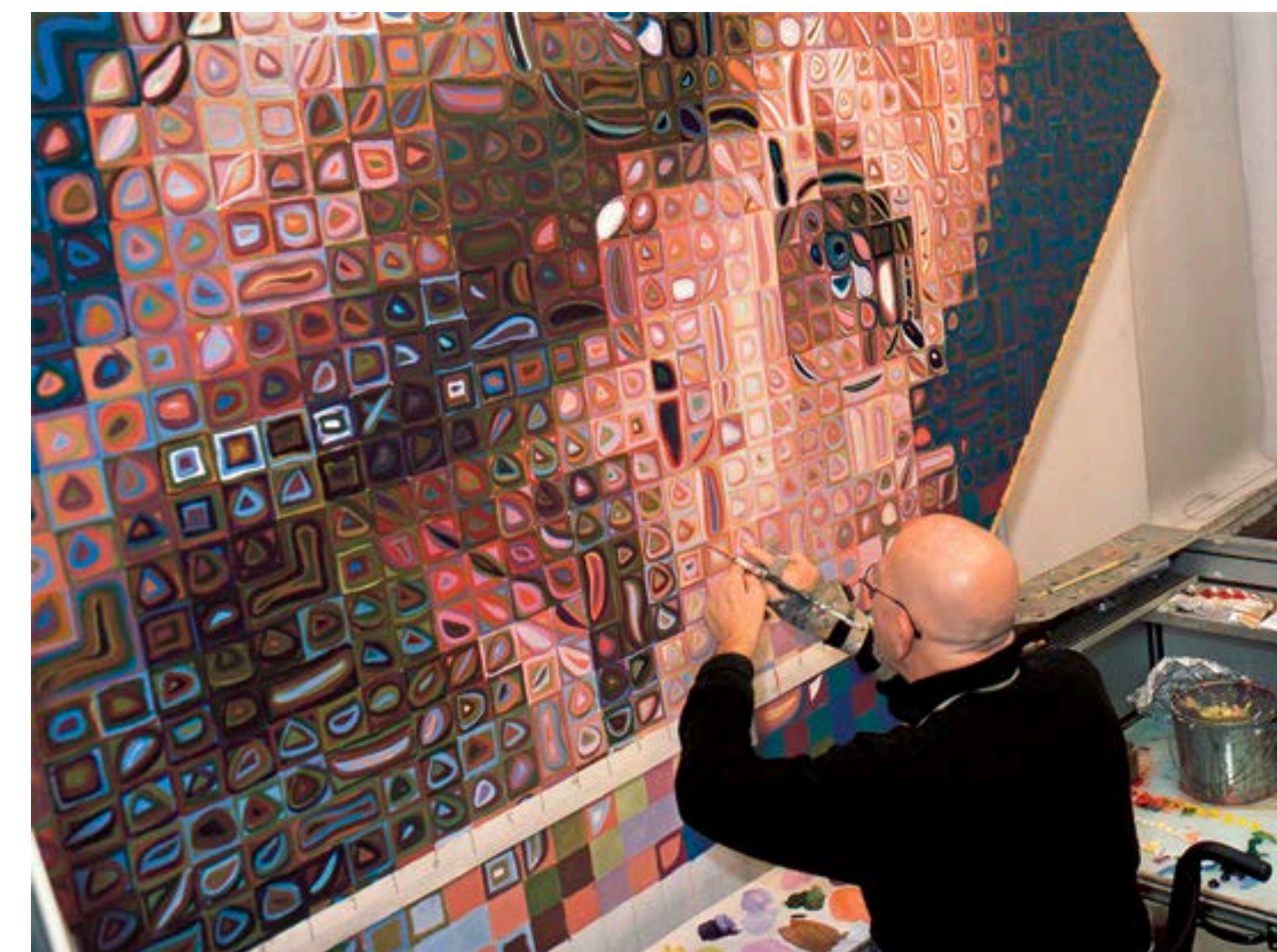# COMD 4801

The Portfolio

Assistant Professor Diana Schoenbrun

Associate Professor Genevieve Hitchings

"The advice I like to give young artists, or really anybody who'll listen to me, is not to wait around for inspiration. Inspiration is for amateurs; the rest of us just show up and get to work. If you wait around for the clouds to part and a bolt of lightning to strike you in the brain, you are not going to make an awful lot of work. All the best ideas come out of the process; they come out of the work itself. Things occur to you. If you're sitting around trying to dream up a great art idea, you can sit there a long time before anything happens. But if you just get to work, something will occur to you and something else will occur to you and something else that you reject will push you in another direction. Inspiration is absolutely unnecessary and somehow deceptive. You feel like you need this great idea before you can get down to work, and I find that's almost never the case."

— **Chuck Close**

COMD 4801: The Portfolio
The First Step to the Rest of Your Career

Fridays 11:30AM - 2:00PM, and by appointment.

