



LOGOLOUNGE.COM THE 2006 REPORT BY BILL GARDNER

You simply can't organize 37,000 logos — the approximate number now on the LogoLounge.com website — and not notice commonalities. Categories. Directions. Insights.

And this year is no exception: There are trends, for better or for worse. We'd prefer for you to be the judge. But what this year's report also delivers is perspective. With the benefit of past years' reports already laid out, it is not necessary to view trends as isolated moments in time. Instead, they can be viewed as organic, growing, morphing and transforming. One trend links to another, and then another. From year to year, there is branching from existing starts as well as shoots that emerge fresh from the ground up. It's all very informative to observe.

Through the LogoLounge reports, you can look forward and backward, too. (Go to www.logolounge.com and look under "Trends" to see all of LogoLounge's past reports.)

Through the website, you can search an enormous database by keyword, designer's name, client name, industry, client category, type of logo and dates to find a few trends of your own, as viewed from your own, personal perspective. And through the LogoLounge books, you can gain even more insights from a collection of 2,000 of the smartest logo designs from the past year, submitted to LogoLounge from all over the world and hand-selected by a team of extremely well-respected identity experts. Books I and II are out now, and Book III will be released in Fall of 2006 by Rockport Publishers.

The goal of LogoLounge is not simply to amass the world's biggest pile of logos (although it is likely that already). Its goal is to offer context with the content, so that you can make sense of it all and perhaps have a better idea of where you would like to go next. The 2006 trends follow.

BLANKETS



clockwise from top left: Aquacon, Chimera Design; Crabtree Lane Studio, SD Graphic Design; Chequered Flag Limited, Gabi Toth; Radiocom, Brandient

Whether laid out flat, rippling in the air or tightly clad to some other shape, many recent logos have been developed with all the qualities of a draped textile. These marks have a sense of place often defined by perspective, as they appear to fade to the back. Blankets generally avoid the head-on geometric solution, but allow their regimented qualities to be pushed about by the laws of gravity or shrink-wrapped to a surface. This connection to the logo's environment helps play out symbology in a clear but subtle fashion.

The Aquacon logo gives every sense of the water's surface without relying on waves, ripples or other trite visuals. These feel like an evolutionary step forward from Microsoft Windows' logo waving in the breeze or Bank of America's geometric landscape fashioned out by a symbolic flag.

BLENDERS



clockwise from top left: Galp Energia, Brandia; BP 75 Years, Shift Design; Ola, Brandia; Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Cato Purnell Partners.

Intense with motion and light, these logos give the appearance of a form being swallowed by a black hole. Shapes seem to bend and warp, as if trying to defy the physics of light. The dervish nature of these marks embody an energy quickly recognized and associated with the product or the organization.

These could be an outgrowth of a trend spotted three years ago — Natural Spirals — but

those forms had a much more leisurely appearance. These logos seem to be powered up with a nearly- alien type of drive. It is a trend associated with any number of consumables, from over-the-counter medications and vitamins to highly-caffeinated energy drinks. Who knew the Tide logo would come back to us with such a vengeance?

BUTTONS



clockwise from top left: Beeline, Wolff Olins; Dell, DDB; AOL Web Properties, America Online Design; Level 36, Judson Design Associates

Fully dimensional buttons with radius tops, highlights, shadows, embossing and the occasional polymer dome seem to be everywhere. I can only imagine consumers with obsessive-compulsive disorders straining to avoid pressing each and every one of these. There's something about a nicely crafted button that feels right to a consumer.

It could be that the message is one of empowerment: Typically, a button is pressed to bring about a useful consequence. Press the Dell button and a computer comes to life. Press the Beeline Cellular button and instantly connect to others. No surprise that these logos are generally associated with electronics and communications.

DOT FUZZ



clockwise from top left: Dub Rogers Photography, Strategy Studio; AJ Mobilitá Srl, Studio GT&P; Tennis Victoria, Chimera Design; Tabcorp, Chimera Design

Vision, motion and energy seem to be conveyed with this updated approach to the age-old screen of benday dots. No one's trying to hide the screen pattern here. It becomes a part of the character of the mark, but generally as a subtle edge treatment to an sometimes uninspired graphic.

Interpreting the idea of motion with this technique has a different set of variables than

the continuous tone Blur trend from last year's report. Dot Fuzz logos have a better chance of accurate reproduction, and their gritty nature may capture a double-take or two from the consumer. Studio GT&P of Italy used the effect in an inspired application for AJ Mobilitá Srl, a transport company. Even at close range, their seagull logo gives the viewer a sense of looking at a bird in the distant haze as it travels across the sky.

