

Design Can Change: Answers for designers

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Why are you sending this document to me?

As fellow designers, we want to tell you about *Design Can Change*. It's an initiative that helps designers make the environment a bigger priority while uncovering ways to combat climate change. This booklet is intended to give you a quick glimpse into *Design Can Change* and answer some of your questions.



“Whatever happens over the next few years, our children and grandchildren are going to live in a world in which the climate is very different from the one we grew up with. A climactic time lag means that we are already locked into a further half-century of global warming. The concern is that if we keep on increasing carbon emissions then climate change will become irreversible and the long-term consequences catastrophic.” *Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London*

Source: The Guardian, April 19, 2006

Why should designers be concerned with sustainability?

Scott Ewen from *Emigre* once said, “Designers make the world’s most beautiful trash”, and it’s true. Paper accounts for 81 million tons of solid waste annually, which constitutes 40% of North America’s total. In the United States alone, designers purchase or specify \$9.1 billion in printing and paper annually. When you create that much demand for such resource-intensive products and services you have an opportunity and responsibility to make a difference. Our action, or inaction, will have consequences.

How does it work?

Design Can Change offers a simple framework for bringing sustainable practice to design studios. There’s nothing particularly strict about the effort, it’s really just a set of guidelines that gets the ball rolling.

The effort unites designers, enabling us to spread the word and lobby for change. It also acts as a venue to share knowledge, make resources available, encourage a sustainable mindset, and help build interest in design that is environmentally conscious.

Who is involved?

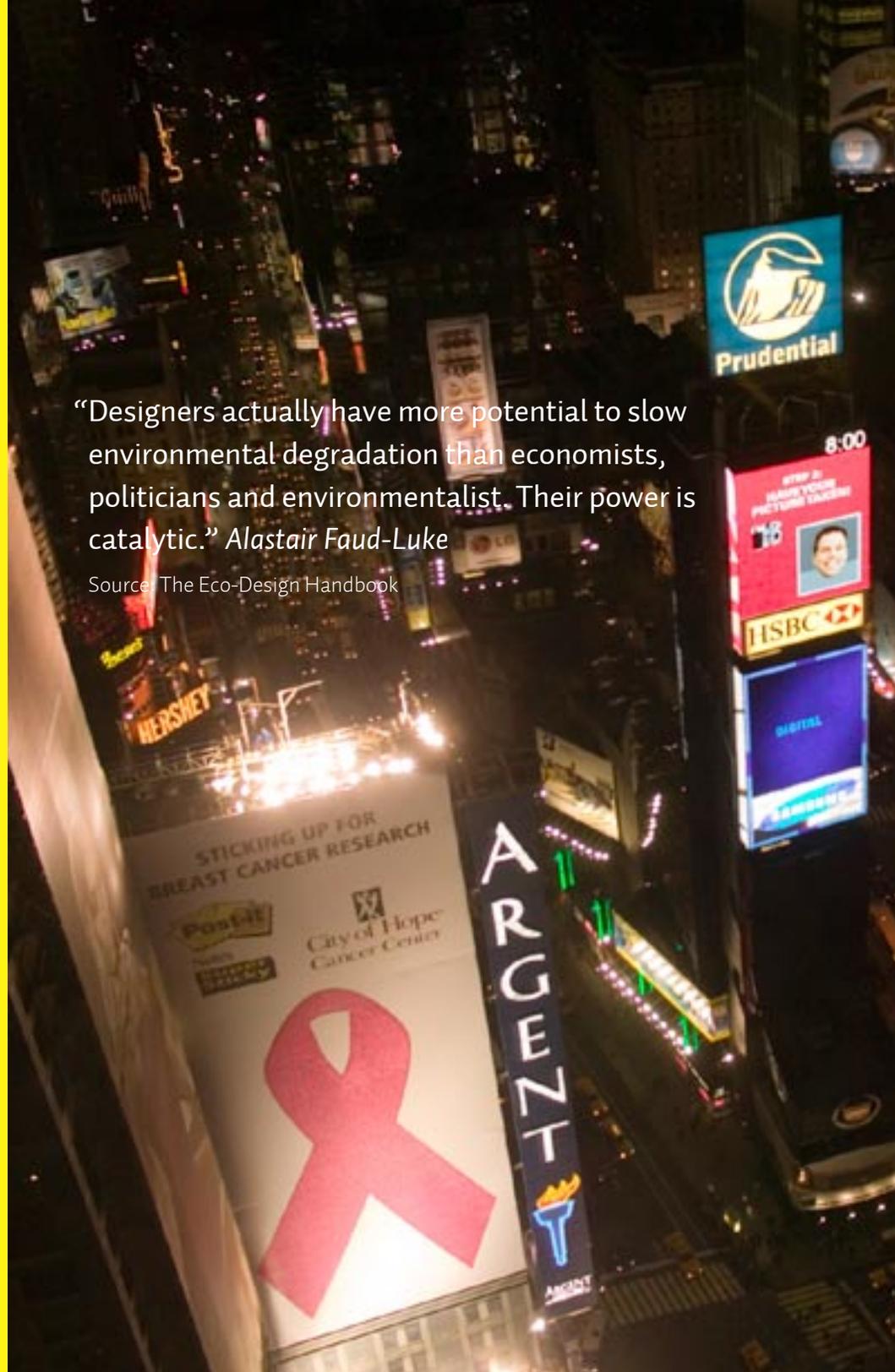
Design Can Change was started by a small studio in Vancouver. Now, designers around the world are getting involved. It's a grass roots campaign and entirely not-for-profit. There's no governing body involved in the effort, so it's really up to us to ensure that we hold up the values that we have voluntarily committed to.

