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Architecture **Boston**

Design Between the Disciplines

Robert Polidori's Havana

The Case Against the Specialist

blur

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Cine Florida, Santos Suárez, 2000

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blur

It's All a Blur

Some trendwatchers — the kind who track cultural changes across centuries rather than across weekly editions of *People* magazine — have observed a profound shift in the way we look at the world around us. As they point out, we are losing our obsession with order and the need to invent names, categories, and classifications for people, places, things, and ideas.

For centuries, the masters of our universe were the most prodigious organizers of the universe. Now, after 300 or so years, it seems that we're finally shaking free of the vestiges of the Enlightenment and are emerging into a much looser appreciation of the world. We're blurring the old distinctions. You can see it in our vocabulary, which increasingly embraces words like merge, morph, meld, convergence, fusion, and collaboration — not to mention endless pairings of multi-this and inter-that. As the film *Matrix* and its sequels demonstrate, we are more willing to entertain and be entertained by ideas that stretch dimensions, senses, even time. We have moved from an era in which the all-purpose mantra was "A place for everything, and everything in its place" to one best summarized as "Whatever." The implications are profound. It's the intellectual equivalent of global warming, without the dire consequences.

Of course, any trend spawns its own countertrend, and the world is full of examples of distinctions held ever more dearly, of walls built ever higher. And as technology and popular culture conspire to dissolve the old order, it's not unreasonable to argue that we're seeing the inevitable consequences of entropy — the tendency of systems (and societies) to unravel into disorder, even chaos. But, as the following pages suggest, this new era can instead be one of extraordinary creative and intellectual activity. Many designers are already at work on issues that fall between the traditional boundaries of the design disciplines. The question is whether the profession of architecture will evolve in response, or whether it will instead hold tight to its orderly view of the world.

"Blur" strikes me as an appropriate theme with which to launch the redesign of *ArchitectureBoston*. From our beginning in 1998, we have welcomed readers and contributors from outside the architecture profession, defining our audience as all those who care about the buildings and communities in which they live and work. *ArchitectureBoston* has always believed in blurring the boundaries.

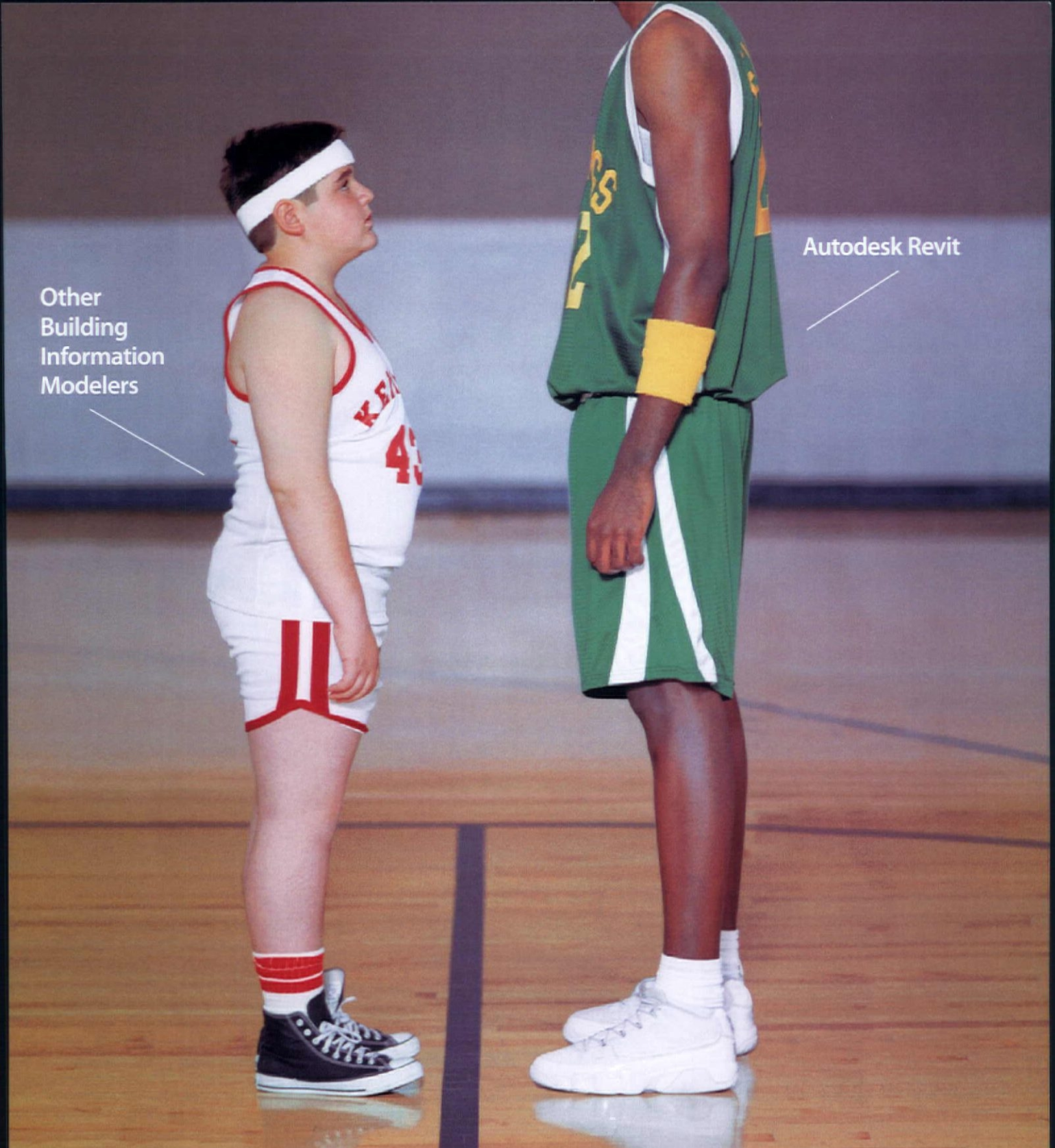
With this relaunch, we have changed the behind-the-scenes business aspects of publishing the magazine, which are intended to secure its growth and success for years to come. Our regular readers will find that their favorite features and columns are still here. We have expanded our Table of Contents page and introduced two departments. "Ephemera"

You can see it in our vocabulary, which increasingly embraces words like merge, morph, meld, convergence, fusion, and collaboration — not to mention endless pairings of multi-this and inter-that.

will include reviews of exhibitions, lectures, and events, which are often as noteworthy as the books and periodicals that we have always covered. "The Lurker" is a new column by Cambridge novelist Joan Wickersham. ("Lurker" is an online term for someone who benignly observes a discussion without actively participating.) In each issue, Joan will chronicle a day in the life of someone whose work contributes to the making of the built environment.

The redesign process has been occasionally tough, frequently exhilarating, and always enriched by the participation of the many people whose commitment to this magazine is extraordinary. Like a city, a magazine is never finished. *ArchitectureBoston* will continue to evolve, and we welcome your suggestions and comments. ■

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor



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Letters Letters Letters

Peter Kuttner and his cartoon

["Drawing on Controversy," September/October 2004] have nailed the "risk" issues that affect architects, which are quite different from the way developers think of risk — as a business tool to handle with fast computers and asbestos gloves. Ours is the risk of being a professional in a litigious society that knows how to pitch risk factors, blame, and costs to the architect, whose only armor is exorbitant insurance that rises with each claim, however frivolous. There is no question of choice or judgment here. Liability protection is becoming to architects what malpractice insurance has become in medical practice — an unsustainable overhead, sometimes costing as much per hour as the professional services rendered, causing many smaller practices to fold or sell out.

For architects tempted to play in the ballpark of development and real estate, the threshold question is, are you "entrepreneurial"? That is a character trait, an instinct that engages one to take risk, often in the quest for innovation or a burning desire to solve a problem better. The entrepreneurial instinct does not seem to drive many in the architectural field, nor is it stimulated by the intense demands of architectural education and pursuit of a career — that has its own if different rewards. Just as well. In my view, only rarely do architectural ideals and development rewards meet and greet. Undertaking the revitalization of Quincy Market was a 200 percent risk, fueled by a passionate conviction about an urban goal important enough to justify the price — working speculatively and unpaid for 10 years to see it finally happen. Had we started with a business plan, we would have called it quits before the real work started.

Entrepreneurial, yes. Lucky, you bet. Rewarding, yes — not financially but professionally, being able to influence the turnaround of Boston and other failing cities. In today's climate, we work

at that with the more conventional tools of planning and design, and leave risk to the businessmen with asbestos gloves.

Jane Thompson
Thompson Design Group
Boston

Hooray to Peter Kuttner! ["Drawing on Controversy," September/October 2004.] I couldn't agree with him more that owner-focused contracts are not good for the industry, "collaboration" or "partnering" notwithstanding!

Richard Keleher AIA
Concord, Massachusetts

I was astonished to read in your roundtable discussion ["Politically Speaking," July/August 2004] that "politicians are not risk takers." If it hadn't been for a young state representative from Brookline and some of his legislative colleagues who began raising hell about the way architectural commissions were being awarded by the Commonwealth back in the 1960s, state architectural work might still be nothing but a political grab bag. And at the time, the profession was doing damn little about it.

Michael Dukakis
Brookline, Massachusetts
(Former Governor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts)

Two things were clear from your recent roundtable discussion on politics [July/August 2004]. First, many architects have a history of political and civic participation, but compartmentalize this as separate from their professional design work. Your panelists make clear the necessary professional connection between good design and an understanding of the community and the political decision-makers around them.

Second, your panelists make clear that good design is only the starting

point. Getting others to accept the concept of good design — or for that matter, the need for affordable housing, well-designed schools, and smart growth development — requires not only being "right," but also having the political horsepower to bring others along.

Without political support, good design often gets left on the drawing board.

George Bachrach
Watertown, Massachusetts

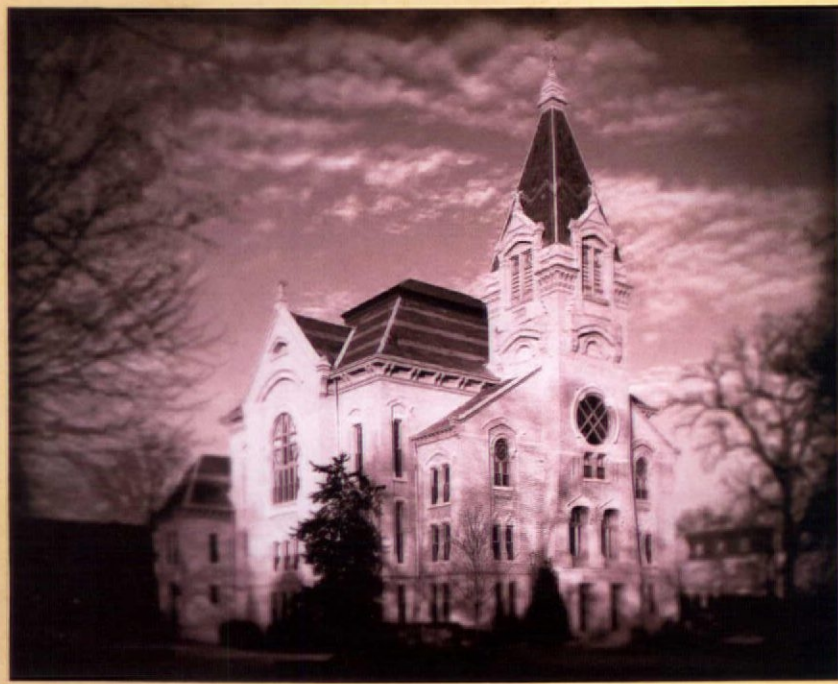
Your lively roundtable discussion

[July/August 2004] put a finer point on the blunt observation that architects have no stomach for politics.

It may be true that architects are generally unenthusiastic about the prospect of engaging their elected officials in the messy task of creating laws or in the odious process of fundraising. But, as Anne Tate points out, because of the nature of representational government, we cannot expect politicians to take risks or produce new ideas. It's up to the electorate — namely, us — to bring creative solutions to the process of policy-making. Good ideas make better public policy, which then leads to better instruments of public policy in the form of land-use regulations and zoning ordinances.

The panelists described their love for designing in the public realm and the thrill of using their skills as designers to synthesize conflicting forces and lead with the power of clear ideas. I suspect many of us share those feelings, but we're often working within regulations that are impediments to "the art of optimization." The way to truly optimize what we can do for our communities is to change the rules by influencing the policy-making process.

Michael R. Davis AIA
Bergmeyer Associates
Boston



Washington Hall, center stage for theatre and cultural events at Notre Dame. Built in 1881, this modern Gothic structure was named by Father Berin himself, Notre Dame's founder, in honor of his great hero, George Washington.

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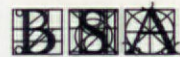
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Politics, for many of my architect colleagues, seems an unbecoming and thoroughly unprofessional process, fraught with compromise and tinged with the specter of “dirty” money. And in many cases, they’re right on target! However, as articulated by the excellent roundtable discussion [July/August 2004], politics can also be an evolutionary (even revolutionary) process that provides the forum for development of a richer, and more effective, built environment.

We on the AIA Massachusetts Legislative Affairs Committee have learned that architects need to be involved with the political process as it relates to our practice environment. Laws, regulations, and procedures controlling professional licensure, architect/engineer selection, construction procurement, and professional liability obviously have a crucial impact on our firms, as do the multitude of tax and business statutes.

Regardless of which market segment a design firm serves, our ability to serve clients in a professionally responsible manner, along with our capacity to practice profitably, is significantly impacted each year by the legislative and executive branches of government. Certainly, one element of this aspect of our profession’s political activism is defense — we must be vigilant against detrimental changes sponsored by other interest groups. However, many of the skills articulated in the roundtable make architects very effective facilitators for bringing about more global improvements to the practice environment. And in the process, we help others to understand more fully the value brought to the table by an architect.

D. Michael Hicks AIA
Domenech Hicks & Krockmalnic
Boston

I’m not sure it’s true that environmentalists need to vie with unions and clients for their place at the design table [“Building on the Art of the Possible,” July/August 2004]. This may be the case on design features that add cost to the project (or have a longer term payoff), but many environmental practices actually save money. My work at greenGoat

is done in one of those areas: materials and resources. Our pitch for recycling construction and demolition debris is an easy one: Landfill fees are averaging \$85 a ton, and recycling averages far less than that.

We have forged relationships with unions by offering training programs for their members. Training is a major union benefit, and the idea that unions are “anti-environmentalist” is an oversimplification. Unions exist to protect the job security of their members. And with the coming ban of certain building materials from Massachusetts landfills (proposed for Jan. 1, 2005), intelligent resource management is a lot more than just tree hugging.

Amy Bauman
Director of Business Development
greenGoat
Somerville, Massachusetts

From what I see going on in Boston, smart growth is not smart growth [“Smart Talk on Smart Growth,” July/August 2004]. It’s all talk. All this density is doing is bringing in more people with more cars. Part of the reason that neighborhood shopping centers are disappearing and being replaced by fast-food places and restaurants is that more people have cars and can go to the malls to do their shopping for groceries and basics; they won’t shop unless they can find a parking space near the store (look at all the double parking). Smart growth is what the Boston of the past was, not the present. I used to be able to do most of my shopping without leaving my neighborhood. Not anymore.

Louise Baxter
South Boston

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Letters may be edited for clarity and length, and must include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Length should not exceed 300 words.

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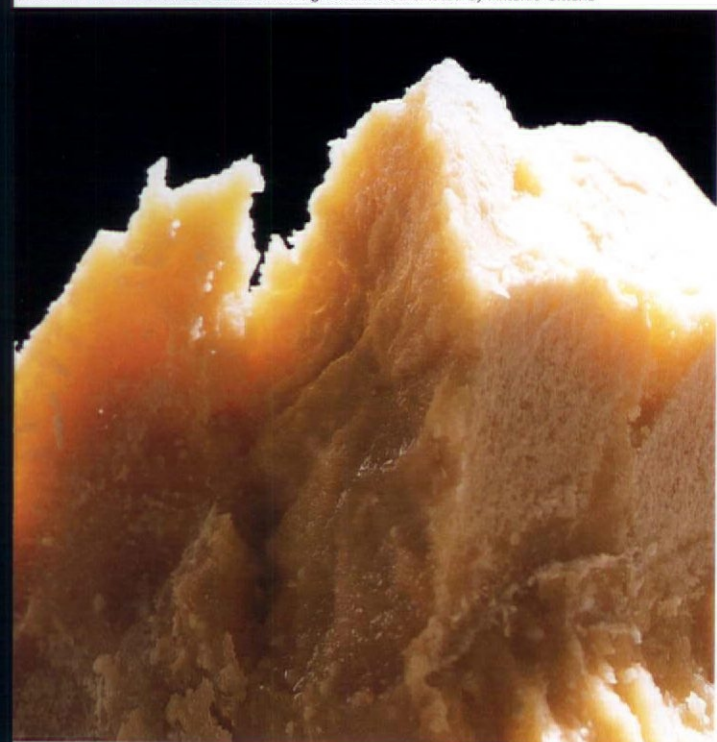
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Ezra Stoller Architectural Photography

Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts
June 19 – December 19, 2004

Hearing the name Ezra Stoller conjures up heroic images of Modern architecture in high-contrast black and white, usually seen in remaindered and rather dull books of 1950s and early '60s architecture. How much more thrilling they are as large, high-quality prints. The Williams College Museum of Art has mounted a beautiful show of his work, the wonderful excuse being that Mr. Stoller has recently moved to Williamstown. Approximately 50 photographs represent six icons of Modern architecture: Rudolph's Yale School of Art and Architecture; Kahn's Salk Institute; Wright's Fallingwater and his Guggenheim Museum; Saarinen's TWA Terminal; and Mies' Seagram Building.

