Set Intentions

Name Omitted

In a world often chaotic and disconnected, I am drawn to graphic design for its ability to create harmony through greater communication and collaboration, leading to stronger communities and personal connections. Design goes beyond visual aesthetics and fulfills its potential when it's able to effectively and elegantly deliver its intended message in a way that's accessible and sustainable. I get excited about beautiful design that also satisfies its purpose in thoughtful ways. One of the greatest joys I find in traveling is seeing how different people solve our common problems and communicate our shared needs through design. There's a great humanity in design as it is a distinctly human compulsion to edit, shift, and restructure our environment for practical and decorative goals. I am pursuing a degree in graphic design because I am passionate about creative problem-solving, communication, and fostering community.

My awareness of art began at a young age and my need to create was nurtured through my dad's demonstration of continual learning and creation as well as a crew of teachers, family friends, and club leaders. Painting and craftwork were my primary fields – working with acrylic, learning to love watercolor, and coming to understand the importance of craftsmanship through sewing. My interest in design (beyond judging advertisement campaigns and irritating classmates over my need to make any presentation flawless) begin through my marketing and writing courses in college. As I was completing a business degree, my natural interests moved less towards the world of statistical analysis and more towards persuasive design, the integration of writing and design, and design's relationship with psychology and human behavior. After spending nearly three years rounding out my business experience by working in the accounting department of a commercial asset management company, I am delighted to re-engage with my left brain and work towards a degree in graphic design.

I'm exploring how I want to approach design as my career. The three standard formats of graphic design professionals all appeal to me, but for a stable career with serious time investment, I am most interested in working as an in-house designer with a side hustle of small business marketing consulting and freelance design. Freelance offers independence, niche work, and a flexible schedule, but its drawbacks include instability and potential isolation. The isolation is concerning because without active

collaboration, my ideas and inspiration resources are more limited than working within a team of varying backgrounds. In-house design addresses the issues of isolation and offers stability in both assignments as well as messaging and management. In-house design paired with a company I believe in and a positive work environment sounds ideal. While in-house design work presents the possible drawback of becoming stale, I believe I could mitigate that risk by pursuing small freelance opportunities and continuing my individual creative practice. Working at a design or marketing firm with a portfolio of clients would protect from the work becoming boring, but the fast-pace and competitive nature of the agency could potentially void out some of the work culture elements that I'm seeking.

Chemeketa's Visual Communications program allows me to pursue graphic design through gaining the necessary skills and theories while developing a career-focused portfolio. In working through the coursework, I am also building my understanding of the career possibilities of graphic design. According to Michael Fleishman in his book *Starting Your Career as a Freelance Illustrator or Graphic Designer*, "to compete in this field, art education is essential…a two-year commercial program is designed to be focused and intense" (Fleishman, pg. 7). With a 3% job growth projected between 2018 and 2028 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics from the US Department of Labor, the overall job growth for graphic designers as a whole is slower than the standard for job growth in the current US economy (BLS, "Graphic Designers"). However, graphic design is also diversifying and partnering with technology to create new career possibilities. Multimedia artists and animators, for example, have a projected ten year job growth that matches the average for the current US economy at 4% (BLS, "Multimedia Artists").

The growth of technology in design has benefits and drawbacks. From the perspective of Matteo Zilla, Art Director of PulceDesign (his own studio based in Switzerland) and Designer for DossierCreative, the availability of creative design software allows anyone to say "I'm a designer," which has decreased the quality of the work. It's now necessary for designers to fight to show themselves as professional. The flooding of the market with freelance and self-proclaimed designers also helps to explain the slower than average predicted job growth for graphic designers in the US economy. The flip side to the integration of technology and increased accessibility is that "thanks to evolution of technology,

we can create something new" that, before, we couldn't even consider (Zilla). Matteo's recommendation for differentiating yourself from other designers and finding success in the design world is to be creative, follow your passion, and "stay outside the lines" (Zilla).

A career in design provides the opportunities of creative problem-solving, collaboration, and using visual communication to achieve broader goals. As a community-invested person, I am especially interested in using design to draw people together, to foster connections, and to support individual and group achievement. I believe in the benefits of thriving small business community and the positive effects they bring to their hometowns, the US and international economy, and global quality of life.

