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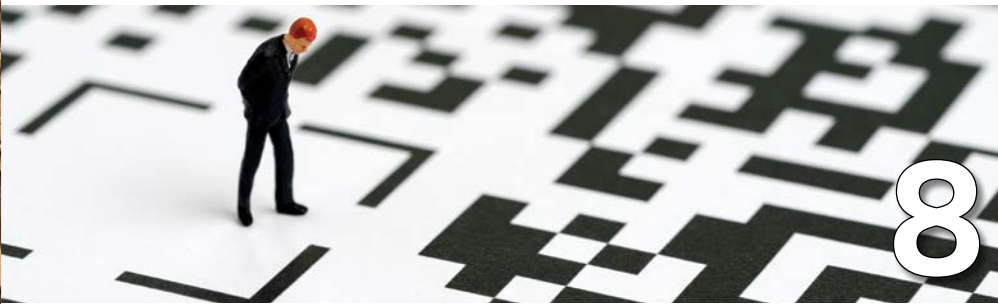
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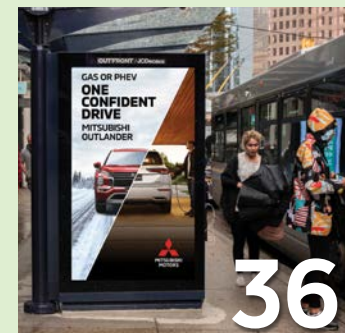
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ON THE COVER

This cover highlights a mural by Lindsay Allison C, where artistic storytelling meets branded environment design. Through refined linework, natural motifs, and architectural sensitivity, her work shows how murals can decorate and define spaces. In commercial and public settings alike, these large-scale visuals become part of the built environment. Here, she paints a mural for Dr. George Hall Public School in Kawartha Lakes, Ont.

Photo courtesy Lindsay Allison C





Where moments take shape

Memory rarely begins with words. It begins in sensation. For me, it starts in my mom's bakery. Long before I understood design, I understood imprint. Flour in the air, sugar on warm surfaces, early mornings where the space felt alive before the world caught up. I didn't have language for it then, but I recognize it now: experience is built in layers you only register later.

There was also a blue-and-white two-tier cake that later served as the bakery's logo. It became part of the setup—seen often enough to fade into the background, yet specific enough to remain. Even now, when I see similar colours or forms, it returns...that sense of recognition.

And that's what I've come to understand more deeply through this industry. While we work in fragments—surfaces, light, material, motion—what we are building is continuity: how one moment leads to the next, and what lingers when it is gone.

This issue moves through that idea. On page five, a digital display design transforms Toronto's Berczy Square lobby into a blend of architecture and narrative, showing us how immersive environments today demand our attention, often all too quietly. On page eight, we look at QR codes on signage, and the friction they can create—raising questions about when it actually helps versus when it interrupts the purpose of the sign itself.

On page 12, we step behind the surface, where installers and manufacturers work through complex substrates—glass, texture, and architectural form—adapting tools to spaces that resist uniformity. By page 16, that complexity becomes structural as we explore the Canadian Electrical Code and Part II standards, and why they matter to signmakers in practice.

On page 21, a mural artist expands the frame, showing how painted work turns environments into spaces of belonging, where walls carry narrative. On page 32, PRINTING United 2026 looks ahead to where production and innovation converge in Las Vegas. We'll see you there!

That convergence continues on page 34 at Canada's Farm Show, where signage systems, from wayfinding to experiential, guide visitors through space as a single connected system. On page 36, Canadian OOH widens the lens again, where attention is more selective, relevance defines impact, and AI shapes strategy. So, what does that mean for Canada's ad landscape? Find out!

Memory, in that sense, is not archived but continuously rewritten through encounter, repetition, and design choices. Across all the articles in this issue, a single thread holds: whether through scale, interaction, material, compliance, storytelling, or strategy, every page is examining the same shift—from signage as object to signage as experience. I hope you enjoy reading this issue. We enjoyed putting it together for you. ●

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Printed in Canada



A 90-foot leap in digital display design

By Dillon Quinn

When you walk into Berczy Square at 33 Yonge Street in Toronto, you are greeted by a boulder-shaped front desk flanked by pillars resembling vast tree trunks. Inside, the lobby evokes a Zen-like greenhouse, with hanging moss pendants over a reflecting pool, a vapour-based fire pit, and a trellis full of cascading greenery that wraps the elevator bay's travertine wall up towards the atrium.

Anchoring the trellis is a towering, 27.4-m (90-ft) direct-view LED (dvLED) screen that guides visitors' eyes up to the sky. The nine-storey display shows a series of four generative art capsules created by Montreal-based multimedia studio Gentilhomme that evolve based on the weather, time of day, and sports schedule.

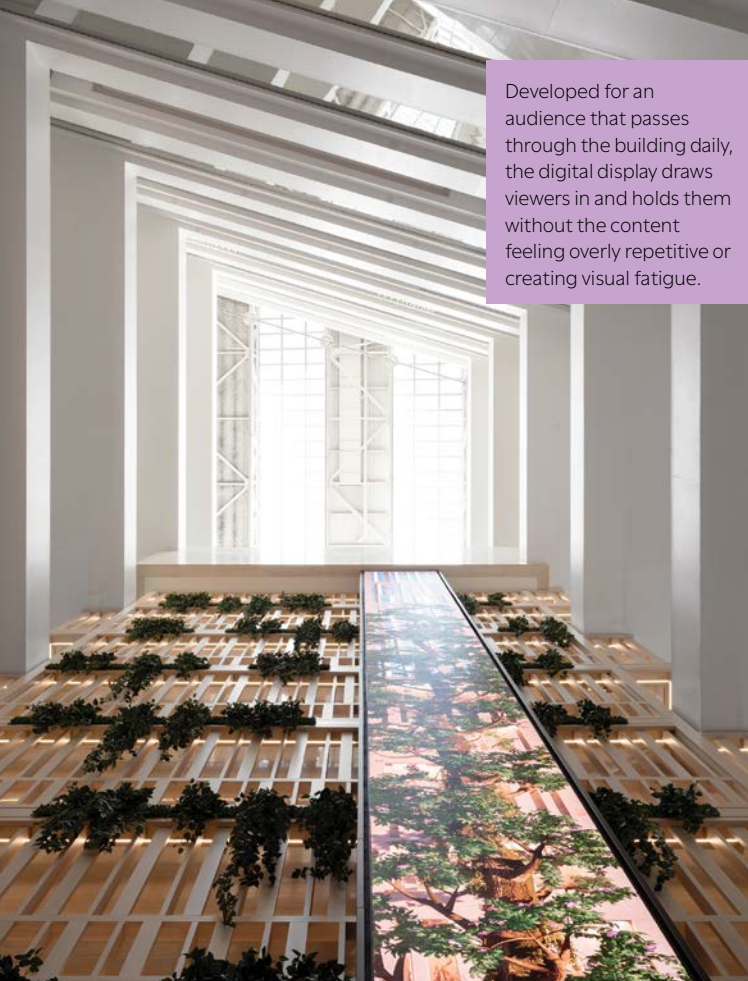
As more Canadian workers return to working in the office, Class A commercial office buildings need to offer tenants more than when 33 Yonge first opened in 1982.

Commutes are longer, working from home became the norm, and employees, especially younger ones, often live with family or in small spaces. They need more places in the city—"third spaces"—to meet, network, and socialize before and after work.

Berczy Square offers something other offices do not: One of the tallest indoor dvLED screens in North America. The screen is not just a display, but an integral part of the architecture that sets the tone for the wider design vision.

Technology, content, and sound had to function as one integrated system within the space, not layered elements. A standard 16:9 format was divided and stacked into five half-screen panels, forming a seamless unified display.

Photos by Scott Norsworthy



Developed for an audience that passes through the building daily, the digital display draws viewers in and holds them without the content feeling overly repetitive or creating visual fatigue.

The office rebound

GWL Realty Advisors (GWLRA) is a Canadian real estate investment advisor. As an office landlord, we realized we need to “earn the commute” by designing spaces and amenities that make employees want to come to the office.

Two years ago, we started reimagining 33 Yonge as Berczy Square, with new restaurants, new retail, and a hotel-like new lobby. In other words, a destination. The investment paid off: Berczy Square is now 96 per cent leased.

Pause, and look up

To reimagine our lobby, we turned to Alison McNeil, a partner at Toronto-based architecture firm DIALOG, who redesigned the lobby and bar at Toronto’s Four Seasons Hotel. The new Berczy Square needed to balance hospitality and productivity while creating a distinctive connection between the Financial District and the iconic Berczy Park in Old Town.

“The lobby at Berczy Square represents a shift in how the office building has evolved,” says McNeil. “No longer simply a place to pass through, we’ve reimagined the lobby as a destination for gathering and connection—a space that reflects both the building’s location and identity.” The screen highlights the atrium architecture, the only one of its kind in the Financial District that’s accessible to the general public. “We call this design concept Pause because it invites people to slow down, look up, and take a moment to breathe,” McNeil adds.

An architectural element

The display’s content does not simply function as wayfinding or advertising. Like architecture, it shapes how people experience the lobby, influencing how they move, where they pause, and where they look.

“We approached the screen as an architectural element rather than a display surface,” says Thibaut Duverneix, founder and executive creative director of Gentilhomme. “The goal was to create something that lives with the building, a form of atmospheric content that reveals itself over time.”

Developed for an audience that passes through the building daily, the digital display must draw viewers in and hold them without the content feeling overly repetitive or creating visual fatigue. The images are calming, unfolding gradually to seamlessly become part of the rhythms of the lobby’s comings and goings.

From concept to screen

With the design strategy in place, our next challenge was to build and install this unusually shaped indoor screen.

Our first call was to Samsung to develop a screen that is nearly 1.9 m (6.3 ft) wide and more than 27.4 m (90 ft) tall. Based on the shape, this would be more complex than a standard aspect ratio. Samsung said it was possible, so we went with the Samsung IFR series, an indoor, direct-view screen featuring advanced LED HDR with brightness up to 2,400 nits and 3,840Hz refresh rates.

Some key numbers:

- 18,360 pixels tall
- More than 23.5 million pixels total
- Five synchronized controllers fed from one video source

A ‘spaceship’ server

In April 2024, we engaged Doing Things Simply Inc (DTS), a Toronto-based company that specializes in integrated corporate AV solutions, to oversee the technical delivery of the project in collaboration with Samsung, multimedia studio Gentilhomme, and our installation and construction partners TradeSync and Govan Brown, respectively.

DTS’s role extended beyond the delivery of the dvLED screen. Early in the process, the team helped underscore the importance of content and sound as integral components of the overall experience, introducing multimedia studio Gentilhomme and shaping how the visual and audio elements could work together within the space.

To support this, DTS designed and integrated a discreet audio system using Fohhn linear directional speakers, selected for their ability to deliver even, controlled sound while remaining visually unobtrusive. The speakers were custom-painted to blend seamlessly into the architecture. GWLRA also partnered with Bellosound to curate a musical program that evolves throughout the day, complementing the generative artwork and reinforcing the calming, immersive atmosphere of the lobby.

