OR ADAPT OR DIE

In honour of three decades of covering the creative marketplace in Canada, *Applied Arts* presents 30 ways the industry has endured, changed or flat-out rocked

By Will Novosedlik, Suzanne Pope, Chris Powell, Brent Pulford & Kristina Urquhart

With files by Sylvain Allard, Graham Candy, Sean Davison, Eric Karjaluoto, Diti Katona, Philip Rostron, George Simhoni, Nick Shinn & Ann Urban

No. 1—9
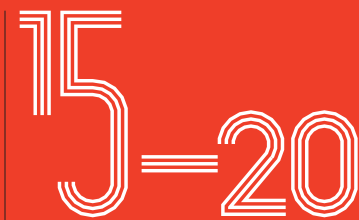
Technology

1/

Technology

The World Market

Anyone who worked in advertising in the 1990s will remember the pain of losing accounts to global realignments. Apart from lamenting the unfairness of it all, we questioned how a campaign conceived in London or New York could possibly reflect the cultural nuances of the dozens of markets it would serve.

Back then, of course, there actually was such a thing as local advertising. The Internet has changed all that. Today, every marketing message is instantly accessible to anyone on the planet with a smartphone. And that requires every global brand to have global oversight of its advertising. Fiat learned this lesson the hard way in 2008, when Richard Gere appeared in a commercial for use in Italy only. The spot celebrated Gere's support of Tibetan independence. Chinese viewers saw the spot online, and the resulting outrage caused serious damage to the Fiat brand in China.

The creative challenge of a global campaign is actually as old as the Creative Revolution itself: to find a core thought so fundamentally human that it loses nothing in translation. "Keep Walking" from Johnnie Walker, "Open Happiness" from Coca-Cola and "I'm Lovin' It" from McDonald's are good examples. Far from becoming distorted in translation, a great global concept actually gains richness and meaning through reinterpretation.—SUZANNE POPE, *freelance copywriter*

2/

Technology

Fragmentation and Imagination

Once upon a time…a media plan built around network TV—perhaps accompanied by a bit of print, radio and (budget permitting) out-of-home—was enough to ensure a brand's exposure to huge swaths of the population.

Once upon a time…advertisers succeeded by employing what john st. president and CEO Arthur Fleischmann calls an "interrupt and repeat" approach. While many of their messages were well crafted and engaging, others relied on sheer repetition to accomplish their objective.

It was an approach so quaint as to feel like something from a fairy tale.

The fragmentation of media, ushered in by the rise of specialty TV services and accelerated by the subsequent emergence of the web and mobile, has rendered the "interrupt and repeat" approach both impractical and impotent.

Simon Creet, partner and chief creative officer with The Hive, describes it as the "new, busted-up media world," one requiring creative—and relevant—advertising capable of successfully engaging disparate audiences.

"It has dissuaded advertisers from assaulting the world with giant waves of generic messaging, and encouraged them to push for a better understanding of their consumers and their values, beliefs and habits," says Creet. "It has made relevancy and utility essential, and forced brands to go forward with purpose."

Today's most successful advertisers approach marketing more as publishers, says Fleischmann. While an intriguing idea is still central to a campaign, it needs to unfold in ways that play to a given platform's strengths.

Zak Mroueh, chief creative officer and CEO of Zulu Alpha Kilo, says that one of the unforeseen byproducts of the explosion of media channels has been an increased desire by brands to seek out non-commercial environments, where there is less chance they'll be lost in a flood of competing messages.

Marketers are also increasingly espousing values that align with their users' lifestyle and beliefs. "[They] now offer something to buy into, rather than just buy," says Mroueh.

While this may not be a magic bullet (or even a magic bean) in a world where the advertiser and consumer dynamic is shifting daily, it could provide a way forward for brands keen to live happily ever after.—CHRIS POWELL, *freelance copywriter*

→
Philip Rostron
Photoshop as art. From left: Livegreen
Tree for Livegreentoronto; Boiling for
Baffin Boots; Cyberbullying–Boy Against
Lockers for MediaSmarts.

3/

Technology
Macintosh Takes a Bite

By 1986, Apple's Macintosh 128K computer had
been on the market for two years and, despite
functions limited mostly to word processing
and fairly primitive WYSIWYG drawing pro-
grams, was rapidly becoming the computer of
choice for creative pros eager to expand their
offering. A year later saw the release of the
Macintosh II, which supported colour graphics.
Traditionalists may have been a bit slower
to adopt the new technology—it wasn't until
the early 1990s that most companies had
embraced some kind of computing system—
but they eventually were rewarded with tools
that would help ease the painstaking process
of pasted-up mockups. After a slow period in
the early to mid-1990s that saw Microsoft win
considerable ground with its Windows PC,
Apple relaunched the "Mac" in 1998 with the
iMac, constructed of a translucent plastic that
instantly became a design touchstone and
must-have for any creative pro. That colourful
computer was only the first in what's been
a long line of design-friendly Apple products
integral to the creative services profession—
and the company's simple, iconic advertising
strategy hasn't gone unnoticed, either.—KU

4/

Technology
The Digital Desktop

Productivity took on a whole new meaning
after the advent of the personal computer.
In the workplace, computers provided a plat-
form on which industry professionals could
create and organize multiple versions of
projects, adjust type, and transfer print-ready
files. Read more about desktop publishing
and how it changed the workflow at *Applied
Arts* and other businesses on p. 92.—KU

5/

Technology
Digital Retouching Gets a New Name

Adobe's Photoshop revolutionized digital retouching in the early 1990s. It was the
first software program written for Mac that was capable of digital file management
and digital retouching. These areas previously had been the domain of super-
computers such as Quantel, which ran Paintbox software and the SciTex retouching
platform. These were hugely expensive million-dollar systems that by today's
standards performed very basic tasks. At that point, removing dust marks from
scanned transparencies was a major ordeal. Macs were pretty slow in those days but
because of the price cost differential, they quickly brought an end to the monopoly
of film separation houses as the digital retouching providers—which at the time were
charging up to $1,000 an hour for tasks that could now be matched on a $50,000
Mac retouching station.

