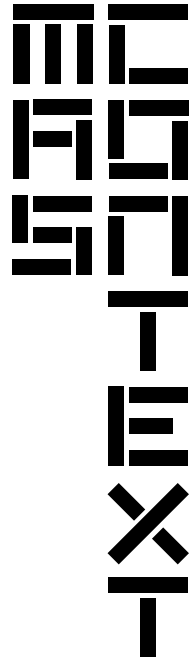


Issue 16 / Winter 12

PRODUCTION

# TEXT

James Black | Anthony Burrill | Edward Burtynsky | Andrew Clark | Jason Fried | Iker Gil | John Herschend | Glenn Himman | Arnold Horween III |  
Cody Hudson | Rod Hunting | Chad Kouri | Andreas E.G. Larsson | Julia Luke | MCA's Teen Creative Agency | Jake Nickell | Prelinger Archives |  
Nina Rappaport | Deborah Richmond | Michael Salvatore | David Steren



Issue 16 / Winter 12

## PRODUCTION

**Our Production issue, a collaboration with the Chicago-based collective The Post Family, explores the impact of production in our cities and built environment, and shines light onto several companies we love, with a specific emphasis on those operating in Chicago. In each, we explore the larger implication of our need for production and consumption, as well as the celebration of craft, tradition, excellence and invention.**

### Guest Cover Designer

David Sieren

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MAS Context is a quarterly journal that addresses issues that affect the urban context. Each issue delivers a comprehensive view of a single topic through the active participation of people from different fields and different perspectives who, together, instigate the debate.

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# A Production of Production

Issue statement by  
Iker Gil,  
editor in chief of MAS Context

Last year, we collaborated with architect John Szot for our Aberration issue, and this winter we have the pleasure to team up with The Post Family for our issue on Production. The Post Family, a Chicago-based collective formed in 2007 by seven artists and designers, came together in support of each other's passions as well as the larger design community in Chicago. Their space serves as gallery, letterpress and printing studio, experimental music venue and creative incubator. Earlier this year, they organized "Manual Labor," an exhibition focusing on the renewed interest in skill trades in our modern marketplace. It was a celebration of the handcraft and physical labor that continues to inspire us. With their obvious love for making things, it seemed a perfect opportunity to collaborate on this issue.

We enjoyed many conversations and gatherings, during which an innumerable number of possible contributors, themes and formats were discussed and considered. The process uncovered many directions, which was both exciting and daunting, if intended to address the topic in a comprehensive and complete way.

We finally narrowed our approach to Production to two specific areas: the impact of production in our cities and built environment, and a focus on several companies we love, with a specific emphasis in those operating in Chicago. We are completely aware that this is just a tiny portion of all the possible ways in which the topic of Production could be explored. Many other areas of interest and current initiatives related to the topic brought up during our conversations had to finally be left out of the issue. I am sure in a future issue we will revisit several of the aspects uncovered during our collaboration.

The impact of Production in our built environment is explored through the words and photographs of Nina Rappaport, Deborah Richmond and Edward Burtynsky. They take us through the history and role of factories in our cities, the landscape created by the distribution of goods, and the impact that manufacturing, consumption and recycling have on our landscape.

For our second area of interest, I'd like to mention a brief personal anecdote. During a visit to Bilbao a few years ago, along with my parents I visited the facilities of Vicinay Cadenas, a family-run company dedicated to fabricating offshore mooring chains. Unknown to me until that point, this company was founded in 1760 and is the leader in its sector, with over 70% of the world production. A 250-year old worldwide leading company located basically in my backyard and completely foreign to me. It was a fascinating visit, for both its rich history and its production process, and it made me wonder how many fascinating companies are around us, in our own cities, ones that go completely unnoticed.

So it was a pleasure to take the opportunity to explore companies based in Chicago, our editorial hometown, from those whose work is based on craft, excellence and tradition to those blurring the lines between consumers and producers to the ones that produce software for us to





continue to produce. We visited the facilities and talked to the founders of Horween Leather Company, Heritage Bicycles General Store, Threadless and 37signals about the history, ideas and goals of those companies. The photographs of David Sieren are the perfect companions to the conversations included in this issue.

Beyond our city limits, we talked to the San Francisco-based **THE THING Quarterly**, a “periodical in the form of an object,” and we toured, via Andreas E.G. Larsson’s photographs, the iconic Colby Poster Printing Company. Having shaped the identity of Los Angeles since 1946 with their bright-colored posters for political campaigns, yard signs and concerts, we were saddened to learn that, unless there is a last-minute turn of events, they will be closing their doors in the next few months. We hope that the photographs and comments from some of those who worked with them pay a much-deserved homage to this emblematic family-run company.

Finally, we close the issue at a more personal level, featuring your favorite object, the one you can’t live without, the one you use to produce whatever you produce, the one with the most sentimental value or the one with the best story. Thanks for submitting your favorite object and letting us know about your personal story.

We hope that the issue helps you think about your city, uncovers interesting stories behind production places, and sparks your curiosity about what is produced in your city. Take a look around you, you won’t be disappointed.



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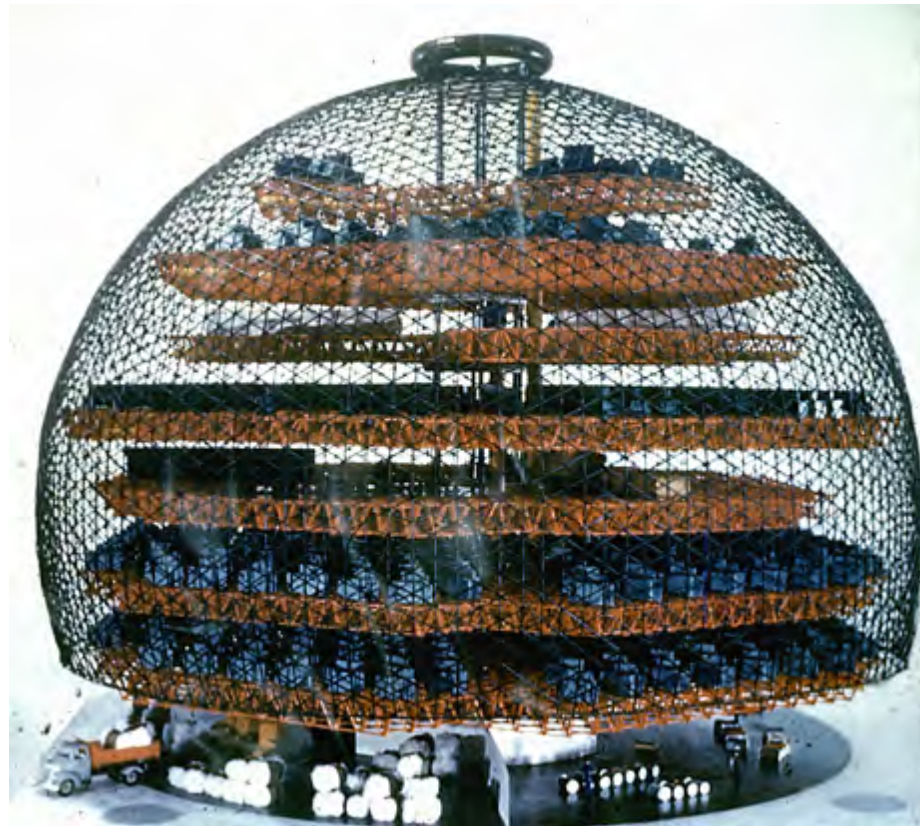
# Vertical Urban Factory

Fiat Lingotto Factory, Matteo-Giacamo Trucco engineer, Turin, Italy, 1913-26. Photograph courtesy of the Fiat Archives, Turin.





How can we provide spaces for urban manufacturing so that they encourage industries to take root in our cities—and thrive? Thinking economically, architecturally and urbanistically, what is the factory of the future? How do the socio-economic-political aspects of manufacturing, with changes in urban manufacturing and manufacturing in general, influence the design of industrial buildings and thus cities? These are just a few of the questions *Vertical Urban Factory* addresses, a project and traveling exhibition first displayed in New York in 2011, and at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Detroit and at Toronto's Design Exchange in 2012. This project is done under the auspices of the New York Foundation for the Arts.

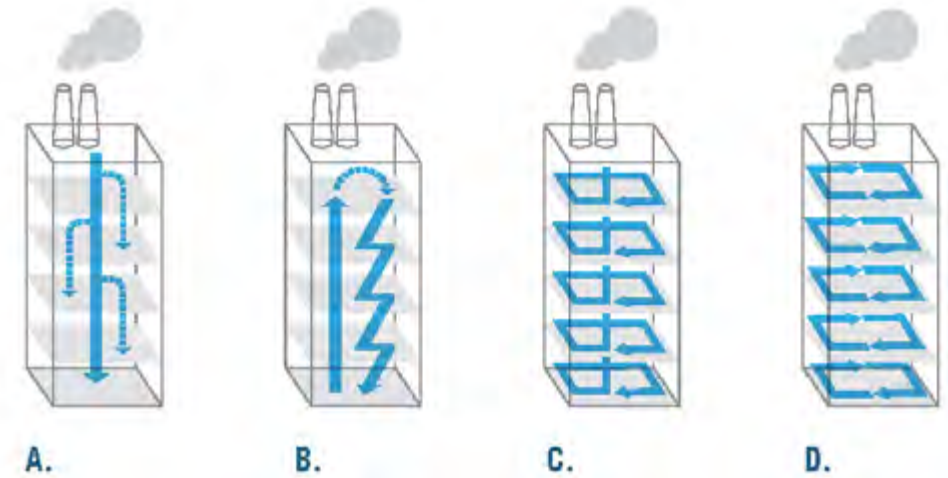


Buckminster Fuller and students from North Carolina State College. Model for Vertical Cotton Mill concept, 1952. Photograph courtesy of Stanford University Archives, Buckminster Fuller Archive.

Historically, factories, those places of making, shaping and assembling things, were our cities, and our cities were factories filled with multi-storied dense spaces for making. This once-new building type provided a freedom to explore the spatial, structural, and organizational ramifications of machines and production from vertical systems dependent on gravity flow and centralized power sources. Workers, owners, and machinery all were in proximity. Factories were integrated into city life, providing stable jobs and building an urban economy.

As factories leave North American and European cities with the ease of containerized shipping and the digital supply chain, they find cheaper land, production, and labor elsewhere. The new free trade zones in developing countries like China, India, and Mexico, and networked just-in-time production, have contributed to a global 'flat' world and changed the dynamic of cities by removing the process of making from our everyday life. As industry is redefined, cities and their entrepreneurs must find new strategies to maintain manufacturing sectors so that they also inspire new inventive modes of production.

Many urban making spaces are what I call vertical urban factories—really a synonym for dense urban manufacturing. They are organized as integrated spaces—companies that own their building, often with processing that goes up and down, or down and up, using the flow of gravity in many cases, or mechanized conveyors.



Or, they are layered in pancake buildings, usually with leased spaces occupied by one or more companies sharing common areas such as elevators and loading docks or services such as power and water.

A much-discussed example is Detroit, which, as with so many American cities in the late nineteenth century, became a center for the production of newly welded, molded, and assembled products, ones primarily made with interchangeable parts for bicycle manufacturing, carriage making, stoves and, ultimately, automobiles. Many were housed in traditional multi-storied masonry buildings with small windows, wood floors, beams and window sashes, often expanding incrementally



across adjacent blocks as their need for additional space grew. They were mixed with other uses in the city center, gradually developing out with the railroads lines. In the early twentieth century, over forty auto manufacturers made Detroit home, harnessing the expertise of machinists and inventors such as Ford, Oldsmobile, Studebaker, Dodge, Packard, and Fisher. The companies eventually consolidated into what came to be known as the Big Three—Ford, Chrysler and GM.



Top and Bottom: Albert Kahn Architect, Ford Factory Highland Park, Detroit, 1909, exterior and interior. Courtesy of Albert Kahn Architects.

By coordinating and streamlining his production technologies, Henry Ford both transformed the automotive industry and Detroit and solidified himself as the center of manufacturing. To expand his production empire, Ford hired Albert Kahn to design his larger Highland Park facility. In the first building, or Old Shop, completed in 1910, Kahn's large open floors for machinery and expansive Crittall steel-sash windows defined the new 'daylight factory,' inspiring the nickname, "Crystal Palace." The four-story, 75x860-foot building used a reinforced-concrete steel system developed by Albert Kahn's engineer brother Julius that was first seen in the Packard Plant #10 in 1903. The patented Kahn Trussed Concrete system allowed columns to be spaced on a wide, 20x25-foot grid and the slab was poured and integrated with the beams, joists, and slabs into a relatively thin floor. The concrete bay could continue endlessly, just as the production line did, synchronizing the system of architectural and automotive production.

Ford developed principles of mass production for the continuously moving assembly line, adopting methods of labor division like those of the meatpacking industry and following Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management methods. Ford focused on worker efficiency, assigning each worker to repeat a specific task, while the object moved in position along a moving belt. That year, the company reduced the Model T's production time from 728 to 93 minutes.

To house the new assembly line production process, the plant expanded beginning in 1914 with the New Shop, which included several narrow six-story buildings linked by skylit craneways that allowed heavy materials to be lifted to the cantilevered platforms in an efficient, mechanized handling system. Taking advantage of the multi-storied building, workers hoisted raw materials up to the top floor to assemble the Model T using overhead conveyors invented by Detroit-based firm Jervis B. Webb. The production descended via gravity chutes through holes cut through the floors. As a three-dimensional grid matrix, the processing flowed from floor-to-floor and end-to-end.

By the end of 1914, the plant completed 248,307 Model Ts, and by 1917 that number nearly tripled. Thus, Ford quickly outgrew Highland Park and built a new River Rouge Plant, also designed by Albert Kahn, in 1917. By 1920, one Ford rolled off the assembly line every minute, and half the automobiles in the world were Model Ts.

Albert Kahn ran his own office as a factory production line, systematically mass-producing thousands of projects in the United States and 520 factories during the Depression, in Russia. As Ford began moving his plants to the suburbs, this both impacted their overarching growth and the demise of urban centrality in production processes. The building itself became a cell on the production line, one element of all that was produced by Ford.

Today, as manufacturing increases in developing countries and trade barriers are further reduced, labor practices are undergoing closer scrutiny. The new politico-economic circumstances they engender increasingly challenge environmental conditions in these factories. Industrialists and their designers need to approach factory design in ways that might stimulate worker-oriented spaces as both a social and design problem to solve.

What might the future factory look like? In response to the urgent need for jobs and cleaner production, the vertical urban factory is a model for innovation integrated into the cityscape. New industries and niche production relating to the local consumer such as furniture, fashion, printing, and food can continue to expand and revitalize urban economies. I have envisioned a few different spatial and land use scenarios for this near future—Spectacle, Flexible and Sustainable—which can work together or independently.

The Spectacle factory represents what I call the “consumption of production.” A factory could engage and educate the public about making by displaying its manufacturing processes through large windows on our city streetscapes. Natural light would improve conditions for workers and those passing by could see how things are made. This would also elevate workers’ dignity and enhance their pride. It already exists in the VW factory in Dresden, Germany by Henn Architects.



Transparent Factory in Dresden, Germany. Photograph by X-Weinzar



Interior of the Transparent Factory. Photograph by Dave Pinter

“Flexible” vertical urban factories are often located in former industrial loft spaces easily adaptable according to new machinery and economic needs. These are light industrial, often high-tech workshops, neo-cottage industries, or shared hacker and maker spaces that can be located in existing or new incubator buildings. With open-source manufacturing software, CNC and 3D printers, designers can quickly make prototypes and develop a product in small batches. This could increase innovative, small-scale, just-in-time production for goods on demand and it could be encouraged with government support. With these smaller spaces, manufacturing can occur everywhere. We do not need separate industrial zones. New clean manufacturing could be integrated with mixed uses to encourage working and living in proximity with a mix of incomes and thus diversity. Even elevators in vertical factories can be assets by using regenerative energy that flows into the building system and allows for multi-storied factories.



Flower molds in factory, New York City, 2011. Photograph by Nina Rappaport

Manufacturing for Sustainable industries, such as plastic and paper recycling, electric cars, and eco-furniture, can be urban-based. Renewable energy production could also support new infrastructures. Local production also reduces transit costs and air pollution. Collectively, greener manufacturing can result in an urban industrial symbiosis, where one factory’s waste fuels another, and energy produced by a new building system can supply power for entire neighborhoods. Experimental methods to inspire new performance zoning, which relies on real environmental data, can potentially increase density in industrial zones and provide incentives for industrial ecological development across interdependent sites.



Brooklyn Navy Yard, New York, 2012. Photograph by Nina Rappaport.



Kings County Distillery, Brooklyn Navy Yard, New York, 2012. Photograph by Nina Rappaport.



In New York's Brooklyn Navy Yard, a vast complex of centuries-old industrial spaces, is a national model for sustainable urban industrial parks. Begun as a small shipyard in 1781 and purchased by the U.S. government in 1801, it quickly became one of the country's largest with over 70,000 men and women employed there by WWII. In 1966, with more than 9,000 employees still active, the Navy Yard was decommissioned and sold to the City of New York to be maintained as an industrial park. In 2007, the city, in a public-private sponsorship, launched the largest expansion of the 300-acre site since WWII, planning 1.7 million square feet of additional space with a focus on sustainable development and job retention with over 5,000 workers.

The Yard can be considered as a holistic entity allowing it to develop infrastructural ideas for sustainability such as recycled wastewater, on-site waste treatment and wind-powered lights. New buildings such as those by Duggal Visual Solutions, Surroundart, and Icestone are contributing to the development of an urban ecological industrial park and these efforts can be replicated elsewhere.

The challenge for the sustainable industrial ecology is transdisciplinary. A future scenario would combine vertical urban factories across urban neighborhoods in symbiotic relationships, where the ecology of making things could redistribute the material and energy supply into urban biological systems that react, interact, and create new products and thus new economies.

If factories could be taller, denser, and diversified, and urban land could be zoned at higher densities, the vertical urban factory could be reinvented for future entrepreneurs in the new economy. A building type that once was inspiring in its architectural innovation now in the modern age needs to be reconsidered as significant for current designs with new materials and technologies. Industrialists and urban planners must reconsider the potential for building factories vertically, and this, in turn, would reinforce and reinvest in the cycles of making, consuming, and recycling for sustainable and self-sufficient cities.



# Requiem

Essay  
by  
Deborah Richmond

"I even went so far as to shop for what I imagined we would need: Donald Brooks pastel linen dresses for myself, a flowered Porthault parasol to shade the baby, as if she and I were about to board a Pan Am flight and disembark at Le Cercle Sportif."

~ Joan Didion



This passage from Joan Didion's latest novel, *Blue Nights*, recounts a touching moment in her youth. She describes her first naïve and perhaps misguided impulses as an adoptive mother, eagerly planning to take her newborn on assignment with her in 1966 to Saigon. It strikes a nostalgic chord for those of us old enough to remember the real Pan Am, though not because of any lingering brand loyalty to the airline (as opposed to the recent TV show), to Porthault linens from Paris (our family was more likely to find theirs at JC Penney's) or to Le Cercle Sportif (which, it turns out, was a rather exclusive, French, colonial sporting club in Saigon). Instead, the passage strikes a chord of nostalgia for branding itself and for a time when slinging a blue vinyl Pan Am bag over your shoulder meant one thing: you worked for an international airline.

