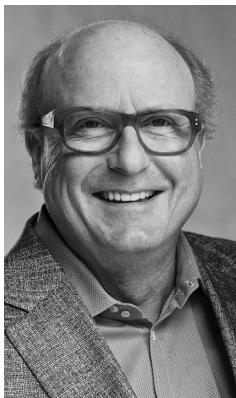


# Design Without Review



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**M**y late philosophical buddy, Blair Ballard, was a designer by passion and an architect by profession. Design is the pure heart of architecture, as it is the heart of every profession. But every immaculate conception is transformed as soon as it is exposed to the world. Clients, colleagues, critics, supporters, partners, bankers, builders, boards and commissions all want to review, collaborate, evolve, improve, approve and transform your concept, and generally get their fingerprints all over it. By the

time your project is actualized it is community property and you may no longer recognize it. You will suffer if you fail to let go of your original design in order to appreciate what it has become in the world.

This is true of human relationships as well. In the beginning there is always the romantic ideal of what your partner, children, colleagues, friends and lovers are going to be like, and about how it is going to be with them. But you will have noticed that it never turns out that way, regardless of how tightly you may cling to your original vision. This is because the universe is not entirely about you after all. You are a leaf on the shoulders of a mighty stream and once you have plunged into it you need to go, more or less, with the flow. Even solitary artists and writers must accommodate their audience if they want to enter the marketplace.

But there is always a space within and around us that is entirely our own, a space within which our design remains true to itself. In his final weeks Blair designed a house entirely in his mind, set among craggy peaks overlooking a vast plain, with features and aesthetic qualities I know nothing about because Blair never externalized his immaculate design or subjected it to any sort of review. Perhaps some version of this house could be built, perhaps not. It doesn't matter. Trust me. Call me.

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