

Products are made in
the factory, but brands
are made in the mind.
Walter Landor,
Landor Associates, 1941

Brand

Businesses have always used visual identities to differentiate themselves. Up until the beginning of the 20th century, artists were employed to create graphic representations of products or the people and processes that made them. These images were shaped by heritage and tradition rather than by creative decision making. In the 1920s, a new generation influenced by the Bauhaus sought to underpin their craft with thought and analysis. As a result, commercial artists began to communicate more abstract, intangible qualities. Slowly the discipline of design took shape, and visionaries such as Walter Landor began to realize its commercial potential. In 1941, he founded global brand consultancy Landor Associates, stating that “products are made in the factory, but brands are made in the mind.” In the years that followed, brand identity became big business.

The influx of artists and designers from central Europe to the United States after World War II brought with them ideas that enabled a younger generation of creative talent to make a valuable contribution to the rapidly developing economy. Designers such as Paul Rand and Saul Bass created visual identities that defined how businesses were perceived, and as a result, were able to bring design into the boardroom. This was the age of corporate identity and businesses aspired to an image of authoritative efficiency, with designers using the template of European modernism to create clean, geometric visual identities that were systematically applied.

Today, brands are much more complex, and as a result, identities can no longer be defined through production-line consistency. The 21st-century business seeks to communicate an air of open humanity. It seeks trust by talking in a language that is relaxed, informal, and inclusive, but at the same time wants to bring its products and services to life as powerful, emotion-driven embodiments of desire. It uses design as a primary tool in the creation of these perceptions. As a result branding is one of the most rapidly expanding areas of the creative economy.

Systems

Corporate identities were applied using systems that enabled adaptations for different uses within a business.

A Trademark is a picture. It is a symbol, a sign, an emblem, an escutcheon, an image. A symbol of a corporation, a sign of the quality, a blend of form and content. Trademarks are animate, inanimate, organic, geometric. They are letters, ideograms, monograms, colours, things. They indicate, not represent but suggest, and are stated with brevity and wit.

Paul Rand



SEARCH: Ben Bos; Andrew Blauvelt "Brand New Worlds"; Michael Bierut "Helvetica period!"; Moving Brands; Wim Crouwel; Total Design; North Design; Green Eyle/ MIT Media Lab; Wolff Olins; Sean Perkins; Steven Heller; Paul Rand/ the International Style; Benno Wissing

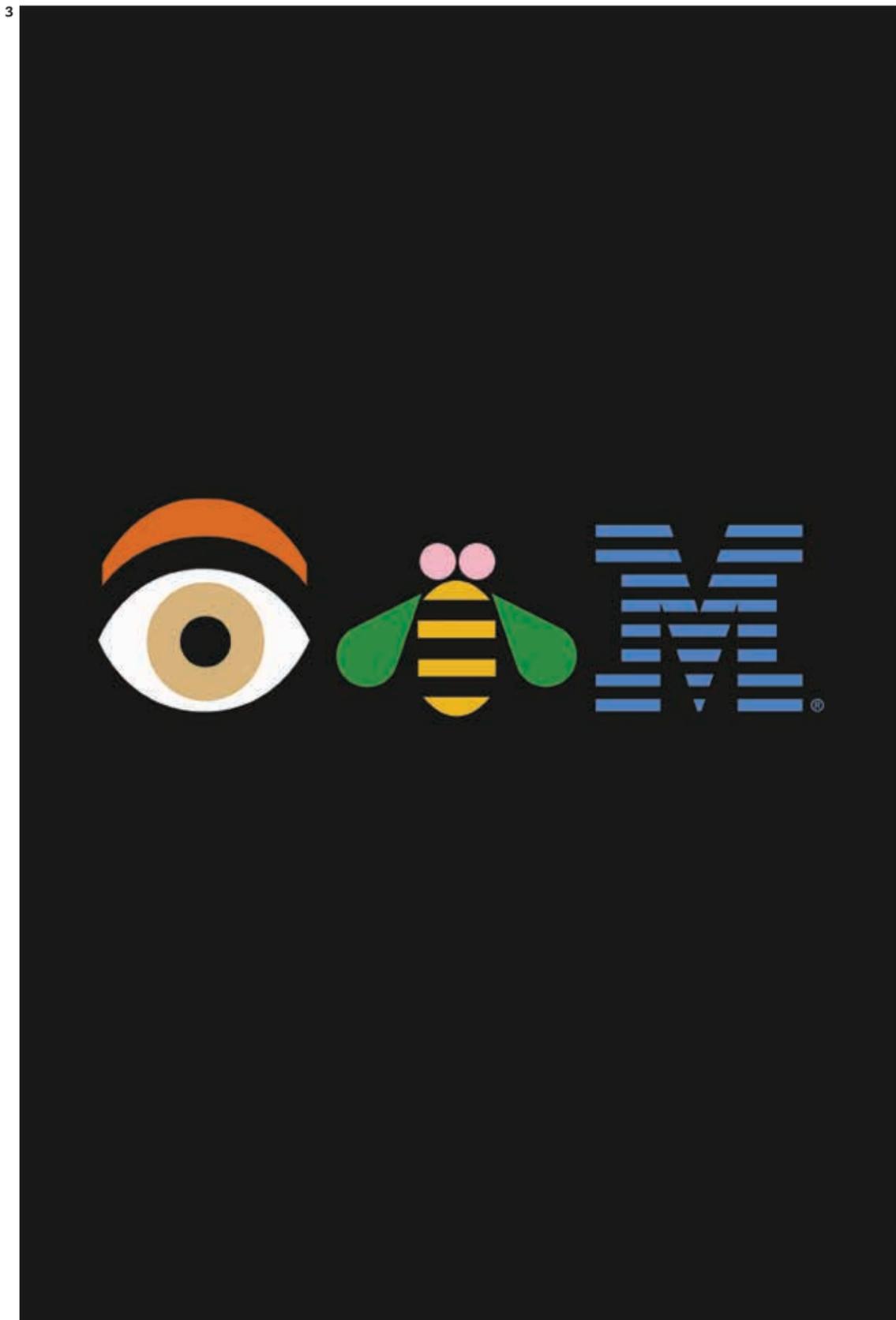
Visual identities help define a commercial proposition. After World War II, this practice evolved into a service industry. Modernist ideas influenced the design of "corporate identities" design, and businesses began to use abstraction to communicate their intangible values. Professionalism, efficiency, and trust were promoted through geometric symbols that allowed growing corporations to appear trustworthy and authoritative. This process is described by Michael Bierut in his brilliant "Helvetica period!" speech from the recent movie about the typeface. He tells the story of how in the 1960s U.S. businesses were persuaded to "scrape the crud" from their "dusty" and "homemade" identities to reveal an image of shining corporate modernity through the use of geometric logos and typefaces like Helvetica. This came to be known as "corporate identity design."

The best corporate identities were applied using systems that enabled adaptations for different uses within a business. At IBM, Paul Rand examined the creation of a trademark that could be applied according to a range of specifications to suit different purposes. He even created the iconic Eye Bee M rebus to demonstrate the flexibility of the mark. It is widely recognized that Rand made a massive contribution to persuading business that design was something that was worth investing in, and doing so, he created some of the world's most memorable trademarks, including Westinghouse, NeXT, Enron, and UPS.

Meanwhile, in Europe in 1963, graphic designers Ben Bos, Wim Crouwel, and Benno Wissing and product designer Friso Kramer established an agency that extended this approach across disciplines. This agency was called Total Design, and as a multidisciplinary design company, it was able to coordinate the implementation of an identity to every aspect of a business from the design of stationery, through to uniforms, vehicles, architecture, and interiors. Their systems offered professional consistency without being dull and uniform and were implemented using complex guideline documents. Total Design became the quality standard for corporate identity through the 1970s and into the 1980s. During this period, a system with a logo at its heart and supported by color and typeface specification became the accepted norm, but as we moved into the 1990s, businesses required a higher degree of flexibility. Guidelines became toolkits, and systems became more complex.

