SKETCH

OCAD University at 135 years
A glimpse into our past, present and future
President’s Message

There are No Limits to Imagination

Who would have thought that when it opened its doors in 1876 that the Ontario School of Art, located at 14 King Street West and home to 25 students, would become OCAD University with more than 4,000 students in a mixture of undergraduate and boutique graduate programs. In recognition of this evolving mission, OCAD University adopted the moniker “University of the Imagination” five years ago. Our goal was to capture the compelling, calculated risks that artists, designers and makers take at every turn. We wanted to encapsulate the vibrant passion and energy that have resounded in the school’s studios, classrooms and laboratories for parts of three centuries.

Our institution strives to stay ahead of changing times, as reflected in a series of name changes: the Toronto Art School (1886–1898), the Central Ontario School of Art and Industrial Design (1900–1912), then the Ontario College of Art (OCA) (1912–1996), Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) (1997–2010), and now OCAD University. Emerging nation-states are transfused with the challenge of establishing cultural expressions and brand identities that speak to their geographical and social conditions. OCA, Canada’s first independent art and design school, housed leading members of the Group of Seven and Canada’s homegrown breed of industrial and graphic designers whose authoritative imagery captured the popular imagination as Canada came of age. While continuing a passionate allegiance to Canada, OCAD U has internationalized—our student population, faculty, curriculum and partnerships represent more than 50 countries. Flatless and well-founded ideas lead to economic and social gains. OCAD University’s alumni and faculty have contributed to prosperity at home and abroad—caring for a significant portion of the more than $9 billion per year of cultural sector GDP in Toronto alone and some $12 billion in Ontario. Beyond art and design, our alumni are everywhere—in financial services, law, medicine, biology, government and information and communications technologies. OCAD U gave them the tools to succeed whatever their career choice, and we celebrate them as we turn 135.

OCAD University upholds the traditions of studio-based experiential learning—we are flexible, critically informed and intimately engaged with the world around us. Our strategic plan, Leading in the Age of Imagination, offers the New Ecology of Learning: a call to excellence that places the lens of art, design and media on burning issues such as sustainability, health and wellness, cultural diversity and globalization, contemporary ethics and the invention of futures.

As a specialised institution, OCAD U has widened its arms to nurture individual talent while enabling unprecedented collaborative experiences and partnerships with industrial and not-for-profit partners, along with top-tier researchers. The Aboriginal Visual Culture Program; Art, Design and Media celebrates and accelerates practice and scholarship in an alliance with Aboriginal communities across Canada. The application of our specialized knowledge to broad interdisciplinary collaboration has catapulted OCAD U into a research and innovation leader in fields such as strategic foresight, Aboriginal visual culture, data visualization, wearable technologies, health design, sustainability, new media art history, inclusive design and mobile technology. Throughout its 135 years, OCAD University has been a city builder, whether through the creation of the Grange at the north end of Grange Park that was designed by George Reid to be the first building in Canada for the sole purpose of art education, or the de facto creation of an OCAD U district that became Queen Street West. The Sharp Centre for Design created by British architect Will Alsop has become a symbol of the combined power of art and design and OCAD University—gorgeous and smart.

Enjoy the pages that follow as we celebrate our history, our present and look towards the future.

— DR. SARA DIAMOND

Chancellor’s Message

It is an honour to be joining Canada’s “University of the Imagination” as it celebrates its 135th anniversary. Since its founding in 1876, OCAD University has been a hub of cultural and economic activity in Toronto, connecting the city and the nation to leading-thinking in art and design.

Strongly rooted in its rich history, OCAD U is going through an exciting transformation of creative adventure, academic exploration and unprecedented entrepreneurialism. Evidence of such tremendous change is reflected in the numerous new partnerships we have created with industry leaders, technology innovators, government and investors, as well as the building of a business accelerator to ensure that our graduating students and faculty contribute to jobs, prosperity and social enterprise.

OCAD U’s mission is to provide its students with the resources, skills and opportunities to succeed in their academic, professional and personal pursuits. The achievements of our students over the past 135 years are testaments to OCAD U’s reputation as one of Canada’s premier art and design institutions—a solid distinction we aim to build upon well into the 21st century and beyond.

— CATHERINE (KIKI) DELANEY

Governor’s Message

It is a distinct pleasure to extend greetings to OCAD University on its 135th anniversary. Since 1876, established as the Ontario School of Art, you have been an important centre for applied and formal arts education in the province. Your students have contributed greatly over the years to the art and design worlds, making a strong impact internationally. In 2000, you started to confer degrees of Bachelor of Fine Arts, and Bachelor of Design, and in 2016, your name was officially changed to OCAD University, reflecting the status befitting this remarkable educational institution.

Students thrive in the downtown core of Toronto in an environment that encourages creativity, interaction between disciplines, and an understanding of business practices, all leading to a well-rounded graduate.

As the Queen’s representative in Ontario, I applaud OCAD University for all that you have contributed to the arts over the years, continue the administration, past and present, and send my best wishes on this milestone anniversary.

— LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ONTARIO

David C. Onley
Only a tiny handful of buildings have the power to change a city, or at least the way it is perceived. In Toronto, the Sharp Centre for Design at OCAD University is one of them. Designed by award-winning British architect Will Alsop, this unique structure is known around the world. Since it opened in 2004, pictures of this remarkable facility have circulated widely. In the process, they have raised awareness of the school and created a new image of Toronto as a city willing to be bold, take risks and think outside the grid—if not the box.

Sitting on a series of 12 brightly coloured steel “stilts” 11 storeys (26 metres) above street level, the Sharp Centre redefined OCAD U and with it, art school architecture. Though controversial at the time, Alsop’s “flying tabletop,” as it’s known locally, has quickly become a Toronto icon. Not everyone loves it, but no one denies it has had a tremendously positive influence on the city and has helped bring a notoriously conservative community into the 21st century.

Of course, the Sharp Centre is just one of a number of architectural episodes that comprise the history of the school. Indeed, OCAD U’s story is one that mirrors not just changing attitudes to the city, but also to art and art education. When the institution was founded in 1876, as the Ontario School of Art, it was housed in a building at 14 King Street West that has long since disappeared. Needless to say, back then the city was a much smaller place and residents’ ability to get around it was limited. In other words, things had to be close or they were inaccessible.

By 1882, the faculty had become part of the Department of Education and moved to the Normal School complex, now incorporated by Ryerson University. It too was situated well within the heart of the city, an indication both of the city’s inherent understanding of the importance of art and also of art education.

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After that, the school seems to have changed locations and names every few years. It spent time (1886 to 1890) at the corner of Queen and Yonge Streets, before going back to King Street West where it shared premises with the Art Museum of Toronto at the Princess Theatre from 1890 to 1910. At this point, it was known as the Central Ontario School of Art and Industrial Design.

When the theatre was torn down to make way for the expanding street grid, the school had to search for a new home once again. But it was also during this period that the Provincial Legislature passed the “Art Incorporating the Ontario College of Art” Act. Queen’s Park voted for OCA to receive an annual grant of $3,000 in addition to giving the college a free room back at the Normal School that it had vacated almost 30 years earlier.

Not until the 1920s did the institution construct its own building. Situated at the north end of Grange Park, the new premises were designed in the same Georgian style as the original Grange, which dates from 1817. When it opened on September 30, 1921, it was the first purpose-built art school in Canada. Its appearance is a testament to the pioneering role played by George Reid, who had been appointed principal of OCA in 1920. A farmer born in Wingham, Ontario, in 1860, he himself had been a student at the Ontario School of Art before travelling to Philadelphia and then Paris to study painting. A tireless champion of the visual arts, Reid was a pivotal figure in the history of Toronto.

Best known for his murals (Old City Hall, Jarvis Collegiate and others), as well as genre paintings such as The Foreclosure of the Mortgage (1893), Reid was a tireless activist who helped to lay the foundations of Toronto’s cultural infrastructure.

His struggles to have the visual arts accepted as part of the provincial education system kept him busy for decades. As he wrote in the OCA Student Manual in 1927: “Art education has been begging for a long time for its proper place in the scheme of Education as a whole, and is only now coming into its own.” Interestingly, Reid argued that OCA should be affiliated with the University of Toronto so students could graduate with a degree. That dream wouldn’t be realized until decades later when OCAD (Ontario College of Art & Design) became OCAD University.

“There is hope,” Reid wrote in that same manual, “that through making Art a subject for matriculation and eventually by creating a degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts in the University that higher Art Education in Ontario may receive full recognition and go freely on its way with the development of the aesthetic side of our life.”
For an idea of how different Toronto was a century ago and what Reid was up against, consider that in 1921 the college had all of 330 students and a staff of 13 teachers, three assistants, a principal and vice-president. The school’s funding consisted of an annual stipend of $400 from the Department of Education and about $300 from the city. In 1910, OCA’s entire budget added up to a grand total of $3,377.

When Reid departed in 1929, he was succeeded by J.E.H. MacDonald, known as one of Canada’s finest painters and a member of the legendary Group of Seven. After him, in 1933, came Fred Haines, also a painter. Haines occupied the postion until 1952, by which time the college was set to enter another period of growth. It was operating summer courses in Port Hope, Ontario, and had taken over William Houston Public School in downtown Toronto in what is now York University’s Glendon College. Located at Lawrence and Bayview Avenues, it was a bit further afield.

Finally, on January 27, 1957, OCA opened its new consolidated campus at 100 McCaul Street, where it remains to this day. The building unveiled back then was a well-intentioned exercise in modernism. Refined rather than exuberant, the complex consisted of a set of glass-and-brick boxes that faced onto the street. Though it must have seemed the last word in architecture at the time, it has since become one of those semi-historical structures not yet old enough to be considered historical. That will happen in time, no question. For now, the building speaks to a moment of extraordinary optimism in Toronto. Planning for Vîla Brețcu, New City Hall had begun as it had for Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s Toronto-Dominion Centre, two projects that helped bring the city into the modern age. Though more modest in scope and budget, 100 McCaul reflected changes that were unfolding not just in architecture but in the arts in general: The new school looked to the future, not—as was the case with the 1927 Grange addition—to the past. In Toronto, the 1950s and early 1960s was the era of Painters Eleven, a pioneering group of abstract artists—many graduates of OCA—who introduced non-figurative painting to the city.

