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by Lily McClure. See p. 33.



Publisher

IDSA
555 Grove St., Suite 200
Herndon, VA 20170
P: 703.707.6000
F: 703.787.8501
www.idsa.org

Executive Editor

Mark Dziersk, FIDSA
Managing Director
LUNAR | Chicago
mark@lunar.com

Advisory Council

Gregg Davis, IDSA
Alistair Hamilton, IDSA

Sr. Creative Director

Karen Berube
IDSA
703.707.6000 x102
karenb@idsa.org

Contributing Editor

Jennifer Evans Yankopolus
jennifer@wordcollaborative.com
678.612.7463

Advertising

IDSA
703.707.6000
sales@idsa.org

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idsa@idsa.org

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WHAT IS ID?

14 Getting Design Right

By Peter Bressler, FIDSA, Guest Editor

17 A Profession That's Easier (Now) to Define

By Mathieu Turpault, IDSA

20 Design Leadership

By Dr. Robert Blaich, L/IDSA

22 But I'm an Industrial Designer

By Justin Coble, IDSA

24 My ID Is Sr₄Pp₂St

By Meghan Preiss, S/IDSA

27 Beauty, Ingenuity, Charisma & Impact

By Jeff Smith and Gerard Furbershaw

30 The Threads That Connect Us

By Benjamin J. Beck, IDSA

33 From Designer to Thinker-Maker: The Evolution of Design

By Mike Glaser

FEATURES

37 Modernizing the Consumer Wait Experience

By Brian Roderman, FIDSA, and Luke Jordan, IDSA

42 Industrial Design School Showcase

Iowa State University

Metropolitan State University of Denver

Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design

The University of the Arts

University of Oregon

University of Wisconsin-Stout

IN EVERY ISSUE

4 IDSA HQ

By Daniel Martinage, CAE

6 From the Editor

By Mark Dzersk, FIDSA

8 Design Defined

By Allen Samuels, L/IDSA, and Frank Savage

10 Beauty

By Tucker Viemeister, FIDSA

12 Showcase

13 Book Review

By Mark Dzersk, FIDSA

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Advertisers' Index

- 41 Aether Global Learning
- 7 IDSA International Design Conference 2017
- 5 IDSA Women+Design Summit: Inspiring Change
- c4 LUNAR
- c3 Mixer Group
- c2 Pip Tompkin
- 9 Prototype Solutions Group
- 5 Radius
- 1 Tactile



FROM THE EDITOR



WHAT IS DESIGN?

A big question, right? My instinct is that in order to unpack it, we need a framework. We need to think about three things. First, how has design stayed the same? Next, how has design changed? And finally, what might design become? Also, to achieve some additional level of clarity on this very multifaceted issue, I have imposed a focus by using only a single word to define each frame.

The word for how it has remained the same is *ethic*.

Well, first of all, design always keeps its primary mission front and center. In almost all cases, design and the practice of designing make the world a better place. Design helps people to live better and accomplish things that are both necessary and meaningful. In addition, it provides an outlet for creative thinking and innovation, which are highly motivating activities to engage in, especially when the manifestation of that thinking turns into useful things, experiences and services. That's when, as a designer, you feel a sense of accomplishment and euphoria.

The word for how it has changed is *speed*.

In a connected world, alive with technology and information, speed is the key element of change. The speed at which design can transform markets and come to market. The speed at which information is discovered. Think Airbnb and Uber as models of disruptive business behavior. Think 3D printing and CAD programs, which make short work of what used to take a long time.

Speed wasn't my first choice, though. I started out with *methods*, but then I thought, sure there are lots of ways to *do things* that are new and lots of new constituencies to consider, especially as design broadens its playing field into areas like service and experience and digital. But if design's ethic remains the same, then the primary difference is more than just new methods. (Mobile ethnography, after all, is a variation on ethnography, which is a variation of customer interviews, something Raymond Loewy's office had a whole division of people doing in the '50s and '60s.)

And the last question: How will design evolve from here? In a word, hmmm...

Above: Virgin Spaceship Unity (VSS Unity) glides for the first time after being released from Virgin Mothership Eve (VMS Eve) over the Mojave Desert on Dec. 3, 2016.

“So what is design?”

It's a constant ethic enabled by tools changing at a breathtaking speed leading to the empowerment of everyone.”

This is the tough one. Would it be virtual or maybe ethereal or imaginative, experiential?

In 2013, CNN polled noted designers asking them to name the 12 best, most iconic designs from the past 100 years. They wanted to find out: “Is the much-loved Piaggio Vespa more iconic than the floppy disk? Is the iPod more of a design classic than the Airbus A380?” An article by Monique Rivalland for CNN published on cnn.com on June 28, 2013, revealed the final selections: the Mac, the Vespa, the escalator, the Virgin Galactic space plane, the AK-47, the floppy disk, the iPod, the Aeron Chair, Bang & Olufsen stereo equipment, the Airbus 380 and the Ford Model T.

