

# THE BEST

# GLOBAL

# DESIGN

# OF 2008

By Bruce Nussbaum

Europeans, Asians, and Latin Americans took more International Design Excellence Awards than ever. And students made a strong showing

IDEA  
AWARDS  
2008

THE GLOBALIZATION OF DESIGN achievement is evident in the 2008 International Design Excellence Awards (IDEAs). Europe is surging, with its corporations, consultancies, and schools winning substantial numbers of awards. Asia is rising fast, with Japan back in force, joining China and Korea. And, for the first time, Latin America is making a strong impact. While the U.S. held first place, taking 114 IDEAs, Korea came in second, with 19, and Brazil ranked third, with 12. Run independently by the Industrial Designers Society of America and sponsored by *Business Week*, the contest features 17 categories ranging from computer equipment to entertainment, and from design strategy to student design.

Ferment in the design field is also reflected in the strong showing by students this year. They captured 33 of the 205 awards given by the jury (16%) and 6 of the 35 gold prizes (17%). At London's Royal College of Art,

for example, students designed a low-cost mosquito killer to combat malaria. A student at Parsons the New School for Design in New York developed an idea for a bar of soap shaped like a land mine that could be sold to raise funds to help "cleanse" the globe of landmines. At Croatia's University of Zagreb, a student designed a 3D puzzle, cousin to the Rubik's Cube, for children. And a student at Kookmin University in Seoul designed a Voice Stick, a portable text scanner for the blind. The concept is to convert written information, including e-mail, directly into speech.

A strong sense of social responsibility ran through most of the winning entries. A jury favorite, and one of two Best in Shows, was the Balance Sport Wheelchair. Designed for physically challenged athletes, the wheelchair frees the hands to play basketball. The One Laptop Per Child project won two golds, one silver, and one bronze award. A gold in

packaging and graphics went to *Design for Democracy: Ballot + Election Design*, a book that helps U.S. states design clearer, more useful ballots and polling place signs. And Philips Design took a bronze for a more efficient wood-burning stove that cuts rural villagers' deaths from smoke-inhalation.

The second big trend in 2008 was the return to minimalism and elegance. Apple's gold-winning MacBook Air laptop and iPhone best represented this trend. So did the silver-winning Whirlpool Duet front-loading washing machine. Other winners were not beautiful but simply sensible. The Flip video camera by New York's Smart Design and Pure Digital Technologies is a pocket-size, easy-to-use videocam that employs no cables or complex software.

IDEO, based in Palo Alto, Calif., led the innovation/design consultancies by taking seven awards. Fuseproject came in second, with five; and Ziba and Whipsaw tied for third, with four apiece. France's Decathlon came in first among corporations, with six IDEAS to Apple's four. Denmark's Eva Solo and Motorola won four awards each. Sony and Samsung earned three. Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Calif., dominated among design schools, with three silvers and three bronzes. All other top winners were Asian and European: Hongik University, Seoul National University, Hanyang University, and Samsung Design Membership from Korea, Britain's Royal College of Art, and Germany's University of Wuppertal. The U.S. won just over half of the awards, with Europe taking 23%, Asia 18%, and South America 6%. For more about the winners, read on.. BW i

**BUSINESSWEEK.COM** Find all of this year's IDEA winners in our interactive, searchable database and slide show. Also, peruse the gold winners of the related, Brazil-focused competition. Listen to a podcast with Alistair Hamilton, jury chair, and hear winning designers discuss their work. Visit [businessweek.com/go/08/idea2008](http://businessweek.com/go/08/idea2008).

# ELEGANT SIMPLE TOOLS



## FLIP VIDEO ULTRA

**DESIGNERS** Smart Design and Pure Digital Technologies

**GOLD** Camcorders are complex and expensive, but this no-frills camcorder has a flip-out USB key that does away with cables.

## TOP WINNERS FOR 2008

DESIGN FIRMS	AWARDS				CORPORATIONS	AWARDS			
	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL		GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
IDEO	1	4	2	7	Decathlon	3	3	6	
fuseproject	2	2	1	5	Apple	3	1	4	
Whipsaw	1	3	4	4	Eva Denmark	1	3	4	
ZIBA	1		3	4	Motorola		4	4	
Ergonomidesign	1	1	1	3	One Laptop Per Child	2	1	1	4
Rockwell Group	2	1		3	Samsung	1	2	3	
Tools Design	1		2	3	Sony	1	1	1	3
Antenna Design N.Y.		2		2	3M	1		1	2
aruliden			2	2	Belkin			2	2
Carbon Design Group			2	2	Black & Decker	1	1	2	
Continuum		1	1	2	Dell			2	2
Hoberman Associates	1	1		2	DKB Household/Zyliss	1	1	2	
ID + IM Design Lab	2			2	Hewlett-Packard	2		2	
Modo	1	1		2	Lumini	1	1	2	
RKS Design	1	1		2	Microsoft	2		2	
Scott Henderson	1	1		2	OXO International			2	2
					Philips Design	1	1	2	

Data: Industrial Designers Society of America

IDEA AWARDS 2008

INNOVATION THAT TRANSFORMS entire product categories frequently begins with designs that make complex products easier to use—and often cheaper. Simplicity defined a large number of winners this year. Some products for home and personal use won for sheer elegance. But others, including a mammoth fire truck and a small camcorder, took prizes because their elaborate functions were stripped down and made user-friendly.



**ROSENBAUER PANTHER**

**DESIGNER** Spirit Design (Austria)

**GOLD** Built to put out airport fires, this 40-ton vehicle has equipment—including cannons that can shoot 4,000 gallons of fire-extinguishing agents—designed for firefighters in heavy gear.



**EVA SOLO BIN**

**DESIGNER** Tools Design (Denmark)

**GOLD** Clever geometry eliminates hinges and allows this garbage can to open easily in any direction. Inside, bags fold around a simple metal ring. All in a sleek, gleaming skin.

**ZEPPELIN IPOD SPEAKER DOCK**

**DESIGNERS** Native Design and Bowers & Wilkins (Britain)

**GOLD** This functional sculpture breaks the mold of home speakers; its polished steel arm integrates smoothly with an iPod.



**HOLEDER EARPHONE**

**DESIGNER** Yoon Sang Kim (South Korea)

**SILVER** Bacteria in the ear can multiply 700 times faster behind earphones. This concept, by a Seoul National University of Technology student, fits on the rim and doesn't plug the ear.

