

January/February 2018

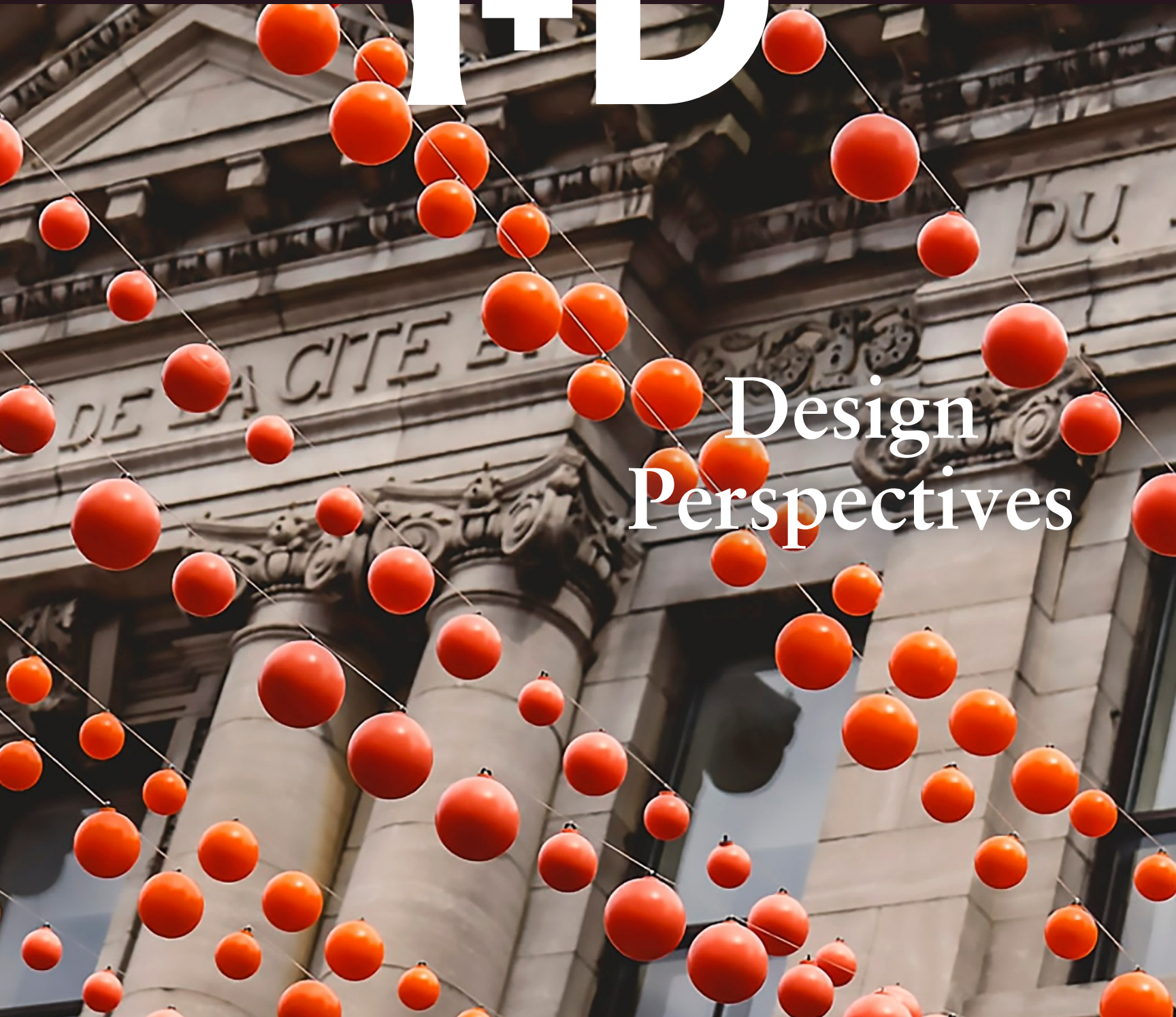
The Impact of Design
on Four Cities

The Demise of the
Dining Room

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i+D

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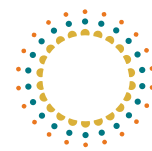
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January/February 2018

VOLUME 2/NUMBER 1
The magazine of the
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the Interior Designers
of Canada

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SEE, LIKE, BUY: DESIGN IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The modern digital landscape has instigated the design community to shift its messaging and place emphasis on designers' rarified, highly specialized expertise.

BY BARBARA THAU



Image: Platform

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ONE OF A KIND

The design industry is working hard to combat knockoffs and promote the importance of original designs, like the authentic Tuyomyo bench by Frank Gehry and Emeco shown here.

BY DIANA MOSHER

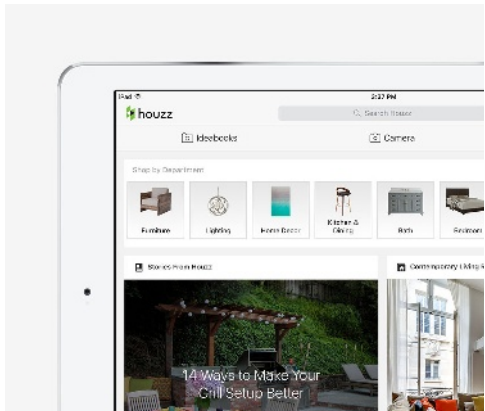


Image: Houzz.com

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A TALE OF FOUR CITIES

Design and creativity are catapulting cities that seek a progressive identity, positive change, and a unique personality.

BY BRIAN J. BARTH



Image: Emeco



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COVER IMAGE:
Raphaël Thibodeau

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ICONIC PROFILE: CAROL JONES

Bringing modern ideas to corporate spaces, this renowned North American designer shares her perspectives on creativity, inspiration, and the public's perception of design.

BY AMBROSE CLANCY



Image: Ted Yarwood

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THE DEMISE OF THE DINING ROOM

Living and dining habits are transforming the places where families and friends sit down, share a meal, and commune.

BY MICHELE KEITH

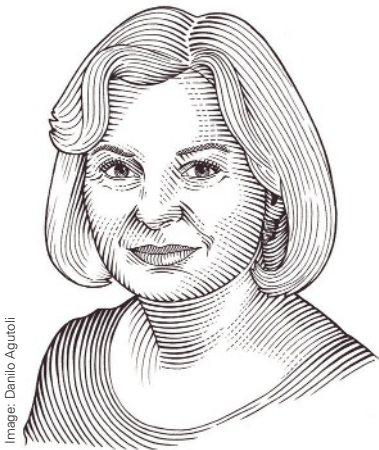


Image: Danilo Agunoli

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ON THE COVER

Claude Cormier's creative installation of colorful balls has become an annual summer happening in Montreal.



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i+D (ISSN: 2575-7628 [print]; 2575-7636 [online]) Volume 2, Number 1, January/February 2018. Copyright © 2018 by the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID). Published bimonthly in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December by Stamats Communications, Inc., 615 Fifth Street SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401. Receipt of i+D is a benefit of membership in ASID and Interior Designers of Canada (IDC). A portion of each ASID member's annual dues, amounting to \$2.42, goes toward the member's i+D subscription. Editorial Offices: 1152 15th Street NW, Suite 910, Washington, D.C. 20005. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to i+D, c/o ASID Customer Service, 1152 15th Street NW, Suite 910, Washington, D.C. 20005.

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Randy Fiser, CEO, ASID, and Tony Benders, CEO, IDC. (Image: Lindsay Cephas)

RING IN THE NEW

As is custom, the design industry kicked off the year with major trade shows in both the United States and Canada, where *i+D* found the aisles packed with positive energy. At both the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show in Orlando, Florida, and the Interior Design Show in Toronto, energy was up, manufacturers pulled out all the stops with new product development, and designers were eagerly sourcing for current and future projects.

This positivity was reflected in recent figures that affect the majority of businesses. As this issue of *i+D* went to press, the Dow Jones Industrial Average had hit an all-time high and, despite a slight dip back down in December, The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index registered a 17-year high in November. While some headlines today are not quite so encouraging, financial prospects for the year look good.

To kick off our own year at *i+D*, we turn our lens to the ways in which we see design influencing our lives at every turn—from our cities to our purchasing power to our lives at home. In this issue, *i+D* explores the positive ways design professionals are influencing cities across North America (“A Tale of Four Cities,” p. 30) and the tactics they are employing to keep knockoff goods

out of our countries and the marketplace altogether (“One of a Kind,” p. 36). On the residential side, we investigate the way people utilize their living/dining spaces today and the moves designers have made to accommodate those preferences (“The Demise of the Dining Room,” p. 42). And, to help inform your daily business, we take a look at design industry statistics on time management (“Design by the Numbers,” p. 26) and running a design business in the disruptive digital era (“See, Like, Buy: Design in the Digital Age,” p. 22).

The year may have just begun, but the industry is on track to make it a great one. And, *i+D* will be here to highlight the many ways design professionals play a major role in effecting positive change in every aspect of our lives. ●

Randy W. Fiser
ASID CEO

Tony Benders
IDC CEO

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Under one checkered roofscape, the East Austin District sports/entertainment neighborhood celebrates world-class sports and cultural experiences.
(Image: BIG | Bjarke Ingels Group)

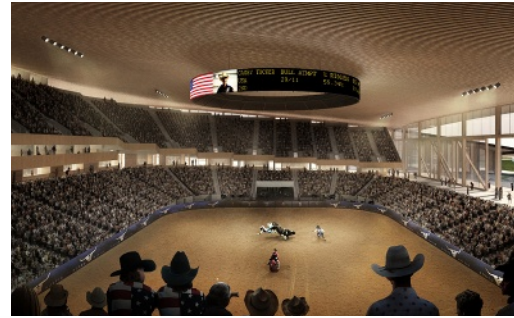
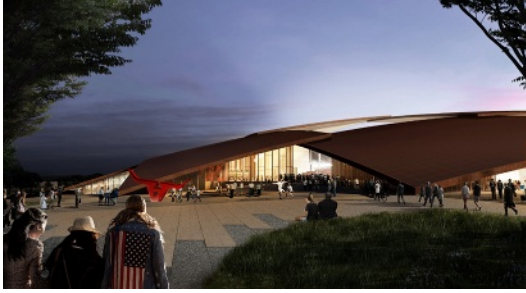
THE CREATIVE HEART OF TEXAS

THE CAPITAL OF TEXAS, AUSTIN IS KNOWN FOR CREATIVE FESTIVALS AND VENUES LIKE SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST, THE AUSTIN FILM FESTIVAL, AND AUSTIN CITY LIMITS, TO NAME JUST A FEW. For years now, the city that borders on the Hill Country region has been attracting creative personalities and professions, whose imagination and ingenuity are reflected in Austin's output of music, film, art, and design of all kinds. Austin is the fourth most populous city in Texas and home to nearly one million residents, as well as The University of Texas at Austin.

