Creative trends for a roaring 2020

The big trends set to influence design, branding and visual production this year.

With Shutterstock's Creative Trends report released today, it seems like high time to predict how creative trends will look for 2020.

Below you'll find forecasts from those most in the know, including figureheads from agencies like Brave, Interbrand, Leagas Delaney and Coley Porter Bell.

Flo Lau, Associate Creative Director at Shutterstock

With creatives, journalists, bloggers and social media managers from all over the world relying on Shutterstock for their content needs, our search data tells not only visual and audio trends but also social issues and upcoming culture shifts.

From Greta Thunberg being named Time's person of the year in 2019, to young people protesting against governments around the world looking to make a difference and representing a shift in culture, there's no doubt that this will be a huge year of activism. The Shutterstock 2020 Creative trends report is filled with a sense of uncertainty, resilience, and demand for change: Occulture representing the uncertainty of the younger generation, Wild Life tapping into our desire to protect and advocate for nature, Game On showing us that visuals conveying dedication and empowerment are highly in demand, and Protest Art concludes the report with a call to take a stand and make a difference, urging for social change.

Occulture image:
Another interesting observation: while augmented reality, AI, and other digital visuals dominated the world of content in the past few years, we are seeing a shift towards visuals that depict physical experience and actions with Wild Life and Game On. This could be a reaction to the always-on way of life, people are looking to regain their mental and physical health by unplugging from their devices and having physical experiences.

We’ve already started seeing these design elements being leveraged in various ways across the world in campaigns, social media, packaging, and even fashion. From major retailers like Amazon and Coach leveraging elements of astrology online to help customers shop according to their

horoscope to florals exploding on the runway in major ways for Dior Cruise 2020 as well as Ralph Lauren Pre-Spring 2020. We've seen our trend predictions blow up in previous years and this year is shaping up to be no different, and I can't wait to see the creative ways in which these trends are interpreted and applied in visual choices, branding, and campaigns across the world.

Andy Payne, Global Chief Creative Officer, Interbrand

Today's world is one of abundance – we download apps that never get used and own subscriptions we quickly forget exist, all in an effort to try to manage our own, increasingly cluttered ecosystems. To combat this, 2020 will see a need for increased utility in design, a focus on creating that which can simplify our lives, save time and instil trust and confidence. In the past decade, those that have embedded utility into their thinking have been able to cut through the noise of the digital age and consistently increase engagement. As we move into the next, this will become absolutely essential, as the expectation that design should empower, simplify and impart knowledge is becoming the absolute minimum.

Harmony? Image:
As the pressure to continuously innovate accelerates, customers expect not just to have their needs fulfilled in a practical way, but to get an emotional reward from their experiences with brands. We associate with things that make us (among other emotions) feel good, creative, rebellious or knowledgeable – things that we can’t predict. For this reason, the most successful players of 2020 will be those that focus not on the now, but on looking ahead to pre-empt future customer expectations and stay ahead of them.

The key to integrating both of these elements is to ensure that any big creative move is grounded in substance, being informed by data that helps give a greater understanding of the risks and opportunities in creating a given move. If done

well, brands can tap into both the emotional and practical needs of its customers, to truly engage.

Caroline Paris, creative director, Brave

If 2018 was the ‘Year of brand purpose growing up’, then 2019 was the ‘Year of the ASA’. So what will 2020 be the ‘Year of’?

The Advertising Standards Authority really found its voice and showed its willingness to flex its muscles in 2019. Whether it’s Volkswagen and Philadelphia gender stereotyping or Deliveroo failing to accurately reflect the real world in which we live (see below banned ad from the brand), advertising creativity has been more scrutinised under the microscope than ever.

[embedded content]

Brands and advertisers will have to be more authentic in the way they communicate with and how they portray the people and world around them. While leaps forward have been made in many ways, there is a tendency to slip back to the ‘norm’ which leaves it over-represented in creativity. And when brands attempt to go out of norm, they risk tokenism and woke-washing – a new issue we face.

Advertisers will have to use 2020 as a springboard to build more authentic creative products. We need to be able to hold a mirror up to the work we do and actually see, what we all see in our lives every day. This may be tough because people have never been so diverse and, sometimes, polarised. But this is a good challenge to have and will help us achieve new levels of creative excellence the industry has needed.

