

THE ADDED EDGE

PR

In the competitive world of design, a good PR program can catapult you to the front.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

By Todd Alan Hays

Hits, placement, multiple releases ... these all sound like jargon that might describe the action in a new sporting event. In a roundabout way they are. These terms are used every day in the fast-paced and highly competitive arena of public relations—a worldwide contest for media coverage that is expanding into all areas of corporate America as owners and managers alike recognize the need for an added edge over their competition.

The development of a public relations strategy, aimed at the

media rather than directly at clients, is one course of action many design firms have already discovered that can help expose them to new clients during these times of increased competition and ever-tightening budgets. In the words of PR consultant Lori Rosen: "Smart companies realize the media is the edge ... that third-party endorsement really helps." Rosen recently worked with the New York office of the Michael Peters Group to develop a media plan for its new publication, *Brand News*. This glossy, four-color magazine has been created solely as a marketing tool for the firm. MPG and firms

like Pentagram and April Greiman, Inc. have developed and refined well-oiled public relations programs that have helped catapult them to the forefront of the graphic design industry.

With many larger firms having already discovered the advantages and value that public relations programs can offer, it's time for smaller firms to look into developing similar programs. With an active PR campaign, any firm can gain the added exposure its larger national or international counterparts are cultivating.

There are many ways to ap-

proach the implementation of a public relations program—retaining an outside consultant, creating a staff position to include communications duties or taking it on yourself. While the first two would be ideal approaches, the intra-office PR team, too, can be a successful reality.

... And One for All

Whether or not you decide to tackle the public relations program with outside assistance, you will need to select one person within the office to handle the many PR responsibilities. It's more effective if one person

takes on all the duties—a breakdown in responsibilities here will guarantee a breakdown in communications later, and communication is the name of this game.

With the players in place, the most important aspect of the process must be addressed—the goals you wish to attain with a PR program. Begin by asking yourself: How am I different? Who do I want to reach? Why do I want to reach them? Where can they be reached?

A public relations program can be established to position yourself within a given professional or geographical area, to maintain a position in a given area, or simply to increase awareness within an area. Success with public relations will best be assured by determining what is unique about your firm at the time you establish your goals.

In the case of April Greiman, the initial strategy was developed to establish her as a leading authority on technology in graphic design. This position was a natural for Greiman, who already had developed a process of working, coined “hybrid im-

This takes into account any editorial agenda a publication may have, but perhaps even more so the issue of the day. In Greiman's case, her foresight and willingness to embrace technology preceded what is now an international whirlwind of growth in the area of desktop publishing. The agenda Greiman chose became hot. Now she had an established authority through this early exploration into computers that would make it possible to look into additional directions for exposure. The timing was right to establish and build a reputation on not just Greiman's cutting-edge work, but specifically her cutting-edge computer work.

The Media List

The next step is how to reach the target audience. This can be accomplished by developing a media list, which should consist of trade, consumer and business publications as well as local press and media contacts. While mention by these media may be a bit far-fetched, don't forget radio and television. Let your media contact decide what may be news. They can't say yes if



As part of its promotional celebration, Strathmore is pleased to present this series of interviews with the outstanding artists whose contributions help shape the business of design. Through the diversity of their insight and experience, we hope to provide a better understanding of the complexities encountered in this most exciting field of endeavor.

Consider April Greiman. Working to define an emerging art form in Los Angeles, Greiman engaged as a guest of the "New Wave" design movement in the late sixties. Her work hung in the landmark houses, as well as the Museum of Modern Art. Now, with the late Los Angeles common to exhibit her work from business and clients. Greiman has well-earned the title of a leading authority on technology in graphic design. Greiman's work is a blend of corporate identity, branding and architectural graphics. Her work, located in what you see in this series, is a historical record of her work. We speak to her here.

APRIL GREIMAN

Interview: You've made the jump from painter to designer. "New Wave" movement in the late sixties. How did you get into design?
Greiman: I was lucky enough to get pushed into a room with video and computer equipment. I was at Cal Arts. I was, of that time, head of the Visual Communications Program and I was a little bit trained with what I call "a lack of ideas in the industry and well-rounded printing." You can communicate with the job in your medium long before you see it. "Ahh, a new breed!" And I really wanted to be that many things. I was using lots of tools and the computer. I was really intrigued initially by the nature of rules and was doing if I could incorporate this into what I was doing. Perceptually, I was trying to make a three-dimensional experience in two dimensions and incorporate time and space. Well, then who else was out there really to show me and what? And so I began exploring video on one the workbooks and in the evening. And then I taught video systems. There (then) I found out when white balance never. Luckily I didn't find out

"Designing is a very organic process."

"You use your whole body, not just your hands or your head."

