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Legacy Rice Server

Q&A with Terry Vine and Lana Rigsby, USA

Terry Vine lives and works in Houston, TX, where he has been a commercial photographer for nearly twenty years. While his advertising and corporate work has taken him around the world and he has won many prestigious industry awards, his personal work centers on black and white studies of the cities and rural areas of Mexico and Europe. In addition to many solo and group exhibitions, Terry's work is in the collections of the Denver Art Museum, Musée de la Photographie à Charleroi, Belgium, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Santa Barbara Museum of Art and also the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art in New Paltz, New York.

Lana Rigsby is principal and design director for Rigsby Design in Houston, TX. She teaches and lectures frequently, and has served as a judge for virtually every major international design competition and exhibition. ■ Lana was co-chair of the AIGA Business Conference, Brand Design, and also chaired the Mead Conference—Design and the Bottom Line—and hosted Mead's landmark 40th Anniversary Annual Report Show. ■ Adweek magazine recently named Lana as its Southwest Creative All-Star. She is a founding member of the American Institute of Graphic Arts' Texas Chapter, and serves as a national director of the AIGA.

Terry Vine and Lana Rigsby have worked together for many years, collaborating on Terry's personal projects as well as some corporate clients. The Imágenes Mexicanas project was never conceived as a promotional piece; instead Terry and Lana thought of it as a work of art and an expression of Terry's vision.

How did the Imágenes Mexicanas project come about?

Terry: *La Vida Tradicional*, (The Traditional Life) as the series was originally titled, started as a purely personal project, a bit of a release from my commercial work, but in many ways an extension of it. Lana and I had talked about eventually doing a piece on the series, and at one point I gave her a set of small prints of the entire series so that she and her staff could have some visuals to start with. I really had no idea what she had in mind, but I certainly knew it would be something spectacular and, as always, unexpected.

I wanted to create an honest, straightforward portrait of the town of San Miguel de Allende in central Mexico and its people. Once I started shooting it was really the personality of the people and the place that came through. Being in Mexico is somewhat of a sensory overload with an incredible mix of sights, sounds, and smells; your senses are alive and in overdrive. I wanted a piece that would be appropriate and effective to send to museum curators, gallery owners and collectors, as well as designers and art directors. This is more than a book of photographs; it activates more than just one's visual senses. Lana created a special book that really captured the essence and experience of being in Mexico.

Lana: The "mission" of this book has its seeds in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's thought that "life is not what one lived, but what one remembers, and how one tells it." We used that idea as a guiding principle for how we, in turn, re-told the story in this book. As the designer, my job was to create an environment for the collection. We included a stylized map of Mexico and referenced each picture's place of origin. We then grouped the photos under themes such as celebrations, diversions, or holy days, and noted the Mexican cities and villages that boast unique happenings in each category. With the book's structure in place, we then began looking for ways to make the "environment" reflect its subject matter.

We wanted to avoid the obvious (metallic inks, translucent papers) and the cliché (scrawled typography, "fiesta" colors). An unexpected solution presented itself in the form of one of Mexico's most ubiquitous objects—the wax-backed paper coasters that populate every bar, restaurant and tienda in the country. Working with a Mexican company that debosses coasters, we created a textured cover that was then hand-stitched onto the book. The simple, inexpensive material

adds a fragile and elegant feel as the cover. We enhanced that preciousness further by housing the whole thing in a flocked clamshell box imprinted with two of the book's most arresting images: a peasant woman viewed from first the front, then the back. The photos have a timeless simplicity to them, so we wanted to find a design and material that was an intersection of that. In collaboration with a studio associate, Raul Pavon, and his family who were living in Mexico, I wrote text describing the purpose and origins of the different rituals and celebrations depicted. Raul then translated the text into Spanish, and both versions are included in the divider pages.

