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JEAN-MARIE DRU

AN ADMAN'S VIEW OF THE WORLD

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JET LAG:
AN ADMAN'S VIEW OF THE WORLD

By Jean-Marie Dru

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JET LAG

An Adman's View of the World

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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JEAN-MARIE DRU

JET LAG

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To Eve

To Samuel

Contents

Introduction

When I fly, I always book a window seat. I never tire of seeing Mother Earth and her landscapes from high above. The ten thousand isles of the Bay of Hong Kong; Mount McKinley rising above the plains of Alaska, the bright green banks of the Nile wending their way through the arid desert; the steep, rutgged uplands of Afghanistan, then Pakistan; all these images will remain forever engraved in my mind. If you want to contemplate the Grand Canyon on a flight from Paris to LA, book a window seat on the left side of the plane.

For more than ten years, my office was in New York. My family lived in Paris. Our biggest agency was in LA. Our biggest client in Tokyo. I spent some of the long hours flying from one continent to the next drafting a few notes on what it is I do and what it is I have done. These intercontinental flights have given me plenty of time to capture my thoughts. This book brings them together. It combines personal souvenirs and anecdotes, reflections and propositions. About advertising, the business world, and the times we live in.

My trade has been like a look-out post, giving me a privileged view of the trends that have marked my time, from the furious growth of globalization to the underground movements of rising generations, the emergence of awareness among businesses of their civic responsibilities, the dreadful handicaps that the world of finance imposes on us, the widely heralded though questionable decline of brands, the shortcomings of marketing, the rise of a new intangible economy, the impact of design on everyday life, the renewed power of word of mouth, the digital-wave practices and products…. Advertising gives us a magnifying glass to observe close-up what influences the life of business, and even sometimes life itself.

I have given this book the form of an alphabet. There is no logical progression from one chapter to the next. It can be read from back to front. The table of contents lets you decide where you want to start, to follow your own path, create your own connections. This format means beginning with our best-known client, Apple, and ending with the campaign that won more awards than any other in the history of advertising, our campaign to save a Zimbabwean newspaper.

Each chapter moves from the specific to the general. I give opinions, but they are always grounded in the particular truth of a product, a brand, a company, a cause, or even a person. I use personal experience to draw general conclusions.

A non-imposed progression from one chapter to another does not preclude a common thread. This book reflects what has been "my life's work" for forty years: encouraging those I meet to always put the most imagination into whatever they undertake.

Apple

"Steve Jobs's passion was to prove everyone wrong," said Lee Clow one evening in January 2012.

Lee Clow is the creative soul of our company. The founder of Apple had just been posthumously inducted into the Advertising Hall of Fame, which was the very least our industry could do. Thanks to Steve, the Apple campaigns conceived by Lee and his teams outdid themselves, campaign after campaign. Remember those black silhouettes dancing against fluorescent backgrounds on iPod posters? The ads that showed us the magical apps for iPads? And that hilarious series of films for Mac versus PC?

Lee had been asked to make the induction speech. I remember well some of the things he said that night. He told us that Steve's vision from as early as the 1980s was that technology was going to change everyone's life, but that this vision was not about business, not about companies, but about people. He wanted to prove that once and for all. Then, emotionally, Lee went on to ask what the world would be like today

if Apple hadn't existed. "If Steve wasn't that intense, passionate, uncompromising, maddening perfectionist that he was, do you realize there wouldn't be an Apple, there wouldn't be a Pixar, there wouldn't be a Mac?" He went on: "Steve's intensity just enveloped people and made them want to help accomplish what he wanted to accomplish."

Everything there is to say about Steve Jobs has been said. Every commentator has underlined the fact that he brought about a revolution in five different industries, four of which had nothing to do with his former experience. Nothing surprises people about Apple anymore. In 2011, it became the biggest company in the world by stock market valuation. People now think all this seems so normal. So expected. Except that when Steve Jobs came back to Apple in 1997, almost every stock market analyst was yelling, "Sell!"