New District, New Destination

They say "everything's bigger in Texas," and the new East Austin District certainly holds that statement true. Totalling 1.3 million square feet, the District is being developed to bring entertainment, job and community opportunities, and a natural vibrancy, not to mention natural energy, to the region and to function as a positive presence for residents of all ages and interests.

Commissioned by Austin Sports & Entertainment, LLC, BIG | Bjarke Ingels Group is at the helm of this project located at the site of Rodeo Austin. Included among the District's planned offerings are a 40,000-seat stadium designed for large-scale soccer and rugby matches, music festivals, and other major events, and a 15,000-seat multipurpose arena that will serve as the home for Rodeo Austin, musical acts, basketball, and more. The two venues share 190,000 square feet of state-of-the-art facilities and support functions. Add to that a series of additional buildings and spaces created to offer growth potential for Austin's burgeoning retail, shopping, dining, and hospitality scene, plus 28,000 square feet of youth facilities, and the District is a complex to be reckoned with.



The East Austin District is part architecture, part urbanism, part landscape. (Images: BIG | Bjarke Ingels Group)

The individual buildings are arranged in checkerboard fashion and unified by all-wooden interiors reflective of the local barn and porch vernacular and Austin’s general lifestyle. The city’s culture for living out of doors, at least as much as in them, is echoed as well in eight open courtyards that connect the buildings and serve as outdoor living rooms for public enjoyment.

The development of this entertainment complex is forward thinking at every turn. As large scale as it may be, the District is meant to complement, not disrupt, the existing community. The very layout of space and lines of the roof panels reflect the angles and intersections found throughout the Jefferson Grid, and the District’s entrances have been located at its four corners to seamlessly tie into the existing road network. And, the dramatic latticed roofscape is much more than an interesting design feature. Serving as protection from the Texas heat and the elements in general, the rooftop also is covered in red photovoltaic panels that have the potential to someday allow the self-sufficient District to actually share its energy resources with the surrounding community, potentially powering East Austin’s electricity and its economy as well.

“Embracing Austin’s local character and culture, the East Austin District is a single destination composed of many smaller structures under one roof,” says Bjarke Ingels, founding partner of BIG. “Part architecture, part urbanism, part landscape—the East Austin District is the architectural manifestation of collective intimacy.”

Collaborators for the overall project include Walter P Moore, STG Design, BIG Engineering, BIG Landscape, and BIG Ideas. ●

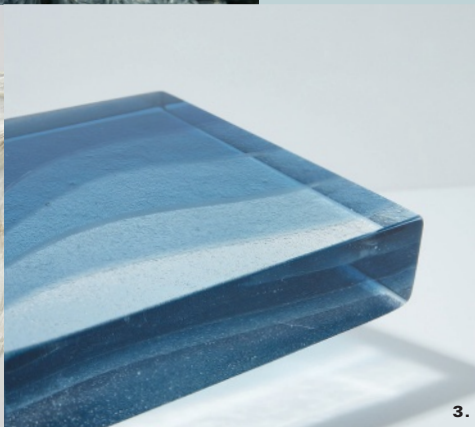
MATERIALS + DESIGN

THROUGH ITS LIBRARIES AND CONSULTING SERVICES, Material ConneXion (MCX) not only delivers the latest in innovative, advanced, and sustainable materials to its clients and members, but provides transparency about the chemistry behind the materials as well, allowing designers to specify materials with full knowledge of their short- and long-term effects.

At press time, more than 15 full-service, satellite, and educational MCX libraries were in operation around the globe, including outposts at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, in Los Angeles; Sheridan College, in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada; and Universidad de Monterrey, in Monterrey, Mexico. That's in addition to the thousands of materials catalogued in the MCX online database. Corporations and academic institutions can subscribe to a variety of access plans to suit their ongoing needs, and opportunities exist to license, lease, or own a Material ConneXion library.

Supported by founding sponsor American Chemistry Council, the ASID satellite MCX library, located at the ASID HQ office in Washington, D.C., includes a collection of materials that have met the rigorous standards set by BIFMA, Cradle to Cradle, Recycled Content, LEED, and others. The design community is welcome to explore the ASID library. Plan your visit today at www.asid.org/request-office-tour. ●

1. (POLYMERS 1845-05) Modular carpet tiles composed of 100 percent recycled waste fishing nets collected from the Danajon Bank of the Philippines. The project provides a source of income for the impoverished fishing villages, while cleaning up their beaches and waters. Applications include flooring. **2. (NATURALS 7685-01)** Handmade paper lace composed of 90 percent plant fiber pulp and 10 percent longer fibers made through a traditional Japanese process. Applications include partitions, lamp shades, and other interior surfaces. **3. (GLASS 7714-01)** Solid block of durable cast glass, featuring a multilayered wave effect. The glass needs no sealant and is easy to clean and non-porous. Applications include horizontal surfaces for commercial and residential uses. **4. (CERAMICS 7746-01)** Soft, semi-translucent porcelain tiles that are waterproof. Hand-polished tiles that do not require glazing and can be backlit with LEDs. Surface patterns are achieved by pressing lace fabric into the half-dried tile. Applications include wall tiles for saunas and bathrooms for commercial and residential areas.



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Business of Design
Design in the Digital Age



SEE, LIKE, BUY: DESIGN IN THE DIGITAL AGE

BY BARBARA THAU

THERE IS A TALMUDIC PROVERB THAT STATES “AN EDUCATED MAN CAN NEVER BE POOR.” That is to say, unlike material things that are fleeting, knowledge is an invisible, yet invaluable and enduring asset.

The interior design community is now finding itself pressed to share a similar message with clients in the era of online shopping.

For consumers, the internet has opened the floodgates to an endless stream of merchandise, while pulling the curtain back on the price of nearly every conceivable product.

This instant, at-your-fingertips access to voluminous, global home furnishings options, décor ideas, and price information has privileged product and cost over process in the minds of some consumers, blunting the value, expertise, and distinct role design professionals play in creating bespoke spaces, according to design executives. Today, “the interior design community tells us one of the biggest challenges the industry faces is educating consumers about what they do and why it’s worth paying for,” says Liza Hausman, vice president of industry marketing and community for Houzz, the online global market for interior design services.

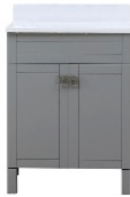
Meanwhile, home-makeover television shows have spread a false narrative on what it takes to create a space, sources note. And, in turn, professional designers are faced with clients who believe their homes can be remodeled in a weekend. “The proliferation of the interior design world do-it-yourself and online purchasing has been both a blessing and a curse,” notes Jason Kasper, principal of IDEATE Design Consulting and president of the Board of Management of Interior Designers of Canada (IDC). “We discuss it a lot in our office and with colleagues.”

While it has catalyzed heightened awareness of—and an expectation for—good design, the click-and-immediately-receive mindset is commoditizing design objects, “just as the 30-minute home-makeover shows devalue the design process,” adds Kasper.

Phyllis Harbinger, an interior design business strategist who is founder and principal of Harbinger Design Consulting, agrees: “It’s a timely issue and something that cannot be ignored. I coach my designers not to [dwell on] how we did business in the past, and [focus on] how to work in this new paradigm, as it’s not going away.”



Images: Houzz.com



Designers, online players, and traditional merchants are finding new ways to co-exist, cost-effectively complement each other's business, and streamline projects, be it via platforms ranging from retailers' design-trade programs to digital-idea boards.

The New Normal

A new normal, where consumers scour the web for goods and services, comparison shopping, and price checking, has awakened the design community to hit the reset button. As a result, designers are zeroing in on educating, and reeducating, consumers now informed by the vast digital marketplace, a resource that often can be misleading. An experienced designer, for example, will be able to steer clients away from the countless knockoff goods masquerading online as original designs, a consistent issue for the design industry (see "One of a Kind," p. 36).

The community is shifting its messaging, placing the emphasis on the rarified, highly specialized expertise and institutional knowledge that the professional design trade brings to crafting interiors, a skill set that even countless online shopping sites can't replace, designers say.

The message: They're trained to provide custom design, not design for the masses.

But, the design community also has work to do in bringing a greater level of cost transparency to their own businesses.

Despite these new challenges, the democratization of design does have its gifts, according to both designers and retailers. Designers, online players, and traditional merchants are finding new ways to co-exist, cost-effectively complement each other's business, and streamline projects, be it via platforms ranging from retailers' design-trade programs to digital-idea boards.

Sell "Brilliance," Not Merchandise, with a New Transparency

One of today's challenges is that designers are grappling with the paradox of choice. They are curating from exhaustive global sources online "that didn't exist before," says Harbinger, while clients also have launched their own exhaustive product and design searches. So, it's not uncommon for a consumer to latch on to the product-procurement element of the designer/client relationship. However, that's ultimately not the fundamental contribution a professional designer brings to the equation, she notes.

To counter that narrative, Harbinger reminds her designer clients, "You're selling your unique brilliance and intellectual property, [so] start thinking of charging for [that], instead of charging for the things that you buy." For example, "a shopper might see a couch they like online but the scale is all wrong. We're curating a selection for aesthetics and appropriateness," which is not the expertise of a layperson, she says.

Some designers have taken to offering "planning services," where they specify everything, charge a flat fee for that service, and then leave it to the client to do the purchasing. That's mostly how Harbinger has always done business, counter to how much of the design community has worked. "Normally, designers pay for all the merchandise being bought for clients. The client gives you a retainer, and you deduct for the retainer, and that worked for many decades," she explains.

