

DESIGN » WEST COAST WONDERKIDS

'These people are killing it over here'

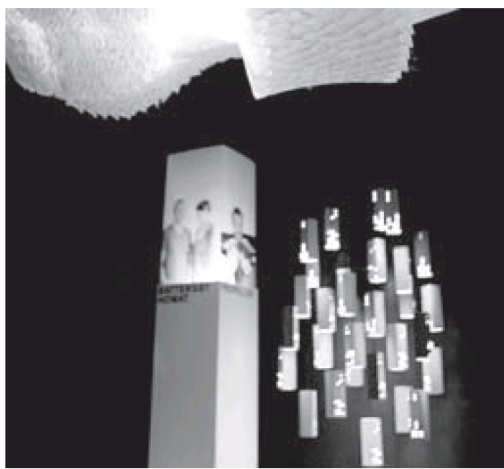
BY VALERIE McTAVISH

If there's a testament to how much West Coast design has grown over the past five years, it's the Movers and Shapers show currently on view at the Vancouver Museum.

The show has its roots in a 2004 exhibition in which 10 emerging designers were originally featured. That first show was well received and spawned a sequel last year. This third and largest installment brings together 20 subjects from the first two versions, including some from 2004 (Omer Arbel, Molo Design) who have already made a mark on the international stage.

The original concept for Movers and Shapers came about when Jane and Steven Cox, both 35, returned to Vancouver after a five-year stint in London's design industry.

"Coming from London, we were surprised at the lack of design awareness in the public realm," Jane said recently. "There was an art community



Paper lighting by Molo, top, hangs next to Propellor Design's pendant lamps at the Vancouver Museum. LAURA LEYSHON FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

in Vancouver, but the design community didn't exist and there was no real awareness of local design."

Showcasing local design in the Vancouver Museum, she continues, "puts it in a formal

setting, a real design venue. It is finally at the level that we'd hoped for."

The exploding interest in and respect for local design was clear on opening night, when close to 400 people

showed up and the lineup to get in was out the door and around the museum's iconic sheet-metal crab fountain.

The crowd was there to see such (soon-to-be-iconic?) displays as Pyrrha Design's celebrity-coveted jewellery, Arbel's arresting lighting fixtures and the kraft-paper furniture of local favourite Molo, whose work has been accepted into the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Even featured designers such as Robert Studer and Beth Hawthorn, whose firm, this is it, design inc., is represented with an eight-foot-tall, backlit cascade of blue and frosted glass, are enthusiastic about the show and the attention it focuses on local design.

"Other countries have caught on, but Vancouver still needs to mature," Studer says from his new studio, which was built from reclaimed lumber. "Design is an integral part of our material culture and that is what defines us."

Creating awareness about Vancouver talent, however, is

only part of the Coxes's purpose. They also set out to develop and strengthen the community.

Antonio Millares III, for instance, is flattered to have his company, Urthwurks, included. "To be associated with talents like Burnkit and Omar Arbel ... I mean, these people are killing it over here," he says. "It brings attention to the show from people who are in the know and I think it's really cool."

Millares's custom-designed furniture isn't sold in stores, so it is seldom on display.

But even though his pieces aren't designed with exhibition in mind - his shiny purple cabinet made from walnut and aluminum, for instance, belongs in a sleek walk-in closet, while his high-gloss nesting tables are part of a larger concept - they still command attention (so much so that Millares has been returning to the museum regularly to wipe off the fingerprints left by visitors who can't resist caressing his items' liquid finishes).

Heather Howat and David

Battersby, the team behind the architectural firm of Battersbyhowat, are far from emerging talents, counting residences from Salt Spring and Gambier Islands to Shaughnessy and Whistler among their current projects.

But they do remain distinctly modest, a trait that characterizes many of the exhibitors both emerging and arrived.

"Our name is out there now, but it's taken 12 years and we are still on a curve," Howat says. "I wouldn't say we are emerging, though. It's more like emergent."

In the exhibition, a miniature model of the recreational home they recently completed on Gambier Island sits under glass.

Like the other exhibits, it's a small sample of the immense contribution they and others have made and continue to make to Vancouver, Canadian and global design.

» Movers and Shapers continues at the Vancouver Museum until June 22. Visit www.vanmuseum.bc.ca for details.

» Special to The Globe and Mail

ECO INITIATIVES » TAKING THE PLEDGE

Smashing global warming with greener design

More than 1,800 pros in 77 countries respond to a Canuck firm's call to tackle climate change

BY JENNIFER HOLLETT

The goal of graphic design is to make things look good. Really good. So good that we want to buy these things, even if we don't need them.

That can be a problem - or perhaps an opportunity.

Eric Karjaluo, creative director of Vancouver design firm smashLAB, says design is "the one form everyone touches whether they realize it or not." He is hoping to use this influence to address one of the biggest issues of our time: climate change.

Karjaluo, 34, is attracting a lot of attention with his initiative, called Design Can Change. It recently made Time Magazine's Design 100 issue, which counted off the people and ideas behind today's most influential design.

Even though Design Can Change is a tangible project with defined goals, Karjaluo has a tough time defining it because he says it is many things. Ultimately, though, he settles on calling it a "campaign."

"The campaign," he explains, "is intended to encourage designers to take on more sustainable practices."

More specifically, it is asking the world's graphic design community to address global warming by altering its personal and professional practices. Since it was launched in April of last year, more than 1,800 designers from 77 countries have taken a pledge at



Eric Karjaluo of Vancouver-based smashLAB is motivating designers to adopt sustainable practices. JENNIFER ROBERTS FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

www.designcanchange.org to pursue a sustainable work style. The project is not for profit and, as Karjaluo stresses, is not a sales ploy.