Professor Diana Schoenbrun
DSchoenbrun@citytech.cuny.edu
Office hours:
Thursday 10:00am-11:00am
by appointment via zoom

Professor M. Genevieve Hitchings
mhitchings@CityTech.Cuny.Edu
Office Hours:
Mon 1:30-2:30PM — Room P115 (In person)
Tues 4:00 5:00PM — https://meetingsamer3.webex.com/meet/mhitchings (Online)

"You need to be an expert about yourself."

–Christina Hines

Grading Policy:

Resume Set and personal branding: 25%
This should include a well-designed resumé (inDesign only. Not word or any online generator), business card, "about me" statement, and cover letter/intro email (to be able to send to potential employers). Optional pieces include a promotional piece, leave-behind, and more.

Portfolio: 50%
Each student should have a portfolio website, an emailable (10mb or less) PDF portfolio, and an optional physical portfolio. A physical portfolio is dependent on your work. Your social media can also be included as supporting your more substantial website/pdf/etc. Social media is not required but will be discussed.

Attendence, research, participation, and presentation skills: 25%
You will be expected to research jobs, companies, and individual professionals you aspire to work for and with. This is an ongoing part of the class and should be a part of your career for the rest of your life.

GRADES

- A: your portfolio is good enough to get into the Portfolio Review, is professional in every way (what is a portfolio review?!?)

- B: by week 14 it is almost there and just needs some tweaking to get into the Portfolio Review

- C/D: Not polished enough: not enough work, not professional, not coherent (no consistent narrative)

- F: Not professional at all.

Distance Learning
How this is going to work, what you need to do

- There are **SIX** mandatory class meetings that everyone must attend:
  - Weeks 1 & 2,
  - Week 7 & 8 (Midterm),
  - Weeks 14 & 15 (Final). The rest of the class meetings will be made up of one-on-one meetings with the professor where you present your portfolio and we talk about your intentions and your progress.
- You must have at least two meetings before the midterm or you will fail the course, and three following the midterm. If you don't have the required amount of meetings your will fail the course. Or you can meet every week.
- There will be a formal Portfolio Review at the end of the semester where, if you are selected, you will meet with industry professionals to get feedback on your work.
- You will need to make appointments for independent study meetings.
- Follow standard practices for video call etiquette - mute if you're not talking, raise hand to talk, put questions in the chat so you don't forget what you wanted to say, etc.

Course Resources

What You Need to Produce
You Will Need These Things by the End of the Semester

- A **Resumé Set**, consisting of:

    - Personal Branding system - logo, colors, etc. to be applied across ALL your portfolio materials.

    - Resumé - created in InDesign. Not MS Word, NOT Photoshop. It should be well-designed and a reflection of who you are as a creative individual

    - Business Card - in the age of social distancing, will the business card finally die? Not sure, so you still have to design one.

    - "About Me" statement - nothing generic, everything specific. Talk about who you are, what you like to create, what your influences are, how you ended up where you are today, and where you see yourself going.

    - Cover Letter/Intro Email - the traditional cover letter is as ubiquitous as it used to be but you will still need to write emails and letters introducing yourself to people. Get into the practice of doing this as professionally as possible.

    - Promo piece or Leave-behind (optional)

- **Portfolio**

    - Website - I'll go into more detail about options for hosting, but you will need a website

    - PDF - This is a more carefully curated version of your website that can be strategically emailed to potential employers and collaborators in lieu of the website

    - Physical Portfolio (optional)

What is a Portfolio?
Who is the Audience For Your Portfolio?

- Portfolio can be (should be): PDF, website, book, reel, social media account, process book

- Where does your portfolio live?

- What do you really need to include in your portfolio?

- What do you need a portfolio for?

- Who do you send your portfolio to?

- How do you know if your work is "portfolio-ready"?

Portfolio Criteria and Evaluation

FOUR Ps

Product – is the product/service clear and compelling or is it secondary or forgotten
Process – is it clear what the process was you used to develop the work; what was your part in it
Professionalism – is the portfolio (and are you) at a professional level
Personality – is it clear who you are, what you do, what you want to known for; is your personal brand defined and expressed throughout

CONTAINER VS CONTENT

Container
Chosen platform
Site design/architecture
Site Nav - Hierarchy rationale
Mobile first

Content
Quantity vs Quality. Every piece must be as strong as the strongest piece.

Minimum Content
· Home
· Work
· About
· Contact
· Social Media
· Other - personal work that's unrelated to the major body of work

What kind of work do you make?
What kind of work do you *want* to make?

• What is your Discipline? In other words: What kind of work do you like to make?

    • Let's introduce ourselves and talk about what we make, what we want to make

    • Do you know the types of jobs available to do this work? What are the titles/companies, etc.?

• Are you good enough to make money doing this?*

• When you think about your "About Me" or "Objective" statement – describe who you are, what they do, why you like doing what you do, etc.

• Discipline determines the structure of your portfolio

• You will have to produce portfolios across multiple channels

• What are these multiple channels?

