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**Designated Pages: Bradbury Thompson's Inspirations for Paper**

A Thesis Presented

by

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to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

**Master of Arts**

in

**Art History and Criticism**

Stony Brook University

**May 2015**

**Stony Brook University**

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Abstract of the Thesis

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How do Bradbury Thompson's designs in *Westvaco Inspirations* work as a guide for design and paper? *Westvaco Inspirations* was a promotional magazine first published in 1925 by the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company. The main purpose of the magazine was to promote paper and to show an intricate relationship between print, paper and design. Bradbury Thompson was the designer for the magazine from 1939 to its final year of publication in 1962. This thesis shows how Thompson's designs promoted the quality of each particular paper brand and its effectiveness in presenting a printed image. The thesis aims to show that his designs combined the visual and the tactile in presenting paper as valuable material with unique aesthetic qualities.

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## Designated Pages: Bradbury Thompson's Inspirations for Paper

David C. Smith begins his book, *History of Paper Making in the United States 1691-1969*, with the following sentence: “It is widely believed by papermakers and some others that the consumption of paper by persons is one of the better indices to the measure of civilization.”<sup>1</sup> Even today, paper is still important in terms of being original or official ‘hardcopies’, as tools of organization that follow the rules of each civilization. Yet what does it mean to write about paper in the age of ‘going paperless’ and digitized documents? Moreover, what does it mean to do research today on a magazine published by a pulp and paper company that tried to utilize design on their brands of paper—when graphic design now has the freedom to do any design on any type of paper through computer software? What significance does the design bear, or what kind of artfulness is there in that composition when the purpose is to sell the platform of it: paper? *Westvaco Inspirations*, a print magazine published by the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company<sup>2</sup> (will be referred to as Westvaco) offers one answer to such questions on design and paper. *Westvaco Inspirations* showed how design worked as a new type of art that made one read the image and not only see but also feel the paper in relation to that image. The magazine conveyed the quality of paper instantaneously through the combined experiences of visual and the tactile.

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<sup>1</sup> David C. Smith, *History of Papermaking in the United States, 1691 - 1969* (New York: Lockwood Publishing Co., 1970), 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 396-397. The West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company (Westvaco) was established in 1899, through the consolidation of the West Virginia Paper Company (found in 1891) and the West Virginia Pulp Company (found in 1892).

*Westvaco Inspirations*<sup>3</sup> was a periodical that was published 5-6 issues per year from 1925 to 1962. *Westvaco Inspirations*, or *Inspirations*, as its title implies, aimed to inspire in the audience a sense of the marvels of advertising and design through the medium of paper. The magazine was specifically targeted towards advertising agencies, designers, art directors, typographers and museums, reaching out to an audience of 35,000.<sup>4</sup> Distributed as a catalog to promote the relationship between paper and effective design strategies for advertisements, it ultimately served to promote Westvaco's various paper brands. One of the most prominent designers for the magazine was Bradbury Thompson (1911-1995). Thompson started to design *Inspirations* in 1939 at the age of 27 and was prolific in his designs for the magazine. He would be designing for the magazine until its final issue in 1962—adding up to more than 60 issues during this period.<sup>5</sup> His work was acknowledged through *The Art of Graphic Design*, a book published by Yale University in 1988, which compiled the most representative designs of Thompson for *Inspirations*.

While not ignoring the information uncovered by *The Art of Graphic Design*, the paper will draw on Thompson's signature design practices using selected examples from original issues. This paper also aims to provide a more extended analysis of Thompson's work. This comprehensive analysis will include angles that the book has missed: the relationship between the design and the tactile quality of paper. Analysis of the relationship between the visual composition and the textural platform will show how these layouts drew the audience to paper

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<sup>3</sup> Was titled *Westvaco Inspirations for Printers* until 1957, when the title changed to *Westvaco Inspirations*. From Alvin Eisenman's forward to Bradbury Thompson's *The Art of Graphic Design* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), ix.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction written by Bradbury Thompson, xi.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

itself not only as desirable material but also as collectible commodity. In regard to what the purpose of the magazine was and what it achieved, Thompson mentioned that it was a unique production in part of the corporation that “tried to encourage the growth of education and innovation in the graphic community.”<sup>6</sup> While this assertion is true, the idea of using high quality paper for good design was the central idea of the magazine. I contend that the magazine worked as desirable material before it created the surge of innovation or provided educational guidance to the audience by its images. The paper will attempt to connect Thompson’s designs within the context of the magazine’s materiality, that of paper.