But, it doesn't anymore, as the web opened Pandora's box. "Once the internet really started to come alive, [clients] became savvy about what they thought something would cost," says Harbinger. "The marketplace has made it so that you have to be transparent."

As a general proposition, paying for a client's merchandise can cloud the value of what a professional designer offers, which is "to curate spaces where people live, work, play, and heal," she notes. The shopping model also can invite the impression among consumers, who can price check an item in minutes on their phone, that they're being overcharged. So, "clients are pushing back now," says Harbinger.

She skirts all that by charging a flat fee for her design services. If a client opts for "purchase management," where the firm orders and tracks goods for a project, they're charged a 30 percent to 35 percent fee for that service. But, when it comes to the merchandise itself, says Harbinger, "there is no markup on the sale, they give me their credit card."

Business of Design Design in the Digital Age

The lesson is that “you have to pitch curated, holistic services as opposed to product shopping,” explains Harbinger. And, communicating the design and personalization process to a client cannot be underestimated. “I get inside my client’s head, understand who they are and what they love, versus who I am. When you can sell it that way, you take away the whole notion of big box and online [shopping].”

Fighting the Quick-Fix Mentality by Changing the Narrative

The industry also is grappling with the quick-fix mentality that has seeped into the consumer conscious as a result of home-makeover programs. These shows have fostered an oversimplified, shortcut-to-design misunderstanding of the work and industry knowledge summoned by professionals to create a customized space. Clients watch these shows and see complete home revamps achieved in 30 minutes, not registering that “so much of that work is done off camera and behind the scenes, which devalues the process,” says Kasper. Process is critical to interior design, but “it’s such a difficult phenomenon to sell, because it’s invisible to clients.”

Disabusing clients of these short-cut notions of design means reeducating the public, he adds. Kasper’s firm is doing just that by changing the client conversation, and by taking professional designers’ *je ne sais quoi* out of the abstract for them. A designer’s value lies largely in crafting “the spaces between objects” in a home—the “placemaking,” as Kasper calls it—where sentiment and nostalgia often reside. That can only be “cultivated with clients through discussion in order to be brought to life. Good designers translate people’s

emotions and expectations into design solutions, overlaying their experience and knowledge base—including the things they’ve done wrong in the past. I once heard: ‘Standards are documented evidence of people’s past errors’...That’s what [the client is] paying for,” he explains.

Co-Existing and Collaborating

Design trade programs run by traditional brick-and-mortar retailers, as well as e-commerce merchants, can serve as one path to a fruitful, mutually beneficial relationship, according to interviewees.

The concierge-like services from retailers, such as Room & Board, Restoration Hardware, Crate and Barrel, and Lamps Plus, that work exclusively with the design trade have been an asset in resourcing goods per project, offering interior designers special rates, according to Harbinger.

Houzz, which features designer profiles and project portfolios, while also selling goods for purchase, says its trade program is helping the design community as it becomes more transparent with clients about the price of products available at retail. “One of the many ways that Houzz supports the interior design community is through our Houzz Trade Program,” says Hausman, noting the company’s “dedicated account managers reduce the time interior designers need to spend on administrative tasks.”

At the same time, notes Harbinger, online visual platforms have brought a new ease to exchanging ideas with clients, collaborating on design direction and making product selections. Clients can share their ideas on virtual scrapbooking sites, like Pinterest, for one, and others geared toward professionals, such as Houzz Ideabooks and Wecora, where designers can share their vision boards with clients. The site streamlines the ideation process. “You can invite clients to the board and save yourself multiple meetings,” she adds.

The design community is shifting its messaging, placing emphasis on the rarified, highly specialized expertise and institutional knowledge of the professional design trade.



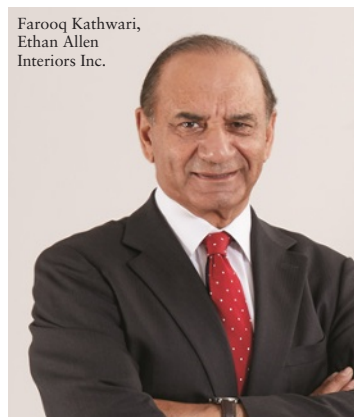
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Houzz



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Harbinger Design
Consulting
(Image:
Dawn Sela
Photography)



Jason Kasper,
IDEATE
Design
Consulting
(Image:
Michael
Rodgers)



Farooq Kathwari,
Ethan Allen
Interiors Inc.



Image: Houzz.com

Retail as a Path to Growth?

Despite the narrative that retail and online shopping are creating new competitive challenges, they actually can lead to more business for interior designers, states Hausman and Farooq Kathwari, chairman, president, and CEO of Ethan Allen Interiors Inc.

Ethan Allen, for one, consistently collaborates with outside designers—7,000 to date—through its interior design affiliate [IDA] program. “Ethan Allen is vertically integrated to handle all the logistics for them,” from order processing to customer support and in-home delivery, Kathwari says. “This leaves the IDA members completely free to focus on what they love best: design.”

And, Houzz claims its site has been a boon for designers. “We have incredible stories from designers about how Houzz has helped them grow their businesses, and has brought them projects and clients, both locally and from countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and more,” says Hausman. [“We’re] driving the industry forward by showing consumers the value that our talented community of interior designers provides to their clients.” ●

BARBARA THAU

is a business journalist specializing in the retail industry and consumer news and trends. She currently is a contributing writer for Forbes.com for which she writes the weekly column, “Minding The Stores.” She has been cited as a retail expert for media outlets, including USA Today, National Public Radio, and CNN Money.



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TIME MANAGEMENT

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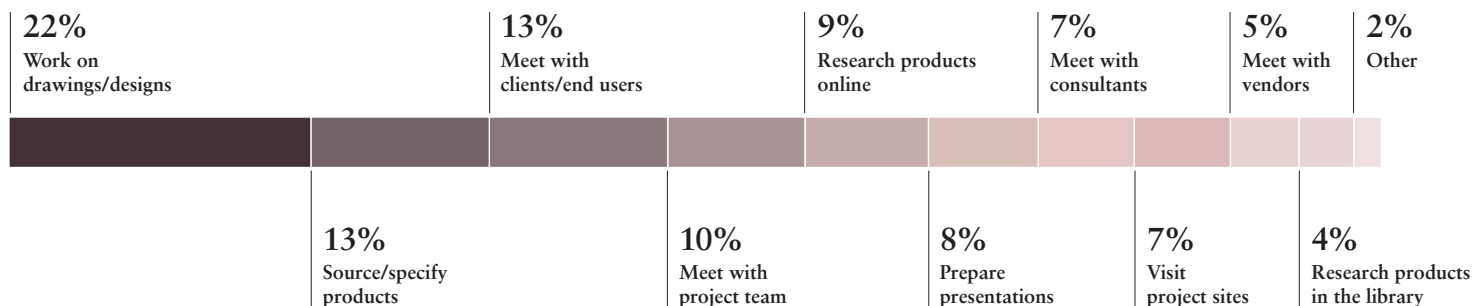
Time is money. The adage is a fact of life for design professionals who balance outreach to potential clients, forward motion on current projects, product research and sourcing, and more on a daily basis.

The firms surveyed for *Interior Design's* 2017 Universe Study of the Interior Design Profession noted working on an average of 101 projects per year, a 6 percent increase from the 2014 study. Of those, Workplace projects led the way with an average of 37 out of the 101, while Residential came in second at 25. Hospitality and Healthcare/Wellness projects tied at nine, followed by Education/Library, Retail, and Government. The research further discovered 38 percent of a designer's average workweek is devoted to sourcing and researching the products that will find their way into those projects. Take a look at how those numbers break down and see how your own management of time measures up. ●

101

AVERAGE NUMBER
OF PROJECTS THE FIRMS
SURVEYED WORK ON
IN A YEAR

How Designers Spend Their Week



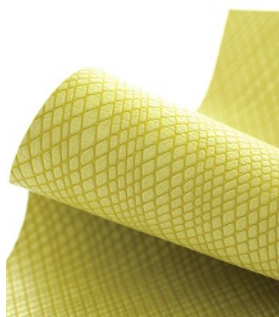
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TO-THE-TRADE



Contributors

Favorite things. Our contributing authors share their thoughts on well-designed cities—the focus of our cover story—and the design perspective they gained in researching and writing their topics for this issue of *i+D*.

1. Ambrose Clancy,

ICONic Profile: Carol Jones

Ambrose reveals he has two favorite cities: “New York, which I came to when I was 18 and have never recovered from the first overwhelming feeling there was something important going on around every corner...As they say, just by living in New York, you get smarter every day. And, Dublin, where I lived for two years and found it to be the most hospitable big city I’ve ever experienced. Its charm is made up of Georgian architecture, mild (if wet) climate, reverence for language and the past, and people who value wit and companionship above almost anything else.” Ambrose enjoyed writing this issue’s “ICONic Profile,” describing Carol Jones as “sure of herself, funny, and eager to talk about her life and work.” One surprise was her ideas on aesthetics and “that different cultures have different values about what makes a design work.”

2. Michele Keith,

The Demise of the Dining Room

Two bits of info Michele learned from her research on dining/living spaces really captured her attention. “The first is how different the design processes are for doing a great room versus a proper dining room, combining the ‘hard’ elements of a kitchen and ‘soft’ elements of a living room into one space, for example. The second is the enormous effect technology has had on people, reaching much further into the home than I ever realized,” she says. Her favorite city? “Paris has it all,” she reveals. “Who but the French can combine old with new, sleek with elaborate, and casual with elegant to create such beautiful buildings and neighborhoods? Add in well-cared-for parks and gardens, window displays that are nothing less

than art, food and flower markets that please the senses, and a metro system that is both clean and efficient and what do you have? Near perfection.”

3. Brian J. Barth, *A Tale of Four Cities*

An author who lives exactly where he wants to be, Brian says his favorite city is “Toronto, my adopted hometown, because of its colorful, diverse, walkable neighborhoods. And, the fact that it has recently developed such an active and innovative design culture.” For his article on cities and design, he learned how civic leaders are taking design very seriously. “That’s trickled down to foster a lot of envelope-pushing design studios run by young folks who, in the past, would have found it hard to become established without joining a large firm and working their way up,” he explains. Even though he lives in Toronto, Brian was surprised to discover numerous new projects in the works he was unaware of, including some very inspiring ones, because “the transformation of the Toronto waterfront is happening so fast.”

