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ACROBAT READER: WELL READ >>

by Ellen Lupton

As novelists include more typographic experimentation in their writing, do audiences read their books or just look at them?

BACK TO THE FUTURE >>

Illustrations by Mike Kerr

Fearless forecasts that Concrete recorded 40 and 50 years ago tell us where graphic design was headed.

*The World
According to
Bruce Mau*

MASSIVE CHANGE

By Adele Weder

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RAD-ical Trad-itionalists

By Jami Attenberg

The newest publishers from Los Angeles are transforming the very format of the art magazine—with paintbrushes, 3D glasses, and limited-edition pom-star air fresheners.

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ADS CUT LOOSE >>

by Anthony Vagoni

The digital magazine doesn't mean the death knell of the classic print—instead, there's gonna be a whole lotta shakin'goin'on.

**THE RISE AND FALL OF THE DESIGN STAR
an INTERVIEW WITH MARTY NEUMEIER >>**

Photos courtesy of Step Magazine

Achieving star status doesn't happen by chance. Marty Neumeier shares his views on design legends, past and present, and why stardom may not be what it used to be.

Play Chicken.

Israel Researcher Avigdor Cahaner has crossbred normal chickens with naturally balding birds; the result is a featherless fowl that stays cool in tropical climates.

Bonus: no plucking necessary.

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By Douglas Wolk

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Brent Rollins's design for Spank Rock's *Yo Yo Yo Yo Yo* (Big Dada) is an ingenious riff on classic hip-hop graphic elements—flashy type, cash, an artist shot, gold chains, and a big booty—reworked into something sly and fresh. Rollins says the group directed him to do something as iconic as the cover of the Sex Pistols' *Never Mind the Bollocks* using "endless yo's." When he worked on *Ego Trip* magazine's VH1 specials, he had played with setting each line of type in a different font; he returned to that technique here, throwing in duotone metallic ink to make the letters pop even more. And in the spirit of the genre, he liberally sampled from other printed material—including the hundred-dollar-bill portrait of hip-hop shout-out homeboy Benjamin Franklin.



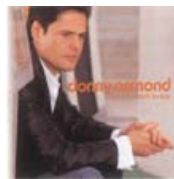
Maria Villar's design for the four-disc set *One Kiss Can Lead to Another: Girl Group Sounds Lost & Found* (Rhino) is a gorgeous example of form following function: a glossy, '60s-era hat box, complete with cord. The liner notes look like a teenage girl's alligator-skin diary, and the Digipaks open like well-worn compacts—they even have mirrors.



The guy on Public Enemy's *New Whirl Odor* (Slamjamz) is opening a much less appetizing container, and his other choices are labeled "AIDS," "Radiation," and "Mad Cow." The incorporation of an apropos-of-nothing frame and a hideous three-level drop shadow on the band's logo are nothing compared to the old-fashioned "scroll" effect on the tide. As Chuck D almost said once, don't believe the type.



DONNY OSMOND and Willie Hightower—separated at birth? Will BanDhead's design for Hightower's self-titled retrospective (released on Honest Jon's) displaces the deep-soul singer's name to the inside of the CD spine, in a font so weird it works: old West type inside little hearts. And the high-contrast headshot on the stock-red background could have graced the label of an old, rare 45. Osmond's new *What I Meant to Say* (Decca) features a bile-orange lowercase ITC Bauhaus—and that is a problem. Along with the washed-out photo (what is that thing reflecting Osmond's head?), the type screams early-'70s motivational poster. Hang on, Donny—Friday's comin'!



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The World According to Bruce Mau

No one has ever accused Bruce Mau, the Canadian Design Guru, of thinking small. His latest project, however, is big even for him. Mau's *Massive Change* (exhibition/symposium/book/website) regards the whole wide world as the ultimate design brief. *By Adele Weder*

The project known as *Massive Change* begins a confident assertion, in the form of a rhetorical question: *Now that we can do anything, what will we do?*

Anything? asks the skeptic. Anything, answers Bruce Mau, its mastermind. "We can do practically anything, with the resources we now have," avers Mau. "Let's say America decided tomorrow it was going to cure cancer, it could do it by mobilizing the resources. It's really a question of what gets decided and what gets prioritized." And whatever ends up the priority, designers—of medical tools, of sustainable hospital design, of economic systems that create the wealth that cures the cancer—will be behind it all.

