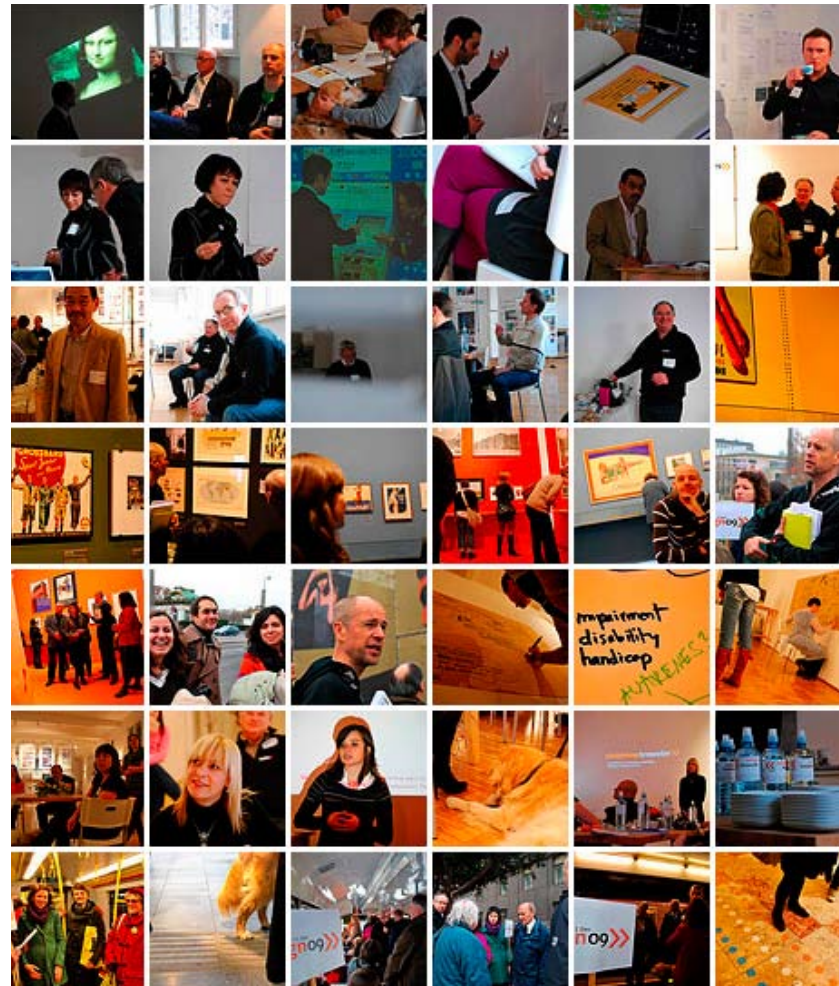


A rewarding first for the society

By Mike Wolff, Chairman, The Sign Design Society

The purpose of Sign09 was to bring together and inform people involved in the discipline, to offer education and networking opportunities and to improve awareness of the social and commercial importance of this often underestimated aspect of environmental design

From 3rd to 11th December 2009, IIID and the Sign Design Society organized a 9-day seminar on signage and wayfinding in Vienna, Austria. The seminar was a joint initiative between the International Institute for Information Design (IIID) and the Sign Design Society (SDS), with the overall goal to contribute to a better understanding of the importance of signing and wayfinding and to encourage greater focus in the design disciplines, industry and education.



SDS Awards exhibition at Sign09 in Vienna



Given the importance of our subject and the still limited recognition it has amongst key decision makers, it's perhaps a cause for regret that there are few bodies around the world with similar objectives to the Sign Design Society. Although their brief may be broader than ours, IIID (the International Institute of Information Design), based in Vienna, can genuinely claim to be one of these bodies. Many of our members subscribe also to IIID, and the Society has long had a loose association with our friends there. But 2009 was to bring about a partnership and a level of co-operation that would have been hard to anticipate just a year ago.

The birth of Sign09

During a visit in February to meet up with various members of IIID in London, I had invited Veronika Eggar and Martin Foessleitner to join in on a Society steering

group meeting. While we were discussing the recent launch of our international Awards, Martin suggested that our planned exhibition in London, of entries to the competition (itself a first), should be brought to Vienna. From this simple but very welcome offer, Sign09, the first conference dedicated specifically to the art and craft of sign and wayfinding design was borne.

