



# Antennae

Profile: Malcolm Waddell

# tuned

# to

# change

BY RUTH PELLY

*"Artists are the antennae of the (human) race."*

— Ezra Pound

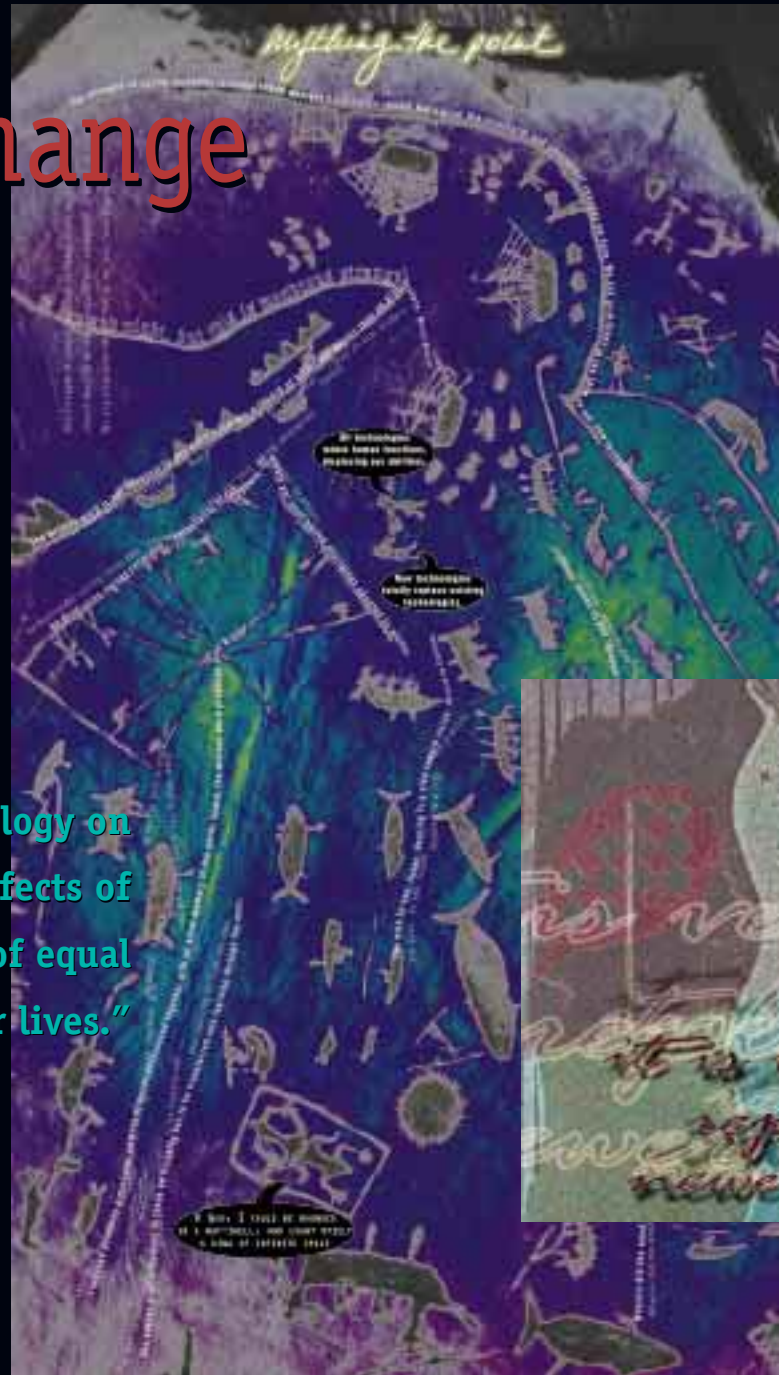
ANTENNAE ARE REGARDED AS SENSORS. THE ANTENNA IS PERCEIVED AS EITHER A moveable organ of sensation or as a metal device engaged in the radiation and reception of vibration.

Designer Malcolm Waddell of Toronto was born with acutely tuned antennae. He picks up subtle tremors that occur during societal changes, such as the movement from print into the wired environment. With his innovative and startling use of graphics and typography, Waddell forces us to stop, look and wonder at the seemingly contradictory changes before us.

