

Table of Contents

3	Directors' Message
4	About DesignTO
6	Purpose, Mission, Vision
7	About Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
9	Organization Reach
11	Festival Reach
12	We are Toronto
13	2024 Audience Survey Results
16	Festival Map
18	Partners + Sponsors

Year-Round ProjectsFestival Week ProjectsDesignTO Team



Directors' Message

Dear DesignTO Community,

We hope this letter finds you well and that you are feeling inspired by the work that we do.

DesignTO was created to bring people together to co-design a better future. Our mission is to curate exhibitions, presentations and educational programming to increase the public's knowledge and appreciation of design and its role in creating a sustainable, just and joyful world. Over the last 14 years, we've realized our mission through hundreds of public-facing projects and programs, working with over 6,500 artists and designers, to reach over 1 million visitors.

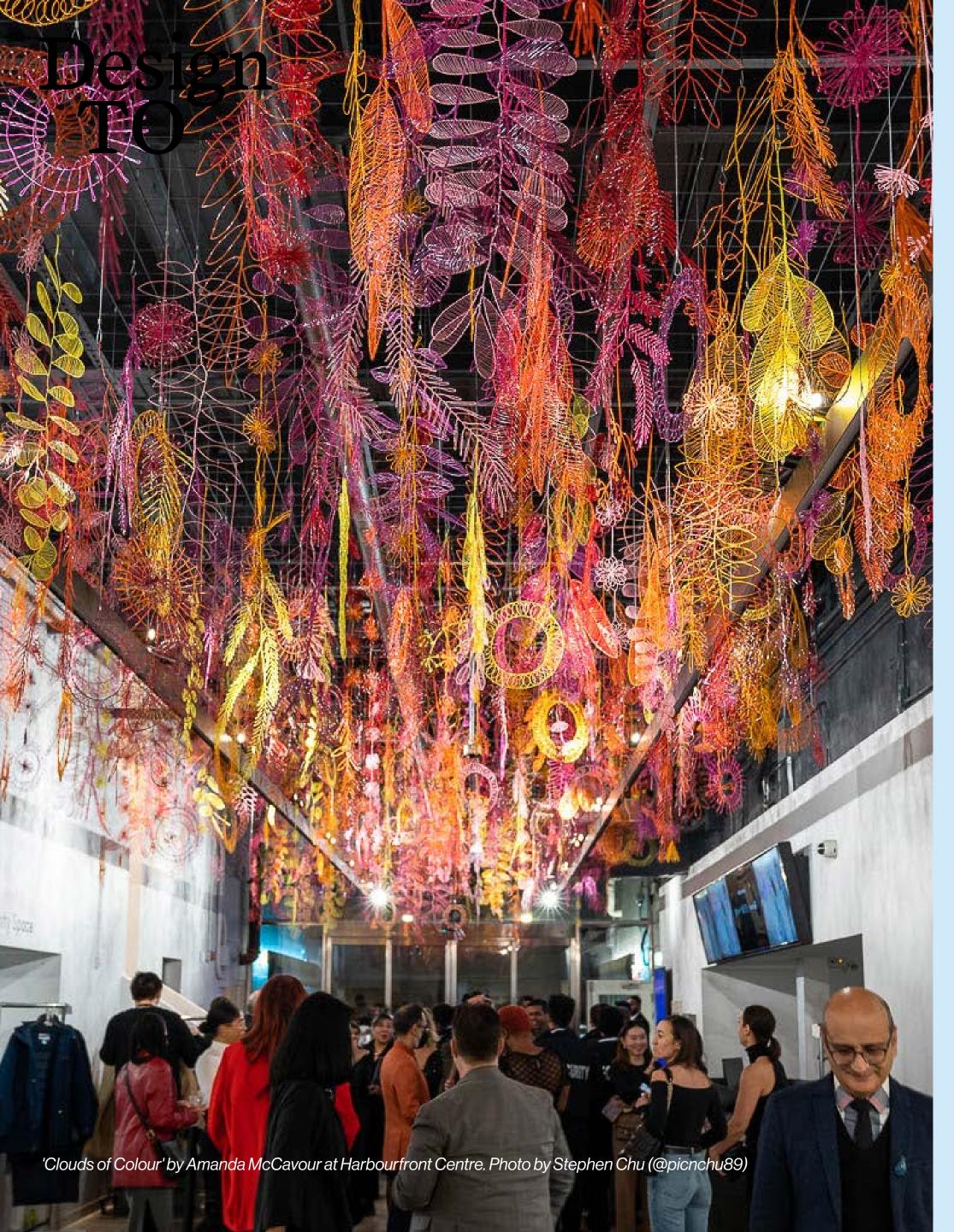
When co-founder Christina Zeidler described the DesignTO Festival as a big party where everyone is invited, she was spoton. She also called the Festival an anti-loneliness machine, which is a beautiful way of speaking about community and belonging. Our annual festival not only solidifies design's importance in Toronto's cultural landscape, but it truly brings

people together to do something larger than each of us. Sharing, thinking, making, learning. It's all better when many voices come together.

