

Depth *of* Feel

A COLLECTION
OF CURATED
TALES



STORIES OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND SPACES

VOLUME 03

We create brands you can *feel*.

At Banko Creative Studio, we spin a great yarn. It's kind of our thing. Regardless of the medium we find the right angle for all of our clients. Whether you're in Atlanta, Chicago, Hamilton, Toronto or points in between, we'll start your narrative and nail your ending.

We've been doing this for a long while—since 1996 to be exact.

A few decades later, we've shared a lot of beers and a lot of cheers with small businesses, large corporations, and non-profit organizations.

We solve unique business problems with unique creative solutions, using a combination of our diverse in-house skill sets.

banko
CREATIVE STUDIO



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The everything bagel of issues.

Welcome to our latest issue of Depth of Feel. One of the things we appreciate most about the work we do is that every day is different. From large-scale campaigns to intimate design projects, we get to collaborate with a variety of clients on a wide range of assignments. You'll see some of that diversity in this issue. The thing that unites all of the projects we do is that, at its heart, our work is about creating meaningful experiences for our clients and their audiences.

We're proud to share the breadth of projects we've taken on, including architectural photography, custom illustration, app development and social media marketing. But we don't just want to show off the finished product, we want to give you a glimpse into our creative process and provide practical tips you can use yourself.

For us, good work extends beyond aesthetics, it's about problem-solving and seizing opportunities. That's why we're especially thrilled about our recent collaboration with mcCallumSather and the Valley Park Library. We developed an interactive scavenger hunt that encourages visitors to explore the sustainable features of the renovation and make a positive impact. We take pride in using our skills to make the world a little bit better each day.

Of course, we also know how to have a little fun. Our team had a blast bringing these projects to life, and we hope that our enthusiasm shines through on these pages. We're always looking for new challenges and opportunities to collaborate with creative, forward-thinking clients. So if you have a project in mind, don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thanks for reading,

Tara

Tara Bryk, CEO
Banko Creative Studio



If these walls could talk.

Imagine walking into a luxurious hotel room with sleek leather and velvet furniture, a mod multi-faceted light fixture casting a soft glow over the space, and gorgeous warm wood accents on the walls. Sounds great, right? But in this instance, we’re not here to enjoy the plush bed or the beautiful downtown view. We’re here for the flooring. Specifically, we’re here for the story behind the fibre that made the flooring.

Dan Banko, our creative director, is photographing the hotel room, and he’s set up his shot to tell the story of the floor.

“Every interior shoot is different,” says Dan. “For this assignment the goal isn’t to showcase the entire room because we aren’t working for the hotel property. We have to show the context of the room, but our clients want us to focus as close up as possible on the individual fibres in the flooring. Everything in the hotel is meant to convey this visual, tactile, sensual experience. They want to tie themselves to the luxury of the hotel brand without identifying the hotel itself. The way we shoot the carpet and the carpet fibre to reflect that. That’s the key to this story.”

Because everything has a story. Buildings, hotel rooms, furnishing and flooring, too.

Telling stories through images is a skill that we’ve honed over the years. Our first hotel assignment took place back in 2004, and since then, we’ve photographed hundreds of spaces, from showrooms and hotels to libraries, labs, hospitals, schools, warehouses, and homes. Each project is unique, and we work closely with our clients to understand their brand, their audience, and the story they want to tell.



It’s all about the brand.

At the heart of every project is our client’s brand. Flooring manufacturer Mohawk Group prefers their interiors to look unstaged and unplanned. While staging does happen—nobody wants garbage cans or clutter lying around—we work to create a natural look with lighting and emphasize the flooring.

“We create images that bring our clients’ stories to life.”

DANIEL BANKO, BANKO CREATIVE STUDIO





In contrast, Hyatt Hotels prefers everything to be very controlled. Their images tell the story of your room, the entire room, the experience you can expect at their properties, and it's going to look perfect every time.

We work closely with our clients to understand their vision and create images that reflect their brand. But it's not just about the visuals. We also need to understand our client's audience and how they interpret architecture and design. Architecture, like any other art form, is open to interpretation.

"The architect or designer may have all these great ideas and themes around why they did anything, but, the people who are using and looking at these spaces are going to bring their own perspective to that narrative," says Dan.

