



FEATURE WELL

Chances are you're familiar with *Coverjunkie*. But, how much do you know about the website's founder Jaap Biemans? He's the art director of **VOLKSKRANT MAGAZINE**. It's ace. So we thought it about time we learnt more about the man behind the blog

INTERVIEW BY: Steven Gregor

What's VOLKSKRANT MAGAZINE?

It's the weekly supplement of the quality newspaper VOLKSKRANT, based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The magazine is widely read. 350,000 copies are distributed with an audience of 990,000 readers every weekend. The newspaper's circulation doubles on the weekend... of course, that's only because of the magazine... ha, ha.

Who's the typical VOLKSKRANT MAGAZINE reader? Urban, open-minded with an above average income. The readers are men and woman alike. VOLKSKRANT is the only newspaper with a growing circulation in the Netherlands.

What's VOLKSKRANT MAGAZINE's size/format? A grand total of... 68-to-100-pages each issue (dependant on advertising). It's 220mm wide by 280mm.

How long have you been the magazine's art director? Since April 2012. Before then, I designed two other magazines at the same time... a weekly called *INTERMEDIAR* and a bi-monthly called *HOLLANDS DIEP*. At VOLKSKRANT, I started with a redesign and this was the first cover that came out (see previous spread)... a fab kick-off because everybody noticed it. You gotta know, VOLKSKRANT usually ran old (often grumpy) faces on its covers. Now, there was this sexual thing popping out from their newspapers. It was hilarious. The photograph was shot for VOLKSKRANT by Corneille Tollens.

Describe your working relationship with the Editor

Everybody knows the Editor/Art Director combo is a very important ingredient for running a magazine successfully. And I struck gold here, ha ha. Really, (Editor) Corinne van Duin's given me lots of freedom and relies on the talent that each person carries. And I can tell... cause I've experienced both worlds. Oh boy, there are some really bad editors out there; those last months at *HOLLANDS DIEP*... tragic. Biggest mistake there was hiring a guy who wanted to do it all by himself, bring in his friends, and did not want to rely on the expertise of others. Finally, they closed that magazine. That was the weirdest thing ever.

Here at VOLKSKRANT, it's the other way around. My editor is very interested in photography, so she's coming up with good stuff that I can use. This also works the other way around, with ideas for articles. We're definitely not sitting on an island; we're constantly feeding ideas to each other. This happens for the whole team. All disciplines are plugging in ideas. I've also gotta emphasise the importance of my Photo Editor. I don't know how it works in the United Kingdom, but in Amsterdam there's this crazy trend to do it without one... that's such a bad idea. I'm glad we have Heike Gulker on board for all her creative craziness.

You've worked with some A-list illustrators, including Andy Rementer, Hattie Stewart and Noma Bar. Are there any illustrators you have not worked with, but who you would love to?

Working with that level of talent is the best part of my job. Those names are category AAA+. It's a bonus, though. It only happens, maybe, a few times a year. It's crazy more magazines in the Netherlands don't use these guys... they're just a phone call away! Andy, Noma, Hattie... they're such nice people! You gotta know, working with artist Benoit van Innis was my goal when I started as Art Director at *INTERMEDIAR* magazine. And this happened with my third cover (pictured, below), so I took it from there. This guy is the genius of all geniuses. He's created like 25-or-so covers for *THE NEW YORKER*. Last I heard, he's now working in another direction and not doing editorial anymore. Thinking about that artwork he created for me, I adore that piece so much. I'd like to have it framed and on my wall. Maybe I should give him a call and ask him again to create new things for VOLKSKRANT MAGAZINE.



But, to be honest, I get so many kicks out of working with new talent from around Amsterdam. I look for relationships with artists, I'm not that one-time-guy... ha, ha. I keep coming back for more. You know, we at VOLKSKRANT carry a lot of work from these three girls, that are so talented... I wanna give a shout-out to Anna Claire de Breij (annecleiredebreij.com) and Robin de Puy (robindepuy.nl). Checkout their portfolios because their work is the best around. And definitely checkout photographer Aisha Zeijpveld (aishazeijpveld.com), she takes portrait photography to the next level. All three lift my magazine with humour and aesthetics.

