

LAS VEGAS
On Learning from Las Vegas

Rebecca Stephany

I found it accidentally, just by looking at titles in the library of the Rijksacademie. Maybe I'm treating books a bit superficially, but I was just looking at the architecture desk, and there was this book titled 'Learning from Las Vegas', and I was like:

YEAH! I WANT TO LEARN
FROM LAS VEGAS!

That sounded like something that had to do with me, not like a historical architecture book. It sounded like architecture can be fun, can have a meaning for today also.

When I opened it I realized it was an analysis from the seventies of the structure of Las Vegas. They treated it as serious architecture. The writers, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, were teachers at Harvard and they did a student research there. They did it in a way like you would analyse medieval architecture, in an honest way — not judging anything. I thought: 'Wow, you can also analyse recent history and take profit from it, also from popular culture'.

Then I went to school, and I said: 'I cannot do this model yet (an assignment from Experimental Jetset about making a pavilion model), I have to read this book first.' And then Danny said: 'Yeah, that is considered as the Bible of postmodernism!' I didn't know that, I just started reading it. Some parts are really dry. Not so interesting. The second part is about their theory about constructed decoration or decorated construction and it shows examples from recent architecture. They have a kind of war with these people who are designing these kitschy round buildings, people like Frank Gehry.

They say it in the last sentence, which sums up pretty much what I think is important:

IT IS ALL RIGHT TO DECORATE
CONSTRUCTION BUT NEVER
CONSTRUCT DECORATION!

Venturi, Brown and Izenour are saying that all these modern designers are making buildings like 'ducks' (there is an image of a building that looks like a duck, which is of course an extreme example of a building as a constructed decoration).

The conclusion I took out of it was: if I do something decorative then I do it intuitively, without thinking about it, I don't construct it.

They play with elements from the past also. They don't try to come up with a new way of how it should be, they rather say: 'A house works like this and that, we just stick to what has been working for the past centuries'. And then they play with it. While these new architects that build these kind of blobs have the aim of creating a new world, a new vision.

When I see this strange bulb architecture I think:

HE COME ON, IT'S A HOUSE,
WHY DON'T YOU JUST MAKE
FOUR WALLS!

'Care for the fact that it is accessible and has nice light, maybe you can paint it in a nice way.'

I think it is also more honest to people, this new architecture is this new thing, this Utopia. Most of these things turn out to be not so handy

I think the writers say that architecture should just be what it is and not in its shape symbolize something. If it's a house, just name it house.

This was the first theoretical (art history) book where I really read every single word and I loved it, I just ate it. It opened my mind so much. It inspired me, but also it was so much of what I was thinking about already.

I found so much of myself in this book, I mean they are talking about architecture and I am doing graphic design, but still.

It's about integrating ugliness in your work, making it work.

They say: 'Okay, a Las Vegas sign, why should we say: this is not our culture? It's today, it is here today, so we should also look at it and not say that things from the past are much more beautiful'. Everything you need is right there,

IF YOU THINK IT IS UGLY, THEN
TAKE A BETTER LOOK AT IT!

Try to analyze why. Because I think ugliness is a matter of perspective, it's not such a matter of ugliness or beauty, it's a matter of context. That's why I very often use commonly considered ugly things, but try to put them in a certain way so they work, they become beautiful in a way.

I am also a bit on the daring side,

I WANT TO SEE HOW FAR I
CAN GO.

CHECK
On a dictionary and thesaurus

Clare McNally

My *Oxford Dictionary* is

an old edition,

but I trust it and it is simple and manageable. I like being able to see it somewhere. It must be visible and accessible to me always. I think it is always part of my work. Perhaps even more than my

computer. But I

don't only use it for reference, I also often refer to it for inspiration.

every time I open it I

find something new, this amazes me after having this one book for almost ten years. If I am using it for its intended purpose i.e. looking for a word, and I cannot find it in there, then I look further on the internet or ask an English friend. With the *Pocket Reference Thesaurus in A-Z form* I have a similar relationship. It is one of the only thesaurus's I have seen that is simple to use and yet still useful. It is also not too big and so you feel like you will not

get lost. It often sets me on a new linguistic path and the interplay between this book and my dictionary is constant. Not to get too poetic or anything, but they really are like an old married couple. In these two books there is everything.

having these books on my table

is like a visible quantity of words that I can see. The fact that I can see them is important. Of course I can also find meanings on the internet, but there you can get lost, and here I know exactly where I am. Even other books wouldn't work. It's like being in a house; knowing where everything is. As an advertisement person — I used to work as a copy witer in a commercial agency — I was always trying to find different ways to say the same thing. You are constantly trying to find different ways to say things like 'wonderful' and 'amazing'. The thesaurus is possibly even more important than the dictionary in this way. It is linked to persuading people. It's also about second meanings (idioms). You could say when you have to write something about a car: 'So the next time you buy a blablabla, put your foot down and insist on a blablabla.'

