

ARCADE

ARCHITECTURE / DESIGN IN THE NORTHWEST

VOLUME 27.01 / FALL 2008

REVITALIZE
REGENERATE
RE-SOURCE

feature editor, pliny fisk III



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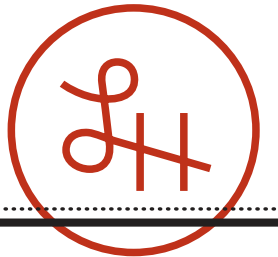


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Amanda Bakke
amanda@arcadejournal.com
206 971 5596

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FALL 2008

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Revitalize Regenerate Re-source

Feature editor Pliny Fisk III introduces the first installment of *ARCADE's* 27th volume.



United Bottle

dirk hebel and jörg stollmann
with tobias klauser

A new form of plastic bottle designed for secondary use—from all forms of vessels to fabrics.



Wasteland

pierre bélanger

The ecologies and economies of Kalundborg's waste-recycling network in Denmark.



Waste isn't Waste Until it's Wasted

daniel knapp

Zero waste uses recycling to dispose of unwanted stuff.



Really Going For It!

pliny fisk III

What's it going to take to create a sustainable future where waste is a resource?

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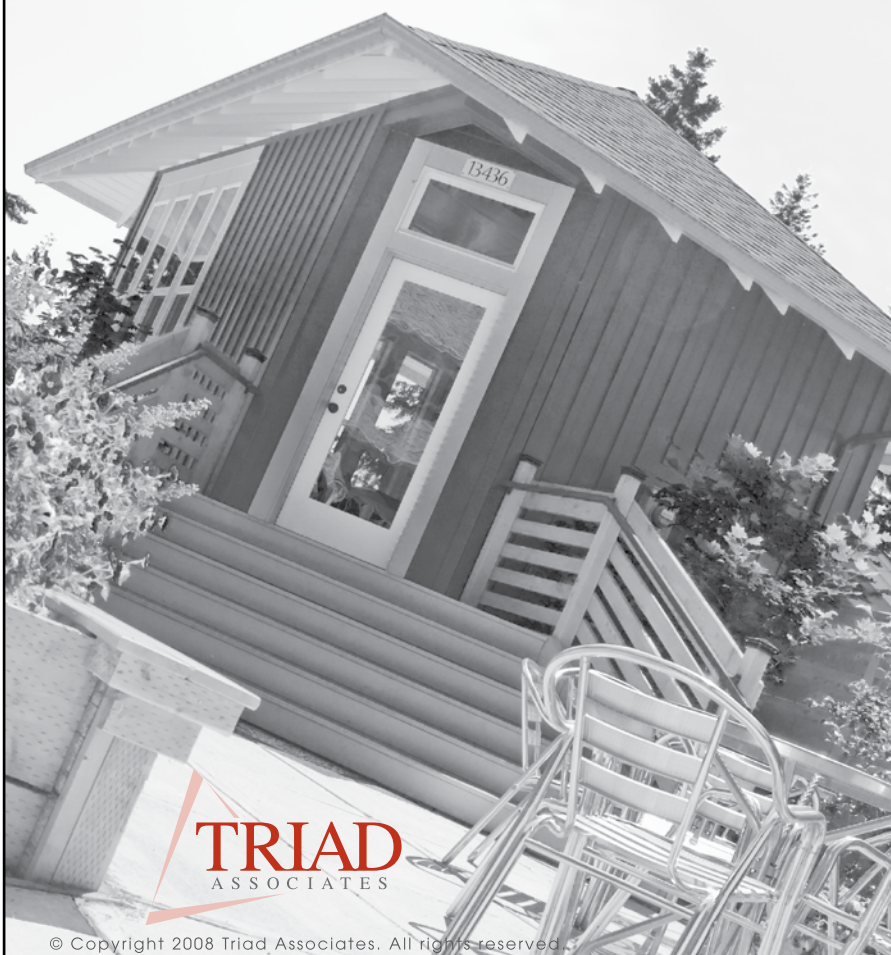
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"I wanted to give the haulers
one large emblematic image
that answers the question
'transfer where?'"

— artist Carol dePelecyn

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Shoreline Recycle and Transfer Station

Fascinated by the strata of earth created at landfills, artist Carol dePelecyn made repeated visits to the Cedar Hills Landfill with photographer Steve McGehee, where waste from local transfer stations ends up and is compressed into landforms on a vast scale. McGehee's original photograph of the landfill is installed as a billboard above the transfer station tipping floor.

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Steve McGehee, original photograph



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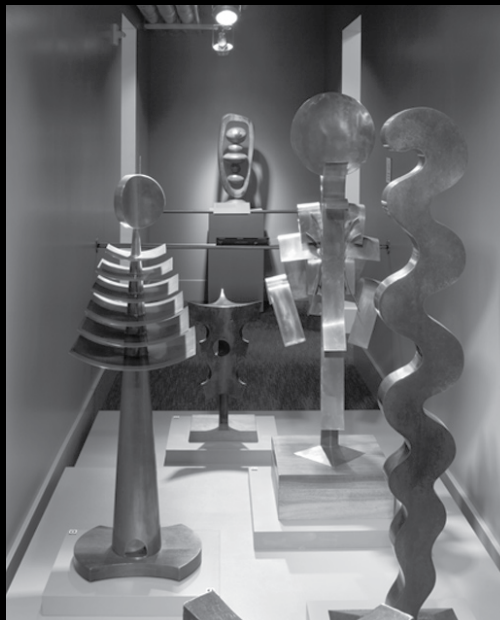
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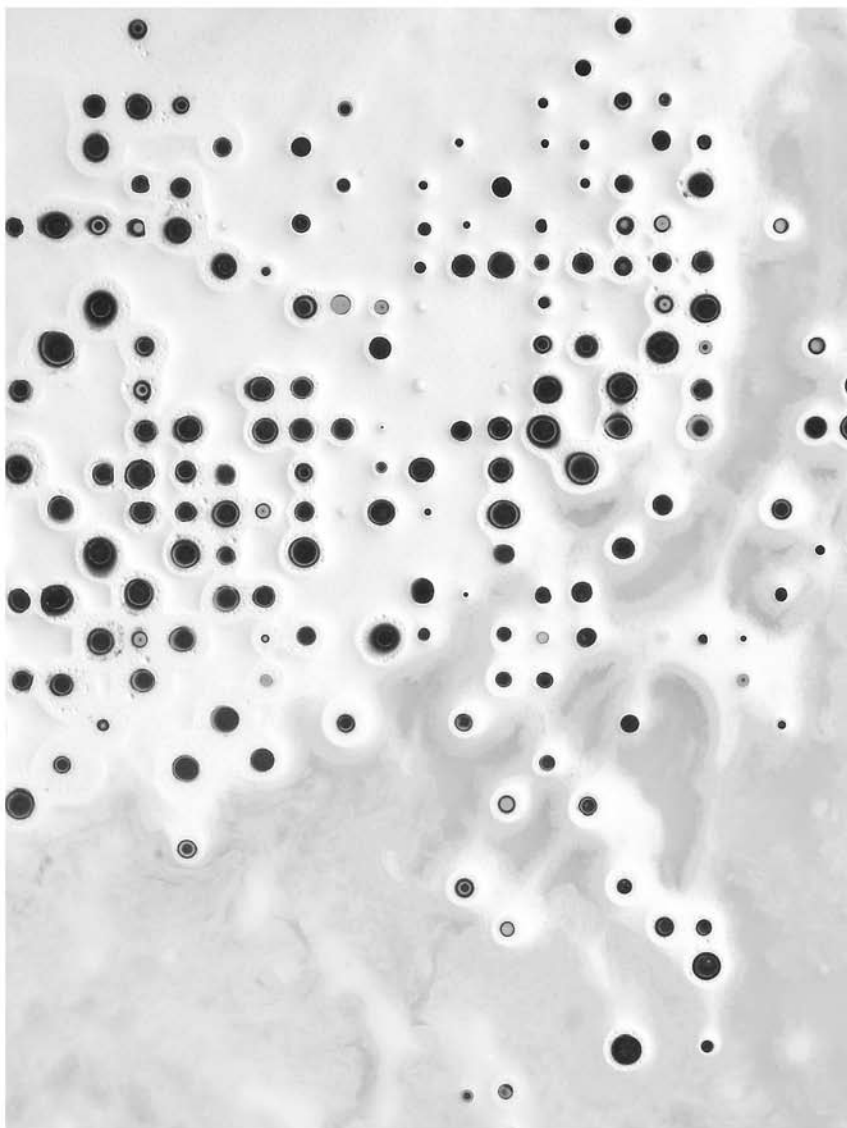
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SHORT TAKES

MANUF@CTURED

the conspicuous transformation of everyday objects
at the museum of contemporary craft

In 1917 Marcel Duchamp altered the concept of “art” by giving us “concept art”: he publically presented to a volatile New York art scene *Fountain*—a urinal with the name “R.Mutt” scribbled on the side. With *Fountain* and other “readymades”—a term coined by Duchamp for everyday “found” objects to which one takes a fancy—Duchamp and the Dadaists, the Surrealists, forever changed how we would define art.

Curated by Steven Skov Holt (former editor of *I.D. Magazine*) and art historian Mara Holt Skov, *Manuf@ctured: The Conspicuous Transformation of Everyday Objects*, showing August 28 – January 4 at Portland, Oregon’s Museum of Contemporary Craft, remakes Duchamp’s concept of the readymade—art as finding is re-found when 16 national and international artists, designers and craftsmen reappropriate everyday manufactured objects, the detritus from an exhaustingly materialistic culture, into the building blocks for new craft. In other words:

FOUND: 100-YARD ZIPPER ON A SPOOL

Made: *Bonded*, Cat Chow—strapless dress made entirely from one continuous zipper spiraled bottom to top

FOUND: CROTCHED DOILY

Made: *Topiaries (Bob, Frank, Mary, Sid)*, Marcel Wanders—intricate and somehow-elegant doily-skins playfully formed into hollow, artificial-topiary sculptures

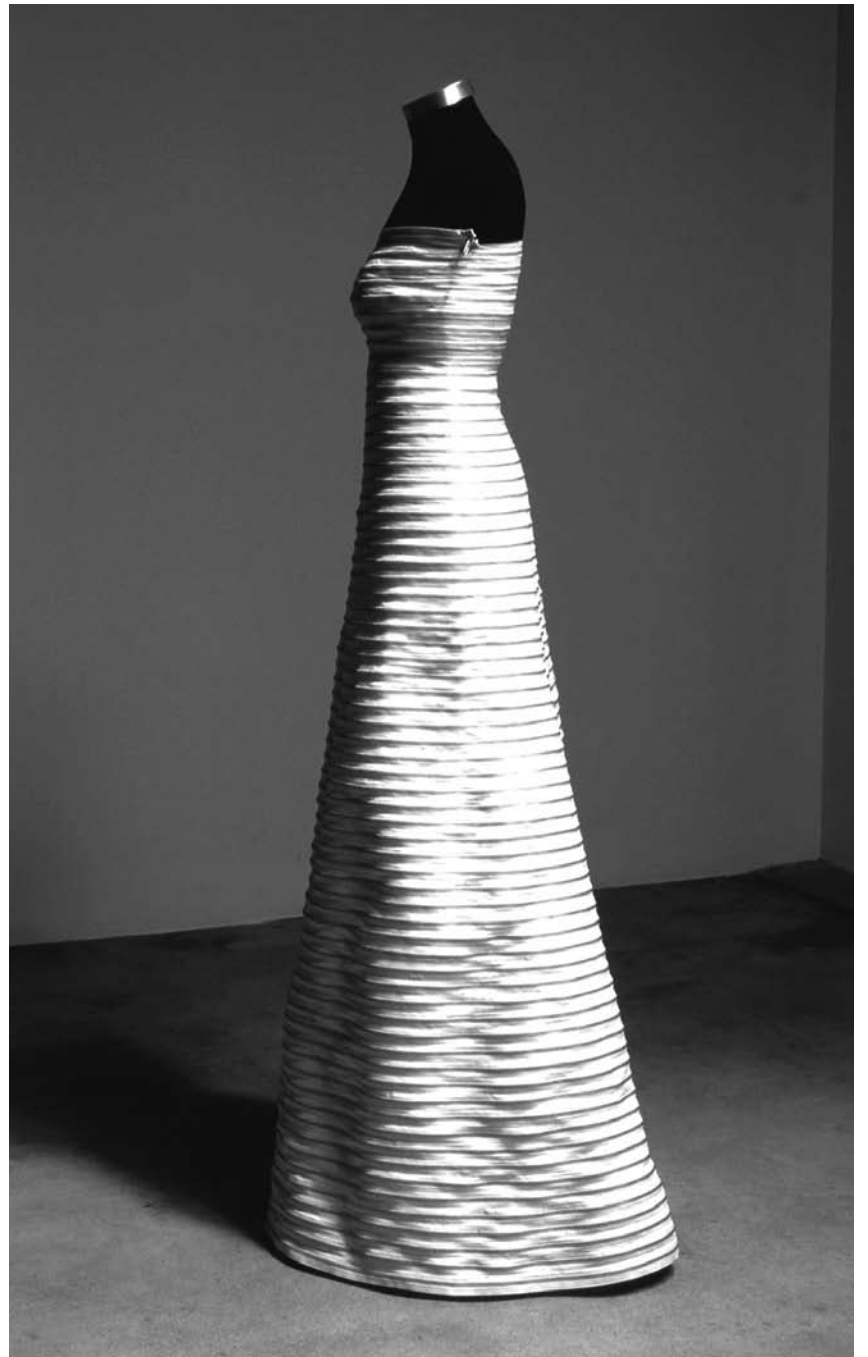
FOUND: POLYSTYRENE (I.E., THOSE STYROFOAM PACKING BLOCKS THAT COME NESTLED AROUND ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT, ETC.)

Made: *Transponder*, Jason Rogenes—large, white, glowing tower

Last but not least, artist Dominic Wilcox melts little toy soldiers and creates hollowware out of them for his piece *War Bowl — Green Soldiers*. Is it a urinal? No, but I think Mr. Mutt would be pleased.

For more information on *Manuf@ctured*, which includes many other wonderful creations that you’ll have to see in person, visit www.museumofcontemporarycraft.org.

