



the new children's museum

news release

For immediate release

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TRASH, MAJOR NEW EXHIBITION, OPENS OCTOBER 15 AT THE NEW CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Highlights include giant maze from bales of used clothing, dumpster playground, and science-fiction inspired climbing space

September 15, 2011 — San Diego — The latest museum-wide exhibition at The New Children's Museum, [TRASH](#), will feature the work of 12 artists from around the globe focused on the kid-friendly and timely topic of trash. As an invisible but important issue, this theme enables NCM to continue making contemporary art approachable to families and children of all ages. Through inventive, participatory artworks, *TRASH* invites families to explore new perspectives and help shape the future. The biennial exhibition encompasses each work of art, hands-on art-making projects, school curricula, artist lectures, family workshops, special events, and online discussion in [The Family Room](#). The exhibition opens with a free community block party on October 15 and 16, 2011.

Children are naturally curious about trash. The dirt and disorderliness of the material is visually compelling to children as is the transformative appeal of turning trash into art. In addition, the related subjects of garbage men and garbage trucks are staples of early-childhood imaginative play. *TRASH* empowers kids to take the lead in their families on talking about environmental and social issues, such as landfills, waste disposal and The Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

"Every child knows we need to recycle, but that's where it ends. *TRASH* empowers kids with knowledge behind the issues — to better appreciate and understand the complexity of waste, to act as agents of change in their own households and educate their families," states NCM Executive Director and Chief Curator Rachel Teagle. "All of the artists in the exhibition ask visitors to confront the reality of waste in our society and encourage them to ask questions. We expect them to find the answers that will change our future."

What is trash and when does it become art? How does trash impact daily life? How can behaviors change to deal with trash? The exhibition addresses these questions through imaginative exploration and insightful play.

Participating Artists and Focus Materials

Artists participating in *TRASH* include Mikey Eastman, Kota Ezawa, Kianga Ford, Institute For Figuring, Layer, Machine Project, Jessica McCambly, Vik Muniz, Jason Rogenes, Shinique Smith, and Chris Sollars. These artists have engaged trash as materials or issues for many reasons, including concern about the environment, the aesthetic appeal of the materials, and trash as a source of cheap and readily available materials. Among the materials the artists will be using for their artworks are plastic grocery bags, plastics, discarded electronics, expanded polystyrene, cardboard, discarded clothing, repurposed metals, and trash collection machines.

MIKE EASTMAN

Mike Eastman unlocks the aesthetic and material potential of electronic waste through a process of discovery and play; transforming discarded television and computer parts into user-activated magnetic sculptures. Eastman's goal is to engage visitors in the process of artistic discovery and spark their curiosity about the hidden magic of materials.

As part of Eastman's artistic investigations, he reduces electronic devices down to their component parts, salvaging the material for new purposes. Playing around in his studio, Eastman discovered that he could create an electromagnet out of the copper wire from an old computer fan. Continuing his experimentation, he found that he could create animated formations and patterns in metallic dust by manipulating the current level. The resulting shapes evoke associations ranging from fur to black holes, stimulating the imagination and generating a sense of wonder. Each artwork offers different methods for creating unique dust sculptures, either by controlling the power level or by running a magnet over the glass surface of a dust-filled aquarium. Visitors are invited to mimic the artist's process and discover new artistic possibilities in the materials through play.

KOTA EZAWA

Kota Ezawa recreates found images by rendering them with animation software to reduce photographic images to essential shapes and colors. He then presents his altered images in 3D stereoscopic viewers that predate the classic view-master toys, to elevate everyday scenes of trash to a status once reserved for photographs of exotic locales or famous monuments. Ordinary images of street sweepers collecting leaves, or an overflowing dumpster, are made extraordinary through Ezawa's infusion of color and three dimensions.

Ezawa's source imagery for *Stereo Trash* includes representations of staple childhood characters, moments depicting trash in film, and international photographs of both concealed and recognizable aspects of trash processing. Despite the diversity of sources, the images are not intended as a comprehensive representation of the ways individuals live with trash around the world. What Ezawa has done so skillfully, is to create a set of images from which every visitor will discover scenes that are familiar and others that are foreign to their experience of trash. An image of Oscar the Grouch will be an easily identifiable symbol of trash, while a scene taken from an auto-wrecking yard might be unfamiliar, and prompt a child to inquire about what becomes of broken down cars. Similarly, an image of German recycling bins may spark a dialogue among a family about how their recyclables are sorted.