Understandably, clients who wanted their images to be finished using the latest
digital retouching equipment had taken this control away. So as a photographer,
this allowed me to bring digital retouching into the studio and take ownership of the
image-making process again.

Now I could visualize the image I wanted to create and manage the whole
process in house. This fundamentally changed the process, with the shoot being
more about image gathering and a host of in-camera techniques that could now
be handled in digital post-production. Photoshop was an astonishing advancement
in the realism we could bring to the images we created, allowing us to illustrate
ideas that previously we would not have attempted. It was a game changer for the
whole visual image industry.—PHILIP ROSTRON, *image maker*

→
Nick Shinn/Shinntype
Three of designer Nick Shinn's
original typefaces. Shinntype was
one of the country's first online
type foundries in 1999.

6/

Technology
Talking Type

I never thought I could earn a living designing
typefaces, but the digitization of graphics
made it possible. Previously, it was a lengthy
process of drawing and inking, and then
getting phototype fonts produced and tested,
for a market—typesetting companies—that
was small. Not a lucrative proposition, and hard
for an art director to break into.

In 1987 Fontographer on the Mac changed
everything. It was the first Bézier drawing
software, cost a couple hundred dollars, and
one could use it to make and test fonts with
QuarkXPress and a LaserWriter, collapsing
the feedback loop.

A vast new market appeared: every
designer using a "desktop" computer, targeted
by direct mail, with fonts delivered on floppy
disks. A publisher was required to engage and
supply customers, collect and return royalties;
FontShop released my 1993 design Fontesque—
a big hit worldwide, but not yet profitable
enough for me to quit my day job.

Come the Internet, type designers could
self-publish on our own web sites, and with
e-commerce in 1998, marketing and distribu-
tion became sufficiently inexpensive that an
industry of independent foundries emerged,
cutting out the percentage taken by publishers,
selling through distributors such as MyFonts,
fonts.com and Veer.

OpenType (2001) enlarged the market
and made it more accessible by combining
Macintosh and Microsoft formats, expanding
language coverage, and including expert
features—all in a single font, replacing many.
Contextual Alternates shifted the paradigm;
I've designed several typefaces that exploit
this OpenType feature, from the cursive
Handsome (2005) to the random mash-up of
grotesque and geometric, Neology (2014).

The @fontface web code of 2011 created
a further new market for foundries, enabling
web designers to specify almost any typeface,
far beyond the few bundled with browsers
and operating systems.

Type design continues to evolve, at
the leading edge of technics, culture, and
commerce. That's demanding, but it keeps
the work fresh and relevant.—NICK SHINN,
RGD, *proprietor of Shinntype*

Handsome Pro Regular
Handsome Pro Bold

30 pt. Handsome Pro

Neology Light
Neology Regular
Neology Medium
Neology Bold
Neology Extra Bold

30 pt. Neology

Scotch Modern Display
Scotch Modern
Scotch Modern Italic
Scotch Modern Bold
Scotch Modern Bold Italic

24 pt. Scotch Modern

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A vast new market appeared:
every designer using a
"desktop" computer, targeted
by direct mail, with fonts
delivered on floppy disks.
99

7/

Technology
Long Live Print

Since it was introduced in 1993, digital printing
has been billed as a lower-cost, efficient option
compared to more traditional processes
such as lithography, which involves applying
a polymer mask to an aluminum plate for
every page being printed. Without that extra
step, digital presses produce less waste, though
historically detail has been sacrificed as the
computer image is reproduced directly onto the
paper using pixel information. In the 23 years
they've been in use, large-format digital
printers have evolved to the point where they
can match the larger runs and close detail
afforded by offset printers.—KU

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DO SOMETHING "LIKE A GIRL"?

Like a Girl
Leo Burnett Toronto, Chicago and London created the Cannes-winning #LikeaGirl for P&G Always in 2014. The video has more than 80 million views worldwide on YouTube, and the hashtag resulted in more than 290 million social media impressions.

9

Technology
A Connected World

Most people in advertising saw it coming but few were ready for the swath the Internet cut across the entire industry. For the first time ever, it was clients who proclaimed traditional media impotent next to this juggernaut. Big agencies weren't ready for it and creative departments loathed it. Oh, the indignity of the banner ad.

Clients insisted, creative people resisted—despite the new, *animated* banner ads that nobody looked at! Inspiration was at an all-time low. Creative people laboured under such a degree of uncertainty they didn't know how to cope. Stay the course and hope that the Internet would grow to fulfill the creative opportunities it had always promised? Or get with recruiters to figure out how to reinvent themselves?

TV and print production plummeted and big agency revenues did too. TV campaigns represented millions of dollars to the agency, but online banner campaigns cost in the hundreds and were paid by the number of "hits" the thing got. Since when did consumers chase bits of creative debris to see what surprises they held?

But one industry did flourish in the nascent years of Internet development. Clients turned to design firms the way they once did their advertising agencies. In essence, the 'Net was raw real estate. Every lot needed someone with design/build capabilities. And for every empty lot, designers huddled to determine the structure and aesthetics of what the client wanted built.

It didn't stop there. Clients recognized the need for prominent, interactive websites. For designers, the circumstances couldn't have been better. And it was to these design firms that net-savvy, young, creative people flocked.

As it's expanded and improved, the Internet has afforded countless new opportunities for creative media. Now, with their more diverse service menus, modern ad agencies are being called on once again to develop exciting Internet fare. Regardless of where you work now—in small agencies or design boutiques, or if you're a hired gun—there is challenging work for you, because the Internet made it possible. —BRENT PULFORD, *freelance copywriter*

8

Technology
Social Media as Medium

Social media has changed almost everything. We are inspired faster and by a more diverse pool of creations. Ideation is even more collective, enabling ideas to grow like never before. We can prototype ideas, learn and recreate before we invest. And the creative process does not end when those ideas launch. Ideas are our children. We guide them, redirect them and guard them as they grow in a global community. A community that now enables us to create dialogue with an instant audience of millions. This community is used to a sea of content and, as such, they demand us to create more beautiful, more human, more engaging experiences.