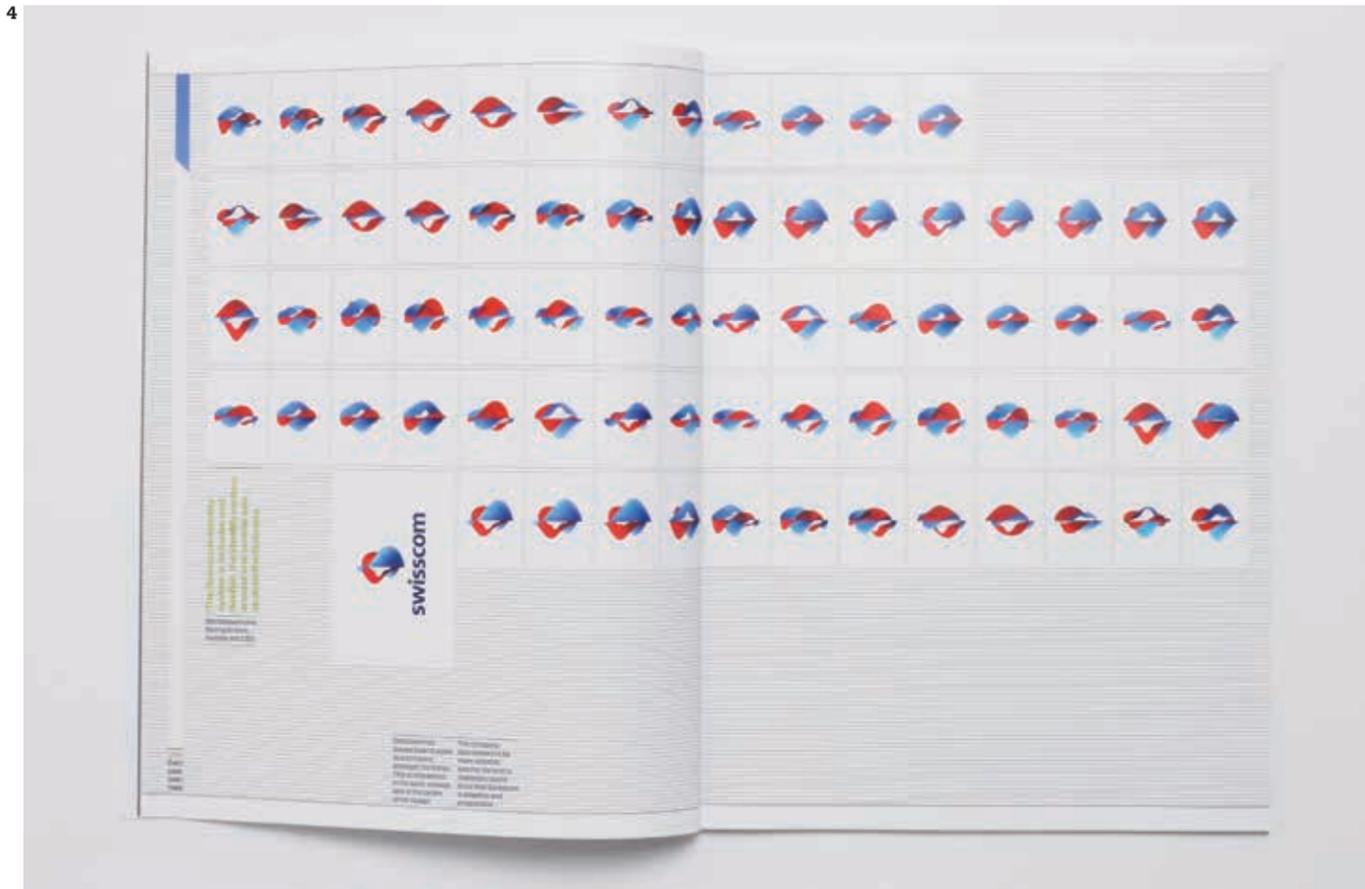
London-based agency Wolff Olins pioneered a more dynamic and adaptive approach for what was now called "brand" rather than "corporate identity." This approach can be seen in their work for the Tate, a family of successful art museums in the UK, where according to the Wolff Olins website, they "created a range of logos that move in and out of focus, suggesting the dynamic nature (of the institution)—always changing but always recognizable." This approach had more longevity because it provided options for adaptation and renewal. At the same time, another London-based studio, North, was creating identity systems for national institutions such as the RAC, the Barbican Centre, and the UK Land Registry that balanced commercial functionality with seductive contemporary styling. Intelligently applying the rigor of Swiss modernism

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1 & 2. Visual identities like this one by Moving Brands for online graphic novel publishers Madefire help define a commercial proposition.

3. Paul Rand's iconic Eye Bee M is an example of his desire to evolve flexible, dynamic corporate identities.



4 & 5. Today, identity systems like this one created for telecom giant Swisscom by Moving Brands need to evolve across multiple media touch points.

6. This Wolff Olins identity for the Tate family of museums in the UK was designed to be always “changing but always recognizable.”

7. Part of the Moving Brands identity system for CX.



Most brands remained fixated on yesterday’s problem—consistent reproduction across media. But today a brand must be alive to change, just like the people it wants to connect with and the business it is part of.
 Moving Brands

to the complexity of a contemporary organization, they provided inspiration for a plethora of identities that were created during the UK’s post-millennium boom.

Developments in new technology at this time meant that any identity system would need to incorporate motion-based options. So in 2001, North worked with a newly established digital studio to help them create graphic mark that was based on pulsing fiber-optic cables. This studio was called Moving Brands, and as its website states, it was set up to provide “creativity for a moving world.” This strategy recognized that brands exist in a rapidly changing technology-driven environment. Moving Brands initially organized its work into four areas: motion, static, sonic, and responsive. Its work for technology-oriented brands such as Swisscom and CX demonstrates how to create brands that adapt and change according to context and media.

Consistently managing brand identities in this environment requires the utilization of a broader range of consistent variables within complex and fluid systems. Designers need to work with code as much as they work with typography. The power and flexibility of this approach can be seen in the identity that experimental technology studio Green Eyle recently designed for the MIT Media Lab. The media lab is renowned for its innovative interdisciplinary research, and Green Eyle set out to create an identity that reflected this reputation. To do this, the team produced a series of algorithms that enabled each student, teacher, or member of staff to generate their own unique rendition of a new logo. They could then create their own custom-made identity. Using code this system cleverly allows for richly individualized outcomes that are still consistent to an overall visual identity. As consumer culture develops, we will continue to demand that brands provide us with made-to-order options, so it seems likely that adaptive code-based identity systems will become more and more prevalent.

We believe that design should be about honesty—not about creating a veneer.

In Conversation

with Mason Wells,
founding partner,
Bibliothèque Design

Bibliothèque is one of the UK's most respected creative agencies. Founded in 2005 by Wells, Tim Beard, and Jonathon Jeffrey, it has been featured on the front of *Creative Review* magazine and has been commissioned by cultural institutions such as the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Barbican, and the British Council.

bibliothequedesign.com

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Wells started his career at Cartlidge Levene, a studio known for sparing use of beautifully crafted sans serif typography and points of reference that include conceptual artists such as Laurence Weiner and Barnett Newman. He later joined former employees of Cartlidge Levene Sean Perkins and Simon Browning at North, which they had set up in 1995. In its early years, North began to apply a European sensibility to design for businesses increasingly aware of the importance of their visual perception.

One of the early projects that Wells worked on was an identity for the Royal Automobile Club (RAC). Looking back, he notes how up until this point, aside from Sean Perkins, the designers' experience within identity design was quite limited. They saw the RAC job as an opportunity to create something groundbreaking in this area. There was definitely an element of learning on the job and Wells talks about how the challenge of doing things for the first time gave them a real focus. What they eventually produced was an identity that positioned the RAC as an forward-thinking and technically efficient organization.

"The core element of the brief was about looking to the future—celebrating their heritage but looking forward to the next 100 years of motoring. At the time I had read a poignant comment by Peter Saville that spoke about the futuristic intent of the NASA logo (designed in 1975 by Richard Danne and Bruce Blackburn)—this really resonated with me as we worked on the identity."

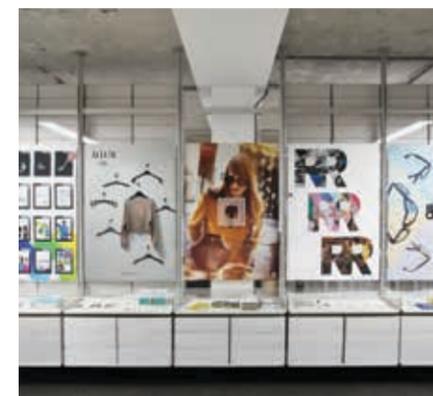
Wells describes referring to identity programmes from BMW and Lufthansa when creating the RAC guidelines—admiring their rational organization and systematic technical rigor. This almost scientific approach

to identity (as the Germans refer to it, "Erscheinungsbild," or "appearance") had evolved from institutions like the HfG Ulm in Germany but had never really been appreciated in the UK. These reference points seemed to have inspired an incisive attention to detail in the way that North went on to specify its identity guidelines and are still present in the work at Bibliothèque. "We all spend time detailing things that often go unnoticed—as designers we have an obligation to do this."

The severity of North's early work starts to soften in the way the agency produced for Telewest in 2002. The system is built from a mark that is an abstraction of fiber-optic technology and uses a Dalton Maag-designed rounded typeface to communicate a friendlier, more welcoming attitude. North also developed the fiber optic idea into motion-based assets to take advantage of developments in new technology.

Wells talks about how a new world of graphic expressions was opening up for brand identity at this time and how these opportunities have allowed Bibliothèque to apply the rigor of its design methodology to a much wider range of applications. This is particularly evident in Bibliothèque's spatial design work. Starting with small "below the line" projects with Adidas before progressing to a series of internationally acclaimed exhibitions, the studio has been able to build a substantial portfolio of three-dimensional spaces. From Dieter Rams at the Design Museum to Cold War Modern at the V&A and Le Corbusier at the Barbican, Bibliothèque creates spaces that are an expression of content with a ruthless eye for detail.

The agency's ability to develop core communication concepts across mediums and disciplines can be seen in projects like its presentation and promotion of the 2010 D&AD Awards ceremony and dinner. Working from a central idea that celebrated the decisive nature of judging—a yes or no answer—the team created marketing, environmental, and ambient executions that each gave



the idea a new twist. The campaign culminated in a collaboration with pioneering technologists the Rumpus Room that allowed them to take the concept from a static typographic expression into an immersive video installation playing out across five stadium-sized screens in the Roundhouse in Camden, London.