Back in London, the need for us to focus on the awards' process and the London exhibition meant that arrangements for the Sign09 conference were pulled together very rapidly, with little time before the event. But the ultimate result was truly inspiring! That over sixty speakers were willing to take part with such short notice showed the interest in an event like this and our sincere thanks go to all the participants in making Sign09 such a success.



Ambitious nine day event

With the awards exhibition as a backdrop, the nine days of talks, visits, briefings and seminars was very ambitious, possibly too much so, but the ground covered was phenomenal and anyone attending will have found it supremely worthwhile on many levels. The international breadth of the contributors and the projects presented mirrored the success of the awards entries and was very heartening to see.

The conference took place in a venue known as IIID Space, and was perfectly sized and presented. It is a conference and exhibition space now functioning under this name as a branch activity of IIID. Located in a beautiful part of historic Vienna, the rooms were used until the 1930s by the Wiener Werkstätte graphic design movement – all it lacked was a lift!

Foundations of a fruitful relationship

I would like to thank all those SDS members who contributed to Sign09, perhaps singling out Peter Barker, now a member of the Society's Steering Group, who actually presented twice, returning to London in between accompanied by his faithful guide dog, Rupert. Sign09 was an example of co-operation at its very best. This was experimental but it's clear we have the foundation of a continuing and fruitful relationship and we look forward to Sign11, also to be held in Vienna in December 2011. Much more on that to come!

More about Sign09

Our hosts, Martin Foessleitner and Lucie Jague had put a great deal of themselves into the venture and the organisation was splendid, with many innovative and



thoughtful touches. I was with them for the entire event and was pleased to join with Martin in introducing each day's events. I'm delighted that Martin has agreed to write an accompanying article that presents more detail on the proceedings and announces the impending publication of the output and the directory of agencies and consultancies. We were also delighted to see Sandar Baumann's extensive (and entirely unprompted) critique on the first day's events and are pleased he's agreed for us to reproduce it here.



IIID and the Sign Design Society in Partnership

By Martin Foeßleitener, High Performance Vienna, IIID Space, Organiser of Sign09

Signage is probably one of the most fascinating disciplines in information design. It is not only concerned with leading, exploring, locating, guiding, but it is fundamentally about service at all levels of society.

Signage is global. It mingles in the context of cultural diversity, an endless number of visual languages guiding people to places of great variety. We love the atmosphere of travelling, of making the unknown known and the challenge to communicate to a global community. At the end of the day, it is about the implementation of all that is a sign or two, or maybe none.

Sign09 brought all these vibrations into play at IIIDspace in central Vienna with delegates from four continents and 15 countries – from India to Denmark, and Japan to Luxembourg. Representatives from education, business,

research and public services built a fascinating community, proving and demonstrating that signage is far more than signs.

Paris, Hong Kong and Dubai train stations, Indian urbanity, Turkish countryside or London downtown and Heathrow Terminal 5 showed how skills in various disciplines are required to handle mass mobility in spaces and places with limited capacity and capability.

Technology and the future of IT and signing wasn't ignored either, with a whole day devoted to new ideas. We also covered the interplay between architecture and signing, always a source of some contention. Suggestions that we should next time also explore the role of the client and the often tense relationship that environmental wayfinding design has with commercial signing were carefully noted.



IIID & SDS *continued*

Sign09 was not just a 'studio bound' affair. Over the nine days delegates were able to visit a major exhibition to understand, with the designer, how navigation within a museum space is achieved. We visited the General Motors factory in the city to understand the complexities of safety signing in an industrial complex, and we also saw how signing had transformed a hospital where Carmelite Nuns are the clients.