“Our intent was to support a complete experience,” says Gavin Bridge, managing director at DTS. “The technology, content, and

sound all needed to work together in a way that felt natural to the space, not layered on. We had to take the usual 16:9 format, split it into sections, and stack them on top of each other into essentially five half 16:9 screens that would work seamlessly together,” he adds.

Another major factor influencing the installation was the generative content, which means it evolves in real-time in response to pre-programmed variables.

Gentilhomme was engaged in September 2024, a month prior to construction. To allow the screen to display real-time changes at such a large scale, we installed a massive PIXERA media server behind the screen. It resembles a spaceship and requires a lot of processing power.

The timeline

- Screen construction starts: October 13, 2025 (video installation begins)
- Screen construction ends: November 26, 2025 (video wall installation completed)
- Final content testing: March 2, 2026
- Lobby opens to the public: March 21, 2026

A screen within a trellis

One of our goals with the new lobby was to ensure all renovations were “soft interventions” that preserved the original architecture, like the travertine wall behind the screen.

The steel trellis structure that surrounds the screen was designed to prevent any damage or penetration of the existing travertine cladding on the elevator column. That introduced big complexities into the load and design of the steel.

The screen, designed to be as hidden as possible, was then built on top of the trellis within an exoskeleton that wraps around it. There are two side gables, and metal stud floor-to-ceiling structural framing that supports the screen at each level like a rib cage.

We made sure everything is perfectly aligned from a depth perspective all the way up. Any error would be noticeable to viewers. As construction was underway, the team was constantly checking measurements because there are no do-overs in this type of install.

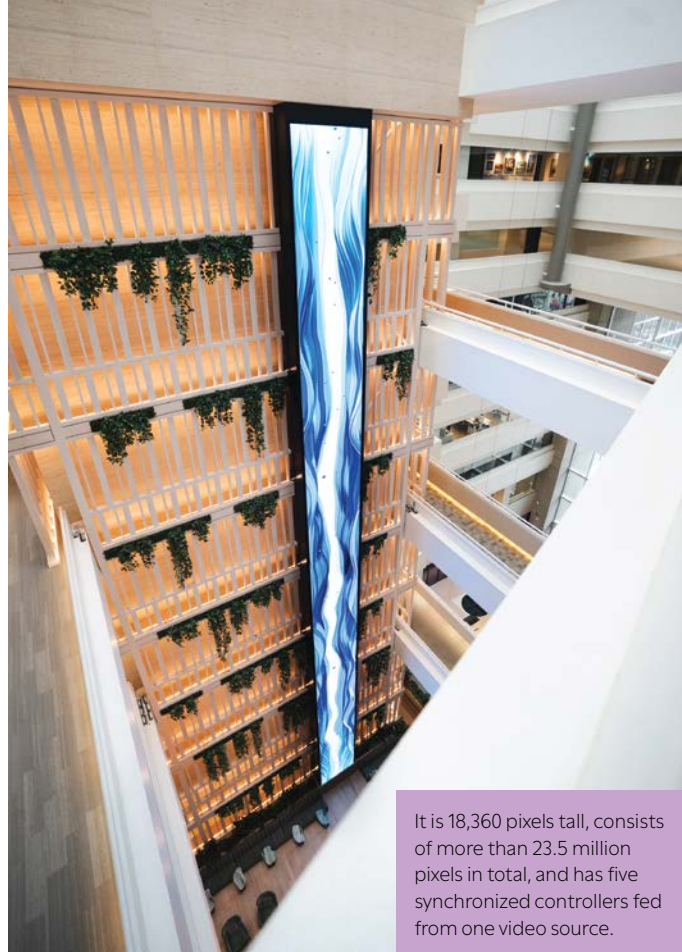
“We’re installing in an active construction site,” explains Bridge. “There were always multiple trades in the space working simultaneously on different aspects of the lobby renovation. The team did a lot of climbing to bring materials up.”

“We also had to test in sections, from top to bottom,” he continues. “We didn’t want to get too far down and realize colour patterns and sequences were not working above. All in all, it was an amazing team of people that worked together.”

The heartbeat of Berczy Square

On March 21, 2026, the lobby opened to the public with an official grand opening event taking place a month later. Depending on the day, visitors will see one of four art “capsules” that Gentilhomme produced.

“The artwork is the heartbeat of Berczy Square,” explains Gentilhomme’s Duverneix. “It responds to the city and the rhythm of the people within it.”



It is 18,360 pixels tall, consists of more than 23.5 million pixels in total, and has five synchronized controllers fed from one video source.

The content responds to a constant flow of data, such as the time, the weather, the seasons, and sports games happening in Toronto on a given day, causing the images to morph and trigger “Easter eggs.”

The four capsules include *Living Architecture*, the hero piece: a tree that grows by the hour and transforms with the seasons; *Breach of Light* offers an ambient, hypnotic flow of continuous movement; *Mirror of Time* presents a calm, passive, dreamlike sky; and *Surreal Hourglass* is the most literal timekeeper, with a parkour for descending balls that mark the passing hours.

The future

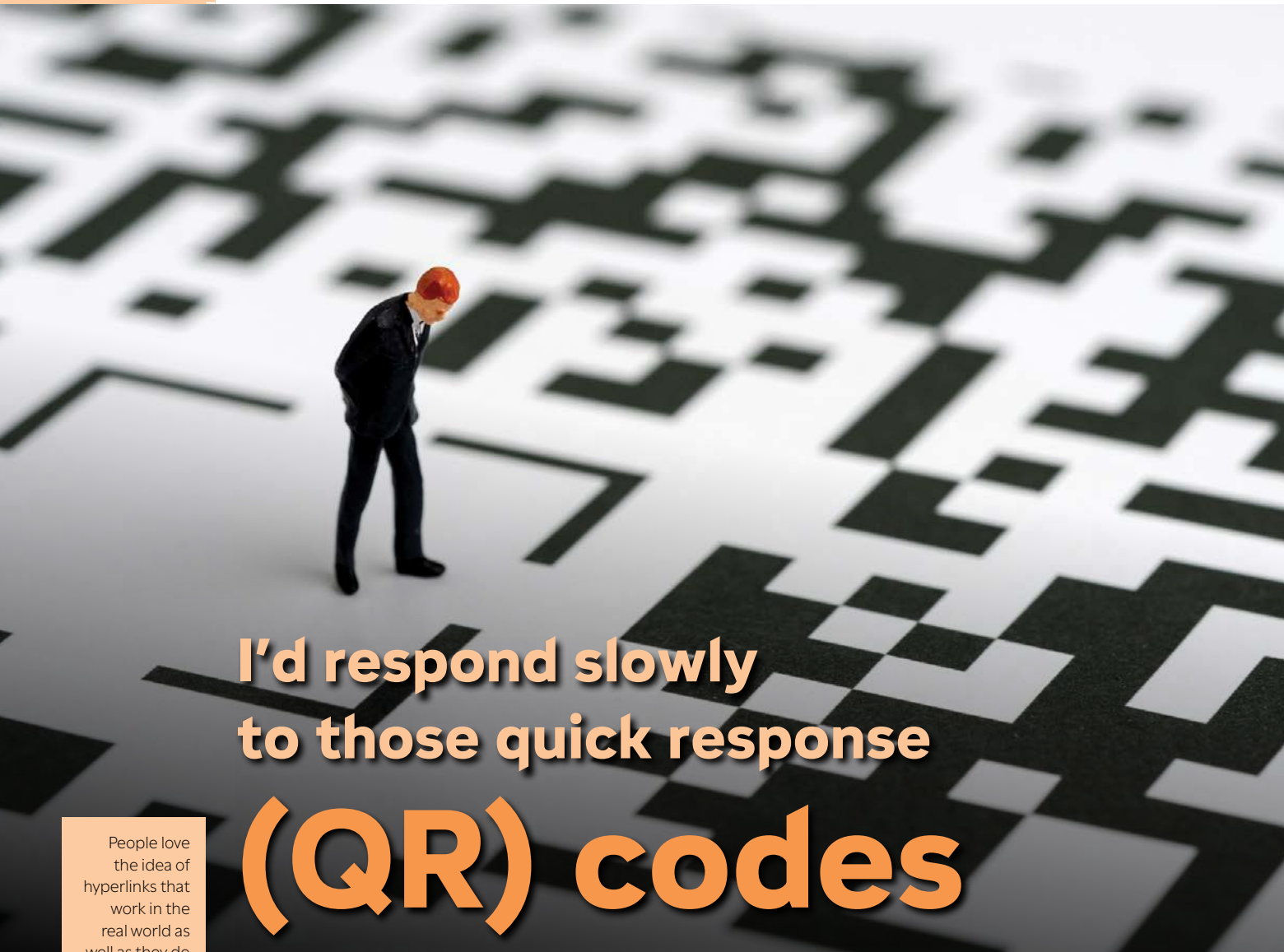
We did several weeks of content testing prior to the lobby’s unveiling to ensure the images displayed seamlessly. DTS is now working on a web-based controller that will take the complexity out of updating the pre-scheduled screen content for GWLRA.

“Our goal is to have GWLRA become fully self-sufficient,” says Bridge. “They can adjust levels up and down without having to log into servers. We’re in the background if they need us.”

There will also be quarterly maintenance checks. If repairs are needed, there’s a monorail system installed 27.4 m (90 ft) above the lobby that requires a lucky maintenance tech to hang from a bosun chair, kind of like a high-rise window washer.

This achievement would not have been possible if we had not brought all the various companies together—the interior architecture firm, the content producers, the installers, and the construction team—early on. ●

Dillon Quinn is a project manager at GWL Realty Advisors, with experience delivering projects across industrial, office, and residential asset classes in Ontario. His portfolio includes work such as industrial warehouses in Bolton and Richmond Hill, residential townhomes in Oakville, and the Berczy Square office renovation, among others. Known for his collaborative approach, Quinn served as owner’s representative on Berczy Square, leading design, approvals, and construction while guiding projects from concept through successful turnover.



I'd respond slowly to those quick response (QR) codes

People love the idea of hyperlinks that work in the real world as well as they do while surfing the web. But when it comes to putting QR codes on signs, the experience rarely lives up to the hype.

Photo © Eamesbot/
Courtesy
Dreamstime.com

By Adam Fine

Quick Response (QR) codes are everywhere. In Canada, advertisements and posters feature them prominently. Some restaurants use them to deliver their menus, requiring patrons to pull out their phones upon taking a seat.

For those who don't know, a QR code is just a graphic that points your smartphone to a specific website. Take a photograph of a QR code applied to some surface—like a sign or a poster—and your phone will take you to a specific website embedded in that code's graphic. Easy!

The firm I work for, Fathom Studio, designs wayfinding and interpretive signs for municipalities, hospitals, trail groups, and others. Every day, my team and I try to make the world better with thoughtful strategic signage plans and functional and beautiful sign designs. Our design process always includes discussions with our clients about what they want their signs to communicate to the public, and by what means.

