

# Tibor Kalman **VS.** Joe Duffy



Photo: Thomas Guarneri

*These two noted practitioners pick up where they left off at last fall's impromptu debate at the AIGA National Conference, exchanging opposing views and accusations on a whole range of thorny moral/ethical design issues.*

In photo above, taken at PRINT's offices, Tibor Kalman (left) squares off against Joe Duffy (right), while moderator Steven Heller (center), PRINT's managing editor, Carol Stevens (left, foreground), and PRINT's associate editor, Julie Lasky, look on. Also present was PRINT's editor, Martin Fox (not seen here). Shown on page opposite is the catalyst for the debate: the Wall Street Journal ad promoting the business acumen of "two guys with art degrees," Joe Duffy and Michael Peters.

What is the ultimate goal of design? A satisfied client? A better product? An enlightened society? A cleaner environment? Ideally, graphic designers should be able to achieve all of these things without compromising artistic and moral integrity. But in a real and imperfect world, they often have to forgo every end but client satisfaction simply to continue working. For many, the question is not whether the designer's role should be redefined, but how it can change to meet the often conflicting needs of client, ego, and society. To explore this issue of ways and means, we invited Tibor Kalman, director of the New York City design firm M&Co., and Joe Duffy, head of the Duffy Design Group in Minneapolis, to participate in the first of a series of PRINT-sponsored debates that will appear in these pages from time to time. The series is called "Oppositions."

Our choice of opponents seemed appropriate given their notorious differences in philosophy and style. Kalman has built his 11-year-old business on flamboyant, "conceptual" design, including a video for the New Wave music group Talking Heads, graphics for Restaurant Florent in New York, and signage and collateral materials for Red Square, a real-estate development on Manhattan's Lower East Side [Fig. 1]. In general, M&Co.'s projects are charged with an effort to raise consciousness as well as move merchandise. They often lean toward the sophisticated fringes of urban culture (literally so, in the case of Red Square), and challenge people to think about the product, not merely consume it.

Duffy, on the other hand, is associated with an impeccably rendered graphic style that is more decorative than conceptual, yet canny nonetheless. In its five years of existence, the Duffy Group has forged a look that combines rustic simplicity with high-toned elegance, generating packages and identities that appeal to a broad consumer market. Its work on such products as Classico pasta sauce, French Paper, and Ralph Lauren's Chaps line of clothing [Fig. 2] has earned the compliment (in design terms) of flagrant imitation, and the ultimate reward (in business terms) of a buyout offer from the Michael Peters Group, a design/marketing firm based in London. Less than a year ago, the Duffy and Peters Groups merged, catapulting Duffy into the international corporate arena.

A series of events resulting from this merger offered a more immediate justification for bringing Duffy and Kalman together. As reported in the January/February issue of PRINT, Duffy came under fire at last October's AIGA conference for a full-page ad in the Wall Street Journal that promoted the services of the Duffy/Peters Groups to corporate CEOs. Kalman, along with sociologist Stuart Ewen and designer Neville Brody, cited the ad as suggestive of a nefarious collaboration between design and big business. In his address to the conference, which was reprinted in these pages, Kalman urged designers to be "bad"—to refuse to abet clients who promote substandard products or champion mediocre design. While Duffy was singled out for neither of these activities, he was clearly used as an example of a distressingly "good" designer who contributed to the debasement of the designer's role.

Conference organizers arranged an impromptu debate to give Duffy the opportunity to respond, but it satisfied neither participants nor audience. So, in an effort to explore the issues that led to this encounter, and open them up to a larger audience, we invited Duffy and Kalman to our offices last December to resume the dialogue. Steven Heller, art director at the New York Times and a contributing editor to PRINT, acted as

moderator. Also present were PRINT's editor, Martin Fox; managing editor, Carol Stevens; associate editor, Julie Lasky; and two cassette recorders that stoically taped the two-hour proceedings.

Guidelines for the debate were kept to a minimum. Heller posed most of the questions, though the opponents were invited to direct questions to each other, which they frequently did. There were no time limits; each participant was free to speak (or shout) until he was interrupted. All comments were considered "for the record," and the resulting transcript was edited only for length and clarity. As the final transcript shows, the spirit of candor was left intact; and if Duffy and Kalman did not exactly bask in warmth, they did cast a great deal of light.

—Julie Lasky

**Heller.** Both of you run design firms; both of your firms are known for distinctive points of view or styles. You, Tibor, seem to have a problem with certain business practices of the Duffy/Peters Groups. And you, Joe, not necessarily at odds with M&Co.'s business style, have been challenged to defend your current business priorities and approach—an approach that has put you and your group in the limelight. As a kind of precis to acquaint the reader with your points of view, tell us why you are in the business and what kind of business or social ethic you try to live up to and how it's reflected in the work you do. First, Tibor.

**Kalman.** I'm in the business by accident, and it always seemed an okay thing to do. So far, anyway. The business may change in such a way that, at some point, I won't want to be in it.

As to the ethics of our practice, I think the simplest way to sum it up is that we're interested in art before money. We're interested in exploring the possibilities for design as a cultural force. We're not uninterested in making money; like everyone else, we like to live in decent apartments and take taxis and stuff like that. But I think that my overall worry about the design business is whether as a group we are becoming overly influenced by money and professional success, and whether that's impinging on our ability to criticize our clients and make an impact on the world and as a group influence culture.

**Heller.** Joe?

**Duffy.** Well, I'm in the business because I love design. First and foremost. I started out in fine arts, and the idea of combining art and commerce for a career intrigued me. I feel there are tremendous opportunities in design. I'm concerned about the future of the business, as is Tibor. The reason I'm in it and enthusiastic about it is that I think I can make a difference and work to improve the business rather than see it succumb to the concerns Tibor has. As far as my practice and its ethics are concerned, I think the most important aspect of our work in the five years we've been in business is that we don't do work we're not proud of; we do not work for people who won't allow us to do good work. And I think that ethically one of the biggest problems design faces is that the people who are capable of doing great design have two standards: one for clients that allow them to do good work and another for clients that will pay the freight, so to speak. I think that's wrong, and I guess I'm most proud of not succumbing to that attraction.

**Kalman.** Can I respond to that?

**Heller.** Go ahead.

**Kalman.** Joe, you said that you're interested in combining art and commerce; then there was a pause, and then you said, "for a

## How two guys with art degrees can do more for your business than a conference room full of MBAs.

With all due respect to the business acumen of your company's employees, we can solve some business problems with a Crayon that your brightest MBA couldn't solve with a Cray.

Because we specialize in a marketing skill they don't teach you in business school—the power of design.

It's a marketing skill that most CEOs think of using only to make their company's annual report look better. But a smart few are using design to make their annual profits look better, too. Which is the whole idea behind the

Duffy Design Group joining the world's largest independent design firm, the Michael Peters Group.

Good design, we believe, can be the most profitable way to spend a marketing budget. It can be the quickest way to build a new brand.

Or to save an old one. It can make your product disappear off the shelf, instead of disappearing into it. And as more and more competitive products become more and more alike, a good package can become a packaged good's best if not only point of difference.

The good news is that you don't have to give a fig about "understanding the design process" to appreciate the beauty of its results.

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To see exactly how ugly we've helped our clients get with their competition, call us and ask for one of our detailed case histories. We have them in a wide range of product categories as well as in a wide range of services—from retail design to product development, corporate identities to packaging, annual reports to special event presentations.

