



Through their Eyes: Designing the Reflections book for Chartwell's National Appreciation of Seniors Day

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BRAD WALKER: Thank you, Thank you.

I just wanted to give you the back-story. What I'm going to show you is just a print piece. But I think, just to understand it, it's representative of how we approach things at Chartwell and the back-story of how we approach things. So when I started at Chartwell I came from ATI Technology, which was about the farthest you could get from seniors' housing. It was a world of 16 million colours, dark, grunge, every Burt and Kramer design exercise rolled into a career. It was pretty wild and a lot of 7 point legal type. So going to Chartwell was quite a shift and this kind of bridges some of the work we do with Game Cube and Wii and into Chartwell. For us, design for seniors doesn't start here, it starts here. And it sounds really cliché and corny but it really is a culture that permeates a whole company from top to the bottom. Everything that we do is done from the perspective of a senior. And it's not even necessarily something that we're looking to sell. This piece that I'm about to show you, Reflections, came out of a genuine desire to position ourselves as a company that cared. And we weren't looking to sell anything in this piece. The closest thing we had to marketing was the logo on the back and that was about it.

In going through this, from that technology then, there were things that we wanted to keep in mind. Print it's a minimum, and we've talked about this stuff, 12 point type where possible, but we go much bigger than that and then constantly reminding people of

that, even within my team, it's very easy to forget that.

And contrast, I can't stress enough. And it sounds like simple stuff, but these things all add up and it does make a big difference in the end piece. The senior eye yellows, the brain compensates for it, but blue greens do darken a bit so we actually do open up the darks in some of our commentary. Shorter paragraphs, simple folds, handling, these are all things that need to be concerned.

The one thing that I use as a test daily is this: I squint. And when I've got one of my team coming with me that's the first thing I do. And if it's a tactile piece, I'll actually get a pair of thin gloves and see how that works. Because there are these considerations that the 25- 35 year old person, while I'm hammering it into them, it's not second nature. You're not living with it, you kind of have to go that extra effort to think about these things.

So in Reflections, and I'm hoping that comes up well, when we looked at this, there were a lot of those things that went into this piece. So, one of the first things that we talked about was actually the form and the size. It had to sit in someone's hand. We had some larger pieces, smaller pieces. At the end of the day, there was a size and when you give Mrs. Smith, who's 85 years old and has slight elements of Parkinson's, it's got to be comfortable in her hands. It's got to be - the page thickness, it has to be something that she can grab and isn't going to be too delicate. And it sounds, you know, straightforward but again, when you're 25- 30 years old, and you're dealing in 9 point and 10 point type, you just don't think of these things.

So, a lot of the things, and I don't think the subtleties come through the page, but when we did this, there was, you know type size was key, line length, clarity. We wanted this thing to be really simple. It's a bit patronizing to be generalizing seniors because there are seniors who have excellent eye sight that don't have glasses and there are those that don't but I think if you work with the lowest common

denominator and so on, and to make reference to a question earlier, about are you're detracting from your design, I think it's something that if you embrace it, it's not a limitation. It is a parameter that you're dealing with but, again if you're thinking about this from the heart and how this is going to be received, I think that when you talk to people at a level that they can understand, in a way they understand in a way they're comfortable with, it really does resonate. So for us, the idea of having really bold images. I was lucky enough to work with Yuri Dojc who has an amazing passion for this. He's known for his fashion photography from the eighties and a lot of crazy ideas that guy. But, does he love this audience. And it really shows in the type of work that he did with us.

It's important to have a sense of humor with this. We didn't want it to be schmaltzy. There was a real danger of being really sappy, syrupy. It's a fine line. When we did this, there were a lot of stories we could tell. It's easy to get carried away. One thing I point out is, even our little paragraph here on top, it's very short, it's very simple, but it tells a story of this woman who daily is knitting these little dolls to give away and when Yuri's in Cuba, she said to him, give this to someone who needs it and he found someone who could really use this. And these were the stories that this project was about telling. I use this again to -- yes you can put type or photographs. It's a fine line, you're trying to balance a design aesthetic, you're trying to respect the image that Yuri's taking but we're also trying to send a message. Careful use of type in an appropriate place can be drawing attention to it without overpowering it, something that still keeping that legibility.

This one is hard to describe. This one we struggled with a lot because there was a, kind of trying to inject a bit of playfulness in this. But we had a series of photographs that we wanted to have a bit of a reveal, and it kind of doesn't translate there but there was a fold out, which did give us a lot of grief, in terms of 'can we do this?' and 'is it going to get lost?' And again, pulling back the cut - something

as simple as that, so it will naturally flip up allowing somebody to pull it out.

Basically for us, the considerations: larger type, open lettering, contrast, size, form, tactile feel. Again, when you pick up these books, and if anyone wants to come by after I've got samples here, we've had these de-bossed and hammered so that you run your fingers across it, again there's a tactile feel whether it's in the hard cover, soft form.

Satin finish. The paper, we actually gave a lot of thought to the paper. I mean, 'well why wouldn't you just use an uncoated stock?' Well uncoated stocks absorb any of the colour, it's a bit more muted, the detail isn't as sharp. We had to custom make - the colouring and the type felt right like this. It didn't exist in Pantone so Bound had a couple of draws made and we were able to narrow it down to something that felt right, from a contrast point of view.

Even on press, we were debating whether we were going to have a tinted satin varnish on the type which doesn't project very well, there's sort of a watermark effect of it repeating with both and one of the press men was about to retire, 65, and without telling him anything we had given him a sheet with just tinted ink, sorry tinted the ink, and tinted varnish and asked him which one was more comfortable. And that was sort of our little ad-hoc focus group test, because it was right down to how much glare can be tolerated on this. And these are just the types of considerations that we used on this. Things that we dropped, spot varnish with the copy, we cut a lot copy out of this thing, just getting it down until it felt right. We were trying to keep costs down but the lesser weight stocks didn't work. We had to keep the paper up just, again, to have that better tactile feel for some of our audience.

One thing I just want to leave you with. Design for seniors isn't any different than how we see them. It's very easy in the real world to take seniors for granted. And, I think, as designers it's very easy for

us to do that. You know, if you're designing for seniors you cannot take them for granted and when you don't, the benefits, the comments that we got back, really translated and made us feel good it was a high water mark in my career.

Anyway, that's about all I wanted to show.