

# WHY DESIGN IS TAKING OVER THE WORLD

## MY STORY

I like to think everyone has their “thing” whether you’re great at basketball or passionate about animals. My “thing” was always creativity. When I was 13, my art teacher at the time submitted a pastel drawing I had made into a contest at the PS1 MOMA institution. There were thousands of admissions from middle schoolers across New York City ranging from kindergarteners to eighth graders. I never put much thought into it and carried on thinking nothing would come of it.

Imagine my surprise when I was picked as one of the finalists and my artwork was displayed in the museum along with a select few others. It felt right and exactly where I belonged and soon, I’d start the process of applying to high schools and had my eyes dead set on design schools.

My parents had other plans for me though and Brooklyn Technical High School was the textbook dream school. It fulfilled all the checkboxes of a good life: stem based, specialized, and highly competitive. It was everything they ever dreamed of.

It was a guaranteed shot to the top and my immigrant parents were ecstatic when that acceptance letter came in.

While I was decent at math and science and am a very analytical person, I wasn’t particularly jumping off the roof when I found out. It never felt quite right but I pushed on to make my family happy and my future secure. I thought it was the only way to succeed in this dog-eat-dog world and rise to the top.

When you’re not happy with the work that you’re doing, it starts to show and soon I was lagging behind in all my classes. I had decided to be a Physics major, and it was all wrong for me. I had to push myself and grew unhappy and depressed. In making others happy, I was letting myself suffer. The stress of everything was overpowering me and I was drowning in work and feeling so incredibly unfulfilled.

## THE STARVING ARTIST

My parents, like many others, fell into believing the starving artist stereotype. The starving artist stereotype is everywhere from our favorite TV shows to the mindset of our peers when they say, “what are you going to do with *that*?” Pursuing a creative career has long been seen as the disempowering lesser path where you’ll be broke and jobless as opposed to the engineer, doctor, and lawyer counterparts.

The stereotype runs rampant particularly in immigrant non-white families and there is massive pushback when pursuing a creative field. While there are definite truths to the stereotype, it’s an outdated view especially in the age of the internet where everything we consume has been touched by the hands of a designer from billion-dollar Apple products to silly little Instagram posts. Through art, creativity, and design, there is the possibility to influence millions.

## THE FUTURE OF DESIGN

Designers are scarce and prospective designers even more so. According to the

[Bureau of Labor](#), graphic design has only a 3% projected growth rate from 2020 to 2030. In this growing age of consumption and media, this is a shocking statistic showcasing the effects of societal and personal outlook on the creative industry overall.

It is often seen as a fruitless path and the stigmatization of pursuing a creative field dissuades many to not even take a closer look at the options. It doesn’t have to be one or the other: chasing your passion or being successful.

The impacts of design create a ripple effect despite this and we’re now seeing increased job offers for digital and web design and not enough interested people to keep up with the demand. [The digital design industry will grow 13% which is faster than average from 2020 to 2030](#) according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor. While focusing solely on creating art can be quite difficult, being able to pivot your skills into a lucrative field and still maintain creativity is an extremely useful skill to have.



## BENEFITS OF DESIGN

The process of design and design thinking is a transferrable and marketable skill that is often overlooked. When you become a designer, your entire mindset shifts into a user experience centric outlook. One of the most important things in design is the documentation of the process or product from concept to real world.

Jeanne Liedtka wrote in the [Harvard Business Review](#), “along the way, design-thinking processes counteract human biases that thwart creativity while addressing the challenges typically faced in reaching superior solutions, lowered costs and risks, and employee buy-in.” Design thinking promotes collaboration, communication, and experimentation which are prized skills in any industry.

Designers must constantly innovate and improve to keep up with the demand thus promoting adaptability and change.

Investing in design as a company also has its benefits. Creating a pleasant user experience and a unique brand image allows the business to stand out amongst competitors. When there’s a sea of the same product, how do you as a company distinguish yourself? What makes one lotion different than the next? Or a bag of potato chips?

It’s not just solely the ingredients or the flavor but how your product looks. We’ve *all* bought something simply because it looked pretty or better than the product next to it.

[94% of the reason the participants rejected a site was for design related issues, while only 6% was for content-related issues.](#) On a subconscious level, whether its architecture, bridges, or social media, we all gravitate towards beautiful design.

Elevated and thoughtful branding can take your product from being sold at corner stores to Whole Foods despite having the same wholesale price.



## FANCY TEA ANYONE?

Let’s take for example tea. Harney and Son’s earl grey tea looks very different from Bigelow’s earl grey tea. They’re both the same product but they cater to vastly different markets just due to the packaging. Harney and Sons tea comes in a metal reusable tin with ornate packaging and design and the Bigelow tea is very austere and practical. Harney and Sons can charge \$4-6 more than Bigelow.

Is that solely due to the quality of the tea leaves? Absolutely not. Harney and Sons’ designers were able to market the tea leaves to a higher tax bracket through the packaging design and therefore justify a price increase.

[Good design is virtually invisible](#) and you can see that in something as simple as tea leaves.

We pass by the grocery store aisle without even batting an eye to the intricacies and the mind games played when creating a successful product. When you level up the playing field and move into the realm of smartphones, you can really see the importance of design at play.

There’s a saying where you “eat with your eyes first.” Perception of the eye is a powerful tool and Apple uses it for their benefit. One of the reasons I hear so many people say they prefer Apple products to Android is the user interface and the design (and the prestige but that’s a separate topic).



The sleek and modern elements Apple incorporates into every product, web page, and marketing email is completely intentional and there are billions of dollars poured into just how something looks. Humans are visual creatures and visual elements are the first and easiest way to communicate. The power of communication is the scariest of all when it comes to developing a company that dominates the world.

## REACHING SUCCESS

I did end up going to Brooklyn Tech and being miserable. I wasn’t aware of all the different options I had when I decided art or design was useless. I let the stigma of the starving artist stereotype from my family and peers dictate a good portion of my life before taking the reins into my own hands and discovering that great design is quiet.

The impact it has goes unnoticed by most and we quietly live our lives blissfully unaware of all the designers around us.

We consume it but never question it. We reject undesirable styles and embrace enticing designs without even knowing why. There’s a rise in demand and not enough people to fill it and with the digital age, it’s never been a better time to break out of the mold.

Success doesn’t have to mean following the status quo and sometimes needs you to think out of the box. Design has taught me how to utilize my innate talent and hard work together to create something worthwhile and still be accomplished doing it.