



## To See: Affinitive Seeing

### **Before we can make things that are pleasant to see, we must find pleasure**

in seeing the things that are offered to our sight. We take note of the flamboyant, extraordinary sights, but we must also seek out the innumerable irrelevant shapes and lines on which our glance can alight and invest them with meaning, as patterns or forms we can enjoy. We must learn to see ... and to enjoy.

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Fig. 4: Patch of snow.



Fig. 5: Wooden railing.



Fig. 6: Tennis racquet.





As we see, we project our style preferences—our moods—and those preferences become a filter, through which we select those things that correspond to the lines and shapes of our preferred style—whatever it happens to be at any given time. In one mood, or stylistic period, we may see cabbages that are comparable to an Art Nouveau hair comb, while in another—when we are in the mood for geometric designs—we delight in a nature composed of technical forms.



Fig. 8. Cross-section  
of a cabbage.



Images also convey meanings and tell stories of faraway lands, of lonely roads, or funerals of forgotten people. In Japan, people often meditate and reflect as they gaze upon stones in open courtyards.



Fig. 10: Japanese sand garden.

Our glances will naturally alight on something and pass over where there is nothing. This is one of the most relevant aspects of design.

Coming into Manhattan, I come upon the lovely sight of many brightly-lit ornamental spires spotting the skyline at a distance from one another. If these jewel-like mirages appeared side by side, with no space in between them, their impact would be far less powerful. Without "nothing" surrounding them, they would tend to blur together—they would present a "forest" instead of individual "trees." The greater the visual importance of empty spaces surrounding something, the more important and valuable that something appears.



Fig. 11: Trees



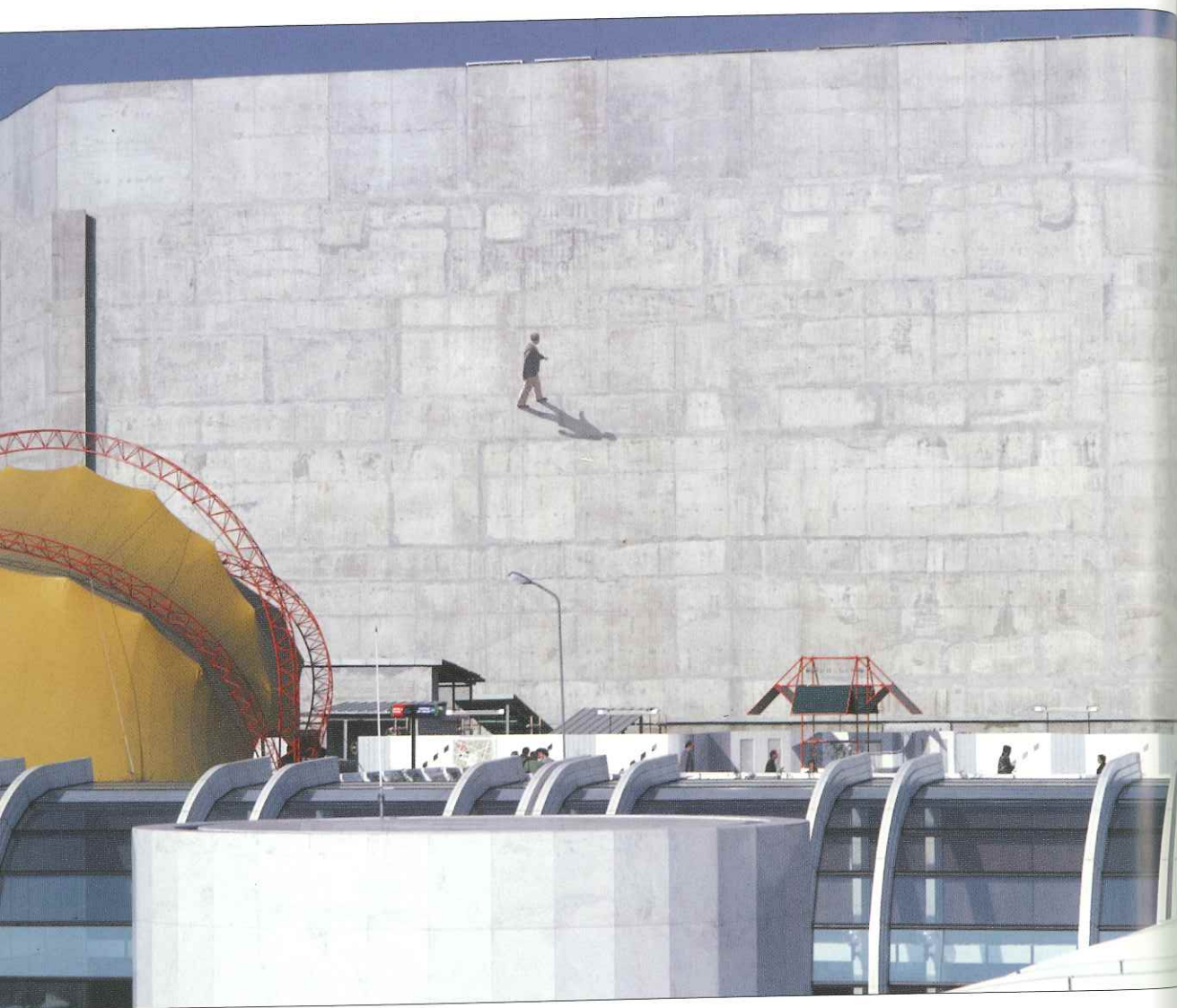


Fig. 12: Figure of man in mural on a wall at Les Halles, Paris.

