



Coffee + Constructivism.

Embracing the international aesthetic of the Depression era, this no-nonsense cafe applies an unexpected visual vocabulary to a familiar place. Design: Djamika Smith.

Forced Connections

From cookie dough ice cream to zombie/Jane Austen novels, intriguing ideas often result when unlikely players collide. By brainstorming lists of products, services, or styles, and then drawing links between them, designers can forge concepts imbued with fresh wit and new functions. For example, most java houses today look alike. They feature dark reds and browns, wooden tables and floors, and—if you're lucky—a comfortable couch. But what if a cafe had constructivist decor instead? Or what if your errand to the print shop doubled as your coffee break? Likewise, laundromats get a rap for being dirty and dingy, yet public laundries offer a greener alternative to individually owned appliances. How could you make a trip to the laundromat a more inviting experience? Combining services or applying unexpected styles can change the way we think about predictable categories. *Lauren P. Adams and Beth Taylor*

Don Koberg and Jim Bagnall discuss the idea of forced connections as a tool for product designers in their book *The Universal Traveler: A Soft-Systems Guide to Creativity, Problem-Solving, and the Process of Reaching Goals* (San Francisco: William Kaufmann, 1972).

Case Study

Multipurpose Tools

Your house is filled with tools. What happens when you combine two or more of these instruments to make something new? This quick exercise using forced connections yields some ideas that are impractical or absurd but others that could become real products with clever functions. Designer Lauren P. Adams started with verbal lists and then made sketches combining ideas from different lists.

Office Tools

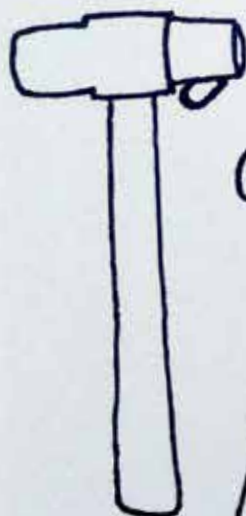
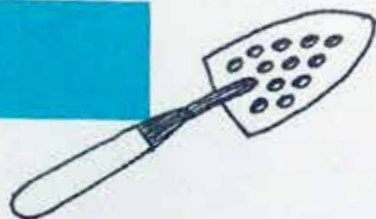
thumbtack
stapler
scissors
masking tape
hole puncher
pencil
glue
ruler
marker
compass
paperclip
staple remover

Kitchen Tools

spatula
ladle
whisk
knife
tongs
vegetable peeler
corkscrew
can opener
drink shaker
measuring cup
dish scrubber
grater
funnel
rolling pin
sieve

Garage Tools

wrench
hammer
nail
tape measure
T-square
trowel
handsaw
clamp
screw
screwdriver
level
staple gun
sledgehammer



Handsaw + Ruler. Nearly every saw cut requires measuring first, so why not add a ruler to the saw blade?

Grater + Trowel. Scoop up your freshly grated cheese, or crumble chunks of hardened dirt before planting.

Scissors + Wrench. This looks like a clever idea until you consider trying to actually cut something.

Thumbtack + Screw. The thumbtack head would give your hand something to grip while the screw threads make a secure connection.

Sledgehammer + Drink Shaker. The motion of hammering is similar to the motion used to shake a drink. (Sober up before swinging that hammer around.)

Compass + Knife. Cut your cookies to an exact dimension with this gadget for the cook who loves math.