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Fraunhofer Singapore founded – well ahead of the trend towards internationalization

Twenty years ago, the Fraunhofer Institute for Computer Graphics Research IGD in Darmstadt, Germany took the bold step to form ties with Singapore. Back then, not many research institutions were thinking about internationalization, but this courage has paid off. A small project group in collaboration with Nanyang Technological University (NTU) evolved into the Fraunhofer Project Center for Interactive Digital Media in 2010. And now this center has become the first legally independent subsidiary in Asia – “Fraunhofer Singapore.”

“I’m fascinated by the incredible energy present in Singapore. A world-leading research landscape has been established here in a very short time,” says Prof. Wolfgang Müller-Wittig, director of the Fraunhofer Project Center for Interactive Digital Media IDM since 2001. Back in 1997, Fraunhofer IGD made an excellent choice when forming a partnership with Nanyang Technological University. In the last few years it has become one of the world’s leading universities, achieving 13th place in last year’s QS World University Rankings. Fraunhofer IGD’s instincts, both in terms of site choice for its Asia branch and cooperation partner, have paid off.

The advantages of laying long-term groundwork

“As a globally recognized research partner, Fraunhofer is in a strong position. Its internationalization strategy is based on working with the best, systematically expanding the expertise of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, and assuring mutual benefit for Germany and partner countries,” says Prof. Frank Treppe, director of the department for international affairs and research programs of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft.

Since Fraunhofer has been active in Singapore much longer than other research organizations, it has a competitive edge there. “If we were just starting out in Singapore now, we’d certainly find it harder to get a foothold. We’ve now spent years proving that we are a reliable partner and building strong networks,” says Prof. Dieter W. Fellner, director of Fraunhofer IGD.

The Government of Singapore was quick to show a keen interest in the Fraunhofer model, as the latter serves both industry and society, and is not exclusively dependent on base financing. It funded the Fraunhofer Project Center for Interactive Digital Media

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in its first five years to the tune of some eight million Singapore dollars, and has tripled this amount for the funding period up to 2021.

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On course for growth

The project center has now become a legally independent subsidiary known as Fraunhofer Singapore. Around 30 full-time staff perform research, focusing on Industrie 4.0, personal health, smart cities, and visual computing. Since 2017 they have been closely collaborating with scientists from the Fraunhofer Institutes for Secure Information Technology SIT and for Ceramic Technologies and Systems IKTS. These joint projects add cyber security and ceramic-based additive production to Fraunhofer Singapore's portfolio.

"Our partnership with Fraunhofer IGD in Singapore focuses on cyber intelligence and threat analysis, cryptography for the Internet of Things, and visual analytics in the field of cyber security," says Prof. Michael Waidner, director of Fraunhofer SIT. "Not only do our activities in Singapore strengthen our links with international research excellence generally, we now provide companies in Asia with improved opportunities for research cooperation in the fields of threat detection and prevention, and in the development of resilient hardware and software systems."

"We are complementing Singapore's additive production technology, which is already extremely well-established, with ceramics, which are an important class of materials. In addition, the joint research with Fraunhofer Institutes specializing in software allows us to apply new IT-based approaches to this production process," says Prof. Alexander Michaelis, director of Fraunhofer IKTS.

"It's a win-win situation. Partner institutes benefit from our network while also extending our research in useful ways," adds Müller-Wittig. Bringing them all under one roof in Singapore means a new dimension of collaboration among the institutes. "We collaborate closely across institutes and disciplines and what we can offer is eliciting great interest from companies and government authorities in Singapore, which is a springboard to the Asian market. Fraunhofer is headed for growth in Asia."

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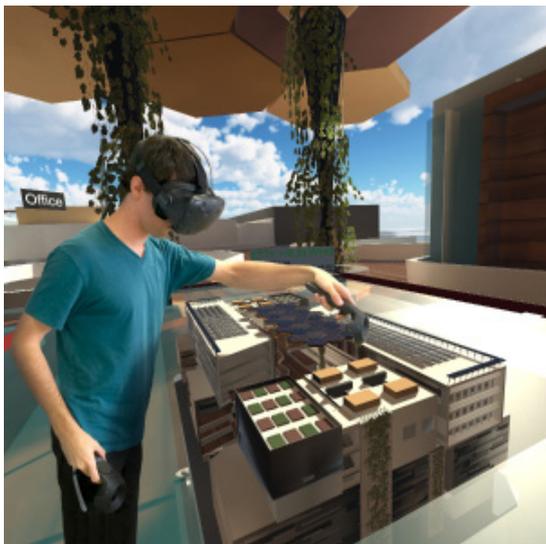
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