

# Ethical Selling Practices

## **Ethical Sellout**

Refining Standards of Ethics in  
the Commercial Design Industry

By Kelly Small  
BDes, OCAD University, 2007

# Acknowledgements /

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“Designers need to recognize and take responsibility for the fact that designed things go on designing —or they fail to grasp the ethical implications and issues of designing and the designed.”

(Fry, 2009 p. 3)

**Keywords:**

Design Ethics, Design for Sustainability, Social Impact Design,  
Social Innovation, Professional Ethics, Marketing,  
Advertising, Graphic Design, Communication Design

# Abstract/

This project aims to refine notions of ethical design within the commercial communications industry and investigate the potential for actionable support to ethical practice. It intends to provide a unique aggregation and distillation of ethical design wisdom in the format of a comprehensive, foundational guide to assist practitioners in exploring their ethical potential and encourage the sustainable, dynamic development of a more socially and environmentally responsible practice.

Though the “responsible design movement” continues to flourish, predominant perceptions of the marketing, advertising, and design industries remain largely negative (Heller & Vienne, 2018, p.103). A profit-above-all focus has resulted in public notions of an unethical industry complicit in perpetuating gratuitous consumerism, reflexive media consumption (Harris, 2016) and gross racial and gender inequality (3% Movement, 2018). Industry discourse indicates a heightened awareness about the perils of commercial work (Schwab, 2018) and employees are increasingly primed (Deloitte Millennial Survey, 2018) to participate in efforts to address today’s most pressing issues, in and outside of the design industry, like diversity, ethics, gender equity, climate action and socially responsible consumption and production (AIGA Design Census, 2017, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2018).

Arguably, however, design literature has had little to offer in terms of *actionable* support for the employee’s desire for purposeful work (Garrotem, 2017). Ethics discourse in communication design

has largely centred on the dissemination of idealistic manifestos (100 Years of Design Manifestos, 2014, Monteiro, 2017), organizations denouncing the unethical aspects of industry (Ico-D stands against crowd-sourced competition for the Tokyo Olympics 2020 logo, 2016, Schwab, 2018, Time’s Up®/ Advertising, 2018), and publications celebrating aesthetics in visual case studies for public-sector clients (Resnick, 2016, Simmons, 2016).

This project explores a history of ethical design discourse, popular publishing in the area of ethical design, and expert interviews and surveys with over 130 practicing professionals. The research reveals an industry that has long focused on problematizing design’s complicity in capitalist endeavour. It has been said that for designers to effectively address the world’s problems, design must first free itself from its position as a tool of advertising (Garland, 1964, Papanek 1971) and separate itself from the hegemonic market economy (Fry, 2009, p. 80, Walker, 2013, p. 446). While there is probable partial truth to this suggestion, it is often impractical and, at times, impossible for a practitioner to leave the industry altogether. Given the multi-billion dollar size of the Canadian communications industry (Fuller, 2016), it is in our best interest to develop a means to effectively support the thousands of industry-employed practitioners (Graphic Designers - Canada Market Research Report, 2018) to realize an ethical practice within their existing work-life structures.

Research findings have supported the development of ten ethical design archetypes under which over 130 actions toward ethical practice are organized. The book-as-thesis has been designed with an intention toward accessibility, inclusivity, and clarity in order to provide practitioners of many ilks with the practical knowledge to realize a more ethical practice.

“...isn't it better *not* to walk away from jobs on ethical grounds, but to ask if there's some way that you can have influence, something you can bring?

The views won't be challenged if I'm not there.”

(Roberts, 2006 p. 47)

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“Despite the growing success of the responsible design movement, the industry is still widely perceived as mostly irresponsible, prioritizing profit and market share in the attention economy over consideration or accountability for harmful social consequences”

(Heller and Vienne, 2018 p. 103)

# Introduction /

My master's project is an industry publication that I have authored and designed. The book is written for a primary audience of creative practitioners in the communications sector including the design, marketing, and advertising industries. My secondary audience includes design-adjacent communications industry-employed practitioners that may include those in strategy, production, project and account management, and agency or client-side leadership. Throughout my process I aimed never to lose sight of an industry-employed audience whose desire, like my own, for actionable support in realizing a more ethical commercial practice remains largely unrequited.

The book is written and designed with an intention toward inclusivity and accessibility. I aim to avoid complicated jargon and employ language consistent with social and environmental justice organizations including AODA, CSJ, Decolonizing Design, Depatriarchising Design, the UN SDG's and World

Charter for Nature. It is designed with large, high contrast and legible typography and uncomplicated diagramming. Its content is BIPOC and LGBTQ+ inclusive. Designed for a primary audience for whom social justice topics may be new, the book provides readers with an introduction to important contemporary issues like decoloniality and gender without delving into deep academic content. Marginal notes containing resources and suggestions for further reading support readers to continue their education on topics that resonate.

Most importantly, the book is crafted to ensure that readers have access to uncomplicated ethical guidance that is enactable within any existing work-life structure. The project aims to subvert a recurrent and arguably privileged position found in design academia and design activism by authors such as Tony Fry (2009, p. 80) who, at times, denounce capitalist endeavour and encourage practitioners away from industry in order to realize an ethically sound practice. Challenging this position, the project is designed with the knowledge that:

- a) for many creatives it is a necessity to earn a living within the commercial industry and,
- b) many of those creatives may be critical about the unethical aspects of the industry and share a willingness to enact change.

The book takes on the stance that, collectively, we may positively impact the system within which we operate by acting from the inside. The ethical potential within each design practitioner represents a significant opportunity to support the realization of a more responsible industry.

# Context & Framing

Practitioners of design have dissented against the implications of a burgeoning consumer culture and advocated for design's potential as change agent since its early days as a distinct practice (Robers, 2006, p. 28). Fifty years ago, the Ulm School was founded on the notion that design must contribute to a "socially responsible construction of the world" (Spitz, 2015 p.7), in 1964 Ken Garland and 30 other designers published *First Things First* to implore an advertising saturated society to reconsider its priorities, and Papanek's famed *Design for the Real World*—arguably the most widely read publication on design—called on designers to create for human needs and not unsustainable, manufactured wants (Papanek, 1971, p. 234). These are only a handful of examples of the design industry examining its responsibilities in a rapidly transforming, increasingly complex world. Though these early rallying cries remain largely unheeded as resource depletion and exploitation accompany unrelenting growth in technology and profits (Walker, 2011, pp. 1), the optimism of the design field toward a more just, sustainable world remains resolute. Theorists, educators, and practitioners like Tony Fry, John Maeda, Ezio Manzini, Katherine McCoy,

Lucienne Roberts, Adrian Shaughnessy, Stuart Walker and innumerable others dedicate their careers to continuing this tradition of examining and, in many cases, attempting to redesign design's role in society. Fry calls for design to become a 'redirective' practice and take responsibility for the fact that designed things go on designing (2009 p.3). Maeda educates industry about inclusivity and ethics at the intersection of design and technology (2018). Manzini has developed the *DESIS Network*<sup>1</sup> in order to forge a collective of social innovation practitioners toward sustainability. Roberts has dedicated her practice to design ethics, accessibility, and a socially aware agenda. McCoy and Shaughnessy educate and write prolifically about the imperative of socially responsible design citizenship (Heller & Vienne, 2018 p. 189, Shaughnessy 2010). Finally, Walker, a vocal opponent of the hyper-consumptive market economy, chooses to write and design about mindful introspection that intends to engage with a reflective spirituality that reunites his material world with meaning (2011 p.3). Further, with a notable range of global signatories, the 2017 Montreal Design Declaration attempts to formalize the ethical pursuits of contemporary designers by developing "an action plan for harnessing the power of design to address pressing global challenges" (Montreal Design Declaration 2017, p. 3). These examples represent a zeitgeist alive with determination toward a more ethical design practice.

Further indication of enthusiasm for responsible pursuits can be exhibited in the prevalence of creative agencies focusing on public good<sup>2</sup>, the flourishing of design for social innovation in academia<sup>3</sup>, the AIGA's 2017 *Design Census*<sup>4</sup> which placed ethics as one of the industry's top priorities, and a growing number of publications dedicated to sustainable design, social design, design activism and the like. My own

## Context & Framing/

research into the top publications in ethical design, an industry survey, and 18 practitioner interviews indicate an eagerness to engage in the topic and also a scarcity of comprehensive resources that account for the unique challenges faced by commercial practitioners.

Largely targeting design students and academics, few of the assessed publications provide accessible, actionable guidance to support industry creatives to work more ethically. The richest information supporting an ethical practice like those by D’Anjou, Dilnot, and Fry, were also the most scholarly, theoretical, and arguably the least accessible to a diverse industry audience. The aforementioned readings engage in critical discourse that links traditional moral philosophy to ethics in design that, while valuable to the greater field, are challenging to translate to a daily practice as shown below:

*To act is indeed to bring something into existence; but what is important is that action is intentional. Sartre asserts that no action can be causally explained. Further, intention is to be understood as seeing a lack and action implies as its condition the recognition of a desideratum (objective lack) (D’Anjou, 2010, p. 96).*

*...[averting system crises] cannot be achieved by a simple assertion—or by naive hope. Neither dogmatic assertion of “will” nor “greening” will suffice. No age (and our short industrial-economic epoch constitutes an age) allows itself to be superseded by will. If we are going to attempt to move from the nihilistic despair of self-interest we need a more structural look at the position we now inhabit (Dilnot, 2015, p. 166).*

Further, a theme emerged that connected social design and sustainability literature with themes of rejecting capitalist endeavour. For example, Fry argues for an absolute separation of design from the “hegemonic market economic system that has at its central focus the production of wealth rather than the production of quality of life” (2008, p. 80). Fortunately, branches of contemporary design such as design for sustainability, social impact design, and design for social innovation have evolved to become a guiding force and ally to the public good. However, it is a current impossibility for much of the design industry to practice professionally if it were separated from the market economy.

For better or worse, the creative industry remains largely subservient to the dominant capitalist system. As such, I argue for the convergence of the existing dichotomy that appears to exist between design for the public good and commercial endeavour. With a significant contingent of designers working in industry with a desire to do more ethical work (Appendix F Fig. 6.4), this book aims to ensure that absolutist notions about design’s role in commercial endeavour do not preclude the opportunity to recruit a mass of industry allies in the pursuit of a better world.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.desisnetwork.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Merriam Webster defines Public Good as “in order to help or benefit everyone”. In this instance, agencies who focus on public good intend to profit while serving a greater social purpose.

Examples of agencies focused on public good:

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3057883/why-20-top-ad-agencies-joined-forces-for-public-good>

<http://forgoodintent.com/>

<http://publicinc.com/>

<http://www.weareloop.ca/>

<https://medium.com/global-shapers-new-york-hub/this-list-came-about-when-i-was-hunting-for-just-plain-cool-organizations-to-work-for-e88cd138169d>

<sup>3</sup> <https://dsi.sva.edu/program/curriculum/>

<http://www.sfu.ca/continuing-studies/programs-and-courses/area-of-study/>

<https://www.ocadu.ca/academics/faculty-of-design/social-innovation/>

<https://www.ocadu.ca/academics/faculty-of-design/social-innovation.htm>

<http://www.desisnetwork.org/labs/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://designcensus.org/>

# Methodology /

The research for this project is comprised of an academic literature review, industry literature review (popular publishing in design ethics), practice-led visual research, industry interviews, and a media scan. Methods including data visualization and affinity diagramming played a major role in supporting the drawing of insights and development of book content. Book content authorship includes the creation of ten ethical design archetypes, book chapters, and design of the publication itself.

In an effort to familiarize myself with the ways in which ethics are being addressed in communication design and adjacent design disciplines, the project commenced with immersion in sustainability-focused literature, participation in environmental ethics courses and securing a role with the Emily Carr University DESIS lab. This period of exploration included scholarly readings by Tony Fry (2009, 2015), Ezio Manzini (2006, 2015), Donella Meadows (1999), Louise St. Pierre (2014), and Stuart Walker (2011, 2014, 2017) whose teachings have been indispensable in the development of content in my book. Many of the

writings, however, are founded on a criticality of capitalist endeavour which was, at times, incongruous with my project's focus on an audience whose work is centred in the commercial world. As such, academic papers such as Walker's 2011 *Imagination's Promise*, quoted below, were foundational and supportive to my process but did not comprise the core of my literature review.

*Perhaps the most important role for design today is to explore ways of re-uniting our material world with a world of meaning – with ethics, inner growth and spiritual wellbeing. Currently, we are far removed from such a conception of design, implicated as it is in an aggressively competitive, profit-centred corporate system that not only seems to have lost its moral compass but is also severely affecting the natural systems of the planet. In this world of unrestrained, consumer-based capitalism, material 'beauty' has become merely the façade of technological progress, which is the dynamo of corporate growth. This superficial version of beauty conceals a ruinous path. It is a shallow, debased beauty divorced from notions of goodness and right action; the outer aspect of a world of things alienated from perennial truths (Walker, 2011, p. 1).*

While Walker asserts a necessary criticism about the ecological perils of superficial excess, his denigration of industry may be problematic. I argue that negating the corporate industry's potential (and therefore that of its practitioners) toward a more righteous path, risks alienating a significant contingent of designers and potential allies.

Further, the highly theoretical nature of academic work was incompatible with my goal of developing accessible support for practitioners of most education levels.

## Methodology/

I included 12 books considered ‘popular publishing’ in the area of design ethics for my primary literature review. Using a large matrix, I aggregated textual information about each book’s content breakdown, format, how the book advocates for ethical work, the actions associated with ethical practice, and how it references moral philosophy (Appendix B Fig 2.0). Through data visualization I began to diagram my findings to glean deeper insights. I diagrammed the popularity of each book using a Bayes ranking equation (CFA Institute, 2018), the frequency of key indexed terms such as sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility, core tenets per publication, and the various approaches to ethical practice (Appendix C Fig 3.0). The visual research provided insight into the most popular ethical design content (that which is actionable, accessible, and includes short ‘bites’ of information), where gaps in ethical design knowledge exist, and most importantly, affinities in publication content (Appendix C Figs. 3.1-3.3). The latter supported the development of ten ethical design archetypes on which the project has been built (Appendix D Figs. 4.0-4.3):

*Ethical Essentialist*  
*Conscious Compromiser*  
*Design Industry Activist*  
*Ethical Design Educator*  
*Digital Ethicist*  
*Ethical Entrepreneur*  
*Social Impact Designer*  
*Social Innovation Designer*  
*Eco Designer*  
*Design Activist*

The primary research for this project was to survey and interview industry practitioners. A preliminary survey of over 100 respondents provided baseline knowledge about ethics in the industry, that there is significant interest in the subject matter, and connected me with potential face-to-face interview respondents (Appendix E Figs.5.0-5.5). I conducted 18 face-to-face interviews with as diverse a cross section of the industry as I could achieve. I asked 11 questions (Appendix F Fig 6.0) to age, ethnicity, and gender-diverse designers, art directors, creative directors, design entrepreneurs, agency leadership, design strategists, creative account types and design educators from across Canada as well as one from the U.S. I first employed affinity diagramming to organize responses into core categories (Appendix G Fig 7.0) and then mapped the most actionable responses against the aforementioned ethical design archetypes (Appendix H Fig 8.0).

A media scan of approximately 300 sites, surveys, social accounts, blogs, and articles rounded out the research. I then collected the most actionable content and plotted it according to the ethical design archetypes diagram (As shown in Appendix H Fig. 8.0).

Across popular publishing, interview responses and a media scan, the diagrammed research data became the basis for the book’s core content. The visualized data supported the authorship of a series of over 130 ethical design actions organized by archetype. The visualized research data also supported the authorship of the front matter of the book, informed the intentionally oxymoronic and subtly provocative title, and inspired the layout, typography, and design of the book itself.

“...responsible design has not yet attained  
the visibility and propagation required to permeate  
the field and raise industry standards”

(Heller and Vienne, 2018 p. 106)

# Contribution/

The book is a modest contribution to an evolving zeitgeist. Industries across the 21<sup>st</sup> century neo-liberal, capitalist world are witnessing a shift in which employees are increasingly striving for meaning beyond satisfying personal egos and the acquisition of capital. Millennials especially are establishing a working culture where spiritual fulfillment and high ethical standards are requisite (Deloitte Millennial Survey, 2018, Gallup, 2016, Garrote, 2017). It is my goal to provide digestible, actionable support to help industry-employed practitioners realize these goals.

The book itself is intended to be the accessible, singular compendium of the project findings. It is my intention that the book is the first of a series of projects. Future work may include conference-based ethical design workshops and partnering with an existing corporate training company to develop ethical programming and education for in-house organizations, agencies and clients.

The book was not written under the illusion that it will single-handedly change the world. It is, however, one voice of many that intends to contribute to the discourse of an evolving society. It is my belief that as practitioners responsible for mass communications and millions of impressions a minute, designers and design-adjacent creatives are a deeply worthy focus of ethics research and empowerment.

“When this generation of designers forms a significant percentage of the population, then design will no longer be regarded as nothing more than the sweetly scented lubrication of consumerism.”

(Shaughnessy, 2010 p. 101)

# The Book/

*Communication tools are never neutral, and Kelly Small tackles the complex territory of ethics in design in a thorough and actionable way. It is immediately obvious that Small writes from a position of insider knowledge and the text is written for practitioners like herself. Ethical Sellout is a sharply written battle cry that meets the challenges of working in the present with a concise and actionable guide; this is a volume that should be on every designer's bookshelf.*

— Katherine Gillieson, *Design Writer and Critic*

## Ethical Sellout

No complicated moral philosophy and no exclusions, no matter what. Just 100+ ethical actions to empower anyone, in any corner of the industry, who gives even the smallest f/ck to work a little more ethically.

Right now.

### In this book you will learn:

- How to navigate the ethical complexities of the commercial industry
- Career options in and outside of agency life
- Over 130 easily implementable actions toward an enhanced ethical practice
- The benefit of discovering the causes that matter to you most
- That everyone can act ethically regardless of client-base



Kelly Small is a Master of Design graduate from Emily Carr University and an award-winning creative director, writer and designer. Kelly lives between Toronto and Vancouver with her partner Dahlia and Winston the westie.

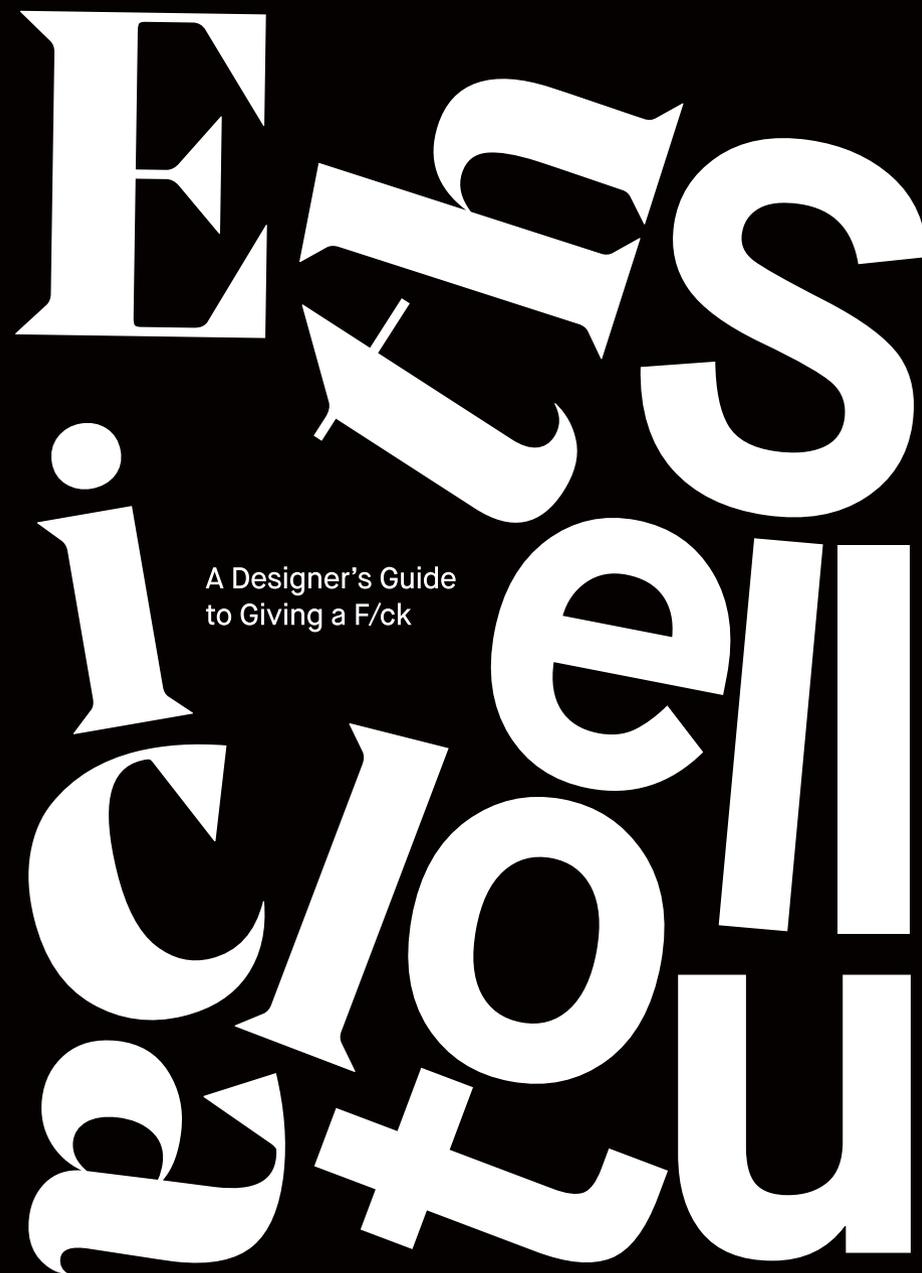
[www.kellysmall.ca](http://www.kellysmall.ca)  
[www.ethicalsellout.com](http://www.ethicalsellout.com)

Kelly Small

Ethical Sellout: A Designer's Guide to Giving a F/ck

Ethical Sellout

Kelly Small



# Fucks i c t to u

A Designer's Guide  
to Giving a F/ck

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Dedicated to the creatives who never start a project  
without asking if something bigger can be achieved.

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# About the Book/

Let's start by setting an intention.

This book aims to clarify the complicated business of ethics in design, marketing, and advertising. Written with the belief that when responsible action is made ultra-accessible and judgement is withdrawn, we creatives are empowered to make positive, incremental changes to our practice—regardless of where or for whom we may have worked and despite acts of questionable ethical merit from our pasts.

The book is free from esoteric philosophical debate. Rigid codes of behaviour are not what this book is about.

It is, instead, a collection of ethical actions learned from industry professionals whose practices include a daily dose of giving a f/ck.

The actions in the book are an aggregation of wisdom from over 130 surveyed and interviewed industry professionals, and over 50 years of popular publishing in the area of design ethics, design activism, sustainability, and social innovation. The result is a diverse and comprehensive guide that intends to be a unique contribution to an evolving zeitgeist and support for the realization of our collective ethical potential.

The actions are organized by ten Archetypes of Ethical Design:

*Ethical Essentialist (pg. 44)*

*Conscious Compromiser (pg. 56)*

*Industry Activist (pg. 66)*

*Digital Ethicist (pg. 74)*

*Ethical Design Educator (pg. 82)*

*Ethical Entrepreneur (pg. 88)*

*Social Impact Designer (pg. 94)*

*Eco Designer (pg. 104)*

*Social Innovation Designer (pg. 118)*

*Design Activist (pg. 124)*

The ten archetypes cover the spectrum of ethical practice. They ensure that each of us may identify the archetypes within which we currently fall and discover those we may aspire to become.

Designed for maximum inclusivity, the archetypes and actions aim to leave none of us without an ethical action to carry out immediately. Presented on a continuum, the ethical actions start by providing simple, accessible support that fit within any existing work-life structure and end with actions that may require more lifestyle maneuvering.

We do not *have* to leave our jobs to practice ethically.  
We do not *have* to fire our clients to practice ethically.

Most importantly, no matter what corner of the industry we find ourselves in, each of us can do *something*.

Right now.



Fig 1.0. The archetypes of ethical design practice

# Dear Sellouts/

**Ethical Sellout** *noun*

An oxymoron. Relating to a commitment to right conduct where possible, avoids causing harm to people, animals, and the environment; the concurrent compromise of some moral principles, especially for money or career progression.

Ethical Sellout is for anyone in the creative industry who ever felt like they had to compromise their personal ethics for the sake of their professional practice.

Quick survey:

Have you ever had to sell a product that you would never buy for yourself or your own family? Been complicit in or experienced discrimination or unequal representation? Flogged questionable consumables? Crafted an experience that misled users into a click to buy? Worked with a client or company whose environmental practices made you cringe? Contributed to over consumption? Convinced an audience they weren't quite good enough until they bought whatever you were selling?

For those of us in the business of design, marketing or advertising, these ethical transgressions can happen on the daily. If you're anything like my colleagues and I, the too-real jokes about selling our souls to make a living certainly weren't coming out of nowhere.

Some folks (including me) agree that communication design as we know it today was born out of a burgeoning "need" to advertise the mass produced wares of the industrial revolution.<sup>1</sup> Since then, we've become impressively sophisticated in our approaches to persuasion and the lines between strategy and manipulation are increasingly blurred. So, is it true that asking designers not to persuade is like asking "fishermen [ahem, people] not to fish"?<sup>2</sup> Or can we continue to do the work that we do and also exonerate ourselves from our roles in hyper-consumption and the environmental and psychological degradation that can accompany that? Are there small actions we can make

immediately to start enacting change in an industry historically preoccupied by our misdeeds<sup>3</sup>, but reticent to propose anything actionably different?

I believe there are.

Selling out may have always been in our blood, but practitioners have also been outspoken against the implications of consumer culture and advocated for design's potential as a change agent since its early days as a distinct practice. Fifty years ago, the Ulm School was founded on the notion that design must contribute to a "socially responsible construction of the world",<sup>4</sup> in 1964 Ken Garland and 30 other designers published *First Things First* to implore an advertising saturated society to reconsider its priorities, and Papanek's 1970's *Design for the Real World* called on designers to create for human needs and not unsustainable, manufactured wants. The industry was dominated by a uniform demographic<sup>5</sup> designing and dissenting but, arguably, doing little *acting* to shift design's responsibilities in a rapidly transforming, increasingly complex world. Despite numerous calls-to-action and manifestos<sup>6</sup>, design's early rallying cries remain largely unheeded in many sectors of the industry.

Don't get me wrong.

There are a number of emerging and extremely promising areas of design that are founded on the pursuit of a more sustainable and equitable world. We'll cover them. What I'm getting at here is that for better or worse, much of the creative industry remains largely subservient to the dominant capitalist system and the social and environmental perils that come along with that.<sup>7</sup> Few of us have a choice to leave the system altogether, even if we wanted to, so best to find ways of

enacting change from within—or becoming ethical sellouts, so to speak.

\* \* \*

So, who am I?

I was born into a family whose livelihood relied on the exploding consumer culture of the 80's and 90's. My father ran shopping centres. You could say that brands are in my blood. My childhood is inextricably connected to malls. I played hide-and-seek in the labyrinth of corridors, indulged my family with cringe-worthy modelling in back-to-school fashion shows and the Sears catalogue, and spent my tween years buying mood rings, Guess jeans, Seventeen Magazine and whichever angsty album had just been released. And when I got my first job, I was learning to lubricate the purchase of fancy sunglasses—you guessed it, at the mall.

Design was a fitting career choice. Like me at the time, its value and identity relied largely upon its proximity to the brands du jour. It's entirely unsurprising that I landed in advertising while completing my first design degree at OCAD University. With my intimate understanding about the creation of desire, it's even less surprising that I stuck it out until my mid-30's. I rose to the role of creative director quickly, and before I knew it I was winning awards and developing strategies to promote the biggest brands in the country.

What was surprising, however, was the emergence of a new ethics and awareness about the perils of the ever expanding, ever-more-sophisticated (yay, data!) world of marketing that I was contributing to, passionately and avidly, every day of my life. Whether it was a health scare, my emerging mindfulness

The 3% movement was started in 2013 to address the fact that only 3% of Creative Directors were female. Since that number has risen to approximately 11%: 3percentmovement.com

practice, or just a freak flash of consciousness, I woke up from a lifetime of deep complicity in mass-consumerism.

My once-impassioned approach to creative briefs that sought solutions for sophisticated persuasions became a painful slog. I was using the power of design to strategically manipulate literally millions of target consumers (a.k.a. people, citizens) to use toxic products, eat food devoid of nutritional value, beautify their less-than-adequate appearances, and upgrade their technology and vehicles needlessly. I also witnessed rampant discrimination and a painfully deep gender divide (I was one of only 3%<sup>8</sup> of female creative directors at the time. Slash that number if we factor my queerness.)