Or talk to one of our CEOs in New York, call the Michael Peters Group at 212-371-1919. And in Minneapolis, call the Duffy Design Group at 612-339-3247.

### The Michael Peters/Duffy Design Groups

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career." You said that there was a tremendous opportunity in this business for you, and that you want to make a difference in this business, and that you want to improve the business. Seems to me that's a lot of talk about business and careers and opportunities, although you said you're mostly interested in design.

**Duffy.** When I said opportunities, I didn't qualify those opportunities as financial rewards or anything else. There are tremendous opportunities to do good. One example is that, as designers, we can help clean up the environment. I think we can do a better job in that regard. We can clarify communication in this country; design is in a very sorry state, and I think that as designers—

**Kalman.** When you say design is in a sorry state, is that an esthetic judgment? Or is that a business judgment?

**Duffy.** Both. All you have to do is open a newspaper or magazine, or drive down the street for that matter, to see that we're bombarded by terrible design.

**Kalman.** Like ugly design? What's bad design?

**Duffy.** Bad design on many different levels. And I think there are opportunities to improve it.

**Kalman.** You mean to make everything look better?

**Duffy.** To communicate better, work better, not pollute the environment.

**Kalman.** The environment's an issue we should dispense with right away, because there's probably no disagreement between us on it.



M&Co.'s brochure cover for Red Square.

Fig. 1



Chaps labels, designed by the Duffy Group.

Fig. 2

Cover of 1986 Limited annual report, designed by M&Co.



Fig. 3

"Askew," M&Co. watch promotion.



Fig. 4



M&Co. paperweight promotion.

Fig. 5

**Duffy.** Well, there might be disagreement as to what we're doing about it. We can talk all we want; our actions are what really define our approaches.

**Heller.** I think we can come back to the environment in another context later, but you, Tibor, had a point about career.

**Kalman.** Well, what I'm taking you to be saying, Joe, is that opportunity really comes from the fact that things in America are not as attractively designed as they could be. You also see tremendous opportunities for improving the business of how design is conducted, which I agree with. But I don't agree with the esthetic issue because I think it has a lot to do with elitism—designers thinking they have better ideas about what things should look like than ordinary human beings.

You also said that one of your problems was that a lot of firms seem to have two standards, and I guess I want to defend us. I think that we at M&Co. grew up having two standards. We've been in business 11 years, and in the first five or six or seven years, we applied one standard to corporate work, where we saw that it was very frustrating to do anything nice, or anything that we believed in. But we also wanted to survive as a studio, so, like advertising agencies, we took direction from our clients and produced work that was miserable.

**Heller.** Does that mean you took on corporations whose products didn't appeal to you?

**Kalman.** Oh, yes. We took on complete garbage. We were doing all kinds of other projects that we were losing our shirts on: cultural projects, record covers, freebies, pro bono, and so on. For a very long time, the two standards were the only way in which we could both survive and be capable of doing the kind of work we thought a lot of our small clients deserved, in spite of their cruddy budgets. I think that's okay and I think a lot of people have to get started that way.

**Duffy.** When did you stop doing that kind of work?

**Kalman.** I think, formally, neither you nor I have ever stopped doing that kind of work. I don't know if anyone can ever fully stop.

**Duffy.** I don't do that kind of work.

**Kalman.** I think that if you think you don't, you're mistaken.

**Heller.** Joe, is the double standard that Tibor's talking about something you had at the beginning with the Duffy Group?

**Duffy.** No.

**Kalman.** Have you guys ever done projects that you're not proud of?

**Duffy.** No. Some projects have been less successful than others. There are some that I'm not as proud of, but it's always been because of my inability to do the best possible job; it's never been forced upon me by a client. I think the people who succumb to those pressures are the problem in design because the situation feeds on itself. The corporate giants in America feel they can bully designers and tell them exactly what to do and treat them as suppliers rather than partners or innovators. And I think that you and others who practice design that way hurt the business of design.

**Kalman.** I don't think you have to worry about me. I don't practice the business of design that way. The point that I didn't finish before about the double standard was that in the first few years in the business, we did a lot of fairly funky projects, both morally and esthetically. And as we got better known and better able to sell our work, we began to combine the two standards so that, to some extent, they overlap significantly. Now we can actually make money on projects we believe in.

**Duffy.** And you no longer work for people who force you to do work you're not satisfied with?

**Kalman.** Pretty much almost never. I've done stuff that I'm not satisfied with the same way you're not satisfied—

**Duffy.** But you've said very recently that you've done work for The Limited and other corporate clients where you try as hard as you can to do good work but give up and just deposit the check.

**Kalman.** That's a pretty broad paraphrase of what I've said.

**Duffy.** Well, I can give you the exact quote. It was at the [1989] Walker [Art Center lecture series in Minneapolis]. Someone asked, "Did you ever do capabilities brochures?" and you responded, "Yeah, what I haven't shown you tonight is that we do some boring stuff that buys me suits. And you know we try in every instance to make those as good as possible, and then we give up and just deposit the check. . . . We did the annual report for The Limited for the last few years. Phew, I said it. So we do those kinds of projects and we kind of take a Robin Hood approach, taking money from the rich bastards and giving it to poor, defenseless clients who let us do whatever we want."

**Kalman.** Great. I'd love to let that stand. What happened with us is that we did Limited annual reports up until the last one and I don't think we're going to end up doing [the next] one. I'm fairly proud of the first one we did [Fig. 3]; I think it was pretty good-looking, pretty smart, pretty honest. The company had had a banner year, so we did an oversize book printed in Japan with inserts and stuff like that. It was sort of a razzmatazz annual report.

The second year, the company had a really miserable year, and we did the whole project on uncoated stock with serious, aggressive photography of the executives. And the third Limited report we did was sort of wishy-washy. But the fact of it is that as design projects, they were all fine. I defend them. I think they were as good-looking as any of your work and better-looking than most annual reports.

**Heller.** Let's go back to the reason for your debate at the AIGA conference. It had to do with the full-page advertisement the Duffy/Peters Groups placed in the Wall Street Journal. At the conference, Stuart Ewen, Neville Brody, and Tibor all cited this key passage in the ad as part of their critiques on contemporary design: "Good design . . . can be the most profitable way to spend a marketing budget. It can be the quickest way to build a new brand or to save an old one. It can make your product disappear off the shelf, instead of disappearing into it. And as more and more competitive products become more and more alike, a good package can become a packaged good's best if not only point of difference." Before I ask Tibor to comment on that, I'd like to know from Joe why this ad was placed and what the motive was for that approach.

**Duffy.** The main reason was to speak to an audience that I think has pretty much ignored design in this country. I think that we really need to deal with a higher level of management in large companies in order to do good design. We were speaking to that audience in a language we felt they could relate to and understand.

**Heller.** What's so offensive about the ad, Tibor?

**Kalman.** I don't disagree with Joe about the fact that we have to speak to a higher level of management about good design; it's something that I've spoken about and written about a lot. One of the simplistic examples I've used is that when companies had a person at the top who actually talked to you about the product—

about more than just the numbers—it was in an era in which the quality of design was higher. There was essentially direct contact between the entrepreneur and the designer. The designer was some weird flake who lived down the street in somebody's attic and was called a commercial artist. So I agree with Joe. Our most successful work has been when we could deal with the boss.

