

# Just because you can doesn't mean you should

**I**n a frustrating way, it's amusing. Occasionally, I'll review a page with a designer and I'll ask: "Hmmm. That's interesting. Why did you do that?"

"Well," comes the response, "It's a neat trick and I thought I'd give it a try."

"In other words, because you can."

"Huh?"

"It's a 'cuzican.'"

"A what?"

"A 'cuzican'—a design trick you use only because you've discovered you can do it."

"Well...uh...yeah."

As design software becomes more powerful—and presses more capable—cuzicans have become more numerous.

Some cuzicans have been around for quite a while, some are not-so-recent arrivals, some still fresh (but there are those who will use-them-to-death in only a few months).

Examples of cuzicans:

**OVALS:** Not as popular now as they were in the early 90s. And they were popular in the early 90s



Go ahead—try to read this caption.

why? Because—for the first time—QuarkXPress made it easy to create ovals.

**GRADIENT SCREENS:** On some pages, the use of a gradient screen can add a touch of elegance, raising the design level of a package from good to magnificent. Unfortunately, those packages are the exception rather than the rule.

**FUNKY FONTS:** Looking for Dom Casual? University Roman? Benguiat? Mistral? You'll find them—and many of their cousins—in newspapers large and small across the U.S. It's ugly but true.

**TYPE OVER PHOTOS:** This is a technique that can be used well—or poorly. Most newspapers seem to prefer the latter. Doubt that? Check the illustration with this column.

**DROP SHADOWS:** Now very popular—because InDesign CS3 has perfected the application of the "soft shadow." Already, this technique is beginning to suffer from overuse, abuse, disuse, misuse...well, you get the idea.

**COLOR:** "If color is good, lots of color is better." Yes? Nope—too much color is just, well, too much color.

**TEXT WRAPS:** These are always popular—and often done poorly. Sometimes the type is too tight to the artwork. Sometimes the type suffers from poor word spacing. A text wrap can help a package—but ya gotta pay attention to the details and take care to do it correctly.

**OUTLINED TYPE:** Gag!

**EXAGGERATED QUOTE MARKS:** Can you say "leisure suit"?

**REVERSES:** Can you say "leisure suit and gold chains"?

Check Ed Henninger's site for details on his newspaper design book!

'**Henninger on Design** is a winner because it condenses all the fundamentals, the rules, the options and the how-to's of newspaper design into a manual that's easy on the eye and mind, and downright fun to use.'

Ken Blum | Black Ink Publishers' Auxiliary

Find out more about **Henninger on Design** by visiting Ed's web site: [www.henningerconsulting.com](http://www.henningerconsulting.com)

**ED HENNINGER** is an independent newspaper consultant and Director of Henninger Consulting.

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