



The People Behind *Print*

An oral history at 70.

Confession: The questions are loaded. But when I talked to Martin Fox—who ran *Print* for almost 40 years—and many of his collaborators about their years here, we ended up with a patchwork of memory that’s a unique testament to the magazine.



MARTIN FOX
editor, 1963–2003



ANDREW KNER
art director, 1962–1999



CAROL STEVENS
associate art director, 1963–81;
managing editor, 1981–92;
executive editor, 1992–97



JULIE LASKY
associate editor, 1989–90;
senior editor, 1990–91;
managing editor, 1991–98



STEVEN BROWER
art director, 1999–2002;
creative director,
2002–04



JOYCE RUTTER KAYE
managing editor,
1998–2003; editor,
2003–08

STEVEN HELLER

Print contributing editor, author, co-chair of the Designer as Author program at the School of Visual Arts

[What is *Print*'s most defining characteristic?](#)

MARTIN FOX: Its willingness to go beyond narrowly defined borders of graphic design and extend coverage to areas that might not relate directly.

ANDREW KNER: When a new issue of *Print* arrives, opening it is always an adventure. Any topic was fair game for us. . . . It was sort of a liberal arts education for designers.

CAROL STEVENS: Its clarity and broad scope, both editorially and visually.

ROSE DENEVE (MANAGING EDITOR, 1969–80): *Print* has always prided itself on being more than a pretty face. This thoughtfulness is, I think, what makes *Print* unique.

JULIE LASKY: Its lack of boundaries.

JOYCE RUTTER KAYE: *Print* explores the layers beneath the surface of design intelligently and beautifully.

TODD PRUZAN (ASSOCIATE EDITOR, 1998–99):

MANAGING EDITOR, 2003–06): Its authority. *Print* is America’s design magazine of record, the media source that best and most thoroughly explains why things look the way they look and why the way things look is not merely significant but often transformative.

JEREMY LEHRER (ASSOCIATE EDITOR, 2000–02; SENIOR EDITOR, 2002–06): Its voice can be at turns philosophical, humorous, literary, witty, dry, straightforward, informative.

The magazine has always had a colorful rainbow of voices and moods.

STEVEN BROWER: *Print* has always had a distinct voice and point of view. Years before I met Marty, Andy, and Carol, I felt I already knew them.

[How would you describe what *Print* became during your tenure?](#)

FOX: When *Print* began in 1940, it was very much printing- and typography-oriented, geared to professional typographers, printers, and typophiles. Gradually, it expanded its coverage of advertising and promotion design, whose creators more and more became

its primary readers. During my tenure, *Print* increased its coverage considerably in these areas. We also made a regular point of going out into the street—that is, covering graphic design as it actually affected people in their daily lives.

KNER: We expanded the design universe to include media that was not in existence 70 years ago. The areas of interest to designers have expanded, and so has *Print*.

STEVENS: I don’t think it ever forgot its mission to report on classic design practice, but it didn’t ignore the avant-garde, especially when the use of some cutting-edge device was appropriate.

LASKY: My tenure at *Print* coincided with the rise of the Mac and the explosion of self-taught designers, desktop publishing, photo manipulation, and a hundred zillion fonts. *Print* became the somewhat dazed chronicler of that revolution.

KAYE: When I started at *Print* as managing editor in 1998, the magazine was focused mainly on print work, with a smattering of



motion graphics and web design, and spoke mainly to graphic designers. As the field began to encompass new forms of media and embrace a more multidisciplinary approach, we expanded the scope of our coverage greatly. We began speaking to a much broader audience than ever before. At last, I didn't have to explain what *Print* was—suddenly, everyone knew.

BROWER: It became eclectic and idiosyncratic. I wanted the spreads to be as interesting as the stories. I wanted to match its singular voice with the visual equivalent.

PRUZAN: The public's understanding of how media works has changed drastically over the past decade, and during the years I was at *Print*. Much communication has lost its power to shock and its permission to cherish. Yet *Print* still finds ways to startle, to prove that our visual world still contains many mysteries worth exploring and explaining.

KRISTINA DIMATTEO (ART DIRECTOR, 2006–09): Its intention didn't change so much as how we approached, communicated, and pushed the boundaries of our content.

