

# Dust, Ash and Dirt as Media in Art and Design in Swept Away at the Museum of Arts and Design from February 7 to August 12, 2012

**SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATIONS, SCULPTURES, PERFORMANCE, VIDEO, PHOTOGRAPHY, PAINTINGS, DESIGN AND DECORATIVE WORKS BY 25 INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS, INCLUDING ANDY GOLDSWORTHY, VIK MUNIZ, ZHANG HUAN, LINDA FLORENCE, AND CAI GUO-QIANG**

## Newly Commissioned Installations Invite Audience Participation in Creative Process



Phoebe Cummings, *Flora* (detail), 2010, unfired clay. Photo by Sylvain Deleu.

New York, NY (January 11, 2012)—*Swept Away: Dust, Ashes, and Dirt in Contemporary Art and Design*, the first exhibition of its scope to examine the artistic potential of ephemeral materials, will showcase the work of 25 international artists who transform dust, ash, and dirt into intricate and poignantly beautiful installations, sculptures, paintings, photographs, and performances. The 34 featured works—13 of which have been commissioned specifically for the exhibition—are created through the collection, removal, and reconstitution of ephemeral matter, exposing, in many cases, the debris of human existence. On view from February 7 through August 12, 2012 at the Museum of Arts and Design, the exhibition will include a series of “live” installations that will allow museumgoers to interact with artists and their works.

There will be a **press breakfast** reception for the exhibition on February 15, 2012 from 9:00 am to 11:00 am.

*Swept Away* is organized by William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator David McFadden as part of MAD’s groundbreaking Materials and Process exhibition series, which explores wide-ranging artistic approaches to traditional and unusual materials, including lace, paper, organic materials and once living objects, and miniatures. The exhibition investigates how humble, overlooked, and discarded materials can be altered, manipulated, and recombined into works which address such issues as the transient nature of art and life, quality and content of memory, issues of loss and disintegration, and the detritus of human life. *Swept Away* features works of art by contemporary artists from around the world, including **Kim Abeles** (U.S.), **Catherine Bertola** (U.K.), **James Croak** (U.S.), **Phoebe Cummings** (U.K.), **Zhang Huan** (China), **Maskull Lasserre** (Canada), **Alexandre Orion** (Brazil), **Jim Dingilian** (U.S.), **Su Zhiqiang** (China), **Vik Muniz** (U.S.), and **Antonio Riello** (Italy).

*Swept Away Projects*, an extension of the show opening on March 6, will include commissioned installations, where artists will create new works in the galleries in front of the public. The “live” installations will allow audiences to experience the artistic process and interact with artists and their dust, dirt, sugar, and sand creations. In some instances, visitors will sweep away the installations by walking through and touching them, accelerating the temporality of these artists’ output.

“*Swept Away* underscores the tremendous power of the creative process in transforming even the most modest of materials into works of art that challenge our perceptions of and relation to the surrounding environment,” says Holly Hotchner, MAD’s Nanette L. Laitman Director. “The fragility and fleeting nature of these works provides a singular opportunity to reexamine the relationship between artist and artwork, the defining attributes of a work of art, and extends MAD’s previous explorations of unusual materials and innovative artistic processes.”

“The artists in *Swept Away* resurrect and rearrange the neglected and castoff materials of our daily lives, and in doing so force us to reconsider their underlying associations,” says Chief Curator McFadden. “More than elaborately crafted and designed works of art, the sculptures, installations, and performances featured in the exhibition heighten our awareness of time, place, memory, and emotion.”

*Swept Away: Dust, Ashes, and Dirt in Contemporary Art and Design* explores the intersection of materials and techniques as viewed through the lens of contemporary art and design as part of a series of MAD exhibitions that include *Radical Lace and Subversive Knitting* (2007); *Second Lives: Remixing the Ordinary* (2008); *Slash: Paper Under the Knife* (2009); *Dead or Alive: Nature Becomes Art* (2010); and *Otherworldly: Optical Delusions and Small Realities* (2011).