I had become aware of the extent to which my industry and practice were not contributing to the betterment of society and, suddenly, it was all I could see.

My career crisis continued to escalate. On paper, I had a great job in a global firm. My clients at the time included the world's most profitable toy company, one of Canada's 'big-3' telecom companies, and a major automotive brand. Gratefully, I also worked on a lone not-for-profit client, the gender-equity brand of one of Canada's largest charities. For years I had done my best to ensure I was working on at least one non-profit client. This one, like those before it, provided a soft place to land for my sullied ad-industry soul. It became respite from a world where bright minds make big money to invent the needs that sustain the beast of unbridled consumerism. As imperfect as the not-for-profit industry is, it offered an opportunity to think beyond single-minded financial return and design meaningful work that could support positive change. It also continued to affirm my sense of criticality and discontentment with the way things were.

I quit my job, sold and donated my stuff, and set off to figure out a way to put ethics at the forefront of my practice. I decided to pursue my Master's degree at Emily Carr University where I used design research to explore the ways in which we may collectively subvert the more damaging aspects of our industry. My philosophy is rooted in an earnest belief about our inherent goodness as humans. I trust that, given the right opportunities, most people want to do better and that ethically-driven design methods can help to create those opportunities.

Within these pages, I am attempting to address the big ethical questions that have been plaguing me. I'm not ready to forsake the industry I have spent my career in, but I do want to understand how it can adapt to be better. This book aims to provide the actionable support and resources that I wish had existed for professionals like me who may still choose to 'sell out', just a little more ethically.

So, let's get started.

# Industry Ethics/

No Pressure, but since we're operating in an unregulated industry, the responsibility for ethical action rests squarely on our shoulders. Ethics in design can be very subjective. It is the conscience of the practitioner that determines the moral framework that will guide each decision<sup>1</sup>. So, for better or for worse it is critically important for each of us to educate ourselves on the topic of ethics and morality.

Cue the crash course.

Morality is concerned with the principles of right and wrong behaviour and the goodness or badness of human character. Ethics is the branch of philosophy dealing with that morality.

The term 'ethical' has a few definitions. First: *The discipline dealing with what is good and bad or with moral duty and obligation*<sup>2</sup>. Second: *morally good and correct*. Third: *To be ethical is to avoid activities or organizations that do harm to people, animals, and the environment*.<sup>3</sup>

So, for our purposes here ethical design is design with the intent to be morally good and avoid social and ecological harm. Unethical design is its mindless or ill-intending counterpart. These are the basic definitions on which this book is predicated and about as deep as we'll go into moral philosophy.

I read an article in a popular industry magazine last year with an ironic but memorable title, *Design is Inherently an Unethical Industry*<sup>4</sup>. It featured reader-led discussions about morality and virtue in the industry with a special focus on design in tech. In it, a handful of contributors offer arguments that the design industry can never be considered 'good' as long as we prioritize client and financial interests over the needs of our users.

Real talk, it wasn't the feel good article of the year.

It brings to mind the work of design theorist Tony Fry, who writes that if our industry is to achieve ethical status, it must separate from a market economy that values the production of sweet, sweet wealth (my language) over improving people's lives<sup>5</sup>. I certainly can't argue with the logic. I can, however, fall down a rabbit hole of crippling existential crises at having no idea how to continue paying rent while overthrowing the dominant economic system. But I digress.

Other contributors in the *Unethical* article argue that we designers are just humans wielding tools that can be used for good or for evil, regardless of how complicit we are in capitalist endeavour. Practically speaking, this resonates with me a lot more than a theoretical pursuit of extricating design from the marketplace. In the article, one user shares a poignant example that for all the fake news Facebook helped to spread, it also enabled the Arab Spring and helps us to maintain meaningful connections with distant family and friends. It's an important reminder that bringing something new into existence invariably results in unintended consequences.<sup>6</sup>

It also reminds me of media theorist Neil Postman's declaration that our relationship with emerging technology is something of a Faustian bargain, where, "technology giveth and technology taketh away."<sup>7</sup>

His point?

For every advantage that a new technology offers, there are often a host of unconsidered societal changes and effects: some positive, some not-so-positive. So, the way I see it, in order to be an ethical creator, it is critical that we start

Many regard social media as a pivotal tool in the 2011 Arab revolutions by supporting mass organization against authoritarian regimes in ways that traditional tools could not. However, as governments and militant groups have caught up with the so-called 'social media revolution', intentions to use Facebook to drive collectives of the oppressed are often thwarted

Neil Postman's work *Amusing Ourselves To Death* contains fascinatingly accurate predictions and relevant discourse about our current relationship to emerging media technology

by considering the social, cultural, political, and economic impacts of our creations—knowing that *design giveth and design taketh away*. It's up to each of us, in every decision we make to maintain a conscious awareness to do our best to avoid those not-so-positive effects of the things that we create.

Where this leaves me in the topic of design and ethics is with a steadfast belief that the notion of an inherently unethical industry with absolute ideals about goodness and badness simply does not exist. In a famous analogy, French philosopher Bruno Latour reminds us that it wasn't until Frankenstein neglected and abandoned his monster that it became truly monstrous<sup>8</sup>. If we follow Latour's wisdom by compassionately tending to and nurturing our creations to mitigate their potentially harmful effects then we're well on our way to a more ethical practice. Further, if cultivating a more conscious, nurturing practice is essential to responsible work then ethical design is a lot like the care we provide our loved ones—it is an organic, ongoing practice and not a rigid set of rules to be adhered to.

This is a very good thing because, over the course of my research, I found that we industry practitioners show little interest in the rules associated with traditional codes of ethics. Collectively, the design, marketing, and advertising industries have somewhere around twelve non-compulsory codes of ethics<sup>9</sup>. Zero compulsory.

Out of 130 people I interviewed and surveyed only 5 people actually referenced the existence of those codes.

Not one person cited a specific rule.

I don't find this surprising.

RGD: Registered Graphic Designers of Canada  
GDC: Society of Graphic Designers of Canada  
Ad Standards: Non-profit self-regulating advertising body  
ICA: Institute of Communications Agencies  
CMA: Canadian Marketing Association

I spent about 15 years in the industry and not once did an employer, educator, or colleague make reference to a code of ethics. I have to confess, prior to my research for this book, I had never read the RGD or GDC or Ad Standards or ICA or CMA codes.

Based on my research, I'm not alone.

Is it that we simply don't care? Or could it be that these codes aren't particularly accessible or designed to fit smoothly into our everyday working lives?

I choose to believe the latter and my research supports this too. In her book *Good: An Introduction to Ethics in Graphic Design*, designer Lucienne Roberts interviews philosopher Anthony Grayling who confidently shares that an ethical code of conduct is too awkward and inflexible for a complex and deeply subjective profession like design. Their conversation suggests that designers may do better with a focus on actionable examples of responsible design practice to support them in making ethical choices at the individual level.<sup>10</sup> I'm partial to this example, because the actions in this book aim to do exactly that.

Let's close out this section with some light moral philosophy.

Aristotle believed that moral behaviour is something we can get better at. According to him, an ethical life manifests through the actions we take and, lucky for us, the more we practice, the more we improve.<sup>11</sup>



# Facing Issues/

I take issue with the suggestion that the most important ethical decision we creatives can make is whether or not we choose to accept a job.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, there can be power in a boycott. Particularly in the case of consumer activism where mass moral outrage stands to tarnish an offender's reputation<sup>2</sup> or temporarily compromise economic stability. But in the case of walking away from a creative project on ethical grounds, don't we risk passing the job on to someone less likely to challenge its morally questionable issues? Don't we relinquish an opportunity to have influence or make change from the inside?<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly, there will be times when a project or client is so morally deplorable that declining the brief and speaking out is the best way forward. Making that decision is up to each of us in the moment. The average project decision, however, is often far less cut and dried.

It's important not to fall into the reductive view that anything in the arts, non-profit, or public sector is ethically a-ok and anything corporate is fundamentally corrupt. Public and private sector organizations, with things like tax funding and corporate sponsorship, can be deeply interrelated. It's also impossible to know how 'clean' an individual charitable donation really is.<sup>3</sup>

The lesson?

We need to do our homework.

It's important that we acknowledge the complexity of the issues involved when questioning the ethical merit of any project or organization. Often, it's less about the type of business or organization and more about the practices within.

Licensing: Payment for the use of fonts, images  
Piracy: Unauthorized use or reproduction of work, often programs, fonts  
Plagiarism & Appropriation: Passing off someone else's work as one's own  
Spec Work: Providing creative work without an agreed upon fee or contract

Ethics in design can be broken down by legalities, integrity and morality<sup>4</sup>. By now, the former two are well-explored areas as they relate to professional practice. They're the self-explanatory, common sense-type-things like licensing, piracy, plagiarism and appropriation, spec work (surely we all know this is on the naughty list), deceptive practices, and generally being a stand-up professional who takes seriously their responsibilities to clients, audiences, and fellow designers. The industry is saturated with resources on legalities and professional integrity<sup>5</sup> and this book will cover some of the more pressing issues. But if I'm honest—which I really should be in a book about ethics—my interest lies in the category of morality and the actions we can take to start addressing our complicity in the social and ecological consequences of our industry.

As creatives responsible for mass communication and millions of audience impressions per minute, we've got a lot of power to make an impact.

We've all heard this before.

This isn't descending into another “design has participated in destroying the world but it, too, has the power to save it!” call to arms. What I'm saying is that, for better or worse, we deeply affect the way information is interpreted, brands and products are consumed<sup>6</sup>, and the ways that people experience the mediated and artificial<sup>7</sup> world. Further, the strategies and delivery methods by which we accomplish these things are increasingly sophisticated, transparent, and seamlessly integrated into our lives.

Surely, your attention span will agree.

So, with this power to impact, it can be argued that the

ethical designer has a responsibility to stay connected to the most pressing issues that society faces. Things like gender equality movements including Time's Up,<sup>8</sup> #MeToo,<sup>9</sup> and Depatriarchising Design,<sup>10</sup> addressing ableism and ageism, trans and queer visibility and inclusion, cultural diversity and decolonization<sup>11</sup>, hyper-consumption and sustainable practices, and the growing list of technology-related issues around privacy, data, addictive experience design, and deceptive user interface design to name a few.

According to Dr. Miriam Ahmed, in her equally optimistic and critical essay in the 2018 edition of *Citizen Designer*, academics and the public have an overwhelmingly negative perception of design and advertising today. Her writing covers the ways in which minority designers are leading a growing industry commitment to social responsibility. She laments, however, that:

*Despite the growing success of the responsible design movement, the industry is still widely perceived as mostly irresponsible, prioritizing profit and market share in the attention economy over consideration or accountability for harmful social consequences.<sup>12</sup>*

That's a bit of a downer, and also not entirely surprising. We all know that we can do better just like we know that the industry can do better.

Saying that, there have been major strides toward a more ethical communications industry in the past few years. The list is exhaustive, but here's a start. We've got the 50/50 initiative and the 3% conference<sup>14</sup> addressing gender diversity in the industry. Various social good awards<sup>15</sup> and Cannes jumping on board to award brands who dedicate their

marketing spend to address global issues<sup>16</sup> (now if they would only address that oppressive dress code). Last year's AIGA design census shows us that design ethics is now among the most important issues to current industry practitioners.<sup>17</sup> We now have numerous conferences like Design Thinkers and SXSW with core content dedicated to design ethics and creative responsibility.<sup>18</sup> Design schools are shifting away from abstract and commercial assignments to those that nudge students toward projects with a more critical social and environmental lens—much to the dismay of some traditional designers.<sup>19</sup> And we're seeing a significant ongoing conversation about the problem of racial diversity in the industry<sup>20</sup> and the efforts toward inclusivity at every stage in the creative process.

Beyond all of this movement, there are emergent areas of design like design for social innovation toward sustainability,<sup>21</sup> social impact design, and design activism whose missions aim to rethink design's role in society to become less of a tool of capitalism and more supportive to critical social and environmental problems.

We will cover this in the coming chapters.

As you've deduced by now, this book isn't a deep-dive into the ways in which our society and industry are slowly imploding—we've got mass media for that. It is, instead, an introduction to the overarching issues that an ethical designer would benefit from understanding and the resources to know where to start.



# Taking Action/

I've always loved a manifesto; compact packages of inspiration and collective declarations of possibility. They decry the most pressing issues of our industry and implore us to do better. Manifestos and design ethics are inseparable. They've been the go-to method for communicating our discontent and arguing for more socially and environmentally responsible ways of designing for more than a century<sup>1</sup>. From William Morris' 1889 *The Arts and Crafts of Today*<sup>2</sup>, to 60 years of *First Things First*<sup>3</sup> iterations, to Dieter Rams' *10 Rules of Good Design*<sup>4</sup> to *The Designers Accord*<sup>5</sup> to the recent *Montreal Design Declaration*<sup>6</sup>, manifestos have been essential to the dissemination of our most progressive design ideals.

Inspirational and encouraging as they are, they also tend to conclude before giving readers any practical next steps to realize the messages they espouse. While outlining the 'how' may not be a manifesto's job, its absence can mean that even the most widely shared texts can lose momentum before their values are implemented. We can see evidence of this in the hugely popular 1964 *First Things First* manifesto spearheaded by British designer Ken Garland, which got a lot of press but made little tangible impact on our industry. With 85+ design manifestos over 100 years, is it possible we're at a saturation point for these impassioned proclamations?

I tend to think so.

What I believe we require now are a set of simple, accessible, and most importantly, actionable resources to support us in actually *living* our values in our everyday careers. This section provides exactly that. "Vision without execution, after all, is just a hallucination." According to Edison, Einstein, and an ancient Japanese proverb<sup>7</sup>, anyway.

My research for this book had me poring over popular and academic publishing in the area of responsible design, design citizenship, and design ethics. From manifestos to industry publications and countless blogs, articles, social posts, and academic papers, I used exploratory visual design research techniques and data visualization to synthesize and understand the themes of what I was learning. The process was fruitful. As shown on page 9, I found that ethical design can be broken down into ten distinct areas of practice. They're framed in the book as archetypes like the *Eco-Designer* or the *Design Activist*.

The following pages describe the characteristics of these archetypes and aim to support us in discovering which areas of ethical practice might best suit our working lives.

We might ask ourselves:

*Which ethical design archetype(s) resonate most?*

*Which might I want to emulate?*

*Which reflect my current practice?*

*Which feel aspirational enough to inspire the future of my career?*

Within each archetype section are a specific set of practical actions that can be taken to achieve a more ethical practice. These actions are designed so that any of us, regardless of industry sector or which business or organization we work for, can find an action to carry out immediately.

They're organized to be easily adapted to everyday working life and the actions are listed loosely from the simplest and most accessible to the most challenging.

The actions and archetypes can support each of us in fleshing out our individual value systems and help us to

determine what kind of professional lifestyle is feasible as we embark on implementing a more responsible practice.

It is my hope that these actions will empower us to enact change, and also to collaborate and support each other as we embark on our ethical journeys. I trust that, in time, our collective action can contribute to a critical mass that will make ethical practice a crucial requisite to careers in our industry.

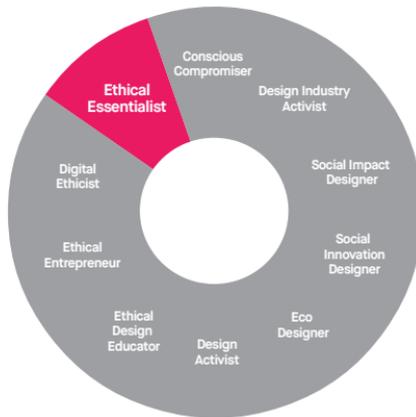
# Archetypes

# **& Actions**

# Ethical Essentialist/

An Ethical Essentialist is all about building the foundations of an ethical practice. An ideal starting place for anyone at the early stages of their ethical journey, the Ethical Essentialist can work for any organization, in any area of the design industry and simply seeks to get the basics right. Less likely to focus on deep questions of morality, they're focused on keeping their practice legal and maintaining professional integrity at all times. They attribute images appropriately, follow contracts precisely, pay for every font, never pirate their programs, and ensure timesheets are accurately completed.

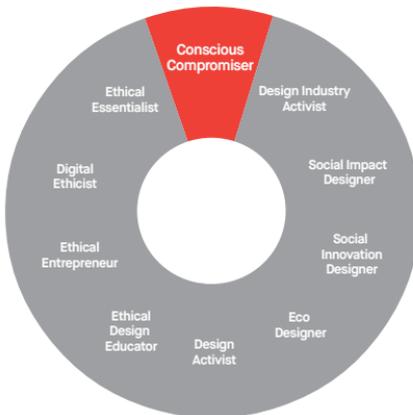
- Seeks the foundational elements of an ethical practice
- Applicable to any practitioner
- Concerned with legalities and professional integrity



# Conscious Compromiser/

A Conscious Compromiser is committed to producing ethical work in the traditional (for-profit) commercial industry where possible. With little control over client base and agency politics, they accept a necessary level of moral compromise in order to maintain their position. This archetype resolutely adheres to the most reputable industry codes of ethics. The actions associated with the Conscious Compromiser support an industry practitioner who works in an agency, in-house, or anywhere in the marketing and advertising fields.

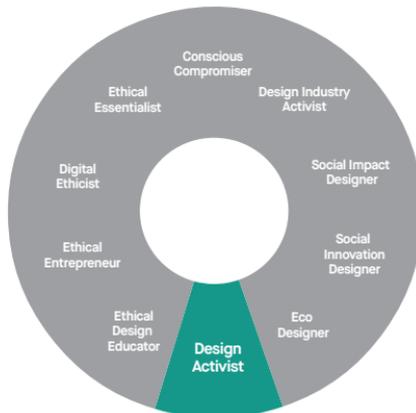
- Seeking support to act ethically where possible
- Accepts the ethical imperfections of industry, effects change where possible
- Profit takes some priority over purpose
- Strict adherence to industry codes of ethics



# Design Industry Activist/

A covert activist in the same commercial field as the Conscious Compromiser, this archetype seeks to subvert from within a business or industry to implement incremental change toward social, organizational, and environmental benefits. This challenger of the status-quo struggles to accept the ethical imperfections in industry and actively works to resolve them. The actions in this section support practitioners with an activist mindset to self-organize, speak up and make significant change within the workplace as well as the industry at large.

- Activist mindset, challenger of status quo
- Proponent of democratic participation within a business and industry
- Leadership role, on the front lines of change

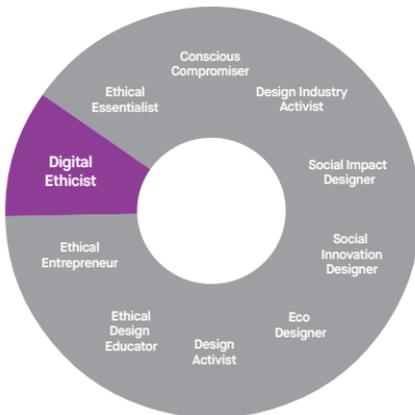


# Digital Ethicist/

A Digital Ethicist is a self-proclaimed tech nerd who advocates for the ethical implementation of digital products and services across a variety of design and design-adjacent industries.

Also present in academia, this role aims to educate and advise everyone from students to c-suites about the ethical perils of mindless technological design and development. An advocate for tech to support and strengthen civil society, the Digital Ethicist is also well versed in mitigating the environmental impacts of the connected world. The actions in this section support any practitioner whose work involves technology to become an effective proponent of ethical design in tech.

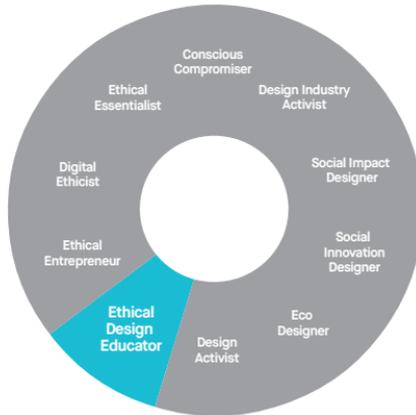
- Advisor on the practical application of ethics in tech
- Educator role, outspoken advocate
- Leadership on the issues surrounding design in tech



# Ethical Design Educator/

This archetype is a design instructor, academic, or researcher in a university or college. Their focus, regardless of which area of design they specialize in, is ensuring that students design mindfully and with an understanding of the relationality and impacts of their work. This role aims to equip students with a strong ethical foundation that will positively impact the types of roles they choose in the future and the behaviours that will form their practice. The actions in this section may inspire educators or future educators to incorporate an ethical dimension into their work.

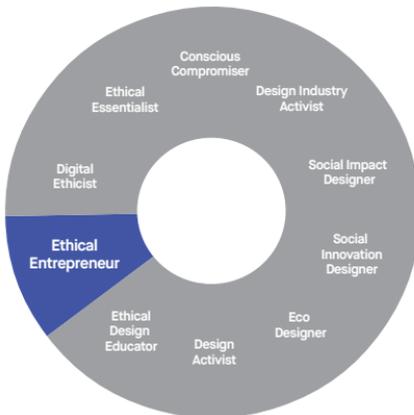
- Practitioner based in a college or university
- Instruction has a consistent ethical dimension
- Aims to develop students into responsible citizens



# Ethical Entrepreneur/

With a steadfast belief that turning a profit doesn't have to compromise purpose, this entrepreneur maintains ethical control by running a business with positive impact at its core. The Ethical Entrepreneur is an independent freelancer or the leader of a social enterprise like a B Corporation with up to date knowledge about emerging areas of accountable capitalism. This business-minded archetype balance a social and/or environmental purpose with the need to earn money and aims for balance above all. The actions in this section offer insight into the foundations of ethical entrepreneurship and can benefit from the actions associated with the Social Impact and Eco Designers.

- Balances profit and purpose
- Self-employed or runs a social enterprise
- Believes in the potential of accountable capitalism

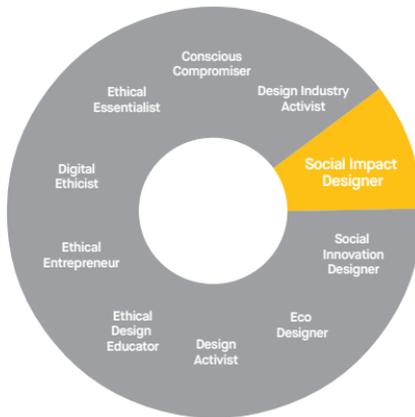


B Corps or Benefit Corporations are for-profit companies that meet the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability to balance profit and purpose

# Social Impact Designer/

A Social Impact Designer uses the tools of design to address critical social issues and enact social change toward a more equitable and just society. Typically found working in the arts, for non-profits, or social enterprise clients, this humanist archetype places purpose firmly above profit. This archetype is considered morally aspirational to industry practitioners like the Conscious Compromiser and Design Industry Activist but is not always practical because of its lower financial reward. The actions associated with the Social Impact Designer support practitioners to work collaboratively with marginalized communities and enact meaningful social change.

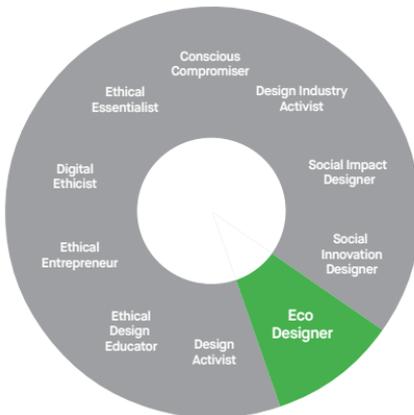
- Often found in the arts, non-profit, government
- Prioritizes purpose over profit
- Low ethical compromise, high emotional reward



# Eco Designer/

Unlike the people-first social impact designer, this ecocentric archetype challenges human exceptionalism to place minimizing environmental destruction at the core of their practice. The Eco Designer advocates to design products and solutions to educate, inform, and mitigate negative impacts to the planet and regenerate compromised resources where possible. This archetype's practice and philosophy acts in accordance with the triple or quadruple bottom line, meaning they aim to balance environmental, social, economic, and personal needs in order to establish a more holistically sustainable society. The actions of the Eco Designer support a philosophically environment-first practitioner to develop a balanced practice that supports sustainable change.

- Challenger of human exceptionalism
- Planet-first mentality
- Educates, informs, and designs toward sustainable change

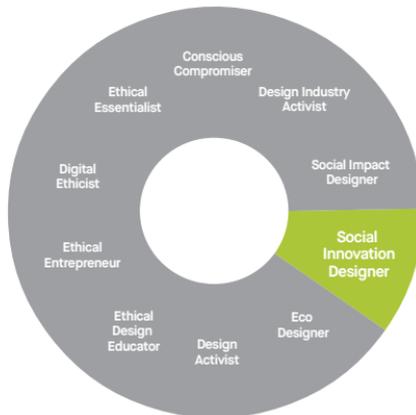


Human exceptionalism or Anthropocentrism is the concept of human supremacy above other life forms

# Social Innovation Designer/

The innovative and grassroots fusion of the Social Impact and Eco Designers, the Social Innovation Designer's practice facilitates social collaboration and activates participatory principles to address complex social, environmental issues toward sustainability. Largely existing outside of industry, this archetype strengthens civil society by activating community engagement. Sustainable societies are developed through interventions like transition towns, intergenerational knowledge exchange, emergency preparedness, permaculture initiatives and innumerable others. The actions in this section provide an introduction to this emerging area of ethical design practice.

- Practices participatory principles to strengthen civil society
- Addresses complex social and environmental issues
- Grassroots/community focused
- Designer as facilitator not top-down expert

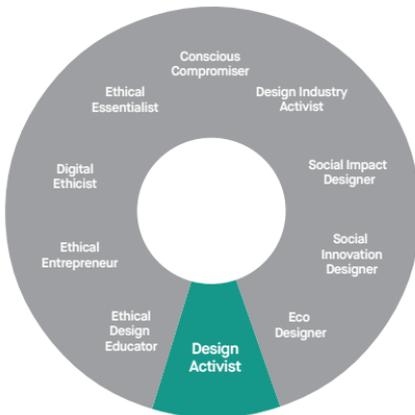


Transition towns are grassroots projects that intend to increase a community's self-sufficiency and reduce the harmful potential effects of peak oil, climate destruction, and economic instability

# Design Activist/

The most anti-establishment of the archetypes, the Activist practices outside of commercial markets and uses design as a political tool to address progressive social or environmental issues and activate change. The Design Activist is an 'ethics above all' practitioner whose uncompromising moral character makes it tough to stomach work in a traditional commercial firm. Often found working in creative collectives, supporting various activism circles, and publishing in the likes of *Adbusters*, this archetype strives for moral consistency and dedicates their work to empowering the most marginalized. The associated actions support practitioners to channel their passion for purpose and resistance into generative solutions to challenge the status quo.

- Uncompromising ethics, moral consistency
- Largely practiced outside of commercial markets
- Aims to support the most marginalized



*Adbusters is a Canadian-based not-for-profit that describes itself as a global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators and entrepreneurs who want to advance the new social activist movement of the information age [adbusters.org](http://adbusters.org)*

# Ethical Essentialist/

As a budding Ethical Essentialist, you'll aim to start with the foundational elements of a responsible practice. As you dive into this section, try to keep a key question in mind:

*What really matters to me?*

As we've covered, when it comes to design, acting ethically is almost entirely a personal choice.

Our industry has a handful of optional rules to follow, but there's no governing body that mandates a specified level of ethical education. No studying. No exams. No certification<sup>1</sup> like there is for architecture, even. There is no official hippocratic oath for designers, although attempts have been made<sup>2</sup>. Formal design education excels in developing critical thinkers, but often omits addressing the practical ethical issues that arise in working life. So we must actively choose to make ethical practice a part of our careers and make it an ongoing task to develop our own set of ethical parameters.

The following actions, presented as a sort of ethical à la carte, can support that process. Aim to start small, develop achievable goals, and commit to the patience it takes to make sustainable change happen.

## Understand the Big Issues

A helpful first step in deciding what matters to you is familiarizing yourself with the big, overarching issues being faced globally. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, are the global plan to establish peace and prosperity for all people and the planet<sup>3</sup>. These goals include eradicating hunger, poverty and unemployment, creating equal access to quality education and health care, establishing gender equality and mitigating climate change by putting an end to the degradation of our environment. Here in Canada<sup>4</sup> we're committed to implementing the SDGs with a special focus on our most vulnerable and marginalized citizens. This means showing sensitivity and paying respectful attention to the unique needs of indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, those who identify as LGBTQ2+, refugee and immigrant populations, and women and girls.

