Bill Gardner

A Preparatory Retrospect
LogoLounge Trend Reports
2012 and 2013

Identifying trends is impossible without context. As a designer your design skills become more valuable over time because the longer you practice, the greater context you bring to your craft. You are able to identify styles that are outmoded and lack relevance with consumers because you can recall a time when they had both. And you're wiser for the experience.

As we prepare the annual LogoLounge Trend Report, we are fortunate to have more than a decade of reports to reflect on. Looking back at the first reports, trends appeared much broader because none had been formally identified; no one else was documenting or evaluating the industry's output. With each subsequent report we found the trends were becoming much more specific.

Anyone who has ever charted his or her family's genealogy has probably created a family tree to assist with the documentation. You had a finite amount of information before you started your tree, but after you were enlightened because this exercise gave you a fresh visual context. It was a more revealing way to look at information you thought you already knew.

In a similar fashion, for the first time, the evolution of logo trends became readily apparent and additionally valuable as information allowed us to not only see where we had been but also estimate the impending trajectory. By categorizing content, we have been able to watch trends cycle in and out over a period of time, allowing LogoLounge to track emerging styles and techniques in real time.

Like that family tree, we are able to see some trend branches come to an abrupt halt, while others grow and expand at alarming rates. Even the co-mingling of trends to create wholly new categories is no longer a surprise but can be projected with modest effort. The ultimate objective of these reports is to allow designers to discover trajectories that will help them define the future of our craft.

Attached are reports from the last two years, which will be valuable for your review prior to the release of the 2014 LogoLounge Trend Report at HOW Design Live. A compendium of all past reports can be found on LogoLounge.com at the following address: http://www.logolounge.com/trend-reports.asp.

2013 Logo Trends

Here

BRANDFORMA
APPLE PLACE

WHITESTONE DESIGN WERKS
PHOTOFOUND

GARDNER DESIGN
VISTERRA

VIRTUE DESIGN LTD.
SUFFOLK BIZ 360 GOOGLE BUSINESS PHOTOS

The iconic map pin has given way to the ubiquitous digital version of itself. A generation that has no use for an analog map also has no use for a tray full of stickpins with multicolored heads. Society navigates with GPS, and it marks its destinations with an iconic inverted drop shape that nods an homage to its predecessor. This icon has arguably entered the visual vocabulary of iconography as fast as any in recent memory.

Need to let someone know they have arrived? Drop a marker. The equity in this symbol is prepped for application and replaces the hackneyed iterations of an arrow, or an X, or a simple dot, to indicate that you have arrived. In logo design, place often is an important part of a story, and this malleable symbol is finding itself merged and modified to convey an even deeper message. It's not every day that designers are presented with a virgin icon fresh for appropriation but here it is.

Crossed

GAVULA DESIGN ASSOCIATES
THE FUND FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ROBERT FINKEL DESIGN
ESCONDIDO LAKE CLUB

LAKE E CLUB

farm products

DONA ENCRENCA
BOTECO DE RESPONSA
RECREIO DOS BANDEIRANTES

ASGARD
MARKET PLACE

WOX
DONA ENCRENCA BAR

It's been less than a handful of years since designers went on a binge with circles containing crossed anything, from arrows to lines to sticks. The standard solution usually involved a graphic being placed in each of the four quadrants formed by these items—a client's initials, a foundation date, a name, a crown, a simple icon or symbol of some kind. The first few had a nice feel to them, but the proliferation of this kind of mark turned most of them into the punch line of their own joke.

The dust has cleared, and the frenetic pace of this design's creation has slowed to a trickle. Better yet, it has shifted to another variant that is not nearly as packed with information as the previous models. These crossed components have a greater variety that often favors cooking utensils, tools, sporting equipment and the like. The X formed by these elements signifies a level of heritage normally associated with a pair of crossed swords. It's a technique that lifts the regal nature of the client it represents and implies a certain sophistication even if it's a pair of crossed plungers.

