Cara Bonilla

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

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I shape the creative vision behind work that earns attention and leaves an impression.

I'm a Creative Director who turns big ideas into distinctive visual worlds—from identity, campaigns and packaging to photography, retail and physical spaces. I transform brands, build and lead creative teams and in-house studios, manage multimillion-dollar productions, and take ideas from the first sketch through final execution. I'm equally comfortable setting the vision, directing the room, or getting into the details to make the work better.

ULTA BEAUTY

$3.2B → $7.4B

Company growth during my tenure and brand transformation

VETNIQUE

$75M → $92M

Company growth during my tenure and brand transformation

EXPERIENCE

CREATIVE DIRECTOR Vetnique | Naperville, IL | **JUNE 2024 – PRESENT**

- Transformed a fragmented visual identity into a cohesive brand system, establishing a distinct look and feel across consumer touchpoints.
- Built the brand book and visual guidelines, aligning internal and external teams across design, photography, color, and typography.
- Lead the creative vision and evolution of the brand across packaging, digital, retail, photography, video, social, print, tradeshows, and Amazon.
- Lead full-scale photo and video productions from concept through final edit, directing shot lists, casting, wardrobe, propping, locations, styling, and post-production.
- Lead and develop the creative team across a high volume of work, matching talent to assignments while raising efficiency and quality.
- Trained and upskilled the team in Figma and AI-driven image and video creation, standardizing workflows and accelerating innovation.
- Extended the brand into physical environments, directing the trade show booth redesign and corporate office design, including art, lighting, color, furniture, and décor.
- Led founder and brand videos from creative direction through final execution, co-developing the concept with the Marketing Director.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR The RoomPlace | Lombard, IL | **OCT 2022 - MAY 2024**

- Led the brand's creative expression across digital, print, in-store, and social, partnering directly with marketing leadership on strategy, messaging, and brand direction.
- Led internal teams and external agencies, developing creative talent through mentorship and strategic hiring.
- Built scalable creative systems, processes, and templates that improved cross-functional execution and consistency.

SR CREATIVE DIRECTOR Owlet Baby Care | Remote | **JUNE 2021 – JUNE 2022**

- Led and scaled the creative team, delivering integrated campaigns across digital, social, e-commerce, packaging, and retail.
- Led creative for 360° product launches across video, paid social, CTV, and digital channels.
- Concepted and produced photo and video content, stretching lean production budgets to deliver high-quality creative at scale.
- Shaped brand voice and storytelling across product launches and key consumer touchpoints.
- Managed creative budgets, headcount, resourcing, and operational planning in a fast-paced environment.

SR CREATIVE DIRECTOR / CREATIVE DIRECTOR Ulta Beauty | Bolingbrook, IL | **SEPT 2013 - JAN 2021**

Named WWD Beauty Inc.'s 50 Under 40: 2016

20+

CREATIVE TEAM

$3M+

ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHY BUDGET

- Set the creative vision for Ulta Beauty and defined and led two enterprise rebrands, transforming visual identity, voice, brand guidelines, retail environments, packaging, OOH, salon, and consumer touchpoints.
- Concepted seasonal creative themes and art directed large-scale photo and video shoots end to end, overseeing set design, casting, wardrobe, styling, locations, photography, and post-production.
- Led and developed a 20+ person creative team, launched an in-house photo studio, and managed a $3M+ annual lifestyle photography budget.
- Extended the brand into the corporate office, designing gallery walls and signage and selecting artwork, lighting, and décor.

EXPERIENCE CONTINUED

ART DIRECTOR Land of Nod | Morton Grove, IL **OCT 2010 - SEPT 2013**

- Helped shape the rebrand by elevating photo art direction and styling to create a more distinctive, competitive visual identity.
- Concepted and designed nurseries, playrooms, and children's bedrooms to showcase new and trending products.
- Selected and directed stylists, photographers, and talent; art directed tabletop and lifestyle shoots.
- Designed and produced print catalogs, overseeing editing and retouching with one supporting designer.

SR GRAPHIC DESIGNER SG2 Health Care | Skokie, IL **MAR 2006 - OCT 2010**

GRAPHIC DESIGNER Cushman & Wakefield | Chicago, IL **MAR 2004 - MAR 2006**

GRAPHIC DESIGNER IO Design | Northbrook, IL **JUNE 2001 - MAR 2004**

INVITATION DESIGNER Paper Source | Evanston, IL **AUG 2000 - JUNE 2001**

CORE EXPERTISE

Brand Transformation • Creative Direction • Art Direction • Creative Team Leadership • Integrated Campaigns • Photography + Video Production • Brand Identity • Retail + Environmental • Packaging • E-commerce • AI-Assisted Creative • Figma • Adobe Creative Suite

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EDUCATION

BFA, Graphic Design
Ball State University | Muncie, IN

INTERESTS

Painting florals, landscapes and landmarks. Baking, cooking and crafting. Home décor and antiquing.

WHAT EXECUTIVES SAY

More recommendations from leaders, colleagues and creative partners on LinkedIn.

Heather Scott, Former CMO, Vetnique

Cara's ability to create an entirely new brand presence AND apply that look/tone/feel to a myriad of platforms is stellar. In fact, the work she has done has been heralded multiple times by our PE firm (Gryphon Investors) as being the standout model for brand transformation and elevation amongst their entire consumer portfolio.

Dave Kimbell, Former CEO, Ulta Beauty

Beyond Cara's impressive impact on creative, she is also an admired and strong leader. Managing a team of over 20, and influencing a creative team of over 50, Cara clearly articulated and motivated designers, managers, photographers, and stylists.

Shelley Haus, Former CMO, Ulta Beauty

Enter Cara Bonilla. She is the creative mastermind and lynchpin designing our brand image – getting us to where we are now as well as where we will be in the future as we continue to grow and evolve.

Steve Bauerfeind, Executive Producer, Bauie Productions

Cara is incredibly creative, organized, and communicative and one of the funniest people I know, so whenever there's a chance to work with her, I'm always confident it will be filled with quality work and much joy. I couldn't recommend Cara more for any position because I've experienced her wealth of knowledge but also seen her curiosity – a combo that makes her incredibly well-equipped to handle anything.