

# Vintage Calendar Celebrates Time-Honored Craft

By Kym Conis



A Venetian princess adorned with seven intricate passes of foil is lavishly dressed for the ball; an Australian Marri tree, multi-level embossed, stands crooked in defiance of time; and a Grecian sundial aligns foil stamping, diecutting, and folding in three-dimensional accuracy. What do these three images have in common? They are all extraordinary pages from an award-winning calendar designed and produced by Prism Grafix of Balcatta, Perth, in Western Australia.

Reflections of beauty, tranquility, and exquisite design unfold with each flip of the page as the 2008 calendar transports the viewer to years, even centuries, past. Adding splashes of rich color and dimension to the calendar's printed canvas of vintage scenes, foil stamping, embossing, and diecutting intertwine to celebrate the true splendor of these time-honored crafts.

### Creating the 'Wow' Factor

Fairly new to Balcatta and to Australia in general, the Vaswani family purchased a small finishing business consisting primarily of saddlestitching and film laminating from a local printer in 2003. This finishing company became Prism Grafix. Backed by an extensive 25-year history in manufacturing high-end leather bound books and diaries in Egypt, Prism Grafix soon expanded with larger format film laminating, diecutting, scoring, perfect binding, foil stamping, embossing, edge gilding, folding, and saddlestitching.

So when the company, young in years yet highly experienced, set out to produce a self-promotional piece for the year 2008, it had several goals to accomplish. "The aim of producing a calendar of this nature was to expose the printing, designing, and advertising worlds to the breadth of our capabilities," stated Managing Director Raj Vaswani. "In our area, there are not a lot of companies doing this type of high-end foil stamping and embossing work. We wanted to reach designers to let them know that there is someone out there that can produce this type of quality – that they have a place to turn."

A year prior, Prism had produced an elaborate capabilities brochure for which it won many awards. This time around, the company wanted to create a 'wow' effect that would catch the eye of Prism customers, current and potential alike. "Four-color process really doesn't mean a lot these days unless you add foil and embossing," said Vaswani. "We decided to create a calendar because it is something that is hung up on a wall; and one of this nature is never thrown away. Plus, a calendar is utilized 365 days a year – that's 365 days of marketing."

Prism also aspired to create something more than a calendar – a work of art that people might want to hang on their walls beyond the year's end. So the calendar was designed with the months at the bottom of each page so if desired, people could cut off the months

and frame their favorite design. In doing this, the calendar became an actual showpiece for anyone walking into an office, as each page has something very exceptional to say.

Spearheaded by Sales and Marketing Director Aruni Vaswani, the entire Prism Grafix team worked together, from concept through production, to produce every detail of the design. “We decided to go with a vintage theme,” said Raj Vaswani. “The perception at one stage was that foil stamping and embossing would wither away because it was so expensive; but we’ve proved that wrong. It has stood the test of time. It is a craft that will never die and has only strengthened over the years.”

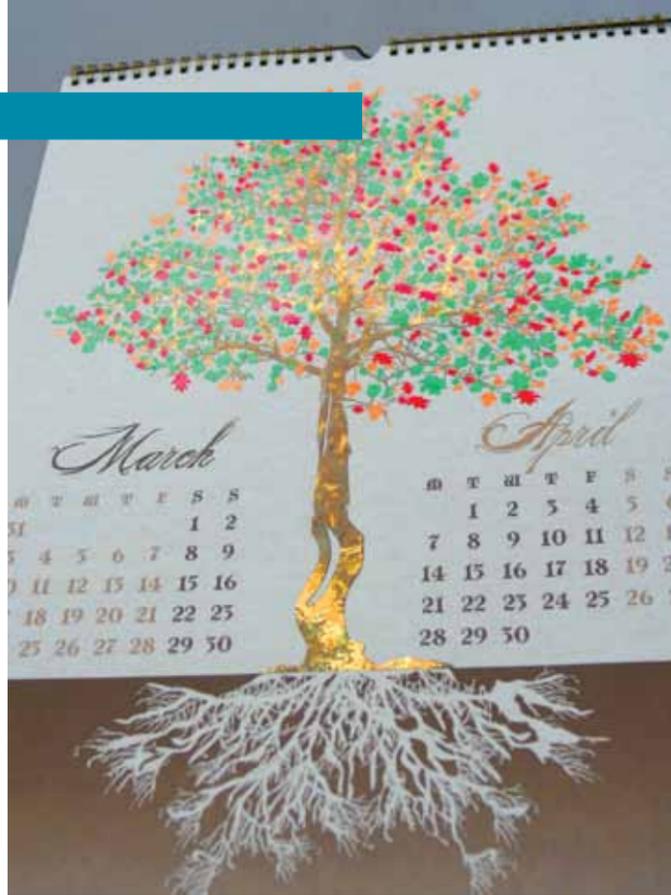
With the calendar’s theme set, the team started the task of designing its intricate pages. Several initial ideas were literally ‘brought to the table’ early on in the process. To choose the designs that would be the most suitable for the graphic processes Prism wanted to highlight, a committee was formed to make the final selections.