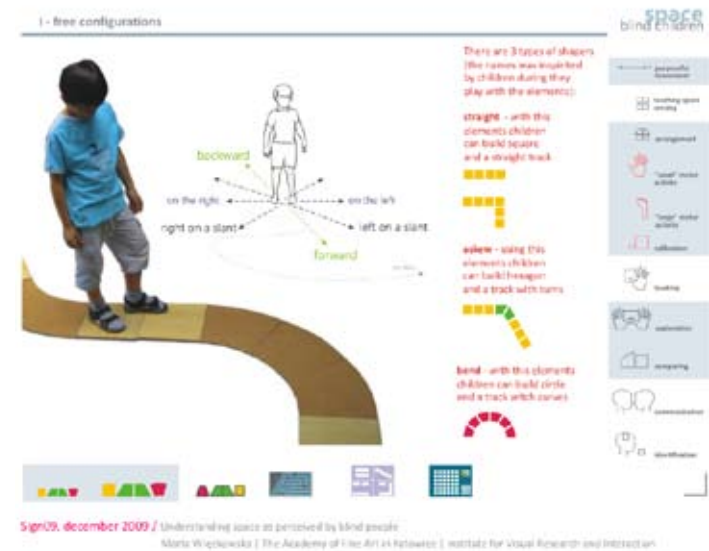
Perhaps the most poignant day of all was the opportunity Sign09 gave for people to get an idea of how visually impaired people perceive the environment and to understand their particularly challenging requirements for navigation. Travelling across Vienna to the Austrian Relief Organization for the visually impaired in the company of Peter Barker and Rupert taught us far more than books and articles can. Touching presentations later from



Siobhonne from RNIB in the UK and from Marta from Katowice in Poland, reminded us that whatever the outcome of our work is, it is about making the world accessible for every human being.

Sixty presentations were an indication how broad the subject is, from evacuating ships, to organising production shifts in factories, to developing our education facilities.

Program for blind children which supports sensorial development and space orientation.



Academics from various countries spoke about their specific methods of teaching signing and wayfinding. Their enthusiasm perhaps served to emphasise yet again how their efforts are islands of excellence in what is still a relatively poorly served landscape.

Participants, speakers, listeners, and volunteers all created a community able to listen, discuss and always eager to exchange and share experiences. Lucie and I, as organizers, are very grateful indeed for everyone's support, and to the SDS in particular for encouraging so many experts from the UK to come to Vienna. We were pleased with everybody's openness and modesty in the dialogue and last but not least for accepting that our schedule frequently overran – my timekeeping will be better next time! Pictures can say more than a thousand words, so as well as those shown here please have a look on the photostream at flickr on sign09 website.

Our thanks again go to the Sign Design Society, for their passion and commitment. Mike of course and Michelle (how good it was to see her and Mario in Vienna) and not forgetting Keith Perry for designing it all. Thanks for offering this opportunity of mutual collaboration and exchange between our organisations, originating with the awards and then the exhibition. As I learned from Mike you may call it “serendipity”.

Thanks to everyone who came to Vienna and we look forward to continuing to be part of this unique community.

Follow-on activity

The output from Sign09 will soon be available for download on the Sign09 website. For €8 you'll get a complete overview of all the talks and themes presented during Sign09. In addition a

PDF-booklet will offer an impression of the ambiance and atmosphere of the events. For those preferring something tangible for their bookshelf, we can supply a well-designed CD and paper booklet souvenir-kit.

At the same time, all projects included in the programme will be accessible on the Sign09 website, where there'll be invitations to join initiatives like Green Signing at the Danish Railway Company, partnership with RNIB in Talking Signs, how to be a beta-tester of Ralf's new font for road signing or contribute to Gökhan's Master thesis project examining the story of Olympic symbols.

There will also be a Sign Directory and we're pleased that so many companies and institutions are to be included, presenting various fields of expertise, impressive implementation schemes and providing the

IIID & SDS *continued*

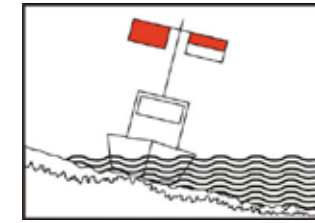
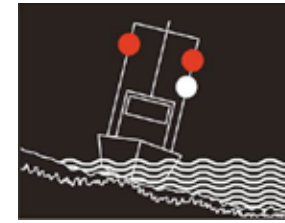
opportunity to find the right partner for wayfinding and signage collaboration. It will also be available on the site and as part of an upcoming book-on-demand on Sign09 that should grow with time to be the first reference directory of experts (last minute boarding possible!)

As an outcome of the day spent on issues affecting the visually impaired, IIID Space will be organising an exchange forum: Space-X: Space Experience for Visually Impaired People. This will take place in Vienna in October 2010. The Call for Speakers has been published.

