

Once treated as a novelty, the phenomenon of architects working in alternative careers has taken on new importance in a time when there are many more architecture school graduates than traditional practice can absorb. Even among AIA members, alternative careers have risen slightly in the last five years. According to a newly released AIA salary report on alternative careers, 18 percent of AIA members – up from 16 percent in 1988 – are “working in settings other than private practice,” most commonly in corporate architecture or facilities-management departments, in education, and in government. The figure for all architecture graduates, while not available, would presumably be much higher, since those pursuing different careers are less likely to become registered (or if registered, to join AIA).

The AIA survey found also that 64 percent of the alternatively employed would not now take a job in private practice for the same pay and benefits. Our Alternative Careers submissions roughly echo those numbers: a majority feel that, however accidentally, they have found their calling. So it is interesting to note that many of our respondents would not even have considered other career options had it not been for disastrous job prospects. Christine Malecki, a recent Carnegie Mellon graduate and student director of the American Institute of Architecture

Students (AIAS), feels that schools should encourage students to explore options. “People need to be educated with an openness to other careers,” says Malecki. “The attitude in schools is that if you don’t work in a firm, you’re nothing.” To combat this attitude, Malecki produced an AIAS booklet for students on nontraditional careers, including art and design, writing, and “entrepreneurship.”

Among the portfolios we received were a substantial number devoted to alternative careers. Some came from people who tried something new out of desperation; others have simply followed pursuits that had long interested them. Some have made a full-time career of their “alternative”; others pursue theirs during off-hours for little or no pay. Most are involved in closely allied design disciplines, but some have moved far afield. Some of the alternative careerists noted were sculptors, painters, furniture and exhibition designers, graphic designers, a sand sculptor, a reserve police officer, and a plumber’s assistant.

Most entrants, regardless of the extent to which they have strayed from conventional practice, feel that architectural education is an advantage in their field. Many cited the training in problem solving as having the widest application, though learning presentation skills and surviving the initiation rite of design juries were also considered valuable. Many complained, though, that their education had placed too much emphasis on solitary design skills – a refrain often heard even from those in traditional practice.

Mark Alden Branch



Grant Taylor

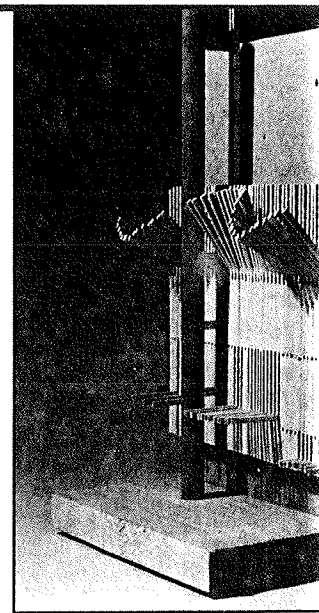
CRAIG KONYK
DESIGN
NEW YORK

Education: B.S., Catholic U., 1981;
M.Arch., U. of Virginia, 1983.

Experience: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Smith-Miller + Hawkinson.

While Craig Konyk’s practice is not exclusively “alternative,” his list of projects includes more exhibitions, competition entries, and furniture-like pieces than buildings or interiors. Konyk, who teaches at New Jersey Institute of Technology and at Parsons School of Design, has built his career on the

fringes of traditional practice, winning recognition through design and award competitions. One recent work, commissioned by Parsons, is a display system of plywood slats that fold down to create horizontal surfaces (above). Konyk practices on his own, but shares studio space with other young architects.



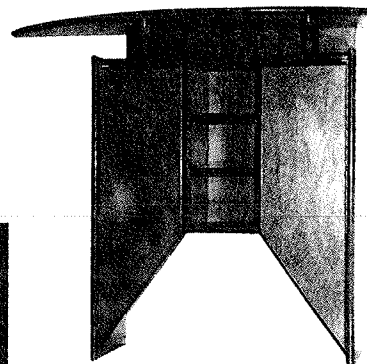
ALTERNATIVE CAREERS



Photos: Louis Jolicoeur

CÉLINE MARCOTTE
LAMINATE DESIGN
UNIBOARD, INC.
SAINTE-FOY, QUEBEC

Education: B.Arch., Laval University, 1990.
Experience: Régis Côté et Associés.



When the economy went sour, Céline Marcotte answered an advertisement for a color consultant at Uniboard, a manufacturer of low-pressure laminate board. “I developed the job and made it more than it was,” she says. As coordinator of design and marketing, she develops new colors and finishes, organizes trade show exhibits, and designs furniture to promote the product. The piece above, developed for a company that makes PVC piping, was designed to display both products.



CAREY FEIERABEND
PLANNING
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SAN FRANCISCO

Education: B.S., U. of Virginia, 1982;
M.Arch., Yale, 1986.

