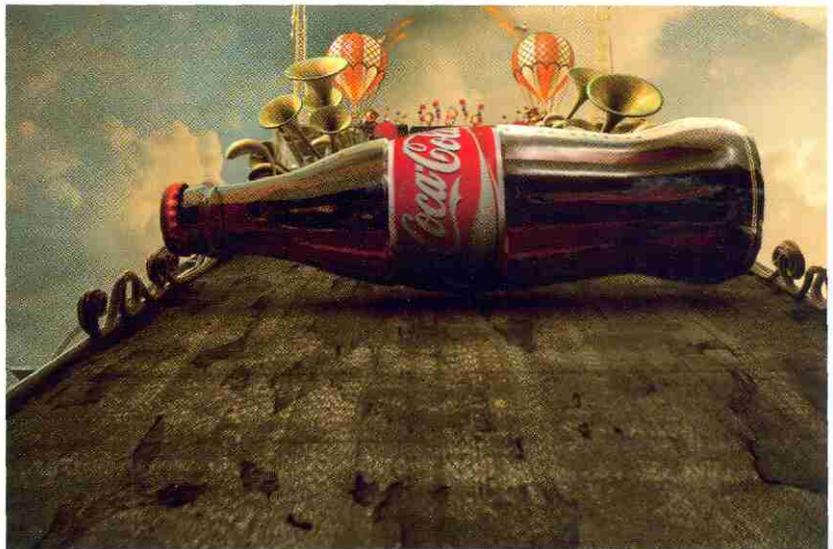


Exploring the Coke Side of Life

The headquarters of Coca-Cola are proudly presenting a new strategic global campaign for the iconic Coke brand called "The Coke Side of Life." This campaign, made by Wieden+Kennedy, Amsterdam, was launched in the summer of 2006 in 191 countries worldwide and includes television, print, outdoor and viral efforts. It represents the first campaign to be taken up globally by Coca-Cola since 1996. The campaign reflects a shift in communications strategy by the famous red brand from Atlanta. Time, therefore, for Lurzer's Archive to talk to the creative brains behind this change.

We want to know what the new communication strategy is exactly like. How do you orchestrate a brand like Coca-Cola? And who are the men doing the creative job?

To start with the last question first: these men are Rick Condos and Hunter Hindman. They are the creative directors on the global Coke account at agency Wieden+Kennedy, Amsterdam. Prior to joining Wieden+Kennedy, Condos and Hindman worked together as group associate creative directors at Goodby, Silverstein & Partners in San Francisco. Their responsibilities included managing and creating work for the global Hewlett-Packard "+hp" campaign, including TV, print, interactive and outdoor work for the brand campaign, the enterprise campaign, the digital photography campaign and the launch of the "HP iPod." They were awarded Campaign of the Year by Campaign Magazine, the prestigious New York Art Direc-



tors Club Vision Award, and AdWeek's Best Spots. Rick Condos has previously worked as a partner and associate creative director at Weiss Stagliano Partners New York on the brands Bass Ale, Guinness Stout, and The Economist, and at TBWA\Chiat\Day as senior copywriter for Wonderbra, Prodigy Internet, and Embassy Suites.

Hunter Hindman has previously worked as senior art director at Tilford:Norman in Dallas, Texas, on accounts such as adidas, Reebok, Miller Brewing Co., Sprite, the Limited Group, and Brahma Beer, and at the hotshop Pyro Brand Development as art director and designer on Converse Shoes, Hummer, Jolly Rancher, and Spyder Skiwear.

