Narratives of Design: Sharing Landscapes
ABOUT

I constantly observe design in the world around me. Whether in a natural setting or in the middle of a bustling city, consciously or unconsciously, I collect, capture and digest what I see. Sometimes my reactions are expressed in writing. Sometimes in images. And other times, in built objects.

I love to create, to tell stories and to connect with others through design. My work has taken on a variety of forms over the years and I have been greatly influenced by my travels. Each place has left its imprint on me, and I also like to think that I have left my own small mark as well.

As I reflect on my work, I see several recurring themes that honor both a sense of practicality and creativity. In a world of limited resources that are quickly being depleted, Creative Reuse challenges people to re-imagine their relationship to their immediate surroundings. The inclusivity of Collective Design can bind and engage unlikely participants. With Social Awareness, I account for outside influences on my thoughts, means of expression and the issues I choose to address. When formulating projects, questions of Form + Function serve as grounding forces. Lastly, my Inner Landscape is shaped over time by the amalgam of my experiences.

*All images on the following pages were created and photographed by Amanda Silvana Coen unless otherwise stated. Cover images feature work by others and settings that inspire me.
Fiber Necklace, 2012, leather scraps, handwoven textile scraps from Peru, naturally dyed, wool yarn
**Inner Tube Bag**, 2010, reclaimed inner tube, hand-printed canvas inner pocket, cotton lining, polyester outer, 8”x10.5”x2”

**Spanish Cork**, 2010, cork, bottle cap, Ghanaian clay bead, silver wire, synthetic cord

**Flame Necklace**, 2011, marbles, reused silk scarf, embroidery floss
Seaglass, 2011, found seaglass, coral, Moroccan clay beads, ribbon, gold clasp, copper wire
Seedpod series, 2011, silver wire, copper wire, seedpods from friend in Florida
Context: The Sacred Valley in Peru is home to an abundant population of wild alpaca and domesticated sheep from which fleece is shorn, sorted through and then spun into yarn using a drop spindle. It is also host to a variety of plants and minerals that are perfect ingredients for natural dyes. By creating a design project that drew on local resources, I was able to engage a variety of stakeholders.

Designed by Amanda Coen. Yarns dyed in natural dye workshop and knit by local women in Ollantaytambo, Peru.
Andean Clutch, 2012, leather outer, handwoven textiles, zipper, recycled cotton flour sack lining, 5”x8”x1”
Context: Upon arriving to Peru where I spent four months from April to August 2012, I was immediately drawn to the Quechua women’s traditional *polleras*, or skirts. The colorful handwoven textiles stood out against the black, knee-length skirts. After a homestay where I was able to closely examine their construction and learn the basics of weaving, I created a prototype for a modernized version of the traditional skirt. The final design features my own attempt at weaving on a backstrap loom and a more complicated weaving done by an artisan in Patacancha.
Artist’s Statement: A veil, whether physical or mental, filters our view of the world depending on our cultural and social background and experiences. These socially created “screens” are at times co-opted for political purposes to create an “other” which we must fear and combat. This is especially apparent in the US “war on terror” in which enemies are repeatedly constructed to validate political and military actions. My work strives to create a context for transformation by raising awareness of the screens we all wear that limit our ability to empathize with the other.

*Veiled Existence*, 2008, wood, satin ribbon, silkscreened silk organza, resist-dyed polyester blend, each screen: 44”x26”x4”, installation: 50”x64”x12”
Artist’s Statement: Throughout college, my artwork was often influenced by material I was reading in other disciplines. I did this copper etching after reading an ethnography by June Nash in an anthropology class titled “Culture & Capital in Latin America”. I was inspired by the story of Bolivian tin miners attempts to form trade unions and attempted to depict the various cultural values and beliefs that dominate daily life in the region.

*Excellence in Printmaking Award, Macalester College Art Dept, 2008

Bolivian Tin Mining, 2007, etching, 14”x6”
Context: As part of a documentary film course I took in Madrid, Spain, I worked as part of a small, multi-disciplinary team to create a short film related to the natural environment. One team member was a geologist and suggested we focus on municipal efforts by the small village of Espíritu to restore a previously mined landscape. We conducted research and made several site visits before producing the final, four-minute documentary, *Cicatrices* (Scars).