Since 1990, National Park Service employee Carey Feierabend has been the lead historical architect on the team that is helping to determine what will be done with the Presidio (above), the 1,400-acre, 865-building military base near the heart of San Francisco that is being closed by the Army. "I've crossed into planning and working with multidisciplinary teams," she says. Her responsibilities include program development, working with the public to gather and present ideas, and contracting out building assessments and historic studies. Her team's draft management plan for the site comes out this month.

National Park Service



Biops Photography

SAMUEL J. ARMIJOS
FABRIC STRUCTURES
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

Education: B.Arch., New Jersey
Institute of Technology, 1985; M.Arch.,
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1987.
Experience: FTL Associates.

Samuel J. Armijos

ings, and music pavilions. In 1991, he founded Nomadic Structures, which specializes in the research, design, and manufacture of fabric structures. His first product, introduced last year, was a portable beach cabana. Other projects include a temporary "ceiling" attached to a trellis for a wedding reception (above).

"Seven years of architecture school and now you're building tents!" Such was the reaction of friends when Samuel J. Armijos finished school and went to work for FTL Associates, a firm that specializes in tensile structure design. Armijos's interest in the "object" had begun with his master's thesis; at FTL, he got a chance to design bandshells, interior tented ceilings,



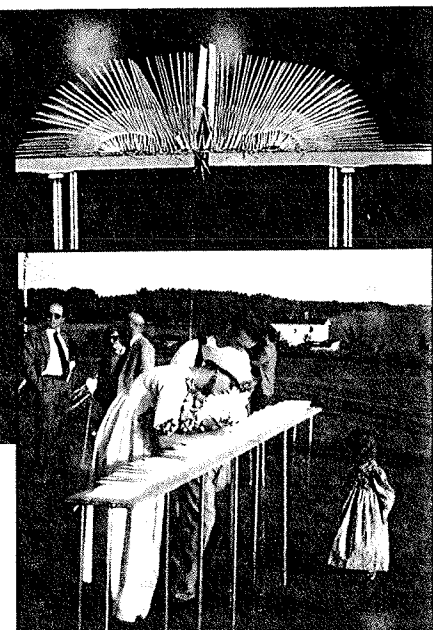
Bob Moustakas

BETSY WILLIAMS
BOOK MAKING
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

Education: B.E.D., Miami University,
1983; M.Arch., 1986.
Experience: various firms; David W.
Osler Associates.

In addition to her architectural work, registered architect Betsy Williams makes books that "enhance the rituals of an event" or "record a place and time." Among her projects are a box containing 100 years of birthday cards (a gift for a newborn baby); an exhibition catalog that visitors assembled themselves using pages gathered throughout the exhi-

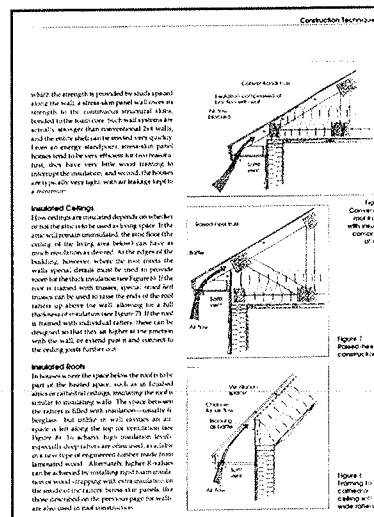
bition; and a ten-foot-long, pleated wedding guest book (above). Williams hopes for "a more complete synthesis" of her book and architecture work in the future. One upcoming project is a series of books on "the space-time relationship of festivals" that she encountered on a European study grant.



Justin Kimball

DUNCAN PRAHL
ENERGY CONSERVATION
WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS
ELECTRIC COMPANY
SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Education: B.Arch., Rhode Island
School of Design, 1986.
Experience: Garofalo & Associates;
GSGSB Architects.



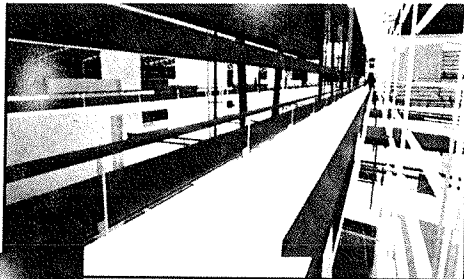
After designing a solar house as a high school project, Duncan Prahl says his interest in energy efficiency was "waylaid" by a formalist education. But after a long stretch without work, Prahl joined Western Massachusetts Electric as coordinator of the utility's Energy Crafted Home program. Prahl consults with builders, homeowners, and architects, recommending construction details (above) and techniques for greater energy efficiency. "I do everything from program management to crawling around attics," he says.