Ezra Stoller was an architect before he was a photographer, and perhaps this helped him understand and capture in a photograph what his clients had been

after. His compositional skill and high-contrast prints could find drama where often there was very little in the architecture itself. He helped create a public for Modern architecture and made it seem heroic. Philip Johnson claimed that "no Modern building was complete until it had been 'Stollerized.'" It is no wonder that architects clamored for his services, with Frank Lloyd Wright and Marcel Breuer even trying to get him to be their exclusive architectural photographer.

The organic buildings seem to work the very best as photographs. The complex spiraling curves of the Guggenheim are fluid and gorgeous; an exterior curve of the TWA terminal soars to a huge polarized sky. But I'm afraid not even the Stoller touch could make the Seagram Building amount to more than an intellectual idea.

Ann McCallum FAIA is a principal of Burr and McCallum Architects in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

Crane Beach Sandblast 2004

Ipswich, Massachusetts
August 7, 2004

Design and democracy transformed Crane Beach into an active election arena this summer. At the annual Sandblast competition, the candidates were sand sculptures, and people's-choice ballots were cast in big white buckets.

Masters squads, armed with stakes and yellow caution tape, descended on the beach to claim prime real estate. (Who were these masters? Sculptors who frequent the regional sandcastle circuit. Big timers — no joke — go international.) Property lines were marked and fortified with low ramparts. Inside, sculptures of SpongeBob and Disney's Ariel revealed that for the masters, Sandblast was not about creative representation, but the reproduction of popular icons.

Sixty-one teams, starring kids and companies, rallied a dynamic amateur scene. Plots were smaller, closer, with squirrely paths as negotiable borders — a tight medieval village outside the masters' walls. Shipwrecks and invasive snakehead fish signaled vernacular and natural inspiration.

In the inevitable tidal onslaught, the masters relinquished SpongeBob to the ocean, while the amateurs repossessed their works with exuberant demolition.

And the people's choice? Mermaid Misfits, a free-spirit alternative to the masters' bootlegged Ariel.

Eleanor Pries is a graduate student at the University of Virginia and has worked as a planner at The Cecil Group in Boston.



Sarah Whiting and Ron Witte Conversations on Architecture

The Boston Society of Architects
July 8, 2004

Contemporary architects spend a lot of time concocting intellectual devices that they can use as tools to generate original design. These tools can be provocative, but how seriously should the architect take them? A winning proposal for a museum competition may be a lesson in sacrificing basic architectural responsibilities for the purity of a generative tool.

Sarah Whiting and Ron Witte, principals of WW in Somerville, Massachusetts, presented their design-in-progress for a new museum at San Jose State University at "Conversations on Architecture," a monthly discussion among architects about a current project.

For San Jose, WW's tool of choice was "ribbons." Using PowerPoint to explain their conceptual model, the designers presented four ribbons drawn across the

site, designated "Darwinian lines" because they suggested spaces that could evolve as the project became more specific.

The four ribbons were then worked over to generate the museum's floor plans. Big loops equal big spaces; little loops equal little spaces. Here is an auditorium, there is a lounge; here is a gallery space, there is a coat-check. The relationships between functions were determined by the coincidental overlap of stacked ribbons.

Discussion focused on whether the building would satisfy its responsibility to the campus environment. Some participants felt that the museum might be too monumental; many agreed that it needed more porosity to engage passersby. As the discussion turned to the legibility of their ideas, Whiting and Witte explained that

their inquiry was about "figuration," their buzzword suggesting the purging of references that might promote traditional ideas of legibility. When asked what they wanted to be legible, if anything, they paused. Witte finally offered, "The sequence of spaces could be one reading."

What happens when four arbitrary ribbons generate a plan? Absolutely anything. Any device can trigger a building's design; after all, one has to start somewhere. In the case of the San Jose Museum, the tool trumped urban or spatial investigations. Whiting and Witte, who teach at the Harvard Design School, argued that any deliberate civic act or geometry would dilute their generative tool. At the end of the discussion, Witte said, "This is not a store. It is not designed to draw one inside." But a big, public building on a neglected campus may need to do more than adhere rigidly to its creators' thesis.

Rachel Levitt is an architectural designer and researcher in Boston.

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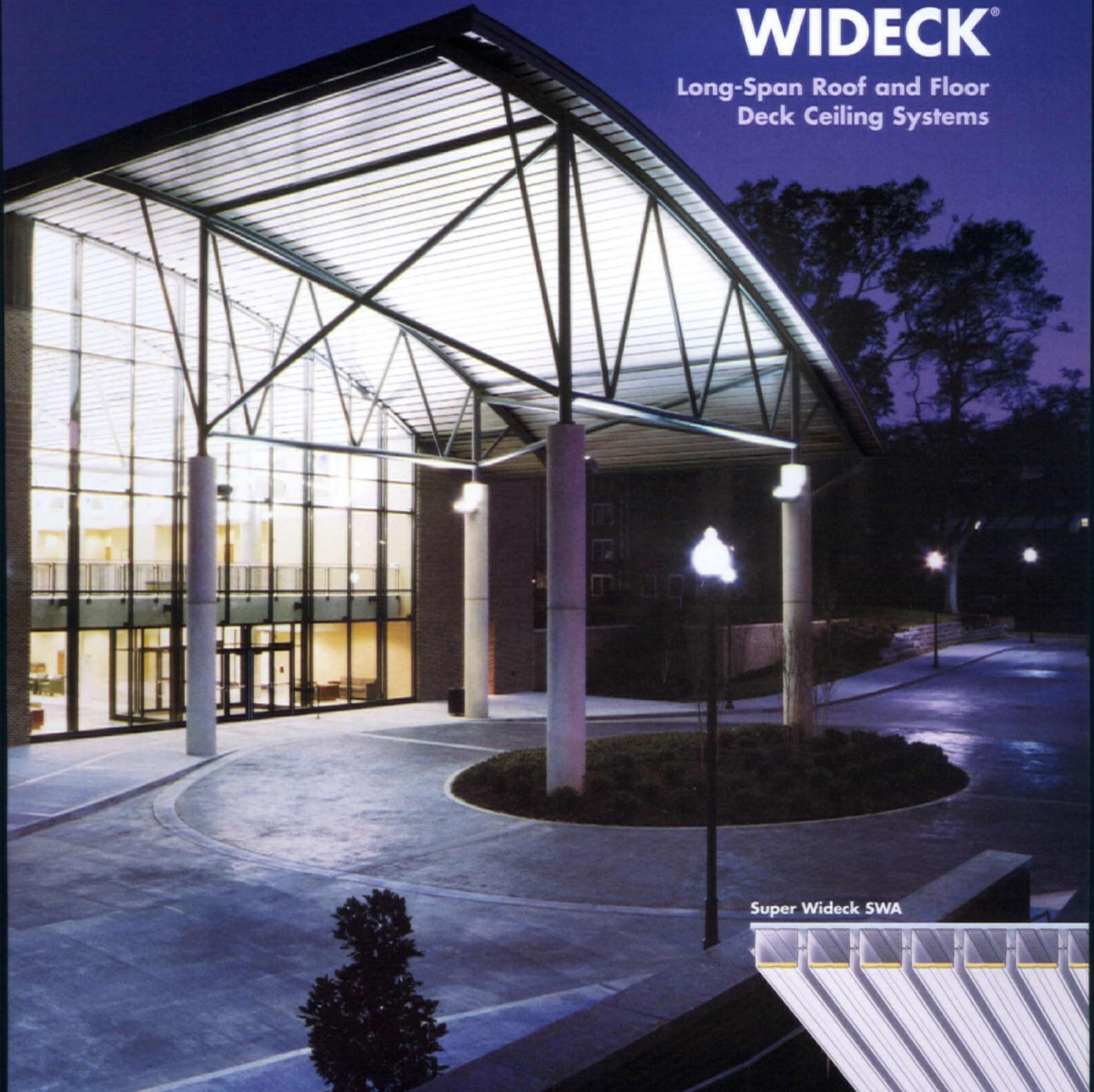
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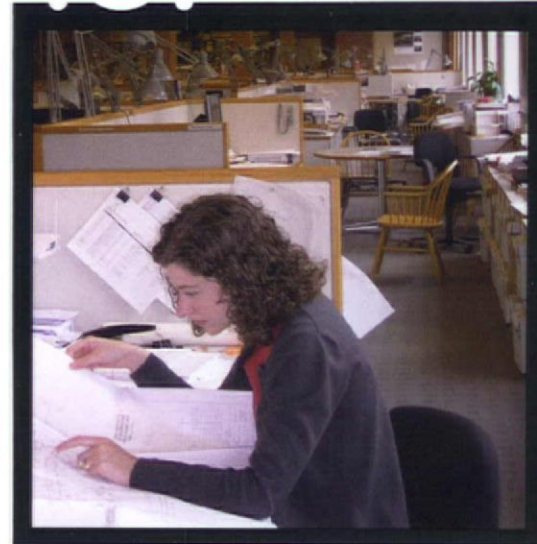
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A Day with an Intern Architect

The intern architect: Sara Gewurz, Payette Associates, Boston
B.Arch., Syracuse University, 2000

The project: A new geology building and natural history museum at Amherst College. Among other things, the museum will house the world's largest collection of dinosaur footprints. Sara joined the project team in late 2002, during schematic design. Now she is occupied full time with construction administration. The project broke ground in June 2004 and is scheduled to open in January 2006.

The office: Very quiet, on a hot day in mid-August. People are away on vacation, or out at meetings. A long room gridded with cubicles. Perched on top of the partitions: models of buildings. A couple of anemic-looking plants. An enormous box of Extra-Strength Tylenol.



10:13 The owner's project manager calls from Amherst. He and Sara have been sleuthing around campus for old slate chalkboards, because they're beautiful. Also cheaper than buying new ones. Yesterday, during Sara's site visit, they looked in the college president's basement, and found one. Now he's calling to tell Sara that more chalkboards have been discovered, enough for the entire building.

10:25 The architect in the next cubicle saunters in from taking the LEED exam. Sara asks how it went. He rolls his eyes but then, clearly remembering suddenly that Sara is taking it tomorrow, says, "It's not too bad."

10:45 Reviews supplier's samples of insulated spandrel panels for the windows, which are supposed to match the medium-gray curtain-wall system. These don't. Two are brown, two are silver. All are different thicknesses.

11:00 Calls the contractor about samples. "What are we looking at?"

11:13 The contractor calls back. He has spoken to the supplier about the problem with the spandrel panels. The

The day:

8:58 Sara arrives to find a message from the contractor. To accommodate the new geology building, a nearby dormitory had to be altered. The building inspector is insisting on fire-rated glass for the dorm's new stairwell window, though the two existing windows are not made of fire-rated glass. What does the code say?

This is an urgent question, since students are moving in next week.

9:01 Discovers that the firm's internal network is down. No access to any electronic documents.

9:02 Discovers that the person who did the drawings of the new stairwell windows is out of the office at a meeting.

9:05 Takes the stairwell plans and elevations over to Payette's in-house building technologies guy. They discuss

materials and the fire-rating of adjacent pieces of wall. He points her to the relevant portion of the code, which she e-mails to the client.

9:50 The contractor calls regarding the fire-protection system. The valves need to be positioned closer to the floor. This means that an access panel currently placed in a ceiling would potentially deface a prominent wall in a monumental staircase. Sara will look into it and get back to him.

10:00 Calls museum consultant. Whose responsibility is it to specify voltage of the exhibit lighting? His plan says, "Engineer." There are numerous engineers involved with the project; Sara wants to know which one he means.

She hangs up the phone. "I think the hardest thing is to figure out exactly what needs to get done when."

supplier doesn't understand the problem.

11:18 Debates whether to formally reject the samples, or simply ask for new ones. Decides to reject them, in order to create a clearer paper trail.

11:22 Calls hardware consultant to relay message that the client has opted for straight door handles, rather than the curved ones Sara had recommended, which would have necessitated stocking both right- and left-handed replacement handles.

11:24 Calls mechanical engineer to discuss the positioning of fire-protection system valves. Leaves a message.

12:00 Call from owner's project manager, who is reviewing museum documents. There's a wall that needs to support a heavy slab of fossilized dinosaur footprints, but the wall as currently designed won't support a heavy slab. Sara makes a note to change the wall.

12:05 Lunch. Meeting to discuss CANstruction, a pro-bono design competition using food cans, which are then donated to the homeless. Last year Payette built a Mini Cooper; it didn't win a prize but was successful with kids, who jumped on it until it collapsed.

"We need to do something cute this year," someone says fiercely. "Cute wins."

1:10 Calls mechanical engineer to discuss air diffusers for the labs. He has specified two different types of diffusers, to be used in different rooms. Sara: "Why?" For aesthetic reasons, she would prefer to keep the diffusers consistent throughout all the lab spaces. The engineer explains that the diffusers he is recommending are more efficient: the ones Sara liked let less air through, so twice as many would be required.

1:24 Begins reviewing and stamping shop drawings for conformance to contract documents.

1:50 Reviews and stamps short-circuit protection study.

2:10 Reviews and stamps lightning protection and grounding equipment report.

2:20 Reviews product data for concealed fireproofing, and begins to check the information against the project specifications and the fire-protection contractor's drawings.

2:37 Can't reconcile fireproofing data with the drawings and specs. Asks in-house building technologies guy how to judge whether or not proposed fireproofing is adequate. They pore over the drawings; he keeps asking Sara questions about the building, and she keeps asking him questions about the fire-code issues she hasn't encountered before. They talk for 40 minutes. She won't stamp these drawings yet — she decides to put them aside and review them again with the project architect in light

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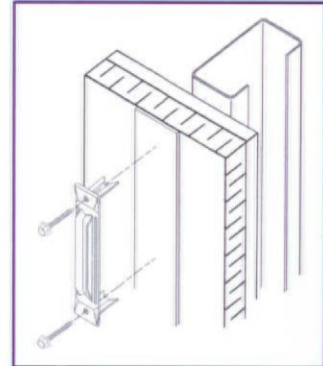
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of all she's just learned.

Out of the stack of highly technical submittals that she's reviewed this afternoon, what alerted her to slow down and subject the fireproofing to such relentless scrutiny? "Too many unanswered questions."

3:22 Reviews HVAC mechanical drawings. Checks that diffusers and access panels won't conflict with lighting. She's still bothered by the appearance of the new diffusers the engineer has recommended. She's still not crazy about the idea of using two different types of diffusers. And she's still debating whether or not it's worth insisting on her original choice, which would entail moving ductwork.

3:35 Calls mechanical engineer to ask more about the ramifications of changing back to her original diffuser concept. The engineer confirms what Sara has suspected: the big ramification has to do with money.

3:53 Calls the contractor's field engineer about the penthouse ductwork. She's noticed that two doors are obstructed by ducts and tells him she can move the doors. But she also wants to talk to him about a potential problem flagged by the engineer responsible for the ductwork layout: in certain places the ductwork is too low for maintenance people to have access to crucial systems. He doesn't seem concerned. She politely continues to badger him.

4:25 Talks with her colleague who just took the LEED test. She says, "Tonight I just plan to review the different agencies which have jurisdiction." Her colleague shakes his head, smiling faintly. "That's only about 200 different agencies," he says.

4:50 Starts thinking about going home, earlier than usual, to review for her test. Regrets a couple of things she meant to start looking at today, but

didn't get to: new sketches for the reading room — the users' committee of five geology professors has so far rejected every concept the designers have presented. And the problem of automatic sunshade blinds, discussed at the job meeting yesterday. If sensors in the museum signal the blinds to lower when the sunlight reaches a certain intensity, then what will trigger them to rise again?

Sara muses aloud about this problem for a few minutes. "Oh, well. Tomorrow."

5:05 She leaves the office, after a day probably not dissimilar from that of an air-traffic controller. Except that the plane she is guiding in will take another year and a half to land. ■

Joan Wickersham lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is the author of *The Paper Anniversary* and is finishing a new book. This marks the debut of her new column, *The Lurker*.

