

the true
measure of
a space is
how it makes
us feel

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the human factor

EVERY INTERIOR HAS AN EFFECT, SOMETIMES PROFOUND. ALL SPACES EVOKE A RESPONSE AMONG THOSE WHO INTERACT EVEN BRIEFLY WITH ITS PLANES AND SURFACES, AND “FEEL” ITS EFFECTS. AND IF IT IS AGREED THAT, IN THE LONG RUN, AN INTERIOR SPACE—IN PARTICULAR, A WORKSPACE—DERIVES MEANING FROM ITS INHABITANTS, THEN AS A MATTER OF COURSE WE WILL MEASURE A SPACE—WHATEVER ITS FUNCTION—BY HOW IT MAKES US FEEL.

THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS OF THIS BOOK FOCUS ON THE ELEMENTS OF INTERIOR DESIGN AND HOW THEY MAY BE PUT TO USE TO CREATE A MORE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE, TO CREATE MORE HAPPINESS, AT WORK. OUR DISCUSSION RANGES ACROSS THE TYPES OF SPACES ONE ENCOUNTERS IN THE MODERN OFFICE OVER THE COURSE OF A WORKDAY—AND PROPOSES THAT FEELING WELCOME, EMPOWERED, CONNECTED, CALM AND COMFORTABLE HELPS PEOPLE TO DO THEIR BEST WORK. EQUALLY, COMPANIES THAT SEEK TO BECOME SKILLED IN LEVERAGING THE POWER OF DESIGN, THAT USE DESIGN TO ENGAGE AND INSPIRE, OFTEN FIND WORKERS A GREAT DEAL MORE LIKELY TO EXHIBIT CREATIVITY, COMMITMENT AND A SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY IN THE COLLECTIVE EFFORT.

WHATEVER THE PREVAILING AESTHETIC MODEL OF DESIGN, AND HOWEVER COMPLEX THE CONCERNS AND CONSTRAINTS THAT DESIGNERS MUST ADDRESS, WE HAVE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO PUT BEAUTY AND MEANING INTO THE EVERYDAY WORK ENVIRONMENT. WE HAVE A CHANCE, AND EVEN A MANDATE, TO IMPROVE PEOPLE’S LIVES. THAT, IN ESSENCE, IS THE STORY OF DESIGN IN EARLIER ERAS AND THIS ONE. DESIGN DOES MATTER.

STEVE DELFINO

inhabited space

the dialects of inside and outside

COMING INSIDE, ONE INVARIABLY ENCOUNTERS NEW TERRITORY, NEW AND PERHAPS UNFAMILIAR TERRAIN. IMMEDIATELY, THE SCALE OF THE SPACE IS DIFFERENT, THE QUALITY OF LIGHT IS ALTERED AND, IF WE HAVE STEPPED IN FROM THE STREET, THE LEVEL OF NOISE AND HUSTLE IS LIKELY DIMINISHED. INSIDE, IT LOOKS AND FEELS DIFFERENT. THERE ARE NEW RULES OF ENGAGEMENT. AND, CHANCES ARE, WE RESPOND CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY TO THE MEASURABLE AND IMMEASURABLE QUALITIES OF THE SPACE. WE FEEL ANTICIPATION—OR, IN SOME CASES, ANXIETY.

Any interior space provides information and offers messages received in the form of scale and proportion, color and shape, texture and detail. How then do we create spaces that send the right message, that serve our purposes? How do we anticipate the physical and psychological effects of any given space? It is our purpose here to explore how we, as human beings, experience the places we inhabit—and to consider how we might design spaces that people feel good in.

While much of this discussion will apply to a spectrum of interior spaces, it will focus on the workplace, where, in fact, most of us spend most of our time—about 60% of waking hours each day. Thus, the places we work have an enormous impact on our bodies and minds, which in turn, affects our potential for creativity at work and for happiness in any context.

Historically, there have been various ways to measure how well the design of an interior space “works.” In a volatile economy, the metric may be the ability to fit as many people and desks into as little real estate as possible. Humanizing or stylish touches may have to go. Such determinants have a rightful place among the tenets of design, but it is certainly possible to reconcile economic necessities, with design that’s intelligent, interesting and human-centered.

Every element of interior design—the shape of the space, the color of walls, the arrangement of furniture—is laden with messages. Each speaks to certain values. Each gives cues for behavior. Taken together, they suggest and invite a way of working, learning or socializing. One might cross the threshold into a space where neoclassical moldings and elegant furnishings speak to tradition or plunge into an open room where raw brick walls and unpainted wood planks allude to the rustic and informal. The visual language of the space communicates and informs, often evoking an emotional response and potentially leading us to pass a verdict on the nature of the enterprise that shaped it.

the language of space

WHETHER SOPHISTICATED ABOUT DESIGN OR INDIFFERENT, MOST PEOPLE WOULD AGREE THAT SOME SPACES FEEL GOOD AND IN OTHERS WE EXPERIENCE DISCOMFORT AND UNEASE. WRITERS HAVE EXPLORED THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF ARCHITECTURE AND ITS VARIOUS IDIOMS IN WORKS OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY. NEUROSCIENTISTS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS CONTRIBUTE EVIDENCE-BASED DATA TO THE DISCUSSION OF HOW INTERIOR SPACES CAN AFFECT MOOD, BEHAVIOR AND DECISIONS. ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS BRING THEORY AND REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE TO THE PROCESS OF DESIGN. YET EVEN INTUITIVELY, WE KNOW THAT THE WAY LIGHT FALLS IN A ROOM CAN CHARM AND DELIGHT; WE FEEL THAT SOME COLORS ARE CHEERFUL AND OTHERS ARE GRAVE.

In his book “The Architecture of Happiness,” Alain de Botton eloquently expresses our susceptibility to architecture and design: “Our sense of beauty and our understanding of the nature of a good life are intertwined. We seek ...metaphors for generosity and harmony in our chairs and an air of honesty and forth-rightness in our taps. We can be moved by a column that meets a roof with grace, by worn stone steps that hint at wisdom....”[01]

Verda Alexander, principal of Studio O+A, also refers to the symbolic function of design in an interview in Interiors magazine. She notes that Studio O+A’s design of the Uber headquarters in San Francisco was driven by the company’s “ethos of populist luxury,” [02] the intent to provide a broad demographic with access to the luxury of a private driver. The concept becomes tangible in rich materials like walnut, copper and leather balanced by “economy class” concrete and raw steel; a cool onyx wall in “dialogue” with the warmth of an Eames lounge chair; a stretch of open workbenches mixed with niches for private work. The design tells the story of collective creativity, a narrative that engages those who visit and those who inhabit the Uber space.

Given the expressive potential of buildings and our human tendency to associate ideas and feelings with the settings we encounter and inhabit, designers must consider what combination of volumes and planes, colors and textures, will elicit the desired response. What materials speak to the appropriate virtues and values? What sort of spaces can help to make people at work more creative, productive, healthy and happy?

There is a general consensus that fresh air and a pleasant view through a window are good things—and research supports that belief with data about the myriad benefits of airy, sunlit rooms. Other research amends our assumptions and we have gained new knowledge about human perception. There is, for example, the evidence that human beings crave the visual complexity of nature and, further, that complex fractal patterns can trigger positive behaviors. Lorraine Francis, Regional Director of Hospitality Interiors at Gensler reports that, based on recent studies, designers are now incorporating patterns that replicate or echo nature, not only to create a more “pleasant experience, but also trigger a deeper affinity to certain brands.”^[03]

As yet, no one can systematically correlate patterns, colors and textures with specific responses—and be always and everywhere accurate. Each person brings his or her own memories, dreams and reflections to the encounter with edifices and spaces. It is, however, a subject worth our consideration. But first, what are the elements of an interior that we perceive and respond to either consciously or unconsciously? What formal and material features of an environment have an impact on how we feel, think and behave?

space, light, geometry and materials

scale

Perhaps the first thing one notices about a room is its size, especially in proportion to oneself. We notice how high and how wide it runs. We notice how big or how small it feels—which depends in part upon how one’s perception of scale is altered by light, color and materials. A narrow space can feel claustrophobic or pleasantly intimate; a very large volume may be inspiring or disquietingly vast. The proportions of a room can feel instinctively “right” or “wrong.” Ultimately, it is the amalgam of several variables that create our first impression and our more lasting experience as we inhabit and adapt to the space.

light

Few elements of design arouse emotion as much as the quality of light, whether streaming through an open window or falling from an overhead tube. Light has profound symbolic meaning, perhaps because vision is eclipsed in its absence. Research makes a strong case for the salutary effects of natural light on mind and body, but daylight is also inconstant and unpredictable, given the rhythm of day and night and vagaries of weather. Thus, in most interiors, artificial light is employed to meet functional needs and to create aesthetic effects, according to the nature of the space and the activities of its occupants.

materiality

Materiality plays a critical role in defining a space and influencing occupants as they interact with their surroundings. While the mental process may be somewhat unconscious, human beings translate the texture of materials from the visual to the tactile, enriching the sensory experience and amplifying meaning. One can create “warmth” with soft, plush textiles or “coolness” with glass and metal. Or, one can animate a space and create interest through contrast and the dualities of burlap and unfinished plywood paired with lustrous marble and supple leather.

Primo Orpilla, principal of San Francisco architectural firm Studio O+A, has noted that people in today’s tech-driven workplace have an “appetite for the tactile.” In an interview posted on ideapaint.com, he says, “I’m talking about brick and steel, reclaimed wood,

raw concrete, stone. When much of the work you do is virtual, when each day you send your work product into the cloud, there is something satisfying about retiring to a coffee bar clad in red oak and walnut or going down to another floor by way of a blackened steel staircase.” [04]

color

Color, it is said, is mood, temperature and structure, “the essence of any interior design.” [05] To change the color of a room will cause its occupants to perceive the room differently—its physical attributes and its message. A room repainted sky blue or deep sienna acquires new meaning, a new “feeling” that an observer may interpret as ethereal or earthy, contemplative or visceral. Of course, the meaning of any color varies according to application and context. A vibrant red wall may or may not be appropriate according to what degree it dominates a space, the function of the space and who is looking at it. Black, with all its potential to connote a profound absence, can be bold and powerful depending upon the context.

sound

Beyond a first impression, each feature of a space modifies one’s experience. The almost subliminal hum of the office becomes a distinct piece of sensory information, composed of the pings, beeps and tic, tic, tic of typing and texting—quite separate from the play of light or contrasts of color. While the volume of sound in today’s workplace may not approach that of a foundry or textile mill, the distraction of chatter, clatter and crunch is often a source of frustration.

shape

Interior space contains all manner of shapes: the rectangular outlines of windows and doors, the figurative or free-form patterns of textiles and the linear or curved silhouettes of sofas and chairs. These shapes—round or angular, simple or complex, organic or geometric—are part of the visual grammar of a space and are often suggestive enough to influence one’s attitude and behavior.

Furniture always departs to some degree from pure utility, assuming endless variations of form that convey ideas through scale, material and shape—a formal symmetry or curvaceous embrace. Recognizing the expressive potential of furniture, office design today—especially in an entry or reception area—often incorporates softer, more inviting furniture shapes along with other elements that help to engage visitors in a state of comfort.

details

The simplest of objects, the smallest of details, carry a message with the potential to evoke an emotional response. When we sit down to work, we may feel affection for the way a task lamp anchors our desk and adjusts with the lightest touch. We derive pleasure from details like the grain in wood or the veins in stone. Details remind us to look and invite us to touch; they make objects and spaces more personal, intimate and relevant.

How then do architectural and design manipulations such as natural and reflected light, color and texture, volume and shape, become useful tools for creating a welcoming, inspiring, creative and empowering workplace?

the true measure
of a space is how
it makes us feel.



chapter 04: seat of roses

Translating a symbolic image to design, the photograph represents the premise that finishes and materials can convey the message of a “warm welcome” and create a feeling of anticipation, rather than anxiety. The chair takes the form of a bouquet. The masses of roses also indicate that natural materials, living plants and other direct and indirect expressions of nature have become part of today’s design strategies for creating a positive work environment.



chapter 05: balancing act

In terms of supporting individual work, the image proposes a need for balance—a balance of focus and interaction, stimulus and quiet, within the structure imposed by architecture and furniture. At the same time, the image uses books to symbolize the knowledge workers’ need to have access to information, as well as control of his environment.



chapter 06: tea service

As an image, the “tea service” represents the idea of office etiquette and the dynamics of interaction and collaboration. Like social rituals, workplace “manners” can be understood through cues provided by intelligent design—the application of warm materials, energizing colors and furniture configurations that convey the intended function of the space—to invite connection and collaboration. The message is implicit in the design. No instruction is required.



chapter 07: out of frame

Calming, restorative workspaces allow people to step away from the intense bustle of activity in the workplace, even without the availability of a wholly separate room. Quiet colors, simple furniture and some form of delineation or identification of separation—a screen, a high-back chair, a border of plants or other marker—are all that is required.



chapter 08: zero gravity

The woman is “floating on air,” completely at ease. As the photograph implies, a sustainable workplace addresses not only physical comfort—optimal temperature, fresh air, ergonomics—but also a feeling of being at home in the environment. This is in part a matter of culture, but also a matter of design. Naturally, a workplace that is intelligently planned and furnished communicates a culture that respects its people, a corporate value that contributes greatly to a psychological sense of comfort.

welcome

I feel welcome

RECEIVED WISDOM HAS IT THAT “YOU ONLY HAVE ONE CHANCE TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION.” WITHIN SECONDS OF ENTERING A RECEPTION AREA OR OTHER POINT OF ARRIVAL AND ENTRY, WE BEGIN TO INTERPRET WHAT WE SEE AND TO FORM EXPECTATIONS. IS THERE AN ATMOSPHERE OF DECORUM? OR, IS THE PLACE BUZZING WITH ACTIVITY? DOES IT FEEL WARM AND WELCOMING OR SLIGHTLY INTIMIDATING? A NEW CLIENT OR POTENTIAL EMPLOYEE WILL QUICKLY GET A FEEL FOR THE CHARACTER OF THE SPACE AND FOR THE BRAND AND CULTURE OF THE COMPANY. THE CLIENT WILL BEGIN TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT SHE WANTS TO DO BUSINESS HERE; THE JOB CANDIDATE WILL KNOW IF HE WANTS TO WORK HERE. THE BRAND EXPERIENCE STARTS AT THE POINT OF ARRIVAL.

Whatever its business, most companies recognize the value of a welcoming, well-appointed reception area. Architect Lauren Rottet, principal of Rottet Studio, notes that, “At Johnson Downie in Houston, a recruiting company for law firms, we designed a reception without a desk. Instead, the visitor enters right into a living room and kitchen space where they are greeted and offered refreshments. Knowing that food and drink are key to social interactions in hospitality spaces, the same can be true in a welcoming space in an office.”[06]

The Houston Chronicle describes the Johnson Downie office as “stunning aerie” in which a “white marble bar replaces the typical corporate reception desk, white leather furniture invites relaxation, rich wood floors bring a touch of warmth, a few chrome accents add sparkle and floor-to-ceiling windows suggest endless possibility.”[07] Rottet Studio’s fresh, approach creates a space of “extreme clarity and light” that might well transform the mood of visiting clients from one of anxiety to one of calm anticipation.

