

# The Plain Dealer Sunday Magazine



## Intelligent Design

Nesnadny + Schwartz hit the big time by giving clients what they least expect.

# INTELLIGE

NESNADNY+ SCHWARTZ BEGAN SMALL, IN THE ATTIC OF A CLEVELAND HEIGHTS HOME. TODAY, THE GRAPHIC DESIGN FIRM TOPS \$5 MILLION IN ANNUAL BILLINGS BY GIVING CLIENTS WHAT THEY LEAST EXPECT.

Story by Michele Lesie

Even by University Circle standards, the slate-blue mansion seems contrary to the ultra-modern business it houses, especially on this sunlit summer morning. As landscapers weed-whip between the roots of towering oaks in the front yard, painters carry dropcloths across the homey wrap-around porch, shoes crunching on boards badly in need of a scraping.

Inside, behind a heavy carved wooden door framed by leaded glass, fresh paint wafts and electric sanders whirl. Above polished hardwood floors and lush new area rugs, clean, bare walls await what will surely be meticulously chosen artwork. The scene is

straight out of a home renovation show on cable: A post-Victorian baron's parlor welcomes visitors into one of the most reputable graphic design firms in the country.

Nesnadny+ Schwartz has occupied the corner of Magnolia Drive and East 108th Street for 16 years, but it's possible even some of the neighbors don't know it. The firm that prides itself on the publications, signs, logos and Web components it creates for dozens of corporations, institutions and charities nationwide has no sign of its own outside. Its business card is spartan, and for months its Web site offered little more than an apology for

# N+S DESIGN

Great graphic design is “in the eye of the beholder,” says Progressive Corporation’s Peter B. Lewis, who first hired then-unknowns Joyce Nesnadny and Mark Schwartz in 1982. “I challenged them with the same thing each year. ‘You just did a great job. Now you have to do better.’ And year after year, they were better than before.”

remaining unfinished. Like the cobbler’s child with no shoes, N+S has been too pre-occupied with clients’ needs to design a graphic identity for itself. And, frankly, it doesn’t have to.

In the last three years, as other businesses in the communications industry shrank or closed, Nesnadny + Schwartz increased its staff from seven to 17 and saw \$2 million in annual billings top \$5 million, says Mark Schwartz, who started the firm



with partner Joyce Nesnadny in 1980. Besides its headquarters here, N+S has offices in New York City and Toronto, where Nesnadny lives. Technology keeps her in touch with the Cleveland headquarters, along with a monthly visit to the city.

“There’s been a wonderful confluence of great projects, both in the corporate and the nonprofit worlds,” Schwartz says. “We’re having our best year, and it’s kind of scary.”



Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management erected the Peter B. Lewis Building, designed by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry. Working closely with the university and architect, N+S was engaged as the lead visual communications firm and charged with designing a complete system of print and electronic grand opening materials that would capture the adventurous spirit of the architecture, while enticing recipients to attend the building's unveiling. Shown above is the complete invitation system.

How growth in the worst market since the firm opened can be scary is hard to imagine. But the hard-driving Schwartz says, "As soon as you start believing you're having your best year because you are the best, you've lost your edge."

Schwartz is not superstitious, just honest about the chutzpah it takes to run a business whose founders have always believed that no design concept is too risky, that the

he says of the 95-year-old house he paid \$116,000 for in 1986 when the small company was still fairly new. "It was the scariest thing I ever did."

Schwartz moves through several of the 28 rooms quickly, pointing out the former parlor that will become a reception area and the original kitchen where staffers eat lunch at an old wood table under incongruous track lighting. He passes, without comment, by fireplace mantels and windowsills

displaying ADDY (American Advertising Federation) and other communications awards. There are nearly 1,500 of them, lined up with near-frightening neatness.

A wide central staircase leads to the designers' area, another mix of high-tech,

calming color and tall old windows. The designers are all relatively young—the eldest is 40—and casually dressed. They glance up briefly when Schwartz walks in booming, "Here's where all the geniuses sit!" A few smile or raise their eyebrows before turning back to their screens.

"We're uplinked and downlinked. It's a very technical business now," Schwartz says on the way downstairs. "Especially since the majority of our clients have a Web component."

Still, he adds, "It was a very sad moment in visual communications when the idea that

having a Web site was more important than how that Web site fit into a company's communications strategy.

"You had these technologically savvy entrepreneurs producing sites [for corporations and institutions] that had no

*"This business has a life of its own, a spirit, a character all its own."*

status quo is boring, and that taking on a project with preconceived notions will doom it.

