

on paper #8

AREM DUPLESSIS

'The future of magazines...'
Arem Duplessis is design
director of The New York
Times Magazine

'YOU HAVE TO SURPRISE
YOURSELF TO MAKE A
GOOD **MAGAZINE**. YOU
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BASIC – IT **MEANS** THAT
YOU ARE ABLE TO

TOO ANGLED ABLE TO SEE THINGS FROM ANGLES' TOSCANI

THREE MAJOR NAMES IN
MAGAZINES TELL US ABOUT
THE ONE ELEMENT THAT
EVERYTHING THEY DO MUST
HAVE IN COMMON...

OLIVIERO TOSCANI

Creativity cannot be secure, if you do something and you know exactly what it is going to be, it is going to be mediocre. You have to push for anything surprising. Over-planned newspapers and magazines are always very boring.

When I decided to make *Colors*, I had wanted to do a magazine like that for a long time. It wasn't at all what Benetton was expecting, but it was an incredible success so it stayed alive. In a way I cheated Benetton by making *Colors*, and then I went around the world and chose my contributors, like Tibor Kalman and Alex Marshian. I never hire someone who has already got history or experience somewhere else. I need new things, new mistakes, new energy, new everything. I don't care about their CV.

The basic idea was to do a magazine without news and without

celebrities, because we were not really organised for that – so I took away the two major columns that are carrying a magazine. Every issue was about one subject: God, the street, Aids, monoculture... But through that single theme, we developed all the other themes: art, sport, wars, information, everything. It was like we had a big avenue that was the title of the magazine, with a lot of streets crossing the main street looking at all the things that people who buy magazines would like to know about.

You have to keep the magazine alive, you shouldn't really have a system. Don't keep the magazine in the same place more than two years – change everybody. Find an excuse to fire everybody and start anew. 'Everybody who arrives at the office after 9 o'clock is fired,' something like that. You shouldn't have a daily routine. It has to be like a theatre performance – every day you have to perform.

Everything I did for Benetton they didn't expect: campaign, advertising. I had all the marketing people against me for the 18 years I worked there. But the thing worked, they became one of the most well-known labels in the world. And making money is not bad. People buy it because you are saying something that people are interested in. *Colors* worked because I was talking about something people wanted to discuss. You have to

provoke an interest. You have to have the courage to subvert constantly.

You have to surprise yourself to make a good magazine. You have to be able to do that. Surprise is basic – it means that you are able to see things from different angles.

It has always been my dream to make a daily paper, probably because my father was a reporter for *Corriere della Sera*, so I grew up at the newspaper. I find paper and print sexy somehow – they have some incredible power. The whole system of how journalists work is going to change. I'm working on a newspaper, on paper and on the web – I call it an information piece. It is a very interesting and complex project. It's extremely eccentric – I'll tell you about it when it's more official. *Oliviero Toscani is a photographer and art director*

GABRIELE FISCHER

A good magazine should be full of surprises – ideas, people and places that you haven't been looking for. A magazine that strictly follows a certain agenda is boring. And feeling bored is the worst sensation you can have while turning the pages of a magazine. The most important thing is to stay curious yourself and let others surprise you: open your heart. We are open to the most absurd ideas, because often they turn out not to be absurd at all. Over the years, we have learned how to play

34 COLORS

DIFFERENT



Bon appétit!

'IT'S LIKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MAN WHO SURPRISES ME AND ONE WHO BORES ME' FISCHER



erechenbar!
konomie der Familie



with ideas. And we do laugh a lot, which helps.

When we started *Brand Eins*, the experts in the publishing industry told us: 'This is not how you make a magazine, and certainly not a business magazine.' The biggest surprise to those who doubted was that it actually worked. We enjoy what we are doing – we enjoy growing and becoming older without turning into a business magazine made with the recipes the experts in the publishing industry believe to be the right ones. How do we know that we still surprise our readers? They still buy the magazine. And they tell us that they were surprised.

Many of our monthly topics come unexpected and define who we are. On the cover of this June's issue about corporations, we wrote: 'There is intelligent life in big corporations.' Probably not a scoop, but it is for certain a new idea. I, personally, am happy about every article that is different from what I was expecting. And that happens frequently, thanks to the fact that we have very good and self-confident reporters.

