

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

London's new wave of interaction designers

Digital poets



Tokyo's design week
A day at the Calatrava circus
Zaha's first UK building

Plus work by Constantin Boym, Toyo Ito, FAT and Ineke Han



Droog Design that reflects the amount of use it has received. The glaze of each object is slightly cracked, and over time the cracks spread to form decorative additions to the products, subverting the idea of cracking as deformation.

Heijden's newer work is an attempt to uncover latent movement in the surrounding environment. "It's all about hooking up to flows and motions that are already there and using them to alter the design," he says. Examples of this include *Lightweeds* (02) (see main article), and his *Reed* (03) and *Tree* (04) projects, which attempt to bring nature back to urban spaces.

Reed is a group of motorised lights that sway and illuminate at different tempos according to the wind's speed and direction. *Tree* is a projected installation of eight-metre high trees that sway when it's windy. The trees also lose leaves each time a pedestrian walks past a motion sensor. On the ground, they billow around the feet of passers by. "Tree is a fake forest revealing real nature – it amplifies the leftovers of nature in the urban surrounding," says Heijdens.

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a real question, desire or need," says Loop.ph's Mathias Gmachl. Others have pointed out the limits of work that is mostly experimental: "Many of these kind of provocative projects wouldn't make it through as products," remarks Jack Mama, creative director of Philips Design. "Elements get taken on and put into something else; the interesting thing is how they get translated, but they can get lost in translation."

However, Dunne sees the work being produced by designers such as Troika as part of a wider movement known as "device art", a term coined in 2004 by Machiko Kusahara, professor at Tokyo's Waseda University, to describe a new body of Japanese work. Alexander Grunsteidl, who set up Digital Wellbeing Labs in September as the first retail environment for device art, predicts that consumers will buy it as much to inspire as to meet a functional requirement.

"We're working with people like Waldemeyer and Troika to create a market space for interaction design products. I'm interested in taking these things out of the museums and laboratories, and in front of consumers."

Troika's Noel sees this development as the inevitable outcome of a post-industrialised society, where functional needs are being superseded by more abstract desires such as self-worth. "It's not really about solving a problem, it's about solving a psychological need for poetry and inspiration," he says. And this means thinking laterally about how we use the technology. As Bill Moggridge, founder of interaction design giant IDEO and inventor of the laptop, puts it: "It's to do with behaviours that are not about a mouse and a keyboard."

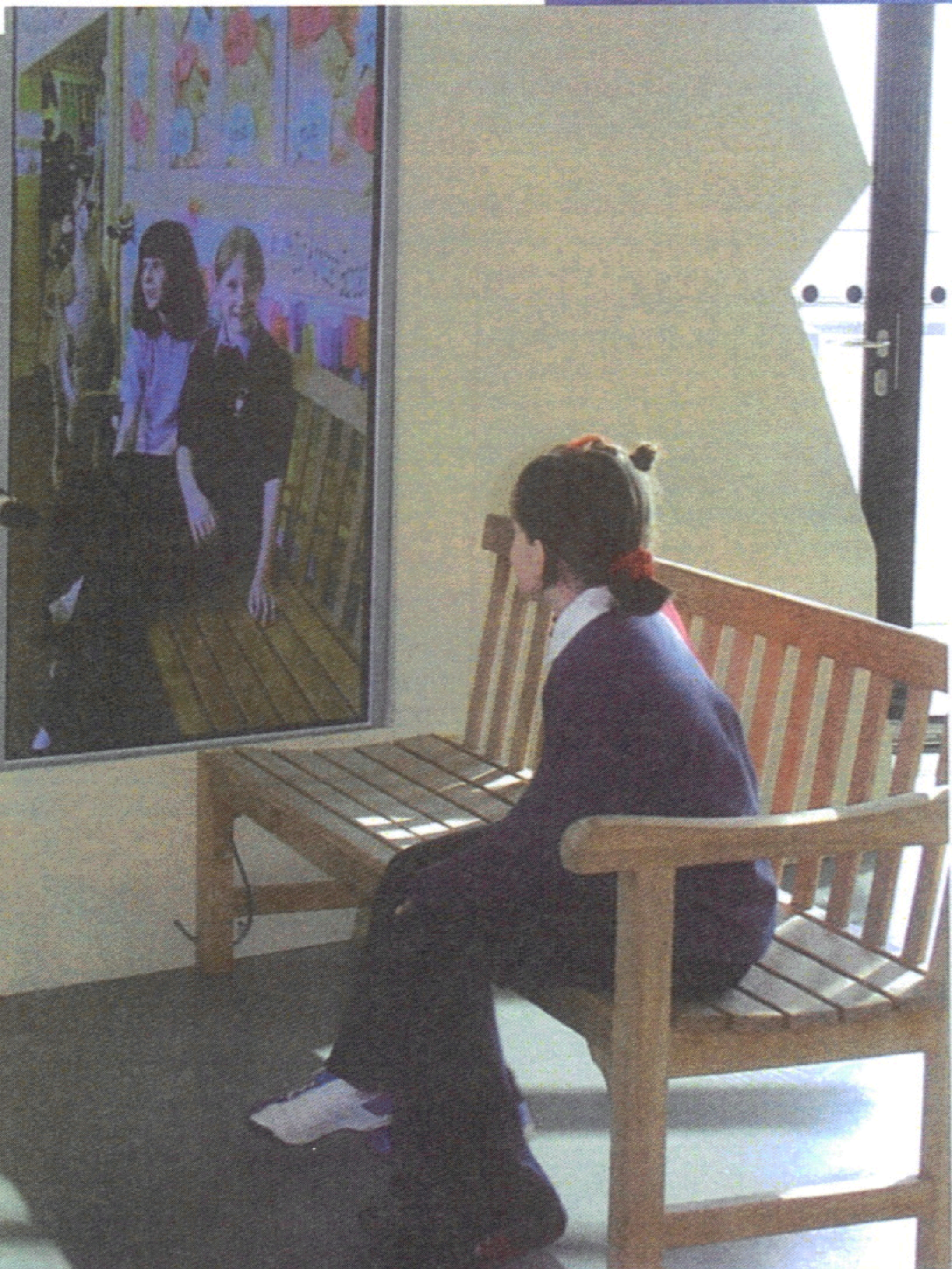
Simon Heijdens, whose work sits somewhere between art and design, creates



