



PRINT AND PRODUCTION FINISHES FOR

Bags, Labels, and Point of Purchase

Carolyn Knight and Jessica Glaser



RotoVision

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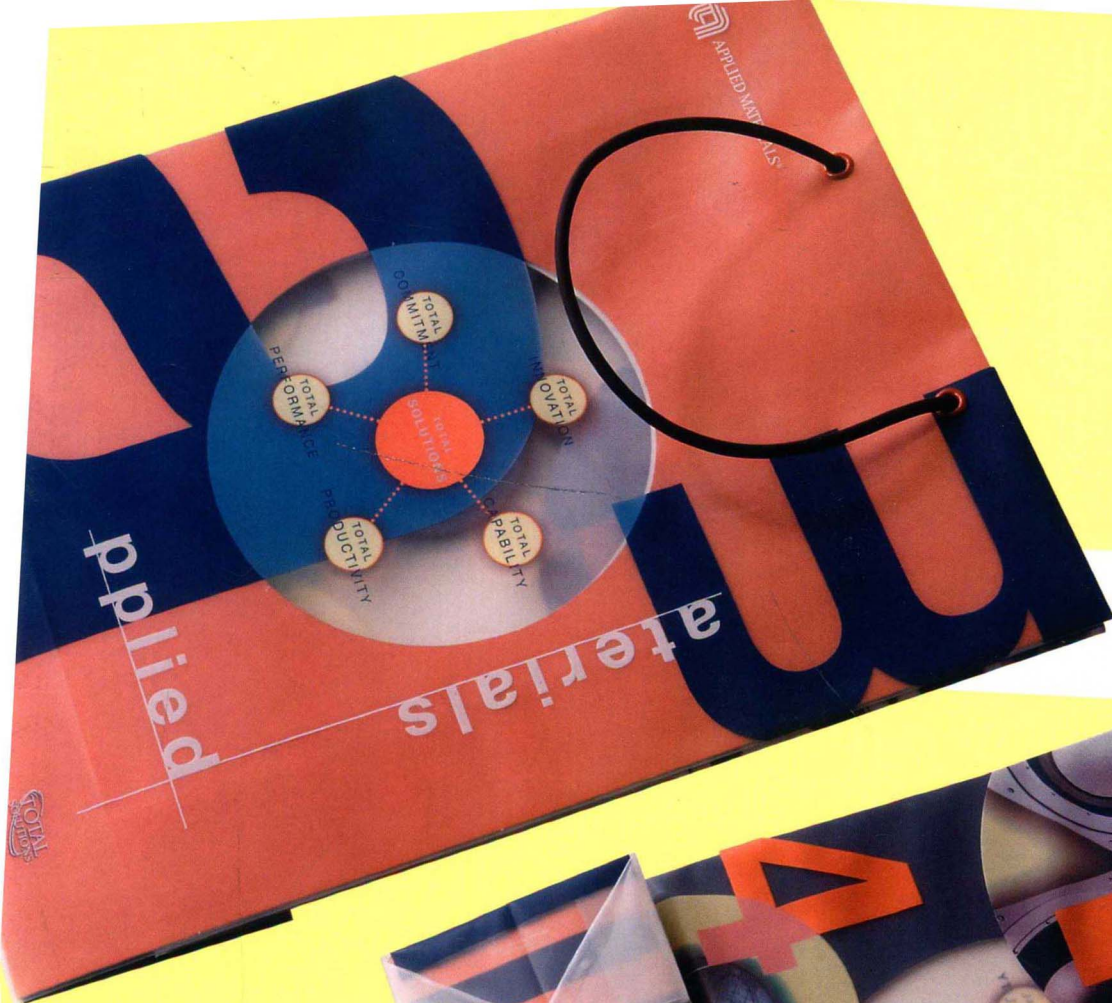
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INTRODUCTION

Global consumerism has secured a prominent role for the graphic design of bags, labels, and point of purchase. These items play an integral part in the retail experience, and designers have made innovative use of print and production finishes in the successful formulation of persuasive solutions. Shopping has become one of the developed world's most popular pastimes, and buying into the right brands is perceived as saying much about a purchaser's lifestyle and ambition. The use of a broad spectrum of print finishes, production techniques, and materials has produced a diverse and inspiring range of promotional items that come together to help a shopper choose what to buy within highly competitive product arenas.