EDEN GREIG MUIR
CAD CONSULTANT/TEACHER
ARCHITRONIX
NEW YORK

Education: B.S., City College of New York, 1983; M.Arch., Columbia, 1986.
Experience: GIST, Inc.; assistant professor, Columbia.

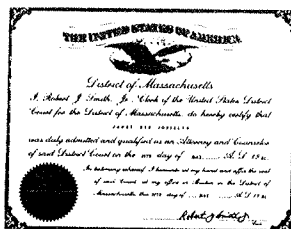
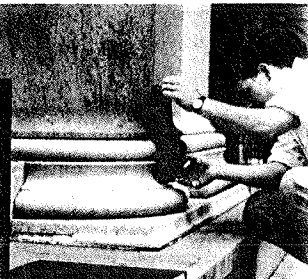
Back in 1984, while a student at Columbia, Eden Muir faced "tremendous resistance to the idea of using computers in design." By 1988, however, he was teaching there, developing a CAD curriculum emphasizing design through "parametric modeling." At the same time, he went to work for GIST, Inc., a software development firm, where he worked on 3-D modeling projects, including the Nara Convention Center competition entry of Scott Marble and Karen Fairbanks (above; see P/A, Feb. 1993, p. 22). "This was a promising use of CAD," he says, "not as an after-the-fact renderer, but as a working tool." He recently founded his own CAD firm, ARCHITRONIX.



DONALD M. RATTNER
EDUCATOR
NEW YORK

Education: B.A., Columbia, 1979; M.Arch., Princeton, 1985.
Experience: Allan Greenberg, Architect; Ferguson, Murray & Shamamian.

Two years ago, Donald established the Institute of Classical Architecture, aegis of the New York Academy of Art, to "stem the erosion of memory" by providing training in Classical architecture and methods. The Institute offers a summer program for architecture students and professionals, a journal, *Acroterion*, scheduled to debut this December, and continuing education.



JANET EVE JOSSELYN
CONSTRUCTION ATTORNEY
BOSTON

Education: B.A., Colby, 1977; M.Arch., Harvard, 1984; J.D., Boston College, 1990.
Experience: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Shepley Bulfinch Richardson & Abbott; Gadsby & Hannah Attorneys at Law.

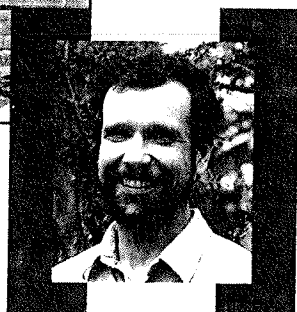


Janet Eve Josselyn, a registered architect who has worked for the past three years as an attorney specializing

in construction litigation. "Architecture is just one element of the practice of architecture," she says. Most of her work has been in construction litigation. (She can't recall a case involving an architect.) When work slowed at her firm recently, she took three months off to write a novel, published, about insurance construction. But she stresses lawyerly caution that "it is a work of fiction."



Claire Stevenson



Don Kerkhof

JOHN W. THOMPSON
MASONRY CONTRACTOR
MADISON, WISCONSIN

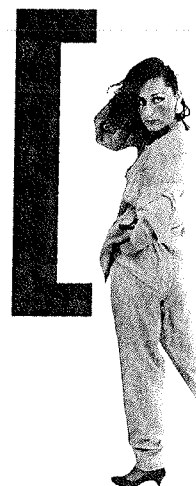
Education: B.A., U. of Wisconsin, 1971; M.Arch., U. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1983.

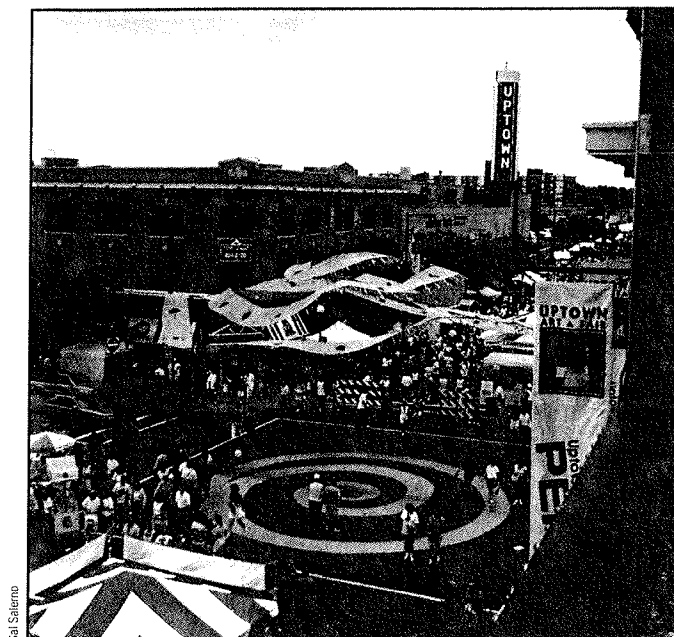
When John Thompson graduated from college, he decided to be a bricklayer, "as a way of escaping institutional tyranny." Several years later, Thompson, by then specializing in masonry restoration, went to architecture school. But after graduate school and conventional employment, he says, "I discovered I really love bricklaying." He now tries to do masonry work in the summer and his own design projects in the winter. Among his masonry restoration jobs have been two Frank Lloyd Wright houses, including the Bogk House in Milwaukee (above).