A 2011 book review of *Blue Nights* noted Didion's long-standing literary tendency to "litter" her fiction with brand names.<sup>1</sup> Such a tendency jumps out in this decade and not, say, in the 1970's when *Play It As It Lays*, Didion's breakout novel, blithely tossed about *le dernier cri*. This is because the nature of branding and its relevance to the consumer has undergone a paradigm shift. While research and brand testing were important in Didion's "youth culture" youth, the flow of consumer identity was unequivocally from producer to consumer. While it's not exactly news that branding has changed in the era of social media, ad designers now counsel their clients that the relationship between a brand and the consumer has completely inverted, such that to be successful in an age of over-choice a brand is no longer about the company that makes it nor a quest to project attributes onto consumers in need of definition. Advertising must now "emerge" from a community of users "seeded" by "influencers" to whom products are sent for social broadcasting.

The effective reversal in the flow of consumer identity raises questions about the flow of the physical goods themselves and the attendant "consumer urbanism" that marks cities where goods are received, stored, distributed and sold. If we can now speak of "classical consumer urbanism" as the link between consumer culture and urbanism, it might go something like this: consumer appetites are whetted via advertising. Advertising itself is consumed in developed economies in which family and social identities have been broken, leaving a void into which advertisers leap with the promise of new, consumer-based identities. Creating an identity is as simple as choosing a product and buying it.

"Rational actor" theories of economics have traditionally and accurately circumscribed the behaviors of consumers in an economy of growth based on rising consumption. Anomalies of morally or otherwise altruistically-driven consumption were utterly eclipsed by good old-fashioned Marxist exchange-values and status-based decision-making. In order to enhance the fantasy and feed the appetite, labor is jettisoned from the entire culture, figuratively and literally, by outsourcing overseas. These classical advertising strategies have led to horizontally-integrated shipping, which allows goods to be produced overseas and consumed at home, with lower prices due to the efficiency of containerization and just-in-time inventory and distribution methods. *Consumer urbanism* thus unpacks itself in three distinct areas of analysis: location and impact of the manufacturing base; networks of horizontally integrated distribution; and physical territories of consumption. The impact on urban areas of shipping infrastructure alone has been a kind of "Silent Spring" of



Collage of Barbara Kruger's, Untitled (I shop therefore I am), 1987, by author

trucks, freeways, containers, trains, rail corridors, pollution, boats, ports, warehouses and the many other appurtenances of the consumer-post-industrial complex.<sup>2</sup>

But what happens to cities if this flow is reversed? If identity no longer flows in a direct line from producers to consumers, will goods continue to flow, Mississippi-like, from producers to consumers through deeply engraved urban corridors? We are in the midst of a dynamic shift in consumer habits, the contours of which are little more than a shimmering corona behind the dark orb of our extant consumer societies. In an effort to discern the corona's potential impact on urban infrastructure, let us examine, for a moment, two current tendencies in retailing, both quite different from one another on the surface: fair trade and fast fashion.

The explosive growth of fair trade throughout the Great Recession—global sales grew by 24%, with consumers spending an estimated 4.3 billion euros on fair trade products in 2010<sup>3</sup>—has been an utter conundrum for neo-classical economic theory. At the World International Studies Committee (WISC) Conference in Porto, Portugal, in 2011, the argument was made that the theories of Thorstein Veblen, a pre-neo-classical economist, when combined with current social constructivist theories of the global market economy, illustrate a possible explanation of the success of fair trade. The basic argument made was that "global market relations are ultimately social relations."<sup>4</sup>

In other words, consumers are making decisions based not only on classical theories of perceived utility and resource scarcity, but also as a means of socio-political expression, such that the market itself has become “the arena for collective political action.” Veblen included in his theories the idea that the “interdependence of instincts” either reinforces or suppresses consumer choices and depends on a changing constellation of social interactions.<sup>5</sup> A modern example of socially interdependent constellations of consumer behaviors can be found in social media, which has become a new platform for influencing consumer behavior. For example, launched in March of 2010, the social networking site Pinterest, in January of this year reached more than 10 million unique U.S. users, making it the fastest site to do so in history.<sup>6</sup>

From the cultural moral imperative of the fair trade consumer to the socially connected pinners, consumer behavior is undergoing a reversal, if not in the reality of its historic antecedents, then in the economic theories that will guide advertisers and hence the producers and shippers of the goods that feed what is increasingly a kind of chimera flickering at the diffuse end of the supply chain.

It is not an understatement to say that advertising and branding are experiencing a conceptual upheaval the likes of which have not been seen since the Sears Catalogue first thumped onto farmers’ doorsteps in 1888, the same decade that saw the American economy officially convert from one of production, so successful that it produced more than it needed, to an economy of rising consumption, in which advertising suddenly assumed a critical role in supporting the balance of supply and demand. Today, social media has simply created a new paradigm, because, “what’s a corporate giant to do when no one wants to follow it on Twitter or be its friend on Facebook?”<sup>7</sup> For example, Ford Motor Company gave 100 social media influencers a free Ford Fiesta with the sole caveat to “lifecast” their experiences with the car. Bloggers could report both positive and negative experiences. By the time the Fiesta hit the U.S. market, it had 60% brand recognition, an unheard of feat for only \$5 million in advertising.<sup>8</sup> Other social media experts have noted that a company’s brand no longer represents the company; it represents the consumer and is a projection of collective identities that find one another through social factors that may or may not include consumer behavior. The brand is an emotional proposition that matters more than ever because consumers have submerged “rational actor” behavior in the face of over-choice and clutter.<sup>9</sup>

So what might the future of goods movement and subsequently consumer urbanism look like if the present day consumer is transforming from a branded beast into a rogue herd of crowd-sourced influencers? Some insight might be derived from the world’s largest fashion retailer, Inditex, based in A Coruña, Spain. Its largest brand is the “fast fashion” giant, Zara. What is utterly unique and surprising about Inditex’s success is that its retail branding and trend-spotting model is already a bricks and mortar, crowd-sourcing operation. While other fashion firms have their clothes made in China, which is cheap, managing a long supply chain is not. Instead of managing a long, ethnically, geographically and economically diverse supply chain, Inditex sources just over half of its products from Spain, Portugal and Morocco. While labor costs are higher in those countries, Inditex can react quickly to new trends through its Zara retail locations to see what customers are

actually buying and charge a higher price due to the timely, high demand for the merchandise.<sup>10</sup> Each store’s sales staff is trained to ask customers questions about the style, color and cut of the clothes they are trying on and transmit this information back to the company’s headquarters on a daily basis in a kind of continuous, customer-feedback tweet.

Conventional shipping is horizontally integrated. This means that containers are standardized and manufacturers outsource shipping to third-party shippers such as Maersk, with an international fleet of 500 container ships, or Evergreen, with a fleet of 160 ships. Before the rise of containerization in the 70’s and 80’s, retailers relied on a vertically integrated supply chain that coordinated manufacturing, shipping, retailing and delivery. Inditex, it turns out, is both the past and present of a nearly vertically integrated supply chain, in which one entity tightly controls the entire supply chain, just as retailers and wholesalers once did before the era of containerization. Interestingly, fair trade suffers disproportionately from the complexity of legal agreements between shippers, producers and retailers, the lack of transparency along the horizontal supply chain and the instability of inventory, which makes drop-shipping, for example, extremely costly and unpredictable.<sup>11</sup> Inditex, while not explicitly promoting a fair trade agenda, has resisted the trend towards horizontal integration in the time since its founding in 1975, which were prime growth years for containerized shipping. The Inditex campus in La Coruña, for example, includes the company headquarters and a factory. As noted above, the proximity of the majority of its retail locations to its manufacturing base has allowed the company to create value through precision trending and timely delivery of goods to consumers at peak demand prices.



Aerial map of Arteixo, A Coruña, Spain © Google Earth





Back in the United States, home of the notorious, resource-inhaling “U.S. consumer,” the construction of new, horizontally integrated shipping infrastructure marches on. In November, ground was broken on the Alameda Corridor East (ACE) project, an extension of the open shipping trench that connected the Ports of San Pedro (highest container volume throughput in the U.S.) to warehousing in downtown Los Angeles. The ACE project will suppress an at-grade rail corridor in the San Gabriel Valley, but is much smaller in scale than the original 20-mile, \$1.2 billion corridor at only 1.4 miles long and \$173 million. It will extend the reach of the ports into warehousing in Ontario and beyond to the humbly named “Trade Corridor to America” by connecting “the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to the transcontinental rail network, creating a faster, more efficient method for distributing an estimated \$314 billion worth of trade by the year 2020.” While it’s true that the Ports of San Pedro continue to push 40% of all goods consumed in the U.S. through the city of Los Angeles (and at least 10 other hapless neighbors), this is a trend that is in decline and losing share to Canadian, Mexican, East and Gulf Coast ports, in spite of zealous local municipalities promoting their pet infrastructure projects. In fact, “combined U.S. East Coast/Gulf Coast Ports have increased their share of U.S. TEUs from 44.4 percent to 48.5 percent, while U.S. Pacific Coast Ports have dropped from 55.6 percent to 51.5 percent.”<sup>12</sup>

The reasons for this involve some obvious but important competition from ports around the country: they are geographically closer to overseas manufacturers and their end markets. In particular, the Canadian National Railway can ship a container from Prince Rupert port to Chicago for \$300 less and only 10 hours more than the BNSF can from Los Angeles. Moreover, Prince Rupert is 1,000 nautical miles closer to Asian ports, which shaves another two days off trans-Pacific shipping over the ports of San Pedro.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps in the final analysis, common-sense geographical proximity as seen in the “fast-fashion” example of Inditex, innovations in the global supply chain arising out of the particular needs of fair trade and the reversal of branding as seen in social media, might actually converge. By following the psychoanalytical thread of consumer-based identity, through a strong correlation between “lack,” desire and the urban gestalt of Los Angeles as a logistical “orifice” for the U.S. consumer, a prediction can be made that, as the socio-politics of “identity” shift, so might logistical trends and, with them, urban form and function. How these shifting identity flows manifest could herald a new generation of vertical integration in the consumer supply chain, trading higher costs of manufacture and shipping for higher revenue based on a more precise understanding of the consumer, not as a society but as an algorithm. “Just-in-time” distribution has reached its limit of granularity in maintaining adequate inventory at the retail site and distribution centers. The success of both Inditex and fair trade demonstrates that the psychology of the individual consumer is more nuanced than Marxist commodification might suggest, reveling both in increasingly instant gratification and socio-political shopping, both of which demand a new look at supply chain economics and its logistical imprint on the city.

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Photo Essay  
by  
Edward Burtynsky

# Manufactured Landscapes







Rock of Ages #4, Abandoned Section, Adam-Pirie Quarry, Barre, Vermont, 1991 © Edward Burtynsky

For over 25 years, Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky has documented how our landscape is being transformed by industry. Both beautiful and horrifying, his large-format images bring up unsettling questions about production, consumption, progress and sustainable living.

The following photographs, selected from his series “Quarries,” “China,” and “Ships,” provide a global perspective on the cycle of extraction, production and recycling. They provide a visual journey through the quarries of Vermont; China’s manufacturing conglomerate; the construction of the Three Gorges Dam and destruction of the nearby cities and towns that displaced over 1.2 million people; and ultimately, to the manual dismantling of oil tanks in Bangladesh.

They open a troubling window onto our modern existence and its consequences.









Manufacturing #6A, Hongqingting Shoe Factory, Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, 2004 © Edward Burtynsky



Manufacturing #6B, Hongqingting Shoe Factory, Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, 2004 © Edward Burtynsky

















Dam #6, Three Gorges Dam Project, Yangtze River, 2005 © Edward Burtynsky



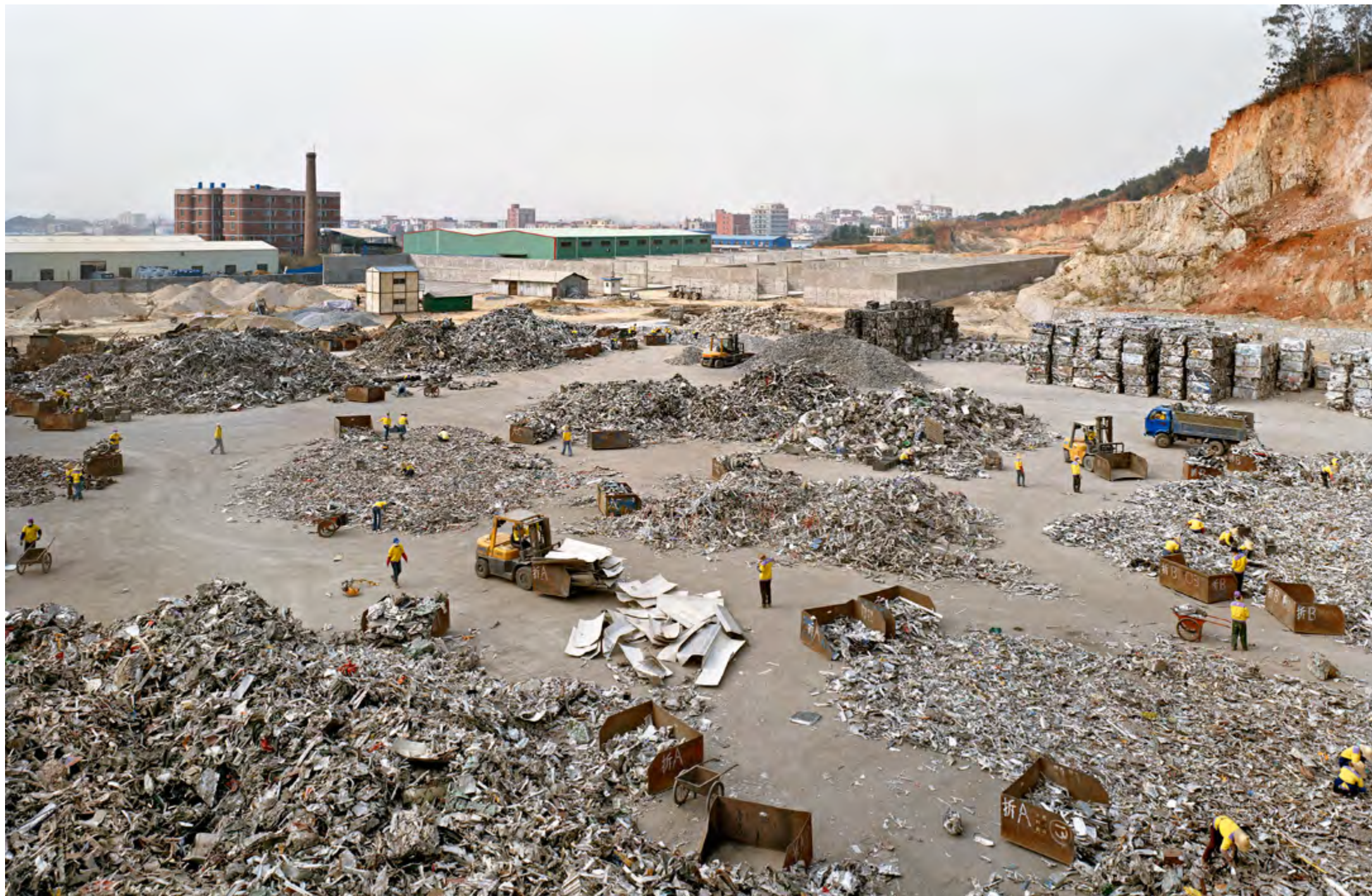


Feng Jie #3, Three Gorges Dam Project, Yangtze River, 2002 © Edward Burtynsky



Feng Jie #4, Three Gorges Dam Project, Yangtze River, 2002 © Edward Burtynsky





















Shipbreaking #11, Chittagong, Bangladesh 2000 © Edward Burtynsky







# Printing the Identity of Los Angeles

Text by Chad Kouri with comments by Glenn Hinman, Julia Luke, James Black, Anthony Burrill and Cody Hudson. Photographs by Andreas E.G. Larsson.







The first time I set foot in Los Angeles, my body flooded with anxious curiosity. The neon yellow, red hot and pink-yellow-blue gradient signage, smacked with a heavy hit of fat-black lettering echoed through the entire city, made my mouth fall open and eyes glass over like some mindless zombie with a printmaking fetish. How is it that the yard sale signs, mariachi band posters and film set directional signage have all adapted this same basic aesthetic? While they may not all be authentic, they all reference the same source: Colby Poster Printing Company.

Colby has had a huge part in developing the aesthetic in Los Angeles and the outlying areas for well over 60 years. For the past few decades, this three-union, family-run letterpress, screen printing, and computer graphics shop existed mainly on the production of campaign signs and other political propaganda, but their history is much richer and more interesting than that. Printing posters for the likes of Elvis Presley, Stevie Wonder, Martin Luther King Jr., and even “Planet of the Apes,” Colby has not only persuaded the visual aesthetic of the city, but has largely informed the public about what we now know to be historic moments in music, film and politics. More recently, Colby has struggled to keep their doors open, supported mostly by cultural institutions like the Hammer Museum and artists including Mark Bradford and Craig R. Stecyk III, all fighting the good fight to keep the tradition of the shop and the original, classic LA aesthetic alive.

Researching the shop, we learned that, at the beginning of 2013, Colby Poster Printing Company will be up for sale, in the hopes that someone interested in keeping the shop running will step in and keep the doors open. However, with rising property values in a prime location just off of the 110, it's hard to say if the shop's history will outweigh the potential for a new business in the same space. Here at MAS Context and The Post Family, we hope that, by informing our reader base, we can help the shop find a like-minded someone who will keep the doors open and the space filled with neon paper, wood type, and the smell of ink for another 60 years.

In the next few pages, travel with us on a letterpress print run, tour the Colby facilities, and hear the inside stories from some of the amazing people who've worked with Colby:

Glenn Hinman,  
president of Colby Poster Printing Co.

Julia Luke,  
senior designer at the Hammer Museum

James Black,  
architect

Anthony Burrill,  
artist

Cody Hudson,  
artist













Glenn Hinman, president of Colby Poster Printing Co. © Andreas E.G. Larsson

### **Glenn Hinman, president of Colby Poster Printing Co.**

My grandfather was a supervisor who could actually run letterpress. In the early and mid 40s he was running a shop and he was well known. I know that because in the 70s and 80s, a lot of these printers who were still alive, would let me know, "I knew your grandfather, he was the best." In the 40s he worked for a guy right down on Venice Blvd and one day they got busted for trying to make money. It turned out it was not him or the crew. But back then, you were a high profile person if you bought cotton and linen paper with the red and blue fibers because that's the type of stock you used to make money. So in other words, if you bought certain stock in those days a red light would go off. They were keeping an eye on it and said, "That paper is for stocks and bonds, why does this little shop want it?" As he was getting busted and taken away, my grandfather did everything to save the shop, and keep the guys going, but it was over at that point. My grandfather and my grandmother sold the stock they had in Standard Oil but still had the list of client. So they set up a place right around the corner, about 200 yards from here that ended up burning down. He then bought this place that turned out to be a heck of investment. You wonder what was this place in 1946, maybe \$10,000? Now it's something between \$1.2 and \$1.5 million. So that's how my grandfather started. Then my dad came on board and we were born into it. I started working here in 1976, Lee started in 1984 and Larry, my youngest brother, came six or eight years after Lee.

We used to do bus sign and billboards for movies like Planet of the Apes, 2001 Space Odyssey, The Death Pool with Clint Eastwood, House of Wax 3D when they had the very first 3D. I always remember that last one because that guy stuck it to us and it was down there so I had to look at it. In the 80s we used to do things for U2, White Snake, Motley Hatchet, Bruce Springsteen... hundreds and hundreds of them. My grandfather did work for the Beach Boys when they were kids, Steve Wonder and even bands from the 50s.