Bibliothèque is also using new technologies in order to create more playful and immersive identities. A good example of this can be seen in the naming and visual identity for a new telecom brand providing high-speed Internet access to emerging markets—Ollo—which features a logo that can evolve and be adapted by the user through a touch screen.

Wells and Bibliothèque believe in design as a set of principles that have honesty and integrity at their heart. They are interested in producing work that has longevity and is conceptually appropriate. As Wells points out, “Of course we know people have a different relationship with brands now—and identities have evolved accordingly, but at the same time you cannot sweep 70 years of

design evolution under the carpet. Instead we should harness and build upon what we have learned from the past. Our preference is to foster long-term relationships with our clients as opposed to leaving a set of guidelines and walking away. That way the work evolves in tandem with changes in people’s behavior and technology. We work with several organizations in this way.” He creates a distinction between marketing and campaign-led graphic design and work that defines ideas and helps people gain understanding. He feels that there is still a place for businesses to communicate an ideology—to stand for something—and that design has a role in helping them do this.

There is idealism in what Bibliothèque stands for. They have principles and care about doing things in the right way. As Wells says, “In this studio we believe that timeless things matter, we are not interested in throwaway. We do not believe in transience. Things matter more when they are constructed correctly and with meaning.”

It can be amazingly liberating to be systematic—to have a set of restrictions and to make them work for you.

Mason Wells



1–4. Examples from the Ollo identity guidelines.

5. The Ollo multi-touch responsive logo in action.



Case Study: Ollo

Bibliothèque named and created the visual identity and strategy for a new telecom brand providing high-speed Internet access to emerging markets. The concept for the brand Ollo defines a line of communication connecting communities. The logo is the first to exploit the new multitouch hardware of smartphones and tablets. It utilizes custom software to allow manipulation of the logo to become a creative tool in building its visual language.

“We wanted to put stake in the ground here and do something that nobody else has done. We wanted to do a logo that would really take advantage of the touch screen. A logo that could be genuinely manipulated but still be recognizable and hold true to the core values of the identity.”

The responsive logo was not a requirement of the job, but Bibliothèque invested in the development of the technology that powered it so that they could demonstrate its potential to the client. “At the presentation, the client actually experienced it [the way] we wanted the end user to experience it.”

This project demonstrates that although Bibliothèque has a connection with the heritage of graphic design, it does not mean it is looking back into the past. At the core of the modernist principles Bibliothèque admires is a desire to utilize new technology to redefine your world—this desire can be seen very clearly in a project like Ollo.

bibliothequedesign.com/projects/branding/ollo/

Strategy

As the nature of brands has changed within our economy, a designer's ability to analyze, understand, and clarify has become ever more important.

What we once charged for, we now give away and what we once gave away, we now charge for.
James Bull, co-founder of Moving Brands



1

1. An example of the process that studios such as Moving Brands use to clarify, name, and define.

SEARCH: Max Bruinsma "Learning to Read and Write Images"; James Bull/ Moving Brands; ico Design Benugo; Bear Design Foxtons; Russell Holmes ico Design; Steven Heller "What Do We Call Ourselves?"

The success of a piece of communication has always been dependent on a connection between content, form, audience, and context—what the message is, who it's aimed at, what it looks like, and how and where it's communicated. In recent years, the balance between these elements has shifted. Communication designers have traditionally offered style and packaging solutions for brands and products. However, as the nature of brands has changed within our economy, a designer's ability to analyze and understand has become ever more important. Dutch editor and design critic, Max Bruinsma pointed out as far back as 1997 in his article for *Eye* 25, "Learning to Read and Write Images," that "analyzing and criticizing form with respect to content becomes all the more urgent at a time when forms and contents and media seem to be floating around in a primordial soup of possible contexts and meanings." Bruinsma calls for designers to be involved in the "whole trajectory of a communication product."

Desktop publishing means that the tools of graphic design styling are available to everyone: as a result it no longer has the same financial value. At the AltShift design conference in 2012, Russell Holmes, creative strategy partner at London-based studio ico, pointed out, "The challenge now is to create compelling communication in a world where anyone can design." In this world, the thinking behind a communication outcome is much more significant to the income of a creative agency, and designers are often employed to help a client understand what sort of design they need, rather than style what they think they want. Processes of definition, clarification, and naming are fundamental to a designer's craft and are today every bit as important as layout, typography, and art direction.

The process that underpins a design solution is now much more important, and contemporary creative agencies structure this process very deliberately to incorporate the input of the client. Russell Holmes describes how ico



2

2-4. ico's redefinition of Benugo's visual identity is designed to reflect insights that were gained through client research. As a result, posters and signage enhance the customer experience and explain key elements of the business proposition.



3

worked with the management and staff of high-street food brand Benugo when redefining its visual identity.

"We went round to all their locations; we talked to managers, we talked to baristas; we talked to people behind the till; we talked to all the key stakeholders around the business, including the board, and interviewed them individually. We asked lots of questions: about how the visual brand worked, what they thought they could do better and things that were already working really well. Also the way that they interacted with customers, what it was about the stores that appealed and what about the stores could work better, etc., etc. . . . At the end of this process we put everything together and went through it all and our findings helped us frame our creative response.

The important thing is that the team isn't just the creative agency—it's also the key stakeholders. There needs to be buy-in from those guys, they need to say yes, we believe that this is right for us."

Detailed analysis and inquiry enable a designer to organize and clarify a complex business or communication problem and to put together a proposition that can then be articulated in ways that will elicit empathy and understanding in the consumer. This is where the real economic value of contemporary communication design lies and as a result both evidencing creative thinking and explaining its significance are now vital to an agency's survival. As James Bull, founder of Moving Brands, said in a recent lecture, "We are what we document. If you didn't document it, you might as well have not done it."



4

**Case Study:
Bear—the Foxtons Mini**

The importance of the thinking behind the making can be clearly seen in the contribution that London-based creative agency Bear has made in helping Foxtons become London's leading property agents. Bear was initially brought in to brand Foxtons' fleet cars, but creative director Roberto D'Andria soon realized that their decisions could have a deeper significance.

In a conversation with the author from the summer of 2013, D'Andria noted, "Looking at their

marketing strategy, we saw that they described themselves as 'London's estate agents' and we suggested that they allow us to help them become 'THE estate agent for Londoners', by using this as the key proposition for all of their communication materials."

From this central concept, Bear put together a rationale for using the recently relaunched Mini Cooper as the Foxtons fleet car to take advantage of its iconic link to London. As a result it created the Team Foxtons Mini, with numbered cars and custom liveries designed to reflect the personalities of the

areas around individual Foxtons' offices. The success of this approach led to Bear being appointed as Foxtons' sole creative agency in 2001. Since then, Bear's ideas have helped elevate Foxtons from also-rans to best of breed. The business was sold for £390 million in 2007 and continues to dominate the London property market.

D'Andria believes that "the only way for a small independent agency (or any agency for that matter) to survive in today's economic climate is to establish ongoing relationships with their clients." These relationships

develop out of an ability to understand and provide insight into the nature of the client's business. D'Andria also points out that if an agency ties itself to a particular visual style, specific processes, or a narrow range of production techniques, it will be limiting their potential commissions.

Bear works with a range of specialists to implement each individual client's vision and will utilize any appropriate output—from high-end fashion photography, to motion-captured animation, or letterpress typography. The most recent Foxtons' Mini is a confident

and playful comment on the transparency of its client's business transactions and features an X-ray of a whole car with the driver in it. This provided a huge production conundrum—one that could only be solved by taking a Mini apart section by section and individually X-raying each piece in photographer Nick Veasey's concrete bunker. The outcome was Foxtons' most popular Mini and their continued belief in Bear's creative vision.