Gensler recently designed the flagship office of McCann World Group in midtown Manhattan, creating a main reception with a dramatic open flight of stairs that ascends to an executive level designed by Tom Dixon’s Design Research Studio. The double-height space resembles “a hip hotel lobby, with seating that’s tailored yet informal.” Rendered in an elegant palette of greys, the reception area is both approachable and impressive, as befits the gravitas of a global advertising agency founded well over a century ago.[08]

make sure it feels like
it's made by humans,
for humans.

stefan sagmeister



Today’s maturing start-ups also recognize the role that interior design plays in communicating brand identity and values. In New York, Warby Parker worked with Lynch Eisinger Design (LED) to create an office that is more understated than one might expect from a six-year-old group, but its reception still projects an energetic culture with mid-century elements and the words “NICE TO SEE YOU” written large across a white marble desk. Designed to help people feel at ease, while projecting Warby Parker’s new grown-up status, the entry uses a signature palette of blue, white, and gray, along with walnut shelving, cozy “Egg” chairs and other warm, welcoming elements. A central, double-height space contains an open staircase that allows “staff and visitors to share a point of entry, and common experience,” notes architect Simon Eisinger. [09]

Beyond establishing a visual language, interior design can create an inviting and immersive experience for every visitor to a workspace:

- Create an easy transition from the point of arrival into the interior space with an approachable reception desk – or no desk.
- Choose seating that invites people to relax.
- Provide support for personal technology.
- Warm lighting, intriguing artwork, plants and other design elements reinforce the brand and the sense of welcome.
- Plan a sequence of transitional spaces that create a sense of how the reception opens the way to the activities beyond.
- Offer generous options for refreshment.

em power ed

I feel empowered

LOOKING BACK A DECADE OR SO, THE OFFICE WAS EVOLVING INTO A MORE COLLABORATIVE SITE. YET, THE CORE OF THE WORKDAY IS OFTEN FOCUSED WORK, WHICH TYPICALLY TAKES PLACE AT A DESK, WORKBENCH, OR INDIVIDUAL WORKSTATION. IN AN IDEAL WORLD, EACH PERSON'S WORKSPACE ENABLES THE WORK THAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN THERE. PREFERABLY, THE CHAIR, DESK AND LAMP ADJUST TO FIT THE PERSON AND THE JOB. THE ARRANGEMENT OF SURFACES AND STORAGE PERMITS A SEAMLESS MOVEMENT FROM ONE TASK TO THE NEXT. AND THE WORKER HAS SOME MEANS OF MANAGING DISTRACTIONS—NOISE, CLUTTER AND DISCOMFORT—THAT CAN IMPAIR HOW WELL ONE PERFORMS.

Work environments are as various as men and women at work, but certain features appear to be vital to sustaining concentration and enabling productivity. Thermal comfort, good air quality, a supportive seat and lighting strategies that illuminate without creating glare or shadows are basic and essential. Practical design details—like a handy place to store a backpack and easy access to power outlets—also help to minimize the distraction of clutter or subliminal anxiety about the dwindling battery of a laptop.

Some measure of acoustic control is also key to staying on task. Excess noise is an irritant at all times and especially so deep in the “zone” of analyzing and solving a problem on deadline. Those who have a private office can close the door and switch off the phone. In an open space, the availability of barriers to sound—like acoustic screens—help give users a sense of authority over their personal space. Equally, activity in peripheral vision prompts us to glance up as a coworker passes by or stands up to adjust a desk. Mobile screens and adjustable desktop screens can mitigate such distraction and also minimize exposure to interruption, again enhancing a sense of control. Continual stimulation and constant interruption can lead to fatigue and burnout.

International engineering firm, Glumac, employed several creative strategies to enable worker performance in its Shanghai office, a 10,000-square-foot space set in a 1912 building designed by Louis Sullivan. Glumac employees work in a sunny, open plan office where noise is muffled by carpet patterned with organic forms resembling the flow of water or the evanescent forms of cirrus clouds. A Kvadrat cloud installation, created by Paris-based

for me, context is
everything—from that
comes the understanding
of everything.

kenneth noland, painter



designers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, further mitigates noise with green, white, gray and black acoustic panels that climb up the walls and across the ceiling. The striking installation absorbs sound that would otherwise reverberate throughout the space.

Affording Glumac’s employees a high degree of control over light levels was another priority. Windows with adjustable transparency regulate the amount of daylight that floods into the office. Dimmable LED desk lights, which project ambient light upward and direct light downward, provide optimal lighting conditions, while reducing electricity use. By varying the intensities of light to reflect the conditions that occur in nature, the lighting strategy ensures that employees remain comfortable, engaged and focused. [10]

Research undertaken by Gensler indicates that 30% to 40% of a person’s day involves “solo work” and concludes that, in fact, those who are able to focus are also more able to collaborate, learn and socialize than those who are not. When focus is compromised, neither works well. Diane Hoskins, CO-CEO of Gensler, interviewed in Fast Company, notes that, “There has to be a space where [the] individual can sit down, really crank things out, really focus, and not have a million distractions...They have to have enough space to do what they need and the resources to do it.”[11]

With quiet being a rare commodity at work, it is imperative to equip employees with the right tools and the right sort of environment, one that enables people to achieve focus and flow. Few of us will do our best work in a noisy room lacking any way to block sound and/or signal that we are not available for interruption. Most of us feel at least somewhat stressed in such conditions, which in turn can result in reduced productivity. Among the design factors that can influence and enable focus:

- Position individual workstations at a distance from noisy communal areas.
- Cool neutrals or a balance of warm/cool neutrals serve as a “quiet” envelope for focused work.
- Add cool accent colors: blues, greens and purples, as well as deep and pale gray and silver tones.
- Rather than using color for contrast, select colors that are close in value and hue, thereby providing balance and allowing the eye to rest.

- Use texture at varied scales.
- Employ screens, plants and other actual and perceived barriers that can provide a degree of acoustic and visual privacy.
- Views, especially views that contain natural flora and fauna, rest the eye and help to prevent fatigue.

connect ed

I feel connected

IN 2005, TEKNION PRODUCED “DESIGN DOES MATTER,” A HARDBOUND BOOK, WHICH INCLUDED AN ESSAY EXCERPTED FROM THE NEW OFFICE BY BRITISH ARCHITECT FRANCIS DUFFY. AMONG THE FIRST TO PLACE EMPHASIS ON HOW ORGANIZATIONS USE SPACE, DUFFY NOTED THAT THE LIMITED VOCABULARY OF STANDARD OFFICE LAYOUTS WAS, AT LAST, BEGINNING TO DEVELOP IN INTERESTING WAYS. DUFFY WROTE “THE OFFICE IS TURNING INTO A KIND OF CLUB. THE TRADITIONAL CLUB ALLOWS AN ELITE GROUP TO SHARE WHAT IS, IN EFFECT, A KIND OF PALACE, A RICH AND DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT THAT PROVIDES A LEVEL OF COMFORT AND SERVICE THAT EACH MEMBER COULD NOT AFFORD SEPARATELY. MOREOVER, BY FREQUENTING THE SAME CLUB, MEMBERS ARE ABLE TO TAKE CALCULATED ADVANTAGE OF THE PROBABILITIES OF MORE OR LESS ACCIDENTAL, MORE OR LESS INTENDED, PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS.” [13]

Duffy’s 1997 book describes rather well the contemporary office, including the concept of shared resources, the potential for serendipitous interactions and the sense of affiliation among its diverse members. With its lounges and other group spaces, today’s office may not be a “palace,” but does provide a spectrum of settings that reinforce community, including both formal and informal spaces where people connect, gather and converse. Whereas casual conversation was formerly regarded as a waste of time, it is now seen as a mechanism for creating new knowledge, especially in organizations where intellectual capital and the generation of ideas lies at the heart of the enterprise.

Co-working spaces, now a conspicuous feature of the urban matrix, are using multiple strategies to create successful collaborative workspaces. Founded in 2006, WeWork today has 141 office locations in 34 cities, 26 in New York City alone and 16 locations outside North America on every continent except Africa. Connection and co-creativity are at the core of WeWork’s culture. But creating a communal space that people would actually use proved to challenge assumptions and require some re-thinking by WeWork leadership.

After opening a new headquarters in New York’s artsy Chelsea neighborhood, WeWork co-founder and Chief Creative Officer, Miguel McElvey saw that members weren’t getting together in the common space, but instead “trooped straight through” to private offices.

the best ideas start
as conversation.

jonathan ive



After observing this phenomenon and requesting feedback, he concluded that there wasn't enough furniture. The open space was too open. When McElvey added more tables and chairs to create smaller groupings, "Literally, overnight change...." Couches were full. Standing tables became "offices" that drew people together. Developers, artists, designers and writers were starting to connect.[14]

WeWork used a number of other design strategies to kindle social exchanges that often led to individuals or groups doing business together. Ashley Couch, Global Director of Interior Design, says that the design team began to pay attention to traffic patterns and spaces that would allow people to circulate. Bistro tables were tucked into landings on the open staircase. And design was also used to "force them into smaller spaces to stage interaction," which improved the "flow and vibe" of conversation and collaboration.

Devin Vermeulen, Creative Director Physical Product, says, "In terms of color and décor, we want our spaces to be warm, inviting and cozy like a living room, in order to make people feel at ease and comfortable while they work. Another crucial technique is biophilia, which is the human connection to nature. In addition to adding lots of plants and greenery, we use natural materials like wood, stone, and leather, which have proven to make people more creative, less stressed and more at ease." [15]

The lesson learned from the WeWork designers may be that design needs to provide cues for conversation and collaboration. The volume and shape of a space, the arrangement of furniture, must set the stage for human moments of connection in which one may feel vulnerable. Collaboration, after all, requires a willingness to speak up and toss out untested ideas. It may entail objecting to another's ideas. London-based designer Ilse Crawford, principal of Studioilse and head of Man and Well-Being at the Design Academy Eindhoven, has pointed out that designing a collaborative space is not as simple as "having sweet sofas...." Rather, "It's the working out if you like, the politics, the organization of how you have conversations. It's having a common room rather than lots of conference rooms, which are ultimately rather confrontational." [16]

In order to create workspaces in which people feel connected, it's important to consider—

and experiment with—the organization, proximity and density of furniture within a space, as well as materials, finishes, lighting and other components. To bolster a sense of connection and community, a workspace might include:

- Communal tables that invite people to work together and to socialize.
- A variety of chairs, ottomans, stools and tables that can be moved around to accommodate groups of different sizes.
- Color blocking or contrasts of color, texture and matte/sheen finishes that serve to activate the space.
- Mid-to large-scale patterns, which are stimulating, especially when applied to a large-scale element.
- Mobile screens positioned to create visual and/or auditory privacy.

calm

I feel calm

JUST AS MEN AND WOMEN ARE REQUIRED TO BE ALERT, ENERGETIC AND ACTIVE AT WORK, THEY ALSO NEED TO STEP BACK TO ABSORB AND PROCESS INFORMATION, TO SIFT THE DAY'S INPUT AND PLACE IT INTO A LARGER FRAMEWORK. IN OTHER WORDS, WE NEED PERIODS OF QUIET, TIME FOR "THE INTERIOR PLACID MURMUR OF SILENCE"^[17]—TO REST AND RECHARGE—IF WE ARE TO BE TRULY CREATIVE AND PRODUCTIVE.

Often distracted by the buzzing hive of the work environment, many people now seek out sheltered places in which to withdraw to think, write, read and rest. Even in an open plan with no private offices or enclosed meeting rooms, designers are creating partial refuge by means of reading alcoves, booth seating, high-back chairs and semi-private hubs that allow for retreat, while maintaining some connection to the larger space. For a deeper sense of refuge, no-talk zones like a library, meditation room or another space where cell phones and chit-chat are forbidden can help to mitigate feelings of stress and preserve cognitive and emotional health.

Not every company has the resources to create sleeping nooks like those provided by Google and Uber, but freestanding, cocoon-like structures can also offer a pleasant niche in which to retreat. These pods or hubs may be engineered with soft, tactile surfaces that help to diffuse sound and can be equipped with comfortable seating and lighting that illuminates the individual work zone. Such small, sheltered spaces are not about isolation or getting away from work, but rather about working with less distraction and a lower level of stimulation.

According to an article by Gina Trapani in the Harvard Business Review, some of the best creative work is done in "times of reflection and idleness. Studies have shown that the wandering mind is more likely to have a Eureka! moment of clarity and creativity. Taking breaks...gives our brains time to do a kind of long term, big picture thinking...."^[18]

Jeff Reynar, Engineering Director at Facebook, comments on the company's Frank Gehry-designed New York office in the historic Wanamaker Building. "Though everybody has

to design is to
communicate clearly
by whatever means you
can control or master.

milton glaser



a desk in the middle of the floor, you'll also see that there are lots of quiet, tucked away corners where you can go sit on a couch, sit on a chair, and get some work done away from the hustle and bustle of your team."^[19]

While the Facebook office has the raw, industrial look associated with start-ups, along with a whimsical Gehry-designed “cloud” and a collection of gaming tables, it also has a library designed for quiet. The library is furnished with study carrels made of Douglas fir plywood, plus over-sized lounge chairs upholstered in leather and open shelves stocked with books. Visually, it's a simple, uncluttered place with a warm, unified palette rather than a kaleidoscopic jumble of artworks and artifacts that fill the open work area.

Kickstarter's office is located in a former pencil factory in Brooklyn—a 29,000-square-foot space in which the Ole Søndresen design team introduced a variety of refuge spaces that offer protection overhead and to one's back. “...some work is social,” Søndresen notes, “and some work is study. The grand library is a social commentary/experiment as much as an ‘amenity.’ Some work requires a quiet and contemplative environment and some work requires a place of action and engagement. The library is a place to squirrel away for a while and hatch those genius thoughts that are the foundation of a business like this.” ^[20] In addition to a library with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves and reading alcoves, the office has an habitable green roof and a courtyard with views of a fern grove, flowering trees and a rain chain—all of which add to the sense of retreat within the urban landscape.

The need to take a break from meetings, socializing and the onslaught of emails, arises from real human needs. It is a biological and psychological response to stimulation that may be amplified by temperament, as well as by the nature of one's profession and work tasks. Designer George Nelson noted that: “There are kinds of people and kinds of work. There are people who file and people who pile. There are doers and dreamers.”^[21] Both doers and dreamers, introverts and extroverts, leadership and staff, need time and space in which to contemplate and create. Design has to accommodate this basic human need.

Design can create spaces that help to create a feeling of calm by providing spaces to work away from one's colleagues and through such strategies as:

- A muted color palette, subdued patterns and plush textiles provide respite for the eye and mind.
- Warm or cool neutrals create a restful, restorative backdrop.
- Sheltering furniture like high back chairs and booth seating can provide a semi-private space with a degree of protection and acoustic control.
- Reference to the contours, patterns, textures and sequences that persist in nature enhance biological and psychological equilibrium.
- Organic materials such as wood, brick, wool, felt, burlap and others with a matte finish and texture act as an antidote to the hard, reflective surfaces of technology.
- Small-scale patterns help to create a space that feels quiet and calm.
- Gardens and atria offer the ephemeral movements of grass, leaves and light that lend a sense of peace.

com fort able

I feel comfortable

COMFORT COMES IN SEVERAL FORMS AS IT APPLIES TO THE WORKSPACE. THERE IS SIMPLE PHYSICAL COMFORT, WHICH IS AIDED BY WELL-DESIGNED WORK CHAIRS, HEIGHT-ADJUSTABLE TABLES AND PROPER LIGHTING THAT ENSURES VISUAL RELIEF FROM GLARE AND EYE STRAIN. EQUALLY, A SPACE WITH GOOD THERMAL AND AIRFLOW VARIABILITY FEELS REFRESHING AND COMFORTABLE. THERE IS ALSO EVIDENCE THAT HUMAN BEINGS FEEL HAPPIER AND MORE COMFORTABLE IN A WORKPLACE THAT INCORPORATES BIOMORPHIC SHAPES, COMPLEX FRACTAL PATTERNS AND SPACES THAT OFFER GOOD PROSPECT CONDITIONS, I.E., A VIEW OVER A DISTANCE THAT ALLOWS FOR SURVEILLANCE OF THE WORK “HABITAT.”

Our comfort, or satisfaction with the work environment, is also influenced by the visual language of design and how comfortable we feel with the messages delivered by the architecture, the space and its furnishings. Even without an exact verbal equivalent for language of a space, we intuitively understand the narrative and the values it represents. Are those values aligned with our own? Does the space claim our approval and affection? Or, do we feel awkward with its stiff formality? Are we uneasy with its atmosphere of austerity? In part, one’s comfort or discomfort arises from the built environment itself, but some portion derives from the point of view behind it.

To draw from Stanley Abercrombie’s admirable book, “The Philosophy of Interior Design,” all “departures from the mere accommodation of function are laden with messages, often very eloquent ones, and it is a critical part of the interior designer’s education to become adept at reading those messages and then choosing which ones to send.”^[22] Abercrombie adds that without such literacy, even the most elegant rooms may be the least pleasant to occupy. At the same time, a thoughtful use of forms and finishes makes it possible to imply or clarify a set of values via the architecture and artifacts of the workplace. A client or employee may not articulate with precision what it is the enterprise stands for, but it is understood and internalized on a subliminal level.