Sadie Westwood, Business Director, 23red

As we move into 2020, it’s clear that the term *Purpose* will be on everyone’s lips. Consumers will more and more be looking to brands to launch products and campaigns with purpose and will increasingly call out the brands that are simply paying lip service to ideals they don’t adhere to. It will be a brand’s best interest to walk the walk if they talk the talk.

And it’s not only brands that will need to respond to this, but the creative industry itself. We’re already seeing the big creative shops storming awards ceremonies with purpose led campaigns, so 2020 will see more agencies looking to align themselves with brands that are making a difference in climate change, sustainability and diversity.

Image:
But as with any purpose-led campaign, the brand and the agency behind it must practice what it preaches. If a brand champions sustainability, then it must be implemented in all aspects of the campaign journey, from conception to launch, and seep into all elements of creativity. This means making creative content that lasts to save on resources further down the line, be it building campaigns with a longer shelf life, or integrating a brand or activation idea that is big enough to be impactful for long periods of time. Whether it’s a campaign that evolves over time, or a timeless idea, we should do what we can to save reinventing the wheel on creativity and save the resources we use to achieve it.

In 2020 agencies will be competing in a very crowded space to

ensure their clients stand for something and have an equal part to play in ensuring the message remains authentic. It’s time to get creative with purpose.

Thibault Michal, Creative Director at Leagas Delaney

Collaboration and partnerships have existed since the age of time in advertising. Brands have always tried to attach their name to an artist, a celebrity or social channel of any sort to grab people’s attention and steal a bit of their fame, their reach and what they stand for. What has been introduced in 2018 by Tide in the Superbowl or more recently by the Ryan Reynolds’ advert with Samsung, Netflix and Aviation Gin go beyond the usual capillaries of function between brands. It launches a new kind of collaboration where brands partner up with other brands to release a single piece of content.

So here we are. With belts tightening around creative budgets and a saturated ad market, the rise of collaborative advertising campaigns between brands will take centre stage in 2020.

And for good reasons.

Reducing production investment means it’s good business sense to share the costs and resources around when formulating a creative solution. What is impossible to consider with one budget starts to become realistic when two are combined. And guess what? Some ad agencies might even be clever enough to choose two brands from their own portfolio.

Data also allows every part of our business to be defined more precisely. Data helps to shape a brand, its target and its future on facts and numbers. It is then much easier for two different brands to see what they have in common. Take the Ryan Reynolds advert with Samsung, Netflix and Aviation Gin.

Three brands not obviously connected, but with a common thread tying them together.

[embedded content]

Businesses don’t really sell products anymore – they sell ideals and vision of the world. And the truth is, there is less ideal or vision to share than product to sell. This makes it easier for two brands to get together to support a collective vision with a stand out campaign without jeopardising the sale of the product.

2020 will then see more brands and campaigns living in increasingly less space. Does this reminds you something? Well, that’s a prediction we could have made for the last decade: ‘let’s have more for less’.

James Ramsden, Executive Creative Director, Coley Porter Bell

2020 will be the year of immersive branding.

Many of the movements we saw in 2019 will continue to evolve in 2020 including sustainability, simplification, authenticity and transparency. However, there is one mega-trend that we expect to see flourish this year. As technology matures it continues to stretch the traditional foundations of brand identity, demanding new expressions and interactions that create enveloping, intelligent, rich experiences. This is pushing brand identities towards the ‘era of immersive branding’.

Image:
Identities are maturing and evolving from UI kits and ‘motion principles’ into fully formed, more immersive eco-systems. Brands have been defining voice for a while, and now they’re designing layers for AR, combining haptics with sound palettes and designing quirkier, more bespoke interactions in ways that were once reserved for ‘fringe technologies’. All in pursuit of delivering the connected experience we all want and expect from the brands in our everyday lives.

To successfully achieve this, agencies and their creatives will continue to collaborate with a wide range of design experts to create brand experiences that are both distinctive and immersive. This will be one of the driving forces behind the culture of branding for 2020 and beyond.

Read next: 2020’s big visual trends – according to stock libraries

https://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk/features/creative-hardware/creative-trends-for-roaring-2020/