As an organization, we remain dedicated to our values of being authentic, equitable, local, and just. We understand that there is still much to be done, but we are confident in our ability to make a positive impact in Toronto and beyond through our public programming and storytelling. We live our values through how we work, who we work with, and what we produce.

Approaching our 15th birthday in 2025, we want to extend our deep thanks for your continued support, collaboration, and encouragement. We can only do this together.

With gratitude,
Deborah and Jeremy



About DesignTO

DesignTO is a non-profit arts organization that curates exhibitions, presentations and educational programming to increase the public's knowledge and appreciation of design and its role in creating a sustainable, just and joyful world.

DesignTO is known for creating a platform for independent artists and designers, through editorial features such as the 'Designer Spotlights' and 'Insider' series, programs such as DesignTO Youth, online talks such as 'In Conversation' and 'Shelf Life', and most notably the DesignTO Festival, Canada's largest annual design festival celebrating design as a multidisciplinary form of thinking and making.

Over the last 14 years, the DesignTO Festival has welcomed over 1 million visitors, showcased the work of over 6,500 artists and designers, and reached over 2 billion people through print and digital media.

"Undoubtedly, DesignTO owns the cultural landscape of Toronto in January! Their dedication always delivers an outstanding, inclusive, joyful festival. Harbourfront values our long-term relationship with DesignTO and is privileged to co-present their annual thematic exhibition, 'Future Matters'. It was a distinct pleasure to host their extraordinary festival Launch Party that brought together over 1,000 people to celebrate design."

- Melanie Egan, Director of Craft & Design, Harbourfront Centre

Testimonials

"[DesignTO] is important because we need more conversations and events revolving around design in order to increase our criticality of what is designed and built around us. It also provides the space for young emerging designers to exhibit their work and to expose their work to a larger audience. Great work y'all!!"

- Reza Nik, Founding Director, SHEEP, 'SHEEP Radio: DesignTO Festival Edition'



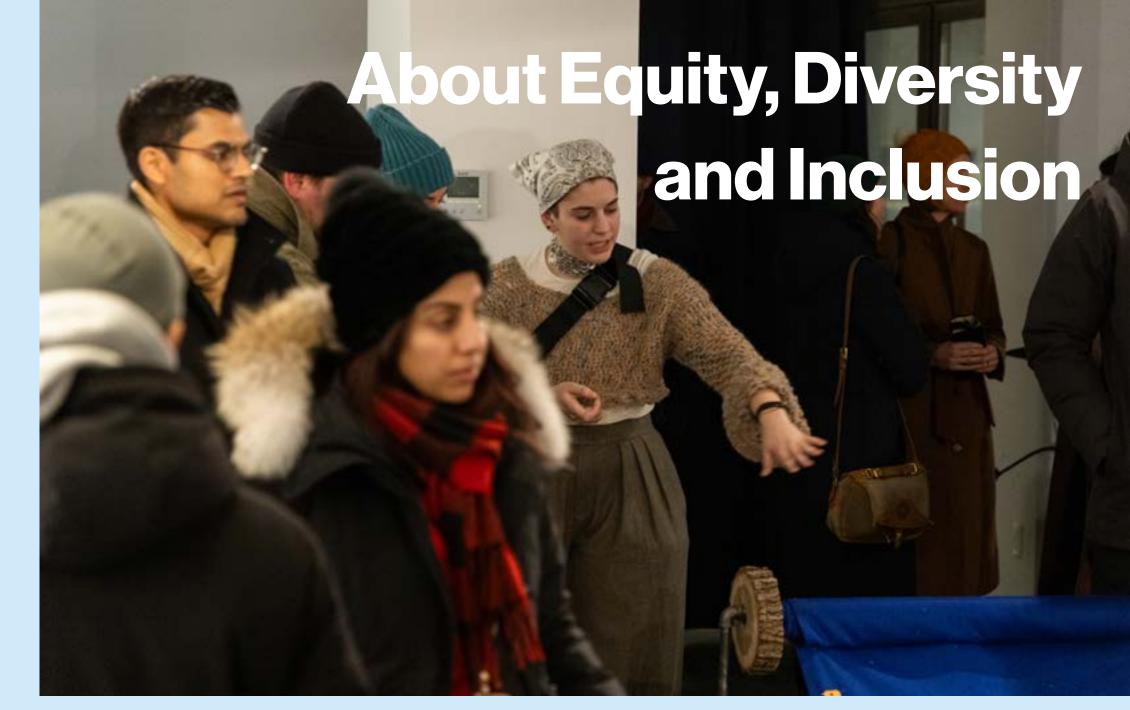
Founded by a team of diverse creatives (women, youth, LGBTQ+, BIPOC), DesignTO continues this leadership with a multi-generational, intersectional team, from many places. We aim to mirror Toronto's vibrant diversity, with equity-seeking representation.

• **Team:** 100% • **Board:** 71%

Exhibitors: 52%Audience: 72%

This representation fuels our mission to reflect Toronto's creative landscape. While proud of our progress, we acknowledge there's more to do. We're actively working to increase representation and accessibility for all.