Does VOLKSKRANT MAGAZINE have a big art budget? Nope, too bad I can't pay everybody what they deserve. Luckily, VOLKSKRANT MAGAZINE is the most-read magazine in the country so all the artists get the exposure they deserve. And when it ends up on the cover, a tiny benefit is that it's gonna appear on *Coverjunkie*, a small blog I'm running. The best thing about *Coverjunkie* is that artists attract some attention in magazine-land and that sometimes results in more assignments. Or so they tell me once in a while.

But, besides all that, I hope big advertising agencies return to print... then art budgets are gonna rise!



What makes a great VOLKSKRANT cover? As I like to say... when you wanna kick it or when it punches you in the face, ha, ha... my *Coverjunkie* line.

I guess for VOLKSKRANT it's more delicate. It's gotta surprise each week. For a king-cover, we need some news, creativity and guts, mixed up in all disciplines... yes, including a helluva complementing headline.

You sometimes post rejected covers on Coverjunkie. On average, how many covers do you mock up each issue? That's different for each issue. Most of the time I try out two or three directions. We work just one week ahead so there's no time for mistakes. I have to make sure I also have a decent cover when a shoot or artwork fails. For example, this one (pictured, left). We'd planned a cover with a portrait of a celeb-writer. But her shoot didn't go very well so we decided to go with her Twitterfeed... cause she's also known as the Twitterqueen of the Netherlands. I had this design running along with the photoshoot so it was easy to switch. Sometimes I think a graphic cover design is more fresh and surprising than lots of photography out there. Am I admitting that sometimes I'm happy when a shoot doesn't go well? Ha, ha, ha.

Do you have an all-time favourite VOLKSKRANT cover? Oh yeah! Created this (pictured, left) recently with Paul Fassem (paulfassem.nl). He's a talented guy and deserves a shout-out. Can't believe he's not working for big titles all over the world, for real. Content-wise he's the best around, his humor is irresistible and his aesthetic's catchy.

This cover was about a big survey that concerned the beauty preferences of men. I showed him this cover with the bellybutton (pictured, far left). I thought it was striking as a start and he completed it by just adding the little guy with the funny detail. It changed the cover in a very funny way and gave the whole survey a witty feel that it needed.

I also have a favourite *INTERMEDIAR* cover (pictured, below top). From 2009, it's about divorce. We reproduced page three on the cover with a ripped effect. And this (pictured, below bottom) is my favourite *HOLLANDS DIEP* cover. I created it with photographers Blommers & Schumacher. It was fun to design covers with a lot of text. **CONTINUES...**



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FEATURE WELL

OK — IT'S BUSINESS TIME. WHICH VOLKSKRANT MAGAZINE COVERS ARE JAAP'S PERSONAL FAVES? WONDER NO LONGER

FACE OFF

There was this crazy image going around on Tumblr. I researched it and discovered the original was from Erwin Blumenfeld, from 1945 or thereabouts. I'd totally forgotten this guy, but what incredible work he created. When you have the chance you gotta check him. He created so many classics. At the same time we were planning an interview with this Dutch actor that's known for his distinguished face so I decided to create this cover as a tribute to Erwin Blumenfeld (with a credit inside).

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

The World Cup Issue is always a treat for me. I'm a big fan of the game and still own the Panini cards I collected as a young kid. We dusted them off and they showed up throughout the whole issue. For the cover we created some new ones with that ace nostalgic feel. The thing that I liked most here is that there are nine logos upfront instead of one.



CRAZY KIDS

This was a whole issue about craziness. So, instead of running the big interviewed guy on the cover, I was looking for a cover that reflected the whole issue. Do you know the little kids game about passing a note with the line: "When you read this you're crazy"? We decided to go with that. It ended up as a two-stage cover with a folded piece of paper on page one and the same piece of paper unfolded, inside the issue, on page three.

PUT AN EGG ON IT

The cover accompanies an article about rebellious kids. The egg on the dad's face has been thrown by his kid. We asked for some volunteers from the office to pose for this. Luckily, photographer Arjan Benning came up with the smart plan to bring some glass before we began throwing the eggs... ha, ha. It ended up becoming something spectacular, I think.

ON THE MONEY

It carried a big interview with our Minister of Finance, Jeroen Dijsselbloem. I sketched a banknote we used in the Netherlands before they introduced the Euro, and illustrated our Minister of Finance. By the way, our original currency (pictured, left) had such an ace design. For that alone we should have never accepted the Euro... ha, ha. **ENDS** volkskrant.nl/coverjunkie.com



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