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Volume 26.02 Winter 2007

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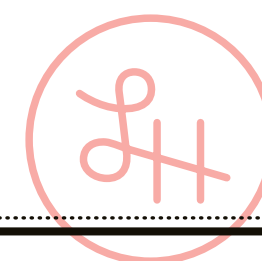
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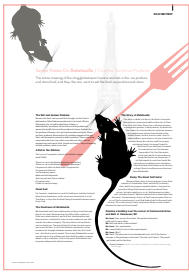


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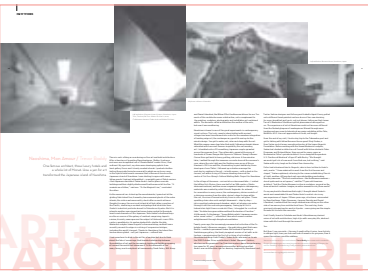


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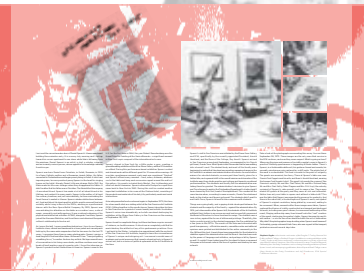


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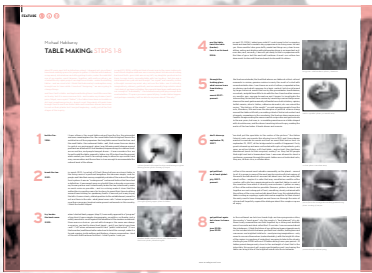
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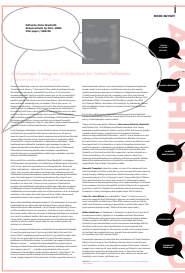


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AS THE MAGAZINE for the contemporary Northwest design community, the mission of *ARCADE* is to provide an independent voice for civic discussion, and a platform to explore and promote quality design in the built environment. *ARCADE* is published quarterly by the Northwest Architectural League, a not-for-profit educational organization. Donations to *ARCADE* are tax-deductible.

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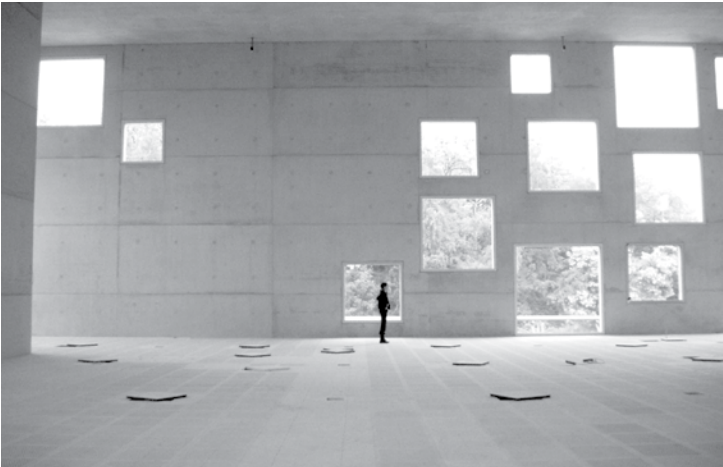
SANAA at the Henry
November 30, 2007–March 2, 2008

This winter, the Henry Art Gallery on the UW campus features a comprehensive exhibit of SANAA's striking, expansive work. Established in 1995, SANAA is a collaboration of Japanese architects Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa. International awards, like the Venice Biennale of Architecture's Golden Lion in 2004, have graced the two innovative designers and their associates, but the Henry's exhibit is a first for SANAA in the U.S.

SANAA has focused their attention on light and dimensionality, merging inside and outside through clever juxtapositions of concrete and glass. The firm's dedication to simplicity and transparency has led them to experiment with exterior facades in startling variety. From the circular glass sheet enclosing the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan, to the square-punch windows that cluster like pixels upon the concrete cube of Essen, Germany's, Zollverein School of Management and Design.

The SANAA exhibition includes models, building plans, photographs and other objects that illuminate the dynamism of Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates. For a preview of what you'll find at the Henry, visit DesignBoom.com for a worthwhile interview with Sejima and Nishizawa.

www.designboom.com/eng/interview/sanaa.html, www.henryart.org



Top: Zollverein School of Management and Design, Essen, Germany. 2003-06. Courtesy of SANAA



Right: Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa Courtesy of SANAA. Photo: GA Photographers

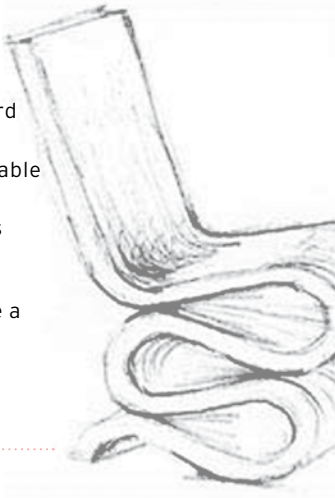
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Living with Trash

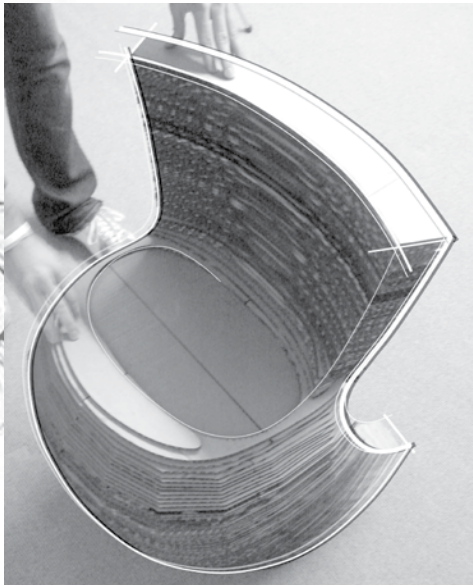
Coming home to a wrecked apartment shouldn't be such a drag. For Jonathan Junker and Seth Grizzle, leaping heaps of cardboard and dodging stacks of newspapers sparked a realization: that with care waste can equal food. Designed around a truly sustainable process, *Scrap Chair* represents a concept. A step ahead of recycling or salvaging used materials, it is the idea that products must be designed to provide new life at the end of their own.

So before you toss the overabundance of junk mail, come receive a free demonstration on living with trash. *Scrap Chair* will be featured at Drop City Gallery's *Take a Seat* exhibition in Seattle, February 2008.

www.dropcitygallery.com, www.graypants.com.



Scrap Chair



COMMENTS

Dear Editor,

Questions:

1. In your last issue (26.01, September 2007) you have an article written by Gary Lawrence of ARUP. Isn't it a bit self-serving to allow him to start the piece with, "Within ARUP, the Global Leader for Sustainable Urban Development..."?
2. Then Gary interviews what I would guess is one of ARUP's biggest clients in Seattle – NBBJ – about sustainability, without the slightest peep of journalistic pessimism on his part? NBBJ isn't the firm most Seattle designers think of when we talk about sustainability, but it sure is when you read this article.
3. Why was ARUP allowed to talk about itself so much?

Observations:

1. ARUP is working with Piano on the Kansai Airport. The article mentions its engineering awards.
2. ARUP is working with NBBJ on the Gates Foundation.
3. Gary Lawrence is a leader at ARUP, and just happens to be feature editor.

My Opinion:

1. This issue was an infomercial for ARUP!
2. This issue was an infomercial for NBBJ!
3. I have counted the pages and I believe between the two firms they owe ARCADE mucho \$\$ for the price of 10 full pages of advertisement.

I am one of ARCADE's biggest fans, but this issue really had me scratching my head and wondering for the first time about editorial oversight.

–Anonymous



HOW IS THE JURY GOING TO INSULT AND PRAISE US THIS TIME?

The 2007 AIA Seattle Honor Awards Ceremony / Clair Enlow

An evening of ritual, danger and great grammar

It's a rite of fall: Architects-from-elsewhere sit in a staged living room in front of hundreds of local architect-petitioners, passing down honors to a handful.

The ritual begins with a running show of black and white images of the jurors being very informal, and – see – very serious. The three – Frank Harmon, Jeanne Gang and Joshua Prince-Ramus, this time – arrange themselves on sculptural furniture and deliver prizes and comments with informal warmth. But there's an invisible wall at the edge of the stage, never broken by questions. It's up to the moderator, The University of Washington's College of Architecture and Urban Planning's Dean, Dean Daniel Friedman, to stand in for the audience while trying to get the best out of the group.

The next stage is also pretty predictable. With pious guilt, jury members declare their bias toward projects – from educational to civic to industrial – that contribute to our common lot.

This year they delivered the only Honor Award to the Olympic Sculpture Park (Weiss/Manfredi), the most civic of all projects in the pool. And they anointed SRG's very respectable Bellevue City Hall – cleverly recycled from a concrete Qwest corporate fortress – with a commendation. They also recognized Patkau's unbuilt Centre for Music, Art and Design at the University of Manitoba with a commendation.

That's three out of seven.

But then they did what juries always do – select the next crop of lonely and exquisite getaways, set in stunning natural scenery. They just can't help it. The Northwest is a playground for architects and their well-heeled clients, and their joy is irresistible.

No one's is more infectious than Tom Kundig of Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen. While one of the houses in the commendation category was the whitely modernist urban Sterling Residence by Pb Elemental, all three remaining winners – including the only two Award of Merit winners – were designed by Kundig.

With these awards, the widely published, homegrown (UW graduate) architect further consolidates his star status. Kundig was also the recent recipient of the coveted Award in Architecture from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Kundig's clients are willing to go along with humor and even danger to build in unique natural settings. "Montecito Residence" was built in a windswept, fire-prone and wild California region and designed to channel the wind. (And brave the flames?) "Rolling Huts" stand like a fleet of modern cabins on concrete wheels in an Eastern Washington floodplain zoned for RVs only. And the captivating "Outpost" is a spare and poetic paradise garden of cinderblock, built on the great scrub steppes of Idaho.

There is a kind of cynicism about the predictability of it all, even among architects that are themselves the authors of exquisite, award-winning getaways.

So why do they keep coming? I think there's a simple answer to that. They want to know: How is the jury going to insult and praise us this time? What has everyone else been doing? Who gets the awards? It's a ritual.

But it's also vocabulary. Maybe they want to know the words, the ones that come out at the event even when they aren't to be found in the published jury comments.

Harmon, an AIA Fellow and professor at North Carolina University, provided a refreshing counterpoint with his Southern manners and humility. Gang, of Chicago's Studio Gang, provided bridges of commentary that kept the show going.

It was up to Prince-Ramus of REX – a native son of sorts, gone international through Koolhaas' OMA-AMO design network – to provide the evening's list. Based on use and over-use, here are the key words, with my interpretation:

normalcy / *n.* A grave threat that designers must guard against, even as they negotiate budgets, regulations, nervous patrons, bureaucracies and professional cultures.

grammar / *n.* The linkage of subject (program, site and other answers to designer's questions) to verb (architecture) and experience (object), as in "I've never experienced such refined grammar."

grammarians / *n.* Masters of grammar (see above).

performance / *n.* seeking the right balance of program, organization and form in architecture – in that order.

virtuosity / *n.* finding the right balance of program, organization and form in architecture – in that order.


uniformity / *n.* (see "Normalcy")

Go in virtuosity, and design for all of us.



Outpost, Central Idaho. Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects. Photo: Jan Cox


Claire Enlow is a freelance journalist and columnist for the Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce.



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FILM REVIEW

Seven Notes On *Ratatouille* / Charles Tonderai Mudede

The entire meaning of the struggle between humans and rats is this: we produce and store food, and they, the rats, want to eat the food we produce and store.

The Rat and Human Problem

Remove the food, and you end the struggle. As the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze pointed out in his book, *What is Philosophy*, life, no matter what form it takes, is determined by a problem: the bird form has the problem of worms, the giraffe form has the problem of leaves, the bee has the problem of flowers, the cow has the problem of grass. These are their problems. Because the rat's problem happens to be our food, rats themselves present us with a problem. There is no other reason why rats live in our cities, race onto our ships, raid our garbage cans and, worst of all, invade our homes – they are working on their problem, which is our food.

A Rat in the Kitchen

The lyrics of a popular song by the British reggae band UB40:

*There's a rat in me kitchen/what am I gonna do?
There's a rat in me kitchen/what am I gonna do?
I'm gonna fix that rat that/ what I'm gonna do...
I'm gonna fix that rat
You invade my space
Make me feel disgraced
And you just don't give a damn
If I had my way...
I'd like to see you hang...*

Clean God

For humans, cleanliness is next to Godliness, and the furthest thing from cleanliness, as far as we are concerned, is a rat. Therefore, a rat is the furthest thing from what humans aspire to be: God.

The Greatness of *Ratatouille*

We know that rats have nothing else on their mind than getting at our food. We know they are filthy little creatures. If we see a dead squirrel, we first feel consternation and then concern; a dead bird, even a raven, makes us sad. But a dead rat makes us happy. The only kind of rat we like to see is a dead one. The worst kind of rat we can ever see is one in our kitchen. A rat in the kitchen represents, in the immemorial struggle between humans and rats, the front-line – the final area of combat. This is why *Ratatouille* is such a great movie. It is nothing less than bold to make a comedy about a rat in a kitchen, a rat in the space that defines the long war between the natural enemies.

The Story of *Ratatouille*

The story is about a tribe of rats that is forced to flee a country home and settle in the city of Paris. One rat in this tribe, Remy, has a strange passion, a dangerous passion, a mad passion, a passion for fine foods. He not only likes to eat good cheeses, rare mushrooms, spices from islands in the Indian Ocean, he also loves to cook. And, to make matters more bizarre, he has a knack for cooking. Remy the rat has a gift for preparing human foods. He doesn't want to steal food from a kitchen; he wants to cook and serve it to humans. Impossible! Yet, the film works. It not only works, it also makes us laugh like there's no tomorrow. A rat that wants to cook fine foods! Because there is nothing more ridiculous than that idea, that image (a rat stirring a stew), there is nothing more hilarious than *Ratatouille*.

Remy The Great Self-hater

Because Remy the rat loves humans, loves their religion of cleanliness, their sensitivity to beauty, their ability to prepare exquisite dishes – because he loves the things that humans most love about themselves, he hates what he is, a rat. And because he hates rats, he hates himself. What he wants to be is what hates him the most: a human being. And a rat that loves humans (the lovers of God's cleanliness) is a rat that hates itself in the most radical way. This is the movie's dark conclusion: Remy is only lovable because he does not love himself.

Passing a building near the corner of Commercial Drive and Main in Vancouver, BC

My lover: See, across the street. Two good restaurants right next to each other.
Me: But look what is above them?
My lover: Yes, apartments.
Me: I would hate to live in those apartments.
My lover: Why?
Me: Rats! The place has to be infested with rats. All of the food in storage, in the garbage in the back. The rats can't help it. They must get inside, get to the food.

Charles Tonderai Mudede is the Associate Editor for the Seattle-based weekly The Stranger.

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Left and above: Benesse House Museum, Naoshima, Japan. Time, Timeless/No Time, Walter De Maria, 2004. Collaboration between Tadao Ando and Walter De Maria.



All photos: ©Mitsuo Matsuoka



Left and below: Benesse House, Naoshima, Japan.

Naoshima, Mon Amour / Trevor Boddy

One famous architect, three luxury hotels and a whole lot of Monet: How a yen for art transformed the Japanese island of Naoshima.

There is such a thing as overdosing on fine art and bold architecture. After a few days of ingesting Rauschenbergs, Stellas, Hockneys and even one exceptional set of Claude Monet’s water lilies, I had redlined. My eyes hurt, my shins were developing splints from hard gallery floors and I clearly needed a break. I pushed a button hailing the private funicular monorail to whisk me up to my room in the hybrid hotel-meets-museum that is Benesse House on the Japanese island of Naoshima. I was starting to agree with some fellow guests I had met at breakfast – a sprightly pair of Dutch seniors – that Japanese starchitect Tadao Ando’s cast-in-place concrete buildings and their slightly alkaline smell had become a bit too Zen. “It reminds me of dikes,” said one. “Or the Maginot Line,” concluded the other.

