Poseur Magazine

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Julia A. Goins

Thesis Advisor

Pamela Leidig-Farmen

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

May 2010

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2010
Abstract

The field of journalism is in a dramatic upheaval. The new generation is consuming information in an entirely new way; as readers click links and watch live, high definition video feed, the newspapers and magazine of yore rest soundly in the bottoms of recycle bins. In order to reach this changing audience, publications must quickly adapt. They must not invest in paying the traditional large newsroom staff, but rather expect more from their employees. The new generation of journalists is expected to have a firm grasp not only of writing and reporting, but of photography, design and editorial judgment. Poseur magazine is the product of my journalism education; the publication, and specifically this photography issue, was the result of thorough analysis of an unaddressed audience, painstaking design decisions, personal exploration of photography principals and execution, lengthy research and reporting and, of course, concise and passionate writing.
Acknowledgements

Foremost, I would like to thank Pam Leidig-Farmen for advising me throughout this project. Her input and support was vital to the completion of such an undertaking.

I must also thank my parents for their unconditional support of all my educational pursuits, even in instances when they simply do not understand my impulses, as well as my roommate, Casey Frost, for listening to my extensive musings at night on our front porch. Casey also deserves a special thank you for her assistance in the last-minute creation of the current cover art.

I would like to thank Mariah Oberhausen for her hard work on the original cover; I am heartbroken that it was lost so unceremoniously in the mail.

Finally, I would like to thank Heather Fullenkamp, who singlehandedly taught me how to navigate Photoshop and InDesign during our pursuits in J323.
Artist's Statement

Strictly speaking, *Poseur* magazine was not an artistic pursuit but rather an academic one. Its execution was possible only though the utilization of skills I have developed over four years in the magazine journalism program. It is the culmination of my abilities in journalistic fields outside of writing, and my hope is that it communicates my passion for the field at large and my ability to meet the expanding expectations of today's editors.

After the nature and focus of my thesis was decided upon and approved, I faced the daunting task of choosing an audience: To whom would my magazine be targeted? To do so, I considered the current magazine market. Whose needs were not yet being met? Unfortunately, I had to face a dark reality: not every audience reads magazines anymore. So, I researched magazines that are currently successful, those targeted to ages 18 to 25, then chose a sector of those readers based on what was already available and what was feasible.

Eventually, I settled on creating an art publication for students in formal art education programs. *Poseur*, as it came to be known, would provide these avant-garde students with a single source of information vital to the success of their future art careers. For example, one regular department is devoted solely to stories about portfolio development. Another focuses on successful artists just out of college and the path they took to get there.

For the sake of authenticity, *Poseur* would need to be divided between content and advertisements. The process of choosing appropriate ads (who would advertise to *Poseur's* readers?) provided me the opportunity to investigate exactly who my readership would be. In this study I determined the ideal reader of *Poseur* would be a 22-year-old photography student. He would read *Poseur* between classes and mark stories to which he would like to later refer. His interests would be broad, but would focus on such liberal pursuits as music, art and literature. Most importantly, *Poseur*’s reader would be massively creative.

To make content decisions, I began to imagine what this reader would expect from *Poseur*. After choosing the departments and the stories for this specific issue, the photo issue, I developed story ideas for the future. If a department could not be carried through to further issues, it was dropped. Eventually, I was able to begin researching and writing my stories. I determined the “voice” and “tone” of my magazine based on the rebellious nature of my readers and found that I was comfortable, even eager, writing within that style.

With content in place, the next step was a bit further from my comfort zone: I needed to begin designing. While I started the project confident in my design abilities, I began to realize throughout the project that my limited instruction in
Adobe CS4 InDesign severely slowed down the process. Undeterred in my determination to create the best publication possible, I spent large amounts of time watching tutorials and training myself in various applications of InDesign. I researched effective design in professional publications targeted to a similar audience, carefully chose fonts and colors that that I believe would be attractive to my audience and finally began to place objects on pages and formulate a design aesthetic for the publication.

A similar program issue arose as I began to next explore Poseur’s photography. Because this issue is the “photo issue,” strong photography was imperative. Luckily, several of my friends within the Ball State art department are photographers, and with their help, I was able to choose, shoot and edit photos that drive the content of my magazine. For my audience, visual appeal is vital. While I struggled perhaps more with Adobe CS4 Photoshop than with InDesign, I believe the photography within my final product is vibrant and consistent. Because most magazines have at least one staff photographer, the photography across and within issues is relatively uniform. I believe Poseur is authentic in this way.

With photos, content and a design concept, I dove into the grueling task of designing each spread. This, perhaps, was the area in which I believe I have improved the most throughout this project. Designing Poseur allowed me to couple my sharp editor’s pen with a less technical task. The ability to expand creatively while considering the way each element of the process impacted one another was truly an enlightening experience that has readied me for a competitive workplace. Because the newsroom relies so heavily on cooperation, respect for one another is key. My exploration in lines of work other than writing has opened my mind to the necessity of each position and the extraordinary amount of talent and work it takes to fulfill it.

Admittedly, Poseur magazine required exorbitantly more time and effort than I originally planned. However, each step of the process surpassed my expectations of reward. I believe I am a stronger journalist and, perhaps, a more freely creative character at the conclusion of this project. I sincerely hope my “real” readers will enjoy it as much as I have.

As a traditional Hausa proverb states: “Accomplishment of purpose is better than making a profit.”