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The venue for Laurie Haycock and P. Scott Makela's first encounter was auspicious, a coming together of design with things unconventional, imaginative and wobbly. The occasion was the "first and last" annual Jell-O mold competition, organized by the Los Angeles chapter of AIGA in 1985. "Everybody brought Jell-O molds—about 25 of them—some absolutely gross and some fantastical," recalls April Greiman, who was vice president of events for the L.A. chapter at the time. "When you meet somebody at an important event like that, it has to be fate."

The event did not go over well with the senior members of the chapter, and never took place again. Its only lasting legacy was the 14-year relationship between Haycock and Makela, a partnership that produced—much as when you mix water with gelatin and fruit flavors—more than the sum of its parts. When friends, colleagues and peers describe the Haycock-Makela phenomenon, a picture emerges of two very different and independent sensibilities that came together in a remarkable fusion. By the time they became the resident co-chairs of 2-D design at Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1997, each had a firmly established reputation. If Makela was known for his loud, vibrant, high-tech approach to design, Haycock was known for her thoughtful experimentalism and refined typography. Greiman describes the combination as upper body (Haycock)/lower body (Makela), though this, of course, depends on where you stand.

It was Haycock's passion that struck Lorraine Wild when she first encountered the designer during an interview at California Institute for the Arts for a faculty position. "When I came to see what was going on at CalArts, I watched Laurie teach and thought, This is a brilliant teacher," says Wild, an L.A.-based designer-educator who was chair of graphic design at the school from 1985 to 1991. "She was one of those people who was very engaged with what is in front of her in the classroom. She could draw the best out of the students and be their best advocate, and through advocacy, and haranguing them, essentially dare them to do better work." Haycock and Wild subsequently collaborated on design projects, including a series of books for the Getty Center for Art History and Humanities, the Getty's academic press. The content of the series was dry and arcane—what Wild calls "extreme scholarship"—but Haycock managed to breathe some life into the essays by treating them as malleable forms. "Laurie's instinct was to deal with the sensual, physical quality of the text," says Wild. "Even with three levels of subnotes she could be incredibly inventive."

Wild subsequently hired Makela, who moved to Los Angeles after graduating from Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD), to teach a sophomore class at CalArts. "He was just a barrel of energy," she recalls, offering one of many variations on the zesty descriptors that have been attached to Makela. His distinctive design sensibility did not emerge, however, until he left L.A. with Haycock to attend the postgraduate program at Cranbrook. The definitive Makela project came after graduation: the Minneapolis College of Art and Design's catalogue for the 1992–93 academic year. Produced with a "100 percent digital process," according to Makela's extensive technical analysis of the project in *I.D.* magazine, it featured all the future hallmarks of the designer, an early adopter if ever there were. It was produced in a high-energy frenzy (on a two-week design and production schedule) on the latest computer equipment and software available (Hi-8 video, continuously crashing 60 MB Quark files, Fontographer, Freehand and PhotoShop). With rich, dimensional montages and bold, custom-made typefaces, the catalogue beat its metaphorical head against the limitations of the available time and technology with

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unmitigated enthusiasm. “The speed required to produce this project on deadline, together with the creation of digital imagery, became a valuable aesthetic underpinning for the catalogue’s design,” wrote Makela in *I.D.* He made no attempt to hide the technology, but let it define the aesthetic, which in turn was guided by his perception of the audience, “17 to 24 year-olds interested in choosing an undergraduate art school but who were more familiar with MTV and computers than with Rapidograph pens and firing kilns.”

