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Issue No. 03:245

IDEA, IMAGE, IDENTITY

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Cover Marakon Associates

Firm: Herbert Lewis Kruse **Blunck Architecture** 

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s I write this introduction my attention is being diverted to a television news broadcast reporting a massive power blackout on the East coast of North America. News of this event is most likely being received all over the globe with a sense of immediacy that has become typical for our time. However, what is

described as the largest power blackout in history will most likely be considered old news by the time my message reaches my readers.

The influence of communication technology and electronic media has transformed our understanding of the world and how we relate to each other. The addition to our language of new words and meanings such as "spam" and "blog" is evidence of the change occurring in how we describe the phenomenon of media technology that now surrounds us. Dick Tracy's radio wristwatch will most likely become a commonplace device rather than one of the futuristic fantasy props of fiction, assuming this innovation hasn't already made an appearance at a consumer electronics trade show. With newly available technology our culture is rapidly becoming a media-saturated culture.

Idea, Image, Identity

As we reflect upon the influence of rapid media technology, we may ask how architects will respond relative to the changes around them. Notably, CAD has replaced the T-square in the day-to-day workings of the architect's office. But as many things change, some things remain admirably and stubbornly unchanged. An architect's ability to create settings and images that evoke a unique identity for individuals and groups is plentifully represented by the projects featured in this issue. For architects such images will continue to abound within that most precious and irreplaceably of all processions: the human imagination.

*Steven Strassburg, AIA* Editor



# Different by design

#### By ANN SOBIECH MUNSON

#### **Good Design in the Toilet**

A BabyByörn design parable



his year's AIA Convention uses a quote from Charles Eames as an epigraph to its registration brochure: "You know what looks good can change, but what works works." Well-known images of Charles and Ray Eames atop a steel beam or astride a motorcycle convey the playful attitude with which they developed their serious designs. Their designs have become emblems for this combination of play, function and aesthetics, a recipe for good design.

BabyBjörn, Swedish manufacturer of award-winning products for infants and young children, may be most wellknown for its cloverleaf-shaped plate, fat red and blue spoons, or rigid plastic bib. Read the tale of the development of the BabyBjörn toilet trainer, or scroll through the photos of heaps of potty models, and one cannot help but think of the Eameses' design approach an example" under the link "About our product development" on the BabyBjörn Web site, http://www.babybjorn.com). After its introduction in 1998, the toilet trainer went on to be recognized with numerous design awards in five countries, including a Bronze Industrial Design Excellence Award (IDEA) in 1999.

The toilet trainer story starts simply in 1995 when Joakim Jakobson, son of BabyBjörn founder Björn Jakobson, fielded questions from customers asking why the company didn't make a toilet trainer that worked. Father and son contacted Swedish industrial designer Håkan Bergqvist and asked him "to make a functional and innovative toilet trainer." They tested all the toilet trainers they could find and found none worked to their satisfaction. Through these tests, they isolated the problem to the fastening mechanism and vowed to design a toilet trainer that would work in "any toilet in the world."

They traveled and made drawings of toilets they found. They solicited drawings of toilets from others. They ended up with a pile of paper toilet drawings from all over the globe. From these drawings, they began building models of the product. In the midst of this process, they traveled to the United States. According to the story published on the Web site, they purchased more than 20 toilet seats from a construction store. They also found that many U.S. toilets are open in front, which meant they had to start over on their design.

The group made many models that failed. They made and tested some models that worked, but were difficult to use, so they redesigned them to increase ease of use. Kids and parents tested the products. The designers tested the products on children to make sure they couldn't fall through the hole. They searched for a manufacturer that could make the





molded product of plastic and rubber materials. Lillemor Jakobson, Björn's wife, worked with the color scheme of the final product. She tried various colors; initially, she worked with three color schemes (blue, red and white), but finally got a yellow in the right tone, and introduced a yellow and lime green product.

This story in the abstract is familiar to all of us: start with a design task, and learn through the design process what works, both functionally and aesthetically. This story contains elements crucial to doing good architecture: consideration of context, knowledge of what's been done before, lessons learned from earlier attempts to address the same issues, ongoing interaction with clients, careful consideration of materials, attention to the smallest of details, and innovation through process. "Does it work?" and "Does it look good?" are two simple questions, but the story of the BabyBjörn toilet trainer demonstrates that arriving at the answers is a complex process.

Learn more about BabyBjörn at www.babybjorn.com. Make sure to check out their most recent product introduction, a subdued "bouncy chair" they call "Baby Sitter 1-2-3."



#### Mississippi River Plaza Davenport, Iowa

OPN Architects, Inc. has teamed up with Ryan Companies US, Inc. to design-build a 95,000-square-foot multi-tenant office building. The project includes a connected ground plaza and will be part of the River Renaissance Area. The conceptual design of the sixstory building takes on its own character, responding to the site context. Floating precast planes flank the north and south sides of the building reaching out onto the plaza. The four-story sloped shaft facing the plaza reinforces the "informal" side of the building. The west face conveys a formal gesture with the tripartite organization. A large picture window on the north face acknowledges the adjacent Mississippi River and future Figge Arts Center. The design of the building is composed of precast concrete, aluminum and glass. m

#### Eagle Villa Dubuque, Iowa

Eagle Villa is a seven-story, 165,000-square-foot condominium project being planned on the banks of the Mississippi River in Dubuque, Iowa. The architect is Stott & Associates Architects, P.C., Ames, Iowa. Construction will begin late fall 2003 on this precast concrete structure being developed by A.J. Spiegel,



Peosta, Iowa. Seven levels of housing units are to be built above two levels of parking. The site was formerly an access ramp to a toll bridge that spanned the river until it was dismantled in the 1970s.



#### Iowa State University football practice facility, Ames, Iowa

Construction is well under way on Iowa State University's new 92,000-square-foot Indoor Multipurpose Training and Practice Facility, serving Division 1 Football, and other field sport programs at Iowa State. The dynamic facility sports a unique roof form that conveys the trajectory of a football when kicked from one end of the facility to the other. With a clear height inside of 70 feet, natural and indirect lighting bathe the new Tarkett Prestige 60 Turf system.

