

ALCOM Wins Top Northern Ohio Live Award: Kent State Home of Four Other Finalists

“Trekke” and “Techie” fans alike recognized the Star Trek theme to which Dr. J. William Doane, former director of the National Science Foundation Science and Technology Center for Advanced Liquid Crystalline Optical Materials (ALCOM), and Dr. John L. West, current ALCOM director, accepted the equivalent of a gold medal on behalf of ALCOM during the *Northern Ohio Live* 20th Anniversary Annual Achievement Awards ceremony on Sept. 18 at the State Theatre, Playhouse Square. Although the gala black tie dinner included other entertaining moments, it could best be described as a sophisticated, fitting tribute to the best Northeastern Ohio performers in 21 main categories and six special categories, each of which had just three finalists.

“We were looking for noteworthy accomplishments, especially things or undertakings that required some risks,” said Dennis Dooley, senior editor of *Northern Ohio Live*. “We were also looking for innovative endeavors or accomplishments that, in some way, extended the possibilities of what can be done in this community or that enhanced the quality of life in Northeastern Ohio. As is the case each year, excellence is a must.”

It is just that – excellence – that is embodied by ALCOM, which is based at the Liquid Crystal Institute at Kent State University and is a collaborative effort between Kent State, Case Western Reserve University and the University of Akron. As a result, ALCOM was the winner of the **science and technology category**. “ALCOM continues to do cutting-edge research and development in the field of liquid crystals and is internationally regarded as the liquid crystals center,” commented Dooley. “Their discoveries have huge applications for computer and other industries.”

“We are pleased to have received the award – it will help make the general community aware of the work we are doing and our influence in Northeastern Ohio,” said West. “It also highlights the effectiveness of collaboration, because ALCOM’s success is the result of our effective collaboration with our academic partners in the region – the Polymer Institute of the University of Akron and researchers at Case Western Reserve University.”

Kent State is also home to four other award finalists, one in each of these categories: community outreach/events, cultural exhibitions, neighborhood revitalization and visual arts.

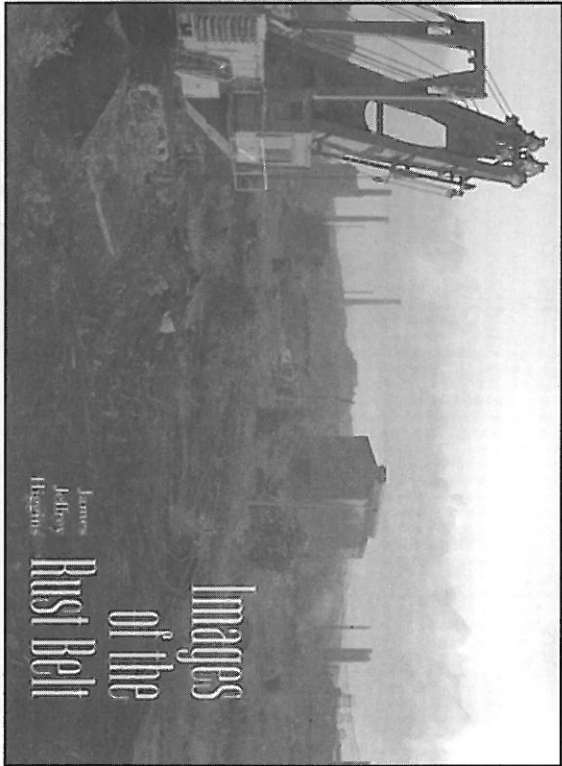
“Kent State’s ‘Experiencing Democracy Commemorating May 4, 1970’ events were a good example of an innovative and resourceful, yet daring undertaking,” said Dooley, who along with other *Northern Ohio Live* editors and former editors of the magazine comprised the core team of judges. “Kent State did not ignore the past. Rather, they turned it around and made it into a very meaningful experience, not only for the university community, but the entire community. They used these events to get us to revisit and think through some fundamental values and priorities of democracy and confront challenges we still face. Even though they did not win the plaque, it was a wonderful example of excellence in the **community outreach/events category**.”

In the **cultural exhibitions category**, “Tradition and Innovation: Japanese Textiles and Fashion Design,” a three-museum collaboration spearheaded by Kent State Museum Director **Jean Driesedow**, was one of the three finalists. “The content of the collaboration was worth honoring in itself,” said Dooley. “But we loved the idea of the institutions collaborating to extend our resources here in Northeastern Ohio. It was a wonderfully realized concept that touched a lot of people.” The exhibition combined efforts of the KSU Museum, the Akron Art Museum and the Massillon Museum and included multiple exhibitions of Japanese fashions and textiles, as well as a Japanese music concert, a symposium featuring an internationally known collector and artists from Japan and, on one afternoon, a free bus ride that shuttled visitors to all three locations to ensure the full experience of the exhibition.