ERIN KENDIG



FROM TOP: CAT CHOW, *BONDED*, 2000; SINGLE ZIPPER, 69" X 30" X 31". DOMINIC WILCOX, *WAR BOWL—GREEN SOLDIERS*, 2002; MELTED PLASTIC ARMY SOLDIERS; APPROX. 17" X 4".

FALL CITY LIBRARY

a missed opportunity

donald fels

Fall City, Washington sits quietly on the edge of the Snoqualmie River, which runs right beside the city's main commercial street. The town marks the western edge of the Snoqualmie Valley in the Cascade foothills, 25 miles east of Seattle. Decades ago a Seafirst bank anchored one end of the main street. The 1960's building had been trucked into town, having been moved off the Seattle World's Fair site after the fair closed. When the bank itself closed, the one-story, swoopy-roofed building was converted into a cozy King County Library, a most welcome addition to a town that has only three other "civic" buildings—a US Post Office in a non-descript leased building, an old elementary school that was recently and tastefully upgraded and a much newer middle school—none of which are on the riverfront.

Last year, the modernist, Northwest, sort-of-Chinese looking fair/bank/library building was demolished for a new purpose-built library designed by Miller-Hull. I was working in Asia for six months and, when I drove into downtown Fall City for the first time upon my return, I was still jet-lagged and thinking about how cold the air felt. I passed the old library site and was totally shocked into the here and now. There on the corner stood a bright, two-story, cheaply-clad box towering over everything else. When I went into the grocery store, I must have been mumbling about what I'd just seen because soon people were talking to me about what they called the "monstrosity."

In fairness, the new library is not monstrous, just glaringly insensitive to its surroundings and function in the community. The building's height, cheaply stained siding, dark-colored panels and hulky shape all seem out of place. The extra height performs no function except insuring higher heating bills; the increased volume provides a louder, starker feeling interior and, of course, cost more to build without a corresponding gain in user services. On return visits I spoke with the librarians on duty. They claimed the public space in the new library is almost exactly the same as that of the old. This, like most of what I've heard in and out of the library in Fall City, is different from what I was told by a spokesperson from the King County Library System. Whatever the specs, the new library feels no larger, only taller and less people-friendly than its predecessor.

The building is part of a design-build package that includes five libraries for small towns in King County, Washington, the bid for which was locked in some years ago (for the library system, getting the buildings at yesterday's prices is a bargain). The spokesperson told me that the building doesn't blend into the townscape because it's supposed to "stand out" as an advertisement for the library. She also told me that the libraries are no longer just "warehouses for books." Sadly, the building comes across as just that: a bare-bones storage facility. The librarians told me that they had very limited input into the design, and it shows.

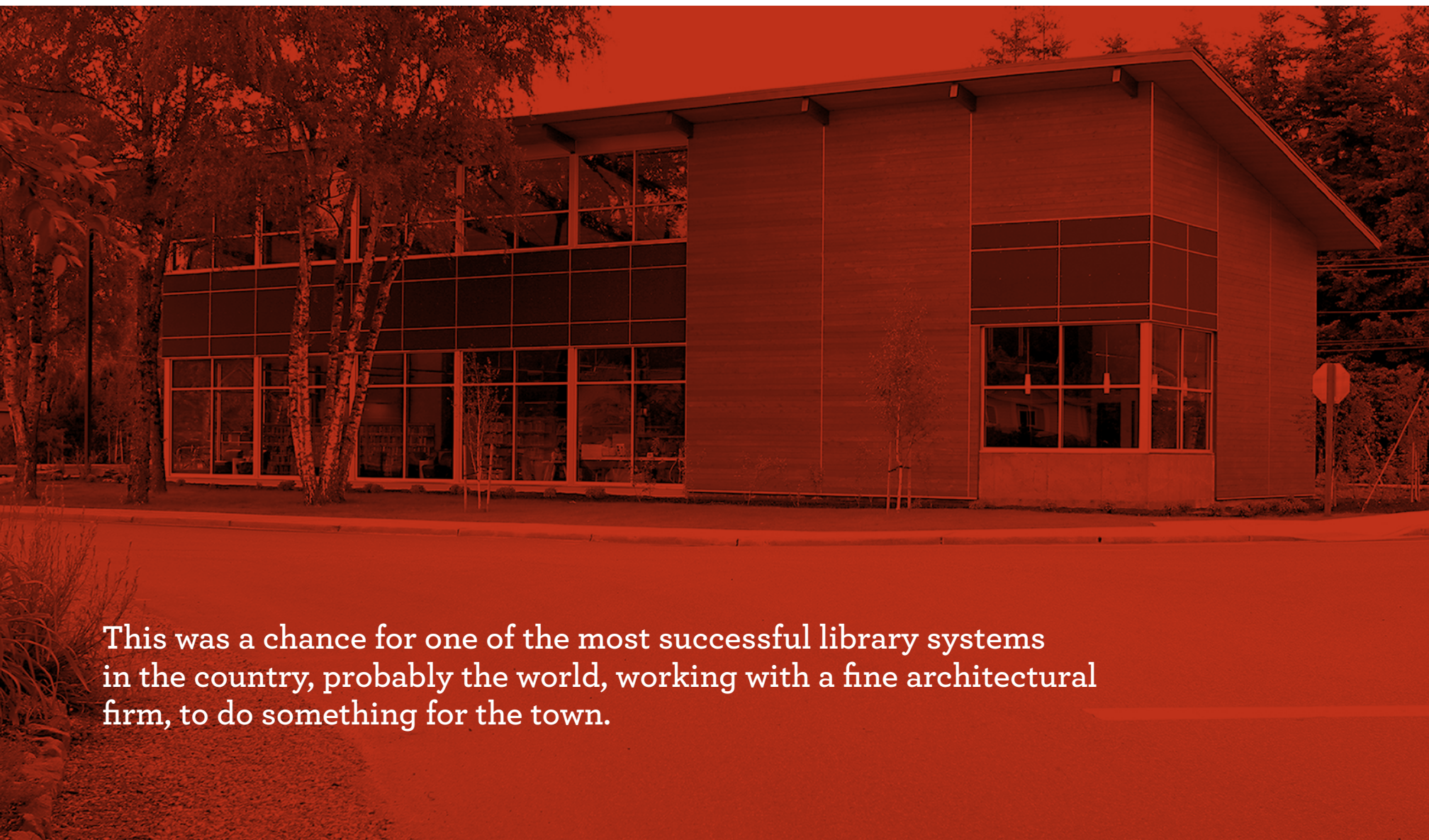
Except for the middle school, Fall City hadn't seen a new building in decades. This was a chance for one of the most successful library systems in the country, probably the world, working with a fine architectural firm, to do something for the town. Instead, almost everything about the building says cheap, standardized and generic. The furnishings are the exception—well-chosen, they bring intriguing color and pattern; for example, the shelving ends are cast with a nicely tactile river-grass pattern. Yet, when the same pattern is replicated in the

Snoqualmie, Washington branch, where the library sits high up on a treeless ridge far from the Snoqualmie River, even the riverine touch is undercut. At least the Snoqualmie library fits its new shopping center location, though even in that context the cheapness of the material treatment stands out.

Miller-Hull got the five-library gig in partnership with a contractor, and having to bid the buildings all at once assured budgets would be tight. But why wasn't the package thought through so there was a kit of parts from which non-iterative and actually-innovative re-combinations could be used in the different libraries? Why are the buildings so impossibly impersonal? Why didn't the architects push the library system to push the envelope?

The old Fall City library had character, the new one has none. In the bank-library, the librarians needed more back-of-the-house space. The new building got that space in the form of a completely unadorned concrete-block cube tacked on behind. Obviously, the add-on could have been attached to the old building as well, leaving the town with a friendly, distinctive public space. How is the loss of a serviceable building factored into "sustainable" design? Carnegie libraries were often exactly the same from place to place, but that sameness came with a commitment to quality. Fall City got a building that feels transitional, like a stand-in for a permanent structure. It seems to be saying that in the future, the King County Library expects to deal with us only online. Historically, in small towns the library has been a prime public place, one of the few places where we gather. Instead, being in this building feels like we could be online, anywhere and nowhere.

DONALD FELS HAS LIVED IN FALL CITY SINCE 1974. AN ARTIST, HE WAS ON THE TEAM THAT CREATED THE AWARD-WINNING BALLARD PUBLIC LIBRARY. HE WAS GUEST EDITOR OF ARCADE FOR THE SUMMER 2004 ISSUE, CITY OF IDEAS.



This was a chance for one of the most successful library systems in the country, probably the world, working with a fine architectural firm, to do something for the town.



PLASTIC-A-HOLICS

step 1: admit we have a problem

kristine matthews

If by some chance you have not yet received your weekly dose of depressing news about the environment, I've got a doozy for you: Garbage Island. Floating in the Pacific Ocean between California and Hawaii, Garbage Island is a vast, swirling mass of plastic currently twice the size of Texas and growing ten-fold every year.

This is a new form of dumping ground, not one we visit in order to offload our waste. The plastic that forms Garbage Island originated onshore and is now trapped by winds and currents in a constant, sickening gyration. Though it has been around since the 1950s, the island's recent exponential growth means it now reaches a depth of 300 feet (the height of the Statue of Liberty) and weighs in at 3.5 million tons. With that rate of growth, it is easy to visualize our grandchildren paddling on California beaches in an ocean of bobbing plastic shards, as the island extends all the way back to our shores. What goes around comes around, indeed.

This is the sort of news story that makes me, as a concerned inhabitant of this planet, want to gently lower my head to my desk in despair. But at the same time, as a designer, I find the story strangely inspiring. It represents a great opportunity for communication and change.

It was this communication challenge that I set to my Environmental Design class for the project: Make Change. The students, a mix of undergraduate and graduate designers, were asked: "When you watch the news or walk down the street, what bothers you? What in the world do you feel needs to change?" Working in teams of four, they chose an issue that mattered to them and conducted detailed

research on their subjects. They then designed a site-specific installation communicating the issue to a targeted audience. The objective was not only to communicate the facts but to prompt their audience into action.

I encouraged students to achieve a sustainable approach through original thinking. Designing "green" does not mean just using recycled materials. How can you reduce energy use? Can you source materials locally? Can you use reclaimed or everyday objects in an unexpected way? Can you take a step back and re-define the problem in order to come up with a smarter solution?

Visual Communication Design graduate students Tom Futrell, Cassie Klingler and Erin Williams, along with landscape architect student Katherine Wimble, conceived and designed the *Plastic-a-holics* project in response to their research on the Garbage Island phenomenon. They simulated the whirling vortex of waste in a heavily trafficked area of the University of Washington campus and experimented with melting everyday plastic waste to form large graphic backdrops. Texts and objects combined to present the scale of the problem as well as suggest alternatives and solutions.

We have all been getting the message lately to cut back on plastic water bottles and shopping bags, but the students brought a fresh angle. They displayed a vast physical inventory of the plastic that populates every part of our daily lives, then borrowed from the language of 12-step programs to suggest how we can break our unhealthy addiction to plastics.

The results of Make Change give me hope as a designer and as an educator. At my company, thomas.matthews, designing sustainably has been a core objective since our founding ten years ago. But most designers still don't think twice about the waste they propagate, let alone how they could use their skills to create positive change. Why? It starts with education. After decades of being fixated on the latest trends and sexiest materials, educators need to make sustainability an essential part of problem solving. This doesn't mean forcing "worthy" (student translation: "boring") approaches down throats but, rather, building it into the creative challenge.

As designers we need to inspire this generation to realize that a sustainable design approach means something smarter, different and more exciting than traditional thinking. We need to lead by example, showing through our own work how these principles can be applied in the real world (and not just for pro-bono projects!).

For designers, the first step is to admit we have a problem. The next step: make change happen.

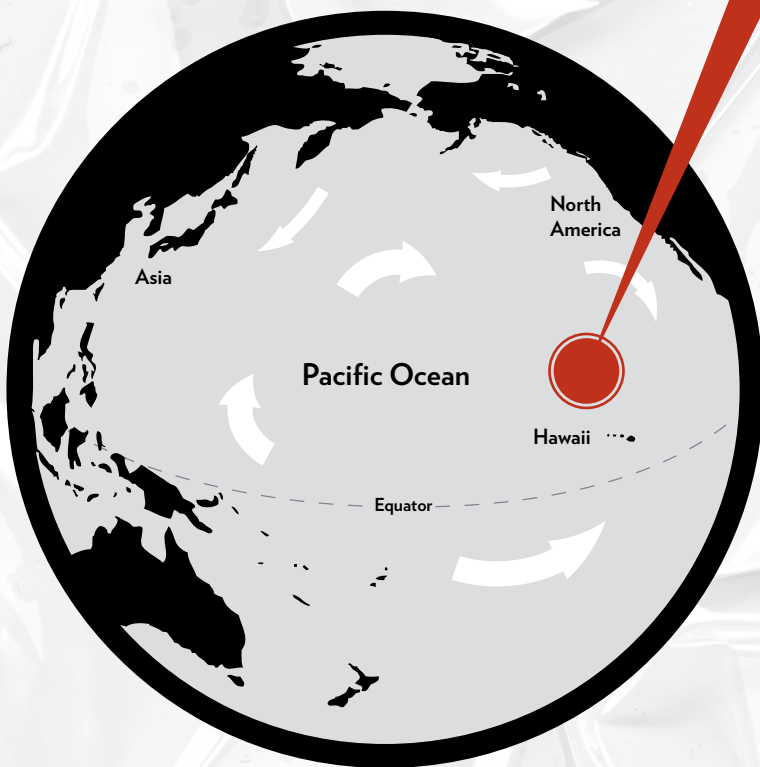
KRISTINE MATTHEWS JOINED THE DESIGN FACULTY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON IN 2007. SHE IS DIRECTOR AND CO-FOUNDER OF THOMAS. MATTHEWS, A LONDON-BASED DESIGN STUDIO AT THE FOREFRONT OF INNOVATIVE, SUSTAINABLE DESIGN PRACTICE. TO READ THEIR PUBLICATION *TEN WAYS DESIGN CAN FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE*, VISIT THOMASMATTHEWS.COM. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GARBAGE ISLAND AND THE STUDENTS' RESEARCH AND DESIGN PROCESS, VISIT [HTTP://ENVIROIDESIGN.TUMBLR.COM](http://enviroidesign.tumblr.com).

