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SKETCH

Connective Clout:
Dozens of Ways We Make
Things Better, Together

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A MOMENT AT OCAD UNIVERSITY
Bruce Mau Design Visual Identity Workshop
Photo courtesy of Bruce Mau Design

President's Message

The 2nd decade of the 21st century: An era of collaboration

At OCAD University, our vision and mission statement are focused significantly on collaboration. Necessary to that focus is a strong sense of identity and a spirit of generosity. We engage in these readily as we recognize that a small, specialized institution like OCAD U has excellent leveraging capacity by contributing specialized art, media and design knowledge to all its partnerships.

In this issue of *Sketch*, we chronicle a sampling of local and global activities initiated by our students and faculty that demonstrate the length and breadth of our reach—and success.

North American universities emerged as standalone institutions in the 20th century. It was an era of specialization wherein programs operated with little collaboration among them, and universities competed for funding from donors and government. Alliances between university and industry research were often regarded as compromising. Bureaucratic structures of internal and external evaluation measured—and still measure—departmental achievement and institutional excellence. Rarely were interdisciplinary contributions and inter-institutional alliances considered markers of success.

In the latter part of the 20th century and in the last decade, this university model began to break down. Hard research questions required that researchers join forces—across faculties, institutions and national and international boundaries. Individual researchers are now driving collaborative practices, and enabling structures such as granting agencies are following suit. University-affiliated artists, designers and other scholars with strong links to local communities are clamouring for their institutions to act as intermediaries for a larger urban or regional ecology.

As a city builder, OCAD University sets a fine example. All our capital acquisitions build resources into the neighbourhood and welcome partners into our labs and studios. The Mobile Incubator of the OCAD University–initiated Mobile Experience and Innovation Centre (MEIC) exemplifies this model, thanks in part to the support of the City of Toronto. We have a fundamental role in the economic lives of our communities, both in actual job creation and in facilitating strategic action to rebuild in hard times. Interdisciplinary and institutional alliances have increased significantly on the individual, group and program levels. For example, we collaborate with the college sector through articulation agreements with Durham, Sheridan, Sir Fleming, Georgian, Seneca and George Brown colleges. And we're developing—in concert with the University of Waterloo—a new Digital Media master's program that will launch in 2011/12.

University private-public partnerships have flourished, as have program advisors and research partners from industry and NGOs. Global partnerships in education and research have proliferated, involving emerging and developed worlds. Quite fittingly, our cover story in *Sketch* showcases one of Canada's renowned international collaborators, Dr. Jutta Treviranus. She has recently joined the OCAD U community as Director of the Inclusive Design Research Centre (IDRC), which takes a participatory approach to building inclusive technologies worldwide.

Enhancing the work of the IDRC is its affiliate, the Inclusive Design Institute, which gathers eight universities and colleges and their industrial partners. Treviranus is a champion of open platforms that encourage collaboration as well as crediting inventors.

Our partnerships flow across borders. In this winter issue of *Sketch*, we feature an alliance between alumni that has resulted in a design entity (AmeobaCorp.) and an art collective (Artlab). You'll read about the work of our alumni and students in Germany, Sweden and the U.K. We highlight Adel Abdessemed, a French artist of Algerian descent who is our current Nomadic Resident and whose compelling exhibition, The Future of Décor, focuses on action collaborations with performers. And we recently led a research mission to Brazil—mConnect—which gathered researchers from OCAD U and York along with companies and associations to explore alliances between research and industry. This initiative has resulted in projects in inclusive design, mobile content and wearable technology as well as Canadian-Brazilian curricular ventures. As well, I participated in the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada's mission to India, undertaking dialogues with leaders in science and technology, innovation, design and art. Our university now has four collaboration agreements with India to inform graduate degree programs, student recruitment and the development of research in wearable technologies, art, digital media and ICT.

As we apply our consultative, collaborative and inclusive method to the process of building—with Bruce Mau Design—our new visual identity, we are reminded of our legacy of nearly 135 years, one that has served us well and has brought here, to 2011.

Welcome to our new era of collaboration and to a happy, productive new year.

—DR. SARA DIAMOND

Sara Diamond Photo by Tom Sandler Photography

OC
ONCAMPUS

OCAD University partners with Bruce Mau Design to create new visual identity

The job of redesigning OCAD University's visual identity follows the institution's long-awaited change in designation and has been tasked to expert collaborators Bruce Mau Design (BMD). After a rigorous process and a publicly issued RFP, a selection committee chose by unanimous vote BMD— a self-described "innovation and design studio centred on purpose and optimism." Creators of Massive Change—the internationally acclaimed travelling exhibition, book, website and interview series—BMD is an interdisciplinary studio comprised of artists, architects, graphic designers, filmmakers, brand strategists, biologists, publishers, curators and technologists. Some of the firm's clients are MTV, the AGO, Coca-Cola, Arizona State University and MoMA.

A key factor in the awarding of the project was BMD's demonstrated commitment to work with the University's many communities. "They place value on the process itself," explained President Sara Diamond when the partnership was announced. "This ensures that students, staff, faculty, alumni and community stakeholders will all be participants."

The consultation process conducted this past fall engaged a multitude of voices, perspectives and locales. Included in the latter were China, Denmark, Hong Kong, India, Italy, New Zealand and the U.K., to name a few. Locally, the BMD team held a total of nine community engagement workshops, which elicited the participation of students, prospective students, staff, faculty and alum. The team has also worked closely with a fourth-year branding class and solicited feedback on Facebook (see facebook.com/ocaduid) and via an online survey. All research will be corralled into guidelines that will inform the visual work, to be presented in early spring.

"Our face-to-face and on-line outreach and research gave us a chance to hear the perspectives of a great diversity of the community's voices on what the future should look like for OCAD University."

—Greg Judelman
Senior Designer, Bruce Mau Design

Bottom Right: Photo by Lino Ragno
All other photos courtesy of Bruce Mau Design

HAVE YOUR SAY

Exchange opportunities for students complement university-wide internationalization strategy

By Lena Rubisova

OCAD University President Sara Diamond joined the largest delegation of university presidents ever to travel abroad in the seven-day mission to India in November 2010. The visit, which forged mutually beneficial links between Canada and India, represents one in a host of internationalization opportunities OCAD U is currently leveraging— innovation, education and research options that will benefit our own students, faculty and staff, as well as those at our partner universities. They also build on OCAD U's existing Mobility/Exchange program, which invites third-year students to study abroad.

Mobility/Exchange students report enriched educational experiences and an expanded art or design practice, while visiting students from universities around the world bring new perspectives to the OCAD U classroom. Frequently, going abroad is the first chance for many students to live away from home, become independent and grow as individuals. The experience comes with other benefits—the students learn a new language, expand their knowledge of other cultures and increase their career options, both at home and overseas.

The program is reciprocal—for every student who spends a semester away, there is a student who spends a semester here—which also enhances OCAD U's international profile in the art, design, new media and post-secondary-education communities. Like the students, word of mouth travels too, and many of the visitors choose to come because they've heard of OCAD U through the students who'd spent time here.

Last year, fourth-year Sculpture/Installation student Sasa Rajsic spent a semester at the Glasgow School of Art. He picked the school in Scotland for the structure of its program and its proximity to other European cultural centres. The loose class structure at Glasgow allowed Rajsic to absorb the culture of the practicing artists around him and to work on projects he may not have had the chance to work on otherwise. "It gave me space to work on a larger number of projects and to spend more time experimenting." The experience has also influenced his approach to his thesis, now that he is in his final year

at OCAD U. "[It] is largely a continuation of the work I was making while studying abroad. The physical distance between me and my collaborator, who was in the Florence program last year, was inspirational. It helped us view our collaborative practice from a different perspective."

Third-year Graphic Design student Robert Lindblom is finishing his semester here on exchange from Malmö University in Sweden. He chose OCAD U because he'd heard positive things about it from other visiting students. He has been able to take courses and access studios that are not available to him at Malmö. "OCAD U is a much larger school with more departments and opportunities than Malmö, like screenprinting and bookbinding." This semester, he learned about how the design process can influence and formulate an outcome—concepts he plans to use in his professional career. Lindblom hopes to return to Toronto to work once he has completed his thesis in Sweden. Says Lindblom, "It has been an awesome opportunity to get to know Toronto-based designers and design students who may help me work here later on."

The proliferation of international and cross-cultural relationships in academia, industry and elsewhere has changed the way people and businesses interact worldwide. It's a trend that many students want to be part of and they're looking for ways to infuse their education with an international flavour. This can mean taking classes with visiting faculty from other universities; attending public lectures by visiting artists, designers and thinkers; getting to know students on exchange here from other universities; and choosing to go abroad themselves to study.