## Start by Soul Searching

As we saw earlier, some say that the most significant decision a designer can make is whether or not to accept the job itself<sup>5</sup>. While it's important not to decline every project or client with minor infractions as a knee-jerk response, doing some soul-searching and research at the outset of a job is beneficial to understanding what you may be complicit in by participating in a new project. Assessment may include the client's manufacturing processes, supply chains, the safety of their products, and the responsibility of their marketing messages. You may also choose to investigate how sustainably they operate, their inclusivity practices, how they manage data...the list can go on. If you discover that an organization is engaging in less-than-responsible behaviour, it's up to you

to decide if a hard decline is the best way forward. Sometimes the best action to take is accepting the brief and asking how you can work from inside the organization to make the change you wish to see.

## Talk the Talk

The language we use can have a significant impact on our ability to understand the social and environmental issues we're dealing with. Language shapes ideas, influences our capacity to empathize, and contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens.<sup>6</sup> To be an effective ally in the collective pursuit toward a more ethical industry, we can equip ourselves with appropriate vocabulary to talk about the issues we face.

The back of this book contains a **glossary** of terms related to design ethics to support understanding about the social, political, economic, and environmental facets of ethical work. Having the right language can support us in imparting our knowledge sensitively and eloquently.

## Make Ethics a Daily Practice

Like yoga or meditation, ethics are a practice where the best results come from daily ritual or routine. In the way that toned muscles or mastering a yogic headstand won't come from a single session, ethical action isn't a one-time-thing and requires patience and a consistent commitment over the course of a career. The good news? Daily practices don't have to be perfect—we just have to show up and act. Over the course of a career, our cumulative effort can have significant impact.

It has been shown that diverse teams produce more socially responsible work and that minority designers are currently leading the responsible design movement.<sup>8</sup>

## Keep It Legal

Getting the legal basics right is core to any ethical design practice. Ethical transgressions to avoid at all costs can include plagiarizing other people's work, not paying for fonts, pirating software, and using imagery without the appropriate rights. Easy, right? Most of us are already nailing this.

## Challenge Your Biases

Designing supportive, ethical work environments and experiences means being conscious of our subtle, unintentional biases. These often show themselves as a preference toward likeness or sameness, so best to challenge ourselves to ask why we chose those particular personas to design with, why we requested feedback from one colleague and not the other, why we want to hire or promote a specific candidate and not another, why we invite certain people out for drinks, who we sit with at lunch,<sup>7</sup> et cetera. Challenging our biases can help to create safer emotional spaces by maximizing inclusion of all ethnicities, genders, sexualities, and abilities. What's more, teams will better reflect the needs and diversity of your audiences, the work is more likely to take on a socially responsible dimension,<sup>8</sup> and we'll foster a sense of belonging wherever we work.

## Brief with Bigger Objectives

How do we get our audience to use our stuff? Buy more stuff? Look at our stuff? Love our stuff? Without careful attention, a brief can become single-minded wish list of client objectives where the needs of audiences and the public get largely ignored. Client objectives aren't going anywhere, but we can start rewriting our briefs to add an ethical

dimension. We may advocate for an additional section of consideration on each creative brief we're involved in by asking: *who or what does this project help?* This question ensures that we never start a project without considering how something bigger than our client objectives may be achieved. If the answer to the question is 'nothing', which it may often be, then it's up to you and your team to change that. Let's challenge ourselves to add a new layer of social or environmental objectives each and every time.

## Get Obsessed with Accessibility

Over 4.4 million people in Canada are considered disabled<sup>9</sup> and, with an aging population, this number is only set to rise<sup>10</sup>. It is an absolute necessity for any ethical design practitioner to ensure that each designed experience is as accessible as it can be. We can begin by familiarizing ourselves with the resources available through the GDC<sup>11</sup>, including government accessibility standards, accessible fonts, universal access symbols, and the principles of inclusive design. Tip: Accessible design should also be inclusive. An important aspect of inclusive design is ensuring that a diverse set of decision-makers are represented during the process.

## Champion Inclusivity

The truth is that design discourse has been largely dominated by heteropatriarchal anglocentric/eurocentric ways of knowing, seeing and acting in the world<sup>12</sup>. In other words, the community of practitioners talking about design have been pretty homogenous—white, male, and straight. As an ethical designer, it's critical to get real with ourselves to challenge our prejudices and assumptions as they relate to

Heteropatriarchy describes the socio-political system where heterosexual cisgender men have primacy over other sexual orientations and gender identities

the richness (or lack thereof) of unique perspectives and cultural knowledge that influences our work.

In order to design more inclusively, represent authentically, and approach issues with more empathy, we can aim to maximize diversity on project teams and start listening more deeply. We can actively notice cultural and experiential similarities and differences without making value judgments and be inquisitive when we encounter something we don't understand. We can work to understand the nuances that exist in a culture or subculture and respect the unique worldviews that culminate from those experiences, rituals, languages, religions, histories, and politics that differ from our own. Doing so can have significant impacts on the sensitivity with which we interact with and represent people in our work. It can also mean the difference between perpetuating discriminatory practices or committing to reconciliatory<sup>33</sup> speech and action.

Tip: Take cues from social justice organizations and learn to make key cultural acknowledgements at work or school. At Emily Carr University in Vancouver, we vocally recognize<sup>44</sup> the First Peoples Traditional Territory<sup>45</sup> on which our classes or public talk is taking place. It's a small but important step toward reconciliation, and one that acknowledges the social, economic, and physical violence committed in the name of colonization.

## Say No To Spec

Since giving away work for free to wealthy corporate clients devalues our collective practice, avoiding spec work where possible is a great way to be a shining beacon of responsibility in the industry. If a no-spec practice is not immediately

realistic, consider advocating against it by respectfully informing leadership about the perils of the practice<sup>16</sup> instead of refusing it altogether.

What's so bad about spec?

Beyond losing money and time, spec often means a rushed and informal design process that can compromise the quality of creative work. This also can establish unfair and ineffective client/designer relationships and, all too often, it puts creative work at the risk of being plagiarized<sup>17</sup>. When faced with a client expecting spec work, consider pitching the job without including the expected speculative creative work. Instead, include a short, polite letter outlining why the practice is problematic. Challenging and bold as it may be, it is also an excellent way to determine if the client is worthy of you or not.<sup>18</sup>

## Call Out the 'Ists and the Phobes'

Calling out racist, ageist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic, or sexist behaviour, regardless of where it's coming from, is an absolute imperative to a responsible practice.

Whether we tell HR, leadership, a coworker, or, ideally, whomever is uttering the problematic language, if we're witness to discriminatory behaviour, it's our responsibility to speak up and advocate for it to stop.

Perhaps just as important is having a voice as it relates to the ethical actions we witness. If we see responsible work, call it out as well. Let's aim to celebrate our colleagues, clients and suppliers who are taking action against injustice and working to make the world a little better. When it comes to our own practice, leading by example is great, but let's not be afraid

to speak up and promote our own ethical actions. A well promoted responsible practice can be a memorable point of difference that supports our career goals.

## **(Actually) Read the Codes of Ethics**

As we already know, there are many completely optional codes of ethics that relate to the design, marketing, and advertising industries.<sup>19</sup> As thrilling as reading codes of conduct can be, knowing our industry's suggested codes of ethics can be an important foundational early step in developing a more responsible practice. Tip: Consider using the codes as a starting point but not the entire ethical foundation of your practice; the research I've conducted for this book suggests that a large number of us believe that the rules are in dire need of an update.

## **Challenge the Integrity of the Content**

There's a long history of discourse that posits that design is not neutral or value-free and I couldn't agree more.

It has been said that "a design has no more integrity than its purpose or subject matter. Garbage in, garbage out."<sup>20</sup>

So, it is imperative that we challenge the quality and substance of the content we're provided by clients and colleagues. By doing so, we ensure the project doesn't commit offenses like perpetuating harmful stereotypes, supporting unsustainable practices, or manipulating users with false claims. And what if you're provided with content that offends? Speak up. Advocate for better.

## Cultivate Empathy

Cultivating empathy and aiming to understand and connect to the needs and aspirations of the people we work with is critical to successful design interventions. Design firm IDEO, in their *Human Centered Design Field Guide*, describe empathy as “the capacity to step into other people’s shoes, to understand their lives, and start to solve problems from their perspectives.”<sup>21</sup> This applies as much to those we design with as it does for our colleagues, clients, employees and students.

One of our most significant opportunities as designers goes well beyond using empathy as a tool to solve problems through design. By committing to a depth of research, we may unearth key insights that can empower our designs to pass the experience of empathizing on to our audiences. We can, thereby, instill heightened levels of compassion, understanding and criticality for our viewers.

## Measure & Share your Ethical Successes

For better or worse, we live in a world preoccupied by quantifying and measuring data. Emerging areas such as social impact design, social innovation, and the innumerable areas of sustainable design haven’t been around long enough to amass a great deal of data and case studies to support their successes. Further, as designers we’re not always the most data-hungry folks around the table. We can participate in the larger responsible design community by making a commitment to defining goals and reporting, widely, the results of our projects. Consider sharing your projects and results in programs like AIGA’s Design for Good,<sup>22</sup> RGD’s Social Good Awards,<sup>23</sup> and Cannes Good<sup>24</sup> to get a wider audience inspired by and building upon our work.

## Design Without Deception

Let's use the example of photoshopping. It is so ubiquitous that, like Kleenex, it's now a proprietary eponym independent of its Adobe roots. Designers and non-designers alike know what it represents: the removal of imperfections, beautification, enhancement, and the improvement of saleability—often at the expense of authentic representation. Heavily retouched, impossibly perfected images of bodies have been implicated in having a negative impact on body image and mental health<sup>25</sup>. In recent years, however, a handful of organizations<sup>26</sup> are making a very public choice to ban the retouching of their models to reflect a more honest, accurate image of real people to their consumer. The data has yet to show whether this has a positive impact on sales, but the decision has been met with appreciation and brand love in social media.

## Redefine your Bottom-Line Ambitions

Success is measured by the size of our salary, right? The industry—perhaps most industries—are still largely rooted in a 'more is more' mentality when it comes to cash.<sup>27</sup> To establish a practice with social and environmental stewardship at its core can sometimes require a shift; priorities of abundant financial compensation are often replaced by those focused on the potential for impact. In expanding our purpose beyond bottom-line ambitions, we naturally have to rethink our criteria for success. This doesn't mean we can't earn a living, but sometimes it means making less in order to achieve more. Social good organizations have less cash than the automotive industry. Environmental projects aren't funded like oil and gas. There may be less money in purpose, but benefits like

enacting change, job satisfaction, and living our values make it all worthwhile.

## Be a Citizen First

We're citizens first and designers second, so a balanced ethical practice requires considering more than just how and what we design. If we dare to look at the impact of our everyday lifestyle choices, we can bravely ask ourselves how we might do better by people, animals and the planet.

We could begin to shop locally and take transit or cycle. We could consume fewer animal products or, if we do choose to buy them, support free range and choose products with high ethical standards. We might stop using one-time-use cups and plastic lids, cutlery and straws and get ourselves some reusable gear (so hot right now). We could trade, mend, and buy pre-loved clothing instead of buying new so we're not supporting the unsustainable<sup>28</sup> fast-fashion industry. Consider that storing less data means that our carbon footprint lessens significantly since data farms cause up to 2% of all greenhouse gas emissions<sup>29</sup>. That's as much as air travel, one of the most carbon-intensive actions we can take.

Perhaps the most important question of all is as simple as daring to ask ourselves how can we consume less and experience more?<sup>30</sup>

# Conscious Compromiser/

As a Conscious Compromiser you're an industry-employed ethics advocates whose principles may gently bend in order to keep your earning potential high. You'll aim to accomplish this in a way that doesn't completely jeopardize your moral principles, though you're well aware that some compromise is necessary.

You'll generally start with a commitment to adhere to industry codes of ethics by reputable organizations like the RGD or AIGA. You'll aim to make small, incremental changes toward social equity and environmental stewardship within your existing work-life structures (don't quit your day job) where possible.

Around the workplace, you're the type that people look up to. You lead by example with a daily practice of making sound ethical decisions at the individual level. You may not save the world in one fell swoop, but by committing to a career with ethics at your core, you're certain to make meaningful change over time.

## Acknowledge Your Role in the System

Hi, my name is Kelly and I'm a tool of capitalism. A critical first step to an ethical practice is being aware of and owning our roles within a troublesome consumption-machine and the human and environmental consequences that come along with that. Being aware of the impact of our actions can empower us with an enriched understanding about the work that we do and, hopefully, (very likely, since we're clearly interested) help us make change. There is a fine line between awareness of issues and being crushed by the weight of the problems we face. Aim for the former to stay in a headspace of action and empowerment and remember: we can't single-handedly save the world in one profound act. What we can do is decide to carry out some of the actions outlined here, or develop some of our own, to bravely effect incremental change toward a better world.

## Ask: What If Everybody Did That?

Simple yet fundamental to ethical work is imagining a world where everybody made the decision you're about to make. What if everybody designed to cultivate empowerment? What if it was standard to hire with diversity in mind? What if every designer rejected the idea of exploiting a user's psychological vulnerabilities to sell stuff? The same is true for the reverse. If you're about to make a decision of questionable ethical merit, imagine the effects of that decision en masse. Decision-making becomes simplified when framed in this way. Advocate within your organization for folks to start asking themselves this question. Champion the idea of adding a layer of ethical consideration to the everyday decisions that you and your colleagues make.

## Give Every Job An Ethical Orientation

Every job can be an ethical opportunity. If you're committed, an otherwise soul-crushing brief can be subverted to cleverly infuse an ethical dimension. Aim to think beyond the needs of your client to examine the impact of your design on your audience, the public, and on the earth.

Consider that you could advocate for improved accessibility, make sure all team members are treated fairly, use transparent and honest language, ensure your creative execution is environmentally friendly, work to remove misleading or inflated claims, or even suggest a partnership program where a percentage of proceeds go to a worthy cause. With practice, you will start to develop go-to strategies that help balance the objectives of your project so that every output can succeed on multiple levels.

## Learn to Avoid Triggering Language

It goes without saying (but I'm saying it anyway) that we shouldn't use misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic, ableist or racist language and, gratefully, work environments are becoming more aware of the importance of creating safe spaces.

*A refresher:* Don't assume to know a person's pronouns. If you're unsure, default to 'they/them' or ask. Don't default the gender in a fictional or hypothetical situation to 'he'. Don't call things gay (unless you're looking at a Pride float covered in unicorns and even then, if you're going to call it gay make sure it's a positive exclamation of how fabulous it is). Know the origins of the idioms you use so you're not inadvertently using sexist or racist references. Avoid using

Contentious as trigger warnings are, in order to foster safe, respectful spaces at work, consider educating yourself about the common topics that may contain potentially distressing content

A living wage varies across Canada, but in major cities like Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver at the time of writing (2018-19) living wages varied between approximately \$18-\$21/h

ableist words like 'crazy', 'psycho' or 'lame', 'dumb' or 'insane'. And you can take this a step further by avoiding militaristic language that is often rife in agency environments. Think: target, war room, execution, postmortem, guerrilla tactics, blasting, pulling out the big guns, bait and switch, capture, convert...the list goes on. Inadvertently using violent language supports aggressive working environments and contributes to a culture of othering! our audiences to create an 'us versus them' mentality.

## Advocate for Living Wages

As in many other industries, design has a history of treating its interns terribly. The worst offence? Not paying them at all<sup>2</sup>. Exploitative and, arguably, elitist (since only those able to afford to work for free can accept such roles), unpaid internships are quickly becoming a thing of the past. Advocate within your organization for a collective understanding that everyone's time is valuable and hire talent for a fair, living wage. An ethical practice ensures all colleagues, regardless of level, are treated fairly and respectfully.

## Add Ethics to Your Ethos

Many designers have a philosophy or ethos that gets shared through portfolio sites, social channels, industry publications, resumes and even email signatures (although I don't advocate for the latter). If your work has even the slightest ethical dimension, don't be afraid to publicize that area of your pursuits. You'll be generating necessary awareness about the responsible design movement as well as keeping yourself accountable. Think you don't have a philosophy? Not sure how to describe it? Most of us follow principles or beliefs, it's possible you've just never had to be

specific about them. A good place to start is by looking into the philosophies and approaches of some of your design heroes<sup>3</sup>. Choose the ones that resonate most and see how your own ethical approach can figure into them.

## Reflect the Real Population

Regardless of how ethically challenging your work environment is, there is often one thing a designer can maintain control over—visual representation. We can more accurately reflect Canada's populations in the work we design by choosing to show people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, members of the LGBTQ<sub>2+</sub> communities, and folks with different abilities. Consider boldly challenging the gender and ethnic assumptions that can be rife in client-supplied personas and target groups. If they feel narrow, non-inclusive and inaccurately representative of the true composition of our country, speak up.

## Appoint yourself as an Ethics Educator

Keep your eyes peeled for opportunities to educate and empower clients, account staff, and colleagues to act in ways that align with a greater purpose than simply affecting the bottom line. One of the most powerful places to start is by informing those around you about the business benefits of social and environmental pursuits.

Did you know that social good initiatives are increasingly embraced by consumers?<sup>4</sup> Companies that communicate a strong and meaningful purpose often realize increased brand loyalty.<sup>5</sup> Did you know that making sound environmental choices is actually good for business? Eco-friendly programs are often shown to save companies money by reducing waste

Studies have shown that over 25% of Canadian consumers would pay more for a brand that is socially and/or environmentally responsible

and improving efficiencies<sup>6</sup>. These are a handful of examples of many that can support your efforts to educate those around you about the merits of making ethical choices. Stay informed and spread your knowledge widely.

## Help your Audience Live Healthily

Over the years there have been all sorts of sketchy ways the design industry has been complicit in manufacturing needs through marketing and advertising. The practice of manipulating audiences has become increasingly stealthy through the use of things like dark patterns (manipulative interface designs that trick users into doing things they may not have wanted to do) and addictive experiences in digital product design. Aiming to identify and avoid these modes of practice is a key step toward an ethical practice.

It's a questionable act to call ourselves ethical designers if we're exploiting self esteem to sell a product, advertising nutritionally void foods to kids, producing experiences that capitalize on a dopamine/reward response, selling high fashion using violent, misogynistic imagery, or promoting mindless consumption. Design has been guilty of all of these things on a pretty significant scale.

These transgressions aren't always simple to avoid, however mindful awareness, positive intentions, and advocating for the promotion of healthy behaviours in our audiences are steps in the right direction.

## Sell the Power of Purpose

This won't always show up in the client-provided 'target' descriptions of your audience unless you're specifically tasked

with creating something with a green or social impact USP (unique selling proposition). Truth is, however, a huge percentage of Canadians—92% according to one study<sup>7</sup>—are so conscious about the impacts of their food, clothes, products and services that they would switch brands for something with a more compelling purpose. Armed with the knowledge that purpose is a key factor in an audience choosing to support a company, urge your clients to make responsible choices<sup>8</sup> and elevate social and environmental stewardship at the forefront of their business.

## Commit to Volun-Team Building

Agency leadership often loves a committee dedicated to company culture and fun (sometimes not-so-fun) team-building activities. A surefire way to take the eye-roll out of office outings is to build in legitimate purpose. Consider partnering with a local (vetted)<sup>9</sup> non-profit or community group to collectively volunteer your support.

Examples might include shore cleanups, supporting a local shelter or food bank, or helping build a home with Habitat for Humanity. Not only can colleagues collaborate over shared values and develop deeper levels of self-awareness, volunteering is also shown to improve employee engagement at work which can positively impact revenue<sup>10</sup>. Further, the average employee isn't just in it for the money anymore. Studies show that many millennials are deeply motivated by altruism<sup>11</sup>. Consider how corporate volunteerism can support an ethical practice while also acting to fulfill employees and retain talent.

## Go Public with your Purpose

There are many community avenues to bring forward the topic of ethics in design. Be a mentor to design students and get involved with local college and university programs. Take on the responsibility of getting the new intern up-to-speed. Volunteer with your local industry organizations. Get speaking gigs at conferences. Be present at portfolio night. Write in the industry publications. Have more face-to-face conversations. No matter how you do it, have a voice in the greater design community—each interaction as an opportunity to share ethical philosophies and find your allies.

## Design for Transparency

Let's say you've been tasked with designing something that sets off your ethical alarm bells. Let's also say you don't have the ability to turn the project down. What you *can* do is ensure that your creative output is honest, transparent, and provides your audience with the best chance of making an informed decision without the manipulative interference of misleading visuals, materials or language.

We can avoid misleading with colour choice or imagery, ensure terms and conditions are clear and accessible, and avoid vague or inflated promotional terms. In cases where having an impact on claims or textual elements is impossible, we may use our unique visual sophistication to show the truth<sup>12</sup> even when language doesn't support our cause. This may be implicit instead of explicit, but every little bit helps.



# Design Industry Activist/

A subversive and outspoken sibling of the Conscious Compromiser, you're a weekend activist with dissent in your heart who can be found making change from the inside of your agency or in-house job.

Never one to fear a little conflict, you're an vocal employee whose expertise in subverting from within your organization equips you to implement meaningful incremental change in environments that don't always align with your personal values. Your aim? Improving conditions for people, animals, and the planet on all sides of the work—coworkers, clients, customers, audiences, and more.

You're a tenacious type with education at the heart of your mission. You know that sharing the right information and starting accessible initiatives can help activate even the most dormant passions in the people around you.

Luckily, it's not easy for public companies to hide their ethical transgressions anymore. Thanks internet. A quick search (if you're comfortable with Google having your search data) can reveal the world's most unethical companies and industry sectors

## Predefine your Hard No

Engagement in the responsible design movement comes with an inevitability of encountering ethical dilemmas in our work. It is best practice to have predefined what you will and will not work on with the people you report to. As we've covered, however, compromise is often necessary and the most beneficial thing we can do is accept the brief and subvert from within. Perhaps the client is a weapons manufacturer, cigarette company, or fashion house known to exploit child labour? Declining the work may be the only option that your values system can handle. Consider sending your employer a short and respectful email outlining your reason for declining the work and reinforcing your previous agreement about what you will and will not work on. Not only is this an opportunity to educate, but also protects your position. Tip: Satisfy your inner activist by getting involved and speaking out about the unethical practices of the company in question.

## Rally your Colleagues

Tip: Start your email with the subject line 'free lunch' (request a budget for this) and offer healthy, delicious food in exchange for the attention of your colleagues for a workshop or seminar focused on improving ethical practices at your company. Whether diversity and inclusion, responsible experience design, volunteerism, or improved environmental practices, run the seminar yourself or connect with local organizations or businesses who specialize in the topic area you're planning to discuss. Non-profits, ethical suppliers, and social enterprises are often more than happy to support your endeavour in exchange for visibility or potential future partnerships.

## Build a Company Code of Ethics

Does your company have a code of ethics? Is it visible? Accessible? Are employees educated on its content? Is it up-to-date on current issues? More than likely, no matter how you answered those questions, there's a project ready for an internal activist to get their hands on. Consider using this book as a resource and carefully select a set of achievable goals that are relevant to your area of the industry.

Don't try to do everything at once, and, like any good company mission, clarify your goals. Consider conducting brainstorming sessions and workshops to gather, organize and visualize the information that is most critical to you and your colleagues.

## Be a Resource

Position yourself as the resident expert on all things ethical. Stay current on the big social and environmental issues relating to your business. Have studies, articles, and books ready to share when colleagues express interest.

Consider writing a weekly or monthly newsletter. Speak at conferences. Aim to make sure that everyone, at every level, internally and across the industry knows that your real or figurative door is always open for questions and support relating to responsible practice.

## Self Initiate Ethical Projects

If values-based work isn't possible within your organization, consider recruiting like-minded colleagues to collaborate

Once your ethical guidelines have been established, consider enlisting the designers to collaborate on creatively visualizing them for display around the company as well as for clients

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outside of office hours. Forget the notion that clients are necessary to make ideas happen<sup>1</sup> and pursue self-directed design projects built around advocacy of critical issues. Start your own non-profit, launch an ethical product, run workshops to co-design improved methods of activating communities, or contribute to activist publications.

## **Campaign Against Spec Work**

Universally condemned as unethical by RGD,<sup>2</sup> Ico-D,<sup>3</sup> AIGA,<sup>4</sup> GDC,<sup>5</sup> and just about every other industry authority, spec work is the great under-valuer of the profession of design. We've been advocating against it since organizations began (and since the last chapter) and yet so many designers and agencies are still requested to give away work for free in order to secure clients or contracts.

Often solicited without proper consultation or brief, this free work is often lacking in strategy, is mediocre and safe by its desperate nature, and perpetuates practices such as design contests in lieu of clients hiring professionals and fully engaging in the design process. The truth is, working on spec is bad for everybody's bottom line. It drains time and resources from an firm's paying clients and negatively impacts clients by compromising the potential for long-term agency relationships. Fire up your inner activist and go beyond declining spec work. Get vocal on social media, report clients to AIGA or RGD who solicit spec, and join industry advocates<sup>6</sup> already campaigning successfully against it.

## **Translate Ethics into Dollars**

Internal activism works most effectively when you're speaking the same language as the key decision makers.

Before making the case, ask yourself: *What's in it for the business? Will it save them money? Bolster their reputation? Forge strategic partnerships?*

Use the language of business and talk dollars.

There is no shortage of proof that consumers are increasingly attracted to businesses who embrace a responsible role as it relates to social and environmental impact<sup>7</sup>. This often means reduced budgets, less waste, increased loyalty in customer bases and more efficient employees<sup>8</sup>.

Share your passion for the idea that making money while doing good is entirely possible and consider educating yourself and your employer on the emerging area of accountable capitalism<sup>9</sup>.

## Amplify the Underrepresented

An activist's role is often one of amplification. Aim to collaborate with and amplify the voices, in and outside of the workplace, who need the most support and are the most vulnerable. Look around. Do employee rights require protecting? Is there a group being underrepresented or discriminated against? How diverse are the voices around the decision-making tables? How is your organization protecting animals? The environment?

If you choose to take on a social cause, remember that it's best practice for the under-represented group to lead. Listen and facilitate without assuming yourself to be a saviour. Instead, provide support where it's requested and never assume to understand a group's unique experiences.

The Accountable Capitalism Act (2018), led by Elizabeth Warren, argues that if corporations claim legal rights of personhood then they must also accept the moral obligations of personhood—that means their obligations must take on a social and environmental dimension and not just profitability

## Make 'Professional' Ethical Again

The word “professional” can have problematic implications. At times, it can be interpreted as a synonym for a corporate drone or dispassionate employee maintaining the status quo until the clock strikes 5 pm or a person who mindlessly carries out company work while detaching from personal beliefs and ethical and political values<sup>10</sup>.

Rejecting that definition of professionalism means staying connected to the fact that we're human. Aim to ensure your values and morality drive both your personal *and* your professional life toward meaningful change.



# Digital Ethicist/

You're an ethical leader in your organization (or working toward it) with a unique focus on design for digital products and services. Considered the resident advisor on responsibility where design and technology meet, your role is particularly prevalent in tech companies but can be found in organizations of all ilks.

Your knowledge centres around practical strategies for designing ethical experiences and advocating for the well-being of end-users. Things like making sure that design decisions don't hijack a user's psychological vulnerabilities<sup>1</sup> or exclude anyone based on ability are a part of your daily practice.

You're an outspoken advocate for humanizing technology, ethical AI, diversity in tech, and net neutrality<sup>2</sup>. You're particularly adept at spotting design decisions that, on the surface, can appear benign but may have significant and lasting consequences for society.

## Flag Problematic Projects

As team members involved in the pivotal phases before a project launches, designers can act as gatekeepers who voice concerns and advocate against ethically questionable products or services before they go to market. Ask questions. Lead discussions. Generate consciousness around the issues at hand. Is a design solution exclusionary? Controversial? Misleading? Emotionally exploitative? You might not always stop the project from moving forward, but you'll be generating critical awareness throughout your organization.

## Design to Empower, Not Exploit

Among our highest motivations is the need to belong, feel loved, and be appreciated by our peers. Facebook is arguably one of the biggest perpetrators of using design features to exploit these motivations as psychological vulnerabilities. Succeeding in achieving its original goal to consume as much of our time and conscious attention as possible<sup>3</sup>, Facebook's introduction of the "like" button initiates a rush of dopamine (sweet, sweet social approval) that feels so good that users can't help but upload more stuff to get another hit. And just like that, they're hooked. Cue Instagram and every other social platform.

