

STEP-BY-STEP

graphics

DESIGN
PROCESS
ANNUAL
1996



BOB

IS NORMAL

SPECIAL MENTION

Annual Report

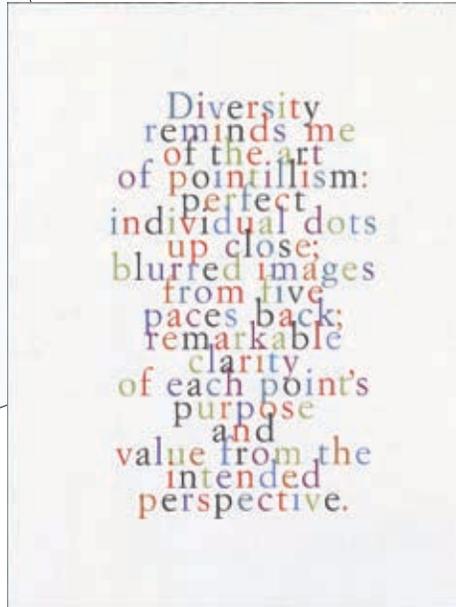
Firm: Nesnadny & Schwartz

Art directors: Mark Schwartz,
Joyce Nesnadny

Designers: Joyce Nesnadny,
Michelle Moehler, Mark Schwartz

Illustrator: Carter Kustera

Client: The Progressive Corporation



Nesnadny + Schwartz (Cleveland) has an unusual approach to designing and illustrating annual reports for the Progressive Corporation, an international property-causality insurance company headquartered in Cleveland.

"We work with fine artists exclusively, rather than with commercial artists and photographers," explains Mark Schwartz, one of the principals of the design firm. "We have from the beginning. The reports are really not art directed. We find people who do something we like and then let them do what they do. That's the key to our approach and to the success of the pieces."

It helps that the client is one of the biggest collectors of contemporary art in the world, so an appreciation for fine art is already well-established within the corporation. It also helps that Nesnadny + Schwartz has a 13-year history of creating successful annual reports for Progressive. "We've got a terrific relationship with Progressive," Schwartz says. "There's a lot of trust built up." (For more about the long-standing relationship between Nesnadny + Schwartz and Progressive Corp., see Vol. 9, No.3.)

"[For the 1994 annual report] our charge was to come up with an innovative solution to articulate the theme

"Diversity," Schwartz explains. When he was introduced to the work of Carter Kustera, he knew he had found that solution in the artist's unusual series of portraits based on individuals he had seen on television talk shows. A New York sculptor turned painter, Kustera exhibits in galleries in New York City. "He's not a commercial illustrator," Schwartz says. "As far as I know he's never done anything like this before."

Kustera's portraits, painted in bold colors with gouache on paper, exemplify the annual report's theme and reinforce the text, which was written (as is every Progressive annual report) by the corporation's chairman, president, and CEO Peter B. Lewis. Each portrait has a descriptive title, either taken directly from a talk show guest or created by the illustrator based on someone he's seen on television, penciled beneath it. Viewed individually, they are rather odd but intriguing snippets of humanity, but taken together they are a powerful portrait of society - or, rather, the diversity of our society.

"His technique of isolating and recognizing the individual and the abstractions created when hundreds of different personalities are represented as a whole, connect you - the viewer - as a participant in this collage of colorful

identities," Schwartz says. (See page 187 for more on Kustera's work.)

The attention-grabbing front cover of the report carries a single portrait painted in red and titled "Bob Is Normal." In contrast, the name of the company and the year are debossed and hot foil-stamped for a very subtle effect. (A dull aqueous coating was applied for protection.) The front and back flyleaves are printed with hundreds of tiny portraits, minus their titles, and more of the colorful heads in varying sizes grace the inside pages. A gatefold with a gallery of portraits in the center of the book serves both to show the reader a larger number of people (more diversity) at a glance and to separate the introductory section of the report from the financial pages. Though it might be difficult to sell some clients on devoting so much space within what is essentially a business statement to illustration, Progressive relishes the opportunity to showcase the art, according to Schwartz.

The annual report's introduction further reinforces the illustration, appearing in reverse type set in the shape of a head (the same head that appears on the cover) on a black page. In it, Progressive spells out its commitment to respecting all people, valuing the differences among them, and responding to their needs appropriately.

