

INTERVIEW

with

KUNZ

WOERPEL

art director for

Interview

MIKO MOLOKAI

RISD GD 2024

Q: (miko)

TRANSITIONING FROM
ZINE DESIGN TO NOW
DOING EDITORIAL,
HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT
CREATING YOUR
COMPLEX LAYOUT
DESIGNS FOR INTERVIEW
MAGAZINE?



K.W.—01 Doja Cat Interview Magazine Cover
'Art direction,' design, and custom lettering for Interview Magazine. In early 2018 Kurt helped Richard Turley in his pitch to redesign the magazine, incorporating hand-lettering and a loose victorian-inspired template at an oversize scale.

A: (kurt)

It was interesting. So I kind of leapfrogged a little bit, from zines to working on Bloomberg Business Week as a magazine. So they brought me into an interview there based on a zine that I designed and kind of like working in the zine community. Um, and then from there, I think having had like some chops of like actually doing that. Um, I got, I think I had like, you know, the road test to be able to work on interview. Um, and, uh, yeah, for an interview. It was, it was interesting.

I was kind of like. a right person available at the right time with like the right skill set, I suppose. So, I got to help Richard Turley, who kind of like proposed and like got the idea through to do the redesign. And like, I got to kind of like sitting in like the sidecar and like help him kind of like execute a bunch of ideas that, that he wanted to see done for that. And then after that, he was like, yeah, this seems like it's working pretty well. Like you were here for like, the kind of initial design phase. And, like, do you want to do this for more issues of this? And then that's kind of how I got into it, but, you know, designing for a magazine is quite different than designing a zine. There's just like certain limitations and certain formality and certain things that like,

note to this is that like in editorial stuff, there's like a lot of different titles for positions. When I was brought in, uh, for the most part, like, and this is the same at business week, um, is that like, there will be like art directors, and then there will be like photo directors.

So when I was at business week, the photo directors were the people, um, like proposing, hiring, communicating with the photographers, making the photo selects, um, delivering those to us as the art directors. And then from there, it was on, on our kind of terms to decide how we use that art and how we put it on the page and how that tells the story. And that was a similar case at the interview. So for the longest, longest time, um, we had a photo director, who would collaborate with like the creative director. The two of them would, you know, put together the concepts like who's available, who the the talent is interested in working with. What everyone's availability is for the workshop, the creative with the talent, or if it's a tie in with the brand if there's kind of a product partnership thing going on, and then they would, do all

K.W.—02 Interview Magazine Opening Spread
Each issue is designed with the goal of showcasing the work of talented people, made up of photos and fashion happenings.



you kind of have to cross all your T's and dot your I's like a little bit more. Where doing a Z and you can just be like there's some- that like, I don't thing want to do. So I'm just going to not do it. It's kind of like, yeah, in the more professional workplace, there's like a lot more limitations. Um, limitations that you

the arrangements, go to set the criteria, hire everyone who needs to be hired. And, and that was that. my role as the art director was typically to interface with the photo director and then the creative director and kind ask questions like, okay what do you have? What's best here? What's working? Which photos do people look good in? Which image should be the opener? What can we do?

Yeah it's been interesting. I think there was a period of time where I would work kind of out of the studio on my own kind of time schedules and be like, Oh, like a hair salon in LA needs identity work and I would be like "Oh hey, yeah. Let's chat on the phone, blah, blah, blah. I have free time this week." And a lot of it was just kind of managing really weird shifting schedules. And then at the magazine I'm on a part time basis with them where I just go in and work on the magazine and then it's typically a month and a half in between issues and they don't need me full time, you know, cause, you don't really need a kind of like heavyweight designer to publish articles online or on Instagram and stuff. And it's kind of like after the magazine's design that they have like a bunch of people on staff who take care of that stuff. So for the last six years I've kind of had this like a magazine thing and it's kind of like my metronome in a way that sets my schedule. It's like, okay, well every two months I know I have to do this so what's my time around that going to look like? That's been kind of how I set my schedule. There've also been times where I'd be working at MTV or at business week or at Apple even and be like, "okay my workday is done, what did I over promise to this exercise where a project? Okay, great, now I have to stay up until midnight doing this zine for them."

Q: (Laniyah)

GOOD TO KNOW! AS ART STUDENTS, WE DO WORK LATE AT NIGHT, TOO. SO DEFINITELY UNDERSTAND THAT. GOING ON TO THE NEXT QUESTION. YOU MENTIONED IDENTITY DESIGN AND WORKING FOR IDENTITIES FOR DIFFERENT BRANDS. COULD YOU EXPLAIN YOUR PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING LOGOS AND WHATNOT? I THINK IT'S SUPER INTRIGUING.

