

# BIG IDEAS START SMALL

The greatest marvels of architecture didn't simply appear one day; they were built one brick at a time. As it turns out, ideas in advertising and design are no different.

Marketers are often fixated on the big idea, on producing that one thing that's so wildly popular it completely shifts the sales trajectory of a business. While a fair aspiration for an ambitious creative to hang onto, things don't always pan out this way in business.

Instead, Insight Creative chief executive Steven Giannoulis tells NZ Marketing, the best ideas generally have an inauspicious start, often growing from what might be as simple as a conversation.

"The traditional approach is to start with the big idea and work out how to sell it into the marketer, but really you should start at the other end and question why the client approached you in the first place," Giannoulis says.

"It's often a little thing, it's just a problem they're looking to solve. And sometimes, that question might lead to a path that arrives at a big thing."

In research conducted for the previous edition of this magazine, various marketers expressed their frustration at the self-aggrandising nature of an industry more interested in winning creative awards than truly helping the client.

As a former client, Giannoulis has been on the receiving end of a few such self-serving agency pitches and understands where this frustration comes from. This is part of the reason he does everything he can to ensure that the work his agency develops actually drives value for his clients.

"I often tell my team to sell the thinking and the value in the idea, and then the design sells itself," he says.

"If you don't do that, people get hung up on the wrong things, like the shade of yellow or the typeface being used. Those things are irrelevant at that stage, because they can all be changed."

For Giannoulis, good design should always deliver results for the client. It's not enough that it looks pretty enough to cause people to ooh and ahh. Unless it drives real commercial value, it remains inert in the world of art rather than that of design.

By way of example, Giannoulis points to the work Insight Creative has done with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (NZSO) in recent years.

"The client came to us and said, 'look, the previous agency did really brilliant work and won lots of Best Awards but they just didn't drive sales'. So the brief we got was to put more bums on seats."

While it would be easy to interpret a brief like this as sapping all creativity out of what could've been an interesting project, Insight saw potential.

"It was an opportunity for a different kind of creativity, the kind of creativity that drives results," he says. "We looked at who was attending concerts and why, and also who wasn't. We sought to understand perceptions and purchase barriers before we began looking at creative territories."

The team at Insight responded by developing a much more targeted campaign, focusing on driving consumer action by addressing needs and perception barriers rather than positioning a creative mood. It was an approach that drove immediate results.

"NZSO had a 30 percent lift in ticket sales, and many of these came from people who had never been before," Giannoulis says.

This is not to say that the work itself was any less aesthetically pleasing than work NZSO had previously done (in fact, the work has been a Best Awards finalist in both years Insight has been involved). Insight still had to produce something that matched the high artistic standards of NZSO, but did it in a way that resonated with an audience that had not previously gone to a show. The work was artistic without being esoteric, making it accessible to a broader audience of potential buyers.

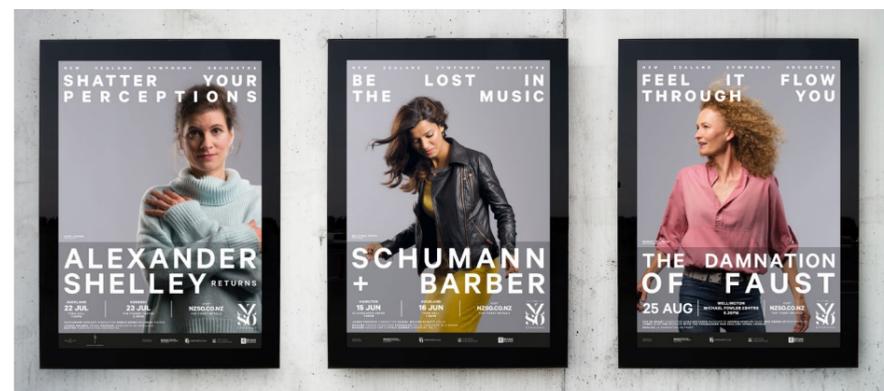
The point Giannoulis makes here is that design should always serve a clear purpose; it should always find an audience, solve a problem, answer a question, change a perception or drive an action. It shouldn't wait tentatively in a museum to be seen and admired, but rather actively offer something useful to the consumer. In this case, that utility



Above: 2015 marketing campaign



Above: 2016 marketing campaign



This page: 2017 marketing campaign

**"THE VALUE LIES IN THE THINKING BEHIND IT. IT'S ABOUT FINDING A GOOD IDEA THAT'S DRIVEN BY AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WILL DRIVE THE AUDIENCE TO ENGAGE."**

came in the shape of introducing a whole new group of people to the symphonies of some of the nation's finest musicians.

Insight has continued to build on this thinking in the following two years' work, going even further in the 2017 Season campaign, based on the learnings from the previous years, to attract an even broader audience set.

Giannoulis says the success of a campaign doesn't come down solely to the design itself, but rather what lies beneath.

"There are a lot of designers out there who can deliver design cheaply and quickly, but aesthetics aren't necessarily the thing that holds the key to the value," he says.

"The value lies in the thinking behind it. It's about finding a good idea that's driven by an understanding of what will drive audiences to engage."

Giannoulis says that marketers don't want to hear that something might work according to the gut feeling of the designer, but rather expect a rational argument outlaying why an idea is likely to work based on a clear insight on the audience, their decision drivers and how the chosen medium and channel aligns with this.

"I often lean back on my client experience, when I was the only marketing person on the executive team. Everyone else was an accountant or a technical specialist, and I used to tell them to spend big money so that customers could feel this or feel that. It was as though I was talking a different language, so I had to change my approach. I had to take my team on a rational journey to the idea."

It's an approach that Giannoulis still applies today, and part of the reason every client meeting at Insight Creative starts with a conversation rather than a design solution.



The more things change

While we can sometimes get tied up in all the changes happening in the industry, Giannoulis says there are certain fundamentals that remain rock solid.

#### Match the media to the audience

"You need to work out where your audience is and what media is right for that audience," Giannoulis says. The point being that baby boomers, for instance, aren't likely to be snapchatting their smashed avo brunches to their mates at the golf club.

#### Match the media to the message

Some messages are easier to deliver in some mediums, and harder in others. This is part of the reason you don't necessarily want to write a novel on a billboard.

#### Match the media to the creative idea

Giannoulis argues ideas that are finely crafted are more suited for books or magazines, whereas ideas that require mood or feeling are more suited to multi-media channels, online or video.

#### Match the media to the desired outcome

Some mediums are better for delivering certain results, whereas others aren't, Giannoulis says. On a website, for instance, you can click a button and make a purchase, but this instant gratification simply isn't possible when it comes to an outdoor ad.

*Want to see if Insight Creative can help you solve your business problem or realise an opportunity? Get in touch with the team today: [talktous@insightcreative.co.nz](mailto:talktous@insightcreative.co.nz)*