

Aether Apparel

Aether is a pure expression of form and function. We utilize technologically advanced fabrics with a sophisticated style for the outdoor enthusiast who wants function without sacrificing modern design and aesthetics.

Aether Apparel was founded by Palmer West and Jonah Smith, two Hollywood film producers, in 2009. Men's and women's apparel is sold online at aetherapparel.com, by appointment at the Aether Outpost, in their traveling airstream showroom, and in specialty stores.



A E T H E R



Goals

Express the founders' vision for a unique market.

Design a visual identity platform for a luxury lifestyle brand.

Define a unique brand voice with compelling imagery.

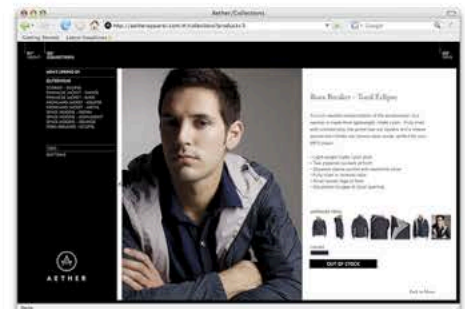
Develop an e-commerce website to launch the brand.

Hello jet black snowboarding jacket that you can wear on the mountain and at a swishy bar.

jcrew.com

To us, design and function should be equal.

Palmer West and Jonah Smith
Founders
Aether Apparel



Process and strategy: Palmer West and Jonah Smith, Los Angeles-based film producers, created Aether Apparel to fill a gap in the market. As outdoor sport enthusiasts, they found that most performance-driven apparel companies lacked design or style, and most fashion lines did not feature technical advancements in outerwear. Their target market was the discerning customer who appreciated high-style, high-quality, high-performance clothing and wanted to show it, both on the streets of Manhattan and on the ski slopes of Park City. They engaged Carbone Smolan Agency (CSA) to design a brand platform and website that would elevate the company from start-up to established luxury brand. The founders named their company Aether, meaning “upper air,” a reference to the air that Greek gods breathed on Olympus. In extensive interviews, CSA found that the core brand message was focused on style, function, and a surprisingly simple promise from the founders, “If we personally do not want to wear it, we will not make it.”

Creative solution: CSA designed a mark based on the Aether A to evoke clouds swirling around a mountain peak. The iconic mark and logotype were designed to reflect the simple aesthetic of the clothes themselves. “The white logotype on black epitomizes the striking yet minimalist quality of the garments and provides just enough ‘urban

cool’ to stand out in a market filled with excess,” says Ken Carbone. The full system of brand applications included clothing labels, hangtags, ads, look books, and an e-commerce website. The brand comes to life on the website, where dramatic and evocative environmental photography transports the viewer to the road to nowhere and everywhere, setting the mood for beauty, adventure, and mystery. The website itself has a clear structure for easily viewing products, which are impeccably photographed. Product names like Atmosphere, Flatlands, and Space appeal to a new generation of world adventure travelers that are as comfortable rock climbing on a glacier as they are bar hopping in Soho.

Results: Aether Apparel is actively growing and breaking into new markets and new marketing channels. Their year-to-year growth is in the triple digits, the expanding product line includes women’s wear and swimwear, and their retail presence has gone from web-only to selling products at J.Crew. In 2011, Aether launched the AetherStream roving pop-up shop, a 34-foot Airstream showroom on wheels designed by Thierry Gaugain that made its way to Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco.



Aether Apparel is where Prada meets Patagonia, and where high style meets high function. This luxury brand is a hybrid of fashion and adventure.

Ken Carbone
Cofounder and Chief Creative Director
Carbone Smolan Agency

Aether Apparel: Carbone Smolan Agency

Amazon.com

Amazon.com seeks to be the world's most customer-centric company, the place where people discover anything they want to buy online.

Originally an online bookstore, Amazon.com is positioned as the "world's largest online retailer," selling music, software, toys, tools, electronics, fashion, and housewares. Founded in 1994, the company has over 100 million customers and ships to 150 countries.

