

# 'Clear' Creates Striking Impact

By Kym Conis

The number of new book titles entering the market each year is staggering. Fiction titles, the leading category in 2007, was up 17 percent from 2006 with a total of 50,071 new fiction titles introduced in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Along with these statistics, consider that on average, a bookstore browser will spend only 8 seconds looking at the front cover and 15 seconds looking at the back cover.<sup>2</sup>

As a publisher, getting a book to stand out on the shelf amidst a sea of competing titles is crucial to the sale of a book. Even with best-selling authors and popular book series, the use of value-added decorative processes delivers the most impact, successfully capturing the consumer eye. However, as the use of metallic foils, embossing, and shine continues to set the standard, particularly with hardback book covers, designers look for unique ways not only to draw attention but also, to get their audience to pick-up the book and make a connection.

From large to small runs, the use of clear holographic foil, film laminates, and coatings to highlight or create an image is a distinct, refreshing way that designers are turning heads. From fiction to non-fiction, educational to children's books, 'clear' is creating a striking impact.

## Pandora's Daughter

A gold winner in the 2007 Foil Stamping & Embossing Association's Gold Leaf Awards competition, the dramatic book jacket with its shards of broken glass elicits intense intrigue and unrivaled suspense. Murder? Mystery? Romance? What lies within the pages of *Pandora's Daughter* is anyone's guess – a clever marketing technique that helped place the fiction novel in the #1 spot on the bestseller lists for the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Entertainment Weekly*.

Produced by Lehigh Phoenix, Hagerstown, Md., and published by St. Martin's Press, the striking book jacket combined 4-color process with clear holographic foil, embossing, spot UV coating, and matte film lamination to create a unique, 'have to touch it' cover. As this was the first book that

best-selling author Iris Johansen published with St. Martin's Press, the publisher set out to create a cover concept that was fresh and bold, but wouldn't alienate the author's fans.

