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FEBRUARY 2010



TOP TEN

Jesko Fezer

A Berlin-based architect and artist, Jesko Fezer has collaborated with the architecture cooperative ifau to realize projects in Berlin, Munich, and Stuttgart, Germany; Utrecht, the Netherlands; Graz, Austria; London; and New York. He is cofounder and manager of Berlin's Pro qm bookstore and coeditor of the journal *An Architektur*. He is also head of the research program Civic City: Design for the Post-Neoliberal City at the Institute for Design Research, Zurich University of the Arts.

1 BRUNNENSTRASSE 9, BERLIN (ARCHITECTS: BRANDLHUBER + ERA, EMDE, SCHNEIDER)

Yet another building has sprung up in Mitte, this one housing studio space, a gallery (Koch Oberhuber Wolff), a magazine (*032c*), and the architects who planned and financed the structure. Why should we care? Because Arno Brandlhuber's construction is not only pragmatically DIY—it's also gorgeous. Reduced to the most basic elements, the design of this bare-bones space, built on the ruins of an abandoned real estate project, was governed by a tough-minded logic of simplicity. Cheap, quick, rudimentary, and open, in the best sense, this building is a retroactive manifesto for '90s-era hypercontextualism: Generated predominantly according to site-specific demands, it refuses to claim any one identity, effectively bewildering city agencies ad infinitum.



Brandlhuber + ERA, Emde, Schneider, Brunnenstraße 9, Berlin, 2009. Photo: Clemens Vogel.

2 BRUNNENSTRASSE 183, BERLIN

Late in the afternoon on November 24, 2009, six hundred police gathered in front of Brandlhuber's building to evict the twenty-some people living across the street at Brunnenstraße 183—one of Berlin's last veritable squats. The raid was a crudely militaristic effort even though it was catalyzed by a labyrinthine deal made between that building's new owner and Berlin's finance department—a deal with the primary goal of strengthening Mitte's real estate market. Soon, however, neighbors and protesters gathered, shouting that houses belong to the people who live in them. As of this writing, plans are under way for the community's long-standing free shop to relocate a few blocks away, at Kastanienallee 86.



Video from confrontation at Brunnenstraße 183, Berlin. November 24, 2009.

3 CÉLINE CONDORELLI, *SUPPORT STRUCTURES* (STERNBERG PRESS, 2009)

London-based architect-artist Condorelli based this manual on a six-year collaboration with artist-curator Gavin Wade, seeking out new possible models for objects, projects, structures, and ways of thinking that aid, facilitate, and support. The overflowing volume presents essays and cites works by a group of thinkers and practitioners as varied as Michael Asher, Martin Beck, Banu Cennetoglu, Ryan Gander, Friedrich Kiesler, Jan Verwoert, and Lawrence Weiner, whose contributions focus less on objects than on their (social) relations. Condorelli's book might at first seem a saccharine appeal for a more pragmatic, service-based notion of culture, but in fact, by valorizing this generally overlooked or underestimated aspect of design, she demonstrates the political potential of enabling both things and processes.

4 METAHAVEN, "STADTSTAAT: A SCENARIO FOR MERGING CITIES" (CASCO OFFICE FOR ART, DESIGN, AND THEORY, UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS, AND KÜNSTLERHAUS STUTTGART, GERMANY, 2009)

In this extra-artsy two-venue show, the Dutch graphic-design collective Metahaven left no display technique untried, creating an imaginary city-state in order to underline the relationship between contemporary forms of society and their various strategic uses of design. Here posters, letterheads, ATM cards, and even adhesive tape spoke of the economic crisis, the increasing significance of financial networks and strategic alliances, and a growing use of design as a tool of (if not substitute for) governance. All of which forced the question: What is a democratic method of branding a city?

5 BEDFORD PRESS, LONDON

It's impossible not to notice all the recent hype around self-publishing, particularly in the arts, as an alternative to the alienation-inducing graphic design obediently produced in the usual work-for-hire mode. One of the best efforts yet is Zak Kyes and Wayne Daly's art- and architecture-minded Bedford Press. Operating out of a space belonging to London's Architectural Association and using a stencil printer for small print runs, this micropublishing house is a one-stop shop: quick, affordable, nonhierarchical, and with a tendency toward self-exploitation and non-commercialism . . . or at least let's hope so.

