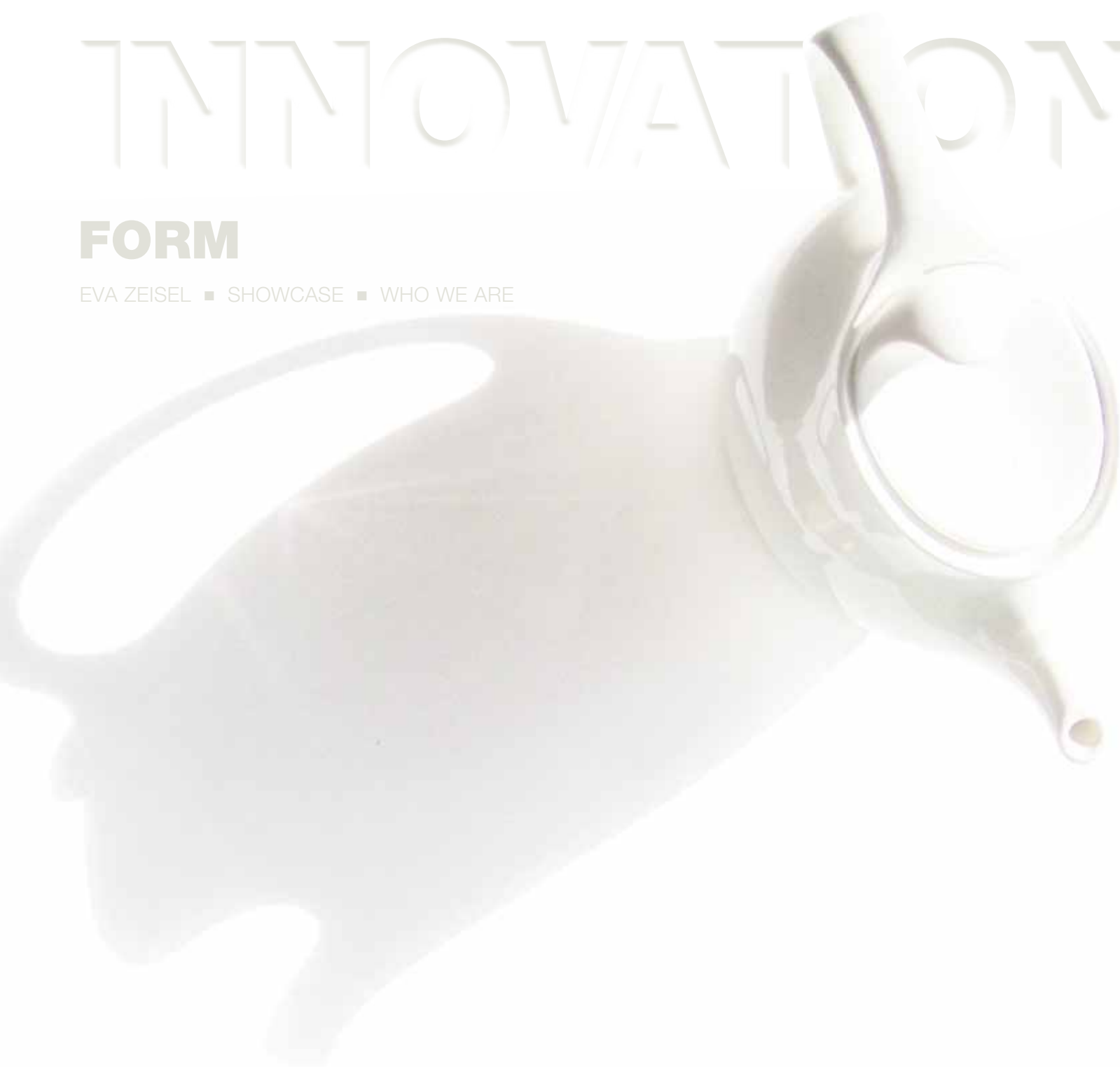


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## FORM

- 16 Form Is Function**  
by Tucker Viemeister, FIDSA  
Guest Editor
- 18 Design to Touch, Use & Inhabit**  
by Bill Moggridge, FIDSA
- 20 Bringing Form to Light: Designing with a New Lighting Technology**  
by Michael McCoy, IDSA
- 22 FORM**  
by Karim Rashid
- 25 A Form Speaks a Thousand Words<sup>3</sup>**  
by Gregg Davis, IDSA
- 28 This Is Rhythms**  
by Karen Gaylord
- 32 Industrial Design and Its Education: Defining Its Visual Responsibility**  
by Kathryn Filla and Martin Skalski
- 38 Hands & Minds**  
by Hartmut Esslinger
- 40 The Transformative Power of the Design Studio: The Path to a Black Belt in Design** by Peter Chamberlain, IDSA and Craig M. Vogel, FIDSA

- 43 The Formlessness of Form and Contemplative Biology**  
by Steven Skov Holt, IDSA
- 48 Communicating Design Intent with Form: Visual Intelligence**  
by Jeffrey Kapec, IDSA
- 52 Eva Zeisel Tribute**