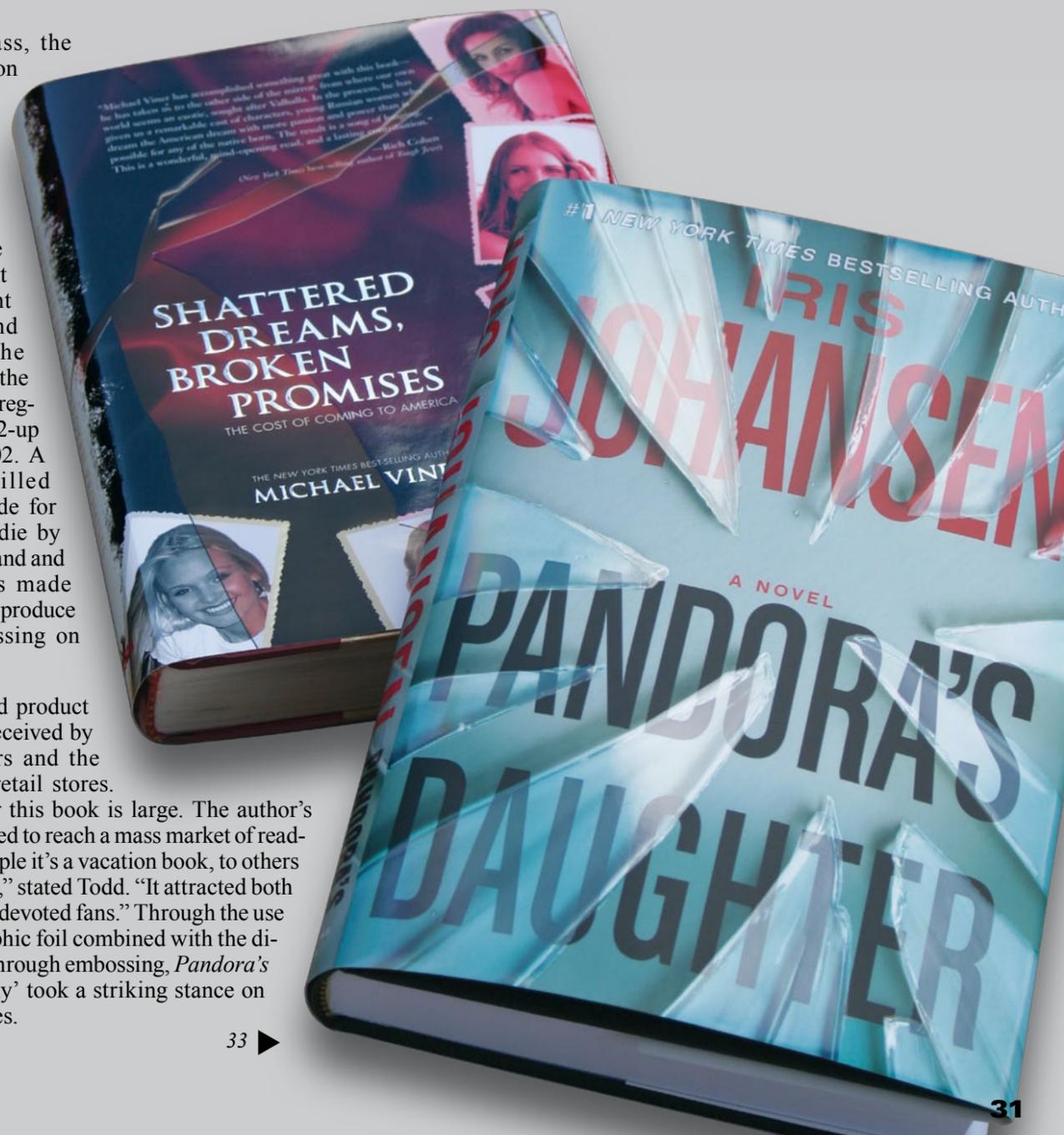
Typically, as with almost all thrillers in the fiction category, a vast majority of the readership is female. Contrary to most of Johansen's previous covers that depicted either action scenes or people, *Pandora's Daughter* sought to pare down the illustration to a more simple, eye-catching element. In this way, the jacket now elicited an air of mystery and intrigue without divulging the contents within – an enticement neither female or male fans could resist.

According to Senior Art Director Jerry Todd, Mass Market Division, St. Martin's Press, "The illustrator and I came up with the cover image by simplifying all the other ideas that were suggested." Originally, the cover design was to be a glass box sitting on top of the type. "The broken shards of glass were a great way of portraying danger and excitement while creating a more original way of producing the final cover." After asking around and looking through Lehigh Phoenix's Look Book (capabilities brochure), the clear holographic foil was the perfect decorative process to imitate glass and add a new level of interest to the final jacket. The design team also felt the clear foil was a look not over-used and therefore, would make the cover pop with even greater impact.

Production of the 500,000 book jackets ran smoothly at Lehigh Phoenix. The covers were printed in 4-color process (2-up on 23x20.5" 100# C1S stock) on a 6-color 27" Akiyama conventional press. Next, shards of glass were flat stamped with clear holographic foil from Crown Roll Leaf on a Bobst 102 foil stamping/embossing press. In the third pass, the sheets were matte laminated with a polypropylene film on a GBC Cyclone film laminator. The sheets were laminated for protection of the foil, as well as for durability. Additionally, matte film was utilized instead of gloss to create a greater contrast between the shards of glass and the rest of the image.

In the third pass, the pieces of glass on both the front and back were spot UV coated on a 40" Steine-mann Hibis 104. The UV coating registered to the foil on the front and to the print on the back and spine. Next, the glass shards on the front cover were register embossed 2-up on the Bobst 102. A magnesium-milled master was made for the embossing die by Anderson Vreeland and then duplicates made from the mold to produce the 2-up embossing on press.

The finished end product was very well received by both the readers and the buyers for the retail stores. "The market for this book is large. The author's books are intended to reach a mass market of readers. To some people it's a vacation book, to others it's a nice escape," stated Todd. "It attracted both new readers and devoted fans." Through the use of clear holographic foil combined with the dimension added through embossing, *Pandora's Daughter* 'clearly' took a striking stance on bookstore shelves.



