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Seattle is a rich city compared to New Orleans. But the wealth has been used to confine the city. Outdoor café bars are ringed by little fences; sidewalks are arteries not sites of encounter. No jostling, no feel of fellow walkers, no trash/no splash. Retail, restaurant and recreation are all neat and clean. But is sanitation and order enough? Circulation systems are great, but don’t they need a heart?

How does Seattle create art and architecture in the urban environment when everything is geared to be “correct,” to not offend. New Orleans is most always incorrect. It is dirty sometimes, vulgar often, and riotous. Even Orleanians are frequently embarrassed by the manifestations of their city. But at the same time they love their city and few ever leave. Let’s hope the Orleanians can keep their city alive after the disaster of Katrina, repairing and rebuilding neighborhoods where music thrives and people speak poetry. America needs New Orleans, we all need to remember that a city is more than a money-making machine, that a city exists where people are nourished by memories, music and crawfish.

Patricia Tusa Fels grew up in New Orleans and is an architect living in the Seattle area.

Image courtesy New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau
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Clair Enlow
AIA Seattle 2005 Honor Awards

Jon Taylor of Callison, chair of this year's AIA Honor Awards for Washington Architecture program committee, said he drew inspiration from Lewis Mumford's 1924 work Sticks & Stones, A Study of American Architecture and Civilization, in which Mumford berates "architecture for photographers" that rarely relates to the people occupying it. "Sticks & Stones" became the theme of this year's program.

But on awards night, the photography flashing before us in the pre-program show at Benaroya Hall showed a bumper crop of arresting architectural images — mostly houses. Before the winners were announced, jury members Shirley Blumberg of Toronto, Brian Healy of Boston, and Julie Snow of Minneapolis talked about values like innovation and refinement and the important opportunities that single-family dwellings represent in the design world. Then they passed over almost all of the houses to hand out awards to multi-family industrial, institutional and civic projects. While recognizing these with "Commendation" or "Award of Merit," the jury gave the only "Honor Award" to an expansive dwelling designed for George and Laurie Schuchart by Suyama Peterson Deguchi with clean geometry and dramatically unfolding outer and inner courts.

As an observer and participant in design juries over the years, I know that it is very difficult to evaluate innovation, refinement or any other design criterion — when faced with large, complex projects like schools, corporate office buildings or hospitals. So they don't seem to get a fair shake in award programs, even though their impact on the overall environment is very significant and we all want them to be responsibly and responsively designed. The problem of getting respect for these large, overburdened projects has been the subject of numerous discussions about the value of design awards programs and their relevance to the profession of architecture. The jury seemed to be making up for lost time by passing over the $500 per square foot houses to recognize architects who work with delimited budgets, big programs, multiple clients and urban sites. A shift to include more of the latter is not surprising.

But this program seemed more like a backlash. Combined with their sparse award distribution, the jury's silence sent a message that certain projects and project types can stand for societal values, like "housing alternatives," (Nordheim Court, by Mithun), "civic pride," (Seattle City Hall by Bohlin Cywinski Jackson/Bassetti Architects), "modern industry," (The Boeing Company, Renton, by NBBI), "quality education," (Nathan Hale High School Performing Arts Center by Mahlum Architects), and even "humane incarceration," (Snohomish County Jail Expansion, by NBBI) — all award winners in the commendation and merit categories.

These were all clearly good projects, and the new City Hall is well known to most. But we strained to understand exactly what had moved the jury about these buildings. Aside from the spare wording of their formal "jury comments" — read by moderator Brian Carter, architecture dean at the University of Buffalo — the jurors (architects, all) had nothing to say. Left with little more than photos, and no direct description to convince us that the jurors really loved these projects, the audience had to read between the lines and the lines on the program. Here's the way I would sum up the message:

You can design for wealthy patrons who build second homes all over paradise. But you'd better be really, really good. In the meantime, remember that architecture is also about whole societies and their values. Let the media feast their eyes on the beautiful houses, and let the owner/patrons eat cake. But the award stand is closed, and the goods have been redistributed.

The hundreds of architects in the awards night audience work day after day to produce an experience, one that can be shared by anyone who visits the buildings they design. This is one of the few architecture juries in the nation that actually visits the projects they recognize, according to AIA Seattle executive vice president Marga Rose Hancock. Braced by Mumford's critique of architecture and image, shouldn't this panel have been prepared to tell us what they experienced? Architecture doesn't have to be a personal possession to please.

The best architecture is even better if it is loaded with public purpose and symbolic value. But why go there? Maybe, after visiting the projects, the next jury will tell us.

Clair Enlow writes about design, the environment and related political issues. She is a freelance journalist and columnist for the Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce.

The 2005 AIA Honor Awards for Washington Architecture program incorporated a design competition for a memorial to Seattle's homeless dead, whose numbers continue to mount as we enter another economic boom. It was managed by University of Washington professor Steve Basdanes. The winning concept, produced by a team of young architects at Callison, involves permanent cast-in-place concrete footprints in scattered sites, along with a moveable memorial of bronze footprints that define a de-facto shine.
CIVIC MOVES

PS: You need to declare victory in smaller elements. The little moves, collectively, make greater progress in the long run than the grand gesture.

JF: Bradner Gardens helped build a community and was good architecture. The architects connected with the neighborhood. They recognized that a simple garden can aspire to something higher. Is this the kind of small move you are talking about?

PS: Bradner Gardens was a big victory. The students, neighbors and architects changed the neighborhood forever. It required involvement on the part of the community. A city where everyone feels a sense of ownership and responsibility is the goal. It is not a piece of legislation or a new transportation system. The grand gesture is almost always out of date by the time it comes. The Alaska Viaduct is a grand gesture.

BS: One of the legacies of the neighborhood planning effort is that the individual communities had to negotiate what they wanted to do. As a result, neighbors can talk to each other in a way they could not before.

PS: There's a lot to be learned there and Seattle was the leading edge. It's something to be proud of. It goes back to what we talked about earlier. You've got to find a way to talk to people that doesn't make them feel stupid, so they see architecture and design professionals as people they can rely on and trust.

There are a few big issues in the community: housing affordability and managing growth, adding density and preserving a healthy community. Change isn't welcome, it's inevitable. The question is, "How do we manage change and preserve the qualities of community that make this a special place?"

JF: If there could be one system who would govern it?

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

PS: Maybe it is time for a deeper discussion. I've thought our counties are obsolete - three counties serving one region. It's inefficient, ineffective and they're going broke.

I think the main goals of a regional government could be growth management or smart growth, regional transportation, regional courts and jails. Don't get into local zoning and local elements. Be the umpire. Indianapolis has a regional government. Portland is similar.

This is a case where it's got to be a collaborative effort. If it doesn't come from the architecture and planning professions, where's it going to come from? It could come from the School of Public Affairs, but anything that comes out of the universities, politicians suspect. It's got
to come from the grassroots. It has to be an alliance. On this, the natural allies are business, the Chamber of Commerce and transportation advocates.

It's much easier to organize a fight than to make stuff happen. It's a long distance game. You take small wins and you keep plowing ahead. Stopping something is a different strategy. Nothing's wrong with forming a group for the purpose of forming a regional constituency. The arts form a potentially powerful constituency. That's another place where there could be a regional support base.

BS: I see alliances between Allied Arts, FutureWise, People for Puget Sound, the ULI and others. These groups are new or have been rejuvenated.

JF: You mentioned the Sierra Club as a group with strong influence [see ARCADE 24:1]. Most of its members live in the urban fabric.

PS: I think the most influential environmental group is the League of Conservation Voters. They see themselves as the political arm of the environmental community. They have relationships with Labor and are politically savvy. On this governance issue, you might find some unnatural allies in people like Tim Eyman and those against government waste.

CIVIC BUILDING

PS: We haven't talked about civic buildings. I'm very proud of what we got done. Each has a different function and strategy. The Opera House was a rebuild, and the money went inside because that's where the performance happens. The outside is an entrance sequence that was done well by Katherine Gustafson. For the Library we wanted something that could compete with the stadiums. This is a literate, thoughtful town and we wanted something that would make people's jaws drop. We wanted intellectual building for this intellectual city. I think Koolhaas did a good job. You see the building in ads all the time, and the library is a tourist destination.

City Hall had a different agenda. It had to be comfortable but also out-there and intellectually challenging. We wanted something green and high-tech and old-shoe and civic all at the same time. When you think about the building in that context, it is a community builder. City Hall is a source of civic pride. Civic architecture should set the standard and inspire the private sector to something higher.

REGIONAL COMPARISONS

JF: Are there lessons we may learn from Vancouver or Portland?

PS: They've done a much better job of in-fill housing. Portland has a public development agency that's been a part of that. Business districts should include a significant amount of housing, helping to solve our transportation problem. Why shouldn't the place you be as nice as the place you live? It is an affordable housing strategy and a transportation strategy.

Explain to people in simple ways: Hey, it's another car that's not on the road; the guy can walk to work! It's cheap; you don't need to pay anything for the land or the infrastructure! This encourages affordable housing. People get it.

Things like Whole Foods and Starbucks are community builders. Integrate them. This whole idea of a separation of uses in our zoning code is a 19th-century idea. It extends from the time when the places people worked weren't fit to live in.

JF: It goes back to what you were saying in the beginning. Bring a school, a supermarket to these areas, the housing will follow. People will want to live there.

PS: And early education and open space, so people can breathe. These are the things you need to be out there pushing. People need to get over whining about the politicians. They're not going to be leaders. And if they are, they're not going to be around long. That's just the way it is.

ACTION

PS: Stop complaining about the press...I have a hard time doing that...I'm so disappointed in the press. They're a dying business just trying to survive. Use blogs, email lists, and community forums... Build alliances. Rather than speaking to impress your peers, learn how to speak to your clients.

Life is more than just surviving it. You've got to figure out a way to have a rich experience. The goal isn't money. You're going to find more joy in life when you find ways to make the place better than it was when you found it. I think it's there in the young people.

