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(The Eyeopener) - Unless you are the pod-like character in an Edvard Munch painting, screaming and art galleries don't often mesh.

But that is what new media is about, bending the notion of what art is, and how it is displayed.

Take Ryerson's new showing as proof.

Refractions is a three-project exhibition of original Ryerson student artwork that explores technology's influence on people's behaviour, and how they take in their surroundings.

Each piece uses different media to challenge perceptions of what the viewer is experiencing. Each also encourages active participation.

Curator Malka Greene, a Ryerson New Media grad, selected the pieces for the exhibition for the way each conveyed a sense of refraction — the bending and deflecting of light or waves.

Take "Befriend" for example; a video-projection piece by third-year New Media students Bryan Adare, Nathan Garvie and Ella Myers. It incorporates a projector and four ceiling cameras that record and slow the participants image while they move near the wall. The projection on the wall is divided into four vertical panels — like a digital mirror — and the only way to leave impressions in every panel is if others join in. One person isn't big enough to fill up each screen.

"You have to almost befriend people in order to experience the piece as it's meant to be," co-creator Bryan Adare says.

Adare describes the project as "a critical experiment of what happens when you bring multiple people together in one space with something they're completely unfamiliar with."

The notion of people becoming an extension of the piece is what makes it so compelling.

The second course from the Refractions menu, "Breathe," is served up by Jeanette Kennedy, James Lee and Priscilla Vogl, also third-year New Media students.

"Breathe" shakes up the notions of sculpture. It's composed of a microphone, small fans, lots of wires and long panels of white cotton that could be the remains of some poor mother's designer bed sheets.

"Breathe" encourages you to yell. You're supposed to yell at it, well, in it. When you do, the sound triggers the small fans hanging against the panels from the ceiling and makes them move commensurate to your volume. It's like watching fresh laundry dry as the panels gently sway and the shadows of the small fans dance about their surface. It creates tranquility by encouraging noise.

The relaxation comes to a screeching halt with Daniel Garcia's pieces though.

A recent graduate of Ryerson's photography program, Garcia's "cITY oF iNFORMATION" is a series of four prints utilizing multi-exposure photography. The piece's semi-transparent layers wreak havoc on your vision.

"We feel and experience only the essence of [life] as we can never process everything that we see, everything that we breathe, everything that we taste," Garcia says in his artist statement. "In the end, what we experience is just a selective interpretation of a few of the elements pervading the environment."

What's striking about each photograph is that, despite the multiple shots on one frame, not one image dominates. The layers collectively create a body of work, while maintaining their integrity as separate prints. This element establishes the piece's interactivity: what you see from five feet away is not what you see from 15 feet.

The colours, transform as well. Each print adopts its own palette and consequently conveys a mood relevant to city living; stress, loneliness, anxiety — all reiterating a pervading sense of alienation. Glum, really; but also beautiful.

Refractions runs until Jan. 26 at the Ryerson Gallery, 80 Spadina Ave., Suite #305. Admission is free and all are welcome.

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