



illustrations by Elie Hanna

A Man With a Message

Hair. Shoulder length, dark brown curls. You can not miss this distinctive feature about David Berman. Just as you can not miss the intensity of the sparkle and honesty in his eyes. Young, playful eyes. This is a man who loves life, who loves his profession and lives his beliefs. David is dedicated to realizing graphic design's potential to help improve the human condition and the global environment. He is the Ethics Chair for the Society of Graphic Designers of Canada—quite a daunting mantle of responsibility—but the title suits the man and he wears it well. A man of high ideals who does not compromise himself in his professional work but instead has made it his mission to explain how designers have contributed to many of the negative aspects of society and how they can use those very same talents to change the world into a more positive place for themselves and their children.

David took this message to Amman when, as keynote speaker at the Creative Nights, he explained his thesis—global branding strategies are the most powerful tools used today to encourage over-consumption amongst developing world populations; the largest long-term threat to the global environment and harmony. He expounded his ideas through a generous sampling of visual examples with supporting statistics in his presentation entitled *How Logo Can We Go*. This was a courageous act since the Middle East, at present, is striving to increase profits and to imitate Western trends and styles with little regard to ethics or morality. Yet, David asked the audience to question the role of designers. He asked, “Are we helping increase market share or helping repair the world? where lies our responsibility, our opportunity, our ethics, our culpability, our balance?”



He argued that communications professionals play a core role in helping corporations mislead audiences in order to invent unfulfilled needs and have more conspicuous power and influence in society than they typically realize. In a world where design has become a recognized corporate asset, designers have the opportunity to use their skills responsibly and to accelerate awareness in the population of the influence of visual imagery and the need to apply its persuasiveness responsibly.

“The largest force driving over-consumption are groups in the Western world convincing the vastly larger, faster growing populations of the developing world to consume more, and the most effective way to quickly do that convincing is powerful brand advertising. The most powerful weapon in the corporate artillery to create demand quickly in new markets for their products are branding campaigns: professional communicators such as graphic designers are the people who proudly think up clever visual lies intended to link deep emotional needs to the consumption of often unnecessary products.” David Berman

David comes to graphic design and communications with more than 20 years of experience. Early in his career he developed a lasting interest in plain language and plain design. His work includes award-winning projects in the application of plain design and plain language for groups such as the Ontario Environmental Farm Plan Workbook, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, the Ontario Literacy Coalition and the Region of Ottawa-Carleton.

[Ottawa. There is another topic that David can talk on about and convince you that it is the best place in the world to live. A moderate-sized city with enlightened citizens who have no polluting industry, located close to some of Canada's most glorious outdoor areas. An idyllic place for a man who travels with a stuffed kitten called Spice. Ask him to open his backpack and you will find a cuddly soft toy that keeps him linked to his daughter Hannah and another toy kitten that she keeps with her at home in Ottawa when her father travels the world.]

As early as high school, he created and produced a magazine which was distributed in four countries. While training at the University of Waterloo in computer science and at Carleton University in psychology and typography, he became involved with the student press. He also worked in the federal government as a computer systems analyst before turning his hobby of graphic design into his career.

At present, David focuses on teaching, lecturing, and working with a small group of clients who do good work. His message has meaning because he is sincerely concerned, aware and informed about the problems and perceptions of design practice around the world. Even while challenging the designers in the Middle East, he spent time learning all he could about Jordan and its people. He was impressed by the “courageous and visionary people who are doing things like Creative Nights in order to elevate the status of graphic design in a quickly changing society. If I am came across as inspired, its because I was inspired by these people: I have never seen anything like it, anywhere I have lectured.”