

# I.D.

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## DESIGN REVIEW 2000

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GRAPHICS  
PACKAGING  
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#### BLISSWORLD OFFICES

Even a humble function—packing and shipping—was given a stylish treatment in this project for a warehouse office in downtown Brooklyn. “It reeks of efficiency,” Ranieri said. “I sort of believe that they’re going to get my package somewhere on time.” The design, by UT Architects, features a full palette of trendy materials—polycarbonate, Acrylite and homosote, among others—handled with assurance.

ANDREW BORDWIN



#### KNOLL SHOWROOM

To seduce a jury that sometimes seemed to be waging war against big budgets and big business, this 17,000-square-foot Neocon showroom, designed by Knoll Interior Design in collaboration with 2x4, had some extra ground to cover. But its restrained use of video images—despite an elaborate deployment of 40 monitors—was held up as an example of how the digital beast can be tamed in an environmental design.



#### UNFINISHED (AN HOMAGE)

At the entrance to a Metro station in Los Angeles, artist Robert Millar stenciled a 12,000-square-foot wall with 10,000 nagging questions relating to his work in progress, such as “Is art used to divide?” and “Why do architects order?” True to form, the jury saluted the piece for a maximal effect achieved with minimal means.

FLYNN LARSON



## ENVIRONMENTS

Remember way back when the 1990s were christened the decade of restraint? When a sagging economy bred fear of failure and calls for temperance? All that changed a few years ago, of course, when America plugged in en masse and the markets took off like a scalded cat. But that early-'90s self-effacing simplicity—that open rejection of the bonfire '80s—was not forgotten by our jurors, who shaped the awards for Environments into their own critique of irrational exuberance. The long shadows thrown by big business and its big boxes, and by the NASDAQ and its perky dot-coms, were never far from the jury room as Walter Chatham, Emanuela Frattini Magnusson and Elizabeth Ranieri set out to choose the winners.

Put simply, it was a bad year to be a superstore—"I find a lot of these things don't have a soul," one juror said. Or to be a themed anything ("People are theming to the edge of madness!") or a fetishizing technophile ("We had a backlash against the use of technology as a design crutch") or to hide behind flashy language or graphics. Excess was definitely out, but not only for reasons of taste; there was, dare we say it, a moralizing tone to much of the discussion. "We voted against things that were easily consumed or already so over-consumed that they had no meaning anymore," Ranieri said. "We tried to award projects that had a clarity, a specificity, a self-critical, edited palette—that tried to say the most with the fewest things."

The Best of Category were two temporary installations that were without a doubt the most reductivist projects submitted. Between the black-tape cartoons of Boym Design's Neocon showroom for Vitra and the haunting landscapes of *Vista Point*, Bruce Tomb, Kris Force and Jayne Roderick's installation at the de Young Museum in San Francisco, there was almost no design in the sense that we all see it most. No funny shapes. No flashing lights. No noise.

The jury favored the minimal, but not the ruthlessly sterile; they made a point to spotlight the humor and wit in the two winning designs. They also showed themselves to have a soft side—a place in their hearts for students (the University of Michigan Faculty Resource Room), raw young talent (John Hartmann, Ana Henton and Troy Ostrander of Freecell) and even an architect-designed tree house. Public space was also given weight, and several civic designs elbowed their way through the commercial crowd: Awards were given to a parking garage in Boston, a bomb-proof plaza in San Francisco, public art in Pittsburgh and a line of bus shelters that could appear in any city. Even beauty, that quiet taboo, was frankly privileged by these jurors: The simple aura of Rick Joy's studio and the Umbra headquarters became, for them, a repudiation of fuss and glitz. And then, with the same instructive goals in mind, they included the exception that makes the rule: a fussy, glitzy Nike store in London. Because even if you just do it, you should just do it right.

JURORS: Walter Chatham, Emanuela Frattini Magnusson, Elizabeth Ranieri  
MODERATOR: Philip Nobel



