

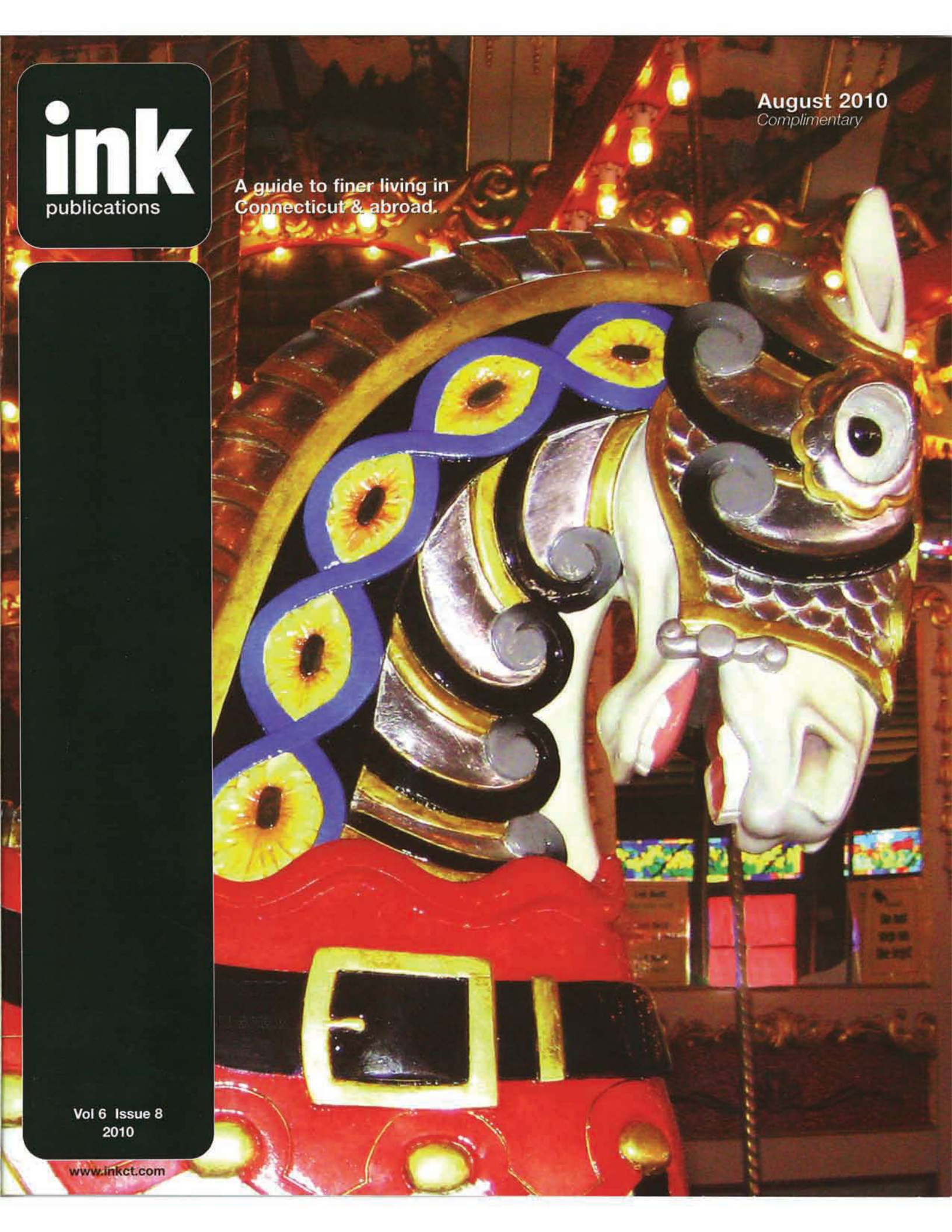
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design ≈ ♡

AIGA

Connecticut

Have You Met AIGA?

The Professional Association for Design

By Lisa Mikulski

Images courtesy American Institute of Graphic Arts

Create, Collaborate, Rethink, Imagine.

I'd like to introduce you to AIGA, the Professional Association for Design. AIGA may not be known to you, but within its organization are some of the finest design minds in the nation. Within AIGA's Connecticut chapter are the people who have created such visuals as the logos for the Hartford Whalers, Special Olympics, Design Is Love, and Save The Music Foundation. Chances are if you look around right now, you may see some example of fine design created by Connecticut talent and chances are that designer is a member of AIGA.