Recently, Pinterest worked with IwamotoScott Architecture to design a new San Francisco headquarters in a 1911 building with a previous life as a John Deere factory. Consciously

there are as many styles
of beauty as there are
visions of happiness.

stendhal



creating a space to reflect the culture of the design-oriented company, the architects incorporated such brand-driven features as a sculptural stairwell with two “stair runs” that “cross slightly to create an abstract representation of knitting (a favorite term in the Pinterest lexicon, used to describe its company culture and how various disciplines intersect.)”[23] Additionally, the headquarters has two spacious ground floor lounges with views of a central atrium, along with an all-hands meeting space and, on upper floors, a series of comfortable lounges, a library and “a generous allowance of meeting rooms” designed to “foster a sense of communal purpose.” The design expresses the creative, design-driven culture, offers a choice of workspaces and makes it clear that Pinterest is invested in the happiness of its employees.

Today, as workspaces are becoming more polished and professional even among start-ups, cluttered workspaces furnished with beanbags and cushy couches may not be optimal for either physical or psychological comfort. Tech companies are maturing and becoming more sophisticated about design, opting instead (like Pinterest) for refined lounge areas that alternate with meeting rooms and relaxed group workspaces. A smart, sophisticated, well-designed workplace instills pride and helps employees feel that they are a valuable part of something great; integral to a mission they want to invest in.

Gabrielle Rubin Deveaux, senior director of real estate at BuzzFeed, noted that the company’s offices are designed “with an emphasis on creating a comfortable atmosphere,” that includes lots of natural light, open space and traditional “elements of home.” There are couches for conversation, but also standing height tables and semi-enclosed pods where people can focus alone or in pairs to generate ideas and process information. The BuzzFeed office does not include “kitschy components,” for the simple reason that Deveaux feels that, “It is fun at first, but it is not sustainable.”[24]

We can anticipate a further evolution of the workplace and imagine an array of possible futures. Today, there is much talk about “humanized AI” and other technologies that may enhance our work life in the future. Clothing will become wearable electronics and intelligent workspaces will respond to the presence of our bodies and monitor our moods. “Smart buddies” will act as personal assistants or avatars. So far, however, robots and

the truly smart office remain in the realm of science fiction. Our buildings cannot yet accurately identify who we are and what we want and need. Nor can we say for certain how such wonders will impact our sense of self, of purpose and well-being.

Even allowing for quantum leaps in AI, human beings will, after all, continue to inhabit the workplace for some time to come—and, to act as the primary source of creativity and innovation. However the future reveals itself, there are ways to help ensure employee comfort:

- Provide workers with multiple options in terms of energy level, informality and noise.
- Arrange furniture within the space to provide biophilic design patterns of prospect, refuge and mystery.
- Include familiar markers of home life, such as table and floor lamps, or accessories that keep refreshment near to hand.
- Use LED lighting with a warmer, slightly yellow light.
- Warm textures create a tactile enclosure for work.
- When possible, maximize access to natural light and views that include trees, grasses and other greenery.
- Ensure that systems maintain a comfortable temperature, humidity and airflow.

design is not for
philosophy, it's for life.

issey miyake

design, in any form, has the potential to please the eye, prompt the hand to reach out and touch, engage the mind and evoke emotion. design engages and enables us and can make our work more creative and more enjoyable, enhancing our sense of community and purpose. patterns unravel, paradigms shift, but there are certain constants in our being, inspiring designers to create places to work made more interesting, beautiful and humane.

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good design is a form of
respect—on the part of the
producer for the person
who will spend hard-earned
cash on the product, use the
product, own the product.

david brown

a meeting of minds

SINCE TEKNION PUBLISHED “DESIGN DOES MATTER” OVER A DECADE AGO, WE HAVE CONTINUED TO EXPLORE AND EMBRACE ADVANCED DESIGN THINKING. THE NEW ESSAYS THAT COMPRISE THIS ANTHOLOGY ARE DRAWN FROM A GROUP OF ACCOMPLISHED DESIGNERS AND WRITERS, EACH OF WHOM IS ARTICULATE, THOUGHTFUL AND INFORMED.

COLLIN BURRY, DESIGN DIRECTOR AND PRINCIPAL, GENSLER, CONSIDERS HOW DESIGN INFLUENCES BEHAVIOR, REFERENCING THE TRANSFORMATION OF TERMINAL 2 AT SFO AND HIS WORK WITH PIXAR AND APPLE. PRIMO ORPILLA DIVES INTO THE SUBJECT OF “SMART ROOMS” AND THE FUTURE OF DESIGN. AS A PRINCIPAL OF STUDIO O+A, PRIMO IS RECOGNIZED FOR HIS WORK WITH UBER, CISCO AND NIKE.

SALLY AUGUSTIN, PHD, IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL/DESIGN PSYCHOLOGIST WHO OFFERS A WITTY AND ASTUTE ESSAY ENTITLED: “HUMANS: SPECIES PROFILE.” SALLY EXAMINES HUMAN BEHAVIOR AT WORK, DRAWING FROM SCIENCE-BASED INSIGHTS.

LUKE PEARSON AND TOM LLOYD, WHO LEAD A LONDON-BASED PRACTICE, ENGAGE IN A DIALOG ABOUT “PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ERGONOMICS” AS IT APPLIES TO THE WORKSPACE AND THE DUO’S ZONES COLLECTION. DISTINGUISHED TEXTILE DESIGNER SUZANNE TICK CONTRIBUTES “IT’S A MATERIAL WORLD,” AN ESSAY THAT ADDRESSES TEXTILE DESIGN IN TERMS OF ART, ARCHITECTURE AND TECHNOLOGY.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY DESIGNER MICHAEL VANDERBYL, AN INFLUENTIAL MEMBER OF THE R&D INDUSTRY FOR OVER FOUR DECADES, CONTRIBUTES “THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT,” A FRESH LOOK AT THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION. PENNY BENDA, A WRITER WHO WORKS WITH CLIENTS IN THE R&D COMMUNITY, CONTEMPLATES A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF INTERIOR SPACE. CELEBRATED INTERIOR ARCHITECT, LAUREN ROTTET, REVEALS WHAT OFFICES ARE LEARNING FROM HOTELS.

WE ADD ALL OF THESE NAMES TO OUR DISTINGUISHED “DESIGN DOES MATTER” AUTHORS, A LIST THAT INCLUDES FRANK GEHRY, ART GENSLER, CHARLES MOORE, NORMA KAMALI AND DAVID SUZUKI AMONG MANY OTHERS. WE HOPE YOU FIND THESE ESSAYS ENJOYABLE AND VALUABLE.

respect for the user

COLLIN, YOU HAVE DESCRIBED YOURSELF AS A “SOFT MODERNIST,” A RIGHT AND LEFT BRAIN DESIGNER. WOULD IT BE CORRECT TO USE THE WORDS RATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL TO DESCRIBE THAT DIALECTIC? AND IS THERE A NEW EMPHASIS ON THE EXPERIENTIAL ASPECTS OF INTERIOR DESIGN?

Not universally, but yes! At one time, the approach had everything to do with financial metrics and that’s changing. User-centric design is gaining traction. Personally, I’ve learned about how design can influence the way people feel in a space—and how they behave—in my work over time. It’s not something that’s taught in design school. It should be, but at least in my own case, it wasn’t.

When Gensler was hired to renovate Terminal 2 at San Francisco International Airport, part of our design brief was, “let’s put the delight back in the airport experience.” We all know that making our way the airport is rarely a delightful experience. No one enjoys waiting to go through security, being divested of your shoes, your coat, your watch and maybe being patted down. So, how do you put the joy back in the traveler’s experience? That was the big question and it bled into everything we did in designing that terminal.

SO, IT SOUNDS LIKE MUCH OF YOUR INSPIRATION COMES FROM USERS.

Right. Our job was to think through the entire experience. We thought there should be a place where people can sit down in comfort and peace once they get through security. There should be good, healthy food—including places where you can grab a fresh sandwich to take home on your way off the plane. We designed the bathrooms with high quality finishes and fixtures. They’re the bathrooms of a 5-star hotel. And it’s interesting that people respect that. Those bathrooms have not been defaced or damaged.

I OFTEN FLY OUT OF TERMINAL TWO – AND IT IS A VERY COMFORTABLE AND PLEASANT PLACE TO WAIT FOR YOUR FLIGHT, EVEN IF IT’S DELAYED.

You don’t have to belong to the Admiral’s Club to have a good experience. We designed the lobby with interesting art and the Virgin America lounge has those red Arne Jacobsen Egg

chairs where you can relax near your gate. Again, the furniture gets a lot of heavy use, but it doesn't get vandalized because people can feel the care and thoughtfulness that has gone into the design. We wanted everyone who passes through the terminal to feel cared for—it helps to alleviate any anxiety.

Respect for the user has immense impact. Designers have to remember that's who we're working for and it's easy to forget because there are so many factors you have to consider and issues you have to address. A lot of credit goes to the client who said, "I want something that's really visionary and human-centered." From there, we actually work-shopped through the design process to reach some kind of consensus.

WHAT ABOUT THE CHALLENGES OF DESIGNING FOR THE WORKPLACE? FOR A LONG TIME WORKPLACE DESIGN SEEMED TO BE DRIVEN PRIMARILY BY TECHNOLOGY, BUT PERHAPS THERE'S BEEN A SHIFT.

Very much so. In fact, it's more about how can design help people to be healthier and happier? And how can we exploit technology to make our lives better? How can we integrate technology into the design of buildings, of the office, to make our work easier, more creative?

When we go in to design a workplace now, there's a real partnership not only with corporate real estate, but also with HR and the CTO. One of the things we talk about is how to leverage technology to create a more seamless experience. Let's say that when I arrive at work my security badge automatically opens the door and immediately my phone tells me that I'm expected on the 4th floor this morning. When I arrive at my desk or office, the lighting adjusts to my needs; the desk height adjusts to my preference and my cappuccino machine makes coffee for me right away. Technology will be able to merge what is now disconnected into something seamless, streamline work processes and simplify tasks—or hand them over to artificial intelligence. At its best, it will be almost invisible.

We recently worked with a Chief of Design and CEO who stated, "We want technology everywhere, but we don't want to see anything. Don't make the technology the hero—make

the focus on humanity, on the people." It's an approach that respects the user. And, again, your people will model positive behaviors if you treat them well. Respect generates respect.

We didn't design it, but there's an office in Amsterdam, The Edge, which is designed to be responsive to very specific individual demands. Each desk has an air vent so that each person can control the temperature and the air—and it's a little weird because people are sitting pretty close to each other. So, we have to be thoughtful about what's possible and what actually needs to be done.

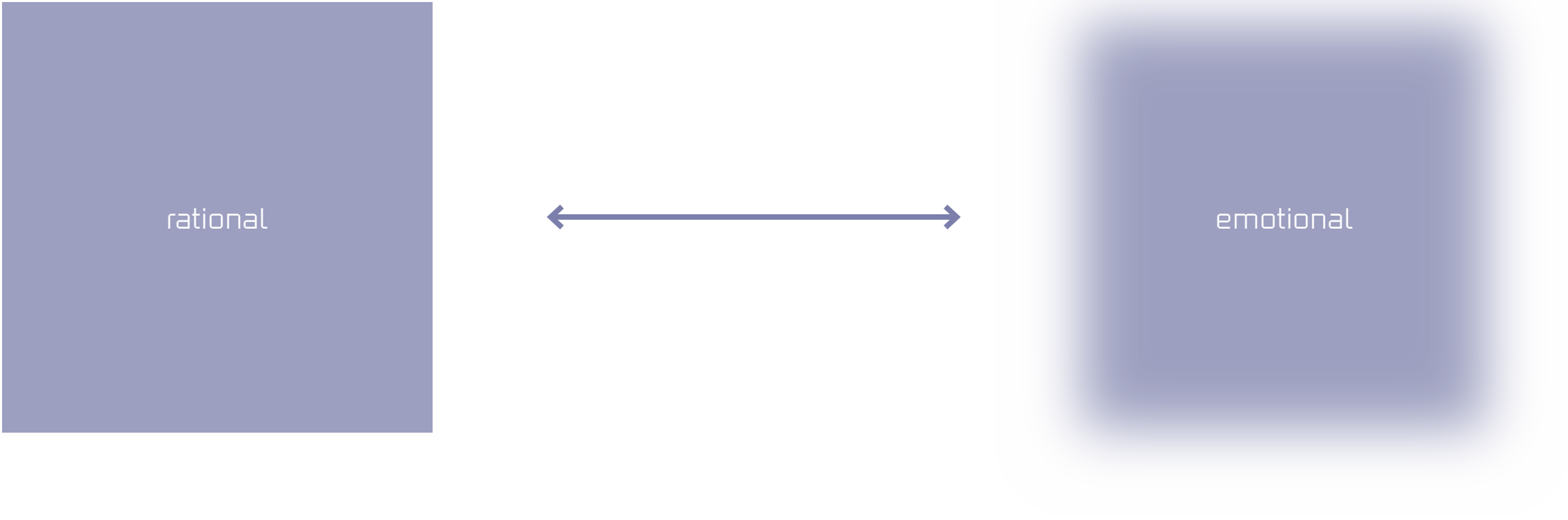
YOU'VE MENTIONED THE WORD "RESPECT" SEVERAL TIMES. ARE YOU SAYING THAT, IF YOU EXPECT PEOPLE TO DO WELL AND EXPRESS THAT EXPECTATION THROUGH DESIGN, THEY WILL STEP UP?

Yes. We are now seeing workplace design that's more intelligent. For a while, especially in the tech sector, interiors were all about reclaimed wood, deer antlers and kitschy wallpaper all over the place. But these are intelligent people—why not play to that?

With Pixar, we were designing a workspace for some of the most creative people in the world. And we knew that the people who work there would fill the space with their own ideas and fantasies on top of ours. So we created a very restrained design that would allow the employees to do their own thing. We used a lot of white and furnished the space with classic modern furniture. And the minute Pixar moved in there were igloos and tiki huts and one office right out of "Mad Men." It works for Pixar because that's the culture and you want to give the artists—and the technical people, too—permission to get creative. They are free to be themselves—which can certainly contribute to happiness.

SO, THE CULTURE CREATES A CONTEXT FOR YOUR APPROACH, YOUR STRATEGY.

We worked with a San Francisco advertising agency and it all started with learning about their people and their work—who they are and what they do. The challenge was how to distill the business model of the group, how to make design reflect the dichotomy of the creative side and the business side of advertising – or the two hemispheres of the brain, the



right side and the left side of the brain. As a background, we used lots of black and white paint, with white standing for the blank canvas of the creative mind and black for the dark suit of the businessperson. The work area and collaborative spaces are white and bright and the client-focused formal areas are black. It's an edgy look—and paint is cheap, so the client can change it up as they evolve.

IT WOULD SEEM THAT PART OF MY EXPERIENCE OF A ROOM, OR HOW I FEEL IN MY SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT COMES FROM A PHYSICAL RESPONSE, AS WELL AS AN EMOTIONAL ONE.

We mustn't forget that we are animals. We have bodies and at least five senses and, as designers, we have to be serious about wellness in the work settings we design. I've often said that when design touches us intellectually, emotionally, physically, if we arrive at the perfect trinity – mind, body, spirit – then the project takes on a soul. It might be a tortured soul or a fabulous free spirit. What kind of soul do you want a space to have?

We recently designed a new office building for the world's largest wine producer. Sustainable strategies were a priority. Not just solar panels and drought tolerant landscaping, but also employee wellness. We took as our mantra, what are the things, based on research, that can make people feel good in this space, can help them to have a satisfying work life?

Now, the employees in this company were accustomed to sit in cubes planned around the different departments: creative services, finance, marketing, etc. it seemed as if a lot might have to happen to pull them into the future and make them fall in love with a completely transparent, completely open space. In fact, there were zero complaints. The employees saw all that beautiful light pouring in through the windows and skylights— and they loved it. The message was clear. "This company cares about you and how you feel. We wanted to give you a beautiful, sustainable workspace, a place where you can thrive." I'm proud of that project. Everyone feels very positive about the new space and it has a real impact on well-being. It's got a good soul.

CHARLES EAMES SAID, DESIGN IS ABOUT CREATING MORE HAPPINESS.

It's a worthy goal. We know that design that is intended for the whole human being

leads to a better life and it is incumbent upon our industry to think about sustainability in this way. In the past, sustainability was too often treated as the peanut butter you spread over the real stuff. It was nice if it happened that you could make use of recycled materials or reduce energy use in some way. We take a much broader, a more holistic approach today.

I was in the Post Office yesterday and it was a perfect example of design guaranteed to evoke negative emotions. It's just awful. The fluorescent lighting, the paint colors, the shoddy furnishings—everything about that environment creates discomfort, unease and unhappiness. Creatives need to lead the way in helping society understand that what we do is not just superficial super cool styling. Design can be responsive and responsible. It can be artful and healthy—attentive to the whole being.

