

## Rear View: August 2022

Monthly spotlight on an item from the HIV/AIDS Graphic Communication Archive

### 30. Unprotected? Worried about getting HIV? The Terrence Higgins Trust.

#### Chosen by Andrew Slatter

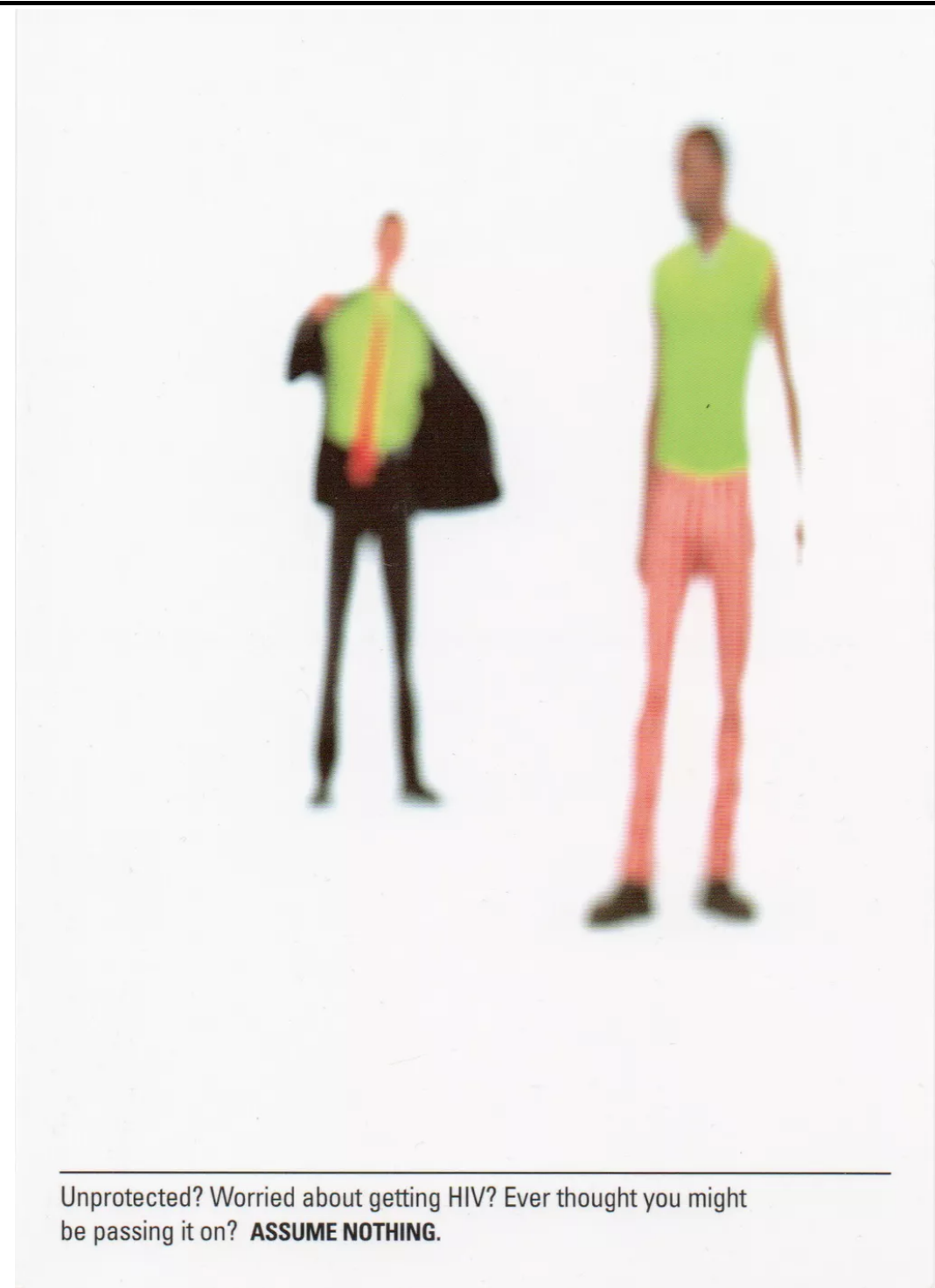
“The photographic subtlety in this 1997 Assume Nothing campaign for the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) is distinctive and memorable. The representation of male figures is retained while their abstraction makes them unidentifiable – a key consideration for the THT. The award-winning photographer Peter Dazeley used an anamorphic lens to create the distortion which has stretched the figures on a vertical axis, in a similar way to the depiction of a skull in *The Ambassadors* painted by Hans Holbein the Younger in 1533.

This distortion has rendered the images blurred, the colours are acidic – they appear jewel-like in a blanket of snow. The image is anchored by a typographic plinth that tells us to ‘assume nothing’, in uppercase letters it commands us to think, to keep an open mind, to take responsibility. The denotational linguistic message asks questions of the viewer while the photographic connotations suggest bodies can be both desirable and dangerous.

There is an aura of annual report slickness in the graphic language, this is not surprising given it was designed by Spencer Landor. When compared to other campaigns in the HIV Graphic Communication archive it capitalizes on its subtlety, it embodies an artistic expression akin to Duane Michael’s 1968 photograph *The Illuminated Man* or Robert Mapplethorpe’s 1984 photograph *Vibert Williams*.

I have this set of postcards and a booklet in my own graphic design archive. Others also found the imagery seductive enough to steal posters from the Pride march that year. I am grateful to Peter for talking to me about his pro-bono work for this campaign.”

Unprotected? Worried about getting HIV? The Terrence Higgins Trust. Assume Nothing campaign. Postcard. 1 of set of 4. A6 4 col. Design: Spencer Landor. Photography Peter Dazeley. 1997.



## August Guest Curator

**Andrew Slatter** SFHEA is a graphic designer and a senior lecturer in contextual and theoretical studies in the Design School at London College of Communication, University of the Arts London.

<https://andrewslatter.design/>

<https://www.peterdazeley.com/>

<https://www.tht.org.uk/>

Booklet, 16 pages. Assume Nothing campaign. CHAPS (Community HIV and AIDS Prevention Strategy). Design: Spencer Landor. Photography Peter Dazeley. 1997.





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"I'm HIV positive, I just assumed he was too. He never mentioned condoms."  
"I think I'm negative. I assumed he was also, he didn't use condoms.  
If he had HIV he'd say... wouldn't he?" **ASSUME NOTHING.**

Postcard. 1 of set of 4, Assume Nothing campaign. Design: Spencer Landor. Photography Peter Dazeley. 1997.



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Remember the last time you had unprotected sex? What if the guy  
had HIV? Would you assume you might now be HIV positive, because  
you assumed he was HIV negative? **ASSUME NOTHING.**

Postcard. 1 of set of 4, Assume Nothing campaign. Design: Spencer Landor. Photography Peter Dazeley. 1997.



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It's hard to believe that someone you love, trust and hope to share a future with could have HIV without knowing... and infect you. Love him, trust him, but... **ASSUME NOTHING.**

Postcard. 1 of set of 4, Assume Nothing campaign. Design: Spencer Landor. Photography Peter Dazeley. 1997.