

CREATIVE CREATION
A discussion on the creation of an advertisement

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After an entire semester of analyzing existing ads, and applying similar techniques towards a redesign, the final test is perhaps the most daunting: I have chosen to create a print ad that implements effectively an array of the skills that I've learned throughout the semester. Unfortunately, no training or research could prepare a learning designer to stare down a blank page. Easily the hardest part of this assignment, finding a place to start proved to be a difficult task. I found myself flipping through the texts in an attempt to cement some sort of foundation, but it did not come very easily.

Before I had begun to wonder about the design elements, I took a few steps to determine the preliminary information. I decided that I would find myself a "client" before I even began. Unfortunately, just picking a random client out of thin air proved to be interesting: I couldn't bring myself to commit to one. Without any real alternative, I decided to choose one at random. I vowed to turn on the TV and pick the company represented by the first commercial as my client. As it so happens, that client turned out to be ING Direct, a big insurance and investment firm. With client in mind, I turned to the internet to do a little research on the target demographic of ING. Though somewhat obvious, I wanted to find some documented evidence that the demographic was indeed the middle-aged to late-aged consumer of middle-class or higher: a family man or woman with a respectable income who was willing and able to set some money away for the future.

Now that I had a client and a demographic, and with the knowledge of the ad being for print already established, I began to brainstorm different ideas with these considerations in mind. I concluded that the most effective means of reaching this demographic was to

present the information clearly, get the point across quickly, and appeal by literally representing them within the ad.

I returned to my blank page and put my first markings on it: to appeal to the target demographic, I took the easiest route possible. I went through my photo CDs and found a picture of the average “middle” class working business couple out for a cup of coffee.

The classic ING image of a pair of adults having coffee was a definite inspiration, but a suitable one; it seemed so iconic of the demographic I was aiming at – almost archetypal in its representation. I decided that this would become the main focus of the ad: the human element. In the simplest possible way, this picture said exactly who the ad was for, and anyone deeming themselves within that category would have



their attention drawn. I also spent some time considering the realization of this business couple. I chose initially to use a cartoon to lighten the mood a little bit: life insurance is not necessarily the most tactful of topics, and so I figured a cartoon realization would separate the ad from others of the same type while lightening the mood slightly. As a final touch, I added a background colour to add some dimension to the piece, and to tie the piece in with ING’s distinct colour of choice.

Continuing with the cartoon feel of the ad, I decided that the best way to convey the text that I wanted was through the typical comic device of a speech bubble. I wanted to have

one of the two people talking about the need for life insurance, and the other thinking about the end result of the life insurance: a happy and secure family. This would essentially be giving the question and providing the answer within the same ad: a clear and concise way of stating exactly what the business that is being promoted is all about. Remembering that my main focus was simplicity, I wrote a very small blurb about the need for life insurance, and dropped the text bubble onto the page. The text itself could not be clearer. There is no unnecessary word play or eloquence; the text serves only to present the idea to the viewer without any hidden motives or ulterior agendas. However, that is not to suggest that the words were not chosen carefully. I wrote the blurb keeping in mind the rules of modality; the use of “could” and “should” present a suggestive attitude, which communicates to the viewer that the ad is not forcing anything upon anyone but rather is suggesting an idea for consideration. This was an important decision, as the demographic in question might not respond well to being forced into thinking or acting a certain way. The text, thus, is successful at implementing cohesion: the entire nature of the ad itself is suggestive, and this is reinforced by the text.

As I shuffled the text bubble around the page trying to find the best placement, I realized that too many elements would take away from the focus of the people. At this point, I decided to utilize a center/margin design for the best effect: the text and logo would be on the margins so as to not detract from the central motif: the target demographic represented within the ad. I then wondered if I could effectively implement both the ideal/real relationship and the given/new relationship within the same ad. This would create a mathematical perfection that would latently appeal to the older audience who

