



**SIMON
MYERS**



TREND REPORT



2023 BRANDING WINS & TRENDS

Insights from Our Attendance
at the **2023 Brand New Conference**

WE ARE SIMON / MYERS.

Where eye-opening data meets
heart-stirring creative

The 2023 Brand New Conference was recently held in our home city of Chicago, and we were there to get the latest from the premier American conference on brand identity. The conference, which featured a diverse and accomplished group of speakers, provided a breath of fresh air to our internal branding process, plus some great insights into how branding has evolved in the past year and where it may be heading.

One of the hosts of the conference was Armin Vit, editor and writer of the corporate and brand identity publication, Brand New, and co-founder of its parent company, Under Consideration. While we heard many people speak at the conference, our team found Armin's insights to be among the most valuable.

Far from covering everything the conference offered, this trend report will summarize Vit's picks for the best rebrands of the year, some branding trends, and the five biggest branding moments of 2023.

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Simon/Myers is a Chicago-based creative agency providing transformative work to national brands. Among our services:

- Branding** (from brand identity to sales support to full campaigns)
- Digital** (from social strategy to content creation to site design & UX)
- Experiential** (from displays to showrooms to event experiences)
- Consulting** (from quant/qual research to long-range planning)

If it sounds like Simon/Myers could be a good fit for you, let's talk:

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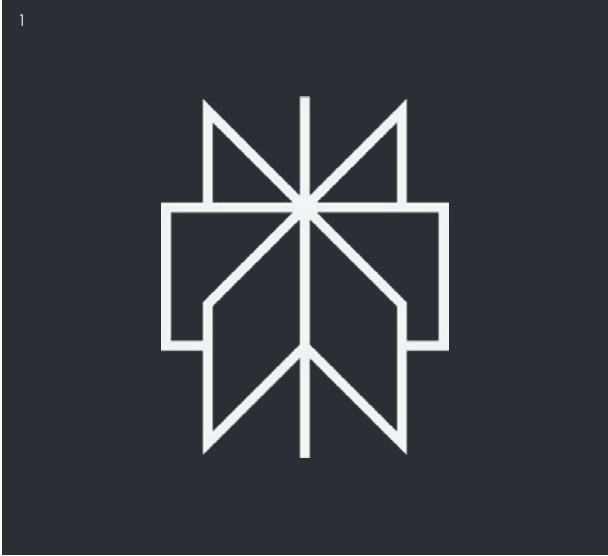


PART 1

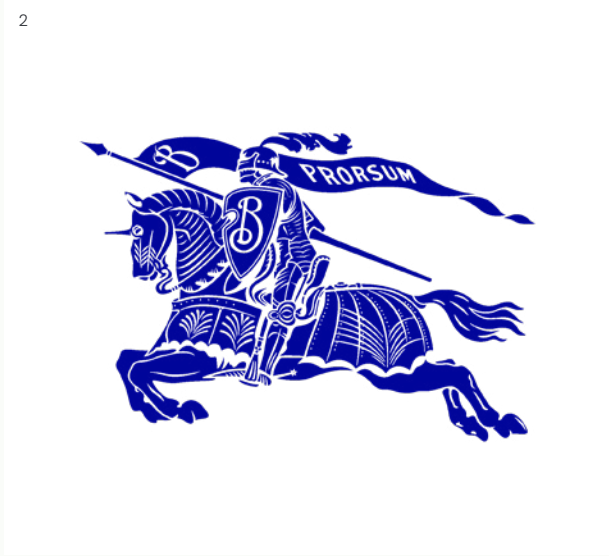
TOP 2023 REBRANDS

Vit's top rebrands of the year (so far) spanned a diverse range of companies and logo design disciplines. To see his full list, keep an eye out for Brand New's end-of-year rankings. But even ahead of Q4's closing, there have been some great rebrands to celebrate and be inspired by.