WHEN I WAS IN THE GENSLE L.A. OFFICE, I WAS STRUCK BY HOW INSPIRING THE SPACE IS. THE GRAND OPEN STAIRCASE IS WONDERFUL THEATER, VISUALLY EXCITING, BUT IT'S ALSO A WAY TO GET PEOPLE TO MOVE AROUND, TO TAKE THE STAIRS RATHER THAN AN ELEVATOR. SO IT'S ABOUT HEALTH AND FEELING GOOD, AS WELL AESTHETICS.

The L.A. office is a perfect example. You automatically want to go up those stairs—and the elevators are hidden away so that they are not the obvious choice. Plus, everything is open so that you can see into the offices and conference rooms as you go up the stairs. It's very transparent and it's very social. It's a place where happy, healthy people can operate with ease.

We are social animals. We do want to see other people, to connect with other people. There are those who say that iPads are teaching kids to be lonely adults—so perhaps we need to design spaces that encourage people to actually talk to each other, to connect without technology as the go-between. It's too easy to get lost in our digital devices.

MAYBE THAT'S PART OF THE CORRECTIVE OF THE MAKER MOVEMENT? IT'S AS IF PEOPLE WANT TO CONNECT NOT ONLY WITH EACH OTHER "IN REAL LIFE," BUT THEY ALSO WANT TO CONNECT WITH MATERIALS IN AN AUTHENTIC WAY.

I think what we are calling the Maker movement is a strong sentiment against everything corporate, everything that's generic. It's about craft and authenticity. And it ties in with sustainability because today we are much more aware of the ecological footprint of every product. Just as people are now sourcing local food—the locavore movement—we also think about where something is made, how far it has to be transported and what is the energy required to manufacture this product.

In San Francisco, we have these great local companies like Pablo lighting and Heath ceramics—it's great to be able to actually use and celebrate local industrial design. Local artists created much of the artwork in Terminal 2 at SFO and the local food vendors emphasize locally grown, organic food.

It's great when you can bring in products that are connected to the local culture and community. I think it shows respect for the identity of the user or the occupant; it's a way to create a more meaningful experience. Ultimately, everything we do has an impact on how people feel in a given space. I want to make sure that my work has that intelligence built into it because it's essential to the art of design.

Collin Burry, Design Director, Gensler San Francisco, is a 2013 inductee into Interior Design Magazine's Hall of Fame. A "soft modernist" at heart, he describes himself as both a left- and right-brain designer who creates environments that strive for beauty and are grounded in strategy. Collin has transformed the interiors of many of the world's most innovative brands, including Apple, Samsung, Gallo and Dolby. His creative and contemporary approach to design has earned him more than 60 design awards and frequent publication in international design and business media. Collin believes in designing spaces that are responsible to our planet and enrich the lives of the people who use them. He is a longtime advocate of design education and the performing arts. Collin is an IIDA Fellow and holds a B.S. of Interior Design from Woodbury University.

designers have a
responsibility to show
the future as they want
it to be, or at least as
it can be.

gives behar

your room is ready

ON THE NIGHT AFTER I VISITED MICROSOFT'S ENVISIONING CENTER IN REDMOND, WASHINGTON, I COULDN'T SLEEP. LYING AWAKE AFTER A LONG DAY, I WAS ACUTELY AWARE OF MY HOTEL ROOM AS A ROOM. I COULD FEEL ITS SHAPE, FEEL ITS CHARACTER, FEEL EVERY DECISION ITS ANONYMOUS DESIGNER HAD MADE. YOU MIGHT THINK THIS IS THE WAY A DESIGNER EXPERIENCES EVERY ROOM, BUT THE ENVISIONING CENTER HAD HEIGHTENED THOSE TENDENCIES. IT WAS AS IF THE ROOM WAS FULL OF SUBLIMINAL INFORMATION. I COULD HAVE SWORN A DRIPPING FAUCET IN THE BATHROOM WAS TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING.

The Envisioning Center is a space on Microsoft's corporate campus reserved for prototyping technologies before they go into widespread release. You might say it's a rehearsal space for tomorrow's environments, a chance to see how the wizardry being cooked up elsewhere on the Redmond campus will play in actual homes and offices. Microsoft had engaged my company, Studio O+A, to design the latest iteration of the Center and as they were showing me some of the wonders they were working on, I realized that going forward, my profession was about to get a lot more complicated. If work environments were going to be this sophisticated, this responsive to their users' needs, designing those environments would require thinking less like an interior designer and more like a science fiction writer.

If Microsoft's Envisioning Center has it right, the office of the future will be in more or less constant communication with the people working in it. Interactive screens and lights that know when to turn on and off are already here—but what if a wall became a desk as soon as you needed a surface to write on? What if anything you wrote on that wall appeared simultaneously on satellite walls around the globe? What if a room could read your stress level and offer you tea, offer you music, lower the lights, suggest a nap? We may or may not want such things, but the capability for them is probably coming. What that means for designers is that interiors will have not just physical properties and technological properties, but moral and social components as well. If a room can predict your behavioral intentions the way algorithms now predict your movie preferences or the word you're trying to type, designing that room will be an exercise in social engineering.

It used to be simpler. When Verda Alexander and I started O+A in the early 1990s a designer was basically a space planner. You tallied your headcounts, calculated floor space, specified furniture, drew up your plans. Flows and hierarchies were predetermined by a hundred years of business practice. Conference rooms came in two sizes and one shape

(small, large, square). Windows went to those with the biggest paychecks. Executives got the comfortable chairs. “Interior Decorator” was an active term back then, and that was the fun part—picking carpets and paint, trying different finishes on the same old surfaces.

O+A entered this field just as it was changing. I like to think we had a hand in making interior design something more than “decorating”—but it was the clients who really changed the profession. Because we were building work environments in Silicon Valley we were working with people used to questioning fundamentals. It made sense that someone neck deep in rethinking how basic communications worked or banking or media or urban transportation would take a look at his own office and ask, “Is there a way to do this better?”

Over a series of projects tailoring environments to the specific needs of specific companies, O+A developed a philosophy based on principles that seemed to apply to all these innovators. Among them were: Give people a variety of space types to work in. Let shifting moods and shifting needs find a home. Make room for leisure. Make room for serendipity. Shed as much light on the situation as possible. Give the office a story people can be part of. If you look at work environments designed over the last ten years, the best will share those qualities.

Offices designed over the next ten years will likely continue these trends toward individual empowerment and add to them the force multiplier of predictive technology. The give-and-take we all know in the virtual world—Google anticipating what we’re looking for, Amazon suggesting products we might want (based on products we’ve already bought), news alerts tailored to our definition of news—all that will be moving soon into the built environment. Rooms equipped with this kind of technology, much of it “invisible,” are going to be enclaves of wish fulfillment like nothing civilization has yet offered.

It’s a huge advance in labor relations that companies now build their offices with the happiness of the employee in mind—based on the calculation that a happy employee is more productive than an unhappy one. And it’s a huge advance in interior design that the design development process now includes an extensive programming phase that encompasses not just traditional headcounts and adjacencies, but the personal preferences and work habits of the people who will use the spaces. When we get to a point where technology will make interior design a process of tailoring spaces to the personal rhythms of individual users, we will all need to activate our inner Ray Bradbury.

Up to now designers have worked with solid forms. Walls and floors, concrete, wood,

stone and steel, furniture that has one shape, fabrics in fixed patterns. One consequence of the advanced technologies that are heading toward the work environment is that forms are going to become less solid, more changeable. We see it already in the enthusiasm for modular furniture systems that can be configured in different ways and for moveable walls that can change the shape and scale of a room. When the room is able to anticipate a need and change itself we will have entered a new era of design.

What are the moral ramifications? From HAL’s breakdown in 2001: A Space Odyssey almost 50 years ago to the robot rebellions in Westworld, Ex Machina and a dozen less thoughtful movies today, the potential for Artificial Intelligence to unleash a storm of unintended consequences has not been lost on sci-fi storytellers. Those movies dealt with A.I. as individual beings. The work environments being hatched at Microsoft and elsewhere today are going to be A.I. spaces. That will make every space designer the steward of an ecosystem he or she may not fully comprehend.

For the 26 years O+A has been in business I have emphasized to our designers that design inspiration comes from everywhere. I have tried to impress upon them the importance of keeping up with all corners of culture: fine art, street art, fashion, movies, music, architecture of course, politics of course, sports, advertising, product design. The modern designer must include science in that list. And maybe philosophy. And maybe ethics.

We are entering an era in space design when rooms are going to “know” who is in them. That’s going to be a challenge not just for those of us who design those rooms, but for those of us—all of us, really—who use them. Stepping into such a room is going to take some getting used to. It’s going to be a new experience for all of us to know that the walls await our command, that the furniture is primed to take new shapes as we require, that the whole space is listening... and waiting.

By the way, I finally figured out what that dripping faucet in Redmond, Washington was trying to tell me: Go to sleep!

Primo Orpilla is an award-winning co-founder and principal (with Verda Alexander) of Studio O+A, the San Francisco firm responsible for groundbreaking office design at Facebook, Microsoft, AOL, Yelp, Samsung, TATA, Levi Strauss, and many other companies. A leader in the field of workplace environments, O+A made its name “rethinking the impact the workspace has on work,” but today the firm’s reach extends beyond commercial interiors to branding, environmental graphics, tenant improvements and design consulting. In 2016, Studio O+A received the 17th annual National Design Award from Cooper Hewitt for Interior Design.

in 2016, office design
grew up and put on
a tie.

diana budds, fast company

the kids are alright

how the past shapes the present

TRULY, THE ARCHIVES OF THE PAST INFLUENCE THE PRESENT. THE EXPERIENCE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN ONE GENERATION REAPPEARS IN THOSE THAT FOLLOW. ONE CENTURY'S DISRUPTIONS EMERGE IN NEW FORM AS "HACKS" IN THE NEXT. THERE IS A CONTINUUM. AND THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THOSE ON THE LEADING EDGE OF THE MILLENNIAL WAVE ARE, AT LAST, BEGINNING TO MATURE. THE KIDS ARE GROWING UP—LEAVING BEHIND WHAT HAS BEEN A KIND OF EXTENDED ADOLESCENCE, AND BEGINNING TO ADOPT A NEW SET OF VALUES AS THEY NAVIGATE THE DEMANDS OF ADULT LIFE. CONCURRENTLY, FLEDGLING START-UPS HAVE MORPHED INTO MARKET LEADERS AND AS A FAST COMPANY POST NOTED, "IN 2016, OFFICE DESIGN GREW UP AND PUT ON A TIE." [01]

I've always felt that there are constants in human experience. Circumstances change, of course, but some things persist. When my daughter was born, I had a sort of epiphany. I figured out—on the way home from the hospital—why my parents were so weird. It became immediately clear to me that words like accountability and stability had real meaning—and that they applied to me. My world had opened up and I was no longer the center of it. I think that the same thing is happening to today's thirty-somethings who are now accoutered with a mortgage, children and other responsibilities.

To borrow a phrase from my youth, I think, "the kids are alright." This young, maturing generation is made up of passionate, purposeful and highly intelligent men and women who are not just tech literate, but tech natives who are wonderfully equipped to make good use of the most innovative technologies. It's as if mobile, cloud and social technologies are not simply tools, but rather an extension of their biological nervous system—embedded in that complex network of nerves and cells that carries messages to and from the brain.

During the time I taught at CCA, I quickly learned that my design students could master any software almost immediately. There was no learning curve. A student with no prior skills in Photoshop or InDesign would simply say, "I'll figure it out." He or she was not at all intimidated by the technology—no more so than learning to wield a pencil. The current crop of young people has an intuitive grasp of the tools of connectivity and, happily, a hunger for purpose and innovation. They comprise a workforce that's adaptive and

aspirational; serious about engaging in meaningful work for companies that live up to their stated mission and values.

In 2016, Business Insider surveyed a number of Apple employees, who reported that they liked working at Apple because, “the work environment is more mature....” To quote one individual, “There are no “Nerf guns” or “slackers.” Employees also noted that Apple employees get to work with “really, really smart people” and are given a great deal of autonomy, the “freedom to do their work.” [02] In other words, they are treated like adults. Not surprisingly, another reason employees want to work at Apple is the feeling that you have a chance to do something big, to be a part of the company’s mission, as once stated by Steve Jobs, to “make a contribution to the world by making tools for the mind that advance humankind.”

Almost everyone can remember having had tastes that have changed with growth, education and experience. And naturally, many formative companies started out as bring-your-own-computer enterprises in spaces the size of a shoebox—or a garage—haphazardly furnished with quirky odds and ends. But for too long, tech-chic resulted in offices reminiscent of a college dorm or frat house. At the same time, start-ups sold employees on a culture of “cool” complete with bean-bag chairs, foosball tables and free food and drink to counteract long, late hours cranking out code. But as people mature, ambitions change, and there comes a time when one doesn’t want to be at the office 24/7, even if there’s volleyball court and a rooftop bar. Smart companies are no longer making an ethos of adolescence. And office design is becoming more thoughtful and considered about how to create a work environment that people can feel good in—and do good work, too.

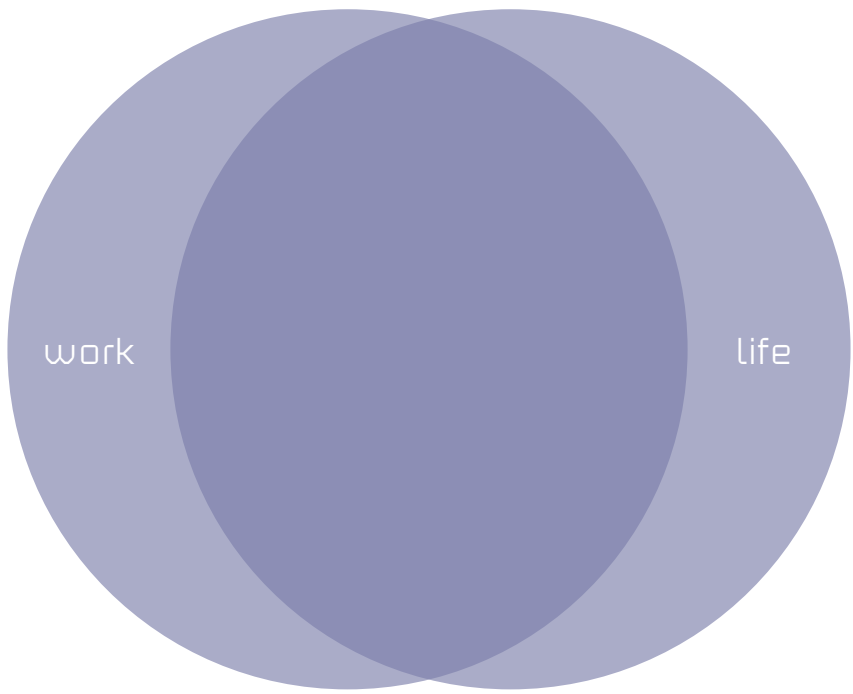
I am not the only person to observe that there seems to be a new direction in office culture and office design. “Tech companies are growing up,” echoes Heather Nevin, regional director of Gensler’s technology practice. Companies are becoming more thoughtful about giving workers “meaningful choices” that go a long way towards keeping people happy and productive at work. [03] Office design can still speak to a culture of creativity and cool. It can say, “we’re communal, we’re energetic, but we no longer fly by the seat of our pants. We’re serious about our mission and you should be, too.”

On a recent trip to New York, I had the chance to talk with a number of interior designers and architects about changes they have observed in office design. Almost all reported a preference for a quieter palette — dove grey and charcoal grey — and other neutrals that have a calming effect. No more pops of color. Why this change? The modern, open office is often buzzing, creating an uncomfortable sensory overload and, as a result, designers are looking for ways to “quiet” the space through more subdued colors, greater simplicity and a calming sense of order. The intent is to create a backdrop conducive to focus or conversation—neither distracting nor dull.

