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JOHN PARMAN

### ART MATTERS

REALIZING THE WAWONA SCULPTURE  
HANS-ERIK BLOMGREN

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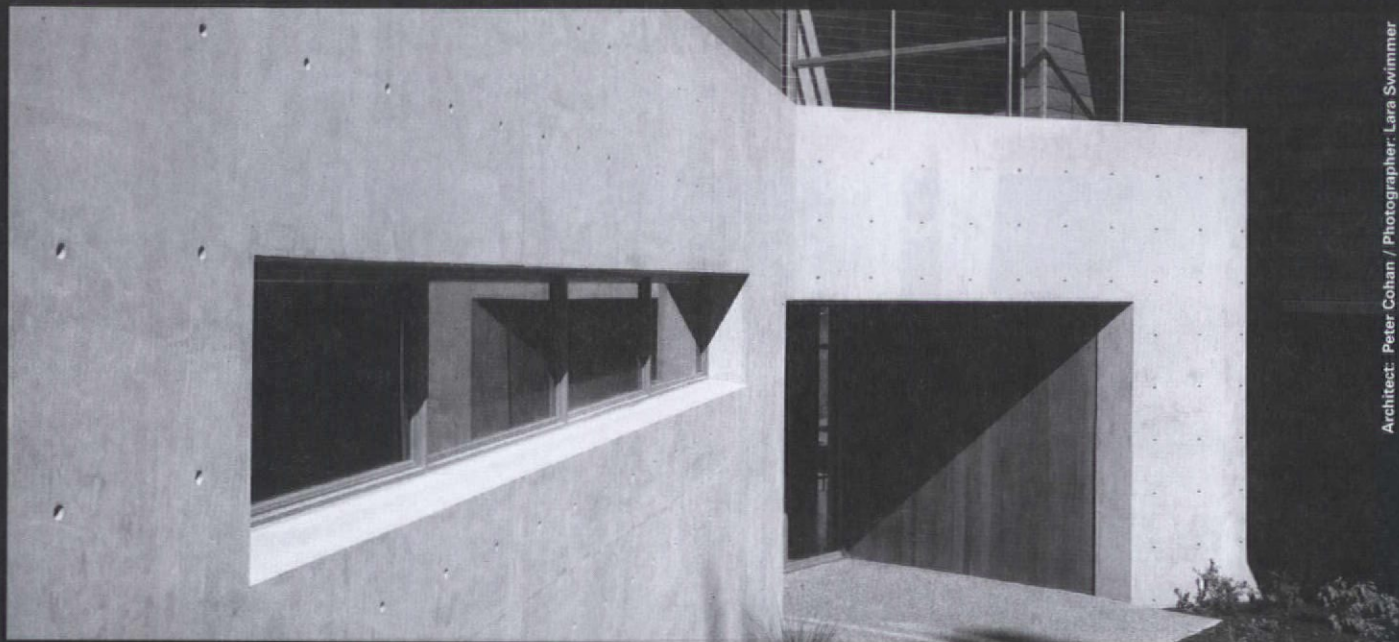
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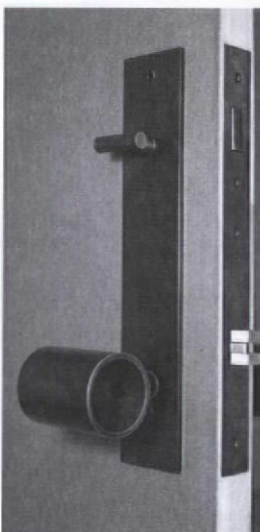
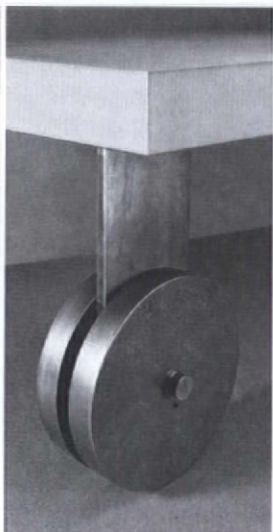
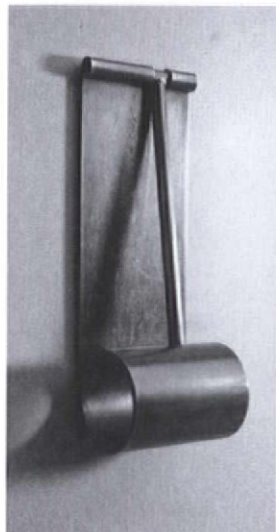
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DIALOGUE ON DESIGN

The mission of ARCADE is to incite dialogue about design and the built environment; our goal is to inspire designers, creative professionals and design enthusiasts to reconsider how design impacts the world around us, and in turn, instigate positive change.

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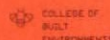
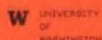
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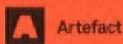
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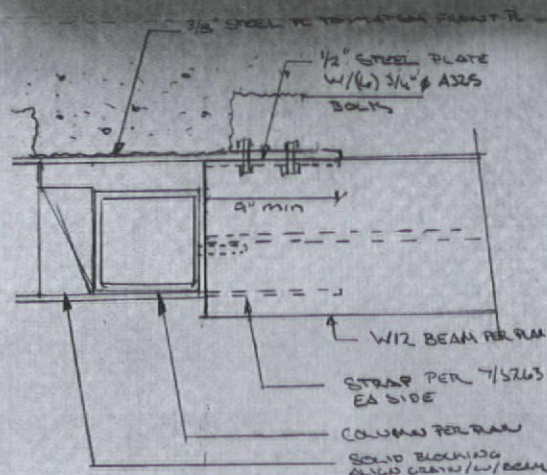


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# JILL STONER: TOWARD A MINOR ARCHITECTURE /

JOHN PARMAN

**“Knowledge itself is a massive heavy object, with enormous foundations and a reliance on gravity. Religions, monarchies, systems of law, corporations—these historical patrons of architecture have provided us with the objects upon which minor architects can write their objections.”**

— *Toward a Minor Architecture*, Jill Stoner

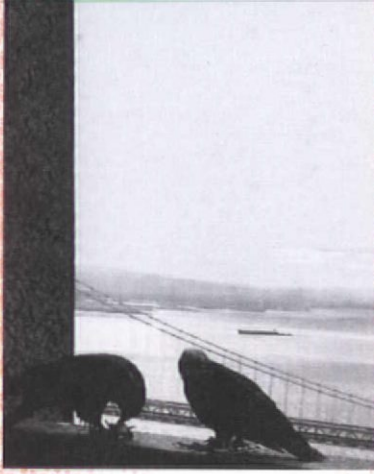
Among the themes of this short, provocatively discursive book is that the taint of capital runs through and distorts architecture, giving rise to celebrity practitioners and to signature buildings that, in Stoner's view, are indecipherable. She traces back to Louis Kahn another line of practice in which architects self-effacingly served their communities, taking for granted the beneficent nature of their civic institutions. She contrasts this with Foucault, for whom these same institutions were “mechanisms of exclusion, segregation and control” that gave rise to a dissenting minority.

Stoner's minor architecture riffs on the minor literature of Deleuze and Guattari: “that which a minority constructs within a major language,” as they put it. “They locate ‘minor’ and ‘minority’ as conditions that exist at the bottom of power structures, yet hold an extraordinary potential for power,” she adds. This is the territory of Occupy, Marx and Jesus, but Stoner cites Kafka; he saw it as the closed world of institutions in Foucault's sense, in which the buildings double back on themselves, and the powerful post guards at every gateway.



Part of the attraction of the book is its constant reference to novels and short stories – like Cheever's “The Swimmer” – that view a conventional “major” landscape, like the backyards of suburban enclaves north of New York City, from the “minority” standpoint of a man who's sinking, even drowning, in its midst. Stoner teaches a course at UC Berkeley, “The Literature of Architecture,” and the book is rich with examples.





George and Gracie, 2008.  
Photo: Jill Stoner

How we relate to nature and how we integrate it is one of Stoner's leitmotifs. In "The Swimmer," the protagonist attempts to traverse his neighbors' backyard swimming pools, likening them to a creek running through their town; reality proves otherwise. Noting how peregrine falcons in Manhattan perch on the ledges of older skyscrapers, Stoner says that nature "is both celebrated and excluded" in today's green buildings. Accommodating the falcons that might perch on them wins no LEED points for their owners.



Corviale, 2008. Photo: Jill Stoner  
Background: *Imagining Argentina*, directed by Christopher Hampton, 2003.

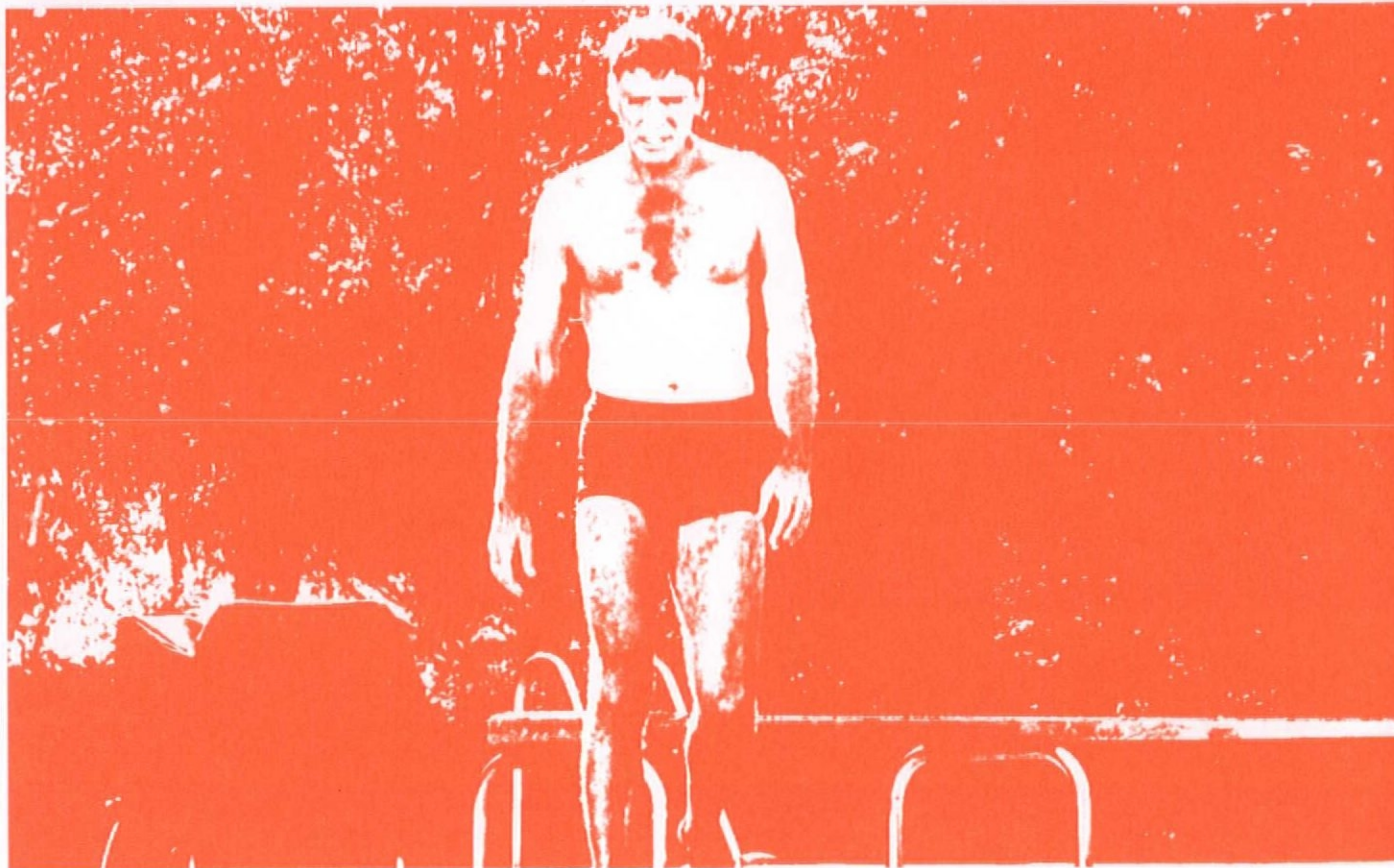
Is this a guide to becoming a minor architect? Occasionally, the book plays to that possibility by suggesting that what's being discussed is applicable to the mainstream. The real question is why anyone would want to become a minor architect. Burnham's "Make no little plans" immediately comes to mind, but then big plans so often disregard the vitality of communities along with the intimacy and immediacy of neighborhoods. Just as Kafka described the landscapes to which a bent and evil bureaucracy gave rise, Jacobs took on the brave new world envisioned by planners like Bacon and Moses. Theirs was not quite the landscape of terror and incarceration Stoner invokes, quoting Ballard and Timmerman, but it was sufficiently dystopian to warrant resisting and overcoming.

This is the minority's creative space. Stoner illustrates it with Corviale, a public housing groundscraper that opened outside Rome in 1982, the year when Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis was demolished. The fifth level of this 8,000-person complex was left open, a gesture toward Le Corbusier and the Marseilles Block roof. Almost immediately, it was taken over by squatters. Today, when the large, fixed apartments intended for families are sparsely occupied by the aging, the fifth level retains its vitality and potential for reinvention.

This is what Stoner is getting at when she says, early in the book, that "the overwhelming weight of an architectural object is its ability to resist change. Frozen in that illusion of being complete and remaining complete, buildings produce an ironic and subliminal longing for their different futures." An architect of my acquaintance put it more succinctly: "After 30 years, we want them to go away. Yet we persist in building for 100 years." So while commercial office buildings can accommodate a changing workforce, they aren't designed to be taken down after a generation or two of use, their pieces and parts recycled and reused. Buildings provide a framework for infill, but an imperfect one. What we long for is a framework that's good for millennia, or, if it isn't, is designed as infill, too, with the city around it providing the long-lived frame.

Most of the time, the minor architecture Stoner posits is done piecemeal, appropriating the cityscape for new, often momentary purposes. Vacant buildings are invitations to squat. Unused land invites the *favela*. In her own work, she says, nothing ever looks finished. "Works assumed to be are cast back into a state of becoming," she writes. "Authorship is put into reverse, and the design process becomes editorial, reflecting a composite of blurred identities." It is "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash," she adds, quoting Barthes. "In architecture as in literature, this is language purified of style, language stripped bare."



*The Swimmer*, directed by Frank Perry, 1968

That it's not all chaos is implied by that word, *editorial*. It suggests an editor, but this is not how cities work. A relevant theorist here is Hayek, who argued that our social institutions are products of evolution, not design. If cities provide a frame for a mostly anonymous process of building and rebuilding, it's because they are rooted in tradition. When an urban economy collapses, in whole or in part, the minority – artists, artisans, filmmakers and writers among them – provides the first signs of revival. This is because tradition hands them a surviving frame that they can appropriate and transform.

Stoner cites examples of large modern buildings, partly vacant or abandoned, that have undergone this process. The implication is that there's no real limit to the size of the frame, but I wonder. What makes urban transformation possible is the *resilience* of cities, the possibility of their constant revival through myriad minor acts. In fast-growing mercantile states, cities sometimes depart massively from tradition. That hubris may leave them, like the dinosaurs, without the resilience that any positive future requires. **A**

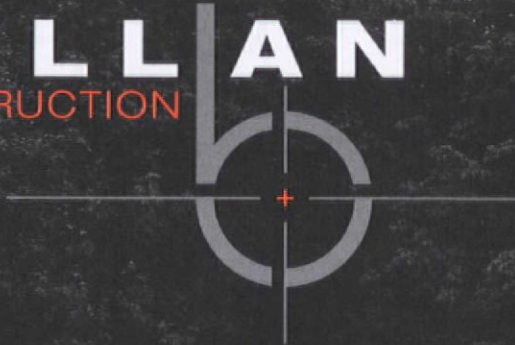
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# REALIZING THE WAWONA SCULPTURE: AN ENGINEER'S VIEW ON COLLABORATING WITH THE ARTIST JOHN GRADE /

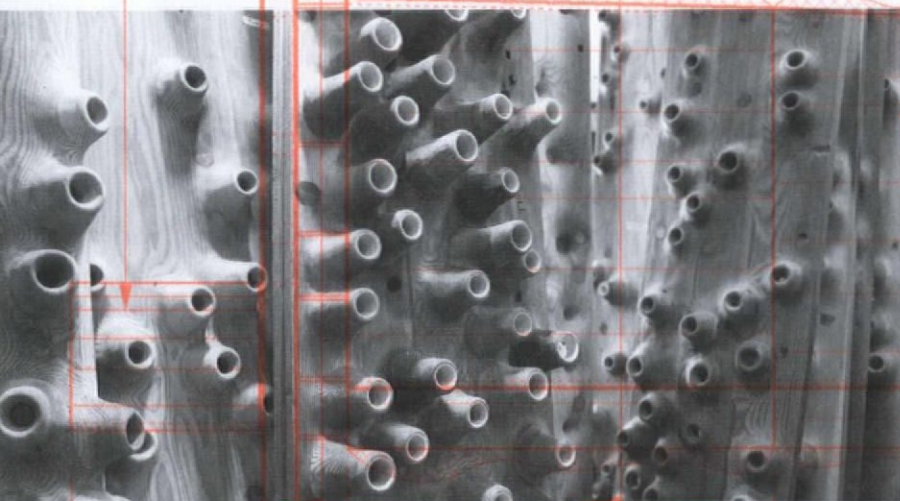
HANS-ERIK BLOMGREN

When doors open at the new location for the Museum of History and Industry at South Lake Union this December, visitors will be greeted by an audacious, 56-foot-tall kinetic sculpture: the permanent marquee installation by Northwest artist John Grade. Over 130 cubic-feet of computer-cut and hand-carved, old-growth timber planks, reclaimed from the recently dismantled Wawona Schooner, will be entwined with 5,500 pounds of water-jet-cut steel ribs and concealed hangar rods. The assembled parts will create a form that evokes the shape of a ship's hull, suspended vertically from the building's roof. The base of the artwork will hover just 12 inches off the floor, creating an enclosed volume of space and allowing the installation to be experienced from the inside-out, as if venturing within the trunk of a hollowed-out, old growth tree. No red velvet rope; the dialogue is open.

