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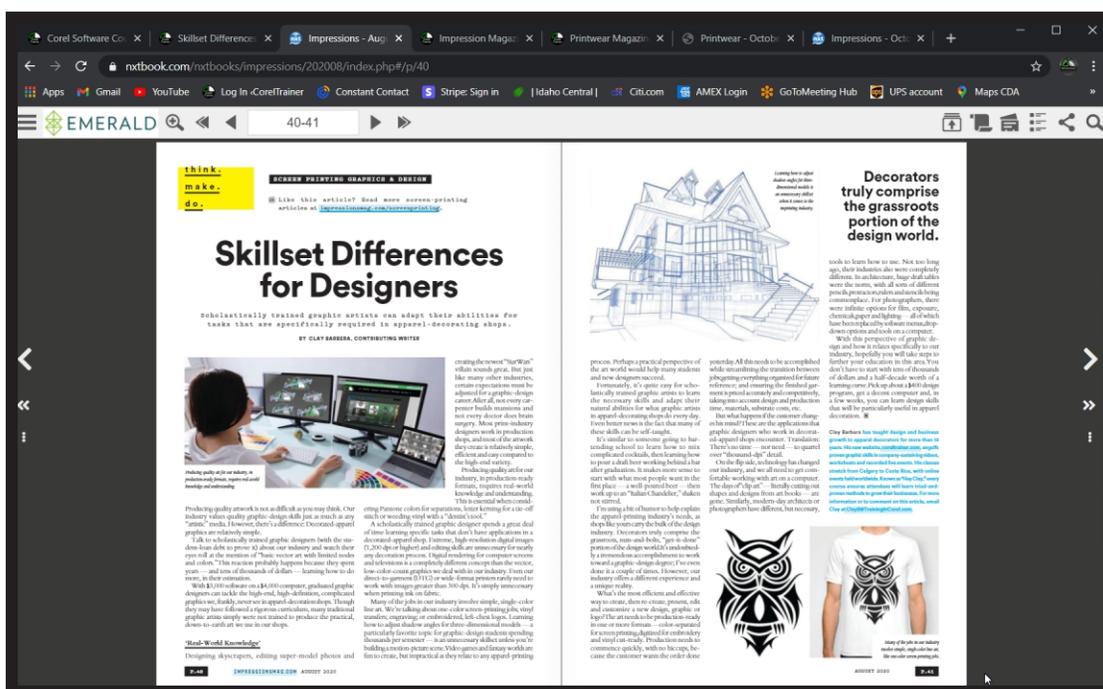
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An Imprint Industry Designer

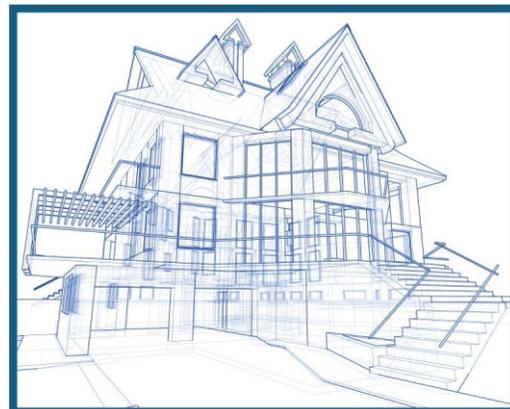
Producing quality artwork is not as difficult as you might think. Our industry values quality graphic and design skills just as highly as any 'artistic' media. The difference is; our graphics are relatively simple in comparison. Speak to a 'classically trained' Graphic Designer (with the student loans to prove it), about our industry. Watch their eyes roll when we bring up "basic vector art with limited nodes and colors". That means they spent years, and tens of thousands of dollars, learning how to do so much more. In a three-thousand-dollar software program, on a four-thousand-dollar computer, a "Graphic Designer" can tackle the high-end, high-def, high-complication graphics we, frankly, never see as Imprinters. Many "Artists" and "Graphic Artists" are either too high-browed to be bothered with our industry's simplicity, or they simply were not trained to produce the practical, down to earth, art we need for real imprinting & production.

Artists are too often sold a dream, much like many college-bound bright-eyed youngsters. "You'll be at the very top of your field." With promises of creating web-art for Apple, new mascots for professional sports teams, & the next billion-dollar-corporation logo. "Your art will be seen world-wide by millions of people". The producers of these 'certifications' push their propaganda. Designing skyscrapers, editing super-model photos, and creating the newest Star Wars villain sounds awesome and sells college-degrees. It's not the youngster's fault, they just need to adjust their expectations for a career in graphic design, just like many other industries. Not every carpenter builds mansions. Not every doctor does brain-surgery. But every builder does build, and every doctor is, well "A Doctor"! Most designers work in production shops like ours. Most of the artwork they create is relatively simple, efficient, and easy, when compared to high-end glamour.