Film by María Feria Aguaded, Amanda Silvana Coen and Victor Homobono Armenteros. See video [here](#).
Context: For the past two years, I have formally been uncovering stories related to sustainable design. The term encompasses a wide array of activities ranging from product design to architecture to fashion to systems design. Each person I interview offers a slightly different perspective and takes a unique approach depending on their business model and/or personal ethics.

For this story, I visited Eat, a local culinary establishment in Brooklyn. Founder Jordan Colon has not only focused his energy on creating a restaurant that serves local, seasonal food, but has also taken the effort to ensure that every detail of his establishment has a personal, artisanal touch. Each of his five siblings has in some way contributed. For instance, Jordan’s brother and a childhood friend bring lumber from their native Lancaster, Pennsylvania and can often be found on the back patio crafting furniture and shelving for the eatery. Jordan’s sister inspired the healthy, holistic focus that characterizes Eat. Another brother can be found in the kitchen cooking the daily meals. Arla Bascom, a good friend and fellow Brooklynite, works from the basement to produce the cups, plates and bowls from which diners enjoy meals.

What draws me to these types of stories is not only the smart design and thought that goes into creating a whole experience, but also the excitement of knowing there are people who still take the time and effort to create alternative realities. In doing so, a sense of community is created and people can once again feel confident knowing the faces behind the handcrafted products and systems that shape our landscapes.

Read the full article here.
Roald Dahl Tribute Kettle re-visited, 2012, foam core, hot glue, 12”x5”x10”

Roald Dahl Tribute Kettle, 2002, clay, glaze, 12”x5”x10”

Original inspiration: I constructed a ceramic tea kettle in high school that was inspired by Quentin Blake’s illustrations for some of my favorite Roald Dahl children’s books. Building on my original design, I created a new prototype with moveable parts for an Industrial Design class at Pratt Institute.
**Artist’s Statement:** The fountain was inspired by playful artists such as Alexander Calder whose fantastical figures and mobiles enliven spaces and invite people to interact with their surroundings. As someone who believes public parks are vital to city life as gathering points, I could not imagine a more appropriate place for my work.

The organic shape of the fountain is especially attractive to children, reminding them to stay hydrated throughout the day. It could feature a moveable basin that would operate with a crank so that even the shortest children could reach without having to touch their mouths to the spigot.

In reality, the fountain stands about 4 feet tall and would be made of steel. It functions by pulling down on either end of the arm protruding from the basin- a feature that allows for both tall and short users to easily reach it.

*The Fantastical Fountain, 2012, foam core, joint compound, spray paint, 10”x8”x14”*
Assignment: Create expressive clay figures that get increasingly abstract until they become an unrecognizable form.

Fear, 2012, wire, clay, 12”x12”x14”
Assignment: Construct a diorama of a dream-like landscape and compose a charcoal drawing from that construction.

I used garlic skins, pieces of egg cartons, bottle caps, plant fibers, cotton swabs, toothpicks, paper and other found, small objects to construct my “dream” diorama.

Dream, 2007, charcoal, 11”x14”
Artist’s Statement: The Philippines was my initial introduction to what has developed into something I crave: experiencing the world with all my senses through the places I go. It was where I spent a year and a half with my family and started my schooling as a young child. Certain images remain in my head as photographic memories. Whether they are documents of actual events and experiences or formed by time and tales, I do not know for sure. Nonetheless, the drawings are meant to explore the origin of my curiosity, adventuresomeness, observant nature, creativity and independence that have shaped and driven me to continue to evolve as an individual.

Compiling these memories in the form of a book reflects the practicality of having something portable to record reactions and observations while on the move. The book is also symbolic of my Nonno, who was a children’s book editor, loved books, and had an immense impact on my creativity.
Memories of the Philippines, 2007, pen and ink, handmade papers from Southeast Asia and the Philippines, waxed string, 8.5”x11”