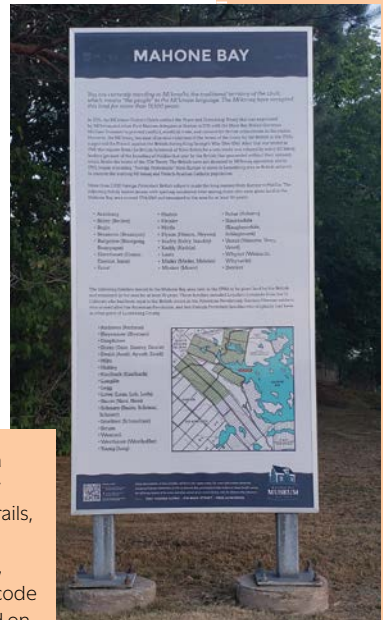
Despite QR codes frequently being proposed by both clients and stakeholders in our projects, it's rare that I recommend them as a design solution. People love the idea of hyperlinks that work in the real world as well as they do while surfing the web. But when it comes to putting QR codes on signs, the experience rarely lives up to the hype.

I've collected some common issues, which should give you pause before considering QR for your project or design.

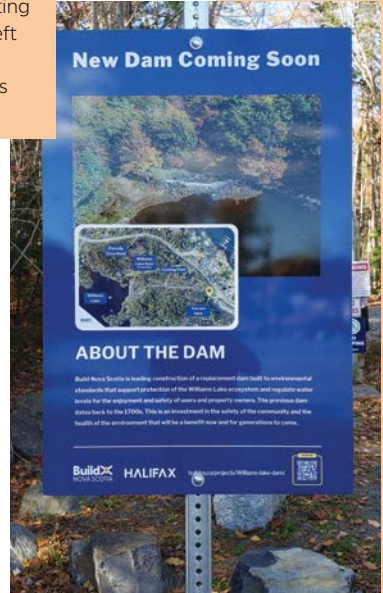
Link rot/link not

Does your client have a working website today?

A user, reading a sign at a trailhead, notes a QR code that will take her to more information. But when she scans the code with her phone, she gets a 404 error saying the website doesn't exist. This scenario is all too common: many QR links I test on signs in the real world are broken. I just tried a QR code on a well-designed trail map sign built in 2025—just one year ago—and the link was already broken.



Signs are often installed in city parks and on trails, where they are rarely checked, and a fake QR code can be slapped on top of the existing QR code and left for months or years before it's discovered.



Each QR code requires a website for effectiveness. If a website doesn't exist today, won't exist for a while, or if there isn't a long-term commitment to maintaining a working link to regularly updated information, I cannot recommend adding a QR code to a sign design. The likelihood of a QR code pointing to a broken link is very high.

Changing technology

Most of us have been scanning QR codes on our mobile phones for about six years: not long.

QR code technology was invented in 1994 for scanning and tracking auto parts by Japanese manufacturer Denso Wave. The codes took a long time to catch on for other uses. In the early 2000s, QR codes were often touted as the next big thing, but it took a long time before users actually scanned them, except as a niche activity by a few tech-obsessed people. In 2012, a joke blog, *Pictures of People Scanning QR-codes*, featured exactly zero posts¹: the joke

being that despite an army of marketers promoting the technology, no one actually ever scanned a code in the real world in 2012.

In 2020, everything changed because of two things that happened at about the same time. The first change was that most mobile phones finally shipped with QR code readers by default—you no longer needed to download a special app or enable special features on your phone. The second was the COVID pandemic: QR scanning rates went up overnight. Fear of infection during the height of COVID made QR adoption rapid: restaurants used them for menus you didn't have to touch. Now, scanning a menu has declined in popularity, but nevertheless, QR code use seems to be up everywhere else, such as on various outdoor media: on ads, posters, windows, and signs.

But a heightened level of broad QR use isn't, by itself, a reason to put codes on signs. Technology changes every few years. A municipal park or trail sign may be in the



If the information is actually important to users, just put it on the sign.
Photos courtesy Adam Fine



ground in 10-20 years. QR code reading requires four elements: **a QR code + a scanning app + a smartphone + a website.** Will all four elements still work together in 2046? In contrast, a no-tech sign can still do its job quite well when there's no network, no power, and even when users don't have mobile phones.

Also, we don't know much about the rate of scanning by users. How many people read your sign today? Of all the people who read it, how many also scanned the code to find out more?

Network effects

A trailhead sign in the wilderness (with no network connectivity) offers its message in the rain, sleet, snow, and hail. In contrast, reading web content requires a mobile phone and a working network connection. QR codes are useless when there is poor network connectivity. For this reason, QR codes should never be used to deliver important information in remote areas, such as behavioural or regulatory information.

If the information is actually important to users—like “watch for bears”—just put it on the sign.

Quishing

QR codes on signs are easily replaced with stickers, which can point users to nefarious websites against their will.

This is called “quishing” in the cybersecurity world, and Canada has already seen many cases. Unlike in retail and restaurant environments with staff around all the time, signs are installed in city parks and on trails, where they are mostly unobserved. Such signs are rarely checked by their owners, and a fake QR code can be slapped on top of the existing QR code and left in place for months or years before it's discovered. This puts your users at unnecessary risk for little reward.

It's worth pointing out that this is a risk even if your sign graphics don't include a QR code: it is possible for someone to put a sticker with a nefarious QR code onto any sign, poster, or billboard. Nevertheless, it's easier to do this to replace an existing QR code in a nicely cordoned-off area of the sign's graphic layout.

Stonewalling

QR codes can be a delay strategy for institutions that would prefer not to debate important issues and come to a decision. Instead of deciding now what information is important to communicate to visitors, “let's just put a QR code on the sign and decide what to write later.” In my experience, this rarely happens as planned: important decisions are left undecided for a long time, possibly forever.

Creating artwork for a real sign that is going to be printed, fabricated, and installed prevents this delay tactic: the



QR codes increase the visual clutter and often detract from the effectiveness of a sign. Placement matters—especially on busy roadways, where scanning encourages drivers to reach for phones while driving.

Photo © Audiohead/Courtesy Dreamstime.com

institution must approve the artwork, including every word and graphic in it. This pressure to review, deliberate, and sign off on a final layout is a good thing for clients, forcing them to decide and execute the project.

Clutter

Signs have to deliver a lot of messages, usually quickly, while people are on the move—by bike, on foot, or in cars. QR codes increase the visual clutter and often detract from the effectiveness of a sign, which already communicates lots of information. I am routinely fascinated by QR codes designed into billboards facing busy roadways. These encourage drivers to pick up their phones while driving!

Disappointment

Even when QR codes work properly, users may be disappointed when the information presented online could simply have been applied to the sign. If the information is stable—it doesn't change periodically—if it's simple to communicate, and readily applied to the sign that people can read right now, why would you make them scan with their phone? Put another way, if users aren't inspired by the message on your sign, what would motivate them to take out their phone and scan your code for extra information?

Possibility

I've made my appeal. Perhaps you have some of the following things in place, and QR codes are worth considering:

- Your client already has a working website, which is frequently updated and well-maintained. The sign program they are considering could increase engagement with the useful information they already provide online.
- Your client's website presents useful in-depth information that would be interesting to a large number of users, and would provide additional information, interactivity, or a call to action.

- The sign you are installing is temporary, part of a campaign with a beginning and end—an election sign that takes you to a candidate's platform, a for-sale sign on a house that connects people to a real estate listing, restaurants pointing people to the up-to-date menu.
- Your signs are installed in a place where it would be hard to meddle with them, or where they are regularly checked and maintained.
- The sign will be in a place with a reliable Wi-Fi or mobile signal.
- There's an opportunity to increase the accessibility or inclusivity of the information on the sign: e.g., alternatives in American Sign Language, translation to other languages.

These are great reasons to consider the technology—but even with the above in place, please keep in mind that fundamentally every sign needs to do two things: it (1) grabs people's attention, and (2) communicates important ideas. Providing a QR code should never diminish or delegate both of those things to a code that people might or might not scan. I'd always make sure your sign is great, even for those unwilling, unable, or uninterested in scanning that QR code. ●

Note

¹ See *Pictures of People Scanning QR-codes* here:

<https://picturesofpeoplescanningqr-codes.tumblr.com/>

Adam Fine is a planner with a unique passion—signs. He has helped organizations improve their public spaces and rights-of-way with better signage. In concert with his colleagues at Fathom Studio, Fine has worked on interpretive and wayfinding plans for all kinds of clients: municipalities large and small, trail groups, Parks Canada, provincial parks departments, and universities and college campuses.

For exterior wall graphics, navigating textures like brick or cinder block can be a real challenge for installers. Look for cast films that have an adhesive specifically formulated for unpainted, tough, textured surfaces.

Photo courtesy Art City Wraps



Mastering the elements

Exploring graphics solutions for textured walls, glass, and more

By Molly Waters

Isn't it great when you get a job where the surface you are applying to is smooth, flat, and perfectly prepped? The reality is that this is the exception, not the rule. Since wraps have become more common, we are tasked with covering a vast array of surface types such as stucco, spandrel glass, floors, and even architectural fixtures. The rise of non-traditional substrates has created the need for manufacturers and installers to pivot, optimizing both products and processes for these unique applications.



Architectural graphic films are gaining popularity for both commercial and residential surfaces. Specialty glass films—like the Auravate film series from Avery Dennison—offer opportunities for residential installation on window surfaces for privacy or decorative finishes.

It is crucial to understand the challenges of these diverse surfaces and pair them with the correct film and adhesive technology. In this article, I will share a few different substrates we frequently encounter in the graphics market and explain how to choose the best film for the job.

Wall wraps: navigating texture and paint

Wall wraps are probably the most common application I encounter on a day-to-day basis. The types of walls, however, vary greatly. Some are new construction, while others involve sprucing up an older space, like decorating a locker room or a

school hallway. The two main things we must consider for wall applications are surface texture and paint.

Depending on the texture, you may need a highly conformable film like a cast film or polyurethane (PU). If the surface is something like brick or cinder block, you will want to use cast or PU. For cinder blocks, the next thing to consider is the environment (indoors vs. outdoors) and whether it is painted. If it is unpainted, it is recommended to use a product specifically approved for unpainted concrete; for Avery Dennison, this would be MPI 1405. If the block is painted, always perform an adhesion test. With the rising popularity

Before getting started on a non-traditional surface, be sure to consult the product data sheets and instructional bulletins to ensure the substrate is prepped properly and take the time to learn about any specialty installation procedures that may be necessary.

