A Tidal Wave of Another Kind

Each year my colleagues and I here at The Lighting Design Lab attend a conference/trade show called Lightfair International, held alternately between New York and Las Vegas. What is particularly attractive about this event is that for three days we (and seemingly the entire lighting community) are exposed to all the latest innovations the lighting manufacturers have to offer (and want us to see). We, of course, need this material because it is no small part of our mission here at the Lab to link these products to end users who may not yet know of their existence. This is especially true of those products and ideas that can add to our arsenal of energy-efficient equipment. For most of the last 20 years or so, new technologies, ideas, applications, etc. occupied only a relatively small portion of the trade show floor. Slow and steady growth in these areas seemed to be the pattern. Recently, however, we have seen a veritable product explosion, and for this year’s show in May, some are predicting a tidal wave.

Even though the efficiency of other lamps, ballasts and luminaires continues to improve, the majority of the product explosion is due to the arrival on these shores of LED products and technologies. Now and for the foreseeable future, new lighting products using LED technology will outnumber all other lighting products by a factor of 10 to 1! And even though many significant advances have been realized in the field of lighting controls, ballast technologies and indeed in other lamp sources, they are coming to market at a time when that LED “tidal wave” threatens to overshadow even the best of these other products.

LEDs have changed the thinking in every sector of the lighting industry, due in large part to the manner in which they arrived on the scene, so full of promise that no one could ignore their potential. Who could forget the claims of 100,000 hours of life, 60 – 70 lumens/watt efficacy and great CRI (Color Rendering Index) numbers in a range of pleasing color temperatures? What was not to like? Well, here’s what I know: it is still an emerging technology and should be treated as such, just as we did in the past with every other emerging technology. Why? Because it, like those other technologies before it, is fraught with as yet unsolved problems, in addition to the fact that the futures themselves are new, and will continue to be, very expensive.

Heat management continues to be an issue. Because of this, manufacturers of LEDs have already started to back away from those earlier claims of extraordinary lamp life. For instance, we recently took possession of a new PAR 38 LED product that was only claiming 20,000 hours of rated life, which, though still very good, is a far cry from 100,000 hours. Color also continues to be an issue. LEDs perform most efficiently in the blue portion of the spectrum. Unfortunately, that makes them almost totally unacceptable for interior applications, and filtering the output to a more acceptable “warm” white reduces the efficacy to a very ordinary level, no better than halogen incandescents. Color rendering remains problematic, so much so that the entire LED industry is trying to have the CRI system replaced with one that makes them look more favorable: the Color Quality Scale.

We firmly believe though that given time, these problems will be solved, one by one, over the long haul. Because there is so much at stake, engineers are working 24/6/5 in an attempt to get them solved. The commitment seems to be there. Beyond the kinds of luminaires and applications in which LEDs have always worked well (flourish as well: accent lights, under cabinet fixtures, etc.), we are beginning to see the kinds of products that we can feel good about recommending—general purpose downlights, accent lights and wall washers being chief among them.

Even though many of the LED applications are simply not yet ready for prime time, my fear is that in order to not be left behind, even high-end manufacturers will rush to market before products are fully tested. In the end, the greatest challenge may not even be the technology itself, but whether the LED lamp and luminaire Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) can somehow co-exist, or possibly even merge, with the semiconductor industry, which is looking to lighting as its next logical business step. Brace yourselves.

Jeff Robbins is a Commercial Lighting Specialist at the Lighting Design Lab in Seattle. With a degree in theater, he previously spent 13 years as a Technical Director and Lighting Designer. Jeff is an Adjunct Professor at Cornell College of the Arts, the Education Director for the Western District of the Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) and serves as co-chairman of the Testing Committee of the National Council on Qualifications for the Lighting Professionals (NCQLP).
Give Me a Hand With This, Will You?
A UW Industrial Design Class Tackles the Need for Better Prosthetic Limbs

On the first day of the quarter, the senior Industrial Design class gathered in their University of Washington studio awaiting the kick-off of a new project. While other students at this level might work on projects in mobile computing, cellular phones or measuring instruments, this was not what this class was about.

As the instructor of the class, I brought along a friend to help teach. Her name was Joanne Tilley, a Georgetown-based artist. Tilley wore a black coat and carried a duffle bag. Walking into the classroom, she pulled her coat aside to expose her arm. It was black, made of carbon fibers and ended in a metal hook. Before the collective staring and gasping abated, Tilley asked, “Hey class, who wants to hold my arm first?”

If we like the way two things interact, we might say they work hand in hand. We joke that something costs an arm and a leg when it is out of our reach. For some, the challenges apparent in this physically inspired word-play are more literal. For those who have lost an arm or a leg — either from birth, through accident or in war — the effortless use of a hand or a leg is difficult to achieve.

It is nearly impossible for those of us with two fully functioning hands to imagine what such a loss could mean. The most mundane actions could pose significant challenges, while larger hurdles may pose near unsurmountable obstacles.

Historically, solutions for missing limbs have exhibited varying degrees of complexity and varying degrees of success. The archetypal image of a pirate with a wooden leg and a hook for a hand is not far removed from early prosthetic devices. In developing countries, where the demand for artificial limbs is high due to war, the bearer with pride, White iPod headphones don’t conceal themselves, but flaunt their cool design, and, in turn, make their wearer feel cool. How might a prosthesis operate this way?

After generating sketches, students used three-dimensional foam models to hone their designs, refining proportions, form and the transition of surfaces. At the conclusion of the quarter, each student presented a hand-built, full-scale model of his or her design, all of which were exhibited at the UW Jacob Lawrence Gallery, February 19 – 20, 2010.

Student designs were meant to inspire, examining unexplored possibilities of prosthetic design that assist in both the physical functioning and emotional healing related to limb loss. The intent of this project was to encourage development of the next generation of prosthetic limbs, hopefully inspiring new designs that are functional, elegant and affordable.

I encouraged students to seek solutions beyond conventional wisdom, finding inspiration in pop culture as well as nature. Instead of concealing prosthetic limbs, function-based aesthetic designs were intended to fill the bearer with pride.

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The Forked Path of Technological Progress, or What Ever Happened to the Tankini?

As the grey skies, chill winds and dark days of winter finally recede from the Northwest, Seattle is experiencing a brief bloom of that swell of seasonal garments: the swimsuit. Here, where bare skin is seldom seen, we have a unique opportunity to observe the yearly evolution of new species within the swimsuit genus, as they flourish for a month or so, then die away into closets, only to be replaced next year by some new, hopeful edition.

Runways last winter were awash with new trends: cutaway suits, bandeau-inspired suits, and asymmetrical, single-shoulder suits. Many of these haven’t been seen for years, or have never been seen at all. Indeed, the unpredictability of fashion defies yearly trends, and the seasonal necessity of changing clothing types has bred an ecosystem of change—strange, exuberant mutants who appear each season, full of promise, only to disappear without a trace. If nature is cruelly efficient in selecting among individuals in its ecosystems, then culture is doubly so when it comes to swimwear.

The tankini was one of the most recent casualties in this yearly churn. Made popular in the early 2000s, this hybrid of a bikini and camisole top achieved explosive popularity in fashion houses from Gucci to Target. The suit was loved by an unusually wide range of body shapes because it balanced showing skin and smoothing it. Even more exciting, it came unexpectedly, after an almost uninterrupted decline in skin coverage since the 1940s. By some strange coincidence of designer choice, celebrity movie appearance, novel fabric technology, and inspiration from who knows where, the tankini was born. But despite the excitement from the market for this brashly demure new style, it was gone from shelves within a season or two.

