

# Designers Find Creative Spark and Compelling Results with Digital Color Printing

*Digital Color Breathes New Life into Design Challenges, Resulting in Portfolio-Grade Work*

by Bob Wagner

Somewhere at the intersection of an artistic medium to be explored and a conceptual challenge to be expressed is the spark of creative inspiration.

It's a familiar landscape for agency and design professionals, who spend much of their working lives seeking that spark and refining the resulting inspirations to generate business results.

A medium that many increasingly are exploring is digital color printing, which provides capabilities that are unavailable with traditional offset printing, such as easily producing short runs and varying the content of jobs. According to a 2006 *Graphic Design: USA* readership survey, the percentage of creative professionals who specify, recommend, approve or buy digital printing has tripled in the last four years to 72 percent. In addition, the vast majority of them report using digital printing more often or the same amount as the previous year.

A number of industry initiatives are shining a light on innovative design solutions using digital color printing. As the leader in digital color, Xerox Corporation champions these efforts to educate agency and design professionals — and drive business to digital print providers.

The initiatives range from classroom instruction to design contests and individual consultations. Here's a look at three of the latest programs promoting the value of digital color variable printing.

## ADIM's Digital Deep Dive

The ADIM (Art Directors Invitational Master Class) was borne 19 years ago to offer a survey of the latest computer-based design tools for designers, illustrators, art directors and photographers. It has evolved into a four-day conference including an in-class assignment using the new tools, led by flagship



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sponsor Adobe Systems Incorporated and other sponsors, including Xerox.

"We're always searching for new design techniques and for new ways of imaging," said Russell Brown, senior creative director, Adobe Systems and a founder of the ADIM conference. This year's challenge: develop a Western-themed wine brand, supported by logo, label and package designs, using Adobe® Creative Suite 2 design software, digital color printers from Xerox and other state-of-the-art tools.

The 120 students learned to design and manage color for digital printing — then produced comps and final wine labels on a Xerox Phaser™ 7750, printing on one of several heavy Xerox stocks, and posters based upon their product photos, on

a Xerox DocuColor™ 250. Their completed packages, including digitally printed labels affixed to bottles, were photographed for a 234-page, personalized book showcasing the class' work and featuring each student's project on the cover and spine. The books were produced on a Xerox iGen3® 110 Digital Production Press, by Xerox Premier Partner ColorCentric Corp., Rochester, New York.

"The work looked like they spent months on it, not hours," Brown said, adding that digital printing is a vital design component. "We like them to leave with a portfolio-quality design. And to sum up their experience in a personalized book is a powerful reminder of what this technology can do."

*This page from the personalized, digitally printed 2006 ADIM Conference book shows the top design produced in the ADIM class according to a vote by class participants.*

*The designer, Dean Markadakis of Fast Company, won a Xerox Phaser 8550/DP color printer.*



## Putting Some 'Wow' into 'HOW'

Designing a poster commemorating the largest gathering of designers, illustrators and art directors in North America is an honor for any designer.

That was one of the prizes of the recently concluded 2006 HOW commemorative poster project sponsored by Adobe and Xerox at the HOW Design Conference in Las Vegas, June 12 to 15. Nine winning designs were selected from among more than 135 entries, printed in 14.33- by-20.5-inch poster format on a Xerox iGen3 press by ColorCentric and distributed among the 4,000 creative professionals attending the show.

The winning designers received 10 copies of their poster, a copy of Adobe Design Bundle and valuable exposure to their peers in the design community. The posters also bore testimony to the high quality of digital color printing, with a life that extended beyond the show to office walls in many agencies.

"The poster images printed very crisp and accurate," said Rozina Vavetsi, assistant professor at New York Institute of Technology, and a contest winner with an image resembling a woman's silhouette as a blossoming tree. "I'm thrilled to win. Such competitions offer exposure, and are a great way to inspire designers and students to create and submit works of their own."

## Have a Hot Mug-o-Mutt

Jeffrey Moores has been a professional illustrator since 1983, his work appearing in such leading publications as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Newsweek*. Each year, he typically applies 10 to 15 percent of his income to marketing, buying space in print and Web directories and running direct mail campaigns.

"The illustration business has changed a lot in the last six to seven years," Moores said. "Now, anyone

can get Adobe PhotoShop and whip off a quick image. Work is not as plentiful, and it's more competitive. The usual promotions haven't been working the way they used to."

That's why his interest was piqued when friend and former classmate at the Rochester Institute of Technology, Mike Riebesehl, Xerox iGen3 project manager, told him about what direct marketers were doing with the iGen3 press.

So Moores created his own full-color, self-mailing, personalized calendar for printing on the iGen3 digital press. His art, recently created characters from



The nine winning designs in the 2006 HOW commemorative poster project were produced in a single variable run on a Xerox iGen3 press by incorporating the art into a template with the conference name and sponsors along its lower edge. This version incorporates the art from all nine posters.

his "hip-drip critters" collection for novelty coffee mugs and t-shirts, complemented his offer: a free coffee mug. He used simple personalization: the greeting, "Hi Bob, looks like you need a hot cup of mug-o-mutt," in a font he created from his own handwriting and cover images that varied between men and women. "There are a lot of female art directors, and I thought they might relate more to a woman in the cartoon," he said.

The results were his best ever — 70 responses from 1,200 pieces mailed, seven times what his recent direct mail has done. He expects nearly one third of his 2006 work will come from the digitally-produced mailing, compared to about 10 percent from direct mail most years. And the two-dozen or so resulting customers include *Time Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes Magazine*, where he rekindled a relationship that had gone cold for a decade. Five months after the mailing, people still referenced the calendar when contacting him.

Moores is especially impressed because the results were generated in such a competitive environment. "That's why this promotion was so valuable," he said.

His experience echoes that of many who design for digital color printing today. So often, applying new digital printing technology to a design challenge delivers not only creative inspiration, but exceptional business value, as well. ■

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Personalization helped illustrator Jeff Moores' self-mailing calendar deliver a greater response than any direct mail piece in his 20-plus year career. Variables included different art for male and female recipients and a personalized greeting.