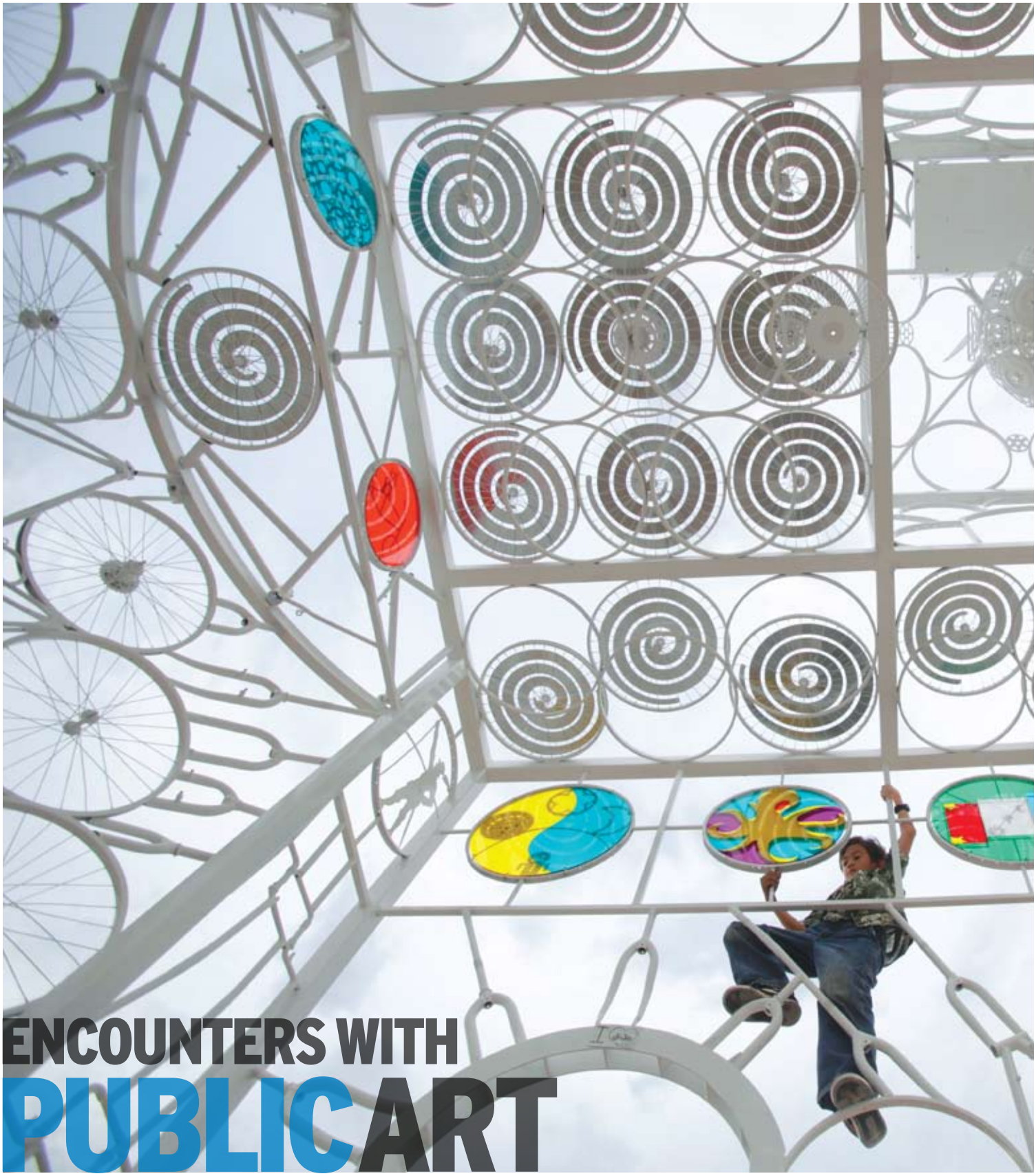


ENCOUNTERS WITH PUBLIC ART

joe o'connell + blessing hancock

WE ARE MAKERS

We like to get our hands on everything.

