



top 5 by design

ELEMENTE REPORTS ON FIVE OF THE COUNTRIES HOTTEST UP-AND-COMING DESIGNERS

Words :: Andrea Cox, Todd Hirsch

IN ELEMENTE'S FIRST REPORT ON UP AND COMING DESIGNERS TO WATCH, we focus on 5 of Canada's hottest rising stars. From architecture to fashion to mixed media to industrial design, this group of talented individuals are making waves in their respective fields.

Left Page :: Gambier Residence
Gambier Island 2000 SQFT Under construction

Right Page :: Bonetti Residence
West Vancouver BC 5000 SQFT Completed 2005

BATTERSBY & HOWAT
ARCHITECTS :: VANCOUVER



VANCOUVER'S DAVID BATTERSBY AND HEATHER HOWAT practice relevant architecture. At least this is the term they have coined to describe their work.

"We don't do intellectual architecture. We are more pragmatic here. We are committed to houses that are representative of the client. For us it is about the process," explains Battersby.

The couple teamed up in the 90s when they were both attending the University of Manitoba where Howat was studying interior design and Battersby environmental studies with a major in landscape. After their undergraduate degree, they both earned a Masters in Architecture from the University of Nova Scotia. Marriage and a move to the west coast provided this creative duo with the impetus to merge their talents into a collaborative design studio.

Twelve years later these two are no longer married, but their friendship and design partnership is as strong as ever. In fact, they recently built a live/work residence in a rather depleted area of East Vancouver. Referred to as a refreshingly positive vision by John Ota in his

story in the July 2004 issue of *Canadian Architect Magazine*, the space incorporates two separate living units and a 400 square foot office space that overlooks a zen like garden.

In keeping with this gentrification trend, Battersby and Howat have found that there is a huge demand for smaller architecturally designed homes in neighborhoods that wouldn't necessarily showcase these kinds of designs. "For many of our clients, it is a stretch for them financially, but they really love architecture," says Battersby.

Over the years their work has earned them two Canadian Architect Awards of Excellence and the Ronald J. Thom Award for Early Design Achievement. Their designs have appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, *Western Living Magazine*, *Azure Magazine*, *Canadian House and Home Magazine*, *Wallpaper Magazine* and a special collective entitled *Young Architects of America*. ©



JOANNA WALA

FASHION DESIGNER :: EDMONTON



Across :: Sofiss Collection
Images :: Ashley Armstrong (kinetic studios)

"I WAS BORN WITH the 'bug' to create," says Joanna Wala. "I've been dressing my dolls for exotic trips and over the top parties ever since I can remember.

"I had no idea a person could actually make a living at this!" exclaims Wala.

Having set her dolls aside long ago, Wala started the Sofiss fashion label in the fall of 2003. Since then she has been establishing a name for herself as one of western Canada's most innovative, up-and-coming fashion designers.

"Emotional, intuitive, intellectual," says Wala, selecting three adjectives to describe her approach to fashion design. Clearly, all three words hit the mark. The Sofiss line is very contemporary, yet not trendy. The emphasis is on beautiful, luxurious fabrics that shimmer with elegance.

Much of the fabric that Wala incorporates into her pieces is from Italy, a fact that has earned her much support from the Italian Consulate and the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Edmonton. But even though the fabric is foreign, her designs are 100 percent Canadian.

"Creativity knows no boundaries and so place is irrelevant," says the Edmonton-based designer when asked about establishing a career in Alberta's capital city. "Initially, it's a challenge to get people to take you seriously. After all, Edmonton is not exactly known as a fashion mecca."

"But, being based in Edmonton is also an enormous opportunity precisely because there hasn't been anyone before me—there is no pressure or comparison," says Wala. "And I don't have several dozen other designers to compete with for exposure."

Wala's designs are definitely for the independent woman who isn't interested in throw-away fashion. Perhaps in this manner, the intellectual aspect of Wala's design is most evident. Her pieces seem destined to become those timeless classics—the ones women hold onto season after season, never relegated to the back of the closet. ©



ADRIEAN KOLERIC

INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER :: EDMONTON



IT'S DIFFICULT to pin down the design style of Adriean Koleric, the talented industrial designer from Edmonton.

