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CONDUIT STUDIOS

7 IONIA AVE. SW SUITE

**230**

GRAND RAPIDS  
49503

**MI.**

A DESIGN CONSULTANCY

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Conduit Studios, a design consultancy, based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, develops evocative visual solutions to print, interactive, packaging, and environmental challenges. Our clients range from global corporations and local entrepreneurial start-ups to national arts organizations. We are passionate about solving problems through our collaborative design process. Thank you for requesting this information about our firm.

**STUDIO**

Employing a proven approach to the design process, Conduit Studios prides itself on not having a predetermined "studio style." Our work environment is often a hive of activity, much like an artist's studio. Stop by and you may find us cutting up old magazines for inspiration or creating a dynamic flash driven site. Each day brings new challenges that we face with fresh eyes.

**DISCIPLINES**

Though each project has it's own unique concerns, materials, and solutions, Conduit Studios bases each undertaking on the principles of branding. Whether working from an existing brand or developing a new one, we strive to create solid, simply understood messages in the following disciplines:

- + Brand development
- + Print
- + Packaging
- + Interactive
- + Environments

**PROCESS**

Developing a visual message for a client and their audience is a unique endeavor. We approach each project first to understand and then to express. Our system for creating evocative, creative designs across a wide variety of medium is:

- + Attract: Before you can relay your message, you've gotta get their attention.
- + Inform: Once you've got their attention, say something.
- + Invoke: Ask them to do something. Make a purchase; log in to your site; phone you.

**STAFF**

Tim Carpenter, Principal, Designer, and Chief Operating Officer  
1993 BFA Graphic Design, Western Michigan University.

John O'Neill, Principal, Designer, and Creative Director  
2001 BFA Graphic Design, Valedictorian Kendall College of Art & Design.

Ryan Mitchell, Designer

Conduit Studios works with an exclusive network of freelance designers and programmers. Though a small firm, we effectively manage projects to deliver quality work on time and on budget.

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#### THE PRIME TIME TO DESIGN

By: Nancy Davis  
January 17, 2008

Rapid Growth

*The following article was featured in the January 17th issue of Rapid Growth. [www.rapidgrowthmedia.com](http://www.rapidgrowthmedia.com)*

Innovating something new can be lucrative business in the knowledge economy. And big ideas tend to start up in the brains of creative people. Tim Carpenter and John O'Neill design web-based communication platforms capturing the interest of the likes of Disney.

The duo, principals at Conduit Studios in Grand Rapids, brand organizations as diverse as the San Francisco Youth Arts Festival and Hush Puppies. They also recently built a fully animated virtual showroom of Steelcase furniture for Neocon, the World's Fair of furnishings shows held last year in Chicago. The project was a big hit.

"The tour fit well into our overall campaign," says Damion Van Slyke, the art director at Steelcase. "And it really caught the attention of the Dream Works people when they saw it on the plasma screen at our exhibit."

You might say that Carpenter and O'Neill met by design. Because the two Gen X'ers essentially lived parallel lives before forming a business partnership seven years ago.

They both grew up in the eastern suburbs of Grand Rapids – Carpenter in Cascade, O'Neill in Forest Hills. They both majored in



fine art – Carpenter at Western Michigan, O'Neill at Kendall College. They both went exploring the world after graduation – Carpenter to San Francisco, O'Neill to London. And they both somehow wound up back in Grand Rapids, MI around 2000 working on the exact same project.

Not long after that the two merged creative forces. Conduit Studios, established in 2001, is a hip little design firm located in a second-story loft with exposed brick walls in the Heartside District. The company specializes in branding and web applications and business is going global.

"We have clients all over," says O'Neill, 29. "We are currently working in London, New York, Santa Monica, and Chicago in addition to our client base in Grand Rapids."

#### New Designs in West Michigan

Whether noun or verb, design is an ambiguous term. But the MFA is the new MBA in the creative economy, experts agree. So it's perhaps not a stretch to say that design know-how plays an integral role in a seemingly unlimited number of business transactions today.