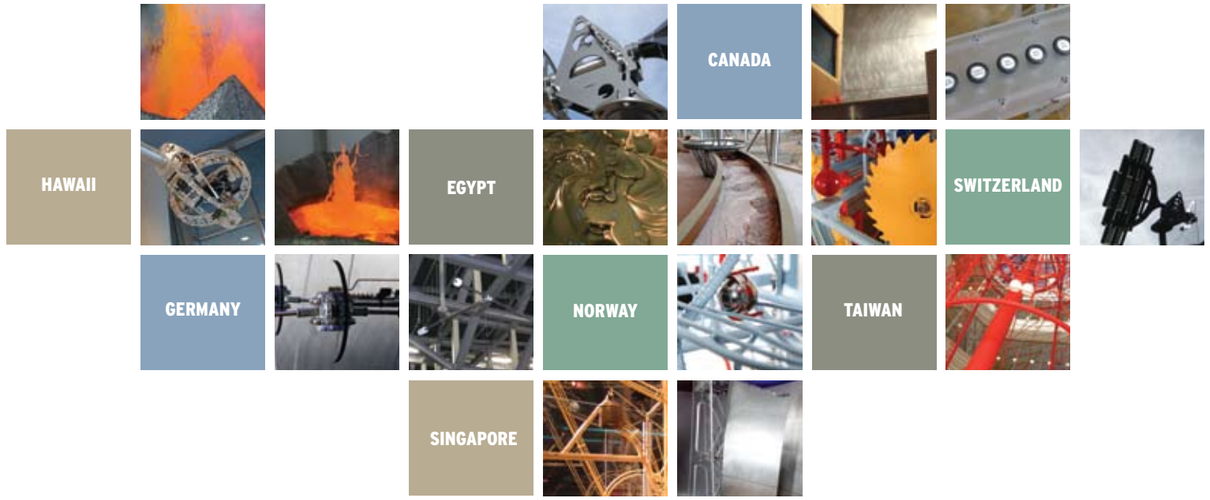
We move seamlessly from the conceptual to the material and back again.

Our work is about finding inspiration and new experience in the day-to-day encounter. We look for new ways to live with art—ways in which art solves problems, enriches the human experience and creates an atmosphere of participation, curiosity and adventure. We often begin with the concept or emotion we want to convey and then find ways to give it form. Interactivity lies at the heart of our sculpture and this sometimes takes the form of touch-sensitive circuitry, electronics and lighting. We like to leave room for people to bring their own meaning to pieces in significant ways.

As an artistic team, Joe and Blessing encompass both ends of the spectrum. Joe is a technologist with an interest in living systems; Blessing is an environmental designer with an interest in machines. Together we are drawn to the generative logic that underlies mechanical and natural structures. Our work spans public art, technological sculpture, and museum exhibition.

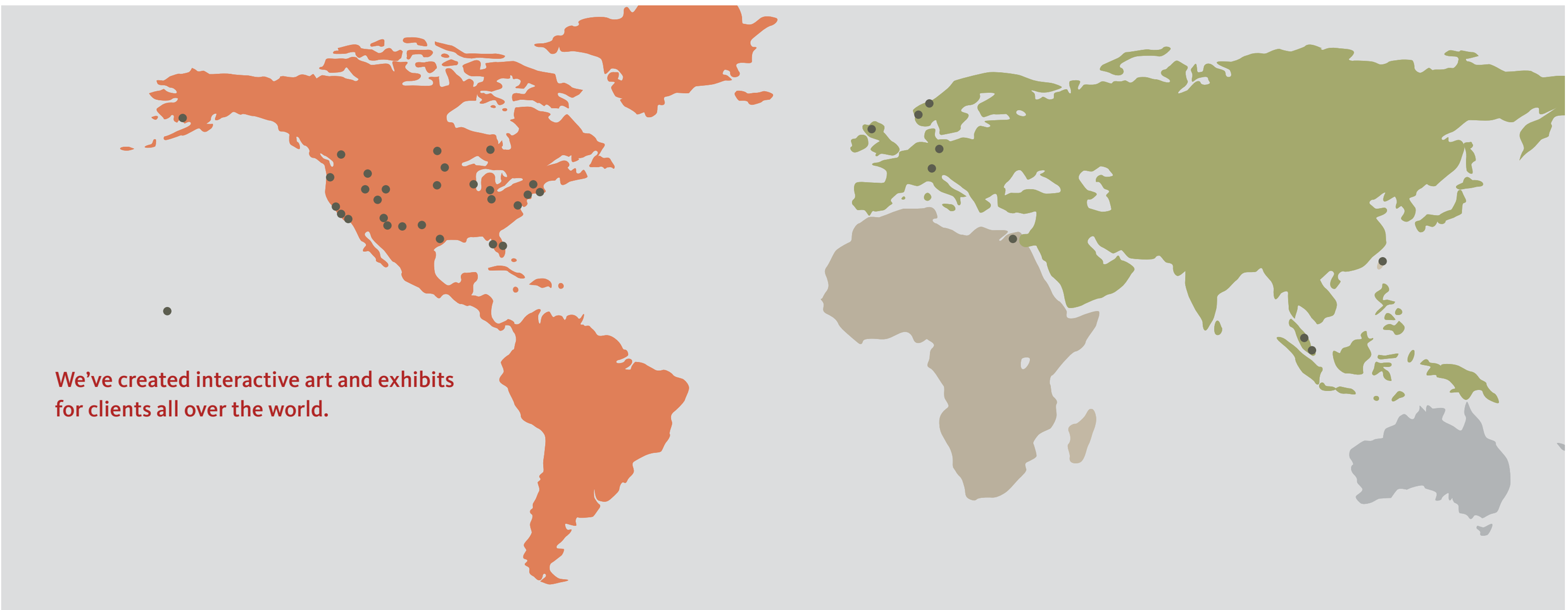
We look forward to sharing more of our work and process with you. While we are comfortable producing pieces similar to those on the pages that follow, we'll do our best work if you challenge us with something new.