A singular 398-foot long triangulated custom truss, curving two different directions and measuring 20 feet across, is the mainstay of this unique and powerful structural statement. This truss uses three separate two-foot diameter steel pipe chord members in association with multiple one-foot diameter webs to clear span this 210 foot x 398-foot column-free interior.

Construction began in January 2003. The \$7,600,000 facility is schedule to be operational by November 2003. This facility was designed by RDG Sports of Des Moines, Iowa in association with CDFM2 of Kansas City, Missouri.

# State of mind

MARAKON ASSOCIATES



The client and architect teamed up again after the resounding success of the award-winning San Francisco office and composed a remarkable space for the Manhattan location.

Above: The precise detailing present throughout the office is illustrated by the use of butt corner glazing and modern artwork which reflects the spatial organization.

Right: The conference room employs a circular recessed lighting design to provide even illumination for staff during meetings.

Project: Marakon Associates Location: New York, NY Architect: Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture General Contractor: HRH Construction Electrical Engineer: Ambrosino DePinto Schmeider Mechanical Engineer: Ambrosino DePinto Schmeider Interior Designer: Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture Photographer: ESTO Photographics n the robust history of American 20th Century modern architecture and design, one city stands alone in terms of sheer power and prestige. Despite its faults, missed opportunities and occasional dubious design decisions, New York City continues to be the ultimate urban tableau upon which to make a significant modern statement. Even though the skyscraper was born in Chicago and absolutely magnificent buildings can be seen everywhere in the Windy City, the New York skyline is filled with many more recognizable landmark buildings. This proud boisterous city can never be undaunted and no competitors are lurking on the horizon.

Marakon Associates is an international management consultancy firm that wanted to expand its East Coast market presence by establishing a New York office. In order to create an attractive work environment to entice the brightest prospects from the top business schools, the client hired the renowned Des Moines architectural firm of Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck (HLKB) to design a new type of space to enhance Marakon's image as a consultant firm on the cutting edge of business. The prospect of designing an office interior in New York City must have been an interesting exercise for an architectural practice located hundreds of miles from the job site in a vastly different relaxing culture and environment. The design firm had already completed an award-winning office on two floors of a San Francisco high rise. The firm of HLKB had also designed numerous successful commercial projects for top clients in the banking and insurance industries. The potential of creating an important corporate identity for a New York client must have been an energizing experience for the firm.

The client's New York office is located in a 44-story office building in midtown Manhattan. Working within the program of a progressive business model and the desire for a different type of open office environment, the architects had to first deal with a dark and compressed elevator lobby with a view of the famed landmark Waldorf Astoria in the distance. A gradual decompression from a horizontally expansive reception area and boardroom to the main conference room and aisles, was devised to create a sequencing from dark to light to expand the spatial experience and enliven the





Large planar doors of dark wood and glass manipulate the grid pattern.

a

HOTO BY: ESTO PHOTOGRAPHICS

Right: Materials of glass, steel and wood are the perfect combination necessary for a contemporary office.



mind. The architects then proceeded to skillfully compose a collaborative workspace unlike any other in the building or nearly all other office environments in this building type. This rearrangement of office functions was necessitated by the large floor plate of the structural system common to high rises that resulted in the nearest window being 90 feet from the building core.

The client program initially required several private offices and the conventional design response would have been to position all offices along the perimeter where only the top select few could enjoy the natural light and great views of the Manhattan skyline. The staff would unfortunately be denied the positive attribute of light conducive to a productive work environment. In order to resolve this issue the decision was made to place only the partner's offices at the perimeter reinforcing the hierarchal nature of the firm. These offices are separated from adjacent spaces with transparent glass walls enabling light to filter into nearby staff areas. But just as important, this plan allows the remaining perimeter footage to be utilized for conference rooms and lounge spaces, allowing visual access to the skyline for all staff in both work and relaxation modes.

MARK E. BLUNCK

Since the partner's offices are along the perimeter, the manager's offices are positioned as glazed blocks modulating the open office landscape. This has created intimate work settings and provides for clear circulation patterns thereby avoiding the common unsightly numerous repetitive rows of boring office systems furniture. This overall arrangement places all management, including partners, managers, associates and analysts in closer proximity to their respective support staffs, reinforcing the collaborative nature of the company. The client image created by this excellent rearrangement of conventional large offices is one of an open work environment where all levels of staff are able to communicate without artificial barriers and denotes a partial deconstruction of the traditional work environment.

The small-scale abstract modern artworks function as circulation modulators throughout the space and reiterate the multitude of grids on glass partitions and millwork. These grids also recall the pattern of Manhattan streets and skyscrapers. The over-scaled glass and grid motif creates a sense of order in the use of glass and millwork for walls and doors.

The integration of artwork, furniture and finishes reflect the spare intricate detailing necessary to enhance the sense of purpose and straightforwardness sought by the client. The ubiquitous grid motif is a reflection of the client's understanding that this orderly assemblage of materials represents a workflow philosophy of efficiency and success. Further enhancing this precision is the high quality of design and construction with careful minimal detailing of elements. Thin vertical panes of glass in clear and frosted treatments line the space and are intercepted by horizontal lines creating a masterful rhythmic patterning of solid and void.



This office project represents the evolving recognition in the business world that collaboration should be encouraged between all levels of staff. In this client's situation, the architects have reconfigured the common space planning concept and substituted a more inclusive arrangement benefiting the entire firm. The project represents the new ideals of a generation that saw the old tired methods gradually losing significance in the modern age. The architects have built upon this school of thought with work area placement and the utilization of wood, steel and glass to illustrate the importance of a more inducing social and professional context.

—Mark E. Blunck has contributed to Iowa Architect for 15 years and recently made his sixth pilgrimage to the Eames House in Pacific Palisades. The trip also included a visit to two Richard Meier projects in Beverly Hills.



Left: Padded Vik-ter II chairs and stools in richly stained wood by Dakota Jackson in the lounge area offer a view of the Chrysler Building.

the repetitive pattern of design components as it denotes form and function.

