

7 HOT TRENDS IN MAGAZINE DESIGN FOR 2016

Hotsheets

BY ANICKA QUIN, Editor-in-Chief, *Western Living*

From a retro-modern influence to digital-first type selections: spot these seven trends in magazines this year.

1. THE MINIMALIST COVER LINE

While mass-market titles like *People* and *OK!* are still aggressively tempting audiences with busy covers of sell lines, some magazines are taking a more restrained approach to stand out in a different way, says Annelise Dekker, art director of *Reader's Digest Canada*. "A lot of travel and leisure magazines have dropped a lot of cover lines off," she says. "Condé Nast has taken the biggest leap—they've pretty much stripped everything off their covers. They're standing out by dropping all of the type off—when you're standing at a newsstand, you do stop at a big beautiful image without a million cover lines. It's really gutsy to pull all of that away and say, here's a beautiful experience."

2. STRIKING PHOTOGRAPHY

There's been a shift in photographic style, says *Canadian Living* senior associate art director Sandi Pilon. "It's become more graphic," she explains. "We're seeing really drastic lighting that creates longer and harder shadows. In terms of styling, for things like food photography and style pages, we're really focusing on the main subject—there's minimal propping, and it's clean and neat."

Along with that look, says Marilee Lamarque, art director for *Reader's Digest*, International Editions, comes a more playful look to the photographs. "It used to be more the domain of a men's magazine or celebrity magazine—these playful portraits of celebrities," says Lamarque. "But now you're seeing them in more places, along with playful illustration."

Strong photography has also become more of the hero in interior spread design, says Dekker. "Magazines are really letting photography be the superstar, with headlines being the secondary design element."

3. HANDMADE TYPE

Trends in typography tend to be cyclical, and there are a few returns this year. "All of these come and go every couple of years," notes Dekker. "But one thing that's strong right now is thick brush lettering—the feeling of the handmade or hand drawn. *Chatelaine* does it well on their covers, and *Bon Appetit* does it all the time."

Hand-drawn type remains strong, agrees Naomi MacDougall, associate art director for *Western Living* and *Vancouver* magazines. "It's layered, textured—adding that human element," she says, "whether it's with typography, or little illustrations."



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4. THE RETURN OF THE CLASSICS

But just as strong is a return to classics, says Dekker. “One thing that makes me really happy, is that I’m seeing a return to using beautiful serifs and slab serifs in features,” she says. “When they’re doing numbers or lists, they’re big beautiful Didot-style numbers—it’s almost going back to the early ‘90s in style.”

Lamarque credits that quieter type style with a renewed emphasis on magazines’ core strengths. “It’s almost a return to what a magazine used to be,” she says, “with an emphasis on the word—as opposed to trying to compete with media that’s become so dynamic with video and movement. Magazine design has become more still.”

MacDougall has seen this shift too, and has a name for the trend: budget cuts. “You can really see magazines where you’d expect to have high budget, high-production photographs, the design has become more classic,” she says. “Classic serifs like Didot, they can relate to a budget cut as well—let’s use the fonts we have. Large magazines used to commission a type face for just one feature, but you’re not really seeing that anymore.”

5. DIGITAL-FIRST TYPOGRAPHY

Canadian Living’s Pilon also points to a shift where digital type is the influencer for print type, instead of the other way around. “There’s a lot of attention paid to digital-friendly fonts,” she explains. Where magazines would usually try to find a digital font for their website or tablet that would closely match what’s represented in the print edition, now they’re working from the digital fonts first. “I’ve been noticing that magazines are going digital first—changing to fonts that are more digital friendly, and the print follows behind that.”

6. GOING GRAPHIC

Dekker points to a look she’s seeing that she’s calling “modern retro”—a trend that’s originated somewhat in the ‘zine world, but is transitioning to the mainstream. “You’ll see borders around images on the covers, or inside, designing with graphics like squiggly lines, dots, chevrons and stripes,” she says. “It’s a throwback with a vintage feel, but it’s modern too. I’ve even noticed it on a cleaner level in magazines like *Fast Company*—where they’re using triangles and little lines.”

7. BRING ON THE PASTELS

Pantone declared Rose Quartz (pale pink) and Serenity (pale blue) to be colours of the year—and those softer shades are finding their way into print design too, say both Lamarque and Dekker. They’re shades from the ‘80s, with a modern bent. There’s more grey in these pastels, with some moodiness to them. “In general there’s minimal colour, mainly black type on white,” says Lamarque, “but pastels are there too.”

