

Defining the contemporary citizen designer

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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, author firmly believes 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

they act simultaneously and in society's best interest, both as 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 sometimes in our exclusive roles as citizens and designers.

Biography

Bradley C 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, he has directed donate design, a service learning experience bringing together design students and non-profits 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, Tap Root Nature Experience and The United Nations Association. For the past 16 years he has worked closely with Widgets and Stone as a long distance collaborator. His areas of professional speciality include identity design, brand development and data visualization.

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