

## Q&A with Paul Roelofs

### Designer of Designers of the Year September 2013

Winner: 2014 Best Art Direction: Cover

*Western Living Magazine, September 2013*



**TMS:** *Congratulations on your award! How did this cover come about?*

**PR:** *Western Living* is a magazine that covers interior design, architecture, and lifestyle categories like food and travel. Nine of our 10 covers per year involve a house – with people or not with people – it’s almost like a template. But the Designers of the Year is our September issue every year. This is our seventh year of doing this. It tags onto the annual Design Week in Vancouver, it’s a big awards event with 800-1000 people; it’s almost a franchise that has taken on a life of its own so we have the opportunity with the cover to do something conceptual to signal to our readers that this is something different - and ultimately it’s a collectible.

**TMS:** *So how do you get one cover to represent so many facets of design?*

**PR:** It’s particularly challenging because there are so many different categories that it’s difficult to come up with imagery that is applicable or relevant. This wasn’t the first idea, we had other ideas of kind of creating a room with all different pantone swatches on the wall, with different tools of the trade across the different categories and creating a conceptual still life with that. But then we came up with this idea of a pantone swatch book, we sketched it out, we drew it up so it was our own design. Instead of colours that go through regular palettes, this was more random and interesting. We were inspired by Paul Smith, an English fashion designer who is known for innovative use of colour and creating really surprising and uncommon pairings and use of colour palette. So it’s a bit of an homage to him.

**TMS:** *So you had the vision, how did that materialize?*

**PR:** I sketched this up and we were wondering “how do we execute this?” We talked to paper companies and printing companies, at first we thought we’d make it and photograph it. But it wasn’t going to be cost-effective. So I called up Mike Cormack, who I had worked with earlier in my career in another company. At that company, we’d need to portray or render products before we had created them, so it was pretty common to go to 3D rendering artists. For example, if you need to create a picture of a product to put in a

catalogue so people will actually buy it, but that's before the product itself has even been created.

When I showed this to Mike, he was immediately super excited, so Mike created this as a 3D digital rendering. That means it was completely and utterly built in a computer, it looks like it's an actual 3D object but it was created entirely using computer software. It jumps off the page and kind of yells out, so it's pretty exciting and engaging.

**TMS:** *It must have been quite the effort to pull off something so unique.*

**PR:** It's largely collaborative – we have a small team – but we try to include everyone in creative collaboration. I start with the associate art director and assistant art director and bring in the editors and everyone's ideas are relevant. But I've got to tell you, it's pretty stressful. It's so much easier to create something that's a known template - the departure from that is stressful. But we want to signal to our readers that this brand is living and breathing and still has the ability to surprise you.

**TMS:** *What advice would you offer to others?*

**PR:** Don't be afraid to take chances, there is risk and reward. You have to take risks in order to get that reward. The thing about magazines is if you fail, there's always another one next month. Although you can't fail too many times (laughs). I think it's all about execution, has to be executed top shelf.

*Erin Isings conducted this interview for TMS.*