



Gail Goldman

design philosophy

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My philosophy of design stems from my interdisciplinary experience in design which has integrated architecture, interior design, industrial product design, user-interface design, web design and communication design. From this perspective it is easy for me to see the importance and far-reaching responsibilities inherent in the role of the communication designer. As designers, the products and visual messages we create have enormous potential to define generations and promote social, environmental, political, and economic change, both positively and negatively.

If our profession does indeed possess such great power, what then are our corresponding responsibilities? What role should design play in the development of our global civilization? Should we be held responsible, in part, for the world's social conditions? How can we act now to create the outcomes we desire in the future? I believe our foremost responsibility is to recognize the value of all peoples. We can do this by promoting designers who see themselves in the larger context of a multicultural world audience. Learning sensitivity to other cultures does not mean betraying our own, but it does mean being adaptable and intelligent in our message-making. Instead of being a purely profit-driven profession, designers have the opportunity to influence corporate decision-making and to promote positive social change with each piece designed to deliver a client's message.

Although both design and studio arts bridge a wide array of disciplines, the impetus for design is generally external in nature, satisfying an externally defined problem whereas for studio arts, like painting and sculpture (with the exception of commissioned work) the impetus is generally "internal" in nature, often satisfying the purpose of the artist alone. Design is ultimately about messages and meaning and how that meaning is created and then conveyed. The interaction between meaning, design and communication creates experience that touches all aspects of our lives. As communication designers today, due to technological changes, we must be generalists as well as specialists, able to wear many hats and provide a complete design solution.

In the past, designers relied upon many others to help complete their projects. The all but extinct typesetter and paste-up artist were among the specialists required on any given job. As in the medical or scientific fields, as our body of knowledge grows beyond our practical limitations, specialization is required. Just as a podiatrist does not perform open heart surgery, a Java programmer should not design corporate identity systems and logos. Although we may not know today exactly what the specializations of the future will be, I believe that, as has already begun to happen with web design and multimedia, the profession needs to come full-circle to a level of specialization at which the designer is, once again, part of a group of people who work collaboratively and bring their expertise together to find the best design solutions. The designer cannot continue to be expected to be the conceator, writer, designer, typographer, photographer, color separator, and prepress expert that we have become over the past 15 years.

What would it mean if we actually did discover the ultimate theory of the universe? ... In Newton's time it was possible for an educated person to have a grasp of the whole of human knowledge, at least in outline. But since then, the pace of the development of science has made this impossible ... years ago, if Eddington is to be believed, only two people understood the general theory of relativity.

—Stephen Hawking

Distinction in the profession of communication design is another concern. Who gets to call him/herself a graphic or communication designer? What expertise and skills are they selling to the public? A way of differentiating a person who has an extensive design education from someone who has learned the latest software package is desperately needed. Much in the same way that licensing is required in other professions such as architecture and interior design, communication designers should have a concrete way of distinguishing themselves, in the eyes of potential clients, from "desktop publishers." For example, although specific laws vary from state-to-state, generally speaking, people must be licensed by the state in which they practice in order to call themselves Interior *Designers*. If they are not licensed, they must use the title Interior *Decorator*. Technology provides wide and quick access to cool graphics in place of sound conceptual development of design solutions. Our education, experience and specialized expertise have great value and should be allowed to be recognized for the distinction that they are.

We, as designers, have great power and should use it wisely, carefully, and responsibly in creating messages and meaning. We should be cognizant of our role in the shaping of society and the long-term effects of our collective work. It is my goal to incorporate these ideals into my own messages as I turn my focus to the education of future design professionals.