His pieces range from simple, minimalist picture frames shaped like giant Popsicle sticks, to a gracefully curved, hot-pink stand up mailbox. Although his pieces are all unique, they all have one thing in common: each one surprises the viewer. It's part Japanimation, part Amish practical and part Alice in Wonderland.

Adriean finds inspiration everywhere he looks, from the back of a cereal box to his son's Matchbox cars, which he admits to having stolen from the toy box and set on his desk to inspire him. "Lately I've also been enamoured with what graphic designers and animators are doing these days. From Mini Cooper ads to packaging for designer toys, there's such an abundance of art in front of our eyes."

His works have found their ways into several international design magazines, and Adriean has already received a fair amount of critical acclaim and design awards. He is actively involved in the IDEA Group (the Industrial Designers of

Edmonton Association), a creative bunch of designers and thinkers who are helping put Edmonton on the map for its unique approach to design.

Some of Adriean's pieces, especially the Monster lamp, are designed to act as a palate for other designers, or even those with any sort of artistic bent, to add their own unique flair. "With the Monster lamp, I've created a 'platform piece' to provide artists and illustrators a surface to customize as they see fit," says Adriean. Motomichi Nakamura, a Brooklyn-based animator, created the first customized Monster piece. Two more are currently in the works with artists from Chicago and Edmonton based illustrator, both scheduled to be released in 2008 releases.

"I like the idea of inspiring someone to go out and do one better than me," says Adriean. "If I've pushed someone to prove me a hack and produce something fantastic, then I'm happy. That's where I like to describe my work as *Attainable Design*." ©

Above :: Sugar Lounger by ITEM, 2004
Based on automotive designs from the Mini Cooper and Vespa Scooter. Inspired through the simple effect of a two tone color palette.

Below :: Monster Lamp by ITEM, 2006
It's a piece of furniture as well as a character at the same time without being too playful to the point of cheapening the design.



LUANNE MARTINEAU

MIXED MEDIA :: VANCOUVER

KNOWN FOR HER HYBRID hand spun wool sculptures, Luanne Martineau incorporates domestic mediums to reference concepts of the feminine, the history of art and various social trends and inequities - in particular the relationship between regressive and progressive activity.

Her work combines high modernism with abstracted aspects of the grotesque to comment on things like the long term exclusion of females in the practice of art. "Child rearing, biology, finance, these are the things that have historically kept women away from the field of art. When looking at history you can't help but look at your own exclusion," she explains.


With her move to Vancouver Island six years ago, her work has begun to incorporate aspects of Island culture, things like the west coast zine comic culture, the psyche of subversion, the hippy tradition and the drop out culture. "I grew up on the prairies where dropping out was just not an option, so it was a bit of a culture shock for me," she says. She has begun incorporating psychedelic wool into her sculptures and her new limited edition hand bound book entitled *FREAKOUT*

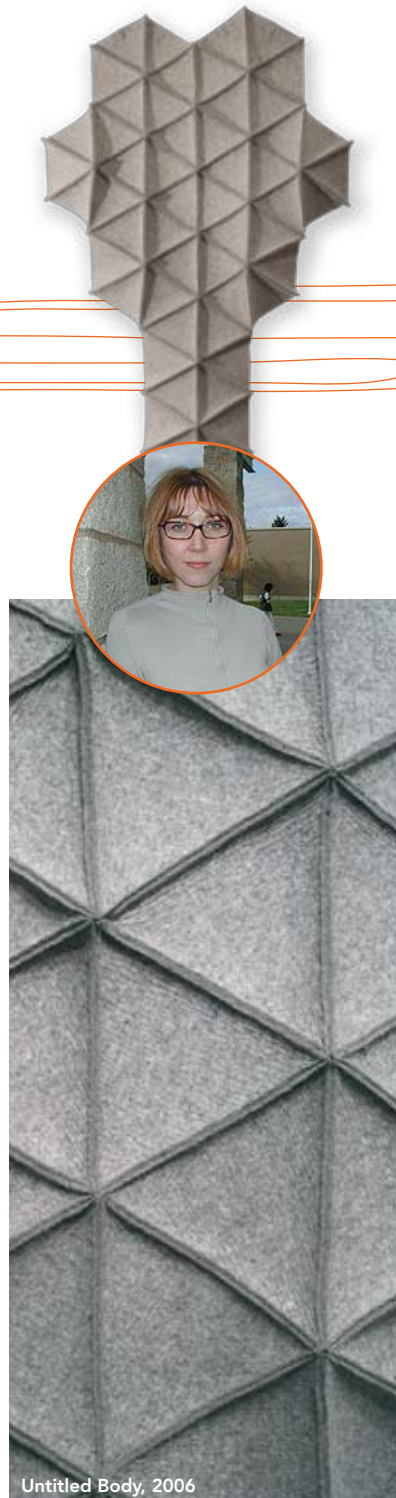
talks about and illustrates this marginalized aesthetic.