The extinction of the tankini, like so many other promising innovations over the years, indicates a fundamental flaw in the most common model of technological development. We, as a culture, believe that technology “improves” over time. Light bulbs get brighter. Cars get faster. Computers get more powerful for the same price. This idea of constant, linear progress is deeply engrained in our cultural consciousness, and has colored theories from evolutionary biology to economics. And yet over time we have realized that there is no “master race” of humans, or “higher order” of animals; we ought to see that there is no globally optimal direction for technology.

In fact, looking back at extinctions, we can see that revolutions in suit design were brought on, not by some overarching long-term goal, but by the instantaneous want of designers, and the market. One year it may be a competition to create the skimpiest suit. Next year, the skimpiest. Every so often, one of these random natrions catches fire, and lines to spawn a new generation of derivatives next year, as the modern string bikini did in the 1960s (although the latest suit was recorded in ancient Crete). More often, however, these yearly saturions are overtaken by the next year of fresh attempts.

We should remember this as we plan trips to the coast, or Maui, or Ibiza: while we are making decisions that influence suit design in the near term, the long-term direction of this development is less controlled, and certainly not headed in a specific direction. And swimsuits are not unique. Technology certainly moves on a path as new innovations are adopted or abandoned, but our control of this path only really applies at any instant. Over a longer term, the real influences on technology are those out of our control: climate, disease, war and the whims of our collective cultural unconscious. There is no foresight to backward that movement, only intensity of change. The suit you wear this season, with its bandaged form, or slashed-motion, only intensity of change. The suit you wear this season, with its bandaged form, or slashed-motion, will echo in seasons to come, but how, and for how long, it is impossible to say.

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Gone Missing: The Town of Snoqualmie Falls

Just over ninety years ago, in 1917, the Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Company began building houses for loggers and mill workers in the Snoqualmie Valley of Washington State. When complete, a few years later, the Weyerhaeuser operation included 250 houses, a community hall, schools, ball fields, a post office, company store, barbershop, hospital, Japanese bunkhouse, hotel and a railroad depot to comprise the new town of Snoqualmie Falls. The town was sustainable; people walked to all essential services and electricity was supplied to homes at very low costs by burning scrap wood in the mill. Harried from the beginning by their own literature as a “planned community” and a “social experiment,” the town was also promoted by Weyerhaeuser as “permanent.” Internal Weyerhaeuser documents reveal that it was expected to consume the hundreds of thousands of acres of forest in forty years. Fifty years ago (40 years after building it), the company sold the houses to the nesting workers and they were sold off-site (now exist elsewhere in the Snoqualmie Valley). The other structures were pulled down, and the town completely disappeared. The six-town site is now covered by Douglas fir—the same “crop” the mill once turned into the first nationally branded lumber. Beginning in the 1930s, the lumber was marketed as coming from an especially enlightened and progressive place, and was used to construct all the town’s houses and structures.

Lumber camps were horrible places to live—damp, overcrowded, vermin—and crucial for constructing warplanes, if the anarchists paralyzed the industry. To the federal government that there could be a critical shortage of Sitka spruce, the lumber camps. as WWI was heating up, it became clear to Weyerhaeuser and Weyerhaeuser has made known its desire to officially become a real estate investment trust (reit). the social experiment that produced the town of Snoqualmie Falls was unsuccessful, no longer offering close-in harvest, and the town was abandoned. Snoqualmie Ridge, another Weyerhaeuser planned community, has since sprouted nearby, and Weyerhaeuser has made known its desire to officially become a real estate investment trust (reit). The social experiment that produced the town of Snoqualmie Falls would seem to have been much more central to the core Weyerhaeuser business than it might have appeared at the time.

According to company records, until 1942, when the men were sent to Idaho for internment, the Japanese never represented less than half the workers employed at the mill. According to company records, until 1942, when the men were sent to Idaho for internment, the Japanese never represented less than half the workers employed at the town, but did so at a time when the Wobblies were making enormous inroads in the lumber camps. As WWI was heating up, it became clear to Weyerhaeuser and the federal government that there could be a critical shortage of Sitka spruce, crucial for constructing warplanes, if the anarchists paralyzed the industry. Lumber camps were horrible places to live—damp, overcrowded, vermin—and crucial for constructing warplanes, if the anarchists paralyzed the industry. To the federal government that there could be a critical shortage of Sitka spruce, the lumber camps. as WWI was heating up, it became clear to Weyerhaeuser and Weyerhaeuser has made known its desire to officially become a real estate investment trust (reit). the social experiment that produced the town of Snoqualmie Falls was unsuccessful, no longer offering close-in harvest, and the town was abandoned. Snoqualmie Ridge, another Weyerhaeuser planned community, has since sprouted nearby, and Weyerhaeuser has made known its desire to officially become a real estate investment trust (reit). The social experiment that produced the town of Snoqualmie Falls would seem to have been much more central to the core Weyerhaeuser business than it might have appeared at the time.

According to company records, until 1942, when the men were sent to Idaho for internment, the Japanese never represented less than half the workers employed at the town. The Japanese were known as “well-behaved” and “hard workers” who never caused labor troubles, the very qualities that Weyerhaeuser was trying to cultivate in its workforce by building and maintaining the town. The Japanese bunkhouse was far removed from the housing offered to the Caucasian workers and was torn down the day after the men were sent to internment. In its literature about the town, Weyerhaeuser wrote that families “enjoyed all the comforts of the city home with the additional advantages of fresh air and plenty of room.” The “farming” company effectively became the family-farming company, creating city life in the forest. By 1958, the forest itself had also been tamed, creating city life in the forest. By 1958, the forest itself had also been tamed, no longer offering close-in harvest, and the town was abandoned. Snoqualmie Falls, house being moved across a temporary bridge from the town of Snoqualmie Falls, 1958. Photograph: Don Fels. The “farming” company effectively became the family-farming company, creating city life in the forest. By 1958, the forest itself had also been tamed, creating city life in the forest. By 1958, the forest itself had also been tamed, no longer offering close-in harvest, and the town was abandoned. Snoqualmie Falls, house being moved across a temporary bridge from the town of Snoqualmie Falls, 1958. Photograph: Don Fels.

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A well-placed, site-specific artwork can make a good building or home a landmark. Ideally, it will dialog with the structure, draw the attention of passers-by (including potential clients, renters, visitors and the like) and offer an interpretation of the building’s location or use.

Commissioning or purchasing art is not like buying a curtain wall or importing an eye-catching tile for a lobby floor. You are buying a concept and adding another creative player to your project team. You are also investing in an object that will have a life both separate from and tied to the life of your building. All in all, no small undertaking. If you decide to commission art for your project, you will want to think about the following things.

**Finding the Right Artist for Your Project**

The Seattle Art Museum’s Olympic Sculpture Park notwithstanding, there is an observable regional bias in the selection of artists for publicly sited projects in the Pacific Northwest. (Seattle is an exception – it is located on the fringes of the American geographic regions and smaller cities like New York and LA tend to be more cosmopolitan because they have the requisite money and workforce.) This regionalism is enforced by the agencies that sponsor and fund public (read: permanent, large) work: state, county and municipal offices with mandates to promote local arts and heritage. Contributing equally to this situation is the tacit assumption by many funders and collectors that an artist who has successfully created one or two big, public-friendly artworks is ideally positioned to produce more of the same.

