

G R A P H I S

Annual Reports 6



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The International Yearbook of Annual Reports
Das internationale Jahrbuch über Jahresberichte
Le Répertoire International des Rapports Annuels

Publisher and Creative Director: B. Martin Pedersen

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Published by Graphis Inc.



Contents

Profiles:

John Van Dyke: it's about trust	8
Attacking conventional wisdom: from digital to analog with Rick Anwyl & James Harris	14
Selected annual reports 1997/98:	
Corporate, Konzerne, Entreprises	24
Creative services, Kreative dienste, Services créatifs	36
Education, Ausbildung, Formation	44
Electronics, Elektronik, Electronique	56
Europe, Europa, Europe	80
Fashion, Mode	106
Financial, Finanzinstitute, Instituts financiers	110
Food & beverage, Nahrungsmittel/Getränke, Alimentation/Boissons	126
Furniture, Möbel, Meubles	138
Health, Gesundheit, Santé	142
Insurance, Versicherungen, Assurances	150
Manufacturing, Industriegüter, Produits industriels	158
Paper companies, Papierhersteller, Fabricants de papier	170
Recreation, Erholung, Loisirs	178
Services, Dienstleistungen, Services	186
Technology, Technologie	194
Transportation, Transportwesen, Transports	226
Utilities, Versorgungsbetriebe, Services publics	238
Indices, Verzeichnisse, Index	242
Graphis books, Graphis bücher, Livres graphis	248

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John Van Dyke: It's About Trust.

By JoAnn Stone

Capturing John Van Dyke in words is not an easy thing. He isn't a flamboyant self-promoter like Raymond Loewy. He's not an iconoclast like Robert Miles Runyan. He isn't a curmudgeon like the man who so influenced his design, Paul Rand. And there are other things he isn't. He isn't arrogant, expecting audiences to figure out the message he's packaged for his clients ("Design has to be accessible."), or inflexible, expecting the client to take-it-or-leave-it when he presents them with a design solution ("It's *their* book."). Van Dyke is, in his own view, "a simple person who appreciates simple things and who also has, perhaps, a short attention span." If this seems an oversimplification and it probably is, nevertheless, it is a succinct way of describing his design, which, from 1975 to the present, has made the most of simplicity, clarity, and honesty, winning him just about every graphic design award there is to win and having considerable influence on his contemporaries in the business. Prompted in part by his recent decision to close Van Dyke Company, the part of his communications business focused on producing printed materials, Graphis approached John

about profiling his work from the past 24 years. He asked, simply, that the story concern itself as much with his 24-year relationship with Weyerhaeuser as with his portfolio; a relationship he characterizes this way: "I cared as much about the company as they did."

Bruce Amundson, who joined Weyerhaeuser in 1997 and worked with Van Dyke on the 1997 annual report sums up the relationship rhetorically: "When was the last time you saw the controller of a public company hug a graphic designer?" The affectionate controller, Kenneth J Stancato, was the only other constant on all 24 annuals from 1975 to the present. During this time, Van Dyke worked directly with three different CEOs and about a half-dozen separate annual report managers.

In a way this nearly century-old forest products giant (\$2.4 billion in revenues then and \$11.2 billion now), with its family culture would seem to have been a kind of surrogate family to Van Dyke, who was on his own in Seattle at age 15. That was a time when the fires of civil dissent were only beginning to smolder, rock music and Elvis were just starting to roll, "the Beaver" was the prototypical

rations saw the annual report as a legal necessity and little else. And it would go on to win national acclaim, the first of many. Van Dyke is candid about how gratifying this recognition was (and is) and how important it has been to his success. But he insists that winning awards is not what drives his design. Ideas do.

He is, above all else, he says, a storyteller. As such, he sees things, gathers them up, and organizes them. And the story he tells is about the client, not about the designer. "I don't think the viewer or audience should see or sense the presence of design or the designer, just the subject matter."