DEBORAH DESILETS
CLOTHING DESIGN
MIAMI

Education: B.S., 1982, B.Arch., 1987, Florida A&M.
Experience: Arquitectonica, Spillis Candela & Partners.

Deborah Desilets has run her own architectural computer graphics firm, teaches CAD at a Miami high school, and designs clothing. Her clothing designs (right), based on the idea that geometric folds "similar to origami" are superior to traditional seam construction, have appeared in *Threads* magazine. "Both buildings and clothes are exterior skins that must respond to movement without putting too much stress on the materials," she says.





Sal Salerno

ABOVE AND BELOW: "SKY SPIRAL", UPTOWN ARTS FAIR, 1992



Karen O'Connor

MOLLIE O'CONNOR
FESTIVAL ARCHITECTURE
MINNEAPOLIS

Education: B.Arch., U. of Minnesota, 1989.

Experience: assistant to artist Siah Armajani; Archistudio; Young & Associates.

Young Architects: Alternative Careers



Progressive Architecture 7.93

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used to cars for festive great potential for creative urbanism," says she. "They can create places where none existed before an ordinary place." O'Connor has been exploring possibilities for the designing parade floats, paintings, and other

constructions for Minneapolis community groups. Such efforts are in addition to her day job with a Minneapolis firm doing government housing rehabilitation, work that she says "isn't particularly satisfying artistically."

Her most elaborate work to date is "Sky Spiral," a ribbon of fabric hung over an intersection for three days at last year's Uptown Arts Fair, casting

shadows on another spiral painted on the street. O'Connor says the piece was "very difficult" to build, and that she would try a tensile structure with concentric circles if she had it to do again.

"I'd love to make this a business if I could, although the volunteer aspect is really important to me," O'Connor explains. She is customarily given a budget for a project; for

"Sky Spiral," she was paid \$6,000, most of which went into the product. "I did buy myself a new pair of glasses," she admits.

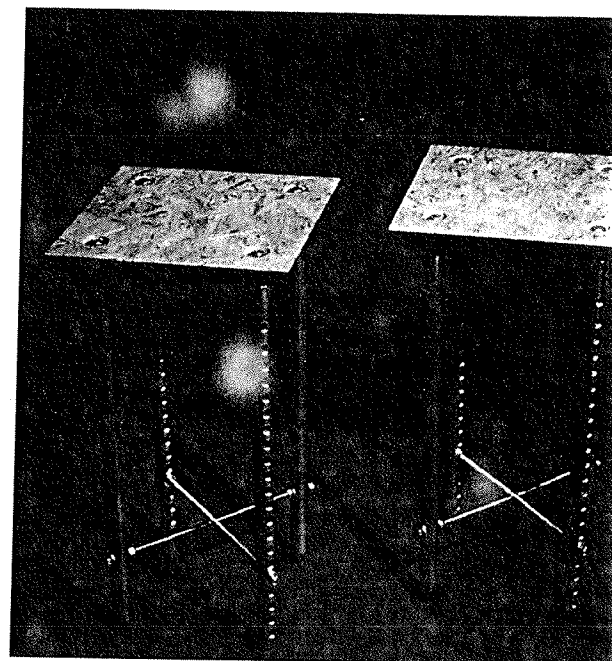
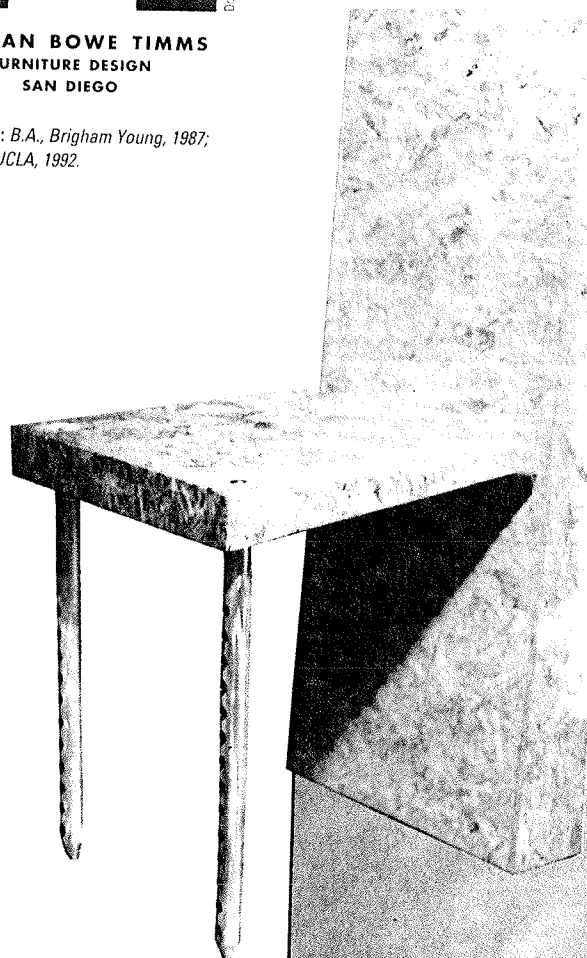
But festival work has had its advantages in the office, too. "I'M MUCH MORE SURE ABOUT MYSELF IN DESIGN DECISIONS, AND I'M CONSULTED ON THEM MORE OFTEN; I'VE GAINED A LOT OF RESPECT."