Schwartz is a tall, solidly built guy dressed this morning in black trousers and a black polo shirt that make him look somewhat like a pastor who plans to spend the day in his study. "When we moved here, this was not a fashionable neighborhood,"



vision, no strategy, no agenda and, in a sense, no goal.

"It was, 'We gotta have one because everybody else does,'" he says.

Instead, N+S looks at how it can integrate a Web strategy with the rest of its clients' marketing needs.

Schwartz cites the firm's work for the 1995 grand opening of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, a multimedia extravaganza, as an example of making everything work together. It remains one of his most memorable projects.

N+S, which won the job over several big New York designers, created nearly 100 different yet interrelated components — invitations, posters, admission tickets, backstage passes, the familiar circular logo, T-shirts and other merchandise, some with as little as a day's notice.

"To have been a part of that moment in Cleveland history was one of the most rewarding professional experiences I've ever had," says Schwartz, leaning back in his ergonomically correct office chair. He ranks the experience, only half-jokingly, just below the birth of his children. "We're expensive, but that one wasn't about the dough."



**"Risk, Learn, Grow,"** a quote from Peter B. Lewis, the principal benefactor for the building, was the driving theme for the entire series of marketing communications materials. Items created for the program included the event Web site, puzzle, mouse pad, rack card, T-shirt, coaster, credentials, all event signage and related materials.

UNLIKE NESNADNY, who hails from Parma, Schwartz is not from the Cleveland area. He was born in Massachusetts and grew up in New Jersey, where he studied political science at Rutgers and moved on to fine arts and photography — still his passion — at Princeton. He has never taken a business course.

The two met in a print-making class at Ohio University in Athens. Schwartz was finishing his graduate degree and Nesnadny was a psychology major considering a switch to graphic design. After graduation, he followed her home.

In the early days, Schwartz taught photography at Cleveland State University and Nesnadny designed ads and bus schedules for the Regional Transit Authority, but both soon lost their positions to budget cuts during the Reagan administration.

"It was as if somebody said, 'Let's make Mark and Joyce get real jobs,'" Schwartz recalls.

Combining their skills and freelance connections to form a professional partnership seemed logical. So did giving Nesnadny top billing in the fledgling firm's name — the two figured if she went last, her harder-to-pronounce surname might encourage people to refer to the business as just "Schwartz."

Would that logic and thoughtfulness make everything that easy?

"We worked and lived together with a capital W and a capital L in the same Cleveland Heights house," says Schwartz of the five years N+S operated mostly out of the couple's attic. "You get done working, and you can't go home."

By the mid-1980s, they had five employees who always seemed to be sleeping on the couch or rooting around in the refrigerator. The Xerox machine hummed in their bedroom; the dining table was for often-heated conferencing.

Nesnadny+Schwartz's first client — and the first of many to stay with them for years — was University Circle Inc., which hired the unknowns to create its annual report in 1980. Gratitude for the nonprofit civic organization's willingness to take that risk is one reason N+S chose the neighborhood for its home.



Brochures and press kit materials, shown above, were also developed by N+S as part of a strategic communications plan for the new Peter B. Lewis Building on the campus of Case Western Reserve University.

Yet what Schwartz calls the firm's "Cinderella story" began in 1982 when he phoned Peter B. Lewis, the billionaire, art-and-architecture-loving, philanthropist chairman and CEO of Mayfield Heights-based Progressive Corp. Schwartz intended to offer to take photographs for the auto insurance titan's annual report.

"I was 24 years old. I didn't know any better," Schwartz recalls. "What's the worse that could happen? He'd say, 'No.' What I didn't expect was that he'd answer his own phone."

Thrown by Lewis' gruff, slightly snappish greeting, Schwartz mumbled his offer and was surprised when the older man suggested they meet. Somewhere along the way, Nesnadny+Schwartz decided to seize the day by submitting a \$3,060 bid to design the entire publication. Lewis sat quietly while a group of experienced Progressive staffers conducted the review.

"They were all trying to be polite, nice and encouraging," Schwartz says. "We had never done a corporate annual report." Even the innocent he was back then, he says, "could tell which way that meeting was going to go."

The real grilling commenced when Lewis stepped out of the room for 10 minutes. (As Nesnadny would later say, "They bared their teeth, and they pretty much let us know we weren't getting the assignment.") Having no idea what went on in his absence, Lewis returned to announce that Nesnadny+Schwartz had won the job. He said he liked their nerve.

The nicest part, Schwartz remembers, and will never forget, was that the department head who oversaw the project did not just grudgingly accept his boss's decision. "Rather than do what some people would have done — ensure our failure—

Jim Lloyd ensured our success by teaching us how to do it.