**Duffy.** Yeah, and you don't deal with the boss by sending out some cute three-dimensional design piece. The only way you speak is through *their* levels of communication.

**Heller.** I think there's an interesting point here. In talking about cute three-dimensional pieces, Joe, you're obviously referring to the Christmas promotions M&Co. sends out [Figs. 4, 5].

**Duffy.** No, I'm not. I'm guilty of it myself. I've learned by my mistakes in this regard. In fact, the first thing that we sent out when we opened the studio was this printed piece that was beautiful, real nice [Figs. 6, 7]. The clients we needed to talk to didn't like it; they ignored it. The Wall Street Journal ad was a vital attempt to break through to that audience.

**Heller.** So again, Tibor, what is so offensive about that ad given that that was the purpose and you agree with the purpose?

**Kalman.** Nothing was really offensive about the ad. I think it was completely fine. I think that Joe *should* advertise his services. It's smart of him to try to reach a higher level of management when he talks about design. It's terrific that he tries to get business and tries to grow—all those things. I don't see anything wrong with them.

**Duffy.** If the ad was fine, if you agree with it—

**Kalman.** No, I don't agree with it. I only agree that it was fine for you to do.

**Duffy.** Okay, if it was fine for us to do, why did you point to it in a summary of everything that's wrong with design? You went on and on about the problems designers have and how deceptive design is, and then as a summary, you pointed to our ad and said, "And look at what these people are saying." I don't care what Stuart Ewen says; he's not a designer. But Tibor Kalman, a designer I respect, props us up as the enemy. You were chairman of the AIGA national conference, and you didn't give me an opportunity to at least present my side of the story, knowing full well—or, at least you should have known full well—that I was going to be there. I think that is unconscionable.

**Kalman.** I think you're overreacting. And I think you're responding completely emotionally.

**Duffy.** It's not emotional, Tibor. How could you do that? Are you telling me that you presented our business philosophy in a positive way?

**Kalman.** I wasn't attempting to present your business philosophy. I was talking about what is, in my opinion, the state of design and the state of how designers are behaving with clients. I cited a passage from your ad as an example of one of the problems with design. You weren't the summary of the talk; you were somewhere in the middle.

**Duffy.** But what bothered you about the passage?

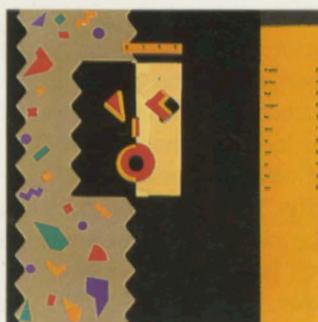
**Kalman.** I was saddened by the fact that graphic designers have kind of gotten down to this issue of having to help distinguish Diet 7-Up from Diet Sprite.

**Duffy.** Well, that's the other thing that bothered me because you used the ad as an example, and then you showed someone else's work as a visualization.

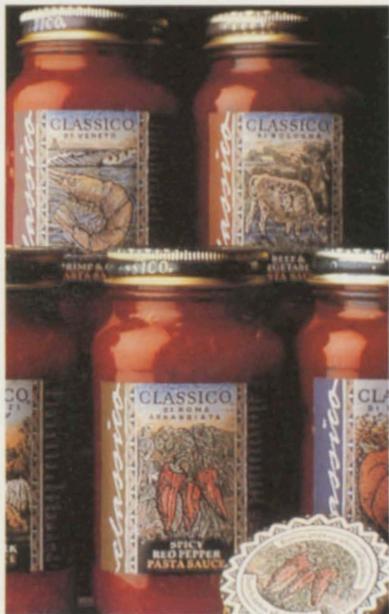
**Kalman.** And what did I say? I said: "They didn't design these cans." Get the tape.



Figs. 6,7



First self-promotion by the Duffy Group.



Duffy Group's Classico package.

Fig. 8



Duffy/Michael Peters: Shell Oil containers.

Fig. 9



Duffy Group's package for Sonny's ice cream.

Fig. 10

**Duffy.** Why didn't you use the work we referred to in the ad? We weren't referring to 7-Up and Sprite.

**Kalman.** Because I chose not to. I was not worried about being fair to you. I was just worried about making a point.

**Duffy.** Good. I'm glad you admit that.

**Heller.** I'd like to get back to Tibor's unhappiness with design and to raise the point that in the 1930s, the era in which you're saying there were entrepreneurs and commercial artists who served those entrepreneurs well, there was also a Great Depression and a lack of buying in America. In order to boost consumerism, designers were brought into the picture; and, as Stuart Ewen said in his talk [at the AIGA conference], something called "forced obsolescence" was invented so that products could move and the economy could get back on its feet. Isn't that the nature of design? And isn't that what designers are still here for, even though we live in a basically prosperous time?

**Kalman.** I am saddened by the idea that our role in this society, as graphic designers in the 1990s, is relegated to finding different ways to knock off other people's designs the same way manufacturers knock off other people's products.

**Duffy.** But that's not what the Duffy Group's about. You missed the point in the ad: Sometimes packaging or brand identity is the only difference. I believe that packaging can improve the product; I believe that a brand identity can improve the product.

**Heller.** How can it do that? I mean if Ragú tastes the same as Classico tomato sauce, how does the packaging improve it?

**Duffy.** Let's say the package would be saved and reused, like Classico's is [Fig. 8]. People use it after the product is gone. They put it on their shelves. They store coffee in it. That is an example of where the package becomes part of the product.

**Heller.** Was that in your mind when you were doing the Classico package?

**Duffy.** Definitely. Also, packaging that is environmentally friendly obviously can improve a product.

**Kalman.** What's the difference between your spaghetti sauce and any other spaghetti sauce that comes in a glass jar with a screw-on top, in terms of reusability?

**Duffy.** The package is one that people like to save because it's well-designed.

**Kalman.** And they throw the Ragú jar away? Isn't the difference in those packages structurally the label?

**Duffy.** No, it's the actual glass as well. The Classico is like a Mason jar, so it can be used for other purposes.

**Kalman.** The Ragú jar can't be used for other purposes?

**Duffy.** It could be, but people are less likely to save it.

**Kalman.** How do we know that?

**Duffy.** Research. Look it up.

**Fox.** But even if people do save the jars, how does that make the product itself—the actual sauce—superior?

**Duffy.** The package itself is part of the product. It's not just what's in the container; it's everything that's part of it. If the package is better, for any number of reasons, the product is better.

**Kalman.** I don't think that's true. I think that's the big lie of marketing.

**Duffy.** Okay, let me give you another example: Shell Oil. The Michael Peters Group did research, and after looking at the product found out that Shell Oil was missing an opportunity in terms of shipping it. Because they were using tin cans, they were shipping a lot of air—space between the containers in the shipping carton. The Peters Group designed something that

eliminated 80 per cent of that air, and so the company saved millions of dollars [Fig. 9].

**Kalman.** What was the new material?

**Duffy.** A plastic that was made out of the oil Shell sells.

**Kalman.** So the Peters Group took a tin can and replaced it with a plastic container? I'm not sure what the environmental impact of something like that would be.

**Duffy.** It's much improved.

**Kalman.** I'm not an expert, but it sounds to me the opposite; it seems that the percentage of tin being recycled is much greater than the percentage of plastic. But I'm not sure. I would question the whole issue. And packaging as part of the product really bugs me. That whole philosophy is something I have trouble with.