Dedicated local support is essential to the careers of most emerging and mid-career artists. This does not excuse myopic art-making and funding practices, however—if you commission something that people have already seen before, they sometimes literally will not see it.

If you can, try to save some time and money in soliciting and reviewing proposals; an independent art consultant will coordinate this for you. For a potentially more of the same.

**Working with Artists**

Artists do not have national associations or codes of conduct. They are not best practices, just good manners.

Architecture programs offer training in materials, building codes and professional practice. Studio Art programs, on the other hand, offer an intensely personal architecture programs offer training in materials, building codes and professional practices, just good manners. Working with Artists

**Project Management**

Most architecture-scale works require engineering or site modification. Make decisions about artwork at the beginning of your project and work with the artist to determine how much you need to prepare the space. Site prep often requires cosmetic or structural changes to the building: selecting new paint colors, moving electrical outlets, even adjusting the shape or placement of a ceiling or wall. In almost all instances, addressing these things at the beginning of a project is cheaper and easier than retrofitting a space to accommodate artwork.

If you are doing much more than nailing a standard picture hook into the wall, you need a project manager to coordinate the internal and external activities of a group comprising any assortment and number of the following: clients, artists, studio staff, architects, contractors, supply, fabricators and specialists, shippers, etc. Your general contractor, your architect, your landlord (or structural changes to the building: selecting new paint colors, moving electrical outlets, even adjusting the shape or placement of a ceiling or wall. In almost all instances, addressing these things at the beginning of a project is cheaper and easier than retrofitting a space to accommodate artwork.

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**Architects can easily imagine some of the other factors that motivate an artist’s behavior. Whenever you place a large, attention-grabbing object in public—a large, attention-grabbing object with your name on it—you will want to control as much of the production and display of that object as possible. And because of the reasons outlined above, artists are not always equipped to effectively share or relinquish control.**

Anticipate a strong personality; someone who will notice little flaws in the prep work you’ve done, someone who may want to change things mid-process when you can, consider these mid-process requests; they may very well lead to a better, more remarkable result. The creative process is rarely streamline-able.

**Architect Matters**

Abigail Guay

**Building Arts**

On Commissioning Art and Working With Artists

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**Avoiding Disputes**

Artists are frequently guilty of agreeing to an unrealistic budget in order to realize a project. They will forgo any actual income, re-allocating the “artists fee” portion of the budget to material or service costs. They will also spend their own money to complete a project. And despite, or rather, as an obvious condition of this complex juggling of funds, the money will sometimes run out. Require detailed budgets from artists and review any material and service lists that relate to construction, fabrication, and any other areas in which you have some expertise.

Finally, plan for the future. Consider upsizing (clearing, fixing atrophies, replacing mechanical parts), and try to absorb that into your or the building owner/operator’s budget. Even very successful artists cannot afford this kind of routine maintenance. Also get a plan in place for what will happen to the artwork if the building is ever raised or renovated, scenarios that can be pretty far from your mind during the construction process.

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ARCADE 29.1 September 2010
Services Editor, Kevin Eckert + Andrew van Leeuwen / BUILD LLC
I've been thinking a lot about fire thanks to this issue of ARCADE. The editorial thrust of this magazine grows from a continual exploration of architecture and design. And while it is true that we also think about buildings and their potential outcomes, the architecture and design conjure multifaceted images of music, dance, painting, film, music, theater, fashion, children, love... The emotion and artistry are about our lives and the places in which we live—what we do and where, how, and why we do it. And when we are living our lives fully and truthfully, there is a continual flame that keeps the moving forward.

Imagine listening to a piece of music that moves you—no matter the genre, doesn't it have the power to transport and suggest something deeper? As a dancer, whether you're feeling the ache of a slow adagio or the intensity of a Cumbia-inspired top spin in a Zumba class, there's a fire that is ignited by the truth of the movement. Or what about the luxuriant act of escaping into a book? As Helen Cixous says, “Reading is a provocation, a tool: we open the book, we pretend it is a simple paperback cover, and in broad daylight escape... Reading is eating the forbidden fruit, making forbidden love, changing a name, changing families, changing destinies, and changing day for night. Reading is doing exactly as we want and on the sly.” The sensuousness of food, sexual passion, or walking through a vibrant city on a hot day are titillating at the very least, and fiery at best. A lust for life is not a sly.'” the sensuousness of food, sexual passion, or walking through a vibrant city on a hot day are titillating at the very least, and fiery at best. A lust for life is not... It has the power to transport and suggest something deeper? as a dancer, whether you're feeling the ache of a slow adagio or the intensity of a Cumbia-inspired top spin in a Zumba class, there's a fire that is ignited by the truth of the movement.

So what about fire?

For this feature I approached 67 people from a variety of professions and walks of life with a call for submissions—asked them for new and creative views on fire. I solicited artists, writers, culinary types, architects, industrial designers, graphic designers, pilots, instructors, musicians, dancers, librarians, curators, academics and government officials. Not surprisingly, the predominant theme to which these contributors speak has to do with inner fire. Whether one is trying to find that fire, or has found it, the ultimate value of recognizing the fire well as a creative fuel is, and assuming it as a tool, is a powerful element of everyone’s individual universe.

I'm ready: “Start Me Up!”

Kelly Rodriguez is the Editor of ARCADE. Kelly Rodriguez is the Editor of ARCADE. Kelly Rodriguez is the Editor of ARCADE.
four kinds of fire

John Parman

one

The dastard Samuel Pepys describes London’s Great Fire, during which King Charles II, bewitched with woe, made sure he was seen helping it out. Large swaths of San Francisco burned down following the 1906 earthquake, although a few landmarks survived. In 1945, the tenements of Warsaw were set aflame by rioters and then left as burnt-out shells, much as the corpse of the condemned were displayed at the gates of medieval towns.

Tokyo burned in the wake of the 1923 earthquake. Rebuilt, it was destroyed again by U.S. bombs. German cities were whipped into firestorms. The Italian journalist Curzio Malaparte told a story on the aftermath, when those left for dead were shot pointblank by the authorities. A man who survived the atom-bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki died recently. In Nagasaki, he was describing the light the bomb made to a friend when the other a-bomb fell. “Like that,” he said.

Napalm rained down on hapless villagers in Vietnam. Lately in Gaza, phosphorus is the rain of choice. Each storm has its screaming child. That a generation separates them shows how little we are moved by these images to put a halt to the barbarous calculations that engender them. Smart bombs and drones now personalize the delivery; instead of the countryside, it’s an apartment in Belgrade or a schoolhouse in Pakistan. The tropes, too, are personal, wrapped around the body.

I was too slow. I would count the second layoff as a firing.

two

“Give tongue” is the phrase that my father’s book of World War II photographs uses to caption an image of an English battleship engaging a German foe. “Fire!” belongs to the sphere of warfare but has spread to the territory of ego. We are exhorted to “work on it,” too, making ourselves “fireproof” by constantly upping our game. Yet the bigger picture of the workplace is fuzzy at best. You specialize and find there’s no second exit. I took the front room closest to the ground, figuring we’d escape with our lives if we had to jump. When my father-in-law died, he was cremated and his remains were put in the mausoleum. Sometimes I wish I’d never read those case studies. My father-in-law set up to sell a barbecue in front of our front door—ah, brisket, actually, that set on the wall. He’s an all-American football player in college, so it was odd to see him so upset. He was usually thinking with his feet. He was usually quitting things on the fly. So I heard. I must have a genius for storing away these events.

three

In the mid-1970s, I read some 120 building-fire case studies. Five left me with a lifetime habit of noting exits and an aversion to IKEA stores, which are designed like mausoleums and an allusion to IRA, stones, which are designed like mausoleums. Someone told me that it’s the quickest death.