"The truth is, we didn't know if our bid was way high or way low. We were that inexperienced." (It was way, way low.) "But it was the best investment we ever made."

What, exactly, is great graphic design?

"I don't know. It's in the eye of the beholder. In a sense, it's unpredictable," says Lewis, who responded to an e-mail with an overseas phone call from aboard his yacht, the Lone Ranger, to talk about Nesnadny+Schwartz. "All I know is, they do a lot more than design. The work was always high quality, on time and within budget."

When I asked Lewis how much input he had (on the annual reports), he said "All I wanted."

"As I did with everybody else at Progressive, I challenged them with the same thing each year. 'You just did a great job. Now



"Not" was the theme that the Eaton Corporation and N+S developed for the 2002 print and electronic annual reports. Together, N+S and Eaton wrote, then strategically positioned, phrases such as "This is not business as usual," and "This is not a time to relax," throughout the report to reinforce the idea that Eaton is anything but your typical corporation.





How do you design a viewbook, reinvent a visual identity and create a Web site for a school for the visually challenged? The Perkins School for the Blind engaged N+S as the lead visual communications firm, not only to communicate the school's innovative history and programs, but also to focus on the world-wide presence and future of this remarkable institution. The firm met these challenges by using Braille, bold graphics, active typography and vivid illustrations.

you have to do better.' And they did. Year after year, they were better than before."

N+S HAS CREATED Progressive's annual reports, which have garnered 300 national awards ever since. Other local clients, from a 100-plus litany

of recognizable names, include Eaton Corporation; General Electric; Ohio Edison; Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue; Cleveland Clinic Foundation; University Hospitals of Cleveland; Cleveland Foundation; George Gund Foundation; Case Western Reserve University; Akron Museum of Art; and the Cleveland Botanical Garden, Center for Contemporary Art, Orchestra, Play House,

Museum of Art, Institute of Art, Institute of Music and Zoological Society.

Outside northern Ohio, Nesnadny + Schwartz's clients include a diverse mix of corporate and nonprofit organizations, including British Petroleum; Ernst & Young; International Spy Museum; Johnson & Johnson;

McKinsey & Company; Perkins School for the Blind; Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Smart Papers; International Paper; Vassar College and the Seagram Company.

"We're up against firms in New York, Boston and Chicago every day," Schwartz says. "Some of them have more employees

than we do and some are better known, but we've held our own in terms of winning projects when we're up against some of the best firms in the world."

"One of the competitive advantages we have is the fact that in northeast Ohio we are blessed with an overwhelming number of high-quality printers who are less expensive than they might be in a client's home market.

I'm happy about bringing so much of that work to Cleveland," he says.

The firm also takes on a number of small jobs and pro-bono projects here because, "This is where we started. Cleveland is our HQ."

"We're up against firms in New York, Boston and Chicago everyday."







When Champion International Corporation and International Paper merged, one of the results was SMART Papers — a 106 year-old “new” company. In addition to inventing and visualizing the SMART name and brand, N+S was responsible for virtually every aspect of the new corporate and product-related marketing communications initiatives.

Shown on previous page: The SMART Papers logo was applied to a variety of identity materials such as letterhead and second sheet, envelopes, business cards, note cards and swatchbooks.

Shown at left: The SMART Papers Kromekoteplus brochure featured “artistic giants who made their mark because they were relentlessly striving to create their own vision.” Artists include: Joan Miró, Georgia O’Keeffe, Martha Graham, Alexander Calder, Philip Johnson, Gordon Parks, Pablo Picasso, Louis Kahn, Martin Scorsese, Billie Holiday, Truman Capote, Frank Stella, and Jean DuBuffet. All photographs were created by Arnold Newman.

Shown below: A series of four paper swatchbooks that were the central marketing tools used for the launch of four major new product lines.



“Working with nonprofit organizations, with their boards of directors and tight budgets, can be tough,” Schwartz says, “so we just use the money smart, which sometimes means taking less for yourself. There are other ways to get paid. How good you feel at the end of the process. How good the project is. Besides, what better way is there to sell yourself than by example?”

N+S estimates that 80 to 90 percent of its business is repeat or referral; the balance comes from admirers who have seen its work in trade and awards publications.

Schwartz picks up Progressive’s 1994 annual report from his neat desk. The theme that year was “Diversity.” The cover, by Carter Kustera, a respected artist, features a simple red silhouette of a young man’s head, the kind children draw in kindergarten. The title, hand printed and plain, is “Bob is Normal.” The sheer weirdness makes you want to look inside.