**Heller.** What's wrong with it?

**Kalman.** I think it's a lie. I think packages are liars; that's what they do.

**Duffy.** I couldn't agree more. Some packaging lies, and that's one of the problems we have in our profession.

**Kalman.** Some of your packaging lies, too.

**Duffy.** Like what?

**Kalman.** The fake nostalgia thing is kind of a lie. I think the reason people do fake nostalgia in packaging is because marketers and researchers have convinced us—and it's probably true—that good old-fashioned homemade spaghetti sauce is better than computer-aided-design spaghetti sauce.

**Duffy.** So you don't do any design that has nostalgia?

**Kalman.** No, I'm not saying that. To me, the lie in these old-time folksy graphics is that the spaghetti sauce is any better. The lie is in getting people to believe: "Oh, this is an old-fashioned label. This company must have been around for a hundred years. This must be an old-fashioned recipe that uses all-natural ingredients just like my mama used to do."

**Heller.** But couldn't you just cross that off to being clever?

**Kalman.** I think there's a kind of cynicism to it. The fact is that Joe's spaghetti sauce is being made the same way that the other spaghetti sauce is being made, for the most part. And for it to have a fake-old label would have people think either that the company has been around for a long time, or that the recipe is a long-ago recipe.

**Duffy.** Neither is true. The label is meant to look like an Italian recipe because that's what it is. The client came out with spaghetti sauces that are based on recipes from different regions in Italy. One comes from Sicily, another comes from Abruzzi, and so on. Those graphics represent the specific ingredients and areas of Italy. It's not a lie.

**Kalman.** I think it's misleading. I'm sure there are chinks in our armor in this area, too, and I don't want to focus the attack on Joe, but to me the issue is that graphic design is frequently used as a tool to lie, including a lot of my work and a lot of Joe's work, and that bugs me. I mean, doesn't it make you a little crazy? Do you sleep okay about that?

**Duffy.** Yes. I have no problems because I don't think it's lying.

**Kalman.** What do you think it is then?

**Duffy.** Communicating.

**Kalman.** Communicating a lie, though. It's not communicating the truth.

**Duffy.** I just explained the Classico labels, and I feel very good about them communicating what the product is all about.

**Heller.** Joe, in terms of the studio's style that you had when Chuck Anderson was with you, the nostalgic overtones, why did

you choose that style of work?

**Duffy.** Well, it's a situation where the style or the focus or the look of the work is based on what we feel needs to be communicated. And it just so happened that many clients came to us with a product or a service that related to something that was nostalgic. Or at least we felt that was the best way to communicate that personality or service.

**Kalman.** But they're all nostalgic.

**Duffy.** There's a pattern.

**Kalman.** I think that most people's perception of your work is that a very large majority of it is nostalgic. You hardly ever use Helvetica, I would guess. Or Univers. What I'm after is: Why nostalgia? What does nostalgia provide as an entrée point to any of your clients, or to all of your clients as a group, that makes it so desirable?

**Duffy.** I think you have to take specific cases, like the Classico example, which I explained.

**Kalman.** Old-style tomato sauce just like the good old days. And what about the ice cream?

**Duffy.** [Sonny's] ice cream is a product that is hand-packed by a father-and-son operation in Minneapolis. And they do it just the way they used to do it back in the '30s [Fig. 10].

**Kalman.** And what about the French Paper Stuff?

**Duffy.** French paper is a mill in Niles, Michigan, that is probably the smallest paper mill in the States. They are about as down-home and nostalgic as you can possibly get in the paper industry [Fig. 11].

**Kalman.** So you're saying that there's a logical reason for all of these pieces to have a nostalgic—

**Duffy.** Yes.

**Heller.** Now let's talk about your obsession with vernacular, Tibor. I mean, basically we're talking about two different forms of vernacular, except Joe is reaching back into a certain area of the '30s and '20s and teens.

**Kalman.** Yeah, well, I think that if you look through every single piece of work that M&Co. ever did, you'll find out of thousands of projects in the last 10 years only two or three that look vernacular, where we succumb to the idea of actually knocking off stuff. My identification with vernacular has always been about really respecting the vernacular process. I respect the authority of it, I respect the simplicity of it, I respect the naturalness of it—sort of like health food. It's like design without all of this process and theory.

**Duffy.** It's honest.

**Kalman.** Yeah, I think so. There's a lot of vernacular in your work, too.

**Duffy.** Definitely.

**Kalman.** And that to me is what's important. Designers have become so professionalized and such pawns to the client and big business that they've had to develop all of these defenses about what it is to just have a great idea and do it. Or not even have a great idea, but just do it, the way in the Caribbean some guy will take a black roller and write this 9-foot G-A-S on the side of a brick building.

**Heller.** If someone came to either of you with a portfolio with a few pages of G-A-S or, let's say, something that is quite vernacular—pinball art—would you hire that person?

**Kalman.** I'd laugh him out of the room.

**Heller.** Where's the honesty then? Aren't you appropriating something from someone you wouldn't hire in a million years?

**Kalman.** What I'm appropriating is a process as opposed to a

Duffy Group's French Paper (Speckletone) promotion.

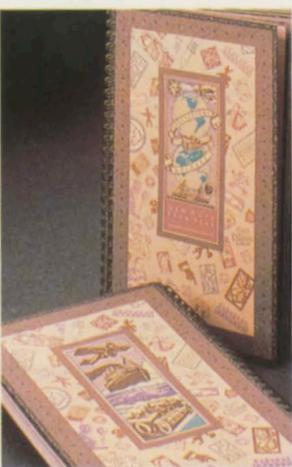


Fig. 11

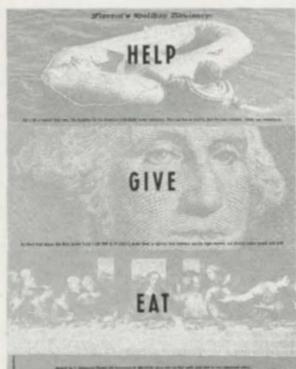


Fig. 12

Still from M&Co. video "Nothing but Flowers."

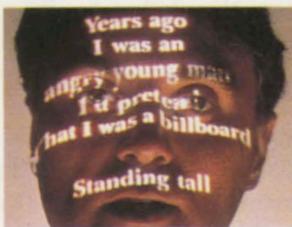


Fig. 13

Duffy poster for AIDS benefit.



Fig. 15

M&Co. greeting card for Diffa.

THEM=US

Fig. 14

look, okay? And the process is how to think about something in a clear and uncomplex and unfiltered and uneducated way.

**Heller.** Joe, are you giving us a process or a look or both?

**Duffy.** Both. It's a look, but it's based on communicating the idea that the product has to offer.

**Heller.** When the Duffy Group began, did you think that you needed a house style, as Push Pin ultimately arrived at a house style?

**Duffy.** The word style has always bugged me, but we really felt, starting out, that we needed to focus on not trying to be all things to all people, as many designers do. We also wanted to establish a design approach that would be identifiable and would establish our credentials.

**Heller.** What is the difference between M&Co. and Joe Duffy, given what we've just talked about in terms of style and approach?

**Kalman.** In my opinion, this is a pure esthetic pow-pow, but I think those guys have a style and we have a process. Their style may come out of a process—that's okay with me—but what we have constantly tried to do, and I think succeeded at, is not let our pieces look very much alike but to focus instead on design as an accidental process in which pieces come out looking all kinds of different ways. Often you can't tell it's us.