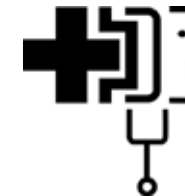
Inspired by the Sign09 session on navigation on waterways by Otto Schwetz, another exchange conference will take place in Vienna on the relevance and contribution of information design in emergencies – another opportunity for pre-Christmas time fun in

Vienna – put 1st-3rd December 2010 in you diary.

Apart from that, several new and important contacts have been made. Plans to collaborate with the Japanese Sign Design Association and bring the SDS Awards exhibition to Tokyo are still being developed as well as an intensification of cooperation with SEGD in the US.



Article 3.25, paragraph 1, letters c and d: Floating equipment at work and vessels carrying out work or sounding or measuring operations and grounded or sunken vessels; protection against wash; fairway clear on one side.



And last but not least, due to the very positive and encouraging feedback, we are already preparing Sign11, which will take place in Vienna again, from Thursday 1st to Saturday 3rd December 2011.

We hope to see you all there!

A review by Sander Baumann

Sander Baumann attended the seminar on Friday which covered the topic of City Identity & Wayfinding. This review is of one of the seminar days, with world leading speakers on signage and wayfinding. In total there were 16 speakers with presentations on city wayfinding, airport signage, metro wayfinding, environmental graphic design, typography, pictogram design, and much more, a seminar marathon!

The opening words were by Mike Wolff (SDS) and Martin Foessleitner (IIDSspace). Attendees were given a personalized booklet with the speakers of the day and additional space on each page to make notes.

1. Jim Northover *Global Cities, Local Places: the challenge of identity in urban environments*

The first speaker on stage (09:00 sharp) was Jim Northover. He talked about the identity of cities, their uniqueness and the need to create a memorable experience. He looked at historical facts like how the Romans built the city of Rome basing its structure on traffic flow and circulation. Find out more about Jim Northover at www.lloydnorthover.com

2. Halime Fisenk and Zeynep Aran *Environmental sign system as a visual language matter in Turkey*

These two Turkish design students are building a case study for creating a sign system for cities in Turkey. The main problem is that there is no clear and concise system of signs showing street names,

directions and more. In the Turkish culture, people navigate by asking locals the way. They have come up with a color-coded system and a sign proposal to make Turkey more legible. Keep up the work and good luck!

3. Khanna Raman *Reading the city of Delhi: wayfinding strategies for international tourism*

From Turkey to India, Khanna talked about the need for information systems for international tourism. In 2010 India will host the Commonwealth Games and this will be an opportunity to create new wayfinding systems that overcomes the illiteracy, cultural biases and overcrowded public spaces. From his point of view new mobile technologies will be used to navigate easier from one location to another.



4. Tim Fendley

A principled approach to designing urban wayfinding

Tim talked about the Legible London project and the theory behind the wayfinding strategy. He talked about the need for information systems that can provide seamless guidance in your city journey. As Tim continued his talk he mentioned the issues of naming the parts of a city, as from an historical point of view, areas or neighborhoods can have different names. By researching the areas and questioning locals they gathered useful information in order to name an area.

He demonstrated a software tool that they use to get information on or off a navigation map - an impressive way to create different maps for specific needs. Through various examples of good and bad we got a great insight into urban wayfinding.

Find out more about Tim Fendley and his company Applied Information Group and follow Tim Fendley on Twitter.

5. Barry Gray

Barry talked about the latest developments in the standardisation of graphical symbols and signs. With many examples, he emphasised the importance of the ISO standard on testing and using symbols and icons in wayfinding systems. This resulted in a discussion about the cultural differences and interpretation of graphical symbols. They plan to release a searchable database that will give out the symbol that you can use in the design.

Find out more about the ISO Standard of graphical symbols at the International Organization for Standardization.

6. Stefan Egger

Tern: A new traffic typeface for the Trans European Road Network

Stefan talked about a European Union project named “In-Safety”, where a typeface should be developed to meet the demands of road users since the introduction of the international standards (agreed on 41 years ago). With a team of type developers, Erik Spiekermann is involved in creating the typeface TERN. Stefan talked about how the typeface was developed and the criteria used to make it legible on road signs or electrical signs. In 2010 Austria will be the first to have the typeface TERN Narrow on its road signs.



