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December 2013

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"INSTEAD OF LEADING A BITTER AND RESISTANT LIFE, SHE DUG IN HER HEELS AND BECAME ONE OF CHARLESTON'S MOST CHERISHED CITIZENS." (pg. 14)

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Brand Man

From restaurants to a resident sports team, much of Charleston bears the branding work of graphic designer Gil Shuler

Gil Shuler has coaxed hundreds of clients out of identity crises. Head of Gil Shuler Graphic Design (GSGD), the Sumter native has helped everyone from Husk to Hubee D's, The Center for Birds of Prey to GrowFood Carolina, define their brands via logos, collateral, and on. Last year, GSGD celebrated its 28th anniversary with a retrospective at the University of South Carolina's McMaster Gallery. Ask Shuler if the show is coming to town, and he laughs, "Charleston sees my stuff every day." That's true, there's a van emblazoned with the Limehouse Produce logo, a kid sporting a RiverDogs' cap, and a sign for the Town of Mount Pleasant. Here, a few words from the artist himself. — *Melissa Bigner*

Graphic design versus fine arts:

I loved fine arts and was a proficient oil painter, but I did not want to do that for a living. I discovered graphic design my sophomore year of college [at Western Carolina University] and never looked back.

Surviving in business as a straight-shooting wild card with a no-holds-barred personality:

Damn, I didn't realize that's what I am—that's kinda cool. To answer the question, I enjoy my job and the people I meet, and my upbringing was always about being authentic and honest, plus, I have a strong work ethic.

On what distinguishes a Gil Shuler campaign:

We have always focused on the idea. I like to think if you see some of our branding, posters, printed materials, etc., that you stop and go, "Wow, that's a cool idea," or "That's smart," or at the very least, you just stop. We base our design on good ideas, not on a fashionable style.

The story of his own logo:

I created it around 1991 or 1992. As a designer, creating your own logo is tough, and nothing was working for me. At the time, I was doing a lot of offshore bottom fishing, and I had this great photo of a black grouper. I was staring at it, did a sketch of the fish, stuck a pencil under its fin, and the rest is history.

On his newest office-mate and his latest headwear:

Noodle the poodle is awesome. She is sitting at my feet right now. I have a porkpie hat I got a couple years ago in New Orleans that I really dig, but lately I can't stop wearing my Limehouse Produce hat (we designed it). Somehow it just feels right.

Where he finds inspiration:

Every week, I try to go out on my boat or a friend's boat to do some fishing or just riding. Getting out in the harbor, creeks, or open ocean always inspires and refreshes my soul. As they say, it wipes the dust of everyday life away.

What's next:

Who knows? Every day is a blessing and an opportunity. The world is changing fast, and watching new technology and innovation growth is exciting as hell. We get to see the world easier than ever. Ain't it great?!

