It’s time for Ställverket to update the old logo and we would like to ask for your help. Use whatever media you want and send your submission to stallverket.uid@gmail.com or put it in the provided box.

PS. There will be a prize for the winner!
Design, through a humanist’s lens, sees optimism as a choice and creativity as an optimistic act. Therefore, constant optimism is a key ingredient to iteration. It fuels the persistence and tenacity necessary for sustaining the creative process, especially during challenging times. For example, the difficulty of innovating within a large corporation reflects a work environment where people often say, “No” or “I don’t understand” because change in corporate culture is often uncomfortable and slow. As a result, negativity must be confronted and countered—not just in a brainstorming session or during a proposal—but on a daily basis.

There is a perpetuated myth within the design community, that a single visionary is required to build great products. Rubbish. Great teams build great products; moreover, in my experience, the greatest teams prioritize and nurture a healthy and positive internal culture because they understand it is critical to the design process itself.

The role of laughter in an effective studio also cannot be understated. Laughter can be exclusive or inclusive: how one defines the role of laughter within the studio defines the studio itself. If we cannot laugh at and laugh with, then we cannot function.

- Laughter deflates conflict when a moment becomes too serious.
- Laughter invites participation and draws a team closer together.
- Laughter offers a rallying cry (“Laughing in the face of adversity”), especially when “The Business” asks the team to “do more with less.”
- Laughter leads to creativity.
- Laughter is serious business.

What applies to a family often applies to a studio. I was raised in a household that believes, “A family that eats together stays together.” There is something so natural and primitive about coming together to eat. People (even overly serious, so-called managers) let their guard down when they eat—and that’s a good thing. History supports this observation. Great bands, movements and many great ventures have all started around a kitchen table—invariably with wine—but we’ll save “The Value of Alcohol” for another essay.

Lunchtime marks a natural pause in the day and becomes a great opportunity for conversation and ultimately creativity. Eating at your desk or in one’s cubicle seems so wrong to me and far too solitary for a culture tied so closely to collaboration. Instead, find a table so that members of the team can eat together as a group—doing so will bring a team together. Therefore, a studio should prioritize eating together. You are bound to learn something about your colleagues or yourself.

But it’s worth going one step further so let me tell you a quick story:

Team events within a big corporation are set up to facilitate these informal conversations but often do the opposite: you go to a nice restaurant, everyone orders expensive food and lots of wine, they drink until they get drunk, and you go back to your hotel room. One year, our budget ran low so we thought, “What if we did the opposite? Go to the wilderness, buy food, and cook for each other.”

What happened next was amazing! Somebody invariably took responsibility for cooking, another for preparing food, and someone else for laying the table. Without much discussion the whole team was buzzing around the kitchen, like a hive working towards a common goal. There’s something inherently vulnerable about cooking together and for each other. It’s humbling to serve and to be served.

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In 20 years of leading design studios and teams, ranging from a small boutique consultancy to several in global corpora-
tions, I have become obsessed with the differences between a successful studio and a merely effective one. Inevitably what makes or breaks a studio depends on its ability to evolve skills and competencies while remaining fastidiously creative. However, simple adaptability is not enough. In an ever-changing hyper-competitive landscape, what I’ve found to be even more important is the value of laughter, empathy, a collective responsibility and a distinct lack of ego.

My measure of success—beyond incredible products—has been creating studios and a studio culture where the creative capacity of the collective team is palpable; where designers love to come to work, and visitors remark how positive and creative it feels.

The following, is an attempt to create a guide for the (often-overlooked, humanist leaning) behaviors that make a studio happy, functional and sustainable. I believe there is a straight line between how the studio feels, how we as designers treat each other, and the innovative impact of the team. The value of articulating the characteristics of an effective studio will hopefully make each team member a more conscientious contributor. Of course, these characteristics will ebb and flow to varying degrees and should not be considered concrete rules. Rather, these behaviors serve as a guideline for creating a consistently positive, and as a result, a consistently more creative place to work.