From 1925, when *Inspirations* was first published, through 1939, when Bradbury Thompson started his work for the magazine, Westvaco was growing steadily and successfully but was still competing with other companies. From 1900 to 1940, the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company ranked 6th among the top 15 paper firms during this period.<sup>7</sup> However, among the 7 of the top 15 paper firms that were founded around the same year, Westvaco only ranked second to last in number of mills and percent of total paper capacity.<sup>8</sup> In addition, with the exception of the top three ranked firms, Westvaco and other three firms had similar numbers of mills and paper capacities. Thus it is possible to say that the company did not have a huge share of the market in terms of production and was competing with other firms that were more or less similar in market sharing. However, though Westvaco was growing meagerly and pulp

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Nancy Kane Ohanian, *The American Pulp and Paper Industry, 1900 - 1940* (Westwood, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1993), 80. *The American Pulp and Paper Industry, 1900 - 1940*, 80. Analyzed from Table 4-8: Largest Multiplant Paper Firms, 1900, 1920, and 1940.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 58. In this case, capacity is directly linked to market share. Paper capacity is a company or firm’s paper production percentage from the entire United States paper industry’s capacity.



production was more predominant than paper production,<sup>9</sup> by 1937 the company became the largest producer of white paper in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

While Westvaco was continuously competing for market share, paper itself was being re-examined and their specific qualities were under reconsideration around the time Thompson started designing for *Inspirations*. In 1925, the same year *Inspirations* was first published, paper manufacture was approximately 90 million tons in paper and approximately 39 million tons in pulp. Manufacture increased considerably over the next few years, but met with huge decrease in 1929 and into the 30s.<sup>11</sup> Efforts to rationalize the industry during the Depression came through the management of the National Recovery Administration (NRA). The Central Grading Committee under the Paper Industry Authority, which was ultimately a part of the NRA, used categories such as brightness, transparency, gloss, opacity, folding endurance, tearing strength, and bursting resistance<sup>12</sup> to provide standards for grading paper. In 1938, the American Pulp and Paper Association (established in 1875) decided that “the time had arrived for a more modern and more comprehensive treatment [of the grading system of paper]”<sup>13</sup> and created a committee composed of people from the pulp, paper, and paperboard industry, with an addition of few

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<sup>9</sup> Smith, *History of Papermaking in the United States*, 398. Analyzed from Table 7-3: West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company Sales 1899 – 1904. The table shows that Westvaco was mainly a pulp producing company. Pulp production was up to 10 times more than that of paper production as it was getting closer to 1904.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 457

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 445

<sup>12</sup> John G. Strange, *The Paper Industry: A Clinical Study* (Appleton, Wisconsin: Graphic Communications Center, 1977), 122.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 123.

others from outside the industry to achieve this objective.<sup>14</sup> Westvaco's effort to maintain sales under more regulations and the creative effort of *Inspirations* could have been entirely parallel practices. However, it is possible to say that Westvaco had turned to a new experiment, a new tactic in emphasizing their paper quality not by living up to industry standards but by creating 'art' on paper.

Experience of art through paper came from Thompson's design practice as "infographics," or information graphics. Information graphics are visual representations of information, data, or knowledge intended to present complex information quickly and clearly.<sup>15</sup> In Thompson's infographics, information was represented not only through the visual but also through the tactual. Instead of giving image or text the primary meaning while paper was secondary, the visual and tactual traits of paper were shown through the graphics as the fundamental meaning. Thompson transformed a sales brochure into infographics that mixed prints, fine art, and abstract illustrations and presented paper through the image rather than as an accessory to the image. Images and paper brands from the issue of *Inspirations* 154 (1945), 159 (1946) and 161 (1946) will be used in order to highlight his practices.

By using image and even text as part of visual communication, Thompson achieved three things; one was that he conveyed the information of paper through graphic design that enhanced the desire for the material. The other was that he did not only communicate information about how good the paper was, but also endeavored to put forward design layout as art and imply that design is readable as artworks. Finally, through the previous two achievements he attracted the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Smiciklas, *The Power of Infographics: Using Pictures to Communicate and Connect with your Audience* (Indianapolis: Que Publishing, 2012), 3.

audience towards the paper through the composition, presenting them with the visual quality of the paper as well as the tactile quality of each paper brand. Tactile quality was central in creating desire for the object in hand, and Thompson's layouts took advantage of those different textural qualities.