KIANGA FORD

[Kianga Ford](#) authors site-specific narratives that she integrates with soundscapes and presents within accompanying environmental installations. In *The Complex, SD/TJ Hillside-12 (Improvisational Developments)*, Ford creates a hybrid space that is part ad hoc hillside settlement and part planned apartment complex. Made of both reused materials and more polished surfaces, Ford's complex brings questions of class and economy into how we live with, and employ trash. The form and materials of the structure rely on innovative building techniques developed by urban planners working to improve the safety of construction in canyon communities in Tijuana.

Ford introduces perspectives from diverse walks of life through the residents of the 12 units in this fictional community, whose stories are told through interrelated audio narratives played in each unit. Visitors to the unit will meet a varied and fantastic cast of characters; all inspired by Ford's extensive research and interviews with children from San Diego and Tijuana. The stories reflect the great disparities and parallels in the ways children from both sides of the border conceive of what constitutes trash, the moral imperative to recycle, and trash processing. These stories are not intended to be didactic, nor comprehensive in telling the story of trash at the border; rather, Ford opens a dialogue through her narratives about the complexities of how children comprehend garbage.

INSTITUTE FOR FIGURING (<http://www.theiff.org/>)

Inspired by their research into the devastating impact of plastic trash on the world's oceans, Margaret and Christine Wertheim of the Institute For Figuring endeavored to keep and track all of their household plastic trash. After cleaning, bagging and storing their plastic trash for just one week, the sisters were shocked by the amount they had consumed, and were motivated to continue this exercise in ecological awareness for four years. In spite of its scale, the *Midden*, which contains all of the sisters' plastic trash

from that period, represents a fraction of what the average Western citizen uses, as the sisters worked hard to minimize their intake.

The San Diego Midden is the first time the IFF will have collaborators on the *Midden Project*. Over the course of the exhibition, the gallery will be filled with San Diego plastic accumulated by NCM visitors. The Wertheim's aspiration in engaging a larger audience to collect and contribute their trash is to make tangible the amount of waste once individual produces and call attention to growing issue of plastics in the oceans.

Public Lectures: Margaret Wertheim will offer two public lectures and workshops on the subject of the impact of plastic trash in the oceans at The New Children's Museum in February of 2012.

LAYER

Influenced by naturally occurring shapes and forms, [Layer](#) experiments with different industrial manufacturing techniques to explore unexpected structural possibilities. Whether working with metal, paper, or plastic, Layer's projects all have a discernible organic quality. Playfully referencing a fennel bulb, the porous aluminum structure of *Three Horned Beast (and Baby Beast)* represents Layer's innovative and economical approach of maximizing volume while minimizing material waste.

The design of the *Three Horned Beast (and Baby Beast)* responds elegantly to the dual challenge of creating a structure which both maximizes material resources and frames the activity taking place in NCM's Improv Theater. By using aluminum, Layer is able to take advantage of the material's light weight and structural strength to create a large open lattice with the minimum amount of material required to still create a sense of enclosure. The net-like framework, also allows visitors on the top floors to peer through the skin of the structure and down through the 30 foot "horns" to the improvised play of the visitors on the interior below. Similarly, the visitors inside the "Beast" can look up through the porous openings and watch the activity elsewhere in the Museum.

MACHINE PROJECT

[Machine Project](#), an informal consortium of artists led by Mark Allen, believes that art offers a unique way to understand the world that privileges curiosity and experimentation. Allen promotes this perspective through workshops, classes, and performances that help participants make connections between art and their everyday life.