GARBAGE ISLAND

Trapped in a constant gyration by winds and currents, Garbage Island has been around since the 1950s and growing every decade. It's not a dumping ground in the sense that people are flying or boating by and throwing their refuse into the heap. Instead, it's picking up trash that originates onshore and has since made its way out into the Pacific.

300'

PLASTIC DEBRIS ESTIMATED AT A DEPTH OF 300 FEET BELOW SURFACE OF THE OCEAN, A SPAN THAT ALMOST COVERS THE STATUE OF LIBERTY.



x2

Garbage Island is a vast, swirling mass of plastic currently twice the size of Texas and growing ten-fold every year.





LAKE WASHINGTON PALIMPSEST

ellen sollod

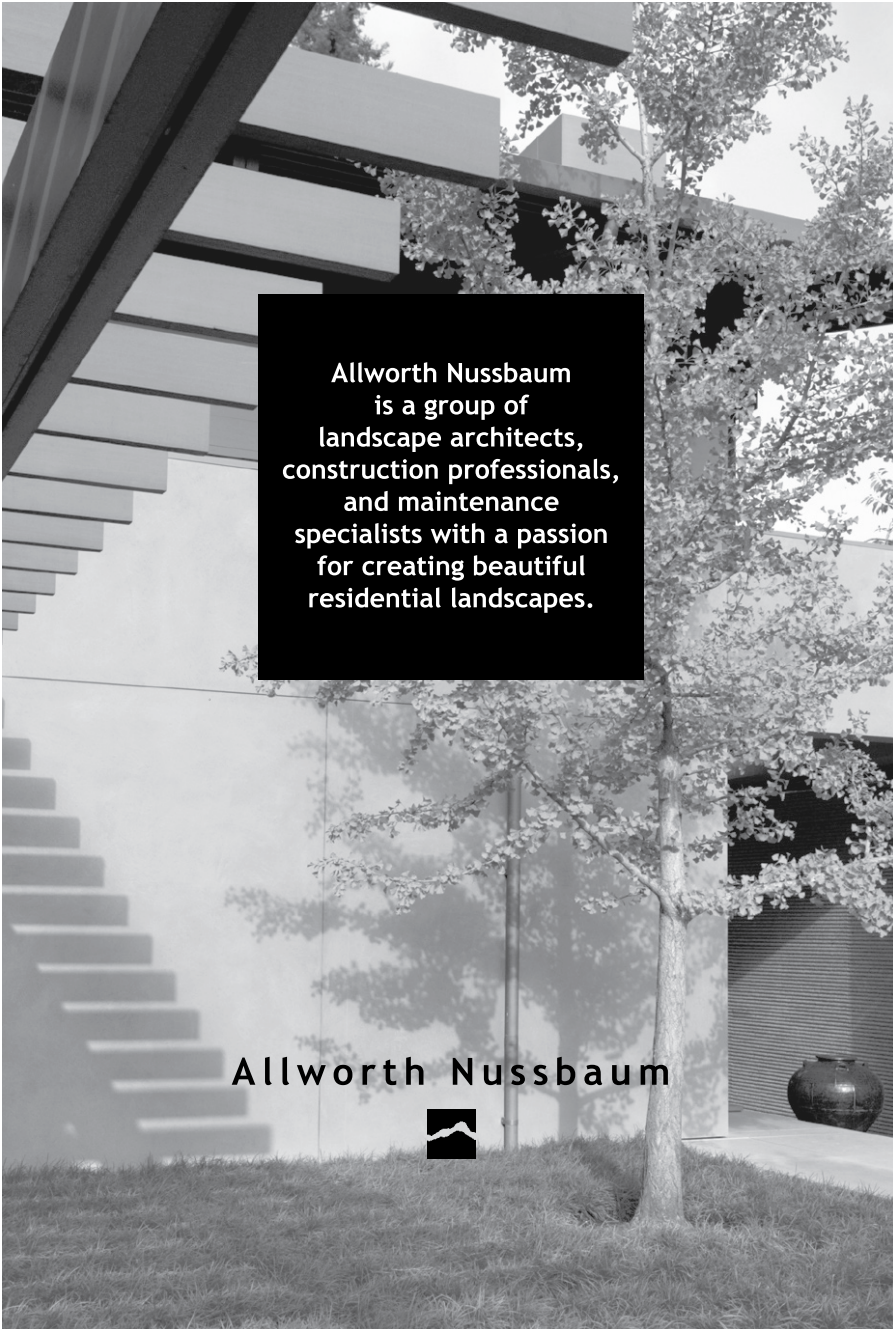
In Seattle, building the Hiram Chittendam Locks and sculpting the Montlake Cut in 1916 dramatically impacted Lake Washington. Shorelines were created; the Black River disappeared; routinely flooded places became dry and dry places, wet. Over the last year, armed with a pinhole camera and audio recorder, I've been documenting sites along today's shoreline that were most dramatically altered. Like a palimpsest, the lake and wetlands were partially removed to make room for another text. Today, wetlands are reclaiming some of those areas and returning them to their earlier forms.

For more information about the project, images and sound samples, visit www.lakewashingtonpalimpsest.blogspot.com.
This project is supported in part by 4Culture, King County Lodging Tax.

SEATTLE ARTIST ELLEN SOLLOD'S WORK IS INCLUDED IN SUCH COLLECTIONS AS THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY SPENCER COLLECTION, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON SUZALLO LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND YALE UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR THE BOOK. SHE HAS ALSO CREATED PUBLIC ARTWORKS THROUGHOUT THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST AND CALIFORNIA.



PREVIOUS PAGE: BLACK RIVER—CHANNELING OF THE CEDAR RIVER AND LOWERING OF THE LAKE CAUSED IT TO DISAPPEAR. FILLED IN WITH COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES. WHAT LITTLE REMAINS OF THE RIVER BED BECAME THE WATER COURSE FOR SPRINGBROOK CREEK. FROM TOP: MERCER SLOUGH—ONCE THE LARGEST PEAT BODY IN KING COUNTY 70' DEEP. WAS NAVIGABLE BY STEAMBOATS. NOW AN ARTIFICIAL CHANNEL. A PORTION WAS CONVERTED TO A BULB FARM BY FREDERICK WINTERS IN THE LATE 1920S KENMORE AIR HARBOR—WETLANDS FILLED IN AND DREDGE SPOIL USED TO FILL IN NEIGHBORING WETLANDS.



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The Art of Waste

DEC 2008
FEATURE EDITOR
ABIGAIL GUAY

ARCADE 27.2

THIS DECEMBER, ARCADE EXPLORES THE WORK OF CHRIS JORDON, WHOSE PHOTOGRAPHS OF INDUSTRIAL WASTE AND FRENZIED CONSUMERISM FRAME A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF ART, ROMANTICISM TO ECO-ART, AND OUR ONGOING INTRIGUE WITH RUINS, EXCESS AND GARBAGE.

Chris Jordan Photography / www.chrisjordan.com

REVITALIZE REGENERATE RE-SOURCE

pliny fisk III



Scope creep—the propensity to go beyond what is called for in any seemingly well-defined work plan—is a time-honored pastime and passion at our nonprofit, whose mission is to stretch boundaries and anticipate what the future might hold. So, to home in and concentrate on which of the myriad facets of waste are worthy of focus has been challenging as this issue’s feature editor.

Having literally grown up with a large-scale compost operation serving as my backyard, I have had a lifetime fascination with all things waste and the simple, elegant arithmetic of nature that transposes the equation $1+1=-2$ to $1+1=2$. The magic of a value-enriched future is no longer our choice but our imperative. Over the years, I have been drawn to the work of my friends John and Nancy Todd, who brought beauty and function into the mix of what used to be called just sewage treatment. And, I have had to wean myself from the assumption that tomatoes naturally grow to be the size of grapefruits and taste unbelievably delicious, as this was my reality from the vantage point of harvesting what I assumed tomatoes were out of my family’s backyard compost piles. But also I have been reminded countless times that what is right is not always supported in the policy-constricted landscape in which we operate. We know that politics and information must flow together.

There are numerous other examples to cite: *Terra Preta* (meaning dark soil in Portuguese) is a centuries-old process developed by indigenous people in Brazil’s Amazon basin, creating a kind of biochar waste-material from cleared forest trees, which enriches the soil more than 800% when mixed with nutrient-rich wastes that attach to this carbon based armature, establishing unheard of carbon sinks that help prevent global warming. No less than ten universities worldwide are exploring how this process can aid in the worldwide efforts to curb climate change, increase food production and act in between as a source of renewable energy within a framework of industrial ecology.

Or the feature could have focused on a series of new products such as what Barbara and Tom Johnson of the Johnson Design Studio did years ago in Seattle through their International Design Resource awards (1996-8), establishing a global benchmark competition and model for a new generation of product design inspired by “design with memory.”

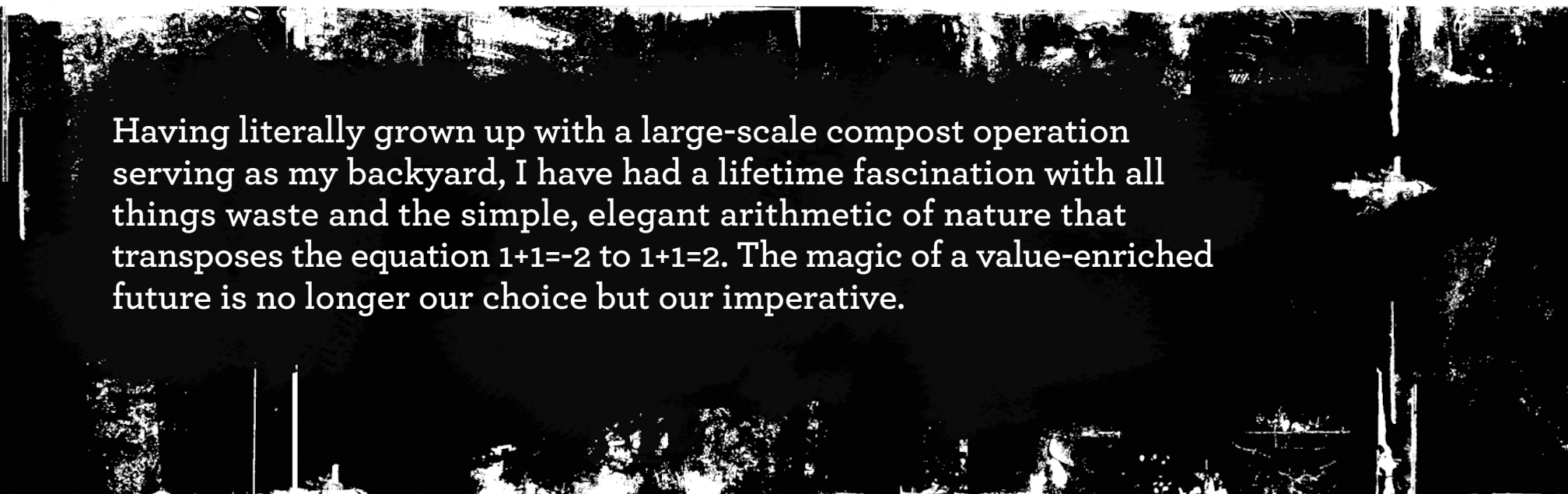
Instead, we (*ARCADE*’s Editor Kelly Walker and Pliny Fisk III) decided to bring together examples that directly and immediately affect planning and design. These projects describe a possible stitching together of life cycles for how resources could be “urban mined” and manufactured sensibly based on Design for Manufacturing (DfM) and Design for Disassembly (DfD) protocols. Using these models, we could substantively impact the 33% of

the waste stream now associated with building construction, demolition and renovation. Then I made believe that if our society really had its shit together, we would not only look at where the most well-known product/by-product example of integrated industry was happening (see “Wasteland”), we would plan our whole urban/regional infrastructure and economy around this, even our entire country, in one gigantic industrial ecology effort (the latter expressed in “Really Going For It!”).

Perhaps the astounding part about all this is that we are on our way to what I call “resource balancing our economy.” Taking into consideration the combined efforts of the Urban Ores of the Berkeleys, the Wastelands of the Kalundorgs, the Life Cycle Building Challenges proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), what we are talking about from the stand point of the total economy is mind boggling—it is as though human settlement could actually be catching up to that balance of producers and consumers so much a part of nature’s economy—a place where every stable-state economic activist wants to be—a Herman Daly Input/Output fantasy—where there is an overall economy that actually reflects directly the inherent value of representing the real value of good work—for it seems that: “according to the EPA, recycling’s combined income in 2004 was about the same size as the US auto industry, or about \$226 billion.” And recycling is about five-times the size of the waste industry in gross receipts. This is not yet even putting into the equation those three examples listed above, nothing about the building sector nor the industrial ecology sector—just the “urban ore” sector, as Dan Knapp has so aptly coined.

I dedicate this issue to my Dad, Pliny Fisk II, for his unadulterated boldness and foresight to transform the conceptualization and utilization of waste across American cities. By the time the 1950s had come about, he had 52 patents for high-rate composting and plans for 500-tons-per-day modular units to be placed across the country via our backyard.

PLINY FISK IS A FELLOW AT THE CENTER FOR HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, A FELLOW OF SUSTAINABLE URBANISM AND A FELLOW AT THE CENTER FOR HEALTH SYSTEMS DESIGN. ALL AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY. HE IS ALSO THE FOUNDER AND CO-DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL BUILDING SYSTEMS IN AUSTIN, TX. ONE OF THE OLDEST NONPROFITS IN THE UNITED STATES CONCENTRATING ON SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND PLANNING.



Having literally grown up with a large-scale compost operation serving as my backyard, I have had a lifetime fascination with all things waste and the simple, elegant arithmetic of nature that transposes the equation $1+1=-2$ to $1+1=2$. The magic of a value-enriched future is no longer our choice but our imperative.



UNITED_BOTTLE

designing waste for secondary uses

dirk hebel & jörg stollmann
with tobias klauser

LEFT: UNITED_BOTTLE ARCHITECTS, DIRK HEBEL AND JORG STOLLMANN, IN A PET BOTTLE TEMPORARY STRUCTURE, FRANKFURT, GERMANY. BELOW: FILLING MATERIALS, LEFT TO RIGHT, HAIR, EARTH, FEATHERS.