Now, constantly, we must be listening and proactively evolving our ideas so they will disrupt social pollution. We need to enable our ideas to live and thrive, so they may have influence, spark a debate or start a movement. Yet this new landscape has not made us more creative; nor has it changed the complexity and challenge of creating, selling and producing great creative. So for those that master, even fleetingly, this challenge of creating engaging solutions—social media has, for the first time in history, formed a truly global canvas of influence.—SEAN DAVISON, *executive creative director, and Graham Candy, director of insights and strategy, Diamond Integrated Marketing*

No.

10–14

The Talent

11/

The Creative Director's New Clothes

↑   Chris Staples, Paul Lavoie and Geoffrey Roche

Before the golden age of advertising was launched by the likes of DDB back in the '60s, agencies were run by suits. Creative directors wore shirts and ties. Women were secretaries and wore dresses; female CDs were almost non-existent (even today, only three per cent of CDs are women. Sadly, some things haven't changed). But I don't have to tell you this—you've seen *Mad Men*.

Bill Bernbach changed all that, and creatives have ruled the roost ever since. The best go on to build very successful creative shops: since *Applied Arts* started, Paul Lavoie left Cossette to co-found TAXI. Geoffrey Roche left Chiat/Day to start Lowe Roche. Chris Staples left Palmer Jarvis DDB to co-found Rethink. It's a well-trodden path, taken by many but mastered by few.

But what Bernbach wrought is now being disrupted by two new forces: you and me. The democratization of content is in full swing. We are making our own "ads." YouTube, Pinterest and Instagram are the channels, and advertisers are watching us, not the other way around. And when we're not making content ourselves, CDs get us to make it for them.

There is also another, more ominous force threatening the reign of the creative director: data. The link between advertising and sales, historically blurred by the absence of hard evidence, is now being laid bare. And like the fairy tale emperor, today's creative director is completely exposed. The suits are back. —WILL NOVOSEDLIK, *head of brand experience, Idea Couture*

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The democratization of content is in full swing…advertisers are watching us, not the other way around.

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10/

The Talent

Dream Teams, Now and Then

The days of the creative dream team—the AD/copywriter team that produced nothing but gold—would appear to be over. But that's not exactly true; they've simply been reconfigured. Almost every notable creative agency that's opened its doors in the past decade has avoided being perceived in any of the traditional ways. Creative is not limited to advertising. Some shops get involved with helping clients design their offices. The client is as big a part of the team as any of the agency personnel. Sure, there are still writers and art directors but hardly a decent shop exists that doesn't have a smart planner, a designer and/or a programmer—heck, even a chef —working on projects together. Today, it's all about dream relationships.—BP

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I would go on location and shoot on a large-format camera, maybe over a two-day stint, just so we could get the right lighting

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←
Smoking Ballerinas
Simhoni's 2006 Applied Arts Award–winning image of two ballerinas between performances of *Swan Lake*

12 /

The Talent
George Simhoni: 30 Years

1986

Photography was still analogue. We created images the old-fashioned way, with a camera, film and processing. The lab did the processing and prints if necessary, often dye-transfer prints that were downright laborious. The retoucher would then work with bleaches, scalpels, tints and dyes.

I would go on location and shoot on a large-format camera, maybe over a two-day stint, just so we could get the right lighting and the right skies to correspond all in one image. Studio set-ups were left for days waiting for all the elements to be in one take, then for lab processing and client and agency approvals.

The front of the camera lens had a complement of filters to bring out the best from the scene. We produced many real effects using matte boxes to project images (the 1927 movie *Metropolis* used this technique). And always, we would wait patiently for the Polaroid to process and reveal what we may see in the final.

2016

Thirty years later, and the whole process is now so much more immediate. Everything is digital. As we shoot the different plates necessary in creating the finished image, it's possible to compose them before we leave the shoot! I can do so much more now as part of my craft. It's mind-blowing.—GEORGE SIMHONI, *photographer, Westside Studio*

→
Balcony Granny
Simhoni won another Applied Arts Award for this 2006 image documenting a person in a communal living environment.
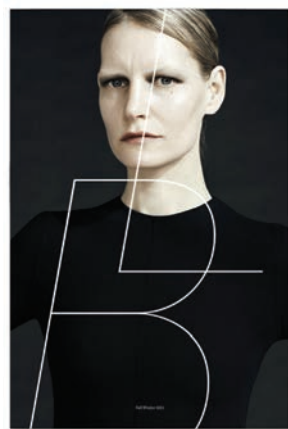
Capo Capo
Concrete created this brand identity for an artisanal spirit maker, as well as a distribution strategy that targeted mixologists ahead of the public.

Lida Baday
For almost 20 years, little retouching and sophisticated images have been hallmarks of Concrete's design for the Canadian fashion brand.

13/

The Talent

Diti Katona: 30 Years

When Concrete first opened its doors, our role was much more defined. We provided graphic design solutions to the parameters and requirements clearly defined by our clients. We acted in a very defined silo of graphic design.

Fast-forward to 2016 and our role couldn't be more different. Rather than acting solely as a design supplier, more and more we are becoming active partners helping our clients solve business goals. Our roles are much broader and the parameters are often in constant motion. As a result, the services we provide have become incredibly varied. We bring an arsenal of branding tools to help our clients tackle some big issues. While design is often an important part of the solution, it is not the only one and often not the critical one. Sometimes the critical issue is defining a messaging hierarchy, while other times it is helping developing our clients' product. Video, imagery, environments, digital experience all come into play. And most important is the integration of all these elements—how they all come together to create a strong singular voice.

Our jobs were much less complicated 30 years ago, and so much more interesting now.—DITI KATONA, *partner, Concrete Design*

BITE Beauty
Most organic makeup packaging is on the bland side, propping up the tired notion that organic = boring. Concrete challenged this with its bold, graphic designs for BITE.

Fabbrica
For chef Mark McEwan's Toronto restaurant Fabbrica, Concrete worked with architects Giannone Petricone Associates and developed a look inspired by postwar Italy.

