

do good ~~design~~

HOW DESIGNERS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

PROFESSIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE

"I hated this book!"
— Joe Plummer, Plummer & Corporation



DAVID B. BERMAN FGDC,
R.G.D.
WITH A FOREWORD BY ERIK SPIEKERMANN

do good

HOW DESIGNERS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

David B. Berman, FGDC, R.G.D.

Berkeley, California | January, 2009



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Speaking of saving paper, if you wish to share this book without giving yours away, bear in mind that **it can be purchased at safari.peachpit.com in electronic format.** But wait: According to BBC Two, data farms now use as much energy as the entire car manufacturing industry. And the store of knowledge is doubling every five years. By 2020, the carbon emissions produced in generating energy for the Internet will be the equivalent of those produced by the airline industry. Tough choices: read the book.

Do Good Design

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Ne csak jó design-t csinálj, hanem tégy jót is vele!

Non fate solo buon design,
ma fate del bene.

Nedělej jen dobrý design, dělej ho pro dobro věci.

لا تصمم جيداً فقط،
بل افعل جيداً

Não faça solo buon design. Faça o bem.

좋은 디자인만 하지 말고

좋은 일을 하라!

Don't just do good design... do good!

デザインだけではなく、本当に「良い」ものを。

Gör ikke bare
godt design,
gör det
gott!

Ne faites pas
que du bon design,
faites du
bien!

Gör ikke bare
godt design!
Gör noe godt!

גור לא רק
דזין גוט,
גור נא גוט!

Nicht nur tun,
gutes
Design,
die Gutes
tun.

Delati je dobro,
ne samo

dobroga oblikovanje.

No fazas sólo buen diseño,
hazlo bien!

做好设计不够, 还须行善有益。

To D.o.M. and D.o.D.
for instilling in me the knowledge
that social justice is not optional.

... and thank you to Naomi Klein
for urging me to write this book.



Why we chose Malloy to manufacture this book

This book was printed by Malloy Incorporated, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Malloy is one of the few organizations within the book industry that has obtained both Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certifications. The goals of the FSC and SFI are similar, and involve detailing objectives for the protection of endangered species, wildlife, soil quality, and water quality. The FSC is an international network, founded in 1993 by environmental groups concerned with global tropical deforestation and unsustainable logging practices.

The book is printed on Spring Forge PCW-30 D56 540 ppi paper, with a 10-point coated Candesce cover stock, using soy-based inks, and under custody certification with the FSC. The page imposition was optimized to minimize waste (using suctioning for all trim, and recycling of all waste paper and plates). The bleeds (ink that runs off the edges of pages) did not result in any additional paper used, due to the shaving required by the book-finishing process.

Malloy recycles over 30 categories of items and more than 98 percent of its discards. View www.malloy.com/pdf/quarterly/1802-springo8.pdf for a fuller explanation of FSC, SFI, and Malloy's commitments.

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New Riders is part of Pearson, a global company that is committed to social responsibility and making a positive impact on the world. Pearson includes many brands you've likely heard of: Peachpit Press, the Financial Times Group, the Penguin Group, and DK Travel Guides. Pearson also partners with Safari Books Online (safari.peachpit.com), which is helping to save forests by publishing electronically. Pearson is on track to become a climate-neutral global business by the end of December 2009 (and David Berman already is). Pearson supports the Anne Frank Trust, and is a signatory to the UN Global Compact. Particularly admirable is their Made With Care initiative, which calls for publishers to produce their product using the most ethical and environmentally-friendly processes possible. Visit <http://pearson.com/environment> for Pearson's full environmental policy.

AIGA Design Press is a partnership of New Riders and AIGA, the professional association for design. AIGA's mission is to advance designing as a professional craft, strategic tool, and vital cultural force. AIGA is also committed to imparting the value of sustainable design at every level of practice and production.

FOREWORD

by Erik Spiekermann

PHOTO: SUSANNA DULKINYS



When the *First Things First* manifesto from 1964 was about to be republished by *Adbusters* for the new millennium, I readily signed it. As the manifesto put it, “designers... apply their skill and imagination to sell dog biscuits,

designer coffee, diamonds, detergents, hair gel, cigarettes, credit cards, sneakers, butt toners, light beer and heavy-duty recreational vehicles.” Who wouldn’t agree with the conclusion that “our skills could be put to worthwhile use”? I signed, because the list of colleagues and friends who had already signed was impressive, even intimidating. And the original signatories from 1964 were pretty much all my heroes.

I did, however, add a paragraph stating slight misgivings. It is easy, after all, to put your name on a list of famous designers and bask in the reflected glow of their presence. But does that change what we would do in our studio the next morning? Would I tell my 70-some employees that from now on, we would be do-gooders only, send our “commercial” clients away and wait for more worthy projects to find the way to our door? Didn’t the other signatories also do work for hire, for clients who use our work to sell more of whatever they are selling? Is all selling bad? Is designing books always good because there are no bad books? Designing signage for a public transit system is good, airport signage is bad because only The Rich can afford to fly? And how about signage for shopping centers? Bad? Amusement parks?

As opposed to architects, who honestly think that the world would cease to exist if they stopped working, we graphic designers know that the world would probably carry on pretty much the same without our services. Things may look a little less colorful and some companies might sell less without our help in communicating their services or goods, but lives will not be lost. There are, however, situations where graphic design, or rather the lack of it, has cost

lives. In 1997, a fire raged through Düsseldorf airport in Germany. Thick smoke made it difficult to see the emergency signs, which were also not placed where they should have been, too small, and too badly lit. Sixteen people died because they could not find their way out. As a result, we were hired to not only design new signage that was legible, well-lit, and visually appealing, but we also worked with the planners to make sure the signs were put where they would be visible. The architects wanted the signs “out of the way of the beautiful architecture,” as they put it, which would have repeated the previous mistakes. We had to insist that we were not hired to simply make the place pretty, but actually make the airport function properly. Behaving responsibly is not asked for in Requests for Proposals, but without asking questions that haven’t even been asked, we would just be window dressers.

