



**WHAT
DESIGN
CAN DO!**

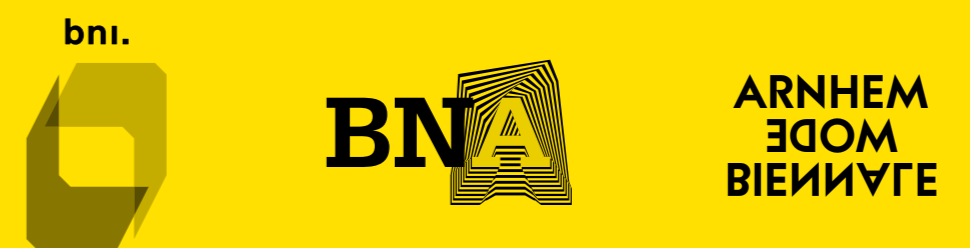
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AFTER TWO DAYS OF WDCD

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

A PLATFORM FOR MUTUAL INSPIRATION

BY THE INITIATORS

'Design is not a thing you do. It's a way of life,' Alan Fletcher, the famous British designer and founder of Pentagram, once said. What he meant is that a designer looks at the world with a designer's eye, always considering possibilities for improvement. A designer cannot not design.

In today's world we face great challenges, including economic and environmental issues, the division of wealth, the changing balance in the world order, and the clash of cultures. Designers reflect on these issues in their own way. Architects and designers in all disciplines are more and more involved in finding solutions to the problems of today's society. They use their talent and characteristic approach to find new and sometimes surprising answers to the benefit of us all.

What Design Can Do! was created to showcase and discuss these efforts. As designers ourselves we felt the need for an event that would throw some light on the bigger picture. Who is doing what and what can we learn from one another? We wanted to create a platform for mutual inspiration, a place where good ideas can become even better.

This book records the results of the two-day conference held on 26 and 27 May 2011 in the city theatre of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. It is a collection of visions, statements, concepts and ideas for a better world. It is meant to inspire designers of all sorts to use their gifts for the greater good and at the same time show all the others **What Design Can Do!**

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

SO WHAT CAN A CONFERENCE LIKE WHAT DESIGN CAN DO! DO?

BY CHRISTINE DE BAAN

If one thing has become clear in the past decades, it is that we need one another to survive. One another's knowledge, experience, and willingness to collaborate. This is of course a self-evident truth, but sadly one that can become all too easily obscured.

The global financial crisis has demonstrated once again how strongly our regional economies have become linked. Globalization has created a new interdependence, not only offering wonderful economic opportunities but also creating new threats and new responsibilities, caused by large-scale urbanization and migration, widely diverging prosperity levels and clashes between cultures. The depletion of natural resources and pollution of cities and landscapes is jeopardizing our common future. Climate change will have an as yet almost unimaginable impact on our lives.

So. Can we have our cake and eat it? Can our cities continue to grow and become healthier and more inclusive at the same time? Can we reconcile traditional local identities with global contemporary culture? Can we learn to communicate and understand one another better? To arrive at structural solutions, and achieve the necessary economic and ecological balance, we need international collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Amongst the many gatherings organized worldwide to address these issues **What Design Can Do!** is unique, in that it highlights the role of the designer in imagining and realizing a more sustainable future world. It is all the more unique in that it is initiated and organized by designers. For designers. And thus for all those whose daily lives are affected by design. Which, again with luck, is all of us. Because design in its strongest and most effective form is about smaller and larger changes for the better. And **What Design Can Do!** can help make some of these changes happen.

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO! FOR ACCESS

What Design Can Do! is an international gathering of designers from all disciplines, who come together to manifest the social potential of their profession. It is an activist conference that works towards solutions. The crossover between professionals from architecture, product design, graphic design and fashion design is intended to evoke new, multi-disciplinary solutions. In the first edition, speakers from all parts of the world shared their visions and ideas for the improvement of our societies. The overall theme for this first conference was *Access*.

TO HAVE ACCESS OR NOT IS WHAT COUNTS

Having access or not is an urgent global issue at play at many levels of society. Too many people still lack access to the basic necessities of life, and others are deprived of the chance of a proper education, the right to freedom of speech or access to unbiased information. Urbanization, globalization and shifting economic powers present new problems for people across the globe. Providing a decent roof over your head, a proper education, and a job that meets your capacities are challenges that people face everywhere. Even for those living in a world of abundance access can be at stake. An excess of information can impede access to relevant data. Companies constantly need to consider how to grant access to their goods and services. In large cities loneliness threatens those who have difficulty accessing social networks. All over the world, designers are involved in meeting these challenges. Graphic designers try to raise awareness for the pressing needs of the earth. Product designers come up with products that do less harm. Architects devise means to house the homeless and slum dwellers. Fashion designers look for ways to reform their trend-driven industry. A theme as versatile as 'access' offers ample opportunity to demonstrate **What Design Can Do!** For the conference the theme was broken down into four areas: Access to basics, Access to the city, Access to cultures, and Access to the public.



SCHOOL FURNITURE BY KATLAMARA CRAFTSMEN

Access to basics

How we rearrange our wealth

With water becoming scarce and a food crisis that is building up, it is clear that access to basics is an issue that eventually will affect us all. Changing times call for new, creative solutions. We need to review the way we share the world's resources and wealth. This requires an unprecedented mentality shift that cannot be established by traditional methods. Creative minds will have to invent alternative approaches to entice people into such a behavioural change.

What Design Can Do! presented some of the most audacious and promising plans in this field, while at the same time providing participants the opportunity to devise new solutions.



"DEMOLITION DERBY" PERFORMANCE WITH BARRY MCGEE, TOKYO, 2001

Access to the city

How we prepare for the megacity

Today half of the world population lives in the city. By 2030 there will be 37 cities with more than 10 million inhabitants. American geopolitical expert Parag Khanna foresees a future where cities assume the political and economic roles up to now played by traditional nation states. Migration and shifting powers mean that all kinds of new issues must be dealt with in the city. How will newcomers find their place? How will they gain access to social groups, work, and housing? How do the original inhabitants cope with the influx of outsiders?

What Design Can Do! questioned the role of creative minds in these matters.



PAULA DIB'S PROJECT MANDALA (2008)

Access to cultures

How we stay in touch with one another

In today's world it is as easy to talk to your neighbour in Amsterdam as to a friend or business partner in China. Migration has also brought different cultures closer together. But while distances between cultures may seem to vanish, the question is whether our mutual understanding has come closer too. The threat of superficiality and misunderstanding is always nearby. However, our growing interconnection demands increasing cultural exchange and cooperation.

What Design Can Do! investigated the culture clash and looks for scenarios that bind people of different backgrounds.



THONIK'S REDESIGN FOR THE SOCIALIST PARTY

Access to the public

How we win the public's support

The Middle East Spring once again demonstrated the power of the people. Empowered by social media, self-confident people take over regimes and enforce political reform. In the western world too people discovered the force of the collective, to be used for instance for combined purchase of goods or to put pressure on companies.

In contrast, the companies, political movements and NGOs that want to be in the lead need to figure out how they best gain access to the public.

What Design Can Do! presented some of the latest strategies to put people in motion.



WHAT DESIGN

CAN DO!

**4 ESSAYS
DISCUSSING THE
CHALLENGES**



**NATURE OF
DESIGN:
THE NEED FOR
NURTURE IN
INDIA TODAY**

M P RANJAN
ACCESS TO BASICS

**SUCCESSFUL
CITIES ALLOW
PEOPLE TO
BE WHAT
THEY WANT**

DEYAN SUDJIC
ACCESS TO THE CITY

**TRUE
CULTURAL
EXCHANGE
REQUIRES
EQUALITY**

ADÉLIA BORGES
**ACCESS TO
CULTURES**

**SETTING
THE
AGENDA
FOR
CHANGE**

OLE BOUMAN
**ACCESS TO
THE PUBLIC**



WHAT DESIGN CAN DO! FOR BASICS

BY M P RANJAN

Prof M P Ranjan is a design thinker with forty years of experience in design education and practice. He helped visualize and set up two new design schools in India, one for the crafts sector and the other for the bamboo sector. His teaching extended from design theory to inclusive design action and from rural employment to usability of information technology applications and services.

He writes a blog called 'Design for India' on thoughts and initiatives for the spread of design in all sectors of the economy. www.design-for-india.blogspot.com With 150,000 visitors it has become a major platform for Indian design discourse.

He is on the Governing Council of the IICD, Jaipur, and lives and works from Ahmedabad in India. He is recognized by peers as one of the leaders in Design Thinking today.

NATURE OF DESIGN: THE NEED FOR NURTURE IN INDIA TODAY

Before we address the question of 'What Design Can Do' for all of us, it would be pertinent to examine in some depth what is the nature of design so that we can try to understand it in all its dimensions.

Some of us have been fortunate to watch design thought and action by students and professionals from up close for many years in very challenging circumstances. All these explorations being applied to vastly different situations and contexts, not all successful, but each effort showing signs of what could be achieved if imagination and skill, strategy and sensitivity, knowledge and conviction are brought to focus on the pressing needs of a society.

How do you address a latent need or opportunity in a rapidly evolving world and culture when no readymade models exist for one to follow? This is where design comes into its own, since one is able to imagine new possibilities and build and test some of these alternatives as prototypes for creating the contours of a future category of product, space, service, communication or system.

Of course you would have to go to first principles and process all of this from scratch. That is, you will need to have a dream and then explore all its dimensions and details and then refine the offering through an iterative process that blends imagination with action in the real world. All this is done before you can build a first prototype and figure out whether the concept that excited you in the first place actually works in the real world.



PROMOTION IMAGE FOR THE DAILY DUMP, BANGALORE

This caring, feeling and iterative process that consolidates all learning and then adjusts the offering in a sensitive manner to changes in the market and the environment in the real world, is best described by the word 'design'. We must remember here that when this act is being done for the first time there are no models that can be followed and we are in a space that is undefined and the outcome is truly unknowable, but this action has the ability to define and shape the future for all of us.

New tools

Design action leaves behind numerous traces of exploration in the form of models, doodles, assemblies of details and prototypes that lead to some refined options that are accepted and adopted by society. In the days when design action was an evolutionary process these models and prototypes went through incremental change over long periods of time and the cycles of change were few and far between. However, with the development of mass communication all these processes have been sharply impacted and changed beyond recognition. This important change has necessitated dramatic change in the tools and processes for design action for it to be effective and not to be left at a superficial level but effective at a deeper level of appreciation. Over the past few years we have been reflecting on the changing nature of design only to discover that it is a complex and

DESIGN IS LIKE A POTENT SEED THAT CAN GROW IF IT IS NURTURED BY SOCIETY AND THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES CAN PRODUCE HUGE CHANGE IN THE WORLD

multi-faceted activity that can operate at many levels simultaneously.

While the surface qualities manifest in the form and determine the aesthetics of the objects and communications, the deeper values are largely invisible since they are part of the structure of the situation and our strategic responses to that situation. It is this structural manifestation, held in the compositions of components and elements, that helps embed meaning in the design offering, which can be instantly felt and appreciated by those initiated to the symbols and signs of the society in which these structures are unfolded.

Convincing policy-makers

While our own insights about design grew with our close proximity to design education and research situations as well as its use and exploration in the field, it was equally difficult to explain these concepts to members of the political and business community and with administrators in Government. Why is it so difficult to explain design thought and action? Why are these otherwise intelligent professionals unable to see what we are able to feel and understand about the power of design?

These questions kept coming up with each failure in our efforts to convince policy makers for some early investments in design thought and action. It has become evident that some of these difficulties stem from the very nature of design and that this was the level that would need to be addressed at first. We tried to explain these characteristics by building models and by using appropriate metaphors that could capture some of the important characteristics of design at various stages of action.

There were three useful metaphors that made visible different aspects of the nature of design. The first was the metaphor of fire, which showed the systems nature of design and the interdependence of the various parts and the whole.

The second was the metaphor of the iceberg, which helped demonstrate and make visible the quality that much of design intentions and deliberately developed organizational structure of elements and features would remain invisible until they are specifically identified and explained. The third was the metaphor of the seed, which shows



KATLAMARA CHALO BAMBOO PROJECT

the very fragile nature of an emerging idea that, although it may have great potency, would need to be nurtured and cared for if it is to find a suitable place and climate to germinate and take root over a period of time. Design is a process that takes a set of intentions and builds great value for society.

Craft-based design

For us, design is a very old human activity that evolved gradually and reached a very high degree of refinement and resolution in our villages and living spaces of our traditional societies in the pre-industrial age. This craft-based evolution was permitted by the interplay of time and the ingenuity of the local craftsman and local leadership, which created a vast body of traditional wisdom that is today still embedded in the rural and village life in places such as India.

Today this kind of design, at a fundamental level of form-giving and structure mapping, has all but been forgotten by the mainstream. It is replaced by a form of professional activity that is seen as dealing more with aesthetics rather than with the fundamental structure and meaning of production systems of our society.

This needs to change in an era where science and technology are being placed at the hub of our decision making pathways, while they can only provide information and knowledge about the world and not about what is desirable to be done to the world. So while technology tells us what is possible we do need to look at design with its participative and integrating methods to find out what is desirable and valuable for a sustainable

ANGEL INVESTING IS NOT JUST FOR TECHNOLOGY START-UPS BUT ALSO FOR SOCIAL AND PUBLIC DESIGN CHALLENGES

future. It is therefore my argument that education, business and governance must reestablish contact with this very old discipline, which has become sidelined in our belief in specialization and in our proclivity to use explicit knowledge resources, even in situations when values and feelings need to be the decision drivers instead of analytic facts couched in scientific arguments.

Vision First

A group of design activists under the banner of Vision First used online forums and a series of meetings with stakeholders across India to draw attention to the failure of policy in India to address this crying need for informed design action. The design policy in India is managed and implemented by the Ministry of Industry, which seems to be myopic to the larger roles that design could play. No international design solutions are available that are ready and off the shelf to address the pressing problems of the Indian people. These include affordable healthcare, rural and urban sanitation, dispersed quality education at the primary and secondary levels, agricultural and rural tools, rural housing and mobility, and a host of other design opportunities across 230 sectors of our economy that are in crying need of design attention.

These will have to be addressed locally and innovation and design will be the way forward. Urgent investments are needed to spur research and development initiatives across many sectors of our economy that stimulate the use of design to find interesting and appropriate answers to the pressing issues and concerns of our society. Design for inclusive development is a multi-disciplinary activity that needs to draw a variety of knowledge and skills in an innovative and future oriented setting that is well informed about the legal and the ethical parameters. In this form design becomes a powerful political activity, since it is propositional in the manner in which it visualizes realizable alternatives for the stakeholders from which the process of selection and decision can begin. It is a democratic activity at the very heart and gives power to the people who are at the location and to those who would be most impacted by its implementation.

Form, Structure, System

This shift in design thinking can be better understood through the model that I have proposed that explains the three orders of design – Form, Structure and System – material & functional,



DAILY DUMP KITCHEN WASTE COMPOSTERS

aesthetic & socio-economic, environmental and political – all of which need to be addressed in all cases if we are to be assured of its sustainability and relevance to the local context. Under these terms of reference, industry and business must take responsibility for end-to-end offer of service, and not just for the delivery of brands and boxes that contain a ‘Good Design’ product, but ensure that they serve the purpose that was promised in the first place.

The Daily Dump in Bangalore (www.dailydump.org) has shown that design and design thinking can indeed transform the way we do things in our society.

It also proves that such actions do not always need huge investments and infrastructure, but above all a set of deep commitments that are born from design explorations and prototyping, and indeed bring hope and participation from society. There is a real possibility of initiating huge change that is scalable, which can transform the world by the message that it carries in each success and even in its failures, of which there will be many. Design is therefore like a potent seed that can grow if it is nurtured by society and through these collaborative processes produce huge change in the world.

Similarly, when we reflect on the various projects done by the NID faculty and students in the early years, from the Electronic Voting Machine to the Jawaja project, through the Chennapatna toy project to numerous textile design projects such as the Dhamadka Block Print project, a number

NO INTERNATIONAL DESIGN SOLUTIONS ARE AVAILABLE THAT ARE READY AND OFF THE SHELF TO ADDRESS THE PRESSING PROBLEMS OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE

of path-breaking design strategies come to mind. We need to ponder deeply on many of these real-world design experiences to cull out lessons that can take us forward to a socially and culturally appropriate application of design action that could bring great value to our population.

More recently, our initiatives in Tripura State through the Katlamara Chalo project integrates bamboo cultivation with product manufacturing as a means to alleviate rural poverty using local skills, resources and local enthusiasm as the primary resource.

Need for nurture

However, all these examples are in my view stray cases of heroic experiments being conducted by committed design activists in search of appropriate answers to the pressing issues in our society. We need the Government and business community to participate in this exploration, and there is a need for setting up venture funds that could seed early-stage explorations of design concepts that could later be rolled out as start-up enterprises, which could be nurtured and grown to become robust services and facilities for our needy population.

This kind of nurturing is critical if design is to take root and flourish in our very hostile environment. Angel investing is not just for technology start-ups but also for social and public design challenges that could be incubated as new age services only if such funds are created to nurture the explorations in the early stages. Much of Government expenditure would be better spent if, before the tendering process that precedes each major investment or the allocation of infrastructure and project grants, there is an envisioning stage where the public and the establishment can examine several visualized options in a fair degree of detail before the most suitable one is selected through participative processes. This putting of Vision First is therefore a call for sustainable and sensitive design action for the future of India, pun intended.

THIS IS AN ABRIDGED VERSION OF M.P. RANJAN'S TEXT. THE FULL VERSION CAN BE FOUND ON HIS BLOG 'DESIGN FOR INDIA'.

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO! FOR THE CITY

BY DEYAN SUDJIC

Deyan Sudjic is Director of the Design Museum in London. Before joining the museum in August 2006, Deyan was Dean of the Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design at Kingston University, visiting professor at the Royal College of Art and the Academy of Applied Art in Vienna, and *The Observer* newspaper's design and architecture writer. He was Director of Glasgow 1999, UK City of Architecture, and in 2002 was Director of the Venice Architecture Biennale. From 2000 to 2004 he was Editor of *Domus*, and Founding Editor of *Blueprint* magazine from 1983 to 1996. Deyan has published many books on design and architecture.

In 2004 Deyan was awarded the Bicentenary Medal of the Royal Society of Arts for the promotion of design, and was made an honorary fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 2000.

SUCCESSFUL CITIES ALLOW PEOPLE TO BE WHAT THEY WANT

When architects talk about the city; they have a way of hitting the wrong note. There are those of them who labour under the misapprehension that they have a total answer to offer. And there are those who blame architecture for all that has gone wrong with the city over the last 50 years. Paradoxical though it may seem, this is perhaps just as egotistical. To suggest that architecture has done so much damage to the city is to inflate its significance every bit as much as the suggestion that it has instant solutions to offer.

But the tendency of its practitioners toward self absorption should not exclude architecture from the discussion of the state of the contemporary city, at a time when the world is at, or already past the point of becoming a place in which more people live in cities than in the country. It's an issue that the Urban Age, the London School of Economics research project, has been addressing over the past five years, and which is addressed in two books, *The Endless City*, and the just published sequel, *Living in the Endless City*. The premise is that the city is too complex an organism to be left to any one of the groups of specialists who pretend to be able to navigate it through its successive transformations. The city is a political construct, but also an emotional one. It is shaped by economic planners and transport engineers, and architects. It is organised by lawyers, interpreted by anthropologists and sociologists. It is shaped by developers and financiers. And, by and large none of these groups



QUINTA MONROY PROJECT IN CHILE BY ELEMENTAL

have much interest in communicating with others. The result is a series of partial, and so unsatisfactory views. There are the theorists, who include the sociologists, and the anthropologists, and the academic planners, and then there are policy-makers, who advise the politicians, and there are what might be described as the practitioners who range from developers and architects to the political leaders. None of them have in the past held the others in much regard. And yet, for a serious approach to understanding and addressing the issues that face the contemporary city, there is no alternative to their working with one another.