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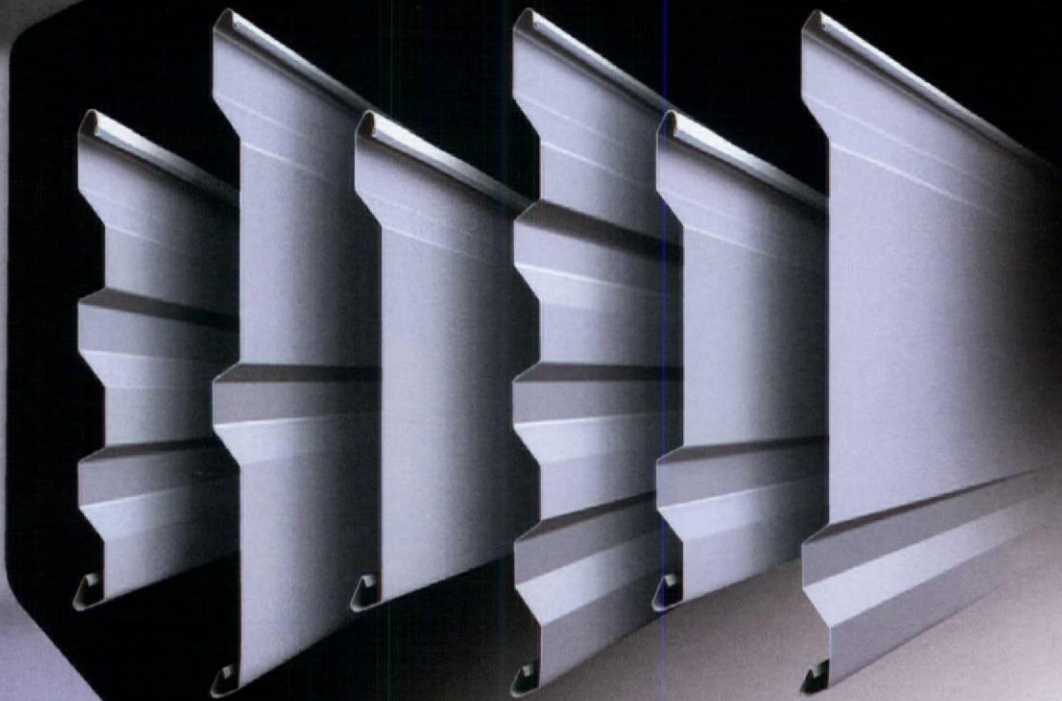
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Working out of the box and between the lines, a new design vanguard is taking its place in the spaces between disciplines

PARTICIPANTS

Gregory Beck AIA is the principal of Architecture + Experience Design in New York City. The founder of the Experience Architecture Forum at the Harvard Design School, he is also co-director of Urban Narratives, an environment and media research group at MIT. He is the former director of architecture for Sony New Technologies.

Phillip Bernstein FAIA is vice president of the Building Solutions Division at Autodesk in Manchester, New Hampshire, and is lecturer in professional practice at Yale University School of Architecture. He was previously an associate principal at Cesar Pelli & Associates. He is the 2005–2007 chair of the national AIA Documents Committee.

Jeffrey Inaba is a partner of HOLA in Los Angeles and New York City. A member of the design faculty at SCI-Arc, he is the program coordinator of the Project on the City at the Harvard Design School. He was previously a principal of AMO Inc., and is co-editor of *The Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping* and *The Great Leap Forward* (Taschen).

Mikyoung Kim is the principal of Mikyoung Kim Design in Brookline, Massachusetts. A landscape architect and environmental artist, she is an associate professor at RISD. Her work appears in a monograph, *Mikyoung Kim* (Grayson).

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is the editor of *ArchitectureBoston*.

Elizabeth Padjen The blurring of boundaries and distinctions is one of the most significant cultural trends today. Fusion, convergence, merging, and morphing are all part of our intellectual, social, and creative lives.

The design world is hardly immune. You might argue that this is old news — designers at the Bauhaus and later in firms like The Architects Collaborative based their work on multidisciplinary collaboration. But the results were very different and the energy was focused in a very different way. Why is that? Is it the influence of technology and new media, or something else?

All of you are in varying ways thinking about these issues and finding your way in the world of design in the spaces between traditional disciplines. You represent a vanguard that is creating something brand new. Let's start by talking a bit about your work and your career paths.

Gregory Beck My interest is the ways narrative and media are creating new kinds of places. In the past, architects designed the building and someone else provided the content. I'm interested in doing both.



"Secrets of the Luxor Pyramid" theater attraction, Las Vegas.
Attraction architect: Gregory Beck AIA. Film director: Douglas Trumball. Hotel architect: Veldon Simpson.



I have a traditional architecture background, but found that I was frustrated with architecture as it was being traditionally practiced. I wanted my work to speak more directly and clearly, and to be more relevant. I felt that Modern architecture was failing us by being too abstract. So I went back to graduate school at MIT and worked in the Media Lab to try to figure out how the work going on there might inform new kinds of places. At that point I realized that narrative was starting to play a much larger role in place-making. It offers an incredible new opportunity for commercial and cultural places, places of entertainment, public and civic places. I designed special venue theaters for filmmaker Douglas Trumbull, and then joined Sony to build its first brand environments. Sony is a very interesting company. We tend to think of it in terms of electronics and industrial design. But it's a company of many brands — short stories. It really makes movies, publishes books. It's heavily invested in content, and it buys companies that do all these things. And it asked my team to make a place that represented all of this, that was intended to be the embodiment of all those brand values. That was when I realized that stories — from the aspirations of commercial brands to the narrative of cultural institutions — could inspire a new relationship with architecture.

Phillip Bernstein I was a practicing architect for about 20 years, spending most of my career at Cesar Pelli's office in New Haven, where I was the guy who was really interested in the process stuff: how do we get things done? So I focused my career in working on big, complicated projects. At the same

“My clients are really open to the idea of bringing in someone who is a hybrid, who can't be categorized. A lot of people, from public artists to architects and landscape architects, are crossing these boundaries in a natural, evolutionary way.”

— Mikyoung Kim

time, I've been teaching professional practice at Yale for 17 years. What I try to emphasize with my students is that there are direct relationships between the instruments of design, the act of design, and the process of design, which don't necessarily focus only on the making of the building.

Four years ago, I shifted over to lead the business unit inside Autodesk that makes the technology that most architects use. It became clear to me during that trajectory that technology was starting to take this increasingly larger role, not just in getting the work done, but also in establishing the relationship between the players.

In my group right now, instead of working on the next set of features in the next version of the software, we're trying to untangle the problem of how architects are related to the larger process of building. What does technology do to enable that? And how do you make those pieces interconnect?



Opposite: "Navigations," strolling garden, Lucky Corporation, Seoul, Korea. Designer: Mikyoung Kim Design.

Left: "River of Light," Federal Courthouse Annex entry courtyard, Wheeling, West Virginia. Designer: Mikyoung Kim Design.

Mikyoung Kim I'm an environmental artist and a landscape architect. I took a very circuitous route to get to this point in my career. Until I was 22, I trained to be a concert pianist. But all along I had been interested in sculpture, and for varying reasons I shifted and that's where most of my background is. I also have a degree in landscape architecture. The blurring of disciplines is something I've been struggling with — the idea of inhabiting the boundaries between the fine arts and design, between academics and practice.

Jeffrey Inaba I'm a partner of a firm called HOLA, which is "hello" in Spanish; it's post-acronym — it doesn't stand for anything. HOLA is an ideas firm — we provide direction for our clients, based on research and creative ideas. A typical client would be a company that is rethinking its business focus or its cultural focus or the way that it presents itself to a particular audience. Besides providing strategic advice to clients, we also create ways to convey that strategy to a constituency. So it's very much an office that's production-oriented in the sense that we will develop the interface between our client and whoever the target audience may be. The interface might take the form of traditional architecture as in a retail space, but it might also be a book that describes a company's mission. It might be a planning document. It might be a video. We don't see ourselves as particularly avant-garde, in the sense that we provide essentially what architects have always provided. The initial idea of what a company ought to be doing is very much like programming a building, and the presentation of a client to its audience is very much like designing a building.

Elizabeth Padjen How did you get from your architecture degree to this point?

Jeffrey Inaba I'm trained as an architect and have been teaching for many years at Harvard and recently at SCI-Arc. I teach with Rem Koolhaas at Harvard, where we have an ongoing research group called the Project on the City, which looks at changes to the contemporary city. So a lot of my training is based in analysis. I was a partner of AMO, which is the think-tank consultancy of Rem's architectural firm, OMA. A lot of HOLA's approach to working with clients on creative projects has come from these experiences.

Elizabeth Padjen Here you are, all working in these untraditional ways within the field. Are you a solution in search of a problem? How do you find clients? How do you convince people they need you?

Jeffrey Inaba Within a company or an institution that's a potential client, there's often a marketing/creative strategy side and also a fiscal responsibility/accountability side. Frequently, the person on the marketing side sees a value in having somebody come in and help them think out a strategy for the future well-being of the company. The hard part is convincing the other side, the CFO, that it's worth it. But you can demonstrate that some preparatory thinking is always valuable for a company because it helps them save money in the long term in any project, whether it's defining the goals of a building project before selecting an architect, or thinking about the positioning of a company before hiring an ad agency to run a campaign.

Mikyoung Kim I think the climate is changing, too. I've only been in practice for 11 years, but I've noticed in the last three years that my clients, from governmental agencies like the GSA to private institutions, are really open to the idea of bringing in someone who is a hybrid, who can't be categorized so clearly. There are a lot of people, from public artists to architects and landscape architects, who are crossing these boundaries in a natural, evolutionary way. I do some work in Asia, where even 10 years ago, things were much more fluid than they are here. People didn't say, "Are you the artist? Are you the landscape architect? If you're designing a façade, are you the architect?" They just said, "If you can create the entire environment, great." I think the different way in which they build projects there facilitated that. But at the same time in the US, people said, "Well, which one are you? We need to know." I find people ask me that less now — they're more interested in somebody who's willing to try to merge the disciplines. It has become a part of our culture.

You see this sort of blurring everywhere now. I grew up in Connecticut, where I was one of the few minorities in my school.

When I was in second grade, I brought a bento box to school, which held a Korean version of sushi called kimbop. My teacher and all the kids said, “Oh my God, you eat seaweed?” They couldn’t believe it. It was a different world, and that was only 30 years ago. Now concepts related to blurring, merging, hybrids, collaboration, and integration infuse even the food we eat.

The word “collaboration” actually has two very different definitions. One is the one we are all using, which is working jointly together; and the other is used in war: If you’re a collaborator, you’re a traitor and you’ve betrayed your country. I think true collaboration involves some of both. Maybe what differentiates the way in which collaboration was used 30 years ago from the way it’s used now is that there is a kind of tension. I think that’s a good thing; it keeps us on our toes.

Jeffrey Inaba I agree with Mikyoung that collaboration and interdisciplinarity come out of the historical moment that we’re in. A lot of the success of AMO as a practice was that it emerged along with the new economy. We were really fortunate to be able to work with clients who wanted to figure out how to situate themselves during a period of incredibly dynamic economic conditions. If you look at AMO clients during that time, you’ll find that their mission statements were all very similar: global domination in whatever industry or market they were in.

Now that we’re in a “post-new-economy” period, the words that describe what we do are changing. And HOLA in many ways is a manifestation of that. It is targeted not to the tier of companies that are interested in extending their global domination in a downward market, but to younger companies that are thinking about ways in which they can remain relatively lean but still have influence and relevance.

Elizabeth Padjen It seems to me that there is another factor, which is the media-driven, graphics-driven shift in the popular culture.

“In many ways, the disintegration of old processes and old structures has to happen before things re-form into new, clear approaches.”

— *Phillip Bernstein FAIA*

Phillip Bernstein Nicholas Negroponte — the founder of the MIT Media Lab — talks about the phases of technology adoption. In the initial phase, you use the technology to replicate the ways you’ve always done things — so for architects, it’s the replacement of hand drafting. Then there’s the intermediate step of integration, where the relationship gets changed. And then ultimately the technology enables a way of approaching the problem that’s fundamentally different.

Technology is an underlayment that creates a degree of

fluidity that didn’t exist before. And that fluidity combines with some other external factors that have to do with widespread dissatisfaction with the way current processes work. The reason your clients today say, “We don’t care what your role is” is that they are desperate for a good idea; they don’t care about the source. In many ways, the disintegration of old processes and old structures has to happen before things re-form into new, clear approaches.

Mikyoung Kim Technology is also an enabler for this kind of collaborative dialogue. When you can send a drawing back and forth so quickly between all the different parties, it allows a dialogue through the drawing that didn’t happen with hand drawings.

Phillip Bernstein And with certain kinds of technologies, you don’t just send a drawing any more. You can send insight. It’s not like a better fax machine — it’s something more. You can transmit intent and relationships and other kinds of metadata that create a whole different dynamic around the design process. What we haven’t yet developed are clear business processes that respond to what this means. For example, the owner says, “Why don’t you just do this and send this thing over to this other guy?” and the architect says, “Well, I didn’t get paid to make the data. I’m not going to take the risk of sending the data over there.”

Jeffrey Inaba It strikes me that “metadata” and “data” seem now to be the same thing, in the sense that meta-information, like intention or insight, is as much a part of the scope of architectural work as, say, dimensions on a drawing. We are responsible for having both the intention and insight in hand, as well as very specific descriptive bits of information.

Phillip Bernstein There’s still a useful distinction between “data” and “metadata.” Data is the information that’s transacted as part of traditional processes. You send me a drawing; I send you data that indicates the boundary of your landscape work. But the metadata is the stuff that, at least in traditional transactions, rides on top — non-graphic stuff like area calculations, quantities, or key relationships between components. It’s now possible to communicate both kinds of information. But unfortunately, there are no well-understood protocols for how to do all this.

Gregory Beck We’re just beginning to think of architecture in these terms. I still labor under the fantasy that my practice could in some way imitate a small portion of what Charles Eames used to do — he was a guy who could design a house one day and a film the next. But no clients are ever going to call me to make a film, as much as I’d like to. I’m working on a project now where I’m not making the film but I’m hiring the filmmaker — so I’m producing a project with a film in it. It’s a question of making the work that I want to do. I’m less optimistic about clients perceiving me as being as multidisciplinary as I feel.

Mikyoung Kim When our firm was starting out, we told people we’re artists. We didn’t want to confuse them with,

"Inside CNN" retail and studio tour theater, Time Warner Center, New York City. Architects: Gregory Beck AIA and Eric Regh AIA. Building architect: SOM.



“What we’ve come to understand is that to really make a place, it has to have a story. And so how that place tells its story is part and parcel of how we recognize its importance.”

— Gregory Beck AIA

“Look, we can do all these different things.” We did small projects, projects that we could call art, or landscape architecture, or urban design. And then one client about four years ago let us do a project that covered two disciplines at once, and last year we found somebody who let us do all three together. But it’s taken a long time. We had to kind of sneak in. In one project we came in as the artist and designed a landscape for them around an art piece as a sort of freebie.

Gregory Beck I also find that if I can contribute to the content of a place, then I’m becoming more of a collaborator in the execution of a whole experience. For me, the goal is to offer that larger sense of being a part of the client’s business and not to step aside when it comes time to actually give a sense of narrative to a place.

Mikyong Kim What do you mean by “giving narrative” to a place?

Gregory Beck Narrative for me is like storytelling. What we’ve come to understand is that to really make a place, it has to have a story. And so how that place tells its story is part and parcel of how we recognize its importance. What makes a place? What makes it special? Why do people go there? So our work tries to bring back some of those stories.

Jeffrey Inaba Thirty years ago, architects were really fluent in the language of place-making, but it seems like a lot of that ground

has been ceded by architects to other disciplines that use the lingo of developers to describe what might make a place unique.

We need to be more effective in the development marketplace as well as the marketplace of ideas. Sometimes using the terminology of design is really good for clients who see themselves as being informed or enlightened, but what architects ought to be focusing on is making sure that they’re communicating to a much more mainstream audience.

A good example is the World Trade Center competition. The video that Imaginary Forces did for the United Architects scheme [see www.imaginaryforces.com] was an incredibly effective vehicle for creating an appreciation for architecture. And the fact that the design team itself went to Imaginary Forces, rather than relying upon their own capabilities to model three-dimensionally and animate their project, is important. The virtue wasn’t in the fact that it was an interdisciplinary effort. What was more important was that there was a very clear architectural goal and that the architects tried to communicate that message to the widest audience in the most effective way.

Gregory Beck Language is an issue. For example, we call the sort of work I do “experience design” or “experience architecture,” but it’s really an invented term. I find that a lot of web designers are now using “experience design” as if it were their own idea. So we’re arguing over the word “experience” and whose right it is to create experiences.

Elizabeth Padjen And of course, once you create a name for something, all of a sudden it’s a commodity and it gets transformed in the marketplace. You’ve created a market for it simply by finding a word that people accept and use.

Jeffrey Inaba That’s the thing. “Place-branding” seems to be an activity that the profession has to reckon with, because this is a term that has been adopted by developers, by ad agencies, by people who are not in the architectural profession, to describe and perform what is essentially an architectural service. How did it happen that somehow architects weren’t seen as the best people to do that?

Right: Branding strategy, Nissan Infinity cars. Consultant: HOLA.

Gregory Beck That's a good point. I don't compete with architects. I compete with a whole new breed of environmental designers who are not concerned with the sanctity of architecture. But the people who really are the best equipped to create experiences — architects — aren't even in this game. They've been slow to come to the game, and it's increasingly marginalizing them.

Mikyung Kim At the same time, creating these kinds of places — places that have meaning — is a real challenge because our audiences are so varied and are constantly shifting. We can't pinpoint them. What's more, there's very little that we as a society in America agree upon. Our firm worked on a Jewish community center and synagogue where the audience clearly had a shared identity. Making a place for them was much easier because they brought to the table rituals that we could incorporate into our work.

The issue gets even more complicated when you're dealing with landscape. In landscape design, a place is not just a product or a deliverable, but it's really about time. You can deliver it in June 2004, but when is it done? It evolves and changes. And because of this, we've found that one of the most important things we can do is to collaborate with the client and the audience. It's another example of the blurring of the boundaries. The more we can engage them or incorporate their daily rituals into the work that we do, then paradoxically, the more control we have over the project. If you don't engage in this sort of collaboration, you will come back to your project 10 years later and find it's completely transformed by very small changes that accumulate over time.