My first responsibility is to my family and to my extended family, the employees of my studio. They look to me for their livelihood. They all became designers because they wanted to make something – something that was better than what had been there before. Of course we discuss what sort of projects we take on and what type of clients we work for. Some issues are quickly resolved: we wouldn’t work for a cigarette brand, although some of us still smoke. But we have worked for automotive brands, and most of us still have cars, although essentially cars are very, very bad.

Whether what we design is good or bad is difficult to judge. We live in this society, and we benefit from the material wealth it offers. As Max Bill put it, we apply 90 percent of our efforts to making something work, and we should apply the remaining 10 percent to making it beautiful. “Designers have enormous power to influence how we see our world, and how we live our lives,” David writes in this book. I could not agree more, and I think that we all need to be constantly aware of what we do, for whom we work, and how our work affects others. But whatever our good intentions

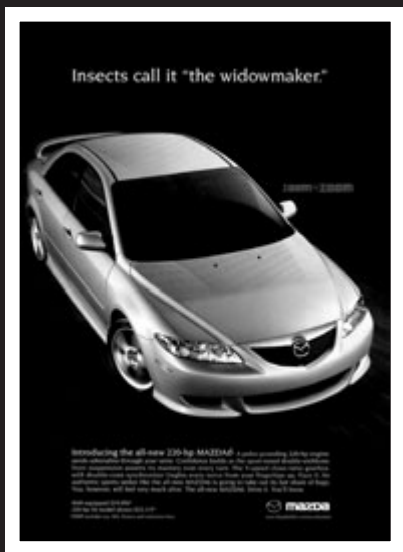
may be, we cannot ignore the reality that design is a business and has to live by the rules of business. As we have seen recently, **those rules need to be rewritten**. There is hope for more awareness and responsibility, even in the world of commerce that we'd rather not belong to but cannot escape from.

In my 30 years of running a design studio, I have come to the conclusion that there is one thing we can do that nobody can stop us from. We alone decide *how* we work. Whatever the restrictions and limitations of the commercial world that buys our services, we create our own processes. *How* we deal with our employees, our suppliers, our clients, our peers, and even our competitors is totally up to us. How we make something is very important, and it is the one thing we can influence without much interference. We'd still have to fill out tax returns, make sure the computers are running and the rent is paid, but the way we work with each other and with our clients is where we can be different. As we take in the big picture of what this book is all about, let's begin by looking at our immediate reality. Charity starts at home.



Erik Spiekermann is an author, information designer, and typographer. He founded MetaDesign and FontShop, is Honorary Professor at the University of the Arts in Bremen, and has an honorary doctorship from Pasadena Art Center. He was the first designer to be elected into the Hall of Fame by the European Design Awards for Communication Design. He lives and works in Berlin, London, and San Francisco. His studio, Spiekermann Partners, employs 30 designers.

the creative disarming the weapons



Irvine, California:

When did roadkill become something to celebrate? We are making 73 species extinct every day. Can we not show more respect for those that survive despite us? The ad copy promises to boost your confidence, as you master weaker things. How did cars go from being tools to being therapy?



Tokyo, Japan:

I found this food packaging for mango-flavored snack cakes in a grocery store in Japan. The food is as simple as it comes. However, the package design is layered with complexity, bordering on the predatory. Is most shopping simply feeding a frustrated hunter-gatherer instinct?

brief: of mass deception



Montréal, Canada:

Tobacco marketers greedily circumvent laws banning point-of purchase cigarette displays in stores, encouraging corner store owners to instead display clever matchboxes that mimic cigarette packs on the checkout counter. Must the marketing ethic be as unhealthy as the product?



Suva, Fiji:

Convincing people to pay more for water than for refined gasoline may seem impressive. Shipping water from the South Seas in plastic bottles from China to the U.S. and Europe in container ships seems unsustainable. Positioning the product as an environmental solution seems outrageous.



PHOTO: DAVID BERMAN

Cult Shaker transit ad, Copenhagen, 2003. Cheap caffeine, alcohol, and sex in a bottle

Køb den her: Statoil, Shell, GS, Hydro Telemo, Føtex, Bilka, 7-Eleven og DSB Mønstre.

**“If we do not change our direction,
we are likely to end up where we
are headed.”** CHINESE PROVERB

1 START NOW

IMAGINE FOR A MOMENT that you’re just over 20 years old. You know exactly what you want to do with your life: you’ve found your passion. You’re proudly paying your own bills doing what you love. Life is good.

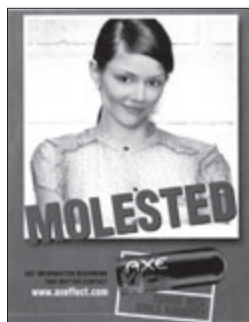
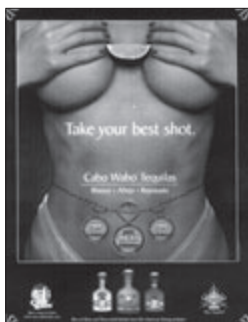
I first discovered my passion publishing a magazine in high school. At University of Waterloo, it was all-nighters at the student paper, neglecting my degree program in computer science. By the late 1980s, I had followed my muse to a tiny design studio above a pawnshop in old Ottawa South. Like so many other young people who realize that designing is who they are, I was jazzed with creating, exploring, and pushing the limits of my perfect little world-within-a-world of grids, fonts, and Pantone® colors, long before desktop publishing would make such terms household words.

