



Colleen Kidd, Calgary Herald

Computer sciences student Julie Stroemer, left, helps bring artist Marjan Eggermont's walk-in art display to life.

High-tech art focuses on homeless

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A local artist and University of Calgary scientists have combined talents to create a virtual depiction of the city's homeless problem.

Viewers walk through a grey, soulless city that's seemingly devoid of life, only to suddenly encounter 1,737 homeless people all in one place.

They appear as ghost-like individuals, standing still as if frozen in time. The idea is to convey

how big the number 1,737 really is. The figure comes from the last official homeless count in Calgary two years ago.

"As an artist, I'm trying to use this avenue to raise awareness yet another notch," said Marjan Eggermont, who grew up in Holland. "I think there's never enough attention on this problem."

Eggermont's show, entitled *The Mystery and Melancholy of the Street, Part Two*, employs an unusual medium. It's a walk-in display environment normally

used by medical researchers to explore three dimensional models of biological systems. The world-class facility features four projection walls. Viewers don special goggles to see the images.

During the six-month project, computer sciences master's student Julie Stroemer learned new ways of using the technology to create 3-D images that viewers can navigate through.

"It's a very odd thing to depict the homeless problem in a space that's a multimillion-dollar space," Eggermont said.

"There are some jarring things happening here, which I think is a good thing.

"It's great to put money into research, but it's also important to put money into social programs. I think we're trying to find a balance in this space."

The show is open to the public today only, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

It's in the Sun Centre of Excellence for Visual Genomics, also known as the CAVE, at 3330 Hospital Dr. N.W.

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