ORBS



clockwise from top left: .Mac, Apple Design; Sporting Clube de Portugal, Brandia; Lusomundo Premium, Brandia; Sony Ericsson, Takuya Kawagoi

If there's inexplicable magic to be sold, there's a good chance the idea is being conveyed in a jewel-like, mysterious crystal orb. These logos may not advance any technical knowledge, but they have the intrinsic value of a bag of ancient marbles cast from precious stones.

Stare into the orb, and you'll see shrouded layers, orbiting stars, swirling liquids and other worlds packaged in a size we could drop in our pocket. These logos convey a message to consumers that there is a complex universe behind the product, but it is neatly captured and contained in a simple sphere they can easily interface with. Every effort at photographic realism is critical to maintaining the illusion.

DRY BRUSH



clockwise from top left: Osaka Sushi, M3 Advertising Design; Precept Brands, Kendall Ross; Sarah's Inn, Cheri Gearhart Graphic Design; Fire + Ice, Polemic Design

Our attempts to avoid slickness and to stay on a human scale are played out with a combination of simple brush strokes and occasionally an economical cut-out of a geometric shape. It's a combination of a little chaos and a little control that suggests

balance. It's a challenge to be both graphic and mortal at the same time, but this method seems to do just that.

Osaka Sushi's logo could easily have been a fish crafted in another method. But the integration of a Kanji-like stroke plays out the cultural origin and gives the impression of handmade freshness. The gossamer tail of the fish gives an impression that the fish is still in motion.

EMBELLISH



clockwise from top left: Buffalo Saints, Howerton+White Interactive; Gridlock Paintball Team, The Flores Shop; The Darling Room, Hammerpress; REB Textiles, Gardner Design

A marriage of grit and finesse is responsible for the visual success of these marks. These are typically a dichotomy of fine details and dingbats knocked out of and assembled with a degenerated background element. Rich with rhythm and emotion, these logos are often, though not exclusively, associated with the arts.

The human process of collecting and meticulously crafting the various components is not lost on the consumer. This genre speaks well to a younger generation and the skateboard culture. Most important, though, is the influence of the artist, Ryan McGinness, who has created a hybrid of graphic design and fine art with his installations.

OVERLAYS



clockwise from top left: 2006 Winter Olympic Games, Iconologic; TAP Portugal, Brandia; Davidson Oil, Tanagram Partners; UCS Romania, Grapefruit

Another branch of the transparency trend makes strong use of multiple flat layers. Clarity

of color is a necessity to avoid transitions that are desaturated and lifeless. These flat layers replicate the additive-color effect of multiple light gel strata. All of these logos rely on the illusion of an inner light which seems to make us smile.

One of the driving factors behind the transparency trend is pure technology. Adobe Illustrator has made the additive color process a click away through layers with or without gradation. That means the effects can be controlled in a vector environment which is more conducive to experimentation than Photoshop.

The designers at Iconologic may have been responsible for creating the greatest audience for this look with their groundbreaking graphic solutions for the sport icons and venue graphics at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino. Their system relied on flat transparency, and the beautifully drawn sport pictograms were just as stunning in one color as in four.

SPLAT

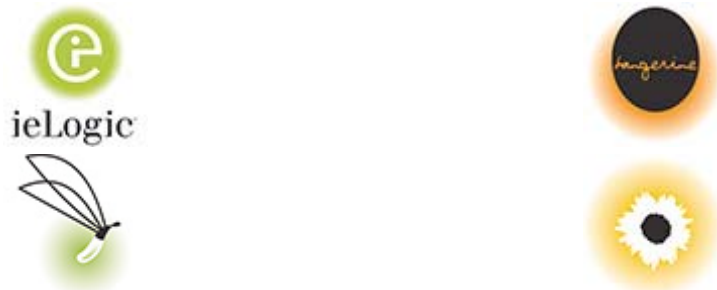


clockwise from top left: 2006 FIFA Worldcup, Hesse Design; World Uncorked, Edward Allen; Q ink, KOESTER Design; Parque Tem-tico da Madeira, Shift Design

From Rorschach tests to blood splatters, these logos express a certain chaotic energy. Sometimes it takes a second look to realize that a critical part of the logo is a splatter. At other times, it takes a second look to see that there is much more than an uncontrolled raw splash of color.

One of the most amazing sets of logos I've seen in years is the splotch pictograms of soccer players created by Hesse Design of Germany for consideration for the 2006 FIFA World Cup. What at first appears as little more than a bug on a windshield suddenly comes to life as a player frantically driving for a goal, with a ball exploding forward with equal force. What amazes me about this series are the subtleties you see in each when you squint your eyes.