The thing about storytelling is your audience is part of the story. Understanding who we're talking to helps us make sure the message comes through loud and clear.

Finally, we get to the story itself. The why. Why does this matter? What is your message? We dive deep into the concept behind the design and determine the message the images need to convey. Whether we're focusing on the flooring, the furniture, or the mood, we work with our clients to determine the story they want to tell and then create images that bring that story to life.

The image feels a bit magical.

Architects and designers think carefully about the experience they want to create, and we do the same with our photography. We use our images to bring people into the environment and experience the space for themselves.

"How does the niche that you want to work in as an architect or a designer fit the storytelling arc of the built environment that you've designed? How does that then translate visually so that other clients will say, 'Okay, I'm getting what you've done here. I want you to tell my version of the story,'" explains Dan. "That's what we bring to architectural photography."

When we photographed integrated design firm mcCallumSather's transformation of a former library into low-income housing, we focused on the story of home. Sandra Mulder, another of our photographers, set up her camera at dawn.

The sky was a vibrant deep blue, a hint of daylight illuminated the beautiful old brick, and the interior lights created an inviting glow.

What story did this photo tell?

"The image feels a bit magical," Sandra shares. "The house is quite old and has Victorian features, and when the lights are on, it looks warm and cozy. It feels homey, unlike other low-income housing that can sometimes feel like



basic boxes. Walking up the stairs to this house would make you feel right at home."

That's a heart-warming story that helps mcCallumSather connect with people.

For Sandra, the storytelling approach is about helping our clients stand out. "If I can create an image with a unique perspective or an element of surprise, that makes the subject more intriguing and interesting. Maybe it makes the viewer think twice or do a double take. I want to set myself and our photography apart to tell a story in a different way."

That sets our clients apart and helps them get noticed.

If your mortgage was a meme.

If making your mortgage, credit card, and bill payments on time is starting to feel like a game of Whac-A-Mole, you really should get in touch with our client, The Personal Mortgage Group.

If you want social media messaging that also doesn't feel like Whac-A-Mole, check out what we're doing for The PMG (and then get in touch with us so we can do it for you too).

Finances have a bit of a reputation. Stuffy. Boring. Hard to understand.

The Personal Mortgage Group shows it doesn't have to be that way.

Their social media accounts are full of memes, song lyrics, gifs, TV shows, pop culture references—along with advice to help you make the most of your finances.

It's an intentional strategy that separates The PMG from other mortgage brokers and connects with their audience. After all, they're not like other mortgage providers.

Be true to your school.

"Your tone is part of your brand, and your brand is what makes you stand out amongst all the other businesses," says Julia Marchionda, our project manager. "At the end of the day a mortgage brokerage is a mortgage brokerage. You're providing the same service. If the service is the same what is going to differentiate you?

That's going to be the way you look, the way you sound, the level of customer service you provide, and how you deliver that service. Creating a memorable online presence can help you attract the clients you're looking for."

So how do you stand out? To paraphrase Michael Jackson, start with the person (or business) in the mirror.

The PMG's tone is rooted in who they are. Knowledgeable, caring, honest, direct, independent, a bit sarcastic and funny.

They work with clients through every chapter of their lives—buying homes, raising families, going through separations or divorce, living through over-extended debt tune-ups, renovations, and retirement. They're there for it all.

Over the years, they get to know their clients. And social media is one way clients get to know them, even before they meet.

"Someone might interact with your content for months, even years," says Julia. "When they are ready to take advantage of the service you're offering, there will already be a sort of relationship formed. When they do go and speak with you, they have a level of familiarity and comfort."

The PMG's top performing posts reach thousands of viewers in Hamilton. They also increase existing and potential clients' comfort through education, though in an informal, friendly way.



Meme it up.

A meme on their Instagram says, "Ugh the service at my bank is terrible!" above a picture of Britney Spears in her iconic "Dump Him" T-shirt. The caption gives The PMG's phone number so that followers can book a five minute call to see how much better they can do.

Social posts cover topics like mortgage pre-approval and renegotiation, interest rates, options beyond the big banks, budgeting, retirement and more.