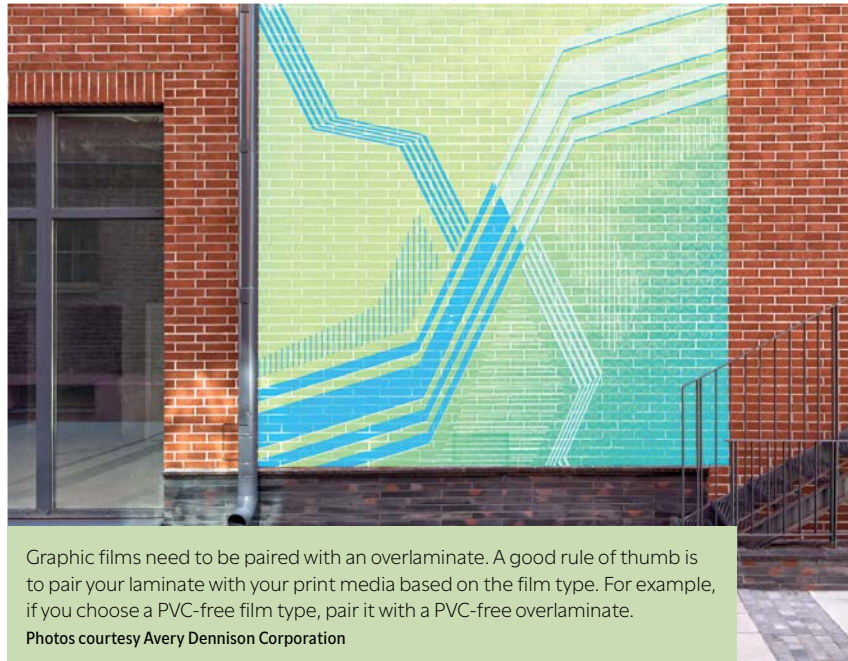


of low-volatile organic compound (VOC) paints, there has been an increase in adhesion issues. Low-VOC paint takes longer to outgas and cure, making it much more difficult to stick to, which often requires a more aggressive adhesive.

Whatever film you choose, it will need to be laminated. A good rule of thumb is to pair your laminate with your print media based on the film type, or choose a laminate of a higher grade than the base. For example, it is acceptable to put a cast laminate on a calendared base, but you never want to put a calendared laminate on a cast base. The same logic applies to PU: you can use a PU laminate over a cast film, but you should avoid using a standard cast laminate over a highly conformable PU base. If you use Avery Dennison MPI 1405, I typically recommend the DOL 7460 overlamine, or, if you want a satin finish, we also have DOL 6470. For MPI 1105, I recommend any of our cast laminates, chosen based on your desired finish.

Floor graphics: safety and surface types

Floor graphics gained massive popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic. While their use may have levelled out slightly, end-users are now much more aware that floors are



Graphic films need to be paired with an overlamine. A good rule of thumb is to pair your laminate with your print media based on the film type. For example, if you choose a PVC-free film type, pair it with a PVC-free overlamine.

Photos courtesy Avery Dennison Corporation

prime real estate for decoration, advertising, and wayfinding. Using short-term floor graphics for events remains incredibly popular.

The most important thing to keep in mind regarding floor graphics is that the warranted life of the film is usually only up to six months. This is consistent across most, if not all, film manufacturers (Some films may have an even shorter lifespan if they are not laminated). When planning a floor graphic, surface type is the most critical factor. A permanent adhesive may be the best choice for surfaces such as low-



Privacy is becoming an increasingly important requirement for both commercial and residential spaces. Decorative films offer rooms a colourful, decorative approach to privacy—and help enhance the design of a newly remodeled space.



pile carpet, a raw warehouse floor, or textured tile with heavy grout lines. Conversely, a lower-tack, removable adhesive is great for smooth surfaces, like linoleum, smooth tile, or sealed wood floors. Finally, any time you are doing floors, you absolutely must choose a film/laminate combination that carries a UL 410 rating for slip resistance. Most manufacturers will clearly note on the product data sheet if the film is approved for floor graphics.

Architectural graphics: resurfacing over replacing

Architectural graphic films are up and coming, opening the door to new applications, like wrapping spandrel glass on the exterior of buildings. It is often much more cost-effective to cover spandrel glass with a pressure-sensitive film than to replace all the glass on the building. The benefit is that clients can choose from more than 100 stock colours or have a custom colour match created to achieve a highly specific look.

Another rapidly growing application is sprucing up old office spaces using specialty architectural films. These

pressure-sensitive films come with textured patterns already integrated into the material. You can choose from a massive variety of high-end finishes, including wood grain, stone, leather, metal, and more. Keep in mind that these are specialty films that require added training to properly prep and install, ensuring the best visual appearance and longevity. Other glass applications include using dusted or frosted films to either completely cover a window for privacy or plotting them into artistic designs to elevate an office space.

The bottom line

I see new applications for pressure-sensitive films every single day. I always say that we are really only limited by our imagination. Before getting started on a non-traditional surface, be sure to consult the product data sheets and instructional bulletins to ensure the substrate is prepped properly and take the time to learn about any specialty installation procedures that may be necessary. If you still have questions, be sure to reach out to your distributor or your media supplier. ●

Molly Waters is senior regional technical specialist at Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions. If you have questions about Avery Dennison films, learn more at graphics.averydennison.com or email insidesales.graphics@averydennison.com.

The compliance guide

How the Canadian Electrical Code relates to the sign industry Part 1 of 3

Section 34 is key for sign installations—but it works alongside the broader electrical code, not independently.

Photo © Alexandersikov/Courtesy Dreamstime.com

By Dale Maron and Devin Froese

Many sign companies experience compliance through plant visits, written notices, and approval labels. That can make it seem as though the shop's obligation is simply to satisfy a certification program. In reality, those programs are only the visible part of a larger system. The foundation is understanding how the Canadian Electrical Code Part I and the applicable Part II sign standard work together.

How does the Canadian Electrical Code relate to the sign industry? It is a simple question with a not-so-simple answer. Sign companies do not operate from only one perspective. They manufacture, install, and service the same sign over its lifecycle. That means the answer is never just “read Section

34” or “follow the label program.” The real answer begins with understanding the difference between Canadian Electrical Code Part I and the applicable Part II product standard.

From a manufacturer's viewpoint, Part I may not seem as important as it does to an installer in the field. From an installer's viewpoint, Part II may seem like something the shop or certification body looks after. In practice, many sign companies touch both. If a company wants safe products and smoother approvals, it needs to understand where Part I starts, where Part II starts, and how they connect.

One of the biggest sources of confusion is that many sign companies experience compliance mainly through visits from CSA Group or another certification authority. Representatives



come into the plant, review procedures, inspect products, and sometimes issue written notices when something needs to be corrected. Over time, that can create the impression that the company's obligation is simply to stay compliant with the certification program. That is understandable, but it misses the bigger point. The certification program is the visible approval process. The underlying requirement comes from the applicable Canadian standard.

Part I is more than Section 34

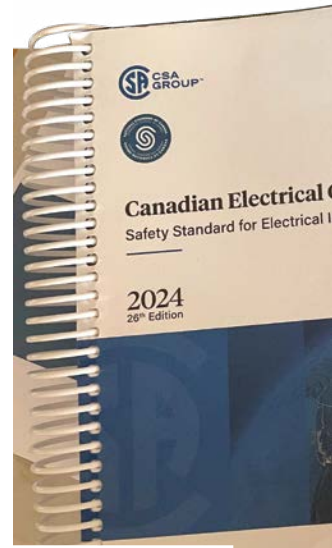
CEC Part I is the code book electricians, technicians, contractors, and inspectors use for electrical installation work. Currently, the national edition is CSA C22.1:24,

KEY TAKEAWAY:

For sign companies, Part I primarily governs installation and field work. Part II product standards govern how electrical equipment is constructed and approved. Certification bodies verify ongoing conformity, but they do not replace the source standard.

although provinces and territories adopt new editions on their own timelines. That is why a sign company must always pay attention to the requirements in its own jurisdiction. The code becomes enforceable through local adoption and regulation.

For the sign industry, Section 34, *Signs and Outline Lighting*, is obviously important. It speaks directly to sign-related



On the manufacturing side, obtain the applicable sign standard, review how approval is being maintained in the plant, and make sure supervisors, designers, assemblers, installers, and service staff understand the difference between the source standard and the certification program used to verify it.

Photos courtesy Dale Maron and Devin Froese

installation issues and is often where people start. The problem is when they stop there. Section 34 is a supplementary section, not a stand-alone code book within the code book. The general sections still matter. Sections 0 to 16 and Section 26 contain rules that apply more broadly to electrical installations, and those rules continue to support, qualify, or interact with Section 34. Depending on the work, that may include wiring methods, bonding and grounding, conductor protection, disconnecting means, permits, and work practices.

That is an important takeaway for installers and service technicians. A sign cannot be installed safely by reading Section 34 in isolation and ignoring the rest of the CEC. The code also relies on tables, diagrams, definitions, and appendices that help explain how the rules are intended to be applied. The more complex the sign system becomes, the more important it is to know how to navigate the entire code, not just one supplemental section.

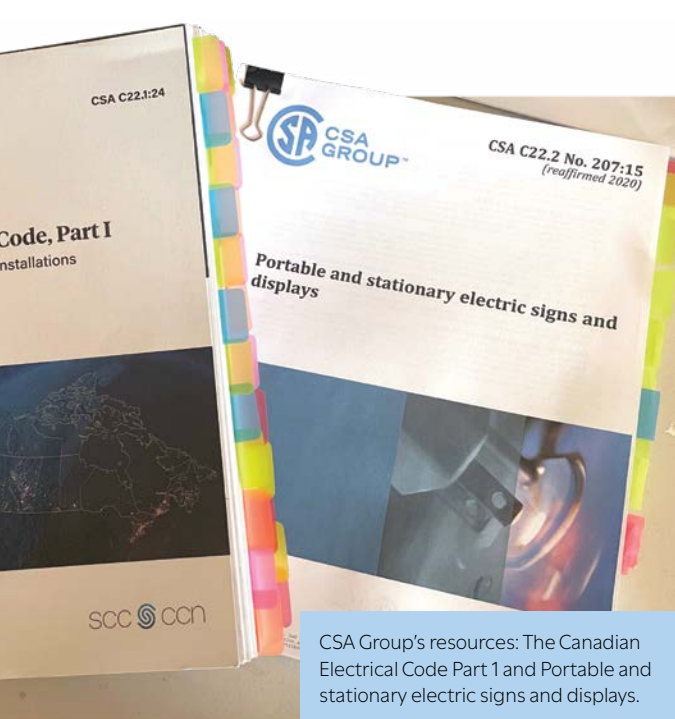
Part II is the standard behind the label

On the manufacturing side, the sign industry's core product standard is CSA C22.2 No. 207, *Portable and stationary electric signs and displays*. It sits within the Part II family of standards and addresses how electric signs and displays

are constructed for use in Canada. That includes requirements related to materials, enclosures, weather resistance, bonding and grounding, corrosion protection, flammability, markings, and other construction details that affect whether a finished sign can be approved as safe electrical equipment.

This is the point many shops need to hear more clearly: the requirement does not begin with a CSA label or any other approval mark. Those marks matter, and the certification process behind them matters, but they are not the source of the technical requirement. The source is the applicable standard and the approval framework built around it. The factory visit, audit, or written notice exists because the sign must continue to conform to the applicable Canadian requirements that govern how it is built and approved.

