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The broad but shallow market in South Africa dictates the teaching of general rather than specialised graphic design courses. This humorous, but critical, look at the difference between a career in design and one in advertising, highlights some points students need to consider when deciding on a career route.

LOGOS, LETTERHEADS, BUSINESS CARDS, LEAFLETS, MENUS, INVITATIONS, BROCHURES, ANNUAL REPORTS, CARDS, BOOK COVERS, MAGAZINES, NEWSLETTERS, NEWSPAPERS, CALENDARS, SIGNAGE, PACKAGING, MAGAZINE ADVERTISEMENTS, NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS, CINEMA ADVERTISEMENTS, KNOCK 'N DROPS, BUS-SHELTERS, BILLBOARDS, POSTERS, RADIO, TELEVISION, AND WORD OF MOUTH. WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

All this is about communication. Communication created to achieve a pre-determined response. Why should some of these items be called design, others below-the-line, promotion, public relations or advertising? Whatever the analysis reveals, all advertising and design professionals need to understand the following: the nature of the sender, the nature of the receiver, as well as the frame of reference of the receiver in order to achieve a successful result.

The split between advertising and design is about specialisation. Would it not be wonderful to personally orchestrate every strategy and element of a major campaign and set the world on fire? But then, which creative person wants to be a brand manager?

Many companies do have the one-stop shop approach. It is not relevant here how successful they are, but what is clear is that one creative person seldom handles each element of a campaign. It is simply impractical.

Differences between advertising and design may be glaring or subtle, objective or subjective. The whys and wherefores are all there, some more obvious and practical but many hidden in the psyche of each group. Many far wiser than I, have described our related fields in more eloquent ways, so I shall stay with my personal experiences and observations of the day-to-day nature of each business.

THE CLIENT

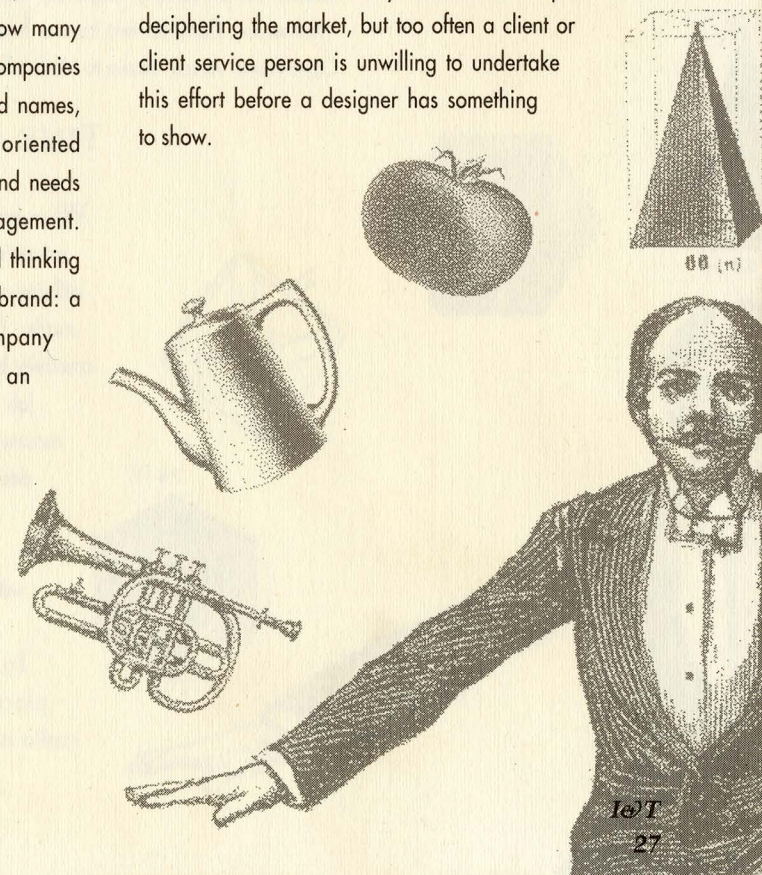
Look at a *Marketing Mix Special* and notice how many more big advertising agencies than big design companies exist. Bigger most definitely means bigger brand names, bigger budgets and well-informed marketing oriented clients. All companies seem to know that a brand needs strategic planning, but few apply design management. Many companies and clients haven't even started thinking in terms of an image being comparable to a brand: a corporate identity, an annual report or a company brochure is often assigned to someone with an accounting or at best a journalistic background.