PROJECTS:

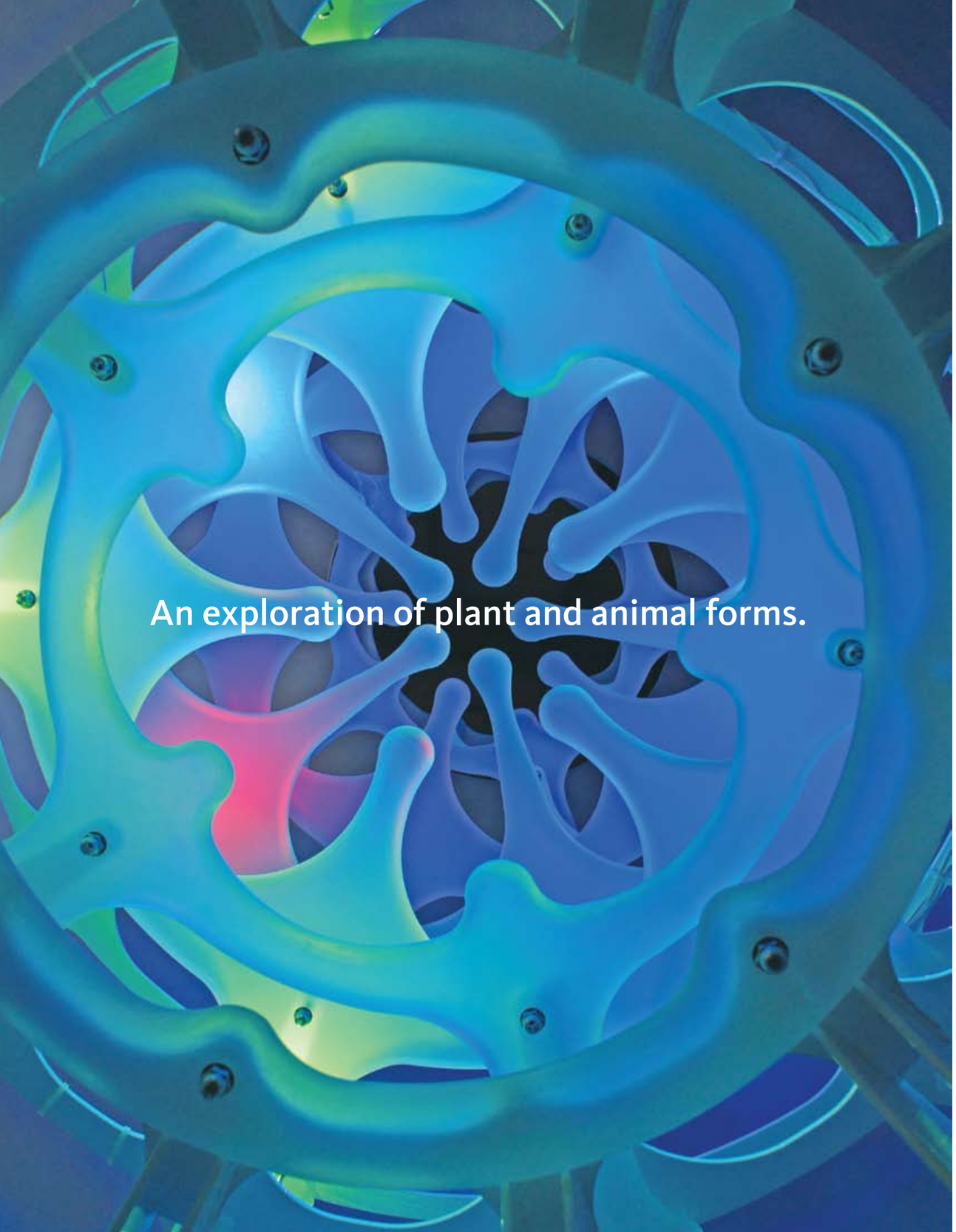


We design and fabricate every project in-house. We've created and installed public art and exhibits for clients throughout the world.

Creative Machines Inc. is our 12,000 square-foot facility in Tucson, Arizona, where we employ 10 artists, designers, engineers and craftspeople. Our shop is set up to support comprehensive prototyping and fabrication. Smart, inquisitive people and extensive CNC capabilities give us the ability to explore innovative materials and processes.



We've created interactive art and exhibits for clients all over the world.