Barbara Swift is principal of Swift & Company in Seattle. John Fleming is a partner with the Architecture in Seattle.
Joseph Schollmeyer is an architect from Portland now with the London branch of Rafael Vinoly Architects. Earlier this year, he traveled to Sri Lanka with Architects Without Borders, designing and building a school in the village of Bata Atta, in the Hambantota District. As he passed through Portland on his way to London, we asked him about the role of architects in post-disaster circumstances.

The name Architects Without Borders draws inevitable comparisons with Doctors Without Borders — is there any similarity? Yes and no. It's a stretch to borrow the moniker "Without Borders" from doctors, since the essential life saving services doctors provide are worlds apart from the more esoteric and intellectual services of architects. Where doctors are pretty much 80 percent action and 20 percent talk, architects tend to reverse that percentage, which is certainly not as helpful.

How do you think architects can best fit into a situation like the one you were part of? There's a desperate need for massive amounts of rebuilding and everyone is in a big hurry to get it done. So the planning is often completely irresponsible. In Sri Lanka, the replacement of destroyed towns began with a knee-jerk government-imposed 100-meter setback from the sea, resulting in former coastal towns being rebuilt miles inland on plots of land that were simply scraped bare. The government planning strategy amounted to having donors write checks to pay for 50, 100 or 200 houses, then picking a floor plan from a plan book, randomly overlaying a Western grid onto the parcel, and just building rows and rows of these things. There was little to no real thinking about making a viable community. At one level I can understand how difficult it must have been for the government, having to build hundreds of towns at once. But it just wouldn't have taken that much more time to do a little long-term planning. This is really what we were hoping to do, but were prevented by their Kafkaesque bureaucracy.

So in the end, politically or culturally, is it appropriate for architects from another culture to rush in after a disaster, or might they be better employed in a preventive role?

Architects are much better suited to disaster preparedness, rather than rescue service, and yes, it is a problem having them fly in and impose their prejudices on a different culture, especially one with long-standing building traditions deeply tied to that culture — I witnessed a lot of this and it was disturbing. Medical techniques are universal, the built environment is anything but.

What exactly did you end up doing there? We designed and helped construct a school addition. It's a complicated story, but because of some political connections, the local authorities left us alone, which was unusual. This allowed the project to be more grassroots than normal, without the thick layer of bureaucracy between us and the villagers, so the school — although built from a standard government-issued plan — ended up much better suited to their needs. And we improved on the standard construction methods seen all over Asia; the stone rubble, bricks and mortar, and asbestos roofs. We proposed cast-in-place steel-reinforced concrete for the foundation and structure (with donated cement), concrete block infill and a tile roof. The laborers were skillful and ingenious with low-tech construction methods, cutting rebar with a hacksaw, bending it by hand, and mixing concrete with shovels on the ground, achieving a surprising degree of accuracy.

We were fortunate to meet the architect Mahanama Premetilka, former assistant to the well-known architect Geoffrey Bawa. He became a great friend and mentor for the whole process, saying to us, "You came all the way from America to help my country, it's the least I can do."

What skill set of an architect would be most useful at that time and place, assuming you had the freedom to use it?

It has to do with the architect as facilitator, more than as designer; understanding what's really there culturally, seeing all the social layers and interactions that exist, and then being able to analyze and understand all that in some comprehensive way, eventually bringing the right people together to create what's needed.

Do you plan to return to Sri Lanka?

I'd love to go back one day to see kids using the school we worked on, and maybe one day I will. But not for a while — it's awfully hot there.

JM Cava is an architect in Portland who teaches, writes and designs buildings and gardens.

Photos courtesy of Joseph Schollmeyer
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TREVOR BODDY
CITY BUILDING VANCOUVER: INNOVATIVE RESTAURANT DESIGNS FEAST THE EYES

With the creative invention of our multi-cultural chefs and the natural bounty of ingredients from our seas and shores, Vancouver is becoming one of the great restaurant cities of the world. But despite the wonders that show up on our dining-out plates, the interior designs of our restaurants have been strictly grey mystery meat and over-boiled potatoes.

Over the past decade, the brutal cost squeeze of our extreme real estate market has limited creative restaurateurs in more ways than one. Vancouverites pay Canada’s highest housing prices on less than Canada’s highest wages – we spend half our net income on shelter these days, therefore putting a lid on hikes in menu pricing in a competitive dining scene. Restauranters are left with a tough equation: improving the look of their premises has to be “financed” by a reduction in the quality of ingredients or portion sizes they put on the table.

Despite the challenging climate, four restaurants that opened in Vancouver over the past eighteen months have sprinkled some much-appreciated garam masala into our heretofore bland dining rooms.

FEENIES, WEST BROADWAY
Hands down, lower-rents-than-downtown West Broadway has become our leading eating street, as there is hardly a top local dining room not within six blocks of it. At the hub of this is the complex of three restaurants run by star chef Rob Feenie. Feenie is almost the only Vancouver restaurateur who balances innovative design with consistently high quality invention from his kitchen team.

Design-wise, my favorite of the three is the upscale Gothic esthetic of his Lumiere Baking Bar. This is a long corridor connecting the front door to the haute cuisine main dining room, and half the fun in this modish room is checking out the tartorial flourishes and dining partner choices of the power hitters on their way to the main room.

My least favorite is the more down market Feenie’s, with its designer versions of dogs, burgers and that gloppy fast food standby from Quebec, poutine. Feenie’s is so 2003 it hurts, with its “Kill Bill” effect of dried-blood-colored wrapped walls set off with fuzzy light fixtures with the hue and texture of fake blonde wigs. But then a link with boy wonder movie director Quentin Tarantino is a natural for Feenie and his designer, David Hepworth, as both Vancouverites have a similar flare for the dramatic on the plate and on the walls, and both gentlemen saw success at a young age.

RANGOLI’S, GRANVILLE AND WEST 11TH
If Feenie’s interior looks like “Kill Bill,” the new take-out café Vikram Vij has opened next to his wildly successful eponymous restaurant is a high-tech Bollywood production, a Bangalore-shot, all-singing, all-dancing playback remake of Stanley Kubrick’s 2001.

Rangoli means “painted prayer” in Hindi, and the prayers of many of us have been answered, as this is the best-designed new restaurant and tastiest takeout joint to open in this city in years. On a tour, ever-gracious host Vikram Vij points out that everything about the walls and skylights were removed from what was once Max’s Delicatessen to shape his re-conceived deli, which he corrects to “New Delhi” after tactfully glancing at my interview notes.

This room is as bright and metallic as the stainless steel Tiffin sets that are used to deliver hot lunches all over the Sub-continent. Indeed, designer Marc Bricault has even conceived Rangoli’s food packaging and custom rack display systems. Both of these are inspired by kitchenware from the Sub-continent, the racks shaped into a highly abstracted elephant, carrying a load of Rangoli-branded spices for sale.

The elephant motif pops up on the tops of the custom-designed tables, the give-away being the over-sized pachyderm “eyes” and squat and you can see it “trunks” on each. Ceramic tile the colour of a Rajasthan dust storm lines the floors and walls of Rangoli’s.

A Franco-Ontarian who is largely self-taught as an industrial, graphic and interior designer, Bricault’s thoroughness and attention to detail for everything Rangoli (he is responsible for the menu typography, the PVC plastic food takeaway pouches printed in Korea, the checkerboard steel and acrylic porous wall between prep kitchen and dining area, and much more) is a stunning demonstration of the business value of investment in design.

LIFT, COAL HARBOUR
When the Vancouver- and Calgary-based Monk McQueen Restaurant Group bought the rights to develop a rare on-the-water restaurant site from a previous group of investors, they hired Smart Design to come up with a concept and name, “Lift.” was inspired by the boat lifts that elevate yachts at high-end marinas, like the ones in Coal Harbour. But grousing Vancouver designers have since taken to calling this flashy marina-side eatery “the well-named lift restaurant.” This is because so many of its architectural details seem to be “lifted” from previous creations.

For example, Lift’s standout nighttime design feature is a backlit honey-colored onyx-stone bar. But Marc Bricault designed an almost identical backlit honey-colored onyx-stone wall feature behind Vij’s bar four years ago. Lift’s maritime-inspired exterior architecture—-with the sweep of its cable-supported forms and metallic surfaces— are
at least cousins if not clones of previous buildings around False Creek. Lift’s architectural genes can be traced back to Peter Cardew’s James Stirling-inspired boathouse townhouses, and Bing Thom’s freighter-like False Creek Yacht Club.

Project designer Al Johnson of Downs Archambault Architects counters that his design attempts to reconcile the corporate architecture around it — like the adjacent Westin’s hulking convention wing, which he designed — with the floating fortunes of the actual water between Lift and Stanley Park. Polished aluminium panels tastefully contrast horizontal slats of rare tropical woods.

The choice of tropical woods is appropriate, given that former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has moved into an adjacent condo. When in power through the 1990s, Mohamad was noted for his campaigns against the Internet and for rumbling about restrictive dress codes for women in his majority Muslim nation.

Now, when spending part of the year in Vancouver, Dr. Mohamad will look down upon the bare shoulders of babinski’s sipping cosmos on Lift’s rooftop bar, capacity 58. This dockside diorama says everything about Vancouver, circa 2005: moneyed Asian real estate investor meets Westcoast lifestyle; Puritanism sets its permanent gaze upon exhibitionism.

There is less to look at inside the 900-square-meter restaurant — more of those rare tropical woods, an aquarium for kids of all ages, plus sliding glass walls that disappear in good weather to link the 140 seats inside with the 50 on the outside decks. Johnson was obliged to set his design over a pre-existing pad, making interior spaces tight, a set of intimate rooms around a winder stair to the rooftop drinking zone, washrooms and a second service bar. This second bar makes it easier for regular-guy patrons, much in evidence, to send over drinks to the babinski’s, with “May I offer you a Lift” being the most popular line to both open — and close — an evening up there.

