

// Make A Human Connection



Photo Courtesy Mike Call

When I started out in magazine journalism, roughly 70 percent of my long-form reporting involved travel to make human connections. My first assignment was to a remote canyon in Arizona to navigate waterfalls and drop pools while shadowing a class full of budding canyoneers. For a report on why Utah's backcountry skiers were mooning heli-ski guides, I once chased a Jack Mormon with Berserker hair up the steepest skin tracks in the Wasatch. To produce original work, I stood atop summits with alpinists, chased Tour de France cyclists on singletrack, and booted up 55-degree couloirs with ski mountaineers.

Even the more mundane trips to get a sneak peek at a new product line or talk to an engineer instead of a marketing person delivered deeper meaning than you get on a video call. Also scene painting, trust, and often friendship. Storytelling—commercial or editorial—is just better when it involves real people doing real work.

It's harder to make such connections today, not just for writers like me who "give good phone" as editors used to say, but for everyone, no matter what aspect of the creative business they work in. I was reminded of that during a recent conversation with Hence Roster member [Kelly Dee Williams](#). I had asked Kelly what the future looked like for his specialty branding and design shop. What he said resonated.

"I believe the future is human," says Kelly. "Everyone is talking about AI, but those are just tools. With our work, I want to be even more focused on human creativity; more meaningful long-form content that AI can't deliver. And more human output in everything we do. Technology can now create a photo that is almost as good as my favorite photographers. But it's skin-deep. It's missing the soul. All it takes is context to show the difference. Real scenery. A story being told. Not a binary interpretation of reality. The board sports world that I came up in is rooted in hyper realism. Why should that change? We want to work with companies and other agencies that share that worldview."

As for the people and businesses that don't share that view? I have one word for them that all the art directors I ever worked with loved: "derivative." That's when you get creative like the skin rash commercials from Big Pharma—overexposed and a shitty jingle—or, to sell beer, a nauseating AI Christmas village with CGI Clydesdales instead of Woodstock, Vermont.

The Hence community exists, in part, to make those human connections that give rise to original work. —Marc Peruzzi

// Build Virtual Marketing Depts.



Photo Kelly Gorham | Mavericks

Why Today's Marketers Need Open Talent Collaboration To Succeed

From the story: "Small companies with one-person marketing departments tend to produce redundant campaigns. Ditto for big companies with the budget to hire an agency known for one type of output. A world where the matrix or the mob can regurgitate still more tired ideas only exacerbates the problem. Stale creative doesn't move brands forward." Read the full story [here](#). (4 min read)

// Meet a Creative

[Read More](#)

If you've watched action sports, you already know [Selema Mabena Masekela](#). Whether it's from his sideline work on the NBA, his tenure at X-Games, his work with Stoked.org, his brilliant smile, or his lifelong stoke.



Photo Courtesy Selema Masekela

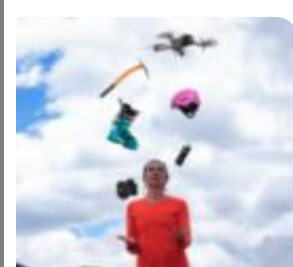
// Meet a Creative

[Read More](#)

In the early 2000s when the internet was pretty fresh, the on-air talent [Chris Coté](#) started a web series called Coté's Cube. "I just had a blast, not knowing that I was actually doing on-the-job training for my future career."



Photo Courtesy Chris Coté



We have a lively discussion going in the forums about [Gordy Megroz's story on creatives undervaluing themselves](#). Join the troll-free discussion [here](#).

// New in Hence Journal

[All Articles](#)



Trade Secrets: Don't Let Your Passions Fade

"Much of the work of advertising these days is based in storytelling that has an editorial feel," says brand strategist Fred Hammerquist. "You can't pretend. You have to live it. We have to marry our passions to our careers." [Read on.](#)



Trade Secrets: Define Your Purpose

"This might sound corny, but I want to create a future for my nephew to grow up in that honors and prioritizes mental health as a core fabric of the culture," says pro skier and mental health advocate Drew Petersen. [Read on.](#)

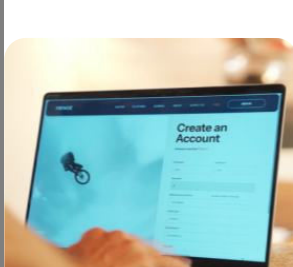
MORE FROM THE BROADER CREATIVE WORLD

What We're Reading Now

The World's Largest Search Doesn't Want You to Search. From Ted Gioia's *The Honest Broker* stack: "Google goes out of its ways to do mischief. Messing with people is in its DNA. Meanwhile, its base business is degrading at an alarming rate. The company doesn't seem to care. In a strange turnaround, search engines don't want you to search for anything. That's because searching leads you on a journey—and Google doesn't want you to leave their platform." (*The Honest Broker*)

Gatekeepers are Censors, Too: Inside the Oscar-Nominated Film That No Studio Will Touch. From Kyle Buchanan's story in *The New York Times* about a documentary created by Palestinian and Israeli filmmakers that is not coming to a streaming service near you. "No documentary this season has been more talked about or acclaimed than "No Other Land," which chronicles the besieged community of Masafer Yatta in the occupied West Bank. ... Still, no American studio has been willing to pick up this hot-button film, even though distributors typically spend this time of year eagerly boasting about their Oscar-nomination tallies." (*NYTimes*)

AI Eats Everything Ever Created—Then Eats Itself. From *The New York Times* story "OpenAI Says DeepSeek May Have Improperly Harvested Its Data." "Like any other A.I. company, DeepSeek built its technologies using computer code and data corralled from across the internet. The leading systems learn their skills by analyzing just about all of the text on the internet." Apparently, OpenAI is upset that DeepSeek did to them what they did to all of us. (*NYTimes*)



Did someone forward you this email? You can sign up for a free **Aspects** subscription or become a paying Roster member [here](#).



HENCE
ASPECTS

info@hencecreative.com
www.hencecreative.com