As the monorail car clicked up the mountainside, I gazed out at the glinting Seto Inland Sea, framed by haze-smeared ghosts of the outer islands, the vista a welcome reality check after so much artiness. Despite its name, the sea is not inland at all but rather a portion of the Pacific, sheltering a verdant archipelago that stretches from Osaka’s industrial portside almost to Fukuoka on Kyushu. But it is inland in another more important sense, being central to the minds, hearts and stomachs of the Japanese. Seto-naikai’s sheltered bays are the ur-source of the galaxy of seafood comprising Japan’s cuisine; its misty seascapes are the subject of Hokusai’s iconic 19th-century woodblocks; its azalea-decked hills shelter the late Modernist sculptor Isamu Noguchi’s stone workshop; and built more recently around its edges is a string of suspension bridges, including the world’s longest. Thanks to Naoshima, the Inland Sea has become a global – not just Japanese – cultural hub.

I had come here to drink in the art for a few days but also to think about the fate of a marriage: that troubled relationship between the exhibition of art and the increasingly boisterous buildings opening all around the world that showcase it. In the aftermath of too many formy, mock-sculptural art museums by Frank Gehry, Will Alsop

and Daniel Libeskind, the Bilbao Effect had become bilious for me. Too much of this architecture was a distraction, not a complement to the painting, sculpture, photography and installation art contained within. The ancients called architecture the mother of the arts, but now it was smothering.

Naoshima is home to one of the great experiments in contemporary visual culture. The lush, remote island dotted with ancient villages has been transformed into a site for the seamless integration of leading-edge art, the contemporary good life and up-to-the-minute design. You get to wake, eat, relax and sleep with the art. What this means came clear later that night, following a *kaiseki* dinner saturated with hues and flavours inspired by the surrounding art. I stumbled onto a 20-something Japanese couple sprawled across the museum floor. They alternately gazed at the army of hundreds of Power Ranger-like figures in Yukinori Yanagi’s *Banzai Corner* then got back to heavy petting, oblivious. A few minutes later, I walked through the immense concrete drum at the museum’s core, where the sole light was the flashing neon array of Bruce Nauman’s *100 Live and Die*, illuminating a quiet debate by three developers from Tbilisi. I followed up a shiatsu massage the next day by soaking in the art – in both senses – with a dunk in the Jacuzzi, set within a ring of Chinese standing stones at the centre of Cai Guo-Qiang’s *Cultural Melting Bath: Project for Naoshima*.

In the village of Honmura – arrived at on a borrowed bike – I visited the hilltop Go’o Shrine. Here one-half of an 18th-century Shinto shrine was restored, and then a new companion temple in contemporary materials was created by artist Hiroshi Sugimoto. An artwork for veneration in every sense, the contemporary shrine consists of a staircase running from the older shrine’s steps to deep within the soil, the risers formed entirely from in-situ cast glass. These sparkling stairs also suck sunlight downward – step by step – into a mystical underground chamber, which art pilgrims can enter through a slit-like concrete passageway. Gazing up at Go’o’s haloed stair-light from a crude dirt floor, I struggled for a critical take. “Architecture gone sublime without the burden of function.” A little wordy. Or this banner: “Young British artists’ Japanese cousins enter zazen satori” – a Buddhist idea which means sudden enlightenment through disciplined meditation.

Twenty years ago, the increasingly renowned art collection of the Fukutake family’s Benesse company – the publishing giant that owns Berlitz – needed a permanent home. But instead of opening a Saatchiesque gallery, the family imagined a union of art with architecture, commissioning the first of a string of art-related Naoshima buildings from Osaka’s Tadao Ando, who went on to win the 1995 Pritzker Prize, architecture’s Nobel. Margaret Jenkins, who has run the prominent San Francisco modern dance troupe bearing her name for 30 years, announced soon after arriving here that Ando’s was architecture ripe for dancing. Inspired by Naoshima’s art,

Toulon fashion designer and fellow guest Isabelle Agnel-Gouzy pulled out a different hand-painted couture dress of her own devising for every breakfast and lunch, not just dinner, telling me that James Turrell’s *Backside of the Moon* optical phenomena had urged her on. The experience of art at Naoshima could not be more different from the flashed glimpses of masterpieces filtered through mass herding we have come to tolerate at any major exhibition at the Tate, MoMA or AGO. Here art appreciation is lived, not taught.

Near the end of my visit, I took a day trip to the Takamatsu port and got to talking with fellow Benesse House guest Shoji Sadao, a New Yorker and a former executive director at the Isamu Noguchi Foundation. Before working with the famed Modernist sculptor, Sadao had studied architecture at Cornell with fellow students Peter Eisenman and Richard Meier, then served for many years as Buckminster Fuller’s private architect. He co-designed the geodesic U.S. Pavilion at Montreal’s Expo 67 with Bucky: “We thought we would get lots of new work from that one, but nothing,” said Sadao with a dry laugh as the Inland Sea churned by.

Fuller had introduced him to Noguchi, who in turn led him to Ando’s early works. “I have admired his work from the first houses and chapel,” Sadao explained, referring to the career-establishing Church of Light, another cliff-perched cast concrete building overlooking the very same sea. “The first constructions – like the Benesse museum – do not quite work as art spaces,” said the 77-year-old American architect, “but the Chichu Museum is a live-in sculpture, as great as the three artworks it contains. Imagine, an entire museum for only three works!”

On my way back to Naoshima that night, I thought about Sadao’s words and remarkable life and Tadao Ando’s central role in my own experience of Japan. Fifteen years ago, at a dinner surrounded by Rem Koolhaas, Peter Eisenman, Jacques Derrida and Daniel Libeskind, I realized that the rough-skinned man sitting on the other side of me was my true architectural hero. The next day, Ando graciously showed me his work in Kyushu – even giving me the simple formula for his tofu-like concrete.

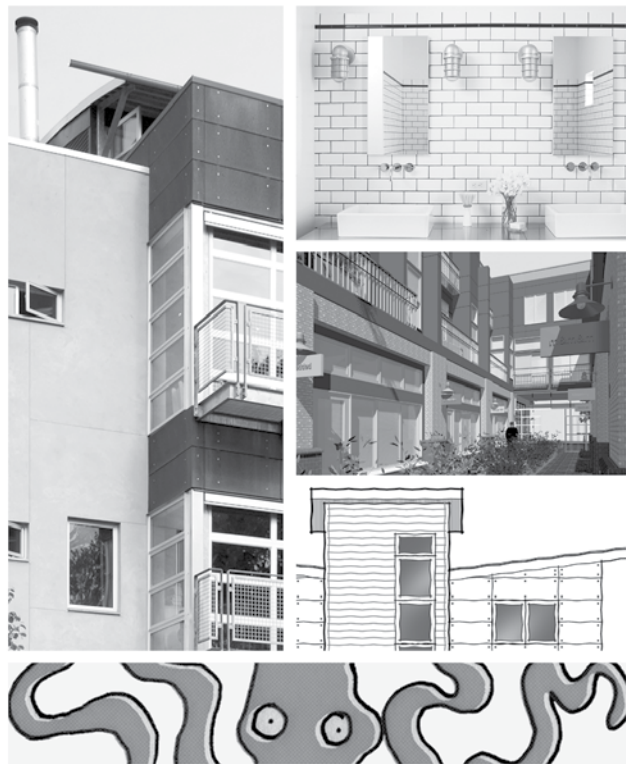
Had I finally found in Fututake and Ando’s Naoshima my desired union of art with architecture, high style with everyday life, abstract ideas with life lived through the senses?

Yes.

But then I love concrete – the way it smells after it rains, how it glints in oblique light, how your beloved looks framed in its greyness, how it spans the ordinary and the sublime.

Vancouver architecture critic and urbanist **Trevor Boddy** has written and consulted in Oregon and Washington since teaching architecture at the University of Oregon. His column “Dwelling” is posted every Friday at www.globeandmail.com.

www.naoshima-is.co.jp/english/index.html



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Left: Floor of the Forest,
Trisha Brown, 1971, Documenta

Below: 13, Monika Sosnowska,
2007, Polish Pavilion,
Venice Biennale.



The Grand Tour 2007 / Dan Corson and Norie Sato

The "Grand Tour" was a rare conjunction of large international art exhibitions in the summer of '07 across Europe. The oldest is the famed Venice Biennale (held every odd year), Documenta in Kassel Germany (every five years), Skulptur Projekte Münster also in Germany (once a decade), and the annual Art Basel in Switzerland. The official moniker pays homage to the pre-rail days when the cultured class would take an extended trip through historic and cultural sites in Europe as a sort of educational rite of passage. For us it was an unprecedented opportunity to see huge international exhibitions supposedly based on the most current thinking of some of the foremost curators and artists in the world.

The 52nd Venice Biennale's Chief Curator was Robert Storr (the Biennale's first American curator and former Curator of Painting at MoMA, NYC), and the exhibition was located in a grouping of spaces around Venice. The Giardini is a series of pavilions set in a garden – usually assigned to the same countries. The largest space in the center of the grounds is the Italian Pavilion, which is utilized by Storr to craft his vision. A 10-minute walk from the Giardini is the Arsenale – a former naval rope factory. Finally, outside of the paid areas are the rest of the official and unofficial Biennale, hidden in palazzos, small churches and other buildings around Venice's intense network of campos, calles and canals.

What is interesting about these shows is they can provide us with new perspectives, sometimes audacious and exuberant, and sometimes sublime and transformative. But, in contrast to other Venice Biennales, we found this exhibition a bit staid. There were a few gems, but nothing that turned our world upside down. Although we both never felt that WOW experience this year, we did see a number of interesting international artists' work. In general, the show seemed very museum "blue chip" – especially in the Italian Pavilion where many of Storr's canon are well represented.

Due to space limitations, we can only give you a couple highlights from Venice:

Monika Sosnowska, in the Polish Pavilion, studies architecture from the perspective of its failures. She transported the dark steel interior supports of a large building into this small white pavilion. The immense scale and shrewd use of buckling steel dynamically engaged the space while recalling the power of natural disasters and improper engineering.

In an oil tank warehouse, Chinese artist Yin Xiuzhen's installed pieces that looked like colorful, textile-covered sci-fi spears or, projectiles flying over the oil tanks. The evocative artwork cleverly engaged the space and reminded us of China's integration into the global economy and its explosive urbanization and growth.

Documenta 12 occurred in four main locations including two museums, a palace and a horribly designed temporary pavilion. This year's directors were Roger M. Buettgel and Ruth Noack whose exhibition featured a combination of historic and contemporary works.

This Documenta maintained its reputation of being very conceptually oriented. The signage was especially unhelpful this year: just the name of the piece and artist. No year, no country, no context – the back-story was contained in the expensive five-pound catalog that you did not want to carry around. There was some interesting synergy between the historic and contemporary works in the museums, but overall the selected works did not really challenge or inspire.

Skulptur Projekte Münster is an outdoor exhibition, organized by German curator Kasper König. This exhibition contained mostly temporary exterior-sited works located all over the city. The artists were given a map and a bike and told to find a place they wanted to work.

Much of the exhibition was walkable, but renting a bicycle was definitely the ticket. While it was difficult to find specific works sometimes due to torrential rainstorms and, bad maps, getting lost around Münster is all part of the experience.

The variety of settings was interesting but much of the work did not engage the site or context and felt like mediocre studio work placed outside. The exhibition was more memorable due to the concentration of pieces rather than its thought-provoking work or new ways of thinking about art within the public environment.

Of the three shows, Venice definitely had the most interesting and varied work. And while perhaps not the most inspiring Biennale this year, taking the "Grand Tour" was definitely worth it. Any excuse to walk around Europe, soak up the history-rich atmosphere and be inspired to go back into the studio is fine by us.

Dan Corson and **Norie Sato** are Seattle-based artists who traveled to the three exhibitions in July. While both continue studio practices, they are nationally recognized for their large-scale and sometimes highly integrated public art.

www.labiennale.org/en
www.documenta12.de
www.skulptur-projekte.de

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TABLE MAKING/ BREAKING

Michael Hebbroy
Feature Editor

For the past one hundred years or so the Western world has been busily building a machine for eating. The blueprints for a glorious global mechanism to produce and distribute the golden jewels of the dirt were drawn up and revised while we hummed from Industry to Information. Now we are all involved and partake daily in this vast architecture. Like many of the armatures of modern design it has left us wanting. This machine may be a grand structure, but it is as cold as a freeway and the tastes it offers are about as complex.

When asked to feature edit this issue – ARCADE’s first sideways glance at the intersection of food and design – I had no clear picture of the patchwork that would form. Kelly had already shoulder-tapped a few respected writers, and I had less than a month to cull the rest of our content from sources far and wide. Strangely it was not a case of lack – the excitement to be involved bubbled over, and if we had pursued every interested party, every concept we had for these pages, you might have a 1,000-page brick of words and images. The connections between food and design are ripe, rich and densely tangled.

We didn’t set out to be macabre or political or really anything particular, but it is clear that this inquiry has hit a common pulse: Scars and personal transformation, broken tables, sweeping proposals to rip up London commons and plant strawberries, and in one case a pitch of anger so intense that a completely uncharacteristic act of violence played out in the night – the articles herein are not military marches, but they clearly respond beyond Koolhaas’s eerie summation, “Shopping is arguably the last remaining form of public activity,” and suggest that eating can once again become public, vital and, at the risk of sounding overly romantic, passionate.

Michael Hebbroy studied literature at Reed College and architecture at Portland State University. After launching the City Repair Project, a guerilla architecture project, with artist/activist Mark Lakeman, Hebbroy turned to the table. In March 2001, Michael opened an unlicensed restaurant in his Portland rental home, called Family Supper, which quickly became the most visible underground restaurant in the U.S. In 2004, Hebbroy and chef Morgan Brownlow opened clarklewis to critical acclaim. Hebbroy now lives and works in Seattle. His recent work includes the launch of a new underground project called “one pot” (www.onepot.org), and a book/website project called Kill The Restaurant (www.killtherestaurant.com).

Fritz Haeg
OLYMPIC FARMING 2012



Edible Estates Regional Prototype Garden #4: London, England. Comissioned by Tate Modern, 2007. Photos by Heiko Prigge



The Tate Modern commissioned this garden for Southwark, the neighborhood just to the south of the museum and the river Thames. This area has many council estates (public housing units) and happens to be one of the least green parts of the city.

The Edible Estate was established on a highly visible triangular lawn in front of the Brookwood Estate, located a 10-minute walk south of the museum. This rare green space is fenced off and was previously unused. Twenty-four units at Brookwood and another 16 in Lancaster House (another council estate) all face the triangle. Placing the garden here meant that everyone would be watching: the local gardeners would perform for their neighbors. In the center of the dense city, the production of food would become a public spectacle.

Initially many residents were skeptical about the prospects of such a garden in this location, and they feared it would be vandalized. But there is a school across the street, which insures a steady flow of children past the garden. It was the children of the council estates who were the most excited about the garden and eager to get their hands in the dirt over the course of the three days of planting.

This garden is intended as a new model for urban agriculture. It is not a true community garden (or "allotment," as the popular practice is referred to in Britain) with separate private plots for each gardener. It is one holistic design that also integrates spaces where people may gather; a pleasure garden made up entirely of edibles. Those who tend it will eat from it.



PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA
Sweet Potatoes: travel 5,000 miles to London dinner tables.



EGYPT
Grapes: travel 2,000 miles



GHANA
Pineapples: travel 3,100 miles



INDIA
Banannas: travel 5,100 miles



MEXICO
Avocados: travel 5,500 miles



PERU
Asparagus: travel 6,300 miles



SAUDI ARABIA
Tomatoes: travel 3,100 miles



SOUTH AFRICA
Carrots: travel 6,000 miles



THAILAND
Corn: travel 5,900 miles



THE UNITED STATES
Apples: travel 3,700 miles



THE UNITED KINGDOM
Host to the 2012 Olympic Summer Games

A proposal presented by Fritz Haeg at Debate London, organized by the Architecture Foundation and held on Saturday, June 23, 2007, in the Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern:

Every night our London dinner plate becomes the venue for a sort of global Olympic event. Over four-fifths of London's food supply is imported. This supply is entirely dependent on the oil market. Agriculture and food account for nearly 30 percent of goods transported on British roads. Over the last 10 years, the distance food travels from farm to plate increased by 15 percent. Forty-three percent of all fruits and vegetables contain detectable levels of pesticides. More than 600,000 Olympic-related guests are expected in London for each day of the 2012 summer games. What will they eat? Food that has been grown, sprayed, packaged and shipped from each of their home countries?

