

Exhibit designer interview of  
the month



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Dan Ciecwiwa, Designer, MG Design



**Cieciwa's highly successful "Create Your Space" interactive booth.**

with my mother and car shows with my father. In my career, I have come to be influenced by people such as Karim Rashid, Zaha Hadid, Santiago Calatrava and, most recently, Samuel Mockbee.

ECN: How do you approach a new project?

DC: With open eyes. I like to do quite a bit of research prior to going to the sketch phase. I look at current trends – both in general and in the particular industry – and at the client's look, feel and product line as well as their competition. After that, I try to find at least one common element, line or style within that group and work from there.

ECN: What is a normal workday like for you?

DC: They can be a bit hectic, but I like a challenge and coming up with solutions to meet those challenges. In our industry, we work off an end date that can't be shifted. The tradeshow or event is going to occur with or without us, and it's our job to make sure we stay on schedule and ensure that everything moves smoothly up until the target date. At MG Design, we pride

ECN: What is your background, and when did your interest in design start?

Dan Cieciwa, designer at MG Design ([www.mgdesign.com](http://www.mgdesign.com)): My interest in design began at an early age. For as long as I can recall, I have always been observant of my surroundings and fascinated by how things are built while at the same time thinking about how I can improve upon them.

ECN: How did you get into the exhibit design field?

DC: I entered into exhibit design a little bit by accident. After completing my degree at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design in 2000, I received a BFA in industrial design. I went on several interviews in various avenues of design, received a few offers and picked the offer in exhibit design.

ECN: Who most influenced your work growing up?

DC: My early influences ranged from Frank Lloyd Wright to Ferdinand Porsche, Harley Earl and Vincent Van Gogh. Of course, at the time, I didn't know who they all were, but I saw something special in their work. I grew up in an area with several Wright-designed homes and frequently attended art museums

ourselves on the unconventional solution. This requires us, the design team, to stay unconventional in our designs and with the materials we select. Each day, we have to stay creative and inspired as well as be prepared for our next big idea.

ECN: What design trends are you seeing at the shows now?

DC: Given the fact that the world is more connected than ever, people are becoming more attuned to their surroundings. And therefore they are more open and see the benefits to what is typically referred to as European design. Appreciation to details like balance, color, unusual materials and openness to the unknown are steadily increasing.

ECN: What are some common misconceptions clients, especially new ones, have about the design process?

DC: That the appropriate solution is right there and bigger means better. There are so many parts to design, both seen and unseen, but all are important to the end design and the experience we seek to create. Each component of a design must be looked at for its contribution to the overall environment. Secondly, scale, proportion and balance of the project as a whole are completely tied to the individual elements within the project.



**the “IDEA Kitchen” utilized the senses of sight, sound, taste and touch.**

space than ever before. Thus, we had a challenge ahead of ourselves, which is something we

ECN: How does the short time frame for tradeshow displays impact design?

DC: Short deadlines and high expectations have the potential to lead to one of two things: “cookie cutter” designs or innovation. In this industry, you need to embrace the tight deadlines and use them to your advantage – by trying new approaches, new materials and new design concepts. At MG Design, we’re known for presenting our clients with unconventional solutions. I don’t serve our clients cookie-cutter designs, no matter what the deadline.

ECN: Can you tell us a bit about a current project you're excited about?

DC: We just completed the design and buildout of our latest EXHIBITOR showbooth. I was really excited to see how it was received. I’ve been lead designer on that show for the last three years and our group continues to push the envelope in that venue every time. This year was no exception.

Having had great success the past two years with variations on our “Create Your Space” interactive concept, we knew attendees expected a higher level of ingenuity within our

thrive on.

Our answer to that challenge was “The IDEA Kitchen.” It was a completely different interactive space than last year’s, in which the combination of high-end contemporary design, materials, craftsmanship, talent and technology struck the perfect balance. In the “Create Your Space” booth, we hit several of the senses: sight, sound, smell and touch. Similarly, in the “IDEA Kitchen” we utilized the senses of sight, sound, taste and touch.

The key differentiator between the two projects was taste. Partnering with a local Las Vegas cooking school, professional chefs were on hand for food demonstrations and samplings for attendees. The whole experience was projected via live feed on three large projection surfaces intermixed with custom animations reinforcing the “IDEA Kitchen” theme. Each year, this event is our opportunity to show off our capabilities to our industry, most importantly to a prospective client base of 6,000 tradeshow and event managers. Our detailing and shop expertise are on full display there!