

# Exhibitor

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## THE WINNERS

*Exhibitor Magazine's*  
**SEVENTH ANNUAL EXHIBIT DESIGN AWARDS**

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# ENCOURAGING DISCOVERY

Design Firm: Earl Gee Design  
Client: Chronicle Books

**C**hallenged with repositioning Chronicle Books as a powerhouse publisher, designer Earl Gee, Earl Gee Design, emphasized dynamic details in metaphorical context. An oversized ladder and staircase evoked images of upward motion. Machine-like cogs formed a partial wall for a semi-private meeting area. Chronicle's corporate logo – a pair of reading glasses – became an oversized, three-dimensional icon inviting visitors to “take a look” at Chronicle Books, a “company that sees things differently.”

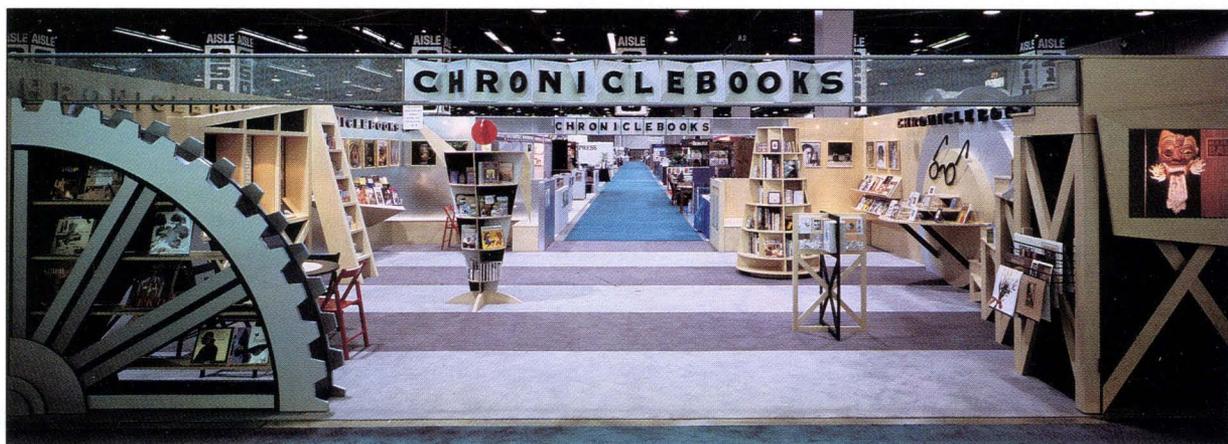
The detailed exhibit – and the reactions – were nothing short of stunning. “An editor at Chronicle told me the booth had a ‘pinball effect,’” says Gee. “Visitors would enter the booth and bounce off areas of interest, rather than just shooting right through it.”

Adding to those high accolades from the client, judges awarded Gee's 900-square-foot, cross-aisle creation with a First Place designation in the In-Line Category.

The design objectives were clear: Create an exhibit that communicated Chronicle Books' progress as it celebrated its first title on the best-seller list. Appropriately, Gee selected the theme, “Something Is Happening at Chronicle Books,” to emphasize recent corporate growth and accomplishment.

Design inspiration for the forward-moving icons came from a timely exhibition in San Francisco on Russian constructivist theater design. (Constructivism is characterized by abstract and geometric shapes, man-made materials and massive structural forms.) The ladder, staircase and cogs reflected an indus-

Earl Gee's fanciful cross-aisle design for publisher Chronicle Books emphasizes imagination and detail.





Inspired by the Russian Constructivist style, which is typified by massive structural forms and geometric shapes, Gee uses giant cogs as metaphors for progression and growth.

trial feel as well as metaphorically communicating progress. In addition, Gee used real metal accents in the exhibit, instead of veneer. Exposed riveting gave the effect that metal panels were actually “bolted, rather than just glued” to the walls, in keeping with the constructivist theme of “activity.”

Yet the client provided one caution. “Our initial concern was that the booth would become the thing on display, not the books,” says Drew Montgomery, director of marketing. “We had to be certain that the books were the showpieces.” Muted shades and natural wood held the exhibit structures in the background while Chronicle Books’ colorful illustrations – the essence of the publisher’s reputation – took center stage.

Because the exhibit was a cross-aisle configuration, Gee faced an added design challenge. “Imagine your living room with a giant corridor down the middle,” says Gee. “My job was to make the two halves look like a whole.” To do this, he chose a striped gray carpeting for the booth. The wide stripes ran perpendicular to the center aisle, in effect “joining” the two sides of the exhibit. In addition, a cross-over header spanned the 10-foot aisle, spelling out “Chronicle Books” in black-and-white, accordion-hinged panels.

Judges praised the exhibit as “warm and inviting,” adding that “this feels more like a bookstore than a trade show exhibit.” Feel free to browse. ■

— By Kristin Troff, staff writer.

To make Chronicle’s books stand out, Gee creates imaginative displays such as this oversized ladder.



#### Designer

Earl Gee

#### Design Firm

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#### Fabrication Firm

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#### Client

Chronicle Books  
San Francisco

#### Design/Fabrication Cost

\$75,000