

**WIPO**  
WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION

## WIPO | MAGAZINE

### Celebrating Italy's design excellence

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Every year, the Italian Industrial Design Association (*Associazione per il Disegno Industriale* (ADI)) selects the best of contemporary Italian industrial design to compile the ADI Design Index. An exhibition featuring design projects and products drawn from the 128 entries in the 2012 edition of the ADI Design Index was hosted by WIPO from September 25 to November 19, 2013. The exhibition, Italian Design Innovation – ADI Design Index 2012, was curated by ADI, and organized with the support of the Italian Ministry for Economic Development, the Directorate General for the Fight against Counterfeiting, the Italian Patent and Trademark Office and the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations Office at Geneva.



Elements of the Exhibition Italian Design Innovation – ADI Design Index 2012 hosted at WIPO from September 25 to November 19, 2013. [More photos on Flickr](#). (Photo: WIPO/Berrod)

### Celebrating a culture of excellence

“Italy’s people have long been admired for the everyday creative expression that contributes to *la dolce vita*. This includes a culture of excellence in design that applies aesthetic considerations to everyday objects, taking them from the prosaic to the sublime,” said WIPO Director General Francis Gurry in his introductory message in the exhibition’s catalogue.

He noted that WIPO’s goal is to create “a more robust and enabling environment for future designers around the world”. While the [Hague System](#) for the International Registration of Industrial Designs offers a rapid and cost-effective route for protecting designs against unauthorized copying and imitation in international markets, Mr. Gurry pointed to the draft of a new international treaty currently under consideration that seeks to “simplify standards for industrial design registration procedures at the national level”.

**The ADI Index: a pathway to prestige**

Three winning design projects are selected from the ADI Design Index each year to receive the National Award for Innovation (*Premio Nazionale per l'Innovazione*) conferred by the Italian President. These winning designs also qualify for the highly prestigious *Compasso d'Oro* competition. Traditionally celebrating the best of Italian design, in 2015, for the first time, on the occasion of Expo 2015, ADI is promoting a *Compasso d'Oro International* and designers from around the world are invited to participate on the theme of Expo 2015 – *Feed the Planet, Energy for Life*.

### **About the *Compasso d'Oro***

The brainchild of Gio Ponti and Alberto Rosselli, the *Compasso d'Oro* award was created in 1954 by the department store, *La Rinascente*, to acknowledge and promote Italian design excellence. In 2004, the Italian government issued a law declaring the historic *Compasso d'Oro* Collection consisting of 300 award-winning products, “a cultural heritage of national interest.” Since 1964 the award has been managed exclusively by ADI.

The *Compasso d'Oro* Collection covers the best of Italian design since 1954 to the present day and continues to expand every three years with new award-winning objects.

### **Roundtable focuses on economic importance of design**

Ahead of the opening of the exhibition and on the sidelines of the WIPO Assemblies, a roundtable discussion highlighted the importance of industrial design for innovation, economic growth and social progress. The event brought together speakers from government, the private sector and the design community.

In her opening remarks, Ms. Gulino noted that design is “complex and sophisticated,” requiring a great deal of research and experimentation to develop a finished product. She also pointed to the importance of design to business and the economy. “Design plays a key role in raising living standards, a better quality of life and it helps economic development,” she noted.

Ms. Gulino underlined the importance of developing more streamlined and simplified design registration procedures. “We need more harmonization of legislation in this field especially because different levels of protection of intellectual property rights within different countries generate excess costs for users and encourage counterfeiting,” she said.

Noting that the *Compasso d'Oro* Collection was now considered “an asset of national interest”, ADI President, Luisa Bocchietto said, “copies of these objects damages not only the designer, not only the company, but the Italian nation.... Protection of these icons of Italian design and of icons of design all over the world is very important because they represent work, economy, not only beauty.”