“Fundamentally, what is our job? It’s to make this...” He gives the report a little shake “...stand out from the rest of the s--- you find in your mailbox. But it’s not just the initial impact. It’s about sustaining the message. You have to try to understand what the client wants to communicate, then come back with ideas.”

“More times than not, we come back with something they didn’t expect, and sometimes, we have to tell them their message is off. But we’ve never had a client tell us, ‘You didn’t understand.’

“We want to go with you on a journey of discovery,” Schwartz would like to tell clients. “If you already know what you want, get somebody else to do it.”

N+S turns down a fair amount of work for lack of “chemistry,” he adds. “Being able to say ‘no’ is critically important to us. ‘No’ buys you freedom.”

Nesnadny+ Schwartz does not cajole, does not mollify. It points to research. It convinces. Clients know what ideas they want to convey; they just don’t live in a “visual universe,” says Schwartz. The people in the big blue house, and the outside artisans they contract with, do.

Longtime friends and clients—with the exception of soulmate Peter Lewis—describe Mark Schwartz as “intense.”



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6



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10



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1. SMART Papers
5. Thompson Hine
9. Spy City Café
13. Shiffman Consulting

2. Verus Investment Management, LLC
6. Fine Line Litho
10. Museum of Contemporary Art
14. Crawford Museum



3

Vassar

4

LAUREL  
SCHOOL

7



LOWENSTEIN DURANTE  
architects

8



11

LANDAU  
PUBLIC RELATIONS

12



15



16

- 3. International Spy Museum
- 7. Laurel School
- 11. Cleveland Zoological Society
- 15. Perkins School for the Blind

- 4. Vassar College
- 8. Lowenstein Durante Architects
- 12. Landau Public Relations
- 16. Master Printing Company

“He’s a handful,” says Dennis Barrie, now president of Cleveland-based Malrite Co., and former director of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. “Clients have to be kind of ready for Mark, and those who think in a more limited way almost always find the experience to be too much.”

“We found ourselves loving what he was doing but having to rein him in,” says Barrie of the Rock Hall’s launch. “I don’t think N+S is for everybody. They appeal to people who are not uncomfortable in this world, who want to push the limits.”

It was Barrie who suggested Malrite hire N+S to design the print materials and merchandise for its International Spy Museum, which opened in July.

In the last four years, Vassar College and the Cleveland Institute of Art saw increases in enrollment they credit in part to the firm’s enticing “viewbooks” sent out to targeted students. Vassar chose N+S over larger, closer-to-home graphic design firms that specialize in college recruiting materials.

“One of the things that struck me is their ability to listen, and then reflect what we’ve said in a visual way,” says Susan DeKrey, Vassar’s vice president of college relations. “The very message ‘be’ [See photo, page 16] reflects the kind of place we are, a school where people don’t fit into a mold.”

The Cleveland Institute of Art’s program takes five years as opposed to the more-common four. The school asked N+S to “explain the extra year confidently, without sounding arrogant or defensive,” recalls the institute’s vice president, William Edmondson. The firm’s simple 2+3=5 theme, combined with data on the good jobs procured by CIA graduates, “was subtle but exactly what we were looking for,” he says. “We challenged them to surprise us and they did.”

One of the firm’s most interesting experiences was designing a viewbook and Web site for Perkins School for the Blind, founded as the nation’s first such school in Boston in 1829 and a landmark in Watertown, Massachusetts, since 1910. The school wanted a publication that would appeal graphically to the current generation and emphasize its outreach programs that extend to more than 50 countries.





In addition to providing the art direction for an astoundingly successful exhibition at the Cleveland Museum of Art, N+S also developed a 180-page hardback book, exhibition Web site, postcards, posters, rack cards, a complete invitation system and T-shirts as part of a comprehensive communications plan for the Gund Foundation's opening of an exhibition titled *A City Seen: Photographs from the George Gund Foundation Collection*.

Janet Spitz, the school's director of development and public relations, was pleased. The image of a globe on the view book's cover "makes it clear that this is an international organization" and lures readers in. The history section features a not-often-seen photograph of Perkins' most famous alumna, Annie Sullivan, and her student, Helen Keller, who began her formal education at Perkins.

Schwartz tends to attract clients who may have different backgrounds, personalities and professions but believe, as N+S does, that the work comes first—and that a little ruckus is part of the creative process.

"It's true that he is very intense," says Spitz. "But the thing about the firm is its absolute commitment to excellence, and people can see that."

