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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ZUGUNRUHE - Quiet Revolution Underway to Heal the Planet *New Book explores our personal connection to the environment.*

SEATTLE, WA., November 15, 2010—Ecotone Publishing, the industry’s first exclusive green architecture and design publisher, today announced the release of a new book, *ZUGUNRUHE – The Inner Migration to Profound Environmental Change*, authored by internationally acclaimed green design visionary Jason F. McLennan.

Just prior to periods of great migration, certain species display agitation and restlessness - a phenomenon referred to by scientists as ‘zugunruhe’. McLennan identifies a similar pattern emerging among people yearning for a sustainable future. This book is intended as a catalyst for anyone interested in exploring a deeper, more meaningful connection to the environmental movement. “Zugunruhe is a work of creative genius that draws us into an engaging journey of self-discovery, brings the biggest and most frightening issues of our time up close, and invites our engagement,” notes David Korten, “It will leave you envisioning human possibilities you never previously imagined.” Profound, personal and practical, McLennan’s narrative reminds us that individual efforts ripple outward and can lead to revolutionary change for the betterment of people and planet.

ZUGUNRUHE – The Inner Migration to Profound Environmental Change (ISBN 978-0-9749033-2-3) is available online and at architecture and building bookstores throughout North America. Foreword by renowned natural sciences writer, and author of *Biomimicry*, Janine Benyus. For more information, excerpts or to order the book, please visit <http://www.ecotonedesign.com>

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**JASON F.
MCLENNAN**

WITH MARY ADAM THOMAS

FOREWORD BY
JANINE BENYUS

tsuk'un-rū'he

ZUGUNRUHE

The Inner Migration To Profound Environmental Change

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ADVANCED PRAISE FOR *ZUGUNRUHE*

THE INNER MIGRATION TO PROFOUND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

“What Jason McLennan does in his powerful new book is to shift our focus on sustainability from technology to the heart of what it’s all about: our personal and collective journey that will change our design practices, our culture and our way of life. His presentation is practical, passionate, and positive. Funny, and filled with useful stories and gems of advice. The best road map I’ve seen to join on our journey together.”

—SIM VAN DER RYN, architect, visionary and author, *Design For Life, Ecological Design, Ecological Design and Sustainable Communities*.

“A true warrior cuts through his story and steps forth from his vision. Jason F. McLennan exposes the misperceptions, bad habits, and justifications that keep us at war with our earth. He presents a blueprint for a courageous, peaceful, and nurturing relationship with our planet. Heed this green warrior’s words, and act – the world needs you.”

—THOMAS CRUM, author, *The Magic of Conflict, Journey to Center and Three Deep Breaths*

“*Zugunruhe* is a work of creative genius that draws us into an engaging journey of self-discovery, brings the biggest and most frightening issues of our time up close and personal, evokes our inner courage, and invites our engagement in an epic creative challenge. It will leave you envisioning human possibilities you never previously imagined.”

—DAVID KORTEN, co-founder and board chair of YES! Magazine and author, *Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth, The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community, and When Corporations Rule the World*.

“Whether you are just awakening to an inner calling to be the change you want to see in the world or have been at it for as long as you can remember, you will find valuable insights and pearls of wisdom from a visionary focused on the relationships between human beings, human doings and the built and natural worlds.”

—DAVID EISENBERG, Director of the Development Center for Appropriate Technology (DCAT)

“A delicious meal of truths and insights about the world we have and the world we want seasoned with lessons from the life of a true green warrior—*Zugunruhe* shines a light on a hidden axiom of sustainability. Our hope lies in our connection to our innermost selves and to each other”

—SANDY WIGGINS, Principal, Consilience LLC.

“Even if you don’t totally agree with Jason’s opinions—and *especially* if you don’t—you won’t be able to deny the fact that Jason’s words ring absolutely true. His opinions will provoke you, his personal stories will inspire you, and hopefully his book will prompt you to act with all the urgency you can muster. Required reading for anyone who desires a future that our children and grandchildren can thrive in.”

—KATHLEEN O’BRIEN, CEO, O’Brien and Associates

“Jason is a brilliant synthesizer of ideas, creating frameworks that shift the conversation. Now he offers an inside look at the stories and experiences behind those big ideas, enriching the conversation even further.”

—NADAV MALIN, President, Building Green, LLC

“*Zugunruhe* is a great read for anyone experiencing a lack of success in redefining design and community, or seeking better strategies for the 21st Century. This is Jason F. McLennan’s personal story as an architect and green warrior—a roadmap for transformation, adaptation, inspiration and change—a guide for expressing love at the community scale.”