I have collaborated on a number of artwork projects over the years – including John Grade's Wawona sculpture – and they've been some of my most challenging and rewarding experiences as a structural engineer. But the reality is that as an engineer, my career has been primarily defined by conventional building-type projects. The engineer's role in artwork projects is not immediately apparent, especially if you focus on the stereotypes:

- Engineers are grounded—artists shoot for the stars.
- Artists live outside of the box—engineers make boxes.
- Engineers wear their pragmatism like a badge of honor—artists strive to transcend convention.

Yet in spite of these apparent paradoxes (or maybe because of them?), somehow things come together; the dialogue is opened and the vision begins to grow. Perhaps an artist is doing a project on a larger scale, working to find the right team, walking the line of control—how to let go of their work to some degree, entrusting others with the execution. When done right and with the collective parties working collaboratively, finding interplay between skills and talents, personalities and world-views provides opportunities for the art itself to exceed expectations.



Right: Rendering of structural analysis model. Structural analysis results depicting global horizontal displacement resulting from human loading near the base of the sculpture. Rendering: Arup

Overlay: Side elevations  
Drawing: Jeff Hudak, Studio Fifty50

Finished wood at John Grade's studio. Photo: John Grade

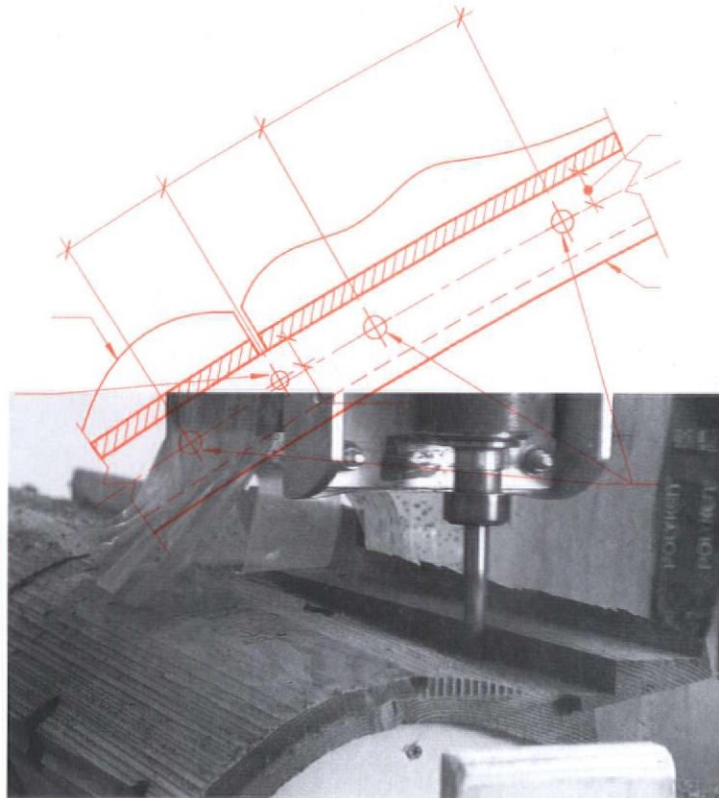
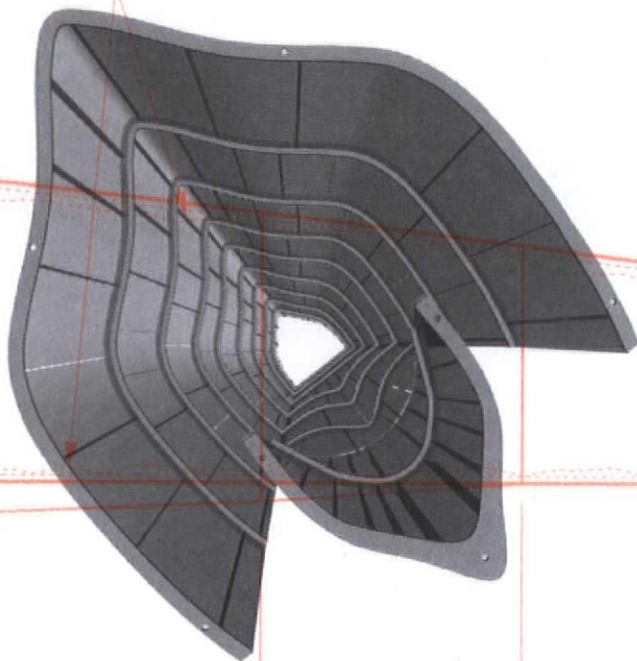


As always, listening is key. In fact, for myself and others at Arup Seattle, listening might have been the most enjoyable part of the Wawona sculpture project. From the outset we had to understand John's vision. What was he after? What parts of the project did he consider sacrosanct? What pieces were negotiable? How could we ensure the integrity of the structural system while letting it complement rather than get in the way of things? This round of discussions at the concept stage led to a period during which we could settle in and define the engineering performance objectives of the sculpture:

- It has to hang exactly vertical from the ceiling as an 11,000-pound pendulum.
- It has to survive the effects of a large earthquake.
- Durability is important, with the sculpture's design life exceeding 50 years.
- There must be safety in the midst of movement. Visitors will be welcome to interact with the sculpture – to push or pull – and this cannot create a hazard.

In addition, the wood used was reclaimed from below the Wawona Schooner's waterline. This portion of the boat survived for over 100 years because it was in contact with the water. A process that included kiln drying the wood before the onset of fabrication was necessary to ensure it wouldn't warp or split too much in its future use. Finally, the sculpture had to be constructible, and in this instance, prefabricated in nine separate sections enabling it to be transported to the site and bolted in place, top down, from the building roof trusses.

Below: 3D fabrication model looking up the interior of the sculpture. Rendering: Jeff Hudak, Studio Fifty50



Overlay: Structural detail at ribs and wood. Drawing: Arup

Above: Wood being CNC milled at University of Washington. Photo: Jeff Hudak, Studio Fifty50

With objectives and requirements firmly in place, we were off to roll up our sleeves and get down to the craft. Pencils and straight edges, calculators, spreadsheets, computer analyses, 3D visual models: We used every tool at our disposal. Permit drawings, calculations and final construction documents of the sculpture's structure were also required. Every component of the wood, steel and connections was subjected to a detailed structural analysis, so its state of stress under all conditions of its use could be quantified and validated.

Even from our first meetings with John, we knew that the actual fabrication of the sculpture would be no simple task. The wood surface geometry is curved in two directions. No two pieces of wood or steel would be exactly the same. Tolerances and fit-up between all of the components would be tight— $1/16$ th of an inch maximum. Even though the sculpture will present itself as something organic and hand-crafted, its underlying form would be made digitally—the cutting of the steel and wood components happen via manufacturing equipment communicating directly with a fully defined 3D computer model of the sculpture.



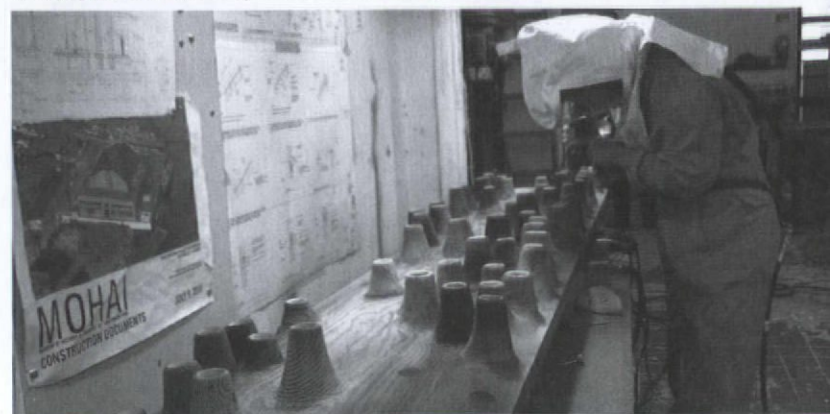
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Overlay: Structural detail at ribs and wood. Drawing: Arup

Left and below: Wood at John Grade's studio.

Photo left: John Grade Right: Hans-Erik Blomgren, Arup



So for the past five months, at the University of Washington College of Built Environment's Computer-Aided-Design and Manufacturing Department, each of the approximately 190 4-inch-thick wood planks for the sculpture have been individually fabricated using their 3-axis CNC mill. The resulting product comprises individual wood elements that are trapezoid shaped in cross-section and have all of their finer coping and block-out cuts at interfaces with the steel components incorporated. This allows the flat faces of each plank to fit piece-wise planar to the sculpture's double-curved surface. From this point, John has been able to get physical with the wood in his studio, hand-carving and drilling to create a fantastically textured and patterned surface topography. For the most tightly curved pieces, the digital fabrication process allows curved guidelines to be milled in the wood at intermittent intervals to ensure the localized depth of hand-carving stays true to the sculpture's overall geometric shape.

Each of the nine tiers of sculpted wood planks will be captured by  $\frac{3}{4}$  by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inch steel ledgers at the top and bottom which have been CNC water-jet cut from plate material to match the sculpture's curved cross-section at the given elevation of each tier. An array of slightly angled  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch diameter, high-strength steel rods concealed within the vertical seams of the wood planks will then fasten at their ends to the steel ledgers to complete the structural system.

Each of the nine tiers will be preassembled and transferred to the museum this fall to be bolted together top down from the building's roof structure by a specialty rigging crew.

Throughout these many months of design and fabrication, the anticipation of seeing the final installed sculpture has been mounting. Everyone involved is engaged, fully invested in the outcome—and that's the way it has to be if you are ever going to achieve something that rises above the fray. The mutual collaboration between artist and engineer is allowing Wawona, initially born as an image in John's mind, to become fully realized. **A**

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**Hans-Erik Blomgren PE SE** is an associate at Arup, a global multidisciplinary consulting firm, and a lead structural engineer in their Seattle office. He has worked in the Pacific Northwest region over his 15-year career and most recently contributed to the design and construction phases of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Campus in Seattle. Hans-Erik's work reflects a deep appreciation for the aesthetics of built form and a belief in the structural engineer's potential for positively influencing the built environment through collaboration with clients.

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#### Wawona Sculpture Contributors

Artist - John Grade

Structural Engineering - Arup

Wood Fabrication - University of Washington College of Built Environments

Rigging and Installation - Artech



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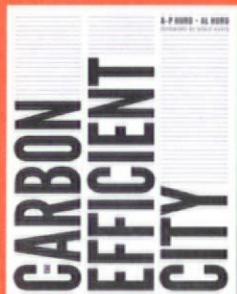
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## 18

## LIGHTS, ACTION, COLLABORATE /

MARY CLAIRE FRAZIER

When light and architecture are successfully integrated, magic happens. Getting there can be a struggle, but when an architect and lighting designer truly collaborate, integration becomes much more of a sure thing—and fun.

At its best, lighting design blends daylight and electric light seamlessly into a building's architectural form, structure and aesthetic. Treating daylight and electric light design as disparate parts of the creative process is not the path to success. Relegating electric light to something pasted onto architecture and specified by someone without a real understanding of the physics and art of light will usually result in something between ho-hum and "what were they thinking?" Then there's the budget. A good independent lighting designer's ability to prioritize design and equipment options based on the overall good of the project can bring substantial savings and support the architectural intent.

How do you get there? Collaboration—the fun part. The architect and lighting designer must truly understand the way all forms of light move around and over a space, surface or object. Each needs to be able to discuss concepts in a language they both understand and with respect for each other's roles and expertise. This will facilitate an integrated design that serves and enhances the architecture while meeting technical requirements. Ideally, the initial discussions are all about concepts, perception and priorities—specific types of lighting equipment comes later. This gives the experienced lighting designer the tools to develop a preliminary plan adaptable to the iterative design process. This sequence results in the best chance that a project will include light that is truly integrated into the architecture. As long as the lighting designer has an appropriate breadth of experience and knowledge of technical issues and available equipment, a balanced approach will

help ensure that the project can meet budget requirements and satisfy design concepts. This is best accomplished by the inclusion of an independent lighting designer on the design team; that is, someone who is not associated with any manufacturer, agency or distributor.

Integrating electric light into the design in such a way that the architecture shines, not the light fixture, requires an understanding of the daylight distribution in the space. Daylight analysis, which ideally informs the architectural layout and finishes, must go hand-in-hand with the development of the electric lighting layout. The discussion must include analysis of how the daylight and electric light interact, balancing and enhancing each other. Without that coordinated effort, opportunities will be missed. With it, operational economy can be facilitated by lighting controls, and the aesthetic quality of the space has an increased chance of meeting the project's architectural goals.

Collaboration often includes detailed physical mockups of unique situations where electric light is incorporated into architectural elements. This process can work very well in combination with daylight modeling. An excellent example of productive collaboration can be seen in the light-well corridors at the Wing Luke Museum. Two formerly exterior light-wells within the original residential building were converted to sky-lit interior corridors. Each housing unit had windows opening onto the wells for light and ventilation. The architectural team at Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen, led by Rick Sundberg, wanted to create the impression that visitors were seeing the shadows of the unit's inhabitants through translucent window apertures. During the day, light floods the space from above, reducing the visibility of the illuminated windows. In the evening, the environment is much darker, and the space must





still serve as a corridor with all the attendant code requirements for circulation lighting. Everyone on the design team agreed that we didn't want to see light fixtures in the space; it needed to feel like the alley outside. An on-site mock-up of the window backlighting proved a perfect way to determine how bright the apertures would appear, how much light would be provided and how to construct it. This process confirmed that a simple fluorescent strip with an asymmetric reflector concealed behind the frame would provide sufficient circulation light. Without this careful collaboration between the architects and lighting designer, this could have required a much costlier solution. Studying the mock-up together strengthened the team's commitment to the concept.

Collaboration is part of the design process that can seem to add expense. But economizing on this aspect can actually detract from the overall quality of the project. Solving challenges by bringing the important decision makers together to consider the options and develop the overall design together benefits everyone. While this method applies to all architect/consultant relationships, it is particularly important that as the architectural design evolves, time is allowed for architects and lighting designers to envision and realize together how light will move around the space. Keeping your design ideas close to your chest is never going to bring the best results. So meet, discuss, be open to everyone's thoughts, and appreciate the contributions of designers reaching beyond narrow boundaries. Your project will celebrate it. **A**

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**Mary Claire Frazier, IALD**, is an independent lighting designer who has enjoyed ongoing collaborative relationships with some of the Northwest's most creative architects. She can be reached at [mcf@tubafour.com](mailto:mcf@tubafour.com).



