

Please allow me a moment to think critically began as an undergraduate thesis on ways of design thinking and questioning. However, it evolved into a project that extends beyond my own academic studies and into the realms of community engagement, and collaboration.

Throughout my experiential learning, I've come to the belief that design is not a pursuit of definitive answers, but an ongoing exploration—one driven by inquiry, dialogue, and reflection. The questions in this book are meant to reflect this ethos. By its nature, the book is never truly complete. Rather, it is an iterative tool—inviting the reader to contribute their own ideas and seek out answers for themselves. Design, like dialogue, thrives not on certainty but on engagement. The only misstep is to refrain from the conversation. It is through participation that we not only shape the world around us but are transformed in the process.



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cedric kraynak

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This book began as an undergraduate thesis on ways of design thinking and questioning but evolved into a project that extends beyond my own academic studies and into the realms of community engagement, and collaboration. This book embodies how my view of design as a designer has changed and evolved over the course of my experiential, conceptual, and practice-based learning. It also signifies a shift in my mindset from trying to find the right answers to becoming open to the diversity of perspectives that shape the possibilities of solutions. Throughout this project, I reflect on my growth as a designer and how embracing uncertainty, engaging in dialogue, and gaining diverse perspectives have reshaped my understanding of design as a fluid and ever-evolving practice.

A pivotal moment for me was when I worked on a project for Whelan Cemetery in the Palouse region of Washington State, designing with the intention of preserving the history of the local community. This project introduced me to the concept of community-based design—allowing me to explore how design can be employed outside of commercial applications to address societal aspirations and needs. Instead of designing for a product, my team and I designed for a “call to care”—an idea that many of us found challenging to comprehend at first. After extensive research, discussions with professional designers, and experimentation, we began to understand this challenge, creating a visual system that preserved and highlighted the cemetery’s historical significance. Looking back, I realize that my preconceived ideas of design were undergoing a transformation.

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Maker + Made is a full-service creative agency in Spokane, Washington, serving clients all across the United States. They focus on holistic branding

brings character and integrity back into the world, combatting the current direction of photography and design within society.

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Jade Blue

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Nice to meet you! My name is Jadezhia [Jade] Blue. I'm a graphic designer based in the lovely pnw - rooted in curiosity and experimental creativity. My primary design interests lie in motion design and branding, with a growing interest in photography and print production. My passion for design originates from promoting a human-centered, holistic approach that encourages individuals in a positive manner. Beyond design, I love pugs, potatoes and riding on my Ripstick no matter the weather. I'm always open to new opportunities - so let's create something together!

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June T. Sanders

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June T. Sanders is an artist, curator, writer, and educator living in Palouse, WA. Her interdisciplinary practice includes photography, sculpture, writing, pedagogy, social practice, and cultural work.

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Lain Bundalian is an queer AAPI designer and illustrator based in Spokane, WA. With a background in media studies, they create

I was beginning to discover how design could be used to create community outside the bounds of commercialization—a perception that would guide my approach to design moving forward.

My first glimpse into the creative working environment was fraught with ideological diversity. It revealed two contrasting approaches that underscored the importance of perspective in design. The first was deeply community-oriented, with a genuine passion for teaching and empowering individuals through design. They emphasized the role of design as a tool for creative expression and collaboration, fostering a sense of connection and support within the community. In contrast, the second had a more corporate and structured approach. They presented a more rigid design ideology, focusing on a set of rules and principles that prioritized commercial applications. This duality challenged me to consider how different design ideologies can coexist and inform one another, allowing me to see for the first time the importance of perspective in shaping design outcomes.

A later trip to Berlin sharpened this focus, revealing to me a culture that already embraces community-oriented design. Tempelhofer Feld, a former military airfield, has been reclaimed by its citizens and transformed into a

I now believe design is not as a pursuit of definitive answers, but an ongoing exploration—one driven by inquiry, dialogue, and reflection. The questions in this book are meant to reflect this ethos. By its nature, the book is never truly complete. Rather, it is an iterative tool—inviting the reader to contribute their own ideas and seek out answers for themselves. Ample white space allows for this making the book a dynamic and participatory experience. Design, like dialogue, thrives not on certainty but on engagement. The only misstep is to refrain from the conversation. It is through participation that we not only shape the world around us but are transformed in the process.