—BOB BERKEBILE, FAIA - BNIM Architects

“This is an absolutely fabulous book! *Zugunruhe* is a very personal journey of discovery and a powerful invitation to begin our own journeys to make a real difference in the world.”

—DR. JOHN FRANCIS, author, *Planetwalker: How to Change Your World One Step at a Time*

“The coming global transformation begins as we transform ourselves. As Jason McLennan explains, transformation works inside out. The century ahead will require stamina, wisdom, and courage, the prerequisites for which are inner clarity, depth, and compassion. Tall order. But the necessary instructions, mentors, and exemplars are all around us from the hummingbird to the heroes and heroines living down the street. *Zugunruhe*—migratory restlessness—is in the air. Jason McLennan beckons us to the journey ahead with a combination of wisdom, humor, practical good sense, and inspiration.”

—DAVID W. ORR, Distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies and Politics at Oberlin College, author of *Down to the Wire - Confronting Climate Collapse*, *Design on the Edge* and *The Last Refuge*

“Jason McLennan, a brilliant, influential pioneer who works and lives on the sharpest edge of green design, turns deeply personal and reflective in “*Zugunruhe*.” I view this book as the very antithesis of the memoirs of another influential architect whose reach extended far beyond buildings: Albert Speer. Unlike Speer, Jason reflects on why and how he does good – not evil.”

DENIS HAYES, *Founder of Earth Day*



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LOOKING FORWARD TO FAILURE:
LEARNING THE MOST WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

“An army of sheep led by a lion is better than an army of lions led by a sheep.”

—ALEXANDER THE GREAT

The phrase “Failure is not an option” has been attributed to Gene Kranz, the lead flight director for Houston-based Mission Control when directing NASA personnel on the ground to devise a method of saving the crew aboard the damaged Apollo 13 spacecraft in 1970. While these five words played great on the big screen when the true tale made its way to Hollywood, and they help to define a dramatic episode in American culture, the real story behind them, I would venture to guess, is far more complicated. In fact, I propose that what actually allowed the ground crew to succeed in this historically tense situation were their many failures that led to that moment. Because without failure – sometimes without repeated failures – there can be no context in which to place success.

We are taught in our culture that winners win and losers lose. It is a fairly black-and-white assessment and it is repeated often. It is particularly strong in the American (and to a lesser extent Canadian) mythos that we do not accept failure in ourselves or in others. Period.

However, anyone who has ever thought, “I’ll never do/say/eat/build that again” knows the wisdom of making mistakes. How would we ever learn how to do things better if we denied ourselves the opportunity to do things badly? In this way, our failures help define us, perhaps even more powerfully than our victories.

Intellectually, this reasoning makes perfect sense. “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again,” is repeated for good reason. But most of us still go to great lengths to avoid failure, primarily to protect our egos. Our sense of our own strength is tied to our internal track record of wins and losses. In addition, we become emotionally attached to our ideas and projects in a way that creates a personal sense of loss when things do not go well. So our affection for and attachment to our own work limits our ability to detach from it and allow it to fail, which in turn limits the very potential of the work.

From a young age, we are taught to take ourselves seriously. We learn that when we succeed – with our childhood milestones, at school, in relationships, in our careers – we are praised and rewarded. When one becomes an expert in a given subject, one is expected always to possess a certain wealth of information in that area – certainly not to fail! An expert always knows, and is not afforded the luxury of ignorance. When we are accustomed to success and taught that failures are “not an option,” even small mistakes feel catastrophic. The reality, however, is that our moderate and sometimes large failures lead to our greatest accomplishments – if we let them.

Here is a cold, hard truth. If you are serious about being a change agent, you are going to fail – a lot. If you want to tackle challenging issues including cultural mores, regulatory hurdles, business paradigms or institutional frameworks, expect to lose a lot of battles. Failure is part of *Zugunruhe*. Expect it, welcome it, learn from it...then try again.

What is missing in our culture, and in the environmental movement to a large extent, is our willingness to thrust ourselves out there on that seemingly fragile limb where failure is likely to occur repeatedly. So we remain timid and stick to small, safe goals while every natural system on the planet is in a free fall. We would rather succeed and make little difference than fail trying to make significant change. Why? Because our egos can not take it! As previously discussed, we need to ditch this ego and step forward into change. We have lost the ability to be friends with failure, and this loss is very dangerous when you consider the size of the environmental and social obstacles we face. Constant feedback loops by learning what does and does not work is critical to being an effective green warrior.