*Equity-seeking groups are communities that experience significant collective barriers in participating in society. This could include attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation and transgender status, etc. Equity-seeking groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation. (Source: University of British Columbia, Equity & Inclusion Office.)





Testimonials

"I love how diverse each of the events that I went to were! I'm a visible minority and at no point did I feel "othered" and everyone was friendly and curious which gave the events such a cool and relaxed vibe."

- Aynne King, Festival Attendee

"I'm truly grateful to join this experience and be part of this community."

- Ehiko Odeh, Artist, 'Golden Beauty Supply'

"What inspired me to participate was DesignTO's initiative to bridge gaps between art, design and creative placemaking, creating opportunities for dialogue and exchange of ideas about what it means to design a better future for artists and communities globally."

- Oliviana Cinco, Artist, 'Santuario'

- 55 Youth served (96 since 2019)
- 17 DesignTO Projects in 2023-2024 (150+ since 2011)
- 15 Artist & Designer Editorial Features (60+ since 2011)
- 687 DesignTO Members (1,144 since 2016)
- 563 Views of online DesignTO Talks (9K+ since 2020)
- 49K Tourists (207K tourists since 2014)
- \$31.4M in Tourism Spending (\$120M since 2014)
- 140K+ Website Visits (1M+ since 2013)

Organization Reach

Brand Impressions

(2.6B+ since 2011)

\$2.6M

AVE

(advertising value equivalency)

20 H Newsletter subscribers 33.5K Instagram followers

23,2K Facebook followers 4.2 4-12 4-14 LinkedIn followers

339 KH X (formerly Twitter) followers 100+ Free events and exhibitions (1.2K+ since 2011)

500+ Artists & designers (6.5K+ since 2011)

170K+ Festival Attendees (800K+ since 2011)

49K+ Tourists 158% ↑ in tourists from previous year

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Design Team n	TO nembers		lustry of the De	signTO Tea	am and 52	2% of visito	ors are fro	m de	sign, arts and c	ulture.	
		Ag 55%	e of the De	esignTO Te	am and 58	3% of visite	ors are 39	and	under.		





2024 Audience Survey Results

Contributed to the local economy.

'Material Memories: Don Kwan' at Craft Ontario. Photo by Garry Bakuniec



"I loved seeing all the exhibits dedicated to taking care of community. From 'A Caring Design Lab' to 'Connecting Through Dumplings', I really think we needed these types of exhibitions this year."

- Martin Gomes, DesignTO Awards Juror

"I've always thought it's been a great opportunity for local designers to see each other's work and potentially get to know each other. I've met some interesting people at these events, and I'm happy to be able to continue this for 2024."

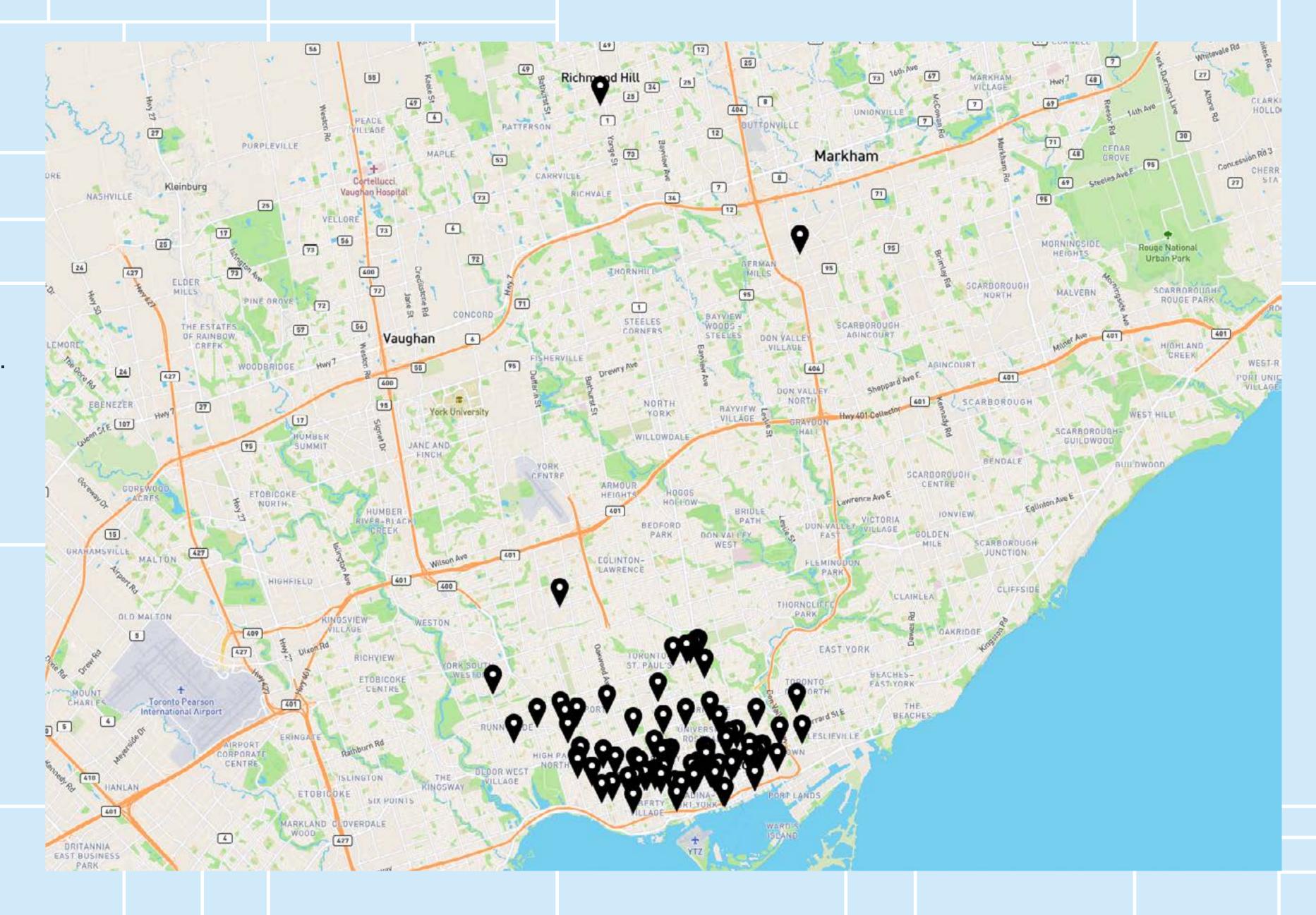
- Christian Maidankine, Designer, 'Carriers of Everyday Things'

