

**"Make/Think: AIGA Design Conference," Memphis
"20/20"**

Filmed: October 8, 2009 Length: 28:42



Debbie Millman:

And now for the task at hand. I'm almost getting to the point where I want to throw down the gauntlet, the 20/20ers against the Command Xers, but that's a whole other story.

So David Gibson performing opera, Ken Carbone playing electric guitar, Mark English playing acoustic guitar, Michael Bierut singing "Star-Spangled Banner" a capella, Andrew Sloat previewing his film *We, the Constitution* for the very first time. These are just a few of the historical and memorable moments in the event we call 20/20. The premise: 20 designers perform for one minute each. The goal: 20 minutes of pure inspiration.

20/20 began in 1991 in Chicago. It was created by Chris Pullman. And over the course of the last few conferences, a unifying theme was added to the challenge. At the last national conference, we asked 20 noteworthy designers to choose 20 exciting young designers to share one moment of inspiration. Last year at the "Gain" conference — the "Gain: Design and Business Conference" — we asked 20 designers to share one secret of their success.

This year's theme is particularly close to my heart. As I've been traveling around the country visiting local AIGA chapters, I have been struck by the energy, the enthusiasm, the overall exuberance of our membership. This connectivity is palpable. It is unique, and it is unlike any other organization that I have ever been part of. So this year's 20/20 is a tribute to and in honor of the marvelous chapters that make up the soul and spirit of AIGA.

Please join me in welcoming 20 extraordinary makers, thinkers and designers, representing 20 vibrant chapters in 20 thrilling minutes. Donovan Beery and Nate Voss.

[Applause]

Nate Voss:

Yes, let's do it like this. Hi, we're from the Nebraska chapter. My name is Nate Voss.

Donovan Beery:

I'm Donovan Beery, and we run 36point.com. A not too conventional website focusing on the lighter aspects of design. There you will find the second best podcast on design with "The Reflex Blue Show." You'll see some book reviews, short films and one kick-ass comic based on a couple of graphic designers called the *One Point Rule*.

Nate Voss:

But it's not all dump trucks full of money and fun for us. Last spring we partnered with an organization called Life in Abundance, which serves to empower and transform communities in some of the most impoverished regions of Northeastern Africa. So we teamed up with Justin Aherons from Rule29, Steve Hartman from Creativille and Christine Taylor from Hallmark, and along with our friends at Neenah Paper and Spark Stationery, we created a special limited edition, letterpress print commemorating the efforts of this amazing organization.

Donovan Beery:

The posters are on sale now, with 100 percent of the proceeds going to feed, clothe and counsel children across the globe. It's not a lot, and a lot more is needed, but it helps.

Nate Voss:

Design can help. Thank you very much. You can find out more at 36point.com. Have a great night!

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Kim Berlin.

Kim Berlin:

Hi, I'm Kim from Sterling Brands, representing AIGA Metro North, and this is my short story.

[Music]

Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Charles Brock.

Charles Brock:

I'm Charles from AIGA Portland, and I mistakenly thought this was Break/Think.

[Sound effects]

[Music and cheering]

Thank you. Nothing of value was destroyed in the making of this video.

[Laughter]

Debbie Millman:

I'm so glad that Amazon wasn't a sponsor of this conference.

[Laughter]

Jane Naillon.

Jane Naillon:

Hello, everyone, I'm Jane. I'm from the Idaho chapter, and this is how we make/think in Idaho.

[Music]

Wow! That was awesome. That looks really awesome. It's for real.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

That is one pretty tattoo. Emily Carr and Jill Spaeth.

Emily Carr:

I'm Emily. I'm a past president of AIGA DC.

Jill Spaeth:

And I'm Jill. I'm the current president of AIGA DC, and we're here to show you that make/think does happen in government design.

[Laughter]

Ethel Kessler:

I'm Ethel Kessler, and I have a design firm in Washington. And formerly I was a — an employee of the federal government, and currently I'm also one of the art directors for stamps for the Postal Service. A couple of years ago, I got the assignment to do four Supreme Court Justices. Yesterday was the first day ceremony, and I can tell you that it was so moving to be in the midst of history. At that moment, it's not important being the art director, and it's not important, I think, being the designer/illustrator — what's more important is that Judge Sotomayor was there, that Sandra Day O'Connor was there. My entire career has been involved in lofty issues, communicating to a very big public. Well, it's just extraordinary.

Emily Carr:

Thank you.

Jill Spaeth:

Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Traci Moore Clay.

Traci Moore Clay:

Hello, I'm Traci and from AIGA St. Louis.

