



Cheryl Heller has built her career around creating new paths where there were none and bringing innovative ideas into reality. Heller has devoted thousands of hours to mentoring and inspiring people and organizations committed to working at a systems level, and integrating the principles of sustainability into the process of design. She is the founding chair of the first M.F.A. program in Design for Social Innovation at the School of Visual Arts.



Dana Arnett is a visionary from both a creative and business perspective. His keen understanding of leveraging design, writing, and business strategy has contributed to VSA's unprecedented growth and leadership in the design industry, positioning it as an agency of innovative design thinkers. Under Arnett's leadership, VSA has helped clients such as Harley-Davidson, IBM, and Sappi, among others, evolve and transform their brands to more effectively interact and communicate directly with consumers.

Sappi Design Partners Awarded Top Honors in Design Industry

By Emily Potts

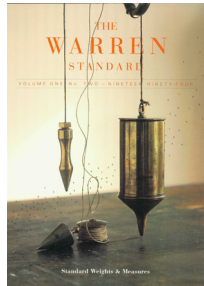
This year AIGA, the professional association for design, is recognizing 24 design leaders, among them Cheryl Heller and Dana Arnett, who have been vital to shaping the Sappi brand over the past two decades. Patti Groh, who has been with Sappi for 21 years—first at SD Warren, then Potlatch—has worked closely with both of them, and she reflects on how they have each contributed to Sappi's success and growth through innovation and design.

Setting the Standard

When Groh started at SD Warren in 1993, Heller was already the designer of record, creating mouth-watering promotions that graphic designers clamored for. “The best part of my job was sharing new promotions designed by Cheryl,” Groh recalls. “SD Warren was the first paper company to apply standards to paper, and she brought those standards to life and communicated the history and legacy of the company through an educational series using inspiration from an SD Warren publication dating back to the early 1900s.” That series, “The Warren

Standard,” quickly became the most sought after promotion in the industry. Not only did it include useful information, but Heller designed it in a way that was compelling and inspirational. “I remember a specific issue in the series called ‘Standard Weights and Measures,’ that was particularly coveted by the design community—it really was outstanding.”

Groh still gets requests today for some of the issues from more than 20 years ago. Scans of the issues are available in the archive on Sappi's website.



The Making of McCoy

In 1997, when Groh joined Potlatch, Dana Arnett of VSA Partners, was already doing much of the branding and marketing work for the company. At the time, Potlatch had several premium products with rather traditional names like Eloquence and Quintessence, but market share was beginning to decline for these products. Arnett took a look at the paper category and felt it was critical that Potlatch reposition itself and launch a new product, so McCoy was born. Named by Arnett, this new paper line exceeded all the attributes of a typical premium sheet but was offered at a lower price point. “It was a non-traditional paper name and one that strategically drew upon the position, ‘The Real McCoy, the paper all others are judged by,’” Groh says. “I look back at the original brand promise for McCoy and it's still relevant today. Many papers have come and gone over the last twenty years, but McCoy has stood the test of time, thanks to the design community.”

The launch of McCoy at the AIGA National Conference in New Orleans in 1997, was another story altogether. Sappi had a custom painted Cadillac that cruised the French Quarter, and the sales team wore McCoy letter jackets at the event. This rollout ignited an incredible response from the design and printing communities. Groh says, “I have to chuckle, because people still ask about that Cadillac.”

Ideas that Matter

In 1999, Heller pitched the Ideas that Matter program to Sappi, which has granted more than \$12.5 million to projects that support communities, promote sustainability, and work to address social problems across the country and around the world. Hundreds of designers submit proposals for consideration each year with the desire to apply design thinking to solve social issues.

“A few years ago, I found Cheryl’s original pitch for Ideas that Matter. Even though the proposal is fifteen years old, the content could not be more relevant today,” Groh says. “Cheryl was ahead of her time in the design for social good space, and the proposal is another example of how her work has retained its relevance and meaning.”

Corporate Sustainability

Arnett helped Sappi create and name its trademarked eQ environmental brand in 2009, to establish Sappi’s corporate sustainability position. Today, these efforts continue to flourish with an industry-leading website, white papers, videos, a blog, printed collateral, and the venerable eQ Journal. Groh says, “Dana has been a big part of our success. His interaction with our leadership team has given us distinct advantages when it comes to adapting our

brands as we advance our business strategy.

Naturally, we are constantly looking at ways to keep our brand strategy and sustainability platform out-in-front of the competition, and VSA helps us do that.”

