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Illustrators shift from slip-and-falls to trademark law

Legal Graphic Artists Get the Picture



David Pellerin, photographer

Marsha Drebelbis, president of **Litigation Graphics**, has found her work gravitating toward intellectual property

Lawsuits are heading away from medical malpractice and toward intellectual property law enforcement and copyright infringement. And, despite setbacks, business is good in the legal community.

If there's any doubt about those assertions, Dallas-based legal graphic artist Marsha Drebelbis would be glad to draw you a picture.

Where, before now, the majority of Drebelbis' time was spent illustrating claims such as faulty medical operations and hit-and-run accidents, she now often uses her eye

for photography to identify similarities between original products and copies.

Drebelbis and other legal graphic artists use photography, computer graphics, computer animation, 3-D scale models and timelines to illustrate arguments for attorneys. To illustrate violations of trademark laws, Drebelbis uses digital cameras to photograph similar or identical traits knock-off products have to original brands.

Drebelbis, president of Dallas-based **Litigation Graphics**, whose annual revenue is about \$300,000,

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Profiles in Law: Bart Cousins



Robert Bartow (Bart) Cousins, Jr. would like to see the law profession take a step backwards.

"It would be great if we could abolish the disagreement and lack of congeniality between lawyers/opponents and return to the days of mutual respect as colleagues; being nice does not adversely affect your client's case," the attorney at Glast, Phillips & Murray declares.

Growing up in Dallas, Cousins never considered a career other than law.



He graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1967 and from SMU Law School in 1970.

First he joined his father, the late Bob Cousins, at Thompson, Coe, Cousins & Irons, LLP, then worked for two other firms. He has been a commercial and business litigator at Glast, Phillips & Murray, P.C. since 1994.

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Legal Graphics continued from page 1.

said the vastness of the Internet gives intellectual property thieves a false impression of anonymity.

"I think people feel they can hide easier, but the evidence is there," Drebelbis said.

Lawyers have always relied on evidence to illustrate their arguments. But as computers have become more powerful and software has become more sophisticated, Drebelbis and other legal artists have used those tools to more effectively transport juries to the scenes of alleged injustice or bad judgment.

GOING STRONG

While slip-and-fall suits have decreased, other litigation — and related graphics — have taken their place, said Chris Stewart, co-owner of Dallas-based Trial Arts, one of about 10 firms in the Dallas area that Stewart says concentrate on illustrating arguments in legal disputes.

Stewart, whose firm was launched in 1984, said her business took a hit when the economy dipped after the 9/11 terror attacks and again when caps on medical malpractice and injury suits took hold. Now, she said, trial-related business is back in gear.

"This year has been our best of the last five years," Stewart said. "Our cli-

ents have started spending more money in the last five years; it comes and goes in cycles."

Drebelbis has often found herself at the scene of a mishap or wrongdoing.

She once, for example, climbed into a Bobcat front loader to photograph a stone that caused a malfunction that decapitated the operator. And she used photographs to illustrate how a prostitute slipped a tranquilizer into a man's drink while in sight of a bartender, and where the woman and the man were when the woman stole the man's wallet.

Drebelbis, a former middle school art teacher and sculptor, still travels to especially complicated accident scenes, such as one involving a complex, multiple road intersection outside of an Irving shopping center. However, most of her work is done in her office using computers.

Drebelbis used an Equinox International Corp. executive's own hand drawing of a multilevel marketing scheme to illustrate an argument against the firm, which was permanently banned from doing business in any state by the Federal Trade Commission in 1999.

John Cosenza of Litigation Solutions, which also does courtroom graphics, said his firm's business is increasing

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After many victories in the courts, Bart Cousins considers one case a special achievement. "At the request of a friend and urging of several judges, I served as counsel for The Committee for Lawyer Discipline in a disbarment case," he recalls. "I undertook the assignment with some reluctance because I did not want to judge another lawyer. However, the accused lawyer had very definitely abused our legal system. When the accused was disbarred I felt that I had served the bar."

Bart Cousins is a client of **Litigation Graphics**. So what does he think of graphics in courts?

"Whether it's posters, video or whatever," he affirms, "visuals always tell the story better than words — at mediation, settlement or trial. ☺"

because of the necessity to search through company hard drives as part of discovery.

"We're moving toward computer forensics — if a corporation has to get e-mails and go through them, it allows them to find what they're looking for," said Cosenza, director of sales and marketing for the firm. ☺

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