In 1914, at the National Arts Club in New York, The American Institute of Graphic Arts was established "as a source of pleasure and intellectual profit" for its members. Today, it is the oldest and largest professional organization for design . . . but make no mistake, despite its longevity, the

organization still holds true to its mission, yet it also manages to evolve with the design times.

As part of its evolution, 2006 brought about a name change that the organization felt served as a better reflection of the industry's future. The Professional Association for Design not only embraces graphic design, but also the other various professions which orbit around and within the creative design field. Photographers, writers, programmers, web designers, industrial designers and creatives of all designation are welcome to join and interact together.

Today, AIGA represents more than 20,000 design professionals, educators, and students. It provides national and local activities, events, professional development programs, and serves as a source for inspiration and education for its members and the public on matters of design value and ethical practices. There are sixty-five chapters and two hundred student groups; and while AIGA has had chapters in Boston and



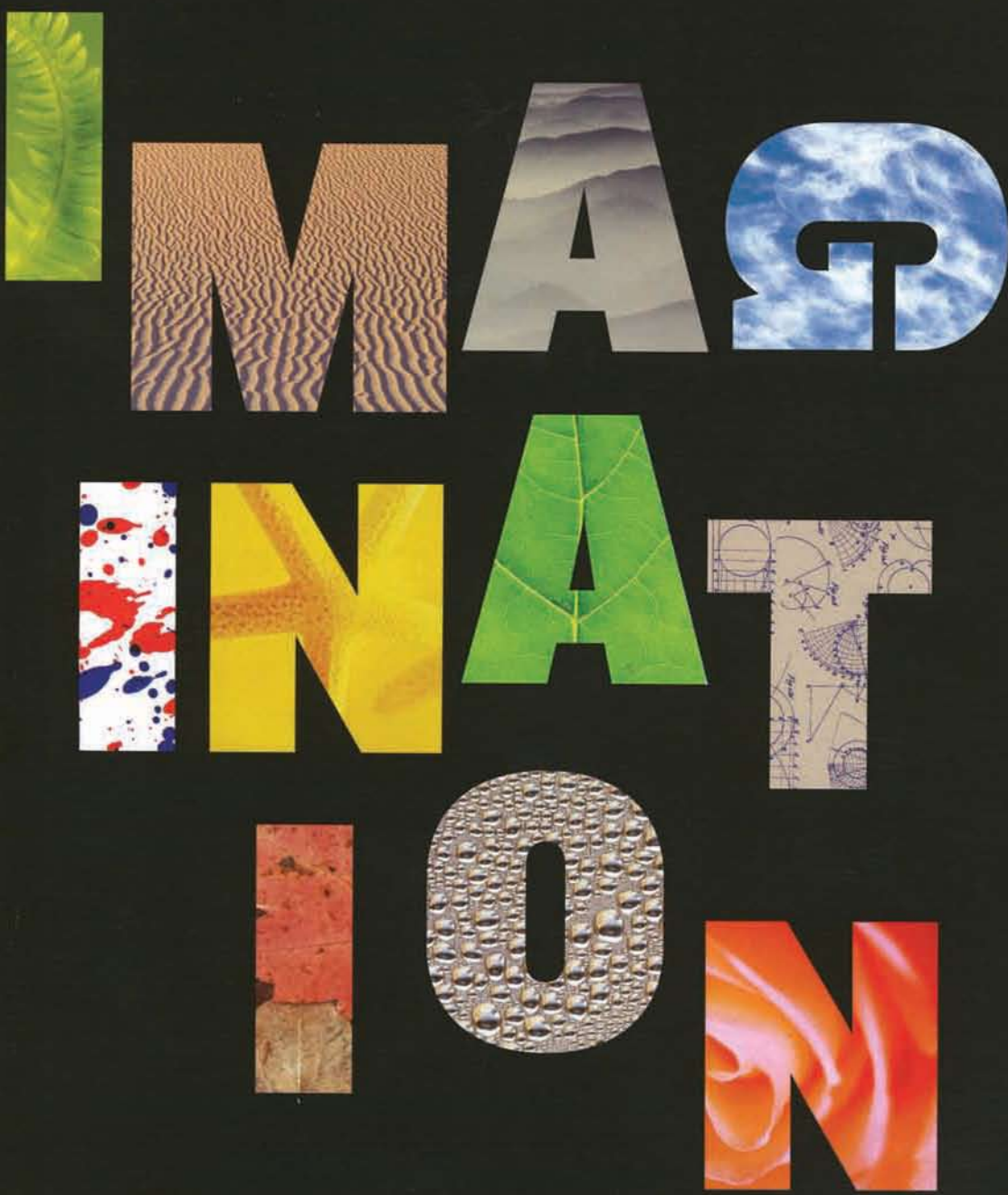
Photo by Aaron Kotowski

New York for many years, it was only less than 2 years ago that an AIGA chapter was established in Connecticut.