Until recently, in China a .45 to the back of the head was the means of dispatch for literally thousands. Someone told me that it’s the quickest death. In the mid-1970s, I read some 120 building-fire case studies. Five left me with a lifetime habit of noting exits and an aversion to IKEA stores, which are designed like mausoleums and an allusion to IRA, stones, which are designed like mausoleums. Someone told me that it’s the quickest death.

Fire is an accompaniment to domestic life. Clothes dryers are a frequent source of fires in nursing homes, while still-plugged-in irons, pots left burning on the stove, etc., also do their part. Castles in the Christmas trees of my father’s childhood burned some neighbor’s house down often enough to be a distinct memory for him. When my daughter lights candles in her room, she sits马拉松, and then forgets to blow them out, my father’s stories come back to mind.

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fire and the alchemy of inspiration and change

Jody Turner

Are you burning out or are you burning upward and onward?

Fire comes in many forms. Most of us think of the fast, red-hot burn, but there is also the deeper and slower coal-burn, and the lighter and wisper, clear, top-of-the-fire burn. All three are fire.

Currently, we are in the red-hot burn. Society is making a major shift and we are in the thick of it. More is being asked of us for less (burnout) and we are uncertain what is ahead within our smoke-filled society. Hints into the future can be found in the trends we have been tracking these several years.

My original profession began in design when I worked at Nike, The Gap and Starbucks, cube-to-cube, desk-to-desk. I learned many valuable skills that help me to this day and I also experienced various forms of continual burnout serving up creativity to the greater machines of which I was a part. Shifting to serving my own passion within my own business led me to what I do today. This article is about shared and personal fire for greater and ever greater growth and contribution.

As a trend researcher and speaker, I have focused these last years on the shift from industrial, top-down, brand driven consumption to the cross-shared, consumer- and community-driven innovation models.

As a trend strategist, I’ve worked the last several years on the personal passion theory for self and company. If you are inspired and are addressing whatever you address with energy, focus, meaning and flow, your outcome can be quite creative and innovative. Like the consumer today, the designers must find themselves with inspiration to stay vibrant and useful in society. The consumer has become an energy reader; they will like drawn to what brings forth energy to them and will move away from products that “take” away and down there.

The trend and true success of smaller “conversational” companies such as Threadless is an example of energy empowerment. It is known that Threadless started as an online passion concept and made over 3 million dollars selling 7 shirts in one year. Unlike most companies that start as brick and mortar and move online, Threadless was able to open a physical space after succeeding first online. Why such a success? A mixture of personal passion with an invitation to others to submit their passionate and playful designs struck a chord with users. A passionate and playful back and forth conversation is key going forward.

Products are shifting to serving human need first and not necessarily consumption. I mean this in an ever-deepening way as we begin to address economic and environmental distress. An inspirational product that is bright, sexy, cool or happy alone may attract but it will not build a relationship with the user over time, nor will it move the user with a meaningful connection. Solution-driven designs build respect by building what is needed at the right time.

As a visual designer at Nike, I felt a need to move into more meaningful endeavors. When the Lance Armstrong benefit bracelet exploded into society, it was clear that modern brand could influence social action. People were willing to wear “what matters” to them on their sleeve for everyone to see. This was not a one-time event but the start of a meaningful trend that we are in the middle of today.

A newer example of this personal passion and contribution trend is GOOD magazine’s campaign with Pepsi Refresh in which people submit and share their social innovation ideas for commercial wins. Pepsi has taken the millions of dollars needed to advertise at the Super Bowl and put them toward smaller, social innovation concepts created by and voted in by the people.

In a bigger frame, there is a shift from one style of consumption to another. The HAVE DO BE model I learned while working in trend at The Gap can explain it.

Brands no longer define what is cool and what matters and we no longer go to the brand for information about the brand—we go to each other. The Gap Foundation, Born and Project Red started this shift. The older industrial model was about HAVE of money to make money to DO what you need to do in order to BE who you are supposed to be. This required a dependency on larger corporations, companies and financial sources.

The newer model consists of self-empowerment to DO what you know now. BE who you are supposed to be and define what HAVING is to you. Society and individuals across the globe are redefining what HAVING is to them. The economic crisis has accelerated this process and has taken the larger company by surprise. A revolution is occurring as a result. Design and design strategy is poised to lead usher in this new model.

This does not mean brands are redundant, rather they are shifting how they engage with the consumer by boilong at what matters, and by taking a lead from smaller agile groups, entrepreneurs and cultural influencers. This is something I am working on with many companies: meaningful consumption.

Today, a personal path of passion requires communal contribution to be “of the future.” The economic and environmental problems facing the globe today ask designers to think differently and make a move from the “thinking about it and working on it” also known as passionate and consumptive “feel” action burn with a focus on brighter and authentically new directions. This future frame is about designing within a new category in a new way.
clean coal
let's change the conversation

Brian Boram

An editorial criticizing the demolition of Pennsylvania Station in the 1960s noted at the time, "a civilization gets what it wants, is willing to pay for, and ultimately deserves." The march of progress to tear down a Beaux-Arts masterpiece became the basis of an urban preservation movement. The idea that a society can embrace a notion of the future while still hanging onto the past has been a popular concept in urban development over the past 30 years. Does this same thinking apply to the legacy of our energy infrastructure?

Recently, I have been a bit confused by the term "clean coal." This is the coal industry's moniker to capture CO2 emissions while ensuring its future as a viable energy source. The "clean" is our future, "coal" our past. I am struck both by the clever collision of these seeming opposites and the hope that we are so ingenious energy source. the “clean” is our future, "coal" our past. i am struck both by the clever collision of these seeming opposites and the hope that we are so ingenious about the future of our energy. I am not sure how to feel about it.

In a Season 3 episode of Mad Men, Don Draper offers a solution to the angry cries of the Mad Men in a Season 3 episode of Mad Men. Their supporting facts read more like forward-looking statements that portend things considered, if not for the Clean air act of 1970, can coal claim anything clean? Coal accounts for half of the electricity generated in the U.S., and is our cheapest source of power. The Obama administration stands behind it as a viable energy source. Yes, we need jobs and, yes, power needs to be affordable. But it is拂 to say that we can actually achieve clean, clean energy source instead of just rebranding.

As America’s Power Army states, new technologies are being developed for coal. "Dreaming the Impossible Dream," an op-ed piece in the New York Times by Thomas L. Friedman, provides an optimistic viewpoint on some smart thinking for "dreaming the impossible dream," an op-ed piece in the New York Times by Thomas L. Friedman, provides an optimistic viewpoint on some smart thinking for America’s energy future. Yes, we need jobs and, yes, power needs to be affordable. But it is拂 to say that we can actually achieve clean, clean energy source instead of just rebranding.

Don’t black lung, mountaintop removal, highly explosive gases and reserves that will only last the next 150 years still make a better case for “dirty dangerous dead-end coal?”