Additional Contributors: Ayse Birsel, Scott Wilson, IDSA, Ross Lovegrove

## FEATURES

- 14 The Designer's Dilemma, Portfolio and Matrix: Feeding the Development Pipeline** by Jim Kendall, IDSA

## IN EVERY ISSUE

- 4 From the Executive Editor**  
by Mark Dziersk, FIDSA
- 7 Design Defined**  
by Allen Samuels, IDSA
- 8 Letters to the Editor**
- 10 Book Review**  
by Scott Stropkay, IDSA
- 11 A Look Back**  
by Carroll Gantz, FIDSA
- 54 Showcase**
- 64 Signposts**  
by Alistair Hamilton, IDSA

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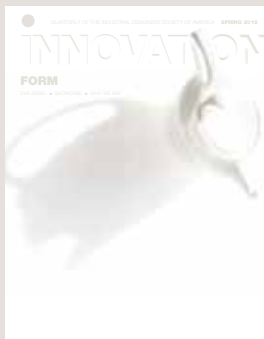
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Far Left: Jessica Rosenkrantz and Jesse Louis-Rosenberg for Nervous System





FROM THE EDITOR



# THE FORM ISSUE

“Connecting users emotionally with a product is the new killer app, function is the new table stake.”



Michael Lozano

**A**t some point everyone has experienced the idea or heard the adage that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” or, as explained by the iconic Scottish philosopher David Hume, “Beauty in things exists in the mind which contemplates them.”

So if beauty exists in our minds, how does that happen? The celebrated late art historian Rudolf Arnheim, author of *Art and Visual Perception*, said that it has everything to do with form and how we perceive it. Which then begs the question: What role does form perception play in our contemplation of physical products and their function?

Maslow suggests that the most vital human needs start at the bottom of his famous pyramid and that the need for self-esteem and confidence is at the top of the same pyramid, far above the more important initial desires, say our desire for food and shelter. Of course, Maslow never met an iPhone.

As knowledge work gives way to a creative age, it also appears that beautifully formed objects and the self-esteem we derive from attaching ourselves to them have come of age in a more meaningful way than Maslow ever imagined.

Far from being the premium nonessential element, beautiful forms and answers may be the only way to survive in the automated and overly abundant product and service markets we experience today. Positive perceptions of form trigger the power of emotional connection that consumers seek in the offerings they buy and use, whether they are physical products, services, systems, software products or brands. Connecting users emotionally with a product is the new killer app, and in this regard, form rules and function is the new table stake.

Said another way, the performance and function of products and services have reached such a high state of accomplished parity that beauty, both in physical form and performance/interaction-based beauty, now dictates the success or failure of products. Interestingly, in the same way, selection serves to propagate species. It’s a fact. Honeybees are drawn to the most beautiful flowers and fragrances first.

Consider, for example, any tablet computer or e-reader device. As a group they are all fantastic and are all feature equal. Which one will endure? I would suggest that the one with the most beautiful form has the best shot.

Beauty comes in many forms, and its importance is usually underappreciated. The author and poet John Keats once said, “A thing of beauty is a joy forever; its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness.”

Tucker Viemeister, FIDSA is a designer who has always understood this truth. He is an advocate for beauty. This issue of *Innovation* celebrates his eye and mind, and all the work he put into guest editing it. Thank you, Tucker.

—Mark Dziarsk, FIDSA, *Innovation Executive Editor*  
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## The World Stage

The first-ever meeting of IFI, Icograda and Icsid was held in Taipei, Taiwan, at the 2011 International Design Alliance Congress. While attending I found myself in the middle of a new world view on design in a country that is dedicating, by some reports, one-sixth of its economy to changing the idea of “Made in Taiwan” to “Designed in Taiwan.”

The Congress was designed as a dialogue between designers and nondesign stakeholders in a unique summit format. A nondesign expert presented a topic of global or social importance immediately followed by a panel of design thinkers from product design and graphic architecture who interpreted the talk and offered perspective.

The IDA's primary objective to become the global voice of design and an enabler of innovation was given a kick start at this event. I left Taipei with the idea that design's future on a global scale is bright and in many ways is just now beginning.

### Icsid

Icsid protects and promotes the interests of the industrial design profession, serving as a unified voice through which members can be heard on an international platform. [www.icsid.org](http://www.icsid.org)

### Icograda

Icograda promotes communication designers' vital role in society and unifies the voices of graphic designers and visual communicators worldwide. [www.icograda.org](http://www.icograda.org)

### IDA

IDA is an alliance between Icsid, Icograda and IFI that advocates for the mutual interest of all the design professions. [www.icsid.org/about/IDA.htm](http://www.icsid.org/about/IDA.htm)

### IFI

IFI connects the international community of interior architecture/design in order to further the impact, influence and application of the design of interiors, promote global social responsibility and raise the status of the profession worldwide. [www.ifeworld.org](http://www.ifeworld.org)

—Mark Dziarski, FIDSA, Innovation Executive Editor  
[mark@lunar.com](mailto:mark@lunar.com)



A man with white hair and a yellow t-shirt is pointing directly at the camera. The t-shirt has a circular logo with the word "MUSKIE" visible. The background is plain white.

