

Concrete plans, abstract art

OCAD student David Kopulos finds the beauty in ugly, neighbourhood-wrecking projects that never came to be

It's May, 2007. Your rear-view mirror catches a glint off the 140-storey Eatons/John Maryon Tower as you cruise past the Spadina Expressway's College Street exit. You're heading toward the lakeshore to pick up friends at Harbour City before swinging past the colossal towers of Metro Centre (where Union Station used to be) on your way to the gleaming pyramids and domes of Ballet Opera House at Bay and Wellesley for shopping and a show.

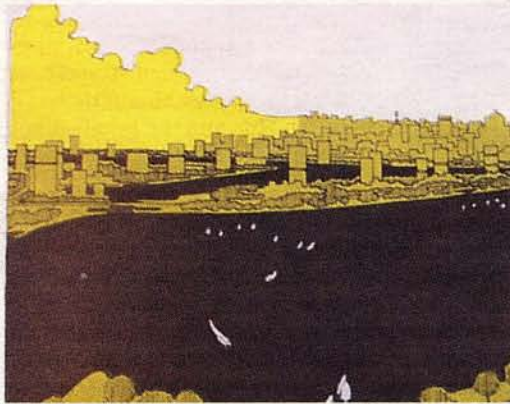
Torontonians have been conditioned to be grateful that the brutal, concrete, modernist city that planners once dreamed of never came to be; a shudder of relief is all the thought it deserves. But 23-year-old OCAD student David Kopulos confronted it — and discovered the allure of what could have been. "Harbour City would have been where the Island Airport is now," he says. "It would have been this large community for about 60,000 people, with canals. It would have been a really interesting addition to Toronto, and I would like to see where that would have taken the city."

For his thesis project, Toronto Pending, Kopulos digitally deconstructed artists' renderings of mega-projects buried in Toronto's past and re-combined their shapes in paintings on plywood, corrugated plastic and sheet metal. With the tracings safely confined to the gallery wall rather than the neighbourhood-leveling planner's drawing board, what were embarrassing schemes to make Toronto a "world-class city" are revived as objects of admiration.

Whereas today "there's definitely an appreciation that the strength of Toronto comes from the variety of neighbourhoods that exist," Kopulos says, we're still not immune to dreaming beyond our means. "With the waterfront today, there's constantly projects being proposed" — such as the Lower Don Lands project announced this week — "and you know not all of them will come to pass. It's just a part of reality in Toronto's history."

OCAD's graduate thesis exhibition takes place today and tomorrow from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Details at ocad.ca. For the interactive version of David Kopulos's thesis, visit davidkopulos.com/torontopending.

Adam McDowell, *National Post*



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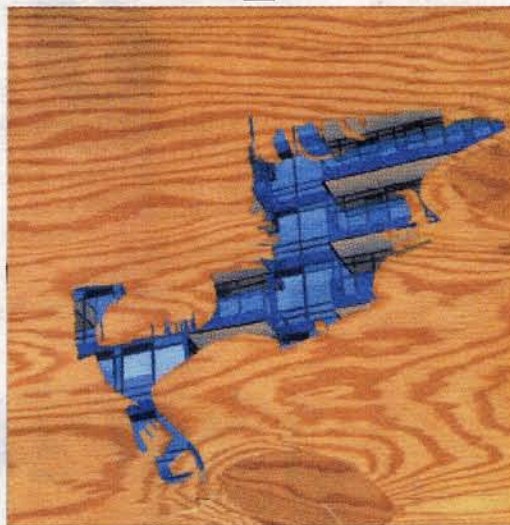
Harbour City Marina (+) Marina and Pavilion Aquatic Park (=) this painting on corrugated plastic. The Harbour City project, if completed, would have transformed what is now the Island Airport into a cross between Venice and Montreal's Habitat community.



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Toothlike high-rises for the waterfront (+) an abandoned plan to develop a marina at Ashbridges Bay (=) this painting on weathered plywood. Ambitious redevelopment plans have followed in an almost unbroken succession since the mid-1960s, but the waterfront remains underused.



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The Eaton's store at the corner of Yonge and Queen before the Eaton Centre redevelopment in the 1970s, the construction of which was originally supposed to level Old City Hall (+) a proposed Terminal 2 for Pearson International Airport (=) this painting on corrugated plastic.