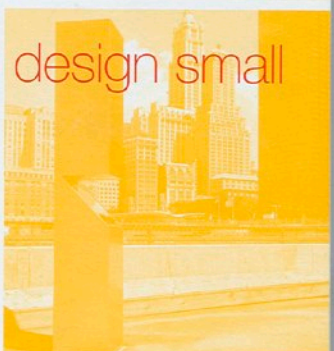
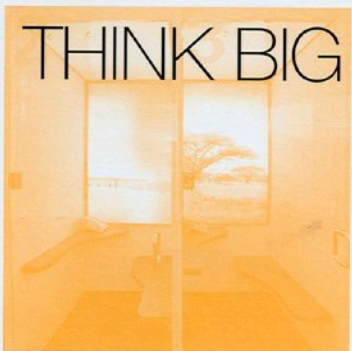


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Oculus

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THINK BIG

design small

Bridging an Urban Canyon

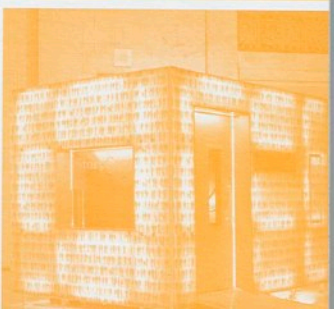
Good Connections

One for the Road

Small Pond Makes Big Splash

What's the Big Plan?