Growing up in Silverton, a small town with a limited (while attractive) downtown and a competitive business community, I have watched businesses open with optimism and either close their doors after a matter of months or become landmarks in our downtown and integral parts of our community. Part of the success of some and the weakness of others has to do with their ability to communicate their offerings clearly and target the necessary markets—namely, their design. For example, we have a plethora of coffee shops for a town under eleven thousand people and yet doors were not closed with the introduction of first a Starbucks and finally a Dutch Bros (we anticipated the untimely death of all our town's drive thrus when the Dutch Bros planted their blue windmill on the prominent thoroughfare). In order for so many coffee shops with generally similar products to compete in the same population, they must utilize design to successfully differentiate themselves and their offerings.

While completing my business degree, I analyzed Silverton's collection of coffee shops based on their products, consumer communication, and market share. From a design perspective, they all answer the question of fulfilling customer needs in a different way—from their signage and the physical environment they offer to their menu and product containers. I'm interested in a career that allows me to look closely at elements like typography and package design as well as consumer psychology and change results by adjusting the variable factors—especially if that career also feeds into the small business community and helps support entrepreneurs in reaching their goals.

With a small business marketing focus, I am interested in freelance branding and consulting services. My background in business and entrepreneurship allows me to understand their business needs holistically and help them in accomplishing their goals. My hope is that I could begin the work with a couple of small, local businesses—ideally ones where I also have a personal connection—to gain more experience and test out my aptitude for the work. I have some experience to draw on already as I spent a couple of years working as a marketing intern for a local jam company. In that position, I was able to expand their social media reach, establish a business partnership with a pub in Oregon City, and successfully sell the jams in person. However, I also struggled when I felt the work was losing direction or when I didn't feel particularly inspired by jam (even though it was both boozy and political, so the marketing possibilities weren't as limited as they might have been). My takeaways from that work include understanding that I need specific objectives from my clients with clear deliverable dates and expectations as well as a greater variety in my overall portfolio of clients and products.

In order to succeed in freelance, I need to establish a network to create connections with clients and a portfolio to demonstrate my abilities, work history, and perspective. Here again, the Visual Communications program is key in advancing my goals. My classmates, professors, and the clients we work with throughout the program can incorporate into my network as well as the people and organizations that I reach out to for school assignments and internship opportunities. My portfolio, established in the barest sense for the application to the VC program, will grow with successful assignments and program client work as well as pieces completed in my individual creative pursuits. As presented in *Becoming a Graphic & Digital Designer*, "most entry level portfolios... (exhibit) original thinking, unfettered by the constraints of a real job, and yet the solutions are realistic" (Heller, pg. XIII). The text also recommends a digital site with "no more than 15 examples" (Heller, pg. XIII). As freelancers are responsible for their self-promotion as strong portfolio and website are essential for demonstrating skill and style as well as advertising previous partnerships.

The need for a successful portfolio carries over into in-house design work as well. As an example, according to a job posting for the Airbnb Graphic Design Fellowship, applicants are required to "provide

a url or pdf of (their) portfolio" demonstrating their "design of both offline and online communications and marketing pieces" (Airbnb). The job posting also highlighted some of the benefits of in-house design that appeal to me. Within this particular fellowship opportunity and in-house design teams as a whole, members are able to "rotate between a handful of different teams in order to explore new skill areas and gain a better understanding of the relationship between visual design and business goals" (Airbnb). I am drawn to the collaborative environment including people of varying backgrounds and the potential for individual career development.

In my interview with Erin Hatch, Senior Associate and Marketing Director at Weber Thompson, we discussed the work culture of her organization and potential for career development. According to Erin, her team is proud of being ego-free (it's a slogan of the company), so there are very few big egos— it's all about the team, collaboration, and sharing. (They) have a collective vision. People are also supported in their professional development goals and encouraged to pursue their certifications (Hatch). As emphasized in my interview with Erin, working in an in-house design environment would capitalize on the skills I've developed in communication, collaborative problem-solving, and team leadership. Having an established group of peers would also allow me to achieve some of my key values: building community and helping people achieve their goals. Within the in-house design sphere, my ideal job would be working at an organization that values sustainability, local community, complexity, and both autonomy and collaborative effort.