have been reading for a long time and have been trained to identify the relationships of ideal/real, given/new. Additionally, this would play off of the enjoyment of a structured and secure lifestyle deemed important by the demographic. The ad would thus become a metaphor for the audience: a demonstration of their lifestyle wrought from the structured nature and clean design. I first separated the page into four quadrants, and marked out the centre and margins. I placed the speech bubble in the “given” and “real” quadrant, as it didn’t offer any new information; it simply planted the seed of “we need life insurance” into the mind of the viewer. In the “ideal” and “new” quadrant, I placed a thought bubble with the end result – the new and ideal information – that would come as a result of subscribing to ING’s service. This created an absolutely flawless inverse-symmetry that effectively exploited the variety of alignment and location related skills that I’d gained. Additionally, the placement of all the elements in relation to the center enforced the rules of proximity; the gravitation to the center proved to establish the salience of the couple’s picture, effectively making it the “boss” or “master” of the ad.



As I looked over the ad that I’d just created, I came to the conclusion that it was not good enough. The structure was fine, but the cartoon realization had gone too far and it didn’t accurately get across the demographic as I’d planned. I then realized that the background colour I’d chosen – the same colour as the ING logo – effectively made the ad mesh with

the logo, but perhaps too effectively, as the orange competed with and washed out the logo of the same colour. To remedy these problems, I chose to substitute the cartoon picture for a real one – appealing to the older audience in a more expected manner – and to change the background colour to both contrast with the logo and also with the black suits of people in the picture. This helps to reinforce the focal point built by the center/margin relationship. As a final touch, I drew in some shadows on the people to add additional depth to the picture.

The picture of the people itself utilizes a distant but level perspective of the couple in an interpersonal range. I chose to use a picture that was not intimate, nor had any element of power, because it allows the viewers to objectify the people in the picture: the viewers are able to project themselves into the image, rather than considering themselves a part of it (as is the case with most intimate pictures). Additionally, the new picture also exhibits an action process – a transactional bi-directional contract between the two participants, connected by a vector. The body positions and general mannerisms of the two subjects in the picture belie the fact that they are engaged in a conversation; a fact punctuated by the vector of the woman's hand and the open mouths and eye-contact. This narrative representation works well because it symbolizes a very common daily activity in the lives of the demographic; an activity that is instantly recognizable and relatable.



I didn't abandon the cartoon realization completely, though. I felt that the ad still needed an element of playfulness; an element that would give it a distinct look. I chose to leave the comic book style text and thought bubbles, and I also chose to leave the cartoon picture of the family. To me, the cartoon family in the thought bubble symbolizes that iconic representation of a family as drawn by the hand of a child. Thus, the thought bubble comes to represent the "happy and whole family" as a function of the apparent drawing of a happy child.

Ultimately, the ad is an extreme example of the usage of the more mathematical elements of design that I've learned throughout the course. The ad uses all the positional elements -



- ideal/real, given/new and center/margin - in a perfect construct that balances all the contents of the ad into the proper places. The balance is also a perfect demonstration of inverse-symmetry: the "speech bubble" offsets the "thought bubble", female offsets male, bottom-right offsets top-left; everything is symmetrical except for the logo that is located in the "new/real" quadrant. This lack of symmetry causes the

logo to stand out, without taking salience. It's perversion of the symmetry renders it the key element of the ad, but not the focal point. Most importantly, all these effects come together to emulate the order, balance and structure that this demographic demands from

their business and lifestyle, and thus the ad acts as a perfect metaphor that gets its point across easily, clearly, coherently and effectively.

This final exercise has proven to be the most exhausting and educational of all the work I have done in the course thus far. By carefully planning out the ad, and considering the many tools at my disposal, I was able to create a simple yet effective and mathematically beautiful ad that communicates its point effectively, and has many latent effects on the viewer.

As I mentioned in the previous discussion for the newsletter redesign, I have been presented with an entirely new set of tools to apply to design, and to critique the design of others. Understanding the effects that design has over an audience, and being able to justify any choices made when creating a design of one's own, is a very powerful tool that legitimizes the art, math and science of design. Through the course of these projects, I've developed a newfound respect for the amount of rhetoric that can be rendered in a seemingly simple image, and this serves to not only educate me about design, but also rhetoric itself, and how it can be manifested in more than just a speech or essay writing.



You know, dear, it's about time that we look into life insurance. If something should happen, we need security for our children.