4. Diana Mosher, *One of a Kind*

Knockoffs are a problem in *every* industry, including interior design. During her research, Diana found the construction methods that differentiate the real thing from the knockoff fascinating. “Organizing demonstrations to show how the authentic products are made is a brilliant way to explain these differences. The work that Be Original Americas is doing to educate customs officials, the public, and designers is much needed and they have built an impressive membership in a short time,” she notes, citing that organization as a valuable resource and a powerful deterrent as it “maintains information on [its] homepage related

to knockoffs spotted in the marketplace.” Although she clearly states she loves all cities, Diana declares Berlin and Chicago as her two top favorites. “Both are so walkable with varied architectural styles, the most amazing river views, and lovely pedestrian bridges. Riding public transportation is an interesting way to connect with locals in their natural environment while seeing the city from a different perspective.”

5. Barbara Thau,

See, Like, Buy: Design in the Digital Age

Technology is such an ingrained part of every day, that its convenience—and resulting expectations—can diminish the value accorded to the creativity and individuality of professional services, including those from the interior design community. When interviewing her sources for the article on design in the digital age, Barbara found their description of their work—the notion of interior design as art—particularly intriguing. “Their descriptions of the client/designer process and the skills, macro design knowledge, and personalization of spaces they bring to a project were endlessly interesting,” she says. However, interior design *is* a business, Barbara notes, adding it was thought-provoking to learn about “the granular view of the business side [and] profit model consideration.” As far as her favorite city, this New Yorker didn’t hesitate: “Although [New York City’s] soul has been bruised by over-development of luxury everything and the loss of character and characters, it’s what shaped me and where my family is.” ●

Image 1: Krik Condy/ies/Image 2: Andrew French/Image 3: Christine Nobe/Image 4: Glen Mosher/Image 5: Dan D’Errico

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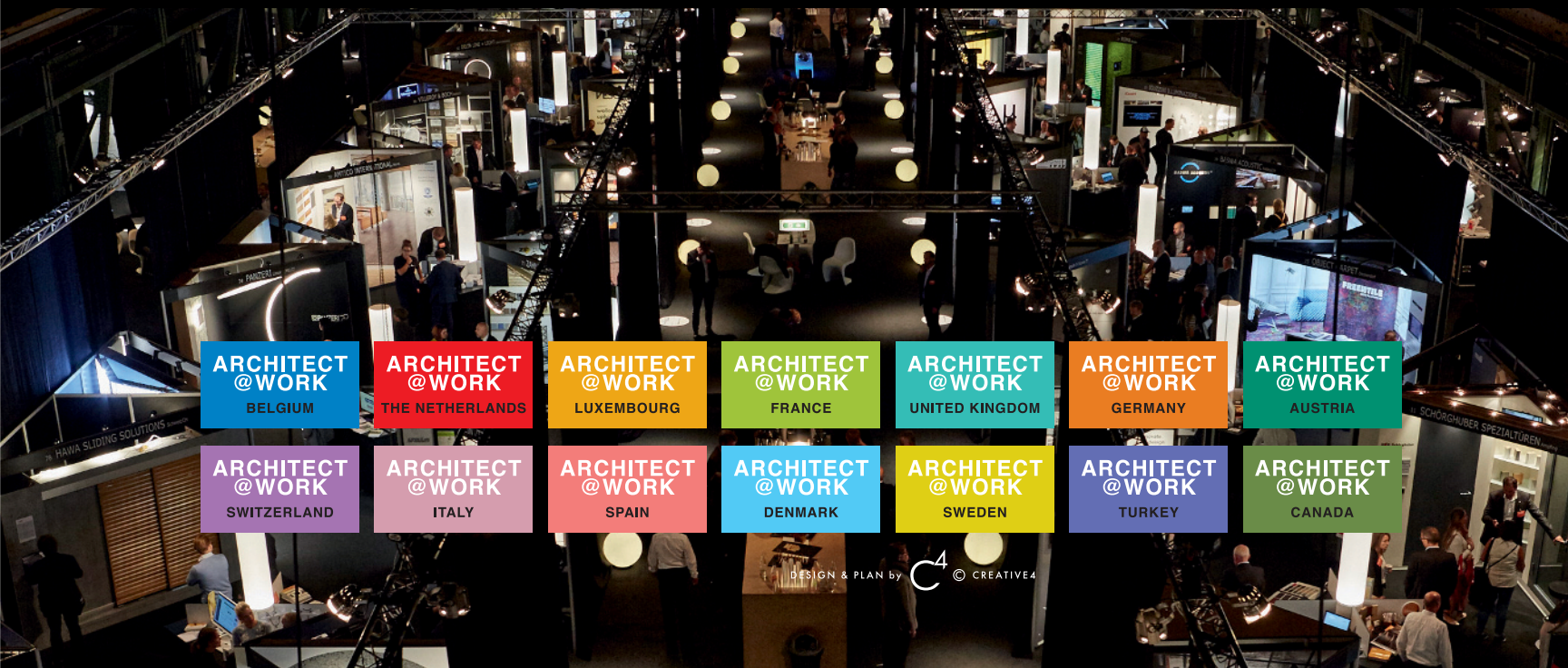
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By Brian J. Barth

A Tale of

Fo

Cities are increasingly being transformed by the creative industries, and are looking to design and architecture firms as catalysts for positive change

Pink balls. That's what landscape architect Claude Cormier wanted to string up above Montreal's Sainte-Catherine Street East back in 2010—170,000 of them. The idea was to suspend the balls from steel wires above a 14-block stretch that was, at the time, a quirky, albeit a bit blighted, neighborhood, known as Gay Village. Initially, civic officials more or less scoffed at the idea. Everyone had a reason for why it couldn't possibly be allowed: The fire department said it would impede emergency services; others said it was just too, well, weird.

Marie-Josée Lacroix, the city's design commissioner, remembers a series of tense meetings where she urged her colleagues, as diplomatically as possible, to take a risk on the project. "Though in the end there really was no risk," she says.

Cormier's final design addressed fire safety and all the other practical concerns. In summer 2011, residents joined together in what amounted to a multi-day block party to string the balls onto their wires. The shift in neighborhood morale was nearly instantaneous, and the project became an international sensation—and has been repeated every summer since. Sainte-Catherine Street East has become one of the city's most thriving and iconic commercial districts. In 2017, Montreal's 375th birthday, multihued balls were employed for the first time, an installation dubbed the "18 shades of gay."

"[The balls] have become a huge part of the branding of the city," says Lacroix. "It is such a clear example of how well-executed design is the best way for a city to stand above its peers. Everybody here understands the impact."

"18 shades of gay" is a promenade of multihued balls, which celebrates the evolving spectrum of the LGBTQI community and is inspired by its rainbow flag.
(Image: Jean-Michel Seminaro)



ur Cities

MONTREAL: Setting a Design Example

In 1991, Montreal became the first city in North America to create a design commissioner position. Lacroix has held that title ever since, and has become something of a guru in the field. In 2004, she organized the International New Design Cities Symposium in Montreal, inviting representatives from other “emerging creative design-oriented cities...to raise awareness of what good design can do as an economic driver.” In 2006, Montreal was designated as a UNESCO City of Design (from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), one of 31 cities worldwide to receive the honor and the first in North America. That same year the Montreal Bureau du Design was established, with Lacroix at its helm, cementing the city’s identity as a creative design mecca.

Given those credentials, you’d think Cormier’s 2010 proposal would have received the welcome mat. But, as Lacroix explains, politics can still get in the way. “The UNESCO designation is not some sort of consecration,” she says. “It’s more of a recognition that we have a lot of talented professionals, and an invitation to better use those talents to build the city.

“The procurement process is a major issue,” she continues. “Here in Quebec, municipalities are legally obliged to hire the lowest bidder—that really informs the results of the work.” To get around that requirement, she’s pushed for more and more design competitions, “which produces much better results. The UNESCO designation has been a tremendous lever for this, helping to maintain the interest of the various elected officials who come and go. When you have such a title, nobody wants to lose it, but it comes with commitments. You have to set an example.”

This past November, Montrealers elected a new mayor, who has her work cut out for her in maintaining the high bar of design. Valérie Plante, the first female mayor in Montreal’s history, campaigned on a promise to create 12,000 new affordable housing units over the next four years—a very ambitious goal that helped sweep her to victory in this increasingly expensive city. It’s not just a question of whether she pulls it off, says Marie-Claude Parenteau-Lebeuf, director of APDIQ (Quebec’s professional association for interior designers, Association professionnelle des designers d’intérieur du Québec), but how she goes about it. “Affordable housing is great, but it has to become an interesting place to live, not just a place where it is cheap,” says Parenteau-Lebeuf. “That means great urban planning, good architecture, and sound landscape design. Consideration for interior design is especially important in social housing that mixes young people, families, and the elderly—you have to get everyone involved in the design process so it is comfortable for everyone.”

Will the new mayor rush to throw up cheaply built, ill-conceived projects in order to fulfill her campaign promise? It’s far too early to tell, cautions Parenteau-Lebeuf. But, she says there are encouraging signs: “The mayor comes from a museology background, which means she is very sensitive to the cultural aspects of the city—so, hopefully, that will come into play with any decisions regarding cultural events or design practices.” One way or the other, Parenteau-Lebeuf is quite sure Montrealers will demand design excellence, whether for social housing projects, high-end condos, commercial developments, or other city-building efforts: “We are not just known as a city of designers, but for the strength of our cultural sector—cinema, theater, music. We are a city of creativity.”

DETROIT: Bright Spots Emerging in the Blight

In December 2015, Detroit became the second city in North America, and the first in the United States, to be designated as a UNESCO City of Design. This may come as a bit of a surprise to those who associate this former industrial powerhouse with overgrown lots, abandoned homes, derelict factories, and shuttered warehouses. If anything, the city, which has lost two-thirds of its population since the 1950s (a trend that continues today), has become a poster child for urban blight, not urban design.

