

# TAXI

## The Love Below

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*Bady and Mykolyn, unstuffed*

Last week, Toronto-based advertising agency TAXI announced 15 Below, a new project to coincide with TAXI's fifteenth anniversary that would see the company create, manufacture, and distribute 3,000 coats for homeless people across North America. Designed by TAXI's executive creative director Steve Mykolyn and designer Lida Bady (pictured), the waterproof, windproof, and plentifully-pocketed coat serves as a lightweight jacket during not-too-cold weather, can fold into a backpack during decent weather, and—when you fill the pockets up with newspaper—converts into a super-warm jacket that was tested (in a meat locker, no less!) to be effective up to  $-29^{\circ}$  celsius.

Named 15 Below for the temperature at which the government issues a cold weather alert, and for TAXI's own fifteen-year anniversary, the company's good deed is accordingly a mixture of overt philanthropy and subtle promotion. Paul Lavoie, TAXI's cofounder, chairman, and chief creative officer (pew) encapsulated that attitude perfectly, stating in the company's press release that "[TAXI's] approach to solving problems—of any sort—has always been to question convention"—one heck of a mission statement, albeit one with some weight behind it (you've seen TAXI's pretty great ads everywhere, from Flow 93.5's portraits of hip-hop artists made out of dance steps, to Reitmans' faux model "Designed for Real Life" campaign, to Jerome Iginla's strength Nike promos). Still, philanthropy is philanthropy, and in a city as plagued by homelessness as ours is, anything helps—especially when it's something as ingenious as this.

According to TAXI, the coats will be on the streets of Toronto, Calgary, Montreal, Vancouver, and New York at some point during the first quarter of 2008. The agency has yet to firm up distribution details, but they expect to partner with charitable organizations. Hopefully the 15 Below coats will be on the backs of homeless people before the end of this winter. It's getting a tad chilly out there.

See a few more shots of the jacket (a mockup of its design, and it being tested in that freezing cold meat locker for eight hours by a significantly less happy-looking Mykolyn). You can track 15 Below's progress on its website.



-By David Topping