



## BLOW-UPS

History and high-tech materials can coexist comfortably within art – at least they can in the hands of Toronto sculptor Max Streicher. In a project for the World Equestrian Games, being held this summer in Aachen, Germany, the artist has reinterpreted an ancient quadriga by creating an inflatable version of the four-horse team made from polymer-coated industrial vinyl.

Streicher was invited by the city based on his previous inflatable work, including *Lost Unicorn* (shown above), where a larger-than-life unicorn pokes its head and front legs out of a building window at the Kunsthalle in Erfurt,

Germany. With his quadriga installation in Aachen, the Bauhaus-inspired Ludwig Forum for International Art, situated in the city centre, acts as a massive pedestal for the 5.5-metre-high horses, which rise rampant to dominate the building.

Influenced by baroque and Renaissance painters who encouraged their audience to look heavenward to the monumental figures painted on cathedral ceilings, the rooftop horses accomplish a similar effect. Viewers are encouraged to reconnect with the urban skyline. Sun, weather and light sources alter the sculpture's surface, reflecting changing patterns of light and

sky. "I wanted to create an object that leads your imagination," says Streicher, "and provide a forum for conversation."

And they are indeed conversation pieces. The four horses were created out of 800 pattern pieces made from the porous vinyl and stitched together on a sewing machine. The lightweight forms are kept aloft by an electric fan.

The artist intends his installation to be an "ironic equestrian" that recalls the ancient and mythological associations of power and kings. The vulnerability of his billowing stallions contrasts elegantly with the prestige and strength these giants imply.

LYNN FRASER

Toronto sculptor Max Streicher's inflatable forms made from polymer-coated industrial vinyl have been shown around the world, including on a rooftop in Aachen, Germany, as part of the 2006 World Equestrian Games. Above: A similar project, *Lost Unicorn*, was installed in Erfurt, Germany, in 2003. Below: *Floating Giants*, in the dome of the Muzik building in Toronto.