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Coal for us half of the electricity generated in the U.S., and is our cheapest source of power. The Obama administration stands behind it as a viable energy source, but, with innovative rhetoric that suggests it is a necessary evil. Although I buy into the notion that to achieve a new energy paradigm we must transition our reliance from one technology to another, I am still puzzled why, in this era of climate change, we would choose coal for anything in the future. It is destructive to the landscape, may end up using more power to make it “clean,” kills miners on a regular basis, and although cheap and plentiful today, it is not a renewable resource. We will not achieve “clean coal” but we can achieve clean, clean and renewable technologies in our energy future. Yes, we need jobs and, yes, power needs to be affordable. But it is拂 to say that we can actually achieve clean, clean energy source instead of just rebranding.

In Bass’s hand, Rietveld’s Red and Blue Chair, once the iconic representation of De Stijl principles, now stood for a new (and yet unnamed) style, so transformed from smooth to slightly craggly, questioned the perfection of the design of everyday things. A drawing chair, a grandfather clock, the Campless brothers’ Towoomba Chair, the “You Can’t Lay Down Your Memory” Chair of Dyre by Pryse—all were blackened to the perfection of the imperfect human hand. Transformed by scorched ovens, cracked pockets and blackened to the absence of shine, charcoal was an imperfect reminder of the impermanence of life. In defying the logic that burn furniture should be discarded, another dimension of beauty resulted. My perception of materiality was altered.

Yves-Courcher (2007) and Coal House (2008), by architect and historian Terunobu Fujimori, are two examples of wrapping buildings in charred cedar. Every ring of cedar trees for a few minutes can actually serve as a presentation to fire, and not just for up to 100 years. Fujimori experimented with a traditional charning technique called aka-sugi-ban and charred boards as long as 25 feet. Gaps from imperfection and warping are filled with plaster. The pinstriped result is as impressive as it is tender, facing its temporal materiality with the ground from which it comes. From this new lightweight version of the material, once known as wood, emerges renewal.

A hawking piece of charred-birch chair, car parts and props discarded from past shows was center stage at the fashion designer Alexander McQueen's Autumn/Winter 2009-10 runway show. Snagged in the luxury industry's web of supply and demand, the collection entitled De Stijl was an attempt to respect both a a representation for De Stijl, and a subversion of haute couture. In New York Times review of the fashion technique of wood, McQueen lamented that "the connection of wood and fashion is so quick and so throwaway." His provocative collection and runway design brought to the forefront considerations of longevity and reuse.

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Screening the new: if it is better, or not, and why.

In Bass’s hand, Rietveld’s Red and Blue Chair, once the iconic representation of De Stijl principles, now stood for a new (and yet unnamed) style, so transformed from smooth to slightly craggly, questioned the perfection of the design of everyday things. We are not accustomed to an emotion of endearment when looking at what has left behind. Flames as metaphor for haier is so deep imbedded in us that even from a near-spiritual Bill Viola perch of a screen, flames are commanding. When a flame beats wood and releases smoke, organic matter is transformed, leaving a remnant as ghostly as one might leave ashes on a hotel pillow when turning down the bed. Like the charcoal, the chair is a surprise gift.

Leonard Cohen reminds us in “Anthem” to “Forget your perfect offering.” There’s a trick in everything. That’s how the light gets in.” From a remnant of fear we discover a new entry into what we design and why. Charring chair

Amery Calvelli

Demand for improving our way of living has unconsciously produced a design treadmill of newer-smoother-cleaner-better. Perhaps we are acclimatized to seeing things and cannot be objective about our creation of them. Chair, while qualifying as a remnant and far from smooth, allows a glimpse into a different dimension of our designed tools and shelter. Chair hands us a fresh pair of lenses with which to view what we once may have claimed was damaged. Taking a torch to vintage chairs and furniture pieces, in 2002, Maarten Baas presented a small collection of burnt furniture for his final project at the Design Academy of Eindhoven. Using fire to confront ornament head-on, he called to attention history, patina and even the flawed nature of the human hand while staring into the headlights of our habit of designing beautiful things.

Do we make things we don’t really touch? I had to touch the first pieces of his “smoke” furniture that I saw. Baas had carefully burnt two sections of furniture for an exhibition at MoMA in New York. Each was presented on white displays in a crisp, clean gallery space. In Bass’s hand, Baas’s Red and Blue Chair, once the iconic representation of De Stijl principles, now stood for a new (and yet unnamed) style, so transformed from smooth to slightly craggly, questioned the perfection of the design of everyday things. A drawing chair, a grandfather clock, the Campless brothers’ Towoomba Chair, the “You Can’t Lay Down Your Memory” Chair of Dyre by Pryse—all were blackened to the perfection of the imperfect human hand. Transforming by scorched ovens, cracked pockets and blackened to the absence of shine, charcoal was an imperfect reminder of the impermanence of life. In defying the logic that burn furniture should be discarded, another dimension of beauty resulted. My perception of materiality was altered.

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Charming chair
fire’s remnant undresses design

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Charming chair is a continuous architectural and design lecture platform. It is exploring the now it’s better or not, and why.

Natives of Sustainability, www.maoisecon.com


Join the conversation at www.citizenscoalcouncil.org

Brian Boram is a partner and founder of 8M/8D, a multi-disciplinary design studio in Seattle. 8M/8D’s work encompasses, manages and implements comprehensive identity design systems in the built environment. Brian is a visiting lecturer at the University of Washington and is an AIAIdaho board member.

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Passion is fire. Passion is pain. Passion is empathy—the reaching into the heart of a relationship, to a problem, an idea, a question that is holistically embraced. And that sense of embrace—which is about the spirit of captivation—is consistently driven to get closer to the flame of the challenge that is set, and to seek the exhilarating freedom of the ideal response. But that response will always be tinted by the person that creates that answer. Surely, in any design problem there will be consistency in understanding the issues at stake, the nature of the question, the character of the audience—but always, in the end, the spirit of the actual signature of the outcome will be touched by personality. The hand draws from the soul.

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In reaching into the heart, the center of the conception of the translation of design, the nexus of a relationship—the challenge of finding a solution—it is the spirit of the designer, the signature, that will be seen. Anyone committed to the ethos of creativity will reach into their soul of experience and the foundation of expertise to bring forth, in the power of a solution, something that is profound—to them, to the community. It is the profundity of this action—for the person, the creator, the reach to others—that builds passion. That sense of soulfulness drives the path to the answer.

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As a designer, presuming strategic intention, the practice is never about what's on the surface alone, but more what lies beneath it. The legacy of any design decision lies in historical experience—it is about the story of what has been, what story might be told now, and how that story could extend to the future. In exploring the idea of design, we might like it to the signature—the "signing" of a solution in the original use of the word. For every design might be just that—regardless of the transparency of interpretation, it is a filtration of personal spirit and character.
ignition
designer on a journey

Jane Savage

I have been a fire keeper and participant in several traditional Lakota sweat lodge ceremonies in my life. The key to keeping a good fire is a clear mind and a prayer of good intention. The Lakota way is an intense, earth-based spiritual practice, whereby in the sweat lodge one can aggressively burn off that which ails you.