Now it's getting tougher and tougher, also with out-of-state competitors and non-unions who can go much cheaper. Unions have been a great thing to us and we have all worked well together, but right now we can't confirm with three unions that we can employ them and do our due diligences for two years. This was our best chance for a good year and it was just ok. Next year is an odd year and odd years are much tougher, there are very few elections. The even years are the big ones and every four you have the super elections. But this year we didn't see the big numbers.

But this can be a thriving business. What I am really hoping for is the interest of the big unions. It's not only a fantastic investment of a property, as it's a third of a mile from all the freeways, but also there are three unions already here. So there is the foundation of a great business, but we are just burnt out.

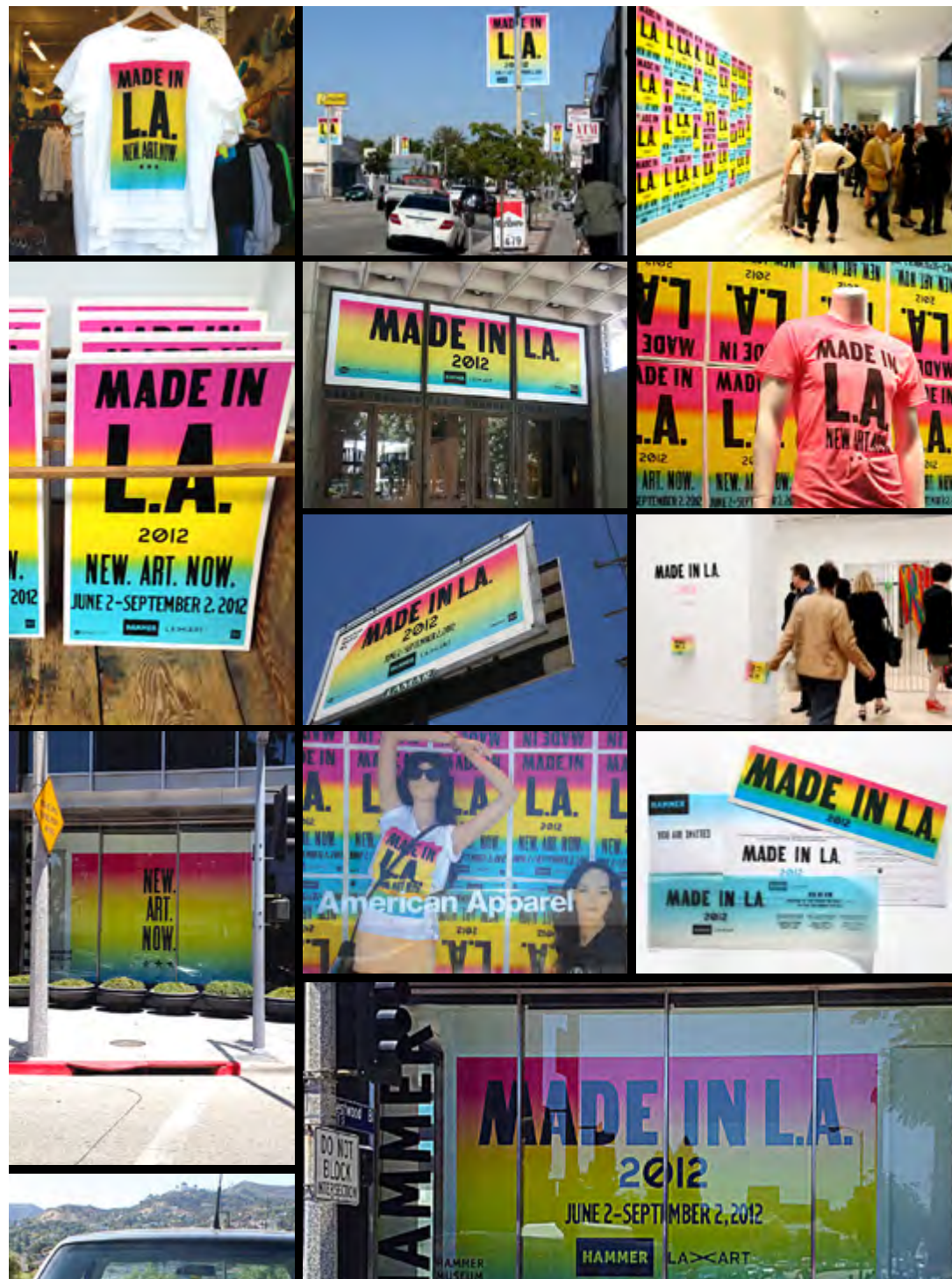












### Julia Luke, Senior Designer Hammer Museum

At the beginning of this year I began brainstorming with members of the Hammer Museum's senior staff about the brand and identity for the Museum's first biennial exhibition, *Made in L.A.*, 2012. As a native of Los Angeles, I felt an exceptional amount of pressure to try to represent my city and its artists in a fresh, exciting, honest, and universally approachable way. The Hammer's aim was to draw a larger audience to the museum with this identity and perhaps bring in more first-time visitors than ever before.

The question I asked myself was, "How to represent L.A. visually?" Los Angeles means different things to different people. On the surface and from afar, it means Hollywood and traffic, bleached hair and palm trees. As soon as I started thinking about freeways and traffic, I forced myself to stop. I did not want to celebrate one of our city's greatest flaws. I did not want to contribute to that stereotype, but then I wondered what is it that we see in our cars? What signage do we have in L.A. that is distinctly different from other cities? Neon. Liquor store light boxes. Insanely-beautiful-split fountain rainbow-gradient-posters with the most fascinating sincere legible black type—COLBY POSTERS. Then the identity for *Made in LA*, 2012 made itself. Duchamp meets Claes Oldenburg. Colby posters blown up to an epic size much larger than life, banners running in succession down Hollywood Boulevard ... there was no end to where this would go.

Colby Posters. They signify church bazaars and school carnivals, lock-smiths and boxing matches, Cumbia clubs, tree trimming services and, of course, Tom Petty's *Full Moon Fever*. For me, Colby Posters were the ultimate graphic design "ready-mades" and I think Marcel Duchamp would agree.

"A work of art that transcends a form but that is also intelligible, an object that strikes down an idea while allowing it to spring up stronger," Jerry Saltz wrote in *The Village Voice* in 2006.

I knew we were going to produce a large marketing campaign for this show. This campaign would feature large-scale building signage, street pole banners throughout the city, various national and international print, and web advertisements, too. With Colby posters, everything was there, they were recognizable, colorful-eyecatching-beautiful and, above all, honest.

Colby has inspired and collaborated with many local artists from Allen Ruppersberg to Eve Fowler, and this just added to how appropriate the imagery would be for an art exhibition. The senior management team at the Hammer was in full agreement and we went forward and collaborated with Colby to create the brand and identity of *Made in L.A.* I went to the shop and typeset the poster with the folks at Colby and this poster then informed the entire identity.

The process, from concept to completion, will remain a high point for me. Not only in my career as a graphic artist, but in my daily life in the city I adore, Los Angeles.

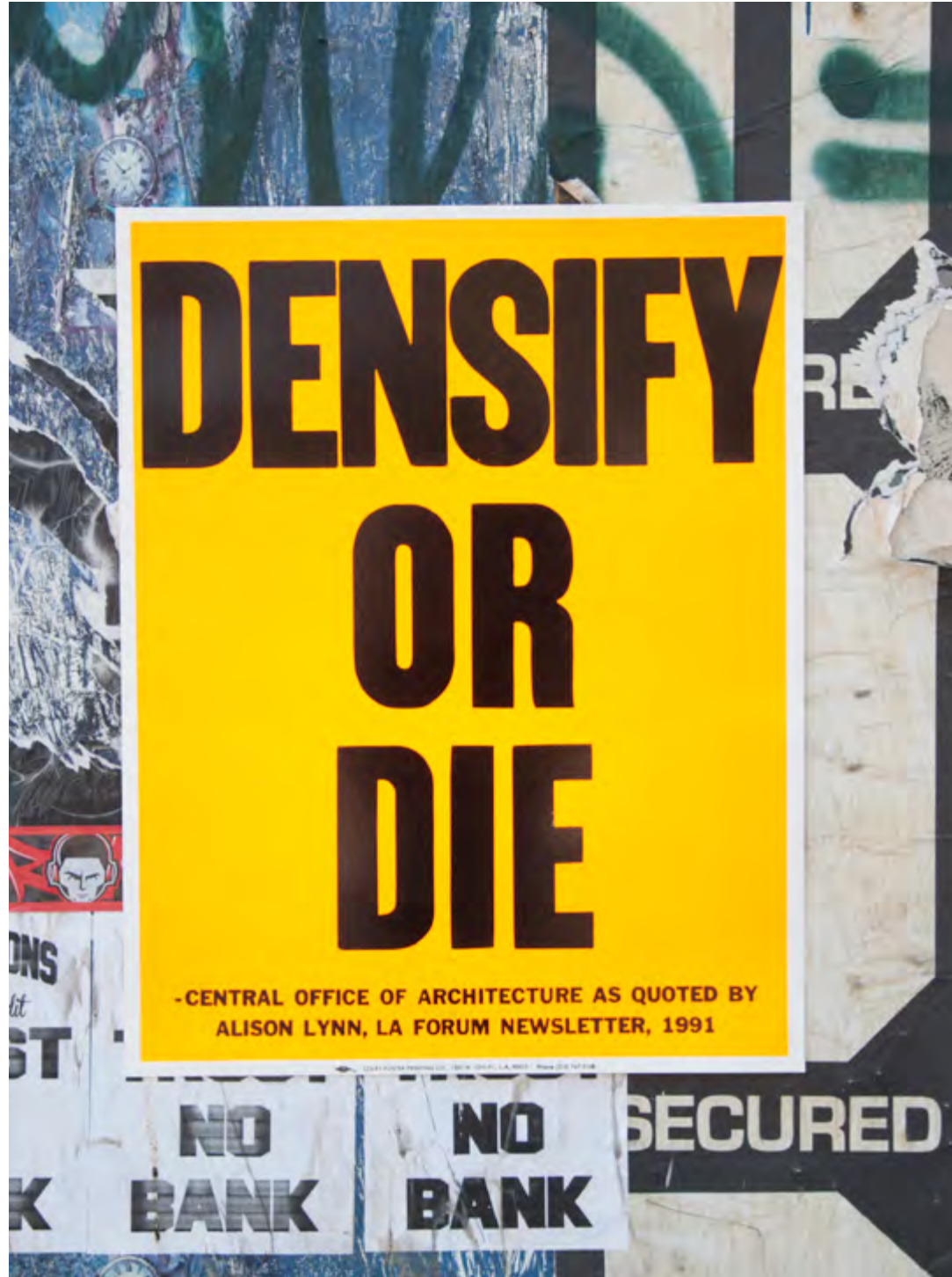












### James Black, architect

The design team for "Unfinished Business," the 25th-anniversary retrospective exhibition of the Los Angeles Forum for Architecture and Urban Design, was tasked with the project of translating selections of discourse about design and urbanism – in large part, a bunch of words – into a gallery show with visual impact. I hit upon the idea of using Colby Posters when, walking down the street, I caught a timely glimpse of one of their advertising signs tacked to a telephone pole. Colby's ubiquitous letterpress advertising prints in Day-Glo colors have an iconic, underdesigned look that screams Los Angeles. The concept seemed obvious and inevitable – as an easy means of setting the visual style for the exhibition, we would have Colby Poster, in their characteristic style, set selected "sound bite" quotations from the Forum's archive.

Our curatorial team supplied the quotations for the posters, and we opted for letterpress rather than screenprinting in order to ensure that we would get that distinctive Colby look. We deliberately gave Colby's typesetters license over the design, and Colby's Glenn Hinman understood what we were after. The ten quotation posters, each printed in small runs on stock of four different day-glo colors, are striking on their own and have a visual coherence when put together. Designed to celebrate the LA Forum's archive, these posters are now a part of it. The posters also opened up unconventional methods for promoting the show, as we sent a crack team of black hoodie-clad architects, armed with staple-guns and stepladders, to hang our snippets of discourse directly in the city streets.













### Anthony Burrill, artist

I came across Colby Poster Printing's eye-popping work while trawling through the internet. I kept seeing amazing prints produced using a fantastic combination of bold woodblock type and zingy fluorescent color merges. I tracked down Colby's website, which also has a unique quality, and finally spoke to Glenn, the amazing proprietor. I loved Colby's output so much that I curated a show in London at KK OUTLET. The work enjoyed a great reception and everybody was amazed by the joyous west coast color palette, the free and easy use of language and bold layouts. I have a great interest in all things vernacular and enjoy the quirky charms of small, independently run print shops. In a time of increased homogeneity, these unique places should be valued, preserved and celebrated.













### Cody Hudson, artist


Colby has such an iconic style and interesting history including a long history of working with artists. This recent piece I did with them was for a show in Los Angeles where they are based, so it made perfect sense to work with them to tie into the long-standing LA history they have. I feel when you are getting something printed at Colby you are not just getting something printed but getting a little piece of history as well.







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Now See The GREATEST SHOW AROUND...  
**A Spectacular GRUDGE MATCH**  
Not To Be Missed!




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All Around "GOOD GUY" & Well Known Friend of The Little Man AND...  
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**MR. MEANIE • ALL AROUND BAD GUY!**  
Dislikes People, Dogs, Cats & Other Furry Creatures...

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# Writing on Useful Objects

Chad Kouri interviews  
Jonn Herschend  
from THE THING Quarterly.

MAS CONTEXT

16 | PRODUCTION





**I know THE THING Quarterly is a collaborative effort between you and Will Rogan. How did you guys get started on this project? You both sustain your own art practices, so give me a brief history of THE THING.**

When Will and I met, we were very interested in collaborating with each other on projects. Our art practices were not exactly lined up, but we got along really well. We tried a couple of collaborations and they were just ... terrible. But we just kept talking about doing some kind of a publication. We were very inspired by McSweeney's here in San Francisco. In particular, the way that they would play with the object of the periodical, the way that they would always try to change the way a periodical would look. We were very into that. We both were and still are subscribers. We just kept talking about how great it would be to have an object and text put together. And eventually, we were given a residency at Southern Exposure. So that is more or less how it began. And it just exploded from there.

**You had said previously that you figured it would only be a one-year collaborative effort?**

Yeah, we didn't go into this thinking that we would run a business. We thought there would probably be 25 people who would subscribe. It was kind of an idealistic thing. And it still is, but it has obviously changed a bit more. It was very much just hands on. We had Miranda July, visual artist Anne Walsh, visual artist Kota Ezawa, and Trisha Donnelly. It was a really amazing lineup. And, for whatever reason, it just filled some unexplainable void in the press and the design blogs. It was picked up everywhere and we ended up with well over one thousand subscribers in the first two weeks. We were both excited and horrified, because we couldn't possibly hand-make one thousand things.

**How was the release of Issue 18 [Mike Mills] at Family Bookstore in Los Angeles?**

Good. Really good.

**Do you guys sell individual "issues" at something like that or only subscriptions?**

We treat it so the model is like a magazine. Subscribers would receive the issue first, just as if you were a subscriber to the New Yorker; you get it before it goes to the airport. Or you better! Because if you show up at the airport and they already have the issue out and you haven't received it yet, you are bummed. In this case, the issue had already been sent to the subscribers at the beginning of October and the event at Family Bookstore was the release to the public, so people could purchase it. However, we only have something like 50 remaining.

**That's a good problem to have.**

The issue has done very well. We sold a bunch at the release and it's in stores around the country as well.



**There is a lot of dialog around the so-called dying print industry. You guys are reinventing this subscriber-based, printed distribution. What is your elevator pitch?**

It's a periodical in the form of an object. And that is like a magazine, but we publish writings on useful objects.

**Do you expect people to actually use the objects? Or do you hope people put them on their shelves as cherished objects?**

We prefer that people use them. That's the whole idea. The doorstep, for instance, is just a solid piece of rubber. The ultimate doorstep. It's screaming to be put to use. Mike Mills' issue is a calendar, but it also serves as a sort of statement by Mike...a thesis, on how the larger fabric of cultural history defines us as individuals. Yes, we want people to use these things, but we understand that there are collectors out there who are not using them, and that's alright too.

**Do you know anyone who has two subscriptions and is holding one and using the other?**

Oh yeah. There are a lot of people like that. And there are also several institutions that are collecting the entire run of THE THING. So we know that it's being collected and that is exciting. But we like the fact that it is troublesome. That: a) Is it a periodical, really? Or some sort of limited edition? It's neither so it's already a problem, and b) is it a useful object or a collectable object which makes it another problem? It's a real wrestling match every time.

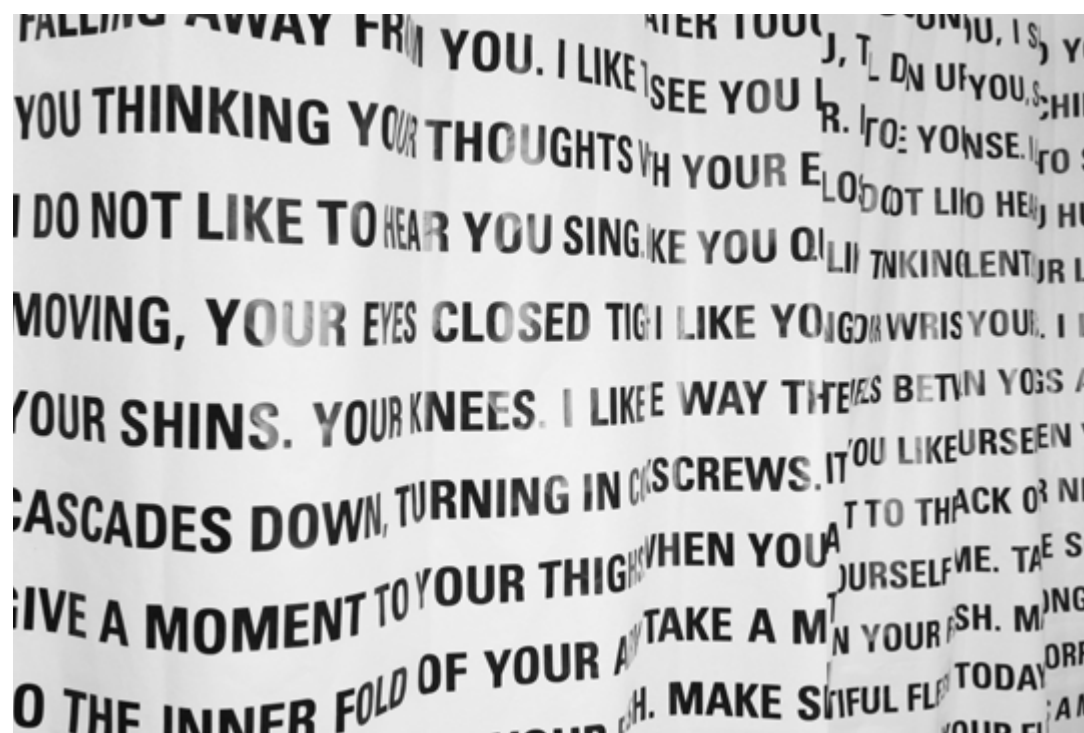
**Do you actively dialog with any schools or institutions about self-publishing or alternative publication models? Have you been asked to speak at schools?**

Yes, we have done a lot of stuff like that. We just did one recently at the San Jose Museum of Art. But we also taught a course here at CCA [California College of the Arts] in the Design department. CK: Have you guys had exhibitions that have solely featured the entirety of THE THING collection?