We meet the team in a labyrinth of canal houses on Keizersgracht in the cen-

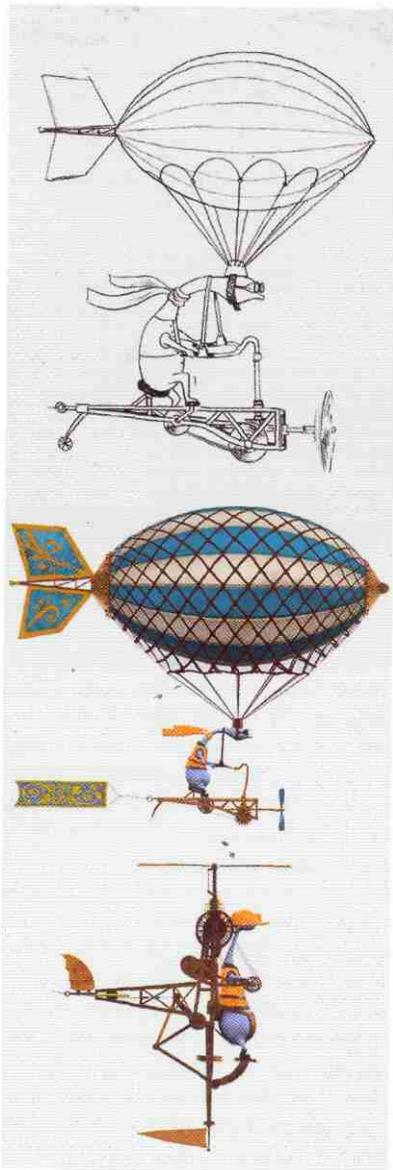
tre of Amsterdam. Formerly, this was the huge place where the Ogilvy & Mather Group was housed. David Ogilvy used to call it "my metropolitan chateau." Today, the former Ogilvy houses are home to three agencies: Strawberry Frog, New Message, and Wieden+Kennedy, Amsterdam, who occupy by far the biggest part with 145 people of more than 22 nationalities. Strangely enough, the global creative team for Coca-Cola, Hindman and Condos, have a room that barely seats three people. Space constraints notwithstanding, our correspondent in Amsterdam, Peter van Woensel Kooy^ managed to squeeze himself in and talk to the team in almost sandwich-like fashion about their new "Happiness Factory" and other relevant new plans for their Coke Side of Life.

LA.: In October 2005, Wieden+Kennedy, Amsterdam won the global Coca-Cola account. What have you been up to since then?

Rick Condos: It has been great. We have been flying around the globe all the time and developing new work every day. In this first year, we have made the iconic viral Bottle films, six Human Truth spots, a spot called First Taste, wallpapers, screensavers for iPods and cell phones. We have built a visual identity system for over 190 countries, and just finished the new "Happiness Factory" commercial.

LA.: Twelve years ago, Coca-Cola headquarters used to distribute a reel containing 30 new Coke commercials made by several Hollywood directors. The local brand managers could make their choice together with a local team at





Examples of models and sketches by post-production company Psyop for some of the creatures in "Happiness Factory."

McCann Erickson, the agency network that handled the softdrink way back then. There was no choice except for films from this reel. Has Hollywood since become Amsterdam? How do you orchestrate the brand?

Hunter Hindman: We create the global campaign. Local implementation is possible. The only thing we are making clear is that the former Coke brand had become a kind of wallpaper. The brand was all over everything so much, you didn't see it any longer. We want to bring Coca-Cola to life again - in every detail, from outdoor to packaging.

Rick Condos: This is the first global campaign in ten years.

Hunter Hindman: So it is not mandatory to use our material. But we are trying

to make the work so new and distinct live that the creativity will persuade every single brand manager to choose the global stuff. And this approach seems to be working.

LA.: How did you win the pitch?

Rick Condos: We were looking for something that could become the hero in ; new Coke campaign: the bottle is the iconic starting point, and we built a campaign from there. The bottle was already used in earlier campaigns, but there was never a focus on it.

Hunter Hindman: The briefing was: make me see Coke again. So we created a voice to make the brand visible.

LA.: But a brand with such a heritage can hardly be the source of a really innovative campaign, can it?

Rick Condos: When you sit down as a team to brainstorm, the first thought quickly pops up and then you feel trapped: you are thinking of creating another Coke commercial. Because you have seen so many already, you tend to use old basic ideas that are typical of Coke advertising. So we decided to pull the brand out of its comfort zone, which was what the client wanted. Coke was ready for a makeover, and we should thank the global team for that. They took the lead to launch the insight required to totally change the brand.

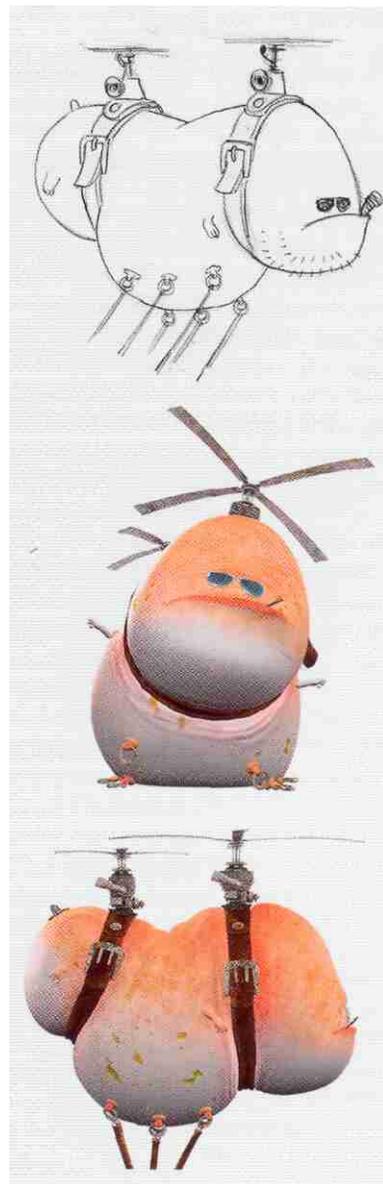
LA.: So teamwork was the key?