A: (Kurt)

Yeah, definitely. Every project is super different which is really interesting. And, you know, for me I had kind of tried to skew a lot of my interest in my portfolio and my talent towards prioritizing editorial as a route. So then a lot of identity work that I've done has been kind of self directed. It's like I had friends who after graduating from art school went straight to work at big branding agencies, like Collins and other things like that, that are very like directed in the institutional workflow of producing identity work. So for me, I never really did that. It was always kind of like, "Okay, how do you do this?" A lot of it has been

do red." So there's a lot of things like that where you just have to do a bunch of work and eventually the conversation just leads you somewhere. Yeah, kind of similar for a bunch of the other things, but it is very much a lot of just talking, just a lot of talking for identity stuff.

And like, I had written this whole kind of reason, like rationale about why it fit with their thing. And. Like translating the X, Y, Z axis into like, they're called inkworks. So it was like, I N C to replace X, Y, Z on this kind of axis thing. They're just like these rocks. This is so cool.

Like we get this, like this reads super immediately. Um, so, but a lot of it was just like, I did a bunch of things that they were just kind of like. I don't know. I don't know about this. Um, yeah, a lot of talking and a lot of digging, I guess. For me, I have two hobbies that are kind of like my main non visual arts hobbies. One of them is like a bit of a legacy hobby, and another one is more active so my legacy hobby was, I can't do it anymore

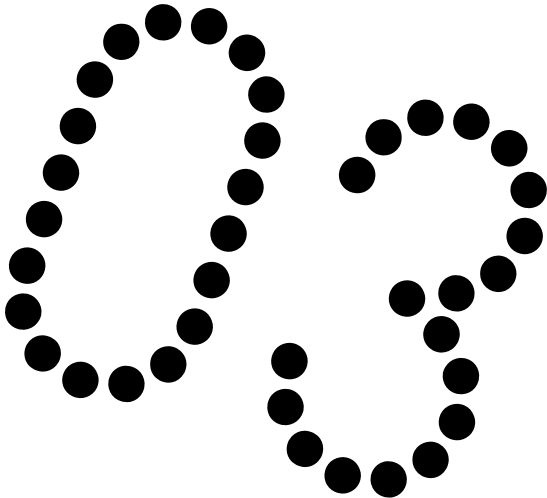
because of health reasons but, I used to skate-board and that

of source of grounding for me. And I still think about that a lot, although I'm not really able to participate in it. But I'll still find myself watching skate clips online or watching old videos or things like that or looking at new skateboard art and stuff. So that still inspires me. But I've also played music for a really long time since I was in like fifth grade. I started taking drum lessons and then in high school I taught myself how to play the guitar and now I do that a lot as kind of a way to unwind and teach myself songs and figure out songs and kind of challenge in that sense.

Being able to write a good email can solve a lot of your problems in that way.

very conversation based and really trying to talk with people to understand what it is they want or what they're interested in and having conversations on values and aesthetics and how you want to align yourself.

It was like, "okay, If it just needs to be the letters like I W O and it just needs to feel really heavy. I'm like, how can it just feel really heavy? I first just tried making it super bold and then tried a bunch of different ways to do that and then you settle on one and he originally sent me a PDF about color stuff. He was sending me this whole thing about the philosophy of this peach color and was like this peach color represents energy and kind of an internal thing. Then I worked on that for a while and he was like, "Actually



K.W.—03
Yeah, I Work Out Shirts
Kurt helped arrange various collections of shirts with YLWO, including an initial launch based on advertisements and slogans found within old bodybuilding magazines. Here are a few.



K.W.—04 Homebuyers Face Bidding Wars on Scarcer-Than-Ever U.S. Listings
Completed In-House at Bloomberg Businessweek
CD: Robert Vargas

Kurt Woerpel is a graphic designer, art director, and illustrator working in NYC and is a recipient of both the TDC Ascenders and Young Guns awards. Currently art directing with Interview Magazine and available for Freelance work on an independent schedule or day rate between issues. Past Work includes Apple[Aquent], Grailed, Bloomberg Businessweek, Brooklyn Art Book Fair, and Yeah, I Work Out among others. In addition to commercial work, he is a publishing partner at TXTbooks, an indie publisher of Risographic artist books.

BIO

