

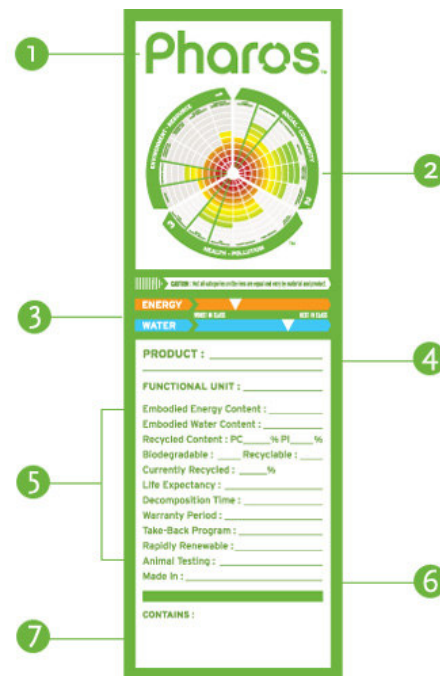
## MADE IN THE USA

It's a satisfying moment when you twist that final compact florescent light (CFL) bulb into its socket – “There! I am making my contribution to slow global warming”, you might think. Then you methodically collect all the paper packaging and flatten it down for recycling, until, you see *it*. There, stamped clearly on the box, albeit in small print, *it* stares blankly at you: “MADE IN CHINA”. The manufacturer’s label that divulges the product’s source, which, an unsettling amount of the time, states: “MADE IN CHINA”, is showing up on a great many of our ‘green’ products as well. What is that all about?

To keep up with the world’s demand for cheap goods, China is constructing the equivalent of two mid-size coal-fire plants a week<sup>1</sup>, each emitting about 4 million tons of carbon dioxide, CO<sub>2</sub>, gases per year<sup>2</sup> - that adds up to 8 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> a year added *per week*! The CO<sub>2</sub> emissions saved by changing one incandescent bulb to CFL, if calculated using a national average of 1.34 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per kwh, saves 587 lbs of CO<sub>2</sub> per year when a 25w CFL is compared to a 75w incandescent<sup>3</sup>. If everyone in the US switches out one bulb, we could turn off (or not build) 1 coal-fired plant, per year. China is adding 2 per week. So, while America reduces its carbon footprint by switching out to compact florescent bulbs, by using those made in China we are in fact contributing to a behemoth increase of carbon output. Reading that fine print makes a difference.

What’s a well-meaning consumer to do? We’ve all heard, shop local and lower on the food chain – in building materials and products that means reuse first, then use products and materials made from recycled content, rapidly renewable material, and wood from sustainably managed forests, choose materials and products made from virgin sources as a last option. There are many movements afoot creating green labels that help the consumer understand the affects of their purchase, some of these include the Pharos Project, [www.pharosproject.net](http://www.pharosproject.net), and the EcoLogo Program, [www.ecologo.org](http://www.ecologo.org). Locally sourced products here in Colorado can be found in the American Institute of Architects’ *Sustainable Design Resource Guide*, [www.aiasdr.org/sdr.aspx?Page=27](http://www.aiasdr.org/sdr.aspx?Page=27), additionally in Boulder we have ReSource at 2665 N 63<sup>rd</sup> Street – a source for reclaimed material and building products.

‘Import substitution’ is a concept where nations wean themselves from dependence on foreign imports, as Jane Jacobs states in *The Economy Of Cities*, “the process of replacing imports...*is* probably the chief means by which economic life expands.” If we are to go local and carry our green values into the construction industry, we have to demand more information from our suppliers regarding material sourcing. Here in Colorado we have abundant locally sourced stone and masonry, for example, and



<sup>1</sup> National Geographic, May 2008, *King Coal*, p.114  
<sup>2</sup> Pablo Paster, Sustainability engineer: [www.askpablo.org](http://www.askpablo.org)  
<sup>3</sup> Erica Rowell, *Environmental Defense*, [www.edf.org](http://www.edf.org)

Kwal Paint has been manufacturing paint in Colorado for over 50 years and carries an entire line of Green Seal certified products. We also have a number of artisan concrete fabricators that can provide locally sourced and made countertops, sinks, and tiles including Dan Roman's Studio in Arvada, and Vitrastone's 70% recycled content concrete products made with reclaimed glass and fly ash. And sometimes it's the products that you cannot see that are the 'greenest', like those that help us retain the water from our heavy winter snows or endless spring drizzle locally by providing porous options to driveway paving. One such product is the Colorado-based Invisible Structures' Grasspave that also happens to be manufactured with 100% recycled HDPE plastic, some of which is recovered here in Colorado, and each 1,080sf of laid Grasspave diverts 410 pounds of waste from landfills. How is that for local-green?



The ultimate local material we Coloradans have in abundance is also global: sunshine. We enjoy an enviable 300+ days of sunshine that can help us heat our buildings and water as well as provide electricity. It is also a source for our light bulb dilemma – use daylight whenever possible! A well-meaning consumer doesn't have to choose between being green and buying local, they prioritize by being efficient and using less to begin with, then using locally renewable options – like daylight, and ultimately, reading the fine print, looking out for the 'green' labels, and creating relationships with their local suppliers, designers, and contractors to establish trusted resources for getting information that will best support their local-green habit. Maybe one day soon we can all confess – I am a recovering 'made-in-china' consumer. Until then, don't forget to read the labels and make considered choices.

MADE IN COLORADO:

Artisan concrete: [www.danromanstudio.com](http://www.danromanstudio.com)

Artisan concrete: [www.vitrastone.com](http://www.vitrastone.com)

Green Guard Certified Paint: [www.kwalpaint.com](http://www.kwalpaint.com)

Grass Porous Pavement: [www.invisiblestructures.com](http://www.invisiblestructures.com)

ML Robles NCARB Architect LEED AP is an architect and Sustainability Consultant with Studio Points and the lead researcher and Green Building Materials and Systems Specialist at the PatternMapping®institute: [www.patternmapping.com](http://www.patternmapping.com). Contact ml at [ml@patternmapping.com](mailto:ml@patternmapping.com) or 303.443.1945.