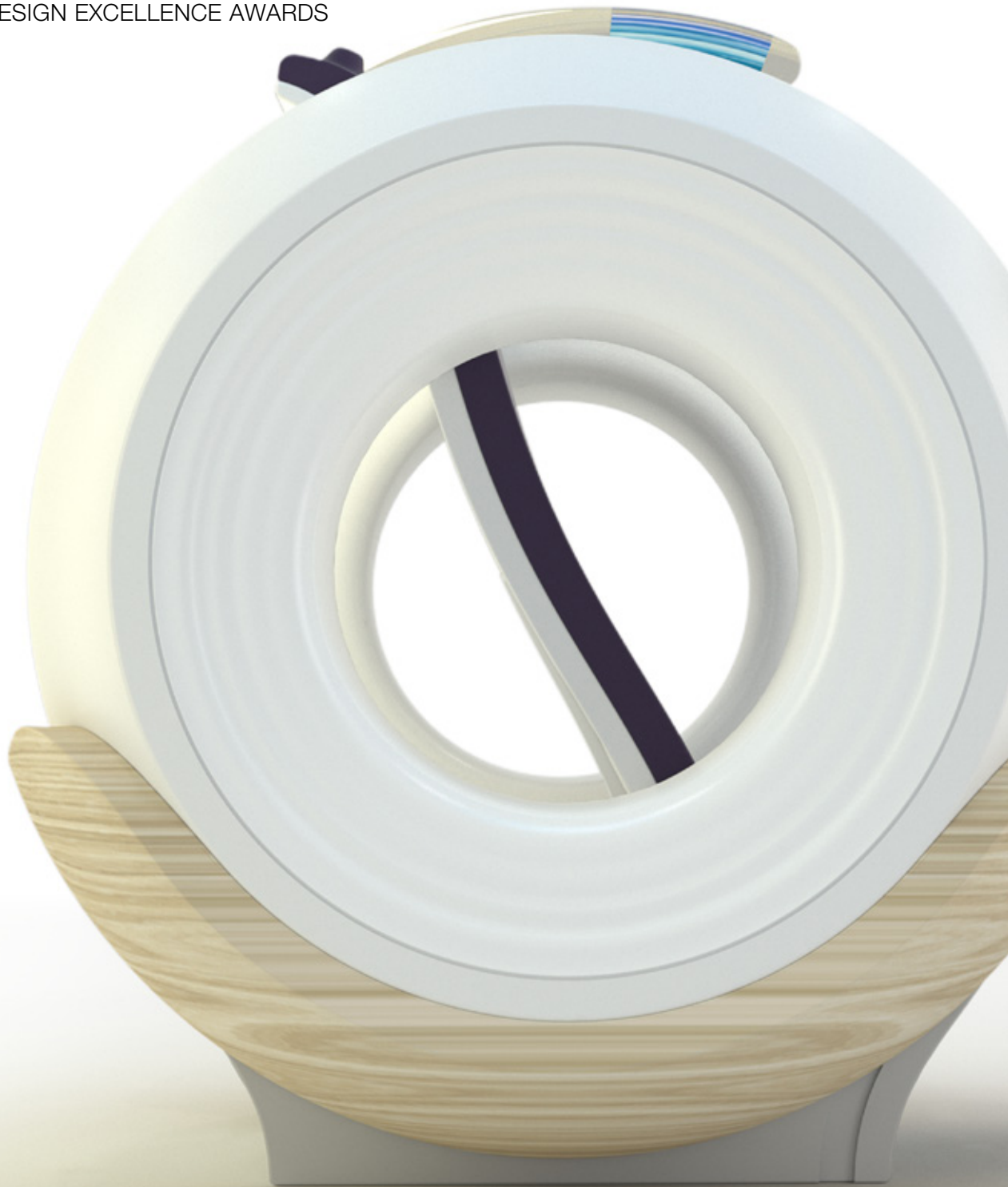


QUARTERLY OF THE INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS SOCIETY OF AMERICA **FALL 2012**

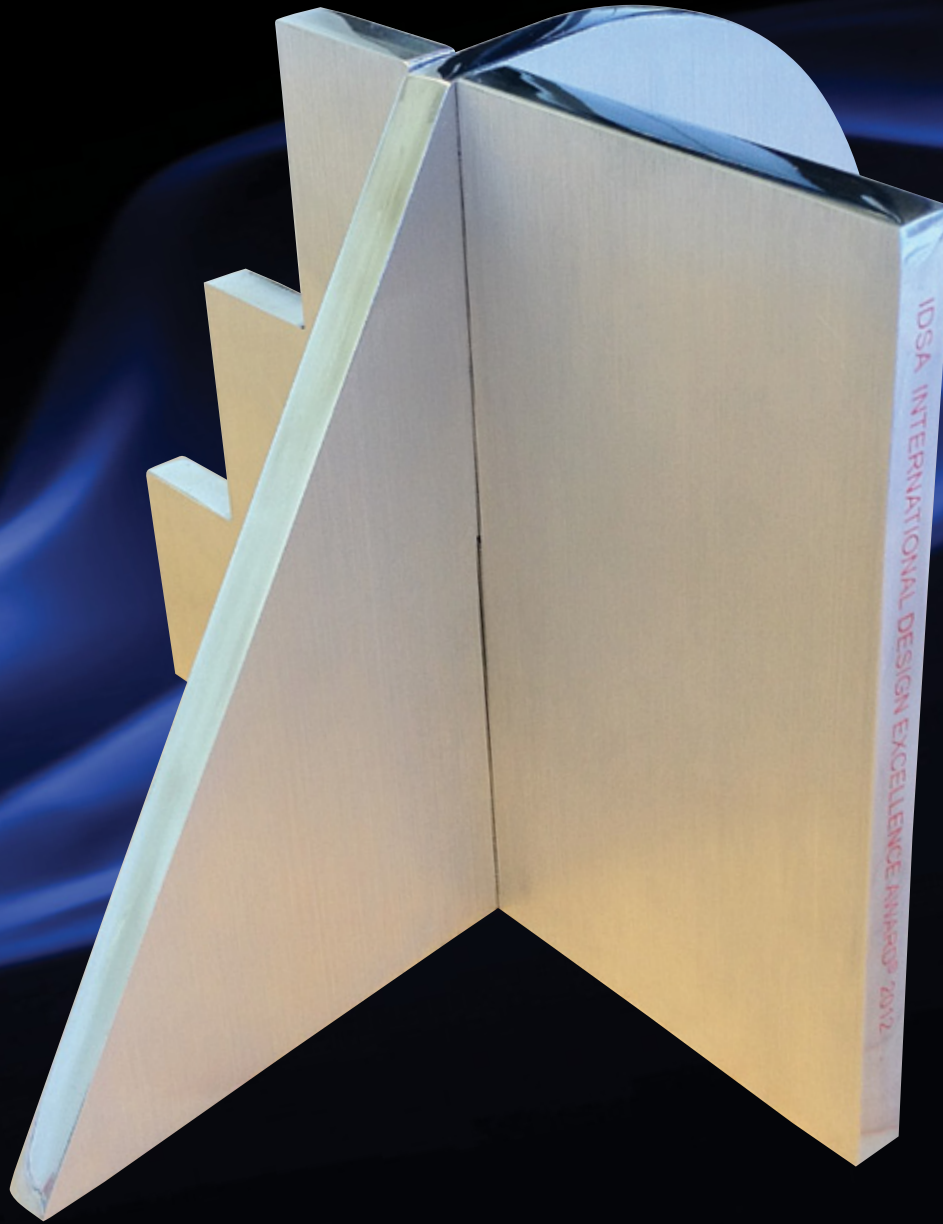
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2012 YEARBOOK OF DESIGN EXCELLENCE

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Cover photo: Gold IDEA winner Cocoon Open MRI Chair by GE Medical (France)

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By Colleen Browning, *Innovation* contributing writer

LED Clear Bulb

A BRIGHT

This year IDSA granted the debut IDEA Sustainability Award, given to the product that meets standards of long-term responsibility on an environmental, economic and social level while exhibiting design excellence, to the Panasonic LED Clear Light. There was some initial discussion among the jury as to whether so utilitarian a product can merit a design award. However, light bulbs have become a complicated and even controversial topic with much of the argument having to do with sustainability: their lifespan, toxicity and cost, not to mention the quality of light they emit. And the fact that there were a half dozen or so light bulbs submitted for consideration to the IDEA 2012 competition indicates that the problems in replacing the energy-greedy incandescent have not been adequately resolved.