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## Shattered Dreams, Broken Promises

The use of decorative foils and added-value processes by no means is limited to fiction. The non-fiction title *Shattered Dreams, Broken Promises* by bestselling author and producer Michael Viner chronicles the stories of several Eastern European women who look to escape their harsh lives for the American Dream. Often faced with a very different reality than what they had sought, their dreams are shattered, time and again.

As a silver winner in the 2007 Foil Stamping & Embossing Association's Gold Leaf Awards competition, the book jacket dramatically depicts this pain and debasement through the image of broken glass – artfully created through the combination of gloss film lamination, matte coating, and deep embossing.

Produced by Scarab Printing Arts, St. Charles, Mo., the book jacket design provided a great subject for the illusion of glass. According to President/CEO Greg Greenwald of Scarab Printing Arts, "Little pre-testing was needed, as all of the components were familiar elements with which to work. However, pre-production conversation did exist as to whether the illusion of the shattered window pane could be

carried off?" To capture this illusion with the greatest impact, several precautionary steps were taken in the design and pre-production stages.

First, because the glass portion of the book jacket was to cover a large area, the embossing dies were made extra deep (.035") so as to exaggerate the broken, jagged appearance of glass. "Additionally, concern was expressed by our customer regarding the contrast between the areas on the jacket where the matte coating and gloss film lamination ran through some of the photos of the women," said Greenwald. "To alleviate this concern, the designer (Sonia Fiore, Phoenix Books) put a black key-line through three photos where the matte coating, shiny film lamination, and embossing met to help with the delineation."

Finally, three photos had a halftone/duotone effect applied to them to help further portray the illusion of the shattered glass (and promises). "The silver foil, with its opaque characteristics, draws the reader's eye back and forth between the text matter, the shattered glass illusion, and the girls' pictures," stated Greenwald. "The embossing of the text on the jacket face added dimension."

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The book jackets were printed in 4-color (2-up on 23x29" sheets of 80# C1S litho label) on a 6-color Heidelberg CD press with a coater. In the second pass, the sheets were gloss film laminated on a GBC laminator. The gloss of the film served as the base for the glass illusion and the film itself made the jacket more durable. Third, the sheets went back to the Heidelberg 6-color to be spot matte varnished, thereby providing sharp contrast between the assimilated glass and the rest of the cover.

In the fourth pass, copy on the front and spine was flat stamped (2-up) with metallic silver foil from Nakai International and copper stamping dies from Clodfelter Engraving. The registered embossing of the copy and glass was accomplished in one pass on a Kluge 30" vertical press, utilizing magnesium embossing dies with counters (also provided by Clodfelter Engraving). Finally, the sheets were trimmed to size.

Overall production of the run (7,725 jackets) took only five days. "We literally were making foil and embossing dies while the job was being printed, laminated, and matte varnished," said Greenwald. This would not have been possible if not for the communication that transpired in the pre-production stage.

"I've always been a believer that good design makes for good results. This piece validates my theory," stated Greenwald. "The illusion could never have worked without the elements of film laminating, embossing, and matte etching. Photoshop techniques would have looked cheap and would have made the designer look like she was 'trying' to do something."

According to Greenwald, feedback on the sales of the book was extremely positive. The *Shattered Dreams, Broken Promises* book jacket dispels the popular axiom 'you can't tell a book by its cover,' as it succinctly sets the stage for the book's shocking narratives. Larry King states in his review, "(The book) will forever change the way many of us perceive women of the former Soviet Union. Hypnotic and riveting." And like the unsettling stories that lie within its pages, the dramatic illusion of shattered glass on the jacket makes an impression equally as compelling and unforgettable. ■

**References**

<sup>1</sup> *Bowker*, May 28, 2008, [www.bowker.com](http://www.bowker.com)

<sup>2</sup> *Para Publishing*, [ww.parapub.com](http://ww.parapub.com)

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