Elizabeth Padjen It's a very good point — we're beginning to adopt a much broader, more fluid sense of time. And that brings up Phil's earlier observation that we haven't yet developed business practices that reflect these changes. One example might be the traditional project phases in construction administration. Each was well defined and you knew when the project was done. The reality, as Mikyung says, is that the project always lives on. Once you start to think more broadly about what the timing of a project truly is, extending from the very early pre-planning stages that Jeff has talked about to long-term ownership that might extend through several generations of owners, you develop a very different sense of the entire process.

Phillip Bernstein What worries me, now that I spend my days looking at how the profession thinks about itself and how that's mediated by tools, is that we're so slow to react. And the broad middle of the profession is very reactive. I worry that things are going to evolve in a way that makes us more marginalized than we are now. A large majority of practitioners are not even aware of a lot of the great ideas that we're talking about around this table. And there are lots of other people out there who are very interested in all these issues.

I'll give you a really mundane example. One of the least



technologically enabled parts of the entire process is construction. It could be hugely well-served by technological infrastructure that architects could deliver, but there are millions of reasons why people don't want to do it: "I don't get paid for that, it doesn't help me, the insurance company won't let me, I can't find any AIA document that helps me do this." The list is as long as my arm. But meanwhile, there are other kinds of enlightened players out there saying, "Oh, gosh, I'll do this." It reminds me of the '80s when architects said, "I don't want to do this, it's too risky, I don't get paid for it," so a whole series of other players stepped up to take these responsibilities.

Mikyung Kim Are you saying that, if we can overcome all of the legal issues, technology could actually facilitate greater dialogue, or engagement, during the construction phase?

Phillip Bernstein At every level of the design process. If you can destroy the traditional direction of osmosis, which is that information is only supposed to go in one direction, then you can get to some much more interesting ways of doing things. And, frankly, much more efficient ways of doing things.

Mikyong Kim The projects that we have the most direct control over — when the structure of the process allows a back-and-forth dialogue — tend to be smaller projects. And in those projects, we always feel that we're actually becoming more traditional, more like craftsmen, because of the nature of the participation. But you're saying that using technology more effectively would allow us to do the same thing more efficiently.

Phillip Bernstein I think so. More information flowing in more directions creates blurrier boundaries, which ultimately makes for a better result. But it's not a free-for-all. One of the issues the architectural profession is going to have to confront is, who sits in the middle of this process? Let's say everybody wants to collaborate. At some point, someone has to manage the process. Who is in the middle of that process? My students are constantly making analogies to the old "master builder" paradigm, which I think is long gone. We're never going back; the world's just too complicated. But the replacement of the master builder is going to have to be somebody who orchestrates the process and all the information that technology creates. And who's going to do that? If it's not architects, I think there's a serious problem.

Elizabeth Padjen I think the metaphor that has emerged is exactly that: the orchestrator, the conductor — the person with the vision who brings together all these various artists and collaborators. Even though I think most architects have

probably bought into that model, I sense that it's flawed, too. In many respects, it's as romantic a model as the master builder. The kinds of relationships between the participants that we've been talking about are much squishier.

Mikyong Kim In an orchestra, there is a maestro who tells everybody what to do. We've been talking about relationships that are more like a quartet or an ensemble than an orchestra. To continue the music metaphor — more of a polyphonic dialogue. One person speaks and someone else responds.

Gregory Beck Maybe we need to view the designer as a translator, not as an author. It's a question of communication. My clients are teaching me a new set of values — experience-design values. Most of the environments I've been working on aren't intended to last more than two or three years, if that, and so skills related to creating the classic object in the landscape are not needed at all. The work doesn't have to be classic and timeless to be valuable. It's of the now. That's good.

Elizabeth Padjen Sometimes these skills aren't actually learned in school but are things we absorb through the culture that affect the ways we both perceive and create things. Like graphic novels, for example. And video games. The new edition of *Doom 3* is apparently extraordinary. If the market for video games is adolescents and young adults, *Doom* is creating a

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“Architects need to be more effective in the development marketplace as well as the marketplace of ideas.”

— Jeffrey Inaba

generation that’s going to have a certain kind of technical and graphic expectation. How does that translate into what we do and how we communicate? When your client is someone who’s used to a media environment as sophisticated as *Doom*, and you present plans, sections, elevations, or the anemic little walk-through animations that some architects are using, you have a real disconnect. And a loss of credibility.

Phillip Bernstein Boeing and McDonnell-Douglas redesigned the dashboards of fighter jets using heads-up displays and all kinds of other game-based features, because the generation of people who are flying them grew up with video games. They have different hand-eye visual sensibilities.

Doom is a great visualization engine. A couple of years ago we actually built a model of the Villa Savoy in the *Doom* engine — but we couldn’t figure out how to turn off the gun. The generation of clients who are training in front of *Doom* today will expect full-motion, 3D, holographic, interactive presentations.

They’re going to want to be able to walk around and open a window digitally, and you’re not going to be able to do that with a traditional set of orthographically projected documents.

Jeffrey Inaba I spoke earlier about Imaginary Forces’ video presentation of the United Architects WTC scheme. It was able to generate appreciation for the building on an emotional level. But the amazing thing to me was my sense that you could probably place any of the WTC schemes into that video and it would be just as powerful and effective. As a visualization tool, the video was a better presentation of the role a building could have in an urban environment than the building design itself. Things like gaming are really key in the sense that they’re already a part of the visual language. But these techniques don’t themselves blur disciplinary boundaries, because they’re used with the ambition of creating a greater appreciation for architecture’s influence.

Phillip Bernstein Practicing architecture is itself a broad design problem. We can no longer define design as either an aesthetic act or a narrowly scripted set of design opportunities and claim that everything else is not design. Our design skills apply to all of this stuff. If you decide that design occupies only one little narrow band, and everything else is the “not fun” part, not only are your buildings going to be bad, but you’re going to be miserable. And broke. ■

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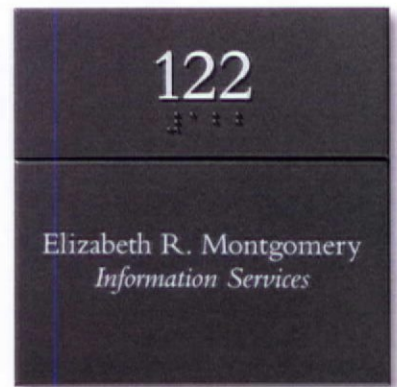
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timeaftertime

Robert Polidori's Havana

Suppose that time is not a quantity but a quality, like the luminescence of the night above the trees just when a rising moon has touched the treeline. Time exists, but it cannot be measured....

— Alan Lightman, *Einstein's Dreams*

For all our talk of living 24/7, for all our smug prowess at multi-tasking, most of us have a remarkably unimagined view of time. Time, we insist with Caesarean single-mindedness, is divided in three parts: past, present, and future. Our datebooks and Outlook calendars prove it. As do, unfortunately, our buildings.

Under the banner of context, we disenfranchise the new. Under the banner of preservation, we have corralled our historic buildings into ghettos. Here it is OK to build something new; there it is not. And conversely, an historic structure whose builders lacked the foresight to choose a site within a future historic district is almost certain to be lost to the natural forces of market pressures and rising property values. We force decisions between new and old every day, a Sophie's choice that ultimately impoverishes our environments and our lives.

In the age of Botox, there is no place for patina. And so property owners and their builders busily scrub away any hint of time. We are becoming germ-phobes, disgusted by the notion that other feet have walked our floors, other hands have touched our doors, other lives have inhabited our spaces.

How have we acquired this uneasiness with our past, this distrust of the future? As we rush about our daily lives, perhaps we've lost our patience with anything but the demands of the present — evolution and accretion just take too much time. But this narrowing understanding of time means that

we've made history too precious for our everyday lives.

The photographs that follow are anything but precious; the artist who made them is anything but a sentimentalist. Taken over a period of four years by the acclaimed photographer Robert Polidori, these images capture the story of a remarkable city and an extraordinarily rich culture that once embraced Modernism with the same passion with which it revered the treasures of its past. Much of Havana's architecture has been frozen in time by political and economic circumstances. The appeal of these images, however, is not that they capture an environment that is frozen, but that they reveal one that is fluid. Time flows through and around these buildings, leaving evidence of life deposited in layers that sometimes literally peel away.

Polidori is not interested in Romantic odes to the beauty of decay. Real people occupy these spaces. They go to work, visit friends, go to movies. We are drawn to these images by their color, their detail, their composition. What holds us is a reminder of what we ourselves are losing: When our buildings no longer tell time, they no longer tell stories. ■

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is the editor of *ArchitectureBoston* and is the consulting curator of architecture and design at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. She curated the exhibition *Havana: Photographs by Robert Polidori*, which is on view through January 9, 2005.



Downstairs from the paladar La Guarida, Concordia 418 (between Gervasio and Escobar),
Centro Habana, 1997

All images © Robert Polidori – Pace/MacGill Gallery



Building façades on the Malecón, 2000

(opposite) Edificio Solimar, Soledad #205, Centro Habana



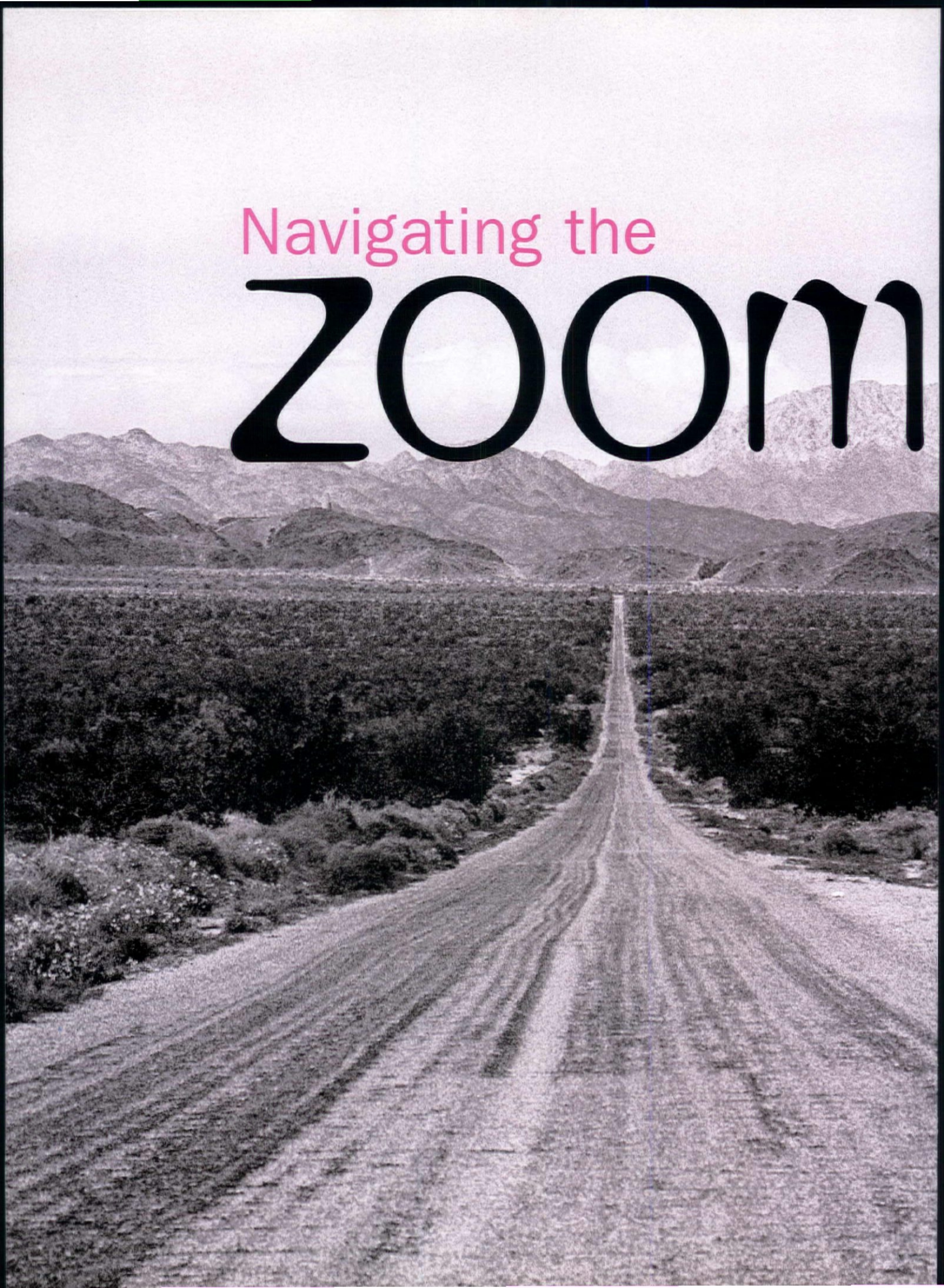


Señora Luisa Faxas residence, 2 #318 (at the corner of Avenida 5ta.), Miramar, 1997



Avenida San Lázaro (from the Paseo del Prado), Centro Habana, 2000

Navigating the
zoom



BY MITCHELL SCHWARZER

sCape

Architecture in the Eye of Technology

On a sweltering day last June, I found myself in the front seat of a taxi swerving through Shanghai. Sitting in front was a mixed blessing. It allowed me to stare out the windshield but also subjected my senses to the terrifying slalom stunts of the

driver and the cacophony of his radio, a medley of vaguely familiar tunes

cast with indecipherable strings of words. The cityscape rushing too close to the side window was also hard to decipher. Chinese expressways cut to the bone of the city, erected on piles just feet from building walls and balconies. For long intervals, I found myself gazing at grayish sweeps of concrete, quivering glass, fluttering laundry, and narrow view-corridors that vanished before I could recognize anything. At other times, stretches of cityscape opened up by the roadside and I was treated to a medley of buildings as familiar and alienating as the tunes on the radio. The super-sized towers, hundreds of which scraped hundreds of feet into the sky, sported distinctive tops — domes, globes, pyramids, steps,


cantilevers, and other sliced and tortured geometries.

What I saw from the expressway couldn't be witnessed strolling at ground level. There wouldn't be enough space to make out the succession of bombastic forms. Nor would there be enough speed to take in the vast dimensions of the city. From the automobile, the Chinese city didn't have a skyline, a set of buildings stringing a line above the horizon for a fixed observer. Rather, I was witnessing a sky-surround, the phenomenon of an observer sprinting through a forest of relentlessly exclaiming towers. It felt like the urban equivalent of cyberspace — perception showered by a liberated architecture.

That same night, I turned on the cable television in my hotel room and clicked around till I saw the familiar grains of an old American movie, *A Patch of Blue*, starring Sidney

lulled by the fullness of the mise-en-scene. I made out things I've never seen and most likely could never see apart from this film — the signs for the Westlake Outlet Center, marquees for the Lake and Alvarado theaters, and businesses which once lined the edges of MacArthur Park, west of downtown LA, that have long since changed. The neighborhood has transformed. Cities have transformed. But on the screen, one can watch past cityscapes over and over again, edited into mythical places that blur geography and turn architecture into a romantic travelogue. Film creates an architecture that finds its form in movement and its site in volatile ensembles of space and time.

Looking back, the taxi ride and film were the two striking events I remember from that day. In some ways, they have nothing to do with each other. One concerned my own



Not only bricks and steel construct architecture and cities. Photographs projected on a screen and sights witnessed from an automobile also construct a built environment.

Poitier, Elizabeth Hartman, and Shelley Winters. Made in 1965 at the height of the civil rights movement, it's the story of an abused and blind white girl who falls in love with a black man. The film is set in an East Coast city in the years after the glamour of urban life had worn off; the opening two shots show a view of a downtown — perhaps Boston — ruled by a new expressway and a set of tired brick rowhouses. The bulk of the film alternates between a dingy apartment and a lush urban park, surrounded by streetscapes sporting '60s signs, cars, and hairstyles. On the 17th floor of the Hua Ting Hotel in China, I was transported back in time to a city whose appearance resembled the New York of my childhood, or at least, I now realize, my memories of it conditioned by the intervening years of watching movies.

I soon noticed, however, that this city of the screen was strangely composed. Early on, when the blind girl is escorted to the park by her grandfather, I glimpsed the fronds of a palm tree and the low-rise stucco retail buildings of a Western city. The role of Boston was apparently acted by Los Angeles, and yet, under the influence of the Jerry Goldsmith score, I was

experience in the moment within a teeming and unfamiliar metropolis. The other showed me an uncannily familiar cityscape, recorded in black and white. Yet there was and is something similar to both experiences. In each, a specific technology — first, the automobile, then, film — influenced the way I saw a city and what I saw. Each skewered what we normally assume to be the continuity of urban experience, slicing the city into long panning shots and rapid visual cuts, a string of fleeting moments packed with astounding power.

In my book *Zoomscape: Architecture in Motion and Media*, I set out to describe the nature and meaning of these powerful experiences. I coined the term “zoomscape” in order to develop a word (and concept) that could embrace the ways that people perceive architecture and the city in modern times: possessed of extraordinary mobility, moving at great speeds, privy to multiple copies of imagery, and exposed to frequent breaks, via editing, to the continuum of space and time. I based the zoomscape on six technologies that have reshaped both the city and our perception of it: three from transportation (railroad, automobile, airplane) and three from



camera representation (photography, film, television).