That distinction matters because a shop can become very good at passing an audit without fully understanding what sits behind the audit. When that happens, compliance becomes reactive. Staff wait for the next visit, fix the next notice, and continue working by memory or habit. A stronger approach is to understand why the certification body is asking for something and how that ties back to product design, component selection, documentation, labelling, and production controls. Whether a company works with CSA Group, UL Solutions, Intertek, or another recognized approval body, the lesson is the same: do not let the label replace understanding.



CSA Group's resources: The Canadian Electrical Code Part 1 and Portable and stationary electric signs and displays.

installation issues, permit issues, service problems, or inspection delays. The cost shows up as rework, slower projects, callbacks, rejected installs, and lost confidence from customers or authorities having jurisdiction.

The knowledge gap can also become cultural. In some companies, practices are passed from one worker to the next without anyone checking whether the original method still matches today's code and standards. That kind of tribal knowledge can work for a while, but it is risky. A worker may know how something has "always been done" without understanding whether it is still correct, or whether it applies to newer products such as LED message centres, digital displays, new power systems, or more integrated control equipment. When knowledge is incomplete, safety can suffer, and so can the reputation of the company and the local sign industry.

Why the distinction matters

This is not just a technical point. It affects daily operations. Many sign companies design, build, install, and service their own work. If the shop does not understand Part II, it may use components or construction methods that create approval problems later. If the field crew does not understand Part I beyond Section 34, it may run into

The industry keeps moving

There is also a practical challenge: the sign industry evolves quickly. Lighting technologies, electronic controls, display systems, power supplies, and product configurations have changed dramatically over the years. Standards development takes time, public input, committee review, and multiple rounds of technical discussion. As of writing, the active sign product standard remains CSA C22.2 No.

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Low-voltage LED signs are not exempt from compliance requirements—if the sign connects to the electrical supply, manufacturing and installation standards still apply.

Photo © Cherezoff/Courtesy Dreamstime.com

207:15 (R2020), which means many companies are innovating in a market that has moved forward faster than the title page of the standard might suggest.

That does not mean the documents are irrelevant. It means companies need to know them better, follow the applicable approval pathways, and stay engaged with current guidance from their certification bodies, local inspection authorities, and industry organizations. It also means companies should avoid assuming that low-voltage LED work is somehow outside the compliance conversation. If the finished sign is electrical equipment connected to the supply, manufacturing and installation requirements still matter.

Where companies can level up

For companies that want to level up their knowledge and compliance, a starting point is straightforward. Make sure key staff have access to the current editions of the Canadian Electrical Code Part I, not just excerpts or word-of-mouth summaries. Review Section 34, but also learn how the general sections support sign work. On the manufacturing side, obtain the applicable sign standard, review how approval is being maintained in the plant, and make sure supervisors, designers, assemblers, installers, and service staff understand the difference between the source standard and the certification program used to verify it.

Useful resources include CSA C22.1:24 and its handbook, CSA C22.2 No. 207-15 (R2020), guidance from provincial or territorial electrical authorities, electric sign code resources, and training from recognized certification bodies and code education providers. Internal shop procedures and refresher

training can then turn that information into everyday practice. Copies of the Code and standards are available through CSA Group's online store.¹

This article is the first in a three-part series aimed at helping sign companies better understand the rules and standards that affect their work. The main takeaway from this first article is simple: Part I and Part II do different jobs, but sign companies need both. Part I is more than Section 34. Part II is more than a label program. When companies understand that relationship, they are better positioned to build safe signs, install them properly, and protect the credibility of the industry. In the next article, look for a closer examination of the education and training options available to help companies and workers strengthen their knowledge and improve compliance, and some of the processes along the path to becoming a certified sign manufacturer and installation company. ●

Note

¹ Learn more about the Code and standards here: <https://www.csagroup.org/store/electrical/>.

Dale Maron is a journeyman Red Seal electrician and holds a Certified Master Electrician designation in Alberta. He also holds a Safety Codes Officer designation as an electrical inspector in the province. He is vice-chair of the Section 34 Subcommittee, a member of the CSA 22.2 No. 207 Standards Committee, and an Electrical Certificate Training Program (ECTP) instructor. Devin Froese is president of Seventy-Seven Signs, a member of the Section 34 Subcommittee, and a standing member of the Saskatchewan Sign Association.



Brushstrokes of belonging

Where murals, memory, and brand identity quietly converge

By Marika Gabriel

When the Olympic season rolled around, it wasn't just the games drawing attention—it was a mural at a Tim Hortons in Peterborough, Ont., celebrating and honouring Canada's hockey team that stopped this writer in her tracks. Behind the work was Ontario-based mural artist Lindsay Allison C, whose signature style blends fine line

illustration, floral motifs, hand lettering, and engraving-inspired detail into pieces that feel both soft and striking.

Known for balancing organic movement with clean structure, Allison creates murals that elevate spaces while telling thoughtful visual stories—an approach reflected in the wide range of branded spaces and client projects she has worked on. As businesses look for new ways to create

Murals are being used as content backdrops, incorporated into campaigns, and even rolled out across multiple locations for consistency.

Photos courtesy Lindsay Allison C



memorable, shareable environments, murals and artistic signage are becoming powerful tools to elevate brand identity and customer connection. That evolving role is why *Sign Media Canada* spoke with her about how art becomes a critical component of the brand experience.

Here's what she had to say.

How did you get started in mural work, and what initially drew you to this medium?

I started my business during a season of life when everything was shifting. After becoming a mom, I knew I wanted to build something that allowed me to stay creative while also being present with my family. I had always been artistic, but I hadn't yet found the medium that felt like it fully fit both my personality and the kind of impact I wanted to make.

Murals changed that for me. There's something incredibly powerful about creating work that exists outside of a canvas or a frame. It lives in the real world. People pass by it every day, interact with it, take photos with it, and build memories around it.





When a mural is created with interaction in mind, whether through scale, composition, or placement, it naturally becomes something people engage with.

What drew me in was that sense of permanence and presence. A mural doesn't just decorate a space; it transforms it. It can make a business feel more inviting, give a community something to feel proud of, and completely shift the energy of an environment. That combination of art and impact is what made me commit fully to this path.

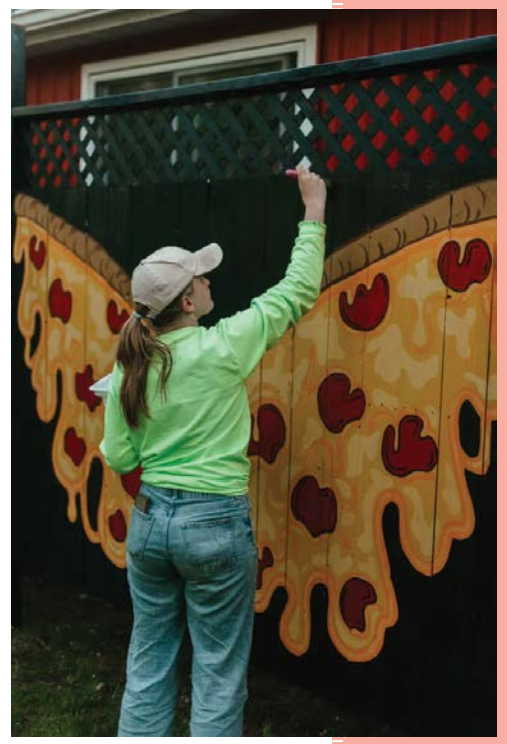
How has your style evolved, and what influences have shaped your work the most?

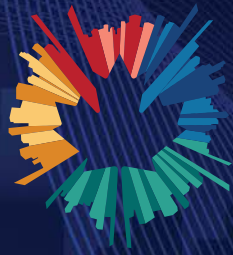
My style has become much more refined and intentional over time. In the beginning, I experimented a lot with detail and complexity, but as I gained more experience working at scale, I realized the power of simplification.

Now I lean into clean line work, balanced compositions, and organic elements, like florals and natural movement. I want my work to feel elevated and beautiful, but also clear and easy to read from a distance. That's especially important in commercial environments where people are often moving quickly past the space.

A big influence for me is the intersection of art and functionality. I'm constantly thinking about how a mural will photograph, how it interacts with light, and how it complements the architecture around it. Nature is also a strong influence. There is a softness and flow in natural forms that translates well into large-scale work.

Over time, I've also become more confident in editing my ideas. Knowing what to leave out is just as important as what to include.





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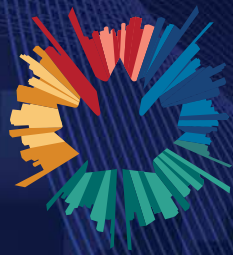


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Tell us about some of your most memorable and/or challenging projects.

Working with national brands like Tim Hortons and Canadian Tire has been a major highlight in my career. Being trusted to create work that aligns with such recognizable brands, especially during something as high-profile as the Olympic season, was incredibly meaningful.

One moment that stood out was seeing my work used as a backdrop for a promotional video. It's one thing to create something in person, but seeing it amplified and shared at that level really reinforces the impact murals can have within a brand's larger story.

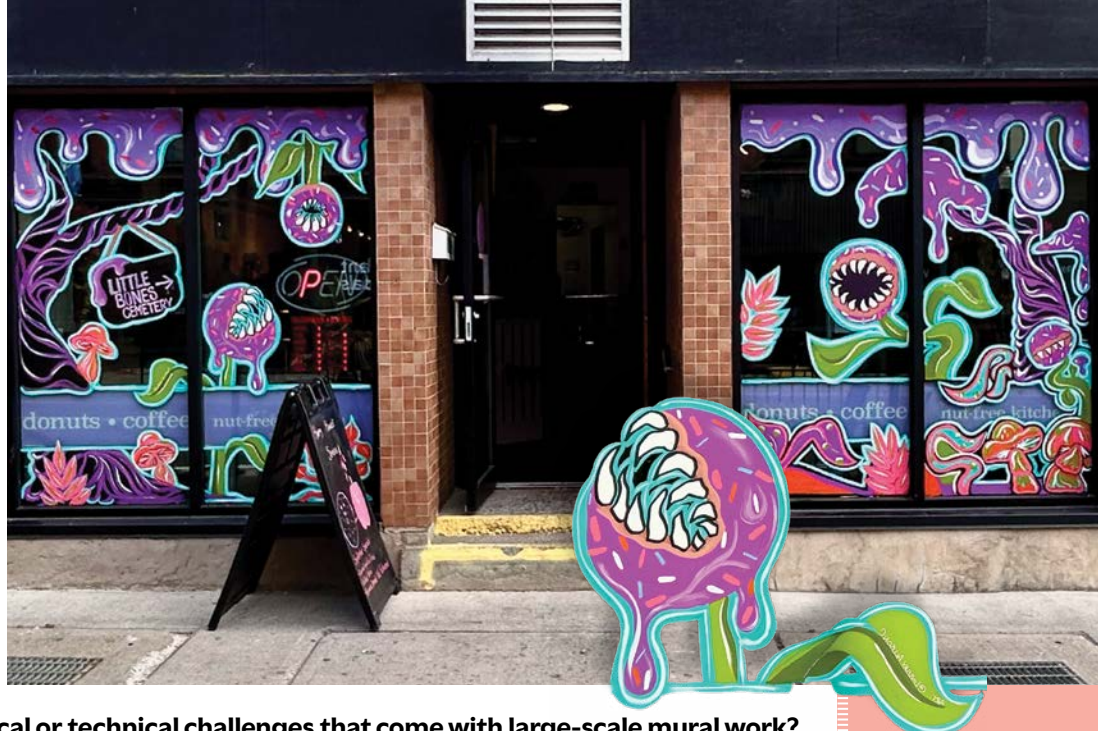
At the same time, those projects come with their own challenges—co-ordinating multiple locations, maintaining consistency across installs, and working within tight timelines requires a lot of planning and adaptability. Every space is slightly different, even when the concept is the same.

