

REGEN PROJECTS

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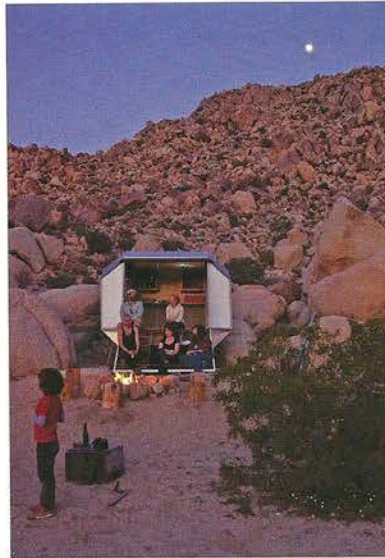
STOCKHOLM

Andrea Zittel

MAGASIN 3

If you're still drinking the Kool-Aid and believe in the lone genius maker of masterpieces—like Kirk Douglas's van Gogh in *Lust for Life*—you get your kicks when the artist looks up wide-eyed as inspiration knocks on his back door. Eureka! And there it is, another new idea in the long succession of new ideas. But is that really the way creativity happens? Neuroscientists agree with philosophers: not really. Creativity and innovation are not single events but complex networks of many ideas and influences that take time to gestate. Ideas just *seem* to pop up out of the blue. Andrea Zittel's "living systems" enable day-to-day experiences—sleeping, cooking, socializing—that she flips into extreme experiences marinating in what Steven Johnson, author of the recent, influential book *Where Good Ideas Come From*, calls the "slow hunch."

Though not a retrospective—the oldest works on view are from 2003, more than a decade into Zittel's career—her exhibition "Lay of My Land" nevertheless demonstrates her work's reach, from craft to architecture, from fashion to design, unfolding from her desert compound A-Z West, which is more like a living lab than a studio, and looks more like Mars than most places on Earth. Zittel's design practice is highly iterative; she presaged the boom in "design thinking" as well as the current craze for artistic research. Immersed in an experimental/experiential process in which slow hunches drive long-term projects, she naturally thinks in terms of sequential phasing. A version of this telescoping—she speaks of layers of authorship—is triggered by inviting collectors and friends to customize her original designs to reflect their own tastes and creativity. This began with the "A-Z Living Units," 1992–94, and even though Zittel saw customization as key, most collectors resisted her invitation, fearful that alterations to her original design would degrade the works' market value. Things turned out better with the "A-Z Wagon Stations," 2003–, that dot her desert property. She designed these quarter-round units as modest guest-houses, but rather than selling them, she assigned them to friends who



Andrea Zittel, *A-Z Wagon Station* customized by Jonas Hauptman, with further customization by Thomas Stevenson, 2011, powder-coated steel, MDF, aluminum, Lexan. A-Z West, Joshua Tree, CA.

visit periodically. Most are gathered into a small community, but one station was moved into the rocky hills for guests to savor splendid isolation. The work's titles—for instance *A-Z Wagon Station* customized by Jonas Hauptman, with further customization by Thomas Stevenson, 2011—acknowledge that they have strayed from Zittel's authorship. The seven Wagon Stations at Magasin 3 have been taken out of service (the desert takes its toll) and will be replaced with new ones of improved design. They reflect a mixed salad of lifestyles: One, for example, was customized for meditation, another outfitted for functional family camping.

Zittel has said that compared with Donald Judd's locked judgments in the 1964 essay "Specific Objects," her worldview remains open-ended and speculative, but I heard envy in her voice. Not a surprise, then, that she has an ongoing project of assembling axioms beneath the heading "These Things I Know For Sure."

One reads: "Ideas seem to gestate best in a void—when that void is filled it is more difficult to access them. In our consumption-driven society, almost all voids are filled, blocking moments of greater clarity and creativity. Things that block voids are called 'avoids.'" There is a photograph in the exhibition's handsome catalogue, reproduced here, of the Wagon Station customized by Harpman and Stevenson. Shot at moonrise, it is a clear imitation of Caspar David Friedrich's *Moonrise over the Sea*, 1822. Five adults fill the tiny house, all lost in thought before a campfire. A boy stares into the expanding distance. Six people sit within arm's reach, yet here is Zittel's void, where slow hunches form and thought takes longer than the blink of an eye.

—Ronald Jones