In addition to remaining true to its vintage theme, Prism Grafix wanted the foil and embossing effects on each design to produce a different look or feel. To accomplish this, each team member contributed to the process to assure all elements would be in place for production. “Input from production was always on the forefront in designing this project,” said Vaswani. “A good finisher knows that the success of a foiled or embossed product starts from the end and not from the beginning.”

The R&D process did not stop at production. Prism went on to consult with diemakers in Germany (h+m) and in the United States (Universal Engraving) in order to determine the best effects for the designs provided. “There is a fine balance between showing the different effects that can be done with the dies – the foil stamping and embossing – and keeping the cost in mind,” Vaswani explained. For instance, instead of utilizing embossing on each page along with the foil (where dies can get expensive), Prism added diecutting to make the designs more complex.

Prism also conducted testing on a variety of stocks to ensure that the foils to be used, especially the specialty foils, would adhere to the stocks chosen. From a crushed velvet material on the cover to a PVC-coated stock for the lizard to a translucent stock for the sundial, a wide range of stocks, mostly uncoated, were selected to showcase the intricate designs.

The calendar’s first page serves as an introduction to Prism Grafix, its mission, and its capabilities. The two-part page, printed in 4/C and diecut in registration to lithography, sets the tone for the calendar pages that follow, pledging “a commitment to excellence in print finishing and embellishing services while charting a journey of consistent leadership.”



### Producing a Work of Art

The cover, comprised of a crushed velvet-like material (SEF Daniel Chamois), is adorned with a deep, multi-level embossed Mayan calendar, which registers to lithography. The round Mayan calendar, ornately framed by a blind debossed filigree, was glued to the center of the design. Finally, “Prism Grafix” and “2008” were foil stamped in gold metallic foil and embossed with sharp beveled edges. The multi-level embossing die for the Mayan calendar was produced by Universal Engraving, Inc. and the foil from Kurz Transfer Products.

All printing for the calendar was completed on a six-color Heidelberg press at Supreme Printers in Perth, stamping/embossing on a Kluge, and diecutting on a Heidelberg cylinder. Flat stamp magnesium dies and brass embossing/combo dies were utilized throughout the project. All foils were supplied by Kurz Transfer Products and the specialty foils by Crown Roll Leaf.

Combining calendar months, January/February depicts a tranquil scene of an Indian maiden basking in the golden sunlight while she reads the sacred texts of the *Vedas*, the ancient scriptures of the Hindu teachings, in absolute serenity. Down the right side are symbolic designs that originated from the *Vedas*, with a letter written in Sanskrit inside each of the six squares.

Produced in two parts, the top page was printed in 4/C process and then foil accents of metallic gold, copper, and red were added in the next three passes. In the fourth pass, a combination

die and two-dimensional holographic gold foil were utilized to create the maiden’s shimmering necklace. The brass combination die was supplied by h+m. Finally in the fifth pass, a round window was diecut out of the sun, creating a duo-tone shimmer in copper and gold, and the sheet was diecut in a curved fashion to show the foil stamped calendar on the second page.

Attention to every detail is exemplified in this first calendar page by the flecks of gold that flow from the sun and light the *Vedas*. Produced completely with gold and silver foil, the second page was foil stamped in two passes, quoting a poem in Latin and English by Italian poet Filippo Sirotti entitled “In the Time”.

March/April depicts the beauty of a Marri tree, crooked with age yet standing majestic with color. The Marri tree, indigenous to southwest Western Australia, also is known as the Medicine Tree. The reddish gum or ‘kino’ was once sprinkled onto wounds to prevent bleeding or mixed with water and used as a mouthwash or disinfectant. First, the sheets (Lorenzo parchment) were printed in two colors – brown and metallic gold. Next, the trunk of the tree and its branches were flat stamped in gold specialty foil, artfully depicting the kino dripping down the tree. In the following three passes, the leaves of the tree were stamped in metallic green, red, and copper. Finally, the trunk and branches were multi-level embossed in register to the foil with a brass embossing die from h+m dies.