Left: Modern architects admire

# Historical interaction

hen Kevin Nordmeyer got his first good

look at the Kenyon Building, now home

to RDG Planning + Design, it wasn't

pretty. Vacant for years, the one-time

RDG HAS BROUGHT TOGETHER HISTORY AND SUSTAINABLE DESIGN WITH ITS REWORKING OF THE KENYON BUILDING

By remaining conscious of the Kenyon Building's history, RDG has been able to pay homage to the structure's roots while fostering a sense of openness.

Right: RDG added the angled steel wall to represent where the original corner of the Kenyon Building was cut off in the 1930s, while placing the entrance to the building where the car dealership garage doors once hung.

Project: Kenyon Building Location: Des Moines, IA Architect: RDG Planning + Design **General Contractor:** Graham Construction Company **Electrical Contractor:** Wolin & Associates, Inc. **Mechanical Contractor:** Wolin Electric, L.C. **Structural Engineer:** Charles Saul Engineering **Interior Designer:** RDG Planning + Design **Photographer:** Farshid Assassi, Hon. AIA Iowa, Assassi Productions

to work with were the walls," says Nordmeyer, a partner at RDG and head of the design team for the Kenyon Building. Even so, he could see the potential, a sort of empty slate the could serve both as a new office for RDG and as a calling card. Originally built in 1907 to house a printing company, the building had been transformed

printing company, the building had been transformed into a car dealership in the 1930s. Garage doors were installed. Ramps were put in place. The southeast corner of the building was clipped in favor of an art deco facade originally intended to display the ill-fated Tucker.

parking ramp had fallen into ruin. Windows were

broken. A fire had left beams black. A hole in the roof

had turned some of the floors to mush. It wasn't

"The building was in such disrepair, all we really had

surprising that it was scheduled for the wrecking ball.

"When we first started to think about designing this place, we realized that the building had always been about machines and machinery," Nordmeyer says. "We wanted that feel in what we did: the idea of movement and machinery."

As a result, the space looks like the inner workings of a stalled engine. Exposed steel studs stand everywhere. Clear and frosted Plexiglas sub for traditional walls. Mesh grating and particleboard cover the floor. And from the ceiling, electrical conduit, air vents and computer wires hang exposed, sprinting off toward desks and RDG's few offices. There are even several swinging doors acting like valves, allowing light and traffic to flow in and out of the former Tucker showroom, now the firm's nearly public front conference area.

Nordmeyer says there was a definite method behind the raw expanses, though RDG incorporated several varying ideas into the design to serve as both practical and metaphorical reinforcements of the company's







Above: Exposed steel studs and steel mesh were used to recreate the feeling of the various machines that once occupied the building.

Left: Though staircases have replaced the car ramps, RDG wanted to capture the movement in the building through placement and choice of materials.

beliefs. Specializing in sustainable design, he wanted the office to not only function as a space to foster and inspire creativity, but to also have as little impact on the environment as possible. As a result, the bulk of the materials used throughout the office are recycled or recyclable. The clear walls and massive windows allow nearly the entire space to function merely on daylight. All those exposed mechanical systems are hyper efficient. "We tried to do things in a frugal manner," Nordmeyer

says, "because I think of printing as being very frugal." The openness also has a residual value. Nordmeyer says that RDG has always believed in a sense of transparency in its work. The unobstructed views and clear materials serve as a visual reminder of that ideal. "We're trying to demonstrate to our clients [through the design] that we're all about openness and team work," Nordmeyer says. "We could have done a lot of private offices, but we decided not to.... It's all about transparency."

### Winging it THE CHRISTING REIMAN BUTTERFLY WING AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY



Above: Corner detail of the Butterfly Wing showing connection between glass roof, walls and steel supports.

Right: West end of the Christina Reiman Butterfly Wing. The 'antennae' end of the main truss and roof detailing suggests both a metaphorical approach and an attention to the material language of glass plane and crystal.

Project: Reiman Gardens **Conservatory** Complex Location: Ames, IA Architect: Architects Smith Metzger **General Contractor:** Story Construction **Electrical Contractor:** Menninga **Civil Engineer:** WHKS **Electrical Engineer:** Alvine and Associates Inc. **Mechanical Engineer:** Alvine and Associates Inc. **Structural Engineer: Charles Saul Engineering** Landscape Architect: Rodney Robinson Landscape Architects Interior Designer: Architects Smith Metzger **Photographer:** Farshid Assassi, Hon. AIA Iowa, Assassi Productions

ntil last year, the southern approach to Iowa State University was dominated by the massive segmental donut of Jack Trice Stadium, a powerful entry, but one lacking subtlety, to say the least. With the construction of the comparatively small Christina Reiman Butterfly Wing to the stadium's south, however, a grace note of glass planes has added a paradoxical lightness to the University's South Elwood Drive gateway.

Part of the new \$8,000,000 Reiman Gardens Conservatory, the Butterfly Wing is instantly recognizable, both for its crystalline construction and its straightforward metaphor. Its folded glass roof, steel spine and ornamental antennae successfully take Ledoux's notion of an architecture parlante down to a universal level — a house for butterflies that unabashedly looks like a butterfly itself, with glass wings and an angled spine complete with an unmistakable antennae.

Architect Daryl Metzger has heard this comparison more than once, but he insists the form came only near the end of a process of constant experimentation using digital modeling and a design methodology he calls digital 'what-if-ing.' Smith Metzger had previously designed the Mahlstede Building in Reiman Gardens, a building that accommodates offices, meeting rooms and facilities for visitors in an understated, conservative 'servant' building that seeks to blend in to the surroundings. Iowa State and it's donors had other ideas for the new wing, however — a 'star' building that would give Reiman Gardens greater visibility along with more extensive visitor amenities, hopefully taking over



THOMAS LESLIE, AIA

as the gardens' public image from a well-intentioned, but ultimately uninspiring steel rendition of the campus campanile. Initial plans called for a small, 500-squarefoot butterfly flight room as part of a larger complex, though this quickly grew into a 2500-square-foot 'flight house' as its potential for drawing visitors became apparent.

