ALEX DUNCAN, University of British Columbia, 2329 West Mall, Vancouver, BC
Finite Groups of Essential Dimension 2

The essential dimension of an algebraic group is a numerical invariant which, loosely speaking, measures the number of parameters required to describe any of its actions. I will discuss essential dimension and the related concept of versal varieties. The classification of all finite groups of essential dimension 2 over the complex numbers is made possible by studying Manin and Iskovskikh's classification of minimal rational G-surfaces.