

Building the Eco-Future

CONFERENCE BRINGS TOGETHER ARTISTS, ARCHITECTS, COMMUNITY by Suzi Steffen

Women in war-torn nations won't have to walk 30 miles a day for water.

Buildings will limit global warming while making bold artistic statements.

Communities will make plans and get their hands into the dirt.

And the parties at day's end? Those parties will *rock*.

Or so run the visions of students at the UO's School of Architecture and Allied Arts in charge of the Holistic Options for Planet Earth Sustainability (HOPES) conference, which starts Thursday, April 19, and runs through Sunday, April 22. They say that one of the strengths of this unique conference lies in its focus on creating solutions.

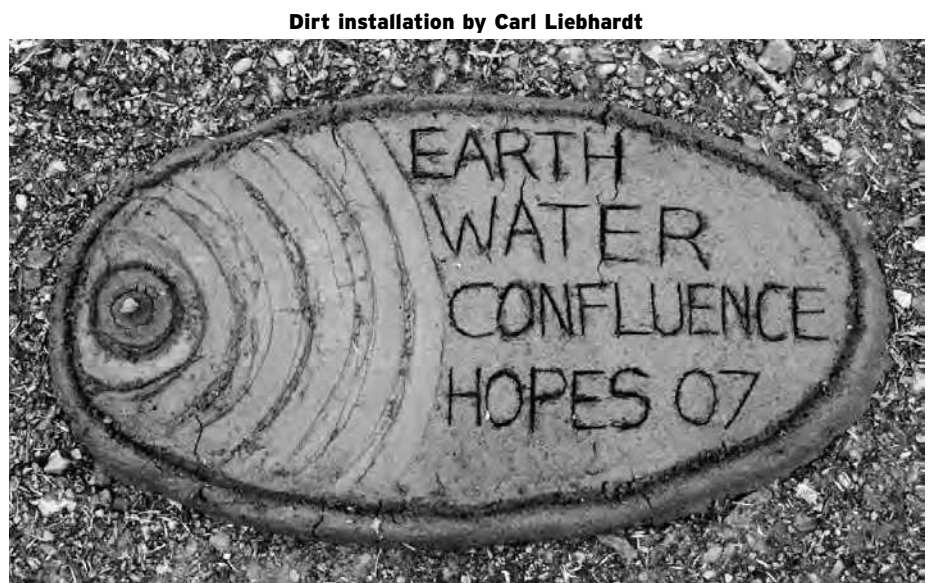
"That's the thing that keeps me coming back — I leave so energized," says conference director John Pete. Pete, a fifth-year undergrad who's dealing with his most complex final projects at the same time that he runs the conference, exudes love for the whole dang thing. And what's not to love? It's about practical people saving the planet. This year's theme, reflected in

the art installations popping up outside and inside of Lawrence Hall, is "Confluence: Where Water Meets Design."

HOPES began in 1995 after architecture student Kevin Parker, stunned that the UO didn't focus on ecologically sound design, decided to make that focus explicit. The weekend event now attracts well over 500 people from as far as Namibia and as close as downtown Eugene.

Energy swirls high when the conference begins with a "24-hour charrette." Teams receive an eminently practical design assignment — last year, it was creating a garden for North Eugene High School's outdoor ed and childhood development programs — and then have exactly 24 hours until the design review, says conference organizer Peter Henne. Henne is a sophomore who runs HOPES' sponsoring organization, the Ecological Design Center. He talks about this year's water-focused charrette with the fervor of one who knows whereof he speaks — he moved to the wet Willamette Valley from the dry lands of New Mexico.

A simple clay pot mixes political,



Dirt installation by Carl Liebhardt

ecological and social needs for this year's challenge. Potters for Peace, an international group, created a pot that can filter and purify water, but the teams will have to take that idea up a level: They'll turn an average shipping container into a portable clay pot factory.

The design, says Henne, will serve as more than just a place where people in crisis situations (New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina or villages near ecological disaster sites) can snag a pot, made from local clay, that will make clean water. Henne says the portable factories will be "an identifiable place for the community to meet" and learn to make and use the pots. That means graphic design elements — clear, attractive signs that translate without language — will be just as important as the practical manufacturing bit.

Community members are welcome to participate in the sleep-depriving process that begins at 2 pm Thursday, April 19, Henne says. Conference designers practically tremble with eagerness to get underway. "I'm so stoked about the charrette!"

says John Pete.

