

How do you help raise the bar of New Zealand creative talent?

Simon & Peter: The ultimate vision for The Church is to pioneer a new design business model. A word we use a lot is nurture; meaning to nourish, educate, develop or help grow. The context for us is to:

- nurture our internal people
- nurture our clients
- nurture young talent and
- nurture the creative industry

This combination gives us purpose, passion and allows us to make a difference – raising the bar in the creative industry by developing young talent through projects and workshops, creating experiences for people through our work, and contributing to the industry via Semi-Permanent.

You get involved in taking on board graduates in their fourth year and involving them in live briefs – what's your clients' reaction and how does the young talent fare?

Simon & Peter: Our model connects us with clients in a diverse range of ways. We build tailored project teams so we know the audience because we 'are' the audience. This widens our ability to help our clients engage with their audience – whatever age, sex, culture or demographic they may be. So clients react really well because our way of working delivers good results.

The commercial reality for our young creatives – pressure, budgets, timeframes and boundaries gives them a taste of the industry with no risk of anything exploding or catching on fire. It's great for developing their creative problem solving and is certainly a challenge.

The opportunity to work with our in-house team is beneficial for both parties. Young creatives don't know 'the rules' so they break them without thinking. More experienced designers win awards by thinking how to 'break the rules' and doing something new. Working with young creatives sometimes offers inspiration – 'stupid' questions can lead to smart outcomes.

Do you get bombarded with graduate applications?

Simon & Peter: Yes we do, especially at the end of the year. We try and see everyone that applies, even if it's just an interview experience and portfolio feedback. The actual number of young

creatives we take on is limited, as it's important that we don't spread ourselves too thin. We want to create a real difference for a few people rather than a brief encounter with many.

Peter: It's rare you get this kind of opportunity, so to all the young creatives who might read this article: Give your portfolio and portfolio presentation some serious thought. It may well be one of the most challenging and important design briefs you ever face.. If you have a solution designed for every audience, with nothing to show your interest in a specific company, then people will see you as someone simply doing the rounds with little connection. A little bit of thought about who you want to work for, why you want to work for them, and what you specifically can offer them goes a long way. Take some of the ideas you learnt in your studies and apply them to this situation.

Delivery is important too. We all have some degree of nervous anticipation meeting new people in this kind of situation – granted. But if someone is going to employ you then it's 'you' they want to see from the beginning. Knowing that you don't have to be everything (in fact it's better that you know yourself well enough to say what you can't do), and that your personal uniqueness is important, will hopefully help ease nerves.

There are a lot of young creatives in New Zealand and obviously not as many jobs. The Church isn't the only design company to get bombarded with graduate applications so hopefully this concept helps everyone applying for work, and all those people on the receiving end too.

What do you look out for in their work?

Simon & Peter: People who have thought about things differently. This might be shown in personal work or conceptually in their university projects. We look for hunger and great attitude. Talent is only part of the equation.

How did The Church get involved with Semi-Permanent?

Simon & Peter: After attending the first one in Sydney we contacted the Design Is Kinky boys to see if we could borrow one of their speakers going into the following year to run a few workshops in New Zealand. We got talking, developed a really good relationship and it flowed on from there.



Simon Velvin (he's the one wearing the gas mask...) and Peter Dixon of The Church engage with their audience.

What can the rest of the industry do to ensure that we continue to produce outstanding designers?

Simon & Peter: See past the word graduate and student. A good idea is a good idea regardless of who has it.

Last word?

Simon: Less is more, share and grow.

Peter: What's orange and sounds like a parrot?*

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PORTFOLIO TIP

It's not easy for graduates; there are more of them than market demand. Graduates tend to be employed directly by design and advertising agencies – recruiters rarely have any graduate roles. However, Portfolio Recruitment provides universities and design schools with articles full of advice on how students should present and prepare their portfolios; and advises graduates on the best way to go about seeking a job. These are available on its website.

*For those who had to ask: a carrot – Ed.