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…more and more we are becoming active partners helping our clients solve business goals. Our roles are much broader and the parameters are often in constant motion.
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Perricone MD
When the skincare brand abandoned its trademark brown jars for a new look, sales dipped. Concrete's audit revealed that a return to roots was in order.

Masterfile Unbound
When Masterfile's sales were flagging in the mid-2000s, Concrete crafted a direct-mail magazine celebrating images "real and imagined."

→ **Uniform**
Le Salon du Livre de
Montréal: A poster created
for a reading festival, by
Montreal graphic design
studio Uniform.

↑ **FEED**
Campus Bag: Montreal's
studio FEED, founded in
1999 by Anouk Pennel and
Raphaël Daudelin, works
on a variety of branding
and typography projects.

→ **Vallée Duhamel**
A Very Short Film: This project
by avant-garde commercial
directors Julien Vallée and
Eve Duhamel exemplifies their
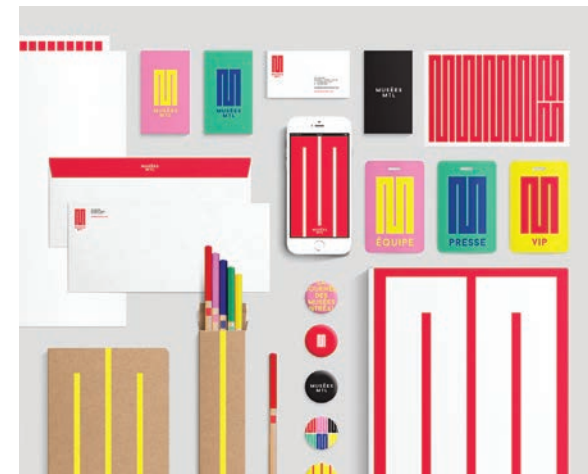signature handmade style.

← **Isabelle Arsenault**
Jane, the Fox and Me:
The illustrations in this
children's book won
Arsenault a New York
Times Best Illustrated
Book award.

Pascal Blanchet
UP Express Magazine:
Quebec City's Blanchet
counts *The Walrus*, *The
New Yorker*, and *enRoute*
among his regular clients.
↓

↑ **Paprika**
Montréal en histoires:
Identity and branding for
a non-profit that creates
cultural projects celebrat-
ing the city's history.

14/

The Talent
The French Factor

Quebec has long had a certain je ne sais quoi
when it comes to creative talent. Maybe it's
clients who are willing to take risks, or maybe
it's the Quebec government's perennial
investment in the culture sector (in 2010,
Statistics Canada reported that Quebec spent
$980,000 on culture, whereas Ontario—
40 per cent larger in population—spent 18 per
cent less).

"If we are talking business, most head-
quarters are in Toronto. I think there's a bit less
money in Quebec, and people need to be
more creative for clients," explains Claude
Auchu, partner and creative director, design
at lg2boutique. "On the other hand, there is
probably less risk because of that. It makes a
small window that we can jump through—if
we work hard enough."

Anna Goodson, artist rep and owner of
Anna Goodson Management in Montreal, adds
that the general cultural attitude is another
point for creative talent. "There's a very laid-
back, passionate, deep-rooted artistic way
about the people that grow up here," she says.
"When you come to Quebec, you speak a
different language, and I don't mean French.
It's like you're speaking to our psyche."—KU

↑ **orangetango**
Musées Montreal: An
overarching brand identity
encompasses 40 different
museums across the city.

lg2boutique
F. Menard: The design
arm of agency lg2 used
old and new family photos
to create this impactful
branding for a local pork
production business.
↓

← **Bureau Principal**
AGAC website: The
Montreal design studio
developed the responsive
website for Quebec's
Association des galeries
d'art contemporain.

The Work

No. 15–20

15/

If You Can't Share It, You Can't Brand It

Brands have been with us since early Christians drew crosses in the sand to signal their faith to other believers. But it was not until the last quarter of the 20th century that "branding" was born as a formal strategic process designed to consciously position products and services in the minds of consumers.

So if brands have been around for so long, why did it take 2,000 years for branding to emerge as a discipline? For most of the years between 1945 and 1985, marketers were focused on top-line growth. Profit was driven by volume. By the late 20th century, most categories were so overpopulated with me-too products and services that people had lots of choice, but no reason to believe that one product was better than any other.

As the focus of publicly held companies shifted from top-line to bottom-line growth, greater product differentiation was required. Brand positioning became the tool for achieving category breakthrough. By the late '90s, brand strategists were popping up all over the place to meet the challenge.

That challenge hasn't changed. But everything else has. Customers are more jaded and critical. People are tuning out of advertising. In an effort to catch up, brands are inserting themselves into every experiential nook and cranny of our lives. They want to be our "friends." They want an emotional connection with us. We're not watching them anymore; they are watching us, following us wherever we go, hoping we'll take them along for the ride—and more importantly—share them with our real friends.—WN

16/

The Work

Too Long; Didn't Read

Last spring, the Internet was greatly amused by a study that compared the attention span of humans unfavourably with that of goldfish. The Microsoft-sponsored research found that the years since the start of the mobile revolution had coincided with a drop in the human attention span from 12 seconds to eight seconds (one second less than a goldfish). But advertising spotted this trend well before the rise of the Internet. In the early '90s, visual puns were already starting to dominate awards shows, with zero words of copy becoming the new goal of every ambitious creative team. In the late 1980s, anything under 50 words was considered short copy; by 1994, one's creative director would ruthlessly whittle those 49 words down to a mere sentence fragment. If the Internet has hastened this trend, it's only because it's shown itself to be an inexhaustible font of terrible writing. Today's online community can no longer muster the energy to type "too long; didn't read." For a while, the abbreviation was *TL;DR*, but even that's been shortened to eliminate the semicolon.