There you have the crux of *Massive Change*, the mother of all design projects that aspires to regard the whole world as the ultimate design brief. Launched last fall at the Vancouver Art Gallery, *Massive Change* is—at this point in its development—a magnificent four-legged beast: sprawling exhibition, pundit-stuffed symposium, 240-page manifesto and interactive website (www.massivechange.com); a product line and feature film are in the works. Subtitled "The Future of Global Design," it's a very big deal for Bruce

Mau Design and also for its graduate school, the Institute Without Boundaries—a one-year interdisciplinary program within the Bruce Mau Design studio, in conjunction with George Brown College, whose students contributed the bulk of its content.

Massive Change positions designers as the 21st century's high priests, whose acumen will resolve everything from world hunger to global warming. In the words of the exhibition/book/website: "*What if life itself became a design project?*" Such a tall order, of course, requires expanding the definition of "designer" to include economists, biologists, politicians and, well, pretty much any creative mind. More pertinently, it entails reconsidering everything from the perspective of a designer.

"When we began the work, we decided against the visual as an organizing idea," says Mau. Still, the visual dominates the chambers of *Massive Change*. Rooms of text information about technical breakthroughs are clearly set out, but it's their aesthetics that engage us, from the computer-generated chart of the global Internet on the brochure to the museum installations themselves. Just walk by the roomful of junk-food containers



Travel Light.

In the *Movement Gallery*, green modes of transportation include the Gizmo neighbourhood electric vehicle (at centre), designed for commuters travelling over 72 kilometres per hour.

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manipulated into beautiful stalactites of metal, cardboard and Styrofoam. Or behold the expressionistic canvas of the world's global airline routes. "I think he's been misinterpreted, or perhaps wasn't clear enough," says Vancouver Art Gallery director Kathleen Bartels of Mau's comment. "For the gallery, the visual experience is very important. Aesthetics were taken off the table at the beginning. They came back."

Massive Change began gestating as soon as Bartels arrived at the VAG three and a half years ago, with the idea of incorporating more architecture and design into gallery programming. As a curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, she'd been amazed at the strong public response to architectural exhibitions. After meeting Mau in Toronto, she wanted to do something big with him. "I wasn't sure what this would be, and it didn't matter," says Bartels, since she figured that whatever Mau came up with would be intelligent and engaging. And big: Massive Change is the most ambitious exhibition the VAG has ever mounted.

It's also *the most ambitious project that Bruce Mau has undertaken* in the vertiginous trajectory of his career. He made his international reputation at Zone Books, a subsidiary of the MIT Press, with brilliant designs for such books as Georges Bataille's *The Accursed Share*, a philosophical critique of civilization's waste and spending patterns.

From there, Mau garnered the choicest graphic design commissions while evolving his studio into a multidisciplinary consultancy for architects like Frank Gehry and enterprises like Indigo Books.

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Picture This.

The scale of subject matter in Massive Change's *Saturated Image Gallery* ranges from the macro (the entire known universe) to the subatomic.