Every so often for spiritual expression and self-improvement, I would curiously and attend an Aranda service that involved an ancient Vedic fire ceremony. It was a very potent fire set in a chafing dish fueled by sacred oils. Prayers were written on small pieces of paper to be offered to the fire and burned. From American Indian to East Indian, the spectrum between these two forms of spiritual practice is extreme in terms of purifying with the fire element. From these deep experiences, I realized how necessary it was for me to keep alight my own mystical flames, whether or not I had access to these rituals on a regular basis.

On the cover of Sir Ken Robinson’s book, The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything, there is a graphic of a flame. It’s safe to assume that the element to which he is referring to fire. I first learned of Sir Ken by watching a video of him speaking to the class of 2009 at my alma mater. He is a leading thinker on creativity and human potential.

He was recently in Portland speaking at Powell’s Books to promote his latest work. I found him delightfully inspiring. Sir Ken gave many examples of artists, musicians, mathematicians and athletes whose lives had fallen into place by following their passion and living in their element.

One man in the audience asked Sir Ken, “What’s the difference between a fire and a flame?”

His answer was that you will have little time for the others once you focus on one or two. But his main point was that it’s more of a challenge for people to figure out what their passions are versus having too many. In my mind, Sir Ken is a modern-day Prometheus, who took fire from the gods to give it to the mortals; using his wisdom and research into the creative drive, he aims to ignite the untapped potential in the lives that he touches.

It’s his case that when you find your passion, your life falls into place. For most of the rest of the rooms in the building were one-room apartments where many of the children lived. They were intended to be my legacy.

Every creative person I talk to is wondering about their true purpose and legacy. There are a lot of frustrated or misguided artists and designers out there. The state of the economy hasn’t helped. All the artists I know, except for one or two, are in survival mode to stay in the lives of financial security and healthcare benefits. The plan is having a financial and environmental crisis in causing us an consumer to reconsider our consumption. We as designers are rethinking how we conscientiously address the consumer’s needs. In addition, Sir Ken argues, are we also having a human resource crisis because we’ve barely scratched the surface of our collective human potential.

In 2006, I led a group of designers from Nike on a trip to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan sits on the western shores of the Caspian Sea in the crossroads of Asia, the Middle East and Russia. Known as the Land of Fire, it’s a country full of natural resources of the petroleum kind. We had an opportunity to visit a tourist site eternally aflame due to fissures in the earth seeping natural gas. There were no barriers safeguarding us from the unbridled blaze, so we could get beside the heat as closely as we wanted.

I read about a study that stated the evidence of career choice is written in your DNA—based on traits passed through your parents. This explains why twins separated at birth often adopt similar if not identical career choices. We have our work programmed into us.

My creative ability came through my father’s line. His mother was a talented dress designer and artist in the Philippines. He told me stories of how she would create precise drawings of him, which I wish I had those drawings, but sadly, she and her stories were lost in WWII. My father’s family was broken apart. Given a choice to stay with his distraught father or go to his strict maternal grandmother, he chose the latter, setting in motion a path of choices that eventually led him to the U.S. where he would meet my mother who was from the southern Philippines. On our last visit to the Philippines, I realized that I was highly unlike their paths would have crossed there. They had to meet in the U.S. and follow their destiny, so that my life could fall into place.

In face of America on PBS with Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr.,herent called Yo-Yo Ma recounts his father’s wisdom, “…it takes three generations to make a musician—1 to get out of poverty, 2 to go to college, 3—to master the instrument…” I look at my five-year-old son, and there’s not a doubt in my mind that he will be the master of whatever he chooses.

Many people came before me so that I could add up to who I am today. As a designer, I am constantly re-defining my role because I am doing the same with my self from a spiritual point of view. I am blessed to have found the path of design. I have all the tools, and I still wonder, ‘What is it that will honor the legacy of those who have come before me?’

Every creative person I talk to is wondering about their true purpose and legacy. There are a lot of frustrated or misguided artists and designers out there. The state of the economy hasn’t helped. All the artists I know, except for one or two, are in survival mode to stay in the lives of financial security and healthcare benefits. The plan is having a financial and environmental crisis in causing us an consumer to reconsider our consumption. We as designers are rethinking how we conscientiously address the consumer’s needs. In addition, Sir Ken argues, are we also having a human resource crisis because we’ve barely scratched the surface of our collective human potential.

Our project in Azerbaijan was to teach design and art to displaced children from the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Their school was on one floor of a cinder block, dilapidated summer sanitarium near the sea. The rest of the rooms in the building were one-room apartments where many of the children lived crowded with their families. Many of us came back from this trip in a state of awe—returning to our comfortable lives with a humbled sense of perspective.

It’s easy to recognize someone at their creative best—it’s like they are on fire. You know the feeling when you are doing your creative best—it’s as if your belly is burning.

I think that artists and designers who’ve been lucky enough to find the creative path owe it to themselves and to each other to channel. Prometheas. Ken says in his book that each child has a singing voice that’s like ringing a bell. I’d say then that each person has a creative expression that’s like a flame. It can be as small as a gas leak, waiting for ignition. It’s easy to recognize someone at their creative best—it’s like they are on fire. You know the feeling when you are doing your creative best—it’s as if your belly is burning.

I am on the creative path. You may be, too. Light the flame. Touch lives. Change the world.

Ignition.

Volcano drawing by Max Savage.

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One has to look back a half-century or more to find an Olympic Games as architecturally un-ambitious as Vancouver’s. Breaking with modern Olympic practice, the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee (VANOC) elected to sponsor no architectural competitions at all. Such new design commissions as there were (Vancouver is the largest city ever to host a Winter Games, so much of the construction work was limited to adaptations of existing facilities) went to bland corporate practices, our best designers such as Bing Thom or John and Patricia Patkau not even getting interviews. Moreover, as the first global sports event entirely planned after 9/11, VANOC spent more on security than on new buildings.

It should come as no surprise that the standout design creation of Vancouver’s Olympic Winter Games was for the only venue where some semblance of civic entrepreneurship was permitted. An oval-shaped arena for speed skating was originally slated to be constructed in the Vancouver suburb of Burnaby, but an aggressive proposal to host the building from rival suburb Richmond prevailed. Innovative use of wood was a priority for both VANOC and the City of Richmond—in particular the use of small dimension lumber harvested from BC’s huge stock of blue-stained beetle-killed pine. Since these BC pine beetles are no longer killed by hard winter frosts due to global warming, the province now has unsold mountains of lumber; simultaneously, export markets for wood-framed suburban bungalows in the United States have all but dried up. Since the structural engineering practice headed by Paul Fast and Gerry Epp is Canada’s leader in engineered wood design, the firm was linked with almost every architectural team shortlisted to design the venue, with Cannon Design emerging the winner.

Fast + Epp’s resulting roof design for the Richmond Olympic Oval is epochal, pointing at the central role sustainably harvested wood will play as the ever-renewable green construction material of the future. Clever design by the engineers and their linked wood-manufacturing concern StructureCraft solved two enormous design challenges: fashion a large, clear-span structure almost entirely out of timber, and make much of this roof out of small-dimension studs (two-by-fours) salvaged from climate-change-killed British Columbia pine. Architecturally, the best possible waves, the Fast + Epp design for the speed skating Oval is ingenious in reconciling its large span with small structural member size.