Visits to similar facilities were, however, disappointing. The delicacy of the butterflies themselves was not matched by the 'heavy duty' nature of existing houses. Metzger and Iowa State were intrigued by the idea of a building that added punch and 'mystery' to Reiman Gardens from the street, but that would disappear from inside, putting the interior focus on the exhibits, not the architecture. Gradually, a simple cube form evolved into a sliced and folded diamond, with simple planes arranged into a troughed, sloped roof atop four glass walls. While a structurally glazed or cable supported system would provide the delicacy that the building's program called for, Metzger suggested that these visually busy systems would in fact emphasize the system's solid elements and distract the eve from interior and external views. In the end, the Butterfly Wing was detailed using a standard glass and aluminum system from Architectural Wall Systems, with understated detailing that parses the glass walls into an elegant, visually minimalist grid — a constant foil to the chaotic flight paths within.

Where the wall is to some degree off the shelf, there are key moments of detail that emphasize the pavilion's sculptural nature, and indeed its butterflyness. As the form developed toward its final configuration, the designers found ways to tease out the planar nature of the roof, turning what had been a crystalline conception into more of an alighting plane. The glass of the roof slides past the walls below, providing a thin edge that delineates plane from volume, wing from wall. Nine arched trusses on each side support the glass roof,

Right: East end of the Christina Reiman Butterfly Wing showing junction of steel frame and concrete support. In the background, the more contextual spine building and the Conservatory continue the dialogue between honed glass and traditional wood construction. meeting pipe columns at the building's perimeter that blend neatly into the rhythm of the exterior curtain walls. The lines of the roof trusses continue through triangular steel infill panels in the glass wall, marking the structural grid on the outside and furthering the roof's sense of weightlessness. A larger truss running the length of the building's diagonal is playfully extended into the building's signature antennae, and the major bearing elements — a foundation bench and concrete piers at the east and west corners — are rendered in crisply detailed, gently angled concrete that play off the lightness of the glass.

Inside, the glass wall fades behind interior landscaping designed by Rodney Robinson. Glimpses of the exterior gardens through the curtain wall's broad grid play up the contrast between the tropical flora within and the



Right: Interior of the Butterfly Wing. The enclosure's main spine, at upper left, supports smaller trusses that rest on steel columns at the exterior, seen at right. This skeleton is wrapped by a gridded glass enclosure that forms a backdrop to the flights of the inhabitants while providing visual continuity to the gardens beyond.



heartier local denizens outside. Looking up, a somewhat heavier structural hand counters the crisp delineation of the exterior where steel trusses meet edge beams. Here, moment joints feel unduly heavy, at precisely the point where a supremely delicate approach was called for pin joints at the exterior and greater depth toward the center might have enhanced the illusion of a floating glass roof. This criticism, though, is only saying that the human hand is not quite the designer that nature proves to be, as a walk through the wing proves — any structure that stayed within the laws of physics would likely be poor competition for the striking delicacy of the Butterfly Wing's residents.

Outside, visitor amenities adjacent to the new structure are located in a spine that continues the timber construction of the earlier Mahlstede Building, sensibly leaving the major statement to the Butterfly Wing and its tectonic counterpart, a stepped, sloping glass conservatory at the south end of the complex. This play between the 'background' timber spine and the glass showpieces — including a set of working greenhouses largely hidden at the north end of the site — gives an architectural drama to the otherwise conservative design atmosphere of Reiman Gardens that is striking and welcome. Despite the occasional balky detail within, the Butterfly Wing and its companions nevertheless combine the site's need for a landmark with a refined approach to materials and, frankly, a sense of the program's sheer joy. Sharing space with several hundred winged critters is matched by the winking sensibility of the overall form, and by a middle ground of careful thought about how a logically conceived glass pavilion can carry on a conversation with the gardens' more traditional timber architecture.

— Thomas Leslie, AIA, is an assistant professor of architecture at Iowa State University.



Left: The Butterfly Wing's glass walls sit on a precisely delineated foundation, emphasizing their lightweight construction. Extended roof elements lighten the top edge detail, and the central spine extends over the low-rise main building, linking the building's form with its contents in a manner suggestive of its contents.

Left: Overall view of the new Reiman Gardens Conservatory. From left, the conservatory proper, the low-rise amenities building, and the peak of the Flight House.

# Street-level subtlety

A FLEXIBILITY OF DESIGN



The layers of economy in the plan for the street-level space subtly provide the image and identity of its host firm.

Above: The space extends itself into the public realm.

Right: The revolving screen serves as a boundary, a projection screen or a means to frame the space.

Project: HLKB disPLAYSPACE Location: Des Moines, IA Architect: Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture General Contractor: Stroud Construction Electrical Contractor: T3 Mechanical Contractor: Waldinger Interior Designer: Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture Photographer: Bob Shimer, Hedrich Blessing erbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture has taken it to the street — level that is. Interested in having slightly greater visibility, HLKB transformed a street-level portion of its Fleming Building offices at 218 Sixth Ave., Des Moines, into elegant, minimal, but multipurpose *dis*PLAYSPACE. The space had had a retail reputation as it was formerly used as a teller line for Commercial Federal Bank.

The initial design conversations spoke to a litany of desired functions including conference space, gallery, public meeting room and formal or casual entertainment space. Given this agenda, criteria for design was flexibility. The noteworthy fact of this (typical) theme is the manner in which the project carries the image and identity of its host firm without actually using signs and logos. This is done through the discipline of design — the act of composing necessary assemblies. Spatial definition is left to the room's purpose of the moment.

The 1,800 square feet of space posed some design

challenges, not the least of which was the reality that it's adjacent to a skywalk connection. With that in mind the design team, including Kirk Blunck, FAIA; Paul Mankins, AIA; and Matt Rodekamp, embraced the challenge and turned it into an opportunity to merge a perceived private meeting environment with a very public, pedestrian right-of-way.

The perforated metal panels that slide to reconfigure the wall and provide a variety of entry passages also make the division between the meeting room and the public corridor less conspicuous. Passersby may be unknowingly drawn into a gathering of say, Des Moines Arts Festival board members.

The room itself is divided into two spaces by a revolving frame, the center portion of which is used as a projection screen. Among other elements that enhance the flexibility of the space are the marker board wall and the magnetic properties of the metal panels. This allows presentation pieces to be attached and observed and discussed. The space is also wired for network access.



M. MONICA GILLEN



ARCHITECTURE

Above: A glimpse into disPLAYSPACE invites passersby to stop and observe the activity of the moment.

Left: Layers of economy frame the space(s).