"Finding ways to talk about finance to people in terms that they're going to be able to understand, and not just understand but remember, is really important," says also-not-a-numbers-person Julia. "Bringing in memes and pop culture references makes explaining those things a lot easier and more memorable."



“If the service is the same what is going to differentiate you?”

JULIA MARCHIONDA,
BANKO CREATIVE STUDIO



Memes are the universal language of the internet. Look at how quickly Rihanna’s Super Bowl marshmallow back-up dancers blew up. People take a clip and use it to talk about blood cells, seagulls, toddlers, cats, and UFOs.

Different applications, but the universal theme—the part that everyone identifies with—still comes through. In Julia’s opinion, “This is what makes memes so great. Even if people don’t totally understand the topic, they get what the meme is trying to convey, making learning and remembering a lot easier.”

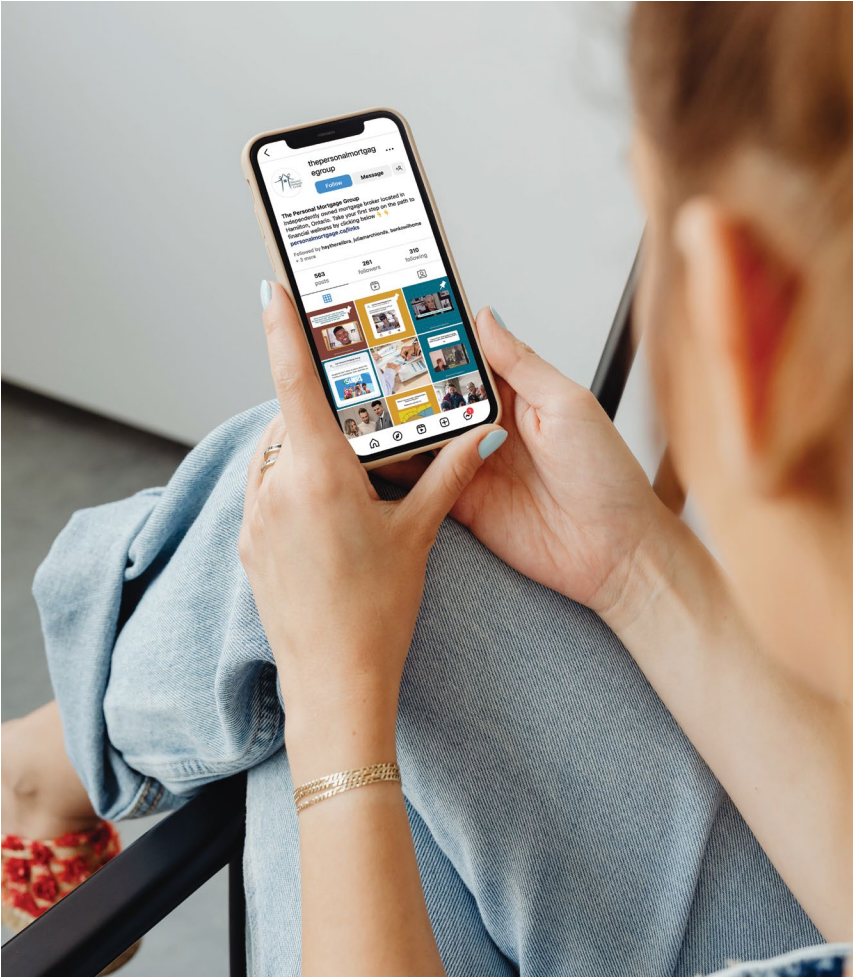
Just the way you are.

It’s a social media strategy rooted in internet history and pop culture knowledge, as well as The PMG’s personality. Why does it work? The PMG actually live and breathe their brand. Their social media channels reflect who they are. But Julia admits that this tone is not the right strategy for everyone.

“If your brand tone isn’t funny and sarcastic you don’t have to be,” she says. But putting effort into your social presence and content shows you care about your business. And we know you care. Here’s how to prove it.

First, figure out who you are. Think about your company, what you value and what you stand for. Then think about the kind of client you’re looking to attract.

Finances have a bit of a reputation. Stuffy. Boring. Hard to understand.