**WATERMARK, KITSILANO BEACH**

The boldest and most refined architecture of the four comes from Tony Robins’ long-gestating Watermark, rising up from the footprint of the former Kitsilano beach fish ‘n’ chips stand.

Born and educated in Great Britain, Robins is one of the most original but unknown designers in Vancouver. If Canada were not one of the most talent-averse, innovation-inhibiting countries going, Robins would be as famous as Daniel Libeskind, and he would have building commissions like that other architect with a deep interest in films and film-making, Rem Koolhaas.

It’s been a decade since Robins has completed a building — a series of Japanese restaurants in Kitsilano, Whistler and Japan. During this sabbatical from conventional architectural practice he has been writing screenplays instead, and has had several optioned by Hollywood, including the fanciful tale of the secret re-building of a second Eiffel Tower.

Taking seven years to secure approvals and complete construction in a city park on the Kitsilano waterfront, Watermark’s resulting architecture is worth every minute. The real test of Tony Robins’ design skill at Watermark is its simplicity — lesser hands would have fudged it up, distracting from the brilliant views and verdant park setting. The proportions of columns, window Mullions, even the width of the exterior deck are profoundly right, making natural beauty even more beautiful in its framing by a sympathetic intelligence. Much of Watermark’s finesse is invisible, as every inch of it was shaped to diminish negative impacts to view corridors and heritage trees in this west-facing park site.

Robins concedes he “had a bit of fun” with the all-glass, sentinel-like elevated lifeguard’s meeting room north of the main restaurant. I hope this room can occasionally be used for dining, or even better, let’s convene sessions in that glorious space where future architects can show their designs to dug-in residents objecting to anything other than trees, sand and jogging trails in our urban parks.

Architecture critic Trevor Boddy offers his opinions monthly about design and urban development issues, and he welcomes yours: trevbody@hotmail.com.
Cloudia Meyer-Newman is Professor of Design at Cornish College of the Arts and received her MFA in photography at the San Francisco Art Institute. Prior to joining the faculty at Cornish she was Senior Designer at Methodologie in Seattle.
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Narcissus believed that what he desired—himself—was something he could possess. When in reality, what he desired was humanity, which cannot be possessed—only borrowed while we inhabit our lives. This issue of ARCADE scratches the surface of the designed and built manifestations and accommodations of desire we encounter in our daily lives.

Writer Charles Mudede tells the story of one summer in the lives of two lovers in Seattle. The result of sating their sensual needs “In Public” places is “…the eroticization of what was initially a desire-less city.” In “Landscape of Desire” San Francisco architect Bonnie Bridges recounts a current project whose program must speak to the visceral desires of its patrons; the environment should provoke shoppers to feel as though they’re on vacation in a Flora ‘n’ fauna-infused locale—the air will be fragrant…birds will be singing. Art critic Regina Hackett ruminates on the commodification of desire in “Love for Sale.” Hackett concludes that “There is no pure desire untouched by commerce…” In “Surface: Welcome to the Age of Desire,” graphic designer Jason Tseltelis also delves into the culture of consumerism and desire by way of mass-marketed fetishes such as the iPod, Blackberry, BMWs and Fashion. And industrial designer Alex Diener compares the stereotypical female sex toy with high-designer examples in “This Isn’t Your Mother’s Vibrator.”

Urban ecology professor and Seattle Monorail Board volunteer Kristina Hill takes a critical look at what contemporary Northwest cities want but can’t have. “Take artsy neighborhoods for upwardly-mobile professionals…. How are people who work 50+ hour weeks to afford lofts and other slick new digs going to make any interesting art? Potato prints, maybe.” Internationally published author Rebecca Brown writes that “Extreme Reading is a kind of being a cannibal. You take a book, like a piece of food, and eat it.” “Every time you read a book you read what you desire. Every book you read includes the story of your life.”

In “Desiring the Act,” by his own admission photographer Michael Burns is “addicted to depiction.” He desires the act of photographing—observing through a camera lens—more than the resulting photographs themselves; he wants his subjects “to tell their own story” as he gets “out of the way.”

Now, then…what do you desire?

Kelly Walker is the Editor of ARCADE.
From your eyes but let me suck
Sensuous passion, sensuous glow.
Ah! Now, I have seen you look
You shall watch my life’s blood flow...
–Karl Marx

**IN PUBLIC**

Charles Tonderai Mudede

*The Birth of Our City.* Four years before the previous century closed, I began in June what would become a season-long love affair with a young woman who had not yet departed the final year of her teens. She lived with her estranged mother in a small Mount Baker home; I, who was about to enter the dead middle of my 20s, lived in a downtown studio apartment with a rather lazy cousin who wasted his days watching professional sports. The path to satisfying my and my lover’s sensual needs was repeatedly obstructed by two stubborn facts: one, with the exception of brief visits to a corner store (candy and Coca-Cola), my cousin never left the apartment; two, my lover was immoral in all matters but one: she refused to stain her mother’s often-empty home with the sin of our sex.

Failing to find a reliable private interior, we hunted for, and became intimate in, emptied or obscure public places: closed city parks, ladies’ lavatories in downtown hotels, buildings with shadow-obscured recesses, rooftops that rose well above other roof tops, and forgotten back staircases in big apartments whose locked main doors were suddenly opened by a departing (and usually uneasy) tenant.

*The Ruins of Nihonmachi.* One June night, we were in the Japanese garden at the edge of what remained of Nihonmachi. Under the full moon, there we stood before something that was once bright and becoming. The intermittent Camps extinguished the lights of this mini city within our mid-sized city many years ago. All that remained of Little Tokyo (or better yet, Tiny Tokyo) was the still open (but always cold) Panama Hotel, with its cheapish rooms, spring-worn white beds, abrupt bathrooms, and Scandinavian landlady, who speaks fluent Italian. There’s also the Maneki Restaurant, whose small bar resembles one I have seen in an Ozu film — was it Tokyo Monogatari, or Tokyo Twilight? But, my dear, how did we find ourselves in that street-lit garden or form around ourselves that transparent bubble which, as if blown out of the park by the open mouth of a floating tori, carried us above the shady phantoms, the brick bulks, and the heavy breathing of this city’s International District?

*After Being With You.* Often after seeing you, kissing you, leaving you there in the night, I would go to my apartment, my room, my bed and fall asleep. Six hours later, I’d wake up with the fresh phantom of your body pressed against me. It was the dumb of you. Of your presence (standing on the busy corner, sitting next to me in the empty bar, your lips in the ladies room) there was now an aural absence — a faintly breathing after-absorbing like something made of glass the aureate light of a sun now fully in the window just beyond the foot of my sleigh-framed bed, which at that brilliant moment seemed to have just arrived from the nothingness that I had journeyed to minutes after seeing you, kissing you, leaving you there in the night.

*My Lover’s Window.* On another June night, we were underneath the monstrous Freeway Park, on a street called something like Bubble Place. The involved traffic roared around us. Not far from where we stood and kissed and groped, was a strange window (maybe the strangest window in all of Seattle) which, from the park’s artificial waterfall, one can see the traffic on I-5 rush by. Looking into this window is like watching your sleeping lover’s dream from a discovered window under her hair. The thing that dreams in Freeway Park’s window — which is yellow, cracked in certain parts, and situated in a small recess over which water flows like transparent waves of hair — is the city itself. The city dreams of traffic streams.

*Maker’s Marxism.* Right after the night we smooched and fumbled in the middle of a discovered park, I went to the Twilight Exit and read a very short book on Marx by Terry Eagleton, whose most popular book, Introduction to Literature, I had reread and re-enjoyed the week before (and also recommended to you after we fucked it the bushes of another park at the top of Queen Anne — o was that even a park? Was it someone’s property that had the big bush that sheltered our prone position — I or the ground holding your skirt-covered waist; you on top with hot hands on my shirt and hips shifting and shifting?). The little book is simply called Marx and is part of Routledge’s excellent *The Great Philosopher’s Series.* It took me five Maker’s Marks to complete Eagleton’s pleasant and short study of the most sensual European philosopher of the 19th century.
August night. We were in the park, sitting on a picnic table, looking at the beginning and the end of the city. To the west of us were the phantom-large cargo ships heading toward or away from Harbor Island; to the east of us were the real and reflected lights of downtown. This park, which is on a dramatic bluff, is the most perfect park in Seattle – Magnolia Park. It was designed by John C. Olmstead, who was a senior partner in America’s first landscaping architecture firm, The Olmstead Brothers, and a stepson to the father of landscape architecture, Frederick Law. John C. Olmstead also designed many of the parks we met and made love in: the tiny Roanoke Park, the massive Seward Park and the Senepeternal Arboretum.

Close to the End. "It seems like I have spent something of a summer with you, Petra," I said at the beginning of the end of our affair. We were on a night bus. We had just seen together in ways that we had never been together before. It seemed strange to have a person I was so familiar with in the context of benches and bushes of local city parks, or the recesses of empty, exhausted bars, suddenly appear like a daily vision through the purple folds of your friend of a friend’s shower curtains, or sitting across from me drinking coffee in the morning, or sharing a heavy meal on a dinner table that had very stable legs. Imagine that! Drinking wine and whiskey with you in circumstances that were plausibly domestic, that were in the slow time of a marriage instead of the panicked minutes of a summer affair. If I had answered the knock of an unknown someone at the door, I would have been to them the man of the house. But there was not enough time for us; the moments quickly passed from day to night to day again, like the scenery on a stage set (except ours was framed by open windows), and in that space something else took shape, something that was even more wonderful than you had imagined. "Actually, Victor, I think I could love you for more than a year," you said to me, impressed by the wholesome hum of our happiness.

All of these summer pleasures entered twilight the moment you walked toward me on the bus departing to downtown, which was bright and at the bottom of the hill we quickly descended. The home that was ours for two days was a block away from South King Restaurant.

