

# Annual Report 2020-2021



**DesignTO Festival is Canada's leading (and largest) annual design festival that celebrates design as a multidisciplinary form of creative thinking and making. In January 2021, we attracted guests worldwide with over 80 events and exhibitions at our digital and distanced festival.**

Since 2011, we welcomed over 600,000 visitors, worked with over 5,000 artists and designers and reached over 475 million users through print and digital media.



**2020 was defined by seemingly insurmountable challenges: a global pandemic, ongoing systemic racism, increased anti-Black and anti-Asian racism, a financial and social crisis, generating shared feelings of fear, loss, isolation, and mourning for our old lives.**

DesignTO connected and collaborated with our community to help cope, support and overcome.

## **How did DesignTO respond to 2020?**

### **We adapted**

We presented a distanced and digital festival of 40 online events and exhibitions, plus 42 window installations viewable from outdoors.

### **We worked according to our values**

We supported creatives and created content that aligns with our values of equity, integrity and humanity.

### **We co-created**

We have a community that is invested in DesignTO:

450+ exhibiting designers and artists  
159 DesignTO Members  
29 funders, sponsors and partners



*“Every year, we look forward to the Festival and opportunities to network with the design community – meeting new people and bumping into old friends. It’s inspiring and fun to explore the various exhibitions and events around town – even if only digitally and safely distanced this year.”*

dkstudio architects,  
international design atelier

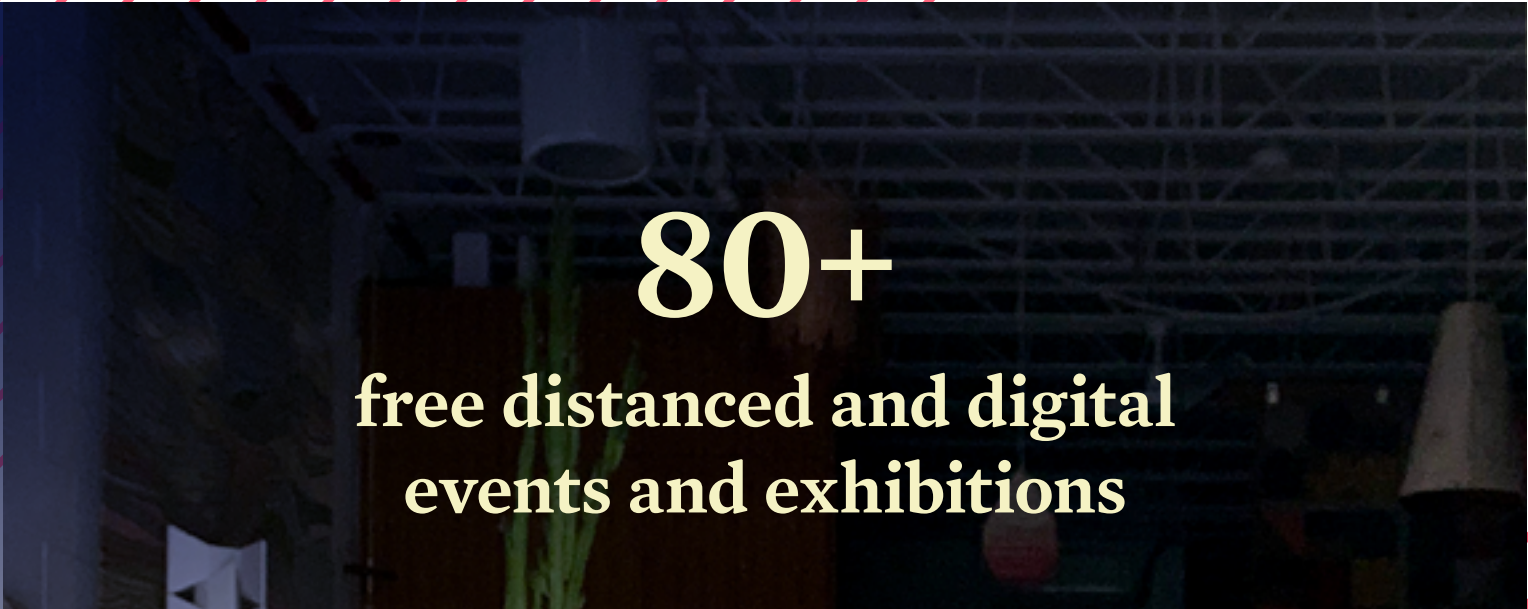
Installations by Anony & Rainville Sangaré Design Studios. Photograph courtesy of EQ3