I propose a new extreme summer event: **Olympic Farming.**

Visitors will be served fruits, vegetables and herbs grown exclusively in the host city. Residents will grow organic food without pesticides or genetic modifications for their guests in every neighborhood across London. Any resident will be able to nominate his or her front garden, or plots of unused public or private land on his or her street, as the site of an official Olympic Farm. Feeding everyone for the Olympic Games will require over 6,000 acres of densely planted gardens.

To give you a sense of how much London acreage this is:

- All Royal Parks total about 4,900 acres
- All office space comes to about 4,800 acres
- Common green spaces around flats comprise about 4,200 acres

The soil on each site will be tested for contaminants, cleaned and prepared as necessary. This might be a good opportunity to come to terms with our toxic industrial past and the state of the land we live on. A citywide Olympic composting system will be established. Four years' worth of London kitchen scraps will be transformed into the most fertile soil the city has ever seen.

An Olympic Farming team will be recruited to represent each neighborhood. Each team will be specially trained to tend one of the thousands of farming venues across the city. They will wear beautiful Olympic Farming uniforms that will be visible from great distances. Everyone will want to be an Olympic Farmer so they can wear the fabulous outfits that are locally customized.

Olympic sponsorship by fast-food chains and soft drink companies will be rejected in favor of this system for a healthy local diet that physically connects visitors to their host. While the Olympics celebrate the gathering of a global community, Olympic Farms will reflect the increasing value of the local.

The entire city of London will be radically transformed as empty bits of land, neglected interstitial spaces, rooftops and even parts of Royal Parks are turned into abundant productive green spaces. All residents of London will watch as agriculture is woven back into the city and public food production becomes a dazzling spectacle.

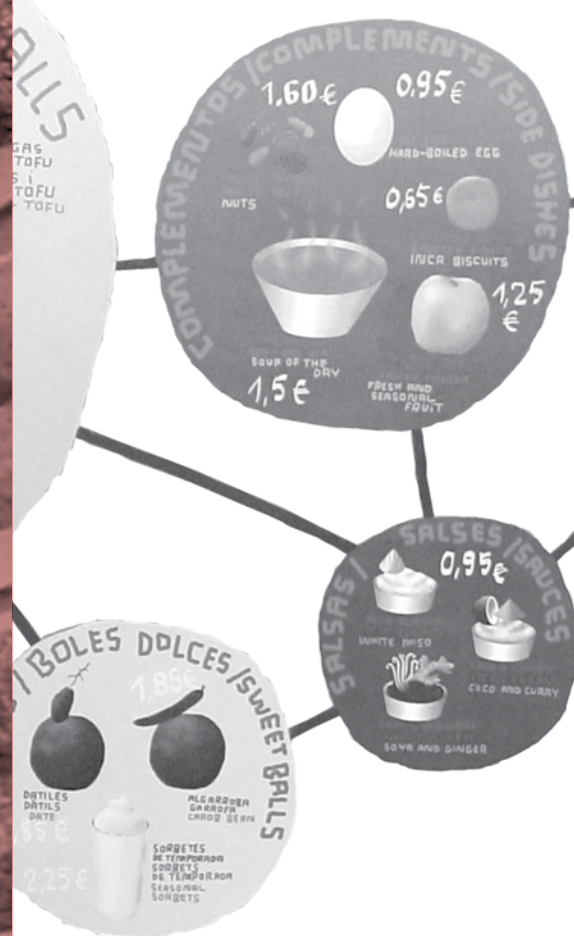
During the games, each Olympic Farm will be open for viewing, tours and evaluation. Specially designed carts will make visible the movement of the fruits and vegetables the short distance between the host garden and the guest's table. Neighborhood farming teams will be awarded gold, silver and bronze medals for the quality of their produce and the excellence of their gardens. They will go on to become urban farming superstars, with offers for product endorsements and their faces splashed across the covers of all the tabloids.

After the summer of 2012, London residents will inherit a spectacular network of urban pleasure gardens that will feed them with the seasons, instead of empty monumental shells erected for a moment of global vanity.

Every evening, the children of London (some of whom may not have known that a tomato comes from a plant) will look at their plates, full of food that they watched grow down the street, and they will even know the name of the famous Olympic Farmer who planted it.

Fritz Haeg maintains an architecture and design practice, Fritz Haeg Studio, oversees happenings at Sundown Salon/Schoolhouse and participates in the ecology initiatives of Gardenlab. He has taught architecture, design and fine art at CalArts, Art Center College of Design, Parsons and the University of Southern California. In 2006 Haeg initiated LA's Sundown Schoolhouse, an alternative educational environment based in his geodesic dome. He has produced projects and exhibited work at Tate Modern, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Mass MoCA, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, the Wattis Institute, the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Maastricht and the MAK Center in LA. His new on-going project, Animal Estates, will debut at the 2008 Whitney Biennial with a series of installations in front of the museum. His first book, Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn, will be published by Metropolis Books in February 2008.

www.fritzhaeg.com



Sarah Rich

FROM FOOTWEAR TO FOOTBALL: HOW CAMPER DESIGNED AN ICONIC EATERY



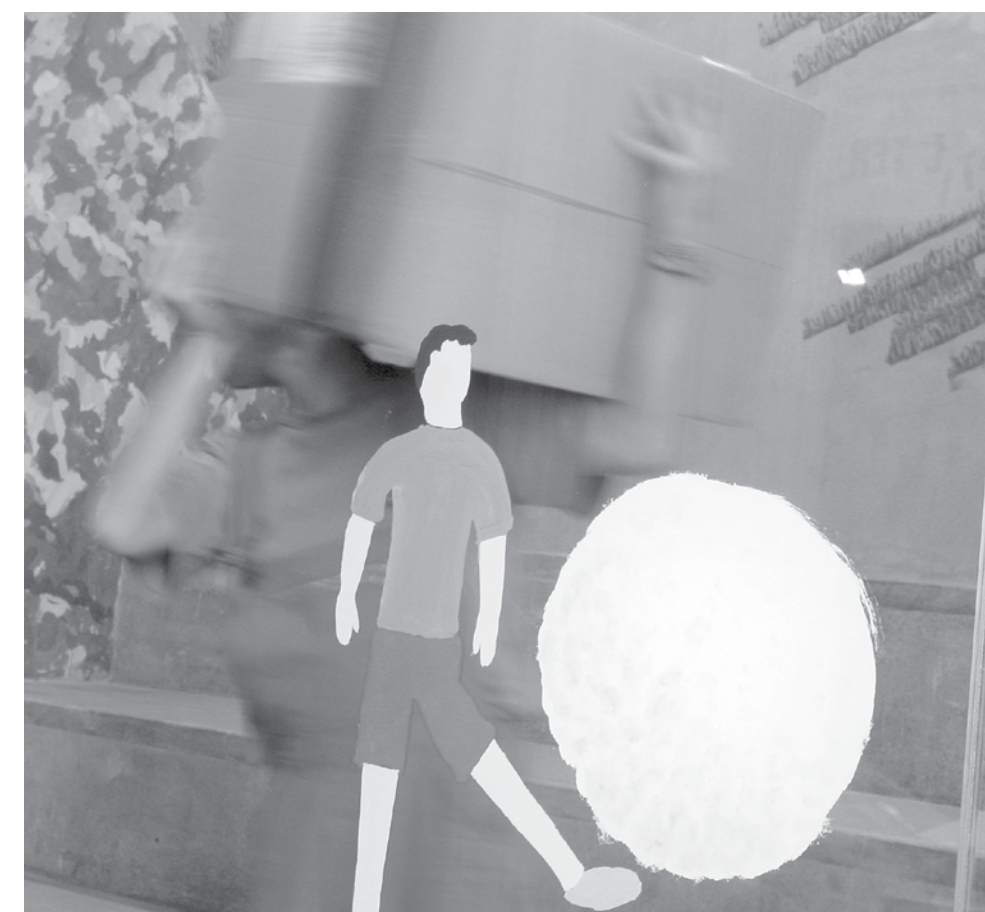
The wall menu, seating area, cute staff, and window dressing of Barcelona's temporary FoodBALL eatery, designed by Martí Guixé, 2004. All photos ©Imagekontainer.

Almost any design fan can recognize the sophisticated eccentricity of the Camper brand. Schoolish colors, matte materials and the occasional embroidered pictorial compose unmistakable footwear and suggest a certain kind of personal aesthetic: independent, unpretentious, concerned with comfort and quality and allergic to blink-length fads. In keeping with their off-center simplicity, Camper retail stores feel like galleries featuring utilitarian shoe art enclosed by capricious graphic murals. Camper enjoys plenty of brand loyalty from their customers because the company doesn't just provide a sensible shoe; they facilitate experiences and define a lifestyle. So it only makes sense that they decided to scale up from boots to buildings.

In its hometown of Barcelona, Camper opened a boutique hotel, Casa Camper, and a restaurant with the curious name, FoodBALL. Like the shoes, these two establishments seem to be simultaneously subversive and instinctive, built around the concept that even when we seek a new experience, we like to feel at home. FoodBALL's two locations (Barcelona and Berlin) were closed by Camper at the beginning of 2007, but Casa Camper remains abuzz. And though FoodBALL was a temporary enterprise, the concept from which it emerged made an indelible mark on design for dining experiences.

Both Casa Camper and FoodBALL were conceived by self-characterized "ex-designer," Martí Guixé, whose work in space creation has almost always been food-related. He regards food not so much in terms of its culinary properties, but as an opportunity to explore mass consumption and the transformation of a physical object into energy. As he said in an interview with London's Design Museum (www.designmuseum.org/design/marti-guixe): "Contrary to what a lot of people think, I am not interested in gastronomy, eating or food in general, and I cannot cook. I am interested in food, as I consider it is a mass consumption product and I like the fact that it is a product that disappears – by ingestion – and is transformed into energy...In my food projects, the edible products are based on the idea of developing food products that fit a contemporary way of life."

For the Camper projects, Guixé had to match the lifestyle of a fashion-conscious European urbanite. His success in this endeavor came at least in part from honoring both the fast pace of the modern city, and the cultural inclination to honor history and tradition even in a 21st-century context. FoodBALL has been called a "fast food" restaurant, but its menu was textbook Slow Food. FoodBALL's menu consisted of a single item, the namesake of the restaurant, which was a tennis ball-sized sphere of rice blended with meats, beans, vegetables and other ingredients in varying combinations. They even made dessert balls. Like Willy Wonka's Never Ending Gobstopper, FoodBALLs provided diners with an entire meal experience in one medium, but unlike Wonka's creation, this product was



fundamentally impossible to industrialize. Each one was made by hand on site, using fresh, simple and often organic ingredients. The fare may have been *prêt-à-manger* when hungry diners arrived, but the process couldn't have been farther from our average idea of fast food.

Once inside a FoodBALL, customers found three adjoining but distinct spaces: the entrance with an ordering counter and a giant menu "map," the kitchen and the dining area, which was designed in tiered, unfurnished concrete steps for a social, unstructured feel that mimics streetlife. Giant wall murals depicted fanciful illustrations that referenced traditional agriculture and the electronic age concurrently. A number of bubbly infographics showed the various types of healthy ingredients available at FoodBALL and the combinations and size options. There was no such thing as "supersize" at FoodBALL – this was about conscientious consumption and simple pleasure; and true to principle, all of the food came in biodegradable disposable containers.

The limitations imposed through adherence to ecological principles and manual production resulted in a place Guixé described as "functionally anecdotal." In other words, the products available at FoodBALL, the process of their creation and the space itself worked together to tell a story about preserving tradition and good health while keeping apace with the evolution of consumption patterns, aesthetic preferences and daily demands on time and energy.

Sarah Rich is an editor at Dwell magazine and a freelance journalist focused primarily on the intersection of design, sustainability, food and brand culture. She is also a senior editor for *Inhabitat.com* and the former managing editor of *Worldchanging.com*. Sarah lives in San Francisco's sunny Mission district next to the best taqueria in town.

www.foodball.com

Eva Hagberg
SCAR TISSUE

There's a scar at the top of my right leg. It looks like the British Isles, maybe Denmark, maybe Iceland. I'm not sure, I'm not a geographer, but it's a cluster of small brown shapes, some merging together, some trailing off to the left. The little dots look like the tail end of a comet compared to the big center of the scar, like the dust cast off by one giant moment.

That's what the scar reminds me of. It is the dust cast off by one giant moment, by a life I was living, by a drawing that I owned. I got the scar in the kitchen of my house, a house I lived in for eight months before I couldn't live in that house anymore. I got the scar while I was cooking Peas in a Creamy Red Sauce, the recipe by Madhur Jaffery, given to me by the stepmother who became my stepmother four years ago, the recipe one she cooked in the kitchen of the house she and my father bought together when they decided to admit to one another that this was it, for real, for keeps. I was on the last part of the recipe, the part where you heat three tablespoons of vegetable oil and throw in a tablespoon of mustard seeds and a tablespoon of coriander, wait for them to pop and then pour in two packs of defrosted peas.

I lit the gas with the match the way we had to because the stove couldn't catch because a mouse liked to live there and with its tail turn off the pilot light, and it made the vegetable oil hot, three tablespoons of it. I'm used to cooking with olive oil – the Columela brand was the best, I read in *Cook's Illustrated*, those illustrations so part of that life I lived – so the vegetable oil confused my visual cortex for a minute. The oil was on the front burner of the stove in the kitchen I was sharing with the man whose life I was living, in the pan that belonged to his mother and his grandmother before her, a New Orleans line. The pan was big and old and perfect for this recipe, large enough to be able to spin the mustard seeds around while they popped. I'd cooked this dish four or five times and every time I made it the kitchen got covered in the cast away debris, like the dust from the scar.

The vegetable oil got hot, I guess, but I couldn't tell because it stays inert unless you throw water in it or, as my stepfather who taught me how to cook taught me, spit in it. I noticed the smell, then, and how something wasn't quite right about it. I thought maybe the pan, which we had just picked up from his mother's house after she had picked it up in Texas, packing up in preparation, that maybe it wasn't clean enough, or maybe something had been left over from the last time I'd made the Peas in a Creamy Red Sauce, and I thought maybe it was time to throw out the oil and start over.

I picked up the pan but my visual cortex was confused and where it should have seen a layer of hot oil it saw inert, clear liquid, mistook it for water. I picked up the pan and I picked it up too quickly and I meant to take it to the sink and pour out the liquid, the burning hot oil, but instead the oil slopped over the side and into my leg. I was wearing yoga pants because I was trying to change my life and yoga seemed to be a good way of going about that, but the drawback to my chakras being realigned and my energies being good and my practice having been dedicated and my having accepted into my life Shiva, the God of destruction, was that the pants were cotton and when the hot oil fell on them they only pulled it closer to my skin.

The oil began to cook the top of my leg, in the shape of Iceland or the British Isles or maybe Denmark, I do not know because I am not a geographer, but I do know that it hurt.

It doesn't hurt anymore, the scar, but it reminds me of the life I was living, and it reminds me of the things I left behind. It reminds me of the drawing that we bought, and how it's there and I'm here, here for now being a transient space, in between, dislocated. I'm living now like the dust cast off from the comet of that life, and it's a beautiful dust, and I can see that it's on its way to the complete part of the scar. The scar reminds me of the drawing, Lead Pencil Studio's *After*, the piece we bought together in Seattle's Lawrimore Project after a dinner we had there hosted by an architect where we ate bento boxes provided by a chef who is very famous in Japan, we promise.

The scar reminds me of that moment of buying that art, the purchase of culture in some way more of a sign of togetherness than the purchase of real estate or furniture, but when I see the scar now I don't think of how much I wish I had the art – although, sometimes, I do – but of how quickly we can recover from these things. When I see the scar now I remember how hopeful I felt when I bought the art, thinking that maybe that was part of the life that I was wanting to live but for some reason couldn't, a reason I couldn't figure out why until I realized that I had to cast myself off from that main island of my life and be like the comet dust.

