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Hirst Pacific Delivers Global Design Strategies

By Janet Herlihy, Editor

From fine fragrance bottles, to stylish razors, mass market personal care lines, prestige writing implements and time pieces, Hirst Pacific brings an attention to detail expressed in strategy and design that is elegant and functional.

Kenneth Hirst, who founded the New York City-based design firm in 1996, is quiet, contained and unassuming, using words as carefully as the design elements that compose his projects. A native Australian industrial designer, who came to New York to visit and stayed to start a business, Hirst began his own studio, "Because I wanted to get back to basics, back to design."



Kenneth Hirst

"Hirst Pacific is a strategic design company," stressed Hirst. "We start with a brand strategy and then apply it to corporate identification, product development, package design, retail presentations and promotions. We excel in projects that require innovative solutions with the highest standards of quality, technical expertise, and aesthetics."

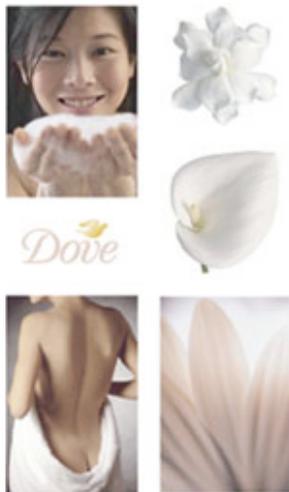
Beauty Is a Key Category

With a customer roster that includes many beauty companies, including Coty Beauty, Estée Lauder Companies, Elizabeth Arden, Helene Curtis, Unilever, Hirst noted that the scope of each job depends on the client, "but the focus is usually on luxury and always on innovation. We have a reputation for being global and work with many international brands."

When Hirst Pacific tackles a project, all the staff gets involved. "Depending on the size and scope of the project, we can put together a team that includes talent from around the world," Hirst said.

Hirst Pacific differentiates itself from other design firms by its strategic approach. "We can create anything to fit any image or any style. We are strong in innovation and in mechanical solutions, (such as a locking mechanism for a brief case that's both simple and strong). The company is not a packaging specialist and we get a lot of cross fertilization between the different disciplines," Hirst stated.

A recent project for Unilever's Dove brand is a good example of how Hirst moves through a design project. The product, a foaming facial cleanser, would only be available in Southeast Asia. The first step is to develop a "vision guide," Hirst noted. The guide is a bound brochure that is a design project in itself that "helps us to understand the essence of the brand and how the brand may move into the future. We look at the current brand situation, study the competition and look at the retail presentation—in all the countries involved.



The Dove Vision Guide includes images of ideas of what the brand stands for with its consumers.

"We found that Dove is perceived as a premium brand in Southeast Asia. We studied the demographics of the Dove consumer in each country and what and how the consumer uses the product. We defined the

“ritual of use” and the benefits of the product. Then we looked at the components that make up brand equity for that brand.” For Dove, the components included the shape of a bar of soap, the color palette for the packaging and the Dove logo.

“We develop creative directions that take into account the Asian Dove heritage—that the brand is connected to ideas of natural, feminine and beautiful skin.

All the background research is put together in a brochure that is given to the client. Hirst added, “It puts everyone on the same page—management, advertising. A company like Unilever has a huge team of people who work on product projects. Our goal for this project was an innovative package that would not be more expensive. We visited all the factories in the regions that would be producing the product to see what each could do, before creating the new design.

Licensing Reshapes the Industry

The greatest change in the beauty business going on right now is the proliferation of licensing, according to Hirst. “Eighteen years ago, cosmetic companies created their own brands, from scratch. Now there are licenses. For example, Tommy Hilfiger. The identity already exists, the consumer already has an idea of the brand.

“We try to personalize the package to the celebrity. For the Celine Dion’s Parfum Notes, Hirst met with the singer and did his usual background research. “The number five is important to her, Five is lucky, so we designed the diamonds on the sides of the bottle to have five points.”



Hirst created the Celine Dion perfume bottle with elements that hold meaning to the celebrity.

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