01 PREMISE

UNITED_BOTTLE proposes a new form of plastic bottle designed for secondary use. Over 50 billion PET (polyethylene terephthalate) and PP (polypropylene) bottles are currently circulating in Europe alone. Since the obligatory bottle deposit was introduced, the return quota has exceeded 90 percent. PET/PP bottles can be used as returnable bottles, recycled and transformed into a variety of products—from all forms of vessels to fabrics. This process of “Up-cycling” mostly occurs in China. The final products are sold again globally. This intersection of local and global circuits forms the basis of the project UNITED_BOTTLE. Taking into consideration the increasing scarcity of resources, UNITED_BOTTLE suggests additional recycling circuits. The project’s working hypothesis is that designers should think beyond the product, designing the waste the product will turn into in order to open up possibilities for prospective secondary uses.

02 CIRCUITS

The UNITED_BOTTLE scenario is based on the idea that newly designed PET bottles can be used as instant building materials for temporary housing or small-scale structures, thus adding additional recycling circuits to existing ones. Fifty billion PET bottles are currently circulating in Europe alone; worldwide, up to 500 billion bottles are in use. UNITED_BOTTLE wants to use those immense resources for sustainable architectural purposes.

03 CRISIS

Relief organizations face two major challenges during a state of emergency: the distribution of drinking water and the construction of emergency shelter. In a state of emergency, the Human Rights Commission and other organizations transport tons of technical equipment by air. UNITED_BOTTLE proposes to shortcircuit the cycles of consumer goods with those of crisis management to reduce both travel distance and weight.

Ideally, the UNITED_BOTTLE already would be integrated in local water sales and thus be instantly available to the local population. UNITED_BOTTLE allows for solar drinking water disinfection (SODIS). The tuck-in system generates secure connections that resist torsion. This system also enhances its suitability as a building material. In combination with UN tent blankets, for example, UNITED_BOTTLE functions as a solid shelter construction and as a water reservoir. Filled with local materials, such as sand, earth or liquid, and natural insulation materials such as animal hair or feathers, UNITED_BOTTLE turns into a construction material for repair works or longer-term shelters. An additional advantage of the project is that it could make use of a local population’s practical knowledge about building shelters by misusing prefabricated consumer goods.

04 UNITED SHELTER

UNITED_BOTTLE is a water bottle designed as a prefabricated building unit to be used by leading beverage producers. The bottle can be integrated into regular PET/PP recycling circuits. It arrives in foiled six-packs on palettes at the local stores to be collected and recycled with the help of a bottle deposit system. In the case of crisis, the bottles are taken from this circuit and are redistributed via the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). In combination with a mechanical water pump, they can be used for local water distribution as nine bottles form a stabile unit that can be carried by a single person. The tuck-in system generates secure connections that resist torsion. This system also enhances its suitability as a building material. In combination with UN tent blankets, UNITED_BOTTLE functions as a solid shelter construction and a water reservoir as it allows for solar drinking water disinfection (SODIS). UNITED_BOTTLE employs local building techniques, crafting, improvisation and misuse of consumer waste to build small structures and to extend and repair existing buildings.

05 UNITED_BOTTLE PARTICIPATE!

For a design concept based on secondary use, full-scale testing and the participatory involvement of prospective users in design development are crucial. As the primary use is defined by the production, distribution and marketing logistics of the industry, parameters that allow for secondary use and appropriation have to be incorporated right from the beginning. In the course of the Van Alen Institute New York Prize Fellowship, the “UNITED_BOTTLE Participate!” campaign asks fellow designers, architects, critics and prospective secondary users to imagine concepts of implementation and design proposals exploring the potential of UNITED_BOTTLE. This ongoing process, in combination with research into alternative production methods and technologies in Europe, Asia and the United States, will define the bottle’s shape as well as its future circuit system.

FOUNDED IN 2002, INSTANT WORKS AT THE INTERSECTION OF ARCHITECTURE, TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION. INSTANT QUESTIONS THE DOMINANCE OF NORMS AND STANDARDS IN ORDER TO DEVELOP RESEARCH PROJECTS AND ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE ON VARIOUS SCALES. RECENT PROJECTS INCLUDE THE VAN ALLEN INSTITUTE AWARD WINNING CONCEPT UNITED_BOTTLE, THE INTERNATIONAL TRAVELING EXHIBITION *INVENTIONEERING_ARCHITECTURE*, THE PRIVATE HOME HAUS_Blick IN DUESSELDORF, AND THE INSTALLATION *ON_AIR* IN BERLIN.

FOUNDERS AND PRINCIPALS ARE DIRK HEBEL AND JÖRG STOLLMANN. THEY HAVE HELD TEACHING POSITIONS AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, THE UDK BERLIN, THE TU BERLIN, AND AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH, AUS, AND ARE CURRENTLY TEACHING AT THE ETH ZÜRICH.



A VISUAL REPORTAGE OF THE KALUNDBORG'S WASTE RECYCLING NETWORK IN DENMARK

WASTE

pierre bélanger

In a 1989 article of *Scientific American*, Robert Frosch and Nicholas Gallopoulos popularized the term “industrial ecology” from a groundbreaking network of recycling discovered in a small Danish town around the Fjord of Kalundborg. Turning waste into energy, the ecology of industries that emerged over three decades became an icon of post-modern industrialism recognized universally. Largely overlooked, however, decentralization underlies Danish policies of waste, water and energy and how urbanism has transformed its economy and ecology.

DECENTRALIZING DENMARK

Maersk, LEGO, Novo Nordisk and Arne Jacobsen are national emblems of Denmark's economic fame; in 1970 Denmark had the third largest GDP per capita in the world, second only to Sweden and the United States. From decades of relentless industrial expansion since World War II, Denmark's economy overheated in the mid-1970s. With skyrocketing energy prices, depleting landfill space and contaminated groundwater, a plethora of problems plagued the entire country. From the oil crisis, Denmark developed a national energy policy to decentralize its economy that was largely dependent on oil for electrical power, heat and mobility. In tandem with the creation of the world's first Ministry of the Environment, the country's urban-industrial landscape was irreversibly transformed through a litany of legislation and a battery of tax strategies. Co-generation plants were set up across the country to turn waste into energy, and by the early 1990s, the four largest cities including Copenhagen, Århus, Aalborg and Odense were producing power and heat by burning garbage.

REGIONAL KOMMUNE STRUCTURES

Since most Danes live on top of the water they drink, the problem of groundwater depletion and contamination was pressing. With lower underground reserves, the price of water—for urban and industrial consumption—was re-evaluated based on the cost of full recovery instead of market prices. In contrast to centralized systems worldwide, 14 Danish counties, called Kommunes, govern groundwater

according to specific underground aquifer regions.

Contamination was dealt with by a nationwide groundwater survey. Since 1987, all 400,000 wells have been mapped and are monitored electronically 'round the clock. Although the average cost of household water supplied in Denmark is ten-times more expensive than in the US, Danes consume five-times less bottled water than the US largely because their tap water is safe and it tastes great.

THE KALUNDBORG PROTOTYPE

From the energy-waste-water conundrum emerged a network of waste recycling in Kalundborg, west of Copenhagen. In 1976, Novo Nordisk, the world's largest insulin producer, began diverting 10,000 tons of sludge and surplus yeast from the municipality's sewage plant to local farms as organic fertilizer. A decade later, the Asnæs Power Station began converting hot waste-water into high-pressure steam for residential heating, as well as fly ash for cement production and waste-gypsum for plasterboard manufacturing. Combined, the two plants produced massive gains from energy cascading, recovering almost 70% of the typical loss experienced by large power generators while reducing dependency on foreign fuel imports. The small sleepy town of 15,000 people also saves about 15 million dollars annually sponsoring renewed urban investment and infrastructural upgrades. Compounded, 600,000 cubic meters of water are saved annually through the cascading and reuse of waste water effluents.

URBAN-INDUSTRIAL ECONOMIES

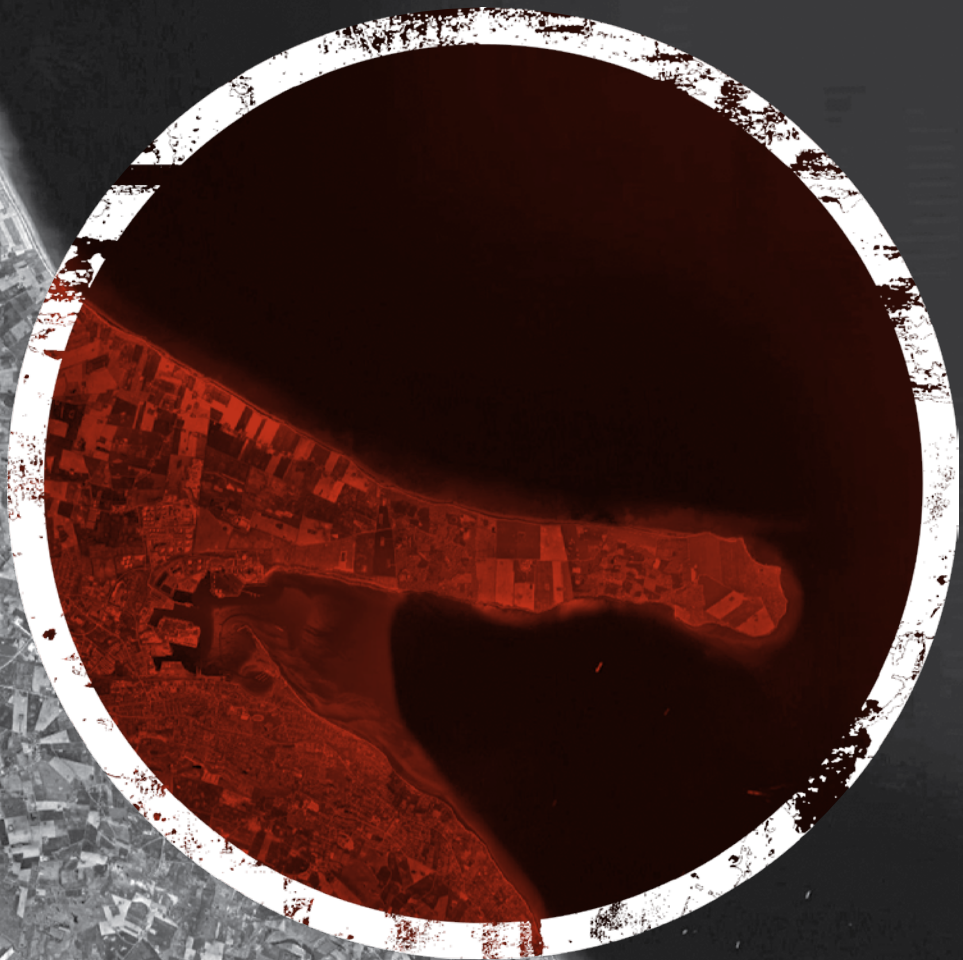
Home to a relatively homogeneous population of 5.5 million people spread across an area the size of Maine, change in Denmark can happen swiftly. Using energy independence as a national objective, the double bind of economy and ecology is being solved through a diverse portfolio that includes garbage, straw, wood, coal, gas and wind. Not surprisingly, Danish manufacturers hold half of the world market in wind turbine manufacturing, while the country has become a net exporter of wind energy. Tight controls, precise metering, gradient taxation and accurate pricing are starting to pay off: recycling of waste water and cascading of energy flows is reaching 100% for industries and 85% for households.

More than an isolated case of waste recycling, the Kalundborg prototype proves durable as a testbed for the limitless capacity of waste and energy synergies when factoring the primacy and longevity of groundwater resources. From self-powered cities to zero-waste industries, the regional decentralization of Denmark's economic landscape makes the case for renewing the discourse on ecology, industry and urbanism in America.

PIERRE BÉLANGER IS ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO'S JOHN H. DANIELS FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE, LANDSCAPE & DESIGN.

THE KALUNDBORG LANDSCAPE: THE AGRO-INDUSTRIAL REGION OF KALUNDBORG, DENMARK WHERE WASTE STEAM FROM THE MAIN POWER PLANT IS REDISTRIBUTED TO HEAT LOCAL PLANTS AND NEARBY RESIDENTIAL HOMES. DUE TO STRINGENT AIR, LAND AND WATER EMISSIONS, ADJACENT LANDS TO HEAVY INDUSTRY AND POWER GENERATION CAN BE USED FOR PUBLIC AND AGRICULTURAL USES.