The scar reminds me of the other scars and the other art, of the time I cried in a restaurant in Yountville after falling into Richard Serra's gravity, and of the time he cried in a restaurant in Chicago after I felt that Anish Kapoor would fall on me. The scar reminds me of all the scars we pick up, of all the memories of food and art – because it all, in the end, comes down to the three of food and art and sex and we do not write about the third, not here or now – and the scar reminds me that it is those scars we carry, those little bits of comet dust, that those are the art that we'll really take with us, that doesn't need to be split or divided or fought over. The scar reminds me that I'm about to and do already live a life of food and art – and sex, although we do not write about that, not here or now – and it'll fade and blend and leave, and so will the memories, and even though sometimes I'll wish the scar was brighter or the memories were different, it will all be good.

And the scar reminds me that I know there's a comet, that I won't always be dust.

Eva Hagberg is a New York-based freelancer who writes about architecture, design, food and culture. Her writing has appeared in Wallpaper, CITY, Metropolis, Domino, Interior Design, Black Ink, and The New York Times.

www.huffingtonpost.com/eva-hagberg

Stephanie Snyder
THE MASTER'S TABLE



www.arcadejournal.com

SFC CHRONICLE
HERB CAEN
OCT 1, 1975

EAT YOUR ART OUT: Daniel Spoerri, the noted French artist of the "New Realism" school, is here from Paris as artist-in-residence at the S.F. Art Institute, but that is not the item. Oh, far from it! Since Daniel's thing is food as art, the stylish Eliane Ganz invited him to do his stuff for some 50 guests at her European Gallery out there on Sacramento Street Sunday night... This "Eat Art" party fashioned out handsome-ly: Daniel had fashioned mashed potatoes (leg of lamb on chicken legs, ugh) and so on, when suddenly someone hit him with a piece of cake shaped like a piece of cake. Daniel, delighted, whirled around and hit Ms. D. A. Hoyt, the illustrious art patron, with another piece of cake... It then developed that Ms. Hoyt was innocent: the cake-thrower was Daniel's own girl friend, imported from Paris at great expense. This so infuriated him — ach, artists — that he turned over every table, broke every dish, hurled wine bottles against the walls, threw food every which way, and stormed out... So much for the new realism. Damage, realistically, is "extensive" but quite artistic.

I arrive at the carved wooden door of Daniel Spoerri's Vienna apartment building three minutes early. It is a sunny July morning and I look up toward his corner apartment to see sheer white fabric billowing from the windows. Daniel Spoerri is an artist, a chef, a scholar, a dancer and an insanely curious person, whose appetite for knowledge radiates from his eyes.

Spoerri was born Daniel Issac Feinstein, in Galati, Romania, in 1930, to a Swiss Catholic mother and a Romanian Jewish father. His father converted to Protestantism and began proselytizing in Galati. A strict and imposing man, he once punched young Spoerri in the head for singing hymns on the toilet. Already, Daniel's life was strange. But in 1941, the Nazis made his life even stranger when they disappeared his father. It didn't matter that his father was a Christian. The Nazis killed him anyway — it was about blood. Spoerri has made a lot of art about blood in his lifetime, and cooked it in many meals. Spoerri is the author of at least five culinary treatises; and, not coincidentally, he lives overlooking the finest farmer's market in Vienna. Spoerri rebukes distinctions between art, food and blood. He developed his artistic practice around food and sociality while living in Bern in the 1950s, working as a professional dancer with the Bern Opera Ballet Company. By 1959, Spoerri was concentrating his attention on the table as a creative locus, a site of magic, sensuality and anthropology. It was a natural extension of his physical and intellectual activities. In 1960, alongside Yves Klein, Spoerri joined the Nouveau Réalistes; and from there revolutionized European culture's relationship to food as art.

As I press the bell, I sense something behind me. I turn to see Spoerri, tucked in close, vibrant and handsome in a linen jacket and canvas pants held up by the same wide suspenders that he has worn for the last 70 years. I recognize them from so many photographs. Spoerri carries a small bag full of fruit and other items. He knows it's me. "I was just getting something for us," he smiles. And our day unfolds. We tape several hours of conversation in his living room studio, and then continue over large bowls of beef wonton soup at a nearby cafe. I focus the interview on Spoerri's productive but limited time in America. Spoerri came to the

U.S. for the first time in 1964, the year Robert Rauschenberg won the Grand Prize for Painting at the Venice Biennale — a significant moment in New York's epic conquest of the international art scene.

Spoerri stayed in New York for a little under a year, creating a groundbreaking exhibition at the Allan Stone Gallery entitled *31 Variations on a Meal*. During this performance-based exhibition Spoerri cooked and shared meals with a different guest for 31 consecutive evenings. At a certain, spontaneous moment, each meal was considered "finished" and Spoerri affixed every remnant — food, ashes, dishware, whatever — on to the table and hung each successive repast around the walls of the gallery. His guests included Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and other art-world luminaries. Spoerri returned to Europe for a spell then came back to New York in 1965. During this visit he created another important installation in his room at the Chelsea Hotel, consisting of the products and materials of his daily life, particularly meals and social interactions.

A decade passed before he returned again in September 1975, this time for a two-month stint as a visiting artist at the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI). Sitting together in the noodle house, Spoerri describes his time in San Francisco as a period of scenic beauty and artistic frustration. Spoerri's voice rises dramatically as he tells me about destroying his exhibition at the Eliane Ganz Gallery in San Francisco on the evening of September 28, 1975.

Spoerri loved to complicate things, but there had been no prior account of violence, no hostile erasure. It struck me as completely odd that he would destroy the artifacts of any of his gastronomic practices. Once I got back to the States, I scheduled an appointment with the archivist of the San Francisco Art Institute, hoping to learn the circumstances of Spoerri's unique and intriguing act. I uncovered a sordid mess of academic and social pressures that came to a head not only in Spoerri's violent act, but in a series of political upheavals at the Art Institute at the time.

Left: San Francisco Chronicle newspaper clipping taped to a folder. Text by Herb Caen, 01 October 1975.

All photos: Daniel Spoerri Banquet, 28 September 1975, Eliane Ganz Gallery, San Francisco, California. Photographer unknown. Clipping and photos courtesy of the Anne Bremer Memorial Library, San Francisco Art Institute.



Spoerri's visit to San Francisco was initiated by the Eliane Ganz Gallery and SFAI, specifically by the recently appointed President, Arnold Herstand, and the Dean of the College, Roy Ascott. Spoerri arrived in San Francisco around mid-September, accompanied by his French girlfriend, Claude Torre. What Spoerri didn't know was that he was walking into a hornet's nest. The student body and most of the faculty were beginning to realize that Herstand was enacting sweeping changes in the Art Institute's academic and administrative structures: no more tuition waivers for selected students, no more part-time faculty, plans for a tuition hike, and a general shift in the overall mission and character of the Institute away from studio practice and critique and toward a vocational professionalism. The students and faculty felt the administration was taking them for granted. The administration's decision to give Spoerri and Torre license to work in the Printmaking Department's studios hadn't been cleared by Dick Graf, head of the department. This created all the more tension when, according to some accounts, Claude Torre behaved badly in the studios and Spoerri got upset. The students didn't want to work with Torre; Spoerri refused to have seminars with students.

Things were going badly, and a gaping divide developed between the students and the majority of the faculty — against the administration. By 1976, just a few months after Spoerri left, the students of the Art Institute withheld their tuition in an escrow account and successfully pressured the Board of Directors to force Herstand to resign. The students won a rare victory against the forces of elitism and privilege. Thankfully, this history exists in print, in the student newspaper, the *Eye*, published for a few years in the 1970s. The events of this time were recorded with great transparency — official documents, committee notes and editorial opinions were printed and distributed to the entire community in the *Eye*. Without this tool, it would have been impossible for the students to mobilize against the administration and the Board. Herstand was sunk by the power of language and initiative, and perhaps a bit by Spoerri as well. It couldn't have looked good for Herstand to have a renowned European artist smash cake in the face of a patron and destroy his own artwork.

Take a look at the photographs surrounding this essay. You are there. September 28, 1975. These images are the only ones that survive in the SFAI archives, and even they seem suspect. What is going on here? Where are the signs and nuances of sociality regularly seen in Spoerri's practice? Nothing spontaneous is happening at these tables. There's Spoerri, in a fashionable white suit, his gestures formal and remote, his normally mischievous grin replaced by a stiff smile. The whole feel of the meal is orchestrated. The food is ornate to the point of vulgarity. The guests are unvaried, too fancy. There at Spoerri's table one sees Francis Ford Coppola and his wife, and there's Arnold Herstand, wearing the trompe l'oeil tuxedo t-shirt. The guest list reveals the cream of San Francisco society: Mr. and Mrs. Paul Pelosi, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Swig, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Getty, Peter Plagens and Mrs. D.A. Hoyt, the unlucky recipient of Spoerri's cake assault, just to name a few. There were almost 40 guests at the party and they were all rich and influential. Notice how only one table is square and without a tablecloth? This was the table that Spoerri was expected to preserve for posterity. And there is the cake itself, a frosted replica of Spoerri's work, sad symbol of Spoerri's original revolution, being plated by a servant, waiting to be consumed. When, moments after these images were taken, Spoerri ruptured the illusion of civility constructed as a banquet and destroyed his work, including everyone's dinner, he renounced authorship of the event, flinging authorship away from himself onto the "real" creators of the event, destroying his master's table. Spoerri became his work's anti-author — a role he has often identified with the act of defecation. Why didn't the photographer keep shooting when Spoerri went bananas? Fortunately, gossip columnist Herb Caen, who was a guest at the banquet, printed an account several days later.

Stephanie Snyder is the director and curator of the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. In addition to curating exhibitions at the Cooley, Snyder writes fiction and essays, and participates in a variety of local and international cultural initiatives. She is the recipient of a 2007 Curatorial Research Fellowship from the Getty Foundation, and is curating a traveling exhibition of Daniel Spoerri's work, with accompanying publication, that will open at Reed College in 2010.

Many thanks to the Getty Foundation and Jeff Gunderson, SFAI Special Collections Librarian.

Michael Hebberoy

TABLE MAKING: STEPS 1-8

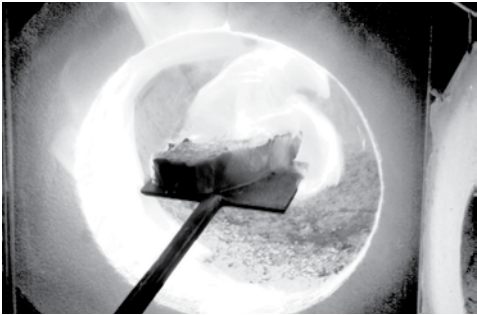
about 12 years ago I left architecture school. I dropped out. since then I have been making spaces for people to gather. it started with bamboo, scrap wood, old windows and ailing pickup trucks, under the watchful eye of my mentor, mark lakeman. together, with endless others, we created the city repair project. we slept in our studio – under the drafting tables – and we cried a lot. I think that bob marley's redemption song brought me to tears while I hunched “designing.” we were going to change things.

and then I built a table, and kept manifesting them. I am little uncertain as to why, but it is now a nervous tick – and invades my dreams (and I pace, fidget, even squint “tables”). the tables have been as humble as dirt and sometimes princely, almost royal. thousands of hands have brought food to and from these tables and countless elbows have come to rest on their planks, but I am just beginning – really just at the first stages of the inquiry.

1 build a fire.

1996.

I have a theory. the round table evolved from the fire. the primordial and even commonplace fire. the round table finds its highest form in the architecture of the symposium. the long table comes from the tree. and the small table – the restaurant table – well, that comes from our desire to control our environment. when I was following mark lakeman around portland we attached 60-foot bamboo/visqueen wings to a datsun truck. we served tea, and people banged drums – it was a modern fire. we forgot to add the table. generally, tables rise 30 inches from the ground. when seated your food is far enough away to allow for eye contact and easy conversation and the surface is close enough to accommodate the natural bend of the elbow.



a dinner hosted in the esque hot shop: steak searing in a glass blowing furnace. photo: courtesy of one pot

2 break the law.

2001.

in march 2001, I erected a 21-foot (three hollow-core doors) table in the living room of a portland bungalow. the idea was simple, cook for people and take their money completely outside of the realm of the legal food system. it was an “underground” restaurant before that term had a definition. it was meant more as a toolkit than a discrete occurrence. my former partner and I intentionally broke the law, intentionally made as much noise as possible – and in so doing made it clear that the authorities in question were far too busy to spend their time sleuthing around town looking for speakeasy feasts. it was not just a way to pay the bills. it was a clearly stated question to the establishment, meant to act as a thorn in the side – what jaime lerner calls “urban acupuncture.” now there are many hundred underground restaurants in this country. I think the toolkit helped.



first night of family supper. photo: b.childrens

3 try harder. the back room.

2005.

when I started family supper (step 2.) I was vastly opposed to a “program” of any kind. it was a simple choreography. no politics, no theater. just a mildly anarchistic revolt against the banalities of the modern restaurant. there were no choices. you sat with strangers. the menu was always a surprise, you had to share food (gasp) – and if you had a lousy time – well... f’off. when esteemed novelist and “public intellectual” (I love that moniker) matthew stadler asked me to twist the concept, make it a formal evening, invite authors and thinkers, stage a conversation – kind of like milk that has been fortified – I didn’t pause. I said yes.



matthew stadler and art historian john o'brien at the back room. photo: johnathan snyder

4 use the table. twist the table (harder). turn it on its head.

2006.

on april 23, 2006, I asked gore vidal if I could come to his los angeles home and manifest a modern-day symposium in his living room. he said yes. three months later gore deftly made two things very clear to me: sitting, eating and drinking with philosopher-kings is as important as it ever was; and, secondly, I was not yet ready to host a symposium with the likes of gore. but this work will continue. it must. our culture has done much to discredit food and much to discredit its elders.



living room. vidal residence. photo: j. bitterman

5 through the looking glass. what can we learn from history. now.

march 2007-present.

the food we celebrate, the food that adorns our tables at critical cultural moments is cuisine; genuine cuisine is rarely the result of a chef with several michelin stars. I see it more as a rut of culture, a repeated action, an obvious and adroit response to a basic context, but also informed by larger historical events that run by like groundwater. bouillabaisse, succotash, and pibil have little to do with the four french mother sauces. six months ago, morgan brownlow and I began to investigate the intersecting forces that form cuisine by launching a series that presses down on the most gastronomically influential non-chefs in history: apicius, brillat savarin, alice b. toklas, catherine de medici, etc. we coined the series, “the history of the mouth.” on said evenings people from the arts, literature, film and even the disciples of political science stomp around the table artificially recreating a kind of historical context and strangely, somewhere in the crosshairs, the food we share seems more familiar. imagine eating the same crawfish recipe alice and gertrude ate in the war years, but now, in a crumbling warehouse on a table draped with sliced dresses, and the diners launching into soliloquy, reading the works of the two ladies. it beats dinner and a movie.

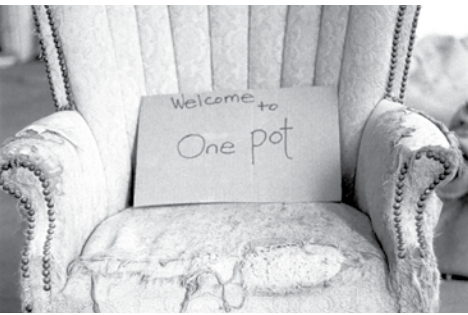


stalin's cupcake. photo: jim riswold. 2007

6 don't show up.

september 15, 2007.

