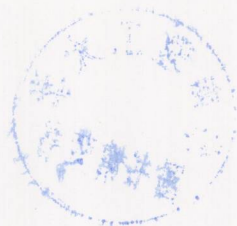


# hall of fame

design for  
a better  
quality of life







# Hall of Fame

## Volume 2

### Design for a better Quality of Life

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**Hall of Fame Volume 2 –  
Design for a better Quality of Life**

Edited by Peter Zec on behalf of Icsid,  
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# Preface

## Hall of Fame

### Volume 2



Peter Zec, Icsid President (2005-2007) and CEO of the red dot design award



Since its foundation in 1957, the "International Council of Societies of Industrial Design" (Icsid) has strived to increase the social significance of design worldwide, and to promote the role of design in providing a better quality of life for all people. For Icsid, design is a central factor in the innovative humanization of technology, and forms a basis for cultural and economic exchange.

Over the past eight years during which I have had the great honour of working in the Icsid Board of Directors, I have been repeatedly asked what is so special about the work of Icsid. Of course, it is not difficult to give an answer to this question when active in the organization and very much committed to it on a personal level, for one knows what one is doing and why. Nevertheless, I have also repeatedly posed myself the same question, in order to find as straightforward an answer as possible that is, at the same time, also convincing. What is it therefore that distinguishes Icsid in such a special way, and what is so unique about this organization? The answer is actually relatively simple and yet plausible: what makes Icsid so special is the diversity and originality of the members brought together in this international organization. Each individual member is important and lends the organization significance and authority. In addition, it is a form of global solidarity in striving to achieve a better quality of life through design that gives Icsid its specific identity and legitimacy. It thereby goes without saying that an international organization such as Icsid can only strive for and achieve goals that are also desired and supported by its members.

The membership of Icsid is divided into four different areas, which are also identified as the four pillars of the organization. These are the areas of Professional, Promotional, Educational und Corporate Members. This configuration of member organizations from the four various fields is both unique and characteristic of this international umbrella association. On the foundation of these four pillars it is possible to build a bridge of communication and understanding in the international world of design. Icsid is committed to safeguarding the interests of professional designers and enables an exchange of experience to take place between designers from various parts of the world. One of the most important tasks is to battle for the recognition and protection of intellectual property rights. The idea of design is promoted and spread throughout the world by the organization's promotional mem-

bers. A constantly growing Educational Network provides teachers and students alike with an international platform for an intensive transfer of knowledge and cooperation in projects. Through its Corporate Members, Icsid enjoys direct contact to industries and businesses that are especially concerned with design and which make a decisive contribution to the development of design. Through the diversity of interests represented by the members, it is possible for each and every member to exchange ideas with representatives from other fields or to jointly develop projects. Quite typical of such projects is the publication at hand, to the success of which numerous members from the most varied of fields have contributed. At the same time, it has also been possible to build a new bridge of communication.

This volume contains more than 50 design bureaus and design-oriented businesses that have committed their endeavours to the book's leitmotif of "Design – for a better Quality of Life". They have been recommended and nominated for an entry by the national Icsid member organizations after careful consideration. Many of the companies and designers presented have long been successful players on the global stage. They can look back on a long tradition, during which they have achieved for people much that is positive through their responsible designs. Through a selection of exemplary works linked to a business portrait, the reader can gain an insight into significant spheres of influence. With its structure of sorting by country, the book also offers an overview of current trends, ideas and developments of the global market.

Very personal perspectives on the diverse theme of "Design for a better Quality of Life" are provided by the renowned design experts Mark Breitenberg, Kenji Ekuan, Carlos Hinrichsen and Stefano Marzano. I would like to take this opportunity to express to them my heartfelt thanks for their essays. My thanks also go to the Icsid Secretary General Dilki de Silva for her contribution on 50 years of Icsid, as well as the entire Icsid secretariat in Montreal for their good teamwork. My special thanks go last, but not least, to all Icsid members for their recommendations as well as to all the designers and businesses who, through their creative work, have made such a book possible in the first place.

Essen, Germany, July 2007  
Prof. Dr. Peter Zec







# **Design for a better Quality of Life**

**What has changed?  
What is the status quo?  
Where we will be tomorrow?**

The theme "Design for a better Quality of Life – The development of industrial design in the context of technology, politics, economy and culture" is complemented by personal perspectives from Mark Breitenberg, Kenji Ekuan, Carlos Hinrichsen and Stefano Marzano.







