

sought out by some of the world's leading engineer-

Needless to say, she's leveraged her expertise to create a recipe for success in Vancouver's highly com-

flung destinations, Shaw is busy raising two kids.

2010 **BIV** Forty  
under40

## Todd Towers

President, **Farmboy Fine Arts**

Age: 38

**T**odd Towers is a well-known global player in the tight niche of developing site-specific artwork for hotels.

Along the way, he has grown **Farmboy Fine Arts** to an 18-employee company with millions of dollars in annual revenue and about 8,000 completed projects, about 95% of which are from outside Canada.

"Instead of simply being the single vendor provider of artwork inside hotels, we've been gaining more ground and are becoming year-over-year increasingly the art consultant of the brand," he said.

"We're working with various brands for multiple rollouts as an art con-

**"We've been gaining more ground and are becoming year-over-year increasingly the art consultant of the brand"**

sultant to build not only manufactured artwork in the hotel rooms, but also a collection of artwork that would have both investment and intrinsic value to the hotel in common areas."

Some recent impressive work was providing art for the new Abu Dhabi destination Yas Island. Towers and his team provided about 8,000 pieces of art for seven hotels on that island.

He is currently working on projects such as the **W Hotel** in Beijing and the



**Hotel Georgia** project in downtown Vancouver.

His biggest client remains **Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide**, which owns brands such as Westin, Sheraton, aloft, Le Meridien and W Hotels. Towers also does work for competing companies such as **Marriott International**.

His early projects were for Calgary technology

companies. Praise for his work encouraged Starwood to give him the nod for a W Hotel project in Mexico City.

Once Towers had jammed his foot in W Hotels' door, he made extraordinary efforts to ensure that he would secure further inroads. For example, he splurged to finance an unannounced trip to Seoul, Korea, where

*Birthplace:* Calgary, Alberta

*Where do you live now:* Vancouver

*Highest level of education:* Bachelor of fine arts degree, University of Calgary

*Car or chosen mode of transport:* My car is parked. I walk to work

*Currently reading:* *Seven Days in the Art World* by Sarah Thornton

*Last CD bought or music downloaded:* *God Willin' and the Creek Don't Rise* by Ray LaMontagne and the Pariah Dogs

*Favourite local restaurant:* Chambar

*Profession you would most like to try:* Either managing director of an internationally traded art fund or a late-night TV talk show host

*Mentor:* My father and my grandfather

*Toughest business or professional decision:* After three years of near financial starvation, when everyone sane around me told me to give up on this business, I reinvested everything I had into it. That was nearly eight years ago and it was the best decision I ever made

*Advice you would give the younger you:* I would give some advice that my father gave me: "It takes a steady hand to carry a full up"

*What's left to do:* Everything. I just need to take it one day at a time

W Hotels was building a posh resort that would be its first Asian property.

Towers met the general manager, showed him some ideas and won the job.

Towers founded Farmboy in 2000 after earning a bachelor of fine arts degree at the **University of Calgary** in 1996. He moved

the company to Vancouver in 2006.

He has served on various boards for art institutes, including the **Art Gallery of Calgary** (between 2001 and 2004), **Emily Carr University of Art + Design** (currently) and *Element Magazine*. ■