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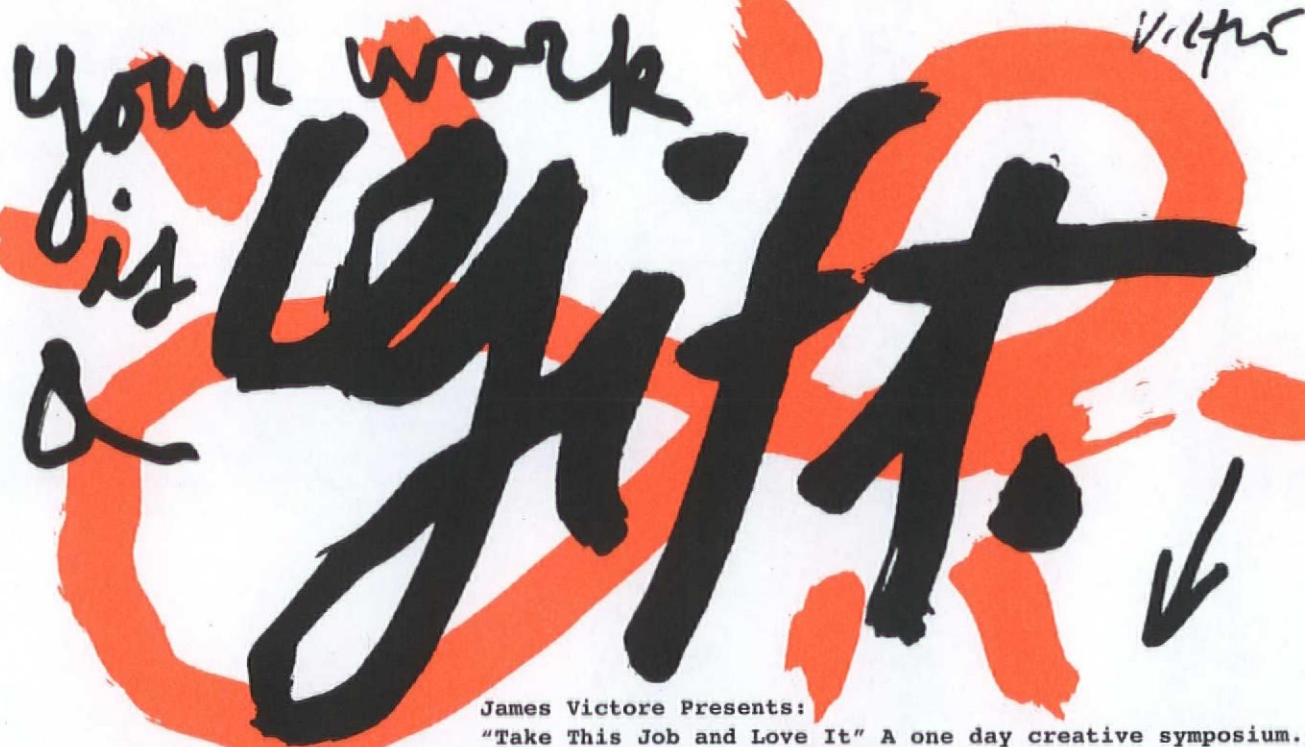
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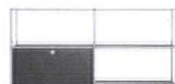


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# DESIGNING PRAGMATISM: AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN RONAN /

BUILD LLC

Earlier this year, we checked in with Chicago architect John Ronan, who's been making a marked impact on civic and institutional architecture. We admire his ability to get in the trenches and create design that has an impact on people's lives. His work with schools, community centers and foundations is contributing to the built environment in significant ways, and he was kind enough to elaborate on his process with us.

**We're big fans of Chicago—more so than other cities because architects seem to be regarded with high esteem there. Has that been your experience?**

Yes and no. Chicago is a place that has a lot of important architecture, and people here respect that legacy. And while Chicagoans take pride in architecture, it's a double-edged sword. Architects in Chicago aren't necessarily freer to explore than in other cities. There is a hardcore pragmatism that prevails here, which sometimes leads to expediency in matters of design and construction. Perhaps this pragmatism is derivative of the economic players in town – insurance companies, financial institutions – that don't have a big appetite for risk. As a result, you have to make pragmatic arguments to get your ideas accepted. On the positive side, this mindset produced the Chicago School; these architects could pull art out of this culture of pragmatism.

**Your website states that “design starts by cultivating an awareness of the realities of each project.” Do you have a standard method for applying this practice to the diverse range of projects we see coming out of your studio?**

It starts with a research period. We look into anything that may have bearing on the project, whether it's the site, environment or other less obvious factors – the situation of the project – that include sociological and historical aspects, for example. This involves asking questions and digging. Why is this being built here or now? What are the economic or social factors, and how do you make these characteristics part of the story? Usually you're given a loose outline of a project, so you have to dig a little to determine how it really came about. Then we assess what the dominant and recessive forces are that will impact the design. We weigh each factor according to the degree that they should influence the work and order them in a project-specific way. The exciting aspect about this process is that it changes from project to project, and there's detective work involved, which makes it interesting and fun.





Gary Comer Youth Center, Chicago, Illinois.

**Your work focuses less on problems and solutions and more on the natural outgrowth of an evolutionary process. Does this imply that there is a “right” place for the project to end up?**

Our methodology is very iterative, and it's rarely the case that there is only one way to do something. There have been a few projects in which we've locked onto something right away because it seemed obvious, but typically we look at many possibilities and then let the forces of the project narrow down the variations. The goal of the process is to almost make it look like it wasn't designed; we should arrive at a point where the “design” is invisible and not constantly referring back to the author. At the same time, the design should look so natural that people might think, *why would you do anything else?* The goal is to get to that point where the design feels intuitively “correct.”

**How do you vet clients? Distinguish the ones that want to go on the journey of architecture from the ones that don't?**

As an architect, you're interviewing the client while they're interviewing you. We like to explain to potential clients how the journey of discovery went with other projects, and if they're open-minded, they'll be willing to explore. Some clients come in with a fixed idea of what their project should be; we try and stay away from those clients. It's important to make clear what you're interested in exploring with them.

**Your projects are in some pretty gritty neighborhoods, such as the South Side. Do you take the viewpoint that good architecture can solve social problems?**

No, I don't think so. It's a naïve notion that architecture is the answer to social problems. Sometimes I see these architectural “ideas” competitions and wonder, is more architecture the answer? Look at Chicago: The low income housing projects built after the war – which everyone thought were a great idea at the time – are now being torn down. The profession lost credibility for this, and rightly so, but everything can't be blamed on the architecture; some problems stemmed from policy decisions. I think it's as equally misguided to think that architecture was the sole cause of these failed projects as it is to think that architecture offers the singular solution to these same problems. What architecture can do is provide support for a community to turn itself around. The Gary Comer Youth Center is a good example. It brought together these different groups and provided something tangible to rally around, which in turn revitalized the community. It's anyone's guess as to how the architecture's quality factors into the social success of a project. In this case, the architecture played a role in bringing attention to the needs of the community. But was it the reason for the success? That's questionable.



Above: South Shore International College Prep, Chicago, Illinois.  
Behind: Gary Comer College Prep, Chicago, Illinois.



**You're dealing with project types in some of the worst hit sectors of the US economy, namely public schools. And yet, you're producing capital "A" architecture. How are you enrolling school administrators to explore design possibilities in such tough times?**

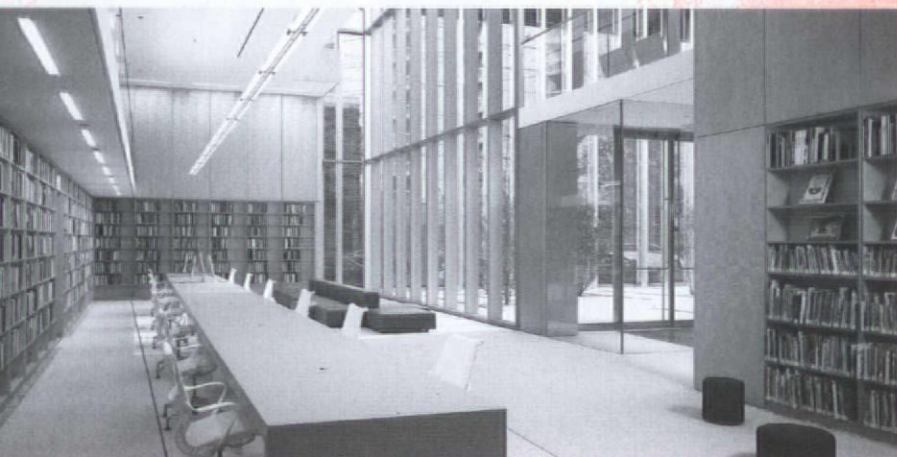
We've now completed schools for a variety of organizations, and we aim to generate designs that reflect and shape the culture of each school because they're all very different. We were designing two schools a few years back that were only a mile apart geographically but a million miles apart in culture and educational approaches. The cultures of Gary Comer College Prep and South Shore High School are both valid, and each deserved an individual response. Comer Prep wanted to incorporate a philosophy of transparency and accountability into the design, so there is glass between corridors and classrooms. This wouldn't fly in a public school because of security concerns. While it doesn't get talked about much, security is a defining factor in school design in urban areas. Security is a pre-condition for learning; you have to feel safe to be able to concentrate on learning, and it's hugely important in these schools where shootings occur in their surrounding neighborhoods on a regular basis. The South Shore High School was designed with clear sight lines so public areas could be supervised by security staff, for example. Comer Prep had a gated plaza off the street where students could socialize before and after school without worrying about street violence.

**Architectural Record recently interviewed students at South Shore Public High School. What's it like having 1,200 young critics of your work?**

The concerns and expectations are so different sometimes. The students come at it from such a different perspective, it's enlightening, and I learn a lot each time. I remember a writer for *Metropolis* came to the Gary Comer Youth Center to do an article after the opening. He asked one of the children what he liked best about the building, and the kid responded that he didn't have to worry about being shot there. At South Shore, they think the lockers are too narrow.

**Your academic projects give students an inspiring and modern impression of design at a young age. Are there examples of the buildings themselves becoming a part of the education?**

I hope so. I hope architecture is important to them, and that they understand the role that architecture plays in their education. While designing the South Shore High School, I was very aware of what the city had been building prior to that. There was a design trend in the 80s and 90s that tried to make schools fun for kids. The thinking went: Let's figure out what kids like and give them that; then they'll like school. They determined that kids like to go to the mall, so the thought was to make a school that looks like one. This was absolutely the wrong direction to take, and what I was trying to do was restore some dignity that had been lost and create a building in which students felt important when they walked through the door. The design of a building communicates how we feel about the people who use it. The architecture of South Shore High School communicates the values of dignity, hard work and discipline.



Above: Poetry Foundation, Chicago, Illinois.  
Behind: South Shore International College Prep, Chicago, Illinois.



**You recently won the AIA's National Honor Award for your Poetry Foundation in Chicago. What's it like working with a bunch of poets?**

It was a unique and memorable experience because poets are willing to go into unfamiliar territory; they're willing to take risks. Poets employ words that everybody understands, but they use them in new ways that make language unfamiliar. With the design, they were comfortable venturing into unknown territory, which requires a certain courage that not every client has. It's always great to engage with someone that's willing to take a risk and help create something they haven't seen before.

That's the hardest thing about practicing architecture in America. There are so many forces and agents that discourage risk-taking that it's unusual and refreshing to find a client that's willing to go on the adventure of design. It goes back to your first question.

**There's a dangerous amount of non-billable work that needs to be done in order to get the type of work you do (responding to RFQs, submitting proposals, competitions, general marketing). How do you decide where to invest your time and energy?**

You only have a certain amount of energy, and you have to be selective about what you expend it on. It has to be worthwhile, in the end. We ask ourselves, "Even if we don't win this competition, will the office grow, or will we get something out of this?" We also undertake a number of speculative projects in order to explore an issue or a material. We typically get more out of these projects than competitions.

More and more, because of the current economic times, owners and program managers are getting more comfortable asking architects to do work up front before getting the job. I'm hoping it doesn't become a structural change – a new normal – because that would be very destructive to the profession.

**Where do you see your firm going and what's ahead for you?**

There are forces at work in the profession that are pushing architects into an operating mode in which the task of the designer is about selecting rather than designing. I would like to resist that. The direction that I'd like to take is toward an architecture in which all the elements of a building are designed in a considered way and use technology not to dumb down the design and make its production more expedient but make it more special, thoughtful and unique.

**What's on your nightstand? What are you currently reading?**

David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King*, which was the novel he was working on when he died. **A**

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John Ronan is the founding principal of John Ronan Architects in Chicago. He holds a Master of Architecture degree with distinction from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan. In December 2000, he was named as a member of the Design Vanguard by *Architectural Record* magazine, and in January 2005, he was selected to be in The Architectural League of New York's Emerging Voices program. His work has been exhibited in galleries throughout the US, including the Graham Foundation, the Art Institute of Chicago and The Architectural League of New York's Urban Center, and his work has been featured in numerous international publications. His firm has been the recipient of two AIA Institute National Honor Awards. A monograph on his work, *Explorations* (Princeton Architectural Press), was released in 2010. John is currently Professor of Architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology College of Architecture, where he has taught since 1992.

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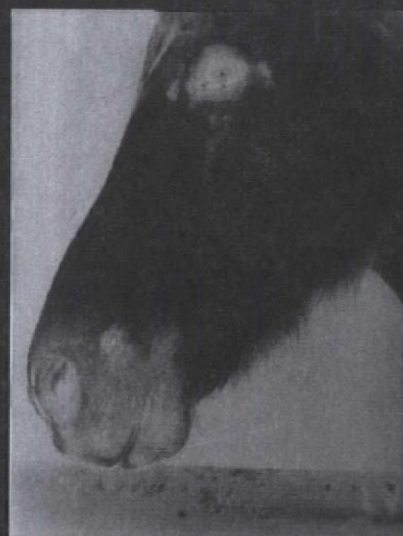
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George Nelson, *Problems of Design*, 1957

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# GLOBAL MORE=GLOBAL LESS

BARBARA SWIFT

Less is the future. Less water. Less food. Less resources. Less consumption. Less of everything. Less equals a mandate for massive change now—the shift in values, in use, in stewardship and in the way we inhabit the world. This can be terrifying, but is change, and less, something to be feared? I don't think so.

Human needs, values and cultural patterns are at the center of this question. Solutions and strategies dependent on the hair shirt (cilice) and morals will not succeed. Long-term change and the curiosity and innovation that supports it must be a source of pleasure and joy. Change that integrates richness as a part of living with less can succeed.

This ARCADE feature section, "Global More = Global Less," asserts that we can leap beyond the fear of change to find liberating strategies, pushing aside stasist arguments that delay action and moving forward. It includes the thinking and work of individuals and organizations that are moving beyond a resistance to change and action. This is hard work, requiring a fearless commitment and a willingness to be alone in an inherently optimistic pursuit.

In Kevin Kelly's "Clock in the Mountain," we see how The Long Now Foundation's 10,000 Year Clock project viscerally challenges the accepted short-term view. Casting forward with a time span equal to the period of human civilization, the Clock places us at the midpoint and begs us to reconsider our role on this planet. Kongjian Yu is doggedly, at great personal risk, doing just this—pushing the mountain. His efforts exemplify the questions raised by the Clock, and are effecting profound physical and cultural change in China. As he discusses in the following interview, Kongjian is compelled to act and is working with great skill in a profoundly complex economic, social, political and environmental situation. Working within the context of the deep cultural patterns of China, this is one man who understands the imperative need to consume less. If he can do this, we all can. As he pointedly notes, we in America have more freedom, and given the international influence of our consumptive lifestyle,

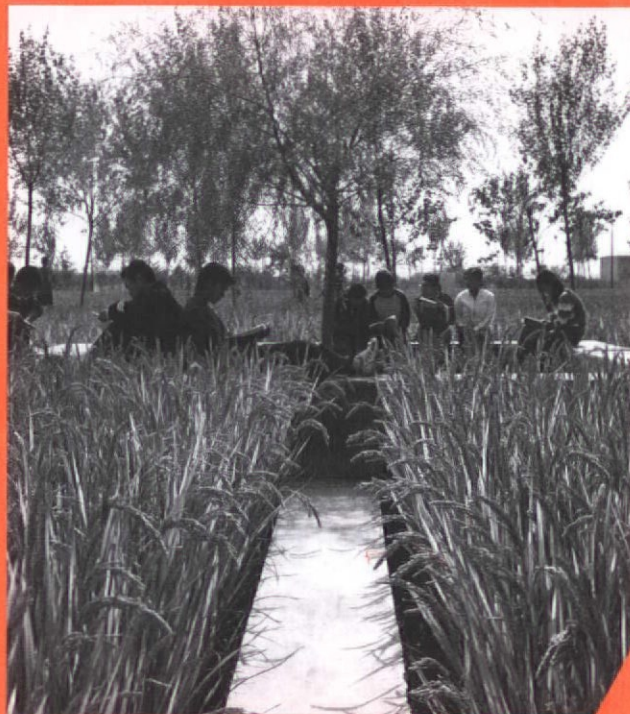


Photo: Kongjian Yu

we have both a huge responsibility and opportunity to effect change. Kongjian Yu considers values and lifestyle habits and their role in establishing patterns of consumption essential issues, and I agree. Take notice of his example and act.

BIG is implementing a simple manifest of "Hedonistic Sustainability" with the necessary complexity the real world requires. They have directly tackled the assumption that sacrifice is required to be sustainable—that it has to hurt to be good. To this, BIG says baloney and is countering this preconception with real projects, rigor and humor. Humans need pleasure—they are hedonistic at their cores. Pliny Fisk III, with the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems, has consistently pursued the question of cultural values and their physical manifestation in his work, and the following excerpts from a lengthy interview share his current investigation into brain function and communication. Like BIG, Pliny's work broadens the framework and tools we can bring to our efforts—a reason for optimism.



It takes small and big moves to change behavior. Anna Fahey and her family have tackled the addiction to consumption with the experiment of not buying new "stuff" for a year, an experience she shares in this issue. While not a new idea, they are successfully replacing the pleasure of consumption with other forms of gratification and living with less. This is a diet that works.

The simple basics keep coming up. A-P Hurd, in her essay "Restoring Our Faith in Investment" urges us to invest in the larger collective and against adding more rules when the basic moral structure like thou shalt not lie! does the job. Biologist and visionary behind The Long Now Foundation and the Whole Earth Catalog, Stewart Brand, reflects on a new sense of time growing out of the Apollo 8 moon mission and our first full view of the Earth from space. First published over a decade ago, his observations are still immensely relevant.

