



RISD's Center for Complexity launches *Horizon 2045*, a 25-year project aimed at eliminating the threat of nuclear war

Project's goal is to catalyze collective action and compel political leaders to consider new knowledge when making decisions about nuclear warfare



Photo courtesy RISD.

PROVIDENCE, RI (January 21, 2021) – Rhode Island School of Design's (RISD) Center for Complexity – a platform for transdisciplinary collaboration and innovation informed by global events and creative practices – announces the launch of *Horizon 2045*, a 25-year project aimed at eliminating the threat of nuclear war. A partnership with NTI (Nuclear Threat Initiative) and N Square—two nonprofits dedicated to reducing the risk of nuclear war— *the project's* goal is to build new models of security for the 21st century. The consortium has secured \$1.2 million in funding, divided among its three constituents, from the MacArthur and Skoll foundations.

Before COVID-19, global warming, biological terrorism and other perils of modern life, the human race faced

one all-consuming threat: nuclear war. During the Cold War—which defined world politics from the late 1940s until 1991—the US and the Soviet Union were the only nations on earth with access to nuclear arms, and the system that kept them in check was known as *deterrence theory*.

According to Center for Complexity Director **Justin Cook**, the theory was created by game theorists, who determined the most efficient way to prevent nuclear war was to “enable our nuclear weapons (but not necessarily our population) to survive an attack and have enough weapons remaining to assure that destruction was mutual. The infrastructure required to maintain readiness of this system of destruction while preserving the conditions that prevent its use is hazardous, monumental, fragile and aging.”

The ultimate goal of *Horizon 2045* is to catalyze collective action and compel political leaders to make a different decision about nuclear warfare than one their predecessors made in 1945 in response to World War II. Cook aims to bring the issue back into public consciousness through a systems map that details the key players, behaviors and power structures enabling the antiquated system to survive. It also allows the people directly affected by nuclear arms to weigh in, such as a group of people in Utah referred to as ‘downwinders’, who are located downwind from the nuclear test sites in Nevada and have high rates of intergenerational cancer due to soil contamination.

“By 2045, humanity will have spent a *century* in the shadow of a civilization-ending nuclear event,” says Cook. “Today there are nine nations with access to nuclear weapons, which is an important piece of this puzzle. We’re working to create a body of evidence that will highlight current political dynamics and unseat deterrence theory as the dominant ideology.”

The project builds on [work with N Square](#) dating back to 2016 headed up by RISD Associate Professor of Industrial Design [Tom Weis MID 08](#). Weis helped to organize an N Square workshop at RISD in 2018 that brought new creative voices into the conversation about nuclear weapons. The Center for Complexity’s [Tim Maly](#) participated in the event, which ultimately inspired a 40-foot inflatable mushroom cloud by artist **Pedro Reyes** and the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* team. Such visualization tools provide easy points of access for people who might not otherwise get involved.



Protestors outside UN headquarters in NYC captured the attention of passersby with a 40-foot inflatable mushroom cloud conceived during a 2018 workshop at RISD.

The backing for *Horizon 2045* would not have been possible without the support of RISD's newly fortified Office of Research & Strategic Partnerships. "It's critical for artists and designers to work in this space," says Associate Director of Strategic Partnerships **Rebecca Nolan**. "Justin's team is essentially creating a new model for conducting collaborative research at RISD—one that supports post-graduates, who will participate as paid fellows when phase two of the project gets underway in 2021."

About Rhode Island School of Design

RISD's mission, through its college and museum, is to educate students and the public in the creation and appreciation of works of art and design, to discover and transmit knowledge and to make lasting contributions to a global society through critical thinking, scholarship and innovation. The college's strategic plan NEXT: RISD 2020-2027 sets an ambitious vision for educating students for the future and bringing creative practices to bear on the creation of just societies, a sustainable planet and new ways of making and knowing. RISD's immersive model of art and design education, which emphasizes critical making through studio-based learning and robust study in the liberal arts, prepares students to intervene in the critical challenges of our time. Working with exceptional faculty and in extraordinary specialized facilities, 2,225 students from more than 60 countries engage in 42 full-time bachelor's and master's degree programs. RISD's 30,000 alumni worldwide testify to the impact of this model of education, exemplifying the vital role artists and designers play in today's society. Founded in 1877, RISD (pronounced "RIZ-dee") and the RISD Museum help make Providence, RI among the most culturally active and creative cities in the region. Find more information at risd.edu.

Media Contacts:

Christina Allan, Blue Medium Inc.

christina@bluemedium.com

+1 212 675 1800

Jaime Marland, Rhode Island School of Design

jmarland@risd.edu

+1 401 427 6954