At StructureCraft’s factory, two-by-four studs were cut into short sections, then the wood was screw-connected through L-shaped metal connecting plates into curving V-sections, which structurally act as long beams. Three of these V-sections were then aligned side-by-side and covered with a capping plywood diaphragm, forming what the engineers call a “Wood Wave Panel.” Once the huge, glulam-laminated wood-beams in a V-configuration were set up across the ice surface to be, cranes lowered the Wood Wave Panels into position as roof elements, then sprinklers, air supply, lighting and other service elements were woven into their latticed forms. The Oval’s roof curves sweep dramatically upwards along its north elevation, admitting stable light and magnificent mountain views.

This design feature was stymied by VANOC, who insisted on covering up all windows for the Olympics, worried that outside views would permit “ambush marketing” by companies not on their sponsorship list. The situation was made worse by glare-inducing lighting by Stantec Engineering. Polychrome end-wall patterns and other architectural embellishments devised by associates Cannon Design are nearly as distracting—this building is all about the roof.

The work of Fast + Epp was included in my exhibition Vancouverism: Architecture Builds the City in its showings in London, Paris and Vancouver itself, and it was the highly innovative Richmond roof that surprised and delighted many. Subsequently, engineers Fast + Epp were awarded the 2009 I-Struct-E prize (the equivalent in the world of structural engineering of the Pritzker prize for architecture) for their trail-blazing clean, deceptively healing roof for the Bing’s Bird Nest Stadium. If the heavy steel members and face-sculptural masts of the Arup/Perceau de Mesma design represents the architecture, economies and materiality of the decade past, the elegant green efficiency of Fast + Epp surely represent a bold direction for this new decade. With innovative architecture shunted aside by design-averse Vancouver Olympic organizers, it took the leadership of engineers to produce a design that is truly Olympic. A gold medal to Gerry Epp, Paul Fast and StructureCraft for the Richmond Olympic Oval.

Trevor Boddy

A Gold Medal to the Richmond Olympic Oval’s Wood Roof

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Trevor Boddy
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$5/person

Wednesdays, June 30 from 7:30 – 9:30 pm

DUWAMISH RIVER SUPERFUND BOAT (COCKTAIL) TOUR
This evening/cocktail tour is co-hosted by the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition and ARCADE. This boat tour will focus on architecture, urban design, and public involvement in the planning of the Lower Duwamish River Superfund site.

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Silver Girl, 2010, galvanized steel, 64 x 1/8 x 1/16 inches
In his writings, collected for the first time in this handsome two-volume set (with a DVD of a lecture), van Eyck invokes the viewpoint of a child throughout; a child filled with wonder, delight and humor, naturally rebellious and irrational. modernism, he was no exclusive bookworm—he was in the trenches, both as a practicing architect and a confidant of the likes of Arp, Rietveld, van Doesburg, Braque, Léger, Breuer, and Tristan Tzara, “the great gang” as he referred to them.

Out of this exposure, he held the avant-garde offered more than merely a change in artistic style. He felt its most significant contribution to Western artistic/scientific culture was its stance that the relationship between Man and Nature was crucial and non-hierarchical. Modern art — and by extension, architecture — expressed, as Mondrian put it, an “equivalence of the dissimilar” where opposite “non-relations” are uncovered, balanced and ultimately “… reveals the reality that is behind visible things…” (Klee).

As Lefaivre & Tonzé remark in their book on van Eyck, the Orphism, as it became known, should have received little attention, but upon publication became widely popular among architects, probably because it successfully integrated architectural operations previously considered intractable. It mixed Modernist composition with anti-classical principles of avant-garde art (De Stijl) and non-Western semançar (Dogon villages). To the blend, van Eyck added a constant concern of all Team 10 members — what they referred to as the Architecture of Community. Borrowing a phrase from the philosopher Martin Buber, he called it “the-in-between.” This attitude, as Lefaivre says “… placed the emphasis on buildings as means for creating relations between people rather than as goals in themselves.” Inspired by the surrealist poet Louis Aragon, van Eyck felt that “ordinary forgotten everyday things… placed the emphasis on buildings as means for creating relations between people rather than as goals in themselves.” Inspired by the surrealist poet Louis Aragon, van Eyck felt that “ordinary forgotten everyday things…” (Klee).

This was an anti-idealistic, anarcho-sympathetic approach in which every space in the building/city had the full status of architecture or planning; no matter how ordinary or mundane; an attitude in direct opposition to the Modernist doctrine that so carefully distinguished between “building” and “architecture.” From this stance, Modern buildings and urban design were meaningless and barren. Le Corbusier’s urban concepts of “functional city,” “heart of the city,” and urban “core” were unable to accommodate human panorama and remained shackled to large-scale space plans (ignoring the essential role of time). “The materialism has gone, he said “… but what has replaced it? Just Hilaire’s organized nowhere, and nobody feeling he is somebody living somewhere.”

In his writings, collected for the first time in this handsome two-volume set (with a DVD of a lecture), van Eyck invokes the viewpoint of a child throughout; a child filled with wonder, delight and humor, naturally rebellious and irrational. Certainly a child’s point of view was far from the canon of modernist theory; marginalized into near obscurity during which it was a primary point of view on which his architectural thinking. Yet, it was a poetics to his thought, that after a snowstorm, it is the child who temporarily becomes “Lord of the City”; architects, he thought, should provide this attitude, as Lefaivre says, “… placed the emphasis on buildings as means for creating relations between people rather than as goals in themselves.” Inspired by the surrealist poet Louis Aragon, van Eyck felt that “ordinary forgotten everyday things…” (Klee).

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McMakin is an artist who happens to create objects that take the form of furniture and houses. His work is at once ephemeral and grounded, heavy and ethereal, emotional and intellectual. From his installation Leaping Frogs to his installation Leaping Frogs: The Art of McMakin, a collection of objects named after his mother, from a house he designed for two Seattle-based art collectors, to the Western Bridge gallery space in that city’s industrial neighborhood, Roy’s work is consistently tactile, though provoking and transformative.

I didn’t know all of this the first time I saw Roy’s work. I had been sent an assignment byopolis magazine from New York to Seattle, and all I knew was that I was there to see a house. The photographer and I drove from Tacoma to Lake Washington and spent a couple of hours in the house before Roy got there to talk about it. I spent time looking at the perfect detail work, the impossibly smooth surfaces, the stairway that seemed to hover despite looking like it weighed one-hundred thousand pounds. As I had learned to do over the course of similar assignments the years before, I walked through the house, following its figure eights of circulation and trying to figure out just what the angle of curvature truly was. I went outside, looked back at the picture windows and thought really, really hard about what this house could mean.