“we shall put the spectator in the centre of the picture.” the italian futurist carlo carra wrote this alluring line in 1910, and I have always wanted to emulate his words and host an event that had no host. on september 15, 2007, at the bridge motel in seattle it happened. Forty guests showed up and were confronted with a pile of ingredients, pots, pans, an ad hoc kitchen, a 40-foot table – and no host. they had been abandoned (much to their surprise). mutiny? no. they fed 60 people that night and had a tremendous time. I was even allowed to shoot a cautionary message through this work: tables are not individual acts; they are, at their core, a collaboration.



no host. photo: sara shaw. 2007

7 get political. or at least global.

july 2007-present.

coffee is the second most valuable commodity on the planet – second to oil. it is grown in some of the most war-torn and conflicted regions of the world. we talk about oil. we even talk about corn. but we rarely talk about coffee – maybe it is safer that way. nonetheless seattle coffee roaster caffe vita has commissioned me to manifest tables in each of the countries from which it directly sources beans. I gather as many of the coffee-entrenched as possible (farmers, pickers, brokers) and together we cook a deep pot of food, something closely entwined with the culture of the crop, and we talk about their lives. this globetrotting table is acting as a sponge, a petri dish and an amplifier for their stories. the early results have changed me and have run through the veins of vita and will hopefully expand the dialogue about the complex cup we all enjoy.



pot on fire in the countryside outside of guatemala city photo: courtesy of one pot

8 get political again. but closer to home.

june 2008-june 2009.

in the northwest we hold our heads high: we have progressive cities, the country's “most green” city, the country's “best planned” city, etc. these lovely communities are held together by a strong and desolate arm of concrete and steel called the I-5 corridor. I am concerned about the in-between – I think the future of our glittering towers depends much on the isolated stretch between portland and seattle, bellingham and vancouver. our brightest intellects – most piercing imaginations – only seem to concern themselves (understandably) with the bright-lit cities of the region. in a gesture of seduction I am going to take to the streets. starting in june 2008 I will erect 12 tables during a one-year period – 12 tables poised dangerously close to the onslaught of steel that is the interstate. this project will require participation and I am hoping the table can bring a few of the brightest minds into the in-between.



potential site for a dinner party.

Adam Kleinman, Greg Lundgren, Matthew Stadler

COOKBOOKS

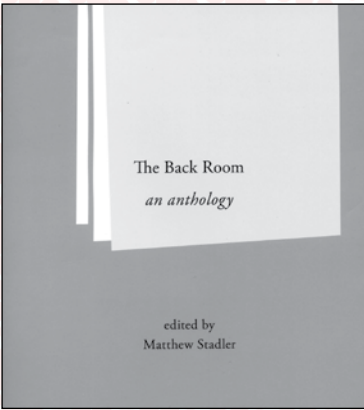


Once upon a time, an artist named Marcel Duchamp outlined three ways in which an artist could produce work. The first was to take the task at hand and make the work oneself. The second was to employ a person or persons to make the art. Lastly, Duchamp proposed that the artist could simply write the instructions on how to make said art, absolving the artist from ever having to exhibit, produce or promote the work. This last method of art-making was coined instructional art.

Not so long ago, Greg Lundgren watched his former gallery be torn down by bulldozers. Without a roof to curate under and a very thick stack of ideas, concepts and experiments yet to be realized, he thought of Mr. Duchamp and considered his options. Alas, it was decided to write a cookbook of instructional art. He convinced his good friend, brilliant illustrator Jed Dunkerley, to animate the 75 recipes for performance, installation, writing and group exhibition. What emerged was a wonderful, and wonderfully diverse, narrative on contemporary art. *The Vital 5 Cookbook* stands as a manifesto, continually challenging the conventions of contemporary art in an attempt to free art from the confines of the gallery and the exclusivity so common in the art world. At its best, *The Vital 5 Cookbook* incites a revolution, reminding readers of the importance of self-expression, that opportunity abounds and that a little risk-taking can save the world from tyranny and boredom. All you have to do is jump.

Edited by Greg Lundgren, Published by Vital 5 Productions
151 pages, \$25.00

-Greg Lundgren

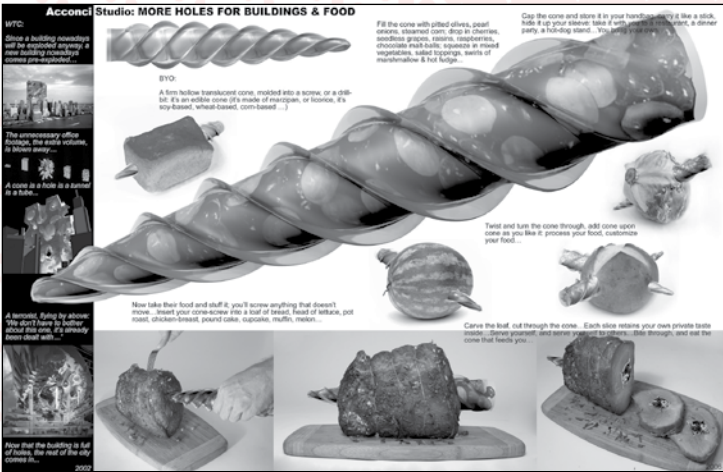


The Back Room was a hunch about conversation that turned into a series of bacchanalian dinners at which great food and wine enabled groups of 50-60 people to carry on meaningful conversations with one another and with a special guest, usually some great writer or artist whom we admire. The events began two years ago in Portland, Oregon, and have featured such guests as Anne Focke, Gore Vidal, Mary Gaitskill, Lisa Robertson, Wayne Koestenbaum, Gregory Crewdson, Lawrence Weschler, Sutapa Biswas and many others. We also have musicians play live at each dinner, including Carrie Brownstein (ex-Sleater-Kinney), YACHT, Steven Malkmus, Dave Longstreth, Bobby Birdman, Phil Elverum, Drakkar Saune, Lucky Dragons and many others.

Because we like to read (and good conversations get anchored by the inertia of written texts), the Back Room began commissioning its special guests to write and publish short essays with us. The result is a collection of 18 essays (including a few visual ones) that document the ongoing conversation of the Back Room, circa 2005-2007. This book, *The Back Room: an anthology*, has been published in a handsome softbound volume by Clear Cut Press, and is designed by Tae Won Yu. It is intended to inspire copycat efforts in other cities and times.

Edited by Matthew Stadler, Published by Clear Cut Press
496 pages, \$16.00

-Matthew Stadler



More Songs About Buildings and Food

Traditionally architecture and cuisine evolved side-by-side out of local environments and raw materials, and as a result, strongly demonstrated a sense of place. For the ancient Greeks, the olive tree stood at the center of their body politic as they built with its wood and ate and traded its fruit and oil. Likewise, Antonio Gaudí became a national symbol as his undulating scaled and barnacled roof surfaces, like the characteristic mixture of surf and turf know as paella, perfectly blended Catalonia's landscape of mountains and sea.

Are globalization and industrial mass-production sounding the death knell for the traditional relationship of location to buildings and food? With the general devaluation of both, the fast-food industry and its prefab architecture does to the built environment what it has done to the American diet – made it bland and uniform.

Your vicinity is a special case in point!

Is your home becoming bland? What is missing in the plans for your downtown? How can you get something that is not just more buildings and more food, additive, superfluous and certainly not ingenious?

We invite you to spice up the pot by thinking about a new “recipe” for your area, be it anything from a design for a new public piazza to the instructions for making a perfect pizza.

Edited by Andrew Kleinman,
Published by The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council
24 pages, Free + Shipping
Contact akleinman@lmcc.net

-Adam Kleinman

Thorsten Baensch and Christine Dupuis

MOVEABLE FEAT

In January 2000, Christine Dupuis and I presented *Cookbook*, an artist book in an edition of 50 published by Bartleby & Co., at Paris' “Fondation Cartier” during one of their “Soirée Nomade.” Sitting together in a café afterward, we schemed. We wanted to create an inviting portable space, somewhere people could feel at ease and share our good experience of working together. We made some drawings and the idea of “Kitchen, la cuisine transportable” was born.

Back in Brussels we spoke with our designer friend Mémia Taktak from Tunisia. We wanted a simple and easy-to-move structure. Mémia offered help and she was finally responsible for the realization of the “Kitchen” structure in autumn 2001. “Kitchen” is made of wood and cardboard and it travels in four handmade bags. It takes about an hour to put it up, another two hours to decorate and so within half a day “Kitchen” is ready for exchange, to give soup and to get recipes.

The concept is simple. We make soup: green, red, orange or yellow with tomatoes, watercress, pumpkin, beets, cucumber or any other vegetable available. Wherever “Kitchen” is invited, we offer soup to the public in exchange for a handwritten recipe, description of a food souvenir or a food-related drawing. These documents serve as decoration material for the cardboard walls of “Kitchen.” The installation is colorful, it smells and it is very much alive. Since the first performance we have carefully collected and preserved the documents we get in exchange. Quite an impressive archive has appeared. During the last six years, “Kitchen” collected more than 1,400 documents. We have been to very different places, such as museums, galleries, an old people's home, schools, libraries. Although the circumstances are different each time, the focus of the project is meeting people and creating a friendly atmosphere.

A selection of more than 900 of these texts and drawings will be published in early 2008, as an edition of 12 artist books titled *Troc-X-Change*. This edition will be presented with 12 smaller performances, showing and using the entire book and the objects forming it.

Other books and editions have been realized by Bartleby & Co. since 2001, such as *Tea Time Box*; *Food*; *Chicken*; *Eat, Drink, Fuck, Sleep*; and, of course, *Cookbook*.

“Kitchen” is an artist project about exchange and collecting. The everyday activity of eating is at its center. It is also a project about collaboration. Christine and myself, we share the fun of working together and we share this capability with others. Our project lives thanks to the support of many people.

Thorsten Baensch, born in Heide, Germany, in 1964, has lived in Brussels since 1991. He is an artist and publisher, and has worked as a bookseller and book production manager in Cologne, Hamburg, Munich and New York. He studied painting in Brussels and Milan. In 1995 he established Bartleby & Co., which creates and publishes artists' books and editions. His limited-edition books are in the collections of many prestigious institutions.

Christine Dupuis, born in Marcinelle, Belgium, in 1946, lives in Brussels. She has worked with food since her childhood. She is an artist and “conseillère culinaire.” Currently she spends her time creating installations. Since 2001 she has collaborated with Thorsten Baensch on “Kitchen, la cuisine transportable,” and various artists' book projects.



Above: A partial listing of all the people who have traded a recipe or creative trinket in exchange for soup from Baensch, Dupuis and their interactive project, “Kitchen, la cuisine transportable.”

Bill Fritts

SETTING THE TABLE

The 1967 edition of Llewellyn Miller's *The Encyclopedia of Etiquette* dedicates 73, that's seventy-three, sections to table manners. Thousands of words on how we are to behave and interact at the table, for example:

"Elbows: the rules about elbows are as easy to remember as they are rigid: Keep them off the table at all times when an implement, cup, glass, or piece of food is in hand; keep them close to the sides when cutting food; apologize if an elbow touches a neighbor at a table."



Marcel Wanders

An early member of the Dutch design collective Droog, Marcel Wanders is responsible for such ground-breaking objects as the Knotted Chair (1996), the Snotty Vase (2001) and the Two Tops Table (2006).

"While eating I guess the attention of people is more on top of the table and over the table. I do think the table is a centre of friendships and will always remember to invite friends in around the table. The table is a piece of architecture that functions as a shrine for friendships."



Dirk Wyants

A hundred kilometers south of Droog headquarters, Belgian Dirk Wyants has built his outdoor furniture company Extremis on the mantra: Tools for Togetherness.

"We have only reached our goal when our products become tools for togetherness with family, friends or relatives, thus improving the social quality of our lives."

In his growing collection is a large round table with an integrated Lazy Susan at its center, 12 legs fanned about, each with its own pie-shaped segment of the top, providing seating for 12 and aptly named Arthur.



Erwan + Ronan Bourellec

My first step in designing is asking my clients about their desires for the project, or I envision the intended use of the object and work towards answering those needs in my work. So it was with wild surprise that I heard the responses of Erwan and Ronan Bourellec, French brothers and the design duo responsible for the Vitra "Joyn" table system, developed in part for the Seattle Public Library.

Ms. Miller, probably armed with a 13-inch ruler for smacking forgetful hands that grab the wrong fork, and the era of table dictatorship have passed. Table memories from boarding school mealtimes to Hofbrauhaus toasting lead me to ponder the interactions and behaviors of people at their tables and how the design of a table influences behavior. Does the designer of the table consider these variables when sitting down, at a table, to design a table? What does the designer think of the table?

I selected six recent tables, each of which represents a different definition of what a table means. I spoke with the designers that created them to find out their thoughts during the design process:

...and in direct reference to his Two Tops Table:

"I made a mistake, I fixed the table-top under the supporting bars instead of on top, and found a space which was always there but was never seen, I created a lid to cover and to hide and change that space and reinvent a few hundred years of classic table-making."



Arne Quinze

Whoever assumes the seat at the head of a table occupies a sociological position of power over the flanks. Intergalactic designer Arne Quinze created his Maze table asymmetrically to intentionally leave only one head of the table.

"With Maze I leave one person in charge of the table by fixing a wide leg at the other end. When I watch people sit at the table I always find the person taking the head is the natural leader in the group; this is what I wanted for the design of Maze."



Ross Lovegrove

Ross Lovegrove, self-proclaimed "captain organic," designs all manner of objects, from water bottles for Ty Nant to solar-powered concept vehicles for Swarovski. He has challenged global brands to reduce consumption through better design. His recent Liquid Tables for special auction at Phillips de Pury & Company in New York City define minimal material use.

"I build furniture that fits architecture. Design, nature and art are the three things that condition my world and my furniture. I am interested in the way things grow, fat-free design, holistic design, healthy products. If it can happen in nature we can design from it, designing as a way of dreaming."

I take away anything extraneous. With the Liquid Table there is nothing extra. It is a single surface product of flowing aluminum minimized to just enough material to get the job done.

The Liquid Bioform tables dematerialize space and melt into the context of their environment. The experience of dining is made poly-sensorial as the food appears to float in space extending the organics of food into the organics of light and liquid deformation of people."



Niels van Eijk + Miriam van der Lubbe

And finally, the Godogan table designed by Niels van Eijk and Miriam van der Lubbe for Droog and Barry Friedman Gallery. The design mashes an Indonesian fairy tale of a frog (the Godogan) that turned into a prince with a minimalist "plank form" walnut table.

The visual interpretation of the tale is realized through a combination of laser etching and intricate hand carving. The table-top is quite literally imbedded with the story, creating a conversation piece for its users.

"In this particular design we very much considered the buyer in the design process. Actually, that is what the whole idea started from. We didn't look at the functional or emotional demands of the product to the buyer, but much more the financial input he will give to the project. We know that the buyer for this type of product must be a wealthy customer, and we wanted to use that financial input to help the developments of crafts on the other side of the world. We developed the most complex decoration in order to have as many people for as long as possible working on this item. In fact, the more he would spend, the more craving he could get and the more an object the product would become."

Six tables, six stories from eight designers with six points of view. The table as icon and design form has been reconstituted a multitude of times through the millennia. As in the world of chair design, tweaks in materials and shapes keep new tables coming. A few basic variables remain constant: people sit at them, they present a horizontal plane between users and they have to be supported somehow from above or below. In the end how many more chairs or tables do we need? Probably enough to set each new generation of designers apart from the one that came before. Tables will be restructured, regurgitated and reborn as long as there is a fresh batch of designers with ideas on how to reinvent the icon. Perhaps some of them will even have table manners.

"At the end of a meal, the hostess catches the eye of one or more of the women, lays her napkin beside her plate, and begins to rise. Everyone rises with her, each man helping the woman on his right with her chair. The hostess leads the way to the living room. The guests follow in any convenient order, with the host last."

Thank you, Ms. Miller.

Bill Fritts is the founder of intelligent design, a solution-focused collaborative working with architects, designers and creative directors to build better environments. Since 2001, his studio has altered the model of design access for projects in the commercial, public and residential sectors. He is launching Solidcore, a comprehensive sustainable furniture design and manufacturing firm based in Oregon. Bill travels extensively for consultative design trend work and is a member of the Board of Directors at the Architecture and Design Museum of Los Angeles.

Peter Lewis

TASTE AND MEMORY

To Jim Harrison

It is Proust, first among the moderns, who reminds us that scent evokes memory. The olfactory sense is the most potent, penetrating the cerebellum like a spike. “All art is contemporaneous.” All smell is simultaneous. Our noses not only stick out, they poke down. We’re all pigs rooting for truffles.

You and I met across the stove at Richard Brautigan’s hacienda in Pine Creek over thirty years ago. I was stirring a pot of split pea soup. You stuck a spoon in and said it reminded you of your mother’s. This compliment, coming from a child of the Upper Midwest, was not lost on me, who hails from Chicago.

In your introduction to *The Raw and the Cooked*, you quote your friend Barry Hannah: “When you are eating well, you are eating memory.” The scent of madeleines catapulted the middle-aged Marcel into his monumental *recherche*. We are, all of us, searching for a paradise lost, the purity of first memories, first flavors, the Edenic garden of childhood when and where each taste generated an archetype. The structure of the self is certainly as much an architecture of taste as it is a construction informed by the dynamics, as they say, of the family.