A hideous tumour

We have more big cities now than at any time in our history. In 1900, only 16 had a population of one million; now it's more than 400. Not only are there more of them, they are larger than ever. In 1851, London had two million people. It was the largest city in the world by a long way, twice the size of Paris, its nearest rival. Having invented the modern city, Britain promptly reeled back in horror at what it had done. To William Morris and John Ruskin, or the Salvation Army exploring the cholera-ridden back alleys of London's East End, the city was a hideous tumour sucking the life out of the countryside and creating in its place a vast, polluted landscape of squalor, disease and crime. In their eyes, the city was a place to be feared, controlled and, if possible, eliminated.

SHANGHAI HAD JUST 121 BUILDINGS OVER EIGHT STOREYS HIGH IN 1980. TWENTY YEARS LATER, IT WAS 3,500, AND JUST FIVE YEARS AFTER THAT IT WAS A STAGGERING 10,000

Such attitudes continue to shape thinking about the city and not only in Britain. In America, the Republicans have concluded that there are no votes to be had in cities. And wealthy suburbanites refuse to pay the property taxes that will support the downtown areas they fear and despise. Yet whether we like it or not, the city has finally swallowed the world. The number of people living in cities has overtaken those left behind in the fields. It's a statistic that seems to suggest some sort of fundamental species change, like the moment when mankind stopped being hunter-gatherers and took up agriculture. It has been the trigger for a wave of task forces, academic disaster tourism and feverish speculation.

Lagos grows fastest

The nature of cities has already changed irrevocably and there is plenty of evidence to show



QUINTA MONROY BEFORE RESIDENTS MOVED IN

that they are changing us. In 1950, they were predominantly a Western phenomenon, with the developed world accounting for 60 per cent of the urban population. Now, 70 per cent of city dwellers are from the developing world. In China in 1970, one in five people lived in cities. In 40 years, that number has risen to two in five. The fastest-growing cities are all well outside the comfort zone of the Western world. Lagos, the fastest growing of them all, is adding 58 people every hour; Mumbai is growing by 42 every hour.

A score of cities including Los Angeles, Shanghai and Mexico City, which were still tiny in the 19th century, have all passed the once unimaginable 18 million mark. That puts them well ahead of all but eight of the 27 nations of the European Union. This is a dizzying rate of transformation and it's still accelerating. In 1900, 10 per cent of the world's population lived in cities; by 2050, it is going to be 75 per cent. And the biggest question is if such places can survive as coherent cities at all.

Half of the 12 million people in Mumbai live in illegal shacks, 200,000 of them on the pavement. Every day, at least two people are killed falling off overcrowded suburban trains. In Mexico City, fewer than four workers in 10 have formal jobs, public transport is largely in the form of mafia-controlled minibuses and taxis. The last mayor's response was to build a second tier on the elevated motorway, to allow the rich to speed up their commuting time.

Johannesburg, with its horrifying levels of violent crime, has seen the affluent quit the city centre for fortified enclaves on its boundaries. As a result, South Africa is leading the world in developing

WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, THE CITY HAS FINALLY SWALLOWED THE WORLD

new security techniques for gated housing, built appropriately enough in the style of Tuscan hill towns. Private security is also a divisive topic in north London, where I live, where the clatter of police helicopters has become routine. My neighbourhood divides between those who want to install barriers and gates to cut us off from the world outside and those who see such measures as the ultimate negation of what life in a city should be. Despite our anxieties, London is a safe city by world standards. The murder rate is 2.1 for every 100,000 inhabitants. In Johannesburg, it is nine times that figure.

Cities look different, too. Shanghai had just 121 buildings over eight storeys high in 1980. Twenty years later, it was 3,500, and just five years after that it was a staggering 10,000.

A city is a menu

But for all their agonies, cities must also be counted as a positive force. They are an engine of growth, a machine for putting the rural poor onto the first rung of urban prosperity and freedom. They make the most of the elements in it that have meaning for them and ignore the rest. A city is an à la carte menu. That is what makes it different from a village, which has little room for tolerance and difference. And a great city is one in which as many people as possible can make the widest of choices from its menu.



QUINTA MONROY BEFORE REDEVELOPMENT

It is chastening but valuable for a critic to be confronted with how little you really know. Before the Urban Age conference in Shanghai, I hadn't understood that the city has three million illegal immigrants from inland China with fewer rights than Mexicans in Los Angeles, or that the city had levels of inequality of an order close to Manhattan's. In the context of a state based on an ideology-free version of Marxism, it's hard to know if that is to be understood as a success or a failure. I knew that huge areas of the city centre had been bulldozed, but I had not understood that this relentless tide of construction had doubled the living space, which is still far from generous, of its most crowded inhabitants.

I knew that Johannesburg was a city shaped by apartheid, but I hadn't understood what it would mean to try to deal not just with social inequalities, but structural ones too. Johannesburg was built as a white city surrounded not by suburbs but by invisible black labour camps. It's not enough to open the city to the majority; the edges are still hugely dispossessed. I could not have imagined what it is like for the city's transport officials to work on its suburban rail system until I heard at first hand of the effects of a security-guard strike that involved scores of murders. Six dead bodies were found on one particularly bloody day.

Visions for cities

We do not belong to a generation that has the shared faith that the pioneer architectural modernists had when they chartered a liner to cruise the Mediterranean and drew up their vision of what the modern city ought to be, the Charter of Athens. They divided their ideal city into functional zones, shaped by slabs arranged to maximize the sunlight falling on the ground between them. Theirs was a generation that was freed from the luxury of self-doubt. Ours is not and that is why we struggle now when we try to think what cities should be. We have seen too many soured urban utopias that were invented by the architects on that liner, and propagated by a political system that measured success in the number of new

CITIES ARE MADE BY AN EXTRAORDINARY MIXTURE OF DO-GOODERS AND BLOODY-MINDED OBSESSIVES, OF CYNICAL POLITICAL OPERATORS AND SPECULATORS

buildings that it could deliver each month. Politicians love cranes; they need solutions within the time frames of elections, and cranes deliver them. But there are only a limited number of problems that are susceptible to this kind of time scale. The result is a constant cycle of demolition and reconstruction that is seen as the substitute for thinking about how to address the deeper issues of the city. Visions for cities tend to be the creation of the boosters rather than the theorists or the policy-makers. City builders have always had to be pathological optimists, if not out-and-out fantasists. They belong to a tradition that connects the map-makers who parcel up packages of swamp land to sell to gullible purchasers, and the show-apartment builders who sell off-plan to investors in Shanghai, who are banking on a rising market, making them a paper profit before they have even had to make good on their deposits. Cities are made by an extraordinary mixture of do-gooders and bloody-minded obsessives, of cynical political operators and speculators. They are shaped by the unintended consequences of the greedy and the self-interested, the dedicated and the occasional visionary. The cities that work best are those that keep their options open, that allow the possibility of change.

Successful cities are the ones that allow people to be what they want; unsuccessful ones try to force them to be what others want them to be. A city of freeways like Houston or Los Angeles forces people to be car drivers or else traps them in poverty. A successful city has a public transport system that is easy to use; an unsuccessful city tries to ban cars.

A successful city has room for more than the obvious ideas about city life, because, in the end, a city is about the unexpected; it's about a life shared with strangers and open to new ideas. An unsuccessful city has closed its mind to the future.

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO! FOR ACCESS TO CULTURES

BY ADÉLIA BORGES

Adélia Borges is a design writer and curator from São Paulo, Brazil. From 2003 to 2007 she was director of the Museu da Casa Brasileira, a government-funded museum for design and architecture. Among the exhibitions she curated were the Brazilian Design Biennial (2010) and *Puras Misturas* (Pure Blends, 2010). Her books include *Designer não é Personal Trainer* (2002), *Sergio Rodrigues* (2005) and *Brazilian design today: Frontiers Design & Interiores* (1987-1994) and design editor of *Gazeta Mercantil*, a daily business newspaper (1998-2002), and has contributed to various Brazilian and international magazines, including *Indaba* in South Africa, *Interni* in Italy, and *Form* in Germany. Borges teaches Design History at Fundação Armando Alvares Penteado (FAAP) in São Paulo. She believes that the Southern Hemisphere should take pride in its cultural heritage and should avoid mimicking cultures.

TRUE CULTURAL EXCHANGE REQUIRES EQUALITY

When we talk about access to culture, this expression is usually regarded as championing the access of the poorer population to culture. This view originates in a dual principle: there is a part of the population that lacks culture, 'them'; and another one, those who possess culture, 'us'. I would like to invert this equation and talk, here, about the right all inhabitants of the world have of having their cultures recognized as such. Or, looking at it from a different angle, I would like to talk about our right of access to cultures of the world, in their rich polyphony and diversity. I believe this demands some Herculean dedication on our part, as the world has been conceived up to now in a different form. The experience of colonization is nothing but an attempt to try to impose a new way of life – new beliefs, religions, values, etc. – on the so-called uncivilized peoples. This procedure is very well exposed by the great author Amadou Hampâté Bâ, from Mali, who has represented his country for many years at UNESCO: 'One of the main objectives of all colonization, under any sky and in any period of time, has always been to start by interpreting the conquered terrain. . . . First, they have to root out from the spirit, as if they were weeds, values, habits, and local cultures, so that they sow in their place the colonizers' values, habits, and culture, considered as superior and as the only ones that have validity'. As Italian anthropologist Massimo Canevacci says, those who have been colonized have had, historically, as their only alternative,

UP UNTIL RECENTLY, DESIGN CREATED IN LATIN AMERICA, AFRICA AND OCEANIA WAS SOBERLY IGNORED AND DISREGARDED

North versus South

Up until recently, design created in Latin America, Africa and Oceania was sorely ignored and disregarded. Objects we have created for our daily lives, logos we have created for our brands, signs we have developed to publicize our ventures – in short, manifestations of our makings, of our material culture regarding the bias of utility, which is what design focuses on – were unknown. At most, they brought about some anthropological interest, like some exotic curio, which could eventually have a place in an ethnographic museum, but never in a design museum or an art museum. This situation started to change, little by little; however, it is still an incipient phenomenon. The international media open their eyes to what is being made in the 'far-away countries', as Andrea Branzi said (we would have to use this as a relative concept, though, as when we say 'far-away' we have a point from where this distance is measured, and it supposes this point as reference, i.e., the centre). People from the Southern Hemisphere are starting to be invited, even though in marked minority, to speak at international seminars in the Northern Hemisphere. And a few initiatives are definitely opening to what is being made in and for the Southern Hemisphere, such as Denmark's INDEX design award. This current historical moment brings us the opportunity to extend and deepen initiatives such as these. Our challenge is to do this in a way that will not repeat the regard and the prejudice of our colonial past.

Revitalizing crafts

A recent phenomenon that has been taking place in the Southern Hemisphere is that of design based on local knowledge and crafts. This word crafts deserves a little explanation. In talks with Europeans, I noticed this word brings them the idea of trained artists who make with their hands one-of-a-kind pieces in sophisticated ateliers. However, when I say crafts, I mean collective initiatives containing all components related to problem solving, to proper use of raw materials and production techniques etc., in a kind of production that is often made in large series, usually using not only hands, but also tools and machines, which brings this production into the domain of design. Since the 1990s, a movement of revitalization of crafts has been going on in Latin America, Africa and South Asia. Local or foreign designers are conducting workshops spread in the far corners



ARTISAN VERONICA DUTRA, FROM AMAZON REGION
PHOTO FABIO SCRUGLI

to adopt the colonizers' thought. 'Either you were identical / similar or you were eliminated.' Through war or diplomacy, countries have been acquiring their independence over the past two centuries. The effects of colonization, however, extend beyond the political victory of emancipatory movements. This can be felt very strongly in the economic domain and, also, in the cultural domain. The power to define what is and what is not culture has remained in the metropolis. Cultural flows used to be unidirectional, coming from a few centres – remarkably London and Paris, and, later, New York as well – to the periphery. In this division, the Southern Hemisphere as a whole was left with the role of being an exporter of raw materials and importer of finished goods, lifestyles and trends.

Multidirectional exchanges

This one-way route is changing. Macro-transformations in economy, with the BRIC countries' ascension; in politics, with democratization in many different countries; and in communication, with possibilities of instant access to information that is not mediated by a central power, bring about possibilities of many different exchanges, in many different directions. Exchanges are becoming multidirectional. The concepts regarding centre and periphery have been subverted. The roadmap of connections through Facebook is an indication of this when it shows a quite pulverized distribution. This landscape in which we live in, in the early 21st century, is extremely exciting. If this was a forum about politics, we could talk about the impact of social networks in the ascension of leaders like Barack Obama and the fall of a dictator like Hosni Mubarak; if it was about economy, we could talk about changes in the money map... However, this is a forum about design, so I would like to steer our reflection towards challenges and opportunities that this historical moment presents to us in our action field.



GILDA BARRETO, LEADER OF ARTISANS IN AMAZON
PHOTO ROGÉRIO ASSIS

of these countries in search of the preservation of productive techniques that have been passed down through the generations, but with the incorporation of new elements of design. They are improving the standards of quality of the products, making use of the potential of local materials, developing graphic and packaging design for the artisanal pieces and helping to 'anchor' the formal references of the objects in local cultural traditions.

As the Australian researcher and curator in the area of craft design Kevin Murray says, a true 'silent (r)evolution' is taking place. I consider this rapport to be an extremely important phenomenon, for the social and economic impact it generates and for its cultural significance. I have been one of its warmest defenders, proclaiming it as a journalist, as a lecturer, as an exhibition curator, and also in my four-year period as director of the Museu da Casa Brasileira, the Brazilian design museum.

Who's teaching whom?

However, there have also been many mistakes, many bad experiences. Some teams are going to communities, taking with them ready-made projects, so the artisans end up elaborating with their own hands something that others have created. This is a posture that sees designers or design students – in other words, people with formal schooling – as superior to the artisans, people without formal schooling. In these cases what takes place is a meeting – or a detour! – between unequal people. The power, the sagacity, the dominance lies with the studios. The 'others' join in with their ability, their skill with their hands and, at the most, their familiarity with the raw matter. It is common to see a group of designers or students travel to a community, use local labour at will and then leave with beautiful photographs of the fine products that were made there, to be featured in glossy magazines throughout the world, saying they are carrying out a social project, when in truth they are simply using cheap labour that in return receives – in money, recognition and prestige – a lot less than received by the designers. Often, these experiences leave no positive results

DESIGN CAN PLAY A KEY FUNCTION IN CREATING A MULTI-FLAVOURED CULTURAL LANDSCAPE INSTEAD OF A UNIFORM ESPERANTO

in the communities, except enormous expectations that are almost always frustrated. There is the need for an urgent discussion about the ethics of this relationship. Powerful voices are making their contribution. Commenting on the movement of northern designers towards the south, the influential North American journalist Bruce Nussbaum wrote the article 'Is Humanitarian Design the New Imperialism? Does our desire to help do more harm than good?', published in *Fast Company* magazine. His words: 'Should we take a moment now that the movement is gathering speed to ask whether or not American and European designers are collaborating with the right partners, learning from the best local people, and being as sensitive as they might to the colonial legacies of the countries they want to do good in. Do designers need to better see themselves through the eyes of the local professional and business classes who believe their countries are rising as the U.S. and Europe fall and wonder who, in the end, has the right answers? Might Indian, Brazilian and African designers have important design lessons to teach Western designers?...'

Two years before, the English author John Thackara had already given his view: 'The most powerful lesson for me, after 20 years working as a visitor on projects in India and South Asia, is that we have more to learn from smart poor people on things like ecology, connectivity, devices and infrastructures, than they have to learn from us', he wrote in a text published on the Design Observer site, under the title 'We Are All Emerging Economies Now'.

Revealing the solutions

About 80 per cent of the world's population lives on USD 10 a day or less. These people are excluded from the consumers' market. What objects, visual signs and systems did they develop to be used in their daily lives? Contributions aimed at revealing these solutions are, for me, an urgent need. First, because we can only respect the things we know. Second, because we certainly have a great deal to learn from them, if we can regard them not as curios, as something exotic, but as true manifestations of creative thought and project intelligence.

I began researching popular objects made in Brazil a decade ago and it is amazing how they can surprise us with smart solutions, how they can teach us. They have a 'strong life force', as



WOMEN OF COOPA-ROCA COOPERATIVE, RIO DE JANEIRO
PHOTO CELSO BRANDÃO

Lina Bardi, Italian architect and designer based in Brazil, said: she made a great effort for their recognition. They reveal a 'new essentiality', as Swiss architect and designer Mario Botta wrote after visiting an exhibition of Brazilian popular design we organized in 2004.

Trying to know more about the What Design Can Do! conference, I found out that Mr. M P Ranjan made the mapping of artisan skills all across India, which he believes to be the foundation for inclusive action and the seeding of the creative economy of the future for India. The outcome was published in 2008 in a book entitled *Handmade in India*. I wish I had access to the wonderful things he must have found, in the same way I have access to Italian furniture exhibitions or to Apple's new products. And I do not have anything against them – I love them both!

Towards a richer cultural landscape

I believe our world could be much better if we could see, in magazines, in museums, in seminars, in publications, not only them, but also the objects and visual systems generated by social entrepreneurs in countries such as India, Vietnam, Cambodia, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Argentina, Mali, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Congo, Namibia.

An emphasis on local skills and crafts may create a cultural landscape with stronger multiple voices. Design can play a key function in creating a multi-flavoured cultural landscape instead of a uniform Esperanto.

ALL INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD HAVE A RIGHT TO SEE THEIR CULTURES ACKNOWLEDGED AS SUCH AND WE HAVE THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO THE CULTURES OF THE WORLD



REED PLAITING FROM AMAZON REGION
PHOTO ROGÉRIO ASSIS

As I said at the beginning of this text, I believe the inhabitants of the world have a right to see their cultures acknowledged as such and we have the right of access to the cultures of the world. Access entails the removal of boundaries. And there is a boundary of prejudice as well, a high and monolithic barrier, which we must tear down so that we can finally see the full quality of these creations. I know many people do not agree with this stand and who even disagree that these creations can be regarded as design. A forum such as the opportune What Design Can Do! conference can be excellent in order for us to share our visions and exchange our points of view.

The inclusion of emerging countries as new and important partners in the world set is transforming many things, and it ought to shake design paradigms as well. Overcoming colonialism and a geopolitical reconfiguration of the world are finally bringing us to a non-hierarchical vision of cultures. We have this opportunity today. Let us use it wisely.

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO! FOR ACCESS TO THE PUBLIC

OLE BOUMAN'S VISION
BY BILLY NOLAN

Ole Bouman has been director of the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI) in Rotterdam since 2007. Prior to that he was editor in chief of the periodical *Volume* and director of the Archis Foundation. Bouman is also active as an author, curator and lecturer. Among the publications he has written or compiled are *The Invisible in Architecture* (1994), *RealSpace in Quicktimes* (1997), *De Strijd om Tijd* (2003), *Al Manakh* (2007), and most recently *Architecture of Consequence* (2009). He has curated exhibitions for Manifesta: the European Biennial of Contemporary Art, and for Museum Boijmans van Beuningen.

As editor in chief of *Archis* and its successor *Volume* he launched a series of events on the reconstruction of the public domain in such turbulent cities as Kabul, Beirut and Prishtina.

SETTING THE AGENDA FOR CHANGE

Does 'access to the public' have any relevance to a critical thinker about architecture like Ole Bouman? The answer is a resounding yes. 'Access is not a matter of just opening doors,' he explains. 'What we are seeing now is an architecture changing its cultural role from statements of artistic genius to solutions for current problems. These solutions can be seen as either designs that solve problems on the ground, or designs that solve problems by way of example for others to learn from, to apply and to transcend. I call this shift a shift to the public cause, making architecture indeed more accessible to what really concerns the public.'

To reinforce his support for this shift, Bouman has sought to broaden the scope of the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI) from a cultural institute to a social and responsible one too in the four years since he became director. Moreover, he has repositioned the NAI as an agency with a clearly activist agenda. His most significant achievement to date has been the launch of a long-term initiative entitled 'Architecture of Consequence' (AoC), the purpose of which is to provide a platform for architecture that addresses the most pressing problems facing the world today. Although the initiative calls upon the architecture community to reassess the purpose of its work, Bouman is very much aware of the public dimension. 'Today there is a lot of architecture that tries to engage with the public,



ENERGY CONSUMPTION IS ONE OF THE ISSUES ARCHITECTURE CAN INFLUENCE. IMAGE FROM THE BOOK 'ARCHITECTURE OF CONSEQUENCE'.

either by designing a lively public domain or by designing for more direct user satisfaction. This does not necessarily mean an AoC, although it does increase its legitimacy. What I would like to point out with the architecture of consequence is a practice that represents an existential urgency; an architecture that makes life not only more beautiful, but also more liveable. An architecture that is not designed for its effect, but for its impact.'