Wave

vesselwines

RHOMBUS, INC.
VESSEL WINES

JUSUM ENTERPRISES
SHOPLOVE

DEEP BLUE

MAGIALIQUID
CENCOSUD

VICTOR GOLOUBINOV
CURSIR

Subtlety plays an important role in this group, and it may well take a second look to see the connections. Generally these marks have a volume to them, but you can assume the substance is in flux. Imagine the simple motion of swirling wine in a glass and watching it stir from side to side in a settling fashion. It is a sign of movement but not in a rushed or torrid fashion. Rather, it is gentle and certainly under control.

Given time, these marks look as if they should come to rest, but the viewer's better judgment suggests that the rolling nature of these icons is ongoing, like the tides. Such a simple visual gesture that's pure in geometry and can express a complex rocking nature is refreshing. These appear to have a liquid quality to them, but as a logo design, it demonstrates an entity's ability to contain a volatile substance and control the results.
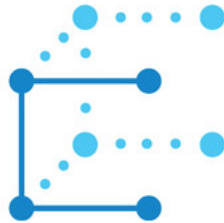
Molecules
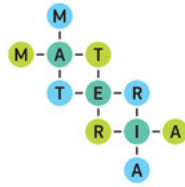
BFIVE BRANDING & IDENTITY
NANOMET

COMMUNICATION AGENCY
CENTER

STANOVOV
CORPUS

DESSEIN
PROFESSIONAL COST CONSULTANTS

Think exacting and with specific purpose. Unlike cooking food, being off in a molecular recipe by one or two elements can kill you. This group of identities conveys concepts using a visual language that connotes an appreciation of precision—everything in its place and a place for everything. Though these identities may not represent a research lab or petrochemical endeavor, they do express the understanding on the client's part for methodology.

The very geometric nature of these marks lets the consumer know that process is critical to success. There are no elements left to chance, and with perfection comes results. The circles connected by lines can represent the aspects of a large business that works together in harmony, or many coming together to create a greater whole. Variations in color demonstrate diversity or a seamless blending of disparate elements. This is how subjective designers present objective solutions to clients that demand a proof of outcome.

Nature Marks

PROJEKT, INC.
MIDDLETOWN LUMBER

COLORYN STUDIO
GIFTOLOGY

CAUSE DESIGN CO.
BRACKEN LEADERSHIP

FLIPP ADVERTISING & JAMES GOTT DESIGN
KOOTENAY ALPINE TREKKING

Long before DNA, we knew that nature's manifestation of individualism existed everywhere. A thumbprint certainly spoke to the uniqueness of a human being, but the rings of a tree or the mapped topography of the land were equally effective marks of singularity. These patterns are immediately recognized for what they are even though each holds a clue to the originality of the entity.

Combining these thumbprints of nature as a surface treatment on a mark is seen as a way to address the unique and peculiar aspects of a client. Or it may be a way of indicating that every client or product or relationship is respected as individual. These prints are also the universal leveler as everyone has one regardless of our station in life. The print of every individual, regardless of wealth, religion, race, education, sex, or any other divisor, looks pretty much the same, but at the same time, each is unique—an imprimatur from Mother Nature.

Membrane

TALLGRASS STUDIOS
SUNSTONE

CASSANDRA SMOLCIC
STONEHOUSE PICTURES

DANIIL SHUMAKOV
SIBERIA

3SAEDGE
ONE WORLD

Pattern is no stranger to the world of logo design. Some of the most effective identities rely heavily on pattern to tell a story. More often than not the pattern is geometric in origin and displays a regular symmetry crafted from dots or squares or line work. The logos in this group are starting to use an irregular pattern that appears to be much more organic in nature. There is a consistency of positive and negative space to the arrangement, but it was formed from similar yet unique components.

Imagine the pattern created by camouflage, the epitome of regularity formed from irregularity. Or picture an arrangement of stones that are all of the same approximate size, but each is individual in form. The name for this category was adopted as a reference to the microscopic appearance of a cellular membrane that is constructed from similar units, connected in a random sequence, that creates a consistent surface. These marks demonstrate order and harmony drawn from dissonance and an appreciation of the beauty of differences brought together for a common good.