### **The secret of Italy's design success**

Alessandro Sarfatti, former CEO of Luceplan, attributed the success of Italian design to the “fantastic alchemy” that exists between entrepreneurs, designers and suppliers. “These three actors have made Italian design what it is today,” he said. “The designer brings into the company his vision of the world, his ideas and then it is up to the company to stick to the project and realize it,” he said pointing to his experience in developing the iconic “Hope” lamp. Built around the idea of the lighthouse lamp developed by the 19th century French physicist Augustin-Jean Fresnel, the lamp is the product of a lengthy iterative process. After months of experimentation, the mutual trust that existed between the company and the designers, made it possible to overcome design challenges and to produce a high quality, commercially successful product.

The evolving business landscape, however, is putting this traditional business model and these traditional relationships under threat. “The challenge for designers today is to rebuild these relationships and to reignite the creative process within companies,” said Valentina Downey who through her LAB.BRAIN.LAB project works with companies to cultivate the proactive and strategic use of design to boost performance.

## Challenges of protecting designs



In their work with the Good Shepherd Foundation, Valentina Downey and Patrizia Scarzella have been working with artisans in Asia and Africa to help create livelihood opportunities and restore pride in their culture and skills through the application of design principles. [More photos on Flickr](#). (Photo: Lab. Brain design)

Designing new products requires significant investment. “When companies protect their product, they are not just protecting the final product but all the work behind it,” noted Mr. Sarfatti. Imitators, he said, “live off the ideas of others and are basically accepting that the world is not progressing.” Ms. Downey agreed, comparing them to a “cancer that eventually kills the intellectual growth of the community.”

While Mr. Sarfatti recognized that it is important for companies to protect their designs, he noted that it was often very difficult to prove “that a copy is really a copy of an original because copiers change a few details.” Lawsuits, he said, take time and money and while a company needs to factor them into their business strategy, “they can also protect themselves by being innovative so the market knows they are the first.”

Mr. Sarfatti also noted that as the integral role of design in the product design process is poorly understood, design is often confused with style and, as a consequence is not given the importance it deserves. “Style relates to the actual drawings whereas the design process starts from an idea which the designer translates into a product. It involves deciding which technologies to use, how to produce it, which solutions to find. It is a 360 degree process, which is easy to describe, but not so easy to implement,” he said.

## Design as an element of social change



Left: The Copernico lamp is made up of nine concentric movable rings produced from a single sheet of recycled laser-cut anodized aluminium. Each ring turns independently on two different axes, making it possible to direct the light and to create a variety of configurations. Designed by Carlotta de Bevilacqua and Paolo Dell'Elce for Artemide. | Right: Ducati's innovative 1199 Panigale is designed to raise performance levels to the maximum and to make worldchampionship technology available to everyone. [More photos on Flickr](#). (Photos: WIPO/Berrod)

In their capacity as strategic designers, Ms. Downey and architect, Ms. Scarzella have been working with communities in Asia and Africa to help create livelihood opportunities and restore pride in their culture and skills through the application of design principles. In an income generating project run by the Good Shepherd Foundation, Ms. Downey and Ms. Scarzella have developed a design training and product development program to help local artisans use design thinking to “grow ideas and find the best solution for a better life,” she explained.

After assessing the production realities within a given community, Ms. Downey and Patrizia Scarzella, develop a training methodology to enable artisans to work more confidently with different types of materials and colors. “In Thailand and Kenya most of the women have a natural and spontaneous sense of color, training in our design methodology gives them an awareness of their work and makes them proud of their

cultural skill," Ms. Downey said. This approach brings out "the technical elements that belong to their own traditions, it gives value to traditional handicraft skills by enabling continuous product improvement and it allows the community to become more competitive and for the local economy to develop sustainably," Ms. Downey explained.

## **Growing awareness of the role of design**

There is growing understanding and broader recognition of the importance of design as a driver of economic growth and development within both the policy-making and business communities. Insofar as design is an integral part of the product development process, it is also increasingly acknowledged as strategically important to business, offering insights that can improve efficiency and performance and help create a competitive advantage. Similar principles can also be applied to empower and boost the development and socio-economic status of communities around the world. Fyodor Dostoevsky may well be right, "beauty will save the world."

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