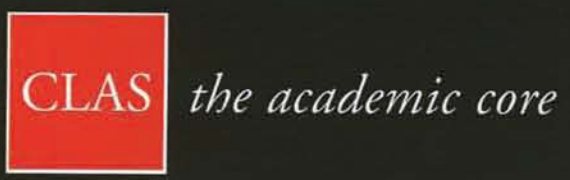
"Several initiatives were made to develop an AIGA Connecticut chapter but it was only until recently that AIGA CT was established," says Peter Good of the Chester Connecticut firm, Cummings and Good, "I've been an AIGA member since 1974 and having to head to New York for a meeting or event was a big deal . . . you'd have to take a half day off from work and often would return back home very late at night. I was delighted when AIGA came to Connecticut because it is a wonderful way to create a local community for like minded professionals."



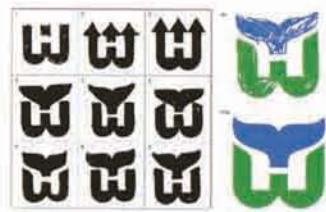
Photo by Aaron Kotowski



is more important than knowledge. Albert Einstein, 20th c.



Design: Peter Good



Hartford Waters logo sketches, Peter Good



Design: John Nordyke



Lotion, Photo by Aaron Kotowski

Lisa Burns, Membership Director of AIGA CT, and Amy Graver, AIGA CT Vice President, felt that it was absolutely necessary to establish a Connecticut chapter and, through their efforts, the Connecticut organization was born.

"The state was rather divided . . . it was sort of like being a Yankees fan or a Red Sox fan; and you either had to drive to Boston or New York for meetings," says Graver. "There was clearly a need here in Connecticut, especially considering all the outstanding designers and firms we have in the state."

As a young chapter, the group is still finding its sea legs but has gotten off to a tremendous start. It is expected that all chapters mirror the high ethical standards and practices set forth by its national mother board; and in keeping with that national mission, AIGA CT has thus far provided quality programming and events which include such design legends as Sean Adams, William Drenttel, Pam Williams, Patrick Coyne and Sean Kernan.

It's not just a matter of programming that members seem to appreciate. "I think what I like the most is exactly what we are doing right now," explains Brent Robertson, Sponsorship Director of AIGA Connecticut, "It's being able to sit around a table with like-minded people while having a great conversation about design. There are no egos, borders disappear, and we are able to connect with other creative thinkers

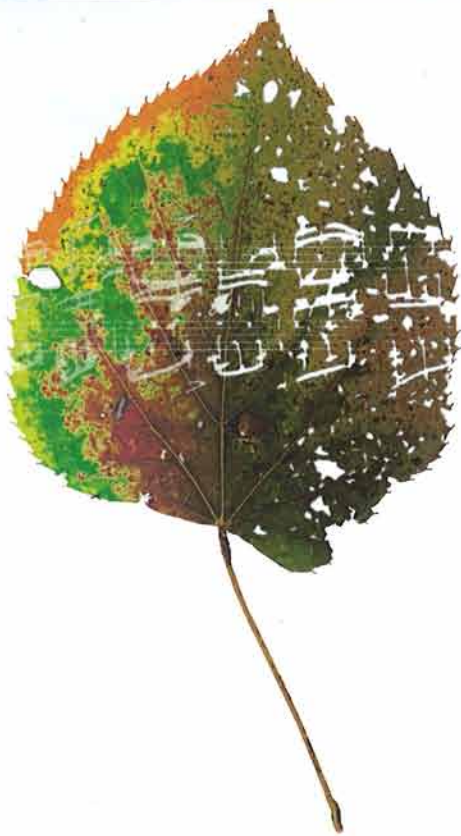
across different channels and different disciplines . . . from independent contractors and freelancers to agency owners. In what other venue do you have that kind of opportunity? That's my favorite part of being in this organization . . . being able to create incredible bonds and friendship."