But what makes the Panasonic LED Clear Light Bulb so special as to be rewarded with the very first IDEA Sustainability Award? Is it mastery over energy waste and barriers to consumer acceptance while exhibiting superior innovation in development? Of course. But it was actually a little more than that.

For a time in light bulb evolution, compact fluorescent lamps (CFL) appeared to offer real answers. CFLs use a little more energy when they're first turned on, but once the electricity starts to flow, they use 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs and last about 10 times longer. Unfortunately, the curly CFLs have other qualities that consumers find undesirable: an unflattering light, a slowness to ramp up to full light output, the use of argon



IDEA

and small amounts of mercury. Some CFLs even hum. People began hoarding incandescents.

Subsequently, light-emitting diodes (LEDs) were introduced. The focal point of LEDs is usually the heat sink—that big aluminum-alloy finned turtle-neck that sits around the bulb and absorbs excess energy (heat). The LED bulb, with its 25,000 to 100,000 life hours, is definitely more energy and cost efficient than even the CFL. They automatically illuminate to 100 percent when you flip the switch, and they don't hum. Bonus: LED light bulbs don't attract insects.

People still continue to hoard incandescents. But perhaps not for much longer, because the Panasonic LED Clear Light Bulb gives the appearance of a technological leap backward while actually leaping ahead of everyone else.

