



A Statement of Existence:

A debate on the role of awards in design education and industry.

23rd October 2008 / 6pm / Market Gallery, Dennistoun

<http://www.marketgallery.org.uk>

Briefing Notes

(In these notes, references to 'design' are intended to include architecture and any activity broadly describing itself as design).

1. Background

At a time when the main topic of conversation between and within design agencies seems to be the much talked about credit-crunch, it is perhaps peculiar that also high on the agenda is the role of awards in the practise of design, and by association their role in education.

While you may think that any existing and well established models (such as awards schemes which promotes individuals and companies above their rivals) would be in their element during these turbulent times, they are actually coming in for an unprecedented amount of criticism and interrogation. Recent editorials and polemics in Eye Magazine, Creative Review and numerous other design journals, and across many design blog sites, indicate that this (for whatever reason) seems to have become one of the most topical design debates of the day. Hand-wringing at the D&AD in relation to no 'Pencils' being awarded in the graphic design section this year, and a subsequent attempt to reconnect with their constituents, also points to a set of institutions who are being forced to question their own existence.

And the issue at hand, while by no means a serious 'world-changing' one, is one that touches on many interesting aspects about how design views itself and how others view it too. It raises issues of hierarchies, value and power structures, and a clash of old and new ways of working. At a micro level it raises questions about the integrity of those running these awards schemes, and at a macro level it raises questions about judgments around the 'best' work in a subjective field, what we value in the design process, and where we see critical design in a commercial context.

2. Further Reading

As a brief overview; those in favour of awards frequently cite needing to take them with a pinch of salt, but say the overall effect is one which opens new doors, brings in new work and provides a culminative effect of raising profile within the sector, and amongst a potential client base. There are others in favour of awards, particularly in an educational context,

who see them as a lesson in the 'realities' of a competitive world, and an important part of professional practise.

Those against awards view them as largely arbitrary, unable to achieve what they set out to do, and counter to the reality of a subjective field with a broad range of practitioners working in a broad range of ways. They often view with suspicion the self-promoting motives of the organising bodies and the vagaries of a jury with it's own internal politics being asked to judge the merits of different pieces of work from different contexts against each other.

This section contains links to much more detailed analysis, and further reading on the topic of design awards:

Our survey results:

<http://www.statementofexistence.org/survey>

Confessions of an awards juror/Nick Bell:

<http://blog.eyemagazine.com/?p=34>

Mad about Awards/Alissa Walker

<http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature.php?id=160&fid=719>

May the best design win?

<http://www.gelatobaby.com/2008/10/09/eat-my-words-may-the-best-design-win/>

Design Awards are so over:

<http://peoplesdesignaward.cooperhewitt.org/2008/nominee/1656>

D&AD seeks counsel:

<http://www.creativereview.co.uk/crblog/what-would-you-like-to-ask-dad/>

What next for Graphic Design and D&AD?

<http://www.creativereview.co.uk/crblog/dad-and-graphic-design-what-next/>

Lost the D in D&AD?

<http://www.creativereview.co.uk/crblog/lost-the-d-in-dad/>

Awards Madness/Jason Grant:

<http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature.php?id=160&fid=717>

David Crowley on D&AD, and histories:

<http://www.eyemagazine.com/opinion.php?id=124&oid=306>

Rick Poyner on D&AD + Design Awards:

<http://www.eyemagazine.com/review.php?id=85&rid=445>

Design Museum / Design of the Year

<http://www.creativereview.co.uk/crblog/design-museums-designs-of-the-year-shortlist-revealed/>

<http://www.designmuseum.org/exhibitions/2008/designs>