Developing personas for your audience can help, Julia explains. “You don’t necessarily need to tailor every single post to that persona, but it is helpful in figuring out what to write about and what angles to take on certain topics.”

Every business has valuable information to share. Whether it’s packaged as a meme or long form blog post, there are different ways to communicate your business that work for different clients.

It all comes back to your brand and the story that you want to tell.

For The Personal Mortgage Group, their story includes Britney Spears, boy bands and why you should break up with your bank. And it works for them.

In the words of NSYNC, bye-bye-bye.



The hunt for sustainability.



If the word scavenger hunt makes you think of turning over rocks, reaching into crevices and peering around trees, let us introduce you to scavenger hunt 2.0. Our version of a scavenger hunt involves your phone, an app and some pretty cool coding. But it's still fun *and* educational.

When Valley Park opened last year, it was a modern, fresh, forward-looking reinterpretation of the 40-year-old community centre. Our clients, McCallumSather, rethought every aspect of the facility—the way people enter, how different spaces connect, even the heating and plumbing. And they built a 26,500 square foot, environmentally friendly addition just for the library. It was definitely an upgrade.

McCallumSather and the Hamilton Public Library wanted to celebrate the new library and introduce it to the community.

They were also pursuing LEED Gold certification, a mark of just how sustainable the new building is. As part of the certification process, they had to include an educational component to teach people about the green measures included in the facility.

Enter the scavenger hunt.



Make learning fun.

No turning over rocks here.

To start the game, people visit the library's reception desk and receive a bookmark that shows the six categories of LEED: location and transportation, sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. The bookmark has a QR code which takes players directly to the app. (There is also a paper option if people prefer.)

Players then move around Valley Park, finding posters that ask simple questions about LEED and give information about each category. *What is the most earth-friendly way to get to Valley Park? How can you save electricity while reading?* After answering a question, either on paper or in the app, the players move on to the next.

"The scavenger hunt is something easy and enjoyable for a wide range of people and it engages and educates them about sustainability in a fun and creative way," says Sarah Bullard, our designer who worked on the project. "Each question goes into a different LEED category and gives the person interacting with the game an opportunity to learn more about it, the environment and its impact, all while exploring the library."

A webpage on the Hamilton Public Library site provides more information about LEED and links players to the scavenger hunt app.



Coding that clicks.

Nick Tomkin, our director of digital development, built the online version of the game.

“Creating a game is different from creating another type of website or app,” he explains. “Games are typically more complex and interactive. They require a lot of programming and design work to create a compelling and immersive experience that keeps players engaged. The user experience is very important. Games need to be designed with a user-centric approach to ensure that they are enjoyable to play, challenging, and provide a sense of achievement or reward.”

Developing a game often requires a designer and developer to work closely together, so that there is seamless integration between the visual and the architecture of the site.

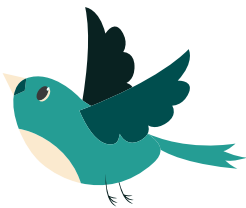
For Valley Park, Sarah designed the layout and look of the hunt, while Nick took care of how it functioned. Together they created a mix of colours, sounds, animations, rewards, and social features to build a game that is not only fun to play but also educational and highly engaging for kids. Who doesn’t love a round of applause?

Making sure the game is easy to use was key. Nick kept the game mechanics simple and used intuitive controls, like swiping and tapping. Immediate feedback—a starburst animation and clapping sound effects—let players know when they answer right. They also make the game more interactive, immersive and exciting.



“Games need to be designed with a user-centric approach to ensure that they are enjoyable to play, challenging, and provide a sense of achievement or reward.”