A risk-averse culture usually finds itself on the decline. A risk-averse person rarely makes a difference. What is wonderful is to think that we were all born with the opposite tendencies. When a baby takes

countless tumbles, testing the limits and discovering the abilities of her own physical self as she learns to walk, she is learning from and embracing failure. If we caught her every time she wobbled, she would never succeed independently. Great parents are those who understand that we can not overprotect and shelter our children. We must encourage them to take manageable risks and to learn from their own failures. We need to be there to pick them up and encourage them to try again. It is difficult to learn to ride a bike properly if mom never lets go of the seat.

Bob Berkebile tells a great story about how Buckminster Fuller once witnessed a mother jump across a room to stop her toddler from falling two feet off of a couch. Buckminster shouted out – “No! What a wonderful way for the child to learn about gravity!”

As professionals, we have too often internalized the risk-averse parent when we relegate our best ideas and greatest talents to the back shelf for fear of failure, and thereby stunt our own development. So many people with so much talent sit back and do nothing with it because they are afraid to fail. The sad irony with such thinking is that it tends to create a negative feedback loop, in which our timidity leads to mediocrity instead of excellence.

As the environmental movement gathers momentum and confronts a greatly impoverished world with seven billion people, we face a time of great transition and uncertainty. Humanity is in sore need of people who are willing to lead – and who are brave enough to fail by taking intelligent risks. We need people who are willing to speak out, to try new initiatives, to launch new business models and to reframe the way people think. Inevitably we need people who have the ability to embrace failures and to try again, now informed with more clarity about what does not work.



Buckminster Fuller and his students. Courtesy, The estate of R. Buckminster Fuller.

It is difficult to discuss revolutionary thinkers without returning to Buckminster Fuller who understood this concept perhaps like no other. When my mentor, Bob Berkebile, was a student at the University of Kansas in the late 1950s, Fuller served as a guest professor. His futuristic ideas about architecture and the environment seemed eccentric to many at the time, but his students were enthusiastic

about his teachings and the great passion he displayed. Buckminster was a leader who believed that the “best way to make something obsolete was to invent its replacement”.

In the class Berkebile attended, Fuller was deep into exploring his concept of “tensegrity”, which was in its early phases. Fuller asked the students to design a large tensegrity structure based on the conceptual guidelines he provided. Over the course of a semester the group then worked together to build the various members of the structure, which they planned to assemble outside of campus in a much-anticipated public demonstration of the great Buckminster Fuller’s revolutionary design concepts.

After weeks of hard work, the big day came, the group gathered and the audience watched as each student grabbed a piece of the giant form and slowly moved it backwards, bringing tension to play and allowing the structure to take shape and history to be made. Berkebile and his fellow students were exhilarated to be part of such a momentous event, and were proud of the contributions they had made both individually and as a class. With one final step, they provided the last bit of necessary tension and awaited the moment in which the tensegrity dome would fully erect itself. Instead, they watched in horror as one member buckled, and then the entire structure collapsed and fell apart in front of the watching crowd!

The experiment had failed. Their hard work was for nothing. They were devastated. Silence permeated the field.

And then...Buckminster’s voice filled the vacuum.

“Yes, we’ve done it!,” they heard Fuller exclaim in great joy.

The students were confused – what did he say?

Buckminster then gathered his dejected students around the pieces that lay on the ground, and enthusiastically praised them for a job well done.

He quickly pointed out to them that they had performed the most crucial experiment of all – they had uncovered the weakness in the structure and in his theory of tensegrity itself. Armed with this new, extremely valuable information, they could now make a bigger and better structure and rely more confidently on its success. They had found Fuller’s own error. What a great day!

While the lesson was not intentional, it was infinitely more instructive – and some might say historic – than experiencing a flawless first attempt. Each student had learned the power of failure to teach and the attitude of a leader who embraces failure as a positive outcome. Where before the students felt personal ruin they now walked away shouting and cheering “Yes, we did it!”

That was 50 years ago, and Bob Berkebile still refers to this story as one of the most important lessons of his life.

While I was not lucky enough to study personally with Buckminster Fuller, I recall a less dramatic but still instructive academic experience of my own that provided wisdom on learning to sit with my own failures. In my first year of architecture school, I was given an assignment that most architecture and engineering students get – design and build a bridge and test it to the point of failure in front of the whole architecture school. There are many variations to this assignment, usually involving what materials are allowed in the construction and stipulations of how heavy and for how long a particular weight needs to be supported. In our case, the assignment was to build bridges out of wood, paper and cardboard only. We were not allowed to use any metal or other stronger materials.