As with most good storytellers, he seeks to elicit a response from the audience, but he wants that response to be in terms of what is needed by the client. Van Dyke's take on his Weyerhaeuser portfolio is that some of the annuals were great while others were not so great, but that all were appropriate to the assignment and capable of getting an audience's attention in a positive way.

New as he is to the company, if not the annual report process, Amundson supports this self-assessment, alluding to a high level of trust grounded in mutual respect

When was the last time you saw a controller hug a graphic designer?

pre-adolescent, and "American Bandstand" teenagers were hanging out at the local drive-in restaurant, where for about \$10, they could get young John Van Dyke to pinstripe their hotrods. (One of his other businesses at the time was buying old cars and converting them to street rods, then custom painting and selling them. These endeavors are not inconsequential. They demonstrate Van Dyke's early development not only as graphic designer but also as entrepreneur.)

His relationship with Weyerhaeuser began with its 1975 annual report, his newly formed company's first project. The climate then wasn't a great one for business. American industry was reeling from OPEC's precipitous increase in oil prices (from \$2.50 a barrel in 1973 to \$24 a barrel by 1979). The national unemployment rate at the time exceeded 9%, the highest in more than 30 years and Weyerhaeuser had had to lay off employees. The recession was severe and universal enough to prompt then President and CEO George H Weyerhaeuser to write in his 1975 letter to stockholders, "We are not among those who accept the view that the events of the past few years may signal the end of economic progress." Van Dyke's design of the annual report that year reinforced this message of cautious optimism with a design boldness rare for its time. Among the earliest to use full-page, bleed photographs of sparingly composed subject matter, Weyerhaeuser's 1975 annual was a sincere effort to communicate seriously in an era when many corpo-

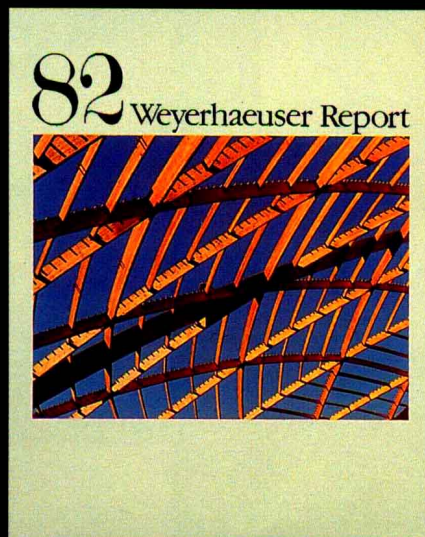
between Weyerhaeuser and Van Dyke. "He gave us great products," Amundson says, "but he also always gave us what was right for Weyerhaeuser." Put another way, as one admiring designer does, "John has always honored his subject."

No doubt this has had something to do with his long run at Weyerhaeuser, as has his non-dictatorial approach to problem solving. Very much a pragmatist, Van Dyke will not beat a dead design horse. "I learned a long time ago that when something is going south, just let it go." Does this mean that he's given to compromise? No, at least not in a pejorative way. His philosophy about design is that there is never just one good solution. One of the best examples is Weyerhaeuser's 1981 report, which was ready to go on press when Van Dyke was handed a rewrite that was one-fourth the length of the original text. An overnight redesign and big type averted disaster, and the report went on to collect more design awards for him.

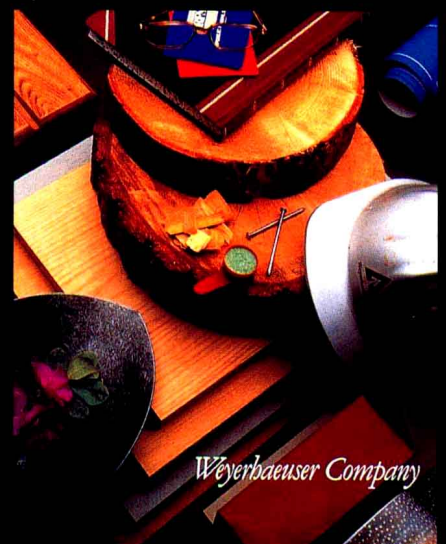
Van Dyke has been influenced most notably, he says, by Paul Rand, Alexey Brodovitch, and Willie Fleckhaus, Rand for his 'commercial art' and use of typography, Brodovitch for his elegance and clarity, and Fleckhaus for his bold editorial approach to graphic design. Editorial design, in general, has been important to his execution, particularly magazines, like Fleckhaus' sixties-vintage *TWEN* and early editions of *Marie Claire* and the Italian *Vogue*. This is apparent in his work for Weyerhaeuser. One of his favorite annuals is from 1982, another bumpy year for business. With its magazine-weight >