But, looks can be deceiving. Olga Stella, executive director of the Detroit Creative Corridor Center, urges naysayers not to judge this book by its cover: “What I love about Detroit is you can drive up a street that looks fairly empty, park in front of a building that looks to be abandoned, and then you open the door to find something really wonderful and unexpected. That’s often the story with the designers and creative talent in the city—they’re hidden away in these spaces that people don’t know about.”

DC3, as the center is known, was founded in 2010 to help energize the city’s creative sector and promote design excellence as a core component of Detroit’s identity as it rises from the ashes. Based out of the College for Creative Studies, located in the city’s up-and-coming Milwaukee Junction neighborhood, DC3 is essentially an economic development organization that works at the behest of Detroit’s creative industries, from architecture and interior design to fashion, film, graphic arts, and industrial design. DC3, which put together Detroit’s City of Design application (and beat a number of much larger and wealthier American cities), has tasked itself with attracting new creative talent, while also raising the profile of the city’s many artists, makers, and design studios.

Detroit’s civic and business leaders are getting the message, says Stella. “We’re building more and more understanding about the value of design. Whether it’s the city planning director, a corporate vice president, or someone in the manufacturing industry—they get it. In the past, some of these folks would say, ‘We’re under-resourced; how can we possibly afford good design?’ Now it’s like, ‘We can’t *not* do this.’”

“What I love about Detroit is you can drive up a street that looks fairly empty, park in front of a building that looks to be abandoned, and then you open the door to find something really wonderful and unexpected.”

—OLGA STELLA, DETROIT CREATIVE CORRIDOR CENTER



1. The one kilometer-long (0.62 mile) linear installation, “18 shades of gay,” is suspended above the pedestrian axis of Sainte-Catherine Street East in Montreal.

(Image: Jean-François Savaria)

2. Detroit’s industrial backdrop provides an ideal setting for the city’s Design Summit.

(Image: Keenan Hastings)

3. A building in Detroit’s Milwaukee Junction neighborhood is adorned by a nine-story painting, commonly known as the “Illuminated Mural.”

(Image: Platform)

4. Six principal colors, each in three distinct hues, combine across 180,000 recycled plastic balls in the “18 shades of gay” installation.

(Image: Raphaël Thibodeau)



“[Montreal is] not just known as a city of designers, but for the strength of our cultural sector—cinema, theater, music. We are a city of creativity.”

—MARIE-CLAUDE PARENTEAU-LEBEUF, APDIQ



1. Toronto's waterfront redevelopment has created spaces for residents of all ages. (Image: Connie Tsang)

2. When completed, the cutting-edge Waterfront Innovation Centre will reinvent how employees work together in Toronto's rapidly evolving creative and technology sectors. (Image: Menkes)

3. A new building (shown) is connected by a sky bridge to a repurposed factory at Google's Pittsburgh complex. (Image: Dennis Marsico)

4. Google is just one of the tech companies contributing to Pittsburgh's reputation as the Silicon Valley of the East. (Image: David Aschkenas)

“We don't want to discourage reinvestment, but it's important that we assist [Pittsburgh communities under redevelopment] in understanding how design can play a role...that actually benefits the neighborhood—that way they are decision-makers in the process, rather than having it happen to them.”

—CHRIS KOCH, DESIGN CENTER PITTSBURGH

PITTSBURGH: (Sharing) a Wealth of Design

Rust Belt cities hold a special allure for creative spirits, and it's not just the cheap rents and availability of warehouses that have been converted into light-filled studio spaces. Something about old industrial infrastructure—the steel, rail yards, monstrous machinery, weeds, and rubble—serves as a fertile ground for ideas to grow. Few cities are as well-endowed with such landscapes as Pittsburgh, which is no longer so much a steel town as a mecca for what urban economist Richard Florida famously dubbed the “creative class:” upwardly mobile tech- and design-savvy professionals who flock to places with a high concentration of artists, musicians, and freethinkers.

Where the so-called creative class goes, big tech companies follow, opening offices designed by world-renowned architects and catalyzing a localized economic boom that, in turn, supports a high concentration of boutique firms and freelance designers of every stripe. Over the past decade, Pittsburgh has gained a reputation as the Silicon Valley of the East, spawning a large roster of tech start-ups and attracting investment from the likes of Google and Uber. At press time, the city was rumored to be a top contender in the bid to host Amazon's new \$5 billion headquarters.

“After hitting rock bottom in the '80s and '90s, Pittsburgh has totally reinvented itself and now attracts people from all over the world who want to live and work here,” says Kyra Tucker, director of interior architecture programs and assistant professor at Chatham University, principal at Kyra Tucker + Associates Interior Design, and emerging professional chair on the board of the Pennsylvania West chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID). “We've seen the renaissance of a lot of down-and-out neighborhoods, with old factories being converted into condominiums and spaces for upscale retailers and office tenants. It's been really fun and edgy to be part of this as a designer.”

Gentrification, of course, has a dark side, to which Pittsburgh has not been immune. The hippest new neighborhoods often are places once dominated by blue-collar factory workers—folks who have not only lost their employment base, but now face sky-high rents and a loss of their sense of community as moneyed newcomers pour in. Those communities have found a champion, however, in the Design Center Pittsburgh, a nonprofit group founded to “bring design expertise to neighborhoods being torn apart by the process of redevelopment,” in the words of its CEO, Chris Koch.

The Design Center's planners and architects act as a bridge between local residents and developers, ensuring their voices are heard. “We have the ability to talk to both sides, working to align agendas and find win-win scenarios. We don't want to discourage reinvestment, but it's important that we assist communities in understanding how design can play a role in redeveloping in a way that actually benefits the neighborhood—that way they are decision-makers in the process, rather than having it happen to them,” explains Koch.

TORONTO: Future City

In recent years, Canada's largest urban area often has been found atop “best” and “most livable” city lists. With more than half its population born in another country, Toronto is officially the most diverse city in the world. It also is the fastest-growing tech market in North America, adding tech jobs at twice the rate of San Francisco. One might say this is by design.

The city has made it a priority to preserve the vibrant streetscapes of the eclectic neighborhoods it is renowned for, while also investing heavily in creating world-class parks, plazas, and museums. Nowhere is the emphasis on innovative design more apparent than along the Lake Ontario waterfront, which is now 17 years into a 25-year, \$30 billion redevelopment project. Two thousand acres of formerly industrial land, most of it owned by the government, are being reclaimed for residential, commercial, and public uses. The results so far are nothing short of stunning.

Christopher Glaisek, senior vice president for planning and design at Waterfront Toronto, a public corporation set up by the government to oversee the redevelopment effort, explains: “It's not like a traditional economic development corporation that cities set up to dispose of unused land, where the goal is simply to maximize the financial return. It was set up to leverage those assets to make something really remarkable for the city. The idea is to create a waterfront that will attract the world, and to showcase Canada to the world.” Glaisek adds his “mantra” for doing that is “design excellence.”

A series of high-profile design competitions has resulted in a number of new iconic spaces, from the undulating Spadina Wavedecks to the The Bentway. Like New York's High Line, only upside down, The Bentway is an artistically appointed linear park found *below* an elevated expressway that courses through downtown.

Waterfront Toronto established a design review panel early on, comprised of some of the country's top designers, including the likes of Bruce Kuwabara, Peter Busby, and—yes—Claude Cormier. As developers bring forward proposals for waterfront land, the panel provides stringent critiques. “They know they need to bring their A-game for design, because they know they're going to be critiqued by A-game designers,” says Glaisek. One of the first condo towers to go up was designed by none other than Moshe Safdie. “That was a direct response to knowing the bar had been raised and that they needed to make a good impression on the panel,” notes Glaisek.

Toronto's waterfront redevelopment has attracted billions of dollars in private investment and created 20,000 new jobs in what was only recently a derelict sliver of the city. Many of those jobs are in the entertainment and tech industries. Construction will soon begin on the Waterfront Innovation Centre, a purpose-built tech incubator; Sidewalk Labs (Google's urban tech sister company) has been selected to develop 12 acres of vacant land “from the internet up”—a slogan describing its vision for the so-called “smart cities” of the future.

Creative tech companies “are something we've actively tried to pursue,” says Glaisek. “Design excellence is not just about putting an aesthetic gloss on things. It's about quality of place, which is now an asset that we can leverage to attract investment. Quality of place is our brand now; it's become an identifier of the city of Toronto.” ●

BRIAN J. BARTH
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He has written for a range of publications, from
Landscape Architecture Magazine
to NewYorker.com.*

By Diana Mosher

One of a

Copcats, beware: The authentic, original furniture movement is reenergized with creative strategies and new partners to combat knockoffs



The one and only, authentic Eames Lounge Chair and Ottoman from Herman Miller is available today in a taller size in response to the fact that the average height of people worldwide has increased about an inch since the chair was first designed in 1956.
(Image: Herman Miller)

Kind

Several years ago Emeco was working with Frank Gehry to raise money for the Hereditary Disease Foundation. Gehry designed an aluminum lounge named “Tuyomyo” for Emeco to fabricate. “We vigorously worked on this project for six months and I was proud with the result,” recalls Gregg Buchbinder, CEO, Emeco. “When I presented this custom handmade Emeco one-off to Frank, he said, ‘We have to start over.’ He had seen a similar-looking design in a Phillips (formerly Phillips de Pury) auction catalog from a decade earlier. Honest people like Frank Gehry only do original work.”

Unfortunately, the demand remains strong for authentic-looking knockoffs that cost much less than the real thing. “Knockoffs have been a problem for a very long time,” says John Edelman, CEO, Design Within Reach. “What’s changed in recent decades is that the internet has made them easier to find. Plus, many dishonest sellers intentionally confuse consumers by using the real product name on their fake merchandise.” Besides ease of distribution, the internet also provides copycats with a constant stream of new ideas to appropriate as their own.

At the same time, social media platforms and e-commerce sites also have made it easier to spot the offenders and monitor their activities. So, creative companies have new tools and more resources than ever before to combat knockoffs and keep them out of the marketplace.

