

REPRESENTING LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT



TEXT BY BIANCA ZEN
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ANNA GOODSON MANAGEMENT

ANNA GOODSON

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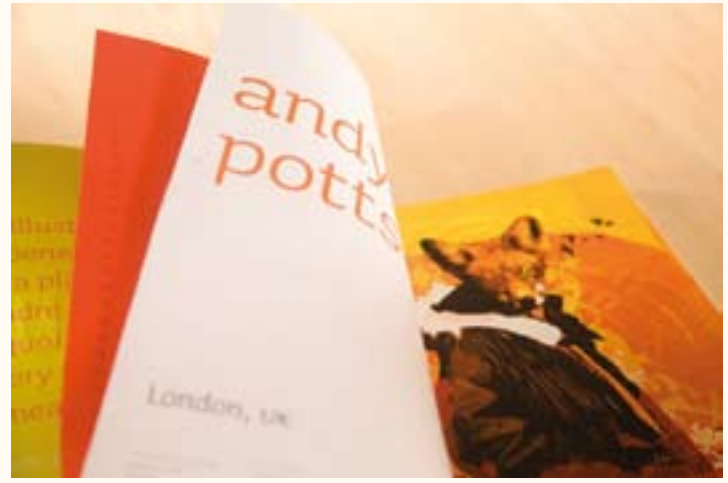
Anna Goodson is probably one of the toughest and laborious women I have ever met. Her drive for success is impeccable and through health and illness her devotion for her agency seep through continents.

Setting up her illustration agency back in 1996, it was not a bed of roses for her then. Like how Coco Chanel set her foot into the fashion industry by being a milliner to the women in the basement of her lover's apartment, Anna's office was in the second bedroom of her apartment. She faced a brick wall everyday. She cold called everyday, rain or shine. From one office to another, her request to represent an illustrator was turned down like a Jehovah's Witness in Singapore.

The rejection did not deject her of hope and faith even when a zero nearly visited her bank account. She survived on cans of soups each time she visited her parents. They would also supply her with toilet rolls. Her office equipment comprised of an old Motorola flip phone that must have weighed 3lbs, a white & black 150mb Mac computer and a desk she bagged from a garage sale. What she has armed with her was not the sad things one would classify as assets but the most valuable thing to anyone anytime. She has chutzpah(!) and drive.

She lived through this sad story but her worst times are only a turn to her long road to success. Those moments built her strength, patience and conviction and became her teacher of life. All she knew about the business was what she had seen on TV in a show called "Thirty Something."

"Chutzpah" just got a new owner. And her name is Anna Goodson.



AGM promotion images

Hi, Anna, please introduce yourself to Asia.

Hi Asia, my name is Anna Goodson and I am president of Anna Goodson Management (AGM), an innovative, boutique-style agency serving the global marketing needs of the visual arts community.

You were from an advertising background. Tell us more about Anna Goodson, the executive of advertising, then.

When I first started, I was hired as a coordinator for a mid-size agency here in Montreal. I really didn't know anything about advertising.

All I knew about the business was what I had seen on TV in a show called "Thirty Something." It was a cool TV show about a group of friends all in their 30's and most of them worked in advertising. It looked like so much fun that I knew that that is what I wanted to do. (Of course I did not have any formal experience.) I saw an ad in the local paper for the job and I applied, they hired me right away. On my first day of work, I remember I got all dressed up; I was to assist one of the VP's at the agency. When I got there, they told me that I had to empty one of the offices from one office to the other. I spent the whole day carrying boxes around. I think "coordinator" was another term for "gofer". After about several months I quickly moved up and was asked to assist on one of the company's big accounts. Not too long after that I ended up handling the client all by myself.

Let's just say that I sprinted up the corporate ladder. It was not long before some of the other coordinators were working for me. I was just crazy ambitious even back then.

Your family has been a generation of businessmen and businesswomen. You mentioned once that you have always known that you would run your own business. Why illustration and not any other business?

Yes, that is true. My grandfather and grandmother had a printing company for many years. My father ended up taking over the family business and he of course wanted me to take over from him. I worked side by side with my father for over five years and I just knew that printing was not for me. It was after working for my dad that I went into advertising. In fact, we are a family of 4 kids and all of us at one point were in advertising. My brother still runs and owns Strawberryfrog in New York.

Why illustration? I just "fell into it" really, without intention. You could say Illustration found me.

How has the illustration industry been to you and your agency?

It has been extremely good to me and to the agency. It's hard to separate the two.

What do you think of Asia's design and illustration industry?

I love Asian design and am still learning about the illustration industry. We would love to work with companies over there and be able collaborate on exciting projects.

Asian clients work very differently from America and Europe based clients. They need to know how much they are paying before even being interested in engaging services. Anna Goodson Management does not have a rate card. While this is an admirable sense of ownership, what do you think you can do to facilitate their requirements and needs?