**Duffy.** And sometimes that's because of what the clients make you do.

**Kalman.** Hardly. Not these days.

**Heller.** Joe, the difference between Duffy and—

**Duffy.** I really don't know enough about M&Co.'s work; I've seen the products, the watches, the gadgets and whatnot.

**Heller.** Given what you know—

**Kalman.** Make it up.

**Duffy.** Let me talk about the similarities first, because I believe that we both have looked backwards nostalgically.

**Kalman.** Not consciously on our part.

**Duffy.** I'm giving my view of how our work is different or alike, and I think in many instances, M&Co.'s work, to me anyway, looks nostalgic. I think that's a similarity. On the other hand, we do work that is packaging or literature or identity. The very areas we practice in—the disciplines of design—are obviously different.

**Kalman.** If you consider our work nostalgic, I don't think you're looking at it very carefully and I don't think you've seen a good range of it.

**Duffy.** Well, I think that I've seen Russian Constructivist; I've seen vernacular—

**Kalman.** When have you seen Russian Constructivist?

**Duffy.** In one of your annual reports for The Limited. There are certainly influences there. I think that the work you did for—what's the cable channel, Showtime?—has a somewhat Constructivist influence.

**Kalman.** I think there are instances of nostalgia in our work.

**Duffy.** Like clip art, old engravings for the restaurant—I forgot the name—

**Heller.** Florent [Fig. 12].

**Kalman.** We used neither clip art nor old engravings for—

**Duffy.** That to me looked nostalgic. The old Bell logo—

**Kalman.** The old Bell logo is used as a reference for—

**Duffy.** And that's not nostalgic?

**Kalman.** No.

**Duffy.** That's not from the past?

**Kalman.** Well, certainly it's from the past, but how it's used is

the question. What the effect of it is. You see, I think your problem looking at our work, and maybe at your own work, is that you're confusing the idea of knocking off something from the past and making it look like it happened 50 years ago in Italy with using the values and the elements that are from the past—and that are good from the past—in a new way. And that's the difference between your nostalgia and my nostalgia.

**Duffy.** You're wrong because we use things from the past for the very same purpose as you do—to communicate. To get an idea across.

**Kalman.** But you don't do anything new with them is what I'm saying.

**Duffy.** We do something very new: We put it in a whole new context. We don't just take something and put it down and print it.

**Heller.** I really would like to end this issue by having the last word, and that is: What Tibor did with Café Florent took the forms of the diner and brought them into the 1980s; it's perfectly appropriate. And what Joe did with Classico or some of the books I've seen is take old forms and give them new color and new life—reviving history in a positive way. This issue may come up again, but I think we should put it to rest because there's another important issue that comes out of Tibor's talk at the AIGA conference, and I think Joe should respond to it as well. And that has to do with subversion and Tibor's whole discussion about being bad.

What do you mean? Can you really subvert a client into doing something the client does not wish to do or into producing a product that he or she isn't geared to produce?

**Kalman.** I believe that the design process as it now works is sometimes not very good and I think it's something Joe and I agree on more than we disagree. The responsibility for design is passed down to a very low level in the company, and the whole process sucks in a lot of cases. There are a few enlightened companies where the people in charge really know how important designers are, get involved, and so on. But for the vast majority of cases, you can't go near the big guys when it comes to these issues. And what I meant by subverting the design process is, first of all, trying to subvert that sort of pecking order in which design happens.

**Heller.** Which means going straight to the boss?

**Kalman.** That's one way. Another way is not being willing to just have somebody hand you a pile of manuscript and making it look nice; you can reject the manuscript, saying, "This is garbage; it has to be completely rewritten. This isn't your problem; you have a different problem." Those are the kinds of issues that I'm interested in.

**Heller.** Do you think subversion is the right word though?

**Kalman.** Well, I think it's an effective word in a talk.

**Heller.** So now that we're among friends, what word would you use?

**Kalman.** Subversion. We're still talking, right? I think the design process does need to be subverted. What do you think, Joe?

**Duffy.** I'd agree with that.

**Kalman.** See? Another subversive.

**Duffy.** I think what we lack in our profession is respect from people who really need our help the most—not only respect, but understanding. The people who can really make the decisions in terms of using design for good purposes are people who haven't a clue as to what we do. They don't listen to us. This is a

generalization, but the problem is that, with large companies, we usually have to deal with people who are on lower rungs of the ladder; and by the time they nibble away at our work all the way up, it no longer translates.

**Heller.** Have you worked with the top guy?

**Duffy.** Yes.

**Heller.** What's happened in those cases?

**Duffy.** Decisions got made more quickly; it's either "Yes, I like it; let's go with it" or—

**Kalman.** I think a lot more chances get taken.

**Duffy.** They're people who aren't concerned with covering their ass. They're willing to take risks.

**Heller.** Give me a specific example of going into the CEO. What did you give? And what did you get in return?

**Duffy.** I've already used the example of Classico; we dealt with the president of the company, who was great to work with. He was in on all the meetings and he really enjoyed the design process. He came up with a lot of the ideas in both naming the product and deciding which graphic direction we should take. There was no chipping away at the concept as it went through the ranks to get to the boss. There was no second-guessing and concern for one's position rather than for doing the best possible design.

**Lasky.** What I want to ask Joe is, How can you in the packaging process actually sit down and have some influence on a product like Classico? Do you feel you can say, "I think there should be more flavor here; the sauce isn't tomatoey enough"?

**Duffy.** Sure. In fact, with Classico, first round, we gained their respect because they realized that our packaging had an awful lot to do with selling their product. They came out with four new flavors this last year, and we were involved with the taste-testing and giving our opinions about how we should flavor something. I think that's an example of first of all gaining some respect and then being involved in the product as well as what surrounds the product.

**Heller.** Tibor, when you talk about being bad, you're talking about helping to recreate the product you're asked to work on. Is that correct?

**Kalman.** Well, yeah. One of the ways that you subvert the design process is you say, "Come back to me when you have a good product." The client says, "What do you mean? We have a perfectly good product," and you talk about why they don't.

**Heller.** Have you done this?

**Kalman.** We attempt it on every single project we work on. We hire the writers for 95 per cent of the material that we design. We think through the marketing issues, and that's another area where designers have to be involved because, otherwise, they're picking typefaces and colors.

**Heller.** Are you saying basically that as long as the marketing is in your hands, it's okay? If it's in somebody else's hands and you're being given the solution, in a sense, then it's bad?

**Kalman.** What I'm saying is that if the marketing is in someone else's hands, your role is incidental, minimal, and is unlikely to have any kind of impact on the product or the design and certainly not the world. If the marketing is in your hands, then I think you're going to fail a lot, but I think there can still be a real synergy between the marketing, the environment, and the design.

**Heller.** Have you succeeded at that?

**Kalman.** We've succeeded at that consistently.

**Heller.** Give me one example. The specifics are important

*Continued on page 158*

## **Oppositions: Tibor Kalman vs. Joe Duffy**

*Continued from page 75*

because essentially what you said at the AIGA conference can be construed as, "Do as I do, not as you do," and therefore I think it's important to know what you've done.

(*A long pause.*)

**Kalman.** I'm just trying to pick something where it's transparent what we've done, so bear with me for a second, okay?