I could shut out the messy world and strive to surround myself with beautifully designed things. There was delight in staying up all night spinning two-inch font filmstrips through my Typositor, hand-rolling adhesive wax onto phototype galleys, refining kerning pairs, and unavoidably breathing photo chemicals. X-Acto blades, Letraset, and Rubylith... in the morning, I would zoom around town with a huge portfolio case strapped to my bright-red scooter, wearing cotton crayon shoes and all-black everything else.



PHOTO: STEVE EICHLER

In front of David Berman Typographics,
Hopewell Avenue, 1988



So when that hot⁶ feminist girlfriend tore into my microcosm, claiming that graphic designers like me were responsible for destroying forests in support of the systematic objectification of women by using pictures of their bodies to help sell products... well, my first reaction was to deny everything. But then I took notice of example after example, and promised to do something about it.

A youthful, creative, male mix of social justice, lust, and angry young hubris naively scooted me off to my first-ever meeting of the local chapter of the Society of Graphic Designers of Canada. Hastily written eco-feminist manifesto clutched in my hand, I was intent on changing the code of ethics of my profession. Little did I know that ride would span 16 years and take me to more than 20 countries and counting, vastly exceeding my naïve expectations. But more on that later ...

March, 1988

Presented in writing and verbally to the GDC Ottawa Chapter AGM

We, as graphic designers, have the ability to control to a great degree the choice of images used in the work we produce.

In the field of visual communications, our opinions are well respected and influential. I believe that with this power comes social responsibility.

It has never been more well-understood how women in our society are discriminated against. Not only are women exploited both mentally and physically: they are also subordinated economically and socially.

... encouraged and perpetuated by the powerful ... other printed



How design failed democracy

Fast-forward 12 years, to the turn of the millennium, when it dawned on me that designers not only had the potential to be socially responsible, but also may actually hold the future of the world in their hands. Here's an example.

The most influential piece of information design in my lifetime may very well be the butterfly ballot used in Palm Beach County for the November 2000 U.S. presidential election. The number of votes mistakenly cast for independent Pat Buchanan instead of Al Gore, due to the misleading layout, was well in excess of George W. Bush's certified margin of victory in Florida, and enough to result in Bush winning the presidency nationally. **The poor design of this ballot is therefore likely responsible for the failure of the United States** to sign the Kyoto Accord on climate change, the 2003 invasion of Iraq in search of weapons of mass destruction,⁷ and a long list of controversial White House decisions during the eight years that followed.

AIGA's Design for Democracy is currently working with the U.S. government to clean up the ballot mess, which has compromised the mechanics of democracy.⁸ As a result of its efforts, in June 2007, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission issued voluntary guidelines for the effective use of design in administering federal elections. However, in the 2008 election, its recommendations were only

“It’s very easy for me to see how someone could have voted for me in the belief they voted for Al Gore.”

PAT BUCHANAN⁹

reflected in the ballot design of perhaps six states. The United States continues to have thousands of different ballot designs, with varied technologies, for electing one president.¹⁰

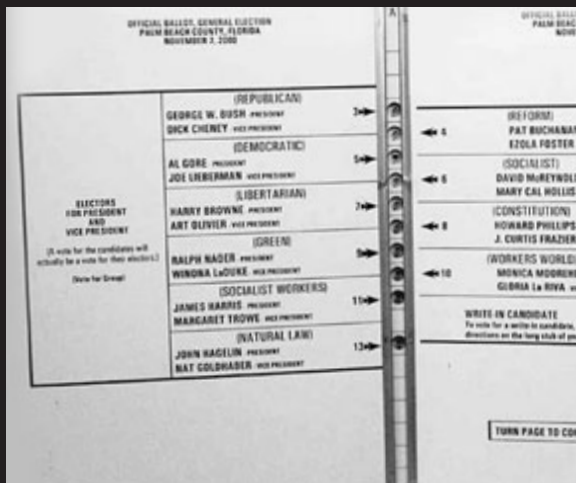
Responsible government should provide voters with a consistent ballot, designed by information design experts. In Canada, as in most Western democracies (let alone in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, which ironically provide their citizens clearer ballots than the U.S. does), anything other than a professional and consistent national ballot design would be an affront. It is oddly inconsistent that, by law, the United States Food and Drug Administration requires consistent nutrition facts on every one of thousands of food package designs, while the U.S. government fails to legislate the use of a consistent, well-designed ballot and voting procedures across its 51 states and districts.

South Africa got it right the first time, in their 1994 election. The vast majority had not voted before, with a substantial portion illiterate. A simple ballot including candidate photos worked well.

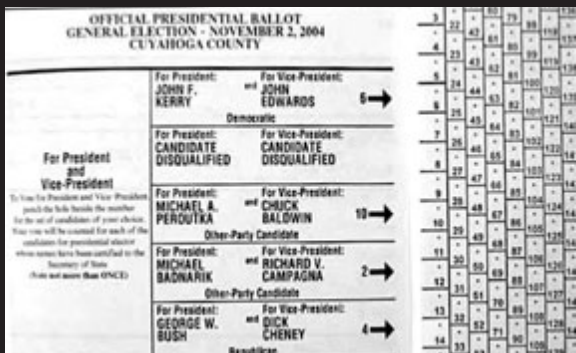
The influence of design on election outcomes does not stop at the ballot box. Candidates spend most of their war chests on ads. Many of these messages are oversimplified and intentionally misleading, cunningly combining pictures and words out of context. *Advertising Age* columnist Bob Garfield admits “Political advertising is a stain on our democracy. It’s the artful assembling of nominal facts into hideous, outrageous lies.”¹¹ In 2004, U.S. presidential candidates spent over a billion dollars¹² disingenuously manipulating opinions, rather than simply presenting straightforward information that helps voters make an intelligent choice. President Obama was the third-largest advertiser in the country during the 2008 campaign,¹³ including an unprecedented online effort focused on positive messages.

