



## Rich Gold's Plenitude, Kenya Hara's Designing Design and More: Books Received & Noted

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## REVIEW

# Rich Gold's *Plenitude*, Kenya Hara's *Designing Design* and More Books Received & Noted

### Anne-Marie Willis

This essay presents a review of Rich Gold's book *The Plenitude: Creativity, Innovation and Making Stuff* (MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, 2007, 111 pages).

A book very much in the same vein as Bruce Stirling's *Shaping Things*. Which is to say, highly personal, hip, smartarse, sometimes witty, often arrogant, occasionally insightful – another 'one person's take on design'. Like Stirling, Gold was not afraid to draw a big picture – to make massive generalisations and create absolutist categories, which, within the confines of the adopted rhetoric, can be quite persuasive.

Where Stirling is not a designer, characterising himself as a design fan, Rich Gold was a designer (he died suddenly at age 53 and this MIT edition of his writings was published posthumously). He was more: claiming also to

wear the hats of artist, scientist and engineer (yes, including cartoon drawings of himself in the hats). In fact Gold had been in the thick of some of some of the most problematic (from a sustainment point of view) areas of design – games and toys. So one of the valuable things about his criticism is that it's from an insider's position.

He was very ambivalent about design, both loving the opportunities it offers for creativity and hating much of what it turns out. He saw clearly designers' implication in the creation of our world of stuff – of too much stuff, of superfluous stuff that promises enriched experiences as it stuffs up the world. This he names 'The Plenitude' and devotes half of the book to considering what we should do about it – presented as cute drawings and provocatively simplistic solutions (e.g... "Pass a law: you can make only 5 new things in your lifetime").

So ... what does Rich Gold say that's new? Does he have anything to offer to The Sustainment? Or is his book (and life's work) just a trite cop-out? Maybe the answer can be found by bringing Gold's version of The Plenitude together with early Chinese thinker Zhuangzi's case for the relinquishment of 'plenitude', as discussed in Jullien's *Vital Nourishment* reviewed by Tony Fry in this issue. Perhaps we'll keep this collision for a future issue.

Matthew Frederick, *101 Things I Learned in Architecture School*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, 2007, 101 pages.

A compilation of illustrated sound bites of architectural commonsense that range from cliché, to pretension, to useful prompts about design process and presentation. Refreshingly, it positions hand-drawing as an essential architectural skill.

Gregory Caicco (editor), *Architecture, Ethics, and the Personhood of Place* University of New England Press, London, 2007, 235 pages.

Described as "a compendium of new work in the field of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and the built environment" – we'll be reviewing this in a forthcoming issue.

Kenya Hara, *Designing Design* Lars Muller Publishers, Baden, Switzerland, 2007, 470 pages.

Works, ideas, words, concepts, projects, provocations, reflections and more, by prominent Japanese art director, Kenya Hara. All lavishly illustrated, with high quality print production. To be reviewed.