Facing up to crises

Impact in this context means tackling the fundamental problems of society, which he lists as food, health, energy, space, time, social cohesion, and value creation. In each of these areas the human race is facing problems on a scale we have never experienced before. We live in a world beset by a whole host of interconnected crises: undermined food chains, the effects of climate change, the depletion of energy resources, the lack of social cohesion, unsustainable economic systems and the debt crisis they have spawned. Bouman points out that while architecture had a hand in bringing about these crises, it can also help in resolving them. It's important to understand that he employs the word 'architecture' in the broadest possible sense to encompass the entire spectrum of design professions, from architecture and landscape architecture to urban design and planning. Architecture encompasses all of these fields and is about organizing space.

Exactly how architecture is responsible for the energy crisis, to take one example, becomes clear if we consider the design and construction of buildings that were not energy efficient. Now, however, owing to advancements in design and technology, we possess the ability to produce buildings that are carbon neutral or can even generate energy for other purposes. In a similar way, architects helped to create poorly planned cities and sprawling suburbs that necessitate the consumption of vast quantities of energy for their existence. And just as architects can construct energy-efficient buildings, they can also plan more compact settlements that reduce the burden on scarce energy resources. If we examine all those crises that urgently need to be addressed by society, we discover that architecture has always been a cornerstone in how society has organized itself. Architects have always been key figures in translating that organization into space. It is they who have assisted decision-makers and investors in creating the spatial conditions that underpin choices made by society about how we want to live, work and play.

Working for the common good

One could even argue, as Bouman does, that architects must bear some responsibility for the current problems that afflict us. For a long time, architecture seemed oblivious to the harm it was inflicting on the world. The profession has often become distracted or preoccupied with



IN FUTURE 9 MILLION MOUTHS ARE TO BE FED.
IMAGE FROM 'ARCHITECTURE OF CONSEQUENCE'

side issues, like the battle between modernism and traditionalism. To Bouman, architecture is not about taking sides when it comes to styles or expression, not about superficial beauty or the latest trend. It's about results and working for the common good. Bouman: 'It makes no sense to produce propaganda for an architecture with a more sympathetic outlook. The only way that really works is to deliver. And if it does, a better reputation is near. Architects might be bashed, ridiculed and negatively framed, but in order to make our lives more sustainable and appealing, people always have to fall back upon designers who are good in designing sustainable and appealing environments. Clearly for some, the architect is the villain; equally clearly, the architect will come to our rescue.'

Why architects? Because, as the projects showcased by the AoC initiative demonstrate, they are capable of analyzing a number of problems at the same time and resolving them in one comprehensive design solution. The architecture he advocates focuses on the many possibilities to intensify, share and combine everything from raw materials, services, energy to time, space, transport and public space. In the book published to launch his Architecture of Consequence initiative, he describes the new architecture thus: 'Rather than an architecture of monoprogrammatic zones, single issue spaces, zoning plans and highly individual, unrepeatable statements, it would be an architecture that derives sustainability from the sharing of space, services, energy, transport, the public domain and of land values, an architecture that through that sharing achieves wholly new typologies.'

Architecture of consequence

To qualify for inclusion within the scope of the Architecture of Consequence, projects must satisfy a number of criteria. They must be more than just a great idea; combine challenges in an innovative way; present a believable alternative future; meet social needs; give the user a central role; and bring about positive change in the long and short term.

The initiative showcases a whole range of projects in which architects demonstrate their problem-solving ability and their skill in bringing together divergent and at first glance incompatible issues in one project. A case in point is Park Supermarket by Van Bergen Kolpa Architecten, a proposal to transform a disused tract of land into a new agricultural landscape near The Hague that a) improves biodiversity by farming a whole range of crops and animals, b) reduces energy consumption by producing food close to the city where it is consumed, c) reduces transport costs for the same reason, and d) boosts social cohesion by involving the culturally diverse population in the process. In a project like this, the designers display their ability to synchronize and recombine a wide range of processes and integrate them into a single proposal that tackles a whole host of problems. But the list of projects is growing all the time. You can find them all at architectureofconsequence.nl

Producing projects of this nature means that architects must adopt a new attitude towards their profession. It's imperative for them to do more than just satisfy the demands of a client by providing all the functional elements required. Architecture must go beyond the provision of a service. Call it the architectural profession's own agenda, whereby its practitioners are called upon to think about what society might need, let's say, ten years from now. Or they might consider scenarios that clients have not yet translated into concrete commissions yet might very well be very important for society. It's the architectural profession's own responsibility to consider such issues, speculate upon them, contemplate what the future holds in store but has not yet acquired definite form as concrete commissions. And in that endeavour, architecture can demonstrate its immense value in helping society to progress rather than just facilitating it with functional architecture alone. Architecture has the capacity to demonstrate what the future could become.

A need for visions

It is perhaps tempting to argue that Bouman is burdening architects with a considerable moral task in this way, entrusting them with a duty to change the world while dealing with building clients whose primary concern is not architectural ruminations on the future. Let the cobbler stick to his last. That may usually be sound advice,



'SEA POWER MASTER PLAN' (2008) BY OFFICE FOR METROPOLITAN ARCHITECTURE.
IMAGE FROM 'ARCHITECTURE OF CONSEQUENCE'

but truly great architecture has always sought to achieve more than merely offer a service. For just doing that is the very bottom line in architecture, the absolute minimum. The maximum, on the other hand, is something completely different altogether. And that is where there is a need for speculative, creative minds. Such individuals can make an unbelievable contribution to society. Bouman's initiative amounts to a call to arms. Time for designers to act.

Such an appeal to idealism can fall on deaf ears, especially those of architects who are quite content to carry out orders and give people what they ask for. After all, architects are at the mercy of the market, and it is difficult to be too idealist when practising what may be an art but is also a means by which many people earn a living. The very nature of their work means that architects cannot isolate themselves from society. But Bouman firmly believes that now they can show the courage to be more visionary at a time when there is a crying need for new visions. This is an opportunity for the profession to show what it's worth, to propose alternatives to the type of development that we now know are no longer tenable. Now is time in which architecture doesn't have to be simply about rendering a service but can set the agenda for a change. This is the time to demonstrate the potential of the profession. No doubt there are architects who believe that the wisest course of action at the moment is to weather the storm and wait for the economic upturn that will inevitably come. Such a course of action is too passive, asserts Bouman. We can make better use of our time now by showing the potential of architecture to organize society in a different way. We can move from demonstrating the profession's skill in moulding space to demonstrating its social vision.

A proactive mentality

A time of crisis and a moment of opportunity. That sounds like a contradiction, but necessity breeds opportunity, as the saying goes. Abandoning the path of suburbanization, for example, and instead building more compact

settlements that are livelier and boast a more vital public domain will not only result in a more sustainable and healthier living environment but also create a more cohesive society in which people acknowledge one another more easily with more respect. Truly innovative architecture today addresses a number of issues simultaneously. It does not treat problems as isolated phenomena. Instead, it sees the bigger picture. The biggest challenge for designers is to adopt a more proactive stance and engage with issues of public concern. Instead of waiting around for clients to come along with a clearly defined wish-list, they have to actively identify opportunities to formulate solutions to the urgent problems facing society. Architecture must end its obsession with image and focus on performance.

Despite that, simply holding up a new crop of talented, problem-solving architects is of itself not enough to turn the tide. If visionary architects are to succeed, they need to work together with those people who invest in buildings and development as well as the people responsible for putting regulations in place, i.e. those in positions of public authority. Only then can new architectural strategies take root. That is why Bouman's initiative is not only about showcasing and discussing interesting projects. He is following up at the NAI with what he calls the Studio for Unsolicited Architecture. This venture seeks to bring together architects, policy-makers and the construction world to create opportunities for realizing promising designs that serve the public interest. The studio acts as intermediary on behalf of projects through bridge building, lobbying and generating media attention. On top of that, there is the mandate of the NAI as a public institution. 'Reaching the general audience is part of our mission; inspiring professionals is another part,' says Bouman. 'I never understood why these should be mutually exclusive aims. The NAI will reopen in just a few weeks as both a museum for many and a podium for the designing few. The NAI is a mediator between these spheres. The renovation is about exactly that: this mediation will no longer be our duty; it will be our drive.'

WHAT DESIGN

CAN DO!

SPEAKERS 2011

**DROR
BENSHETRIT**
ACCESS TO
THE CITY

**JURGEN
BEY**
ACCESS TO
THE PUBLIC

**ADÉLIA
BORGES**
ACCESS TO
CULTURES

**OLE
BOUMAN**
ACCESS TO
THE PUBLIC

**GIORGIO
CAMUFFO**
ACCESS TO
THE CITY

**PAULA
DIB**
ACCESS TO
CULTURES

**DANIEL
EATOCK**
ACCESS TO
THE CITY

**DINGEMAN
KUILMAN**
ACCESS TO
THE BASICS

**JULIA
LOHMANN**
ACCESS TO
THE BASICS

**JACOB
VAN RIJS**
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THE BASICS

**PER
NIMER**
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THE PUBLIC

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RANJAN**
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SHIVKUMAR**
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**HUDA
ABIFARES**
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**SCOTT
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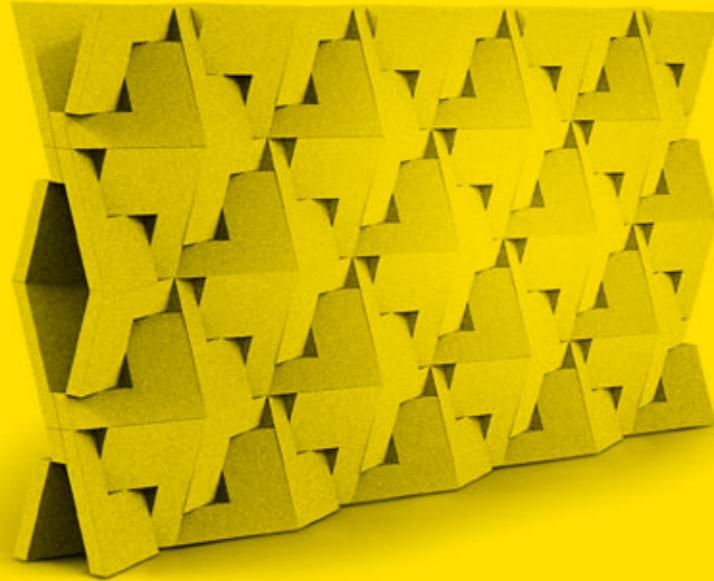
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DROR BENSHE TRIT LOVES GEOMETRY



POETRY AND PHYSICS MAKE EXTRAORDINARY OBJECTS

'I get the ideas for my designs from physics, from movement, from observing people's natural behaviour, from fashion and from my heart,' Tel Aviv-born and now New York-based designer Dror Benshetrit says. His latest conception, QuaDror, has it all: a spectacular simple geometric structure that can be the base for everything from furniture designs and easy-to-build housing for the homeless.

'I have no interest in adding another ordinary object to the market,' says Benshetrit, who was educated at the Design Academy Eindhoven in the Netherlands. That's why he offered the world, among other designs, his beautiful geometrically structured Peacock Chair, designed for Cappellini. Other clients include Alessi, Bentley, Bombay Sapphire, Levi's, Marithé + François Girbaud, Puma, Rosenthal, Skins Footwear and Swarovski.

In collaboration with a team of experts, Dror conducts thorough research, focusing on materials, technology and geometry. The latest fruit of this research is QuaDror, an elegant structural principle that is lighter yet stronger than traditional structures. QuaDror can be used to build decorative walls quickly as relief structures in disaster areas.

www.studiodror.com

DISCIPLINE
PRODUCT DESIGN
NATIONALITY
ISRAELI

IMAGE
QUADROR: A UNIQUE GEOMETRY
FOR MANIFOLD DESIGN INITIATIVES:
INNOVATIVE. SIMPLE. STRONG.

What is your key message at this conference?

Having access to a strong shelter. QuaDror: a design innovation for building that aims to bring a solution to the global issue of habitat. One billion people still don't have access to proper habitat (source: UN Habitat). QuaDror is a new space truss geometry, lending itself to a wide scope of applications. This innovation presents great structural efficiency and tremendous potential for a didactic solution to the global issue of habitat. The QuaDror relief houses provide integrated design, preserving the organic diversity of cultures and ecosystems, while encouraging social empowerment.

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?

John Maeda, *The Laws of Simplicity*

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?

I would tell them to NOT think about solving but to open their mind, heart and senses to the world in which they live. Then to share their emotional and intellectual response to it in beautiful and respectful ways.

Do you think design really can change the world?

It has always been and is doing it every day.

JURGEN BEY A PLEA FOR CRITICAL DESIGN



'WE NEED OBSERVANT VISIONARIES'

Jurgen Bey treats the world like a treasure waiting to be revealed. Many of his process-based designs start with elements we usually walk past, like dust or cobwebs. In 2002 Bey founded Studio Makkink & Bey together with Rianne Makkink, a studio that explicitly aims to create a new design culture through critical design.

A renowned educator, Jurgen Bey has taught at prominent institutions, including the Design Academy Eindhoven and London's Royal College of Art. Since 2010 Bey has been director of the multidisciplinary Sandberg Institute, where he is trying to instil a new consciousness in designers and artists of the future: 'The Sandberg has to train artists and designers to become observant visionaries. This changing world demands critical artists and designers who are willing to collaborate and serve a bigger purpose.'

www.jurgenbey.nl
www.studiomakkinkbey.nl

DISCIPLINE
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NATIONALITY
DUTCH

IMAGE
INTERIORS FOR 'BALANCING BARN'
(MVRDV) AND TEMPORARY HOTEL
ROOMS RUHR 2010

What is your key message at this conference?

The new role of master education and where art meets design. Should education prepare us for professional practices or should we jump over them and start a new culture?

What do you hope this conference can achieve?

I do hope that it starts a yearly debate about where we stand and want to go as a profession.

Could you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?

I would rather choose a piece of art that shows how far you can go and what you can achieve if your goals are clear while the impact remains open. Pioneering what art can do and what it means if you look well: Francis Alÿs, When Faith Moves Mountains.

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?

Oliver Sachs, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat: And Other Clinical Tales*, to understand that normality does not exist and that there is always a talent for things.

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?

I do not know if I would ask them to solve things, since that only makes questions big, but rather be modest or invisible as designers, so that things can do their work.

ADÉLIA BORGES VALUES MULTIPLICITY



'DESIGN SHOULD NOT BECOME AN ESPERANTO'

In what direction is globalization headed in the 21st century? Certainly the one-way route of centre-periphery is making way for a more diverse and multilateral stream of information. Will this changed stream lead to a multi flavoured or a more unified cultural landscape? Brazilian design theorist and curator Adélia Borges comments on these subjects and states that an emphasis on local skills and crafts may create a cultural landscape with stronger multiple voices.

In her lecture Borges will focus on how design can strengthen the position of local cultural expression and crafts, and states that these connections may eventually lead to a more diverse and sustainable cultural panorama. Design can play a key function in creating a mixed language instead of a uniform Esperanto.

Borges is an independent curator and journalist. She has been writing on design since the 1970s for newspapers and magazines and published several books. She directed the Museu da Casa Brasileira from 2003-2007 and was the chief curator of the Brazilian Design Biennial 2010.

tinyurl.com/adelia-borges

DISCIPLINE
CRITICISM, CURATING
NATIONALITY
BRAZILIAN

IMAGE
'PURE BLENDS' EXHIBITION,
CURATED BY ADELIA BORGES.
PHOTO: MARIANA CHAMA.

What is your key message at this conference?

We should be concerned with design *for* and *by* 'the other 90 percent'. We should open our minds, senses and hearts to the different voices regarding design, not just to those from the white 'first world'.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?

This conference can be a good catalyst for designers and thinkers who believe that we should stop considering the commercial dimension of design only and should develop its social dimension.

Could you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?

Many projects in Latin America are devoted to social innovation through craft design. To name just one, Coopa-Roca, the women artisans' cooperative of Rocinha, the biggest slum in Rio de Janeiro.

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?

Supply of water and food for all the population. And supply of 'bridges' between people and cultures that would give us a better knowledge and understanding of one another.

Do you think design really can change the world?

Design can't change the world, but it can help to change the world. It requires less ego and feeling of omnipotence and more humility and spirit of collaboration.

OLE BOUMAN WANTS DESIGNERS TO ACT



'HONOUR ARCHITECTS THAT SERVE SOCIETY'

Ole Bouman has been director of the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAi) since 2007. Prior to that he was editor in chief of the periodical *Volume*, a cooperative venture set up by the Archis Foundation, architectural think-tank AMO, and the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. As a curator, Bouman dedicated a series of public events to the reconstruction of the public domain in cities hit by disasters, among them Ramallah, Mexico City and Kabul.

Bouman has written articles for a wide spectrum of publications, ranging from *ArtForum*, the *Harvard Design Review* and *Proiekt Russia* to *Domus* and *De Gids*.

DISCIPLINE
ARCHITECTURE, GOVERNANCE
NATIONALITY
DUTCH

**IMAGE: SPORTPLAZA
MERCATOR IN AMSTERDAM,
DESIGNED BY VENHOEVEN CS.
PHOTO: LUUK KRAMER.**

He was a guest editor in chief of *A+D* (India) and an editorial consultant for *Urban China*. Bouman also co-authored the encyclopedical *The Invisible in Architecture* and *Al Manakh*. He also contributed to the architecture and design manifestos *RealSpace in QuickTimes* and *De Strijd om Tijd*.

Bouman's most recent publication, *Architecture of Consequence*, published in 2009, examines a more proactive design mentality. 'Architects that keep their eye on the bigger picture and focus more on serving the society as a whole than on short term profit deserve to be honoured.'

www.nai.nl

GIORGIO CAMUFFO: ACTIVISM FROM THE LAGUNA



'VENICE IS NOT SINKING'

DISCIPLINE
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
NATIONALITY
ITALIAN

IMAGE
VENICE IS NOT SINKING MAGAZINE
AND INTERIOR DESIGN BY
STUDIO CAMUFFO

Venezia, *La Serenissima*, is one of the most lauded places in the world. But the lagoon city's future prospects are grim. Each day some 80,000 tourists pack into the postcard beauty, while the actual population of 60,000 inhabitants is shrinking by the day. In the meantime, water is eroding the city's very foundations. However, Venetian-born graphic designer Giorgio Camuffo refuses to jump ship.

Camuffo founded a studio for visual communication in his home town in 1990, directing an open team of young designers and focusing on editorial design, exhibition design, merchandising, corporate branding and cultural events. Clients have included include Fabrica and the Benetton Group, Palazzo Pitti, Palazzo Grassi, and La Biennale di Venezia.

Camuffo also teaches visual communication at the Faculty of Design and Art of the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano. His charming resistance to the downfall of his beloved home town is expressed in a self-produced exclusive magazine dedicated to Venice entitled *Venice is not sinking*.

What is your key message at this conference?
That we designers should do what every person (not necessarily a designer) has to do in his/her life: look at the world around us. No need to go far away, just get out of our homes and offices.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?
I hope that this conference can shake the designers' world.

Can you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?
The work of Oliviero Toscani for Benetton changed my way of looking at the world and at what design – in the broadest sense – can do.

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?
The book by the expert on biblical hermeneutics Haim Baharier, *La genesi insegnata da mia figlia* (Genesis explained by my daughter): a great reading of the Bible's first book, and a wonderful, inspiring book. Unfortunately it has not been translated into English yet.

