

ROCKPORT

# packaging

graphics + design

Renée Phillips

**packaging** graphics





**packaging** graphics **Renée Phillips**

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# introduction

Although the box it is packaged in is rather dull, most designers, retailers, and marketers would agree that the iMac is one of the most successfully packaged products of the last few years. The product—a user-friendly computer promising three-step Internet access—is beautifully packaged in an all-in-one, translucent blue-and-white nugget.

This leads to a long-standing debate about which takes precedence: product design or packaging design. Ask any product designer and he or she will tell you that the product is the most important thing. After all, customers buy products. Ask any packaging designer, and you'll hear that the packaging is more important. After all, without a great package the product may never even get noticed.



In reality, the lines between product design and packaging design have always been blurred. In many cases—such as the iMac—the packaging is the product. In order to sell something liquid like a beverage or a skin-care product, you have to create a container that holds the product while branding it effectively. The branding or visual equity of the iMac is so high that it has spawned a wide range of products with a similar translucent blue-and-white look, such as secondary drives, mice, scanners, CD holders, and other desk accessories. Not only are these products designed to look like the computer they are used with, they are packaged so that consumers can see their similar colors and materials.

The design of the iMac isn't the only reason for its success. Apple Computer's successful television advertising campaign boosted knowledge of the product and improved sales. Advertising and packaging have always been related. Television, radio, print, and Web-page ads create the knowledge of and the desire for products. Spend a few minutes watching television ads or looking through print ads—it's rare that the packaged product is not shown. The packaged product, on the supermarket shelf, reminds the buyer of the ad and offers the potential customer more. A package can be picked up, examined, labels can be read, and price considered—all in the space of a few seconds. And, if the advertising and the packaging are successful, the consumer won't even need to consider the purchase, he or she will pick up the package and head straight to the checkout counter.





# basic packaging

It has been said that the egg is the best example of simple, functional packaging. While that may be true, no one would ever claim that an egg was graphically appealing due to its bold use of color, type, and material. The shell, or packaging, of the egg is valued because of its pleasing form and its function. These are also the reasons we value simple packaging, but simple product packaging must go beyond form and function. Simple, effective packaging must quickly communicate what the product is, must make selection simple, and must stand out from the competition.

The pieces featured in this section use a variety of approaches to stand out from the competition. Some rely on color, some use special metallic or transparent inks, some use unusual artwork, some use uniquely shaped bottles or boxes—all are effective.



Designers who create direct-mail pieces know that they only have five seconds to catch a reader's attention. Designers who create packaging may have even less time. Unless a customer is looking for a specific brand or product, a package's design may only have two to three seconds to get a shopper's attention as he or she passes it on a store shelf.

In today's world of warehouse shopping and overabundance, where consumers can choose from a vast array of products in a variety of complex packaging, simple packaging designs may be one of the easiest ways to catch consumers' eyes. When competing on store shelves against designs with too many typefaces, colors, unnecessary bursts, banners, and other art elements, a simple design causes the eye to stop, rest, and take notice of the product.

design firm  
**Design Guys, Inc.**  
creative director  
**Steve Sikora**

## Michael Groves/Torget

These simple, minimal package designs work because the products are merchandised together in small in-store concept shops. The firm designed packages for over one hundred products in the kitchen, garden, and decorative home accessories categories. Although product manufacturing took place in several countries, for consistency all printing was done at a single source in Hong Kong. It was the only way to consistently match the blue (an important color from their product color palette), which belongs to no color system. A dull laminate gives the boxes a velvety surface and softens the blue just a bit.





design firm  
**Thorp Did It**  
designers

**Rick Thorp, Nicole Coleman**  
illustrator  
**Word Schumaker**

### **Planet Harmony**

Planet Harmony is a new line of natural snacks for the established Harmony brand. These "yummy treats with a healthy spin" come from "a junk-free zone." The design objectives were to make the package fun and informative while establishing a strong brand and shelf presence unlike anything else in the natural-food category. The bags were printed on a special metallized film; some of the inks are transparent to give a mirrored look.



design firm

**Thumbnail Productions Inc.**

art director

**Rik Klinge**

designers

**Judith Austin, Valerie Turnbull**

illustrator

**Judith Austin**

## The Marine Ecology Station

The Marine Ecology Station is a real, working, floating marine laboratory; they wanted to project an environmentally friendly image that differentiated them from the typical area tourist traps. Since they are a non-profit organization, their budget was practically non-existent. So a flexible logo was the key to this packaging system. The entire system was printed in a single color on a recycled Kraft stock. The packaging has since been rolled out into merchandising, including a line of clothing.