I know it sounds a bit crap, but politeissness dictates that when you walk into a room that you say “Hello” and when you leave say when you walk into a room that you say “Hello” and when you leave say “Goodbye.” It’s not that complicated. But this common courtesy is as important and plays functional role in a studio.

Because design work is naturally collaborative there needs to be some type of announcement that declares, “Here I am. I am going to contribute.” As someone who leads listens to a team, I often use the way in which somebody says “Good morning” as a barometer of their mood. It tells me how they are feeling without me having to ask.

Alternatively, it is important that we end the day with “Goodnight, I am leaving.” Practically speaking it is good to know when someone leaves because you don’t know…if they will return the next morning. Seriously though, “Godspeed” is something we tell our children, our domestic partners and our parents. Invoking a goodnight upon departure subliminally colors the studio with a similar familial spirit.

I also think it’s important to shake hands before business trips. I know this sounds weird, but it’s both a powerful and intimate gesture. People going on these trips often take work that represents the entire team; it’s an opportunity to look in one another’s eyes and say, “Godspeed and I hope it goes well.”

And when they return, it’s a moment of celebration. We are a team, so when people are away from the team, they are missed. When they return, the collective team is restored. It’s good. Let’s celebrate it.

While it may appear trivial, the act of observing (and even encouraging) these subtle cultural rituals increases a studio’s functionality by making it more personal.

Designers know that great design requires constant iteration. Iteration means failure and repeated failure. The challenge then becomes, “How do you deal with repeated failure during the design process?”

NO DICKHEADS! A GUIDE TO BUILDING HAPPY, HEALTHY, AND CREATIVE TEAMS.
Rhys Newman and Luke Johnson

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How to Revive a Neighborhood: With Imagination, Beauty and Art

Theaster Gates, a potter by training and a social activist by calling, wanted to do something about the sorry state of his neighborhood on the south side of Chicago. So he did, transforming abandoned buildings to create community hubs that connect and inspire those who still live there (and draw in those who don’t). In this passionate talk, Gates describes his efforts to build a “miniature Versailles” in Chicago, and he shares his fervent belief that culture can be a catalyst for social transformation in any city, anywhere.

Theaster Gates
Artist, potter, community builder

Theaster Gates is a potter whose ambitions stretch far beyond the wheel and the kiln.

Watch the talk here:
http://www.ted.com/talks/theaster_gates_how_to_revive_a_neighborhood_with_imagination_beauty_and_art?language=en
YOUR NAME: Søren Rosenbak (PhD)

10 WORDS OR LESS ABOUT YOURSELF: I still like turtles.

SOMETHING MOST PEOPLE DON’T KNOW ABOUT YOU: My great love for Dr. Pepper. I only know people who kinda hate it. Admittedly, it’s sort of gross and super synthetic. And yet. Hmmm.

AN INTERESTING FACT FROM YOUR COUNTRY: For all the aurora fanatics: Head to Skagen and experience the surreal sunlight that has inspired some of Denmark’s most incredible and famous paintings done around 125 years ago. The light is still there.

THE NEW BLACK ON THE WEB: Just came across http://design.designmuseum.org/design/ this week, a nice selection of short & sweet introductions to various designers, studios, brands by the Design Museum in London.

THE NEW BLACK IN DESIGN: Friend & former classmate Sofie Rosenkrands, a rising star in the fashion world. Her MA thesis, She’s the Afternoon Dreamer, is amazing. So trippy and delicate.

THE NEW BLACK ON THE SLANG: Swatting. During a seminar this week our group worked with mapping out SWATTING “the act of tricking an emergency service (via such means as hoaxing a 911 dispatcher) into dispatching an emergency response based on the false report of an ongoing critical incident” (thanks Wiki). How do we respond to this as designers?

Do you have any interesting websites, movies, or good reads that you’d like to share with the rest of the school? Send them to wozzop@gmail.com