I don't think the issue is strictly one of word count. After all, when millennials were growing up, they managed to read seven Harry Potter novels. Today, the more relevant question is how to present a marketing message so the modern reader will be less likely to abandon it. As it happens, the advice for online writers is the same advice given to generations of direct-mail copywriters: Keep copy short and digestible; break up the page with graphics, subheads and sidebars; phrase your subheads so that your reader will glean your message even if your body copy goes unread; use plenty of calls to action.

If we can't hold a reader's attention, it's not the reader's fault. It's ours.—SP

17/

Image Making: Taking Stock

There's nothing more exciting than producing original illustrations for a client looking to make a statement. We were worried illustration was going to become like photography in the 1990s, but it never really did. At that time, photography was badly hit by stock—just about everyone was shooting and throwing their images up to make money. Because so many budgets have been cut over the years, clients can't afford to produce photo shoots like they once did. But this does not hold true for illustration. The cost of using stock illustration compared to commissioning original work isn't very different. If you have an illustration style that really appeals to people, it will get noticed. I don't think that can be replaced.

I've been a player in this field for 20 years now, and I've seen some illustrators make a great living and others just scrape to get by.

I've always focused on getting commissions for the illustrators I represent. Artists need to create; it's who they are and what they are all about.

Art is funny in a way, because it's made a bit of a "comeback." We've got street art, graffiti, art in corporate events, live art—even print has made a comeback.

The pendulum has swung the other way. Original creative art and conceptual work is sexier than ever.—ANNA GOODSON, *artist rep and owner, Anna Goodson Illustration Management / MeatMarket Photography*

ALL ARTISTS ON THIS PAGE ARE REPRESENTED BY ANNA GOODSON ILLUSTRATION MANAGEMENT.

Paul Blow
"The Prediction Possibilities" for *Security Magazine*.
↓

→
Jessie Ford
"Beautiful Food," a bright personal project characteristic of Ford's illustration style.

Clare Mallison
"Oops Upside Your Head" by The Gap Band inspired this illustration for a 2014 London exhibition.
↓

↑
Iratxe López de Munáin
For the children's book *Cuentos de Odesa*.

↑
Marta Antelo
For the Spanish textbook editorial *Anaya*.

→
Nathalie Dion
"Don't Sweat Rise in 'Full' Retirement Age" for *Wall Street Journal*.

18/

The Work
One-Stop Shops

Creative specialists (you'll note a theme throughout these pages—perhaps we should have called this feature "The Rise, Fall and Resurrection of the Specialist") dominated the 1980s and much of the 1990s—you'd get your product design here, the ad campaign there, and the media buy somewhere else entirely. Cross-pollination didn't really exist, and often each creative service would find itself working in a vacuum.

Paul Lavoie and Jane Hope launched their agency TAXI in 1992 and were two of the first to flip that notion upside down. The agency consisted of only the key people who would fit in a cab to go to a client meeting: the creative director, the account manager, etc. It was the boutique shop to launch a thousand others—many agencies followed suit, hiring cracker-jack design talent to offer clients not just a rounder strategic campaign but also more for their dollar.

After the 2008 recession (see number 30), the one-stop shop proliferated, as budgets got tighter and the notion of "value added" got bloated and eventually became the new normal. But for their part, these new types of agency have embraced the change in stride, coming up with creative ways to challenge the status quo while delivering measurable results, whether that means keeping overhead low and arming themselves with a network of freelance production partners, as in the case of Vancouver's 123w, or remaining a big advertising agency with a renewed focus on strong design departments, as in the case of Cossette or Leo Burnett.—KU

Cossette
The identity for the Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec (BAnQ) can be taken apart and put back together to create new "stories."
↓

Leo Burnett Toronto
A rebrand for Elections Ontario's handbooks, voter info and registration cards extended to TV and out-of-home advertising.
↓

→ WAX
The multidisciplinary agency's identity for Bocce, a casual Italian restaurant in Calgary.

66
After the 2008 recession, the one-stop shop proliferated, as budgets got tighter and the notion of "value added" got bloated and eventually became the new normal.
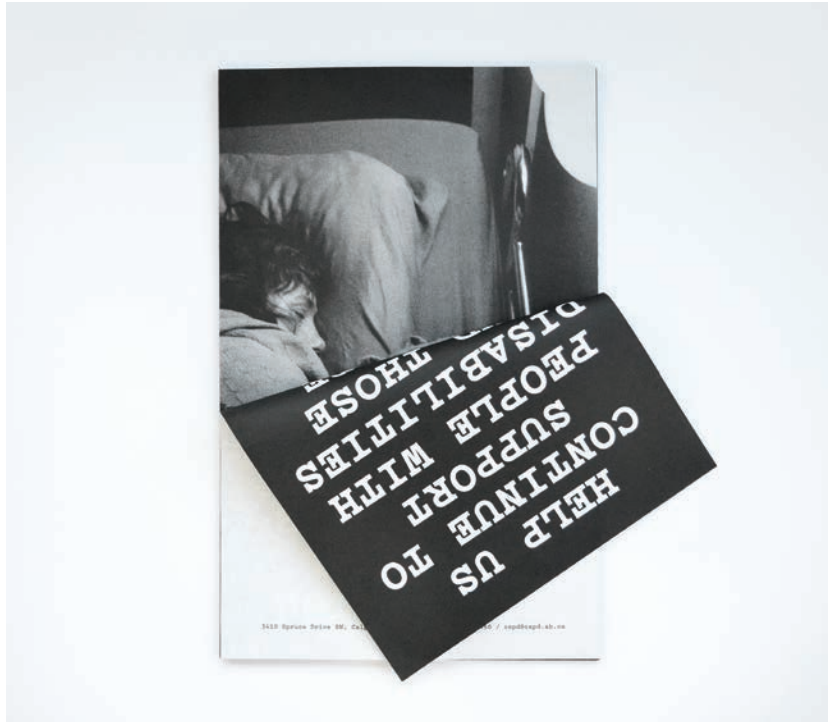99

← lg2boutique
The visual program for Montreal's Olympic Park also included wayfinding, transit shelter advertising and apparel.

↑ Cossette
More graphic-heavy examples of the agency's communications design for BAnQ.