Palm Beach County ballot, Florida, 2000: even Pat Buchanan was shocked at his proportion of the Jewish and black vote. With many pages of voting (11 offices, 9 judicial contests, and 4 referenda) to complete, many voters wrongly marked the second hole from the top to indicate their "Democratic" intention.

PHOTO: INDIANAPOLIS STAR

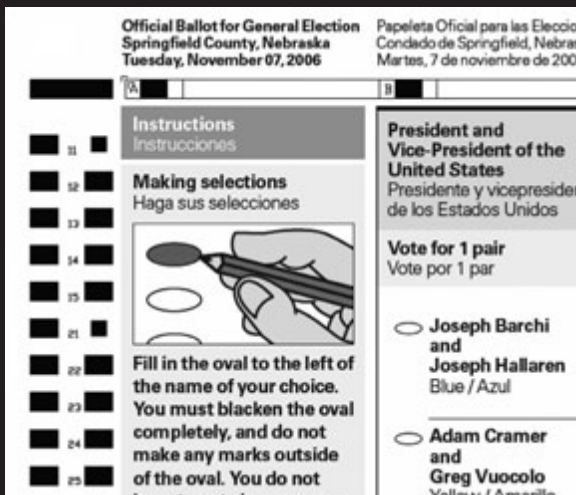


Not the solution: it was just as difficult to vote for George W. Bush for president in Ohio in 2004.¹⁴ Voting for Kerry was easy: mark box 6. But how do you vote for President Bush?



One of many sample ballots created by AIGA's Design For Democracy for the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. Their recommendations were reflected in ballot design used for the November 2008 presidential election within at least 6 states.

PHOTO COURTESY AIGA



How have these manipulations become the norm? If the American public is to be equipped to choose the best leaders, we either need mandatory media literacy education starting in elementary school, or **legislation that prohibits lying with imagery as strongly as current legislation prohibits lying with words.** Meanwhile, good design can encourage youth to seize the cynical 54 percent U.S. election turnout rate as an opportunity.¹⁵

“Drink Milk. Love Life.”

That same chad-hanging election year, my daughter Hannah and I were on the way to her school. She was eight (and a half!) years old. As we passed by a beautiful bill-board that proclaimed “Drink Milk. Love Life,” Hannah, who does not like drinking cow’s milk, had questions.

HANNAH: “David, I don’t drink that milk. Does that mean I can’t love life?” [Yes, she’s always called me David.]

DAVID: “No, of course not.”

HANNAH: “Do I love life less than kids who drink a lot of milk?”

DAVID: “No, Hannah, they just made that up to try to convince you to drink more milk.”

HANNAH (after a long pause): “Why are they allowed to say that if it isn’t true?”



**“We do not inherit this land from our ancestors,
we borrow it from our children.”** HAIDA PROVERB

persuasion

Good question, Hannah. At the time, I was preparing to speak at a design conference in Vancouver. Like most designers, I had planned to show my best work. But in that moment with my daughter, an idea hit me: instead of speaking about my own design work, why not instead speak about the influence of *all* design work?

What could become possible if designers used their power to influence choices and beliefs in a positive and sustainable way? **Imagine: what if we didn't just do good design... we did good?**

Many conferences, keynotes, and seminars later, I'm still traveling with that message. On the way, I've learned as much as I've taught, often from those who are younger.

I met a young boy in rural Tanzania. He was clutching a plastic bag, decorated with the Camel cigarette brand, the only camel he is likely to meet in his lifetime.



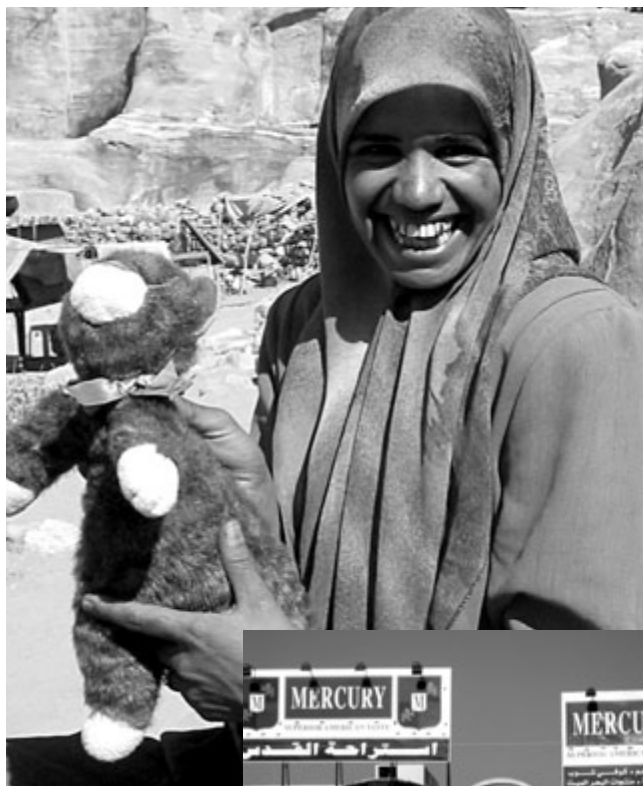
PHOTO: DAVID BERMAN

Tengeru, Tanzania

DOING GOOD

Cuba was an unlikely place to meet American Alan Jacobson. In 2005, Alan traveled 6,000 miles to work with artist Lily Yeh's Rwanda Healing Project. There, he led the transformation of Survivors Village and The Genocide Memorial Park honoring genocide victims from the Rugerero area, where over 800,000 people were slaughtered within 100 days in 1994. "Some designers feel that there is no meaning in what they do. I hope I can inspire some to find the good to be done."