Formula

S DESIGN INC.
SCHLEGEL BICYCLES

CURTIS SHARP DESIGN
ALPHA RECLAIM

NIKITA LEBEDEV
KINGSTYLE

SIMON FROUWS DESIGN
ORIGIN WINES

This, and this, and this, when brought together equals something much greater. Why not show those ingredients? Instead of showing s'mores, let's break it down and show graham crackers and chocolate and marshmallows. The idea of stepping back from the finished product and showing the equation or the components responsible for getting you to the solution is what this group is about. The elements in the equation may be dramatically different but the combination tells the consumer a story and requires their participation to assemble a final conclusion.

These logos appear in a variety of styles, and whether the formula is displayed vertically or horizontally, there is usually a sequence to be followed for the result. Another connotation derived from this category is simplicity, as if there is someone telling the consumer, "It's not that hard to understand." Breaking a process into steps or showing its transparency is a good method of engaging the consumer with an educational message that coincidentally is also used to identify.

Bracketing

IMPACT MEDIA DESIGN
EDM

SEBASTIANY BRANDING & DESIGN
S.I.N.

MRS SMITH
QUOTIENCE

TOKY BRANDING+DESIGN
CARAVUS

As different as these marks appear, a square in a negative white space is the connecting tissue. Generally, two elements of equal construction are pushed together to create a square- or diamond-shaped center which becomes the unwitting centerpiece of the logo. It's a bit like two brackets that are uniquely designed and certainly have a message, but it's never as much about the device as what is between them.

Here, two pieces make a whole and create something greater in the central area. Remove one of the pieces and there is no story, but squeezed together, they envelop one of the greatest of all products, potential. It is the light that is captured between. It is the known or unknown. It is the elusive result that only this firm can define and manifest. The beauty of showing potential is that the consumer is able to dream and fill in the blank with the answer that best serves his objective.

Eyelet

JEAN-LUC SLAGLE DESIGN
LOVE WATER

HAYES IMAGE
PHARMABOND

ODNEY
MBT'S

TEN26 DESIGN GROUP, INC.
JPWENDT CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

Imagine a world where you are not allowed to make any hard right turns, and you pretty much have the concept that leads to this genre of marks. Typically, these are built with a continuous motion monoline weight that may or may not be capped with a feature, or it may terminate into itself. Crossovers are certainly common, with a visual line break to convey dimension and continuity. There are many variants, but the use of a loop is how you navigate a hard right angle.

There is a pleasure in tracing the line with your eyes as it takes us on a bit of a journey. It demonstrates a sense of flow and flexibility and creates a solution that literally has an unexpected twist to it. Were you given enough rope, you could no doubt design your logo with it. These marks are approachable, friendly, and demonstrate a methodology by tracing a path from beginning to end.

Slash

DEI CREATIVE
LIGHTBOX

36CREATIVE
29RHINO

NOX CREATIVE
BAZAAR SOCIAL LLC.

Q
HEIMANN MEDIA GROUP

The ubiquitous slash comes of age and has found a home in the realm of identity design. But what does it mean? The forward slash has tremendous flexibility and, aside from being a separator in networking or URL addresses, it is most commonly a symbol representing "or" in between two options. It also is at home as a divider between initials such as b/w for black and white, or as a divider in a fraction, or even as the mark for a spare at your local bowling lane.

In identity design, it is a clean visual substitute that allows us to connect or build separation between concepts or entities. The mark appears equally comfortable in a typographic solution or maybe used with a bit more wit between icons/visual elements or both. The acceptance of the slash is reminiscent of the avalanche of solutions using the @ symbol a number of years ago. Because of the almost invisible nature of the slash, it has much more utility and probably will be viewed much more like an ampersand or another letter in our alpha-arsenal.

Written

JACKSON SPALDING CREATIVE
DALLAS ARTS WEEK

STEBBINGS PARTNERS
HEARTLAND BREWERY GROUP

COPILOT CREATIVE
PIKES PEAK ADVERTISING FEDERATION

SIMON FROUWS DESIGN
HOOPENBURG WINES

As this trend developed this year, it started as a recognition of the abundance of logos incorporating handwriting. There were some A-plus examples of cursive, for sure, but no additional theme was evident. The more I scrutinized the category, the more obvious the use of this script became as it appeared in a supporting shape to complete the message. Most of these looked as if a blackboard had been created in the shape of a "fill in the blank" for whatever the topic was.