Previous *Inspirations* issues starting from 1925 had focused on textual information that relayed how paper can enhance the desire of products on ads. The images were used as examples and were analyzed in 'short essays' within the magazine. The main objective of *Inspirations* that continued throughout its publication was to show how different images from all types of sources were reproduced in fine quality through the printing process on Westvaco paper brands. The structure of the magazine developed over the years to better serve this purpose, but it would be when Bradbury Thompson started his work for *Inspirations* that those structures were integrated with the design of the magazine. The basic structure consisted of cover and back page, content, and the 'publication page' which here will be called the 'index page'. The magazine was 7 to 10 single leaves including cover and back. Pages with different paper brands had distinct characteristics that could be seen not only through the printed images and the tone of the paper, but also through the tactile quality it presented to the person who turned the pages. These pages, each of distinct paper brands, were one of the most unique characteristics of the magazine. However, earlier issues did not utilize the distinct textural quality of those brands but only described the different textures of the paper to prove that Westvaco paper could cater to any type of advertisement. Each page had captions on the brand of paper used, with separate captions for images that included the original advertiser, artist, art director and the printing process (half tone, line engraving, 4 color process, line screen, lithography). The final page or back cover had a list of paper brands from Westvaco and addresses of distributors.

The pages of each issue were cumulative—the pagination of the next issue started after the page the previous issue ended with. Each page was themed with a topic essay with images. The essay provided an analysis of images within the context of the advertisement they were previously used in. The analysis centered on themes such as color, typography, technique, photography and its effects on sales. Some issues after the first issue in 1925 had an introductory page that stated the purpose of the magazine and the types of paper that were used. These introductions basically stated that the magazine provided various images that show “their affinity for the wide range of Westvaco Papers.”<sup>16</sup> *Westvaco Inspirations* had a clear purpose of publication that was communicated through its basic structure. It tried to relay to advertisers, designers, and other parties that using the right paper with good printing was most effective in presenting products. While the purpose of the magazine was to present various images, a huge portion consisted of textual information. *Inspirations* had yet to go beyond being a sales catalog with charming sales pitches and images.

Thompson went beyond arguing the importance of quality paper through text and supporting images. He used images to actually ‘design’ paper as an aesthetic commodity in its own right. As seen through the example of the introductory page, *Inspirations* had been emphasizing how important paper was in forming desire for products printed on them but had

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<sup>16</sup> Starting from Issue 104 of 1937 until around later in 1938, a stronger message appeared on the title page or the inside of the cover page,

**Here is a fact about Westvaco Inspirations for printers** which is a marked tribute to Westvaco papers... Plates for each issue come from many sources, from all parts of the country—lent by advertisers, advertising agencies, publishers, engravers and printers. They reach *Inspirations’* publishers in the most varied possible forms... The uniformly good printing results [of these various images] ...are excellent testimony of the exceptional printing qualities of Westvaco papers.

not found a way to trigger desire for paper as independent material. Thompson decided to trigger this desire towards advertisers and designers just as they would try to spark desire for commodities and services. To fulfill this purpose, Thompson integrated color, abstract shapes, text, and artworks from all periods with the medium of the composition: paper. This integration worked as infographics that made the audience understand paper through its aesthetic possibilities rather than taking paper for granted as a practical commodity. Design tactics were combined with the unique visual and textural qualities of Westvaco brands. The integration of design and paper enhanced the personal connection to paper and made the audience read the images as collective art and ultimately look at paper as an artistic medium.

One of Thompson's design schemes for the purpose of creating artistically appealing paper was to incorporate primary colors of printing, figurative images, and abstract shapes for visual impact (fig 1). Thompson created multiple layers of one painting in a variety of colors and overlapped them for a dynamic effect. The visual impact given by the shapes and colors immediately sent a message before textual information. The text on the opposite page of Figure 1 in this two-page layout briefly explained the theme 'diffusion'.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the composition relayed this message immediately by showing diffusion itself and captivating the audience. The photograph of an enlarged fly was a unique subject matter to choose for a design magazine, yet the image alone did not bear a very interesting experience. The layout had the image in its original color—the fly in natural color on an orange and yellow gradation background. This original was reproduced in a variety of tones (grey-scale, and the primary colors magenta, cyan blue, and yellow) and overlapped throughout the two pages. The image reproduced in magenta was cut in the middle at the edge of the page. On the opposite page, the image reproduced in

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<sup>17</sup> "...Diffusion of color is diffusion of knowledge, every printing press a broadcasting station." From *Inspirations* 159 of 1946, page 3166.