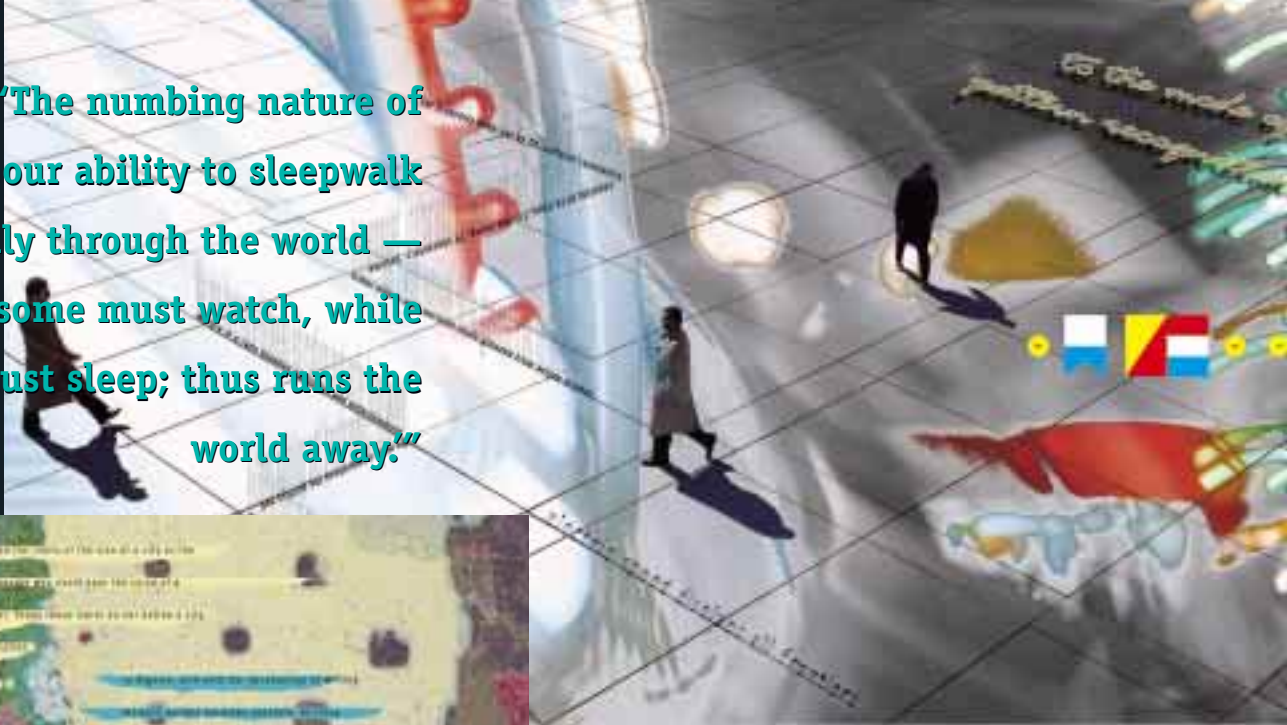
Malcolm Waddell's work is included in the Library of Congress Permanent Collection, the Cooper Hewitt Museum and in the Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of Design. In a career spanning thirty years, Malcolm has created graphic design for major corporations in Montreal, Toronto and London, England.

**"Here we show the effects of technology on native peoples; we list the devastating effects of change on older cultures oblivious of equal changes taking place in our lives."**

Ten years ago, Waddell began a project that was initially conceived as a paper promotion. His creative starting point was Marshall McLuhan's comment in *THE GUTENBERG GALAXY*: "We are today as



**"The numbing nature of change...our ability to sleepwalk blindly through the world — 'For some must watch, while some must sleep; thus runs the world away.'"**



**"Examining the effects of technology on Western culture, we are primitives when faced with these changes."**



far into the electric age as the Elizabethans had advanced into the typographic and mechanical age. And we are experiencing the same confusions and indecisions as they felt when living simultaneously in two contrasting forms of society and experience."

For this project, Waddell used as text lines from Shakespeare's Hamlet, juxtaposed with contemporary statements.

"Hamlet represents the rise of the individual," he notes, "while today's society reverses this process. Hamlet, prepared at Wittenberg for scholarly disputation, returns to a mediaeval court where no one dare speak their mind. Following his training, Hamlet becomes the first literary detective, and certainly the first to stage a re-enactment of the crime, in the play within a play."

Waddell has each of the characters in the play speak his line and then there is a contemporary response. Regarding the art of Government being to say what the people want to hear, Claudius says, "I do believe you think what now you speak." And the response is a George Bush remark: "Of course I have opinions, very strong opinions, but I don't always agree with them."

The graphics for this project are an electronic mix of personal photographs, overprinting and posters. The paper choice was cast coated on one side, interleaved with a translucent stock; the cast coated was used for the two contrasting forms of experience — the gloss side (visual, high definition) depicting modern individualism, the uncoated (aural, low definition) for mediaeval and electric corporate interdependence, and the translucent stock forming a layered interface.

The artist's antennae gives us the vision of the future, the fruit and the blossom, and the awareness of the seed, which is its source. \*