Hunter Hindman: Indeed. The Coca-Cola marketing team had been preparing the pitch for three years. Their purpose was to make the softdrink Coke relevant again.

Rick Condos: For Wieden+Kennedy, the agency also had the right momentum to win the pitch. We got a new creative management in Amsterdam and a new MD. It was the right time and the right place. We won the pitch and the next day we took off. Not only with loads of ideas. This was the start of an incredible production, too.

LA.: The "Happiness Factory" commercial is like an animated psychedelic dream, and vaguely reminded me of the Honda "Grrr" spot. For Coke, it is terribly innovative. How did you convince the client to invest so much in animation?

Hunter Hindman: We did a lot of roadshows to sell the concept internally at Coca-Cola. We sold them this new animation world, which you enter when a coin is thrown in a Coke vending machine. We take the audience on a journey through the vending machine into a fantasy land full of wondrous characters and spectacular landscapes. All of which contributes to the delivery of happiness

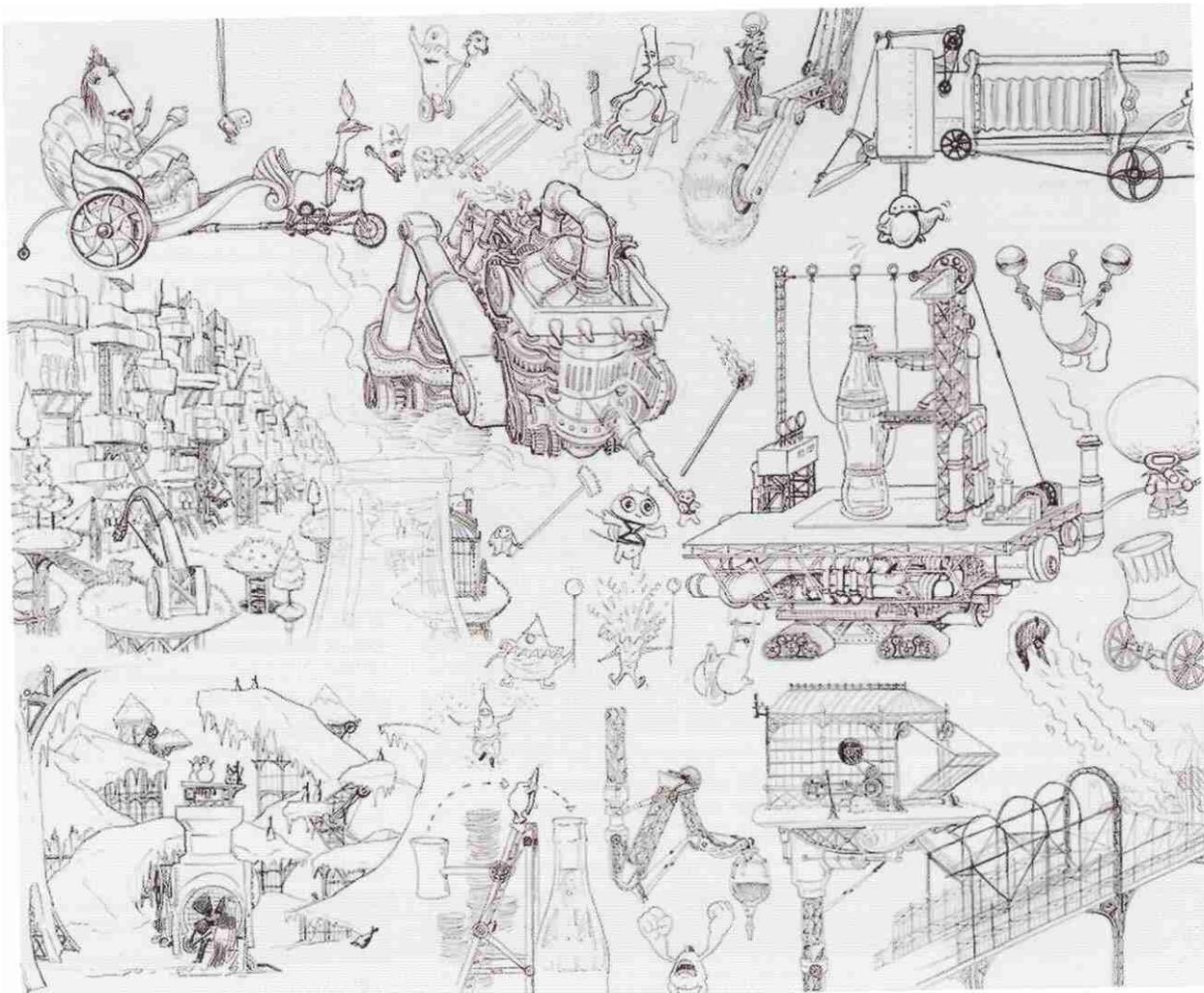


in a bottle. When it came to execution, we locked ourselves up at the production company Psyop in New York. Psyop is an agency of animation experts who partnered with us to create the spot.

Rick Condos: The client was more open than we expected. They visited us along the way. Hunter and I were working in New York about nine weeks.

Hunter Hindman: The Coke marketing people are very collaborative.

Rick Condos: We trust them. We need each other. The company is too big for us as a creative team to throw a commercial over the wall and wait. That is not enough. During the process of creation, you need key players to support you from within the company, people who can help sell the ideas through.



Sketches for Coca-Cola's "Happiness Factory."

Hunter Hindman: You always have to touch the sweet spot.

Rick Condos: You have to own the concept together.

