



FRESH AND ON THE FRINGE

BY BOB KODZIS

It's time for a refreshing jolt of originality. Get ready to add some Red Bull to your creative juice. I bring you eight divine and wildly diverse sources of creative inspiration. They run the gamut from advertising to science, from architecture to art and poetry to engineering. The common theme they all share is astounding innovation.

Keep in mind that this is not a competition or even a top 10 list. It's a field report from the front lines of an ongoing quest for creative inspiration; a constant search for individuals, work and ideas that have the power to stoke the creative spirit.

Drink up some of this cool elixir of creativity and then revisit your creative challenges refreshed; maybe even with a new perspective.

"The human mind, once stretched, may never return to its original dimensions."

— Henry David Thoreau

WORD POWER

If you love words that are inspired, well chosen and well delivered, you will find joy in "HBO's Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry." Experience the power of words in a very unique and entertaining way. It's urban poetry delivered in styles that range from solemn storytelling to grand theatrical oration. Done well, it is mesmerizing.

The show has been on the air since 2001, yet every emerging episode is fresh and different. It reinforces the fact that "fresh" does not always mean "most recent."

Look beyond the hip-hop facade and listen to the words. Listen to how poets sell ideas with their voices, their inflections and their body language. It's a course in creative pitching. And the words ... oh the words ... they will move you.

So far, every installment has offered at least one poet whose message and delivery has made me sit up, listen, laugh and shake my head in awe of the power of the spoken word. It's pure inspiration.

For a show schedule and some excerpts from the show check out Def Poetry at www.hbo.com/defpoetry.

SENSORY ECSTASY

Art Basel Miami Beach is one of the best and most eclectic art showcases in the U.S. The American sister event of Art Basel in Switzerland, this cutting edge international art show has crossover events in music, film, design and architecture. Each year more than 195 galleries from five continents bring together the cutting edge art of over 2,000 extremely diverse and gifted artists. The result is a smorgasbord of art that has the power to move the human spirit.

Art Basel Miami Beach, which takes place Dec. 7-10, has something for everyone. "It's the hippest art show on the continent," says Jan Savarick, a South Florida art collector and entrepreneur. "It's a feast for the eyes that promises to make even the most jaded art junkie's heart soar."

If visual arts shake up your creative spirit, find your way to Art Basel Miami Beach. It will fill you up. www.artbasel.com.

PICASSO OF THE BLUEPRINT

"Architecture is a small piece of this human equation, but for those of us who practice it, we believe in its potential to make a difference, to enlighten and to enrich the human experience, to penetrate the barriers of misunderstanding and provide a beautiful context for life's drama." — Frank Gehry

Frank Gehry is an architectural icon and a celebrity. He achieved this status by bucking convention and expressing his truly original artistic vision on the skylines of some of the world's most famous cities.

To call Frank Gehry's creations "buildings" is to sell them short. They are works of architectural art. In fact, when recently asked where he finds his inspiration, Gehry picked up a photo of Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi from his desk, and said, "Actually, I tend to think more in terms of artists like this. He has had more influence on my work than most architects." It's no wonder that Gehry is considered by some to be the Picasso of Architecture.

At 77, Gehry is a distinguished professor of architecture at Columbia University, and he continues to expand his extraordinary portfolio of structural innovations.

His recent works include the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, The Guggenheim Bilbao in Spain and the Experience Music Project in Seattle (commissioned by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen). For more information on the life and works of Frank Gehry, check out "Sketches of Frank Gehry," a documentary by Academy Award-winning director Sydney Pollack. Or visit this Web site: www.greatbuildings.com/architects/Frank_Gehry.html.

PERFORMING MIRACLES

Julie Taymor has guts. I know I should be more inspired by her madly creative vision and her beautiful costumes and puppets, but what inspires me most about this Tony Award-winning director and costume designer is her courage.

Taymor's Broadway production of the "Lion King" took a story that half the world knows by heart and boldly infused it with her creative vision. She

intertwined the tale with brilliant costuming, choreography and puppetry to make something that was once very familiar, completely unique. The result is a must-see, often sold-out Broadway show that will thrill audiences for decades.

Taymor has also directed two films that draw their inspirations from very different places. She directed and wrote the screenplay for "Titus," a big-screen adaptation of Shakespeare's "Titus Andronicus." It's a visually stunning story of horrible vengeance. I don't often get my inspiration from Shakespeare, but because of Julie Taymor's visual prowess and sense of performance, I now have scenes from "Titus" indelibly etched in my memory.

Slightly more conventional, but no less original is Taymor's film "Frida" — the story of the life and loves of Mexican art phenomenon, Frida Kahlo. It's artistic storytelling at its best and remains one of my favorite biopics.

Taymor is currently directing the Opera "Grendel" for the LA Opera Company. The show opened in Los Angeles in June 2006 and was also presented at the Lincoln Center Festival in New York City. For this grand production, Taymor also played the role of the Opera's librettist and puppet designer.