↑ Rethink
The agency stepped away from its usual viral ads to create an identity that turned a standard washing machine icon into a king's crown.
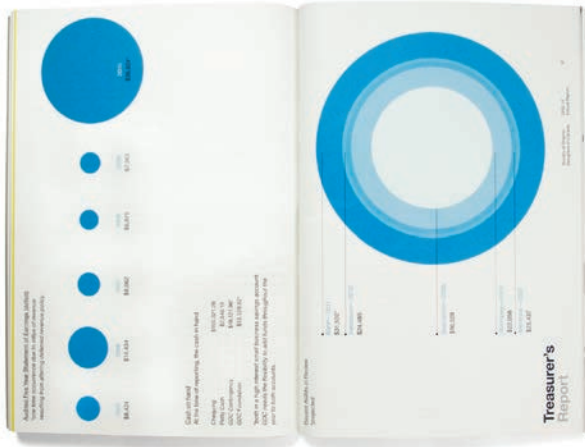
WAX
A Black Pencil–winning
2014 report for Calgary
Society for Persons with
Disabilities was stapled in
the centre to demonstrate
that without accessbility,
being disabled is difficult.

Seven25
The GDC Annual Report
used connecting dots
throughout so the design-
ers reading it could find
hidden meanings.

Cossette
Habitat for Humanity's
2011 report included
insight from volunteers,
homeowners and donors
to create a documentary
"reportage" theme.

orangetango
A 2013 annual report for
Fondation du Dr Julien,
a non-profit for disadvat-
aged kids, was designed
to look like children's
construction paper.
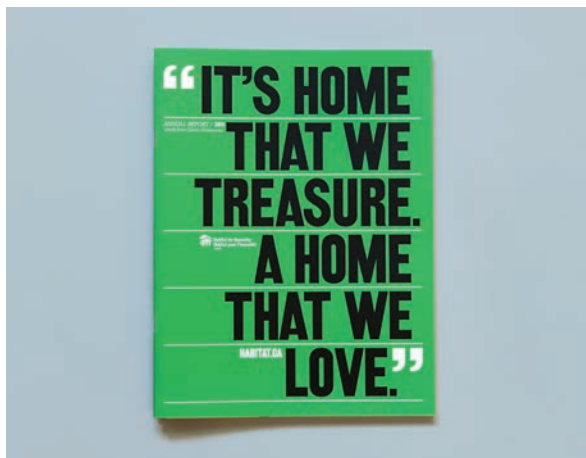
19 /

The Work

Annual Reports: Saving the Trees for the Forest

One of the staples of visual communications design used to be the annual report. When print still ruled, annual report design kept a lot of designers busy. Firms like Tudhope Associates (later sold to Interbrand), Craib Corporate and Bryan Mills Iradesso built their entire business models around annual report design. It made sense: they were a legal requirement of all public companies, and they were issued every year, so reports provided a regular and predictable revenue stream for any studio that specialized in corporate communications.

They could be very lucrative sources of income for both designers and printers. But just as Gutenberg has given way to Google, the predominance of paper, ink and printing press has been vaporized by a perfect storm of corporate cost-cutting, data visualization and digital efficiency.

Firms like Shopify, Airbnb, Kickstarter and Warby Parker are showing the way. What used to be a slog to read is now an engaging interactive experience built on the expressive potential of data visualization. Instead of turning pages, you scroll down through these interactive reports. And because they are responsively designed to be device-agnostic, they are forced to keep things simple and accessible.

It should be no surprise that digitally native firms are leaders in this shift. But traditional corporations have also gotten the message. Coca Cola, GE and Yum Brands are great examples. When the big guys get on board, you know the chasm has been crossed, and soon everyone will follow. Forests everywhere have a new lease on life.—WN

→
lg2boutique
This line of salt packaging for gourmet condiment line Maison Orphée evokes the sea.

Post Projects
The Vancouver-based duo of Alex Nelson and Beau House contributed to the new Umbra Shift line, a decor collaboration between multiple studios.
↓

20/

The Work
Nice Packages

A decade ago, I developed a packaging design class in our design graphic program at UQAM. At the time, and for many years, all packaging seemed to have the same graphic approach, as if they were all designed by the same person and for the same client. The more brands wanted to be distinctive, the more they ended up looking alike. Packaging at that time only seemed to be perceived as an extension of the brand. It was a bit like a necessary evil.

Since then, the print industry slowed down and the way we publicize products transformed. Yet packaging design seems to be enjoying continuous growth and is becoming the predominant voice of brands.

At a time when consumers are increasingly informed, they are more concerned with what they consume. They expect quality products and consequently better packaging. They are now asking for packaging that is more functional, sustainable, graphically distinctive and unique.

For a few years, what we've been seeing are more and more exciting packaging designs. My graphic design students love packaging design because it is concrete and contrasts with the virtual world we live in. As an artifact of our commercial world, I consider packaging as a media with its own code of communication and interaction. Today, packaging is a lot more than just a brand pasted on a box. It has the role of being the spokesperson of the brand.—SYLVAIN ALLARD, *professor, Université du Québec à Montréal*

↑
TAXI
Both the packaging and the name (conceived by TAXI for its client) of this product suggest dandyism.

21–23

No.

Education

this year) and amassed a community of members across the country. With proof of experience and a portfolio review, members could become informally "certified." By 1974, the Quebec chapter had splintered off, forming the Société des designers graphiques du Québec (SDGQ) and its own certification process. Ontario followed suit some years later—after a dispute with the GDC about accreditation in 1996, the Ontario chapter became the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario (now just called the RGD, also celebrating a milestone anniversary in 2016). The Ontario group wanted to establish a more formal, provincially recognized and supported accreditation process. Which they did. And then the GDC, now representing the Maritimes and Western Canada, developed its own. Years of semantics ensued (for the full history, see "Professional Differences" in the November/December 2013 issue of *Applied Arts*). At the end of it all, accreditation remains a popular choice for many designers—perhaps to give weight to the idea behind number 21 on this list.—KU

23 /

Education
OCAD U Changes the Ad Game

Like most ad programs back in the day, OCAD once taught skills related to cookie-cutting one Big Idea onto the mass media of television, print, radio and outdoor.

