

STEP-BY-STEP

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Earl Gee is principal of the newly formed Gee + Chung (formerly Earl Gee Design), San Francisco, a multi-disciplinary design consultancy he established with his partner Fani Chung. Gee graduated with distinction from Art Center College of Design, and served on a United Nations-sponsored delegation on package design to the People's Republic of China. His firm creates a diverse array of award-winning two- and three-dimensional work for clients including IBM, Apple Computer, Chronicle Books, the Federal Reserve Bank, and the Smithsonian Institution.

As regular readers know, for *Step-By-Step Graphics*' annual design and illustration competition, we interview each of the winning designers and provide how-to details for each of their stand-out entries. We also do not require judges to select a "best of show" or "best of category" (although they may if they wish), nor is there any requirement to pick a particular number of winners.

We've always felt that this was the fairest, most objective way to let the cream rise naturally. And after reviewing thousands of entries over two long days of judging in late 1995 at the Grand Geneva Resort and Spa in Lake Geneva, Wisc., 98 outstanding pieces of design and illustration came out on top. Our judges — Earl Gee of Gee + Chung Design (San Francisco); Greg Paul (Brady & Paul Communications, Boston and Fort Lauderdale, Fla.); Supon Phornirunlit (Supon Design Group, Washington, D.C.); Valerie Richardson (Richardson or Richardson, Phoenix); and Jack Unruh (illustrator, Dallas) — reviewed table after table of work. They were delighted by some of the entries, discouraged by others, inspired by still others. Consensus was infrequent.

When the judging was finally complete, we sat down with the judges to discuss what they had seen (we've included some miscellaneous samples here), in particular the five pieces they had singled out for special mention (see pages 35–49). The following is a partial transcript of that conversation.

Earl Gee: You know what's surprising about these five special mentions is how simple and

clear all of them are, compared to all the layered stuff that's out there. Now, we included some layered stuff in the show, but the ones we really rallied around are very clear and very simple. That surprised me. We'll be able to look back in a few years and agree that these are all good, solid solutions.

Valerie Richardson: I really think that insofar as design in general goes, we're going to be seeing more creative solutions in shows, like these. This kind of work is going to have to take a priority because, with the computer, more and more clients are going to be doing their own work. And so the value of graphic design is going to be in our *ideas* and what we can bring in terms of *solutions* rather than simply production or even typography. As creative people, we're going to have to be smarter about our solutions; we'll have to be more conceptual in problem solving as opposed to solving it simply with technique, or production, or whatever. And I think that the special mentions we selected are really very conceptual in nature.

For instance, in the [black-and-white ads for the adult shop], the designers didn't worry about the number of colors and so on. Instead, they thought about the person who was going to buy the product, and how they're going to communicate the message in what I think is a sophisticated and tasteful way, and they did it not only with good design but with good typography as well.

Supon Phornirunlit: When we said, "let's go to the pieces we think were the best" for the special mention, we all went to

the same pieces — these five. I agree with Valerie: When I judge a show and I look at work, the pieces cannot just be printed — they have to mean something to the intended audience.

Greg Paul: These were, without a doubt, the most memorable pieces. If we want to talk about categories that stood out, well, then there were whole categories that are hard to remember because nothing really dented our consciousness.

Phornirunlit: That's what really surprised me, that some of the categories weren't stronger, like corporate identity, letterheads and logos.

Jack Unruh: The one category that was really the best was annual reports.

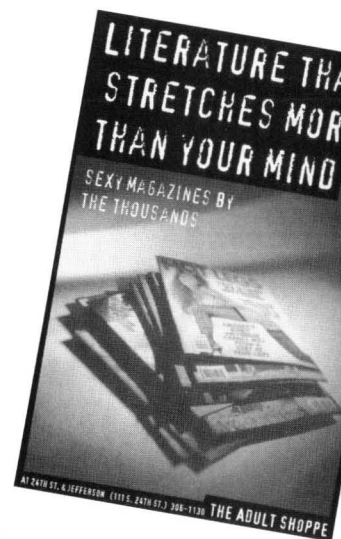
Phornirunlit: Yes, every single winner is very strong in that category.

Paul: Very few weak pieces in that category, you're right, whereas in other categories there were considerably more.

Unruh: Stationery was weak.

Phornirunlit: There were a lot of entries for letterheads, but there were just a few that made it.

Gee: I did like the Canary one, though.



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