No, we haven't and it doesn't feel right to do something like that. We've shied away from that. We did a residency at Artist Space in New York and we decided that, instead of exhibiting artwork, we would bring in someone else's collection, and that was a better way for us to negotiate that. When we've been asked to participate in exhibition-type scenarios, we end up trying to figure out how we can pull other people in instead of what we've done. Same with Chronicle. We are doing a book with Chronicle Books that is coming out in 2014. Our initial conversation with them was that we did not want to do a retrospective of THE THING. We wanted to do something that really examined the book as a project space, and they were all for it. Again, trying to think ourselves into a problem, opposed to the standard model of just showing what we have done.



Rubber wedge for Issue 2 of THE THING Quarterly by Anne Walsh © Chad Kouri



Shower curtain for Issue 16 of THE THING Quarterly by American writer Dave Eggers



**You use this project as a tool for collaboration. How do you go about choosing participants?**

We talk about it endlessly. We have a list of people who we want to be involved. We've started to become more comfortable as editors now that we see this as a more long-term project. And it's really thinking about how the four people fit together each year and what the balance is between object makers, writers, filmmakers, architects, etc. Then, outside of those descriptions, who are the people that we would love to work with and will rise to the occasion of doing something unconventional like this, regardless of their background? But we do get people who submit ideas. Starlee Kine, who is a radio personality (a lot of people know her from *This American Life*), approached us with a project that we were so excited about that we just said, "YES!" We knew her work, but didn't know her personally. And that ended up being one of our favorite issues. It's the cutting board about a lover's breakup. It's for cutting onions on, and one is supposed to cry about the loss while one cuts the onions.

**You typically do release events and have a storefront here in San Francisco. How much of your efforts are focused on face-to-face interactions with people like that?**

We are trying to do that more and more. Projects that take place throughout the year instead of only four times a year. Right now, we have Nathan Lynch doing an ongoing, three-month project wherein he is trying to make the perfect

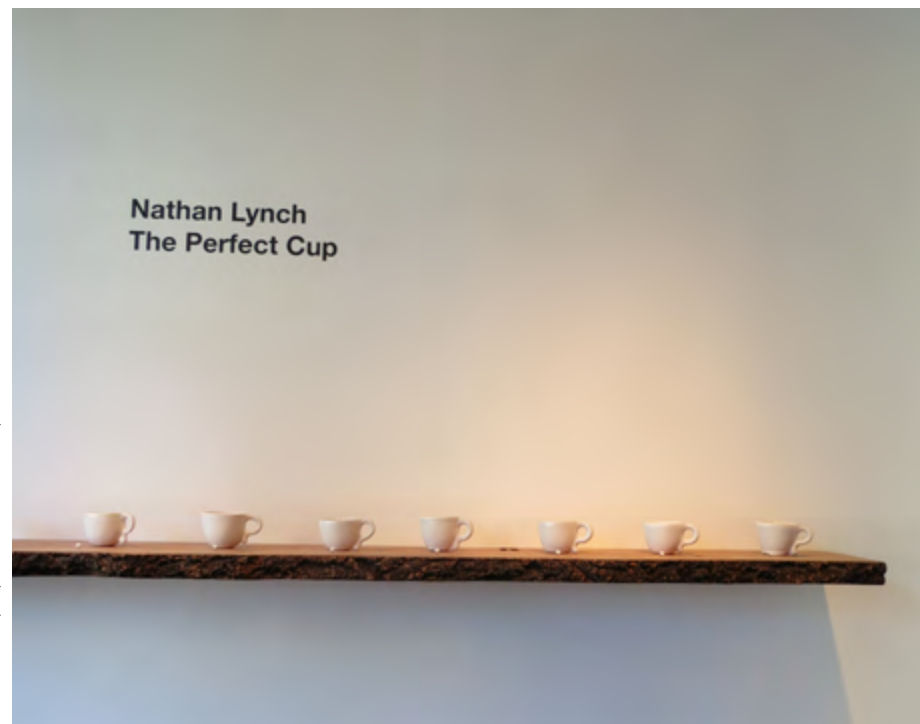
espresso cup with his hands instead of spinning it on the pottery wheel. So, it's a bit of a beautifully hopeless project. We have the cups in here and people come in and fill out a form based on the characteristics of thirty different cups. The idea is that they are providing Nathan with the vital information for his quest for the perfect cup. So there is that kind of stuff we are doing. But we haven't utilized our office as well as we should. We both teach and have other jobs, so we are pretty maxed out. People come by and pick up their issue, which is great, but we do want to do more things. We want to sponsor more events, we want to get more involved in creating a larger dialog around our interests, but for now we are huddled around the idea of this subscription-based model until we can really think more broadly.

**Outside of that space, you guys have individual art practices as well?**

Yeah, I know Will has an artist studio in his house, and I have an artist studio that is in my computer. Will has work up right now at The Wattis in San Francisco. And I have work up at SITE Santa Fe.

**Since you started this project five years ago, do you find yourself changing the way your art practice works, based on the decisions you make on THE THING, or do you compartmentalize?**

I can't answer for Will on that, but yes, I can't imagine how it could not bleed over. The way I approach my own work, the way I think about what I'm doing definitely feeds into the way I have been thinking about THE THING. One thing that



"The Perfect Cup" by visual artist Nathan Lynch © Chad Kouri



Issue 18 by American filmmaker and visual artist Mike Mills © THE THING Quarterly



we realized is that when you are in school or an institution and you're studying art, it's very idealistic, and the reality of the world is not that idealistic. I think a lot of artists end up falling off because they come up against the hard reality that a gallery is actually a store. And it's not really that easy to make money doing art, so you have to come up with another way to make a living. All those are things that we don't know when we are studying and we don't talk about. Part of what THE THING has done for me is introduced a more pragmatic element into my art practice, where I think idealistically about what I want to do and then pragmatically about how I can accomplish it. And that is not the most romantic way to think about things, but thinking this way helps me keep doing what I want to do.

### **You talked about school briefly. Did you study Fine Art or Design?**

Neither. I studied Theater at Boston University and then transferred to Political Science when I discovered Howard Zinn. He was teaching there at the time, so I just threw in all my marbles with poli sci. After that I had various jobs. I taught high school for five years. I went back and got my MFA at Berkeley, where I met Will. It's a Fine Art program, but you basically have access to the entire campus and all the classes available at the school. I chose to spend most of my time at the Pacific Film Archive and that was amazing. But obviously, the experience of school is one thing and the experience of the real work is quite another.

### **Do you think you would have landed in the same place if it weren't for that schooling?**

Well, if I hadn't gone to Berkeley, I wouldn't have met Anne Walsh, who was a professor of mine, and who was extremely influential in her thinking. She blew me away. And I wouldn't have met Will, so we wouldn't be doing THE THING. So it wasn't the conceptual ideas that we threw around at Berkeley. It was more being in the place that was isolated from the real world and you can throw around ideas, which is great fun. It is such a luxury in many ways. But I was able to really rethink a lot of the things that I was considering before that.

### **Do you guys consciously make an effort to manufacture in America?**

Well, we began with this terrible curve of "we have to figure out how to get this stuff made, immediately, because we are not making it by hand." So we were not immediately thinking where we would make these items. It was not a priority. It wasn't until Starlee Kine's issue that we actually had a physical hand in the making. We made it here in San Francisco at Luke Bartels' Woodshop, and it was a great experience, but we were lucky to come out without losing a thumb. Now we think more aggressively about working with people who make stuff in America. Ideally in California and even more specifically in the Bay Area, so we can go see what they are doing and talk to them and change things. But, there are things that just aren't made in America, like the Dave Eggers shower curtain issue. Believe it or not, there are not any shower curtain manufacturers in America that don't cost \$90 a piece to produce, which is unrealistic. So we had to make a decision on that one to go overseas. We worked with Izola, a company in New York that makes designer shower

curtains and they were great guys. They made them at their factories in China. But I would say in the grand scheme of things that is just the way it needed to be done for that particular issue. We wanted to make this Mike Mills issue in the US or in North America and we ended up going to The Prolific Group in Canada. And that was a great experience. It was perfect for us. So to clarify, ideally, we would like to make everything in the United States. But the reality is that our issues are priced really low for what they are and there is always a learning curve to what we are doing. We try to find small manufacturers who are doing really cool things and match them up with the contributor. That's our ideal situation.

### **What is the most challenging request you guys have gotten from a contributor?**

One of my favorites was Allora and Calzadilla. They had four different things they presented to us and one of them was a trash can that would reject the trash that was thrown into it. We actually considered it, but thought, "Can we actually pull this off for what it costs to make?"

### **What do you guys feel that you produce at THE THING?**

Well, I think it goes back to the very beginning, when we wanted a "magic-ness" or "specialness" that objects are instilled with. It's like this rock my daughter gave me once. It looks like any old rock, but because she gave it to me, it has this "specialness" that only I know. And I carry it with me all the time. I think THE THING is about the stories, history and personal experiences we associate with objects, which we carry with us always. And, as objects disappear more and more, I feel like it's important that at least I participate in something that is trying to do that. Something that is trying to make an object special. We don't make a ton of these, we make just enough, hoping that the people who receive them think about the object and use it, and it develops this story that goes along with it. And maybe they hand it to someone else over time and the story continues. But it's all about developing this "specialness".

### **So what's next?**

Well, we are in pre-production for all three of our upcoming issues. We have a great lineup. But on a larger scale, we're at the point where we're really starting to think about how we can turn this into our job rather than it staying a side project, and that has us thinking about what THE THING is becoming as it morphs, because it is constantly morphing. We are starting to see ourselves as this strange incubator for art and design, which sounds kind of cliché, but not in a comfortable way. In a way that's not oriented around the consumer, but is practice-oriented.



# Documenting Production

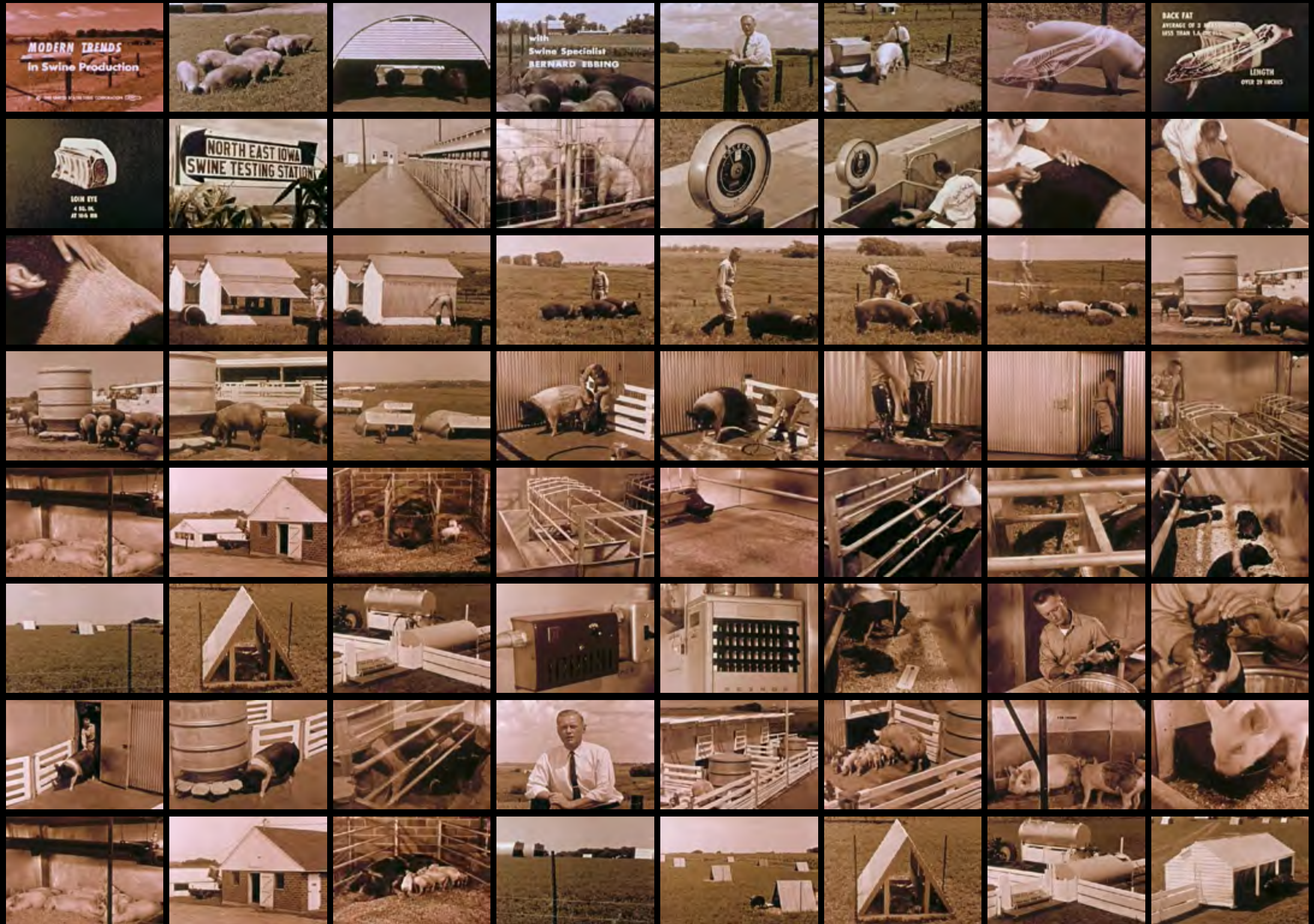
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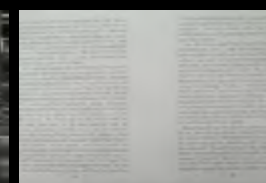
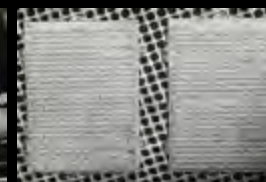
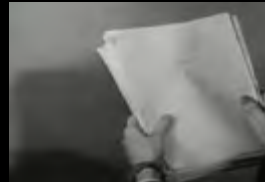


















Introduction  
by  
Iker Gil

# Chicago Production

The economic fulcrum insists that manufacturing can't be sustained in the US. But there are products still made in America. We wanted to know which ones are produced right here in our editorial hometown of Chicago.

So we met the locals who make leather for you to wear, hand-make bicycles sold in a coffee shop, offer T-shirts that you can design and build software for you to produce what you need.

Welcome to Horween Leather Company, Heritage Bicycles General Store, Threadless and 37signals.





## Raw Quality

**Iker Gil and Andrew Clark talk to Arnold Horween III, president of Horween Leather Co., and John Culliton, VP sales.**

Horween Leather Co. | Founded in 1905 | 150 employees

Located on the Chicago River in Chicago's Bucktown neighborhood, Horween Leather Company is the city's last remaining tannery. Founded by Isadore Horween in 1905, for over 107 years the company has had only one goal: make the best leather in the world. Their excellent leather has been used to produce the finest products, from shoes, bags, and belts to NFL footballs and NBA basketballs, for which they have been the exclusive suppliers for over 50 years. Andrew Clark and Iker Gil listened to Arnold Horween III tell the history of the company and toured the facilities with John Culliton as David Sieren documented the tanning process.

~

**Arnold, you are the fourth generation of Horween now running the company. Tell us about the history of Horween Leather Company, a family-run company that is now 107 years old.**

The company was founded by my great-grandfather, Isadore Horween. He was an immigrant from the Ukraine who came here in time for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Because the stockyards were here in Chicago, leather was a big deal. At that time, there were a couple of dozen tanners. We are the last. At the World's Fair, my great-grandfather, who came here with the idea of finding work, went down to visit the leather exhibit to see if he could make some contacts, and he met a gentleman there whose company was actually one of the companies putting together the leather exhibit. I never met my great-grandfather but, from stories I gather, he was a very confident fellow. So the gentleman whose workers were there said to him, "That's pretty nice leather, isn't it?" And my great grandfather said, "It's nice, but I can make it better." And the guys said, "Well, if you can make it better than that, maybe you can see us on Monday morning." So he went and started to work for them. In about 5 years, he was the plant superintendent and, about 6 or 7 years after that, he went on his own.

The original tannery was called I. Horween and Company and it was located on Division Street, not far from Sheffield. It was much smaller than this and the original product was shell cordovan for razor strops, because in those days, pre-safety razor, you got to the point where you could grow beard and everybody got out a mug and a cup and a razor and a strop to sharpen it on. Around 1912, the safety razor came to be and that changed the dynamic. It was a paradigm shift. We started producing lightly softer leather that was used for other goods and footwear.

And then, in 1919, where we are right now, there was a tannery called Herman Loescher and Sons. The Loescher family had decided they were not going to continue in the leather business and my great-grandfather closed on this property on January 1, 1920. Because he had two sons, his original idea was to have a facility for



each, but that turned out not to be so efficient. So about five or six years later, they moved and consolidated everything up here, adding on over the years. Where we're sitting now, what people here refer to as the new building, was built in 1941. The oldest part, where our hideout is now, is pre-1900. We have converted part of it to use it as a floor because it used to be pits. We had to do some repairs on the beams and contractors did not want to touch them because they didn't know anything about them. There are really no drawings, so we decided to experiment and check out one of them. We rented a bunch of huge jacks and we jacked everything up. We took a beam out and started to dig down. That part of the building is on wooden pilings driven all the way to bedrock. The tops of those piling, 100 and who knows how many years later, are perfect, they are absolutely perfect. That part of the building is the oldest and the original dirt floor has been concreted over.

Starting in the 1920s, with the addition of what became Horween Leather Company, we got into the cowhide business. It was a mix then of horsehide, horse butts at that point, for cordovan. At that point we moved into the cowhide business, which at the beginning was largely for work shoes. They also did some development into taking us into what people refer as mechanical or hydraulic leathers, which turned out to be very significant later. Those are leathers that are used for oil seals or gaskets. At one point, all the gaskets for cars were leather and they were wax-impregnated and then hot formed. Now, basically all of them are synthetic, because they are less expensive as well as more uniform to work with. But there is still a small business left of leather seals and washers, because there are some things that can't be replicated in synthetic. The big seals that they use in a lot of the high pressure pumping applications are still leather. It's counterintuitive until you think it all the way through. The leather seal, when it starts to fail, will leak and the synthetic seal will fail. So, if you are pumping at high pressure, you'll have a moment from the leather seal that you will see it leaking and you can shut things down, while with the synthetic seal one minute is fine and the next one it's gone. That was for a while the largest part of our business. Chicago Rawhide was in Elgin and we had a little truck running back and forth, a predecessor of just in time. At the peak, there was 6,000 hides a week. So you have a reference, right now that is as many hides as we make for everything at this point. That was one product at that time.

The cordovan business has expanded across the different generations. The peak of our cordovan business was probably about 50 years ago. We were the only ones doing it at that time and we were running about 11,000 shells a week. Right now, we are running about 6,000 a month, and we are the biggest that's left, globally, doing that. So there has been a tremendous change, largely in the raw material. That's pretty much what drives everything, it's a pretty expensive raw material. And we also continue to use my great-grandfather's process, which takes six months. There is a lot of aging and curing.

