

INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AWARDS BEST OF SHOW



1 Lee Krasnow of Pacific Puzzleworks, who's well-known for his intricate, interlocking wooden puzzles, produced 500 pencils, at \$18.50 apiece.



But the comments they made immediately following those concerns solidified their choice. "[The designers] took a unique approach and got people involved that they were targeting," Smith said. "That's what sets this apart." Lefebure agreed: "It's at a higher level of strategy, concept and execution."

The subject of this hand-wringing is a comprehensive, multidimensional campaign soliciting entries to the 2009 D & AD Awards, whose coveted Yellow Pencils and Black Pencils recognize top print and interactive design and advertising from around the globe. The awards program is sponsored by London-based D & AD, which was founded in 1962 (originally British Design and Art Direction) by a group of creative professionals that included Alan Fletcher and Colin Forbes (two of Pentagram Design's founding partners).

D & AD taps a different international design or advertising firm to create each year's promo materials, and for 2009 they chose TAXI Canada. The agency, which has offices throughout Canada, in New York City and in Europe, works with local and global clients, including Coca-Cola, Heineken, Molson and the Canadian Film Centre. "When they asked us to help them out this year, we had to think about it for all of three seconds," says creative director Dave Watson. "Ironically, the coveted Pencil is possibly the only award that TAXI has yet to win."

TAXI's campaign for the 2009 D & AD Awards has the usual components (website, direct-mail, posters). And then some: two public art installations, a series of 3D promotional pieces and two videos. The campaign engaged not only the creative community it targeted, but also passersby in London's Trafalgar Square who marveled at the construction of a giant yellow pencil on a rainy day in November 2008. And people in a Brooklyn, NY, neighborhood, who looked up to see

Award Show

After much heated debate about more than a dozen contenders, HOW's judges chose a design show call for entries as their top pick.

BY BRYN MOOTH

Standing over a conference table displaying the 17 contenders for Best of Show, the trio of judges debated the merits of one particular project: a call for entries campaign for the international D & AD Awards. A fantastic example of design at its finest, to be sure, but still they wavered. Tim Smith worried that HOW readers would look at the project and think, "Well, that's an easy choice." Judge Pum Lefebure lamented, "I hate the idea that we're awarding a call for entries."

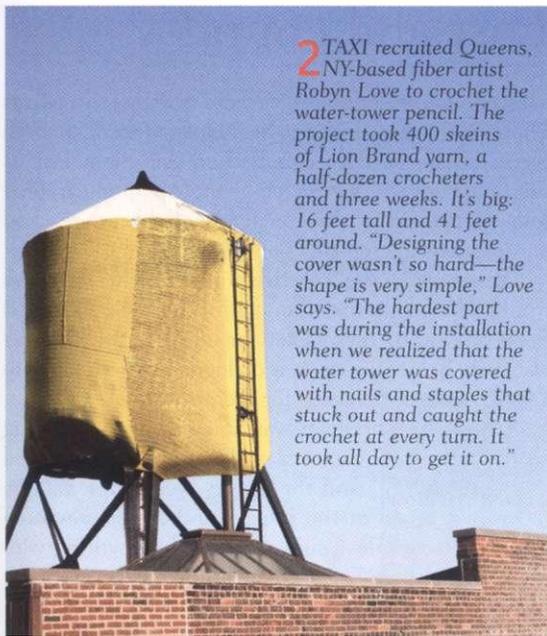
2 TAXI recruited Queens, NY-based fiber artist Robyn Love to crochet the water-tower pencil. The project took 400 skeins of Lion Brand yarn, a half-dozen crocheters and three weeks. It's big: 16 feet tall and 41 feet around. "Designing the cover wasn't so hard—the shape is very simple," Love says. "The hardest part was during the installation when we realized that the water tower was covered with nails and staples that stuck out and caught the crochet at every turn. It took all day to get it on."



3 After the installation came down, TAXI gave the massive crocheted cover to Lion Brand Yarns. It was turned over to volunteers who cut it into squares and made afghans for Warm-Up America.



