



By Kristina Urquhart

People often say your 30s are your best decade. I couldn't agree more

# It's Evolution, Baby

By hopeful estimates, thirty years is a third of a lifetime.

So, in 1986, had you asked Georges Haroutian, an art director with a lengthy and varied editorial resume, if he thought he might end up dedicating three decades to one project, the answer may have been no.

"I started *Applied Arts Quarterly* without any business plan or research!" Georges tells me. (Despite "retiring" in 2013, he still drops by the office for weekly meetings). "It was all passion. I just wanted to talk about talent in Canada without being provincial.

"The magazine was borne of my frustration—I was always hearing that international artists were somehow better than ours in Canada. I studied graphic arts in Europe and did work in New York, so I have knowledge of other places. And I knew that we had as many great visual communicators here in Canada as anywhere else."

The naysayers descended quickly, incredulous that he would invest so much money from his own design studio, M.A.G. Graphics, to found a magazine for what seemed like a very small niche. Indeed, Georges and the editor at the time, Tony Leighton, gave away copies of the first few issues just to establish a subscriber base. They talked to anyone and everyone who would listen about Canadian talent. They poured money into quality paper and production materials so they could show work at its best. They *hustled*.

Turns out the creative community in Canada needed a platform after all. Thirty years later, I'm writing this letter surrounded by at least half of the back issues of *Applied Arts*. There's the last time we were a quarterly (1991), the first-ever awards annual from 1992, the CMYK design years, the Fuck Luck issue (MacLaren McCann's guest directorial effort in 2012 had people calling the AA office thinking there'd been an error at the printer). There's been striking cover portrait after another, several logo variations and an apparent affinity for birds. One hundred and fifty-seven issues in all, plus another eight of the short-lived *Electronic Link*, a sister publication that launched in '94 to teach newbies the ins and outs of computing. Not bad for an independently owned publication whose founder was once told there wasn't enough talent in Canada to sustain such a venture.

To the person who said that, wherever you are: you were wrong. Thirty years of *Applied Arts* has proven that Canadian talent is not only out there, but also worth celebrating. Those 157 issues are a testament to the volume and the quality of work the creative industry in Canada produces every year, and showcasing it has been both our pleasure and honour. Says Georges, "The biggest satisfaction I get is hearing from successful artists who say that *Applied Arts* played a positive role in their success." Recognizing your creative excellence has always been at the core of what we do. But we've also investigated the tools you need to achieve greatness, and the roadblocks that sometimes stand in your way.

I spent considerable time with our back issues to research this special edition of *Applied Arts*, and I noticed a couple of themes that have endured. The first will come as no surprise: technology completely shifted how we work, and even sometimes why we work, and infiltrated nearly every part of the creative services ("Adapt or Die," p. 16). This magazine launched on the cusp of computing (p. 92), but it wasn't until some years later that we see the work start to reflect those changes. Some would say that over the last 30 years, technology has made creative smarter. With great power comes great competition, so it's had to be.

Others may disagree. And to them I'll concede that for all of technology's merits, there have been pitfalls, too. I learned that first-hand preparing the content for this issue. You'll note that most of our featured work is more recent, because our digitized Awards Archive only goes back 15 years. When I turned to the pre-2001 disks of image backups, my computer couldn't even open them. And, as it turns out, many of our readers didn't think to make high-quality, readable copies of their work either, back when no one knew that obsolescence was going to be a thing. →

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#### A Note from Tung

We were genuinely humbled and beyond excited when Applied Arts reached out to us about updating the magazine for their 30th anniversary. This was a rare opportunity to design something meaningful for our own creative community.

Excitement transformed quickly into nervousness. The pressure of redesigning a long-established publication with a thirty-year legacy, for a readership of our colleagues, collaborators, mentors and friends—many of whom are acutely sensitive and hyper-critical individuals (as they should be!)—weighed on us heavily. But we had a strong desire to help revitalize the Applied Arts brand, to create something thoughtful, contemporary and honest.