In terms of the side leather, we began our foray into sporting goods in the 30s and 40s. That was driven by the fact that my grandfather and great-uncle both went to Harvard. Their father said that they were going to get the best education in the land and that was the first college that he read about. They were both really gifted athletes and both played football. At that time, Harvard was a football power and played in the Rose Bowl in 1920 and won. Things have changed a little since then



Arnold Horween III © David Sieren



John Culliton © David Sieren



because they did not want their mother to know. At that time there was no TV and no radio, so it wasn't that difficult to pull off. My grandfather, his brother and their two best friends played as the McMann brothers, A, B, C, and D. Very creative. But during that time, they met and got to know George Halas who was at the Decatur Staleys, a team that then became the Chicago Bears. They thought they could do a better leather. As Wilson Sporting was headquartered and manufacturing here, the Bears were here, and we were here, it was like a nice little R&D lab. They would come up with an idea, my grandfather would make the leather, Wilson would make the ball and they would take it to the Bears' practice. We were one of multiple suppliers for a while but, by the 1960s, we pretty much had taken over. My grandfather and father came up with some of the advancements that are still at the core of the leather today in terms of the tannage, the coupling, and the feel. And we maintained that through until today.

Recently, I would say that this industry was largely exported, starting 25 years ago, much like other industries. The worst possible thing that you can do is be medium size, because the big guys are cheaper and the small guys do it better. So we were always the little guys and we were always the specialty guys. Starting with my great-grandfather the saying was that, if you can pick something and get to be really good at, then you will never be this big but you can probably do this well. So part of your charge then was looking for other little pockets like that, of things that were interesting and not so easy to do. While that happened, we certainly shrunk, but we were able to maintain ourselves. We have always been really conservative so we could shrink things down and bend down the edges, basically play some defense. We executed the last man standing strategy with the idea that someday there is a home for it. We were lucky, too, because our customers also survived and made it out the other end of the tunnel. Never underestimate the power of luck.

My grandfather was here the first 5 years I was working in the company, and my father and I worked together for 24 years, so the benefit of that was irreplaceable for me. 20 years ago now, we had a particularly good year. I am sure in all of your travels you have times where it doesn't matter what you do, you can't do anything wrong. And there are other times where you can't do anything right. During that good year, my father called me into what is now my office and said, "I just want you to understand that you are not as smart as you feel right and you are not as dumb as you are going to feel the next time you are really slow." Seven years later, we experienced the other side. When things are going really good, that's the time to work really hard because that doesn't automatically sustain itself. I think that's a lesson we have taken to heart. It's not that things are going to go away but it's hard to sustain. But people do, that's our nature.

We are also looking for something else that is a little bit interesting. Our process is not as fast and it's not as easy, but that's part of the attraction. We are never going to be everything for everybody and that's ok. That's why not everybody can do the job that John does. You have to be thick skinned enough for someone to go, "That price is ridiculous." Yes it is. And here is why. We feel like if the only objection that you have to our product is price, then we have done our job. We have also been really lucky, because we have customers who have chosen to point us out as

the source of the leather. But we are really careful to tell people, "It's us in small letters and you guys in big letters." Our job is to give you the best marble to do the sculpture with. We are not, by any means, trying to be the story. We are not the story. We want to be something that you can always reach out for right where you left it.

A while ago, we had a customer who was producing gloves and they wanted to splash our name all over. Actually, they wanted to have it all over the palm. We just wanted this little thing down the finger, that was totally cool for us. Our ultimate goal is to be that part of the resource. We are sort of a lumberyard, but we get to make the lumber. You are going to pick something out and you are actually going to do the making. We provide something that you can make into your vision. And we also want to understand what you want so we can get you what you want.

Sometimes people who work with us get a little surprised by us. We'll go, "I think I understand what you want and here is somebody else who actually can do a good job of this because it's not our thing. Don't get me wrong, if you want me to try this, I'll do it, but here is a guy who is really good at this. It is his specialty. Some day I'll get a chance, but you should really look at this stuff, too." There are different looks and feels that people want. It's not right or wrong. You have an idea, and you want it to look and feel a certain way. Our job is to match what we do to your expectations. To the extent that we can do that, then we both have a success. When your eye sees something and then your hand feels it, because leather is a very tactile experience, do the two match up? If they don't, you are probably not going to buy it. At that point, price is not the issue. Does it look, feel and smell the way you think it is supposed to look, feel and smell? If it does, then the value is there for you. People will buy the best they can afford if they can understand the difference.











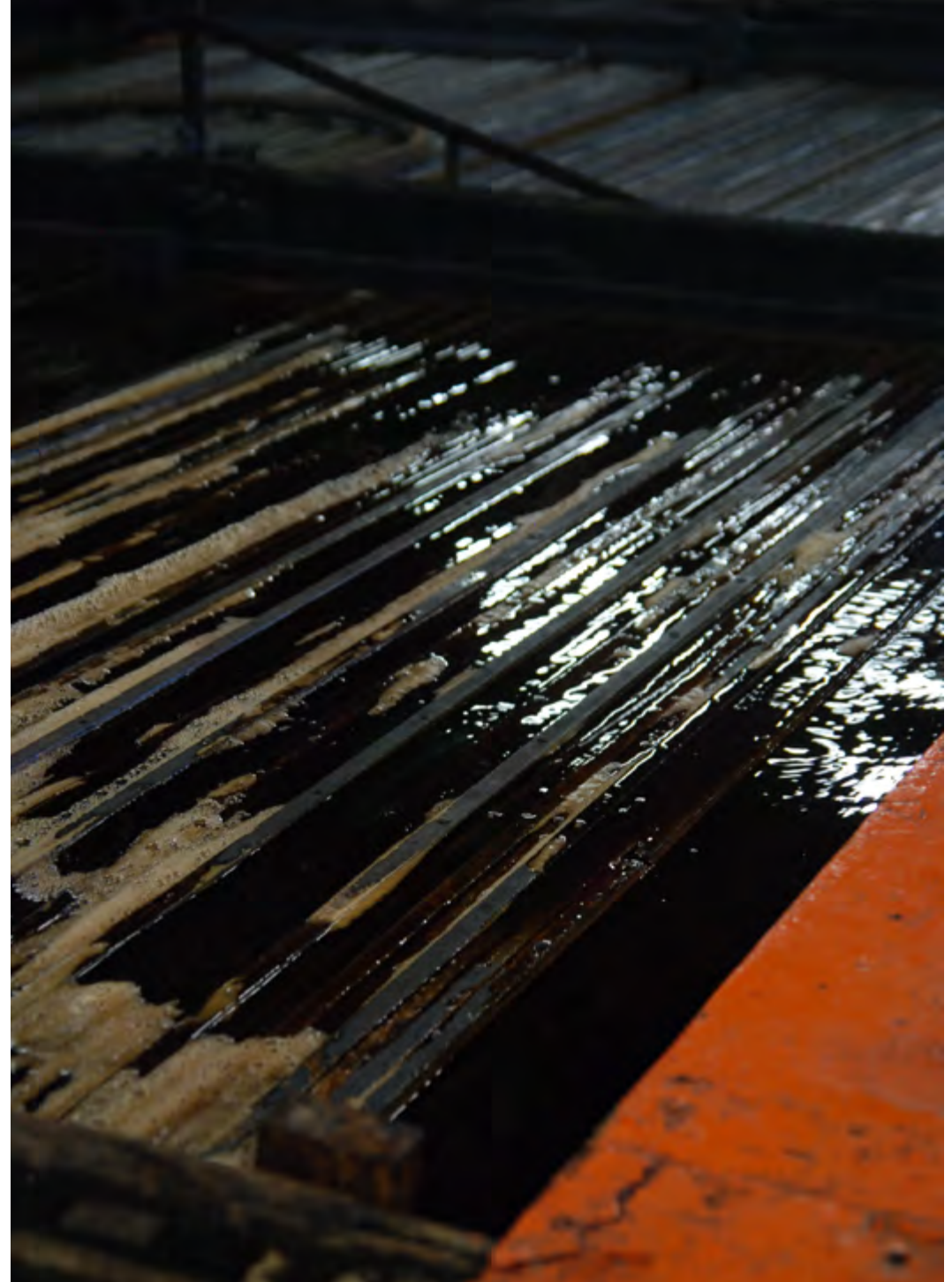












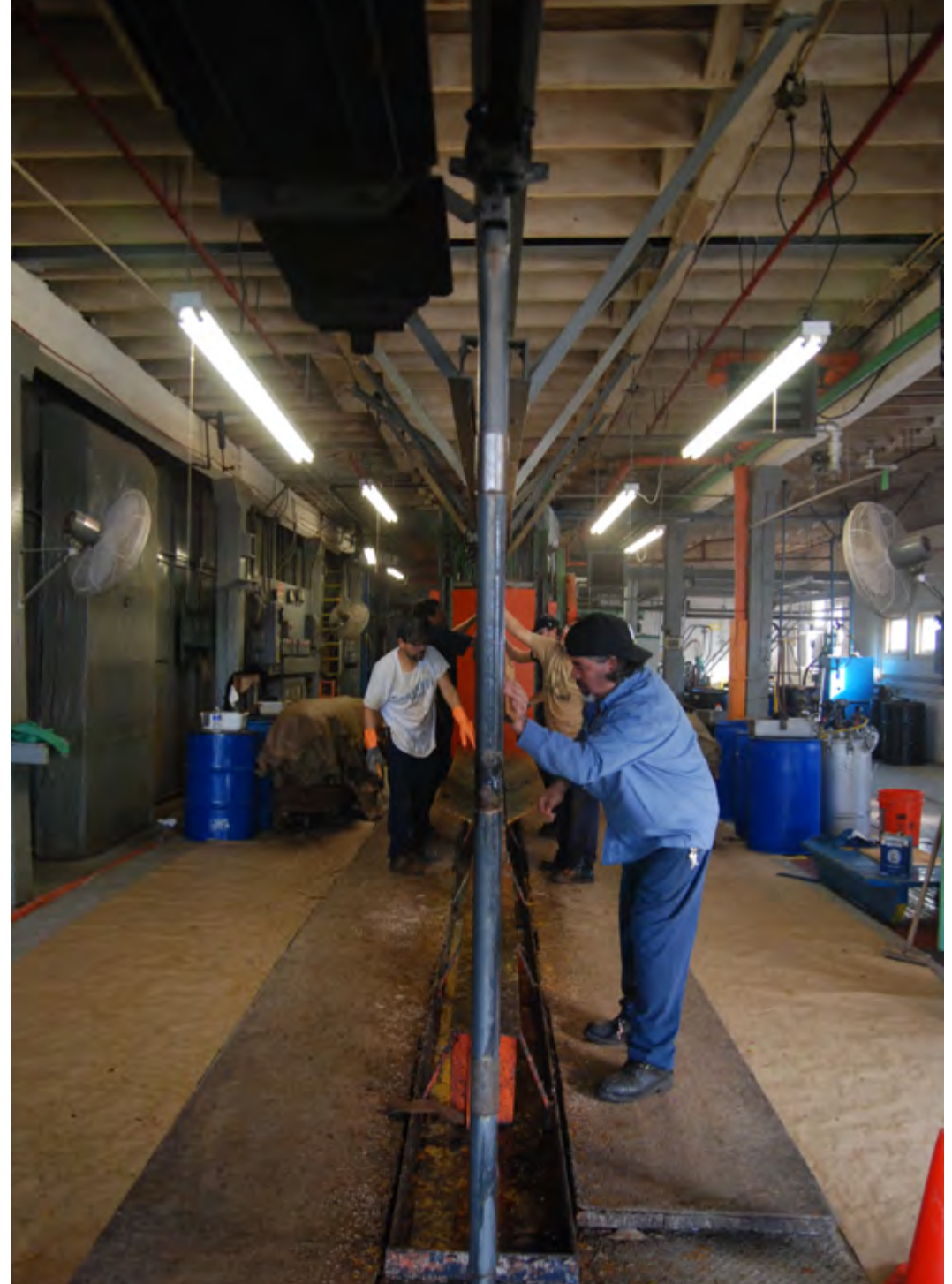
















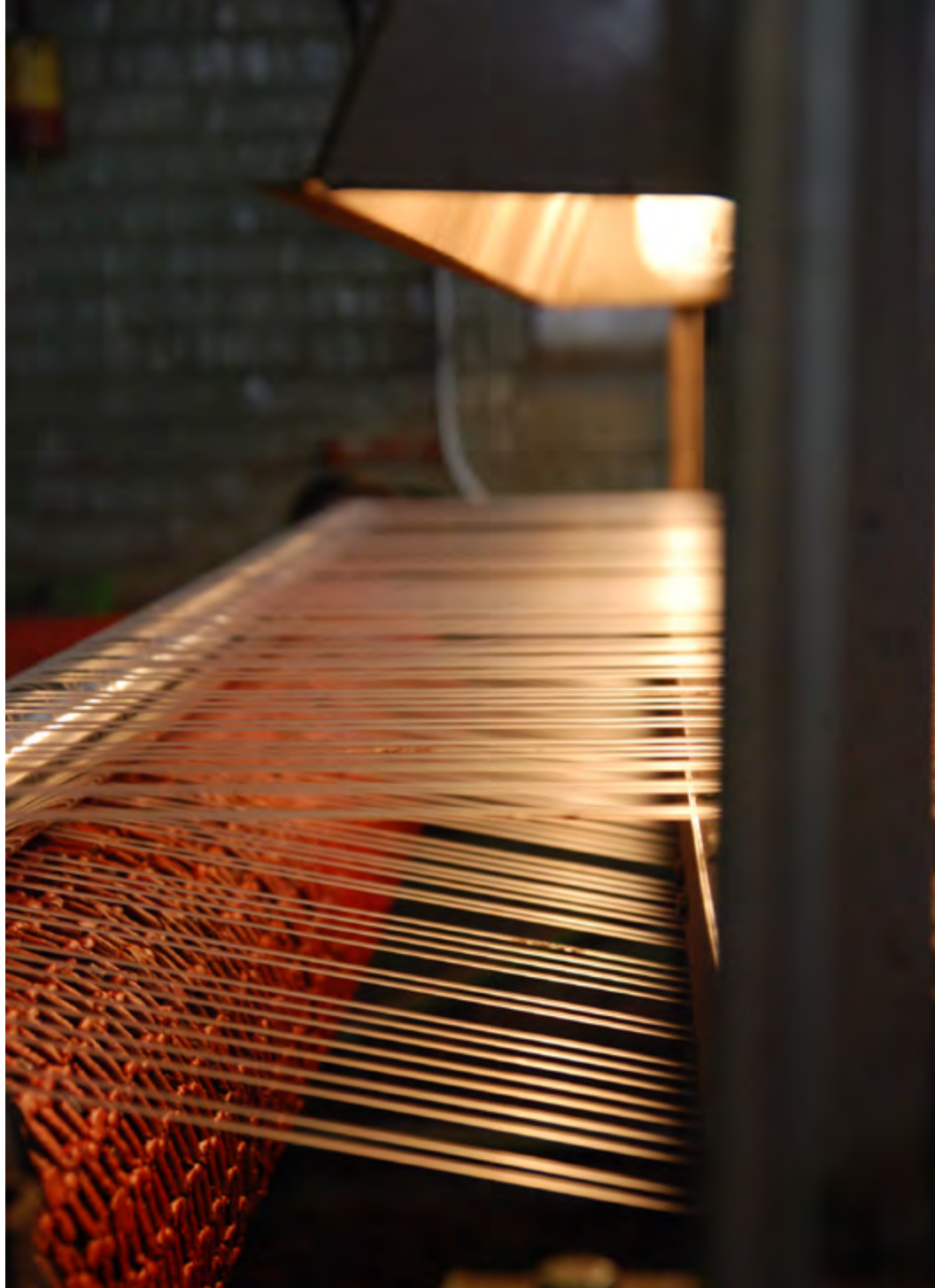
























# Creating a Lifestyle

**Iker Gil interviews Michael Salvatore, owner and  
CEO of Heritage Bicycles General Store**

Heritage Bicycles General Store | Founded in 2011 | 13 employees

Early this year, I was walking on Lincoln Avenue with my parents and we saw a place that we couldn't quite figure out. Is it a coffee shop? A bike shop? What? Bicycles were in the window, but inside people seemed to be enjoying a relaxing afternoon drinking coffee. Intrigued, a few weeks later, my wife and I went to check it out. We discovered a beautiful place, reminiscent of the shops on old main streets in towns across the US, where bicycles are displayed and repaired while people hang out and drink coffee around a long communal table. In early November, we talked to owner Michael Salvatore about the inspiration behind Heritage, his process of making bicycles and how he produces the sense of community he wants to foster in his space.

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**How did you come up with the idea of combining a bicycle manufacturer and coffee shop?**

I lived in New York for five years and, while there, I helped start a company, around 2007-2008. We couldn't afford retail space, so we went to the markets, went to the people and set up booths in different spots. Throughout the development of the company, I started to become more aware of how similar the cultures were between coffee and bikes. There is an aspect that bikes and coffee are two of the most common, accessible and tangible products in the world. You go to any Third World Country or any First World Country and they are going to have coffee and bikes. The poor is the poor and the rich is the rich so their caliber is different, but they still have coffee and bikes. It's just an old world idea that I thought we could combine, along with the business aspect. In the wintertime, bike shops in Chicago nearly shut down. They lay off a quarter of the staff, if not half of the staff, to get by. I wanted a space where my employees and our business model live through that winter and the café was part of that plan.

**Why Chicago?**

When we had our child in New York, we were looking for a way out. I'm a fifth generation Chicagoan. I wanted to come back to my roots. For me, it was both personal and financial. You get a lot more bang for the buck here. Along with that, there is a rich culture of cycling and manufacturing in Chicago. Schwinn manufactured bikes here, you have the steel mills and now there is this new culture of cycling in Chicago. [Mayor] Rahm Emmanuel has stepped in and says he wants Chicago to be a better place for cycling. So all these things worked with decisions that were already in the works. One thing after another piled up and I said, "This is the right spot to be right." But I don't foresee this being the only spot. Chicago may have several spots



and, in the future, I'd love to manufacture in different parts of the country. What is cool and exciting about what I have done here is that I have worked out a business plan that I can take to other spaces. The idealistic business approach for me would be to have many manufacturing plants and retail locations in different parts of the country. I'd love to go to Los Angeles, to be in New York again, I'd love to go to Arizona, Colorado... have hyper-local manufacturing, making bicycles specific to that region when the plan comes together aligned. That's the end game.

**Would you first extend to other neighborhoods in Chicago and then expand to other cities?**

Not to manufacture them, but I've been in talks about opening up another location. It has to be the right spot and the right situation. I don't want to go to places like Wicker Park, Bucktown, or Logan Square, it just seems too obvious. This is an established neighborhood, but there is not necessarily foot traffic here. I'd rather go to a space where I can hold my own brand. I'm looking forward to the opportunity where I can do that. At first, when I started my business plan, it wasn't about another location. I was going to do one location per city but, as I see it grow, there is a possibility to manage another space in Chicago. Doing it cross-continently might be more difficult because, if it gets to that point, you'll have to do financing, investors and whatnot. Right now, it's me and my wife, we bootstrapped it, we do it ourselves, the way we wanted to do it.

**Why this specific location?**

It just called to me. I was in from New York, looking at spaces on Southport, Addison, Bucktown, and Wicker Park. One day, I was staying at my friend's, who lives on Lincoln Avenue, and I saw this big "For Rent" sign by the owner. I peeked in the window, saw the wood floor, saw the light coming in and it just really appealed to me. I told people where in the area it was and they told me, "No, don't go there, it's stupid. The rent is great but don't go there, it's not going to survive." But something called me back here. It had this old-school look and, even though we built everything out, I knew there was a foundation for a really special place. I think the energy that comes from the bike room and the windows is just impossible to replicate. The location itself is just happenstance.

