



The Storyteller

Dutch landscape architect Adriaan Geuze and his firm, West 8, have been turning cool, rational spaces into warm, narrative ones by connecting the land to its history and people – and being sure to plant a little fun wherever they go
By Aaron Betsky



City on Fire/City in Bloom, Rotterdam

This temporary installation, on view this past summer, commemorates May 14, 1940, the day Rotterdam was bombed by Germany and destroyed by fires. Geuze hung thousands of potted plants on webbed scaffolding, with an air raid siren sticking out from the middle. Surprising and poignant, the project represents a perfect example of his approach to altering landscapes.

Rotterdam is a modern city. Bombed by the Germans during the Second World War, it was rebuilt as a rational and logical place. Home to Europe's largest port, it's a place of business. Yet in its grey heart, thousands of flowers now bloom, courtesy of master landscape architect, urban planner and self-proclaimed "poet/engineer" Adriaan Geuze. He arranged 60,000 geraniums in undulating ranges, evoking the fires that destroyed the city after the German blitzkrieg in 1940. He increased the sense of a smoldering mass by using lighting that pulses in various shades of red. "It's a way to make people aware of the war, of course, but also of what the war destroyed. In the interbellum period, this was a sexy, dirty city of sailors and bars and all kinds of illegal things. That was lost when it was rebuilt as this clean, modern city, which is now supposed to be a great place of architecture. I'm just not sure I buy it anymore."

That skeptical attitude informs Geuze's work, casting him as the Pied Piper of narrative landscape architecture. It has also become a mainstay of West 8, the 60-member Rotterdam firm he founded in 1987. While Geuze, now 47, trained as an agricultural engineer (graduating from Wageningen University, also in 1987), West 8 has moved far beyond choosing plants. Instead, its specializations range from elaborate bridges and interactive gasolens that include collages of different elements, to large-scale urban plans combining logical grids with seemingly arbitrary cuts, swirls and interruptions. "I wanted to do more than just design patterns; I wanted to tell stories and create illusions," says Geuze, going on to describe a school visit to Versailles: "I didn't see this straight axis going all the way back and representing the ability to control the world, like the professor said. I saw these wonderfully sensual fountains and dark copes, where I just knew people went to wander around and dance and make love. The teachers tried to sell me on the modernist idea of functionality, but I wanted to tell stories."

And with Geuze's now-famous design for Rotterdam's Schouwburgplein, or Theatre Square (of which the geranium installation represents an extension), people started listening. Completed in 1996, "it was really no more than a new covering for an underground



MORPHOSIS' DOUBLE-DUTY FEDERAL BUILDING

At the intersection of 7th and Mission Streets in San Francisco, a slender yet sure-footed tower rises in stark contrast to the portly courthouses and apartment buildings that surround it. Viewed from the south, a perforated steel screen buckles and folds across a plaza before leaping up the side of the building and curling over the top. From the north, the facade is entirely glazed, sliced by parallel rows of green laminated glass fins.

Although the design is unlike anything the neighbourhood has seen before, what's really surprising is the building's owner: the United States government, a client that isn't exactly famous for cutting-edge architecture. The city's new Federal Building was designed by Morphosis under the U.S. General Services Administration's Design Excellence program, which has gradually been changing the government's architectural track record. It is the third such project Morphosis has completed. Project manager Tim Christ says the firm and the

program have a similar interest in exploring ground-breaking new designs for public buildings.

Another interest shared by client and architect is environmental sustainability. The Federal Building's slender shape comes from a decision to design the structure around a narrow footprint so that daylight reaches into most offices. This strategy also allows for natural cross-ventilation. While the lower five levels – where there are high concentrations of people and equipment – are fully air-conditioned, floors six through 18 make use of a living skin. During the day, a computer system monitors internal and external conditions and automatically adjusts the operable windows, vents and screens to provide natural ventilation and cooling. At night, the system opens the windows again to flush out heat and cool the concrete core. The planes of folded metal that shield the south facade and roof act as massive sunscreens; the translucent glass fins on the north elevation shade the windows from direct

sunlight. In the end, the building's naturally ventilated upper levels are expected to use less than half of the GSA's usual target energy allowance.

The glass and perforated screens are also meant to convey a sense of openness, something the architects struggled to maintain while responding to their client's strict security requirements. "We were interested in the idea of transparency and accessibility," says Christ. "We're celebrating the symbolic importance of the building in the neighbourhood." Indeed, the metal screens extending out to the public plaza, and the security barriers that double as outdoor seating, create an inviting welcome for the building's 1,500 employees as well as neighbours who come just to use the café, child care centre and conference facilities.

BY MARK COUCH



Morphosis has hit two birds with one stone in its design of the San Francisco Federal Building. The 18-story structure adds to the United States government's steadily growing list of environmentally innovative projects, and it classifies as environmentally sustainable. Left: The lower's slim profile allows natural light and breezes to enter most workspaces. Above: A perforated steel screen, flanking the entire south elevation, shields the offices from solar heat gain. Opposite: Translucent laminated glass fins, set parallel to the glazed north facade, shade the windows from direct sunlight. These passive strategies cut down on energy used for artificial ventilation and lighting.

