

Michael Gainer



When Michael Gainer moved from Boston to the Rust Belt city of Buffalo, New York, he had no idea he'd end up in "deconstruction"—not the collected works of Jacques Derrida but the controlled demolition of architectural structures.

Gainer arrived just as the city hoped to start its 10-in-10 plan: removing 10,000 abandoned homes in under ten years. "I started crunching the numbers," Gainer explains, "and the total resources involved, for a city already struggling with poverty, meant that \$150 million would be spent simply on taking down old structures. I knew there had to be a better way." Gainer, who had some experience dismantling barns in Massachusetts, and

who was inspired by a meeting with David Bennink of RE-USE Consulting, promptly came up with Buffalo ReUse, a nonprofit organization offering its own "community-minded alternative to demolition."

Along with Buffalo ReUse's core staff of ten, Gainer now works directly with the city to take down old houses, salvaging and reselling the parts, from doors and flooring to intact banisters. The first house they took down netted an incredible six tons of lumber, all of which went back onto the construction marketplace and into future homes. This is "green demolition," as Gainer points out, keeping perfectly good building materials out of the local landfill.

Buffalo ReUse now has its eyes set on an ambitious mentoring and training program for city residents—particularly young men, aged 18 and older, with whom Gainer often works. Most of them have never had a job before, and Buffalo ReUse is their first experience of professional responsibility. All told, organized deconstruction could represent a new model for "how to turn the corner in our aging industrial cities," Gainer suggests—transforming what would otherwise have been mere ruins into a resource for the urban future.

buffaloreuse.org

David Trubridge



Environment is inspiration for British-born, New Zealand-based David Trubridge, but eco-design is a label he eschews: "We do everything we can, but this greenwashing trend can create a dangerous complacency." Trubridge's sculptural wooden pendant lamps have achieved ubiquity in the window displays of Design Within Reach showrooms across the country, and he recently produced a unique outdoor hanging sculpture for the new King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in Saudi Arabia.

What's your ideal working environment?

A sand dune by the beach.

What's your dream commission, and what do you wish that you'd designed?

The KAUST project is pretty much ideal, as a one-off toward the art end of the spectrum. I would love to have designed one of Richard Serra's *Torqued Ellipses*; his vision and the scale of the work are amazing.

What music keeps you thinking about design?

Everything from Miles Davis to world music to Portishead—but Bob Dylan is essential. I saw

him live back in the late 1960s and then more recently: He is the same he—and I am the same me—but we've both grown and evolved.

Is there a specific object that changed how you think about design?

Ron Arad's *Water in the Southern Hemisphere* is fascinating. He and his craftsmen were able to produce this incredible, nearly impossible piece.

Where do you see your profession in 20 years?

Cultures are historically defined by their art, but we've lost that fundamentally human element and replaced it with a consumer binge. Designers are crucial to the future, creating objects that are like nourishing food: lasting, with a sense of identity and sufficiency inherent within them.

And your last words?

"Keep doing it."



davidtrubridge.com



Nice Modernist

Q & A