• *this is a loaded question and a topic for a whole different class

Find the venn of
• things you want to do
• things you are genuinely good at
• things people will pay you to do

things you
want to do

a career?

things you
are good at

things people
will pay you
to do
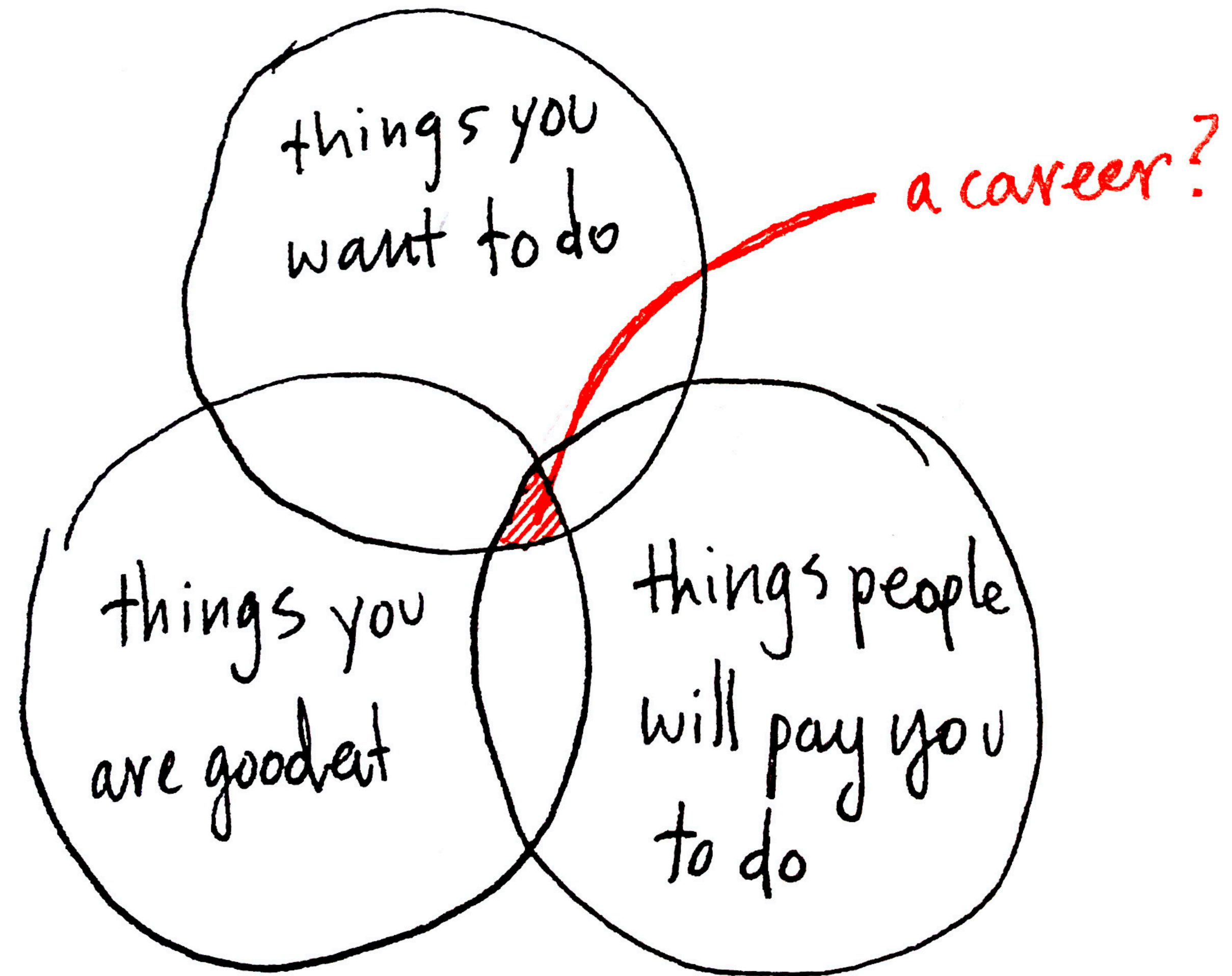
Personal Branding System

Logo, etc. that can be used across all your professional

- Logo/monogram - A signature can be used in place of a logo. Something created by hand that shows your style and aesthetics.

- Avatars

- Colors

- Contextual system for framing work

- Fonts - no more than two
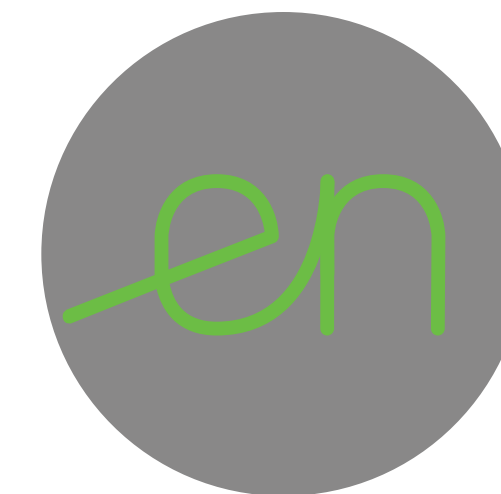
Diana Schoenbrun

DIANA SCHOENBRUN

DIANA
SCHOENBRUN

dianaschoenbrun

Follow

Diana Schoenbrun
Illustration, children's books, comics. Children's book art rep, Lara P
**dianaschoenbrun.net**

Time to hear from each of you.

