

Open market

In the quest for the perfect image, designers may spend hours trawling picture libraries and the Web, but often the design process is what makes imagery so successful. **Anna Richardson** looks at the creative use of stock images and photography 'found' on the Internet

1 Cover for *Man's World*, by James Nunn

2 Web pages showing the visual identity for Alquity Investment Management by Kimpton Creative sourced through Flickr

3 Collage for Basement Jaxx's album *Scars*, by Big Active's Mat Maitland

4 Campaign for Alexander McQueen's *McQ* brand. Art directed by Remi Paringaux, using archive images from Magnum Photos

5 Stamp designs combining sourced stock and historic imagery, for The Royal Society by Hat-Trick Design

In design, David often slays Goliath of the image library world. Even though past years have seen large stock libraries buy a number of smaller ones (Getty's recent acquisitions include Jupitermedia's online images division and iStockphoto, for example), designers often prefer to turn to more artistic, smaller libraries, such as Millenium Images and Plain Picture.

In addition, the Internet is allowing anyone to showcase image wares via social networking sites. Many designers cite Flickr as a great inspiration, and search services such as Cooliris make trawling this wealth of imagery increasingly straightforward.

When creating the brand for new ethical investment company Alquity Investment Management, Kimpton Creative ended up paying for work found on Flickr. 'It's a very good resource and we tend to reference it more and more,' says David Kimpton, founder of Kimpton Creative. 'We might look at it in order to buy images or to find a photographer we would want to commission.'

For the Alquity brand, Kimpton was looking for references to African imagery and portraits, and ended up contacting photographer Eric Lafforgue, whose work kept catching his eye on Flickr. Budget constraints meant Alquity wasn't in a position to send a photographer to Africa, so the Flickr avenue was ideal, says Kimpton.

Designer and illustrator James Nunn also appreciates the photography-sharing website, and has designed a number of book covers using images spotted on Flickr. One *More Stop* uses images from an amateur in Nebraska to illustrate one of the characters, while for *Can We Play You Every Week* Nunn contacted a snapper in Yeovil.

Mark Ecob, art director at publisher Canongate Books, has found interesting results via Flickr and social networking sites (using

image aggregator Cooliris), but concedes that Getty still is the best and most used source for 'bread-and-butter' images. 'Its searching facility is second to none, but in my experience it just doesn't have the bespoke feel that libraries like Millennium Images have, even through advanced searching or its in-house picture research service. It's a "Tesco versus high street" issue – shopping local is better, but sometimes you need to go to the supermarket.'

According to Simon Cliffe, executive director at the British Association of Picture Libraries and Agencies, many image libraries are making concerted efforts to provide a more effective service to design and other creative consultancies, rather than pitching predominantly at the publishing market.

Magnum Photos last year collaborated with Penguin on covers for the Penguin Magnum Collection of classics and recently provided archive images for a campaign for the late Alexander McQueen's *McQ* brand, art directed by Remi Paringaux.

Often, the perfect image is derived from less than perfect source material, as Nunn points out. 'Finding the right image is a slavish process – you can spend a huge amount of time on it,' he says. 'There's a notion that there must be [a perfect image] on the Internet, but you can obsess too much. Sometimes you have to rely on the design working rather than finding the perfect image to carry the design.' For the cover of *Man's World* by Rupert Smith, Nunn used a crop of what was quite a 'cheesy' Getty image of a man with a cat.

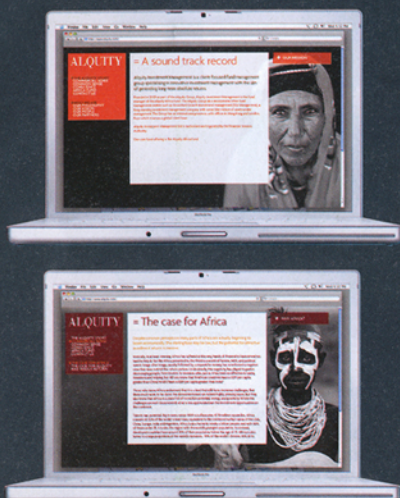
For a new set of Royal Mail stamps on The Royal Society, Hat-Trick Design used stock and historic images and commissioned shots, while illustrator Mat Maitland at Big Active also mixes imagery in his intricate collages, with many sourced through Shutterstock. 'My work is about how I use a selection of images as part of a bigger picture,' he explains. For a recent fashion editorial for *L'Officiel Paris*, Maitland used supplied product shots, submersing them into his visual world. 'It isn't about finding one amazing image,' he says. 'Sometimes they may not be much by themselves – it's about how they fit together.'

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James Nunn



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