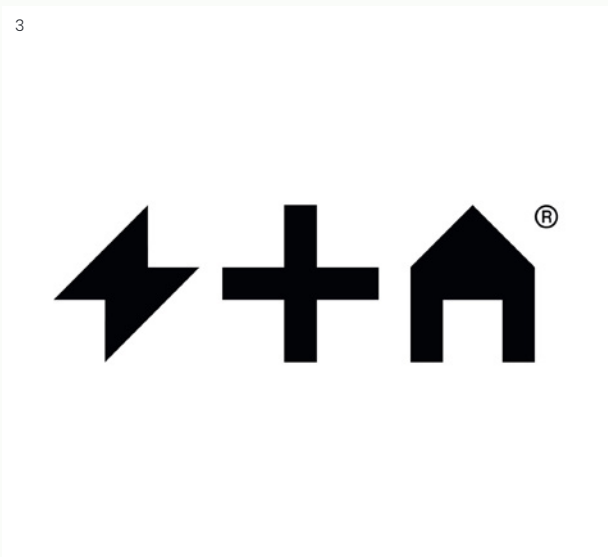
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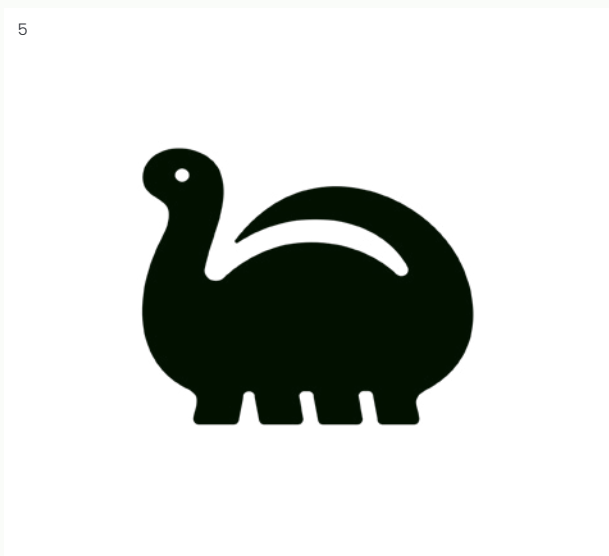
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TOP REBRANDS

LOGO MARKS

1 PERPLEXITY

An asterisk/book/cursor/window for this AI company by Smith and Diction, with a great animation bringing it to life:

[Click here to watch](#)

2 BURBERRY

An equestrian knight icon, and a return to the fashion brand's roots, under the direction of new CCO, Daniel Lee

3 STORM AND SHELTER

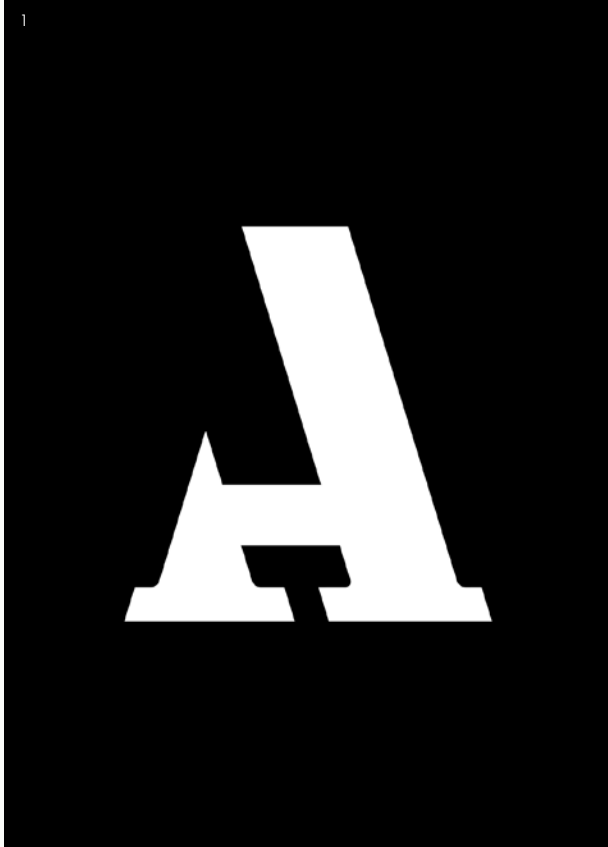
A clever rebus for a film and commercial studio by Toward Studio