By the time British architect Will Alsop was selected to design the Sharp Centre in 2000, the McCaul premises were showing their age. OCA was staring to look like a last-model high school, a bit rundown and verging on shabby. When the federal/provincial infrastructure funding program SuperBuild was launched in the 1990s, many cultural and educational organizations recognized it for what it was—a chance to get their hands on some desperately needed cash. Alsop, who by his own admission was barely aware of Toronto, heard about the project from a Canadian colleague. Despite the fact that his bid submission didn’t include a design, he made the shortlist and travelled hurriedly to the city. “I was back in London Monday,” Alsop recalls, “and they called on Tuesday and said well like you to do it. I had made it clear in the interview that I didn’t know what I was going to do. I wanted the design to be an inclusive process. I wanted to include everyone in the conversation.” Some architects might be hurt by such openness, but not Alsop. Indeed, his willingness to engage with students, staff and neighbours was almost as unusual as the building he produced. “Through those conversations,” he says, “it emerged that no one wanted a building on the south parking lot. I tried to agree with them. So I asked the question: Where do you put the building?” The idea of putting the building on legs emerged from talking to people—including the neighbours. The truth is that I did not know I was going to do that. But it solved a huge number of problems. And despite what people might think, we got the building permit in just 12 days.

For one thing, Alsop’s scheme meant that the building did not have to be closed down for two or three years while construction took place. Once the steel skeleton had been constructed—a job that took place during summer holidays and attracted large crowds—the rest of the work was relatively straightforward.

Another major advantage of Alsop’s approach was that it allowed for the creation of an open space beneath the “tabletop” connecting Grange Park on the west with McCaul on the east. That plan made a lot of sense. The impulse to fuse these various components into a single multi-faceted urban entity is appropriate in a city that has only recently wanted to value itself as a city. As Alsop pointed out when he won the commission, the public realm on McCaul needed attention; what better way to provide that than by “dragging” the park through to the sidewalk. “Apart from the legs, it’s a very simple form,” he explains. “You don’t have to put the building on the sidewalk. “Apart from the legs, it’s a very simple form,” he explains. “You don’t have to put the building on the sidewalk. It’s okay to be different and look for the right tone. It’s okay to be different and look for the right tone.”

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1876 The school relocates to a building near Queen and Yonge Streets.

1880 The school moves to the Normal School building (present site of Ryerson University).

1890 The school is enrolled.

1900 Twenty-five students are enrolled.

1920 The school relocates to a building near Queen and Nassau Street.

1930 The school moves to the famous old Normal School building on Nassau Street (same location as from 1882 to 1930).

1933 Fred S. Hames becomes Principal, a position he will hold until 1952.

1945 The college expands to the William Houston Public School on Nassau Street to house the Design School. The curriculum is broadened to include various forms of applied arts.

1947 The ‘Act Incorporating the Ontario College of Art’ receives royal assent and the college is given an annual grant of $3,000, as well as free premises on the first floor of the Normal School building on Gould Street (same location as from 1882 to 1930).

1953 A second major extension containing the Nora E. Vaughan Wing is added to the south wing of the building.

1957 The main campus of 100 McCaul Street opens. OCA is reunited under one roof with the original Grange building wing.

1962 OCA opens its own building in Grange Park on a site donated by the Art Gallery of Toronto. The building is designed by George A. Reid and is the first of its kind in Canada to be constructed specifically for the purpose of art education.

1967 The school assumes the role of Vice-Principal.

1970 For the first time, OCA Council includes students and faculty as voting members.

1973 OCA launches the first fundraising campaign in its history.

1980 The Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD) announces a $24-million investment from the Province of Ontario through SuperBuild to make possible a major capital expansion and renewal plan.

1985 Trustees of the OCA Foundation vote to expand their custodial role with endowment funds to include fundraising activities.

1988 The first set of graduate programs is launched: Master of Fine Arts in Criticism and Curatorial Practice, Interdisciplinary Master’s in Art Media & Design, along with an Executive Master of Design in Advertising. The Honourable James R. Bartleman, former Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, is installed as OCAD’s second Chancellor.

1990 OCA announces the Master of Fine Arts in Strategic Foresight & Innovation is added.

1995 The name of the college officially changes to the Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD) and the academic structure is defined by three faculties: Foundation Studies (first year), Art and Design.

1996 The Aboriginal Visual Culture Program is launched to foster expertise in Aboriginal art, design, media and other related knowledge. A Master of Design in Strategic Foresight & Innovation is added.

2000 The Aboriginal Visual Culture Program is launched to foster expertise in Aboriginal art, design, media and other related knowledge. A Master of Design in Strategic Foresight & Innovation is added.

2001 OCAD is granted membership into the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC).

2004 The Sharp Centre for Design officially opens. McCaul Street is closed for the event, which is attended by 2,000 people. Rosalie Sharp (AOCA, Material Art & Design, 1950) is installed as OCAD’s first Chancellor.

2005 Sara Diamond is appointed as the 21st President.

2006 OCAD undergoes official status to confer the degrees of Bachelor of Fine Art (BFA) and Bachelor of Design (BDes).

2007 Establishment of the Digital Futures Initiative, a set of cross-disciplinary programs, research, and innovation activities in digital art, media and design. Design by Jim Diorio and Shawn Mundell.

2009 The Aboriginal Visual Culture Program is launched to foster expertise in Aboriginal art, design, media and other related knowledge. A Master of Design in Strategic Foresight & Innovation is added.

2010 The Government of Ontario introduces legislation to officially change the name of the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) to University (OCAD U). A Master of Arts in Contemporary Art, Design and New Media Art Histories is added.

2011 OCAD U unveils its new visual identity and introduces two new graduate-level programs: Master of Design in Inclusive Design and a Graduate Program in Digital Futures. Catherine (Kiki) Delaney is installed as OCAD U’s third Chancellor.
Group of Seven member Arthur Lismer, who served as OCA’s Vice-Principal from 1920 to 1927, shares his thoughts on art education in the 1930 student issue of Tangent.
For more than 100 years, students have shown off their works in a variety of student publications and exhibitions. Here are a few pieces from the archives.
Icons and Innovators: OCAD U’s Impact on Canadian Design

By Earl Miller

Another former student, Bruce Mau, considered by many to be Toronto’s best-known graphic designer, is postmodernism what Kramer, Ash et al. were to Swiss modernism. Leaving the college in 1980 before graduation to work for agencies in Toronto and London, Mau made a breakthrough toward self-employment in 1987 when Zone Books hired him to design the academic Zone 1/2 series. His hip, colourfully abstract, yet never excessive covers of more than 100 volumes redrew book design—academic or otherwise—and accordingly launched the expeditions of his own firm, Bruce Mau Design. Mau, who has continuously defined design conventions by incorporating art, pedagogy and social concerns into his practice, achieved a Flat-Vertex’s museum with his exhibition Massive Change. Beginning at the Vancouver Art Gallery and now traveling to the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2005, Massive Change made a powerful argument that design could facilitate global social progress.

Just as iconic as the Zone 1/2 series was Scott Laughton’s 1987 Stralia light, developed when Laughton was still an industrial design student (he has also taught in that same department). A Memphis-influenced design capped by a quintessentially postmodern triangular shade, the lamp made Time magazine’s Top 10 designs that year. Multimedia followed postmodernism, and two computer savvy graduates of OCAD’s Graphic-Electric Arts department, Kevin Steele and Gord Gower, literally created the Canadian market for this design trend. After graduation they began applying their Mac computer skills to advertising, forming Mac潇洒 Interactive in 1990, which they promoted with a black-and-white interactive electronic brochure available on a floppy disk. Multimedia’s old-tech beginnings sharply contrast with Martha Ladly’s current practice. An associate design professor and the Director of the Interdisciplinary Master’s in Art, Media & Design program, as well as a graduate who once played keyboards in the seminal Toronto new-wave band, Martha and the Muffins, Ladly specializes in interactive communication, social networking and mobile experience design.

Ladly’s interactive media specialization exemplifies a new era at OCAD University, one heralded by the 2006 appointment of Dr. Sara Diamond as President. Diamond came with an extensive academic, administrative and artistic background in media art and computer science. Moreover, she fully implemented the academically-informed education that Ascott espoused by transforming a studio-based art college to a degree-granting university. In 2008, President Diamond launched a graduate studies program, with a Master’s in Design stream that attracts students with impressive qualifications due to the expertise of Ladly and other faculty actively affiliated with Canada’s design epicenter in downtown Toronto. Barr Gilmore, for example, a 2011 graduate and a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Art (RCA), entered the Interdisciplinary Master’s in Art, Media & Design program after working for Bruce Mau and running a freelance business with clients that included TIFF and the New York-based Gagosian Gallery. With such high-calibre graduates poised to enter—or to re-enter—the workforce, OCAD U will undoubtedly continue to define and shape the Canadian mediascape well into the 21st century, and beyond.

Earl Miller is an independent art critic and curator. He has written for Art in America, Acme, C Magazine, Canadian Art, Flash Art and other leading international publications. He has curated exhibitions at venues including the Art Gallery of York University in Toronto and The Text Museum in Gravenhurst, Ontario.
Striving for a sustainable future
At home and abroad, OCAD U is finding ways to reduce its footprint

By Sheila Waite-Chua

Before the environmental movement had reached maturity and was capturing headlines around the world, OCAD University was not only aware of the consequences of turning a blind eye; it was actively involved in identifying opportunities for engagement.

In 1993, the university introduced Design for the Environment, one of the first courses on sustainability in an art and design curriculum in Canada. Throughout the 1990s, as the impact of global warming spurred campaigns for drastic economic and societal change, artists and designers were faced with growing evidence of the “shadows side” of their practice and its impacts on both environmental and human health.

In response, OCAD U faculty developed a curriculum that includes studio work and explores sustainable alternatives without naively lumping on “the next big thing.” In the Faculty of Art, students in the Aboriginal Visual Culture program study the analysis of natural materials and processes to better understand self-sustaining and self-renewing solutions.

In addition, through the Habitat Studio they work in collaboration with the Habitat for Humanity agency; while strategies for designing vital communities is the main premise of the course. There is also an Urban Landscape Ecology offering where students view cities as living labs, and in Sustainable Design and Development they consider the global issues involved in the consumerist lifestyle. All second-year design students are also required to take Think Tank 1: Awareness, which includes a project focused on social enterprise.

In the Faculty of Art, students are increasingly engaged in issues relevant to their discipline. The process stream of courses includes health and safety issues and also the inherent implications of materials and their impact on our world. Senior students are also examining broad-based issues in Painting in the Expanded Field and Landscape to Environment course.