Across town at the Walker Center for the Arts, Haycock, now Laurie Haycock Makela had taken the position of design director and was working to redefine the contemporary arts institution. With the departure of the center’s venerated design director Mildred (Mickey) Friedman and her husband, Martin, came the opportunity to address the institution’s visual identity, until now characterized by an unwavering adherence to the clinical International Style. With the support of the museum’s new director, Kathy Halbreich, Haycock Makela hauled the institution’s mailers, catalogues and publications into the 1990s, introducing new typefaces like DIN, Imago and her husband’s Carmela, and “shutting down the white space,” as she told *I.D.* in 1993. At root was a desire to reflect the museum’s culturally diverse program in its visual language. As design director, she also had an opportunity (albeit short-lived) to revise the center’s publication *Design Quarterly*, most memorably in the Winter 1993 issue, where three designers were asked to submit unreleased typefaces—experimental, in-progress or discarded. Ed Fella delivered the hand-rendered Out West on a 15 Degree Ellipse—now an Emigre font—while Zuzana Licko provided the spiky serif face Quartet, and Matthew Carter sent Sophia, inspired by letterforms from sixth-century Constantinople. “It was interesting in that Laurie did not commission typefaces but asked what we had in the bottom drawer,” reflects Carter. “I wish more people would do that.” The experiment proved particularly fruitful when Haycock Makela recognized that Carter might also provide the solution to the problem of finding an identity system for the Walker that could reflect its polymorphous outlook. By requesting a flexible, modular house typeface instead of a conventional, monolithic logo, she paved the way for Carter’s historic Walker, with its snap-on serifs. “I came up with a few ideas, none of which I had much confidence in at the time,” recalls Carter. “I listened to Laurie and Kathy Halbreich shoot down these trial balloons, and knew what I had to do. A typeface that could be modified by its user.”

In the years before finally conjoining their careers at Cranbrook in 1997, Haycock and Makela developed interests and methodologies that increasingly came to resemble each other’s. Makela, by now on the international lecture circuit as a multimedia design star (“while everybody is standing around contemplating multimedia, Makela is doing it,” noted Emigre founder Rudy VanderLans in 1993), embarked on a collaboration with video and commercial director Jeffery Plansker. His bulging, hybrid typefaces appeared in two memorable Plansker spots: for the TV channel UTV and for Vans shoes, the latter a series of compelling live-action optical tricks that included a double-sided card printed with apparently random letters (in Makela’s Dead History typeface) spinning to spell the phrase “think twice.” Haycock, meanwhile, was not only putting Makela’s fonts to good use in Walker catalogues like *In the Spirit of Fluxus* (1993), she was turning up the volume in her print work. Her design with Kristen McDougall of a 1994 Bruce Nauman exhibition catalogue featured fragments of a Nauman video blown up to almost (but not quite) unintelligible proportions, with large display type rotated and pushed to the page edges until the letter tops were sliced off. While the designers’ stated aim was to create a book that reflected the “purity and vigor of a mathematics textbook and a spiritual text,” the proximity of Makela’s approach

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clearly had some effect in firing up their methodology. Type gains the power of image, and image becomes texture—at least on the covers. In Makela’s work the layering was more extreme. As he put it in 1992 in *Emigre*, “I am trying to grab a chunk of experience and have that bleed off all edges.”

The Makelas’ ideas about running Cranbrook’s design department were often as unconventional—and controversial—as their work. While it was expected that department chairs would continue their professional careers, some students and outside observers questioned the Makelas’ blurring of boundaries between the classroom and the commercial world. Cranbrook was even called a “sweatshop” after a Nike commission for Words + Pictures, the commercial arm of the Makelas, became a studio assignment (although students were paid for their contributions). The Makelas also incorporated student work in their public presentations, which pleased the more extroverted people in the class, but displeased those who wished to maintain a strong sense of ownership and downright pissed off those whose work was never chosen for the shows.

On the other hand, many students and visiting lecturers came away from the campus in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, as if they had received an adrenaline shot. Among them is Stefan Sagmeister, who recently chose to embark on a year’s “non-client work” inspired to no small extent by what he saw and experienced during a visit to Cranbrook. “The program was unbelievable when I saw it, because the students were truly mature—they had five years of work behind them and could do honest experimentation. Two or three days there definitely had something to do with my year without clients. I felt that what they were doing was very healthy.”

The Makelas’ methodology, immortalized in their 1998 book and website project *Whereishere*, was symbolized by a circle surrounded by three words—Obsession, Means, Audience—and penetrated by a fourth—(De)material. Candidates interviewing for a place at Cranbrook would be asked by a panel of current year students and the Makelas, “What is your obsession?” The essence of the program was for students to use their obsession—“your ignition, swag, food and payload”—to drive a creative project toward its audience, guided by the chosen tools (“means”) and media (“dematerial”).