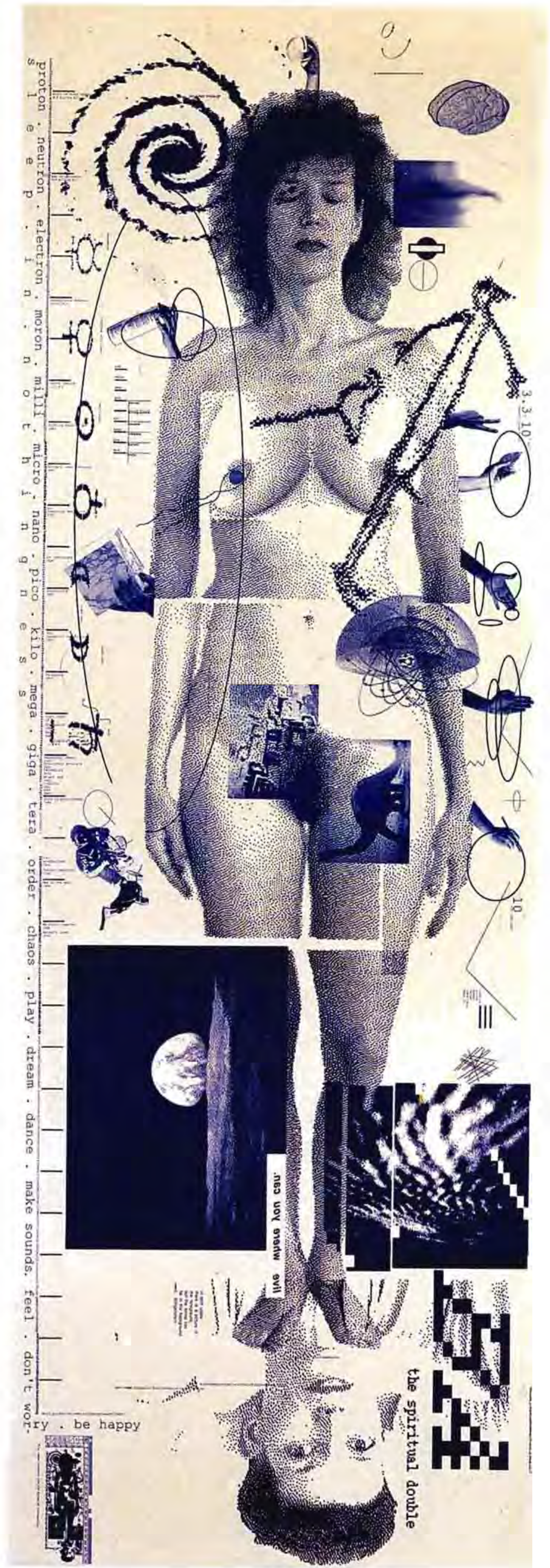
The whole idea is one system."

Strathmore

about it until it was over you see and I had already broken the rules. **Interview:** You were taking video to print?
Greiman: I was trying to replace photography with videography. I was not at all on the monitor and show off the monitor and manipulate it to alter color. And then I could still support it in a traditional method. We did a few projects like that. Shortly after that I then got involved with computer graphics. I started running the video signal through the computer and then altering that and photographing off of another monitor. This was really one of my own concepts. I get like that I just have to do it. Design or die, right?
Interview: Your style seems to combine a process of bringing things together.
Greiman: It has to do with hybrid nature. The whole point of hybrid nature is that computer technology is a wonderfully profound tool for collapsing all kinds of seemingly disparate kinds of disciplines, including traditional ones, into one language—one digital language.

Strathmore recently paid tribute to Greiman in this ad.

This poster (right), created for Design Quarterly in 1986, was a frequent insert in early Greiman press kits because its innovative computer techniques helped to establish her as a pioneer in computer graphics.



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AIGA/LA BRINGS KIT HINRICHS AND PENTAGRAM TO LOS ANGELES

The Los Angeles chapter of The American Institute of Graphic Arts will be hosting an upcoming lecture featuring Kit Hinrichs at the Pacific Design Center, October 23, 1989 at 6:30pm.

L.A. born and raised, San Francisco's Kit Hinrichs returns to his hometown to talk about graphic design, his Pentagram partners and the creative process. Hinrichs is a well-known author, lecturer and recipient of numerous design honors and heads up the west coast office of international design firm Pentagram.

In addition to his presentation on the American perception of international design Hinrichs will touch upon many of his worldwide projects through a series of "Case Studies" selected from a client list ranging from Lucas Films, US West, Potlatch, Warner Communications, The Nature Company and the Smithsonian Institution to his alma mater, Art Center College of Design.