The End of It All. "Capitalist production collects the population together in great centers," writes Marx in his love poem Das Capital. In the way that heavy industry transformed the very structure and nature of the 19th-century city, our heavy passions transformed the substance and character of the last city of the 20th century. After we split – you left Seattle on August 21 to study modern dancing in Denver – I found myself coming across, and feeling aroused by: some recess, shadowed area, or dense park we had romanced in. The total effect of this has been the eroticization of what was initially a desire-less city. Because of you Seattle is now for me a place that Prince in a purple haze of music described as the "erotic city" – a topography that was now disorganized by and gorged with our sun-soft caresses, sticky kisses, and always clumsy and partially-clothed groping.

Charles Tonderai Mudede is an associate editor for The Stranger. He was born in an Africans-only hospital in Que Que (now called Kwekwe), Rhodesia (now called Zimbabwe) in 1969 – Kwekwe was, and still is, a steel town, much like James Dickens’s Coketown. Mudede is also an adjunct professor at Pacific Lutheran University, and his work has appeared in The Village Voice, Sydney Morning Daily and The New York Times, among others.
I'll admit it. Even as an educated urban-dweller, well-versed in the delirious Koolhaasian theories of shopping, I can't resist plant purchasing as an escape from the dissonance of my automated, structured life as an architect and parent. One of my favorite recreational activities is going to the plant nursery on Sunday mornings with my kids, dreaming about the gardens I might have, coveting ridiculously over-priced rare and unusual plants while feeling guilty that I don't love the cheaper natives. After several years of this weekly ritual, I have more than enough plants for my postage-stamp backyard, but I go anyway, to enjoy the shopping experience and feed my desire for more plants.

My company was recently asked to consider what I consider the perfect project: a large, destination nursery in San Francisco. In addition to a retail nursery, the program includes an indoor garden boutique, a café, a garden design/installation company and offices. We've been thinking a lot about how desire informs the utilitarian practice of selling plants.

Our clients, Guerrero Street Gardens, came to us with a site, limited budget, tons of enthusiasm and a conviction to continue retailing their nursery as a secret garden. The vision was clear according to Flora, one of the owners: "The store is an oasis. Once inside, you feel like you are on vacation. You feel like you are far, far away from the world outside. You want to spend lots of time looking and touching things. From time to time the plants in your path require that you stoop down and the leaves brush your face as you walk by. It smells good. There are birds singing. You sit on a bench and take it all in. You come here to be restored. It is a treat you give yourself.

You leave having spent an hour and a half. You had a cup of coffee. You spent $50 dollars, even though you didn't really need anything. You can't wait to come back."

To start the design process, together we defined the critical features of a destination plant nursery:

- Staffed by people passionate about plants, with horticulture/garden design knowledge and experience
- Great selection of plants suited for San Francisco's micro-climates
- Wide variety of rare and unusual plants that will draw customers from the entire Bay Area
- Healthy and non-invasive plants
- Enough natives to accommodate the ecological garden zealots

Everyone agreed the secret garden nursery could not have row upon row of four-inch plant racks, massive quantities of ubiquitous annuals and a charming, but aloof staff. Designing a "secret garden style nursery," where the shopping experience is anchored in desire for a place of retreat, a lush refuge from the urban quagmire, presents a bit of a conundrum. The secret garden must also drive high-volume retail sales, and the retailing of plants is most profitable when done in the dreaded "Best Buy" mode: racks of four-inch plants, one gallon and five gallon on the ground nearby.

So we addressed the shopping experience and the amenities that translate into increased revenue:

- Easy off-street parking – the financial partner informed us that there is a direct correlation between quantity of parking and gross sales
- Café (the latest trend in garden retailing) – creating a destination and capturing the customer for longer periods of time to spend more money
- Family and child-friendly
- Life-style boutique – where shoppers envision and purchase the entire California indoor-outdoor living experience, in addition to plants
- Comfortable areas to relax and workstations for planning gardens

We struck upon a hybrid solution, arranging the secret garden as a series of rooms that are interspersed with stations to place plant racks for easy purchase. The rooms trigger the desire for more and more plants – and will hopefully result in the engagement of the design and installation part of the business. To support this, we located the main conference room on the ground floor in full view of customers on their way to and from the main retail area.

Formally, the basic idea is quite simple: when in an industrial zone, build like an industrialist. (The project is located in Bayview, a neighborhood in transition as a new Muni line connecting downtown to the southeast sections of the city promotes gentrification. Begun more than 10 years ago by ex-mayor Willie Brown, the rail line is scheduled for completion in 2006.) We started with a large pre-engineered metal shell (45-feet wide, eight rigid frames 25-feet on center that span 200 feet from street to street), 20-foot-high eaves, 3:12 roof pitch. The shell is reminiscent of flower markets, garden halls and nearby produce terminals. The clean, crisp industrial design provides a serial-systematic order for Guerrero Street Gardens' inherently ephemeral product, and allows an armature for constant evolution.

The site's organization prioritizes the beauty of plants and gardens. The two street frontages (150 feet on 1er rold and 125 feet on Innes) are designed as long thin gardens, which establish the edges of the secret gardener inside. Even the end walls of the steel shell follow this order: the rigid steel frames are in-filled with a wire girk to support a selection of perennial vines. The remainder for the street frontage is black iron fences, also covered in vines. A privet hedge provides the backdrop for the dem onstration garden.

The project is scheduled for completion in spring 2007, at which point I will need to re-design my garden (again) to support my plant-buying habit.
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The Futility of Renunciation

Regina Hackett

In the age of corporate come-ons, pop-ups and product placement, the endless drone of the sales pitch and the fractured free-for-all of the advertised image, our desires come to us second hand, packaged by the marketplace for purchase and consumption.

Love for sale. Prostitution is the oldest profession, but surely we've aspired higher at some point in our history. Wasn't there ever something more romantic for somebody, buried in sex roles and conventions of the day, something untouched by considerations of cold cash? Idealists think so, and our culture still supports the narrative of a quickened pulse that ripens into an intimate understanding over time.

Many search, and some believe that they've found what they desire in another, but Capitalism's undertow urges them to keep paying for the privilege. Few relationships are hardy enough to forego commercial signs of continuing devotion (gifts) and efforts to achieve perpetual youth (product). Grow old gracefully if you dare. If you're female and your man has money, you risk being replaced by a younger version of yourself. Whatever anybody says about family values, everything's for sale, which encourages mates to believe themselves entitled to the thrill of a new person once the lover's body has lost its initial sparkle. George Orwell, as always, got it right. The lover's song in "1984" is short: "Under the spreading chestnut tree, I sold you, and you sold me."

How did the victory of the commercial impulse in the intimate arena affect visual art? When capitalist commodification of desire first took root and flourished in the 19th century, artists responded with Modernism. Make it new. Cleanse the lens of desire to see the world with fresh eyes. What was formerly considered beautiful became coarse (Courbet), exact (Cezanne) and savage (Picasso). Color went wild (Matisse) and form dug down to the root of reality (Malevich).

What did Modernism say to the academic painters of the old world, selling pre-digested dreams, suitable for framing? Can't touch this. Great artists tried to shake us from the conveyor belt of fabricated feeling, but those who were pushing product knew how to shape the image world to their advantage. They rallied, imitating artists, which encouraged the artists to imitate them back. In the long reign of Andy Warhol, love-for-sale has become our culture's dominant iconography, and Andy is the ultimate realist. Following him, postmodernists don't believe they offer a cleansing view. The last artists to try it were the Minimalists, who began by thinking their product was beyond placement, only to see the least tangible manifestations (Sol LeWitt's buried drawing) rise like surface to air missiles on the secondary market.

In "A Lover's Discourse," Roland Barthes observed that "there are moments when a patient needs to be told that the breakdown, fear of which is wrecking his life, has already occurred."

Art can't save us. There is no pure desire, untouched by commerce, and there is no anti-desire art to fortify us against the market forces of our culture. At best, art offers rigor, a pause point of surprise, a call and response development to other voices and other rooms, a passion you don't have to buy and a point you don't need to package. The rest is static.

Regina Hackett is art critic for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.
SURFACE: WELCOME TO THE AGE OF DESIRE

Jason Tselentis

Virginia Postrel, who wrote the Substance of Style, has labeled our time as the age of aesthetics, but we could just as easily call it the age of desire. And these days, if you aren’t drooling over some hip sports car by BMW, or hot fashion designs by the likes of Marc Jacobs or Tom Ford, your friends might think you’re weird. However much you love or loathe these things, you can at least share in the belief that advertising and brands are part of our culture — a culture of consumerism and desire.

These days, there’s nothing more desired than Apple’s latest and greatest iPod. We see the high contrast ads with flaming colors in print and observe the revved up advertisements pumped through our televisions. The MP3 players come in many colors, shapes and sizes and no matter who you are, chances are you have one or want one. Even senior citizens can be seen with the white earbuds dangling over their shoulders while waiting for the bus. Handheld devices like the iPod are unique objects of desire, because they hit right into our most sensitive plane — what actors and performers label an aesthetic plane — the hand. With our hands, we experience and elicit a wide range of interactions that translate into emotions such as love and acceptance, whether through hugs or handshakes. Design is deemed “good” when it meets similar human-centered emotions; it feels and looks good, sustaining our interest and curiosity. It tickles our eyes, feels good in our hands and performs the job much better than design that “looks bad” or outdated.

What would you rather have, a wobbly stack of compact discs in scratched-up jewel cases or an MP3 player? The iPod’s clean lines and smooth white surface make most consumers weak at the knees just on the merits of its sophistication and streamlined controls. And the BlackBerry is another example of a handheld device that caters to ideals of simplicity; more importantly, the BlackBerry keeps the consumer connected.

A colleague of mine recently confessed that his biggest fear is having the Internet go down, crashing his Web site and leaving him without e-mail to communicate with clients and peers. For him, the BlackBerry (or as he calls it, the Crackberry, because he’s so addicted to using it) services a desire for information and it keeps him in touch by always maintaining his connection with data, work, and peers. But ultimately, don’t we all need to escape and have some fun? Despite the notions of a mobile office, and the tenacity for maintaining contact through e-mail and cell phone, nothing matters more than being rewarded for our hard work and effort in this age of desire.

