

SEAN ADAMS  
PHILIPPE APELOIG  
FELIX BELTRAN  
MATTEO BOLOGNA  
MARGO CHASE  
**MASTERS OF DESIGN  
LOGOS & IDENTITY**  
STEFF GEISSBUHLER  
FRITZ GOTTSCHALK  
MICHAEL HODGSON  
MICHAEL JOHNSON  
ERKEN KAGAROV  
DITI KATONA  
LUCIO LUZO LAZARRA  
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A COLLECTION  
OF THE MOST  
INSPIRING LOGO  
DESIGNERS  
IN THE WORLD

SEAN ADAMS

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Concrete Design Communications, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Logo design requires a focused vision that uses large amounts of complex information and funnels that into a clear message. Concrete Design Communications partner Diti Katona has created a body of work that is connected with a philosophy that makes more with less. She designs a logo and identity project by distilling the message into a simple visual. “Generally, we think that successful logos should express as much as possible with the greatest economy of form,” she explains.

OPPOSITE  
Even cropped and  
as a background, the  
Masterfile identity is  
recognizable. Together  
with the photography  
it represents, both gain  
recognition and value.

# Masterfile

This is our logo

Masterfile

This approach is made successful not by simply making a logo minimal. It is successful due to Katona's skill at slowly condensing a client's message, politics, business goals, and audience into a seemingly obvious solution. Understanding the client's culture and the audience's culture is at the core of every Concrete solution.

## Form and Function

The goal of every logo and identity system is to create an outcome that makes a business successful. The aesthetics and form are critical, but they are secondary to the final business goals. It is easy to fall in love with a specific shape or color, and Katona is no different than any other designer in that respect. She has the ability, however, to set that aside, understand the larger issues, and modify the forms successfully to reach the desired business goals. "Designers have a tendency to try to make the logo say too much," Katona says. "You cannot communicate a company's product/service offering, vision, intended audience, and aspirations in a single graphic form, at least not explicitly. A successful logo needs to choose a singular message and express it clearly."

The logo must have a clear message, but this cannot happen without well-designed visual forms. Katona believes that most logos fail due to poor execution. She adamantly rejects the devaluation of skill. "In recent years, so much emphasis in design has been placed on 'concept,' that often the articulation of the logo, the artisanship, has been neglected,"

she explains. "Logos often have very simple ideas behind them. They need to because of the issues we've discussed. But what makes them work, what makes them come alive, is the way they are crafted. Often, the most successful logos are the ones that have a very simple idea, brilliantly executed." Katona uses the example of a project that involved collaboration with an advertising agency.

The agency had developed the concept (the heavy lifting so to speak), but they needed help to give form to it. The implication given to Katona was that most of the hard work had been done and the only part remaining was to make the logo look pretty. However, the reality was that very little had been done. The concept had used very predictable symbolism. "While this may not have been the wrong symbol, it needed to be direct and easily understandable. Its predictability required a distinctive way of articulating the concept," Katona says. The crafting of a unique graphic form would distinguish this particular logo from the thousands of others that used similar themes. This logo succeeded in the end due to Katona's unique vision and insistence on perfection of form.

## Signs and Symbols

For Katona, symbols can often have more power than a name because they use visual imagery rather than the alphabet. The symbol can be much more expressive. A picture of an apple, for instance, is instantly more recognizable than the word *apple*. "I still remember the time when my children were very young, well before they were able to read,

"When designing a logo, distill, distill, distill, and distill."

—Diti Katona, partner,  
Concrete Design Communications

**THIS SPREAD**  
At first, the identity for Masterfile looks as if it's just a standard typeface, but at a closer glance you realize that the letterforms are a unique typeface.

The identity system and execution of the promotional collateral are more free and open. Therefore, the quality of each piece is dependent on the designer.