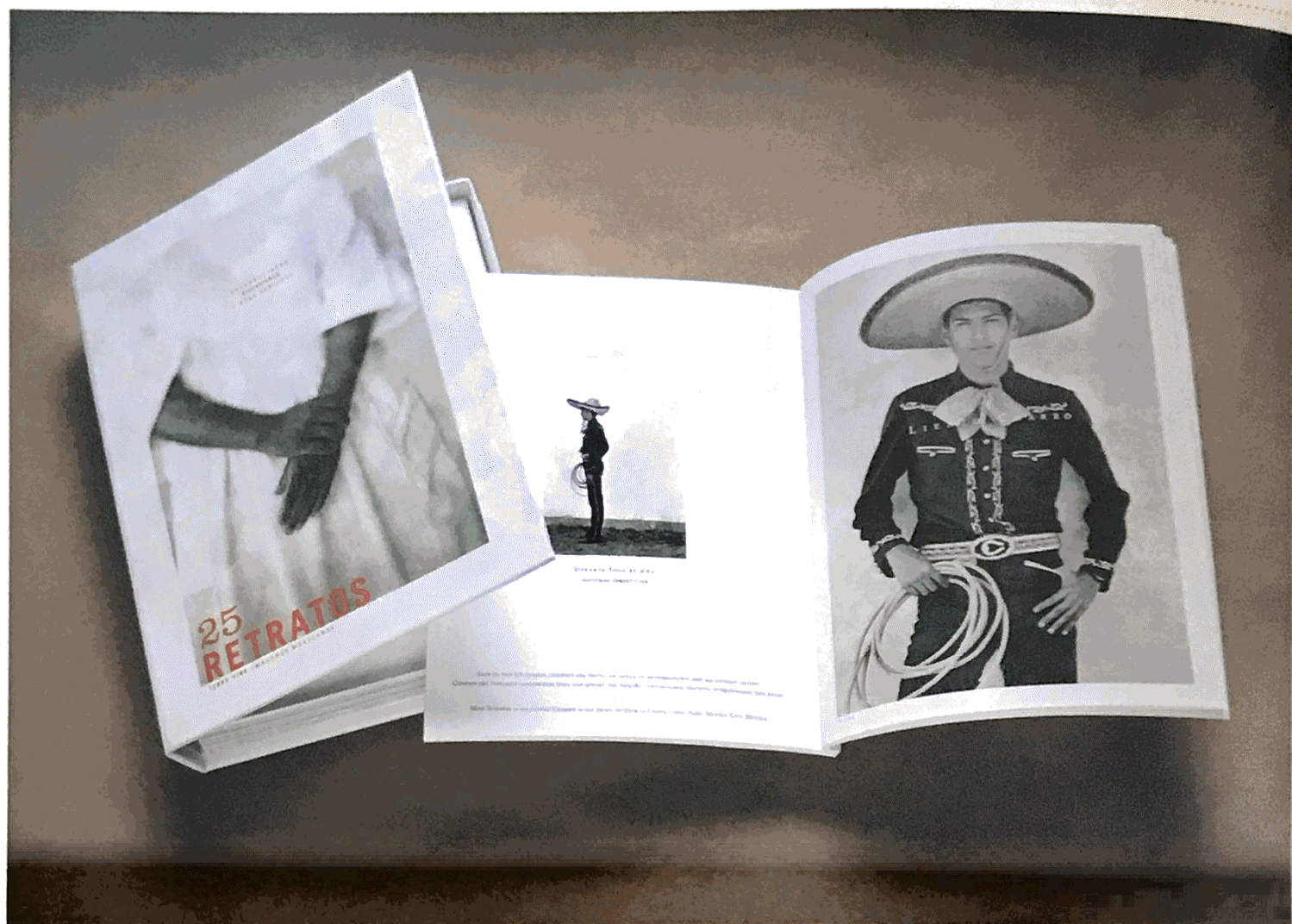
The book was enormously complicated, difficult to produce, and took almost a year from start to finish. It was an intense collaboration between designers, production people, printer, bindery (and yes, coaster-makers). I have to fully acknowledge the hard work the printers and bindery did (Kim Blanchette at H. MacDonald Printing in Vancouver), they went far beyond the call of duty. We gave them things to do they've never done before—a lot of experimentation, time, inventing, and expertise went into it. The result, I hope, is a piece that feels authentic to its subject in every detail, and true to the vision of its ultimate author: Terry Vine.

Terry: The process was unbelievable—they pulled off such superior quality, details, and craftsmanship. We made 1,500 copies, and I signed and numbered each. Both Lana and I thought that was a more special and personal touch. Plus, the response has been wonderful. I send out numerous promotional pieces during the year, and with this one, I was getting thank you letters and gifts back—not like the typical promotional piece. There was an emotional response because it was such a unique product.

Tell us more about yourself and your work, where do you find your inspiration?