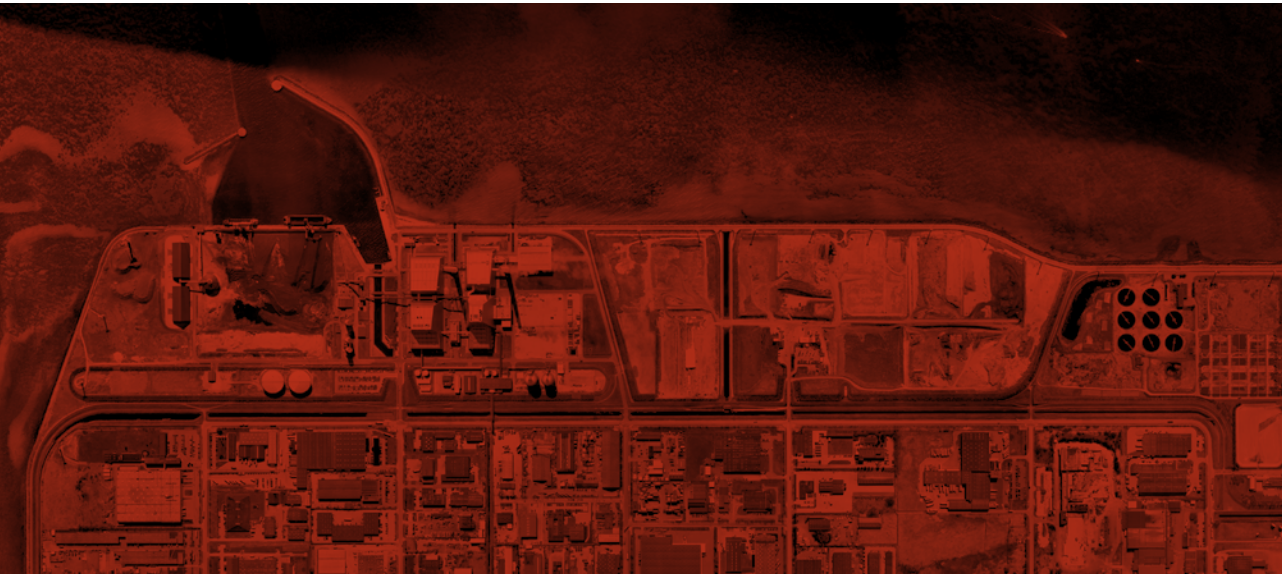
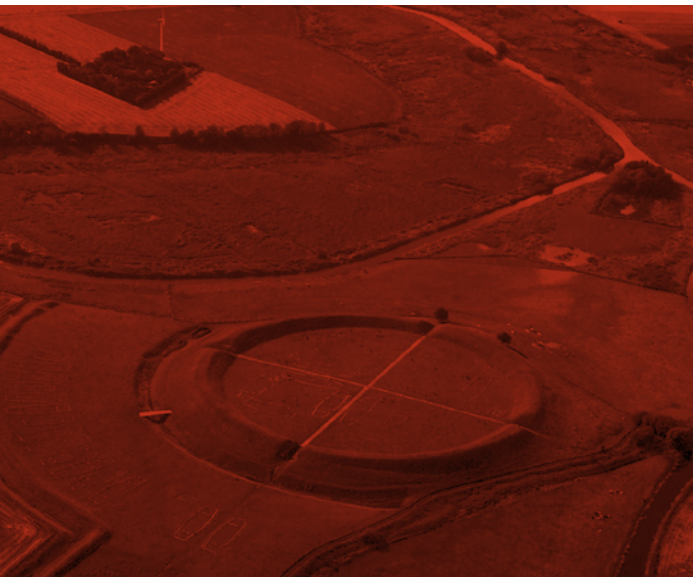
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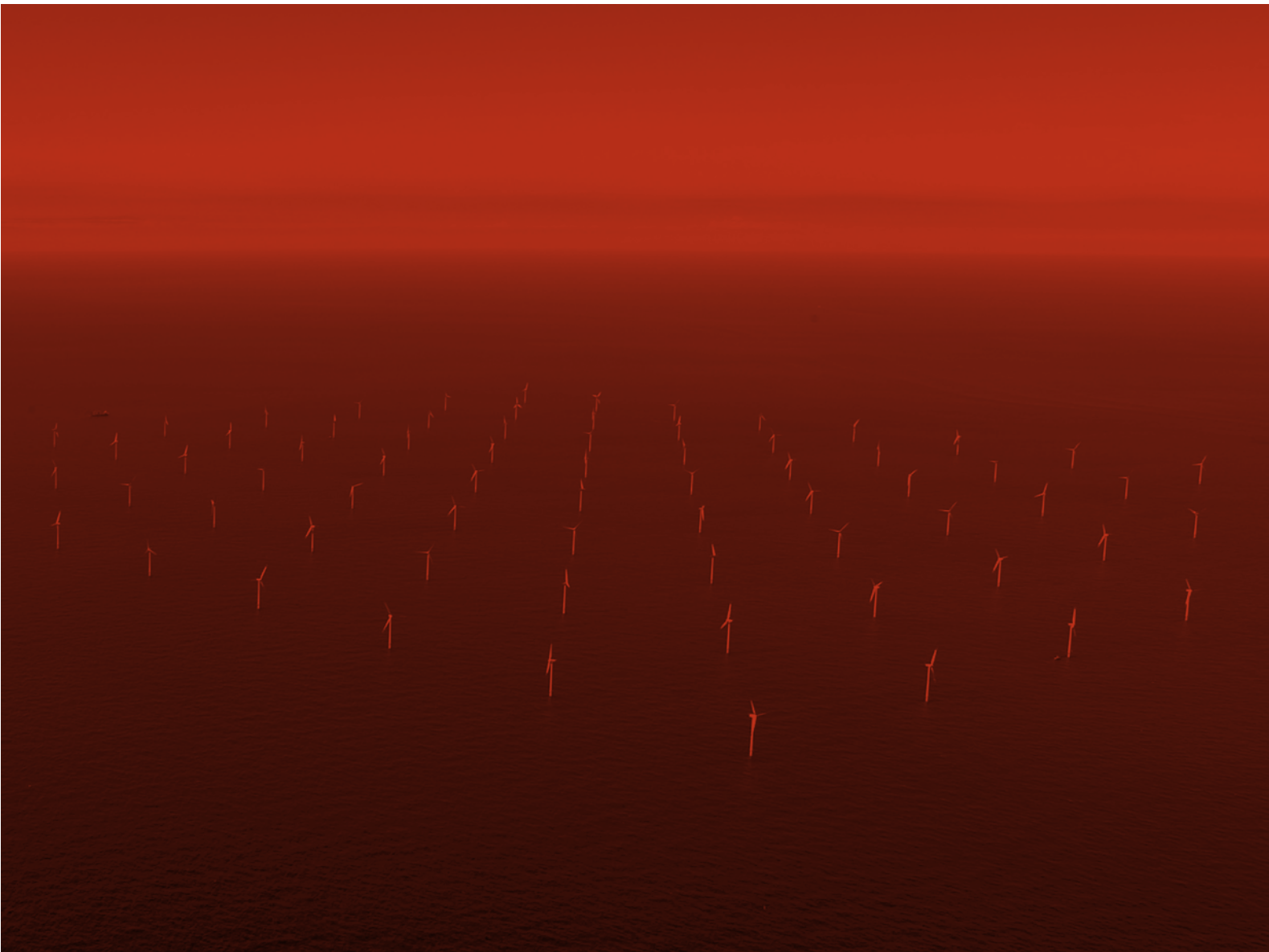
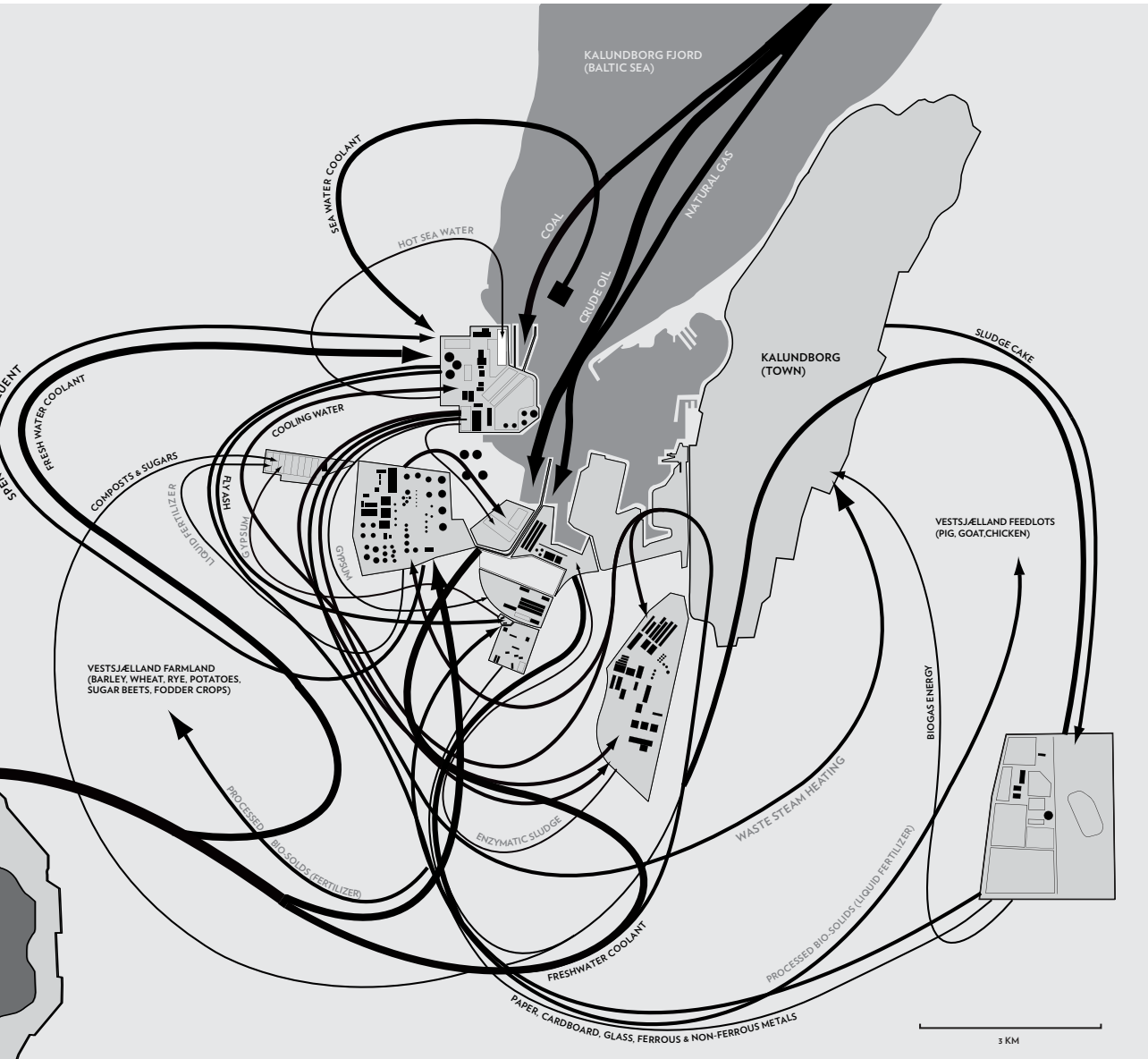




WASTE URBANISM: more than just a series of isolated experiments in urban recycling or industrial ecology, the entire landscape of Denmark—onland and offshore—proves as a durable testbed for the limitless capacity of waste synergies and energy synchronicities latent in the recirculation of by-products and rechanneling of heat sources when factoring the longevity of pre-existing groundwater resources. From the construction of the first military forts using waste materials during the Middle Ages to the conversion of sludges into fertilizers in the 20th century to the generation of power from garbage in 2008, the market for waste—an irreversible residue of industrial and urban operations—appears to be one of the most sustainable economies in the history of the Old World. Shit, in other words, is the new fuel.

CREDITS—CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 1. SOLID WASTE TO SOLID FUEL: VESTFORBRÆNDING A/S, 2007 2. BROKEN ARROW: STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND—GREENLAND THULE AIR BASE, 1983 3. PROTOECOLOGY DIAGRAM: PIERRE BÉLANGER 4. CONSTRUCTING COPENHAGEN: COWI A/S, 2008 5. SLUDGE FACTOR: PIERRE BÉLANGER 6. AEOLIAN POWER: DONG ENERGY, 2007 7. EXOTIC ECOLOGY: PIERRE BÉLANGER 8. CHINESE COAL: PIERRE BÉLANGER 9. VIKING URBANISM: SYDVESTJÆLLANDS MUSEUM







WASTE ISN'T WASTE UNTIL IT'S WASTED

zero waste uses recycling to dispose of unwanted stuff

daniel knapp

Zero waste is a big vision. For discards—garbage, recyclables, the things we “throw away”—no single method can do the whole job. Zero waste requires a complex economic ecosystem of sustainable disposal and production.

Many parts of this vision already exist, each different. My business, Urban Ore, is one company in an economic ecosystem built on secondary materials. A three-acre reuse enterprise in Berkeley, California, open 360 days a year, we receive and sell nearly anything that doesn't require a motor vehicle permit. Our income from retail sales, scrap and service is about \$2.5 million annually. We have 38 employees, a full parking lot, hundreds of retail customers streaming in and out, vehicles loaded with incoming discards and outgoing merchandise. Conversations fill the air. Every transaction involves a human negotiation.

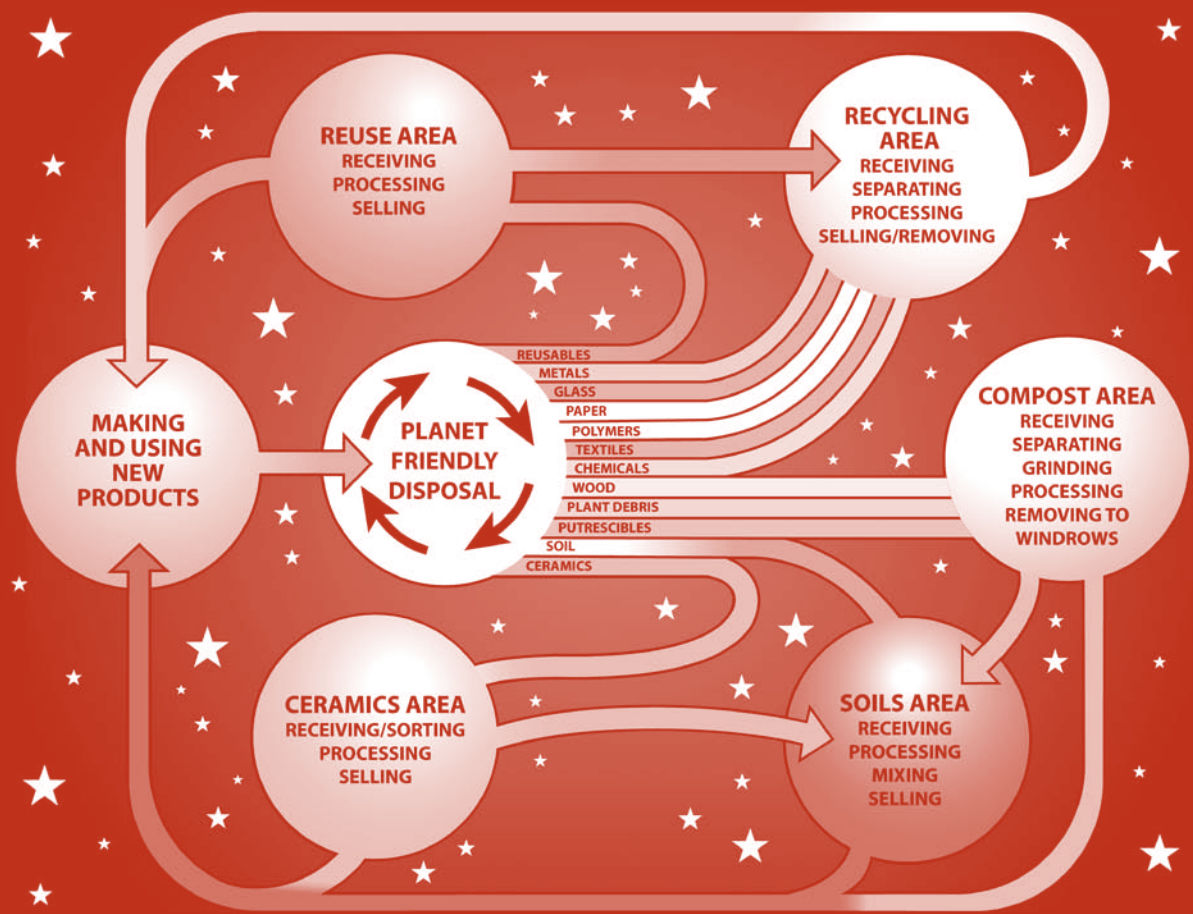
Like many recyclers, I started out in another field: sociology. Later, as Co-Director of the Lane County Office of Appropriate Technology in Eugene, Oregon, I studied the goods wasted at a tiny, rural solid-waste station. The results revealed a rich opportunity, but as so many decision-makers have done with recycling opportunities, the County Supervisors declined to pursue it. Later, they de-funded the agency, so I hitchhiked to Berkeley and

tested the study by salvaging at the municipally-owned bayfill. I wore a psychic lab coat as protection from the chaos and cultural downgrading.

