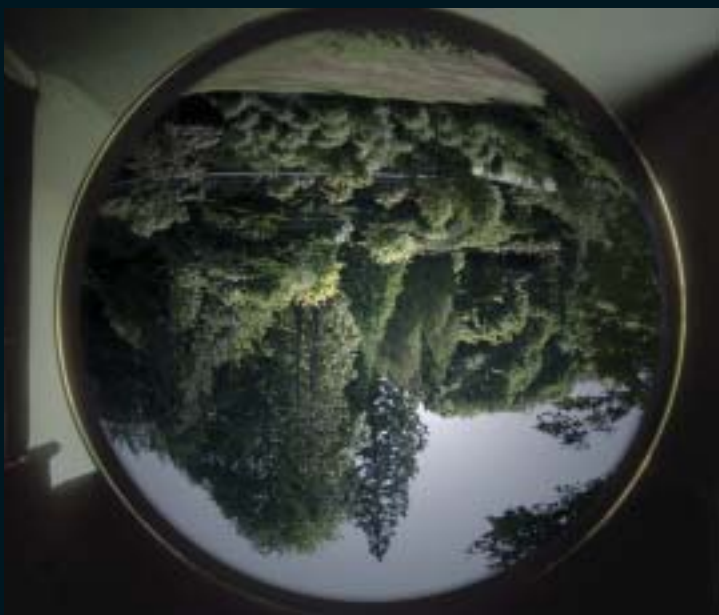


delight



Photographs: Martin Tessler

A PHILOSOPHICAL TOY, BASED ON NINETEENTH-CENTURY TECHNOLOGY, IS HOUSED IN A MODERN DISPLAY CASE TO ENHANCE AMBIGUOUSLY THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.



This Millennial Time Machine, and the pavilion designed to house it, were unveiled in 2003. The project, a collaboration between the artist Rodney Graham and designers Tim Newton, John Wall and Gary Smith, carefully integrates art and architecture. Inspired by his interest in photography, the camera and modern technologies for picture making that are increasingly used to represent the world, Graham invented a machine that consists of a horse-drawn carriage converted into a camera obscura. Elaborating on those ideas, the artist suggested that 'a moving camera obscura image in the interior of a darkened, itinerant, nineteenth-century horse-drawn carriage' would have constituted a prefiguration of the cinema, had such a thing existed. To realize this 'philosophical toy' in a post-cinema age is to fabricate a kind of time machine in which the spectators, 'looking forward, may see backwards and upside-down, that which is forever receding behind them'.

Graham's proposition, the first work of art to be commissioned for the campus of the University of British Columbia since 1976, has been housed within a new glass pavilion sited on the main mall of the campus overlooking the Koerner Library. Defined by an elegantly detailed concrete structure this pavilion, like the machine it houses, embodies simplicity and lightness. The four columns are pulled out beyond the outer edges of a rectangular building platform and articulated at the joints with the roof slab which, in turn, is sculpted and made thin at its outer edges. Enclosed by a transparent glazed screen and located on the platform by a grid of circular rooflights, the carriage, transformed by the insertion of a brass mounted lens, is an ambiguous object set in the landscape and sheltered under a new canopy. Graham's camera obscura is sited to focus on a young sequoia tree as it grows to maturity. That tree and its location, this elegant new building and the ingenious machine that it houses, make a captivating landmark that raises tantalizing questions about invention, the consideration of time and the place where knowledge, technologies and views of the world are constructed. BRIAN CARTER