

## A Specialty Concrete Benefits from a Specialty Branding Treatment by Philippe Becker Design

When sculptor and concrete specialist Buddy Rhodes comes to a business meeting, his dungarees might be dusty from concrete mix and Henry, his best white Labrador friend, might be off his leash. Lucky for Buddy, he found Philippe Becker Design (PBD), who fully appreciated his unpretentious style as well as his desire to expand his business into a new category—and who now have a beautifully smooth, sky blue Buddy Rhodes concrete conference table in their office.

By the time Buddy Rhodes found PBD, as it turns out, he had already established his brand—that is, his name—based on the services he offered to individual designers and homeowners, large commercial clients, and the specialty work he did for Pottery Barn stores across the country. With a base of operations in the San Francisco Bay Area, Rhodes had perfected concrete to an art form, and it was not uncommon for a real estate ad to boast, for instance: “Kitchen features Buddy Rhodes counters.”

Philippe Becker, creative director of PBD, relished the challenge of creating a completely new category and brand from scratch, because the Buddy Rhodes products themselves had never been packaged and sold at retail. They already had a brand—the reputation of Buddy himself—but no packages. “We felt pretty strongly that it was necessary to build a brand around his name,” Becker recalls.

### It’s all in the mix

The core product that Rhodes wanted to market to concrete users of all kinds was his Buddy Rhodes Concrete Counter Mix, which is a combination of sand, cement and special ingredients that is malleable, smooth, colorable, dense, and very strong—yet with a fine surface required for interior design. The concrete mix, predictably unstable, would be packed in the familiar brown, 70-lb. sacks in an uncontrolled environment, with many limitations on the printing and color.

However, PBD was determined to turn those limitations into assets by making the most of the situation. “We really had to design something with a real crude printing quality,” Becker explains, even though the same treatments would be used across many media and applications, from promotional stickers to large plastic molds. The “distressed” look of the printing was intentional, and the imperfections make it look like part of the system, especially on the brown paper sack.

The overall presentation is that of a respected, serious industrial product presented in a novel way. The target users are contractors



*The multiple award-winning design of the Buddy Rhodes products projects confidence, high quality, and authenticity across different media.*

and DIYers expecting a high quality product. “It had to look authentic, but not overly designed or too sophisticated,” Becker explains.

Of the initial logo and branding treatments, the intention was to introduce, in a not-too-serious way, a central “character.” Rhodes himself immediately felt an affinity for the coarse, wood-cut image of a toiling character (not necessarily a portrait) that would become the emblem of the brand. Strong, bold type reinforces the sturdiness of the product, conveying both “retro” and “designer” aspirations.

The Buddy Rhodes project has, somewhat surprisingly, turned into a bellwether project for PBD. As Ellen Baker, director of PBD client services, explains: “Clients are amazed that we branded a concrete”—and equally amazed at the many awards that PBD garnered for this unique branding project. ■