

2 January 2007

Best wishes from Canada!

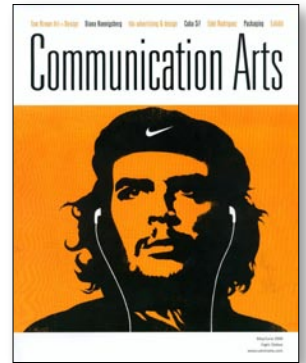
As 2006 draws to a close, I am filled with gratitude for both the opportunities and challenges this eventful year has provided. Since October 2005, when I completed an intense six-year leadership term with the board of Icograda (The International Council of Graphic Design Associations, the world body for professional graphic design and visual communication: www.icograda.org), I have spent considerably more time back in Manitoba practicing design, writing, and also doing more teaching. Here are some of the past year's highlights...

Circle, the design consultancy that I co-founded in 1976, celebrated a milestone 30th anniversary this year. At Circle, I have the day-to-day privilege of collaborating with a talented team of remarkable co-workers in a pleasant studio here in Winnipeg's historic Exchange District. We offer strategic advice, branding, and marketing expertise to help organizations establish clear identities and communicate effectively with targeted audiences. More about Circle: www.circle.mb.ca

We also enjoy deploying our collective talents for local causes that we are passionate about – Circle's 2006 pro bono and in-kind contributions included a guerilla campaign to stop a proposed hog-slaughtering plant in Winnipeg, celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Alpine Club of Canada (founded here on the prairies a century ago), and fundraising support for several schools, hospitals, and foundations. On a personal level, I have designed posters for various activist causes this past year and I have acted as an informal advisor to the new magazine *Geez* (which just received two Independent Press

An open letter from Robert L. Peters...

Caveat: I do not particularly like form letters, but I also can't seem to find the time to correspond on a one-to-one basis with everyone that I would like to. So, with apologies, this is an overdue attempt to keep in touch with you, impersonal as a PDF document may seem. (Dynamic links to additional, related online content are shown in red).



Awards from *Utne*). See: www.geezmagazine.org

In early January, my good friend Ev (a lovely ceramist with whom I relish considerable leisure time) and I spent a pleasant sun-filled week in Havana, Cuba. We enjoyed visiting with friends and meeting with professional colleagues in the delightful old city (this was my third visit in recent years, leading to the Icograda World Design Congress 2007 that will take place there next October: www.havana.icograda.org). While there, I also gathered works for a feature article entitled "Cuba Si! Life and design on the embargoed archipelago" that I wrote for *Communication Arts* magazine, May/June 2006 (CA Issue #344).

My recent book *Worldwide Identity: Inspired Design from Forty Countries* (published by Rockport in partnership with Icograda, and designed by our team at Circle – ISBN: 1-59253-187-3, Rockport Publishers, Inc., Hardcover, 256 pages, 400 color images) enjoyed a Winnipeg launch at McNally Robinson on 18 January, followed by several weeks on the local best-seller list. The book, which features over 300 identities showcasing originality and cultural diversity around the globe, is selling well internationally and has met with very favorable reviews (e.g. on Amazon.com). An excerpt from the book first appeared as an Opinion/Commentary article in *Communication Arts* magazine in July 2005 (CA Issue 337, Illustration Annual) and is available [online](#).



In late January I was invited by the Macau Designers Association to attend the gala award presentation and opening ceremonies of the *6th Macau Design Biennale* at the Handover Gifts Museum (colonized by the Portuguese in the 16th century, Macau reverted to Chinese control in 1999). I had earlier served on the *Macau Biennale's* jury in October 2005, and this junket (via nearby Hong Kong) provided an opportunity to re-connect with some of the good friends I've made in that region in the past years. The quality of communication design in the exhibition (particularly for Macau's renowned cultural institutions) was exceptional, and inspiring. [More info.](#)

Between February and May 2006, I taught a studio course at the University of Hartford, Connecticut as a recipient of the Hartford Art School's *Georgette and Richard Koopman Distinguished Chair in the Visual Arts*. The course I developed (in the Visual Communication Design Department) was entitled "*Cause an Effect,*" and consisted of three topical modules relating to globalism and cross-cultural issues: *Identity* in a rapidly shrinking world; *Response* (the relationship of power to responsibility); and, *Connections* (connectivity, commonality, collaboration). Teaching involved an intense four-day visit/session in Hartford each month along with international guest collaborator/critics that I was able to invite to participate (through the school's visiting artists program), along with interstitial weekly student submissions and online exchanges.