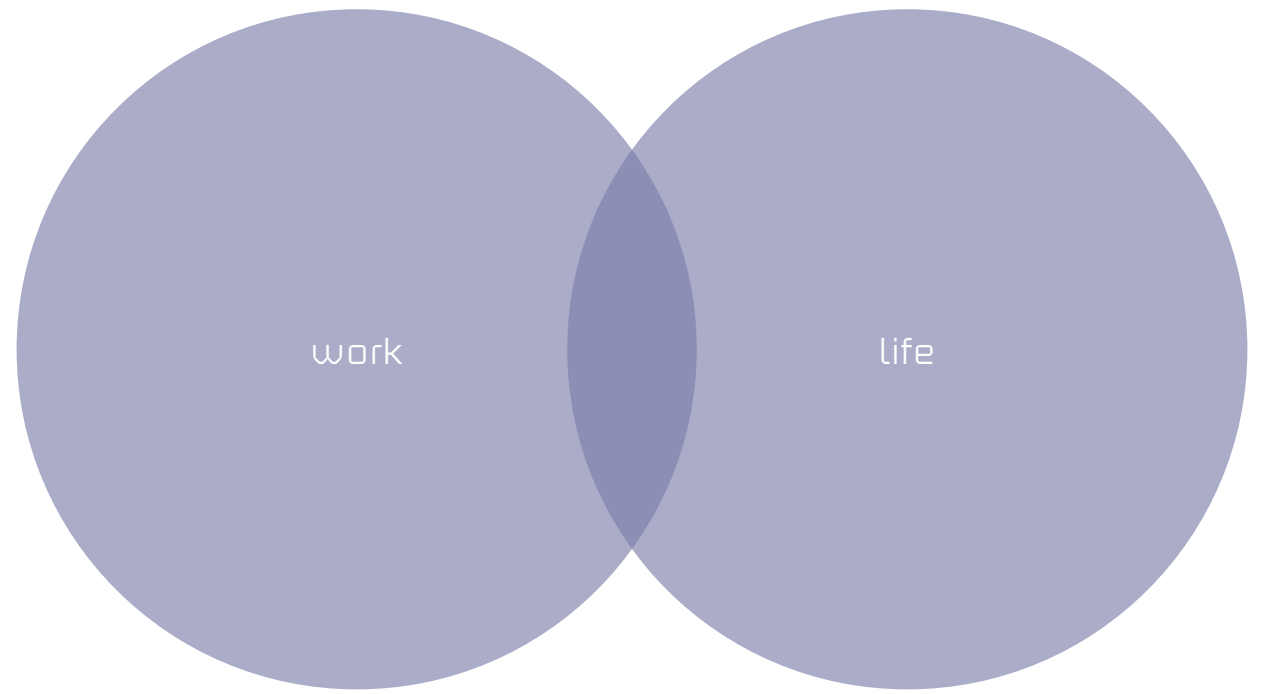
Uber is a generation younger than Apple (by 33 years), but this “start-up” now operates in 400 cities and 58 countries and the company is equally serious about its “disruptive” brand—a stance reflected in the semiotics of its San Francisco headquarters. As the designer of Uber’s vast office space, Primo Orpilla, principal of O+A, makes clear that Uber’s striking interiors “reflect the maturation of a start-up.” [04] If one takes a look at the gleaming black walls, veined marble, weathered maple and polished copper, the materiality alone speaks not only to money spent, but also to an intention to create an extraordinarily rich experience aligned with Uber’s “ethos of populist luxury.” The space expresses and celebrates the values of the company in a tangible way—and seduces and inspires any visitor.

Today, the work culture and the physical work space itself, has to be engaging and interesting—not in a superficial way, but in an authentic and meaningful way. If a company is looking to attract bright, committed employees, it has to stand for something that people can embrace; it has to offer a work experience that is more than simply transactional; it has to recognize the significance of architecture and design, the idea that we feel and behave differently in different spaces, that, in fact we become different people in different places—happy or unhappy, creative or stultified.

Happiness is important to the Millennial generation. It’s an important life goal. Speaking for my own generation, most of us wanted to get a good job or succeed in a career that we planned on pursuing for a lifetime. This younger generation is looking for more out of work than a job. Work needs to be a place to create, learn and grow—and workers are willing to scout around and move on to find employment that resonates with their own priorities.



past/present



present/future

As one matures, a work/life balance takes its place among one's ambitions. And achieving that goal has become a challenge as people work longer hours than in previous generations. This has been especially true in the tech industry, which is notorious for applying pressure to work marathon, coffee-fueled days and to stay connected 24/7. As compensation for their endurance, employees get a concierge service, on-site chiropractor and a game room. European companies take a different approach, promoting happiness with benefits like 30 days of guaranteed vacation time, universal childcare and other humane practices. A few U.S.-based tech companies, like Adobe and Genentech, now offer five and six-week sabbaticals in addition to vacation time—although only every four or five years.

This renewed respect for the human element has a parallel in the Maker movement. I think that this recent phenomenon is less a collective nostalgia than it is a new way of doing traditional things, a renewal of craft in a contemporary context. Making is a way to reconnect to fundamental experiences, to design, tinker, build and invent using traditional tools—or, to design, prototype and make using a laser cutter and 3D printer.

Some of the great architects and designers of the 20th century—and the 21st—have honored both tradition and technology. Alvar Aalto applied the advanced manufacturing technologies of his time to organic materials, notably to wood, to make “simple, good, undecorated things...that are in harmony with the human being.”^[05] More recently, Antonio Citterio combines natural and high-tech materials, 19th century forms with neo-modern shapes, endowing objects with an ageless quality by keeping technology in touch with craft.

Traditionally, the design studio itself has had a look and feel much like what is now considered the modern office. Design has always been a highly collaborative process. Disciplines and functions overlap. And speaking for my own studio, we take our work seriously. There's a lot of camaraderie—and a lot of very focused, creative work that gets done. In other fields, this co-creative protocol may represent a radical new style of working, but it is familiar among designers, including veterans like myself who started out using pencils, exacto blades, glue and paste-up boards before everyone hopped on the digital bandwagon. You could say we were makers.

We've returned to the subject of continuums—or, at the very least, arrived back at the ways that the past informs the present. And, I am foolish enough, in spite of everything, to subscribe to a hopeful and even optimistic view of the future. I see an intelligent, idealistic generation on the threshold of maturity, along with companies attending to enduring human values and design that is engendering a work environment that takes account of how directly design touches us, how subtly it evokes emotion. In an ideal future, all the spaces we enter and use will offer a physical, intellectual and emotional experience that is appropriate and perhaps memorable. It begins here and now.

Michael Vanderbyl has gained international prominence in the design field as practitioner, educator, critic, and advocate. Since being established in San Francisco in 1973, his firm Vanderbyl Design has evolved into a multidisciplinary studio with expertise in identity, print and digital communications, showrooms, interiors, furniture, and product design. He received a BFA degree in Graphic Design from the California College of Arts & Crafts (now known as California College of the Arts), where he subsequently taught and held the position of Dean of Design for over thirty years. He is a member of Alliance Graphique Internationale and has served as President and on the board of the National AIGA. Michael has also been honored with the Gold Medal award from AIGA, with induction into Interior Design Magazine's Hall of Fame, with the Titan award from IIDA and with Contract Magazine's 2017 Design Legend Award.

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design is so simple.
that's why it's so
complicated.

paul rand

ergonomics: physical, behavioral and emotional

Speaking by telephone from London, England, Luke Pearson and Tom Lloyd shared some thoughts about design and how to help people to feel more at home in different types of spaces.

T: WE HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT HOW DESIGN, AND ESPECIALLY INTERIOR DESIGN, INFLUENCES ONE'S STATE OF MIND, ONE'S MOOD AND EMOTIONS. IS THAT PART OF YOUR THINKING AS WELL?

TOM: It is. In our practice, we pay a lot of attention to materiality and the feeling of a space that is created through many layers—materials, form, scale, detail and so forth. We see furniture as a way to change how people connect to architecture and how people manage their relationship to the architecture and the space they occupy. Whether we are designing a workspace, a hotel room or the cabin of a commercial jet, these are all rather compressed spaces and we have to work hard to make the behavioral ergonomics work across all of those strands.

T: CAN YOU CLARIFY THE IDEA OF "BEHAVIORAL ERGONOMICS?"

TOM: Ergonomics or behavioral ergonomics has the sound of a dry technical or engineering term, but the idea is that we can encourage or amend behaviors through design. For example, a desk is an item of furniture that appears everywhere and tends to be used always in the same way. How can we design a desk that changes the way a person operates or feels when seated at the desk? How does design influence how one interacts with the desk in the context of the architecture and the culture of the workplace?

In the past, office design has been seen as a way to manage people. The mark of success was either the ability to fit lots of desks into a given amount of space or to measure how efficiently people did their work—a sort of "command and control" idea. The Taylorist office, which imitated the factory assembly line, was a highly structured environment meant to deliver the goods with maximum efficiency. That's not the way we deliver value any longer.

To a certain extent, we are attempting to manage emotional well-being, which is somewhat paradoxical. To be efficient, to perform well, people need to sustain psychological health.

And we do have to acknowledge economic objectives; we have to respond to the conditions of a commercial environment. At the same time, I think that quite often, company leadership does care about employees and about the quality of the workspace. Most clients are beginning to understand how much the language of a space influences how people feel about their workspace and how they feel about the company, how engaged employees are in their work.

LUKE: We think about ergonomics as being both physical and emotional. There's the side of ergonomics that one can measure – the physical or metric aspect —and we can design a chair based strictly on those measurements, but it might be hideous to look at. No one will want to use it. On the other hand, there are chairs that one falls in love with on sight, but which turn out to be quite uncomfortable. One needs to find a balance.

Certainly, the emotional component has always been very important in our work. The way a person responds to furniture, the way furniture interacts with the space. . .those interactions will change the way it is used. So, we begin to develop layers of aesthetic features or qualities. That holds true for any type of interior environment.

T: YOUR DESIGN OF ROOM INTERIORS FOR INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP DEPARTS FROM THE STANDARD LOOK AND LAYOUT OF A GUEST ROOM. THE “WORK/LIFE” ROOM HAS SEVERAL LAYERS AND A LOT OF TEXTURE THAT CREATES A VERY WARM LOOK.

TOM: We began by thinking about a traveler's emotional needs. A person often arrives late and has to get up early. He or she may be jet lagged, tired and hungry, so the room has to be comfortable and the layout of the room needs to be logical as well. What are the spatial relationships required to get your activities going? How can we make it easy to work, relax or prepare for the next day? We actually looked at how kitchens are designed so that you can easily reach the refrigerator from the cooker and so on.

As a way of creating the most legible space, we built it around the triangulation of the bed, a lounge/work area and the area with a television and coffee bar —a kind of “magic triangle.” We connected the elements that make up a hotel room in a different way, not only to

manage the space, but also to represent the brand, the responsiveness to a traveler's needs.

T: THE FURNITURE HAS A LIGHTNESS THAT'S RARE IN MANY HOTEL ROOMS AND YOU'VE USED SOME TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS LIKE THE ANALOG CLOCK ON THE WALL-A BIG CLOCK WITH BLACK HANDS ON A WHITE FACE. IT SEEMS AS IF INSPIRATION COMES FROM USERS AS WELL AS CONTEXT.

TOM: Yes, the furniture has a softness and a simplicity, but there is a technical character underneath. It's a machine wrapped in a blanket that allows you to be productive in a pleasant environment.

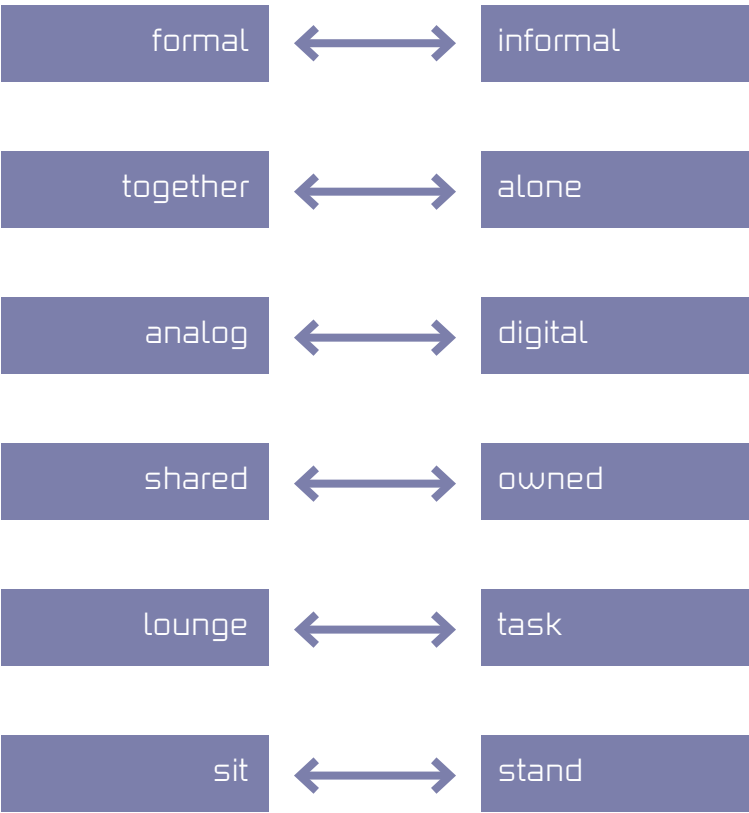
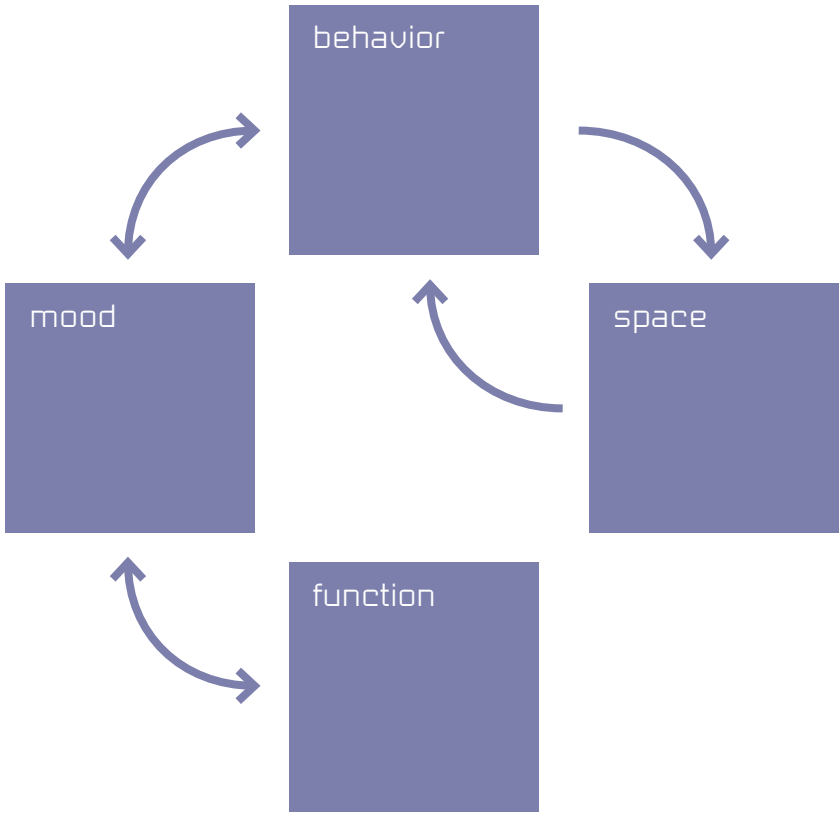
About the clock...we do pay a lot of attention to craft and to incorporating analog elements into environments or into the furniture collections that we design. There is a need for humanity and craft, almost in inverse proportion to the degree to which technology proliferates. Again, it's a balance of the hard and the soft, of analog and digital. The clock is a kind of explicit signal, a presence quite unlike that of flashing digital numbers.

LUKE: It's good to have things that we immediately understand. Technology is often hard to interface with; it certainly takes some mental effort. I just bought a digital radio. On my analog radio, I know where the stations are, but the digital model just gives me numbers, which at first had no meaning for me. In the same way, an analog clock gives you a sense of time by the movement of the hands through space. The beauty of it is, you don't even need numbers to interpret the position of the hands.

Business travelers are often disoriented, and simple, tactile things are a way to ground them. You don't have to compute anything. There's no secondary mental process required. You can see time vs. space. It's very physical. We are overly indulged in the digital and we need things that ground us, our lives, in our spaces.

T: HOW DOES THAT APPROACH TRANSLATE TO THE WORKPLACE?

LUKE: In every project, we're interested in the basic human experience or need. It's a nice way of commencing the work of design. In the office, almost everyone has a glass of water



or an apple during the day and you need a place for these ordinary things. In 2015, we designed a group of table-top accessories for Teknion to create a place for fruit, water, a pencil—items that introduce a human element into the workspace.