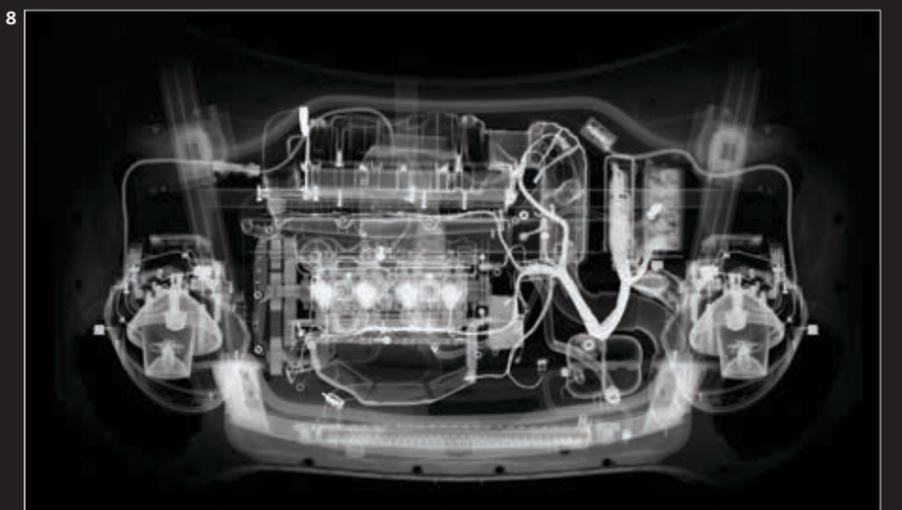
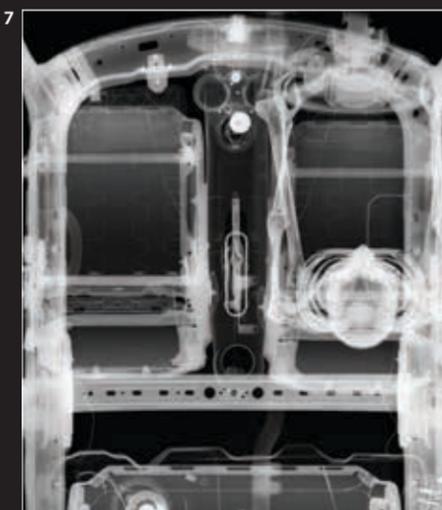
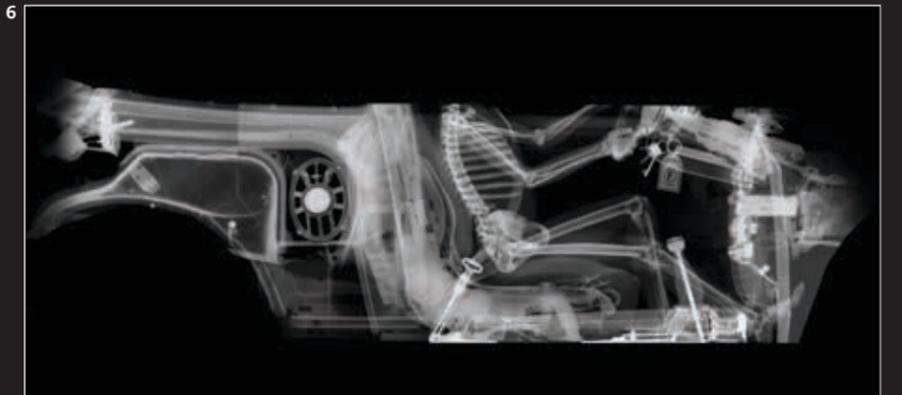
bearlondon.com/work/foxtons-brand

1. Foxtons' use of design, particularly in relation to the customer experience, has made them London's leading property agents.

2-4. Examples of the individual Team Foxton liveries applied to individual Minis.

5. The X-ray Mini as it appeared on the street.

6-8. The original Nick Veasey x-rays.



A lot of design is about problem solving, but it's more interesting to create opportunities.

In Conversation

with Mat Heidl,
CEO, Moving Brands

Moving Brands is an independent global creative company. It works in partnership with some of the best companies in the world, defining and articulating their stories, building systems, and designing and producing emotive experiences. Moving Brands' clients include Nokia, Swisscom, Hitachi, Infosys, and Hewlett Packard.

movingbrands.com

Moving Brands is defined by a set of core thoughts and attitudes. Mat Heidl began our conversation by trying to define them. The first is the power of a team.

"We are in a team business: as a result everybody who works for us needs to be able to understand this. Our business is inherently multidisciplinary, inherently complex, and inherently involves lots of people who are not from the design industry. . . . We need people [who] are able to move from an individual mentality to a group mentality. Our business is built around the capabilities of the team. And it is the different qualities of each member of the team that come together to solve a problem."

Heidl highlights a desire to build narratives around the brands Moving Brands work with. This interest in storytelling can be traced back to the filmmaking backgrounds of the company's original founders. There is also what he calls a "slightly obsessive desire" to exploit the latest technology. From the beginning they have had an insatiable curiosity to find out how things work and how to use them to do new things.

Moving Brands is "not wedded to accepted norms"—it is actually suspicious of these norms. Its project teams have no desire "to be framed by their capabilities" and instead see each task as an opportunity to extend these capabilities. "We try to look at a [project] brief a bit differently and drill down into what the client is really trying to achieve, then having established this—we bring the talent we have in the studio to bear in the delivery of this objective."

Heidl has a deeply held belief in the importance of quality. Several times in our conversation, he talked about not letting something leave the studio until it had reached a certain standard. Many other digital agencies talk about a minimum viable product and seeking to perfect in the marketplace, but Moving Brands has a visual rigor that we might trace back to its early collaborations with print-led studios like North and Bibliothèque. Heidl points out that "there is an

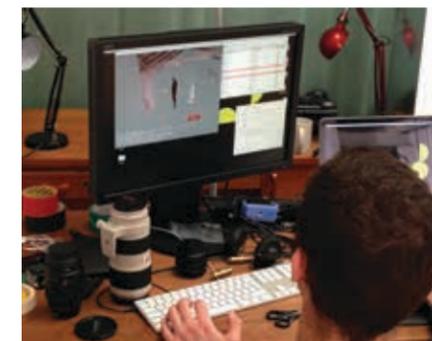
honor in going for perfection. This is inherent in the characters within our studio. There is a sense of wanting to get something right and being prepared to stay until it is."

This is not altruism but business sense. Moving Brands offers a premium service, and the quality of its work enables them to market itself as doing so. As with any digital agency, Moving Brands also recognizes the need "to ship," to get work out and perfect through user input, but at the point that this process starts, the standard is probably a little higher than at some other digital agencies.

As a start-up studio, Moving Brands defined its practice in different types of experience: static, moving, responsive, and sonic. This helped create a proposition that related to a new way of thinking about brands. Now this experiential approach is inherent to how everyone has to think. These ideas now no longer differentiate them in the marketplace. Using experiential technology simply helps you create identities that are fit for purpose.

Heidl says, "Media-responsive systems are now simply more cost-effective because they have a longer life. Sooner or later a system will need to address a range of new touch points and this is something that has always been part of the Moving Brands offer. It has value in terms of the economics of profit and loss. So while we might get excited about it the visual richness that these options add—to a businessman they just make sound economic sense."

This ability to look at a project from a business perspective is something that is built into the way Moving Brands works. Every project employs both a business and a creative lead with input at every stage of a project. Heidl stresses the need for a balanced perspective to avoid only looking through a design lens. "A lot of agencies try to design their way through every problem—but a lot of problems have nothing to do with design; they are to do with commerce, with people's careers or the power relationships within an organization. These factors might be what created the need for the



project in the first place and we try to be sensitive to this fact.”

Every project begins with a proactive conversation with the client. “The point of the brief is not to say thank you very much and then go away into a pit, make something amazing, and hand it back to them. The point is to ask why the brief was written in the first place.”

As do many agencies, Moving Brands structures the design process in stages:

1. Assess
2. Define
3. Create
4. Thrive

Initially, this process works like a waterfall, with insights at the assessment stage leading exploration at the definition stage. However, once they have moved into the definition stage, the whole process becomes more agile and the team then uses its expertise to move back and forward through the process, creating prototypes that are tested with the user.

As well as solving problems, the team is looking for creative opportunities. “A lot of design is about problem solving, but more interesting for me is opportunity creation,” Heidl says. By this he means identifying the things a company can do to extend its business, such as developing new products and services. “Let’s look at creating the thing that does that thing.”

“People think we are in the business of changing perception, but the design industry is about so much more than that. It’s about making things safer, making things cheaper, or just simply making things work better.”

Moving Brands defines the success of a project by how “correct” it is to what a client is trying to achieve. This idea of correctness is not just about function, satisfaction, or service—it’s also about feeling right for the brand, i.e., its character, attitude, and principles. Heidl deliberately uses the word “correct” instead of “appropriate.” Correct is stronger and more incisive and as a result feels much closer to what Moving Brands stands for.

This approach makes Moving Brands’ work extremely hard to pigeonhole. “If somebody sees that you have done a really high-tech responsive environment for somebody like Infosys and they also see that you’ve created a really traditional brand for Norton & Sons and both are completely correct—then this is really exciting.”

The openness and complexity of Moving Brands’ approach provides a very particular set of challenges and a special type of a designer. Its leaders have set up a culture of high achievement—of people who relish a new challenge with every project. As Heidl points out, “To work at Moving Brands you need to give a shit; you need to work hard and you need to give of yourself. There is no sitting around and being quiet if you’ve got an opinion—you need to state it at any level. You need to be prepared to stand apart and have your own position.”