Upholding the studio-based education in art and design, the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences and School of Interdisciplinary Studies provides a rich offering of sustainability-related courses in theory, history and science. In Biological Principles of Sustainability, fundamental principles of biodiversity are being linked with issues such as agrihumanity and genetically modified foods. The Design and Sustainability offering also focuses on defining sustainability within today’s contemporary global context, and in Nature, Culture and the Environment consideration is given to the notion of progress and the consequences of technological development.

Another key curricular development across the university is the Sustainability Minor, which has expanded into an interdisciplinary framework, while the unique Aboriginal Visual Culture program provides essential perspectives on First Nations, Métis and Inuit traditions and visions of linking land and culture.

Such advancements in the curriculum are mirrored outside of the classroom. In 2008 the Sustainable Task Force was created in part to develop strategies for environmentally responsible practices. Also in 2008, the Sustainability Office launched a mandate to coordinate all sustainability initiatives on campus and to work closely with both the Task Force and the Sustainability Working Group of the New Ecology of Learning (NEL). During its inaugural year, the Sustainability Office and Frog Pond, led by Design Chairs Bruce Hibbs and Keith Radstone, collaborated with the Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief to launch “Food Prints,” an interdisciplinary team of students who created a display with salvaged materials to showcase food security issues in West Africa. Another international endeavor involves a Memorandum of Agreement with Dr. Vandana Shiva’s “FreedomFilms” project.

On campus, a number of grassroots initiatives have also taken root. The Green Exchange has to date diverted 15,000 lb. of electronic waste, while the national Bottled Water Free has resulted in 800 individuals and 26 departments pledging not to use bottled water on campus. Environmental stewardship is increasingly embedded in the built environment and studios are replacing toxic solvents and adopting conservation measures that target energy and water.

Additionally, Bullfrog Power provides the OCAD U Student Centre with 100% renewable energy, and the Zero footprint partnership launched ZERO Lab to create visualization tools. Future projects include building re-skinning and plans for a solar panel installation. Such initiatives are paying dividends. Last October, the university received a Better Buildings Partnership incentive of nearly $253,000 for OCAD University.

At the Student Centre, OCAD University, launching a new project called “Twisting Cities & Twisting Artists,” will offer collaborative online space where photography students from Finland, Korea and Toronto critique each other’s work.

Just as OCAD U’s Toronto campus is stretching, so too is its international presence. The historical turning point in the university’s international strategy was the development of the Florence Program. For 37 years, groups of students have enjoyed the unique opportunity to strengthen their technique and deepen their understanding of art history in a cross-cultural setting, under the guidance of OCAD U faculty, while surrounded by architectural and artistic treasures from the Italian art world.

Although Florence is still OCAD U’s flagship international program, a network of partnerships now takes students teaching and learning in new regions. At the heart of this global network of artists, designers and educators is an understanding that intercultural and transnational collaboration deepens the learning experience for students and generates new discoveries in research and practice.

“Nothing is more amazing than being completely immersed in such a different culture,” says Thel Davidson, a fourth-year design student who studied at Jiangnan University in China last year. “China is such an incredible up-and-coming presence in the design world, so I wanted to see it through their eyes.” China is one of the new study abroad opportunities OCAD U offers to its students through the Mobility/Exchange program. Through partnerships with more than 50 of the world’s most renowned art and design programs, OCAD U allows students to pursue their practice and intellectual development within a cultural context that is not their own while continuing to progress toward their degrees.

The roots of the Mobility/Exchange program can be traced within OCAD U’s membership in AICAD—the Association of Independent College of Art and Design—a consortium of North American schools that agree to facilitate mobility of their students between institutions. Over the past decade, the development of new partnerships has opened up options for study beyond North America in such locations as Australia, Israel and South America.

In 2007, OCAD U launched a new partnership with the world-renowned Photographers for Aid and Relief to launch the We’re Winning Through Cultural Partnerships and an architectural studio in London, England. Through cultivating such interdisciplinary partnerships and experts on climate change, smart cities and experts on climate change, smart cities and healthy communities and social enterprise.

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For Selig, “We’re being more deliberate about featuring Toronto activity internationally,” says Reeve. “But at the same time, being internationally acclaimed artists and designers to the campus gives students, faculty, alumni and the public an opportunity to engage with them.” For a student to get that kind of engagement with someone at the pinnacle of the world is invaluable experience.”

Deanne Fisher is OCAD University’s Associate Vice President, Students.
Our new visual identity
A process in discovering who we are, and how we want the world to see us

By Susan Mohammad

When OCAD University’s Graphic Design Chair, Keith Rushton, was a student at the school in the late 1960s, the entire school was the size of the program he now runs. And since he began teaching shortly after graduating in 1969, Rushton has watched the school develop into a leading, internationally recognized art and design institution. He’s also been witness to a few identity changes, beginning with OCA, then the Ontario College of Art & Design, and finally OCAD University.

“It’s impossible to stand still,” says Rushton. “It’s important to protect and hold on to what makes an institution what it is, and also important to show that creativity doesn’t stand still. Ideas change and society changes, and a constant in the creative field is to be ahead of that movement.” Considering the transitions Rushton has seen over the years, he viewed the school’s unveiling of its new visual identity at the graduation exhibit in May as a logical step in OCAD U’s evolution.
During the pitch process Bruce Mau Design demonstrated a desire to design the “process” as much as the identity itself.

Steve Virtue, who was the Director of Marketing & Communications for OCAD U during the process, couldn’t agree more. A new visual self was necessary, he says, to reflect the school’s community status and expansion into other areas, such as research in the experiential and patient-care design areas. “There are activities you may not think an art school would have, but OCAD U is dramatically increasing its research activities by building strong partnerships with companies like Apple and Microsoft,” says Virtue. Another sign of the school’s growth is the students. There are now about 3,700 students at OCAD U, and that number is growing.

The school’s new logo is anything but conventional. The iconic Sharp Centre for Design and the ever-changing, student-created art spilling out is reflective of OCAD U. be an agency that is in the midst of tremendous growth. But what exactly does the new visual identity say about OCAD U, the people who work and learn there, as well as the direction in which the school is heading? And how tough a job would it be to create an identity that defines a place burning with such a diverse range of critical, top-level artists and designers? From the start, the process to find the new identity was a challenge. Even before the new identity selection committee (made up of a group that included alumni, students, faculty and senior administrators) was created, some insiders felt spending money on rebranding was wasteful. Others expressed strong emotional attachment to the school’s university status and expansion into other areas, which were as follows:


“The first principle on having a history built on risk-taking is a key part of the school’s identity. So we ask ourselves: ‘How do we reflect that?’” says Stein. “People start by sketching crazy things and ideas develop. We then pick which of these have the best potential to represent the school’s identity and brand. The decision is based on the potential of the concept to be taken forward. James Gauvreau (BFA, Printmaking, 2010), a former medal winner, had his work chosen as the prototype in the basic window of the new identity.”


“Of the three squares never changes but the rest incorporate a sense of both seriousness and play. The identities you see that really fail are the ones that haven't paid attention to the audiences they are trying to reach,” says Braide. “There is intense consultation and a real sensitivity to what's going on in the OCAD U environment, and that was reflected in so many ways in this new identity.”

In today’s global marketplace, even the smallest mistake in the rebranding process can be damaging for any business (a lesson Gap Inc. learned the hard way). Last fall, the clothing giant revealed their new, very American Apparel-looking logo (a white box with Gap written in white Helvetica typeface) days after unveiling it due to extreme protest from designers and the public who called it pedestrian, among worse things.

Braide has also witnessed how emotional the process can get. In the summer of 2009, she advised the University of Waterloo during the time their new logo was mocked—embarrassing an uncomplimentary brundle of responses. “Unfortunately, a logo as important as the university was about to enter an extensive consultation phase, so the process got completely sidetracked,” says Braide, who was involved in the brand strategy for U of W. “Fortunately, someone in the design group loved it so much they put it on their blog, and that started the crazy wave of negative stuff,” she says. “Within two or three weeks there were 9,000 messages on this Facebook page.”


Although the research group couldn’t estimate how much feedback to expect, an impressive 40 per cent of the total respondents were from students. Alumni from 12 different countries (on four continents) also participated. Once the research was complete, Stein and her co-designers sifted through the material, then boiled it down to key identity principles. The insights were then posted in the firm’s space for inspiration.

“Then we sketch, sketch, sketch,” says Stein from the firm’s loft-like King Street West studio. Feedback from the community and research process was synthesized to establish the Identity Design Guidelines, which were as follows:


The 28-year-old multidisciplinary artist was thrilled that his 20-foot sculptural installation (entitled Really Long Lany) was selected. He says the new visual identity makes sense because it will always be adaptable to where the school is headed. “Having a simple design is good,” says Gauvreau. “I think it’s quite smart. A blank canvas.”

Outside of OCAD U’s wider community school this enthusiasm. Fast Company’s Co.Design site, for one, described the identity as a “remarkable example of student work” that demonstrates the school’s dedication to its students. But what does this new identity offer people like Rushton, whose relationship with the school dates back nearly 45 years as a former student and now teacher? “It’s like the small school is headed. Having a simple, black-line object that can be filled with other designs is good,” says Gauvreau. “I think it’s quite smart. A blank canvas.”
By Vladimir Spicanovic

The Idea of an Art & Design University

By Kathryn Shailer
Digital Innovation in the Classroom

By Lena Rubisova

I
digital technology plays an important role in the educational experience at OCAD University and has come a long way since the mid-1980s when the first Macintosh computers began to appear in classrooms. Back then, it wasn’t unusual for an entire class to share one computer.

During the 1990s, and throughout the past decade, the university has seen enormous changes in the realms of digital technologies, which in turn have created numerous possibilities for collaborations between scientists, designers, artists and programmers in a wide range of departments and studios.

Since 2007, the Digital Futures Initiative (DFI) has been developing a series of interdisciplinary programs to create new opportunities for students who are working with digital technology in both art and design programs at the graduate and undergraduate level. Initially made possible by a $2-million annual investment grant from the Government of Ontario, the DFI has grown to receive additional grants and awards to support research. The DFI supports developments in other departments by creating joint courses that give students a better understanding of how digital technologies can enhance their work. This includes providing funding to such areas as the Photography Department for the purchasing of new cameras, and to the Drawing and Painting Department for the development of a digital painting lab.