**In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 DesignTO Festival was a “distanced and digital” event with 42 window installations, viewable from outdoors, and 40 digital exhibitions and online events. The introduction of the digital format allowed us to engage an international audience.**

Featuring the work of hundreds of designers each year, the Festival showcases locally made furniture, lighting, products, graphic and experiential design, interiors and architecture, art installations, and more. As a non-profit arts organization, the Festival emphasizes collaboration and the expression of personal values and identities through the creative process.

DesignTO is about building creativity, community, and experimentation. We bring people together to celebrate and explore design. We do this by taking design out of the studio, into the public realm, and now, into your home.



**80+**  
free distanced and digital  
events and exhibitions



**Participation**

<b>450+</b>	<b>6K+</b>	<b>150+</b>
artists & designers	digital visitors	DesignTO Members



**DesignTO Network**

<b>24K+</b>	<b>26K+</b>	<b>148K+</b>	<b>15K+</b>
Facebook followers	Instagram followers	Website page views	E-newsletter Subscribers



*“I am grateful for the way  
DesignTO makes spaces to  
host critical conversations  
and ideas, opening up  
the idea of design and  
deconstructing conventional/  
Eurocentric ideas of what  
design is supposed to be.  
Thank you”*

Amy Wong,  
Artist



‘The Commons: Public Space, Public Art’. Photograph by Christine Lim





# We are Toronto.

17 DesignTO Team members

## Diverse

71% of the DesignTO Team and 60% of visitors identify as either a visible minority, person of colour, LGBTX, person with a disability, youth, or indigenous

## Creative

55% of visitors work in design, arts and culture.

## Youthful

59% of the DesignTO Team and 56% of visitors are 34 and under.

## Educated

94% of the DesignTO Team and 42% of visitors have a college or university degree.

Data reflects the 2020 & 2021 DesignTO survey results

'2019 DesignTO Launch Party'. Photographs by Natasha Hermann



*“DesignTO plays a critical role in creating connections among a diverse group of designers; engaging the public in design discourse; and showcasing innovation across design disciplines.”*

Maya Mahgoub Desai,  
Associate Professor and Chair,  
Environmental Design, OCAD U