LA.: As a team, you did some stunning work for Hewlett Packard, such as the "+hp" campaign. Was this a good warm-up before the Coke game started?—And what are the main differences between the two brands?

Hunter Hindman: HP is big but Coke is really everywhere!

Rick Condos: With the "+hp" campaign, we were talking to a smaller group of professionals. To like technology, you need some technical affection. To like Coke, you just need a mouth.

Hunter Hindman: With Coke, everybody carries the brand in his or her subconscious. The audience is bigger.

Rick Condos: HP wanted to change the brand, too, the same way Coke does. They know that they have to move on.

LA.: One of the ways to teach clients and consumers how to "move on" is to

create a brand manual. You wrote one for Coca-Cola. Are you happy with the result?

Rick Condos (picks up the book): It is a big book, hey!

Hunter Hindman: The main question in the manual is: how do you inspire the world? In this book, we show you how you can do that, inspiring other agencies. Somebody in Mexico or in Switzerland is free to execute the concepts. Isn't that what every creative director wants? Full freedom and enough ammunition for inspiration.

Rick Condos: This manual offers freedom within a framework. We do not want to control the global campaign. But we love to see how parts of the campaign are being embraced and how people are playing with it. As a result, we get surprised and say, "Wow, that's awesome."

LA.: Aren't you afraid of receiving £ "wrong" interpretation?

Hunter Hindman: To be honest, we would love to control everything. But that is

impossible. The best we can do is to guide them through it.

Rick Condos: Our focus is "thought leadership." That is the way we are creative-directing the account.

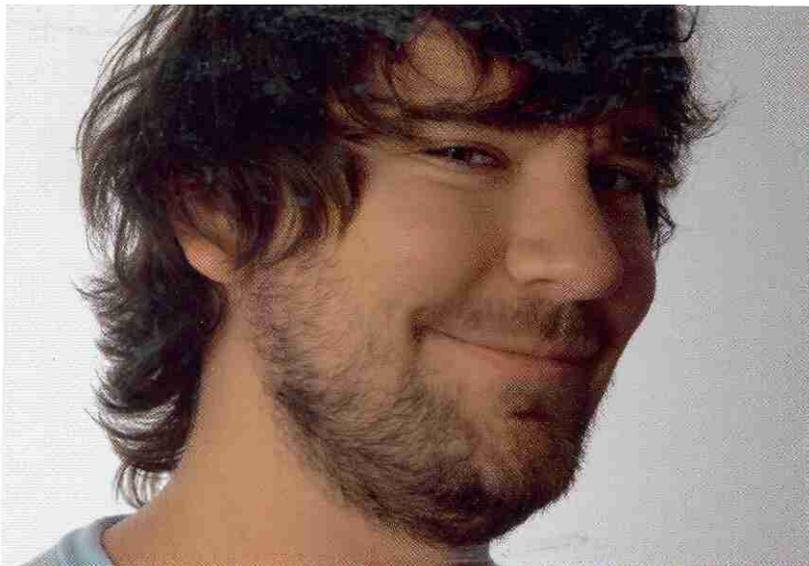
Hunter Hindman: We are the lead agency. But as creative professionals, we indeed know that every good creative person is challenging this lead agency.