Two years ago, the DFI began offering minor in Digital Media and On-Screen Media, as well as a Graduate Degree and Master’s Degrees in Arts, Fine Arts and Design. Since its implementation four years ago, the DFI has grown to include new faculty members that are bringing new areas of expertise to a variety of projects at OCAD U.

The Photography Department has had a constantly expanding relationship with digital technology for several years. Computer programs have been taught, to some extent, since the late 1980s despite their limited availability at the time. Initially, digital processes were used primarily for photography book layouts and fairly low-quality printing. A major contributor to the growth of digital printing in photography at OCAD U has been the department’s partnership with Epson that was developed in the 1990s through the digital work of Professor Barbara Arntzen. Under SuperBuild, an investment from the Government of Ontario, to help expand and renew the university’s facilities in 2000, Epson donated printers and scanners to help set up the Epson Imagining Lab, now part of the Photography Department. Epson has continued to support the Photography Department through further donations, while older models of printers and scanners have been passed on to other departments and areas at OCAD U.

An important part of digital development has been retaining more traditional analog processes and integrating them into singular practices. “Philosophically, (the Photography Department) sees the medium in hybrid terms, presenting students with a mix of production media and processes for their exploration and art making,” says Chair of Photography Peter Sramek. As digital print quality and camera resolutions improve, students have been able to experiment with going back and forth on printing digitally from analog negatives and vice versa.

Since the late 1970s, the Integrated Media Department, originally called Photo/Electric Arts, has been investigating technologies such as film, video, audio and robotics. It was in the latter area that pushed interest into interactivity and connectivity within the department, with projects such as David Rokeby’s Very Nervous System that uses sensors to convert movements of the body into sound and musical pieces. (Rokeby graduated from OCAD U in 1984 with a degree in Experimental Art.)

The scope and nature of the department began to change in the early to mid-1990s when digital computer labs came to OCAD U, and as courses that had to do with the Internet and with digital design began to be offered. Moving into the start of the 21st century it became clear that many students were more familiar with digital technology than with traditional print processes, and labs such as the Rapid Prototyping Centre and Physical Computing Hybrid Lab were established for use at graduate and undergraduate levels.

One of the ongoing trends in the development of digital technologies in the Integrated Media Department has been the integration between digital and analog practices, which allows opportunities for collaboration and research between different departments and areas. “We see more integration of digital tools across every aspect of university practice,” says Judith Doyle, Associate Professor and Chair of Integrated Media.

DONOR PROFILE: GEORGE AND MARTHA BUTTERFIELD

George and Martha Butterfield have given more than just financial support to OCAD University, they’ve given their time and energy. Martha, who earned a fine arts degree from the University of Toronto, was an active member on the Board of Governors in the 1990s. “When I was at U of T, I was aware of what was happening here and I was so happy to see the school at close range,” says Martha. Not to be outdone, George was Chair of the Ideas Need Space Campaign where he found himself putting in endless hours trying to attract would-be investors. “I like hard work and we spent countless hours trying to get investors on board,” says George. Not only did the largest campaign ever executed by the university conclude successfully, the Sharp Centre for Design was built and George was awarded an Honorary Doctorate degree in 2007, acknowledging his monumental effort and a truly inspiring success. Photo by Christopher Wahl

Media. Since Integrated Media has been available as a minor, it has become a set of skills that students from the Faculty of Art, and in particular the Faculty of Design, are using to add to their arsenal.

To go along with developments in the above-mentioned departments, OCAD U features many labs that allow students to explore digital technologies through critical and innovative practices. Examples include the Physical Computing Hybrid Lab that has been at OCAD U since January 2009, which allows students and professors to work on projects related to computer sensors detecting motion, sounds, beams or infrared lights. The lab has plugs, connectors, cameras and displays, as well as a soldering station and installation spaces.

Another example of ways in which the university is using digital technology is the Drawing and Painting Digital Suite. The suite is a collection of interactive SMART Board whiteboard systems with Wacom Cintiq displays for digital painting. The scale and sensitivity of the equipment allows students to transition intuitively from analog to digital painting in a way that would not be feasible on a laptop.

There have been many changes to the university over the last 20 years as digital technologies have increasingly played a more important role. This has spread to both the Faculty of Design and Faculty of Art and has changed the way that emerging artists and designers think. Initiatives such as the DFI and technological partnerships with external partners are taking the university towards a future that mixes digital and analog technologies in a provocative and exciting way.

Lena Rubisova is a fourth-year Graphic Design student at OCAD University. She graduated from the University of Toronto in 2007 with a degree in Art History and Classical Civilizations.
WHAT OUR STUDENTS ARE MAKING TODAY: Works by our recent Medal Winners
n August 1, 2010, the Inclusive Design Research Centre (IDRC) joined OCAD University. IDRC is a reformation of the Adaptive Technology Research Centre (ATRC) that was established at the University of Toronto in 1993 as an international centre of expertise in the inclusive design of emerging information, communication systems and practices. One of the ATRC’s research focuses was the Web, and the ATRC grew up with the Web. On that August day, more than 25 permanent research staff and 15 multi-disciplinary, international and national research projects made the transition to a new home at OCAD U. The largest of these projects is an infrastructure project to build a multi-institutional regional research hub focusing on digital inclusion called the Inclusive Design Institute (with a budget of $15 million supported by the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Ontario Ministry of Innovation and the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation). Post-secondary partner institutions include York University, Ryerson University, the University of Toronto, U of T, Sheridan College, Seneca College and George Brown College.

IDRC’s mission is to ensure that mainstream information and communication systems are designed from the start to be inclusive of the full range of human diversity. This is made possible by the unprecedented flexibility and adaptability of digital systems and resources. To achieve the largest impact, IDRC research and development focuses on the beginning of the development “food chain” and intervenes at the formative stages of emerging technologies. Research initiatives, such as the Fluid Project (fluidproject.org), create inclusively designed building blocks for the most popular software development toolkits so that software applications built using the toolkit integrate accessibility from the start. This means that adaptability becomes embedded into the foundations of the software, and users who depend on that adaptability, such as users who are blind, have low vision, or difficulty controlling a keyboard or mouse because of a physical disability, can operate the software.

Projects such as Attior (atior.ca) help curriculum content producers create accessible learning resources. The FLOE project (floe.org) is building a global framework to deliver learning resources that meet individual learner needs, making education accessible to previously marginalized learners. IDRC gives priority to initiatives that will result in systemic or cultural change. This includes helping to create policies, standards, international specifications, international guidelines and legislation that support inclusion. IDRC also establishes and fosters open-source communities to recruit help from around the world in this sometimes overwhelming but critical effort. IDRC distributes all of the work produced under an open-source, open-access licence to enable the greatest possible uptake and implementation.

Reactions to this major transition for IDRC (and for OCAD U) have been very diverse, but the predominant response from those who are familiar with both entities is: “What a brilliant move, good for OCAD U!” Less than a year from that important transition, I can say with certainty that IDRC at OCAD U is an inspired match—for more than the obvious or initial reasons. The generative fermentations has begun and there is a palpable potential to collectively create and demonstrate hugely disruptive, timely and transformative ideas and practices.

Establishing IDRC at OCAD U symbiotically expands the intellectual scope of both entities. OCAD U and IDRC share a common grounding in design thinking, applied practice and critical analysis. While OCAD U is known for expertise in the visual modality, IDRC brings an emphasis on multi-modality and on translation from one modality to another.

While IDRC was founded to address and has focused almost exclusively on the digital, OCAD U helps round out the digital with the creative merge of the digital and the physical, thereby helping IDRC transition to the inclusive design of the emerging “Internet of things.” IDRC’s concentration on functional accessibility is completed by OCAD U’s concentration on aesthetic accessibility. IDRC provides ready-made instantiations of many of the goals of OCAD U—international collaboration, research leadership, interdisciplinary studies, as well as established competence in software research and development. It can be said that the combination helps both entities resist the stereotypes they are frequently assigned.

The fit with design is obvious, but the fit with art is just as important. In a paper I wrote with Derrick de Kerckhove and David Rokeby in 1995 (the same year the ATRC was established), we argued that art (interactive art in this case) and inclusive design had five concerns in common (paraphrased here):

1. A primary focus and emphasis on the person: the highly individualized nature of the aesthetic relationship between a person and an artwork also matches the individualized nature of inclusive design.
2. An informed and searching interest in the senses, sensory modalities and human perception.
3. An understanding of interactive technologies as extensions of the human body.
4. An interest in developing techniques to observe, process, and interpret and extend human input.
5. A common desire to promote the mutability of life and the richness of the human experience: the condition for success in the aesthetic experience is the same as that for the inclusive experience; artists, like inclusive designers, are motivated by a deeper sense of what being human is all about.

I would add to this the common driver of innovation and creativity. Innovation occurs at the margins of any domain. A diversity of perspectives results in greater creativity. Both OCAD U and IDRC understand the potential of disruptive notions, the countermovement, the unconventional—and the great potential to pool and share resources provided by online networks, we can dynamically reconfigure or replace the interface and ensure it is in response to the goal, the context, but most importantly, the individual requirements of each user. Thus every individual can create a personal specification of what he or she needs or prefers and whatever networked systems they encounter (e.g., Web service, kiosk, multi-user workstation) can match that personal specification. With partners around the world, IDRC is leading the construction of a global infrastructure to support this vision (gpii.org).

IDRC brings with it a compelling challenge to implement the imagination of OCAD U. To make it possible for everyone to participate in our digitally mediated society requires new ideas, focused risk-taking, creativity and innovation—things that OCAD U excels at. And it couldn’t be more timely, or more urgent, as jurisdictions around the world come to recognize the social and economic impact of exclusion. The possibilities are limited only by the limits of our combined imagination.

Innovation. Neither is comfortable with the average, typical or conventional.

Both IDRC and OCAD U are also concerned with the collective potential of the digital transformation of our tools and our environment. IDRC has pioneered a refining of universal design in the digital world. This refining is based on the premise that the mutability of the digital frees us from the need to create a single configuration, design or solution to meet everyone’s needs. Making use of the adaptability of digital systems, and the great potential to pool and share resources provided by online networks, we can dynamically reconfigure or replace the interface and ensure it is in response to the goal, the context, but most importantly, the individual requirements of each user. Thus every individual can create a personal specification of what he or she needs or prefers and whatever networked systems they encounter (e.g., Web service, kiosk, multi-user workstation) can match that personal specification. With partners around the world, IDRC is leading the construction of a global infrastructure to support this vision (gpii.org).