Top: Robert Lindblom
24" X 36" poster advertising Gallery Exhibition
2010

Above: Sasa Rajsic
All Well-Come*
2010

Top right: Robert Lindblom
City Of Glass
Hardcover graphic novel Adaptation of Paul Auster's *City of Glass* with custom slipcover. Impositioned and hand-bound by the artist.
2010

Environmental Design students propose interactive space for ancient Aboriginal heritage site

By Lena Rubisova

How can we apply the design process to a living space?

In one OCAD University classroom and outside of it, students were asked that question, in fall 2010, by Sessional Instructor Cathie Sutton in her Environmental Design class—"Designing Across Difference: Aboriginal Communities."

Responding to the challenge, Sutton's students set out to design a public space for the Mnjikaning fish weirs at the Atherley Narrows of lakes Simcoe and Couchiching. These 5,000-year-old wooden fish traps have long been a sacred site and an ancient traditional meeting place for Aboriginal communities. As part of the course, the class visited the site and met with Aboriginal community members to collaborate with them and receive guidance for their semester-long design project.

Abandoned by the Huron in the 1650s, the Atherley Narrows weirs—a series of underwater fences that were once used to trap and harvest fish—are as old as the Pyramids of Giza and were rediscovered in the 1960s by the Royal Ontario Museum and Trent University. In 1982 the Canadian government designated them as a National Historic Site to promote awareness of the site as well as the threats—boating, fishing and land development—to its preservation. Now maintained by Parks Canada, the site is protected and promoted by a group of local residents collectively known as the Mnjikaning Fish Fence Circle. Although the priority today is to keep the weirs safe and prevent further damage, the group hopes to build an on-site interpretive cultural centre sometime in the future.

The students in the "Designing Across Difference" class were asked to break

down barriers to designing across diverse communities, and to do so in a meaningful and engaging way. Part of OCAD U's Aboriginal Visual Culture Program, the course investigates the role of design in collaborating and maintaining a dialogue, specifically with Canada's Aboriginal cultures. Working in groups, the students get to know the community they're designing for—through research, conversations and hands-on experiences. During one of their visits to the weirs, for example, students participated in a traditional learning circle, spent time talking to community members about the site and documented it through photos and sketches.

This push to design *for* and *with* other cultures reinforces the need for collaborations in today's world. For example, globalization has made it possible for a Japanese architectural firm to design a project for a Canadian Aboriginal community, and for such a collaboration to work, it's important to keep the lines of communication open. The students in Sutton's class are learning how to do just that. At the time of this writing, they're generating ideas for a wayfinding system and interactive centre at the weirs site, presenting concepts to one another, to community members and to OCAD U alumnus Keesic Douglas for feedback. Some of the questions that the students were asked at this stage have to do with whether or not they fully understand the community they're servicing, how well the navigation system for the proposed space flows, and whether they should consider an open or closed space for the site.

For Douglas, the questions being posed are tricky because Aboriginal cultures are evolving and it's often difficult to determine what is culturally authentic for a given community.

After watching class presentations of the site and the proposed experience, Douglas was encouraged. Participating students, he says, showed "a genuine interest in learning about the culture." Many of these students later commented that the course's emphasis on collaboration—within and among the student teams and with the Aboriginal community—allowed for stronger ideas and concepts to come through. On the structure of the class, third-year Environmental Design student Avalon Backus explains, "[It's] so different from everything else that you're able to focus on it more."

This class reflects a current trend in design education—increasingly collaborative community engagement. As third-year Graphic Design student Angela Gillis notes, working as a group means that "everyone has something to bring to the table, especially for this kind of project." The work presented thus far clearly illustrates that multiple approaches and methods were taken up by students of diverse cultural and academic backgrounds.

Scheduled for completion at the end of the semester, the final presentation of the design for the Aboriginal heritage site will then be submitted to the elders of the community, reinforcing the importance of keeping the dialogue open at every step of the design process.

Lena Rubisova is a third-year student in OCAD U's Faculty of Design, majoring in Graphic Design. She graduated from the University of Toronto in 2007 with a degree in Art History and Classical Civilizations.

Photo: courtesy of Parks Canada
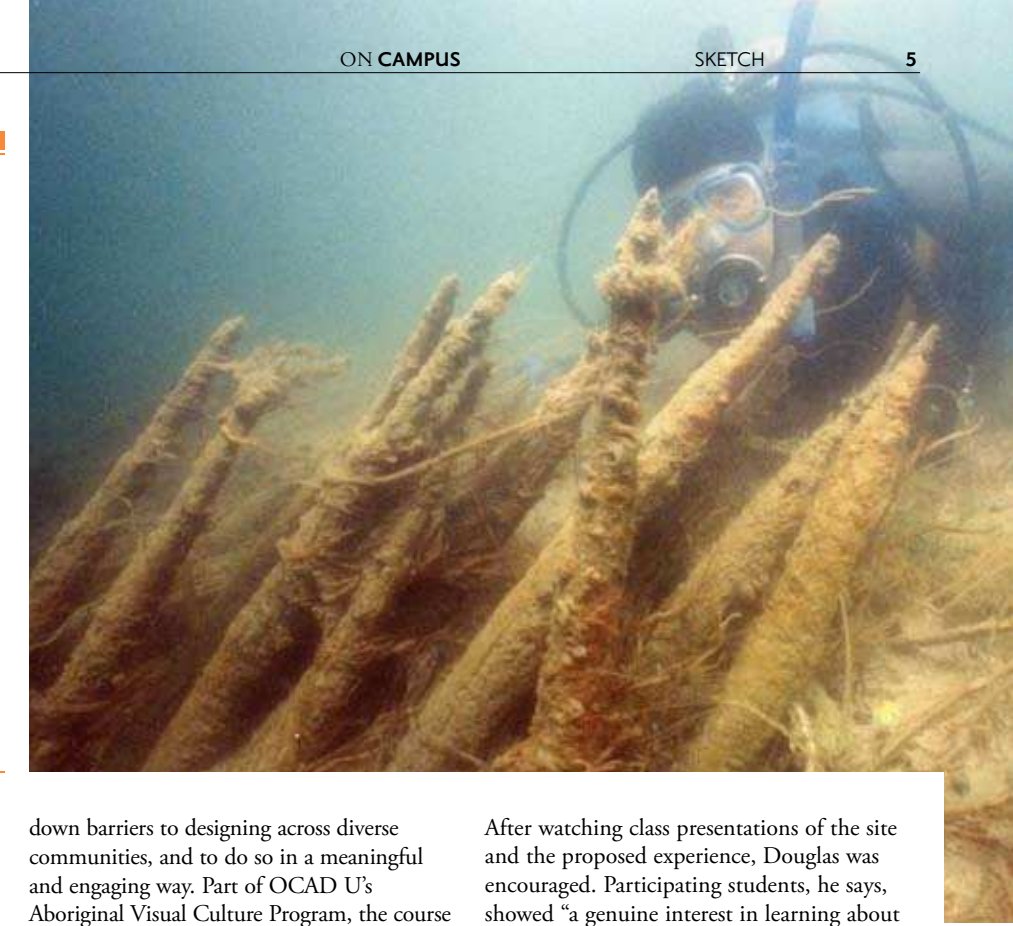
From Subtlety to Bombast:
Adel Abdessemed's Romantic Cynicism

By Charles Reeve

The Nomadic Residents series aims to inspire and influence the OCAD University community and the public by featuring artists and thinkers from around the world whose work questions issues such as travel, mobility, displacement, dislocation and homelessness, as well as the speed or instability of modern life.

D oubt doesn't come easily, especially when it disturbs something fundamental. Doubting that Toronto will be warm in January is one thing. But doubting that what we believe to be good merges with what we know to be factual—as Adel Abdessemed invites us to do—that's another story.

For instance, the care we shower on our pets hardly typifies our relationships with animals. Starting from what we kill and pulp to feed our cats and dogs, violence toward animals supports our demands for shelter, clothing, food, waste disposal and so on. But that train left the station millennia ago. The bulldozers that built our cities won't start flattening them to accommodate the return of the displaced wilderness. Streets and buildings belong there now, which is why in Adel Abdessemed's photograph *Sept Frères* (2006), the boars look incongruous. Indeed, without the artist's apparatus surrounding them, the boars would be shot—a fate befalling thousands of their comrades in an inversion of Darwinism whereby the boars' adaptability becomes a jinx that gets them killed.

The incongruity depicted in *Sept Frères* of animals in the urban environment returns several times in Abdessemed's work, as in *Jasmine* (2009) and *Séparation* (2006). These works disturb our expectations only mildly, and, in each case, that disturbance plays against an understated but undeniable lyricism. The tentativeness of the boars in the mid-ground, the stillness of the lion that Abdessemed hugs, the nonchalant beauty of the dog and her pups—these elements turn the incongruity

back on itself, as the animals seem to take the unexpected in stride better than we do.

