The Ontario College of Art & Design is Canada’s “university of the imagination,” engaging in the broad spectrum of art and design, local and global culture initiatives, and knowledge and innovation across a wide range of disciplines.

Sketch magazine is published twice a year by the Ontario College of Art & Design.

President Sara Diamond
Chair, Board of Governors, J. Anthony Caldwell
Vice-President, Academic, Sarah McKinnon
Associate Vice-President, Academic, Kathryn Shailer
Vice-President, Finance & Administration, Peter Caldwell
Vice-President, Research & Graduate Studies, Daniel J. Frye
Dean, Faculty of Art, James S. Moy
Dean, Faculty of Design, Kathryn Shailer
Dean, Faculty of Liberal Studies, Kathryn Shailer
Executive Director, Development & Alumni Relations, and President, OCAD Foundation, John Vivash
President, Alumni Association, Maggie Birds

Produced by the OCAD Marketing & Communications Department
Designed by Hambly & Woolley Inc.

Contributors to this issue
Bill Clarke, Larissa Kostoff, Lorna McLennan, Leah Sandals

Date of issue: June 2009
The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Ontario College of Art & Design.

Charitable Registration #10779-7250 RR0001
Canada Post Publications Agreement # 40019392
Printed on recycled paper

Return undeliverable copies to:
Ontario College of Art & Design
100 McCaul Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5T 1W1
Telephone 416.977.6000
Facsimile 416.977.6006
www.ocad.ca

SPRING 2009
The magazine of the Ontario College of Art & Design

CONTENTS

FEATURES
Street Furniture: An Urban Romance?
by Leah Sandals
Page 10

Grime, Disintegration, Grit, Desolation: Roger Ballen’s South Africa
by Bill Clarke
Page 14

COLUMNS
From Our President
Page 2

On Campus
Page 3

Alumni Notes
Page 18

Emerging Alumni Profile
Page 22
venture capitalists, financial-sector leaders, manufacturers, developers, its student medal winners. Along with alumni, we invited a host of participants digital tools.

models, even a virtual walk-through. Some Material Art & Design students Exhibition invited friends of OCAD to “discover all that we add to the world strategic themes we embrace as an institution resonated throughout digital platforms.

phoTo By Tom Sandler phoToGraphy

SaRa diamoNd

10) will masterfully put the urban sculpture of our students right into the hybrid media projects that occurred in Second Life before an international audience and the National Design Forum.

The university’s Second Life campus on Second Life.

Hybrid Lab’s newest projects in Second Life have been presented at numerous conferences and events — IN 2009, Interactive Ontario’s public event; and beyond, OCAD has co-presented and actively participated at key

Hybrid Lab team lead by Ian Murray and managing virtual studios, and drawing on OCAD’s research in building

Lively at Second Life

SARA DIAMOND

PHOTO BY TOM SANCHELIN (PHOTOGRAPHY)

This spring marked the second anniversary of OCAD’s innovative campus in Second Life. Second Life is an interactive virtual world where visitors socialize, connect and create using diverse media practices ranging from film, video, robotics, electronics and time-based media and subjectivity.

The university’s Second Life campus on Second Life.

Baycrest, a premier academic health

Lively at Second Life

“Biomapping” is a collaboration between Gardner and some of the students who participated in the project.

MOBILE/BIOMETRIC TECHNOLOGIES RESEARCH TO DEVELOP USER FOCUSED ART, NOVEL DOCUMENTATION

In April 2009, associate professor Paola Gardner received a Research/Creation Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The grant, in the amount of $158,084, will assist Gardner in developing her project titled “Biomapping: Mobile Experiments in Self-computation and Spatial Aesthetics.”

I would like to extend congratulations to our graduating class and the following 2009 medal winners: Teresa Aversa (Criticism & Curatorial Practice), Alex Cogliani (Illustration), Laura DeYoung, Lian Tran, Michelle Gallant (Printmaking), Mariano Imperio (Photography), Faye Mullan (Sculptrure/Installation), Stephen Shaddick (Integrated Media), Arnaud Brassard (Graphic Design), Danielie Keen (Textiles) will develop process-based and collaborative digital tools.

Previous winners in this category have included Edge — Research, Scholarship and Art (2004), the University of Toronto and the Bartle Centre, Report to the Community. This year and the other awards in the program were handed out in early June at OCAD gala — part of its annual national conference.

I would like to extend congratulations to our graduating class and the following 2009 medal winners: Teresa Aversa (Criticism & Curatorial Practice), Alex Cogliani (Illustration), Laura DeYoung, Lian Tran, Michelle Gallant (Printmaking), Mariano Imperio (Photography), Faye Mullan (Sculptrure/Installation), Stephen Shaddick (Integrated Media), Arnaud Brassard (Graphic Design), Danielie Keen (Textiles) will develop process-based and collaborative digital tools.

Previous winners in this category have included Edge — Research, Scholarship and Art (2004), the University of Toronto and the Bartle Centre, Report to the Community. This year and the other awards in the program were handed out in early June at OCAD gala — part of its annual national conference.
DESIGN MATTERS: DESIGN CAMPS OFFERED BY OCAD AND THE ACO

Design Matters, a new series of design camps for students from ages 8 to 13, will be launched this summer by Continuing Studies at OCAD, in partnership with the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO). These camps will complement the popular AGO Art Camps, which have been offered by the gallery for the past 11 years.