My son’s primal infatuations centered around French bread and avocados. At age two he absconded with a two-ounce tin of Beluga caviar amidst the clamor of a party at an antique shop in Morecombe Bay, polishing it off in less than a minute, his poofy lips smeared with fish eggs. Was this not a primal gesture: the gaping maw of a toddler insisting, like the carnivorous plant in *Little Shop of Horrors*, to “Feed me!”? Won’t he remember this – the flavor if not the act – on some primordial, preconscious level, every taste of caviar forever casting him back to this infantile outburst of voracious self-interest?

All tastes but the first are forms of recognition. Flavor is memory. When we say that something tastes like something else, or when we say, “Gee, this tastes good,” we have, subliminally, a point of comparison. Perhaps this accounts for the typical conversation over food, the way any given meal recalls a previous meal or builds anticipation of our next. There is something so deeply civilized in this that it constitutes a literal geography and ethos in and of itself: gastro-nomy, “the law of the tummy.”

Do we set out to find this or does it find us? “The search for the genuine” is more serendipitous than strategic. We stumble upon our finest meals. “Quel surprise!” we exclaim. “Eureka!” as Archimedes is said to have uttered on splashing around in his bathtub. Go try and find the finest bouillabaise in Marseille. I dare you not to be disappointed. But you know the real thing when you taste it. This is the result of true discipline and practice, a talent honed by a lifetime’s devotion to refining your palate, the endless failures and few successes separating the wheat from the chaff.

At Lulu Peyraud’s table I was served octopus stewed in Bandol, a revelation in simplicity. Her raw sardines marinated in olive oil and lemon juice rivaled in understated minimalism a sculpture by Giacometti. In this vein I used to endlessly instruct my chefs at Campagne to remove ingredients from an overly complicated dish, to pare the plate down to its essential elements: to cook not what you can but what you must. This is an asceticism of the highest order.

Our conversation always returns to our two abiding passions: truth and beauty in language and truth and beauty in food and wine. It was Curnonsky, Prince of Gatsronomes, who proclaimed that, “In cooking, as in all the arts, simplicity is the sign of perfection.”

Not to draw spurious parallels, but Strunk & White’s Rule #17 reads: “Omit needless words.” Writing, like cooking, should be founded in the necessary. What can you not do without? Strunk’s elaboration of his rule might be rewritten for the cook as follows:

“Vigorous cooking is concise. A dish should contain no unnecessary ingredients, a meal no unnecessary dishes, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the cook make all his dishes one-dimensional, or that he avoid any complication of ingredients and cook his food only one way, but that every ingredient tell.”

Omit needless ingredients. The beauty of essential form. Apply that rule to every element on a plate, in a menu, in a restaurant, and you make a thing of beauty. But it’s equally important that every element relate to every other element both in form and content. This is a question of proportion and rhythm, of aesthetic integrity.

I know we would share in our depiction of the “genuine” that food be a consummately honest statement. How do we detect the bogus, the ersatz, the inflated in a dish? It would be glib, if somewhat true, to claim that “the nose knows.” We might as easily include the eye, the tongue as arbiters of gastronomic truth. How many times have you been presented a plate that in sheer architectonic hyperbole looks ridiculous? You laugh. It is preposterous. Visual artifice for the sake of effect: the thing made to look like something else, or the whole stacked in such ludicrous profusion – all geometry and polka dots – that you dare not touch it with your fork lest it collapse like the wild constructions of Lincoln logs we demolished as kids. In fact, you want to smash it with your fist. Or taste a dish that in its sauce-to-nuts-to-berries-to-mushrooms approach proffers such a hodge-podge of aimless flavors that it tastes “like shit,” as we so eloquently say?

But there is a higher measure, something intangible, a quality of passion or passionate attention. Call it “heart.” A dish achieving such a sublime level of simplicity, directness and authenticity is real “soul food” and nourishes not only our bodies, but our spirits. Is this not why we experience elation when we eat this way? It can be as simple as a Papaya King hot dog, or in my *Geography of Pure Flavors* one from “Tony’s Pump Room” near Wrigley Field; a perfectly sautéed filet of brook trout spattered with lemon juice; or L’Assiette’s Boudin Parmentier.

I smile just thinking about these things. They restore me to sanity, return me to the world, confer a snippet of ecstasy to my hum-drum existence.

Peter Lewis opened Campagne in 1985 and Café Campagne in 1992, both in Seattle, Washington. He sold the restaurants in 2005. He has written a novel, Blind Tasting (an orphan in search of a publisher), and was contributing editor to Virtuoso Travel & Life for which he wrote a regular column, “Wine Country Notebook.” He and his friend, the poet and novelist Jim Harrison, have been searching for the genuine in food, wine and literature for over three decades.

“Taste & Memory” appears in The Search for the Genuine: Notes for Jim Harrison, 2007.

Manga by Marcel Wanders, photo by Edland Man

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Helvetica, The Film / Karen Cheng

Typefaces usually follow the same boom-and-bust cycle as singers or starlets – progressing from obscurity to “it-girl” to overexposure/meltdown. But in the design business, art directors are the overworked, under-appreciated casting staff, wearily scanning catalogs and specimen sheets, trying to find exactly the right face and personality for the project at hand.

Sometimes the results are Oscar caliber – for example, Didot for *Harper's Bazaar*, a match made in heaven (or at least, in the golden age of magazine publishing). Sadly, there are also horrible blunders (like the original Trajan masthead for *ARCADE*, thankfully retired several years ago).

Gary Huswit's documentary, *Helvetica*, brilliantly clarifies the thinking process behind this type of aesthetic match-making. While ostensibly about the rise and fall (and rise again) of a now ubiquitous typeface, the subtext of the film is really about the factors that lead to broad changes in art and design – the social, cultural, political, historical and personal circumstances that advance design movements.

The best parts of the film reveal these semiotic underpinnings. During the interviews with the opposing pro- and con- Helvetica camps, it becomes clear that even a preference for neutrality can be loaded with meaning. Designers who like Helvetica (Massimo Vignelli, Wim Crouwel) see order, objectivity and structure as ideals. Conversely, designers who hate Helvetica (David Carson, Paula Scher) prize individuality, variety and non-conformity.

While these extremes make for good footage (watch Massimo's face contort in fury as he describes grunge typography as a “post-modern disease”), it's the practical guys who come off the best. Michael Bierut, senior partner at Pentagram New York, has a very good turn as an authoritative veteran of the corporate identity (CI) wars. When he describes the rise of CI in the 1960s, his short exegesis nails both ideology and street-smart business sense. Similarly, Stefan Sagmeister succeeds by clearly stating the obvious problem: “modernism became boring.”

The film falters a bit in the second half, after the rise of Post-Modernism is explored. Perhaps it's harder to see and classify what's happening now, without the distancing filter of time. And of course, it's easier to pick out the key players from the past. Still, it's hard to believe that the three studios featured as contemporary users of Helvetica (Experimental Jetset, NORM and Michael Place/Build) will someday be in the same league as Pentagram or Erik Spiekermann. Perhaps time and experience will give these firms more ambition – and more interesting things to say in the future.

The film is also somewhat gender-imbalanced, with only two prominent female figures (Paula Scher and Leslie Saven). While type design (and indeed, professional design itself) has been male-dominated in the past, there are many current female designers and female type-founders who might have offered unique perspectives (perhaps Zuzana Licko from Emigre, or Veronika Elsner of Elsner + Flake. Ellen Lupton, April Greiman and Sibylle Hagmann also come to mind).

Still, all in all, *Helvetica* is an interesting, informative and entertaining film. Non-designers need not fear being bored – it's an engaging, well researched and sharply edited documentary, propelled by a lively alt-rock soundtrack. At the Seattle screening, which was part of the 2007 TypeCon conference, the film played to a sold-out house of 720 seats – an interesting crowd to see the film with, since the featured designers rank as celebrities to the in-group of professionals, students and educators. While the non-initiated may miss some of the subtle spacing/ Kerning humor, there remains plenty to enjoy – especially for people who can't get enough good design, typographic or otherwise.

Helvetica screened at film festivals, museums, design conferences and cinemas worldwide, and a DVD was released on November 6, 2007.

Karen Cheng is a professor of Visual Communication Design at the University of Washington and the author of *Designing Type* (Yale University Press, 2006). Karen is also a practicing designer whose work has been recognized and published by the AIGA, Communication Arts, Print, Critique, I.D. Magazine and the American Center for Design.

www.helveticafilm.com



Top: Film poster for *Helvetica*, a documentary by Gary Huswit, 2007.
Above: Helvetica metal type (with Manfred Schulz).



Essen Design School. Courtesy of SANAA.

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Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa. Courtesy of SANAA.

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The Beautiful Evidence of Edward Tufte / Linda Norlen

The design fields are susceptible to the same syndrome as American culture at large – marked by a short attention span, a bias toward recent events, a tilt toward marketing and a language of hype and the pitch. (The future! What's next!)

One person working strongly against these tendencies is Edward Tufte. Tufte is considered the preeminent authority on the subject many call "information design," but which he calls "analytic design." He has spent 30 years developing his own set of principles about it, resulting in four books, all self-published, that have won 40 awards for content and design.

Newspapers and magazines have called Tufte "a visual Strunk and White" (*The Boston Globe*), "the Leonardo da Vinci of data" (*The New York Times*), and the "Galileo of graphics" (*Business Week*). In truth, he's a teacher with a strong reformist streak.

Far from chasing the latest trend, Tufte's aim is to contribute to lasting knowledge. "I'm very patient," he says, "because I'm never writing for the moment."

Tufte's models are as likely to come from the 16th century as the present. In the introduction to his most recent book, he writes that " ...the illustrations come from 14 centuries, 16 countries...three planets and the innumerable stars...it is difficult to identify what place or time this book is from, which is the point." At his one-day course in Seattle in July he showed participants several books, among them a 1570 edition of Euclid with 80 paper pop-ups in its solid geometry section, still in excellent condition. "It's 437 years old and still works," Tufte said. Will our websites last this long?

For Tufte, making what he calls "an evidence presentation" is no less than a moral act. Tufte is a teacher and reformer who wants to goad us into designing information in ways that are truthful and that foster analytical thinking for both the producer and the consumer.

Designers first began to discover the work of Edward Tufte after he published *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* in 1983. Displays of graphic evidence "often have... a story to tell about the data," Tufte wrote then. There are those who think that, among modes of communication, statistical data are at the opposite end of the spectrum from narrative, but they're wrong, Tufte says. For him, words, pictures and data are all *Beautiful Evidence*, the title of his most recent book.

"It's my favorite title," he says, because of the ambiguity and tension between the word "beautiful" and the word "evidence," which sounds like the language of a courtroom. The term "beautiful evidence" reflects the breadth of what Tufte writes about: from art to science. What science and art have in common is the act of intense seeing. "*Beautiful Evidence* is about how seeing turns into showing," and how showing shapes thinking. The purpose of making better presentations, after all, is to get us to think more clearly and deeply.

The designer's job is not to make analytic design simpler (or to "pep it up"), but more substantive. The way to make information displays interesting rather than boring is to get better content, better numbers, Tufte says. He thinks that readers are fully capable of comprehending complex displays; one need not and should not condescend to them.

Getting the displays of evidence right or wrong can sometimes have momentous consequences, as in the case of the engineers whose charts failed to persuade NASA officials not to launch the space shuttle in cold weather on January 28, 1986. The Challenger exploded, killing seven astronauts.

Though less dramatic, the way we display information in ordinary ways can have enormous power over our ability to reason. Tufte's view about Microsoft PowerPoint software, for example, is that it corrupts our thinking with its paltry ratio of signal to noise, its "bullet grunts" that displace sentences (and therefore better narratives), and numerous other "analytical disasters."

Tufte's contributions to the evaluation of the two space shuttle disasters and to public debate about PowerPoint are examples of how he has moved into the role of a public intellectual, from which he writes and speaks about data and design issues.

Who practices the kind of design Tufte respects? In his books there are more references to Galileo than to the names of modern designers, but Tufte does include examples from Josef Albers, Sam Antupit, the Eames office, Herbert Matter, Paul Rand and Jan Tschichold, among others. As current examples of good analytic design, Tufte cites the graphics in *Nature* and *Science* magazines and in high-quality newspapers like *The New York Times*, where the work of Megan Jaegerman has appeared, a researcher/reporter Tufte considers among the best in news graphics.

Tufte travels the country teaching his course, roughly five hours of lecture with his books as high-resolution handouts. Anyone willing to spend more time with the four books can have a far deeper experience, however. (And the ET website contains hundreds of threads.) Warning: prolonged exposure to Edward Tufte's intelligence may have a tonic effect on your thinking and work.

Linda Norlen is a consultant, educator and writer. For 15 years in Los Angeles she ran a design studio that specialized in print, exhibit and environmental design projects. She taught first at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia, California, then at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, where she was provost of the college for five years. More recently she spent three years in Italy and collaborated with the Interaction Design Institute Ivrea. She has been a visiting lecturer in Visual Communication Design at the University of Washington.

Edward Tufte is Professor Emeritus at Yale University, where he taught courses in statistical evidence, information design and interface design. Of his eight books, the four about analytic design are The Visual Display of Quantitative Information (1983, 2001), Envisioning Information (1990), Visual Explanations (1997) and Beautiful Evidence (2006).

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Far Left: Interior of a VM house.
Photo: Jasper Carlberg

Left: Bjarke Ingels with the BIG house model.

A New Design Flair in Copenhagen Warms Nordic Hearts / Trevor Boddy ³⁷

With a Vancouver-like horizon of building cranes and streets crowded by dump trucks, the Danish capital is in the throes of a building boom it cannot quite understand, much less tame.

Though the city is smaller than ours, Copenhagen's largely redundant port, former shipbuilding havens and surplus naval dockyards are larger, and every one of them seems swamped by a development wave that is only a few years old.

The Danish dockside building boom has two key differences from our own: no building is taller than 10 storeys and developers must construct a 50/50 balance of housing and workspaces at every major project. Copenhagen's planners – low-key experts who, by the way, know Vancouver's city-building in extraordinary detail – are resolved not to turn their town into a lightless and viewless resort for retirees and hot-money investors.

Copenhagen is changing with a rapidity seldom seen in Europe. A grey Nordic diffidence has been replaced by aggressive play-making, just as Aquavit has been replaced with imported Scotch and tequila. Stable, statist predictability is falling before roller coasters of speculation. For example, condos are overbuilt, but a new mania for harbour-side offices is heating up. This is all because the ancient seat of Danish kings is emerging as the port city for global businesses that locate here to serve all of Scandinavia.

In parallel with the new urbanism along the waterfront, Copenhagen's architecture is shifting, too. Danish cultural autonomy, which occasionally verges on xenophobia, had kept foreign architects from building in the central city for more than 250 years. But since 2001, a wave of commissions has gone to imported "starchitects." Now on the books is a national broadcast corporation theatre by Parisian Jean Nouvel, a slick gallery extension by Iraq-born Londoner Zaha Hadid, and, soon, a controversial new Danish architecture centre by Rem Koolhaas, Rotterdammer to the core.

Public buildings may have gone international, but housing remains the preserve of Danish designers for a lot of good reasons, principally because they have always had a flair for domestic design that balances coziness with the boldly contemporary.

Thanks to Arne Jacobsen, Danish Modern is one of the strongest design brands around, and his houses, chairs and office tower helped shape it. Fine new housing can be seen in Copenhagen, with the north boasting condos looking as if chiselled from a block of marble by a mathematically inspired sculptor. Down south lies a drum-like student residence complex finished in copper sheeting and banded wooden panels.

Cozy, however, is the last word that would be used to describe the work of Denmark's own rising architectural star, 32-year-old wunderkind Bjarke Ingels, and his design firms BIG and PLOT (the later intentionally dissolved in January 2006). After a brief apprenticeship at the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rem Koolhaas's Rotterdam firm, Mr. Ingels designed the VM condo development in the new suburb of Orestad at age 27, when most Canadian designers-to-be are just starting architecture school.

The Orestad complex is called VM for the simplest of reasons – one of the side-by-side buildings looks like an "M" in plan, the other like a "V." VM minds its dwelling-place Ps and Qs, with a variety of unit types, many with sharply defined triangular balconies.