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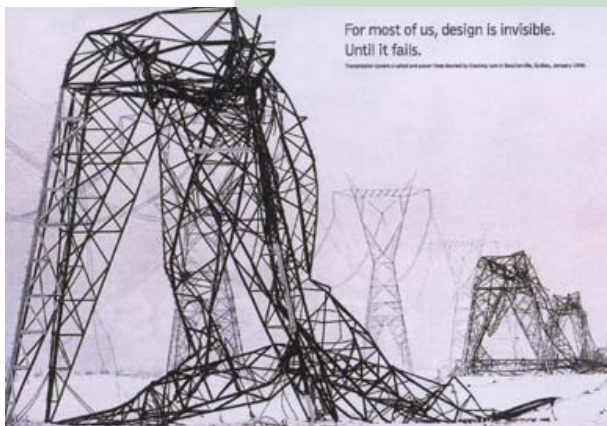
And publishing: the apogee was his collaboration with Rem Koolhaas to create *S,M,L,XL*. Mau's brilliant graphic design was not just an illustration but also an extension—the visual equivalent, really—of the jarring, enigmatic and spare writings by Koolhaas. A few years later came *Life Style*, an awkward combination of monograph and manifesto. Stuffed with platitudes and self-congratulations, it rang hollow and had the shelf-life of the Spice Girls and other pop icons of-the-moment that featured so prominently within it.

Mau's newest book, *Massive Change*—which doubles as the exhibition catalogue—is largely a compilation of the exhibition concepts and discussions. More accessible than *S,M,L,XL* and more substantial than *Life Style*, it looks and reads much like an expanded edition of *Wired* magazine.

Not much in this project is radically new or original: *Wired* itself, as well as such other magazines as *Adbusters* and even *Time*, have been bringing many of these ideas to a wider audience for a while now. But *Massive Change* is trying to take the most salient of these developments and unify them within a state-of-the-union account for the masses.

In each venue—book, exhibition, symposium and website—Mau is careful to list his many collaborators, while asserting that the “ruthless” media star-system compels him to step forward as the front man. This role has become such a second nature that in conversation he will say, with total offhandedness, “I’m working on a project to cure malaria.” He’s often called an unabashed showman. But this is what Mau does best: he shows.

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For most of us, design is invisible.
Until it fails.

Make Design Visible.

Powerlines downed by freezing rain in Boucherville, Quebec, January 1998.

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The gallery installations themselves span what the Institute Without Boundaries sees as the spectrum of civilization, which they have broken up into various systems, or “economies”—of *Urban, Movement, Information, Image, Energy, Markets, Materials, Military, Manufacturing, Living and Wealth & Politics*, all in galleries bejewelled with visual and textual data. The Movement and Information economies pretty much rely on the cliché museum displays of, respectively, odd-looking vehicles and backlit images of mother earth in space. But the exhibition excels at depicting of the abstract. Along with VAG curator Bruce Grenville and a crop of Institute Without Boundaries students, Mau has created installations that marvelously illustrate intangible concepts and treatises, such as property ownership (a giant barcode envelopes a house) and the Kyoto Protocol (an easy-to-follow graph of its pollution-bartering premise).

Mau's *Wealth & Politics* gallery acknowledges the dilemma of how to measure and enhance the world's riches. Conventional economists don't measure the depletion of natural resources in our GNP, for instance, even through they count the clean-up bill of a disaster. The gallery calls us to embrace the new, enlightened economics espoused by Hazel Henderson and others. What's not clear is how we can make the transition to these enlightened economic systems from our current mode, wherein corporations are compelled to grow and conquer, or die. Mau says he has faith that the most powerful conglomerates and most powerful nations, which have created much of the world's wealth of

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Waste Not.

The *Manufacturing Gallery* imagines a world of zero waste. Pristine white takeout containers made from biodegradable plastic derived from potatoes and constarch—contrast sharply with a “Garbage Wall” of styrofoam containers threaded together.

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society in the first place, will make the transition toward the new economy. Says Mau: *"Now, should we maintain a critical vigilance?"* Of course. Will there be bad companies? Yeah. Will there be assholes who make the worst kind of decisions imaginable? Yeah, sure. But if you look on the whole, what you see is that the numbers—housing, longevity, literacy, wealth and so on—are all going up."