Half of the space is furnished with modular conference tables that can be stored. The other half of the space is home to a model of the Gateway West project. The model's presence incites people who happen by and look in the window from the Walnut Street sidewalk to wonder about the space. The space is not home to pictures of the passel of award-winning projects the firm has to its credit. Currently, the only assumable reference to HLKB, is the vinyl adhesive that spells "Architecture." This is present, however, only to keep spectators from running into the glass walls.

Whether an important meeting with a client, a vendor breakfast or a prelude to an HLKB Christmas party, the space can be rearranged to meet the needs of the beings that occupy it. The team's plan worked. The original idea for the image of the space manifests itself in the way one feels upon entering.

-M. Monica Gillen lives in Ames and works in Des Moines.

ker-ated shee

BUILDING AS BRAND IN MASON CITY

Architects explore Las Vegas lessons in a Mason City sporting goods store, combining conventional retail space with applied ornament to create a clear identity for the client.

Right: Bold graphics and primary colors, at all scales, take cues from typical sports team designs.

Project: Decker Sporting Goods Location: Mason City, IA Architect: Bergland & Cram Architects **General Contractor:** Dean Snyder Construction **Electrical Engineer:** Gilmor & Doyle Engineers **Mechanical Engineer:** Gilmor & Doyle Engineers **Structural Engineer:** Don Peterson, Peterson Engineers **Interior Designer:** Innovative Retail Displays **Photographer:** Retail Design Group; Douglas Foreshoe, Associate AIA, Bergland and Cram Architects

ANN SOBIECH MUNSON

// t's a duck!" "It's a decorated shed!" Since the initial publication of *Learning from Las Vegas* in the early 1970s, these exclamations have become standard

elements of architectural discourse. This distinction represents two "manifestations" of what Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour present as a contradiction between "symbolic and representational elements" in architecture and "the form, structure, and program with which they combine in the same building." (*Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form.* Revised edition. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1977.)

In their discussion, a "duck" is a "buildingbecoming-sculpture," or an instance "where the architectural systems of space, structure and program are submerged and distorted by an overall symbolic form" (Venturi, et al, 87). A wiener-shaped hot dog stand is a duck; "the duck is the special building that is a symbol" (Venturi, et al, 87). A decorated shed, on the other hand, "is the conventional shelter that applies symbols," or an instance "where systems of space and structure are directly at the service of program, and ornament is applied independently of them" (Venturi, et al, 87). Ducks engage an "implicit symbolism" presented in an "heroic and original" image. Decorated sheds employ "explicit symbolism" via "ugly and ordinary" images (Venturi, et al, 93). Ducks connote, while decorated sheds denote (Venturi, et al, 100-101).

The architect-authors endorse the decorated shed asserting that "the duck is seldom relevant today" (Venturi, et al, 87). They acknowledge the value of highway-scaled commercial architecture and the inclusion of the everyday (Venturi, et al, 53). They



continue, "we shall argue for the symbolism of the ugly and ordinary in architecture and for the particular significance of the decorated shed with a rhetorical front and conventional behind: for architecture as shelter with symbols on it" (Venturi, et al, 88).

Fast forward 30 years, and one could argue that the decorated shed has superceded the duck in vernacular architecture, particularly in buildings designed for retail purposes. This dominance often appears to be an unintended consequence of responding to the current demands of inexpensive construction, tight schedules, and real estate markets characterized by high turnover. "Big box" stores provide the "conventional behind," while tenants provide the "rhetorical front." These buildings seldom result from a self-conscious adoption of the principles of the ugly and ordinary, and thus seldom fully explore the possibilities inherent a decorated shed.

Bergland and Cram Architects of Mason City, in association with Retail Design Group, Inc. of Columbus, Ohio, go beyond the typical big-box retail routine in their design for Decker Sporting Goods. From the outset, their client expressed a desire for a total "branding" approach. They wanted the building itself to be "a billboard for the business," and they planned to carry the brand established by the building throughout the business, "down to the t-shirts the store sells." Bergland and Cram responded to their client's goals with a concept that employs the rigorous execution of applied ornament within a conventional building.

Decker Sports, at its most basic, is a big box store. From the exterior billboards announcing the store's contents, to the cashwrap fashioned after a press box, to the athletic-inspired color palette, Bergland and Cram takes the explicit applied imagery from outside in, and from large scale to small detail. A well-lit sign on one side of the building marks the building from the highway. Flags at the storefront entrance corner protrude beyond the roofline, recalling the figure of an athletic stadium. Chain-link in the baseball merchandising display denotes a batting cage or dugout. Bold graphics and primary colors take their cues from sports team logos, and pervade the space at a variety of scales.

Among the lessons learned in Las Vegas "there are didactic images...for us to take home to New Jersey and Iowa" which "show the vitality that may be achieved by an architecture of inclusion..." (Venturi, et al, 53). Decker Sports brings these lessons home. From Mason City we can hear the cry: "It's a Decker-ated shed!"

—Ann Sobiech Munson is an intern architect with Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture in Des Moines.



Left: Display materials denote specific sports, as evidenced in the chain-link baseball section.

# Aerodynamism

DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE-WEST CAMPUS FACILITY

The architects have formulated an expressive and powerful design for a college building using geometry, materials and systems adaptable to changing factors in the new century.

Right: The gridded ellipse throws complementing shadows onto the pure white walls, staircase and exposed structural components.

Project: Des Moines Area Community College -West Campus Location: West Des Moines, IA Architect: RDG Planning + Design **General Contractor:** Weitz Company **Civil Engineer: Civil Engineering Consultants Electrical Engineer:** Pulley & Associates **Mechanical Engineer:** Pulley & Associates **Structural Engineer:** James Wilson Landscape Architect: **Civil Engineering Consultants Interior Designer:** RDG Planning + Design **Photographer:** Farshid Assassi, Hon. AIA Iowa, Assassi Productions

MARK E. BLUNCK

xceptional educational architecture is commonly a hallmark for the campuses of established prestigious universities. Throughout the country many remarkable buildings by the design greats of the past and current renowned architects have brought honor and pride to educational organizations. The idea that a community college could acquire superb design expertise is not a common thread in contemporary society. At a campus in West Des Moines, however, a community college design standard has been set in motion by the firm of RDG Planning + Design.