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Engineering. Architecture. Software development. Graphic Arts. Landscaping. Fashion. Packaging. Medical devices. These and countless other disciplines rely heavily on creative, talented people to do the research, thinking, problem solving, conceiving, planning, modeling, and manufacturing that goes into designing new products, services, and systems.

Throughout history, this cycle of innovation has given society groundbreaking inventions such as the wheel, the telephone, and the personal computer. In the Digital Age, the design industry is generating incredible wealth with uber popular advancements like the iPod and YouTube. In an attempt to get a piece of the action, local business leaders recently launched a campaign to strengthen and promote West Michigan's creative community of companies like Conduit Studios to a worldwide audience.

The initiative, known as Design West Michigan, is an effort to organize the region's design community around a common branding and development strategy. Kicked off officially last fall, the effort aims, among other things, to inventory area design firms and expertise, assess how that capacity compares with similar regions, and strengthen West Michigan's reputation as a leading hub of advanced design innovation and activity. The project is funded in part by a major grant from the U.S. Department of Labor and, housed under the umbrella of the regional WIRED initiative, is rising as a critical component in West Michigan's 21st century business plan.

"We are looking at how design impacts economic development," says John Berry, a local communication strategist and an organizer of the effort. "We hope to develop a bridge between designers and the business community that uses them."

#### **Building the Brand**

Entrepreneurial firms like Conduit Studios, which generally focuses on strategic communication design, are generating lucrative opportunities for both themselves and their clients. The company's work includes branding the local restaurant Naya, creating high tech display kiosks for Hush Puppies, and promoting the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts.

A recent project with A.K. Rikks, the swanky Cascade men's store, illustrates how designers like Tim Carpenter and John O'Neill can add value to a company's bottom line. Before hiring the duo, Jim Murray, the general manager of A.K. Rikks, said his business wasn't "even on the marketing radar."

But Conduit came in, Murray says, and combined a unique understanding of image and fashion, communication creativity, and technological ability. They redesigned the clothier's website with a classy, more international look. As a direct result of the new metropolitan attitude, A.K. Rikks was able to ink a deal with the glamorous Dolce and Gabbana fashion house and begin selling a limited line of the Italian-designed clothes later this spring. Murray's reply to vendors around the world today: "check out our web site."

What's more, Conduit developed a strategic email campaign to compliment A.K. Rikks new web presence. That operation ultimately connected with a VIP shopper in Florida who was looking for stylish Eton shirts in the U.S. and, impressed by the Cascade shop's extensive selection, now plans to take a shopping trip to Grand Rapids, MI.

"The return on investment in design has generated incremental sales to A.K. Rikks," says Tim Carpenter, 37.

It could also give rise to a productive sector of the economy in West Michigan. Carpenter and O'Neill both actively support the Design West Michigan initiative. They believe a more concerted effort to organize and promote the region as a creative center of design innovation is a smart way to accelerate the transition to knowledge-driven economy.

"No one has ever really quantified the effect of a strong design community on the overall economy," O'Neill says. "But look at the implications of Conduit Studio's success. We not only eat, park, and buy entertainment around our downtown office. As we grow, we hire more people, we continue to spend money on local vendors, and the community grows and is strengthened."

*Nancy Davis is an independent writer and artist living in Grand Rapids. She last wrote for Rapid Growth about St. Cecilia's Music Center.*