# **Design for a better Quality of Life**

## **The development of industrial design in the context of technology, politics, economy and culture**

**Peter Zec** Icsid President (2005-2007), President and CEO red dot design award.

### **I. Status quo**

1. Much remains to be done
2. Design is illogical

### **II. Design and the technology of society**

1. Industrialization takes command
2. Pragmatism and the entrepreneurial spirit
3. Form and function
4. The pursuit of prosperity and quality of life

### **III. Design and the politics of society**

1. Promoting design awareness
2. Protecting intellectual property
3. Creativity requires freedom

### **IV. Design and the economy of society**

1. No prize, no value
2. Investment rather than costs
3. Decisions and feel for the market

### **V. Design and the culture of society**

1. Design reflects consciousness
2. Creativity knows no boundaries
3. New "archetypes" from the East
4. Ecological and social responsibility

### **VI. Summary**

# I. Status quo

## 1. Much remains to be done

“Icsid strives toward a world where design is recognized for its social, cultural and economic impact on the quality of life.”

Thus reads the vision statement of the worldwide largest design organization, the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, or Icsid for short.

At first glance the Icsid vision might appear untimely or even outdated. Is it really necessary in today's world to strive for such a goal? Has design not already reached the desired state? Is it not the case that design has long been recognized by the wider public as the driving force behind continuous improvements in quality of life? And has design, as an ambassador of a socio-culturally advanced way of life, not already pervaded all aspects of the global social order? Has design not become an integral and almost natural part of our everyday lives, without which life would be unimaginable? Does design not play a key role for the success of a product in a globally competitive environment in winning market share? Is there any business today that could dare dispense with design and not risk being utterly left behind by its competitors? Many companies that have tried to do so in the past have long disappeared from the market and have themselves become history in the process.

The answers to these questions concerning design depend in large part on the angle from which they are viewed and addressed. From the perspective of the highly developed post-industrial world, one can at least superficially be certain that all of these questions would be answered with a “yes”. However, if we look at the current development of design from the perspective of economically aspiring nations, or even from the perspective of developing countries, things look very different. When we look at it from their perspective, it is clear that the world of design is not in the best shape everywhere. We can easily discern a fundamental imbalance and a serious temporal disparity in the development of design.

Even when scrutinising design in the post-industrial world, we can still easily identify numerous areas in which design is not yet well, or well enough, developed. Regardless of the degree to which design is acknowledged as a key factor of economic success, the social and cultural significance of design is, unfortunately, in too many cases not yet emphasized strongly enough. We recognize that the design of a product does not mean an increase in the quality of people's lives per se. Sometimes even the exact

reverse is true, especially when a product unacceptably pollutes the environment or negatively impacts on our lives. Much remains to be done if we are to raise awareness of how significant and important design is in our shared world. It is against the backdrop of this insight that the vision formulated by Icsid has to be understood. This vision is anything but untimely or outdated; the aim – and the aspiration it expresses – is still unreservedly valid even today.

## 2. Design is illogical

How is it that design has developed to such differing degrees in the various nations and societies of the world? Why is it that there are such varied, even contradictory, perceptions of and opinions on design? Why has it still not been possible to define a common denominator for design in terms of its interpretation and evaluation? Why are there still many people who either have no idea whatsoever of design or even adopt a fundamentally dismissive attitude toward it?

From a philosophical point of view, it can be said that no truth as such is to be found in design. Indeed, it is an essential quality of design that it always provides scope for creative freedom in deciding between several possible forms. Thus, in design, it makes little sense to seek the one and only ‘right’ form or even to predefine it by law as universally applicable. In design, we are dealing more with probabilities based on an existing multitude of possibilities rather than truth. As soon as this array of possibilities is reduced to only one unequivocal solution, it is no longer a creative but rather a purely technical solution, which, as such, no longer belongs to the realm of design.