[Music]

Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Amy Decker.

Amy Decker:

Hello, I'm Amy Decker, President of AIGA Wisconsin. A few years ago, I left L.A. and moved back to my hometown of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As a result, change of my AIGA L.A. involvement, I never needed a network outside my design community.

Disconnecting from the life I have been living for the last 18 years in the West forced me to design a different life for myself in the Midwest. I never felt so alone. I had to get used to public speaking, I had never led a board. This was way outside my comfort zone. This experience forced me to think differently. Seeing a need to help bring the design community together pushed me to be more involved.

As a result, we made our own design community. This refreshed and inspired me, as well as others. AIGA Wisconsin is in its second year as a revitalized chapter with 200 members. Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Thy Doan and Kevin Perry.

Thy Doan:

I'm Thy.

Kevin Perry:

And I'm Kevin. We're from the AIGA Salt Lake City chapter. [Cheer] [Laughing]
[Background music] As designers we make things — things that we touch, see and feel.

Thy Doan:

We've energized organizations and enriched society.

Kevin Perry:

We've also been responsible for impacting the health of our planet through the materials we choose to use.

Thy Doan:

Realizing the consequences of our choices, we want AIGA Salt Lake City to provide a meaningful example to our community.

Kevin Perry:

We did this by creating the Revinylize Project for the Utah Arts Festival, where we reclaimed thousands of square feet of vinyl and gave it new life in the form of unique vinyl bags.

Thy Doan:

Selling over 400 pre-made vinyl bags and do-it-yourself workshops, the project continues to grow and gain more attention.

[Music]

Kevin Perry:

To find more about the Revinylize Project, or if you want to purchase bags or donate to the Project, visit revinylize.com or talk to one of us during the conference. Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Jay Ganaden.

[Background music]

Jay Ganaden:

Hi there. I'm Jay from AIGA in San Francisco. About two weeks ago, my car was totaled by a drunk driver while parallel parked in San Francisco. At first, I thought that my favorite drinking and driving joke was finally catching up with me. Dude, just drive it off. Most would see this as a tragedy, but as I looked at my car, I laughed. I'm recalling some adventures that I've had with the car over the last nine years, including my roller coaster career in the dot coms, driving my newborn daughter home, snowboarding, backpacking and bike racing, and embarking on two photography businesses. And of course, AIGA stuff.

My friends, and even the insurance company, were amazed at how positive I was throughout the whole experience. And that's the point, think positive. You know, there — you might be here because of a loss — a lost creative vision or a lost job. But no matter what, know that losing is part of winning. You've got to live some adventures, take some risks, and focus on work and people that make you smile or simply make positive first impressions. After all, it's human nature to gravitate to funny, happy people. Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Michael Guthrie.

[Cheering]

Michael Guthrie:

Thank you. Those two words there — when they come together in Memphis magical things happen. Mojo happens. Like when a sound called up from the Mississippi Delta to Beale Street and the young man walked into the arms of Sam Phillips at Sun Studios and made history. When Memphis-area creatives came together to develop the identity for this conference, mojo happened. Someone wrote, “Mojo is a hard — is hard to explain and phenomenal to find.” Some say you carry it with you or a magical spell occurs when things come together, like soul music, soul saving, like civil war and civil rights. But all agree that when someone has it, the power can be mystical.

Finding your mojo is key. It’s key to breaking new ground, it’s key to finding that passion that’s gonna drive your career. And I think that’s why we’re all here; it’s why I’m here. I plan on finding mine this weekend. And whether it’s one person or it’s a hundred-person effort, when it happens, you’ll know it. So I hope you all find it. Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Bernardo Margulis.

Bernardo Margulis:

Hi, I’m Bernardo, Co-Chair — Ethics Co-Chair, AIGA Philadelphia. [Inaudible] I highly enjoy making things. I love making posters, websites, packaging and brands. I love taking a blank format and transforming it into something new, original and exciting. But what really drives me is the idea that as designers, we can make people think. We can take ideas and pressing matters and present them to those who would never think about them in new and innovative ways. We can make a case for sustainability, social justice, quality and ethics. We can educate students to think about the environment and how to sell the threats we pose on it. We can help the corporate world come up with new products to alleviate poverty. We can inspire people to voice their opinions and make themselves heard. We can make — we can move our communities to become safer places for our children. I’m an optimist designer, and I strongly believe that design can make and think a better world. Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Mike Joose and 2007 Command X contestant Matthew Muñoz.

[Cheering]

Mike Joose:

I’m Mike.

Matthew Muñoz:

And I’m Matt.

Mike Josse:

And we're from the Raleigh chapter.