Many of these ideas are old, but the juxtapositions that are surfacing are surprising. Lisa Picard argues that the struggle for change and associated discomfort is no worse than discomfort resulting from life fractures due to inaction. Lisa is acting and thinks real estate development should be undertaken with mindfulness in order to nurture new, rather than habitual, responses. This has its roots in the teachings of Buddha and is a mind-blowing way to view development. In practice, it forces the thoughtful consideration of what is real and what is essential. It questions the superficial mindless trends and historic patterns of consumption. It drives strategies to a deeper level and while uncomfortable, pushes toward change.

Having time for mulling and incubation is essential to finding truly integrated, innovative strategies. Maggie Kaplan, founder of the foundation Invoking the Pause, has committed to supporting exploration through small grants that give recipients the freedom of time to explore intellectual and meaningful connections. This generosity is essential in shifting profoundly embedded values and patterns.

The contributors to this issue of ARCADE represent a small sample of the multitude of individuals and organizations working with conviction, dogged commitment, and often alone, toward effecting fundamental change. Many like Stewart Brand and Pliny Fisk III have made this their life's work. If you are impatient or given to whim, this path is not for you. If you are in it for the long run and really care, we live in a time when access to information is richer and more diverse than it has ever been in history. The opportunity for cross-disciplinary and integrated thinking, rapid innovation and action, is exceptional.

In terms of design, access to this wealth of information and examples of innovation fundamentally increases our ability to reframe the basic cultural values that define the world we live in. It is possible to build credible arguments, find like-minded thinkers and shift the cultural impulse from more to less. **A**

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**Barbara Swift** is a landscape architect, urban designer and founder of Swift Company LLC. Barbara's work at the European Ceramic Workcentre focused on the development of a building cladding system that collects and slowly releases water.



# MORE INDIVIDUALS EFFECTING POSITIVE CHANGE



## Rory Sutherland, Ogilvy & Mather

Cultural values and patterns are critical tools for those in advertising, and Rory Sutherland's observations in a number of recent TEDTalks merit watching. People who sell things and ideas must understand values and behavioral economics to be successful. If we are to shift, as Rory suggests, from our blind attraction to big actions with little return to small actions with huge return, we should understand these forces. He believes value is relative, which if true, presents a remarkable tool for all of us to use.

Inventor Pieter Hoff's Groasis Waterboxx exemplifies thinking that creates more from less. The Waterboxx, which lasts for 10 years, captures daily condensation—enough to support plant saplings or seeds. Dew collection is not new, but this simple strategy can be used to successfully address the fertility of arid and semi-arid lands impacted by war, deforestation and over-farming. Brilliantly, he has proposed a cross continental Waterboxx tree-windbreak in the African Sahara. The Waterboxx is a great example of a remarkable return on investment and a perfect response to the questions A-P Hurd raises in this issue about focusing on a long-term vision, not just rules and standard evaluations of return. How many Waterboxxes could be purchased and installed for the cost of one fighter jet?



## Pieter Hoff



## Brian Eno

Brian Eno - composer, producer and visual artist - is a board member of The Long Now Foundation, maker of the 10,000 Year Clock. His thoughts on "Now" from the foundation:

"The longer your sense of Now, the more past and future it includes. It's ironic that, at a time when humankind is at a peak of its technical powers, able to create huge global changes that will echo down the centuries, most of our social systems seem geared to increasingly short nows. Huge industries feel pressure to plan for the bottom line and the next shareholders meeting. Politicians feel forced to perform for the next election or opinion poll. The media attracts bigger audiences by spurring instant and heated reactions to human interest stories while overlooking longer-term issues—the real human interest.

...But can we accept that our actions and decisions have distant consequences and yet still dare to do anything? It was an act of complete faith to believe, in the days of slavery, that a way of life which had been materially very successful could be abandoned and replaced by another then yet unimagined, but somehow, it happened. We need to make a similar act of imagination now."



## CLOCK IN THE MOUNTAIN

KEVIN KELLY

There is a Clock ringing deep inside a mountain. It is a huge Clock, hundreds of feet tall, designed to tick for 10,000 years. Every once in a while the bells of this buried Clock play a melody. Each time the chimes ring, it's a melody the Clock has never played before and will not again for another 10,000 years. Most times the Clock rings when a visitor has wound it, but the Clock hoards energy from a different source, and occasionally it will ring itself when no one is around to hear it. It's anyone's guess how many beautiful songs will never be heard over the Clock's 10 millennial lifespan.

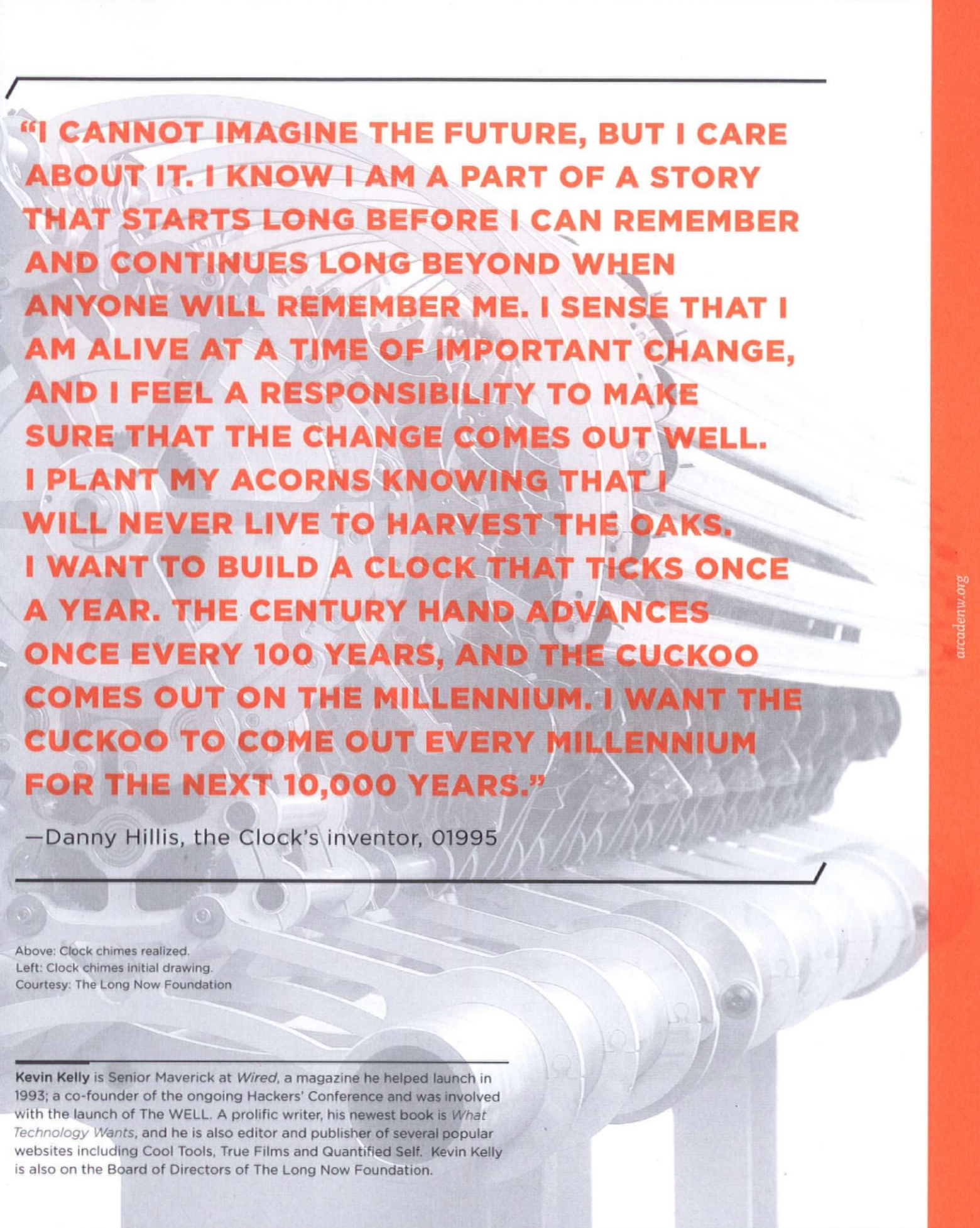
The Clock is real. It is now being built inside a mountain in western Texas. This Clock is the first of many millennial Clocks the designers hope will be built around the world and throughout time. There is a second site for another Clock already purchased at the top of a mountain in eastern Nevada, a site surrounded by a very large grove of 5,000-year-old bristlecone pines. Appropriately, bristlecone pines are among the longest-lived organisms on the planet. The designers of the Clock in Texas expect its chimes will keep ringing twice as long as the oldest bristlecone pine—5,000 years. Ten thousand years is about the age of civilization, so a 10K-year-old Clock would measure out a future of civilization equal to its past. That assumes we are in the middle of whatever journey we are on—an implicit statement of optimism.

The Clock is now being machined and assembled in California and Seattle. Meanwhile, the mountain in Texas is being readied. Why would anyone build a Clock inside a mountain with the hope that it will ring for 10,000 years? Part of the answer: just so people will ask this question, and having done so, prompt themselves to conjure notions of generations and millennia. If you have a Clock ticking for 10,000 years, what kinds of generational-scale questions and projects will it suggest?

If a Clock can keep going for ten millennia, shouldn't we make sure our civilization does as well? If the Clock keeps going after we are personally long dead, why not attempt other projects that require future generations to finish? The larger question is, as virologist Jonas Salk once asked, "Are we being good ancestors?" **A**







**"I CANNOT IMAGINE THE FUTURE, BUT I CARE ABOUT IT. I KNOW I AM A PART OF A STORY THAT STARTS LONG BEFORE I CAN REMEMBER AND CONTINUES LONG BEYOND WHEN ANYONE WILL REMEMBER ME. I SENSE THAT I AM ALIVE AT A TIME OF IMPORTANT CHANGE, AND I FEEL A RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE THAT THE CHANGE COMES OUT WELL. I PLANT MY ACORNS KNOWING THAT I WILL NEVER LIVE TO HARVEST THE OAKS. I WANT TO BUILD A CLOCK THAT TICKS ONCE A YEAR. THE CENTURY HAND ADVANCES ONCE EVERY 100 YEARS, AND THE CUCKOO COMES OUT ON THE MILLENNIUM. I WANT THE CUCKOO TO COME OUT EVERY MILLENNIUM FOR THE NEXT 10,000 YEARS."**

—Danny Hillis, the Clock's inventor, 01995

Above: Clock chimes realized.  
Left: Clock chimes initial drawing.  
Courtesy: The Long Now Foundation

**Kevin Kelly** is Senior Maverick at *Wired*, a magazine he helped launch in 1993; a co-founder of the ongoing Hackers' Conference and was involved with the launch of The WELL. A prolific writer, his newest book is *What Technology Wants*, and he is also editor and publisher of several popular websites including Cool Tools, True Films and Quantified Self. Kevin Kelly is also on the Board of Directors of The Long Now Foundation.



# INTERNATIONAL MODELS AND THE IMPERATIVE TO CHANGE

AN INTERVIEW WITH KONGJIAN YU

BARBARA SWIFT

It took very little coffee to light this conversation on fire over breakfast on a rainy winter Saturday prior to Kongjian Yu's Seattle Art Museum lecture.

Central to this issue of ARCADE is the imperative to change how we live and consume resources. It must be a source of joy, or change will not happen. We must address the fear of change. Your work is fearlessly pursuing change in China, a situation that is a little like David and Goliath.

Values are the fundamental issue. It's about shifting an entire culture. This kind of change is frightening for a developed civilization, especially for America. It means people must give up their current lifestyles and do something different. It's fearful. If you elect someone who has different values and says that you won't be driving a car or living in the suburbs or have a green lawn, this totally changes your daily life.

Changing American values is fundamental. For 150 years, the American lifestyle has been wasteful, and it causes so much trouble - war, fighting for oil and energy - and it's a model being replicated by developing countries.

**Why are the value frameworks of countries overtaken by the American lifestyle?**

This is the theory of cultural transformation. All cultures feel inferior when compared to others, and in this case, they say, "We will follow the American standard." Large houses and cars become valued. This is about power—economic power and social status. In my own culture, we have "high" and "low" culture—"high"



The Red Ribbon. Girls sitting on the red ribbon watching the sunset.

culture is elite, imperial. The emperor defined the values, and his criteria drove society. Everyone seeks this "high" culture. In China, the resources are limited, and not everyone can live in this way, so we also have the "low" culture that grows food, saves, conserves resources for survival and uses minimum energy. In the last 20 years, this pattern has changed from saving to consuming with the application of American consumerist values.

The key to capitalism is consumption. That is the basis of the political system and economy. It was good for America at the beginning when the country needed to be developed and resources were abundant—then capitalism worked. When resources lessen, the model does not work. The resources cannot sustain the consumption.

**You're taking risks in what you're doing—the challenges you're posing in your country by asking questions of moving from "high" to "low" culture.**

In China, you sacrifice your status when you demand a shift from "high" to "low" culture. You lose your value as defined by the imperial culture.

American society encourages risk. My culture literally beats people who take chances. I avoid taking political risks; instead I take intellectual risks. For



example, I gave a lecture in Minneapolis in 2006 in which I criticized both Chinese and US culture. I was reprimanded by Chinese landscape architects for criticizing China. I was told, "As an intellectual, you have a good background. You went to Harvard and have a professorship at the prestigious Beijing University. You can easily climb the ladder to high status. Don't criticize the past. Don't take risks. Follow the rules."

American society still encourages you to act freely. In my culture, the situation is risky and infused with fear. I wrote a book called *The Negative Planning Approach* that takes issue with current planning methods, and it was not published. Writing my book was not a political action; it was intellectual. This kind of censorship would not happen in your country, and this is why you Americans have to take real risks and make change happen.

**I think as the Chinese GDP drops from nine to seven, social debate will increase. I see the arts and artists like Ai Weiwei as the indicator of social change—with the increased silencing of social comment.**

A 1930-40 revolutionary used the metaphor of the box. You need to go outside the box to get inspiration, new criteria and a new value system. That is what I'm doing. As long as the system is closed, it will not change or grow. The whole civilization needs to evolve.

**US culture is defined by consumption, so I think the economic recession is an opportunity to shift cultural values. We have to do more with less and take care of each other. This experience changes us.**

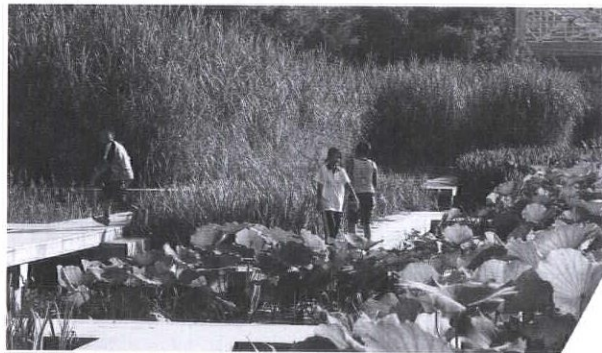
That's a good point. This means the culture itself becomes sustainable. With the Chinese economic change to the lower GDP, this is an opportunity. When the Chinese system was closed to globalization during the last century, the culture was more sustainable. Now the Chinese system is globalized and emulating American culture, and until the US changes the rules, the Chinese will still want more—more of everything. You Americans have to change the values. You have to address the water and energy problem.

There is a powerful trajectory in Chinese and American cultures, which the US is curating. The US



Qinhuangdao Forest park—transforming a working landscape into an urban park.

needs to present a new lifestyle. Everyone is looking to the US for social status. In China, only a very small group understands that America is struggling to find a new direction. This can be done, and I'm very optimistic. This is why I keep taking risks. I ignore what people are saying, and I find that more people in China are trying to follow what I am doing. For 13 years I have struggled within myself, against society and against the intellectual culture. [My firm] Turenscape is serving more than one-third of China. With more experience, people will



Zhongshan Park: a former shipyard transformed into an urban cultural & ecological park that regenerated a brownfield and catalyzed urban re-development.

have different aesthetics and values.

As designers, we need to present values through the materials we use. We have to say, OK, cheap materials can be as fashionable as expensive ones and even look better: "Your backyard of native grass looks better." How can you make messy-looking, natural landscapes that use less energy a new type of design aesthetic—a new value? This is how the design professions should think. We know we can have the Frank Gehry fantasy—beautiful, fancy and expensive. Can we find another way? **A**

**Kongjian Yu** is Dean of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, Peking University; Visiting Professor at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and President and Principal Designer of Turenscape. His work endeavors to define a new aesthetics based on environmental ethics.



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KAI-UWE BERGMANN, BIG

At the core of Bjarke Ingels Group's vision and work is both hedonism and sustainability—terms generally thought to be diametrically opposed. This juxtaposition inspires questions: "What exactly do you mean? Why put these two concepts together?" What does this mean for the built environment and your work?" For this issue of ARCADE, we went to BIG and asked.—Ed.