There are also physical challenges that come with the work. Long days on ladders, working in changing weather conditions, and making real-time adjustments on site all require a level of resilience that goes beyond just the creative side.



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What are some of the logistical or technical challenges that come with large-scale mural work?

Murals involve a lot more behind-the-scenes problem-solving than people often realize. Every surface is different, and that can dramatically affect how a design comes to life. You have to consider texture, absorbency, existing colours, and how the paint will behave on that material.

Environmental factors play a huge role as well. Weather can impact everything from drying time to scheduling, especially when working outdoors or on exterior windows.

There are also practical considerations, such as access to the space, working around business hours, and ensuring the design accounts for windows, doors, and structural elements. Something as simple as a window partition can change how a design needs to be laid out.

Time management is another major factor. In commercial settings, there's often a need to complete work quickly without sacrificing quality. That requires a lot of upfront planning, from creating paint-ready mockups to streamlining the execution process.

At the end of the day, a successful mural is just as much about logistics and preparation as it is about creativity. ●

Using the brand's colour palette, typography, and overall tone helps create consistency, but the interpretation is where the artist comes in.





Shaping the canvas of brand identity

How do you translate a brand's identity into a mural that feels both authentic and visually compelling?

For me, it always starts with understanding the brand on a deeper level. Beyond logos and colour palettes, I want to know how they want people to feel when they walk into their space. Are they aiming for something calm and elevated, or bold and energetic?

From there, I take those ideas and begin translating them into visuals that feel natural within the environment. I focus on simplifying the message into something that's clear, impactful, and visually cohesive.

A strong branded mural shouldn't feel like it was added as an afterthought. It should feel like it belongs to the space and enhances the overall experience of being there.



What makes murals an effective tool for brand storytelling?

Murals create a physical, immersive experience that's hard to replicate in other forms of marketing. In a time where so much content is digital and constantly moving, murals give people something tangible. They create a sense of place. They invite interaction.

They also naturally encourage sharing. When a mural is thoughtfully designed, people want to take photos with it

and post it. That turns the mural into an organic extension of the brand's marketing without feeling forced.

It's storytelling that people participate in, not just consume.

Where do you see the line—or overlap—between murals and signage in today's built environments? Do they complement each other?

There's definitely more overlap now than there used to be. Murals are becoming more strategic, and signage is becoming more design-driven.

I see them as two parts of the same experience. Signage provides clarity and direction, while murals create atmosphere and emotional connection.

When they're designed together intentionally, they can elevate each other. A mural can draw people in and set the tone, and signage can then guide them through the space in a way that feels cohesive rather than disconnected.



The most successful projects are the ones where people feel something when they see it. It might be a sense of pride, nostalgia, excitement, or simply feeling more welcome in a space.



How can signmakers and fabricators better collaborate with mural artists on integrated projects?

The biggest opportunity is in early collaboration. When mural artists are brought into the process at the beginning, rather than at the end, the final result feels much more unified.

It also helps when there's open communication around materials, scale, and installation methods. Understanding each other's processes allows both the painted and fabricated elements to work together rather than compete for attention.

There's a lot of potential in combining hand-painted work with dimensional signage, and when it's done well, it creates a much more layered and impactful environment.

What role do materials, surfaces, and location play in the success of a branded mural?

They are foundational to the success of the piece.

A design might look beautiful digitally, but if it doesn't account for the surface it's being applied to, the result can fall short. Texture, porosity, and even the base colour of a wall or window all affect how the paint appears.

Location matters just as much. How people move through the space, where they naturally pause, and how the mural is lit all influence how it's experienced.

A well-designed mural takes all of these factors into account from the very beginning, not as an afterthought.



How do you ensure a mural remains consistent with a brand's visual identity while still feeling artistic and unique?

I approach brand guidelines as a framework rather than a limitation.

Using the brand's colour palette, typography, and overall tone helps create consistency, but the interpretation is where the artistry comes in. That's what keeps the work from feeling overly corporate or generic.

The goal is to create something that feels aligned with the brand, but still clearly hand-crafted and one of a kind.

Have you seen a shift in how brands are using murals within their marketing strategies?

Yes, there's been a noticeable shift.

More brands are starting to see murals as long-term assets rather than just decorative elements. They are being used as content backdrops, incorporated into campaigns, and even rolled out across multiple locations for consistency.

There's also a stronger focus on creating spaces that feel experiential. Brands are recognizing that the physical environment plays a big role in how people connect with them.

How can murals contribute to creating more memorable, shareable brand moments?

It comes down to designing with intention.

When a mural is created with interaction in mind, whether through scale, composition, or placement, it naturally becomes something people engage with. It invites them to step into the space rather than just pass by it.

Those moments of interaction are what make a brand more memorable. And when people share those moments, it extends reach in a very organic way.

What advice would you give to sign companies looking to incorporate murals into their offerings?

I would encourage them to think of murals as part of a larger ecosystem rather than a standalone feature.

Bringing artists into the process early, investing in strong design, and considering how the mural will interact with signage, lighting, and architecture all make a big difference.

There's a real opportunity to create more immersive and layered environments when these elements are designed together.

Do you have anything else you want to add?

At its core, mural work is about connection.

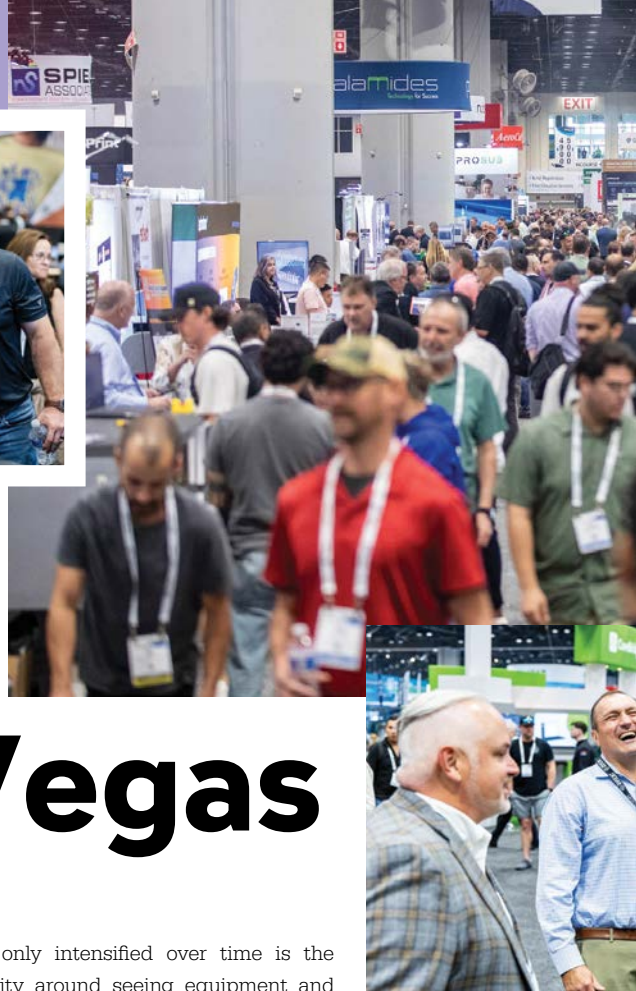
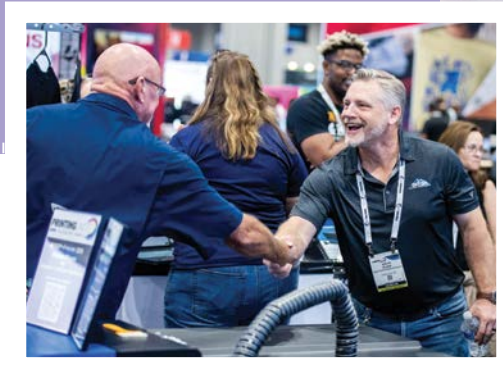
It's about creating something that resonates with people, whether that's through a brand, a space, or a community. The most successful projects are the ones where people feel something when they see it. It might be a sense of pride, nostalgia, excitement, or simply feeling more welcome in a space.

That's what continues to draw me to this work. It's not just about painting a wall, it's about shaping how a space is experienced and remembered.

I'm also incredibly grateful for the community that murals have brought me into. There's such a strong network of artists who genuinely care about people and about helping communities feel more beautiful and connected. There's a shared purpose in creating work that makes people love where they live a little more.

I've seen firsthand how murals can bring light back into a community. They can shift the energy of a space, spark conversation, and give people something to feel proud of. That impact extends to businesses as well. When a space is thoughtfully designed and visually cared for, it creates a sense of pride for the owners and a stronger connection with the people who walk through their doors.

That ripple effect, from artist to space to community, is what makes this work so meaningful to me. ●



PRINTING United Expo 2026:

A total print takeover in Vegas

By Marika Gabriel

“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”—that sense of momentum is exactly what PRINTING United Expo 2026 is aiming to capture when the industry heads to Las Vegas, Nev., in September.

Taking place September 23–25 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, the event is one of the printing industry’s largest gatherings, bringing together commercial print, apparel decoration, wide-format graphics, labels and packaging, mailing, industrial applications, and more under one roof. The Expo is shaping up to be equal parts tech showcase, networking hub, and crystal ball for where print is headed next.

Running full colour

For Josh Carruth, EVP, Expositions, PRINTING United Alliance, the evolution of the Expo reflects broader shifts happening across the industry itself. “Even just a few years ago, what was then Specialty Graphic Imaging Association (SGIA), primarily serving the graphic, wide-format, and screen-printing markets; we recognized what we’ve coined as industry ‘convergence’—the blending of technologies, applications, and business models across traditional print segments—was already underway. We made a strategic decision to pivot alongside that reality, which ultimately led to the evolution of PRINTING United Expo into a truly comprehensive industry event. Today, that vision is fully realized.”

That convergence is expected to be everywhere on the show floor this year. From automation software and AI-driven workflow tools to new presses, finishing systems, embellishment technologies, and sustainability-focused solutions, exhibitors are preparing to showcase innovations designed to help print businesses work smarter, faster, and more efficiently.

And while virtual demos and online product launches have become more common, Carruth says nothing replaces seeing technology operate in person.

