

LETTERS

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Mayor Boris taking a different route on London bus design

Boris Johnson makes some wayward decisions on design – to replace the Routemaster, he launched a competition in which the winners were two projects with rear platforms.

This is unrealistic, as future buses will need to operate without a conductor (necessary for safety) and he will find it hard to get hold of a chassis without an engine at the back.

At Ogle Design we carried out a two-year study to develop a specification for a future London bus. With this knowledge and an appreciation of the Routemaster's cuddly appeal, I proposed a design (pictured below) developed in co-operation with Jukka Rautiainen of Labra Design.

I think the Mayor's office threw all my correspondence away without acknowledgment or thanks. A pity, I think.
Tom Karen, designer, by e-mail



Evolution not revolution is stifling vehicle design

Regarding your feature 'The body electric' (DW 21 January) and the opportunities offered automotive designers by electric vehicles, in theory the opportunity is indeed a great one and we would hope to see a new automotive aesthetic emerging.

The reality, however, is quite different.

Cars will continue to look like cars, as long as people continue to look like people, the laws of physics remain the same, and increasingly prescriptive EU safety legislation continues to spew forth from Brussels.

Passengers need to be accommodated in comfort, drivers need to see out clearly, wheels need to remain in what is their optimum position for comfort, handling and roadholding, and there needs to be a strong crumple zone at the front of the car (engine and engine compartment make an excellent shock absorber).

The real challenge for automotive designers is not the creation of radical new shapes (at least not until computer-controlled,

autonomous vehicles become the norm), but rather the development of a new design language for a vehicle's details, where these elements, perhaps dynamically, communicate the technology and sophistication within.

The headlights of Audi's E-tron concept are a good example, where LED technology has freed the designer from the restraints of bulbs and mirrors. The headlights do, however, remain in the same (optimum) position on the vehicle body.

The challenge for automotive interior designers is greater than that facing their exterior counterparts.

Introducing radically different controls to a mass market used to wheels and pedals would be a brave move indeed. I fear that the adjustment time and resulting accidents would be too great a price to pay.

The car's ubiquity is its own worst enemy, shackling it forever with evolution rather than revolution.

Andi Rusyn, Owner, Space and Room, by e-mail

Only joined-up thinking will help the people of Haiti

With regard to the question, 'What is the best thing designers can do to help the relief effort in Haiti?' (Voxpop, DW 4 February), maybe the best thing that the UK design community could do for this type of disaster is to discreetly develop an intelligent, functional, co-ordinated range of equipment that can be stored around the world, ready for such incidents.

Typically, the first stage should be lightweight emergency packs that would include all the necessary stuff of life, such as temporary shelters/tents, bedding for children and adults, fresh water-purification equipment

and other nourishment, and a simple radio which might allow authorities to communicate directly with the displaced, and instructions for use should be simple and pictographic.

Then a second stage of assistance, with well-designed modular dwellings that will give more permanent shelter and facilities: flat-packed, easily erectable and well-thought out, with a two- to three-year life.

Joined-up design in such situations could prevent much of the far more harmful secondary, collateral misery, caused by dysfunctional ad-hoc aid solutions.

It will need some sort of a Thunderbirds-style international rescue organisation to deal with it for it to truly work.

Sebastian Conran, Director, Conran Associates, by e-mail



UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Voxpop

If you could bring in anyone from outside the design industry as a non-executive director, who would you choose, and why?



My father. He's never worked in the creative industries, and he asks frustratingly obvious questions. When we set up Earnest last year, he asked, 'So what exactly is it you do?' I started with 'integrated this', and 'brand that', but to no avail. He didn't understand the terminology, and it forced me to drop the industry lexicon and use terms he'd understand. Real language. And that's the point. He represents our customers, who don't use our language or think the way we may want them to. A target customer, right here, in the boardroom.

Chris Wilson, Managing director, Earnest



A non-executive director should bring something different and refreshing to your party. I'd like someone with a creative mind of their own, who doesn't just talk the talk, but has the balls to stand up and be counted. My nominees: Eddie Izzard, Banksy, Molly Parkin, Vince Cable, Mary Portas and David Bowie. But my winner is Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum, and one of the outstanding visionaries and thinkers of the 21st century.

Callum Lumsden, Creative director, Small Back Room



If you know of anyone who has got a blend of Heston Blumenthal's spice, Fabio Capello's steel, Simon Cowell's honesty, JK Rowling's fortune, Boris Johnson's juice, Bill Clinton's charm, Robert Peston's insight and Jeremy Paxman's punch, I'd love to meet them.

Julian Grice, Chief executive, The Team



Non-executive directors should crucially link a company's boardroom to the outside world, in order to provoke and challenge the processes of creativity, partnerships, boundary pushing and, of course, making money. Anyone who can drive that agenda would certainly be a welcome face around the table. How about Tom Ford? He is a man with a plan, he has created a strong brand for himself that's believable, with the added ability to diversify himself, too, from product to film – he has always got his eye on the next thing and he brings people with him. Oh, and Oscar Niemeyer would be more than welcome, too – 102, wise, brave and cool.

Julie Oxberry, Director, Household