In 2002, I spoke at a design conference in Amman, Jordan. We took a day trip to Petra – an ancient city majestically carved entirely from the surface of rock, and certainly the eighth wonder of the world. There I met a young woman and her camel. They live in the nearby town of Wadi Musa, where the largest sign in the town proclaims the “Superior American Taste” of a local cigarette brand.



PHOTOS: DAVID BERMAN

Bedouin friend, Petra, Jordan. (The cat is my traveling companion, Spice, one half of twins: Blackie stays home with my daughter)



Wadi Musa, Jordan

On the flip side of my world, back home in Canada, my daughter has never seen a cigarette billboard: all tobacco advertising likely to be viewed by children is illegal in Canada.¹⁶

Cigarettes are among the most highly advertised products in the world. Big Tobacco will spend over \$13 billion this year¹⁷ promoting their cleverly designed disposable nicotine-delivery system. Their goal: to convince all three of these youth to start smoking cigarettes, within their teenage years, until they die.

PHOTO: GERRUNTED



The cigarette: highly effective British industrial design from the 1880s

[All \$ in the book are u.s. dollars.]

In proudly free Western societies, we like to tell parents that it's up to them to control what their kids see and don't see. It is said that it takes a village to raise a child. I would add that it takes a society to raise a generation. Striving to be a good parent, I will help my daughter make clever choices around tobacco, and hope that she will live a long and healthy life, perhaps well into the next century.

When that 22nd century arrives, and our children's grandchildren look back on these remarkable days in which we lived, what will history recall as our most crucial issue?

PHOTO: HANNAH LANGFORD BERNAN



My daughter, Hannah

A teenage civilization

The potential impact of any global threat to humanity is far greater when combined with the current trend toward homogeneity of civilization design. Let me explain.

Human civilizations have come and gone, risen and fallen. Although most scientists believe our species has been around for at least five million years, this approach to social organization is only around 6,000 years old (10,000 at most).¹⁸ However, as science philosopher Ronald Wright points out, after 6,000 years of experimenting with civilization design, we humans now find ourselves sailing together into the future on the one huge remaining ship of a combined global civilization.¹⁹ Whether or not we welcome or like the idea of globalization, we are witnessing in our lifetimes our evolution into a singular, merged human community – the largest ever. There are no more geographic New Worlds to discover: only a shared destiny.

Wright goes on to describe civilization as God having let loose a special group of primates – the human animal – into the laboratory of life, giving them the power to tinker with life itself. What scares me the most about this image is that we are all now living inside the experiment: if we accidentally destroy “the lab,” we have no home left, either for ourselves or our future generations.

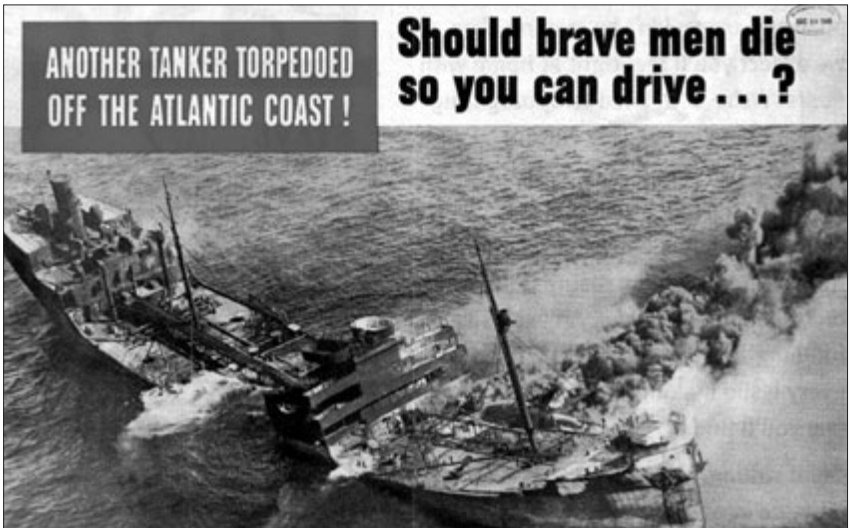
For good or for bad, our globalized inventiveness is fusing our destinies into one civilization. So together, humanity must choose wisely, and in this lifetime. Our common future is our common design challenge.

With or without us, evolution moves forward by trial and error. But if the future is to include a recognizable human civilization, we cannot absorb one more major miscue.

I hope that, 100,000 years from now, our descendants will look back on those first 6,000 “childhood” years of the Big Bang of civilization as the successful adolescence of humanity: that awkward time when there were many civilizations would be a distant memory. Maybe we will be remembered for somehow overcoming

our adolescent delusions of immortality and inane infighting, bringing forward the best of all cultures, and designing a sustainable future together: that we found a way to meet our needs without compromising the ease for future generations to meet theirs.

Wright's ship analogy describes our situation well. Consider that many miles of open sea are needed to turn a huge ship around: In the event that an iceberg appears on our horizon, we must start changing direction far in advance, to avoid crashing into it. If we wait too long, we pass the event horizon, with no choice but to resign ourselves to witnessing our demise in painfully slow motion. **Design has the potential to help steer us to a safer course.**



FROM CHARLATAN ARCHIVE (SEE NOTE 20)

“As Homo sapiens’ entry in any intergalactic design competition, industrial civilization would be tossed out at the qualifying round.” DAVID ORR²¹

Which future should we choose?



Human civilizations combine, then shortly implode. End of experiment.



Human civilizations combine, work it out, proceed with long sustainable future.

So which iceberg threatens us the most?

Is it terrorism? I don't think so. Though timely and freshly horrible in our minds, terrorism is not a new phenomenon and has yet to pose a serious threat to civilization. (I *do* think it is worth pondering why intelligent, and not particularly radical, people



Italy's Diesel brand presents a bizarre juxtaposition of Asian poverty and American poverty

from around the world are increasingly angry at and offended by Western culture. Perhaps they are outraged about being lied to continually by the most sophisticated deception process in history. More on this later.)