The sensory contrasts at a landfill are jarring. Berkeley's 90-acre mini-peninsula jutted into San Francisco Bay. It had sweeping views of the Marin County hills, the Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco. In Berkeley, the university's Campanile carillon gleamed, but under my feet were 50 feet of compressed garbage, held in by a stone dyke. Rats appeared at dusk. The smell was the internationally-consistent landfill smell. Dry weather brought dust, wet weather smelly mud. Winds blew continuously. When the ten-foot-high garbage compactors squeaked, beeped and rumbled by, the “land” jiggled. Swooping clouds of seagulls soared, circled and perched all around us.

BALANCING CARBON, REDUCING FOOTPRINTS

Urban Ore's mining metaphor fits the daily work. One resource we “mine” is refined aluminum in industrial products: windows, doors, cable, car parts, sheet goods. We upgrade it by removing contaminants such as ferrous screws. By recovering, disassembling and



cleaning, we convert discards into feedstock—raw material to supply an industrial process.

Smelting—extracting metal from ore using heat and melting—also creates feedstock. Once I worked in an aluminum plant in the Ohio River Valley that used prodigious amounts of electricity produced by coal-burning power plants located every few miles along the river. The precious metal was extracted from a white earthen powder mined in the tropics and barged thousands of miles. Similar plants in the Columbia River Gorge may use the Bonneville Dam’s hydropower for electricity, but all reduction furnaces still use vast amounts of refined coal for anodes and cathodes, which vaporize during production. Aluminum smelting pollutes by requiring ore to be mined and shipped, and coal to be mined and refined, all before using electricity to turn the refined coal into carbon dioxide and the ore’s residue into slag heaps.

By “making” feedstock from already-refined metals, recycling shrinks aluminum’s carbon footprint. Recyclers can tell similar tales about wood, glass, bricks, textiles and even plastics. Our story improves substantially when we sell the recovered objects for reuse, conserving the manufacturing value, too.

BALANCING DISPOSAL SERVICE

My company isn’t in the field of “waste management.” Waste management—a profession and industry that mixes and contaminates discards before or in lieu of separating them—is our competition for the supply. And despite unfair obstacles, sharp competitive practices and regulatory barriers, conserving and recycling businesses like American Soil Products, American Iron, Community Conservation Center, Standard Metal, Eco-Haul, Habitat for Humanity and Ohmega Salvage are winning market share from wasting.

First, recycling businesses have important structural advantages over waste management companies. Both methods provide the service of disposal, which is simply to make your unwanted thing go “away” legally. However, recyclers dispose with more soul. Suppose that you have something to let go of. If a recycler accepts it, it will be upgraded and returned to productive use. If you give it to a waste company, it will be mashed, mixed with unlike materials, and taken to your local landfill or incinerator. The rough handling destroys everything, taking most or even all value out of any “recycling” attempted.

Second, recyclers have a financial advantage over traditional waste management systems. Destructive disposal depends completely on service fees, whereas service fees are an option for reuse and recycling businesses, who also sell products. Materials recovery enterprises can balance the two income sources to cover costs and generate profits, so almost all forms of recycling can charge lower service fees than wasting.

Waste companies argue that only they can assure that local governments will fulfill their statutory public-health obligations. But then they want police-power protection and guaranteed profits, often of 30% or more. Worse, many communities rely on garbage-service income as a cash source, so whatever policies they may make, these communities must protect waste income. It’s hard to replace an industry that’s so embedded.

In terms of cost to the community, recyclers only ask that wasting be evaluated at its full price, including assured long-term landfill space, cleanup for hundreds of years in case water supplies are contaminated (current contracts provide the federal minimum of 30 years) and greenhouse gas offsets.

In general, landfills will always deal with long-term liabilities. They generate huge quantities of carbon dioxide and methane. Waste companies brag about capturing methane, producing energy and sequestering carbon. But some analysts now think more methane is generated during the filling, when organic garbage is fresh and cooking, than after



Geographically, solid waste has a small urban footprint but a very large rural footprint. Old edge-of-town dumps are now parks, and rural megafills are standard. The Potrero Hills landfill in Suisun City, California is located in close proximity to the largest protected wetland on the West Coast. Consider its size compared to the urban footprint recycling needs...

closure, when gas collection starts. Besides, burning methane makes more carbon dioxide.

Recycling and reuse have no comparable long term liabilities.

Recycling’s advantages have intensified the resource competition. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says recycling is now five times the financial size of the waste industry and growing. In my region, I have watched the cost of landfilling rise from about \$15 to \$110 per ton.

BALANCING LAND USES AND PROTECTING RESOURCE QUALITY

Besides fighting to correct the hidden subsidies that keep the price of wasting artificially low, the two biggest challenges facing recycling today are finding land and protecting resource quality.

Geographically, solid waste has a small urban footprint but a very large rural footprint. Old edge-of-town dumps are now parks, and rural megafills are standard.

Conversely, reuse and recycling have a small footprint in the country except for compost windrows, but must occupy large urban industrial spaces. Resources have to be received, sorted and aggregated for sale. Yard debris is best shredded at the aggregation point before transport to rural windrows. Reuse has the largest urban land requirement and needs a good retail location. It also generates the highest revenue per ton.

Unfortunately, cities today are shrinking their industrial neighborhoods to favor “smart” growth, assuming domestic manufacturing is dead and letting infill take production lands. Meanwhile, California’s Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board found that new or growing recycling-based businesses are having trouble finding sites, and cities bluntly make them unwelcome. The board found older businesses tend to own their own properties, employ many people per dollar invested, pay good wages—and need industrial land.

Another challenge is protecting resource quality. Today’s municipal waste managers have conflicting mandates and internally divided departments. They develop recycling using solid-waste thinking, so they build automated systems that

first mix and contaminate resources, then sort the pieces. They keep life simple by using a single contractor to recover diverse resources.

BALANCING THE WHOLE RESOURCE SYSTEM

Today’s combined problems largely could be solved by building zero-waste parks modeled on airports or malls. Municipally owned and managed facilities, coherently designed, could be occupied by synergistic, specialized tenants. Government’s ability to manage contractors would be fused with private entrepreneurial talent that is already working and looking for more opportunity.

Resource parks would unify municipal missions and facilities with income. They would encourage diversified conserving industries, condense the industrial footprint required for aggregation and processing, protect rural areas and generate sustainable community income through conservation. The outputs would be feedstock for domestic green businesses to make the already-refined resources into new products.

Myriad feedstocks produced could include graded metals, color-sorted glass cullet, glass-free paper and other fiber, compost and crushed concrete. End products might include topsoil, glass dishes, countertops with embedded polished glass, doors and windows, furniture and roadbeds. Locally-made products can be sold for fair prices to local markets, completing the resource loop where it matters most.

The wages of conservation are greenbucks, so let’s make our own products again. Let’s supply a rebuilding boom. Let’s conserve and enhance value. Let’s become genuinely sanitary. Let’s build resource recovery parks and run them with resource development authorities. Let’s stop all landfill expansions and stop subsidizing wasting. Let’s get all organics out of landfill and stop burning what is better composted and returned to the soil.

Let’s go all the way to zero waste, and the sooner the better.

DANIEL KNAPP HAS OPERATED URBAN ORE, A ZERO WASTE MATERIALS RECOVERY ENTERPRISE, FOR 28 YEARS. URBAN ORE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATES (UODA) TEAMS ALSO DESIGN ZERO WASTE RESOURCE RECOVERY PARKS FOR PRIVATE AND PUBLIC CLIENTS INTERNATIONALLY.



REALLY GOING FOR IT!

pliny fisk III

THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPED YEARS AGO FROM THAT TIME-WASTING HABIT CALLED *SCOPE CREEP*.

“OK, let’s say we really went for it! I mean full bore—no kidding—things are serious—waste of all wastes—the greenhouse gases, the criteria air pollutants, the toxic releases are really getting out of hand. We have to do something!”

That was close to the statement I made in 1993 when I was on the early American Institute of Architects (AIA) effort called the Committee on the Environment (COTE)—at the time I was sharing the national chairmanship of the Environmental Resource Guide (ERG) with Bob Berkebile and Harry Gordon. Bob had put together COTE and the ERG using the greenest expertise he could find, all of us being more on the edge of the architecture profession than in the middle—people like Paul Bierman-Lytle, Bill McDonough, Sim van der Ryn and others; half of us were non-architects or solar activist architects like Greg Franta. Then there was a scientist from the EPA, Bob Simmons, and many people, who, in general, were not supposed to be doing what we were doing. All this took place under Susan Maxman, the first ever women president of the AIA, who was more than willing to push us forward.

At the time, the proposal I made to the EPA’s Program Officer James White (who was funding COTE) and the ERG was one of those impatient *scope creep* challenge statements, which to my surprise was unabashedly accepted. Since the ERG’s funding was not really as effective as we had hoped, James decided to fund Max’s Pot (the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems) for a three-year cooperative agreement to create a scientifically robust standard that would hopefully go beyond buildings, one that the Feds could really depend on—one that was not simply subject to COTE’s opinion. A dare for a dare like, “Okay smarty pants, stop the talk, get the team together and do it—here’s the money.” So I put my dream team together and we did it and this is what we did.

We set out to baseline what sustainable really meant from a standards point of view because the Feds were forced to state the words *green*, *sustainable* etc. etc. in their procurement strategies for any product or building purchased. The trouble was no one knew what the words meant or how to do it—this was our number one task: what does it mean to be green and what criteria are needed to call yourself green.

To say that everything fell right into place would be far from the truth, but for a nonprofit by the name of Max’s Pot to have a cooperative agreement with the EPA was better than much of the foundation money we had in the past—now, not only were we actually being paid to think about really important stuff but also to develop an operational national model. We were told we could have whatever support the Feds could give us, like the supercomputers at the Research Triangle in Chapel Hill: “They are yours to use—if needed.”

So I put my own magic team together, beginning with a Geographic Informations Systems (GIS) practitioner and general systems thinker, whose work I had admired for years: Bill Bavinger. Bill was in the midst of being fired from Rice University as head of the Advanced

Visualization Lab (luckily for me the architects did not know what to do with him—I did). As it happened, Bill also grew up in Bruce Goeff’s Bavinger House, a definite brain-teaser for developing creatively. Then there was my cohort in all argumentative discussions with the EPA, AIA, COTE, you name it: Hal Levine, the person who created the term “building ecology.” Another technically competent person turned teammember claiming he understood what we were trying to do and that he had the skill to pull it off was Greg Norris (at that time with the National Institute for Standards and Testing or NIST). And lastly, we had two team members who constantly reminded us how serious this all was and that we were never meeting protocol: Gail Vittori, now my wife and Chair Elect of the US Green Building Council’s Board of Directors, and Joel Ann Todd, our only official Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) person.

The task was daunting, with months going by as we barely satisfied James White enough so that he could justify the next payment. Then we realized it was all sitting right there in front of us.

I mentioned one day that I had witnessed the operational qualities of a national model of the US economy called the I/O model, which was presented to us in the regional science program at Penn’s Department of Architecture and Planning in my graduate school days. Walter Isard demonstrated how the I/O model showed how every business affected every other economically: i.e., how the rising price of silica sand is reflected in all things glass—from windows to eyeglasses—in one gigantic matrix equation linking all business through the flow of money. It was one of those classes whose subject matter I swore I never wanted to get into again (I was supposed to become an architect, but at the time Penn was about the best *scope creep* place of any university anywhere).

I called Bill Bavinger and Greg Norris and James and said, “Here’s a crazy idea—let’s combine it all, overlay the scientifically peer-reviewed national I/O economic model created by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) that connects businesses monetarily with the EPA’s reporting system showing each business with its associated pollutants. They were all there in the EPA’s reports, all the Greenhouse Gases (GHG), the Criterial Air Pollutants (CAP), the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI)—a considerable amount of the waste-to-land, waste-to-water and waste-to-air in the US. Before we knew it we had the ruminants of the first I/O, LCA, National GIS Model. From this base we could actually create a verifiable baseline that was peer reviewable. If we were lucky, it would tell us the base impacts of a typical house, a typical school, a typical car, a typical anything, as to their materiality impacts along the entire production chain from mining, lumbering, transport, manufacturing on through—even the impact of getting lunch was in there someplace, as Greg would attest. Bill found that one of the off-the-shelf digital US phonebooks had the latitude and longitude together with the

According to NASA, today the USA consumes up to 21 equivalent USAs if we were to balance our own carbon with the vegetation and soils that we still have as carbon sinks.