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Professor Jutta Treviranus is the Director of OCAD University’s Inclusive Design Research Centre and Inclusive Design Institute.

### ALUMNI PROFILE: EUNSO L YEOM

**When Eunsol Yeom (IDRex, Industrial Design, 2005) was six years old and living in her native Korea, she began having Christmas cards for friends and family with an unabated passion. Her work caught the eye of her mother who encouraged her to pursue a career in art and design. When she reached high school, her entire family moved to Canada and she eventually made her way to OCAD U where she “learned how to build concepts, run research and conduct experiments before designing products,” says Yeom. To say the least, her passion and devotion to her work paid off! Last March, Yeom won the prestigious Red Dot Design Award for her highly innovative smartphone project, Voin, which she created with her collaboration. Youngseong Kim. “During four years of OCAD U, I learned to think outside the box and to generate design processes from start to end,” says Yeom. “And eventually, I learned to expand my design thinking process and viewpoints.” Photo by Sungmin Kim.**

### Fluid Infusion

**A Web applications framework and library of Web components for accessibility, usability and removability in mind.**

### Fluid Engage

**Inclusive museum visitor experiences across mobile, Web and in-house spaces.**

### Sketch

The “University of the Imagination” meets Digital Inclusive Design

By Jutta Treviranus

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OCAD UNIVERSITY'S 96TH ANNUAL GRADUATE EXHIBITION

Photographs by Christina Gapic
AN INSIDER’S PERSPECTIVE:

ALANNA MULE
HOMETOWN: HAMILTON
PROGRAM: DRAWING AND PAINTING

Knowing all too well that things can change quickly, Marc De Pape came to OCAD U to keep up with the times. Although it was only six short years ago that he graduated from Concordia’s Digital Image and Sound in Fine Arts program, he already feels that it’s time to re-immers in education—OCAD U’s pioneering Digital Futures Program—to maintain a cutting edge.

“When I graduated, YouTube didn’t even exist,” he says. “There were no smartphones even. There are so many more platforms for digital interaction.” For De Pape, it’s not about the job market, since he’s already an accomplished videographer and has given up a full-time job at the ROM producing video content to accompany exhibits. “If I wanted to, I could continue being a video producer making videos, but I want to draw inspiration from a wider variety of media and a wider variety of ideas,” he says. “That’s important to me.”

De Pape felt the time was right to go back to school and was investigating a program in Interaction Design at the Copenhagen Institute, even though he really didn’t want to leave Toronto. “When I was travelling with the ROM, I took a little detour and visited the school. Then on my way home I was on the flight and flipping through the catalogue next to me was Geoffrey Shea, a professor at OCAD U. He told me they were developing a program devoted to that.”

“There was no downtime, describes the program as the perfect balance between individual work and learning from instructors and classmates. “You’ll be working on your own and then a professor will come and help you with a technique that can really help you improve.”

Her muse is classic horror, which she paints in a photo-realistic manner. Not long after she started at OCAD U, she made the switch from oil to acrylic, which works better on the large wood sheets she now paints on. “I find larger-scale artwork grab more attention and also let me work more freely with paint,” says Mule.

For Mule, the transition to Toronto and OCAD U was easy. She got a job quickly and made friends with people in her classes, and with the help of people at OCAD U found an apartment literally two blocks from campus. Her smooth transition is something she attributes, in part, to a desire to see the world, and who graduate work and time in Toronto is the first step in her plans to travel and work abroad extensively.

“I love it here,” she says. “There are so many great people and there’s so much going on. It really keeps you on your toes.”

Marc De Pape
HOMETOWN: WINNIPEG
PROGRAM: MASTER’S IN DIGITAL FUTURES

Chanda feels fortunate to be presented with so many novel opportunities at OCAD U. “This school places a lot of emphasis on collaborative work, which is really great. Last semester, I was taking a course sponsored by Microsoft and was very lucky to work with colleague Nerrin Moulti on a groundbreaking project for the associated Microsoft Design Expo Competition.” This pioneering course was a first for OCAD U and the first time a Canadian school was chosen to participate in the annual competition. What’s more, Chanda and Moulti won the competition. Says Chanda: “The opportunities the school offers are great. You have to make the best of them!”

WHAT’S IT LIKE TO BE A STUDENT AT OCAD U?

By Christine Sismondo

Chris Allen, a third-year Graphic Design student with a minor in Advertising, enrolled in OCAD U’s Graphic Design program after already graduating from Centennial College with a Graphic Design Media certificate.

“I graduated at the height of the recession, when design jobs were really scarce,” explains Allen. Although enthusiastic to get into the workforce, he applied to OCAD U’s Graphic Design program to keep his options open and to improve his skill set. It didn’t take him long to decide that everything had happened for the best.

“At first, I was a bit overwhelmed, but was quickly floored by how supportive an environment it was,” he says. “There are so many resources here to help students.” Allen is certain his time at OCAD U spent not only in classes but also taking advantage of programs like the peer-monitoring program that he participated in as both a protege and a mentor, will give him a life-long advantage in the field of graphic design.

Allen has been particularly inspired by his program, which, he notes, is taught by professionals with impressive and recognizable portfolios who take students through every stage of the branding process, just as it would take place in the marketplace. “I do really well in an environment where I respect the people teaching me,” he says. “For example, one of my instructors designed the logo for the Toronto Football Club (TFC).”

While Allen appreciates the practical hands-on training he received in the first stage of his education, one of the things that he values most about the approach of the Graphic Design department is that it’s not centered solely on results, but also on teaching students to focus on the entire creative process. That’s important to Allen since it helps teach people how to think about the bigger picture.

“So, not only are you learning how to make things, but you’re also learning how to think,” he says. “Teaching you how to use tools isn’t a substitute for a good idea.”

FAReena ChAnDA
HOMETOWN: Karachi
PROGRAM: INTERDISCIPLINARY MASTER’S IN ART, MEDIA & DESIGN

Photographer, designer and artist Fareena Chanda has been working toward mastering design on four continents—Africa, Asia, Europe and Africa. She’s lived in Seattle, Paris and Karachi, but her current frontier is at OCAD U where she is working on her Interdisciplinary Master’s in Art, Media & Design. She enrolled in the program to enhance her background as a content designer, along with her education in photography and design that she first studied at the University of Washington in Seattle.

“I’ve always been interested in design practices and this program has given me a tremendous amount of freedom to combine practices from different fields and explore the space between art and design,” says Chanda. “A program like this allows you to try new things.”

Although she points out that Seattle has arguably better weather, Chanda, who grew up in Paris and Karachi, was attracted to Toronto because it has all of the benefits of a large, international city, along with some of the comforts found in a smaller town. “Toronto doesn’t feel as intense as some of the other places I’ve lived, the people here are really nice.”

Chanda feels fortunate to be presented with so many novel opportunities at OCAD U. “This school places a lot of emphasis on collaborative work, which is really great. Last semester, I was taking a course sponsored by Microsoft and was very lucky to work with colleague Nerrin Moulti on a groundbreaking project for the associated Microsoft Design Expo Competition.” This pioneering course was a first for OCAD U and the first time a Canadian school was chosen to participate in the annual competition. What’s more, Chanda and Moulti won the competition. Says Chanda: “The opportunities the school offers are great. You have to make the best of them!”

Chris Allen
HOMETOWN: TORONTO
PROGRAM: GRAPHIC DESIGN

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Statal News Report
Such traction is of increasing concern to students at OCAD U. In 2011, the university launched a pair of master’s programs for those interested in working in sectors that engage digital media, information and communications technology (ICT) systems, including government, arts and culture, health, and the mobile and interactive industries. The first, the MEIs in Inclusive Design, examines the ability of design to recognize the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, and other forms of human difference. The second, the Graduate Program in Digital Futures, features unique partnerships with the Canadian Film Centre Media Lab and the University of Warsaw, and builds on OCAD U’s strengths in practice and research in digital art, design and media. “Both programs envision projects and prototypes; they’re practice-based, so students leave with something they can actually develop,” notes Dr. Helmut Reichenbächer, Associate Vice-President, Research, and Dean, Graduate Studies.

Reichenbächer’s remarks underscore OCAD U’s commitment to provide tangible benefits for the real world—a demonstrated success of OCAD U’s. In 2010, Research Infosource included OCAD U among Canada’s top 50 research universities, and just as impressive was the percentage growth (2,317%) that the university experienced in research income from 2008 to 2009.

Our government is also investing in research commercialization at OCAD U. Early this year, the university was granted $3,599,800 in funding from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) through the Applied Research and Commercialization Initiative. This investment supports commercialization of the projects of 12 OCAD U research teams and their private-sector partners. Over the long term, it also creates jobs and sustains economic growth by helping small businesses get new ideas into the marketplace faster. Projects are wide-ranging and span the fields of mobile, health, educational, and digital technologies. Support of this kind recognizes OCAD U’s ability to see vision and education through to application—a strength evidenced by the institution’s skyrocketing number of research initiatives and partnerships, as well as the more than 12 dozen research laboratories and incubation facilities that support them.

Take as an example the Centre for Information Visualization and Data Driven Design (CIV-DDD), led by York University in partnership with OCAD U, the University of Toronto and a multiplicity of industrial research partners. Imagine, like these researchers do, looking at millions of genomic patterns and seeing the diagnostic implications. Such data visualization, and the need for it, is growing exponentially in such sectors as health, the social sciences and finance.

Another forward-thinking venture on campus asks designers to consider how we access our world. Called the Interactive Design Research Centre (IDRC), this self-funded centre conducts research in the inclusive design of emerging information, communication systems and practices. Led by renowned inclusive design expert Jutta Treviranus, the IDRC represents an international group of academic researchers, students, government, community and private-sector partners whose work expands to legislative communities, market demand and universal values of inclusion and diversity. The IDRC also leads the Inclusive Design Institute, supported by the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation, that is comprised of eight post-secondary institutions as its core partners: OCAD U, the university of Toronto, Ryerson, York and the Ontario Institute of Technology, along with the colleges of Sheridan, George Brown and Seneca.