“What has only intensified over time is the attendee priority around seeing equipment and technology firsthand. This remains an industry where seeing technology in action matters, and PRINTING United Expo has become one of the most important places for attendees to evaluate opportunities, compare solutions firsthand, and make strategic decisions about the future of their business.”

Ink, ideas, and in-between moments

Of course, Expo 2026 is not only about equipment launches and software demos. The event is being shaped around experience and connection. Returning attractions such as the Apparel Zone, Print-On-Demand area, Spill the Ink Roundtables, and ASI Pavilion are designed to give attendees opportunities to move beyond simply walking the aisles. The goal is to create spaces where printers can exchange ideas, ask questions, troubleshoot challenges, and discover new business opportunities organically.

“People want to be part of something, not just attend as spectators,” Carruth continues. “We’ve become much more intentional about focusing on experience, not just attendance. Yes, the ROI activities matter tremendously, but we’ve also put significant thought into creating spaces where the industry can connect, share ideas, learn from one another, and strengthen the community as a whole. We also want people to genuinely enjoy the experience, create lasting memories, and leave feeling energized about both the future of their business and the future of the industry itself. That includes continuing to elevate the experience for our members through expanded networking opportunities, education, access, and engagement that extends beyond the days of the Expo itself. Sometimes the biggest takeaway is a new partnership, a fresh business idea, or simply a broader perspective on where the industry is headed.”



And yes, there is also the return of the

always-popular Opening Night Party on

September 23—giving attendees a chance to kick off the week in classic Las Vegas style.

AI gets real

One of the biggest conversation starters heading into this year's Expo is Artificial Intelligence (AI)—but organizers are working hard to move the discussion beyond buzzwords.

Expanded PRINTING AI programming and the PRINTING AI Pavilion will focus heavily on practical implementation and operational value. Amy Servi-Bonner, vice-president—PRINTING AI, says the goal is to create an environment where printers can evaluate technology in realistic production contexts. "The 2026 PRINTING AI Pavilion is built on the same principle: three operational zones, sponsors running their own live demos, and a floor structure designed for operators who come with real questions, not wish lists."

For many attendees, the biggest challenge is separating useful tools from overhyped promises. According to Servi-Bonner, trade shows remain one of the best ways to pressure test solutions in real time.

"Trade shows are one of the few environments where real-world print and sign operational questions get pressure tested as close to real conditions as you can get. A vendor can build a beautiful slide deck and a polished demo for a remote presentation, but at a show, you can stand in front of their booth, look at their system, ask the person running it what breaks, watch how it handles an exception, and compare what you're seeing to the way real print and sign move jobs through a shop."

She also encourages attendees to approach AI with specific operational goals in mind.

"What I tell operators heading into a show is this: don't go 'shopping' for AI. Come with one or two specific problems you've been trying to

solve; the kind of problems that have been on your 'need to solve' list for two or three years. Then, walk the floor. The vendors with real answers will engage with the specifics. The ones who pivot to general capability statements are telling you something important about where their solution actually is in its lifecycle...and often that is underwhelming or not even real."

Imprints and impressions

Beyond technology, Expo 2026 is also placing significant focus on workforce development, mentorship, and long-term industry culture.

Student Day "3.0"—the continued evolution of this popular event targeted to the future of the industry—will see expanded programming aimed at connecting students directly with exhibitors. "Walking the show floor, talking directly with exhibitors, hearing how people actually got started, and seeing the technology in action makes the industry feel a lot more tangible and accessible. As workforce expectations continue to evolve, creating those direct conversations and experiences is important—not just for students trying to understand where they fit, but for companies looking to connect with the next generation of talent in a more meaningful way," said Christine L. Cachuela, vice-president, membership operations, PRINTING United Alliance.

Meanwhile, Women in Print Alliance programming will continue creating opportunities for networking, mentorship, and leadership development across different segments of the industry. A special microsite will be soon launch featuring all Women in Print planned activities, including its various networking events and always-sold out luncheon, at www.womeninprintalliance.org.

"Industry events also help women connect up and down the seniority ladder; being an 'attendee' at the industry event is an equalizer. At the very least, it allows women who are earlier in their careers to visualize a pathway to a rewarding, successful professional journey in print by meeting outstanding female print leaders," said Lisbeth Lyons Black, Director, Women in Print Alliance.

An evolving industry

If one theme runs through PRINTING United Expo 2026, it is that print is no longer operating in silos. The industry is becoming more connected, more automated, and more collaborative—and the Expo itself is evolving alongside it.

Carruth concludes, "Looking ahead, I think the biggest force shaping the Expo will be automation driven by AI and other emerging technologies. The pace of innovation is only accelerating, and the Expo will continue evolving as the place where the industry comes to see what's next, learn how to stay competitive, and build the relationships that move business forward." To register for the show, or for more information, visit www.printingunited.com. ●



Harvesting attention

Farm show branding in motion

By Mackenzie Schultz

For this year's event at REAL District in Regina, Sask., a fully integrated signage program was designed, produced, and installed.

Photos courtesy Sleek Signs

When thousands of attendees arrive at Canada's Farm Show Presented by Bunge, first impressions matter—and effective signage becomes far more than simple direction. It becomes part of the event experience itself.

For this year's event at Regina Exhibition Association Limited (REAL) District in Regina, Sask., a fully integrated signage program was designed, produced, and installed to transform the venue into a cohesive branded environment that guided visitors, elevated sponsor visibility, and strengthened the overall event identity.

Exterior: Bold branding

The visitor experience began well before attendees stepped inside the venue. Large-scale combines, generously provided by South Country Equipment, were strategically positioned as landmark visual features—one at Regina's YQR International Airport and another just outside the entrance to the Bunge International Trade Centre.

Serving as high-impact branding anchors, the wraps combined to function as both photo opportunities and prominent visual landmarks. Designed for long-range visibility, they created a strong outdoor presence while reinforcing the agricultural identity of the event and setting the tone for the experience ahead.

As visitors turned off the main entrance roadway, mesh banners welcomed them onto the site. Within the REAL District grounds, pillar banners lined both sides, clearly

signalling arrival and reinforcing the event's presence from a distance. Light post boards throughout the parking areas provided additional wayfinding, confirming that guests had reached the right destination.

Large-scale exterior graphics were also installed across primary entry points, including main entrance doors and windows, with all elements working together to establish strong arrival branding from the moment guests approached the site.

Interior: Managing movement

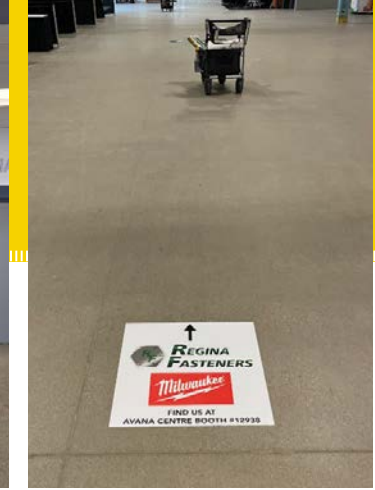
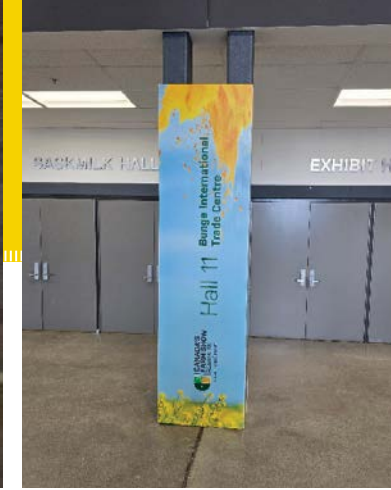
Inside the venue, signage shifted from impact to functionality. Column wraps were installed throughout key halls to clearly identify zones and improve navigation across the large event footprint.

Directional signage and overhead markers were strategically placed to support attendee movement, helping visitors quickly locate exhibitor areas, meeting spaces, and major program zones.

This level of wayfinding is particularly critical in high-traffic venues, where signage must balance clarity, scale, and visibility without interrupting the visual flow of the environment.

Experiential elements

Beyond navigation, the signage package introduced immersive visual elements designed to make the venue feel unified and intentional.



Floor graphics and wall installations were placed throughout major corridors, creating branded pathways and enhancing key transition spaces between halls.

Overhead visual features added another layer of depth, helping transform otherwise functional spaces into more engaging attendee environments. These experiential components contributed to a stronger sense of place and ensured branding remained visible throughout the attendee journey.

Tactical targeting

Functional areas of the venue also became opportunities for strategic messaging. Elevator door wraps were used to highlight destinations such as the International Business Centre and Exhibitor Lounge, turning everyday surfaces into high-visibility communication points.

Sponsor and partner branding were carefully integrated into these locations, ensuring visibility without overwhelming the overall event design.

This approach allowed sponsor messaging to remain prominent while still supporting attendee navigation and venue communication.

Tight timelines

Delivering a signage package of this scale required careful co-ordination across both indoor and outdoor environments, as well as alignment between multiple companies, design teams, production schedules, and installation timelines.

What made this project truly successful was not simply the volume of signage installed, but how each element worked



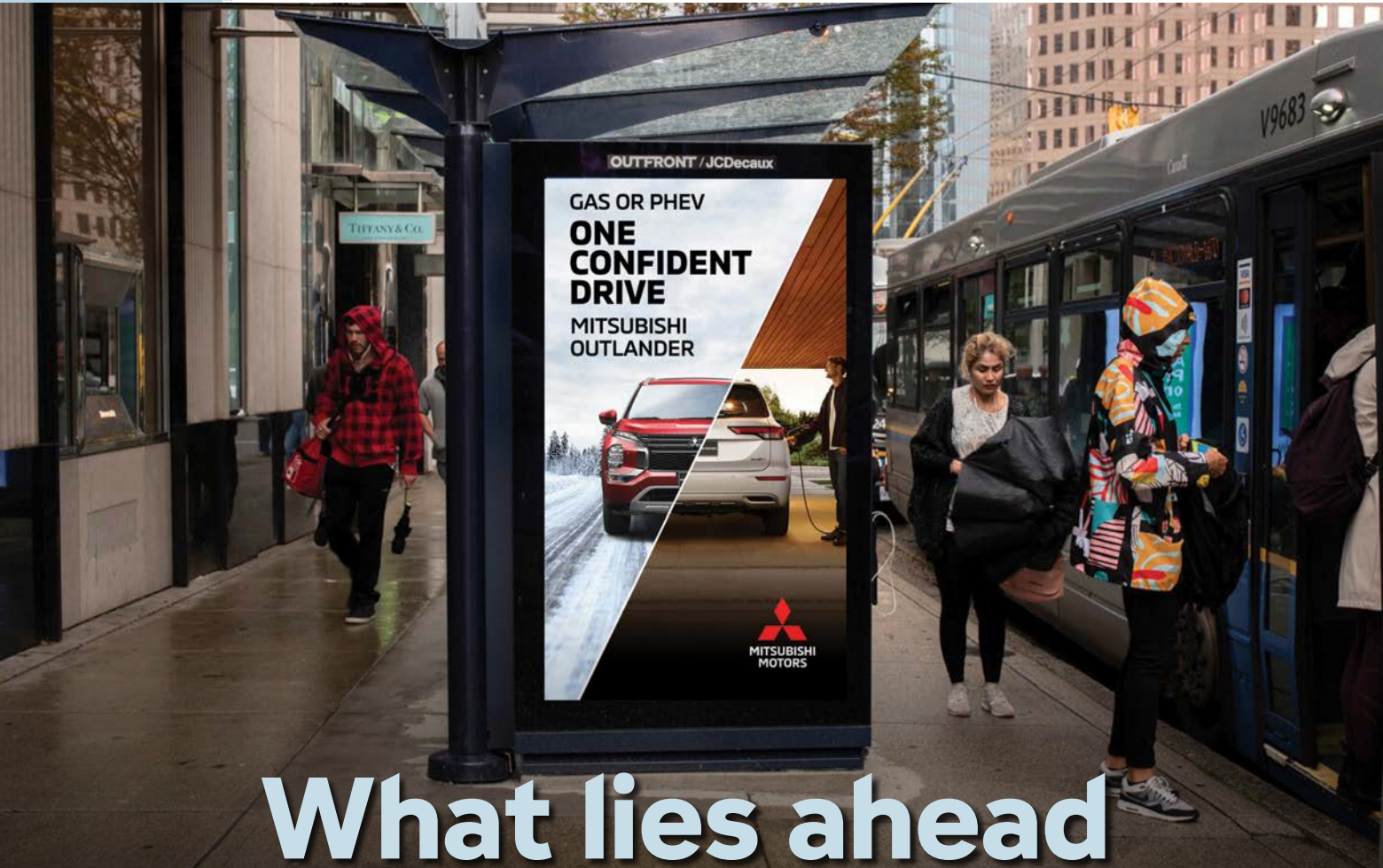
together as a cohesive visual system. From exterior branding to interior wayfinding, experiential graphics to sponsor integration, every component contributed to a stronger, more polished attendee experience—demonstrating how signage can influence both movement and perception.