Steve Jobs will go down in history as one of the great geniuses of recent times. He was unbelievably inventive. If any other company had just achieved one-tenth of what Apple did, this would have been seen as a breakthrough. But Steve Jobs will be missed for another reason. He offered a beacon of hope in the gray and menacing world that my generation is bequeathing to the next. Steve Jobs showed that a man of no means, starting from nowhere, can make the wildest dreams come true, if only he believes enough. Over and above the fun of surfing with an iPad or downloading music on iTunes, everyone felt something like a ray of hope. That is why Steve Jobs was so adulated.

Steve Jobs's main talent lay in an unusual capacity to give people what they wanted, before they knew they wanted it: a playful computer, a magic phone, a sorcerer's pad. Twenty years ago, our agency in California published a book called *Inventing Desire*. That is what Steve Jobs did. He invented tomorrow's desires. He was the first to sense how a multitude of inventions, often first conceived outside Apple, could be combined into becoming an iPod, an iPad, or an iPhone. He was able to do this because he was incredibly focused. "Innovation has nothing to do with how many R&D dollars you have," he said one day. "When Apple came out with the Mac, IBM was spending at least a hundred times more on R&D. It's not about money. It's about the people you have, how you're led, and how much you get it." Then he added, "People think focus means saying yes to the thing you've got to focus on. But that's not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully. I'm actually as proud of the things we haven't done as the things I have done. Innovation is saying no to a thousand things."

Over and above the incredible year-in, year-out successes, Steve Jobs left his mark on more than just the businesses he transformed. He brought beauty to a field where beauty was scarcely expected. He turned computers into objects of desire, making design matter. Remember the eighties, when computer science was gray, ponderous, stressful. Then Steve Jobs came onto the scene. He turned computers into giant brightly colored objects or long silver candy bars. He brightened people's offices with compact

Brancusi-like sculptures. He made machines friendly and beautiful.

Jonathan Ive is head of design at Apple, the man Steve Jobs found when he returned to the company in 1997 and to whom he said he owed half of his success. Barely twenty designers work under Ive. That's a tiny number compared with the hundreds of designers working in rival firms. Where does Apple find its unbelievable creative energy? In talented computer engineers and designers, of course. But also in the precision of the demands Steve Jobs and Jonathan Ive made of their teams, and in the briefs they gave them.

Two factors, I suggest, were crucial to these briefs: they insisted on not only the best but also the most intuitive solution to every problem. The first of these criteria goes without saying, but it does mean that working for Apple was like entering a holy order. The second is because for Apple the functions of a state-of-the-art technological product must be easy to grasp. Consumers unsure how something works must be able to find the answer instinctively.

Finding solutions that will be intuitive for others requires a colossal amount of work. Remember the first iPod dial: within minutes, everyone was comfortable with a totally new concept. The company had researched and tested a large number of different systems before settling on a solution so easy that no users' manual was needed. We all know there are no users' manuals in iPhone boxes, either. No other manufacturer has been brave enough to do that.

The Seven Golden Rules of Design

Apple design is peerless. It is exemplary because it obeys the following principles that I would call the "Seven Golden Rules of Design."

You cannot achieve great design if you are just satisfied with minor improvements to existing designs. When the iPod was launched, nothing like it had ever been seen before. It was based on nothing that had been previously produced.

You cannot achieve great design unless design is central to your company. All too often, design is a minor plus, low on the value scale. It serves to cover up for a lack of imagination. The requirement for good design must be visceral.

You cannot achieve great design unless everything within the company, every aspect of it, is integrated. And no company is as integrated as Apple. It is the only firm in the sector to control both hard- and software, the only one where software developers and designers work closely together. At Apple, ideas travel: transversality is exemplary.

You cannot achieve great design unless the production process and design are interdependent. Apple products are not just innovative in the functions they offer, they are also innovative in the way they are made. Apple engineers routinely invent new tools, new materials, and new production processes. Competitors will be slower

to copy a product that requires them to manufacture in a different way. Innovative production systems are also a means of keeping the competition at bay.