Standard Industrial Classification (referred to as the SIC number) of US businesses—all we had to do was make sense out of it and we were off and running. Bill placed everything (all 12,500,000 businesses) mapped into the GIS, while Greg cross-linked all the economic data from the EPA with the BEA environmental data reporting so that each dollar flow would represent a quantity of pollution or jobs or many other items. Greg and I worked with the AIA and the Master format people in DC so that all the specification language could be cross related to the language of the BEA and the EPA. Then we waited and we waited, even though Bill had some pretty robust computers at the time, all waste probably derived from the Rice University waste stream.

It took days, if not weeks, to make our first run. We did not quite have the confidence to go to the super computers at the Research Triangle in Chapel Hill, although we probably should have because the probabilities of accuracy and other issues needed to be verified by definite mathematical robustness, but we weren't sure that the idea would even work. But of course, what we were unwilling to admit as well was the importance of what we were doing. As things started to actually spill out of the programming—building-type by building-type, sector by sector, state by state—we were beginning to realize that we had the whole country—one large series of millions of life cycles—placed on the land, including all the jobs, the taxation, the pollutants, for every region at every scalar area, country, state, city, zip code and just about every business.

Now we needed to actually apply it. So we took what was now referred to as BaselineGreen™ and GreenBalance™ and realized that we could redirect some jobs on the table at our center. Tony Gale and Lucia Athens in Seattle said “let's try it” on the Seattle Justice Center, and that building became an early application, as did the UT Health Science Center in Houston, then the US Pentagon, and then one day someone at the federal level watching the presentation Gail was making to The Pentagon team realized what we were doing—he understood the ramifications, sort-of, and stated that if Vice President Gore was elected President he would see to it that this became national policy. Well, the rest is history; Gore did not get in, funding was gone from the EPA, we could not get enough clients that understood what we were doing, nor the true implications, and things came gradually to a grinding halt.

But let's say history went our way—what could have happened? Every business's inputs and outputs of materials, money, energy, waste (air, water and land), out-products coordinated with in-products, cradle-to-cradle, waste for food, economic verses environmental benefits,

jobs verses pollution—all spelled out. The big problem was: would the country do it? Would anyone in position stand up and say, “Let's really get our shit together”?

As I have presented what we did over those years, many folks are dumbfounded. Others have criticized that you cannot plan the economy in this way. When I mention that this could be the start of a new level of enterprise development well beyond eco-industrial-parks (single-site industrial ecology models, such as those in Denmark), forming purposeful business input/output relationships at a city-wide or regional level, others tell me that business does not like to be planned by others. When I say that this is an approach that needs to happen throughout the country, few understand what I mean.

Then I try to bring to the table what I call a closely akin procedure, that of flexible manufacturing networks, once tried in the US as the original basis behind the CDC's (Community Development Corporations) and also borrowed from great successes in Europe; in my mind, these chains of businesses can be linked in what could be purposefully derived business-to-business life cycle relationships, helping to control life cycle by-product contaminants through reuse in other regional industries, becoming more efficient overall.

But I am told that businesses in this country hide their inventories, hide their production capabilities, their books etc. etc. It's not part of our culture to do things at this level of cooperation. My answer is that “but it's happening anyway—it's just a matter of who is admitting it or who is saying it.” Look at Silicon Valley and the immense degree of cooperation at all levels that takes place there—from shared protocols of all types to financial cooperation to “instep manufacturing,” nearly the same cooperation that is behind just-in-time manufacturing, or the auto industry or the computer industry or, or... With the necessary tweaks the US business community could become large input/output-coordinated industrial ecosystems.

So what's the problem? How serious are we? This is our country's metabolism. This is our home economics, our building ecology, and we are not thinking in strategic nor systemic terms. With the richest database on earth, instead of thinking creatively, we think of information in weird ways about weird things. We don't seriously understand what it's going to take to create a sustainable future, including waste as a re-source.

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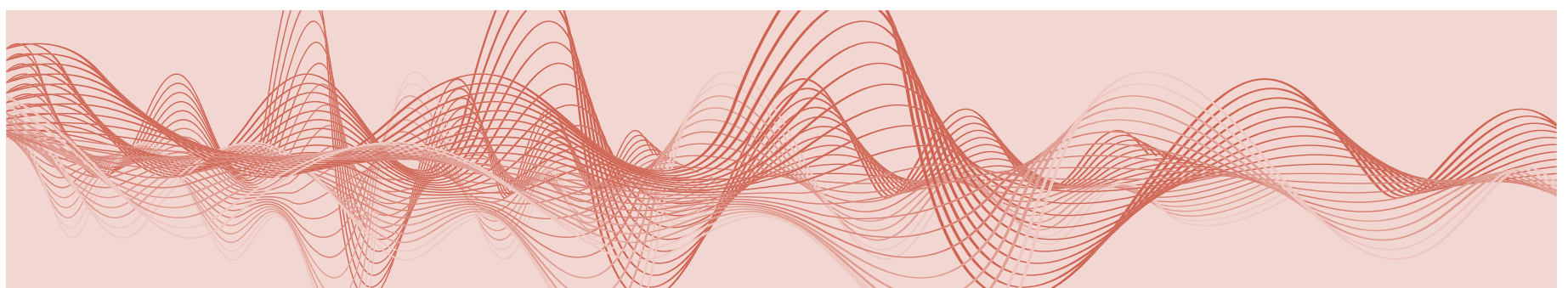
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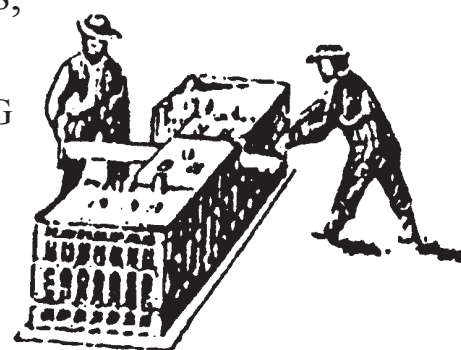
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HOW (NOT) TO CRITIQUE

help us help you

karen cheng

Like most designers, I approach client presentations with a mixture of dread, hope and fatalism. At these meetings, anything can happen:

THE BOOSTER The client might gush over the work (rare). “We love it!” This can be great, but it might also be an illusion (a stay of execution, so to speak). Many clients are uncomfortable with face-to-face critique/discussion; they prefer to send post-presentation emails with extensive Hollywood-style “notes” (i.e., requests for significant alterations/changes, often involving surprise agendas from hidden committee members.)

THE ANTAGONIST The client might hate the work (also rare). “We don’t like this at all.” Well, at least you know—and right away, too. But now you have to find (and fix) the problem. Was it an unknown subjective preference (they hate green?). Was the solution off-strategy (“Sorry, we forgot to tell you that our corporate mission has changed”). Or, did they think you were someone else (i.e., you are minimalist/Swiss, they want maximalist/California).

THE BLENDER The client might like *all* the concepts. This usually leads to what M—(my husband, also a designer) calls “The Frankenstein”: the monstrous hybridization of unrelated ideas and visual elements.

THE MICRO-MANAGER This person (often a Middle-Manager, Assistant or other low-level Go-Between) critiques the font choice, font style, font size, composition, color, spacing, etc. Unless you’re working for another graphic designer that you respect, it’s pretty hard to take criticism on typography from the client (after all, weren’t they business majors?). I mean, I can take it when clients complain that “the type seems too small,” but otherwise, type is pretty firmly in the design-expertise camp.

Perhaps more importantly, these micro-critiques leave more important aspects of the communication unexamined, things that you’d really like the client to weigh in on, such as: Does the solution fit the brand personality? Is the design appropriate for the intended audience? Does the proposed design production fit into the project budget/timeline?

I know this sounds like I hate working with clients (I admit this has sometimes been difficult for me) and/or that I don’t want to change any aspect of an original design solution (à la Paul Rand: “I have solved your problem. Here is the solution. And, here is the invoice.”). But actually, I don’t think a client has to love your first idea (or first set of ideas). Often, a design develops and improves as a result of informed discussion—a critique in which the designer and client clearly communicate their objectives, responses and rationale. In a good critique:

1. The designer explains their core concept/strategy and their rationale for executing that concept/strategy with specific aesthetics (color, composition, typography, visuals, etc.).
2. The client offers input on the core concept—does the client think that the proposed design strategy will accomplish their goals/objectives for the project? Why or why not? Here, the client attempts to clearly articulate their criteria for judgment.
3. Assuming the core concept is viable, the client offers input on the specific design execution. The client does not pretend to be an expert, but articulates why they think the specific design execution would (or would not) be appropriate for their audience/product/service. Again, the client is as explicit as possible with the rationale that supports their opinion (i.e., “our audience is older—50-70—so small type is hard for them to read.”)
4. If appropriate, the client offers specific suggestions for improving the concept or execution. These suggestions are not necessarily directive; they are offered to illustrate/clarify the client’s thinking/rationale. (“I’m not saying you should do this, but would a business suit make Betty Crocker seem more up-to-date?”)
5. If possible, the client remains encouraging and positive. There’s no point in lying outright (if you think it’s awful, say so), but it is helpful to mention which (if any) of the design elements

are successful so that they can be maintained. It’s both good manners and good business to remain positive and tactful. Most designers (perhaps most people) work a bit harder/better when they aren’t completely demoralized.

6. Both the client and the designer listen carefully to each other and ask questions to ensure that all feedback is understood.

A key concept here is the difference between “like/dislike” and “good/bad” and “successful/unsuccessful.” In a useful critique, personal preferences should be separated from a more abstract analysis of a design solution. That is, it’s possible for a design solution to be outside of a reviewer’s personal preferences and still be successful in accomplishing a specific communication goal. For example, one of my graduate students recently showed me the (ahem) very bold “Healthy Penis” advertising campaign for gay men in San Francisco and Seattle (www.healthypenis.org). It’s not my own cup of tea (I think the cartoon talking-penis character could have been a lot more Swiss/geometric), but you have to admit that it’s effective and memorable.

At any rate, good critiques take thought, practice and trust on both sides. Clients worry that designers might steer them down odd (and unprofitable) paths for the sake of novelty. Designers worry that their best work will be crushed down into typical corporate pablum. Clients need time to become experts in the critique setting, and designers need to simply listen and absorb information without undue verbal defense. Getting this elaborate game of give-and-take on track is the only way to bring both sides to a better understanding of the problem (and a better design solution.)

KAREN CHENG IS CHAIR OF THE DESIGN DIVISION 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.

THE NOT SO DUMB HOUSE

jm cava

APPROPRIATE: THE HOUSES OF JOSEPH ESHERICK

MARC TREIB

WILLIAM STOUT PUBLISHERS, 2008

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Joseph Esherick was an enigmatic figure to me—anyone with a modicum of architectural awareness was familiar with his name but would be hard pressed to identify any particular building of his, with the possible exception of Cannery Row in San Francisco. My firm even entered a competition once on the strength of Esherick being on the jury—we thought of him somehow as “one of us,” but none of us could have provided any specific information about him. *Appropriate*, the title of this monograph on Esherick’s houses by the prolific architectural scholar, Marc Treib, is well chosen, for it resonates at several levels; neither the work nor the man did any grandstanding, as is so common today. Instead, Esherick went quietly and, it seems, joyfully, about his task of trying to make sense of the business of making buildings. Though he and his firm garnered all the typical honors and prizes, he remained a somewhat mysterious character—other than the one or two iconic photographs of the Cary House interior and his involvement with UC Berkeley, no one knew all that much about him. His work at Sea Ranch was overshadowed by the more theatrical MLTW, and his other houses—though shown in the so-called “shelter” magazines and books—were too quiet to feature in the architectural press. Esherick also was quick to give credit to his architectural partners and collaborators—another sign of someone uninterested in fame.

Despite his restrained manner, Esherick was a pivotal figure, along with Wurster and Dailey, in what came to be loosely known as the Second Bay Region group of architects, which followed the path set out by Maybeck, Polk, Coxhead, et al. before them and was named after Lewis Mumford’s famous proclamation of 1947 heralding the group’s existence. Esherick was also one of the last influential American architects to have trained with the Beaux Arts system under a great master trained in Paris, in this case Paul Cret at the University of Pennsylvania (known more often as Louis Kahn’s teacher).

Esherick’s California houses—along with those of Wurster, Dailey and other contemporaries—helped define the very idea of a modern regionalism. He had a kind of anti-style towards design, something that would later work to his disadvantage in the 1960s when formulating a pseudo-scientific approach to design, but served him well as a designer; his ego and personality were always subservient to finding a truly “appropriate” solution to the problem at hand.

As such, Esherick’s houses present a fascinating study of style vs. non-style, for though many architects say they let the program and site dominate, in fact, their own personalities emerge triumphant. Esherick walked his talk—so much so that he was occasionally willing to allow the houses to be quite awkward, for that was simply the manner in which they functioned best. An overlay of style would have, in his opinion, made the design less appropriate for the owners, the site and so on. Esherick himself seems conflicted—Treib provides many quotes—about the

role of the architect in design, how much to play the master builder/artist and how much the self-effacing coordinator. Clearly, Esherick was endowed with superior talent when it came to design, and there are a half-dozen houses in this book that are simply masterpieces of understated yet powerful architecture—the Cary House among them, one of the most gracious and expansive small houses in the modern repertoire. This makes it all the more incongruous to find several Esherick-designed houses that are not merely humble but downright awkward in their design, probably the result of overbearing clients or attenuated budgets. But Esherick never disowned these lesser designs; on the contrary, he saw in them a certain honesty that reflected their circumstances. Elegance was desirable but unnecessary, for one of his architectural watchwords was “dumbness,” a term of praise meaning simplicity (my own teacher from Penn used the same terminology, so my guess is that it trickled down from Cret). Esherick was fond of asking, “How would a farmer do it?”

But the best of these houses are deceptively simple—the way Glenn Gould made playing Bach sound so simple—and are worth close study, not only for their often exquisite planning and massing but for their skill in developing the craft of the modern wood house and for their thorough integration with the natural environments around and within them. Esherick’s sense of craft is said to have come from his famous uncle, Wharton Esherick, whose idiosyncratic, organic and thoroughly-American modern works in wood now fetch astronomical prices at auction. But I suspect it also came largely from his Beaux Arts training—which stressed the integration of details with the whole—and from studying the work of Maybeck et al. and working directly with Gardner Dailey as an integral member of the Bay Area Style. Even the most ordinary of these houses is taken into the realm of the beautiful simply by virtue of Esherick’s decision to associate with Thomas Church and Lawrence Halprin, two California landscape architects of colossal genius. It is not just the gardens that are delightful but the way these designers were able to design from cues in both the site and the architecture, creating a whole that transcended them all. In this sense, Treib is a terrific guide through this work, as he has always refused to accept a hard boundary between the design of buildings and landscapes; as such, his descriptions move effortlessly between the two.