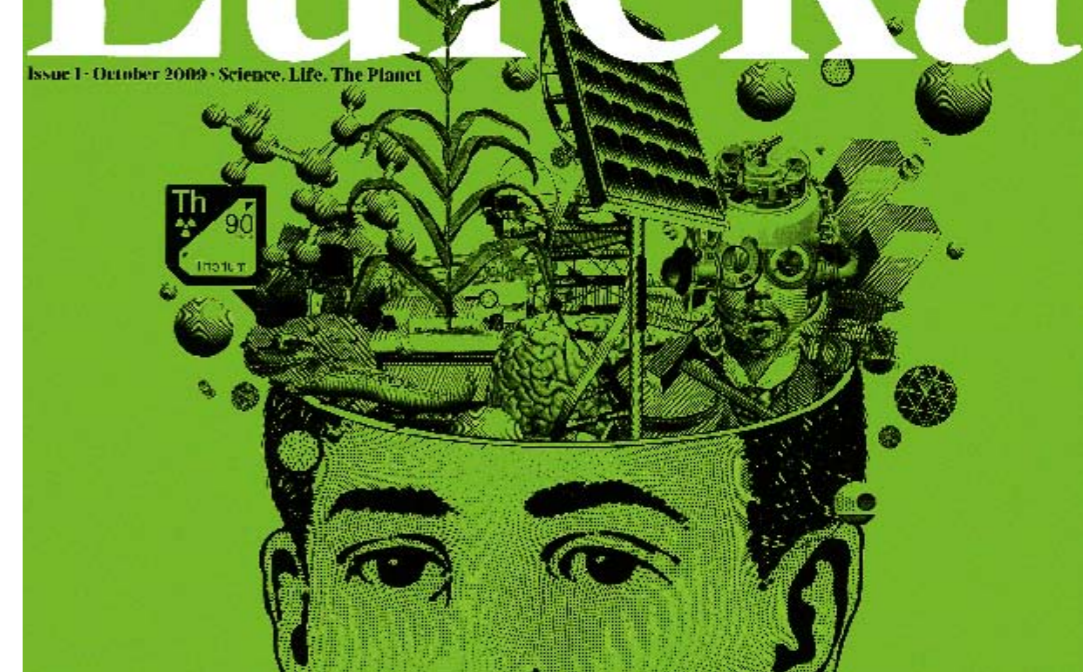
The difference between publications that surprise and those that don't is like the difference between a man who surprises me and a man who bores me. In a business magazine, the element of surprise might not be decisive, but it does no harm at all if I find articles about ideas or people that fascinate me and that I wasn't expecting. Just imagine if women's and men's magazine did the same – or even the yellow press – it would be great.

The first step might be for us all not to take too seriously what we are doing. Surprise always has to do with fun (except a bad surprise: and that's not a great way to run a magazine).

Gabriele Fischer is founder and editor-in-chief of Brand Eins

DAVID EDWARDS

It is not only magicians and army generals who lean heavily on the element of surprise. Editors do too, or should do. Producing the same



'THERE ARE ADVANTAGES TO LEAVING IT TO AMATEURS' EDWARDS

product day after week after month can make staff and readers alike feel a sense of *déjà vu*. Having lured your public in with the brand, the cover and all that lovely content, it's hard to continue to amuse and amaze. I worked on sports desks of national newspapers for the best part of 20 years. There we relied on the news to do the surprising: England winning, for example. Otherwise, the approach was the same every day. Same old layouts, same old faces in the photographs. I was keen to try something else and that turned out to be a monthly science magazine.

The Times launched *Eureka* in October 2009, and I came on board first as production editor and then editor. For a sports staffer (and history graduate) working on a science magazine means that every day, let alone every issue, is a surprise. There are several "outsiders" on the *Eureka* team. You might think that proper science journalists could do a better job, but there are advantages to leaving it to the amateurs. An expert has already banked an enormous amount of information and knowledge – much in the way that all those sports desk

veterans I worked with could recite Cup Final teams going back decades. They would not necessarily consider things they have known for years to be interesting to others.

Eureka's approach paid off in our fifth issue, a special on the human brain. At one meeting, one of the paper's science writers mentioned in passing that she knew a neuroscientist who could turn a brain off. She carried on talking about something else when one of us stopped her and said: 'What did you say?' Apparently, the brain can be temporarily switched off by magnetic pulses, a technique used to study how the brain enables us to talk. So we sent our writer along, and she had her brain switched off so that she tried to speak and couldn't. 'We have ways of making you not talk', read the headline.

We have also "discovered" how bees dance to tell each other where food is; that there's a mushroom in Oregon covering more than 2,000 acres; and that string theory is really hard to understand. For me, science is never less than surprising. ●

David Edwards is editor of Eureka magazine