The submissions for this book demonstrate that, by exploring the scope of materials and processes, designers are creating solutions that work hard to send numerous complex messages to as many existing and potential consumers as possible. Designers are assessing the brand, its market, and a project's print and production budget in order to tempt consumers to make associations that define not only contexts, but also an individual's personal style and aspirations.

There are many messages that can be created visually through the use of print finishes, production techniques, and materials. Visually interesting and tactile printed surfaces, varieties of material, and carefully selected techniques all have the potential to establish connections within the viewer's mind of, for example, environment, culture, exclusivity, craftsmanship, gender, and age. To successfully communicate these complex messages by text alone would probably require an excessively wordy description. Visual language created by using a mix of print and production techniques and materials is a very efficient way of communicating brand character, appeal, and positioning; it is not only quickly assimilated, but also easily crosses many cultural and language boundaries. As David Crow suggests:

"The ability of images to communicate across linguistic boundaries offers a level of consistency that is difficult to achieve otherwise. It also has distinct cost advantages. In a global economy, the ability to distribute the same product in a number of territories saves both time and money."¹

By combining materials and processes, the connotations of differing qualities and characteristics impact upon one another to create a fascinating synergy of meanings. Contrasting materials can come together to depict very distinctive styles and messages, which often appeal to quite focused target markets. For example, a label printed on an elaborate combination of tough, hard-wearing fabric with a more feminine, intricate material, held together by a metallic component, can become representative of a particular type of youth culture or "style tribe." The graphic styling of the tags helps to categorize the product as much as the product itself does.

Advances in technology and transglobal production have allowed designers to produce cost-effective solutions, as well as being creatively ambitious and adventurous. No longer are designers restricted by printing presses with extremely limited operations; it is now possible to combine full color with other options such as varnish, fluorescents, and metallic inks, in a manner that was not economically feasible a few years ago.

Graphic designers can now utilize production procedures that were once used exclusively by other industries. This means that the palette of processes has widened considerably, encompassing influences including engineering, printed and constructed textiles, plastics, science, and ecology. Gone are the conventions that confined designers to solutions that simply involved traditional print on paper or board; competition now dictates that bag, label, and point-of-purchase design often has to embrace the broadening range of print and production processes in order to maintain brand positioning and profile.

The term "material" initially suggests a spectrum of products including paper, fabric, plastic, leather, and metal; however, it is important to recognize that within each of these categories there is a wealth of choice available. For example, there are many kinds of papers and boards that vary tremendously in terms of surface quality, texture, durability, resilience, and weight. Creating a bag in really heavyweight paper gives it an entirely different feel and character from one made in a lighter-weight stock; a wine label printed on textured paper will convey a totally different message from one printed on metallic paper. Combine or contrast these materials with carefully chosen print and production techniques, and the variations are endless. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen comment on the intricacies of meaning potential created by diverse choices of materials:

"The hastily torn-out scrap of paper has different sets of potentials as a signifier than does the beautifully made weighty sheet. Glossy paper has the possibility of signals of a different kind to matte—and here the complexities of materials as signifiers already appear: 'glossy' paper can serve as a signifier of value, and yet, in different contexts, it can also serve as the signifier of pretence of value."²

This book investigates the print and production finishes used within three distinct graphic design specialisms: bags; tags and labels; and point-of-purchase design. Featured bag designs demonstrate how many different materials can make effective, practical, and sometimes very exciting carrying devices. On occasions, the materials are sourced from extremely unusual and unexpected arenas that include carpet fitting and medicine; other times, more conventional materials are used, but print and finishing techniques combine to create different and desirable effects. Attention to detail in terms of handle materials or structures, stitching, die-cutting, or foil blocking, stands out as being highly effective in personalizing these practical marketing tools.