"DesignTO is important in bringing together the community so that we can learn from each other, and bridging the gap between art and design."

- Maryam Mohamed, Artist & DesignTO Youth Program Participant

The 2024 DesignTO Festival presented 100+ in-person events, exhibitions and window installations across Toronto. This year, the Festival's reach extended beyond the borders of the City with projects in Richmond Hill and Markham.

Festival Map





Partners + Sponsors

DesignTO would like to thank the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, Ontario Arts Council, Government of Ontario, and our corporate sponsors and partners.











Partners



• Harbourfront centre





mason studio.









Supporters

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entro KPMB





Event Sponsors



yabu pushelberg



Partners + Sponsors

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Studio

v2com

Association Partners











Cultural Partners







[WANTED DESIGN]

Thank You

Crow Douglas Design Studio





DesignTO Blog Editorial

Through editorial features, DesignTO has created a digital platform that has promoted over 50 artists and designers on the DesignTO Blog. Primary editorial features include 'Designer Spotlights', and the 'Expert' and 'Design101' series.

Designer Spotlights

Through the 'Designer Spotlight' series, readers have the chance to learn more about the artists and designers that make up Toronto's vibrant creative community.

Design 101 Series

The 'DesignTO 101' series aims to provide valuable insights on the role of design, craft, and art in promoting sustainability, social justice, and joy.

Expert Series

The 'Expert Series' invites experts from various disciplines to share unique knowledge and information.

Insider Series

The 'Insider Series' takes our readers into the spaces and places often hidden from public view. We explore the homes and studios of artists and designers in Toronto and abroad.

Meet Series

With a diverse range of community members, the 'Meet' series introduces members of the DesignTO Team, Festival Week volunteers, DesignTO Members and more.

DesignTO Membership Program

DesignTO Membership fuels our mission for a better world by connecting members with a passionate design community, exclusive events, and valuable resources. Membership fees support accessible design experiences for everyone.

2023-2024 Membership Events:

- The Drake Hotel Modern Wing Tour
- Members 4 Members
- Tour of 'The Built Environment' Exhibitions at Gladstone House

Currently there are 687 DesignTO Members.

DesignTO Youth

DesignTO Youth is a community engagement program which offers equityseeking youth access to creative disciplines and professionals, concluding in a public exhibition of their work at the DesignTO Festival.

For 2023-2024, DesignTO Youth collaborates with JAYU, a charitable organization that shares human rights stories through the arts and engaging conversation. This year the program engages 55 equity-deserving youth creatives participating in a six-week workshop series plus DesignTO Festival exhibition. Youth explore themes of identity, resilience, and cultural heritage through artistic mediums. Expanding the program further enriches its reach and impact.

Inspired by talks and workshops from wolari studio (Isabelle Ofume and Dana M), Jananda Lima, Zahra Siddiqui, Alita (Alexandra Gonzalez) and Whak&Mo, youth were prompted to consider the complex role of artists and designers in society and how critical thinking can be used to generate creative solutions.

Exhibition: January 19 - March 15, 2024 Annual program launched 2019

Organized by DesignTO in partnership with JAYU, and supported by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, Government of Ontario and Entro. Collision Gallery provided by QuadReal.