The winning bridge would not merely be the strongest, but would, in fact, carry the most weight relative to its own weight. Understanding how to minimize the amount of unnecessary material was an important part of the assignment. Efficiency was key. As designers, we naturally wanted our bridges to look attractive as well. Like most students, I wanted my class bridge to stand out. Mine needed to be the strongest, the best looking and the most memorable – after all – everyone would be watching!^[1] I spent a great deal of time working on the design and “perfecting” how my bridge would go together. My partner and I looked at photos, sketched alternatives, calculated weight loads, gathered supplies and crafted a beautiful span.

As the day approached, we were excited and proud of the amazing structure we had built – our confidence was palpable. Unfortunately, the reality was quite the opposite. When it was our turn, the professor brought out the weights and starting with some very light loads, hooked them up to our bridge. Immediately the bridge began to sag to one side and then – bang – it collapsed in a spectacular explosion. It stood out all right, by failing almost immediately! We were mortified. Our only consolation was that we were not alone – many students had made the same mistakes we did.

The problem was that we were all so busy designing our bridges that we forgot to test them for the very properties that would ultimately make them fail. We were so confident that we did not allow for failure in the design process, a mistake that eventually led to a much bigger failure (a poor grade on the assignment).

The next year was very different. Learning from my mistakes (which surprisingly so many students did not do), I adjusted my strategy accordingly. The key lesson was that I needed to learn from failure.

[1] There’s that pesky ego creeping in again.

So instead of spending all my time on the design and then hoping for success, I quickly built several bridges and tested them on my own until they failed. Each time I observed my error and quickly built another. I didn't worry about how the bridge looked – at least not right away... Dumping wood all together (which took longer to work with) my partner and I switched to cardboard and paper even though they were not as strong so that we could construct several test bridges in a fraction of the time that it took to build with wood. The day of the competition brought forth a bridge with multiple prototypes behind it. Some scoffed at our design – it had no wood! It was strange looking – looking frail in parts even! “This will be quick,” someone said.

Yet we understood ahead of time where our bridge would fail and why — and we had a great understanding of how much weight it would carry. We sat back quietly and waited.

And unlike the year before, pound after pound was added as people looked on with great surprise – a cardboard bridge that strong? It soon surpassed many of the wood structures. When it did fail, we cheered – knowing that in some small way we had changed our own paradigm of loss, failure and true success.

In my subsequent career, my failures have led me to my greatest moments. While I cannot say that I love to fail all the time, the lessons learned are never lost on me and I rarely take them to heart in a negative way for long. Sometimes I still become happy when something fails (and people think I am crazy).

I have been blessed to have had an amazing and successful career at such a young age, and people sometimes comment on how much I manage to get done successfully in such a short span of time. I usually just grin at them, as I know it is merely because I build a lot of bridges.

Like anyone, I actually have a fairly poor “hit rate” with ideas and initiatives. It is just that I have swung at a lot of pitches and when I miss I get right back in the batter’s box immediately and adjust my stance or swing while others still ponder their next move. Eventually, I do hit the ball.

I would like to think that I now make fewer mistakes than I used to, but I rely on the fact that my many screw-ups have allowed me to find the path toward my own success. I force myself to be open to professionally vulnerable situations, I constantly “put myself out there”, I refuse to perfect an idea prior to its release^[2] and I fight the urge to retreat in the face of failure. I have found that the rewards are greater when I resist timidity. So it did not work – big deal. Try again.

Our greatest ideas are cultivated in the fertile ground of failed attempts properly mulched. Failure, then, is our most important teacher and has the power to lead us to magical moments.

Do you ever wonder at the amazing world we live in? At the millions of species of animals, plants, insects and microorganisms that live together on this great blue orb? And to learn that the vast majority of all species that have ever existed since life first emerged on this planet are extinct. Life has rewarded what works through constant experimentation.

Consider Bill Bryon’s quote in *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, “The average species on Earth lasts for only about four million years, so if you wish to be around for billions of years, you must be as fickle as the atoms that made you. You must be prepared to change everything about yourself – shape, size, color, species affiliation, everything – and to do so repeatedly.”

[2] A critical idea we will discuss in Chapter ¾ Baked.

G W E R S I X I I I

Look for opportunities to test yourself.

