

HORT is a Berlin-based studio that works in all fields of graphic design, specialising in pure creativity. Marion King, also known as 'the one that pulls the strings behind the scenes', explains the inspiring way in which the studio works and what it produces.

B E G I N N I N G S

HORT was founded in 1994 by Eike Koenig. The studio is described as being an 'unconventional working environment,' and as a 'particular space, or playground that gave him and the people he worked with the possibility of honing their abilities with the right expression'.

Marion explains that 'Hort is all about being open, exchanging thoughts and ideas, letting things grow and develop. It is a place where people can bring their own personality. That is one side. The other side is that we are very focused, we reflect our client's briefs, the brand, the product in a very intense but sensitive way.'

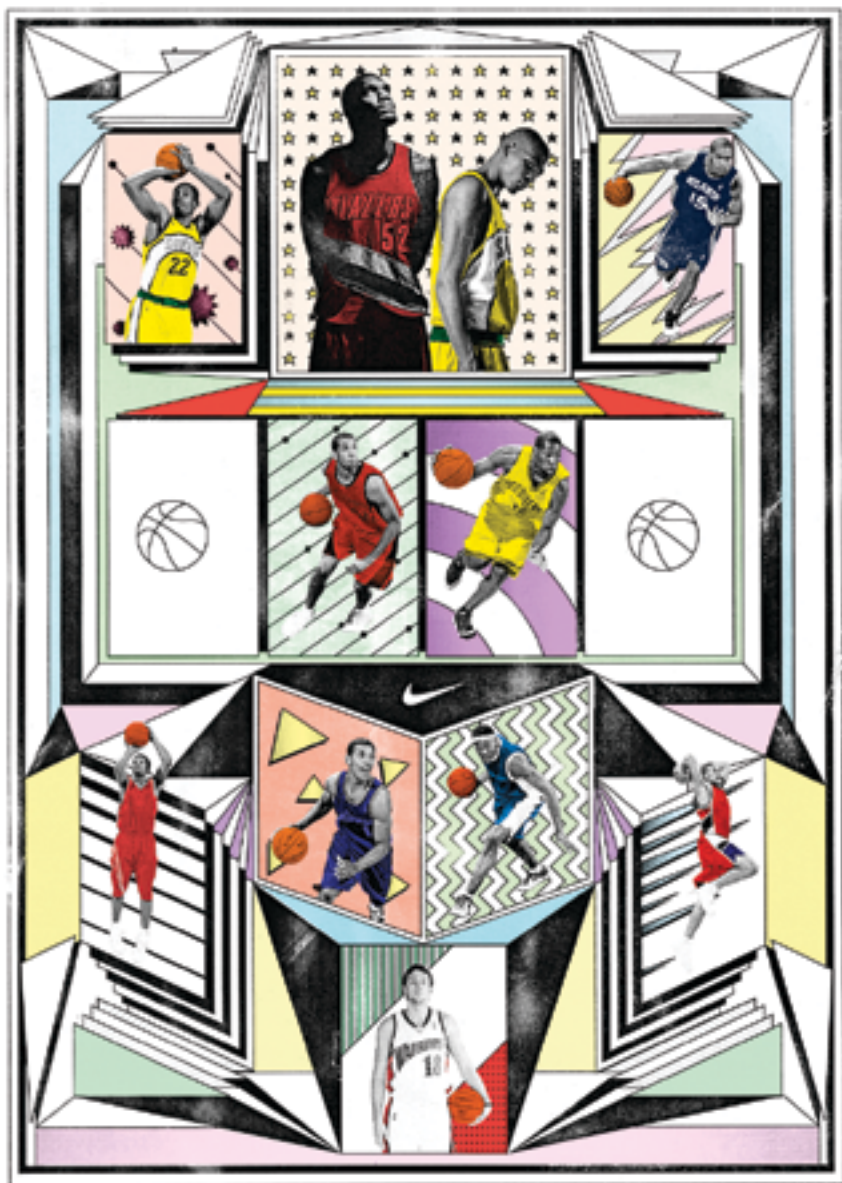
The studio produces a wide variety of work, from campaigns for top-end clients like NIKE, The New York Times, and Volkswagens' 'Project Fox', to new emerging companies who need some assistance establishing themselves.

Presently there are twelve designers involved at HORT. Marion describes the studio as 'a mix of Hort members that have worked with us for some years and several interns. Although we all work very closely and exchange ideas, we decide by project who is most linked to the task and what could be interesting to try out.'

