

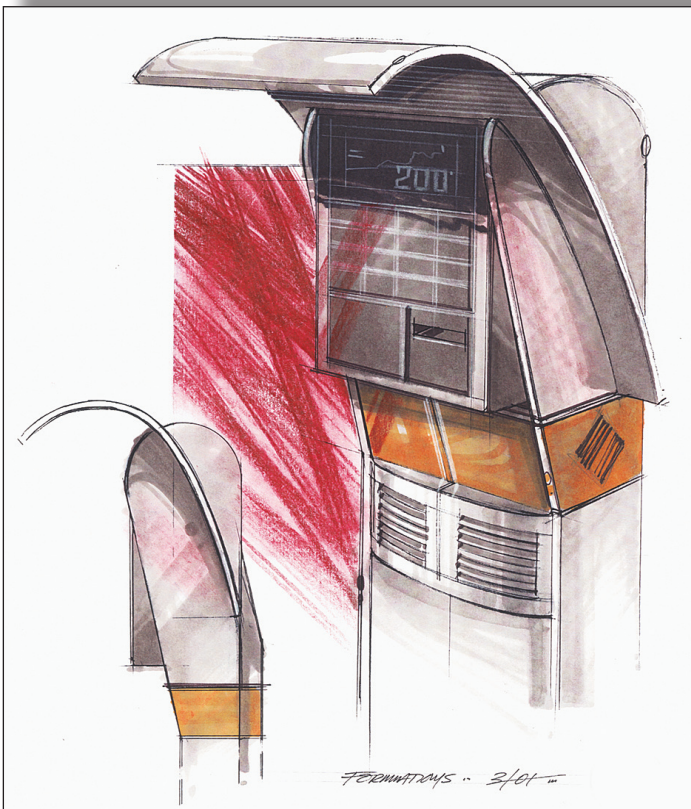


Article
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Steven Storts

INDUSTRIAL designers, by nature, always seem to be on the brink of visual discovery in product development. It's what they strive for. But how do they relate to the engineering team when it comes to advancing the creative process, and what practices can they share with engineers to help move a product agenda forward?

Internationally renowned industrial designer James D. Orr regards his discipline as a true problem-solving science in the sense that its application toward solving complexities simplifies the natural tendency for projects to drift into conflict. "Good design is a product of good thinking," he states succinctly. "It will seek and secure correct material technologies, guide the design-build process, reduce commu-

Outreach Project Fosters Mutual Respect Among Industrial Designers, Engineers



Shown here is an example of one of James Orr's concept refinements for closed-cabinet architecture, part of an unattended weigh station design.

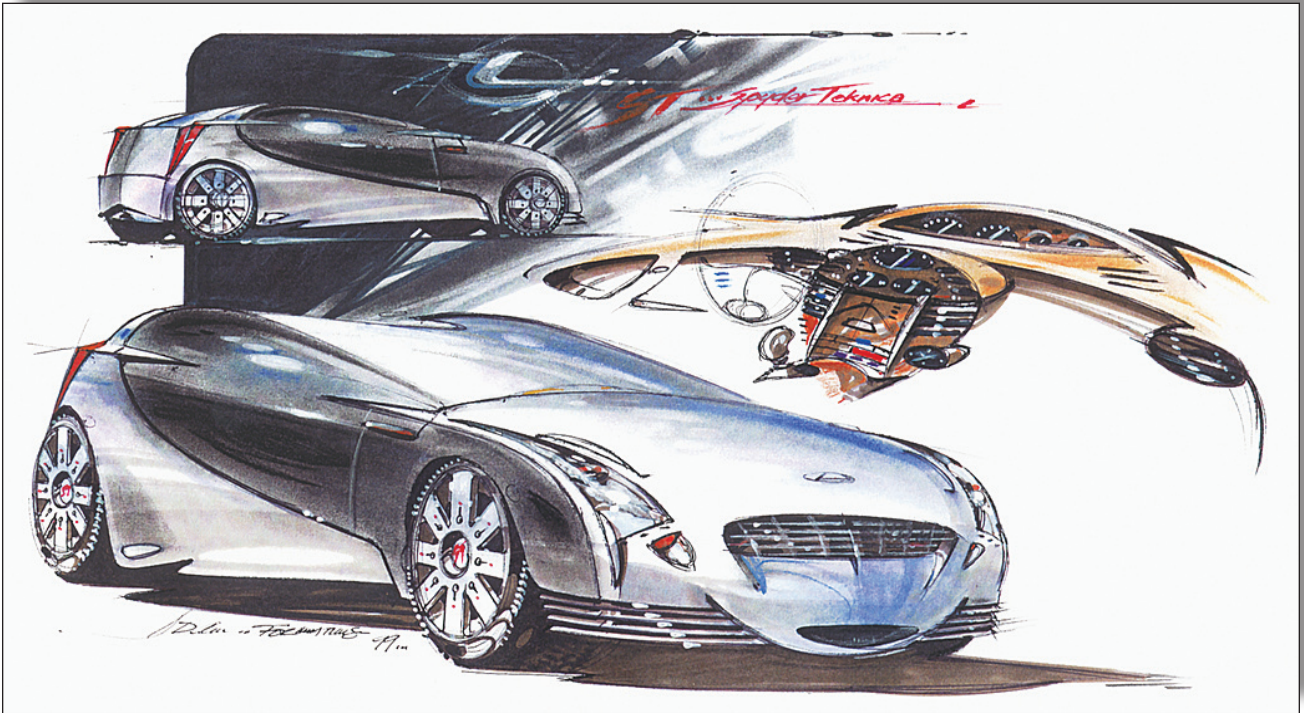
nication errors, amplify individual and collective credibility, and, last but not least, generate trust and respect among all parties concerned."