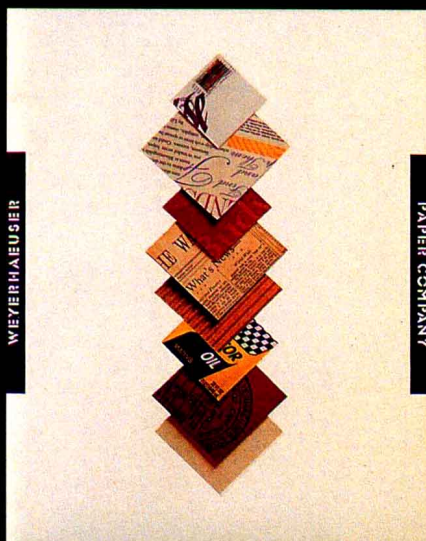
1978



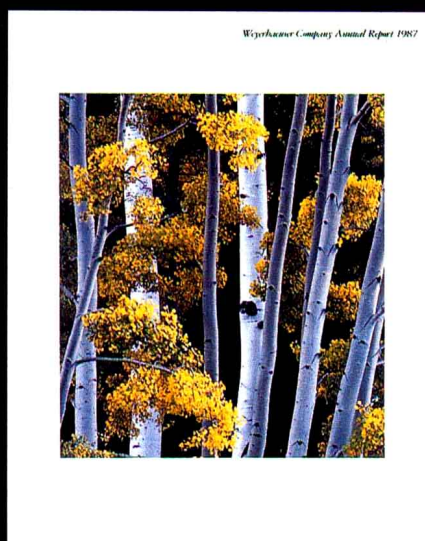
1982



1985



1986



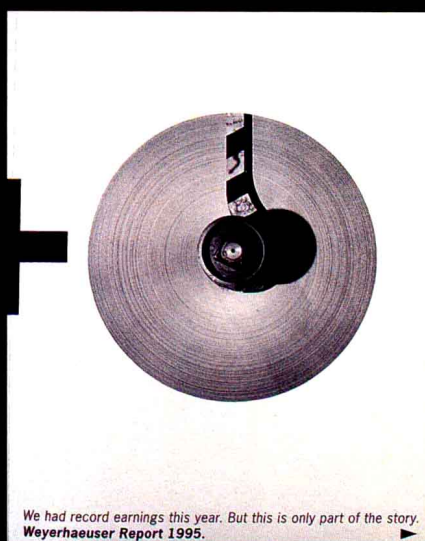
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1993



1994



1995



1996

VISION

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HIGHLIGHTS

	1990	1989
Revenue (million dollars)	111,332	111,111
Net income (million dollars)	201	201
EPS (per share)	2.00	2.00
Dividend (per share)	0.50	0.50
Book value (per share)	1.00	1.00
Capital expenditures (million dollars)	1,000	1,000
Debt (million dollars)	1,000	1,000
Stockholders' equity (million dollars)	1,000	1,000

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WORKING TOWARD A COMMON GOAL

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ADDING VALUE FOR SHAREHOLDERS

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RENEWING A VALUABLE RESOURCE

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(1) Statistical source for sheep tags in 1970 U.S. Farm Service data. The percentage of Southern softwood forested to primarily conifers in hards and plywood mills has apparently increased since 1970, but more recent data is not available.