### Featured artists include:

- Renowned British artist **Andy Goldsworthy**, known for creating site-specific sculptures by utilizing natural and organic materials such as mud, rocks, twigs, and snow, which he then photographs—will exhibit a series of 13 photographs.
- British artist **Catherine Bertola** whose site-specific work focuses on the experience of memory and loss. She researches the users and/or inhabitants of an installation space and collects its dust, much of which is human hair and skin cells, over the course of several months. Her artistic process culminates in the creation of an honorific pattern made of the collected dust and placed on the walls or floors of the space. Bertola will create a new work for *Swept Away* made from dust collected at MAD.
- American artist **Kim Abeles** explores urban sprawl and social issues in her *The Smog Collector* series. Abeles masks out designs on unfired porcelain plates and linen tablecloths and allows the smog of Los Angeles to fill in the pattern. *Swept Away* will feature a new work by Abeles.
- American artist **James Croak** creates sculptures of human figures, animals, and furniture from unfired dirt, expressing both a physicality and fragility. For *Swept Away*, he is recreating a modernist office space with two life-size figures made entirely of unfired dirt. This will be his first work of installation art.
- Brazilian artist **Alexandre Orion** will present a video of the creation and destruction of his soot “reverse” graffiti. The video documents Orion wiping away soot along a stretch of São Paulo’s traffic tunnels to create a stunning “ossuary” of human skulls, a work created over 17 nights, and eventually censored by the police by being washed away with water hoses.
- American artist **Jim Dingilian** creates intricate nature and urban scenes inside glass bottles by smoking them and wiping away the ash with skewers and needles. The landscapes are built up through a series of smokings and have a haunting, three-dimensional quality. Dingilian will present nine smoked bottles in the exhibition.
- The London-based Anglo/Dutch team of Tim Simpson and Sarah van Gameren, known as **Glithero**, is dedicated to exploring and presenting the beauty of the moment of creation. Glithero has produced an installation involving a flammable paint they specially developed with a chemist. They are presenting a similar video in *Swept Away*.

### *Swept Away Projects* will showcase works by:

- German artist **Elvira Wersche** is known for her polychrome, Islamic inspired, floor paintings made from sand and earth collected from over 600 locations around the globe, including holy sites, places of pilgrimage, mountains with temples, sacred caves. Shortly after the work is completed, Wersche invites dancers to erase the carefully constructed pattern in a dazzling final performance.
- Chinese-born **Cui Fei** will be creating a site-specific installation using sand as her medium and the evolution of Chinese characters as her inspiration. Visitors will be able to watch the installation that will take place over the course of several days. Her work will be on view for the entire duration of *Swept Away Projects*.
- Croatian artist **Igor Eškinja** will create a large “Dust Carpet,” a floor covering using dust collected over the period of several months by the maintenance team at MAD. Here the dust, consisting of shedding skin cells, hair, and clothing fibers from hundreds of anonymous visitors will be exposed “in plain sight.” The installation will take four days, and viewers will be allowed to watch from beginning to end.
- Using stencils, British artist **Linda Florence** will cover MAD Project’s gallery floor with an elaborate pattern made in chalk. Later in the exhibition, dancers will perform on the chalk floor, rhythmically eradicating the intricate pattern, capturing and revealing traces often unnoticed.

### EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND CREDITS

*Swept Away: Dust, Ashes, and Dirt in Contemporary Art and Design* is organized by the Museum of Arts and Design and is curated by Chief Curator David Revere McFadden; it is supported, in part, by public funds from the Netherlands Cultural Services.



### CATALOGUE

*Swept Away* will be accompanied by a 136-page, fully illustrated catalogue, which includes an essay by Chief Curator David McFadden. A complete set of artist biographies and statements will be included along with images of the artists’ works.

### ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design explores the blur zone between art, design, and craft today. The Museum focuses on contemporary creativity and the ways in which artists and designers from around the world transform materials through processes ranging from the artisanal to digital. The Museum’s exhibition program explores and illuminates issues and ideas, highlights creativity and craftsmanship, and celebrates the limitless potential of materials and techniques when used by gifted and innovative artists. MAD’s permanent collection is global in scope and focuses on art, craft, and design from 1950 to the present day. At the center of the Museum’s mission is education. The Museum’s dynamic new facility features classrooms and studios for master classes, seminars, and workshops for students, families, and adults. Three open artist studios engage visitors in the creative processes of artists at work and enhance the exhibition programs. Lectures, films, performances, and symposia related to the Museum’s collection and topical subjects affecting the world of contemporary art, craft, and design are held in a renovated 144-seat auditorium.



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