When Allen contemplated creative fundraising ideas for his organization, he sought to find a way to make donating fun. His solution came in the form of a pneumatic device reminiscent of an old-fashioned drive-up bank teller. When NCM commissioned him to develop a similar donation system, he and engineers Tod Kurt and Carlyn Maw jumped at the chance to augment his original design to include literal bells and whistles that could be triggered when a donation is made. Thanks to their creation, now when an NCM visitor makes a contribution, the *Cash Machine* comes to life to thank them with unexpected fanfare! In addition, Machine Project will develop a *TRASH* event that will allow the collective to take over the galleries and infuse NCM with their quirky, participatory, and original offerings.

JESSICA MCCAMBLY

Finding complexity in simple material, [Jessica McCambly](#) transforms ubiquitous white plastic shopping bags into an ephemeral cloud of light and shadow. Created from bags collected from NCM visitors, the accumulated mass of delicate imperfect rings, floats mist-like overhead, mimicking the dynamic shape of a wave breaking against the shore. The uniformity and intricate alteration of material invites myriad associations to be projected onto the suspended formation. McCambly encourages visitors to slow down and observe the temporal shapes the light draws against the wall and to contemplate the quiet beauty in the subtle shifts the piece makes over time. The simple act of noticing is critical to the experience of this work. As McCambly states, "the fast pace and culture of convenience that necessitates these plastic bags is also the one that interferes with our ability to notice fleeting moments of visual, aesthetic

pleasure.” By reducing the pace, McCambly offers an alternative, giving us an opportunity to breathe and find the magic in the mundane.

VIK MUNIZ

[Vik Muniz](#) has stated that he wishes for viewers to see more than simply “a representation of something” in his work, by showing them “how it happens.” This makes for a particularly rewarding experience for children, as the magic of one thing transformed into something else entirely can truly change how they perceive the world around them. Muniz’s *Pictures of Garbage* photographs depict “*catadores*”—individuals who pick recyclable materials from the largest landfill in the world in Brazil. The photographs elevate the status of the figures by placing them in monumental portraits inspired by classical paintings, which are composed from the very materials the catadores collect. He shows the figures with great dignity and respect this way, commenting on the importance of their overlooked, yet critically important role in Brazil’s effort to cope with seemingly insurmountable issues of waste.

Muniz’s collaboration with NCM features a corresponding hands-on studio project that offers visitors unprecedented access to his creative process. Muniz invites visitors to compose their own “picture of garbage,” using broken plastic toys placed upon light boxes; in a technique that mirrors his own. By revealing the details of his practice he hopes to inspire a greater understanding and appreciation of the artistic process among NCM families. As he argues, “it is by empowering the viewer that art achieves its miraculous force.”

JASON ROGENES

[Jason Rogenes](#) has explored the possibilities of expanded polystyrene, better known as Styrofoam, for more than ten years. By working with discarded materials, Rogenes continues the long tradition of 20th century artists who challenged the notion that art-making requires precious or expensive materials. Rogenes is also motivated by environmental concerns, and hopes that viewers will acknowledge that the accumulation in his sculptures reflects only an infinitesimal percentage of the consumer packaging sent to landfills across the globe daily.

One child examining Rogenes’ work described it as a machine that could tell “stories of the future.” Rogenes’ immersive environments appear to be composed of the stuff of science fiction: spacecrafts set within geometric landscapes that evoke unfamiliar planets. To create his futuristic illusion Rogenes has in fact skillfully manipulated the materials of everyday consumer culture—cardboard and polystyrene, made to glow by fluorescent lighting. Rogenes’ skill in seeing possibility where others see waste embodies the aesthetic approach of so many artists working with discarded materials today. His work brings issues of consumer excess into focus, while reminding us that our everyday surroundings offer up endless opportunities for artistic transformation.

SHINIQUE SMITH

Drawn to stories in the things we leave behind, [Shinique Smith](#) uses discarded clothing as an artistic medium to explore the complex and accidental connections between individuals. Her installation, *The Secret Garden*, is an adjustable maze of brightly-colored and textured panels, influenced by the practice in which unwanted used clothing from the United States is baled and sold overseas to third world countries, with the bulk going to Africa. Several hundred tons of clothing, packed into tight bundles, is shipped every year, generating a multi-billion dollar industry. Beyond the economic implications, these bales also provide a tangible connection point to individuals elsewhere in the world through the very clothes on our backs. Smith’s maze provides a metaphor for these complex connections as visitors explore the network of interlocking paths. In navigating the maze, the visitor is mentally and physically making connections in space, and with other visitors. The surface of the maze itself is built up through an accumulation of paint, fabric, found objects, and collaged images. The texture invokes the layers of memory and the history of the individuals passing through. Exiting the maze, visitors emerge into a room filled with bundles of recycled clothing, providing a space to replicate the artist’s process and contemplate the tangible connection between individuals and their material goods.