The architect and client collaboration included several discussions with Des Moines Area Community College administrative staff in order to identify the appropriate project vision, scope and direction. The primary stakeholders also consulted with potential future facility users, faculty, students and business and industry leaders to further define the specific and general needs and requirements. One important consideration was the changing dynamics of human learning theory and the need to create completely modifiable learning spaces with the adaptation of future technology being the prime directive. The program idea was to configure spaces to encourage creativity with the structure acting as an education super computer completely adaptable to changing social and technological forces both predictable and unforeseen.

The college needed a creative environment encapsulated into an organic and flexible building that could be easily modified to meet student demands and able to accommodate future student population growth. These needs were essential factors in the concept and design. This flexibility was inherently necessary to assimilate technological advances as the computer industry and educational facilities teaching the latest technologies must be able to adjust to constantly improving computer processing power and applications. In 1965 Intel founder Gordon Moore accurately predicted that computer speed would double every two years. Moore's Law is now accepted as gospel and computer facilities must be able to adapt to this continuing phenomenon. The form of DMACC West





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PHOTO BY: FARSHID ASSASSI, HON. AIA IOWA, ASSASSI PRODUCTIONS ©



Above and bottom: A perfect use of projecting curve and grids creates an iconic building form able to manage all future demographic and technological requirements. exemplifies this powerful bold leap into the future and the result is a singular architectural statement.

The absolutely stunning building form rises like a futuristic airship from the landscape with an expressive central sloping elliptical prow as the focal point creating a purposeful image. This remarkable bold element is canted forward with the curved vertical gridded glass curtain wall projecting itself into the environment and announcing its forward thinking intent. This elliptical form slopes from three stories along the southern elevation down to two stories at the northern elevation.

Further enhancing the image of forward progress are expandable unequal length side wings emanating from the ellipse. These structures employ horizontal window grids utilizing the aspect ratio of the vertical ellipse grids and establish continuity to the overall design. More importantly, the curtain walls match the forward cant of the prominent central element and appear as leading edges of aircraft wings. In a perfect counterpoint to the ellipse profile, the wing structure roofs are sloped in the opposite direction adding to the building's dynamism. The stark white exterior panels are a perfect contrast with the natural elements and create a strong Modernist statement in the tradition of Le Corbusier and Richard Meier.

The building materials employed ensure a long life structure with a metal roof and skin including unitized four-sided structural glazed curtain wall systems and Open Joint Rain Screen composite wall panels and entrances. South facing passive solar design and a geothermal mechanical system enhance the energy efficiency of the building.

The central interior spaces were organized with the ellipse as the focal point for the building. This space includes the reception desk, coffee bar, studen commons and lounge areas on the ground floor with th commons completely open to the three-story hig ceiling. On the second level of the ellipse an auditoriur occupies the back half and a balcony overlooks the larg volume created by the dramatic curved wall. The interio of exposed structural components, stairs and walls i pure white is a perfect visual complement to the clea ordered symbolism of the forward thrusting prow.

The expandable wing buildings that stretch from th strong geometric form were configured to resemble th data boards in a computer central processing unit. Th wings are filled with various uses including flexible lab telecommunication facilities, networking lab classrooms, offices and mechanical systems. Compute labs are designed with raised access flooring to provid flexible integration for new technology and expansiv glass provides needed acoustical separation and a visu connection to the technical guts of the systems. In order to establish continuity with the exterior building form many interior partitions are angled forward at the sam degree as the exterior walls and this reiteration of th expressive design forms an integration of interior an exterior spaces.

The use of pure and simple architectural forms hare resulted in remarkable structures throughout histor. The twentieth century was replete with clean geometric designs such as the 1939 New York World's Fair Trylo and Perisphere and the Gateway Arch by Eero Saariner. These bright shining forms are some of the strongest and simplest uses of geometry and are easily identifiable events to individuals with scant knowledge of design histor. This same energetic principle has been utilized for the college as the shapes are carefully finessed to exemplify





Lef: The primary yellow wall is canted at the same angle of the exterior walls and large glass sections allow for visual access.

the changing applications of technology. The building form is so dynamic that the ellipse shape has been adopted and developed by the college as an icon of the organization and has changed campus graphics and organizational identity.

The powerful dynamism represented by DMACC West is the result of the necessary programmatic requirements of education and the capability of the client — a government organization — to be fully involved in the envisioning of this project. RDG has skillfully incorporated the program into the building to meet today's educational and technological parameters and those of decades to come. The powerful forms of line and curve have been assembled and integrated into an unusual structure to define the state of architecture at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

*—Mark Blunck attended DMACC in Ankeny twice but does not recall anything this cool on any college campus.* 

# Waste not, want not

A WASTE MANAGEMENT AGENCY'S NEW HOME REFLECTS ITS MISSION



Above: The symmetrical design of the Metro Waste office space begins here at the reception desk. Natural bamboo stalks provide a visual contrast with the plywood cabinetry and steel partitions, but also acknowledge the floor underneath, which is made from bamboo, a renewable resource.

Right: The conference room/library resource room utilizes low-voltage lighting and ergonomically designed Aeron chairs.

Project: Metro Waste Authority Location: Des Moines, IA Architect: Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture **General Contractor: CPMI** Construction **Electrical Contractor: Baker Electric Mechanical Contractor:** Waldinger **Electrical Engineer: Baker Electric Mechanical Engineer:** Waldinger **Interior Designer:** Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture **Photographer:** Bob Shimer/Hedrich Blessing

ERIC GAUKEL

he ancient Romans — innovative as they were in architecture — proved to be worthy recyclers as well. Sections of the Coliseum and other monumental landmarks in Rome were crafted with materials lifted from older structures.

Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture (HLKB) put a new twist on recycling for its interior design work at the downtown Des Moines offices of the Metro Waste Authority, an independent government agency that oversees solid waste disposal in Polk County.

Using the agency's motto — "No Wasted Resources" — as a program, HLKB architects, led by Paul Mankins, AIA, came up with a plan to use recyclable and sustainable construction materials that can themselves be recycled when the office and building are eventually dismantled.