"It's what I call smashLAB's great money-losing adventure," he says with a laugh. "It's something that we wanted to do and to do at a time when we thought it would be meaningful."

Indeed, smashLAB put off most client work for about eight months in 2006 and 2007 to focus on developing Design Can Change. Inspired in part by the Oscar-winning

Al Gore film *An Inconvenient Truth*, Karjaluo and his business partner, Eric Shellkie, decided to look into making their own studio more sustainable. Design Can Change evolved from there.

Designers, Karjaluo says, have a lot of power and influence when it comes to purchasing patterns. They also exert great sway over the materials used in design and marketing. By making design more sustainable, the theory behind Design Can Change goes, there will be a positive trickle-down effect that reach-

es and influences consumers and industry, too.

"Designers are a small enough group to mobilize globally," Karjaluo explains, reiterating an idea supported by "the law of the few," a rule governing social epidemics that author Malcolm Gladwell explored in his bestselling book *The Tipping Point*.

"The success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social skills," Gladwell wrote. Among those

skills are being well connected, being informed and being persuasive - all of which designers are, making them a triple threat.

Designer Kaytlyn Sanders, a principal at beneficial design in Seattle, says Karjaluo and Design Can Change have inspired her to suggest a host of green ideas to her clients. These include paperless proofing and invoicing and the use of low-environmental-impact marketing materials such as post-consumer recycled paper and soy inks.

"I never realized before that

designers could influence so much," she says.

Efforts such as these are commendable, of course, but is inspired design and greener office work really enough to affect environmental change?

"I think that, realistically, it isn't enough," Karjaluo acknowledges. "But my counter-argument would be that we have to start with steps that we all can handle."

Graham Saul, the executive director of Climate Action Network Canada, is nonetheless impressed with Design Can Change. "It's a great example of people taking an issue into their own hands," he says.

For his part, Karjaluo says Design Can Change has already surpassed his expectations. "When we first built it, my dream was to get someone to actually go to the website," he recalls. Now, there is so much interest in taking the pledge and exploring the concept that he's making the rounds on the speaking circuit, talking about the project at design conferences across North America.

"Here I am, flying around the world and talking to people about climate change. Something is wrong with this scenario," he jokes.

But he is also warmed by the response to the initiative. "I'm just blown away that so many people have embraced it and taken it on and actually changed their behaviour as a result."

» Special to The Globe and Mail

YOUR WEEKEND HOROSCOPE » SALLY BROMPTON

IF IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY...

Today: Most things will come easy to you this year. It will seem as if a giant invisible hand is reaching out and sweeping away any and all obstacles that lie in your path. What have you done to deserve this good fortune? Who knows? Who cares? Enjoy it.

Tomorrow: Venus, your ruler, is magnificently aspected on your birthday this year, so where both your finances and your love life are concerned good things, maybe even great things, are to be expected. Act as if you cannot possibly fail - and chances are you never will.

♈ ARIES (March 21 - April 20):

There may be a few unexpected invoices that have to be paid over the weekend but you'll find ways to make ends meet. In fact, this is an excellent time to apply for a loan or ask for a pay rise. The powers that be cannot refuse you.

♉ TAURUS (April 21 - May 21):

This is one of the best weekends of the year, so make the most of it and don't just make do with what you've got. Venus, your ruler, makes positive aspects to luck planet Jupiter and surprises planet Uranus. If you believe your dreams will come true, they will.

♊ GEMINI (May 22 - June 21):

You need to be aware of all possibilities this weekend, no matter how far-fetched some of them may seem to be. Something valuable and enjoyable is about to come into your life. Don't try to reject it just because you don't believe you

♋ CANCER (June 22 - July 23):

Aspects from Venus, planet of values, to both Jupiter and Uranus this weekend will give your dreams and desires a boost, so don't hide yourself away, get out and about and dazzle everyone with your brilliance. Let them see what star quality looks like.

♌ LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23):

You will really turn on the charm this weekend. No one will be immune to your persuasive ways. If you are smart you will focus mainly on your work situation. Make sure important people know who you are and what you can do.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23):

You don't have to do anything special this weekend. Just be who you are and do what you do and you and everything fall into place as if by magic. Partnerships and relationships will be especially productive. There may even be one or two

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23):

At some stage this weekend you will realize just how easy it is to make money, and just how slow you have been to get your share of the loot. Never mind, it is never too late, and with Venus aspecting luck planet Jupiter the cash will soon be flowing in.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 23):

Your head may tell you one thing and your heart may tell you another but your heart will win by a mile. You may seem to be in control of your emotions but it's all an act, and the way you behave this weekend will make that rather obvious.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21):

This will be one of those extraordinary weekends when everything goes right. Every move you make will be the correct move and every time you reach out to other people they will reciprocate with kind words and profitable deals.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20):

You won't have to look for love this weekend - it will find you. Love planet Venus aspecting Jupiter in your sign will heat up even the most undemonstrative Capricorn (it's all an act, of course) and before you know it passions will be raging. Go on, have fun.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19):

The atmosphere on the home front will go from good to glorious this weekend as you and your loved ones finally put behind you all the annoying, petty, little things that have caused so much tension of late. Life is too short to hold grudges.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20):

Put worries out of your mind and put chores on hold until early next week. This weekend's cosmic outlook is so overwhelmingly positive that it would be a crime to waste time and energy on anything that is not so near and dear.

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