I suppose it's not lost on anyone today that these 12 designs are all physical objects, things that are experienced through touch and sight and physical interaction. Ask that same question again in 2113 and the results might not include any physical designs at all. Airbnb, for example, might make the list. While there is a physical aspect to it, Airbnb's real delivery is the empowerment it engenders, the control we have in our hands when we engage with the service.

When you go to the electronics store to assess your choices but then go online to make the actual purchase, what kind of behavior does this foretell? Who is really in charge of that transaction? In the future when we order online or interact with a hologram or instruct a company about what and how to make something specifically for us, we will be making key decisions that today are made by someone else or even teams of someone elses.

I am hypothesizing that the future of design will not be just the where and how decisions get made, but also by whom. It's not the company or the factory or the big box store anymore. It's you.

Finally, to answer the question of how design will be different, I am going with the word, which is also a feeling, *empowered*. I think design will up the ante in this arena. And while the design of a new speedboat, for example, today can empower us to cross the lake, in the future, people—not designers—will have an important say in how that design is considered, executed, sold and acquired.

So what is design? *It's a constant ethic enabled by tools changing at a breathtaking speed leading to the empowerment of everyone.*

At least that's my take. In this issue, the idea of unpacking this very big question inspired INNOVATION to bring in a very big thinker, someone up to this weighty mission. So we called on IDSA Past President and esteemed design thinker Peter Bressler, FIDSA, to be our guest editor. Peter has assembled an amazing group of noted designers across a wide spectrum of the field to give us their take on this very big question. IDSA and INNOVATION would like to thank Peter and all the authors for their thoughtful contributions to this issue.

Lastly, to anyone who reads these articles and finds that you have another take or that you would like to argue a thought or even completely disagree, please feel empowered to reach out to my email below. I would love to hear your take on the question.

—Mark Dziersk, FIDSA, INNOVATION Executive Editor
mark@lunar.com

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GETTING DESIGN RIGHT

I was lucky. I had been drawing and making balsa models of boats, houses, cars, etc. since childhood, and when it was time to think about college, I had never heard of industrial design. Fortunately, my mother, who was a painter who hung with the Philly arts and architecture crowd, knew Louis Kahn, then chair of architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. We went to see him. I spread my stuff on his drafting board and asked, “Do I want to be an aeronautical engineer or an architect?”

His response was, “Neither, you want to be an industrial designer, and the school you should go to is the Rhode Island School of Design.” With a bit of discouragement and incredulity from my prep school college adviser, I applied, was accepted and went. I still believe that I have never worked or played harder in my life.

I was fortunate to attend RISD during a period when the Industrial Design Department was chaired by John Lincoln, a mechanical engineer, form exploration and semantics (aesthetic communication) was taught by Gene Joseph, and design research and process philosophy was taught by Mark Harrison, who was a master at inspiring empathy with users and instilling in students a designer’s responsibility for improving, not cluttering, the quality of life for society. These experiences resulted in the Standing Wheelchair Project, which received IDSA recognition and a patent and ultimately set the direction for my career. But that’s another story.

Coincidentally, two years after my graduation Victor Papanek published *Design for the Real World*. Papanek challenged the then-young profession by espousing sustainability as a priority. Who knew at the time that he was a prophet? Though they were the same values instilled during my industrial design education, they were considered radical and professionally destructive. He was uninvited as the keynote speaker at the 1976 Industrial Designers Society of America national conference by its then Board of Directors. This rejection was what motivated me to become involved in the organization, which has for 44 years been one of the most satisfying involvements of my career.



The Henry Ford



By Peter Bressler, FIDSA

pbressler@comcast.net

Peter Bressler founded, and for 42 years, led Bresslergroup, a product design and development firm, recognized for innovative product solutions for a diverse range of clients. Bressler is the inventor on 75 patents and has received over 50 design awards. He's juried multiple design awards programs and has presented at events in Europe, Asia and the US. An IDSA member, Past President and Fellow, Bressler received the IDSA Personal Recognition Award. Since 2006, he has helped to found and has supported development of the Integrated Product Design program at the University of Pennsylvania.

Some Historical Perspective

In 1970, industrial design was a young profession of perhaps 40 or 50 years. The challenges that the relatively new profession faced may be better understood when viewed in the cultural and socio-economic context of the development of our country. I say, development of the country, in that the United States, as a societal entity, is the youngest of the industrialized nations by at least a millennium. Having just celebrated its 194th birthday in 1970, the US was barely in adolescence compared to the cultural maturity of European and Asian cultures.

For designers, the nation could be seen as having developed with a substantial cultural disadvantage. America was populated by people from a variety of world cultures who brought with them the differing values and traditions of their homelands. American settlers and subsequent industrialists had no shared cultural traditions upon which to rely, no aesthetic values to inherit and nurture, and a limited historical perspective from which to learn. I've learned of Japanese children raised with a reverence for their aesthetic heritage in a nation that preserves and supports its national treasures, and I've seen Italian children playing in a piazza created by Michelangelo. The historical continuity of these more mature societies can instill an intuitive understanding of aesthetic values and empathic sensibilities. This did not, and still does not, exist in the United States.