Buchbinder’s team searches for counterfeit copies being sold on well-known e-commerce sites. Emeco vigorously protects its intellectual property and fights until fake chairs are removed. “We litigate where someone capitalizes or profits from our design, goodwill, or reputation,” explains Buchbinder.

Educated design firms are on the same page. “HKS will never advocate for copycat products,” states Jennifer M. Kolstad, director of interior architecture, associate principal, and senior vice president at HKS, who sits on the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) National Board of Directors. “We can’t ensure quality, warranty, performance, ethical manufacturing, sustainability implications, procurement...the list is long.” Of greater significance, however, is HKS’ ethical commitment to refute the misappropriation of intellectual property.

“It’s a huge issue of integrity,” agrees Charrisse Johnston, principal and firmwide interior design practice leader at Steinberg Hart and past chair of the ASID National Board of Directors. “Using a reproduction means the original designer and manufacturer, who invested in the development of the original design, are getting ripped off. And, when the knockoffs are being made overseas, then the original country is being deprived of sales and tax revenues.”

Furniture designers from High Point, North Carolina, to Milan also are savvy forecasters looking years down the road at where the market is headed, notes Linda Kafka, marketing director, coach + brand strategist, who is an Interior Designers of Canada (IDC) board director and a member of IDC’s industry committee. “When they bring those [designs] out to market, it’s easy for people to knock them off within seconds. They take a picture and off it goes to another country. Within a few months’ time, that piece is already out there, and it’s so frustrating because you put your heart and your soul into it.”

“I’m passionate about this, especially from the Canadian perspective,” adds Kafka. “It almost cuts deeper when you see the knockoffs happening in our smaller market, because we work so hard for people to notice us.”



On the Front Lines

Along with obvious measures like prohibiting photos at trade shows, qualified manufacturers are getting ahead of the counterfeiters by broadcasting their own reputations as innovative companies that produce authentic and original design. Kafka is marketing and sales manager at the new Canadian iteration of ARCHITECT@WORK, a 15-year-old European juried trade show that requires all its exhibitors to be vetted and approved by a judging panel of architects and interior designers.

Another organization combatting knockoffs is Be Original Americas, a 501(c)6 nonprofit committed to informing, educating, and influencing manufacturers, design professionals, and individuals on the economic, ethical, and environmental value of authentic design—all while preserving and investing in its future. “So many fine companies are being knocked off and the designer/architect/consumer never realizes the impact. They don’t think about the conditions under which many of the products are being made, or the hazardous materials found in some,” says Beth Dickstein, founder and CEO of public relations and marketing firm bde, who co-founded Be Original Americas in July 2012 with David Rosenkvist (formerly of Republic of Fritz Hansen; now with Louis Poulsen).

Along with Emeco and others, Design Within Reach is a charter member of Be Original Americas. According to Edelman, buying knockoffs hinders the future of design, because new products are expensive to create. It’s the success of original designs that funds their research and development.

“Be Original Americas is a wonderful platform that has forged this relationship amongst design brands and leaders,” says Karolina Dabo, marketing manager North America, Republic of Fritz Hansen, also a Be Original Americas charter member. “Together, we are stronger and able to fight copies.”

Be Original Americas spreads its message through accredited CEU courses and has presented talks to groups, as well as at schools and retail member locations. “When consumers say they can’t afford the original, we ask how long did the fake last—it usually comes out that it’s been replaced multiple times, because they loved the piece but it never lasted,” explains Dickstein.

“Sometimes, toxic materials are used and you’d never know it,” says Johnston. “I think the issue of knockoffs is both a practical one and a moral one,” she adds. “Clients may not care about the latter, but when you lay out the practical reasons one by one, you have more of a chance of getting through to them.”

“One of the big steps we’re taking against the counterfeit market is through education. As a design brand, it’s our job to tell our story to help people understand the thoughtfulness and quality that goes into designing and manufacturing our products. We’re proud charter members of Be Original Americas, and have been delighted to host students as part of their fellowship program,” notes Sam Grawe, global brand director for Herman Miller and president of Be Original Americas.

“We’re also working with agents at U.S. Customs and Border Protection to educate them on our products so they know how to spot knockoffs when inspecting incoming shipments of goods,” adds Grawe. “So far, they’ve confiscated \$10 million-plus in counterfeit products over the last year.”

Seeing and Touching

When consumers don’t know who produced the piece they love, their online searches can lead to misleading images and/or text posted by the copycats, who have figured out the terminology that will enable them to come up first in the search. “Some counterfeiters have used photos of the Emeco factory and quotes from designers like Philippe Starck, from *our* website,” says Buchbinder. They have copied the story of the Emeco Navy Chair made for U.S. Navy war ships in 1944. These counterfeiters misrepresent the source and purposely cause confusion and deceive the public.

“It’s a frustrating situation for everyone: the designers, the producers of authentic goods, and especially the consumers,” agrees Edelman. “I always tell people to ask a lot of questions and purchase only from trusted retailers.”

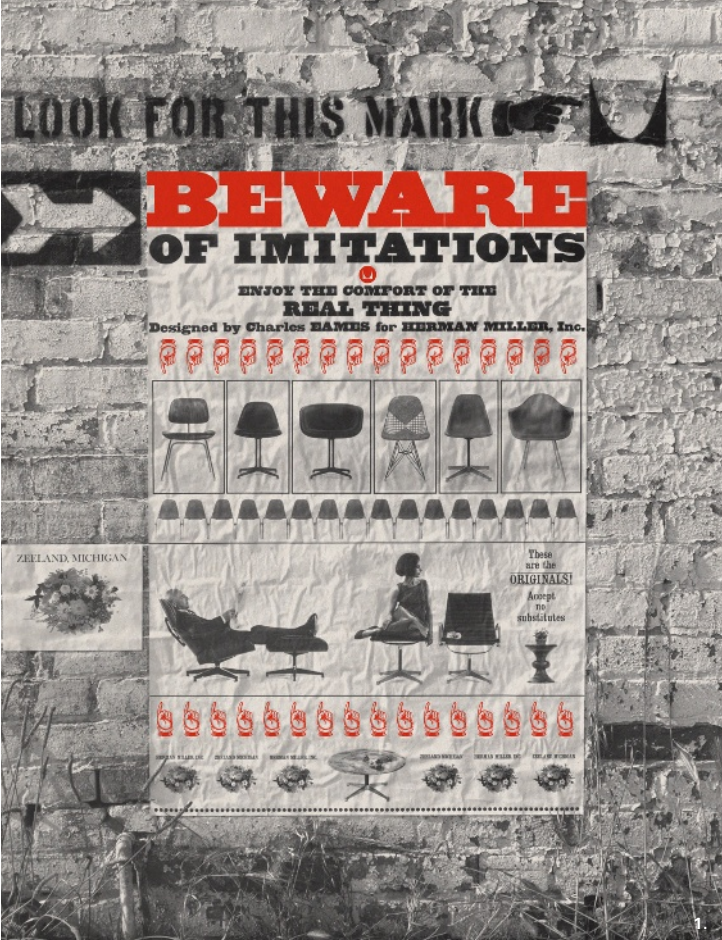
Since actually seeing, touching, and being part of the upholstery process in a live in-store demonstration is still much more valuable than images or videos, Ligne Roset brought its master craftsman and 30-year veteran Daniel Berthaud to the United States from France for a four-city tour. “The authentic demonstration for our iconic Togo collection has been instrumental in educating our customers about the artisanship included in every piece of furniture they purchase,” says Simone Vingerhoets, executive vice president, Roset USA Corporation.

Republic of Fritz Hansen also has flown in its master upholsterer from Denmark to demonstrate handcraftsmanship on design classics, like the Egg and Swan chairs. According to Dabo, “Seeing a piece of classic design handmade before your eyes really changes your perspective.”

Lawyers get involved when it’s difficult to tell the difference between “inspired by” and a clear cut copycat. “The latter, in my opinion, are the greatest offenders,” remarks Kolstad. “The original design is not modified, but is a straight up rip-off.” Others are detectible only by internal construction and quality. The investment reveals itself over time as the inevitable conclusion is disposable furniture.

“It’s become more egregious and shameless recently,” observes Johnston, who has seen disreputable manufacturers even shoot their product photos using similar backgrounds as the original. If it seems too good to be true, she warns, then there has to be a catch. ●

Counterfeiters misrepresent
the source and purposely
cause confusion and deceive
the public.



1. A poster designed by Charles and Ray Eames in the 1960s illustrates how long the industry has been faced with knockoff products. (Image: Herman Miller)

2. Since 1944, the aluminum Navy Chair has been manufactured at Emeco using a unique 77-step process and comes with a 150-year warranty. (Image: Emeco)

3. Imitations are not the sincerest form of flattery when quality suffers. A broken knockoff of Emeco's Navy Chair was found in a delicatessen in New York. (Image: Emeco)

DIANA MOSHER,
Allied ASID,
is a New York City-based communications professional specializing in content creation and brand strategy for the real estate and design industries. She also is an interior design consultant.

Working with Homeland Security



Be Original Americas was launched with 11 charter members: Alessi, Bernhardt Design, Cassina, Design Within Reach, Emeco, Flos, Republic of Fritz Hansen, Herman Miller, Kartell, Ligne Roset, and Vitra. Many more have signed on since then, including Studio O+A and Michael Graves Design Group.

“Be Original Americas and furniture rights holders have helped to educate us on the problem with counterfeit furniture, lighting, decorative household articles, etc.,” says Gregory Moore, public affairs specialist—media division in the Office of Public Affairs at U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. “As a result, there has been more visibility for this niche industry and much progress has been made.”

In 2016, CBP seized 42 shipments of unauthorized replica furniture determined to be counterfeit iconic mid-century modern design home and office furniture. These seizures involved goods worth an estimated \$4.2 million if genuine. CBP’s furniture enforcement efforts have helped to protect more than 8,000 American jobs.

Homeland Security’s Intellectual Property Rights Seizure Statistics are not yet released for 2017, but the next CBP report is expected to show an increase in confiscation of copies. “We look forward to achieving greater successes as we continue to work closely with all stakeholders,” states Moore.

Other enforcement actions involving violators may include civil penalties, audits, and referrals to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arm of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) for criminal investigation.