I've seen some of the costumes and the puppets for "Grendel" and they are both amazing and horrifying. Thanks to Julie Taymor, I'll soon be adding opera to my sources of inspiration.

Whether through film, theater or opera, Julie Taymor is a creative soul who is worth a closer look. Her new hardcover book, "Playing with Fire," is slated for launch in November 2006.

EVOLUTION UNLEASHED

Even if you are not a fan of video games, you will appreciate the sheer brilliance of the big idea behind Spore (Maxis/Electronic Arts).

Designed by veteran game designer Will Wright, this mind-blowing simulation game allows you, as the Supreme Being, to create a life form and follow its evolution from a single cell amoeba to a creature to a civilized being to a space traveler.

It's an amazing journey with awe-inspiring challenges along the way. This game is so beautifully detailed and designed that it reminds us of the wisdom, the complexity and the awe of evolution. It's no wonder it won the 2006 Game Critics Award for Best Original Game. For a closer look go to www.spore.com — or better yet, find a friend who owns it and play!



DO YOU WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?

We all have secrets, but few of us can unmask them as artfully as do the contributors to the Web site Post Secret (www.postsecret.blogspot.com). This Web site is an ongoing community art project dedicated to sharing user-submitted postcards that creatively depict the deepest, darkest secrets of their makers. And what secrets they tell.

Some are funny, some are sad and some are downright angry. Most are very poignant and brilliant in their art and their simplicity. Remember, you can only fit so much on a postcard.

Many of these postcards are art from the heart, while others seem to come from a darker place. The mix makes for a very interesting creative diversion.

The next time you get creative block, take a dose of inspiration from Post Secret. I promise, I won't tell.

REINVENTING THE WHEEL

The wheel is one of a handful of inventions that has changed the course of human history. As important as it has been to all stages of civilization, the wheel has evolved in a rather boring, linear fashion during the past 7,000 years. We have seen it progress from solid wood to wooden spokes with steel rims to inflatable rubber to steel-belted radials; each iteration only slightly better than the previous version.

Recently an inventor named Steve Katsaros has taken the design of the wheel to a whole new level. Simply and appropriately named "The Wheel," Katsaros' invention is a self-contained, self-propelling bicycle wheel. It can fit on any standard bike and it has the power to propel the rider at 20 MPH over relatively flat terrain. It operates on a 25cc two-stroke engine (1 horse power maximum output). "The Wheel" weighs less than 12 pounds and runs on regular unleaded gas, with an average fuel efficiency of ... get this ... 200 MPG. With gas prices topping \$3 per gallon in some parts of the U.S., the timing of this invention could not be better.

What moved me to include "The Wheel" among these fresh and fringe sources of inspiration is the radical right turn that Katsaros took in his thinking about the function of a wheel and its contribution to transportation. Without a source of propulsion, a wheel has the value of a big cylindrical paperweight. With its own source of propulsion, the wheel has almost limitless applications in industry and in life – from corporations to third-world nations. Stay tuned, we'll be seeing more of "The Wheel." As far as I'm concerned, it's the hottest invention since ... well ... the wheel. To see this innovation in motion, visit www.revopower.com

THE ART OF SCIENCE

As a life-long a student of nature (Okay, maybe I'm more like a groupie of nature) I've found hundreds of fascinating sources of inspiration at the intersection of art and science. That's why I was so excited when I stumbled upon the Princeton University's second annual The Art of Science Competition.

The competition was launched in 2005 with the tag line "Science is boring. Art is stupid. Prove us wrong!" They got exactly what they asked for: proof that science can be beautiful and the art can be smart. The scientific art that has emerged from this contest is breathtaking. It reminds us of the infinite sources of inspiration that can be found in the natural world – some with the help of a microscope, others just by paying attention. It's definitely worth a peek.

To check out the winners of the 2005 and 2006 editions of this creative competition, visit www.princeton.edu/artofscience.

Although we've only scratched the surface, that's all the good stuff I can fit into one edition of Quest. There are thousands of other examples of work and ideas that are fresh and on the fringe. If you encounter creative work that takes your breath away, please drop me a note and share it: Bob@flightofideas.net. I'm always glad to pass along creative sparks to our readers.

Until next time, stay inspired!

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Bob Kodzis is an award-winning artist, keynote speaker and performer. He has been contributing ideas and articles to *Create Magazine* for five years. Kodzis is also a facilitator and founder of the wildly creative thinktank Flight of Ideas, Inc. – a company whose mission it is to unleash a new level of fun and creativity throughout the world. His clients range from the United Way to Kennedy Space Center to Vekoma, the largest rollercoaster manufacturer in the world. You can contact Kodzis directly online at Bob@flightofideas.net, or check out his cool Web site at www.flightofideas.net.