Be willing to fail, not just once but as many times as necessary.

For it is in the failure that true success is found.

Understanding why something works

Is best done through learning how and why it does not.

G W E R S I X I V

When something does not go as originally planned,
embrace the change

And recognize that there is great value in having
assumptions and ideas proven wrong.

True growth comes from learning how to change

Rather than doing anything possible not to be wrong or to
keep things the same.

Only the fool views success as never having been wrong.



09

3/4 BAKED:

A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

“The artist who aims at perfection in everything achieves it in nothing.”

—EUGENE DELACROIX

AVOIDING THE CHASE FOR PERFECTION

As odd as it may sound, I have always tried not to seek perfection. Do not get me wrong; I always give my best effort and work extremely hard at whatever I do. I believe wholeheartedly in committing myself to each task I face, and devoting all of my knowledge and energy to the job at hand. I believe in excellence – just not “perfection”.

One of the most important skills that anyone can learn regardless of the task or assignment, large or small, is knowing when to stop. I have spent a great deal of time working on recognizing the magical point at which any continued efforts might actually hinder a project’s progress and diminish its potential; the magical point when it is time to release the work into the world to allow other individuals or forces to complete it.

This is the stage I refer to as $\frac{3}{4}$ -baked.

When we refer to something as “half-baked,” we often mean that it is inadequate or incomplete. The phrase has a negative implication. To extend the culinary metaphor, a half-baked item is undercooked; it is certainly unappetizing and it is possibly hazardous.

When I talk about ideas or tasks being $\frac{3}{4}$ -baked, I mean that they have reached a special moment in time or development where the idea has significant shape, clarity and elegance. It can stand on its own, perfectly workable, yet still has room for some improvement, some rough edges and questions yet to be resolved. When a concept is $\frac{3}{4}$ -baked, its original author or “architect” has taken it to a certain stage of near-completion, then, resisting the urge to keep refining, has offered it up to the outside world for feedback, criticism and testing. It is, so to speak, “taken out of the oven”. Oddly enough, aiming for this stage of development and then sharing the work, rather than striving for perfection itself, is likely to bring about a more perfect result.

CONSIDER THE GOAL

From my perspective, when people strive to work on things to the point of perfection, they are usually only fooling themselves. “Perfectionists” spend so much time and energy making miniscule improvements to whatever they are working on that they often end up losing sight of the ultimate goals of the projects they tackle. Typically the joy has been sucked out of the activity as well. We have all heard the statistic that 90 percent of our efforts are expended on 10 percent of the result. It is usually the last 10 percent or the last 25 percent that does us in – and keeps good ideas from going somewhere. Remember the earlier discussion of learning from failure.... The $\frac{3}{4}$ baked philosophy goes hand in hand with this maxim – putting your ideas out in the world – even if they might fail.

When I studied in Glasgow, Scotland, I had a classmate who was an incredibly talented designer. The only problem was that he always aimed for perfection in everything he did. He would work endlessly on something and never knew how to let go. He could not move on until it was perfect, which meant that he rarely moved on at all. He worked and worked and worked at things, never satisfied with himself or his projects. He consistently produced beautiful artifacts, but rarely completed them. Regardless of the assignment and its importance, he put in the same amount of effort and placed the same amount of pressure on himself. As a result, he suffered greatly from stress, even over assignments that were inconsequential. He had been carefully taught only to pursue perfection; indeed, to equate his own value as a person with how close to perfect his accomplishments were. Each assignment was a huge challenge for this student – he did not know how to stop and be satisfied. Being human, he repeatedly produced things that were less than perfect. Not surprisingly, his self-esteem suffered greatly even though he was

brilliant. He had never learned the valuable lesson of scaling effort to the importance of the task at hand (if all you do is sprint, you never catch your breath). Nobody taught him that chasing perfection was a fool's errand and the harder he pursued it the further it got from his grasp. By the end of the year, my friend was close to failing due to the number of assignments that he simply could not complete. He refused to move on with one element of an assignment until it was perfect; then he ran out of time or became immobilized by the self-generated pressure. The sad thing was that the quality of his work was higher than just about anyone's in our year – but he was his own worst enemy. In trying to go for a home run each time, he never scored a single hit. As Edith Schaeffer notes,

“People throw away what they could have by insisting on perfection, which they cannot have, and looking for it where they will never find it.”