You cannot achieve great design without an obsessive concern for detail. Look at the finish on an Apple product, and you can see what industrial-scale craftsmanship means. Jonathan Ive once demanded that the blocks of marble destined for the first Apple Store in Manhattan be sent to the head office in Cupertino so he could check the veins in them. Apple has ended up functioning like a luxury goods company. The inside that no one ever sees is treated with as much care as the outside. This is Swiss-watch culture, applied to Silicon Valley.

You cannot achieve great design without allowing for mistakes. Or rather, without actually encouraging mistakes. All artists sometimes end up in a dead end. Jonathan Ive once told *Radical Craft* magazine, "One of the hallmarks of the team is this sense of looking to be wrong. It's the inquisitiveness, the sense of exploration. It's about being excited to be wrong, because then you've discovered something new."

Finally, you cannot achieve great design without aiming for major visual impact. Design is like art. People talk about strong design like they talk about great art. Which is to say, design leaves a mark, just as a great work of art does.

There is currently a renaissance in design. Many years ago, companies like Braun and Sony showed the

way. But today few brands exercise as strong an influence over our daily lives as Apple. By giving us beauty where before there was only a kind of "beigeness," the firm has raised our aesthetic expectations.

You can dream of more beauty. You can also demand it. I dream of a world in which every company becomes conscious of the visual impact it creates around itself. I dream that French bank branches will cease bombarding us with their tens of thousands of aggressive Perspex signs, whose neon rays invade our lives at nightfall. I want retailers to bring curves to the bunker-like rectangles of their supermarkets. I want the ugly terraces of Paris cafés to abandon the hideousness they inflict and become inspired by the more contemporary styles of Milan and Budapest bars. I wish town planners would forego populist projects that are polluting the thousand-year-old riverbanks of Europe. I dream that one day our eyes will not have to be confronted with the more than eighty competing signs and panels—I counted them—outside Paris's Gare de Lyon railway station; that modern architects will no longer disfigure our cityscapes. Who could ever honestly defend the atrocious raw green cladding on the new City of Fashion and Design on Paris's Quai d'Austerlitz?

I hope the children in our schools will be taught typography and calligraphy, and that like Steve Jobs, who learned those crafts, they will grow more sensitive to the beauty of material things. Put a plain, sans serif typeface on your storefront, and the value of your business will go up.

Managing Interaction

Working with Apple, I rediscovered that design is not just an aesthetic plus. It lies at the heart of product development. Apple taught us two other important things. They taught us the importance of interaction and—more on this later—the art of reduction.

In 2000, we were told that Apple was thinking of creating its own stores. The aim was to reduce reliance on multibrand retailers who weren't giving Apple the privileged attention it deserved. Apple wanted absolute control over the interaction between Apple customers and Apple. Most especially, Apple wanted to oversee that crucial moment when a customer physically confronts the product, which marketing people call the "first moment of truth."

In the age of the Internet, why would a brand as pristine as Apple want to enter the mundane world of retailing? Surely the right decision would have been to go the Dell route and sell through the Web? Many of us were asking ourselves that question. But one argument made sense to me: in a year's time, Apple was intending to launch a revolutionary new MP3 player (the name iPod was yet to be born). Analysts said it was going to be a hit. They were predicting as much as a 30–40 percent market share, a figure incomparably higher than Apple's plummeting share of the computer market. Once future iPod owners discovered the Apple world, they might think about switching to Mac. But switching from Windows to Mac

is a big move. Years of familiarity go down the drain. Apple needed a place where iPod owners could go and try out a Mac computer. These stores help "switchers," as they're known, to spend several hours getting to familiarize themselves with the product before they decide to purchase it…. Mac computer market share has more than doubled since the iPod was launched.

There are now some 380 much-loved Apple Stores in the world. They embody the way product design and store design complement each other. Contemporary marketing is about interaction. From store to product, from iPod to Mac, from iTunes downloads to iPad subscriptions, Apple is a master at interaction. Physicists have long known that managing the interaction between elements increases those individual elements' energy.

In the advertising field, too, the people at Apple are skilled in the ways of managing interaction. They know how a variety of advertising postures work in combination. Leader, challenger, outsider brands all need to adopt a different advertising language. But what if a brand is a leader, a challenger, and an outsider all at the same time?

