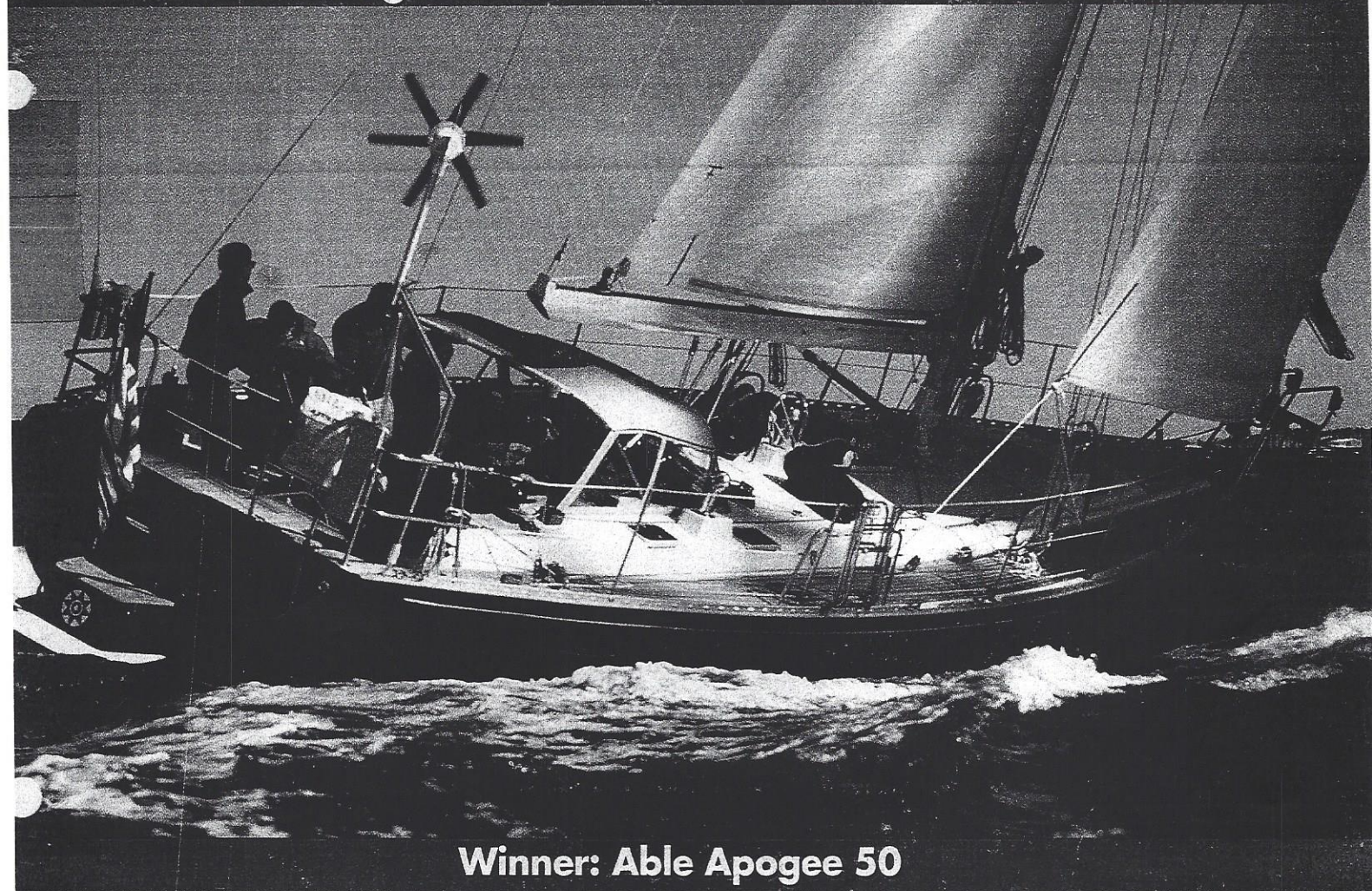


Cruising World Bluewater Boat Of The Year



Winner: Able Apogee 50

This award was presented to the boat best exhibiting safe, sea-kindly design and performance characteristics suitable for self-sufficient offshore voyaging and live-aboard purposes.

