

Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) “Waste-Free Packaging” posits the scenario of on-line shopping as a construct for developing 21st-century design solutions for graphics, packaging, and point-of-purchase materials for the virtual aisle. From packaging to the waste-food/cradle-to-cradle cycle to virtual packaging and display to extreme refill systems to plastic free living, students under the tutelage of Inna Alesina and Ellen Lupton query current assumptions about how purchasing happens, and attempt to imagine how it ought to happen (or not) in a more environmentally aware and less wasteful world. Prototypes in a variety of materials and media will offer intriguing possibilities for rethinking the purchase/package/perish (or perishable) equation. A giant flow chart will help visitors visualize a range of possible scenarios for the future of this most elemental of human activities – that is, trade.

Pratt Institute In today's economy, what can designers create for a dollar? An interesting question, indeed, as in a culture currently redefining its ideas of value and worth. The students participating in the “Design for a Dollar” challenge, which they themselves proposed, attempt clever solutions to reach beyond accepted norms of material, structure, and form. On exhibit will be furniture, lighting, objects for the table, and other designs for the home and personal space, developed from components that do not, in aggregate, exceed one U.S. dollar in cost (receipts are included for verification).

Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Design does not occur without material investigations. Innovation cannot occur without a full understanding of material properties. Such are the intertwined premises of “Immaterializing Material”, a show that showcases the results of an investigative process. Students explore specific materials in terms of their unique and individual qualities rather than their accepted uses and applications: by shedding preconceived notions about what a material can and will do, it becomes possible to discover what properties the subject matter expresses. Once that's fully understood, it's then possible to redefine its use within those new parameters. On view will be “products” that are prototypes of “ideas” about materials, as well as models of the analytic process.

San Diego State University To explore the power of light and study how objects are migratory entities, the students of San Diego State University's Furniture Design Program plan a tent show of an exhibition that they call “Cabinets of Curiosity”. The idea comes from the classic “Wunderkammer,” a room filled with an encyclopedic collection of wildly various curiosities from all corners of the world. This particular Cabinet of Curiosity will contain actual cabinets – and sideboards, highboys, and chests of drawers, all reclaimed from the streets of San Diego. The cubbies and drawers of each case piece will house everything from light installations to original, student-created objects, to full-on design fetishes. At the end of the ICFE, the students plan to donate the now-empty furniture to New York City thrift stores, so that it can continue to change hands and homes.