Do you think design really can change the world?
It can be tried, but as it is part of the world, design inevitably takes part in its transformation too. But maybe the real question is: 'Can design change the world for the better?' Then my answer is: I hope it is possible. And I think that every designer should aspire to do so.

www.studiocamuffo.com

PAULA DIB: EMERGING REGIONAL PRACTISES



'AUTHORSHIP IS OUTDATED'

DISCIPLINE
SOCIAL DESIGN
NATIONALITY
BRAZILIAN

PHOTO
BRAZILIAN VILLAGERS USE
EUCALYPTUS LEAVES TO MAKE
PRODUCTS DESIGNED BY PAULA DIB

With her studio Trans.forma Design Brazilian product designer Paula Dib aims to join 'emergent Brazil' and 'regional Brazil', two opposites in society separated by social and economic barriers. In practice, this means she stimulates collaborations between trained designers and crafts specialists.

Active since 2003, Dib has received praise and attention, even more so after winning the 2006 British Council Young Design Entrepreneur Award. Dib states that in future design the aspect of collaboration will become more and more the common practice. 'I'm very much in favour of collective intelligence and collective creativity shared between designer and craftsmen, individual and community, thinker and maker,' Paula Dib says. 'As a social enterprise Trans.forma acts in a transversal and integrated way, promoting partnerships between companies and social organizations to complement social, cultural and productive resources and to maximize the positive impact of the actions.'

www.transformadesign.com.br

What will be your key message at WDCD?
Design goes far beyond creating things. Design is a powerful creative tool and also a conceptual method for development. It should be used locally, in a transparent, collective and transversal way, inspiring, involving and enabling positive changes.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?
I would like to see the results of this event have an impact on decision-makers and to open doors for design to influence public policies in the Netherlands and worldwide. :-)

Could you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?
The DREAM:IN project: an initiative that explores what Indians are dreaming about by collecting thousands of dreams across the country and putting them in a database for analysis. <http://dreamindia2011.wordpress.com/dreamin-initiative/>

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?
I considered many things in a few seconds, but I think it's not a matter of what to do, but how. The inclusion of a creative and innovative point of view can contribute to many issues.

Do you think design really can change the world?
No, but I really believe that a holistic point of view should be involved when you want to change anything.

DANIEL EATOCK: THE PERFECT CIRCLE



'I LIKE GRAY AREAS, OXYMORONS AND THE FEELING OF FALLING BACKWARDS'

DISCIPLINE
GRAPHIC DESIGNER, ARTIST
NATIONALITY
BRITISH

IMAGE
DISPLAY BOOK SHELF (2009)

Random everyday life magic exploration. The work of graphic designer and conceptual artist Daniel Eatock is in orbit around these themes. After graduating from the Royal College of Art in London, Eatock initially worked as a designer at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and then returned to the UK.

Daniel Eatock currently runs an integral practice that boasts clients such as *The New York Times* and Channel 4 and allows him to create free work. In collaboration with Jeffrey Vaska, Eatock designed the portfolio application *indexhibit*. Princeton University Press published an exquisite monograph entitled *Imprint* in his honour in 2008. This monograph, in which Eatock literally left his mark with an imprint on the cover, shows the thought process of an incredibly dedicated and talented artist.

What is your key message at this conference?

To reduce the extraneous and subjective. To propose and find solutions to problems that cannot be formulated before they have been solved, the shaping of the question is part of the answer.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?

More questions than answers. To fix things that no longer work. To suggest alternatives to existing models. To encourage alternative ways around doing things properly.

Can you name a project, other than your own, that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?

Walsh PB Elite Xtreme Fell Running Shoe.

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?

<http://www.ubu.com/>

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?

Unhappiness.

Do you think design really can change the world?

Yes, but not necessarily in a positive way.

www.eatock.com

DINGEMAN KUILMAN: DESIGN NEEDS A NEW OPERATING MODEL



'SHIFT TOWARDS SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUE'

DISCIPLINE
DESIGN RESEARCH, EDUCATION
NATIONALITY
DUTCH

IMAGES: BRIDGING PROJECT
'WHU ZHI QIAO' IN EARTH
QUAKE AFFECTED MALIE
VILLAGE, SICHUAN

Dingeman Kuilman knows the design field from A to Z. He is a graphic designer by education and worked in different roles for several design agencies. In 1993, he became the first director of Premisela, a platform dedicated to strengthening the position of the Dutch design industry. Currently Kuilman is chairman of the executive board of ArtEZ Academy of Art and Design.

Kuilman started his career at the famous Anthon Beeke Studio before working as a design strategist at Philips Design department and FHV/BBDO. He was member of the influential Arts and Design Committee (Raad voor Cultuur), taught at the Rietveld Academie, the Design Academy Eindhoven and the Academy of Management, and acts as chairman of the board of the Sikkens Foundation.

As an observer of design culture from different angles, he stresses the necessity for a more critical and reflective approach to design, for the times, they are rapidly changing: 'The fashion model and the art model followed by design are both worn-out, and the economic value argument that sustained design in the 1990s now needs to be supplanted by thinking in terms of social and cultural value.'

www.artez.nl

What is your key message at this conference?
Design can make a difference.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?
Get designers, students, companies, governments and consumers inspired to do the right thing.

Can you name a project, other than your own, that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?
Farbrico Próprio, The Design of Portuguese Semi-Industrial Confectionary

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?

Read: Charles Taylor's *The Malaise of Modernity* and *My Life and Work* by Henry Ford (also available via www.gutenberg.org).
Check out: www.updatinggermany.de and www.trustdesign.nl.

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?

Sign www.change.org/petitions/call-for-the-release-of-ai-weiwei and take it from there.

Do you think design really can change the world?

Yes, but it will take time and effort from all of us.
Design itself can't perform miracles.

JULIA LOHMANN: WHY DO WE DESIGN?



ATTACKING THE INSENSITIVE

When do we lose our emotions and let a once-living animal become flesh? This question triggered product designer Julia Lohmann's research project Void. The scene of investigation: a slaughterhouse. The final product: a stool that mirrors the cavity in between the ribs of a calf. 'A beautiful shape that's inside all of us', states Lohmann.

Lohmann, currently based in London, has been fascinated with the natural world and the apparent uselessness of leftover products since her childhood in the small village of Hildesheim, Germany. Through design she explores the ambiguous relationship we humans foster towards animals as source of our food and materials.

DISCIPLINE
PRODUCT DESIGN
NATIONALITY
GERMAN

IMAGES
'LASTING VOID' STOOL (2007),
A CAST OF THE INSIDE OF A DEAD
CALF. PHOTO: FABRICE GOUSSET

Lohmann holds degrees in Product and Graphic Design and has taught on the MA Design Products course at the Royal College of Art where she is currently engaged in a practice-based PhD studentship in conjunction with the Victoria & Albert Museum. 'I am hoping to develop objects that will raise questions about how we interact with the world around us, how we consume resources and to which purpose we design.'

www.julialohmann.co.uk

JACOB VAN RIJS: IDEAS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE



'SUSTAINABLE ARCHITECTURE IS BORING'

With Nathalie de Vries and Winy Maas, architect Jacob van Rijs founded the famous MVRDV agency almost two decades ago. MVRDV is globally renowned for its original solutions for intensified use of space. In concept projects like Pig City and the more recent Food City the agency aimed to resolve structural challenges of our consumer based society.

Projects by MVRDV include: the Netherlands Pavilion for the Hannover World Expo 2000, the innovative business park Flight Forum in Eindhoven, the Matsudai cultural centre and the Gyre shopping centre in Japan, the Mirador building in Madrid and the Silodam building and Lloyd Hotel in Amsterdam. Amsterdam-born Jacob van Rijs graduated with honours from Delft University of Technology, and currently lectures at the university and several international institutes. Van Rijs remains critical of the fashionable character that sustainability has obtained, stating: 'I don't like sustainable architecture; I think it's boring. My aim is to create projects that are so interesting they will inevitably be sustainable.'

www.mvrdv.nl

DISCIPLINE
URBAN PLANNING, ARCHITECTURE
NATIONALITY
DUTCH

IMAGES
GEMINI RESIDENCES
A CONVERSION OF OLD
SILOS, COPENHAGEN

What is your key message at this conference?
How architects and designers can be key in developing ideas that can help to solve urgent global issues.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?
More awareness of the design disciplines for the need to solve global issues.

Could you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?
The 100 dollar laptop is a fantastic project.

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?
A lecture by Jeremy Rifkin, to be found on the internet. I like the way he connects different fields like economy, science and also architecture.

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?
Less waste, and more space.

Do you think design really can change the world?
I keep on trying every day... Smart design solutions can improve things, but design alone is not enough.

PER NIMER: LET'S COLOUR THE WORLD



'A SPLASH OF COLOUR CAN INSPIRE US ALL'

Grey is out. Gloom is gone. It's time to live our lives in colour.' That's the motto for the Let's Colour Project in which Akzo Nobel works together with local communities around the globe. The project has already brought colour to streets, schools, homes and squares in Brazil, France, the UK and India.

As Akzo Nobel's Global Design Manager, Per Nimer knows what a little colour can do. Trained as an interior architect and designer, Nimer has become one of the world's foremost colour trend forecasters. With his team of ten designers he has been working on design concepts, shop concepts, colour cards, collections and marketing concepts for Akzo Nobel's different paint brands. It is not surprising that Per Nimer knows everything about colour: he has been studying it from his very first years. In his grandfather's paint shop, taken over later by his father, Nimer gathered an intuitive knowledge of colour and paint, painters and paint customer behaviour. After receiving a bachelors degree in interior architecture and graphic design in San Francisco, he worked from his own architectural studio for some years, before becoming design manager at Akzo Nobel. Nimer is the author of *Dare to Paint*, a colour and design book translated into 12 languages.

www.akzonobel.com

DISCIPLINE
DESIGN MANAGEMENT
NATIONALITY
SWEDISH

IMAGES
DIFFERENT PROJECTS FROM
LET'S COLOUR PROGRAM

What is your key message at this conference?
What colour can do for architecture and what architecture can do for colour.

Could you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?
Skyspace by James Turrell, an architectural design in which a neutrally coloured room has a hole in the ceiling, allowing observers to look to the sky.

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?
Is Brad Pitt a fishfinger? And fifty-two other thoughts on brand design by Silas Amos

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?
We need to continue to question everything and come up with the best answers.

Do you think design really can change the world?
Without question so, yes.

M P RANJAN: INDIA IS IN NEED OF DESIGN



'CRAFTS LAY THE BASE FOR CREATIVE ECONOMY'

'Design is not a mere hand-maiden for industrial development, but a much broader strategy that can help transform society and feed into the culture forming processes of a country and a region,' says Indian design thinker and academic professor M P Ranjan, who condemns India's lack of vision and funding for design education.

With forty years of experience in design education and practice, Ranjan helped visualize and set up two new design schools in India, one for the crafts sector and the other for the bamboo sector. He retired last year as a faculty member at the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad and continues as the author of a blog, Design for India, that reaches 125000 readers.

Earlier this year, professor Ranjan spoke about inclusive design for development in India at the World Economic Forum in Davos. Here he stressed once again the crying need for design to address the pressing problems of the Indian people, including affordable healthcare, sanitation, better education, housing and a host of other design opportunities across 230 sectors of the Indian economy.

Among Ranjan's initiatives was the mapping of artisan skills all across India, which he believes to be the foundation for inclusive action and the seeding of the creative economy of the future for India.

tinyurl.com/m-ranjan
www.design-for-india.blogspot.com

DISCIPLINE
DESIGN POLICY, EDUCATION
NATIONALITY
INDIAN

IMAGES
KATLAMARA BAMBOO
PROJECT WHERE DESIGN
AND CRAFTS MEET

What will be your key message at WDCD?
Design is not about the surface qualities of what you see, but it is increasingly about deep structure and meaning, which for many situations is what you cannot see. In these cases you can only feel and experience it, and only if one is sensitive or oriented or informed to receive the intended message. Design is about culture and the forming of intentions that lead to actions that produce value. It is a very human activity and must be returned to society and not just left in the realm of industry and markets.

What do you hope WDCD can achieve?
Help us articulate the various domains in which design can help us address the pressing needs of our society and for these deliberations to reach the conscience of our people here in India and those across the world who need to use it the most.

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?
Hunger, poverty and deprivation in the world right at your doorsteps and not somewhere around the world.

Do you think design really can change the world?
Yes it can change the world and it has been doing just that ever since it was used by humans 2 million years ago with the first use of fire for a single purpose, security at that time. The change, can be positive or very destructive since design actions can be invisible and very powerful. Design therefore needs deep rooted values and ethics to inform its direction and application.

ROHAN SHIVKUMAR: CITIES NEED CULTURE



REINVIGORATE CULTURAL PRACTICE OF ARCHITECTURE

Under the title Anarchytect, Indian architect, urban designer and educator Rohan Shivkumar blogs about cinema, literature and the changing face of the Indian cities and villages. The blog reflects his cross-disciplinary view on architecture, and the way art, literature and cinema should interact with the city.

Shivkumar is Deputy Director at the Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute for Architecture and Environmental Studies, Mumbai. His interests have been shaped by the dramatic changes in the physical landscape of the city, with rampant development wreaking havoc on communities and collective memory. He is interested in deciphering the patterns of these changes, the ideologies and their manifestations; especially of the resistances posed by everyday life to the displacing tendencies of globalisation. He feels that it is imperative to reconstruct a relevant role for architects and design for India by reinvigorating architecture as a cultural practice in the context of the city of Mumbai.

In his research and practice within and outside the school he has engaged with many projects including those concerned with slum communities and housing, cultural production and its impact on spatial imagination, and projects on heritage and conservation. Currently he is Project coordinator for Cinema City, an interdisciplinary venture exploring the relationship between cinema and the city of Mumbai.

www.anarchytect.blogspot.com

DISCIPLINE
ARCHITECTURE
NATIONALITY
INDIAN

IMAGE: CINEMA CITY EXPLORES
RELATIONS BETWEEN IMAGE, IMAGI-
NATION AND THE CITY (KRIVIA IN
COLLABORATION WITH MAJLIS)

What is your key message at this conference?

The context of an Indian city offers unique and difficult possibilities for designers. Unfortunately, coming from preconceived ideas received from different contexts, the design profession and education system is unable to even recognize these, never mind evolve solutions for them. It is imperative that we be able to evolve tools of mapping and representation that are able to decipher the specificity of the nature of the issues within the Indian context.

Could you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?

One that shows what design CAN do: Millowners' Association in Ahmedabad by Le Corbusier, built in 1957, using a progressive and playful language of architecture for an Indian nation newly independent.

And one that show what design CAN'T do: the 'Sites and Services' housing schemes built in Mumbai in the 1980s. Instead of making and giving completed homes to inhabitants, the government chose to give a basic infrastructure and enable individuals and families to build their own homes. Therefore while at the urban scale, formal systems of infrastructure were protected, at the individual unit scale complexities of informal systems were acknowledged.

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?

A Critique of Everyday Life by Henri Lefebvre.

Do you think design really can change the world?

Yes, it can.

HUDA SMITSHUIJZEN ABIFARÈS BRIDGES EAST AND WEST



PUTTING HERITAGE IN MODERN CONTEXT

'The primary goal of creating the Khatt Foundation in 2004 was to bridge and establish dialogues between East and West through design and typography,' Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFarès says. 'As a typographer, graphic designer, researcher and writer, I work with whatever means and talent I possess to make design a meaningful and positive part of people's lives.'

Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFarès was born in Beirut. She was educated in graphic design at Yale University School of Art and Rhode Island School of Design. While teaching design at American educational institutes in Beirut and later Dubai, she realized that Arab designers generally looked to the West for inspiration. 'We rarely took the time to examine and study our Arab and Islamic heritage when thinking of design. I realized then that we needed to look at our heritage, but not copy it.'

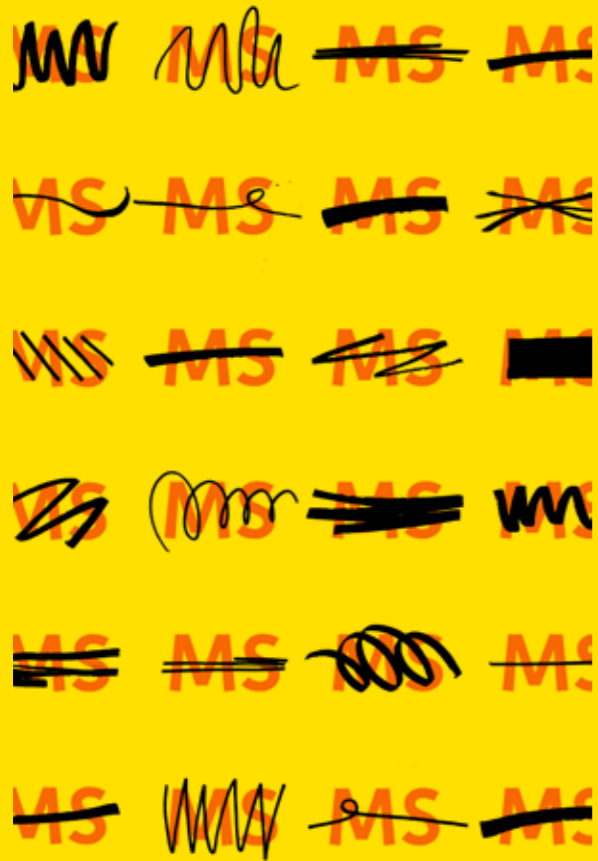
DISCIPLINE
TYPOGRAPHY
NATIONALITY
LEBANESE

IMAGE
**PRESENTATION OF TYPOGRAPHIC
MATCHMAKING IN THE CITY**

Bringing back the heritage of Islamic applied arts into contemporary design and reconnecting Arab youth to that heritage was the other reason to start the Khatt Foundation, Center for Arabic Typography. The centre received plenty of attention in 2007 through its three-year Typographic Matchmaking Project that allowed Arabic and Dutch type designers to collaborate on creating five new Arabic fonts that match Latin fonts. Smitshuijzen AbiFarès curates exhibitions, organizes collaborative design research projects and acts as editor of the Khatt website. She is currently pursuing a PhD at Leiden University while working between Europe and the Middle East as a typography and design consultant on projects of cultural relevance.

www.khtt.nl

SCOTT STOWELL WANTS YOU TO PAY ATTENTION



'SOMETIMES THE OBVIOUS IS THE BEST'

Since 1998, designer Scott Stowell has been doing business as Open – and has survived by staying small, not really specializing in anything in particular, and embracing ‘an open notion of the term “office”, inviting different participants to every project’. As it turns out, everything is connected and everything is an opportunity – if you’re paying attention.

Stowell is the proprietor of Open, an independent design studio that creates rewarding experiences for people who look, read, and think. Right now he is working on a book for Stanford’s d.school, a campaign for Uniqlo, an e-book with futurist Alex Steffen, information graphics for *Harvard Business Review*, more signage for Brooklyn

DISCIPLINE
PUBLISHING, DESIGN
NATIONALITY
AMERICAN

IMAGES
LOGO DESIGN FOR MULTIPLE
SCLEROSIS SOCIETY AND COVER
OF GOOD MAGAZINE

Bridge Park, some strategy for Naked Pizza, this text for this conference, a website for Google, and a plan to get some sleep.

Before starting Open, Stowell was the art director of *Colors* magazine in Rome and a senior designer at M&Co. New York. Before that, he earned a BFA in graphic design from Rhode Island School of Design. A former vice president of AIGA/NY, Stowell teaches at Yale and the School of Visual Arts. In 2008, the Smithsonian’s Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum named Stowell the winner of the National Design Award for Communication Design.

notclosed.com

DEYAN SUDJIC: HOW POWER AND DESIGN INTERTWINE



ESSENTIALLY DESIGN HELPS TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD

‘Something in design has gone wrong when objects don’t mature in a way that makes them more desirable.’ A clear-cut comment on today’s consumer culture from the director of London’s Design Museum: Deyan Sudjic.

Sudjic, who trained as an architect, been in charge of the museum since 2006 and has built up an extensive career in different fields. He reported about architecture and design for *The Observer* newspaper, was editor in chief of *Domus*, and published monographs on architects like Norman Foster. In 2002 Sudjic curated the Venice Architecture Biennale, entitled NEXT.

Deyan Sudjic mastered the art of translating complex subjects into understandable and even humorous proportions, as demonstrated by his 2005 book on architecture and power, entitled *The Edifice Complex: How the Rich and Powerful – and Their Architects – Shape the World*. He advocates a critical approach towards the adoration of the creative industry, where culture and economy are increasingly intertwined. For in the end, he says, ‘The way we design our society reflects the means and values we have built upon.’

www.designmuseum.org

DISCIPLINE
GOVERNANCE, ARCHITECTURE
NATIONALITY
BRITISH

IMAGES
QUINTA MONROY HOUSING
PROJECT IN CHILE
BY ELEMENTAL

What is your key message at this conference?
Design is the best tool that we have available to us to understand the world, and the cities around us.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?
Persuade its participants that it is worth repeating.