However, if design and engineering causes are to be sincerely advanced, then the first wave of effort must be directed toward removing the lack of trust that exists in some circles of industry, Orr notes. "Trust is really another form of respect," he says. "If we respect engineering, then it will respect industrial design. What I find encouraging is that when the engineering team is given the floor to speak openly regarding the pros and cons of a program, more positive dialog and professional trust emerge."

According to Orr, the task of designers is to physically push the boundaries of the world in which they live. "We cannot do that without the trust of solid engineering as a vehicle of motivation through which to advance," he admits. "Odd as it may seem, the most efficient means of advancement for the corporate team is to retreat from typical operational status and encourage every



The J. D. Orr Project



Orr did the Lexus drawing as a conceptual study for a world-class E-series coupe and sedan.

component of the mission to have a voice—to be proactive, not protective.”

Engineering can and does play a powerful role in advancing this mission, Orr contends. It encourages exploration and execution, investigates new discoveries and innovation, and generates a database that, when valued and used, yields profound results. “Any team can design and engineer a Ferrari F-50,” he points out. “But give me a team that can design and engineer a world-class sedan that looks like a Ferrari F-50. Now that’s trust and respect!”

Orr, a strong advocate and mentor for creative design, currently serves as product design manager at

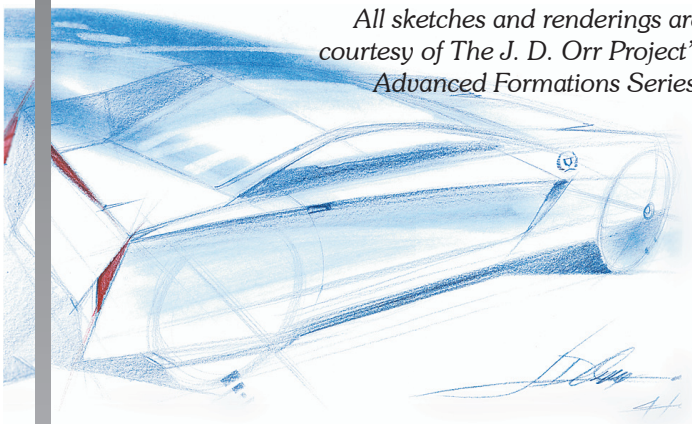
the Columbus, Ohio, headquarters of R. D. Zande & Associates Inc., a consulting, planning, and engineering services firm, with additional offices located throughout Ohio and in West Virginia, Kentucky, Georgia, and South Carolina. His consulting role encompasses a diverse mixture of tasks: marketing services, new product design, and creativity training for staff personnel.

“In working with a variety of engineering systems at Zande, it is my responsibility to deliver applicable design concept studies for several production projects,” he explains, pointing out that the illustrative process of concept through completion is an invaluable tool that allows both parties, client and company, to communicate in a highly efficient and professional manner.

Part of this illustrative, communicative process requires the field of industrial design to advance a higher purpose, to exceed the goals and expectations of its application, says Orr. “If all work is process, then the quality of the product is going to be greatly influenced by the quality of the process,” he emphasizes.

The “quality of the process,” particularly the creative process, is something Orr has pursued during his 30-year career. Before coming to Zande, he served 10 years as executive director of the design

All sketches and renderings are courtesy of The J. D. Orr Project's Advanced Formations Series.



studios for Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, and Cadillac. Orr then spent an additional two years at General Motors as the corporate education liaison for advanced vehicle operations and as director of world car vehicle design at Opel's design headquarters. Following his tour with GM, he served as chairman of the industrial design department at the Cleveland Institute of Art for five years.