It's a difficult concept to understand. I am assuming that a rate card works in editorial work but it would be very difficult to have a rate card for advertising. There are so many factors that go into giving a quote that for me it would be impossible. I would need to understand more clearly what the client meant by a "rate card". We work with clients all over the world. We used to work regularly with The Wall Street Journal Hong Kong and there was never any mention of a rate card. The clients had a budget and we respected the budget. We worked with them for over two years and



had no problems at all. There are many illustrators working for clients in Asia that are based elsewhere so there must be some misunderstanding.

What would you advise people to say and do when they are searching for a representative?

How do I find the artists I represent? I am often asked how I find the artists that I represent, so I decided to share this not so secret information with you... I find them in magazines, in newspapers, on the Internet, on murals, in annuals and on blogs. Yes that's right I actively search high and low for talent to represent. I hunt them down!

More commonly now I visit various websites that I have bookmarked over the years. I read the updates and the news. I check out portfolios and click on a blog or two. I look to see who is up to what and what is up to par. I search for a feeling, best described as "love at first sight". While browsing I hope that somewhere, something will jump out at me.

I have been doing this since back to when I first started my agency some 12 years ago, this February. When I started back in 1996 my fingers did the walking but not on my keyboard. Back then I did indeed have a website but I really didn't know how it worked nor was I very familiar with the Internet. My source for finding new artists was limited to the printed page. CA magazine was always a source for inspirations as was Applied Arts and others. Their Illustration and Photography annuals were a place of inspiration.

I ended up taking on artists that were not very well known or just starting out. For some reason I found it more challenging and appealing to represent someone new. So for the longest time, I started searching the graduates or the recent graduates in illustration. Word got around that I was taking on illustrators that had very little or no experience and I started getting inundated with requests. I learned later that I was almost the only one out there that was willing to invest the time, energy and money to take on someone just starting out. The fact that they had no professional experience really did not matter to me if they had a style that I loved. I rarely read CV's that are sent to me. I focus on the work!

In the past... Since we are based in Canada, my search for artist remained well within our borders. The only artists that I thought I could represent back then were Canadians. Over time as the

Internet came of age AGM no longer limited itself to only represent Canadian talent. It was such a liberating feeling to be able to represent artists no matter where they lived.

Our motto became "There are no more borders to separate us from our clients and artists only time zones".

What are the criteria or signature of an illustrator that make you want to say, "Please be part of my team"?

That's an easy one. I just need to fall in love with his or her work.

How many artists do you take in on an average of a month? And what are the criteria for taking them on? More business? Or just merely falling in love with new illustrators?

It's never the same. I may not be looking to take on anyone new and someone sends me an email with a few jpegs and I love the work, so I take them on.

Your agency also represents photographers, and now, motion designers? What's next? And how has the expansion been?

Fewer photographers than before. We are down to two. Two very special ones. We really want to concentrate on Illustration and Motion. As for the future, who knows!

You've set up a new office in London? How is business in Europe so far?

Yes we have, and it's something I have wanted to do for some time now. It was just the matter of finding the right person. I think that Nicolette is that person. She and I are very much alike. I think there is lots of business for our artists over there. It's very exciting to have a new market to conquer. I am very excited to introduce AGM to the Brits and I am hopeful that they will love the talent that we have to offer, not to mention the friendly Canadian hospitality.

Your agency is a small boutique one. How do you manage with so many jobs and the database of illustrators growing?

The "database" of illustrators is not growing. We have never wanted to be too big and always try to keep the same amount of artists on board at the same time. My team is very hands on and we deal really well with the business that comes in and the artists that we represent.



Gianluca Foli

Gi Myao

Katy Lemay

Who is your all time personal favourite illustrator/artist?
 I don't have one favourite. It's like asking a parent who their favourite child is. I love all the people that I represent. There are some styles that touch me more but there are too many to mention. I guess I love art and many different styles. If I had to choose an artist, then it would have to be Andy Warhol.

What do you do when you are not at work?
 I am usually with my family whom I cherish very much. We do lots of things together. The theatre, we travel, go to the museums and see shows. We are also a very active family so we try to introduce our daughter, Sacha, to lots of different sports. I also LOVE to eat and go to great restaurants. When I am not with them, I am usually at the gym working out or going for a long walk.

What would you say motherhood has taught you about life?
 Motherhood has taught me how to live and appreciate the simplest things in life. It is by far one of the most rewarding experiences I have had the pleasures of experiencing. My life is so much richer now that my daughter is in it. I think about her when I am at work and I can't wait to get home at the end of the day to see her.

If you can give me a word to describe the illustration industry, what is it and why?
 I can't give you one word. Here are a few. Exciting, challenging, rewarding and stimulating,

Where do you see your agency in 10 years time? Where do you see yourself in ten years time?
 I hope to be doing what I love and have been doing for the past 14 years, with the same energy that I have now. Keep innovating, stay fresh and give a highly personalised service. I would also really like to work more with Asia and their talented designers and art directors.

I hope that "stock illustration" becomes obsolete and that commission work is still flourishing. I also hope that my teenage daughter and I get along as famously as we do now.

Visit her agency at www.agoodson.com