Zoomscapes rupture our immersion in place. They cause us to experience architecture in eddies and rapids of scenery that flow through vast terrains and distorted chronologies. Because zoomscapes favor vision over touch, the image acquires unprecedented aesthetic importance. Not only bricks and steel construct architecture and cities. Photographs projected on a screen and sights witnessed from an automobile also construct a built environment. The perception of architecture, mediated by technology, becomes the element for the creation of new architectures.

In seeking to understand the potent qualities of the zoomscape, I have come to realize that it has much in common with memory. In memory, the veil of time turns our gaze from a clear, unobstructed view to a patchy sky, owing to the steady erosion of forgetting. We look upon the past quite differently than we do the present. Our remembrances are edited by emotion, amalgamated with ideas, and structured by the psyche. Memory calibrates vision to the rhythms of the mind's rants and rambles.

Similarly, in the zoomscape, a veil of technology blasts apart the full picture of static perception. We are privy to a gaze composed of fragments and vapor trails, a multiplication of points of view that defies the singularity of objects. How else can we explain the delicious and delirious gaze from a speeding automobile or the darkened weightlessness of the cinema? Like memories, sights of the zoomscape possess the power of heightened perception. Bereft of a stable picture, the eyes and mind extract new worlds from miniature pieces. Removed from a stable place, the view of architecture floats in a personalized space. The zoomscape evokes the unbelievable. For is not heightened perception something of a trance?

Still, the zoomscape is not just a personal affair. It is also a collective reality, a very public realm of architectural aesthetics. One can hardly imagine anyone today who does not experience the zoomscape. Modern literature is filled with scenes that describe the deforming, disconcerting, and exhilarating sights gained from trains, planes, and automobiles. Modern media showcase the plastic fantastic reality of imagery in magazines, billboards, cinemas, and the ubiquitous



TV set. Practically everywhere material reality is transformed by the zoomscape. Sight can never be the same again. Not when we consider: the train's captivation with distance; photography's dive into detail; the airplane's astounding breadth; television's jingle of celebrity; the automobile's feast of mobility; film's halls of glowing wonder.

At the end of the 20th century, with the computer and the Internet, the discipline of architecture, too, began heading towards startling plasticity. First with drawing, then with making, and most recently with conceptualizing, architects have been progressively enraptured with digital technology's

effacement of material limits. The zoomscape demonstrates that the public at large long ago crossed beyond the bounds of now and then or here and there. From a train window, in a photograph, and on a computer screen, the visual scene before us is more of a construction than a given, a manifestation of mind, technology, and reality.

Through greater awareness of the zoomscape's aesthetic, we can better understand and enjoy the extraordinary range of visual experiences available to us. By exploring these less charted reaches of perception, we can begin to make sense of our vague and sometimes negative impressions of the contemporary city. Architecture is profoundly influenced by technology, not just in its making, but also in its apprehending. In the zoomscape, viewers may find their vision catapulted toward a startling horizon or deadened by a lugubrious wayside. But upon reflection, they may also begin to grapple with the subtleties of the mobile modern world that they negotiate on a daily basis. ■

Mitchell Schwarzer is a professor of architectural history and the chair of the visual studies program at California College of the Arts. He is the author of *German Architectural Theory and the Search for Modern Identity* (1995) and *Architecture and Design: San Francisco* (1998). His most recent book is *Zoomscape: Architecture in Motion and Media* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).

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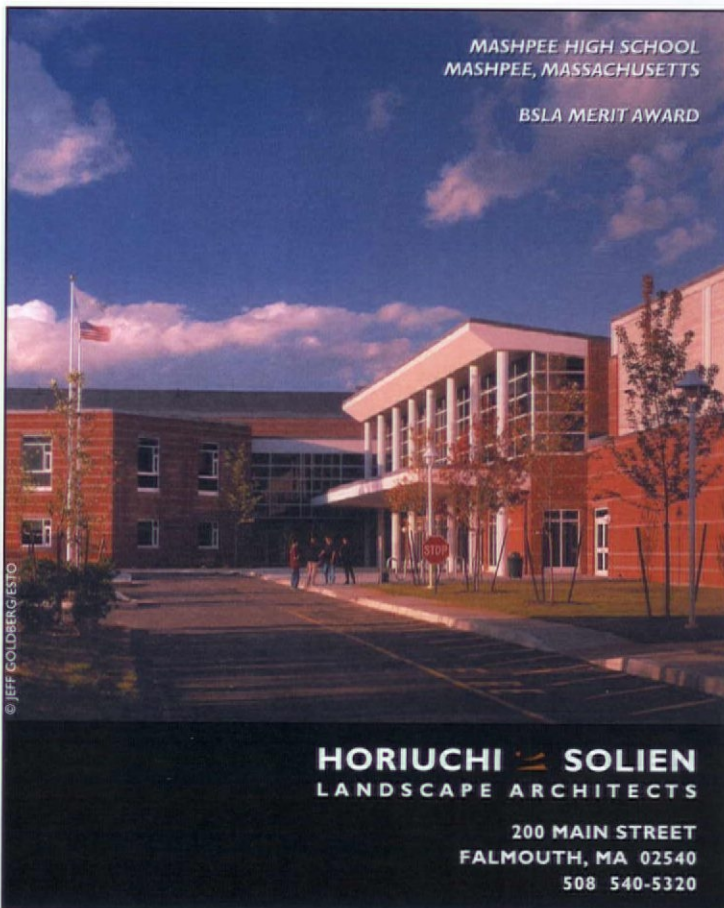


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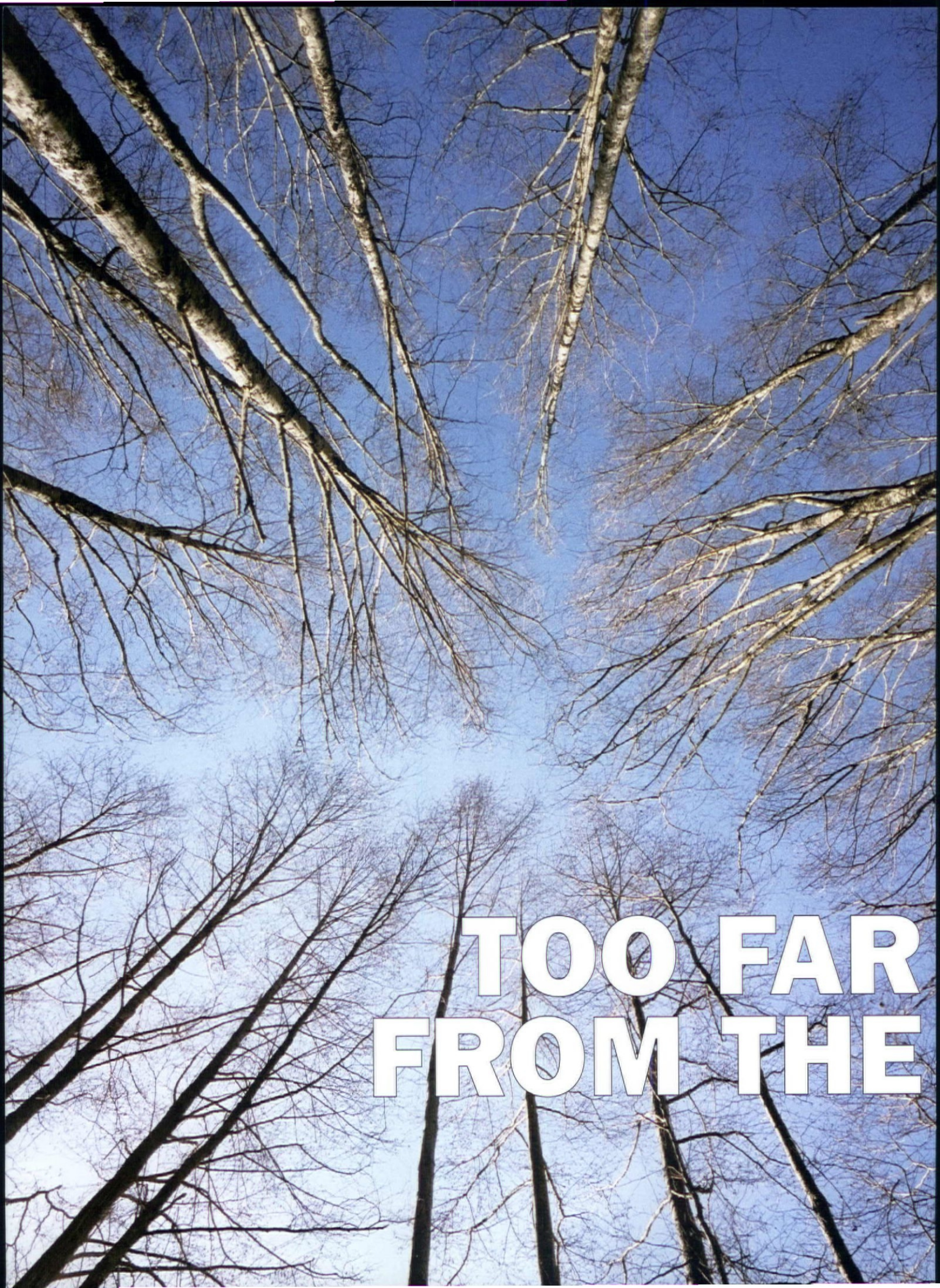
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**TOO FAR
FROM THE**

BY VICTORIA BEACH AIA

Still reeling from the (unconfirmed) tabloid stories that Brad Pitt wants to work for Frank Gehry? Just remember, the discipline of architecture was built on such brash crossbreeding. In fact, the ancient Egyptians deified Imhotep as a doctor, priest, poet, astrologer, and statesman, not just as an architect. The burning issue is not outsiders joining the profession, but insiders dividing it.

The ancients may have possessed a god-like understanding of all knowledge, but modern mortals cannot. These days, one person's knowledge is either broad and shallow or deep and narrow. Without collaboration — sharing what we know — we have no way to utilize the full range of our collective knowledge.

Significantly, the tree is a common metaphor both for human knowledge and for organizational structures: broad, general knowledge lies at the core or trunk, while narrow, specialized knowledge extends out through many separate branches and twigs toward the periphery. Now imagine twigs with grander aspirations, breaking off from the tree to try to survive alone, and you'll see what's happening in architecture today: specialists are going solo — with grave consequences.

A pioneer of this trend in architecture was George Hellmuth Jr., who in 1955 co-founded Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum (HOK). Hellmuth's father, also an architect, was repeatedly censured by the AIA for unfairly ensnaring clients

with free preliminary sketches, which were at that time prohibited in the AIA code of ethics as a form of marketing. As the younger architect watched the AIA erode his father's client base, he vowed to avenge his father by inventing a way to guarantee unstoppable streams of clients.

Drawing on years of experience in architectural marketing, Hellmuth devised a divide-and-conquer strategy: an organization comprising parallel divisions with virtually no interconnections or centralized presence. This format forced designers who had worked on a particular project type to entrench themselves in that area of expertise, never again taking on another typology. New building commissions spawned new divisions within the firm based on a growing list of building typologies: jails, airports, convention centers, office buildings, schools, hospitals, stores, stadiums. Hellmuth then steered potential clients to the appropriate division and promoted it as the most expert in its field — a field that he most likely had just invented.

The strategy was not really new, just copied from businessmen such as Dick and Mac McDonald, who had narrowed and mechanized their menu 10 years before. Like McDonald's, HOK touted quicker, cheaper results from personnel who already knew exactly what to do. But to building clients, this felt fresh and promising, and they indeed streamed in. HOK grew into one of the largest architectural conglomerates in history and certain divisions, such as HOK S+V+E (Sport+Venue+Event),

TREE

Why Specialist Architects Shouldn't Go It Alone

became some of the most profitable architectural ventures ever.

The fortunes of HOK S+V+E (then HOK Sport) were assured with the accolades heaped on the famous Orioles Camden Yards project of 1992. Credited for its daring rejection of the ubiquitous spaceship-landing-in-a-parking-lot style and for its respectful "retro" embrace of Baltimore's urban fabric, the building proved what many had thought impossible: that a large ballpark can reinvigorate rather than stifle neighborhoods and fans.

The catch to this success story is that the credit really belonged not to the architects but to the city officials and to the clients (guided by Janet Marie Smith, who had architecture and planning degrees). HOK Sport had originally proposed nothing but the same spaceship formula it had been churning out for years. Frustrated, the officials and clients halted the firm's work and seized control. Throwing out HOK's proposals, they diagrammed new massing, mandated the reuse of the existing industrial buildings,

Knowledge is the only real tool of any professional. The fact that none of us can command its breadth and depth anymore should be taken as a sign of progress, not as a way to convince clients to shrink the design team.

and specified the more contextual materials, scale, and detailing we see today.

The ironic twist to the story is that HOK Sport turned this unique project into a new retro formula and has since churned it out, at great profit, in the same manner as the spaceships it replaced. Meanwhile, Smith hired HOK Sport once again for the Atlanta arena project, but she refused to let the firm work alone or to give it the lead position, granting that spot to a generalist firm, Arquitectonica, which she entrusted with injecting some "architecture into the building."

Many savvy clients have since mandated such partnerships when looking for broad thinking, deep experience,

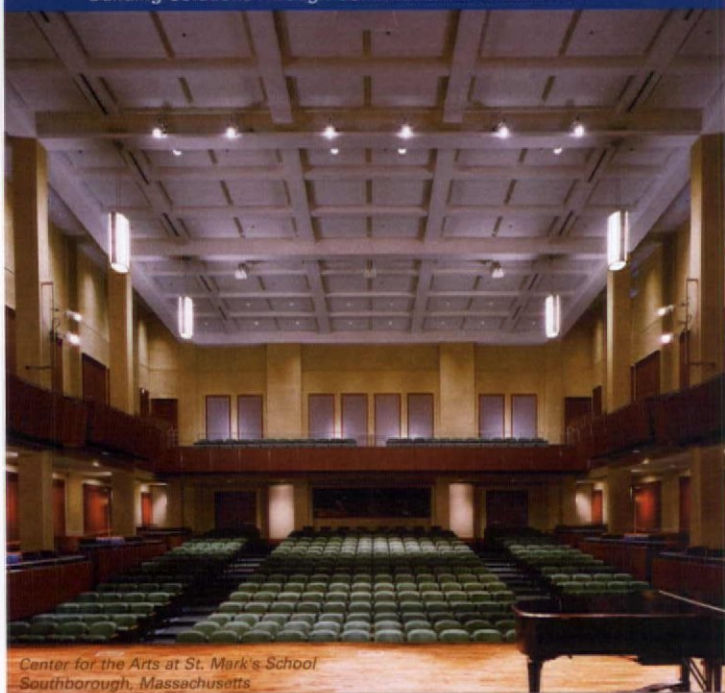
and a unique result. Others, however, seem to want predictable buildings, just as they want predictable burgers from McDonald's.

But with buildings, more than lunch is at stake. First, buildings have an incalculable power to harm or (like Camden Yards) to benefit the public sphere. Second, every time, place, and constituency poses unique questions, whose answers cannot be guessed in advance.

As Samuel Johnson said, "Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information on it." Generalists, by definition, do not know the subject themselves. Not knowing is their strength: it

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prevents preconceptions.

Putting the ballpark specialists in charge at Camden Yards initially obscured the hybrid nature of the project, which ultimately involved just as much retail, museum, and office space. This is because a firm specializing in a particular building type (or component, or phase) must automatically prescribe that thing no matter the time, place, or constituency. Conversely, a generalist must first investigate a project's complexities before deciding which experts to summon and how they should work together.

Before a project even begins, how can lay clients (without a Janet Marie Smith on board) possibly discern the appropriate design questions to ask and therefore the appropriate personnel structures to answer them? To protect itself, the public should insist on the simple solution that Smith devised for her second project: generalists at the center orchestrating the knowledge of surrounding specialists. Architects already do this with many other specialists such as acoustic

modelers, structural engineers, spec writers, and curtain-wall designers, who come and go depending on the project. It is also a standard model in other arts, such as theater and film production, and even in other professions.

Under the medical paradigm, for example, a general practitioner oversees the history, treatment, and broad objectives of patients and involves specialists as necessary. Specialists, on the other hand, forego this primary diagnostic and caretaking role in exchange for the prestige and usually greater remuneration associated with their expertise. Thus, one virtue of medicine's division of labor is that its distribution of rewards eliminates the need (albeit not always the desire) to hoard patients.

Unfortunately, the tendency for architects to reduce vital issues to marketing or, worse, turf battles remains as strong as in Hellmuth Jr.'s day. The American College of Healthcare Architects (ACHA), for example, aggressively markets its "certified specialists" as

the best practitioners for health-care buildings, angling for the prestige, the money, and the central role. Meanwhile, the AIA suspects the ACHA of deliberately scaring hospital clients away from non-certified, generalist architects (who, judging by the percentage of awards won, actually produce better designed facilities). A more elevated, conscientious, and professional debate would concentrate only on how architects should work together to produce the best design for the most people.

Knowledge is the only real tool of any professional. The fact that none of us can command its breadth and depth anymore should be taken as a sign of progress, not as a way to convince clients to shrink the design team. The built environment can only suffer from such narrow-mindedness — and that would really be the pits. ■

Victoria Beach AIA practices architecture and teaches ethics and design at the Harvard Design School.



