

Students design digital 'capsule'

■ The stainless steel structure — an exhibition booth — will be sent to Japan for display

By Kara Cogswell
Oregon Daily Emerald

In front of a crowd gathered in Lawrence Hall on Thursday, two University students unveiled a structure that will soon travel to the other side of the world.

Designed by architecture students Omid Naseri and Padru Kang, and architecture assistant professor A. Scott Howe, the structure will be shipped to Japan next week, where a Japanese firm will use it as an exhibition booth. Called the Kajima capsule, the stainless steel structure stands nine feet tall and three feet in diameter when closed.

But as the design trio demonstrated to about 30 awed onlookers the four panels on each side of the capsule can expand to nearly eight feet across within seconds. In the exhibition, Padru said, each panel will have a shelf attached to the inside to be used as a workstation for a laptop computer.

The two student designers of the capsule said they became involved with the project after being approached by Howe, who had a proposal from the Japanese high-technology firm Kajima.

While they received a stipend and University credit in exchange for their work on the project, Naseri said the most valuable part of his involvement was the experience of working for a real corporation on a budget.

"This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a student," he said.

Howe, who worked for Kajima for 10 years before coming to the University, said the Japanese company hired his firm, Plug-in Creations, to build the booth.

Howe said he "hand picked" Kang and Naseri to work with him

because of their knowledge of digital design.

While he said the students did most of the work designing and building the structure, Howe described the project as a collaboration between the three of them.

"It was genuinely a team effort," he said.

The design for the capsule began as sketches, which were then transferred into a three-dimensional computer program, Kang said. After they had developed the layout for the structure on the computer, they then flattened the design into a two-dimensional plan to give to the manufacturers of the structure's component parts, he said.

Three Eugene firms — Nichols Manufacturing, Coyote Steel, and Valley Stainless — made the structure's pieces, and all were stainless steel and cut with a digitally controlled laser, Howe and Kang said. Once the parts were constructed, Kang said, they put them all together to create the capsule.

Kajima provided the team with a \$40,000 budget to complete the project.

Kang described his involvement in designing the structure as "a great learning experience" but also a time-consuming one.

Since the beginning of this term, he said, he and Naseri have worked on the structure constantly — in addition to taking a full schedule of classes.

Naseri laughingly described it as a "24-hour" commitment.

And it's not over yet, as Kang said they still must paint the capsule, and dismantle it before shipping it to Japan.

In July, the two students will also travel to Japan, where they will meet with Howe and members of Kajima to help assemble the structure before the August exposition.

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