A child in the United States grows up on a fiberglass slide under the infamous golden arches of McDonald's. It is an environment that represents the quintessential American priorities: constant change driven by consumption, newness for its own sake. The United States has had no unifying or cohesive cultural foundation upon which to build an appreciation of the value or the aesthetic qualities of refinement of the functional artifact. Nor has it been constrained by individual space, as many other cultures have been, to value sustainable efficiency. Viewed in this context, the inherent social and cultural deprivation of US consumers can be more fully appreciated.

However, at the same time the nation has had a socio-economic advantage that spawned a meteoric rise to world prominence. Unlike any other country in the world, the United States was populated instantaneously, by historical standards, by a peculiarly egalitarian assortment of people,

mostly from the world's middle and lower middle classes. They came seeking a land without the traditional constraints on opportunity or personal property.

By far the greatest opportunities were seized by the individual entrepreneurs, the pioneers, the innovators. Many of America's most popular heroes have been characterized by their staunch individualism. People like Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell are individual innovators in whom our country takes pride. Entrepreneurs like J. P. Morgan, Getty, Rockefeller, Hearst, Hughes, and now Jobs, Gates and Bezos are American legends. The Horatio Alger stories of these trailblazers and others continue to lure new people to the United States. Hundreds of thousands of individual immigrants have cumulatively created a broad and wealthy middle class, who ironically are now suffering from the success of capitalism with a higher standard of living than the rest of the world has ever experienced. Interestingly, the prestige associated with the innovative individual, the source of past success, has directed the nation's social values toward invention, not implementation or visual refinement, and toward consumption, not quality or product longevity. Hopefully, global warming is beginning to change these self-destructive attitudes.

The great American successes, have been, and apparently continue to be, the result of new technologies, not the result of the skill, imagination, creativity, refinement and efficiency required to be a sustainable competitor in a mature global market. Businesses in the United States are beginning to learn and appreciate the values required to design and manufacture quality products that society really needs. On the other hand, industrial design in the United States has perhaps gained the most from the conflicts inherent in our heritage. Individual innovative design, self-expression, remains vital, but has been tempered by the assimilation of the diverse humanistic and cultural values brought to the New World. In an environment where priorities have been technological breakthroughs and short-term returns, design in the United States has matured to become a primary advocate of the values that elevate the quality of life as expressed through both the physical and virtual manufactured artifact. In a Gallup poll conducted in 1986, industrial design was found to be the single largest contributor to a customer's long-term satisfaction with their ownership of a product.

WHAT IS ID?



Going Forward

In the last 30 years, our profession has gained increased recognition, and those we serve are beginning to recognize the value of the innovative processes we offer. We can build upon that momentum by being clearer about and more confident in our values.

Revolutionary and evolutionary technologies have changed both the opportunities for and the practice of design. When my office began, industrial design was primarily involved with determining and addressing user needs through the physical embodiments of both object and user interaction. Interface design was implemented with the arrangement and operation of analog knobs and keys, handles and buttons.

Now much of what was once physical has become virtual. So too, technology changed how design is done. When my office began, it was with a corded phone, a chamber of commerce directory, a folding chair, a hollow core door, a T square and triangles and ellipse templates, colored pencils and fluid markers. Now, starting an office requires major investments in technology: computers, digitizing tablets, multiple software packages, video conferencing, etc. Now you not only feed yourself and your employees, but also the office Technosaurus, which has a voracious appetite. It's faster but weightier, and if it stumbles, it can be disastrous.

Getting design right is now recognized as essential for business success. Design thinking is beginning to change how capitalism thinks. How is design practice evolving to meet expanding demands and opportunities? How can design best use the lessons of yesterday and today to evolve and reimagine the future?

With this issue of INNOVATION, we hope to bring to the reader a broad view of careers in industrial design. We've gathered articles from a broad range of design professionals: A young professional finds her bliss in specialization, a C-level corporate designer reflects upon design leadership and a management-level designer journeys through alternative views of designing user experiences. A consultant designer explores how design has grown up over the last 25 years, and a well-seasoned consultant/entrepreneur shares how he was born to be an industrial designer. The founders of one of the country's most successful design consultancies explains how having finished that design they are coming full circle. And a dynamic design educator shares an evolving view of how industrial design should be taught.

In conclusion or perhaps as an introduction, if you become an industrial designer, you will make a reasonable to very good living and most likely will enjoy your work. Perhaps more importantly, you will have the opportunity to struggle with and ultimately resolve for yourself the conflicts inherent in trying to contribute to the quality of life as a sustainable society using your creativity, imagination, intellect and skills. I, for one, am constantly grateful to the people who set me on a course to have so much fulfillment and fun. ■



Designed in Austin, Texas

