

A Global Celebration of Design

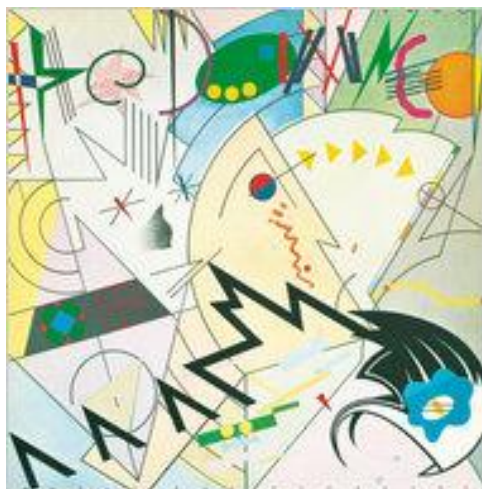
By ALICE RAWSTHORN



Courtesy of Seoul Design Foundation

Dongdaemun History and Culture Park, the first phase of a new design district designed by Zaha Hadid, will be built around Seoul's ancient city walls.

LONDON — Quiet, shy and introspective, Colin Fulcher was so self-effacing that even after disguising his identity by adopting a new name, Barney Bubbles, he avoided signing his work whenever possible. On the rare occasions that he did so, he adopted another pseudonym or used a cipher. He signed one piece with his tax code, and another by drawing a dog. When a magazine asked for a portrait, he sent fragments of different photographs.



Barney Bubbles for Stiff Records

Sleeve of The Damned's "Music For Pleasure" album, 1977.

Mr. Bubbles (he hated his original name) died in 1983, when he committed suicide at the age of 41, after a long struggle with depression. He left a stunning body of work — the luscious graphics he designed for British bands such as Hawkwind, Elvis Costello and The Attractions, Ian Dury and The Blockheads and The Damned — which is to be celebrated in an exhibition opening Tuesday at the Chelsea Space gallery as part of the London Design Festival.

It is one of dozens of events planned for the festival, which runs from Sept. 18 to 26. They range from the sprawling 100% Design furniture fair at Earl's Court to the fledgling Anti Design Festival, a series of exhibitions, screenings and debates organized by the graphic designer Neville Brody as “a response to the pretty commerciality” of the main festival.



Courtesy of Kemistry Gallery

Lou Dorfsman with his “Gastrotypographicalassemblage” wall in the CBS canteen in New York.

Elsewhere, the work of the American graphic designer Lou Dorfsman is to be exhibited at Kemistry Gallery, including parts of “Gastrotypographicalassemblage,” a wooden collage of typography he devised for the canteen in the New York headquarters of the CBS television network. The furniture company Established & Sons is to commandeer — and refurnish — its local pub, the Wenlock Arms, for the week. A different designer will play pub landlord each night by hosting karaoke, happy hours and pub quizzes.

Over on Trafalgar Square, eight industrial robots from an Audi car factory will “write” messages in the sky in Outrace, an interactive installation created by the Swedish-German design group, Kram/Weisshaar. If you text or e-mail a short message (no more than 70 characters, half as many as a Tweet) through the Web site outrace.org from Thursday onward, it will be “written” letter by letter in shafts of light beamed up from the robots’ tool heads.

The London festival is one of the dozen or so design fests planned for this month and next in cities such as Amsterdam, Eindhoven and Utrecht in The Netherlands; Brussels and Kortrijk in Belgium, and Lodz in Poland; as well as Helsinki, Paris, Seoul and Verona. None of them matches the commercial clout of the Milan Furniture Fair, which is held every April. Nor do they have the same intellectual impact on design as the Venice Architecture Biennale, which opened last month and ends Nov. 21, does on architecture. Though that doesn't stop them from being stimulating and enjoyable.

The heavyweight of the season is the Seoul Design Fair, which opens Friday as the highlight of the city's World Design Capital 2010 program. Some 2 million people visited last year's fair. This year's events will take place in exhibition halls designed by the architects Kim Seok-Chul, Alessandro Mendini and Daniel Libeskind, and in the Dongdaemun History and Culture Park, the first phase of a new design district designed by Zaha Hadid to be built around Seoul's ancient city walls.

Seoul's design shindig may be the biggest, but the Dutch win when it comes to intellectual clout. They began earlier this month with the launch of the first leg of the Dutch Design Double program in Amsterdam. It continues next week with Picnic, an annual festival of science, creativity and technology. This year's theme is "Redesign the World," including a "Redesign Design" series of talks, debates and workshops on the changing role, process and practice of design.

The second leg of the Dutch Design Double will be in Utrecht where "Rietveld's Universe," an exhibition devoted to the work of Gerrit Thomas Rietveld, an early 20th century Dutch architect and designer, is to open Oct. 20 at Centraal Museum.

Dutch Design Week starts Oct. 23 in the city of Eindhoven. The highlight will be the graduation show of Design Academy Eindhoven, Europe's leading design school. More than 200 other events are planned, including a retrospective of the work of the Finnish glass designer Oiva Toikka and "Blown to Life," an exhibition of glass objects produced by the Dutch designer Arnout Visser in collaboration with designers and glass blowers from Kenya and the Czech Republic as well as the Netherlands.

Among the other fall design fests, there was a flurry of activity in Paris earlier this month during the Maison et Objet interior design fair. The Abitare Il Tempo furniture fair opens Thursday in the Italian city of Verona, featuring "Living Utopia," an exhibition on craftsmanship curated by Mr. Mendini as a companion piece to "Quali Cose Siamo," his critically acclaimed survey of Italy's design identity at La Triennale Design Museum in Milan.

In Belgium, the Design September program is under way in Brussels. While the Interieur 2010 design biennale is to start Oct. 15 in Kortrijk with an installation by the young Japanese architect Junya Ishigami a star of the Venice Architecture Biennale.

One of the liveliest of the current crop of design bacchanales comes from a recent recruit to the ranks of the world's design centers, the Polish city of Lodz. The fourth Lodz Design Festival is to take place in the last two weeks of October. The theme is "Amazing Life," exploring design's potential to improve our quality of life.

The Lodz festival has already helped raise international awareness of young Polish designers at a time when Poland's design scene is expanding rapidly.

Among the most successful is the product designer Oskar Zieta, who is now returning the favor by curating an exhibition on inflatable design at this year's festival. Though that isn't his only commitment this fall. By the time the Lodz show opens, Mr. Zieta will have exhibited his work at the Paris, London and Seoul design fests too.