"Sure, Mark's intensity can grate on some

IF JOYCE NESNADNY seems far removed from all this, she is not. She works from, rather than in, Toronto, where she lives with her Canadian husband, also a graphic designer, and their five-year-old son.

"It's amazing that we weren't afraid, but we didn't have a choice," she says, recalling the two gung-ho, jobless twentysomethings who set up shop in a Cleveland Heights attic more than 20 years ago. "Then came Peter Lewis and everything just started going."

people, but you're not hiring a personality," says Kristen Bihary, vice president for communications for Eaton Corporation "The last thing you want is design for design's sake."

Schwartz was intrigued with the idea that N+S might touch the lives of people who would never see their work. "We in the world of visual communications get selected to do a Web site for the blind," he says. "The opportunity was just astounding."

We never did much cold-calling after that. They [clients] usually came to us. We've been very lucky."

"One of the things that struck me was their ability to listen."



She laughs at the memory of that first meeting with Lewis' staff. "It was a humorous moment even then," she says. "Everyone looked so shocked. Progressive has had great faith in us over the years. It's easy to screw up when you're new, but Peter worked with us. That's what made it so remarkable."

Much of what N+S has achieved rests on the connections it makes, not just with clients but with everyone involved in a project, Nesnadny believes.

"We really work hard to establish relationships with people," she says. "We've been able to maintain a lot of clients for a decade plus, which is unusual in the design world. Part of it is the reputation we've built, the work we've published, the quality of the staff. They want to work for us."

"And part of it is being in a place that really supports our work. People outside of Cleveland don't seem to have that loyalty. There's always new talent willing to do stuff for less. In a different city, this would have been a different business."

Another departure from the ordinary is the firm's collaboration with artists and fine-art photographers who often surprise staffers as well as clients. "They look at things a little differently than a commercial artist would," Nesnadny says. "They respond to the assignment but interpret it in a personal way."

They also can be fiercely uncompromising. "You have to be open to that," she says.

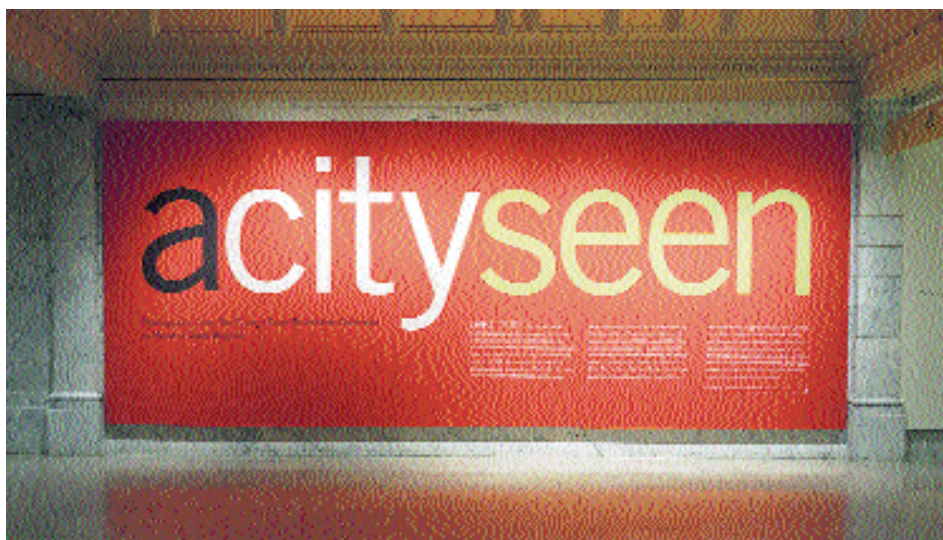
In 1986, the year N+S moved to University Circle, Nesnadny took a two-year leave of absence to pursue a master of fine arts degree

at Yale University. "Those years apart were a turning point," she says. "Grad school is time for yourself. It opened my eyes."

"Schoolwork is more theoretical, so the boundaries fall away. I could also slow down enough to understand that there were more opportunities out there than we'd seen before."

Looking back, Nesnadny recalls never making a clear-cut decision to end her personal relationship with Schwartz while maintaining their professional partnership. It just happened that way. Both concede the arrangement is unusual, but after all this time, more so to others than to themselves.

"The way I look at it is, we got to keep the part of the relationship that was good," says Nesnadny.