Not surprisingly, given their shared atavistic basis, the incoherence that marks our attitude toward death—we love animals so much that we can't stop killing them—also characterizes our attitude toward sex. On the one hand, while enlightened men in North America and Europe band together to fight pornography, surveys of Internet usage show that the on-line porn industry yields more revenue than Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo! and Apple combined. This disjunction feeds the unease that surrounds Abdessemed's *Real Time* (2003), a video of a performance in which the artist filled a gallery with strangers he brought together solely to have sex with each other, en masse and in public. Ranging thematically from the subtlety and sentimentality of *Sept Frères* to the bombast and outrageousness of *Real Time*, Abdessemed's art also explores media varying from drawing and photography to film, video, ceramics and more. His sculptures, for instance, incorporate such unorthodox materials as cannabis and—as with the cowboy hats in his show at OCAD U, or his soccer balls of a few years ago—razor wire.

Also, following in the footsteps of such artists as Marcel Duchamp and Alighiero Boetti, he created an alter ego. However, there's nothing playful in Abdessemed's *MohammedKarlpolpot*, merging as it does Mohammed, Karl Marx and Pol Pot. The calamity evoked by this convergence and the fact that this list could include many others point to Abdessemed's affinity with other contemporary artists—Sharon Hayes, Ei Arakawa, Michael Krebber—who find ideals like paradise, nostalgia and utopia wildly anachronistic. As the current trend toward "reasonable" restrictions on immigration make clear, nothing undercuts the ideology of tolerance more completely than the rising insistence on its triumph. However, if Abdessemed's process of turning, overturning

and turning back received opinions reaches out to current artistic and social contexts, it also reaches in to an august cultural legacy in Algeria of questioning things as they are—from the writings of Augustine of Hippo in the fourth and fifth centuries to the art and literature of Albert Camus, Frantz Fanon, Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous in the 20th and 21st centuries.

These historical and contemporary affinities speak to a thematic and formal richness that characterizes Abdessemed's art and informs the pieces in *The Future of Décor*. Consider, for example, the three cowboy hats, fashioned from razor wire and suspended from the ceiling. The cowboy hat becomes a crown of thorns evoking the interaction between steel and skin that gives razor wire the historical significance that distinguishes it from its precursor and close relative, barbed wire. While barbed wire spoke to modernity's need for a material that could cut across geography and into animals and then into people, razor wire restricted its paranoia to people—either keeping "dangerous" persons in concentration camps and prisons, or keeping them out of private property or foreign countries.

The razor wire's silence in the gallery thus contrasts with its cacophonous history—a saga of war, strife, fear and danger. The chaos of the show's title work, made with Abdessemed's frequent collaborator, David Moss, reflects our contemporary context back to itself rather than offering an escape from it. The looping pandemonium bouncing off the gallery walls makes us long for its opposite, for the very thing that our current context of spectacle and violence makes impossible. In the gallery, as in the wider world, we find fewer and fewer reserves of the one thing that facilitates doubt and its companion, contemplation: fewer and fewer reserves, that is, of silence.

— Charles Reeve, Curator, Onsite [at] OCAD U
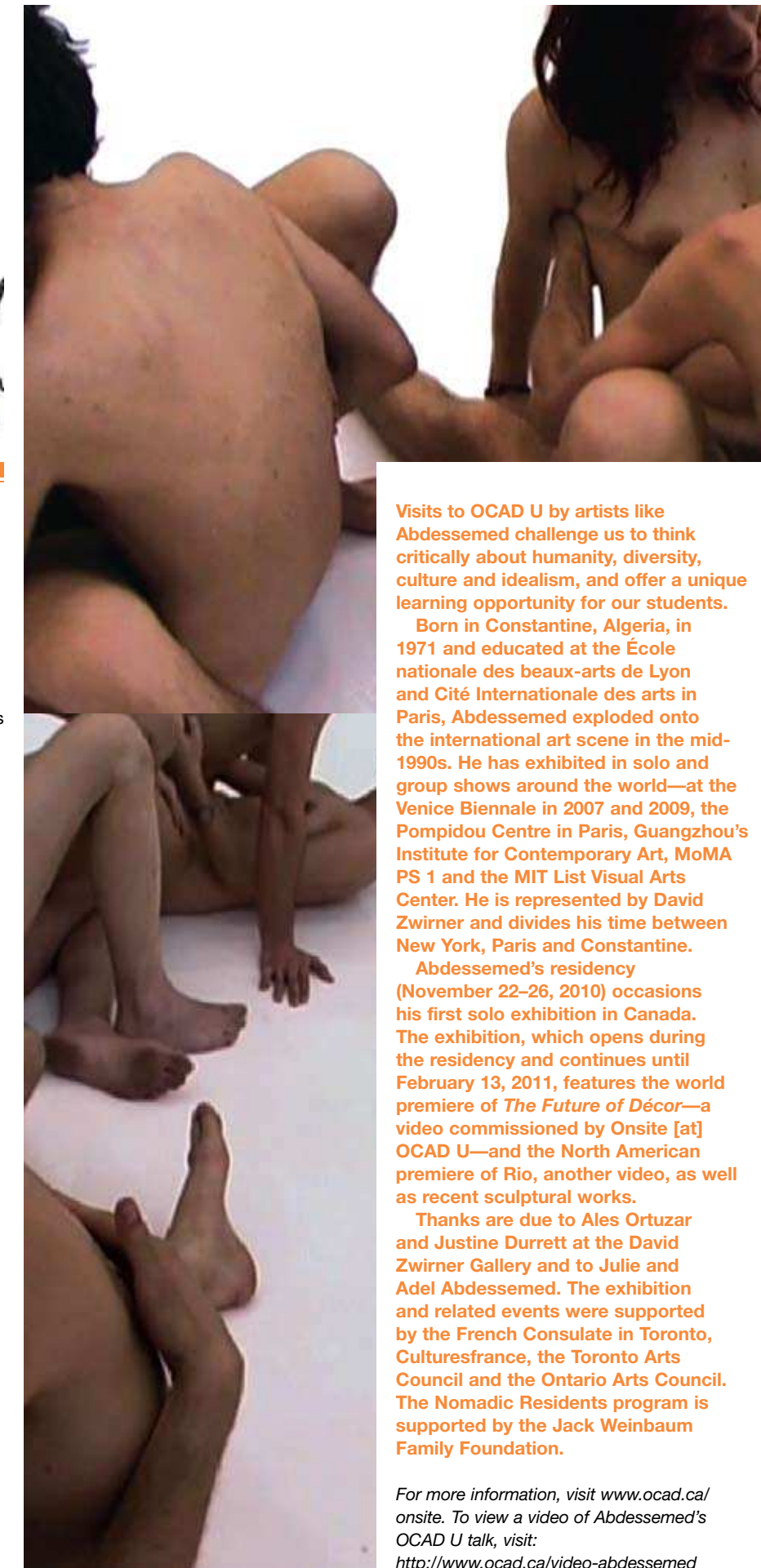
Visits to OCAD U by artists like Abdessemed challenge us to think critically about humanity, diversity, culture and idealism, and offer a unique learning opportunity for our students.

Born in Constantine, Algeria, in 1971 and educated at the École nationale des beaux-arts de Lyon and Cité Internationale des arts in Paris, Abdessemed exploded onto the international art scene in the mid-1990s. He has exhibited in solo and group shows around the world—at the Venice Biennale in 2007 and 2009, the Pompidou Centre in Paris, Guangzhou's Institute for Contemporary Art, MoMA PS 1 and the MIT List Visual Arts Center. He is represented by David Zwirner and divides his time between New York, Paris and Constantine.

Abdessemed's residency (November 22–26, 2010) occasions his first solo exhibition in Canada. The exhibition, which opens during the residency and continues until February 13, 2011, features the world premiere of *The Future of Décor*—a video commissioned by Onsite [at] OCAD U—and the North American premiere of *Rio*, another video, as well as recent sculptural works.

For more information, visit www.ocad.ca/onsite. To view a video of Abdessemed's OCAD U talk, visit: http://www.ocad.ca/video-abdessemed

Solitude in Numbers: The Struggle of Nuit Blanche

By Sky Goodden

It's 5:30 in the morning as I wearily climb inside the booth and press my face into the camera. Reena Katz looks back at me and asks how I am. She is asking it with all the presence in the world, it seems. I furtively glance at our framed exchange, cast on the back wall of the Art Gallery of Ontario, some 40 feet high, and try to focus my response. "I've had a frustrated evening, Reena." We both find ourselves laughing.

