
...note

Rockwell Group's
Imagination Playground in
a BOX, in New York City
(See "Recess, Rethought,"
page 52)



By Jesse Ashlock

Play It As It Lays

*In tough times,
designers can still
have fun.*

We're starting to get accustomed to living in an economic downturn. The furniture fairs came and went, and were, as predicted, more subdued than in years past. The eulogies to boom-era design have been penned, and the theories about what happens next have been offered (a renewed focus on public works; rethinking production in order to deliver more affordable products). Words like "frugality" and "austerity" have become part of our daily discourse.

And that's all probably as it should be. But things don't have to be so *dire*. Regardless of economic circumstances, design possesses a wondrous capacity to

delight—after all, as Charles Eames, a master of innovation in lean times, once asked, "Who ever said that pleasure wasn't functional?" That's why we decided to use this issue to explore design as it relates to play—in all the senses of the word, including organized sports and surfing, video games and board games, toys and playgrounds, music and theater. In doing so, we found that community-sourced design is especially powerful in designing play experiences, that play is a remarkably potent educational resource, and that remembering childhood toys brings out the poet in all of us.

Like the rest of the world, I.D. has been changing. For proof, look no further than my byline here. It is my great privilege to inherit the stewardship of this magazine from Julie Lasky and her talented team, who made I.D. more incisive and more relevant than ever during their tenure. Along with William Bostwick, I.D.'s new senior editor, I hope to keep up their great work while striving for even greater heights. You can help. Please let us know what you'd like to see in the magazine (and on our soon-to-be-overhauled website) by emailing me at jesse.ashlock@id-mag.com.

...on the web

...more from Astro Studios

Check out photos of the designers' work and more from their San Francisco offices.

...more Playgrounds

Watch a slideshow of the world's coolest parks and playpens for kids.

...more from

Hoberman Associates

See the Expanding Video Screen in motion.

...more Toys

Watch a slideshow of all the iconic playthings featured in the issue, plus more.