“This is our first partnership for the summer camps,” notes Kelly McKinley, Director of Education and Public Programs at the AGO. “It allows us to offer a wide range of options for students to experience visual culture.”

Design Matters students will study with OCAD faculty in the Sharp Centre for Design and join the AGO Art Camp students for lunch and recreational activities.

There are several possibilities for students to explore various aspects of design, “Inventing Space and Place” invites them to create meaningful, sustainable environments. “Say What? Tell the World” gives them the opportunity to create meaningful stories as they explore how messages are produced using visual and verbal language, as well as traditional and digital media. “Materials Rediscovered” allows them to create objects, such as jewellery and wearable art, using low-tech methods. And “The Power of Design” encourages them to use design as a problem-solving tool for solving how and why things are made.

The camps run from June 29 to August 21. For more information, visit www.ocad.ca/programs/continuing_studies.

ON CAMPUS

CREATING COMMUNITY: CONTINUING STUDIES FOR ART AND DESIGN PROFESSIONALS AT OCAD

When artists and designers graduate, they often lose access to the studio space, resources and mentors that they enjoyed as students. But art and design education doesn’t have to stop upon completion of a degree.

Continuing Studies at OCAD will keep artists and designers connected to the academy and to their peers.

“You can’t do independent practice,” says Evan Tapper, one of two Continuing Studies co-coordinators. “The programs are created for artists and designers after they’ve enjoyed as students. But art and design education doesn’t have to stop upon completion of a degree. Continuing Study is currently developing programs. Master classes will be scheduled for artists and designers with lecture courses on the historical perspective of the graphic novel. A lecture series in sustainability and design principles, biomimicry and Public Programs at the Sharp Centre for Design and join the AGO Art Camp students for lunch and recreational activities. Continuing Study is currently developing programs. Master classes will be scheduled for artists and designers with lecture courses on the historical perspective of the graphic novel. A lecture series in sustainability and design principles, biomimicry and sustainable design. Programs in design are being developed. As well, the Ontreaux Writing for Artists and Designers program includes courses that range from designing your life story to “The Power of The Land.”

To the Power of The Land.

One Truth to understand,

Whether woman or a man,

Is equal for all.

Duke Redbird joined OCAD in January 2009 as the university’s first Aboriginal Advisor/Mentor. A poet, scholar, storyteller; inspirational speaker and television personality, Duke is a member of the Stoney First Nation. He is the author of a collection of poetry and has been published in numerous anthologies including texts in Canada and the United States. In addition to holding a master’s degree, Redbird is a Fellow of McLaughlin College at York University and has served as Senior Associate of the York Centre for Applied Sustainability. During his time at OCAD, Duke will work closely with the Aboriginal Visual Culture Program and its curriculum leader, Bonnie Devine.

Part of the mandate of Continuing Studies includes consulting with advisory committees in each faculty, including external members from the art and design communities, to develop courses. Further, as part of the Digital Futures Initiative, OCAD is working with industry partners to design courses for professional and executive development. With these collaborations, more possibilities will be generated connecting professional experience with creative education. To find more information, visit www.ocad.ca/programs/continuing_studies.

Duke Redbird: The hub of my personal creative expression is always poetry. I never had the opportunity to learn Ojibwe, yet I’ve always had a sense of the world I’ve lost, the world denied to me. And I felt I could express this world in poetry. It’s a kind of middle language — it’s something in the middle place of being neither/mine. In my study of linguistics, I’ve realized that Native languages are like that. Unlike English, the majority of them are not binary; they don’t have the words either or and. Also, you can’t say “why” in many indigenous Aboriginal languages, which is very important to know because it represents a different perspective.

In English, the “why” question is philosophical, abstract. The answer to “why?” is “because,” which never answers how something happens. Instead it puts people on the defensive. But when you say, “How did it come about?” It can take you down a whole different road of experience that is much more interesting.

In poetry, I never try to write an answer to “why.” But I always write to “how” or “what.” It has helped me as a reporter when I’m doing a story even though (if) traditional [reportorial] wisdom, there are five W’s — who, what, when, where, why. I leave out the “why” and I often get better information.

In the time I’ve been here, the “why” question has been with me, but the question I have for the institution is not “Why?” but “How did it all come about?”

Sketch: Your experience is so multifaceted. How would you introduce yourself?

Duke Redbird: The hub of my personal creative expression is always poetry. I never had the opportunity to learn Ojibwe, yet I’ve always had a sense of the world I’ve lost, the world denied to me. And I felt I could express this world in poetry. It’s a kind of middle language — it’s something in the middle place of being neither/mine. In my study of linguistics, I’ve realized that Native languages are like that. Unlike English, the majority of them are not binary; they don’t have the words either or and. Also, you can’t say “why” in many indigenous Aboriginal languages, which is very important to know because it represents a different perspective.

In English, the “why” question is philosophical, abstract. The answer to “why?” is “because,” which never answers how something happens. Instead it puts people on the defensive. But when you say, “How did it come about?” It can take you down a whole different road of experience that is much more interesting.

In poetry, I never try to write an answer to “why.” But I always write to “how” or “what.” It has helped me as a reporter when I’m doing a story even though (if) traditional [reportorial] wisdom, there are five W’s — who, what, when, where, why. I leave out the “why” and I often get better information.

In the time I’ve been here, the “why” question has been with me, but the question I have for the institution is not “Why?” but “How did it all come about?”