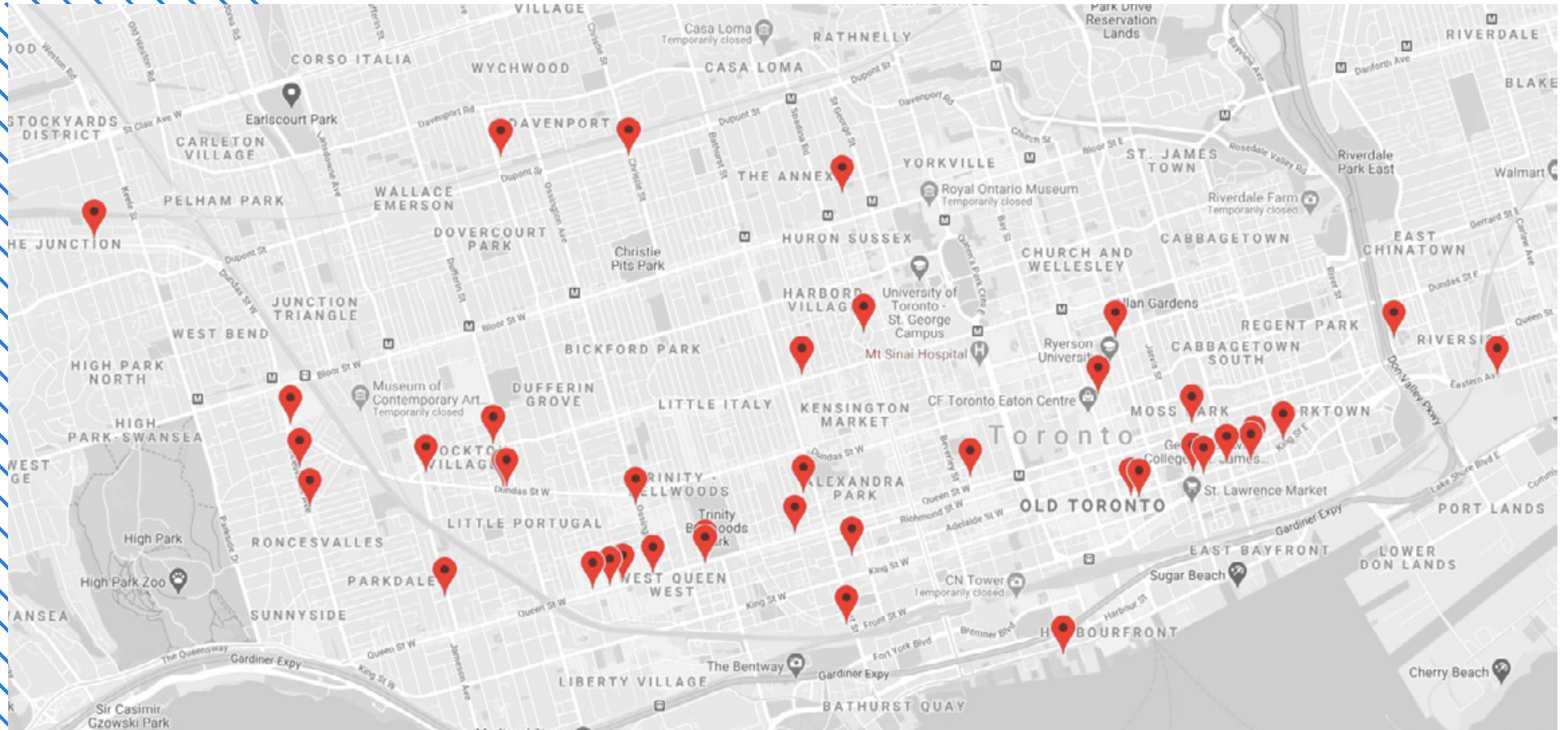
WC

'Dream State' by Alby Kenny. Photograph by Christine Lim



# Festival Map

The 2021 DesignTO Festival presented 42 window installations across the city of Toronto, reaching as far as Geary Avenue to the north, Queens Quay to the south, Carlaw Avenue to the east, and Quebec Avenue to the west.



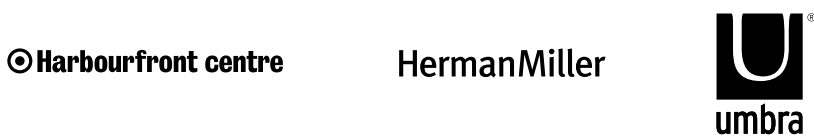


# Funders + Partners

## Major Funders



## Program Partners



## Partners



## Supporters



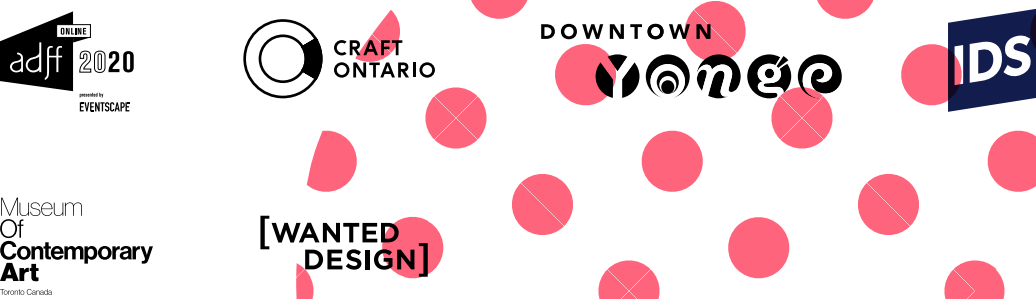
## Media Partners



## Association Partners



## Cultural Partners







*“DesignTO is a rare opportunity for those of us just getting started to have a voice in the design community. It is an amazing platform for Canadians to showcase their talents and come together.”*

Ava Nourbaran,  
Designer

‘Florae’ by Dominique Cheng. Photograph courtesy of the artist.