The lesson? Doing the right thing means designing so your audience can make informed, empowered choices instead of acting on the urges of addiction. A great place to start is by learning the principles of behaviour design<sup>4</sup> to better understand how it can be exploited at the expense of the user, and conversely how to use its principles for good.<sup>5</sup>

## Design to Maximize Usability

Usability is essential to designing ethical experiences. A lack of usability can, and often does, result in the use of ‘dark patterns’<sup>6</sup>. These ominous sounding interface elements trick users into doing something they didn’t want to do like adding extras to a shopping cart or inciting an unintended swipe<sup>7</sup> or click<sup>8</sup>.

Aim to use the Neilson Norman Group’s five quality components of usability to ensure you’re designing based on best practices:

1. *Learnability*: Ease of accomplishing tasks on the first try
2. *Efficiency*: The speed at which users can perform tasks
3. *Memorability*: The speed to reestablish proficiency after a period of not using the design
4. *Errors*: Number of errors, severity and ease to recover from
5. *Satisfaction*: How pleasant a design is to use

## Learn the Accessibility Legalities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes web accessibility as a human right<sup>9</sup>. As ethical designers, we have a responsibility to design inclusively and do our best to understand the legal accessibility requirements of the cities, provinces, and countries in which we work. Made available for designers through the RGD<sup>10</sup>, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (among the most comprehensive web accessibility standards globally) which outlines “the degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible”<sup>11</sup> is a resource that can support your intentions to create accessible designs that comply with government

requirements<sup>12</sup>. Don't let the legal stuff freak you out. There are many helpful tools available to help you meet those requirements.<sup>13</sup>

## Advocate for Data Protection

Since a significant number of the experiences we design require data collection, staying familiar with the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, or PIPEDA<sup>14</sup> and its European equivalent, the General Data Protection Regulation or GDPR will support you in advocating for ethical practices. These legally binding regulations can result in fines if an organization breaches user rights. Rights include the right to be forgotten, that data collection is only done with explicit consent, the right to access, data portability, and the right to withdraw consent or delete accounts at any time.

## Design to Curb Reflexive Consumption

Consider the rabbit hole of endless scrolling that most of us have fallen victim to in our social apps of choice (is it still a choice?). Design decisions like incorporating 'bottomless flow' or autoplay keep people consuming well past the point of being hungry.<sup>15</sup> The same goes for experiences that apply the psychology of a slot machine<sup>16</sup> to keep users persistently checking their devices for new notifications. With innumerable studies<sup>17</sup> linking excessive screen time to increased anxiety, depression, and even suicidality—especially in teens—it's imperative, as ethical designers, to support healthy relationships with devices. Tip: Aim to conclude experiences once the user has accomplished the task they set out to do. Consider giving users the power to determine specific times of day to receive notifications.

## Get Involved in Humanizing Tech

There’s a growing community of design and tech leaders dedicating their careers to making sure that the stuff we design in the tech realm isn’t doing unnecessary harm. They’re advocating, raising awareness and actively designing solutions to mitigate the ways that culture, business, design, and organizational structures can drive technology to hijack our brains. Educating yourself and participating in the ongoing conversations of the *Humane Tech*<sup>19</sup> and *Time Well Spent*<sup>20</sup> communities (interestingly, reclaiming the Facebook platform to have these conversations) can expand your ethical network and inform ethical advocacy in your practice.

## Advocate for Continued Net Neutrality

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) defines net neutrality as the principle that all Internet traffic should be given equal treatment by Internet service providers (ISPs)<sup>21</sup>. This means that as users we have full access to all online content and applications regardless of the source without the likes of Bell or Rogers favoring or blocking particular products or websites.

Unlike the U.S., in Canada it’s illegal for ISPs to compromise user access. This doesn’t mean, however, that the big telecom companies don’t periodically push back. As recently as 2018, Canada’s major telecom companies attempted to censor sites in order to fight piracy. This attempt at censorship was viewed by many as a slippery slope toward compromising net neutrality. As such the Canadian government unanimously voted that “a Canadian carrier shall not control the content or influence the meaning or purpose of telecommunications

carried by it for the public”<sup>22</sup>. So, for now, our Canadian online space is transparent as ever but it's important to stay connected to the cause and advocate when necessary to ensure it stays that way.

## Design with your 'Edge Cases'

It's been said that the difference between universal and inclusive design is that inclusive design is not a result, it's a process.<sup>23</sup> Core to that process is the act of designing *with* the people for which the product is intended.

Best practice includes paying special attention to the users who may have previously been excluded because they're considered 'edge cases', or users with atypical needs or abilities. It's often impossible to predict the requirements of users whose needs differ from our own, so it's imperative to include those users in the design process itself.



# Ethical Design Educator/

You're a values-driven educator at a college or university whose practice aims to inject a healthy dose of ethics into everything you touch.

Masterful at adapting ethical ways of working into your existing teaching role, you advocate for improved institutional ethics, support those around you to clarify what matters to them, and build projects rooted in the world's most pressing issues.

You can be found pontificating about emerging areas in ethical practice, sustainability, or social justice, or critiquing design's complicity in the environmental and emotional degradation associated with consumerism. You use your unique position outside of commercial markets to challenge dominant ways of being and actively support student-citizens and colleagues to expand their ethical design repertoire.

## Support Students to Clarify Their Values

Supporting students to clarify their values, as well as giving them the resources and tools to recognize when to act on them is essential to your role as an ethical educator<sup>1</sup>. Have them ask themselves that big question we covered earlier: *What really matters to me?* And support them in learning to align their work to their values. Consider conducting seminars or workshops to introduce industry codes of ethics, ethical philosophies of key design thinkers and to tease out the individual guiding principles of each student.

Provide reading materials and resources that introduce authors like Tony Fry, John Maeda, Ezio Manzini, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, Lucienne Roberts, Stuart Walker, Victor Papanek, Adrian Shaughnessey, Cheryl Heller, and other design thinkers for whom responsible work is important. Aim to assign projects that evaluate a student's depth of understanding around critical issues and not just the skillfulness of their craft. There's power in this unique position to impact the thinking of a generation of new designers.

## Advocate for Institutional Ethics

Ethical practice requires going beyond an individual teaching role to advocate, at an institutional level, for better on-campus ethics.

As an active and ethically-minded faculty member, aim to support practices such as fair pay for teaching assistantships and academic research, as well as the importance of reliable teaching contracts and job security, fairness of

student governments and institutional boards of directors, and the accessibility of resources for student and faculty health and well-being. Further, keep your eyes peeled for the ever-popular practice of lending out students for free labour and advocate for fairness in payment for work, regardless of level.

## Educate yourself on Social Justice

As an ethical practitioner, it is crucial to stay on top of emerging frameworks for research that are rooted in social justice. Educate yourself on intersectional feminism and the ways in which design has been complicit in oppressing women and girls<sup>2</sup>. Advocate for design justice, an approach that challenges the matrices of domination like white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, capitalism and settler colonialism and aims to provide a more equal distribution of the benefits of design<sup>3</sup>.

Be familiar with the movement to decolonize design which acknowledges how discourse has been almost exclusively dominated by anglocentric/eurocentric ways of “seeing, knowing and acting in the world, with little attention being paid to the alternative and marginalized discourses from the non Anglo-European sphere”<sup>4</sup>. Connected to this is the aim to indigenize curriculums, a critically important step toward reconciliation that introduces indigenous ways of knowing into education.

## Build Citizenship-Centric Curriculums

Student designers, or soon-to-be citizen-designers will benefit from programs that nurture passion toward participatory democracy, social change and environmental

Designjustice.network.org is a network focused on creating design practices that “center those who stand to be most adversely impacted by design decisions” This includes indigenous peoples, communities of color, poor and working class people, the sick and disabled, migrants, LGBTQ+ people, and women and femmes

stewardship. As curriculum designers, we have a crucial choice: cultivate self-awareness and action toward positive global impact or continue the age-old tradition of educating students using formal exercises, void of content, borrowed from the Bauhaus and Basel schools<sup>5</sup>. Some believe the latter is a dangerous practice and that steering students away from the reality that design can never be divorced from content<sup>6</sup> results in a lost opportunity. By incorporating citizenship-centric critical issues into our curriculums, we can actively engage students in an enriched understanding about things like poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation and justice. Truth is, there will always be content in the professional world. Students must learn to choose it wisely and navigate the ethical implications of those decisions.

## Lead by Example

As an instructor and faculty member our behaviour is on display. This can be an excellent opportunity to make responsible lifestyle choices that educate students and colleagues by example. As also discussed in *Eco Designer*, consider asking: *How responsible are my transportation choices? Do I use single-use cups and cutlery? Am I outspoken about critical issues? Do I actively participating in local politics? How sustainable are my design interventions? Are the projects I assign rooted in responsible citizenship?* Every decision is an opportunity to educate by example.

## Create Safe Spaces

Start by knowing the difference between equity and equality. Aim for the former to achieve the latter. Ensure you're leveling the proverbial playing field of the classroom by accounting for unique needs and

Equity is about fair treatment based on respective needs. Equality, however, is about treating all people exactly the same

differing abilities; things like language barriers, cultural and learning differences, and visible and invisible health issues. Provide supplemental support where it's needed most, stay informed on your school's accessibility policies, and help students access the institutional help that they require. Creating safe learning environments also means using the names and pronouns that students and colleagues prefer. Best practice? When you introduce yourself share your preferred name and your pronouns and suggest that group introductions proceed in the same way.

## **Start an Ethics-Based Research Lab**

If you feel passionately about a particular area of practice or design ethics as a field of study, consider applying for funding to start a research lab within your institution. Publicize your lab and its research by attending conferences, mentoring research assistants, publishing in academic journals, staying active in social media, running seminars, and developing compelling projects that will get students and faculty excited to participate.

## **Build an Expansive Ethical Bookshelf**

As an expert on all things ethical, a diverse bookshelf full of moral philosophy, the history of ethical thought, and readings on responsible design is essential to your role. Staying connected to the ever-expanding modes of values-based design like those outlined in this book will also help to establish you as the expert you are. The resources on page 176 are a great place to start.

# Ethical Entrepreneur/

Whether through freelance or running your own social enterprise, you're a business-minded creative with a commitment to profiting with purpose.

You're an expert in benefit-based business models like B Corporations<sup>1</sup> and you understand deeply that while money makes the world go 'round, there are myriad justifications for a more accountable form of capitalism<sup>2</sup>.

Driven by a commitment to social and/or environmental change, you masterfully sell your clients on the increasingly quantifiable profitability of responsible work<sup>3</sup>. You skillfully balance turning a profit with acts of generosity.

By valuing alternative returns on design investment like testimonials, improved networks, talent recruitment and retention, and, of course, impact, you ensure that profit never compromises your purpose.

## Clarify your Purpose

Today's young employees want a job with purpose and meaning; they have high standards, demand equitable treatment and look for opportunities to become a part of something bigger than themselves.<sup>4</sup>

With cash increasingly taking a back seat to these desires, the time is right to start a business based on benefits that go way beyond the bottom line. Begin by understanding the difference between a mission and a purpose: your mission is what you're trying to accomplish and the purpose is the larger why.<sup>5</sup> Ask yourself more than what you can do to fulfill a social benefit to the world and start by focusing on the larger driver of your personal purpose. You'll solidify your value proposition, enable values-based connections with like-minded suppliers, clients and employees, and establish the foundation on which you can develop a meaningful mission.

## Sell Responsibility

As we know by now, organizations with a social and environmental conscience relating to factors like climate change, labour rights, and public health issues have proven to be more stable and profitable<sup>6</sup> than those whose focus rests solely on the bottom line. Increasingly, discerning consumers are more loyal to organizations with shared values: social responsibility is perceived as a competitive edge.

Employees want to be connected to purposeful businesses. Purpose incentivizes clients and consumers to pay a premium.<sup>7</sup> Some argue that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is no longer just an option. It has become a critical

factor for consumers and shareholders in their choices about whether to support a business.<sup>8</sup>

## Communicate Your Purpose

Making your purpose central to all of your communications efforts, both internal and external, will ensure that potential/employees and potential/clients alike are aware of your ethical intentions. Depending on personality, this can be a tough task. Challenge yourself to interpret promoting your purpose as different to bragging or shameless self promotion. By sharing your intentions with the world, you recruit support for the mission and increase your potential for impact. Tip: studies have shown that consumers actually *want* to hear about a company's social and environmental achievements.<sup>9</sup>

## Demand Diverse Teams

Want to maximize your potential for impact? Hire as diversely as possible. Recent studies investigating social impact in the design<sup>10</sup> and tech industries<sup>11</sup> show that diverse teams made up of minorities and women are significantly more likely to carry out work that has a social good dimension than homogenous, single-demographic teams.

## Design a Democratized Workplace

By establishing equal vestedness in project successes, a worker-run co-operative can lay the foundation for success in building a socially responsible, democratic, equitable business<sup>11</sup>. Values-driven and hierarchy-free, co-ops<sup>12</sup> keep the decision-making power in the hands of its members and often result in a more engaged staff, increased productivity, and even enhanced potential for innovation.<sup>13</sup>

Learn more about co-operatives, organizations operated by members who also use its services. [canada.coop](http://canada.coop)

## Donate Work Through A Grant Process

Donating pro-bono work can support local communities, build credibility in the non-profit space, and establish future business connections. Plus, as an Ethical Entrepreneur, an ethos of generosity is an excellent addition to your ethical business model. In addressing questions like not knowing where to start, who to help, or how to effectively promote the donation, consider establishing a grant process. With a formal application process reviewed by a panel of professionals, organizations are given a fair chance to apply to become the recipient of your donation.

## Hire People Who 'Get It'

Craft is nothing without a passion for greater purpose. Aim to hire people whose lives are steeped in community participation, volunteerism, political engagement, and consciousness as it relates to social and environmental issues. Portfolios are important, but consider a 50/50 interview approach where hard skills are given as much attention as a candidate's fit within the ethical culture you're establishing.

## Help For-Profits Support Non-Profits

Traditional pro-bono is great, but what if your for-profit clients support you to donate even more work to companies who really need it? The agency VeryNice<sup>14</sup> developed a "give half" model, where half of the work they do is given away for free to companies who, otherwise, wouldn't be able to afford quality design. They fund this through traditional work for corporate clients who know that by employing this

agency they're actually doing some good in the world. In-line with their generous approach, the model is open source.<sup>15</sup>

## Make Your Methods Open Source

Another approach to a generous practice is making your tools and methods available and open source. Not only is this an excellent mode of self-promotion, but it supports and empowers anyone, regardless of income, to benefit from the research and knowledge coming out of your organization.

## Create a Safe Office Space

As we know by now, ethical work is way more than the clients we choose. The cultivation of a supportive, responsible work environment that is safe for all employees regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, or ability is an essential aspect of ethical entrepreneurship. Consider making company values central to all interaction and ensure the office is a safe space to share any issue, from interpersonal to mental health. Lead by example with respectful, sensitive conduct and a zero tolerance policy on ethics violations.

Speak out about your personal values, problems you contend with and encourage others to share their own. Provide ethics workshops and diversity training. Actively praise ethical conduct. And finally, ensure there are protective mechanisms in place to support employees who encounter problems<sup>16</sup>.  
Tip: Issues are inevitable. What matters is that your organization is proactive and has established systems in place to effectively address problems when they arise.

# Social Impact Design/

You're community focused and in pursuit of the public good. You may have experience doing corporate work, but you've chosen to work predominantly in the public sector for governments, non-profits and community organizations.

You use the tools of design to support humanitarian causes and effect social change toward improved well-being and a healthier, more supported society. Advocacy and amplification are core to your work; you get deeply involved with underrepresented issues and communities.

You're all about empathetic storytelling, co-designed solutions, and using the power of design to educate the public. Compassionate and collaborative, you're a friend to the people whose greatest foe is working solo.

## Start Small

The social impact space can be riddled with life's big questions and it's easy to get overwhelmed by the seemingly unsolvable, intensely complex problems. A good place to start is to (try) not to get weighed down with the gravity of the problems society faces. Start small. Contribute at a local level with the people you know and trust. Take it one project at a time, starting with the problems your community faces and work collaboratively to make change where you can. If you're feeling energetic once you address all the problems at a local level, move on to the big, global initiatives.<sup>2</sup>

## Include More Women & Minorities

The importance of diverse teams is critical across every sector of the design industry. Whether you're the one doing the hiring, advocating from within an organization, or have any impact on the makeup of the teams, clients, or suppliers with whom you collaborate, making diversity a priority means projects are far more likely to take on a social good dimension.

As we've covered, studies show that in design and design adjacent industries, responsible work is many times more likely to be made a priority by women and minorities.<sup>3</sup> It's speculated that the creative work of systemically underrepresented and stigmatized groups is impacted by their unique experiences and power struggles. The result is an enhanced level of empathy and passion "to seriously commit to ethical design advocacy".<sup>4</sup> Reminder: Inclusive design can only happen with diverse stakeholders at the table.<sup>5</sup>

## Keep the Social in Social Impact

In her book *Citizen Designer*, Cheryl Heller said it simply and said it best: “...the essential nature of social impact design is that it’s social.” Community collaboration is key to success in this area of design. The easiest place to find your collaborators as a Social Impact Designer is to get a job within an organization that has already taken up the causes<sup>6</sup> you aspire to support. If you plan to freelance, aim to get involved with other solo creatives, build your own teams, and make sure your practice remains active and rooted in community.

Consistent engagement within local governments and communities not only increases quality of life, but also provides an insider understanding of hopes, needs, and opportunities of the folks within it<sup>7</sup>. That can positively impact your ability to design with them effectively.

Tip: Consider joining local boards, offering internships, teaching locally, and volunteering whenever possible.

## Choose Your Causes Wisely

In the same way we assess potential clients, it is essential to research the causes and charities with which we choose to partner. Since transparency is a legal requirement for all non-profits, their annual reports are readily available for your critical perusal. An easier place to start, however, is with Charity Intelligence<sup>8</sup> in Canada or Charity Navigator<sup>9</sup> in the U.S. These third party organizations are dedicated to reviewing non-profits for the quality of their impact, overhead costs, need for funding, accountability to donors and overall transparency. Tip: if you’re looking for a partner and don’t know where to start, both sites boast top 10 or top 100 lists. If animal testing is a potential risk factor, as it can

Consider vetting the organizations you choose to partner with by examining their ratings: [charityintelligence.ca](http://charityintelligence.ca), [charitynavigator.org](http://charitynavigator.org).

be in the case of medical organizations, assess your potential partner at Humane Charities Canada<sup>10</sup> before concluding your research.

## Partner, Don't Parachute

Getting deeply involved in the communities with whom we collaborate can be the difference between designing *for* and designing *with*. (Hint: aim for the latter.) Immersion in communities to effectively incorporate and mobilize the skills and strengths of its members and resources can add a critical dimension of authenticity, accuracy, and empowerment to your work.<sup>11</sup>

Avoid the often-critiqued 'parachute design', a typically well-intentioned but "paternalistic and misdirected"<sup>12</sup> form of design intervention that 'parachutes' in to high-need settings without taking time to understand the real problems faced by those people. This is especially prevalent in design interventions for the developing world. Best practices indicate that if you can't fully immerse yourself in a community, it's best to stay local and find a community to work with where you can.

## Represent with Dignity

In the social good space, we're often working to lessen the impact of significant and sometimes systemic issues. As such, it's hard not to focus our designerly intentions on the massive, looming problems before us. Certainly, we need to understand the complexity of what we're up against but when it comes to executing a design intervention, focusing on the strengths of the people we're working with instead of the shortcomings they face means a more dignified

representation. Search hard for the strengths of the people you're representing, whether it's style, local language, or a certain skill set.<sup>13</sup> By doing so, your intervention will inspire change in your audience without compromising the empowerment of those being represented.

## Be Mindful of Literacy & Language

Arguably, all design work has a voice. In the case of social impact design, it typically shouldn't be that of the designer. Working at the same level of literacy, languages and cultural norms<sup>14</sup> of the groups we design with is absolutely critical to responsible representation and accessibility.

## Apply for Grants & Microgrants

Awarded by governments, institutions, corporations, or the foundations of wealthy individuals or families, grant money exists to support non-profit initiatives to address needs or issues in communities. Do your research and search for a list of grant opportunities<sup>15</sup> related to the area you're working in. Write a compelling proposal that outlines your mission, approach, and how you'll measure success...and cross your fingers. Grant writing takes time to perfect. Be persistent and don't get discouraged if at first you don't succeed. If you're looking for a less intensive application process, consider applying for Microgrants. They are smaller, non-repayable sums of money are often awarded directly by a group of local donors.

## Check Your Privilege

Most of us are carrying around some sort of privilege. Privilege arises from society's tendency to value certain

Check out these federal level resources for finding grant opportunities.  
Tip: search at a provincial and local level too.  
Innovation Canada: [ic.gc.ca/eic/site/080.nsf/eng/home](http://ic.gc.ca/eic/site/080.nsf/eng/home)  
Canada Council for the Arts: [canada.council.ca/funding/grants](http://canada.council.ca/funding/grants)

Ideas about privilege are rooted in intersectionality and are defined in the Oxford dictionary as: The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage

things over others.<sup>16</sup> It means that some of us get advantages in life that others don't. Whether it's our gender, ability, race, education, class, religion, sexuality, or neuronormativity,<sup>17</sup> it's important to acknowledge the ways in which your social status has offered you a helping hand.

So, why is this important?

Compassion.

Empathy.

Not only are these traits critical to developing the sensitive and respectful relationships necessary to design effectively, but they don't hurt your pursuit of being a solid person in the world either. Checking your privilege means designing with the knowledge that a community's plight can only be truly known by that community. It means respecting the challenges and experiences that shape that community or individual's unique worldview and their position on issues. Tips: Don't present stories or experiences that you have not received explicit consent to share. Consider actively breaking out of your echo chamber<sup>18</sup> to expose yourself to the issues and ideas of groups outside of your own closed circle.

## Design to Pass the Torch

Since funding is rarely flowing for local community groups and non-profits, it's best to design with legacy in mind. Legacy is about making sure your design or intervention can live on without you. Start by asking: *how might this client and audience continue to benefit from this design when I am no longer present to implement or modify it?*

Think about how your work can be easily replicated and modified without you. This may mean providing frameworks,

written methodologies, or designing using easily accessible and open source programs. Consider trying not to think of it as putting yourself out of a job, but as being a good partner and strengthening your relationship. By supporting organizations selflessly, you're more likely to obtain valuable referrals and get a call for the next project.

## **Design for Democracy**

Since, as Milton Glaser says, “good design is good citizenship”, ask what you can do to support your local democracy to function optimally for its leaders and constituents. Getting involved in local governments to use the power of design to increase civic participation through ballot design,<sup>19</sup> advocating for voter turnout, and working to make government/citizen interactions easier to understand and more transparent is a deeply worthy cause for a social impact designer.

## **Start a Non-profit**

Consider dedicating funds from your for-profit design organization, freelance business, or sole proprietorship to the development of a non-profit branch branded specifically for its dedication to social impact initiatives. Bonus: tax breaks.

## **Go Pro Bono**

Get generous. Sometimes the best way to get involved is to volunteer your services. Consider, in the case of pro bono work, that there are many ways to be compensated for your work that don't involve the exchange of money. You can barter for services, develop your network by working with charity boards of directors, secure future paid work or

bidding privileges, receive invaluable testimonials, build your portfolio with work that aligns with your values, and cultivate industry credibility. Whether you're just starting out or making a late-in-the-game switch, doing values-based work free of charge can support your social impact goals.

## Design with Gratitude in Mind

Research shows that reminding people about who and what helped them along their path to success increases gratitude and empathy for those who didn't have similar support.<sup>20</sup> This is an absolutely critical insight for the successful design of donor communications in the non-profit space.

## Downsize Your Lifestyle

Shifting away from commercial work to dedicate yourself to social impact is no small feat, and can be financially burdensome. Consider challenging yourself to work slowly toward a leaner lifestyle. This action comes with a bold set of questions: *What if you switched neighbourhoods? Live in a smaller city? Sold your car and instead took public transit or cycled in the summer?* It can be a terrifying, exciting, and deeply satisfying ongoing project to challenge the idea that success is determined materially.<sup>21</sup>



# Eco Designer/

You're a passionate proponent of an ecosystem-first philosophy. After all, what do we have without a functioning planet? Your work has a consistent and, at times, hardcore focus on not just minimizing environmental impact, but aiming to renew natural resources by incorporating regenerative approaches.<sup>1</sup>

You challenge hierarchical notions that place humans above other life forms and every aspect of your work-life has an eco-dimension. Beyond cycling to work and unflinchingly aiming to reduce your personal impact, you design self-sustaining solutions, always choose local resources and suppliers and use clean energy where possible.

Regardless of the brief, you're advocating for ethical environmental practices; you believe that waste is a design flaw<sup>2</sup> and there's no excuse for mindless decision-making about everyday tools like inks, papers, and technologies. When it comes to the business side of your work, you adhere to a triple<sup>3</sup> or quadruple<sup>4</sup> bottom line that ensures your practice balances benefit to people, the planet, the personal, and not just shareholder profits.

## Solidify your Stance On Eco-Issues

I said it before and I'll say it again, defining your position is absolutely essential to an ethical practice. As an Eco Designer, you'll have to decide where you draw the line on key topics.

*What do you consider to be clean energy? What are your thoughts on animal welfare? Water conservation? Which materials do you consider to be ethical for use in design? What about the impact of companies in the dirtiest industries like oil and fashion? Who is mitigating those impacts successfully?*

Once you've established where you stand, speak up. The inner values of the leaders and employees in an organization has been shown to have a strong connection to the success of a company's sustainability programs.<sup>5</sup> In other words, it takes a whole lot more than scientific knowledge about the impacts of climate change to spark action and change within an organization.

## Commit to Self-Care

Counter to the utilitarian argument that positions ethical practice as the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people, it is believed by some that in order to achieve a sustainable 'good' in the world, it is absolutely imperative to, first, be good to yourself.<sup>6</sup> Consider that without the sustainment of your mental, emotional, and physical health, it may not be possible to continue your actions toward environmental change. Further, wading into the treacherous waters of environmental degradation can be emotionally harrowing. Self-care supports a sustainable, healthy practice.

## Design In Moderation

Eco Design is a less-is-more affair so start by lowering your resource consumption and mitigating your impact. Look for environmental certifications like Forest Stewardship Certified FSC paper,<sup>7</sup> and products that use biodegradable and compostable materials. Seek out labels that indicate reduced carbon impact, no ozone depleting substances, recycled and recyclable materials, and chlorine free production. Familiarize yourself with Energy Star,<sup>8</sup> Ecologo,<sup>9</sup> and Rainforest Alliance Certified.<sup>10</sup>

To design in moderation means thinking smaller with fewer frills and materials that break down over time. It means aiming to make your creations last and avoiding planned obsolescence at all costs. Creativity can be maximized by designing within constraints like using only repurposed and local materials, or avoiding excess embellishment.

## Say Goodbye to Greenwashing

Greenwashing happens when marketers jump on the eco-is-trendy bandwagon and overstate the eco-friendliness of a product.<sup>11</sup> Buyer-and-designer beware. The marketplace is rife with misrepresented toxicity levels, environmental performance facts and over-inflated (or all-out untrue) 'all natural' claims.

It has been argued that without doing our due diligence in ensuring the accuracy of claims, we are complicit in the deception of our audiences.<sup>12</sup> It's critical, therefore, to investigate<sup>13</sup> the products or services you're being asked to promote. Ask the hard questions about things like GMOs, energy use, and whether products harbour chemicals that

might be dangerous to human health. Consider going even further to scrutinize a product's ingredients,<sup>13</sup> the methods used for harvesting or extracting those materials, and the associated supply chain.

So what if you're being asked to greenwash? Push back and don't misuse words like 'organic' and 'all natural'. Avoid excessive use of the colour green, healthy-looking imagery, and natural motifs. Use your creative prowess to do the job and get paid without misleading the public into believing that something is cleaner and safer than it actually is. Do your best to show the truth and support consumers to make informed decisions that support larger sustainability goals.<sup>14</sup>

## Favour Fair Trade

A Fair Trade<sup>15</sup> certification means practices that include environmental sustainability and empowering opportunities for all stakeholders, especially marginalized women. The certification ensures fair, honest and ethical approaches for the environment and humans alike. This certification is especially important if you're working with organizations whose business involves coffee, sugar, tea, flowers, cocoa/chocolate, cotton, bananas and more. These industries can have devastating human and environmental impacts like slave and child labour, reductions in biodiversity, soil erosion, and chemical contamination.