CULTURELLES DE L'ONTARIO

entro





esignTO Youth: touchbase' at Collision Gallery. Photo by Cherry Wu

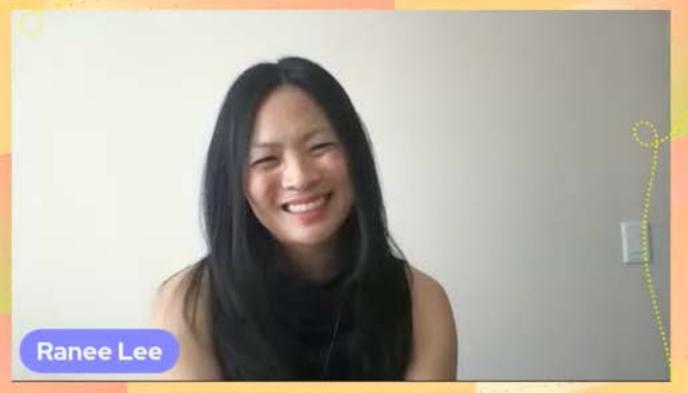
In Conversation Series

Spotlighting designers from Canada and the UK,
DesignTO in partnership with University of the Arts
London (UAL) and OCAD University presented a new
six-part online talk series in 2021 called 'In Conversation'.
As the title suggests, faculty, students and alumni from
UAL and OCAD were in conversation with each other and
industry experts to discuss contemporary issues, research
and creation in design.

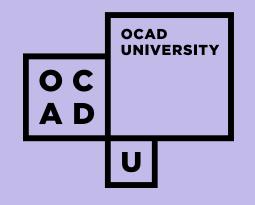
2023 speakers included Tnachon Benjapipatkul, Anna Horváth, and Ranee Lee, in the last of 10 online events.









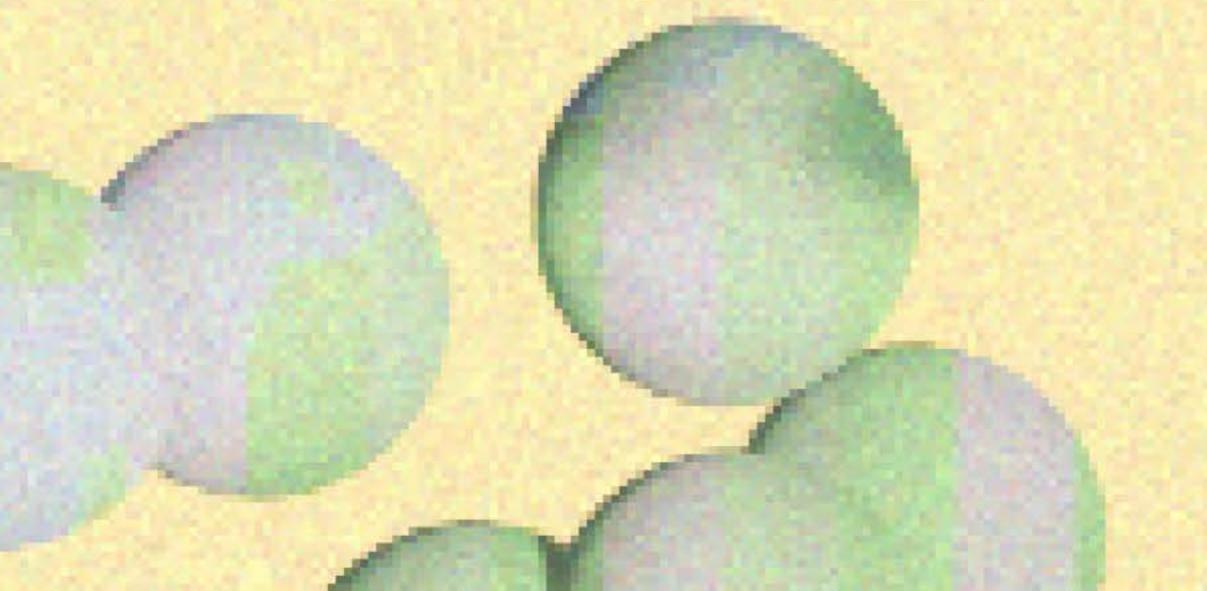




Shelf Life

September 20, 2023

'Shelf Life' is an online panel discussion about the state of publishing in architecture and design, featuring editorial directors and writers Ashley Simone and Brian Sholis, and designer and writer Wendy W Fok. It takes a deep dive into architecture books, exploring the medium of print media, the oscillating nature of books as objects and vehicles of storytelling and documentation, and the question of shelf life: how books stay relevant and sustain conversations.





As curators and collaborators, Patricia Ritacca and Shannon Linde discuss their distinct and shared experiences in the arts, including their mutual goal to give more support and visibility to artists. They talk about building personal art collections, but also about their work as curators of collections: acquiring art for organizations, collecting and loan strategies, and how to work with their "client."



"DesignTO helps bring attention to the vibrant and thriving ecosystem of artists who are practicing here in Toronto. Not only does it provide much needed coverage and promotion of these artists, but it gives them an opportunity to gain prestige for their work by offering recognition in the form of awards. I received favourable press coverage for my film in 2020 when it was released, and it emphasized to me the importance of participating in art-centric festivals so that my work can be enjoyed by a larger following outside of a commercial context."