The automobile has long served Americans in a number of functional capacities: the station wagon of the 1970s, the minivan of the 1990s, and the present day SUV’s by the likes of Range Rover and Hummer. Such vehicles (monstrous by most accounts) are intended to meet the needs of our family gatherings and goings on, but the “functional” nature of these crafts never really gets pushed to the envelope. And it should come as no surprise that during a time of aging baby boomers, there’s been more emphasis placed on the automobile as escape — as toy — now that these erstwhile parents have an empty nest. Convertibles and sports cars seem all the rage, and rightly
so. You'll observe middle-aged drivers zooming around town in the compact and friendly BMW, Mini, Nissan Z and Porsche 911 because they promise fun and want to fulfill desires to be young and exciting, independent from the masses; solitude, speed, and sex appeal can be yours once you're behind the wheel.

And if you're looking to hit the road in these toys, you've got to look good. People will be gazing at not only your car, but also at you, so prepare for attention. Even if you don't own one of the above, you want to look good anyway—you want to be desirable. Like the celebrities we see in magazines and on the E! channel, it's in our nature to be desired. Nothing helps further that longing like clothing; you don't have to spend big to look good these days, but, of course you can if you want. Plenty of designer labels deliver smooth fabrics that drape lightly over your body, hugging curves and angles. From Coach to Donna Karen, Claiborne to Kenneth Cole and Daniel Cremieux to Calvin Klein, if the label on your back starts with the letters 'C' or 'K,' chances are you'll look like a million dollars. Unless it's Kmart, but that may change sooner than you think because of another mass-merchandise store putting pressure on the designer labels. Target, which has been invading the "design" landscape for nearly ten years by employing the likes of Michael Graves, Phillippe Stark, Cynthia Rowley and Isaac Mizrahi, has fashion and accessories that will dress you up without draining your pocketbook. Like the Bauhaus long believed, Target wants good design available for the masses.

When you can't acquire those things, those objects that define our age of desire and promise a better lifestyle, it's easy to think you'll become an outsider. That's a fair assessment, but people have been trying to climb the social ladder for ages and our society will always be comprised of the haves and have-nots. Well beyond these economic and social implications lies the once popular notion that brands and corporations are evil. While Naomi Klein dashed a majority of them in No Logo because of her distaste for the way corporations turn the masses into pawns, the fact is that products are good, brands are good. Like the iPod, they have the opportunity to create unique cultures that unite people. When you notice a person with white earbuds dangling from their ears, you know they're part of your "group" and in rare cases you may strike up a conversation and make a new friend. Dolling yourself up or putting on a dapper outfit changes your perspective on things, and gives you attention you wouldn't get in jeans and a t-shirt. Our culture of consumerism delivers brands and goods that have the ability to elevate our well being by making us feel complete, or in some cases, making us feel desired. If you're cynical enough to find such remarks vile or impure, then you're missing out on one of our country's greatest qualities that overshadows the No Logo fanaticism: the freedom to create desire and be desired.

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"When you can't acquire those things, those objects that define our age of desire and promise a better lifestyle, it's easy to think you'll become an outsider."
It sits on the shelf of your local "adult toy shop," an icon of desire, lust and funky good vibes. A neon yellow ten-inch silicone sheath enwraps a rigid plastic tube filled with D-cell batteries and a gyrator. Nubs, ridges, veins and all sorts of flagella cover its silicone skin all in pursuit of the perfect orgasm. This vibrator is designed to be one-stop-shopping for sexual tantalization. The state of vibrator design and sex toys in general is dismal. The adult industry is more into kitsch than comfort, easily fixated by flash and novelty. By doing so, the sex toy industry has closed itself off to an emerging upscale market opportunity. This market is looking for products to add extra excitement in the bedroom, but desires elegant eroticism over grotesque camp. Women are the primary market for vibrators, but it's hard to believe these products were designed for them. The over-the-top designs seem out of step with the modern woman's keen aesthetic sensibilities and erotic preferences.

Why should a vibrator be an exact replica of a penis? Does it stimulate more effectively? Or is it simply what the consumer has come to desire? But the question still remains: how does the consumer want to enjoy this product? Many vibrators blindly follow the status quo: a sex object should look like a sex organ. To design an alternative is more involved process: target your user, develop a product based on their use model, then spend marketing dollars to convince consumers you have a more desirable pleasure proposition.

A few designers have recently ventured to challenge the established course of sex toy design. Tom Dixon, Creative Director of British furniture retailer Habitat, has put forth his own stimulating solution. "Bone" is a cast resin, rechargeable vibrator that looks more like modern sculpture than sex toy. If left on a bedroom dresser, most would walk by, giving only a second look to admire its sensuous organic curves. Its form is inspired by ancient fertility symbols, but shaped to give a variety of rhythmic intensities to the clitoris. Acclaimed Australian designer Marc Newson has put his design DNA into his vibrating creation, "Mojo." Its soft nipple-formed plastic body invites women to experiment with it in a variety of solo-sex positions. Mari-Ruth Oda, a Japanese ceramist, has brought her talent for organic nature-inspired forms to vibrators. Her work, "Pebble," resembling a palm-sized wave-washed stone is most inconspicuous vibrator of the three. It's shaped for fingers to guide it easily along the body or to nestle into more intimate areas.

Each of these pleasure products is decidedly different from the mainstream vibrator, focusing on both user experience and form exploration. These products package arousal and exhilaration to inspire new uses and empower sexual exploration. While most vibrators of the past had a naughty, kinky connotation, this new generation seeks to create desire on a more sophisticated level of Eros. Their forms don't incite the embarrassed snicker today's largely campy vibrators do. Rather, these designers sought to give the vibrator a fresh identity, creating desire for an object that is as natural as it is sensual.

Seattle-native Alex Diener is an Industrial Designer for Simonsite Ultrasound. Traveling the world reminds him that, as different as people may seem, we all share the same needs, wants and desires.
Cities desire. More than that, they crave. Politicians take polls and campaign contributions that express those cravings in the language of votes and money. But are those the things that people who live in cities truly crave? Or just what their elected representatives crave? And whose cravings matter more, those of the majority (rich and poor), those of the rich alone, or those of our so-called representatives?

Here’s a short list of the things contemporary Northwest cities seem to desire:

- Artsy, culturally-rich neighborhoods for upper-middle-class professionals
- Biotechnology office and laboratory districts
- Good public schools
- Less traffic congestion and more rapid transit
- Better air and water quality
- Federal money for infrastructure from a Republican-dominated capital
- "Sprawl control" — more density while preserving single-family neighborhoods
- No homeless people blocking sidewalks
- Efficient, effective government that’s transparent and genuinely representative
- "Strong" elected leaders who listen to people in single-family neighborhoods

Now for the bad news. Some of these things cost more money than elected officials are typically willing to ask for, and some can’t be achieved at all because they’re in conflict with less-publicized realities. So cities may want them real bad, but never get them.

Take artsy neighborhoods for upwardly-mobile professionals, for example. Talk about an oxymoron. How are people who work 50+ hour weeks to afford lofts and other slick new digs going to make any interesting art? Potato prints, maybe. But not art. Where’s the angst going to come from, or the impulse to take obsessive risks? Upwardly-mobile people are supposed to be happy, not angst-driven. It’s just not American to make money and be unhappy.

Here’s another one: new biotechnology districts. Wait a minute — isn’t that the same industry that brings us genetically-modified crop plants? And aren’t most Pacific Northwest urbanites opposed to that sort of thing, along with the environmentalists? I suppose it would be grand to have more of it in every thriving city, and maybe it’s really not about plants at all — maybe it’s about developing genetic tests that let us sort healthy humans from humans who might get sick. So we can do something about that. Or not. In any case, most elected leaders want biotech in their city. Maybe they think it’ll help upwardly-mobile neighborhoods get a little more artsy.

Then, there’s that famous streetcar named desire. People want traffic in their city to go away, basically so they can drive. That’s a real public policy dilemma. How do you get people to pay for new transit when most of them want everyone else to use it, and are hoping it means they can drive downtown in their SUV without hitting traffic? This one’s an example where sometimes it’s the people who are the problem, refusing to pay for what they want, or refusing to recognize that they need to actually use transit in order for it to work.

But what happens when people get out ahead of their elected leaders on this particular craving, as happened in Seattle over the last 8 years? Seattle was getting light rail — very little, at a very high price and very slowly. So its people voted to create a new public agency (the Seattle Monorail Authority) to build a 14-mile monorail, and created a tax on car value to get the job done. Talk about a craving — the monorail idea passed four times at the ballot box, even withstanding a recall vote in 2004.

When project opponents put together a dollar figure that included financing costs (and operations and maintenance for the life of the project), the papers made it a front-page headline and the city’s elected leaders ran from the transit agency as if it were underneath a mushroom cloud. Now it’s going back to the voters for a fifth time, because the mayor and city council withdrew their support over the propaganda cost figures that appeared in the press. The citizens don’t know what happened — they just get told that the agency is an example of wasteful, inefficient government. So unless a miracle happens at the ballot box, Seattleites will wake up in 2011 with only 10 miles of transit instead of 24. Score one for the bad guys. Desire unfulfilled.

In the end, it’s easier not to want anything but a few people are repaired. Why “drink the Kool-Aid” — as they say about anyone who has the guts to advocate truly better cities — when you can buy a dark roast espresso at Starbucks and be bitter?

Kristina Hill teaches urban ecological design at the University of Washington, but her students don’t know she’s this cynical. She attributes it to reading too much mainstream media this past summer and spending 8 years on Seattle’s monorail board as a volunteer.
EXTREME READING

Rebecca Brown

You eat because you have to, it sustains you. But once you get past the basics of hydration and calories, what you eat and how you eat is determined by your own peculiar, and in the most literal sense, taste, by what can satisfy your sweet tooth or your sour tooth, your savory or unsavory desires. You eat some things because they are good for you, but there are only so many hours in a day, so many days in a life, so you also consume other things solely because you want to, because you have some craving, some urge, some visceral longing that only this particular thing can fulfill. To be polite you’ll eat whatever the people who invited you to dinner at their house have made for you, but when you go out you won’t order something you don’t like and if something shows up on your plate in some brownish sauce or gelatinous pool or that gets in your caw or goes down wrong or doesn’t appeal, you turn away from it, discreetly if you can, but if you can’t, if push comes to shove, if spit comes to fore, you hawk it or gag it or cough it out and you don’t care whose watching.

