



# DESIGN CHAT

An infrequent touch base from the desk of Brett Gadbois Design & Illustration

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Designers are odd ducks, not to mention rabbits, rats and boars. They spend an inordinate amount of time, elbow to elbow at hip watering holes, singing the praises of fonts, waxing reverently about elegant annual report leading and sweating bullets to come up with a snappy rejoinder when a co-worker has embarrassed himself by digging a lame blockbuster movie that makes more money in three weeks than the gross national product of a nameless Latin American country does in a year. Some people don't realize it, and furthermore don't care, but that's precisely why I got into this racket. I wanted to be cool. →

## EARLY



## LAPTOPS

Early laptops were cumbersome things. As you can see, the technician is wrestling with prehistoric dialup technologies. No microchip finery here. It's screwdrivers, hammers, thick cords and heavy boots all the way. Besides, whose lap could hold such a contraption? Sometimes it's important to take a not-so-nostalgic look at the "good old days" and wonder if in fact, they were "good" after all. On the other hand, this technician could probably afford a real "home" instead of a trailer on the outskirts of a shabby suburbs a stone's throw from the sewage treatment plant.



Some things never change. The debate over what's cool, for one. Here at [Brett Gadbois Design & Illustration](#) we have come up with some handy tips to keep you from being hopelessly unhip at the next art director's soiree.

Cool: Avocado. After years of misuse by industrial designers and marketing professionals it's back. Like Richard Nixon. The Dukes of Hazzard. George Jones. Plaid couches. Hi-carb food. Cherry pie. Flag decals. Seventies disco lettering.

UnCool: Pilates. Oprah magazine. The Adkins diet. Political correctness. Gender-specific. Getting a degree in Rock and Roll studies. Skinny, wimpy typefaces. Swooshes. Curves lifted from financial service web sites, and plopped into collateral from bulldozer companies to airlines. That zipped-up limey green that's as distinctive as say, avocado (see above) was a decade before. Fluorescent orange.

There you have it. Just the tip of the proverbial slag heap to be sure, but at least it can save you the heartbreak of becoming one of the terminally unhip embarrassing themselves at the next industry function. Of course, all of this will change and shape-shift completely within two weeks.



## WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

With so much negativity in the world today, both at home and abroad, here at [Brett Gadbois Design & Illustration](#) we feel compelled to point out what's right first, then move on to the difficult and sensitive issues at hand. There is so *much* right with it, where to begin? First, the father is wearing a sensible hat, no need for greasy sunscreen here. The girl is wearing sensible shoes, a sensible haircut at the same time she's making a strikingly original fashion statement with her pale dress/black belt ensemble. The home is a sturdy post-craftsman box able to withstand the ups and downs of foreign investment, market mood swings and, as an added bonus, has American Dream written all over it in bold caps. Mother is kneeling, working on drought-resistant shrubs with maximum curb appeal and an eye on a heftier resale value. So, you might ask, what precisely does this have to do with design? Well, as they say about the picture and a thousand words, there is a rather large flaw here that only the most discerning and visually sophisticated marketing professional could hope to find. Can you find it? Please turn your computer upsidedown and read the answer below.

*The father has left the car running and forgotten to secure the handbrake. He's in grave danger of being run over by his own car unless his daughter can warn him in time.*



Dear Brett;

My husband and I recently purchased the *Epoxy For Swingin' Lovers* kit from a discreet mail order source. To say it jump-started our marriage would be a gross understatement. I felt like we could begin again, that we had a new leash on life so to speak. He took the role of "hardener" and I was "resin" in our passion play. Unfortunately, we have been inseparable since that night. *I do* need to go to the store for things and of course, we both work. My coworkers are getting a little irked that he's been hanging around my cube so much. Please advise,

Kari \_\_\_\_\_, Waukeegan, Illinois

Dear Kari,

Every professional has his limits and I believe I've reached mine. Your situation gives new meaning to the "til death do us part" section I've always found so touching in weddings. Have you tried the plumbing section of your local Yellow Pages? A decent plumber can be a boon to a marriage, and, often as not, they're discreet as well. Barring that, you may have to learn to live with it. In that case a qualified therapist might be your best bet.

Best regards, Brett Gadbois



That's all for now, folks. Go ahead, ask me anything. I may not know the answer to everything, but, shoot, who does? I'll give it my best. Be sure to write (email: [bgadbois@sounddsl.com](mailto:bgadbois@sounddsl.com)) and let me know how you're

doing. Who knows, maybe *your* letter will be featured in the next Design Chat. And, while you're in the digital neighborhood, don't forget to visit my brand spanking new web site: [www.brettgadboisdesign.com](http://www.brettgadboisdesign.com)