**Are you trying to fill a niche in Chicago by combining the different programs? There is a sense a community generated here, with all the activity in the space, and it's not just what you sell.**

Yes. We don't consider ourselves a bike manufacturing company and we don't consider us a coffee shop. I consider Heritage to be a lifestyle brand. It was an important thing to have the community in the space. To have a communal table, to allow people come here, to have events here. That was one of the main points that my wife and I talked about before opening up. In New York, there's the stoop, the places where you sit on the front stairs of a building and all the neighbors come down and hang out. We really enjoyed that time. And we thought it would be really hard to have a stoop again in Chicago, but we tried to make that happen. The whole idea of hanging out, talking to people, it is an extension of our living room. Literally,







we live upstairs. We knew that we wanted this to be somewhere comfortable, somewhere where we would want to be and hang out. So the idea of community has always been a focal point in the construction of Heritage. We'll add more components to the brand, hopefully clothing, a kids' line that we are releasing soon. And all this fits with who we are at this point in our lives. We made this wood bike because our child is 18-months old and we want to put him on a bike. So let's make him a balance bike. That's kind of the way this whole shop is going.

**The community that comes here is probably slightly different from the one that goes to more hardcore or traditional bike shops, or even other coffee shops.**

Definitely. No matter what shop you are, we are going to be as friendly if not more friendly. It's important for us, it's in our DNA. I grew up in an environment where my parents always hosted families from all over the world in our house. We always try to recreate that in this space. It's welcoming, it's enjoyable. Another aspect is that we don't know it all and we don't expect our guests or clients to know it all. It's all about learning, the process, understanding it and walking them through that. There are people who come here for coffee and know way more than us and that is cool, they teach us. There have been bike guys who are much more skilled and diverse in building bikes and that's awesome, too, teach us. There is a gap between reality and expertise. And the reality is that 99% of the people who are here are not experts in these fields. So let's welcome them in and we'll teach each other.

**Let's talk a little bit about the actual production of the bikes. Can you walk us through your process of manufacturing?**

It starts out with an idea. I came up with a design board, where I take bikes that I really enjoy and I toss them up on it. That becomes my inspiration for the next bike. Take parts of different bikes, combine them, and come up with a catalog of parts that would look good together. The overall idea forms in my head and then I sit down with my engineer to go over the design in CAD drawings. We do that back and forth for about 1 or 2 months. Once we got the CAD drawings solid, we break down the components and go to my welder. We weld up a few bikes and we test them out. We all test out the geometry, the bridges, the edges for a few months. After that, we go into production. We do a jig matt and we start estimating cost and figuring out how it is going to work best. Process is not about one bike at a time. In order to make it all work, we need at least a batch of 40 and that will keep us busy for a while. We cut the tubing, we laser cut the dropouts, in order to have all the different components. Once we have all those parts, we bring them together and the team welds it. And with every iteration of the bike, it gets better. That's just the process of growing. For example, our first design was just straight tubes for the bridge, but we later changed it to plates and now we have plates in the back, which is aesthetically pleasing and much easier to weld. So it serves two purposes: it cuts about half an hour and it adds a beautiful design for the back of plate. So all these things play a part in how the bike evolves to the next step. We are never stopping. Everything that we learn from the last batch of bikes we apply to the next. So right now,



although we have a couple of jigs, we are looking for better jigs so we can produce tighter specs and also faster. There are always things that have to be done.

### **How many styles of bikes to you have in the market?**

Right now we have two styles, two frame types, in three different sizes. But we are coming out with a tandem bike, another style for spring, and right now we are also working on reverse engineering a cargo bike. One of those front-loaded cargo bikes from Amsterdam. I'd love to make them local. Again, that's part again of the organic growth of who we are as a family. I want to be able to ride the kid around in front of me in a basket, maybe also if I have two kids! So this whole idea of creating things for our lifestyle runs through every aspect of our business.

### **Basically you are the client for everything.**

Yes. [laughs]

### **The design of your bicycles, the design of the space, you are extending your lifestyle and sharing it with others.**

I think so.

### **In a way, you do it for yourself but in return, because you care and are passionate about it, you do it well and people appreciate it.**

Yeah, and I don't think I push anything on anyone. I'm always open to suggestions. I think now that I have a solid staff between my welders, my engineers, my bike mechanics and the rest of the staff, everyone has input, and everyone has a say. As I evolve my perspective on things, I always consider that before the final process. This whole thing is an extension of my wife and I. It sounds selfish, but that's what we believe in.

### **Is there any stylistic reference for your bikes? You mentioned Amsterdam for your cargo bike.**

There is no one reference. There is always a clean vintage look. We always like to utilize dark wood, I don't think that ever goes out of style. To marry the contemporary cleanliness of a design with old-fashioned hardwood and industrial turn-of-the-century stuff, that's appealing to me. I don't know what it is, but it's kind of handsome. As far as lifestyle goes, I really enjoy the approach and lifestyle in Amsterdam, where a bike is a bike and that's all it is. It's part of their life, it's not something that they have to show off, or outperform anybody else. You get on a bike to utilize it, to go across the city to meet your friends. That's what it is for. Here, we got away from that. In our culture, in America, it's too competitive, it's too much emphasis on what kind of bike it is instead of why you are using it. The lifestyle approach is definitely important to us.

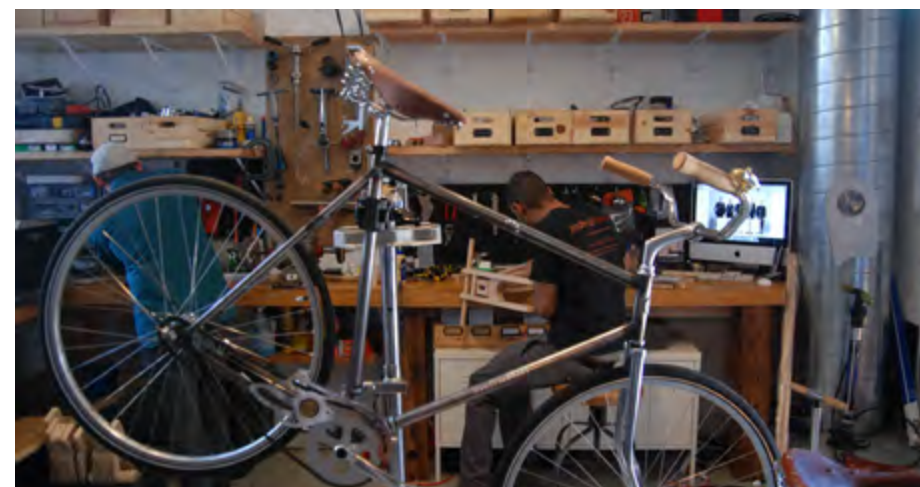
### **In terms of the coffee area, you carry Stumptown from Portland. How did you connect with them?**

It's a New York friendship. I met them through the Ace Hotel in New York. When Heritage was being conceived, I was out there and somehow we met and it

started a conversation. They had been in Chicago, but they did not have any accounts here. They were looking for accounts in Chicago, but they were turning people away for a long time because their biggest thing was quality control. They wanted to make sure that their product was served the best possible away. And that's something that I really thought was admirable of the company. They could sell in Chicago, and they wanted to, but they said they wouldn't because, in order to make that happen, they wanted to be there. That was a goal of mine as a brand. When we started working together, they were there 100% of the way helping me go through with the café. I was there with my bike company and the café was part of a lifestyle, but I didn't know technically anything about it. So when they chose us, it was a mutual agreement that our brands would work well together. Their brand is very classic, has grown organically, and they maximize themselves in creating a product that is excellent. They know all the farms are direct trade and they hold hands with their businesses, which is amazing. When we first set up, they flew three of their staff from Stumptown to Chicago to train our staff of eight people, for three days of intense training. I don't know any company that would do that, mostly for someone that was staring like us and, in a way, we did not know what we would be.

### **But I think Heritage communicates that idea that you are looking for a certain quality, whether with the bikes, the coffee or any other thing you sell here, like chocolate by the Mast Brothers. They are all looking for excellence.**

Those things are appreciated. They are not appreciated by a lot of people but, when they are appreciated, you'll know why. It's because there is a quality there that is superior to anything else. I don't think our bikes are for everybody, I don't think the coffee is for everybody, but I know the quality that I want to represent and that's where we are at. If you like this, you might like that. I don't know what the right formula is, but for me, the quality is the most important thing. When we started to work with Stumptown, what they did was an amazing reflection of who they want to be and what they are.











Heritage Bicycles General Store © David Sieren

**To talk more about the community aspect, you are organizing events at Heritage that somehow are unrelated to the coffee or the bicycles. Tonight, for example, you are having a CD release by the band Gaudete Brass. How important is that?**

It's extremely important. It serves two purposes. Again, it's an extension of who we are. We have a small kid so we can't go out and enjoy these things. So why not invite them into our living room and play for us? That's as selfish as it gets, but it also gets people in the door. We get to know our customers really well, we get to know our musicians or just people who want to sit here. That's the fun part, building relationships. Because once you build them, that is better than any ad, better than any bikes, or better than any coffee. You build a relationship with people who know who you are. I am very transparent with who I am, and so is my entire family, our entire staff and that shows in the culture of the space. We have events because we want to have events, because we enjoy them, we get to meet people, and it exposes us to things that we haven't been exposed to before. I'd like to have more events! I can walk downstairs and listen to a brass band play in my shop? I can't say no, it's just amazing. We really like our community. That's why we built a park out there, and we got the city to build this park in front. It's all about creating a space where people feel comfortable and want to come in. It's amazing to see that people really enjoy our work and enjoy working here.

**Creating a place where people feel welcomed and somehow be able to influence other business in the way they think.**

I don't know if I would go that far.

**I mean it in the sense of not telling people what they should be doing but leading by example, by showing that other business models can work.**

Here is the thing. I don't ever look at other businesses and say I want to do that. Once I start doing that, I'll become crazy and I'll be miserable. I turn to my employees to figure out what we should do next. It's really important to listen to them and I let them tell me what they want to do. So they all have their own things that they're really talented at and I will go to the ends of the earth to make sure that they're doing what they want to do in the situation where we are in. If someone wants to build a bike, if someone wants to weld, I am always there to utilize what his or her passions are. At the end of the day, I want people who want to do something greater than what I can possibly give them. I do what I do and it comes from within, and I let my customers and my employees dictate how it grows. A lot of businesses come here and think I am crazy. They think I don't know what I am doing, or why I am building a park that is taking my parking space in front of the business. People don't get it, but maybe I don't get it! They have been in business for a long time. I can't worry about other people. Do your thing, you worry about you, and I'll worry about me.

**I think also having a naïve approach to it makes you not have preconceived ideas. Maybe the experts have a way of doing things that don't let them see new ways of approaching it.**

I think that's true. An example that confirms that is this coffee machine. We put that in right when we opened up. I love iced coffee and we have extra space in the basement, so I said, "Why can't we put a keg in and run a line. It will be much easier, everybody will drink it." And people said, "Nobody has done that, that's stupid. How are you going to do that?" I kept researching and saying, "Why can't you do that? What's the problem?" In the end, we just built the line, we just did it, and we had this iced coffee tap line. And all of the sudden, six coffee shops did it in within three months, which is great. And they actually wanted to hire me to put a line in their space. I am just more worried about me, what is next. Iced coffee on tap is not like rocket science. Just go ahead and do it. That's kind of my philosophy: if you want to do something, just do it. Take a shot and try it.

**It's a good way to go.**

It's expensive, but in the long run I think it will work out.













Threadless © David Sieren

# Producer as Consumer

**Iker Gil interviews Jake Nickell, founder and Chief Community Officer of Threadless**

Threadless | Founded in 2000 | 80 employees

In the warehouse area, it's clear that it's holiday season. Nearly a hundred people move quickly, filling thousands of daily orders, packing and shipping them to their final destinations. In contrast, the office areas are quiet, with over fifty people working in front of computers. All of this happens in a building housing arcade machines, kegs, an Airstream trailer, hundreds of t-shirts hanging above the playroom, and graffiti murals by the in-house artist Joe Suta. Welcome to Threadless, the etailer that allows users to submit and vote on which designs will get reproduced on t-shirts and other products. More than that, it is a business that has completely changed the relationship between a company and its customers. Iker Gil sat down with Jake Nickell, founder and Chief Community Officer of Threadless, to talk about the origins of the company, crowdsourcing and blurring the line between producers and consumer.

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**Tell us about the history of Threadless. How did the company start?**

I was going to an art school and, at the same time, working in a full-time job as a web developer. I taught myself how to code when I was 14 or 15-years old. When I was deciding where to attend college, it was going to be for either Computer Science or Art, and I decided Art because I was already doing technical computer work for my job and I wasn't really into it. I actually had a job as a web developer in high school, but then I got burnt out on it. While at art school, I got invited to this forum called Dreamless. It was a pretty small community when I joined, about 300 artists worldwide, and existed for only a few years. But it was a really inspirational thing. I was going to school part-time, working full-time and spending every free moment in this forum. There was all this creative stuff happening there, with people collaborating on projects and doing cool things. We were all making artwork and posting it digitally, but it never really existed in real life. Threadless was really just my contribution to it. It was just a hobby, a project to add to the value of that forum as a member. So I thought that it would be fun to take some of the things we were doing and turn them into real products like t-shirts and posters. But it was only meant for us to have them. One day somebody posted a thread on the forum asking people to design a t-shirt for an event that was taking place in London. So I posted something and it was ultimately used for the event. And I literally started Threadless one hour after that. I just started a thread on that forum saying, "Post designs for t-shirts and I'll make the best ones into real t-shirts." It took no money. I was throwing myself under the bus, because I didn't know how to print shirts, how to charge people's credit cards online, how to ship orders, I didn't know how to do any of that stuff. I



think a lot of people are scared to do something because they don't know how, but when you say to a huge group of people that you are going to do it, you kind of have to. From that point on, it just snowballed over the years. That was 12 years ago.

### **What do you see as the key moments in the development of Threadless?**

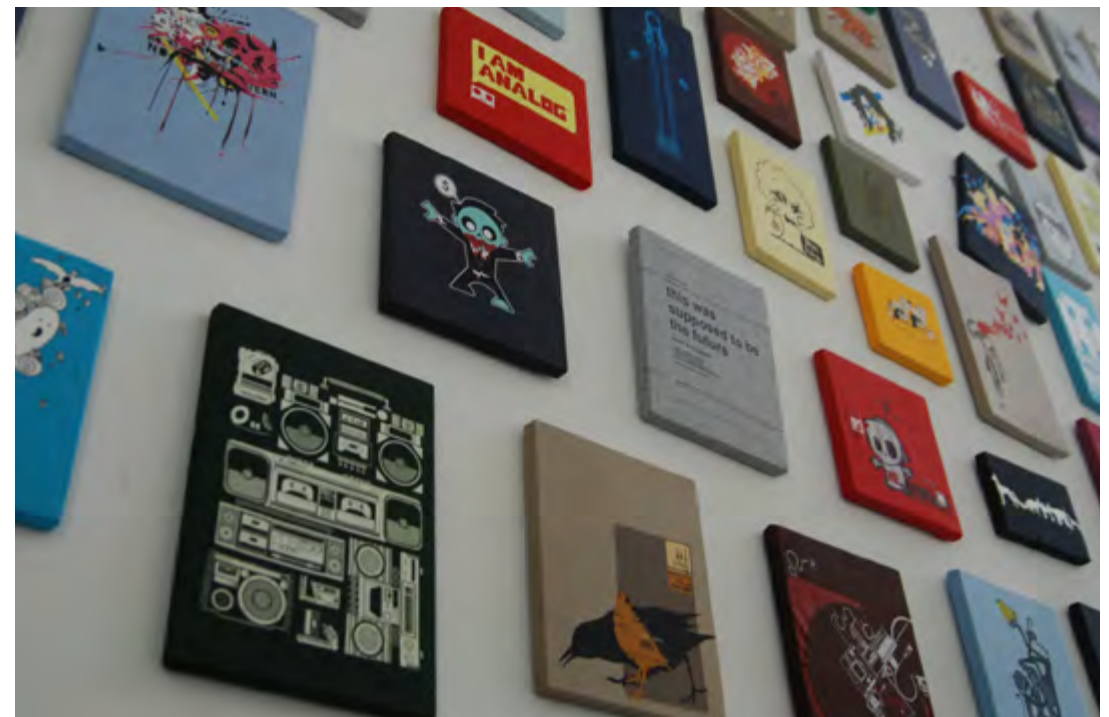
I started the company with \$1,000. \$800 were used to print that first batch of shirts and the other \$200 I used to get advice from an accountant. I printed that first batch of shirts and sold it, and the company has been profitable ever since. From that first \$1,000. During the first two years, any profits we made we used to make more shirts. Those first two years were a key part of the company because we were able to grow 100% by just using the money to print more. We had no expenses other than a \$10 monthly hosting fee for our website. We didn't pay ourselves and we didn't have any employees. It was just kind of a hobby. Two years in, I quit my job and started my own web consultancy. That's why there is a parent company called skinnyCorp. Initially we did web design and development for clients. We worked with some of the big agencies here in the city, where they would farm out work to us. We were known for doing CMS systems, database integration, and Flash work. A lot of Flash jobs. Threadless was a side project, but it was also funding us at that point a little bit. So two years in, we looked at our budget and realized Threadless was actually making all the money, but we were spending 80% of our time in this stressful client work. So in 2004, four years into the business, we let go of all of our clients and just focused on our own projects, because we still weren't focusing completely on Threadless at that point. We started other projects like Naked and Angry, 15 Megs of Fame, Extra Tasty, and OMG Clothing. We started all these other brands and it took us another couple of years to realize we should just be doing Threadless. If we wanted to do something new, we would have to do it under the Threadless umbrella so we have that brand recognition. So, we killed off all those other projects and rolled everything into Threadless. Naked and Angry, for example, would take artist-submitted pattern designs and turn them into pattern-based products like umbrellas, or ties, or dish sets. Now we have pattern challenges that take place on Threadless.

### **The best-known outcome from Threadless are t-shirts, but there are many other products that come out of the company, all using the idea of crowdsourcing. You are blurring the line between producer and consumer.**

Yes, it's all about crowdsourcing, which I think it is being misused a lot. The way that we started Threadless was by realizing that there is this amazing community of artist doing great things. And we wanted to add to that, helping to do something productive with what they were already creating. However, now when a business has a problem they want solved, they look out at the community and say, "You come and do the work for us." That's how they think about crowdsourcing. In reality, the framework that you need to use to do something like that is the same either way. It's just the way you are thinking about it that is different.



Jake Nickell © David Sieren



Jake Nickell © David Sieren











**Walk us through the process of producing a Threadless t-shirt.**

Our production process starts with a continuous open call, wherein everybody can submit a design for a t-shirt or for any of the other products we carry. We then look at every design that comes in and, once it gets approved, it has seven days to be scored. After those seven days, it is given a final score and then we choose a handful of the top-scoring designs to print. The artist gets paid \$2,000 plus royalties for their design. We usually print a design a day or more but, during sale times, we come out with more designs. It is a pretty streamlined process. It seems that fashion usually happens by season, but we come out with new stuff every single day.

**Once you get the design selected, do you work with a local printer?**

We have five different printers that we work with. Most of them are based here in Chicago or in the nearby suburbs. One is just a couple of blocks from here.

**Once they produce the t-shirts and send them back to your warehouse, do you do all the marketing and photography in-house?**

Yes, we do all of our own photography in the warehouse. Our employees are the models.

**Do they know that when you hire them?**

Yes, people are pretty stoked about it.

**And then you prepare the orders, package them and ship them from here.**

Yes, we ship everything from this facility. About 50,000 square feet, half warehouse, half office.

**How many different designs have you printed in these 12 years?**

We've printed close to 4,000 designs. Maybe more with our GAP deal, but that is in a different database.