### Increasing the Quality of Life

At the center of our culture's general perception of sustainability is the idea of a moral code: How much of our existing quality of life are we prepared to sacrifice in order to afford being sustainable? It is the protestant perception that it has to hurt to be good and that living a sustainable life means doing less than we normally would. At BIG, we are looking at how sustainable cities and buildings can increase our quality of life. We want to find ways of designing cities and buildings as double ecosystems that are both ecologically and economically profitable and don't force people to alter their lifestyles in order to clear their consciences. We want people to be able to live exactly the way they want, or even better, because their world and cities are designed in such a way that they can actually do so. It is to approach the question of sustainability not as a moral dilemma but as a design challenge.

I have two favorite examples from Copenhagen in which sustainability brings an upgrade in experience rather than a downgrade:

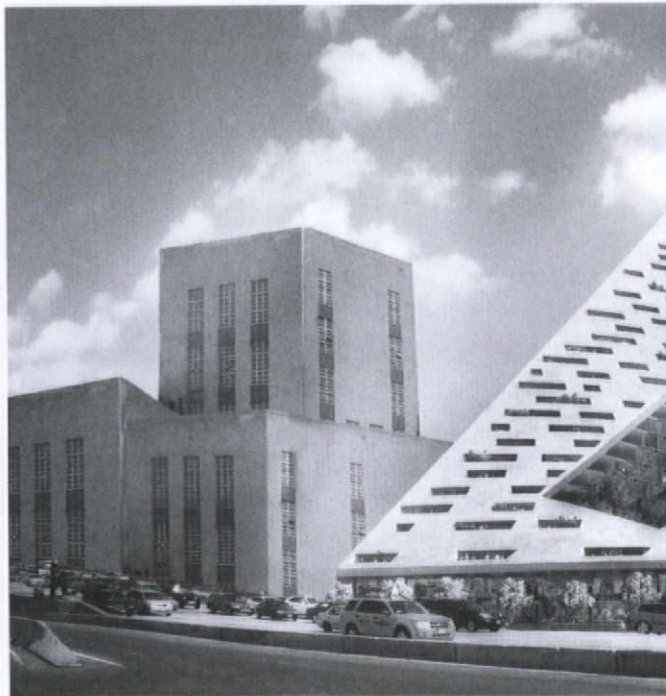
First, thirty-seven percent of Copenhageners today commute by bike; they never experience unenjoyable traffic jams because they have the convenience of going from point A to point B on a bicycle. For them, the joy of riding their bikes has replaced being stuck in traffic or looking aimlessly for parking.

Secondly, Copenhagen's port has become so clean people can swim in it. Copenhageners don't have to commute to the Danish equivalent of the Hamptons in order to have clean water. The first project that BIG did was the Copenhagen Harbour Bath, which extends public life into the water in the middle of the city.

### Economy and Ecology

With the double global crisis of finance and climate change, architects can't resort to being crazy, expensive artists creating spectacularly irrational forms to attract attention. A sustainable idea that is too expensive will never be applied on a large scale, which is what we need, and a business model that is based on exhausting our natural resources won't provide long-term growth. We have to pursue approaches that are both ecologically and economically successful. In one of our most current projects, the Waste-To-Energy power plant in Copenhagen, the mass of the building serves as a ski slope. It is economically profitable because it turns waste into heat and energy. It is environmentally profitable because it disposes of a landfill.

West 57th Residences, New York, New York. Photo: BIG





In Denmark, only 4% of waste ends up in landfills, as opposed to 99% in the US, and the rest is either turned into energy or recycled. In addition, the project is socially profitable because it creates a social activity - skiing - which would otherwise be impossible. With this project, Copenhagen will get its first ski mountain.

## Engineering Without Engines

Under the headline of "Engineering Without Engines," BIG is trying to find new ways of eliminating superfluous machinery through our contemporary capacity for calculation, computation and simulation. At the advent of Modernism, functional analysis led to the design of different machines to deliver different qualities in buildings; for example, people needed to be able to see in the dark depths of buildings, so electric lights were designed. People needed comfortable indoor temperatures, so central heating and AC were invented. In the end, the architecture was rendered an empty box void of certain functional characteristics, plugged into a stack of machines that made it inhabitable. These additions were perceived as providing freedom but at the cost of exploding energy consumption.



Copenhagen Harbour Bath, Copenhagen, Denmark.  
Photo: Casper Dalhoff

In a way, we at BIG are attempting to reinvent the term "vernacular architecture"—the form of architecture without architects that has emerged over centuries, in which peoples have found ways to build houses and cities to optimize living conditions in given climates. In pursuing this new vernacular architecture, we create buildings in which the qualities of the design come from the architecture and not from the machines we plug into it. Our current interests revolve around architecture that performs rather than appears—that looks different because it works differently.

Right now everybody needs to have an attitude toward sustainability. Perhaps we are raising a battle cry for architects and designers to stop whining and start designing. Our current lifestyle has a negative impact on the environment simply because when we conceived it, we weren't aware of the side effects. It's not that our manufacturing process or our transport systems *need* to have these side effects—it's that they weren't factored into the original equation. The question of pollution isn't a political or a moral question, it's a design challenge—one that every designer has the ability to change. **A**

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**Kai-Uwe Bergmann**, Partner at BIG, is a former Seattleite and ARCADE Editorial Committee member. Today he manages the BIG office in New York City.



# POPULATION DYNAMICS, COMMUNICATION AND THE NEOCORTEX

EXCERPTS FROM A CONVERSATION WITH PLINY FISK III

BARBARA SWIFT

The following is an excerpt from a March 2012 interview in which Pliny Fisk shared his thinking about critical issues influencing the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems. In Haiti, the Center's work incorporates the country's cultural tradition of wild color in village prototype kits used to create personalized, flexible housing—solutions growing out of the island's culture and ecology instead of the most recent disaster. At the other end of the spectrum, the Center's research includes a rapidly-curing, high-strength cement using brine instead of fresh water—a game-changing approach that creates a building material out of a waste product instead of continuing to use a limited resource. These examples illustrate the results of deep, innovative thinking and action.

## Pliny Fisk III:

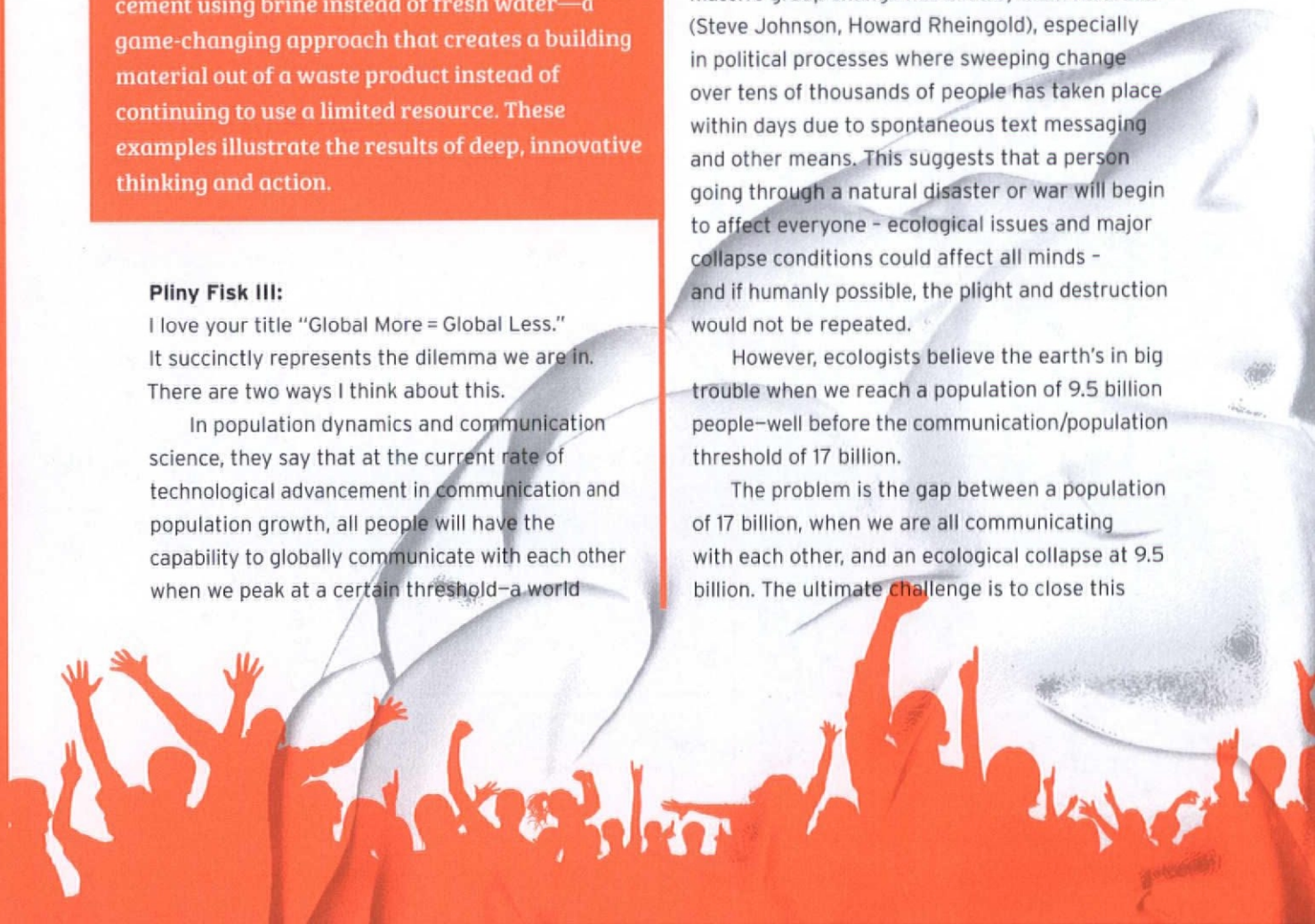
I love your title "Global More = Global Less." It succinctly represents the dilemma we are in. There are two ways I think about this.

In population dynamics and communication science, they say that at the current rate of technological advancement in communication and population growth, all people will have the capability to globally communicate with each other when we peak at a certain threshold—a world

population of approximately 17 billion people. Those focusing on technology and population (Von Foerster, Wolfram) follow in the footsteps of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in his conception of what he called the *noosphere*—a kind of global brain. They believe there's hope that when we reach the communication technology/population inflexion threshold, empathy between all people and life will occur, and the usual hurdles of misunderstanding will be conquered. An analogy has been made regarding bird, insect and fish swarms, and the possibility of massive group change has already been recorded (Steve Johnson, Howard Rheingold), especially in political processes where sweeping change over tens of thousands of people has taken place within days due to spontaneous text messaging and other means. This suggests that a person going through a natural disaster or war will begin to affect everyone - ecological issues and major collapse conditions could affect all minds - and if humanly possible, the plight and destruction would not be repeated.

However, ecologists believe the earth's in big trouble when we reach a population of 9.5 billion people—well before the communication/population threshold of 17 billion.

The problem is the gap between a population of 17 billion, when we are all communicating with each other, and an ecological collapse at 9.5 billion. The ultimate challenge is to close this





difference through massive understanding before it's too late. We must enable a gigantic shift in thinking before we hit 9.5 billion.

A second way of thinking about these issues is what I call the *biophilia dilemma*: the primitive brain versus the neocortex brain. Those within the biophilia movement are dealing primarily with the primitive brain, not the neocortex, the modern brain filled with commotion. My conclusion is that the neocortex loves change, feedback, activity, loves to connect patterns every millisecond. The primitive brain is slow, seasonal, yearly, with long feedback cycles. The neocortex wants immediate gratification. The current domination of the neocortex is a global disease, a virus that is now affecting nature herself. We have to play the brain game in addressing ecological issues.

Let's interpret what's going on in the sustainability movement. Not only are we being good nature/resource stewards, but perhaps more importantly, we are responding to what the brain wants: a use of resources which more and more represents an accelerated use of slow, earthly processes that cannot keep pace with our rate of consumption. But oddly enough, we seem to be responding in a neocortex manner, as we're placing entire life cycles into buildings, thus speeding our brain activity to monitor and manage those resources and their rate of replenishment in these faster paced life cycles. The whole water cycle source catchment, processing and cleaning, use and reuse—we're just shortening a very large natural cycle, and we're doing the same thing with air, energy and food. If this is true, we're seeing the primitive brain's desire to replicate slow moving, natural systems but sped-up to satisfy the neocortex. It would seem that our perception of what we are doing and where we are going requires much greater understanding of our brain as a mechanism that could offer a massive change in our understanding of resources.

I have some psychologist friends who say that as the spatial environments we are in become smaller, time speeds up in our brains, and it slows down when we're in large spaces. Another way of looking at this is that cell phones, iPads, and small screens make big spaces small. The brain has a time-space component different from physics.

**Barbara Swift:**

**So, the larger the space, the more the brain slows time. It allows your primitive brain to be heard over the noise of the neocortex? You might be able to align the two—the neocortex and the primitive brain.**

Yes, the larger the space, the more the brain slows time. You make decisions at a much different pace. Remember, humans evolved in large-scale environments, and now our conditions have changed—we're no longer in the wild, working closely with cycles of nature. Instead, we are creating a mimicry of natural cycles in order to bring them in sync with the modern brain.

We can start working with the cycles of life and use them to tickle the neocortex. Considered as an evolutionary phenomenon, this could be more important than taking a purely conservational approach or even the good steward angle. We need to work with what the brain craves within the context of planetary well-being. **A**

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**Pliny Fisk III** is a co-founder and co-director of the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems, a sustainable design and planning nonprofit established in 1975, making it the oldest continuously operating nonprofit in the United States. Pliny has also held positions as Faculty Fellow at Texas A & M, Mississippi State and the University of Oklahoma.



## STUFF

ANNA FAHEY

In 2012, my family resolved to quit buying new stuff for the entire year. This experiment is nothing new; in fact, it has been recycled many times over. This doesn't mean we won't buy anything at all. I'm buying new food and some essentials, like toiletries and medicine. But when we need something else - stuff - we try to find it used, or we borrow or rent. I see it as a triple bottom line approach: In a year of widespread belt-tightening, focusing on people, the planet and profits - or in this case, our pocketbooks - makes just as much sense for families as it does for businesses.

A big part of this experiment is about slowing down, taking the time to consider whether we need something or not and prioritizing where we spend our money.

Freedom from stuff is also a big part of it. In just a short while, I see that not accumulating new stuff means accounting for, valuing, taking good care of and making good use of the stuff we already have. I'm using up stuff that I'd long squirreled away and essentially forgotten. I'm clearing out drawers, closets and our attic—freedom!

A reader of my blog series on this experience (at [daily.sightline.org](http://daily.sightline.org)) suggested that we add another "R" to the familiar triad **reduce, reuse, recycle**: reflect. And we are indeed more mindful of stuff, having sworn off it for a spell. In fact, my family's experiment seems to be setting us on a path to expansion rather than contraction.

When you cut the strings to the consumerist treadmill, you find yourself with more time to spend with friends and family, more money and a better sense of what is fulfilling—beyond instant gratification. One family that inspired me to do this experiment (See: *No Impact Man*) lived for a year using as little energy and resources as possible. The father described his experience this way: "I saved money, lost weight, gained energy, improved my health, spent more quality time with family and friends, renewed my relationship with my wife and discovered an overall sense of freedom."

Red boots. Courtesy: Brooke, [secondhand-goods.blogspot.com](http://secondhand-goods.blogspot.com)



Six months in, one of the best things about the experiment is hearing from people who have been living this way for a long time, cutting their carbon footprints, saving money, weathering the recession and re-jiggering their priorities to favor family, friends and financial sanity over credit card debt and mindless materialism.

These "no-new" veterans will proudly tell you that new stuff, with all of its high-priced packaging, shipping, off-gassing and carbon-intensive manufacturing, is overrated. This doesn't mean they hate stuff or even shopping! **Au contraire.** There are plenty of connoisseurs and collectors in our no-new ranks. One characterizes herself as an Elite Thrifter. Because they hunt and forage for these treasures, pawing through lots of discards to find them, they cherish them more than items purchased new. **A**

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**Anna Fahey** is senior communications strategist at Sightline Institute in Seattle—a sustainability policy think tank. Anna's talking points memos, messaging workshops and blog posts tackle tricky topics, such as climate change and the role of government.





Below left to right:  
Thrift store party dress,  
modeled by Amanda Mathson.  
Courtesy: lodekka.com  
Photo: Focus97

Thrift store brunch set.  
Courtesy: Melanie Coerver

Good Will baby shoes.  
Courtesy: Leslie Schuyler





# RESTORING OUR FAITH IN INVESTMENT

WHY WE NEED FEWER RULES AND HIGHER STANDARDS

A-P HURD

In the United States over the past decade, we have lost confidence in both the government and the private sector to do the right things with our money, and as a result, we just don't seem to have the stomach for making any new investments, even when good options exist. For instance, investing to reduce the risk of climate change impacts has a highly profitable ROI, as *The Economist* and many other respected researchers have concluded. But it takes capital, and in this fearful environment, we are at an impasse. We have lost faith in the ability of our institutions to use our financial resources to create a better future. It is even possible that we have lost faith in the fundamental mechanisms that govern our institutions.