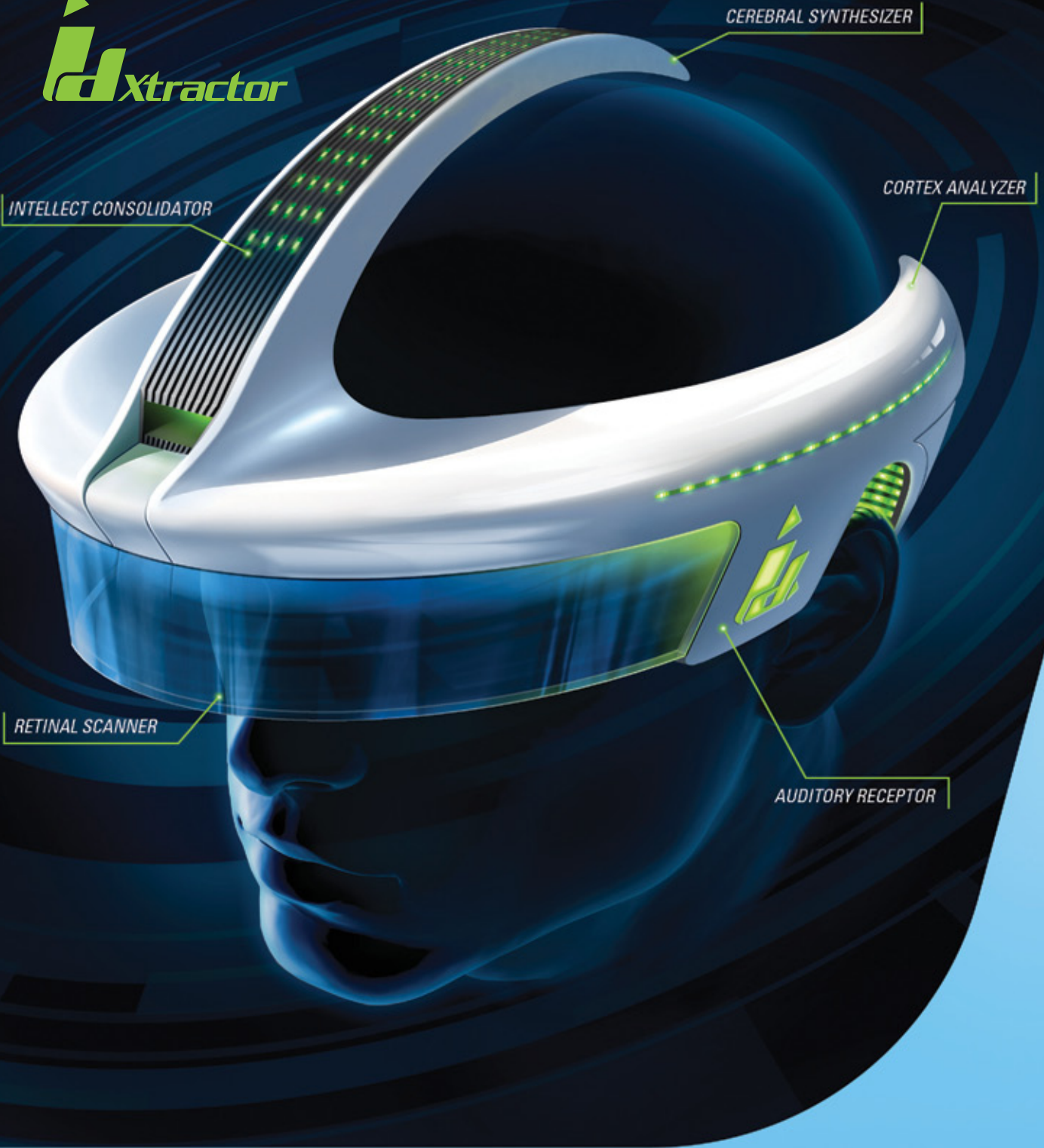
It looks like an old fashioned incandescent light bulb and emits a warm glow like an incandescent. It's made from clear glass as opposed to the frosted glass we're becoming accustomed to. And if you look closely at the filament, you'll realize that what you're really looking at is a heat sink. As one of the jury members said, "They went to the trouble of making it look like a light bulb." And that made all the difference. Nobuyuki Mase and his design team at Panasonic not only solved the technological problems, they captured the lost comfort of those old bulbs. It turned out that consumers do want sustainable and economically responsible light bulbs, but it was the ingenuity with which Mase's team answered the consumers' emotional requirements that won the award. ■

Designed by Nobuyuki Mase and Haruhiko Uneo of **Panasonic Corp.** (Japan)

“...The conceptual and organizational tenacity it takes to deliver such dead-simple elegance. Wow.”

—*Tad Toulis, IDSA, creative director, Teague*

Editor's Note: In addition, the LED Clear Bulb received a Gold IDEA in the Living Room & Bedroom category.



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