Release1, a group of seven Canadian and American designers with a common desire to explore design issues sheltered from market forces, announces its new show:

The McDonald's Project

Opening in Boston Friday April 11, 2003, 6pm-11pm
Berwick Research Institute
14 Palmer St., Roxbury, MA 02119
exhibit hours: Sat 4/12, 11am-5pm
Sun 4/13, 11am-5pm
Fri 4/18, 1pm-8pm
Sat 4/19, 11am-5pm

Also opening April 11 online at www.release1.net
email: info@release1.net, phone: 617.232.4137

Last Fall, Release1 put out a call for submissions to develop ideas for ways to encourage 'alternative effects' at McDonald's using design. Impossible concepts, implementable changes; anything was possible and encouraged. The group hoped to begin a dialogue for ideas that observe, process and reflect our love-hate relationship with this worldwide phenomenon.

Previously, Release1 put together the award-winning* exhibit DisturbDelightDesign, an assembly of product ideas illustrating a design process that had 'jumped the tracks' (see www.release1.net for details) and a way to make the public more aware of what's around them.

Why did Release1 choose McDonald's this time? There is an enormous infrastructure, a vast cultural impact, an international presence, and complex design roles; all things with extensive thinking and design potential. Plus, it's a corporation with a direct connection to the public stomach. McDonald's, more than any other corporate entity, embodies an omnipresence and familiarity that everyone can identify with, and has something to say about.

Like in DisturbDelightDesign, Release1 wants to reach a broad spectrum of people with this new show. Who better to do it than designers, the new masters of physical media through the sheer day-to-day necessities of their jobs.

The result? Re-engineered burgers, voting fry boxes, cross-global view screens, sex, synthetics, uniforms of liability.... The pieces fall into two main categories: observation and proposition, and tread the border of plausibility. They can be read as legitimate (albeit extreme) ways for the fast food industry to regain market share, but also as bleak reflections of what our culture is increasingly willing to tolerate.

McDonald's is an icon that is a springboard for discussion, much like Nike and Disney. This is not a culturejamming effort. This body of work creates a bittersweet vision of what our culture could become. While some of the pieces use criticism of McDonald's to make a point, it is also a redesign for a McDonald's with a sober, world-weary culture in mind.

*I.D. Magazine 2002, Best of Category, Concepts

Shown here are some ways for the fast food industry to diversify its 'portfolio': French Fry Ballots to increase turn out and guarantee consistency; QUIKnEZ in-home mealmaker; and Neighborhoods, convenient, total family planning

Release1 Mandate:
Design is a cultural force. It's an unstoppable impulse that shapes our world, from the arrowhead to the airplane to the electric toothbrush. Release1 seeks to mature that impulse; we challenge people from many professions to think broadly about the contents of our world, to laugh at what we've got, to worry about what we're getting. Our collaborative workshops and exhibitions reveal what's possible when sheltered from market expectations. We use design to take our culture further.