In addition to considering issues of access, researchers at OCAD U are also changing the way we experience the world, through work of the sort carried out at the Ambient Experience Lab. Based on a deep understanding of the values, needs and cultures of end users, ambient experience design integrates ambient technologies (image, light, connectivity, scent and sound) into architectural environments. Led by Professor Job Rutgers, OCAD U’s Ambient Experience Lab conducts research with partners such as Princess Margaret Hospital, Roman School of Management and Singapore Polytechnic. It also engages OCAD U students like Ev K. Hui. Together with DaDoS, a Canadian manufacturer of exterior cement and coatings, Hui is working on the FedDev-funded Visible Campus project. To express the ‘excitement and innovation’ defining present-day OCAD U, Visible Campus is creating street furniture, wayfinding and other graphical elements as a means of linking the university’s 12-building campus. A further examination of experience is being studied at the Mobile Experience Innovation Centre (MEIC), which provides leadership in building innovation capacity and design excellence in Canada’s mobile and wireless industries. Through applied research and commercialization, SME advisory and services, conferences and workshops, and international outreach, the MEIC is recognized as a leading organization across Canada.

Effective innovation also identifies capacity and need. OCAD U’s Strategic Innovation Lab (SIL) develops and applies strategic foresight, design research, visualization and prototyping methodologies to classify and feed the front end of the innovation process. Among the lab’s many outcomes are early-stage recognition and support for innovative products, services, platforms and business models with industry partners such as the Association of Canadian Publishers, Bell Media and Corus Entertainment.

Despite the potential for all of these projects and initiatives, one thing is certain: they’ll only be relevant if they are embedded in the world they benefit. That’s where the university’s ZERO Lab comes in. It uses a visualization and mobile computing environment to develop new applications, tools, visualizations and methodologies to reduce our carbon footprint. The ZERO Lab will eventually house collaborations with Zerofootprint Inc. An early example is the FedDev-funded Neutral Carbon Product, which pairs Zerofootprint Inc. with OCAD U to develop a visualization aesthetic that communicates different aspects of a product’s carbon footprint.

Not only will ZERO Lab direct research into green technologies in coordination with industry and institutional partners, it will also work with other university research facilities such as the Design Research Centre, which supports collaboration between the Faculty of Design and external partners by researching and developing new products, communications, systems and environments that are useful, desirable, inclusive, sustainable and economically viable.

Vision, education, application: they come together at OCAD U. Whether it’s the human factor they introduce into health research, or the cultural knowledge they apply to the digital advance, OCAD U’s artists and designers are engaging innovative, interdisciplinary approaches to the opportunities we face as a society, now and in the future.

Larissa Kostoff is currently on leave from her position as Managing Editor, Marketing & Communications. Her work has been published in numerous literary journals and trade publications, and she is a senior editor at决战 magazine.
The Power of Design as a Vehicle for Social Change

By Gayle Nicoll

Design has an important and purposeful place in advancing, supporting and implementing positive societal changes and preserving our highest cultural principles. In the late 1970s, when I was beginning my design education, much of the world around me seemed engaged in unprecedented social and economic changes associated with equality, the availability of energy and pollution.

Design education at that time, due principally to each discipline’s specific isolation within the educational system, provided little insight into the importance of the design disciplines in advancing the public good, especially in areas of social justice or sustainability. My architectural education, for example, focused almost exclusively on building design rather than exploring a transdisciplinary understanding of the influence of the design disciplines on social issues. Over time, however, it became evident that social and ecologic public issues endure as challenges for each generation to address for the benefit or to the detriment of the next generation.

The design disciplines have played a pivotal role in advancing the public good and creating the society we experience today and that we will pass on to the future generations. Design object and environments since the start of last century illustrate only a few of the many examples where the product of designers influenced social action.

Consider the 1965 American Indian Movement’s visual and sound installations such as “Roust the Rivers” (1942), designed during the Second World War to attract female homemakers to join the workforce when men were leaving the industrial workforce to engage in combat. The image has transcended its immediate message for the need for labour during an extraordinary time to play an important role in breaking down the stereotypes of male-oriented jobs and empowering women within our society. I recently viewed a WWII poster titled “Together” (1943) that depicted a group of uniformed troops from all nationalities and ethnicities within the British Commonwealth of Nations marching together as a united force. The message was aimed at sustaining support for the war effort. The poster’s message of unity and ethnic diversity would have been aligned with the focus on unity and ethnic diversity in the first federal national inventory of designed communications, objects and environments since the start of last century only illustrates a few of the many examples where the product of designers influenced social action.

Canada’s early recycling symbol (1970) were instrumental in promoting public safety “seatbelt campaign I viewed on television empowered me, as a child, to engage in combat. The image has transcended its immediate message for the need for labour during an extraordinary time to play an important role in breaking down the stereotypes of male-oriented jobs and empowering women within our society.

Canada was a leader in the social justice movement of the 1950s—was especially influential in the development of functional and aesthetically pleasing products available in the mainstream marketplace for household, workplace and the public domain. Noteworthy as well are wearable objects of expressions that develop awareness or identity for causes, positions or groups. Most of us understand immediately the significance of wearable symbols such as a red ribbon, or the yellow silicone wristband that indicate personal support for awareness and support of important social and charitable causes.

OCAD University continues Canada’s leadership in accessibility through inclusive design initiatives for providing accessibility to digital communications and applications. Today, OCAD U’s Faculty of Design has assumed public leadership by providing exposure and investigation within aspects of design that inform social and environmental responsibility. Through lecture and studio courses, to theoretical and service learning pedagogies and learning activities, studio instructors are taught to think critically and responsively to the human condition and to nurture a transdisciplinary understanding of the means and media that inform and cultivate the stewardship of our finest societal values.

Dr. Gayle Nicoll is the Dean of OCAD University’s Faculty of Design.

Research that Makes a Difference in the World

By Helmut Reichenbächer

as March, Deputy Ministers Deborah Newman (Training Colleges and Universities) and George Ross (Research and Innovation) visited the campus to see our new Inclusive Design Research Centre, the hub of the Inclusive Design Institute (IDI). The Deputy Ministers and Noëlle Richardson, Ontario’s Chief Diversity Officer, met with Professor Jutta Treviranus and her team at IDI where researchers are focused on making digital media more accessible.

Treviranus’ team develops technology that adapts access to electronic media to meet the individual needs of the user, whether the user be short-sighted (enlarged fonts), blind (screen readers), with limited motor skills (alternate human-computer interfaces), or requires health information in culturally relevant formats.

OCAD University embraces such real-world challenges and encourages its faculty and students to develop innovative and creative solutions, particularly in the health and wellness sector. Even since OCAD U’s symposium on Cultural Knowledge and the Healthy Society in the fall of 2009, research in the health and wellness sector at the university has become increasingly prominent.

The symposium underlined what we do so well: bringing together designers, artists, and creative and cultural industry workers to explore how these disciplines can engage productively to create measurable impact on improving the quality of life for all Canadians. Here are some highlights of a few ongoing projects:

Creativity and mitigating memory loss
Professor Judith Doyle’s collaboration with neuropsychologist Dr. Brian Richards at Baycrest engages patients with acquired brain injury and their family members to mitigate the effects of memory loss. Drawing on her expertise as Chair of the Department of Integrated Media, Doyle employs a number of studio-arts-based approaches. One client who suffered traumatic brain injury in a cycling accident and subsequent coma in 2004 has recently returned using software to compose/ create visual effects at the Memory Link Media Studio. When the client relays his embodied memory or “knowledge-in-the-hands” of video composing software, he activates his procedural memory system.

Improving end-of-life experience
Collaboration with Toronto’s teaching hospitals is also spearheaded by Professor Job Rangers whose research in the health sector builds on his professional design experience in the industry. He currently supervises Okuna Kazuhito, a graduate student in OCAD U’s Master of Design in Strategic Forensic & Innovation program. She is working with Dr. Gary Rodin at the Princess Margaret Hospital to identify design elements in the environment of palliative care units that particularly engage the senses of the patients and their families in order to maximize quality of life. The goal is to discover the positive influence of sensory experiences, such as light and colour, sound, scent, or touch, and how they contribute to the patient’s experience.

Unlocking the meaning of complex data sets
Visualizing complex medical data sets constitute one of the Centre for Innovation in Visualization and Data-Driven Design’s major research streams. In collaboration with York University, the University of Toronto and Toronto’s medical communities, Dr. Sara Diamond and the team developed new approaches to representing difficult-to-read medical data. Visualizing, for example, extensive numerical data through new systems of shapes, colours, or animation will help medical practitioners, patients and their families gain more immediate access to complex information.

Better training for surgeons
Professor Francis Leboulchier, Chair of the School and Installation programs put his talents and skills to use in medical environments. He develops high-fidelity silicone models for surgeons preparing complex operations. Highly detailed models of the fetus in the womb allow the surgeons to plan and practice challenging procedures in a risk-free, realistic, three-dimensional context, thus better preparing the surgeons before they tackle their tasks in the hospital’s operating room.

Access to the marketplace
OCAD U’s “Take Your Idea to Market” competition last spring highlighted the great potential of our students. Two examples from amongst the 11 finalists who presented their innovations to a group of invited angel investors: Adam Oliver presented a prototype of “Next Step,” a device based on a rollator that facilitates the gradual sitting down while storing kinetic energy to help patients stand up again. Jessica Nguyen presented her prototype of a storage container for dental drill heads that attaches directly to the handheld drill thus making drill heads more easily accessible to the dentist.

These examples of innovative contributions from OCAD U faculty members and students reflect the priorities of the university’s strategic plan, and show the great potential of our institution’s impact on quality of life and well-being, and for improving economic prosperity.

Dr. Helmut Reichenbächer is OCAD University’s Associate Vice-President, Research, and Dean, Graduate Studies.
Burgeoning Curators and Education
The evolution of curating in Canada

By Rosemary Donegan

he work and practice of art curators—variously defined as writers, organizers, historians, stylists, friends of artists and intellectuals—had had such currency. In public culture, the notion of the curator has taken on a chic and contemporary resonance as people curate auto-collections, poetry readings, branding campaigns and clothing stores. Internationally, art curators have been elevated into glamorous art stars in mega-exhibitions like Germany’s Documenta, the Istanbul Biennale and Sydney Biennale where the independent, transnational curator often overshadows the artists. In Canada, curating has evolved from the historical notion of the institutional keeper of the collection to a robust and engaged creative practitioner that reflects the changes in contemporary art and exhibitions practices, and parallels the 135-year development of OCAD University from a small art school on King Street West to the institution it is today.