Folks have been building type into shapes for years, and though that is   a modest part of this trend, the overarching majority of these look like a barista at Starbucks has been busy designing logos when not filling out the menu boards at the store. This is an engaging way to tell a story, at a distance from a shape silhouette, and up close where the consumer can read the details. The handmade aspect of these solutions brings to the story a sense of care and attention to detail missing from the competitor's soulless entity.

Line Craft

QUIQUE OLLERVIDES
EX-LIBRIS

SUNDAY LOUNGE
BLINDSIGHT BREWING

TYPE08
ENOVA

ODNEY
JACKALOPE

Probably most evident of any trend this year is the aesthetic and beauty associated with these marks and their understated elegance. The crafting of logos using a single stroke weight is not new, but it is in full display with nuances that keep the work fresh. These examples are mostly black on white, but there are exceptions with color that work as well. The illustration and the typography are both handled with even weights, which allows the copy to have a true sense of place.

Influences may come from icon systems that have been developed over the last several years using a non-scalable line weight to build consistency. A Charley Harper influence seems to come from the geometry applied to the illustrations. There is just enough line work to define shapes, but not enough to lay in tonality. A nod to the work of the '50s is also evident here, which is always a pleaser for generations still in love with that era.

Badges

JEREMY SLAGLE DESIGN
DABBLE & STITCH

STEVE DECUSATIS DESIGN
MARK HUNTLEY STATE REPRESENTATIVE

WESTMORELANDFLINT
THE BUTTERCUP FACTORY

DEPT OF ENERGY
POST ALLEY PIZZA

A glance at this year's logo crop turns up more crimped edges than a state fair pie contest. Badge logos are doing their best bottle cap impression with slow, wavy edges; tight, pointy, ziggurat edges; and every combo in between. It's the diversity of filling that is keeping these interesting and that still allows the well-crafted version to stand out. Some of these are intended to be seal-like, and then others just use the shape as an enclosure.

There is an air of official-ese associated with these marks but also a wink that they can just as easily be irreverent and light-hearted. Dating back to the irregular edge created by an impression in a wax seal, this shape over the years found regularity in shape. Reminiscent of the gold seal applied to any document of importance, the shape still denotes an official stamp of approval, and designers are glad to promote this school of thought.

Banners

ALEXZHU
SETTLEMENT "NEIGHBOURS"

HUBBELL DESIGN WORKS
SELECT BEER BOTTLE SHOP & TAP ROOM

DOTZERO DESIGN
REGIONAL ARTS & CULTURE COUNCIL

STILES DESIGN
BASTROP WILDFIRE RELIEF

As a graphic device, the banner has enjoyed a significant ride with designers for a number of years. What was once a nice way to add a violator to a package or a website has this year found a place at the logo design table. An updated version of ribbons from years past, these banners only exist in a sharply creased and highly starched variation from the past. Generally, the banners are tipped with a rise to the right, leaving the italic passenger type in a perfectly erect state.

Occasionally the banners exist by themselves, but they are more often incorporated on or around a significant graphic element. Acting almost as a ribbon, these devices have the ability to serve as the background for a text message and also as a gathering and bundling device. The ribbon-like tips of the banners often are trimmed to contain a V tail evocative of an award. Because of the nature of the product this emulates, it allows a designer to build depth and layers into an otherwise flat solution.

Monograms

SIMON FROUWS DESIGN
WOOLWORTHS

SIVIERO|NAHAS
ASK THE MISSUS

STANOVOV
EKATERINA DENISOVA

MOTER
MOLLY'S MARAUDERS

The art of personal aggrandizement is alive and well, and designers are busy doing their part to keep it fresh. Though monograms date back to 350 BC, they met their true renaissance starting in the mid-eighteenth century. This is when family crests gave way to a more democratic identifying motif that anyone could develop, regardless of his or her station in life. These solutions range from overly ornate to incredibly spartan in appearance and have been the outgrowth of the desire for everyone to have a mark of their own.