But Pete and Henne say there's much more to the conference, from

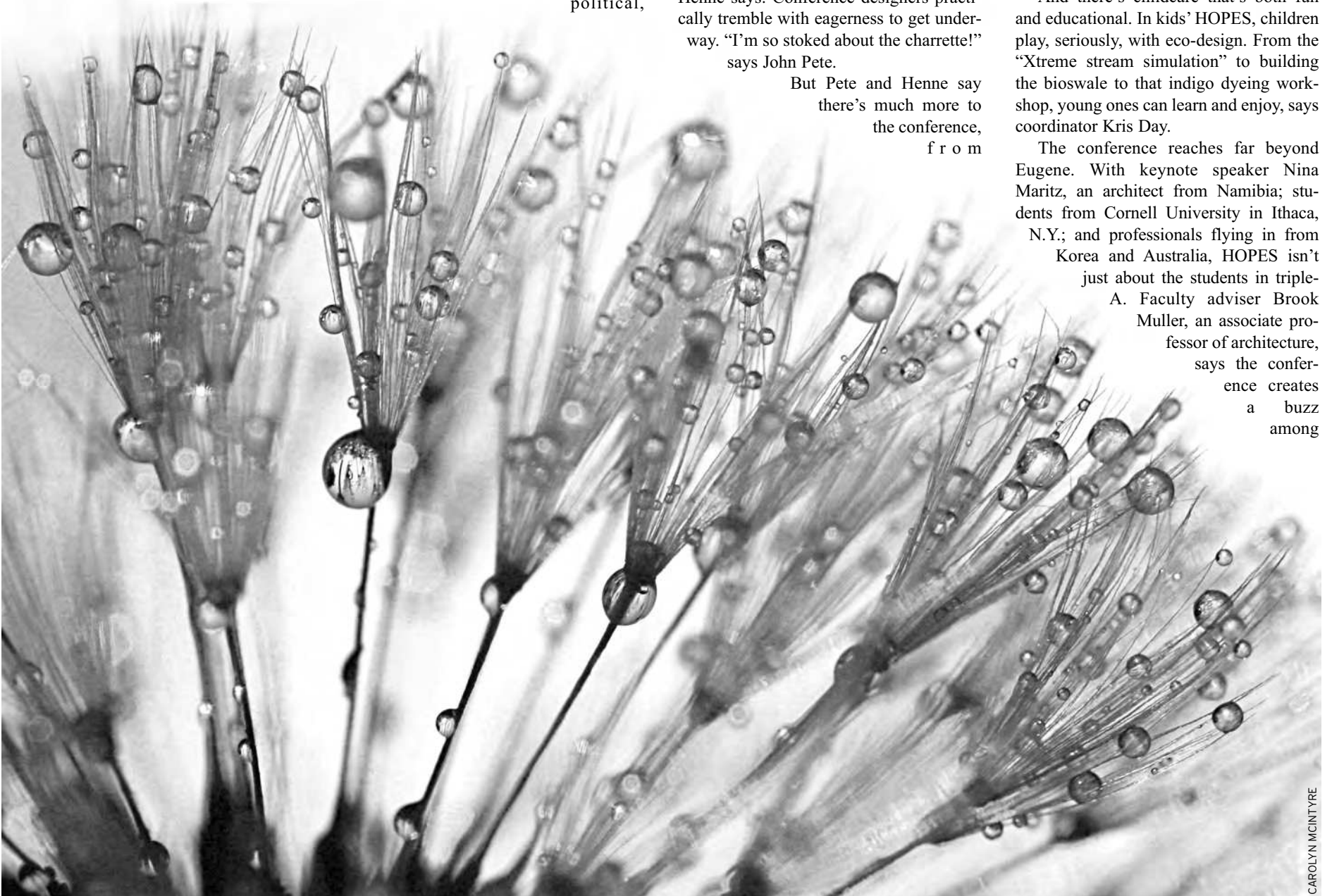
theory to actual dirt; from keynote speaker Joan Nassauer, a professor of landscape architecture at the University of Michigan, to the "Ancient Art of Indigo-dyeing" workshop. And although artist Maya Lin (famous for the Vietnam Memorial design) couldn't make it to the conference, Henne is happy to host a representative of Lin's massive Columbia River art-and-community-work, the *Confluence Project* (www.confluenceproject.org).

Conference director Pete loves the opportunities for hands-on work and play during the entire weekend. On Saturday, conference attendees can help build a bioswale in the parking lot near Johnson Hall. A bioswale traps surface pollutants and deals with them using plants, compost and riprap, so that the water going into storm drains ends up cleaner and healthier. Sunday brings a workshop on taking rain from your winter rooftop and storing it for the dry-as-a-green-banana summer.

And there's childcare that's both fun and educational. In kids' HOPES, children play, seriously, with eco-design. From the "Xtreme stream simulation" to building the bioswale to that indigo dyeing workshop, young ones can learn and enjoy, says coordinator Kris Day.

The conference reaches far beyond Eugene. With keynote speaker Nina Maritz, an architect from Namibia; students from Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y.; and professionals flying in from Korea and Australia, HOPES isn't just about the students in triple-

A. Faculty adviser Brook Muller, an associate professor of architecture, says the conference creates a buzz among



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