



january inspiration... design actually...is all around

During the holidays I watched (for the "umpteenth" time) a favorite holiday flick of mine, *Love Actually*. Even though I have seen it numerous times in its entirety, I have yet to tire of it. I think it is an excellent movie - well paced, humorous and poignant, and at the end of the movie, all of the story lines depicting different types of love connect in a wonderful (even if a bit contrived) way.

The "lead in" to the movie shows small visuals of an infinity of people meeting, greeting, saying goodbye and embracing their loved ones as the voice over of actor Hugh Grant explains that, "well....love actually *is* all around". The message being that you just have to look and you will see it. How simple is that?

Taking the theme further, there are many things that are "all around" but many of them have become so much a part of our daily lives, that we rarely notice them - the beautiful view out your office window, the bright, colorful stack of limes in your grocery store. It seems simple, doesn't it? Look out the window, look down the aisle. But the richness of our lives most times escapes us as we multitask, text, or talk on the phone. Instead of looking up, we are looking down. We are so engrossed in checking an item off our TO DO list, that we rarely look up and notice what is happening in the immediate world around us.

Design inspirations come from the most unlikely places - ask any artist or designer about that. Those of us who work in creative professions, have been trained to "look and see". After all, it is our job to come up with the perfect design solution whether it be a product, a paint color or a room layout. Most designers I know have inspiration boards, ipads stockpiled with photos or binders overflowing with visual "stuff". They are not so much ideas as something interesting that has caught their eyes. My own travel photos include an occasional person but the majority of what I record are of details I file away for inspiration if and when the occasion arises. Some people photograph food, sunsets, their children...I snap away at a stone wall, a lighting element on a bookcase shelf or architectural details etc., (sorry boys!).

I have a ritual on Friday nights of plugging my iphone into its charger and giving it a rest for the weekend. The work week is done and I need to recharge as well. For me that might be going to a museum, paging through the numerous design books and publications that are stacked on my desk, or just taking time to pull a few weeds from my garden. I need space and time to be creative. It is a discipline I work on, and believe me, it gets harder every day as more and more of what we consider our "life" is filed away in that little piece of plastic.

Unplugging can feel a bit like free falling. It might sound crazy to most of you but it can be very freeing and exhilarating knowing that the buzzes of your texts and emails are far, far away. Try to not feel guilty, the good news is that they will all be waiting for you when you return!

The most relaxing vacations I ever had were the summer trips our family took to the Adirondacks when the boys were young. Not only was there no internet, there was no cell service, TV or phones. The only phone available was a phone booth in the woods that was so spider infested, my husband and I would limit calls to our offices as much as possible. Knowing that our offices would solve most problems that arose and that there was NO POSSIBILITY of the phone ringing, really was like dying and going to heaven. A retreat like that brought on a plethora of creative design ideas.

For good or for bad, the world has changed in 10 short years and I am sure that the tiny town of Westport, NY now has an ATM, internet and cell service. The point is, unplug or not, it is important to spare a little time each day to look and see what is all around you, because...along with love, design and beauty, your wonderful, one of a kind life actually is all around.

Here's looking at you kids!

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