

# Art in America

## Everything Old Is New Again

By Stephanie Cash

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*“National Design Triennial: Inside Design Now” is on view at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York, through Jan. 25, 2004. It is accompanied by a 208-page catalogue with essays by the show’s four curators.*

***Many works in the Cooper-Hewitt’s current survey of contemporary American design advance concepts in their respective fields by mining the past***

The second Cooper-Hewitt National Design Triennial has a decidedly different feel than the first. Compared to works in the inaugural exhibition, which were more “blobular” and sleek, those in the museum’s current roundup of recent American design have a funky, homemade quality. Many of the works reuse design motifs or materials from earlier periods, giving the show an overall nostalgic quality, but in a decidedly fresh manner. Titled “Inside Design Now,” the survey encompasses everything from home interiors to an artificial heart. The focus remains on experimental projects—whether imaginative recycling or hypothetical innovation—that are advancing design concepts, technology and research without forgetting esthetic appeal.

Among the innovative Web sites featured in the triennial are those by Alison Cornyn and Sue Johnson of Picture Projects. The duo's site 360degrees.org is a study of the U.S. prison system. Together with their site akaKurdistan.com—which aims to build a virtual national archive for the Kurds, the largest ethnic group without a country of their own—the humanitarian projects present a compelling use of the Internet. Other standouts include Amy Franceschini's digital creations [futurefarmers.com] and Chpping Block group's engaging and easy-to-navigate sites for Turnerclassicmovies.com and the bands They Might Be Giants [tmbg.com] and Phish [phish.com/farmhouse], as well as their own Choppinblock.com.