Producing quality art for our industry, in production-ready formats requires more real-world knowledge and understanding than most artists learn in fancy graphic-design school. Talk to an 'Artist' about: "Pantone colors for separations" or "Letter Kerning for a tie-off stitch" or "Weeding vinyl with a dentist' tool" and you'll both have a laugh, but for different reasons.



A classically trained graphic designer spends a great deal of time learning specific tasks that are (sorry to say) irrelevant to an imprint industry production house. Extreme high-resolution digital images & editing skills are unnecessary for nearly any imprint process. Digital rendering for computer screens & televisions is a completely different concept than vector low-color count graphics. Even our direct-to-garment or wide-format printers rarely, if ever, need to work with images over 300 dots per inch. It's simply overkill and unnecessary when printing on fabric, which itself has more depth and variation than the ink being laid on it could ever show. About 90% of the jobs in our industry are single-color simple line art anyway. One color screen-print jobs. Vinyl transfers. Engraving. Front-chest embroidered logos... on color, simple art. Learning how to adjust shadow angles for three-dimensional models, a particularly favorite topic for persons spending thousands per semester, is a completely unnecessary skill-set, unless you're building a motion/moving-pictured scene. Video games & fantasy worlds are fun to create, but impractical as they relate to any imprint process, in more ways than one.



Now, 'Artists' deserve a great deal of our respect. For those who learn, can accomplish, and may even be good at the top 1% of design skills, more power to them! The issue is; why spend a huge amount of time and money on something that might be used one out of a hundred times, or necessary for one out of a hundred careers? By all means, shoot for the stars. But realize that an Uber driver, or even a Truck driver, does not need to spend thousands of dollars, and years learning how to drive on a Formula One multi-million-dollar racecar. It sure sounds fun, but perhaps a practical perspective to the art world would help a great many youngsters & new 'designers' succeed.



The good news is: it's quite easy for an 'artist' to learn the few skills necessary and adapt their natural ability to what we do every day (if they're willing). The better news is: YOU can learn those skills pretty darn easily YOURSELF! Think of it this way: Instead of first going to bartender school to memorize the most complicated mixtures, then learning how to pour a draft beer after graduation when you get an actual bartending job. You, yes you, can start with what most people want in the first place; "give me a beer". Learn to pour with a perfect head (foam on top) and then work your way up to the rarity of; "make me an Italian Chandelier, shaken not stirred". Make sense?

I hope I don't offend any Graphic-artists, Web-designers, Architects, Mixologists, or Neurosurgeons. I am using a bit of humor to help explain the Imprint Industry's needs. Imprint shops, like ours, carry a bulk of the Design Industry itself. Imprinters truly are the grass-roots / nuts & bolts / get-it-done, part of world of design & well of "designers" themselves too. Again, I have a great deal of respect for those who work through a degree, I've done it a couple of times myself. Plus, a design degree may be a valuable commodity someday. Our industry, however, will quickly give a dose of reality.

Real-world example: What is the most efficient & effective way I can create, then re-create, present, then edit & customize a new design/graphic/logo? The art needs to be production ready in one or more formats such as color separations for screen-printing, digitized for embroidery, and vinyl-cut ready. We need to move it through our equipment fast, with no hiccups, because they want the order done yesterday. All this needs to be accomplished while streamlining the transition in between jobs, organized for future reference, plus priced accurately & competitively, taking into account man-hours, materials, substrate costs etc. Wait, the customer just changed their mind... You get it. There is no time for, nor need to, quarrel over thousand dpi detail.

On the flip-side of the same subject, technology has absolutely changed our industry, and all of us absolutely need to get comfortable with working on art on a computer. The days of "Clip-Art" - yes people used to physically clip-out shapes and designs from books, are gone. A modern-day architect or photographer has completely different, necessary, tools to learn. Not too long ago their industries were completely different. Huge draft tables were necessary with hundreds of different pencils, protractors, rulers and stencils. There were infinite options for film, exposure, chemicals, paper, lighting... All of which have turned into software menus, functions, drop-down options, and tools on a computer.

Now that you've absorbed a little perspective in the world of graphic design, and how it relates specifically to our Imprint Industry, don't you think that you, yes you yourself, could probably figure this art thing out? Now that you know you're learning curve may be as little as 1% of a 'classically trained' "Graphic Designer"? As a Screen-printer or Embroiderer, a Vinyl Cutter or even a Sublimator/DTG printer, you could learn some of graphic design all by yourself! I am telling you that you can. Your Imprint Industry Design Education does not have to start with tens of thousands of dollars, and half a decade learning curve. Pick up an about four-hundred-dollar design program, get yourself an about six-hundred-dollar computer and spend a week, or a few, learning how to be an Imprint Industry Designer. Let me know if I can help, Clay Barbera -CorelTrainer.com

Some of the information in this periodical article may be out dated, including contact vitals.

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