When there is little else to say about an individual, you can always bank on him having at least two initials you can rub together to create a monogram. There is a certain aura of elegance and formality that accompanies these, even though contemporary versions may not have the character to pull off being stitched on your shirt cuff. Name a fashion designer who doesn't use a monogram of some sort on his or her merchandise. Considering the enormous trade in counterfeit fashion apparel and accessories, it helps prove the dollar value a logo can infuse in an industry.

2012 Logo Trends

Icon Clusters

FBA (FOXTROT BRAVO ALPHA)
SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST

ED NACIONAL
MONEY MAGAZINE

CHRIS ROONEY ILLUSTRATION/DESIGN
THINKBOX

PRINCIPALS PTY LTD
TAUBMANS

Iconic symbols with a universal feel—such as the crosswalk man or the restroom lady—have long been a mainstay of graphic language. They are very useful in their directness. Both icons and logos are used as a pictorial solution reduced to their bare essence to convey a message, but there has always been a fine line between them in that icons are purposely anonymous whereas logos could not be more personalized (or should be, at least).

But as symbols, icons are so ubiquitous that it's probably on natural that they would eventually start to jump the track from the world of giving directions into the world of corporate representation. The question is: How do you send a message with an icon that you are something much more?

The solution: Merge multiple icons together with transparent linkage. Bundling several messages into a single unit demonstrates simplicity and clarity of image but also indicates the depth of a concept. This is managed in the same way you might express a thought by linking several words into a phrase, except with this technique, designers are using icons as if spelling out a rebus. AT&T uses this technique effectively as the visual centerpiece of its current Rethink Possible marketing campaign.

Transparent Links

TURNER DUCKWORTH
TASSIMO

DRAGON ROUGE CHINA LIMITED
INSTITUTE OF SCIENTIFIC
ANIMAL COMMUNICATION

HOLLIS BRAND CULTURE
SUSHILICIOUS

113DC DESIGN+BRANDING
SION

Demonstrating strength in numbers by constructing a logo from multiple elements is a long-standing formula. Linking these elements together in a transparent chain-like fashion is new, however. Whether elements are joined in a circle or a linear band is irrelevant as the concept is the same: Diversity finds a common bond and creates synergy from a stronger union. Color is used to demonstrate variety in these samples, and proof of connectivity is demonstrated by tonal shift where elements overlap.

Though nothing is new about the use of transparencies, the increasing use of this technique is now at critical mass. A sense of lightness is prevalent with the use of clear, clean, pure chroma colors that sometimes produce a rainbow palette. These signature colors are likely used as darker or desaturated tones will create muddy overlaps. It's hard not to gain an optimistic perspective when you look at these bright solutions.

Watercolor

MAD STUDIOS
REFLECTIONS MEMORY CARE CENTRE

AKAPUSTIN
KITT

STEBBINGS PARTNERS
ARAGOSTA BAR + BISTRO

SIEGEL+GALE
COOPERVISION

Every year, there is at least one trend that does its best to build a bridge away from technology and back to the human touch. And whether this is achieved with a red sable hair brush or a digital filter, the tactile essence of watercolor is marking its territory in this year's trend set. More than just a textured background, this painting technique usually defines the logo's shape, form, and highlights as well. Conveying moisture or a water origin is a common but not a mandate in these solutions.

CooperVision, the world's third largest contact lens manufacturer, recently launched its new identity, created by Siegel+Gale. Design team members wanted to convey the duality of technology alongside the tactile and intimate experience of wearing the lens. Siegel+Gale's Howard Belk notes, "We love the humanity it conveys, the purity of color it makes possible, and how it comes alive in digital, illuminated environments."