Sketch: How can people grappling with the bureaucracy of an institution or a corporation be encouraged, at the eleventh hour, to shift perspectives, to stop and consider “Is this wise?”

Duke Redbird: Nothing is set up in the society that we live in to encourage wisdom. There’s something in everybody’s reality that indicates it doesn’t make sense — what we’re doing to the universe that we live in — yet, we’re unable to stop ourselves from continuing to [make] unwise decisions. How do we function within that “mess”? [Through] sight, incremental persuasion — we persuade people very slowly to come even to a more enlightened response.

Sketch: It seems that you’re mentoring the institution as well as its students, staff and faculty.

Duke Redbird: I did love to make use of the grassy knoll opposite Butterfield Park. I’d set up a type of geodesic dome with open top, open sides, a table, a telescope, two towels covered in canvas. In it, I’d conduct lectures along the lines of “everything you’ve wanted to know about Natives but were afraid to ask.” I’d love to invite students to paint the canvases that make up this dome. And to experience the flexibility of other perspectives. I want them to have a friendly, cozy place to retire to as they’re dealing with the process of learning all the other things that are a function of getting a degree. It’s a little outrageous, but I’d love to do it.

In every Nation, in every Clan, The Elders to a person... Whether woman or man, a shared common truth, One Truth to understand, That the spirit of the people is equal To the Power of The Land.

— Excerpt from “The Power of The Land” by Duke Redbird
Seizing that opportunity right now is the Mobile Experience Innovation Centre (MEIC), a public-private partnership made up of the best and brightest in mobile research, design and innovation. Funded by the Ontario Media Development Corporation through the Entertainment and Creative Clusters Partnerships Fund, the MEIC is comprised of six academic institutions — OCAD is the lead partner — as well as more than 30 organizations from across the mobile industry. It is new territory, and because of that, the obstacles are profound. But so too are the possibilities.

“Mobile and wireless devices are revolutionizing the way we think, work, play and live in the same way the Internet did almost two decades ago,” says OCAD President Sara Diamond, who also chairs the MEIC. “Unfortunately, our research shows that we’re falling behind other jurisdictions in terms of our ability to play a leading role in driving this mobile revolution.”

Diamond is referring to the findings of a significant, albeit cautious, new white paper released this spring by the MEIC. “Innovation and Insight: Mapping Ontario’s Mobile Industry” analyzes the shift occurring within the mobile industry on a global scale, relating it back to consumers and businesses within this province. Primary findings suggest that Ontario and Canada could and should be leaders in the global mobile and wireless sector, but considerable challenges must be overcome for us to realize our potential.

“One of the key findings of our research is that we don’t have enough people with the right set of skills to keep up with the demand to develop applications for new and emerging mobile platforms and devices,” explains Ray Newal, one of the report’s principal authors. “We need to invest in education to build a workforce that’s ready to lead the world in mobile research, design and innovation.”

According to “Innovation and Insight,” emerging industry dynamics have created a kind of gold rush, as each new mobile platform competes for compelling content and for talented content creators. This, in turn, has created opportunity. Because of the newness of the playing field — with its lush potential and its correspondingly thin available talent — an exciting prospect exists for the creation of geographic centres of innovation. “The country, city, state or province that invests heavily in creating a workforce with the right combination of skills and creativity will become a proverbial battlefield for emerging mobile platforms,” reports “Innovation and Insight.” These battlefields will attract large amounts of investment from multinationals and other players from within the funding ecosystem, and will thrive on the spending power of a highly skilled and sought-after workforce.

So, where will this workforce come from? Surprisingly, industry survey results included in the report show that a majority of respondents are either unsure or don’t actually believe that post-secondary education in Ontario is adequately preparing students to work in the mobile and wireless sector, and that Ontario is not among the best places in the world to find people with the necessary skills and talent. We must interpret this as a call to action.

“Innovation and Insight” makes 16 recommendations, all of which are endorsed by the MEIC’s 30 corporate partners, to address current and anticipated gaps in Ontario’s mobile sector. Among those recommendations are the following:

• Industry-academic research initiatives aimed at procuring local talent should be established, facilitated and supported by the mobile industry, universities and colleges and governments.

• A mobile partnership consortium — which would broker targeted business development, alliances, research and training among industry, academia and funders — should be formed.

• Provincial and federal governments should further develop procurement strategies for the mobile and wireless sector to fund initiatives for applied research, business development, tax incentives and prototyping for content, services and applications development.

• “We have a window of opportunity to act on the report’s recommendations,” says Diamond, “but we need to move quickly to maintain and enhance our capacity to generate new jobs and new technology, and to help drive continued growth and innovation.”

What she and others will argue is that the MEIC has the potential to be exactly this kind of driving force. MEIC’s partners and advisors manifest as well as carry forward the collaborative energy and cultural entrepreneurialism that has defined this industry — they have done the legwork, so to speak, and opened its doors.

“Innovation and Insight” makes clear a very real net benefit: “By establishing a local ecosystem that is capable of global innovation, Canadian consumers will benefit by gaining access to world-class applications and services. These will stimulate usage, and result in the creation of more effective business models which could spur flow-through economic benefit to other local industries. The Canadian consumer is indeed an important player within the ecosystem. The time to act is now.”