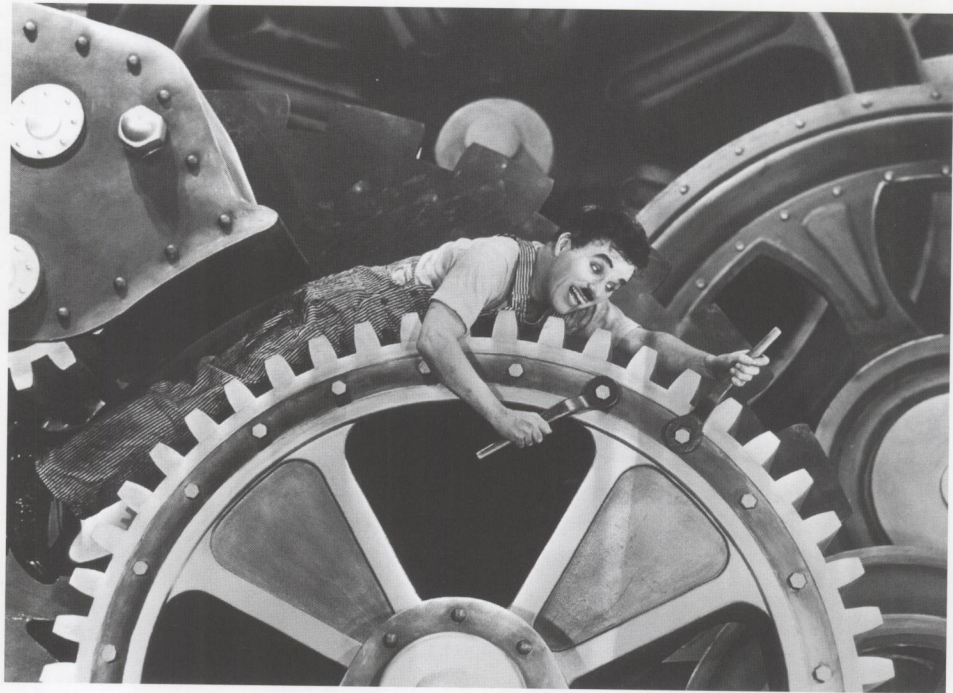
In principle design is illogical, even though its outcome, the form for a specific product, often appears logical. The rules which are at work in design do not correspond to the laws of formal logic; rather they are based on the choices made by the designer in following his own concepts. Just as the final form of a product is a definite reality, so too is the wide range of pos-



The origins of industrial design are to be found in the development of new technological means of production and the resulting industrialization of society.

#### Modern Times

Charlie Chaplin in the motion picture  
Modern Times, 1936



sible forms prior to its actual creation, a range within which certain choices had to be made. In principle this never changes, even when limited by special demands made by the client on the product to be designed. Irrespective of such demands, sufficient creative possibilities generally still remain, even when the designer's freedom in making decisions is limited.

Design is a matter of choosing between forms. And in order to do so, decisions have to be made continuously. However, this process does not follow any predefined or universally applicable rule. We therefore face a fundamental problem of determination. To the question of which form is the right one, there are no purely objective criteria on which to base an answer. Even when the product's tasks and the demands it has to fulfil are precisely described, the final outcome will remain undetermined as long as the final decision on it has not been taken. Although this decision may well be based on objective criteria, this does not change the fact that the decision will always be a subjective judgement. And it is here that both the fascination and the problem of design lie. Design is always accompanied by the risk of failure. Design is thus always full of suspense and unpredictable.

There is no unequivocal option and certainty in design. That is why it is possible for so many different perceptions and interpretations of design to exist. Decisive is always under which aspect and from which point of view design is considered.

The development of design is essentially defined by four factors. These are the areas of the technology, economy, politics and culture of society.

## II. Design and the technology of society

### 1. Industrialization takes command

The origins of design, or to be more exact of industrial design, are to be found in the development of new technological means of production and the resulting industrialization of society. Prior to this, all goods had been

produced by artisans and craftsmen, commissioned usually by either the church or by feudal lords and affluent merchants. The advent of industrialization, however, fostered mass production of items for a large group of consumers. Industrial workers in the fast growing cities comprised a new group of consumers, who at the beginning did not have any great financial means at their disposal, but were nonetheless forced to consume goods and products simply because they were living in the city. Due to industrial mass production, it had become possible to produce and sell products not only faster, but at a much lower price than had been the case with handcrafted items. Great quantities of mass produced goods soon came to define what was on offer in the newly emerging department stores and shops.

With these new technological means, it had simultaneously become possible to develop and ultimately market entirely new products. After 1850, a kind of inventive spirit seemed to have permeated the collective consciousness, a spirit which was geared toward the mechanization of virtually all aspects of life, ranging from handcraft to the private household. In his book "Mechanization Takes Command",<sup>1</sup> the art historian Sigfried Giedion gives us a highly detailed and vivid description of the changes that were happening in the product world at the time, changes triggered by mechanization and industrialization.

Together with a new, massive group of consumers, there also emerged the desire to consume cheaper mass products. Missing, however, were role models and the necessary experience to set new quality standards and orientation norms for mass-production in terms of the possibilities that were afforded by technological advancement as opposed to individual craftsmanship. So at first, many attempts were made in industrial production to imitate as closely as possible the product forms and patterns of taste that until then had been shaped by handicraft. The result was products marked by a certain arbitrariness of quality. Some of these products were even badly manufactured botched products, which nonetheless found a ready market among a still relatively inexperienced group of buyers.



