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A look into the newly redesigned ROM magazine

The Royal Ontario Museum has just released its newly redesigned *ROM* magazine. The spring 2009 issue is the first to show off the new look with the theme being biodiversity.

“It was our aim to produce a publication with a bolder look that better highlighted the passion and knowledge of our curators,” explained **Victoria Littler**, executive editor of *ROM* magazine.

The challenge of making over the beloved publication went to the internationally acclaimed firm **Hambly and Woolley Inc.** The ROM hired the design firm back in October of 2008.



A vertical logo was considered for the redesign but was thought too radical of a change.

photographs and captions.

It is not hard to tell that the magazine has been completely reworked. The size is much bigger, now at 11 3/4 by 9 inch from the old 10 7/8 by 8 1/8 inch. The size increase allows for more effective design options as far as the placement of sidebars, illustrations, graphics,

“Our mandate was never to change the name, obviously we would never have done that, but we wanted to strengthen how ROM sat in that top corner,” said **Dominic Ayre**, associate at Hambly and Woolley Inc.

Hambly and Woolley accomplished this by modifying the humanistic sans font Slate by Rod McDonald. The down stroke off the R and the angles on the M were slightly adjusted, while the O was narrowed. This customization creates a bold block at 160 pts, where the tops of the letters run off the page and the R wraps itself from the cover onto the spine.

The logo’s font has a close cousin within the pages. The slab serif version of Slate, Egyptian Slate, is used in the headlines as the main serif font. It is used mostly in the department headlines while the features use the classic sans-font Benson. However, as Ayre explained it: “They often play back and forth”.

The fonts used in the body text of the previous design (Futura and

Bembo) were found to be lacking in gray value and didn't offer entry points to readers. The serif Chronicle, by Hoefler and Frere-Jones, remedied this and added readability.

The entire feel of the magazine was examined. Hambly and Woolley wanted to create a "buttery feel but still have press quality." They figured the place to start was from the backend of the production so they went to see how it was being printed. The magazine was being printed on a half-web press but was changed to sheetfed to allow for flexibility in weight. The next switch was to a matte finish paper stock with a weight of "around 70 lbs." The paper is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) mixed certified. It is the first time the magazine has ever been printed on recycled paper (mixed source, not 100 per cent recycled) and it is chlorine and acid free. Even the polybag will be made from organic materials, which is fitting with the issue's theme of biodiversity.

In order to make all the changes come together the binding was upgraded. It is now perfect bound as opposed to its old saddle stitches.

It's not just the looks that have changed. The content has been inflated with new sections as well as new contributors.

University of Toronto philosophy professor and author **Mark Kingwell** challenges the mind with his poignant opinion pieces. In the new issue, his article, Thinking Green, addresses the cliché that is "being green" while our culture is addicted to fossil fuels. **James Chatto**, *Toronto Life's* food columnist and the editor of *harry* magazine, gives his culinary expertise in the Cuisine and Culture section with, Fishing for Solutions: How Canadian chefs are keeping endangered species off the menu.

ROM magazine is partly funded by the Louise Hawkley Stone Charitable Trust. The trust was created in 1997 to "build and promote the ROM's collections through ongoing acquisitions and publications".

— Jon Kennedy

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