Above: Agnes Winter
Monument to Smile
Photo by Peter Sramek

Opposite: Martin Arnold and Micah Lexier
Erik Satie's Vexations (1893)
Media: two pianos, one table, 840 printed scores (folded), various performers
Photo courtesy of Sam Javanrouh and Toni Halkenscheid, 2010

Below:

Right:

Katz (Integrated Media, 2010) is in Brooklyn. Hundreds of miles separate us, and yet I am having my first real exchange in as many hours—or at least it feels that way. Moments later, I am reciting a chant under Katz's direction, and the artist is cooing thanks and encouragement. And when I step out of the booth, my Nuit Blanche is not the letdown I had initially resigned myself to. On a night like this one, all you're seeking is a moment of connection. It's nearly 6 a.m. and finally I got mine.

Nine hours earlier, I roll into the streets of Chinatown, pulled along by the swell and rill of White Night beachcombers, all searching for that metallic shimmer or glass-hewn crust—something special to collect, to tweet, to call their own. It's the fifth anniversary of Toronto's Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, and our all-night, city-wide art spectacle comes with anticipation—and some trepidation. As the most expensive event of its kind in the world, Toronto's Nuit Blanche is often met with criticism. But as I cast past the AGO, with Allyson Mitchell's fleshy mannequins anchoring her feminist library in the Toronto Now gallery, this vitrine-like microcosm of the city hums with a promising energy. I approach OCAD U, hoisted above us by its familiar blue-lit stems, and a crowd of students and passersby ripple beneath it. We are all gearing up for a long night in search of some jewel.

In years past, I'd begin my Nuit Blanche at OCAD U because it was close to home and, because I attended school there, I regarded it as my port. This year, a few months out from my MFA in Criticism & Curatorial Practice, I could have anchored myself anywhere. But having been charged with reviewing the evening for *Sketch*, I find myself pulled back to the underbelly of the University's checkered torso, considering its frame and the way it will frame my night.

Luckily, nothing about this proves difficult.

I am first transfixed by Katz's Empathic Maneuvers (dimensions not to scale), a Skyped broadcast responding to the city's desire for real exchange. Night-trippers crowd into the parking booth to cantillate a series of chants, variously intoning protest demonstrations from the contested sites of the U.S.–Mexico border and the Palestinian Separation Wall.

The displaced protests channel their urgency to this place, and though it's merely a parking lot dividing art school and institution, the screen melding New York and Toronto eclipses distance entirely. Katz fosters intimacy in real-time, and pulls the oral archives into the digital present.

Steps away, Bentley Jarvis (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Art) centres the Pitch_Patch_Pulse trilogy in a suspended space of acoustic meditation. Titled *Temporal Loop*, a span of windows project what can only be described as the visual iteration of sound itself. To the accompaniment of Jarvis's distinctive composition style—a numerically programmed and lulling soundscape that has the effect of stilling everything in its scope—the images scrawl themselves across the windows, the visual and the acoustic splintering colour and form between tree and frame. I don't know it yet, but this will be my evening's enchantment.

Around the bend, Geoffrey Shea (Associate Professor, Faculty of Art) dances his *Trio* projection over the University's Butterfield Park, a space typically occupied by skilled skaters and class-skippers. With a digital projection programmed by phone-ins from passersby, Shea inventively crosses elements of folk art and DIY digital media. The projection pictures bobble-headed musicians who change (as does the music), depending on the viewers who phone in the switch. Shea sites his inclusion of folk music for its history of participation and accessibility, aptly linking it to the current digital era. And with his collaboration-driven configurations matched by Jarvis's cogitative compositions and Katz's remotely performed archive, Pitch_Patch_Pulse delivers on the digital projection trend

that this year's Nuit Blanche had yet to reveal to me. However, as I soon discover, it'll be presented here best by making place matter, and making people work.

Uptown, an extension of the digitally democratic flashes across the façade of Holt Renfrew, of all places. Photography Chair Peter Sramek had various students and alumni collaborate on Toronto's iteration of the ongoing Agnès Winter project, Monument to Smile. Previously staged in cities such as New York, Paris and Rio de Janeiro, Smile involves photographing a spectrum of a city's inhabitants, and then inventively projecting them onto the façade of a defining structure. The rotation of grinning busts takes a while to run its course before beginning all over again, all the while injecting the street with a rhythmic *joie* (this particular incarnation clicked along to the soundtrack of Michael Jackson's "Smile") and superseding its architectural buttress with a benevolent scaffolding. The makeup of a metropolis begins to be revealed, with the sum of its profiles being much more than its parts.

Buoyed by these various plays on projection, I sweep the city for more. But the guaranteed disconnects and disappointments of Nuit Blanche begin to set in. Starting with Daniel Lanois's $400,000 enterprise at the helm of City Hall, I find myself less interested in the large screen relay of Lanois fanning his guitar (a noxious revolution of screen savers unfolding behind him) than in the massive black mirror that tilts up over the stage on which he plays, dully. The large band of switchboards and controls that gear his projected performance become projected themselves, but through a much simpler technology. Accounting for milling crowds and flickering lights, the mirror's vast span roves with an unerring focus that calls to mind an Andreas Gursky print set in motion. If only the magic in this had been the spectacle, I think, steering around Lanois's screen-splattered riffs.

I head to the top of City Hall, where, again, practical magic trumps purpose, as I press myself up against the ribbed walls of Toronto's municipal lighthouse and watch the pussy willows sweep the crowd along. Nearby, Dan Graham's *Performance Café with Perforated Sides* doesn't quite connote the performance it's meant to, as vague reflections do less to populate the glass structure than to call up the emptiness of projection.

I cast my eyes over the city, and regard the satellite hotspots where my night will eventually take me: Nuit Market with
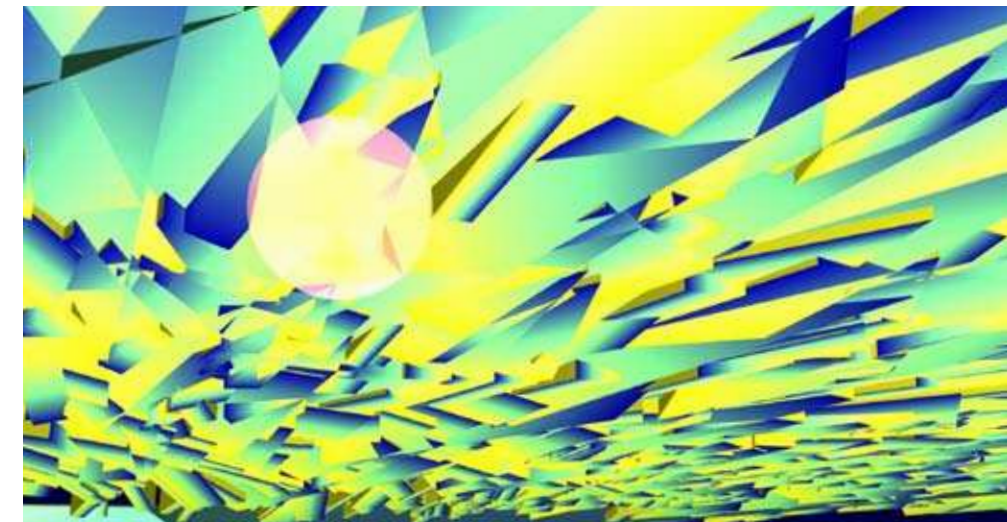
I am limping back to the site of my evening's start, beginning to wonder if I'm the only one, in this city of raving drunks and sodden parades, who spends the night as if on a pilgrimage, seeking something special.

its offerings of detritus and commodity, unfortunately outmatched by the corridor of artlessness on Yonge Street (a harbinger for future attempts at efficacy over event); Kent Monkman's red-lit rock, where I will arrive only to be met with the news that the performer left before midnight; and the bonfires strung throughout Trinity Bellwoods Park, to which Ryan Gander's aptly titled *Just Because You Can See It Doesn't Mean It's There* doesn't hold a candle.

But the successes of Nuit Blanche await me—out of sight, tucked away indoors. Catherine Gordon and Ulysses Castellanos pair up in the city's resident castle, Casa Loma, with their darkly thrilling and site-spectacular *Cabin in the Woods*. Micah Lexier and Martin Arnold perform Eric Satie's *Vexations* (1893) between two pianos, extending the score's machinations and unique beauty in origamic terminations. And Sarah Robayo Sheridan similarly makes the audible sculptural with *Reunion*, an interpretive addendum to Marcel Duchamp and John Cage's historic "chess match" of 1968.