Tell us about who you are, what you make, where you see yourself going, and anything else that can help us help you! It is so unbelievably important for you all to get comfortable talking to people about yourselves.

Social Media
Networking on Social Networks

- **LinkedIn**

  - Take a deep dive, starting with Professor's links

  - Look at Job Titles and respsonibilities

  - Look at how people write about themselves? What's good and what's not?

  - Find THREE people that really interest you and be prepared to explain why

- **Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.**

  - Do you have to have it?

  - How to keep your personal and professional pages separate

  - What works and what doesn't work?
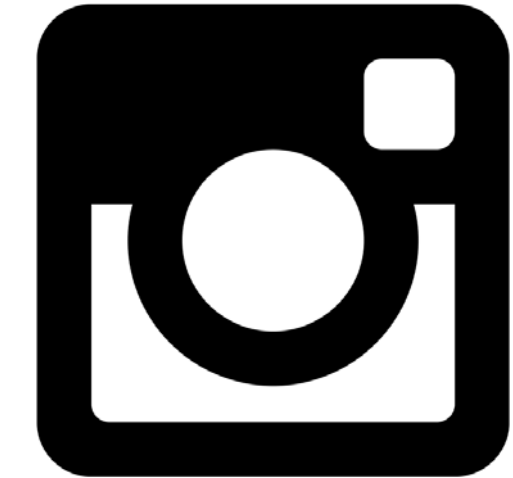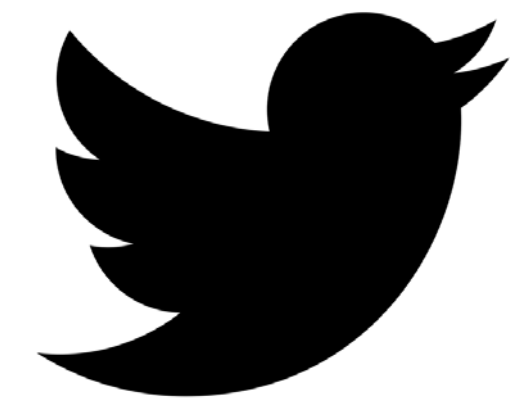
How to Find Jobs
They're Out There, Aren't They?

- Find a job.

- Get a job.

- Keep the job.

- Do it again.

- (And again, and again.)

Some Advice
What does it mean to, "shape your own career narrative"?

- Always have your resume ready or ready to revise.

- Your "about me" section should avoid clichés like, "hard-worker," "self-starter," "works well with others," and more things that everyone always puts in that spot. It was noted that if you are writing something about yourself that every other person could write, or if you are writing something that is a basic assumption of a good employee, then you should cut it. Also, think about the opposite of some of these statements, "lazy", for instance, and the fact that no one would ever write that. Be uniquely yourself in this section, but not for the sake of being unique or different. Stand out by being who you really are, not standing behind boring platitudes.

- Be a storyteller, and tell your own story. Who are you and what do you like to do? What are you good at? What else do you do? What else are you interested in?

- On Portfolios: If you have to explain a project on your website or in your portfolio, then take it out/off. You will not always be there to explain it and it also means that it doesn't speak for itself, which means it is not successfully communicating what it needs to.

- Networking: Do it! Build a network, stay in touch with people. Don't be shy or afraid of talking to people or reaching out to them. Take advantage of the built-in network of school: peers, faculty, guest speakers, tours, etc. and build on that.

- Build a network of like-minded people, people you actually are interested in. This is one area where you should not "fake it til you make it"

- Toot your own horn: "If you're not going to blow your own horn, who is?" –Fifi Jacobs

- If you aren't comfortable with sharing your own website or portfolio with teachers or classmates then how are you going to send it to employers?

Style
Does all my work need to look the same?

- NO. But it helps. So only do it if it's the right thing for you. Or have 2 styles.