Paralleling the seismic shift from an analogue to a digital world, OCAD University responded, with a more rigorous, richer approach to advertising. Today, our ad program, revamped in 2012 by our chair Sandy Kedey and me, teaches strategy, research, media, budgeting, branding, positioning, ideation, art direction, design and copywriting—executed in multiple software across a vast range of media, both traditional and leading edge.

Compounding today's educational demands, industry has abandoned the luxury of training young talent, requiring grads to leap directly from classroom to boardroom. We answered by inviting industry into the classroom, as participants and as a reality check.

Meanwhile, consumers provide counterbalance. Empowered with the ability to click away from ads, they give us the license to create more engaging and entertaining advertising than ever before.—ANN URBAN, *associate professor, OCAD University*

21 /

Education
Yes, Design is a Real Career!

Before the late 20th century, design as a vocation wasn't something taken too seriously in Canada, at least in terms of available post-secondary study. Sure, you had notable designers who were educated elsewhere, like Burton Kramer, or ones who learned the craft through experience, such as Neville Smith. In 1996, to reflect the growing number of design programs available, the Ontario College of Art became the Ontario College of Art & Design. Fourteen years later, OCAD became a university, restructuring its curricula to strengthen the theoretical aspects behind art and design. Similarly, the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver attained university status in 2008 and now offers masters programs in both design and the applied arts. In 2000, York University and

Sheridan College launched YSDN, a four-year joint program in design that sees equal study at both schools. Graduates receive an honours bachelor of design after studying both design practice and theory. As design thinking starts to permeate other industries, other schools have followed suit. The Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto introduced its DesignWorks studio in 2011, an experimental learning centre for MBA students to explore how creativity and innovation can benefit companies.—KU

22 /

Education
The Accreditation War

By the time *Applied Arts* launched, the GDC (Society of Graphic Designers of Canada) had been operating for three decades (the

No. 24–30

The Culture

24/

Media Goes Solo

For most of the 20th century, advertising agencies offered their clients in-house media services. Agencies were paid a standard 15 per cent commission on airtime and print space. But in the late 1980s, agencies worldwide began unbundling their media offerings, creating independent media companies and billing for their creative services by fee rather than by commission. In part, this was because of the rise of cable television (with the Internet soon to follow). Suddenly, there was a vastly more complicated media landscape, one that created new opportunities for independent media specialists (read p. 19 for more on media fragmentation). These specialists could buy space and time more cheaply and often more inventively than their big-agency counterparts. They were also more likely to be media neutral than big agencies, which were quick to recommend television buys in order to maximize commissions. Thus began the spinoff of media departments from their big-agency parents. Today, a 15 per cent commission is unheard of. In the past 20 years, commission rates have been pushed down into the single digits, with especially large or prestigious clients forcing agencies to accept as little as one or two per cent of billings.—SP

25/

Marketing a Millennial

Millennials make up just over one-quarter of the Canadian population and more than one-third of the Canadian workforce, but their status as digital natives has forever changed the definition of advertising.

Millennials are savvy, vigilant, speculative, and have come to expect more than simply functionality from the products they purchase, says Rethink co-founder and creative director Ian Grais. To this group, "marketing" is no longer just the information conveyed in a 30-second TV spot: Every consumer interaction—whether it is a service call, an app interaction or TV ad—is now capable of generating a reciprocal action.

Marketers that focus on "channel" strategies in an era where the average millennial person has 29 apps on their phone, checks their phone more than 150 times a day and watches 30 hours of TV a week are completely missing the point, says Grais.

"It's not enough to have a message on a channel," he says. "What is more important is creating an idea, a world, or experience that pulls customers in."

Brand strategy was traditionally anchored around two pillars: Why does my brand exist, and how does it communicate itself to its customers. The advent of digital—and in particular social media—means that how brands want their customers to behave must now be a key consideration.

"[Millennials] are now a voice equivalent to that of a Fortune 500 organization, and thinking about what [you] want them to say will help turn them into brand advocates," says Grais.—CP

26/

S, M, L

Not talking pizza here, rather advertising agencies. There was a time, if you were a massive company like P&G, stewards to literally hundreds of the world's most recognized brands, that you had an "agency of record." One grand multinational agency that both developed creative but also bought all media. In the 1980s, these conglomerates scooped up most of the existing ad agencies (WPP acquired JWT in 1987, then Ogilvy in 1989, Omnicom snapped up TBWA and Interbrand in 1993 and Chiat/Day in 1995).

In the '90s, however, with the Internet changing the way business got done, we saw these agencies, like big woolly mammoths, struggling to adjust their business and revenue models to cope in the brave new world.

It was then we began to see prominent creative directors leave agencies to open the doors to their own shops. Typically accompanied by a big client and leanly staffed with a handful of proven creative people plus a planner, they did what they did well. No media buying, no hand holding, no free tix to the ball game—just brilliant, powerful creative built from equally brilliant strategies. Some of these agencies have naturally grown, but their sole reason for being is to remain able to turn on a dime and adjust to the unexpected.—BP

27/

The Culture
Freelance Design: Honey, I Shrunk the Firm

Until recently, design was expensive, time-consuming and highly specialized. Good designers were scarce and required training. Consequently, they could make a very good living. But now that anyone can get a logo online for five bucks, the barriers to entry have evaporated. Design has been automated. Creativity has been commoditized. To start a serious practice today is like setting up a Prada kiosk in a dollar store.

Used to be there were more large shops where a young designer could go to learn the trade. Now those are few and far between. While there are far more designers practicing than ever before, at least half of them are freelancers. Along with online automation, this has driven down prices, which makes it a lot harder to earn a living, and tougher to scale your business. You're working a lot more for a lot less.