02

03

04



Greyworld was founded in 1993 by composer Andrew Shoben, 35, who formerly taught on the RCA Design Products course. The other members are Neil Gavin, 32, and Adriana Paice, 29. Greyworld's name comes from its aim of drawing attention to liminal urban spaces – "grey" by virtue of their in-betweenness. Greenwich foot tunnel, beneath the River Thames, is one such space. The Layer consisted of a blue carpet installed on the floor that was connected to minute speakers on the ceiling. As pedestrians walked the length of the tunnel, their footsteps triggered the sound of crunching through snow, or splashing through water. The Layer was later installed on a bridge in Dublin (01).

The humble park bench has provided inspiration for

products and installations that are intended to inspire. In his Lightweeds project, plants projected onto a hospital's interior walls spread and grow depending on the weather and how many people walk past them, making the space alive. "I think the labels 'artist' and 'designer' are outdated, they don't have relevance anymore," says Heijdens.

Also working in spatial design, **Greyworld** calls itself a public art collective, and comprises a composer, a theatre designer and an art historian. Its work applies the interactive principles of device art to public spaces, engaging users in the artwork's creation and enabling a more subjective experience. One project involved tuning a set of railings so that they play The Girl from Ipanema when you run a stick along them; another is a bus stop in Bradford that emits different sounds depending on the colour of the clothes worn by passing pedestrians. "We [produce] situations that make people react, leading to a community of presence," says Greyworld founder Andrew Shoben.

many of Greyworld's projects. Worldbench (02) is a global network of video-conferencing benches in schools from Berlin to South Africa. Real time video is streamed between pairs of benches via plasma screens so the sitters can interact across time zones.

The Source (03) is Greyworld's best-known installation. It consists of 729 motorised spheres suspended on cables in the atrium of the London Stock Exchange. The spheres are controllable via software, allowing any 3D shape to be modelled. The pace of its activity is based on the number of trades going on at the time, but it also grabs headlines from the web and writes them in huge 3D letters.

"We don't want people to have to read a book or a description to unlock an installation. It's not high art, it's art for people that buy a can of beans in the supermarket," says Shoben. "More and more people are getting bored with screens and [conventional] products; they want to make things that affect their environment in a more fundamental sense."

www.greyworld.com

By making the interaction effortless and invisible, Greyworld's work is infused with a sense of magic. Professor Steven Gage, from London's Bartlett school of architecture, believes the mechanics of interactive architecture and design are often close to stage magic in their ability to deceive and create wonder. "Bruce Tognazzini, one of Apple's first interaction designers, is an amateur magician," he says. By appropriating illusion and narrative, designers are rediscovering modes of communication that have evolved over millennia. Products and buildings are being infused with the power of storytelling and dialogue. "The choice is between the familiar and the abstract; the practical task-based design versus an enjoyment of aesthetics that is closer to art," says Moggridge. "Any product has to sit somewhere on that scale. It's happening not because we didn't always want it, but because it's now much more possible. Because of the dispersal of technology you can make magic with almost anything." ¶