westvaco inspirations for printers 159

printed by letterpress on sterling enamel 25 x 38-70

diffusion diffusion diffusion diffusion

Figure 1. *Westvaco Inspirations* Issue 159 of 1946, page 3167. Printed by Letterpress on Sterling Enamel, 25x38-70. Reproduced with 4 color process, 120 line screen. Photograph by Victor Keppler for the Hercules Powder Company. Design by Bradbury Thompson.

yellow was cut off at the edge in the same manner. The cutting off created a composition that employed the figurative image of the insect as an abstract block of color. While not ignoring the detailed image of the insect, the entire block was reproduced and then divided to utilize the shape of the rectangle. The overlapped areas formed additional geometric shapes in shades of mixed colors, making a layout that combined the figurative and the abstract. Thompson did not just use random shapes and add them on to paintings or prints. He tried to use the image itself and reconstruct it so to enhance its figurative and abstract characteristics.

The sharp corners created by the overlap were contrasted with the circles sprayed on page. These circles were also black, magenta, yellow, and cyan blue, but the colors of the circles on top of the images were of different from that of the image. The colors of the circles were mixed with the background, which enhanced the clarity of its color. Sprayed generously over the images, the circles played a role in presenting an interesting abstract layout contrasted with the insect. It was a visual representation of the theme diffusion; the sprayed dots were showing diffusion of color into paper, which then diffused paper with image, then with product or service. On the bottom of the page, the word 'diffusion' was repeated four times without capitalization or without a context in a finished sentence. The repeated word had more impact than the paragraph on the opposite page. The words were texts with meaning but worked as an image and as part of the visual integration in this design. The repetition of the words created a horizontal line that paralleled the cyan blue rectangle, but also crossed over with the vertical rectangle created by the cyan blue and magenta rectangle. This vertical shape fell down towards the letters, which produced a lively composition.

The composition shows how Thompson used the figurative, the abstract, and text as image to draw the audience towards its complexity and variety. By looking at how the shapes and

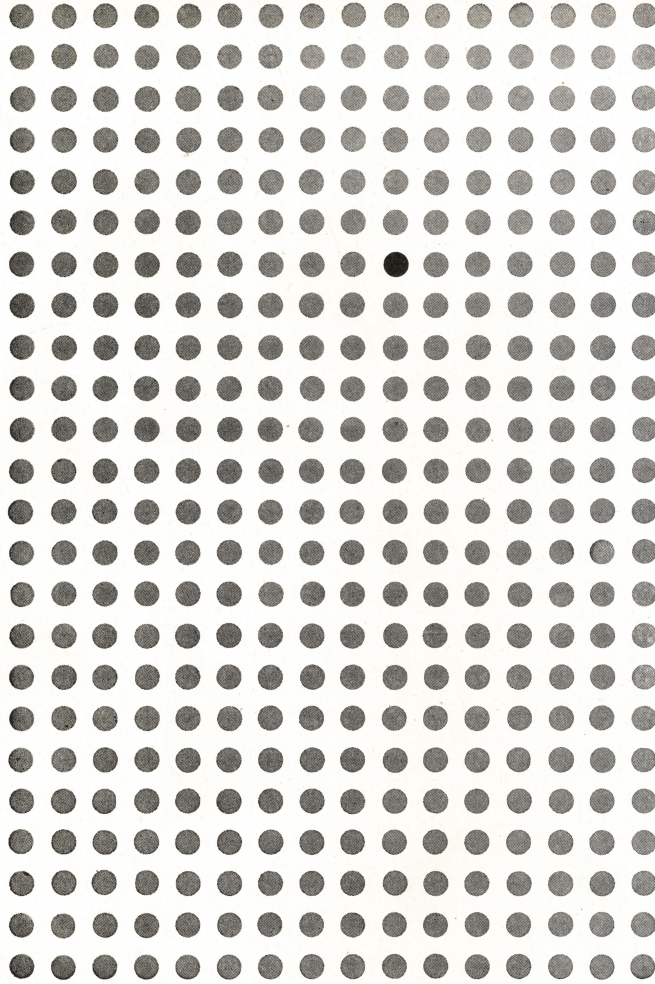
colors worked together within the page, the audience also tends to the feeling of the material that the design is laid on. The paper brand used for this page was ‘Sterling Enamel’, which has a smooth and glossy finish. The paper is of medium weight<sup>18</sup>, slightly firmer than the average magazine paper of today. The smooth and shiny surface enhanced the design by amplifying the radiant colors and clarifying the overlaps of the rectangles. The quality of this paper brand can be compared with other brands within the magazine through the process of visual observation and touch. The relativity in gloss, smoothness, and feeling of weight and firmness can be seen and felt through different pages with different images. By following how color and shape are structured and combined together the audience would have realized that the gloss and density of the paper reinforced the particular design. The overlapped areas would not have been as impressive if the paper had been less shiny or less smooth. It was the smooth, shiny quality of that particular paper that made the hues more brilliant and the overlapped geometric shapes clear and luminous.