TOM: We’ve also designed a simple wood hat rack, another very simple, pure symbol. The reality of my workday is that when I arrive I don’t want to go to a locker room 50 yards down the corridor. I want to be able to go to the place I am working for the day and have a place for my jacket, my hat or whatever I am carrying. We always try to observe and take note of people’s everyday needs. Our approach is to respond directly to needs, to create products or spaces that are a natural consequence of how we behave, how we think and feel.

Collaboration no longer sets up the workplace. The bench system has sold all over Europe because it is equitable and collaborative and it certainly has its uses. It also has its drawbacks if people are seated too close to one another and making too much noise. When we design furniture for the workplace, we think about how one’s needs change from day to day or hour to hour and how to create the right mix of forms and functions—which makes for a much more dynamic space.

LUKE: We have been involved in workplace design for 20 years. When we started, the hero was getting cables to lay in and data delivered to all the workstations – and it was incredibly static. Five years after we started, Wi-Fi began to be trusted and that began to change the culture in a radical way. In terms of how a more dynamic workplace affects people emotionally, I think it’s a good thing not to stare at the same wall all day long. It’s good to be able to move around.

T: I AGREE. IT’S IMPORTANT TO GET UP AND GET THE BLOOD CIRCULATING, OR SIMPLY CHANGE ONE’S PERSPECTIVE.

LUKE: We often step out and go down to our local club because it’s a good place for a private conversation. We make use of the city, as well as our studio, going to a different space to achieve different things and to experience different emotions. Our work has changed, too. To return to the analog/digital dialogue, we find that our work has gone back to whiteboards.

T: THERE IS SOMETHING REASSURING ABOUT SUCH FAMILIAR, LOW-TECH FORMS. AND, OF COURSE, WE HAVE ALSO SEEN A TREND TOWARDS A MORE RESIDENTIAL LOOK AND FEEL IN THE WORKPLACE.

TOM: Familiarity is an intentional part of our design, but the familiar forms fit into new kinds of spaces in the office. I think that the domestic or residential tag is a tough one. We’ve yet to find the right word to describe what others are calling residential, empathetic and so forth. It’s more about a softness and an informality, a balance between soft and tech, productivity and style – finding a sweet spot between empathy and rationality. We have begun to use the term ‘informal productivity’ to describe the new paradigm of work that is embodied in Zones.

LUKE: We used to design task chairs that were about adjusting the chair to your own body. Now that people sit still for much less time, we can design a chair that is very comfortable and supportive, one that embraces the body, but isn’t as technical. It’s a much softer sense of what ergonomics needs to be and it’s contextual. A simpler, less technical seat is actually very smart and creates a more exciting visual landscape.

TOM: If we’re completely rational all of the time, design becomes uninteresting. It’s too pragmatic. Design doesn’t always have to start from a purely rational or ergonomic analysis. Interior design does have the opportunity to create the Wow! And we do want to “surprise and delight.” That is an old, well-known phrase, but why not?

LUKE: Technology has liberated office design in a way. The furniture doesn’t need to be technically served—we’re all happy with Wi-Fi. Design can be more about creating singular elements that people like and that can be chosen for what they are. Of course, taking that direction too far can create chaos.

TOM: Organizations like to systemize and organize things, so there’s a bit of conflict between our ability to deliver singular elements and the need for very practical, scalable solutions. But the corporate world today is much more aware of how the workplace represents the brand, how it influences the perceptions of outsiders and also how people within the

we do not want to work
in a factory or in a home.
is it possible to work in a
space that is both informal
and productive ?

luke pearson and tom lloyd

organization feel about themselves. The workspace can function as a way to leverage the brand in a positive way.

LUKE: I could compare it to flowers that attract the right sort of insect because each flower has a visible personality. But it’s more than that. Organizations can really express how they want to behave and who they want to attract through a cohesive expression of the brand. Everyone can understand everyone else a bit better.

TOM: By tapping into all of our experience, knowledge and intuition, we can create objects that are unique and appealing, even lighthearted and poetic—but frivolity can be tiring. Right now, there may be a little too much frivolity in design. It lacks calm and balance. There’s a sense of anything goes. I think that is changing. One thing we do know is that the economy will change, technology will change, it is all endlessly evolving and that we are trembling along this wave of change doing the best we can.

T: WHAT ABOUT SMART ROOMS AND ROBOTS? HOW WILL WE BALANCE THAT LEVEL OF EMBEDDED TECHNOLOGY WITH HUMANITY?

LUKE: I would feel rather harassed by a smart room. I would rather go find a space that I feel good in – a white room or a purple room – than have one room that responds to what I am doing or thinking about and changes color.

The question may be, how will technology, and new technologies that we can’t even yet imagine, change human thinking and creativity? We don’t know. At work in our studio, when we feel that we have an idea, the quickest way to communicate it is on a piece of paper. We like lead and paper and our hieroglyphics.

I would like to comment further, but I must go pick up my daughter from school.

T: THAT’S A VERY BASIC HUMAN NEED! THANK YOU BOTH SO MUCH FOR YOUR THOUGHTS.

Luke Pearson and Tom Lloyd set up design studio PearsonLloyd in 1997. Since then, the London-based practice has worked across the workplace, aviation, urban design and healthcare sectors with a goal to identify and respond to the shifting patterns of behaviour in contemporary life. In 2008, Tom and Luke were awarded the distinction of Royal Designers for Industry by The Royal Society of Arts, and in August 2012 were named one of the top 50 designers ‘Shaping the Future’ by Fast-Co Magazine in New York.

design is about the
betterment of our lives
poetically, aesthetically,
experientially, sensorially,
and emotionally.

karim rashid

it's a material world

design, performance and craft

OUR POSTMODERNIST DIGITAL ERA IS AN INTERESTING MOMENT IN TIME, AS WE EXPERIENCE PROFOUND CULTURAL SHIFTS TO WHICH WE MUST, AS DESIGNERS, PAY CRITICAL ATTENTION. ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE, THE PROVOCATIONS OF ARCHITECTURE AND ART, CHALLENGE PRECONCEPTIONS AND SUGGEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATING HEALTHY AND HUMANE ENVIRONMENTS THAT CAN IMPROVE AND EVEN TRANSFORM PEOPLE'S LIVES.

Happily, the workplace is no longer tied to prescriptive ideas of how it should look or function. Corporations and start-ups alike are creating multi-purpose spaces in which people do lots of different things. Given the mobility and diversity of the people at work, we see a need for universal design and materials that allow everyone to function, to do what they do, whoever they are. Today, materials are not applied as specifically as before, rather we look for textiles that can be used across the office and on both the horizontal and vertical plane.

As an example, furniture designers are creating new kinds of furniture like freestanding semi-private work enclosures, as well as all manner of high-back sofas and chairs designed to offer a sense of privacy. These products require fabrics that work in all directions; that can be applied to the seat and the back or to wrap the surround. To add visual interest, we can embellish the back of a high back sofa and not the seat. We can also address acoustics by using thick wool felting or other fabrics that help to absorb sound.

At the same time, many companies have moved out of the high rise or the office park and into the city. Vacant warehouses and abandoned factories are being repurposed as offices, as are derelict train stations and even old churches. Adaptive reuse, often a radical change in the function of a building, has created a trend towards workplaces housed in an envelope characterized by exposed structures and raw materials—an architectural context that inspires a softening of upholstery and panel fabrics, floor coverings and wall coverings. As textile designers, we are creating richer, more textural, fabrics that have a warmth to

them as a counterpoint to raw wood, burnt wood and tinted wood, as well as unpainted brick and galvanized metal. In work environments, we are using metals like brass and copper, rather than chrome; ceramics with a matte finish, rather than a lustrous glaze. Wool is very popular, not only for wool's comfort and breathability, but also because it suggests pre-digital, analog processes, i.e., the art of handweaving.

Office design used to make liberal use of pattern, but textural fabrics are much more versatile. You can use the same fabric to upholster the sofa and to wrap the walls. And, in most cases, textural fabrics are better suited to contemporary contract furniture that is less formal, more relaxed and more amorphous in shape. We add visual interest to these types of fabrics through embellishments like embroidery and embossing, distinctive details that refer to artisan techniques and domestic settings.

From what I have observed, people crave the visual and tactile richness of fabrics—especially natural materials as an antidote to the hard, flat surfaces of our computers, laptops and phones. We love the look and feel of wool and linen, of unvarnished wood or etched stone, for the same reason that many people still prefer bound books, words printed in ink on paper. I think it is a matter of instinct, as well as a reaction to the proliferation of technology.

Whether texture is perceived or real, it does create a more relaxed and comforting space. Layers of color and texture, or the collaging of different materials, creates a more organic feeling, echoing the tactile and visual complexity of the natural world, which can be very reassuring in the face of rapid and radical change. For many of us, technology is exciting, but also exhausting. One can quickly become fatigued or agitated vibrating between Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook, emails and newsfeeds. We crave things that look handmade and materials that invite us to touch, objects that speak to the time and care taken to make them.

The advent and popularity of co-working spaces around the world has strongly influenced corporate design and the types of materials and fabrics that are now being used even in

relatively conservative environments. People seem to thrive in co-working spaces. Beyond WeWorks, which is almost as ubiquitous as Starbucks, boutique co-working spaces have been especially influential—and in many of these spaces one sees a very eclectic mix of materials. The effect is rather like a collage.

Part of the intention in using a collage of materials is to create a gender-neutral space, one that is global and inclusive—not based on a narrow cultural or sexual orientation. Leather is mixed with a wool flannel, a nubby boucle or another loosely woven fabric with a big, bumpy texture. This androgynous environment might also include plush velvet and plywood, burlap and ceramic tiles. Synthetic fibers or a mix of natural and synthetic fibers—cotton and acrylic with a polyurethane finish—can add interesting texture, as well. The creative and unorthodox mix of fabrics and finishes offers a more inclusive approach to interior design.

People connect with the collaging of materials because the process suggests human agency, the presence of the human hand and the idea of craft, which is closely tied to the Maker culture. Along with the Maker aesthetic, current design trends also refer somewhat nostalgically to the art and design of the 1970s and to a Brutalist architecture or ethic, with its predilection for raw, unfinished concrete. Ultimately, this wide-ranging approach gives textile designers permission to explore a wealth of new ideas, structures and embellishments. We are creating new patterns or manipulating classic patterns. Our studio, as an example, has developed a large-scale houndstooth pattern that we then reinterpreted by creating unexpected distortions in the graphic. It's traditional, but with a twist.

In the same way, we are seeing a new chromatic language in the workplace with richer, deeper colors used to lend an intimate feeling in semi-private spaces like alcoves, pods and the other nooks and crannies of the office. These darker colors help to create a perception of privacy, even where the space is not entirely enclosed. There's definitely a shift from the usual variations on white, cream and pale gray to mid-value colors, darker hues and ombres, plus accents like blueberry blues and blush tones. These deep, loungy colors create a certain mood and make a wonderful backdrop for wood and the glimmer of metal. The metals really pop.

Color is enormously important in today's sprawling, open plan offices. We are using a palette of analogous colors as a means to soften these spaces, layering color and texture to create visual dimension and warmth. Analogous colors are predominant in nature. The natural world is made up of countless shades of green: warm and cool greens, lime green and olive green, moss green and apple green. The multitude of color so abundant in nature, in every landscape, gives designers a wonderful palette with which to define a mood and evoke a positive emotional and visceral response.

There are no hard and fast rules about which colors are appropriate or effective. What matters, is the application of the color and the context of the space. We do use vibrant stripes and color on the vertical plane, but we also use very matte vertical materials that are appropriate for law firms and financial groups—a look that conveys substance and integrity. The atmosphere in a law firm is already quite intense and does not need to be energized by using brilliant color or a high luster fiber. When you add reflective finishes or create assertive contrast in color, you are activating a space in which more stimulation is unwarranted. What may be needed is calm.

As a textile designer, my work is greatly influenced by what is happening in the art world and in architecture. I study architecture and respond to the surfaces, materials and structural features of architecture in the weave structures of our fabrics. Architectural patterns in textiles make a connection between the interior space and the building envelope, creating a more integrated environment.

Painting, sculpture and the other arts offer designers such a rich visual language and techniques that we can borrow for our own uses. Within my studio, I create 3D woven sculptures as works of art, but even in the textiles I develop for commercial environments, I may use a palette based on graphite and charcoal, or a pattern with natural variations as if created in the act of drawing or painting with palette knife. Really, everything in art is about the hand. I am inspired by Agnes Martin's weave structures, Donald Judd's geometry and art that's about social responsibility, gender equality and sustainability.

How can we represent sustainability through textiles? As a textile artist, I use all sorts of salvaged and repurposed materials. As a studio, we use only chrome-free leather. We create high-performance fabrics using post-consumer and post-industrial recycled fibers and we eschew treated fibers and off-gassing finishes that bring toxic chemicals into the work environment. VOCs certainly have a negative effect on physical well-being, and over time, an emotional effect as well.

Materiality has an enormous impact on the identity and sensory quality of a space—and on the people who occupy that space. I hope that by riffing off traditional concepts, natural structures, architectural concepts and art, that we create original and inspiring textiles that help to inspire others who live with those materials in their place of work. No designer works in a vacuum. We have to pay attention to social and cultural shifts, to our personal and collective past and to our imagined future, if we are to create beautiful spaces where everyone feels safe, comfortable and valued.

Suzanne Tick is the founder of Suzanne Tick Inc., specializing in materials brand strategy, product design, development, and direction for commercial interiors. Currently the Creative Director for Teknion Textiles and Design Consultant for Tandus Centiva, Suzanne has maintained a distinguished career as a textile designer and studio Principal in New York City. At Teknion, Suzanne is responsible for the development and direction of textiles for seating and vertical applications. She is developing a new textile business model for Teknion, offering textiles suited for both the Teknion and B&B Italia offerings as well as the industry at large.

good design should
reflect a sense of
human history—some
aspect of where we've
come from.

harmutt esslinger, founder frog design

human beings: the species in the built environment

humans: species profile

COMMON NAMES: Human, sub-species Designer and Non-Designer

SCIENTIFIC NAMES: Humana, Excogitatoris; Humana, Non Excogitatoris

DIET: Way, way too often

SIZE: See response to DIET, above

INTELLIGENCE: Often questionable

HABITAT: Human's place-based thoughts and behaviors have been systematically investigated by scientists. Applying insights derived from their findings increases the likelihood that single humans and herds of teammates in a particular habitat achieve species-valued goals. These objectives often include sustained market success and financial health.

Researchers, working in labs tucked into the darkest recesses of psychology department basements, and in spaces as publicly accessible as Grand Central Station, have learned that the responses of members of the sub-species Non-Designer to their habitat can differ from those of humans in the other sub-species, Designer. The most frequently identified reason for these differences is that design training influences how humans experience the world around themselves.

Both Designers and Non-Designers share the same cognitive structures, however. The rest of this section will focus on the form of habitats in which both Designers and Non-Designers exhibit their highest levels of professional performance, with sub-species differences noted, as relevant.

The ways that today's humans are affected by the world around them can often be linked to collective experiences as a new species, many thousands of years ago. Being in the same sort of environments where early humans would have felt comfortable has a positive effect on the mood of today's humans. That's important because, achieving the goals detailed in design briefs depends on humans being in one particular mood or another.

Rigorous research studies have found that when humans are in a more positive mood, they think more broadly. As a result, they're better at problem solving, coming up with creative ideas, and getting along with others, for example. When they're thinking more broadly, humans are also healthier, because their immune system functions more effectively.

There are times when negative moods are best, however. When they're in a negative mood, all humans are better at quickly and accurately running through emergency protocols, for instance. So, don't eliminate the flashing lights and annoying sirens that come standard with each nuclear power plant control center, at least in the movies, just yet.

Humans, both individually and in teams, are in better moods and do a better job on cognitive tasks when they can make choices about the spaces where they're working—that means they can adjust light levels and temperatures, for example. People, however, can become stressed when they need to make more than 4 or so decisions about their physical workplaces; so curated option sets should be provided. It is better to provide humans with lighting fixtures with a finite and carefully selected set of light color/light intensity options than rheostats with infinite numbers of light color and light intensity possibilities built in, for example. It is particularly desirable for humans to be able to choose where they will do solo work that requires concentration and, in so doing, avoid distractions whenever possible. Distractions generate stress and destroy positive moods.