Generally, clients in the design world think more literally, need more guidance and are unfortunately more difficult to advise. An uneducated client often finds it difficult to discern between personal taste and the job at hand.

THE BRIEF

When creating a communication, you need as much relevant information as possible in order for it to be effective. Who's talking to whom? What do you want them to think or do? What's the budget? And who on earth is going to give you the answers to all that? The brief.

A scanty brief is sometimes the result of a smaller budget, where time and money cannot be spent deciphering the market, but too often a client or client service person is unwilling to undertake this effort before a designer has something to show.



I say designer because this is quite common in the design world. Packaging specialists, for instance, are more thorough at briefing, but generally speaking, design briefs contain too little information, are often given verbally and tend not to be sufficiently prescriptive. This results in a designer's work being the stimulus for a client to start thinking.

Very frustrating!

Undoubtedly, the advertising industry is very professional in this sphere. Advertising briefs are good, clients commit to the brief and the better clients make sure that the brief is met. Briefs contain lots of information, research results, history of the brand, and detailed analysis of the target market. An art director might say that this kills spontaneity - nonsense! Consider two famous headlines 'Lift wanted to Cape Town' versus 'Home to Mother for Christmas'.

TIME AND PROFIT

When one looks at design and advertising, there is a major difference in how the money is made. Design companies sell creativity but also time. Once a job is produced, no more income is derived from it, so designers are continually under enormous pressure to come up with good solutions fast.

In advertising the placement of an ad in media is a source of income

for as long as the ad runs. Consider producing an ad which runs ten times, compared to ten ads which run once. Exceptions exist, but usually one has more time to solve a campaign in the ad business.

THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

This is what it's all about. The fun part of course. Both advertising and design creatives should think conceptually, but it flows in different ways and with different emphases. Designers move towards graphic development. What turns them on? Typefaces: all shapes, sizes, often taken over the limit. Colours: subtle, aggressive, important or playful. Line, form, folds, textures, papers and wondrous craft materials. Truly a sensuous business to be in.

How do different inks and processes react on different surfaces? Embossing, folding, foiling, laser printers. So many different materials and executions are used in the design business, that a designer needs to be extremely knowledgeable about production.

With the integration of computers into the workplace, control of reproduction has become an even greater responsibility for the designer. Much of a designer's night life happens down at the printers, ensuring perfection. This is opposed to an advertising communication where the publication usually dictates the printing surface, and the creative has little say about the paper, ink or processes to be used.

A single designer usually crafts a communication from the beginning to a highly finished presentation. Ideally, designers should think more conceptually. There certainly is room for improvement. 'Good' design is all too often reliant on design elements - relevant or not.

In the office of the agency creative team, another scene unfolds. It's lateral thinking, it's a ping-pong game. Ideas tried out, from trite to tremendous. Just think! The tools include sound and movement! It's heady to think we learn to capture a world in thirty seconds - many directors of films on circuit would benefit from this brilliant shorthand.

To my mind, the biggest difference between advertising and design creatives is the wide involvement of craftsmen and other artists on the advertising side. Directors, cameramen, musicians, clients and client service are much closer to the creative process, thus the capability to coordinate and interact, i.e. people skills, are as important as creative talent.

Of course, this is where the classic joke about being an art director comes in. With pride you point out your ad to Dad. He is overawed. Wow, did you take that wonderful photograph? ... No. Of course, you did the sweet drawing. ... No. Did you write the copy, the music, the ... No, no, no.

What exactly **do** you do?