Potato Chip

LIQUID AGENCY
AMYRIS

YURY AKULIN | LOGODIVER
AGILIS

PORKKA & KUUTSA OY
TELKO OY

MOTIV DESIGN
AUSTOFIX

Anyone who has ever wolfed his way through a stack of Pringles chips can relate to this shape, better known to the geometry world as a hyperbolic paraboloid. To categorize the appearance of this shape in the world of identity, we'll call it a potato chip as the form of each instance tends to vary a bit, much like the chips in a bag. Flattened out, most of these shapes would look like a circle or an ellipse, but with a gentle twist they occupy a unique three-dimensional space.

The shift to a greater use of surface gradient to define shape is critical to the success of these images: If viewed with just a flat tone, they would appear as the twisted loop of an infinity sign. There is a certain tension that permeates these marks, as if releasing torque would allow the shape to relax back into a flat disk. Flexibility and elasticity come to mind as defining attributes. Being able to simultaneously show both sides of an otherwise two-dimensional shape brings forth even more conceptual opportunities (as well as an excellent bar bet).

Anaglyphs

CON KENNEDY VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS
DUBLIN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

WENDY K JOHNSON DESIGN
UNTIL LAMBS BECOME LIONS

BITENCOURT
ALESSIO MOSCA

SPARC, INC.
HERMAN MILLER

Never have two colors carried such a universal set of directions. An offset red and cyan overprint sends the public scrambling for a set of old-school 3-D glasses. This technique was originally developed by a Frenchman to create dimensional stereoscopic imagery in the 1850s. Today, modern iterations of this effect overprint divergent imagery and make one or the other visible depending on the color of lens selected for viewing.

Messaging from these marks creates a dichotomy of choice. They are obvious enough that certainly no special glasses are required to grasp the intent. This technique tells the viewer they may make the choice of this or that but not both. But they also convey that the viewer is responsible for her own selection. Because this is a novel and interactive technique, it commands a response which ensures a few additional milliseconds of attention while the consumer deciphers her options.

Selective Focus

BITENCOURT
NAVNEET DALAL

DENIS ARISTOV
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE OF
PERM REGION

SALT BRANDING
SFDW

KALACH DESIGN | VISUAL COMMUNICATION
NUTOPIA SUPPLEMENTS

Digital and technical advancements now allow almost anyone with a camera or the most basic apps and software to create dramatic imagery through field of focus contortions. Layers of crispness in an image can become paper-thin with everything else wracked by distortion or blur. Even items in the same focal plain can be selectively focused (or not) at will. No surprise to see this effect translate to the field of identity design.

The subtle misty qualities of these logos can create an entrancing effect as the soft edges of the mark seem to vanish into the surface. This technique gives a soft dream-like quality that engages the viewer by demanding a second look if for no other reason than to confirm they are not going blind. This sharp versus fuzzy look is a perfect example of the design industry emulating effects from other visual sectors of the consumer's life.

Woven
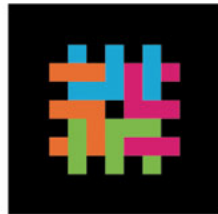
RIZA CANKAYA
ERTAN VURAL

KITE
COUNTERPART INTERNATIONAL

RIVERCANE VILLAGE

SOUND MIND CREATIVE
RIVERCANE VILLAGE

MOTIV DESIGN
DTED

Certainly this is anything but new, and it's becoming even more pervasive in the last year. These are coarsely woven patches reminiscent of a caned chair seat from another era or maybe micro-shots of an amazing wonder fabric. A sense of strength or an impenetrable bond is created by the interlacing of warp and weft. The interlocking nature of this process can also indicate a union of elements that a ravel-proof.

The concept of taking separate components merging from divergent directions and blending them together to create greater strength is one of an identity designer's oldest stories. This concept is carried to its visual extreme when the combining strands are a Technicolor array of diversity. Curiously, this technique is rendered in a flat, two-dimensional manner as if constructed from ribbon. It will be no surprise if this direction evolves forward with more dimensional strands.

Twined

LANDOR
TELIASONERA

I ON THE WORLD
STAR SUPERMARKET

SEBASTIANY BRANDING & DESIGN
INSTITUTO 5 ELEMENTOS

LOGOSTA
COLORFUL FARM

There is something about these designs that is reminiscent of a skillfully tied beef tenderloin, all ready for roasting. Hopefully, it will stay together once cooked, and then the string will be removed, but there is always the possibility it might unceremoniously unfurl as soon as the binding is snipped.

