



INTERVIEW NOWATCH





The accomplishments of these designers, architects, curators and entrepreneurs are already substantial. Now *Art+Auction* has turned its eye to the big things they have in store for 2008—and beyond.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THREE IMAGES: BEN HOFFMANN; LEON CHEW; BEN HOFFMANN; FRED R. CONRAD/THE NEW YORK TIMES; MASAYA YOSHIMURA FOR NAKASA+PARTNERS, INC.; STIJN & MARIE



NEW BLOOD

Zoë Ryan may hold the title of curator at the Art Institute of Chicago, but she's also a translator of sorts, helping make serious design meaningful to the public. When the 31-year-old was appointed as the first-ever design curator at the museum, in 2006, she was given the mission of thoroughly overhauling and improving its small collection, an area that had been a quiet backwater. Many in the creative world were happy to hear that she had been given a job that would realize her full potential.



"Her attitude toward design is very open-minded," says Paola Antonelli, MoMA's curator of architecture and design, for whom Ryan interned 10 years ago. "She takes in everything—from landscape design to industrial design to graphics to products—without making too much of a distinction."

Case in point: Ryan's memorable 2006 New York show, "The Good Life: New Public Spaces for Recreation," curated for the Van Alen Institute. She practiced what she was preaching in the exhibition by choosing an unusual venue—Manhattan's Pier 40, jutting out into the Hudson River. The show

melded the international design establishment—wall-mounted videos of architect Charles Renfro talking about what public space means to him—with innovative neighborhood projects like Jonathan Kirschenfeld Associates' "floating swimming pool," a barge-bound recreational facility that delighted Brooklyn residents last summer.

Ryan will solidify her reputation at the Art Institute with the museum's first show devoted exclusively to the work of a single design firm: London's Graphic Thought Facility, a cross-disciplinary group with an improvisational, nonsleek aesthetic that is visible in such elements as the textured, perforated pages and rough cloth-bound cover of a monograph on the Dutch designer Tord Boontje. It's an out-of-left-field choice, but it's one that Ryan hopes viewers will embrace.

"I realize that a lot of people aren't coming to the museum to look at architecture and design," she says. "I want to engage them so that when they see something particularly inspiring or innovative, or a beautiful object, it makes them want to come back and study it." And just like that, learning is fun again.

Zoë Ryan, at the Art Institute of Chicago, is the museum's first-ever design curator. Her debut show there, on view through August 17, is devoted exclusively to the work of London's Graphic Thought Facility, whose MeBox storage system is seen above. Portrait by Ben Hoffmann.