6 IVAN ILLICH, *TOOLS FOR CONVIVIALITY* (HARPER & ROW, 1973)

If only the binding of my edition weren't so shoddy! A book everyone should reread every few years, *Tools for Conviviality* is an incredible critique of growth and technology—and not critique of a gentle sort. The religious, radical, humanistic undertone of philosopher and Catholic priest takes some getting used to, but Illich's incisive argument against a culture of professionalism based on the division of labor is spot-on, and his seminal connections between ecology and political self-determination still pack a punch. Looking at the environmental crisis from a global perspective, he points to its social implications: "Give people tools that guarantee their right to work with high, independent efficiency," he says to all designers. "[And] provide guidelines for action, not for fantasy."

7 PICNIC MAGAZINE 4

The editors of this Tel Aviv–based design-art-fashion-miscellaneous magazine recently curated the Second Herzliya Biennial of Contemporary Art. During the opening, horses carrying monitors like pannier bags were marched through the urban landscape, and porcelain plates designed by the curators (and featuring Memphis-style graphics) were presented as merchandise. Equally cryptic and very, very lovely is *Picnic's* fourth issue. Doubling as the biennial's catalogue, it's almost text-free, with nothing to interrupt the incredible pictures and graphics—best of all, printed on the issue's pullout poster, a confused little bird sitting on three stones.



Eitan Ben Moshe, *Light Boxes*, 2007–2009, light boxes, color transparencies. Installation view, Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art. From the 2nd Herzliya Biennial of Contemporary Art. Photo: Yigal Pardo.

8 SWISS ANTIPROPAGANDA

Just prior to the public vote that banned the construction of minarets on Swiss soil, the leftist Zurich-based party Alternative Liste (AL) launched a parodic campaign to counter the Swiss People's Party's stance on the issue. While the right-wing group plastered its Alexander Segert–designed poster—which employed such racist clichés as a woman shrouded in full niqab, and minarets that resemble missiles—in virtually every public square in every city across the country, AL appropriated the image and replaced the woman with a Swiss man in lederhosen holding a blazing match, now beside missiles that represent minarets, one furnished with an ignited fuse. The message was clear: A law prohibiting the construction of a place of worship would be passed by the same voting bloc that supports its country's supplying the world with weaponry.



(Left) Alexander Segert for the Swiss People's Party, poster for the minaret-ban referendum in Switzerland, 2009. (Right) Studio Typosalon for Alternative Liste, poster for the national referendum to eliminate weapons exports in Switzerland, 2009.

9 RIETVELD-SCHRÖDER HOUSE (UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS, 1924)

Taking the reverentially conducted tour of this icon of modernism, you discover that the building's architect, Gerrit Thomas Rietveld, and the woman who hired him, Truus Schröder-Schröder, were not only reckless but also out of their minds. Every last little convention of inhabitation and its supporting spatial structures was put into question by Rietveld and, true to De Stijl form, reconfigured to achieve a space that could be totally mobilized. The cute, absurd collage of crates meant to hold a radio, knickknacks, and a film projector was soon dismantled by its creator and replaced with a proper bookshelf—which in turn got the ax when the house was renovated and made into a museum, perhaps with the intention of defending it from the destructive impulses of its own master.



Gerrit Thomas Rietveld, Rietveld-Schröder House, 1924, 7 Utrecht, the Netherlands.

10 BRAIDED BELTS

Lutz suggested an obscure political novel. Martha thinks Miffy and Fillipa are sweet. Stephanie is a fan of *Mad Men*. Andreas admitted (without even being asked) that he'd hardly gone to any art shows this year. And Nina thought braided belts were worth mentioning, though she hasn't managed to buy one for herself yet. The one I'm wearing belonged to my father.

Translated from German by Oliver E. Dryfuss.

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