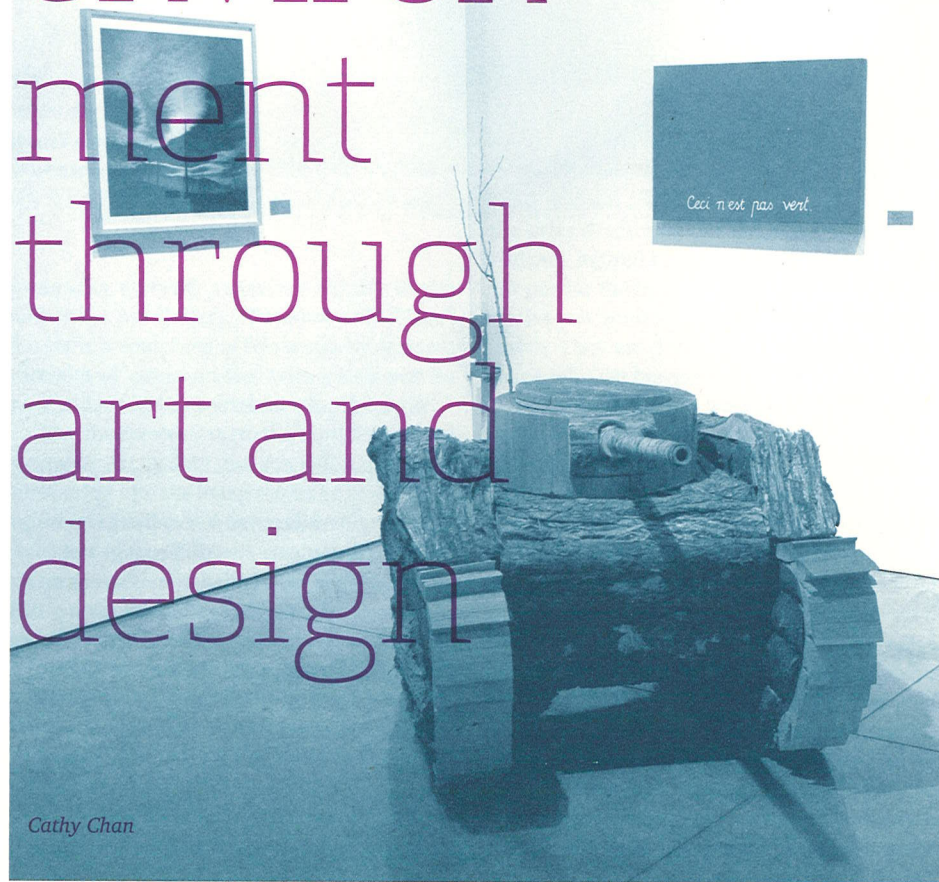


Considering the environment through art and design



Cathy Chan

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL decades there has been increasing awareness of human impacts on the environment. Recent media attention about issues such as climate change has helped more people begin to look at how their activities have a role in affecting the future of the Earth. In their 2007 assessment, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported that human influences have very likely effected changes in global climate and sea-level, yet it remains difficult for the general population to implement changes in their lives toward living more sustainably. The issue of climate change isn't only an environmental one; ecological principles shows us that no system exists in isolation from another.

The impact of our behaviour is far-reaching environmentally, socially, politically, economically and culturally. The effects of environmental degradation have been linked with poverty and war ... one needn't look far to see how resource scarcity increases conflict, think back to the November 2006 boil water advisory in the Greater Vancouver Area. But effects of climate change also infringe on the way of life for people in various parts of the globe, one example being the Inuit, for whom changes in the Arctic environment have become a matter of human rights. The detrimental effects of environmental degradation are not distributed equally around the world, but sustainability isn't really about pointing fingers, it is about taking responsibility for one's actions and being aware of one's role in a larger community. The issue of our impact on the environment and on one another is extremely relevant, and it is important for continued dialogue to occur between different groups. What kinds of changes can we make to continue in this direction? How do we incorporate these changes in behaviour, thinking, and activities into our lives?

The Sustainability Working Group (swig) is a group of ECI students, staff and faculty who are interested in fostering and working towards a sustainable present, both at ECI and in the wider community. The group meets on a regular basis to discuss ideas, concerns and initiatives toward this goal. Some of the activities that swig has undertaken include: organizing a 100 mile dinner with a menu consisting of local foods and considerations for incorporating it into one's daily life; curating the recent show in the Concourse Gallery where we questioned what it means to be 'green'; giving workshops at sustainability conferences in collaboration with the Sierra Youth Coalition; and assessing the school's overall sustainability using the Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework.

Art and design are not traditionally thought of as avenues for working on sustainability, but as part of the local and global community, ECI has a role to play in increasing education and awareness of the impact that we as individuals and institutions have on the environment and each other. In our behaviour, creative practices and daily activities the adage of thinking globally and acting locally remains relevant, whereby individual actions extend to a greater community.

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Untitled
 Anthony Smith
Forces of Nature
 Neil Chung
Ceci n'est pas vert
 Angela Henderson