

REBRAND FOCUS

MILLS & BOON

Focus on: Mills & Boon

We critique Pentagram's new visual identity, graphic system and series concepts for the romance novel publishers



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“The new identity takes emphasis away from the supersized ampersand that had previously dominated, reducing its scale and shifting the focus to the whole Mills & Boon name, which is where the brand equity lies according to a consumer insights study.

The ampersand's rose has been replaced with subtle heart-shaped geometry, a more universal signifier of romance. Pentagram has devised a graphic system that can deliver cover artwork for the high turnover of titles – which rely on stock imagery – yet focused enough to ensure the brand communicates its core proposition to consumers.

The system and resulting style guide use a combination of tight crops and filters for the imagery, alongside considered typography and flexible colour palettes. This removes unnecessary and trite elements from the composition, focusing instead on the characters. The resulting covers allow readers to project their own fantasies onto the Mills & Boon promise, and are more appealing in a today's retail environment.”

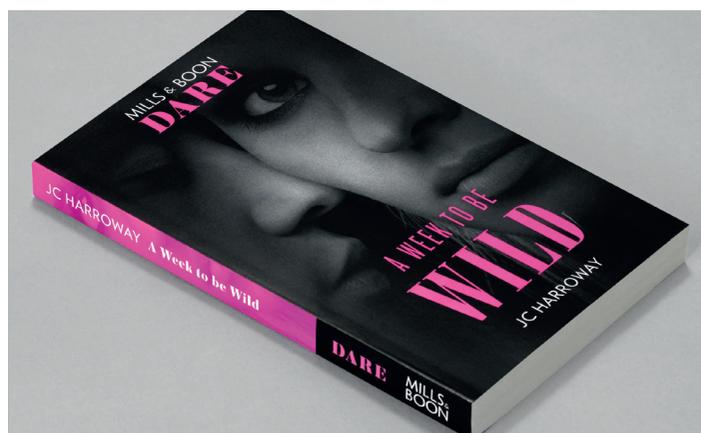
“As a cover designer, I tend to shy away from the romance/erotica genre. Not for any priggish reason, but because the designs are often too cheesy. Mills & Boon suffered the same epidemic, resulting in a cacophony of oversaturated imagery and competing typography and branding elements. It's no wonder their target audience felt overwhelmed and assaulted by the previous aesthetic.

Pentagram's new branding elevates the genre with sexy, clean typography and strategic pops of bright colour. It leaves more to the imagination, while still promising a rollicking good time between the pages. They've cleared the clutter of too many overlays and branding elements, such as the ornate ampersand and rose, giving the covers more breathing room and elegance. Within this overarching new direction, they've managed to brand each subgenre to help new readers find exactly what they're looking for quickly; be it historical, Western, or modern kink. The result is a brand that's more approachable, accessible and intriguing.”

“It's a big challenge to totally overhaul the brand identity of a publisher like Mills & Boon. Not only have they been around for over a century, but they also release a mindblowing quantity of books each year. That said, Pentagram's designs offer a long-established brand a modern, clean reboot.

Riding the seemingly unending coattails of *Fifty Shades of Grey* (and its iconic, stark cover design), the tight-cropped images and combination of both bold geometric and romantic serif fonts make the covers feel much more ‘of the moment’.

Die-hard readers can still easily locate the publisher they know and love thanks to the prominent redesigned logomark. But more importantly, for a millennial reader who feels hesitant to dip her toes in the hot and heavy world of romance, these covers might make her more inclined to pick up a title and see if it sparks any excitement.”



Mills & Boon's own research found that its multiplicity of series, titles and categories were disorientating consumers, so Pentagram devised a new, flexible design system to simplify matters and refocus attention on the book titles and characters.