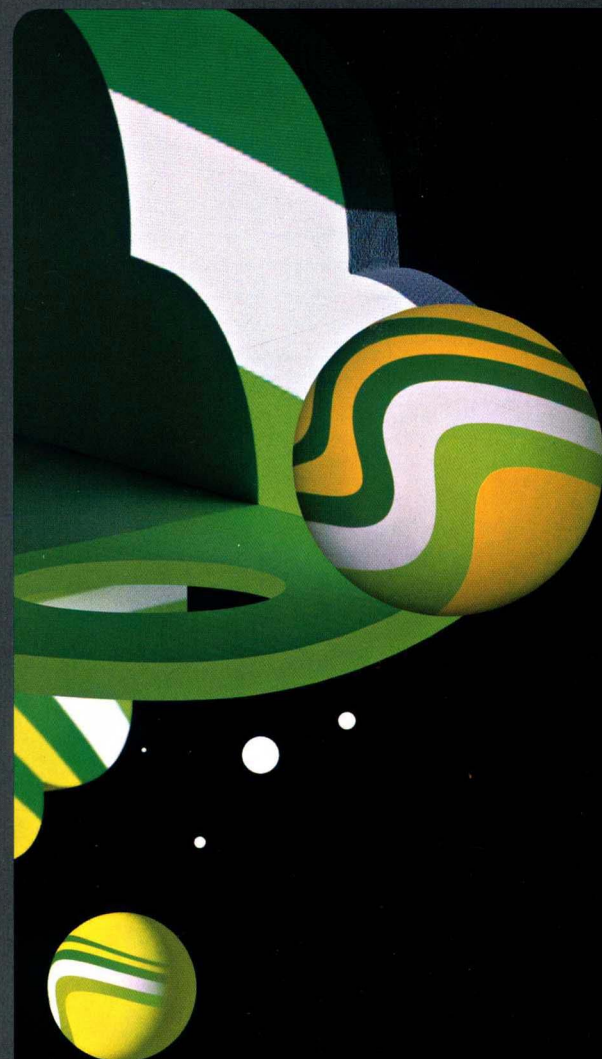
The graphic styling of labels shown in this book proves that they can heighten the appeal and market positioning of many varied products. Hangtags in particular convey a sense of value and individual care that is remarkable given their small scale. Add to this cleverly selected print and production processes, and products can be distinguished and elevated in a manner that is invaluable to marketing and sales.

Featured point-of-purchase designs show some of the effects created by the carefully considered use of print and production finishes, for both two- and three-dimensional promotional and display items. Point-of-purchase design particularly benefits from the use of unusual and memorable methods to attract interest, and clever combinations of different materials and processes can prove very successful in this quest for attention.

Print and Production Finishes for Bags, Labels, and Point of Purchase shows examples of a wide variety of processes in all three of these areas, and discusses the intriguing messages that help to define brand and personal image.

Notes > ¹ Crow, David. *Left to Right: The Cultural Shift From Words to Pictures*. AVA Publishing SA, 2006.

² Kress, Gunther, and Theo van Leeuwen. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. Routledge, 1996.



STANDARD PRINTING

The work appearing in this section is printed by lithography, either in four-color or in a number of selected PANTONE colors. Lithography is the most common, practical, and economical print process for quantity runs of items displaying image and/or text. However, this does not mean that an alternative process would have been chosen had a client brief been different, or the budget higher. As the examples here show, standard lithography can be the very best method of printing many design solutions. In particular, color photography must be printed in four-color litho if images are to be represented showing all their subtle nuances of color, tone, and texture. Precision of type, right down to 5- or 6-point in size, is also achievable in lithography.

In the context of hangtags and carrier bags, full-color litho is especially significant, because very often these items are printed in a limited number of colors. Full color is therefore comparatively unusual, and can be used to connote certain messages to readers. For example, images with muted, tertiary hues can suggest that associated products, services, or environments are luxurious and expensive, whereas predominantly bright, vibrant, primary hues can evoke upmarket, lively, sporty, or youthful associations. Proportions and configurations of color impact upon visual language, but whatever the design, full-color lithography is unique in being able to convey a wide spectrum of meanings, as well as creating exciting and innovative hangtags and carrier bags.

Since the advent of sophisticated software that enables designers to manipulate images and type to create distinct impressions, characteristics, and styles, it could be said that there is less need for varying print processes and materials. For example, the RedHead hangtag shown on page 011 (designed by Matt Graif) is printed in four-color litho onto stiff board, and looks as if it is made up of a wooden base, with handmade paper layered on top, and an embossed metal emblem. In fact, all the effects have been produced and assembled on the computer, including the three-dimensional illusion, and it is likely that most viewers will barely make the distinction between this printed version and one constructed from the "raw" materials. Lithography has enabled all the inherent semantics of the combined materials to be produced very effectively and efficiently with just one process.

