New directions for digital design on display

“Digital_minimal,” a new exhibition in the School of Architecture and Planning’s Wolk Gallery, explores a num-
ber of alternative directions for our digital future, from the use of mobile devices that describe urban space in
time to new tangible user interfaces that redefine the
design process.

Italian architect and planner Carlo Ratti and his design
team, Carlo Ratti Associati, based in Turin, Italy, and Cam-
bridge, collaborated on the exhibit with colleagues in the
MIT Senseable City Laboratory.

The exhibit is a presentation of some of the projects under
development by the Senseable City Lab and Ratti,
who currently holds joint appointments in the Depart-
ment of Urban Studies and Planning and the Media Labo-
ratory.

The collaborative projects include iSPOTS, which was
developed as a way of studying wireless usage on the MIT
campus. Completed in October 2005, iSPOTS now allows
researchers to track when and where members of the
MIT community take most advantage of the school’s 9.4
million-square-foot wireless network.

Most of the exhibition is interactive, featuring video
and live computer links.

The one stand-alone object in the gallery is part of the
SANDscape project, developed with the Tangible Media
Group at the Media Lab.

A digital sandbox of sorts, SANDscape projects imagi-
native ideas onto a surface of tiny glass beads through which visi-
tors may run their hands, thus changing the “landscape.”

The project aids design and understanding of landscapes
through computational simulations that analyze such natu-
rals as slope and drainage.

As a measure of its success, SANDscape has taken on a
double life as an analytic tool and an artwork.

Although this project was started to support land-
scape design, interactive art museums such as the Arts
Electronics Center in Linz, Austria, commissioned us to
several people from the MIT community are involved in the festi-
val, including some who helped found the event 30 years ago.

George Kirby (S.B. 1977) originated the festival in 1977 and remains active,
serving on the coordinating committee and coordinating the sound system this
year; Ira Vissner (S.B. 1974) danced in the first festival and is now on the coor-
dinating committee; and Joshua Mushet (S.B. 1987), who danced in the festival
while a student, remains an active partici-

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