Kuiper Atrium Home to Historic Time Piece

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The Kuiper atrium is looking a little classier these days, mainly because it is now home to an elegant and historic clock. The clock was made ca. 1774 by Jean Andre Lepaute, clockmaker
to Louis XV, to commemorate his wife's accurate prediction of the circumstances of a near-total eclipse of the Sun, as seen from Paris on 1 April 1764.

Mme. Nicole-Reine Lepaute was court astronomer to Louis XV. She wrote an article in which she gave a map of the eclipses extent in 15-minute intervals across Europe (the article was published in "Connaissance des temps").

The clock's narrow steel hand indicates sundial time, which varies by just over 16 minutes from constant clock time during the course of a year, a result of the tilt of the Earth's axis together with the varying speed of the Earth in its orbit around the Sun. Seven phases of the eclipse can be seen engraved below the feet of the clocks cherub. The bronze statue is Urania, Goddess of Astronomy.

The Lepaute clock is a gift from an anonymous donor. It was refurbished by Ewen Whitaker.

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