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Events Guide: Luminato OpenCity projects

Posted by Jake Schabas

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WHAT: Luminato's OpenCity Icebreakers Projects
WHEN: June 10 – June 20, 2009
WHERE: XSPACE Cultural Centre, 58 Ossington Avenue, Toronto
HOW MUCH: Free
WEBSITE: opencityprojects.com

One of the many Luminato exhibits this year is the Ontario College of Art and Design's OpenCity Project *Icebreakers: Creating Common Ground by Design.* The many different design ideas created by OCAD students are not so different from Spacing Magazine's thinkTORONTO submissions as they aim to promote communication in the hopes of strengthening communities.

The Icebreakers range from building a neighbourhood greenhouse to installing hop-scotch and water benches in Baview Village Mall. Unlike last year where some of the projects were expected to be installed in the city, this year's designs were never meant to be implemented. The result is that some of the projects are rather unrealistic, reflecting how this year's designers were relatively free to let their imaginations run wild (for better and for worse).

Calvin Lee's idea of turning TTC shelters into "Junction Boxes" using Thru-Glass touchscreen technology where the glass walls would act like a facebook wall seems pretty neat, although extremely costly. The glass walls of the shelter would allow users to upload images, videos and music from their cell phones as well as being able to access others' posts by touching the glass.

On more of a low-tech, low-cost note, Mihaela Kandeva's "Laundry Exchange" idea, where old clothes are hung on hangers that have a story written by the former owner on it, seems like a fantastic way to go about connecting people who live in vertical communities. Being cheap and easy to start, the simplicity of this idea seems like a little touch that might go a long way to building communities through the city's already existing semi-public spaces like laundrymats.

While many of the other designs, although well-intentioned, are a little too over the top (see the design for turning the PATH network into a motion-sensored biosphere), Riku Rikala's Plong concept is just too clever to ignore. Despite being totally impractical and probably unsafe, this game looks like so much fun it deserves at least a test-run as a temporary public art installment. Hey 2010 Luminato organizers…

Check out all eleven *Icebreakers* electronically at the OpenCity Website, or go and see the exhibits in person at the XSPACE Cultural Centre on Ossington Avenue beginning on Wednesday.

Photo by Jake Schabas

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