Michèle Perras, MEIC’s project manager, has guided the progress of the consortium through the course of Phase 1 research, which culminated in the report. Phase 2 will include, among its objectives, the fostering of innovation, research and knowledge-sharing through collaboratively funded, three-month research and prototyping cycles, as well as a deepening of the relationship between industry and academia. OCAD is in the unique position of being able to do this within the MEIC as well as within the greater spheres of the province.

OCAD, as the lead partner in the Mobile Experience Innovation Centre (MEIC), works very closely with both academic and business leaders in the mobile industry to drive innovation in this sector. These partners and advisors, who have supported the MEIC through Phases 1 and 2, include EchoMobile Ltd., Aesthetech, Achilles Media Ltd., Bitcasters, Canoe.ca/Quebecor, Decode Entertainment Inc., The Delvinia Group of Companies, Design Exchange, Ecentrics Inc., Gasur徒Tek, IBM, Interactive Ontario, marimedia, MEF Canada, Microsoft Canada, Mobile Monday, Motorola Canada, mypathbrainstorm, NRC Canada, Silverback Media, Sweet Caesar, Telus Mobility, Triptych Media Inc., TVG, Wirelessnorth.ca and Yahoo! Canada.
OCAD ILLUSTRATION STUDENTS ARE DOMINATING INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS.

Most recently, 36 of 200 student images selected from 8,100 entries in the American Illustration Awards were from OCAD. That’s a stunning 17 percent in what is widely considered the most prestigious of international illustration competitions, a meeting of the best and brightest in U.S., U.K. and European undergraduate and graduate programs.

Driving our success in this arena is the 2006 introduction of thesis into the OCAD Illustration program by Illustration Chair Paul Dallas. Thesis pushes students to explore their ideas with increased depth and application. Through the creation of a cohesive body of work spanning two core semester courses, they learn to establish and then refine a recognizable artistic voice.

Thesis also prepares students for what many in the industry recognize as the new realities of the profession. Says Dallas, “In addition to providing images for traditional editorial, book and advertising markets, illustrators are increasingly producing original content, authoring their own material, engaging in entrepreneurial enterprises, working in a variety of media and exhibiting in galleries. The most creative work is deeply personal and idiosyncratic while still serving as effective graphic communication.”
From benches and bike stands to subway maps and traffic control boxes, artists and designers worldwide are increasingly applying their creativity to everyday urban infrastructure.

By Leah Sandals

STREET FURNITURE: AN URBAN ROMANCE?

David Byrne, famed for his musical work with the Talking Heads, put on his designer cap last year when he created nine neighbourhood-specific bike-rack designs for New York City. In the U.K., Art on the Underground, a transit agency in London, hires artists for everything, from large-scale station-sized subway installations to tiny illustrations for pocket subway maps. In Calgary, the Art in Motion program reproduces local artists’ paintings and bios on traffic control boxes, while Vancouver’s Art Under Foot project has installed sewer covers with striking swirling imagery based on traditional Coast Salish designs.

Toronto is no exception to the trend. In 2005, Bell Canada partnered with graffiti collective Style in Progress and developed a pilot project that has since covered 50 utility boxes in the city with vibrant street-inspired graphics. Also in 2005, the Liberty Village Business Improvement Area (BIA) launched BENCHmark, a program that invites artists to turn local park benches into creative functional pieces of sculpture. The following year, Toronto
Culture ran Grounds for Art, a design competition for custom-made utility hole covers to decorate the streets of Regent Park. And in 2007, EcoMedia Direct, a company that owns many of Toronto’s sidewalk recycling bins, launched the Street Art Sponsorship Program that inserts the work of local painters and photographers into spaces typically used for advertising. This spring, OCAD — already considered an urban design icon, thanks to the distinctive Sharp Centre for Design — intensified design’s blossoming romance with city spaces by hosting a unique bike-stand design competition.

Architect Robert Chang, who initiated the competition, has worked in the Queen West area for more than a decade. While designing a new, five-storey mixed residential/commercial building for the corner of Queen and McCaul streets, he realized that the sidewalk would need widening to accommodate TTC needs and that the space would be ideal for some artistic bike stands. Chang approached OCAD to hold the design competition, and also secured prize funding from the building’s owner. The result was the OCAD Gateway Bike Stand Challenge — a competition aimed at enhancing the identity of McCaul Street as a cultural corridor, and Queen Street as one of its many entry points.

“I just wanted greater awareness about public spaces in our city,” says Chang. “And I wanted this whole process to be formal, so people could see how these things can be done.” He also hopes that the project will inspire more building developers to integrate similar public space initiatives into their work.

According to local planning advocates, design initiatives like Chang and OCAD’s are sorely needed. “The importance of the public realm cannot be overemphasized,” says Glenn Miller, a professional planner and director of education and research at the non-profit Canadian Urban Institute in Toronto. “And quality is so important. When you’re looking at something like a bicycle stand, you’re connecting with city dwellers on a number of levels. One level is very practical: we have city policies to get more streets filled. My dad said [that] if you build them, they will come. ‘So, for a circular bike stand to be functional, you have to stretch it to at least 30-plus inches.’”

Rising to the challenge, OCAD students produced a range of strong designs. Jaeho Shin and Jihoon Lee’s “Art History Movement” proposal drew on classic paintings and sculptures to create elegant, intellectually rigorous forms. Kelli Hui’s “Installation of the Winning Designs” design was based on the handwritten phrase “Peace & Love.”