N+S developed designs that drove the opening of the exhibition, *A City Seen: Photographs of the George Gund Foundation Collection*, at The Cleveland Museum of Art. *A City Seen* was a culmination of 12 years of annual reports created by N+S for the George Gund Foundation. The year 2002 marked the 50th anniversary of the foundation's beginning therefore, the exhibition also served to celebrate this milestone. N+S managed, created and produced all components relating to this event, ranging from marketing materials to event signage and gift shop merchandise. Additionally, Mark Schwartz, president and creative director at N+S, was the curator and project manager for the exhibition.







As the graphic design firm of record for the International Spy Museum, Nesnadny + Schwartz's mission was the development of a comprehensive system of visual communications tools and materials. The scope of work addressed various projects throughout the Spy Museum universe. They included print and electronic communications, marketing materials, special events, signage, product development and design, packaging and the museum's Web site. The same visual attitudes were applied to create identity systems, menus, signage and related materials for the two museum restaurants—Spy City Café and Zola. The resulting design programs supported the museum as it shattered all attendance and merchandise sales projections. Translation: mission accomplished!

"There are no hard feelings," says Schwartz, who lives in Cleveland Heights with his wife, a clinical psychologist, and the five-and seven-year-old daughters who "changed my world." What is left of the former relationship, he says, is "an intimate knowledge of how each other thinks."

IT IS NEARLY NOON, and Schwartz is eager to get back to work. N+S has just been hired to do the invitations and all other marketing materials for the new Peter B. Lewis building at Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management. Lewis donated nearly \$37 million toward the eye-popping structure by renowned architect Frank Gehry.

Schwartz also will soon curate a 50th anniversary show of photographs culled from the George Gund Foundation's last 12 years of annual reports. Executive Director

David Bergholz hired N+S in 1989, he says, after growing bored with the publication's usual photos of "happy grantees." The exhibit's provocative images of city life and landscapes, taken by well-known and unknown photographers, will be donated to the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Up on the office's second floor, associate creative director Greg Oznowich is

change their minds as long as there's logic behind it [a different idea] and it's smart," Oznowich says.

His definition of smart, a word heard often at the firm is, "the right solution, not just the best-looking one."

"Mark is demanding. Even if something doesn't fax well, he gets upset. But that's just what happens," Oznowich, says, shrugging. "I think we all admire his unwillingness to compromise quality."

*"It's the work that gives it that life. It's*

handling another big assignment, Planned Parenthood's \$340 million national fundraising campaign. Like most of his fellow designers, he jumped at the chance to work at N+S after seeing the firm's work at professional meetings and in awards publications.

"Mark and Joyce always bring good things to the table, but if you don't like it, you can

"What it all comes down to is the concept. The fun part is discovering that concept. I've literally been on the highway and stopped to sketch something in my sketch book. The work is constantly changing here.

"The jobs are always exciting," he says.





The Planned Parenthood Federation of America chose Nesnadny + Schwartz as its lead visual communications firm to develop a comprehensive print and electronic program to brand their international “Power the Promise” Campaign. This \$340 million fundraising effort is the first federation-wide campaign in the organization’s 87-year history. The materials included: a complete graphic identity system and related business papers, a case statement brochure, presentation portfolio and various supporting materials. Additionally, N + S was commissioned to create a new Web site to further bolster the efforts of the campaign.

Designer Teresa Snow, 27, is working on a display for the Cleveland Zoological Society effort to raise \$4 million for the zoo’s new hospital and education pavillion. N+S also designed the society’s Web site, logo, membership cards and other materials. Cleveland Zoological Society executive director, Elizabeth Fowler, wanted the firm because “I really feel like they care about us. They’re always on time and within the budget,” she said. “As the manager of a non-profit, I can’t tell you how important that is.”

The zoo project is one of the more fun assignments and a nice fit for a new

Nesnadny+ Schwartz does not employ the usual go-betweens, account executives and other “business types,” Schwartz says. “Our most junior staff people, as well as everyone else, have direct contact with our most senior clients. It helps prevent miscommunication,” he says, “not to mention the too-many-cooks syndrome.”

“We’re careful not to set [young staff] people up for failure,” he says, “We can’t have them losing credibility with clients or vendors because once you lose that, it’s hard to get it back.”

Still, the stress can be unbearable.

To assuage it, Schwartz brings in a chair masseuse, has soft music piped into the designers’ room, tries to close shop early every other Friday in the summer and invites staffers out for impromptu lunches and movies — if they can get away.

“This is a deadline-driven business,” he says. “It doesn’t matter how wonderful your work is if it’s late.” The non-artsy logistics of manufacturing and distribution also can cause anxiety which, in Schwartz’s estimation, is not nearly as stressful as being considered “fluff.” It’s important to show the client that what N+S does is an essential part of their business.

