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Cooper-Hewitt Awarded 2013 Ladislav Sutnar Prize

The Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum was awarded the 2013 Ladislav Sutnar Prize, Tuesday, Nov. 12, in Pilsen, Czech Republic, for its contribution to the world of design and the promotion of Ladislav Sutnar's legacy and work. The prestigious award is given on behalf of the Faculty of Art and Design of the University of West Bohemia and is chosen through public nomination, followed by a jury. Caroline Baumann, director of Cooper-Hewitt, received the award on behalf of the museum.

"We are extremely honored to be recognized for our work in creating a central resource on the life and efforts of pioneering information designer, architect and product designer Ladislav Sutnar," said Baumann. "Cooper-Hewitt has one of the largest Sutnar archives in the world and continually works to broaden access to the archive and share his innovative designs on a larger scale."

Cooper-Hewitt's Sutnar archive acts as a comprehensive survey of the designer's professionalism, artistry and innovation and serves as a critical source for design scholars and researchers. The museum's collection includes nearly 23,000 archival items, including some design prototypes; an additional 62 three-dimensional objects, including glass, ceramics and toy block "Build the Town" prototypes; 22 two-dimensional drawings and prints; and three textiles.

As part of a broader online access initiative, the museum is currently digitizing the Sutnar archive and cataloging the collection in connection to works held throughout the world. The site will host canonical biographical records for Sutnar and other designers in the museum's collection, connecting disparate content across the Web and drawing on the strength of the museum's holdings.

About Ladislav Sutnar (Czech-American, 1897-1976)

Sutnar was at the forefront of bringing modernism to a broad public via product design. The use of commercially available glass and porcelain combined with pure geometric shapes (visible in early 1930s coffee and tea services in Cooper-Hewitt's collection) illustrate the designer's dedication to the democratization of modern design.

In New York, Sutnar thrived as a European émigré designer able to synthesize principles of modern art into his designs for catalogs, magazines, and brand identities. Deemed the father of information design, Sutnar acted as artistic director for the Sweet's Catalog service from 1941 to 1960 where he implemented innovative graphics and charts that clearly communicated complex topics in engineering, construction, and architecture. Cooper-Hewitt's archive of Sweet's Catalogs, as well as other corporate graphic design is extensive and demonstrative of Sutnar's impact on the way information is communicated still today.

About the Ladislav Sutnar Prize

The Ladislav Sutnar Prize is awarded to Czech and international artists for outstanding performance in the field of fine arts, applied arts and design. The award-winning artists are selected by a jury of members of the Arts Council of the Institute of Art and Design. To learn more, visit www.fud.zcu.cz.

About the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum

As the only museum in the nation devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design, Cooper-Hewitt educates, inspires and empowers people through design. The museum is undergoing a transformative renovation resulting in 60 percent more gallery space and will open in fall 2014 with an entirely new visitor experience. During the renovation, Cooper-Hewitt's events and education programs are popping up locally at the Cooper-Hewitt Design Center in Harlem, nationally with the Design in the Classroom program in New Orleans, New York City, San Antonio and Washington, D.C., and globally with exhibitions in Europe and Asia. To learn more, visit www.cooperhewitt.org.

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