



SUCCESSFUL EUROPEAN DESIGNER VISITS HIS CIA ROOTS

In 1968, Janez Smerdelj '71 arrived in Cleveland from what is now Slovenia with \$16 in his pocket and a strong determination to become an industrial designer. Forty years later, Smerdelj is an award-winning designer for a leading European household appliance manufacturer and professor in a Slovenian university. In a visit to his alma mater this summer, he attributed much of his career success to his Cleveland Institute of Art education.

"The attitude we learned was to do work honestly. Not to just use some gimmicks and some styling with nothing behind it, but to really solve the problems. This is still my professional credo," Smerdelj said.

He studied under renowned faculty members Viktor Schreckengost '29, Roy Hess '48 and Peter Zorn '65, all of whom he cites as major influences on his work. Smerdelj recalls all-nighters in the studio with Zorn and fellow students; philosophical discussions with Hess, whom he described as "like a father;" and learning the interplay of art and entrepreneurship from Schreckengost.

"They were opening new worlds for me," he said.

Smerdelj also thanks CIA Honorary Board member Mary Gardner and her late husband, Joseph, with whom he lived that first year. "Having Janez live with us worked out very nicely; it was the right time for our family," Gardner said. She recalls Smerdelj was "totally dedicated to working on his projects" as he cultivated a CIA work ethic he would maintain over four decades.

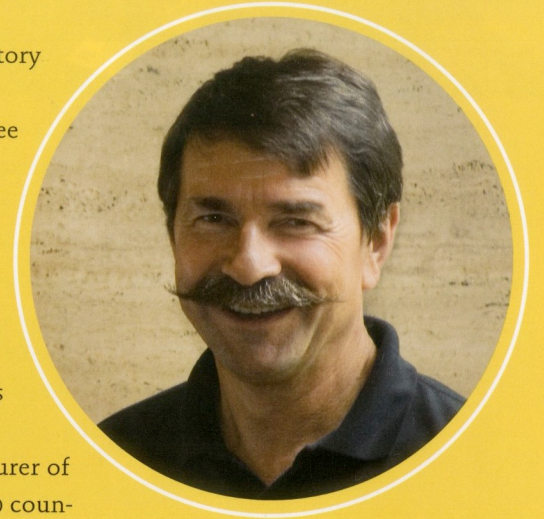
Even Smerdelj's impressive mustache has its roots at The Cleveland Institute of Art. At the end of his first year, he accompanied some friends to a bar to celebrate. Although he was of age, he was denied a beer because he didn't have an ID card. After that, he grew his mustache and never again had a problem getting served. "And this is why I have had a mustache ever since," he recalls with a chuckle.

Smerdelj got the most out of his CIA experience, taking electives in sculpture, photography, watercolor, printmaking, and life drawing. "I think it's good to combine fine art courses with industrial design courses because when we design products for everyday use, we want to make them not only functional, but also

to have some emotions, some story behind them. If you talk about emotions, it involves how we see the message from the product. And that involves the color, the form (and) the proportions. . . Those are the aesthetic parameters."

Smerdelj continues to combine fine and applied arts in his work as director of design for Gorenje, a Slovenian manufacturer of household appliances sold in 70 countries, and as professor in the Department of Design at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

He said his CIA education prepared him for a wide range of jobs in his field and, after conversations this summer with CIA President David Deming '67 and Design Environment Chair Dan Cuffaro '91, he is confident that current CIA students are being prepared equally well for the evolving world of industrial design. After all, CIA students today are still taught to ask the same question he was taught to ask at the beginning of every project: for whom are you designing?



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