“Stress comes from wanting to do your best work under pressure and exceeding the client’s expectations.

And yes,” he says, sighing a

little dramatically, “occasionally, Mark Schwartz is a monster, a demanding, uncompromising perfectionist. But I think that’s one of the strengths of this company.” His smile returns. “Trying to communicate everything as the loving leader is not easy for me.”

the people too, but it's mostly the work!!

designer. Snow has been at N+S for a month. “The focus is on good design here. I really like that,” she says. “You don’t make reputations by doing something mediocre.”





Left: The Vassar College Office of Development required an identity and related materials that would compel people to support the school, as well as recognize those who have helped sustain Vassar over the course of the year.

Below: N+S completely revamped the Vassar College admissions communications materials to focus on raising awareness and increasing admissions numbers. The series, shown below, includes a viewbook, direct mail brochure, science brochure, outcomes brochure, and redesigned Web site. The design of each component is conceptually and visually linked to form a cohesive series of vehicles targeted at prospective Vassar students.

Opposite page: N+S worked closely with MOCA (Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland) to strategically introduce and position its new brand. The firm developed a new identity system; provided consultation, design, copy writing, art direction, production management and supervision of all brand launch materials; created all internal and external signage; and designed event and exhibition-related communications materials.











Since 1981, the Progressive Corporation has commissioned N+S to create its annual reports. For approximately 20 years, Progressive has used fine art to illustrate these publications. The firm's role has been to design and develop the conceptual and visual theme for both the printed and electronic annual reports. Shown at left: Progressive's commitment to creating a virtually perfect customer experience led to the theme of "service" for the 2001 annual report. The report featured the artwork of Robert ParkeHarrison.

TWO MONTHS LATER, the painters and construction workers

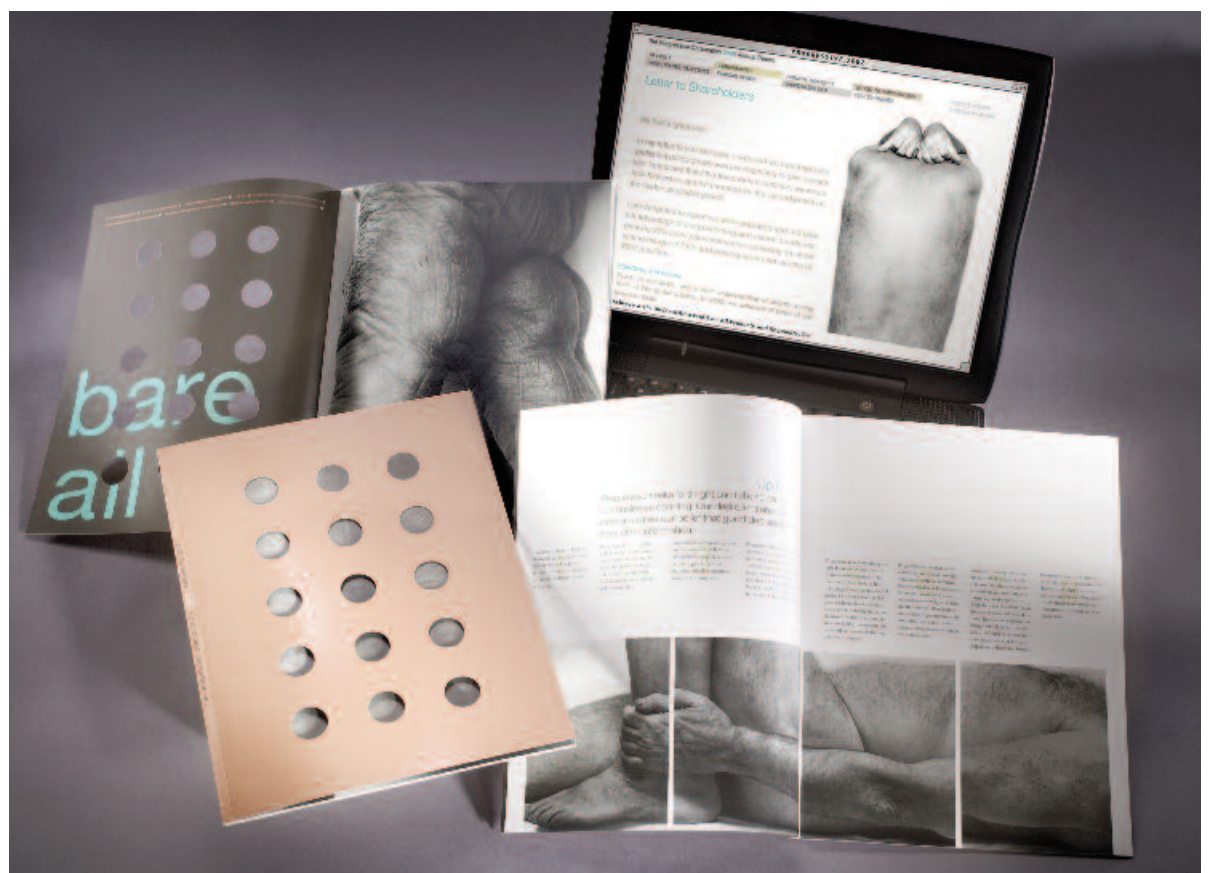
Both the International Spy Museum's dedication and a benefit for the Zoological Society were hugely successful.