NICK TOMKIN, BANKO CREATIVE STUDIO

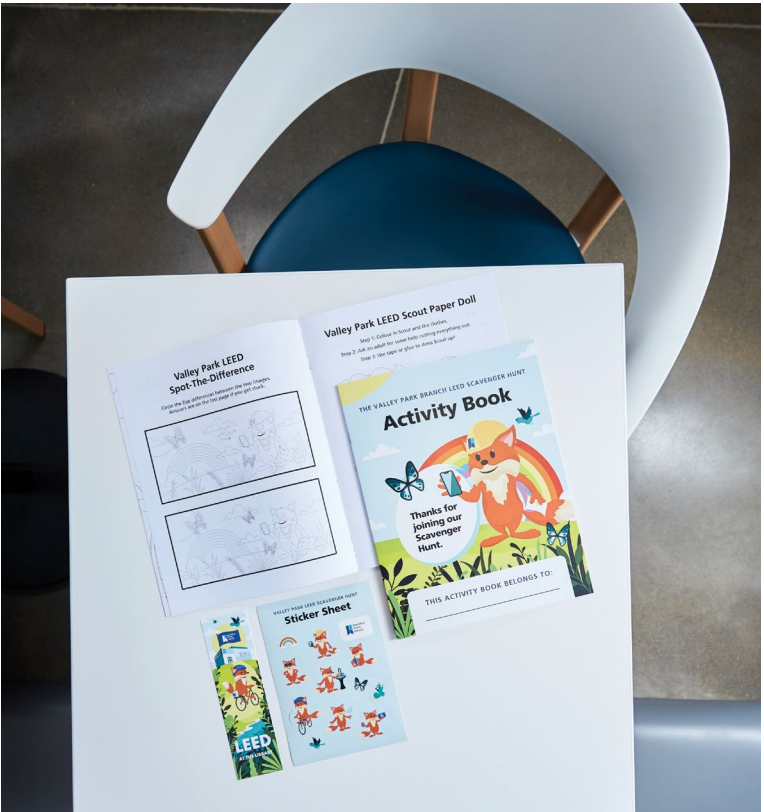


Something else that helps to engage players is the library’s fox mascot, Scout. Sarah used her illustration skills to make Scout part of the hunt. She sketched the cute canine with solar panels, water-saving taps and other environmental features to reinforce the sustainable message. Sarah was able to match Scout’s familiar appearance so that kids could connect with the friendly mascot.

At the end of the hunt, players receive Scout stickers and a LEED-themed activity book (or if they’re playing remotely, they can download the activity book themselves). Going virtual means that this environmental education is available to everyone, whether they visit the library or not—and is also part of the LEED certification process. The word search, maze, connect the dots and colouring pages are another opportunity to reinforce the LEED categories—and to inspire people to think about their impact on the earth.

Seeing the evolution of Valley Park inspired us. The building has changed, and it’s creating more change in Stoney Creek and in people’s lives. Technology—and scavenger hunts—have changed too. By developing this fun game we’re educating visitors, connecting them with the library, and inspiring them to help the environment.

Who wants to change the world? We do.

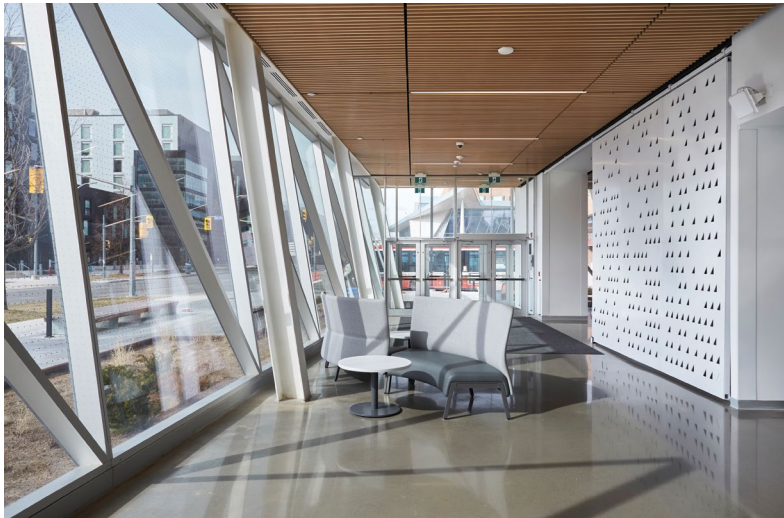
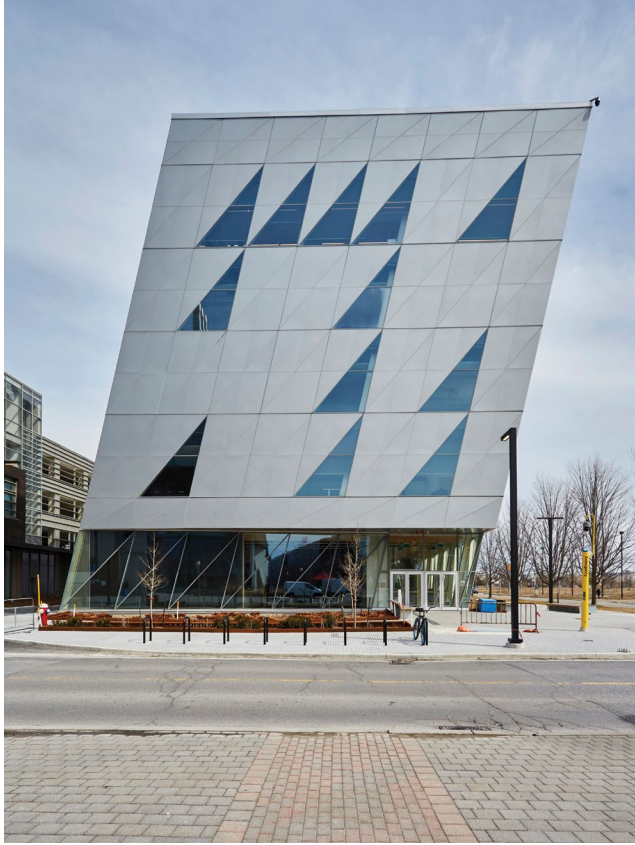