GLOW



clockwise from top left: ieLogic, Sockeye Creative; Fairmont Hotels, Kaimere; Firefly, Felixsockwell.com; Tournesol Siteworks, Carol Gravelle Graphic Design

This subtle vignette that serves as the ground for a logos may be the cousin to the traditional gray shadows of the past, but more often they suggest an internal glow. This technique has been turning otherwise unremarkable logos into something special with a certain softness.

Technically, the subtle gradation of color for a background field bucks traditional production rules for a logo. But these are rules that have been cast to the side with advanced technology and production methods. The vignette also might lock the application into a white-only background, but considering the effect, it's well worth it.

TRANSPARENT 3D



clockwise from top left: Europharm, Brandient; Oceania, Strange Ideas; MVP Architecture, Gardner Design; SDNM Origin·rio, Shift Design

If any one technique has had a dramatic impact on logo design over the last few years, it has been the adoption of transparency for identities. Though this technique was forecast in our 2003 report, there was no calculating just how impactful it would be. Some logos in this year's field are identified for other trends, but they could pull double duty and fall into this category, as well. With this report we find ourselves dissecting a previous trend to trace its course.

These logos are fabricated from transparent layers that also take on form or gradation and highlights. Their luminous quality of light is engaging. Soon we could anticipate seeing transparent, yet tactile and textured surfaces.

Transparency has become a buzzword within the corporate world as more industries see the need to open their books and their practices to the public. Using actual visual transparency in a logo is a common metaphor.

FILIGREE



clockwise from top left: RelianzBank, Gardner Design Minneapolis, UNO; Bank West, Cato Purnell Partners; Adidas, Sockeye Creative

There was a time that filigree only lived on currency, stock certificates and cigar bands. That was then; this is now. The intricate, interlocking weave of the Spirograph-like form sends a certain message of quality, prestige and security. Its engraved appearance adds a sense of heritage to its application.

Whether in a close-up detail or a complete wreath, this technique creates an authoritative, impervious force field around the logo. It doesn't rely on mass: Instead, it uses an airy finesse that allows it to lock to a surface and gives the mark a sense of place. Last year's report discussed The Bank of New York logo, developed by Lippincott Mercer, which conveys a similar sense of beauty and security.

POST APOCALYPTIC



clockwise from top left: BT, Wolff Olins and Rufus Leonard; Bank Direct, Cato Purnell Partners; INAS-FID, Brandia; AT&T, Interbrand

It's the invisible sphere. The traditional globe has been vaporized, and all that is left behind is the atmosphere. I wish I had said these words or named this trend, but all credit goes to the incomparable designer, Miles Newlyn.

If you are global, the globe is not the message: It's what you bring to the globe. AT&T doesn't bring us a sphere. It brings us the connectivity to transcend geographic constraints. The same can be said of Wolff Olins solution for BT. Watching the animation of this logo you get a sense of the world's continents and the symbolic coverage of communication. Both of these solutions take advantage of transparency to intensify the effect.

VIVID



clockwise from top left: Villa Schneider, Gabi Toth; Wines of Chile, FutureBrand; BenQ, Cato Purnell Partners; The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Duffy & Partners

After a glance at this year's trends, a secondary trend stands out: color. This is not just color, but unabashed color. Not in all sectors, but in many, the desaturated or one- and two-color palettes of the past have been pitched to the heap. Hues are more vivid, and many logos are represented by the full spectrum.

Events, destinations and celebration lead this group, but bold application of color is showing up in more traditional fields like communications and banking, for example. Technological barriers that used to limit logo color for pure economic reasons have become less of a concern. Companies have a greater presence on the internet and TV, both of which have light-driven, luminous RGB environments at their disposal. We've simply become more accustomed to saturated color.

SCRIBBLES



clockwise from top left: Conquest Recordings, AKOFA Creative; Double Dutch, Planet Propaganda; Revolve Motion, Edward Allen; Brainfloss, MINE

This is a throw-back to our childhood, when we didn't have to stay inside the lines. We

could create bedlam with any color crayon we damn well pleased. These marks have a frantic nature about them that appeals to a younger generation, but note that the logos are generally brought back under our thumb with the addition of a formal element, often typographic.

Here, again, we come back to the theme of controlled chaos. It's an opportunity for companies to show they have the ability to create an orderly freedom, a chance to escape the constraints of an organizational planet, but not leave the gravitational field.