**This is a worrisome turn of mind.**

Over the past few months, I've been reading the *Little House on the Prairie* books to my daughter and the sequels about her daughter Rose that stretch into the early 20th century. One of the fascinating things about re-reading these books as an adult is encountering the relationship between the westward pioneers and their stuff. When Laura is five, she is delighted at Christmas to get her own tin cup for drinking, so that she doesn't have to share one with her sister, Mary. There is barely enough, and yet the feeling of scarcity is rare in these stories. Two tin cups for two sisters is enough.

Once upon a time, when people owned three outfits, they would take the rest of their money and invest in their future. Which of us could say the same?

It is perhaps no coincidence that one of the most massive investment booms this country has ever had took place in the late 19th century. I am not talking about the stock market specifically, though the capital markets of that time provide some fascinating stories, but the investment in things that would bear on one's descendants. At a national level, there was the building of the railroads across the country and the thousands of individual decisions to move west and hold on to a claim. In Seattle, we had the building of the ship canal and the Denny Regrade.

Interestingly, this was not a low interest rate environment. In many cases, even secured personal loans (for instance, a mortgage on a farm) ran at 15%. Capital markets were relatively illiquid with much higher frictional costs than today, and yet, people invested. They invested in every way, time and money, not because capital was cheap but because they had hope. They recognized market risk, but they trusted the fundamental integrity of their institutions, both public and private.



Perhaps the greatest loss of this recession is the loss of our faith in government and in the private sector to invest our money for our future gain. What else could provoke a political discourse where “big government” is generally vilified, while the 99% have also lost all faith in the private sector? If we don’t believe in either of these institutions, than what mechanism do we have left through which to invest? We are reduced to making small, personal choices that are difficult to align into true systemic change, or we pour our money into our own private sphere, using it to buy houses and fill them with stuff. How do we rebuild institutions that are worthy of our faith and our investment?

Perhaps we need to shore them up with fewer rules. It sounds like a paradox, but maybe it isn’t. The proliferation of rules, particularly in a litigious society (and we are one) can make people think that the rules are all that matter. If you haven’t broken a rule, you aren’t doing anything wrong. We have so many rules that we dissolve our focus on outcomes. Our rules also make us less nimble and responsive to emerging ideas for good or for bad. This is true across both government and in the private sector.

Complex systems of rules can lead us away from the discussion of what we are actually trying to do. Even worse, they can be a barrier to innovation and even social equity. Think about whether Sarbanes Oxley is really engendering better corporate citizenship or just more barriers to entrepreneurialism.

The more rules we pile on, the less we look to personal judgment or common sense. Are we really well served by a Seattle land use code that has 49 chapters and over 700 pages? Do the bankers in London really need more rules to know that it’s a bad idea to skew their LIBOR rate reports?

Perhaps the way forward, the way to find our investment hearts again, is to dump a whole lot of rules out the window and focus once again on outcomes: simple rules like “thou shall not lie to or mislead your investors.”

We need to go back and articulate why our institutions exist in the first place and what we can expect if we give these institutions our money, in trust. Then, we need to evaluate them – and their leaders – not on whether they follow some detailed set of rules, but on how well they serve our society. **A**

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**A-P Hurd** is a Vice President at Touchstone, responsible for corporate and project strategy. She is also a Runstad Fellow in the College of Built Environments at the University of Washington, where she teaches a course on development economics. A-P is the author of *The Carbon Efficient City*, recently released by University of Washington Press.



## COLLATERAL DELIGHTS: A CONVERSATION WITH MAGGIE KAPLAN

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF INVOKING THE PAUSE

GABRIELA DENISE FRANK

This spring, I spoke with Maggie Kaplan, founder of Invoking the Pause (ITP), an environmentally-driven small-grants program that offers creative respites to seed innovation through interdisciplinary collaborations. The program seeks to advance public awareness and engagement around climate change by helping individuals and communities understand its impact on our daily lives. As part of CityLab7, a group that has received ITP grants, I was pleased to talk with Maggie about her vision behind the program and her thoughts on "less."

### How did ITP begin?

In 2007, I participated in a strategic philanthropy program, The Philanthropy Workshop West (TPWW), where I was to present a new non-profit initiative. Around this time I saw *An Inconvenient Truth*. The world's challenges seemed so insurmountable that I wanted to hide.

To clear my head, I walked on the Sonoma bike path where I met Lisa Micheli, a Switzer Fellow and geomorphologist who had also seen the film. She wished for more time to collaborate with a colleague, wanting to take action in the Bay Area on the data presented in the film. To do so, they both needed a break from their busy professional lives.

In that moment, I realized I could give them the "gift of a pause." I funded them to take a week off of work to conduct their research, asking them to report their findings and next steps. In a cabin in the Sierra Mountains, Lisa Micheli and Healy Hamilton, who directed the Center for Applied Biodiversity Informatics at the California Academy of Sciences, were the first to "invoke the pause."



I realized that I had initiated more than a project for TPWW; I was building a program with collaboration and time for innovative reflection at its heart.

ITP is an idea incubator that creates community. We are all equals: I offer economic resources and guidance, and our Grant Partners bring ideas. Together, we co-create a structure for brainstorming, support and implementation.

### This issue of ARCADE focuses on "less." What does that mean to you?

When I was a corporate real estate lawyer, we discussed ROI—return on investment. With ITP, I'm questioning whether dollars are the best measure of value. Instead of ROI, I've coined the term "ROR"—return on relationships. Relationships are a softer science, sometimes challenging to measure in quantitative terms, but isn't that where value arises?

Look at the collaborations between CityLab7, Grant Partner Gary Nabhan, Olson Kundig Architects, Schuchart/Dow and others who helped implement Fertile Grounds. In two months, you raised awareness,



changed business practices and sparked new relationships. What will happen in a year?

I believe that small can be beautiful and impactful. None of our grants exceed \$10,000.

### **What have Grant Partners discovered in their "pauses"?**

I've seen profound changes in scientist Nicole Heller, who feared that people were not paying attention to the science of climate change. She has discovered that facts aren't enough to shift attitudes or behaviors. She has realized that, as a climate scientist, she has to expand her own world view.

This year, Nicole is our first returning Grant Partner to receive a new grant. She'll study how to impact climate change messaging by drawing upon partners in the worlds of science, the arts, neurobiology and environmental science.

### **Several projects came to fruition last year. What's next?**

ITP does not limit funding to one or two phases; there are four funding phases to encourage Grant Partners to develop their projects. Projects are not "completed" at the end of funding cycles; we continue to seek nexuses between past, current and new Grant Partners.

We are also exploring a new kind of collaboration between Chris Desser (The Catalogue of Extinct Experiences) and the Presidio Graduate School of Sustainability (PGS) uniting creativity, art and sustainability. Other steps include finding an organizational partner to collaborate with ITP to gain access to larger funding sources that would allow more Grant Partners to participate each year.

Of utmost importance is keeping you all connected, so that your relationships thrive, enrich each other and expand the reach of your work.

### **When all the ITP Grant Partners convened in 2010, we were scared to feel hopeful; that has shifted as we've seen the impact of our collaborations. What gives you hope?**

All of you and your power to manifest ideas in dynamic ways. Together, we've created a community on the cutting edge of new strategies for addressing climate change.

Two Grant Partners - the Council of Pronghorn and St. John the Divine - made an incredible impact last year. Millions of visitors walked amidst the 23 pronghorns in the nave of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York; millions more can see the video online. Who will be inspired to act based on experiencing their collaboration?

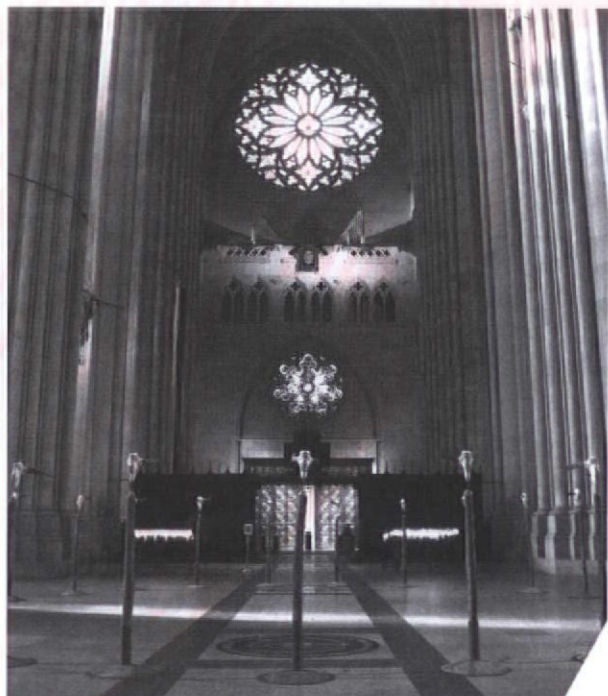
I love the magic of the unknown, knowing that it moves to its own rhythms and oftentimes manifests in ways better than we could dream. **A**

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**Maggie Kaplan** is an attorney and founder of Invoking the Pause, a foundation established in 2007 that gives the gift of time. [invokingthepause.org](http://invokingthepause.org).

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**Gabriela Denise Frank** is a writer, founding member of CityLab7, and a senior business development manager for Olson Kundig Architects.





## TAKING THE LONG VIEW

STEWART BRAND

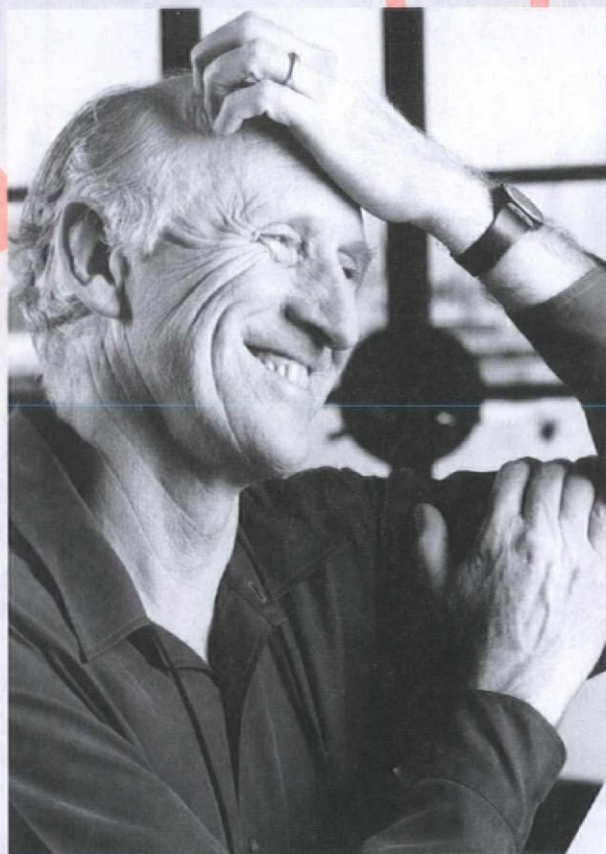
This article first appeared in *TIME* magazine on 26 April 2000. Written over a decade ago, Brand's observations remain timely—Perhaps more so now than ever. They also inspire reflection as thoughts read in hindsight often do: In the last 12 years, how far have we come? Where are we going? How long is our view?—Ed.

It is no accident of history that the first Earth Day, in April 1970, came so soon after color photographs of the whole earth from space were made by homesick astronauts on the Apollo 8 mission to the moon in December 1968.

Those riveting Earth photos reframed everything. For the first time, humanity saw itself from outside. The visible features from space were living blue ocean, living green-brown continents, dazzling polar ice and a busy atmosphere, all set like a delicate jewel in vast immensities of hard-vacuum space. Humanity's habitat looked tiny, fragile and rare.

Suddenly, humans had a planet to tend to. Planet-scale perspective on atmospheric health, ocean health and stable climate made strictly national approaches obsolete. Environmental non-governmental organizations bloomed to set in motion mechanisms for emerging global governance.

Even more important, a new time perspective arose. Such issues as climate, biodiversity and population could be dealt with only in terms of multiple decades, even multiple centuries. Governments limited to next-election thinking had no way to grasp environmental issues. Corporations limited to next-quarter perspective were similarly blinded. Both blundered environmentally because they could not operate on a planetary time scale. Ecological problems were thought unsolvable because they could not be solved in a year or two.



Behind: Earth taken from Apollo 8, 1970. Photo: US Government  
Left: Stewart Brand. Courtesy the author

That's changing. Environmentalism is teaching the world's citizens, governments and corporations to think long term—to realize that lag times and lead times in the dynamics of atmosphere and climate are decades long and to think of forests, oceans and aquifers as "multigeneration equity." It turns out that environmental problems are solvable. It's just that it takes focused effort over a decade or three to move toward solutions, and the solutions sometimes take centuries. Environmentalism teaches patience.



Patience, I believe, is a core competency of a healthy civilization. I propose that it is useful and realistic to think of a civilization as operating at a number of different paces at the same time. Fashion and commerce change quickly, as they should. Nature and culture change slowly, as they should. Infrastructure and governance move along at middling rates of change.

Because we understandably pay most attention to the fast-changing elements, we forget that the real power lies in the domains of deep, slow change. Nature and culture define the limits of what's possible for the quicker elements, and they provide the base of continuity for the whole game. While fashion and commerce "learn" quickly, governance and culture integrate lessons steadily and "remember." The combination of quick learning and deep remembering makes a civilization strong against shocks and profoundly adaptable. Blending in with the pace of natural systems engages the power of their resilience.

Back in the 20th century, Russia showed what happens when the differing paces of change are not honored. The Soviet Revolution of 1917 transformed governance at fashion pace, and then everything was run at infrastructure pace—Five-Year Plans. Commerce was slowed to a crawl, and fashion came to what seemed like a dead stop. Deep-seated culture was forced to pretend that it was changing at the pace of the plans, and nature dropped right out of the picture. When the system inevitably broke, there was little robustness left in the culture, scant adaptivity left in commerce and the Russian environment was a poisoned wreck.

A sound environmentalism doesn't try to slow commerce, but it must act to prevent commerce from violating the pace of nature (or, for that matter, of culture). The destruction of the cod fishery in the northwestern Atlantic was the work of commerce unfettered by intelligent governance. Governments like Canada's kept trying to protect the jobs of fishermen without listening to what was well known at a cultural level in the fishing communities—that the size of the fish and the catch was shrinking steadily. The alarmed environmental scientists on the scene were ignored. Next time perhaps they won't be. The demise of the fishery was an economic disaster.

Science, along with such technology as Earth satellites, gave us the necessary long-term perspective on the harmful environmental trends under way. Goaded by environmental organizations, the various bodies of governance are gradually learning how to respond—with sustained, alert, patient action.

Future historians may note that in the same period that technology acceleration was driving the world to operate on fleeting "Internet time," environmentalists were teaching the world the long-term foresight and long-term responsibility of biosphere time. Just when technology was busy making us smarter, environmental awareness began to make us wiser. **A**

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**Stewart Brand** is a co-founder and president of The Long Now Foundation and co-founder of Global Business Network. He created and edited the *Whole Earth Catalog*, and co-founded the Hackers Conference and The WELL. His books include *The Clock of the Long Now*, *How Buildings Learn*, and *The Media Lab*. His most recent book, titled *Whole Earth Discipline*, is published by Viking in the US and Atlantic in the UK. He graduated in Biology from Stanford and served as an Infantry officer.



## THE STRUGGLE FOR CHANGE AND PERSISTENT ERROR

LISA PICARD

I recently met a French astronaut in the lobby of my hotel in Sweden. He was attending the international Space Conference, and the book in my hands, *Design for Growth*, caught his attention. He stopped, asked to open the book, and queried, "Do you think scientists can be innovative?"

"Why do you ask?" I responded.

He said after a long pause, "Every year we photograph the Earth from space. Every year we are amazed at the destruction. We see the rain forests and the depletion, the undeniable depletion that spreads and extends year after year. And every year we see the destruction grow without any ability to change it. We are captive, stuck in the quagmire and fearful of stopping our own patterns of consumption. I don't think we can change or innovate when we are attached to the status quo."

Then he said something to cut all the subtlety.

"It takes a fracture." He said.

"Fracture?"

"Yes," he said, "I believe that change is only possible upon the experience of a fracture. People can only change once there is a break, the realization of personal loss, a forced change that reduces the desirability or availability of the status quo."

I left with a realization of the stresses around me, the sensations of near fracturing. Can we really feel these fissures and cultivate the awareness and need for change now before we actually break?

Brain research has observed that once we make an error (e.g. while adding up a column of figures), we tend to repeat it again and again. This is known as persistent error. The same habit occurs when we ponder a problem; as our thoughts take a certain course and that path is followed the next time, it becomes firmer with

each use until finally the connection is so well established that the chain is very difficult to break.

