

# Side by Side

By CAITLIN DOVER

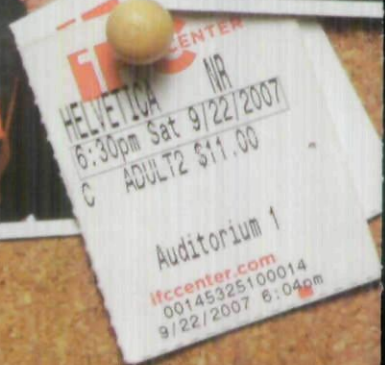
THINK OF FAMOUS COUPLES in the fine arts, and only a few spring to mind—Georgia O’Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz hardly inspire with their example. In fine art, artistic pairings usually begin and end with the lone genius and his muse.

With design, it’s different. Two of the most revered designers of all time, Charles and Ray Eames, were married, and their partnership was integral to their work and their mythology. More recently, Tibor and Maira Kalman (whom we profile on p. 52) set another enduring standard for tandem creativity at their firm M & Co. As we considered whom we’d count among today’s brightest design stars, we found that quite a few come in pairs. Some just share a home and a calling; others share a workspace or even a business. We asked the following couples how their relationships impact their work, and vice versa, and learned a lot about what it means to do laundry, raise dogs, and feed children while you’re also drawing type or art directing a magazine.



For extended interviews with these designer couples, go to

[printmag.com](http://printmag.com)









# Seymour Chwast & Paula Scher

Photographed by REYNARD LI

*How did you meet?*

PAULA: Seymour and I first met in January of 1970 when I was a senior at Tyler School of Art. A publishing art director named Harris Lewine arranged for me to have an interview with Seymour at Pushpin.

*Where do you both live and work now?*

PAULA: I am a partner of Pentagram and work there on Fifth Avenue. Seymour's business is still called Pushpin, and it's on Ninth Street. We live in Chelsea and in Salisbury, Connecticut.

*Did either of you influence the other in your choice of discipline?*

PAULA: I originally wanted to be an illustrator, but I realized, being around Seymour, that I'd never be good enough, so I concentrated on design.

*Do you ever collaborate on projects?*

PAULA: We can't collaborate at all. It's a total disaster.

*What's your favorite thing that you've done together?*

PAULA: We are both good parents to our dogs.

*How does your partner influence your practice?*

PAULA: Seymour always works harder than me, so it keeps me working harder.

SEYMOUR: I do everything Paula tells me to do.

*How are your working lives and home lives integrated? Do you get input from each other on your respective projects?*

PAULA: We have studios at home and in our Connecticut home. We see each other's paintings, and we show each other work when we like something or want input.

*How do you approach design-related decisions that you make as a couple in your daily lives?*

PAULA: Seymour does whatever I tell him to do.

*What's the best thing about being a couple working in design?*

PAULA: When we complain about work, our partner can be sympathetic.







## Min & Sulki Choi

Photographed by SEUNG NA

### *How did you meet?*

**MIN:** We met in 2001 in New Haven, Connecticut, where both of us were graduate students in graphic design at Yale University.

**SULKI:** Min came to Yale in 2000, and I did a year after him. When I was doing my phone interview as part of the application process, Min was one of the people on the other side. That was the first time we spoke.

### *Where do you both live and work now?*

**SULKI:** It's more complicated than it needs to be. I teach full-time at Kaywon School of Art and Design, which is in Uiwang, a small city to the southwest of Seoul. Min also teaches full-time at the University of Seoul. I teach two or three days per week; so does Min. We have our studio in the old city center of Seoul. And we live in Yongin, another city approximately 40 kilometers south of Seoul. Each point is almost unreachable from the other by public transport, so we find ourselves driving all the time.

### *What's your favorite thing that you've created together?*

**MIN:** I am particularly proud of the books we have made together as Specter Press. We always wanted to publish, partly because we wanted to directly contribute to the content and the editing of publications.

**SULKI:** I especially like the invitation poster for the Yale Graphic Design MFA Thesis Show 2002, because it was the first project we collaborated on.

### *How does your partner influence your practice?*

**MIN:** I tend to become immersed in my work, driving things in this or that direction. I'll lose my sense of balance and judgment. Then Sulki will interfere, saying, "Wait! Just stop there and think about where you're going."

**SULKI:** Min is more obsessed with details, and I tend to see the bigger picture. Sometimes Min works like an editor. He reads the *Chicago Manual of Style* just for fun! He's very much a word person, while I am more visually oriented.





## Bryony Gomez-Palacio & Armin Vit

Photographed by MATTHEW GENITEMPO

### *How did you meet?*

**ARMIN & BRYONY:** We first met in 1997 when we were both in college, studying graphic design. We met at a nightclub in Mexico City, where we are from. We had mutual friends and were introduced. We stayed up all night talking until sunrise. Seriously.

### *Where do you both work and live now?*

**ARMIN & BRYONY:** We both work and live together at UnderConsideration headquarters, a 2,000-square-foot campus that houses our office, kitchen, bookcase, bedroom, and two daughters (a three-year-old and a newborn). We spend a lot of time in here, but, surprisingly, we don't get cabin fever. It's also great that you are always around for the cable guy to come over during a 12-hour window.

### *What kind of work do you do together?*

**ARMIN & BRYONY:** We do everything together, pretty much. Since Bryony is a half-time mom, taking care of our daughters in the afternoon, Armin

becomes the consistent, day-to-day face and voice of the operation. All projects that go out the door have to be approved by both of us. For the blogs, we have found a nice split where Bryony does most of the entries on FPO, and Armin does all the entries on Brand New and Quipsologies.