LA.: Coca-Cola claims they will stick to the new agency for at least ten years. So nine more years to go ...

Rick Condos: That is not the way we look at it. Such a term challenges us more to give it the best of the best. As creative people, we don't want to look too far into the future. The art is to keep fresh and never become complacent 01 stale.

LA.: What are the main creative ideas driving the new "Happiness Factory" campaign?

Rick Condos: It starts with general values like optimism, yes in the face of no and impact.



Hunter Hindman, **Wieden+Kennedy**, Amsterdam.

Hunter Hindman: Have a Coke and a smile. We brainstormed about making those old values relevant again. More modern, more fun. And, in the meantime, keeping the brand honest. No overstatements. Remember, that Coca-Cola is culture. Even Andy Warhol painted a bottle. I drink it, and so does Rick. Everybody drinks it. So mass democracy gives us a licence to experiment with the brand.

Rick Condos: Don't forget that Coke is entertainment. Edgy entertainment. The famous first "Hilltop" commercial in the 70s was a protest that reflected and supported a youth movement.

Hunter Hindman: This brand has so many stories. Many books have been written about the secret formula alone, and two million ideas are going around. We are interested in all these stories because we like fantastic mental journeys.

LA.: Are you already addicted to caffeine? At McCann Erickson Amsterdam, it was policy to drink as many cans of Diet Coke as was physically possible when the client was around, just to please them, even at 10 a.m.

Rick Condos: I was already addicted before I worked for Coke. I open up approximately ten bottles a day. But I must confess that I leave a lot of half-full bottles standing around all over the place at the office here on Keizersgracht.

Hunter Hindman: For me, this is more a designer's dream that is addictive. To play with the typeface. Did you know that, after the word "okay," Coca-Cola is the most-used word worldwide? The scale and the audience of this brand are what make the difference. The response we get with our online campaign is phenomenal. Tons of viral commercials are sent through to us digitally.

LA.: So, as Hermann Vaske used to ask in his interviews for Archive: What makes you creative? Where do you get your inspiration? From the Amsterdam coffeeshops? From partying with youngsters? Or the Coca-Cola museum in Atlanta?

Rick Condos: I spend all my time with my family. As for the rest, I don't have any spare time.

Hunter Hindman: This may be a small room, but don't underestimate how much info comes in here - digitally and from all the people who happen to pop in. That is inspiring. Coca-Cola is part of our life. When you walk one block away from this office, heading to the Jordaan district, you can spot 150 Coca-Cola logos on your way. The brand is so prevalent. Our challenge is to make it even more visible again. That makes us creative.

Rick Condos: The brand creates a myth from within. That gives us a lot of inspiration.

LA.: Do you like being in the creative capital of Europe?

Rick Condos: Amsterdam is very inspiring. New York and San Francisco were great, too. But this city is a big change. Beauty is everywhere in Amsterdam. The architecture in Amsterdam is another visual advantage.

Hunter Hindman: It is a very vibrant city, yet one that feels more like a village. In London, my head falls off when I leave the Tube station. Here, you take one step back.

Rick Condos: Amsterdam is peaceful.

LA.: What is the aim of your new Coca-Cola campaign?

Hunter Hindman: To double the brand volume in ten years.

Rick Condos: About fifteen people are working on Coke here at Wieden+Kennedy, Amsterdam, helping us to reach this target. Many more people are helping us abroad. Last year, I travelled 100,000 miles.

LA.: It sounds as if you have to make every creative sweat-drop accountable for Coke. Have you travelled frequently to Atlanta to show off your efforts?

Rick Condos: Fortunately, the Coke staff travel a lot around the globe. Atlanta is not the centre of the world. During the World Cup this year, for instance, we met them in Germany. Recently, we met them in Istanbul. And they like to visit Amsterdam frequently. The current team at Coca-Cola is smart, modern and cosmopolitan - and incredibly dedicated to the brand.

LA.: Has the "Happiness Factory" already won awards?

Hunter Hindman: We haven't sent it in yet. The go-sec version has just launched. Let's see if people like it. Personally, I love the snowmen in this commercial the most. And the people who burn themselves into fireworks in the air. This new campaign is an entertaining ride.



Rick Condos, **Wieden+Kennedy**, Amsterdam.