



# THE DESIGNER

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## Winter – A time to breathe, rest & dream



By Daniel Lowery, APLD

Although contemporary professional painters and photographers are intrigued by winter images, they know there is little “fine art” commercial value. Consumers do not want cold winter or snowy images hanging on their walls reminding them how harsh that season can be. All other seasons are portrayed in art with much greater frequency; just look around your house.

“CHILL” is current day slang requesting a reduced response to a violent or uneasy emotional situation. Twenty years ago, the term was “cool it”. For garden designers, winter may mean a reduction in outdoor activities and therefore reduction in revenue, perhaps causing us to “cool our heels” or participate in “cooling our jets”. Calm down, slow down, breathe, rest, dream, and sleep. That’s what winter is about and what nature has been coaching us to do forever.

So why does “winter” and taking a break get such a bad rap? VISA and MasterCard do not take breaks, neither do utility or mortgage companies. Children want bigger shoes and smaller laptops. And we all have forgotten how to say the word “NO”. Who doesn’t wish at times to be able to exist year-round at the same vibration level as June 21<sup>st</sup>? But at what expense, burn-out and self-destruction?

One of the essential practices of living in the environment in a sustainable manner is to use less than is available so that the excess can go back into the environment to keep it functioning for the process of future years -- not unlike putting the profits from your business back into the business so it retains your wealth and functioning assets year by year. Winter is a great reminder to appreciate our reserves, and to breathe, rest & dream.

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# Dirt

By Toni Cross

One of the most striking qualities about the American psyche is our persistent optimism. It has seen us through some very rough times. For instance, who in their right minds would have supposed that The American Revolution would succeed? Certainly not Benedict Arnold. Arnold was too tied to England to have absorbed the optimism of the Revolutionaries. He preferred to be a pessimist (he would have said “realist”) and betray them as a bunch of benighted loonies. So much the worse for him. This same optimism drove the exploration of the West by Lewis and Clark, the first moon landing, the wearing of powder-blue polyester leisure suits, etc.

And what is more demonstrative of this pull-up-your-bootstraps optimism than a sign on a parking strip offering, gaily and without a shred of self-doubt, “Free Dirt.” Its open-hearted generosity, its naive *bonhomie* endears the sign-makers to even the hardest of hearts. No doubt they can picture the streams of people with 5-gallon buckets, wheelbarrows—perhaps even simple sacks—converging on the swollen pile to whisk the brown gold away to gardens and landscapes which lack sufficient dirt of their own. If this were not adequate proof of our native optimism, I recently saw such a sign augmented by the enjoinder to “Please sift stones out when taking dirt. We are using them for the rock wall.” These, dear readers, are certainly people who would clap for Tinkerbell.



And yet, and yet. . . . the dirt piles sit there, and sit there and still—is it possible?—no one comes to claim them. They grow grass, weeds, even trees and *still* they sit. I have seen cows grazing on these levees of dirt. One in my neighborhood was recently purchased by a developer and subdivided into four city lots—well, actually, three. The fourth is being carved into a miniature Mt. Rushmore, only with Ronald Reagan’s face included.

“Free Dirt!” is where American optimism meets the adage “There is no free lunch.” The Founding Fathers knew that if The Revolution failed, they would all be hanged. It was win or die: No Free Lunch. However, those who pile dirt and expect the dirt-desirers to carry it off believe absolutely in the existence of a free lunch.

They will never have to hire someone to remove the dirt—oh no! It will magically disappear. It won’t actually keep blocking the view of the mountains.

Like Native American burial mounds, some future generation will survey these piles with curiosity and wonder, perturbed and yet impressed by the triumph of optimism over reality.

Free dirt: it’s the American Way.

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## 幸福

*If* you wish to be happy for a *day*,  
get drunk;  
*If* you wish to be happy for a *week*,  
kill a pig;  
*If* you wish to be happy for a *month*,  
get married;  
*If* you wish to be happy *for ever and ever*,  
make a garden.

~ Chinese Proverb

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