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Storytellers in the sky



I've been fascinated by drones since I was a kid, and this is the first of two articles on the topic. Lately, I've explored how drones are used in arts and entertainment.

This summer, China **broke** a Guinness World Record for the largest aerial image made with drones, showing how these devices are becoming storytellers in the sky.

It was a drone light show that utilised 11,787 drones to break the world record. Chongqing Broadcasting Media Group and Shenzhen DAMODA Intelligent Control Technology organised the show, which featured themes of landscape, culture, daily life, and the city itself.

Scenes such as "Camellias in Bloom" and "City of Mountains and Rivers" showcased architecture, natural beauty, and local culture through aerial choreography.

Today, I'll share some recent achievements and introduce key innovators.

How Disney and Others Are Using Drones

Drones have moved beyond being just novelty props for content creators. Now, they're a key part of amusement parks, public celebrations, and themed entertainment. Fireworks alone are no longer the main attraction at big events.

At Disneyland Paris, Dronisos has helped create shows like the latest Disney Tales of Magic. These feature glowing drones above Sleeping Beauty Castle, along with projections, lights, fountains, and fireworks. It's an impressive mix of showmanship and technology. I've seen it several times, and it always makes me smile.

"The cutting-edge technology provided by Dronisos will allow us to take immersive storytelling to new heights" – Natacha Rafalski, President, Disneyland Paris

Natacha Rafalski, President, Disneyland Paris, said to Dronisos, and I quote, "Creativity and innovation have always been an integral part of our brand DNA and what sets Disneyland Paris apart. We are constantly striving to push the boundaries of imagination to surprise and amaze our guests. In this regard, the cutting-edge technology provided by Dronisos, our resort's Official Technology Provider, will allow us to take immersive storytelling to new heights for the greatest pleasure of our guests of all ages."

Companies You Probably Don't Know by Name But Have Seen Before

DAMODA Intelligent Control Technology, creator of the Chongqing show, also set another world record in September 2024 with 10,197 drones.

The company focuses on large-scale formations that fit different locations and cultures. It comes as no surprise, since China often leads in technology and innovation.

They use advanced drones, like the Light Show drone V4, V3, and Pyro Drone, which can carry fireworks or cold pyrotechnics.

Dronisos creates permanent drone shows in theme parks, museums, musicals, cruise ships, and conventions. Their collaboration with Disney expands from France to the USA, and other brand names you may recognise that have used Dronisos are Legoland, Dollywood, Puy du Fou, Epic Universe, Marvel Studios, Lancôme, Nissan, Dubai Expo, and SAP, to name a few.

Sky Elements is the biggest drone show provider in the U.S., with 16 Guinness World Records. They've worked on big events like Marvel's 'Deadpool x Wolverine' at Comic-Con, July 4th shows, and for brands like Coca-Cola, Jack Daniels, and Ford.

Their team, led by President Rick Boss and Chief Pilot Preston Ward (also known as

@ThatDroneShowGuy on Instagram), puts safety first and brings a lot of experience to every show.

Nova Sky Stories has been combining engineering and art to push the limits of drone performances for over a decade. Their work shines for its imaginative choreography, environmental awareness, and compelling narrative.

They have produced large-scale festival displays, early drone spectacles, and even Olympic performances. You may have witnessed their performances at Coachella, Burning Man, the Tokyo Olympics, or the Super Bowl.

Where Drones Are Shining in Arts and Entertainment

Visual Media and Storytelling. Drone shows serve as narrative tools. The Chongqing show, for example, tells stories of the city, its geography, flora, and history, transforming the sky into a new stage much like a cinema or a theatre stage.

Theme Parks and Daily Spectacles. These immersive shows are performed regularly for visitors, and I am personally a huge fan, becoming part of the local experience. Disney's use of drones in its Paris Park exemplifies this trend.

Events and Brand Activations. Drones are increasingly used at concerts, brand launches, and festivals to create strong visual statements. They offer dynamic, flexible, and programmable alternatives to traditional fireworks and light shows, with less environmental impact.

Art Installations and Experimental Performance. Artists use drones as moving light sculptures and aerial performers. Some shows feature drone formations interacting with music, soundscapes, and audience presence. The medium is still emerging, with exciting possibilities being developed as we

speak.

Don't Forget To Look Up To The Skies

Technology is now used to make experiences richer and add to our culture, not just to show off. For me, it's always about the impact something has, not just how impressive it looks.

A lot of effort goes into safety, regulations, and creativity. Top drone companies handle permissions, think about the environment, and look at the bigger picture. You might not always hear about it, but their teams work hard to keep everyone safe.



Every new show pushes the field forward, using more drones, more complex choreography, and more ways to express ideas - Sydney Drone Show

Sometimes, people get upset when a drone show is cancelled because of weather, but safety always comes first. I really respect the engineers who have to make tough calls at the last minute, since no one can control the weather.

Every new show pushes the field forward, using more drones, more complex choreography, and more ways to express ideas. The sky is turning into a new kind of canvas for art.

More Possibilities and

Questions

Drones in arts and entertainment show off our imagination, just like paint, projections, or sculptures do. They offer a new way to inspire and bring people together. I've seen thousands of people react with amazement and "uhhhhhhs and ahhhhhs" during these shows.

If you are interested in how technology shapes our culture, I encourage you to watch the next drone show near you. Consider who designed it, the story being told, and the values expressed through its visuals.

Art can help technology create beauty, hope, and a sense of wonder

Art can help technology create beauty, hope, and a sense of wonder. When drones perform above us, we get caught up in the moment. It gives us a break from daily life and reminds us that there are beautiful things to see when we look up from our screens.

Stay tuned for my upcoming analysis of the more complex aspects of this technological arena. In part two of this article, I will examine how governments use drones for surveillance and how they affect power and privacy. It is, after all, how my fascination for drone technology began.