Could you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?

The Elemental social housing project in Chile, Yves Behar’s customizable spectacles for Mexican school children, the Motivation wheel chair project led by David Constantine, Enrique Penalosa’s work on mass transit systems, bike ways and schools, during his time as mayor of Bogota.

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?

The Language of Things – I wrote it.
Living in the Endless City – I edited it with Ricky Burdett.

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?
Apathy.

Do you think design really can change the world?
I think the point is to understand it.

THONIK: CLEAR AND HAPPY MODERNISM



vpro

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vpro vpro vpro vpro

vpro vpro vpro vpro vpro



DISCIPLINE
VISUAL COMMUNICATION
NATIONALITY
DUTCH

IMAGES
VISUAL IDENTITIES FOR
VPRO TV AND SOCIALIST
PARTY

'SENDING OUT CLEAR MESSAGES IS THE KEY'

Thonik holds a firm position in the current visual landscape of The Netherlands. The design studio was founded in 1993 by partners Thomas Widdershoven and Nikki Gonnissen. Their clear visual communication, a self-proclaimed 'happy modernism', balances on one central design principle: if the concept is strong, the design works.

Thonik has branded many cultural institutions, including Centraal Museum in Utrecht and Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, as well as the city of Amsterdam, the NRC media company, and most recently the VPRO broadcasting organization. Internationally the work of Thonik has been shown in exhibitions ranging from the Venice Architecture Biennale to the World Expo in Shanghai.

In 2006 Thonik rebranded the Dutch Socialist Party, and Widdershoven has a clear opinion about the relation between design and politics: 'It worries me to see that the basic values of democracy are under a lot of pressure now. Transparency is under severe attack. Design can play a significant role in creating clarity.'

What is your key message at this conference?

Amidst the food crisis, the water crisis, the financial crisis, the environmental crisis, the democratic crisis, the demographic crisis, the climate crisis and the energy crisis, design stands for a pragmatic, creative and open attitude. This civil attitude is worth spreading.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?

Design is a process and a mentality. The question is whether these can be translated into other fields, where the outcome is not a specific design, but an approach to bigger problems.

Can you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?

Foodprint, a project by Stroom the Hague. It focuses on food for the city. What influence has food on the culture, functioning and design of the city.

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?

In the 1980s 'managers' were introduced to solve everything. Now it is 'consultants'. After that 'designers'? This should be avoided. Part of the design process is that you question the brief. The brief contains the problem. The designer does not solve the problem, the designer questions the brief. The result of his effort is a design, not a solution.

Do you think design really can change the world?

In chaos theory there is the butterfly effect: a butterfly flapping its wings in the Amazon can lead to a hurricane on a different continent. If that is so then everything is possible. Design is a humble force, but it can tip the balance.

FRANK TJEPKEMA ADDS BLING TO AGRICULTURE



'AMAZEMENT IS OUR GOAL'

After designing *Bling*, the most branded piece of jewellery ever, and creating *Do Break* a vase that is only finished when it's broken, industrial designer Frank Tjepkema is now turning his attention on agriculture and sustainability. In his vision for urban agriculture he even envisioned a new religious practice to go along with it: *Agriligion*.

The ongoing research project *Oogst* (Dutch for 'harvest') is gradually taking shape in the design of three models for self-sustaining farms. High technology meets nostalgic windmills in structures that mimic the idea of natural ecosystems. In his plans there is plenty of room for these urban farms, which ideally become new landmarks on top of existing buildings.

Tjepkema grew up in Geneva, Brussels and New York, before settling in the Netherlands, where he graduated with honours from the Design Academy Eindhoven and continued his education at the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam. His unconventional approach resulted in successful collaborations with Droog Design, and he now operates from his Amsterdam studio Tjep. With clients ranging from Camper to Dutch royal princess Maxima, Tjep. never ceases to surprise us and states: 'Ultimately we are designing to add a little quality, energy and amazement to the world.' (Portrait by Marc Deurlo)



DISCIPLINE
PRODUCT DESIGN
NATIONALITY
DUTCH

IMAGES
'HARVEST' PROJECT (2009, LEFT),
BLING BLING MEDAILLON (2003)

What is your key message at this conference?

That if an issue interests you, you don't have to wait for a client to take it on, no matter how complex it is. My 'Harvest' project is an example for that.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?

Breaking the image of luxury that clings to design. And full auditoriums, both days.

Could you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?

The Biosphere 2 project in Oracle, Arizona.

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?

Blink by Malcolm Gladwell, because of its plea for intuitive thinking, very suitable for a world that is focused too much on ratio.

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?

Everything that is ugly.

Do you think design really can change the world?

No! Real changes have always come from technique. But if designers make the world a little more beautiful, that is already something.

OLIVIERO TOSCANI KEEPS ON FIGHTING HYPOCRISY



'IN ART, TRANSGRESSION IS A DUTY'

Toscani studied photography at the Academy of Arts in Zurich and initially focussed on photojournalism, but his talent was soon picked up by the fashion industry. He created images and worked on campaigns for numerous brands, from Valentino to Chanel and Fiorucci, but to Toscani his work is not so much about fashion. It is much more about creating documents on social behaviour and the human condition in general.

Toscani gained acclaim and has won many awards, including four Lions d'Or in Cannes. His work was shown at

DISCIPLINE
PHOTOGRAPHY
NATIONALITY
ITALY

IMAGE
CAMPAIGN IMAGE
'NO ANOREXIA' (2007)
FOR NOLITA BRAND

the Venice Biennale in 1993. In this same year Toscani founded Fabrica, the renowned international centre for arts and communication research. For Toscani a head-on confrontation with hypocrisy and values is the only way of moving things forward. That is why he continues to create images to cause a stir: 'The scale of values has to be destroyed and matters put into discussion, uninterrupted.'

www.toscani.com

DAGAN COHEN BRINGS WEB TO BIG SCREEN



UPLOAD CINEMA: YOUTUBE AT THE MOVIES

DISCIPLINE
INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION
NATIONALITY
DUTCH

IMAGE
UPLOAD CINEMA IN CITY
THEATRE AMSTERDAM

'The web is changing film. Not only in the way content is being distributed, but also in the way film is being produced and watched,' says creative director Dagan Cohen. 'A new collaborative film culture is emerging with blurring boundaries between consumer and producer.'

With more than two billion videos watched on YouTube every day and 35 hours of video uploaded every 60 seconds, the web is turning into a huge video database. But how do you find the gems amongst these millions of videos? Enter Upload Cinema: an initiative started to select and present the best of the web in cinemas. Every month the film club produces a fresh programme of inspiring and entertaining Internet shorts around a specific theme. The audience submits films via the Upload Cinema website, then an editorial team selects the best and compiles a feature-length programme, which is screened at movie theatres and special venues.

Dagan Cohen is founder and director of Upload Cinema. He studied environmental art and design at the Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam and worked as a visual artist and creative entrepreneur before joining advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi in 1995 as art director. Fascinated by the impact of the Internet, he shifted his focus from mass media to interactive media, working as creative director for a number of advertising agencies before becoming executive creative director of Draftfcb Netherlands in 2006.

uploadcinema.net

What is your key message at this conference?

I believe internet has democratized creativity. Good ideas can come from anybody, anywhere. Moreover, there are a lot of great ideas already out there. Waiting to be found. Maybe the task of the creative professional is no longer just to make new products or content, but to reuse existing material.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?

That we will have a discussion about the role of the designer/creative professional in a connected society. That it will forge some kind of creative network that will stay engaged long after the conference is over.

Could you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?

The New York Highline.

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?

The white paper: *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture* by Henry Jenkins.

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?

I would convince captains of industry and governmental policy makers to stop hiring boring organizations such as McKinsey or the Boston Consultancy Group and start hiring creatives to crack regardless which hard nut.

LIU XIAODU IS ALWAYS READY FOR CHANGE



A HEALTHY CITY MUST HAVE DIVERSITY

Urbanization is one of the core issues today's architects have to deal with. That is why Liu Xiaodu, Meng Yan and Wang Hui named their office Urbanus, derived from Latin word for 'city dweller'. The architecture office provides new strategies for urbanism. 'A healthy city must have diversity to absorb others and reserve space for itself.'

Urbanus, based in Beijing and Shenzhen, is recognized as one of the leading forces among China's young design firms. The partners, trained in both China and the USA, are very much committed to the Modernist belief that architecture is a pivotal force for a better life. One of their projects involved the creation of dignified housing for migrant workers, who abundantly inhabit Chinese cities. Liu: 'Our design has the capacity to accommodate 1800 people,

DISCIPLINE
ARCHITECTURE
NATIONALITY
CHINESE

IMAGE
TANGSHAN URBAN PLANNING MUSEUM AND PARK (2007) BY URBANUS

but now that all the units have been rented there are less than 600 people living in the building. They are not rich, but they can afford not to share.'

Liu Xiaodu received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from Tsinghua University, and Master of Architecture degree from Miami University. Prior to establishing Urbanus, Mr. Liu has taught at Tsinghua University and worked in American design firms as a project architect. He has been lecturing as guest professor at Shenzhen University, Hong Kong University and Hong Kong Chinese University.

www.urbanus.com.cn

MONIQUE VAN HEIST TURNS FASHION TRADE UPSIDE DOWN



THE FASHION SYSTEM WILL COLLAPSE

Monique van Heist is persistent in attacking the fast turnover system that the fashion industry runs by. In 2008, this Rotterdam-based designer stated her critical claim by launching the Hello Fashion collection. Hello Fashion will never run out of season, for it is an ever increasing line where new items will be added, and old ones will always remain available.

The Hello Fashion collection made Van Heist a triple winner at the 2008 Dutch Design Awards, taking home the Incubator Award, the Mercedes Benz Dutch Fashion Award and also the Media Award. For her designs Van Heist finds inspiration in everyday situations: the most uninspired designs found in mail order catalogues or the interior design of a supermarket can spark thoughts and concepts. She also refers to the classics of design, and aims to create items that will exist lifetimes, without them having to be basic.

'The Fashion industry is working up to a boiling point', Van Heist says. 'There are more brands, more products, more everything. Within some years this system inevitably has to collapse.'

www.moniquevanheist.com

DISCIPLINE
FASHION DESIGNER
NATIONALITY
DUTCH

IMAGES
HELLO FASHION COLLECTION

What is your key message at this conference?
The extremely personal approach.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?
Raise awareness of the direction design can move in, break current 'rules' and boundaries.

Could you name a project that shows What Design Can Do and inspired you in a special way?
The 'Wongema' project, a 'work-hotel'/cafe/restaurant for artists, design students and designers in Hornhuizen in the north of the Netherlands to be opened in September 2011. It will be an inspirational and quiet place to work, eat, drink and think. A perfect combination of work and free time, with a very 'farm-like' touch.

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?
The works of artist Rachel Whiteread and of the late photographer Francesca Woodman.

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?
How to design less.

Do you think design really can change the world?
Yes and no. Do we need to change the world or just make sure we lead good lives?

MICHAEL WOLFF: DESIGN IS LIKE TRYING NEW SHOES



‘LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK’

DISCIPLINE
FOUNDER OF WOLFF OLINS
NATIONALITY
BRITISH

IMAGE
A FOX MADE PAINT
FIRM HADFIELDS THE
APPEALING UNDERDOG

Michael Wolff started training as an architect, and worked for short periods as a product designer, welder, interior designer and graphic designer before teaming up with Wally Olins in 1965. This marked the beginning of Wolff Olins, one of the world's leading corporate design and branding companies. His many clients range from Audi and Apple – the Beatles' record label, not computers – to Zen.

For Wolff, who currently runs his Michael Wolff & Company from London, the design business is all about putting yourself in other people's shoes. 'To be in other people's shoes, you have to take off your own – bang goes your ego!'

Branding is all about expressing what makes your clients special, and doing it in a way that brings value to the world. On the value of designers Wolff says: 'Some designers bring innovation into what they do, and by taking risks with new thoughts and ideas, good designers can help companies to stand out and lead.' (Portrait of Michael Wolff by Christine Donnier- Valentins)

michaelwolff.oi-dev.org

What is your key message at this conference?

Nobody knows what the future will be – nobody, look at what's been happening over the last 12 months. To quote Ken Robinson, creativity is now as important for all of us as literacy and numeracy – so using our curiosity/inquisitiveness, our appreciation/awareness and our imagination/creativity with greater personal power, is always my message to myself and to anyone else who asks me.

What do you hope this conference can achieve?

An opening of minds and a willingness not to know..

Could you mention one or more websites or books that in your opinion every participant of What Design Can Do should see?

Ken Robinson's talk to the Royal Society of the Arts. Itay Talgam's TED talk.

If you were in charge, what issue(s) would you ask designers to solve?

Embracing what we call inclusive design into mainstream design. Transforming the idea of making money for yourself into the idea of earning money by being useful to the world.

Do you think design really can change the world?

I think anyone can.

LIDEWIJ EDELKOORT: THE MOTHER OF FORECASTING



A LANDMARK MEDIUM OF SOCIAL COMMENTARY

DISCIPLINE
TREND FORECASTING, CURATING
NATIONALITY
DUTCH

IMAGE
TALKING TEXTILE EXHIBITION
(MILAN 2011) CURATED BY
LIDEWIJ EDELKOORT

Lidewij Edelkoort is a trend forecaster, curator, publisher and educator who constantly lives in the future. Studying the links between art, fashion, design and consumer culture, Edelkoort has pioneered trend forecasting as a profession, providing design and lifestyle analysis for the world's leading brands. Since 1992, her magazines (*View on Colour*, *InView* and *Bloom*) have been highly influential in the creative industries.

Her work has evolved into the realm of education at the Design Academy Eindhoven, where she was chairwoman from 1999 to 2008; into humanitarianism through the Heartwear craft foundation she co-founded in 1993; and into curatorial work as she delves into the field art and

design, illuminating museums and exhibitions around the world. In 2007, Edelkoort founded the Designhuis in Eindhoven, a cultural institute where she exhibits innovative design.

In 2008, the French Ministry of Culture honoured her as a Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, and the Dutch Royal Family made her a Knight in the Order of Oranje Nassau. 2009 saw the launch of Archeology of the Future, a retrospective exhibition in Paris and Eindhoven that highlighted Edelkoort's forecasting as a landmark medium of social commentary over the last twenty years.

edelkoort.com



**WHAT
DESIGN
CAN DO!**

**4 INTERVIEWS
SHOWCASING
SOLUTIONS**



**‘DESIGN HAS
A HUGE
INFLUENCE
ON THE
QUALITY OF
THE WORLD’**

**DROR
BENSHETRIT**

**‘WE NEED TO
THINK OF
DESIGN AS
A SERVICE TO
SOCIETY’**

**HUDA
SMITSHUIJZEN
ABIFARES**

**‘STICK
TO YOUR
IDEALS
AND DON’T
BOW TO
OUTSIDE
INFLUENCES’**

**LIU
XIAODU**

**‘IN THE END
DESIGN
SHOULD
ALSO BE
ABOUT
HAVING FUN’**

**SCOTT
STOWELL**



WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

FOR DROR BENSHETRIT

BY BAS VAN LIER

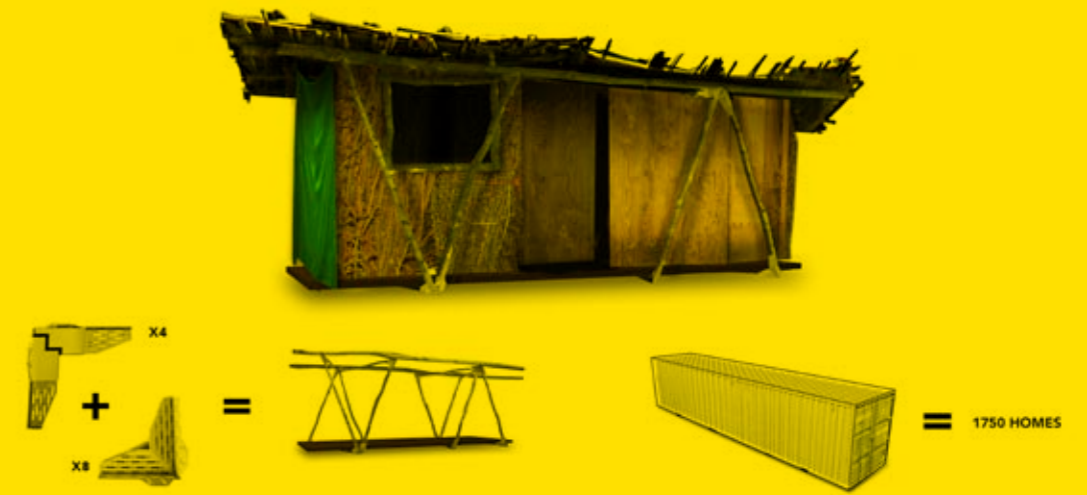
Israeli-born designer Dror Benshetrit is not limiting himself to one type of work. His portfolio encompasses product design, architectural projects, interior design and art direction. Working since 2002 from his New York studio, he has designed furniture for Cappellini and Boffi, footwear for Puma, shop and restaurant interiors, proposals for innovative architectural projects, spatial planning for islands in the Gulf region, and a conceptual model for top-segment carmaker Bentley.

'DESIGN HAS A HUGE INFLUENCE ON THE QUALITY OF THE WORLD'

'I have no interest in adding another ordinary object to the market,' says Benshetrit, who was educated at the Design Academy Eindhoven in the Netherlands. One of his best known designs, the Peacock Chair for Cappellini, is a beautiful manifestation of his desire to combine poetry and physics and geometry in his work. His invention of the self-supporting structural system named QuaDror is of comparable beauty. It originates from the assembly of four identical L-shaped pieces that fall open in a structure that stands on its own. The light, yet extremely strong frame can serve a multitude of applications, including decorative division walls, dwellings, supportive trestles, as well as easy-to-ship and quick-to-build relief housing. Thanks to the collapsibility of the structural support system, 1750 QuaDror relief structure kits fit in one 40-foot container. The easy to assemble housing structures are finalized using local available materials, allowing local communities to make their own designs.

You're designing almost everything, from Bentley's to spatial planning for islands. What is the line in your work?

'Everything I do is always about transformation. I'm always searching for innovation and this, in general, comes from a search outside of the boundaries of disciplines. For me the whole idea of working cross-disciplinary is very important. I'm bringing one element from one thing to another and all of a sudden I find a solution that is completely unexpected. That is what interests me.'



So there won't be anything you don't want to design?
'That is true. At first I thought that there are some things that are boring to design, but the boring aspect is all about how you approach them. They could be things that you would usually think are uninteresting. But that would be in fact the reason to design them, because you can always find something unique and innovative in any type of design challenge.'

Is that a lesson learned at the Design Academy?
'Very much so. It is one of the main things I learned in Eindhoven, to work across disciplines and to search for the right knowledge when you don't have it.'

That is why you are working so often with people from other disciplines?
'Absolutely. I work with engineers, photographers, animators, motion graphic designers, and even choreographers and modern dancers. We are working from a relatively small studio, but depending on the project we're working on the studio can grow two or three times the normal size with contributors.'

You recommend WDCD participants to read John Maeda's *The Laws of Simplicity*. Why?
'Because it represents something I'm very much connected to. This book is very simple and very straightforward and it explains how the end result always needs to be very simple to digest, while the process getting there is always very complex. The process requires a lot of profundity, but the complexity at some point has to translate into something that is digestible and easy to communicate. The simple outcome is the strength of every complex project.'

Designers make the world more beautiful by default. Do you think designers also need to use their skills to improve the world?
'I think that design has always improved the world. Making the world a more beautiful place is a big improvement, because beauty and aesthetics have a direct correlation to our feelings, emotions, and attractions. So in a way design has a huge

influence on the quality of the world, on the presence and emotions of people. In countries where people are always upset there are more problems, more wars. So I think design has a big impact on those things. But design of course can do more. Design, or better creativity, is already changing the world.'