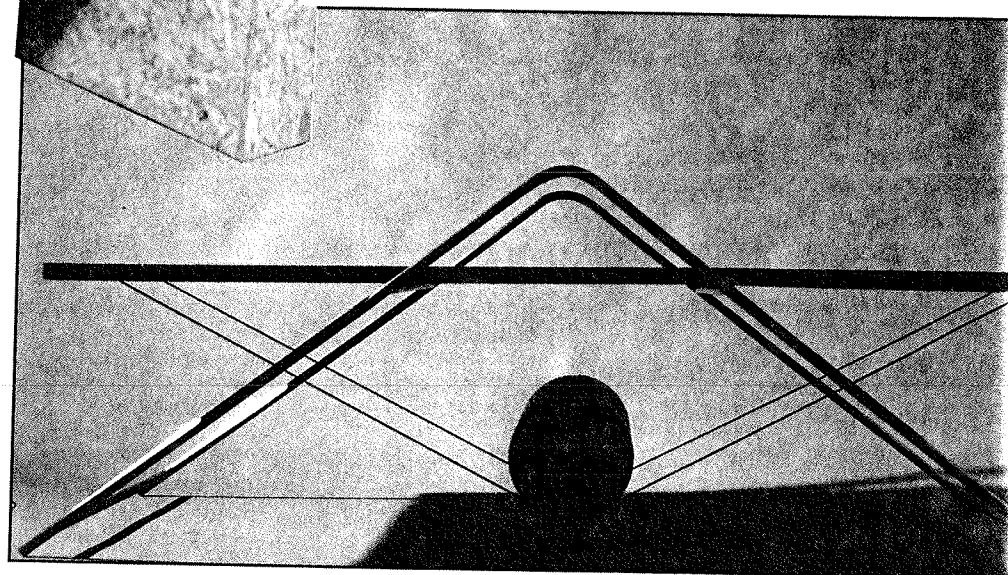
Doug Godey

NATHAN BOWE TIMMS
FURNITURE DESIGN
SAN DIEGO

Education: B.A., Brigham Young, 1987;
M.Arch., UCLA, 1992.



CHAIR (LEFT) AND TABLES (ABOVE) MADE OF STRAND BOARD AND WEIGHT MACHINE PINS



COFFEE TABLE WITH CONCRETE CORE SAMPLE AS COUNTERWEIGHT

For his master's thesis, Nathan Timms offered a recycling project of sorts: a house remodeling that reused and reconfigured existing parts. The project, along with his "unemployment and desire for hands-on design experience" led him to his current pursuit, building furniture with leftover and unconventional materials, some scavenged from alleys and junkyards. There are some noble

