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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Solar-powered "modern Stonehenge" lets audience create nightly performance over internet



In a collaboration between the community and the sun, *Solar Collector* gathers human expression and solar energy during the day, then brings them together each night in a performance of flowing light.

Twelve shimmering metal shafts rise at surprising angles from a grassy hill. They hang over the landscape, creating a graceful curve that appears to unfold for passing motorists.

The shafts are part of *Solar Collector*, a sculpture created by artists Matt Gorbet, Rob Gorbet, and Susan LK Gorbet as a commission for the Region of Waterloo. Set in front of the Regional Operations Centre in Cambridge, Ontario, the sculpture is solar-powered and interactive, inviting the community to choreograph its nightly performance via the web.

Each shaft has three sets of lights, along with three solar panels. Their angles reflect the angles of the sun through the year. The tallest shaft is perpendicular to the sun at winter solstice, when the sun is low in the sky. The flattest shaft faces the high sun at summer solstice.

During the day, the solar panels collect the sun's energy in a battery within each shaft. At the same time, the *Solar Collector* website (www.solarcollector.ca) collects light compositions – patterns in light that are created by the community through a simple web interface.

"Since it's public art, it was important to us that the piece be accessible to the public," says co-artist Susan LK Gorbet. "Because it's set in an industrial area, we used the internet to create a collaboration with the community. People can compose in light on the web with a set of simple sliders."

Each night at dusk, a performance begins of all the compositions collected that day. "The light patterns are based on sine waves – the mathematics behind sunlight and the seasons," explains co-artist Rob Gorbet. "As we explored the geometry of solar energy, we were struck by how beautiful it was, and we wanted to make it visible. The angles and lengths of the shafts, the light patterns – the entire sculpture is based on the sun's movement."

After the patterns collected each day are displayed, the performance moves on to a series composed collaboratively from all the patterns ever created. The length of the performance is a reflection of the weather and the seasons, as the shafts use up their energy and fade out late in the evening, one by one.

Solar Collector launches on the summer solstice – Saturday, June 21st

The first performance of *Solar Collector* will be on June 21st, the summer solstice. The public is invited to bring an evening picnic out to the grassy lawn under the apple trees (beginning at 8:30pm) and enjoy the live music that will accompany the sculpture's performance.

A few months ago, Rae Crossman, the Program Director of Waterloo Unlimited, heard a talk on *Solar Collector* at the University of Waterloo, and was so inspired by the piece that he proposed to organize a series of musical performances for the sculpture's launch.

"I was drawn to the piece because it is both contemporary and ancient," explained Crossman. "It uses current technology in the midst of an urban industrial landscape to remind us of the cycles of nature. With its astronomical alignment, the sculpture evokes a deep, ancient impulse that can be traced back to Neolithic man – it's a modern Stonehenge. And, as a work of art, it calls out for a celebratory response: music, dancing, poetry."

Crossman is a collaborator of the distinguished Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer, whose music is often performed in wilderness settings. "Murray has given his permission for his music to be used at the launch because *Solar Collector* connects us to the natural world so fundamentally," he says.

French horn player JC Morrison, clarinetist Tilly Kooyman and soprano Marion Samuel-Stevens will perform selected works by Schafer to accompany the sculpture's first performance on the 21st. Carousel Dance Company and all-percussion group Organic Groove will also perform. More details about the event are available at: www.solarcollector.ca/invite

About the Artists:

Matt Gorbet is a technology artist, researcher, and designer. He is a founder of Gorbet Design, a design firm creating innovative experiential art and design. He teaches Physical Computing at the Canadian Film Centre's New Media Lab, and Think Tank at the Ontario College of Art & Design. He has degrees in Architecture and Media Arts and Sciences from MIT.

Rob Gorbet is a technology artist, engineer and researcher. He is a frequent collaborator with Gorbet Design, as well as other artists, architects, and designers. His award-winning artwork collaborations have been exhibited across North America. He is an Associate Professor at the University of Waterloo, where he researches shape memory alloys and teaches engineering and technology art.

Susan Gorbet is an experience designer and interactive technology artist. She is a founder of Gorbet Design, a design firm creating innovative experiential art and design. She teaches Experience Design at the Canadian Film Centre's New Media Lab and at the Ontario College of Art & Design. She has degrees in Psychology and Computer Science from the University of Pennsylvania.

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If you'd like more information, or to schedule an interview with any of the gregarious and friendly Gorbets, please call Susan LK Gorbet at 416-939-3207 or email all three at gorbets@gorbetdesign.com. (Rob and Matt are also available for interviews in French.)

Location of *Solar Collector* sculpture and launch event:

Waterloo Regional Operations Centre, 100 Maple Grove Road, Cambridge, Ontario
(Google map at http://tinyurl.com/63namo)

Links:
http://www.solarcollector.ca
http://www.gorbetdesign.com/proj_solar.html

Photos at:
http://www.solarcollector.ca/photos

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