

# NOTES

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## Traveling Activism

**Look for Emily Pilloton's Design Revolution Road Show at a school near you.**

This spring Emily Pilloton's Airstream trailer will roll into New York City, crowning her triumphant Design Revolution Road Show. The adventure began on February 1 at Redwood High School, her alma mater in Larkspur, California, and then headed south and east. The beneficiaries of this traveling exhibit/workshop/dialogue series were students in 35 design schools and high schools, and their communities. Now you can experience what thousands across the country already have: the white-hot circle of design activism.

The Airstream—chock-full of useful objects designed to empower people who really need them, not simply high-end consumer products for those who can afford them—will be parked inside the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center at the *Metropolis* booth during the International Contemporary Furniture Fair, from May 15 to 18. We're thrilled to have it there. Let me explain why: the idea for Emily's book *Design Revolution: 100 Products That Empower People* was born in 2008 at our annual ICFF conference, when she presented her manifesto of values-based design. Her approach and commitment so impressed the editorial director of Metropolis Books, Diana Murphy, that she asked Emily to submit a proposal on the spot. And the folks at George Little Management, the producers of ICFF, so appreciated the poetics of Emily's full-circle journey that they gave their generous support to the finale of her Road Show.

Before, during, and in between all the traveling, Emily and her book landed on the speaker circuit, including *The Colbert Report* on Comedy Central. Her natural poise and mature

commitment to her mission were tested by the goofball behavior of the show's host. Amid all his shenanigans and wisecracks, her message that designers need to watch the triple bottom line for the benefit of planet, people, and profit came across with dignity and clarity. This same self-possessed poise and razor focus on design activism distinguish other Metropolis Books authors, starting with the peripatetic and irrepressible Cameron Sinclair. (Among his many accomplishments and accolades is the prestigious TED Prize, which he received in 2006, the same year we published his book *Design Like You Give a Damn: Architectural Responses to Humanitarian Crises*, now in its fifth printing.)

The other two titles in the quartet of Metropolis Books stressing designers' social and environmental responsibilities are Bryan Bell and Katie Wakeford's *Expanding Architecture: Design as Activism* and Fritz Haeg's *Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn*. Bryan, Katie, and Fritz, like Emily and Cameron, are creating professional, academic, and public dialogues on responsible design. Two of them have been nominated for National Design Awards—Bryan in architecture, and Fritz in landscape architecture. No wonder that we at *Metropolis* magazine and Metropolis Books feel like proud parents of exceptional children.

Our pride is well-placed. This summer Emily and her partner, Matthew Miller (who towed the Airstream, among other essential duties), will be settling in Bertie County, North Carolina. In this poor, rural place, they will run a hands-on program teaching high school students to build projects in their own backyards. And true to form, Emily, who trained as an architect and industrial designer, is working on getting certified as a high school teacher—her values solidly in place, her vision intact, her influence growing. ■ / +