All of the designs had potential, but it’s easy to see why competition winners Justin Rosete and Erica Mach stood out. After all, their bold proposal called for massive 9-foot planks of wood to be planted directly into the sidewalk. This proposal evokes both minimalist sculpture and the wooden framing of the Art Gallery of Ontario farther up the street.

Fourth-runner-up Michael Plam’s design, a metal circle inserted into the sidewalk, took an approach that was different from the other submissions. It was aligned with the long tradition of more-subtle, user-friendly designs. Plam’s initial inspiration was close at hand, literally. “I looked at the ring I was wearing and explored what I could do with it — play around, drop it, spin it. That’s where I got my idea.”

The key was getting proportions just right. “Today, you have to lock a bike in multiple places: the bike wheel and the bike frame,” he explains. “So, for a circular bike stand to be functional, you have to stretch it to at least 30-plus inches.”

Installation of the winning designs at Queen and McCaul will follow city approval, which is forthcoming. But to associate professor Colleen Reid, the end of this competition is merely a beginning for the designs themselves: “There’s a hope [that] the winning bike-stand designs will be installed up and down the street, and maybe into other areas of the city.”

There is a lot to suggest that Plam’s hunch could be right. Says jury member Mark Glassman, “The Queen Street BIA, which I chair, already had plans to beautify the area with custom-built bike racks when I was asked by OCAD to be on their jury. It was quite fortuitous. I got to see some excellent work by young artists, which is always inspiring to view.”

In the process, Glassman decided to invite all the finalists to have their designs judged for potential installations on Queen Street. Winners were announced in late May, along with further details of the bike-stand installation.

Recent history shows us that projects like this are generative. Since launching a unique set of bike stands in Parkdale in April 2007, artist Philip Sarazen has also received commissions from the Yonge-Lawrence BIA and the Royal Ontario Museum. Sarazen’s site-specific approach — working with a Parkdale community group on transformative symbols like trees and gargoyles, with the Yonge-Lawrence BIA on family-friendly stroller imagery, and with the ROM on artisan imagery like Greek urns and trilobites — certainly suggests a citywide hunger for infrastructure that reflects neighbourhood characteristics. Hopefully, OCAD’s bike-stand designs will catch on too, from Queen West to busy streets nationwide. After all, the vitality of our cities may just be depending on it.”
Roger Ballen in person embodies the photographs he makes. The words elusive, inscrutable, challenging and introspective describe the man as well as his art. But the man and his art also share a playful, rather wry sense of humour, which becomes apparent after one spends time in their presence.

In conjunction with a retrospective at OCAD’s Professional Gallery this spring, Ballen spoke about his 40-plus years of image-making. The talk, however, raised more questions about his practice than it answered. Some would argue that it was less a talk than a performance. Much of what Ballen said about his work, and the conditions under which it was produced, felt as if it needed to be taken with a grain of salt.

Ballen is a skilled storyteller, and his talk was peppered with descriptions of nightmarish “characters” (such as witch doctors and child murderers) that may have been true-to-life, composites or complete fabrications. Ballen’s tongue-in-cheek, deadpan delivery kept the audience guessing.

Occasionally, Ballen would dance his laser pointer over the surface of an image on the screen, saying in his deep, microphone-friendly voice: “What’s going on in this picture? Hmm, what’s this here? Isn’t that strange? Why’s the person doing that?” And then he would proceed abruptly to the next photo. (This elicited chuckles from some audience members and grumbles of consternation from others.)

This is not to say that Ballen doesn’t take his work seriously; rather, he is reticent about playing the role of interpreter. “I’m often asked the boring question of whether I stage things,” Ballen told the audience. “Yes, the subjects know I’m there, but the pictures are about how I put reality together in front of me and organize visual relationships. I’m also...
asked, “Is this real?” I don’t know myth from reality, so don’t ask me.” Ballen’s interest in photography developed through “a process of osmosis.” Ballen, who was born in 1950 and grew up in and around New York City, had a mother who was an editor at Magnum Photos agency organizing shoots for Elliott Erwitt and Bruce Davidson, among other 20th-century greats. Interviewed by SeaLair magazine in 2007, Ballen recalled his mother’s passion about her job, how photography books “started to pile up” in their home and photographs were “hung on the wall.” As a teenager, he picked up a camera and kept taking pictures while studying geology at the University of California, Berkeley in the late 60s. He would go on to attain a PhD in 1982; that same year, he moved to South Africa where he has lived ever since. Although Ballen has never taken a photography course, his CV is the kind that most photographers dream of: four monographs published by Phaidon (with another two forthcoming); works in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York; solo shows at prominent galleries across Europe; and, representing him, Larry Gagosian, one of the world’s most influential art dealers.