# Distanced & Digital

As a response to the pandemic and to guidelines set by the Government of Ontario, the 2021 DesignTO Festival was a “distanced and digital” event.

The 2021 Festival included a wide range of programming, such as events and exhibitions that were experienced online and window installations across the city that were completely viewable from the outdoors. We created a series of icons and instructions outlining the COVID-19 precautions to help attendees maneuver exhibitions, events, and installations.



Distanced & Digital Badge



Attendees will be required to wear face masks.



Hand sanitizer will be provided



A digital alternative will be available online.



Physical distancing measures will be followed.



Exhibition/Installation viewable from outdoors.



# Launch Party

The must-attend digital bash kicked off the 10-day “distanced and digital” Festival, hosting 200 virtual guests, which included artists, designers, and creative enthusiasts.

The party featured a virtual performance by artist Maylee Todd, with sets by DJs Fly Lady Di and Sigourney Beaver.

Organized by DesignTO. Supported by Salex.



2021 Launch Party Performer Maylee Todd, photo courtesy of Maylee Todd





# Exchange Piece

The digital exhibition 'Exchange Piece' explores collaboration as an act of care through an exchange between 10 early career and senior artists and designers working in pairs to explore how care in the creative process affects the way we relate and position ourselves to what we create.

Participating artists and designers included Khadija Aziz, Jennifer Chan, Leigh Dotey, Laura Kay Keeling, Kristine Mifsud, Moira Ness, Tiffany Shaw-Collinge, Rhonda Weppler and Trevor Mahovsky, Amy Wong, and Florence Yee and Arezu Salamzadeh as the Rice Water collective.

Curated by DesignTO, co-presented with Harbourfront Centre, and supported by Lemay.

© Harbourfront centre

**lemay**

'Please Help Yourself' by Florence Yee and Arezu Salamzadeh as the Rice Water Collective





# Exchange Piece - Window

As an extension of the 'Exchange Piece' exhibition, this window installation features the work of one pair of collaborators: Khadija Aziz and Laura Kay Keeling, and the solo work of Laura Kay Keeling, reflecting on labour, love, and acts of care that have become especially prominent in our communities over the last year.

Curated by DesignTO, co-presented with Harbourfront Centre, and supported by Lemay.

© Harbourfront centre

lemay

'Layers of Labour of Love' by Khadija Aziz & Laura Kay Keeling





# Work/Life

'Work/Life' is an annual exhibition that explores new prototypes for contemporary life. The sixth year of the exhibition showcased the work of eight Canadian designers and studios including, Maha Alavi, Jeremy Labelle Design, Brandon Lim, Noda Designs, notoro, Ava Nourbaran, Plural, and Superwise.

'Work/Life in Conversation', an online event featuring all 8 designers talking about their prototypes, working from home, and new opportunities in a post-COVID world, reached 321 views.

Organized by DesignTO in partnership with Umbra.



'Work/Life' group photograph. Photograph courtesy of Umbra





# Ask Me Anything: Jamie Wolfond

'Ask Me Anything' is a new online program launched by DesignTO, featuring Toronto-based designer Jamie Wolfond as its first guest. Its aim is to create direct access to a designer, and foster learning about design and the design process between guest designers and the public.

Kicking off in January 2021 during DesignTO's annual festival, Jamie Wolfond (founder of Jamie Wolfond Studio and Good Thing) held 30-minute private online meetings with anyone who was interested in speaking with him.

Conversations: 11

Jamie Wolfond. Photograph courtesy of Jamie Wolfond.





# DesignTO Symposium: Towards Inclusive Design

DesignTO's sixth annual symposium brought nine multidisciplinary experts together for an inspiring virtual discussion about Inclusive Design, covering inclusive education, the business case for inclusion, accessible technologies, co-creation, decolonization and other thought-provoking topics.

Speakers included Andrew Do, Annie Jean-Baptiste, Lee Jones, Matthew Hickey, Maya Mahgoub Desai and Veronica Madonna, Jahan Martin, Shelagh McCartney, and Rain Michaels.

Organized by DesignTO. Supported by BDP Quadrangle, with media partner AZURE Magazine.