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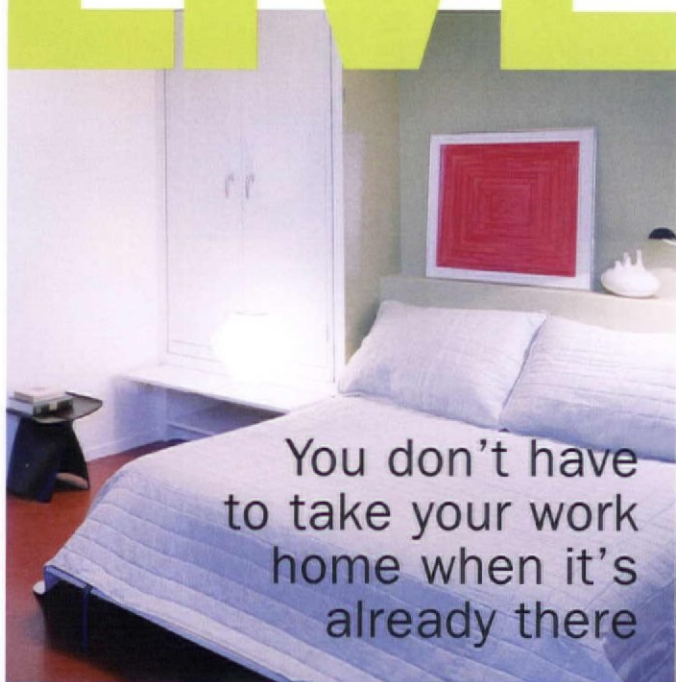
See our website



Above and opposite: Live/work loft, Boston. Architect: Grant Studio.

Life's Labors:

LIVE



You don't have
to take your work
home when it's
already there

WORK

The notion of a vacation house with office space may seem contradictory, but it's fast changing from oxymoronic to de rigueur. When more and more work can be performed via phone and mobile computer, and wireless networks colonize even the remotest areas, there's little to prevent work from migrating across clock, calendar, and floor plan.

Economic and technological changes have led to a blurring of week and weekend, in- and off-season, and boundaries between work and living spaces. Depending upon your experience, technology is either the culprit or the savior in this upheaval. Globalization and 24/7 operations, increased competition, a less stable job market, not to mention the rising cost of living and the prevalence of two-income families, all undermine the walls that separate work from the rest of life. The built environment has always reflected social conditions, but the speed and extent of recent changes in the nature of work pose serious challenges to designers.

BY TED SMALLEY BOWEN



Left: Residence and studio, Jamestown, Rhode Island.
Architect: Lerner | Ladd + Bartels.

Right: Live/work space, Ritch/Zoe Studios, San Francisco.
Architect: Santos Prescott and Associates.

This transitional period is marked by an all-too-familiar disconnect between how people live and where they live. “The design of the built environment has in many ways failed to catch up with the ways in which the nature and patterns of working and living have evolved over the last decade or so,” says Andrew Laing, managing director of UK design firm DEGW’s North America division in New York. “This is apparent from the urban level, where cities are still largely planned in terms of downtown for working and suburbs for living, with long commutes in between, to buildings and office interiors which for most organizations are designed on the basis of individual work spaces set up for individual work every day.”

One of the more telling developments is the almost standard requirement for workspace in weekend, vacation, and second homes. Workspaces range from alcoves off the kitchen and spaces adjoining the living room to acoustically insulated antechambers off of the master bedroom and private offices above garages or in outbuildings, according to Mark Hutker, principal of Mark Hutker & Associates Architects in Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts. “For the last 10 years, we haven’t done a house that didn’t include a den, library, or home office,” he says. Clients with the wherewithal and seniority can generally blur their time and space to suit themselves. “They can get away with two days a week in an urban environment and work the rest of the time in Martha’s Vineyard or the Cape,” Hutker says. “It’s easier to be away from the office when you’ve equipped the home theater for video conferencing.”

The idea of a home office itself may be in transition. Nick Winton, principal at Anmahian Winton Architects in Cambridge, Massachusetts, points out that younger workers tend to have a greater tolerance for chatter and quick-cut multitasking and so might be less interested in private offices and segregated home workspaces. “They don’t know what it’s like not to be connected,” he says, noting that new technologies such as flat-panel monitors, smaller laptops, PDAs, and wireless connections have dramatically cut bulk and clutter and are more easily integrated into living spaces.

Office design has not kept pace with the changes in work patterns, according to DEGW’s Laing. “As work becomes more virtual and mobile, less place- or location-dependent, the significance of the office as a place designed for face-to-face collaboration, alongside virtual collaboration, actually increases,” he says.

Furniture maker Knoll recently commissioned DEGW to poll international corporate facilities managers on work trends and design/space needs. The results aren’t likely to surprise anyone involved in facility design. Telecommuting and teamwork, already established, are expected to increase in the next five years. “Hoteling,” in which employees hopscotch between unassigned workspaces, is also expected to take hold, putting a premium on flexible office layouts. The number of people working at home at least part of the week is also expected to rise. (Among other things, these trends point to less storage space for everything from papers and books to computers and video equipment.)

The expansion of work into nontraditional times and spaces isn’t a uniform experience, nor are remedies equally available. A lathe operator doesn’t have the same flexibility (or demands) as a business consultant, bond trader, or mid-level manager. And workers at the bottom of the white-collar pay scale generally have fewer options for juggling work and home life. (US labor

law leaves it to employers to decide where to draw the line.)

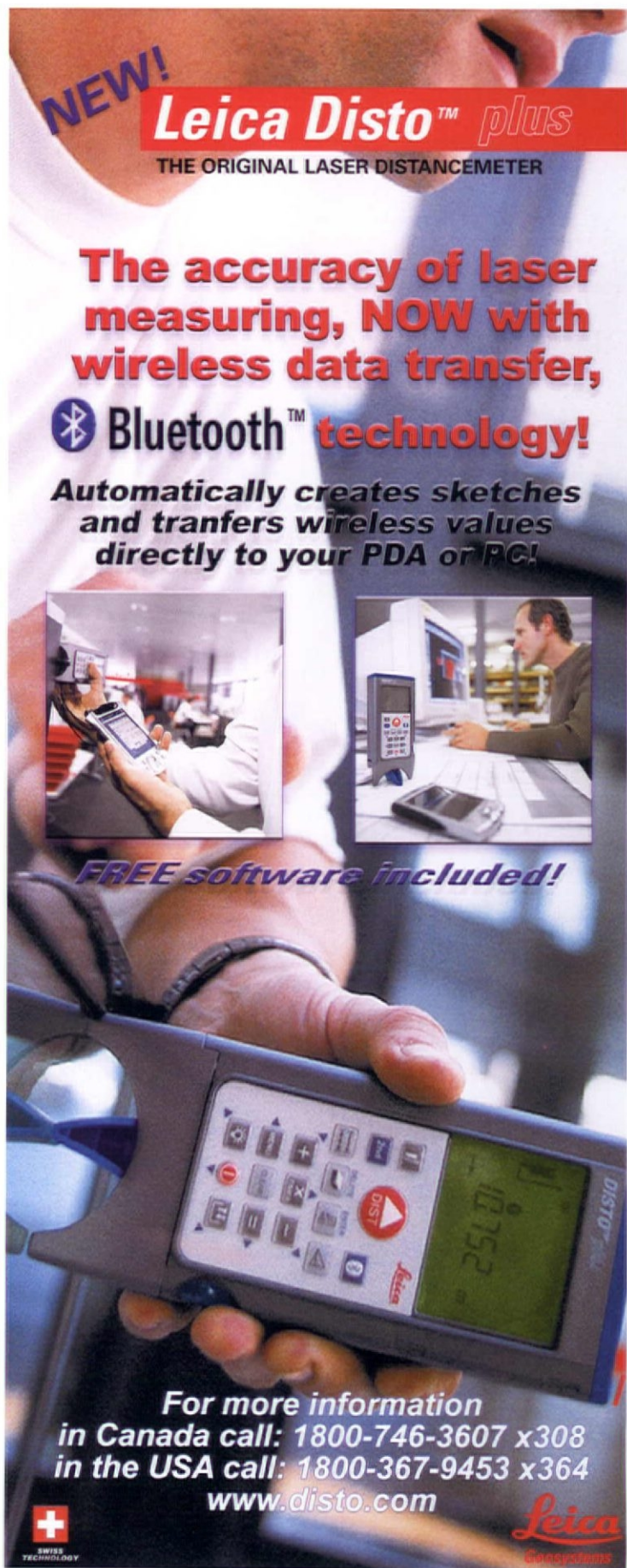
"In some of the more enlightened organizations that have very powerful, very qualified workers they want to retain and that have altruistic executives, there's an appreciation of the long-term payback of paying attention to employees' needs," says Vivian Loftness, head of the Carnegie Mellon University School of Architecture in Pittsburgh. Onsite daycare, medical services, health clubs, drop-in elder care, and catering can reduce the work-related pressures, she says. At the same time, they can also contribute to an increasing acceptance of the convergence of work life and private life.

Planners have approached the work-life balance from numerous angles over the years. But the focus was on scale and the proximity of dwellings to workplaces, from the more enlightened company towns of the 19th century to "garden" cities and the master-planned communities of the 1950s through the 1970s. It was assumed that work, for the most part, was discrete from personal and home life. The information technology and communications revolution blurred those lines. And while the more recent model of New Urbanism offers some relief, its promise of walkable, mixed-use communities hasn't always panned out. "Government can do some things, like allowing mixed use, but in lots of cases it is residents who resist mixing workplaces and homes either in the same building or nearby, fearing noise and traffic," says Ann Forsyth, professor of architecture and landscape architecture and director of the Metropolitan Design Center at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

These kinds of conflicts — between public policy and individual preference, between employers and workers, between neighbors, and even between spouses — complicate the struggle to reconcile the live/work tension. Technology will only increase the blurring of the distinctions between our work and personal lives, increasing the pressure on designers to come up with innovative responses to the new realities. Lotte Bailyn, a professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management, argues that the convergence of live/work can even benefit families — under certain conditions. "Ideally the 'work' place and the 'home' place should have some separation so that one doesn't dominate the other," she says. Bailyn urges architects to address the problem creatively, not only in terms of single residences, but also in the ways residences combine to form communities. She offers an example: "One might think more imaginatively about communal space for a group of families, perhaps a group of houses around a fenced-in playing space where children can congregate without each family having to provide its own caretaker."

Just as live/work lofts were frequently prohibited by zoning codes, only to become one of the most sought-after segments of the housing market, attitudes and both public and private policies about how and where we live and work are certain to change. "It's all a design problem to architects," says Mark Hutker. "But people will spend a lot of time defining that edge between domestic and work environments." ■

Ted Smalley Bowen is a freelance journalist based in Boston.




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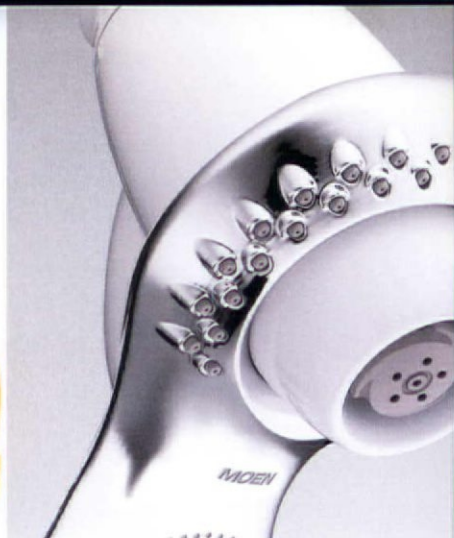
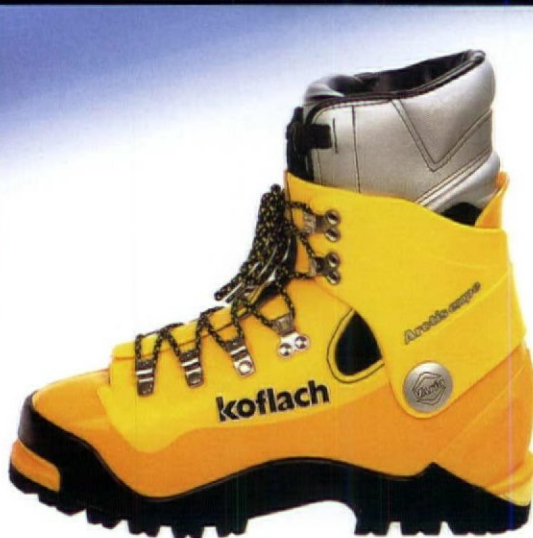
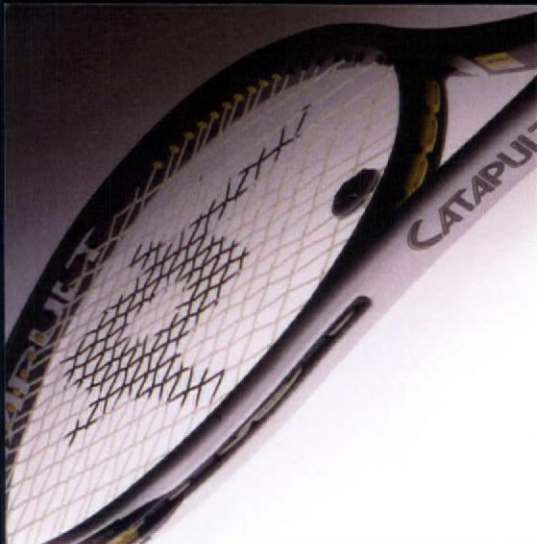
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Industrious

Design

An international product-design firm takes on the world of design

Gianfranco Zaccai talks with Timothy Love AIA

Gianfranco Zaccai IDSA, ADI is the president and CEO of Design Continuum, which has offices in Milan, Seoul, and West Newton, Massachusetts. He received a degree in industrial design from Syracuse University and a B.Arch. from the Boston Architectural Center. Design Continuum, which he founded in 1983, has received two Presidential Design Awards.

Timothy Love AIA is the principal of Utile Inc. in Boston. An assistant professor of architecture at Northeastern University, he received degrees in architecture from the University of Virginia and Harvard Design School.

Left to right: Moen Aberdeen faucet (residential faucet with commercial pull-down spout function)

Siemens camera/phone (a digital camera with a phone, instead of a phone that also takes pictures)

Affymetrix Gene Scanner (provides simple, one-button operation)



Left to right: Volkl Catapult tennis racket (includes innovative integral spring mechanism)

Koflach climbing boots (new generation of mountaineering boots, with removable liners)

Moen Revolution showerhead (based on desired water droplet shape, size, distribution)

Master Lock padlock (new generation of iconic padlock)

Timothy Love Your firm's website displays an astonishing array of products and services that you've been responsible for: Bose headsets, Coleman grills, Moen faucets, Zeiss sunglasses, various medical devices — as well as identity and retailing strategies for companies such as California Pizza Kitchens and Sprint. You obviously think about "design" in very broad terms.

Gianfranco Zaccai Our name, Design Continuum, starts to explain that. It comes from the notion that design is not the sole purview of any one discipline, and very seldom is design completed by any one individual. Even when one creative person has been credited with the design, there's an army of people behind him or her.

The opportunity for meaningful innovation requires two groups of players in the design process. The first is the design team, but just as important is the client who's willing and able to see the greater potential beyond just doing what's most popular. Rarely does wonderful design — things that stand the test of time, that are economically successful, that are emotionally gratifying — happen without that collusion.

Timothy Love When the client and the designers are colluding, as you say, they are together defining the problem and the criteria in such a way that the answer often becomes inevitable. You could call it retroactively inevitable — once it's been conceived, you can't imagine doing it any other way.

Gianfranco Zaccai That's right. It requires the willingness to

explore the issues together rather than to accept preconceptions. You discover the opportunities together.

Timothy Love The work you did for Master Lock, rethinking the basic padlock, is a great example of what you do that has lessons for many kinds of designers. It was an example of a problem well-stated: let's not restyle the padlock, let's think about —

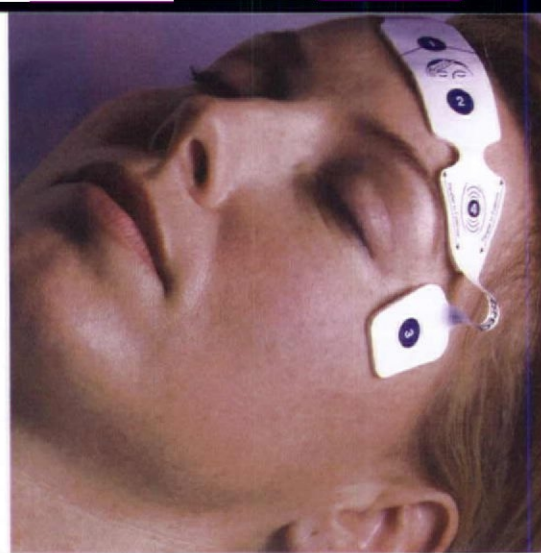
Gianfranco Zaccai Security.

Timothy Love Security and the functional problems of the basic padlock. It tends to scratch things because the edges of the locking mechanism are exposed. It's easy to break into.

