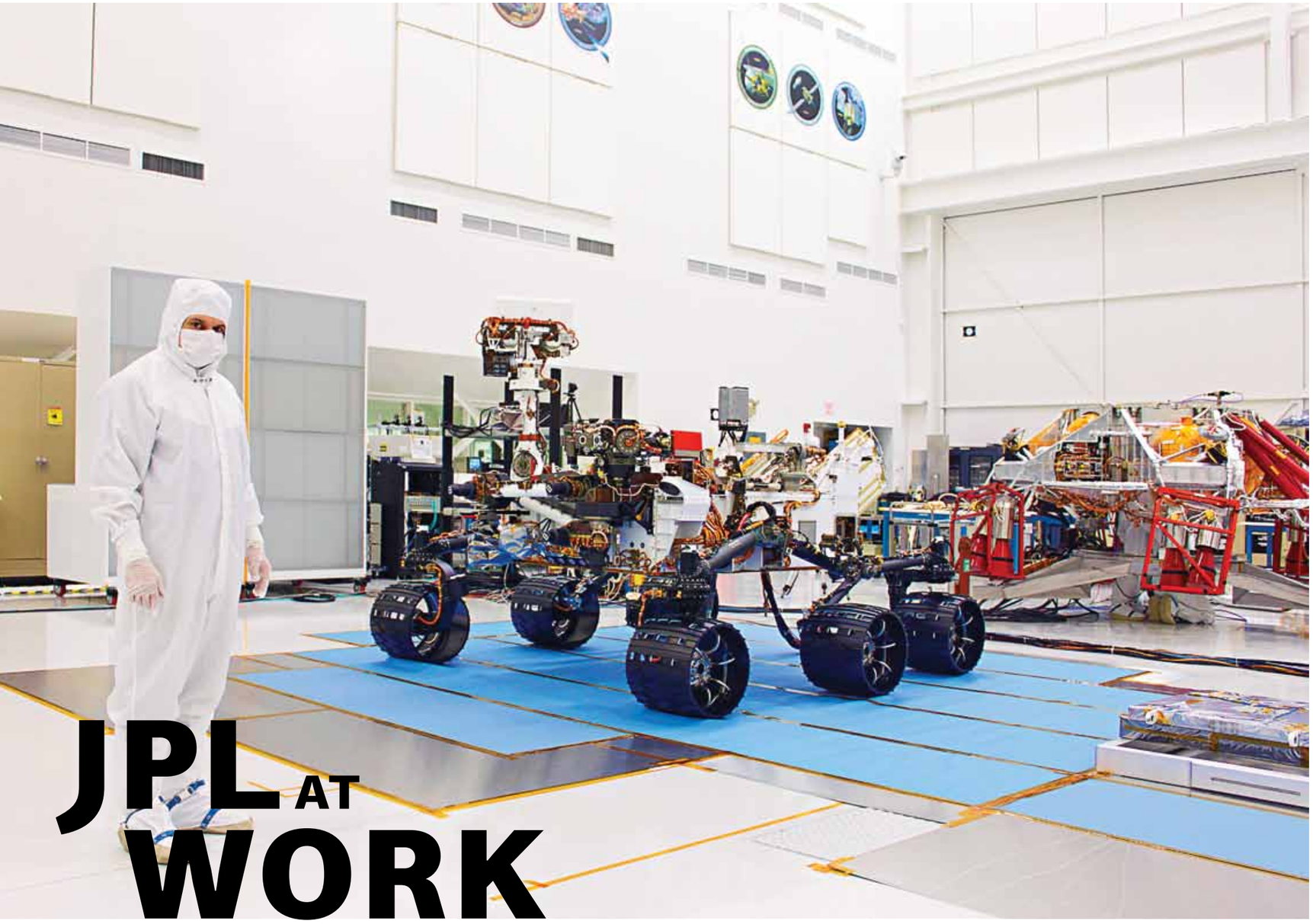

Zareh Gorjian

JPL AT WORK

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) is located in La Canada Flintridge, Calif. In these laboratories scientists have created engineering masterpieces such as the Voyagers 1 and 2, Mars Rovers, including the latest Curiosity, the Cassini-Huygens Missions to Saturn, the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter and the Spitzer Space Telescope. Take a look at what it's like to be on NASA's JPL campus.

Text **Ani Garibyan**

Driving onto the JPL campus, you must go through security, then some more security, and then be escorted around by a staff member. Researchers at JPL/NASA must maintain strict confidentiality and a commitment to keep flexible work hours. Time in space is not the same as it is on Earth; therefore, JPL scientists adjust their clocks to that of their research, at times spending sleepless nights watching over their handiwork.

The campus laboratories are quite large, spacious enough to accommodate all the components of their inventions with extensive outdoor test areas. Currently, JPL has 24 spacecraft and 10 instruments conducting active missions. In June 2012, JPL launched the X-ray telescope NuSTAR. The Dawn spacecraft, which since last summer has orbited the asteroid belt's second largest object, Vesta, will soon embark on a flight to orbit the dwarf planet Ceres in 2015.

Louis Trinh

The inventions that are brought to completion in this tranquil campus are life changing and substantive additions to the technological advancement of humanity. These influential creations are in part the work of a diligent group of Armenians – close to 20 engineers worked on the Curiosity Rover project.

At JPL, researchers have opportunities to attend various seminars and conferences to keep abreast of new technology within their respective fields. With the knowledge that's brought to the table, they are periodically rotated to various projects. Each project has its own regulations, including the use of protective gear. At times, scientists look like they are about to enter an operating room or handle hazardous material. The protective clothing is to avoid undesirable interaction between various elements, including static. One of the outdoor fields looks and feels like the rugged terrain of Mars. Though the Curiosity Rover safely landed on Mars on August 15, 2012 and is currently making newsworthy discoveries, additional tests are essential to ensure that the Rover continues to function properly.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet and observe the Armenian scientists, and proud to learn what they have accomplished and plan to achieve at JPL/NASA, one of the world's most important research institutions. I believe the renowned astrophysicist Viktor Hambartsumian would have been very gratified, too.