

A Decade of South African Design Excellence

This is a book that highlights the growth and development of the graphic design industry in South Africa over a period of the last 10 years.

 By [Richard Clarke](#) 23 Jul 2003

Keeping records is as old as mankind itself and the benefits are obvious including a reference for practitioners and students as well as journalists and maybe even historians.

Nathan Reddy, Chairperson of think (South African Graphic Design Council), says at the beginning of the book that this is the first official record of graphic design in South Africa.

As such it will be a milestone for future graphic generations to add to and maybe redesign.

In any creative industry, getting perspective on where ones predecessors were at creatively can build ideas about where the creative future lies. That is not the way it always works in practice but this book will serve as a good trigger point for generations of designers to come.

The book is split into sections including corporate identities, packaging design and literature design.

These sections are mostly self-explanatory but one of the omissions is some detailed analysis and explanation as to why these particular designs were rated the best and what criteria were used in the judging process.

Reddy answers this question in part when he goes on to say, "We live in a society that recognises icons and symbology well over the written word. Pictures really do say the thousand words that most people can't or won't read or write."

He goes on to relate design to the very high illiteracy levels in South Africa and my criticism seems elitist when taken in this context. However, the readers that are not experts in this field would have benefited from some sort of map or signposts that point the way to a better understanding and insight.

This is especially important given that many readers and users of this volume will be students.

My criticism should not detract from an invaluable addition to the reference books focused on the communications industry. Communicating via pictures and symbols is different from communicating with words but here in South Africa it is a very critical factor not only in selling but also educating.

The designs that caught my eye were both in packaging and both by The Jupiter Drawing Room SA. Watch out for the Nuts, Bolts, Screws project for Penny Pinchers and the S,M,L project for The Young Designers Emporium.

A Decade of South African Design Excellence is available at R345 and is published by Affinity Advertising and Publishing; Tel: +27 11 486 2573, Fax: +27 11 486 2595, E-mail: .

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