Case Study: iO

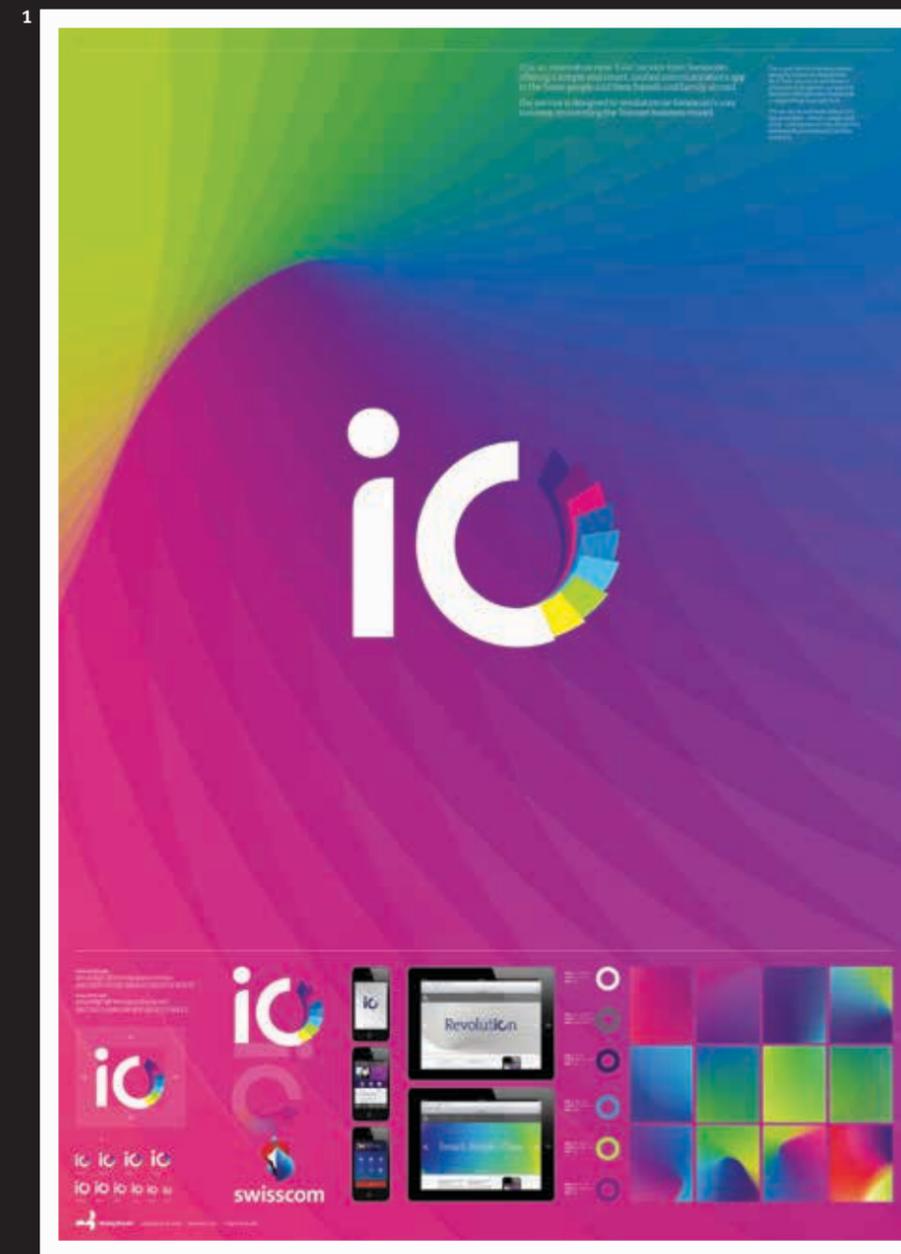
iO is an example of “a thing that does that thing.”

Moving Brands has engineered a long-term partnership with the telecommunications giant SwissCom after designing its corporate identity in 2007. From the start, Moving Brands sought to move beyond the traditional branding agency model of guideline creation for third-party implementation. Instead, its leaders and team members see themselves as stewards in an ongoing and evolving interpretation of their original brand definition. iO is the latest step in this process.

It started with a piece of in-house software that Moving Brands identified as having commercial potential. Recognizing a creative opportunity, it worked with Swisscom to develop and evolve it into the SwissCom brand. It is a great example of what Mat Heidl sees as a key area of future development—the symbiotic evolution of products alongside the brands that created them. iO illustrates the studio’s desire to connect brand identity and product development to help evolve an ecosystem of touch points that seamlessly define a brand experience.

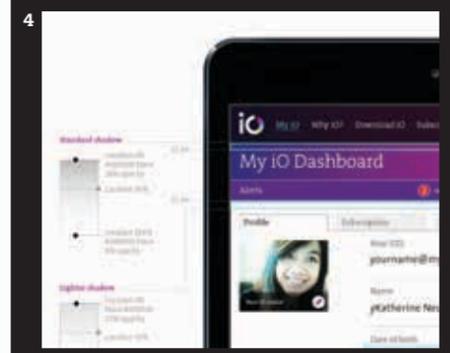
In the short term, iO is an application that delivers free calls, chats, and messages to SwissCom customers, but it is envisioned that, with Moving Brands’ help, it will become much more. It is engaged with both product and brand development—shaping what iO does and helping it feed into the definition (and re-definition) of the visual identity through a website, brand films, photographic treatment, guidelines, messaging, and launch campaigns.

movingbrands.com/work/keeping-your-world-simple-secure-and-close



1. Poster describing the iO identity guidelines.

2. Initial ideas for the iO mark.



3-5. Wire frames and other visuals designed to define the iO user experience.

Ecosystems

Coherence is now more important than consistency.



SEARCH: Red Bull brand; Google doodles; Mark Gobé “Emotional branding”; Adrian Ho Zeus Jones; Gary Holt O2; Frank Olinski/ MTV; Wally Olins “On Brand”; Wolff Olins; Simon Manchipp; Design Studio/ Nokia/ Uusi; Simon Waterfall

Until the late 1970s, businesses sought trust through authority, and their identities reflected this attitude. They used serious typography and abstract symbols to communicate neutrality and corporate efficiency. Then came MTV—an identity that was not only irreverent but alive—changing and adapting according to context. Designer Frank Olinski and the team at Manhattan Design refused to provide guidelines for color or background for their distinctive logotype; instead they allowed animators and designers to re-interpret it according to context. Suddenly a brand could have a complex multifaceted personality.

The growth of the Internet provided opportunities for brands to enter into a conversation with their audience and the dot.com start-ups of the late 1990s were ideally placed to explore identities that responded to this opportunity. The best known example is probably the search engine Google, which, after its launch in 1998, created multiple logo iterations called “Google Doodles” that respond to the date and time they are displayed. Technology offered opportunities for brands to be more adaptive, and more established brands such as Sony also took advantage of this opportunity. In 2000, working with Tomato, it created the “connected identity” enabling users to download a custom identity from an ever-evolving set of graphic variables.

Technology provided new ways of presenting the identity of a company, but ideas were developing that went beyond presentation and examined how the perception of a business might be influenced by experience. In 2003, Wally Olins, one of the founders of UK brand consultants Wolff Olins, published *On Brand*, setting out the ground rules for what was now called “branding” rather than “corporate identity.” Olins’s approach was sociological and anthropological as well as commercial, and he stressed the need for business to understand all of the different factors that influence its perception. At the same time, Mark Gobé (who had famously said in the 1980s, “People love brands, but brands don’t love people back.”) published *Emotional Branding*, in which he called for brands to understand marketing through the eyes of an audience and communicate with them on an emotional level. For both Olins and Gobé, design had a fundamental role in this new world of brand creation, and over the next decade they used it to establish a wealth of new economic opportunities for their agencies Wolff Olins and Emotional Branding LLC.

The logic of corporate identity arranges visual elements within a system of specifications and guidelines that aim to provide consistent reproduction across different media. Branding is more human and aims to communicate complex attitudes or values through a series of coherently designed touch points. New technology enables the creation of an endless array of brand-related experiences, and linking these experiences together requires complex strategic thinking. The traditional mechanism for this is a logo, but some industry figures have questioned our continued reliance on this approach. According to Simon Manchipp (see pp. 31–33), designers and clients love logos, but consumers want something more dynamic. He advocates the creation of a “brand



A strong brand is not just a visual identity, it is the credo of the company.

Russell Holmes, strategy director, [ico Design](#)

1 & 2. Google presents an ever-changing interpretation of its logotype. These doodles reflect the nature of their business and enable the identity to remain fresh and alive when viewed millions of times a day in almost every country in the world.

3–5. Examples of the O2 visual identity in use and evolving through combinations of water, bubbles, the night sky, and neon tubes.

6-8. The Red Bull brand is brought to life by the participants in the activities it sponsors.

6. The French B-Boys—Chakal, Tim, and Francklyn—“representing” the day before Red Bull BC One Western European Final at Piazza Plebiscito, Naples, Italy, 2013.

8. The winner from the Summer X Games Los Angeles, 2013, Tyson Bowerbank.

world” and points to the success of brands like O2 as proof. Since its transformation from BT Cellnet in 2002, O2 has built a complex visual landscape from a very simple idea—essentially bubbles in water. This idea has inspired the evolution of a surreal world of photography, sound, color, and movement. If you removed the O2 logo, we would still connect to the brand.

Along with many industry thinkers, Russell Holmes, creative strategy partner at London-based studio ico, believes that these ideas are giving brands a new place within contemporary culture. As he noted in a conversation with the author, “In the 1970s and ‘80s, designers were largely packagers of culture. They came in at the end and applied a badge. Now brands create popular culture, and they employ designers to be part of this process.” This culture will develop out of and be defined by a set of principles and values rather than a set of identity guidelines. Elements of an identity will give clues to its source, but the form will be far more open to an interpretation of the personality of the brand. Brands are able to develop ecosystems where partners with similar values link their activities to feed from the same culture.

As a result, how each brand communicates its values is extremely important, as is the part creative agencies play in helping them do this. They are employed to create internal as well as external communication that bring the values of a brand to life. Sometimes this might include the creation of documentary films

or publications that help align the brand to aspects of contemporary culture. To help define the attitude of global technology giant Nokia, DesignStudio created a series of short films that explore the idea of everyday adventure. Sending a series of documentary filmmakers to explore the alternative culture in cities like Shanghai or Istanbul, it sought to connect the brand to innovative culturally diverse youth cultures. The agency has also been involved in the design and production of Nokia’s brand magazine, *Uusi*, which explores similar ideas through photography, illustration, and creative journalism.