Perhaps the iceberg is a pandemic. A global pandemic is a highly probable catastrophe that deserves attention, including well-designed messaging to mitigate its effects. The spread of infectious disease is not new. In today's world, infectious diseases spread farther and faster than before, due to international travel

10,000 12,000 14,000 16,000 18,000 20,000 22,000 24,000 26,000 28,000

and shipping. The likelihood of a global pandemic of deadly, drug-resistant influenza or tuberculosis grows every day. Health authorities tell us that the question is not if, but when. Nonetheless, the worst scenario, while devastating, wouldn't likely end civilization as we know it.

Is the iceberg financial collapse? Or corruption? We'll consider design's role in these ills in the next chapter; however, we have overcome this type of challenge in the past and we will again.

No, the answer is "none of the above." When our children's children look back at the biggest issue of our era, they will see the most deadly threat as the devastation we wrought on our physical environment.

It is unfortunate that the culture that was the most influential of the 20th century also happens to be perhaps the world's most environmentally unsustainable.

**"There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth.
We are all crew."**

HERBERT "MARSHALL" MCLUHAN (1911–1980)²²



PHOTO: DAVID BERMAN

CONSUMERS OF DESIGN: SHOPPING TIPS FOR AGENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Temporary installation to draw media attention to the UK launch of International

No Shop Day: shop posters were screenprinted over recycled billboards. The language of shopping – shop fronts, sales coupons, receipts, and shopping bags – forms a No Shop brand, turning consumerism on its head.



COURTESY THOMAS MATTHEWS

Have a personal mission. **Rethink.** Know what you need, then seek out products that will fit you for a long time. **Read *Cradle To Cradle*.** Demand objects that are designed to last. **Avoid disposables.** Carry one great pen. **Carry chopsticks.** Carry your own shopping bag. **Carry a tune.** Be happy with your hair. **Give ideas as presents more often, things less.** Give a gift subscription to *Adbusters*. **Eat less junk.** Eat fewer animals. **Avoid bottled water.** Drink local beer. **Seek simple entertainment.** Have fun. **Remember that you are already beautiful (and embrace those who have told you so).** Avoid style magazines: fashion is declawed rebellion, and a weak substitute at that. **Entertain yourself simply.** Don't leave your car idling (except in Wasilla). **If you don't have democracy, fight for it.** If you do have democracy, fight to keep it. **Then vote for lawmakers who will make laws that control visual lies and will regulate products that steal dreams.** Shake off the excessive amount of stuff you have in your life, then see how much lighter you feel. **Plan more carefully,** so you can consume more efficiently. **Resist all messages that seek to convince you that you need to consume in order to feel good.** If shopping is your hobby, find a more sustainable hobby. **If shopping is your habit, figure out why.** Avoid products made of PVC, the hazardous waste of the display industry. **Buy products that tell the truth.** Resist designer products unless you see the value the designer has contributed. **Resist being manipulated by visual lies.** Resist giving up your mental environment to corporations that wish to post billboards in your mind. **Don't get too comfy.** Stay alert. **Demand truth.** Share your truth. **Speak out when you see visual lies.** Think about how you can apply the principles in this book to all professions. **Lead by example.** Teach it. **Live it.** Share it. **Design your better future, then help us all design ours.**

“Be the change you want to see in the world.”

MAHATMA GANDHI (1869–1948)

the do good



The time
to commit
is now.

IMMEDIACY

1

"I will be
true to my
profession."

ETHICS

pledge

2

PRINCIPLES

"I will be
true to
myself."

3

EFFORT

"I will
spend
at least
10 percent
of my
professional
time
helping
repair the
world."

"Don't just do good design, do good."

DAVID BERMAN



Award-winning ad for cosmetic surgery: but aren't our noses good enough already?

**“Now that we can do anything,
what will we do?”** BRUCE MAU

12 “WHAT CAN ^{ANY}~~ONE~~ PROFESSIONAL DO?” ^{commit!}

EVERYBODY: Please read this final chapter. Think about how these principles apply to your work even if you do not call yourself a designer.

Imagine what would be possible if designers did not participate in the export of overconsumption and the unbridled fulfillment of greed. No one understands the powerful mechanism behind these manipulations better than design professionals, and we have the creativity and persuasiveness to make a positive change. We must act, be heard... and sometimes simply say no by designing a better yes.

Some of us choose to pursue design purely as an exercise in the aesthetic. I know that simply creating beautiful objects or surrounding yourself with beautifully designed things can help create a fulfilling and comfortable life. However, that is only the surface of the potential good and sense of accomplishment you can achieve with your creative skills.

Go further: recognize the interdependence, power, and influence of your role as a professional, and let it resonate with the world around you and within you.

Designers ask me, “So what can *I* do?” My answer: take this three-part pledge, with its components of professionalism, personal responsibility, and time.

1 “I will be true to my profession.”

For a couple of millennia now, doctors have been taking a pledge. Imagine if, instead of following the Hippocratic Oath, doctors only focused on the wealth to be had from cosmetic surgery... or shaking down dying people for their entire inheritance in exchange for a remedy that would extend life by a few weeks.

Design professionals have built their own oaths. Join a national or regional association of design professionals that has a code of ethics (sometimes known as standards or rules of professional conduct).

Your professional association should have a code of ethics that includes a commitment to social responsibility (and many other good things: licensing, authorship, competitions...). If not, use Icograda's template or call me: we'll work together to get that remedied.

If there isn't such an organization in your region, you can start one (we can help!), become a Friend of Icograda, or become a member at large of a professional organization in a nearby region (such as AIGA).