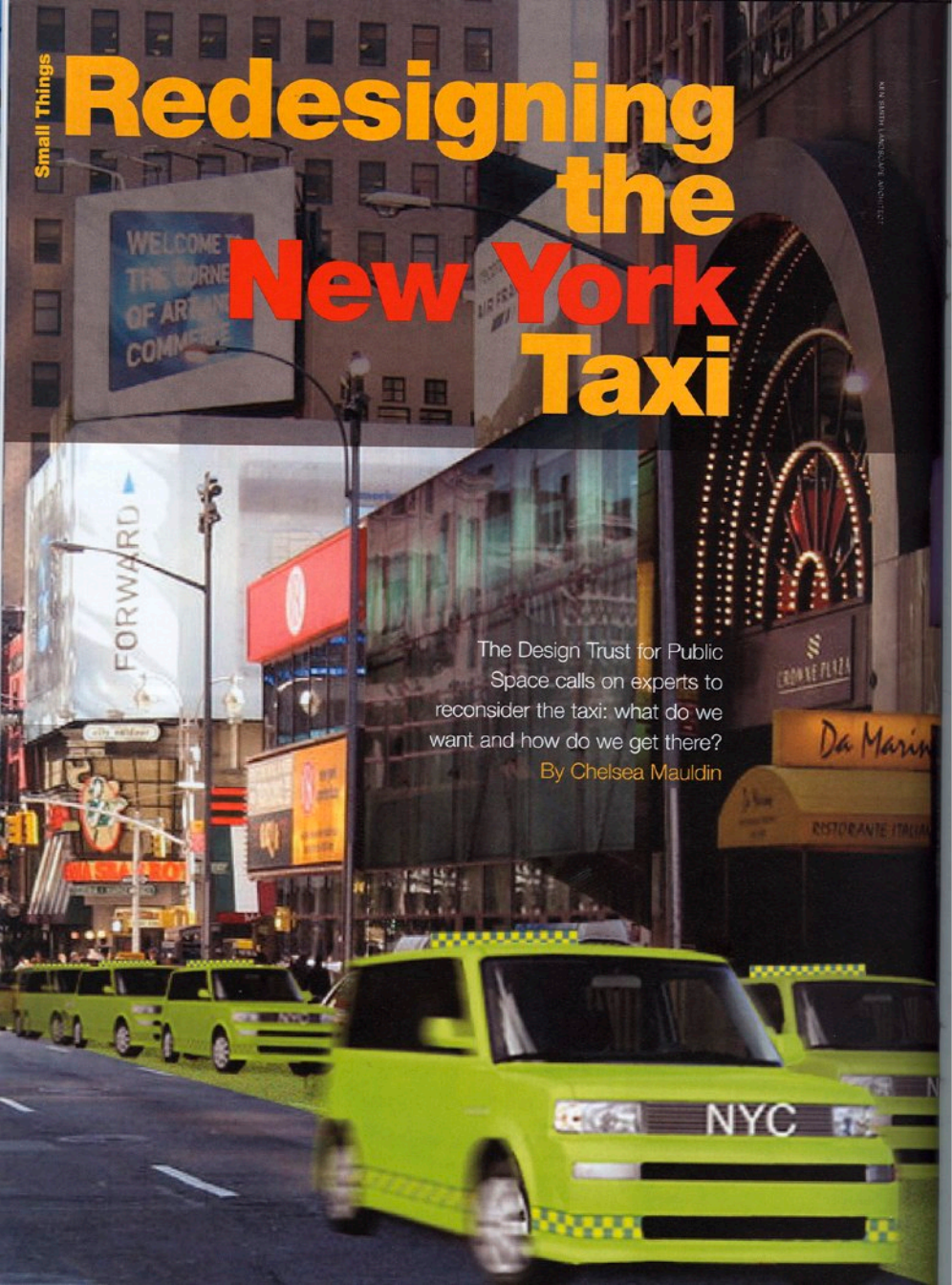
Street Smarts



Redesigning the New York Taxi

The Design Trust for Public Space calls on experts to reconsider the taxi: what do we want and how do we get there?

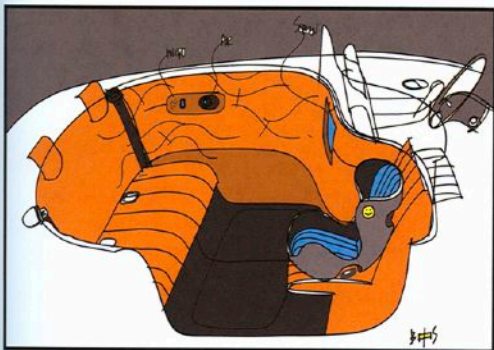
By Chelsea Mauldin



As the New York City taxi approaches its one hundredth birthday in 2007, the question of how to improve the city's notoriously contentious mode of transportation was a challenge recently tossed in the lap of the Design Trust for Public Space. Like all Design Trust programs, "Designing the Taxi" is a collaborative effort, a public/private partnership to improve civic space in New York City.

The Design Trust invited some 60 fleet owners, cab drivers, landscape architects, urban planners, vehicle and industrial designers, graphic artists, medallion holders, and representatives of the Taxi & Limousine Commission and other city agencies to take part in two half-day workshops at Parsons The New School for Design. The aim was to turn out innovative – but feasible – ideas for "Designing the Taxi."

Spearheading the activities were Design Trust Executive Director Deborah Marton; Parsons dean Paul Goldberger; Paul Herzan, president of the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum; and Andrew Salkin, First Deputy Commissioner of the NYC Taxi and Limousine



Birsel + Seck: Re-imagining the cab interior with safety in mind; the front passenger seat is reversed to make room for a fold-down children's car seat



Opposite page: Ken Smith Landscape Architect: The Green Taxi proposal imagines compact, fuel-efficient vehicles using dedicated taxi lanes
Above: Antenna Design New York Inc.: A redesigned partition increases visibility while integrating a host of features, from a power outlet and reading light to an information display with real-time map, tip calculator, and more



TRUCK Product Architecture: The STRETChfence concept turns a typical park fence into inexpensive and indestructible urban furniture – perfect for taxi drivers' one-hour relief stands

Commission. Questions on the agenda at the May 2005 event included "How could the cab be more functional?" and "What features of the sidewalk could be altered to improve taxi usage?" – followed by a call to define the ideal taxi of the future.

The "Designing the Taxi" forum also sought to pinpoint ways in which the cab contributed to New Yorkers' urban experience. John Reddick, president of the Cityscape Institute, said, "I do think of the cab as this mythic New York chariot. Visually it's ever present." Added Fred Dust, a designer at IDEO, "The cab is a real icon. We need to recognize that you don't revamp an icon without considering the emotional component."

How could the cab be more functional? What features of the sidewalk could be altered to improve taxi usage?

The result – last June, 17 members of the workshop showed preliminary designs and a range of other proposals. Moderator Kurt Andersen, of WNYC's Studio 360, led three panel discussions. Topics: the taxi in the public realm, improvements to the vehicle itself, and ways to improve cab service. Proposals included the following:

- Redesigns of the rooftop indicator light and interior partition
- Cashless payment
- Cell phone hailing
- Cab-only lanes
- Built-in children's car seats

The Design Trust released the findings this November. These are intended to launch discussions with New York's taxi industry and regulatory agencies with a view to transforming the findings into concrete results.

Chelsea Mauldin is deputy director of the Design Trust for Public Space.