



Photo by Tom Little

Above: A giant chandelier of ultraviolet black light tubes hovers above the ultraviolet acquiescence installation like a continuum of molecules. *Right:* Close-up of the nutrient container showing root growth and the hydroponic light tower that surrounds a single plant with 1480 watts of light. Tomato plants grown from seeds launched into outer space by NASA and then brought back to earth are continuously fed by balanced nutrient solution reservoirs. *Directly below:* A glass ultraviolet fullerene rests on the bank of the fluorescein-infused stream. *Bottom:* Inside the UFO (ulterior farming operation) tomato plants grow upside down in a self-sustaining environment. A recycling nutrient system routinely rains on the plants as gravity assists in their growth.



Photo by Michael Oliveri



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'ULTRAVIOLET ACQUIESCENCE AND DEEP SPACE DRIP CULTURE'



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“Ultraviolet Acquiescence & Deep Space Drip Culture”

This show was on view at the Wood Street Galleries in Pittsburgh, Penn., June 30-Sept. 2, 2006. The installation consists of a 30-foot fluorescent green stream flowing into 20-foot diameter pool. A molecular network of black lights, UV Hydrocarbon, hovers over the stream making it glow. A UFO (Uterior Farming Operation) grows tomatoes upside down at the edge of the pool. The UFO double parabolic dish maximizes the 6000 watts of light using only 780 watts of power.



Photo by Michael McKelvey

By Carole VanSickle

“With just the right poetic blend of art, philosophy, and science, theories appear to be real—at least for a little while,” said artist Michael Oliveri, chair of Digital Media at the University of Georgia. Concepts that used to float slightly outside the orbit of “hard” science have found a dialogue in “Ultraviolet Acquiescence and Deep Space Drip Culture,” Oliveri’s recent solo show at Wood Street Gallery in Pittsburgh, Penn. A search engine query about a recent hypothesis that the universe is finite intrigued Oliveri. The concept, based on NASA data measuring radiation waves from the original Big Bang, has led scientists to speculate that the cosmos is a polyhedron—the shape of a soccer ball.

When Oliveri Googled “Buckyball Universe”—the nickname for a polyhedral universe—fullerenes, a type of carbon molecule, appeared in the results. These molecules, which are thought to be among the most stable structures on earth, are also shaped like soccer balls.

Currently debated is the possibility these fullerenes transported volatile gasses to earth’s atmosphere and initiated the primordial spark of life. “Ironically, my non-linear search led me to the conclusion that the shape of the universe and the shape of this molecule are the same,” Oliveri said.

This association triggered his memory. In 1984, NASA launched tomato seeds into outer space for five years, then invited 3

million elementary-school children to experiment with the seeds. “One of the biggest science experiments ever,” said Oliveri. He purchased some of these seeds on eBay, and Deep Space Drip Culture was born.

Oliveri’s installation consists of two separate complete environments: NASA Nourishment and Ultraviolet Acquiescence.

NASA Nourishment is a hyper-reflective Mylar-lined room. Three hydroponic light-towers grow tomatoes; hexagonal neon

floor panels unfold a polyhedron topology. Fullerene-inspired glass sculptures inhabit the space, and a deep bass vibration permeates the installation.

Oliveri invited botanist Sue Arlott of the Bidwell Training Center in Pittsburgh, Penn., to conduct research on the plants while ensuring their survival. NASA Nour-