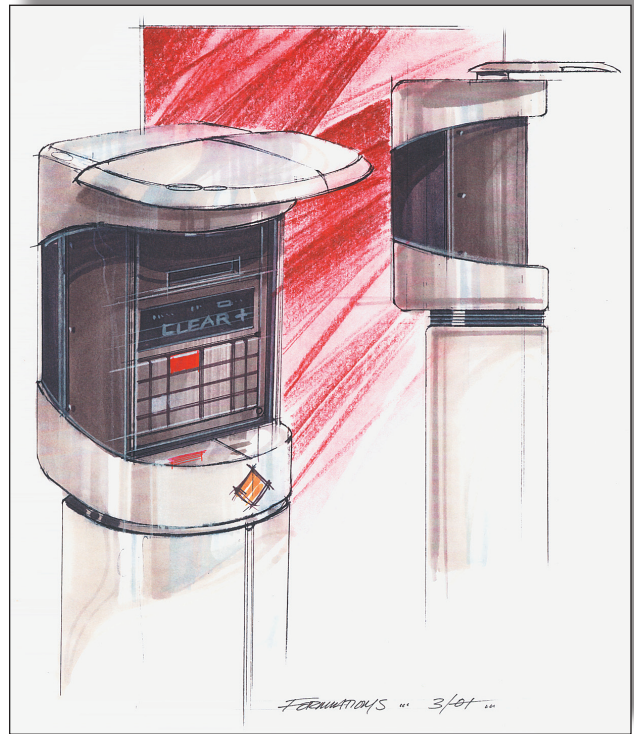
The J. D. Orr Project

Orr's thirst for inspiring creativity and confidence in the work of design students and practicing design professionals led to the recent development of The J. D. Orr Project, a culmination of Orr's teaching curriculum and a lifetime of dedication to his discipline. The Project features the acclaimed *Advanced Formations Series*, a suite of motivational DVD programs and workbooks, in conjunction with a design academy that provides one-on-one instruction and mentoring, and a design studio that offers a working environment for principals, associates, and advanced students.

Inspiring creativity and confidence is not just simply a coined theme for The Project. Indeed, it has been transformed into the title of a special edition DVD, *Inspiring Creative Confidence*, which contains two-and-a-half hours of hands-on instruction taken from the *Advanced Formations Series* that addresses drawing in dynamic perspective, rapid visualization, and marker rendering.

"The Project serves a multitude of needs, the greatest of which is the absolute necessity to develop and possess a confident, conscious means of communicating visually," Orr observes. "This critical aspect of life is our major reason for existence, for there is no doubt that the greater majority of mainstream academia is choosing to ignore or dismiss this vital skill as a means of advancing both the profession and the practicing professional."

Nevertheless, Orr says the ability to conceptualize and create is not going to vanish. In fact, it is becoming more and more the expectation from the "practice" side of life. "In addition to maintaining the handcrafted disciplines, The Project is committed to serving individuals on a one-to-one instructional basis," he points out. "We thrive on working with the 'group dynamic' in all circumstances. Motivation is also a key. We diligently work with talent to develop the total creative package found



Here is another example of Orr's concept refinements for industrial closed-cabinet architecture.

in each individual, honing and securing confident visual aptitudes, verbal skills, and manners of professional conduct."

Program Evaluation

So, what has been the response from the engineering community regarding The Project? "We are very pleased with the successes we have experienced since our launch in April of this year," Orr reports. "We've enjoyed a steady sales pace, due primarily to our presentation found on our Web site, and we conducted a series of workshops throughout the summer months that were very well received. Our energies are now being directed toward developing a series of workshops specifically targeting high school education systems in the Central Ohio area."

Another strong indicator of The Project's early success has been the favorable reception by major corporations that have a vested interest in education and training. Corporate leaders such as Target, Sanford of North America, Riverside Paper, GM, the Ford Foundation, and Dick Blick International are currently evaluating the program's content, in addition to other major high schools and universities that have expressed an interest.