- Traditional

- Digital

- Vector/flat

Some Links

- [A good article about what should be in your Portfolio.](#)

- [The Bio is as important as the Resumé.](#)

- [Some helpful tips for making a killer portfolio.](#)

- [How to answer when someone askes, "What do you do?"](#)

- [A Guide to Making Art Under the Constraints of Capitalism](#)

What do Professional Portfolios Look Like?
Some Examples

- James Yang
- Rebecca Mock
- Sachin Teng
- Gail Anderson
- Pedro Sanches
- Dana Tanamachi
- Rodrigo Corral
- Leta Sobierajski
- Jessica Hische
- Derrick C Lee
- Juliana Castro
- Daniel Fishel
- Aaron Dana
- Richard Chance
- J.A.W. Cooper
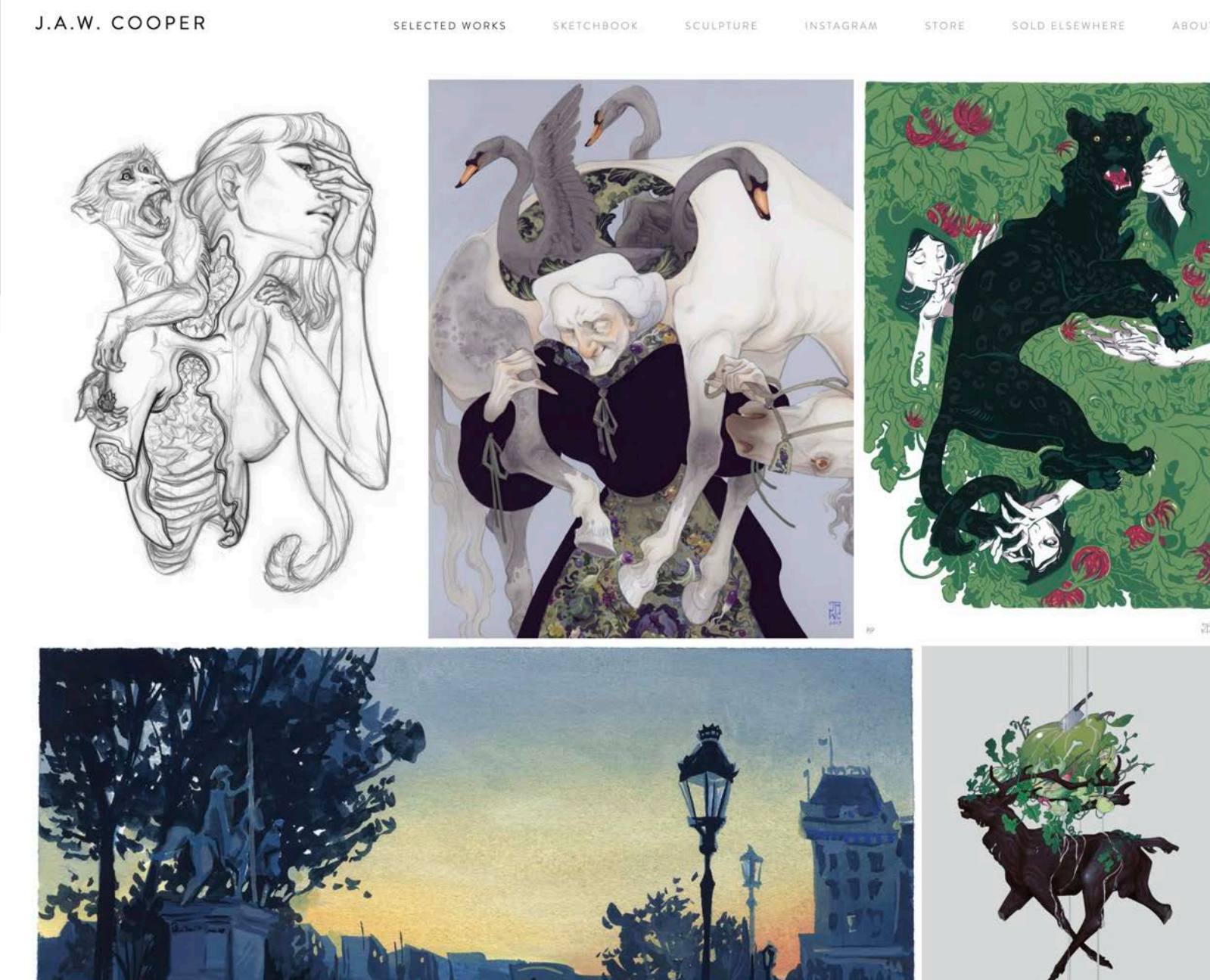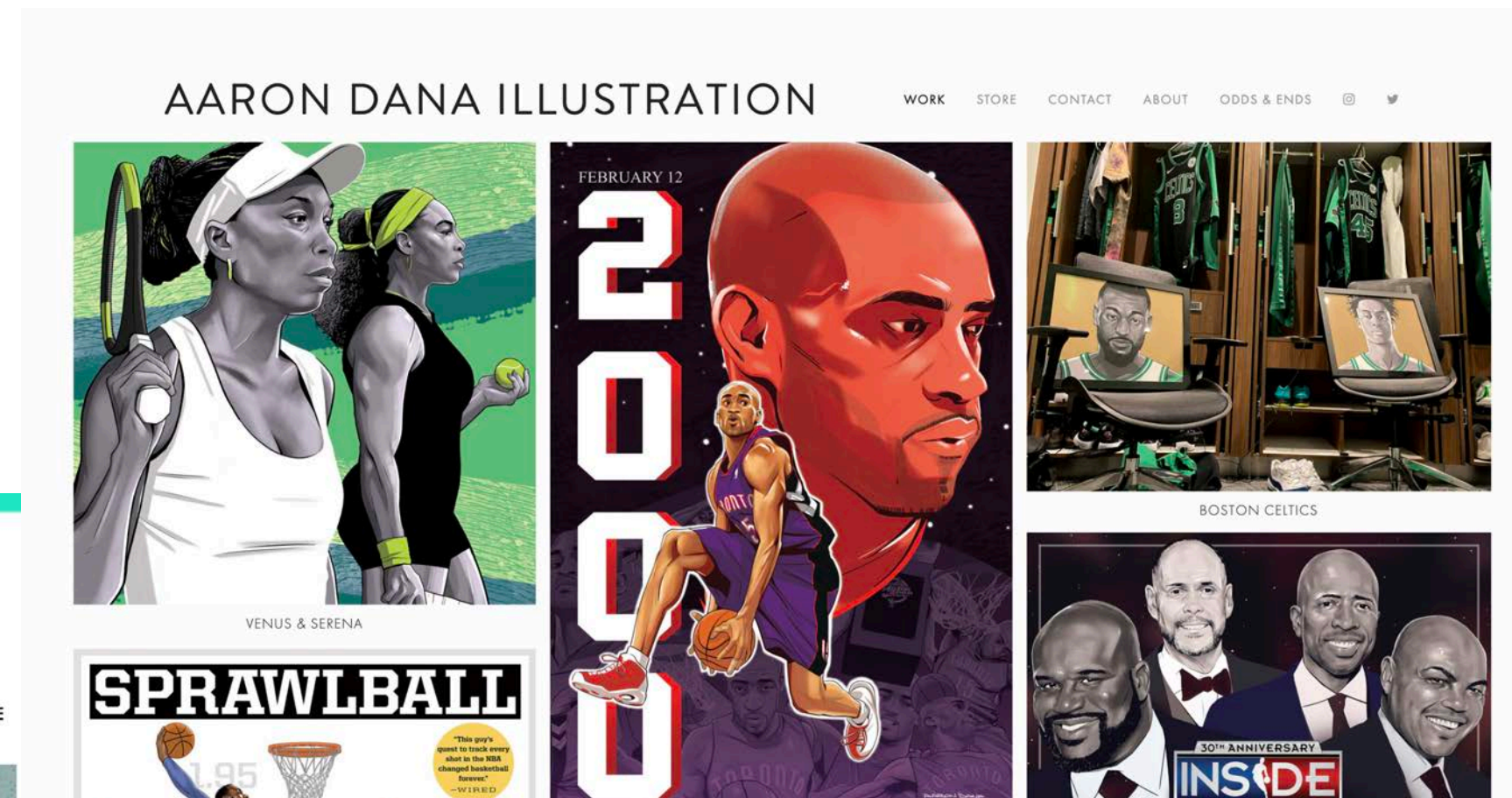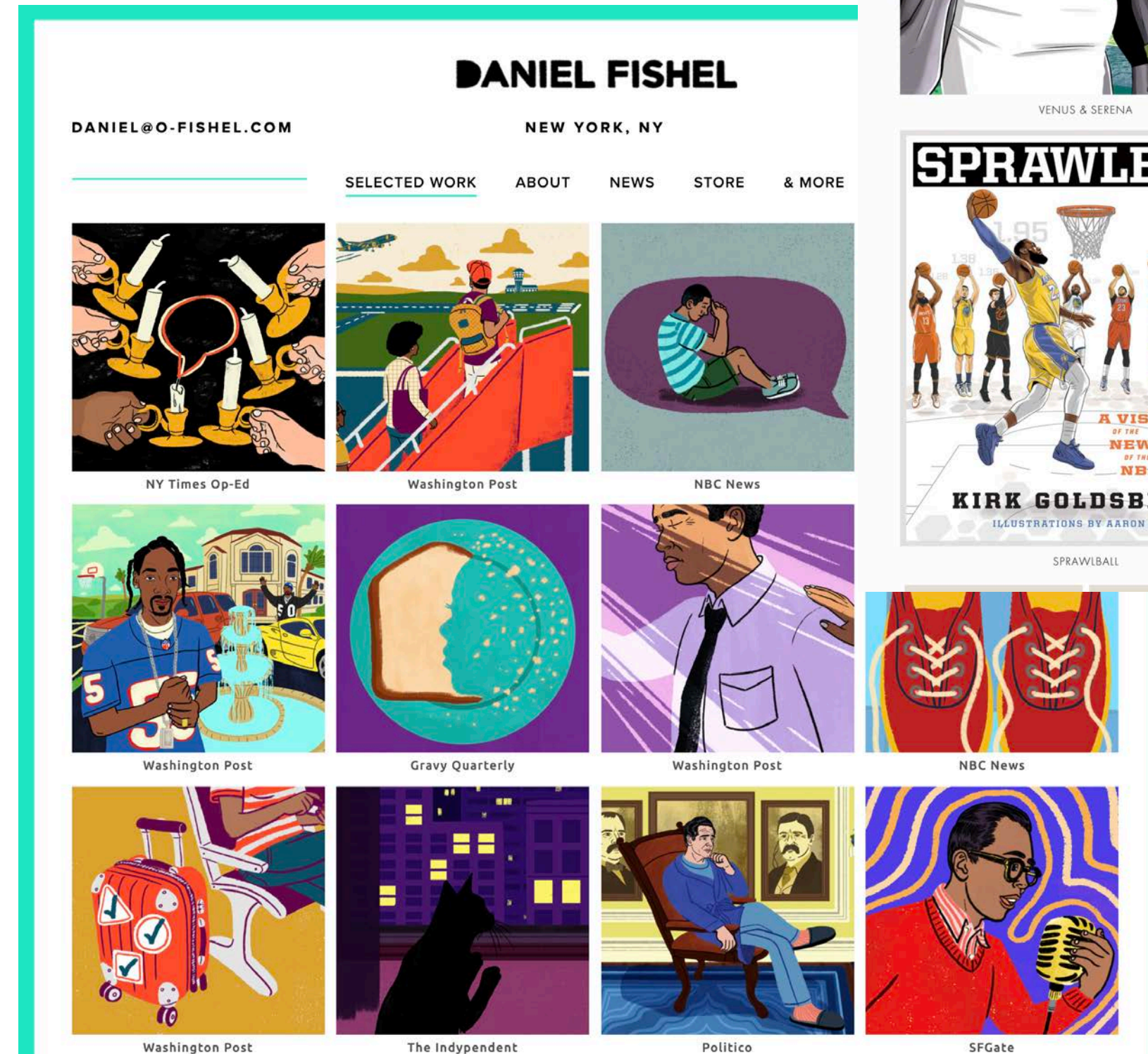
Freelancing
Pitching Your Work