I can’t finish books I think are bad. I can’t get through somebody’s prose that reads to me like sucary or some brownish lumpy sticky sauce or is salt-and-peppered or soy-sauced beyond a shadow of its former self, that’s watered down or stupid or pretentious. Anthropologically speaking, we all recognize there are taboos on what we should not eat. But no one agrees about everything.

We’re taught to read because we need to to get through our culture, to read road signs and the names of stuff at the grocery store, to sign our names on documents when we marry or when we ought to be able to marry. This kind of reading is like hydration and calories. You need it to survive. If you don’t get it you get rickets. If you are illiterate you are probably poor you’re missing something basic from your diet and you’ll die sooner than you should.

But then after we’ve taken care of our basic needs, we’re taught to read in ways that our “good for us,” a grounding in the humanities to broaden our minds, etc., then finally to give us pleasure. At this level we decide what we like chicken or fish, poached or grilled, comics or Rilke, Th New York Times, O’Henry, Barbara Cartland, tacos, cheese.

Extreme Reading is a kind of being a cannibal. You take a book, like a piece of food, and eat it. For sustenance, to blood, if not to ritually ingest the soul or heart or powe of your enemy or someone who you loved. You take it in and chew it, grind and tear it down to the smallest bits to things that you can swallow down. Your rid yourself of some of it and keep some of the rest. Sometimes you keep what may not be the best for you. Your body knows what’s good for you, but sometimes you don’t listen. The things you eat and keep become a part of you. You recreate inside yourself, with caverns, juices, processes you can and can’t control, a kind of meat.

A book is a thing that someone made from things you think that you can understand (words in a language you think you know). You take it in and though you think you are sophisticated, a connoisseur, or at least someone with manners enough to wield a knife and fork and know to not talk with stuff in your mouth your big wide gaping frothing sucker open. You know that whatever it is, a ham and cheese on Jewish rye or cornpop or lobster or foie de something, no matter how humble or fine, you’ll break it down into broke things that can be used by you, your wanting flesh.

When you read a book, you read what someone else wrote but you also read your own book. You may read all the words or not, but the words you keep, that stick to your ribs and keep you awake, dyspeptic, bilious, worried in the night, or nourish you as if to health, that may become you muscle, bone or heart are words shape as you desire, no only or even the book that was written by someone else. The book you read is what you want, you will it into your.
very time you read a book you read what you desire.

This year I made up my mind to encapsulate the visual records of a small town in Vermont, a book called I Want To Be a Lady. I Want To Be a Lady, by Maximilian Foster, 1926, is a comic western romance that tells the story of an Eastern girl who, in late 19th-century America, goes West where she encounters the laugh-inducing antics of a group of lovable cowboys and scrappy, "unladylike" frontier folk. Though our heroine wants to be a lady (i.e. live a genteel, back-East style life), she realizes that the lovable cowboys and scrappy frontier folk are warm hearted and good and she is happier being the honest frontier wife of a lovable cowboy than a proper back-East Lady. I Want To Be a Lady, however, contains within it an entirely other book, which I discovered through severe editing. I went through the book, page by page, for more than a year, and painted or colored or collaged over most of the words, leaving only the words that told the story I needed to tell. My book, the book I desired, contained therein, is titled, I Want A Lady and it is a woeful autobiography about a doomed lesbian romance I had with an older, uh, lady, when I was young and still believed the things I read.

Every time you read a book you read what you desire.

I have been making cut and paste collages or illuminating manuscripts or, in the words of librarion friend, mine, defacing books. I'm following in (or just ripping off) the tradition of Tom Phillips, Orton and Halliwell and everyone else doing "altered exits" these days. I get a book, usually a book I think is silly or innocuous, not great and rooks. They were found at a municipal dump outside a small town in New Hampshire. I had gone to the dump with some visual artists who were scavenging for materials. My friends had to pay the dump for things like bed springs and auto parts, engines and tool handles and fence posts. The rest of these found at the municipal dump outside a small town in New Hampshire. I had gone to the dump with some visual artists who were scavenging for materials. My friends had to pay the dump for things like bed springs and auto parts, engines and tool handles and fence posts. The books, which I've read these books for years and probably no one will ever going to read them again. These books were utterly useless. I loved them for that. I took some home.

This year I found, for a dollar at one of these bookshops in Vermont, a book called I Want To Be a Lady. I Want To Be a Lady, by Maximilian Foster, 1926, is a comic western romance that tells the story of an Eastern girl who, in late 19th-century America, goes West where she encounters the laugh-inducing antics of a group of lovable cowboys and scrappy, "unladylike" frontier folk. Though our heroine wants to be a lady (i.e. live a genteel, back-East style life), she realizes that the lovable cowboys and scrappy frontier folk are warm hearted and good and she is happier being the honest frontier wife of a lovable cowboy than a proper back-East Lady. I Want To Be a Lady, however, contains within it an entirely other book, which I discovered through severe editing. I went through the book, page by page, for more than a year, and painted or colored or collaged over most of the words, leaving only the words that told the story I needed to tell. My book, the book I desired, contained therein, is titled, I Want A Lady and it is a woeful autobiography about a doomed lesbian romance I had with an older, uh, lady, when I was young and still believed the things I read.

Every time you read a book you read what you desire.
As a photographer, I seem to desire an awful lot. Or at least, I want to photograph an awful lot. I don't desire the object of my intention, but the very act of photographing. It's been said that photographic depiction is a way of having a kind of proxy experience of reality, a way of hiding behind a safe, powerful and voyeuristic stance – making photographs in lieu of direct involvement in the real.

But what if the act of photographing is the experience I'm after? And why is photographing architecture, for example, less of an experience of the architecture than just being there, without photographing? I know for certain that my experience is heightened, not diminished, by the act of photography, and anyway, we all maintain some kind of distance in our lives, perhaps with the exception of those fortunate enough to have a kind of mental illness that allows for no such distinction.

So, what am I really desiring in my photographic work? Do I really want to experience...to posses every rock in the desert I'm photographing? Every structure, vista, street theatre, woman or man, known or unknown to me? Maybe I want a little of that...maybe. But I certainly desire the photograph. Even more, I desire the act of photographing. The rush of the moment of split-second recognition, valuation and response embedded in an overarching awareness of thousands of photographs I and hundreds of others have made within the history of the medium; the differences between me and all those others who have made pictures before me, and, all importantly, the tone of the image – that subtle and persuasive resonance with the instant, the light, framing, meaning and configuration. To sidestep the obvious, to see what others could not have prepared themselves to see, in that very particular way.

I spent a month photographing the Berlin Wall in 1987. The dark, brooding power of its brutalist design – an architecture of containment, control and division – provided one of the closest brushes with the obvious in my photographic work. But even then I treasured my neutral stance. What I wanted – desired – was to let the Wall, towers and crossings tell their own story, to speak for themselves. It's the same for me in my street work, in the studio, in architecture and the landscape. I only need to observe, leaving the meaning implicit, explaining as little as possible. Listen to the native language. Get out of the way.

I desire to show, with very little intervention, aspects of life that can be seen, and that's its own reward. I don't want to go home with my subject, but I do want to go home with a photographic experience, maybe even a photograph. You might say I'm addicted to depiction, or, as the Jesuit definition of "vice" goes, to a sin that's become a habit. Find yourself by losing yourself. Trust the process, hope for the blossom.

Michael Burns is a photographer working professionally with architecture and landscape. His personal photographic work has been widely exhibited and collected internationally over the last 30 years. For more information visit www.michaelburnsphoto.com
Anne Gould Hauberg
Fired by Beauty
Barbara Johns

Anne Gould Hauberg is legendary for her advocacy of artists, the creative spirit, and the handmade object. A major figure in Seattle's cultural life, she has been an instigator of ideas for innumerable people and organizations. Her openness to creative possibility contributed most famously to the beginnings of the Pilchuck Glass School. This book celebrates her life of commitment, filled with passion for beauty and for universal access to art.

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Centennial Trail Spokane River Bridge, built 2004

bridge
engineering
Street addresses, an integral part of a city's system for identifying the location of lots and buildings, generally designate places and spaces. This regulatory system of names and numbers associates residents with their whereabouts and indicates where a person, business or institution can be found. The alleys in Vancouver, however, while technically defined as streets of a certain (limited) width, are not included in the designation system given to streets. "The city doesn't normally name alleys because the practice would double the number of street names in the city, present delivery problems for mail carriers and interfere with emergency vehicles, which often use alleys," says Larry Cantrell, the city's clerk on the street-naming committee. Because buildings cannot front onto alleys, and because the entire alley-way system was created to accommodate city services such as electrical lines and garbage disposal, the status of alleys is always that of something secondary, often of something "other." As the backside or out-of-sight space that hides the messy reality of a working city, the space of the alleys is often forgotten or avoided. As the domain of dumpsters and clutter, they are nonetheless host to informal economies and systems of exchange.

In January 2005, SPACEAGENCY announced an open international design competition to re-conceive of Vancouver's alleys as FRONTIERSPACEs, new frontiers within the city. Considering these frontiers as the border that separates the known and accepted from the unknown, the competition sought innovative ideas that transformed the public's consideration of the urban fabric. The objective of the design competition was to explore the potential of alleys through the development of a design intervention that considered multiple forms of occupation across the span of a 24-hour day. The interventions were to be conceived of as a vital urban public space in which different activities, planned and spontaneous, could take place.