“With respect to the majority of CBP’s furniture seizures, at issue were trademarked configurations or designs, and not brand names or logos,” says Moore. If a chair takes a similar shape but uses different materials, is it a knockoff? CBP works closely with rights holders and relies on the product identification guides they have prepared for CBP.

“As we tell all our new members and renewals, the key is for firms to visit the Intellectual Property Rights e-Recordation page on the CBP website, where they can record their trademarked and/or copyright designs with U.S. Customs,” says Beth Dickstein, co-founder of Be Original Americas and CEO at bde. “That would be a huge step forward.”



Quality at work:
True craftsmen
ensure a company's
standards are
consistently met.
(Image: Emeco)

ICONic Profile



**Carol
Jones**

Carol Jones is one of North America's most influential designers and business leaders. A partner with Kasian Architecture Interior Design and Planning, Jones has been in the forefront of expanding the firm across Canada with offices in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta; and internationally, with an office in Doha, Qatar. Jones brings more than 40 years of experience working with corporate clients and has led teams that have designed and redesigned headquarters of major firms with footprints of up to 200,000 square feet.

Born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Jones is the recipient of a bachelor's degree in Interior Design from the University of Manitoba. She's a writer and teacher, holding the post of lecturer at her alma mater, plus similar positions with British Columbia Institute of Technology and Kwantlen Polytechnic University. A member of numerous professional boards and associations, she has been inducted into the College of Fellows of the Interior Designers Institute of British Columbia, the Interior Designers of Canada, and the International Interior Design Association.

i+D caught up with Jones at Kasian's headquarters in Vancouver.

i+D: When you look up from your desk, what do you see?

Jones: Don't be jealous. We're on the 16th floor overlooking the most beautiful part of Vancouver—Stanley Park, the Lions Gate Bridge, and the harbor with ships waiting to be unloaded. We never take it for granted.

i+D: I read that when you were a little girl, you didn't play with toys or dolls, but were on the floor sketching designs.

Jones: I've just cleaned out two storage lockers I've been renting, and came across a whole bunch of drawings I did at age 10. Drawn to scale, using a ruler, of house plans, because they were the only structures I was familiar with at that age.

i+D: What was your inspiration?

Jones: I have no idea where it came from. There wasn't anyone in my family who was involved in design. I just always had this great interest in how you deal with spaces, and wanted to arrange them and place elements in them.

i+D: One focus of your career has been to bring modern ideas to spaces employees inhabit, to make them more comfortable and healthier. It seems such an obvious concept. Why did it take so long for employers to catch up?

Jones: The focus was once more on creating spaces so it worked for the company, as opposed to the employee. That hasn't gone away, but an added layer is now asking how can it be made to work for employees. There's recognition now that bottom lines are directly affected by how satisfied the staff is, and people are interested today in wellness and variety for employees.

i+D: Before, was it just a question of economics, to get a design on the cheap?

Jones: Getting it done as cheaply as possible was not necessarily a driver. Employers always wanted a space that functioned well so people could do their jobs. But health and wellness have been a new filter.

i+D: Widening out on this, looking at cities, you have an office in Doha, Qatar, which is expanding rapidly. Are people there thinking about progressive ideas in design?

Jones: The design aesthetic in Doha is a bit different from North America. It's not particularly employee-centric. We do palaces, for example, and there's no question who the client is in that case. We're working on a bank building and there's not much user input in the facility, because design that we're discussing is fairly new in that part of the world. But, they'll get there.

i+D: How often do you travel?

Jones: Once or twice a month.

i+D: Any guilty pleasures to stay sane while on the road?

Jones: A great hotel. It will make or break a trip. But, I love traveling. I always want to get on a plane.

i+D: What's the first thing you look for when arriving in a place you've never been?

Jones: Walking to get a sense of residential areas. The high-income areas, middle-income, and even the not-so-great places. I want to see how people live.

i+D: What part of a résumé do you ignore?

Jones: Everything is important. I'm always concerned if there's misspellings or grammar mistakes, that's a level of detail that should never be overlooked. I'm always interested in whether they've traveled, and, if so, where, and other interests they have, like photography or art.

i+D: Are you a collector?

Jones: I've spent a lot of time trying to de-collect. I'm de-cluttering and downsizing, as I mentioned, going through the storage lockers, getting rid of stuff. It's empowering.

i+D: Growing up, who was your inspiration?

Jones: Mrs. Ivanov, my English teacher. I still have to watch my grammar to prevent her from rolling over in her grave. She taught me wonderful things, like "précis," the ability to take a whole bunch of information and distill it to its essence. When I've taught communication in interior design programs, I've given students a long newspaper article and asked them to highlight the key points and rewrite it in 500 words. A great exercise, and so important when writing proposals, to stick to the essence and not have a lot of boilerplate.

i+D: If you weren't designer, what would you be?

Jones: At one point, I thought I'd be a lawyer.

i+D: Until you came to your senses?

Jones: (Laughing) Well...Now that I've worked with a lot of law firms, I realize that profession would not be as interesting as what I do. I can't imagine doing anything else. What other job gives you the opportunity to affect the way people feel living in spaces, in airports, hospitals, anywhere? You have so much influence for the good.

i+D: Thinking of the Me Too movement, is there sexually inappropriate conduct in the world of design?

Jones: Sure. I've seen it and heard about it. It's a big discussion when I get together with friends, and people ask, "Did you ever experience it in your career?" I did, nothing too serious. Because of the times, we just said, "Ugh, he's a jerk." I'm glad it's happening now. I just hope the pendulum doesn't swing so far that it becomes awkward to work with two sexes in any environment. That could be a danger, especially in this business, when everyone's so friendly, everyone hugs when they see each other. Is that going to stop? I hope not.

i+D: What's wrong with design today?

Jones: It saddens me that design is a commodity in many people's minds.

i+D: That designers aren't taken seriously?

Jones: Right. But, also, that it's considered a product, when, really, it's a process. The process is what we're selling, not a product. ●

AMBROSE CLANCY

is the editor of the Shelter Island Reporter and a novelist, nonfiction author, and journalist. His work has appeared in GQ, The Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times.

A casual dining area in a corner of the kitchen makes efficient use of the space. Designed by Jody Myers-Fierz. (Image: Jane Beiles)

The Demi Dining

Out of favor, or out of our lives?

Is the dining room dead or is it simply undergoing one of a series of natural transformations? Wanting to get behind the hearsay and learn the truth, we turned to three top interior designers and discovered not only what changes are taking place and why, but how dining-living areas—known as “great rooms,” “open-plan formats,” and “communal spaces”—are being created and the effect they’re having on people’s lives.



By Michele Keith

se of the Room

The State of Today's Dining Room

Toronto-based Wayne Swadron, says, "I wouldn't say the dining room is dead, especially in our clients' principal residences, where large, sit-down dinners remain a fairly high priority. Here, proper dining rooms are still well-used."

In his clients' secondary homes, however, dining is more often incorporated into a great room with living and dining areas, as well as, potentially, the kitchen.

Jody Myers-Fierz, whose business, Color Concept Theory, LLC, is headquartered in Westport, Connecticut, shares her experience. "Maybe 10 percent of my clients request a formal dining room. Usually because they're building a new home on a large scale, 10,000 square feet-plus. With a house this size it's expected. Plus, they have the footage for both a true dining room *and* a communal space covering the owner's needs, as well as future buyers' when the house goes on the market.

Equally important, she adds, is that "with ever-higher real estate prices and [increasing] taxes, it's imperative that every square foot is of value. A formal dining room, most frequently used just twice a year or so, is not cost effective."

Why Open-Plan Layouts Now?

In San Francisco, interior designer Chris M. Shields explains the reason for the popularity of great rooms today is due to the way we live. “People are shying away from [formal dining rooms] because our lifestyles have grown more casual and fewer people have been raised in families with traditional dining styles.”

Myers-Fierz blames technology for the move from dining room to open plan. “It has separated us, putting everyone on different schedules, keeping us working full time at full speed. Communal spaces do, however, allow for interaction, communication, eye contact—things that are very much needed, but missing today. Also, such spaces are not formal, which corresponds with today’s more relaxed lifestyle.”

“Yes, the dining room is on the outs, and great rooms are becoming the norm,” agrees Shields. “What hasn’t changed though, and might be increasing, is our desire for togetherness and shared time, especially when it comes to food. Many clients still ask for a dedicated place for the dining table, which can be placed in any number of places, and which, incidentally, has become larger over the last few years.”

Elegant and functional: Designer Chris M. Shields combines the kitchen-counter eating area with a classic dining room.



Artwork and interesting lighting create warmth in even the most contemporary of traditional dining rooms. Designed by Jody Myers-Fierz. (Image: Jane Beiles)



Lifestyles have grown more casual and fewer people have been raised in families with traditional dining styles.

Designing Ops and Challenges

All the designers agree that, if a positive outcome is to be reached, it is crucial to discuss both current dining habits and how a client would ideally like to dine, in initial talks. “What we normally find,” Swadron notes, “is that flexibility in dining options is very important. The same client may be perfectly happy eating breakfast while standing at the kitchen counter, taking family meals at a big round table in the kitchen, hosting parties in a formal dining room, or using the kitchen counter as a buffet table with guests spreading out to eat in the lounge area.”

While great rooms provide many positives—there’s no need to adhere to symmetrical layouts or formal room definition; they can deliver a sense of drama—Swadron says it requires careful consideration to create a sense of intimacy and warmth. Natural materials, changing the floor or ceiling (constructing different levels), incorporating furniture layouts to help define areas, lighting and art features: All are devices that can assist in creating more comfortable spaces.

One staple in Myers-Fierz’s design plans for communal spaces is the classic wood farm table, especially when surrounded by simple chairs left unupholstered or covered with a high-performance Crypton fabric, which is resistant to stains and odors.

Also a fan of dining tables, Shields points out that, while many activities other than eating take place at today’s dining tables, “I’m convinced people still yearn to be surrounded by family and friends while sharing a meal. The dining table continues to be a foundational element in the home.”



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Pros and Cons

“Open plans can both enhance and detract from the dining experience,” says Swadron. “Challenges, such as the temptation to turn on the news or the game, can completely compromise the rare opportunity for face-to-face social interaction.”