So 'put your foot down' means to insist, but in terms of driving it's to accelerate. It's good to have a second meaning that's also linked to the thing you're advertising. But you also try not to be that obvious, to hide it. I am very aware of language, being in Holland and at this school. It's strange, everybody thinks it is an advantage: being able to speak proper English, and it would be if everybody else was speaking properly, which they don't. That can be frustrating sometimes. You can't take it to the next level. And sometimes you can't help it when you go to the next level and then wonder if people understood what you

just said. It's a subtle thing. I am always aware of what other people say and how they say it. It's not particularly about mis-

takes, for me it's quite charming. For instance French people would have a certain way they always phrase something. When you are interested in languages and also speak different languages and come from a country that has all different languages (South-Africa) and when you are at the Rietveld with all

kinds of

languages, it's like a big playground. You are always seeing little differences. For instance Dutch people would say: 'Can you turn on the lightning?' and it's 'lighting' of course. But now you even hear other people saying this. Or they would talk about a 'long

man' and a 'thick person', while there's

no such thing. It's a tall man

or a fat

person (thick means stupid). Mispronunciations are sometimes funny, but you can't laugh because someone is giving a lecture. There was a guy saying 'dis-cra-pansy' instead of 'dis-cra-pansy'. When somebody gets it that wrong I have to laugh, especially because 'pansy' is a flower, it's also a term for a gay guy. What I like in dictionaries is how objective they try to be and how many words they need to describe a word. A very simple word like 'bed', they really bother to describe it in this way: 'bed' *n* 1. thing to sleep or rest on; mattress (feather bed etc.); framework with mattress and coverings'. It's a strange kind of clinical, informative, neutral and hard to understand language. It's official and you can trust it, like a man in a suit. But this doesn't mean I only use it in a strict way. For instance when I'm searching for the word 'check' I've already seen chance, chancy, I didn't even mean to look for them, but immediately I'm thinking 'Chancy, what a weird little word'. And it says: 'chancy is dangerous or dicey, dodgy, hazardous, problematic,

risky, speculative, uncertain'. And immediately I am thinking: 'Chancy is not a word I ever used, but I would love to use it, because it's a bit nineteen fifties'. But I'm not looking for it, I don't

say: 'Let me look for

the word 'check' and hope I'll find some words along the way'. I would never intend to find anything but the word check. But the other way I do

use a dictionary is sometimes, when I'm bored or stuck, I actually do just go and read the pages of the dictionary, which is a completely nerdy thing to do. For me it's not about difficult words or even strange words, it can be any word. What I like is that you're immediately reminded of one single word. You never get that in real life, because every word is always in a sentence, a context, a text. While in a dictionary you see 'swap': 'Oh swap, nice'. Nobody would ever walk up to you and just say 'swap'. So it talks to you in a strange way, a way that people don't talk to you. Because each word is bold, each word gets its own attention.

RADEN
Over dyslexie

Ingeborg Scheffers

Ik heb proberen te omvatten wat dyslexie precies is, ik dat eigenlijk zelf niet zo goed weet. Op mijn twaalfde is het getest bij mij, en toen hadden ze dus door dat ik dyslectisch was. Toen zei mijn moeder: 'Ja, leer er maar mee leven, want het is een handicap.' Ik werd heel erg kwaad, ik was niet dom, en ik zat niet in een rolstoel. Het probleem dyslectici is dat veel mensen denken dat ze dom zijn, vooral als ze jong zijn, omdat ze dan nog geen strategie hebben ontwikkeld. Zeker in mijn tijd, toen hebben ze kinderen die niet brutaal waren als ik op LOM

scholen gezet.

Wat er gebeurt bij dyslectici eigenlijk: Je ziet iets, je oog constateert het, maar je hersenen zien het niet. Er mist een soort schakel. Ik lees met mijn rechter hersenhelft, met mijn beeldend vermogen, terwijl normale lezers met hun linker hersenhelft lezen.

Je hebt spellers en raders onder dyslectici. Spellers lezen letter voor letter, heel langzaam, maar wel begrijpend. Ik ben rader. Als ik een tekst lees, kan ik woorden overslaan invullen met een ander woord. Ik zie niet dat ik het oversla of invul met een raar woord, waardoor de tekst verkeerd begrijp. Ik heb oefeningen moeten doen die mijn ogen trainde, coördinatie oefeningen. Een balletje aan het plafond met een touwtje, mijn ogen het balletje volgen, tien keer op en neer en heen en weer. En ook een matje dat een beetje ruw was, daar moest ik overheen wrijven met mijn vingers. Ik snap niet hoe het werkte. Ik vond afschuwelijk. Maar het heeft wel geholpen.

Het waren een soort van concentratie oefenen. Het heeft te maken met leren kijken op een speciale manier. Als ik me op een woord moet concentreren gaat de hele tekst dansen.

Volgens mij denken dyslectici vaak anders. Het heeft iets te maken met grote stappen maken, bijvoorbeeld niet de rekensommen doen zoals het hoort, niet in logische stappen, maar in één keer, en dan wel goed.

Ik heb fotografie gestudeerd. Maar in de techniek bijvoorbeeld ben ik niet zo goed, ik doe het op gevoel, ik heb een beeld in mijn hoofd en ik maak het. De directe weg.

Eigenlijk is het heel logisch dat veel vormgevers dyslectisch zijn. Vormgeven is een soort van beeldontwerpen. Zelfs een typograaf kijkt niet naar de letter d als een letter, maar een object.

SCRIPT
On programming languages

Jonathan Puckey

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{there are certain levels of programming languages} {there is for instance c++ and java, languages which are very complicated and which have been extended in a lot of different directions} {that's why they are so complicated, and they are also quite abstract} {the program languages i work with are more simplified in a way that you write the program and it is interpreted by another program that makes it more abstract, the second level of complexity is solved by that}
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{i'm making scriptographer scripts now} {scriptographer is a programming environment that makes you able to create your own tools for illustrator (a computer drawing program)} {it's developed by a swiss programmer and graphic designer} {he had the idea to open up all the possibilities from this application, so you can make your own tools}
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{usually when you're designing in illustrator you work with separate pre-defined tools, like a pen, scissors etc } {you are working in separate steps, actually a bit like a computer} {you first have to do this, then that} {the tools are fixed, you cannot adapt them, you're always depending on how they are made, on the way illustrator is programmed} {but with scriptographer you can
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