Why should I care?

The risk global warming presents is huge and its impacts can be devastating. As the main contributors to this crisis, we all have a major responsibility.

“Designers actually have more potential to slow environmental degradation than economists, politicians and environmentalist. Their power is catalytic.” *Alastair Faud-Luke*

Source: *The Eco-Design Handbook*



If that's not motivation enough, we should also note that most major brands have added sustainability to their business agendas. They recognize it as a competitive advantage and as a key to continued success. From a position of self-interest alone, you really have to start thinking green.

Will the quality of my design be compromised?

No, it's just a different way of looking at the projects we take on. Sustainable thinking doesn't demand that we become monks. It just asks us to work smarter and think about our impact more carefully. We will be more targeted in our efforts and focus on our client's goals more expressly. We have to think strategically instead of traditionally.

Will this change how I work with clients?

If anything, this is an opportunity to work more closely with your clients. Talk to them about the issue, engage

them in discussion about sustainability, and help them find ways to make positive change. As designers, this is just one more way to offer clients value.

Do we have to become experts in sustainability?

No. We're still designers and the sustainability knowledge of those involved varies greatly. We're not trying to be something we're not; however, we are working together to gain understanding of the issue. We don't have all of the answers, but we have to start asking the questions.

How do I get started?

Visit www.designcanchange.org and read about the effort. The site will answer many of your questions and recommend ways to start addressing the issue. If you feel the initiative makes sense, we'd ask that you sign the online pledge.



“A common complaint at many a design conference is that designers are not taken seriously in the business world. Designers want to sit at the adult table. Yet despite the fact that sustainability is fast becoming a top-level business priority, and that it represents a progressive issue for which many designers should be sympathetic—design community awareness currently trails existing business initiatives (and related disciplines such as architecture and industrial design). When looking for examples of “design with a capital D,” sustainability holds tremendous potential. Designers like to characterize themselves as problem-solvers. If this is true, then they should have little difficulty inserting themselves in the midst of this crucial emerging business dynamic.” *Phil Hamlett*

Source: Communication Arts, Sustainability and Graphic Design

Why should I take the pledge?

By joining with other designers we build critical mass. This helps us illustrate our strength when we lobby government to institute change and ask suppliers to make sustainable options available. Additionally, those who sign the pledge are automatically listed in the *Design Can Change* directory, which allows green-conscious buyers to locate like-minded designers.

How will I tell my clients?

After you take the pledge, we encourage you to visit the “downloads” section on the *Design Can Change* website. There you will find a book much like this one, dedicated to answering the questions your clients may ask. Feel free to share the booklet with them. They will likely be pleased to learn that you are taking such issues into account in your practice.

Will it cost me anything?

Design Can Change does not charge any membership or subscription fees.

How can I do more?

We need to spread the word and unite our community. As such, we ask that you email this document to your peers and ask them to take the pledge. Do you blog? If so, please post about the effort. If you have a website, download the “change” icon and link to the *Design Can Change* website.