Seedpods is an interactive public art piece currently under development for The Woodlands, TX. The sculptures are inspired by primitive plant and animal forms and will be highly integrated with the landscape and hardscape of this popular plaza. Visitors interact with the sculptures through a touch-sensitive system that invites and rewards exploration. A total of five sculptures will surround the Tinsletown intersection.

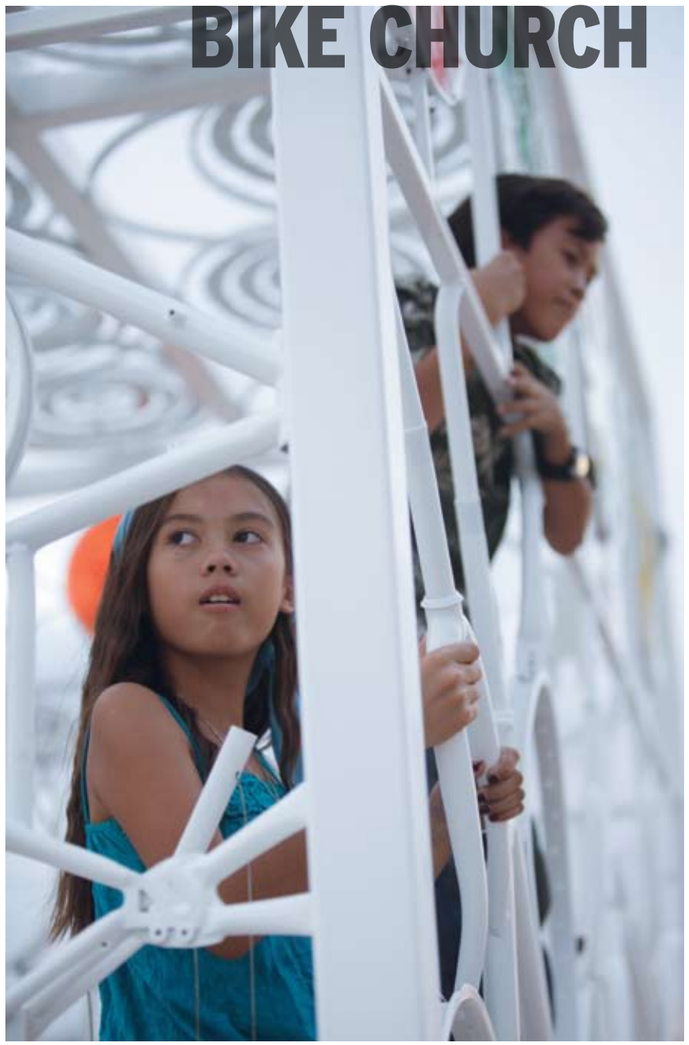
Seedpods
Joe O'Connell and Blessing Hancock
2010-11, The Woodlands, Texas
acrylic, aluminum, touch sensors,
computer-controlled LED lighting, $280,000.