Thompson tried to design infographics that did not necessarily require text and aimed to create abstract visual forms that communicated information. This example, which is one of the two separately closed pages that shared the same theme, specifically shows how infographics work even without the function of various colors or forms (fig 2). While this page had a paragraph on the theme of the layout, ‘meditation’, it shows how Thompson used the abstract to visualize information while creating an artistic endeavor. Thompson’s infographics had nothing to do with visualizing information in charts or pies. Thompson’s work had more to do with

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<sup>18</sup> A note on the concept of paper ‘weight’: Dimensions on each page of *Inspirations* indicated the size and weight of the paper used: 25x38-[weight]. Weight of paper is expressed with pounds per 500 or 1000 sheets. Though paper density and weight are separate categories, heavier paper allowed less light through than lightweight paper—thus heavy paper is ‘denser’ or ‘thicker’ in general.





printed by letterpress on marva satin finish super 25 x 38-50

**i**

f you think meditation means day dreaming or reverie, awake! it means to plan in one's mind; to fix upon mentally; to think with a view to action. hence there is much meditation in paper mills, engraving plants and printing shops. consider, no piece of paper is printed unless meditation has gone before it. one dot in 369 is here emphasized. by accident? no! by design, born of meditation. nothing good or bad occurs but that good or bad thinking gives it birth.

Figure 2. *Westvaco Inspirations* Issue 159 of 1946, page 3169. Printed By Letterpress on Marva Satin Finish Super, 25x38-50. Design by Bradbury Thompson.

creating a collective art piece that embodied the theme. In Figure 2, the text begins with an enlarged lower case ‘i’, which brought attention to the shape of the letter rather than its connection to the paragraph. The dot of the ‘i’ became an image rather than an alphabet: a single black circle on a pedestal. Enlarging the letter formed a space between the dot and the stem, which created an image of a circle ‘elevated’ up into the air—as if a single ‘thought’ had been raised in the middle of the expanded space of our minds. This circle was repeated in grey-scale and constructed into a vertical cascade of circles. One single circle in this cascade was black. This reflected the larger black circle that was part of the ‘i’, while leading the audience to concentrate on those two particular circles. The process of meditation was presented through the circles by visually creating a situation that required concentration on a single thought while discarding all others that veiled the essential. The cascade of circles was in minimalistic fashion; in simple non-colors and form the image absorbed the audience into the sublime and the essential truth. The short paragraph on the theme of meditation was a secondary aspect of the presented image. The audience was invited to look at the design and derive the meaning of meditation as if they were reading into an artwork.

The non-colors in this composition were toned down even more by the type of paper used for this page. The paper brand is ‘Marva Satin Finish Super’, which has a relatively smooth feeling but is not glossy or stark white like the ‘Sterling Enamel’ used on the opposite page (page 3168). Instead, this brand has a mixed tone of light grey and yellow with a fragile feeling to it. The texture of the paper and its demure tone illustrated the theme. By using paper that did not have an embellished quality and instead had a less ‘material’ and even delicate feeling, the theme of meditation was presented within a spiritual and psychological context. The lack of gloss and shine established the demure tone of the grey-scale circles that led the audience towards the dark

circles. Shiny and glossy paper would have made the colors too bold and bright. The specific quality of the paper brand fixed ‘a state of focus’ within the ‘obscurities of free flowing thought’.

Each *Inspirations* issue revealed Thompson’s experimentation regarding the layout of text, images and color. Double paged layouts showed aggressive and large compositions combining figurative artworks, abstract shapes, type and prints. The two-paged design showed how these elements could be used in a simple manner to create a direct and interesting message (fig 3 and 4). This composition was themed ‘synthesis by paper’ and addressed paper as a gift that transformed personal desire into buyable desire. The left page (see fig 3) presented a figurative painting of trees, half in its original color and half in grey-scale overlapped with a vertical line of printed engravings of leaves. A thick black line shaped as a loop starts at the left page and leads to the right (see fig 4). The loop cannot be referred to a specific object; it could perhaps been an abstract expression of synthesis or the shape of a leaf. However, it is best to say that its function was to visually connect the other abstract shapes together as a whole. It may not have indicated a specific object, yet it visually cooperated with the other aspects. The right page also had a print of a root, the letter ‘A’, and a partial image of the texture of wood in biomorphic shape. These aspects were used to illustrate a theme of trees, leaves, and the process of synthesis. However, they visually worked together not only because of a combining theme but also because their particular shape, color and position.