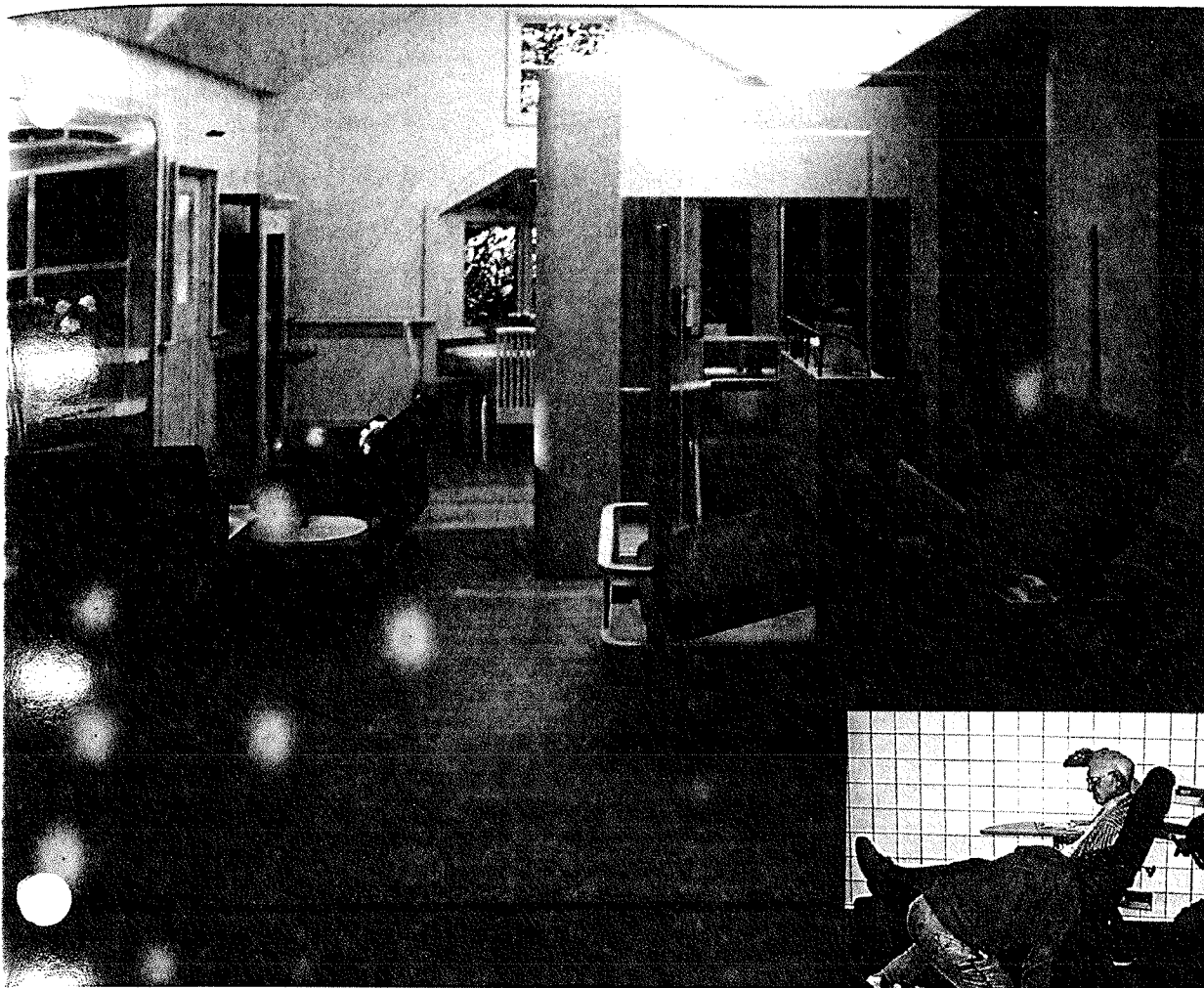
ideas behind Timms's furniture: his goal is to make each piece with 50 percent post-consumer waste, addressing environmental concerns and helping to keep down the cost to consumers.

His palette of materials includes old office doors, perforated center pins from weight-lifting machines (he found a motherlode of these), concrete core samples, end cuts of wood

beams, and sometimes entire pieces of furniture that he reconfigures.

He has sold a few pieces, mainly to "friends and old roommates," but has not had luck in galleries where his work has been shown. (Gallery mark-ups don't help, he suggests.) Lately, his thinking has moved toward ideas of mass-production with cheap materials like oriented strand board, which shows up in some recent

tables. "I WANT THE STRENGTH OF DESIGNS TO NOT BE SPECIFIC TO PRECIOUS MATERIAL."



VIEW FROM STUMPF OF POTENTIAL PRODUCTS FOR OLDER PEOPLE



ERGONOMIC ANALYSIS

While a student at the University of Michigan, Waymire became interested in design "as much as or more than the solution itself." Inspired by a professor who had worked for CRSS, he worked on several architectural programming projects in school. This interest has led him to a career dedicated to the pre-design process; most of Waymire's work consists of research done with end users, a group he defines as "people who might come into contact with the product."

At Herman Miller Corporation, Waymire is on a team that investigated market needs related to products for older people. In order to develop products that would serve an older population, his team set up a "living arts" program—a kind of ongoing focus

group—with older people in Ann Arbor. The project led to prototype products, by well-known designers, in seating, kitchen equipment, and bathroom products. The project remains on hold at Herman Miller.

His current employer, GVO, Inc., does product research predominantly for the computer industry.

Waymire says he is not bothered by turning projects over to someone else to design. "I WORK VERY CLOSELY WITH A LOT OF DESIGNERS, BUT I DON'T CONSIDER MYSELF A DESIGNER," he says, adding that he tries not to interfere with "the intuitive aesthetic decisions of designers."