- Emily Switzer, Artist, 'Crystal Abyss'

Testimonials

"DesignTO stands at the forefront of Toronto's cultural scene, transforming our winter landscape into a vibrant showcase of design. It's not just a festival; it's a movement towards showing how design can make a more sustainable, equitable city. Through creativity, they inspire change, engage communities, and highlight design's crucial role in our future."

- Mayor Olivia Chow, City of Toronto



'Cocktails & Conversation' is an A&D event at hollis+morris' new 14,000 square foot Toronto production studio, where furniture and lighting are designed, prototyped, manufactured and showcased on-site.

On the occasion of their 10th anniversary, architects, interior designers and design writers are invited to join hollis+morris founder Mischa Couvrette and architect Jonathan Mandeville of Passage Studio (Halifax) for a cocktail and conversation about the design of the studio, including a preview of the design of Mischa's new house, designed and built in tandem with the workspace.



DesignTO Awards

The DesignTO Awards recognize design excellence at the DesignTO Festival, Canada's leading and largest annual design festival that celebrates design as a multidisciplinary form of creative thinking and making. Supported by KPMB, the DesignTO Awards celebrates the talent, expression, and diversity of designers from Toronto and abroad.

DesignTO recognizes design excellence in the Festival each year with up to 27 DesignTO Awards. An annual jury of designers and industry experts vote for the 'Founders', 'Emerging Artist/Designer', and 'Best Product/Object', as well as three 'Best in Festival' categories and three 'Juror's Choice' each, while the public votes for three 'People's Choice' awards.

Jurors: Alexandra 'Alita' Gonzalez-Vučina (principal and creative lead, AxD), Kendra Jackson (Deputy Editor, Azure Magazine), Martin Gomes (writer and composer; 2023 Award winner), Myriam Tawadros (Senior Associate, KPMB Architects), Renée Powell-Hines (executive member, BAIDA), and Quan Thai (Associate, SvN Architects + Planners; founder, Never Only Architecture).

KPMB

Kick off the 14th DesignTO Festival at our official Launch Party! Mix and mingle at the event that brings Toronto's creative community together. As a fundraiser for the non-profit Festival, all proceeds will go to help achieve our purpose to bring people together to design a better future.

This year, our Launch Party is taking over Harbourfront Centre on Toronto's waterfront! Experience a one-night-only immersive multimedia installation by Toronto-based elsewhere Collective. Be the first to see 'Future Matters', a DesignTO-curated group exhibition in Gallery 235 featuring the work of eight local and international artists and designers. Explore three new exhibitions across site showcasing works in lighting, sculpture, glass, textiles, ceramics and more. Dance all night to music by DJs Fly Lady Di and Adeola.

The 'DesignTO Festival Launch Party' is organized by DesignTO in partnership with Harbourfront Centre, and supported by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, Government of Ontario and Weston Premium Woods, with media partner AZURE Magazine.

• Harbourfront centre











Join DesignTO for an engaging presentation and discussion with graphic designer and artist Michèle Guevara and interdisciplinary artist Janet Hinkle, whose projects 'Water Weavings' and 'Shifting Grounds' explore the relationship between natural and man-made environments. Moderated by DesignTO Programs Assistant Kikki Guerard, this event seeks to inspire and cultivate awareness of nature's fragility, while creating space for honouring the land and water that surround us.

'DesignTO Talks: Across Land and Water' is organized by DesignTO, and supported by the Trinity Bellwoods BIA, the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund and Government of Ontario.







DesignTO Talks: Across Land and Water

January 21, 2024





DesignTO Talks: Dematerialized

January 24 & 25, 2024

DesignTO's ninth annual symposium brings together eight multidisciplinary experts to explore the complexities of dematerialization in an increasingly digital world. Speakers include Lynne Heller, Austin Houldsworth, Alex Yueyan Li, Neo-Futuristic Walks, Joel Ong, Justin Kyung In Park, Skawennati, and Ruby Thelot, covering such topics as the future of digital artifacts, the ecological impact of computation, spaces for Indigenous self-determination, walking as an immaterial urban practice, material representation in digital environments, and more.

Organized by DesignTO, and supported by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, Government of Ontario, Teknion and EQ Bank, with media partner AZURE Magazine.