We reflected on the past and pondered the present state of the Canadian creative industry. Georges Haroutiun, the founder of *Applied Arts*, told us he started the magazine in an effort to upend our industry's inferiority complex and to provide a much-needed platform for showcasing our collective creativity. That purpose really resonated with us, particularly now, as our industry has been grappling anew with questions of whether or not we're competing on a global level and producing worthwhile work.

It's sobering stuff, and we think about it regularly. But the amount of home-grown talent we've been seeing lately is both reassuring and motivating, and we're looking forward to working with some amazing people in upcoming issues this year.

At its core, *Applied Arts* has always been about the work, and ultimately, we hope that the new design doesn't get in the way of that—it can speak for itself. [madebytung.com](http://madebytung.com)

“Nowadays, you can be a copywriter or a social media director or a game designer or an illustrator who animates for iPads or a documentarian or a content creator—the number of roles seems infinite, and at the end of it all, you still get to make stuff.”

So much has changed. Or has it? The other theme that struck me is that in 2016, the creative industry's issues are still almost identical to what they were in 1986. Working on spec. Tight budgets. No budgets. Clients not “getting it.” The financial strain of keeping up with the aforementioned technology.

Now I'm usually a glass half-full kind of person, so I'm just going to set aside the fact that we've been writing about the same problems for three decades (that's true of every trade magazine, right?) and focus on something that has changed for the better. Nowadays, you can be a copywriter or a social media director or a game designer or an illustrator who animates for iPads or a documentarian or a *content creator*—the number of roles seems infinite, and at the end of it all, you still get to *make stuff*. And be inspired by others who make stuff. That's pretty cool.

This brings me back to *Applied Arts*. We've watched and encouraged you to make stuff for 30 years, and we plan to do it for another 30. Recently, we've endeavoured to include all those new, non-traditional areas of the creative services in our editorial mix. At the same time, we've gone through more than a few visual identities (see all 158 of our covers, including this issue, on p. 67). In an effort to keep things interesting for our visually driven audience, we've had 10 guest art directors put their own stamp on the magazine since 2011. And each of those issues was a fabulous exploration of creativity. But I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that, in hindsight, having Georges leave his post in 2013 was perhaps the start of a small identity crisis for us. In figuring out what our audience needed, we lost a little bit of ourselves. (And can you blame us? The end of your 20s is such a daunting time.)

But we're back now, and better than ever. We sought a visual strategy that would elevate our content, and in the fall, conducted a national search for who might help us. I'd like to officially welcome you to the new *Applied Arts*. Our design directors Emily Tu and Edmond Ng, sole proprietors of the award-winning studio Tung, have worked tirelessly to consider our upcoming year and establish a visual base for us going forward. Emily and Ed represent the future of design in this country and are just the kind of Canadian talent Georges wanted to recognize when he started *Applied Arts* all those years ago. They approached our magazine with the same careful consideration that Georges did—those of you familiar with the early days of *Applied Arts* will see a homage in the redesign, from some of the typographic treatments to the strong editorial sensibility. I couldn't be more confident with Tung's direction.

We'll be rolling out the new look throughout the year in a set of five collector's editions. In this issue, we're excited to debut two recurring features for 2016: Conversation (p. 88), a mentorship session that pairs a senior-level creative with one or more students in a related field; and Evolution (p. 92), an in-depth exploration of a technological advancement in the creative industry. You'll have no trouble understanding why we picked desktop publishing as our first topic when you read how it was done before the computer. Ouch (literally).

You may have noticed our new tagline is *Create. Celebrate.* It speaks for itself. To usher it in, we've decided to specifically celebrate each of the disciplines we cover in their corresponding awards annual in 2016. For example, the Photography & Illustration issue in May will have a special editorial focus on image making.

Before I let you dive in to Tung's design (though, if you're any visual artist I know, you've already flipped through the whole book and maybe just happened upon this letter), I want to say thank you on behalf of Georges and the staff here at *Applied Arts*. Thank you to our readers both loyal and new, our advertisers, our printer Mi5 Print & Digital, our paper suppliers at Veritiv, and, of course, our awards entrants and winners. Your continued support over the last 30 years has made us proud to be Canadian—oh, and you produce some damn fine work, too. We can't wait to see what you have in store for us next.