CHRIS SOLLARS

Through humorous interventions and performances, [Chris Sollars](#) calls attention to the things we throw away. Rather than telling the viewer what to think about trash, Sollars's goal is to stimulate curiosity as a way of encouraging us to rethink the everyday world and consider the importance of the invisible and overlooked. In *Play-Fill*, Sollars creates a situation in which visitors are asked to think about the world from the perspective of a piece of trash. By refocusing our point of view, Sollars spotlights a critical topic we would rather ignore and makes it personal. Set against the backdrop of a wall size photomural of San Diego's Miramar Landfill, the installation places the visitor in an empathic position to trash. Visitors play on a dumpster converted into a playground and watch a video of trash falling from above while lying on the dumpster floor. The visitor is further connected to trash through an additional video, *Pile Trash San Diego*. The video follows a group of anthropomorphic trash bags on a journey between the former landfill at Balboa Park, through downtown San Diego to the Miramar Landfill. By focusing locally on San Diego landfill sites, Sollars challenges us to question our individual connection to trash and what becomes of it once it leaves our sight.

TRASH Block Party and Opening Events:

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15

Members Only Preview Celebration | 8am–11am

Member families get to experience *TRASH* before the public. Children will work directly with exhibition artist Jason Rogenes in a collaborative hands-on workshop and enjoy light refreshments. [Museum membership information is available here.](#)

Street Festival and Public Opening | 10am–4pm

Free admission sponsored by ScholarShare College Savings Plan

The community is invited to celebrate the opening of *TRASH* with an action-packed street fair, featuring award-winning talent, kid friendly entertainment and special *TRASH*-inspired art projects. Families will enjoy food truck fare, experience interactive demonstrations, information booths from environmental organizations, and an opportunity to explore the new exhibition. Entertainment highlights include Ozokidz, a family-friendly edition of the celebrated group Ozomatli; Junior Crew Stomp, directed and choreographed by Chris Rubio of the off-Broadway show STOMP!; The Platt Brothers, a comedic dance and acrobat trio of real-life brothers; and a [flash mob](#).

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16

Hispanic Community Day | 10am–4pm

Free admission sponsored by Target

In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, NCM is showcasing the rich culture of the Latino community through cultural performances and bilingual programming. Families will enjoy performances by Mariachis Real de San Diego, Manny Cepeda, and Danza Coatlicue; experience interactive demonstrations; information booths from environmental organizations; food truck fare from Arthur's Bomb Tacos and Cool Cycles; and an opportunity to explore the new exhibition.

TRASH opening events are made possible by generous support from ScholarShare College Savings Plan, Target, Entravision Communications and Televisa. Media sponsors include KPBS, 12 XEWT, Univision San Diego, T33 Telemundo, Telefutura, myTV13, 102.1 KPRI, 105.7 The Walrus and San Diego CityBeat.

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Culture, the County of San Diego's Community Enhancement Program, Museum members and donors to NCM's annual fund.

NCM is closed to the public September 12 through October 14 for exhibition build-out.

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ABOUT THE NEW CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

The New Children's Museum is a dynamic new model of a museum that provides inventive and engaging art experiences that are meaningful to children and families. NCM brings families together in a rich educational environment that fosters creativity — blending elements of art museum, children's museum, and community center.

A non-profit institution funded by admissions, memberships, and community support, the Museum stimulates imagination, inquisitiveness and innovative thinking by exhibiting participatory works of art by contemporary artists and providing a venue for art making and play. Serving all ages, from toddler to teen, NCM inspires new ways to see the world through the language of art. To learn more, visit thinkplaycreate.org/pressroom.