4 INDUSTRIAL LIGHT AND MAGIC

An old school mashup of a gear, light bulb, star and swoosh for the Oscar-winning visual effects studio by Hoodzpah

5 DE-EXTINCTION

An adorable brontosaurus for the earth-friendly packaging company by Koto Studio



TOP REBRANDS

MONOGRAMS

1 **AMERICAN COLORS**

A paintbrush and a streak of paint inside an “A” for the paint company by After

2 **GOING**

A plane and arrow “G,” a rebrand for travel site Scott’s Cheap Flights by Design Studio

3 **RADIUS RECYCLING**

A recycling arrow “R” for this massive metals recycling corporation by Chermayeff & Geismar & Haviv

4 **ORCHESTRA SINFONICA DI MILANO**

An overlapped “M” for Milan’s Orchestra by Landor & Fitch that, appropriately, reacts to sound: [Click here to watch](#)

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TOP REBRANDS

WORDMARKS

1 LEX

A quirky script for a on online queer community space by &Walsh

2 BOLT

A clever negative space mark for the ecommerce payment service by Koto Studio

3 UNMIND

A chunky serif for the wellbeing platform by Ragged Edge

4 PEER GYNT FESTIVAL

An angular monospace composition for the Norwegian festival by TRY

**5 NEW YORK CITY
TOURISM &
CONVENTIONS**

A complicated city street grid arrangement by 2x4

**6 CHICKEN AND
THE WOLF**

A custom wacky, hot thing for a hot chicken restaurant by Brethren Design Co.

OUR TAKE
TOP REBRANDS OF 2023

We love to see expressiveness in type continue to regrow and flourish after the great sans-serifing of 2015. From simple iconic logomarks to legacy-emphasizing and illustrative logos, these top rebrands all share a flexible, clean ethic that helps them stand out from the crowd.



PART 2

TOP 2023 BRANDING TRENDS

Branding involves so much more than the logos reviewed under the previous heading. You must consider things like how you showcase a new brand, how you create assets and mockups for that brand, and even whether or not your logo is anthropomorphic. If that last one seems random, read on.

TOP TRENDS

DAWN OF AI

AI is still far from perfect, but its value to marketing is undeniable. The results of its application can be humorous, like these famous logos being translated through ControlNet by FOFR¹. They can be surprising, creating scenarios that don't exist in real life, like the mockups at right used for De-Extinction², or at the bottom right, these over-pierced models to promote Claire's piercing service³.

AI has already become part of our productivity tool set, helping with the strategy, design, and production phases of branding. In fact, within a very short timeframe, it has grown from a novelty to an accepted part of everyone's vocabulary.

