

Design Army

The art of the visual



Photo by Dean Alexander

★ DESIGN ARMY

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Washington, D.C.
www.designarmy.com

www.howdesign.com/adobeproject
www.printmag.com/article/adobe-project
www.designarmy.com/wonderland

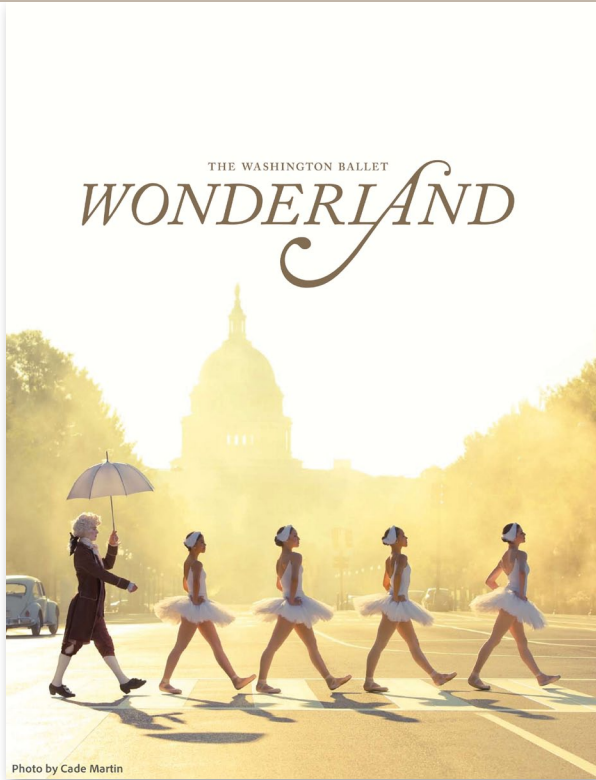
Design Army takes risks, captures rewards with Adobe® Creative Suite® 5 software

When Pum and Jake Lefebure take on a project, halfway is not in their vocabulary. The trendsetters believe that the bigger the risk, the bigger the reward—and this philosophy frees them to wholeheartedly explore uncharted artistic territory and master the art of the possible. In 2003, their newly founded design studio, Design Army, was a force of two: Pum and Jake, working from their kitchen table. They had to build a portfolio to show clients, so they treated each project as if it was the last one they would set out to do.

Today, the husband and wife team has transformed their business skills and love of design into a force of nine designers working from the firm's own custom-built offices. The multi-disciplinary firm has a client list that reflects a balanced mix of small businesses and international giants, including GE, Verizon, Disney, Human Rights Campaign, Marriott International Inc., Relish, Ritz-Carlton, Rockport Publishers, Smithsonian Institute, and Washington Ballet. The studio's foundation is based on a traditional design sensibility, color that sizzles, and extensive use of the latest technologies, including Adobe Creative Suite 5 software.

"In many ways, we are very old school when it comes to creativity, especially in the early stages. Our designers fill up hundreds of sketchbooks a year exploring concepts," says Pum. "The Design Army way is sketch, sketch, sketch. We save about 15 rounds of edits just by focusing on the idea versus the execution. Then we move into Adobe Creative Suite software to execute the chosen idea across print, web, and interactive media."

Wonderland, a pro bono project for the Washington Ballet that unfolded over a period of two years, was created in collaboration with photographer Cade Martin. Utilizing Adobe Creative Suite 5 software, *Wonderland* is a unique blend of art and fashion that features over 50 dancers performing in locations throughout Washington D.C.



Challenge

- Create an interactive companion piece for a non-profit print project using in-house designers and without writing code
- Maximize design exploration
- Increase efficiency while maximizing creative potential
- Enable designers to own projects once an idea is chosen

Solution

- Use Adobe Flash Catalyst CS5 to transform Adobe Illustrator artwork into interactive piece
- Increase productivity and spur creativity through integration and consistency of Adobe Creative Suite 5 software

Benefits

- Explored new avenues and formats by creating interactive piece based on printed book
- Raised nearly \$80,000 for the Washington Ballet
- Enabled designers to add interactivity to all types of projects quickly, without writing code
- Reduced production time
- Fueled creativity
- Enabled end-to-end project ownership

Print to interactive, without code

Design Army is a project-based studio, producing approximately 400 projects per year: 50% for fashion- arts- and entertainment-based clients, 30% for corporate, and 20% for nonprofit and other clients. The Design Army team is known for juggling 50 jobs at any one time, and many are full branding campaigns.

One of the projects Design Army is most proud of is *Wonderland*, a pro bono project for the Washington Ballet that unfolded over a period of two years, created in collaboration with photographer Cade Martin. Originally designed for print, *Wonderland* is a one-of-a-kind book commemorating Septime Webre's 10th year as the dance company's artistic director. With over 50 dancers performing in locations throughout Washington D.C., the book is a genuinely unique blend of art and fashion.

"It was a feat just getting the permits to shoot the project over four weekends in D.C. due to the security requirements," says Jake. "We were sometimes shooting in places with no electricity and no bathrooms. A lot of people in addition to us, such as Cade, donated their time. While it wasn't our initial goal, we wound up raising close to \$80,000 to keep children's programs related to the Washington Ballet alive."

After the success of *Wonderland*, both *Print* and *HOW* magazines asked the studio to convert the print version to a fully animated project. To do this, Design Army turned to Adobe Flash[®] Catalyst[®] CS5 software. The interactive companion piece to the project equals the print version in elegance and beauty, yet users can interactively explore it, going from sketches to animated dancers, for example.