The profits from sales of public lands to private developers at Orestad (Vancouver politicians please take note) entirely paid for the light-filled, stone-decked, spotless metro station that now serves it.

The aggressively shaped VM sold out in three weeks to young Copenhagen residents hungry for something different. These structures are being followed by a third building from the same developer, a kind of green-deck-topped mountain that strongly recalls Arthur Erickson's Evergreen building on Pender Street. The invention and bold sense of play in the BIG studio is attracting offers from cities and developers all around Scandinavia.

Mr. Ingels gave a talk in Vancouver's Lighting Resource Centre's public lecture series a year ago. Many of the key players in our city's housing design scene were there, and those who were not baffled by the scale and wonder of his work sagely declared that his was a boom-time flash career – or some quirk of computer image-making – and certainly no alternative to our own concrete condo towers sprouting out of townhouses. To be sure, I saw tacky elements during my VM tour – the AstroTurf in the covered plaza reveals an ignorance of microclimates, and the already aging wooden door frames are joined by other evidence of detail in decline. But Mr. Ingels' technical finesse will increase with his portfolio of finished buildings. His spirit of optimism and invention is sorely needed in Vancouver, where it sometimes seems we reward our oldest, dullest and most predictable designers with guaranteed approvals.

Think BIG for a change, Vancouver.

Vancouver architecture critic and urbanist **Trevor Boddy** has written and consulted in Oregon and Washington since teaching architecture at the University of Oregon. His column "Dwelling" is posted every Friday at www.globeandmail.com.

www.big.dk



Right: Balconies at the VM houses, Orestad, Denmark.
Photos: Johan Fowelin



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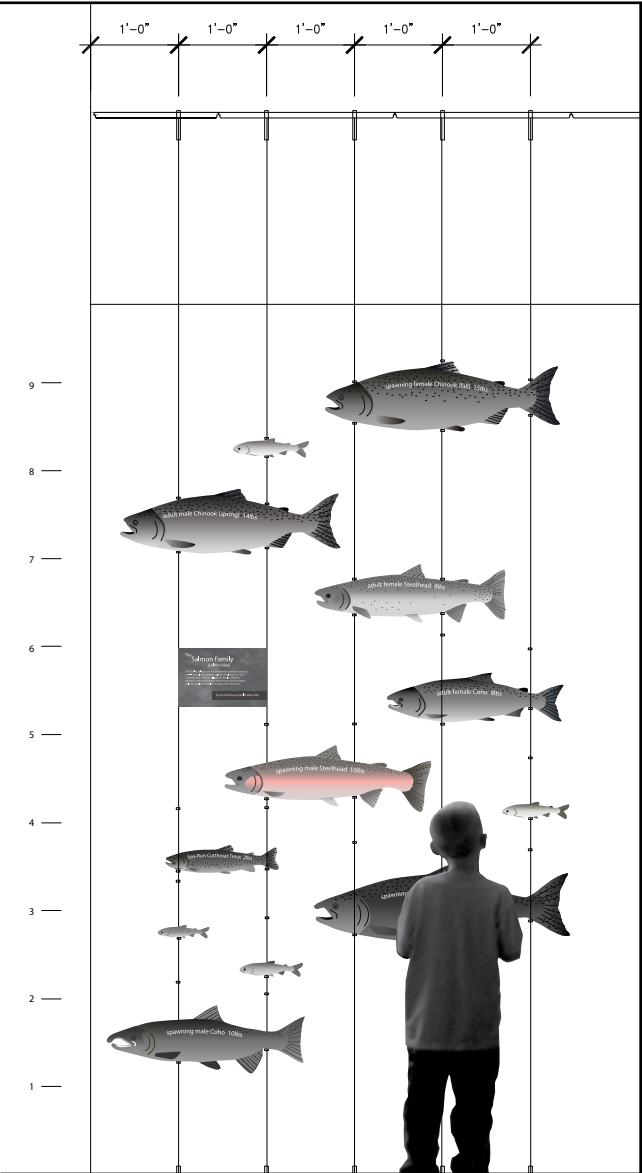
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Archipelago: Essays on Architecture for Juhani Pallasmaa
/ Reviewed by JM Cava

I have to admit that, even as I write and teach in the realm of “architectural theory,” I find most of the material published under this heading supremely unrelated to practice, if not just plain incomprehensible. And I’m a pretty smart guy, as far as architects and academics go. But the realms of school and practice inhabit parallel worlds that share a surreal coexistence, intersecting every now and then, seemingly only at random. This is the curse – or maybe the blessing – of having one foot in the office environment and the other in academia. Only on rare occasions do contributors to architectural theory directly inspire and enlighten us in our daily practice; these are usually people who are also firmly embedded both in teaching and in the creation of buildings. Unfortunately, such contemporary writers can be counted on one hand: Kenneth Frampton, Alan Colquhoun, Colin St. John Wilson (sadly recently deceased), and the Finnish architect and teacher, Juhani Pallasmaa.

In *Archipelago*, Pallasmaa is honored with a series of short pieces by architectural personalities both famous and obscure, all woven upon his specific convictions about experiencing architecture through senses other than the visual. Such a collection is commonly called a Festschrift, loosely translated as “celebration publication,” and is bestowed upon influential academics who manage to reach an advanced age with some distinction (70, in the case of Pallasmaa). Often these are boring and tiresome academic compilations, specialized pieces on inordinately erudite topics probably rejected by more sensible publishers.

Not so with this collection, edited by Peter MacKeith, a colleague of Pallasmaa’s and professor of architecture at Washington University in St. Louis, where he specializes in all things Nordic. Almost all of the contributions – there are 23 of various sizes and textures – are lively, easy to read, informative and inspiring, reflecting not only Pallasmaa’s influential academic research and compelling professional work, but what appears to be his great generosity of spirit and kindness towards his colleagues, who seem to all have become his friends in no time flat. These are not a group of deferential acolytes, but solid thinkers and doers in their own right, who recognize in Pallasmaa a kind of archetypal architect, whose status is further validated by his association with one of the ancestors of all archetypal architects, the larger-than-life figure of Alvar Aalto, whose spirit permeates nearly every aspect of modern Nordic life.

And so this beautifully designed volume (it’s Scandinavian of course) is packed with provocative and stimulating articles, conversations and architectural odds and ends – as in a good cocktail party, there’s a little something here for everyone, from the serious scholar to the casual reader, with only a couple of offerings that flew over my head in a rush of academic babble. But even allowing for a dud or two leaves nearly twenty good solid excursions into Architecture-with-a-capital-A, which is pretty good odds for any reading material, scholarly or otherwise.

If you’re unaware of Pallasmaa’s contribution to architectural thought, it’s worth exploring, even if you’ve got both feet in the world of praxis (that’s academy-speak for practice, if you slept through Latin class), for he gets right to the heart of one of the most serious problems in architecture today. In a nutshell, he suggests that in our Western culture, “...architecture has adopted the psychological strategy of advertising and instant persuasion; buildings have turned into image products” – a quality exacerbated by the current dominance of both digital media and the celebrity “starchitect.” As such, he claims, modern design has focused overwhelmingly on visual (image) aspects to the exclusion of other essential senses of

the human body and our non-visual means of experiencing places: sound, smell, touch, balance, and the more elusive but equally significant human experiences of memory, imagination and dreams. To fully explore the great Finn’s sagacity, your first stop should be his book, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, first published in 1996, re-issued in 2005 by Wiley, and/or the 1994 A+U Special Edition, *Questions of Perception*, by Pallasmaa, Steven Holl and Alberto Perez-Gomez (re-issued in book form by William Stout in 2006).

It is to this solid premise that these invited guests have tied their various contributions, and like reviewing the characters at the cocktail party, a few highlights come to mind:

There are three absolutely fabulous **interviews edited by MacKeith**, with Steven Holl, Tod Williams and Daniel Libeskind. Holl rarely publishes anything without a thick overlay of PR, but here he speaks candidly about design, in particular his museum in Helsinki – where he associated with Pallasmaa – and it’s a real pleasure to get a glimpse of the man behind the Holl Machine. Williams discusses his (and Tsien’s) use of the stair as a major event in architecture and how important it is to maintain, in spite of ubiquitous motorized vertical transport. Libeskind is an unlikely candidate here, which he admits, and it shows the breadth of Pallasmaa’s personality and flexibility of his doctrine that this superstar can be included as a friend and admirer. His interview reveals aspects about his celebrity and relationship to architecture that are normally hidden behind the smoke and mirrors of publicity, and make him a more sympathetic figure than I thought possible.

Kenneth Frampton takes the reader on one of his advanced treks into the heights of history and theory, but unexpected views open up along the way, making connections I didn’t know were there. Here, he reveals aspects of Le Corbusier’s work, along with that of Eileen Gray and Charlotte Perriand, that connect to Pallasmaa’s sense-theories in new and unexpected ways, once again showing Le Corbusier to be a deeper and more thoughtful architect than history generally gives him credit for. Despite his sometimes-dense writing style, Frampton’s clarity, discipline and insight never fail to satisfy.

Colin St. John Wilson has a delightful “letter” to the honoree in which he suggests that Pallasmaa’s theories are what lie behind the most successful architecture of the 20th century, such as that by Aalto and Scharoun, existing in opposition to what Aalto called “the glass parallel-biped on legs” that proliferates even today.

Mikko Heikkinen, of Heikkinen + Komonen (a great firm if you don’t already know them), explains in a readable and well-illustrated essay Pallasmaa’s early excursions into inexpensive modular timber-frame housing in the 1960s, and how he succeeded and failed. Architects have worked their social consciences and design skills to the bone on this ever since the Moderns first proclaimed that architects should design for the masses as well as the ruling classes, but without any marked success, despite the journalistic hype surrounding “pre-fab” houses today.

It would be a pleasure to describe the contributions of Peter Zumthor, Alberto Perez-Gomez, Dan Hoffman, Karsten Harries and the rest, but it would be, as they say, beyond the scope of this piece. Instead, I suggest you round up all your bodily senses, get them to your nearest architectural bookstore and buy this book, or any other by this grandmaster of humanist architecture; your mind, your senses and, hopefully, your clients, will thank you.

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

BOOK REVIEW

“COLIN ST. JOHN WILSON”

“DANIEL LIBESKIND ”

“ALBERTO PEREZ-GOMEZ”

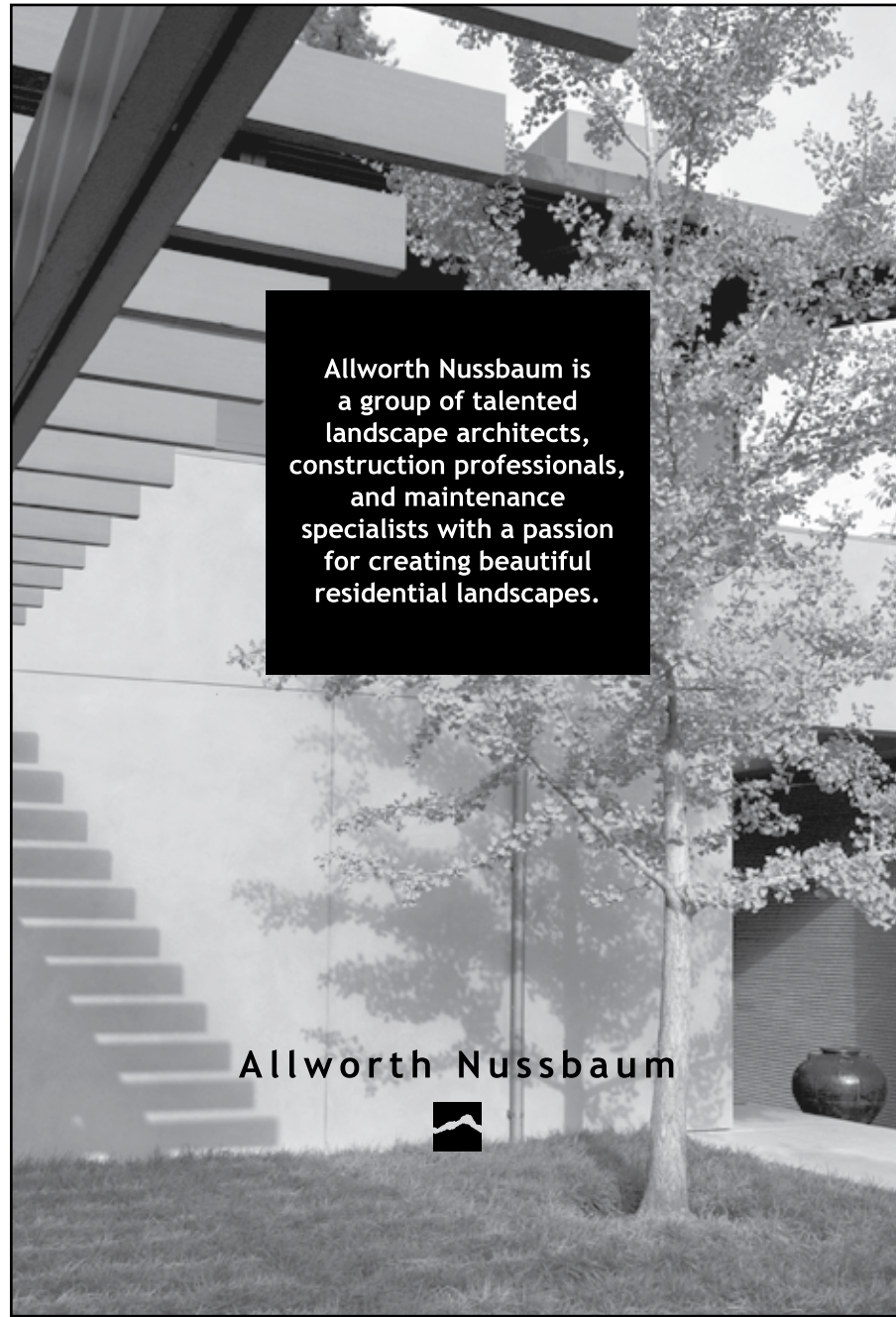
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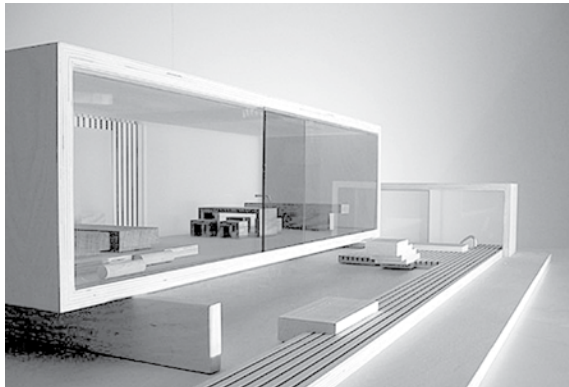
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Cool Toys for the Holidays / Ron van der Veen

We tried to be the perfect urban Seattle parents. We filtered what our three sons watched on TV. We outlawed playing with guns, sent them to peace rallies, fed them vegan food, read them the classics, enrolled them in yoga...everything to develop them into progressive next generation-ers. So you can understand how shocked Kerry and I were when we came home one day to find that our youngest, Ronny, Jr. (four years old at the time), had taken a toothpick and bent it about one-third of the way up to make a gun. Worse, he was running around making disturbingly authentic semiautomatic rapid-fire noises, trying to shoot his older brothers. He was desperate for testosterone-induced fun!

Until this point in our parenting, we were very deliberate about the toys toward which we steered our boys: cool, modernist, gender-neutral playthings that reflected our concept of an enlightened childhood. But our boys didn't like playing with them! It eventually hit us that kids prefer toys that actually look and act like toys.

Let's jump forward a few years to 2007. In anticipation of the Christmas season, I wanted to write this article to help all you hipsters find the ultimate cool toys for the little ones in your families. I Googled “modernist cool toys” and found a host of websites. My sons are in middle school now so they are much more into playing it cool than playing, but the subject still interests me. As I scanned all of these designer games, dolls and a full gamut of kiddy *objets d'arts*, I couldn't help but think back on my experience with a determined Ronny, Jr., trying to shoot his brothers with a toothpick. He didn't care whether his makeshift gun inspired higher thought processes or matched the clean-lined décor of our living room; he just wanted a simple object that would fit into the imaginary world he had in his head. Most of the stuff I found on the Web seemed designed to make parents look cool rather than give kids a good time.