For humans doing cognitive work to feel comfortable in a space, and be in a positive mood, they must feel secure. Humans (of either sub-species) feel sheltered in the same sort of spaces that chipmunks (scientific name: *Tamias*) do. Chipmunks are regularly social creatures who rely on their wits to survive, just as the earliest humans did. Chipmunks are in relaxed positive moods when they sit on a shielded tree branch with a view out over the nearby meadow, just as people like to survey a restaurant from a high-backed booth with a view of the door. Neither humans nor chipmunks will do their best at work requiring focus when they're sitting with their backs to passersby in an open area or when they're being watched by hoards of others, for example. The “chipmunk test” reliably distinguishes spaces where humans are in relaxed positive moods from those where they're in tense, negative ones.

Researchers have identified numerous pleasant experiences humans had in places where they prospered long, long ago that can be conceptually replicated in modern environments to create spaces where all humans perform well cognitively and are in positive moods. For example, gentle air currents can move things such as mobiles, just as mild spring breezes

caused flower heads to bob slightly. Also, a range of sensory experiences at a variety of scales can be incorporated into spaces.

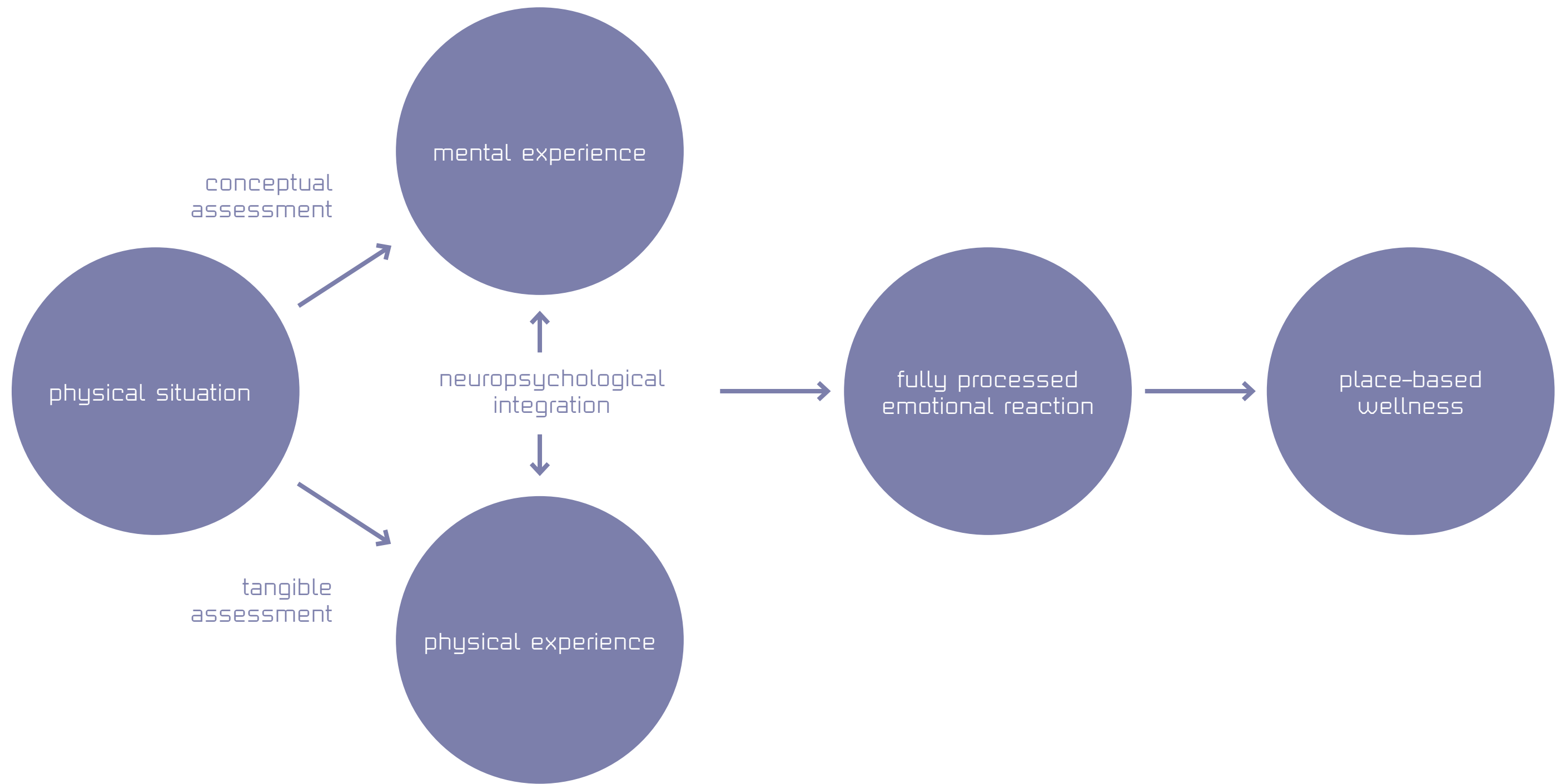
Humans are pack animals and never ignore the relative status of those they're with. Many of their social processes depend on having rank-related information. For example, the distances that humans stand or sit from each other depend on their social standing. Not knowing relative status makes humans tense.

Humans today judge their own rank and that of others just as courtiers did centuries ago, by determining what goodies are provided to them—a seat near the manager? A special task chair? Eliminating differences in options provided doesn't reduce humans' need to determine the relative standing of others. People use whatever tools they have to signal relative rank. In one case, when everyone was given an identical workspace and coat racks were randomly distributed across the office floor, after a little while, all of the coat racks mysteriously migrated to be beside the work areas of those of highest rank.

The sorts of places that make it more likely humans will be in a better mood make them feel appropriately respected. Non-Designers put a lot of effort into deciding if a place indicates that they're valued (which Designers do as well but don't like to talk about). Both human sub-species share a deep-seated interest in knowing what other people think about them—so they've become good at working with whatever clues they can find to do just that. Are bathrooms appropriately designed and maintained? Are finishes used unhealthy? Do spaces provided support the work that people need to do, really?

Spaces silently convey additional information that can influence human mood. Organizational and national cultures create the context in which messages are sent and interpreted by users. The only way to understand the symbolic language being spoken in a place is to spend time with the people who use it. Habitats that send unwelcome unspoken messages are extraordinarily stressful for humans—and stress diverts mental energy from the task at hand, degrading cognitive performance.

Scientists have collected a great deal of information about how sensory experiences in an



area affect how humans respond emotionally to a space. So much information, that only a sprinkling can be shared in this profile. Seeing colors that are not very saturated but relatively bright, such as a sage green with lots of white mixed into it, has been linked to the relaxed positive moods that are just right for knowledge work. Looking at colors that are saturated and not very bright, such as Kelly green, is helpful when humans need to be more energized. Being in warm light optimizes the likelihood that humans get along well with others. Around the planet, floral smells are likely to put humans in a good mood, while smelling cinnamon has been linked to more creative thinking; orange aroma is an anxiety-buster. Sniffing lemon puts people in a great mood to do knowledge work.

Human hearts start to beat in time to nearby sounds, a process called entrainment, and people keep careful track of how fast or slowly their hearts are beating. Unconsciously, humans use information about their own heartbeats to, in part, judge their own mood—with slower beats being interpreted as feeling calm, for example. Tactile experiences also affect humans' moods, encouraging them to be more or less empathetic to others, or generous and trusting, or to negotiate more vigorously, for instance.

Peoples' mood and performance are best in spaces with moderate visual complexity. A space with moderate visual complexity features carefully curated sets of colors and shapes. The interiors of homes designed by Frank Lloyd Wright generally have moderate visual complexity, for example. Designers have much better experiences in spaces with low visual complexity than Non-Designers, who often feel quite stressed in these areas. Designers are generally attuned to variations in design details that are lost on Non-Designers; as a result, Non-Designers can be unpleasantly under-stimulated in a space where Designers are at ease. Non-Designers' discomfort in spaces where Designers are pleased to be often puzzles Designers.

Information is continually being gathered by human sensory receptors and processed. Individual sensory inputs are combined with simultaneous other inputs to determine the overall effect of a space on mood. National and organizational cultures guide the processing, integration, and interpretation of information received. Many other factors, such as

compensation structure and economic conditions also affect employee moods.

In technical terms, the physical situations in which humans find themselves drive their conceptual and tangible assessments of stimuli. When those assessments are integrated they determine humans' fully processed emotional reaction to an experience. That fully processed emotional reaction in turn contributes not only to professional performance, etc., but also to place-based wellbeing.

A final cautionary note: Humans, whether members of either the Designer or Non-Designer sub-species, can, on occasion ignore their own human-ness, and the forces that influence their emotional response to the world that surrounds them, noted above. This has dire consequences for personal and organizational outcomes. Humans are not automatons, however; they are complex animals, often driven by processes more primitive than they like to acknowledge.

Sally Augustin, PhD, is an applied environmental psychologist and a principal at Design With Science, focusing on human-centered design. She consults with both individuals and multi-national organizations to inform the design of places and objects. Dr. Augustin is president-elect of Division 34 (environmental psychology) of the American Psychological Association and often speaks around the world and on national radio programs. Sally is a graduate of Wellesley College (BA), Northwestern University (MBA), and Claremont Graduate University (PhD).

architecture is really about well-being. I think that people want to feel good in a space... on the one hand it's about shelter, but it's also about pleasure.

zaha hadid

hospitality comes to the office

the influence of hospitality

SINCE 2005, WHEN TECHNOLOGY FINALLY UNLEASHED THE WORKER FROM THE DESK AND ANYONE COULD WORK FROM ANYWHERE ANYTIME, ALL TRADITIONAL OFFICE DESIGN RULES WERE OFF. WE SAW OPEN PLAN, HOT DESKING, BENCHING, TELECOMMUTING AND ALL SORTS OF WORK-FROM-ANYWHERE SOLUTIONS, IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET MORE PEOPLE TO WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY FROM ANYWHERE AND TO SAVE COSTS ON FACILITIES AND CONSTRUCTION. BUT NONE OF THESE OFFICE CONCEPTS CONSIDERED HUMAN EMOTION, PERSONAL SATISFACTION OR WHAT THE CLIENT OR EMPLOYEE REALLY NEEDS IN THE OFFICE IN ORDER TO BE PRODUCTIVE AND FULFILLED. THE MILLENNIALS TRIGGERED THE REALIZATION THAT WORK IS NOT ALL THERE IS TO LIFE AND THAT TURNABOUT IS FAIR PLAY. IF WORK IS COMING HOME MORE THAN EVER, VIA TEXT, CALLS AND EMAIL, THE MUCH-COVETED PERSONAL LIFE MUST CREEP INTO THE OFFICE. HAVING NOW JUMPED OVER “WORK-LIFE BALANCE” INTO THE REALITY OF “WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION,” COMPANIES ARE REALIZING THAT THE OFFICE IS MORE THAN JUST A WORKPLACE—IT MUST NOW SATISFY A VARIETY OF PERSONAL NEEDS. COMPANIES ARE BEGINNING TO SEE THAT CUSTOMER, AND ESPECIALLY STAFF, LOYALTY MAY BE MORE TIED TO “HOW YOU MAKE THEM FEEL” THAN THE PRODUCT OR SERVICE ITSELF.

Companies are realizing what boutique hotels discovered 10 years ago and are now perfecting—guest satisfaction promotes loyalty and catapults the brand. Good hotels have perfected guest satisfaction by anticipating and meeting guest needs—from the basic human desire to be recognized, welcomed, entertained, and comfortable to the need to work intensely. From the moment the guest walks in they are made comfortable through the design, lighting, music, scent and refreshment (branded, of course) offered by a friendly greeter who calls them by name and asks how they can help with any little thing. It is all about orchestrating the Experience with a capital E and making the guest feel like, “It’s all about and for them personally and that you really care.” This is accomplished through careful strategic planning, design and service style with well-trained house staff all working hand-in-hand.

Hotels spend a great deal of time doing market research and designing just the right experience for their customer. They have to as customer satisfaction is their business and is directly linked to higher occupancy, room rates and higher profit. Hotels talk a lot about “Touch Points”—the moments that matter most to their guest. They use different terms, but all concentrate more or less on the following five touch points: First Impression, Arrival Experience, Quiet Zones and Personal Comfort, Living Room/Social Hub and the Food & Beverage Experience. They have more recently added a sixth—Healthy Lifestyle. Hotels also spend a lot of time choosing words and slogans to describe their core values and then setting brand standards that reflect these core values like Marriott’s “Welcome, Gather, Collaborate, Chill.” Of late, some of the key words applying to the design of the hotel are Authenticity, Timeless, Dynamic, Transformative, Empathetic, Confident, Purposeful, and Intelligent.

Today’s smart companies realize that the look and feel of the office is a direct reflection of the brand and that they are the hosts to their clients and must anticipate and accommodate client needs. Companies are looking at how employees work at home and in hotels to tune the office for similar comforts and the appropriate professional social interaction. Hotels have been accommodating travelers working from their room for years, with multiple power and data outlets available at desktop, bedside and a comfortable lounge chair—three different work venues with proper lighting, telephone and TV controls all within arm’s reach. Hotels soon realized the guest worker wanted company while working and ACE hotels led the way with the Social Hub. Now all good hotels have excellently equipped living room/social hubs where guests can work “alone together”.

Aligning with the five Touch Points, there are five trends I see making their way into offices today.

first impression

The Reception is no longer a cold, quiet, internal and empty-feeling lobby with stiff furniture, bright lights and a stern gatekeeper sitting behind a tall desk. It is, if at all possible, on the window line with natural light, appropriately styled with art accessories

and set with comfortable seating that guests and employees are free to use. The lighting is softer and more residential or hospitality-like and lighting scenes are set for three points in the day, giving just the right ambiance and allowing the view outside to be visible. As this generation of workers thrives on energy and enrichment, the reception is active and houses at least one of the refreshment centers—styled like a chic contemporary residential kitchen, with built-in refrigeration, an array of healthy drinks and snacks and an enticingly good looking coffee maker. There may be very quiet music in the background or a television, and sometimes now even a scent created just for the company, thereby aligning all of the senses to the brand. The guest mingles with employees and is made to feel welcome and like a part of the family. There may not be a reception desk at all as the greeter/concierge might be standing at the pantry counter making a coffee.

the arrival experience

The Arrival experience is where appropriate staffing meets appropriate design. Everyone wants to feel good about one’s self and to be a part of something successful and fun. The old-school office arrival made the employee and guest feel tense—almost unwanted—or in search of approval before allowed in. Learning from hotels, the new style is to immediately put the employee and guest at ease, with staff helping to convey the brand and upbeat attitude of the company.

When we design a hotel, we also design or select the uniforms of everyone from the doorman to the housekeeping staff. The hotel general manager holds a daily morning meeting to address the staff, letting them know of any special guests and handing out a sheet of the day’s itineraries with instructions and special guest names. I have been in only one office so far that has learned the significant value of guest/client recognition and it was as impressive as is their balance sheet! Fresh, neatly styled flowers are set weekly and the receptionist assures that the designer’s styling is respected—no bad trashcans, ugly office toys or bad art appears over time and the skillfully designed ambiance remains.

Why not put your client in a good mood the moment they walk in the door? Why not have a friendly greeter come out from behind the desk, call them by name, take their coat, offer

to store their bags, and ask if they need to charge their phone or if there is anything else they need? Elevating the company brand through ambiance and style is a lot better than degrading it with a bad arrival experience.

quiet zones and personal comfort

Privacy zones are important for guests and employees alike. If an office is open plan, it is quite important to provide individual places with complete privacy for use by anyone to unwind, gather thoughts and reflect—to clear the mind and reboot. These should be set with comfortably styled seating, lighting and if possible, refrigerated water. Power should be provided for working, if the employee just needs alone time to accomplish an intense task. It is amazing what closing a door can do to eliminate distraction and clear the mind, especially for an employee or guest coming in from a long trip and facing important meetings and decisions. There is also a trend towards “Libraries” though they are not necessarily filled with books. These libraries are quiet zones where conference calls or talking are banned and people can work “alone together”. They are often set with library tables with personal power stations so people can sit side by side, but work alone. When private offices prevail, they are now typically set with a work wall or credenza, an up/down desk (not a hotel trend btw) and a comfortable lounge chair or sofa with power to provide an alternate work venue. Reading lamps and other residential lighting is provided.

the living room/social hub

This addition to the office program accommodates those who move seamlessly between work and play. It can be the same room as the Reception, especially if the office is small, but it is more likely a separate room geared towards internal impromptu gatherings and professional socializing, idea sharing and relaxing between tasks. The Living Room/Social Hub can be one large room for the whole company or a smaller space on each floor. It can be set with game tables, white boards, smart TV’s, along with bar height or seated communal tables, lounge chairs and even rugs and floor pillows.