Can you tell us about how you discovered the QuaDror principle?

'I found it more or less by mistake. I was exploring and playing with materials, trying things out. The first moment this thing stood on its own and opened and closed, I thought: okay, this is something interesting I must continue working on. It came by really being open-minded and posing a lot of questions. And when you put knowledge next to that and start involving engineers and validating things, then more ideas and more possibilities come. So I think that we arrived at this disaster relief housing application really step by step. That is what I mean when I say that you can reach completely different things from a any type of challenge.'

You say that QuaDror offers tremendous potential for a didactic solution to the global issue of habitat? What do you mean by that?

'I think the fact that we are involving local communities and that the design just represents a portion of what this thing can be and do; it is encouraging people to encase with it and be part of it. At the same time the design is highlighting geometry, so it is beyond what this thing is and what it can do. It is an envelope to other things that could be created.'

Is QuaDror already in use in local communities for relief housing or other habitat projects?

'We are just starting the first production now and hopefully we'll start testing it in the coming months in different communities. There is one organization in Haiti that is very much interested, another organization in Sierra Leone. We are also talking to places in Brazil, Sri Lanka, and some companies in South Africa.'

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

FOR HUDA ABIFARES

BY BAS VAN LIER

Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFarès is the founding director of the Khatt Foundation, Center for Arabic Typography. Since its inception in 2004 the foundation has established itself as a platform for launching innovative design projects that address needs in the Middle East and North African region.

'WE NEED TO THINK OF DESIGN AS A SERVICE TO SOCIETY'

The foundation has organized a number of successful events, including the Typographic Matchmaking 1.0 project (2005-2007, Amsterdam) that brought Dutch and Arab designers together to work on matching fonts. Two offshoot events followed from this project: the Khatt Kuffi Kaffiya Symposium on Arabic Visual Culture and the El Hema exhibition in collaboration with Stichting Mediamatic. In the exhibition the newly designed typefaces were presented in the context of an Arab version of the very Dutch department store HEMA.

Recently a second matchmaking project was organized, called Typographic Matchmaking in the City (2008-2010, Amsterdam), resulting in three-dimensional typefaces meant for use in urban public space. Besides the cross-cultural typographic experiments, both matchmaking projects helped to raise awareness of the vital role design can play in building a sustainable environment.

What made you decide to become a designer?

'In school I was quite good at drawing and when I discovered that you can actually make a profession out of something you like, I decided to continue my studies in this direction. I was born in Beirut, where education is either in French or in English. I choose to do a two-year course at what now is called the Lebanese American University (LAU). From there I continued my studies in America at Yale University School of Art and Rhode Island School of Design.'

At the time, what was the level of graphic design in Beirut, or the Middle East in general?

'It was dominated by the advertising industry. We didn't have specialized education; designers studied art and developed themselves into designers. This has changed dramatically over the past 20 years. There are now too many designers for the work available, design has become super popular. This is mainly due to the few professional designers who were trained elsewhere and came back and started to teach. I have to admit that I was one of them.'

When did you start focussing on typography?

'I completed my studies with a project/book on the relationship between Arabic and Latin typography through a narrative about immigration and identity. Only when I came back to Beirut, after having stayed in Holland for five years, did I realize how poor the state of typography was in the Arab world. Everything there is bilingual and it was obvious that the Arabic typography didn't meet the visual standards of the time. This led to my first book Arabic Typography: A Comprehensive Sourcebook. Initially I wanted to collect existing Arabic typefaces in it, but the minimal number of good quality Arabic fonts at the time made me change the direction of the research, and the book turned into an extensive research that traced the history and provided guidelines for Arabic type design.'

Are the typefaces developed in the first Matchmaking in use now?

'Very much! They have been used in highly visible commercial situations and in artistic and cultural design applications. But more importantly, the project changed the perception of designers and clients in regards to the importance of Arabic typography. It also inspired designers to start their own projects and develop expressive and contemporary typefaces. People realized that they could do things on their own and that they could express very personal ideas through design. It also made people aware of the cultural and political purposes design can serve.'

Do designers play a role in the current developments in the Arab world?

'Definitely, but we will only know in retrospect in what ways. I know of some people who are collecting what is made now in connection to the insurrections. But I imagine that the work collected will be a different kind of work than what is made in a normal studio situation, mostly made quickly on the spot in a vernacular style. We'll probably see a lot of design work and discussions reflecting on the situation in the coming years.'

What results, besides the actual designs, did Typographic Matchmaking in the City yield?

'Other than developing five bilingual type families (in both Arabic and Latin scripts), the project has provided a unique study on the topic of '3D typography' for monumental design applica-



TYPOGRAPHIC MATCHMAKING IN THE CITY BOOK

tions in multicultural urban contexts. It brought about the little explored issue of how to design and use lettering and typography in the real 'material' space. For the designers the project was also a natural way to gain cultural understanding through design. It forced everyone to work outside their usual 'comfort zone'. It pushed the limits of the design process and the possibilities of productive collaboration.

Moreover, on the professional level, the contact with the diverse and flexible Arabic writing system, provided the Dutch designers with a new way of looking at typography. This can have fruitful outcomes in the years to come.'

Are you planning new matchmaking projects?

'Definitely. The next Typographic Matchmaking will take new media and its social ramifications into consideration. It will provide more hands-on tools for designers to collaborate on designing multi-script open-source fonts. This project is at a very early stage and still a work in progress.'

What is your key message for What Design Can Do?

'My message is that design, in a humble way, can have an impact on society. If designers play too much the starring role, they may become imprisoned in their own style and become eventually isolated and irrelevant. We need to think of design as a service to society. I think that the future of design is much more collaborative. We often need to engage others in the process of creation. That can sometimes be difficult because a collaborative process can be draining but it forces one to question oneself throughout the process. Designers also need to accept that a design/research project that they start might fail, but not let themselves be too discouraged by this potential failure. Painful failures can generate valuable insights and lasting lessons. Sometimes the process itself is more important than the final outcome.'

So, do you think design can change the world?

'Yes. But as part of an accumulative process. One design can set a lot of change in motion. As a designer you can take pleasure in that.'

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

FOR LIU XIAODU

BY BILLY NOLAN

Liu Xiaodu is a founding partner of Urbanus Architecture & Design Inc. The firm was founded in 1999 in Shenzhen, and opened a second office in 2003 in Beijing. Along with his fellow partners Meng Yan and Wang Hui, Liu Xiaodu studied at Tsinghua University in Beijing and later at Miami University. They worked for various design firms in the US before returning to set up in practice in their native China.

'STICK TO YOUR IDEALS AND DON'T BOW TO OUTSIDE INFLUENCES.'

Among the vanguard of Chinese practices that have emerged over the past decade, Urbanus focuses on embedding its buildings and public spaces into the physical and social fabric of the city. Key projects to date include the Dafen Art Museum in Shenzhen (2006), which is not a museum in the traditional sense but a mixed-use arts centre that extends the intricate urban grain of the surrounding city; and Tulou (2007), a series of circular social housing complexes for migrants in Guangzhou based on traditional residential compounds arranged around a courtyard. In 2009, Urbanus and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture were awarded first prize in the design competition for a major new cultural centre, transport hub and public landmark in the heart of the city of Shenzhen.

You studied and worked in the US before returning to China. How would you characterize the difference in architectural culture between the two countries?

'I would like to say that they are totally opposite in many aspects, similar to how we are living on the other side of the world. Americans are conservative in terms of attitude and lifestyle and the Chinese tend to be more optimistic towards the future, often blindly. In the US, preservation is a common cultural idea, whilst in China, people think new equals better. Projects in China are big in size, have a fast pace, rough construction and are always changing until completion. In the US, projects are smaller, take longer to complete,



SHEKOU MID-HILL APARTMENTS (2005-2007), SHENZHEN

contain greater detail, and involve more careful decision-making. In addition, construction schedules are fixed. Chinese architects are overworked and receive lower pay than American architects. Most Chinese designers are under thirty years of age, while many US designers are older and more experienced. Liability is a big issue in the US. In China, clients are more tolerant of design mistakes. As a result, experimental architecture is more likely to happen in China than in the US. There are so many new large-scale projects under development in China at the moment. In the US, there are much fewer projects but the quality is generally being controlled more consistently.'

Numerous Western architects are working in China now. Do they need to bridge a cultural divide in their work? Or is that irrelevant to the type of work they do in China?

'Yes, I think they can do a better job if they have more knowledge about Chinese culture, and then use the knowledge to provide better design strategies that fit local situations. On the other hand, globalization has increasingly westernized Chinese culture, so that many Chinese clients are seeking foreign designers to create designs that reflect authentic Western styles. In this sense, bridging the cultural divide is irrelevant towards their work. This, however, doesn't mean that they are doing the right thing in China.'

What mistakes do architects make when working in another culture, like Western architects in China?

'Communicating with and understanding clients are very common problems. Normally, Chinese clients will honour payment according to written contracts. However, during presentations, most Chinese clients dislike confrontation and will remain polite about a design even if they dislike it, in order to help the other party 'save face'. They will speak nicely, and even praise the work. If foreign designers don't pay careful attention to the subtleties of Chinese communication, they might think their presentation to be a success. A successful

foreign office in China must have a capable Chinese project leader or manager who understands these cultural issues.'

Your projects reveal a strong strategy in how you deal with public authorities and property developers in order to realize your ambitions. This requires great understanding and knowledge of the local culture of politics and planning. Does this mean that only local architects could do this type of work?

'Understanding local context and culture are the most important elements of working in China. What Urbanus has established over the past 12 years is not a relationship with authority. It is the quality of our design works that has contributed to our reputation as problem-solver. This is not much related to the locality of the architects.'

What are the main lessons we can learn from your approach to architecture?

'Focus on the strengths of your work. Stick to your ideals and do not allow yourself to be easily changed by outside influences. While working on a project, be prepared for anything that might arise, as situations can change incredibly quickly. A fast-paced job is not always a bad thing here; it may lead to speedy construction and you will soon see the result of your new ideas!'

In which of your current projects is the theme of 'Access to Cultures' most clearly revealed?

'In our previous research on urban villages and our Tulou project, where international modernism met Chinese sub-culture. Also, the newly finished mid-hill housing project in Shenzhen and the National Museum of Sinology competition, which merged ideas of traditional Chinese art and scholarly landscapes with modern architectural expression.'

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

FOR SCOTT STOWELL

BY LOTTE VAN GELDER

The connecting element in the work of New York-based designer Scott Stowell is obviously the social. Having worked for several years for the ultimate 'designer with conscious' Tibor Kalman, Stowell founded his own studio OPEN in 1998. Clients vary from Google and Coca Cola to Yale and *GOOD* Magazine. He appears to specialize in never specializing, an approach that keeps him on his toes and eager to find fitting solutions within different settings.

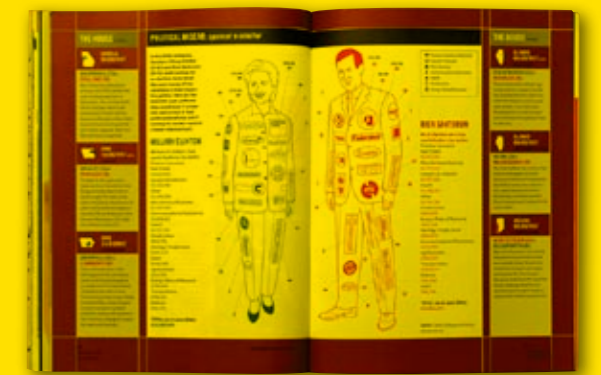
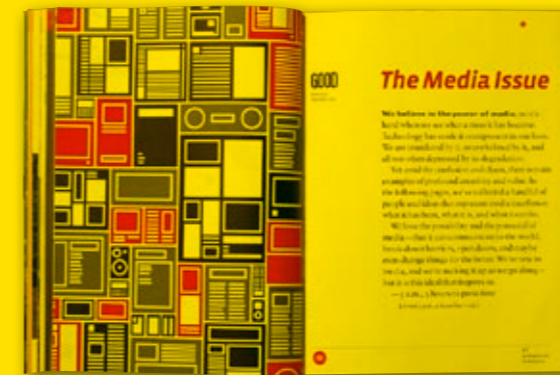
'IN THE END DESIGN SHOULD ALSO BE ABOUT HAVING FUN'

The name of your studio is simply OPEN. Where did it come from?

'We often joke about having the best product placement ever, since our name is in every shop window in the world—people send us photos to prove that all the time! I picked the name because Open is an adjective and a verb, but it's not a noun. It's an active word that always does something or modifies something. So it has power, but it feels normal. Obviously Open relates to the way we work, doing lots of different things in different disciplines. But like the name of the studio, we like to take really simple things that everyone can understand and then reveal more layers of meaning. It's very satisfying when your work is understood by regular people who are not exclusively in the cool design crowd. These days I'm proud to say that the idea of Open has grown apart from me and become its own thing. Sometimes I'll make a sketch and then somebody in the studio will say "that's not very Open!"'

What type of projects do you like to undertake?

'My favourite project is the ones we don't know how to do yet. Business-wise it is usually suggested that specialization leads to success. That's good advice, and I highly respect designers who refine and refine a specific craft into perfection. But for me the experience of being briefly terrified and then learning something new is amazing. It makes us come up with new solutions: this leads to surprising results and



SPREADS FROM GOOD MAGAZINE

also keeps the work interesting for me. As for the topic: I enjoy to work for clients who try to sell ideas instead of just product.'

Any current terrifying projects?

'Well, we just finished a couple of projects for Google: a campaign for their Google for Nonprofits program and an identity and website for their sustainability initiative, called Google Green. We're also doing just about everything for Naked Pizza, a new international chain of healthy and accessible pizza places. And while I can't really talk about what we're making for them, I'm excited about our newest client, the Japanese clothing company Uniqlo. They have a clear and inclusive mission: "made for all." Plus, they explicitly like to present themselves as futuristic. Back in the day when I worked with Benetton, they used their work to spread ideas like multiculturalism and a more diverse and mixed society. Today, Uniqlo simply operates in that new world. It's fascinating to be working in the future.'

Could you tell something about the collaboration of OPEN with GOOD magazine?

'Working for *GOOD* was a really important step for us, it opened so many doors. I always call it a lifestyle magazine for people who want to change the world, whether it be through arts, politics or business. The founders dubbed it: *for people who give a damn*. When it started we all didn't know what we were doing in the best possible way: they had never made a magazine before. I had worked on magazines but not to that extent. The result was a very interesting and fluent process, where the borders between content and form were totally fuzzy. We figured out the rules as we went along. *GOOD* became an explosion of ideas, where we tried to push limits and got away with it.'

It appears that the social theme is in the air these days..

'The idea of sustainability has been big for the last several years, but as a social trend in America there's been a decline of interest. A few years ago

most Americans believed that climate change is caused by humans and that we have to try to fix it. Now that number is down to about half. There obviously are positive signs: you're a jerk if you don't recycle. Hummer went out of business. But after the initial shock, fewer people seem truly concerned, or they don't feel their actions could make a difference. So there is definitely change on certain levels, but it remains unclear how profound the movement will be.'

In what way does this translate to the design world?

'Among designers and design students (who are the future of design), you notice a new approach. It's now rare that someone comes up with a project that lacks an idealistic view. For the new generation, social responsibility is almost a given. My personal focus, in my school days and during my career, has always been social. While working for Tibor it was just simply part of what we did. On the other hand the idea of being socially responsible has become so widespread, that I might find it refreshing if someone would decide to just make a "cool product." In the end, design should also be about having fun: joy is also socially responsible.'

Do you have any preliminary thoughts on the conference?

'The theme, expressed by the name of the conference, suggests two sides: one is really big and hopeful, because design CAN do things. On the other hand it also urges a certain modesty: there are things that CAN'T be done by design. That to me is interesting, since as a designer you can do so much with all kinds of different people, you feel like you could do a lot. But there are also real limits, and it's these limitations that help us to come up with better solutions.'

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

FOR FOOD

**BREAKOUT SESSION
HOSTED BY PHILIPS DESIGN AND
DESIGN COOPERATION BRAINPORT**

In 20 years our kitchen might tell us how much we should eat. Our food will be home grown or come from a food printer. Electronics could enhance our eating experience by stimulating our senses.

These visionary ideas come from an extension to Philips Design's ongoing design probes programme with four new projects: Diagnostic Kitchen, Food Creation, Home Farming and Multisensorial Gastronomy. The investigations examine the possible consequences of various long-range social trends. In the case of food, this involved tracking and interpreting issues like the growth in popularity of organic produce, the implications of genetic modification, the threat of serious shortages, and rising food prices. Will we in the near future control our food intake with the help of a swallowable sensor? Will a food printer be the next kitchen appliance?

The breakout was presented by **Jon Rodriguez**, Senior Consultant People Research at **Philips Design** in cooperation with **Design Cooperation Brainport**, a platform for all designers and design-driven companies, organizations and knowledge institutions in Eindhoven.

www.design.philips.com
www.designcooperationbrainport.nl

THE FUTURE OF FOOD



Diagnostic Kitchen

A visionary project from Philips Design, Diagnostic Kitchen allows you to analyze what you eat. By using the nutrition monitor, consisting of a scanning 'wand' and swallowable sensor, you can determine what and how much you should eat to meet your nutritional requirements.

In the discussion, someone suggested it would be interesting to make this concept not only individual but also social by sharing local community eating habits and creating common goals to improve eating habits. You could also scan food in the restaurant or market and understand where it came from and how it will affect you. This is interesting for people with dietary problems. Diagnostic Kitchen could also be deployed to address hunger issues by letting people know which herbs and plants are edible. Another question was how this concept could help educate children about healthy eating habits.



Food Creation

The Food Printer accepts various edible ingredients and combines and 'prints' them in the desired shape and consistency, in the same way that stereolithographic printers create 3D versions of product concepts. The audience understood Food Creation



DIAGNOSTIC KITCHEN



FOOD CREATION



HOME FARMING



MULTISENSORIAL GASTRONOMY

as food for fun, as something to enhance the experience. It was seen as a game and not a contribution to solving hunger. But the idea triggered the imagination. Someone suggested that we could use organic ingredients and compress them to reduce the cost and burden of transport. On the other hand, food cartridges alienate people from the source of food. We lose touch with the effort needed to grow and prepare food. Clearly, we need to balance the emotional and rational aspects of cooking.



Home Farming

Home Farming explores growing at least part of your daily calorific requirements inside your house. This biosphere home farm occupies a minimum area and stacks the various mini-ecosystems on top of one another.

One participant commented that this concept focuses on urbanized populations only and is not a solution for rural areas where land is plentiful. Another asked: 'Aren't we losing the time and effort it takes to grow food? Aren't people more aware of what they eat when they see it grow? Will people respect what they eat?' There were practical problems too. How can you grow things like coffee, which takes at least two

years to grow? And how can we connect people to grow local food that is seasonal? But, on the other hand, we are putting food production into everybody's hands rather than empowering farmers.



Multisensorial Gastronomy

Multisensorial Gastronomy explores how the eating experience can be enhanced by stimulating the senses using electronics, light and other stimuli. Developed in collaboration with Michelin chef Juan Marie Arzak, these are four design concepts for interactive tableware.

Here the public asked if glowing food could perform a function. Can we communicate something about what we are eating?

The general conclusion was that these four concepts play around collective needs related to nutrition in combination with individual desires related to the experience of eating. Another remark was that the themes were contradictory. Whereas Diagnostic Kitchen responds to our need to understand what is on our plates, Food Creation seems to want to conceal the nature of our food and turn the act of eating into an experience, a form of entertainment.

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO! FOR SUSTAINABLE TEXTILES

**BREAKOUT SESSION
HOSTED BY PREMSELA**

In recent years, both industry and designers have been paying more attention to the sustainable production and processing of textiles. Designers in particular were triggered by the opening of the TextielLab in Tilburg's Textielmuseum and by a renewed interest in crafts.

Consumers are demanding sustainably produced textiles. New materials are emerging, while many jeans brands are switching to less harmful methods of dyeing. Interest in crafts and technique is also increasing.

Lenneke Langenhuijsen's Wooden Textiles project is a good example of the trend. She adapted a special method of fabric making on the Tonga archipelago in the Pacific. Interest in textiles and fabric development is also growing in design education. We are no longer merely designing with textiles; we are designing the textiles themselves.

