

Pasadena's Art Center Exhibit: Let the Design Revolution Continue

By Andrew Myers

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ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN'S ALYCE DE ROULET WILLIAMSON GALLERY EXPLORES THE PAST AND FUTURE OF OBJECT MAKING

The Curious World of Patent Models & The Future of Objects On Exhibit June 4 to August 15, 2010

(Pasadena, CALIF.) May 11, 2010 – The Alyce de Roulet Williamson Gallery at Art Center College of Design is continuing its series of explorations into the intersecting domains of art, science, technology, and design with side-by-side exhibitions that look at the interplay between the technologies used to fabricate objects and the thought-processes used to conceive them. The complementary exhibits “The Curious World of Patent Models” and “The Future of Objects” will be on display June 4 to August 15, 2010, it was announced today by Stephen Nowlin, vice president of Art Center College of Design and director of the Williamson Gallery.

The relationship between technology and its influence over the process of conceptualizing objects, inventions, and innovations is referenced overtly in “The Curious World of Patent Models,” an exhibit of more than fifty scale models representing ideas submitted for United States Patent protection circa 1800-1880.

A separate but related exhibit, “The Future of Objects,” displays new digital-age fabrication and prototyping techniques in which startlingly complex forms are conceived and “grown” by machines known as 3D printers. As the exhibit reveals, technologies related to those used every day in households and offices to print 2D information on flat pieces of paper are now being used to “grow” freestanding 3D objects in physical space, using a variety of solid materials.

According to Mr. Nowlin, “The impact of these new technologies in fields of specialized industrial design are being increasingly felt, but in pursuits such as contemporary art

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they are still barely known. Yet in the very near future they are certain to revolutionize all object-making to a degree that may well equal or even exceed the cultural impact of the 19th-century's Industrial Revolution.”

He continued, “As we celebrate Art Center's 80th anniversary, it's fitting to showcase advanced computer modeling and 3D printing techniques that will very soon become such a big part of the planet's visual culture. Exhibiting 19th-century fabrication beside 21st-century technology opens up a whole new conversation about what is coming in the future and where it came from.”

Established in 1790 by Thomas Jefferson, the U.S. Patent Office required inventors to submit a working scale model of their invention along with their patent application. Continuing through 1880 and the Industrial Revolution, this policy was responsible for creating a historical archive of innovation, vision, ingenuity and artistic ambition. Organized by the Rothschild Patent Model Collection (patentmodel.org), “The Curious World of Patent Models” showcases more than fifty of these one-of-a-kind artifacts along with

their original accompanying documentation. “These historic artifacts depict America’s heritage of inventiveness, and exemplify the spirit upon which our country was founded,” explained collector Alan Rothschild. “They showcase the innovation of the nation’s past and serve to foster a new generation of American inventive spirit.”

As descendants of “The Curious World of Patent Models” and its spirit of inventiveness, objects in “The Future of Objects” showcase cutting-edge forms and prototype fabrication. Some have been created in Art Center’s Technical Skills Center—working with the same equipment students have access to as part of their professional education. Art Center also has partnered with Solid Concepts Inc., North America’s largest multiple technology company, to showcase additional contemporary forms.

David Cawley, director of Art Center’s Rapid Prototyping and Model Shops, said “What’s incredibly remarkable is that the 3D printing technology showcased in “The Future of Objects” is going to be commonplace in the next 10 years or so. Just as the PC revolutionized the way we live and do business, we’ll have 3D printers in the home which will benefit us in ways we can’t begin to imagine. Both the applied arts and the fine arts will move into uncharted new territories using these magical tools.”

“As a way of symbolizing the bridge between past and future technologies and their impact on human ideation,” Mr. Cawley continued, “we plan to digitally scan one of the hundred-fifty year-old patent models and grow two clones using a 3D printer. One will be displayed in the exhibit and the other presented to the Rothschild Patent Model Collection as a commemoration of the profound links existing between past and future innovation.”

Scott McGowan of Solid Concepts added, “We jumped at the chance to partner with Art Center. They have a true understanding of the importance of manufacturing and computer technologies to both the worlds of business and culture. Art Center is renowned for its emphasis on innovation and commercial success. These two exhibitions are a nice way of referencing the importance of craftsmanship — equal parts art and design — to commercial success.”

Art Center will host an opening reception for both exhibi-

tions on Thursday, June 3, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. The two exhibitions will continue through August 15, 2010. Williamson Gallery hours are noon to 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday and noon to 9:00 p.m. Friday; the gallery is closed Mondays and holidays. For gallery information, call 626.396.2446.

The Williamson Gallery presentation of “The Curious World of Patent Models” and “The Future of Objects” is funded in part by the Williamson Gallery Patrons and a grant from the Pasadena Art Alliance. “The Curious World of Patent Models” will be presented by the Rothschild Patent Model Collection to audiences on a fourteen-city national tour over a three-year period. Smith Kramer Fine Art Services, an exhibition tour development company in Kansas City, Missouri, developed and manages the tour.

About Solid Concepts (www.solidconcepts.com)

Solid Concepts Inc. is a supplier of rapid prototyping, direct digital manufacturing, tooling and injection molding services. Founded in 1991, Solid Concepts has grown to a five-facility, multiple technology company known as a solutions provider with project management and engineering expertise. Capabilities in high precision PolyJet™, Stereolithography (SLA) models & patterns, Selective Laser Sintering (SLS), Fused Deposition Modeling (FDM), CNC models & patterns, QuantumCast™ Cast Urethanes, and Composite Products including Fiberglass Reinforced Plastic (FRP) panels & Vacuum Assisted Resin Transfer Molding (VARTM). Prototyping and low-volume production of plastic, urethane, and metal components directly from design data are easily achieved with the broad selection of technologies and materials. Capabilities in tooling and injection molding make Solid Concepts your one-stop source to bring your concept to finished product. SolidView software makes 3D CAD design communication & collaboration easy. ISO 9001 (Valencia CA, Poway CA, Austin TX) and AS9100 (Valencia CA) certifications.

About Art Center College of Design (www.artcenter.edu)

Founded in 1930 and located in Pasadena, California, Art Center College of Design is a global leader in art and design education. Art Center offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in a wide variety of art and design disciplines, as well as public programs for all ages and levels of experience. Renowned for its ties to industry and preparing students for professional practice, Art Center is the first design school to receive the United Nations’ Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) status, providing opportunities for students to create design-based solutions for humanitarian and non-profit agencies around the world. During the College’s 80 years, Art Center’s alumni have had a profound impact on our culture, the way we live, and important issues in our society.