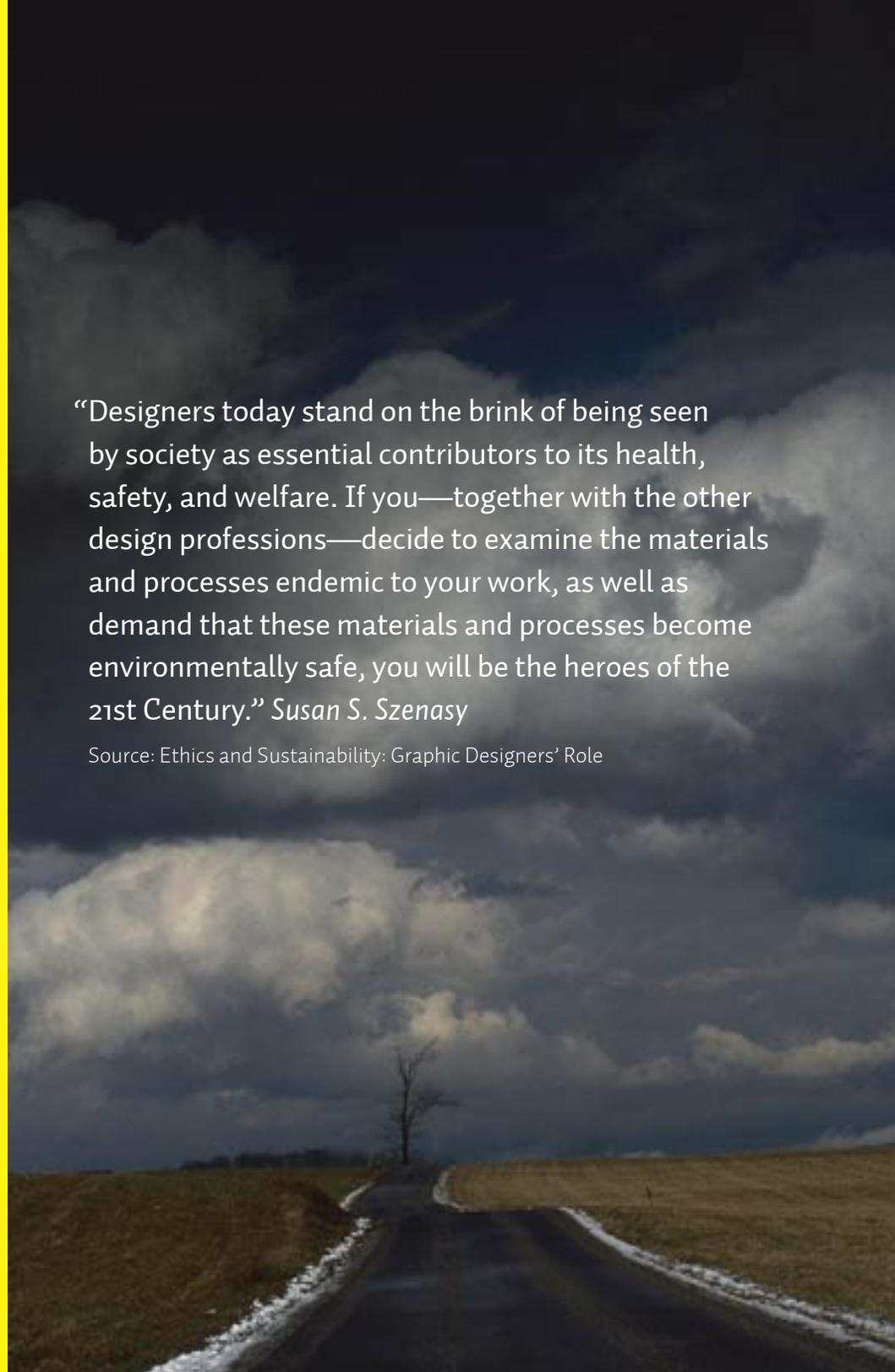
Is there anything else?

We’d just like to say thanks. A number of designers have shown their support and become involved in the effort. We’re grateful for the goodwill. As a group, we can do great things!

If you have questions, comments or criticism, please share them with us: info@designcanchange.org

“Designers today stand on the brink of being seen by society as essential contributors to its health, safety, and welfare. If you—together with the other design professions—decide to examine the materials and processes endemic to your work, as well as demand that these materials and processes become environmentally safe, you will be the heroes of the 21st Century.” *Susan S. Szenasy*

Source: Ethics and Sustainability: Graphic Designers’ Role



Mission

Design Can Change is a non-commercial initiative aimed at bringing together the design community and making system-wide change to how our work affects the planet.

Credits

Design Can Change is a smashLAB initiative
Official imagery sponsor: Getty Images

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