Litho printing in selected PANTONE colors, as opposed to colors from the four-color set, is also an excellent way to ensure continuity of identity for a range of printed items, and can often give more vibrant color. Specific PANTONE colors can be chosen as company or product colors and, providing they are consistently printed onto similar stock, they will always appear the same. Uniquely, lithography enables those PANTONE colors to mix and form other colors; two colors when printed in litho can overlap to form a third color, as the inks are not opaque. Images also can be manipulated in software to create duotones or tritones that mix two or three colors in assorted proportions to give a number of color variations.

In particular, this section on standard printing demonstrates the diversity and professional use of lithography. From small single-color labels to full-color point-of-purchase posters, the process is able to achieve high-quality image and text printed on a wide spectrum of paper stocks, and is often the very best process to choose.



LA PECA DE LUPE

DESIGN

SONSOLES LLORENS DISSENY GRAFIC

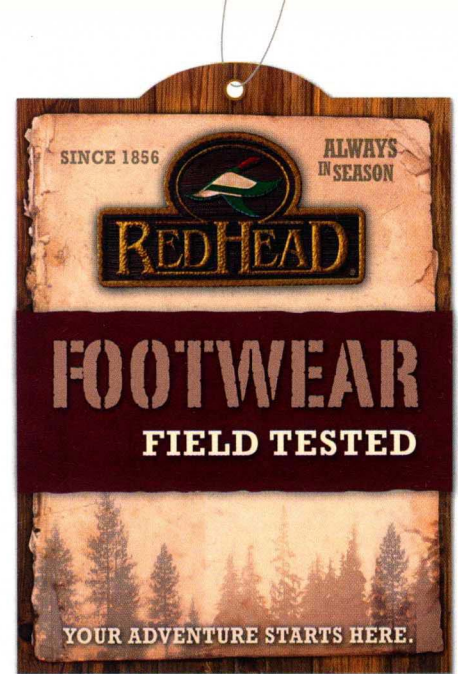
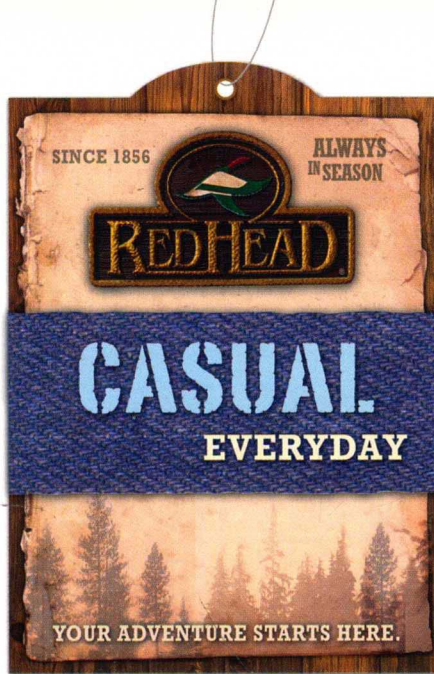
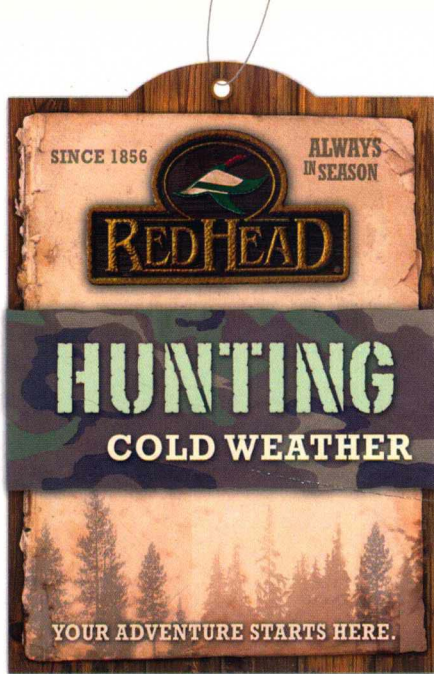
SPECIFICATIONS

- Tag > three-color offset lithography
- Paper bag > three-color offset lithography
- Plastic bag > three-color flexography

This range, designed by Sonsoles Llorens for the La Peca de Lupe brand, features a tag and two types of carrier bag. Each is printed in three colors using a standard print method: either litho or flexography. Both types of print allow the designer to produce areas of consistent, crisp-edged, flat color. What is interesting to observe here is the differences in print effects that have been achieved simply printing the same colors onto different materials.



