



ARTICLE by Carol Crawford, FEB. 2007 for The Voice, The newsletter for the New York City chapter of IIDA, the International Interior Design Assn. While the information in the following text is most pertinent to professionals in the design-build industry, consumers...our clients, big and small,...can benefit by knowing about sustainable, green design objectives, and how by hiring an interior designer who understands such issues, they, too, are helping to repair and save the health and future of our global environment.

GREENBUILD 2006, DENVER: AN APPRAISAL OF WHAT NUMBERS CAN DO

“WE’RE NOW MORE NUMEROUS THAN RATS!”

So intoned **Dr. David Suzuki**, in his keynote address for GreenBuild 2006 Members' Day, as 13,000 of the 6.7 billion of us humans, having overrun the planet, swarmed into Denver, and heard that the doom foretold 25 years ago was upon us. Would we listen, this time? Suzuki, zoologist, and white-haired guru of environmental concerns, can be forgiven his passionate pronouncements. He was an environmental activist and teacher long before the

1992 Earth Summit in Rio; and for 40 of his 70 years has been issuing warnings that our reckless consumerism was ruining life on the planet. We have disconnected from Nature, and the world that spawned us, even while we've become the dominant species. Would politicians or government help? No. There was only one politician he had encountered back in the '80's who understood perfectly what handbasket we were creating to take us to Hell, and that one warned against counting on politicians for leadership.. Name? Al Gore. We have to help ourselves, he said. Our human swarm, like lemmings, has at last arrived at the Big Dropping-Off Place and its turn back or vanish from the earth.

6.7 billion of us, on a collision course with nature. Awesome. The shouts and warnings continued through much of this conference, writ large. Imagine 13,000 architects and designers, post-breakfast, herded out of the Colorado sunshine, through the doors of the main auditorium of Denver's Convention Center for their first full day of serious information-input, staring down into a dark, vast Coliseum-like space, its tiers of seats illuminated by flashes of psychedelic light emanating from wide screen images, pumped by loud rock music. The effect was... stupifying. I didn't know whether to laugh or stare in shock. The theatrical effect did its thing: everyone grew animated and energized. We were focused.

As David Suzuki had said, **“The Green Building Movement is exploding”**.

Rick Fedrizzi, the CEO who helped launch the U. S. Green Building Council 5 years ago, cited some startling stats: there are now 33,000 L.E.E.D. APs---Accredited Professionals---number growing daily, and 68 chapters of the USGBC in the USA. There were 6000 registered certified L.E.E.D. Buildings by last November. The big aim of the USGBC, Fedrizzi said, is **sustainability within a generation: by 2030**. That includes the goal of 9 million certified green homes by 2010, and 1 million certified buildings by 2020. The savings of natural resources in a “green” bulding is said to be 30% in energy, 35% carbon footprint reduction, up to 50% water saved and 50-90% waste reduced. The prediction of a vast population explosion in the 21st century makes water and energy of prime importance; by 2050 we may need two planets to support all of us. Especially if the fishing industry collapses by 2048 as some project.

Now, if this sci-fi prospect hasn't turned you off, read further: help is out there.

GreenBuild's seminars provided information about some tools being developed to arrest or reverse our negative impact on the environment and help us make sustainable choices: **the Pharos Project:** for green materials selection. http://www.pharosproject.net/about_pharos/index.php The Pharos Wiki will help in the evaluation and identification of, building products. Pharos is a part of the **Healthy Building Network**, www.healthybuilding.net, a great resource for information on sustainable materials and issues.



CSI Greenformat:

http://www.csinet.org/s_csi/docs/13800/13744.pdf, for reporting on construction product sustainability; it is being developed by the Construction Specification Institute whose coded categories the design-build industry cites for building material specification schedules.

Of the many seminars I attended, probably the most amazing was given by Prof. Terry Collins of Carnegie-Mellon University's Institute for Green Oxidation Chemistry in Pittsburgh, concerning his research in developing Fe-TAMLs. They are versatile oxidizing catalysts made from benign natural elements that combine with hydrogen peroxide to convert pollutants into less toxic substances-- cleaning dyes from plant effluent, removing sulfur compounds from fuel, and pesticides from agricultural run-off. A glimmer of hope for our earth's dwindling potable water supply.



Interior designers can also be part of the solution. When asked to recommend materials for a project, we can first check the nature of their dyes, fibers, backings, glues, content, chemical processes, coatings, method of manufacture *before* we select them. We interior designers can push to be on the design team at the outset of a project, not at the end, to "finish it off". We can become L.E.E.D. Accredited Professionals, and play a leading role in making sustainable choices. We can push the USGBC and L.E.E.D. to give a greater number of point credits for interior materials and finishes, those elements which cause the vast amount of toxic off-gassing and pollution--- in fires, for example.

Since there are so many of us, solving the problems we caused should be a piece of cake, right?

Some bedtime reading:

DECEIT AND DENIAL. THE DEADLY POLITICS OF INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION. By Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner, Berkeley: University of California Press/The Millbank Memorial Fund, 2003, 408 pp., illustrated

"The Sacred Balance" interactive website of the Suzuki Foundation:
<http://www.sacredbalance.com/web/indexfirst.html> <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/>
Union of Concerned Scientists <http://www.ucsusa.org/> facts on global warming

U.N. report on climate change: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>