FORM

# FORM IS FUNCTION

**T**he computer is seducing humans out of their bodies. More and more of our time is sucked into the virtual (at home, in school and in the studio).

We designers are here to reaffirm the importance of the physical world. It's not just what we experience—real stuff actually impacts our health and our climate. **Realize** is more than understanding truth. The soul of our profession is essential to life. If you deconstruct the word “de-sign,” it seems to mean “un-sign,” or the “real thing,” not a symbol. **Objective. Matters.** This issue of *Innovation* is not about form *following function*—it's about form being in the actual *driver's seat!*



Tucker Viemeister has built design groups: as a founder of Smart Design (famous for Oxo “GoodGrips”), by opening frog design’s New York office, by establishing Razorfish’s physical design capability group, by developing Springtime-USA and recently as lab chief at Rockwell Group, where he built a small research and development team into a teeming interactive business. He is now president of Viemeister Industries, headquartered in NYC.

In our world of branding, finance and celebrity, real stuff is making a comeback—crafts, gourmet cooking, home brewing, Maker Faire, gardening. People want to make things—DIY. They are reshaping their bodies: pumping up at the gym or other augmentations with plastic surgery and Botox. Even Harry Potter needs a wand to make magic.

Today more nursery schools are using open-ended block play to encourage children’s imaginations. The problem-based-learning trend in K–12 programs is not new; progressive education is essentially learning by doing. Design thinking is a root skill of science, medicine, music, interfaces, writing and design. According to Arnold Wasserman, “Enthusiasts say that re-creating education around principles of ‘design thinking’ is the essential first step toward building ‘World 3.0.’” Even business consultants have learned Larry Keeley’s and Tom Kelly’s lessons about innovation. “But if everyone can do ‘Design Thinking,’” Liz Davis of Les Ateliers in Paris rhetorically asks, “what makes designers special?”

We designers create real stuff. This *Innovation* is a celebration of the essence of industrial design: form giving. Objects **matter**. There is a reason that they *ground* us and that form following function is about genuine needs. Designers put real things on the table, things that we can see, hold and feel. “Today as never before the consumer is design-conscious, and the appearance of a product has become an integral feature in its success or failure,” wrote J. Gordon Lippincott in *Design for Business* in 1947.

Of course, everyone should be doing design thinking (it makes sense)—but we designers are the ones who give form to those ideas and solutions. We make the dreams come true. We translate new technology into tangible objects that people want and real places that people experience. We make brand strategies into real stuff that people grab, drink, drive and play with. Our work has the urgency of reality. It is more important than just good business: form is essential to human life. After all, we live in the real world where sticks and stones actually do break our bones.

“The biggest issue with the B school design thinking craze,” Craig Vogel, FIDSA said, “is that it does not support the idea of making people functionally literate of design.” The pendulum is swinging back, pushed by real problems like climate change and pulled by computer scientists and user-interface designers who not only find inspiration in biomimicry but who want to create digital tools to support real communities and actual experiences.

“The school and the culture separate the head from the body,” wrote Loris Malaguzzi, developer of the Reggio

Emilia Approach in *The Hundred Languages of Childhood*. “They tell the child to think without their hands, to do and make without their head, to listen and not to speak, to understand without joy.” Students today want to become industrial designers because they want to give form to their dreams—they want to contour cars, sculpt appliances, mold furniture, shape medical devices, construct spaces, model toys and make experiences.

Learning how to make beautiful forms is being squeezed by nonvisual subjects that industrial design students need to learn. Pratt’s Martin Skalski and Kathryn Filla advocate a renaissance of industrial design’s core responsibility and its supportive pedagogy. Minds and bodies are unified: drawing and making forms with our hands are the basic ways humans teach themselves (especially designers). The 1959 article (reprinted here) about the City and Country School’s Rhythms program explains how physical movement teaches children important skills, just as 3D exercises teach design students to think.

*Fast Company* may say that “the career of the future doesn’t include a 20-year plan,” but quality form giving is a craft that never goes out of style. As Harmut Esslinger’s teacher, Professor Karl Dittert, told him, “Renderings are nice, but models are magical.” Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* principle is all about the design-by-doing method (the natural selection system even works without *any* thinking). Survival of the fittest isn’t really about survival so much as reproduction (but that’s for another industrial design topic).

This issue about real stuff is a reminder to *knowledge workers* of the supremacy of reality above thought. Practice over theory—we see the apple dropping but can only infer gravity. Ideas and dreams are strong motivators, but real objects exist in the real world where they actually affect reality—in fact they are reality (not what we wish it is). Truth. Entrepreneur Avi Telyas makes prototypes—instead of business plans. Descartes may have said, “I think therefore I am,” but Karl Marx came back with “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”

That’s where we come in. Good industrial designers obviously think about what they are doing, but they know how to think better because they learned how to think by doing. We know what it means to create real stuff that people touch, use and inhabit. Like firemen, doctors and chefs, industrial designers put out real fires, heal real ailments and cook up tasty new things that make the world a better place to live. Form is function **matters!** ■



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