In this breakout session Premsela's programme manager **Tim Vermeulen** talked with design critic **Adélia Borges**, designers **Lenneke Langenhuijsen** and **Tjeerd Veenhoven**, and TextielLab's creative director **Hebe Verstappen**. Together with the public they discussed how designers can help industry catch up, and what the revaluation of old techniques is worth.

www.premsela.org
www.textielmuseum.nl/textiellab/technieken.html

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TEXTILE PRODUCTION

Beginning with examples of new sustainable textiles, the discussion in this breakout gradually shifted to the implications of producing textiles, communicating about textiles, and the changing role of museums. It all showed that the field of textiles extends to every corner of today's social and environmental concerns.

Hebe Verstappen introduced the activities of the TextielLab of the Textiel Museum in Tilburg. Part laboratory, part micro-producer, the lab invites designers to experiment with creating specialty textiles using a combination of sophisticated machinery and traditional craft techniques. The textiles become prototypes (e.g. a one-piece knitted lamp) or custom commissions for architectural projects. The aim is to push the boundaries of textile techniques – and no doubt the patience of the textile technicians. Verstappen suggested that technology could help innovate textiles whereby the production machinery could be redesigned in collaboration with the designers.

Natural materials were a focus for two Dutch designers. Lenneke Langenhuijsen developed a new interior textile made from beaten wood bark. Why do we always treat wood as a solid material, Langenhuijsen wondered. Her research led her to the Pacific Islands where the craft of beating tree bark was still practiced to make traditional ceremonial cloth. Her Wooden Textiles comprise a soft paper-like textile that is embroidered



THE SPEAKERS



THE INTERACTION

to enable washability. Upon returning to the Netherlands, Langenhuijsen asked whether the bark of European trees – a waste product from the timber industry – could be crafted into textiles using a similar technique?

Tjeerd Veenhoven recognised the potential in palm bark/fibre that is commonly used for disposable tableware. The self-confessed inventor-designer experimented with soaking the leaf in a natural oil-based solution to produce a strong, almost leather-like material. Veenhoven intends to develop this as an alternative to leather. Currently, the palm leather has been fashioned into flip-flops, intended for the local market in India where the shoes and textile are made. Veenhoven envisions textiles – with their intimate relationship to our bodies – as a tool that can be used to stimulate awareness about adopting sustainably produced materials in other areas of our daily lives.

Brazilian design theorist, curator and journalist Adélia Borges drew from her country's rich heritage in craft. Discussing natural materials used to make textiles (e.g. Amazonian plants, pineapple, fish skin, banana tree) and connecting traditional crafts with new design approaches (e.g. highlighting imperfection of the handmade), Borges placed textile production in a social context where the process of manufacturing through craft could sustain local economies and facilitate ways to improve the welfare of artisans. While working with artisans she emphasized that 'designers can't impose their "solutions"; they must work together'. Design can be a way to



THE AUDIENCE

WE SHOULD DESIGN NOT ONLY TEXTILES BUT ALSO THE MACHINES THAT PRODUCE TEXTILES.

improve production, combine sustainability and innovation and better people's lives.

It became clear that good communication was needed to tell the story behind the making and materials with the intention of educating consumers about the value of sustainably produced textiles and narrowing the gap between design and the mass market. How can innovative textiles like these reach a broader audience? Concerning industry, how can we convince commercial manufacturers to put their money where their (marketing) mouth is? Audience member Julia Lohmann praised the changing role of institutions like the Textile Museum to build bridges between innovative design ideas and industry.

A way to achieve sustainability is to look at what craft techniques can add to industrially produced textile. In addition to the use of natural, renewable materials, this increases quality owing to the often unique tactile and visual features added to the textiles. A major obstacle, however, is the jump in scale from manual to industrialized production, and the lack of the right tools for this. Designers should therefore be involved in designing the machines that produce textiles, argues Hebe Verstappen of the Textile Museum in the Netherlands. Verstappen put his money where his mouth is and proposed to take a group of designers to a major trade fair for equipment used in the textile industry. She wants to link designers and their projects to the producers and challenge them to collaborate on devising new equipment.

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

FOR URBAN PROBLEMS

**BREAKOUT SESSION
HOSTED BY NO ACADEMY**

The way we organize our cities and provide food for citizens is directly linked to the five major world problems: hunger, pollution, social oppression, wars and animal suffering. Solving urban problems therefore helps to save the world.

This breakout session was chaired by Martijn Engelbregt and Sjim Hendrix from No Academy, a social design laboratory for starting artists and designers. Participants were invited to move outside and have a fresh and socializing walk through the beautiful and vivid Vondelpark. The walk helped to open up the minds of the problem solvers, in order to invent radical solutions for concrete city problems, like bike wrecks on the pavement, loitering youths around the corner, and the lack of safety in neighbourhoods.

Martijn Engelbregt is a graphic designer and artist who designs institutes, forms, surveys and procedures. His absurdist projects offer an ironic perspective on a sometimes Kafkaesque world. **Sjim Hendrix** graduated from the Rietveld Academy for the arts in Amsterdam in 2009. Before that he worked as a cook. In a No Academy project meant to counter obesity among city-dwellers, Hendrix invented OBESIBAR, a brand that works to redevelop the relationships between city-dwellers and nutrition in the city.

No Academy: noacademy.org
Martijn Engelbregt: egbg.nl

SAVE THE WORLD IN 90 MINUTES

The only way to save the world is to save yourself. Solutions surround us all the time; the only thing we have to do is to open up to them. Taking a walk alone or with a stranger is a proven way to find answers, as you can see by these results. 27 do-gooders went out into the space of the city armed with a potato. They had to find a solution for the potato and for the world as well.

Solutions for bike wrecks in Utrecht

1. Turn bike wrecks into bike racks.
2. Make drive-in shops for the bike only: BUY BY BIKE. Clients use their bike instead of shopping carts or baskets. And bike-in restaurants: you park your bike in the restaurant and use it as a seat.
3. Bikes are modern horses – let's treat them the same way. Love your bike; clean and polish it.
4. Try to make bikes more beautiful. Decorate them with flower baskets, and put them in even bigger flower baskets (instead of ugly bike racks).
5. After a while jobless people should go and pick up bike wrecks. They should bring them to a place and turn the wrecks into jewellery, new bikes, something else and good social designs.

BIKES ARE MODERN HORSES – LET'S TREAT THEM THE SAME WAY.



POTATOES WERE USED AS METAPHOR



THE BOXING RING



ANOTHER SOLUTION FOR THE POTATO



MAJOR SOLUTION



THE THINGS YOU CAN WITH A POTATO



MINOR SOLUTION

Solutions for loitering youths in front of McDonald's

6. People should approach the so-called dangerous youths in a more polite way. They should show respect, and the youths will react likewise.
7. We placed a boxing ring in front of McDonald's. The staff from McDonald's could fight the loitering youths, under strict rules, like in a fight club. The strongest employee becomes McDonald's 'Fighter of the Month'.
8. Addressing the issue of different languages.

Solutions for social security in mixed neighbourhoods

9. Social booby traps. Two people deliberately getting stuck in a lift: they have to find ways to communicate. There is no fear of the other person, only of their shared, uncomfortable situation.
10. Children could organize social events and workshops. They can help because they are ignorant of race differences.
11. Growing food and culture. Children can create public space, make gardens, and spread food around – yeah!

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO! FOR LONELINESS

BREAKOUT SESSION
HOSTED BY YD+I

One in three people in the Netherlands feels lonely. Research has shown that loneliness is present at all layers of the population, from students to old people, immigrants and natives alike, in both urban and rural areas.

This omnipresence of loneliness seems to be rooted in our highly individualized and risk-taking society. We all have to perform at a rapid pace and high level. In our largely rational society, that leaves no place for a phenomenon like loneliness. Loneliness is simply not acceptable and seen as 'not being successful'. Loneliness has become the new taboo.

Together with a team of artists and designers, Young Designers + Industry (YD+I) has taken on the challenge of breaking the taboo on loneliness, addressing it from different perspectives and creating new concepts to approach the phenomenon.

In this breakout the same challenge was taken on together with the What Design Can Do public.

Young Designers + Industry seeks answers to current issues by instigating projects that go beyond the standard frameworks for problem solving and create space and time for processes that can lead to truly substantial and new answers.

www.ydi.nl
www.in-de-buurt.nl
www.situatiesvaneenzaamheid.nl

LONELINESS: BREAKING A MODERN TABOO

Together with designers and artists YD+I is designing new ways of breaking the taboo on loneliness. In the breakout three short workshops were executed.

Sandwich boards

Some participants walked the street with sandwich boards displaying questions about loneliness they weren't comfortable about asking. People on the street were remarkably open; they responded without hesitation to then questions put to them.

To the question 'Is loneliness good for me?' different answers were heard: 'Loneliness means not being connected, and this sandwich board is a way to get connected'. Also: 'Sport is something you have to do alone; it includes positive and negative loneliness'.

The question 'What do you do when you're lonely?' prompted the answers: 'I work,' 'I listen to music,' 'I want to be alone,' 'I have sex with myself,' and 'I call my friends'.

'Does technology make you lonely?' was another question posed. 'Yes,' said some elderly people. 'No,' said youngsters. 'I've got Facebook'.

The beauty in it

In recent years Maaïke Roozenburg photographed herself in moments of loneliness. She discovered that these moments also have a strong element of beauty. Now she aims to make people discover the beauty in their moments of loneliness; thus



THE BREAKOUT INTRODUCTION



DISCOVERING THE BEAUTY IN PICTURES



DO YOU KNOW THE BEAUTY OF LONELINESS?



CONFRONTING THE PUBLIC

the perception of loneliness may become more diverse and subtle.

Participants of the breakout 'dived' into their mobile phones and on the web to search for pictures they felt combine loneliness and beauty. They experienced the beauty, strength, weight or melancholy of these pictures, and started looking in a different way at pictures they had gathered before.

Snow words

Madelinde Hageman developed the website www.situatiesvaneenzaamheid.nl where people are invited to describe their situations of loneliness. She has also been searching for words to express loneliness more subtly. Inuits have 22 words for different states of snow. In the description of these words she replaced the word 'snow' by 'loneliness': melting loneliness, glazed loneliness and so on.

She invited the participants of the breakout to describe personal situations of loneliness and relate it to a 'snow' word: a sense of how they experienced their loneliness. Participants had a remarkable need to share their experiences, to read out loud what they described.

The three workshops showed once more that loneliness is something everybody experiences and loneliness needs to be shared.



COLLECTING REACTIONS

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

FOR AGRICULTURE

BREAKOUT SESSION
HOSTED BY PREMSELA

Eating is both a biological necessity and a cultural matter. In fact, with food important in so many ways, it's strange that its industry is one of the last to employ any designers.

We obviously care where our food comes from. Numerous projects focusing on the relationship between diners and food producers, such as the Slow Food movement, have arisen in recent years. But will they be enough in the long run? Today more than half the global population lives in cities and that figure is rising. The activities needed to feed all those city residents will look nothing like the faintly nostalgic picture aspired to by the Slow Food movement.

Our ideal image of where our food comes from is worlds away from the reality of agribusiness. The food industry clearly has an image problem. But perhaps the challenge goes further than that. This breakout investigated what role designers can play in closing the gap between consumers and industry and helping people to understand new forms of agriculture and farming?

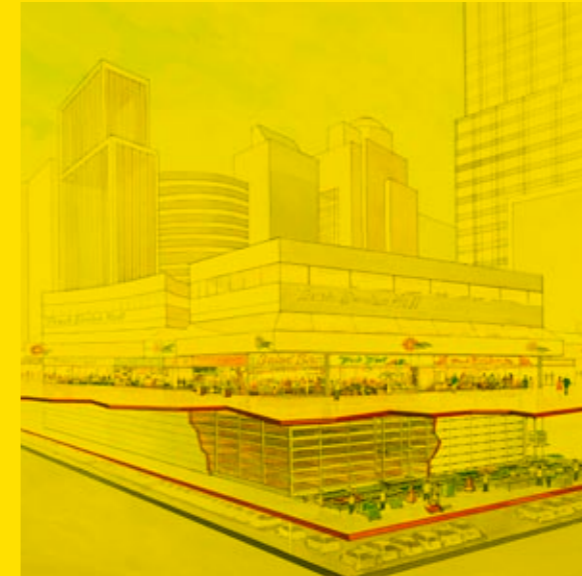
In this breakout session moderator **Tim Vermeulen** (Premsele) talked to architects **Jacob van Rijs** (MVRDV) and **Brent Richards** (The Design Embassy Europe, London).

www.premsele.org
www.mvrdv.nl
www.transpolisglobal.com/brent_richards.html

FOOD CULTURE: CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN DESIRES AND REALITY

No doubt the hottest topic on everyone's plates currently is food production. The need to grow food to feed the planet's ever increasing – and urbanizing – population. The staggering statistics were noted by first speaker Brent Richards: by 2020, 70% of the world's population will be living in cities. During Thursday's last breakout session, three very different approaches to food in the city got the audience's minds racing.

Richards, founder of UK-based creative consultancy The Design Embassy, set the scene by connecting food with culture: we live in the cities to satisfy our need for social engagement. Food is a culture (or obsession for some) that we love to share. In today's expanding cities food supply is a problem: the scarcity of land and longer transportation distances are a concern. Traditional agricultural models can no longer sustain this growth. And while we've found our greener urban pastures, our mindsets remain nostalgic about growing food in the countryside: note the amount of food packaging illustrated with barns, meadows and rolling green hills. An alternative approach to food cultivation suggests Richards is to look into the cities themselves: bring nature into urban areas via in-between spaces. Disused spaces can be renegotiated for food cultivation: flower boxes replanted into vegetable boxes, rooftops transformed into roof gardens and unsightly wall surfaces become fertile wall scapes. Additionally, new



PLANTLAB: GROWING AND SELLING FOOD IN THE CITY



DEBATING THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE

architecture could incorporate green spaces as interior gardens, extended balconies or vertical gardens. What Design Can Do for Agriculture is to provoke, translate, communicate, set up new scenarios and ask what if?

PlantLab took a technological approach to inventing new agricultural models. Dutch architect Martijn de Potter collaborated on the project which proposes indoor agriculture powered by LED lamps, specifically only coloured red and blue, which have been proven to be optimal for plant growth. In other words, the plants don't need daylight to grow, which means they need little land. The experiment has been flourishing in a disused building in Amsterdam but has the potential to be incorporated into urban vertical farming or reuse of vacant properties. The vertical organic pig farm Pig City by MVRDV has been – and still is – provoking people for the last decade. After discussing it in his keynote lecture, co-founder and accidental pig farm architect Jacob van Rijs elaborated in the breakout that Pig City could be a statement for cities to be proud about their meat production but that was a big mental step that society still had to take.



IDEAS FROM THE AUDIENCE

WE SHOULD DESIGN THE CULTURE AROUND THE WAY WE PRODUCE AND EAT FOOD.
– BRENT RICHARDS

Any discussions about food production are guaranteed to generate heated debate. It's a subject too close to our stomachs. One audience member commented about wanting to see more concern for people in their designs, not just the concept. What about the connection between the design, the practice of agriculture itself and the farmers themselves? Was it a case of designers imposing their solutions to try to change the system? De Potter and Van Rijs pointed out that the existing solutions are far more scary than their proposals. As with much of the design industry, and what is already happening in the food industry, communication is key. Another audience member who had worked with the pig industry in Denmark explained: the pig producers will produce whatever sells. The supermarket sells what the consumer wants. And the consumer wants sustainable produce at low prices. So what comes first: the chicken or the egg? Designers can play an important role in telling these stories to try to shift the mindsets of consumers and industry... at least until the cows come home.

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

FOR LESS

BREAKOUT SESSION
HOSTED BY DOEN FOUNDATION

There is no doubt that in the future we will have less access to natural and human resources. This will affect our Western lifestyle. What are the big challenges that we face, which questions do we have to ask ourselves and does design provide answers? Can we design with less in a way that it becomes more?

This breakout session explored the challenges of creating a sustainable future with less water, less energy, less food supplies, less consumption, less materials and more of less. Four professionals reflected on the theme. **Ton Bastein** of research organization TNO talked about less materials, Canadian born designer **Cynthia Hathaway** proposed ways of living with less, **DUS Architects** told us about less building and energy use, and artist, urban planner and professor **Ton Matton** shared his own reduction theory: 'The Moral Balance sheet'.

Moderators **Anne van der Zwaag** and **Joanna van der Zanden**, both working as independent curators and coordinators of many art and design project, guided the subsequent brainstorm on the idea of 'Less is more' as a renewed standard for living and design motto. DOEN Foundation, the fund of the Dutch charity lotteries, embraces social design as one of its main programs.

ACCESS TO LESS

Cynthia Hathaway:
'Thinking about empty shelves, can we cope with less? Can we learn to negotiate living with fewer products and choices? Psychologists say that too much choice doesn't free us, it numbs us. We should think about less quantity and more quality. And ask ourselves: what do we really need?'

Ton Bastein:
'We should use less of the resources that are scarce or hard to harvest, and instead use more of the elements that are always available. Save the scarce materials where it is really needed. And let's tax consumption and not labour.'

Ton Matton:
'Thanks to internet we are the first generation that knows everything about all the problems in the world. And within a few minutes more we have heard a second and third opinion. So awareness is no longer the theme. We need to face the consequences and act as conscious humans. Are you sure your clothes are not made by children?'

Hedwig Heinsma:
'There are multiple ways to create lots using little. With few rules, for instance, we can play the city, not plan it. Or with few resources we can generate lots of revenue. Not only by reducing resources, but also by thinking in another way. Just start with doing something small and then let the research grow into a project for others to react to.'



MANY ROADS LEAD TO LESS



EMPTY SHELVES AT A GROCERY STORE IN IQALUIT IN THE ARCTIC

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO! FOR AFGHANISTAN

BREAKOUT SESSION
HOSTED BY BUTTERFLY WORKS

Ten design solutions for Afghanistan to overcome the current barriers of branding and trade to improve its economic situation, that was the objective of this breakout session. The best ideas will be implemented by the design label **Crafting Peace**.

Crafting is a method of tapping someone's often undiscovered potential using the hand, head and heart. At the same time, crafting – however graceful, authentic and artistic it may appear – simply generates income for those in need. The design label **Crafting Peace** was established to create a new approach towards crafts and trade with fragile countries like Afghanistan.

Due to a lack of strategy, branding and local hardship, it is nearly impossible to create and export a sustainable collection of crafted design products from Afghanistan, even though the quality of Afghan design and craft is distinctive and highly competitive. Moderators **Hester Ezra**, art director of Butterfly Works and **Klaas Kuitenbrouwer**, media watcher, teacher and program manager at Virtueel Platform, searched together with the participants for solutions.

Butterfly Works uses design for social change. Through inspirational media, social branding and experimental learning the organisation triggers creativity and builds sustainable businesses.

www.butterflyworks.org

CREATE A MINDFUL CHAIN FOR AFGHAN DESIGN

Butterfly Works presented the following questions to the participants.

First: How can Dutch design professionals co-create, in a *mindful* way, interior objects made by craftspeople in Afghanistan without actually going there? There are no easy digital media channels by which the designers and the craftspeople can communicate with each other.

Second: How can the wholesale process of selling the objects to retailers be designed so that it becomes more mindful, without leaving the mindfulness to a personal meeting with the retailer.

Three groups were formed with designers of nine different nationalities, which did not stop them from having highly focused, inspired and productive conversations.

Solutions to question 1:

Group 1
Make a treasure box with various design materials; add a diary to write and draw in, and a camera to make pictures of design steps. The box travels up and down from the Netherlands to Afghanistan, and in each place the designer continues from the last design iteration. The diary adds a specific kind of attention and connection. Every design contributor also writes or draws in the diary. Even unreadable

Design Solution #18 - Mindful Stuffing

PROBLEM:

Unfortunately we can't send stuffed birds from Kabul airport due to security reasons and insufficient scanning methods.

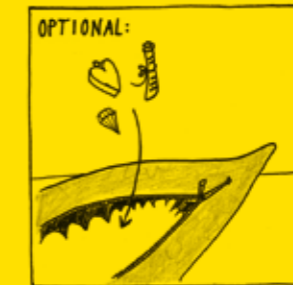


SOLUTION:

Vacuum filling is added to the delivery box by butterfly works in the Netherlands.