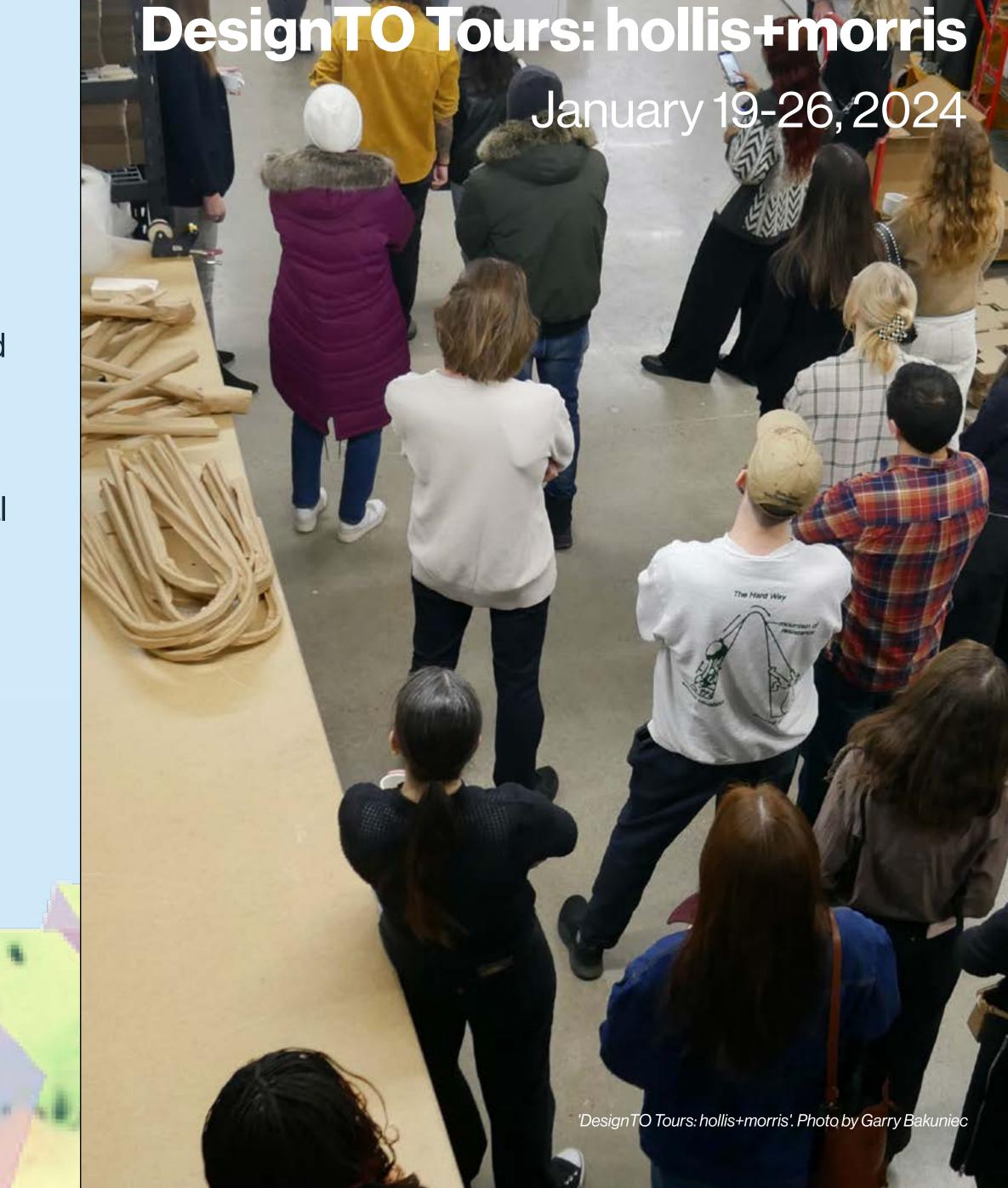


'DesignTO Tours: hollis+morris' is an opportunity to take a deep dive into the new 14,000 square foot Toronto production studio of hollis+morris, where furniture and lighting are designed, prototyped, manufactured and showcased on-site.

As a combo shop, assembly hall, office and showroom overlooking a park, this studio tour and open house provides a behind-the-scenes look at a space for local manufacturing that was designed by architect Jonathan Mandeville of Passage Studio (Halifax) in collaboration with hollis+morris founder Mischa Couvrette. Located in a former Cooper Canada sporting goods factory, both the building and the products made within open up larger conversations about sustainability, Canadian manufacturing and growth.

Organized by DesignTO in partnership with hollis+morris.

hollis+morris



This walking tour invites you to take a closer look at three installations on display in the Yonge + St. Clair neighbourhood. With firsthand insight from the artists and designers behind the projects, delve deeper into the installations, their stories and how they came to be.

The tour starts at 'Santuario' (with Oliviana Cinco) located at 45 St. Clair Avenue West, followed by 'At what point does irrational thought become rational?' (with Eric Lachance), and 'Golden Beauty Supply' (with Ehiko Odeh), all within a short walking distance of each other.

Organized by DesignTO, and supported by the Yonge + St. Clair BIA, the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund and the Government of Ontario.











'Future Matters' is a group exhibition featuring the work of eight local and international artists and designers exploring themes related to material expression, innovation, and environmental sustainability.

Featuring Yassine Ben Abdallah, Nada Al-Obaidi, Safaa Alnabelseya, Sonny Assu, Morgan Possberg Denne, Julia Rose Sutherland, Cole Swanson, and Elaine Whittaker, this multidisciplinary exhibition includes a broad range of works in sculpture, video, installation, photography, and textiles to explore the intersection of traditional and futuristic materials and practices.

Curated by DesignTO, co-presented with Harbourfront Centre, and supported by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, Government of Ontario and Yabu Pushelberg, with media partner AZURE Magazine.

