The Arts

SOA Students Showcase Their Talents at P.S.1

By Kristin Sterling

To be a student at Columbia’s School of the Arts is to be immersed in the culture of New York City, while at the same time being a student of art and refining one’s skills. It so makes sense that when a major museum hosts a show made up of emerging New York artists the phones in Dodge Hall ring. It began two years ago, when CIESIN students are included in exhibitions around the city in the next few months.

Mika Rottenberg, SOA’04, is among 31 Columbia students and alumni selected for a joint exhibition by P.S.1 and The Museum of Modern Art titled “Greater New York 2005.” The work has to do with production, labor and economy, so New York City is very inspiring for me,” says Rottenberg, whose hour and a half video piece involves video drawings and photography. Her installation “Tropical Breeze Project” is part of the exhibition. “I look at people at work and watch how the city functions as a system,” she says. “A Pound of Cure, a painting by Anna Conway, SOA’02, also will feature in the exhibition. She and Rottenberg have been selected for an Art Review magazine article about the exhibition. “Art Review: 25 Emerging U.S. Artists.”

The exhibition opened on March 9 at Phillips, De Pury Go Gallery on W. 15 Street, and is sponsored by the magazine.

In addition, three current SOA students—Tamy Ben-Tor, SOA’06; Miki Carmi, SOA’05; and Francesca DiMaggio, SOA’06—are participating in the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art’s “First Look” show. The School of the Arts is proud of its artists—faculty, students and alumni—whom we as a museum are able to ensure their presence in the world of art,” says Dean Bruce W. Ferguson. “That they are so visible at this time is testament to their hard work and seriousness.”

“Greater New York 2005” is sponsored by the magazine, however, the show is on view at P.S.1 in Long Island City through Sept. 26, occupies all of the museum’s indoor and outdoor gallery space, totaling 145,000 square feet. In addition to showing a huge exhibition, the gallery was closed to the public for nearly three weeks preceding the March 13 opening, while a team of more than 50 people installed the works of art.

Among the other Columbia artists featured in the exhibition is Guy Ben-Ner. SOA’03. His 13.5-minute video movie projection “Moby Dick” features himself and his daughter in a silent, slapstick version of the novel, performed in their kitchen. Ben-Ner also will represent Israel this summer at the Venice Biennial. Laleh Khoshroo’s, SOA’04, animation “Gropi & Gays” is also on view at “Greater New York 2005,” and Bust, an oil painting on canvas by Garth Weiser, SOA’03, is included as well.

For more information about the show, visit www.ps1.org

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“The GRUMP datasets will allow us to rethink trends in urbanization and the relationship between population, ecosystems and land use,” explained Deborah Balk, a demographer at CIESIN and the principal investigator of GRUMP. “GRUMP shows us that the urban experience is not uniform, that city size matters and city distribution matters. Coastal areas are more urban than other ecosystems, for example, and even rural populations in coastal ecosystems are much denser than in other rural areas.”

This study has resulted in the construction of a suite of products constituting the first detailed and systematic data sets on urban populations in the world. The above populations map highlights clusters of urban areas around the world. GRUMP delineates urban boundaries across the planet ranging in size from 1 km2 to the largest of urban extents Tokyo, which includes more than 500 connected settlements, is the largest urbanized area in the world at 38,000 km2. “The night-time lights satellite, the primary technology used to detect urban areas, tends to overestimate the geographic size of highly-encircled cities, but for those cities, we have much more detailed sub-city population data to supplement the extent information,” said Balk. GRUMP has shown that in the year 2000, there were 24,000 urban areas across the globe with 5,000 residents or more. “They’re areas that were either hard to detect with the satellite or have weak census-taking. This method is novel and a huge improvement over previous databases. It’s not perfect, but it’s an important achievement,” Balk said.

Eventually, GRUMP data should revolutionize the way population figures are debated and discussed,” said Gordon McGranahan, director of the Urban Settlements Program at the International Institute for Environment and Development. “The GRUMP presentation of data, particularly if combined with population estimates by location, is so much more amenable to up and down-scaling and local verification than conventional tables.”

GRUMP data took years to compile. It drew on years of investment from the Gridded Population of the World (GPW) project, in which population counts are converted from irregularly and administratively defined census units to a uniform latitude-longitude grid. The GRUMP datasets, as well as the newest release (version 3), of GPW may be accessed through the NASA Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center (SEDAC), operated by CIESIN, at http://beta.sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/gpw/.

The GRUMP data collection system for urban and rural populations in coastal and land use, “explained Deborah Balk, a demographer at CIESIN and the principal investigator of GRUMP. “GRUMP delineates urban and rural populations, but the better we can distinguish patterns of rural population, farming and use of natural resources, the better place we are to address the major challenges of rural development and poverty alleviation.”

GRUMP is an important step in the right direction.”

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This study has resulted in the construction of a suite of products constituting the first detailed and systematic data sets on urban population distribution and the extents of human settlements across the globe. Although population census and satellite data have been available for some time, until now minimal effort had been made to combine these two kinds of information to capture the geographic boundaries of human settlements.

The GRUMP data collection consists of three individual data- sets: GPW, GRUMP Urban Extent Mask and GRUMP. The GRUMP Urban Extent Mask is the first systematic global-scale attempt to portray the boundaries of urban areas with defined populations of 5,000 or larger. The GRUMP Population Grid reports the distribution of human population across the globe and is the first to report the population concentration more precisely than previous efforts. It allows for inference about urban versus rural populations, and cities of different sizes, when used in combination with the Urban Extent Mask.

In contrast, prior data sets, such as those from the United Nations or the Digital Chart of the World, indicated either the population size or extent of urban areas, but not both.

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The above populations map highlights clusters of urban areas around the world. GRUMP has identified about 75,000 distinct settlements worldwide, but only 24,000 urban areas—the result of many agglomerated urban settlements.