It is of interest to note that in the ten separate interviews conducted to write this article,

reoccurring themes and sentiments were expressed by all. It was the idea of community, collaboration, and the value of design which members spoke to again and again. "How we solve design problems creatively helps people every day and in every-day life. It's how to make a better mousetrap, a better vegetable peeler; and it's not just about the logo, but the industrial design, the packaging, and information design that participates in everyone's life. We've all seen



Creative Grab Bag - Ethan Bodnar



Chopin poster design, Peter Good

Good, "I feel its much more gratifying to work with design that has an intrinsic value, and I've always been much more attracted to expressing an idea through graphic design or illustration."

Others in AIGA feel the same as design created in Connecticut reaches out not only to local organizations such as the Connecticut Food Bank, but also internationally to such concerns as the China Earthquake and Rwanda.

Does design need to be beautiful? Yes, it does, but its calling is higher. "The aesthetics come last . . . the problem solving and conceptualization is the bulk of the job," explains Lisa Burns.

The people of AIGA are proud to call themselves professionals, and they work hard at it every day. Indeed, one could purchase a logo or brand identity from any of the growing online Internet companies which farm out logos for a song . . . but working with a true professional provides guarantees not found in these crowd-sourcing Internet companies.

There is commitment, responsibility, and relationship involved in working with an AIGA designer; and despite the controversies and conversations regarding getting your biggest bang for the buck with an online Internet logo farm, a professional designer will always work

within your budget and provide the greatest return on investment. It is a part of their job, and their reputation, to do their best work and adhere to established ethical practices.

The First Things First 1964 Manifesto was written in London by Ken Garland and was backed



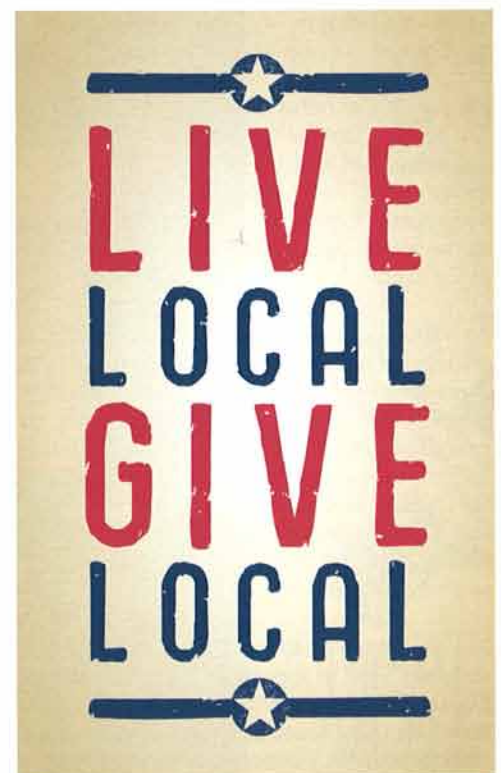
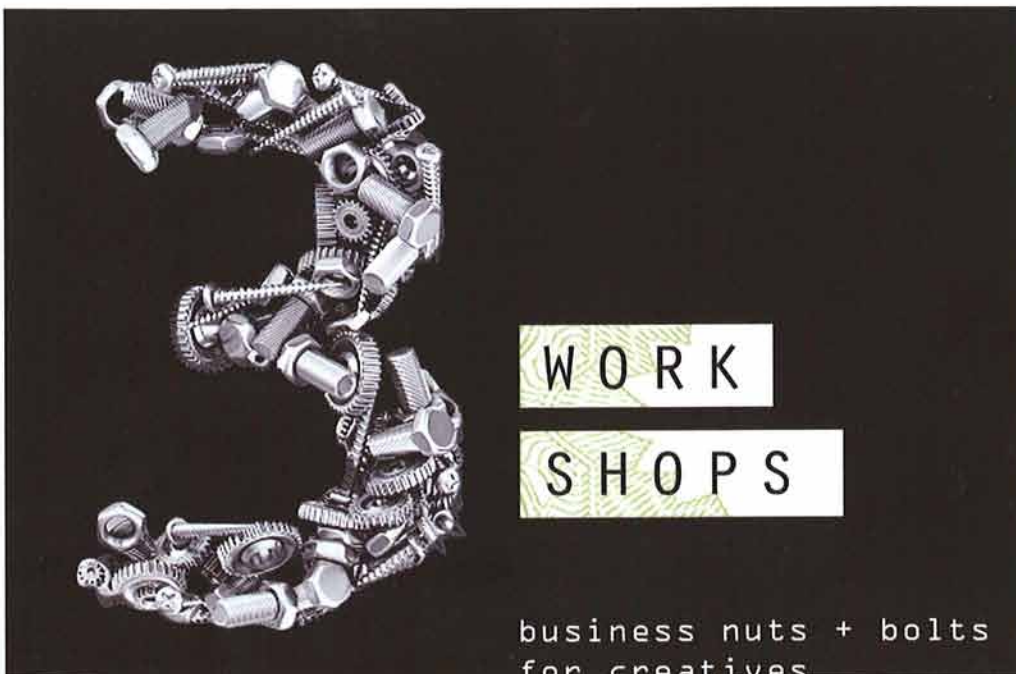
CT Food Bank - Fred Caserta