SEEDPODS

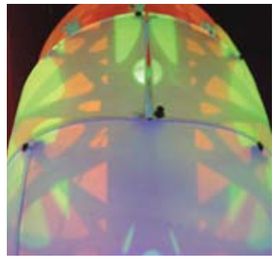
Bike Church is a walk-in sculpture made from bicycle parts. Although the structure borrows from Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Native American iconography, the overriding formal message is radiance. Bike parts are oriented relative to hubs in the way that spokes radiate out from an axle. At night a single solar-powered point source throws brilliant light into the surrounding neighborhood. The sculpture features a memorial area for fallen cyclists and interactive chimes that hang like organ pipes. Featured in Sculpture magazine, Vol 29 No 1.

Bike Church
Joe O'Connell and Blessing Hancock
2009, Tucson, Arizona
steel, bike parts, acrylic, LEDs,
photovoltaic system,
12' x 15' x 21', $50,000.

BIKE CHURCH



This sculpture gathers solar energy throughout the day and releases it at night through powerful LEDs. Every day of the week has a different animated color scheme. Day or night, its steel skeleton can be seen inside the frosted acrylic skin. It also has a secret button - a single touch-sensitive fastener that allows nighttime visitors to change its color scheme. Once visitors have gone away, the sculpture returns to the color scheme scheduled for that night.



DESERT O

A downtown beacon of shifting color.

Desert O
Joe O'Connell
2004, Tucson, Arizona
steel, acrylic, LEDs, secret button, photovoltaic system, 6' diameter
$20,000.

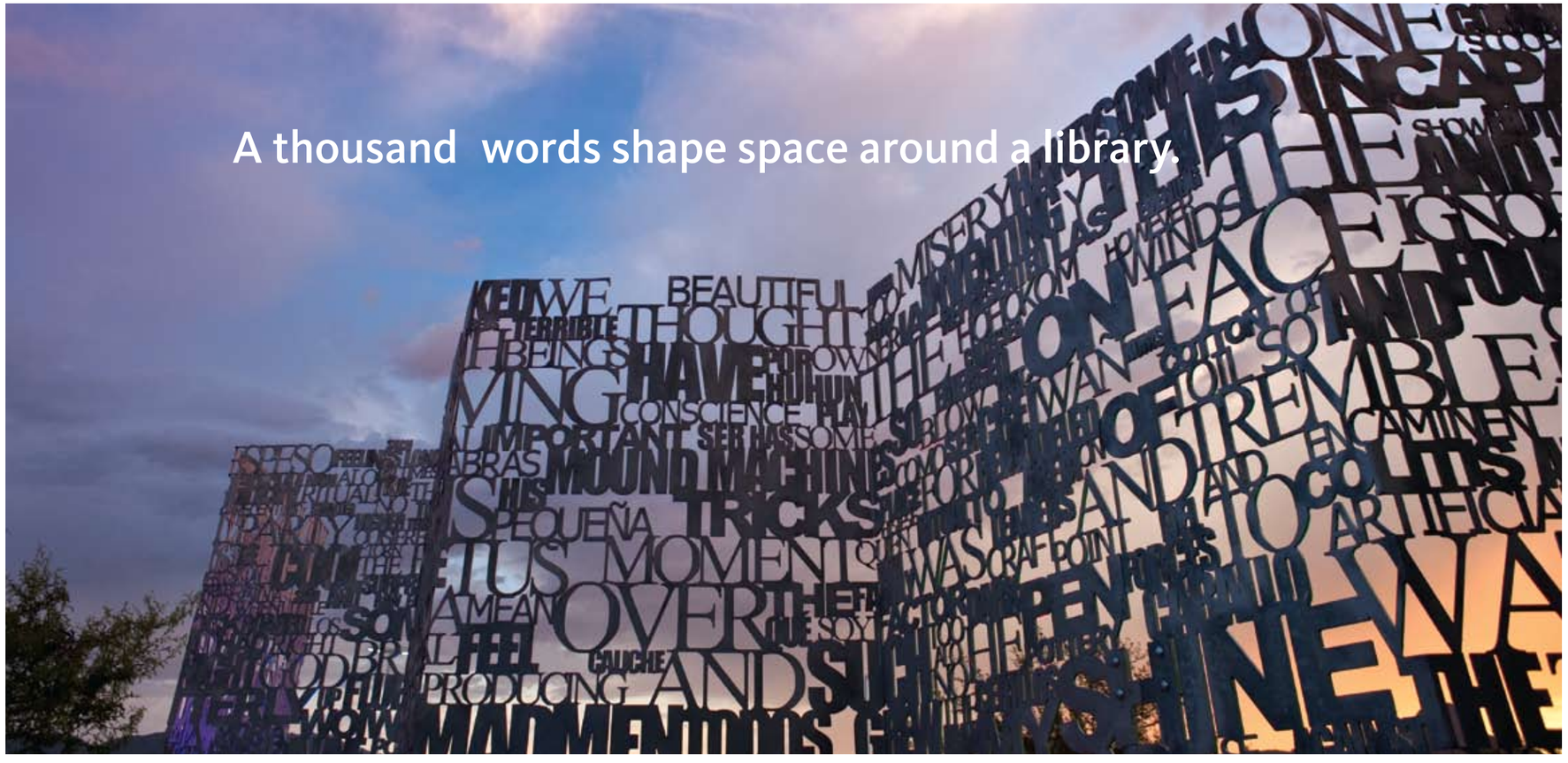
A fiery griffin jumps out of history.