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## Case Studies

### CLIENT

A.K. Rikk's

### ASSIGNMENT

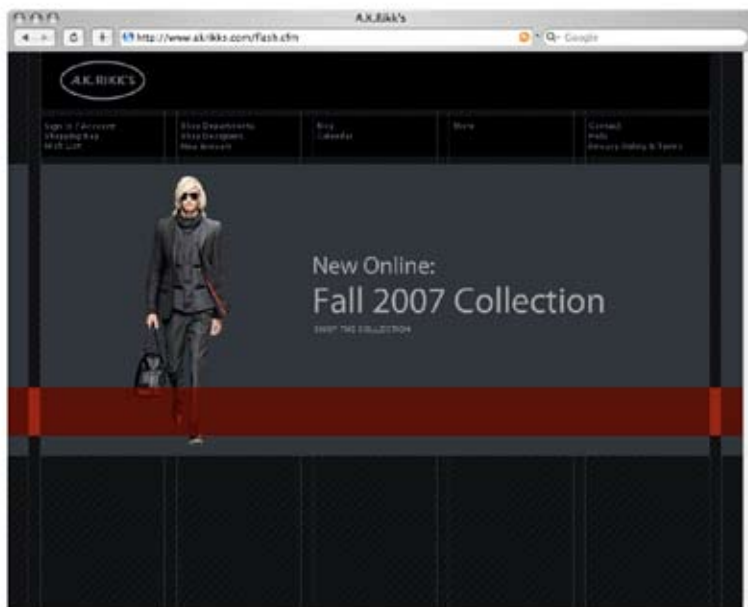
Refresh the brand to reflect the luxury market they serve. Develop a strong web presence to attract international vendors and clientele. Drive traffic to their site through print and e-mail based marketing efforts.

### SOLUTION

Deliver an overall brand refresh through updated business stationary, a cleaner logo solution, point of purchase materials, direct mail campaigns, and e-commerce website with client controlled content management system.

### APPLICATION

www.akrikks.com



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## Case Studies

**CLIENT**

Steelcase

**ASSIGNMENT**

Create a robust platform to attract and engage audiences to the Steelcase 360 Speaker Series.

**SOLUTION**

Working with Steelcase and their PR firm, we delivered a content managed site not only visually stunning, but also highly useful in registering event attendees, archiving past speakers information, and providing feedback on past events. *(2008 Addy Award Winner)*

**APPLICATION**

[www.360series.com](http://www.360series.com)



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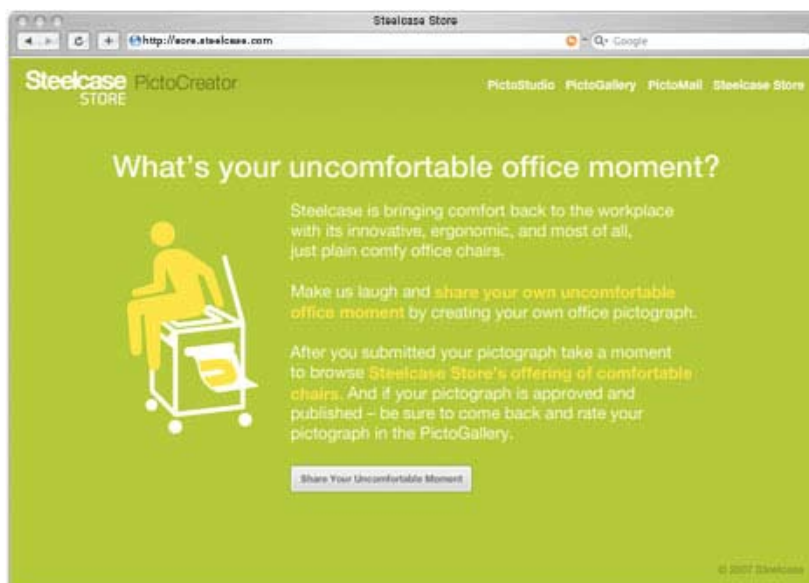
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## Case Studies

<b>CLIENT</b>	Steelcase
<b>ASSIGNMENT</b>	Increase traffic to Steelcase's online store for Holiday Season 2007. Track the results of different marketing strategies to deliver new visitors (ie. potential customers).
<b>SOLUTION</b>	Designed New York Times Ad and web-based marketing campaign promoting interactive "game" in which users register to win a office chair. Site tracked visitors, sent custom e-cards, and was judged to be a huge success. <i>(2008 Addy Award Winner)</i>
<b>APPLICATION</b>	<a href="http://www.store.steelcase.com">www.store.steelcase.com</a>



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## Case Studies

**CLIENT**

Holland Hospital

**ASSIGNMENT**

Communicate the hospitals goals, achievements, and future plans to the community at large.