To understand the evolution of curatorial education in Canada, it is necessary to examine it within the larger historical context of Canadian art. At the beginning of the 20th century, the few art galleries that existed in Canada either employed local connoisseurs/artists, like Martin Bawden at the Art Gallery of Toronto, or hired English director/curators, such as Eric Brown of the National Gallery of Canada. Curators in keepers of the collection undertook acquisitions when there was money, kept track of artworks, undertook basic conservation, organized and installed exhibitions. Some, like Eric Brown, saw his curatorial role as a promoter of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven as a nationalist art movement.

By the 1950s, the line between directors, curators, dealers and artists was becoming more distinctive, even though they often overlapped. The new generation of gallery directors and curators came from a variety of backgrounds. Some were from undergraduate art history programs, a few were recent European immigrants who had professional experience in Europe before the war, while most learned on the job starting as secretaries, framers, registrars, artists and art teachers. In smaller galleries the curator would organize and install exhibitions, bring in travelling shows, run art classes, work with local art groups, write press releases, and probably sweep the floor before an opening. The larger public institutions, such as the Art Gallery of Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum and National Gallery of Canada, hired graduates such as Robert Hubbard, Jean Boggs, Russell Harper and Doris Shadbolt from the new art history departments at McMaster University, McGill University and the University of Toronto. In 1958, Alan Jarvis, then Director of the National Gallery of Canada (NGC), initiated the first gallery internship program, which included “some art history, as well as connoisseurship [sic] and museum techniques.” Interns received practical training in management and administration, conservation, security and standards for installation, lighting and storage. In 1967, the NGC expanded its internship program for artists and art history graduates from U of T, McGill, McMaster, University Laval, University de Montreal and even OCA. Many of the NGC summer students and interns from the 1960s were to go on to long careers in Canada’s major public galleries. The first formal museology program was established at the Royal Ontario Museum in 1969, later becoming Museum Studies within the University of Toronto.

The development of curating as a profession within public art institutions paralleled the social and cultural shifts of the late 1960s and 1970s that resulted in the establishment of new exhibition spaces at the local/regional level and in major urban centres. The first aspect of this shift was an increase in regional public art galleries as spaces focused on the new practices of video, performance and installation art that defined the exhibition space as a ‘zone to be filled by the artists who used it.” Once established, the network of artist-run galleries was funded by the Canada Council of the Arts and various provincial arts councils. With the various councils’ acknowledgement of the principle of paying artists exhibition fees (which had been advocated by Canadian Artists Representation) there were funds to pay artists, and eventually fees for writers and curators. Funding for exhibitions enhanced and strengthened the independent curators’ role, which combined with the councils’ more demanding jury processes required applicants to develop complex exhibition proposals such as curatorial thesis statements, budgets, schedules and catalogue essays.

Simultaneously, curatorial and critical writing was fostered in catalogue essays, magazines, books and eventually within academia in new art publications like Vanguard, Punctuate, Puce, C Magazine, Provincial Essays, MTAC Talk Flash, Borderline, Public. The energetic engagement with critical writing reflecte the international interest in critical theory in the art world and the parallel development of feminism, gay and post-colonial art criticism. The development of these new critical voices, particularly in curatorial and critical writing, brought together issues of representation, race and gender, in addition to a more theoretical approach to critical and curatorial practices. This combination of artist-run spaces, art magazines and the funding of the arts councils supported an informal apprenticeship system for artists, critics and curators that provided a creative laboratory for new forms and a new generation of audiences. These varied investigations of new art practices, critical theory and curatorial practices that originally took place in bars, galleries, lofts, artists’ panels and at conferences gradually converged in the 1980s into formalized programs of study, in the form of critical and curatorial studies, within various art colleges and university art departments. It is within this Toronto context and in the exploration of “the artist as curator” that OCA mounted its first undergraduate courses in criticism and curatorial practices in the mid-1990s within the Sculpture/Installation program through the administrative efforts of Ian Carr Harris. The Criticism & Curatorial Studies (CRCS) interdisciplinary program combined seminars in curatorial practices, critical writing, art history, field study placements and thesis. Over the past 13 years this CRCS program has graduated 69 students, many of whom are working as independent curators, gallery/dealers, institutional curators and critics/writers, while others have gone on to work in community arts and education or to graduate school.

Following the success of the undergraduate program, OCA/CDAC launched its first graduate program in Criticism & Curatorial Practices in 2008. In its fourth year, the interdisciplinary program, while drawing on the proximity of the local Toronto art scene and the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), integrates a range of curatorial practices within a theoretical framework emphasizing cultural history, research and investigation, analysis and critical writing. The success of OCAD University’s graduate and undergraduate criticism and curatorial programs has provided young and emerging curators and critics with an engaged education in which they can develop their curatorial eye, write essays, undertake critical research, hang shows, paint walls, develop websites, organize events and respond to local communities, as emerging Aboriginal curators, and most importantly work directly with artists.

It is fitting that in celebrating its 135th anniversary, OCAD University is graduating critics and curators who are entering the art and design world with big ideas, solid practical experience and new ways of thinking, writing and working with and about art, design and media in the 21st century.

Rosemary Donegan is an Associate Professor at OCAD University and an independent curator.
hose looking for a sneak peek at the future of mobile might be surprised to learn that one of today’s most innovative smartphone apps involves the decidedly undigital game of tag.

Which makes Matthew Milan, founder of Normative—a Toronto-based interaction design company—an “It” boy. Literally. Over the last 18 months, Milan has steered not one but two different mobile projects through OCAD U’s Mobile Experience Innovation Centre (MEIC) incubator. Normative Lab’s first mobile app, called Red Rover, was completed in the summer of 2010. “It” is an exploration of real-time, location-based gaming. Or, as Milan explains, an attempt to discover what happens to simple games like tag or red rover when players can augment their sense of sight and hearing through the radar-like capabilities of smartphones. “Mobile devices have become cyborg-like extensions of people’s self,” says Milan, echoing a key theory of the late Marshall McLuhan. “And being reliant on the sensor systems in these devices has become second nature to people.”

Normative Labs, meanwhile, has become gently reliant on the resources, funding, interns and guidance the MEIC has provided. As Milan notes, “We started the business with a very clear understanding that you wouldn’t be able to figure out what the future of interaction design looks like if you didn’t have an R&D function within your company. The MEIC was invaluable in getting that function jump-started in our business early on.”

Of course, the MEIC is not the only start-up incubator in Toronto—there are at least a half-dozen other options for new-tech companies looking to grow their business. This reflects the fact that Toronto has become a North American hub for mobile app development—there are now over 200 companies in the GTA working hard to produce the next Instapaper or Angry Birds.

“But with any incubator, the people are the real difference,” argues Milan. “And since Normative is a design-driven company, connecting with an institution like OCAD U was a perfect fit. They get how we work.” Kathleen Webb, the current Director of the MEIC, agrees with Milan’s assessment. “People might call it a business accelerator or an incubator, but it’s really just a room. It only becomes an accelerator when you provide expertise and mentorship—all those extra layers of support.”

Founded in 2007 by OCAD U and now a broad not-for-profit membership organization, the MEIC is the latest example of OCAD U’s long-standing commitment to mobile innovation—be it through research, app development or industry partnerships. Along with the MEIC, OCAD U also founded the Mobile Experience Lab, a key partner in the Mobile Commons Digital Network, and has hosted a conference entitled Mobile Nation. But this acronym soup of organizations (MEL, MEIC, MCDN) is meaningless without results. And OCAD U university staff and students, along with outside companies like Normative Labs, have produced numerous successful and innovative mobile projects over the past five years.

Ads for the Apple iPhone like to boast that no matter what you like to do, “there’s an app for that.” But the history of mobile development at OCAD U proves that if you want to create an innovative smartphone app in Toronto, there’s also a university for that.
A little over four years ago, on June 29, 2007, the first iPhone was released for sale. And although Steve Jobs has a habit of calling new products “revolution- ary, in this case his description was entirely accurate. The smartphone explosion that the iPhone helped inaugurates now means that users can send and receive data from almost anywhere, whether the device is discounted technology or taking new approaches to building and testing mobile games and applications.

McIntosh also worked to expand the definition of mobile, which meant moving beyond the phone itself. This involved distributing 5,000 music CDs to bus, cab and garbage truck drivers, who played them constantly, creating a soundtrack for the event. Meanwhile, four performance artists took over the city, projecting photographs on to buildings and themselves.

“One of the really beautiful things about mobile is that you can go through any circumstance, any situation and not damage anything,” notes McIntosh. “You don’t have to install anything.”

In 2003, Gabe Sawhney, Shawn Micallef and James Roussel created Murmu, a site-specific mobile storytelling experience as part of their residency at the CFC media lab. Sawhney, now a master’s student in OCAD U’s Digital Futures Initiative program, is quick to stress that his work isn’t exclusively mobile. That said, he’s a founding member of the MIEC steering committee. He has also worked on a series of research projects for the MIEC, including helping a large software company called Nexi Systems to integrate game mechanics into health apps for people recently diagnosed with diabetes. As part of his graduate work, Sawhney is leading three research projects at OCAD U.

“Sousveiller app, called Sousveiller, also involves security cameras that are then pushed to a mapping system that documents their location. Milan hopes that Sousveiller will be completed by the end of the summer, and in the iPhone App store soon after that,” explained Sookman. “As foreshadowed by the 2007 OCAD U conference, we now live in a mobile nation. And thanks to OCAD U, Toronto is now one of the capital cities of that nation. Not that such an outcome was obvious four years ago. The future, is after all, notoriously difficult to predict.”

What OCAD U did foresee with great clarity was that a significant technological shift requires a parallel shift in human psychology. With which to say that without the MIEC, providing the technological and artistic impetus, and artists wishing to pursue seemingly crazy, fuzzy or lunatic experiments, the MIEC might bewithout a project to incubate.

Sawhney said, “I mean it’s lunatic.”

“In 2003, Gabe Sawhney, Shawn Micallef and James Roussel created Murmu, a site- specific mobile storytelling experience as part of their residency at the CFC media lab. Sawhney, now a master’s student in OCAD U’s Digital Futures Initiative program, is quick to stress that his work isn’t exclusively mobile. That said, he’s a founding member of the MIEC steering committee. He has also worked on a series of research projects for the MIEC, including helping a large software company called Nexi Systems to integrate game mechanics into health apps for people recently diagnosed with diabetes. As part of his graduate work, Sawhney is leading three research projects at OCAD U.