The defining white channel between elements in these logos serves as both a connecting and a bisecting agent at the same time. The randomness of their lines seems to generate just a touch of whimsy.

Circumnavigating lines give the appearance of three dimensions to most of these logos, whether rendered with flat color or gradations. To break up monotony or to demonstrate diversity, some examples use a varied color palette to define the unique segments created by the string. Generally, the deliberateness of the line placement keeps these one step away from a shape that has been scribbled on by a young child.

Sprout

IDEGRAFO - ADRIAN MIRONESCU
REON (RETINA, EUROPEAN UNION)

ZEBRA DESIGN BRANDING
THB

SHUBHO ROY
EXFLORA LLC

GUILHERME ROVAI + TAINÁ FREITAS
VILLA ATIVA ASSESSORIA ESPORTIVA

Sustainability oriented design is a perennial theme, and designers continue to grow new niches—this despite an impending sense that the realm has been so heavily harvested that the soil is near barren. This solution is focused on the seminal moment of green birth, that moment when a seed that has been planted first breaks its coating and a minute green leaf springs out of the ground.

A sprout is indicative of the beginning of a new cycle of life. The spiral nature of this growth is so wonderfully generic: It's hard to say at this stage if the seed is birthing a flower, a tree, a crop, or a weed. It simply represents the green birth. It's a bit like looking at an egg being cracked open by its baby resident and not being quite sure what is coming out. At that moment, it is promise enough of a new day.

Peel

LANDOR
DC COMICS

MOLIVI
ANATRON - FOOD SERVICES SA

TENACITY WORKS
ONLINE LEGAL

CELLAR DOOR CREATIVE
GREEN TO GUEST

2007 marked the graphic invasion of the peeling trompe l'oeil sticker. These graphic devices, usually referred to as violators, held a revered spot in the packaging industry and usually held copy such as "new and improved" or "30% more detergent." Often as simple as a laid-back shape on a round background, these designs gave the appearance of a sticker with poor adhesion. Used on web interfaces and print, alike the proliferation of these violators reached saturation levels by 2010.

The old faux tactile effect, which had completely run its course, is reincarnated now as a reveal. The effect is incorporated into identities set to unveil or expose an inner value or underlying trait. The rendered shadow implying that the peeling back of layers is occurring in real time gives you an immediate peek behind the scenes. DC Comics uses a family of solutions, each pulling back the curtain on a graphic representing a different super hero.

Sphere Carving

ZEBRA DESIGN BRANDING
EVOLI

CREARTOR
T+C

SEAMER DESIGN
EGOVERNMENT RESOURCE CENTRE

PORKKA & KUUTSA OY
URV OY

Imagine you were told to design a logo and then, for tools, you were given a wooden bead and a fine point Dremel. Some of these logos remind me of intricate ivory puzzle orbs created in China. Here a sphere is meticulously carved away, creating a series of delicate, lace-like balls nested inside of each other.

It is the idea of taking an orb with obvious highlights and shadows and tooling out enough of the element to create a secondary level of meaning. This might be a letterform or a shape indicative of a process or even a color treatment of the new surfaces to describe a corporate spirit.

Consumers already have a reference for the sphere and whether they imagine it to say "global" or "self-contained" or "precise," they understand the message of the identity is created by what is not there as opposed to what has been added.

Apps

PHANCO DESIGN STUDIO
RAINEY DISTRIBUTING

BIG COMMUNICATIONS
THE BIRMINGHAM NEWS

BBDO BRANDING
MTS

CROSSTHELIME
KIDPROOFAPPS.COM

Mobile devices and the visual language of apps may well have the single largest impact on how we design identity over the next decade. We are entering a period where the lines of differentiation between logos, icons, symbols, favicons, and app buttons are completely blurred. These elements have always been visual cousins, but the results of their inbreeding is creating some new strains of solutions that don't fit with conventional branding models.

