Abstract Template

Abstract Title: Defining the Contemporary Citizen Designer

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Abstract

The term “citizen designer” has become increasingly tossed about in contemporary professional and academic circles. A pervasive term throughout architecture and industrial design it has in the past decade found a new home in the field of graphic design. Unfortunately the understanding of this terminology has seemed to sacrifice a truly holistic view of “citizenship” in favor of limitations seemingly imposed by the “designer” title. As a result we have a powerful term that conjures up images of positive social change yet too often falls flat when trying to deliver on such promises.

Speaking as a graphic designer and educator, I firmly believe that it is imperative that we define “citizen designer” in a way that allows us to embrace the dichotomy of being both citizens and designers. We must view design citizenship as a gestalt—with the whole of our thoughts and actions being more than the sum of personal and professional roles. Our true potential as graphic designers lies in using our creative problem solving and communicative talents to create meaningful experiences. We have the power to delight, inform, and persuade. However, instead of being crippled by limiting ourselves to design-centric pursuits of “good” citizenship, we should be willing to explore these two avenues with autonomy.

When inclusive opportunities arise to act simultaneously, and in society’s best interest, as both a citizen and a designer, we indeed must rise to the challenge and put our communicative and problem solving abilities to best use. However we must not let the rarity of these truly inclusive opportunities impede our willingness and ability to think and act daily in our sometimes exclusive roles as citizens and designers.

Keywords—*citizen designer, social engagement, collaboration, practicum*

Professional Biography (100-150 words)

Bradley Dicharry is a designer whose research explores the intersection of social responsibility, identity, and visual communication. He is committed to design thinking and collaborative problem solving as methods of impacting meaningful change.

Since 2003, Bradley has directed Donate Design — a service learning experience bringing together design students and nonprofits in the local community. The group has worked with over 50 clients including Iowa Women's Foundation, The International Writing Program, Iowa Flood Center, Englert Theatre, Taproot Nature Experience, and The United Nations Association.

For the past 16 years Bradley has worked closely with Widgets & Stone as a long distance collaborator. His areas of professional specialty include identity design, brand development, and data visualization

Recent Publications (up to 5)

- Broad Street Magazine, Richmond, VA, 2016 (upcoming
- Work featured online in MintStyle Studio journal, February 2012
- 1000 More Graphic Elements, Rockport Publishers, 2009
- Print Magazine, Regional Design Annual, 2008
- Print Magazine, Regional Design Annual, 2007



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Any Comments: