

ANTENNA™

WHAT DROPS NEXT

THE ISSUE

10. DEEP ABSINTHE
A.P.C. ANGRY GENES
BAPE BENADRYL
BLACK SHEEP &
PRODIGAL SONS
BOTTEGA VENETA
CHARRIOL CLAE
COMMONWEALTH
DIOR HOMME DUNKS
FENCHURCH GENERRA
GRAPHIC T'S
GUILTY BROTHERHOOD
HOODIES HUBLOT
HYPEBEAST JEEPNEY
JACQUES TORRES
KICKING MULE KSUBI
LEATHER JACKETS
MAISON BIBLIOTHEQUE
MONEY MOSS NOBODY
OBESITY AND SPEED
OCD POLO SHIRTS
PSYCHO-BUNNY
RELWEN SKATE DECKS
SUNGLASSES
TRIUMVIR TROVATA
UNRULY HEIR
UMBRELLAS VILLAINY
Y-3 ZIP-UP JACKETS

SPRING 2008



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(A)

ANTENNA
Spring 2009

THE Adult

WHILE HE HAS FASHIONED A WORKPLACE THAT'S A COMBO PLATTER OF CHILDHOOD FANTASY AND HIPSTER PARADISE, KIDROBOT'S PAUL BUDNITZ HAS STILL MADE SURE THAT HIS COMPANY HAS GROWN UP NICE.

BY LAUREN SILAGY PHOTOGRAPHS BY TONY HARMER



IF PAUL Budnitz really was born missing a gene preventing him from taking risks that were both “stupid and dangerous” like his grandfather once said, then it has truly been a blessing. Paul’s variety of career endeavors within his 40 years have included filmmaking, photography, coding software for nuclear power plants (in high school, of course), as well as creating computer games for the classic Commodore 64.

Oh yeah, then there is Kidrobot. We were curiously transfixed by the sight of goldfish inside a giant Steuben glass Dunny, at the first show for the now well-known toy. Nowadays you can see Dunny and friends on a Burton snowboard, a Volkswagen, on clothing in Barney’s or between other iconic designs at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC. Or you can simply visit one of the four store-galleries in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the newest, Miami. For those who can’t make it to these locations on toy release days, where lines typically stretch for city blocks, you can visit Kidrobot.com.

Whatever gene Paul may be missing he clearly makes up for with big dreams.

Q: CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE OFFICE? THERE ARE SO MANY COLORFUL THINGS YOU WANT TO TOUCH, FEEL, AND LOOK AT. WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO CREATE THIS TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT FOR THE COMPANY?

A: Well I think it’s evolved into looking like that. The thing is that we make so much stuff, and everywhere we go we seem to come back with more. It’s really for inspiration and it’s great to have all of this energy around.

YOU’VE HAD A REALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUND AND CREATIVE EXPERIENCES. WE WERE WONDERING WHAT ASPECTS OF YOUR PAST WERE CRUCIAL TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF KIDROBOT?

The truth is, the thing that attracted me to the job was the fact that I have a bit of a disability. I physically have a hard time organizing and doing things with my body in a coordinated way. There were some sort of developmental disabilities with me that made it difficult for me to work physically in the world. I ended up compensating for that disability as a collaborator. I like to work with other people, because in essence they can bring things that I can’t. So I think at Kidrobot, because we’re a super collaborative company, we’re about crossing over, we’re about working with other people—we’re really about being open. In a lot of ways we compensate for our weaknesses and develop strengths.

YOU ONCE CLAIMED THAT STARTING THIS COMPANY WAS PROBABLY THE STUPIDEST THING YOU’VE EVER DONE.

That kind of keeps me up here. One of the things that I can’t stand is when people say, “You can’t do that.” If I had sat down and thought through how stressful it would be to do Kidrobot, if I knew what it entailed, I probably would have done it anyway. If I’d left it to my heart I might not have done it, but I had an intuition that if you make beautiful things people will follow that.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU ARE OBSESSING OVER OR COLLECTING BESIDES TOYS?

I’m actually not a collector. The whole idea of Kidrobot is not to collect and keep, but to create and keep creating, almost like a river. What’s flowing through our stores, it has its own momentum.

SO, THE MORE TOYS YOU MAKE, THE MORE CREATIVE YOU FEEL?

One thing leads to another so you’re never stagnant. You make something and you’re like, “Ah, that’s beautiful but it would be so much more beautiful or interesting or different if...” Everything keeps moving and that kind of momentum defines us in a lot of ways. At Kidrobot we’re following what we’ve made. We’re not trying to see what’s going to be the next big hit. We’ve made a bunch of stuff and the need arises to do something else, and new toys arrive.

Look kids: it's M-I-C-K-E-Y M-A-O-S-E



THERE'S CERTAINLY A LACK OF PRETENSION IN THE AESTHETIC YOU'VE CULTIVATED AT THIS COMPANY. HOW DO YOU STAY GROUNDED?

To me the most important thing is learning how to actually keep your ego out of the work. We work in groups, so you have to keep yourself out of the picture. When you start asking questions like "How am I going to look? Am I important? Where's my name on this?"—these are the kind of artists we tend not to work with very much. People we work with are open to collaboration. Frank Kozik is an incredibly collaborative artist; he's great. His stuff is dark and twisted and fantastic.

THAT'S AN INTERESTING THING ABOUT THESE TOYS, THE WHOLE SUBVERSIVE QUALITY TO THEM. THEY'RE CUTE, BUT AS A CARICATURE OF VIOLENCE, THEY RETAIN A UNIQUE CHARACTERISTIC.

