



Client: Apple Computer, Inc.
Design firm: Apple Creative Services, Cupertino, CA
Packaging team: Tom Hughes, art director; Clement Mok senior designer, illustrator; Ellen Romano, designer; John Casado, illustrator
Client liaison: Steve Jobs I then Apple board and chairman, general manager Macintosh product division

Opposite page, lower left: random sampling of logotype development (note capital I giving way to lowercase i); elsewhere opposite page: very early Macintosh "mark" explorations above; further mark and logotype development; below right: finished packaging for Macintosh dealer starter set with shipping box containing Macintosh (rear), keyboard box (left), "open -me-first" box (front), and "mouse", box (right).

When in-house designers at Apple Computer talk about the company's current, uncluttered identity program, they refer to "the white look." But when those same designers refer to just "the look," they're talking about the graphics program that introduced the Macintosh computer.

This graphics concept—totally different from anything else in computer packaging—was so simple, so engaging, and so right that it has spawned a host of imitators and started to change the look of packaging, not only in computer hardware and software, but also in other high-tech products whose uses are difficult to communicate to consumers through traditional illustration and photography.

The Macintosh graphics combine abstract, child-like drawings of the computer's components in pure bright colors—red, green, yellow, blue and gray—with a handsome logotype in ITC Garamond Regular, optically condensed to 80 per cent and then redrawn to give it a livelier look than its classical "parent." This combination of approachable, deliberately Picasso-like "fun" art with an obviously serious logo presents the user not only with a friendly product, but a friend whom you are supposed to trust.

The design team, with Tom Hughes as art director, began work well over a year before the introduction on January 24, 1984. (Because of the now-legendary "1984" commercial run during the Super Bowl game earlier in the month, the Macintosh launch was probably the most eagerly awaited product introduction in history.) "The packaging evolved out of the product identity, 'the look'

as it was called," says corporate creative director Clement Mok, senior designer and illustrator on the project. The Macintosh is a smallish computer with a paper-white screen, icons to help you choose among functions and a "mouse" that rolls along the desk and allows you to point out your choices. "While it was in development," Mok continues, "we knew Macintosh was a radical departure from industry standards—an easy-to-learn, easy-to-use product for mass consumption. Our assignment was to develop a packaging and identity program that would appeal to "The Rest of Us." To quote Steve Jobs, "It's got to be insanely great! — the best job you've ever done in your life." Jobs, then chairman of the Apple board, was general manager of the Macintosh product division and the computer is acknowledged to be his-baby."

Mok explains the design guidelines (or lack of specific criteria) like this: "Steve Jobs had in mind something very simple, something very different from existing standards, and something with a personality—something that would transcend the technological appeal of the computer." After 10 rounds of comps, Mok reports, "and living with the engineers in the Macintosh division day-in and day-out for months, we were nowhere. The solution didn't come until we realized that those engineers are not technicians, but poets and artisans. It came to us," he goes on to say, "that here were people who spent 90 hours a week at Apple working on Macintosh out of passion and the belief that they can change the world. The engineers were using the technology medium to create art: what they designed is really a new art form—that of the 1980s. It was then we realized



Above: schematics for shipping box— 1) "open-me-first" box, 2) Macintosh, 3) mouse box and sleeves, 4) keyboard box and sleeves; left: Macintosh "look" is extended to promotion for Apple University Consortium marketing program; below: studies of "open-me-first" box and contents.

that an artful depiction of the product was the only right solution to communicate to the world what this product is all about."

Then began an extensive series of design explorations that resulted in seemingly care-free, rough drawings, which nonetheless gave a loose description of each item in each box—the computer with screen, the keyboard, the mouse, the cord, etc. A study of the design evolution reveals that the appearance of quick playfulness in the drawings was the result of many consultations and many changes. The Macintosh "mark" is a composite of the various parts and contains all of the colors used in individual drawings for each part.

The dealer starter set chosen unanimously by the Casebook jurors includes what the designers call the "Open Me First Box," an injection-molded plastic container holding the cord, a user manual, two disks and a tape cassette explaining the system and the MacWrite and MacPaint programs. The manual, cassette and overall explanatory disk bear the main Macintosh mark, while the cord sleeve and the MacPaint/MacWrite disk carry their own specific graphics, as do the boxes for the keyboard, the mouse, and the 10-disk carton, The Macintosh name evolved out of its frequent usage as a code name during product development. It's interesting to note that the spelling remained in question for a while: early logotype explorations capitalize the "I" that ended up lower case. Mok says the design team was never given a budget. Instead, they were told to spend "whatever it takes to do it right." The emphasis on quality prevailed through to the choice of No.1 grade white corrugated board for the mail shipping box, with six-color flexo-webb printing.

The graphics were spun off onto shopping bags, stationery, tags and T-shirts. And, in a more serious application, the "look" was also extended to marketing programs in the education field where Macintosh is the focus, i.e., the Apple University Consortium, all information exchange system for American universities that use the Macintosh as a mandatory part of the curriculum.

First year sales of 250,000 amounted to what Apple called "the greatest first year of any business computer in history." The company says it established the Mac as the third computer standard, along with Apple II and the IBM PC. The first year was just a prelude to the Macintosh Office, introduced in January of 1985 following another teaser commercial during the Super Bowl game. The Office allows up to 32 Macintoshes to be connected with each other, enabling office workers to share information.

It's hard to say whether the Macintosh identity program achieved one of its goals-to get people to think of computers as just another simple tool like a telephone or toaster. But it certainly made an impact on the design community. The Casebook jurors agreed in calling it "an example of a genuinely new approach." As one juror summed up: "These graphics catch you up because they're the opposite of a high-tech approach with all those grids and graphs and lines running through letters. They used a very free line of contemporary art for a very contemporary product of this age and age to come."