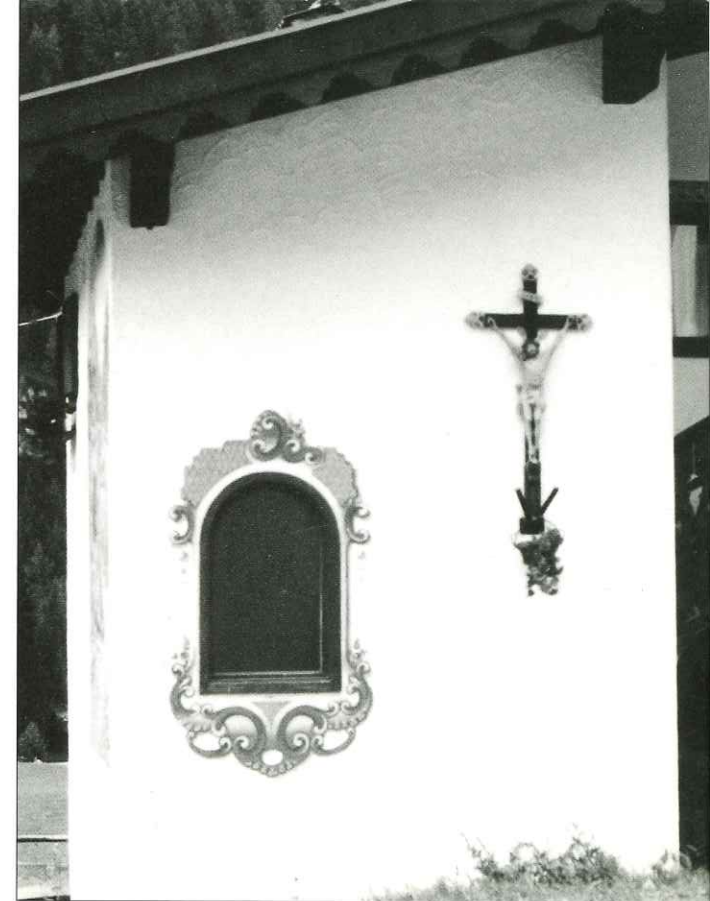


Fig. 13: Wall painting, Bavaria.

Fig. 14: Painted door in Greece.







Fig. 154: Silly house,  
by Ross Miller.

## Fun

### We have spoken for so long now about design in terms of industrial design, in

terms of making useful things, that we have forgotten good humor, an attitude of lightheartedness, of frivolity, of *joie de vivre*. It might be useful to mention that we must not take ourselves so seriously, in following the strict rules and principles of Puritan order and restraint preached by the modern movement, that we forget about making lovely and funny things, including jokes and toys.

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Fig. 155: Peekaboo Vase  
(Nambé) with and without  
flowers. Eva Zeisel, 2003

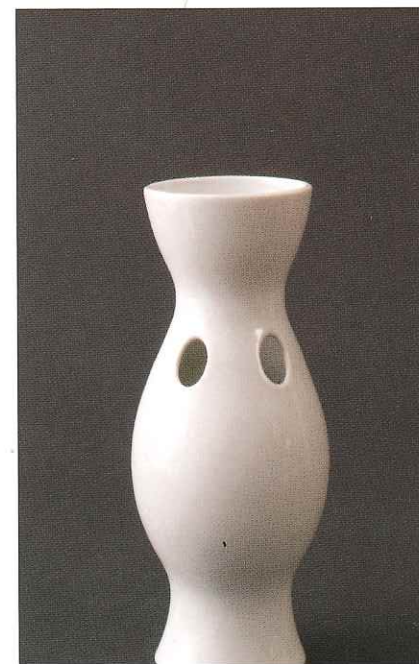






Fig. 156: "Eva" teapot and sugar bowl for KleinReid, Eva Zeisel, 2003.

Fig. 157: Animal jug from Honduras.



Fig. 158: Old toy (15th century B.C.).

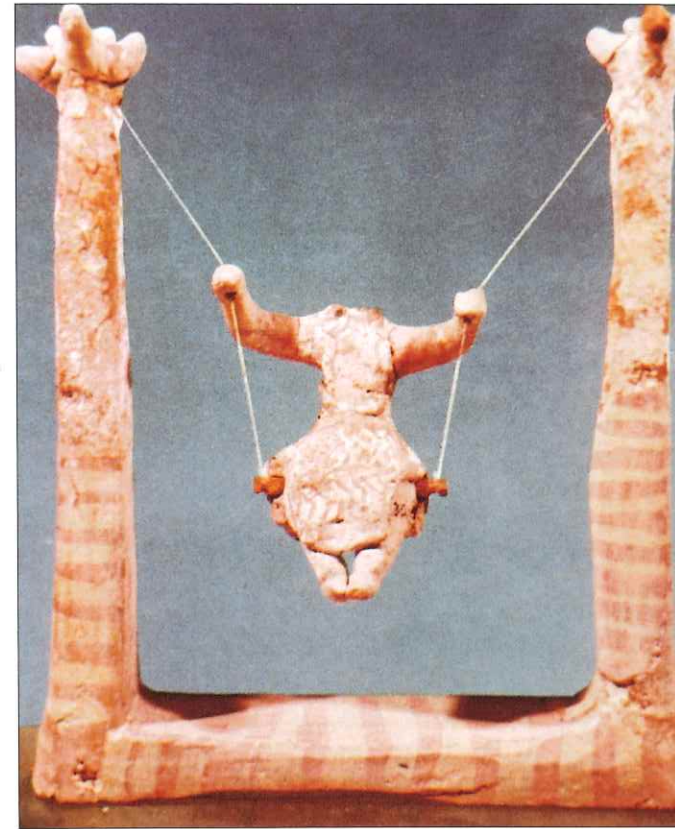


Fig. 159: Invitation/card designed by Milton Glaser, 1984.