The tag is printed onto an absorbent uncoated stock, which causes the ink to sink in and results in a slight muting of color. The paper bag is also printed onto an uncoated stock, but on a bright white, lighter-weight, and less absorbent material that results in a slightly more vivid print quality. The plastic bag, which is printed using flexography, has a completely different effect; ink remains on the surface rather than being absorbed into the body of the bag. Overall, the print and production processes used throughout these three pieces help to reinforce the impression that La Peca de Lupe is a contemporary brand that appeals to a predominantly young-at-heart, female market.



LABELS

REDHEAD

DESIGN

MATT GRAIF DESIGN

SPECIFICATIONS

- Four-color process
- One special PANTONE color

Many designers of labels and swingtags layer materials in an intriguing way to create a specific meaning that will appeal to a particular market. In these examples, Matt Graif has created a similarly complex, three-dimensional layered effect, but has used four-color process plus one special to achieve this result.

RedHead adventure gear has a range of three labels: cold-weather hunting clothes, everyday casual clothes, and field-tested footwear. The label for each line cleverly creates the illusion that it is made from three layers of material—a thin wooden board, a piece of deckle-edged handmade paper, and a wraparound label that appears to be made from material appropriate to each range. Camouflage fabric denotes hunting; denim defines the casual range; and brown leather indicates footwear. In reality, this effect has been achieved with the aid of litho printing in five colors, yet it still succeeds in communicating quite complex messages to the audience. For example, it is clear that the RedHead range appeals mainly to men, and the use of litho printing (as opposed to the more costly alternative of hand-fixing three different materials together) will assure the brand's customers that they are getting good value for money when purchasing a RedHead garment.

