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**Rhode Island School of Design's Innovation Studios
Explore Large-Scale Global Issues and
Approach Them from an Interdisciplinary Design Perspective**

In the course's ninth iteration, Charlie Cannon will lead students in designing carbon mitigation solutions at the scale necessary to stabilize worldwide emissions

PROVIDENCE, RI, October 1, 2007 – *Since 1999, the Innovation Studio series at Rhode Island School of Design [RISD] has been examining difficult large-scale environmental and infrastructure problems, working to shift the attention of the design disciplines to present-day concerns, and working with a larger public to solve those challenges.*

This semester's Innovation Studio will be no different, as professor Charlie Cannon leads the fall project entitled "Controlling Carbon," in which students will research and design various carbon mitigation solutions at the scale necessary to stabilize worldwide emissions at 2005 levels.

"Global warming is one of the most pressing issues of our time, with a deep consensus around the causes and implications of climate change," said Cannon, one of the creators and instructors of the Innovation Studio series at RISD. "Significant work has been done to identify technical solutions to mitigate carbon emissions, but we do not really understand the human consequences of implementing those technologies. This Innovation Studio will approach controlling carbon as a global design challenge, using the model that we've honed the past eight semesters, but tackling what may prove to be the most timely, critical and international-in-scope issue we've examined to date."

Unlike conventional design studios, where a problem 'brief' is spelled out in great detail, the Innovation Studio model involves problems that actually need to be defined in order to be solved. Over the years, Cannon has developed a methodology for the studio that supports the notion of problem framing versus problem solving (the former proceeds from inquiry), and reinforces the importance of using interdisciplinary tactics to tackle society's most persistent problems.

The course began in 1999 as an interdisciplinary elective in Landscape Architecture, Industrial Design and Architecture. Each semester that an Innovation Studio has been

offered at RISD, approximately 12 to 16 students have generated amazingly comprehensive and insightful proposals dedicated to rethinking our fundamental assumptions about energy production, manufacturing, waste management and water to develop new models of ecologically sound infrastructures, including potential solutions for a municipal landfill in Phoenix and for the mounting garbage issues in New York City.

Throughout the semester, the Innovation Studio process shifts back and forth between individual and group work, so that students come to understand the challenges and rewards of collaboration. During the final weeks, each student develops one aspect of a studio-wide proposal, so his or her individual investigation supports a broad, integrated solution.

“Now that business leaders and the rest of the world are recognizing that design really matters, not just as a nice-to-have add-on or marketing tool, but as a fundamental way of thinking, designers have a great opportunity to affect change,” said Cannon. “The Innovation Studio relies on the active participation of policy makers, planners, community activists and businesspeople. It’s a fantastic way to engage students with the community at large and take a look at holistic ways design can create solutions to massive social problems with no easy answers. The students are breaking new ground in academia and, we hope, leading by example.”

Over the last eight years, the subject matter of various Innovation Studios has garnered wide-ranging support, including studio sponsorships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Institute for Civil Infrastructure Systems (a National Science Foundation Initiative), the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council and many RISD departments. The work of the IS to date has been widely exhibited, and the interdisciplinary methods used in the studio have been the subject of lectures before architects, engineers, historians, business people and policy makers in the U.S. and abroad. Cannon’s model for innovative teaching was also cited in Ken Bain’s *What the Best College Teachers Do* (Harvard University Press, 2004), which is currently being filmed for a documentary on the Korea Educational Broadcasting System. Progress for this semester’s Innovation Studio can be tracked at www.controlling-carbon.blogspot.com.

About Rhode Island School of Design

Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) has earned a worldwide reputation as the preeminent art and design college in the country. Today, with more than 20,000 alumni, the college enrolls roughly 1,900 undergraduates and 375 graduate students from the United States and almost 50 countries, offering degree programs in the fine arts, architecture, and design disciplines, and art education. Academic programs include research and design initiatives, the exploration of art criticism and contemporary cultural concerns, as well as international exchange programs. Each year, RISD hosts prominent and accomplished artists, critics, and authors to its campus. Included within the college is The RISD Museum of Art, which houses a world-class collection of art objects from Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome and art of all periods from Asia, Europe and the Americas, as well as the latest in contemporary art. For more information go to www.risd.edu.