Charles Reeve, curator of the OCAD Professional Gallery, became familiar with Ballen’s work when Clint Roenisch, the photographer’s Canadian dealer, had an exhibition of images from a single series at his Toronto gallery in 2007. “OCAD’s show resulted from Roger’s interest in mounting an exhibition in Toronto in conjunction with his latest book, Boarding House,” says Reeve. “Suddenly, these photographs became what the white population was, or at least some aspect of it… . I think it was a revelation to a lot of people, not only in South Africa but [also] outside of South Africa.” According to Ballen, he received death threats and was even arrested because of these portraits. Ballen’s portraits have been compared with Diane Arbus’s from the 1960s. Her portraits of people on the fringes of society, including nudists and transvestites, had the same effect on viewers then that Ballen’s work has on viewers now — one is likely to gawk at first, but one then feels compelled to study the images, to come to terms with them. And certainly, precendants for Ballen’s portrait work exist further back than Arbus’s work. For example, the aforementioned abattoir worker’s wife brings to mind Walker Evans’ Twin Sisters, NYC (1937) or the dorps and Platteland show Ballen shooting in a relatively straightforward documentary manner. The dorps series shows the exteriors of crumbling buildings in rural South African villages. In Platteland, Ballen decided to focus on the people living in these environments, such as the gaunt, shly smiling woman pictured in Witte of abattoir worker holding 3 puppies, Orange Free State (1984) or the jar-eared, drooling brothers seen in Drie en Caaks, twins, Western Transvaal (1993). Although South Africa was still in the grip of apartheid at the time, Ballen considered himself apolitical while these portraits were being made and was surprised by the anger they generated.

“The white South African population had been seen as professional and strong-looking,” Ballen told SeaLair. “Suddenly, these photographs became what the white population was, or at least some aspect of it… . I think it was a revelation to a lot of people, not only in South Africa but [also] outside of South Africa.” According to Ballen, he received death threats and was even arrested because of these portraits. Ballen’s portraits have been compared with Diane Arbus’s from the 1960s. Her portraits of people on the fringes of society, including nudists and transvestites, had the same effect on viewers then that Ballen’s work has on viewers now — one is likely to gawk at first, but one then feels compelled to study the images, to come to terms with them. And certainly, precendants for Ballen’s portrait work exist further back than Arbus’s work. For example, the aforementioned abattoir worker’s wife brings to mind Walker Evans’ Twin Sisters, NYC (1937) or the dorps and Platteland show Ballen shooting in a relatively straightforward documentary manner. The dorps series shows the exteriors of crumbling buildings in rural South African villages. In Platteland, Ballen decided to focus on the people living in these environments, such as the gaunt, shly smiling woman pictured in Witte of abattoir worker holding 3 puppies, Orange Free State (1984) or the jar-eared, drooling brothers seen in Drie en Caaks, twins, Western Transvaal (1993). Although South Africa was still in the grip of apartheid at the time, Ballen considered himself apolitical while these portraits were being made and was surprised by the anger they generated.

"If you don’t have dark, you can’t have light, and you first need to comprehend the dark before you can comprehend the light.’

Upon completion of the Platteland series in the mid-1990s, Ballen says that he started to question what art is and what he was trying to accomplish or say by making photographs. Reeve characterizes Ballen’s shift from the documentary style of Platteland to the hallucinatory Shadow Chamber series as a move “from the exterior to the interior.” When the book Shadow Chamber was published, Eyemazing magazine interviewed the photographer. “[The Shadow Chamber photographs are] about a strange, ambiguous, dark and comic place,” Ballen explained. “It is not necessarily a place that you would want to visit or spend a Sunday afternoon. It has elements that are both disturbing and humorous.” But humour in Ballen’s art isn’t “funny ha-ha.” Instead, Ballen casts a critical eye over the human condition, making the humour in the work appear absurd in the kind of existential way Jean-Paul Sartre would have appreciated. After describing the Shadow Chamber and Boarding House environments to the OCAD audience as “chaotic, lawless places where everyone is in constant survival mode,” places where “the rats, cats, dogs, geese and people [all] have antagonistic relationships with each other,” Ballen went on to give his opinion of humanity: “All my time in these places gave me a negative perception. Human beings are quite selfish, quite evil. So, perhaps Ballen is something of a Dadaist, but he’s not a nihilist. There is meaning buried in the dirty chaos of his photographs, but Ballen demands that viewers (like gallery-going geologists) unravel it. “Your work is dark and depressing,” a woman said during the question-and-answer period of Ballen’s talk. “What do you want viewers to get out of it?” Ballen looked stern for a moment and then he smiled. “People say the work is dark, but is that so bad? If you don’t have dark, you can’t have light, and you first need to comprehend the dark before you can comprehend the light.” — Bill Clarke is a Toronto-based visual arts writer and collector who has published previously in Canadian Art, Border Crossings, Modern Painters and other magazines. He is a member of the Board of Directors for Mercer Union: A Centre for Canadian Art, and is the curatorial co-chair of Art with Heart 2009, a Casey House fundraising art auction.
Jan van Kampen never interfered with the way his faculty delivered material to their students, recalls Steve Quinlan, a professor in the Faculty of Design. "That only comes with van Kampen, because he never had the people in the classroom," notes Quinlan.

To say that teaching the Communication & Design department was "a big job" when van Kampen took it was an understatement. Even the program itself was big — comprised of Advertising, Graphic Design and Illustration, it was OCAD's largest — and according to Quinlan, it wasn't always well understood by the administration and other departments. But van Kampen had the ability to unite people around shared goals. Quinlan remembers him as "one of the most stubborn people" he had ever met, "relentless in his persistence. If he felt there was something worth salvaging and he usually did — he wouldn't let it go. He was patient and always positive, but he'd eventually wear all of us down."

Keith Rushton, current chair of OCAD's Graphic Design program, co-chaired Communication & Design during van Kampen's last two years in academic administration. "Jan very quickly inspired confidence," says Rushton. "He was well liked and well respected — a real galvanizer. "He inspired us forward, into the future. He brought in technology, and he did so really early into Apple's revolution of computer graphics. He was instrumental in revamping the curriculum, stressing that [we] should focus on concept rather than software training. In his mind, we were there to teach the business of design, the conceptual, the strategic. Today we still believe that... Technology is important, but creativity is, too."

