

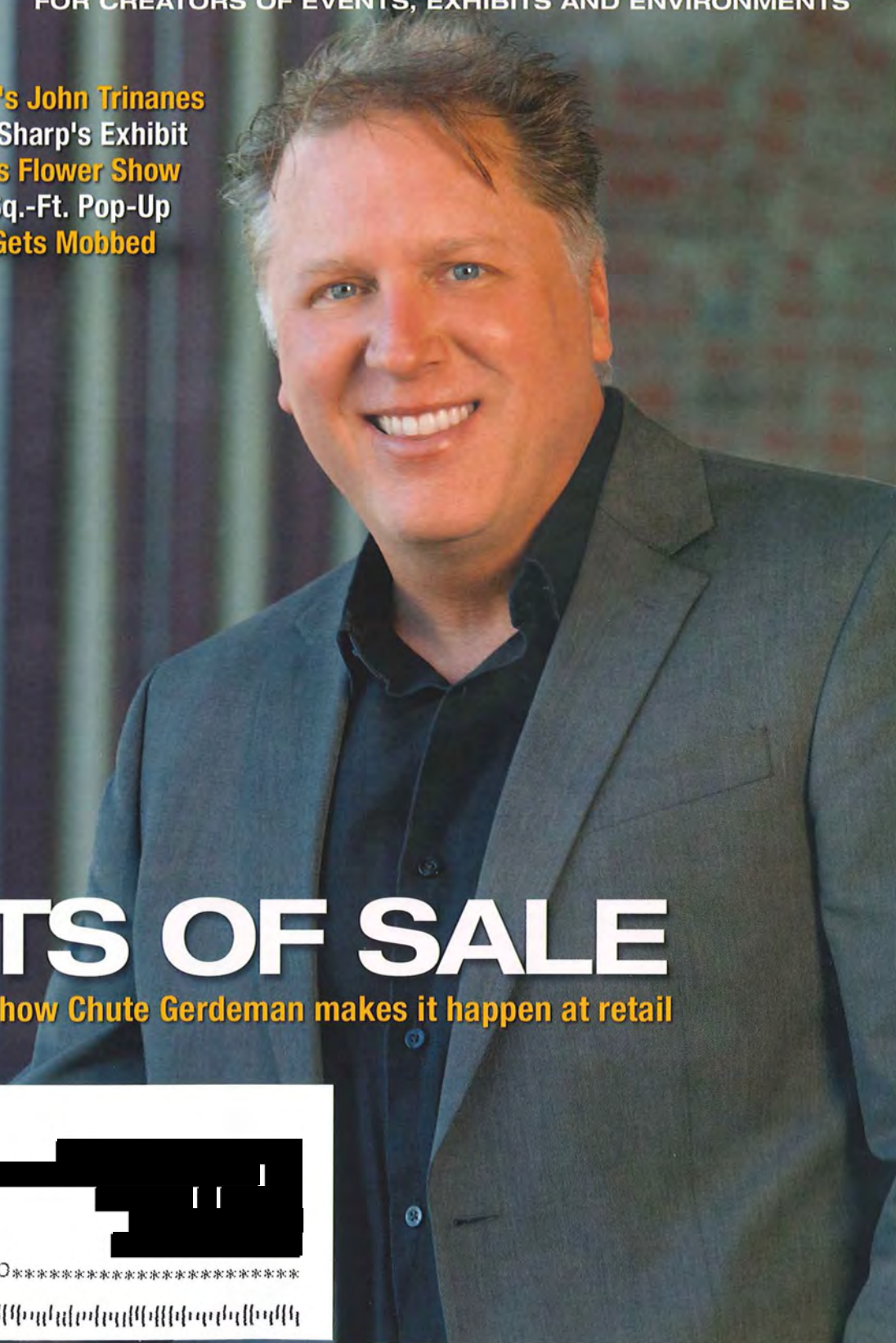
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FOR CREATORS OF EVENTS, EXHIBITS AND ENVIRONMENTS

Q&A: George P. Johnson's John Trinanes
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OnTap

John Trinanés has been at the head of one of the industry's largest creative departments for less than a year, but he's more than ready to face the challenges the future has to bring. With a background in the advertising industry, Trinanés joined GPJ and worked under the tutelage of the venerable Robert Albitz for a few years before taking the creative helm when Albitz retired in 2011.

