

Blogger Triumphs in Encore Design Contest

by Irena Granaas

A crossover enthusiast who is an interior designer and blogger received exciting news recently when he learned his Buick Encore "Pinboard to Dashboard" design will be showcased during the 2013 New York Auto Show.

The designs created by Michael Wurm, Jr. - a Pennsylvania bed-and-breakfast owner whose Website has nearly 4 million followers on Pinterest - were selected over that of nine other influential bloggers on design, food and fashion in Buick's first-of-its-kind online design contest launched in October.

"It's a blogger's dream come true," Wurm said after learning of his selection. "From start to finish, I was checking out what the other participants were doing, and I thought everyone had a strong design."

"I had no idea whose design would be selected because you really got to see everyone's style and I was in love with all of them. I have a totally different perspective of Buick now."

As social media platforms grow in importance for auto marketing, the fast-growing Pinterest site is a great fit, as it invites users to organize and display favorite designs, products and other items of interest on digital "pinboards."

Each of the competing designers and bloggers displayed on their pinboard how the Buick Encore luxury small crossover expressed their personal sense of style and life interests.

In creating the contest, Buick selected Pinterest because 71 percent of its nearly 25 million users are under the age of 45, and half of them are 25-44, a key market for the all-new Encore.

The 2013 Buick Encore five-passenger crossover, is manufactured in Bupyeong, South Korea, using Buick's global small crossover platform, which is unique in terms of North American sales, but is shared with the Opel Mokka and the Chevy Trax, which are not sold in the U.S.

Powered by a 1.4-liter turbocharged engine, the crossover is rated at 33 mpg highway with standard six-speed automatic transmission and FWD, and also has an available AWD edition.

Phil Colley, Buick Product Communications manager for the Encore, explained the selection process that resulted in Wurm's winning designs being chosen.

"We started off with 10 different design, fashion and food bloggers who created pinboards that kind of showcased their personal style and what they would do if they had an Encore . . . Then we whittled those pinboards down to five finalists, and we put those into an

online 'look book' . . . We took that look book and pitched it out to a number of lifestyle editors from top publications, and they basically voted on whose design would be selected to showcase at the show," he said.

The more than 20 lifestyle editors polled represented publications and outlets such as *Lucky*, *Oprah*, *Woman's World*, *Essence*, *Uptown*, and *Good Housekeeping*, *The Huffington Post* and *She Knows*.

"Knowing the Encore's target audience spends a great deal of time online, and on Pinterest, we created a social strategy to reach them where they 'live,'" said Lloyd Biermann, Buick Crossover's Marketing manager.

"Pinterest and this program help visually explain and reveal the beauty of the Encore from a third-party perspective. We were impressed by the level of creativity

and inspiration these bloggers created with their pinboards."

Colley talked about the Encore and how contests like this attract their core customer base.

"The Encore gives people the crossover feel, but it does it in a more maneuverable package . . . It's very versatile and has lots of cargo space and a pretty dynamic interior," he said.

The crossover offers several fashion interiors, Bose noise cancellation, a rear-view camera, leather-wrapped steering wheel, General Motors' Intel satellite link system, and other luxury features.

"We think (the Encore) hits a pretty good sweet spot out there with the younger, urban professionals . . .

"It really gives us a good intro, along with the Verano (Buick's compact, luxury sedan) into the brand . . . now we have two vehi-



Participants in the first-of-its-kind program included, from left, Jessica Sturdy of Bows & Sequins, Katie Rodgers of Paper Fashion, Aly Walansky of A Little Aly-tude (kneeling), Shannon Ables of The Simply Luxurious Life, Julie Deily of The Little Kitchen, Michael Wurm of Inspired by Charm and Julie Thigpen of Belle Maison 23. Not pictured are Susie Anderson of We Are Not Martha, Jeanne Chan of Shop Sweet Things and Maia McDonald of Conundrum.

cles that appeal to get people into the brand," Colley said. "We think (the Encore) hits a pretty good sweet spot out there with the younger, urban professionals . . . now we have two vehicles that appeal to get people into the brand, and hopefully, grow them into the brand," Colley said.

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The SAE International's general membership has elected officers and directors to its Board of Directors for 2013.

The officers include Donald Hillebrand, director of Argonne National Laboratory's Energy Systems Division in the office of president, and 2013-2015 Vice President Automotive: Jeff Hemphill, chief technical officer of the Schaeffler Group in North America.

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Officers and directors begin their terms in January 2013.