



Art

OBSERVATION: In April, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) will put on display 15 video games as part of an exhibition of best design works. The show will include games such as Pac-Man and Tetris. “Digital screens are an expansion of the space that we inhabit,” explains MoMA’s senior design curator, Paola Antonelli. (*ARTnews*, 3/13)

COMMENT: Critics have not been kind to MoMA, insisting that video games hardly qualify as art. But the museum insists that game design is typically executed by artists and represents cutting-edge design. More critically, Antonelli notes that what the player sees when playing a game is an example of design, but the real art is out of sight in the code, wherein patterns and choices the coder makes approach the kinds of expression associated with works of art.

Restaurants | Healthy Lifestyles

OBSERVATION: McDonalds announced a launch of the "Egg White Delight," a version of the Egg McMuffin sandwich made with egg whites, a whole grain English muffin, white cheddar cheese and Canadian bacon. It will have 260 calories, compared to the original McMuffin's 300. McDonald's also now has a "Favorites under 400" section on the menu, which lists all offerings under 400 calories. (*Christian Science Monitor*, 3/14/13)

COMMENT: In the face of declining sales, McDonald's is attempting to keep up with changing consumer attitudes about health and weight. [Our intelligence](#) suggests this move towards healthier, lower-calorie offerings should be successful.

OBSERVATION: For the first time, Burger King is offering a turkey burger, as part of a limited time offer for spring. (*Boston Globe*, 3/19/13)

COMMENT: With this new offering, Burger King seems to also be making a move on “Got Health,” which seems to be resonating with consumers. When will we see a Burger King in your local health club?

OBSERVATION: In February, factory workers in the United States worked an average of 41.9 hours per week, more hours than any month since World War II ended. On a separate note, Taco Bell last year sold 372 million “Doritos Locos Tacos,” a new product with Dorito-style taco shells, and had to hire 15,000 new employees to handle the rush. (*The Week*, 3/22/13)

COMMENT: When will this steadily increasing number of work hours in America’s factories convert from longer work weeks into new jobs? Perhaps, if Taco Bell provides a lesson, the answer is when manufacturers innovate sufficiently to create breakthrough products that consumers demand.

China | Africa

OBSERVATION: Xi Jinping's first overseas trip as President of China (including a stop in Russia) this week is to three African countries, Tanzania, South Africa and Republic of Congo. At his stop in Tanzania, Jinping announced plans to build a major port and industrial zone there, at a cost of up to \$10 billion. Drawing applause and laughter from a local crowd, Jinping also made reference to a Chinese soap opera that has become popular in Tanzania – it tells the story of a Chinese couple who fall in love while on safari in Tanzania. (*Financial Times*, 3/25/13)

COMMENT: China is deftly going where the growth is, creating partnerships with African countries and conducting \$198 billion in trade with that Continent last year. And now we see Chinese culture and entertainment making inroads in Africa. China is spreading its soft power and is fast becoming a [new kind of superpower](#).

Rare-Earths | Mining

OBSERVATION: A team of scientists from Japan recently discovered rare-earth metals in deep-sea mud, 5,700 meters below sea level within Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone. This was the second Japanese discovery of the metals, following an earlier finding in the mid-Pacific two years ago. The quantity of these total ocean reserves are thought to be 1,000 times more than all land-based deposits. Over 50 percent of the metal in the most recent discovery is the heavier end of the rare-earth spectrum, twice the level of China's key mines and **without the radioactive by-product thorium, which would make the metal difficult to mine**. Exploration will continue for another two years, before Japan starts production. Japan consumes half the world's rare-earths metals. (*Telegraph*, 3/24/13)

COMMENT: In September 2011, [we wrote](#) that countries were beginning to aggressively explore the ocean in order to find the natural resources they need. This recent rare-earths discovery was Japan's second deep-water triumph this month, following its announcement last week of a break-through in extracting gas from methane hydrates under the ocean. We expect countries to increasingly finance ocean exploration for natural resources, which will bring down prices over the long term, especially in commodities like rare-earths, where supply is tightly controlled.

Books

OBSERVATION: In 2012, sales at independent bookstores increased 8 percent over 2011. (*Christian Science Monitor*, 3/17/13)

COMMENT: In an attempt to regain some of the culture lost to digitization and globalization, consumers are increasingly supporting local and small businesses, and independent bookstores have benefited from this changing priority. What other businesses and industries will benefit from this new consumer perspective?

Retail | Publishing

OBSERVATION: Wal-Mart Stores now sells more than 3,000 *Better Homes and Gardens*-branded products, FTD.com sells 35 *Better Homes and Gardens*-branded flower arrangements, and, since 2008, Realogy, the parent company of Century 21, has sold homes around the country via a *Better Homes and Gardens* line of residential real-estate offices. The publish of *Better Homes and Gardens*, Meredith, also licenses its magazine titles to partner publishers overseas, including *Diabetic Living* which is now published in Italy, Greece and Russia. (*Bloomberg Businessweek*, 3/18/13)

COMMENT: In the wake of tremendous changes in the publishing business, brought on by the Internet and digital communications, many companies are in the process of rethinking assumptions and restructuring operations – a process we have termed The **Great Restructuring**. Meredith is a company that has been in the Experimentation stage for several years, with one experiment being the licensing of its magazine titles' names to major national businesses selling branded products. Other such experiments include: repurposing their content across multiple platforms; staying as far away from the news as possible in print and running their own marketing agency. This company seems to have taken a leading position in the Restructuring of print publishing companies.

China | Environment

OBSERVATION: Kowa Co. of Japan is increasing output by 500 percent of its largest home-use filtering mask, the Sanjigen line, which filters out 99 percent of particulates as small as 0.1 microns. (*Nikkei Weekly*, 3/18/13)

COMMENT: Japanese consumers are increasingly worried about particulate pollution originating in China. Once again, China presents an opportunity for Japanese business.