A LITTLE DREAMER ART INSTALLATION: PAPER AIRPLANES AND SUSTAINABILITY

QIYI LI HONORS PROJECT INDEPENDENT STUDY
ADVISOR: MICHAEL MARTIN DECEMBER 1ST-21ST 2013
COLLEGE OF DESIGN ATRIUM IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

ISU 2014 SYMPOSIUM ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH & CREATIVE EXPRESSION
APRIL 15, 2014 ISU MEMORIAL UNION
A LITTLE DREAMER
ABOUT THE ARTIST

QIYI LI
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
BLA UNIVERSITY HONORS
SPRING 2014 CANDIDATE
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

MARCH 15TH 1991
FROM BEIJING, CHINA

CONTACT
liqiyi@lastate.edu
CELL 515.509.6761
UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

Requirements:

1. At all points, members must maintain an ISU GPA of 3.50 or above

2. Submit, and receive approval for, a Statement of Honors Purpose

3. Three honors courses
   - ARCH 427. History, Theory, and Criticism of Chinese Architecture
   - LA 478G. Topical Studies in Landscape Architecture: Graphic

4. Two honors seminars
   - HON 321P: Resonance: Intersections between Music and Architecture
   - HON 321Q: Entrepreneurship

5. Honors Capstone Project
   - Honors Studio
   - Independent Study

6. Poster Presentation
   - Spring 2014 Poster Presentation
     Memorial Union, Great Hall
     April 30th, 3:00pm-5:00pm
INSPIRATION

Dawn Ng 2009 Art Installation
I Fly Like Paper

It all starts with one image. In here, I see her lost, I see her loneliness. I see myself in her. I couldn’t move my eyes off it.
I FLY LIKE PAPER
I GET HIGH LIKE PLANES

IS CORE TO MY ONGOING STUDY OF HOME. HAVING SPENT THE PAST 8 YEARS AWAY, I HAVE BECOME OBSESSED BY THE NOTION OF HOME AND PARTICULARLY INTRIGUED BY THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD NOSTALGIA WHICH COMES FROM TWO GREEK ROOTS, NOSTOS "RETURNING HOME" AND ALGOS "PAIN." NOSTALGIA WAS COINED AS A MEDICAL CONDITION BY SWISS PHYSICIAN, DOCTOR JOHANNES HOFER, IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD.

THROUGHOUT MY LIFE, I’VE FOUND THIS SEDUCTIVE FEELING OF HOMESICKNESS OR ITS OPPOSITE, FERNWEH "FAR-SICKNESS"— A DESIRE TO LEAVE, BOTH TSUNAMIS OF LONGING SO GREAT THAT EITHER CAN OVERWHELM AND PARALYZE MY ENTIRE BEING.

THE IDEA OF THIS WORK OF ART IS TO RECREATE THIS GREAT WAVE OF EMOTION, BY ORCHESTRATING THOUSANDS OF PAPER PLANES TO PHYSICALLY BURST THROUGH A SINGLE WINDOW AND EXPLODE INTO THE MASSIVE INDOOR SPACE, MY INTENTION IS TO VISUALLY AND PHYSICALLY ENGULF THE VIEWER.

SYMBOLIC OF TRAVEL, EACH PAPER PLANE CARRIES THIS UNIVERSAL DESIRE TO LEAVE OR RETURN HOME.

EARLY IN SCHOOL, I LEARNT THAT DA VINCI INVENTED THE PAPER PLANE, HOWEVER THE CHINESE CONTEST TO THAT FACT HAVING INVENTED BOTH PAPER AND THE KITE — THIS EAST VS. WEST OWNERSHIP BATTLE OVER THE ORIGIN OF A PAPER PLANE MIRRORS MY OWN UNDERLYING GEOGRAPHIC TUG OF WAR BETWEEN AMERICA AND SINGAPORE TODAY. HENCE THE SMALLEST PLANE IS MODELLED AFTER THE SIZE OF MY PALM AND THE BIGGEST ONE OF ME LYING ON MY SIDE.

DAWN NG | 2009 | ART INSTALLATION

Planes are seen bursting through a small window, and into a massive indoor exhibition space. The installation is meant to represent the artist’s feeling of homesickness, and the planes symbolize a wave of emotion rushing in all at once.
OPEN STREAM SURVEY

“What do paper airplanes remind you of?”

I conducted a brief survey to see actually how people would respond to paper airplanes. I asked acquaintances: what do paper airplanes remind you of? Interestingly enough, even though almost everyone would mention childhood, but no two people gave the exact same answer. Their answers were not things I had considered, but when I thought about these responses, they all made sense to me. The topic has become intriguing for me.