Trinanés also delivered the keynote address at the 2012 Event Design Summit in Chicago, hitting it out of the park while addressing the challenges facing experience designers and how creative leaders should be handling those issues. We sat down with Trinanés to chat about how his creative team is evolving, what clients expect from designers moving forward and why he'd rather surf to work than walk.



EVENT DESIGN: How are things at GPJ creative and how is your first year at the helm going?

JOHN TRINANÉS: It's been interesting, because I had been the number two creative person here for a couple of years, and I had a wonderful mentor in Bob Albitz. Filling his shoes is a bit intimidating for me, but at the same time I'm very excited to instill my personality into the position. I come from an advertising background, and I'm excited to put my fingerprint on this company, as far as the tonality, the creative voice and fostering the culture of creativity.

ED: What's the focus for your team in 2012?

JT: From a creative standpoint I think the biggest thing we're trying to push is trying to define what GPJ's creative voice is. We have evolved so much in the past three to five years, not only as an industry, but as an organization. I'm challenging our creative leadership to push to a single initiative of defining what is that creative voice and how does that contribute to a culture of creativity.

ED: How has experience design evolved over the past few years?

JT: Our industry has changed so much, and has put so many different demands on creatives. There is a new engagement model out there, and it keeps changing on us. There are challenges that are coming from the brand marketers, because they are speaking to their customers in completely different ways. That includes social media and digital; they are effecting how we do our jobs every single day. And our industry is getting so crowded right now, where we're seeing so many traditional agencies backing into our space and competing for work we used to compete amongst each other for. I don't look at that as a concern, I look at it as an opportunity because I see that brand marketers look at their experiential agency as more of a strategic partner than just a vendor. We're now taking that discussion with them a little further upstream. Now, 10 years ago I think we'd all admit that we were a little further downstream. Now we get to be a part of that creative roundtable at the very beginning. The DNA of our creative studios had completely evolved in a sense that not only do

we have a much more diverse discipline base that's a direct result of the industry evolving on us, but also our creative leadership are being asked to almost evolve beyond 3D.

ED: How are creative roles and responsibilities within your team evolving at George P. Johnson?

JT: We went from our weapon of choice being the hammer, to the hammer and the mobile device. We are now speaking to consumers and attendees in many different ways. We don't hire graphic designers anymore, or 3D designers—we hire experience designers. Everything tracks into thinking experientially. What are the stories you're trying to tell, and what is the discussion you want to have moving forward with that customer? We look for individuals who understand that. It's no longer just about the physical experience, it's about the trans-media experience.

ED: What are clients asking for now that they weren't asking for in the past?

JT: Marketers are very savvy, and they're expecting you to

come in with that solution. In the old days, we used to interpret campaigns into the physical space. Now, we have clients where the point of their arrow is a physical experience that manifests out to the other channels. You have to be much more strategic in thought, where strategy doesn't just inform the creative process, it inspires the creative process. It's really a campaign approach.

ED: What will we be talking about in three or four years when it comes to experience design?

JT: I think that the trans-media discussion will in 18 months become even more important, because it's an opportunity to speak to such a greater audience. It's up to creative directors to up their games to meet those demands. Content is king.

ED: What do you like to do when you have a little downtime?

JT: I surf like a banshee. I'm now in my mid-40s, so I've transitioned from a short board to a long board, which is more of a soulful approach to surfing. I surf pretty much every week, and I travel around with my board. **■**