## Assess your Project's Impacts

Design philosopher Tony Fry suggests that something must be destroyed in order to bring something new into existence.<sup>16</sup> Always consider what must be destroyed in order

to create. Start every project by asking yourself: *what are the human and environmental impacts associated with this job?*

Take a look at the holistic impacts of the products or services you're selling and the suppliers you're connected to. Do your research. Some of the worst environmental offenders aren't so obvious like cheap t-shirts<sup>17</sup> and avocado toast.<sup>18</sup>

Take time to accumulate some knowledge before accepting any brief and support your colleagues by sharing that knowledge. Further, design work can be a messy venture and excess waste can be a consequence.

Further, a responsible Eco Designer knows the rules and constraints of their local waste disposal, compost, and recycling initiatives so as to make informed choices about how to move things like design tools, paper, and disposable products on to their next life. Consider that local sourcing is typically less ecologically destructive than its globally sourced counterparts, and it often ensures a certain level of awareness regarding the human impact of production.

## Choose Your Clients Wisely

Investigating the impact of our clients in order to ensure we're not complicit in environmentally destructive practices is a critical step to becoming an Eco Designer. Choose your clients wisely—with the caveat we discussed earlier in the book. Some people believe that the best way to effect change is to subvert from within an ethically questionable organization. Ask: *Can I add value to a business whose practices are currently less than ideal?* Enacting change is a worthy uphill climb but it is also perfectly acceptable to decline working for a client whose values don't align with your own. If you have strong feelings about industries like oil, fashion,

mining, development, or industrial agriculture consider conjuring your inner activist. Stay current on your knowledge about the issues associated with certain industries and speak out and educate your colleagues. Consider channeling your energy into partnerships with organizations that share your values and can support the work you want to achieve.

## **Choose Your Suppliers Wisely**

Being mindful about our environmental impact means considering the practices of the entire network of people and organizations with whom we work. Aim to understand a partner's approach to things like energy conservation, manufacturing, and printing processes.

Suppliers with a commitment to environmental stewardship typically make it a point to market themselves as such, but don't let that dissuade you from doing your due diligence. Ask about recycled content, emissions and energy efficiency, attempts to produce products with fewer toxins, product lifecycles, and approaches to disposal and reuse.

## **Sell Sustainability**

Clients and consumers alike react favourably to intentions toward environmental stewardship. Fact: the average consumer is more attracted companies who acknowledge and address their environmental impact.<sup>19</sup> Another fact: companies with an environmental action plan are proven to be more financially stable and attractive to investors.<sup>20</sup> That means there's a bottom-line benefit to designing with sustainability in mind. Sell it.

## Trade & Share

Resourcefulness is in the blood of designers. Trading with colleagues or sharing resources like physical supplies and technology can save a new purchase and reduce our overall impact. If you're in a larger city, look for barter groups like Bunz<sup>21</sup> or try buying second hand. Of course, we'll eventually have to buy some supplies to support the work that we do. Best to ask ourselves whether or not something is essential. When a purchase is necessary, making well-researched decisions about the tools we choose to purchase can save us from a 500-years-to-break-down landfill contribution or supporting manufacturing practices that have dire environmental consequences.

Tip: As many of us are Apple users, we'll be pleased to know that Greenpeace named Apple among most eco-friendly companies globally<sup>22</sup>. Apple is committed to sustainable practices, but they're still working to stop the environmentally destructive mining of rare earth metals to make their technologies. As ethical consumers of products, we can stay connected to the environmental initiatives<sup>23</sup> of the companies we support and do what we can to keep them accountable to their goals.

## Start an Eco-Initiative

Most companies understand the value of operating in a way that supports environmental sustainability. Unfortunately, however, those companies don't always have resources at the ready to spearhead their initiatives. Put on your leadership pants, pitch an idea to management, and initiate programmes with sustainability at their core. If your company doesn't buy your idea, consider starting an initiative within your

local community. You might organize folks to start upcycling otherwise landfill-bound products or design communications that promote low-waste lifestyles and empower consumers to buy chemical-free. You could support 'binners' in your neighbourhood who collect glass and cans for recycling, get involved in parks projects or community gardens, or become a member of your local Transition Town.<sup>24</sup> With a willingness to take a leadership or organizational role, the list of opportunities is nearly endless.

## Assess your Personal Impact

Fact: 20% of people (mostly in wealthy countries like ours) consume in excess of 80% of the world's natural resources.<sup>25</sup> If you'd like to start putting a dent in that number, aim to make small, incremental, and balanced change as a starting point. Remember: decisions that border on ascetic won't be conducive to long-term, sustainable change.

Some people practice meatless Mondays to reduce their consumption and contribute to both environmental sustainability and improving their health. Others aim to alter their idea of entertainment in a way that fosters more experience and less shopping and consumption.

Making a shift in your overall impact doesn't have to mean a total lifestyle overhaul. Start small. Drive a little less. Turn off the lights. Take a shorter shower. Stop using single-use plastics.<sup>26</sup> Make your clothes last a bit longer. Buy organic and fair trade. Research ways to reduce your impact<sup>27</sup> and aim for balance above all.

## Detox from Dirty Data

No, not that kind of data. Studies show that communication technologies may account for approximately 3.5% of global emissions by 2020. This means our connected devices are effectively dirtier than both aviation and shipping combined.<sup>28</sup> As companies work to make the switch toward renewable energy (currently 80% of our power still comes from fossil fuels) do your part by being smart about your data use.

Start by reminding your colleagues and organizations that paperless is not necessarily more eco-friendly. Consider sending less email. Store only the data that you absolutely need. Use green hosting solutions that tout renewable energy resources. Disconnect your devices and indulge in a digital detox wherever possible. Your brain will thank you too.<sup>29</sup>

While you're at it, spread the word that the seemingly infinite capacity of that nebulous data 'cloud' is in fact a series of big, metal data farms emitting greenhouse gasses all over the world.

## Insist On A Triple Bottom Line

Working to a triple bottom line means that your clients, employer, and/or suppliers consider social and environmental as well as economic impacts related to the work.

Insisting that every project begins with measurable objectives that include this triple bottom line<sup>30</sup> can ensure that a company's financial needs and decisions don't compromise its social and environmental goals.

## Consider a Quadruple Bottom Line

If you're feeling particularly keen, you might follow the lead of sustainability designer and philosopher Stuart Walker who argues to expand the triple bottom line beyond the social, environmental and financial to include personal fulfillment. He argues that the path to sustainability starts at the individual level where a focus on personal meaning-seeking is critical to achieving the ethical perspectives and conscience necessary to realize an ethical practice.

## Capture True Costs

The nerdy sibling of the 'triple bottom line', 'True Cost Accounting' is an approach that ethical designers and the businesses they're involved with can benefit from. It ensures environmental, social, and economic impacts are identified, quantified, and made transparent. By accurately reporting on the holistic impacts of an initiative, businesses can ensure that future projects account for more than just economic costs and mitigate any potentially damaging effects. We may not be expected to do the math (thankfully), but knowing what to advocate for is key.

## Champion Nature's Rights

Across the world and under most legal systems, nature is considered property with no rights of its own.<sup>31</sup> As such, nature's treatment—and the choice to destroy or compromise its ecosystems—is entirely up to whoever owns that property. To champion the rights of nature is to unlearn these philosophies that dominate western society and consider nature as an independent entity with the right to flourish.<sup>32</sup> This radical shift in understanding to our dominant

paradigm is one that many argue is critical if we are to have any chance against climate change. Educate yourself on the history of this thinking starting with the U.N.'s 1982 World Charter For Nature<sup>33</sup> and get involved in the emerging Nature's Rights Movement.<sup>34</sup>

## Design to Reduce Consumption

This challenging action falls toward the end of the list for a reason: much of our everyday work involves an end-goal of supporting consumption. Let's attempt to challenge that.

One way to reduce a desire for consumption in our audiences is to design in such a way that fosters conviviality<sup>35</sup> and discourages competitive relations between people that can inflame envious feelings toward each other. Consider this when assessing the quality of the content you're designing with and the subtle visual messages within your work. Studies have shown that competitive consumer behaviour is associated with anxiety and depression and that there are significant social benefits to reducing consumption.

Dissuade your audience from mindless consumption by instead encouraging behaviours that are core to human well-being like harmony with nature, fun and leisure, healthfulness, and friendship.<sup>36</sup>

## Offset Your Carbon Use

Carbon offsetting is a mechanism that allows individuals and companies to mitigate the impact of their greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>37</sup> Let's say you have an opportunity to fly to Beijing for a design conference. Start with the questions: *Do I really need this flight? Can I do this in a way that is more energy*

*efficient? Are there greener travel alternatives?*

If you decide the conference is essential and there is no viable travel alternative, then carbon offsetting will allow you to effectively neutralize the greenhouse gasses associated with your travel plans.<sup>38</sup> Take advantage of programs that can support you to invest in renewable energy projects whenever you feel it's necessary to offset your actions.

## **Don't Just Sustain, Regenerate**

Regenerative design takes sustainability a step further and aims to build systems that naturally regenerate lost resources back into existence. This means deep consideration for the ways in which humans and the environment coexist.

Consider the popular example of 'for every purchase you make, we'll plant a tree!' This is a restorative (not regenerative) measure that can certainly have its benefits, but developing naturally regenerating ecosystems (as in permaculture) restores a deeper level of social and ecological resilience. We can consider regenerative methods when pitching eco-friendly partnerships or promotions to clients or aim to get involved in regeneration efforts outside of office hours.



# Social Innovation Designer/

A comparatively fresh area of design, you can be understood as the Social Impact Designer's less traditional, even-more-collaborative sibling. You're passionate about the power of participatory design and use it wisely to strengthen civil society.

Your approach to community engagement is non-hierarchical. You see yourself on equal footing with those you're designing with and, together, you design the sorts of interventions that are holistically beneficial and enhance society's capacity to act.<sup>1</sup>

Citizen empowerment is at the core of your practice. Your ideas are local in scale, sustainable, and centre on enhancing community resiliency<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps, most importantly, you innovate based on social needs rather than the needs of the market. You can be found toting a copy of *Design, When Everybody Designs* by Ezio Manzini or as a member of a local DESIS<sup>3</sup> or social innovation network.

## First, Listen

Stop. Breathe. Best to quiet the unrelenting voice of the designer-mind that urges: 'change something!' or 'do something!'.<sup>5</sup> Listening is arguably the most critical part of the design process. Without it, we can miss out on identifying vital connections or taking the time to truly understand the needs, goals and aspirations of the people we're designing with.

## Don't Be An Expert

A Social Innovation Designer aims to transform the age-old approach of the omnipotent 'design expert'. We rethink the top-down approach of telling people what they need, to instead become facilitators and collaborators in co-design processes.

Think workshops instead of cubicles and participatory community co-design sessions instead of agency-only brainstorming.

Direct interfacing with local populations instead of impersonal surveys and traditional focus groups. This shift in perceptions about the role of a designer will empower you to truly become a member of the teams and communities with which you collaborate.

## Be Socially Engaged

In her book *'Good'*, Lucienne Roberts wisely said "The first step toward trying to be ethical is being socially aware and engaged."<sup>6</sup> Yes! An effective Social Innovation Designer is, first, an active community member.

Understanding community needs from the inside is an amazing way to ensure you're not designing with a top-down mentality. Attend community meetings. Stay informed and active in local politics. Volunteer. Have more conversations. Ask people what matters to them. Every chat is an opportunity to better understand the hopes and needs of the people you call neighbours and will invariably inform your design interventions.

## Share Project Ownership

Collaboration and shared ownership are core to developing the sort of strong, long term and mutually beneficial relationships that make community projects successful. Make sure the experiences of the communities you're working with are at the centre of your design process—it is their insights, after all, that will enable the project to flourish.

## Design Self Sustaining Interventions

Design with the future in mind. Ask: *how can this design live on, autonomously, in this community? How might they continue to benefit over time by modifying and duplicating this project as they require?*

Consider designing in such a way that makes your project easy to implement without a designer present and include things like easy-to-follow methods and instructions with your final output.

## Make it Analogue

If you're designing with objectives toward developing strong and connected communities, consider leaving your technology

at home. Social Innovation designer Ezio Manzini believes that a community's reliance on digital connectivity can actually weaken a once-solid social fabric.<sup>7</sup> This replacement of authentic, real-world connections with those based in superficial, digital realms can, arguably, compromise a community's resilience. If technology is necessary in your design, ensure it plays a supporting role and never replaces face-to-face human connection.

## Connect to Social Innovation Networks

Design for Social Innovation Toward Sustainability or DESIS is a values-based non-profit cultural association and network of research labs largely based in academic institutions. Its purpose is to use the power of social innovation as a driver toward sustainable change and aim to innovate around social demands instead of those of the market. Connect with the network to learn more about this emerging philosophy,<sup>8</sup> partner with a local lab,<sup>9</sup> or find out how to get involved in social innovation in your community.<sup>10</sup>

## Design at a Local Scale

Aim to design small scale innovations that are specific to the needs of local communities. Your networks will be tighter, projects will feel manageable, you'll use fewer resources, the communities you're designing with will be better represented, the voices of all constituents will be heard. Think big but design small.

## Democratize Information

When working with a diverse group of local co-designers, keeping the project information open and accessible is

absolutely essential. Best practice is to use your design superpower of visualization as a tool to organize, democratize, and spark critical social conversations.<sup>11</sup>

## **Expand your Definition of Social**

When thinking about social innovation and its intention of “working to meet social goals”, it’s important to consider asking who “social” really includes. Are we only supporting humans, or should we expand our definition? The research conducted by Emily Carr University’s DESIS lab, for example, aims to include social relations with more than humans. The team looks at the integrated relationships between animals, the environment, and people to support the development of more holistic project priorities that benefit the entire natural world.<sup>12</sup>

## **Recombine Existing Assets**

All too often ‘innovation’ is synonymous with the sort of newness that pristine, fresh out-of-the box technology has. In the world of social innovation, however, where the aim is to lower resource intensity, we aim to find ways to innovate without increasing consumer volume. Your greatest tool for achieving this is to recombine existing assets wherever possible. Predominantly applicable when designing physical products, this action can manifest for communication designers as creative solutions for repurposing old print executions, offcut paper and promo materials.

# Design Activist/

An outspoken proponent of design ethics, Milton Glaser, famously said, “It is our responsibility to question, challenge and communicate dissent wherever necessary to protect those freedoms we so value.”<sup>1</sup>

As a Design Activist you’re an anti-establishment type whose dedication to moral righteousness keeps you working outside of commercial markets. Design is your tool to address, advocate for and activate progressive social, political, economic and environmental issues toward a more equitable and just existence for all.

You’re more than a traditional activist who often uses the act of resistance to instigate reform. Design activism is a generative act. You create positive alternatives to the status quo<sup>2</sup> that go beyond manifestos and rallying cries (those are great, too) to raise awareness and offer powerful, viable solutions to some of society’s most critical problems.

## **Do The Work You Wish To See**

Self-initiate. Seek out supportive resources.<sup>3</sup> React to local and global issues. Just start designing. Create the work that you wish clients would pay for and do it for causes that could benefit from your support. You'll build your portfolio and accumulate a vital network of ethically-minded fellow activists.

## **Show Up & Skill Share**

Effective activism isn't a solo sport. Being an active community member and showing up both online and in-person to contribute to the causes you're passionate about is critical. Whether climate change, gender equality, queer issues, wealth distribution, decolonization, labour justice or something else entirely, do your part by working to enhance communication, organizing workshops, or participating in protests. Whatever your cause: show up and share your skills.

## **Tell A Compelling Truth**

In the attention economy and post-truth world, hard facts devoid of emotion can lose their lustre. When advocating for underrepresented groups or critical issues, aim to communicate evidence and experiences in the form of compelling stories that act to counter false perceptions. Infusing facts into inspired storytelling can give your ethical work a better chance of contending with sensationalism and the dreaded 'fake news'.

## **Share Your Work & Resources**

As a Design Activist, you're likely to be an open source kind of person whose more-the-merrier ideals celebrate free access

to resources and information. Using a Creative Commons<sup>4</sup> license enables free distribution for the work you create and means that other creatives can share, use, build upon, and distribute the work too. With 16 variations of licenses, you can stipulate terms like requiring attribution if someone uses your work, or allow users the right to distribute it globally as long as the purpose is non-commercial.

## Get Vocal

Aiming to be as vocal as possible about the causes you believe in is an attribute of any activist and an essential action that can be enacted immediately. Turn up your injustice radar and call out the issues you encounter. Write a blog, be active on social media, and have face-to-face conversations.

Any small step toward expression is worthy. Try to mitigate fear that your public actions will negatively impact your career path. If you're honest and respectful in your public communication, you'll be sure to attract the organizations and companies you would want to work with and, hopefully, filter out the ones you don't.

## Embrace Peaceful Design Resistance

There is often an incongruity between an activist's peaceful ideals and the violent-looking, dark and radical images that get used to communicate messages.<sup>5</sup> Consider that effective activism doesn't always promote clashes of power but can resist in a way that is visually non-violent. Design to promote collaborative, respectful relationships with the folks your messages address. By doing so, you're more likely to foster the dialogue and open-mindedness that is necessary for inciting change.

## Get Political

Designer Ken Garland once said that his vote and political actions were more valuable than anything he could do as a designer.<sup>6</sup> Stay informed. Read the news. Watch CPAC, even. Know where you stand on political issues municipally, provincially, federally, and globally. Most importantly, get involved. Participate the action that supports your political beliefs.

## Align Your Career with Your Values

As an uncompromising Design Activist, you may find that full time employment in a corporate organization is impossible if you are to stay true to your ethical ideals. Instead, choose to work as a freelancer, within a collective or co-op, a social enterprise or in the non-profit sector. There are innumerable options outside of traditional agency and in-house roles that can support your values.

## Use Your Design Superpowers

This can be as simple as designing content for social media that illuminates critical issues or as in-depth as conducting co-creation workshops to radically transform the way an organization or community operates. As Design activists we have a unique set of practical and conceptual skills that take our activism role way beyond resistance. As designers, we have the capacity to develop the sorts of innovative, transformational ideas that can fundamentally change how people live—even in cases where reform seems out of the question.<sup>7</sup>

## Say No To Unethical Clients

As an uncompromising activist, this may be among the most challenging and crucial actions. Saying 'no' to paying clients whose practices grossly misalign with your values is a glorious privilege and one that, let's be real, can be financially burdensome to obtain. Living small is one way to alleviate some of that burden. However, optimistically speaking, the ethics of the industry are beginning to shift. Securing an ethical client base may be easier now than it ever has been.

## Don't Expect to Solve The Problem

Consider yourself hereby released from the crushing responsibility of having to solve the world's complex and systemic problems. Though many of us have been told over the course of our design-lives, that 'designer' is synonymous with 'problem solver', we now know a little better.

The popular belief of many a modern design thinker is that assuming we can solve problems is a bit, let's just call it like it is...arrogant and can lead to design becoming a figurative band-aid for social or marketing issues. Instead, we can now be content with a goal to respectfully research the problem, aim to accurately present its issues, and engage the public to promote meaningful, ongoing dialogue.<sup>8</sup>

# Making it Happen/

We made it. Consider step one to becoming an ethical practitioner complete.

From the agency-employed Conscious Compromiser to the community-centric Social Innovation Designer to the politically-motivated Design Activist, we've made it through an à la carte of over 130 ethical actions.

This book is a modest contribution to an evolving zeitgeist where ethical pursuits are of increasing importance in the face of the today's most pressing social, political and environmental issues.

Now, the rest is up to each of us.

There will be actions we choose to implement today and there will be those which resonate but may not feel immediately possible. Both are important. We can act now while also collecting a set of aspirational goals to fuel the future of our practice and develop a unique, values-based

roadmap for our careers. *Ethical Sellout* or full blown *Ethical*, whether we continue to work in industry, making small compromises while advocating for ethical action where possible, or forsake it altogether to pursue design for public-good full time, the point is that we're *doing something*.

I believe that every action, regardless of size, has the capacity to have meaningful impact and I have a great deal of belief in our collective power. May we continue to act and evolve this industry into a leading model of ethical practice.

And as for me?

Am I ready to acquiesce and re-enter the industry? Am I ready to accept my role within a troublesome and sophisticated system of persuasion? Am I prepared to face the realities of discrimination, questionable products, and unreasonable beauty standards? Do I miss the dynamic people? The passion? The openness to outrageously creative solutions and the big budgets that enable them?

I believe I am.

I am also prepared to address the issues that I face head-on. I am prepared to have a voice, to get involved, and to support others like me to work in ways that support safe, supportive, and sustainable practices. I am prepared to choose my clients and agencies wisely and to subvert from within when I, inevitably, find myself in ethically-questionable settings.

I will commit to mindful action. I will never write or accept a brief without asking if something bigger—something more meaningful—can be achieved. I will remember that ethics is a daily practice. I will set achievable goals.

Most importantly, I have learned to find the dialectic. I am committed to being ethical and I am *also* a member of a problematic industry (and the human race at large). Both things can coexist. What matters is *right action*, as the Buddhists put it, and that can happen anywhere.

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# Glossary

## A

### **Ableism**

Discrimination in favor of able-bodied people

### **Accessibility**

The quality of being easily reached, entered, or used by people who have a disability

### **Activist**

A person who campaigns to bring about political or social change

### **Analogue**

Not involving or relating to the use of computer technology, as a contrast to a digital counterpart

### **Anglocentric**

A worldview centred on or considered from an English or Anglo-American perspective

### **Appropriation**

The action of taking something for one's own use, without the owner's permission

### **Archetype**

A very typical example of a certain person or thing. A prototypical model of beliefs and behaviours that others may emulate.

### **Attention Economy**

Attention economics is an approach to the management of information that treats human attention as a scarce commodity. Particularly relevant in the internet age

## B

### **B Corporation**

Certified businesses that meet the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability to balance profit and purpose

### **Bias**

Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another unfairly

# C

## **Capitalism**

An economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state

## **Carbon Offset**

A reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases made in order to compensate for or to offset an emission made elsewhere

## **Clickbait**

Online, hyperbolic or misleading content whose main purpose is to attract attention and encourage visitors to click on a link to a particular web page

## **Co-Creation/Co-Design**

Participants (putative, potential or future) are invited to cooperate with designers, researchers and developers during an innovation process

## **Co-operative**

A business, or organization that is owned and run jointly by its members, who share the profits or benefits

## **Colonialism**

The practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, exploiting it economically

## **Consumerism**

The preoccupation of society with the acquisition of consumer goods

## **Copyright**

Exclusive and assignable legal right, given to the originator for a fixed number of years, to print, publish, perform, film, or record literary, artistic, designed, or musical material.

## **Creative Commons**

One of several public copyright licenses that enable the free distribution of an otherwise copyrighted work

**Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

A business model that supports companies to be socially responsible to itself, stakeholders and to the public

**Crowdsourcing**

The practice of obtaining information or input into a project by enlisting the services of a large number of people, either paid or unpaid, typically via the Internet

**D**

**Dark Patterns**

In user interface design.

A design that intentionally tricks users into carrying out a task they might otherwise not do. Examples can include unknowingly signing up for recurring payments or including expensive add-ons to a purchase

**Decolonization**

The process of a state withdrawing from a colony, leaving it independent.

Formerly considered a formalized process of handing over government control, it is now recognized as a long-term process involving bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power

**Democratize**

Make (something) accessible to everyone

**Dissent**

The expression or holding of opinions at variance with those previously, commonly, or officially held. Often in the context of activism

**E**

**Echo Chamber**

Describes a situation where ideas or beliefs are reinforced through the repetition of a closed system that does not allow for the free movement of alternative or competing ideas or concepts

**Eco-Efficiency**

Goods and services are eco-efficient when they satisfy human needs and improve quality of life, while progressively reducing resource intensity and mitigating negative ecological impact

**Ecosystem**

A biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment. Also a complex network or interconnected system

**Elitism**

The advocacy or existence of an elite as a dominating element in a system or society. The attitude or behavior of a person or group who regard themselves as belonging to an elite

**Equity**

The quality of being fair and impartial. Supporting based on individual need rather than that treating everyone identically

**Ethics**

Moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity

**Eurocentric**

Focusing on European culture or history to the exclusion of a wider view of the world; implicitly regarding European culture as preeminent

**F****Fair Trade**

The practice of directly benefiting producers in the developing world by buying straight from them at a guaranteed price

**Fake News**

Refers to fabricated news. Found in traditional news, social media or fake news websites, has no basis in fact, but is presented as being factually accurate.

**First Things First Manifesto**

Reacting against an affluent Britain of the 1960s, this

famous manifesto rallied against consumerist culture tried to re-radicalise a design industry which the signatories felt had become lazy, uncritical and dedicated to working for the advertising industry

### **Font Licensing**

End User License Agreement (EULA) that defines what usage of a font is legally allowed. It is important to read the EULA and understand its restrictions. For example, some licenses may allow a font to be used on a single computer, some may stipulate that the font is for web-use only and some may allow any use in perpetuity

## **G**

### **Gender Equity**

Provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women, non-binary identities, and men

### **Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)**

Any organism whose genetic material has been altered using genetic engineering techniques. There is debate about the long-term effects to human bodies and the planet from the creation and consumption of GMOs

### **Grants**

A sum of money given by an organization, especially a government, for a particular purpose

### **Green Hosting**

Web hosts that actively work to carry out eco-friendly initiatives that mitigate the impact on the environment that results from the high energy use and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) output of the data centres they use. Hosts typically mitigate their impact through the use of renewable energy or carbon offsets

### **Greenhouse Gasses**

Any of various gaseous compounds (such as carbon dioxide or methane) that

absorb infrared radiation, trap heat in the atmosphere, and contribute to the Greenhouse Effect. The main greenhouse gases in our atmosphere are carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and ozone. Scientific evidence indicates that these gasses have potentially dangerous impacts to water levels and earth temperatures

### **Greenwashing**

Intentional disinformation disseminated by an organization so as to present an environmentally responsible public image

## **H**

### **Heteropatriarchy**

The combination of male (patriarchal) and heterosexual dominance essentially describing the sex and gender bias prevalent among the elite ruling classes of nation-states

### **Hippocratic oath**

The ethical oath taken by medical professionals to “do no harm”

### **Homophobia**

Irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuals/homosexuality

### **Human Centred Design**

A design and management framework that develops solutions to problems by involving the human perspective in all steps of the problem-solving process

## **I**

### **Income Inequality**

The difference found in various measures of economic well-being among individuals in a group, groups in a population, or countries. Economic inequality sometimes refers to income inequality, wealth inequality, or the wealth gap

### **Inclusive Design**

Design that is usable by and accessible to the maximum number of people without the need for special adaptation or specialised design. Design which includes as diverse a team of stakeholders as possible

### **Indigenous Peoples**

In Canada, a collective noun for First Nations, Inuit and Metis. The original settlers of a given region, in contrast to groups that have settled, occupied or colonized the area more recently

## **L**

### **LGBTQ2+**

Also described as the queer community. An evolving acronym, LGBTQ2+ includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and two-spirit people. The + aims to include the identities for which language does not yet support or that the abbreviated acronym does not directly include

## **M**

### **Misogyny**

A hatred of or discrimination against women

### **Morality**

Principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior or the extent to which an action is right or wrong

### **Moral Philosophy**

The area of philosophy concerned with theories of ethics and the study of human conduct and values

### **Multidisciplinarity**

Combining or involving several academic disciplines or professional specializations in an approach to a topic or problem

## **N**

### **Natural Capital**

The planet's natural assets

including geology, soil, air, water and all living things which make human life possible

### **Nature's Rights Movement**

An ecocentric movement recognizing that nature (including trees, oceans, animals, etc) has rights as humans have rights. It aims to balance what is good for human beings with what is

good for other species and the planet as a whole and recognizes that all life on earth is intertwined

### **Net Neutrality**

The principle that internet service providers treat all data on the Internet equally, and not discriminate or charge differently by user, content, website, platform, application, type of attached equipment, or method of communication

### **Neuronormativity**

Opposite of neurodivergent. Not displaying/characterized by autistic or other

neurologically atypical patterns of thought or behavior including mental illness. Having a brain that falls within the dominant societal standards of 'normal'

### **Non-Government Organization (NGO)**

A non-profit organization that operates independently of any government. One whose purpose is to address a social or political issues

### **Non-Profit Organization (NPO)**

Organization dedicated to advancing social or environmental causes that uses the surplus of its revenues to achieve its purpose, rather than distributing income to the organization's leadership

## **O**

### **Open Source**

Denoting something for which the original source code, information or file is made freely available and

may be redistributed and modified

### **Othering**

View or treat (a person or group of people) as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself

## **P**

### **Parachute Design**

Well-intentioned but paternalistic form of design intervention that 'parachutes' in to high-need communities, especially in the developing world, without a depth of understanding necessary to effectively contribute toward resolving the problems faced by the people in those communities

### **Participatory Democracy**

Individual participation by citizens in political decisions and policies that affect their lives, especially directly rather than through elected representatives

### **Paternalism**

Paternalism is action limiting a person's or group's liberty or autonomy which is intended to promote their own good. Paternalism can also imply that the behavior is against or regardless of the will of a person, or also that the behavior expresses an attitude of superiority

### **Patriarchy/ Depatriarchisation**

A system of society in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it/  
The undoing of that system of society toward more equitable structures of power

### **Personas**

A persona is a fictional character created to represent a user type that might use a site, brand, or product in a similar way

### **Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)**

Canadian law relating to data

privacy. Governs how private sector organizations collect, use and disclose personal information in the course of commercial business.