We see change and doing the hard work to make it happen as risky. Typically, we perceive risk as something to be avoided, rather than what it is: a deviation from the expected—positive or negative. Deviating and standing out from the crowd of complainers, naysayers and friends can foster innovation and potentially avoid a fracture.

Discomfort with the uncertainty risk brings is the inhibitor of change and innovation. However, the consequence of repeating comfortable patterns is ultimately a fracture, which is itself a form of uncertainty. Therefore, uncertainty is always the constant.

To grow as humans, we must migrate from what we knew gave us comfort or even past success. We all started out naked and hungry and ever attentive to what would provide success and survival. At some point we experienced comfort, then protected it, trying to keep it forever. Governments, institutions and companies do the same.

It is here where change from the status quo, hard work and awareness must happen - for the individual and the collective - to innovate and avoid the fracture—to no longer be held captive by inaction and change the yearly pattern of depletion and destruction seen from space. **A**

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**Lisa Picard** is the Executive Vice President in Seattle and the Regional Manager for Skanska USA Commercial Development. She holds two master's degrees from MIT and is known for her innovative approach to high quality developments.





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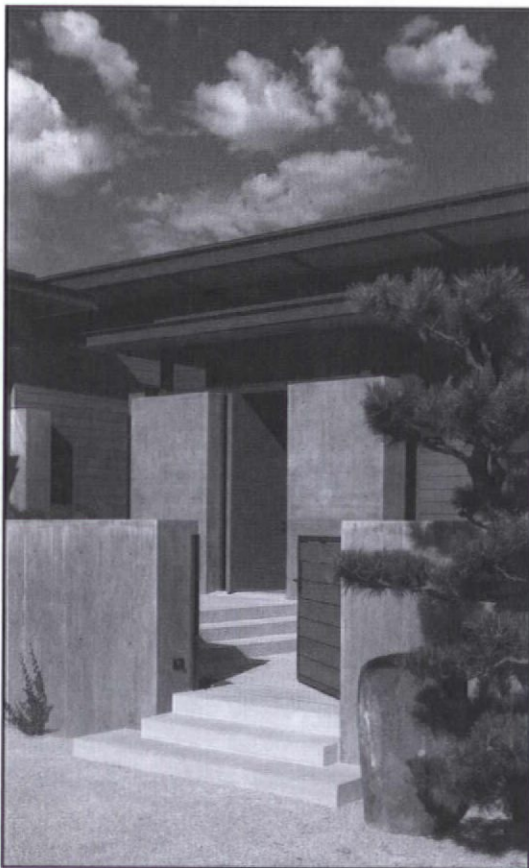
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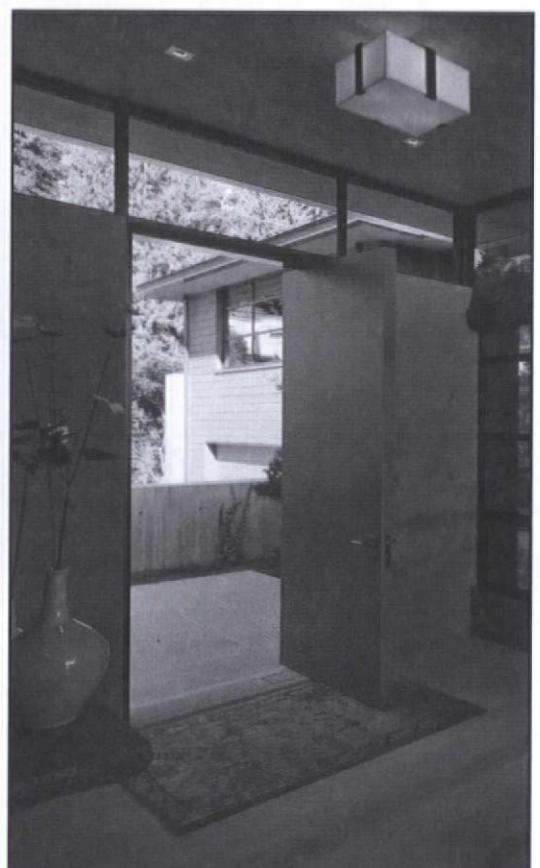
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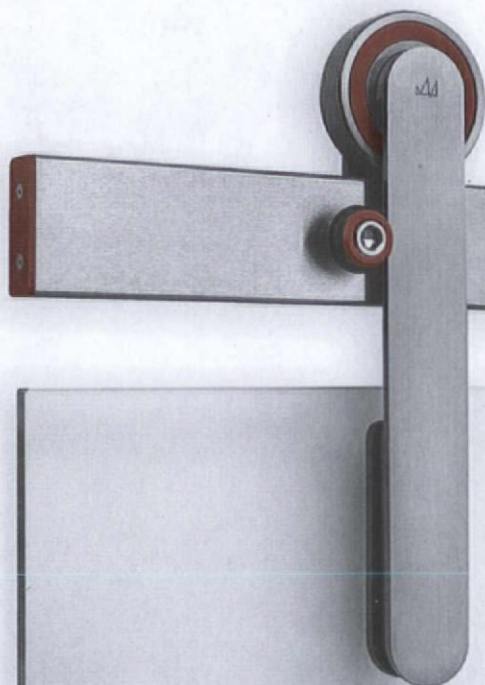
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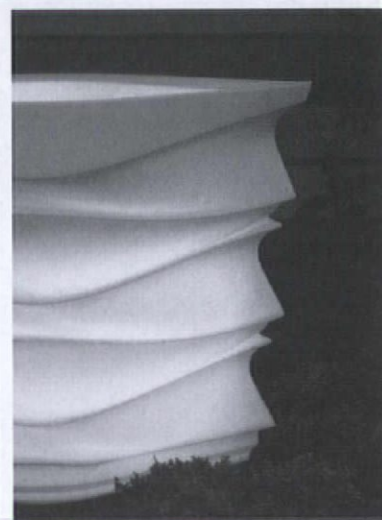
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# ABANDONMENT DORMANCY

AARON ASIS

**"Ruins might well be thought of as living organisms embodying notions of progress, forgetfulness and reclamation."**

— Dylan Trigg

I guess my interest in ruins began as a teenager wandering back-and-forth along the narrow path of the then abandoned Highline in Manhattan. I had always enjoyed the serenity of its elevated platform but often questioned why I was almost always the only person up there, and if I was so often alone, then what would the fate of the Highline inevitably be? Of course, now I better understand that most people prefer not to trespass as a means of finding calm and know that the abandoned Highline would eventually land on the cover of every design magazine published in the year 2010. Who knew?


At any rate, over the past decade, my interest in abandonment has escalated from a curiosity to an over-intellectualized obsession and a documentation of post-industrial structures in their various stages of decay. I've come to realize that terms like "urban atrophy" and "ruin porn" are becoming commonplace and that the past, present and future of these structures have become lightning rods for dynamic conversation—from misuse to reuse. But, too often, our appreciation for the past is romanticized, our relationship with the present is ignored, and our solution for the future is removal or re-appropriation. Why do we routinely insist on normalizing our ruins? Where is our acceptance?

Background: Packard Plant, Detroit, Michigan.

All photos: Aaron Asis



Below: Fisher Body Plant, Detroit, Michigan.  
Background: New York Dock Company, Brooklyn, New York.

PHOTO ESSAY 



ARCADE 30.4 Fall 2012

Despite this curious relationship between ruins and the market forces hoping to redefine their use (or eliminate them), the value of these spaces should not be limited to merely an acceptance of abandonment. In fact, by definition these spaces are not even abandoned; rather, they are dormant—rich in texture, life and a deviant sense of appreciation for the decorated surfaces, uneven floorboards and crystalline fields of broken glass that combine to create unexpectedly tranquil and unique spatial environments. Why are we so quick to discredit the integrity and uncertain future of these structures? Where is their security?

That said, I am not suggesting that we all migrate to the nearest derelict train station to start new lives of utopian bliss. That would be ridiculous. Rather, I am proposing that we question our relationships with these structures. Maybe their value is best served in decay—to challenge our aesthetic sensibilities and consumerist tendencies in the name of progress. Or maybe the true value of these spaces is simply in their ability to inspire our child-like enthusiasm for these wondrous facilities that now stand dormant, remnants of an endangered industrialized empire. Who really knows?

Either way, I do believe that we have more to learn from the subtext of abandonment dormancy than we think, and hopefully these pictures are worth a few thousand words to that end. **A**

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**Aaron Asis** works as an architect at DLR Group and as an independent photographer/artist in Seattle. You can see his work at [aaronasis.com](http://aaronasis.com) and contact him at [aasis@DLRgroup.com](mailto:aasis@DLRgroup.com).





**“Often obscure in function and value, objects in ruin speak back to a material world in which things are contained by assigned place and normative meanings.”**

— Tim Edensor

Top: A&A Metal Works, Buffalo, New York.

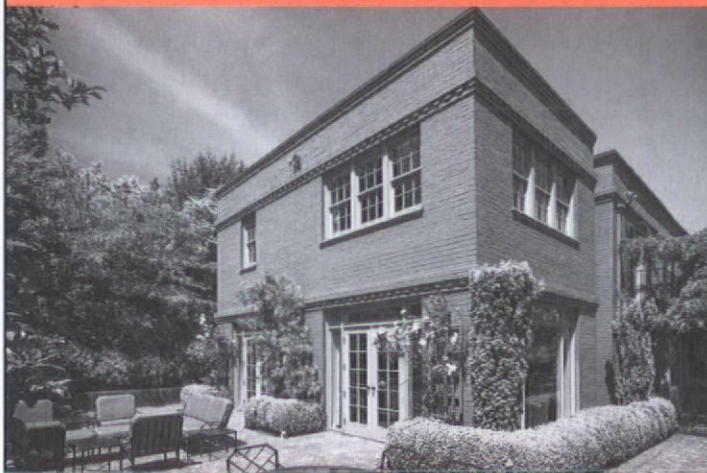
Middle: Packard Plant, Detroit, Michigan.

Bottom: Hamm's Brewery, Minneapolis, Minnesota.



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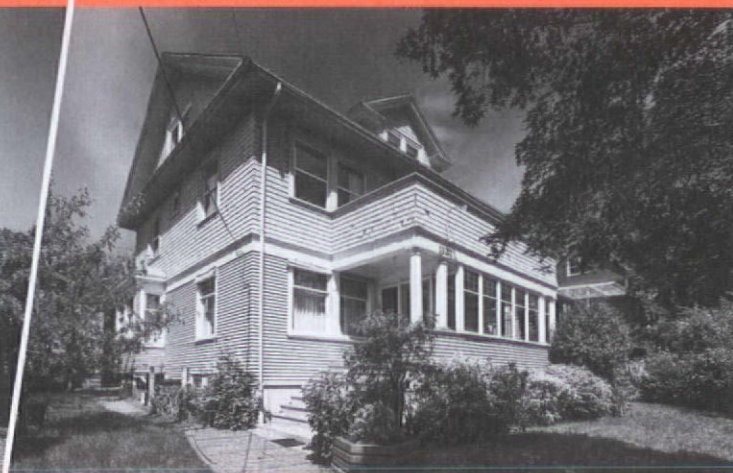
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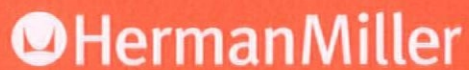
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# MAKING YOUR OWN HOUSE, ONE BLOCK AT A TIME /

JEFFREY KARL OCHSNER

William and Elizabeth Tracy were nothing if not dedicated. Beginning in the late spring of 1955 they started casting concrete blocks. Working with their contractor they had commissioned a set of metal forms that accommodated various wood inserts to create the different block patterns they required. Over the course of a year, casting blocks twice a day, five days each week (in addition to working full time jobs), they personally cast roughly 1,700 modular concrete blocks of a wide variety of types—wall (some to accommodate glass), corner, jamb, roof-ceiling, roof edge and so on. Wall blocks were generally 12' x 24' x 4'; ceiling blocks, the heaviest—weighing about 160 pounds each—were 24' x 24' x 4'. Today, we marvel at the Tracys' patience and dedication. The blocks were all for their own house, a Usonian Automatic, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Not only dedicated, the Tracys were also persistent. They had been, in a sense, Wright students; in the summer of 1952, they traveled across the Midwest and visited Wright buildings in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan. But when they contacted the Wright office in 1953 requesting a house design, an apprentice, serving as Wright's secretary, wrote back that the architect was unable to help—the site in Normandy Park was too far, their budget too small. When the Tracys approached architect and former Wright apprentice Milton Stricker, he recognized their devotion to Wright's ideas and intervened on their behalf. In August 1954, William Tracy again wrote to Wright, and this time he mentioned that contractor Ray Brandes, for whom Wright had designed a house in Issaquah, had



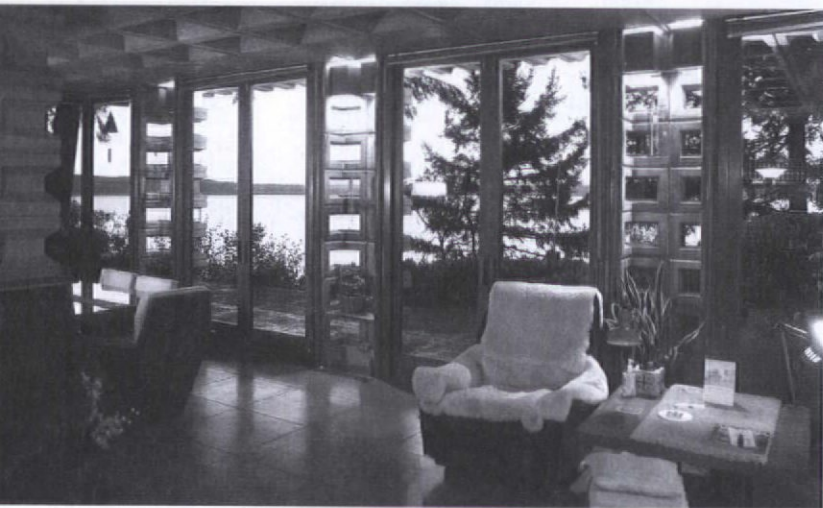
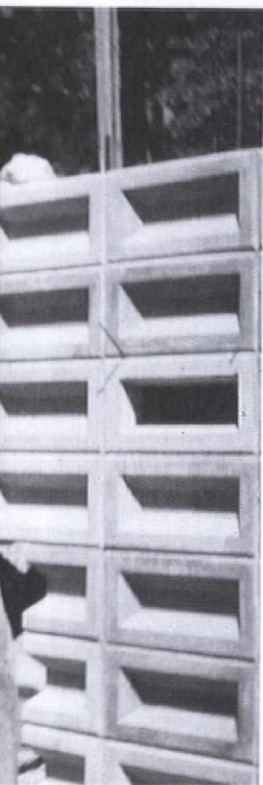
Photo courtesy of the Estate of Martha (Elizabeth) Tracy

offered to build the house, and Stricker had volunteered to supervise. He also suggested the house might be constructed using Wright's patented block technique, an integrated system for design and construction using modular concrete blocks that Wright had perfected in about 1949. Wright called both the blocks and the buildings made of the blocks by the name "Usonian Automatics."

Wright completed the design by November 1954; construction went forward the following July. Although Wright had intended his Usonian Automatics to offer a way for a wide range of clients to build their own houses, construction with this technique is actually quite demanding. The blocks are held together with reinforcing rods running horizontally and vertically in the walls and in two directions in the ceiling/roof; creamy grout poured into grooves cast in the blocks as well as the spaces between the blocks bonds the reinforcing rods and the



blocks. The system is modular in three dimensions but depends on meeting very tight tolerances; each hand-made block must be the correct shape and size, and the assembly must be precise such that the whole system will properly bond together. As a result, relatively few Usonian Automatics were actually built. Other than the Tracy house, the



Top and above photos: Larry Woodin, Echome Foundation

nearest examples are in Arizona and the Midwest.

With Brandes as their contractor and Stricker supervising the work, the Tracys achieved an extraordinary result. Although the three-bedroom house has an area of only 1,150 square feet, it feels much larger. The house is set into a slight hill. The solid blocks on the east side near the entrance are opaque, offering little hint of what is beyond. Inside, the living and dining room flow together around the fireplace and open up to the west with floor-to-ceiling doors and blocks with embedded glass for columns to a terrace overlooking Puget Sound 150-feet below. The blocks are light gray; the natural redwood of the doors, trim and other elements provides a rich contrast. The concrete floors are terra cotta colored. There are built-in benches and other furniture of Wright's design.

The Tracys loved their home and generously showed it to many visitors. Although constructed of blocks the Tracys made themselves, the house proved to be quite sturdy; there have been several earthquakes in the region – the last in 2001 – but the house shows no evidence of cracking. During more than a half-century, the only change the Tracys made was the construction of a small workshop at the back of the carport in the 1960s. Although Wright's successors, the Taliesin Fellows, designed an expansion of the carport, it was never built. William Tracy died in July 2008; Elizabeth in August 2010.

