



# OVERLOOKED IDSA FELLOWS RESTORED

One of IDSA's most distinguished honors conferred publicly and annually on certain members is Fellowship, a unique group of members known as the Academy of Fellows who have "earned the special respect and affection of the membership through distinguished service to the society, and to the profession as a whole," as the honor is formally described. Such members can be identified by the "FIDSA" following their names for the rest of their lives.

Unfortunately, over many years, cumulative historical clerical practices and the merger of predecessor organizations in 1965 to form IDSA have denied a number of deceased members proper, permanent recognition in IDSA's honored Academy of Fellows. The number of "overlooked" Fellows has accumulated because of past organizational protocol going back far before the merger that originally created IDSA. During IDSA's 50th anniversary in 2015, we would be remiss if we did not correct as many of these errors as possible.

Long before their merger in 1965, IDSA's predecessors, the Industrial Designers Institute (IDI) and the American Society of Industrial Designers (ASID), honored their outstanding members with Fellowship, and identified them as such in their annual membership directories. However, as these Fellows became deceased or dropped their membership, their names (and their honor) were removed from the current directory. Accordingly, the directories of IDI and ASID in 1964 included only Fellows who were still living and were still members at the time the directories were published.

When the merger of these predecessor organizations occurred in 1965, IDSA automatically accepted and honored all living IDI and ASID Fellows, (FIDI and FASID, respectively), as Fellows in IDSA (FIDSA). But of course, at this time, IDSA was not aware of a number of deceased



Former IDI members John W. Hauser, John Vassos and Alfons Bach are all IDSA Fellows.

Fellows who had been dropped from previous membership directories. For a number of years after that, IDSA's annual directory included the member status (such as Full, Associate, Life, Fellow) after each person's name. However, between clerical errors such as Fellows being erroneously listed as full or life and the continuing practice of removing names of Fellows who became deceased or had dropped or been dropped from membership by IDSA, the number of living Fellows continued to decrease.

The IDSA list of Fellows as an honored independent group only began with the 1978 directory, which listed

## A LOOK BACK



One of the founders of ASID, Raymond Loewy, FIDSA has always been a member of the IDSA Academy of Fellows.

primarily the known, living Fellows on record at the time. Starting with the 1992–1993 directory, IDSA decided to include deceased Fellows in the list, even though some had dropped their membership or had been dropped when they stopped paying dues. At this time, some deceased Fellows' names were added, when known or remembered, but others were not because they were still unknown.

By 2001, this comprehensive list of Fellows in the annual directory was being called IDSA's Academy of Fellows. As chair of IDSA's Design History Section at that time, I became aware that many deceased Fellows were missing from the Academy, so I conducted a thorough analysis of all IDSA directories back to the first, published in 1966, and determined that about 30 IDSA deceased Fellows had been omitted from the Academy of Fellows. These were all immediately added to the 2002 Academy of Fellows list, and included prominent and well-known pioneer industrial designers such as Egmont Arens, FIDSA, a founder of the Society of Industrial Designers (SID), the predecessor to ASID, in 1944; Dave Chapman, FIDSA, founder of the Chicago Society of Industrial Designers in 1938; Donald Deskey, FIDSA, a founder of SID; Lurelle Guild, FIDSA, a founder of SID; and Russel Wright, FIDSA, a founder of SID.

In 2012, it was noticed that Walter Dorwin Teague was not listed in the IDSA Academy of Fellows. Teague, who entered the profession in 1927 after a successful career as a graphic artist, was called the "Doyen of the Profession" by 1934 and was one of the founders of SID. Because of Teague's outstanding fame and influence in the profession, this seemed to be a glaring and embarrassing omission. I realized that he had died five years before IDSA was formed, and therefore had been automatically removed from the membership list of living Fellows of ASID, the standard process described earlier. Accordingly, he had never been identified by IDSA as an ASID Fellow. This sad discovery triggered a renewal of my interest in searching for additional Fellows who had been overlooked earlier than the 1965 merger. However, this would be possible only by searching through pre-1965 directories of IDI and ASID, few of which, if any, were readily available in 2012, 47 or more years later.