May/June splashes a red lizard with scaly-to-the-touch skin onto the page – a reptile that established itself on earth nearly 300 million years ago. The stock (black Notturmo) first was printed with silver and gold metallic ink. Next, the sheets were flat stamped with a silver metallic foil and then the lizard was glued to the center of the foil stamped area. The lizard was diecut from an acrylic bookbinding material that is PVC-coated called Pelle from Winter. This page was designed to showcase Prism’s diecutting capabilities on difficult surfaces.

July/August unveils several items of antiquity. The key of life is multi-level embossed and demonstrates the company’s ability to register embossing to lithography. The ancient Roman and Greek coins were foil stamped in two passes in a matte silver metallic foil and a gold metallic foil. Next, the days of the month were stamped in two passes of antiqued specialty foil in a bronze and gold. Finally, the four coins were multi-level embossed in registration to the foil.

September/October unveils a stunning image of a Venetian princess. Adorned in glimmering robes and a delicate crown, she bows her head with grace at the royal ball. Produced in seven passes, the silver metallic foil of her dress and gloves was applied first with a flat stamp die. A second blind pass on the dress created the exquisite yet subtle detail on the skirt and bodice. Next, the princess’ skin was stamped in a copper metallic foil and a black metallic foil was stamped with a micro-etched flat stamping die to create the movement of

her hair and the detail on her face. Next, the crown, mask, and bodice were stamped in metallic gold. The mask, like the hair, also utilized a micro-etched stamping die to create detail and dimension in the mask. Similarly, the magenta plume of feathers was stamped with an etched flat stamp die, thereby creating a light breezy feel. The detail on the mask also was flat stamped in magenta. Finally, the months were stamped in a gold metallic foil.

The Venetian princess was by far the most challenging page to produce in the calendar, mainly due to the tight registration of the multiple foil passes, as well as the amount of tonnage that was required for the large surface areas. The jet black stock, a latex-based rubbery material called Plike, also posed challenges in getting the foil to adhere completely. Air entrapment on the large solid areas presented yet another obstacle, as the foil wanted to bubble. This challenge was overcome by cutting brass blocks from the center of the die.

November/December, another two-part page, layered a translucent material (Gilclear) atop a cream stock with a laid finish (Scotia Original) to create a splendid sundial. Printed in 4/C process and then flat stamped in two passes with metallic gold and silver foil, the lightweight top sheets contain diecut windows showing the Roman numerals underneath.



The bottom sheet, also printed in 4/C process and stamped with two passes of foil, has a diecut dial that folds up and slips through the top sheet, creating a 3-dimensional sundial. This page was difficult to produce largely because of the lightweight stock and the alignment challenges brought on by the diecut windows – the top and bottom graphics had to match up perfectly. Vaswani also pointed out that the windows and the dial contain no nick marks. “To ensure that the graphics aligned, we had to run the diecutting and the foil stamping simultaneously. They must work in tandem to guarantee accuracy,” he said.

The final element on the back cover depicts a modern rendition of a Greek 2009 calendar, printed in gold metallic ink and foil stamped in two passes with silver and gold, this time on chocolate brown Plike. The circular calendar with its crisp lines and fine-line reverse outs (with no fill-ins) on the difficult-to-stamp stock provides the perfect culminating touch to an extraordinary project.

### **Gaining Industry Recognition**

Two months (from design to production) and 360 calendars later, Prism Grafix’s 2008 calendar has received compliments and positive feedback from customers, peers, and potential clients. “Many designers have been amazed at the effect that these processes can have on the printed sheet,” said Vaswani.

Recently, the self-promotional calendar won a Gold Leaf Award (calendar category), as well as an Honorable Mention (best of show), in the Foil Stamping & Embossing Association’s 2007 Gold Leaf Awards Competition. Greeted with praise from industry peers, Raj and Aruni Vaswani traveled to Scottsdale, Ariz. for the FSEA national convention to receive these awards of excellence.

Additionally, the calendar has received several gold awards in the 2007 Western Australia PICA (Printing Industry Craftsman Awards) competition, including a Best of Show; a Product of Excellence and Award of Recognition in the Binding Industries Association 2008 Binding Awards; a silver award for self-promotion from the 2008 National Printing Awards (Australia); and just recently, two Benny Awards from the Premier Print Awards, sponsored by PIA/GATF.

Currently working on an idea for the 2009 promotion, Prism Grafix would not divulge any hints as to what’s on the board next. However, one thing is for certain. With the strength of its 18 team members working toward a cohesive vision, the 2009 piece will once again demonstrate excellence and integrity from a print finisher distinctly committed to its craft. ■