Her recent work *Parasite Buttress*, a 22 foot long mixed media sculpture, explores architecture as a social site: its concept of space as a place in time that tells you who you are within that context.

Martineau received her undergraduate diploma in Fine Arts from the Alberta College of Art and Design and her Masters in Fine Arts from the University of British Columbia. She is currently a Professor of Theory and Curatorial Studies at the University of Victoria.

In 2007 she was invited to exhibit at the Montreal Biennial, to speak at the Tate Gallery in London and she was honoured with the prestigious VIVA award.

Her work is exhibited at Jessica Bradley Art & Projects in Toronto, Ontario and at Trepanier Baer in Calgary, Alberta. 



Untitled Body, 2006



KOBAYASHI & ZEDDA

ARCHITECTS :: WHITEHORSE



AS AWARD WINNING ARCHITECTS, urban designers, developers and club and cafe owners, Jack Kobayashi and Tony Zedda definitely embody the entrepreneurial spirit.

"That's one thing about architecture school," says Zedda. "It teaches you how to take advantage of the opportunities presented to you."

Kobayashi and Zedda both received their architecture training at the University of Manitoba, although they didn't meet until 1995, a year after they had graduated, when they both found themselves above the 60th parallel in a place of unlimited opportunity: the town of Whitehorse.

"This place is a little bit of a secret. It's only two hours from the Pacific Ocean and it is spectacular. We are in the middle of a boreal forest," says Zedda. He also adds that the territory has more moose (40,000), than people (30,000).

Within their collaborative design studio KZA, these two architects have created some very inspiring regionalist designs that include everything from schools to private residences. So inspiring that they were awarded the prestigious Canada Council of the Arts Prix de Rome in 2006.

"Part of our whole regionalist approach is working with what is available and that includes the labour force and materials," says Kobayashi. As a result, most of their design incorporate timbre. "We like to challenge the work force that is here by doing some designs that are a little bit different, but still within the realm of what they know," explains Zedda.


In Whitehorse the light contrasts (like the temperature contrasts) are extreme. "This is a very unforgiving place," says

Kobayashi. "In the harsh days of winter the sun shines for a mere four or five hours, whereas during the longest days of summer it is light for 22 hours a day." As a result, they try to capture the essence of this northern climate through the play of light on the spaces.

Temperatures, which can descend below -55 C in the winter, also create a design challenge. "We have to build above ground, because the ground is perma frost," says Zedda. But, not only that, he adds that with global warming the ground temperatures are changing, so they have to design to compensate for future shifts in the permafrost.

Adding to their portfolio, Zedda and Kobayashi have recently started a construction and development company and they are in the process of gentrifying Whitehorse's downtown core, which has been neglected over the years. "We feel that a compact urban environment with a higher density downtown core is more appropriate for the type of climate," explains Kobayashi. To date, they have built 50 multifamily units.

As an extension of the urban concept, they have recently opened a martini bar and Café in the ground level of their downtown architecture offices.

"We love the fact that we won the Prix de Rome; it is such an academic award, but we also like the hands on thing too. In fact when you called, we were downstairs making lattes for the customers," says Zedda. 



Top :: Teslin Tlingit Heritage Centre, Teslin, Yukon, 2001
photo by Kobayashi + Zedda Architects Ltd.

Bottom :: Taku River Tlingit Multi-Purpose Building 2007
photo by Kobayashi + Zedda Architects Ltd.