It turned out that some of these directories were, in fact, buried in archival storage in the Special Collections Research Center at the Syracuse University Library in a collection of industrial designers' work and personal records initiated in the 1970s by Arthur Jon Pulos, FIDSA, a past head of the Syracuse Design Department, an industrial design historian and an IDSA past president. The collection contains the personal files of a number of early designers, such as John Vassos, founder of the American Designer's Institute (ADI), predecessor to IDI, in 1938, as well as large collections from IDSA. I requested and obtained authorized funds (about \$300) shared by the IDSA Board of Directors and the IDSA Design History Section to hire a professional researcher to look through archival materials at the Syracuse Special Collections archives, specifically to look for pre-1965 IDI and ASID membership lists.

Over several months, nearly 30 file boxes were carefully searched at the library, but in only four of them were pre-1965 directories of IDI and ASID found. In July 2013, I submitted a report to IDSA of what was found and verified from the pre-1965 ASID documents, along with copies of the actual documents confirming the information. Of the 15 founders of ASID in 1944, all of whom became Fellows, eight had been overlooked and excluded from the permanent Academy of Fellows, including Walter Dorwin Teague, Norman Bel Geddes, Raymond E. Patten, Joseph B. Platt, John Gordon Rideout, George Sakier, Joseph Claude Sinel and Harold Van Doren. The remaining seven founders of ASID who had already been identified as Fellows are Egmont Arens, Donald Deskey, Henry Dreyfuss, Lurelle Guild, Raymond Loewy and Brooks Stevens. An additional ASID Fellow was found: Gilbert Rohde. All of these were prominent members of the profession in 1944.

Teague has already been publicly honored by IDSA as a posthumous Fellow on pages 11–12 of IDSA's Fall 2014 issue of *INNOVATION*, and his name has already been added to the Academy of Fellows. The others will soon follow. Bel Geddes was a highly successful New York theatrical set designer before he entered industrial design in 1927, and practically invented the interstate highway

system with his Futurama exhibit at the 1939 New York World's Fair. In 1934, Patten established the first industrial design department for General Electric in Bridgeport, CT. He held this position until his death. Platt, who designed the classic 1951 Parker 51 fountain pen, was a friend and neighbor of Loewy. Van Doren and Rideout were partners in their 1931 office in Toledo, designing streamlined toy scooters and pedal cars. Van Doren later opened a Philadelphia office to design Philco major appliances. Sakier designed glassware for Fostoria Glass in West Virginia for 50 years, and in 1927 headed the Bureau of Design Development for the American Radiator and Standard Sanitary Corporation. Sinel, a New Zealander, was designing art deco products and package designs in the 1920s, and later taught industrial design at a number of schools. Rohde was appointed director of design for the Herman Miller Furniture Company in Zeeland, MI in 1932 and was a pioneer in modern furniture design.

In addition, the following seven Fellows from IDI who had been overlooked in the Academy of Fellows were found and documented in pre-1965 IDI documents. They are Ruth Gertz, Henry Hagert, Marie Kirkpatrick, Alexander Kostellow, Ben Nash, C.E. (Chauncey Eugene) "Chick" Waltman and Scott Wilson. While some of these names are not well known, Kostellow was on the faculty of the first degreed industrial design program initiated at Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1934, and went on to become the prominent and beloved head of the design department at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn in 1938 until his death. Waltman was already well known as a decorative lamp designer in Chicago as early as 1920, and probably established Chicago's first industrial design office in 1925, although the name of the new profession was at the time yet unknown.

It would be unacceptable to deny permanent recognition to deserving Fellows honored by predecessor organizations prior to 1965. Despite these late discoveries through continuing research, IDSA is proud to add these 16 overlooked Fellows to its Academy of Fellows, which can found on the IDSA website ([www.idsa.org/academy-fellows](http://www.idsa.org/academy-fellows)) with, in most cases, photos of the honored individual.

—Carroll Gantz, FIDSA  
[carrgantz@bellsouth.net](mailto:carrgantz@bellsouth.net)