Kent State’s Urban Design Center in Cleveland (CUDC) was in the **running for the award in the neighborhood revitalization category**. “Even though the CUDC is just getting started, we still considered it a really positive move and something to be applauded,” said Dooley. “This is a great boon to Cleveland and will have a ripple effect on all of Northeastern Ohio. It brings in immense resources and internationally recognized experience of people in urban design, which will certainly become a positive force in the community.”

James Jeffrey Higgins’ book, “Images of the Rust Belt,” which was published by the Kent State University Press, was one of three finalists in the **visual arts category**. Interestingly, its competition was not other books of photographs – rather a Cleveland artist’s murals that depict entire neighborhoods and a snow titled “Bugatti,” which was at the Cleveland Museum of Art and included six classic cars and other items not seen together since 1912. KSU Press’ **Susan Cash** nominated Higgins’ book “because I knew they were looking for nominees who had more of an aesthetic appeal.” Higgins’ photographs of nature and industrial sites in the Mahoning Valley have been shown in exhibitions across the country.

“Three honorees are named in each category. In almost all cases, they are stunning, wonderful examples of what can be done in Northeastern Ohio. You could argue that almost any of them is the legitimate winner. In fact, to be in the top three at all should be considered an honor,” concluded Dooley. “We hope it calls attention to all of the wonderful things that have been done. It’s a way to recognize the best of what happened in Northeastern Ohio in the past year.”



The cover of the James Jeffrey Higgins book, titled “Images of the Rust Belt,” appears here. Kent State University Press’ Susan Cash submitted the book as a nominee in the visual arts category, for which it was one of just three finalists.



Photo by Gary Harwood

ALCOM, based at Kent State’s Liquid Crystal Institute, was awarded top honors in the science and technology category. The award was accepted by (left to right) Dr. John L. West, ALCOM director, and Dr. J. William Doane, former ALCOM director.

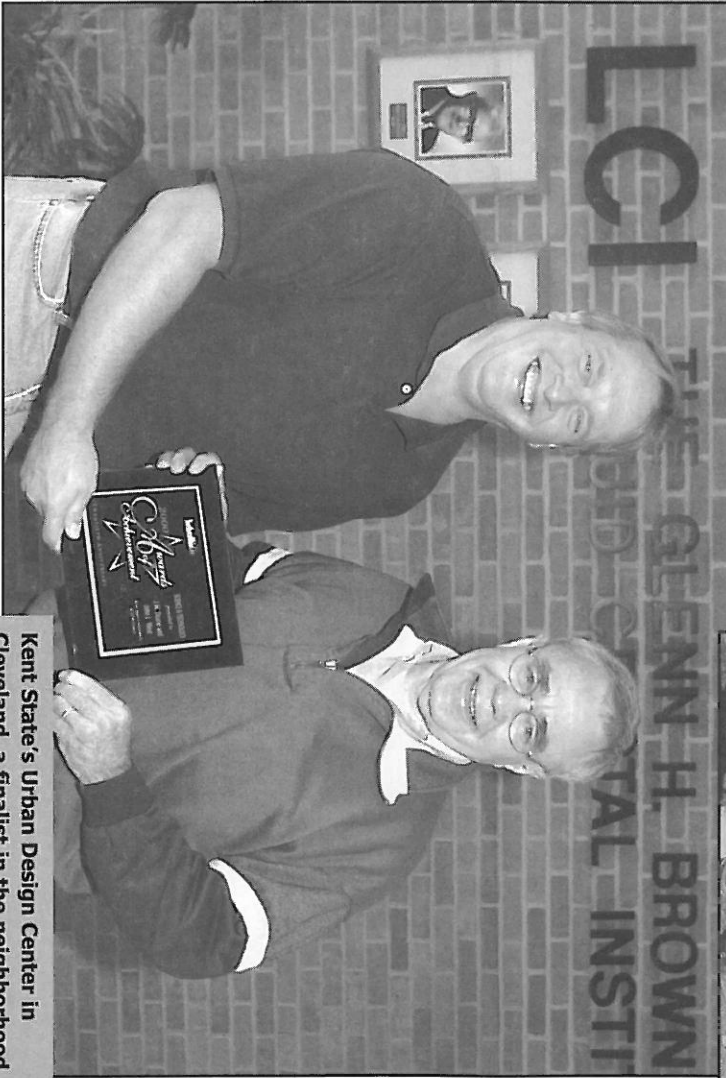


Photo by Jeff Glidden

From “Japanese by Design,” the Pleats Please collection by Issey Miyake was exhibited at Kent State University Museum. This exhibit was one of many that comprised a three-museum collaboration titled “Tradition and Innovation: Japanese Textiles and Fashion Design,” which was a finalist in the cultural exhibitions category.



Kent State’s Urban Design Center in Cleveland, a finalist in the neighborhood revitalization category, is housed in the Pointe Building in downtown Cleveland.



Photo by Gary Harwood