Here are some of the responses I got:

1. parents
2. toy
3. love
4. lipstick
5. middle school
6. crop field
7. boys and girls
8. childish dream
9. air crew
10. classmates
11. unsustainable
12. good memories
13. message
14. distance
15. sidewalk
16. conquer
17. dreams
18. home
19. homesickness
20. imagination
21. origami
22. song-paper aeroplane
23. freedom
24. daring
25. beauty of machines
26. habbit
27. loss
28. wish
29. movie-the chorus
30. creativity
31. airport drainage
32. love letter
33. game
34. bird
35. friends
36. friendship
37. life
38. note
39. convey
40. les christoes
INITIAL SKETCH

Initial Location: College of Design 2nd Floor Center Meeting Space

Close access from stairs and student services office. Smaller space with easier control

But decided to change to College of Design Atrium for a more powerful display and wider audience
AIRPLANE MAKING
the 634 paper airplanes are made from sheets of paper discarded from Design Building printing lab.

The number of planes reflect the number of trees worldwide that are cut for paper mills every five seconds, based on the rate of four billion trees per year.
NOV.24-30 THANKSGIVING BREAK
NOV.24-30 THANKSGIVING BREAK
My installation responds to its architectural frame because these airplane "vectors" are connecting each of the atrium's four balconies to the opposite wall on the ground level. These descending arcs provide a counterpoint to the narrow and vertical atrium and new ways of re-experiencing the linear and squared-off space.
The planes themselves are static, but viewers experience a diversity of psychological responses because of the dynamic aesthetic variations that occur from different levels, angles, or time of day.
“A Little Dreamer” was the most striking and thought-provoking installation anyone has ever done inside this building.”

-Associate Dean, Marwan Ghandour

“This was our very own waste paper, dive-bombing its way into our collective consciousness, forcing us to visualize our personal and quotidian contribution to a problem of abstractly global dimensions.”

-Honors Advisor, Michael Martin
LA Honors Student Wins Live Green Award

Fifth-year landscape architecture student Qiyi Li, Beijing, China, received a Live Green Award for Excellence in Sustainability at the ISU Symposium on Sustainability at the end of February. She was recognized for her "A Little Dreamer" honors project, for which she created more than 600 paper airplanes from recycled paper and hung them in the College of Design's atrium last fall to raise awareness of the number of trees cut down worldwide for paper manufacturing in just five seconds.
2013 LIVE GREEN AWARD

Symposium on Sustainability
February 25th 2014

Iowa State Daily Report
February 26th 2014

Live Green Newsletter
March 2014, Follow-Up Report

Students Living the Cardinal, Gold and GREEN!

Qiyi Li - Sustainable Art Installation

Qiyi Li is a 5th year student in the College of Design Landscape Architecture Program with a secondary major in environmental studies, she is also a member of the University Honors Program. For her honors capstone project Qiyi chose to do a week long art installation in the College of Design atrium called "A Little Dreamer".

The installation consisted of 654 paper airplanes flown in from the four balconies to the opposite wall’s ground level. The paper used to make these airplanes was letter-sized paper that people had discarded from the College of Design printing labs. The number of planes represents the number of trees that are cut down for virgin paper production every five seconds worldwide.

Qiyi was inspired to create this installation by artist Dawn Ng's project "Fly (like Paper)". Qiyi took the idea of paper airplanes but added many layers to it including expressing childhood memories and dreams, architectural reflections and new-experiencing paper conservation and sustainability.

She named the installation "A Little Dreamer" to represent the childhood memories layer of the project. She stated, "I wanted this art to remind people of their childhood dreams, those pure, beautiful, innocent dreams, and accept the true beauty of who they are.

Although art usually represents the artist’s reflection or expression, Qiyi wanted this installation to be neutral and reflect only the audience’s thoughts. Paper airplanes are such a media that are similar enough to evoke resonance, but at the same time, different enough to be personal," says Qiyi. The installation was so well received by the project that instead of only keeping it up for one week she was asked to keep it up for an entire month.

Qiyi has become more interested in public advocacy of sustainability through her secondary major in environmental studies. Learning about resource scarcity, sustainability challenges and environmental issues, she has become more aware of the importance of public awareness saying "Only when you realize the importance of it will you start to take action!" This is why she wanted to use her own efforts to raise awareness of paper recycling and sustainable conservation practices.

After graduation, Qiyi plans to continue her efforts in advocating sustainability and environmental protection through her work in landscape architecture. She stated, "There are so many people taking different approaches toward sustainability, and I really want to make meaningful contributions in my own ways. As for completing another project like "A Little Dreamer" Qiyi says that with time her views and understandings will develop and she would love to do another project to express her deeper understanding in the future."
The installation utilizes public art as a medium to highlight environmental issues and to raise public awareness of paper recycling and sustainable conservation practices.

- Qiyi Li
04/15/2014
Iowa State University