For three days in August the winning and commissioned competition entry, Balloon Caught, by Tokyo architects Satoshi Matsuoka and Yuki Tamura, was installed in a Vancouver alley. The urban installation, designed to be mounted and dismounted in less than a day, featured light air-filled glowing nylon orbs measuring fifteen to thirty feet in diameter wedged between buildings. Balloon Caught drew local residents, planners, tourists, school classes, families and designers to explore the public space through an array of programmed and spontaneous activities. As described by Michael Gordon, Senior Planner at the City of Vancouver, the "Asian-infused surreal experience of cylindrical forms in a rectilinear environment" promoted a shift in perception of the alley by introducing a sense of destination and place. Spatially, the presence of the soft white forms overhead brought enclosure and continuity to the alley, encouraging the public to reconsider the forgotten or avoided space commonly associated with infrastructure, garbage and illicit activity. What is significant about Balloon Caught is that while it re-conceptualized the space of the alley, it maintained all existing functions. The alley was not re-programmed or masked, but was re-presented as an occupiable public space.
The provocation in Balloon Caught is that within our cities, spaces exist that offer unique potentials for public gathering. That alleys don't have addresses and are therefore outside of the system of naming and designation can be considered their greatest asset. If a street address locates place in the spatial and cultural context, then being non-addressed is to resist stabilization and singularity, social expectation and compartmentalization. Undesignated, undefined, informal, the space of the alley provides the opportunity for open-ended, playful activities and thus for a vibrant civic life to unfold. As Herbert Marcuse points out, "The play impulse does not aim at playing 'with' something, rather it is the play of life itself, beyond want and external compulsion ... and thus the manifestation of freedom itself." Rather than to project the familiar experience of the streets onto the alley, Balloon Caught made space for spatially and socially discrete activities in a city of delineated, regulated and over-programmed public space. From an opening night party to an exhibition of selected competition entries to a family event featuring stilt performers to curious pedestrians following the evening glow, the installation drew over 3000 people into the otherwise sparsely occupied alley. Given the city's predilection towards the surrounding topography, the majority of Vancouver's civic life and active public spaces are oriented towards the water and landscape. FRONTIERSPACE and Balloon Caught highlight the potential of existing inner-city spaces to redirect public activity to the center of the city.

SPACEAGENCY's future projects will continue to explore the potential of the public realm. Working with the mandate "making space for knowledge and discussion of architecture in the public realm" upcoming projects that include Private Surfaces for Public Pleasure will investigate the relationship between private property and the public domain.

Maru Fujita and Oliver Neumann are principals of the Vancouver-based design firm Studio Fujita Neumann. Both are Assistant Professors at the University of British Columbia School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, and members of SPACEAGENCY. Gavin Mackenzie is an intern-architect and architectural photographer based in Vancouver.
The art director of a New York magazine wants me to draw the cover of their special issue about doctors. "How do you feel about drawing on a person?"

-HE ASKS.

"You mean, instead of on a piece of paper?"

"Yes."

"Sounds like FUN to me."

He explains how he wants me to draw, based on the marks that surgeons put on people before operating:

...cut here, this leg not that leg, arrows, crosses, dotted lines and whatever else you can think of. What kind of pen will you use?"

"Probably just a Sharpie." -I REPLY.

"Will that come off?"

"I suppose I should check."

THE FOLLOWING WEEK, AFTER SOME PRACTICE SKETCHING ON PHOTOS AND TESTING VARIOUS PENS ON MY HAIRY SELF (DECIDING AGAINST USING A SHARPIE), I MEET THE MODEL AND THE MAGAZINE'S EDITORS IN A PHOTO STUDIO.

THE MODEL IS A CONVENIENTLY PALE-SKINNED AND NON-HAIRY SWEDISH GENTLEMAN.

I INTRODUCE MYSELF: "Hi, I'm Peter, and I'm going to be drawing on you."

"What are you going to use?"

-HE ASKS.

I PULL OUT A JAPANESE BRUSH-TIPPED MARKER. "It's water-based and comes off easily. I know. I tested it on..."

THE MODEL LOOKS HAPPY ENOUGH, SO, WHILE THE PHOTOGRAPHER Fiddles WITH HIS LIGHTS, I START DRAWING.

ALL GOES SURPRISINGLY SMOOTHLY -EVEN THOUGH THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE EVER DRAWN A HAPPY FACE ON A STRANGER'S NIPPLE. THE MAGAZINE EDITORS ARE PLEASED.

IT ALL FEELS LIKE GOOD FUN.

BUT THEN THE EDITORS DECIDE THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO DO ANOTHER VERSION - "JUST IN CASE." THE MODEL IS SENT TO THE BATHROOM TO ERASE HIMSELF. BUT HE COMES RIGHT BACK. THE SHOWER DOOR WON'T LOCK. HE'S NERVOUS AND WONDERS IF I WILL STAND GUARD. "OK." -I SAY, DETERMINED TO TREAT DRAWING SURFACE WITH RESPECT. BACK INTO THE SHOWER HE GOES... AND STAYS THERE... AND STAYS THERE AND... "Are you OK?"

- I ASK THROUGH THE DOOR.

"No."

TURNS OUT THE INK DOESN'T COME OFF AS EASILY AS IT CAME ON ME. "Aaaaaaaaaaaaraaardaar" -IS WHAT I THINK, AS I RUSH OUT IN SEARCH OF A SOLUTION. I END UP IN A HARDWARE STORE WHERE I BUY SOMETHING CALLED GOJO. ("Natural orange pumice hand cleaner for removing grease and oil.") AT THIS POINT I STOP HAVING FUN AND START WORRYING ABOUT BEING SUED:

How will I be able to do that million-dollar Calvin Klein campaign now?

BUT THE GOJO DOES THE TRICK... EVEN IF THE MODEL IS RED FOR ALL THE SCRUBBING. I HOPE IT WILL CHANGE THE EDITORS' MINI ABOUT DOING ANOTHER DRAWING.

"No problem. We can fix that in Photoshop." - THEY SAY, MAKING ME WISH THE WHOLE THING WAS HAPPENING ON A COMPUTER INSTEAD OF IN REALITY.

BUT ANYWAY, I PICK UP MY PEN AND DRAW... WITH A PROMISE TO THE MODEL THAT I WILL DO ALL I CAN TO DRAW AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE "Try to avoid my face." -HE SAY.

THIS SECOND VERSION IS NOT AS GOOD AS THE FIRST. IT FEELS LIKE A WASTE OF TIME.

BUT AT LEAST, AFTER A FINAL SCRUBBING, THE MODEL IS FREE TO...

OF COURSE A FEW DAYS LATER, THE ART DIRECTOR TELLS ME HE'S VERY SORRY BUT MY DRAWING HAS BEEN BUMPED FROM THE COVER TO AN INSIDE PAGE. I WONDER HOW THE TORTUROUS MODEL FEELS ABOUT THAT?
This week, the Department of Agriculture unveiled a radical redesign of a beloved staple of American culinary life: the Food Pyramid. I feel sad. The government’s attempts to modify American diets have a fascinating history. I have fond memories of the old food pyramid, which was modified many times over the past years but maintained its basic configuration. Even as a child, I found it pretty easy to understand.

At the bottom sat the firm foundation: Grains. Six to eleven servings daily! That’s a lot of Wonder Bread. Next tier up were two groups of things that were less fun to eat: Fruits and Vegetables. The idea of eating vegetables every day as a child seemed absolutely bizarre to me, particularly the three to five servings the pyramid suggested. That would mean eating vegetables for breakfast, for god’s sake. I never heard of that. Above that, two more categories, Dairy and Meat, I liked milk, so that was fine. The interesting thing about the meat group was that it included meat, fish and beans. I often wondered what kinds of influence lowly beans had to exert to get elevated up there next to meat.

Finally, appropriately set at the very pinnacle of the pyramid, was the only thing that made eating any fun at all: Sweets. “Use sparingly,” we were advised, subtly and appropriately casting us as “users.” While the principles of the old pyramid were graspable, it was sometimes hard to reconcile those principles with my actual diet. Where, for instance, would I fit in one of the foods I most enjoyed using, Oreos? The outside was caky and crunchy, sort of like bread, so I guess they were partly Grain. The creamy white inside seemed like milk, so they must be Dairy as well. Obviously they were sweet, but not that much: I mean, I never actually put sugar on Oreos. Finally, I had never knowingly consumed oil or fat, both of which sounded disgusting. So I would count Oreos as two thirds Grain, one-third Diary, with a little bit Sweet thrown in. A serving was always hard to calculate, so I would simply estimate it as reasonably possible: about half of one of the three rows in a full bag, or about eight Oreos.

The new pyramid has none of the brazen clarity of the old one. As a seasoned graphic designer, I find myself with the dismaying ability to look beyond any new design and see the interminable series of meetings that was its genesis. The brief the Department of Agriculture gave its consultant, Porter Novelli, must have been daunting.

First, it retained the beloved pyramid form, but eliminated its implied hierarchy to displace Sweets from its position as King of All Food. So now we have something that can only be described as a pie chart made from only one slice of (inverted) pie. The usefully vague “serving” unit has been replaced with specific measures like cups and ounces; this means that relative amounts can no longer be compared, rendering the barely visible differences between the various groups meaningless without a key. In the fancier version of the pyramid, the key is represented by an uneasy combination of drawings and photographs of food items that appear to be carelessly piled at the structure’s base.

Finally, someone has dictated that exercise must be represented as part of the equation. So one side of the pyramid has been turned into a staircase, mounted enthusiastically by one of those odd, neutered sprites that you see everywhere in public sector graphics: neither young nor old, male nor female, raceless and faceless, representing everyone and no one. (I understand why they never have breasts or penises. But why do they never have hands or feet?)

I can clearly imagine this last transformative addition to the pyramid. There must have been one person in all those meetings who kept asking the same question: but how can we integrate exercise into the Pyramid? Finally, here, give me the pencil; what if you just did it like this? Can you just clean this up? Porter Novelli, who supposedly charged 2.5 million bucks for all their work on this project, which includes an interactive element to render twelve customized versions (hence, “MyPyramid”) and a pretty zippy website, earned every penny.