4 Creating the origami pencil on this call for entries requires 180 folds. Noted origami theorist and artist Dr. Robert Lang devised the folding pattern.



a giant crocheted pencil encasing a rooftop water tower. TAXI documented the two installations in videos posted on YouTube.

The TAXI creative team developed a tagline, "Make it a Pencil," that carried a double meaning: Designers should create work that's pencil-worthy, and they should construct a pencil out of the campaign's 3D components. Stitch together a stuffed pencil using a fabric pattern printed on one of the call for entries posters. Cut another poster apart and fold it into an origami pencil. Solve an elaborate wooden pencil puzzle. Watson says that recipients really did "Make it a Pencil." "Not only did they build the various items, but our client also told us stories of creatives actually fighting over the wooden pencil puzzle," he says.

Beyond the public interest and audience interaction, the ultimate gauge of any call for entries is, well, entries. In a tough economy, D&AD submissions declined in 2009 vs. 2008, though not as much as expected, according to D & AD Awards deputy director Rob Eves. "The call for entries mailer had a response rate of 6.5% and an ROI of 263%," Watson says. "The high-value mailer (with the wooden pencil puzzle) generated incredibly high interest, with 75% of recipients entering the awards show."

For all its elements, the HOW judges hailed the project's simplicity: "The design doesn't get in the way of the idea," says judge Derek Sussner. Smith notes that the campaign's biggest selling point is that it's such a natural, even obvious, solution to the client's communication need. "The flash of brilliance is when you have a, 'Well, yeah' reaction—but no one's ever done it before."

Eves, who knows a thing or two about evaluating design work, recognizes the HOW judges' concerns about picking this particular Best of Show. "I can

understand that debate, and I think it's a relevant one to have," he says. "Yes, it is possible to do more creative, more edgy work for a design and advertising awards call for entries. But you could also argue that it's not just possible, it's needed. And I don't think creating for other creatives is necessarily easier. While you can perhaps take what would seem like risks with more conventional campaigns, you also need to get even more just right. Every execution will be viewed through more critical eyes."

In a blog post on October 2008, when the "Make it a Pencil" campaign launched, D&AD president Garrick Hamm said, "I hope to see some truly inspirational work; work that sets new standards; work that hasn't been seen before. And work that has that 'F***, I wished I'd done that' about it."

Exactly.

TITLE D&AD 2009 Call for Entries | **DESIGN FIRM** TAXI Canada, Toronto; www.taxi.ca | **EXECUTIVE CREATIVE DIRECTOR** Steve Mykolyn | **CREATIVE/ART DIRECTOR** Dave Watson | **DESIGNER** Maria Lishman | **WRITER** Jess Willis | **ILLUSTRATORS/RETOUCHERS** Andrew O'Driscoll, Alex Chung | **MAC ARTISTS** Nancy Hanninen, Natalie Akoon, Pam Cohen, Christopher Smith | **ORIGAMI ARTIST** Robert J. Lang | **PUZZLE MAKER** Lee Krasnow | **ARTISTS** Miwa Takabayashi (Trafalgar Square pencil), Robyn Love (crochet pencil) | **PRINT PRODUCERS** Sharon Govang, Bruce Ellis, Mark Prole | **ACCOUNT MANAGERS** Nicole Polivka, Natasha Sidhu | **EDITOR** Josh Ingleby | **EXECUTIVE PRODUCER** Kevin Saffer | **MUSIC** Company X | **ANIMATION** The Craft Shop | **ART BUYERS** Anne Maureen McKeating, Kathryn Brown | **PRINTERS** MLG Digital Graphics, Generation Press | **CLIENT** D&AD Awards

5 "Imagine doing a campaign for one of the most prestigious awards shows in the world," TAXI creative director Dave Watson says. "Not to mention the fact that the target audience were the best creatives in the world. Creating a campaign that would be seen by the likes of Stefan Sagmeister and David Droga is something that we were salivating over."

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Check out HOWdesign.com for links to two YouTube videos, artist Robyn Love's account of this crochet project and more photos. HOWdesign.com/2009 InternationalBOS