Thompson kept the structure for this two-paged spread simple but its message clear and strong. The abundance of green could have made this layout mundane—thus he used black and grey to bring down the brightness of green. He also used yellow and blue for the leaves to create a color contrast. Thompson used a bold thick line to cross over the composition to contrast with the watercolor tone of the painting. The engraving of a root gave the abstract composition a



Artist: Bernard Lamotte  
Art Director: Walter S. Maas  
Advertiser: Pinaud Parfumeurs  
Agency: Dorland International, Inc.  
Engraving: 4 color process, 120 line screen

## Paper synthesis

3074 Printed by letterpress on Piedmont Enamel, 25x38-70

Figure 3. *Westvaco Inspirations* Issue 154 of 1945, page 3074. Printed by Letterpress on Piedmont Enamel, 25x38-70. Reproduced with 4 color process, 120 line screen. Painting by Bernard Lamotte for Pinaud Parfumeurs. Design by Bradbury Thompson.



Consider vast green forests which, by synthesis of elements from sun and wind and rain and earth, create timber within the laws of creative principle. Paper is made so that you, by its wise use, can set up the greatest synthesis of all...conversion of the subjective desires of people into objective desires for goods and services. Through printed advertising that is well designed, your message is transported to the doorsteps of the world for the eyes of all men.

Figure 4. *Westvaco Inspirations* Issue 154 of 1945, page 3075. Printed by Letterpress on West Virginia Machine Coated, 25x38-60. Reproduced with 4 color process, 120 line screen. Design by Bradbury Thompson.

classic, scientific, ‘enlightenment-era’ addition to balance out the collection of abstract shapes. The tension between the figurative and the abstract was delicately balanced for visual intrigue. The beauty of this layout, however, was not only how Thompson used contrast but also harmony. The letter ‘A’ was a part of the design without specific meaning. Perhaps it was used because it was the first letter from the word arbor, but even without reference to its meaning as text the shape of the letter worked as an interesting aspect within the larger design. The angular shape of the letter gave another point of contrast in the more curved shaped designs, while aligning itself with the vertical and sharper edges from the green shapes. The color of the leaf engravings were a contrast but also a harmony, since green comes from yellow and blue. The vertical alignment of the trees in the painting and the somewhat darker black strokes outlining them were reflected in the black loop. The vertical lines were contrasted with the rounder, horizontal loop but were also in concordance with its color.

The use of simple colors that brought out the green but also counter-balanced it was a subtlety that evoked visual pleasure to the viewer and led to the interest in paper itself. The variety of integrated shapes made the eye follow around the pages and look at the paper. The aspects of this composition are impressive because two different brands were used for the design. The left page with the painting is ‘Piedmont Enamel’, while the right page with more abstract shapes is ‘West Virginia Machine Coated’. These two pages do not have a visible difference and seem to be similar in smoothness and gloss. One can only find the difference in the two pages when they observe the design carefully, or even trace it with touch. In order to convey the subtle difference between these two brands Thompson tried to incorporate a dynamic design that would draw close attention to both pages. The black loop that led the audience from the left page to the right and then back again urged the audience to pay careful attention to the paper in the course of

following the loop. Under careful observation of the composition and through comparing the two pages, it becomes clearer that ‘West Virginia Machine Coated’ is slightly smoother and less dense than ‘Piedmont Enamel’. Perhaps the design tried show how fine paper (Piedmont Enamel) can become more refined (West Virginia Machine Coated), and connect this process to the synthesis of paper: how paper can present the desires of the mind in tangible form.<sup>19</sup> The reader did not necessarily have to read the text, rather the integration of design and paper made the reader follow the image and absorb their visual contrast and harmony. While looking at the design and correlating it to the paper the viewer is drawn to feel the difference between the pages with both sight and touch.

