

Bringing Research to LIFE

Upcoming Events

Join the Discussion

Café Scientifique events give the public an opportunity to chat with leading academics about the latest in health-related research and do so in a relaxed setting, at McNally Robinson Booksellers.

Here is the line-up for the 2012-13 season:

**TUBERCULOSIS:
THE HIDDEN EPIDEMIC**
7 p.m. Oct. 23, 2012

**HIV/AIDS IN MANITOBA:
GLOBAL STRATEGIES
FOR A LOCAL PROBLEM**
7 p.m. Nov. 29, 2012

**NATURE AND NURTURE
(not versus):
THE NEW SCIENCE
OF EPIGENETICS**
7 p.m. Jan. 28, 2013

**DRUG DISCOVERY:
THE 21st CENTURY
PETRI DISH**
7 p.m. Feb. 25, 2013

Check out the new website!

The Office of the Vice-President (Research and International) has officially launched a revamped website, having adopted a template being introduced across all units at the university.

The user-friendly site boasts new features, like a link to research YouTube videos.

Visit:
umanitoba.ca/research

Parades and pageantry

Architect flexes her creative muscle in a different way



Photo by Trevor Tomlinson

Faculty of Architecture's Lisa Landrum with her latest group costume for a New York City parade: a giant winged eye.

BY KATIE CHALMERS-BROOKS
For The Bulletin

Not many people can say they've worn a giant-sized large intestine through the streets of New York City. But Lisa Landrum can.

"It felt liberating," says the architecture assistant professor, who, along with a handful of collaborators, navigated Sixth Avenue wearing the labyrinthine costume, made of hundreds of balloons wrapped with translucent tubing and stretching nearly half a block.

Lisa and her husband Ted Landrum, who is also an architect, have been making group costumes since they met 15 years ago. With support from a Creative Works grant, they recently exhibited a retrospective of some of their surreal creations at the Faculty of Architecture's ARCH 2 Gallery.

Most of these costumes were worn in NYC's Village Halloween Parade, a lively grassroots event founded by famed puppeteer Ralph Lee in 1974 and now attended by more than 2 million people annually. The couple first got involved while living and working in Lower Manhattan during the late 1990s. It provided a creative release from their day jobs designing and managing architectural projects. Lisa says it also "allowed us to gain a larger-than-life understanding of the city we lived in."

"This was another way for us to interact with the city," Ted adds.

All of the costumes depict a variation on oversized body parts and are intended to provoke questions

"about perception, social relations and the body politic," says Lisa. She describes them as "strange, monstrous creations with serious undertones."

A troupe of six-foot operable tongues test the limits of free speech and public taste. A large hairy armpit belonging to the Statue of Liberty — with the slogan What's up Liberty's Sleeve? — comments on the dark side of wars fought in the name of freedom. A giant brain the size of a minivan, animated with puppets and coloured light, shows the workings of collective imagination. Giant winged ears hollowed out through the middle capture the art of listening, as well as the enigma of understanding (as information goes in one ear and out the other).

Their costumes have multiple inspirations.

"Dionysian festivals, foundation rituals, the history of pageantry, Renaissance iconography and allegories," Lisa says. "But they also complement and extend my scholarly research into the original and persistent affinity between architecture and dramatic performance."

For her PhD, she studied a selection of ancient Greek plays, which offer some of the earliest known references to architects. This includes a comedy by Aristophanes in which a protagonist, dubbed an architect, flies a giant beetle up to the heavens to restore peace on Earth. (Her winged ear costume alludes to this architect's beetle).

Some of the costumes are designed for one person while others accommodate up to seven. They're made

of materials and objects like acoustic foam, electrical conduit, beach balls, a parasol, and a parachute. She says the idea is to combine simple components in ways that reveal "their metaphoric potential," which is something architects strive to do all the time when choosing and adapting building materials.

After moving to Winnipeg in 2008, she brought her U of M architecture students to the Big Apple to study the city and get their own taste of the parade experience. They designed and wore a series of rollercoaster cars and enacted the movements of the amusement park ride while criss-crossing the crowded parade. It's meant to be a performance; that's part of the fun and artistry, says Lisa. So, too, is the journey to get to the parade's start line.

She and Ted created pre-parade spectacles by lowering their massive intestines and brains from the roof of their Brooklyn studio, then carrying them through the city and over the East river before arriving in the West Village.

Engaging onlookers is always a goal. So when a group of street performers on stilts at the end of the parade adopted the discarded hula hoops, which had formed their giant brain, the Landrums were thrilled.

"Ultimately what we make as architects is given away," says Lisa. "The hope is always that others will discover meaning through the work, build on its meaning and take its meaning in directions you never expected."