Later in life, I became friends with a man who was an amazing trumpet player. From a young age, he showed talent that his father (as well as his teachers) spotted as real potential. In an effort to encourage his son, the father ended up instilling an unhealthy set of expectations focused on being “perfect.” When my friend became older, he stopped playing altogether. I assumed that he quit because he no longer enjoyed the trumpet. In actuality, he told me that he loved the instrument and missed it terribly. But he gave it up when family and work obligations limited his practice time to what he perceived as an unacceptable level, and he began to hear nothing but his mistakes. For him, this artistic pursuit was all or nothing; he felt he needed to be perfect or not play at all. In his case, a quest for perfection killed the music in this man, and I believe that his life was less rich as a result.

One of the secrets to success is knowing when to stop, how hard to work and for how long. I have seen so many great talents waste their skills on the hubris of perfection.

“The greater the emphasis on perfection, the further it recedes.”

—Haridas Chaudhuri

In so many disciplines, the “perfect is the enemy of the good.” People obsess over details, worrying about acceptance, approval and propriety. By the time they do manage to finish an endeavor, the reality has often changed, making their deliberations all for naught. I have watched as skilled professionals have blown projects, not by underperforming, but by over-thinking to the point where they missed deadlines or exceeded budgets. Top athletes train to “peak” at certain times when it really matters. They have “off-seasons”, and while they remain conditioned, they recognize that rising to the very top of their game is something that can only be done by spending the majority of their time not at the top of their game. All of us, regardless of the work we do, would be wise to remember this truism. Show me a perfectionist, and I will show you someone who does not get much done – unless they have learned to rein in these tendencies in a healthy way.

THE SWEET SPOT

“The thing that is really hard, and really amazing, is giving up on being perfect and beginning the work of becoming yourself.”

—Anna Quindlen

How do we seek and identify the $\frac{3}{4}$ -baked sweet spot of our own undertakings? How do we give ourselves permission to be less than perfect, while demanding from ourselves more than mediocrity?

Often, when I am seeking my own answers to life's dilemmas, I cook. I find that cooking provides many lessons applicable to our lives and the decisions we have to make. Releasing a project when it is $\frac{3}{4}$ -baked is a lot like preparing asparagus. Let me explain:

If you steam fresh asparagus until it is "perfectly cooked," it will actually end up overdone and soggy by the time you eat it. Why? Because it continues to cook internally as long as it is hot. Anyone who enjoys this particular vegetable knows that there is a very fine line between deliciously al dente and horribly mushy asparagus. So often people wonder why it did not turn out right – "I took it out when it was perfect".

An experienced chef knows when to remove it from the hot water – while it is still undercooked; about $\frac{3}{4}$ cooked. Some even plunge it into cold water immediately after removing it from heat to slow the process further. In either case, it is the universe (metaphorically, in the form of cold water or the absence of hot water) that finishes the job to help accomplish crunchy-but-cooked excellence. The key to this metaphor is that you take the asparagus out of the water. You let it cool and serve it – and by the time it is ready to eat – well it just might be perfect...or darn close.

When we put something out in the world – an idea, a design, a project, even if great environmental importance is behind it – we must be willing to accept that the idea is not likely perfect despite our best efforts. When we are open to possible changes and criticisms and invite others to expand upon our original vision, we give our work and ourselves a great gift. When we hold onto an idea too long as we pursue its perfect execution, we run the risk of squeezing the life right out of it, missing relevancy from a timing perspective or never finishing.

So an idea's sweet spot – the time and place in which it is ¾-baked – is the point between its conception and its death by strangulation where there is the most potential for it to succeed. Crazy how it works – by letting the idea go before it is perfect, the likelihood of its success is greater. Fancy that.

IF YOU LOVE IT, SET IT FREE

When we release our ideas into world, incredible transformations can take place. It takes courage to let go of our biggest and boldest work (even our smallest ones), especially when doing so requires acknowledging imperfections and possibilities for error. But taking that chance often leads to great things – magical things even – when the ideas are good enough to take on a life of their own.

The universe has a way of providing what is required when we allow it to, doing away with bad ideas (usually for everyone's benefit) and elevating good ones. The individual who gives birth to the idea, and is strong enough to release it fully when it is ¾-baked, enables the greater community to:

- Determine whether the idea is worthy
- Strengthen the idea and help it shine more brightly
- Focus importance on the idea rather than the author
- Find synergistic or complementary ideas
- Avoid potential pitfalls earlier with less time wasted
- Remind us all that letting go of our attachment to our ideas can be the best idea of all

After all, if it is change we seek, we need not concern ourselves with glory. Seeking perfection is really about assuaging the ego, more than

it is about creating impact. If it is true impact that we seek, then releasing our ideas as often as we can is critical. Regardless, work released in the right spirit tends to find ways to reward its creator. The ideas that come out of the collective movement will safeguard our future, regardless of how or by whom they are created. Releasing ideas into the universe in the spirit of selfless passion for change results in powerful magic.