Online views: 453

**BDP.**  
**Quadrangle**

**AZURE**

Symposium speaker headshots courtesy of the speakers





# DesignTO Talks: Anony & Rainville Sangaré

Virtual attendees joined design expert Catherine Osborne for a conversation with Christian Lo of lighting studio Anony, and Lambert Rainville and Nicolas Sangaré of multidisciplinary studio Rainville Sangaré, on the occasion of their installations at EQ3's King East showroom.

Organized by DesignTO in partnership with EQ3.

Online views: 230

## EQ3

Screenshot from DesignTO Talks: Anony & Rainville Sangaré virtual talk





# Healing Spaces: A panel discussion on art, design and architecture as opportunities to heal

Moderated by The Site's Carey Van der Zalm, the 'Healing Spaces' panel discussion touched on colonial legacies, urban planning, and communal and community spaces. Speakers Gloria Alamrew, Sechaba Maape, and Florence Yee examined the different ways in which ideas about healing shape the work they do as artists, writers, designers and architects.

Organized by DesignTO in partnership with The Site Magazine.

Online views: 460

**-SITE**

Screenshot from 'Healing Spaces' virtual talk





# Ideas Forum: Community Care

This event featured five fast-paced and fun presentations exploring the themes and questions from DesignTO's thematic exhibition on care in collaboration, creative practice and community.

Speakers included Jennifer Chan, Steve Hilditch, Tiffany Shaw-Collinge, Graeme Stewart & Ya'el Santopinto (ERA Architects), Herb Sweeney (Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates).

Organized by DesignTO in partnership with the Toronto Society of Architects.

Online views: 460



Screenshot from 'Ideas Forum: Community Care' virtual talk





# The Commons: Public Space, Public Art

DesignTO Youth is a community engagement program which offers youth access to creative disciplines and professionals. Delivered in the form of a six-week residency program plus DesignTO Festival exhibition, youth artists are given opportunities to engage with and discuss civic issues and public space through tours, talks and workshops.

Participating artists included Sol Amarillo, Aidan Dolan, Priya "Pree" Rehal, Danielle Tullo, Maneesa Veeravel, and Lana Yuan.

Organized by DesignTO in partnership with SKETCH Arts. Supported by the City of Toronto (Economic Development & Culture) and Shopify. Venue provided by Stackt.



'The Commons: Public Space, Public Art'. Photograph by Christine Lim





# DesignTO Awards

The 9th annual DesignTO Awards presented by Herman Miller recognized design excellence within the Festival with 21 awards.

This year's jurors were Stephanie Hosein, Associate, Omar Gandhi Architect Inc.; Zviko Mhakayakora, curator, creative manager and graphic designer; Nadira Narine, glass artist and designer; and Chris Rowe, Collection Sales Lead, Herman Miller Canada