Everything is illuminated



Decorative and interior lighting usually grabs most of the design headlines, but on occasion even the world's top interior lighting manufacturers and designers bring their talents outdoors: witness products designed by Mario Cucinella and Marc Sadler, along with those manufactured by Luceplan and Guzini.

Manufacturers clearly have energy efficiency on their minds. Low-wattage LEDs are sweeping the globe, especially for outdoor applications in northern climates, where they can operate at far cooler temperatures than other bulb types. Artemide's ground-recessed Buco luminaire operates on three to 12 one-watt LEDs, while Prisma Architectural's Waylight and Delta Light's Channel feature optional LED fixtures.

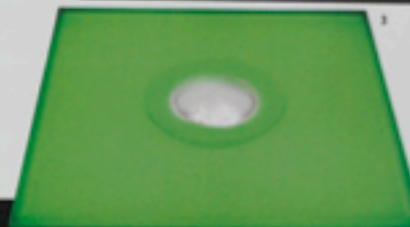
Lights powered by photovoltaic cells are smart for two reasons. They eliminate reliance on traditional power plant electricity, earning a gold star from environmentalists. Also, without the need for wiring, lamps like Luceplan's Sky and Se'lux's SonneLibe can be placed anywhere — no need to dig up earth or locate them a certain distance from a building or power source.

Beyond these technical considerations, designers and manufacturers continue to show how some of the innovative stylistic flourishes we normally see in decorative lighting are worth pursuing outdoors. Spanish manufacturer B.Lux's Kanpazar lamp, by Jon Santacoluma, is a stunning sculpted cone based on the form of a pine tree, and its entire polyethylene frame radiates light. And Marsel's Duna lamp recalls a contemporary, up-styled version of the beachfront tiki torch, with its sand-filled floor-pot base.

With all of these offerings for outdoor lighting, there's no reason to be afraid to go out after dark. In fact, you just might see something you like.

—ANDREW BRADTHAINE

Marco Meroni designed the Tofo family of lamps for Italian manufacturer FontanaArte. The outdoor floor lamp, 60-centimeters tall and crafted in aluminum, emits light from a dog-eared cut in its cylindrical body. Its way sound escapes from a pipe organ. Colour variations are produced with red, yellow, blue and green bulbs, or combinations thereof. The cap can be removed if uplighting is also desired.



1. Tofo by Antonio Miro for Marsel Based on a historical model of illumination — a torch stuck in the ground that could be pointed in whatever direction — the design-conscious cave dweller artist Miro's Tofo has a ball-and-socket joint that allows the user to rotate it 360 degrees. The flowerpot-style base, ideal for patios and gardens, is filled with sand to stabilize the post. The interchangeable shade is available in red, white, and black.

2. Kanpazar by Jon Santacoluma for B.Lux Jon Santacoluma based the top of the Kanpazar on a large pine tree in the Alto de Kanpazar mountain range in Guipuzcoa, Spain. Lit by two fluorescent bulbs, the oddly tubular lamp is manufactured in neutral polyethylene to produce a white glow.

3. Buco by Artemide With frames available in strikingly bright shades of blue, red, green, amber and white,

and in three sizes, this ground-recessed luminaire provides spot or area lighting. Its bright ray is powered by three to 12 one-watt LEDs, protected by a tempered safety glass cover with translucent foil and anti-slip coating.

4. iTeka by Mario Cucinella for iGuzzini A simple, minimalist light, iTeka can be customized in myriad ways: mounted on a wall, a pole or in the ground, with single or double light bodies. Accessories include a safety grill to protect against vandalism, transversal and longitudinal louvers that produce glare-free asymmetrical illumination, and coloured filters to diffuse your choice of fluorescent or halogen lamps.

5. Prisma by Knud Helischer for Lightyears This if 2007 Product Design Award winner gets top marks

for its efficiency: in addition to the light beamed from the top principal reflector, stray light from the metal halide or low-voltage halogen lamp is also distributed by two smaller aluminum rings at the bottom of the impact-resistant polycarbonate shade. Available in bollard and wall-mounted versions (shown), Prisma is finished with a grey powder lacquer.

6. Sky by Alfredo Haberli for Luceplan The name of this lamp, Sky, nods to its power source: the sun. Haberli's design features a lamp head covered in latest-generation photovoltaic cells, which capture sunlight during the day, powering the light after dark and facilitating placement without the need for cables or trench digging. Available in two bollard heights, as well as a wall-ceiling model, Sky can be equipped with a white LED, a 20-watt fluorescent or a metallic iodide light.

7. Beluga Stone by Marc Sadler for Fabbian Sadler's Beluga Stone floor fixture turned heads at this year's Salone del Mobile in Milan for its orientability: the spherical frame rotates in the base. The structural parts are available in a natural colour, or in a white textured version produced with a mix of cement and resin. The light source is a metal halide bulb.