Still, I find myself missing the personal connection that makes Nuit Blanche more than what An Te Liu wryly calls "Ennui Blanc." I am limping back to the site of my evening's start, beginning to wonder if I'm the only one, in this city of raving drunks and sodden parades, who spends the night as if on a pilgrimage, seeking something special. Is it just me in search of that glass-hewn crust, while the others content themselves with broken bottles? I seem to be forgetting that Katz is waiting, leaning through her screen, and collapsing the distance between us. Upon our encounter, I realize that her parenthetical title maintains its promise: the dimensions of our dawn-break exchange are not to scale. Nine hours of sloughing through the running streets amount to less than these five minutes in a parking booth, where two people meet, and a history is called to be present.

Sky Goodden is an art writer and editor living in Toronto. A recent graduate of OCAD U's Master's program in Criticism & Curatorial Practice, she writes for *Canadian Art, C Magazine* and *Muse*, and is the managing editor of ONE HOUR EMPIRE.

Top: Bentley Jarvis
Temporal Loop

Above: Cathy Gordon and Ulysses Castellanos
Cabin in the Woods
Mixed media
Photo by the artists

Opposite:
Geoffrey Shea
Trio
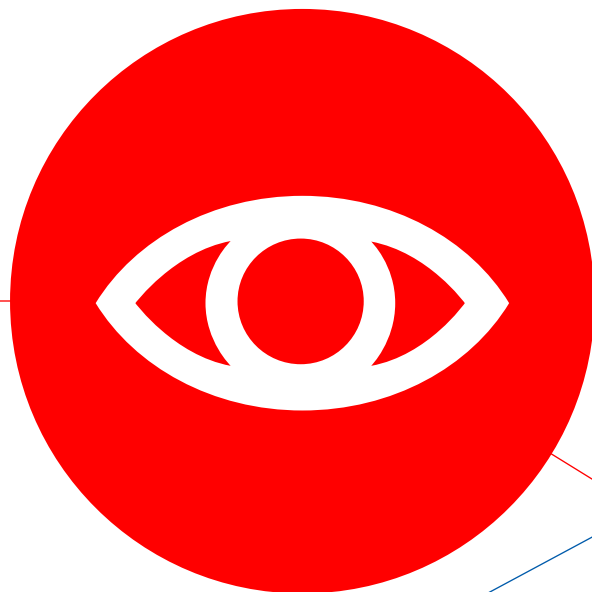
Open Source, Open Windows, Open Future

By Ryan Bigge

Jutta Treviranus begins our interview by mentioning that she's trying to correct the spelling of her name on a plane ticket for an upcoming flight purchased on her behalf. Such a mistake is not that surprising for two reasons. Her last name isn't particularly easy to pronounce (Tray-vee-rah-nouss), let alone spell correctly. And since Treviranus has been a frequent flier as of late, such a typo was bound to happen eventually. In the past few months, Treviranus has visited Washington, D.C., Brussels, Barcelona, Seville, Paris, Vancouver and Colorado to present her work on accessibility standards and inclusive design to audiences that have included European commissioners, secretaries of state and various high-level government ministers.
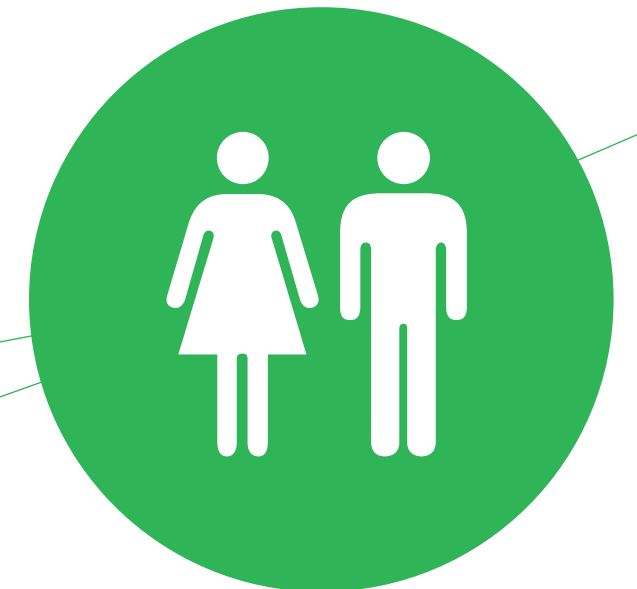
Treviranus is not the only one in flux; so is the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre (ATRC), the research unit she founded 16 years ago at the University of Toronto. In August of this year, the ATRC started a new chapter when it moved to OCAD University, where it will serve to augment and reinforce an ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusive design. Now known as the Inclusive Design Research Centre (IDRC), Treviranus and her team are clearly excited about the possibilities, since OCAD U "still has the agility and creativity and freedom of movement that a large institution such as U of T doesn't have."

That's not the only reason to be excited, however. OCAD U is now also home to the brand-new Inclusive Design Institute (IDI), a multi-institutional regional research network led by Treviranus, with partners that include Ryerson University, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, University of Toronto, York University, Sheridan College, Seneca College and George Brown College. Treviranus is director of both the IDRC and the IDI, which, when complete, will include offices at 205 Richmond Street West, a captioning and multilingual translation centre at 230 Richmond Street West, plus a participatory design lab and accessible performance space —the Black Box Theatre—at 49 McCaul.

"What we're constructing with the IDI is a regional centre that is looking at designing for diversity," explains Treviranus. "We're trying to engage the end user in creating systems that will become part of their lives."

Despite her 25 years of experience, Treviranus wasn't entirely sure if the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) would recognize the IDI proposal. "It was actually quite a miracle it was accepted because I wrote it in such a way that it went counter to everything that they tell you to do," Treviranus says. Instead of following the conventional wisdom of only including senior researchers from major universities and having a strong patent strategy, her proposal included researchers from colleges and researchers without PhDs. And, of course, the entire project is open-source, which means that

OCAD University still has the agility, creativity and freedom of movement that a large institution such as U of T doesn't have.

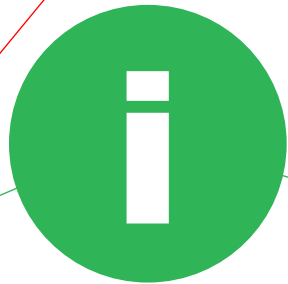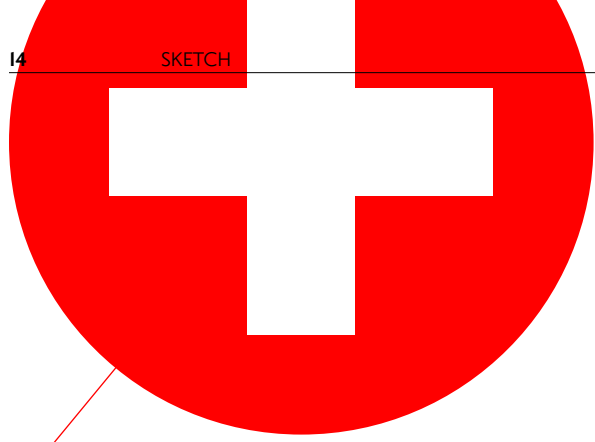not only can the curious peek at the source code of software created by the IDI, but the research process itself is viewable, providing complete transparency.

Treviranus's belief in openness pervades both her conversational style and the mandate of the research centre. The inclusive design and accessibility systems created by the IDRC and the IDI are both open-access and open-source—and, of course, her staff and researchers work in an open-plan office. Such openness benefits both end users and OCAD U faculty, who are already working on projects such as AccessForAll, which will result in accessible infrastructure for training the more than 65,000 Ontario Public Service workers involved in the implementation of the Accessibilities for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

"Everything is transparent," says Treviranus as she points me to the wiki for the FLUID project, which infuses accessibility into various software development toolkits. "You can tell whether we've had a disagreement and our every bug is known to the world." And since each decision and conversation is documented in digital form, Treviranus notes that involved grad students "can get a full history and see the whole process and workflow."

Treviranus is currently helping to create a two-year professional Master's program in Inclusive Design at OCAD U, which is scheduled to begin in September 2011 and will underscore a growing university-wide focus on inclusive design, evinced most recently by OCAD U's partnership with Toronto Community Housing. If all goes according to plan, the following year will see an undergraduate program in inclusive design. Working with an existing team that has already created the necessary IT infrastructure, grad students will be in a supportive environment that will allow them to focus on research instead of the usual grunt work of website maintenance. And because end users are woven into the process, the work of the IDRC and the IDI will have tangible, measurable impact and benefits.