Gianfranco Zaccai You have to think about all the dimensions of the problem. There are the functional issues of locks. But there are also emotional issues — there are different kinds of security. If you want to protect your children from getting into some chemicals under your sink, that's a lot more important to you than keeping your rake from getting stolen.

Timothy Love Architects can learn a lot from industrial design. The problem is boiled down to a concise set of criteria that lead to a design response — an object that itself reveals the criteria that were considered. I think that's one of the values of cross-disciplinary collaboration. All design stems from the same kind of methodology, the framing of the problem itself. But we all frame the problem somewhat differently.





Left to right: Samsung digital presenter (new concept for digital projection)

Aspect Medical Wireless EEG scanner (pioneering brain monitoring technology)

Gianfranco Zaccai Jane Thompson said something I've always admired: "Most problems are caused by solutions." And that's absolutely true. Too many problems are addressed from a single dimension. And so, a problem solved is another problem that's created.

Timothy Love Do you think the mass marketers like Martha Stewart and IKEA are raising the bar, in terms of encouraging people to see design as more instrumental to their lifestyles?

Gianfranco Zaccai Yes and no. Martha Stewart is really much more about style than design, or about form rather than substance. IKEA is a different matter. IKEA is providing well-designed products that are reasonably priced that you can buy and enjoy that same day. But it's also in a field where people understand that, for better or worse, design plays a role in their lives. You may not agree with someone's choices, but they are often based on design as an aesthetic direction.

The broader question is, what kind of role does design play and should it play in the way you live, the way you perceive the space around you, the way you interact with other people? This is really what I'm most interested in — the notion of not only design at the grand scale — the grandest scale of design isn't even about urban planning, it's about economic planning — but also design at the human scale. All the various touch points in between include not only the built environment but also the crafted environment. We get discontinuity when different disciplines only focus on their own particular fields.

Timothy Love You studied architecture in school. How did you end up in industrial design?

Gianfranco Zaccai When I started at Syracuse University, I went to visit the firm of the dean of the school of architecture. At that time, there were no computers. Ever since I was five years old, I had had this notion of the architect as superhero. But then I saw 125 people in his office, and it seemed that 120 of them were doing window details.

One day, on my way to the gym, I stumbled into the industrial design department. And I saw all these projects that intrigued me: a chair, an appliance, baggage handling for supersonic transport. Industrial design offered a less crowded space,

and I wouldn't have to do window details; that was very important. I could explore problems that I knew nothing about. It seemed to me that a building is a building is a building — the archetype of a building had been established for a really long time. But the archetype of a pacemaker, for example, hadn't.

Timothy Love How have you been influenced by role models or even by competitors?

Gianfranco Zaccai There are lots of people whose work I admire. Even some of the star-system people. I think there's a place for idiosyncratic, egocentric design, as long as it's really great. The problem is that in reality, most people don't have the talent even if they have the name. So we look around and see lots of things littering our landscape that were done by luminaries, and we're kind of embarrassed by them. But I admire many designers, mostly people who have done really thoughtful and comprehensive work or who didn't follow conventional wisdom. People who didn't design for their peers, who had their own vision. And they all had an ability to engage others — because obviously, they didn't have the funds to underwrite their own work. They had to convince other people to do it. I think that's a talent that's seldom focused on in any kind of design education. Unlike sculptors or painters, who work in a studio and show you what they've produced so you can decide to buy it or not, a designer has to get someone to say, I will put my resources, my future, my life, my marriage — whatever — into making this real. And that's very hard.

Timothy Love We're seeing more designers, especially the star-system designers, developing an aesthetic that extends to a full product line — they become brands. But what happens when design can be handled simply through product selection? If it's a Philippe Stark flooring system and Philippe Stark towels and sheets and Philippe Stark furniture, how much design is left? It's an especially intriguing question for architects. How much of what we do is off-the-shelf shopping and how much of it is truly design?

Gianfranco Zaccai I'm not sure that off-the-shelf shopping, per se, is not design. It depends on your choices. Charles Eames developed an entire aesthetic largely using off-the-shelf

components. I think that's OK. In fact, I think that most architecture now consists of a great deal of standardized components.

We have a prototype in the office of something we worked on that never went into production. It was the result of an interesting project that looked at the problems of an aging population of people wanting to live in their own homes. I mention it because it's an example of an architectural problem that can't be addressed by architecture, because it requires the creation of products that can be specified out of catalogues, products that go beyond ramps and grab bars to deal with the psychosocial and physiological issues associated with aging. It's an area that needs both more collaboration among design disciplines and more enlightened clients to underwrite the development and production of innovative products and systems.

Timothy Love And yet architects are rarely able to completely rethink a project in such a holistic way, even in the way that you were able to rethink an everyday product like Master Lock. Everyday architecture is mostly focused on assembling pieces chosen from catalogues. It's pushing architects more and more to the same kinds of choices that consumers make.

Gianfranco Zaccai It's a question of economies of scale. When you're designing a building, you're usually talking about just one building. If you don't use things out of a catalogue, you blow your budget. If you're making something that's going to be molded in the millions, to buy things off the shelf means that you're paying for someone else's profits. So you're actually encouraged to make your own.

But you've also brought up the issue of branding. I think branding can develop a greater sensibility about the potential for thoughtful design. I'll give you an example. Boston is just finishing this massive project of putting the highways underground and building the tunnels and restructuring the airport. A lot of that work seems to have been done in piecemeal fashion by individuals focusing on single aspects of it, rather than collaborating. Nobody thought about the Ted Williams tunnel and the other tunnels and the bridge as being a gateway into the city, especially a gateway from the airport. Nobody thought about the impressions visitors get — investors, business people, scientists coming from Japan or Europe or wherever.

Medieval cities were surrounded by walls; some of that was

defensive, but the main gate also said, "This is an important place. This is a place you want to be. This is a place you want to respect." And the Big Dig lacks that. For a city like Boston to be successful, it has to brand itself. There's nothing wrong with that. It has to brand an experience, which is based not on smoke and mirrors but on reality.

Timothy Love You're asking for the kind of sensibility that you find in Scandinavia and Italy, where design infiltrates all aspects of life. That requires a culture that would integrate those issues in a way that would make it impossible to value-engineer out all the elements that contribute to good design.

Gianfranco Zaccai But I would ask what came first, the chicken or the egg? If the design community doesn't collaborate and promote the economic value of this collaboration, it's not going to infuse society. If you don't have schools of management trying to measure the contribution that an impression makes to a regional economy, you're not going to have groups of future managers who have that component in their packet of sensibilities.

Timothy Love This is why I think there is an opportunity in Boston for a group of allied professionals and the Harvard Business School, let's say —

Gianfranco Zaccai And the Kennedy School of Government —

Timothy Love Exactly, to begin to discuss this specifically, because we have the intellectual resources and the design professionals here to think about this at a fairly profound, theoretical level. But that hasn't happened because the architecture community is very self-referential, and because there hasn't been any leadership yet to get those forces aligned.

Gianfranco Zaccai I wouldn't single out the architecture community as the villain. I think all the design fields tend to be self-referential. I'm on the board of an international body called ICSID, International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, which has been meeting with the International Council of Societies of Graphic Design. We are forming something called the International Design Alliance. The point is to

Left to right: Cambridge Soundworks Newton speakers (designed to appeal to both male and female buyers)

Electrolux dishwasher concept project (dishwasher as furniture that cleans and stores dishes)



really promote this synergy between the various design disciplines. But I can tell you that it's a hard row to hoe.

Timothy Love And yet some cultures, some countries, seem to do it naturally. Denmark is one example.

Gianfranco Zaccai You have to wonder how that comes about. I know that Italy, for all its traditions in the visual arts and design, also produces some really terrible things because of politics — nothing is perfect. But it's certainly true that on some levels Italy recognizes that design — fashion and products and furniture — is an important part of its economy.

For example, Turin is reinventing itself, partly because it will host the 2006 Winter Olympics, but also because Fiat, its major employer, has pulled out of the city. I was invited to speak at a conference there; the participants represented a range of fields, from historic preservation, industrial design, communications, and industry. They all understood the need to brand the city and to develop its infrastructure in a cohesive way with a broader vision. That's design at the largest scale.

Timothy Love It's a project that would make a lot of sense for Boston, even though San Francisco and New York tend to be the obvious places that designers gravitate toward.

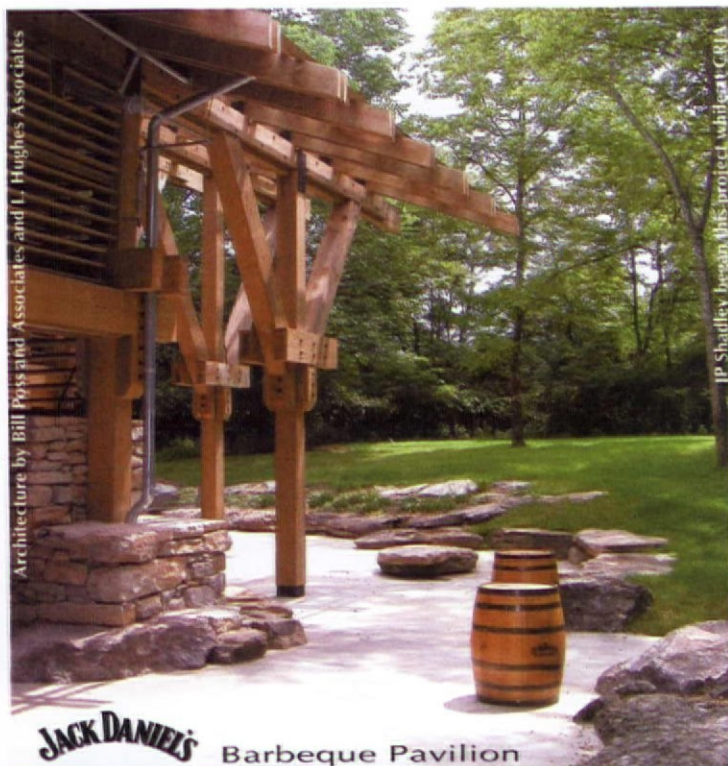
Gianfranco Zaccai Interestingly, Boston has one of the highest

concentrations of industrial designers in the country. There's probably even more industrial design happening in Boston than in New York, because there aren't that many corporate headquarters in New York for companies that make things.

But Boston is a prime candidate for this approach because it already has so much to offer. It would be wonderful to see the mayor take ownership of the idea and say, "Look, we are going to take this collection of communities and make it sing. We don't know yet what that means, but it's not just a signature bridge or a signature building. It's looking at the way you experience the city when you're sitting on a park bench, or trying to get directions, or flying overhead."

Timothy Love I think the argument that would have the most traction is the notion that branding the city is an economic development strategy. Design innovation can be as important to Boston as, say, the biomedical industry.

Gianfranco Zaccai Designers sometimes talk about "elegant solutions." I never quite understood whether that has the same meaning in English that it has in Italian. An elegant solution in Italian doesn't imply a beautiful solution. Elegance refers to something being so simple that it does multiple things really, really well. The wonderful thing about design as a strategy for a city like Boston is that it not only has economic implications in terms of attracting investment and tourists, but it also



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— *Gianfranco Zaccai*

makes the community a much more desirable place to live. So it creates a virtuous cycle that reduces the kind of degradation that often happens in cities, especially communities that are planned in a one-dimensional way. Branding Boston would be an elegant solution.

Timothy Love That’s the collateral benefit of design being an economic-development strategy — in its wake comes a nicer city. Which is less true with other industries that might do negative things to the environment because of the kinds of facilities they require.

There are some precedents. I have a “design guide” to Montreal; Copenhagen produced something similar. The mayor is inside the front cover extolling the virtues of design in Montreal. It’s a guide not just to retail outlets and restaurants that embody good design, but also to the designers themselves. It is so smart in a Chamber of Commerce sense, because you find it right next to the glossy city guide in your hotel room. I think it would be a great idea for Boston.

Gianfranco Zaccai I couldn’t agree with you more. Montreal offers another useful model: Cirque de Soleil. Cirque de Soleil is a designed experience. And that’s a great model for a city — a design culture that embraces not just inanimate physical objects, but also the kinds of activities that happen.


Timothy Love What is fascinating about Cirque de Soleil is that it could only have come out of the design and arts culture of Montreal.

Gianfranco Zaccai Boston has every right to a strong design culture. I think the idea of merging tradition with innovation is a very powerful force here that should be leveraged. If you’re not going to tear everything down and start over, yet you need to develop, you are stimulated to be more creative.

Timothy Love Given the nature of the design industry here, maybe that innovation needs to be incremental and not revolutionary.

Gianfranco Zaccai I think you need both. But at some point you also have to re-evaluate, because incremental innovation leads you through a series of steps where you’re always dragging some aspects of the past behind you. That’s extremely important. But occasionally you also need to make a quantum leap. ■


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Covering the Issues

News you can really use... New York City launches five new high schools of architecture and design! Muschamp is out and his clone is in! Don't work for the Whitney — they'll only break your heart! Check out *The Architect's Newspaper* (Issue 13, 7.27.2004) for these stories and more. Launched in 2003, this New York-based biweekly rag is unique in the architectural press for its timely, hard news with a side of editorial gossip. While nearly impossible to find on Boston (or New York) newsstands, parts are available online.

Maybe nobody noticed... Did any DNC delegate ever step foot outside the Fleet-Center? Was all the pothole-patching, street-tree-planting, elevated-highway-demolishing and public-art-polishing that just "happened" to happen last spring worth it? What did visitors see and think of our city? Alas, the lack of magazine coverage about the city is perhaps the real story. Is no news good?

An argument for mediocrity?... As the terror alert once again went to orange, this time in select locations, Christopher Hawthorne wondered aloud, "Can a skyscraper be cursed?" In "Citi-Cursed: The Back Story of al-Qaida's Latest New York Target," posted on *Slate.com* (8/3/2004), Hawthorne retells the story of the Citicorp tower. Citicorp is the silver 1970s New York angled-top skyscraper that achieved renewed attention in 1995 when *The New Yorker* ran a detailed account by Joe Morgenstern about potential structural weaknesses discovered during the construction phase and engineer William LeMessurier's heroic work at fixing them. Hawthorne suggests that shortly after that article, al-Qaida began studying the building. In doing so,

he implies a darker question about the amount of detail that should be published about "signature" buildings. Hawthorne concludes, however, on a positive note: perhaps fixing the tower's problems has also "prevented more than just a meteorological disaster."

The global village gets another mag... "We are Spatial" declares *Bidou*, a brand new Brooklyn-based "quarterly forum for Middle Eastern talent," launched "to promote contemporary Middle East arts and culture." Yes, yawn, another graphically sleek design/culture mag has been born, though this one appears more serious and focused than its peers. Contributors include artists, architects, filmmakers, and journalists who have all lived and worked in both Western and Middle Eastern societies. Articles are notable for their global nonchalance, as authors cite cities on different continents without pause or ceremony. Politics, too, are mentioned only in the context of specific works. Indeed the focus remains where the editors claim: on the projects themselves.

Through the looking glass... Ever wonder how architects view architects on the other side of the Pond? OK, probably not. Even so, this specially commissioned set of comic drawings by satirist Paul Davis provides interesting and amusing (if uneven) insights into what British architects think of American architects, and vice versa. Titled "Watching Us Watching Them," the drawings are scattered throughout *Blueprint* (July 2004).

You go first... As Boston wrestles with the design and ownership details of our new Greenway, *Landscape Architecture*



magazine (August 2004) offers a useful case study. In a series of articles ("How the West Was Done," "Elegant Design with Incongruities," and "The Best Park Money Can Buy; Did the Public Win or Lose...?"), writers Allen Freeman, Christine Dianni, and Alex Ulam present reports and commentary on the design, economic strategies, and long-term viability of Manhattan's new \$400 million, five-mile waterfront park along the Hudson River. Never hurts to learn from someone else's experience. ■

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and maintains a practice in Boston.

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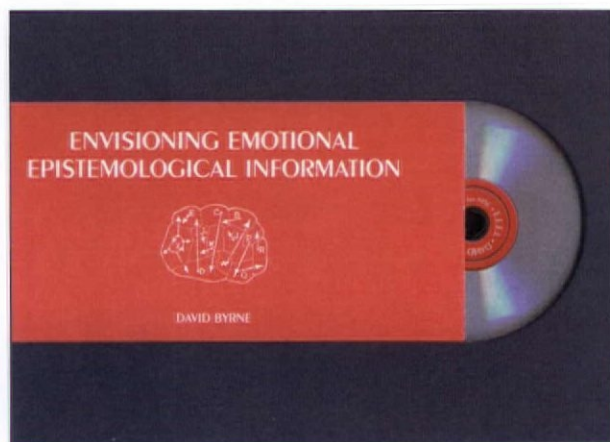
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DAVID BYRNE: E.E.E.I. (ENVISIONING EMOTIONAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL INFORMATION)

by David Byrne
Steidl, 2003

Reviewed by John M. Rossi, Assoc. AIA

In his new mixed-media compilation, David Byrne combines short philosophical writings, animated digital graphics, and a subdued, underlying soundtrack. Its wrapper is a beautifully constructed, substantive box-set package containing a single DVD (vulnerable to scratches) and a 55-page, hardcover book of excerpts from the DVD, which is an animated PowerPoint presentation unlike any you have ever seen.