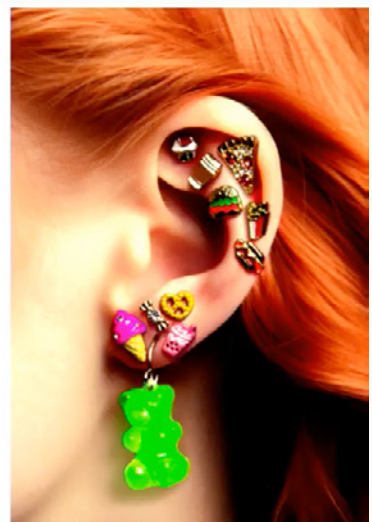
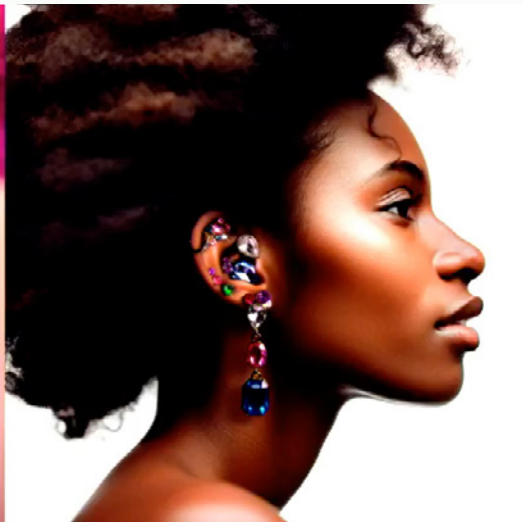
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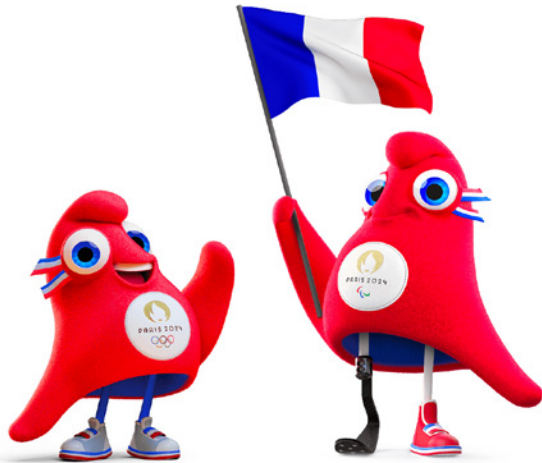


TOP TRENDS

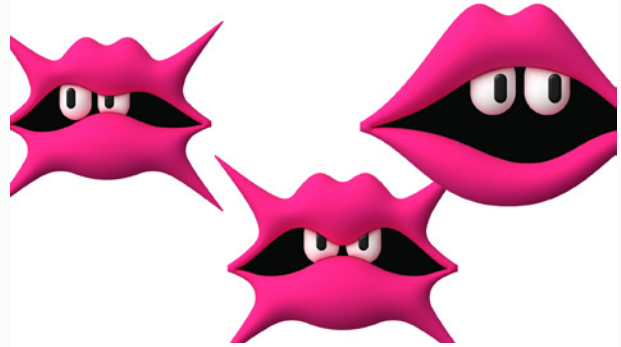
MASCOTS MAKE A COMEBACK

This year has seen a major influx of weird mascots including, for the Paris 2024 Olympics, a pair of Phrygian caps¹; a lips/oyster shape for Caroline Bosmans²; county-shaped boxes (called the Municipals) for CivEd³; a blobby-cubey being for Kili⁴; a mycelium for Meati⁵; and wacky bees for Bit-O-Honey⁶.

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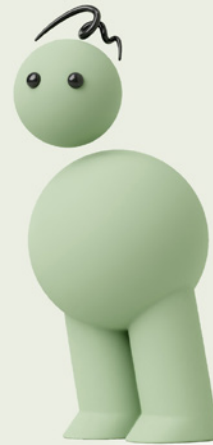
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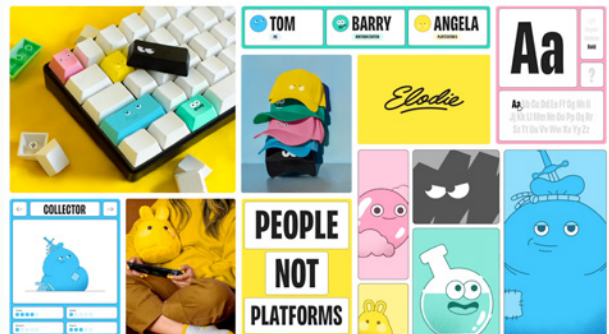


TOP TRENDS

THE BENTO BOX

The Bento Box is a popular format for identity assets and animations. While not entirely new, this year it has taken off. Koto Studio has a lot to do with its popularization, but it has recently been adopted by several other studios for their clients, including ANTI, Beginners, Fiasco Design, and Pentagram. Though Bento Boxes are sleek and look effortless, the animations they feature are anything but, reflecting a passion for detail that exceeds all concern for the extensive time and expertise they require to create.