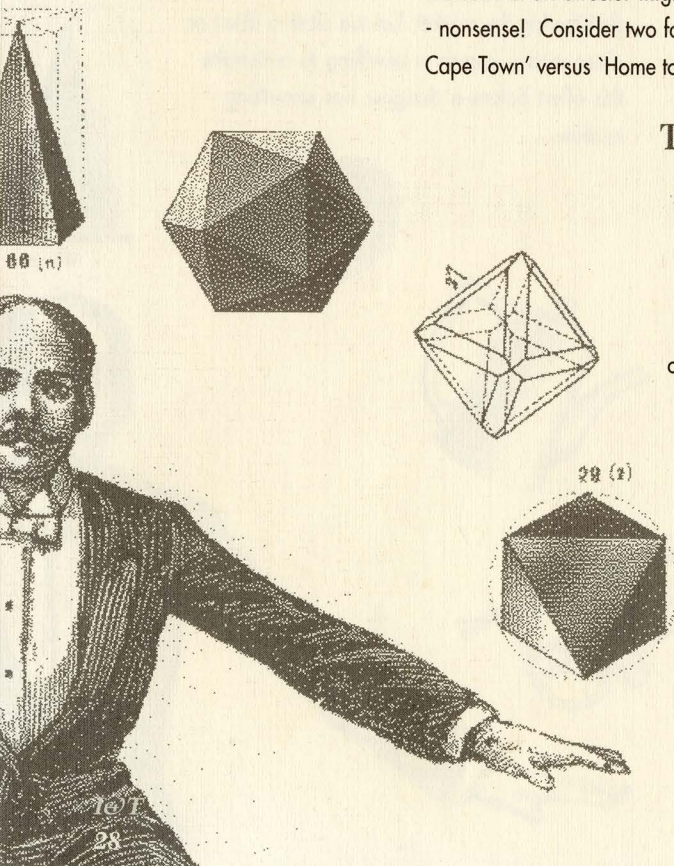
I think it up with someone else.

I see. (He doesn't).

There it is. In an agency the idea/concept is evolved by a team. Hopefully a message so strong is conceptualised that the combined brainstorming produces the perfect solution to the problem.

THE FINAL CHOICE

The choice between a career in advertising or design is a



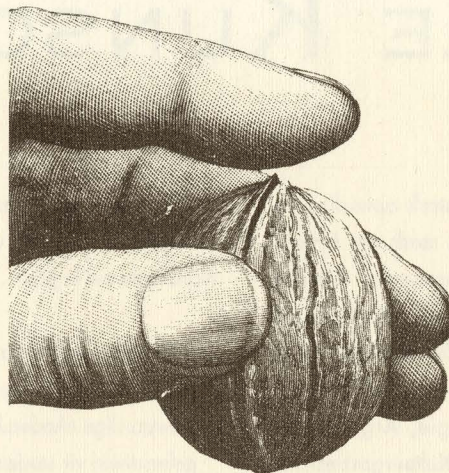
formidable one, especially when one considers the reasons many students took up their courses in the first place! One can only hope that the routes taken by chance or necessity will prove to be fulfilling. Studs Terkel said about work: 'It's about a search, too, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor, in short, for a sort of LIFE rather than a Monday to Friday sort of dying'.

There are a few general points for students to bear in mind which give direction, even though there will always be exceptions. Particular personalities can colour experience, whether in advertising or design - not unlike schooldays when your favourite subject could be turned into a nightmare by the manner of the teacher. Similarly, a particular company philosophy can be mistaken for the nature of the business.

The size of a company may affect career opportunities. For instance, a small company means smaller accounts. Therefore at a small agency, a junior could be closely involved in the development of all aspects of work. Then again, a small company could be exactly the place where all challenging work is jealously guarded by art directors starved for opportunity themselves.

Much could vary even between two advertising agencies of more or less the same size. Do the juniors work with an art director in one office or in a bull pen? In the first case, one would get close to the origination process but in the latter, one would gain by learning from a variety of art directors.

A big company is great when a generous mentor or an overloaded art director creates opportunities. On the other hand, some believe a junior stays a maximum of three years and should not be promoted from within. Good luck!



A FINAL COMPARISON DESIGN VERSUS ADVERTISING

Lone worker	Team worker
Develops self-reliance	Learns from others faster
Strong control to the end	Relies on self and others for results
Includes many smaller jobs	Larger scale work
Builds party faster	Is skivvy for longer
Tied to desk more	Wider involvement
Tendency to stylistic work	Strategic work
More innovation	More interpretation
Less 'pain'	More involvement
Less fame	More glamour
More small budgets	Bigger budgets
Campaigns split up	Bigger responsibilities
Only initially bigger salaries	Long-term bigger salaries
Longer 'life'	Quicker burn-out
Wear designer labels	Denim and diamonds