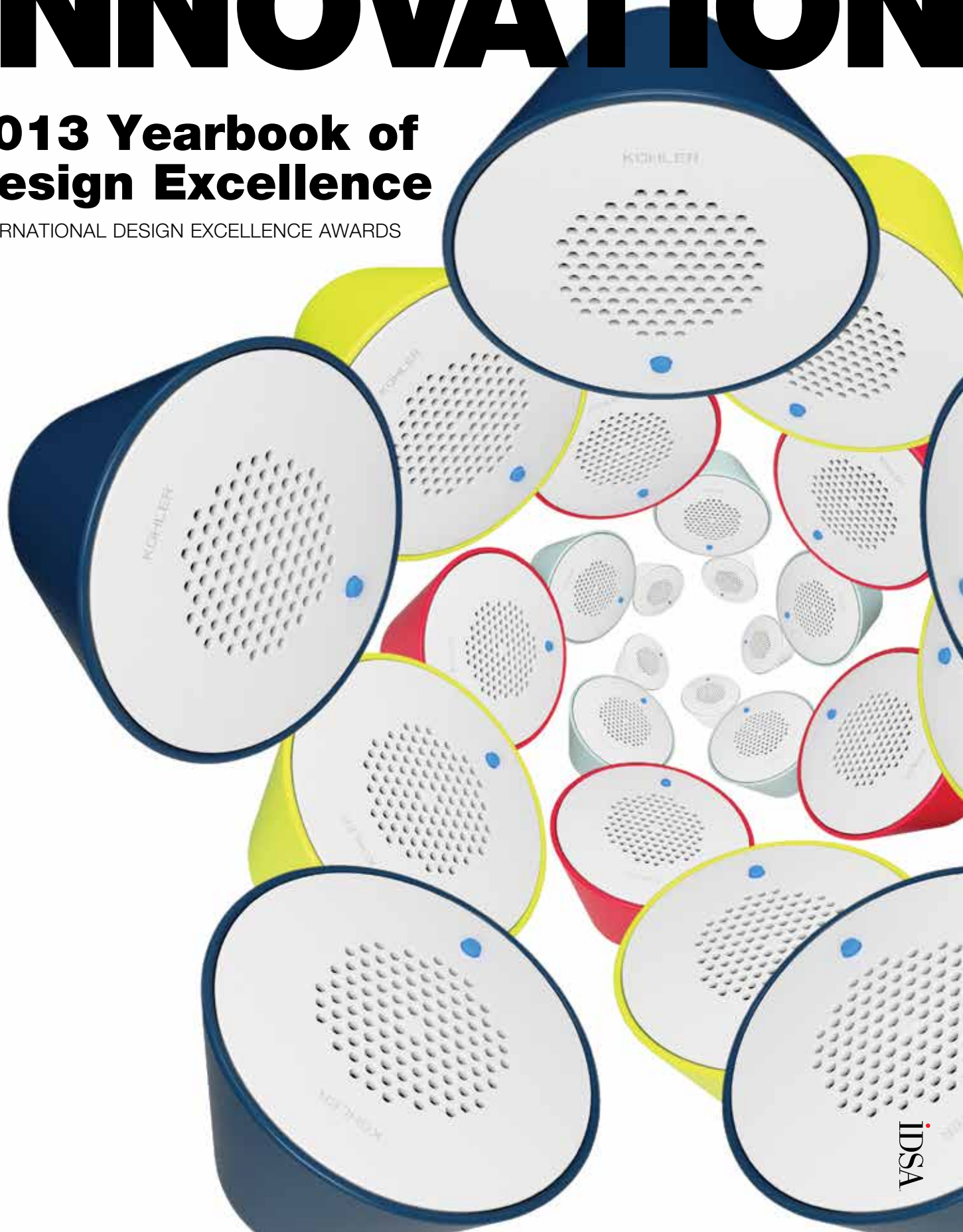


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Cover photo: Moxie – Showerhead + Wireless Speaker by KOHLER Co., p. 54.
Far Left: Nokia Colour and Materials Design Strategy, p. 82.

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By **J. Marc Greuther**, Chief Curator, The Henry Ford

Sonos SUB

TIMELESS SOUND

Sonos SUB is an enigmatic object—almost a distant relative of the monolith in *2001*—streamlined yet blocky, polished yet dark. Equipped with a single button for syncing to its host wireless network, this subwoofer emits sound from its depths via centrally mounted speakers positioned face to face, as if talking to one another: nondirectional sound, more physical than audible, perfect for reproducing the bass in everything from *Apocalypse Now*'s helicopter rhythms to Thomas Köner's vast soundscapes.

But the Curator's Choice Award wasn't granted so much for the SUB itself as for something beyond. Its fine aesthetic, user interface, build quality and performance are hereby acknowledged, but something—excuse the pun—*deeper* prompts this award.

The SUB is not a stand-alone device; it is wedded to a system, and it is a characteristic of that system that drew my attention. The history of Sonos is one of an even-tempered advance from its beginnings as a developer of wireless streaming technology to a designer of

a growing variety of speaker units married to that original technology. Accessibility and simplicity appear to be the company's watchwords. Sonos' system—quick to set up, unobtrusive and readily added to—offers unencumbered pathways to stored sound files and countless Web radio stations. Sonos has a peculiarly liberating effect: You can get to what you want to hear—simply; the system stays out of the way. The sound quality is high while its physical presence is discreet.

But beneath the system, with its seamlessness, usability and invisibility, is the deciding factor: The newly introduced SUB can be integrated into systems that incorporate the very earliest Sonos devices (shipped in 2005). And those devices continue to be updated with the latest software upgrades; all models, regardless of vintage, can be controlled by iOS, Android and Kindle apps. How radical as you look back on multiple noncompatible recording formats and recent yet unsupported hardware! Finally, then, it is Sonos' denial of planned obsolescence that tips the balance and prompts this award. ■



Designed by Mieko Kusano, IDSA and Rob Lambourne of **Sonos Inc.** and Wai-Loong Lim, IDSA of **Y Studios LLC** for **Sonos Inc.**

Sonos SUB

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