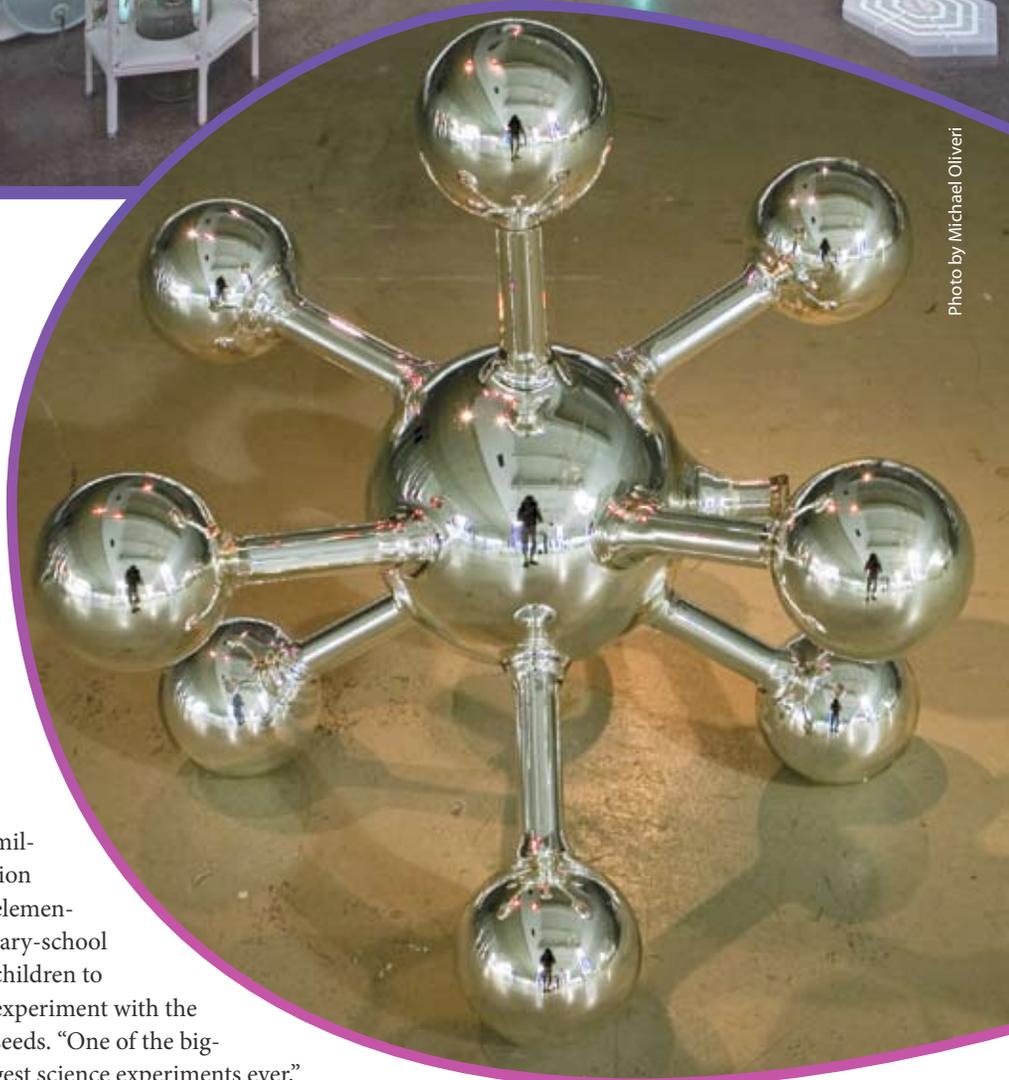


Photo by Michael Oliveri



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idea of light efficiency,” Oliveri said. “Parabolic dishes create a semi-closed environment, focusing light on the plants.” This whimsical vision that light waves would infinitely reflect and dissipate only through the windows is his idea of permaculture.

Permaculture principles focus on thoughtful designs for small-scale, intensive growing systems that are labor-efficient and use biological resources instead of fossil fuels. Designs stress ecological connections and closed energy and material loops. The core of permaculture is design and the working relationships and connections between all things.

“The use of ultraviolet light suggests the potential for vision outside our normal spectrum,” Oliveri said.

For more information about Michael Oliveri, visit conceptrecycling.com.

Carole VanSickle is a writer based in Atlanta, Ga.

Above: A view of the ultraviolet acquiescence installation while gallery guests peer into the UFO (ulterior farming operation). **Below:** The UFO (ulterior farming operation) spills its energy of white light upon the already glowing ultraviolet surrounding.

ishment’s overall impression is a phallic one of weight and power.

Ultraviolet Acquiescence, on the other hand, is a feminine counterpart to NASA Nourishment. It is a soft, womblike room lit by an overhead ultraviolet molecular-shaped structure. A glowing, dye-infused natural rock waterfall and stream courses smoothly past a UFO (Ulterior Farming Operation), a glossy black spaceship structure with eight gleaming windows.

Inside the UFO tomato plants hang upside down from clear buckets. Nutrient showers rain down and are continuously recycled as artificial sunlight snaps on and off at 10-minute intervals. These visible cycles of light and nourishment combine to create an experimental growing environment for the space-age tomatoes.

“I designed the UFO with the

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Left: Silver nitrate-coated glass sculptures called eternal fullerenes inhabit the hyper-reflective installation. *Directly below:* The UFO (ulterior farming operation) as seen under white light. *Bottom:* The UFO (ulterior farming operation) spills its energy of white light upon the glow of an ultraviolet surrounding.



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