RECENT WORK

CLIENT:
York University

SERVICES:
Photography
Videography

SCOPE:
We went behind the lens to capture the new School of Continuing Studies building at York University. From small details to significant innovation, our photography and videography showcased how it empowers students to build their future.

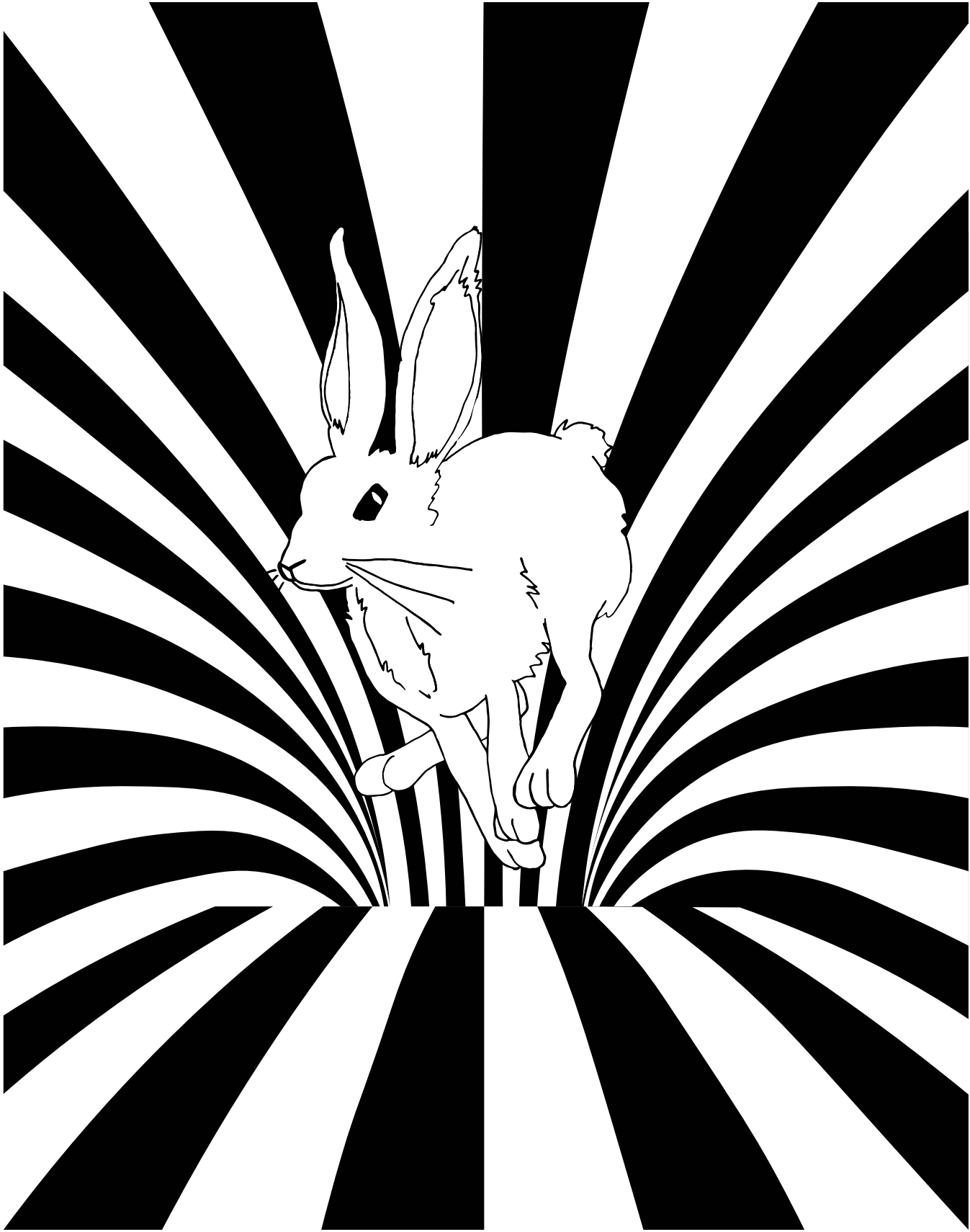


CLIENT:
Arts Trail on 21

SERVICES:
Design
Illustration

SCOPE:
A fun and playful custom illustration highlights the theme of Arts Trail on 21, "A Journey of Creativity". When fully unfolded, the brochure reveals one continuous illustration showing the same scene at different times of day. It is a work of art unto itself and a tribute to the pieces you'll find along the way with Arts Trail on 21.





Rabbit Hole is inspired by the pace we work at. Often, when people call us, they are in crisis. Every meeting is important, every mission is critical, every deadline is a hard one. We're often working at a fast pace, often going down one rabbit hole after another, solving one problem then moving onto the next.

Social media roadmap

Lost in the maze of social media? Let us be your guide. Here are some of the top social media myths we run into—and some tips to help you find your way through.

MYTH: Your business should be on every social platform no matter what.

- BUSTED:**
- The platform should be the right fit for your brand. Is your brand very professional? Choose LinkedIn over TikTok.
 - It's better to do one or two platforms extremely well than all of them halfway.

MYTH: Likes are the most important metric.

- BUSTED:**
- Audience growth and retention, engagement (likes, comments, shares, saves), and reach/impressions are just some of the KPIs we track.
 - Building a community and being social are most important.