the rock hall. "Just think," he says, "the whole world will be focusing on Cleveland again. The opportunity, for a firm like ours, is a blessing."

are gone. The porch has been resurfaced. The nearly finished Web site opens on an image of a glowing light bulb with tiny N's and S's swarming around it like moths, and the firm's signature word, "Ideas."

Schwartz is geared up for the dedication of the Peter B. Lewis Building this Wednesday, which puts him in mind of the excitement that surrounded

Shown at right: Progressive's long-standing commitment to full disclosure, self-examination, continuous improvement, timely reporting and most importantly, honesty, led to the theme of 'transparency' for the 2002 annual report. Photographer John Coplans, who is known for his nude self-portraits, was commissioned to communicate this theme. N+S strategically featured Coplan's photographs to show that when it comes to corporate disclosure, Progressive has nothing to hide.



# NESNADNY + SCHWARTZ



Cleveland



New York



Toronto

## Concepts backed by research. Creativity backed by logic. Results backed by experience.

Relationships—the long-standing, mutually beneficial, learning kind—that is what Nesnadny + Schwartz is all about. Many of our clients have partnered with us since our formation 23 years ago. We are often told that it's our visionary ideas and flawless execution that keeps them coming back. On the other hand, we like to think it's our charming demeanor, keen wit, pleasant smiles and striking good looks (see back cover) that really has them hooked.

All joking aside, we can't do great work without great clients. This realization informs every project we accept, which includes a healthy balance of national and international engagements from both the corporate and institutional sectors. We take great pride in our work. Pride in the ideas—in the clarity of thinking—in the attention to every detail—and ultimately—in exceeding all expectations. And so it follows, that for N + S, it is through this pride that the voice of each client and every project reveals itself.

Nesnadny + Schwartz's work is represented in the permanent collections of many museums, has been featured in virtually every journal devoted to the field of

visual communications and has won over 1,500 national and international awards in the fields of marketing communications, interactive electronic design, public relations, event and environmental graphics, recruiting, investor relations, development, graphic identity and brand development, photography, illustration and graphic design.

Our clients include: British Petroleum, the Cleveland Clinic, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland Museum of Art, Ernst & Young, Eaton Corporation, Federal Reserve Bank, International Spy Museum, Johnson & Johnson, McKinsey & Company, Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, NASA, Perkins School for the Blind, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, The Progressive Corporation, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, SMART Papers and Vassar College, to name just a few.

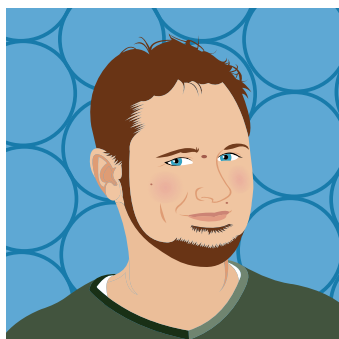
We believe that the best creative opportunity is the next creative opportunity! We continue to accept all challenges and obstacles with an open mind and eagerness to dream. If your enterprise has an exciting opportunity that you would like to discuss, contact Mark Schwartz at 216.791.7721, or [info@NSideas.com](mailto:info@NSideas.com).



Interiors by Hanson Photographic







Cover: Joyce Nesnadny + Mark Schwartz. Left to right, top to bottom: Dana Anderson, Michael Beh, John P. Forrest Jr., Sarah Heintzman, Cindy Lowrey, Joe Matsumoto, Michelle Moehler, Gregory Oznowich, Rachel Perez-Stable, Keith Pishner, Monica Quiroga, Samantha Rine, Stacie Ross, Teresa Snow, and John-Paul Walton.

CLEVELAND  
216.791.7721

NEW YORK  
212.673.8888

TORONTO  
416.465.8415