

DESIGN NOTEBOOK

Life on Earth (Condensed)

Editors who draw up lists are defined by them.

DEREK

SANDERS

and his stuff:

1. Bag: Prada.
2. Bike: old Schwinn.
3. Cereal: Familia muesli.
4. Hairdresser: D. J. Rubin.
5. Sheets: Martha Stewart, Kmart.
6. Water: Volvic.

SERGE BECKER and his stuff:

1. Deodorant: Queen Helene vitamin E.
2. Cereal: Frosted Flakes.
3. Mouthwash: Listerine.
4. Pet: Rhodesian ridgeback.
5. Underwear: Hanes.



Nancy Siesel/The New York Times

By WILLIAM L. HAMILTON

READING the telephone book used to be a joke until List magazine, also exclusively a collection of lists, appeared in June. Four thousand copies later (at \$15 a pop), the new magazine's last laugh is the next item on the editors' list: Issue 2 arrives in October. The white pages, at least, are free.

Detractors and admirers — and List's creative directors, Lisa Ano, 28, and Serge Becker, 39, who are designers by background — like to think of List as a kind of literary Armageddon: the arguments of the traditional magazine piece stripped to a corrosive litany of disinterested facts.

It might be a perfect model for the new popular magazine: you can't do anything but skim it.

In 40 lists, List/01 includes topics that are better listed than explained (supermodel day rates), topics explained by their listing (international illiteracy rates) and topics explained in a list (death row inmates' last meals: John

LISA ANO and hers:

1. Music: Guns n' Roses, Jimmy Scott.
2. Stereo: Yamaha.
3. Detergent: Tide.
4. Ice cream: Häagen-Dazs.
5. Coffee: green tea.
6. Toilet paper: Scott.
7. Razor: Gillette Mach 3.

Wayne Gacy ate four courses of fried foods, with fresh strawberries for dessert).

Ms. Ano and Mr. Becker create List at Can Resources, an architecture and design company, where they work with Derek Sanders, 39, an architect, on projects like the new Standard hotel in Los Angeles. Ms. Ano, a graphic designer, previously assisted Tibor Kalman at M&Co. Mr. Becker, a restaurant and club entrepreneur — List is his idea — is a list maker from way back, as in guest lists and A-lists. He helped create MK, Bowery Bar and Joe's Pub. With a résumé that lopes like a velvet rope, Mr. Becker understands the power of exclusivity, from the F.B.I.'s 10 Most Wanted list to

Tina Brown's "Talk Magazine Launch" Liberty Island party list: he published both in List. New York publicists have undoubtedly shuffled them. Recognition is its own reward.

Visited at its Chinatown offices, two flights

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Life (Condensed)

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above a sewing shop, List previewed its next proudly engineered controversy — List/02 — an advertorial vehicle created instead as “advertisements.”

The magazine will portray 12 personalities, like Bryce P. Wilson, a music producer, and Lizzie Grubman, a publicist, in visual lists or trademark collages based on the brand-name products they consume, excerpted from responses to a 138-item questionnaire on items from art to underwear. Makers of the products listed will be invited, the editors said, to sponsor the magazine by paying a \$3,500 fee for a more adlike depiction of the product. It is either a bold sales call or a sly social comment. Mr. Becker, unsurprisingly, said it was both — a Trojan horse with viewing balconies. List/02 has to pay its way, or it's history.

“We Are All Lucky,” a vertical list of Chinese characters left by the last tenant, was the only sign on List's door.

Q: Name two things you used to do that you don't do anymore.

DEREK: Smoke cigarettes.

SERGE: Smoke cigarettes.

LISA: Ever?

DEREK: Oh — steal.

LISA: Oh! Me, too.

SERGE: Me, too!

LISA: That's No. 1. Thank you. That was a major issue.

SERGE: Shoplifting — big teenage sport.

DEREK: Good consumers at an early age — we had an eye.

Q: Why lists?

SERGE: It seemed pure. Very much of the moment. We have less time right now. They're really easy to kind of glance at. What about a magazine that condenses everything down to lists? You pick it up, you check out one or two, you put it down. You pick it up again. It dispenses with the articles concept.

Q: How did you come up with the lists?

LISA: Calls, calls, calls.

SERGE: First, we made a list. (Laughter all around.) Blacklist, wish list, A-list, to-do list. Then wordplays, like socialist, capitalist. The idea was that it could be a very collaborative magazine. You can't ask everybody to contribute an article, but you can ask a lot of people to contribute a list. Lists can be very boring, but then, a really good list is a really great snapshot that really captures the moment. A little bit like the cover. (Mr. Becker's 1-year-old daughter, Georgia, is pictured in the arms of her mother, Jodie Patterson-Becker: the first item on their family list.)

Q: Is a magazine of lists with a paying readership a good or a bad thing?

SERGE: I read The New Yorker. List doesn't replace a really great researched long-form article. There's not that many great ones written anyway. There's so much fluff in magazines. This is cool information that's actually useful.

Q: How has an architectural office come to publish a magazine? Is List really a design magazine?

SERGE: I studied communication design in Switzerland. My career at that point was supposed to be advertising. I hated it. I came here, got into nightclubs, started designing them.

Q: Why nightclubs?