Red Bull

Probably the most notable example of a brand that has successfully built a cultural ecosystem around itself is Red Bull. It produces little traditional advertising, choosing instead to develop initiatives that “give wings to people and ideas,” such as Red Bull Music Academy, Danny MacAskill’s *Imagine*, Red Bull Flugtag, and Felix Baumgartner’s Red Bull Stratos mission. In alternative sports such as skateboarding, BMX, and mountain biking, as well as cultural events, Red Bull supports the most exciting and interesting practitioners. Not only does it have the world’s most popular energy drink, but it’s established an independent media company—Red Bull Media House—that produces, publishes, distributes, and licenses sport, culture, entertainment, and educational programming across

the full spectrum of platforms to global media such as NBC, Discovery Channel, N24, Globosat, and BT Sports.

Red Bull lives the “brand as action” maxim, and many within the industry, such as Adrian Ho, strategist and founding partner of Zeus Jones, see it as a “mentor brand.” He describes three reasons for this:

1. Its content business is on track to become larger than its drinks business. As a result, the things that it has traditionally done to raise awareness of its product are on track to generate more income than the drinks themselves.
2. It has carved the position for itself in the global sports market. Up until that point you would have assumed that this was impossible because Nike owned sports.
3. It doesn’t leech off of culture. Rather it finds early nascent examples such as extreme sports culture and seeks to develop this culture collaboratively. It does this in a sympathetic and nurturing way so that the members of that culture align themselves with the brand.



Logos are what designers want to create, not what the public wants to see.

In Conversation

with Simon Manchipp,
founding partner,
SomeOne

Simon Manchipp is one of the founding partners of London-based creative agency, SomeOne, whose clients include O2, Eurostar, the 2012 Olympics, Sky Sports, and Accenture. Manchipp is famous for suggesting that the logo is dead and he is a regular speaker at design conferences around Europe. He enthusiastically advocates that designers embrace more flexible and responsive approaches to brand identity.

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Manchipp started off by talking about how our relationship with brands has changed.

“We have moved from reverence to reference. We trusted what brands told us, but now we reference this against what people are saying on Trip Advisor or Facebook. We have shifted from trusting brands to trusting people.” Brands need to communicate with people on their level; they needed to invite them in and create a world that they want to be part of. This means creating culture.

“Clients are often programmed into buying a logo and a set of guidelines. They are not programmed to buy culture . . . but the thing is, there is little to interest the public in a consistently applied logo, a set of colors, and a typeface—it does not make financial sense to invest in the surface. Sooner or later, clients realize that they need more.”

To overcome this problem, designers need to be able to explain their ideas on their clients’ terms. They need to be able to reassure clients who are inherently terrified of creativity. Creativity is all risk—and business is all risk averse.

Manchipp reminds us, “It’s not what you say it is—it’s what Google says it is. When we first meet a client, we often get them to type the name of their brand into Google or Twitter to see what comes up. If they don’t like what they see, then we talk about how we can help them change it, [which] generally involves a lot more than tweaking a logo. . . . Via a rebrand, they will sometimes get a new typeface, a new logo, and a refreshed color system—but these days that’s not enough because we are in such a multichannel culture. . . . So we advise them that we will also need to create a broader set of assets to connect the many channels together. It may cost a little more, but it will last considerably longer and will connect with audiences more deeply. What’s not to love! . . . Many start skeptical, but gradually, as we work with them, they start to realize the advantages.

“There is a reason why the creative industries are outperforming the finance sector, for example. There is a reason why we are

generating more value and hiring more people. And this is due to the fact we make brands and the owners of those brands very rich—we provide a competitive advantage.”

Manchipp was part of the team that created the Meerkats for comparison website Compare the Market, and the benefits that this campaign has had for the business is there for all to see.

Unlike some designers, Manchipp feels that the ability that the Internet provides to get public feedback on one’s work is a positive thing.

“The old way of doing things would be to pay a lot of money for a logo, spend a year crafting it, and be wedded to revering it. You no longer need to do this, you can publish the things you do, you can get feedback, and you can gauge the reaction to understand how people feel. If you provide your client with adaptive systems, this means you can take the feedback on board to give your client more of what they want and less of what they don’t.”

He points out that the reaction to visual work is not always logical, and sometimes the only way to understand the way people feel about something is to ask them. “Ideas and artistic justification are one thing, but the emotional response to something doesn’t always work to the same logic.”

Manchipp also feels that there has never been a better time to be a graphic designer.

“Graphic design does what other things cannot do and more importantly has become a bolt on to other sexier, more easily quantifiable stuff, for example digital—this is the one thing that everyone wants—but for digital to really work it needs charming, entertaining, involving, and inventive graphic design—the two things together make the experience and the brand identity more powerful.”

He believes that the success of digital creativity lies in a much more collaborative approach to design as a whole. “Digital has to collaborate. And as you remove the walls and start to collaborate people realize that the product improves exponentially, that

you have more fun, that you relax, and above that no one has to be an auteur—you don't have to do it all yourself. . . . Great work comes from teamwork—Richard Rogers says that no architecture can be achieved by a single person: it's too complex. The same can be said of creating a brand. We see every client we work with as a collaborator. At Eurostar, I almost had a desk in their head office I was there so often. I wanted to understand their culture, to go socializing with them, to attend their meetings, and to find out how they approached things that were not related to design. The insights that I drew from these observations were what we built our design work around. The best part of design is that you get to find out about lots of different businesses and lots of different areas of practice.”

“A designer can very rapidly become the most interesting person at any dinner party because they've worked with so many different companies.” Good designers should be interesting people, they should read weird books, and they should do things that are outside the mainstream to avoid creating a cultural echo chamber.

Unlike some bigger consultancies, SomeOne believes that designers should be client facing. They do not see the value in a third party who manages the client relationship. They also believe that designers should be involved in creating the conceptual direction for a project.

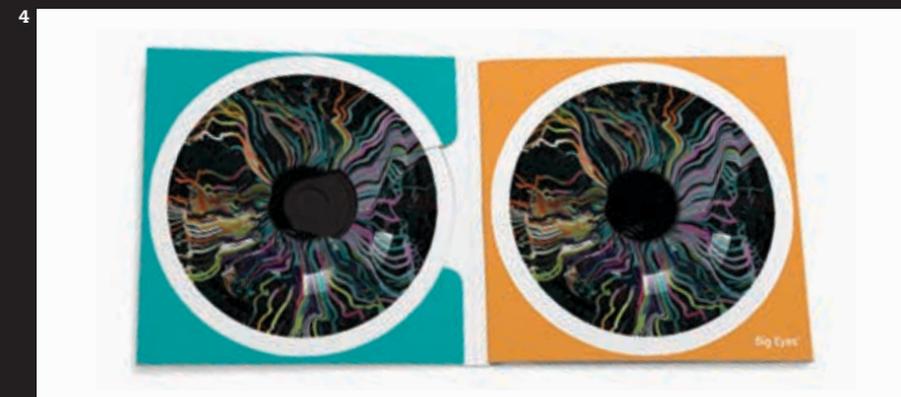
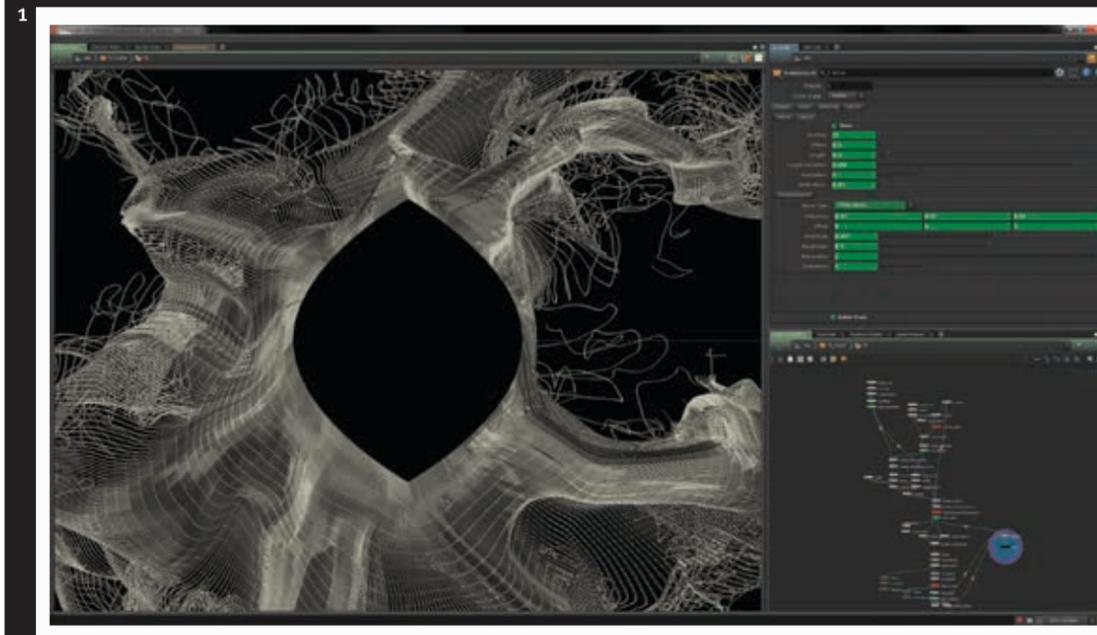
“At SomeOne we have [a] 90/10 split between designers and non-designers. Of the 30 to 35 people [who] work here, we have five or maybe six project managers—the rest are designers. We do not have traditional strategists. The most senior designers are strategists, and all of the designers are strategically led. This is because we believe that if you have worked in design for long enough and you're actively involved in business change, you can add considerable value strategically. . . . Designers are known to be very good with pictures. But the best ones are also really good with ideas.” Manchipp believes that designers should be able to think beyond the surface.