BAG

CROATIAN NATIONAL TOURIST BOARD

DESIGN

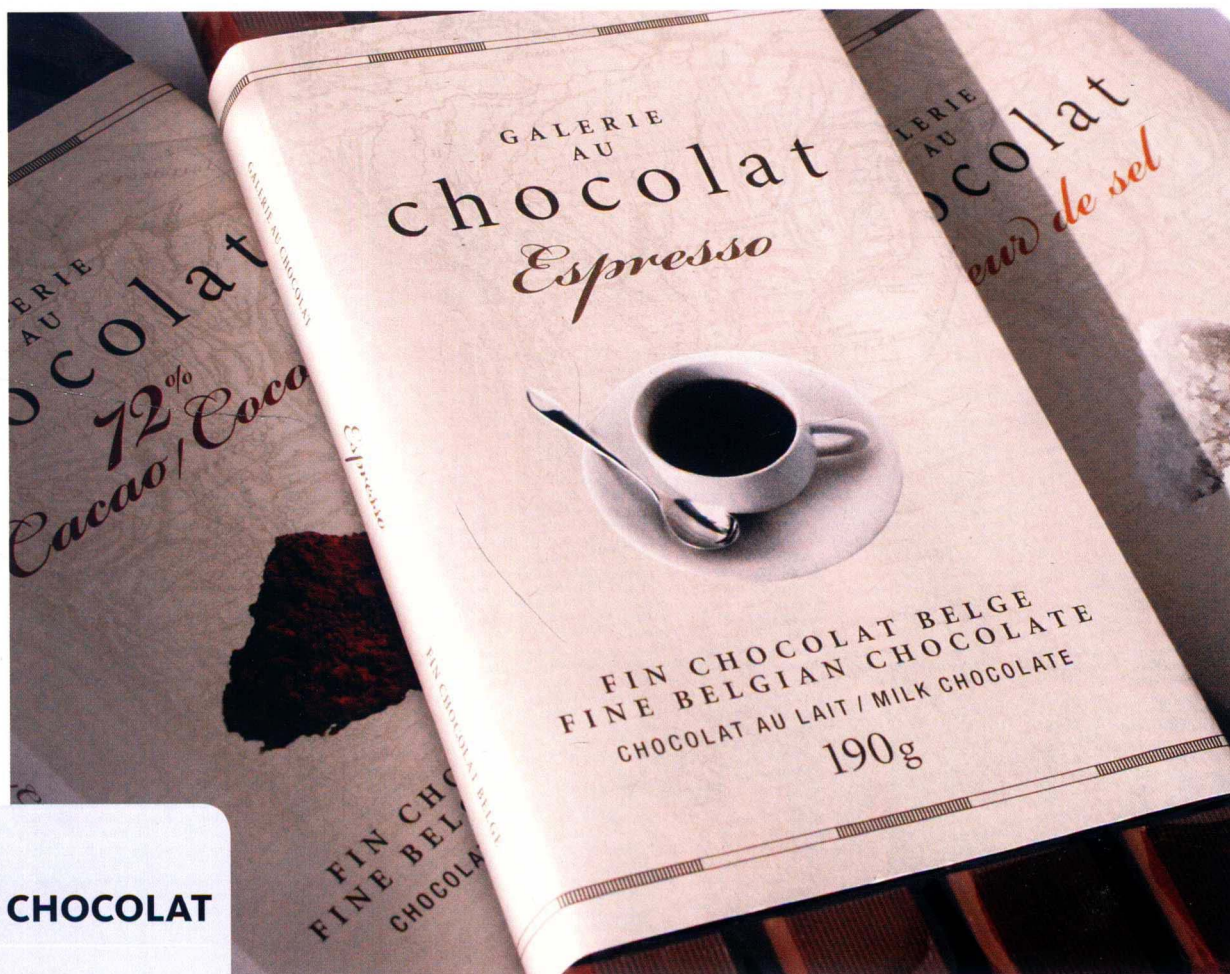
STUDIO INTERNATIONAL/HTZ

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Four-color lithography

This design samples long stripes of colorful detail, sourced from Croatian imagery, and is expertly printed in CMYK to capture the contrasting individuality of these many shades, hues, and textures. The visual language created by the selection and use of four-color print speaks primarily of variety, while the choice of imagery also encompasses meanings such as heritage and enviably beautiful environments.





LABELS

GALERIE AU CHOCOLAT

DESIGN

PAPRIKA

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Four-color lithography

Paprika's labels for Galerie au Chocolat indicate the product details cleanly and have great visual impact on the shelf. Designs were printed in four-color litho and make full use of the potential of this process. This includes the creation of specific full-color mixes to capture individual shades; the accurate reproduction of photographic imagery; and the printing of subtle, tinted background shades. With this printing method, all this can happen at the same time, using only four passes on press.



CALISTOGA BAKERY CAFE

DESIGN

VRONTIKIS DESIGN OFFICE

SPECIFICATIONS

- Labels > three-color lithography
- Bags > four-color flexography, lamination



The distinctive, rich, earthy color palette remains consistent throughout every separate element that makes up Vrontikis Design Office's work for the Calistoga Bakery Cafe, yet each standalone item features well-considered and varied use of shifting color priority. Bags and labels are printed using two standard methods, depending upon which material is to be printed: paper-based products have been created using lithography, whereas silky-smooth, laminated foil coffee bags are produced using the most suitable process for their surface—flexography. These bags are first printed in white to provide a base that will enhance the quality of the remaining colors.

The selection of three PANTONE colors has provided the Calistoga Bakery Cafe with considerable design scope with which to differentiate their products. Each color has sufficient depth and density to hold even small serif typography without compromising legibility. The basic palette of red, yellow, and brown is occasionally supplemented with deep blue, but the design still remains true to the economy and visual character created by the three-color print palette.





The complementary combination of earthy shades, simply yet beautifully printed in litho and flexography, blends fluidly with the varied color priority. This not only helps add significant value to Calistoga Bakery Cafe products, but also helps to reinforce the impression that product and service possess the same degree of quality, consideration, care, and attention to detail that is present within the design.



STAVERTON

DESIGN
FORM

SPECIFICATIONS

- Lithography
- Die-cutting

Staverton uses a distinctive set of vivid corporate colors, the most characteristic being a bright, lively yellow, which has been recognized and exploited to the full by design company Form in the creation of these two carrier bags. Litho printing enabled precise color matching on each bag, with Staverton yellow even appearing within the sunny landscape of the smaller carrier and being used as a major source of corporate recognition on the outside of the larger bag. Yellow is usually perceived as bright and uplifting, and the Landscape bag makes a feature of the picturesque yellow-flowering crops that are evident in many rural environments. The designer is suggesting that "roomscales," including Staverton furniture, have a similarly edifying effect.