#### Elements of a Standards Manual

Even if I have a good relationship and strong advocate with a client, we still create a standards manual to help everyone use the logo properly. Typically, we try and create one that leaves some creativity to the final designer. The manual includes these elements:

- Logo use
- Black and white examples
- Color examples
- Scale instructions
- Primary color palette
- Secondary color palette
- Primary typeface
- Secondary typeface
- Image use
- Print examples such as stationery
- Environmental examples such as signage
- Merchandise examples
- Vehicle applications

recognizing that McDonalds was a brand. The simplicity of the golden arches was all that was needed to communicate to them," Katona recalls.

Katona's philosophy on complexity and simplicity is pragmatic. For her, a logo should ultimately be whatever it needs to be to communicate effectively. The context and the communications criteria should dictate what form the logo should take. "Not the other way around," she clarifies. In the past, logos designed by Concrete were fairly simple in form. This was partly due to Katona's bias for simple and direct ways of communicating. In recent years, she has been exploring identities that are more complex and more reliant on color. Technological advances in reproduction influenced this. "Not very long ago, logos were designed for the lowest common denominator of reproduction processes," Katona says. "This, of course, meant the dreaded fax, along with other black and white applications. But with the pervasiveness of color reproduction, having it 'work in black and white' is no longer the prevailing mantra."

The shift in technologies, from a print-based solution to a multiplatform solution has affected Katona's approach to logo design. The result has been logos with more dimensionality and more reliance on color to tell the story. However, while keeping these influences in mind, Katona believes strongly that while important, these should never dictate the design. "Just because you can have a three-dimensional, spinning logo, doesn't mean you *should* have one," she jokes. Once the identity leaves Katona's hands, the unexpected will happen. Her strong standards for a color palette and typography will help the identity maintain a consistent look in multiple hands.

Formally, Katona's logos tell stories. The color conveys an idea. And, while often forgotten, or ignored, Katona always addresses the typographic system. For her, colors are relatively easy to specify, but typography is much more challenging. "Spocifying font families isn't sufficient," she explains. "Type treatments, including hierarchy, relative sizes, and case, provide so many variables that very specific guidelines are critical for a consistent look."



**OPPOSITE**  
Pulling from opposite sides like its rustic modernized European influenced font, Cava visually identifies itself with interpretations of 1930s dining graphics that are flat, but made contemporary by dimensional perspectives.

**THIS PAGE & NEXT SPREAD**  
An established Italian restaurant since 1963, the Pizza Nova identity is constructed with a primary word mark and a decorative script listing all the menu items in the restaurant. At a larger scale size, the script becomes a secondary graphic. From packaging, wrapping paper, website graphics, the Pizza Nova identity is exciting and tasty at a variety of sizes.



# KEILHAUER

## Police Work

The elements of an identity designed by Katona are explained and described in a standards manual. "It helps if you can keep working with the client, and handle all of their communications," she advises. "Failing that, the success of any system depends on having a person within the organization champion the cause of adherence to identity guidelines. This person needs to be fairly senior with the authority to enforce the standards." This advice is not given to create restrictions on other users. When it comes to graphic communication, creative partners often resist rules and have a natural impulse to be "creative" with the brand. But it is vital that they understand that this impulse does not benefit the organization. "A consistent identity system may become boring to those who work with it every day, but is vital to portraying a strong image to the outside world," Katona says.

The consistent use of a logo and identity system, strategic goals, and business issues partnered with Concrete's thinking and visual skill create proprietary and successful brands. Katona, nevertheless, has a passion and humor that inform all of her work. In terms of logo and identity, this is expressed with her choice of a favorite application to design. "I love designing for vehicles," she says. "It's a great feeling to pass a logo you designed somewhere on the road." She adds that the strangest place a Concrete designed logo has appeared was on a homeless person. "Company logos printed on T-shirts invariably end up in the hands of a very unintended audience," she says.

**THIS PAGE**  
Most creative work starts with a designer's first sketches. This Keilhauer identity celebrates the first sketch and relationship to the end final design. Several variations of the logo exist to work with different applications and varying sizes.



**THIS SPREAD**  
Like the chair, this identity is about moving freely in all directions and with ease and no obstructions. The website, advertising, promotional items, and the chair itself, consistently identify themselves with logo mark. The identity also has endless promotional products that are possible with only the addition of the logo.



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