HORT are unique in their approach to the brief, which in turn brings about a creatively rich outcome. As stated on their web site, 'Whether it's a poster for a theatre company, a catalogue for an art exhibition or working collaboratively with people of other design disciplines'; the studio is capable of producing a piece of work that is completely original: visually, as well as the construction process undertaken to achieve the result.

H O R T

Caroline McCurdy



Retail art poster for the Rookie program. Client: NIKE USA Basketball, 2007.

A new piece of work HORT has created that demonstrates their unique approach can be seen in their vinyl sleeve design for Resopal. The record consisted of two musicians, one track on each side of the record. The studio's response was to have the sleeve design 'based on this principle: two sides, two designers.'

Marion explains that the studio loves working for the music industry, with a long list of musical clients, most notably, their designs over the years for German electro-house duo: Booka Shade.

'Our background and history is the music industry,' she says. 'We always loved working for them - and still do!'

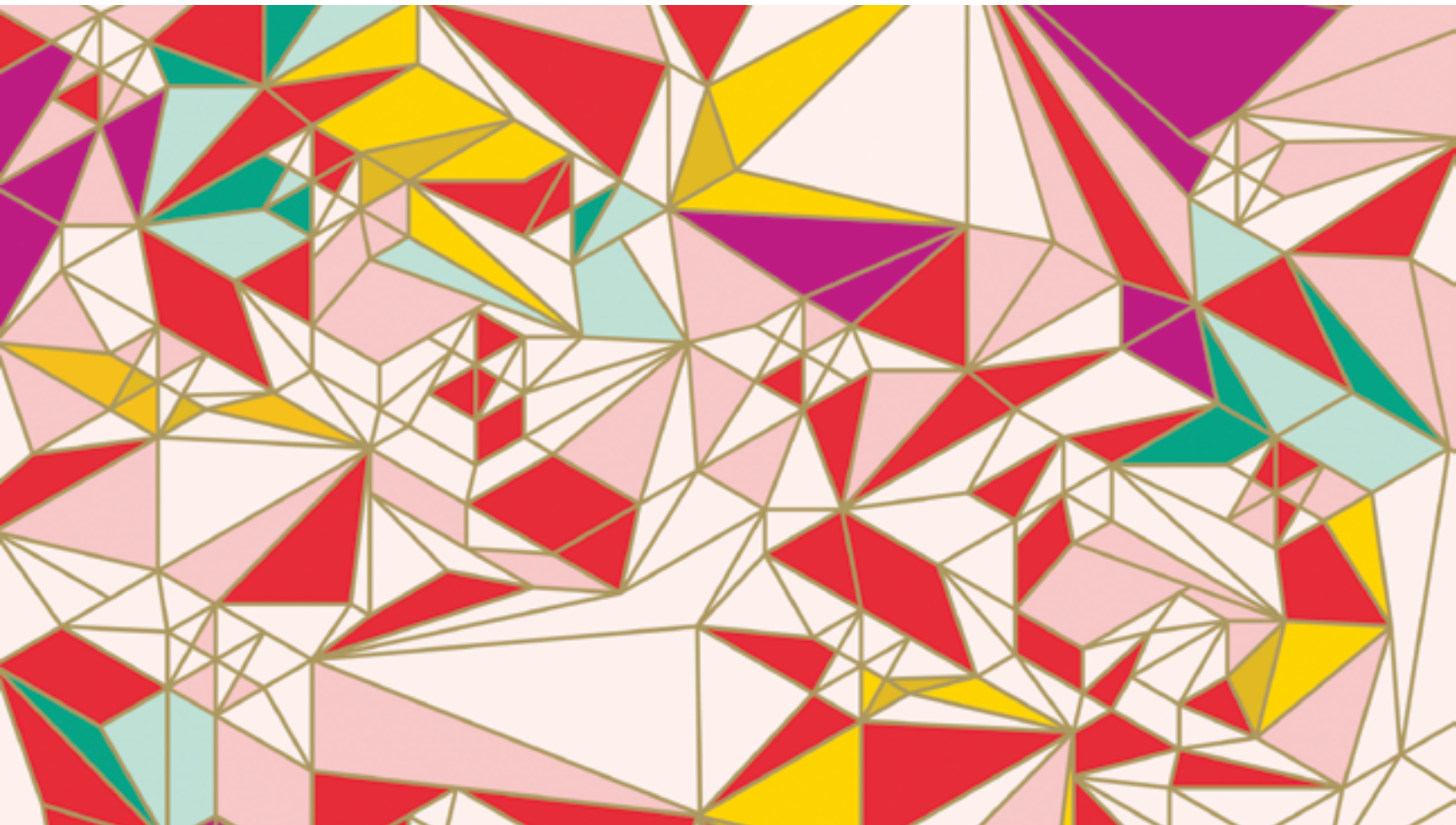
A P P R O A C H

The importance of their specific approach to the brief is what makes HORT stand out from most studios. When 'illustrating a companies personality by developing a brand; creating a visual connection with some music and its listener; translating the artwork of an album beyond its sleeve; working with or for people and companies in other creative fields,' their creative process provides a more in-depth focus on where their ideas can be explored.

Another important aspect of the way in which HORT creates, is that they try to experiment as much as possible and produce work that is not completely reliant on the computer.

'We feel that if you start your design right at the computer you limit yourself,' Marion explains. 'That is why we always try to work with different material. The computer limits you to the structure of it's programming. We think it is important to include the room you are working in in your design process. The connection between brain and hand is perfect and that designing on a "real" format gives you a different perspective on the work you do. It's great to touch the paper, to smell the glue, to pick the design and show it to people for feedback.'

Rebranding pattern for POS material, website background and player wallpaper. Client: Microsoft/Zune, 2008.





top
Retail art poster for the Summer Hoops Program. Client: NIKE USA Basketball, 2007.

above
Art direction and design of all releases from Booka Shade. This one shows the cover of the single 'Planetary'. Client: Get Physical Music, 2008.

WORKSHOPS

HORT not only works to make a difference in the design world through the work they create for their clients, but also through conducting workshops at universities and companies. The workshops help participants 'unmask new things about themselves and how they work.' The workshops mission states that 'individuals will discover the process of communication through other people's eyes; the people they work with. The open space also supports the development of interaction and discussion. We want this friendly exchange to open up and broaden people's ways of engaging and thinking.'