Click on any of the boxes on the right to see the animations in action.



TOP TRENDS

FASHION INDUSTRY TURNS A CORNER... WITH A CATCH

Years ago, all the fashion houses had bespoke serif word marks. Then, about three to five years ago, they all abandoned serifs in favor of all-cap, sans serif versions. This year, Burberry not only brought back its equestrian knight icon, they introduced a new (you guessed it) serif-based wordmark. Incredulously, it seems the imitative cycle is starting again, as the Australian fashion house Trenery rebranded this summer with serifs that look a lot like... well, see for yourself.

OUR TAKE

TOP BRANDING TRENDS OF 2023



In one year, generative AI has blown up the limits of how we can visually present our brands, from conceptual mockups to finished executions. At S/M, we're excited to keep pushing our own creativity with tools we could hardly have dreamed of in 2022. Weird mascots are a fun reminder that branding doesn't have to take itself so seriously (though some probably should). The Bento Box identity format feels like the most fleeting trend of the bunch, even if we do love the flexibility and order it provides. As for fashion brand logos... our face is firmly in our palms.

YVES SAINT LAURENT → SAINT LAURENT →
BALENCIAGA → BALENCIAGA →
BURBERRY → BURBERRY → BURBERRY
London, England LONDON ENGLAND
Berluti → BERLUTI →
Paris PARIS
BALMAIN → BALMAIN →
PARIS PARIS
T R E N E R Y → TRENER Y

BURBERRY
TRENER Y

PART 3

TOP 5 BRANDING MOMENTS IN 2023

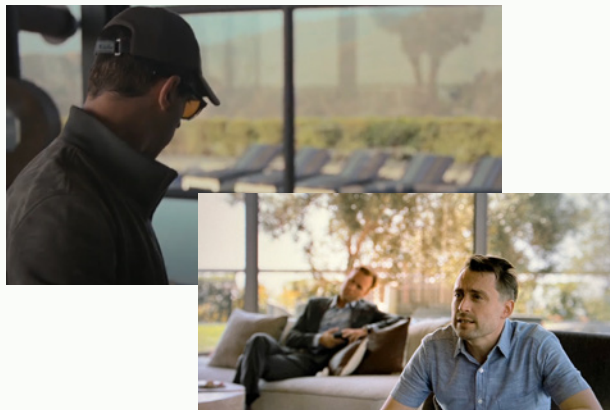
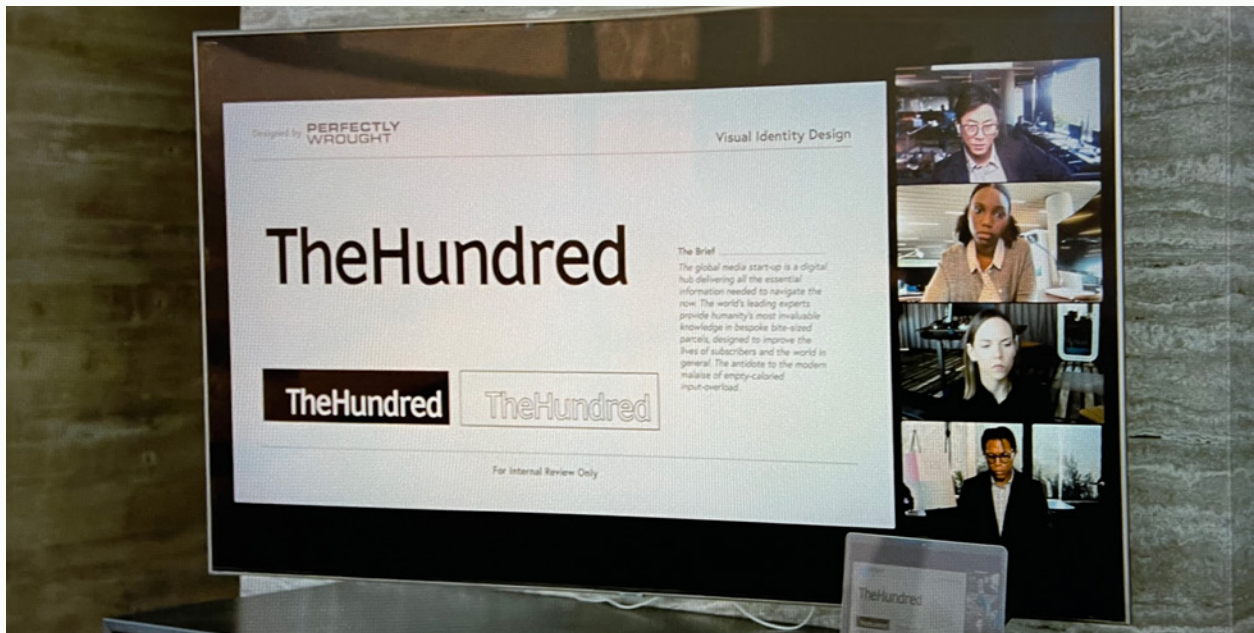
Because branding is part of everyday life at Simon/Myers, we know what it takes to break out of the mainstream. Here are some of Armin's biggest moments in branding for 2023.