MYTH: You'll see your paid ad as soon as it's live.

- BUSTED:**
- Maybe. Or maybe not. You might not be the target audience. Or the algorithm thinks you're a better fit for a different ad. Or you may have already hit your budget.

MYTH: There's a secret formula to going viral.

- BUSTED:**
- Sorry. No.
 - Focus on making your own original content. Every trend starts somewhere—the next one could be yours.

MYTH: Links in Instagram captions are clickable.

- BUSTED:**
- They're not. Clickable links only happen with the Link sticker on Instagram Stories.
 - Use LinkTree and Linkin.bio to get your audience to click.
 - Ask us about how to build your own custom link page.

MYTH: If your brand is serious, you can't have fun on social media.

- BUSTED:**
- Merriam Webster and other brands all have fun and funny social media presences. If the dictionary can do it, so can you.
 - Social media is for being social, not sales-y. Often fun leads to sales.

MYTH: Social media posts should be square.

- BUSTED:**
- Sometimes. Pretty much every platform supports square images and videos, but it isn't always the best fit.
 - Think vertical for stories, Reels, and TikToks. Don't be afraid to use portrait on Instagram or landscape (16:9) on LinkedIn.



Need to figure out what fits where?

Download our social media sizing guide.

Work with people your mom would love.



Fancy wordsmiths would call our team “multi-disciplinary”; we just call us “really darn good at a bunch of really valuable things.” This ultimately means no cookie-cutter solutions (unless you’re a cookie-cutter business). We solve unique business problems with unique creative solutions, using a combination of our diverse in-house skill sets. Plus, we’re charming and really smart.

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