**Heller.** Pick one.

**Kalman.** I'm sorry, there are all kinds of things that are confidential and things that are not coming out yet. Let the record show that I'm twiddling my thumbs.

**Fox.** Steve, do you have anything in mind?

**Heller.** What I think of perhaps is the video for [musician David] Byrne. It may not be high-end corporate, but it's something that Tibor had some role in.

**Kalman.** This is a video we did for Talking Heads called "(Nothing but) Flowers" [Fig. 13, p. 74]. The strategies involved were that the video had to be made on very little money. The song was difficult to film: It's about fast food and the future and trees, and it exists as a sort of person in the future lamenting about the past. The ordinary rock-video thing to do would have been to dress up the band in McDonald's outfits and shoot it at a fast-food place, and that would have been funny. Instead, we got the lyrics to do what they're supposed to do in a song: In a song you hear lyrics and you hear music; and on television, you see lyrics and hear music. So what we did was simply animate the lyrics and put them over a very simple composite of the band.

**Heller.** But this was your idea, right?

**Kalman.** Yeah.

**Heller.** What I'm getting at is that the bottom line to being subversive, being bad, is having ideas.

**Kalman.** Having ideas and making them make sense on the marketing level. Designers are just not taught that very much, not the people I see coming out of the schools these days. And they don't think it's their job or—the most astounding thing of all to me—they think that the manuscript is the manuscript.

**Duffy.** And the typeface is the typeface.

**Kalman.** And I think the product, the name, the language, the graphics, the production, and the media are inextricably entwined; and if you're not dealing with them as a global issue, then you're not dealing with anything. What's happened is that with the enormous growth of companies and markets, and the unwillingness of big business to take risks, the designer's job is becoming narrower and narrower. And that's what I was talking about when I made the criticism of the ad. Our job comes down to knocking off the Coke can for Pepsi, or the Pepsi can for Coke. It's astounding how much these competing items look alike. I mean, what's the difference between Coke and Pepsi? Between Hertz and Avis? Lee and Levi's? Nothing.

**Heller.** I would like to go to something that was said in the opening remarks: One of the problems people talk about today is that design has become overly professional, where we follow the commands of the corporate ruling class. Joe, you have just merged with a multinational design group. Some people might even say you were bought by this group. Is that a fair term?

**Duffy.** Yeah.

**Heller.** Has this purchase affected the way you practice design in a negative way? Or a positive way?

**Duffy.** It hasn't in a negative way. It's only been six months, so I

can only rely on that frame of reference, but some positive things have happened. The most significant is that we have been able to get in and talk to the people who are closer to the top, as I mentioned earlier.

**Heller.** But you said that you would only take jobs from the people who would allow you to do quality work. Does this still hold true? Can you still be that picky and choosy when someone is governing your destiny?

**Duffy.** So far, and I'm not about to compromise our principles. I don't care if it's for Procter & Gamble or General Mills or whoever. If they won't allow us to do good work, then we won't work for them.

**Kalman.** How can you afford to do that, though? Don't you have to grow?

**Duffy.** I've been doing it for five years.

**Heller.** You sold your business because you also need more of a financial base, right?

**Duffy.** I sold the business because large companies do not want to deal with a 10-person operation based in Minneapolis. They consider us a boutique. If we are part of a multinational organization that deals in a number of different disciplines—that has experts in a number of areas they feel we need experts in—they will listen to us; they will give us work. And companies like that have given us work since we joined the Michael Peters Group. People who would not even talk to us before.

**Kalman.** Who do they want to talk to?

**Duffy.** People they feel will communicate with them on a business level, people who can become partners in that marketing process you were referring to. They don't think—and in my estimation, they're right—that the small design firms have the marketing expertise to accomplish what they want to accomplish.

**Kalman.** But don't you have to grow? Don't these buyout deals demand that you meet certain quotas of growth?

**Duffy.** No. I want to grow. I plan to grow. And if I work for bigger companies on bigger projects, I certainly will grow. That is the intent. But no one is saying, "You have to reach such-and-such a level at such-and-such a time."

**Kalman.** But doesn't that have to do with your compensation for the company?

**Duffy.** Sure, but I put our work before compensation—my compensation, anyway. I'm not going to do bad work.

**Heller.** Tibor, you're a small firm—

**Kalman.** Not so small; we have two big offices.

**Heller.** Do you consider yourself a boutique?

**Kalman.** Yes, but I think that big corporations are completely comfortable with boutique-type firms.

**Duffy.** Which ones that you work for?

**Kalman.** Knoll International. Chiat/Day, MTV Networks . . .

**Heller.** Do you now pick and choose your clients the way Joe picks and chooses his?

**Kalman.** Yes, of course, to the extent that we turn down a lot of work. That's how one picks and chooses: You turn down certain kinds of work cold; with other kinds of work, you go through the design process, you see that it's a disaster, you take a walk. We probably turn down almost as much work as we accept.

**Heller.** Do you have an interest in being bought out?

**Kalman.** Yes, but let me tell you what it is. The frustration to me is that M&Co. has to make money, which is a drag. What I'd like to do is suggest that Michael Peters buy M&Co. and allow it

to lose \$2 million a year. Maybe it could grow a little bit over time, but I'd like to be able to lose \$2 million a year, and anyone that wants to let us do that, our company is for sale.

**Heller.** And what will you do during that grace period?

**Kalman.** Not a grace period! We want that forever; we want heaven on earth. What will we do? We'll spend a lot more time working on the projects that we really love and the projects that don't have adequate funds to be done as well as we think they deserve to be done: working for museums, artists, music groups, political organizations.

**Fox.** But isn't that avoiding the whole issue basically by saying, "Great, let us work for all the nice peripheral groups"?

**Kalman.** It's avoiding the issue, but the question Steve just asked me is, "Who would you sell to? And on what terms?"

**Heller.** So the answer is that you wouldn't sell.

**Kalman.** I don't know. Maybe I could find a deal like that.

**Heller.** The question then becomes—and from what I gather, Joe is actually addressing this—When you say that you're opposed to the Sprite and 7-Up cans, isn't there room for better work in those areas? Isn't there a need for better-looking things in the mainstream?

**Kalman.** Frankly, I think designers decrying the esthetic decline of America is a boring issue. I would hate to live in a country in which everything is well-designed.

**Heller.** Would you, Joe?

**Duffy.** No, I wouldn't hate that. I guess it depends on who considers it well-designed.

**Kalman.** Would you like to live in a country where you designed everything?

**Duffy.** Definitely not. I wouldn't even want to live in a city where I designed everything.

**Kalman.** Much less a house.

**Duffy.** Or a room.

**Stevens.** Are there no lucrative jobs that are fulfilling, satisfying?

**Duffy.** I don't want to give the impression that we've never worked for large companies, because we do. We've worked with Timex, Porsche, and others for whom we've done very fulfilling work. I'm very proud of it. I think it's really good design, and it has also experienced marketing success, and that's the challenge for me. I think there are a number of opportunities out there to do good work for large companies.