7. Gökhan Namanoglu

For the Istanbul Summer Olympics 2020 Gökhan is researching whether international pictographic languages exists and his project focuses on the function and effectiveness of pictograms.

8. Nic Banks

Signing public transport systems

After lunch Nic got on stage to talk about his work in Asia, designing signage systems for transport facilities in Bangkok, Dubai, Hong Kong and more. He pointed out that the principle of signage is to move and navigate and also hold its own identity. Clearly informing passengers to create understanding of a facility forms the backbone of all good transport systems. He addressed the differences between cultures and peoples' interpretation of information on which a signage system is built. With various examples

we got a great insight on transport signage systems in Asia.

Find out more about Nic Banks and his company Atelier Pacific Limited Hong Kong.

9. Matt Butters

Heathrow Airport Terminal 5

Designed to handle over thirty million passengers a year, this airport terminal was to bring together the standards of modern terminal design. Matt talks about the way architecture can play a part in wayfinding to create clarity in orientation and information delivery. This intuitive way of designing a building creates trust with its passengers who will find their gates with ease.

Find out more about Matt Butters and his company Pascall + Watson.

10. Helmut Ness

Messe Frankfurt

Messe Frankfurt is the world's largest trade fair company. Within three separate buildings its current wayfinding system is not providing the necessary information. Helmut talks about the new and improved wayfinding system they have developed, with a custom Univers typeface designed by Erik Spiekermann. Their ideas consist of the right balance in showing dynamic and fixed information within a circular red following line that connects all three buildings.

Find out more about Helmut Ness and his company Fuenfwerken Design AG.



11. Tony Howard

Public service or brand opportunism

Everybody has problems with client demands. Tony talked about the signing and wayfinding for Dubai Metro. He discussed how they designed specific cultural pictograms and custom typeface that combines Latin and Arabic characters in one typeface. Interestingly the way public signage is handled in Dubai is to sell 'advertising' space on signs in order to create income. He talked about how he managed, despite difficult circumstances, to create a working signage system.

Find out more about Tony Howard and his company Transport Design Consultancy.

12. Tommie Nyström

Teaching wayfinding at Stuttgart Media University

The future of information design is in the hands of students. Tommie has students who study wayfinding for well-known places such as the Porsche Museum. They come up with ideas for new ways to show information. Within six weeks the students go from initial ideas to prototype and they then present their ideas.

Find out more about Tommie Nyström and the Stuttgart Media University.

13. Ralf Herrmann

Wayfinding typefaces

Ralf studied road signage typefaces throughout Europe for over three years. His study showed many typefaces are difficult to read under certain circumstances. He decided to design his own wayfinding typeface based on his ideas of maximum legibility. He created a software tool to simulate reading conditions in order create a working wayfinding typeface under all weather and distance conditions. It is currently in a beta stage of development.

Find out more about Ralf Herrmann and his typeface Wayfinding at his website Open Type, see here for a review of his typeface.



14. Clive Richards

A picture isn't always worth 1000 words

Clive is the president of IIID / UK and discussed the design of warning labels, in particular for tractor security. The manufacturer of tractors wished to minimize the number of different language variants needed on the labels. He talked about the problems that they faced and how they managed to maximize the level of understanding of graphical information.

15. Cliff Selbert

Finding your way while enhancing your brand
Cliff has a specific approach to wayfinding and landmarking. His philosophy consists of creating big environmental sculptures to create an identity for an area. This is an interesting way of making areas or facilities legible and memorable, whilst creating a photo opportunity. He talked about the parking for

Disney where they used music and images to let visitors remember the location and enhance the experience that linked to the brand.

Find out more about Cliff Selbert and his company Selbert Perkins Design.

16. David Gibson

Finding the hidden logic

After about nine hours of talk David had the task of closing this marathon day of speakers! In his book *The Wayfinding Handbook* he has created legible environments by finding the hidden logic. With basic principles he creates systems that allows us to find our way in unfamiliar environments. Having recently visited Beijing, he told us about the hidden logic he found in this immense city.

Find out more about David Gibson and his company TwoTwelve or read the review on *The Wayfinding Handbook*.

Additional information

Hopefully IIID and SDS will continue hosting these events in the future. If you want to know more about the organisations or events, please use the links in this document.