Treviranus first began using information and communication technologies as a way to improve accessibility back in 1981, when she helped a group of students with severe disabilities negotiate their first semester at McMaster University. Treviranus realized that the first personal computers, including the Apple II, were very mutable in terms of information input [ED: note singular input, so will jive with it]—be it visual, tactile or auditory—and thus had great potential for bridging the barriers that face people with disabilities. "It was still very open territory—the 'Wild, Wild West' in terms of possible interfaces," she recalls.

The value of open systems has remained a consistent theme in her work. Back in 1993, one of the first ATRC projects involved an HTML accessibility initiative for the web. Treviranus and her team became determined to move to an open-source model after having to recreate valuable work

that was lost due to a patent mix-up when Nortel Networks downsized in 2001.

Much of the IDRC's current work involves "access for all" achieved through auto-personalization. "Rather than having a one-size-fits-all solution to accessibility, it's a one-size-fits-one," says Treviranus. Users might, for example, have a USB key or smart card with a list of personal needs and preferences, so that if they're blind, a government information kiosk will speak to them. "You don't have to negotiate or explain or get someone to fix or readjust the security settings, so that you can use the system," explains Treviranus. "It will just automatically do what you need it to do."

The implementation of the AODA, an ambitious piece of legislation that will enforce mandatory accessibility standards for both the private and public sectors, is already bringing worldwide attention to the IDRC's work. As part of a meeting with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Treviranus found herself within a few metres of President Barack Obama. But she refuses to say she actually met him. "*Met* is an exaggeration," she says. "I was introduced together with a group of people. He said a few words and we said a few words."

Meanwhile, the world will soon be watching Treviranus and her team on a daily basis, thanks to the IDRC's nearly completed Distributed Collaboration Room, where an otherwise ordinary boardroom is being outfitted with six screens—three at each end of the room. The screens will serve as open windows with live audio and video feeds from various work environments of collaborating partner institutions, including the Open University of Catalonia, University of Cambridge, Sofia University in Bulgaria, the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Colorado at Boulder. The idea is to foster casual and ongoing conversations between international research partners, rather than formal scheduled conference calls.

Not that open windows can solve every communication problem—at least not yet. A recent conversation with the Chicago-based MacArthur Foundation required synchronizing with IDRC partners at the University of Kaiserslautern in Germany and Georgia Tech, plus a researcher on a cellphone located 60 kilometres outside of Lagos, Nigeria. Six webcam-enabled computers were eventually jammed together into a circle, facing one other in order to overcome networking and communication incompatibilities. Treviranus laughs at the memory.

"That's the type of bizarre distributed collaboration we do here."

**Rather than having a one-size-fits-all solution to accessibility, it's a one-size-fits-one.**

Ryan Bigge is a Toronto-based cultural journalist and content strategist. His work has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Toronto Life* and *The Globe and Mail*. He is currently completing the Canadian Film Centre (CFC) Media Lab's Interactive Art and Entertainment Program.

AN
ALUMNINOTES

Voting public awards Kristan Horton Canada's largest prize in contemporary photography

Winning the only major Canadian art award voted on by the public is a particular honour, and this year it went to OCAD University alum artist Kristan Horton (Sculpture/ Installation, 1996).
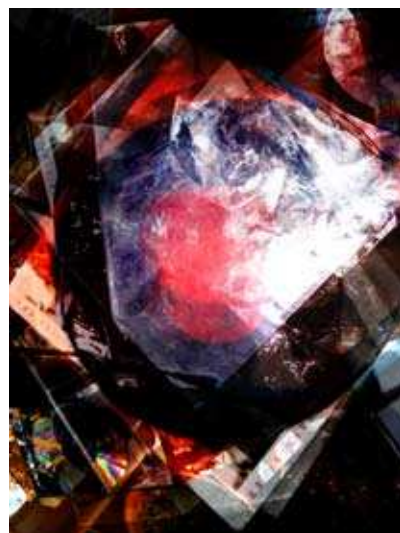
The Grange Prize—the result of a unique partnership between the Art Gallery of Ontario and Aeroplan— engages the public in a way that other art awards don't. By inviting members of the community to view public exhibitions of shortlisted artists' work—encouraging them to discuss the work online and ultimately to vote on it—the Prize is also contributing to a vital public discourse, one with special meaning for institutions like OCAD U.

With this accolade, Horton—a Toronto-based artist who creates by layering and manipulating photos—is at the centre of this year's conversation about the power and prevalence of contemporary photography. Recalling the time he spent at OCAD U (he would eventually complete his MFA at the University of Guelph), Horton says, "I learned from serious Canadian artists what artists do. OCAD U's contribution was for me a rich experience at a formative age. It wasn't so much how to make artworks, but how to think in this particular tradition. I might be told how to do things, but never what to do."

Launched in 2008, The Grange Prize comes with a mandate to "recognize the best in Canadian and international contemporary photography." It is this country's largest photography prize, granting a total of $65,000 to photographic artists each year: $50,000 to the winner and $5,000 to the three runners-up. Organizers work with an international partner country and institution to form a nominating jury of curatorial and scholarly experts who select a shortlist of four photographers—two from Canada and two from the partner country. The 2010 partner country is the U.S.; the partner institution, the Museum of Contemporary Photography (MoCP) at Chicago's Columbia College. The Prize invites each shortlisted artist to participate in a 10-day residency. This year Canadian nominees travelled to the U.S. and American artists visited Canada.

When the four 2010 finalists are considered together, it's possible to see how all of them create non-traditional forms of photography. Horton's work, for example, ranges from digitally altered abstracts to large-format images of manufactured objects. He has described his practice as one of intensive research and creation. Using layered processes of construction that are both material and virtual, Horton has produced numerous long-term projects. Like the acclaimed *Dr. Strangelove Dr. Strangelove* (see above), these works are often linked conceptually by their serial and episodic structure. In a September interview with CBC News, Horton described his art: "We're talking about layering inside the computer. Each layer I deal with individually and where they meet, they have torque." Eventually, he achieves a quality of "kaleidoscopic coherence."

For the past decade, Horton has shown his work widely in Canada and abroad. His multi-disciplinary practice includes sculpture, drawing, photography and video, but he admits to being "closest" to photography. To find out more about his art, visit kristanhorton.com.

Above: Kristan Horton
Orbits: The Original
Inkjet print (135 cm x 102 cm)
2009

Top: Kristan Horton
Dr. Strangelove Dr. Strangelove
Series of 200 giclée prints (28 cm x 76 cm)
2003–6

Images courtesy of the artist and
Jessica Bradley ART + PROJECTS.

Twigs, toothpicks, buttons and thread:
Artist Kai Chan celebrated in 35-year retrospective

Organizers of Kai Chan's 35-year retrospective have further distinguished the artist with an unlikely title: master of the unremarkable. But the designation is one of affection, even admiration, and speaks to Chan's extraordinary way with everyday materials.

In late fall of 2010 the Textile Museum of Canada and the Varley Art Gallery of Markham partnered to present Kai Chan: A Spider's Logic, celebrating 35 years in the artist's career. Curated by Sarah Quinton, the exhibition also marks the Textile Museum's 35th anniversary.

Chan, whose work has been known to play with assumptions about sculpture versus textile, graduated from OCAD University's Environmental Design program in 1970. He describes his years at the University as "familial," years that exposed him to "a lot of work by students in other departments." This exposure would later inform his practice in myriad ways.

Of that practice, Chan says: "I draw inspiration from the basic elements in my immediate surrounding—light, air, earth, water, flora and fauna. I have chosen to work with simple everyday and, often, recyclable and found materials. For me, the nature of these materials represents a fundamental value that informs living.

"Indeed, I no longer find that mainstream or 'traditional' art materials encompass the range of integral meanings that can capture my concerns about living in our contemporary world. I look instead to the simultaneously irregular and linear qualities of threads and tree branches, to suggest the structure and meaning of Chinese characters and calligraphy. Using the tension of such characteristics similarly rooted in other materials provides me with the tools to negotiate a balance between East and West within the [conceptual framework] of my art practice. I thus work to achieve an understanding that product and process in art-making emerge as the essence of living a life."

Kai Chan has exhibited across Canada, the U.S., Japan, Australia and Europe. He is the recipient of numerous grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, as well as the prestigious Jean A. Chalmers National Crafts Award (1998) and Prix Saidye Bronfman Award for Excellence in the Crafts (2002).