The career path options of in-house design and freelancing are united for me by a couple of common themes: the opportunity to engage in community, the importance of communication skills, and the need for a strong portfolio and individual passion. At the end of my interviews with both Matteo Zilla (representing freelance design) and Erin Hatch (standing in for in-house design), I inquired after final words of advice for someone looking to succeed in their career paths and their advice shared a few points. Both highlighted the necessity of an open mind, creativity, passion, and communication. As Matteo responded, "Be creative. Think outside the line and remember (to) follow you(r) passion" (Zilla). Erin listed essential qualities as "enthusiasm, passion, and creativity" and her primary advice was "to keep an

open mind. Often times our paths are circuitous. It's not bad to plot out a plan, but keep an open mind. Look for opportunities and be resourceful" (Hatch). From a team-management and hiring position, Erin also added that "applicants have stood out when their passion shows through" (Hatch). In the end, opportunities are achieved through flexibility, dedication, and following the urge to create.

Through this research paper, I've explored how design could build on my business experience, the pros and cons of freelance and in-house design, specific job postings, and the predicted industry growth over the next decade. I completed interviews with individuals that represent freelance design and self-employment as well as in-house design and marketing. My success in both fields is dependent on my ability to differentiate myself through the strength of my portfolio, communication skills, and passion. Going forward, I am going to continue my research into existing career opportunities as well as attempt to create my own. I need to further define and strengthen what I can offer as a designer. Finally, I need to find connections to places where I can meet specific needs that also align with my primary values of community, communication, collaboration, and creative problem-solving.

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Emily Pelletier
Interview Notes from Conversation with Erin Hatch - October 13, 2019.

Erin Hatch
Senior Associate and Marketing Director at Weber Thompson
225 Terry Ave N #200, Seattle, WA 98109

<u>What does your average work day look like?</u>

      Every day is different, but commonalities include emails, meetings, and interactions. I usually get in the office around 8:00, check my email, have conversations with my coworkers, make a cup of tea, attend 3 or 4 meetings (brainstorming and presenting ideas), work through lunch, get off at 5:00, and answer emails on the ferry home. Communication is the consistent theme -- in person, through email, and through Slack. But it's a variety and no two days are alike. There are surprises every day, like the opportunity to go and walk through a job site.

<u>What is your work culture like?</u>

      It's a causal office that is all about people. We're very supportive of each other, really a work family, caring for each other and supporting each other through personal life (babies, marriages, etc.). We are proud of being ego-free (it's a slogan of the company), so there are very few big egos, it's all about the team, collaboration, and sharing. We have a collective vision. People are also supported in their professional development goals and encouraged to pursue their certifications. (For Erin personally) I've been a part of an association, specifically for marketing in the architecture industry. My time was supported, they allowed about 10-20 hours a week to go on my time card. I've attended conferences and pursued my CPSM (Certificate for Professional Services Marketing). Even though I'm an admin and the typical employee is a designer, they still see my contributions to the firm and support my goals.

<u>What are some influences that have had a big impact on your career that you wouldn't necessarily find on a course list?</u>

      In studying architecture, there was only one class that was geared towards the business side and the teacher clearly hated the subject. We discussed liability and business practices, but the lack of attention to architecture as a business carried through and I found my career through accident. (Her studies in architecture) allow me to be a valuable team member, with empathy and understanding for what my coworkers went through. I discovered an entire career I knew nothing about, it wasn't a class that got me excited. I'm still exposed to the design side in working in a firm with a collaborative culture -- I can still be involved in design projects. Also being involved in SMPS associations. They focus on filling the void in education for marketing professional services (marketing in school traditionally focuses on marketing products).

<u>What would be a dream project or assignment for you?</u>

      At my firm, we're on a quest to do higher design and also ultra-sustainable projects. So a project that combines high design with sustainability where we would get recognition. In architecture, a lot of the firms that get the attention are working without constraints (budget constraints). So a project with a decent budget, high design, sustainability, and credit would be ideal.

What skills do you consider to be essential for your work?
- Enthusiasm
- Passion (it always helps)
- Creativity
- Flexibility
- Listening skills
- Some amount of fearlessness/ confidence
- Communication
- Collaboration (ties back to working in an office with no egos)
- Being willing to swallow your pride

What design trends are you excited about?
- Sustainability
- Technology and its impact on marketing
- Simplicity
  - Modern design is based in simplicity, attention to detail, and authenticity
  - My colleagues are actively shunning anything that is too sales driven

Have you ever been involved in the hiring process? If so, what are somethings that made an applicant stand out?