What makes the Metro Waste project so important is its execution. If you walk through the offices without any knowledge of its environmentally conscious design, you wouldn't know it. The wood floors in the reception area appear to be maple, but they're bamboo — a grass that's easier to replace than a 75-year-old tree. The carpet in the office areas is made from recycled fibers. The open office partitions are unfinished, recycled steel plates. Exposed framing members — linked by glass and plastic panels to form office walls — are "Trex" reconstituted wood studs. Custom furnishings are made from plywood, particleboard and some ash boards recycled from a nearby demolition site.

These materials would lose their visual appeal in a more cluttered environment. Here, however, the overall office plan is symmetrical, clean, bright and open. As a result, the steel, wood, plastic and glass surfaces have room to stretch.

Knowing that these very surfaces and furnishings might be dismantled in the future, the architects decided against using padded cubicle walls and veneered surfaces things that likely would end up in the landfill. Instead, when this place is taken apart, the wood table tops, the steel partitions and the plastic wall panels, for example, can either be reused or sent directly to the recycling facility. Even the plastic Aeron chairs — made from recycled materials — can be chopped up and reused.

HLKB's work in this 10,000-square-foot project includes several energy-saving options. Natural light plays a key role in illuminating the work areas. In areas that need a boost of low-voltage ambient light, motion sensors control the switches. Exterior light shelves (rows of metal tubing mounted on the exterior of the building) help to block the sun from the south-facing offices.

Located in downtown Des Moines' East Village, which is emerging as a vibrant place for new restaurants, shops and offices, Metro Waste is situated on the ground floor of a three-story brick and glass structure, also designed by HLKB, and gives the business district a welcome splash of modern architecture. Pedestrians and parking meters, visible outside the large west-facing windows in the conference rooms and dining area, give the interior space a human scale. Peering beyond the street scene, the Des Moines skyline rises just across the river.

This project is a smart move for Metro Waste, an agency that needs to lead by example when it comes to recycling and reducing the amount of waste that ends up in its landfill east of town. That might help build the public's support of "green" buildings and innovative design in Iowa. Right now, HLKB is involved as a local partner on David Chipperfield's Des Moines downtown public library project. Chipperfield's proposed grass roof for the structure — something that he says would increase energy efficiency and improve the look of the building — has stirred controversy. Perhaps the Metro Waste project will help plant some new seeds in the argument — and, ultimately, the library's roof.

—Eric Gaukel is the editor of New Horizons magazine.



Among the recycled and sustainable building materials visible from the reception area: bamboo floors, recycledfiber carpet and steel partitions.

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# nitectural educat

By CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

#### The College of Design Turns 25

Join us for events marking our silver anniversary

he coming academic year, 2003-04, will mark the 25th anniversary of the College of Design at Iowa State University.

To celebrate a quarter-century of accomplishments and explore future directions for the college, we have prepared an exciting program of lectures, exhibitions and other events, beginning in August and culminating in April 2004.

The general theme for the year is "Design from Without/Design from Within." Several sub-themes loosely focus on sustainable design practices, reflections within, material innovation, industry and design, design activism and projections without. Our goal is not only to reflect upon our first 25 years, but to investigate new possibilities for design education, research and outreach as we continue the college's envisioning process.

Following is a schedule of public activities planned for the coming year. We hope many of you will be able to join us for these informative and celebratory events! Reminders and invitations will be mailed for some events, and additional information will be made available on the college's Web site, www.design.iastate.edu. In particular, check the online Calendar and Gallery 181 exhibition schedule for specific times and locations for all events.

Silver Anniversary Schedule, Fall 2003

| September | (Sustainable Design Practices)                     |
|-----------|--|
| 9/2-12    | Spring '03 Architecture Rome<br>Program Exhibition |
| 9/5       | College of Design Golf<br>Tournament               |
| 9/5       | Architecture Fall Kickoff<br>Lecture               |
| 9/11      | P.H. Elwood Lecture<br>(Landscape Architecture)    |
| 9/15-26   | Summer '03 Urban Design<br>Rome Program Exhibition |
| 9/29-10/5 | Summer '03 Los Angeles<br>Studio Exhibition        |
|           |  |

| October |  |
|---------|--|
| 10/4    |  |
| 10/8-23 |  |

10/9

10/17

10/30

11/4

(Material Innovation)

**Opening Reception** 

(during Homecoming)

(Reflections Within)

Faculty Exhibition

design faculty

Susan Szenasy

Family Weekend Reception

Work by 24 retired Iowa State

Anniversary Kickoff Lecture:

Szenasy is editor of Metropolis

magazine and teaches design

history and design ethics at

Parsons School of Design.

Silver Returns Exhibition

"Silver Returns" Retired

- 10/27-11/14 "Transformation: New International Design" Exhibition Work by 30+ international women designers interpreting the 21st-century home; showcases unexpected and surprising materials, processes or forms used to reinvent the familiar.
- Lecture: Ned Kahn 10/29 Kahn creates interactive sculptures that celebrate nature and science. He also creates outdoor artworks that respond to their environment.

Lecture: Arthur Ganson Ganson is a kinetic sculptor who creates machines that combine art and motion, and often deal with the notion of time.

(Material Innovation continued) November

Metal Construction Association Lecture: William Zahner Zahner is CEO of A. Zahner Co. of Kansas City, Missouri, which produces custom architectural and ornamental metal work for the commercial industry. Zahner has worked on many of the most fascinating architectural and sculptural projects utilizing metal as a major design material. Graphic Design Student 11/17-29 **Competition Exhibition** 

| Si | ver | Anniversary | Schedule, | Spring | 2004 |
|----|-----|-------------|-----------|--------|------|
|    |     | 1           |           | 1 0    |      |

