



## FROM THE EDITOR

**W**hen IDSA's President Bruce Claxton, FIDSA, appointed me as executive editor of this magazine, he took me aside and whispered in my ear, "Shake it up a bit, Mark; the magazine needs a strong point of view." I've always said you're either part of the problem or part of the answer. Well, here's my chance.

Design today is facing a great many new challenges. Education and the economy come to mind immediately, but perhaps the biggest crisis is in design journalism. A lot of what passes for journalism in the design field is nepotistic and uninspired. Part of the problem is the way it is created. Magazines frequently employ freelance writers who are simply not invested in their assignments. Sometimes called "stringers," they too often choose to focus on star...uhm...worship and getting the scoop on the other stringers, as opposed to meaning and content. Professional writers may take on a topic not out of interest but rather of necessity. They are hired for one reason alone: They can write. Too many of these design journalists appear obsessed with writing about the next new thing, regardless of its value or long-term implications. This focus on what is of the moment does the core of the profession a great injustice.

This is where design, as a profession, needs to step up. This reality TV—*People Magazine's* equivalent of media coverage—is dominating design publications. The

other extreme: sincere articles written in endless streams of gray type that (if ever read) would bore an actuary. It is shortsighted on the part of our profession's thought leaders that only these limited kinds of content propagate.

This issue of *Innovation* writes itself as far as content is concerned. It profiles the 2003 award winners and the challenges and problems that they solved. The collection of excellent work of the winners of the Industrial Design Excellence Awards (IDEA) and the third-party endorsement of *BusinessWeek* are invaluable assets in design's effort to promote its value to business, education and society in general. Bruce Nussbaum's introduction is always insightful. And the Design and Business Catalyst Award winners demonstrate quantifiable marketplace success that can be attributed almost entirely to the role that design played in the development of a product or idea.

Arguably the single most important thing that IDSA does each year, the IDEA competition is rigorously juried. The judges are some of the best qualified of any

design competition, and this year's submissions are the best I can remember in a long time. Fewer awards were given, perhaps due in part to the rigor of the judges.

The IDEA-winning products are deserving of collective acknowledgment and the validation they receive here. The *Innovation* Yearbook issue speaks to the state of the profession; the work presented becomes the standard by which successful product design is judged. It is as always a great collection, especially when compared to the often-inflated and silly work we see published every month by many popular design magazines. The endless idolizing of false gods and the "fat Elvises" of the profession needs to stop. How many times have you picked up a design magazine only to flip through it and throw it down moments later, unsatisfied?

The answer to the problem lies within the design community itself. Many of you have something important to say but are simply not inclined to sit down and hammer out 1200 compelling words. It's a hard thing to do. Writing in a way that will keep a reader's attention for more than 30 seconds is a talent that must be practiced. Let's face it, designers are great at creativity but not usually great writers. If you disagree, send me a letter—a well-written letter.

*Innovation* has always been an opportunity for IDSA members to publish, and it will continue in that spirit. But we will no longer publish the dull, drab, gray stuff. This is an opportunity for you to express your ideas, but if you would like to see them in print, apply the same level of creativity to make your article interesting that

you do to solve a design challenge. Hire a ghostwriter or an editor. And remember, unique formats and original ideas and topics are encouraged.

In the issues to follow, you will see examples of what I am talking about. The winter issue will feature an article on the design explosion in Asia. The article is longer and deeper than usual because this is a topic that deserves this level of attention. Other articles will discuss original ideas, such as leveraging fear as a new design technique. Some pages will be graphic; some articles short but effective.

Another feature you will see return to these pages will be the classic "Letters to the Editor" column. This offers an opportunity for you—the IDSA membership—to express your viewpoint in a small, tight paragraph. If you don't have time to write 1200 words, send us 120 words or 12. Include your name, of course; no anonymous angst allowed.

Enjoy the Yearbook, and please help me with the content for upcoming issues of *Innovation*. Send your thoughts to [Mdziersk@hlb.com](mailto:Mdziersk@hlb.com). If you would like us to consider publishing your remarks, entitle it, "letter to the editor" and include the phrase, "permission to publish." I will be happy to respond to your thoughts and suggestions and want to publish as many as we can. This way, all of us—the collective design community—can become part of the answer.

Regards,  
Mark