

DESIGN MUSEUM

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DESIGNER OF THE YEAR

Embracing every area of design – from cars and computers, to graphics and video games – the Design Museum's £25,000 prize is given annually to the UK designer or design team that made the biggest contribution to design in the past year.

Design is a field where the UK leads the world. The work of the designers shortlisted for this year's prize – furniture designer Tom Dixon, the design team of The Guardian newspaper, Jamie Hewlett, creative director of the virtual band Gorillaz and the humanitarian designer Cameron Sinclair – illustrates the richness and diversity of the UK's design talent.

The nominees were chosen on the basis of their work in 2005 by a jury of Christopher Bailey, creative director of Burberry; Emily Campbell, head of design at the British Council; Hilary Cottam, the public sector design reformer and last year's Designer of the Year; and the television presenter Kevin McCloud. The jury is chaired by Christopher Frayling, rector of the Royal College of Art and chair of Arts Council England.

On 22 May, the jury will meet again to vote for the winner. You can help to choose who will win this year's prize by voting for your favourite here at the exhibition or on the Designer of the Year website at www.designmuseum.org. Your vote – and the other public votes – will count towards the final choice of the next Designer of the Year. The Design Museum also wants to know who you think should be nominated for next year's prize – please tell us if you have any suggestions.

TOM DIXON

One of the UK's most respected and pioneering product designers, Tom Dixon celebrated an exceptionally prolific year in 2005. Alongside products for companies including Cappellini, Habitat, Magis, Swarovski and Thonet, Dixon launched new furniture, fabric, wallpaper and lighting designers for Tom Dixon Ltd and the Finnish furniture manufacturer Artek – of which he is also creative director. His evident enthusiasm for design also saw Dixon championing the work of emerging designers in a number of international workshops and competitions throughout the year.

Born in Sfax, Tunisia in 1959, Dixon has been based in the UK since the age of five. Following a frustrating six months at Chelsea School of Art and time convalescing after a serious motorcycle accident, Dixon spent the early 1980s at the heart of London's post-punk design scene – experimenting with 'creative salvage' from reclaimed materials. This DIY approach to design galvanized a curiosity for materials and processes that Dixon retained throughout his more commercial ventures Space, Euro lounge and Habitat – where he was appointed creative director in 2001.

More recently Dixon has explored materials and techniques that are currently unfashionable or underexploited, such as stone or enamel and blow-moulding or extrusion. The Fresh Fat series, for example, is made from extruded strands of still-warm spaghetti-like plastic which are woven, twisted, or moulded into a variety of products ranging from bowls to light shades and one-off furniture pieces. For Dixon, the current challenge is to be able to create products such as these through modest manufacturing methods that are of a quality and standard to compete with global companies or specialist manufacturers.

CAMERON SINCLAIR

In the year since the tsunami ravaged the South East Asian coastline, Architecture for Humanity has constructed schools, medical clinics and community centres that have had an immediate positive effect in the devastated areas. Co-founded in 1999 by Cameron Sinclair, Architecture for Humanity develops innovative design solutions for global, social and humanitarian crises. The non-profit organisation is now focusing on design solutions for the havoc wreaked by Hurricane Katrina and the Kashmir earthquake.

Sinclair first became interested in social and humanitarian design as an architecture student at the University of Westminster and the Bartlett School in London. After graduating, he moved to New York where he worked as a project architect while founding Architecture for Humanity in response to the need for transitional housing for refugees returning to Kosovo at the end of the Balkan conflict. The experience established the template for future projects: a global network of designers and architects submitting competition proposals for tackling social issues, with the winning entries overseen by Sinclair and his partners.

Although previous and ongoing projects have centred on building transitional housing for refugees or reconstructing communities destroyed by disaster, Architecture for Humanity does much more than disaster relief. Using design as a catalyst for change and embracing Sinclair's slogan 'design like you give a damn' – Architecture for Humanity is also developing projects such as a football facility and HIV/AIDS outreach centre for young girls in Somkhele in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

www.architectureforhumanity.org

JAMIE HEWLETT

While some musicians have reinvented themselves as cartoon characters – Michael Jackson and the Beatles included – it took the launch of Gorillaz in 1999 to challenge expectations of what an animated band could accomplish.

Through a wealth of printed and on-screen presentations, Jamie Hewlett, cult comic artist and co-creator of Gorillaz, produced a fiction-as-fact illusion of the band. His detailed storyboards and character profiles have brought to near-life the group's four members – Murdoc, 2D, Russel and Noodle – and made the virtual group Gorillaz a real entity in the international music industry.

On leaving Northbrook College, West Sussex in the late 1980s, Hewlett developed the anti-heroine comic character Tankgirl for the music and culture magazine *Deadline*. The popular strip quickly became the focal point of the magazine introducing Hewlett to other creative projects, including more mainstream comics, advertising campaigns and record sleeve design. The extraordinary Gorillaz project grew out of a shared interest – and flat – with Blur's lead singer Damon Albarn. The debut self-titled album sold an impressive six million copies worldwide, making Gorillaz the most successful album ever by a virtual group.

For the 2005 launch of the second studio album, *Demon Days*, Hewlett took the visualisation and personification of the band to a new level. Working with long-time collaborators Passion Pictures, the group's 'live' performances were upgraded from 2D projections to complex quasi-holographic performances in which the band were fully rendered onstage in 3D for the MTV European Music Awards and the Recording Academy's Grammy Awards.

THE GUARDIAN

One of the most ambitious projects of 2005, The Guardian redesign has raised the benchmark of editorial design and already led to a significant uplift in Guardian sales. Having decided to shrink its broadsheet format to the new convenient Berliner size, The Guardian's design team, led by creative director Mark Porter, used the opportunity to initiate a comprehensive and integral overhaul of the entire paper.

In an era dominated by instantaneous digital newscasts, the traditional newspaper is under increasing demands to compete for readership and attention. Yet the redesign of The Guardian was more than a reflexive response to its on-screen competitors – the team created a design which combined the most relevant aspects of newspaper tradition with digital technologies and printing processes to make the most of the reduced size, with colour photography, illustration or infographics on every page – a first in UK national newspaper design.

Although a newspaper has a shelf life of a single day, it is designed anew for each edition to accommodate changing news, advertisements and features. To ensure readability, coherence and continuity the design team implemented a rigorous five-column modular grid structure. A new typeface family – Guardian Egyptian – was commissioned from Christian Schwartz and Paul Barnes to enhance legibility and project a calm, contemporary personality.

More direct and visually focused, with an intelligible structure, and minimal distractions for the reader, the overall result is a newspaper designed to interpret daily news with clarity, complementing the high editorial standards The Guardian has celebrated since its first edition in 1821.

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Curator:	Libby Sellers
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