None of this would have been possible without our incredible team, whose expertise and dedication brought the project to life.

Event execution

Last, the exhibitors are at the heart of any trade show. From booth setups to signage and floor decals, effective branding is essential. Without exhibitors, trade shows simply wouldn't exist, and their presence drives both the event experience and overall success. ●

Mackenzie Schultz is the director of installations and account executive at Sleek Signs.



What lies ahead for Canadian OOH?

Memorability starts with creative, and today, the bar is higher than ever.

Photos courtesy Vistar Media

By Scott Mitchell

Vistar Media's 2026 *State of Consumer Attention Report* challenges a common assumption: audiences aren't tuning out advertising; they're becoming more selective about what earns their attention. Attention hasn't disappeared; it's concentrating around advertising that feels timely, useful, and relevant.

For Canada's out-of-home (OOH) industry, that distinction is critical. In a medium where impact is measured in seconds, visibility alone is no longer enough. The brands breaking through are those delivering contextually relevant creative in the moments consumers are most receptive. And the opportunity is substantial. OOH reaches roughly 85-90 per cent of Canadians weekly, making it one of the country's most pervasive media channels.

Creative that earns a second look

Memorability starts with creative, and today, the bar is higher than ever. According to the report, 69 per cent of

consumers say humour, emotion, or entertainment drives memorability, while 53 per cent say ads resonate more when they feel personally relevant. In other words, visibility alone is no longer enough; creatives need to justify attention immediately through relevance, emotion, or utility.

That shift plays directly to the strengths of Canadian OOH. Whether it's a digital screen or a transit shelter, the most effective campaigns don't just occupy space, they become part of the environment. When creative feels native to its surroundings and taps into context or cultural moments, it becomes part of the experience rather than an interruption.

This is one reason OOH continues to stand out in today's fragmented media landscape. In high-dwell environments, recall is already strong, but contextually relevant creative deepens the impact. A recent Vistar-commissioned survey found that 22 per cent of Canadians notice creative or visually engaging ads most in public spaces, more than on

social media (19 per cent), reinforcing OOH's ability to break through when creative delivers on both form and relevance.

In today's attention economy, exposure alone doesn't drive results; meaning does.

AI can optimize, but it can't replace insight

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming how campaigns are planned and delivered but also how they are perceived. According to the report, 43 per cent of consumers say they trust ads less when they're labelled as AI-generated, with skepticism rising among younger audiences.

The implication for marketers is clear: AI should strengthen contextual relevance, not replace human insight. Digital OOH (DOOH) is especially well-positioned because it uses contextual signals such as location, timing, and environment to deliver relevant messaging without relying on personal data.

The smartest approach is to use AI behind the scenes: informing planning, optimizing delivery, and refining audience insights, while ensuring the creative itself still feels human. Ultimately, audiences don't connect with algorithms, they connect with ideas.

Authenticity over star power

The report also signals a shift in what drives trust, with 58 per cent of consumers saying authenticity matters more than who delivers the message, while just four per cent prioritize celebrity alone.

That shift is especially important in Canada, where regional identity and cultural nuance heavily influence how advertising is received. Messaging that reflects a local mindset or shared experience will often outperform one built around scale or star power. That sense of familiarity and relevance also drives trust. A recent Vistar survey found that 50 per cent of Canadians trust OOH advertising, nearly four times more than social or online ads (12 per cent).

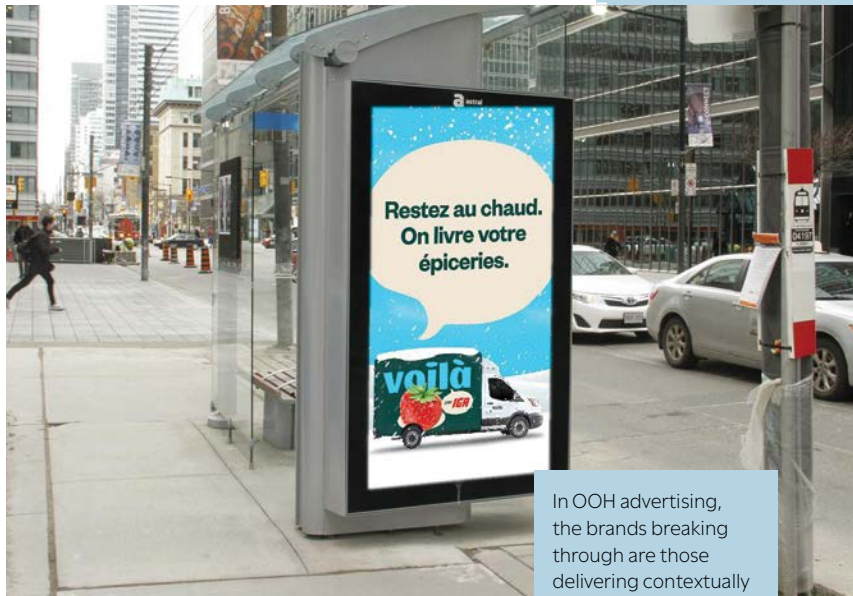
In practice, this shift toward trust and authenticity changes what effective creative looks like. Work grounded in humour (47 per cent), nostalgia (26 per cent), and local cultural context has a clear advantage. The most effective OOH creative reflects the mindset of the communities it appears within.

Context is OOH's competitive advantage

While 40 per cent of consumers cite creative quality as the top driver of recall, factors such as unexpected placement (28 per cent) and contextual relevance (24 per cent) play a critical supporting role.

Across Canada, digital networks are expanding rapidly. These environments deliver more than scale; they create high-attention moments tied to intent, proximity, and real-world context.

The impact is measurable. According to the same survey, 30 per cent of Canadian consumers are more likely to act after seeing DOOH advertising before making a purchase,



In OOH advertising, the brands breaking through are those delivering contextually relevant creative in the moments consumers are most receptive.



while 39 per cent report taking action after seeing a billboard or outdoor ad.

As retail media networks expand, OOH is becoming increasingly valuable not just for awareness, but for influencing decisions closer to the point of purchase.

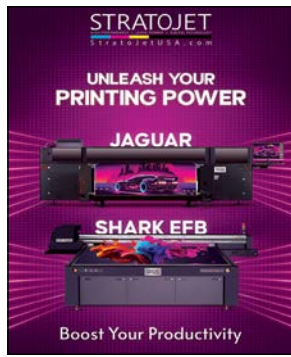
The future of OOH is intentional

In today's media environment, attention has become a value exchange. Consumers reward brands that respect their environment, reflect their mindset, and contribute something meaningful in the moment.

DOOH uses real-world cues like location and timing to deliver messaging that feels relevant in context. Its future isn't about chasing consumers across devices; it's about showing up meaningfully on the moments that matter most.

For Canadian marketers, the path forward is clear: elevate creative, invest in smarter contextual execution, and treat every placement as part of a connected, audience-first ecosystem. OOH's future won't be defined by format; it will be defined by impact. Attention isn't disappearing; it's becoming harder to earn and more valuable when captured. ●

Scott Mitchell is managing director, Canada at Vistar Media.



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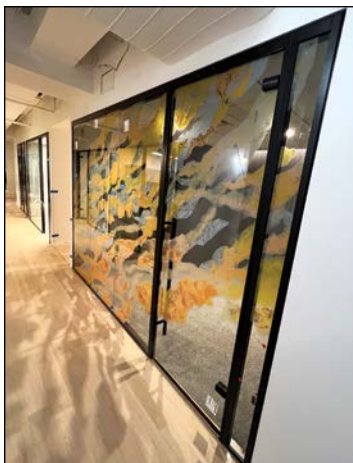
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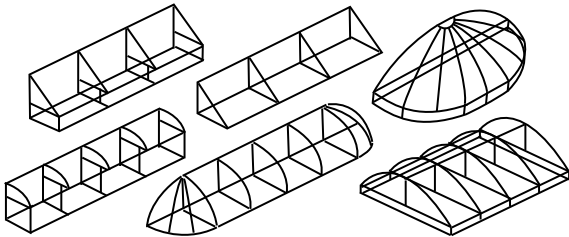
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Game on, Toronto

Photos by Billy Dhillon

Toronto's Nathan Phillips Square is looking a little different these days. Where skates once carved across the landmark rink at City Hall, a temporary soccer pitch now sits at the heart of the Square as World Cup energy sweeps through the city, complete with countdown signage and tournament graphics throughout the space.

From banners and stickers to large-scale environmental graphics, the activation turns one of the city's busiest gathering spaces into a

true celebration of the sport. The visuals are part of the atmosphere—drawing attention, encouraging photographs, and pulling fans into the excitement surrounding the highly anticipated global event.

With Toronto hosting World Cup matches at BMO Field, the activation highlights how signage can help define identity and energy. Intentional and impossible to miss, the downtown transformation tells us that some of the most effective signs are the ones that shape an entire environment. ●

~ Marika Gabriel

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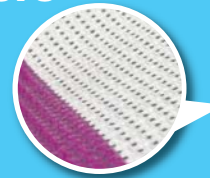


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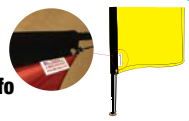
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