



The Pratt Design Incubator

IN THE NAVY YARD, ENTREPRENEURIAL PRATT ALUMNI ARE TACKLING THE PLANET'S BIGGEST PROBLEMS

By Steven S. Matt

Pratt Institute has long been regarded as a consistent progenitor of creatively talented individuals. Recently, several members of Pratt's faculty and students have begun to focus their talent on sustainability. In the past few years, several organizations and initiatives on campus have sprung up to address the issues of sustainability on and off campus.

Sustainable Pratt, led by a mix of faculty, students, administrators and staff, was created in 2005 to unify the school's interest in sustainability. In March, the organization hosted its second annual "Green Week," which elicited students and members of the community to participate in addressing local environmental issues. The organization meets regularly to develop plans for facilitating communication, generating awareness, and encouraging collaboration.

organization at Pratt is the Pratt Design Incubator for Sustainable Innovation.

Deb Johnson formed the Incubator in 2002. The goal is to support the entrepreneurial talents of designers, artists and architects selected from the Pratt community. The deal is simple: if you're an alumnus of Pratt and you're starting a business that addresses the issues of sustainability, you get free office space with amenities, advice from a network of professionals and mentors, and a peer support system that grows with you. With that accord, the members are set free to pursue their dreams. And unlike most university incubators, the Pratt Design

quarters for Pratt's new Center for Sustainable Design Studies and Research.

Since inception, the Incubator has launched six businesses. Currently there are five businesses growing in the Incubator.

Sustainably Minded Interactive Technology (SMIT):

Led by Samuel Cochran (Founder/ Partner), Teresita Cochran (Founder/ Partner) and Benjamin Howes (Partner).

SMIT develops products that allow people to reduce their negative impact on the environment. Their current project, GROW, is a truly

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New York City Water Tower Furniture (NYCWTF):

Led by David Gibbs (Founder/ Partner) and Nao Matsumoto (Partner).

Have you ever wondered what happens to those old water towers when they come down? NYCWTF has developed a brilliant solution by upcycling discarded water tower wood into heirloom quality home furnishings. The team is also working on a special public project commissioned by the City of New York. Visit nycwtf.net for more information.

Thrive:

Led by William Staley (Founder/ Partner) and Terrance Clark (Founder/Partner).

Thrive is a non-profit national sustainable design initiative that plans to provide social and economic relief to the 20 poorest US counties by exploring the ways ecologically and socially conscious design can help move areas out of decline. The team has decided to begin its pilot center in Arkansas after receiving a pledge of support by the Governor and the Mayor of Helena.

One Earth Network:

Led by Steven S. Matt (CEO and Founder), Thomas Fondano (Technology Leader), Emmett Pickett (Chief Financial Officer), and Nicholas Whitaker (Visualization Marketing Coordinator).

One-earth.com enables people to find and post Green actions, businesses, organizations, and events in their neighborhood; it's like a Craigslist for environmentalists. The team plans to launch the site in June. Visit one-earth.com for more information.

For more information about the Pratt Design incubator and all the businesses discussed here, visit incubator.pratt.edu

Steven S. Matt has lived in Fort Greene since 2003 and currently resides on Washington Park. Steven works full-time as a graphic designer at Louise Blouin Media, part-time as a free-lance graphic designer, and on the weekends at the Grand Army Plaza farmer's market to support One Earth Network.



From the left: Terrance Clark, David Gibbs, Diane Ruengsorn, Will J. Staley, Steven S. Matt, Samuel Cochran, Debera Johnson. Not Pictured: Teresita Cochran, Jamie Allen, Emmett T. Pickett, Nicholas Whitaker, Thomas V. Fondano, Micah Koc

In 2007, a group of students created a simple, yet aggressive, recycling system to address the Institute's lack of such a program.

Recently, Pratt designated Deb Johnson as Sustainability Director—the Institute's first such position. Among other things, Ms. Johnson will work with operations to guide the greening of Pratt's campus to reduce the carbon footprint by 30% by 2017 as part of the "2030 Plan" put forth by Mayor Michael Bloomberg in 2007.

Perhaps the most potentially far-reaching—albeit unknown—

Incubator does not require businesses to give up a percentage of the company to become a member.

The main office is located in the basement of the Engineering building on Pratt's Brooklyn campus. The Incubator also has an auxiliary space in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, which is provided by Ms. Johnson to accommodate projects that require larger space. Over the next few months, all the members of the Incubator will begin the transition of moving their operations entirely to the Navy Yard while the Pratt space is transformed into the head-

innovative approach in obtaining energy from wind and the sun in one elegant hybrid device. The concept design is on display at the MOMA in the exhibition Design and the Elastic Mind now through May 12. Visit s-m-i-t.com for more information.

Domestic Aesthetic:

Led by Diane Ruengsorn (Founder). Domestic Aesthetic sells affordable home products that are socially and environmentally responsible. The company works with farmers and foresters in impoverished areas helping them develop their commodity goods into value added products.