- <u>How to Cold Email Art Directors</u>

- <u>Approaching Art Directors</u>

- <u>Make Your Art Work</u>

- <u>Dear Art Director</u>

- <u>https://www.fantasyflightgames.com/en/more/freelance-opportunities/</u>

- <u>https://company.wizards.com/content/freelance-art-submissions</u>

- <u>http://theonyxpath.com/art/</u>

"Never compare your behind-the-scenes to someone else's on-stage performance."

—V.E. Schwab (Author)

5 Years in the Future
Where do you see yourself?

Where do you see yourself in FIVE years?

● Write a one-page place description of your perfect day at work five years from now. Dream big. Don't talk yourself out of your highest aspirations just because you can't imagine how you'll get there from here. Be honest and courageous in your imagining. Push yourself to visualize the workday in as much detail as possible.

Where do you work? As a freelancer, in a studio, for a publisher, at a start-up, or a large corporation? What does your work-space look like? Is it a desk in your apartment, at a coworking space, in an open corporate floor plan, do you have your own office? What are you working on throughout the day? Advertising, illustration, branding, books, editorial, user interfaces, user research, or something else? Who are your clients? Are you in-house working for a single brand, do you work freelance or for a studio serving a wide range of companies? Who do you work with? Do you work alone, with a small team, or are you part of a large department? Include a description of how you feel at this job.

● Don't limit your 5-year visualization plan to work-only… think about your quality of life! Do you want to have your own apartment (if you don't already)? How much money do you want to earn? Do you dream of traveling – How much vacation time do you want to have?

ALSO!

● Research professional creatives and bring in a list of 3-5 portfolios that you admire.

● Research places of employment and bring in a list of 5-10 employers you want to work for.

Jhonen Vazquez drawing at San Diego Comic Con

Links

Design Organizations You Should Know

In my opinion Twitter and Instagram are the best way to stay up to date with what all these organizations are doing. Even if Tweeting and Gramming are not for you I would recommend keeping an account to follow all these groups—use it like a news aggregator.

- Type Director's Club: A professional organization for type directors and type designers, but their membership also includes many graphic designers. This is an intimate, NYC only, single chapter club. A great place to network. For starters I highly recommend you attend one of their Type Thursday events. I would recommend entering your work in their annual competition.
- AtypI: An international organization for Type designers.
- AIGA/NY: A very active chapter of AIGA. AIGA is a national organization focused on uniting and supporting graphic designers. AIGA/NY hosts many talks, a great way to continue your education after school. It's a little harder to network at their events because they're bigger.
- The One Club for Creativity/The Art Director's Club: This is a group that's primarily focused on the advertising side of the design world—it's more expensive as a result. Not my favorite club, but I would recommend keeping an eye on and eventually applying for their "under 30" Young Guns competition.
- D&AD: Basically the British version of One Club/ADC.
- Society of Illustrators: If you're an illustrator this club is for you. Like TDC this place is single chapter and NYC specific. They hold weekly life drawing meetings. And exhibitions in their two floor gallery. I would recommend entering your work in their annual competition.
- American Illustration: another important annual illustration competition if illustration is your focus.
- Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum: This NYC-based museum is an amazing resource. I highly recommend that you stay on top of their programming and exhibitions and attend whenever possible.
- Herb Lubalin Study Center: This is the archive of Herb Lubalin's work at Cooper Union. There's a TON of other amazing historical artifacts there and they are super friendly and accommodating. I would highly recommend reaching out and scheduling a visit.