After his 10-year tenure as chair of Communication & Design, van Kampen kept teaching full-time until 2001, when he formally retired, but taught part-time for another four years. Rushton also describes him as "student-centric," quite respectful of students and their needs. "Jan had a respect for the significance of [their] coming to Canada, the experience of starting from scratch and transformation."

Quinlan comments in the same vein: "The fact is, he was positively giddy about teaching. He loved teaching students who were just beginning their education in design. And I think the students loved it — and him — even more!"

Echoing Quinlan's sentiments is Jan Sage, Director of Admissions & Recruitment. "Jan van Kampen was an important figure in the history of OCAD," says Sage, who worked closely with van Kampen during her years in the Faculty of Design Office. "He was opinionated and stubborn, but with a passion tempered by integrity, enthusiasm, honesty and, above all, fairness. He loved teaching, providing boundaries to young designers and then encouraging them to find appropriate ways to colour outside the lines."

Van Kampen's 40-year career as a graphic designer started in 1961, right after his graduation with a Communication & Design degree from OCAD. For 11 years, he worked for several prominent design firms in Toronto and Amsterdam before founding his own company, which specialized in corporate image and package design. He then sold the firm in 1987, a move precipitated by his 1988 appointment as chair of Communication & Design at OCAD. Sage has helped create a scholarship in van Kampen's name "to ensure that his influence continues to be an integral part of OCAD's future." The student who wins the scholarship will be awarded to a top student entering second year with a major in graphic design. Van Kampen's family initiated the campaign with a lead gift of $2,500. A second gift of $2,000 has been pledged by the "Designing Women," as they are affectionately known — Sandra Barnes, Margot Jeffrey, Tammy Mark McClellan, Lenore Richards and Jan Sage, who all worked in the Faculty of Design Office when van Kampen was the chair. Printmaker Rudolf Biikioas, a good friend of van Kampen's, has pledged $1,000.

The RCA is comprised of established professionals working in Canada in 20 visual arts disciplines. Its mandate is to celebrate, encourage and facilitate the visual arts in this country. When the academy was established in 1880, its original goal was to advance the growth and development of the visual arts in a then-Rising Canada. Part and parcel of this goal was the setting of aesthetic standards — those that would compare favourably to the standards at play in other "civilized" countries. Also acknowledged was the necessity to commemorate the authenticity of the Canadian experience.

A quick audit of RCA's membership reveals countless OCAD graduates spanning nearly every discipline represented by the academy. Original categories of membership celebrated the country's painters, sculptors and architects. Today's RCA is different, considering new forms of visual expression as they emerge. The advent of new media and the blurring of boundaries between disciplines have further contributed to a considerable altering of the landscapes, and the new membership categories reflect this. The academy now has close to 800 members representing 20 disciplines; among these are filmmaking, furniture design, illustration, mixed media, and video art, to name just a few.

From the beginning, members have been elected to the RCA in mid-career by a jury of their peers. President Diamond was elected into the new media category, while this year's elected alumni became members in the categories of painting (Lorraine Simms), painting and drawing (Ted Fullerton), painting/ mixed media (Garry Neil Kennedy) and painting/textile art (Mary Scott).
"We're probably outside boiling down maple syrup," says the voice message.

It's fitting that this is my first contact with artist and OCAD alumnus Kevin Lockau (AOCA, Faculty of Design, 1986), recipient of the 2009 Saidye Bronfman Award, the Governor General's Award for fine crafts. Lockau's large-scale glass sculptures express his connection to nature, and when I contact him I discover that he's been out tapping trees. Before studying at OCAD, Lockau received a bachelor of arts in agricultural science, with a major in animal science, from the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph. When he graduated in 1978, he got a job on an industrial hog farm, where he worked for four years. At night, he painted.

By Leanna McLennan

"I asked a friend what I would have to do if I wanted to make art full-time and she told me about OCAD," Lockau says. And so began the artistic career of the hog farmer.

"When I saw the glass studio, I fell in love with glass," Lockau recalls. "I was drawn to its ethereal qualities, its clarity and light."

When he creates a work of art, Lockau sometimes begins with a piece of glass. He looks at it for a while, thinking about what he wants to do until an idea comes. Other times, the idea comes to him first and he seeks out a piece of glass for the work he has in mind. "I work with what is given to me," he says. "What is given to him he then transforms into inspiring works of art." What is given to him he then transforms into inspiring works of art, even when what he gets could be regarded by other people as, well, garbage.

"What is given to him he then transforms into inspiring works of art," says the voice message. "Kevin Lockau collects cast-off glass from other artists' studios — what he calls "the crap at the bottom of the tank" — that people don't want because it's already been heated and its chemistry has been changed. It's glass that can be unpredictable to work with because its colour is contaminated and it can crack. But Lockau mixes the glass with sand and stone, so that he can carve it. "These large castings can take two months to cool. And glass is heavy. In my next life, I'm going to make papier mâché," he jokes. "I do all the things with glass you're not supposed to do," he continues. "Essentially, I'm creating volcanic rock. I'm not afraid of the cracks and bubbles. Those are some of the best parts, the surprise elements."