Until just recently, Apple was an outsider in the computer field; a leader in MP3 players; and a challenger in the smartphone sector. We honed our different campaigns to suit that reality. The computer campaign, for instance, is clearly an outsider campaign. It's a comparative campaign that rests on two characters, one representing Mac, the other PCs.

As *Adweek* put it, "The Mac guy is a younger Steve Jobs who is casual and comfortable in his skin. PC, as a rounder, paler Bill Gates, is a well-meaning geek with all kinds of operating problems." *Adweek* went on to say, "For Apple, the campaign managed the neat trick of making the brand look laid back and cool while it mercilessly skewered its rival." With sometimes innocent but usually devastating wit, Apple was poking fun at Microsoft.

Comparative campaigns are usually outsider campaigns. But market leaders should avoid entering into comparisons. They need to rise above the fray. This is what iPod posters do. The iPod is the unquestioned leader in its sector. The images it offers are imposing. Bold, brightly colored shapes stare down at us from posters. There is no escaping them. In fact, the Mac campaign and the iPod campaign are just about as different as you can get. And yet, their graphic perfection, their simplicity, their beautiful style both speak Apple.

As for iPhones, they came somewhere in between. They had to challenge Nokia and Sony Ericsson. Whereas emphasizing the technical advantages of the iPod would not have been appropriate, the opposite was the case with the iPhone. Focusing on the product, and most especially on its applications, enabled the iPhone to establish a strong competitive edge. And took it from challenger to market leader.

Choosing the right approach to match every product's position in the market helps build brand magic. The way these different approaches interact

is priceless; it makes the brand ubiquitous. It means you can become the market leader and still stay cool. That's craftsmanship for you.

Art of Reduction

This brings us to the final lesson Apple taught us: the art of reduction. Let me ask you now to make an effort. Erase all those bright iPod posters from your visual memory. They don't exist. They have never existed. We are in the year 2000. Apple is getting ready to launch a new product that possesses many revolutionary new functions. Everyone says it's going to be a gigantic success, if the launch campaign is good enough. There is a well-known rule in our profession, which says to always highlight the product's exclusive features. The iPod has dozens of them. Now imagine that a young art director comes up with a campaign that seems empty, superficial even. The visuals are just black silhouettes dancing against a range of fluorescent backgrounds. They don't even begin to do justice to the product's exceptionally innovative features.

Many of us failed to see the strength of Apple's great iPod campaign: its iconic dimension. We thought it was superficial and meaningless. We failed to grasp the elegance of its plainness, a quality much cherished by designers. James Vincent, the head of Media Arts Lab, our agency in LA that runs the Apple account, speaks of an "art of reduction." He means the ads apply Jonathan Ive's minimalist approach to advertising.

One of the key aspects of minimalism lies in the duality between simplicity and richness: the pureness of form exposes only the bare essentials. Minimalism's quest for instant comprehension means removing any distraction between an object and what it's for. Apple offers a quintessential instance of this approach. Ornament, superfluous patterns, are set aside. In Apple, we have the object as concept. This is the basis of minimalism in art.

Apple has brought the art of reduction into consumers' lives. This is more than welcome. Today's world is crying out for simplicity. The brand's approach to design has a social corollary. At a time when sustainable development is becoming a decisive factor, where simpler lifestyles are preferred to overconsumption, it seems natural that minimalism should become a strong and positive value, both in economic terms and in society as a whole. It may seem surprising that a brand constantly inventing new consumer needs should be at the forefront of a drive to make things simpler. But that is just one of the many paradoxes of Apple.

Back to Steve Jobs. Several times, during new product launches, he has projected a visual of a street sign at an imaginary intersection between a road called "Technology" and another one called "Liberal Arts." He used this as a description of the kind of multidisciplinary and fertile thinking, sensitive to human needs, that lies at the heart of Apple products. When he launched the iPad in 2010, Steve Jobs stood in front of that same crossroads sign, musing on the

secret to Apple's success. "It's in Apple's DNA," he said, "that technology alone is not enough. It's technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields the results that make our hearts sing."