The Bluewater Award bid *Cruising World's* panelists to view all 38 BOTY boats as a group and then determine which one most

The Apogee 50 (above) impressed our judges with its seriousness of purpose and with the thoroughness of its overall design. The Bristol Award went hands-down to the impeccable Morris 44 (facing page, top). Innovation Awards were presented to two builders for their achievements in elevating the technology of modern-day sailboat production, TPI, Inc., and Beneteau. Shown are a resin-infused Sundeer fresh out of the mold at TPI (far left), and an advanced computerized panel cutter at a Beneteau production facility (left).

thoroughly addressed the issues of long-range cruising and long-term living aboard. Practicality, safety and performance at sea were of keynote importance; less significant were the constraints of satisfying a given size category or of attempting to cover the separate requirements of less rigorous inshore cruising. In simple terms, the Bluewater Award was developed to spotlight what our judges would consider the year's most serious offshore cruising vessel. Period.

Two boats rose to the top in the judges' deliberations: the Able Apogee 50 and the Valiant 4042. The Valiant is in fact a significant upgrade of the globe-proven Valiant 40, about which Ted Brewer commented after test sailing: "I like the Valiant because I think it's the one boat I figure I could go around Cape Horn in if I had to, if I were insane enough to do it. Heavy skeg rudder, quite capable of going anywhere, offers reasonable comfort. The 4042 is just a better version of the one that's already done it." This fine boat

emerged a very close second.

The all-out winner of the award was Able Marine's Chuck Paine-designed Apogee 50. The judges were thoroughly impressed with the detailed program behind the boat and the close, productive collaboration evident between the designer and the builder. Sheila McCurdy stated, "I like the way Able builds boats. They have shown flexibility in the semi-custom field, and they will build what you want." Peter Hogg noted that it was "one of the few boats with a substantial walk-in engine room and workbench." Commending the boat's behavior under sail, Ted Brewer recounted that "she did seven knots at 35 degrees apparent in 24 to 25 knots of wind. Very well balanced." Carl Moesly found her capable of "slipping along at 6.8 knots in 24 knots with an apparent wind angle of 28 degrees — pretty good."

And Bill Lee, when asked to assess the value of the boat in light of its price tag of over \$600,000 as tested, simply remarked, "The Apogee is obviously a very su-

perb bluewater boat, and value is not an issue in blue water." The value criterion was a critical factor in determining the relative success of one boat over another in the judges' category deliberations. Higher price was not seen to connote a better boat any more than lower price was seen to connote a better deal. The value of a given boat was assessed according to its suitability for a particular design program at the price offered. In the case of the Bluewater Award, focus on value *per se* became secondary to a more serious focus on the safety and reliability of the boat offshore.

With that, we top off our March coverage of *Cruising World's* Boat Of The Year competition in the following pages by presenting an expanded review of the Bluewater winner, the Apogee 50. Next month and in ensuing issues of the magazine we will treat the remainder of the BOTY field in a similar format, with detailed synopses of the category winners and in-depth reviews on virtually all who participated in the contest.