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fifteen questions every designer should ponder

Alec van Staveren is a multidisciplinary motion designer living in Los Angeles. He received his Graphic Design BA from Portland State University.

Alex Egner

Alex Egner is a Professor of Design at Western Washington University. He also consults as creative director and designer for clients like Apple, Meta, LinkedIn, GE Healthcare, and many others. His work has been recognized by numerous international organizations and publications, including the AIGA, the American Advertising Federation, Communication Arts, Graphis, HOW Magazine, Print Magazine, and the Type Directors Club. Alex holds a BFA in Communication Design from the University of North Texas and an MFA in Design: Visual Communication from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Caleb X.M. Hartsfield

I'm a multidisciplinary designer born and raised in Honolulu, HI, based in Los Angeles, CA. The environment I grew up in and the one I now live in provided me with a wide range of cultures and values to be influenced by, and I've always been a curious person drawn especially towards art. When I'm not working on graphic design, I'm keeping myself busy either with writing music, designing

What defines timeless design?

To all who contributed...

Throughout this book's creation, I came to understand the power of collaboration. Many who took part were strangers at first—individuals with whom I had little to no prior connection. Yet, each response I received filled me with an indescribable joy, a reminder of how creativity—and simply reaching out—has the power to bring people together. I can only hope the feeling was mutual.

Through guidance, encouragement, feedback, or simply offering their time and expertise, I am grateful to all who supported me on this journey and played a part in the creation of this book. May these pages inspire others to learn, grow, and contribute, just as I have been inspired by those around me.

Thank you.

"Timeless design" is ultimately a reflection of the creator's passion and authenticity. What makes a design timeless is the care and thoughtfulness poured into it—whether architecture, graphic or experiential to name a few disciplines. When someone puts their heart and soul into their work, it transcends its own era, continuing to resonate with future generations. Just like the impact you leave on others, a meaningful design leaves a lasting imprint that continues to inspire.

—Jade Blue

In what ways can design
shape human behavior?

What defines timeless design?

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What meaningful roles can design
play beyond commercial applications?

Can design be used as a form of activism?

What are the ethical and cultural
responsibilities of a designers?

What risks does design pose when
it oversteps its boundaries?

How is technology reshaping design, and
should there be a limit to its influence?

How can designers navigate the
tension between following
established rules and pushing the
boundaries of creative innovation?

What is the relationship between
objectivity and subjectivity in design?

What elevates design
beyond problem solving?

How can design remain meaningful
in an oversaturated world?

How does collaboration influence
your work as a designer?

How do constraints shape
your practice in design?

How do your personal values
influence your work as a designer?

What impact do you hope to make as
a designer, both now and in the future?

I think that design which shapes human behavior for the better is evident in campaigns with easily recognizable cues like Smokey Bear's initiative. This was proven to effectively reduce careless fire outbreaks across the US: a moral incentive promoting community accountability. Our public services like Medicare and the USPS are often underfunded, resulting in inadequate, confusing design. Design that doesn't work efficiently for a society provokes stressed and irritable human behavior.

–Alec Van Staveren

What meaningful role
can design play beyond
commercial applications?

What impact do you hope
to make as a designer, both
now and in the future?

All of the built world was designed by
someone (thoughtfully or not) according
to the "average" body. But design makes
the most sense when we take it into our
own hands, based on our own needs.
I want a world of adjustable height
countertops. Affordable shoes and
clothes that actually support our bodies,
and not fast fashion capitalism. I want
a world where we take ownership and
make the world what we need it to be.

–Serena Hocharoen

Can design be used as a form of activism?

As an anti-capitalist, feminist, and queer person, I believe that our current economic systems are not only destroying our relationship with our planet but also with each other. I believe that nothing has to be the way it has been but that every day we create a new world with the same problems. My work then becomes to propagate a shift from systematic isolation to localized interdependence. I remain dedicated to imagining new worlds and changing power dynamics.