The company also asked its employees, customers and independent agents to provide thoughts on the "Diversity" theme and their insightful responses are printed in large, colorful text which echoes the colors of the portraits, toned down a notch for the sake of readability. Despite the unusual type treatment (tightly-kerned colored letters and negative leading), "The text is quite legible, I think," says Schwartz. "We wanted to create some visual tension between the text and the illustration. It helps draw you in."

Soft blue, green, and lilac hues were used for the financial pages in the back of the book. The soothing colors serve to make the information presented on the pages more digestible, and also echo the colors used in some of the illustrations in the front section of the report. The uncoated stock contrasts with the heavier coated paper used for the bulk of the piece.

The 30 to 40 portraits Kustera painted for the annual report will be hung as a huge grid in Progressive's Cleveland headquarters as powerful visual reinforcement of the company's commitment to answering the challenges presented by "Diversity."

MUSEUM BROCHURE

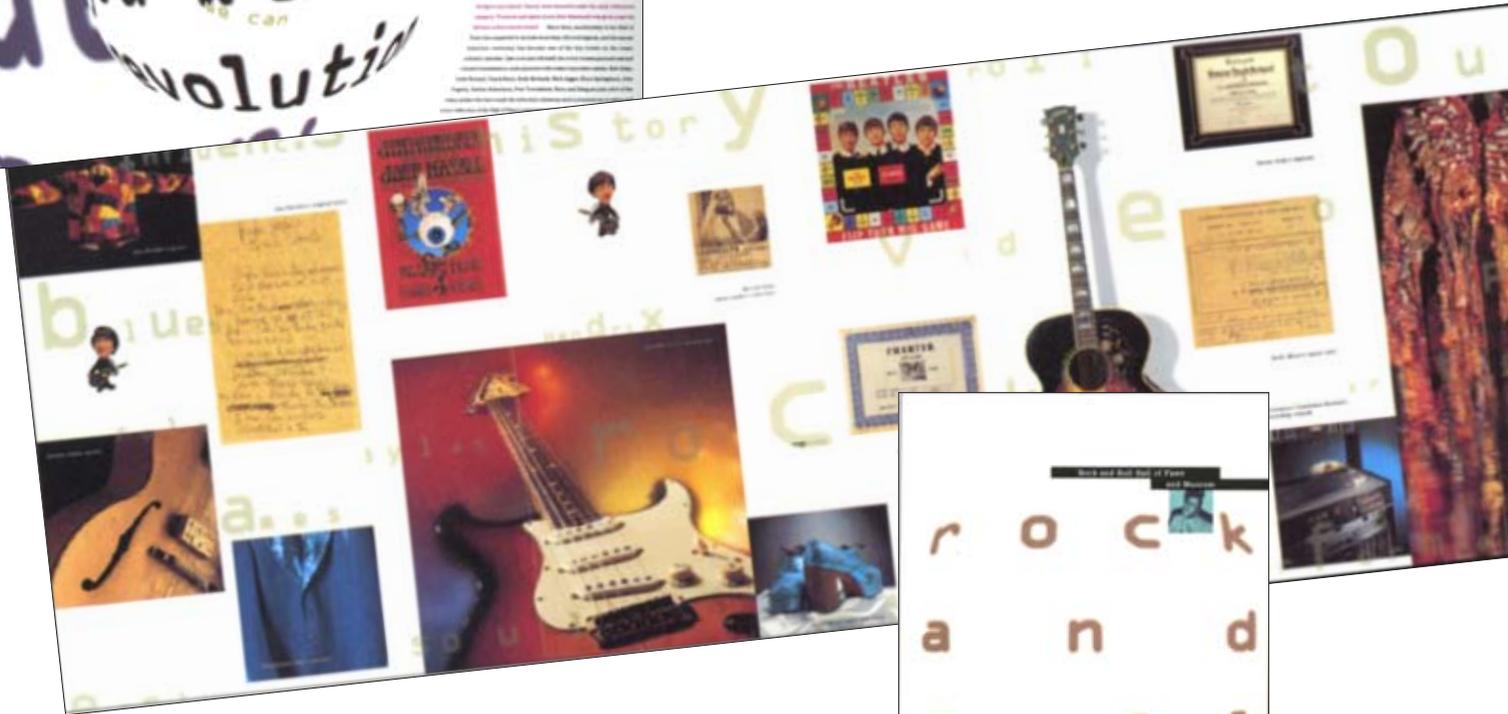
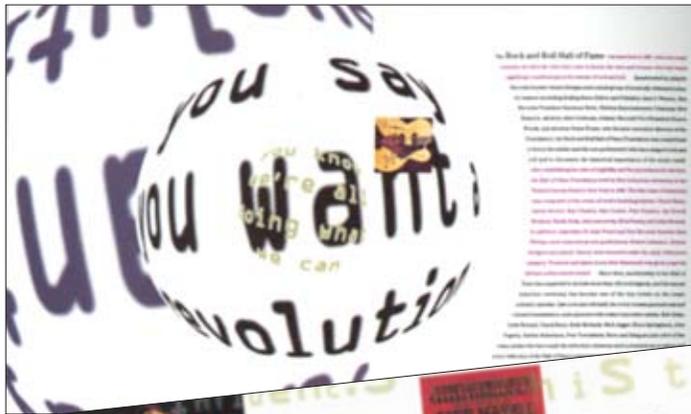
Firm: Nesnadny + Schwartz