Griffins originally perched on the corners of the Carnegie Library overlooking Scott Avenue in Tucson. They were removed in the renovation of 1938 but one escaped. You can see his footprints where he jumped to the sidewalk and walked away. This sculpture includes incredibly bright red LEDs at the Griffin's heart.

Toby
Joe O'Connell, 2009
Tucson, Arizona
steel, LEDs, four-layer paint,
concrete footprints, 9' x 8' x 12'
$32,500.

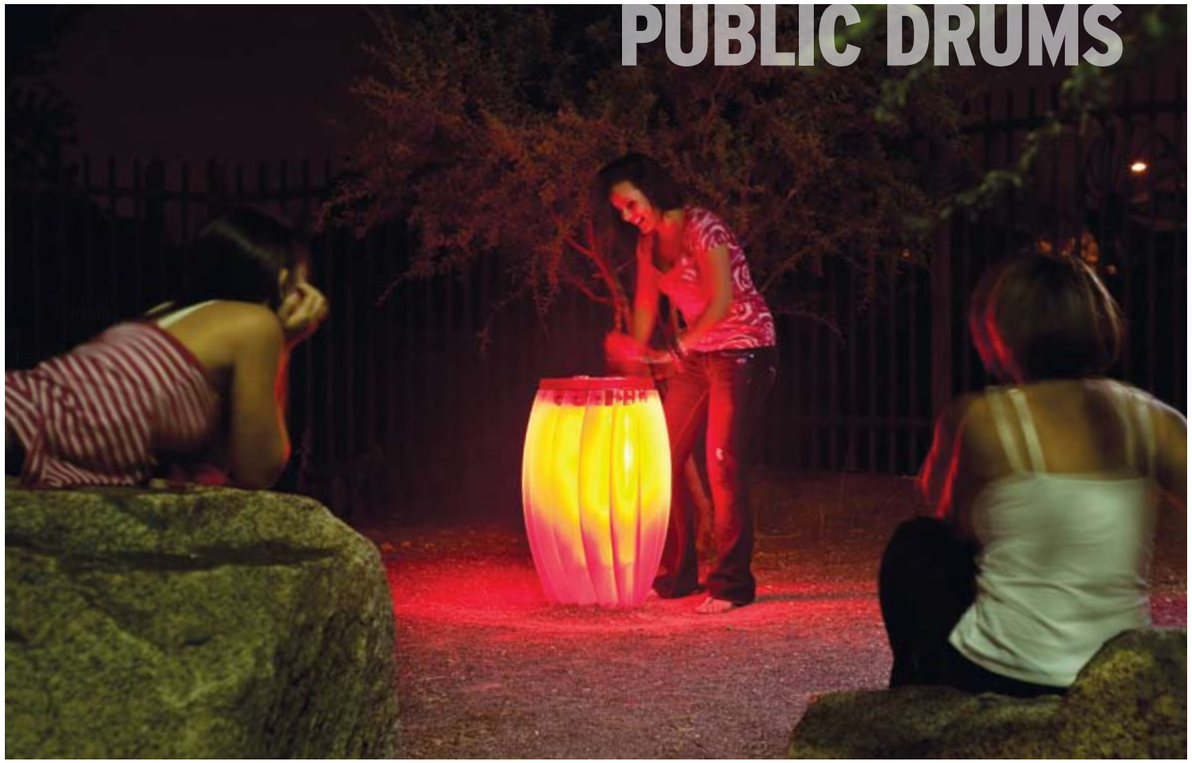
Wondrous is a long, folded panel of galvanized steel and an intense light source that is active at night. The panel includes roughly 1000 words laid out in a way that encourages your eye to wander through it, creating new meanings from existing sources. We chose phrases from a wide range of literature, as well as oral histories of the settlement of the Marana area.

