Art with function: The Design of Rick Valicenti

by Paul Carlson
ART WITH FUNCTION
PROMOTING EMOTION
EMOTING PROMOTION
Rick Valicenti was born in 1951 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He lives and works in Barrington, Illinois, about 40 miles outside of Chicago. After working for The Design partnership in Chicago, he founded R. Valicenti Design in 1981. Later, in 1989, he founded Thirst/3st, an internationally-recognized design firm. The aim of Thirst, as well as that of its founder, is to create design that marries art with function. Thirst is known for its playful approach, intelligent risk-taking, and pushing the envelope of each client’s discomfort zone. The powerful style of Thirst has been embraced by clients like Gilbert Paper, Gary Fisher Mountain Bikes, Wired, and Absolut.
Gilbert Paper ads that appeared in various issues of *Wired* magazine
Rick Valicenti has devoted over 25 years to creating his unique brand of design. He practices graphic design from an experimental, deeply personal point of view. However, his work is often very satirical and cynical in nature, which is upsetting to some and refreshing to others. Such works position Valicenti as a cultural critic. His passion for design and embrace of new technologies (such as 3D imaging) creates a dynamic union of imagery and inspiration. His career exemplifies the potential of design to function both as an independent undertaking driven outward from self-defined problems, as well as a functional tool that can serve up commercial messages with refreshing ingenuity and perspective.

Valicenti is also a celebrated typographer, having produced several typefaces both alone and in collaboration with others.

- Alexey (2003); with chester
- Apex Sans (2003); with chester
- Apex Serif (2003); with chester
- (Ultra) Bronzo (1993/1997); with Mouli Marur
- Commerce (1992); with Greg Thompson
- Handsome (1999); with Brian McMullen
- Infinity (2001); with chester
- Negatron (2002); with Dakota Brown
- Ooga Booga (1993)
- Orbit (2003); with chester
- Punch (1999); Gregg Brokaw
- Twiggies (2002); with Dakota Brown
Series of illustrations advertising Gilbert Paper’s new Esse line, named and designed by Rick Valicenti
“After almost two decades of beating my head against the wall, I've come to believe a ‘safe’ approach yields the most certain communication connection.

Remember that only the warm, fuzzy and familiar can serve your effort to communicate any messages of real value.”

(Open Type, p.141)
“It's very easy to be a designer today. All the codes are well established. All the technology is in place and under the belt.

Good taste is relative. Style is in the eye of the beholder.

A point of view is all that is required.”

(Ideas=Inspiration, p.118)
Valicenti is closely involved with design education, at both the secondary and post-secondary levels. Valicenti has lectured on four continents and for the past decade, and has contributed his energies to college and high school students in the form of workshops, personal critiques and conversation about design and professional practice.

“How does one capture a point of view?
1. Find quiet time amidst the chaos.
2. Engage in a round of healthy conversation among friends and colleagues.
3. Pray that without much effort, good design will manifest itself.”

Ideas=inspiration

(p.118)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


• Drate, Spencer; Salavetz, Jütka; and Smith, Mark T. *Cool Type*. North Light Books (an imprint of F&W Publications), Cincinnati, OH. Copyright 1997. ISBN 0-89134-728-3.

• [http://www.rickvalicenti.com](http://www.rickvalicenti.com)