Lockau creates his sculptures in the 10-by-20-foot tents he has built on his land near Bancroft, a town some 200 kilometres north of Toronto. He tells me that he's slowly been migrating north and west from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, where he was born. In the northern climate, he can work in temperatures as low as -20 degrees Celsius in the winter. He makes a picture from what is beamed in via the CBC and TVO, a view to the outside — and a connection with nature. Spiritually, says Lockau, "we're all connected."

Behavioural Studies of Tolerance — two coyotes made from steel, cast glass and concrete — was inspired by a conversation he had recently on CBC Radio about the "urban coyote" that has taken residence in Neville Park in Toronto's east end. It's a comment on the need for people and animals to share the environment. As our conversation draws to a close, I wish him good luck with the rest of the maple syrup.

"After three weeks, it just feels like work," Lockau says. "It doesn't look at all like what you see in a store. It's darker and kind of cloudy, but it tastes much better.

Such imperfections are what set Kevin Lockau's sculptural works apart. Just like Lockau's art. Kevin Lockau's sculptural works can be viewed at Lafrenière & Pai Gallery in Ottawa. Or you can visit www.lapaigallery.com.
EMERGING ALUMNI PROFILE

ELEPHANTS AND ROBOTIC CHAIRS: MATT DONOVAN’S INTUITIVE FABRICATIONS

By Leanna McLennan

It took Matt Donovan (OCAD, Sculpture/Installation, 1999) a long time to find his calling. Donovan didn’t excel in his seven years of high school. But he was good at art, and he eventually applied to OCAD as a mature student. Once at OCAD, Donovan thrived, discovering his talents and committing all of his energy to developing his technical skills and making art.

Donovan has a knack for creating things that take on a life of their own, well beyond gallery walls. The Styrofoam elephant he created as his own, well beyond gallery walls. The things that take on a life of their own in his unique way of working. This is perhaps best exemplified in his graduate thesis, An Elephant in the Room — which featured the elephant carved out of Styrofoam along with a herd of black sheep in plaster and a bronze red herring — explored the contradictory feelings he had about making art. “Art-making is creating useless things. Sometimes I wonder if I should be using my skills working for Habitat for Humanity,” he says. “On the other hand, I do feel that making art is very meaningful.”

After graduation, Donovan almost destroyed the massive elephant with a bulldozer. He planned to videotape it being destroyed but was convinced otherwise by his friend James Lawson, who suggested he put the sculpture on Lawson’s small lawn. “I thought it would cause a car accident,” Donovan recalls. “People were swarming to see it.”

Since then, people have put candles at the base of the elephant’s trunk. They’ve also knit it sweaters and hats. As for the black plaster sheep, Donovan donated them to OCAD after graduating. They now grace alongside workstations in the university’s administrative building and sit in the windows of the wood shop, appreciated by staff and passersby alike. So far, 12 concrete reproductions of the sheep — always requested in sets of four — have been commissioned.

Because of his fabrication skills, Donovan was hired after he graduated to work on Max Dean’s The Table: Childhood, a robotic table exhibited at the National Gallery of Canada in 2002/03, and on the Robotic Chair, which was completed in 2006. Dean conceived of the chair and brought it to fruition with co-artists D’Andrea, then a professor at Cornell University, and Donovan, who worked on the chair’s mechanical components. Dean sees the chair, which collapses and then rebuilds itself, as a metaphor for life. The Robotic Chair has been exhibited internationally in many locales, including the Nicholas Metivier Gallery in Toronto and ARS Electronica in Linz, Austria. At ARCO gallery in Madrid, the chair attracted the attention of Juan Carlos I, King of Spain, who stopped to view it for some 20 minutes, which was so unusual an occurrence it made the Spanish news. (To view the chair, visit www.roboticchair.com.)

Donovan and Seigel are collaborating on an interesting text or aesthetic idea — until we are both satisfied with the result.”

Leanna McLennan’s fiction and poetry have been published in numerous literary journals and anthologies, including them Fire Lounge: An Anthology of Poetry from the Brief Writing Studio. She currently writes in her studio at Artscape Wychwood Barns and teaches at OCAD and the University of Toronto.
Thank you to our donors:

Each year, hundreds of donors — individuals, companies, foundations and associations — provide financial support that contributes to student excellence. While it's not for scholarships and bursaries, equipment and facility improvements, or library and audiovisual resources, every gift to OCAD makes a difference. Those who give generously, whether anonymously or otherwise, have made our world-class school possible.

The students and faculty at OCAD are grateful for your contributions, and we hope that you will join us in thanking the many donors whose names are listed below. If your name was omitted, listed incorrectly, or misspelled, please contact Malka Greene at 416-977-6000, ext. 481.

You may also want to consider a gift in honor or in memory of a loved one.

Gifts were made in honor or in memory of a loved one.

If your name was omitted, listed incorrectly, or misspelled, please contact Malka Greene at 416-977-6000, ext. 481.
GROUP HOME AND AUTO INSURANCE
for members of the Ontario College of Art & Design Alumni Association

PROTECTION MADE EASY...
GROUP RATES MADE EASIER!

As a member of the Ontario College of Art & Design Alumni Association, you can SAVE on your home and auto insurance through preferred group rates, while enjoying high-quality insurance products and outstanding service.

As the leading provider of group home and auto insurance, we offer a wide range of innovative products, so you are sure to get the coverage that is right for your particular needs…and the peace of mind that goes with it!

Insurance program endorsed by

MelocheMonnex.com/ocad
1 866 352 6187
(Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.)