



PHOTOS: JOYCE FANG

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD: Orchard Road passers-by awed by the aerial shots of earth from the lens of renowned photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

See the world's beauty ...in the heart of town

BY RADHA BASU

THE OFFICIAL launch is still nine days away, but the Clean and Green Week — Singapore's annual celebration of the environment — opened in spirit yesterday at an unlikely venue: the concrete hub of Orchard Road.

On the stretch of sidewalk between Wheelock Place and Forum The Shopping Mall, groups of passers-by paused to stare in awe at 120 life-size photos of natural and urban landscapes spanning all corners of the globe.

The Earth From Above exhibition, inaugurated by President S R Nathan yesterday, comprises a collection of aerial shots taken by Frenchman Yann Arthus-Bertrand to highlight the raw beauty and immense fragility of the

planet we call home.

From whales jumping out of turquoise waters off Argentina's coast, to the stark aridity of Sudanese refugee camps and the golden camel-dotted dunes of the Mauritanian desert, the 120 pictures show nature in all its glory — each taken in a different country.

On till January next year, the exhibition will be one of the highlights of this year's Clean and Green Week celebrations, which will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Bedok Reservoir on Nov 5.

Mr Arthus-Bertrand, who took most of the shots from a helicopter, explained yesterday why he took those pictures: "Governments have a role to play, but ultimately it is individuals who are responsible for the planet.



GREEN MESSAGE: Mr Arthus-Bertrand hopes his photos convey to people their role in protecting a beautiful but fragile earth.

"And that's a message I hope my pictures convey."

The exhibition was brought here with the help of the French Embassy and the Singapore Environment Council.

"City people often don't realise how beautiful the world is and why it needs to be protected," French Ambassador Jean-Paul Reau told The Straits Times.

Ambassador Reau and Mr Arthus-Bertrand were both present at a press conference

by the National Environmental Agency (NEA) to announce the line-up of the celebration's activities.

An annual event since 1989, this is the first time the celebrations are being held near a reservoir.

"Traditionally, we have opened these celebrations at parks," said Mr Wang Mong Lin, director of the NEA's corporate services division. "But by holding it at a reservoir, we want to acknowledge the importance of clean

water as part of our natural heritage."

The Clean and Green Week celebrations will open on Nov 5 with a two-day carnival which will include kayaking and electric boat rides on the reservoir.

Contrary to its name, the celebrations this year will last not just a week but a month, during which various community groups, schools, grassroots organisations and government bodies will display their green conscience.

On Nov 12 and 13, for instance, the National Parks Board will hold a series of gardening activities to help those interested to hone their green thumbs.

These workshops will be held at Bedok Reservoir Park, Bishan Park, West Coast Park and Zhenghua Park.

"We want to sustain Singapore's image as a garden city," said the board's director for streetscape Simon Longman.