Funded by FedDev, these initiatives involve establishing stronger connections between the university and small- to medium-sized businesses, and creating a platform for gaming or as a way to navigate information visualization projects. So, for example, in his work with Echo Mobile, Sawhney is exploring a variety of interfaces. “We really want to explore the possibilities of a tangible interface like the_poster, offers where you have a touchscreen and an accelerometer to really give a different kind of experience for exploring data visualization.”

Like McIntosh, Sawhney believes that mobile is most interesting when it’s defined more broadly. “From a creator perspective, the line between what’s mobile and what isn’t super fuzzy,” argues Sawhney. He favours the phrase mobile experience, as it presents an opportunity to rethink what a smartphone app might involve.

The multitude of apps now available means that art and productivity apps often coexist on the same phone. And while some pepper fuzzy mobile, Joel Sooam, the founder of Guardly, is crystal clear about the intent of his app. The Guardly app allows users to leverage their social network of friends and family to help them during an emergency response situation. The app harnesses “contextual data,” information that your social sphere would have to access (such as medical conditions or the route you use to get home every evening), but that 911 operators would not.

Sookman recently completed the MIEC’s incubator program, in the process growing his company from four employees to six. “I think the MIEC is doing a lot of leadership to help mobile companies become more sustainable. Or all-night coding sessions. Or even smartphone batteries.

Instead, the key element of the mobile revolution is imagination and creativity. And for OCAD U, incubating these precious human traits has become the most important element of the mobile revolution.

Ryan Biggs 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 recently completed a postgraduate degree in Interactive Art and Entertainment from the CFC’s New Media Lab.
RAJNI PERERA  
DRAWING AND PAINTING, 2011

No mess gathers on Rajni Perera. Having graduated only this past spring—with the Nora E. Vaughan Award, OCAD University Medal, Spoke Club Membership Prize and the medal winner of her program—Perera launched her career with a solo art show and an installation in Vaughan, Ontario. She has become known throughout the OCAD U community as an emerging talent with a playful, cartoon-inspired take on some rather weighty matters: images of the ethnically female body, hybridity, ethnography, deities and sacrilege. Not to mention the pervasive dinosaurs.

“I have friends from every discipline at this school. I think that is a really valuable part of going to art school or any post-secondary institution,” says Perera. “You make friends everywhere and then, at the end of your tenue, you have a Criticism & Curatorial Practice grad to curate you, a Printmaking major to make your prints, a Bachelor of Design for your site and promo, and a Material Art and Design specialist for your salable merch!”

Perera draws inspiration from a wide range of sources, including science and paleontology textbooks, comic books, fashion imagery, contemporary kitch, pop culture and Bollywood, as well as the contrast between her adopted Canadian culture and her Sri Lankan heritage. She notes that Toronto has been inspirational because of the people she has met and the passion she has for the local art scene. There’s also the fact that the cold winter forced her to stay inside and work hard.

Her family’s fear over the viability of a career in the arts has also been assuaged by her more than encouraging early success. “I want to paint until I die, whether I successfully selling and supporting me,” says Perera. “You make friends everywhere and then, at the end of your tenue, you have a Criticism & Curatorial Practice grad to curate you, a Printmaking major to make your prints, a Bachelor of Design for your site and promo, and a Material Art and Design specialist for your salable merch!”

DEREK ENG  
GRAPHIC DESIGN, 2011

When Derek Eng found himself less than inspired at his ad agency job a few years ago, he knew it was time to make a change and decided to try to find a way into an industry he had been passionate about since he was a kid—magazine publishing. He also knew that his commerce degree from the University of Guelph wasn’t going to get him where he wanted to go. After a little independent research and career counselling with a mentor in the industry, Eng figured out that OCAD U’s Graphic Design department was the ideal place for him. Citing “amazingly talented, friendly and supportive” colleagues and instructors who helped him focus on magazine design, Eng is glad he made the right choice.

While at OCAD U, Eng distinguished himself by winning the H.L. Rous Award at conversation, in addition to winning the AGA Maine 2011 Abstract Conference Student Competition and the Society of Publication Designers Student Competition—twice. The aspiring magazine designer also completed internships at More and W magazines. Currently, though, he is in New York City, interning at his dream publication, Martha Stewart Living.

“This was actually the magazine that got me interested in editorial design,” explains Eng. “It’s one of the few magazines that places as much importance on the visuals as the text, so it’s been interesting to see how the editors, art directors, stylists and photo producers all collaborate to create this story.”

Since Eng lived in Toronto for his entire life, save the four years he was an undergraduate student in Guelph, we asked him about the move to Manhattan to pursue his dream. “New York in the summer is crowded, hot, noisy, and smelly. Yet, somehow, I love it,” he says. “There’s an energy and diversity here that’s hard to describe.”

SUNgh Wook Park  
INDUSTRIAL DESIGN, 2011

Sung Wook Park isn’t afraid to put all his eggs in one basket. After deciding to immerse himself in the world of design, he applied to only one school—OCAD U. “Fortunately, I made it in,” he says. “Becoming a good designer and learning professional skills was my only goal, so the professional faculty, consisting of professors like my mentor Scott Chin, made me want to come to OCAD U.”

Luck probably didn’t have much to do with it, given his outstanding performance in the Industrial Design department. He won first prize in the Audi-Umbra Driving Design competition, the Nora E. Vaughan Award, Spoke Club Membership Award, OCAD University Medal and was the medal winner in his department for his project, Ami, a personal security device designed to help women in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. Says Park: “I was inspired by refugees who have survived natural disasters, especially in Haiti, where women are suffering in silence every day. I really wanted to help them and create something that would improve their lives.”

Park’s Ami is designed to help women communicate with each other and relief organizations about where to safely get food and supplies, and was a response to the problem of male-dominated relief centres and a rising incidence of rape in what is known as Haiti’s sex-for-food problem.

Park recalls his time working in teams in the Industrial Design program, wherein professors, classmates and technicians worked hard to support one another and solve problems as a group. “It’s difficult to come up with a fresh, new idea,” says Park, who currently works at Umbra as a product designer, “but it’s worth it once you see a real product appear that will change lives for the better.”

SARAH ROTELLA  
INTEGRATED MEDIA, 2011

No question Sarah Rotella is going places. For starters, Los Angeles, where she is already working in film for a production company called Odd Lot Entertainment, which recently put out the Ryan Gosling movie Drive. But the award-winning OCAD U graduate is also happy to receive acclaim here in Toronto, where her short animated film Bramula, about a cat who once lived as a vampire, was selected for screening at the Eighth Annual Student Film Showcase at the Toronto International Film Festival this summer.

Rotella came to OCAD U with a degree in Film and Television production from Humber College but wanted to continue her schooling to round out her skills. “I already knew the production side of film and the technology side, the hands-on editing and using film software,” she explains. “But OCAD U gave me a new skill set and a new way to think about the way in which I make films.”

Aside from winning the William F. White Scholarship—twice—and the 2010 Toronto Animated Image Society Award, Rotella also scored a chance to have her film viewed and critiqued by Tim Burton at the TIFF student film showcase. She says her connection with TIFF, which came through volunteering, has been fantastic for making connections with people in the industry. She has also worked with Capri Films, Disney, the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto and the National Film Board of Canada. And while the independent study and real-world film connections forged through OCAD U have inspired her to express herself with films like Bramula, nothing inspired her more than her pet cat. “She does a lot of crazy things,” says Rotella.

By Christine Siemondo

Photo by Adrianna DiLonardo
SCOTIABANK NUÎT BLANCHE @ OCAD U
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 7 PM
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2, 7 AM

GOLD COLLECTIVE
LOUISE NOGUCHI
KELLY RICHARDSON

Future
Image courtesy of the artist

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continuingstudies@ocad.ca

FUTURE FORWARD

Kelly Richardson
Louise Noguchi
H2.0 Collective
Philippe Blanchard
Assume Vivid Astro Focus

One of OCAD University’s leading expositions, FUTURE FORWARD will present a series of works that explore what tomorrow may bring. Works from Kelly Richardson, Louise Noguchi, H2.0 Collective, Philippe Blanchard, and Assume Vivid Astro Focus illustrate the spirit and forward-thinking outlook that celebrate OCAD University’s visionary past and celebrate OCAD University’s visionary past into the future.

The Office of Continuing Studies offers a wide range of courses to increase your creative potential, build your career or explore new areas of art and design.
www.ocad.ca/continuingstudies
continuingstudies@ocad.ca
416 977 6000 x 2266

SEPT. 2011
Chancellor’s Welcome Back Event
September 8
(Butterfield Park)

Faculty of Art Speaker Series presents Ricardo Dominguez
September 13
(100 McCaul Street)

Alumni Association Social
September 20
(Gladstone Hotel)

OCT. 2011
Scotiabank Nuît Blanche @ OCAD U – Future Forward
October 1-2
(100 McCaul Street)

“a retrospective of works that have never been seen” – assume vivid astro focus
Opening
October 1
(Onsite [at] OCAD U)

Collaborium – Revisiting the Indians of Canada Pavilion: Aighskekwada, Let Us Look Back
October 15-16
(100 McCaul Street)

Toolbox Tradeshow
October 27
(100 McCaul Street)

Look Inside
October 29
(100 McCaul Street)

digifest
October 29

Onsite [at] OCAD U Gallery Launch
October 29
(Onsite [at] OCAD U)

OCAD University’s 135th Anniversary Date
October 30

NOV. 2011
President’s Lecture Series presents Gilberto Gil
November 7

National Portfolio Day
November 12
(100 McCaul Street & Sharp Centre for Design)

DEC. 2011
Alumni Association Holiday Schmooze
December 6
(100 McCaul Street)

FEB. 2012
Alumni Association Social
February 7
(100 McCaul Street)

MARCH 2012
Sumo Robot Challenge
March 8
(100 McCaul Street)

Project 31
March 29

APRIL 2012
Faculty of Art Faculty Exhibition
(Brinks Building)

MAY 2012
97th Annual Graduate Exhibition
May 3-6
(100 McCaul Street & Sharp Centre for Design)

Opening Night – May 3
High School Art, Alumni Day & General Public – May 4
Alumni Day & General Public – May 5
General Public – May 6

JUNE 2012
Alumni Association Meeting & End of Year Social
June 5

For more information on these and other events please visit www.ocad.ca
THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

“I F I WAS TO FOLLOW MY HEART AND PURSUE THE ARTS, THERE WAS ONLY ONE INSTITUTION FOR ME.”

— SAJ JAMAL

(AQCA, ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN, 1990)