Marion explains that the workshops started with 'students' workshops at universities, and found out that this could also be something really interesting for people that work as art directors or designers in agencies. So, now we offer these creative workshops to advertising agencies and to creatives in other fields. And they love it!

NIKE

HORT began designing for NIKE with a piece for the Visual Center, which Marion describes as a kind of 'manual for Nike employees on how to work with the brand. We designed a special font, developed the graphic style, the illustrations in combination with the photography, a colour code, the book itself, motion pieces, 3D shop window displays, retail posters, etc. All the things you need to brand a product.'

Since then, the studio has also created posters, catalogues, t-shirts, interior designs and more for the global brand. On each design they work in unison with art director Michael Spoljaric (from NIKE) to create works that have an artistic abstract quality, not usually associated with such a large corporate name.

Most recently the studio has produced designs for the development of the NIKE USAB exhibition in New York City. The exhibition is dedicated to the US Olympic basketball team in NYC.

Marion explains, 'Again we worked with Michael Spoljaric on different design explorations, like huge pull outs showing the history of the US Basketball Team, over 30 posters for each player and wall designs for the gallery space. Mr. "fantastic" Bruce Gildea took the photos of the 2008 team.'

PRESENT & FUTURE

Recently HORT were invited to be part of an exhibition titled, 'Vertrautes Terrain - Contemporary Art in/about Germany' at ZKM Karlsruhe. HORT's contribution was 'designs on a huge wall composed of artwork that spans our entire career,' says Marion. 'The idea was to put 10 layers of A0 size posters on the wall. The first layer was restricted to black and white typography and the last layer was full of colour. We hung them irregularly so you could see different elements coming through and the image in the end was a totally new one. A huge drawing of our work in way we had never seen before. The visitors were asked to pick their favourite piece from the wall and were allowed to rip it off. During the 4 week running exhibition the image of the wall changed daily. As new layers disappeared, new combinations of images arose.'

When asked what was happening next for HORT, Marion replies, 'We don't know. We are open and will see. We did a lot of exciting stuff for Nike Europe, a special project for the MTV awards in Dublin, Ireland. At the moment we are working on the new Visual Center for LeBron James - The six. We just finished a branding and interface design for a music program. Working on a fashion store design for GoodTrueBeautiful in Berlin, developing a concept for a public space in Berlin, developing a visual system for Modular Recordings from Australia etc. etc. Lots of things that are pretty interesting, so we are having a great life.'

hort.org.uk