Here are my observations on cool toys:

1. They typically have very little detail. I mean some of these dolls and stuffed animals could be anything from dinosaurs to dogs. This minimalist aesthetic makes them look like snuggly amoebae.
2. They are designed by combining platonic geometric forms. Who says that Michael Graves hasn't influenced modern design? A lot of these toys look like variations of his teapot and other overpriced Target home accessories (I do have to admit that I kind of like his household design – much better than I like his buildings, which usually look like giant versions of his household designs).
3. They are painted with a very muted color palette. Hello balance, restraint, sophistication and all the colors that reflect the natural world. What happened to the fun colors that hark back to our 70s high-school disco shirts?
4. It is almost impossible to hurt oneself with “cool” toys. There must be a specialized team of lawyers that reviews all modernist toys. A kid couldn't injure himself with one of these things even if he crammed it down his throat (probably bio-degradable). Nothing blows up. What fun is that?
5. They are typically very generic and have no distinct purpose. It takes a while to figure out exactly what they are. Chair, car, doll, hat? Does a kid snuggle it, throw it, roll it or leave it in the box? When faced with these questions in the past, my sons often picked the “leave it in the box” route...
6. All of these “cool” toys seem to be designed with some specific higher-learning goal in mind. Your kids won't learn stuff like how to whittle or make fart noises. They will, however, learn to tackle lofty tasks that support world peace or push their IQ to the really, really smart level (so they will test AP in the Seattle School District!). I am convinced, after 14 years of neighborhood boys tearing up our house, that EVERY boy would rather blow something up, melt it or otherwise destroy it than use a toy to learn emotional life skills.

Now Karen Cheng, whom I greatly respect as a writer for *ARCADE*, a self-admitted modernist and professor of visual communication design at the UW, is probably crafting an article as I rant about how cool “cool” toys are. I am almost ashamed to admit that most of the toys that my boys have kept around through the years are ones that inspire enemy annihilation, territory defense or the transport of people and aliens at very high speeds. Not many are “cool” enough to have around when my hipster friends come over with their solemn kids who are learning to develop skills in global conflict resolution.

So as you contemplate holiday surprises for the little ones in your family – you know, the next Rems, Zadas, Franks and maybe even Michaels – please cut them a little slack. Playing with stupid-looking toys from our most reviled big-box outlet stores probably won't turn them into international design leaders, but they might actually have...FUN.

Ron van der Veen is a long-time contributor to Side Yard and architect with Mithun. He is very, very cool.

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February 21–May 11, 2008



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Lorenzo Ghiberti's Renaissance Masterpiece

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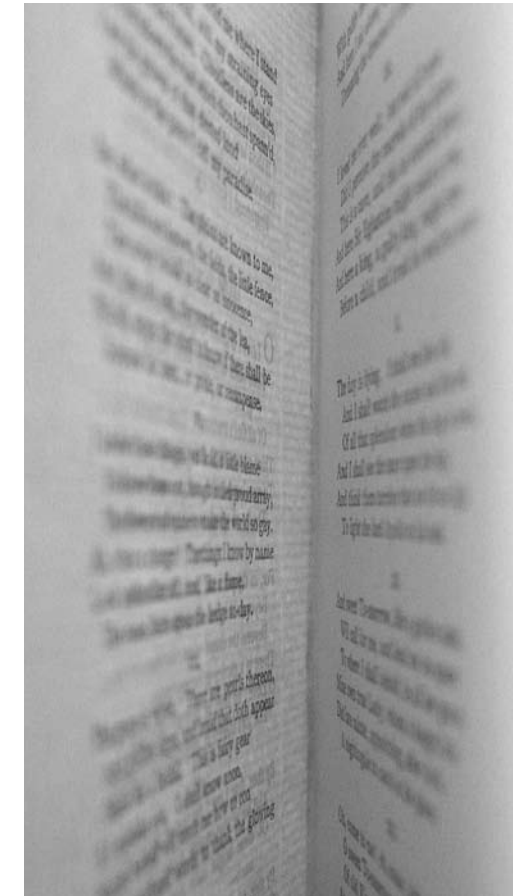
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The Gates of Paradise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's Renaissance Masterpiece is organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, in collaboration with the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore and the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence. • The Exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities and by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art. • The Seattle Art Museum's presentation is made possible in part by a Leadership Grant from The Robert Lehman Foundation. • *Creation Panel, Gates of Paradise*, 1425–1452, Lorenzo Ghiberti, gilt bronze, 31.5 x 31.5 in., Collection of the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo. Image courtesy Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence

Roman Art from the Louvre is organized by the American Federation of Arts and the Musée du Louvre. This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. • Major support for the Seattle presentation has been generously provided by the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences. • *Young Girl*, late first century B.C. or early first century A.D., marble, 56 3/4 x 20 7/8 x 21 5/8 in., Musée du Louvre, Paris (MA 682–MR 203), © APF/ Musée du Louvre/Anne Chauvet 2006. Image courtesy of American Federation of Arts.

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The Burden of Libraries / Dean C. Rowan



For much of the nearly 30 years I have worked in libraries, their purpose has been defined by a service relationship: the librarian assisting the patron with a research inquiry. In a significant sense, the materials themselves were secondary. One took for granted that no library could have all relevant materials for all requests. Instead, the librarian's responsibility was to discover when local holdings were insufficient and to propose practical alternatives. Libraries thus assumed an ethos of service that is difficult to pin down and easy to puff up, because it's primarily social and relational, fleetingly gestural, best delivered "with a smile." I have recently begun to worry that the focus on this vague notion of service has been a mistake. It neglects that libraries, the buildings and the books, consist first and foremost of material objects of permanence and persistence.

My emerging sense is certainly due to the fact that these have been a critical 30 years for libraries, spurred by widespread technological achievements. The rise of public awareness of the Internet and the explosive growth of the Web, the approach toward ubiquity of personal computing, and the increased reliance on forms of remote intercommunication, such as cell phones and wireless devices, are obvious examples of how technology has materially altered the quotidian. Indeed, I have had the good fortune to work in an information-related field at a time when information has become an increasingly important popular and commercial concern.

But there is also a great deal of hyperbole about the capabilities of the technology and the value of the achievements, which come with burdens we tacitly agree to bear in terms of cost, learning curves and security vulnerabilities. My skepticism is not a prejudicial disdain for technology that some would (incorrectly in my view) characterize as Luddite, but a by-product of my experience with computing, including an introduction to programming in the mid-1970s and, during the 1990s, my position as an administrator of an automated library system and its network. I learned early on that information technologies are also material objects, albeit ones that don't always function properly without a good deal of human intervention, vigilance and patience. It's evident to me that "automation" is something of a misnomer.

Consequently, the prospects of survival faced by libraries these days seem paradoxical. As "traditional" (read: outmoded) service providers, libraries are waning legacies of information collection, organization and access. They are cumbersome, inefficient and expensive institutions heading toward extinction unless they successfully market themselves for a digital age. According to this view, libraries must compete to outperform the hyped technologies that threaten to displace them. Yet major library construction projects, arguably, have flourished in recent years, as if in response to heightened demand for the traditional, hallowed custodians of the cultural and historical record.

These conflicting scenarios are not irreconcilable. The physical condition of many libraries, owing to ordinary wear and tear, overuse and chronic financial neglect, has declined so pathetically that there is little choice but to renovate or build anew. Still, the projects are costly, and opponents argue that innovative technologies have mooted their necessity. I think it's fair to suspect that the common misconception and futile desideratum that "everything is online" informs such arguments. Furthermore, the design and construction of new library spaces is itself a component of a conscious refashioning of the library's image. Re-branding and rebuilding are not mutually exclusive enterprises.

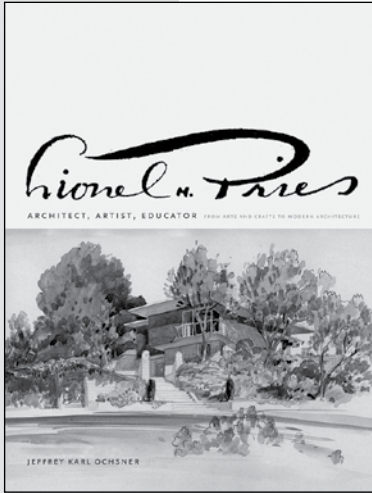
But no matter how vigorously they market themselves, libraries are unlikely to prevail in a contest with technology when the terms of the contest have been dictated by the hype. Ironically, libraries have often been at the forefront of application of innovative tools, but they also routinely recognize and work around the tools' inevitable defects. Libraries have acquired this refined skill of *ad hoc* making-do because they have been forced to adapt, not only since the advent of widespread digital computing, but from the very beginning. They have exercised the skill for decades, accommodating increasing quantities of expanding varieties of media, of which the paradigm is the book. They have done so under a rubric of "service" now perpetuated by technologies of the virtual. But the fact of the matter is that their real work, regardless of the medium, requires lifting and arranging the objects that embody information.

Dean C. Rowan is a reference librarian at U.C. Berkeley School of Law (Boalt Hall). He has also worked at a law firm library and a city public library. Observation of his young son's consumption of books has further contributed to his awareness of their materiality.

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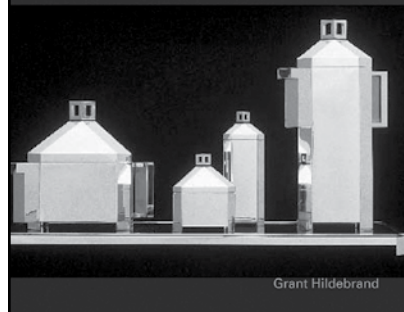
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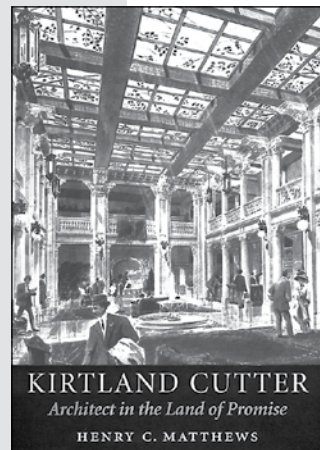
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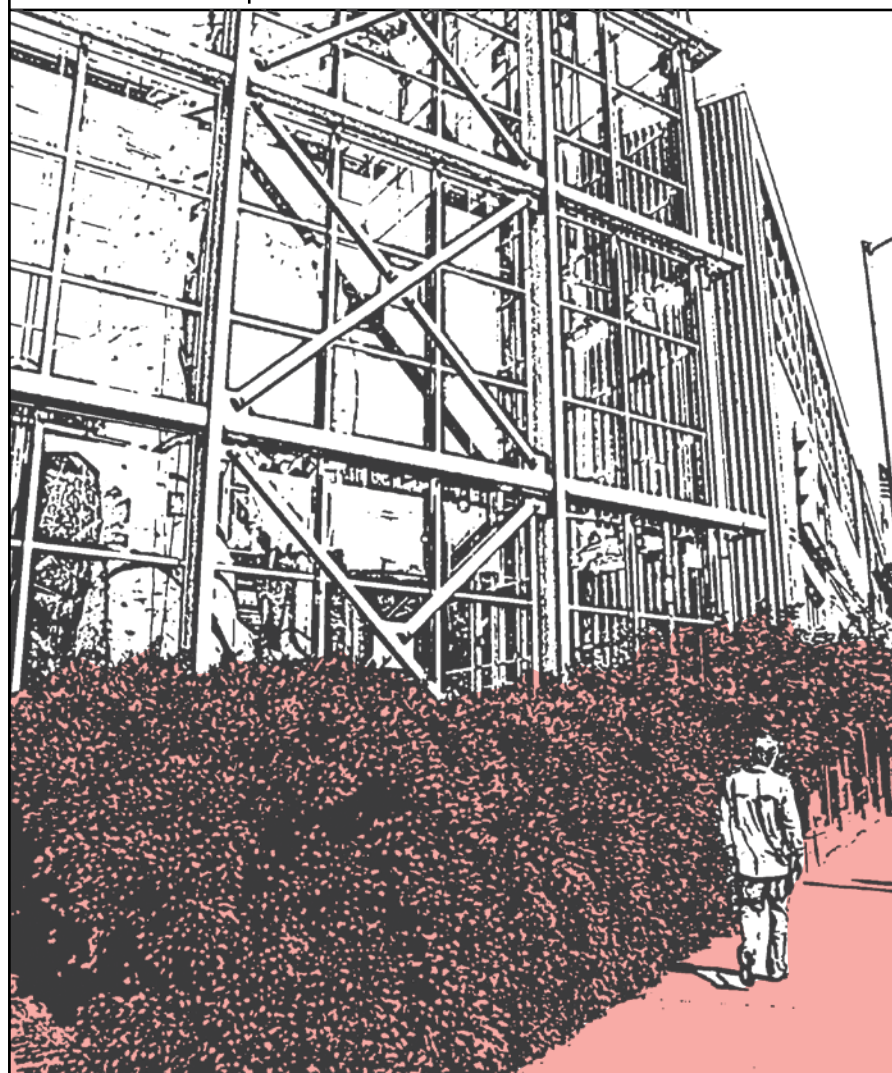
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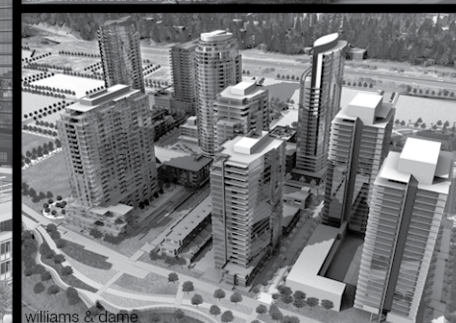
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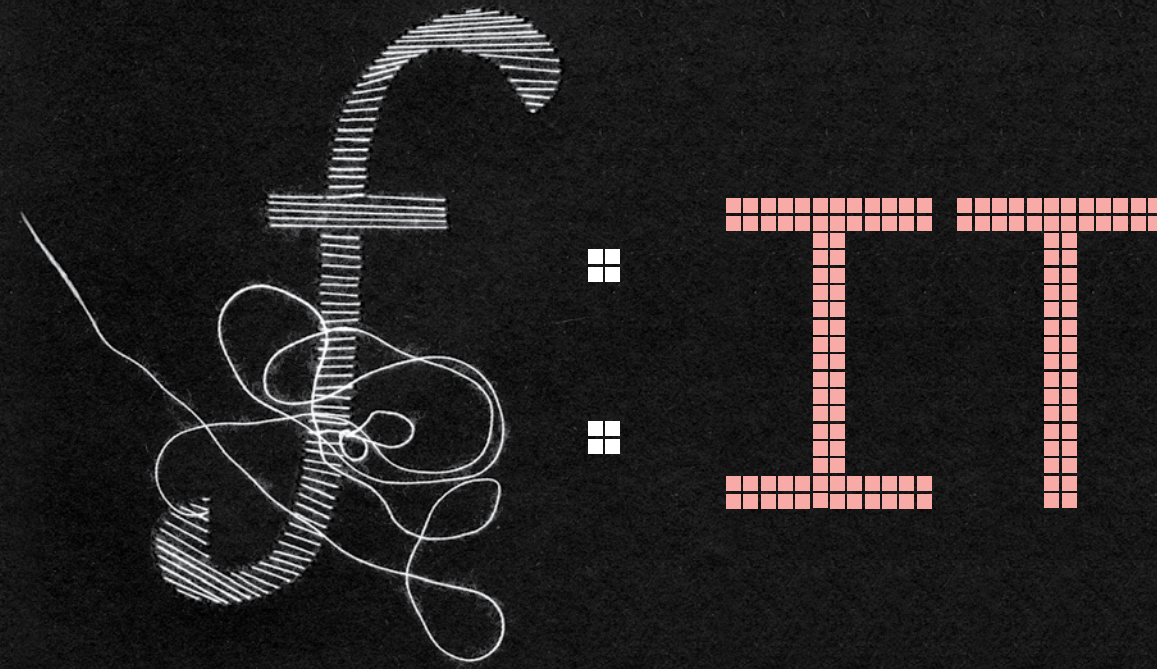
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Feature Editor: Cara Rose DeFabio



FASHION OWES ITS MODERN EXISTENCE TO TECHNOLOGY. From sewing machines to pattern design software, technology has had an obvious effect on efficiency; but what about style? Our next issue looks at how fashion uses technology to talk about personal aesthetic.

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