

## A COMMUNICATION DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

*Design is a plan for arranging elements in such a way as best to accomplish a particular purpose.*

– Charles Eames, designer, architect, filmmaker

**gather, order, shape** > A communication designer re/arranges and re/sends contextual elements — primarily words and images — in space, over time. Not arbitrarily, but intentionally — to arrive at a solution, improve a situation, express an emotion, articulate a vision, send a message, guide a visitor, maximize potential, illuminate the possible. A designer must think as well as act, be both dreamer and realist. A designer must also develop the discipline to pause now and again to evaluate progress, not only products and surfaces generated, but also means and methods employed, along with implications and effects produced.

*Collaborate. The space between people working together is filled with conflict, friction, strife, exhilaration, delight, and vast creative potential.* – Bruce Mau, graphic designer

**communicate, coordinate, cooperate** > Earth isn't getting bigger, and it's filling up fast. We must cultivate our ability to relate to each other if we are to survive and thrive as a species. We lack time and space to afford everyone the opportunity to live and work in isolation. Fortunately, there are as many ways of collaborating on a design project as there are ways of remixing music. Contribute parts to a whole, take turns defining and refining, divide up tasks, trade tools or roles, work separately while bouncing ideas together, and so forth. A willingness to share — concepts, opinions, resources, skills, experiences — enriches everyone.

*Technology is the campfire around which we tell our stories.* – Laurie Anderson, performance artist, musician

**explore, experiment, explain** > All designs tell a story; all stories are designed. As communication designers, we don't just encourage someone to buy a particular product or service, we explain why. Where does it come from? What makes it special? How is it connected to other products and services? Is it safe? Is it easy? Is it fun? Stories make products, services and information more desirable by establishing a connection with the consumer. Design has always embraced technological progress as a means to tell richer stories and reach more people.

*Design is the fundamental soul of a man-made creation that ends up expressing itself in successive outer layers of the product or service.* – Steve Jobs, CEO, Apple Computer

**attract, express, illuminate** > The fundamental objective of a work of design is to grab attention. No matter how time consuming the labor, no matter how sophisticated the color palette, no matter how subtle the degrees of scale, if design isn't noticed it fails. Of all the means of attracting attention, including hierarchy, scale, color, placement, proximity, repetition and texture, none matters more than personality. Can a work of design have a soul? Isn't that what we try to define by explaining what we like?

*Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity.* – Charles Mingus, jazz musician

**deconstruct, delineate, define** > Confronted on all sides by a perpetual swarm of (often mixed or conflicting) messages, today's media-savvy global citizen struggles daily to extract meaning from such apparent chaos. Some of the greatest opportunities available to the communication designer involve making complexity clear. And the consequences of ignoring such opportunities can be significant and long-lasting. Such mundane tasks as voting for a leader, taking medicine, choosing when to change lanes in traffic, applying for health insurance or using a hair dryer can turn dangerous or even fatal if a communication designer isn't informed and precise.

*The aesthetic evaluation of quality must be attempted.* – Jorge Frascara, writer, educator

**attract, exemplify, transcend** > Beauty, a measurement of taste, a reflection of craft, a value signifier, persists. Surfaces seduce or repel, the whole is either more, or less, than a sum of parts. For a designed message, object or experience to be both useful and memorable it must do more than function consistently and with ease, it must also delight, empower, enlighten, surprise or inspire.

*Think more, design less.* – Ellen Lupton, writer, curator, graphic designer

**confront, question, research** > Can communication design do harm? What are the implications of working for an unethical client or creating an inflammatory message? Is design sustainable? Will a designed object remain after its usefulness expires? Which is more direct, a word or an image? Can one communicate clearly without the other? Is design accessible? If not everyone "gets" it, does it fail? Is design responsible? Can two colors do the work of three? How can we leave the world better than we found it?