Esherick’s trip to the dark side, for many of us, was his falling into the trap during the 1960s of thinking the individual architect’s design skills should be marginalized in the design of buildings and environments, that design was really all about systems and mathematical models. Granted, this was the 60s and questioning authority was the watchword of the time, yet this approach became a kind of anti-architecture that was furthered by Christopher Alexander, whose institute ultimately became a kind of anti-architecture school. During this period, Berkeley became known as an architecture school that gave little training in the normative architectural skills, focusing instead on social aspects of supposedly empowering “people” at the expense of the profession. The paradox here—as Treib points out—is that Esherick knew full well that individual talent, training and intuition are essential to good design, that it is a human activity that can never be relegated to mathematical program—despite certain continued attempts to do so.

In the end, however, Esherick’s houses give us a set of powerful lessons that reach towards bringing Mumford’s proposition into being, that “a house, whatever its form, in mass and in plan, should provide a contemporary expression of the timeless concept of home.” The drawings, photographs and stories in this handsome new book show us all that it can be done.

JM CAVA IS AN ARCHITECT IN PORTLAND, WHERE HE TEACHES, WRITES AND DESIGNS BUILDINGS AND GARDENS.



LEFT: TIEGLAND HOUSE, ORINDA, CALIFORNIA, 1957. PERSPECTIVE BY GEORGE HOMSEY (26 FEBRUARY 1957).

RIGHT FROM TOP: BERMAK HOUSE, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, 1962. SOUTH FACADE. PHOTO: ROY FLAMM, EHDD. RIGHT BELOW: ROMANO HOUSE, KENTFIELD, CALIFORNIA. LIVING ROOM. PHOTO: ROBERT BRANDEIS, EHDD.



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1989-90 Michael Peters Group

1990 Hale and Hearty

1991 River of Resources - Garbage Museum

1993 Island Architecture

1994 Osaka Science Museum

1998 Odyssey Maritime Discovery Center

1999 Stanford University Museum of Art

1999 Columbus, GA

2001 Soundbridge Seattle Symphony Discovery Center

2001 Woodland Park Zoo-African Village

2001 Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo-Bat House Renovation

2002 IslandWood

2002 Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve Visitor Center

2001-03 Northwest Folklife Festival

2002 Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo-Bobcat and Raptor exhibit plans

2003 Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium - Seahorse exhibit

2004 Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium - Asian Forest Sanctuary exhibit

2004 Global Partnerships

2004-05 Seattle Aquarium - Orcas exhibit

2005 University of Alaska Museum of the North

2005 Washington Park Arboretum - Interpretive and Wayfinding Plan

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—adapted from *The Daily Journal of Commerce*, Portland, Oregon, 2006

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session, and although there will be no dinner served on the physical plane, in your astral travels, you may consume anything anywhere, anytime. A former Hells Angel reputed to be one of the original Merry Pranksters will supervise your “trip.” Happy Trails!

SEXY TIME WITH AN ARCHITECT

Find out first-hand why poll results confirm again and again that architects are the partners of choice in the sack. You will draw a name from our list of super-sexy architects and join one (or more!) in an unforgettable night in the honeymoon suite at the No Tell Motel, complete with endless loops of all your favorite videos, Barry White’s greatest hits, a spa filled with real champagne (not recommended for drinking) and a mini-bar of treats from the neighboring adult store. Forget dinner—you’ll be way too busy. So turn down the lights and, in the words of Borat, Let’s make sexy time!

B&E WITH AN ARCHITECT

Ever wanted to be Cary Grant in *To Catch a Thief*? Well, now’s your chance – little did we know that one of our most admired local architects once did five years in the slammer for B & E back in the day. He’s graciously consented to give members a hands-on demonstration of the basics needed for successful breaking and entering into some of our city’s most pretentious architectural residences. “There’s nothing quite like the feeling of standing in someone’s tacky bedroom and stuffing their diamond jewelry into your pocket,” he says. Why take his word for it? Sign up and try it yourself – we can’t guarantee Grace Kelly, but this promises to be some good clean fun. Dinner will depend on your net proceeds from the event. Ticket price includes tool kit and black ski mask (may be declined if you already have one from the Grand Theft Auto event).

Although we do our best to ensure these events proceed smoothly, there is some risk involved—sometimes there’s just the tiniest little hitch, in which case you may end up spending **Jail Time with an Architect**. But you know what they say—No Risk, No Reward. See you at the event of your choice!

JM CAVA IS STILL AN ARCHITECT IN PORTLAND, WHERE HE TEACHES, WRITES AND DESIGNS BUILDINGS AND GARDENS.




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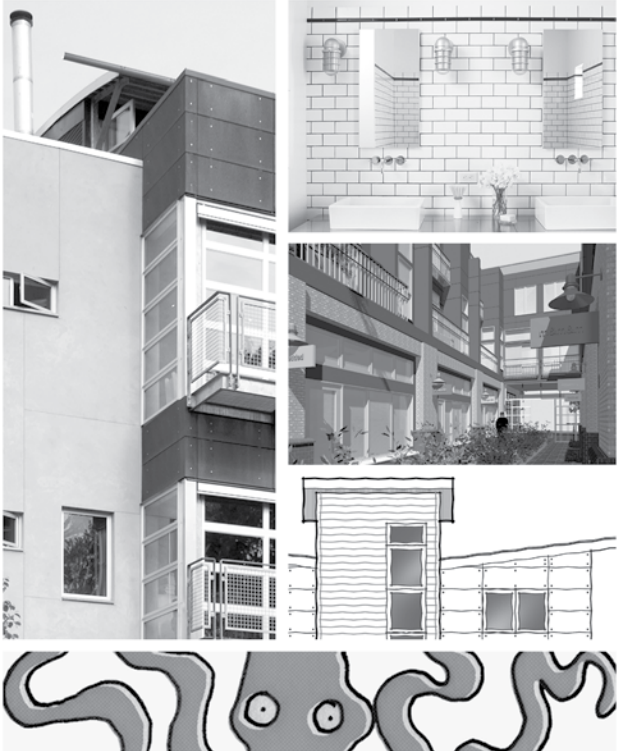
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Aloe Blossom by Jeremy Cole
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Richard Misrach: On the Beach is organized by Henry Chief Curator Elizabeth Brown with major support from PONCHO. IMAGE: Richard Misrach. Untitled #1132-04. 2004. Chromogenic color print. Courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco; Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles; and Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

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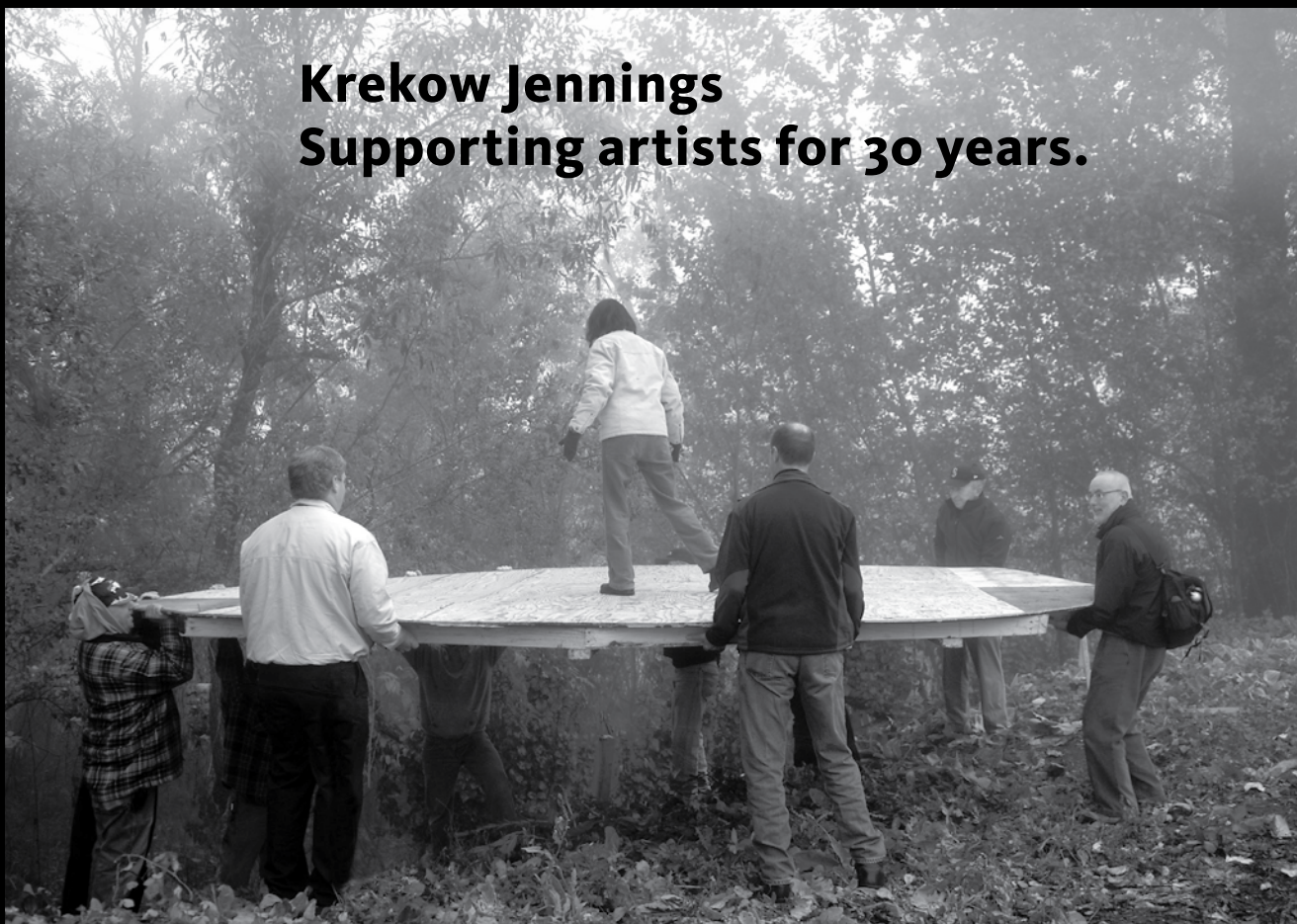
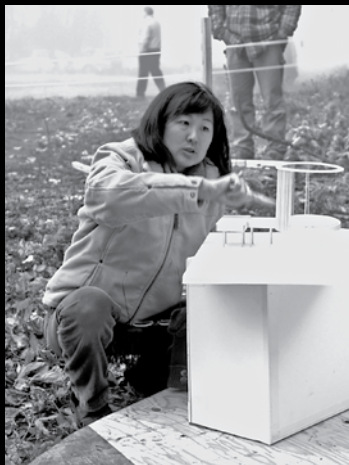
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LAST SPRING WAS AN EVENTFUL TIME FOR ARCADE.

On May 31st we honored some of our greatest friends and patrons at our fourth-annual Leadership Celebration, hosted by Barbara Lycett and John Parchem at their beautiful Eggleston Farkas designed home.

On June 5th we made merry at Inform Interiors as we released *ARCADE 26.4 Now + Next: Furniture and Product Horizons*.

Thanks to our gracious hosts. Thanks to our wonderful guests. Thanks to you for being part of *ARCADE*'s community. See you at our next event!

Cheers,
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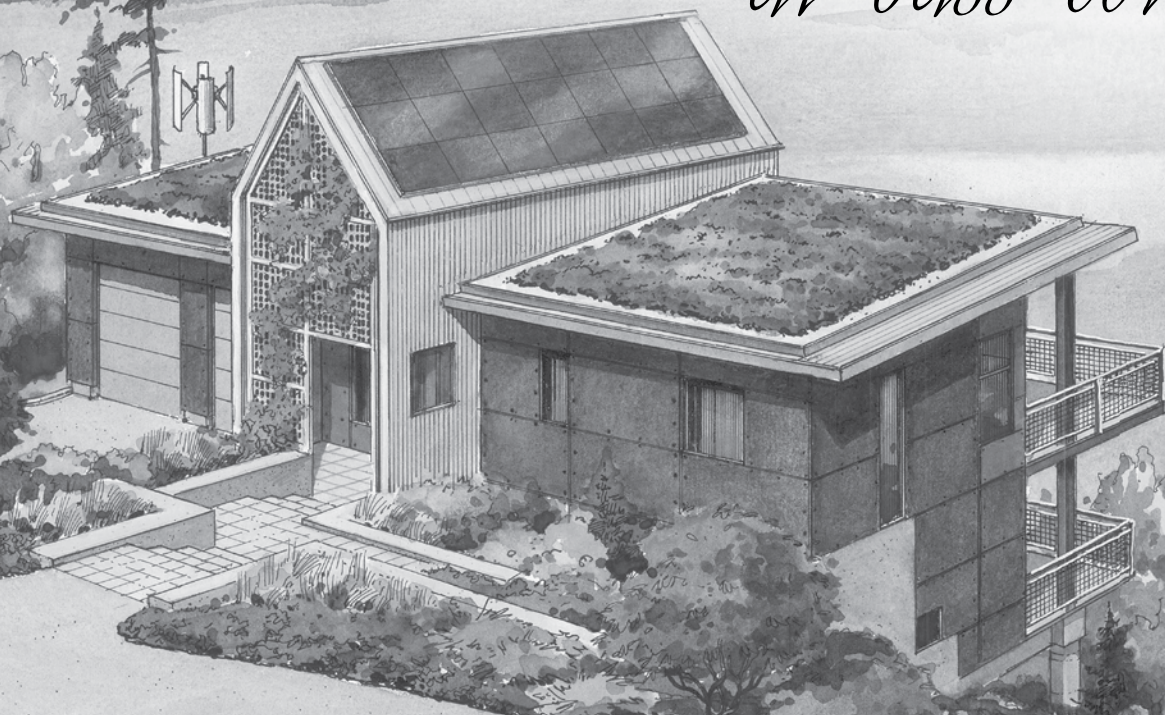
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