



At first glance, the depictions of space in Adam Makarenko's intricate landscapes seem vast, extending far beyond our world into distant, cosmic territories. But the scenes in his ongoing series, *Probes*, are a lot smaller and closer to home than they appear, belonging to a miniature universe the photographer has crafted by hand. His small-scale worlds are controlled environments, in which he can explore the mysteries of nature and science.

His first series, which focuses on bees and hives, caught the attention of The Magenta Foundation, which awarded him the Bright Spark Award in its 2008 Flash Forward competition. His new project moves from apiaries to outer space, using probes to explore the cosmos. In his statement, he says, "The probe is the biggest and most far-reaching extension of our senses."

The Toronto-based photographer has been developing his approach alongside an award-winning career in TV, music videos and film. Drawn to the speed of the photographic process, he explains that "in other forms of media, especially film and video, you don't have that immediate satisfaction. It takes a lot longer to achieve your vision, because it doesn't come together instantaneously. You have to edit the work to make it whole."

Paradoxically, completing a diorama is a lengthy, challenging process. Each scene begins as a sketch, followed by a long process of fabrication that can take between a week and several months. From growing long strands of Epsom salt crystals in a sodium silicate solution to sourcing materials from pound shops and hardware stores, Makarenko's meticulously built sets are the result of a creative approach

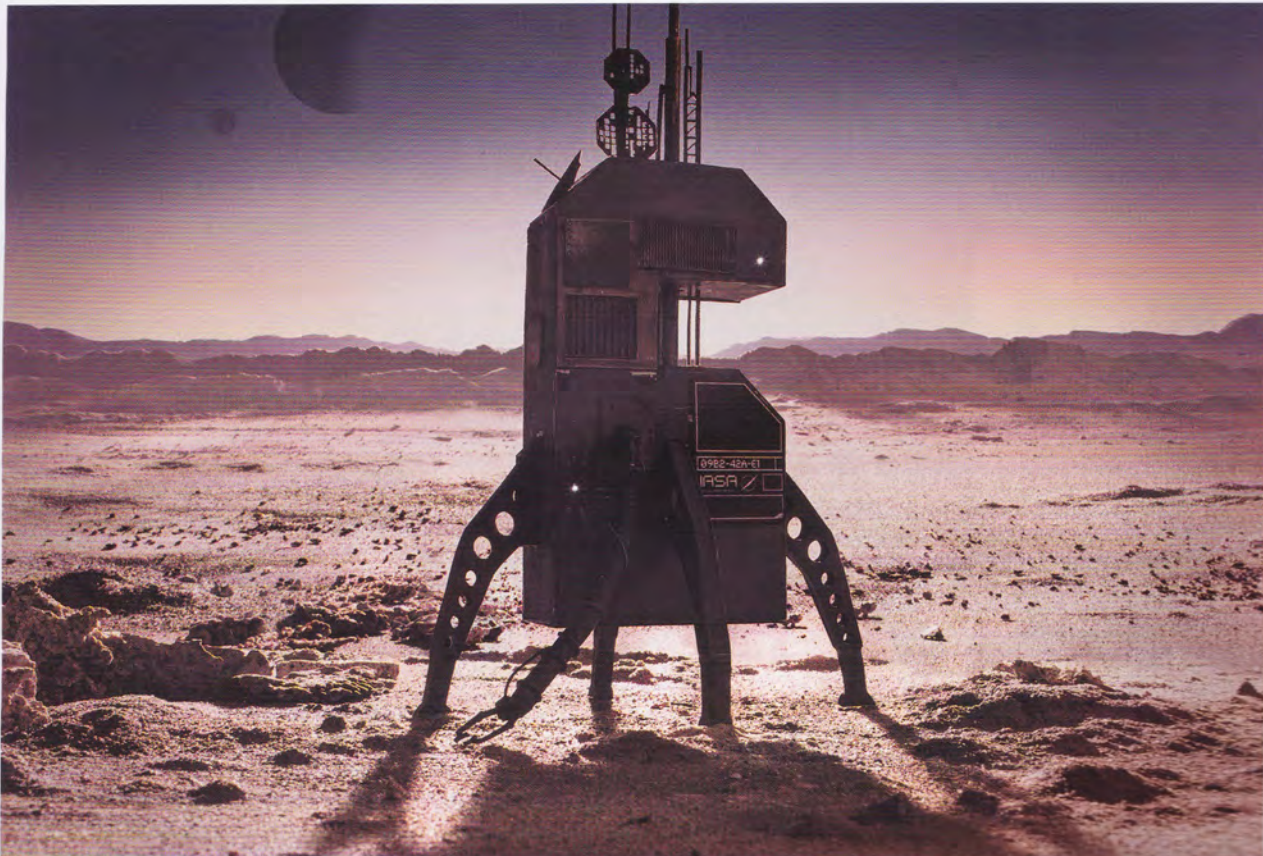
to construction. "Materials can come from anywhere, including other people's garbage."

Shooting these mini worlds has its own complexities. "You are constantly battling against physics – the physics of light and optics. In real life if you shoot a landscape scene with a wide lens, generally everything is in focus, but in the miniature realm you are dealing with much shorter distances, yet you have to make it feel as if it's far away," he explains.

Drawing on his background in film, he navigates what he describes as the "nightmare" of shooting miniature with a bag of cinematic trickery, such as forced perspective and complicated fixed-lighting setups. "My work is a never-ending process of research and development. I am constantly trying to figure out how to shrink everything into the miniature realm and make it feel real," he says. **BJP**

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Adam Makarenko



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series *Probes*
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