Additionally, the evening will be highlighted by a reception taking place prior to the Kit Hinrichs lecture honoring the patrons and sponsors of AIGA/LA.

The lecture takes place at the Pacific Design Center Theatre, at 8pm Monday, October 23, with the reception preceding the event at 6:30. For reservations and information please call AIGA/LA at 213 653 1724.

Press releases need to be produced in a reader-friendly typeface and are always double-spaced for added readability.

AIGA

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PRESS RELEASE

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19 February 1990

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AIGA/LA CELEBRATES A 75TH BIRTHDAY WITH STYLE AND TASTE

The Los Angeles chapter of The American Institute of Graphic Arts will be joining their national parent organization with a local birthday party and celebration—a celebration of the past and the future.

For three quarters of a century the American Institute of Graphic Arts has represented the best traditions of graphic design, and on the 75th day of its 75th year there will be a local party and celebration thrown by the Los Angeles chapter—Friday, March 16, 1990. Starting off the event at 6:30, being held at the Helms Bakery Building in Culver City, will be the unveiling of the official cake. The cake will be the baked version of the winning entry chosen from those submitted to the AIGA/LA Celebrity Cake Contest being held earlier in March.

Following the cake cutting will be a series of events and studio tours at the Helms Building, including the viewing of all the cakes submitted by artists and designers for the cake contest. In addition, there will be the official announcement of a graphic design competition for students. The subject is the future—saving the environment. The winning entry will be produced in the form of a t-shirt. Over \$2,000 in scholarships will be awarded.

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In addition to a press release, include the following in your press kit: a cover letter, background information on your firm, profiles of your firm's principals, photocopies of previous press coverage, a business card and (if available) a company brochure.

the release even if it's already printed on your letterhead. And don't discount the importance of the letterhead. "I love designers' stationery," says Robinson. "It's always more visually interesting than PR agency letterhead."

Visual interest is one of the greatest inherent advantages designers have over most other industries. Good visuals can play a key role in the success of a story. Never underestimate the visual value of a project or story. This can be a make-or-break issue. Once a promotable project has been selected, keep plenty of visuals on that project at the office for use in your press kit. Many writers, editors and art directors work under very tight deadlines and may ask that you get something to them overnight. This holds true for company resumes, bios, photos of principals and reprints of past coverage the firm has received, so keep plenty on hand.

The Pitch

Now that the goals have been established, the media list developed, and the press releases written and sent out, it's time to follow up and pitch a story idea. This is where the term public relations takes on its importance. PR is a relationship business, and while a consultant is not required, it can be a tremendous advantage to attaining exposure within the media. In describing the relationship Pentagram has with its consultant, Miller says: "He works as an adviser.

We both do the legwork, but he does more of the work outside of the design world. Working with an outside consultant really helps. It gives us a perspective. It helps us to gain insight into the business press—press we do not have as much experience with."

Experience and insight will help you determine just how an editor decides which stories are a "go." Following up a press release can be the best way to pitch a story to an editor. Be sure that when you call the editor you're clear that the story is appropriate for the publication (and get the editor's name right, by all means). Try to determine if it has ever run a story like yours before. You may also be asked to write a short query, or synopsis of the idea. While it's more work on your part, it's also a good sign, Miller says. "If it gets that far, 90% of the time it will work into a story."

In Greiman's case, stories have been pitched to specific publications within the high-tech industry, including *MacWEEK*, *Publish!*, *The Jaffe Report*, *MacWorld* and more; all these met with favorable responses and ended in a story. In some cases, the firm was also given the unusual opportunity to collaborate in the design and layout of the spread. While being offered design control is some-



Clippings from previous articles established Greiman as an authority on computer graphics, and paved the way for this piece that appeared in an early '89 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*.