Able Apogee 50

by Quentin Warren

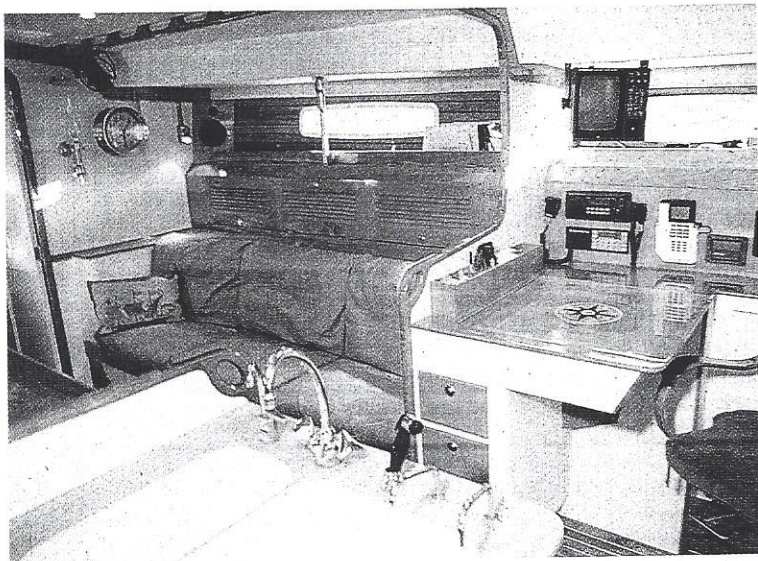
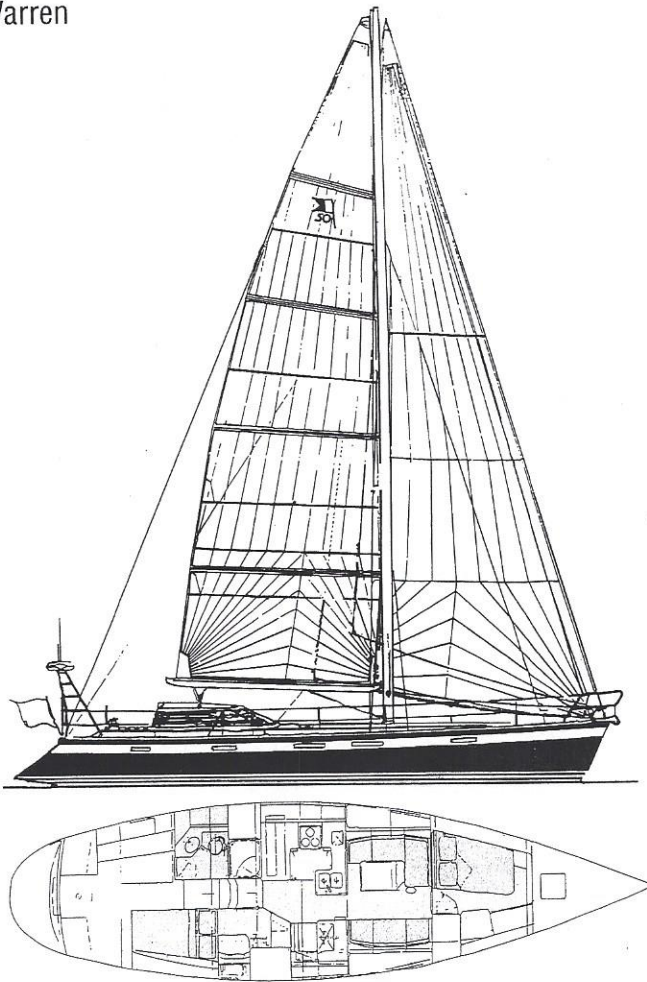
You'd be hard pressed to find a semi-custom cruising boat more carefully thought-out than Able Marine's new **Apogee 50**. The vessel was developed according to a clearly defined plan: to provide performance and safety offshore, to expedite, in basic comfort, long passages and lengthy onboard tours, and to offer logical, fail-safe systems easily serviced and simply maintained. Able's thorough approach to boat-building, inspired in no small part by the vision and experience of the company's marketing guru Ted Cooper, has blended with designer Chuck Paine's painstaking attention to detail and proven talent to beget a substantial offshore cruiser that is truly unique.

The 50-foot figure came out of the builder's desire to keep to a size that is realistically manageable by one or two people, yet provides "a stable enough platform and a large enough plane of flotation to accept necessary loads and provide a comfortable ride." Necessary loads in this case include a functioning aft engine/mechanical room and a fully segregated fo'c'sle for sails and assorted cruising gear. A

safety dividend occurs in the form of watertight compartments fore and aft with collision bulkheads. You end up with practical volume to accept the added paraphernalia that comes with living aboard, and practical flotation to address the added risks that come with spending a lot of time at sea.

