

From Now to the Future

By Yorgo Lykouria

We often forget why things matter. As thousands will congregate in Chicago for NeoCon 2023, we might forget that this is a celebration. We celebrate the union of commerce and design; ideas turned into reality. We celebrate an optimistic view of the future that we are all a part of creating. We design new products because we believe we can make tomorrow better than today.

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We come to NeoCon anticipating fresh products that will awaken new perspectives on one of life's most important activities - work. Among these will be our work with Okamura, and the realization of a new collection by Arcadia - from California, who will show 'Sunny', a project conceived during the pandemic, out of a refusal to bow to the worrying emotions spiralling around the world. We resolved to find a language that embodies the spirit of the solar state and makes surf culture a worldview - embracing freedom, joy, and life. Life - what happens at home, at work, at play and everywhere in between. This is where design lives, in the space that buoys up our emotions and reminds us of who we are and that we belong right here, right now. Design carries emotion, and this is why design matters.

This year will be like every year before as we gather around objects and people to experience a sample of renewed life. This year, I anticipate something more. We are past the Covid

crisis, yet its affects are still present, as many remain rooted to the cozy confines of home to conduct work, play and live. This year is a chance for the industry to mobilize a return to working together by truly demonstrating a better vision for the workplace. Although the commute is hard, boring, and often ugly, engagement with the real world is ennobling and vital to each of us as individuals and for society.

The great moments in history happened in the realm of community with shared values built on trust, cooperation, and a little bit of passion. Beijing, Kyoto, Persepolis, Athens, Rome, Florence, London, Paris, Chicago, New York, and Palo Alto. Being together means rising to our best, while growing from our encounters and forming essential shared values. Creating shared experiences is what makes our communities, our culture, and our civilization a thriving human endeavour. In societies lauded for their success, we might forget that we still must endeavour: To strive, to yearn, to manifest dreams. Not to watch from the side-lines, but to dare enter the field of play. To take responsibility for one's dreams and aspirations. I expect this year will be the turning point from having no reason to be in the workplace, to making it fundamental for a fulfilling life.

Whenever someone asks; what are the current trends; what is the future of design; what is the future of workplace? My answer is, the future will be whatever we make it. The future is not an abstract entity hovering in the distance. It is the result of our work today, and our responsibility to create. In our work, we pitch our visions for the future to take hold of. I still wonder what Helmut Jahn meant when he told me, "The future is never wrong." Perhaps he meant, be bold and believe. While there are obstacles, challenges, and world events that we cannot control, we can control our reactions, remaining steadfast in our commitment to human

values, while resisting the downward tendencies that confront us daily.

This year is a chance for the manufacturers and their designers, in alliance with the A+D community to make the world a place we are thrilled to be living in. We must think differently about inclusivity, embracing every aspect of our shared humanity, every race and creed, every gender, and every sex. We also acknowledge that people have varied gifts and diverse needs, when matched with the right kind of environment, give rise to extraordinary results. This year, we want to see this newfound wisdom applied to product

thinking so that all people may thrive. The quest for human excellence is not in the name of altruism and charity. We are all slightly out of sync with the base line into which we might be tempted to align ourselves, and every day is not the same. Embracing difference is a reminder to all of us, that we have the freedom to be true to ourselves, in every moment, in every environment. Good design engages all people.

This piece was written by me, a human. Not a machine. This flawed and limited viewpoint shrinks before the vast knowledge in the digital realm. Yet trust that I am mining true emotion from a

tapestry of experience to share these aspirations to manifest a fulfilling human future. Do not outsource your creative power, do not outsource your mental power, and your life. Being human to the greatest extent allows each one of us to become a person of infinite possibilities. We call this project, life. Remember this: We are extraordinary. We are human. ■



Yorgo Lykouria

Founder,
Rainlight Studios

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