The J. D. Orr Project

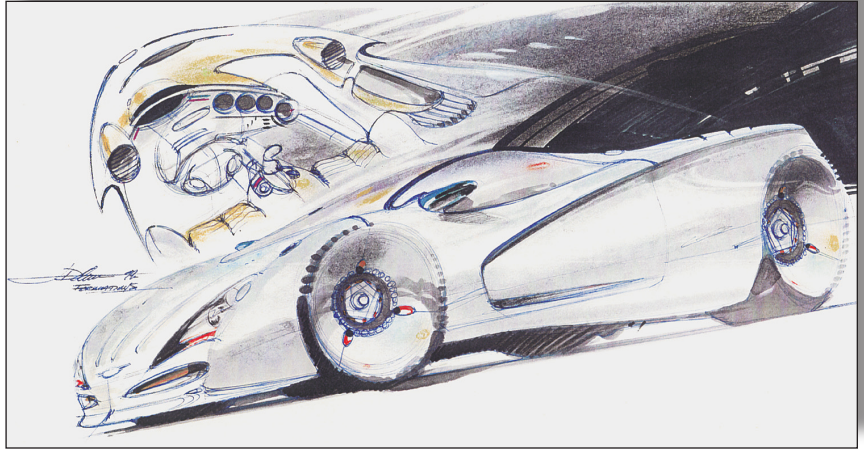
“Our desire is to partner with each one of these outstanding organizations to advance our mission,” Orr explains. “We are not fearful of developing sound business relationships with these key players. In fact, we find it necessary to be on board with them. It allows us to have a deeper and more eventful presence in the markets we are devoted to reaching.”

Engineering Interest

“One of the unique aspects that gave life to The Project was that many corporate enterprises continued encouraging us to develop a program where designers could communicate more efficiently with engineers and vice versa,” Orr points out. “Visual communication is evident in both disciplines. It stands to reason that we should strive to lift the status of both for the good of the products for which we are accountable.”

Orr says The Project has been fortunate in working with engineering staffs to better equip them with “visual thinking skills,” with the positive effect of “integrating the cause” as opposed to “perpetuating the curse.” He emphasizes that each program is tailored to the individual needs of the participating engineering staff, and then adds, “We do not assume that all cases are similar. By maintaining individuality, we build credibility with all concerned.”

The interaction of engineering with The Project’s mission is fostering excellent results, Orr contends. “Staffs are now realizing that bringing the designer together with the engineer generates an integrated approach



A further sampling of a GM conceptual study from Orr's portfolio.

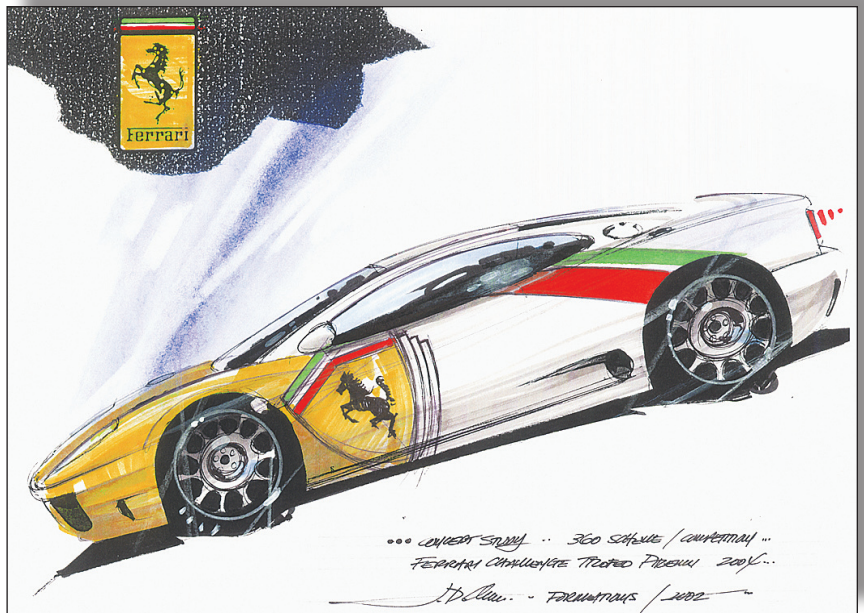
that greatly streamlines a project team’s efforts,” he notes.

Overall, Orr says companies are witnessing several benefits from participating in The Project, including an increased respect for communication, both internally and externally; a willingness to accept new challenges, take on more risks, or invent new manufacturing systems; and a better use of problem-solving skills

when a crisis or adverse situation first appears.

Orr also cites two other major benefits behind The Project’s purpose: a united effort to eliminate the “you can’t do that” syndrome and a stronger push to lead the market in product development.

Engineering organizations interested in learning more about The J. D. Orr Project should visit the Web site, www.jdorr.com.



The Ferrari rendering was one of several done for a paint scheme for the 360 Modena to compete in the international Trofeo Pirelli racing program (see rendering on front page).