Wondrous
Joe O'Connell, 2008
Wheeler Taft Abbett Sr. Library
Marana, Arizona
galvanized steel, LEDs, 9' x 19' x 3'
$40,000.



Public Drums is a sophisticated and rugged musical instrument that glows brilliantly at night. Commissioned for a troubled park, it is designed to encourage individual performance and positive group interactive. People play the drum by tapping the four metal circles on the head of the drum. A small button inside each circle changes its sound and a wheel bends the pitch in semitone increments.

PUBLIC DRUMS



Public Drums
Joe O'Connell, 2008
Ochoa Park, Tucson, Arizona
bulletproof polycarbonate, steel, LEDs, sounds, waterproof speaker, 30" x 21" x 21"

When the Children's Museum of Utah moved to a new location in downtown Salt Lake City, they asked Joe to create an interactive sculpture for their atrium. Visitors move giant overhead gears that alter how light comes in through the south and west-facing windows. This piece is unique in that all the huge pieces overhead can be moved by visitors turning simple handwheels, and when the pieces move they cause interesting effects in the space.

Color Factory
Joe O'Connell, 2006
Salt Lake City, Utah
MDF, hardened steel drive components, acrylic gels, 40' x 180' x 2'
$100,000.

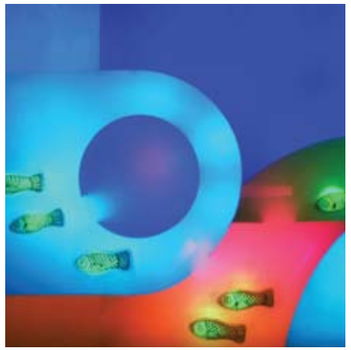
Seed [pop!] is an interactive sculpture that uses sunlight to make popcorn atop a 10-foot tower. The popper is heated using three vacuum-controlled, four-foot diameter circular reflectors fabricated from aluminized mylar. It was commissioned for the 2010 Solar Decathlon and featured in Sculpture magazine, Vol 29 No 4.

SEED [POP!]

Seed [pop!]
Joe O'Connell and Blessing Hancock, 2009
Washington, DC,
aluminized mylar, steel, vacuum pumps,
popcorn, photovoltaic panel, motor, 12' x 10' x 10'
$14,000.

A solar-powered popcorn factory.

Visitors interact with Watercolor Wall by touching glowing objects on its surface. By holding their hands on various objects they can set areas of the wall to different colors along a continuously variable spectrum. Colors leak between regions in the way that watercolor paint blends on paper.



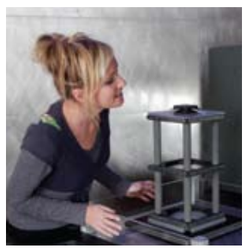
WATERCOLOR WALL

A wall of color that blends like paint.

Watercolor Wall
Joe O'Connell and Nina Borgia-Aberle, 2010
Tucson, Arizona
acrylic, LEDs, touch-sensitive electronics
10' x 6' x 2'
$20,000.

PROCESS:

We begin each project with extensive research, brainstorming and testing to understand the intended experience. We then build and test prototypes with representative users, complete the final design and fabrication ourselves, install our work, and make modifications if necessary. We take a project completely from start to finish. This lets us extend a consistency of vision to every detail of the experience.



PROJECT LIST:

Utah Bit and Mine, Midvale, Utah, with Nina Borgia-Aberle, currently commissioned, $90,000.

Seed Pods, Tinsletown Intersection, The Woodlands, Texas, currently commissioned, $280,000.

Houghton Road from Irvington to Valencia, Tucson, Arizona, with Nina Borgia-Aberle, currently commissioned, $160,000.

Wet Wheel, Tucson, Arizona, An interactive water sculpture for an urban shared-use path, currently commissioned, $100,000.