### **Piracy**

The unauthorized use or reproduction of another's work. The creators of fonts, films, and computer programs are often victims of piracy

### **Plagiarism**

Taking someone else's work or ideas and passing off as one's own

### **Planned Obsolescence**

A policy of producing consumer goods that rapidly become obsolete and so require replacing, achieved by frequent changes in design, termination of the supply of spare parts, and the use of non-durable materials

### **Post-Truth**

Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to

emotion and personal belief. 2016 Oxford Dictionary Word of the year

### **Prejudice**

Prejudice, or bigotry, is an affective feeling towards a person or group member based solely on that person's group membership

### **Privilege**

A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people

### **Pro Bono**

Denoting work undertaken without charge, especially work for a client with a low income or a non-profit entity

### **Proprietary Eponym**

A ubiquitous brand name or trademark that is used to refer to its generic class of objects. Kleenex is a popular example

**Protest**

A statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something

**Q**

**Quadruple Bottom Line**

Aims to balance monetary profit with environmental, spiritual and social benefit. The term was first coined and introduced into mainstream usage by Ayman Sawaf in a bid to factor in the return to one's spiritual self as an additional, fourth bottom line

**R**

**Racism**

Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior

**Reconciliation**

The restoration of friendly relations. The Government of Canada is working to advance reconciliation with indigenous populations

based on rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership

**Reflexive Consumption**

The repeated use of a resource or product performed as a reflex, without conscious thought

**Regenerative Design**

A process-oriented systems theory based approach to design. It describes processes that restore, renew or revitalize their own sources of energy and materials, creating sustainable systems that integrate the needs of society with the integrity of nature

**Renewable Energy**

Energy from a source that is not depleted when used, such as wind or solar power

**S**

**Single-Use**

Made to be used once only. Often used to describe single-use plastic

packaging and the value of opting for environmentally friendly products instead

### **Social Enterprise**

A social enterprise is an organization that applies commercial strategies to maximize improvements in financial, social and environmental well-being. This may include maximizing social impact alongside profits for external shareholders

### **Social Impact**

The effect of an activity on the social fabric of the community and well-being of the individuals and families

### **Social Innovation**

The process of developing and deploying effective interventions to address systemic social and environmental issues in support of sustainable progress.

### **Spec/Speculative Work**

Any job for which the client expects to see creative work

or a designed product before agreeing to pay a fee

### **Status Quo**

The existing state of affairs, especially regarding social or political issues

### **Stigmatization**

If someone or something is stigmatized, they are unfairly regarded by many people as being bad or having something to be ashamed of

### **Sustainability**

Meeting the needs of human beings and nature in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Considers sustainability of natural resources as well as social equity and economic development

### **Systemic Problems**

A systemic problem is a problem due to issues inherent in the overall system, rather than due to a specific, individual, isolated factor

## T

### **Transition Town**

Transition initiatives and transition models refer to the grassroots community projects that aim to increase self-sufficiency to reduce the potential effects of peak oil, climate destruction, and economic instability

### **Transphobia**

Intense dislike of or prejudice against transsexual or transgender people

### **Triple Bottom Line**

A triple bottom line broadens an organization's focus on financial return to include social and environmental considerations. It measures a company's social responsibility, economic value and environmental impact. The term was coined in 1994 by John Elkington

## U

### **United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

The UN SDGs are a plan for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. They recognize the relationality between ending poverty and other deprivations like health and education with addressing climate change and environmental preservation

### **Unique Selling Proposition (USP)**

A marketing concept first proposed as a theory to explain a pattern in successful advertising campaigns of the early 1940s. The USP states that such campaigns made unique propositions to customers that convinced them to switch brands

**Universal Design**

The design of products, services, and environments to enable accessibility, comprehension, to be used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of age, size, ability or disability

**Usability**

Connected to the term "user experience" it is the ease of access or ease of use of a digital product or service. The level of usability is determined by how readily a user may realize their intention in an experience

**V****Virtue**

Behavior showing high moral standards

**W****Wicked Problems**

Complex problems with solutions that are difficult or impossible to realize due to contradictory or changing requirements such as climate change and public policy like health care and education. "Wicked" denotes a resistance to solutions and complexity of interdependencies that make solutions extremely challenging without innovative approaches like design thinking



# Resources

## Codes of Ethics

### **Academy of Design Professionals | Code of Professional Conduct**

[designproacademy.org/code-of-professional-conduct.html](https://designproacademy.org/code-of-professional-conduct.html)

### **The Canadian Code of Advertising Standards**

[adstandards.com/en/standards/cancodeofadstandards.aspx](https://adstandards.com/en/standards/cancodeofadstandards.aspx)

### **AGDA | Australian Graphic Design Association Code of Ethics**

[agda.com.au/about/code-of-ethics](https://agda.com.au/about/code-of-ethics)

### **The Canadian Creative Industries | Code of Conduct to Prevent and Respond to Harassment, Discrimination, Bullying and Violence**

[readthecode.ca/](https://readthecode.ca/)

### **Chartered Society of Designers | Code of Conduct**

[csd.org.uk/about/code-of-conduct](https://csd.org.uk/about/code-of-conduct)

### **Canadian Marketing Association | Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice**

[the-cma.org/regulatory/code-of-ethics](https://the-cma.org/regulatory/code-of-ethics)

### **Graphic Designers of Canada | Code of Ethics**

[gdc.design/ethics/code](https://gdc.design/ethics/code)

### **International Council of Design | Best Practice**

[ico-d.org/resources/best-practices](https://ico-d.org/resources/best-practices)

### **RGD Rules of Professional Conduct**

[rgd.ca/ethics](https://rgd.ca/ethics)

## **Design Manifestos**

### **100 Years of Design Manifesto**

[backspace.com/notes/2009/07/design-manifestos.php](https://backspace.com/notes/2009/07/design-manifestos.php)

### **First Things First 1964 Manifesto**

[designishistory.com/1960/first-things-first](https://designishistory.com/1960/first-things-first)

### **First Things First 2000 Manifesto**

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[designintech.report](http://designintech.report)

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[depatriarchisedesign.com](http://depatriarchisedesign.com)

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<https://colloqate.org/design-justice-summit>

**Design Justice Network**

<http://designjusticenetwork.org>

**GDC | Accessibility Design**

[gdc.design/accessibility-design](http://gdc.design/accessibility-design)

**RGD | Accessibility Resources RGD**

[rgd.ca/resources/accessibility/access](http://rgd.ca/resources/accessibility/access)

**Let's Make the Industry 50/50 Initiative**

[5050initiative.org](http://5050initiative.org)

**TIME'S UP™/ADVERTISING**

[timesupadvertising.com](http://timesupadvertising.com)

**So(cial) Good Design Awards**

[rgd.ca/programs/sogood-awards](http://rgd.ca/programs/sogood-awards)

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[advocatedesign.co.uk](http://advocatedesign.co.uk)

**And Also Too**

[andalsotoo.net](http://andalsotoo.net)

**Barnbrook**

[barnbrook.net](http://barnbrook.net)

**Civilization**

[builtbycivilization.com](http://builtbycivilization.com)

**Co: Lab**

[colabinc.com](http://colabinc.com)

**Firebelly**

firebellydesign.com

**HyperAkt**

hyperakt.com

**Inkahoots**

inkahoots.com.au

**Intent**

forgoodintent.com

**Justin Kemerling Design Co**

justinkemerling.com

**Loop**

weareloop.ca

**Manifest**

manifestcom.com

**Memefest**

memefest.org

**Minute Works**

minuteworks.co.uk

**Nice and Serious**

niceandserious.com

**Ohyescoolgreat**

ohyescoolgreat.com

**Partner & Partners**

partnerandpartners.com

**Rally Rally**

rallyrally.design

**ThePublic**

thepublicstudio.ca

**The Work Department**

theworkdept.com

**Public Inc.**

publicinc.com

**Sadie Redwing**

sadieredwing.com

**Thomas.Matthews**

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**Verynice**

verynice.co

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Fig 1.0  
Certificate of Completion:  
Panel on Research Ethics

# Appendix B/ Industry Literature Review

Popular Publishing in Design Ethics												
	Berman - Do Good Design: How designers can change the world (2008)	Fry - Design Futuring: Sustainability, Ethics and New Practice (2008)	Heller & Vienne - Citizen Designer: Perspectives on Design Responsibility (2003/18)	Graphic Artists Guild: Graphic Artists Handbook of Pricing and Ethical Guidelines (2007/18)	Kane, MacAvery - Ethics A Graphic Designer's Field Guide (2010)	Papanek, V. & Fuller, R. B. (1972), Design for the real world, London: Thames and Hudson.	Riesnick - Developing Citizen Designers (2016)	Roberts - Good: An Introduction to Ethics in Graphic Design (2006)	Scalin - The Design Activist's Handbook: How to Change the World (Or at Least Your Part of It) with Socially Conscious Design (2012)	Shaughnessy - How to be a graphic designer, without losing your soul (2005/10)	Simmons - Just design: socially conscious design & critical causes (2011)	
<b>Publisher</b>	New Riders in association with AIGA Design Press	Berg Publishers	Allworth Press in association with School of Visual Arts	Graphic Artists Guild Inc.	Eileen MacAvery Kane (Self published)	Academy Chicago Publishers	Bloomsbury	AVA Publishing	How Books	Princeton Architectural Press	How Books, F+W Media	
<b>Commercial Popularity &amp; Criticism</b>	Best Seller Lists / Amazon Ratings out of 5 / Goodreads Rating out of 5 / Referenced In	3.98 Goodreads 234 ratings / Amazon CAN 5, 1 review / Amazon US 3.8, 48 reviews (goodreads criticism about lack of depth)	3.48 Goodreads 21 Ratings / Amazon CAN 5, 1 review / Amazon US 3.5, 8 reviews (amazon criticism that it's too academic and not practical enough)	3.85 Goodreads 78 Ratings / Amazon CAN 5, 6 reviews / Amazon US 3.8, 2 reviews / Referenced in Resnick p 12. (Criticism goodreads about specificity to graphic design, amazon it reads like a textbook, lack of "next steps" about how to practice)	4.05 Goodreads 931 Ratings / Amazon US 4.7, 13 reviews / Amazon CAN 4.7, 15 reviews (Supports designers when declining spec work or unethical contests, Criticism that the pricing guidelines are excessively high and may not apply to all cities, approach to client relationships in the book may be "too formal")	3.33 3 ratings Goodreads / Amazon US 3.7, 11 reviews	4.25 Goodreads 788 ratings / Amazon US 4.7, 30 reviews / Amazon CAN 3.6, 10 reviews / Referenced in Shaughnessy (2010) p 99. Referenced in Resnick p 8 and 12. (Criticism goodreads: abrupt shifts in topic and sloppy thinking, confrontational tone if your worldview doesn't align it might cause defensiveness, flawed language as an indication of the times)	5.0 Goodreads 3 ratings / Amazon US 5.0, 2 reviews /	4 Goodreads 26 ratings / Amazon US 5.0, 2 reviews /	4.19 Goodreads 31 ratings / Amazon US 4.7, 5 reviews / (Criticism amazon more of a brochure, light on information for designers legitimately interested in activism or social design)	3.96 Goodreads 3822 ratings / Amazon US 4.2, 70 reviews / Amazon CAN 4.4, 8 reviews (Criticism amazon entry level, general advice and not specific to design, lacking practical don't expect philosophy)	4.17 Goodreads 29 ratings / Amazon US 4.6, 6 reviews /
<b>Average Rating</b>	Average rating across sites	3.97	3.54	3.5	4.15	3.62	4.26	5.0	4.07	4.26	3.97	4.24
<b>Genre or Subject Categories</b>	Market Segments/ Subject Categories/ BISAC (book industry standards and communication)	Marketing	Design / Architecture / Environment	Design— Philosophy / Design—Social Aspects / Design—History—20th Century / Designers— Interviews	Business of Design, Illustration, Graphic Arts	Graphic Design Ethics	Design, Industrial/ Human Engineering	Design / Design— Social Aspects / Design—Case Studies	Design Theory	Design Activism	Graphic arts— Vocational Guidance / Commercial art— vocational guidance	Social Design
<b>Audience</b>	Target, Level	Beginner/ Communicative Student Marketing, Design (Communication)	Designer, Design Educator, Student (transdisciplinary, case studies focus on urban design and architecture)	Graphic/ Communication Designers	Graphic and interactive designers, illustrators, animators, web programmers and developers.	Beginner/ Intermediate Graphic Design Industry / Students	Industrial Design, Designers, Students (Transdisciplinary)	Design Education, Design Students	Graphic Design / Students	Early Career Graphic Designers / students	Social Design / Students	
<b>Physical</b>	Format / Printing / Page Count	5.5"x8", 180 pp	6.125"x7.5" 278 pp	6"x0" 260 pp		8.5"x5.5" 56 pp	8.5x5.5" 394pp	9.75"x9.5" 312pp		7.5"x8" 176 pp	10"x8" 202pp	
<b>Design (General) and Tone of Voice</b>	Text / Images	Tone: Animated, Impassioned, Casual, light-hearted, Playful at times. Fonts: Meta Serif, Meta Plus and DIN Pro	Tone: Authoritative, Academic, Complex / Fonts: Main argument of the book in serif face, methodological suggestions italicized, case studies in sans serif. All sans serif Gil Sans with Times	Tone: Critical, Authoritative, Humorous at times, Thoughtful, Philosophical	Tone: Instructional, Authoritative, Formal, Objective	Objective, Restrained	Tone: Provocative, polemical, Assertive, Persuasive, Subjective, Accusatory, Contemptuous toward the consumer market	Tone: Encouraging, Inspirational	Tone: Instructional, Philosophical	Tone: Encouraging, Inspirational	Tone: Encouraging, Philosophical at times,	Tone: Encouraging, Inspirational, self-congratulatory Design: Glossy, full colour, large, special printing, predominantly image based
<b>Content</b>	Editorial Structure (short articles, long-running text, expert interviews etc)	A series of short essays accompanied by visual examples. Supported by short pullouts that features 3-5 sentence cases of design doing good. Appendix of tips, historical examples and codes of ethics	Theories and concepts in long-running text, supported by methods for implementation and case studies	Divided into four sections: "Social Responsibility," "Professional Responsibility," "Artistic Responsibility," and "Rants and Raves."	Short, instructional sections in bite-sized chunks of information with bulleted lists - designed for maximum ease of use and referencing	Divided into 3 sections: legalities, integrity, morality, each covers a series of topics with short, bite sized chunks of instructional information, 2x case studies per section, pull quotes from practicing designers, questions for further discussion and a list of further resources	Long Running text - divided into two sections - How it is and How it could be	Divided into 3 parts: Design Thinking / Design Methodology / Making a Difference 42 Assignment based case studies by design educators, Q&A Interview and Introductory essay per section (6) "designed to be read as well as looked at. If you are a designer it is offered as an inspirational nudge, the gentle force of which hope is sufficient to alter, however slightly, the creative trajectory...3		Guidance and resource book - Short sections of practical advice and philosophical guidance touching on professional skills, the creative process, and "global trends like social responsibility, ethics, and the rise of digital culture" Includes 8 in depth interviews and strategies for setting up, running, and promoting a studio; finding work; and collaborating with clients.	90% glossy full colour case studies interspersed with short essays and interviews by a variety of different designers discussing their work in social design	
<b>Core Topics (TOC)</b>	How is the TOC organized	The Brief: Disarming Weapons of Mass Deception: start now / beyond green: a convenient lie / pop landscape / the weapons visual lies and manufactured needs / where the truth lies a slippery slope / wine women and water / losing our senses. Design Solution: Convenient Truths_ why our time is the perfect time /	Rethinking the Context and Practice of Design: Understanding the nature of practice / understanding the directional nature of design / the imperative and redirection / design as a redemptive practice / reviewing two key redemptive practices / futuring, redemptive practice, development and	Good citizenship / socially responsible advertising / ethical design education / beyond pro bono / timing is everything / healing with design / expelling school violence / brand name dropper / not for profit / reporters without borders / the cultural influence of brands / mental whiplash/ reality branding/ think	Professional Relationships / Legal Rights and Issues / Professional Issues / Technology Issues / Essential Business Practices / Salaries and Trade Customs / Graphic Design Illustration Prices / Cartooning Prices / Animation Prices / Surface Design Prices / Contracts	Legalities: Copyright, Font licensing, piracy, image usage, Plagiarism and Appropriation / Integrity, Responsibility to client, Work on spec, crowdsourcing, Gronymim, Kickbacks, Professionalism and certification, /	How it is: What is design / phylagenocide/The myth of the noble slob/ do it yourself murder / our kleenex culture / snake oil and thalidomide How it could be: Revel with a cause / the tree of knowledge / design responsibility / environmental design / The neon blackboard / Design	Part 1 Design thinking 1. Socially Responsible Design: anatomy of the socially responsible designer / omni vulpinar interview / case studies 2. Design Activism: When design activism is and is not a primer for students / Harry Pearce interview / Case studies 3. Design Authorship:	Section 1: Making good - history of visual art and its use for persuasion, education and control art and craft to design draws from egypt to renaissance Italy and first things first. / Section 2: Theoretical section: interviews consider ethics in relation to philosophy, law.	Introduction / Foreword / Intro to original edition (05) / Attributes needed by the modern designer / Professional skills / how to find a job / Freelance or setting up a studio / Finding new work and self-promotion / Clients / What is graphic design today / The creative process / Interviews	Beginning, Supporting, Seeking, Organizing, Teaching, Reacting, Celebrating, Proceeding	

Fig 2.0 Literature Review Matrix: popular publishing in design ethics data capture

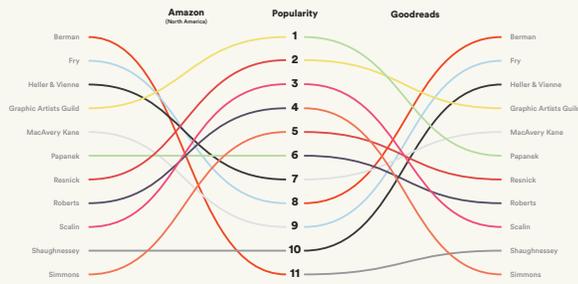
# Appendix C/ Literature Review Visualization & Analysis

## Popular publishing in design ethics

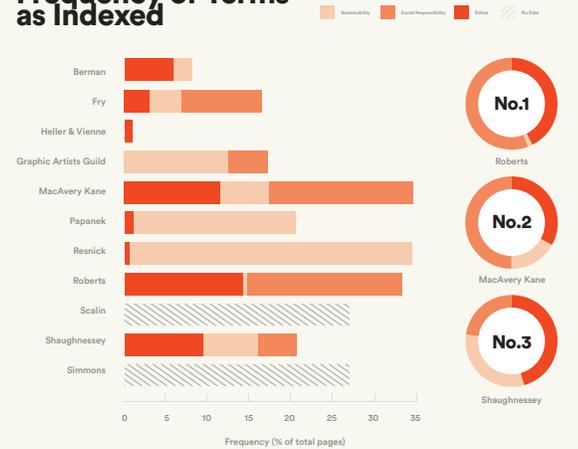
Analysis of Top Publications Addressing Design Ethics

March 28, 2018  
Kelly S Small  
GSMID 510 | Studio

### Popularity Ranking\*



### Frequency of Terms as Indexed



### Core Principles Per Publication



### Core Areas of Ethical Design



Figs 3.0

Popular publishing in design ethics data visualization and analysis

# Popular publishing in design ethics

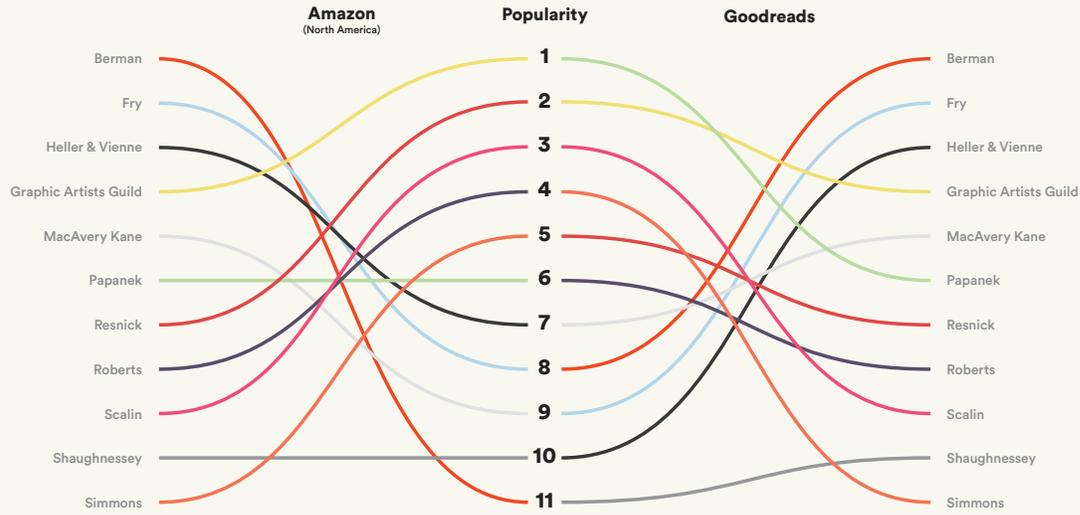
Analysis of Top Publications Addressing Design Ethics

March 28, 2018  
Kelly S Small  
GSMD 510 | Studio

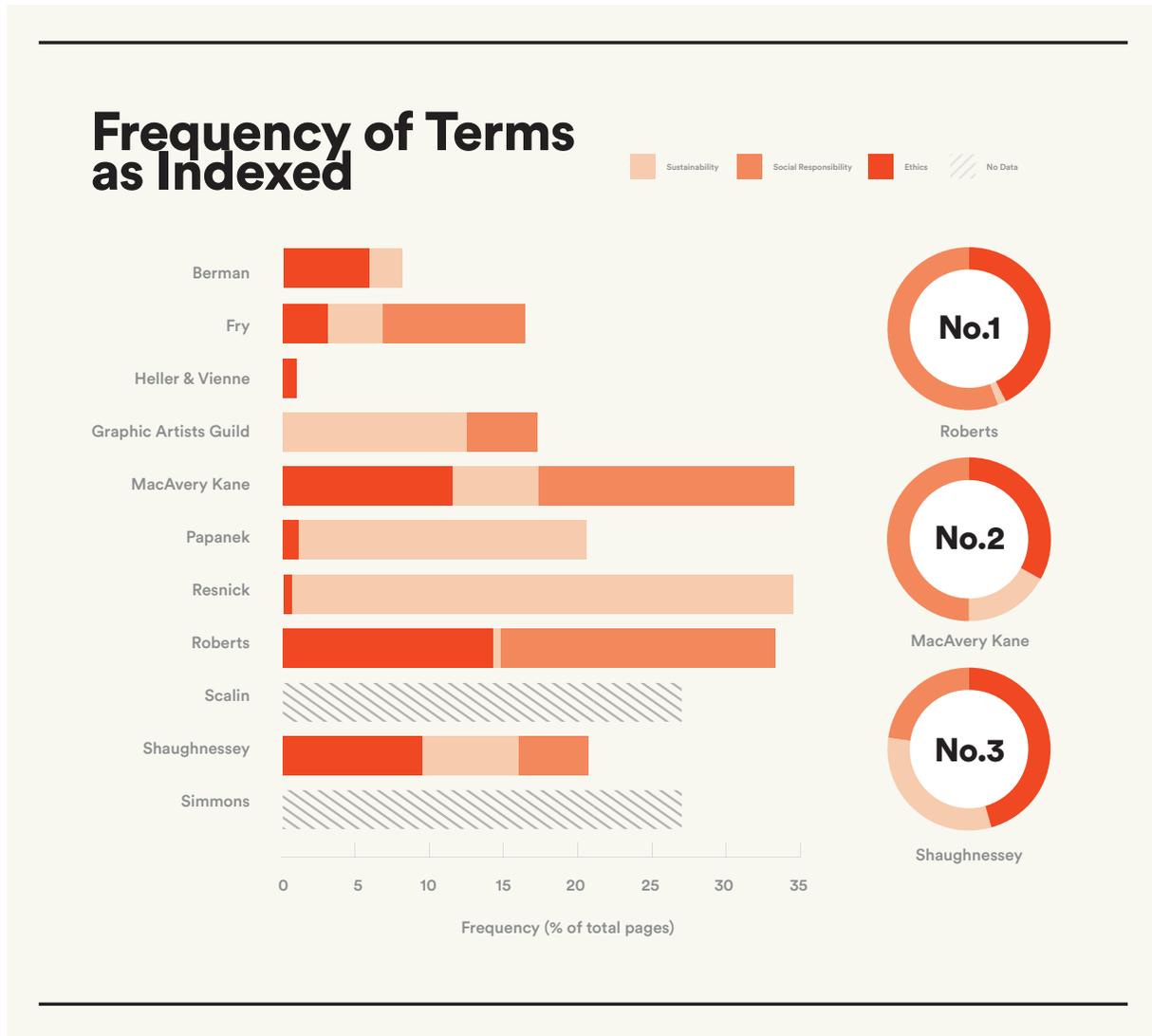
## Popularity Ranking\*



Goodreads / Amazon  
\*Using Goodreads and Amazon popularity ratings from user ratings on Goodreads.com and Amazon US and Canada. Data adjusted for accuracy based on number of reviews per rating.



Figs 3.1  
Visualization detail: popular publishing popularity ranking



Figs 3.2  
Visualization detail: frequency of terms as indexed

# Core Principles Per Publication



## Berman: Do 10% good work.

Suggests designers pledge to spend at least "10 percent of professional time helping repair the world" and offers GDC and AIGA codes of ethical practice as guidance.



## Fry: Design for life not commerce.

Argues for a separation of design from the hegemonic market economic system that has at its central focus the production of wealth rather than the production of quality of life.



## Heller + Vienne: responsibility to self and society.

A series of essays that offer insight into how individual designers approach accountability and moral code in practice. Acknowledges the subjectivity in the topic of ethics and reinforces that ethical work is a personal choice.



## Graphic Arts Guild: follow the code.

The creative practitioner must adhere to the code of fair practice and bring ethical issues to the grievance committee of the Graphic Arts Guild.



## Kane: legalities, integrity + morality.

A field guide that provides high level information relating to nearly all potential ethical issues a graphic designer may face. Separated into the above 3 categories, this book takes no ethical stance but instead provides objective information.



## Papanek: design for need not want.

In order to practice ethically, the designer must only create for true human needs—clean air, shelter, etc—and not fabricated wants from the marketing and advertising industries (for which he has a great deal of contempt)



## Resnick: design for social causes.

The designer must consider their social responsibility and, ideally, work for people, animals, and the environments—those who do not have access to design tools, or strategic design-thinking methods.



## Roberts: learn from moral philosophy.

One of only 2 books exclusively dedicated to ethics in design. It is a comprehensive collection of tools for understanding and managing all ethical issues in design and, as well, understanding the underlying moral philosophy.



## Scalin: subvert from within the industry.

Designers can learn to become activists who actively subvert from within their industries to enact positive change toward a more socially and environmentally just society.



## Shaughnessey: ethics are core to business.

Everything a young professional needs to know about entering the industry with an eye on social and environmental responsibility. Suggests that a strong set of ethics are as core to practice for the emerging design professional as concept development and strong visual communication skills.