Art directors: Mark Schwartz,
Joyce Nesnadny

Designers: Joyce Nesnadny, Brian Lavy,
Michelle Moehler, Mark Schwartz

Photographers: Collection: Tony Festa;
People & Events: Various photographers

Client: Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
and Museum



One might expect a brochure touting rock-and-roll to be somewhat off-beat, perhaps a bit antiestablishment. A little rough around the edges. The brochure created by Nesnadny + Schwartz (Cleveland) for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, however, is none of those things. It might be described as classical, even elegant.

"We based the concept for the brochure on the charge we were given," explains principal Mark Schwartz. "We had to consider who the audience for the piece was - executives and artists within the music industry. It's principally a fund-raising piece with a dual mission: to amass money and to get donations and extended loans of memorabilia to display in the museum." Was it successful in accomplishing those objectives? "Very," says Schwartz.

In designing "we wanted to create something that was very accessible, but exciting and engaging at the same time," he adds. This the designers accomplished by handling the text in a straightforward, easily digestible manner and illustrating it with beautifully reproduced photographs that portray the enormous energy and appeal of rock-and-roll. Collecting the many photographs of the legendary artists and their memorabilia proved to be one of the most time-consuming tasks in producing the brochure; researching the images and obtaining all the necessary releases took several weeks of dogged work.

The back cover of the book is designed to hold additional information, with flaps folding inward to give the appearance of a record album (opposite, lower right). A circular diecut in the outer flap reinforces the impression.

It was sheer coincidence that brought illustrator Carter Kustera and art director Mark Schwartz of Nesnadny + Schwartz (Cleveland) together, but

when they met, Schwartz knew he'd found the perfect artwork for Progressive Corporation's 1994 annual report. (For more about the design of the report, see page 46.)

Kustera and his wife were involved in a serious car accident, and one of the insurers was Progressive, a property casualty insurance company. Kustera's wife recognized Progressive as owner of one of the largest and finest collections of contemporary art in the world, and she suggested that Kustera mention in a letter to them that he was an artist. The rest is award-winning history.

Kustera's colorful portraits, based on people he has seen on television talk shows, seemed ideally suited to portray Progressive's 1994 annual report theme, "Diversity." They eloquently embody the firm's commitment, as outlined in the report's introduction: "... embracing and nurturing our changing mosaic of people, customers, strategies, culture and environment."

"I had been working on this body of work for about three years. I call it 'America's Most Wanting,'" the artist says. Each portrait is painted with gouache on paper measuring approximately 30 x 40-inches, and oddly descriptive titles are penciled beneath the paintings. "The titles in the report are quite tame compared to ones I show in galleries. Those have a lot more to do with sex and violence, because that's what you see most on TV talk shows," Kustera says. "I'm still in the process of developing the idea, changing it, taking it further and further." The artist is also currently working with the Kohler Company to produce ceramic tiles bearing his work.