HBO ORIGINAL

SUCCESSION

THE FINAL SEASON



#5 BRANDING MOMENT

SUCCESSION

The final season of HBO's Emmy Award-winning drama, *Succession*, aired in 2023. In the season premiere, we see the main characters, who have all been vying to succeed their father as CEO of a media empire, trying to create a media company of their own. The episode features a branding presentation, typically only experienced by agencies and their clients, which became a cringe-inducing moment of entertainment for its prestige TV audience.

You can [click here](#) to watch the clip, but be aware that the HBO dialogue isn't exactly friendly to office speakers.

SIDE NOTE

Our favorite episode was the one that followed (Season 4, Episode 2), when patriarch Logan Roy stands atop 6 boxes of Hammermill® paper, courtesy of one of our favorite clients. The episode was seen by more than 2 million viewers.¹



¹<https://variety.com/2023/tv/news/succession-finale-ratings-viewers-series-high-1235628129/>.

BOLT

The image shows two tweets side-by-side. The left tweet is from Joshua Ariza (@Joshua_Ariza) and discusses the difficulty of creating yellow logos with negative space lightning bolts. It features a grid of four logos: 'VOLT TV' (yellow background, black text), 'BOLT' (yellow background, black text), 'BUZZER' (yellow background, black text), and another 'BOLT' logo with a lightning bolt icon. The right tweet is from عاتق التفاصيل (@detaillover) and shows a comparison between 'DURAVOLT' (red background, white text) and 'fizz' (green text) on the top row, and 'VOLT TV' (yellow background, black text) and 'BUZZER' (yellow background, black text) on the bottom row. Both tweets include engagement metrics like views, likes, and reposts.

Joshua Ariza @Joshua_Ariza
It's been a tough week for yellow logos with negative space lightning bolts.

White Rabbit
Follow · Hire Me

BOLT

VOLT TV

BUZZER

4:18 PM · Jan 22, 2023 · 529.7K Views

208 Reposts 53 Quotes 3,222 Likes 179 Bookmarks

عاتق التفاصيل @detaillover
Bolt by copying

DURAVOLT **fizz**

VOLT TV

BUZZER

2:54 AM · Jan 24, 2023 · 194 Views

1 Like

#4 BRANDING MOMENT

BOLT REDESIGN CONTROVERSY

Koto Studio created a clever and nicely executed evolution of Bolt's logo, but got into hot water on social media. Peevish designers posted multiple examples of previous logos that featured "negative-space lightning bolts," many of them for obscure companies. Vit made the very valid point that 100% originality is nearly impossible in logo design, and not every design has to be completely new to be good, or even ownable.