Are these app buttons or are these logos? Designers are tasked with creating identities for entities that may only live in the virtual world. If a mark is to primarily live on the menu of a mobile device, do you design a logo and place it on a button or is it best to integrate the two from inception? Is it imperative to use the glossy reflective visual vernacular for a button, and if you do, is that effect part of the actual logo or does it just appear when the mark is used for that purpose? Expect to see many more of these app logos appearing off-device in unnatural surroundings.

Tessellation

LIPPINCOTT
MARSH & MCLENNAN COMPANIES

PRETTY POLLUTION
DUHA GROUP

BFIVE BRANDING & IDENTITY
INTERVENTION OF A MIRACLE

01D
LOYDFISH

Followers of these reports will see similarities between these logos and Bucky logos and Pixel logos from the previous two years. This is a perfect example of watching a trend progress in a way that proves that designers are evolving and not emulating. Here, multiple geometric shapes are gathered in a series to cover an area with a repeatable pattern. Often the individual components share a common color palette that creates the effect of overlaps and transparency.

Mosaic-like patterns range from highly complex to very simple solutions, created from a small number of elements. Aside from their striking beauty, these logos convey the concept of strength in numbers; combining elements creates a sum greater than the parts. These marks express a scientific nature based in math and give the assurance of precision and accuracy.
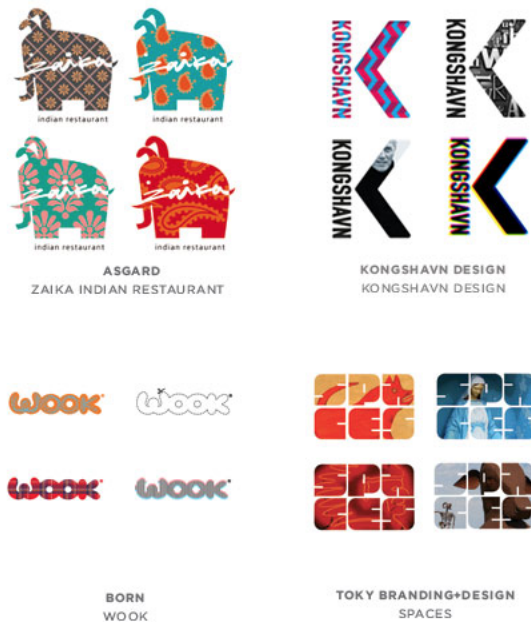
Arc Twists

QING LI DESIGN
MORGAN LEWIS FINANCIAL

TD2
SINED

GARDNER DESIGN
ATIGEO

RYAN COOPER
TURBO TRAINING FITNESS CENTER

Geometry used to be simple when there were just circles, triangles, and squares. There may have been a few more oddball shapes, but I'm sure there weren't more than a dozen tops. Then this shape appeared. and it has become the graphic building block du jour. Similar in some respects to the Potato Chip trend, this appears to be a rectangle that has been twisted 90 degrees and curved simultaneously. It could be a hybrid between a piece of macaroni and a length of fettuccine.

Without transparency or gradation this is a challenging shape to visually recreate in a two-dimensional world. The proliferation of both techniques in logo design has opened up a world of previously challenging shapes to add to our visual vocabulary of building blocks. These arcs combine to express a cyclical motion, creating a dynamic essence of change. The twist also reveals change, as if turning a new page.

Cousin Series

ASGARD
ZAIKA INDIAN RESTAURANT

KONGSHAVN DESIGN
KONGSHAVN DESIGN

BORN
WOOK

TOKY BRANDING+DESIGN
SPACES

Last year's report noted the profusion of logo series designs. And though they were a family of marks, each differed in design and content. This year finds the continued proliferation but with the variation occurring in the surface or technique used to draft the logo. All members are still in the same family, but the variations make the units less like siblings and more like cousins.

Variants used on these series may be for trivial variety, or they may be part of a precise matrix to help code or convey specific information. Whichever the plan, the idea of building a system that is flexible and maintains diversity allows for ready identification, but it recognizes a need to buck uniformity. This can create longevity for a program designed to build equity as consumers gain familiarity with it, yet change with the vagrancies of style through modification of surface and technique.