Modern Streetcar Stop, Tucson, Arizona, currently commissioned, $70,000.

Glendale Park and Ride, Glendale, Arizona, with Nina Borgia-Aberle, currently commissioned, $200,000.

Bends Towards Justice, MLK Tower at Depot Plaza, Tucson, Arizona, A plaza sculpture in downtown Tucson, currently commissioned, $50,000.

Watercolor Wall, Square and Compass Children's Clinic, Tucson, Arizona, with Nina Borgia-Aberle, 2010, $20,000.

SEED[pop!], Public Art for the Solar Decathlon, Tucson, Arizona. An interactive, solar-powered sculpture, 2009, $16,000. Featured in Sculpture magazine, Vol 29 No 4.

Bike Church, Barrio Anita Neighborhood, Tucson, Arizona. A walk-in sculpture on the edge of downtown, 2009, $50,000. Featured in Sculpture magazine, Vol 29 No 1.

Toby, Scott Avenue, Tucson, Arizona, A free-standing steel sculpture of a griffin incorporating lighting and concrete footprints, 2009, $31,500.

Public Drums, Ochoa Park, Tucson, Arizona. An interactive outdoor piece for a troubled park, 2008, $10,000.

Wondrous, Wheeler Taft Abbett Sr. Public Library, Marana, Arizona, An outdoor sculpture for a library and community center, 2008, $40,000.

Color Factory, Discovery Gateway, Salt Lake City, Utah. An interactive artpiece for a large public atrium, 2006, $100,000.

Desert O, Tucson, Arizona. An interactive solar-powered sculpture in front of the Tucson Museum of Art, 2004, $20,000.

Children's Museum of Santa Barbara, Comprehensive exhibit design and fabrication, a current project.

Pusat Sains Negara, Kuala Lumpur. Several interactive artpieces and science exhibits, 2010, $161,000.

Durango Discovery Museum, Durango, Colorado, 2010, $125,000.

Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN, 2010, $80,000.

The United Nations, New York, NY, 2009, $27,500.

Adventure Science Center, Nashville, TN, 2009, $46,000.

Anchorage Museum, Anchorage, Alaska, 2008, $364,150.

Alqanater Children's Museum, Cairo, Egypt, 2008, $125,000.

Vitenfabrikken, Sandnes, Norway, 2008, $52,000.

Science Centre Singapore, Singapore, 2008, $202,000.

NTU Hospital, Taiwan, 2008, $110,000.

Don Harrington Discovery Center, Amarillo, Texas, 2008, $125,000.

VILVITE, Bergen, Norway, 2008, $192,500.

The Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 2008, $61,500.

Exploratorium, San Francisco, CA, 2008, $28,000.

Kendall Healthcare, Ithaca, NY, 2008, $48,000.

Liberty Science Center, Jersey City, New Jersey, 2007, $373,277.

Children's Museum of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2006, $130,000.

Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii, 2005-2010, $586,500.

phaeno, Wolfsburg, Germany, 2005-2010, $151,500.

California Science Center, Los Angeles, California, 2004, $435,770.

Calgary Science Centere Calgary, Alberta, Canada, 2004, $12,000.

Zeum, San Francisco, CA, 2002, $28,900.

Long Island Children's Museum Garden City, NY, 2001, $48,000.

Denver Museum of Natural Science, Denver, Colorado, 2001, $110,000.

Leepa Rattner Museum of Art, Tarpon Springs, Florida, 2000, $189,650.

Gulfcoast Wonder and Imagination Zone, Sarasota, Florida, 1999, $120,000.

Discovery Science Center, Santa Ana, California, 1998-2007, $245,500.

Complete references for these and other projects available upon request.

PRINCIPALS:

JOE O'CONNELL

Joe grew up making things and turned that into a career. After a long liberal arts education that spanned four universities he began working for science museums where he designed and built exhibits. He founded Creative Machines in 1995 to design and fabricate interactive exhibits for museums around the world. He began making public art in 2002 in order to reach new audiences.

BLESSING HANCOCK

Blessing runs the collaborative art and design company Skyrim Studio which focuses on public art, creative consulting and landscape architecture. She has contributed to design team projects throughout the country and has extensive experience working with community groups. Blessing brings a unique balance of imaginative thinking and technical knowledge to the public art realm. She specializes in site integration for public art, ensuring that the experience of art extends beyond the boundaries of sculpture.

REFERENCES:

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