In addition, the *Koopman Chair* offered the opportunity for a public presentation (the *Koopman Lecture*) and display of my work in the exhibition *Symbols, Icons, & Indices – Signs of the Times* at the Joseloff Gallery, Hartford School of Art. I enjoyed working closely with a select group of talented and highly motivated U.S. students in providing "creative and intellectual stimulation and experiential learning at the intersection of passion, reason, and purpose." [More info.](#)

In February I was invited to lecture at the Department of Art and Design, University of Alberta, in Edmonton. Then in March,



I once again taught a workshop session at the International Centre for Creativity, Innovation and Sustainability (ICIS, see: www.iciscenter.org) in Hornbaek, Denmark – this time on "*Teambuilding & Networking*" as part of the *ICIS Kompetanceudvikling for Designere*. Other lectures in 2006 included *FITC (Flash In The Can) Conferences* in Toronto and Winnipeg, as well as professional practice presentations with the local chapter of the Society of Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC).

A highlight of my summer was a week of mountaineering with a small group of climbing friends in the remote Adamant Range of the rugged Selkirk Mountains in British Columbia. After considerable agonizing (re: the questionable environmental ethics of using a helicopter for pleasure, etc.) we finally opted to chopper in to the beautiful Fairy Meadow, along with rock and glacier gear and a week's provisions. We stayed at the ACC's Bill Putnam hut, and were blessed with spectacular weather that allowed for numerous summits and awe-inspiring views – though physically taxing, the week was a splendid time of fellowship and rejuvenation.



In mid-July, Ev and I made a 5000+km road trip west to the *Icograda Design Week* in Seattle, Washington, with several days of scrambling and camping in the Canadian Rockies with friends en route. The Seattle event, entitled “*Defining Design on a Changing Planet*,” focused on how designers can contribute to a healthy world economy while being mindful of the cultural, environmental and political impact of design. It also afforded excellent opportunities for me to re-connect with U.S. and international colleagues in attendance.



From mid-September through mid-October, I spent four weeks in Melbourne, Australia as Designer in Residence in the Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University. A focus of my time there was the preparation of the traveling exhibition “*MIXo6: One Step Back, Two Steps Forward*,” the culmination of the “*Migrant Immigrant eXchange 2006*” cultural exchange project undertaken by my design students Hartford School of Art and students of senior lecturer Russell Kennedy (my host) at Monash University. The aim of *MIXo6* was to encourage contemporary discourse between indigenous and non-Indigenous designers/collaborators in AUS and the USA, in recognition of and respect for both First Nation and Aboriginal culture. *MIXo6* will open in Hartford on 16 February 2007. You can read more about the initiative in the ‘About’ section, and view the individual works in the website gallery at: www.mixo6.com.au



Ev accompanied me to Australia, and enjoyed a spacious studio in the ceramics department at Monash. The school provided us with a fully equipped in-situ visitors’ apartment, for optimal convenience. Though my days were quite full at school, we availed ourselves of Melbourne’s excellent public transport systems to visit numerous galleries and museums.



Weekend highlights ‘down under’ included field trips along the Great Ocean Road (springtime surf at Torquay, overnight in Lorne, the spectacular Twelve Apostles), a visit to wineries and marsupials in the Yarra Valley, and attending the Grand Final of the Australian Rules ‘footy’ season (in the MCG stadium packed with 97,000 singing fans).





This New Year's weekend was accompanied by a heavy snowfall here in the woods of eastern Manitoba (where I still live in the passive-solar house that Bev and I built 25 years ago). In addition to a half-day of shoveling the lovely white stuff, I have now also broken in some X-country ski trails in the 'back forty'... so if you're in the area, please do come by for a ski and a cup of good cheer...

I wish you much peace, happiness and fulfillment for 2007!



Robert L. Peters

p.s. Please don't feel that you need to respond to this letter, though be assured that I would welcome hearing back from you. My coordinates follow:

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