

Annual Design Awards: Winners 2003

The best product designs of the year

Bruce Nussbaum

International - Asian cover story

How do corporations survive in hard times? The Industrial Design Excellence Awards (IDEA) for 2003 show how. This annual contest is sponsored by BusinessWeek and juried by the Industrial Designers Society of America. The winners this year used design to push traditional brands into new markets, extend well-known brands into new products, and invent something totally new, cool, and useful. With money tight, companies used design research to develop not only products but also their branding, packaging, and marketing. The impact of this approach goes far beyond the objects themselves.

Indeed, the biggest winners this year used design -- and top design firms -- to create powerful, emotional consumer experiences. "We have moved from designing iconic objects to designing iconic experiences," says Sohrab Vossoughi, founder of ZIBA Design Inc., which snagged six awards this year, second only to powerhouse IDEO's eight.

The best example of what it took to win big in 2003 is Logitech (LOGI) Inc., which won six gold, silver, and bronze awards. The info-tech slowdown dented demand for Logitech's famous computer mouse. So it used both ZIBA and IDEO to move into new markets. The gold-winning Logitech Pocket Digital Camera slides open smoothly and is so thin and light that it feels just right in the hand. The product is more than functional -- it's emotional. "Experience design requires superlative design and engineering execution to deliver on the emotional promise of a new concept," says Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO, which created the camera, along with MOTO Development Group and Logitech.

The power-of-experience design is evident in the gold-winning software Zinio Reader. It combines the magazine reading experience -- the turning of pages, color images, navigation through headlines and charts, and advertising -- with interactivity. It's simply dazzling, with subscribers able to download video clips and interact directly with advertisers.

The 2003 IDEA contest showed that Asian design continues to grow. Samsung won three honors and is now second only to Apple Computer Inc. in total awards for the past five years. Motorola (MOT) Inc. designed a gemlike cell phone for the high-end Asian market and decided to sell it worldwide. Indeed, many products designed in Asia or made for Asia quickly become global. A beautiful windsurfing sail collection came from Hong Kong is an example.

There was plenty of innovation in this year's winners. Dutch Boy reinvented the paint can, for the first time in 100 years, so there's no dripping. Herbst LaZar Bell Inc. designed baby nail clippers with a magnifying glass to help moms and dads. BMW won a bronze for moving a motorcycle gas tank under the seat, opening up room for more storage up front. A Swede came up with a two-handed hacksaw, and KabaClip finally solved the problem of the lost contact-lens case -- clip it to the bottle of lens cleaner. As for style, this year's winners showed that flashy color is mostly out. White, blue, and black are in. There are more straight lines and fewer blobs to reflect leaner times.

In 2003, there were 1,279 entries from 15 countries around the world. The 122 winners received 38 golds, 39 silvers, and 45 bronzes. Check out the following pages and our Web site for more great designs.

Disponível em: <<http://www.businessweek.com>>. Acesso em: 27 jun. 2003.