

HATS OFF

UNDERLINE STUDIO

The Ontario Association of Art Galleries (OAAG) was particularly fond of 401 Richmond graphic designers this year bestowing awards on **Lisa Kiss Design** (Studio 435, see news) and **Underline Studio** (Studio 356). Underline, responsible for constructing the eye-catching pages of **Prefix Photo Magazine** (Studio 124), won two design awards this year, a double whammy for their work on Prefix's media kit and posters for former tenant **Interaccess Electronic Media Arts Centre**. www.underlinestudio.com



Underline Studio's media kit for Prefix Photo Magazine.

SAVAC

The **South Asian Visual Arts Collective** (SAVAC, Studio 450) held their very own *Art School Confidential* this past June raising funds to support future South Asian artists choosing the path less traveled and featured works by budding and professional artists. During the evening, held at **DeLeon White Gallery**, awards were presented recognizing contributions made by individuals in the arts community and celebrating their accomplishments. The ceremony included a Most Generous Patron award for 401 Richmond! SAVAC will be participating in **Nuit Blanche** at 401 Richmond on September 30 (see more in listings) with a site-specific installation outside **YYZ Artists' Outlet** (Studio 140). www.savac.net



A guest at SAVAC's fundraiser adds her touch to the collaborative art project.

BIRDLAND THEATRE

Sharing a space with Artist **Guntar Kravis** (Studio 366), **Birdland Theatre** has been keeping a pretty low profile in 401 Richmond. This is certainly not the case outside of the building where Birdland's Founding Artistic Producer **Dr. Zorana Kydd** was honoured with one of five Dora Awards for the production of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. This non-profit performing arts company will be showing its stuff again soon with a production of *Salome* by **Ognen Georgievski**. www.birdlandtheatre.com



Birdland Theatre's Founding Artistic Producer **Dr. Zorana Kydd** at the Dora Awards.

TENANT PROFILE



Left to right: Architect **Heather Dubbeldam** in her studio; **Woodside House**: designed and constructed by Dubbeldam Design Architects; **Loft renovation**: interior renovation of existing house with new loft mezzanine and open riser wood and steel stair



BEAUTIFUL LITTLE MOMENTS DUBBELDAM DESIGN ARCHITECTS

In every architect there is the precision of a mathematician and the creative energy of an artist. It is an art form that requires meticulous blueprints for its expression and as **Heather Dubbeldam** suggests, the results are a collection "of beautiful little moments."

One such beautiful moment is captured in the artist-designed room *411 offset* at the **Gladstone Hotel**. A result of Heather's collaborative work with staff intern architect and colleague **Tania Ursomarzo**, the design was recently recognized by **Canadian Interiors Magazine** as the winning lighting application project in their *Ninth Annual Best of Canadian Design Competition*. The room has also been widely published in other leading design magazines, proof of it's resonance in the art and design world.

For an architect who works primarily on larger projects with an average span of two years, the Gladstone hotel room, was a departure for Heather that was both exciting and rewarding. It also afforded **Dubbeldam Design Architects** (Studio 258) media recognition that is a valuable key to the success of a smaller independent practice. "As a small firm, that's really how you become known in this field. Unless you're designing large buildings that everyone can walk by, see, and spend time in, you have to rely on getting your work published in magazines for exposure. When people see your work they start calling you."

Running an independent practice is a balancing act between taking on challenging projects and managing them with the available resources. During very busy periods, Heather has grown her team of architects to get the job done, but working this way requires an intensity that can be almost all consuming. "I would like to grow the practice, but I think that happens over time as a natural evolution." For the time being, Heather enjoys the enviable position of being selective, picking and choosing projects that are in keeping with her design style and ethos. "From a business perspective it would make more sense if I just took any work, but we don't just do the projects, we live them. The relationships we build with our clients can be intense at times so selecting projects that are in tune with what we believe in ensures both sides are happy with not only the outcome, but also the process."

Maintaining a practice with a small team of architects also gives Heather the opportunity to remain involved and in touch with all aspects of the design and construction process. After spending six years at the award winning and internationally recognized **Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects**, based in Toronto, she was pleased to find that having her own practice meant she could immerse herself in each project in a way that is simply not possible in a large firm. As Heather describes, "when you have your own practice, you're directing everything from client relationships and design to the execution of details and the oversight of construction, where the whole thing comes together. It's a very collaborative process where everyone works both for you and with you, pooling ideas and then channeling them to come up with a refined finished product whether it's furniture, interiors or entire buildings."

Sitting in Heather's office amidst models of houses, flooring samples, and boxes waiting for a home once her own studio renovations are completed, we can hear the children from **Studio 123 Early Learning Centre** playing in the courtyard below. Although we can't make out distinct voices, we're sure one of them is Heather's daughter Abigail. Having space at 401 Richmond, a place she has worked in various forms since 1996, is important to her mostly for the creative atmosphere and energy in the building community, but also because she has the luxury of being able to see and hear her daughter at play in the courtyard. Incidentally, Heather has also volunteered her time and services to help the non-profit daycare complete its own renovations.

Heather's other artistic outlet has long been photography, a passion that's been pushed to the back burner in the last year, but she is now working on producing a new body of work. She appreciates that "photography is completely different from practicing architecture—it's so immediate; you see something you want to photograph and you take it, print it, and it's done. Most of our architecture projects have such a long life span that the immediacy of photography is such a nice counterpoint to my other work." While Heather does architectural photography and still shoots her own projects for the most part, it is fine art photography that satisfies her expressive impulses. Heather's photography is part of a group exhibition in the vitrines at Harbourfront Centre called *Sited: Power of Place*. The show includes the work of eight Toronto architects and runs from September 16–November 5.

Her photography skills have also been put to good use shooting sites for the **TSA Architectural Guide Map of Toronto**. The **Toronto Society of Architects (TSA)** is a non-profit volunteer organization of Toronto-based architects that work to promote architecture. Heather was instrumental in the creation of the award-winning guide map that featured significant buildings from 1953-2003. Another guide map focusing on public spaces around the city is on its way this fall. A former co-chair, Heather remains active on the executive as the Editor of the TSA newsletter.

Heather's plate is clearly full, yet she doesn't forget to think about the future and new creative directions her company can explore. Having designed custom furniture for clients in the past, Heather is considering expanding this part of her practice. No matter what Dubbeldam Design Architects tackles next, Heather's vision will guide the evolutionary process. "I think you really have to have integrity about your own style, interests, and the things you believe in—the things that motivate you to come to work every day and design. I guess it's an issue of just being able to make a difference on your own whether it's volunteer work or designing buildings... finding a way to make a mark."

www.dubbeldamarchitects.com