By joining, you'll have made a public professional commitment to abide to a minimum standard of ethical conduct. (There will be many other benefits to joining as well.)

A commitment to professional ethics implies a minimum standard of conduct: a combination of your personal and public principles. The personal commitment you make to yourself, in

the form of your mission, morals, and beliefs. The professional commitment is a promise to uphold a common set of published minimum standards of behavior, which you make when you join a professional body. Professionalism implies a 24/7 commitment, a recognition that your profession is part of who you are.

[You can go further as well: there are issue-specific public professional credos that you can commit to regarding particular issues within the field of design. Here are some examples:

- *the Design Can Change pledge at www.designcanchange.org*
 - *the Designers Accord at www.designersaccord.org*
 - *Catherine Morley's No-Spec site at www.no-spec.com*
- ...or visit www.davidberman.com/dogood for a longer list.]*

2 "I will be true to myself."

Be guided by what you know is right.

People ask me what constitutes doing good. I can't answer for you whether a hybrid SUV is part of the solution or part of the problem. However, I do know that if all designers simply looked in their hearts, chose to be their best selves, and did only work that was in alignment with their principles, then we'd be 90 percent there.

Be aware of your principles. Part of what designers do as professionals – just as is expected of doctors, judges, or engineers –

is to strive to maintain our principles all the time. So when it comes to the question of what is right or wrong in the professional world, simply ask yourself, “How would I deal with this on a personal level? Would I recommend this product to my children? Could I look my daughter or my best friend in the eye while speaking this message or pitching the product I’ve designed, or would I have to look away?”

I don’t have all the answers. I do know that if each one of us forbids ourselves from doing anything or helping to say anything that is out of alignment with our personal principles, then that will be more than enough to change the world.

Saying no at times is a big part of it. But it is often more powerful to propose an alternative solution that aligns with the principles of all parties. If we all do that, we’ll get the shift required: we’ll be contributing more than we’re taking away; doing more good than harm.



“This is your life, and it’s ending one minute at a time.”

TYLER DURDEN

3 "I will spend at least 10 percent of my professional time helping repair the world."

I am not asking you to sell your firm. I am not asking you to quit your job. I am not asking you to work pro bono (well, maybe a little bit, but that's another story).

Here is what I am asking...

Christians call it a tithe. Muslims have something similar: *zakat*. Jews call it *ma'aser*. For the Chinese, it is *ci shan*.

And since time is money, I'm asking that you commit 10 percent of your professional time to help repair the world.

That's four hours of a 40-hour professional work week (and I'm clearly giving you a break here by pretending that you only work a 40-hour week). Four hours of design for an organization, a company, or government clearly acting for the social good.

There are close to 2 million designers in the world.¹²⁶ If each of us were to take just 10 percent of our professional time, imagine what would be possible. Close to 8 million hours a week of designing a more just, more sustainable, more caring civilization.

“When I retire from Madison Avenue, I am going to start a secret society of masked vigilantes who will travel the world on motor bicycles, chopping down posters at the dark of the moon.”

DAVID OGILVY, FOUNDER OF OGILVY & MATHER (1911–1999)

Make money doing it.

Let me be clear: I am *not* asking you to work for free. I am simply asking you to make sure that at least four hours of each professional week is spent on projects that are socially just.

When I sold my design agency, and decided to rededicate myself to working on projects that matter while sharing what I know, I expected to take a pay cut. I was surprised to discover that working exclusively for clients who are doing good in the world actually pays well. I suspect it is because they have products and services that truly fulfill on their promises. And clients like that tend to be stable and healthy organizations that also value my ethical practices. I also know that when I am working with integrity, I produce better work.

Sometimes it's a bit of a Robin Hood thing: the wealthier clients, who get to be the most demanding, effectively subsidize the less-wealthy clients, who allow us more creative and deadline flexibility. It's healthy cross-pollination that nurtures everyone involved.

Now.

Are we too late? Not at all. The time is perfect. Because of the increasing visual literacy and networking in our society, I believe we can design a scenario where we avoid running the ship aground. 15 years ago, if you said you were a designer, people asked, “What is that?” Today, they tend to already know. Instead they are now asking, “What are designers really about? Are they tradespeople?”

Are they craftspeople? Are they artists? Professionals? Are they ethical?" What's our answer going to be? It seems the perfect time to be able to declare, "We're about this, and we're definitely not about that."

If not now, then when? I was invited to speak on ethics at one of the largest design schools in the U.S., Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond – the heart of Tobacco Country. The talk was mandatory for design students, and in a huge campus auditorium I made a point of using example after example from the cigarette industry. When it was over, I wasn't sure if I'd be shown the door or embraced. After the Q&A, a student came up to me and said, "Thank you so much. I'm from a tobacco family, and until today I assumed I'd be taking a job in the tobacco industry."

Young designers often promise me they'll change: later, once they've established themselves and gotten a foothold in the industry. More experienced designers will tell me that they wish I would have reached them years ago, but that right now they have a mortgage and kids to feed: they claim the right time will be "someday." I tell both younger and older designers the same thing: our time is now.

**"It is only with the heart that one can see
rightly. What is most important is invisible
to the eye."** THE LITTLE PRINCE

commit

I've had many audiences raise their hands to commit to give a percentage of their time to repairing the world. You'll recall the ICS masterclass from an earlier "Doing Good" sidebar? The participants one-upped me by applying strength in numbers: Lane Vad Jensen is one of the founders of the group that the masterclass participants formed, called Designers Of Today. DOT is a multidisciplinary forum of 30 designers who formally donate 5 percent of their professional design hours for "Design to Improve Life." For example, DOT offered 5 percent of their combined time for a year to UNICEF: a block worth more than \$200,000. They turned UNICEF's global warehouse in Denmark into a learning showroom for all visitors, and planned a game that teachers can instantly use to teach children's rights.