To start out, designers created the pages and the states needed in Adobe Illustrator[®] to set the stage for the interaction design. Any images or artwork that needed retouching were brought into Adobe Photoshop[®] CS5 Extended before being placed back into Illustrator CS5. The Illustrator layout was then exported and opened in Flash Catalyst, where designers defined frames, states, interaction designs, and transitions—all without having to write code.

Adobe Flash Catalyst CS5 is the newest addition to the Design Army toolset, but the studio has been using Adobe Creative Suite since day one. The integration among Adobe tools improves efficiency to meet the demanding deadlines of hundreds of projects a year.

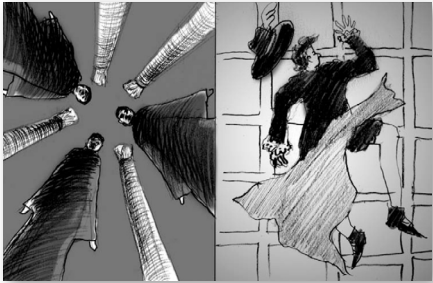


Photo by Cade Martin

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Pum Lefebure
Co-founder and creative director, Design Army

“What’s most inspiring about Adobe Flash Catalyst CS5 is seeing a static design animate and come to life so quickly and easily,” says Charles Calixto, print and interactive designer for Design Army. “The ability to see your animations in real time, instead of in code, gets any visual thinker excited because you can immediately see what is happening.”

The use of Flash Catalyst on the *Wonderland* project opened a new world of design possibilities for the studio. For interactive projects, a fast-growing part of the business, designers previously created static comps for clients to click through and get a sense of animation and pacing. Now, designers can quickly develop user interactions and transitions in Flash Catalyst without coding.

“With Flash Catalyst, we can show clients what we have in mind much sooner in the process,” says Calixto. “Flash Catalyst has us thinking and moving in new, exciting directions. We are looking into adding more interactivity on our web projects, building web applications, creating pages with user-generated content, and more.”

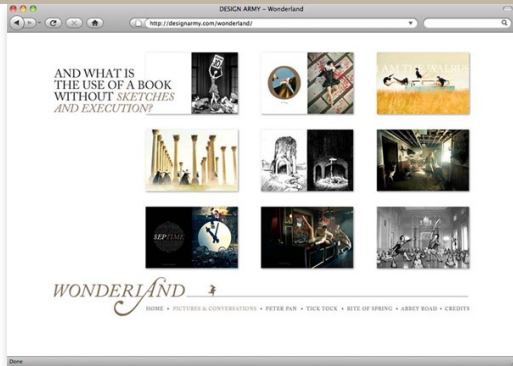
Pride of ownership

Adobe Flash Catalyst CS5 is the newest addition to the Design Army toolset, but the studio has been using Adobe Creative Suite since day one. This includes adopting Adobe InDesign® CS when the firm’s print providers were still on QuarkXPress. “At the time, we were redesigning a national magazine, and we told our vendors they had to move to InDesign to land the job,” recalls Pum. “It was a good decision because it’s so much easier for us using a consistent, integrated software toolset.”

The co-founders say the decision to start out with an all Adobe workflow has proven beneficial for a number of reasons. The integration among Adobe tools improves efficiency to meet the demanding deadlines of hundreds of projects a year. “With Adobe, it’s all about cross-program portability,” says Calixto. “Being able to copy and paste objects, layers, text, and so on from one program into another with no format changes really helps cut down on production time.”

Adobe tools also have an even more fundamental appeal—they support a workflow that gives designers ownership of projects from start to finish. They can complete print projects using Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign software or web and interactive projects using Photoshop, Flash Catalyst, and Adobe Flash Professional.

Designers at Design Army have creative freedom. They are encouraged to experiment—and once their ideas are accepted, they can realize them in Adobe Creative Suite 5 software.



"With Adobe Creative Suite, our designers don't have to hand off projects to a creative director or a production person. They enjoy being able to take their projects full circle once an idea is selected."

Jake Lefebure
Co-founder and CEO,
Design Army

Toolkit

Adobe Creative Suite 5. Components used include:

- Adobe Flash Catalyst CS5
- Adobe Flash Professional CS5
- Adobe Illustrator CS5
- Adobe InDesign CS5
- Adobe Photoshop CS5 Extended

For more information

www.adobe.com/products/creativesuite

"With Adobe Creative Suite, our designers don't have to hand off projects to a creative director or a production person," says Jake. "They enjoy being able to take their projects full circle once an idea is selected. It's the end of the studio assembly line."

Time for play

While the studio has a growing client base and a hectic work schedule, the Design Army team still finds time for fun—and for feeding the creative muse. They create wrapping papers and Design Army products. They also have an ongoing project on their Facebook page called Color Consumption, where the world can see Design Army's favorite color combinations, often inspired by Pum's mood, and each identified with a meaningful moniker.

"Just like the way Jake and I live our lives, we encourage all of our designers to try something risky rather than something safe," says Pum. "The wealth of cool projects we get to work on here is endless and it stems from collaboration and enthusiasm, as well as adoption of the latest tools."

WONDERLAND Creative and Art Direction by Design Army, www.designarmy.com. Photography by Cade Martin, www.cademartin.com. Client: The Washington Ballet, www.washingtonballet.org.



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