Links

Where to Find a Design Job

- [Creative Circle:](#) recruiters who will help you find freelance and full-time jobs in design, illustration, UX
- [Design Observer](#): Go here to see design jobs from across the "Design Employment Network" which includes jobs posted to other orgs like TDC, Print, How, Brand New, The One Club/ADC, etc.
- [Society of Publication Designers](#): Go here to see, very specifically, design jobs in magazine publishing.
- [Publishers Weekly](#): Go here to see, very specifically, design jobs in book publishing.
- [Publisher's Lunch Job Board](#): Go here to see, very specifically, design jobs in book publishing.
- [Dribbble Jobs](#): Go here for a lot of UI/UX jobs, there are some graphic design jobs mixed in there too.
- [LinkedIn Jobs](#): Note: your LinkedIn profile should be complete, remain up to date, and you should make an effort to connect with all of your real life academic and professional connections there. Regarding the job site, there's a lot here, and some jobs will allow you to apply with your LinkedIn profile, another reason to keep it up to date. Also note: To my mind LinkedIn doesn't count as a social platform—LinkedIn would disagree—don't use it to post and engage, only as an online resume and as a way to manage professional connections.

Links

Articles and Books About Picking a Design Job & Keeping a Design Job

- [The AIGA Guide to Careers in Graphic and Communication Design](): This book just came out last year, it is the definitive guide to your design career. I can't recommend it enough.

- [Design is a Job](): A frank book about the realities of working as a designer.

- [The Graphic Artist Guild Handbook: Pricing & Ethical Guidelines](): This handbook will describe everything from pricing scales for freelance work to salary scales for in-house work. You should have this book.

- [AIGA Survey of Design Salaries](): This is a searchable database of self reported data on current design salaries. You can search even more granularly if you're an AIGA member. You should consult this site before every interview so that you know what a fair salary is for the position you're looking for.

- [A Designer's Code of Ethics](): Very important. It's not just about finding a job. Ethical conduct within the field of design is paramount.

- [Questioning Graphic Design's Ethicality](): Design Observer essay about design ethics.

Links

Design Podcasts

If you're not a regular podcast listener I recommend downloading a podcast app—or use the one built into your OS. Subscribe to all of these podcasts and then listen to episodes when you have free time. While you're cooking, while you're on the train, whenever you have a moment. Many of the podcasts listed below feature guests who tell the stories of their careers. They describe step by step how they went from where you are now to where you want to be. The models these stories provide are incredibly valuable.

- [Design Matters](): Hosted by Debbie Millman. Now that her podcast has become popular beyond the design industry she's begun to host creative people from outside the design industry. I would recommend going back to her first season and listening forward from there. Back then she primarily interviewed graphic designers.

- [The Observatory](): Michael Bierut and Jessica Helfand are design leaders you should know. On this podcast you get to sit in on a weekly conversation between them.

- [The Design of Business | The Business of Design](): This podcast is also by Michael Bierut and Jessica Helfand. In this podcast they interview people who's job place them at the intersection of the business and design worlds.

- [Wireframe](): This is brand new podcast from Khoi Vinh, Principal Designer at Adobe—he is also someone you should know. This podcast is about UI/UX design I believe.

- [Talking Practice](): This is also a brand new podcast from Harvard's Graduate School Design. Here they interview all kinds of designers from architects, to industrial designers, to graphic designers.

- [Scratching the Surface](): This podcast is very specifically about the intersection of design theory and practice. Jarrett Fuller interviews (primarily graphic) designers who also have active writing practices.

- [Three Point Perspective](): This is all about illustration. The job, the jobs, the work, the practice. If you want a career in illustration this a must-listen.

Links

Additional Readings About Design Theory and Practice

- [Readings.Design](#): This is a one-of-kind listing of seminal texts about design theory and practice. The list includes, books and articles. In the case of the articles, the PDFs are made available straight from the site. Visit this site often. Read as many of these texts as you can. Reading should be an integral part of your design practice. Reading should be viewed as a practice in of itself.

Creative Staffing Agencies

- [Onward Search](#)
- [24 Seven](#)
- [The Boss Group](#)
- [Artisan Talent](#)
- [Working Not Working](#)
- [Aquent](#)
- [Mondo](#)
- [Vitamin T](#)
- [Salt](#)