"All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us." GANDALF

Are you ready to take the Do Good Pledge?

Each one of us has a choice: We can spend the best years of our careers helping to convince people they don't belong, that they don't smell right, that they're not thin enough or famous enough or tall enough or red enough or white enough or rich enough or smooth enough... and all they have to do to belong is to satisfy manufactured needs by buying more stuff.

Or we can remember that we all belong, and that each of us has an important role in working together, making the world better.

What this profession will be about is now up to us.

Design is a very young profession, without a long history that's impossible to uproot. We've barely begun. The role of design need not be defined by selling ideas and things through deceit.

Over 95 percent of all designers who have ever lived are alive today.

Together, it is up to us to decide what role our profession will play. Is it going to be about selling sugar water and smoke and mirrors to the vulnerable child within every one of us... or helping to repair the world?

It should be about embracing a responsible and honored role in society – as it is with medical doctors, lawyers, and engineers. Society will then truly recognize the power of design, and the special role that designers will play in a brighter future.

I know that if we fulfill the gifts of our professional skills by recognizing our power and the stewardship responsibility that accompanies that power, we can make a real difference. And since we can, we must.

Perhaps 100,000 lifetimes of human history preceded yours, and hopefully at least more than that will follow. Do you ever wonder why your life is taking place right now, at this remarkable turning point in human history? I know that we can continue to work together to create an environment where our children and our children's children will be able to fulfill their needs as easily as we are able to today. The future for humanity lies in the decisions we will make in our lifetimes.

Our first 6,000 years has been civilization's collective childhood. From here on, it's one civilization for all – or not. So in this post-Darwinian world, it's up to us: the product designers, the message designers, the specialists in the transportation of things and ideas over great distances and time. We must make sure that our inventions are not just clever but also wise; that they don't just do cool stuff, but are also in alignment with a sustainable future for humanity.

And, should civilization survive and thrive, perhaps 100,000 years from now people will look back at this "teenagehood" of civilization and admire the legacy of how we chose to spend our creative energies... of the ideas we chose to propagate.

So choose well: **don't just do good design, do good.**

We need you:

Take the Do Good Pledge right now.

Go to www.davidberman.com/dogood

APPENDIX A

FIRST THINGS FIRST MANIFESTO**A manifesto by Ken Garland, London, 1964**

We, the undersigned, are graphic designers, photographers and students who have been brought up in a world in which the techniques and apparatus of advertising have persistently been presented to us as the most lucrative, effective and desirable means of using our talents. We have been bombarded with publications devoted to this belief, applauding the work of those who have flogged their skill and imagination to sell such things as: cat food, stomach powders, detergent, hair restorer, striped toothpaste, aftershave lotion, before-shave lotion, slimming diets, fattening diets, deodorants, fizzy water, cigarettes, roll-ons, pull-ons and slip-ons.



By far the greatest effort of those working in the advertising industry are wasted on these trivial purposes, which contribute little or nothing to our national prosperity.

In common with an increasing number of the general public, we have reached a saturation point at which the high pitched scream of consumer selling is no more than sheer noise. We think that there are other things more worth using our skill and experience on. There are signs for streets and buildings, books and periodicals, catalogues, instructional manuals, industrial photography, educational aids, films, television features, scientific and industrial publications and all the other media through which we promote our trade, our education, our culture and our greater awareness of the world.

We do not advocate the abolition of high pressure consumer advertising: this is not feasible. Nor do we want to take any of the fun out of life. But we are proposing a reversal of priorities in favour of the more useful and more lasting forms of communication. We hope that our society will tire of gimmick merchants, status salesmen and hidden persuaders, and that the prior call on our skills will be for worthwhile purposes. With this in mind we propose to share our experience and opinions, and to make them available to colleagues, students and others who may be interested.

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"You don't finish writing a book; you abandon it." –Candlyn Brown

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*More about you...
it's always about David ...*

PHOTO: HEADLIGHT



David Berman has over 25 years of experience in design and strategic communications. His award-winning client list has included IBM, the International Space Station, Health Canada, Inter Pares, the Aga Khan Foundation, the Sierra Club, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and Canada's three largest Web sites. He has had a

longtime passion for plain design and accessible design, producing special projects for Justice Canada, Ontario Soil and Crop Association, and the Ontario Literacy Coalition.

David provides motivation and techniques for applying strategy, design, ethics, and creative branding and communications to business problems. As a strategist, designer, and typographer since 1984, he has worked to establish codes of ethical practice that embrace social responsibility for designers throughout Canada and the world.

Along the way, he served as the first elected president of the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario (North America's first certifying body for graphic designers) from 1997 to 1999. He drafted the association's constitution and Rules of Professional Conduct, as well as the section of the accreditation exam on ethics and professional responsibility. In 1999, he was named a Fellow of the Society of Graphic Design of Canada, the country's top honor in the profession, and was elected national ethics chair in 2000, a role he continues in today. David is in his second term on the board of Icograda, the world body for communication design. He is also a professional member of GDC, AIGA, IFPA, and a Friend of IEDD.

Perhaps his greatest professional passion is as an expert speaker: he lectures at conferences about the role professionals can play in improving the human condition and the global environment. David's speaking and professional development work has brought him to 20 countries.

Please visit www.davidberman.com/about for more about David, or to book him for speaking engagements.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David B. Berman is a strategic consultant with over 25 years experience in graphic, interface, and accessibility design. He has traveled to 20 countries as an expert speaker, serves as the Ethics Chair for graphic design in Canada, and as a vice president of Icograda, the world body for graphic design. Clients include IBM, the International Space Station, the Sierra Club, and Canada's largest federal government departments.

The author will make a donation of 10% of his proceeds to a not-for-profit organization whose mission is in alignment with the goals of this book.



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