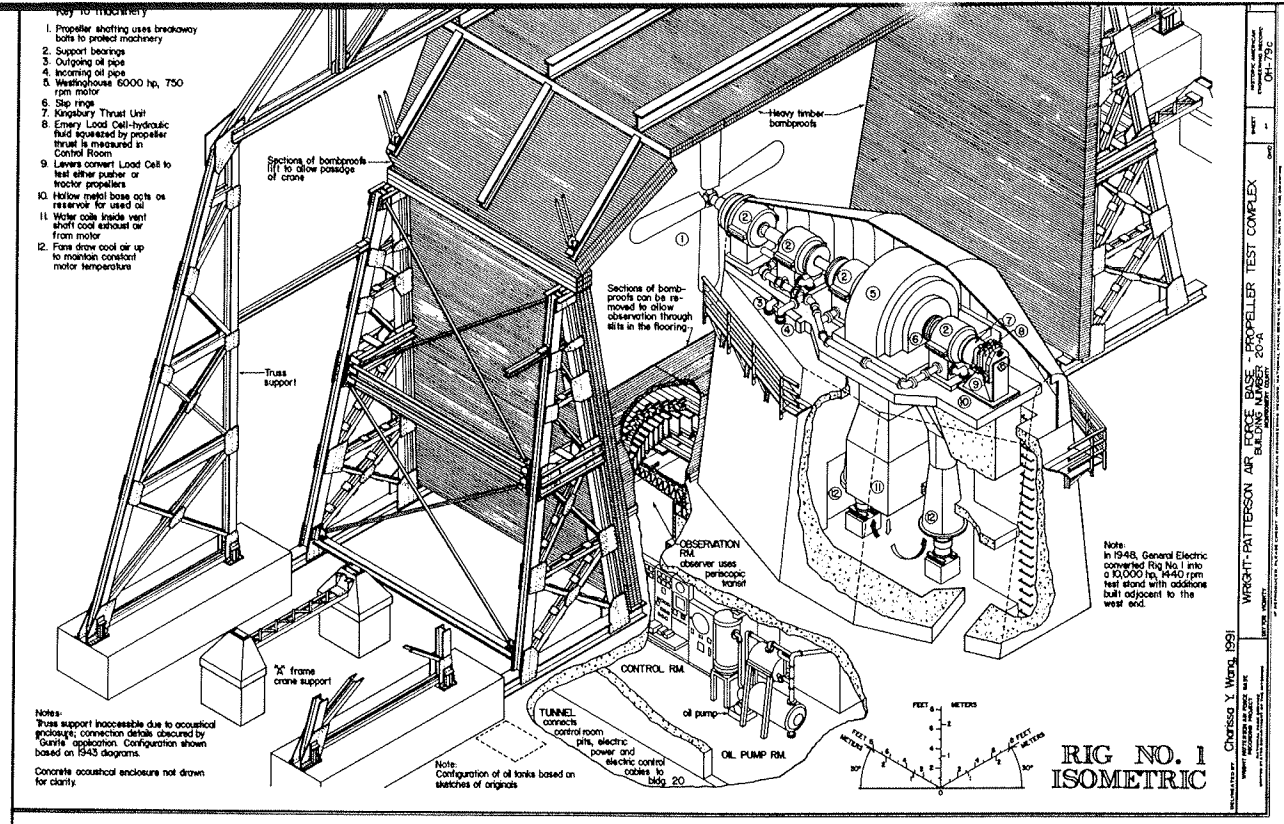


Emma Hooker

GARY L. WAYMIRE
PRODUCT ANALYSIS
GVO, INC.
PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

Education: B.S., 1985, M.Arch., 1987,
U. of Michigan.

Experience: Herman Miller; IBACoS.



PROPELLER TESTING MACHINERY, WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE



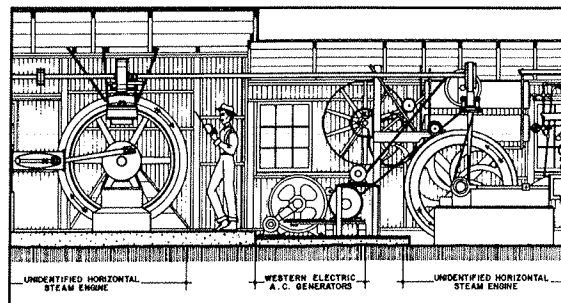
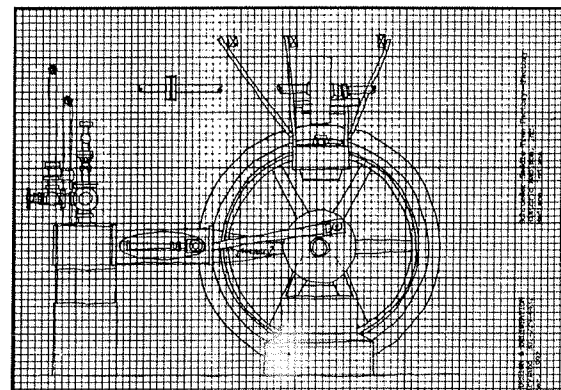
CHARISSA Y. WANG

DONALD M. DURST

**HARDLINES: DESIGN & DELINEATION
COLUMBUS, OHIO**

Education: B.S., U. of Maryland, 1988; M.Arch., Ohio State, 1990.
Experience: Stoiber & Associates.

