



## "I Do Have a Brain"

By Kevin Kelly

**But Martha Stewart also has a server in her basement.**

**Martha Stewart, as every American knows, is a living brand. In fact, with a 2.3 million-circulation magazine and syndicated column bearing her name, a river of books, and a stream of television shows, Martha Stewart is a force of nature, the most influential person alive in terms of giving shape to our living spaces. She certainly has a knack for articulating our habitat dreams. And she is way into materials - premium, well-crafted stuff like flower crystallizing kits. But what about liquid crystal displays? Any plans to expand from bedsheets to spreadsheets? *Wired* caught up with the lifestyle queen on her car phone as she navigated the streets of New York en route to a dinner party.**

**Wired: Why are tech-minded people so interested in your ideas?**

**Stewart:**

It is the technological age, but it is still an age of people wanting to know how things are done. My readers think in a modern fashion about old-fashioned values.

**Are you of the school that says flaunt your computer equipment, or hide it?**

Oh, absolutely put it out in the open. Or hide it in the most effective way possible. My office at home is an office in a closet.

**So you hide it?**

Well, no, it is always out, except when I am having a dinner party - then I roll the shelves back in and close the door without disturbing anything. I want real practicality and real simplicity. So, invisible, appropriate, and simple, simple, simple.

**What's the appropriate color to go with computer beige?**

Why are you thinking only of beige? I have a beautiful new black computer with all black components. And, I have a very beautiful new silver one. I think computers certainly could be more appealing aesthetically and fit into rooms nicer.

**Any thoughts on smart houses?**

I am restoring a house now that was a 1962 Bunshaft modern. I've gutted it and am now installing silence.

Silence? How do you install silence?

I want to have a silent environment where you don't hear furnaces, you don't hear refrigerators, you don't hear dishwashers. I am working very closely with all the different companies trying to get them to enter the 21st century with a sense of adventure and silence. It is a very difficult directive.

Besides silence, what else are you after? How about having your refrigerator talk to your stereo?

I don't want my refrigerator talking to me period. I don't want it telling me that I am low on meatballs. I do have a brain.

Do the same design principles you use in your other projects also apply online?

Yes. People respond to a pretty Web site, and they respond to a simple Web site. I don't want talking parrots. I want it to be a gentle, soothing kind of place - functionality has to be good, but it doesn't have to be invasive.

Do you find the Web sympathetic to that kind of soothing?

I want to get across as much information as possible in as short a period of time. I want it to be straightforward - I don't want to open drawers or doors. I hated Myst. It was so queer.

So you'd find no use for a virtual walk through a house?

No, it isn't that. I do have plans for being able to wander around a home. But I want to do it in a simple, very beautiful way and a real way, not distorted. You could click on something in a closet and be told what it was and where to buy it.

What about email?

Oh, I have a server in my basement. I am really connected, but I find the software to be abominably inadequate. I complain about it a lot.

Do you find yourself surfing the Net much?

I don't have a lot of time to sit and just sort of fool around. When I get home at 11 p.m., which is normal, I go to my computer to read mail, then answer as much as I have the energy to. I'll usually get my answers in the morning before I go to work, because I have a lot of friends and business associates on the West Coast and in London.

Yet your magazine doesn't give the impression that you are so techie - you don't see computers on the table in your photos. Why this disconnect?

It is a little bit sparse, I must admit. But they are there if you really look. Besides, there is still a big gap between the 35 percent of the public who have computers and the 65 percent who don't. When that fault is fixed, I think you will see a lot more in the way of female users and older people. And yet our readers know that we are technically savvy. More than 50 percent of our correspondence is reaching us by email now, around 130,000 pieces of email correspondence a year. Which is very easy to respond to and very pleasant to receive.

The question of the season: Microsoft monopoly - thumbs up or thumbs down?

Listen - if anybody who wants to be an explorer or a pioneer has to go through what Microsoft is going through, I feel really bad about it. Man wouldn't have gotten to the Moon, or invented the telephone, if there had been a check at every step of the way. I don't believe in this action at all.

Management guru Tom Peters preaches the "brand of you" - if there is anyone this applies to, it's you.

What happens if you get hit by a bus? Does the brand of you continue?

I'm trying to make sure that my brand extension is broad enough that if anything happens, or I decide to check out, it can continue. We have taken the next five years of photographs of me already, so if anything happened to me we have those closets full of photos.

You could have yourself scanned to create a virtual character.

Cloning hasn't worked yet, but I'll be the first. The first human Dolly will be me.

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