A Spider's Logic includes a selection of Chan's work from 1975 to 2010, gathering 30 key pieces that have never been seen together before, and introducing five large-scale wall works made of finely knotted thread. The exhibition opened at the Varley Art Gallery in late September 2010 and at the Textile Museum of Canada in November, where it continues until May 1, 2011. Chosen artworks from these two exhibitions will tour to additional venues across Canada.
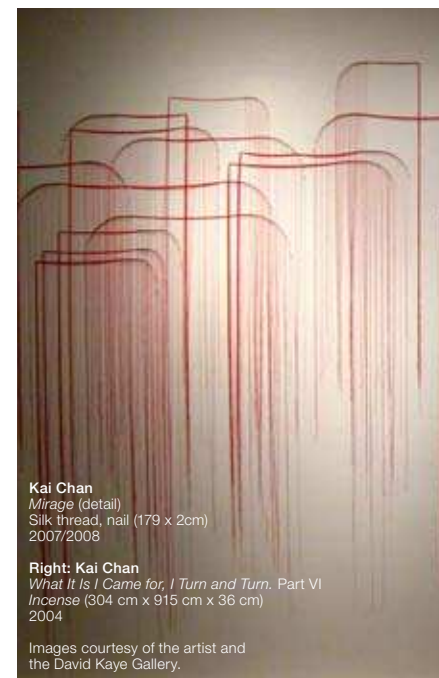
Kai Chan
Mirage (detail)
Silk thread, nail (179 x 2cm)
2007/2008

Right: Kai Chan
What It Is I Came for, I Turn and Turn. Part VI
Incense (304 cm x 915 cm x 36 cm)
2004

Images courtesy of the artist and
the David Kaye Gallery.

PROJECT 31

Anda Kubis
Crosswind (36" by 48")
Oil on Board
2010
Courtesy of: Drabinsky Gallery
Sold at Project 31, 2010

This March at OCAD University, we're playing a month-long game of digital show-and-tell, culminating in a contemporary art auction that features a staggering 31 works by 31 faculty members.

Save the date for Project 31:
Thursday, March 31, 2011

Creative Shape Shifters

AmoebaCorp.'s Mike Kelar and Mikey Richardson

By Leanna McLennan

The deceptively simple amoeba moves by changing its shape. And just like the amoeba, Mike Kelar (Graphic Design, 1997) and Mikey Richardson (Illustration, 1996)—co-creative directors/partners of AmoebaCorp. since their graphic design and visual communications company started in 1996—thrive on change. "We don't have a house style, a design philosophy or a way of working," says Kelar. "Even that is always changing."

Given their propensity for change—and moving ahead—it is no surprise that these two designers won a prestigious Webby Award in 2010 for "Best Use of Animation or Motion Graphics" for redesigning the website of soft-drink retailer The Pop Shoppe. The project was a collaboration with the agency OneMethod Digital + Design; audio production house Tattoo Sound + Music; and ON THE CHASE!, a motion graphics design studio. The Pop Shoppe website features a soundscape of animal sounds, creaking trees and music, tantalizing its viewers and inviting them to explore the world… inside a pop bottle. With each click, a different part of a vivid landscape emerges, as does a soundscape reminiscent of an experimental noise improvisation class. It's an experience that gives a whole new resonance to "message in a bottle."

ArtLab
Rumble Rumble Art Throw Down
Illustration by Mikey Richardson, Neil
Collyer, Gary Taxali, Travis Coburn,
Marco Cibola, Sophia Tanninen, Carey
Sookocheff and Chris Wellard

In 2010 Kelar and Richardson—whose client roster reads like a who's who in international dream accounts, such as Nike, Fruitopia, Mattel and Tetley—were hired by wireless telecom provider Wind Mobile to design the visual identity for its Canadian market. At a time when most mobile companies favoured simple designs printed on high-gloss paper, Kelar and Richardson persuaded Wind Mobile to go for a multi-faceted, colourful design on matte paper. Says Kelar, "We thought it would be interesting to present technology in an analogue way."

Inspired by both art and design—Wassily Kandinsky's abstract shapes, Eames' mid-century Modern furniture and 1950s cartoons—the designers created a cartoon-like design for Wind Mobile. They used hand-drawn abstract shapes in text bubbles to offer a sense of intimacy and playfulness; multiple colours to suggest the possibility of diverse conversations; and uncoated paper to convey approachability and honesty.

Art is a source of inspiration as well as a complement to design for Kelar and Richardson, who both make art in their spare time—"the flame that keeps us going," notes Kelar.

To fan that creative flame, they created ArtLab in 2004 "to bridge the gap between art, design and corporate culture." In their past studio, they had a gallery/retail space, where they exhibited local and international art and design. As part of ArtLab, they also now stage exhibits and events that provide opportunities to collaborate with other artists.

One such event took place in 2004, when Nike hired AmoebaCorp. to design the Toronto launch of Art of Speed, its global campaign to promote athletic footwear and

AmoebaCorp.
Tetley Cold Tea packaging
Photo by Richard Sibbald

AmoebaCorp.
The Pop Shoppe website; animation by OneMethod

apparel to the non-mainstream market. Kelar and Richardson brought together artists, designers and musicians in a warehouse in Liberty Village, a lively creative hub in Toronto's downtown west. Graffiti artists painted murals with precision and speed, and short films about speed produced by film students at Ryerson University were shown alongside films commissioned earlier by Nike. Over the course of the evening, DJs gradually increased the music's beats per minute, and waiters served fast food.

The exhibit Mr. Brown vs. Val Kilmer, in spring 2005, featured two street artists in Toronto: Mr. Brown, who was known for paste-ups that resembled tattoos, and an anonymous artist who stencilled images of American actor Val Kilmer's face on telephone poles, signs and buildings across the city. People were intrigued by the stencils: Was this an advertising campaign for a film? Was it publicity for the actor? Speculation about the artist's identity generated a lot of hype and drew a large crowd to the event. To this day Kelar and Richardson have not revealed the stencil artist's identity.

In 2006, Rumble Rumble: An Art Throw Down gathered eight illustrators for one night to produce original artwork on a 20'-by-4' table comprised of 40 panels. The illustrators, most of whom were accustomed to working independently, collaborated gradually, drawing over each other's work and creating illustrations together. At the end of the night, the panels were separated and later exhibited in a sold-out group show.

This skillful crafting of large-scale experiences is a far cry from Kelar and Richardson's early days. For their first pitch—to specialty cable TV channel YTV—they showed up

with with garbage bags containing their work because they didn't own portfolio cases. Fortunately, the consultants that YTV had hired from Big Blue Dot—a family/kid-oriented creative studio in Watertown, Mass.—advised YTV to hire the young designers. That was the first major project for Kelar and Richardson, and it allowed them to expand. In 2006 they partnered with John Street Advertising to share an office, and while the two companies currently share some clients, AmoebaCorp. remains an independent design house.

Kelar and Richardson continue to create both art and design, but they see a clear distinction between the two practices—the intention of the artist is self-expression; that of the designer is to solve problems for other people—and although designers may draw on their artistic skills, they're not making art. "If you tell some designers that what they're doing isn't art, they get defensive," says Kelar. "But the sooner young designers make the distinction, the better. The client isn't paying you to express yourself."

Richardson agrees. "You check your ego at the door. You're not hired to create your own style. You're hired to form a connection between the organization and its audience."

Self-professed design addicts Mike Kelar and Mikey Richardson connect with others afflicted similarly through their studio's official blog: designporn.com. Their website address is amoebacorp.com.

Leanna McLennan's fiction and poetry have been published in numerous literary journals and anthologies, including Third Floor Lounge: An Anthology of Poetry from the Banff Writing Studio. She currently writes in her studio at Artscape Wychwood Barns and teaches at OCAD U and the University of Toronto.

AN
ALUMNINOTES

Hitting it Big in Berlin: One Couple's Story

Gregory Blunt
Fade to Grey
Acrylic paint and frosted mylar on acrylic glass
(152 cm x 76 cm x 15 cm)
2006

Emmy Skensved
Untitled (Hong Kong)
Acrylic on canvas (80 cm x 60 cm)
2010

Emmy Skensved
Maquette for outdoor pavilion project
2010

Emmy Skensved
Framework
Exhibition at September Gallery, Berlin, 2009
Photo: courtesy of September Gallery

Top: Gregory Blunt
Architectonic
Acrylic paint and black glitter in epoxy resin on acrylic glass
(152 cm x 152 cm)
2007

Alumni, take note. For those of you looking to make it big in Berlin's bustling art world, meet—via *Sketch*'s intrepid Berlin-based reporter, Artstar* Nadja Sayej— OCAD U Drawing & Painting graduates Emmy Skensved and Gregory Blunt. Herewith tips from this couple that could—and did.

Berlin is the hottest city for contemporary art. Some would say it's the new New York…of Europe. Now, 20 years after the fall of the Wall, a strong community of artists has emerged, in particular, Canadians, ever since the blockbuster electropop singer Peaches made her way here almost 10 years ago. Numerous artists of note have since followed, from experimental filmmaker Bruce LaBruce and Janet Cardiff to Matthew Carver, Christine Cheung, Mark André Pennock and OCAD U grad Tiff Izsa, who lives in Düsseldorf.

