



Photo by Jesse Hill

The Make-Up Designory Schools Create Acronym Branding for Retail

The Make-up Designory is a brand that has grown out of a small professional make-up school in North Hollywood, CA, 10 years ago to become a respected authority on make-up research and education. The school has also developed a trusted line of cosmetics within the professional make-up industry, with over 170 SKUs.

When the Make-up Designory (MUD) realized they would need help expanding their market to the everyday make-up user, they turned to The Kitchen Collaborative design group in Los Angeles. The cosmetics marketplace was already flooded with other brands such as MAC, Smashbox, Lorac, and Laura Mercier that all took an “expert” positioning with their brands. Since MUD was attempting similar messaging, the challenge was to create a different design approach to help them stake out their territory.

MUD president Tate Holland felt the company needed a fresh look, a way to simplify the company’s portfolio, and a way to explain the sophistication of their products. Consumer market surveys revealed great consumer confusion in cosmetic choices, and Holland wanted knowledgeable MUD consumers. “The challenge and the opportunity had to incorporate our educational base,” says Holland. “Everything we do has a reason.”

Aniko Hill, CEO of the and The Kitchen Collabora-

tive, took on the project as full rebranding effort that would reinvent every brand touch point while staying true to the brand’s mission. “It was really a great opportunity to bring that educational positioning to the public,” says Hill.

Finding the marketplace

The first step to rebranding MUD was to analyze competitive messaging and trends in order to find areas of opportunity within the marketplace. The Kitchen found that although many competitors took a “professional” approach to their brand positioning, none were owning “education.” With MUD’s educational roots and the reputation of the school, it was their natural area of opportunity.

In order to differentiate Make-up Designory the school from the cosmetics line, The Kitchen developed three complete and unique naming and tagline concept directions to communicate the proposed positioning options for the brand. The first approach stressed the simplicity of the line; the second was inspired by the expressive nature of make-up; and the third emphasized education.

In order to organize a complete packaging solution for 170 SKUs, Hill and The Kitchen felt strongly that a new logo had to be explored. The MUD acronym had evolved over the years and was well known by students and profes-

sional artists but was not part of the official Make-up Designory name. The Kitchen's exploration included over a dozen highly refined and embellished acronym solutions, custom iconic wordmark designs, and beauty-inspired supplemental icons.

The final solution for the MUD logo was a modern, iconic word mark with a clever fusion of all the characters in the name. The continuity of the mark, scalloped edges, and "accent" element were reminiscent of a brush stroke, creating a subtle reference to the artistry of make-up. In order to ensure simplicity for the busy MUD consumer, The Kitchen divided the line into easy-to-follow categories such as "Face" and "Eyes" and color-coded each product grouping for fast recognition on the shelf. Holland feels the brush stroke and accent are fun and creative, and the dark grey color of the logo reinforces the academic seriousness of MUD. "It's a little piece of art," says Holland. "It's something we can lay claim to."

Putting it on the shelf

One of the main challenges in redesigning the MUD packaging was integrating their current primary packaging seamlessly. Before, the packaging had no representation of what the MUD brand stood for and had the typical "studio" look shared by competitors such as MAC and Smashbox. The new educational brand positioning was explored through informative text, dense typography, diagrammatic illustrations, and layering of information presented through-

out the package experience. Clever production concepts such as inserts, sliding boxes, and die cuts were also explored.

The final MUD packaging communicated the educational brand positioning by featuring product copy usually reserved for the back of the package right on the front. Clever copy headings such as "The Basics" and "Quick Study" gave the consumer important information without being overwhelming. Subtle diagrammatic illustrations of the products were executed in a spot gloss varnish for a sophisticated, upscale feel. Color-coding was introduced in the logo mark and in the headline copy for quick recognition on the shelf.

The new MUD brand was further executed in the website, where the home page featured a selected look with corresponding products to help the user to find products quickly. Headlines such as "Lip Lessons" and "Eye Know" reinforced the educational positioning and let the user know quickly which category of product was being featured.

Finally, despite the busy foot traffic of downtown Burbank, the old MUD store was unapproachable to the general public. The Kitchen's first priority was to make the store pop by adding large illuminated signage and bold graphics and photography. A deep grey paint color tied the building into the brand and added a sense of sophistication. The interior of the store makes the shopping experience as simple as possible with custom displays, soft white hanging panels, and instructional graphics. ■