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STEP

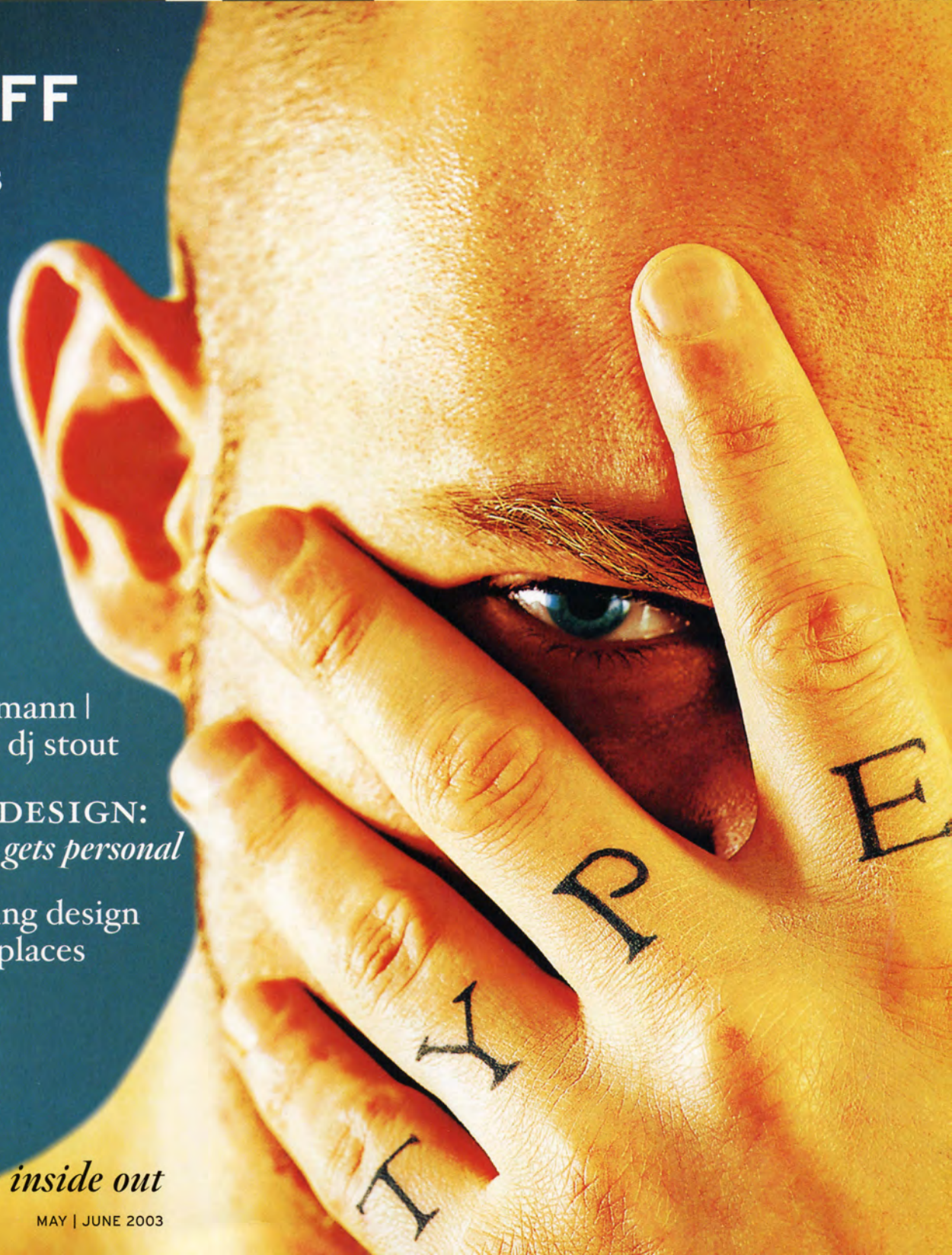


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MAY | JUNE 2003



my color palette *nancy herrmann*

WHAT COLORS SAY ABOUT INDIVIDUALS



Drawing on experience in architecture, publishing, and fashion, designer Nancy Herrmann has made a career of cross-pollinating design principles in her work for companies such as Virgin Entertainment and Michael Kors.

“Sometimes I see architecture in terms of color, or fashion in terms of space. For me, color is informational. It may operate as a wayfinding device or signify the type of space, say public or private, that one is entering. My color choices are generally guided by the use of space and its context.

“With retail brands, I am often designing public spaces, where an immediate response or quick reading is desired. The Virgin Megastore signage system (left), designed with Anthony Deen and John Schettino, makes full use of the color spectrum to achieve this.

“It all started with Rock/Pop/Soul (a Virgin music category) and PMS 485—the perfect red and the color that is most strongly identified with Virgin. We used several large gestures of color, in concert with a set of icons, to categorize more than 400,000 pieces of music and entertainment products and, ultimately, to guide the customers to what they want. Color families were introduced to the palette to give each product category its own identity and to allow for enough ‘space’ between the groupings to read as distinct.”

“In private spaces, such as apartments or small graphic pieces, I find that singular colors in play with texture and pattern work well. Because these spaces have a more personal reading, a color can be stronger and have an active presence.

“The Fall 2003 look book for Edward An (right) exemplifies this and is closer to my personal color sensibility of a simple, but dramatic palette. The collection of coats and separates designed by Lori Batt always include the fashion requisite black, navy, and camel fabrics. But Edward An’s signature colors gravitate toward Kelly green and cotton-candy pink. Here, these saturated colors stand out against the cool, modern backdrop of a picture-perfect house in the Hollywood Hills. I pushed everything else in the printed piece to colors bordering on black and white in order to give the product, like the Kelly green coat, its own space.”

Incidentally, black and white is where Herrmann always begins. “Personally, I am drawn to a strong statement with few colors. I formulated my affinity for a dramatic black, white, and red color palette in my high school years, while growing up in the shadow of ultra-conservative Washington, D.C. I was heavily influenced by punk music, classic films, and the fashions of the times when I discovered my signature palette in the form of Clairol’s Blue Black hair color, Chanel’s white face powder, and Revlon’s ‘Love That Red’ lipstick.

“Recently, I’ve been exploring black and white in combination with similarly saturated colors, like canary yellow or cobalt blue, for an expansive urban loft near downtown Los Angeles. It’s a graphic approach, one that is shared between my print and architectural work.”

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