A GATHERING INTELLIGENCE

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Dave Gilmore

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Editor's Note:
In January 2024, in a Design Futures Council rite of passage that has now spanned 30 years, industry leaders converged on an intimate, charming, 98-year-old hotel in La Jolla, California, La Valencia, for the annual DesignIntelligence Futures Leadership Summit on the Future of Technology, entitled AI – Demystifying, Optimizing, and Cautioning. There, attendees assembled to share their expertise and learn about the impact of artificial intelligence on the design, construction and built environment professions. In two full days, followed by a third day work session of the DFC Senior Fellows, ocean views, savory meals and stellar content from thought leaders were punctuated by self-organized connections, dinners, drinks, debates and discussions that continued long into the evenings. To kick off the conference, DesignIntelligence President and CEO Dave Gilmore welcomed attendees with the following remarks. We share them to help you shape your opinions and actions on AI's pervasive, powerful nature.

As in most things, the quiet, steady progress of nascent thought gradually finds its footing in influence, product, or service. And so it was and is with what we refer to as artificial intelligence. Centuries of conceptual ideas, built upon then abandoned then taken up again by later generations, the idea of a thinking machine, an inanimate creation taking on and expressing sentient consciousness, generating its own thoughts, and making antonymous decisions outside the strict

programming of mechanisms or code to bound its output. We continue to speculate when such a full expression as this will be realized, but suffice it to say, it's drawing closer with each tick tock of the clock.

The transdisciplinary mix of philosophy, psychology, biological sciences, computer science, social science, and more have contributed to the body of knowledge we now categorize as artificial intelligence. The rapidly expanding science of decision-making best understood through observation and study of human brain mechanics and chemistry is still a deep well whose depths have yet to be delved beyond speculative hypothesis to objective understanding. Nonetheless, human interest coupled with tools and knowledge unlike any other prior period is advancing our knowledge deeper into this well with hopes of finding the clarity all seek towards this seeming union of humanized technology.

The built environment industry and its myriad participants, continue to be behind the innovation and adoption curve. We are only now, in these past 5 years, dipping our collective toes into the AI water. We're toying with the themes of acceleration and efficiency but have limited the horizon of possibility to narrowed application. How AI will wholly disrupt the design professions in both positive and negative ways are not being deeply considered towards positive transformative outcomes. A working philosophy of intelligence is wanting and the essential germ of culture as the organizational rudder of such is not earnestly being considered nor developed. Yet other industries have been riding the digital data waves for several years now and see the latest iterations of AI as natural extensions to what they've already foreseen and actioned.

The last two convenings of this DesignIntelligence gathering here in La Jolla focused on how the pervasive and ubiquitous nature of digital transformation coupled with the circular fuel of ingestible data has changed how businesses define their internal and external value, how businesses and their consumer clients redefine their interactions, how industries and societies understand transactions and economics, and the list goes on and on. We challenged this audience with a pragmatic pursuit of data clarity towards a holistic strategy that holds the promise of authentic transformation on multiple dimensions.

What we've realized since meeting last is there's a critical gap in functional digital and data literacy. That's not to suggest we are collectively illiterate as being unable to read. It is stating that we

don't hold the ready competence or knowledge required to leverage digital and data towards transformational outcomes. Why is this important? Simply because without such foundational understanding, the legitimate value of artificial intelligence will be unrealized. AI is wholly dependent on digital and data to yield the outcomes we seek for the betterment of the human condition and natural world. As AI mainstreams into the built environment, the fundamental economics of design will alter. Gone are the days when the design community owned design conceptualization. Fading are the days when the gap between the disciplines was fixed . . . convergence is accelerating through AI competency, and it had disruptive promises being manifest in how value is perceived and understood.

As we enter these two days, let us commit ourselves to deeper and broader responsibility. Let us give ourselves to the scholarship of reading and research, of history and application, of philosophy and logic. Let's distance ourselves from false expedience that seeks shortcuts without foundations. Let's measure thrice before cutting once. Let's be the responsible leaders our firms, our institutions, and our industry at large hope we will be.

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> We encourage risk awareness coupled with gauged risk taking. We urge cross-entity collaboration to raise the collective intellect that yields responsible outcomes for all.
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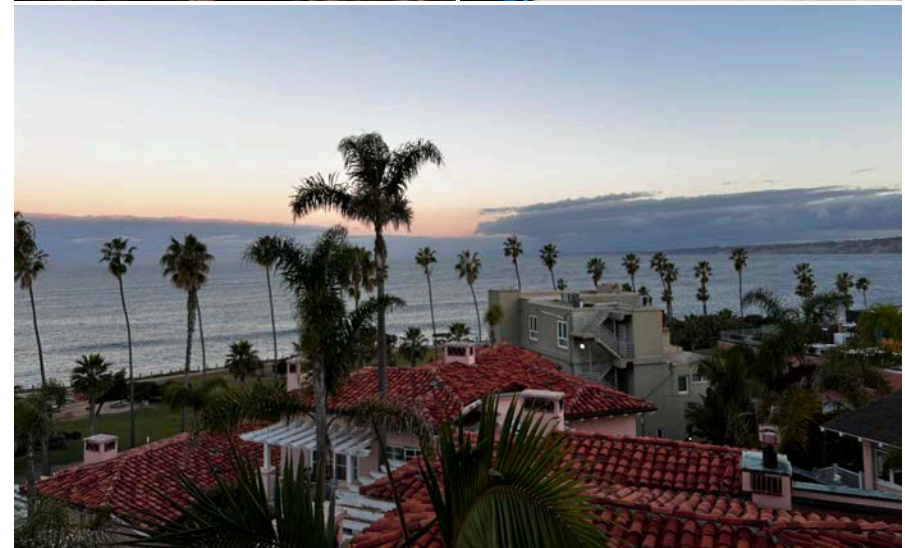
Ours is to find the pace we can run in this race. To not take the lead, but certainly not to bring up the rear either. We encourage risk awareness coupled with gauged risk taking. We urge cross-entity collaboration to raise the collective intellect that yields responsible outcomes for all.

We hope you've come ready to engage, to lean in, to ask honest questions, to vulnerably share where you are and where you aspire to be. Sometimes through these two days you'll be tempted to check-out, to give into brain fog or brain pain, but don't do it! Stay in this and emerge better than when you arrived.

Welcome to this gathering of DesignIntelligence Futures. We're glad you're here!

Dave Gilmore is the president and CEO of DesignIntelligence.