

MILLIONS SERVED

There is a popular saying that states, “It takes years of hard work and dedication to become an overnight sensation”. To many, *Hylozoic Ground* may appear to have arrived fully formed out of nowhere. In reality, it has been an ongoing project spanning multiple years, incarnations, venues and continents. It stems from the creative genius of Philip Beesley in collaboration with his dedicated in-house studio team and key experts in complementary fields of practice.

To date, more than a million people have viewed and experienced the *Hylozoic* exhibitions in person and hundreds of thousands more have viewed elements of them on television, on the internet and via print media. With new projects slated for the United States, Australia, Spain, Austria and India those numbers will grow exponentially. Few other contemporary Canadian artworks can approach this scale of exposure and public recognition.

Perhaps it is the rare ability of *Hylozoic Ground* to simultaneously demonstrate refined beauty, primal bodily functions (such as breathing, swallowing and sensing/reacting to the proximity of humans) and innovation, that has captured its audience’s imaginations and prompted numerous kudos, awards and commissions around the world.

The word ‘hylozoism’ refers to an ancient belief that life arises out of matter. The immersive environments of the Hylozoic Series are comprised of construction systems that represent the vanguard of responsive architecture, mechatronic engineering and ‘livingsystems’ experimental chemistry which are actuated, or brought to life. The sculptures emulate, reinterpret and capture the essence and intricacy of nature through inorganic and synthetic means. Primitive metabolisms of acrylic, latex and silicone that are irresistibly alluring, endearing and intoxicating.

With this exhibition, Design at Riverside continues its unique initiative of repatriating Canada’s Biennale entry for Canadian audiences. *The Hylozoic Ground Collaboration* traces the evolutionary journey of this body of work from the earliest construction at the Palatine Hill (*Palatine Burial*, Rome, c.1996), to the present. A deep commitment to collaboration and generosity of spirit drives the creative and production processes of all Beesley’s work and is acknowledged in the team’s sketchbooks, quotes and contributions to the publications presented, as well as the Key Collaborators Forum, a special one-off ‘live’ event accompanying the exhibition”. The exhibition itself is where

the *Hylozoic Ground* story unfolds. This is achieved through an animated display of photographs, dense sculptural clusters of components, short films, sketch books, drawings, 3D models and a linear chronology of component prototypes.

Hylozoic Ground weaves together architecture, science, engineering and art. The resulting sculptural forms are not only captivating objects, but function as conduits for Beesley’s theories of responsive architecture. Through *Hylozoic Ground*, he may have rekindled in his audiences, the intuitive sense of wonder and optimism about the future that emanated from historical World’s Fairs such as Chicago (1893) and New York (1939)—the world writ large with possibilities, manifested (to reflect our times) through tens of thousands of lightweight digitally-fabricated components fitted with microprocessors and sensors that respond to and interact with humans.

The integration of *Hylozoic Ground*’s visual and technical breakthroughs into mainstream architecture may not happen tomorrow, but it no longer seems to be a huge leap of faith. Audiences around the world are getting-it in record numbers and enjoying the invitation to dream again.

— **Esther E. Shipman,**
Curator, Architecture & Design
Design at Riverside
Cambridge Galleries, Canada

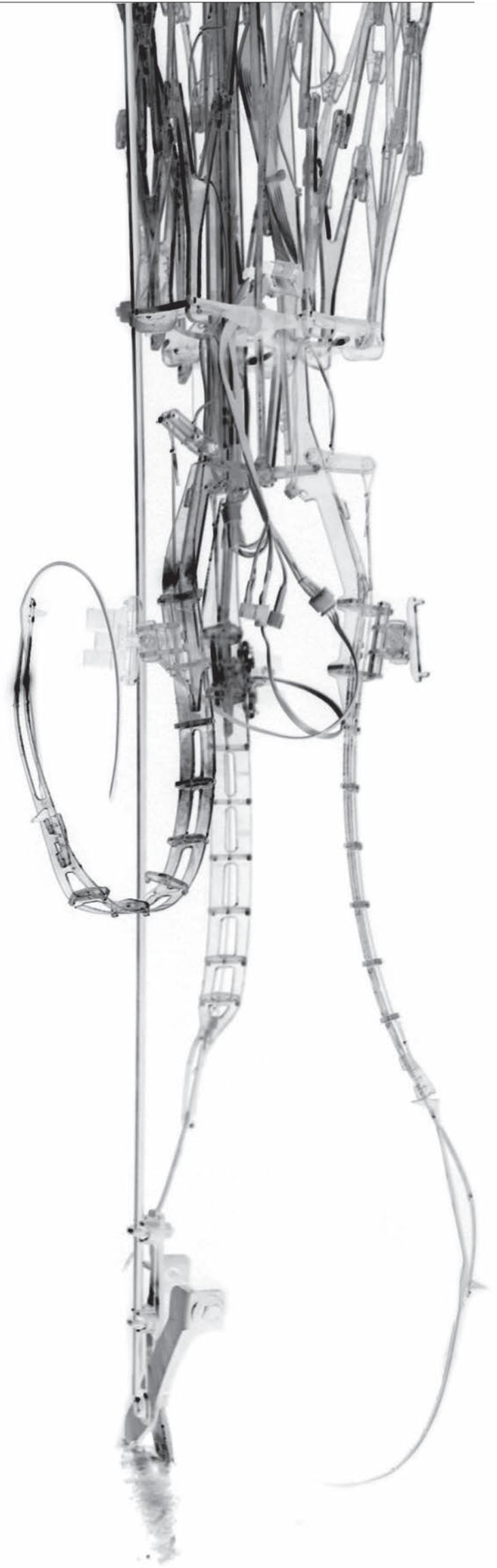


Image: Detail, *Hylozoic Soil* – Musée des beaux-arts, Montréal, 2007. © PBAI.