• Harbourfront centre





yabu pushelberg







Ideas Forum: Architecture of Imagined Spaces

January 23, 2024

Organized by DesignTO in partnership with the Toronto Society of Architects, 'Ideas Forum: Architecture of Imagined Spaces' features four fast-paced presentations (20 slides shown for 20 seconds each) exploring the intersection of real and virtual built environments with Sara Grimes, Vivian Lee, Jay Pooley, and You+Pea (Luke Pearson and Sandra Youkhana).

How can we think architecturally in digital realms? What are the consequences of inhabiting virtual worlds? How can technology help expand our (architectural) imagination? What are the implications of the shrinking gap between virtual and non-virtual worlds on labour, safety, and authorship?

Organized by DesignTO in partnership with the Toronto Society of Architects, with media partner AZURE Magazine.



Lucid Ideas

January 19 - February 16, 2024

Showcasing the work of designers from Canada and abroad, 'Lucid Ideas' is a group prototype exhibition exploring translucency through concept, material and form. The exhibition features new work by Annaka Hoelk, Atelier Fomenta (Florence Barnabé, Julia Arvelo and Muriel Bentolila), Hsiao-Chien Hung, Lara Knutson Studio, Jordi Lopez Aguilo, Mark Malecki, NONUMENT (Dom Cheng & Fallon Robar), Polymetis (Michaela MacLeod & Nicholas Croft), Stephanie Singh, and Kenyon Yeh.

As a concept, translucency offers ambiguity, a sense of illusion and complexity. As a material, it allows light to pass through, while scattering or reflecting it, to blur or obscure. Through material and form we can use translucent properties to create unique visual outcomes that conceal, diffuse, or reveal. In doing so, we can engage with dimension and space. From glass and resin to paper and plastic,

every material can be manipulated in some way to design what is seen and how it's perceived. To what extent can the process of obscuring light be transformative? This exhibition highlights various examples of how translucency can be considered in homeware design.

Previous editions of 'Lucid Ideas' were 'Purpose & Play', 'Work/Life' and 'Compact Living'. A jury will recognize best-in-show with a Best Product award and a cash prize. Visitors to the exhibition will be able to cast their vote to award Fan Favourite in-store or online.

Organized by DesignTO in partnership with Umbra, and supported by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund and Government of Ontario, with media partner AZURE Magazine.









To kick off the second season of SHEEEP Radio's EX•PER•I•MENT•ER•S, join DesignTO for an open discussion with two mid-career and two emerging designers as they reflect on the realities of their design practices within and outside of architecture, featuring adé abegunde, Lara Hassani, Michael Lee Poy, and Reza Nik.

EX•PER•I•MENT•ER•S by SHEEEP Radio is a Q+A style monthly Instagram Live series featuring conversations with thinkers, doers and makers reflecting on their career paths. Hosted by artist and architect Reza Nik, each session is structured by the same six questions. For the DesignTO Festival, this will be SHEEEP Radio's first in-person discussion. Topics will reflect and expand on past conversations, such as realizing personal aspirations while navigating the binding environment of the industry, embracing change, and adapting to explore new pathways.

Organized by DesignTO in partnership with SHEEEP, and supported by the Government of Ontario. Venue provided by HomeCourt.









Testimonials

"We need more appreciation of design and a reason to get out and explore the city in the winter, thank you DesignTO."

- Dustin Mac, Urban Planner, Festival Attendee

"I am incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of the DesignTO 2024 Awards Jury. Getting the chance to explore a wide range of work from the talented individuals who participated was an experience that has deeply influenced my view on public art, and I'll take these feelings and the passion I witnessed forward with me."

- Renée Powell-Hines, DesignTO Awards Juror



DesignTO Team

Executive

Jeremy Vandermeij, Executive Director Deborah Wang, Artistic Director

Michael R. Madjus, Head of Marketing

Robyn Wilcox, Head of Programming

Operations + Development

Anna Kao

Diana Nigmatullina

Emily Christie

Simon Mhanna

Programming

adé abegunde

Kikki Guerard

Olga Klosowski Schellenberg

Safoura Zahedi (on leave)

Marketing

Kerala Woods

Nabila Basher

Wing Lam Leung

Tory Healy

Zhuyun Wu

Brand + Design

aftermodern.lab, Graphic Design

Aaryan Pashine and Amir Khoshnevis,

2024 Look & Feel Designers

Kenson Chan, Web Design

Mike Spears, App/Mobile Design

Board of Directors

Ilan Ishai

Leslie Jen

Jessica Kamphorst

Lee-Roy Madzima

Zviko Mhakayakora

Julian Mills

Shaun Moore, Chair

Catherine Osborne

As of February 1, 2024

Founders

Joy Charbonneau

Shaun Moore

Katherine Morley

Julie Nicholson

Jeremy Vandermeij

Deborah Wang

Christina Zeidler

Address

DesignTO

PO Box 31027 College Square

Toronto ON

M6G4A7

designto.org

hello@designto.org

Data Sources

Brand Impressions, DesignTO Festival

Survey, DesignTO Attendance Records,

Buffer Analytics, MRP Report, TREIM,

City of Toronto Signalized Intersection

Traffic Data, Google Analytics, Facebook,

X (formerly Twitter), Instagram