It is hard to ignore, however, that such concentration on textural qualities of paper partly relied on the inherent interest in paper to start with. The target audience of *Inspirations* would have given keen attention to paper. Nevertheless, Thompson integrated paper and design in a more deliberate way that incorporated visual and tactile aspects by using different paper brands within an over-arching spread (fig 5). The paper became more intriguing to look at, which led to the focus on paper itself directly. This structure effectively showed the difference between paper brands even to viewers who were not interested in the subtle qualities of paper. Using different brands of paper to show how the image became more appealing had been the main purpose and practice of *Inspirations*. Yet each page was a confined box that worked with only what was within the page. Different brands stood out to a certain extent, but Thompson’s layouts stretched such impact further and made a ‘jump’ between two very different types of paper in Figure 5. This was a more dynamic way of generating aesthetic enjoyment of a particular page and

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<sup>19</sup> From *Inspirations* 154 of 1945, page 3075. “Paper is made so that you, by its wise use, can set up the greatest synthesis of all...conversion of the subjective desires of people into objective desires for goods and services.”



Figure 5. *Westvaco Inspirations* Issue 159 of 1946, page 3068-3069. Printed by Letterpress on Piedmont Enamel 25x38-70 (3068) and Inspirations English Finish 25x38-40 (3069). Reproduced with 4 color process, 120 line screen (3068) and with line (3069). Painting by Simka Simkhovitch for The Upjohn Company (3068), illustrations by Lombard Jones (3068-3069). Designed by Bradbury Thompson.



bringing attention towards the elements of the paper such as shine, texture, tone, solidity, and density as aesthetic qualities of the material. The two pages shown were consecutive and had the same theme of ‘enjoyment of pictures’. The left page is ‘Piedmont Enamel’, which is a coated paper that is clearly more solid and glossier than the right page. The right page is ‘Inspiration English Finish’, which is less dense and has a duller but creamier tone. A series of overlapped cows in bold primary colors jump to the next page—changing into beige and light grey cows flying towards the moon. In contrast to the illustrations a figurative painting of a child was placed on the left page. The fleecy, pastel-like soft tone of this painting was contrasted to the sharp, cut, and bold images of the cows on the left and the grey scale illustrations to the right.

The images conveyed enjoyment through the smiling child and the animals that move up and about towards the moon—a bedtime story for children visually created as a design fit for each brand of paper. The colorful cows on the shiny white paper were overlapped to create more movement and liveliness while it soared into a realm of the right page, a page with a thin texture that toned down the colors and created the mood of dreaming and night time. The strict contrast between the two papers was amplified when one followed the images of the cows from the left page to the right. The page on the right was considerably lighter, thin, and weaker to the touch—like the a dream or the state of sleep—in contrast to the glossier and opaque left page, which combined the merriment in the child and the bold colors of the cows. The difference in paper brand was clear through sight, but was enhanced when the reader actually looked at the images and understood its relationship with the paper while actually feeling the delicacy of the page compared to the firmness of the preceding page.

One of the most unique works of Thompson was the design for the inside of the cover pages and the index page (fig 6). The elaborate work on these pages was not to serve a specific theme, but purely for aesthetic appreciation of how figures and colors ‘sit’ on paper. Changes to the overall structure of the magazine, and especially the index page had already begun just before Thompson started designing for *Inspirations*. Previous issues only had information on paper brands and distributors, along with information about artists, advertising agencies, and paper referenced as captions within the issue. From *Inspirations* 109 of 1938, these descriptions were re-organized and arranged into clear categories on the final pages of each issue which functioned as an ‘index’ page. Categories included a full list of Westvaco paper brands<sup>20</sup>, information on papers used, subject headings, advertisers, agencies, types of engravings (line screen, color screen, line engraving, lithography), artists, and the typeface with specific page numbers that correlated with each category. The back cover had the address of distributors. These index pages would have worked as a reference not only for paper brands of Westvaco but also as a reference for names of advertisers, artists, and agencies. Such information had been in the magazine for quite a while, but had very little visual aspects and was purely text.

By designing the index page and the inside of the covers Thompson brought attention to the information and intrigued interest towards paper up to the end of the magazine. It was the final effort to transform a sales catalog into a collection of valuable paper. In his earlier practices he used tiny prints as headers for each category, or had them placed around the page like frames. He also employed abstract shapes in primary printing colors, or specific shapes that reflected the compositions of previous pages. However, these designs functioned as ‘decorations’ for the text and as mere aspects that only served the layout itself.

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<sup>20</sup> As of Issue 161 of 1946 used in Figure 6, *Inspirations* had a list of approximately 83 Westvaco paper brands.



Figure 6. *Westvaco Inspirations* Issue 161 of 1946, index page and inside of back cover. Printed by Letterpress on Sterling Enamel 25x38-70 (Index) and by Offset Lithography on Clear Spring Offset 25x38-120 (Back Cover). Designed by Bradbury Thompson.