Matthew Muñoz:

So, everyone makes, everyone thinks, everyone designs. Mike and I believe this because we see it in our local chapter, we see it in a larger community and we see it here.

Mike Josse:

We know there are 100,000 ways to make. You can make friends, you can make a sandwich, you can make someone laugh. You can make it rain. You can make unobtainable goals and then meet them. You can make happiness — especially you can make badass things.

[Laughter]

Matthew Muñoz:

You can make simple connections with people because sometimes — more than any other designed object — it's the conversations, the relationships and the examples we set that make impressions on those around us.

Mike Josse:

And through these actions we're making/thinking, either directly or indirectly, encouraging ourselves and others.

Matthew Muñoz:

In this bag there are 1,000 humble reminders — 500 buttons say "Make" and 500 complete the phrase. These buttons are happier when paired together, so we encourage you to connect with us and to connect with others during your time here.

Mike Josse:

And when you leave here on Sunday, we hope these tiny symbols remind you of your ability to continue making beautiful thinking. Thank you.

Matthew Muñoz:

Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Amanda Otter.

Amanda Otter:

Hi, I'm Amanda from the New Mexico chapter, and this is my piece about nurturing your creative soul.

[Music]

Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Jeremy Perez-Cruz.

[Cheering]

Jeremy Perez-Cruz:

Hi, everyone. I'm Jeremy from Orlando, Florida.

[Music]

I hear there's some good barbecue here.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Zack Shubkagel and Robb Smigielski.

[Applause]

Zack Shubkagel:

Hi, I'm Zack.

Robb Smigielski:

And I'm Robb from AIGA Kansas City.

Zack Shubkagel:

In lieu of focusing on what Kansas City is known for — jazz, barbecue, tornadoes, Dorothy, *Little House on the Prairie* — we decided to push each other's make/think envelope for the 20 days leading up to this 20/20.

Robb Smigielski:

So we imposed an ambitious project — create 20 ideas in 20 designs in 20 days. Every day one of us would publish an idea to the other that we personally hold as a truth or axiom about being a designer, particularly in the Midwest.

Zack Shubkagel:

It would then up be — it would then up be — can't even say it — up to the other designer to create an interpretation of that axiom or that thought in a design.

Robb Smigielski:

Idea after image after idea after image, we certainly learned something about each other in a way that a simple conversation couldn't duplicate.

Zack Shubkagel:

We are creatives after all, so why not have a design dialogue? There's nothing like having to visualize someone's beliefs as a means to understanding them.

Robb Smigielski:

So we encourage you to visit twentytwentytwenty.blogspot.com to see the work at a more leisurely pace. Feel free to comment and even think about your own beliefs about the power, significance or multiplicity of this thing we call design. Thanks.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Valerie Sloan.

Valerie Sloan:

Hi, my name is Valerie, but you can call me Val. I'm representing the Rhode Island chapter tonight. Make mistakes, think out loud, explore, expand, explain, experiment, extrapolate. X-ACTO, Xerox, slice, jump, crash, tumble, tear it up, reflect. Look sideways, look upside down, look over there. Play with food, walk the dog, take a road trip.

Twyla Tharp suggests in her book *The Creative Habit* that to think outside the box, you must first define the box. While our methods of making have changed, creativity thrives continuously. I switched gears early in my career to pursue full-time design education, and I'm now on my fourth board of AIGA. I'm not a native of this place, but in two years I'm happy to make, think, live and teach in the smallest box in the union. Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

Michael Surtees.

Michael Surtees:

Hello, I'm Michael Surtees from the AIGA—AIGA New York chapter. What I wanted to share is what I get to think about every day as I walk to work. Graphic design in its purest form. It basically lives and dies on the strength of its mark.

[Street sounds]

Thank you.

[Applause]

Debbie Millman:

And Robin Tooms.

[Cheering]

Robin Tooms:

Howdy. I am Robin Tooms. I am actually representing the fabulous Houston chapter. And I have something I want to show you guys. So the film we're showing is really meant to inspire, but I know that each of you are gathered here this weekend because you care passionately about design, just as I do. But I have something I want you to consider.

[Music]

Thank you.

Debbie Millman:

Thank you, Robin. I'd like to have all of the 20/20ers come out on stage. Come on Charles, Kim, Jane, Traci, Val, Amy, Jay, Donovan and Nate.

[Applause]

Jill and Emily. My gorgeous Jeremy, Kevin, Thy, Amanda, Michael, Robb, Matthew. I can't see everybody now. Ladies and gentlemen, the 2009 20/20 performers from Make/Think.

[Music and cheering]