In a Social Hub, seating is flexible and permits multiple uses, enabling guests to converse and interact in relaxed and spontaneous ways. The groupings can support large teams or individuals working separately. The W Hotel launched this approach and though

originally, it was strictly for socializing, it soon became socializing while working. The Social Hub might be off the exercise room, lobby, conference center or meditation room depending on the company, but one thing it must have is a great refreshment center. Food brings together employees and guests like no other tool. It should feel like the family room where everyone can relax, share in conversations or do their own thing, but be a part of the company community. Again, ACE Hotel social hubs have this down. In smaller hotels, the bar is often the Social Hub. And, yes—we are seeing bars come back into the office. Beer taps and locked liquor cabinets with crystal glassware and all.

food and beverage

We have spoken about the importance of food and beverage in several of the preceding Touch Points, so no need to elaborate, except to say that the cost of breakfast and lunch brought in once a week and a social hour once a week is small compared to the good will and camaraderie it promotes. The design needs to accommodate not only the venue, but also where to serve and to eat, along with the overall ambiance and experience surrounding the meal. We are also seeing our office clients pay more attention to how food and drink is served. Gone are paper cups, plates and flatware—they are not environmentally conscious and they are uber tacky. Companies are going the extra mile to dish wash and store in order to achieve food service with style. There is a lot of competition now and a lot of foodies who value a nice cup of coffee and lunch beyond its apparent worth. Why lose a client over a bad sandwich served on a paper plate when you could serve them a nice healthy lunch for little more?

a healthy work/life work style

Health and Fitness has long been a part of the better hotels and they are amping it up rapidly with “Fitness on Demand” online instructors, yoga, personal trainers, heart healthy menus, private chefs and so forth. Some of the larger office campuses are able to offer similar amenities. Smaller companies are addressing health with sit/stand desks, small areas for stretching breaks, multiple venues from which to work to prevent fatigue and boredom or a fitness facility membership. And, providing water and healthy drinks and snacks throughout the day.

Ten other hospitality trends making their way into the office:

1. More eclectic, residential or hospitality styled furniture—more “Set and Styled.”
2. Art and accessories are important—a sterile empty wall environment subverts the brand.
3. Lots of attention is paid to planning so that employees will interact, exchange ideas and bond.
4. Lots of attention is paid to design—the “Cool” factor. Employees and clients are taking pride in the style of the office just as a hotel guest takes pride in discovering the best hotel.
5. Lots of attention to lighting to guide and assist employee activity, be more flexible and allow for personal control so it is suited for a particular task at a particular time. More ambiance in lighting.
6. Integrated technology makes it easy to move from one space to the other while staying connected and having what is needed to work from anywhere.
7. More authentic and locally or regionally inspired design—not one-size-fits-all, generic design. Employees want to feel a part of their community.
8. A little background music at certain times.
9. Better restroom design with more privacy, better lighting, better mirrors and better amenities such as nicely styled and natural soaps, hand creams, hand towels and other comfort items.
10. Concierge Services! There is no time to do anything anymore. Some offices are starting to offer the amenities of hotels and high-rise residential properties—pick up and drop off laundry service, drop off and pick up doggie care, dinner and entertainment reservations. This way the employee can go home and work instead of dealing with all of the personal things they used to have to do.

When interviewing for an office design project, whether a law firm, investment firm, technology group or other project, our studio now shows not only our office experience, but also our hotel experience. I apologize for showing a bar with lots of great comfortable seating, outlets everywhere and some high-tech TV’s fitted perfectly into the millwork, but the reaction I get every time is, “We want that!”

Lauren Rottet is likely the only commercial designer in the industry who is designing as many hotels, ships and high-rise residential interiors as she is office interiors. Starting her career with Skidmore Owings & Merrill, she spent her first 20+ years designing offices all over the world. She has spent the last 9 years of her career leading her own firm and designing not only offices, but also hotels for Four Seasons, St. Regis, Langham, Kimpton, James, Marriott and many more. What Rottet has learned, is that good hotels know how to appeal to clients on a personal level by satisfying all of their guests’ needs—relaxing, entertaining and feeding them to create a strong customer loyalty that lasts over the years. Savvy companies are realizing that what boutique hotels discovered 10 years ago might just be the key to a happy, productive office with loyal, satisfied clients.

architecture is life, or at
least life itself taking form...
the truest record of life as
it was lived in the world
yesterday, as it is lived today
or will ever be lived.

frank lloyd wright

after the millennium

IF I HAD ANY DOUBT THAT AN INTERIOR SPACE COULD EVOKE EMOTION, I NEED ONLY TO LOOK TO MEMORY FOR EVIDENCE. EXPERIENCE AND OBSERVATION SUPPORT THE ARGUMENT. ACCOUNTING FOR THE IMPACT OF A SPECIFIC SPACE ON A PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL MAY BE ANOTHER THING ALTOGETHER. NONETHELESS, I THINK THAT IDEAS CAN BE CAST AND APPREHENDED IN FORMS, IDEAS THAT ARE FELT AS WELL AS UNDERSTOOD, THUS ENRICHING THE MEANING WE FIND IN OBJECTS, BUILDINGS AND SPACES. WHAT DOES THIS SUGGEST FOR DESIGN OF THE 21ST CENTURY WORKPLACE? I'LL BEGIN WITH A MEMORY.

Not long ago, I had an appointment to meet with an architect at a well-known firm in downtown Los Angeles. I arrived at the appointed hour and stepped from the elevator into a space filled with light, one that seemed to soar upward past the open staircase and a mezzanine with offices stacked around a central atrium. I had to wait a few minutes, but I was happy to live in that generous space for a while. It felt like a place where ideas could grow towards the light. It was vibrating with activity and yet, it also felt calm.

I liked being there. Did others share that feeling? What about the bearded junior associates trekking up the staircase? Or, the young woman I met with? Clearly, they had come of age and into the workforce at an earlier time than my own. In a sense, these young people were native to a culture unfamiliar to me, separated across time as Los Angeles and Kolkata are separated geographically. Certainly, office design had changed even in the last decade. And this one was clearly a post-Millennium office, although I saw no hover boards zooming through the reception area, no dogs snuffling around desks or “ironic” wallpaper.

How different are we? Surely, Baby Boomers and Millennials share more than biology and morphology. Or, is the mindset of the Millennial generation unlike any other in history? Do these young men and women have different attitudes and aptitudes, ideals and anxieties? It may be important to find out. After all, people age 20-37 are now most of the people in North America and in the workplace.* These are the people that design can engage, inspire and empower—or not.

There seem to be hundreds of articles in print and online that describe the current crop of

young adults as entitled, lazy and lacking in discipline. At work, “spoon fed” Millennials expect to be rewarded without having earned the prize. They are highly social, but unable to form lasting relationships. They have no attention span; distracted by Snapchats with co-workers and friends. Such generalities do seem to apply. What we know, empirically, is that Millennials are the most ethnically diverse of any generation and are on track to become the best educated. They are less likely to be married than young adults in previous generations and are less attached to political parties or religions. And of course, we know they like artisan coffee, indie music and bean bags.

**Note; Millennials are a significantly smaller percentage of the population in Europe and, if research by Pew is accurate, they are happier with their lives than American Millennials.*

Recently, Simon Sinek, a British/American author, motivational speaker and marketing consultant published an online video that has been viewed by 6 million people on YouTube. The subject? “Millennials in the Workplace.” Sinek agrees that Millennials do pose a challenge to management, and to themselves. The source of the problem, according to Sinek, is three-fold: parenting, technology (which engenders impatience) and the work environment.

To quote Sinek, “The generation that is called the Millennials...too many of them grew up subject to failed parenting strategies where they were told that they were special...they can have anything they want in life, just because they want it.” When these young men and women are “thrust into the real world,” they discover how unworkable that self-definition is. The reality results in disappointment, a loss of self worth and a deficit of motivation.

Sinek next points out that young adults are not only fluent in the use of technology, they are also addicted to it—dependent upon a dopamine kick that hardwires the brain to seek continual affirmation from texts, tweets and re-tweets. While plenty of Baby Boomers and Gen X’ers also find it difficult to put aside their cell phones during a business meeting, perhaps only a twenty-something “executive social editor,” as described in an article in The New York Times, would “...[prefer] the theater of tweeting back and forth with the editor she sits next to rather than speaking face to face.” The editor works at Mic, a news

source web site, and left her previous job because “we had to mail things. And no one really took my opinion into consideration.”

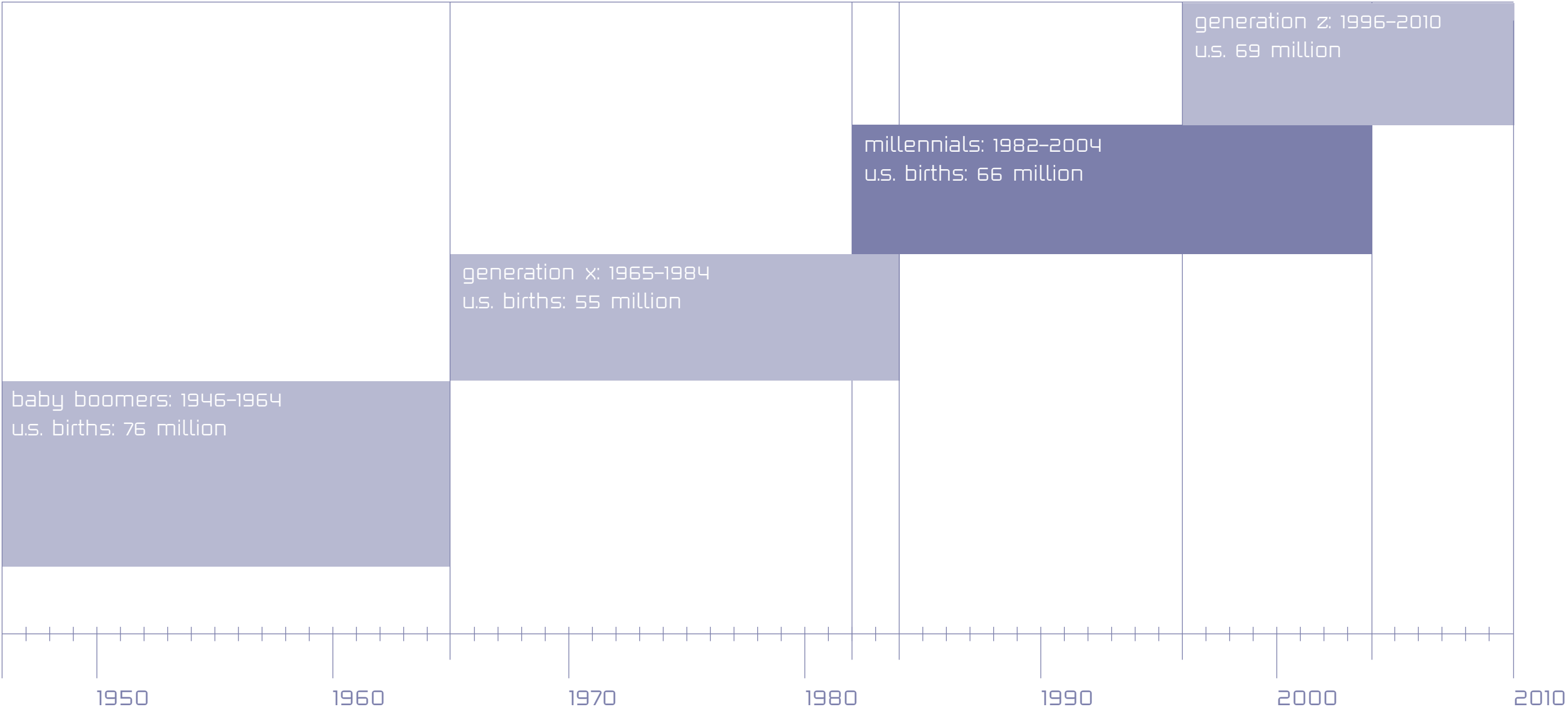
Technology has another effect on behavior thanks to an ever-ready supply of streaming news and movies, shopping websites, apps and media libraries like iTunes that are available 24/7. The “kids” get used to, and expect, instant gratification. Sinek continues, “And so Millennials are wonderful, idealistic, hardworking [and] smart kids who’ve just graduated school and are in their entry-level jobs and when asked, ‘how’s it going?’ they say, ‘I think I’m going to quit.’ They feel that they aren’t making an impact. “To which we say, ‘You’ve only been here eight months...’” Lacking experience in delayed gratification, these young people don’t know how to deal with the fact that “things that really, really matter, like love or job fulfillment...confidence, a skill set...” take time. Sinek isn’t the only writer to note the reluctance to pay one’s dues.

One writer put it this way: “If a generation had a mantra, “my way, right away, why pay?” would fit Millennials perfectly.”[03]

Sinek’s next assertion takes us back to the office environment—not only the physical space, but also corporate culture, which, according to Sinek, is not geared to helping young human beings succeed. “We care more about the year than the lifetime,” says Sinek. “We are putting them [Millennials] in corporate environments that are not helping them build confidence...that aren’t helping them learn the skills of cooperation...that aren’t helping them overcome the challenges of a digital world and find more balance.”

In a sense, Sinek seems to suggest that companies act like good parents, aware of skills that are lacking, ready to offer guidance and feedback in order to build confidence and willing to listen to questions and challenges. Mentoring is essential. The “kids” will figure out the software.

Sinek also suggests that business leaders need to set ground rules like a ban on cell phones in the conference room or at a business dinner, “None. Zero.” And don’t just turn it upside down. Put it away. Leave it in a drawer. Why? “When you don’t have the phone, you just



check out the world. And that’s where ideas happen. The constant, constant, constant engagement is not where you have innovation and ideas. Ideas happen when our minds wander...[But] we’re taking away all those little moments.”

In those moments, people might talk to each other—and not only to toss around ideas or solve a problem. People might talk about their families, their passions and plans, building a stronger sense of connection and camaraderie.

At the end of his lecture, Sinek sums up, “The point is, we now,,,have a responsibility to make up the shortfall. And help this amazing, idealistic, fantastic generation build their confidence, learn patience, learn the social skills, find a better balance between life and technology...because quite frankly, it’s the right thing to do.”

We also have an opportunity—and maybe a responsibility—to offer a physical environment that informs, inspires and engages, one that encourages creativity and connection, one that supports both performance and well being. From my own point of view, I think that a workplace very much like the one described earlier, which happens to be Gensler’s LA office, is exactly that kind of space. And it works for the three or even four generations who work there.

Architecture and design must be attuned to the tastes, habits, abilities and susceptibilities of the persons who occupy a workspace, not forgetting the obvious fact that the person—whatever his or her age—is a human being with a human body. To see Millennials as sharing a nature with ourselves – Baby Boomers or however we identify that self—is, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz, said, “the merest decency.” As is designing a space that is clearly meant for a human being to use and addressing the well-being of any and all persons by what we bring into the world through design. If that sounds ambiguous, perhaps it is; or, as George Nelson put it, “The humane environment is not a slogan, it is a mystery, which can only be penetrated by humane people.”[04]

Sitting in that sunlit space in the midst of the teeming life of downtown Los Angeles, gave me time to think about how ideas become visible and tactile and how an office

might “mean” different thing to different people. Oddly, that very modern and elegant space reminded me of my grandfather’s barn—the verticality of the space or the way light poured in from a door at the summit of the gabled roof. Maybe it was the similar way that smaller spaces—offices or stalls—cantilevered around the central open area and the clarity of function that belongs equally to the hay barn.

However one accounts for the similarities and differences between barns and offices, that memory suggests to me a continuity that exists across time and space in human endeavor and which persists from generation to generation. And I think that if we credit Millennials with intelligence and worth, they will begin to respond intelligently with much that is of value.

[01] *Simon Sinek, Inside IQ Quest, YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MC2X-LRbkE*

[02] *What Happens When Millennials Run the Workplace?” Ben Widdicombe, The New York Times, March 19, 2016. www.nytimes.com/2016/03/20/fashion/millennials-mic-workplace.html?_r=0*

[03] *“Portrait of a Millennial,” T. Scott Gross, July 27, 2012, Forbes; www.forbes.com/sites/prospornow/2012/06/27/portrait-of-a-millennial-2/#6cd80322acf9*

[04] *Nelson, George, “The Design of Modern Design,” MIT Press paperback edition, 2000.*

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