Bradbury Thompson designed the index page just as he would design the content pages (see fig 6) and created an existence for the index that went beyond the reference page. The design for this page was purely for aesthetic appreciation—the prints and the content of the page did not correlate to each other or have a specific purpose. Reproduced prints from line engravings originally from the *Iconographic Encyclopedia of Science, Literature and Art*<sup>21</sup> were set on ‘Sterling Enamel’. Prints of shells and prehistoric flora in magenta, cyan blue, and yellow were placed regularly all over the page. The yellow prints worked as a base layer for the paper, while the few prints in magenta and cyan blue stood out from the background and left a lively mark. The center image in grey-scale was contrasted with the bright colors; the brighter images almost worked like a ‘background’ for the central image. That is, the paper was not applied with images but was transformed into an actual brand of paper that innately had these ‘designs’ embedded on them. The colors were enhanced by the gloss and stark whiteness of the paper, while the smooth finish of it combined the prints and the paper together for the illusion of a new, unique paper brand.

The inside of the cover page functioned in a similar manner, though the method of printing and the paper brand were different. The page used ‘Clear Spring Offset’, a thicker, denser paperboard like brand that has no gloss or shine. The color set on this paper was demure and calm. The images were reproduced with offset lithography, and as a result the paper and the prints were toned down, but the darker and lighter parts of the images were reversed which created a ‘shining’ effect on the dimly toned paper. As the index page had become, the cover page turned into a lavishly designed paper that could be appreciated aesthetically as a distinct

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<sup>21</sup> Reproduced from the *Iconographic Encyclopedia of Sciences, Literature and Art*, Edited by J. G. Heck and engraved by H. Winkles, J. Keller, A. Krausse and Feldweg. United States Edition published by Rudolph Garrigue in 1851. Information stated on the index page of *Inspirations* 161 of 1946.

paper brand. This final page made the magazine worth keeping as a collectible for the sake of its elaborate design even if the content of the issue was disappointing. Thompson's idea directed the audience towards paper and motivated desire for 'the thing', the platform in hand—paper.

Attention towards paper facilitated a closer look at the index and the information that could have been overlooked. As for the covers, not all issues of *Inspirations* had the 'designed' inside covers, and some were much simpler. For example, Issue 202 of 1955 only had lines of repeated Ws and Vs (standing for West Virginia). However, these compositions were not intended to present specific textual information but were rather fashioned as aesthetic effects to realize the value of paper pleasing to the eye. Thompson created a desirable sample of paper that people would have the urge to keep for the sake of keeping. His actions were not a practical message of how important paper was in advertising, but instead a visual communication of how paper had aesthetic value. Thompson understood that design was creation through integration of material and content, paper and art, platform and design. He believed in the visual possibility of designed paper for conveying the desirability and artistry of paper.

Thompson's layouts enhanced that desirability even more in later issues. For example, Issue 202 of 1955 filled a reproduced print from an old engraving entirely with magenta, yellow, and cyan blue. He also used text more radically, using the shapes of letters to support the design or radically twist sentences to go around the page. For one cover page of a 1960 issue Thompson developed a photomontage and applied the letters WESTVACO as a full image on the cover page instead of having the cover image and the title separated in two sections as previous issues had before. These are only few examples of designs that reflect Thompson's long career with *Inspirations*.

There is no direct evidence that *Westvaco Inspirations* directly influenced advertising agencies to consider paper in assessing the effectiveness of their advertisements, or if the magazine directly affected sales of Westvaco. Westvaco continued business then merged with the Mead Corporation in 2002 and is now MeadWestvaco. However, Thompson's designs for *Westvaco Inspirations* established a new possibility of paper by creating a visual book of designed paper that could be read aesthetically and thus be appreciated as an entity of its own. The combination of paintings, illustrations, abstract designs, line engravings, letters, text, and color was introduced as a new persuasive art form that was worth 'having', thus supporting Westvaco's cause in asserting the importance of paper in material culture.

The visual and tactile qualities of paper were important for the magazine as well as the paper industry because it brought in the 'personalization' of paper. Reading paper through design and understanding its qualities and potential would build a personal of taste for paper that triggers desire for paper rather than perceiving it as expendable supplies. The fact that *Westvaco Inspirations* had cumulative page numbers shows that it was considered to be 'a series of paper collections' that were not to be thrown away easily. Though it could have been a practical strategy of number labeling all brands of paper for sales efficiency, Thompson's work went beyond practicality. He united image with paper for visual persuasion rather than using them as mere supporting aspects. Thompson understood well that passion for paper initiated by visual admiration and tangibility was the key in personalizing paper and giving rise to the pursuit of these designated pages.

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