Lana: I find inspiration in daily life; it's seldom that I'm inspired by other design work. Not that there isn't great work out there, it's just that for me the fun is in the work, the journey, and not so much in the finished product. I'll hear a story, or read something, and start to think "I wonder how that might LOOK..." Somehow that winds up being incorporated as an idea in a piece later. Ironically, I find inspiration in words a lot more often than I find it in visuals.

Terry: I look for and find inspiration anywhere and everywhere; films, books, magazines and life in general. Inspiration is a funny thing and it changes all the time. I'll look at something that I tore out of a magazine a month ago, or last week—at the time thinking it was absolutely great—and wonder what I saw in it. Others will stay pinned to my wall for ages.



(previous page) Portrait by Loren Brock. (this page, from left) 'The Sword,' San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, 1999. 'Braided Hair,' San Miguel de Allende, Mexico 1999. Photography: Terry Vine. (opposite page) *Imágenes Mexicanas*, 2002. Designers: Lana Rigby and Pam Zuckler of Rigby Design; Photography: Terry Vine; Printing by H. MacDonald Printing. (next page) 'Parroquia at Night,' San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, 1999. Photography: Terry Vine.

What is your design philosophy?

Lana: My design philosophy is to make things as clear as possible, but in doing so, be careful of dumbing it down for the sake of clarity. Life is not always neat and there's something awfully dangerous about design that tries to make it so. I think it was Albert Einstein that said, "things should be as simple as possible. But not simpler."

What is your recipe for a good client relationship?

Lana: Good client relationship: respect the client, and command respect yourself. Know why you're there and do your part.

Terry: I don't feel like there is a specific recipe. A good relationship grows when you respect a person's ability and they respect what you can do. A good relationship comes out of mutual respect.

Lana: It's like a marriage—the most important thing is to marry the right person! The right client understands how powerful design can be and allows you to do your job.

Name three to five designers you most admire

Lana: Frank Gehry, for loosening things up. The Apple guys, for caring about quality even when they can't sell it, then finding that they CAN sell it. Michael Bierut, for knowing that content is more interesting than appearance.

Terry: Photographers whose work I admire: Nadav Kander, Albert Watson, Irving Penn... there are many, but I really admire those whose work walks that fine line between the commercial and fine art worlds.

What are some of your interests, hobbies, or passions?

Lana: My babies, year-old twins Jack and Annie. Fast bicycles on smooth roads, like the one that winds through Beucher State Park between Houston and Austin. Good photography. Good risotto. Handmade boots.

Terry: Spending time with my two-year old son, Beckett.

What directive would you give a student entering the profession?

Terry: The photography world is extremely fluid right now, trying to find its way through the current digital evolution. It's interesting to see how people are responding. Some photographers are embracing it, others shunning it. Some people are responding by utilizing alternative processes, glass plates, cyanotypes, etc., as far from the latest technologies as possible. But I would think that anyone entering the field these days should be immersing themselves in all that technology has to offer and at the same time keeping one foot in traditional techniques.

Lana: For design, it's changed a lot over the years. What students have to look forward to is different now. Technology has replaced much of the production work previously done by entry-level people. Right out of school, you need to be designing. Be aware of that! Where you have to add value is in your thinking: spend time in school learning about what designers are thinking about, immerse yourself in perspectives about design, art, commerce, and stylistic dialogue. Learn how to bring ideas to the process and learn about the major design issues.

If you were given the opportunity to work on a dream assignment, what would it be and why?

Terry: My dream assignment is one which truly mixes art and commerce. The ultimate shoot is a commercial job where they want it to look like a fine art piece; where commercial and fine art becomes one. In the early '90s, I started putting together a portfolio of work I'd shot in Paris. It was the first time I'd actually done more of a personal portfolio and I ended up having an exhibit of the work. Throughout the years, I haven't made a conscious effort to combine art and commercial art—it's difficult—but the personal projects have become some of my strongest work and the pieces that have received the most attention.

What are some of your favorite past creative works?

Lana: Richard Avedon's photo series, "In the American West." He took a concept and didn't romanticize it, but found a place for his perspective. I was so blown away. It opened my eyes in a special way. He proved you can show things as they are, but still find a place for your opinion.

Terry: I was just thinking of that one! It's not very often that a series of work has lived on like that. Richard Avedon's work is profound.

