

DEPARTURES

CULTURE

The Issue

“To begin with, it’s worth noting that all the insanity around us notwithstanding, there will be a moment when this age will start to make sense: That brave new world will look very different than it does now...”

From the article “Brave New Worlds” by Joshua Cooper Ramo, page 47

ARTWORK BY NICK CAVE, PAGE 51



CULTURE WATCH

THE STATE OF THE ARTS AROUND THE WORLD

A SPECIAL SECTION EDITED BY STEPHEN WALLIS

2009 A-Z GUIDE

THE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND
IDEAS TO KNOW NOW

A

IS FOR AN ENLIGHTENED AUSTERITY

The era of the \$50 million corporate jet, the \$70 million Warhol, and the \$6,000 shower curtain is over. Those boom-time emblems are still realities for some, of course, but less conspicuously so. Extravagance is unseemly these days. Now it's about simplifying, getting back to fundamentals, rebuilding.

What does it mean for culture? If you buy arguments like "design loves a depression" and "a financial scouring can only be good for American art"—both put forth in *The New York Times*—then the slump is, well, not all bad. But arts organizations everywhere are hurting, cutting back hours and programming, laying off workers. Some have shuttered completely.

It's fitting that this year marks the bicentennial of Lincoln and Darwin's birthday. This certainly is a Darwinian survival-of-the-fittest moment, and it's ripe for some Lincolnesque



There's nothing austere about this 2008 Soundsuit by artist Nick Cave.

inspiration. In the post-Lehman, post-Madoff, post-Damien Hirst sale era, we're all a little wiser, if a lot poorer. At New York's Armory Show art fair in March, Milan dealer Massimo De Carlo exhibited a cracked marble slab by the duo Elmgreen & Dragset etched with the words *EVERYONE IS BROKE* in gold. It was a pitch-perfect piece for the times—simultaneously a wry epitaph and an earnest wake-up call.

AGELESS INNOVATOR

"Once in a Lifetime," the pop-existential anthem of the seventies and eighties New Wave band Talking Heads, ends with front man David Byrne intoning, "Same as it ever was, same as it ever was..." But for the creatively rangy Byrne, now 57, not much ever seems to stay the same. In the past few years he has written and illustrated books, composed music for the HBO show *Big Love*, created art and design projects (including bike racks for New York City), even written a disco-inflected song cycle about Imelda Marcos.

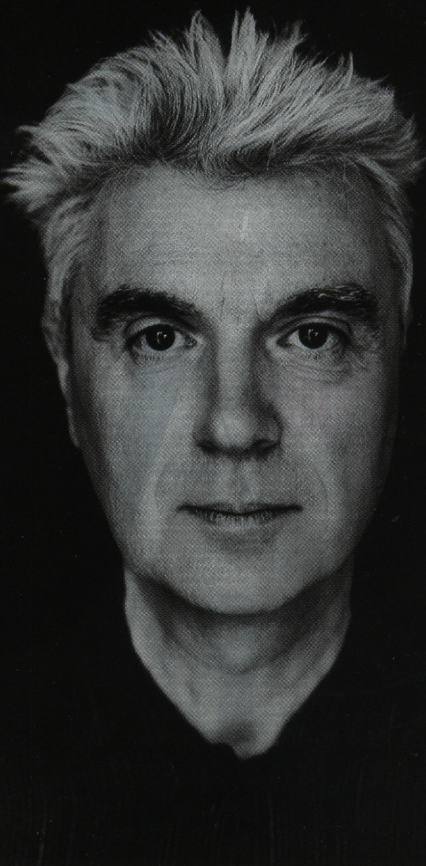
The nonstop genre-crossing Byrne also recently returned to his musical roots, collaborating with onetime Talking Heads producer Brian Eno on the 2008 album *Everything That Happens Will Happen Today*.

Eno had a group of songs he'd written lying around and invited Byrne to add lyrics and vocal melodies. "Brian's tracks," says Byrne, were "like simple gospel or folk songs in their structure. I ended up writing tunes and lyrics that were vaguely uplifting, even optimistic, but with dark undercurrents." The widely praised album isn't groundbreaking, but as Chris Jones of the BBC weighed in, "Dammit, it's Eno and Byrne, and it's lovely."

Byrne has been touring, without Eno, doing elegant sold-out shows. Later this year he plans to release a recording of *Here Lies Love*, the Marcos song cycle, which he composed with DJ Fatboy Slim, and his book *Bicycle Diaries* is due out from Viking in September. "I've kept a diary for decades as I passed through various cities on my bikes," says Byrne, "and these entries are a kind of record of urban experience."

In August the latest installation of Byrne's popular art piece *Playing the Building* will be at the Roundhouse in London. The work involves attaching various machines to the building's structure and wiring them to a pump organ so they can be

"I TAKE A BICYCLE WITH ME ON TOUR," SAYS DAVID BYRNE. "I DON'T RIDE TO MAKE A POINT OR TO LOWER MY CARBON FOOTPRINT—I RIDE BECAUSE IT FEELS GOOD AND IT GETS ME WHERE I WANT TO GO."



activated by pressing the keys. "The motors make the girders hum, and the hammerlike solenoids make the columns clang like a giant xylophone," says Byrne, who notes that the Talking Heads played an early punk

show at the Roundhouse in 1976 or '77. "We were between the Ramones and the Stranglers. I remember a lot of gobbing [spitting], especially at the poor Ramones. At least their leather jackets protected them."

ARAD'S EVOLUTION

Over the past 25 years, few have crisscrossed the line between design and art as brazenly as Ron Arad, the Israeli-born, London-based maverick whose sculptural, highly collectible (and expensive) work is the subject of a retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art, August 2 to October 19. Some 137 of Arad's pieces will be displayed on a steel structure he is creating for "No Discipline," as the show is titled, a nod to his experimental, no-boundaries approach. "Of course, he likes to be an enfant terrible," says MoMA curator Paola Antonelli, "but at the same time he's able to straddle these different disciplines—design, decorative arts, architecture—in a very natural way."

1981



Rover Chair

Arad recycled old Rover car seats for these ready-mades. In 2007 Vitra introduced a version, called *Moreover*, in chrome or rusted steel.

1991



At Your Own Risk

Balanced with lead weights, this pucky anodized-steel chair pops upright when the sitter rises. Hence the cheeky title.

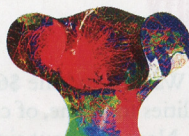
1992



After Spring

The designer made this sinuous chaise and a related piece, *Before Summer*, in multiple finishes. The example here is in polished bronze.

1999



New Orleans

A pigmented polyester and fiberglass version of Arad's iconic 1988 *Big Easy*, this is one of 20 or so examples—each entirely unique.

2004



Oh Void 2

With versions in carbon fiber, acrylic, silicone, and Corian (pictured here), this tour de force shows Arad pushing boundaries with materials.

2006



Blo-Void 3

One of the last designs in the Void series, this piece combines aluminum mesh and mirror-polished, anodized-aluminum sides.

2008



Bodyguard

With his large-scale *Bodyguard* forms in polished aluminum, Arad ventured further than ever into the realm of pure sculpture.