#3 BRANDING MOMENT

WE LOVE NYC CAMPAIGN

Clearly an evolution of Milton Glaser’s famous “I love NY” design, the “We love NYC” campaign launched this year. The new version replaced “I” with “We,” the typewriter font with a san serif face, and the minimalist heart with an emoji heart, which became the foundation of a whole emoji-based system. The campaign received a ton of internet and media criticism, but according to the agency who created it, it was seen by 3.2 billion people, and it dominated the news cycle for days.

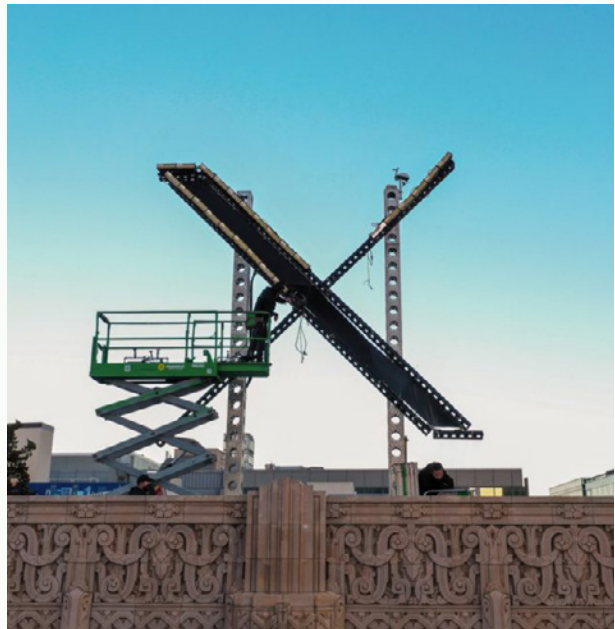
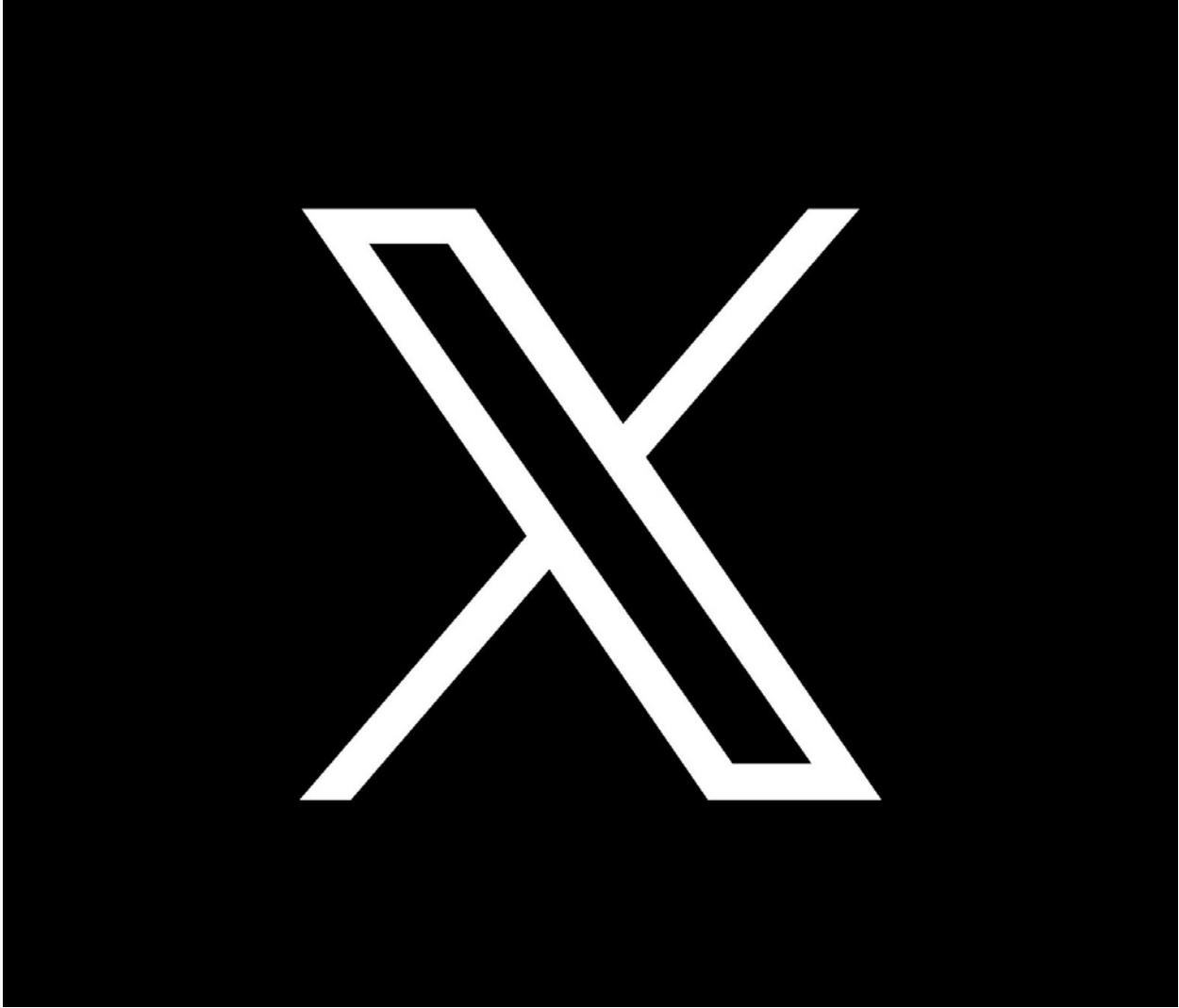
While Vit suggested this number be taken with a grain of salt, there is no denying that this campaign made a huge impact—and that its creators turned lemons into lemonade.