Industrialization literally proceeded full-steam ahead. Nevertheless, a highly critical voice could be heard in England around this time. That voice was William Morris, a kind of resistance fighter against the aesthetic pollution of society who attacked the new circumstances with scathing criticism and thus, more or less unwittingly, set the ball rolling in the development of industrial design – although he actually advocated entirely different objectives. In the mass products designed completely “without art”, he discerned an aggressively effective potential: “They wound the artistic by their presence. They wound us by their existence.”<sup>2</sup> Morris’ intellectual struggle against the tastelessness of modernity finally ended in an appeal to boycott consumption as, in his opinion, the most effective weapon against an artless and thus inhuman production of goods. The mass of new consumers however neither heard nor heeded his appeal. Nevertheless, Morris was not altogether unsuccessful. In Germany at least, his critique was well received and shared by an ever increasing number of craftsmen, artists and architects. The intention here, however, was not to bring the rise of mass production to a complete halt, but rather to foster a new aesthetic awareness for industrial mass production and thus to improve the situation.

The artist and architect Peter Behrens was to become a major figure within this movement. For Sigfried Giedion, Behrens and his work epitomizes German architecture at the start of the 20th century. Behrens became famous for considering the industrial construction to be a serious architectural task. The objective of his industrial architecture was to design factories as dignified places of work. In addition, his design work remained focused on the creation of new aesthetics in industrial production. At the same time, Behrens also had a tremendous influence on many other contemporary designers, and such significant personalities as Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius and, last but not least, Le Corbusier worked in his office. In 1907, Peter Behrens was appointed art consultant at AEG, the world’s largest industrial firm at the time. This gave him a unique opportunity to directly influence the design of a whole industrial company. His responsibilities at AEG were broadened step by step, from the graphic design of the company’s in-house magazine as well as product and exhibition cata-

logues, to the entire corporate appearance of the company, and finally to architecture and product design. With his work, Behrens significantly contributed to the development of the new discipline of industrial design. Today, he would be called an industrial designer or even perhaps be described as a design manager.

Behrens realized very early on that the aesthetic of utility items in the new industrial era was closely related to the possibilities afforded by technological advancement. Instead of working against technology with artistic means, Behrens made use of it to create products with improved usability and simpler functionality. Later on, the Bauhaus would follow a similar design approach.

The starting point and the basis of the work at the Bauhaus was the experimental use of everything that the industrial age had to offer in the way of new possibilities: new building materials such as plate glass and steel, new communication media such as photography and film, as well as new technical production possibilities in handicraft and industry, such as the processing of steel tubes and textiles. Having set out to explore new design concepts based on the technically feasible, the designers at the Bauhaus constantly had to start from zero in order to improve the modern world. And they drew their inspiration from a completely new perception of technology.

The technology of industrial society was paired with a creative imagination to become the driving force for the creation of a new world. This movement had actually begun much earlier with the construction of the Crystal Palace, which was opened to the public on May 1, 1851 in London. A building project unrivalled at that time, Crystal Palace was erected by the English horticultural architect Joseph Paxton in just seventeen weeks in order to host “The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations”, which itself was to have a strong influence on the further industrialization of modern life. With this first ever World Exhibition, the people on the America continent also began to participate in contemporary development of a new international industrial society.

William Morris attacked the aesthetic pollution of society and set the ball rolling in the development of industrial design.

Wallpaper  
Designed by William Morris

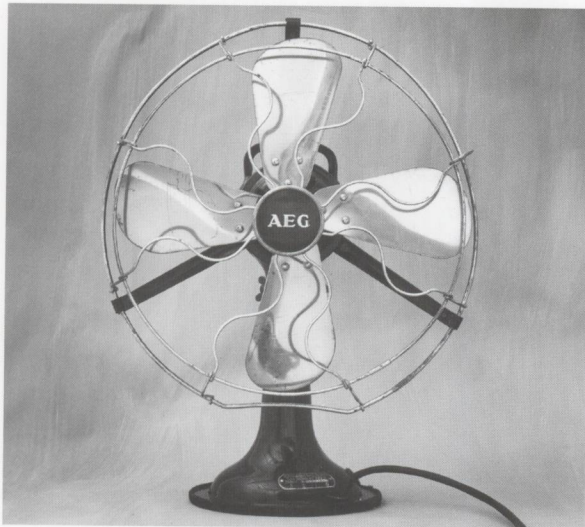




The objective of Peter Behrens' industrial architecture was to design factories as dignified places of work. His design work focused on the creation of new aesthetics in industrial production.

AEG Turbinenfabrik, Berlin  
Peter Behrens, 1910

AEG Electric Table Fan (Replica)  
Designed by Peter Behrens in  
the early 1920s





The technology of industrial society  
became the driving force for the creation  
of a new world.

Crystal Palace, London  
Joseph Paxton, 1851

Bauhaus, Dessau  
Side view, 1927

Wassily Chair  
Designed by Marcel Breuer, 1926