Goals

Create a unique and proprietary identity.

Maintain the brand equity of the original identity.

Position Amazon.com as customer-focused and friendly.

Modify the core identity for global domains.

Why did you name your company Amazon?

Earth's biggest river. Earth's biggest selection.

Jeff Bezos
Founder and CEO
Amazon.com

amazon.com®



As part of the Amazon.com brand identity design, Turner Duckworth created a single letter lock up with the smile, originally to be used online as a button. A decade later, Amazon is using this design on its gift cards.

Process and strategy: In 1999 Amazon.com retained Turner Duckworth to redesign its brand identity. Amazon.com's positioning as a customer-focused, friendly company was the core of its mission and values. The challenge was to create a unique and proprietary identity that maintained what Amazon.com believed were its brand equities: lowercase type in the logo, and an orange swoosh underneath the name. Turner Duckworth immersed itself in the brand, spent a lot of time on the website, and examined competitor sites. The firm also analyzed what makes a logo effective or ineffective on the web. "Our goal was to infuse personality into the logo, and to create a compelling idea that would convey the brand message," said David Turner, head of design.

Creative solution: The design team developed distinct visual strategies at the first stage; each one emphasized a different aspect of the positioning brief. The final logo design was an evolutionary leap from the old logo. The central idea behind the new logo reflected the client's business strategy of selling more than just books. The design team connected the initial a of "amazon" to the z. This approach clearly communicated "Amazon.com sells everything from A to Z." The graphic device that connects the a and the z also speaks to the brand positioning: customer focus and friendly service. This device forms a

cheeky smile with a dimple that pushes up the z. The brown shipper box packaging was considered at every stage of the logo design. Turner Duckworth designed custom lettering for the wordmark and made the "amazon" more prominent than the ".com." The typography was designed to give the logo a friendlier and unique look. The design team also designed a full alphabet so that Amazon.com could update its international domains, currently in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Japan. The project was completed in eight weeks.

Results: Jeff Bezos, the CEO, founder, and visionary, was involved at every presentation and was the key decision maker. Amazon.com had determined that it would execute a "soft launch" of the new identity. The new brand identity was not announced to the press or highlighted on its website. Sensitive to the perceptions of customers and Wall Street analysts, the company felt it was important that Amazon.com did not appear to be a "different" company. Amazon.com will always be considered the e-commerce company that changed the future of retailing forever. The Amazon Kindle was introduced in 2007 and has led a new generation of e-book readers.



Access to the key decision maker, and in particular to the visionary of a company, certainly makes our work easier. Not only does it accelerate the feedback, development and approval processes, but it also allows us to ask questions of the visionary and hear unedited answers.

Joanne Chan
Head of Client Services
Turner Duckworth

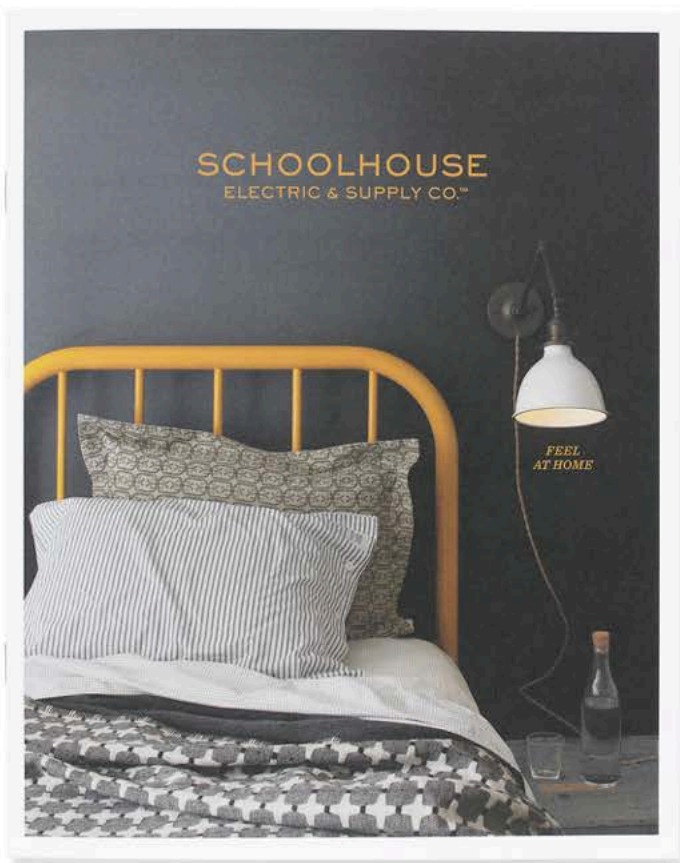
When you have a leader with true vision and enthusiasm, it becomes contagious and inspires the team.