DO NOT RELEASE CRAP

All right, I still feel compelled to state the obvious. The ¾ baked philosophy is not an invitation to release shoddy, crappy work. The world is already full of half-baked ideas and poorly conceived projects. Do take the time to make your work clear, coherent, understandable at all times – worthy of sharing it with others. The more important the work, the more care that should be given. Is there a tension between not releasing crap and not trying to perfect something before releasing it? Absolutely. That is the whole point – the art of making effective change is learning to understand the idea of balance and quality...of beauty and elegance and how timing and effort relates to those ideas. You will not always get it right – but the first step is in understanding the tension, working hard – and then knowing when to stop.

The Living Building Challenge™^[1]

Since the mid-1990s, I have been focused on a concept that I call Living Buildings. I coined the term while working on a project in Montana called the EpiCenter^[2], as our team sought to describe building performance that was “truly sustainable.” The idea is that nature, not machines, provides the ideal metaphor and performance measuring stick for the buildings of the future – a vast departure from prevailing wisdom that viewed the “mechanistic world” as the icon of progress. The architect Le Corbusier famously said that “a house is a machine for living in” during the 1920s and summed up an attitude that has shaped architecture for the last century. For me, a paradigm shift occurred when Janine Benyus wrote her wonderful book *Biomimicry* –and although she did not address architecture in her book, she certainly opened my eyes to a different way of seeing the world.

What is a Living Building? Imagine a building designed and constructed to function as elegantly and efficiently as a flower; one that is informed specifically by place, climate, topography and microclimate. Imagine buildings that generate all their own energy with renewable resources; capture, treat and re-use water in a closed-loop process; operate pollution-free with no toxic chemicals used in any material – all while being

[1] For more information on the Living Building Challenge visit the International Living Building Institute – www.ilbi.org .

[2] The most advanced green building to never get built due to political issues at the University.

a beautiful inspiration to anyone who interacts with them. Even before LEED^[3] came to fruition, Bob Berkebile and I spent hours focusing on how to develop the Living Building idea, eventually publishing a series of articles on the subject. Back in the late nineties, it was still a fuzzy concept – a vague notion of the kind of impact that we desired buildings to have even though we continued to talk about the idea to every client who would listen. “You need us to design you a living building,” we would always say. In 2000, a BNIM-led interdisciplinary team did a substantial amount of research for the David and Lucile Packard Foundation^[4] on what a living building would cost as compared to LEED and conventional construction.

In 2005, I was encouraged by the growing strides that the green building industry was finally making. I had worked on two Platinum LEED projects and three Gold LEED as well as other Silver and Certified projects, all of which were done on budget (or close) and on time, and I was convinced that the industry was ready to go deeper. So, in my spare time in the evenings and on weekends, I began writing the world’s most stringent green building standard, for the first time, clearly codifying what a Living Building really needed to do to deserve the designation.

[3] LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design and is the most influential rating system in North America, designed and operated by the U.S. Green Building Council. For more information on LEED visit www.usgbc.org

[4] The result was the David and Lucile Packard Foundation Sustainability Matrix.

I finished the first version of the Living Building Challenge (LBC) while moving out to Seattle before starting as the new CEO of the Cascadia Region Green Building Council^[5] in the summer of 2006. I knew that what I had on my hands was a very special document, but I also understood that it was far from perfect. It was a powerful idea – ¾-baked – and ready to be shared with the industry.

I decided to bring the intellectual property to Cascadia and to give it away without asking for any compensation. It had too much potential to be “owned” by a single individual, or any single architecture firm and the spirit of the tool demanded that personal profit could not be a motivator in releasing the work. So, in my very first board meeting with Cascadia — in what was a complete surprise to them — I made a presentation sharing the LBC and offered to give it to the non-government organization (NGO), but with one important condition: when I offered the tool to the organization’s board of directors, I told them that they could have it, provided that we made it a centerpiece in the organization’s future and that we would invest significant resources into its development and adoption. Without hesitation they adopted it in a unanimous vote and that single act of leadership has now led to a huge chain of powerful and positive outcomes that is helping to change the building industry, state and local laws and ordinances and the very way many architectural design firms design buildings.