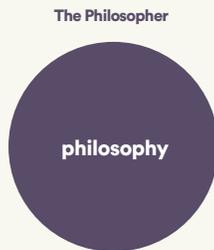


## Simmons: simply do something.

Title is used as a mantra: no matter how small the idea or the cause—just do something, make something. Just design. (Predominantly design for existing good causes and toward some sort of social good. no matter how imperfect)

Figs 3.3  
Visualization detail: core principles per publication

# Core Areas of Ethical Design



- Roberts
- Design ethics and moral philosophy theory
- Asks "what is the good?" (Meta ethics)
- Ulm school and habermas
- Malaise of Modernity
- Academic



- Fry
- Papanek
- Environmental Ethics (land ethic, silent spring)
- Ecocentrism/anthropocentrism
- Sustainable design practices
- Walker
- Often contemptuous toward capitalism



- Pro bono work
- NFP/NGO/Public sector
- Resnick
- Citizen designer
- Just design
- Manzini
- Design for public good
- Avoidant of commercial work



- Graphic arts guild code
- Kane
- AIGA, GDC, RGD Code adherence
- Adherence down to every font purchase
- Commercial industry or non
- Reports issues to grievance committees



- First things first
- Designer for cause
- Scalin
- Design activism
- Contempt for capitalism
- Designer for the underdog or underrepresented



- Works in the commercial industry for big brands
- Quiet/everyday activism
- Does their 'best' to do good within market constraints
- Commits a percentage of time to do 'good' work
- Shaughnessy
- Berman
- Maximum earning potential



- Design for social innovation toward sustainability
- Academic
- Public-good focused
- Everyone is a designer
- Expert designer as facilitator
- Avoidant of commercial industry

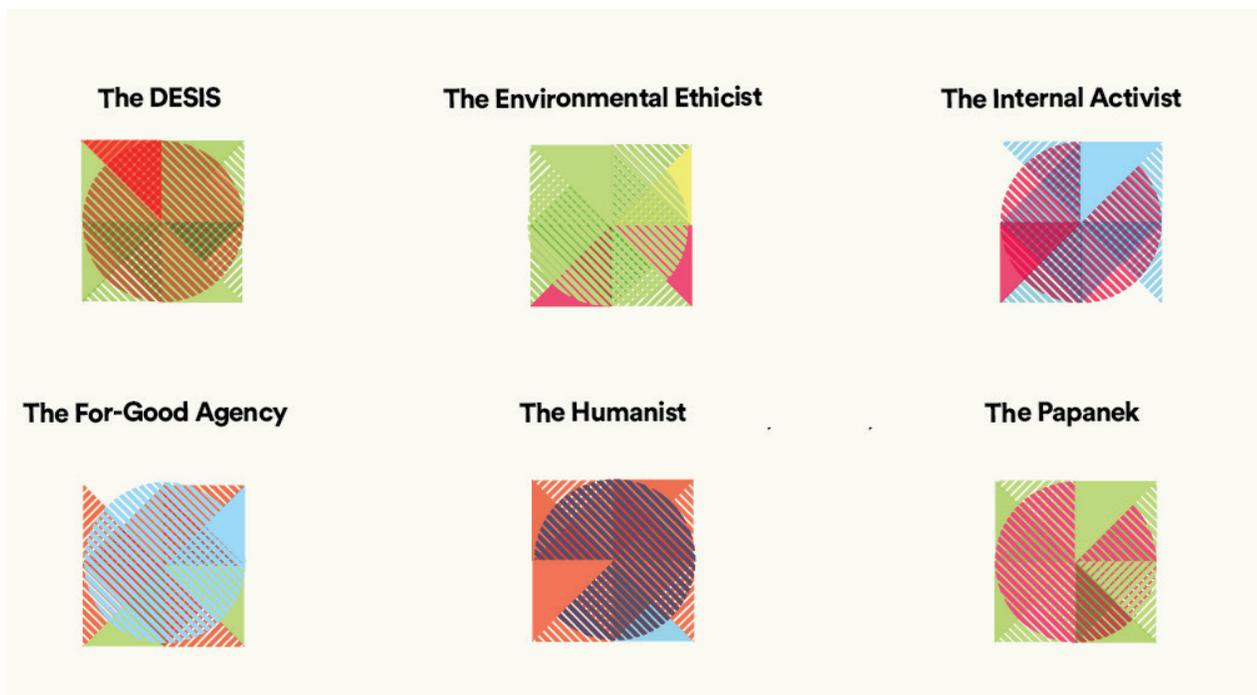
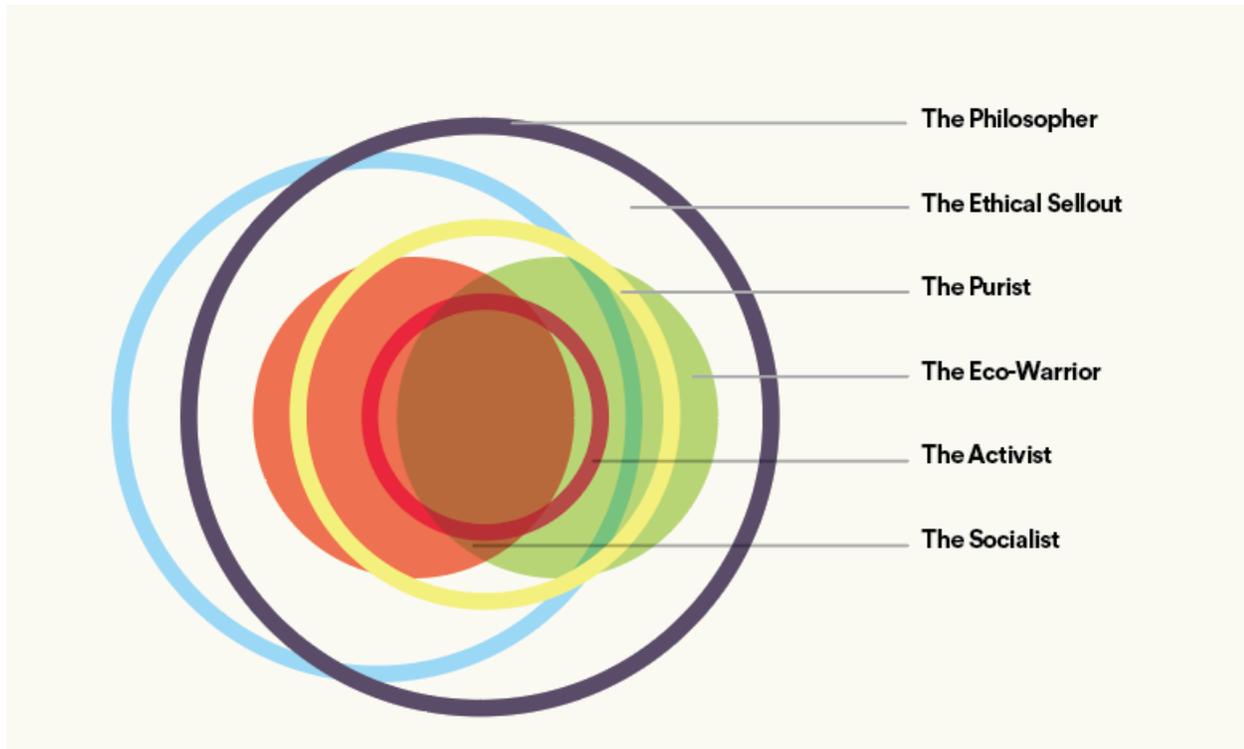


- Charges a reduced rate for work
- Clients include NFP, NGO, Public institutions
- Highly engaged in the community
- Will decline work for clients who don't fit philosophy

Figs 3.4

Visualization detail: core areas of ethical design

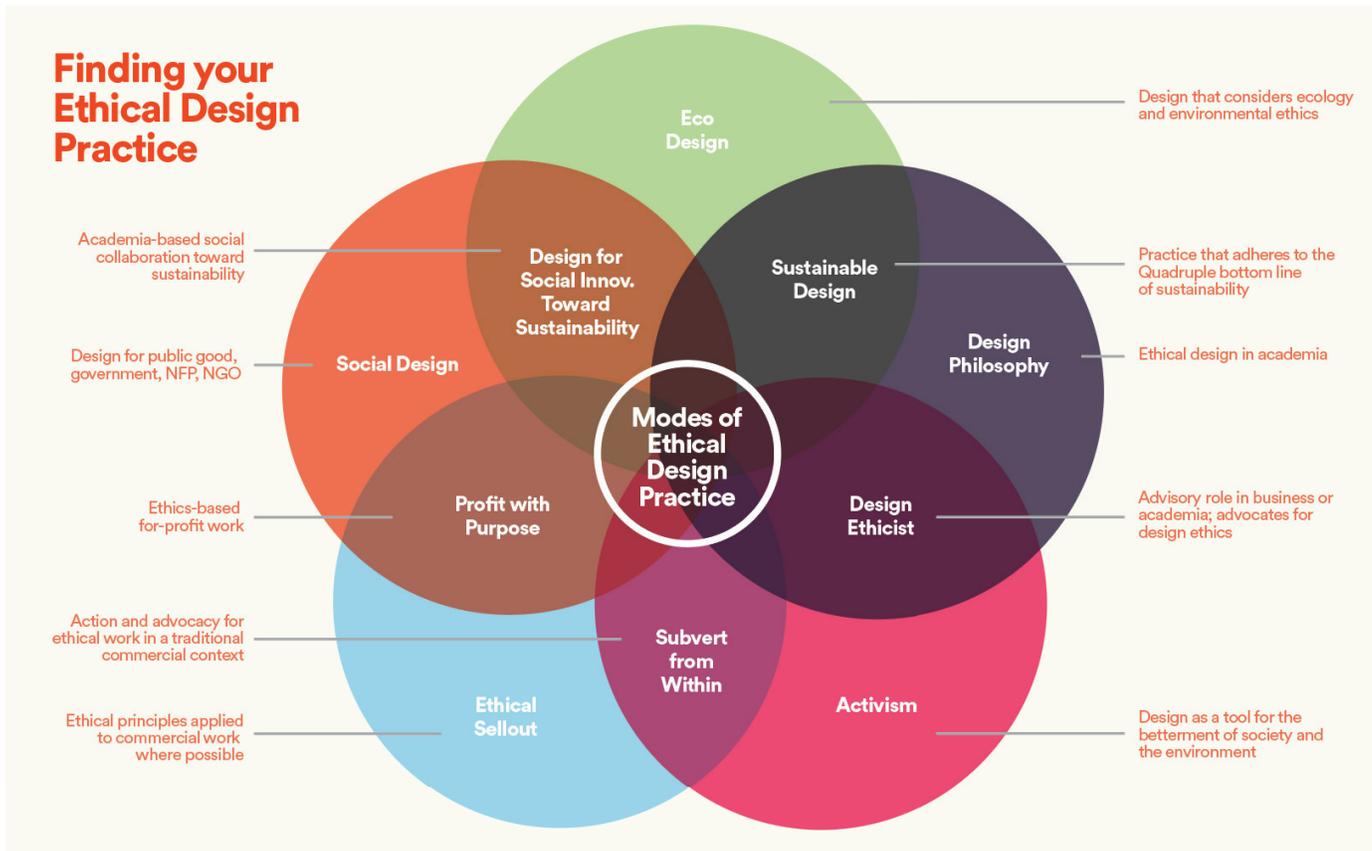
# Appendix D/ Visual Language Exploration



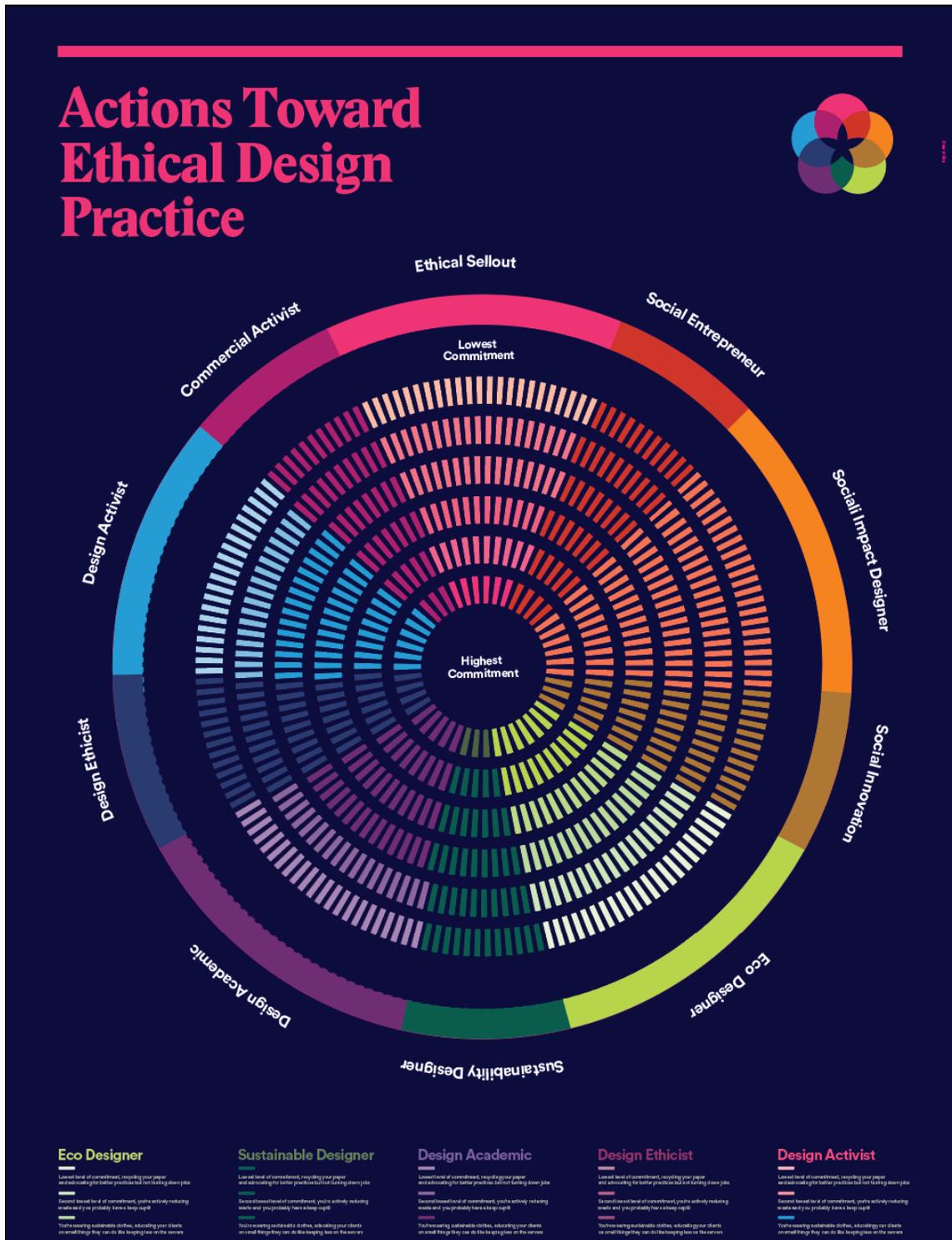
Figs 4.0  
Archetype visualization trial: universe of archetypes

Figs 4.1  
Archetype visualization trial: geometric overlays and secondary archetypes

## Appendix D/ Visual Language Exploration



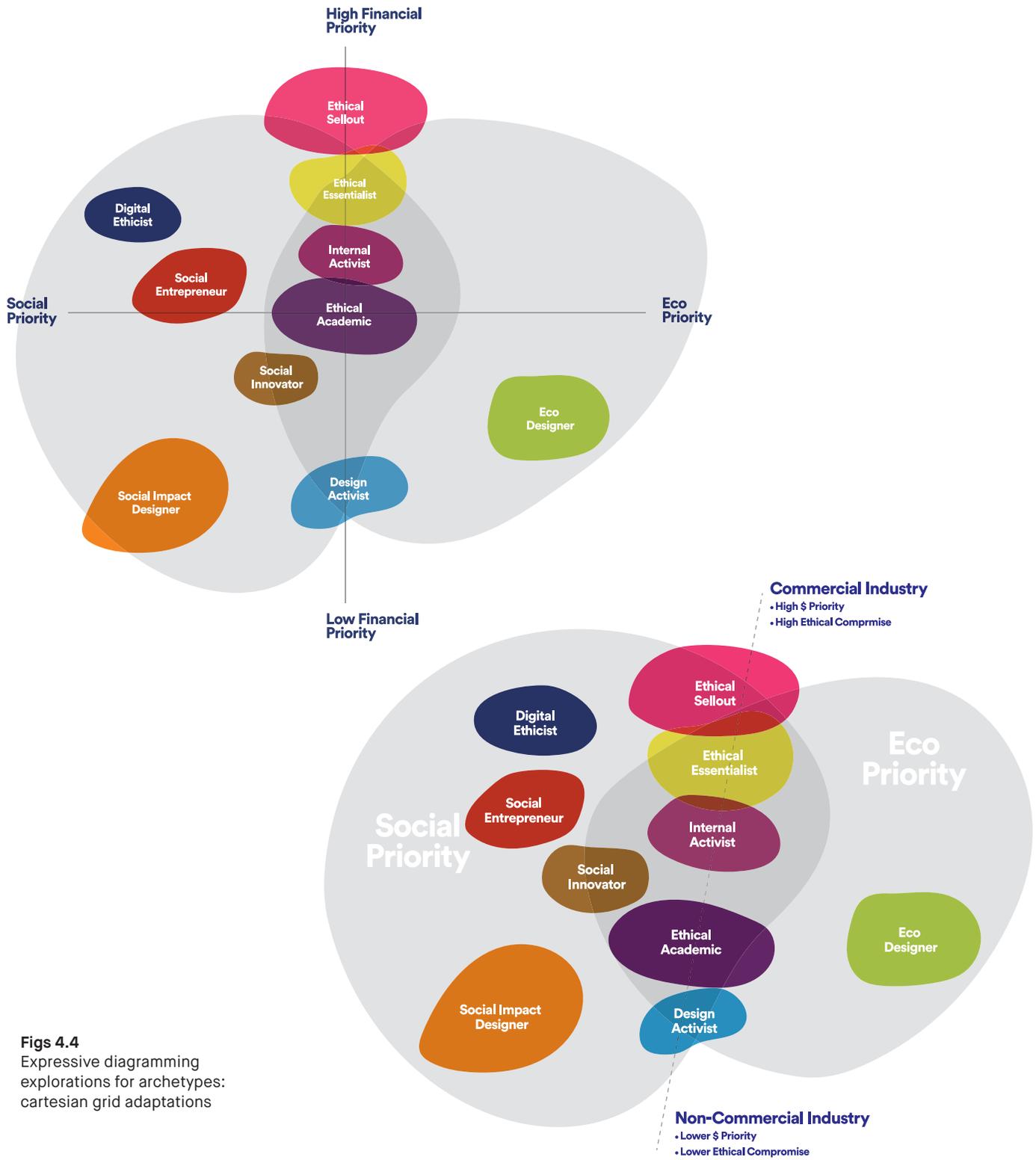
**Fig 4.2**  
*Ikigai* inspired development of the ecosystem of core and secondary ethical design practices