Jaleh Bisharat
Former VP of Marketing
Amazon.com

Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co.

Schoolhouse provides iconic products—embodying a uniquely American mindset and aesthetic—for inspired homes and workspaces, and productive modern lives.

Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co. sells iconic period lighting, housewares, and furniture to homeowners, architects, and builders via catalogues and the web, as well in showrooms in Portland, Oregon, and Tribeca, New York. Schoolhouse, founded in 2003, is privately owned.



Goals

Revitalize the brand platform to include expanded product lines.

Craft an authentic story and an evolution of the name.

Create a brand identity platform across marketing channels.

Design catalogue, website, and product branding.

Develop look and feel for product photography.

An object's value is measured in its use. Beauty is a virtue, but not a substitute for functionality. Whether made by hand or machine, design is about what works, and that's what matters to Schoolhouse.

Brian Faherty
Founder and Owner
Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co.

The Schoolhouse voice is neighborly, but not assuming. Plainspoken, but not blunt. Optimistic, but not Pollyanna. Sincere, but not humorless. Playful, but not zany. Witty, but not pun-y.

Andy Gray
Managing Partner
VSA Partners NY



Process and strategy: In 2010, owner and founder Brian Faherty decided to evolve Schoolhouse Electric from a classic lighting company to a lifestyle company, and to extend customer relationships into a broader range of products. VSA Partners was engaged to articulate the enduring relationship between American craft and mass production, and to help Schoolhouse tell a better story with different messages across new channels. VSA began by doing research on logical product extensions beyond lighting, identifying synergies with urban/craft/heritage design enthusiasts. VSA's Andy Gray and Travis Barteaux worked closely with the founder and the director of lighting, marketing, and digital Michelle Steinback, to clearly define, what is the Schoolhouse Electric of furniture and housewares, and what isn't? It became clear to the team that the name should evolve to Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co.— retaining the equity of "Schoolhouse Electric" but reflecting a newly expanded range of goods.

Creative solution: VSA and Schoolhouse worked together for over a year on product inspiration, identity design, catalogue concept and design, art direction of photography, and website redesign. "We always imagined the identity as a series of logos, which should feel as if they had evolved over time, like an unwritten history. Their usage

would be guided by application and context," said Gray. VSA used a fluid design process to help shape the brand persona. They did not specify rules until after the packaging and collateral had been explored. VSA also developed an approach to photographing classic products in a relevant and modern way, demonstrating a uniquely American mindset and aesthetic. VSA wrote and designed a brand book articulating the unifying design principles, voice, and values that define Schoolhouse. In fall 2011, Schoolhouse was ready to launch 150 new lifestyle products, seventy-five new hardware items, and fifty new lighting items.

Results: Schoolhouse opened a new flagship store and launched the new branding and website all on the same day. News spread quickly to a large audience of bloggers and design enthusiasts, including Design*Sponge, Remodelista, and A Continuous Lean. Leading magazine editors picked up the story in publications including *Monocle* and *Men's Journal*. Eighty thousand beautiful catalogues were mailed, email blasts were sent out, and Schoolhouse posted a professionally produced video on Vimeo. Sales have increased exponentially each month since the launch.

