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RE: PROFILING CANADIAN GRAPHICS PROFESSIONAL

In the July/August issue of *Graphic Exchange* you take issue with the accreditation initiative which has been undertaken on behalf of Ontario graphic designers. This personal editorial rant—written under the guise of a feature article—raises important questions about journalistic integrity for *Graphic Exchange* readers and advertisers.

But more important for graphic designers, it calls into question your understanding of the graphic design profession you claim to serve. You say that “creativity starts with a good grasp of the power and capabilities of creative software”.

No, Mr. Brill, it’s the user, not the software, that is creative (we suggest you read the article by Mr. Martin Murphy in the same issue). Graphic design is about selling ideas and producing effective visual communications. It is not “window dressing”. Your disdain for formal design education refutes a century of progress that began with the Bauhaus in 1918.

Interesting.

Finally, your support for “spec” work is bizarre. Producing upfront work for clients “on spec” suggests that creative problem solving has little mon-

etary value—not a wise policy if designers want to generate a profit and stay in business.

In a free market system, markets are created by establishing a value for products or services. The accreditation initiative is creating a market for graphic designers by defining educational criteria, business ethics and professional practice. This will benefit not only practitioners, but clients and the public. That’s why the designation A.R.I.D.O., M.D., LL.B.—or R.G.D.—is so important.

For years we’ve been trying to define the differences between desktop publishing and graphic design. Thank you for putting it into perspective so effectively.

PAUL HASLIP, R.G.D., MICHAEL MAYNARD, R.G.D., ALBERT NG, R.G.D., DIANNE SEMARK, R.G.D., TIT TELMET, R.G.D. TORONTO, ON

[Dan Brill responds: A few clarifications and corrections, if I may. *Graphic Exchange* is a magazine for the graphics industry, of which graphic designers are but one segment. Desktop technologies are an integral part of today’s graphics workflow. Since design jobs are almost always produced with these technologies, the term “desktop publishing” seems redundant in my view, so drawing a distinction between the two is

somewhat anachronistic. In a free market system, value is determined by mutual consent between buyers and sellers, not by unilateral initiatives; no accreditation can “create” a market. Nowhere did I suggest that a designer should feel obligated to perform work on spec, but simply that this is a business decision which should be left to the individual, not mandated by an organization. Nor did I say that creative ability resides in software; however without a working knowledge of software tools, income opportunities may be severely constrained (and personally, I would be loathe to hire a carpenter who insisted on banging nails in with his fists). It was educational institutions’ struggle to stay abreast of current technologies which was highlighted, not their competency in formal design education. The first 60% of the article was devoted to factual information provided directly by ARGDO itself, the balance quite clearly identified as opinion, so I would suggest that questioning my journalistic integrity was a tad over the top; and lest there be confusion concerning the two quotes in your second paragraph, note that I made no reference to graphic design as “window dressing”. Recognizing standards (de facto or otherwise) for graphic designers has merit. What those standards should entail, how they should be administered, and who should formulate them is a matter of opinion—and ultimately it is the client who will decide.]

MORE ON PROFILING

Having read your article, *Profiling the Canadian Graphics Professional*, I am greatly concerned, as a professional designer and as an educator, about a number of points that you have made. I believe that you have confused *Graphic Design* with surface decoration, as your magazine *Graphic Exchange* so clearly exhibits. I wish that I could recall the source, but the quote “technology is transportation, design is communication” seems appropriate here. Design has never had anything to do with making “pretty page layouts”. There is no such thing as “creative software”! (an oxymoron if ever there was one). An “intimate knowledge of the history of design” is as critical as the understanding of the psychology of how people read hierarchies of elements in visual communication. In an age where we are inundated with information, what is it that makes one message stand apart from another? Its ability to stimulate and challenge and at the same time communicate its message effectively. *Graphic Design* must be driven by research (a clear understanding of the “brand”), compelling and insightful strategies, and powerful concepts in order to be effective.

Can a school teach someone to be creative? No. Can we create an environment in which the individual’s voice can be recognized and developed? Absolutely.

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Letters

[The Editor replies: Sorry, Rocco, RGB printing is a long way off (or at least we think it is). That piece was a spoof, an attempt to inject a little levity into the magazine. But if by chance someone actually does perfect this technique, I'm sure you'll read about it first in *Graphic Exchange*.]

RE: NAPSTERISM

The article about copyright by Shane Steinman (*Napsterism, The Rise, Fall & Rebirth of a New Religion*—July/August) was certainly useful, if only because it causes us to think again about this complicated issue.

It may be helpful if one avoids all the legal mumbo-jumbo and considers the ethics of protecting the 'intellectual property' of others. We should be asking, when appropriating someone's photograph, music, artwork or text, "Do I owe some remuneration to this artist for the use of his property?"

It's certainly become easier and painless to make copies since the advent of the computer, and therefore, thieves and lazy entrepreneurs will take advantage of the system. Copyright protection boils down to a matter of ethics and good manners. I believe that's why there is so much "pirating" going on...today's generation is simply unschooled in ethics and manners.

I have nothing more to add to the copyright debate, however I must correct a couple of factual errors in Mr. Steinman's article.

He wrote: "Copyright infringement is a matter for civil litigation..." Really? I would have concluded that it is a

criminal matter, especially when we read of the RCMP's participation in raids on software pirates.

His mistaken reference to music recordings in the 1940s and 50s is excusable, since he admits that was before his time and he only heard "tales" of those olden days. The "78" rpm record did not "[hold] a lot more music" than the "45". Mr. Steinman was probably thinking of the 33 1/3, "long-playing" record which exceeded the "45" in music content.

Isn't it amazing how a little time can distort history? I wonder how the "floppy disk" will be described fifty years from now—and, more to the point, will copyright still be protecting artists in the year 2050?

GEORGE DUNBAR, OWNER
GEORGE DUNBAR PHOTOGRAPHY
TORONTO, ON

[Shane Steinman responds: The RCMP participation in raids on pirates took place because the behaviour of the pirate organizations constituted a conspiracy to defraud, which is a criminal matter. And...I'm holding a 78 right now. It has 16 minutes of music on it—each side—considerably more than I've ever seen on a 45.

Finally, I wholeheartedly agree that there's a more widespread lack of consideration today than ever before—especially as it applies to artistic rights and license. But it's nothing new.

People have been taking advantage of each other since prehistoric times. I guess it's the scope that concerns me. With today's software, it hardly feels immoral (let alone criminal) to be in possession of something that probably should have been paid for.]