Yes and applicants have stood out when their passion shows through. You have to have a passion for marketing and design and architecture. Also customer service background. As an in-house team, everyone you work with is a client or customer, so sometimes you have to bend over backwards to make coworkers look good. We also like to see tenure in previous jobs; we're looking for commitment. Overall, a well-rounded individual with passions or interests outside of work.

What are some of your current sources of inspiration?

I'm constantly inspired by my coworkers. Though conversations with coworkers, I can see what they're working on. I'm also inspired by my husband, because he's very interested in different things than I am and he's tech-focused as an early adapter. Plus my daily commute-- the beauty of the Pacific Northwest, the access to the water, plants, sky, watching the seasons change. Like the other day, I passed a pod of orcas on the daily commute.

What is some advice you would give to someone who is interested in having a career like yours?

My main advice would be to keep an open mind. Often times our paths are circuitous. It's not bad to plot out a plan, but keep an open mind. Look for opportunities and be resourceful. Apply what you're learning. One thing that worked well for me was having a lot of side projects and gigging. I connected with job opportunities and design opportunities. I used my interests and gumption. For example, I did wedding photography and some graphic design and that experience lead to leverage in me getting my current job.

Emily Pelletier
Transcript from email interview with Matteo Zilla
        questions posed October 11, 2019 and answered October 16, 2019

Matteo Zilla
Art Director of PulceDesign
Designer for DossierCreative
611 Alexander St #402, Vancouver, BC V6A1E1, Canada

Matteo Zilla
Oct 16, 2019, 8:37 PM
to me

Ciao Emily,
here you will find my answer. I'm not really good with world and english writing.
Hope you will understand everything. If you dont understand something please let me know.

Thank you
Matteo

Il giorno ven 11 ott 2019 alle ore 19:44 Emily Pelletier <emily.pe181@gmail.com> ha scritto:
Hi Matteo,

I really appreciate you taking your time to answer my questions! Please feel free to take your time in getting back to me with these -- there isn't a big hurry.

To start with, what is your current title and organization/ organizations that you are working with?
Art Director of PulceDesign (My own studio based in Switzerland) and Designer for DossierCreative (Vancouver Canada).

What does your average work day look like?
The first thing is go for walk/running or in winter time ski with my dog. I think it's really important get inspiration from nature.
After this morning routing it's really important focus on the project/client. Each client/project we approach in different way, but everybody have something in common, the research. I think its the mot important thing to do when you create something.

How would you describe the work culture of your company?
Good question, be OPEN MIND and always listen the suggestion from everybody (especially the client).
When you design you learning something new and the same time you teach something new to your client.
Always respect the client (if it's possible).

<u>With your work, what are some of your current sources of inspiration?</u>
Inspiration come from everywhere, for me come from the world, city, nature. The other big source is Internet and Social Media. There are some many Instagram account that help you to find the inspiration.

<u>What are some of the biggest changes you've noticed in design since you began your career and especially as you've worked internationally?</u>
Since everybody and use the creative program "everybody can be designer". This is a big problem because the quality of work its really low. So you need "fight" for show your professionally. In the other hand thanks to the evolution of technology we can create something new that before we couldn't think about it.

<u>What would a dream project or client look like for you?</u>
For with company such as Patagonia, North Face, Arc'teryx. I love ski and outdoor and i think work and follow your passion is the best thing.

<u>Were there any courses or outside influences that impacted your studies and career that wouldn't necessarily be on a design school course list?</u>
I think my passion for ski/outdoor give to me a huge impact on my careers. Remember to follow your passion.

<u>What skills would you list as essential in the work that you do?</u>
Be creativity and be different, think outside the line and follow your passion because will help to you to stay outside the line and be different from other designer.

<u>Where do you see design moving in the next few years or are there any prominent trends you've noticed?</u>
No big news, we are "copy" from the past and mix different style. In the outdoor world we are working to look like the fashion world. Nice design, nice color, clean brand and attractive.

<u>Any words of advice for someone who would be interested in a career similar to yours?</u>
Be creative think outside the line and remember follow you passion. Try to specialized in something, we dont like the person said: "i can do everything".