Construction And Execution

The FRP hull is hand laminated in one piece using a single-element female mold. Materials include a combination of non-woven biaxial glass, unidirectional roving and Kevlar reinforcement in particularly stressed areas such as the forward position of the hull and the turn of the bilge at midkeel. The core consists of Baltek one-inch CK-100 end-grain balsa below the waterline and CK-57 between the waterline and the sheer. Notably, hull core is omitted in all areas of thru-hull penetration in lieu of solid glass. Resin throughout the hull is 100-percent vinyl ester. A system of stringers and structural floors is glassed in immediately after the last layer of laminate to ensure a strong primary bond. Additionally, all major bulkheads are bonded to the hull and deck, with 1/2-inch Airex foam fillets

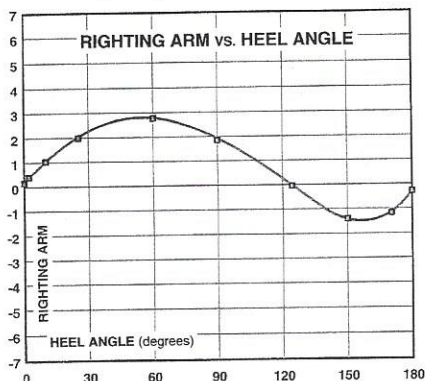


The idea below has been to keep the interior bright and open with white Formica, North Carolina cherry and cheerful fabrics. The main saloon interacts sociably with the navigator's area to starboard and a large U-shaped galley to port. Joinery and yacht finish are top, and the builder has rendered the space as functional as it is liveable.

owner for detailed schematic reference.

Accommodations

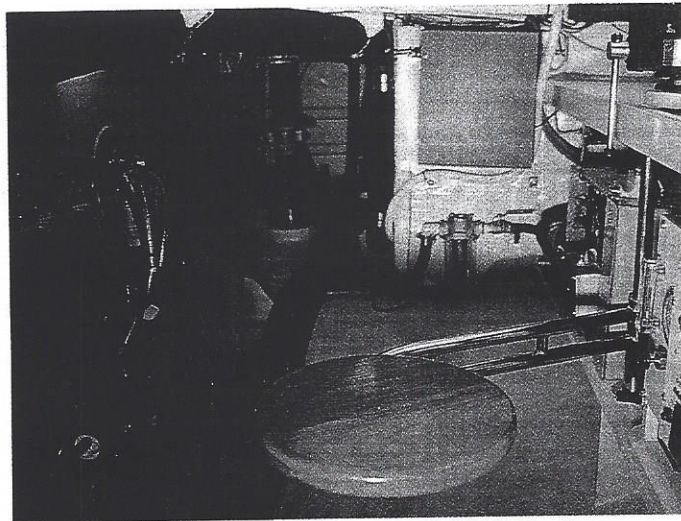
Living quarters emphasize the practical concerns of crew comfort and seagoing convenience. Notably, the builder has chosen not to fill 50 feet of boat with redundant or superfluous amenity; instead, Apogee's volume accommodates the basic needs of a small crew offshore and then nets extraordinary storage and work space for everything from food to spare parts.



Righting arm data on the Apogee 50 shows a positive range of stability of well over 120 degrees.

Drawers, bins, lockers and shelving are generously dispersed. Standard materials include North Carolina cherry; joiner work throughout is top.

Two private double cabins — one aft to starboard and the other forward to port — feature large wardrobes, drawer space and built-in seating. A single head occurs at the base of the companionway to port, and it includes a separate shower stall and a wet locker for foul-weather gear with its own drain. The engine and mechanical room is accessed through the head by means of the watertight door mentioned above. The main cabin features a wraparound U-shaped galley to port conveniently arranged for cooking in a seaway and outfitted with good storage and counter space. A serious built-in navigation station occupies a no-nonsense niche to starboard and includes a large chart table and ready access to electronics and to the vessel's electrical distribution panel. The saloon is open and airy, and consists of a sizable dinette to port and more seating to starboard; both elements become viable sea berths on long ocean passages. Notably, hand-



The engine room features walk-in accessibility and enough open space to incorporate a well equipped workbench with its own adjustable seat.

holds are placed liberally throughout the interior.