Graphic designers are often asked to reduce complicated ideas to simple diagrams. Sometimes it’s possible, but often it’s not. In this case, what we’re left with is something that is well-intentioned but dysfunctional. The new food pyramid is what a friend of mine would call a cat’s breakfast, except it has vegetables in it. And everyone knows that not even a cat would eat vegetables for breakfast.

Michael Bierut studied graphic design at the University of Cincinnati’s College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning. He is a partner at Pentagram, New York. Bierut’s work is represented in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY, and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Montreal. He served as president of the NY Chapter of the AIGA from 1988 to 1990, and is president emeritus of AIGA National. Michael is a Senior Critic in Graphic Design at the Yale School of Art. Reprinted with the writer’s permission from the Design Observer http://www.designobserver.com.
Ron van der Veen
Dwell Syndrome

Why can’t my sons be just a little more “Dwellish?”

Maybe it’s because I refuse to let my subscriptions to Dwell magazine run out (and ARCADE for that matter!), but I’ve developed this modernist inferiority complex. It seems that nothing I sit on, write with, look at, drive in, drink out of, sleep under, wear, carry, see through, or even mow is ever quite cool enough. The worst time of year for me is Christmas. I struggle with the same consumerist impulses the next American does, but there is something more insidious that obsesses me. I call it the “Dwell Syndrome.” You know what I am talking about: an unquenchable craving for cool modern stuff I can’t have.

The recent September issue of the magazine really brought me down. It features a fabulous modernist house in Mexico for an architect and his very à la mode family. Not only is the designer a groovy looking guy, his wife is gorgeous (as all Dwell wives seem to be) and his young kids are hip. There is one shot of his boy having a very very trendy christening party. Even all the neighborhood kids look designery. Nothing is ever frumpy in this magazine!

This got me thinking about how my kids are getting in the way of my modernist self-esteem. I have 3 boys ages 12, 10 and 8. They are not Dwell magazine kids. They never look bathed, they don’t speak a foreign language, they have cracked or broken virtually every piece of pseudo-art we have in the house, they put dorky posters on their walls, they never align anything, they purposely wear uncoordinated outfits and have little regard for my Corbu chair. They do have strong opinions, though, about modern architecture: they think it’s cold, not cool! Kerry, my wife (who many of you know from past articles), loves the modern aesthetic too, but is really more interested in our kids having a fun and balanced childhood.

So as this Christmas draws near I can again feel the tug of the “Dwell Syndrome” on my mental wellbeing. I find myself struggling with the subtle impulse to influence my family’s aesthetic values, as well as my own craving for this utopian chic. I subconsciously see Christmas as an opportunity to bring our house closer to an enlight-
In a foul DIY mood I cracked open a copy of A Pattern Language, which my sister maintains will not only help me plan my kitchen remodel, but will change my life. Not familiar with Christopher Alexander and company? In the late 70s, they broke down urban planning and architecture into essential elements, such that anyone could create utopian cities, garages and window seats. I've become obsessed with this book and its train-wreck of a graphics scheme, this strange set of mutually referring chapters illustrated with what look like tiny black-and-white travel snapshots and back-of-napkin sketches.

Frustrated with designing my kitchen, I've instead made a game of rewriting the patterns to suit my family. Don't work too hard trying to understand the strange flow of Alexandrian paragraphs and fonts. Just get the gist of it and then join in with your own patterns.

74(e) KITTIES

...The pattern ANIMALS (74) contends that our humanized pets provide neither "emotional sustenance nor... ecological connections." However, STAIR SEATS (129) and the ENTRANCE TRANSITIONS (113) both fall short without faithful felines.

People say to pets what they long to say to each other.

Nobody can resist a kitty. Kitties on a front stoop invite the community to partake in a family's affection without crossing boundaries of personal space. People ask inane questions of homeowners to establish a relationship that legitimizes their attachment to the kittens. Some people are so transported by kitty love that they abandon their plans and lie down on the parking strip with the household kitty. This serves as a daily model for children in sharing and community-building.

Therefore:

Install one or more fat, furry kittens on the front stoop.

Choose breeds like Tabby and Tortoiseshell for their coats of WARM COLORS (250). You'll suddenly notice OLD PEOPLE EVERYWHERE (40).

240(e) PEE SPOTS (A.K.A., SEAT SPOTS, REVISITED)

...Kids, like ANIMALS (74), need places to squat. Locate near TREE SPACES (171), or perhaps a BUILDING EDGE (160), preferably in a SUNNY PLACE (165).

Bears do it, so why shouldn't children?

Kids resist admitting to adults that they need to stop their play in order to go potty. Therefore, they need places in the yard to do so without time-consuming bathroom rituals like door-shutting and hand-washing. Wise adults grant this privilege, after cautions against scandalizing the neighbors and stunning the dahlias. Therefore:

Designate places in the yard where children can pause to pee.

195(e) STAIRCASE VOLUME, REVISITED

...STAIRCASE AS A STAGE (153) and the original STAIRCASE VOLUME (195) patterns deal well with the aesthetics, flow and practicalities of stairs, but don't address the need to escape from the BED ALCOVE (188) through the FARMHOUSE KITCHEN (199). "Volume," in the revised pattern, refers to acoustics.

Stairs that announce every coming and going of a house's residents induce claustrophobia, eventually leading to the breakdown of the family unit.

Creaky wooden staircases evoke sweet memories of tip-toeing around so as not to wake the baby. Scaling them after a long day lulls one into the first stages of sleep, so comforting is the familiar noise. They may even sell an old house to a sentimental prospective buyer. But studies show that only a tiny number of proposed post-bedtime escapes are successful if the home has a creaky staircase. This sets the stage for conflict between parents and children, just as the children are naturally seeking independence and establishing their own identities. Such conflict delays separation and can ultimately lead to either a premature or delayed empty nest.

Therefore:

Build stairs of solid materials. Do not assume that stair noises are worthy of preservation. Instead, fortify saggy, creaky old stairs with new reinforcements underneath every joint.

One caveat to this pattern: CHILDREN IN THE CITY (57) who have access to a quiet staircase are often found DANCING IN THE STREET (63) and SLEEPING IN PUBLIC (94).

Capitol Hill writer Jane Radke Slade, fed up with DIY, finally broke down and hired a kitchen designer. After looking over the plans, a local cabinet salesperson said it best: "This looks like a pain in the ass. I'm not sure we even want to do this."
Toward a New Regionalism is a peculiar combination of monograph and textbook. It includes projects designed by the author's firm, but other buildings as well. It uses prosaic categories (earth, wind, fire and air) but also employs scaled diagrams of mechanical systems. The parts of the book are very, very good. At its best it is a poetic textbook: complete, pithy, compelling. But the whole is defeated by the scope and structure of the book. The scope is too narrow, temporally and geographically, and there is too much structure in the book, too many categories and divisions.

The first two chapters of Toward a New Regionalism, detailing the climate and history of Cascadia, are quite engaging. Dave Miller gives us thoughtful definitions of sustainability, definitions that do not (praise be) include the color green. The first comes quickly on page 15: "The primary goal of sustainability is to produce elegant architecture that utilizes a combination of the best ancient, proven building approaches and the best technological advances." The second comes in the glossary: "Design in which energy use is minimized and renewable resources are maximized; creates an enduring architecture that works with nature's systems and cycles."

The third chapter introduces the environmental strategies on which each project will be evaluated: earth (topography, siting), wind (ventilation), fire (sunlight, daylight and heat) and water (use and conservation). Purposely more poetic than scientific, these categories emphasize the buildings' connections to the Pacific Northwest and regionalism. Sustainability is posited as a natural result, not the end goal. Every now and then, a quiet, self-consciously precise tip sneaks in: "orient PV panels at the latitude plus fifteen degrees." "Accept air at the high pressure side of the building."

The flaws in the structure of the book become apparent in the case study section. The projects are divided into four restrictive chapters: Site; Resource-Conserving Building; Climate-Responsive Enclosure; and Technology and Materials. This is too much organization; these categories detract from the integrative nature of sustainability that Miller espouses. The first part of the book emphasizes the holistic approach that Northwest architects have taken, historically, but then the current Northwest work is separated by scale. The narrow scope of the book

is betrayed by this section as well of the 15 projects, three are by Miller-Hull. More significantly, nine of the case studies highlight Puget Sound buildings. This issue was raised when Dave Miller spoke at the Seattle Architecture Foundation on September 28; he responded that he knew the buildings more intimately. An honest answer, but a goal for subsequent books should be a more even-handed read on the region.

While I criticize the structure, the case study program choices are varied and bold (wastewater treatment facility, a dump and office buildings). Also, the absence of low-density examples speaks loudly to density as a value of sustainability and this message is delivered without the use of a soapbox. Large houses are used as examples of historic Northwest School projects but they are refreshingly absent from the examination of the present.

At the Seattle Architecture Foundation lecture, Miller emphasized that "what is going on here in the Northwest is truly significant," and he decided to write the book to "get the word out" about a model of work that is beautiful and sustainable. Miller answers the question, "Where do we go from here?" with a slew of progressive verbs: continuing, keep going, doing the same thing; the verbs themselves speak to maintenance. The goal for this New Regionalism, with its inherent sustainability, is simultaneously a planned obsolescence (sustainability will be an assumption) and ubiquity in the Northwest.

Toward a New Regionalism does serve notice to the international architecture community. The Pacific Northwest has quietly and intuitively integrated sustainability into our buildings for a decade — and they're beautiful buildings, an absolutely essential quality of both the New Regionalism and of sustainability. The projects have in common an integration with the regional topography, an understanding and use of natural light, reliance on natural ventilation, and creative uses of and for water. And, while the whole is disjointed and overbearing, the parts are delightful and inspiring.

Seattle resident Christina Bollo is a designer of affordable housing and determined advocate of sustainable architecture.
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