#2 BRANDING MOMENT

PEPSI REBRAND

This year, Pepsi updated their logo and wordmark, bringing back the classic wave element that had been a part of their logo for decades. The refreshed wordmark font became the biggest point of discussion, though Vit maintains that the wordmark was a success both in the logo and on the cans.



#1 BRANDING MOMENT

X, FORMERLY KNOWN AS TWITTER

In a billionaire megalomaniac stunt, Elon Musk rebranded Twitter as X, then asked his followers to submit designs (without compensation) for a new logo. A man named Sawyer Merritt submitted a logo he had used for a podcast called X Pod, which turned out to be a unicode character that anyone can use. Difficult to own and far from original, Musk dubbed it “futuristic art deco” and rushed it into use.

To quote Vit,

“Years of brand equity and value? Trashed. A process that would usually take months? Rushed. Developing a strategic plan to ensure business and marketing initiatives are in sync to meet the company’s long-term goals? Disregarded. Working with a brand consultancy? Neglected. Hiring a designer to create something new? Crowd-sourced. Ensuring a cohesive roll out across digital and physical applications? Mishandled.”

While this is certainly a moment of deflation for branding professionals, and perhaps a sign of things to come, it’s more likely that this process, which went counter to all best practices, was merely another example of random disruption from the mercurial Musk. Only time will tell.



CONCLUSION

A CLEAN, QUIETLY TRANSFORMATIVE YEAR FOR BRANDING

While X may be the branding story of the year, it is not representative of all the branding inspiration 2023 has given us, or of how promising 2024 looks to be. Craftsmanship, personality, refinement, and an emphasis on the iconic are leading the way forward.

Moreover, while generative AI was unknown in 2022, it has rocked our industry over the past year. With AI empowering designers to create worlds and visual effects previously unimaginable, the future of branding looks brighter than it has for some time.



IS YOUR RIGHT BRAIN SMILING?

Thank you for spending your valuable time with our 2023 Branding Trend Report. We hope we've given you something to think about and be inspired by.

Speaking of thinking, we hope you'll think of Simon/Myers the next time you consider partnering with an agency. Whether your needs include research, strategy, digital executions or in-person experiences, we exist to take brands to the next level.

You can reach us anytime at simon-myers.com/contact. Or reach out directly to Lawson Soward, Group Creative Director, at lsoward@simon-myers.com.

Once again, thanks.