**SOLUTION**

Redesigned the 2008 Holland Hospital Report to the Community, highlighting former patients with their testimonials.

**APPLICATION**

Annual Report



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## Case Studies

### CLIENT

Stylex

### ASSIGNMENT

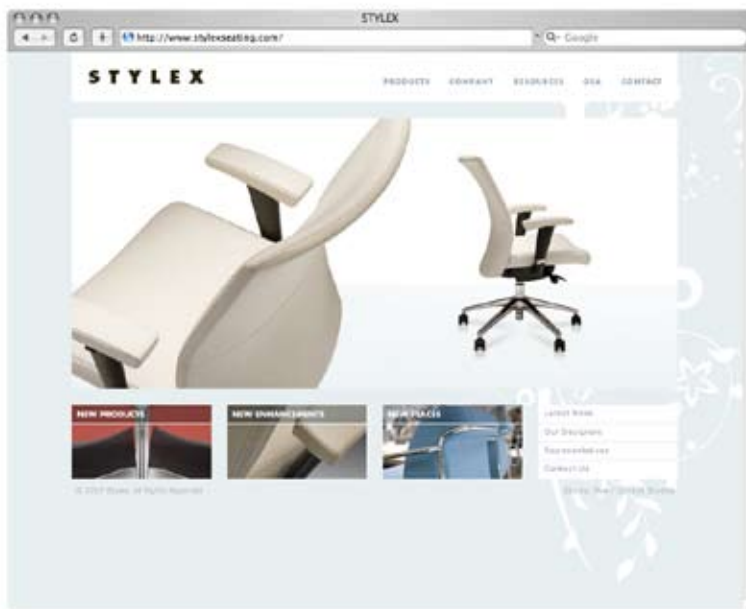
Redesign website, with client controlled content management system, to increase companies presence in marketplace.

### SOLUTION

Site was completely redesigned with modern aesthetics and simplified site structure for easy navigation. Proprietary CMS allows site administrators to quickly update content without changing the look and feel of the site. *(2008 Addy Award Winner)*

### APPLICATION

www.stylexseating.com



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## Case Studies

### CLIENT

Scholastic - The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards

### ASSIGNMENT

Promote the largest art and writing awards program in the United States.

### SOLUTION

Design focused on the "imperfect" quality of children's art. All materials had a hand made quality, yet showcased the high quality of the award winners.

### APPLICATION

Deliverable included posters, postcards, invitations, application forms, video graphics, stage banners, catalog of award winners, writing journal



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## Case Studies

### CLIENTS

- (T) BRE Properties, SF
- (B) The Ms. Foundation for Women, NYC

### APPLICATION

Annual Reports



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Conduit Studios specializes in developing strong brands. Each identity we design is unique and is created through a proven collaborative process. Here are a few samples.



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Conduit Studios designs and develops highly effective,  
and dare we say, beautiful work.

**PARTIAL CLIENT LIST:**

3M  
A.K.A.  
A.K.Rikk's  
Achievement Advocate  
Agility Group  
Alliance for Young Artists and Writers  
Ashley Cole Design  
Autodesk  
Bark Magazine  
Bates Footware  
Bayer  
BestNet  
Brooklyn College  
Cascade Optical  
Catalyst Partners  
Coalesse  
Design West Michigan  
Details  
Haworth  
HipLife  
Holland Hospital  
Hush Puppies  
J. Galt Associates  
Jennifer Butler Interior Design  
Joseph Jeup  
Kathryn Chaplow  
Laboratory Solutions  
Leigh's  
Mosaic Properties  
Ms. Foundation for Women  
Nourish  
Optisave  
Private Jet Services  
Ripe  
San Francisco Unified School District  
Scholastic  
Siemens  
Steelcase  
Stylex  
Tylor Devereaux Interior Design  
UICA