**How many people work in the different areas of Threadless?**

We have about 80 people full-time and about 70 tem in the warehouse right now. Out of the 80 full-time people, 20 or 30 are in the warehouse and about 50 are working on the front end of the business.

**In a way, you are producing two things as part of Threadless. One is the physical products, such as the t-shirts, iPhone cases, mugs and many other things, but you are also producing a brand and a sense of community. In this building you not only have the warehouse for the products, but also the offices with a large amount of people working on the website, forum, blog, competitions, and engagement with the community.**

We are a weird balance between platform and brand. A mass customization platform like CafePress prints anything that comes in. The difference with us is that we accept everything, but then there is a level of curation, where we apply a brand perspective to it. Most brands have something aspirational about them and that's why you connect with them. For example, with Patagonia you want to be outdoors doing cool stuff. I think Threadless is about supporting independent artists and finding really talented people, a lot of time those who go unseen. Most big name artists get there because of the network that they build and it's hard for an artist to break through. In a way, we level the playing field a little bit and allow anybody to be found. In the end, it is about the best artists, because we don't print everything.

**As that is decided by popular vote, you are giving back the responsibility to the community of not only producing the design but also deciding whom the best is. That also makes the community be proactive. There are other companies that people associate with, but they don't have that interaction, the consumers aligned with their ideas, but that's it. They are passive consumers.**

One thing that I learned is that most of our customers feel that, just by buying our shirt, they are part of the process of making it real. When a customer feels that they are part of the process of making it just by buying, it is really neat.

**You are an advocate for making things, as you shared in your TEDxBoulder talk last year. Why do you think people should be making things?**

There are a million different reasons. I am not sure if one of my slides said, "Make your own luck," but I think that sums it all up. You are not going to get lucky unless you are going to do something to earn that. You have to put yourself out in the world. During our meetings, I don't like to just discuss things that we could be doing, especially when the ideas never come to life. It's so much more important to do the work and get the thing out there. We like to get our ideas out of our head and work with our hands.

**It refers to the beginning of our conversation, when you said that, when you started Threadless, you had no idea about how to run the business or produce anything, but you just starting making it. This has come up in previous conversations we have had with other people in Chicago. It's this idea of being naïve that keeps you fresh, because you don't have preconceived ideas. You just have to figure things out for yourself.**

One of the biggest strengths when starting Threadless was my complete ignorance about how any of this worked. Not just how to ship things or charge credit cards, but also how to run a business. I think that, if I had gone to business school and learned how complicated it is, I wouldn't have even wanted to do it in the first place. It's this "ignorance is bliss" idea, and then you approach things with a fresh eye, where you do what is not supposed to be done. You carve your own path.





**A lot of your content and engagement happens online, but you also have a retail space in Chicago, and you create events for designers to come together. How important to you are the physical and virtual aspects of Threadless?**

I think it's important for us to get out of the way, to allow our community to have relationships with each other rather than individually have a relationship with Threadless. So we do a lot of things to bring people together. We have a few thousand people who regularly participate on the forum. It's not a huge chunk of our audience or customers, but they are the core people who really care the most. So we do events around the world to bring these people together. Every year we do a thing here in Chicago where people fly in from around the world and hang out with each other. There are usually events in California that we go out to because we have a pretty big crowd there. I was just in Singapore where we threw a party and three thousand people showed up, it was awesome. When you spend time in real life with people and put faces to names it's super powerful. You are 99% of the time online talking with these people and, when you have that 1% of the time to be together, it makes that relationship so much better.

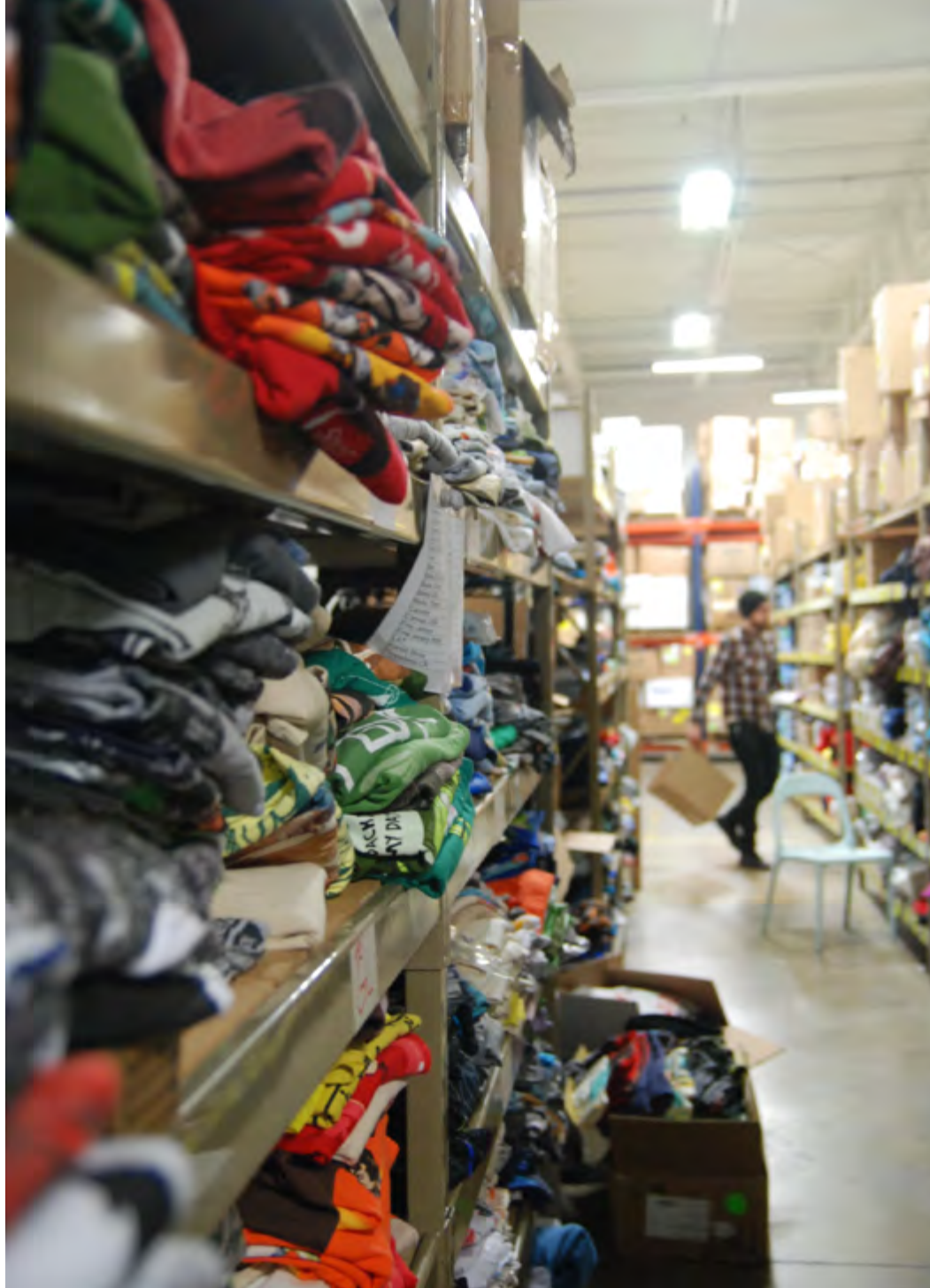
**Are there any other fields that you think could benefit from crowdsourcing?**

I think the best place to do it is where there is already an existing and really active community of people doing things that don't have anything productive, although I'm not sure if that's the right word. Say it's a hobby, something that you spend three hours a day working on, and its outcome doesn't have an impact on the world. It's those types of communities where I think a company can be formed to help people turn their hobbies into something beneficial. Hobbies like music, cooking, those kinds of activities. Maybe there is something to build around that. One thing about Threadless is that we are not asking you to actually produce the thing or get really technical. You don't even have to know how to set up your files or screen-printing. So, if we're talking about cooking, people only need to be able to come up

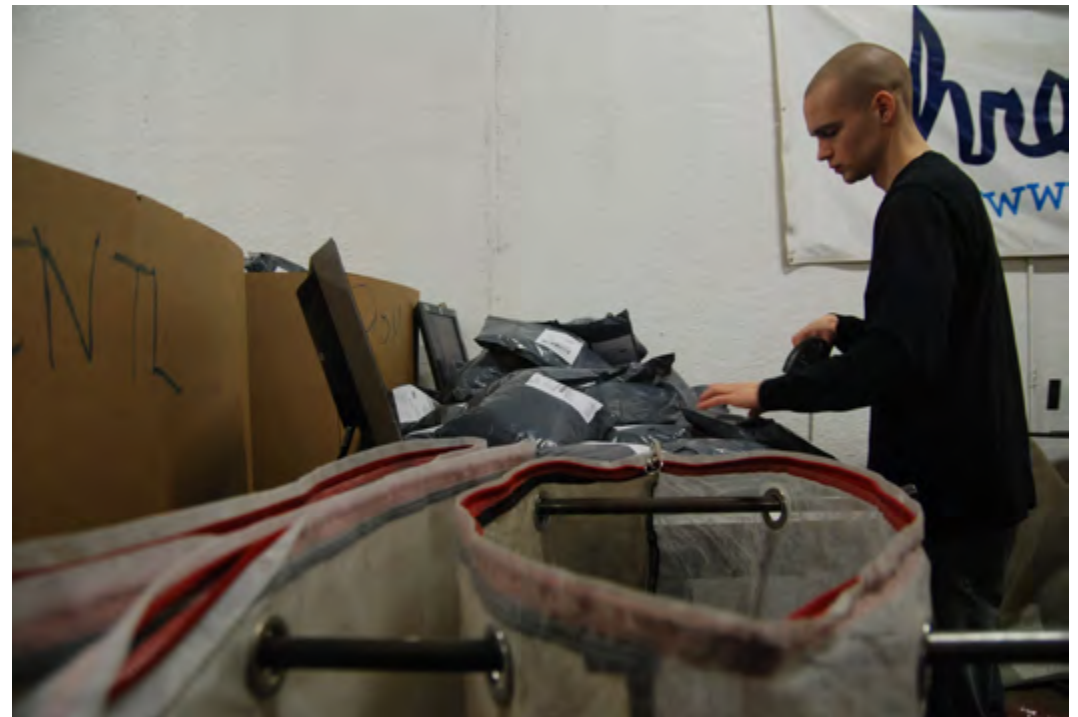
























# Software to Produce

**Rod Hunting interviews Jason Fried, founder and CEO of 37signals**

37signals | Founded in 1999 | 36 employees

Originally created to redesign websites, 37signals turned their need to manage their client projects into basecamp, an incredibly popular and successful software tool now used by millions. The programs they create have become the go-to platform for many other companies to operate. Rod Hunting talks to Jason Fried, founder and CEO of 37signals, about the origins of the company, its culture and the lessons we can all learn from their experience.

~

## When was 37signals created?

37signals started in 1999, doing work for hire with firms that needed website redesigns. But it wasn't until 2004 that we became a software company and released basecamp.

## What was your original intent for 37signals?

When we made basecamp, we really made it for ourselves. We needed a way to manage our client projects. We were getting busier and busier and managing projects with email and other things and none of them were working well for us. So, we built basecamp to allow us to keep our clients in the loop and get feedback from them and to keep things in one central place, so everyone knew where it was. And that was really the intent: just to kinda build it for ourselves. But then, after we started using it with some clients, they began to say, "Hey, where can I get this? I can use this for my own projects." And that's when the light bulb went off. We thought, "There have to be a lot of other firms just like us, using email," or at the time, Microsoft Projects was really popular, but it wasn't really working for people. So, we decided to put it on the market and about a year later, it was doing more business for us than our consulting business, so we stopped consulting and focused only on software.

## Do you feel like if you're in need of a service or product that other people out there will need it too? The idea that your problems and needs = other peoples' problems and needs. Is that what keeps pushing you to create new software?

Whenever you build something to scratch your own itch, you're probably scratching a lot of other itches at the same time. Now, maybe 10 years ago, it would've been harder to scratch all those other itches for all those other people, because it would've been harder to reach them. But now, with the Internet, you can reach millions of people for next to nothing, and so that itch that you have is probably shared by thousand, or tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of other people, too. The trick now is how to get the word out to them so they know. Before, you'd have to buy a bunch of ads or try and get software on a shelf somewhere, and



that seems really expensive and hard to do. So everyone has a really big advantage these days. I think that when you solve your own problems with software, you have a much better understanding of quality and whether something actually really solves the problem, rather than trying to solve problems for other people, where you're not quite connected to the problem. You can do a lot of research and talk to a lot of people, but you'll never really know how well that solves the problem, because it's not solving your own. If you really care about delivering something great, you should probably look to yourself first and solve your own problems. And in fact, if you look at a lot of great products out there, a lot of them are built by people who built those products for themselves.

### **How many people work at 37 signals? How many work remotely?**

We have 36 people. 13 in Chicago and the rest remote, in 23 separate cities around the world. Most are in the US, but we have some in Canada, a couple in the UK, there's one in Russia and we just hired someone in Berlin. Even the people who live in Chicago work remotely, too, so they don't come into the office everyday.

### **Do you think that a physical office space is as important as it once was for operating a business?**

It's certainly less important that it once was, but I still think it's really nice to have a central place to meet together when you need to. But our office is really the exception to the rule, not the norm. I think one of the problems with having an office is that if you've spent money on it, you think everyone should be there. And then everyone comes in all time, and then when everyone's all together all the time, you interrupt each other and things get off track, and you waste time during the day, and that's why a lot of people end up doing work from home, or work late at night or early in the morning because no one else is around. So the downsides of the office sound like the upside to most people. The upsides are easy collaboration and you can jump into a meeting room and chat and riff on stuff. But, actually, I think most of the time those are downsides. The way we use our office is actually the exception to the rule.

### **In your book REWORK, I love the chapter "interruption is the enemy of productivity." That's something that I don't think a lot of people realize in an office, how you stay reachable, yet unreachable, to be productive.**

We have what we call library rules. Be quiet, respect everyone else's privacy and space, don't make a lot of noise and don't distract people. When you have that understanding, a lot of things just fall into place. So if someone wants to talk to someone, they'll whisper, and maybe they'll pull them into a separate room. If someone was at the library and pulled out their cell phone and started talking, everyone would be like, 'what the hell, this is totally inappropriate!' But in an office, that's not the case. Except in our office. It's not an office, it's actually like a work library. We built it that way. Most libraries have private rooms where you can go and have conversations at normal volumes. We have five of these spaces. I think it has to be part of your culture to in order for this to work. It's very hard to change an office that has traditional office rules to library rules if people are using the office as a place to just







interrupt each other and talk a lot. It's an important thing to set up in the culture very early on.

### **Is this something that people typically adhere to?**

People are generally cool with this. Sometimes things get a little rowdy here and there, but it's totally fine, because it's the exception. Exceptions are totally fine with me. It's more about the norm. When the norm becomes interruptions and loudness and distractibility and the inability for people to focus, that's the problem. Also, we have a big communal table in the kitchen which seats 20 people. It's this huge, wooden, heavy table and a lot of people will work around that table. In the kitchen people will talk at normal volumes and that's totally fine. We also built our office to have a lot of acoustical materials and a layout that's all about having open space, but also reducing sound transmission. That was a key requirement for the new office: keep it open, but keep it quiet. There's a lot of soft materials, we used felt, and some stacked materials that deflect sound and some sound absorbing panels and things like that to really reduce sound transmission.

### **Obviously open source software and creative commons have helped a lot of people. What do you think about this shift to transparency from proprietary /trademarked ideas? Do you think it increases productivity in general, or does it hinder the creation of new ideas/things because people are scared of imitators?**

I think anyone who's scared of having his idea ripped off is probably not going to make anything great anyways. I think people who make great things are making things great because they can't do anything else. And that's one of the things I love about open source. I'm mostly a designer, so I don't really participate in open source per se, but I love the ethos of it. A lot of our infrastructure is based on open source. The idea that you build something great, put it out there, give it back to the community and let them make it even better, that's great because infrastructure is really hard to build, technological infrastructure. So having dozens of people, potentially even hundreds, contributing back to a project, each one of them running into different problems in their own business and solving them and contributing those ideas back to the world, I find that just to be such a valuable, special way to move ahead. Compared to locking everything down, making things proprietary, protecting everything so closely that new ideas don't happen and people are afraid to build things because they're afraid of being sued.

### **Where did the name 37signals come from?**

One of my original business partners, Carlos Segura, a designer in Chicago, was watching the PBS show NOVA. They were talking about SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) and had analyzed all these signals from space—radio waves, microwaves, frequencies, you name it—there was just a bunch of noise out there. And they'd analyzed these signals, but at the time, this was 1999, there were 37 signals that couldn't be explained. We all loved it, there were just four of us at the time, and the domain name was available, so we said let's do it.