“I am interested in designers who have an intellectual position,” in designers who make a contribution to the debate around the subject.

“The best brands put design in the boardroom and they respect it. As soon as design becomes seen as an asset and not a cost, it becomes boardroom worthy. When a designer gets involved in a project intelligently and can be articulate enough to talk to the CEO in a reassuring and encouraging manner, he has the ability to move mountains.”

Simon Manchipp's ten principles to creating engaging brand communication:

1. Be coherent, not just consistent.
2. Create more than a logo.
3. Brand without badging.
4. Bring charm to charmless categories.
5. Create ownable moments.
6. Remove clients' fear.
7. Weird stuff works for brands.
8. Curate choice.
9. Create assets, not costs.
10. Finally, always remember we are not in the design business—we are in the people business.



1. Generative wireframes created by Field.

2. Examples of some of the iterations of the iris created for the project.

Case Study: Big Eyes

SomeOne was asked to brand a start-up advertising agency, originally called “Monster.” After some initial research, which included drawings of monster eyes by Simon Manchipp's five-year-old son, they started to explore the patterns held within the iris. Using the child's drawings for inspiration, they approached generative designers, Field, to create “something innovative and daring using eyes as a metaphor.” In response, they developed a “metaphorical representation of the iris in a 3D environment.” The digital iris design emulates the muscular construction of biological eyes, creating unique designs for each context and application. They can mirror visiting clients and be activated by data. This generative system provides a flexible source of imagery that remains visually coherent across its media iteration. Using this, SomeOne has created a brand world that manages to balance a consistent tone of voice with a visual dynamism that gives the brand a life beyond well its launch.

someoneinlondon.com/category/projects/data-powered-branding-big-eyes

3–5. The Big Eyes visual identity applied to a website, specially created vinyl album, and promotional bags.

Authenticity

Brands seek to create a sense of honesty, transparency, and a connection to how something is made.

Over the last decade there has been a backlash against the digitization of the design process. Working on a computer provides the opportunity to endlessly correct a piece of communication, and this process inevitably leads to a visual perfecting than can leave work feeling sanitized and impersonal. In the eyes of the public, perfectly contrived digital slickness can be the signifier of the faceless corporation. As a result, brands are seeking to distance themselves from it. There is desire among designers to achieve a sense of “authenticity”—of honesty, transparency, and a connection to how something is made.

Brands are careful not to talk to us in a voice that feels too authoritative and aloof. Instead they strive to appear friendly and humane. To compliment this tone, rounded sans serif typography and hand-rendered letterforms are the order of the day. When asked to redefine the visual voice of the Macmillan Cancer charity, Wolff Olins created an awkward hand-rendered font to deliver messages in the first person, stressing that “WE are Macmillan.”

Good writing is essential to the success of these strategies, and few brands have been able to create copy that is as down to earth as Innocent Smoothies. Their drinks are brought to you by “the makers of trees and stuff!” or “from a product range that includes the Brecon Beacons,” and their seasonal range includes “the perfect smoothie for a summer season of flip flops, freckles, and rained off barbecues.”



1. Examples of Wolff Olins' award-winning identity for Macmillan Cancer support applied to information leaflets.

2. Letterheads carrying the hand-drawn logotype of the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith, created by Multistorey.

3. The Lyric identity applied to communication aimed at children.

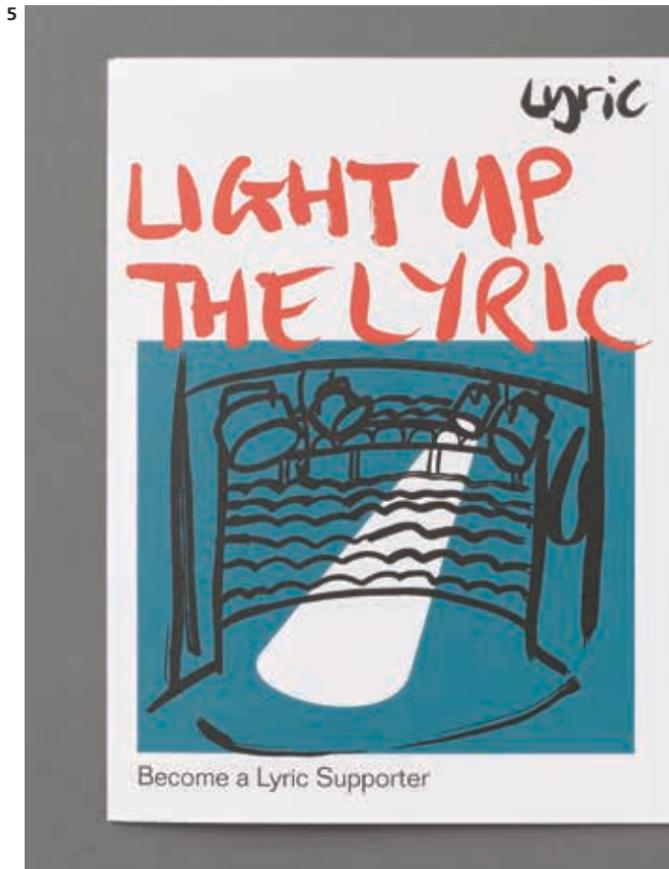
SEARCH: Blu animation; David Crow; Eye 70 “Digital Craft”; Eye 70 “Make it Real”; Michel Gondry; Chrissie Macdonald; Multistorey/ Lyric Theatre; Ann Odling Smee “New Handmade Graphics”; Wolff Olins/ Macmillan; Innocent smoothies; Job Wouters ABCDEFGH...

Multistorey’s rebrand of the Lyric Theatre in West London is a good example of something that communicates an informal honesty. Harry Woodrow and his team have created a unique visual personality for the theatre by utilizing “a handwritten system to become both the signature logo and the general voice of its presentations.” As their website points out, “The idiosyncrasies inherent in the mark-making of spontaneous handwriting are key to reflecting the personality of the Lyric.” Evidencing the hand of the maker in a piece of communication provides a connection for the audience. It also helps us more easily understand the work that went into its making.

In a world where the computer takes much of the effort out of the creative process, something that has been made with obvious care and effort engenders a certain respect. Much has been written in the design press about the resurgence of traditional craft skills, and brands have been quick to utilize its power. This is evident in the popularity of the calligraphy of Job Wouters or the handmade constructions of Chrissie Macdonald. In the world of animation, it can be seen in the popularity of stop-motion animators such as Blu. This phenomenon is more than a style driven trend and is not limited to the analogue world: In Eye 70, David Crow draws attention to the craft involved in digital design. He points out that, “Craft is so often described as a practice surrounding

a specific set of materials. But in truth it is less the material that defines the practice as the process of play, experiment, adjustment, individual judgment, and love of the material.” These qualities can be part of the digital creative process. Matt Rice, founding partner of digital agency Sennep, echoes this sentiment: “The best apps are the ones that feel like all the team that produced them care and have put some love into them. You can feel it in the extra non-essential details they have added. Little personal touches that evidence that the developers have really thought about the experience of the user.”

4 & 5. Multistorey’s hand-rendered typography applied to a series of promotional posters.



Orange, I Am by Chrissie Macdonald with photography by John Short

Very soon after graduating in illustration from Brighton University, Chrissie Macdonald went to see an art buyer at the advertising agency Fallon with her portfolio. A decade later, Fallon was asked to pitch for a new campaign for the telecommunications giant Orange and built its proposal around her hand-crafted models.

Fallon won the job, and in a conversation with the author from 2013, Macdonald describes how the project developed.

“The original concept was based on collections; a group of individual elements illustrating one theme

composed on a tabletop. This developed over time and was used across a series of billboards as well as online, point of sale, direct marketing and so on. The process began with the copy line and initial ideas from the creative team (a copywriter and art director), often using metaphors to represent different aspects of the mobile network. I’d respond with a list of ideas that we’d develop together to illustrate the concept most effectively, to be agreed and signed off by the client who was refreshingly open-minded . . . soon a visual language started to develop.

“Although some pieces were based on sketches, others were designed as they were created; I enjoy how materials and their constraints can steer

the direction of the design, particularly with the family of characters. These developed by combining different shapes and materials as a kit of parts, the whole process was very organic. . . .

“After lighting and shooting all the elements, the photographs went into postproduction retouch. Here John would work with the retoucher to strike a balance between being able to see the hand in the objects’ creation and a clean, neat aesthetic.”

“The success of what they created meant that what started as a three-month commission eventually developed into a three-year collaboration that forced Macdonald and Short to take on a larger studio just to accommodate the amount of work that was involved.”