–Corbin LaMont

How do your personal values influence your work as a designer?

Yes, absolutely. At the intersection of design practice and empathy is the potential for intentional community building and activism. In terms of printed design (our speciality!) we like to think of it as the great equalizer in terms of access to information, which spreads a message far and wide and is arguably one of the main catalysts for change.

–Outlet PDX

What are the ethical and cultural responsibilities of a designer?

Constraint gives me the challenge to be inventive and find ways to do more with less. It allows me to hone in on a visual language for myself to present 3-4 visual ideas that represent me in shapes, color, and composition and finding a harmonious pattern and balance within those numbers. The downside is feeling the need to overcompensate if my visual language starts feeling stale after a while.

–Naomi Likayi

How do constraints shape your practice in design?

The designer recognizes the systems around them and works to question, challenge, and redefine them into newer meanings for an even newer age. The designer does not create in isolation; rather, they are influenced by the social, cultural, and environmental contexts around them. This understanding allows the designer to create work that is deliberate, critical, and restorative—all in an effort to connect with the world they're ever-present in.

—Lain Bundalian

What risks does design pose when it oversteps its boundaries?

Collaboration is an essential aspect of all my projects, regardless of if I'm working on someone else's idea or working for myself. At the end of the day, I design to communicate. Whether I'm communicating information or emotion, bringing another perspective to the table checks if what I've done visually is communicating my intentions consistently across minds beyond my own.

–Samantha-Lynn Martinez

How does collaboration
influence your work
as a designer?

I would make the argument that design has no boundaries, but rather humans have boundaries that design is used to cross. Design is a messenger that communicates and interacts with us, but only because the designer gives it soul and purpose. A person/entity has to have malicious intentions for their designs to do intentional wrongs. It is the person designing that is overstepping boundaries, the fault does not lay on the design itself.

–Ducky

How is technology reshaping design, and should there be a limit to its influence?

For design to remain meaningful, it must focus on intentional impact.

Design, at its core, is about deeply understanding the problem, the audience, and the time—with a focus on creating solutions that resonate with the right people. It's not about reaching everyone; it's about making the right impact on the right person at the right moment. Oversaturation is inevitable, but the way to transcend it is by making it irrelevant—by honing in on the moment of intentional impact.

—Maker + Made Team

How can design remain
meaningful in an
oversaturated world?

Technology constantly reshapes design, from how we understand it to how we create it. Advances in digital tools, broader access, and AI-driven innovations allow more people to communicate ideas faster. However, technology alone isn't enough—it depends on the design problem you're solving. While tools enhance efficiency, great design will always be driven by creativity, ideas, and interpretation. I am not sure we will ever be able to "limit" it, but I feel that no matter how advanced technology becomes, human ingenuity remains the key to truly impactful design.

—David Janssen Jr.

How can designers navigate the tension between following established rules and pushing the boundaries of creative innovation?

If design was just problem-solving, we'd make every sign imaginable in Helvetica and be done. However, design finds greater efficacy when it appeals to our human and expressive nature. Creative problem-solving entails finding a voice that can cut through anything that distracts from your message. You'll shape a unique voice with trial and error; stumble forward enough and you'll learn to run. Lastly, like good design considers negative space, always consider what you leave unsaid.

—Caleb X.M. Hartsfield

What elevates design beyond problem solving?

First remember that design rules are different than, say, Newton's Laws. They aren't empirically-proveable absolute truths, but rather a set of best practices hard-earned by craftspeople over centuries. The "rules" aren't arbitrary edicts—they're the principles that have proven time and again to be most effective. I'm not a fan of self-indulgent boundary-pushing as an act of rebellion. Or innovation for innovation's sake. It's only exciting if you create something genuinely better than established practices would have allowed.

—Alex Egner

What is the relationship
between objectivity and
subjectivity in design?

To me, design makes the subjective objective. Design is in the business of normalization — or norms — and it has the power to take subjective concepts of taste, perspective, and gaze and use them to create seemingly objective cultural norms. Brands, technology, institutions, are all made to seem logical, necessary, and customary through our visual treatments of them, for better or worse.

—June T. Sanders