Sail Plan And Deck

Everything topside emphasizes Apogee's deliberate offshore program. The boat is sloop-rigged with a double headsail arrangement, a sizable high-aspect mainsail for light air and a diverse menu of options for shortening sail. Two

sets of spreaders are swept slightly aft; lower shrouds are double up fore and aft. Rigging is oversized 1x19 stainless wire with Sta-Lc terminals. Decks are clean and easily worked, with genoa primaries located within easy reach of the helm and items such as the placement of headsail halyards left up to the whims of the owner. Main halyard and single-line re-

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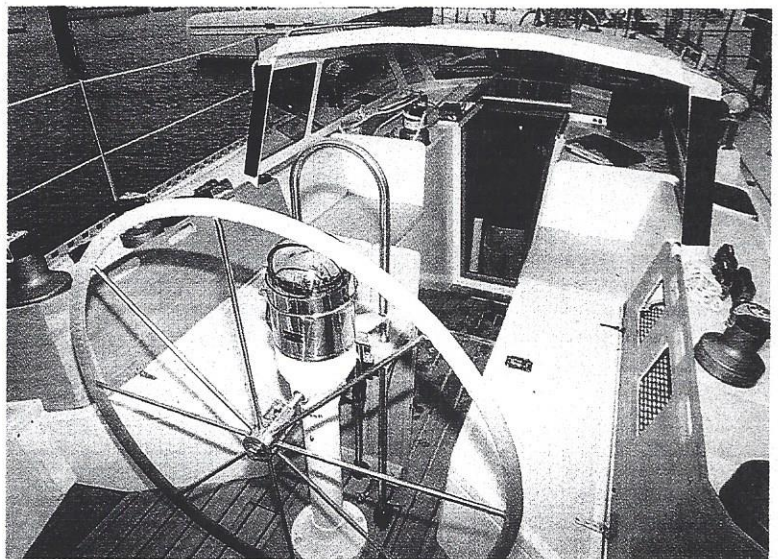
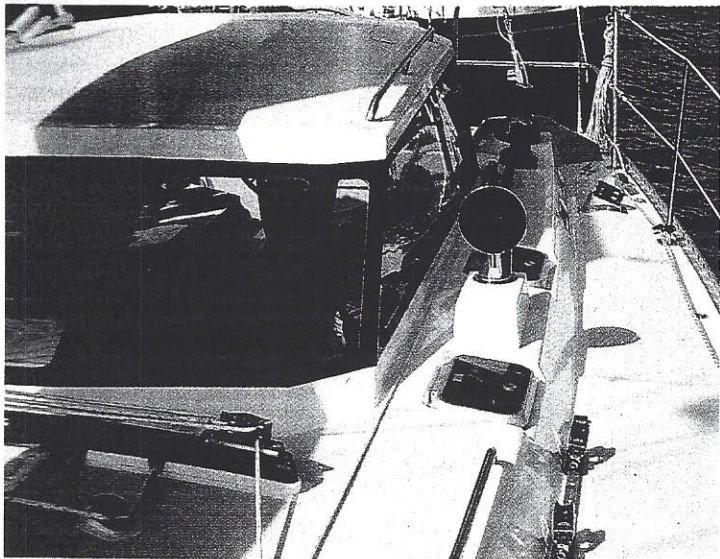
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The Apogee is available with a fixed deckhouse (shown above) or with a flush deck and convertible soft dodger (see page 59). The builder stresses a sensible preference for the fixed arrangement, noting its inherent weathertightness and its subsequent ability to double as an on-deck navigation and piloting pod in nasty conditions. Notably, the vessel is designed so that she remains low-profile and well balanced aesthetically with the hardtop built in.

to optimize cohesion.

