



200152328-001, Brendan Tobin/Stone

The first edition of the MAP Report (What Makes A Picture) tracks the consumer desire for anchorage in an unstable world, for a sense of self that gives us control in an age of information overload, for a sense of One Life.

The MAP Report has been created by the Getty Images Creative Research Matrix, a global team of image analysts based in offices from Los Angeles to London, Beijing and beyond. The One Life report is based on the analysis of image searches by 1.4 million

customers on the Getty Images website, the gathering and study of over 2,000 advertising tear sheets from around the world, and a survey of 500 advertising, design and marketing professionals.

The following extract looks at One Life drivers around consumers exploring 'belief'.

One Life: Belief Shelters

Though One Life is a kind of lifestyle pragmatism, it doesn't exclude 'heroic' imagery. Anything that conjures a sense of destiny, of a greater purpose will lock onto the desire for One Life.

Imagery that expresses certainty, direction and spiritual drama will match the intense emotional appeal of One Life.

Gateway to self

The internet is a playground for belief. A recent Wanadoo ad is built around One Life belief. Accompanied by David Bowie's "Heroes", a series of mini dramas unfold focusing on someone's unique identity, each concluding with the internet site they could find themselves in, such as 'we are believers', 'separated at birth' or even 'unusual weasels'. Wanadoo are not offering shopping or music or games on the web. They are offering a gateway to your self.

It's likely we will see plenty of this kind of advertising inviting consumers to engage with products through an exploration of their sense of self, or discovering it. The big attractor for consumers is the belief that this self is the ultimate filter for all decision-making, that it's going to make life simpler. (And if you're too confused by choice and can't rely on yourself as the filter, you'll soon be able to rely on shops such as the chain in Tokyo called "Ranking RanQueen". They only carry the top-selling items (either the top 3, 5 or 10 sellers) from all the local superstores.)

Spiritual heroism

The Wanadoo ad confirms what we are beginning to see in our analysis of image purchases. The testimonial trend in portraiture is shifting to accommodate ideas around 'belief', 'spiritual heroism' and 'sanctuary'. We are beginning to see more imagery of people lost in thought, eyes closed, introspective, often outdoors in 'nature' where nature in traditional fashion signals 'sanctuary', a shelter from the chaos of modern life. It's part of a wider trend around what we call 'belief shelters'.

From rules to religion

These belief shelters are a response to 'rule-based' culture. As globalization and the open-all-hours work and consumer culture emerged in the '90s, traditional forms of passing on experience, knowledge and information began to break down. The fast-paced nature of business and work meant that disappearing knowledge resources such as mentors and extended family networks were being replaced by the professionalization of culture in books which gave us the 'rules' of how to conduct our lives, how to date, how to parent, how to manage our time. Now this rule-based lifestyle is being seen as a problem, not as a solution. There is a trend towards religion and spirituality filling the gaps, as they seem more authentic.



200240941-003, Rosebud Pictures/Stone+

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Mealtime sanctuary

The rise of the Mega Church in the US is just one example of the re-emergence of belief shelters, as symbolic sanctuaries that set boundaries, simplify and filter out social noise. This idea is beginning to be used in faith-based marketing by companies such as Tyson Foods – maker of chicken, pork and beef products – which offers a downloadable booklet of mealtime prayers, re-creating mealtimes as a haven.

Modernist populism

Many, of course, won't join this trend but the 'sanctuary' trend will appear in other ways. The belief shelter is also visible in the minimalist interior design, which is not a sign of modernist populism.

Well-meaning lifestyle commentators have begun to criticise this off-the-shelf minimalism in favour of consumer self-expression. But this visual minimalism isn't about style or aesthetic or consumer laziness.

Minimalism will still appeal because it offers the visual experience of sanctuary.

One look, one life

Minimalism will still appeal because it offers the visual experience of sanctuary and such images were among our very best sellers. They do not represent the norm – how most of us actually live. These images are aspirational, but not in the conventional material sense of desiring a more beautiful or elegant domestic space. The appeal of our popular selling images of minimally designed spaces lies in their 'aspirational spiritualism'. One 'look' for One Life.

Macho minimalism

Maxim magazine creates 'macho minimalism' in advertising its online interior design portal. It pictures a surprisingly spartan studio, using captions to deconstruct the image into its various contents: "Nice bed. So she'll want to stay the night. Hopefully." And: "Bottle openers. Because using your teeth isn't a turn-on anymore."



892045-002, Kyoko Hamada/Riser

Gender demarcation

'Metrosexual man' never really took off beyond the trophy males of style supplements. As every woman knows, looking beautiful takes time. And men have no patience.

Metrosexual man embodied gender fluidity at the very moment culture demanded gender demarcation. This is reflected in the current fashion trends with lines leaning towards the 1930s and '40s – women's and men's clothes are more formal and traditional, looking back to an era when social views were more rigorously defined.

Bodily sanctuary

The other big visual trend around the belief shelter is images of the body in action, exercising, at play.

What we're discovering amongst our most-popular-selling images is a trend towards clear layouts, with the human body itself portrayed as a physical drama, situated against a backdrop of nature. The 'body' is pictured as a sanctuary, as an escape from the surrounding chaos.