As those numbers go up, though, so does energy use and resource depletion. Hence the Movement economies gallery, which is crammed with rows of energy-efficient vehicles or prototypes and highlighted by inventor Dean Kamen's Segway. If you're a cynic, the Segway is a rather expensive (\$5,000 plus) motorized scooter with handlebars. But if you regard it as low-energy transport for short distances, it could significantly reduce car use— if only more people would take it up. At the Visionaries symposium, Kamen seemed happy, open and optimistic—until moderator Charlie Rose delicately asked why it hasn't caught on in the marketplace. It might have been an excellent occasion for the inventor to solicit insights into some of its obvious design drawbacks, such as its lack of rain protection. But this was not the place to start talking about rain.

In fact, the entire exhibition is lean on critical detachment and long on giddy anticipation of the future. "It is an extremely optimistic show," allows Bartels. "But what we've found in our research is that people feel overly pessimistic. They feel there's no hope. We'd like to show that there are a lot of advances being made." For Mau, the advances outweigh the setbacks. "It's amazing to me how controversial that

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Make Visible.

The burned-out control room of Reactor 4, Chernobyl, June 2001.

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is, the idea that it would be optimistic," he laughs. "For me, it's like: 'Really? Is that controversial? I didn't realize!'" Right from the conception of *Massive Change*, he says, "we saw a pattern that ran counter to the mood of the day. And the mood of the day is largely produced by a media that feeds on crisis." Positive developments—including the work of designers—are largely ignored, he argues. *It's as though Massive Change is redressing the balance.*

The end result is that the exhibition is so jolly that you could turn it into a Broadway musical, but it largely ignores the dark and inexplicable aspects of human nature. The brilliance of *Massive Change* is its perception of the earth as a network of design systems; the flaw is its acceptance of humans as rational beings within that network. "We will eradicate poverty," shouts the oversize wall text, and much of the rest of the exhibition implies that with poverty eradicated and the ecosystem in balance, man's inhumanity to man will vaporize as well. Because, as *Whole Earth Catalogue* founder Stewart Brand comments in *Massive Change*—referring to *Constant Battles*, a book by Harvard archaeologist Steven Leblanc—"Whenever we exceed carrying capacity, we fight over scraps."

Actually, even with full bellies, we fight over scraps, and that's the twisted truth that *Massive Change* seems to deny. Its premise treats human beings as rational creatures but we aren't. Some rogue gene within us craves social rank, military superiority, historic legacy or just plain notoriety. Even if the world's plenty could blanket all regions, with a custom house and trash vaporizer for all, our own greedy souls crave ever more. More money, more stuff, more

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Create Anew.

Scientific Developments have rendered materials—traditionally things to which design is applied—as objects of design developments. An exhibit in the *Materials Gallery* features electro-luminescent film, which is activated by electricity.

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status, more than our neighbours, more than last week and last year, more of our "accursed share." What Massive Change needs for completion, perhaps, is an annex gallery to deal with the darker corners of the human psyche and social order. Call it Sin economies, maybe, or economies of Evil.

But if you want to quantify happiness, this project offers a lucid and engaging summary of the improving human condition. And we'll keep on improving it, but we'll never be satisfied with our lot. Which will keep designers in business for all the ages. "One of the things about design is that we don't have the luxury of cynicism," says Mau, "because we don't have the luxury of not doing something. We are obliged to act."

Meanwhile, our collective lust for luxury—not just luxury of cynicism, but the more tangible kind: for big houses and jet-fuelled vacations and anything on eBay—shows little sign of waning. Georges Bataille put it succinctly in *The Accursed Share*: "It is not necessity but its contrary, luxury, that presents living matter and mankind with their fundamental problems." Now, there's a thought to ponder.

Massive Change opens at Toronto's Art Gallery of Ontario this March, and then travels onward to Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art in 2006. ..



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Soldier On.

The "Vision 2002" concept suit, developed by Natick Soldier Systems, is named for the proposed year of its implementation. It should be able to heal the soldier wearing it, should he or she be wounded in action.

Play Chicken.

Israel Researcher Avigdor Cahaner has crossbred normal chickens with naturally balding birds; the result is a featherless fowl that stays cool in tropical climates.

Bonus: no plucking necessary.

