

# Perceptual visions: play of light

Among other things, Amsterdam's **Doors of Perception** conferences have mapped the evolution of the Info-Eco paradigm. Their end of millenium Lightness bash, updated the parameters of this emergent new media design movement.

**A**utumn and Amsterdam, and the new media design world looks to its calendar and thinks, ah yes, it's Doors of Perception time. Over a lifespan of a decade or so, the Doors of Perception conferences have become a fixture for the new media/design crossover crowd, and one of the best-attended continental events covering that particular, and fuzzy, turf. 'Doors' originally emerged from an experimental synergy between Amsterdam's funky *Mediamatic* magazine and the Dutch Design Institute, in the early days of John Thackera's directorship. In 2000, it went independent as a separate organisation, choreographing another plush, big production, this time around the theme of 'Lightness.'

'Lightness' as the previous piece hopefully makes clear, is a fully-fledged sustainability-inflected design and engineering movement, emerging principally out of Holland. But the metaphor contains broader resonances, rippling out from that core interpretation across, and into, a variety of other neighbourly and related communities; a cross-section of which can be corralled into one arena. This is very much the Doors of Perception approach: take a key word, and reel out its meanings so that a whole variety of people can fall under its big tent of interpretation. That said, 'Lightness' and the eco-sustainability dimension isn't new. Doors has been trying ever since 1995 with the 'Info-Eco' Doors 3 conference; to factor in something



of the eco-dimension into its proceedings. However, it isn't the usual, traditional ecodesign universe Doors have been opening to, but rather, a youngish, stylish, continental and North American design crowd: those who are already professionals, and those aspiring to join their ranks, who intuit sustainability as part of the firmament about which they need to be aware and literate, although it may not be necessarily a core concern. Also, it's not hard to suspect that Amsterdam's eco reputation, being part of the much more advanced ecological design across continental Northern Europe, may have had some strategic bearing on this choice, though nothing of the sort is explicitly stated. Still, these conferences have given considerable exposure to a range of sustainability-originated ideas and people, which the audiences might otherwise not get to thinking about. That said, the usual question of how much this translates at the design face into changed behaviours and practices, remains questionable. It is also both completely hi-tech and technophilic in its version of the future and where and how the solutions will emerge.

Because of this hi-tech routepath, Doors doesn't seem too interested in the concerns of the traditional arbiters of ecological design, be it windmills and alternative technology, eco-design and designer-maker holism, or natural materials such as organic paints and sustainably sourced woods. In turn, this whole grouping who embrace a different energy, gives the