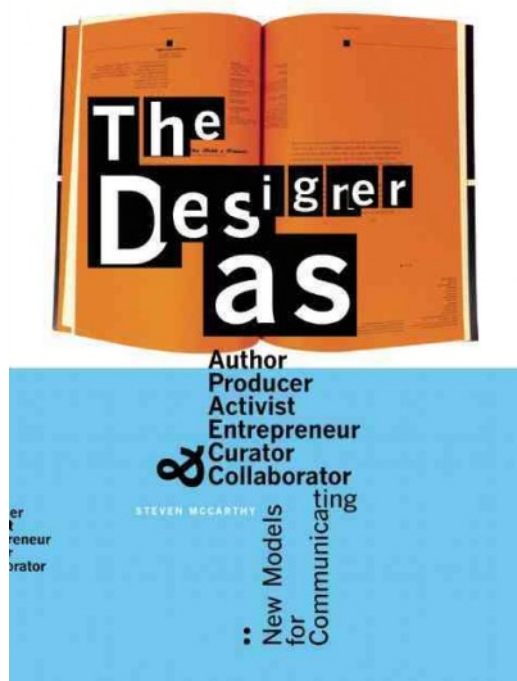


The Designer As ... Author, Producer, Activist, Entrepreneur, Curator, and Collaborator: New Models for Communicating

by Steven McCarthy. BIS Publishers, August 2013. 248 p. ill. ISBN 9789063692926 (pbk.), \$39.00.

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McCarthy's subject—design authorship—is essentially a blending of roles and blurring of boundaries. It is a complex and (as indicated by the ellipsis above) ever-expanding system of activities by which the designer incorporates both form and content into the production of meaning. After defining design authorship and outlining its historical context in the first chapter, the author examines this topic from various angles—textual, activist, artistic, entrepreneurial, and collective—in the remaining five chapters. A diverse corpus of works illustrates McCarthy's discussion, including artists' books, posters, trade publications, pamphlets, postcards, typefaces, prints, digital video, websites, installations, textiles, film stills, photographs, sculpture, and mobile interfaces. Each chapter also features interviews with prominent practitioners, educators, and critics.

McCarthy establishes a lineage from William Morris's Kelmscott Press, though, as the subtitle suggests, he is interested in design authorship as it relates to new modes of meaning-making. The author chronicles how design authorship has gained wider circulation in the design press over the past two decades and notes that practices have matured and started to shift from the margin to the mainstream. Notably, Michael Rock and his 2x4 design firm just published *Multiple Signatures: On Designers, Authors, Readers and Users* (Rizzoli, 2013), which includes a revised version of Rock's 1996 *Eye* magazine essay, "The Designer as Author."

In addition to the inventive typography of *The Designer As ...*, Martin Venezky, the book's designer, adopts a "both/and" approach that encourages reading and looking. The book's

myriad images create multiple, often overlapping narratives. For the diligent reader, an internal logic emerges as the main body of text weaves around large-scale color images as well as a stream of grayscale, thumbnail-sized images and their enumerated, vertically-oriented captions. The interview portions are also illustrated and printed in two columns on buff-colored paper, allowing the reader to single out the contributors' content. The format is a perfect binding with sewn signatures and a glossy, French-flapped cover.

The Designer As ... is not a standard scholarly reference. Footnotes and citations are absent. Instead of a traditional bibliography, McCarthy presents a timeline of significant works, exhibitions, and publications over the past 100-plus years. The only index is a listing of URLs for the Internet-supplied illustrations. The introduction and afterword function as autobiographical bookends and imbue McCarthy's own design work with prescience and continuing influence. As an advocate for design authorship within the field of graphic design, McCarthy's intended audience seems to be primarily students and practitioners rather than historians or design enthusiasts. Thus, this book is recommended as a resource for art and design school libraries or any library collection with a graphic design focus.