[5] The word “Region” has since been dropped in the name of the organization. It is now simply the Cascadia Green Building Council.



Clockwise from top left. 1. Xstrata Nickel Sustainable Energy Centre at Cambrian College; Sudbury, Ontario; Castellán James + Partners; 2. Omega Center for Sustainable Living; Rhinebeck, New York; BNIM Architects; 3. Hawaii Preparatory Academy Energy Lab; Kamuela, Hawaii; Flansburgh Architects; 4. Center for Interactive Research on Sustainability; Vancouver, British Columbia; Busby Perkins + Will; 5. Oregon Sustainability Center; Portland, Oregon; GBD/SERA Architects.

Any transformative idea needs three things to create widespread change: the right timing (timing is indeed everything), the right message artfully delivered and the right platform.

With Cascadia, all three finally began to align to make the Living Building Challenge a reality around North America and increasingly around the world. Pulling some strings with some friends at the U.S. Green Building Council, Bob Berkebile and I reunited to present the idea at the 2006 GreenBuild^[6] in Denver to a crowd of several thousand leading practitioners. Opening right before my childhood hero, David Suzuki, we asked the assembled delegation to join us in accepting the “Challenge.” In a moment that will always remain a powerful personal milestone for me, the whole assembly rose in a spontaneous standing ovation. Releasing a ¾-baked idea (for it was far from perfect) had started a paradigm shift in the building industry.^[7]

Since then, what has happened has been truly phenomenal: dozens of projects have emerged all over North America and beyond, racing to be the first Living Buildings anywhere – the first of which may be certified by the time this book comes to print.

These buildings will provide critical models for how people will live, work and play in the coming decades, finally reconciling the balance between the natural and built environments. Thousands

[6] Greenbuild is the nation’s leading green building conference held in a different major metropolitan area each year.

[7] To read much more on the Living Building Challenge and the huge changes it is motivating, visit www.ilbi.org.

of people from many different disciplines – most of whom I have never even met – are now working to advance the ideas of the Living Building Challenge in their communities. In late 2009 the 2.0 version of the LBC was released – based on continuous feedback from dozens of practitioners helping us make the program stronger. Still far from perfect, we inch closer as a community, excited that the new version now encompasses all kinds of design and construction including renovations, infrastructure, and now whole neighborhood and community designs as well as addressing issues of social justice, equity, transportation and food production for the first time in a green building standard.

The Living Building Challenge is now operated by the International Living Building Institute (www.ilbi.org) with a collaboration in Canada with the Canada Green Building Council and chapter organizations in Ireland and Mexico.



**LIVING
BUILDING
CHALLENGESM**

G W E R S I X V I I

In any endeavor, scale the effort of your work to the effort required for success.

Accept that sometimes your “best” varies under different conditions.

Do not overthink or overdo.

Learning balance and restraint without harsh internal judgment is a fundamental requirement of true success.

Perfection comes not when it is sought, but when it is not.

G W E R S I X V I I I

Release your ideas and innovations to the world when they are
3/4-baked.

Learn when to stop and invite others to contribute and
collaborate.

Reject the urge to constantly refine and improve until
something is perfect before sharing.

Chasing perfection is a fool's errand.

The chance for perfection grows by letting go,

Not by hanging on.

“Zugunruhe is a work of creative genius that draws us into an engaging journey of self-discovery, brings the biggest and most frightening issues of our time up close and personal, evokes our inner courage, and invites our engagement in an epic creative challenge. It will leave you envisioning human possibilities you never previously imagined.”

—DAVID KORTEN, co-founder and board chair of YES! Magazine and author, *Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth*

“Jason presents a blueprint for a courageous, peaceful, and nurturing relationship with our planet. Heed this green warrior’s words, and act - the world needs you.”

—THOMAS CRUM, Author, *The Magic of Conflict: Turning a Life of Work into a Work of Art*

“Jason’s opinions will provoke you, his personal stories will inspire you, and hopefully his book will prompt you to act with all the urgency you can muster. Required reading for anyone who desires a future our children and grandchildren can thrive in.”

—KATHLEEN O’BRIEN, Green Designer, Writer, Educator

“Zugunruhe is a great read for anyone experiencing a lack of success in redefining design and community, or seeking better strategies for the 21st Century - a roadmap for transformation, adaptation, inspiration and change - a guide for expressing love at the community scale.”

—BOB BERKEBILE, FAIA, Principal, BNIM Architects



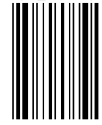
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