So, what is it about Berlin? It is the capital of production in the international art world. The spacious studios, affordable housing and 70-cent beers draw the creative crowds to mingle, exchange and collaborate to build new realms. It's home to more than 180 museums and 200-plus galleries, to German art superstars Neo Rauch and Elmgreen & Dragset, and to those Canadian artists who have hit it big here—among them OCAD U Drawing & Painting alums Gregory Blunt (2004) and Emmy Skensved (2005).

Just this October, Blunt started a job as full-time assistant to American artist Paul Sietsema, who recently showed at New York's MoMA; meanwhile, Skensved is hard at work on an outdoor pavilion funded by the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA).

But Blunt has sobering advice for those who want to make it in Berlin: "People think they can come here and opportunity will drop on their laps. You've got to work for it—you're in the big leagues."

Over a bowl of Tuscan soup, pear salad and cherry schnapps, on a frosty October evening, the two OCAD U grads dish out tips on how to be a successful artist in Berlin. They do so despite the fact that their first year in the city was, as both will admit, a bit of a party binge—"an endless flow of cool hipsters," Blunt muses.

When they first spent time in Berlin, in 2006, Skensved worked as an assistant to the Danish-born Kirstine Roepstorff, an artist with Peres Projects. "I felt that I needed to leave Toronto, that I couldn't get any more out of it," recalls Skensved.

She notes that it's easy to feel at home in Berlin, but "you never learn German." Why? Because there are so many Canadian artists in the city to mingle with.

It was in 2007, after getting their MFAs from the University of Waterloo, that Blunt and Skensved decided to move to Berlin permanently. That's when they bought an apartment and began exhibiting. A finalist in the 2008 Royal Bank of Canada painting competition and a multiple recipient of CCA project grants, Skensved has shown at Kulturpalast Wedding International and Galerie Knoth & Krüger. She launched her first solo at September Gallery in, coincidentally, September of last year. Blunt showed at Galerie Scherer 8 and Künstlerhaus Bethanien while assisting Sietsema. He'd also worked as an assistant to Manhattan-based painter Sarah Morris in 2005.

"The best part…here is the apartment-show scene. It's all word of mouth— that's true Berlin," says Blunt. "You've got to dig deep; on the surface it's just the commercial galleries."

Ever keen for more challenges, the couple are currently restoring—from scratch—their apartment, which was built in 1905.

But their story of having made it in the Berlin art scene is not, by any means, a fairy tale. Job-hunting can be difficult, Blunt cautions, because most gallerists no longer hire English speakers, preferring instead fluently bilingual applicants.

Non-proficiency in German has been a serious setback for Blunt and Skensved. Despite daily studying and up to five hours a day practising with German friends, Blunt says that he is still not fluent enough to apply for jobs that require German.

Be prepared too, he says, to pay a minimum of €125 a month for health care and for Kaution—the required three-month deposit up front when renting an apartment. In the matter of travel documents, the best and easiest route is to get a youth mobility visa from the German Consulate General in Toronto. Free of charge to applicants who are Canadian citizens between the ages of 18 and 35, the visa allows you to work for one full year anywhere in Germany. Alternatively, you can get an artist's visa, in which case a letter from a German gallery willing to employ you would help.

Of course, it also pays to know Canadian insiders like Blunt and Skensved, who will walk newcomers through the most recent Index art guide, recommend where to set up a bank account and perhaps offer directions to the next apartment show.

And don't underestimate the importance of parties, as they're simply business networking venues in disguise. "When you run into the director of the National Gallery of Canada, she's in party mode. So, it's easy to approach people here…versus back home," says Blunt. "We know so many people [now from] all over the world."

But for this couple that could—and did, work is a top priority. Blunt continues to assist artists and is trying his hand at curating home shows. At the time of this interview, Skensved is preparing to create a public sculpture this winter. And as they approach their fourth year in this city, working and living in Berlin remains magical, they say.

"Berlin is a real education, more…than my master's," says Blunt. "If you're willing to work, things will work out. I am grateful every day."

Nadja Sayej—host of ArtStars (artstarstv.com), the only contemporary-art travelling web-TV show—lives in Berlin.*

Emerging Alumni Profile

Vanessa Harden: Covert Gardening and Interspecies Collaboration

By Leanna McLennan

I f James Bond were a covert gardener, what spyware would he need? OCAD University alum Vanessa Harden (Material Art & Design, 2005) asks questions like this as part of her design process. Harden—who is currently working as a designer in London, England—was an OCAD U medal winner in 2005 and, more recently, the recipient of the prestigious iF concept award for Best Universal Design in 2010 and the Blueprint Award for Best Exhibition at 100% Design London in 2009.

Vanessa Harden is a modern storyteller. She dreams and she builds. Her finely tuned design process—brainstorming, field research and prototype making—was honed at London's Royal College of Art, where she completed her Master of Arts (Design Interactions, 2009). "I design for people in fringe groups," she says. "I spend time with them, so I can see what tools they need. And I look for the interesting story."

Once that story is found, Harden crafts a narrative around the product and its users. The James Bond storyline was inspired by "Subversive Gardener," which is part of her master's thesis. It was while creating designs for "guerrilla gardeners"—those who clandestinely plant, typically at night, flowers, shrubs and vegetables in neglected urban spaces to beautify them—that Harden found herself on the London Underground

transit system one night, in her nice, smart clothes, struggling with shovels and bags of soil. At that moment, she realized that guerrilla gardeners face similar hurdles. "I played on the idea that this type of gardening is illegal and came up with a narrative inspired by the gadgetry in James Bond films."

In her storyline, two gardening spies are on their way home from work. In an abandoned lot, the first spy takes out a shovel from his stylish black briefcase, digs a hole in the ground and leaves. The second spy follows on his heels, unzips a secret bottom compartment in her red leather handbag and presses a button to trigger a conveyor belt that expels a plant from the handbag into the hole. She walks away, leaving behind a beautiful flower. Mission accomplished.

Harden has created other products for clandestine gardeners—a shoe with a secret compartment for seeds, and a camera that shoots seed capsules from its lens. "I take everyday objects that you wouldn't think twice about, but when you look closer, you realize there's something different about them that's intriguing."

Her own life story is no less interesting. Right after graduation, she headed to Barcelona to make her mark as a designer. It was a humbling experience, recalls Harden. "I realized that if I wanted to work with technology, I had a lot more to learn."

And learn she did. In 2006 Harden did a residency at XS Labs at Concordia University in Montreal and earned a diploma from the MIT Media Lab's Advanced Study Program. She learned how to program computers and build circuit boards. But in order to become a successful designer on the international stage, she knew that she needed to further her studies. That's when she enrolled in a Master of Arts program at the Royal College of Art.

Now kept busy with myriad independent projects, commissions and consulting work, Harden has a client roster that includes Burberry, the British luxury fashion house, for which she created a report on the impact of emerging technologies on the Burberry brand's fashion shows, products, and retail stores; and the BBC, for which she and Dominic Southgate, her partner in the design firm Gammaroo, designed and built props for an upcoming film, *Operation Mincemeat*.

Recently, she was commissioned by Do The Green Thing—a London-based non-profit public service that advocates a greener life—to design an environmentally friendly tent for music festivals where tents are abandoned after the events. For her origami-inspired design of an aesthetically innovative, biodegradable tent, Harden solicited input from Mark Bolitho, General Secretary of the British Origami Society. And, in keeping with her engaged design process, she took the cardboard prototype

'I design for people in fringe groups. I spend time with them, so I can see what tools they need. And I look for the interesting story.'

to the popular annual music event in Scotland, T in the Park, in July 2010. "It was cold and raining the whole weekend, a drunk person fell on my tent, and half of [the tent] blew away," Harden says, laughing. "But people liked it."

Meanwhile, Harden is involved with *Built by…* (her current collaboration with industrial designer Kevin Hill) which she describes as "an inter-species collaboration between humans and bees." In it, designers position furniture inside a specially constructed beehive, so that beeswax will drip onto it. Later, they will retrieve the furniture and add a resilient coating to the "bespoke detailing" in order to make it more resilient.

Built by… was exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum and made the shortlist for the category Design for a Better World at the Seoul Design Festival in September 2010.

To view Vanessa Harden's designs and to find out more about her design process, visit vanessaharden.com.

Left: *Round Tactical Gravity Planter*
Photo by Roel Paredaens

Above: *Precision Bombing Device 2*
Photo by Roel Paredaens

Above: *Built-by...*
Photo by Vanessa Harden

Above: *Future Tents:* Prototype
Photo by Ross Cairns

Top: *Guerrilla Gardeners*
Photo by Roel Paredaens

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