If *Whereishere* mystified much of the design world outside Cranbrook, it was because it was a strange hybrid—the Makelas’ radically experimental fusion of Eastern and Western ideas and a selection of contemporary design work—without any serious attempt at explication. In the Western tradition were the obsessions—technology and sex, how they define us and shock us—represented in the cover, an out-of-focus detail of a photograph of interracial anal sex. “Scott’s question was always, ‘What will shock people?’ And then, ‘How can you get it into stores in Singapore?’” says Warren Corbitt, a Cranbrook student who also worked at Words + Pictures (including on the design of the book). In the Eastern tradition was a devotion to Buddhist philosophy (Haycock’s brother is a Buddhist monk), a belief that eternity can be experienced in a moment and that wordless teaching can be sublime.

The best illustration of the Makelas’ fusion of Western ideas of technology and sexuality and Eastern philosophy is Haycock’s shocking story, told in *Whereishere*, of her brain hemorrhage, a “congenital time bomb” set off by “three sequential orgasms in the ladies room of a trendy restaurant in Soho, New York.” The text, set in Carmela type opposite a scan

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of her injured brain, starts off in vivid imagistic fashion, littered with medical terminology and blunt detail, and ends with a mystical explanation of the phrase-word that became the book's title. "The Zen master uses a technique called the koan to sharpen the mind," writes Haycock. "'What is this?' he might ask the student, holding up one finger. With the speed and precision of dueling swords, the student answers 'this.' 'Where is here?' he asks, looking the student in the eye. The student answers here." The intent of the koan is to encourage mindfulness—an awareness of the present moment. The significance of the phrase "whereishere" is intensified by Haycock's own story; her survival was celebrated by a neurologist to a class of Cornell medical students. "What is the most important fact of this case?" the doctor asked. The answer: "She is here!"

Makela's own interpretation of "whereishere" was perhaps more a craving for a moment of intense awareness brought on by something resembling an orgasm, epiphany and system overload. His last and most important project win was for Rossignol, a Vermont-based snowboard and ski maker. A passionate snowboarder, Makela fended off competition from much larger advertising agencies with the sheer energy of his presentation, which dwelt on the sublime nature of the sport. "Scott loved snowboarding and mountain biking," says Paul Schneider, a Cranbrook student who took on the Rossignol project. "He had always meditated, but he once told me that finding these activities allowed him to meditate at a speed which felt comfortable to his mind."

Schneider recently left Words + Pictures to form his own L.A.-based firm, which he named Wide Open Spaces in homage to P. Scott Makela's love of the great outdoors. Corbitt, who collaborated with Schneider, has a lasting impression of Makela: "Scott was a power chord designer. He'd get the biggest amp and pick you could find and go *blam*. I remember seeing him in his studio with Swiss trance stuff playing over Real Audio, working on MTV stuff while a snowboarding video was on the television and [the Makelas' daughter] Carmela running around. He always had to have so many data streams going on. He never had the time to get bored by one thing."

Makela never, in fact, slowed down. During his last year at Cranbrook, he and Haycock landed an MTV project to design and direct on-air spots. "Scott locked himself in a room with an Avid editor and came out with 16 different cuts in just about an hour. Each five- or six-second version was so wild I worried MTV wouldn't be able to run them," remembers Schneider. "These things were fast even by the quickest video-game-teen-attention-deficit-standard. The MTV editor was shell-shocked, and Scott was beaming with delight. I always felt those spots were just about normal in their pacing with relation to his mind." The frenetic pace of Makela's life ended tragically in May 1999, with his death at age 39 of complications from a viral infection. It was an untimely end, to say the least. At Cranbrook, the Makelas had just begun to send out the first waves of influence, with their first class of first-year students nearing graduation. As partners of a commercial practice, they were winning increasingly prestigious and coveted jobs, from the film titles for David Fincher's *Fight Club* to the advertising and marketing campaign for Rossignol. As a couple, they had two children, aged eight and six months, and a flourishing musical project. "They were just starting to hit a good stride, starting to make a giant wave," adds Greiman. "They were a powerful combination, a couple where one plus one does not equal two, but three."

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In awarding a medal to Haycock and a posthumous medal to Makela, it would be easy to convey the wrong impression that the AIGA thinks the show is over. This would underestimate the strength and autonomy of Haycock, who will continue to chair the design department at Cranbrook through the end of this year while raising a family and pursuing her music and performance career. In effect, a new chapter has begun, and the design world waits to see where her next steps lead.