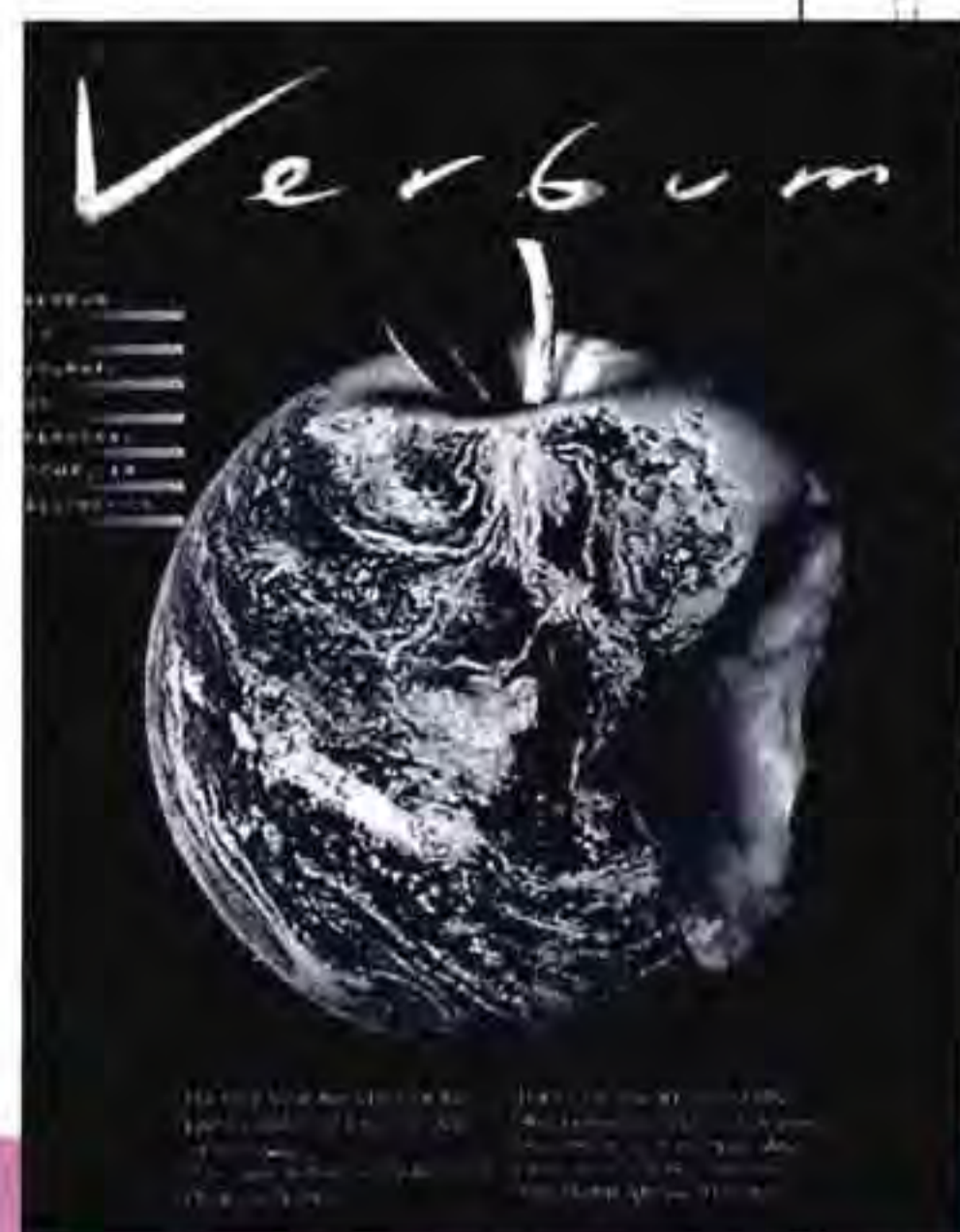
thing *highly* unusual in the publishing industry, an offer like this, if used properly, can be worth thousands of dollars in free advertising.

Another option for getting your story told could be to approach a writer directly. It may take time to cultivate a relationship with a reporter before it results in anything, but it can pay off with more than just an initial story. First, identify the right reporter for your issue or story. To do this, consider the publications you are interested in, and identify which reporter writes on what subjects—usually they specialize in subjects for which they hold an affinity or have been hired to cover exclusively.

There are a number of additional avenues to be explored when talking about publicity. Don't overlook speaking before trade organizations or taking on a job that may not be of great financial reward, but could be PR-driven—that is, one that can provide your firm with additional promotional opportunities. Remember, publicity equates with exposure, and exposure comes in many different forms.

For Greiman, the ongoing quest for exposure includes maintaining an active speaking schedule within the high-tech industry through numerous appearances at key industry conferences worldwide, including those sponsored by computer giant Apple. This continuous visibility helps Greiman maintain her standing as an authority on technology within her profession, while keeping her in front of an audience that until recent years did not take much notice of the graphic design industry. □

Todd Hays is a Pasadena, Calif.-based public relations consultant who has worked with clients ranging from actor Lorne Greene to the University of Southern California. Currently he is working with April Greiman and the AIGA.



Verbum, a magazine dedicated to computer-generated art, was an obvious choice for showcasing Greiman's work.

The Pacific Wave poster and sculpture are other key pieces often included in Greiman's press kits to computer publications. The sculpture was created on the Macintosh and printouts of the design were faxed to an Italian fabricator who then erected the final sculpture in Venice.



Greiman's design for *Workspirit* often accompanies press releases because it establishes her firm as one with international clientele.



PHOTO: PAOLO LUTMERGHER

