

## Features

# Beyond design

**Lydia Pawlenko**

The Olivetti Company has long been in the business of nurturing its corporate image through design. The corporate identity radiates from its logo—it is contained within the sleek lines of its typewriters and computers, and conjured up by enticingly elegant showroom displays.

The company's exhibition at the First Canadian Place coincided with last Saturday's conference on the design process held in one of

design, for healthy design never happens in isolation. It is dictated by the client's needs.

Theatre designer Brian Arnott somewhat dryly emphasized the balance that is needed when combining fantasy and reality in set design. Somehow, a designer must create a theatre set that will not only be imaginative, must also "abide by the laws of the land." Arnott admitted, "People who perform rarely have a say in the

complicated system of quite explicit pictograms combined with a dynamic logo. The symbols, which show all the different diseases, services and functions of the hospital, were developed to keep each of the 14 floors of the hospital from looking identical, and to help guest workers from North Africa and Yugoslavia who do not understand Dutch.

"We decided to make it look very 'hospital', very 'nursey',"

to the evolution of the human spirit.

It is through the building of this fantastic community, cast of natural material from a nearby riverbed, that Soleri has delved into studying ecological questions such as the using and re-using of wastes, as well as social interaction.

The structure of this city, which has been named Arcosanti, is miniaturized in order to support complex cultural and economic

activities, and to give individuals a new perspective and renewed trust in society and the future.

The town is to be integrated with a 5-acre greenhouse sloping down along the south face of its mesa site. The greenhouse is expected to provide food on a year-round basis and to meet the space and water heating needs of the town.

Funded through the sale of windbells, sculptures, graphics and research grants, the urban



Left: The evolution of the Olivetti logo: "It's hard to define the corporate image and the corporate identity."

the Curtis Lecture Halls at York.

It was former President Adriano Olivetti, who strived to reconcile "the two hostile images—man and machine," claimed Hans von Klier, a chief designer with Olivetti, who spoke at the conference.

At first, von Klier's lecture, spelling out the Olivetti corporate credo and flashing slides of sleeky business machines and sultry women, seemed to threaten the tone of the conference. After all, the 500 or so students and professionals had paid quite large fees, expecting an enlightening cognitive experience. The last thing people wanted was another trade show.

The lecture, fortunately, soon proved to part of an informative, well-rounded discussion of the various aspects of design. Coordinator Andrew Tomcik, an associate professor of visual arts at York, stressed the interrelation within design areas by inviting six speakers from North America and Europe, to express their ideas.

"Designers don't make reality go away. They address it," explained American writer and communications design consultant Ralph Caplan, who described the designer as being somewhat of a catalyst.

"A designer is a director," Caplan went on. "He anticipates a situation in a way that precipitates a situation and permits change and change," he said.

He dismissed, however, the notion of "fairy tale magic" in

building process."

The afternoon speakers were given a chance to discuss the actual projects they were involved in.

Vancouver urban planner Norman Hotson gave a fascinating presentation on the sensitive upgrading of Granville Island. He voiced his opposition to "the masterbuilder approach"—building on a massive scale—which won him some supportive applause from the audience.

Then came a glimpse of a rather bizarre project as Dutch graphic designer Gert Dunbar spoke of ways he discovered to relieve a monotonous and bureaucratic situation. Dunbar amused participants with slides of his

Dunbar said.

He chose the "unifying theme" of a graphic bouncing ball to identify the floors. "Look at them carefully. I think they're beautiful," he boasted. "And very effective. They're playful so as to relieve the stress of the hospital."

And participants giggled as they watched the thirteen images of balls in various states of motion appear on doors, walls, desk fronts, ceilings...

The mood quickly sobered as architect-philosopher Paolo Soleri began to share his vision.

Soleri mesmerized the participants of the conference with slides and explanations of a functioning example of alternative urban landscape which he has supervised over the past ten years. Located in the high desert of Central Arizona, 70 miles north of Phoenix, the project exemplifies the concept of ARCOLOGY: a fusion of architecture and ecology, into which he incorporated humanism, paganism, Eastern and Western thought. This term, Soleri explained, addresses itself to energy resources in the environment and



Above: A view of Arcosanti—Paolo Soleri's experiment in urban design in an Arizona desert. Below: Paolo Soleri



laboratory is also dependent on the presence of students, who begin a preliminary study of the project at the Cosanti Foundation in Scottsdale, and then arrive in Arcosanti for 5-week intervals. The construction of the project involves the constant presence and activity of 500 to 600 people.

Here was the speaker that brought a totally holistic approach to design, proving that it is indeed, as Ralph Caplan mentioned, "a process of relationships between things, between things and people, and between people and people."



Left: Gert Dunbar's graphics for the Westeinde Ziekenhuis (hospital) in Holland. Pictograms illustrated diseases and services of the hospital.

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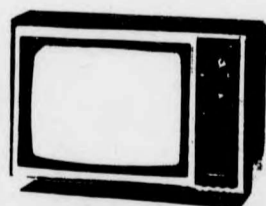
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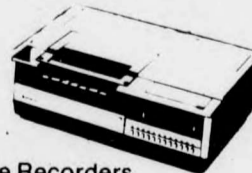


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