

Interview: Dudy Creative Warrior Magazine

By Tracey Woods
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When and why did you take interest in architecture?

I have always been hyper-sensitive to atmosphere and spaces. I'm always surprised when people aren't aware of the spaces they are in and the emotional impact space has on them. It's huge. It changes the way we think and what we can't think of. Architecture makes worlds, and more interesting to me, future worlds.

What has built the fascination for synergistic effects?

This comes from both an intuitive and an intellectual place. I have always been interested in natural systems: plants and animals and ecologies. When I look at the diversity of species in the rainforest, I always think, why doesn't architecture have this kind of diversity? Of course I know why, but the question just doesn't seem to go away for me. The diversity is in terms of visible features and embedded behaviors, not just one or the other. For a while now I have been trying to bring the idea of features and behaviors together in a profession which seems to cycle between promoting one or the other. Sustainability is one example of how behavior is being promoted at the expense of architectural features, and the digital Neo-baroque is an example of how form is being promoted at the expense of behavioral robustness.

As in biological systems, I think architectural systems should never operate alone in an optimal state, rather in a messily interwoven, excessive, redundant, and non-optimal way. This opens up a whole new territory where divisions between surface and infrastructure, structure and ornament, color and pattern, luminosity and thermodynamics are no longer relevant. Think of sugar. Sweetness is an unpredictable, irreducible feature of the combination of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen atoms (C₆H₁₂O₆). The whole exceeds the sum of the parts. My work is like sugar. Simple recombination or chimerical hybridization is not the point; the point is to get to a higher level order where systems fuse into something new.

What was your vision when you established your office?

I was interested in new theories of complexity. Especially in how parts become wholes, like cells-to-bodies and sensations-to-consciousness. The office has always been associated with materialism rather than representation, critical studies, narratives, meaning, and so on. I used to be more hard core into science-- you know my father is a physicist at NASA-- but the older I get the more I realize I am just surfing on science among other intelligences in the world. Science alone for instance wouldn't necessarily account for the emotional responses I'm trying to elicit in my work by the use of variable patterns, colors, luminescences, and fluids. And I have to say, I am getting increasingly interested in the discipline of architecture on its own terms—I don't want to force external analogies all the time, usefull as they are to me...

How did you plan out your vision?

Before I started my office I was Senior Designer for Coop Himmelblau, I had a whole career there and designed and built three projects there including BMW World in Munich. So this is my second life I guess. Part of that life is defining which things from my previous life will carry

over and which things must be new. It's like when Tom Ford left Gucci-- he had to redefine himself. So I would say that a lot of what we have been doing in the office the last few years has been taking risks, trying things out, defining a space to work. I give us a few more years of that before we hit full stride creatively. We need to make more mistakes first.

The architecture market is a rather competitive and fierce field, in which ways have you grown your firm? Advice to those who struggle?

That's a funny question, because I am struggling myself! I find it charming that my office doesn't appear to be struggling actually. That's probably a good sign, maybe that our design sensibility resonates in the world. Who knows.

Actually, I do think it is important to always behave "as if", by which I mean, behave as if everything I design will be built, as if my little office was a big office, as if I can compete with the gorillas in my field, as if it were just a matter of time before I get a significant commission. Otherwise you become a victim of self-fulfilling prophecy. Especially if you spend time in academia, which many young architects do. That can be a trap.

Which mistakes have you made that you can share, what can we learn from them?

I think my impatience has not always served me well. I want to get better at letting things simmer. Life goes by and you feel like you have to hurry, but authentic work never gets done that way.

What advice do you have for aspiring architects?

Develop an eye and a craft. There are so many architects out there promoting architecture as problem-solving, as engineering, as data-collection, as social science, as concept, as narrative, as meaning, and so on. But I am convinced they are wrong. I think that architecture, when it's good, is always the result of a sophisticated design sensibility at work.