

Everybody Is an Asshole

“How can I say this as nicely as possible?”

This is my job as a designer. To take shit and turn it into gold. Shit, you understand, it's not even like I'm taking scrap metals and transmuting them into a precious metal. Nope, I just gallop right on by alchemy atop my twenty-foot-tall horse and bitch slap it with the Hand-of-Midas.

Have you read this before? Are you sure? Then you're probably not one of us. This is what we read. This is what we write. Articulate, sophisticated, observant, and inspired. Verbose, obscure, referential, and patronizing. Whether we love ourselves or hate ourselves, we know we're better than the luddite masses incapable of what we do. We wouldn't even be in this field otherwise.

Incontrovertibly, our very livelihood depends on shooting down inferior thoughts and stepping up to replace them with our own masterful conceptions. So when our thought-out, neatly-packaged, highly-prized, and cleanly-presented ideas are challenged, it's in our nature to fight for them tooth and nail. For most of us, this means defending our designs from the filthy, pedestrian hands of our clients. Those of us who either look down on journalism or feel that it's beyond our grasp yet choose to write anyway, attempt to pre-empt any sort of contention by using big words and name-dropping as many esoteric references as possible. We also love our hyphens. Hyphens make you look smart.

But what about everyone else? As I write this, my classmates discuss the unfortunate run-ins they've had with bourgeois unfamiliar with the concept of Graphic Design™. Living, iron-clad proof of my point, conveniently observed from my ivory tower of truth and solitude. They are right, though. It's a pain in the ass to explain this crap to philistines. God knows, I can't even explain it to my parents.

I recently attended a family reunion. You know, the kind where you see forty aunts and uncles that can't believe how much you've grown up. The kind where everyone wants to know what you're doing in school now. Graphic Design. What the hell is that? Well, uncle Hector, it's- and I'm already getting a blank stare here- well, I'll probably use it to go into advertising. Do I plan on making a career out of advertising? Fuck no, but no one here is going to care enough to listen to what I think typography is or the niggling differences between art and design. I mean, honestly, besides *us*, who cares? And that's it right there, I guess. No one else cares about the inner workings.

As far as an outsider is concerned, our job is to make things look pretty. If he doesn't like the way it looks, no amount of justification is going to change that. And who's to say he's wrong? What makes *him* the asshole? How about Susan Sontag, claiming that outside interpretation is a fate worse than death? Is *she* the asshole? Elliott Earls? He seems to think it's not only cute when something is misread, but vital to it having any sort of life. Is *he* the asshole? And here I am, a wet-behind-the-ears college student writing about how wrong *everybody* is. So I'm *clearly* an asshole. Then who's the real asshole? To be quite honest, we're all assholes whether we like it or not.

By the way, we're using italics, *and* hyphens now, so try to keep up.

Inevitably, someone is going to read this and be offended by it, and while that very thought warms my heart, that's pretty pathetic. Even worse, however, is that someone- probably the type to actually use the word “bohemian” in a self-description- is going to agree with it too. The only people I respect are those who won't care either way. Interpretation be damned, I've said my piece for my own reasons, and no one will ever know why for sure. This truth is my own, and though you may borrow it, it will never be yours. And *that* makes me an existential dick. Excuse me, asshole.

Comments are welcome in the space provided.