

Club of Amsterdam

## the future of Creative Agencies

February 2009



The world is changing. Some ask for change - some try to avoid it. Media is obviously changing and so will creative agencies.

What is a creative agency? Creative agencies work in different fields: From architecture to advertisement, from film to web - all with the shared scope to use creativity to create business for clients.

A definition can be that a creative agency has to create formats, messages etc. that differ from established communication methods. The agencies use creativity to advise clients on how to reach their goals.

Creativity is a hot topic. Cities consider it essential to support creative industries because it stimulates the development of a city and attracts quality companies as well as people.

The first creative agencies were usually linked to a person, the one designer - the one name. Most agencies therefore worked along the vision of this individual designer(s). Agencies however have grown over the last years and the founding fathers have left. You can see that more and more agencies are now built round shared values or concepts, rather than around a person. One of the questions is how this will evolve in the coming time.

Another question to address is the role of the client. Clients are becoming more and more professional, more and more creative functions will be part of the corporations itself. How do you connect as agency and how do you add value? Everyone is creative. Or not? A step further will be the influence of crowdsourcing, what if creativity does not start with a vision of an entrepreneur or company, but with an individual? The co-creating agency, enabling customer advocacy, vendor relation management?

How is the agency organised? Is there a smaller basis in the agency that works more and more with a flexible workforce with specialists that work independently? At what stage is the agency no agency anymore? What is the balance between their own vision and the workforce? Do we move to bigger agencies - more full service or do we tend to smaller focussed agencies that work together in networks?

Is the agency more and more a producer of the products or only an advisor and project organisation. And what if it is producer, and even manufacturer?

► [Paul Hughes](#), Strategic Director and Partner, Lava graphic studios, Coach to the Creative Class

### Design for change

The future of the creative agency is to be just that, creative. Yet when one analyses the outputs of most agencies the work often is only creative at the beginning of the process and then it becomes focused on consistency. Now indeed consistency is needed to build brand recognition however a brand can only be kept alive through change. Creatives must work to manage this paradox of creating consistency AND change. In a world that will become every more connected and diverse it is only this balance that will achieve success. We must design for change.

► [Jann C. de Waal](#), Managing Director, Info.nl

### **A new breed of creative agencies**

Jann de Waal will look into the rise of new breed of creative agency where technology is part of the output and therefore part of the creative process. The most creative online products are not initiated within traditional creative agencies.

► [Robert Marijnissen](#), Researcher

### **The city as a creative agency**

We live in a world of creative everything. Every city is trying to be creative. But what makes a city creative? The answer seems easy: only people can be creative, so to be creative a city needs creative citizens. Psychologists suggest that everyone has inherent creative skills, but only very few know how to exploit them. Is it the same with cities? The creative citizens are already there, but cities just don't know how to develop an environment that supports creativity. How can cities act as a creative agency, turning cities into creative (work)places.

► [Marlon Heckman](#), Founder, Strategy Director, Plain

### **what you C is what you Get**

Companies are in desperate search for sustainable competitive advantage in a world that is hyper competitive, uber-dynamic and soaked of media. The traditional media mix no longer offers an effective platform for differentiation. However, Plain believes there is one ultimate and evident approach for sustainable differentiation: getting closer to the end-customer. This might sound corny, but the truth is that the bulk of marketing communication concepts is created in isolation of customers or fundamental customer insights. A real and thorough orientation on the customer might urge companies to adapt or re-invent their propositions, way of interaction, positioning and sometimes even their entire business models. It utterly demands for a central service or experience concept that aligns all marcom activities with the fundamental needs and wants of customers. Plain furthermore advocates that the strategic use of interactive media is pivotal within a more customer-centric approach. Plain will conclude its contribution with a projection of the different consequences of this line of thinking for the creative discipline and industry.

19:00 - 20:00

**Introduction** by our Moderator

► [Seth van der Meer](#), Creative Director, Sandfire b.v., Chairman, NLGD Festival of Games

### **Part I:**

► **Paul Hughes**, Strategic Director and Partner, Lava graphic studios, Coach to the Creative Class  
**Design for change**

► **Jann C. de Waal**, Managing Director, Info.nl

**A new breed of creative agencies**

► **Robert Marijnissen**, Researcher

**The city as a creative agency**

► **Marlon Heckman**, Founder, Strategy Director, Plain

**what you C is what you Get**

20:00 - 20:30

Coffee break with drinks and snacks.

20:30 - 21:15

**Part II:** Open discussion



### **Paul Hughes**

Strategic Director and Partner of Lava graphic studios  
Coach to the Creative Class

Paul Hughes left the rolling green hills of his native Ireland, shortly after completing his studies in Visual Communication, and arrived in the distinctive flat planes of the Netherlands, where he has worked in the creative industries for over 12 years.

Currently, he is based in Amsterdam where he is a strategic director and partner of *Lava graphic studios* and since 2005 he has consulted with *Design Machine* in New York.