I was suffering from lumbritis at the time. I had been dizzy for a couple of weeks. Friends had encouraged me not to fly to Seattle, having some inner-ear disorder that would surely be made worse by some thirty-three thousand foot elevation. My career came before everything, so of course I came. On the transcript of our interview, I was suffering from arm will not always be broken. And it is because of Roy that I know it’s OK. McMakin’s work goes to the core of the human condition, and that doesn’t make that I had a human condition before I met Roy, but the more time I spent looking at projects like Untitled (A Small Chest of Drawers With One Drawer That Doesn’t Fit) or Love and Loss, his installation at the Seattle Olympic sculpture park, the more I realized that McMakin tends to manifest physically what I — and all others who experience this work — experience. I see the job of an artist as that of a philosopher of visual experience. I am interested in how meaning is contained within objects and how I can illustrate and manipulate that meaning. I am interested in how memory, familiarity, scale, craft and functionality factor into this investigation. I am interested in how emotionally becomes perceptible. That untitled chest of drawers, the one with that monstrous drawer that doesn’t quite fit, is an example of McMakin’s perceptible emotionality. It is functional and, therefore, can be classified as a design object, as can most of Roy’s work. But it is the immediate sense of singling, isolation and memories of traumatic lunches in the high school cafeteria that seeing this drawer, almost the same size as the others but not quite, elicits. The thing that makes Roy so brilliant is that his furniture not only expresses that formerly ineffable sense, but immediately soothes, holds and convinces you that everything is going to be all right. Flipping through McMakin’s monograph is like looking into a mind that is at once melancholic and expressive, sharp edged and enveloping. His titles alone, like A Slightly Not Found Tax, produced in 2005, or Whirlpool, a Door Made as Adornment, the title of a solo show at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, offer a linguistic expression of the artist’s wide-ranging playfulness. Some could read in this seemingly effortless wordplay the type of compensation frequently used by smart and self-aware people as a way of deflecting any talk of pain. And the pain is here, in this constant pull and pull between pain and comfort, mourning and excitement, and to borrow a phrase from the artist himself, love and loss. There is no a priori sense of the artist himself, love and loss. The thing that makes McMakin truly an artist, rather than a deeply meaningful furniture maker, lies in the fact that McMakin’s work that I understand that my arm will not always be broken. And it is because of Roy that I know it’s OK.

McMakin is an artist who happens to create objects that take the form of furniture and houses. His work is at once ephemeral and grounded, heavy and ethereal, emotional and intellectual.
Kelly Rodriguez, our esteemed ARCADE editor, has been hounding me daily for a positive, uplifting, cheerful Side Yard contribution. It’s two in the afternoon and I am sitting at work in front of my computer wearing a slightly stained T-shirt, colorful pajama bottoms and Chuck Taylors. I just realize I only shaved half my face this morning... and I didn’t shower. I can’t think of a single past client to call today; my list ran out weeks ago. I have a warm, half consumed Miller Light from lunch staring at me. Wow, my socks really smell when I take my shoes off...

Yeah, cheerful...

Suddenly my iPod starts blaring, “Oooh, take the money and run...” and I have one of those “aha” moments: The Top 10 Architectural Recession Songs of all Time!

Kelly loves this mostly because it’s the ONLY idea I have come up with in three weeks. This burst of energy elevates me out of my stupor, and the music starts to flow.

So here is my list starting from number 10. If you feel I overlooked a particular song, tough luck! I’m not in a cheerful mood.

10. “Money for Nothing” by Dire Straits. This is technically more of a pre-recession banking/developer song. Also, the line, “We gotta move these refrigerators/we gotta move these color TVs...” makes direct reference to what several of my architecture friends are doing to make money these days.

9. “Burning Down the House” by Talking Heads. OK, I admit I don’t exactly know what this song is about, but it has “house” in the title, and it’s so angst ridden it had to be on the list.

8. “Your Cash Ain’t Nothin’ but Trash” by The Clovers. Steve Miller ripped off this 1954 R&B hit. I put this song on here because I figured at least a few people would write me complaining I had no authentic blues songs. I wish I had the balls to sing this to some of my derelict clients.

7. “Car Wash” by Rose Royce. What better architectural recession song than one that has commercial building references and describes what several of my other designer friends are currently doing for work?

6. “Shuttin’ Down Detroit” by John Rich. Had to throw in a country song! This genre is good for recessions, but most songs are about losing your farm, horse or truck—not exactly architecture. This one is also number four on my Top Five Urban Planning Recession Songs of All Time. Here is the chorus (remember to sing this with a twang):

‘Cause in the real world they’re shutting Detroit down,
While the boss man takes his bonus pay and jets out of town.
And DC’s bailing out the bankers as the farmers auction ground,
Yeah, while they’re living it up on Wall Street in that New York City town...

5. “We Built this City (on Rock and Roll)” by Starship. Not actually a recession song and barely rock-n-roll. Furthermore, I HATE this song. Starship does sing about building a city, but I threw this one in to see if you were really paying attention!

4. “Money (That’s What I Want)” written by Bradford/Gordy and made famous by the Beatles. There are actually several good recession songs with the title Money. I love this one because it is so raunchy. I altered the lyrics a tad to make them more architectural:

Your [designs] give me a thrill,
But [marketing renderings] don’t pay my bills,
Now give me money,
That’s what I want...

3. “Take the Money and Run” by The Steve Miller Band. This song is also in my “Top Ten A.I.G. Bailout” song list (hey, I have a lot of lists because I have a lot of free time). This one is so far up here because I have always secretly wanted to be Billy Joe in the song. You know, “Two young lovers with nothin’ better to do...”

2. “Livin’ for the City” by Stevie Wonder. Funk-a-fide, gritty, urban, relevant, bad-to-the-bone funky, ghetto, out of cash, car smog, streetwise, did I mention funky? This one, hands down, tops my “Top 10 Urban Planning Recession Songs of All Time.”

1. “It’s the End of the World as We Know It” by R.E.M. This could either be a song about the economic collapse or B.I.M. technology. Whatever way one spins it, compared to the mid-2000s, it really is the end of the world as we know it... And I feel fine!

You know, these songs are actually making me feel a bit... cheerful...

“Oooh, take the money and run...”
Fire

Fire is a call to action. "Fire it up," dates to the era of coal-fired engines, and most recently, "fired up and ready to go" applies to this era of political engineers. The dreaded, "You’re fired!" has its origins in mid-1900 British coal mining towns. For earlier nomadic peoples, a sacred duty was to carry the still burning coal from one campsite to the next; hearth-to-hearth. "The fire in the earth first kindling the flame, the hearth where we gathered. The center of life." (from “Millennium” by David Whyte). If you think of the hearth as home, as the gathering place, fire becomes the metaphor for life, for our lives.

In speaking of fire, a friend suggested we could use it to eliminate the myriad architectural atrocities around us, but that doesn’t seem like a workable idea. Rather we might want to expand upon the idea of the hearth as the heart of the home, and of the home more as shelter than ego. As stated in a recent issue of ORION, "Our must evolve a culture suited to the limits of the Earth." Examples of exceeding these limits abound.

As I write this, I’m looking at a construction site across the street. What had been for 30 years a simple, if homely, two-bedroom, one-bath, house has been transformed into a monstrosity. A porch and second bedroom, along with some needed structural upgrades, were added in the first phase. Not too bad. The second phase saw the addition of a two-story building with a two-car garage on the ground floor and guest quarters with a deck (a Northwest scourge) above. The current phase involves enclosing what had been the attached garage, raising the floor level to match that of the house, and creating yet another roof line in order to gain a higher ceiling for an additional vehicle. Every square inch of buildable space on this lot is now covered. It’s a maze with no architectural integrity, no heart, no hearth and no sensitivity to the earth. Surely a candidate for pyrotechnics.

How much is enough? I live in a community where, among upper income people, guesthouses abound and sit empty most of the year, while small inns and bed & breakfast establishments struggle to survive and would welcome these “guests.” However, it is very challenging to talk people out of building unnecessary structures, which needlessly take up land and resources, divide and separate us, and do not foster gathering around the hearth. A healthy relationship with the earth demands the consciousness required to tend a fire. It also demands attention to air and water. The inextricable linkage.

This photo of the hearth in a family home in the north of Sweden reminds us that simplicity meets these demands. Water, the inextricable linkage. This metaphor for life, for our lives.

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