The house is now vacant, awaiting a purchaser. Fortunately, unlike the Paul Thiry house recently destroyed in Normandy Park, the Tracy House, when sold, will be protected by a conservation easement. **A**

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**Jeffrey Karl Ochsner** is a professor in the Department of Architecture and Associate Dean in the College of Built Environments at the University of Washington. He thanks **Larry Woodin**, head of the Echome Foundation and current president of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, for assistance with this article. He also thanks **Donald Leslie Johnson** for sharing his research.





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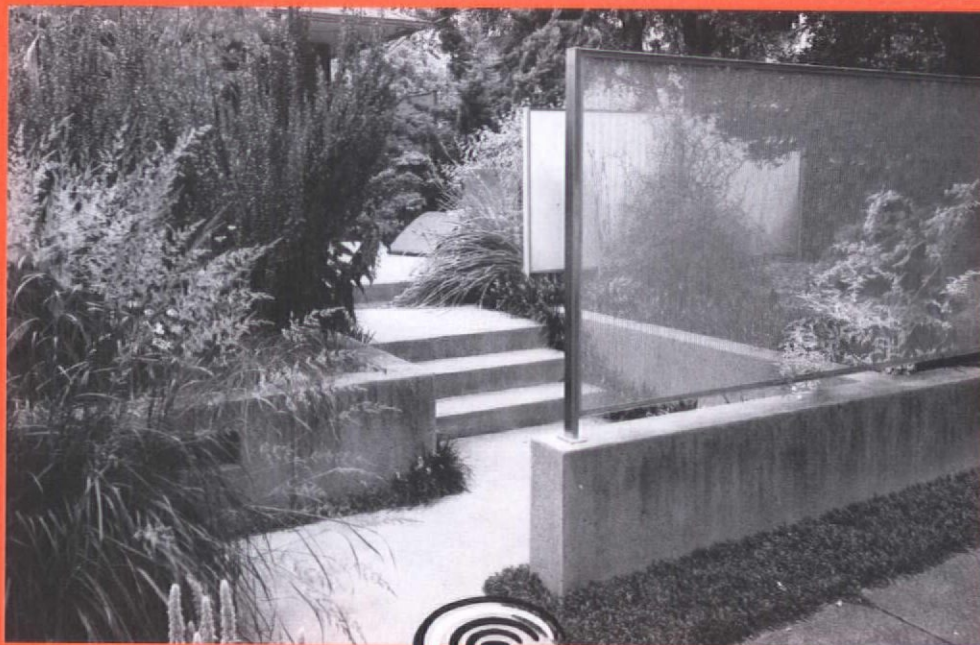
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# ITALIA, ARCHITETTURA, E ME /

RON VAN DER VEEN

There are some Side Yard installments that are hard fought labors of love, and there are others that just sort of walk through the door, like this one; you might say that this particular chapter literally came through the door of my office...twice.

A few weeks ago, I was introduced to a woman from Italy who knew seven languages, seemed decidedly intellectual and was very attractive. Before I had a chance to learn anything about her, I immediately assumed that she was an architect. Now, I have mentioned my long, happy marriage in numerous articles, but even a stoic Side Yard essayist like "io" is not immune to the intrigues of an attractive woman with a gelatinous romantic accent. The thick black hair and dark eyes didn't hurt either.

After chatting with her for about 15 minutes, trying to make myself seem convincingly Eurocentric, she departed with a colleague. It got me thinkin': Why did I instantly assume that because she was Italian she must be an architect or designer? When she described her job, it occurred to me that it was about as far from the design world as a traffic engineer, but her melodic inflections persuaded me to visualize "l'Architetta!"

When I got home that night, I opened our most expensive bottle of Italian Sangrantino (\$9.99 at Trader Joes!) and pondered this encounter for a bit. I actually began feeling a strange sense of prejudice and bigotry. Wasn't I sort of doing something ethnically stereotypy? Why did Sophia's Italian charm so easily make me think that we are of the same professional ilk? (I also started wondering if my references to the debt crisis in Italy and its effect on the regional economy of Basilicata impressed her.)

Coincidentally, the next day, a sales rep who was also Italian came to our office to talk about some new products; at least I think he was Italian because he sounded like a male Sophia. He was a very average looking guy – even thinning out on top – but his accent threw me off. Even though the products he was peddling were pretty mundane, his brogue duped me. He was Italian, so he had to be selling designer stuff! At one point in the presentation, I considered his clothes and assumed they were Euro-posh and well crafted, but on further inspection I was shocked to realize he was wearing Dockers! It's embarrassing to admit that during his spiel he could have persuaded me that something he picked up at Lowes was actually designed by Valerio Cometti, Paulo De Lucchi or some obscure risotto dish, and I would have believed it. And I am sure I would have paid about 47 times more for it than at Lowes!



Again, after he left I reflected on this fixated partiality I have toward the sound of romance languages. He was no Sophia, but he had me engrossed in the passione and ambiente of his tongue. With an ARCADE deadline looming and these two episodes rolling around in my head, I was persuaded to work out my European chauvinism on paper.

To backtrack a bit, my parents are immigrants from the Netherlands, and I grew up with numerous Dutch, German and Swedish families around us—all Northern Europeans and Nordics. My father and mother's enunciations really humiliated me throughout school (not to mention their old country mannerisms and customs; they made me wear lederhosen in seventh grade!!!), but now that I'm older, I think of this heritage as kind of a family badge of honor.

I have always had this biased feeling that there are just some accents that sound cooler than others for architects and designers. Living in Spain for several years and falling in love with the language – not to mention many Spanish women – cemented my favoritism for the romance languages. I admit that this is pretty irrational, especially since many of my favorite architects happen to be Northern Europeans, and I love all the exciting design coming out of the Netherlands. Though I must say that I've met Rem Koolhaas, twice, and tried to speak to him in Dutch. Both times he blew me off like I was an infantile, which really pissed me off, so I'm not a big Rem fan...

I believe the romance languages were designed specifically to express amore and beauty...and architecture! Who the hell really cares if Sophia is AIA? I imagine her growing up in an 800-year-old stone farmhouse with Umberto Boccioni paintings and Ligorio working drawings hanging all over the place—maybe even in the pantry or bathroom. When she wasn't picking up fresh organic local greens from the market, she was being home-schooled in architectural history. Oh, I can just hear it in her accent!

(Incidentally, I consider the Dutch or "Nederlands" language and diacritic – much like our people – to be a finely honed amalgamation of the Romantic and Germanic idioms, a right brain/left brain balanced tango.)

At the end of the day, who would you rather hear say something architectural like "juxtaposition" in their native tongue—Sophia or Rem? Sophia would say "giustapposizione" with a lingering emphasis on the *siZIOÓÓNE*. Rem would probably say "naast elkaar" and call me an idiot. So give me an Italian to be my architetta, artista or disegnatore! I just adooooore that romantic accent...and thick black hair...and dark eyes...and...

*Piacere di avervi conosciuto, Sophia...* **A**

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Ron van der Veen is a principal at DLR Group and happily married to an Irish/German woman. Comments welcome at [rvanderveen@dlrgroup.com](mailto:rvanderveen@dlrgroup.com).



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## DESIGN HERE + THERE /

REBEKAH WILSON

**Design Your (Neighbor)hood**› [seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)

In ARCADE issue 30.3, Brian Boram in “Agents of Change: Design Thinking for K-12” posed the question: “Are the skills of ‘design thinking,’ such as creativity, adaptability, empathy and synthesis now at the forefront of a new curriculum?”

Now in its fourth year, the Seattle Art Museum’s Design Your (Neighbor)hood program challenges youth to incorporate design thinking in a solution-focused way. This last summer, SAM and Arts & Academics Academy in Seattle partnered on the program, and for four times a week for four weeks, summer school students at Arts & Academics Academy met to work on design projects that asked them to re-envision and make better a common space within their own school. Working under the leadership of SAM instructors, students were encouraged to seek potential within each space and consider the needs of their peers, emphasizing art, design and urban planning as tools of positive social change. The program reframed the classroom as a “design studio,” and the students chose the space which they would revitalize: a main hallway, a popular hangout spot in the school. Learning about the importance of purposeful decision making in the design process and consideration for the end user, the students researched, designed and implemented changes within the hallway, transforming the space and giving it new life.



Praça Cantão, Favela Painting Project. Artists: Jeroen Koolhaas and Dre Urhahn, Haas&Hahn, with Santa Marta favela community youth. Santa Marta, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2009-10. Photo: © Haas&Hahn for favelapainting.com

**Design with the Other 90%: CITIES**› [museumofcontemporarycraft.org](http://museumofcontemporarycraft.org)

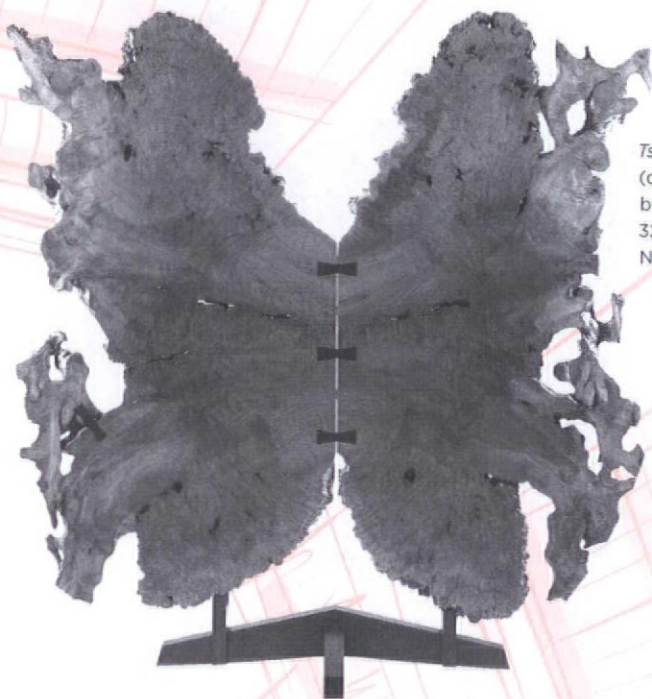
For the first time in history, those of us living in cities make up the majority of the world’s population. However, urban dwellers served by professional design make up a much smaller portion.

Cooper-Hewitt’s exhibit, *Design with the Other 90%: CITIES*, on view at the Museum of Contemporary Craft and Mercy Corps in Portland, addresses the 90-percent of the world’s population not served by professional design, posing the question: How can design embody compassion in order to change lives? Second in a series launched in 2007, the exhibit showcases 60 real-life proposals and solutions to benefit those living in temporary urban communities by seeking ground-breaking advances in urban design.

The exhibit is split between two Portland locations: the Museum of Contemporary Craft and the Mercy Corps Education Center. The two halves are working together to cover six themes: Reveal, Prosper, Access (at Mercy Corps) and Exchange, Adapt and Include (at MoCC).

*Design with the Other 90%: CITIES* is on view at both locations through 5 January 2013.





*Tsuitate Butterfly Gate, 2011*  
(designed and produced), Maple  
burl root with walnut base, 84" x  
32" x 80." Photo courtesy of George  
Nakashima Woodworker, S.A.

### **George Nakashima: A Master's Furniture and Philosophy**

› [wingluke.org](http://wingluke.org)

"A tree is our most intimate contact with nature," said woodworker and architect George Nakashima. The Wing Luke Museum's exhibition *George Nakashima: A Master's Furniture and Philosophy* pays homage to Nakashima's inspiration from the natural world and his influence on modern design.

The exhibition, which opened 13 July, includes original work from Nakashima and others influenced by his legacy: his nephew Craig Yamamoto, his daughter Mira Nakashima – a dynamic artist in her own right – and other contemporary artists. Photographs and biographical information from Nakashima's life are on display as well.

Looking at Nakashima's work, it isn't difficult to spot the ideas and observations influencing his practice, the physical translations of which mark his contribution to modern design—natural, free-form edges and his awareness of the origin of the materials with which he worked. In his designs, there is a strong presence of the Pacific Northwest, where Nakashima was raised, yet his other formative experiences – his time abroad, his incarceration in a US internment camp – are concurrent.

The exhibition is on display at the Wing Luke Museum through 20 January 2013.

### **The Seattle Design Festival**

› [seattledesignfestival.org](http://seattledesignfestival.org)

The second annual Seattle Design Festival, taking place 20–23 September at various venues throughout South Lake Union, will feature four days of formal and informal activities, speakers, workshops and exhibits—all geared toward the general public and focused on this year's theme, "Engage Your World." The festival is presented by Design in Public, and thirteen additional nonprofits— including ARCADE – have collaborated with the organization to make the festival possible. One major goal of the festival is to reach out to the community to promote design as a way of thinking and living life, showing the positive impacts design can make.

ARCADE will present the keynote speaker, sustainable developer and author of the *The Carbon Efficient City*, A-P Hurd. Hurd's talk "Designing Cities/Seeding Cities/Rearing Cities" will discuss the impact of design, economy and infrastructure on urban growth, exploring the idea that if cities are more like living entities than inanimate objects, then perhaps our design focus should be less on the end product and more on thinking about cities as design systems.

Other highlights of the festival will include walking tours of South Lake Union, workshops that require no previous design experience and film screenings at SIFF Cinema. Events like a "Hipstamatic" photo contest and an interactive outdoor installation will mix playfulness with serious design inquiry.

All events are open to the public. Visit [seattledesignfestival.org](http://seattledesignfestival.org) for a listing of events and to purchase tickets.





# DESIGN-MINDED EVENTS IN THE NORTHWEST/

TO RECEIVE EVENT INVITES AND NEWS, JOIN ARCADE'S ENEWSLETTER AT [ARCADENW.ORG](http://ARCADENW.ORG)



## Online Calendar of Design Events

› Fall 2012

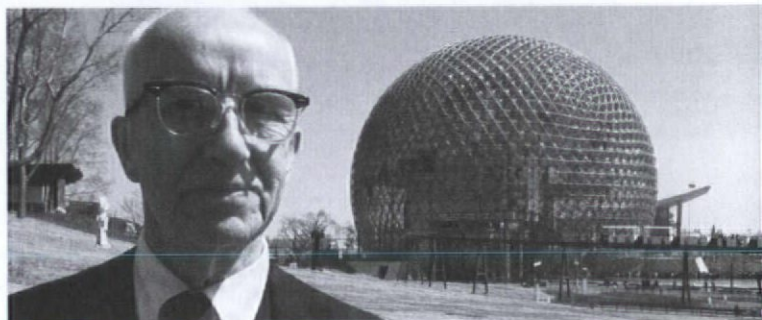
This fall, ARCADE will launch the second phase of its new website, which will include an online events calendar of design-related happenings in the Northwest. After surveying our readers, supporters and community members last year, we discovered a want and need for such a calendar—a one-stop-shop for the design-minded looking to connect, learn and find inspiration out and about in the community. The calendar will compliment our newsletter and include interdisciplinary educational discussions, networking and social events, films, tours, art exhibits and more. We hope it will become a great community resource, helping to bring together the various vibrant creative groups and interested individuals within our region.

We look to provide an open, lightly-curated calendar formed from content we receive from organizations and individuals within our community. We invite you to submit events the design-minded will enjoy.

Visit [www.arcadenw.org](http://www.arcadenw.org) to submit events and view the calendar.

Thank you to all the individuals and organizations generating such wonderful programming in our community. See you soon!

—ARCADE



### ***The Love Song of R. Buckminster Fuller***

\_Northwest Film Forum + STG

11 September

› [nwfilmforum.org](http://nwfilmforum.org)

### **Seattle Design Festival\_Design in Public**

20-23 September

› [seattledesignfestival.org](http://seattledesignfestival.org)

### **A-P Hurd: Designing Cities / Seeding Cities / Rearing Cities**

\_ARCADE + Design in Public

20 September

› [seattledesignfestival.org/designing-cities-seeding-cities-rearing-cities/](http://seattledesignfestival.org/designing-cities-seeding-cities-rearing-cities/)



### **Chris Ware, Charles Burns & Chip Kidd: Building Comix**

\_Town Hall + Fantagraphics

22 October

› [townhallseattle.org](http://townhallseattle.org)

Image from *Skin Deep* © 2012 Charles Burns

### **Gail Grinnell, *Ruffle*\_Suyama Space**

Through 7 December

› [suyamaspace.org](http://suyamaspace.org)

### **Alejandro Echeverri, Architect/Planner, Medellin, Colombia (Un)Limited Means Lecture Series\_space.city**

November (Date TBD)

› [spacecityseattle.org](http://spacecityseattle.org)



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[www.4culture.org](http://www.4culture.org)



**aLive**, a Low Impact Vehicle exploration, asks artists, inventors and community members to imagine a transportation system designed around the human body. The aLive project aims to spark interaction across disciplines, showcase ideas and suggest action around issues of energy, livability and design. The **Undriving Stories Project** documents the choices and changes made by individuals who are looking beyond the car for creative ways to get around.

Check out the series on the Undriving website at <http://undriving.org/undriving-overview>

The **Undriving Stories Project** was produced by **Undriving** and the **UW MCDM**, with support from **aLive**, a project envisioned by artist Cheryl dos Remedios and produced in collaboration with **4Culture** and **Great City**.

Photo courtesy of Undriving.org

**4**  
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