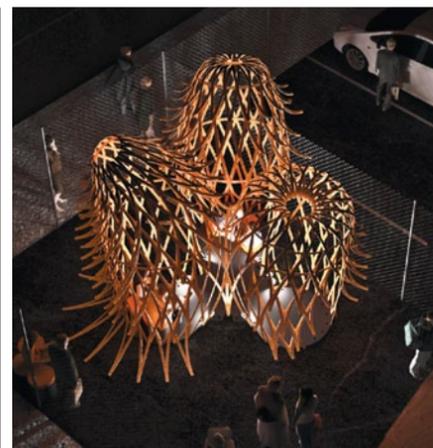


# surface



HOW IT'S MADE

*The Sole Purpose of CHRISTIAN  
LOUBOUTIN and the Secrets Behind  
Fall's Most Inspiring Objects*



# Social Networkers

*TECH-SAVVY BAY AREA STUDIO FUTURE CITIES LAB MAKES SOFTWARE, THE INTERNET, AND HASHTAGS TANGIBLE.*

PORTRAIT **JAKE STANGEL**

"There are a lot of technologies out there," says architect Jason Kelly Johnson, who founded the San Francisco-based firm Future Cities Lab with Nataly Gattegno in 2002. "It's just that architects aren't trying to engage them or understand them deeply." This isn't the case for Johnson, 39, and Gattegno, 34. The two met in 1999 while students at Princeton's School of Architecture and later, while teaching at the University of



PHOTOS: TRILUX RENDERING, COURTESY FUTURE CITIES LAB; TRILUX PHOTO, PETER PRATO; XEROMAX ENVELOPE, ZECHARIAH VINCENT; SUPER GALAXY, JAKE STANGEL

Gattegno and Johnson with a model of the Datagrove installation in their San Francisco studio. (OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) A rendering of the Trilux pavilion. The Trilux

at the Museum of Craft and Design last year. Xeromax Envelope installation at the Pratt Manhattan Gallery last year. A model of the firm's 2006 Super Galaxy proposal in their studio.



Virginia, applied to competitions together. In 2009, after serving as fellows at the University of Michigan, they relocated their studio to California, in large part to be near—and a part of—Silicon Valley and its innovators. "As architects and designers, we need to figure out what our role is within this new technological environment," Gattegno says.

The studio's often utopian yet surprisingly practical installations, pavilions, and concepts are an attempt to uncover "what the spatial implications are of data, media, and information," Gattegno says. Adds Johnson: "We're really interested in how the technologies, the software, the social networks—all this stuff emerging from Silicon Valley—can be instigated for a design logic."

The firm's interactive Datagrove installation is a prime example of this approach. Set to debut at September's Zoro Biennial in San Jose, California (through Dec. 8), the 20-foot-long public outdoor project is built out of a wavy steel conduit and an acrylic-tubing

lattice framework. It will take trending online data—in particular, the top five geotagged Bay Area hashtags from Twitter—and present them through suspended liquid-crystal-display pods. As visitors to the biennial move toward the project, text will brighten and a voice will whisper, via a text-to-speech translator, the illuminated tag on display through built-in speakers.

Another example is the firm's recent Hydramax Port Machines project, the model of which—on display at SFMOMA's "The Utopian Impulse: Buckminster Fuller and the Bay Area" exhibit earlier this year—is composed of laser-cut and thermoformed acrylic, circuit boards, infrared sensors, and alloy motors. The project proposes introducing robotic and sensor technologies to San Francisco's Embarcadero waterfront neighborhood, in essence creating "soft systems" out of the portside area's existing industrial buildings, machines, and landscape.

A central component of the firm's agenda is in-house fabrication. "We're doing most of our work on computers, but we also have a mill and laser cutter," Gattegno says. The firm's cocoon-shaped, canopy-like Trilux pavilion, made of pine lath and shown last year at San Francisco's Museum of Craft and Design, exemplifies the pair's material know-how: the project combined traditional steam-bending techniques with CNC-milled and laser-cut components, all arranged and partially built in their studio.

Practicality, though, is perhaps the firm's most essential factor. While much of their work is rather ambitious, it isn't only intended for museum displays. The two are currently working on a permanent waterfront pavilion for a development in Athens, Greece. "We do large-scale utopian thinking, but we engage in technologies at a tactful, hands-on, real-life kind of level," Johnson says. Silicon Valley may have found its architectural match.—SPENCER BAILEY



*Struggling only makes DIMOS MOYSIADIS stronger.*

Four years ago, Dimos Moysiadis moved back to his native Greece to launch his eponymous studio—just in time for the global financial crisis and all that’s followed in its wake. The decision to go back to the troubled Greek polity might seem like a startling one for a designer who trained abroad at London’s Bartlett School of Architecture, but Moysiadis, 27, remains undaunted. “I like to think big,” he says.

Moysiadis and his longtime collaborator Xaris Tsitsikas have been aiming high with a lengthy series of international competition submissions. A 2008 entry for a new tower at the zero-longitude line in Greenwich, England, seems to attack the whole notion of lines and linearity, bulging and snaking like a broken slinky; a proposal last year for an information and video kiosk at the London Olympics is a bafflingly oblique, mirrored triumphal arch. “Super-expressionistic architecture is not what counts,” says Moysiadis, whose work, in opposition to the gestural trend so common in contemporary architecture, is grounded in a coolly clinical analysis. Out of this objective investigation, unlikely solutions can emerge, “triggering the excitement of the user,” he says.

The ongoing crisis in his country hasn’t been easy—“Everybody’s really afraid to invest,” Moysiadis says—but it doesn’t appear to have put too much of a damper on his outlook. His first realized project, a solid white wedge of a house in Ioannina, Greece, broke ground in August. Adversity only seems to whet his appetite. “If you want to survive,” he says, “it’s better to struggle.”—IAN VOLNER

(TOP TO BOTTOM) A rendering of a proposal for a park in Nicosia, Cyprus. A rendering of a proposal for a temporary pavilion in London’s Trafalgar Square during the Olympic Games.



PHOTOS: COURTESY DIMOS MOYSIADIS.



PHOTOS: JULIEN LANOÛ.

*LAN builds chameleonlike projects that spur dialogues.*

Wrapping up construction in October, Paris-based firm LAN’s new gymnasium for the community of Chelles, France, is a spare composition of glass, steel, and copper, its gridded facade and slender black mullions recalling the clear-cut work of Mies van der Rohe. But why design a recreation center to resemble a stately civic palace? “The question itself holds the answer,” says principal Umberto Napolitano, 36. LAN (an abbreviation of Local Architecture Network) deliberately made the building as formal as possible, since it sits in the central square of a centuries-old commune. Bounded by a church, school, and town hall, the new structure is meant to be the capstone in this municipal ensemble, exerting a calm, authoritative presence unusual for a sports facility. It’s complemented by a landscaped esplanade that ties the adjacent buildings into a coherent whole.

Understanding the way new buildings are “inserted in the city,” as Napolitano puts it, is a major preoccupation of the firm. Another example is a publicly sponsored residential development completed late last year in the Paris suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt. The 58-unit complex, detailed with copper trim and chrome balustrades, looks less like social housing than it does the handsome contemporary buildings that surround it.

What the two projects have in common is the firm’s evolving engagement with building surfaces and the “relationships” that develop between structures, users, and their urban surroundings. “An architect is like an archaeologist,” Napolitano says, “digging into layers and levels of the present.”—I.V.

(TOP TO BOTTOM) The EDF Archives in Bure-Saudron, France, completed in 2011. The courtyard of a student housing project in the La Chapelle district of Paris, completed in 2007.