6. Drawings of initial ideas from Chrissie Macdonald’s sketchbook.

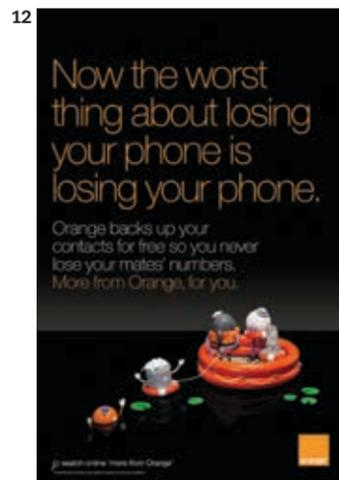
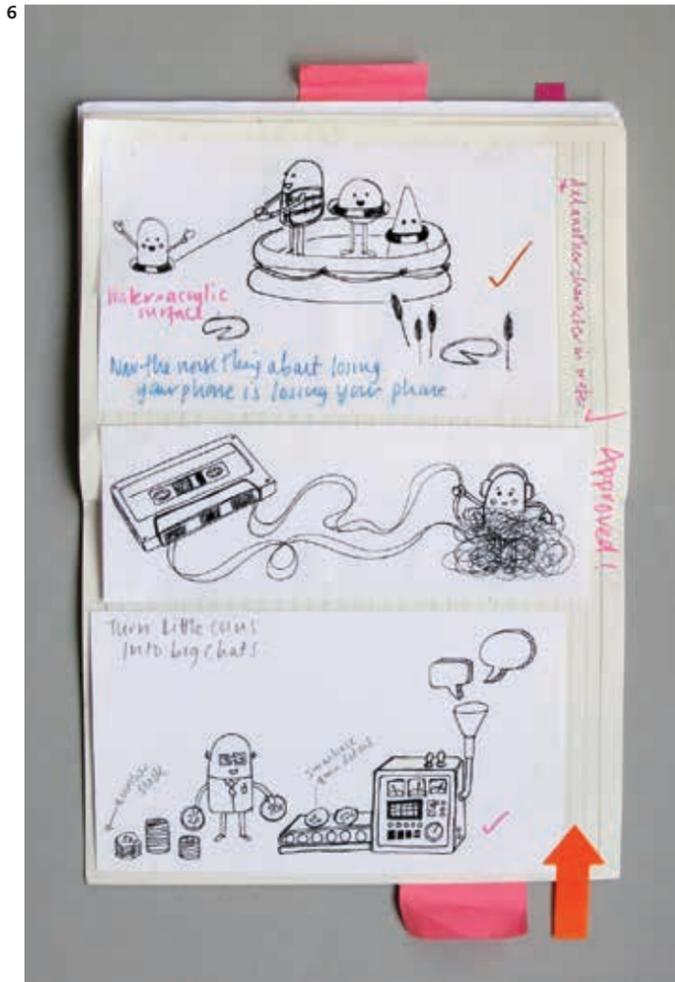
7. One of John Short’s photo shoots from the project.

8. Color swatches from the model-making process.

9. One of the illustrations for the Edinburgh Festival that inspired the project.

10 & 11. Some of the models that were used in the I Am ads.

12 & 13. Some ads from the Orange campaign.



Heritage

At its best, a visual heritage grows organically from how a brand behaves.



1



2

SEARCH: Michael Bierut “Helvetica period!”, “Austerity Graphic Design” Patrick Burgoyne/ the Creative Review Annual; Labour and Wait; Peyton and Byrne; Grainedit; Draplin Design; Sign Painters; Coca-Cola Santa Claus; St. Peters Brewery; Ortiz tuna; Moving Brands E. Tautz/ Norton and Sons

We talked earlier in the chapter of how in the 1950s the International Style cleansed American corporate communications of nostalgic idiosyncrasy in a single-minded pursuit of modernist clarity. To a certain extent, the design community has never lost this evangelical zeal, but there has been a cyclical questioning of the universal benefits of this approach. In the early 1970s, Push Pin Studios’ decorative quirks became the order of the day, and soon after, Wolfgang Wiengart pioneered more obscure and discursive forms of visual communication. More recently, there has been a revival of some of the design values of preceding ages. *Creative Review* called this “Austerity” graphic design, and after judging entries to the 2013 annual, Patrick Burgoyne remarked in the editorial that he “felt like he’d stepped into a design time machine and emerged in the mid fifties,” because so much of the work was “nostalgic for an austere post war era in British life.”

The success of brands like Labour and Wait and Peyton and Byrne in the UK or blogs like *grainedit*, studios like Draplin Design, and the documentary film *Sign Painters* in the United States testify that this is not an isolated local trend. There seems to be a longing among consumers for visual messages that have the authority and integrity of a simpler bygone age. Whether this will last is another matter, but there is definitely a sense that a perception of heritage has currency with the contemporary audience.

Too often, however, heritage is applied as a veneer of faux letterpress typography and decorative borders plundered from Google’s never-ending supply of reference material. A more intelligent approach develops a visual narrative that explains the inherent values that have built a brand. Coca-Cola utilizes its history to confirm a place at the heart of recent American culture by reminding us of its role in creating the modern Santa Claus, and craft brewery St Peters uses its historic pub, the Jerusalem Tavern in Clerkenwell, London, and traditional bottle designs to connect with the heritage of British cask-conditioned ales. The key is applying this approach with integrity so the message is not perceived as contrived or falsely constructed. At its best, a visual heritage grows organically from how a brand behaves. Spanish fish manufacturer Ortiz packages its products using visual iconography that has evolved gradually since the 1930s. The design of Ortiz’s cans draws a direct visual parallel to the meticulous care and respect for tradition that goes into processing their sustainably caught anchovies and tuna. In a market where ethical concerns have more and more significance, audiences are increasingly receptive to this narrative.

E. Tautz/ Norton and Sons

The heritage of a brand offers an intrinsic link to something that has authority and lasting meaning. An intelligent designer sees this as a valuable communication tool and something that need not inhibit the creation of fresh, contemporary design. A good example of this is Moving Brands’ re-brand of Savile Row tailors, Norton and Sons.

Established in 1821, Nortons has a long history of providing tailoring to clients bound for Africa, India, and the near East and developed an expertise in lightweight

clothing. Lord Carnarvon was dressed by Nortons when he discovered Tutankhamen’s tomb, as was Henry Stanley when he met Dr. Livingstone. Unfortunately, Nortons fell on hard times—its suits were made so well that they were handed down through generations, and new customers were proving hard to find. Its brief to Moving Brands was simple: Find us a way to get some new customers because our existing ones are dying!

Moving Brands sought to build out from a tradition rather than set up a new one. From the beginning of the project, they sought to understand the heritage of the company and build an identity that allowed customers to understand its richness and quality. The agency was given access to Norton’s archives and found a wealth of historic material to draw inspiration from. It created an identity that reflects the idiosyncrasies of this material—even including an upside down S that had been incorrectly replaced when the shop’s signage was repaired after the war.

The re-branded Norton and Sons has become one of the best-known and most successful of a new wave of Savile Row tailors, and it has returned to Moving Brands to help it create new a ready-to-wear brand called E. Tautz.



3

1. The classic Ortiz can, utilizing original artwork from the brand’s history.

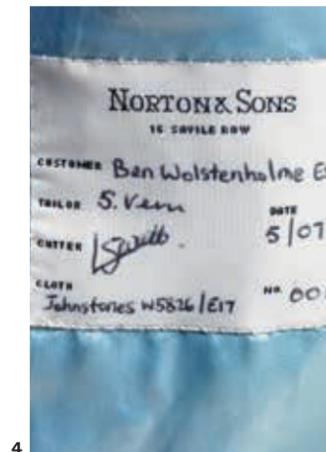
2. Labour and Wait have built a very successful business by tapping into perceptions of heritage and authenticity.

3. An original ad for E. Tautz from 1912.

4. These Norton and Sons suit labels incorporate handwritten details of the tailor, cutter, and cloth supplier.

5. The identity for E. Tautz, which is Norton and Sons ready-to-wear brand, was also designed by Moving Brands.

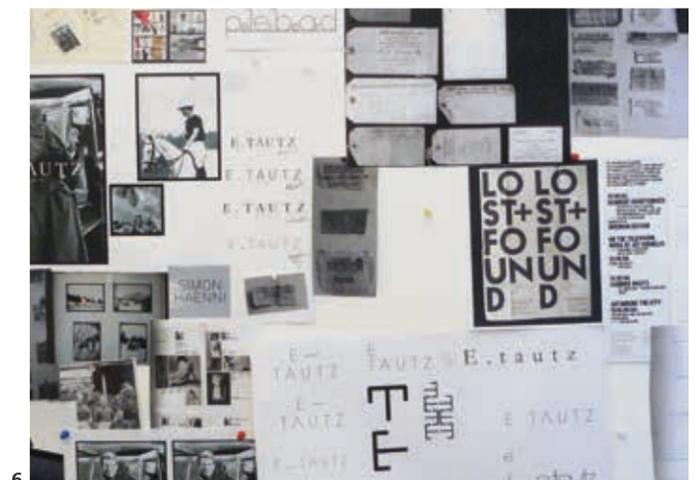
6. A wall of reference material from the E. Tautz project in the Moving Brands studio.



4



5



6