[What was the most memorable issue or piece of work that you saw?](#)

FOX: I would hesitate to assign the term “most” to any of it.

KNER: When we started the Regional, we were astounded to see the variety of work out there and the strength of regional characteristics by *not* showing the work by media.

STEVENS: Leo Lionni, Cipe Pineles, and Josep Pla-Narbona.

LASKY: The infamous Tibor Kalman/Joe Duffy debate about graphic design's responsibility, the infamous Massimo Vignelli/Ed Benguiat debate about type design's responsibility, and Michael Dooley's tour-de-force send-up of *Emigre*, *Step-by-Step*, *Communication Arts*, *Metropolis*, and, yes, *Print* in his “profile” of a donut maker, published in the 1994 parody issue. That issue remains one of the proudest accomplishments of my career.

KAYE: Paula Scher, Abbott Miller, Rick Valicenti, David Carson, Fred Woodward, Janet Froelich, Marian Bantjes, Andrea Dezso, Stefan Sagmeister, Wieden & Kennedy, Maira Kalman, Christoph Niemann, Laurie Haycock, Scott Makela. And Dave Eggers—his influence resonated during that time.

BROWER: I always loved the theme issues. And I loved the old, large format.

DIMATTEO: For me, it's the whole history of iconic artists who have graced the covers—there were some true masters through *Print*'s history. And the first-person narrative essays were a lovely opportunity to do something special and/or make a statement.

[What was the most controversial *Print* feature?](#)

FOX: The Sex Issue, for obvious reasons. Anyone who thought that *Print* readers were all liberal-minded types when it came to discussing sex got a dose of reality when that issue came out. The indignation and outright fury it provoked was startling. Clearly, sex is an uncomfortable and distasteful subject to deal with for many people in this country, graphic designers included.

STEVENS: The Comics Issue. The cutting-edge comix artists complained that we paid too much attention to superhero art, and the superhero artists complained that we had too much callow, kinky stuff. Art Spiegelman didn't like any of it.

DENEVE: A piece I wrote on an invitational industrial-design show at MoMA. The show was mounted during a time of intense public debate around social and environmental issues. It included some very stylish furniture and high-concept environments, a lot of it made from plastics. The end of the article called into question the entire premise of hosting an invitational design show that was in essence an exercise in conspicuous consumerism. MoMA wasn't too happy, but the article got people talking.

KAYE: The whole Sex Issue, by far. We were motivated by covering an area of design that the design press had previously avoided. And we had a lot of fun doing it. At the time, I was the only female editor on staff, so you can imagine the red faces at those article meetings.

BROWER: I designed the cover for *Print*'s second parody issue, featuring the Oliveri Toscani Benetton photo of a priest kissing a nun with a Groucho mask, which received complaint letters and cancellations.

PRUZAN: Nothing holds a candle to the Sex Issue. Dozens of readers took the time to complain about the issue—and then to boast that they'd thrown it away without opening it, rendering an honest, open dialogue about

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the issue a moot point. Clearly, some readers were upset that *Print* would address the topic of sex itself; more than one referred to the Sex Issue, inadvertently, as the “Porn Issue,” as though sex and pornography are interchangeable ideas.

[What was your foremost contribution to *Print*?](#)

FOX: I would claim as a “foremost contribution” bringing Steve Heller into the *Print* fold. His contribution to *Print* over the years as consultant, adviser, and noodge has been incalculable. I couldna done it without him.

STEVENS: One illustrator told me that her father said he never really understood what she did until he read the piece I wrote about her. That became a kind of goal for me.

DENEVE: I was at *Print* during a time of expansion. I was hired as a gal Friday, but within a few months I was in the editorial department, writing features. If needed, I could also jump into the art department and do pasteups. If nothing else, I was useful!

LASKY: A style sheet I constructed in 1989 or 1990. At one point, I also rewrote all the procedures for submitting to and judging the Regional Design Annual. Both have gone the way of the allosaurus.

KAYE: My personal goal was, and still is, to try to create breakthrough collaborations between editorial and design—to knock down the barriers between those sides and create new experiences with content. When they work well, you don't see articles or layouts—you see experiences that convey messages in new and surprising ways.

BROWER: Stirring the pot.

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