Most designers don't get out of bed primarily to make money. But if they want to earn a living doing what they love, they need the raw ambition of an entrepreneur, the foresight of a futurist, and the business savvy of a strategist—in addition to stellar design chops. It's not your dad's design business anymore.—WN

28/

The Culture
Space Rules

Thirty years ago, clients walking into an ad agency or design firm would be greeted with a pronounced reception desk, sleek office furniture and a bunch of people in suits—all designed to make a lasting, if somberly corporate, impression: don't worry, you're in good hands. The hands may be as capable as ever, but the surroundings are decidedly more casual, and the message is something else entirely: we're all friends here; let's hang out. At Grip Limited, a big orange slide and fire pole cuts through a stark white upper and lower level. Rethink's office fridge is stocked with Molson Canadian. Boardrooms are a cluster of couches or a ping-pong table or maybe the cafe downstairs. Every day is casual Friday. Treadmill desks and stand-up desks and exercise ball chairs abound, and there is almost always a lack of walls. Collaboration is encouraged, working in a vacuum is not (unless, of course, you need to actually think, in which case they've got you covered too—try using Jacknife Design's glass-walled meeting room, without the meeting). We'll try almost anything to get the creative ideas flowing.

And while there's a lot of stock in the "happy employees are good employees" mantra, just as much of it has to do with maintaining that sacrosanct relationship with the client. Dylan Staniul, creative director at Vancouver design firm Burnkit, stressed the importance of a well-designed space in a column for *Applied Arts* last year: "It suggests to clients that they are part of something, a member of the team and directly connected to the process." Pass the beer, please.—KU

PHOTO: GRIP LIMITED COURTESY / JOHNSON CHOU INC.

→ **Burnkit**
Concrete, couches and a non-traditional workspace at Vancouver design studio Burnkit.

← **Grip Limited**
The Toronto agency is famous in ad circles for the Big Orange Slide—it was even the name of the company's now-defunct online blog.

Common Good
Expect the unexpected: this is a TV production company with a light, bright, minimal space.
↓

PHOTO: COMMON GOOD COURTESY M·S·D·S STUDIO

29/

The Culture
Start-Ups: Changing the Creative Process

There's nothing new about start-ups. What's notable is the sheer number of them—which increases the likelihood that you'll at some point produce design for one. For the past decade, I've straddled traditional studio work and start-up projects. Over this time, I've noticed how designing for each differs.

Design projects for existing businesses have more defined outcomes. This means you can follow a structured method and (typically) deliver suitable work. Start-ups aren't like this, though. Instead, they begin as a kind of hypothesis, which you test and then retool. As a designer who works on start-ups, you have to get used to not knowing.

In studio work, absolute failures are uncommon. With start-ups, failure is the norm. This puts your design under great scrutiny. Are visitors confused by the service/product? Is the onboarding process broken? Is the call-to-action lost? Each of these could make the difference between your start-up's success or demise.

Aside from comprehensive brand projects, studio work is often piecemeal. Design for start-ups tends to be more all encompassing. You need page conventions, a logo, UI patterns, copy, notification templates, videos, and a thousand other things. These need to work independently, and as part of the whole. Oh, yes—and you need them now. There's no time for committee meetings and drawn-out approvals. Start-ups move fast, so, you need to get stuff out today—even if it's imperfect. Your start-up might be dead in two months. You'd better not take three to agree on site visuals.

To me, design for start-ups feels more direct. It's not muddied by politics or ego (for the most part). Instead, it's a kind of fast-moving discovery, in which every design decision matters. Sure, the probability of failure is high, but that just makes it all the more real.—ERIC KARJALUOTO, *partner and creative director, smashLAB*

30/

The Culture
The Great Recession

Some aspects of agency life are exactly as they were 30 years ago. Clients have always wanted more for less (or for nothing, as in the case of new-business pitches). What's new is the perfect storm of expectations created by the Internet and the 2008 recession.

The Internet has a voracious appetite for videos and tweets and blog posts; the recession made it possible for clients to demand all that extra work for no extra money. On top of all this, big agencies now have competition that didn't exist in the past: Clients are recruiting leading creative talent to work in-house, and PR firms are becoming powerful enough to encroach on advertising's previously exclusive turf of paid media. So, not surprisingly, it's become fashionable to join in the deathwatch for the big-agency business model.

But the patient is actually doing better than one might expect. Big agencies are still the best choice for conceiving and executing big ideas. And today's big agencies now house mini-agencies that offer the desired speed and agility while still being able to call on the support of a big agency when it's needed.

And all that unpaid work? At some point, advertisers will recognize the folly of trying to fill the Internet's bottomless pit of inventory. In their efforts to have been always on, brands have littered the online world with banners that appear to have been written by bots and laid out by squirrels. All of this is the natural consequence of the delusion that exponentially greater volumes of work can be ordered up for the same money without any sacrifice in quality. I predict the love affair with always-on will eventually cool, and be replaced by fewer messages that are better crafted and less resented by consumers. After all, there is no virtue in agency nimbleness if all that's being delivered nimbly is crap.—SP
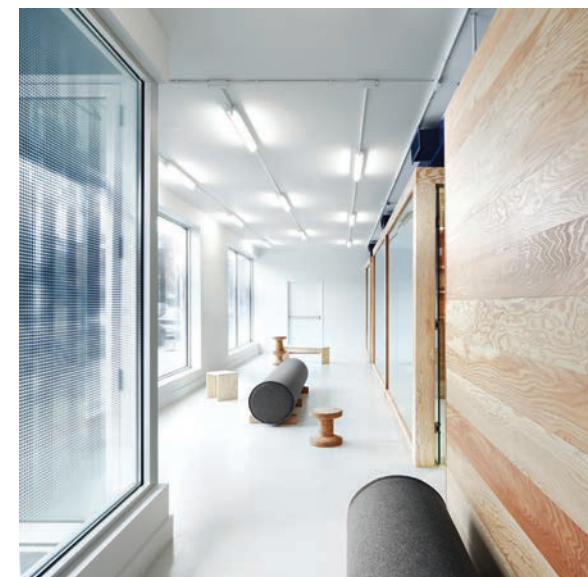
66
The love affair with always-on will eventually cool, and be replaced by fewer messages that are better crafted and less resented by consumers.
99