While Myers-Fierz believes designing communal spaces in new construction is easier than creating other rooms—fewer details to deal with—she encounters three troublesome issues rather often:

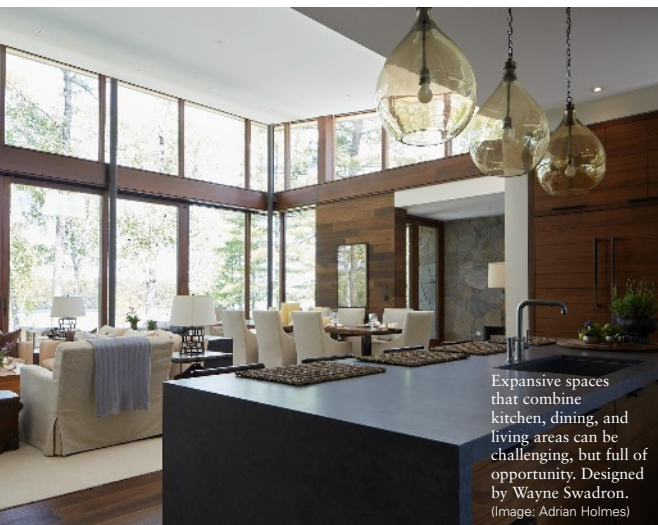
- The frequent lack of wall-to-wall carpeting creates “echoing”—the noise of shoe-clad feet, electronics, voices.
- If the design calls for a lot of color, it takes careful planning to make it work in a large space that metamorphoses from, say, a dining area to the kitchen to the lounge than in one smaller room.
- The inevitable “floating furniture” in a great room means that backs of pieces, which can include unsightly seams, are visible. Special attention, therefore, must be paid to ensure that everything looks perfect from every angle.

Regarding great rooms, Shields reveals: “Not only am I combining the dining and living rooms, the kitchen is also being integrated. I get to solve the dilemma of how to combine the traditionally hard elements of a kitchen with the desired soft and comfortable elements of the living room. It’s an exciting area to design.”

But, nothing is easy, he adds. “The idea about having more space in a great room has been tempered with the growing desire for larger-scale furniture. By the time a kitchen island sized for activities is combined with a sectional sofa and large dining table, space can evaporate. It takes careful planning to achieve a well-functioning and comfortable great room. On the other hand, people have gained a lot of flexibility with great rooms. For example, more expansive walls create more possibilities for artwork and self-expression.”

Extinction, Renewal, Reformation, or...

Without a crystal ball, no one knows what the future holds for this space in the home. The designers we spoke with, however, would not be surprised if one day, formal dining rooms came back in a big way. That’s simply the cycle of design. ●



Expansive spaces that combine kitchen, dining, and living areas can be challenging, but full of opportunity. Designed by Wayne Swadron. (Image: Adrian Holmes)

MICHELE KEITH
is a New York-based writer and nonfiction book author who focuses on design-related topics. Her work has appeared in The New York Times, ASPIRE Design & Home, Luxury Listings NYC, and DESIGN.

What about Sustainability?



One might think the pro-great-room client would be keen on using sustainable materials in building them. Not so, says Jody Myers-Fierz. “Sustainable products have been around for a long time, yet I’m rarely asked about them for residential design. It’s more common in commercial projects.”

“I’m LEED-certified and suggest options whenever possible. With the exception of baby nurseries, people are generally more concerned about lighting, probably because it’s been in the news in a huge way and the government has made a big effort to inform the public about the benefits of LEDs. Even so, the amount of knowledge regarding sustainable design is meager.”

It’s easier with new homes than old ones, she adds, where she can use items like geothermal heating systems that are proven to work well and eventually save money, or sometimes offer a tax benefit. These prod clients into giving green products the thumbs up.

“We are always mindful of the types of materials we present to clients for any room of the house regarding suitability from a durability and maintenance standpoint,” says Wayne Swadron. “But, of course, client reactions vary. They will often commence a project with instructions to ‘incorporate as much green tech as possible,’ which, when we explain what they are actually asking for, changes to ‘incorporate as much green tech as reasonable,’ which turns to ‘Oh, is *that* what it looks like?’ or ‘Is *that* what it costs?’ So, ultimately, most green concepts remain concepts.”

Chris M. Shields finds he is most often the driver of sustainability concerns on a project. “I try to lead by example, and hope it rubs off on the people I serve. I do find people are interested in and want to learn more about sustainability when I bring it up.”

Still, he adds, “There continues to be a lot of misconceptions about the performance of sustainable products, and performance can vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. But, it’s my responsibility as a designer to do my best to leave a home better than I found it, and that includes its impact on both inhabitants and the environment.”

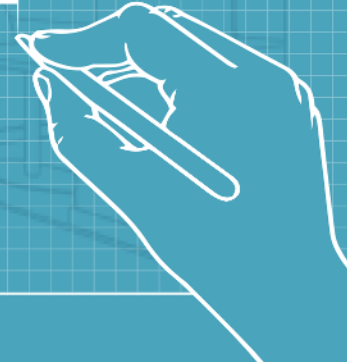
What can be done to improve things? The experts have some ideas:

- First, according to Swadron, “As designers, it is critical to educate ourselves about sustainability, and then be prepared to offer clients suitable choices.”
- “Manufacturers must do a better job educating consumers with their advertising and marketing,” believes Myers-Fierz.
- “The industry should follow the lead of the organic food movement,” suggests Shields, “by creating an easy-to-understand scale for environmental impact. It could go a long way to creating awareness and culture change... much as we make selections now when we see the calorie count on a menu.”



DESIGN LIFE

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Karolina Dabo, Republic of Fritz Hansen
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Olga Stella, Detroit Creative Corridor Center
Wayne Swadron, ARIDO, IDC, Wayne Swadron Architecture Interiors & Landscape
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HUB OF DESIGN

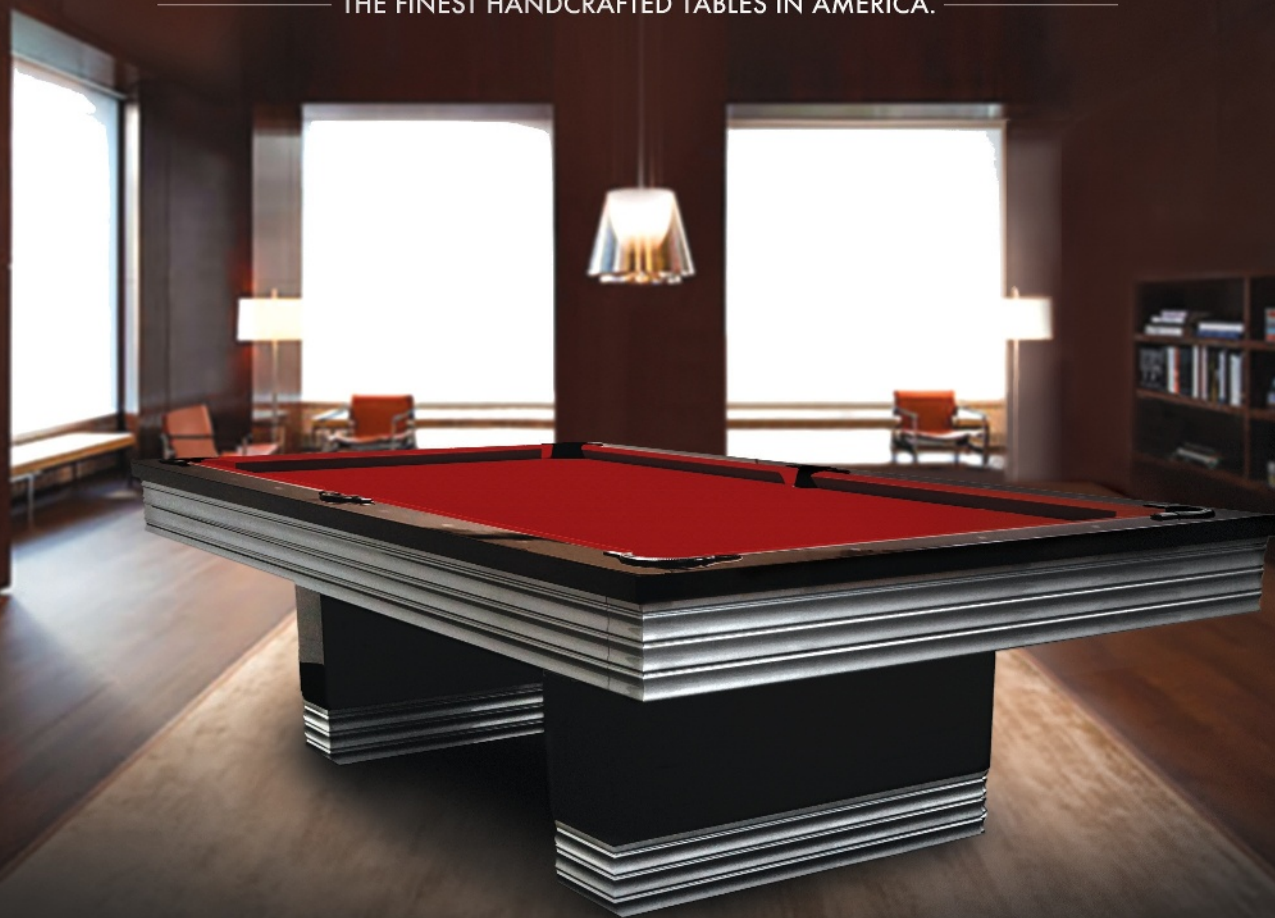
Airports, train stations, subway terminals, and transportation hubs of all kinds are a part of our built history and can represent many things—excitement, adventure, frustration. A portal to another place, the design of such buildings is a canvas for designers to tell the story of a region, to inspire and amuse travelers, and make the time spent in such places as peaceful and efficient as possible. In the March/April issue, *i+D* will take a deeper look at the changing face of these unavoidable junctions and the design work being done to improve the passenger experience. ●

As riders ascend the escalators at the Stationshal Delft (Amsterdam) railway station, an impressive ceiling with the historic map of Delft unfolds. (Image: Mosa)



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