philadelphia. To capitalize on the re-invigorated image of the museum, as well as leverage its core mission of inquiry, The Franklin recently introduced its tagline “Curious?” to cement public perceptions of The Franklin as a place for excitement, intrigue and just plain fun.

The Franklin Institute

Founded in honor of America’s first scientist, Benjamin Franklin, The Franklin Institute is a renowned and innovative leader in the field of science and technology learning, as well as a dynamic center of activity. It is dedicated to creating a passion for science by offering new and exciting access to science and technology in ways that would dazzle and delight its namesake. For more information, please visit www.fi.edu.

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