*The Key Collaborators Forum brings together Hylozoic Ground’s visionary team of experts including Philip Beesley (architect/artist, Canada), Dr. Robert Gorbet (engineer, Canada), and Dr. Rachel Armstrong (experimental chemist, United Kingdom), for a discussion on the implication of mixing art, engineering and science. One of three events organized to accompany the exhibition.



Image: Component Wall, *The Hylozoic Ground Collaboration* — Design at Riverside, Cambridge, 2011. Photo: K. Jennifer Bedford

THE HYLOZOIC SERIES

The Hylozoic Series of installations are interactive geotextile mesh environments that respond to visitors. Entry is beneath a meshed canopy, interspersed with a dense field of meshwork columns and layered suspended filters. Proximity sensors are controlled by arrays of microprocessors that track foreign movements throughout the space and trigger caressing and swallowing movements in ripples. These curling and twitching actions spread outward in peristaltic waves. In turn, protocell chemistry forms a primitive metabolism that absorbs increments of carbon and emits viscous skins.

The work is an evolving series. Seventeen related installations will have been completed between 2006 and the end of 2011, initiated at the Montreal Beau-Arts Museum in 2007–8 and culminating in a permanent installation with major portions of the Venice Biennale project at The Leonardo in Salt Lake City. New stages of development in 2012 are slated for Calcutta, Madrid, Wellington, Sydney, and Edmonton.

The Hylozoic Ground Collaboration, Design at Riverside, Cambridge, August 2011

Hylozoic Soil: Hylozoic Series 9, The Leonardo, Salt Lake City, August 2011

Sargasso, Luminato Festival, Brookfield Place Galleria, Toronto, June 2011

Hylozoic Series: Stoa, Lexus Hybrid Art, Moscow, May 2011

St. Exuperly Field, Galerie St. Exuperly, Reims, February 2011

Aurora, Nuit Blanche, Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto, October 2010

Hylozoic Ground: Hylozoic Series 8, 12th International Venice Biennale in Architecture, September 2010

Alameda Field: Hylozoic Soil: Series 7, Laboratorio Arte Alameda/Festival de Mexico, Mexico City, April 2010

Meduse Field: Hylozoic Soil Series 6, Mois Multi Festival, with Recto-Verso, Québec City, February 2010

Hylozoic Soil Series 5, Medialab Enschede, Holland, October 2009

Hylozoic Soil Series 4, Biologic Gallery, SIGGRAPH, New Orleans, August 2009

Hylozoic Soil Series 3, 2009 VIDA Awards, the Matadero, Madrid, February 2009

Hylozoic Grove Series 2, Museum of the Future, Ars Electronica, Linz, December 2008

Hylozoic Soil Documents, Beijing Architecture Biennale, October 2008

Hylozoic Soil Work In Progress, National Yunlin University of Science and Technology Gallery, Douliou, Taiwan, December 2008

Hylozoic Projects, in *Aesthesia*, University of Southern Illinois Art Gallery, September 2007

Hylozoic Soil, in *Communicative Vessels: e-art*, Montreal Musée des Beaux-Arts, September 2007

VENICE BIENNALE

Hylozoic Ground was selected to represent Canada at the 12th International Venice Biennale in Architecture—August 29th to November 21st 2010.

The Venice Biennale in Architecture is the single most important and prestigious international event in contemporary architecture, offering an unparalleled opportunity to showcase Canadian architectural excellence on the global stage. More than 30 nations, including Canada, have permanent pavilions within the Giardini Pubblici site and many others host temporary exhibits in central Venice.

Cambridge Galleries would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of its membership, the City of Cambridge, the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. The *Hylozoic Ground Collaboration* exhibition received additional support from the Promotion of Architecture Program of the Canada Council of the Arts, and the Grand River Society of Architects.

Philip Beesley acknowledges the support of Waterloo Architecture, Bartlett School of Architecture, Canada Council for the Arts, Graham Foundation, Greenwich University, Langlois Foundation for Art, Science and Technology, National Gallery of Canada, Ontario Arts Council, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, Toronto Arts Council, University Syddansk, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

**THE HYLOZOIC GROUND COLLABORATION
IS CURATED BY ESTHER E. SHIPMAN**

AUGUST 18—OCTOBER 16, 2011

Cover image: Installation view, *Hylozoic Ground* — Venice Biennale for Architecture, 2010. © PBAI; photo: Pierre Charron.

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THE HYLOZOIC GROUND COLLABORATION

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