SERGE: New York was the city of Studio 54. Clubs were a vital part of the culture. It's changed. The moment has passed. The people drawn from the creative world to clubs are focusing on fields like the Internet. I started designing other places and got into architecture. Derek and I worked together on the Mercer Hotel. As you get older, you don't want to be in nightclubs anymore. I had to create a day job for myself.

Q: Design's such a trendy subject right now, from hotels to Web sites. Is it this generation's new club scene?

DEREK: There's a glut almost.

SERGE: Design is fashion now. It spreads really fast, because there's so much media that translate these ideas. From the time it's a germ until it's some mass product in everybody's house, everybody's mind, that time lag is so short. These things move like viruses through the culture.

DEREK: We're talking about something as simple as the radius curve that you started to see.

SERGE: It started in furniture. Then it went into graphics. One minute it's in Wallpaper — the next minute it's at Urban Outfitters. The next minute...

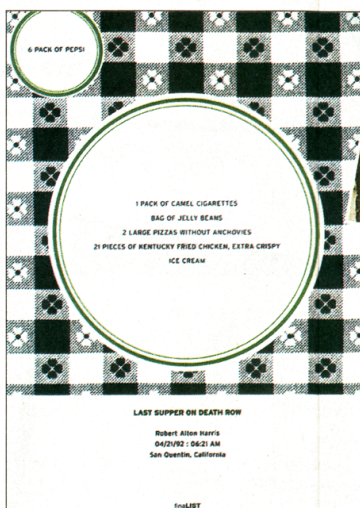
LISA: Centro-fly.

DEREK: I think our conversations are a little anti-design sometimes.

SERGE: It's not just dealing with the form and the shapes of things anymore. List is about pure content, and a lot of the design work that we do is really a little bit like production design, about scripting — an environment idea that fits a particular purpose, then creating a set for it.

DEREK: The attempt is to get a little bit of longevity out of design — in creating a place that moves you. You go there, to feel that. It's not a radius curve that you get tired of.

SERGE: We're going through such a transformation of our information culture — all these new technologies. They always bring too much to you. When you first get a cell phone, you're constantly on the stupid phone. Gradually, you realize, hey — I can turn this off. It's the same way with design now: how much design do we really need? I like the new Jasper Morrison low-pad chair.



Above, Diane Shaw/List; inset, List, top, Andrew Song/Hard Rock Hotel

Do I need it? Is it exciting? Is it what I want to do with my life? Absolutely, no.

DEREK: We're still in the infatuation phase with the technology. You take like Frank Gehry, infatuated with creating shape with it. It's still new. I think you'll get past that, into something more content-driven.

Q: What's next then?

SERGE: Design becomes less dogmatic, less one style ruling all and more niche, niche, niche. More people doing their own thing.

Q: But do most of us, after 50 years of commercial television, international advertising strategies and global brands, really have our own identities to draw upon? Or

will individual design just be an assembly of prefabricated parts? A shoplifter's list?

LISA: It's the theme of our next issue.

SERGE: How we construct personalities as consumers — all the consumer choices that people make.

LISA: From clothes to water.

SERGE: The car they drive, the toothpaste they use. We tried to look at our own lives: what we use, how we make decisions. Do you ever ask yourself that?

LISA: All the time.

DEREK: All the time! (Laughter all around.)

SERGE: When you look at the magazine, you'll think, “Where are the ads?” The

magazine is the ad. We won't have a single page of real advertising, but companies will pay for our endorsement, when we show their product, in a personality's profile.

Q: That doesn't seem particularly provocative, or new. Michael Jordan wears Nikes — we know that.

SERGE: But Jordan is paid to wear Nikes. The value of our endorsement is different: it's true. Real people are saying they really use the product. That's at least as valuable as an ad, to an advertiser.

Q: Is it still possible to be in love?

SERGE: Yes.

LISA: Definitely.

Q: Is anyone at the table in love?

SERGE: I am.

LISA: No.

Q: Name two people you admire.

DEREK: Muhammad Ali and Rem Koolhaas.

SERGE: I have to say Rem. It's the first thing that came to my mind. He doesn't make value judgments. He deals with a lot of what we've been talking about. He embraces these changes that are coming.

Q: O.K., that's one.

LISA: I'm totally blank. I can only think of my mother right now.

SERGE: I'm trying to think of a person that I find inspiring, in terms of helping people get past these doubts, all these daunting changes that are constantly assaulting us, that can inspire you to say, “No it's not getting worse, it's getting better,” and have trust in that. I met Nelson Mandela, when he got out of jail and came to New York. He had dinner at TriBeCa Grill. I was totally blown away by his example, but then, I look at his country. Maybe it isn't enough, the idea that one person can do it all.

Q: Is globalization a good or a bad thing?

DEREK: It's not good or bad — it's just happening.

SERGE: We're becoming members of, not ethnic tribes, but cultural tribes, that have their equivalent all around the globe. When we travel, we travel within that world. You have your equivalent of the scene that you have here in L.A. When you go to London, you have your connectors that bring you into the same world.

Q: Isn't that just portable consumer choices?

SERGE: It's a support network. I'm sure there are people that arrive at great wisdom by not interacting at all.

Q: What one thing would you change if you could change anything?

DEREK: I'd slow the world down — just the pace that everything's progressing at. That's the one thing that's anxiety ridden in me. If I slowed it down, somehow, inside me, it would calm a lot of stuff.

LISA: I want to be in love.

SERGE: Yeah?

DEREK: Yeah.