I have been a fan of Byrne's music and performances from the dawn of New Age in the '70s through the advent of middle age 30 years later. Regrettably, his music is largely absent from *E.E.E.I.* Sure, there is music and sound, but it serves as little more than a background for synchronized screen fades and transitions of PowerPoint presentations — the primary medium of *E.E.E.I.*

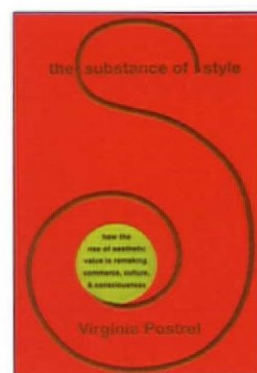
And so my biases are clearly built into this review — much as those of Microsoft's engineers, as Byrne claims, have been built into PowerPoint. Even so, it seems clear that his graphic art does not deliver the emotional equivalent of his music and could be a disappointment to many viewers.

But if *E.E.E.I.* emphasizes his work as a visual artist and philosopher over

his music, luckily for Byrne, enough of the world embraces his mixed-media work and installations to indulge this latest foray. Byrne's writings are surprisingly provocative, if brief. A self-proclaimed smug pseudo-bohemian, he claims that the "pod people" occupying the cubicles of corporate America embrace PowerPoint as a means of conveying perfection and intelligence and of achieving a near-religious feeling of happiness and community. Maybe PowerPoint does offer greater life-changing opportunity than we give it credit for. After all, as a philosophical framework for embarking on a career, a life change, or an artistic endeavor, you could do a lot worse than trying "the ready-to-use templates in the pull-down menu at the top of your screen."

Byrne's music always served as the creative sustenance that fed me and contributed to life's significant moments; my hope is that he gives us music and philosophical writings right on through old age. His forays into graphic art and new media undoubtedly are all part of his commercially successful package. Yet, to buy into any one of his media is to believe that people like David Byrne contribute in a real way to artistic freedoms and spark creativity. *E.E.E.I.* is an indulgence of art for art's sake that just might get you thinking.

John Rossi, Assoc. AIA, is the director of business development at Bruner/Cott & Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



THE SUBSTANCE OF STYLE: HOW THE RISE OF AESTHETIC VALUE IS REMAKING COMMERCE, CULTURE, AND CONSCIOUSNESS

by Virginia Postrel
HarperCollins, 2003

Reviewed by Thomas de Monchaux

Let's judge this book by its cover. It's glossy yet clean. It's red, suggesting the ageless and totalizing atmosphere of all small red books, but features an idiosyncratic acid green that was, for architects and sneaker-fiends alike, the mid-2003 color-of-the-moment. The purist severity of the sans-serif typeface is leavened by its being printed in gold. There are blurbs from the unlikely bedfellows of Karim Rashid and Robert Venturi. The effect is timeless yet timely, warm yet tart, spartan yet luxurious, substantive yet stylish.

This blend of seemingly paradoxical qualities could be one consequence of what Postrel calls a new "aesthetic age." Today, she suggests, "having spent a century or more focused primarily on other goals — solving manufacturing problems, lowering costs, making goods and services readily available, increasing convenience, saving energy — we are increasingly engaged in making our world special." This specialness emerges from the sensation and spectacle of the things and environments that surround us: "With its

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carefully conceived mix of colors and textures, aromas and music, Starbucks ... is to the age of aesthetics what McDonald's was to the age of convenience or Ford was to the age of mass production." Surface is depth. Packaging is content. "Aesthetics," Postrel writes, "has become too important to be left to the aesthetes."

Especially aesthetes with government jobs. Venturi emerges as the hero of Postrel's discussion of the encounter between design discourse and public policy staged by zoning, historic preservation, and other planning review boards. His proposed marquee/loggia for a 1999 campus building was resisted by Princeton, New Jersey, officials who classified it not as a small architectural sculpture, but as an overscaled billboard of a sign. "Environmental policy is not just about clean air and water anymore," warns Postrel. "It is, increasingly, about legislating tastes."

There's something postmodernly reassuring about this pluralist notion that no one should tell you how to feel

about how things look. Postrel asserts that "aesthetic pleasure and moral virtue are independent goods. They may complement or contradict each other, or operate entirely independently." Yet even pleasurable things and places inevitably support or subvert moral, political, or ecological systems. Postrel comments: "Modern design was once a value-laden signal — a sign of ideology. Now it's just a style, one of many possible forms of personal aesthetic expression." Yet any style is always already loaded with values. Divorcing the look and feel of things from the possibility, much less the necessity, of moral content removes the substance from style. While this book may have set out to integrate those seemingly opposed properties as effectively as its own cover does, the effect of its argument may be to further estrange the partners in that other great, mutually dependent pairing: aesthetics and ethics.

Thomas de Monchaux is a writer and designer in New York City.



BLUR: THE MAKING OF NOTHING
by Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio
Harry N. Abrams, 2002
Reviewed by James McCown

In early 1999, New York-based architects Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio were hired to design a lakeside

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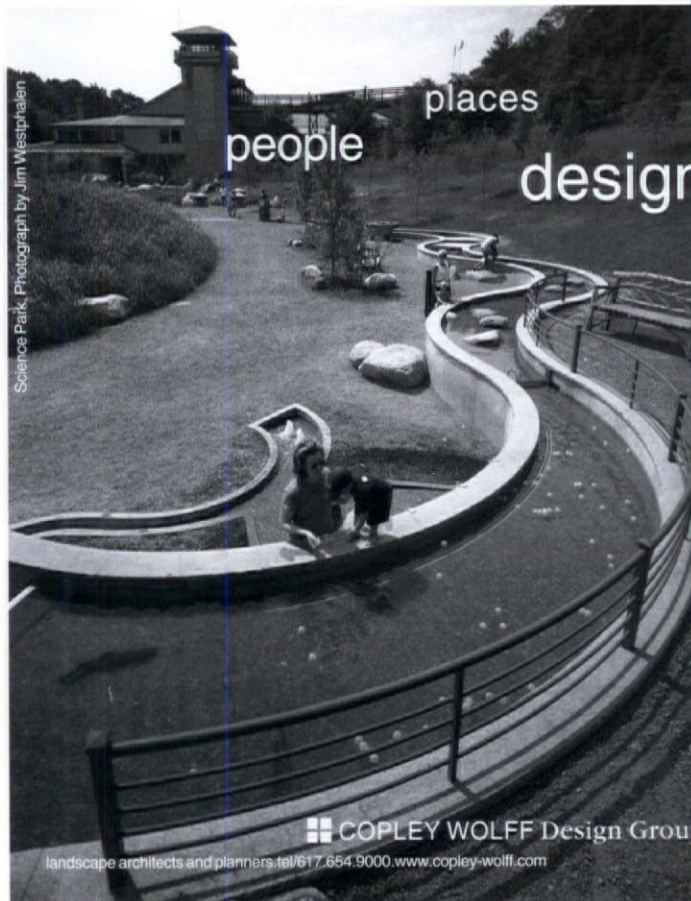


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attraction for Swiss Expo.02, a vestige of what used to be called World's Fairs. The architects proposed a metal pavilion held together by a tensile cable system suspended from pilings anchored in Lake Neuchâtel. It would be permanently shrouded in a man-made fog emanating from thousands of tiny nozzles within the structure, thus the name "Blur." This book is a tireless chronicle of the entire process, which lasted over four years and provided the one icon for the Expo, just as the Eiffel Tower had done in Paris in 1889 and the Space Needle in Seattle in 1962.

Forget everything you've ever heard about Swiss efficiency. In many ways the design and construction of Blur was a comedy of errors. A gaggle of prima donna designers — D + S, the landscape architects, the engineers, and "new media" designers — seem always on the verge of walking off the project altogether. Meanwhile vendors screw up, the Alpine weather erupts, and

construction crews and clients groups all seem to be acting at cross purposes.

Architects who are busy designing and building schools, hospitals, and apartment buildings can be forgiven for rolling their eyes on the whole Blur enterprise — what really is the point? Even so, the book is reasonably well organized and quite readable, a cross between a scrapbook and a stream-of-consciousness narration. Eschewing the normally thick and tedious verbiage for which academic architectural theoreticians are known, Elizabeth Diller is actually at times quite eloquent about the thinking behind this Swiss folly: "... our technological culture privileges high definition ... Blur is decidedly low-definition. The strongest feature ... is its atmospheric luminosity and lack of focus."

But as chief author of this narrative, she sets a trap for herself. As the project dragged on and budgets were cut, she dug in her heels and insisted on keeping certain "new media" aspects of

the design, such as a system of LED monitors that would flash supposedly edifying statements as visitors made their way through the wet, thick morass. At one point she suggested bringing in artist Jenny Holzer — yes, Jenny Holzer, whose cliché leftist pamphleteering is *so* 1980s. When you set yourself up as the purveyor of the latest in hip architectural thinking, don't propose collaborating with yesterday's hot artists.

Even though the book is a diverting read, richly illustrated and well put together, it's hard to escape the notion that the Blur project is just another artifact from a decadent, post-millennial Europe whose population has too much money and too much time on its hands.

James McCown is the director of marketing and communications at Schwartz/Silver Architects in Boston and writes about architecture for regional and national publications.

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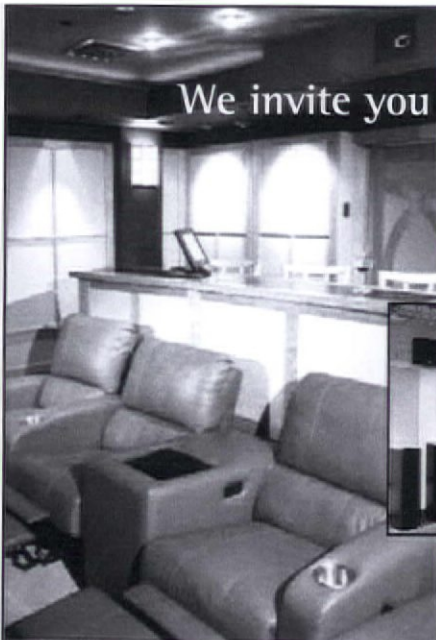


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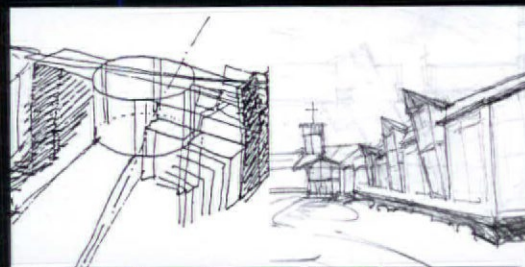


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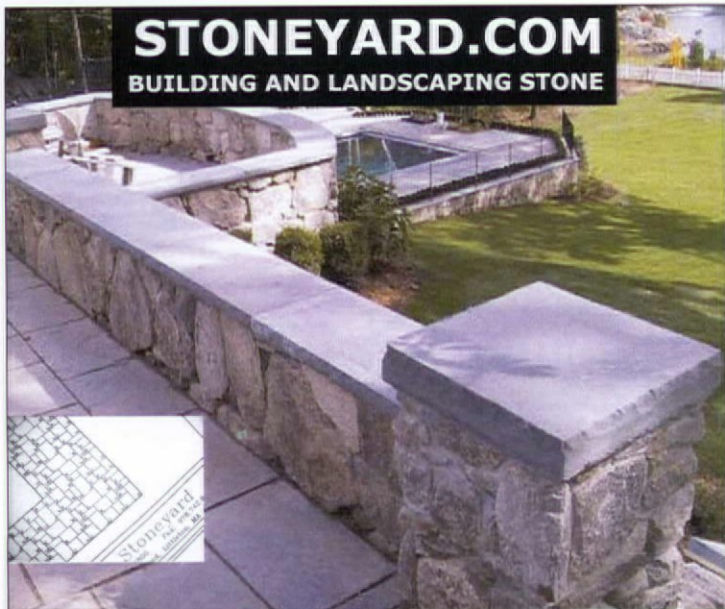
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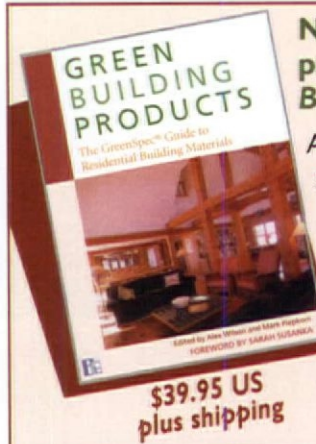
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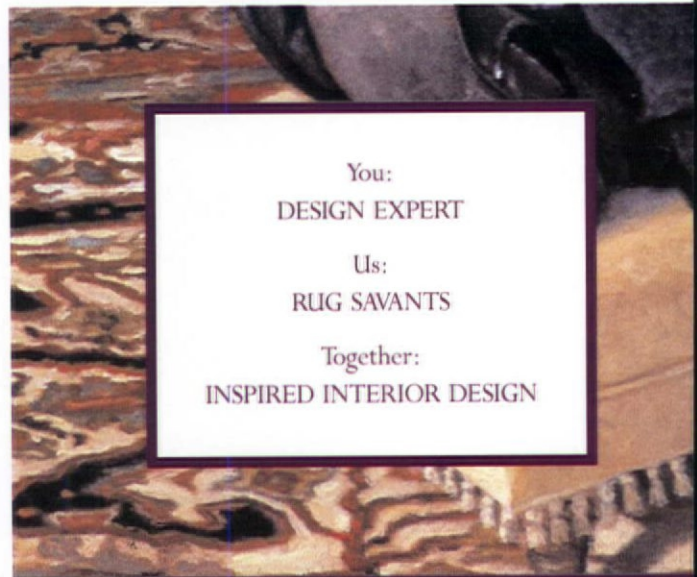
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Like many groups who see themselves as misunderstood minorities — college professors, Jehovah's Witnesses, reptile fanciers, architects — motorcyclists are missionaries.

We are like the Ancient Mariner. Our lives have been changed by our experience; we want to grab you by the lapels and, with the force of our passion, make you *understand*.

You will not be surprised, then, if I try to persuade you that motorcycling is not only a delight, but that it is also a revelation — particularly if you are interested in the environment that we human beings have built for ourselves.

I will begin where almost every motorcyclist begins, with the obligatory paean to the splendid synaesthesia of motorcycling, its delicious soup of sensations. At its best, riding a motorcycle offers an astonishing blend of experiences: the changes in temperature from shade to light, the exhilarating swoop of a curve taken at speed, the growl of the engine and the roar of the wind, a whole world of smell — from the perfume of new-mown alfalfa to the effluvia of industrial life — from which one is almost entirely insulated in the confines of a car. The result of all this is that motorcycling gives a profound sense of being more than a mere observer, of being immersed in the surrounding landscape.

But there is an even happier corollary: In part because of this immersion and in

part because of the intense concentration it requires, motorcycling also creates a novel and unusually revealing perspective from which to look at things.

From the saddle of a motorcycle, structures and objects can take on the stroboscopic, almost hallucinatory, energy of things seen in dreams. I believe the power of the architectural images you experience on a motorcycle is underscored by their brevity, perhaps because to see them at all, your attention must be grabbed — pulled away, almost despite yourself, from the quite serious business of keeping the motorcycle upright and on track.

This is of course only speculation. Yet I can testify that some — perhaps most — of my truly memorable, even haunting, mental pictures of buildings and places arrived on the back of a motorcycle: London's Battersea Power Station at night, a great cathedral for the worship of early 20th-century industrial might, but for all that somehow embarrassed and uneasy in its setting; a village someplace north of Errol, New Hampshire, seen on the descent from a long hill, embodying the inexplicable yet obvious perfection of a community laid out not according to somebody's reductionist schema but according to the real textures of life and work; the stillness of the battlefield at Gettysburg on a hot July afternoon, studded with the myriad monuments erected by veterans' organizations and all the states whose soldiers fought there, seeming a cemetery for giants — which, of course, is just what it is.




I don't want to leave the impression that all judgment is swept aside in this euphoria. The same clarity illuminates the ugly no less than the beautiful, the awkward no less than the graceful. You can't, for example, avoid the obtrusive and misshapen Westin Waltham hotel that looms up at you along Route 128 outside Boston, dressed in a strange chemical blue previously seen only in the ruffled tuxedos worn by grooms in Las Vegas wedding chapels, and appearing for all the world like an unconvincing set for a low-budget science fiction movie. And, alas, you can't avoid seeing that part of the built environment with which motorcyclists are unavoidably most concerned: our roads, highways, and bridges. Once a matter of (justifiable) national pride, they are now decrepit, decaying, potholed, and spalled, incompetently repaired, often dangerous — an index of our muddled priorities and fragile national self-confidence.

Yet these are also small epiphanies, insights into the world we have made, delivered with an intensity and focus only accessible to those who participate in what an acute motorcyclist once called "a dance with angular momentum and gravity."

Come and join the dance. ■

Jon Westling is president emeritus and professor of history and humanities at Boston University. A senior fellow of the Design Futures Council, he also serves on the board of directors of the Motorcycle Hall of Fame Museum.



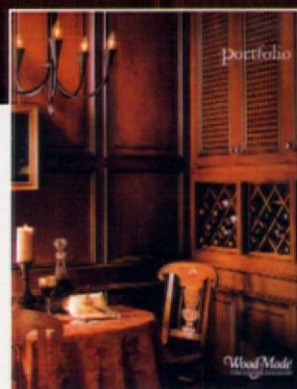
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