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Power-Modernism—the Future of Beauty Packaging

Robert Bergman explains what makes a package great.



Robert Bergman
Mpaht, New York City

It's year-12 of the new millennium and technology speeds ahead, consumers race to keep up, and the market tags-along to keep up. What's "new" is "old" quicker than ever and factoring-in the amped-up volume of competition makes survival of the fittest-package ever more challenging.

We only have a split-second to grab a customer's attention or they're on to something newer. To be successful, a package must make a consumer stop and look—approach, read and buy. It must speak with a powerful, clear and attractive voice. So how does a product find success in this brave new world? The answer's in the design— design that speaks to the times.

What's making or breaking product success today are aesthetics and communication —the design of "the package."

Dieter Rams, the design genius behind Braun's revolutionary products, said, "good design helps a product to be understood," but in this new millennium, the rules have changed. All bets are off. In this new century, to be simply understood isn't nearly enough. What doesn't speak up and stand out will be left behind. The language a product speaks must be crystal clear, and have a finely tuned, beautiful voice — it has to speak with a new *visual vocabulary*.

This new vocabulary uses typography, imagery, color and form to communicate in groundbreaking ways: focusing, exciting, and innovating the message. It steers clear of anything extra, dated, busy or confusing. The look is always strong, powerful, sophisticated and bold—*power-modernism*. *Power-modernism* balances bold, strong modern typography with a sensitivity for design: aesthetics, balance, harmony and open-space, combining powerful imagery that is never cluttered or too busy to understand immediately.

The beauty industry is a never-ending cycle of product launches and promotions where success or failure are clocked by the hour. I meet daily with marketing teams in the world's biggest beauty companies to get briefed on new packaging projects or to modernize aging ones. It's becoming common to be briefed on packaging a new product and then watch competitive changes alter the brief constantly during the design process. It forces you to react quickly because *the future is now*. One week a package has to be a certain color or have a certain product benefit, the next week it's another color or benefit. This creates an exciting environment to perfect the "recipe" of *power-modernism* in a microclimate ripe with potential wisdom to apply to all markets.

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All you have to do is a little surfing online to see the incredible increase in velocity of evolution in the global market—and to be successful, packaging design must evolve at that same speed. Simply put, packaging must *cut through the clutter* like never before. The need for the *power-modernist* package that makes a consumer stop and take notice has never been greater.

About the Author

Robert Bergman is founder and creative director of Mpakt, a luxury product packaging design company in New York, specializing in "modern packaging"—with clients such as L'Oréal, Calvin Klein Fragrances, Redken, and Shu Uemura—and Bergman Associates, a design, branding and advertising company—with clients such as Kao Cosmetics Japan, Coty, Alberta Ferretti, Moschino, The Council of Fashion Designers of America and David Byrne.

Bergman is former vice president/creative director at L'Oréal and creative director of international editions of Vogue. Bergman is the recipient of several American Package Design Awards, The Prix d'Excellence de la Beauté, The HBA International Package Design Award, The Type Director's Club Award, and The Tokyo Art Director's Club Award.

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