



Notes from the Editor

Scott L. Melnick

What's the difference between an excellent structural design and a mediocre one? The easy answer is the one that U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Potter Stewart gave when he said: "I can't define it, but I know it when I see it" (though, of course, he was talking about pornography and not structural engineering).

Structural engineers usually prefer more specific and definitive answers, however. And fortunately, AISC's Engineering Awards of Excellence competition provides some specific guidelines: An excellent design demonstrates structural efficiency—it is neither overbuilt nor underbuilt. An excellent design provides an elegant and creative solution to the owner's or architect's program. And excellent designs often incorporate new or innovative solutions or technology in areas such as connections, gravity systems, lateral load-resisting systems or fire protection.

Of course, excellent designs occasionally simply create an "ooh and aah" factor: The significance of the engineering achievement is so great that others simply know it when they see it (many Frank Gehry-designed buildings force engineering solutions that fall into this category).

Each year, AISC's Engineering Awards of Excellence competition honors building's for the quality of their structural design. The buildings can be big—such as the International Terminal Building at San Francisco International Airport—or small—like the Woodstock Branch Library in Portland, OR. They can be monumental projects—such as the Experience Music Project in Seattle—or functional—like the

Roadway Canopy connecting a parking garage to a terminal at the Portland International Airport.

There is no entry fee for the competition and the national winners receive a \$2000 prize—which will be awarded at the North American Steel Construction Conference on April 24-27, 2002, in Seattle. To be eligible, structures must have been completed between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 2001, and a significant portion of the framing system must be steel wide-flange structural shapes or hollow structural sections. Additionally, the projects must be located in the U.S., Canada or Mexico. Firms can submit multiple entries, with each entry considered separately.

Deadline for submission is March 1, 2002.

There are four categories and the jury may select a national winner and up to two merit awards in each category:

- Up to \$10 million in constructed value;
- \$10 million to \$25 million;
- \$25 million to \$100 million; and
- Greater than \$100 million.

For more information on submitting an entry, view the information sheet on pages 15-16 or visit www.aisc.org.

The national and merit award winners also will be featured in the June issue of MSC. I hope to read about you then!

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