**Stevens.** Tibor?

**Kalman.** Well, I think there is lucrative work where you can do very good design. But it's a lot rarer than most people admit. And I think no matter how successful you are as a graphic design company, the one thing you sorely lack—and this is something Milton Glaser has told me—is good clients. And if Milton Glaser has trouble finding good clients, God help the typical design firm in America. I think that's part of the reason people accede to a lot of mediocrity. They've got to get the project out; they've got to pay the rent. And it's a very sad, hard struggle. I think there are a few heroes in that struggle: Art Chantry, Tom Bonauro, Rick Valicenti—people who are not taking the route of least resistance and most money, people who are staying independent and not seeing design as a business or as a career or as an opportunity but who are fighting to return design to the idea of art and making it part of culture.

**Duffy.** That's where we disagree most—

**Kalman.** Definitely. You think design is a business and I think it's an art.

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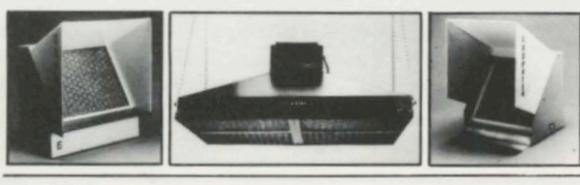


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**Heller.** Tibor, you used a term that I've heard bandied about recently, and I'd really like you and Joe to address it. The term is "cultural force." Now, once it's agreed that a certain mediocrity tends to govern mainstream design, how can design be a cultural force?

**Kalman.** I think that even mediocre design is a cultural force. When design is good, it celebrates the intelligence of the audience. When it's mediocre, it insults that intelligence. It deals with limited, perverse, and convenient frames of reference that will entice a client to buy the product, as opposed to dealing with education, for example. Can a commercial project be educational? I think the answer is yes. Can a brochure for a hospital be informational? Yes, because a certain amount of that space can be devoted to making people understand how a hospital works and what it does.

**Heller.** Well, a hospital brochure is one thing; that's intended to be informational . . .

**Kalman.** Then let's talk about a real-estate project. In a real-estate project, you can address issues of architecture and architectural context, of neighborhood and neighborhood context, of history, and so on. The brochure can be used as an educational device that will deal with issues that are broader than how many square feet or what type of dishwasher an apartment has. I think that's one of the things we and a lot of designers in America struggle with. Unfortunately, a lot of other designers don't give it their attention: They don't want to put that many hours into it; they don't want to think about it too hard; they don't want to break the client's chops; they don't want to take a chance that they'll lose the project.

**Duffy.** I think design definitely is a cultural force. As Tibor mentioned, even bad or mediocre design. It causes people to do things, or it gives people perceptions or ideas about products or about how to get from point A to point B in the case of signage, for instance.

**Kalman.** Or why. That's the part that's usually missing.

**Duffy.** Right. And design should be educational, not just in terms of explaining how a hospital works but in terms of explaining a product. How to use it. Or why it's better than another product. I think that's valid.

**Kalman.** But you see, Joe, that's the lie. That's the lie of the Wall Street Journal ad, too, and that's the line that you used in San Antonio when we had our stupid debate: that your ad informs people.

**Duffy.** We're talking about design.

**Kalman.** Yeah, but you're saying that it explains the product. Explaining the product is selling the product, and to confuse that with making an impact on the culture is a lie, and don't tell yourself that one.

**Duffy.** If you explain how a hospital works, to use your example, are you not selling the services of that hospital? Or of a real-estate project, if you explain its history or why someone should live there? You're not selling it?

**Kalman.** I didn't talk about any of those things. If you go back to what I said, it was about creating a context for the product and dealing with that context. If we can spend some of our budget educating about the context, as opposed to the product, then we might be able to teach someone something. We might be able to use private funds for public good. But if all we're doing is merely explaining the product, then we haven't done that.

**Heller.** I hate to go back to the Classico sauce, but . . .

**Kalman.** Your question is, How would M&Co. have handled the

Classico sauce to avoid its being purely nostalgic and have it make an impact on the culture?

**Heller.** Wait a minute, let me put it in my own words: Okay, Tibor, how would *you* have handled the Classico sauce?

**Kalman.** I think that if it was about Italy, it could have taught Italian. It could have been a geography lesson. It could have been a history lesson. Also, all packages should begin to deal with political and environmental issues; they should do more to encourage people to recycle—show them other uses for the product so that it doesn't just have to go into the garbage. The downside, of course, is that all of that takes more label space, and therefore we have to use a larger piece of paper and more glue and kill more trees. But these things can be done. If you give me an hour, I'll come up with 10 better ideas.

**Heller.** Is this what designers should be doing now, from the lowest level to the highest: thinking about these aspects of the problem? Is that what you're saying?

**Kalman.** I guess I am.

**Duffy.** And I would agree with it. I think, as designers, we have to strive to do more and not just be decorators; we have to do things that would educate. With Classico, we certainly didn't give a geography lesson, but we talked about a region in Italy where that particular product came from. There's only so much you can do on a package, and I think what we have to strive for is gaining the respect from companies that make products like that so that we can sit in earlier on and help improve the product as well as the package. We're not going to do that unless they feel that we have our marketing act together and that we can help them sell it. That's what design is in many respects: We have to sell. Otherwise, why not be involved in fine art, Tibor? I mean, if you're so against the selling aspect of design, and if you want to do things that will allow you to lose \$2 million a year, why don't you just do it for art's sake?

**Kalman.** I'm not interested in being an artist.

**Heller.** Then what do you mean by the "marriage of art and design"?

**Fox.** Or that design should be an art?

**Kalman.** Design should be practiced more like an art form. Right now, it's going in the opposite direction, becoming too professional and analytical, not intuitive enough.

**Heller.** Does that mean that design should be a matter of individual expression?

**Kalman.** I think that design needs individual expression to be meaningful. And individual expression has to be honest and not cynical.

**Heller.** Isn't the work of the Duffy Group well crafted, imaginatively put together, colorful, and pleasing? And isn't there M&Co. work which falls under that same category? And wouldn't you say that's what the art is in the design process?

**Kalman.** I think that's the visual part of it, but art exists on other levels besides what something looks like: It also deals with the intellectual process of absorbing the work, or the intellectual process of enjoying it, or how it was created—like conceptual art and other kinds of things.

**Heller.** Enjoyment is a very good word here; as Joe says, the Classico product is enjoyed by people because, for some reason, it appeals to an esthetic sense.

**Kalman.** We like to do some work that makes people's eyes hurt.

**Heller.** Is that appropriate?

**Kalman.** I don't think the whole thing is about enjoyment and

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making things pretty. I think if you're in business, that's certainly what you do, but if you regard what you do to an extent as an art—and I want to be very careful . . . I'm not an artist; I don't know anything about art, and I don't want to be out there on that branch, either. What we do, we're in a business. And we run it as a business.

**Duffy.** But isn't part of a business to sell through design?

**Kalman.** I know you've been dying to ask me that question, and my answer is that that's what you get paid for.

**Duffy.** But is it wrong that design is at least partially about selling?

**Kalman.** Isn't it entirely about selling?

**Duffy.** Okay, is it wrong that it's entirely about selling?

**Kalman.** No, that's not wrong. It's what designers do with it that's wrong.

**Heller.** That confuses me. I want to go to the next question, and this has to do with something I know both of you have done projects for, and that is AIDS. Joe has done posters for benefits [Fig. 14, p. 74]. And Tibor recently did a card for something that ID magazine was putting together to help support Diffa [Design Industries Foundation for AIDS] [Fig. 15, p. 74]. And I raise this point because it relates to appropriateness, it relates to art, it relates to social consciousness.