**HermanMiller**

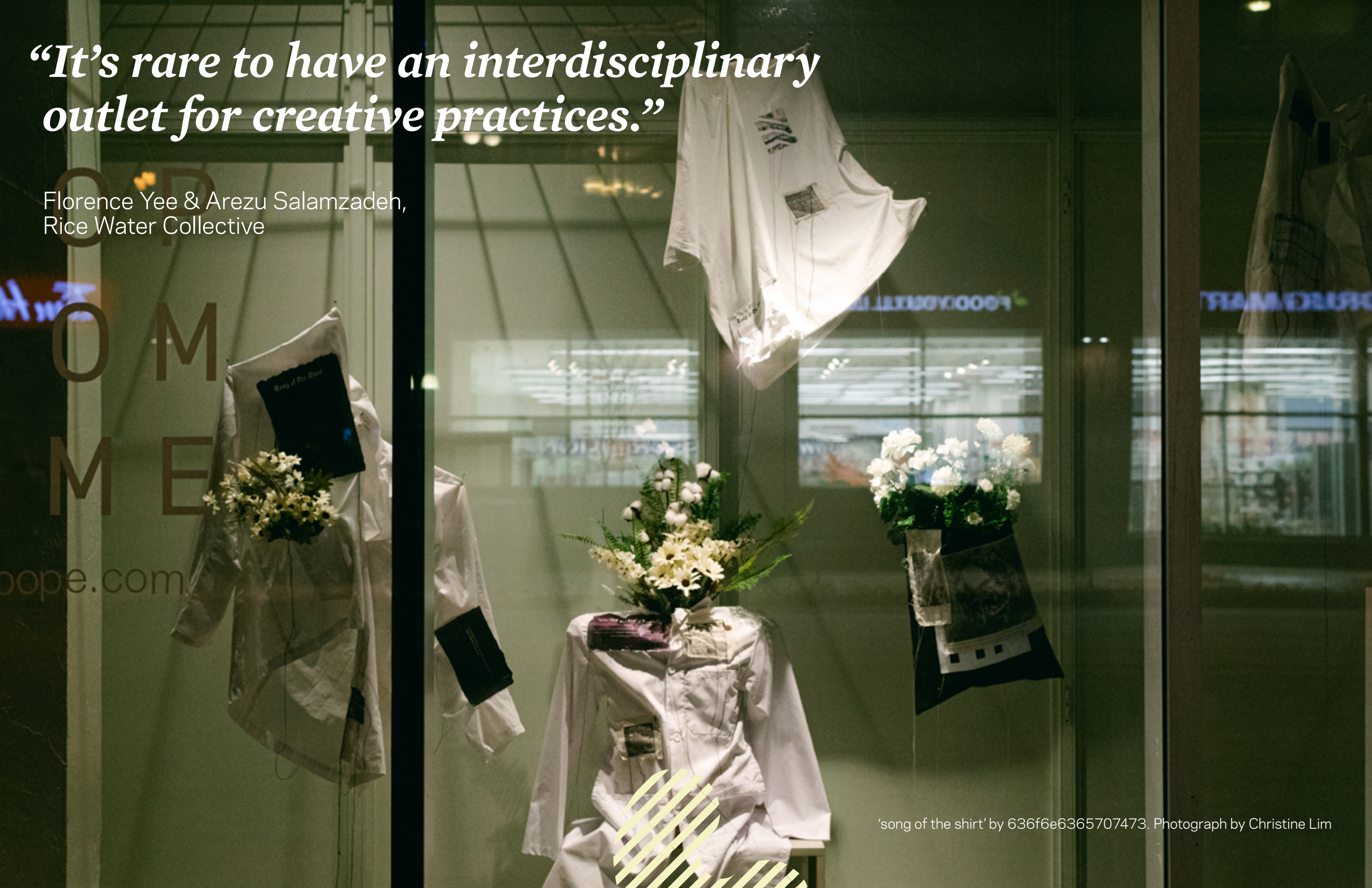
People's Choice: Favourite New Work - 'Between the Suns' by Rachel Miller, photograph courtesy of FENSTER.





*“It’s rare to have an interdisciplinary outlet for creative practices.”*

Florence Yee & Arezu Salamzadeh,  
Rice Water Collective



'song of the shirt' by 636f6e6365707473. Photograph by Christine Lim



# The Team

---

## Executive

Jeremy Vandermeij, Executive Director  
Deborah Wang, Artistic Director  
Michael R. Madjus, Head of Marketing  
Robyn Wilcox, Head of Programming

## Operations + Development

Emily Christie  
Anna Kao  
Simon Mhanna  
Anna Vander Meij

## Programming

Carmen Douville  
Amanda Low  
Kelsey Miner  
Olga Klosowski Schellenberg  
Safoura Zahedi

## Marketing

Carmel Garvez  
Kerala Woods  
Nadia Yau

## Brand + Design

aftermodern.lab inc., Illustration, Visual  
Communications, Web Design  
Kenson Chan, Web Design  
Mike Spears, App/Mobile Design

## Public Relations

Brill Communications

## Board of Directors

Ilan Ishai  
Leslie Jen  
Jessica Kamphorst  
Zviko Mhakayakora  
Julian Mills  
Shaun Moore, Chair  
Catherine Osborne  
Christy Thompson

As of February 1, 2021

## Founders

Joy Charbonneau  
Shaun Moore  
Katherine Morley  
Julie Nicholson  
Jeremy Vandermeij  
Deborah Wang  
Christina Zeidler

## Address

DesignTO  
PO Box 31027 College Square  
Toronto ON  
M6G 4A7

## designto.org

hello@designto.org

## Data Sources

DesignTO Festival Survey, DesignTO  
Attendance Records, MRP Report, City  
of Toronto Signalized Intersection Traffic  
Data, Google Analytics, Facebook,  
Twitter, and Instagram