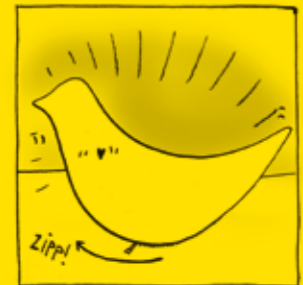


Customer fills bird *mindfully*



OPTIONAL:

add extra elements (beads/thoughts/notes/...)



Zip! & ready to enlarge compassion!

ONE OF THE DESIGN SOLUTIONS



BRIEFING FOR CRAFTING PEACE



WORKING ON SOLUTIONS

handwritten messages foster some kind of connection between the contributors.

Group 2

Again a treasure box, but this box contains transparent paper, so design contributions can be made in separable layers. This box contains a smaller box with inspirational elements like newspaper clippings, pictures, feathers, anything, that convey mood and feeling. This group suggested that boxes could start processes simultaneously in different places, and travel along a series of different people, rather than just back and forth.

Keep yourself posted on the next shower of ideas at: www.craftingpeace.com

Solutions to question 2:

Group 3

This group proposed that the retailer always buys a certain quantity of birds in the form of one symbolic bird. This symbolic bird is wrapped in several layers of paper with different kinds of information about where and how the birds were made. Another layer of wrapping says how much time went into making the birds. The last layer contains the sales contract. It was noted that the diary suggested by the first group would also work in this process: the retailer would also be able to write or draw a page in the diary. The design solutions for how the diaries are presented still have to be found.

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

FOR INFORMATION

**BREAKOUT SESSION
HOSTED BY CROSSLAB**

The cities of Rotterdam and Amsterdam have recently initiated 'Open Data' projects. This is one example of data becoming more and more publicly available and accessible in real time. What could designers do in this era of 'information overload' and public data?

Designers are editors of information. As such, they can make the public aware of certain issues. Data Visualization offers a new method for this purpose. Rendering complex data visual can provide insight into invisible processes, making us aware of certain patterns in our behavior. In this process, the role of the designer is of fundamental importance: for example, the dynamic data visualization of CO2 emissions expresses more than statistics or a bar chart.

This breakout session was hosted by CrossLab, platform for digital media at the Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam University

With: Alper Çugun, Gabriëlle Marks, Michael van Schaik, Bruno Setola, Aldje van Meer, Deanna Herst and students of Willem De Kooning Academy (Kris Soroka, Tijn de Kok, Romero Watamaleo, Stefan van Rijn), Rotterdam University.

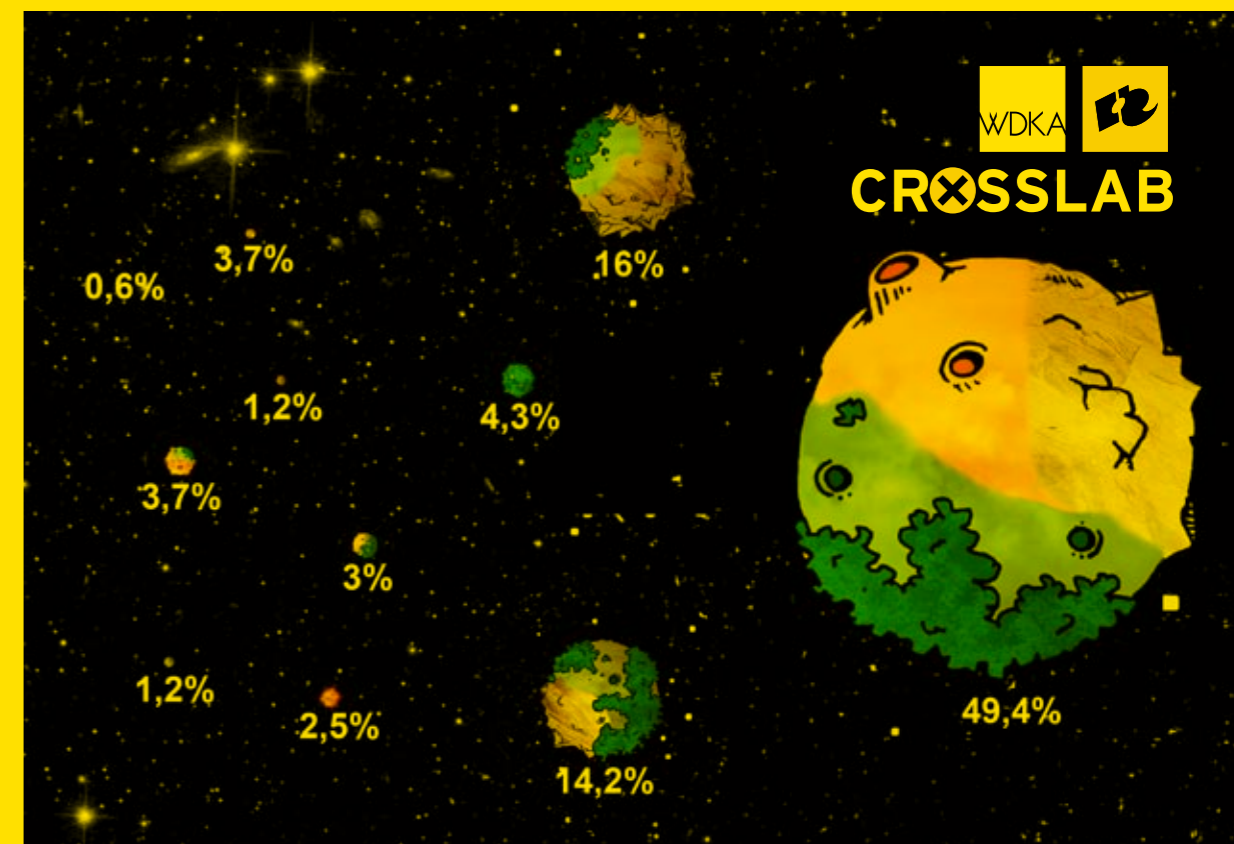
<http://extra.wdka.nl/crosslab/>

VISUALIZING DATA

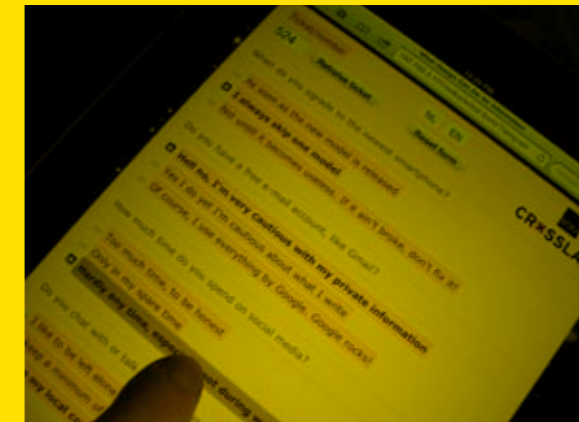
The breakout Visualizing Data showed the transformation of a dataset into visualized data. On Thursday, May 26, a CrossLab team conducted a survey among conference visitors. The central issue to be addressed: how committed are you as a designer? How social is your design? The questionnaire was based on three stereotypes of social and environmental awareness - ranging from naively involved to indifferently destructive. Hence, the visitors were confronted with questions like: Do you chat with or talk to people living in your street? When do you shut down your computer? Do you ever upload something online that is useful for others?

Their answers were collected, processed and visualized. The metaphor of a planet represented their individual profile and level of involvement. The process resulted in a collective 'data portrait' of planets, a universe we would live in if it were up to the visitors of WDCD.

On Friday, May 27, CrossLab hosted an introduction about data visualization, hosted by Aldje van Meer. Gabriëlle Marks and Deanna Herst revealed a tip of the iceberg of data visualization and discussed its potential for designers. Alper Çugun showed recent projects in Open Data, like the 'Apps for Amsterdam' contest. Finally, Bruno Setola talked about the process of data visualization - from questionnaire to planet - and unveiled the universe according to the visitors of WDCD.



THE OUTCOME OF 200 QUESTIONNAIRES



ENQUETES ON THE IPAD



A PARTICIPANT



PROCESSING INCOMING DATA



PERSONALIZED BUTTONS

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO! FOR THE PUBLIC

BREAK OUT SESSION
HOSTED BY NAI

While cultural grants are evaporating and competition in the area of leisure time activities is heating up, cultural institutions are forced to open up. A breakout on what architects can do about that.

There is an urgent need for a low-threshold and varied programming, which includes more interaction with the public. This type of programming also requires a more accessible building. A building that can adapt to the new range of activities and facilitates alternative forms of presentation. In the new culture building visitors have more contact with the production, presentation and conservation of art, thus allowing for a welcoming atmosphere. All of this means a major undertaking for designers.

These issues were discussed by architect **Liu Xiaodu** of the Chinese architecture firm Urbanus, cultural advisor **Johan Idema** of consultancy firm LAGroup and designer **Jurgen Bey**. The breakout session was moderated by **Ole Bouman**, director of the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI).

The Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam is a museum, archive, library and platform that wants to get people of all ages involved in architecture.

www.nai.nl

HOW CULTURAL INSTITUTES OPEN UP TO THE PUBLIC

'No more cathedrals of culture.'
– Kaywin Feldman, president Association of Art Museum Directors

How to make a cultural institution more accessible to the public? The NAI has been examining this question in practice by transforming its own premises from a temple of culture into a public domain.

In this breakout session three people with different backgrounds showed their visions on the interrelationship between culture, institutions and public space.

Often, the focus is mainly on what the building (=hardware) looks like when we speak about opening up cultural institutions to the public. For example: large windows, transparent lobbies, flashy colours, big texts on the walls and other visual aspects.

But it's not only about the building. It starts with the mentality of the people who are working at the institutions (=orgware) and the programme (=software). Who do you want to engage with and why?

Be aware of the effect of adding certain functions to the original programme. Sometimes, opening up threatens the original purpose of the cultural institution. So we should think about: what do you want to achieve from your audience? Then decide *how* you want to 'open up'.



OLE BOUMAN MODERATING THE BREAKOUT



WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR THE PUBLIC



DISCUSSION WITH LIU XIAODU

There was also a plea for diversity. For example: not every library has to offer the same programme. The Netherlands is small enough to have twenty different types of library. Even in public spaces some scripts can become too dogmatic and therefore leave little space for experimental use. It's important to find a balance between the facilitating and curating role of institutions.

It's about accessing the space *and* the product!



JOHAN IDEMA, LIU XIAODU, JURGEN BEY

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

CAN DO!

GROWING EXHIBITION

2011

PARTICIPANTS OF WHAT DESIGN CAN DO! WERE INVITED TO SHARE THEIR IDEAS AND REACTIONS ON A WALL AT THE CENTRE OF THE CONFERENCE VENUE. IN THE COURSE OF THE CONFERENCE, THE WALL GREW INTO AN INSPIRING EXHIBITION OF DESIGN INGENUITY. ON THESE PAGES SOME OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS ARE HIGHLIGHTED.

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
 Don't use design as a superlative or just to make things look prettier!
 Design is a process to create tangible and meaningful experiences.
 Rob Mulder

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
 TEXTILES:
 Fill the GAP between mass-production & consumption and unique pieces by innovating the retail market and more important Process

INSPIRATION FROM
 HANGING TREE
 I think BAG COVERED WITH HANGING TREE SO BIKES ARE COVERED
 BIKES WITH FLOWERS
 8

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
 NATURAL DISASTERS
 LARA BRUCE
 2011

1. Problem is actually that people are not interested/curious about other people.
 2. Question is how we can make people more interested/curious?
 3. ~~Some~~ Solution we need to make tools for it, for example - teaching that to be curious?
 Garo DS

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
 Changing the way of thinking!
 Nick F.
 NL

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
 WITH HEARTFULNESS!
 ARTHUR VAN BUUREN
 THE NETHERLANDS

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
 THE PLANET
 Design can do less, I think design has its place but were reaching a place where everything is being designed which means more resources are being used + since design means innovation new products are produced almost daily, in this place a tremendous pressure on our natural resources and also creates a lot of waste since a cell phone bought 6 months ago, for instance it just thrown away for a brand new designed phone!
 DESIGN CAN DO LESS!
 Name: Ishan Khosla
 Country: India

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
SOCIETY

REDESIGN POLITICS/
REDESIGN DEMOCRACY
(BECAUSE THEY FAIL)
SIGN VON ERF / NL

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
CHILDREN 1ST

Make design skills a major in prim. Schols instead of colouring within the Lines

ONLY then we can promote knowledge and imagination, the 2 key factors for Sustainable Life
@mornixbras ,NL

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
MAKE AMSTERDAM THE GREENEST SERVICE OF THE NORTH better version!

SO: free public transport - boats instead of trunks
- terraces along the canals
- no cars + scooters
- wider cycling + walking paths

ALL TRANSPORT by water / tram / bicycle / foot

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
THE MANY

A LOT MORE THAN FOR A FEW!

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
WHAT DESIGN CAN DO IS A VIRUS

you are already infected! Please enjoy the disease.
DORATIO

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:
YOU

OPENS UP YOUR MIND.

- MAKES YOU SEE BEYOND WHAT IS USUAL
- MAKES YOU HEAR BEYOND WHAT IS AUDIBLE
- MAKES YOU UNDERSTAND BEYOND WHAT IS FEROUSIBLE
- MAKES YOU FEEL BEYOND WHAT IS TACTILE
- MAKES YOU ASK QUESTIONS WHICH WOULD NOT BE ASKED
- MAKES YOU LOOK FOR ANSWERS WHICH IS BEYOND THE OBVIOUS
- DESIGN TRANSFORMS YOU ... AND A SOCIETY OF SUCH ACCUMULATING OPEN MINDS ... BECOMES INFLUENTIAL AND TRANSFORMING SOCIETIES.

NAME: SIGN VON ERF
COUNTRY: NL

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO FOR:

CHANGES THE IDEAS A SOCIETY CAN HOLD

NAME: AD STREUM - (LONDON HAS LEFT)
COUNTRY: TURKEY (BILGUSERS & COMMUNITY DESIGN)



WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

FOR CONCLUSIONS 2011

Two days of **What Design Can Do!** have certainly shown what design is capable of. Whether it is purely driven by social motives or set in a more commercial context, creativity can make the difference. A creative mind makes people think, as Julia Lohmann demonstrated, breaches social and economic barriers, as Paula Dib showed, or envisions new approaches to faltering systems, as we see in the conceptual studies of MVRDV. Designers of all disciplines act in their own way, according to their different capacities. Some set concrete steps, others paint broad visions for the future. Whether they turn a product design into a frame for slum housing, as Dror Benshetrit did, or try to change systems through large-scale thought experiments, like in Frank Tjepkema's 'Harvest' project, doesn't matter. What matters is that they act and bring their ideas out in the open. Having ideas alone is not enough; expressing them is what makes a person truly creative, as Oliviero Toscani put it. It is this creativity that drives the world forward. That cannot be said often enough.

What the conference clearly showed is that a creative approach to many of the issues that trouble the world is not restricted to one part of the world alone. Speakers from China, India, the Middle East and South America were clear in their message that design thinking is as valid there as anywhere else. Walking a different path has led to many extraordinary

CREATIVITY DRIVES THE WORLD FORWARD

achievements across the globe. See the buildings by Chinese architecture firm Urbanus or the many examples of local cultural expression and community enforcement presented by Brazilian design writer Adélia Borges. Or look at the truly creative and independent approach towards slum reconstruction that the Indian architect Rohan Shivkumar spoke about. His blunt exposure of ego-architecture and commercialism, which completely miss the point of what the real needs of people are, resounded long after.

A force for change

However, the counter forces seem to be evenly well spread. In western economies there may be growing support from policy makers for the creative industries, but there are still crowds of company leaders who need to be convinced. In emerging countries it might be the other way around, as India's prominent design thinker M P Ranjan pointed out. The Indian government still needs to realize that strong encouragement for the creative professions will be of immense benefit to society. Design is not for luxury products only but can be a tool to counter poverty, water shortage, lack of proper sanitation and garbage accumulation. The examples professor Ranjan and other speakers presented are convincing proof of that.

Fighting ignorance is what gives **What Design Can Do!** its right to exist. By bringing together so many creative minds with their hearts in the



right place, the conference is a strong plea for design as a force for change. 'By speaking here about the need for design in India, I think it will be heard louder over there,' Ranjan said. At the same time, creatives all over the world need to defend themselves against the safe conservatism of bureaucracy and market research, Toscani preached.

The convincing power of this conference lies in the exchange of ideas, the accumulation of best practices, and the demonstration of what design can do. The inspiration came from seeing so many designers who won't let themselves be prevented from pursuing their own visions. Truly creative people, who dare to be different and subversive, are rare, Toscani said in his energetic and defiant speech that concluded day one. That is why a gathering of so many of them, with such different backgrounds, proved to be so stimulating. Seeing how things are turned upside down in other disciplines and cultures opens the mind to new ideas, new possibilities.

That's why the absurdism of Daniel Eatock is so refreshing. Like Giorgio Camuffo and others, he made clear that lightness is a powerful tool of the creative species. Humour connects people and

helps to bring a message across. In dealing with the serious issues at hand, that is an important lesson.

An equally important lesson is that the quality of the impact is more important than the scale of a design project. A small-scale magazine that helps prevent Venice from sinking is no less inspiring than a large vision on food production in the coming decades. Both ways have their benefits and are needed for renewal and progression. As Huda Smitshuijsen AbiFarés said: 'Any culture needs to keep on changing or else it dies'. Designers are a driving force in that, whether they are typographers, fashion designers or architects. 'Any designer can influence the future,' she remarked, adding that working together makes the impact even bigger. At the same time she argued for a certain humbleness, and Michael Wolff showed how humbleness can be truly powerful when addressing and solving major issues for major institutions. 'I don't relate to big companies, I relate to the people who run them,' he said. Designers can and must take the first step, but changing the world is not in their hands alone. That, however, is no excuse for sitting back. Act and enforce change: that's our duty.



REACTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID ABOUT WHAT DESIGN CAN DO!

'For many designers social awareness still isn't part of their daily practice. But it is clearly an issue that has their interest, judging the turnout at this conference'

HAICO BEUKERS - THE NETHERLANDS

Yellow is the new pink.

LIDEWIJ EDELKOORT - THE NETHERLANDS

'The conference was not as intellectual as I expected after having seen the website, and I must say I was quite happy about that. The presentations were very clear and easy to follow. It has been very inspiring for me.'

PETER NIESSEN - THE NETHERLANDS

The Dutch Indaba is born!

ROB HUISMAN - THE NETHERLANDS

'You really feel that everyone here has the right intentions and actually wants to do something. I saw some really cool presentations.

My advice for next time – and I strongly hope there will be a next time – though is to add speakers from the academic world and from industry.'

JULIA LOHMANN - ENGLAND

'This is a very good initiative. It is nice that the conference offered such a broad spectrum of subjects. Some stories were very inspiring. Jurgen Bey stood out, because of his special way of telling things. I liked that he didn't talk about himself, but about the notion that it is good to do things intuitively.'

SAPPHO PANHUIJZEN - THE NETHERLANDS

'When you bring a lot of people together and they talk about what they believe in, and what they have done and that with great humility, that is wonderful. It makes you think. In the end, life is about how we confront the kind of situations we are put in. So if you see how people come up with their solutions, that is very inspiring. That is what matters.'

DANESH KORJAN - INDIA

'I was a little disappointed that many presentations showed design as a goal, not as a means. I'm rather sceptical about the problem-solving ability of designers. To me the design profession is more about processes. It is more important for designers to understand the complexity of things than to design straight-forward solutions.'

ANNELYS DE VET - THE NETHERLANDS

I'll be there in 2012.

TINEKE KOELEWIJN - THE NETHERLANDS

'I am a service designer, usually I go to conferences about my own profession. I came to this conference to see what's new in the approach of other disciplines. I saw some very interesting presentations, from the Indian speakers for instance, and Michael Wolff. Eatock was very inspiring as well.'

REMI GRÉAU - FRANCE

Heading home from the conference full of inspiration.

RIJK WILLEMSE - THE NETHERLANDS



SEE YOU IN 2012!