There's a couple things going on. Our logo, the robot; if you look at him you can't quite tell whether he's smiling or if he has an evil grin. You put a crowbar in his hand and he looks like he's about to break into a car, but if you put flowers in his hand he's a happy little Kidrobot.

ARE THERE ANY PEOPLE YOU HAVEN'T WORKED WITH YET THAT YOU'RE ITCHING TO GET INVOLVED WITH?

I would love to work with Jeff Koons, David Byrne and Laurie Anderson. I would really love to work with Sanrio. I've also thought it would be really fun to do furniture.

IS THAT SOMETHING YOU'RE LOOKING TO EXPAND INTO, FURNITURE DESIGN?

Yes, I would love to do everything; dressers, tables, chairs, you name it.

I KNOW YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T WORK WITH ANYONE WHOSE EGO WAS BIGGER THAN WHAT THEY WERE MAKING.

Yes, we're in service to the art. We're here to make beautiful stuff—first. You know there's those Lower East Side kind of stores that are like "Fuck you, don't even think about shopping here, you're not cool enough to shop here!" I purposely created Kidrobot to be different. Even though it's a pretty deep culture, pretty obsessive, the whole vibe calls for it to be open, and we really try hard to maintain that. We're not all about ourselves, we're about the things that we're making, we're about the company.

DO YOU SEE ADULTS' FASCINATION WITH TOYS AS A FAD?

After six years now, I don't. Kidrobot clothing, for example, is super-bright colors, and it's supposed to be like as if you were becoming a toy—that's kind of the whole vibe behind it. It's being worn by all kinds of different people. The skinny, lanky kids from Williamsburg wear our clothing, then the hip-hop guys wear our clothing, skaters wear our clothing, and middle-aged adults wear our clothing. It's the people buying our toys; it's everybody. I feel like we're trend-proof because we're not trendy people. We're not following anything. Again,

"THE SKINNY, LANKY KIDS FROM WILLIAMSBURG WEAR OUR CLOTHING, THEN THE HIP-HOP GUYS WEAR OUR CLOTHING, SKATERS WEAR OUR CLOTHING, AND MIDDLE-AGED ADULTS WEAR OUR CLOTHING. IT'S THE PEOPLE BUYING OUR TOYS; IT'S EVERYBODY."



we're just trying to make everything beautiful. So I don't know about the trend thing, I can't control that, but no, we don't encourage the whole eBay thing. We make it hard for people to do that, we limit people to how many they can buy. We keep our prices where they are on purpose.

SO YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE IT SO THAT EVERYONE CAN BUY A TOY?

Totally. Look at the price point. You can buy Kidrobot toys for \$6 or \$10 or \$20,000 dollars. It's all over the map. We have kids coming in with their allowance buying Peecols, and we have art collectors come in.

TELL US ABOUT SOME OF THE UPCOMING TOYS FOR 2008.

Zoomies, they're these little animals, and all they care about is driving their cars as fast as possible. They've been on our clothing for about a year, on some of our most popular t-shirts. The sweaters in the spring clothing line are unlike anything you've ever seen. It's almost like Japanese art clothing combined with European art clothing combined with Kidrobot. We're moving away from this whole patterned hoodie thing into a whole other world.

(C) CREWNECK SWEATERS



Fenchurch Renta
\$70.00



Relwen Two-Ply Thermal
\$108.00



Kostym by
Cheap Monday
\$65.00



Hurley Space
\$46.00



Mad Hectic Logo
\$146.00



Kidrobot
\$125.00



Uniqlo
\$39.50



Atticus Clothing Astoria
\$55.00



A.P.C. Tea & Black
\$360.00



L-R-G
Slicker This Year
\$125.00

Kidrobot
Gingham Boxer
\$165.00

Adam
\$295.00

Name Ribbon Chinatown Bus to Rio
\$120.00

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Spring 2008

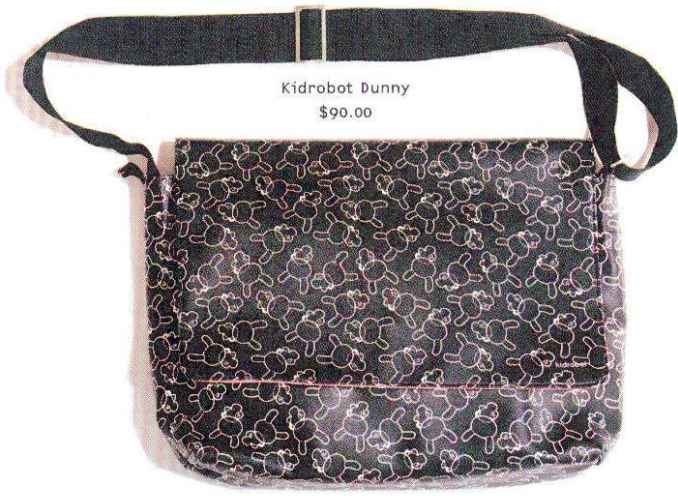
(M) MESSENGER BAGS



Stussy
\$58.00



Paul Smith Accessories
\$400.00



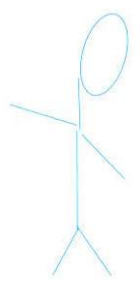
Kidrobot Dunny
\$90.00



Mark Nason
\$815.00



C.P. Company
\$1,365.00



Gravis Digi
\$75.00