how the hanging chad can affect the world," says Graver.

"As designers we are always observing how things work and how things are expressed."

The power of typography and images is a heady business, and designers are very aware of cultural and social obligations. "I think the idea of how design can help our community at large and our culture is one of the most rewarding aspects of design. My ideal project would be something that might promote nutrition or prevention of hunger...organic food, local food markets," says

by over 400 graphic designers and artists. To Garland it seemed that design was in danger of forgetting its responsibility to work toward a better life for all. Many shared the idea that the consumerist culture of Britain was only concerned with the buying and selling of things. Because



Design, Noemi Kearns

it's all about the

Love

and a little

about us



in words

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Poster design by John Lepak.

AIGA Connecticut

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graphic design was so entrenched in the consumer driven economy the idea of 'do no harm' was growing among design practitioners. 'Do no harm' is still a part of the professional designer's code; and in 2000 a second manifesto was written and launched by Adbusters magazine, AIGA, and Emigre. Its signatories are designers of repute such as Milton Glaser, Ellen Lupton, Steven Heller, Rick Poyner; and includes designers from Connecticut, William Drenttel, and Jessica Helfand.

As the world changes, so too does its expressions. Always with a finger on the pulse of current events, design communities and AIGA have fostered such groups as Design Ignites Change, Design for Democracy, The Living Principles, and a Better World By Design to bring awareness to cultural and environmental concerns. The prevailing philosophy to 'do no harm' extends to even the supporting sponsors of design. Mohawk Fine Papers is one such example. Mohawk does not provide the every day paper you might use in your copier. Mohawk is the paper of dreams and is esteemed by designers nationally and in



Photo by Aaron Kotowski

dom" behind the multitude of theories and bring them to life for the design community. AIGA's The Living Principles fills that need and states, "The Living Principles weave together environmental protection, social equity, and economic health — thus building

their creations and choices shape habits and values."

"Graphic design is going through an interesting time. More is expected of us today," explains Alexander Isley, of Alexander Isley, Inc. No longer are there geographically specific design styles . . . the Internet has leveled that playing field. The industry embraces a new position where designers are not just creating the graphics, but they also serve as consultants, information specialists, advocates for the environment, public relations spokespeople, and marketing experts.

AIGA's scope is far reaching and brings benefits to its members and the public that only a national organization can bring . . . fighting for legislation, setting standards, and getting involved in issues which protect and support individual members. As AIGA CT Communications Director, Rich Hollant also expressed, "AIGA has given me accessibility to creativity." Where else could a creative find such a home? **ink**

Author's Note: I'd like to thank AIGA, AIGA CT and Mohawk Fine Papers for their help in putting together this article.

Image contributions also include selections from:

- Peter Good
- Nathan Garland
- Fred Caserta Design
- Noemi Kearns
- Aaron Kotowski Photography
- Tom Kutz Photography
- Creative Grab Bag by Ethan Bodnar

Visit websites and resources at:
www.aiga.org
www.connecticut.aiga.org www.livingprinciples.net
www.designigniteschange.org www.feltandwire.com



PamWilliams and AmyGraver - Tom Kutz Photography

Connecticut. It's luscious. It's run by women, and it's sustainable. AIGA prides itself in connecting with such companies.

The pressing concerns of global health are widely accepted in society, but a living framework was needed to distill the "collective wis-

dom" upon commonly accepted, triple bottom-line frameworks. But most significantly, they incorporate cultural vitality because culture is where all aspects of sustainability find their way into the blood stream of society, and culture is where designers have the deepest impact as