The hull-deck joint is accomplished by means of a double inward flange, an anodized and perforated aluminum toe rail, 1/4-inch thru-bolts and 3M-5200 sealant/adhesive. The deck itself utilizes polyester resin and is cored with one-inch Baltek end-grain balsa except where solid glass is built up in areas of hardware attachment. Deck fittings are thru-bolted and carried by G-10 back-

ing plates. Each chain plate is engineered to carry more than the entire weight of the boat at any given time.

Systems

The creation of a walk-in engine room and utility space leads to the centralization of mechanical systems. It's an intelligent concept that facilitates their installation and maintenance, and keeps noise-makers such as pumps and com-

pressors sequestered in one well insulated compartment. The area is any mechanic's dream-come-true. The steering quadrant and associated autohelm paraphernalia are accessed simply, without the need for contortion. The engine and associated V-drive are exposed. Pumps, strainers and hoses are clearly labeled and meticulously installed. Non-corrosive Forespar Marelon sea cocks penetrate the hull and all hoses are dou-

ble clamped. A practical four-foot workbench is built in outboard to port. It is all sealed off to the living area forward by means of a sturdy Freeman watertight door.

The electrical system is kept as simple as possible and runs on basic 12-volt DC for safe and elementary troubleshooting; a Heart inverter provides AC power to dedicated outlets in the heads, galley and engine room. A custom-built Bass distribution panel covers an immaculate wiring scenario that includes color-coded tinned copper circuits with heat-shrunk soldered terminals and numbered identification labeling at both ends. A custom electrical wiring diagram is provided to each

Comparative Specifications

Able Apogee 50

C&C Custom 51XL

Oyster 55 Sovereign

LOA	51'0" (15.54 m.)	51'9" (15.77 m.)	55'3" (16.83 m.)
LWL	45'8" (13.92 m.)	43'11" (13.39 m.)	45'6" (13.9 m.)
Beam	14'0" (4.27 m.)	15'7" (4.75 m.)	15'9" (4.80 m.)
Draft (shoal)	5'11" (1.80 m.)	N/A	5'8" (1.73 m.)
(deep)	6'4" (1.93 m.)	10'4" (3.15 m.)	7'7" (2.31 m.)
Ballast (lead)	11,400 lbs. (5,171 kgs.)	15,800 lbs. (7,167 kgs.)	13,359 lbs. (6,060 kgs.)
Ballast (water)	3,200 lbs. (1,361 kgs.) total	N/A	N/A
Displacement	32,000 lbs. (14,515 kgs.)	33,900 lbs. (15,377 kgs.)	50,000 lbs. (22,680 kgs.)
Sail area	1,066 sq.ft. (99.03 sq.m.)	1,343 sq.ft. (124.8 sq.m.)	1,304 sq.ft. (121.14 sq.m.)
Mast above water	68'0" (20.73 m.)	71'8" (21.8 m.)	71'1" (21.67 m.)
Disp/Length	150.1	178.7	237
SA/Disp	16.89	20.4	15.6
Ballast/Disp	0.36	0.47	0.28
Fuel tankage	150 gal. (568 l.) Welded alum.	75 gal. (284 l.) Welded alum.	228 gal. (864 l.) FRP
Water tankage	200 gal. (757 l.) Stainless steel	200 gal. (757 l.) Welded alum.	204 gal. (772 l.) FRP
Auxiliary	Yanmar 75 hp.	Yanmar 85 hp.	Perkins 80 hp.
Designer	Chuck Paine	Rob Ball/C&C Design Group	Holman & Pye/Oyster Marine
Base price	\$449,000	\$435,000	N/A
Boat tested	\$710,000	\$560,000	\$930,000

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Beginning this month we will print comparative specifications for selected boats that offer different approaches to design and program in the size range of the particular boat being reviewed. In the case of the Apogee 50 being treated here, we bracket the vessel's numbers with those from a more mainstream racing-oriented boat, the C&C 51, and those from a heavier more traditional craft, the Oyster 55 Sovereign. Each boat fulfills the requirements of a slightly different niche. It is interesting to see how the designers and builders have approached fundamental specifications and non-dimensional ratios to get a feel for where any given boat fits in the broader scheme of things.