Education: B.S., U. of Maryland, 1987; M.Arch., Ohio State, 1990.



FIELD DRAWING (CENTER) AND REDRAWN ELEVATION (ABOVE), SCHROEDER FACTORY

"We never thought of ourselves as alternative," protests Donald Durst. And indeed, Hardlines, the firm he founded upon graduation with schoolmate Charissa Wang, did almost all conventional design work for its first two years. But last year, most of the firm's work was in the area of measuring, researching, and documenting historic buildings. Their business is fueled by Federal rules requiring such

work before undertaking federally funded projects that might result in damage to historic properties. Wang and Durst provide clients with a thick "anthology" that includes field photographs, notes, drawings, and historic documents.

Such work is commonly performed by summer employees of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) or the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER); in fact,

both Wang and Durst spent summers working for HAER. In 1991, they were commissioned by HAER to do work at Ohio's Wright-Patterson Air Force Base that could not wait until summer; they have since done several jobs for both public and private clients, the latter including the Schroeder Saddle Tree Company in Wisconsin, which wanted its historic factory buildings documented.

"I THINK WHAT WE'RE DOING IS A GOOD EXERCISE OF ALL THE WE'VE LEARNED IN SCHOOL: DESIGN, PRESENTATION, RESEARCH," The pair hopes to have an architectural firm; both were to take their regist last month.

SCENE FROM THE FILM "BIRCH STREET GYM"



Alan Kong Au

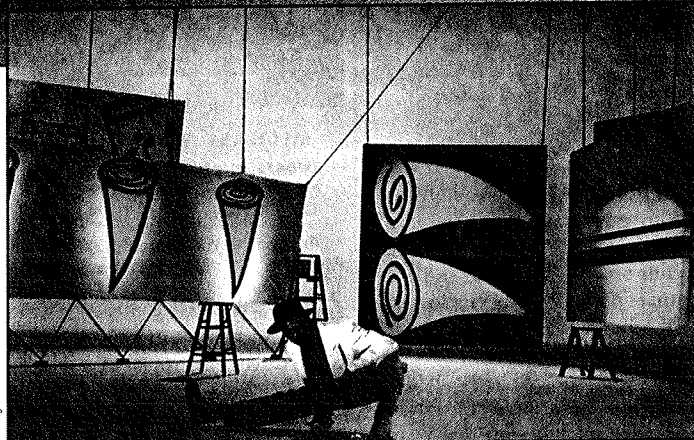
PERRY ANDELIN BLAKE
SET DESIGN
BLAKE + AU ASSOCIATES
VENICE, CALIFORNIA

Education: B.A., Utah State, 1982;
M.Arch., Harvard, 1985.
Experience: Frank O. Gehry &
Associates.



Rhythm & Hues

COMMERCIAL FOR MITSUBISHI GALANT



COMMERCIAL FOR "BUGLES"

Red Dog Film

Perry Blake feels that there is "no better background for designing sets than designing buildings." His young firm's success in design for commercials, music videos, and short films supports his point. After four years at Frank O. Gehry & Associates, Blake and fellow Gehry employee Alan Kong Au struck out on their own and found themselves doing as much set design as architecture. "Just being in Los Angeles meant half the people we did architectural work for were in the film industry," says Blake; he estimates that 90 percent of the firm's work today is set design, and their goal is to move into feature films. He cites several advantages of the temporal world of film over architecture: **"WE DO THE DESIGNS SOMETIMES IN DAYS, AND THEY'RE BUILT IN A WEEK; WITH A CAMERA, I CAN DETERMINE THE WAY MY WORK WILL BE SEEN; AND NO ONE CALLS ME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT TO SAY IT'S LEAKING."**

But Blake feels that his and Au's architectural training and experience are an important part of their success. Film clients have been impressed by the architectural work — office interiors, houses — that they include in their portfolio.

A commercial for the snack food, "Bugles," featured a dancer moving around an abstract set with cartoon-like, two-dimensional graphics. Some of the firm's more literally architectural work includes the sets for a short film nominated for an Academy Award, *Birch Street Gym*, and a series of commercials for the Mitsubishi Galant that debuts this month.