**Kalman.** That's not fair, because actually the designer and the copywriter on the card is Alexander Brebner.

**Heller.** Okay, but it was an M&Co. project. The cards were essentially designed to be like UNICEF cards, to sell to people to raise money for an organization that is supporting AIDS research. Five or six other designers were asked to do something, and essentially the brief was to make a pretty card that would sell to a general market. The M&Co. solution was a stark commentary on the issue itself. And my question is, Is it appropriate to take the problem and express yourself in that manner, which is to make the eyes sore, as you said?

**Kalman.** Well, that card is intended to make the emotions sore, not the eyes. And it's a very good example of the difference between the way my group and Joe's group might handle a project. Yes, we could have made this pretty scene with flowers—something that looks like a greeting card. But we wanted to create a political statement about AIDS because we think that if you are going to do a project for Diffa and not deal with AIDS, you might as well just send them a check. We wanted to come up with a solution that took away the idea that AIDS is only gay people or poor people or IV drug users or little black children and get across the idea that AIDS is about all of us. So we did a very simple card, which just said in capital letters: "THEM = US." We were very careful to make a political statement that no one could disagree with. But if in the context of talking about AIDS, you were to say, "THEM = US," that's something George Bush could not call radical bullshit. And a young gay person could send it home to his parents with the message, "Hi, Mom, I'm gay. I wanted you to know." We wanted it to be on that level.

On the other hand, we were also asked to do a project for "Edible Architecture," which is a show that Steelcase Design Partnership sponsored this past fall. They had asked for 25 or 30 designers and architects to do pieces like a cake of a building to raise money for Diffa. We made a proposal for a project which we managed to find the funding for, but they refused to put it into the show because it was not a building—because it dealt with AIDS. They said, "Why don't you do a homeless person in a

box?" And we said, "No, that's not what AIDS is about. Let's really talk about what AIDS is about, and let's see whether what you guys are doing is getting publicity for Steelcase Design Partnership or raising money for AIDS."

Now, the problem with all of this is that if we had made a really pretty card, maybe a lot more people would have bought a pretty card, and that would have raised money for Diffa. Or if we had made another beautiful, nice, stupid Empire State Building cake, that would have raised more money for Diffa. We ended up not doing the "Edible Architecture" project because they refused to accept our piece.

**Heller.** Is that an issue of political rightness or egotism?

**Kalman.** Fuck you, Steve. That's my answer to that. It's an issue of political rightness. And I think that's a bullshit question.

**Duffy.** But if you agree to take on a project where the purpose is to raise money for what you consider a worthy cause, why would you disagree with doing something that would raise some money?

**Kalman.** Because I don't think that money is enough. I think education is just as important as money, and there are a lot more people with a lot more money than me. I'm better off making my contribution educational, and the cause is better off, too.

**Duffy.** If the client comes to me as a designer to create something that will make money for what I consider a worthy cause, then I'm going to do the best possible job.

**Heller.** So you wouldn't rewrite the brief?

**Duffy.** Not unless I felt that I could do the job better in a different way. I don't find fault with the client saying, "We're going to refuse your work because it doesn't address what we're trying to do."

**Kalman.** Steve, what was that question? Were you really asking whether I believe politically in what I'm saying or whether I'm just trying to do a project that will get us a lot of notoriety? Is that the question?

**Heller.** No. The question is: How much of that is ego and how much is political rightness in your ethic? How much of it is ethical, moral—whatever you want to call it?

**Kalman.** It's all ethical, political, and moral.

**Heller.** Well, that's the question. And the question goes to Joe as well. Is sticking to that brief an ethical/moral decision? If you came up with an alternative project that you felt was more appropriate for the client's needs, would you or would you not continue with the job?

**Duffy.** Well, it's really hard to say, not being given the specific job, but if I feel that the client is right in asking me to do something that will sell in order to benefit that particular cause, I'll go along with it. That doesn't mean I won't challenge him and say, "Why don't I try it this way instead, because I think it'll work better?" We do it all the time, and I think we have to. We can't just sit back and say, "Tell us how to do it."

**Kalman.** This "Edible Architecture" thing is a good example of what Steve is talking about. Our project was a lifesize Ronald Reagan cake with Reagan wearing boxer shorts, and that was all he was wearing, and he was looking a bit like a cadaver. We planned to take all of the comments he had made about AIDS over the course of his eight years of administration, which are considerable, and write them on the cake with frosting in script, so it was completely edible. That's what our project was because we feel, and I think you probably feel, that a lot of what happened in this country about AIDS was disgusting and could have been dealt with a lot better, a lot earlier, with a lot more

people's lives saved—a lot of my friends' and I'm sure a lot of your friends' lives saved. Our piece was angry. And Michael Graves's piece was little triangular-shaped cookies that were sold at Bloomingdale's. And Milton Glaser's piece was a thing with a pear—a pear cake or something. And everybody was going around making these cute little things. The reason we were doing ours was because we knew that all the coverage of this project would become political coverage because of this goddamn body in the middle of this room.

**Heller.** I'd like to end this with one question that we essentially started with. Now that you've both had your say, are the differences between your points of view the same? Are you any closer?

**Duffy.** As I mentioned earlier, I have respect for Tibor Kalman and for M&Co.'s work. I think they've done many good things. As I also mentioned earlier, I have a problem with any designer—but particularly one who has a position of influence in our business—having double standards, doing work for people who tell them what to do, in order to make money and to finance work they want to do for clients that don't have the power to tell them what to do. And I think Tibor has been guilty of that.

**Heller.** Tibor?

**Kalman.** Well, this is not a jury trial, so I won't bother to repeat my answer to your double-standard thing. If it stays in [the printed version of this debate], I'll just ask people to please go back a few pages and find the discussion.

Let me say that one of the things that's going to have to happen if design is to get any better over the next few years is that people are going to have to be criticized—including myself—and be ready to stand up to criticism and defend what they do. The more public one becomes, the more we are criticized, and that criticism is a very good thing for this industry.

**Duffy.** My concern is not the criticism, because I appreciate that, and I'll stand up to that. But I want to be given the opportunity to stand up to it, and I think my whole problem with AIGA San Antonio was that I did not have the opportunity to present my side of the argument.

**Kalman.** But that's what the next conference is for, Joe. The next conference is for you to attack me.

**Duffy.** You miss the obvious. If I have something to say that is negative toward you, then I'll say it so that you can respond to it. You didn't give me that opportunity at all. I don't think it's fair. **Kalman.** I did say it in front of you. I think you said you were in the audience. And I would have welcomed you standing up right at that moment and interrupting the speech.

**Duffy.** I don't think it's fair to—

**Kalman.** Life ain't fair, you know. I don't think that we can have a polite forum for criticism in everything we do. And I think this issue of fair and unfair and opportunity to respond is bullshit.

I think what really distinguishes us is that, with all due respect, and don't take it personally—I think the political issue is more important than the personal issue—you're a Reagan-era yuppie and I am, unfortunately, a '60s radical. And I think the difference between us is precisely that: You see this as a good opportunity, a nice career, a chance to make a killing. And I see this as a business that affects people's lives and affects people's brains.

**Duffy.** I think you're completely wrong. I have not worked for people in order to just make money, as you have, so for you to accuse me of being in this business to make a killing is absurd.

**Heller.** Let's end it on that happy note.

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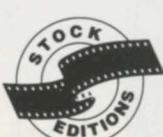
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