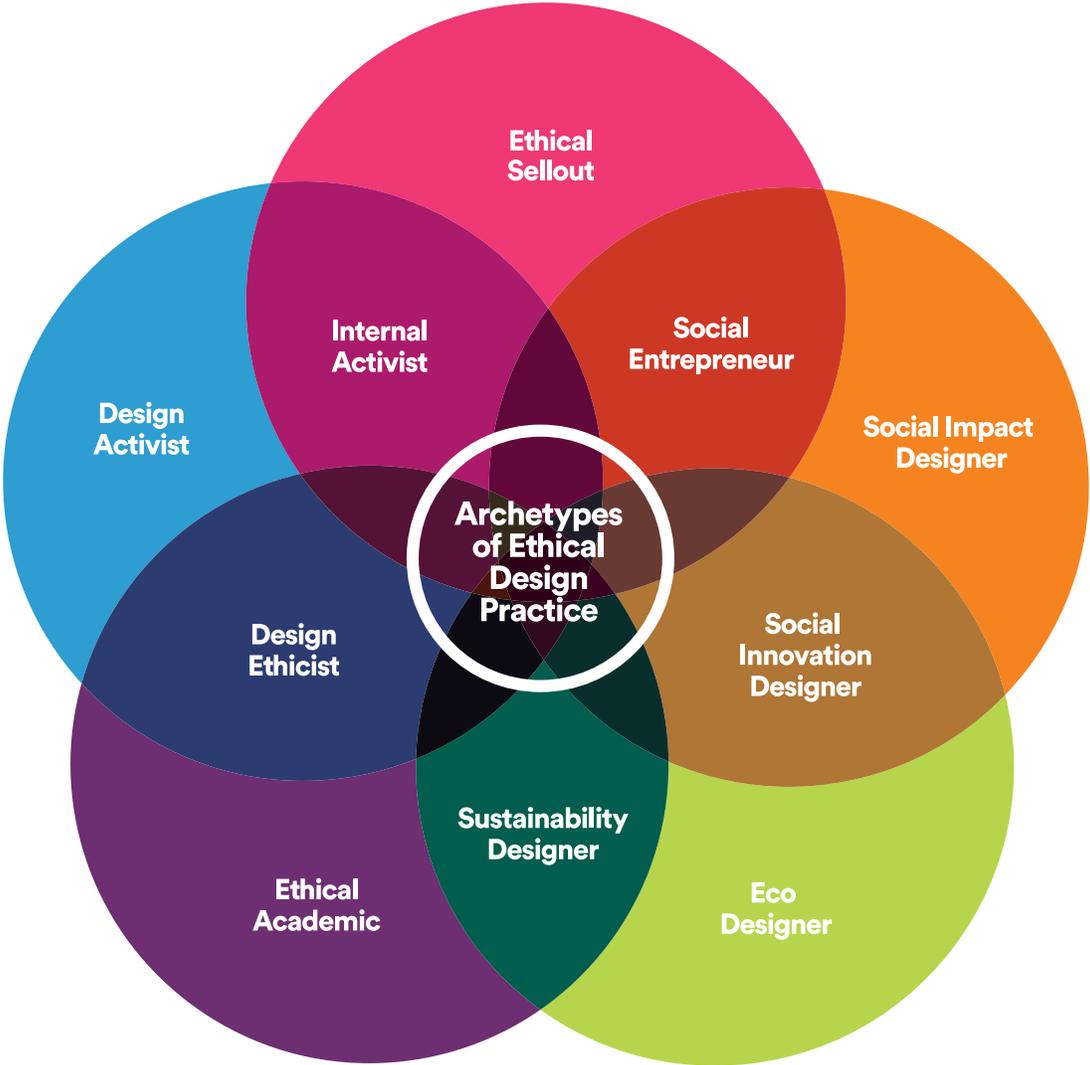
Figs 4.3

Partial poster concept featuring archetypes and top actions

# Appendix D/ Visual Language Exploration

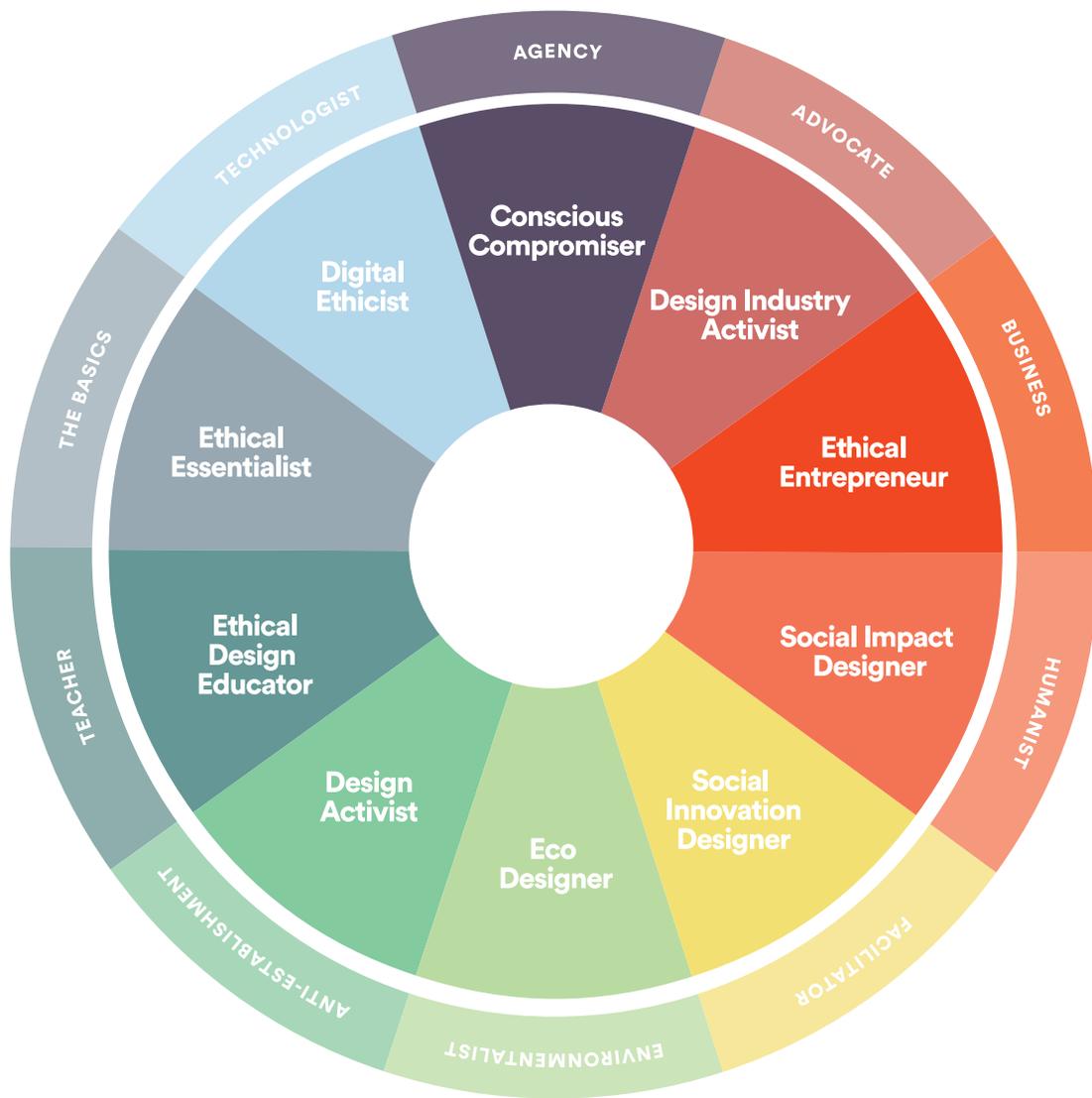


**Figs 4.4**  
Expressive diagramming explorations for archetypes: cartesian grid adaptations



**Fig 4.5**  
Working model of the ecosystem of ethical design archetypes for use in research analysis

## Appendix D/ Visual Language Exploration



**Fig 4.6**  
Finalized visualization of ecosystem of ethical design archetypes for use in book

# Appendix E/ Affinity Diagramming & Data Analysis

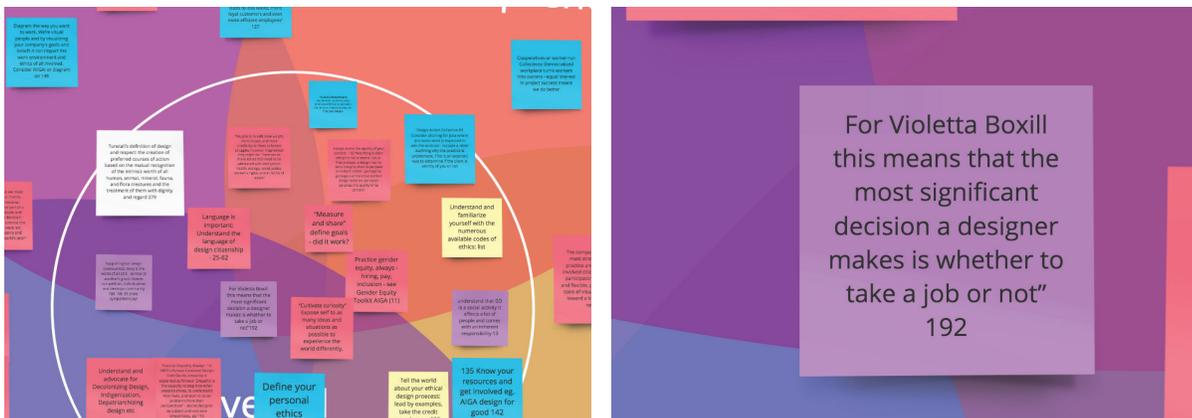
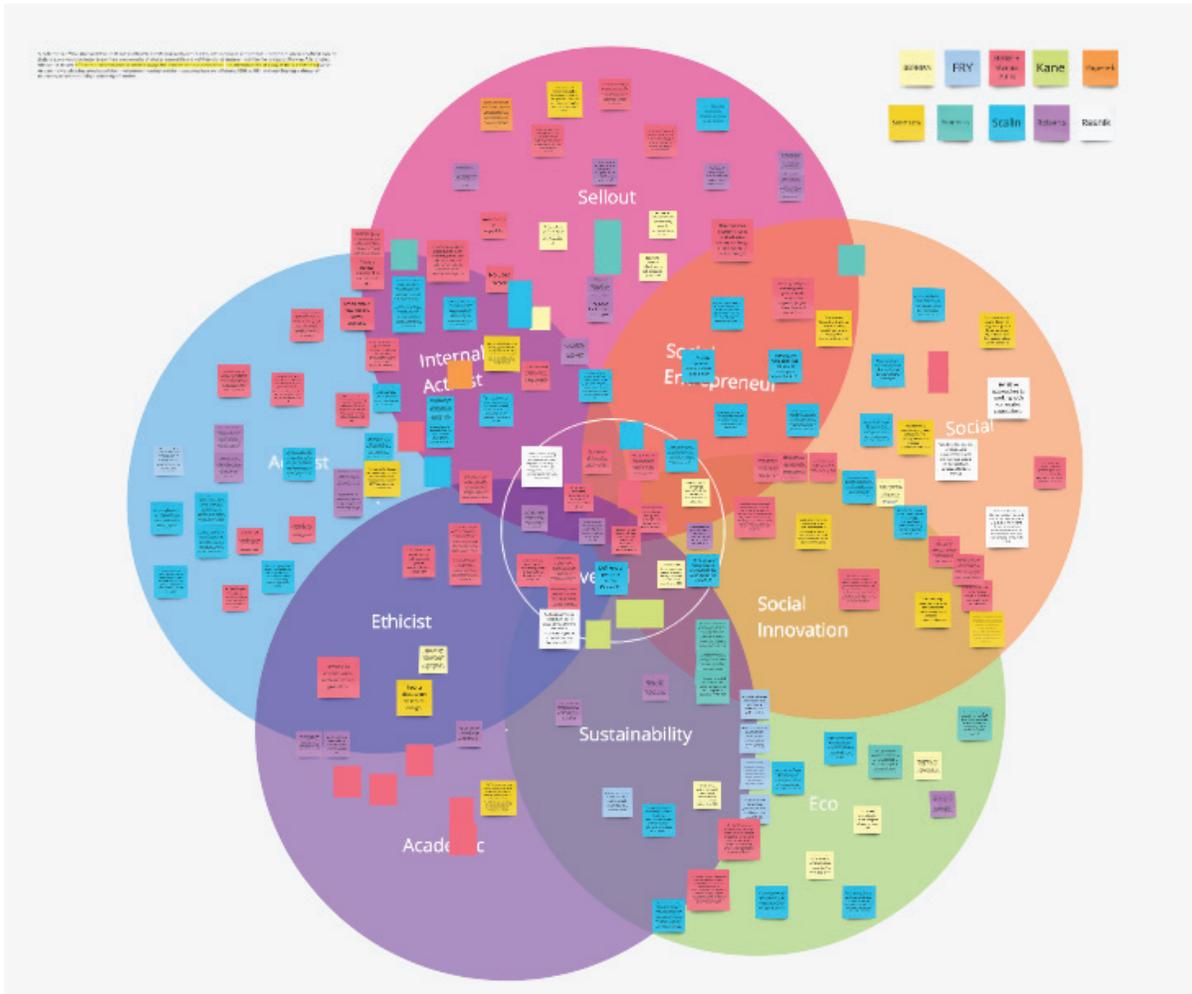
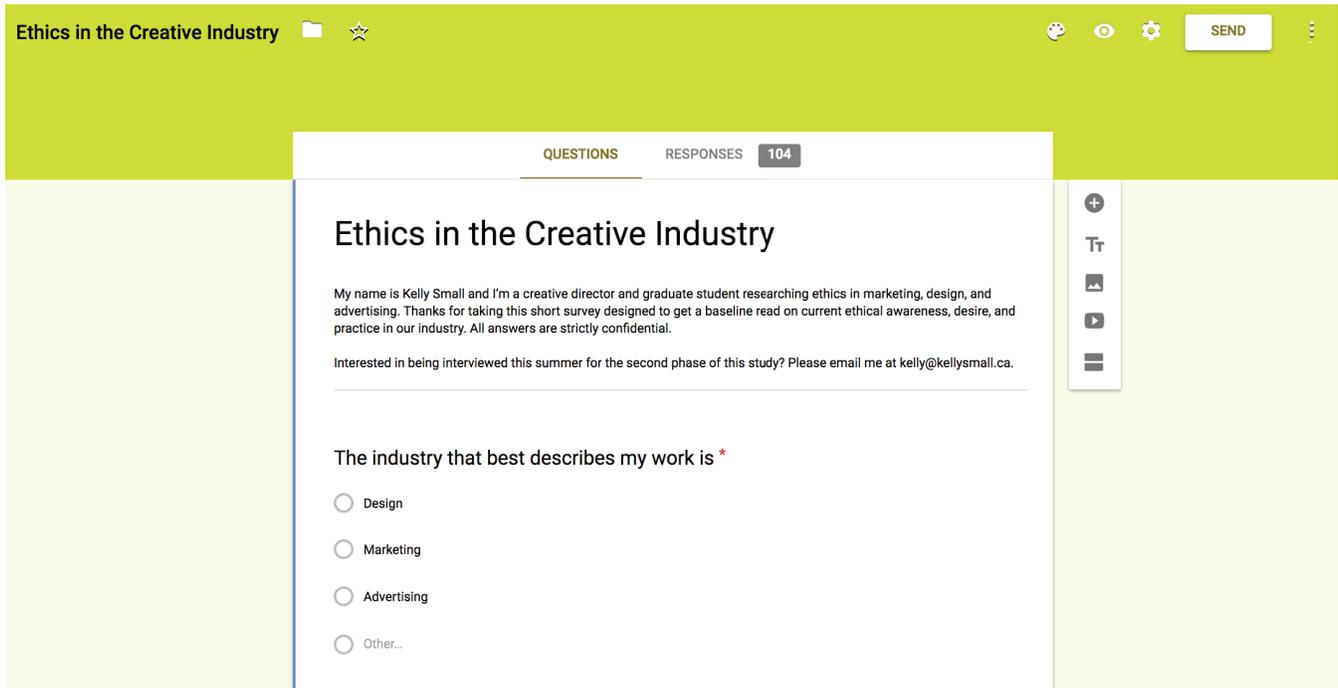


Fig 5.0 Assigning ethical action research findings to ethical design archetypes

# Appendix F/ Survey - Ethics in the Creative Industry



## My job title or role is (be specific)

104 responses

- Graphic Designer
- Creative Director
- Director of Exhibit Design
- Senior Designer
- Art director
- Designer
- Art Director
- Graphic designer
- Senior Graphic Designer
- Senior Design Strategist
- Intermediate Graphic Designer
- Senior Designer/Art Director

## My personal definition of 'ethical work' is

104 responses

- To do work that has a positive impact to a community or society as a whole
- Doing good for the human race and animals
- Work that makes the world better even if slightly. Work that helps humans, animals or those less fortunate in some way. Work that doesn't just increase the wealth of the rich and sell products that people don't need but are manipulated. Work that truly solves societal problems. Work that solves real problems.
- Work for the good of society/culture
- Projects where the alignment of my clients' vision & values do not contradict my own.
- Work that does not diminish or have a negative impact on any given community. For me, it is also about inclusivity and a big part about environmental impact.
- Honest advertising, Good for the earth/community. Also equal pay for equal work (men/women) and safe workspaces.
- Work that does no harm to the client, the public and the profession.
- Work produced within a humane time line, by well-paid workers, to promote ideas and efforts that better our environment, culture, and world in general.

**Fig 6.0**

Ethics in the Creative Industry online survey: google form

**Fig 6.1**

Job title or role response sample

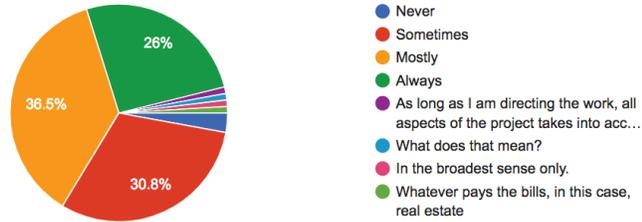
**Fig 6.2**

Personal definition of ethical work response sample

# Appendix F/ Survey - Ethics in the Creative Industry

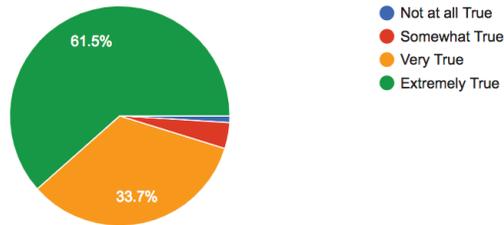
## My work takes into account social responsibility

104 responses



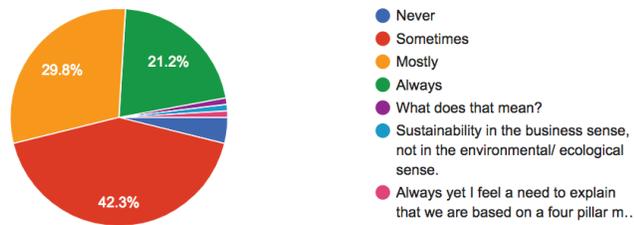
## I want to do ethical work

104 responses



## My work takes into account sustainability

104 responses



**Fig 6.3**  
Work considers social responsibility response sample

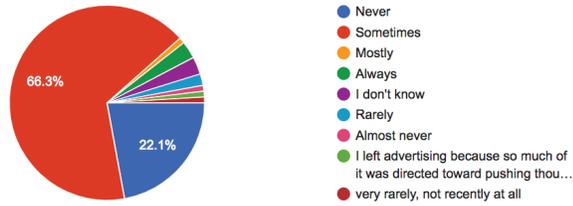
**Fig 6.4**  
Want to do ethical work response sample

**Fig 6.5**  
Work considers sustainability response sample

# Appendix F/ Survey - Ethics in the Creative Industry

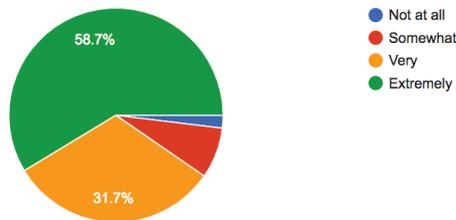
I experience conflict between personal ethics and professional practice

104 responses



I am more likely to want to work for an ethical employer

104 responses



I am interested in ways to be more ethical in the work that I do

104 responses

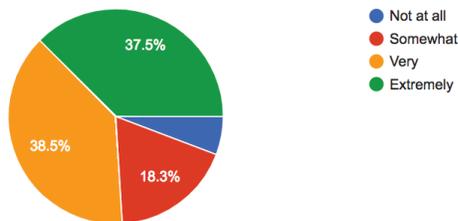


Fig 6.6  
Conflict between personal and professional ethics response sample

Fig 6.7  
Likelihood to choose ethical employment response sample

Fig 6.8  
Interest in ethical work response sample

## Appendix G/ Industry Interviews

### **Ethics in the Creative Industry**

Name:

Role/Level:

Industry:

Gender:

Years in the business:

Company:

Clients/Client Sectors:

### **Warm-up**

- *Ethics in Design/Creative Industry* (first thing that comes to mind)
- Can you tell me about a personal philosophy or set of values that you live by
- How do you, personally, define 'ethical work'
- How interested are you in learning how to work more ethically? Explain.

### **Personal Experience**

- From 1-10, 1 being the least ethical, can you tell me how ethical you think your current agency is? Your clients? Explain.
- Tell me about an incident where your personal ethics and professional practice were in conflict?
- How do you, personally, support a responsible practice; what are the ways that you insert your personal 'ethical agenda'? Concrete actions that bring your values into practice. Name as many as you can.

### **Industry/Professional Practice**

- Your company's business model and how ethical considerations factor
- Can you tell me what you know about your industry's code of ethics
- What are the ethical dilemmas people tend to run into in their day-to-day work
- Tell me about something you've seen in industry that discusses ethical work: books, conferences, etc.

### **Future of Ethical work**

- What issues do you feel are the most pressing as it relates to ethics in our industry in 2018?
- What tips would you give a student or entry-level employee about how to work ethically in this business?

**Fig 7.0**  
Interview question document

# Appendix G/ Industry Interviews

<p><b>Research Invitation &amp; Consent Agreement</b> Date: Summer 2018 Project Title: The Ethical Sellout</p> <p>Principal Investigator: <b>Kelly Small</b> <b>Faculty of Design and Dynamic Media</b> <b>Emily Carr University of Art and Design</b> ksmail@ecuad.ca</p> <p><b>Invitation</b> You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kelly Small in partial requirement for the degree of Master of Design. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are currently employed in the area of communication design or an adjacent industry.</p> <p><b>Purpose</b> The purpose of <i>The Ethical Sellout</i> research study is to refine notions of ethical design and develop actionable tools that may improve ethical practice in the commercial creative industry.</p> <p><b>Participation and Media</b> As a participant, you will be asked to answer a series of 10-15 questions in an interview format during which the audio will be recorded for future transcription. Participation will take approximately an hour of your time.</p> <p>The recorded information is expected to include audio clips that are identifiable as you. It is expected that the recordings or transcriptions of recordings may appear in presentations or publications.</p> <p><b>Consent</b> Due to the nature of this research, the researchers request that direct quotations be included in the research. The purpose of including your name is to appropriately attribute garnered knowledge.</p> <p>Although your decision can be changed during the course of this research, please indicate your preference for the use of direct quotations and the use of your name in the research:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, I consent to the use of direct quotations in this research. <input type="checkbox"/> No, I do not consent to use of direct quotations in this research.</p> <p>If yes, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, I consent to the inclusion of my identity (name) in this research. <input type="checkbox"/> No, I do not consent to the inclusion of my identity (name) in this research. I choose to remain anonymous.</p> <p><b>Voluntary Participation</b> Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to take part in the research, you can decline to answer any questions or decline to participate in any component of the research. You can also decide to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason, or to request the withdrawal of your contributions to the data.</p> <p><b>Publication of Results</b> Results of this study may be published in student theses, publications, websites, videos, and/or conference presentations.</p>	<p><b>Contact Information and Clearance</b> If you have any questions about this research, you are invited to contact the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided above.</p> <p><b>Confidentiality</b> All of the contact information that you provide to this study is considered to be confidential. Your contact information will be kept separate from the interview data.</p> <p><b>Consent Agreement</b> I agree to participate in the research that is described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read here. I have had the opportunity to get more information about the research from the researcher. I understand that I may ask for more information at any time. I understand that the release to the researchers of my interview data is a choice that I can make separate from my participation in the research.</p> <p>I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I may withdraw this consent at any time by contacting the researcher. By consenting to this research, I have not waived any legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.</p> <p>Name: <u>[Redacted]</u></p> <p>Signature: <u>[Handwritten Signature]</u> Date: <u>May 16, 2018</u></p> <p>Thank you for your assistance in this project.</p>
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**Fig 7.1**  
Interview release form sample

## Appendix G/ Industry Interviews

Ethics in the Creative Industry INDUSTRY QUESTIONNAIRE

Return to: [kelly@kellysmall.ca](mailto:kelly@kellysmall.ca)

Name: ~~Gregory Johnson~~

Role/Level: Senior Brand Strategist

Industry: Community Design

Gender: F

Years in the business: 20+

Company: Ion Design

Clients/Client Sectors: Local/Community

**• Can you tell me about a personal philosophy or set of values that you live by**

Community Design, Participatory, Including the community, making them stakeholders

**• How do you, personally, define 'ethical work'**

Putting people and the planet before profit

**• How interested are you in learning how to work more ethically? Explain.**

I don't know if I want to externally learn I learn through my own journey. I'm an older person. I've been through a lot in my life. If you asked me at 30 I'd have a different answer. I would want to know how to do it. I remember struggling with this. When I got right out of art school I said I would never work for a cigarette company. That was what I thought of. It's gone from this simplistic view to something more rich and complex but through experience. You get the shit kicked out of you personally and emotionally and you start to realize you need to look outside yourself instead of to your reputation and your reputation building. It's easy to say this when you have a good reputation. *when did the knowledge culminate into a new philosophy:* I was in richmond in 2013 and it was feb or march and I was trying to buy tomatoes - in richmond - in garden city - I could only find tomatoes from argentina, mexico, I could throw a rock at a greenhouse from where I'm standing why can't I grow local tomatoes. Started my work with CCA - design leadership 6 month course - that drove me to want to do something with design thinking. My focus is more on design thinking than design as a craft though they have to be meshed perfectly they have to work. I am involved in a lot of design dev but I am interested in how design thinking helps non designers explain what they're really thinking about.

Fig 7.2

Interview response raw data sample

Industry/Professional Practice

**• Can you talk to me a little about your company's business model and how ethical considerations factor**

3 years into this company. ion has - first of all recycling up the ring yang - it's small but important. We have a program called one good idea we **donate 25000 of design work every year to an NFP**. This year we're working with Via sport to promote sport, theatre groups in the past. They also **pay all their interns** always. Shouldn't be a question but it is. they bring in interns every year - it's just what they do to help the industry - **pay people fairly**. take good care of their employees.

**• Can you tell me what you know about your industry's code of ethics**

the biggest thing for me, the bug there for me is people doing free work - they still do it- the fivers the cheap logo people and i guess that's the way they practice their craft when they're looking. i see a big diff between craft and design thinking not that craft people don't think but we're using our brains to help people. When people compete by showing work it's my biggest issue. Ion and Hrynkow refuse to do it. Got into battles with the vancouver whistler olympics about it - very public battle in the news - **ASK FOR THIS** Also I've been a founding member of the society of graphic designers of canada, vp of the bc chapter, ray husband was ethics - there the ethics are about not to stab the rest of the industry in the back. Also copyright infringement - licenses, using the rpeople's work. GDC doesn't get involved in licensing issues. Our site Hrynkwo we found the skin of it on somebody else's website sometime.

**• What are the ethical dilemmas people tend to run into in their day-to-day work**

How much is **inspiration and how much is stealing**. There is no such thing as an original Idea I think and you have to look at what is going on in the zeitgeist to sort of understand what is the best way to communicate something in the vernacular of now. to do that you have to look at other stuff I just think it seems to be conversation about that.

**• Tell me about something you've seen in industry that discusses ethical work: books, conferences, etc.**

Fig 7.2 Cont'd  
Interview response raw data sample

No. I was a participant in a speed dating thing for design thinkers conference and I was a sr participant where people could come around and ask about their portfolio might have come up I don't know,

• **From 1-10, 1 being the least ethical, can you tell me how ethical you think your current agency**

**is? Your clients? Explain your choice**

Current agency 10, Clients range from 10-6 maybe 7. I think it's ignorance more than it is malice. I think people just don't understand that design is a job you feed your children pay for your mortgage it's not a hobby - that's one of the biggest problems with clients - that ignorance bothers me. I think there is some **willful ignorance in terms of using images** - clients will say 'just use this' and we ask where it came from. We won't do it of course.

• **Tell me about an incident where your personal ethics and professional practice were in conflict?**

nothing comes to mind. I would say ...did we ever work for a mining company. We did get some looks from people working for the largest forestry company in canada. I talked to some of the people there i know they cared about doing things right. The media spin and the public perception was raping and pillaging - and senior execs - absolutely they were like that clueless about the world. I sat down with the CEO COO CMO first time we did their annual report - just out of curiosity I asked do you see anything changing in 5 years - they said no - I was wondering about remanufacturing - starting to build houses - etc - they said 'we sell logs' - 5 years later they were out of business. The good people below them were trying to do the right things - but the seniors were scotch drinking cigar smoking c suites. **The thing was we wrote the truth in what we wrote and how we told the story** - we tried extremely hard not to put any spin on it. We said what people were doing. We didn't say the CEO's an asshole but we said they were doing good things at the level that was happening. A conversation i had with the CEO that got written into the book was actually read - my own words were used in the annual general meeting - I didn't not tell the truth - but they were using what we wrote to tell the better story. I felt on balance that was a good company. They're responsible for the existence of port alberni for example. We wanted to try to work for mining maybe it was god just saying don't get involved. we worked for BC gas. Methanex - maybe that's a dirty company - they make methanol - product of oil and gas - used in fabrics building materials chemicals.-

• **How do you, personally, support a responsible practice; what are the ways that you insert your**

Fig 7.2 Cont'd

Interview response raw data sample

**personal 'ethical agenda'?**

Just the design thinking. I write a lot for the company. Speaking my gospel. I wrote two of them this week.

Future of Ethical work

**• What issues do you feel are the most pressing as it relates to ethics in our industry in 2018?**

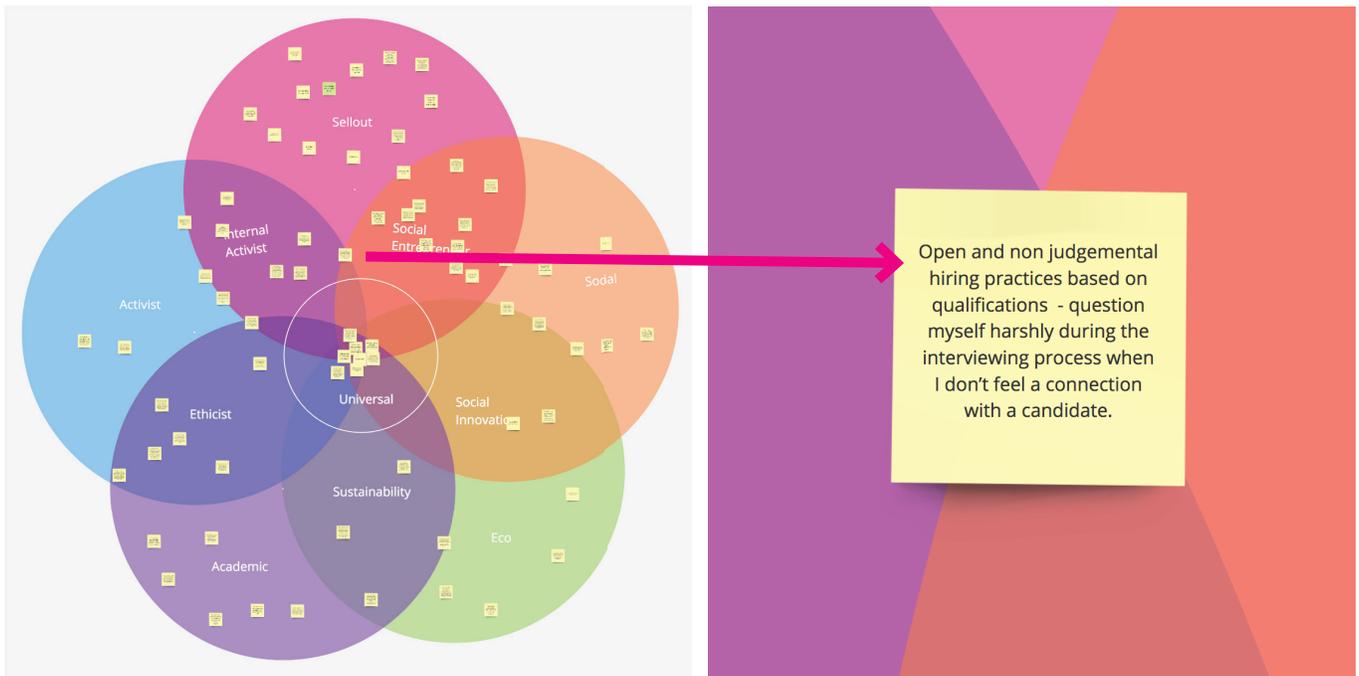
I personally think helping the world understand that design thinking has the capability of making positive change in the world. I see this as extremely pressing. I know using DT techniques can help people solve the problems we have - makes people think differently. ASK FOR CASE STUDIES DESIS and working in Africa I need to work in my own backyard. I'm glad someone's getting water for people in Africa but we have big shit to do here.

**• What tips would you give a student or entry-level employee about how to work ethically in this business?**

I do it all the time. To just make sure they're looking at who they're designing for. That they're being authentic. Genuine. And really thinking about how what they do is going to result in some positive change.

Fig 7.2 Cont'd  
Interview response raw data sample

## Appendix H/ Interview Diagramming & Analysis



**Fig 8.0**  
Interview data diagramming per ethical design archetype



# Appendix I/ Industry Interview Data Analysis

## Interview Insights Capture V1

### Perceived Problems in the industry:

- Not paying junior staff a living wage / unpaid interns
- Money trumping ethics: tech seeking the next unicorn to IPO instead of solving legitimate problems — Niamh
- Data and privacy
- "A corrupt, money hungry, white male dominated industry"
- Spec work as an ongoing problem in pitching
- Not educating young designers about ethical work
- Lack of universal design in products and services / designing so that everyone with every ability can access it "I think it's unethical if only one group of people can use and another is intentionally excluded" — Jed Looker
- Work environments that don't respect people's non-work lives

### My Philosophy to Live by: 19/27 responses were about ethics 70%

- "Take no shit. Do no harm"
- Live well outside of design: "I'm vegan, I live small, use my car less, support local, buy what I need and use what I need, recycle, trade and help people" - Andrea Emery, Design Educator
- "Co-creation—we see clients and communities as collaborators" — Casey Hrychuk, David Coates
- "Generosity. It's a company value whether pro bono or impact models, we have an ethos of generosity"—Manos
- "Don't Steal. Be Nice"
- "If you're truly openly considering your user in every aspect without prejudice and bias then you're headed in the right direction. Empathy."
- "Anti-Assumption" Find the root of the problem to be solves instead of filling assumed solutions like 'we need a new website'
- "Legacy" (can also be understood as sustainability) that something doesn't just die once we launch or finish a workshop. Create things as simple as guidelines being able to carry the work forward and training the client in our methodologies
- "Essentially putting humanity at the centre of everything you do and create"
- "Align your job with your personal values"
- The golden rule was referenced 3x
- "My personal anthem would be entitled 'love is the answer'" —Matthew May

### Actions toward Ethical Practice: 20% of all responses (11 repeats in 55) were about diversity and inclusion

- Practicing inclusive design - don't just work for the white middle aged man archetype where other personas are "edge cases" "Fuck that they're not edge cases, they're humans" — Niamh Redmond

### Learning to work more ethically: 75% or 9/12 responses were enthusiastic

- 'yes' wanted to learn more about how to practice more ethically, some even asked direct questions about what they can do right now and wanted more information about books, conferences, workshops etc that they could

**Fig 8.2**  
Interview insight data capture

## Appendix I/ Industry Interview Data Analysis

engage with now or send their team to.

- "Definitely interested—not a lot of research exists not he topic as you would find in industries like healthcare"
- "I think I work more ethically than a lot of people I know. As an educator, I actually talk to students about ethical practices that are important to me and important to them in our industry"
- "I am interested as an educator - example young generation has interesting challenges like accommodation and kids on the spectrum I'm learning"
- "I understand extreme examples of unethical work like turning down the #1 source of pollution in north america - but with more nuanced issues I know I could be doing better and want to be more aware - like diversity training in design or inclusive design training"
- "We currently just follow RGD directives as a graphic design program — the most value that doc has is 'spect work' but of course we're not allowed spec work!"
- "I am very interested in learning more about how I can make more ethical choices on a day to day level. Global change is difficult if not impossible in this industry but having a guide toward more ethical practice on a micro level would be incredibly interesting to me"

How do you define ethical work: 39% 9/23 'doesn't harm people and the planet', 4/23 "transparency and not misleading" 17%, 4/23 "Accessible and inclusive" 17%, 1/23 'sustainable and not disposable' .5%, "no spec" .5%, 5/23 "fair and responsible/work I believe in" 21%

- "Ensure the work doesn't harm planet and it helps people"
- "Work not solely for profit"
- "Work that employs the right people for the right job including women, ethnic minorities, people with mental health problems, etc"
- "Not taking work I don't believe in"
- "No spec or unpaid work for profitable companies"
- "Work and practices that don't harm others and contribute to the greater good"
- "Being honest and transparent" (honesty and transparency came up a lot)
- "Putting people and the planet before profit"
- "Work that adds value to communities" (helps move small towns into a more intellectual economy, attract creative thinkers, etc - social branding)
- "Accessibility of good design" For example, IDEO is great but too expensive
- "Finding ways to be profitable but not unethical"
- "Transparency - people are more conscious of where food, clothing, products and services come from and support businesses they believe in"
- "Protecting, safeguarding, and promoting human rights in a professional setting"
- "Only working for and with people/organizations/clients and institutions who follow a basic standard of human decency far from bigotry, racism, sexism, and ageism at a bare minimum"
- "Producing work that helps to motivate social conduct toward inclusion"
- "Work that isn't temporary - I don't consider work for the development industry to be ethical - it's disposable and crass"

Fig 8.2 Cont'd  
Interview insight data capture

**Thank you/**