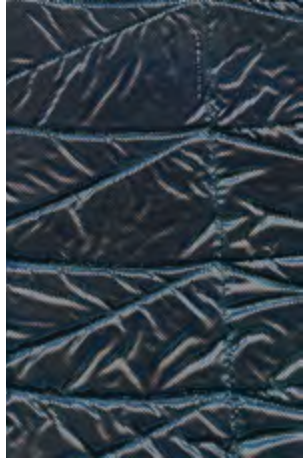




# Your Favorite Object







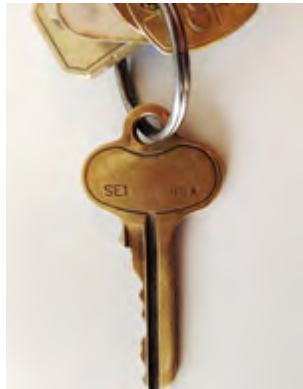
The inside of my jacket shares the same technology as most pizza delivery bags./ Alexa Viscius



I love using Post-It Notes as a temporary mind map. While brainstorming, I can write my thoughts on the notes and shuffle them around until I am ready to proceed with my ideas. / Andrew Castro



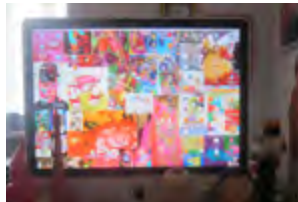
I have carried a handkerchief on a daily basis, on and off, for almost a decade now. I remember my dad having the standard white cotton hanky everywhere he went when I was growing up. Mostly for absurdly loud nose blowing. But now that I have adapted the use of a hanky for things other than nose blowing, I have found myself using it every single day for so many different reasons. I have used a hanky as a lunch box, bandage, sun block, dog toy, sling shot, a tie for bags while commuting on my bike... the list is endless. / Chad Kouri



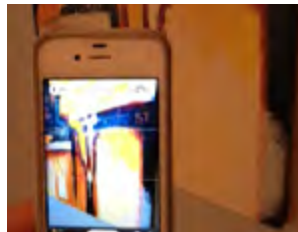
This is the key to a warehouse on Goose Island where I used to park production trucks when I was a production assistant. The garage is long gone but I still have the key. / Anwar Khuri



My favorite object(s) are a set of 1950's scotch glasses designed by Dorothy Thorp. They were a birthday gift from my girlfriend. I had seen them on the TV show Madmen and commented on how nice I thought they were. She tracked down four originals from that era. I am pretty sure it is lead paint around the rim but I really enjoy them. / Christopher Lawton



This is my computer, my image factory. I spend hours and hours creating images, absolutely in love with it! / Bebel Franco



I consider the iPhone the one product that I can't live without because it simply owns and manages the workflow of everything I do in my daily life. From performance measuring of my exercise routines to logging my ever-expanding list of "ideas" to letting me proactively manage and perform work activities from practically anywhere, my iPhone makes managing my life a much more streamlined and enjoyable experience. / Chris Sherrill



These flags, Tibetan prayer flags, are from a Buddhist monastery I visited when I went to see the Dalai Lama speak. They have hung over my bed since. Each flag has five boxes. A different animal symbol is in each box. In the spaces between the boxes, there are blocks of text in Tibetan. / Ella Kinsman



My "transfigurator" makes me believe that everything is possible! / Luis, 10 years old



The most constant part of my practice is brainstorming in the form of lists, which is always the first step towards an idea and something that I do regularly. / Christalena Hughmanick



These are death dice: small, wooden, multicolored dice embroidered with stitching to make them appear leathery. They are stamped on each side with gold numbers or words. Rolling them determines the date of your inevitable death. / Elizabeth Adams



I like pachouli, candles, weed, beers that require bottle openers, cigarettes and mischief. / Drew Ryan



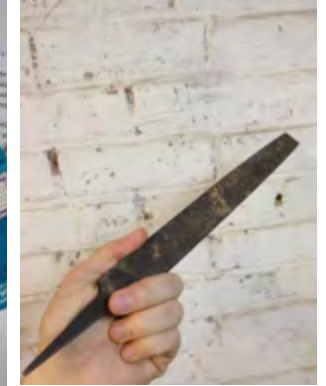
When I need to concept or write, I have to chew gum. Lots of it. The brand is always Extra. I'll go through a pack in about two hours. / Deanna Stallsmith



While living London after college and became enamored with the electric tea pots found in every home and business. My mom bought this Russell Hobbs electric tea kettle for me the Christmas I returned. Early on I used it to make instant soup and ramen. Then I had a hot-brewed iced coffee phase. Most recently, I've been back to Earl Gray tea. / Dominy Edwards



From: Somewhere in Asia, possibly China Made Of: Glass with bells inside and paint Why: It looks like it is made for a ritualistic purpose / Alejandro DiPrizio



Nothing is as useful for working wood or metal as a good file. All my files have a special place in my tool kit, but this one belonged to my Grandpa. / Dan Kops



This breast cancer ribbon has never been worn by anyone. It is to honor my mother who passed away from breast cancer. / Alexis Moore



I was introduced to this tool of production while with Goods!, a Berkeley, California design and manufacturing firm best known for their "Zip Lamp" and perhaps slightly lesser known for the working vintage bumper cars that were used on occasion in the studio. / Dave Simon





This Inflatable patriotic assault rifle toy was obtained in 2012 via the Boone County Fair in scenic Belvidere, Illinois. Being true Mid-westerners, my mother always told me that no matter wherever I am in the world, I must always come home for the county fair. I can miss Christmas, Thanksgiving, her birthday, and Easter if I need to; but I can't miss the fair, of which we have attended every year without fail. I like my mom and I plan on sticking to her advice for as long as I live. / Emily Haasch



Being human is a powerful concept. The changes that happen in and out of the body are astonishing: the color of your eyes, the tone of your voice, or the adjustments of your attitude. I focus on physical growth. / Benjamin Marshall Jr.



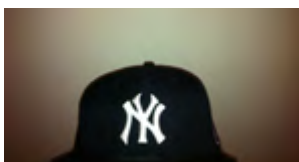
Any given time, I own several pairs of Converse Chuck Taylor All Stars, mostly high-top and some low-top. I love their design and versatility and you'll find me wearing a pair almost every day. / Iker Gil



Made out of canvas, this is one of my retired shoes that I wore to the very end. It was deteriorating naturally until I finally ripped off the sole. I believe shoes tell a story of where you've been. "Don't buy new shoes until you make a million." — Lil b / Ethan Viets-VanLear



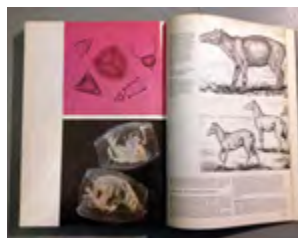
These steel salt & pepper shakers are hand-me-downs that originally came to me oxidized and black after years in a drawer. After a quick polish, I became obsessed with the quality, weight & simplicity of them. As a general rule - I love things that never break, go out of style or need replacing. / Jessica Lybeck



It symbolizes where I came from and how important it is never to forget that. I wouldn't be the person I am today without it. / Ishmael Adam



My item is a Prince Albert tobacco case. It holds things that are important to me. I bought the case in New York. It was my first case, and I have since been collecting them ever since. / Andres Salamanca



I have a huge collection of encyclopedias, both for children and adults, from the last 50 years. I love the variety of illustrations and photographs and the strange and wonderful facts within which surprise me everytime I open them! / Holly Wales



This blanket is the warmest, softest, and richest colored textile I have ever had the pleasure to wrap myself in, but I love the occasional thistle thorn that can be found buried deep in its fluffed fibers, a reminder of the old world process used to produce this. It is mohair, hand dyed and woven in Ezcaray, Spain, run through rolling spindles of dried thistles and finally, hand brushed, to achieve ultimate fluffiness. / Julie Michiels



I will say, that I find myself staring out the window often. So maybe that's mine? My office with a window? It frees up my mind to let ideas come in. Which is kinda funny since my view is blocked by a half-constructed building -- victim of recession. But if I recline enough in my chair, I can catch a glimpse of blue sky. My window is also a source of entertainment -- as I am writing this there is a guy peering over the roof edge of the adjoining building. But now I must continue to stare at him to see that he doesn't fall... / Karen Rafeedie



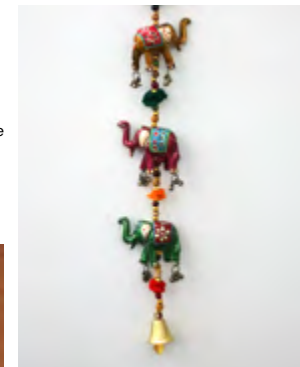
I'm lugging this book everywhere in the world with me. It's very comforting that it always has an answer. / Mika Savelle



Moleskine weekly notebook. Old school calendar and task manager. Only thing that keeps me on track at work and at home. / Nicole Wilson



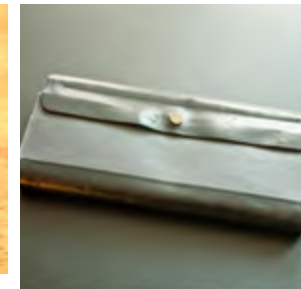
I don't smoke, nor like ashes, but this ashtray is always on my desk. It used to belong to my great-grand mother. She did not smoke either. The small devil inspires me, not sure why...maybe it shows me that we all can have our favorite little devil. / Marcos Magalhaes



This chain of beads was given to me by my grandmother on our last trip to India. As I was about to leave for boarding school, my grandmother gave it to me as a good luck charm and a remembrance of home. The chain has a loop that is made of gold and red cloth and the décor brings feelings of warmth and excitement into any room. / Elizabeth Johnson



This is a box that fits inside a hand. Waxy to the touch, it is made of things that were lost and found, materials crafted by man or by nature, and assembled with love. / Rosa Novak



This is a Postalco\* toolbox. I bought this toolbox short after arriving to the country for the first time, and it has been always with me in all my travels, carrying my drawing pens and pencils. Every time I open it, I feel happy and bounded to it in a special way, since I can feel the love that's put in making it, and that inspires me to make nice things. / Luis Mendo

\*Postalco is a small Japanese brand whose items are made with a very special design, the best materials and made with great craftsmanship in Japan.

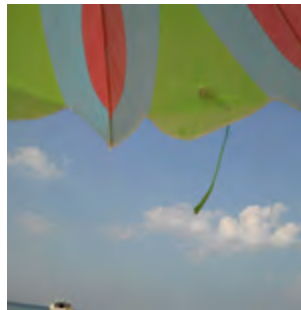


We built it together, my son and I. What I like the most about it is the fact that it is a mode of transportation, intent to take toys from one shelf to the other, new ideas from a world to another. / Maria Haddock Lobo





This is a bowl that my mom made and gave to me for my 30th birthday. I probably eat out of it every night. When I started taking pottery classes she dug into her old tools and discovered this unglazed bowl. We then went and glazed it together. She stopped doing pottery about 15 years ago, so its near and dear to me. I'm slowly working up my own skills and hope to someday throw a bowl as beautiful as hers. / Mollie Edgar



I love the colors, the sun, the water, the sounds, the sand of the beach. And I love this old umbrella because it protects me while I sit at my favorite place in the world. / Ramona Lauras Viscus



My beyblade is my favorite object because I love to play with it with my friends in school. / Paula, 7 years old



Every morning I stir my coffee with this spoon—a piece of vintage Dansk flatware that my parents received on their wedding day in 1970. For decades, the rare, circular shape of the stem has confused guests that use this utensil. But the sensation of holding this object is a daily reminder that straying from uniformity can bring beauty and joy. / Nora Semel



Tape is my favorite productivity tool & useful object it can do more things than my computer...usually, until is gone, then I buy another one. / Pierina Benvenuto



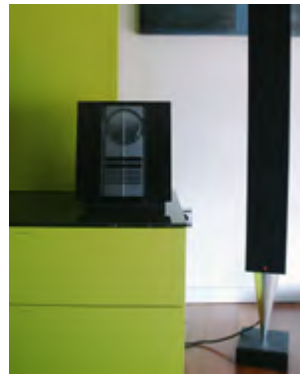
This is a necklace that I crafted from a particular form of quartz and wire. This necklace is special because I made it during a very rough time in my life, and the stone means a lot to me. / LaMar Gayles



The trusty and versatile Fineline Pen puts the objects in my head to paper. Being that its language is always more eloquent and articulate than mine, it never leaves my pocket. / Mike Serafin



This is my good luck charm that has traveled with me since I was five years old. The cicada has been in this jar for 20 years and has brought me good fortune ever since it was given to me. / Marissa Macias



My favorite object, or one of them, is the sound system. Its design is simple, timeless and precise, and provides an excellent quality of music reproduction. / Rafael Gil



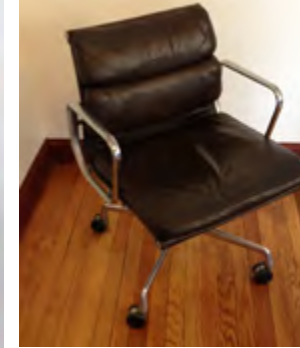
When I was ten years old, I asked my grandma what she thought of my personality. In response, she made this strange looking doll. Although it is made with simple yarn and craft store items, the bright colors and fluffy bottom symbolize what people think of me, especially my grandma. Now that she is gone, this is the only tangible representation of our close friendship. / Olivia So



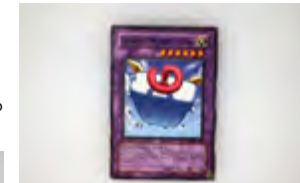
This is a pocketknife from my grandmother. She is my role model because she has always been there for me. She is also well known in the martial arts field. She used to have an eight-pack and was very skilled with weapons. Although she is a lot older now, I still treasure her, and I treasure the knife because I feel it protects me when I'm in trouble (not physically but in spirit). / Xavier Smith



The NCC official portable type studio. / Stephen Smith



I bought this chair used, I sit on it every day to work for the past 5 years. I like the idea that it has been used before me and maybe someone will use it once it is no longer mine. / Renata Graw



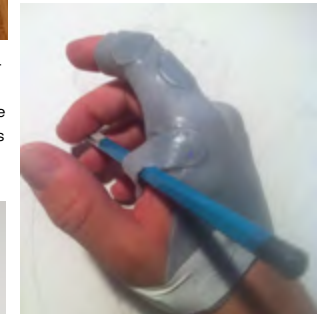
This is a Yugioh card. I just happened to have it in my wallet when I was looking for an object. It is not anything too special, I just really like Moki Moki and the card art. / Oran Dillon



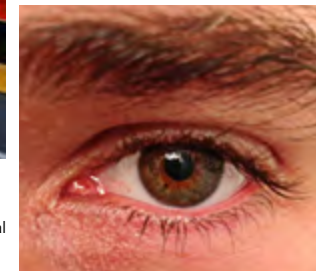
I built a creative ritual around this 70s Steelcase couch in my office. To get away from the computer and enable real thinking, I put on a record and sit here with my sketchbook. "Couch Time" is focused and creative and has become critical to the imaginative early stages of producing work. / Shawn Hazen



Creating social media marketing magic anytime from anywhere! / Shannon Downey



Everything that I create in both my art and my design starts with a concept. Most concepts start with sketching, and many works are eventually completed through drawings. I injured my right index finger last year and haven't been able to draw for 8 months, but after making a plastic brace with a pencil mount I am able to do some basic sketching again. / Ray Horacek



My eye drives my production. It is the guide to all I make. It conducts research and gathers inspiration. It is a choreographer directing other tools to achieve its vision. It judges, critiques, and inspects for perfection. / Johnathan Bufalino



## **JAMES BLACK**

is a Los Angeles-based architect. Along with Garrett Belmont, in 2003 he launched Architecture Burger to publish original design and research work, with particular focus on the intersections between design culture and popular culture.

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is a designer whose persuasive, up-beat illustration and design has been commissioned by cultural, social and commercial clients around the world from New York, to London to Tokyo. Burrill works across a range of media, including posters, moving image and three-dimensional work. He combines an instinctive handling of color and composition with a witty approach to words.

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## **EDWARD BURTYNSKY**

is known as one of Canada's most respected photographers. His imagery explores the intricate link between industry and nature, combining the raw elements of mining, quarrying, manufacturing, shipping, oil production and recycling into eloquent, highly expressive visions that find beauty and humanity in the most unlikely of places. His remarkable photographic depictions of global industrial landscapes are included in the collections of over fifty major museums around the world.

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is a designer at MINIMAL and a collaborator in MAS Studio. He has designed solutions for communications, brand, vision, experience and visualization projects. His work is featured in "Shanghai Transforming" (Actar, 2008), "Building Globalization" (UChicago Press, 2011), and "Work Review" (GOOD Transparency).

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is an architect, urban designer, and director of MAS Studio. In addition, he is the editor in chief of MAS Context. He is the recipient of the 2010 Emerging Visions Award from the Chicago Architectural Club.

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## **JONN HERSCHEND**

is an interdisciplinary artist, filmmaker and experimental publisher whose work explores fiction, reality and the narrative structures that we employ as a way to explain the chaos and clutter of our everyday lives. He is the co-founder and co-editor, along with Will Rogan, of the experimental publication THE THING Quarterly.

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## **CODY HUDSON**

is a Chicago based artist, also known for his graphic design contributions under the name Struggle Inc. His graphic work and paintings have been exhibited throughout the US, Europe and Japan. He has produced logos, album covers, and clothing for clients such as Nike, Converse, Stussy, The Cool Kids, and A-TRAK.

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## **ROD HUNTING**

spends most of his day relentlessly hitting refresh on his email and nervously biting his nails. Usually he can be found at his day job, in a small brand design group within Ogilvy, called 485, eating pears, drinking tea and wrangling cats — but not always at the same time.

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## **CHAD KOURI**

is a Chicago-based artist. With equal interests in conceptual art, ethnography, typography, design, jazz and the gray areas between these fields, his body of work is a collection of various ongoing projects, thoughts and experiments tied together by a strong sense of composition, concise documentation and an overall vibe of optimism.

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## ANDREAS E.G. LARSSON

is a Swedish photographer based in Los Angeles. Influenced by the trademark simplicity of Scandinavian design, Larsson's photographs are clean and uncluttered. His portfolio includes interiors, portraits, editorial features and advertising campaigns, and his images have appeared in world-renowned publications.

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## JULIA LUKE

Julia Luke is Senior Designer at the Hammer Museum overseeing design and production of all museum collateral from quarterly magazines and invitations to environmental and exhibition signage. Before joining the Hammer, she worked as a designer at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles. Her work was recognized in Print's 2006 Regional Design Annual and in 2009 for the Francisco Mantecón International Advertising Poster Competition, Vigo, Spain.

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## MCA'S TEEN CREATIVE AGENCY (TCA)

is a rigorous program where you interpret and make sense of art, yourself, and your world through the lens of your own creative questions and passions, and with contemporary art as a resource.

**[www2.mcachicago.org/teens/program](http://www2.mcachicago.org/teens/program) | [@mcachicago](#)**

## JAKE NICKELL

has been making websites since 1995. In November of 2000 his life spiraled into crazy-rad-town when he made Threadless.com... and then into a bustling metropolis of rad when his wife and he made two super-kids. Wide-eyed forever!

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## PRELINGER ARCHIVES

was founded in 1983 by Rick Prelinger in New York City. Over the next twenty years, it grew into a collection of over 60,000 "ephemeral" (advertising, educational, industrial, and amateur) films. In 2002, the film collection was acquired by the Library of Congress, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division.

**[archive.org/details/prelinger](http://archive.org/details/prelinger) | [@footage](#)**

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is an architectural critic, curator, and educator. She is publications director at Yale School of Architecture and editor of the biannual publication Constructs, the exhibition catalogs, as well as the school's book series. Her current research and projects focus on the intersection of urban design and infrastructure, innovative engineering, and factory spaces. She is curator and director of the Vertical Urban Factory project.

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## DEBORAH RICHMOND

is an architect based in Los Angeles and principal of Deborah Richmond Architects. She uses research, writing, photography and installations to explore and document the intermodal relationships between buildings, transportation logistics, consumer urbanism and cultural theory. She has taught critical theory at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA and design studio at the University of Southern California, SCI-Arc, UCLA and currently at Woodbury University.

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is the owner and CEO of Heritage Bicycles, a Chicago-based company that builds American-made bicycles, provides fashionable biking accessories and serves one of the best coffees in the city.

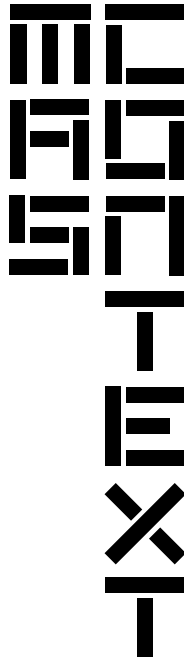
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## DAVID SIEREN

works all the time and is never home, much to the dismay of his [Post] Family brethren. It wasn't until relatively late in life that he decided to pursue a career in design in lieu of life as a photographer—however coming from a lineage of designers and artists, the foundation was always there.

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Issue 16 / Winter 12

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# MAS CONTEXT

Issue 17 / Spring 13

## BOUNDARY

Our next issue will focus on the topic of BOUNDARY.

We all set our personal and physical boundaries. They are important to keep us running as well as sane. Other boundaries, established by people, countries or nature are used to define edges, separate two entities and interrupt natural flows such as human migrations and ecosystems. Natural and artificial boundaries exist and will continue to do so in one way or another. Is it possible, then, to rethink what a boundary is, what its potential in our society can be, and if we even need them?

For this issue we are soliciting submissions that address critically the role of boundaries and their potential in defining them or blurring them.

17 | BOUNDARY SPRING 13 will be published on early March, 2013.



Issue 16 / Winter 12

PRODUCTION

# TEXT

James Black | Anthony Burrill | Edward Burtynsky | Andrew Clark | Jason Fried | Iker Gil | John Herschend | Glenn Himman | Arnold Horween III |  
Cody Hudson | Rod Hunting | Chad Kouri | Andreas E.G. Larsson | Julia Luke | MCA's Teen Creative Agency | Jake Nickell | Prelinger Archives |  
Nina Rappaport | Deborah Richmond | Michael Salvatore | David Steren