#### January

| 1/15      | Richard Hansen Forum<br>and Lecture  |
|-----------|--|
| 1/20-30   | Art and Design Rome<br>Program Exhibition  |
| February  | (Industry and Design)  |
| 2/1-6     | Interior Design Senior<br>Exhibition   |
| 2/9       | Lecture: Brenda Laurel   |
| 2/9-24    | Iowa Industries Exhibition   |
| 2/19      | Lecture: Harvey Molotch  |
| 2/25      | Lecture: Barry Katz  |
| 2/26-27   | Career Days  |
| 2/29-3/21 | College of Design Faculty<br>Exhibition  |
| March     | (Design Activism)  |
| 3/1       | Lecture: Lucy Lippard  |
| 3/3       | Presentation: Guerrilla Girls<br>Lecture: Grace Boggs<br>Presentation: Long Haired<br>Collective |
| 3/22-26   | BFA Student Exhibition   |
| 3/29-4/10 | Art and Design Annual<br>Exhibition  |
| April     | (Projections Without)  |
| 4/1-3     | American Indian Symposium  |
| 4/11-5/7  | College of Design Alumni<br>Exhibition   |
| 4/14      | College of Design Awards Day<br>College of Design<br>Anniversary Picnic                          |

#### Historically significant or simply history?

he twin towers of East Side School and adjoining Middle School has dominated the skyline of Decorah for well over 100 years. For generation after generation, these buildings became time-honored icons that signaled the importance of education to this scenic farming community. More recently, they were bestowed with yet another honor: the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) designated them as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places for 2003. Each year the NTHP's Most Endangered List highlights the country's architectural heritage threatened by "neglect, insuffi-cient funds, inappropriate development or insensitive public policy." Decorah's schools are in good company. Also appearing on the national list is





the TWA Terminal at New York's JFK International Airport and the Minute Man National Historic Park near Boston. Closer to home, the Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance produces it own Annual Most Endangered Properties list of threatened structures here in Iowa. Selected by a panel of jurors judging criteria such as geographic location, historic significance, type of threat and building type, the 2003 list includes (in addition to the Decorah East Side and Middle Schools)

a bridge in Adel, the American Legion Memorial Building in Atlantic, Clinton Machine Company Administration Building in Maquoketa, the Fort Des Moines site in Des Moines,



the Franklin County Courthouse tower in Hampton, Lincoln School in Cedar Falls, Mormon House in Bentonsport, Old German Bank in Dubuque, St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Burlington and the Woodworth Building in Millville, Iowa. Here's a short quiz: Should these structures be saved? The easy answer would be a resounding "yes." Now here's the hard part: Can or will these structures be saved, infused with new life and purpose? Only time will tell.

#### Art museums of architectural artistry

esign Intelligence, an e-journal focused on all topics related to the business of architectural and industrial design, recently released its list of 100 Outstanding United States Art Museums and Their Architects. The states comprising the Central States Region of the American Institute of Architects were well represented. Iowa, of course, was represented by the Des Moines Art Center, the architectural magnum opus featuring the original building designed by Eliel Saarinen (1948), with masterful additions by I.M. Pei (1968)

and Richard Meier & Partners (1985). Others receiving mention in the region include the recently completed Contemporary Art Museum by Allied Works Architects (2003), the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts by Tadao Ando (2001) and the St. Louis Art Museum by Cass Gilbert (1903), all in St. Louis, Missouri; the Wichita Art Museum by Clarence Stein (1935) in Wichita, Kansas; the Joslyn Art Museum by John and Alan McDonald (1931) with its Scott Pavillion designed by Norman Foster & Partners (1994) in Omaha, Nebraska;

the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art & Design by **Gunnar Birkerts & Associates** (1994) and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art by Wight & Wight (1933), both in Kansas City, Missouri; and Phillip Johnson's Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery (1963) in Lincoln, Nebraska. Feeling a need for some creative inspiration? Experience the architectural artistry of one of these museums today, and while you are there, I understand that the other art is pretty good, too.

# **Architect**

#### A LIST OF CONTRACTORS AND MANUFACTURERS FOR MAJOR

BUILDING ELEMENTS IN FEATURED PROJECTS

#### **Decker Sporting Goods**

Carpet: Bentley Mills Inc.; Lighting: Weidenbach-Brown Lighting; Paint: Sherwin-Williams Co.; Plastic laminators: Abet Laminati; Vinyl composition tile: Azrock; Merchandising: Merchandising Options; Bamboo flooring: Buell Flooring Group; Rubber base: VPI; Perforated metal: McNichols; Mats: Kuhlmann and Associates; Slatwall: Wonderosa Wood Products, Inc.; MDF board: Marlite

#### Des Moines Area Community College — West Campus

Glass: AFGD; Curtain wall system: SOTA Glazing Inc.; Metal roof: Berridge; Metal skin: Sobotec Limited; Floor tile: Mannington Commercial; Carpet: Interface, Inc.; Coiling door: McKeon; Folding partitions: Wilson Doors Co.; Doors: CECO; Paint: Iowa Paint; Heat pumps: Bells and Gosset (ITT Industries); Other major HVAC, AHU: York; Controls: Siemens; Lighting fixtures: Corelite, Metalux, Portfolio, SPI, Halo, Phoenix, Surelite, Kim, Louis Paulsen; Lighting control: Lutron

#### HLKB disPLAYSPACE

Carpet: Interface; Lighting: Lightolier; Furniture: Knoll, Norman Foster; Millwork: Tony Lisac; Metalwork: Hawk Metal

#### **Kenyon Building**

Exterior cladding: Exterior Sheet Metal, Inc.; Windows: PITTCO; Storefront: PITTCO; Skylights: Wasco Products, Inc.; Metal fabrications: Majona; Roofing: Stevens EP Roofing System; Lighting: Tech, Dac, Lightolier

#### **Marakon Associates**

Ceilings: USG; Doors: Hird Blaker (custom); Carpet: Durkan; Furniture: Herman Miller (Pigott); Lighting: Peerless, Bruck; Hardware: Doorma; Glass doors: Blumcraft; Millwork: Hird Blaker (custom); Appliances: Subzero, GE, Gaggenau; Plumbing: Kroin, Kohler

#### **Metro Waste Authority**

Floors: Bamboo; Carpet: Mohawk; Furniture: Herman Miller; Lighting: Artimede, Flos, Lightolier, Peerless, Bruck; Millwork: Tony Lisac (custom); Metalwork: Hawk Metal (custom); Ceilings: USG; Appliances: Kitchen Aid

#### **Reiman Gardens Conservatory Complex**

Curtain walls: Architectural Wall Systems; Stone materials: Webber Stone; Structural steel: Metal Fabricators

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