### *How do you each feel your partner influences your design practice?*

**BRYONY:** More than an influence, I would describe our dynamic as a partnership, one where we can be completely honest with each other while voicing our opinions on each other's work. There are no hurt feelings, no bruised egos, no broken shells in the process of a project—just the search for the best possible outcome based on each of our strengths.

**ARMIN:** What I love about Bryony is that I come up with very stupid or money-losing ideas and she never hesitates to say, "That's a terrible idea." And it's always nice to know that you can try different things and have someone who is looking out for you because you have the same interests and goals in mind.



# Zuzana Licko & Rudy Vanderlans

Photographed by AYA BRACKETT

## *How did you meet?*

**RUDY:** Zuzana and I met at the University of California at Berkeley in 1981. Zuzana was studying architecture as an undergraduate, and I was in the graduate program studying photography. We often ran into each other in the hallways, and it didn't take long before we realized that we were two odd ducks, because our real interest was graphic design. Besides that, we were both born in Europe. So we had a lot in common.

## *Where do you work and live now?*

**ZUZANA:** We work together and run Emigre Inc.—just the two of us. We work out of our house in Berkeley and also have a small warehouse from where we ship out Emigre products.

**RUDY:** Our working and home lives are fully integrated. We may be working while the laundry is spinning. Zuzana may be busy with some tricky kerning issues while she has a cake in the oven. The work we create, our photos and ceramics, are all over our house. I often have a

basketball game on in the evening while I'm working on my type-specimen booklets.

## *How do you divide up your work?*

**RUDY:** Zuzana designs and produces typefaces, and she does most of the administrative chores. I design the type specimens and other related design projects, and I handle most of the writing and promotional work. It's a match made in heaven, really.

## *What's the best thing about being a couple working in design?*

**ZUZANA:** I enjoy having our work integrated in our daily lives and sharing the experience. Design is one of the few fields that allows for this. I look forward to our retirement, because I imagine it won't be much different from our life today, except somewhat slower paced.

**RUDY:** Whenever a design magazine is doing a special on couples, we always get invited.





## Stephen Doyle & Gael Towey

Photographed by REYNARD LI

### *How did you meet?*

**STEPHEN:** I was “summoned” to Gael’s office because she was looking for a designer for a book about—get this—weddings! Ugh! Sorry, wrong number! But wait, she’s gorgeous, chic, and gives me a business card with the last name crossed out. She tells me her last name is “Towey” like it used to be. Yes! The EHSS: Ex-Husband Surname Syndrome—an opening! I still have that card and that Rolodex. It’s the only reason I still have a Rolodex.

**GAEL:** Looking for a sensitive and smart designer, I contacted three colleagues who I respected. They all told me to call Stephen, who had just started his own company. He was tanned and in huaraches, and I loved his work and delivery—lighthearted and happy, which was in bright contrast to my state of mind.

### *Where do both of you work and live now?*

**GAEL:** I’m the chief creative officer and editorial director at Martha Stewart—celebrating 20 years this year. We live in a townhouse in

Greenwich Village that we have had the best time decorating (and entertaining in) together.

**STEPHEN:** Gael has a small job working for a stylish woman, and my incredibly influential studio of ten is poised to take over the planet with wit, humor, and the color chartreuse.

### *How does your partner influence your practice?*

**STEPHEN:** Gael taught me (is still teaching me) how to look at photography. This is her visual genius. Before we were married, I was collecting color photographs, but she looked at my collection and set me straight with three little words: “Black and white!”

### *What’s the best thing about being a couple working in design?*

**GAEL:** Making friends! The people, the amazing and incredibly talented people that we get exposed to, the journalists, artists, gallerists, filmmakers, photographers, nutcases—who could ask for more?

**STEPHEN:** The huge, *huge* dollars. I’m just in it for the money.







## ***Ellen Lupton & Abbott Miller***

Photographed by REYNARD LI

### *How did you meet?*

**ELLEN & ABBOTT:** We met as freshmen at the Cooper Union in the fall of 1981. We had all of our classes together that year.

### *Where do you work and live now?*

**ELLEN & ABBOTT:** Abbott is a partner at Pentagram. Ellen is director of the Graphic Design MFA program at MICA in Baltimore and curator of contemporary design at Cooper-Hewitt Museum. We live in Baltimore, and we both travel regularly to New York, where Abbott's primary office is.

### *How do you each feel your partner influences your design practice?*

**ELLEN:** Abbott's work is highly controlled yet poetic and surprising. My career has become more focused on writing and research, but I still do quite a bit of design for my own books and curatorial projects. I look to Abbott to make sure my stuff isn't too crude and obvious.

**ABBOTT:** Ellen influenced me from our very first design classes together. I can remember most of the pieces she did in school because they

pointed to an entirely different way of thinking. We forged a way of working together at a very early stage in our lives, and though we now work together less, we still have those bonds.

### *How do you approach design-related decisions in your daily lives?*

**ELLEN & ABBOTT:** Abbott has primary authority over decorating the house. (Ellen controls the food.) We think couples have less stress when there is leadership in some areas. Why argue about paint colors or chicken recipes?

### *How do you approach your children's connection to the visual arts?*

**ELLEN & ABBOTT:** We don't push art and design on our kids, but we want them to see what it's like to love what you do. Our kids have two working parents who have challenging and rewarding professional lives. If they can find that kind of satisfaction, in any field, then we will be proud and happy.