There is an emerging group of people who have become a key driving force in economic development that *Richard Florida* calls the *Creative Class*. These people face new challenges, have new responsibilities, and require a skill of life-long learning. Hughes is an active **coach** to people who interact with, or act within, this Creative Class on an individual and team level. Coaching is always tailored to the needs of a client and training is always offered on an organizational specific request. Hughes has offered trainings within a wide spectrum of organizations, including the real estate industry, the academic sector, the financial industry, and the design industry.

Additionally Hughes is a **trainer** on the subject of *Unpacking the Creative Process*. Creative processes need not be haphazard or questionable procedures; rather, creativity can become deliberate and effective procedures. This deliberate approach to creativity and innovation is captured in what he calls *Design Thinking*.

Hughes has additionally held trainings at a variety of institutes in Europe and worldwide, including: *School of Visual Arts New York*, *Parsons School of Design New York*, *New York University*, *The Fashion Institute of New York*, *University of Arts Vilnius (Lithuania)*, *The National College of Art and Design Dublin (Ireland)*, *Hojer College of Visual Communication (Denmark)*, *Bergen National Academy of the Arts (Norway)*, *University of Science & Technology Islamabad (Pakistan)*, *Kyoorius DesignYatra Goa, (India)*, *Hallo Academy Amsterdam*, *Willem De Kooning Academy Rotterdam*, and *Eindhoven Design Academy*.

Many institutes have also called upon his knowledge as a **jury member** including: *Yale University (USA)* academic evaluations, *Print magazine interactive annual (USA)*, and *Vilnius European Capital of Culture 2009 identity consultation (Lithuania)*.

Additionally Hughes has been called upon as a **moderator** for a variety of events including: the *Alliance Graphique Internationale 2007* event ([www.bno.nl/unknownland](http://www.bno.nl/unknownland)), a variety of events in Amsterdam for *Creating Brands*, *Brand Genetics*, and the *Design Management Network*, and recently an international design event in Goa, India, *DesignYatra* ([www.designyatra.com](http://www.designyatra.com)).  
[www.lava.nl](http://www.lava.nl)



### **Jann de Waal**

Managing Director, Info.nl

From 1998 on Jann is the Managing Director of Info.nl, one of the oldest Dutch Internet Agencies. Info.nl is a full service internet agency that is designing, developing and implementing online services for several large customers in the financial and publishing industry. In 2008 Info.nl has been chosen, by professionals in the branche, as full service internet agency ranking 1st in know-how (the Emerce top-100).

Jann is also the founder and chairman of PIBN (Dutch Association of Full Service Internet Agencies).

After receiving his Master for Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the University of Delft, Jann started his career as a navigator for Offshore Racing. In the following years Jann has worked in a variety of functions in the IT-industry before he started Grey Interactive in 1994, which he left for Info.nl in 1998.

For more information about Jann please go to: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/janndewaal>  
[www.info.nl](http://www.info.nl)



**Robert Marijnissen**  
Researcher

Drs. Robert Marijnissen (1957) has more than 20 years of experience on the interfaces between art, culture, art management, leisure, research, urban and economic development. Both as a commercial consultant and as a civil servant.

As a researcher he will work the next three years (2009-2011) on his thesis, titled urban policies for the creative industries, the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area in an European perspective.

He was involved with development and implementation of the policies for the creative industries in the City of Amsterdam (2002-2008). He contributed to the 'Long-term vision on culture, Amsterdam 2015', the cultural plans (Kunstenplan) for 2005-2008 and 2009-2012, the Programme Creative Industries 2007-2010 and has worked for Creative Cities Amsterdam Area (CCAA).



**Marlon Heckman**  
Founder, Strategy Director, Plain

Marlon Heckman is strategy director and founder of the new interactive agency Plain. Marlon has been working in the marketing communication industry for more than 10 years. As an economist he started his career at the strategy department of one of the major domestic energy companies Nuon. After 5 years he switched from the energy sector to the financial sector, starting the Internet venture TBM, combining the forces of Amsterdam Exchanges and the regional newspaper publisher Wegener. He continued his career in the interactive industry as strategy director at Clockwork and later on strategy director at his own cross-media company Fitzroy. Plain is the latest initiative and aims to be a new kind of agency, assisting its clients to serve their customers with superior customer experiences. In order to do so, companies must orchestrate their activities over the various media and

channels on the basis of a central service or experience concept.

[www.plain.info](http://www.plain.info)



**Seth van der Meer**

Creative Director, Sandfire b.v.

Chairman, NLGD Festival of Games

Seth van der Meer is passionate about how technological advances have a changing impact on people's behaviour. He has been online since 1992 and has never logged of since.

In his work at Sandfire as a creative director, he has been on the forefront of spotting trends and creating new propositions for banks, telecom providers, property investors, accountants and health care institutes.

Another passion he has been enjoying even longer is video games. Currently Mr. van der Meer is Chairman of the Board for one of the largest European Game Industry conferences, the NLGD Festival of Games.

[www.sandfire.nl](http://www.sandfire.nl)

[www.nlgd.nl](http://www.nlgd.nl)