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Society of Design presents Modern Dog at the Pennsylvania Academy of Music

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Designers Robynne Raye and Mike Strassburger of Seattle's Modern Dog firm came to the American Academy of Music in downtown Lancaster, Pa., Mar. 18. Penn State Harrisburg's Society of Design sponsored the event.

Modern Dog signed copies of their book *Modern Dog 20 Years of Poster Art* in the academy lobby. Designers, students, and

the curious walked about enjoying cookies and coffee, as well as the excitement of the event itself. Around 200 people showed up to the event according to Professor Craig Welsh, faculty advisor to the SOD.

"I've seen their work but didn't know it was them. They're a renown design firm," said Communications Major Hannah Moyer, 21.

"It's really exciting," said Communications major Gunnar Wray, 27. "I like the products they work on. They're Funky. They have a good sense of humor."

Welsh opened the presentation portion of the evening with club

business. Noteworthy items included the "thank you" card charity fundraiser, the "Keys for the City" Lancaster design event, and the SOD night at Isaac's on Mar. 18 from 5-9 pm.

With business covered, Welsh introduced the multiple award-winning duo of Robynne and Mike.

"Normally people don't believe us when we say we sucked," said Robynne as she brought up power point slides of the groups early portfolio. Mike quickly agreed as the images were displayed.

"And you're gonna feel good," he said. "This is our portfolio work, the cream of the crop."

The two joked and cringed at their mediocre work as amateur designers. In 1987, Raye and Strassburger took their talents and formed what is currently Modern Dog Design Co. They claim it was to tide them over until they both found real jobs with a firm. That was more than twenty years and several awards ago.

"Our big break came in 1989 with K-2 snowboards," Raye confessed. "It was a complete accident. When we called, they thought we were someone else."

An accident that turned into a nearly \$4 million account and a reminder that one has to make opportunities and take full advantage of the situation.

Blue Q, a product manufacturing company operating out of MA, became Modern Dog's next big client. Noted for their "zany" and diverse product lines such as Dirty Girl Bubble Bath and Naked Men in Oven Mitts refrigerator magnets, Blue Q was perfectly suited to the often humorous styling of Modern Dog.

As Raye and Strassburger continued their presentation, the audience soon learned that the client relationship would take an unusual twist in 1998. Modern Dog would get royalties for their campy product designs and ideas. When the duo agreed that Q's "Wash-O-Matic" line would fail as it was, the owners of Blue Q asked for design firm's thoughts on a replacement body wash.

Today the Blue Q/Modern Dog partnership has yielded such classic items and the Cat Butts line of air fresheners and magnets that have grossed over \$5 Mil. Also of note are the Mullet line of products ranging from gum and towels to stickers and even body & car wash.

"Strong enough for the car, yet gentle on the nards," read the car wax scented body & car wash.

"It's looking at everyday things that you don't normally think about," said Mike as he switched the discussion to how the firm finds ideas for their work.

Mike and Robynne finished the formal part of their presentation by announcing the design products available through their online store at store.moderndog.com and the recently purchased klickymart.com. A music montage of their numerous music posters finished the power point show.

Before the evening came to end, both Mike and Robynne took questions from the audience and rewarded those asking with packages of Blue Q products. Perhaps the best question came from an anonymous design student. How do you get past your insecurity as a designer?

"One of the neat things I've got to do as a designer is meet most of the greats in the business," answered Robynne. "They are all insecure. I think to be insecure about your work is normal. I think the day you think you're the s**t, it's over. Insecurity is a really good thing. Anyone who creates takes a big risk... you are revealing yourself."

"If you weren't insecure," added Mike, "I would be worried."

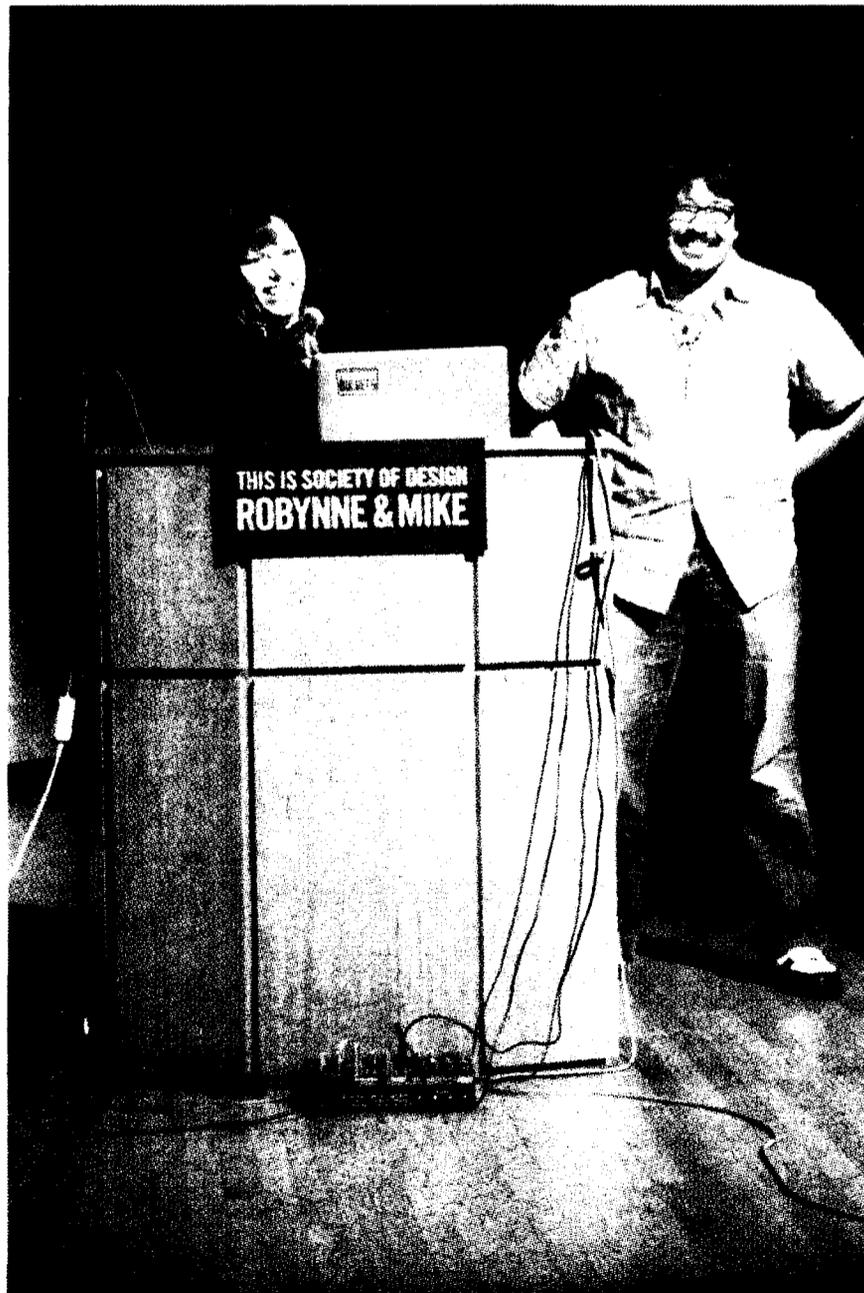


Photo by Jenna DeNoyelles/ The Capital Times