

CUT OUT

West Malaysia RM 15
East Malaysia RM 18
www.cutoutmag.com

volume.04
issue.02

PP16659/11/2012 (031877)

ISSN 2180-1754



BLACK
+
WHITE



CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
WHAT'S IN STORE FOR GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

SINGAPORE TOY, GAME + COMIC CON-
EXCLUSIVES AND COSPLAY GALORE

10 BEST BLACK +
WHITE PROJECTS

graphic design. pop culture. and everything in between.

A DIALOGUE WITH DAVID BERMAN

I knew about author-cum-graphic designer David Berman when a committee was set up within wREGA, the graphic design association of Malaysia, to co-create Malaysia's code of professional conduct for graphic designers. For the uninitiated, David is a doer and he does a lot to inspire. When he inspires, the world receives. Driven by a passion for writing and a personal interest in the good of fellow graphic designers, he cares deeply about what he can do, who he does it with and who he does it for. David's work has been about bringing positive changes to the graphic design industry while at the same time working out ways to make social responsibility count in his daily work.

Social responsibility was perhaps an idea that popped in David's head once upon a time and it stayed until today. He discovered there is a potential for the idea to grow into something bigger and better for the community and the society, hence

deserving his lifetime dedication. He had written and developed the code of ethics for graphic designers and is now being used as a template for national graphic design organisations by Icograda, the International Council of Graphic Design Association. It has since been made the code of ethics for AIGA, Grafill, ADGI and now wREGA in its process.

More recently, David and wREGA have begun to collaborate in designing and constructing the code of professional conduct for graphic designers - a move aimed at raising the bar for the graphic design industry of Malaysia. It may be something David has become familiar with since his involvement in this area for about 20 years, but as far as he is concerned, there is definitely something to learn about making graphic design as a business or profession in this country, and eventually a code of ethics that we can all take inspiration from.





When and how did it occur to you that Malaysia ought to have its own code of professional conduct for graphic designers?

I believe that every country should have a code of professional conduct for graphic designers. However it was Zachary Ong, the president of wREGA who had the idea to contact me with the privilege of helping to make this happen.

How will the code benefit the industry and the designers?

The code will elevate both the real and perceived value of design and designers, while helping to ensure that design is serving the social good. It's also an important step towards certification of the profession, which is ultimately what will benefit Malaysia and its designers the most.

Would you like to talk about your encounter with this subject? Why was the code of ethics important to you?

There's a really good book out there that tells

this story and hopefully it will be available soon in Malay as well. However for me it started with my parents: they taught me that social justice was not optional.

Being really good at computer skills and techniques aside, what other life or business skills that every designer should possess?

In order to be our best, we need at least basic understanding in media awareness, universal design and sustainable design. And we need to know how the brain works. If you only read one book this year, I'd recommend Fast And Slow Thinking by Daniel Kahnemann.

You have been involved in the setting up of the code of professional conduct with wREGA. What can you gather or grasp from the conversations that you have had with the members about the graphic design industry in Malaysia? Do you find anything interesting about our work culture?

Two observations: I was impressed with

how similar and sophisticated the concerns of designers are in Malaysia with those elsewhere in the world. I am also impressed with the direct interest in taking proactive steps regarding intellectual property rights and transparency.

You must have had good influences along the way. What has been an inspiration for you in creating the code of ethics especially for graphic designers?

I stand on the shoulders of many, however if I had to name one graphic designer I know well it would be Canada's (and the world's!) Robert Peters. And one graphic designer I'll never meet, it would be Theodor Seuss Giesel.

Was it you who wrote the first code of ethics for graphic designers?

No, I would say that the first document akin to a code of conduct for graphic designers would be the First Things First Manifesto, written by my friend Ken Garland of London, England in 1964.



Can you name us your favourite 5 rules that govern the work ethics of a designer?

Actually I have a 3-part pledge (which designers can commit to at: davidberman.com/dogoodpledge)

1. Ethics: "I will be true to my profession."
2. Principles: "I will be true to myself."
3. Effort: "I will spend at least 10 percent of my professional time helping to repair the world."

Since I get two more, I'll add these:
 "Never amplify a message that you couldn't say directly to your child or best friend without flinching. Never take a project that isn't in alignment with your personal values."

I think having an opinion is not always a bad idea and if expressed in an ethical and sound manner, it would have made someone's day. What are your thoughts on this area?

Not only do I think it's a good idea to speak up, I believe it's our obligation. It is a part

of the responsibility that accompanies the power which the society entrusts us with.

All of us designers will want to know how by having a code of professional conduct can help us progress in our careers.

Please share your views.

I'm eager to share a deep understanding of how the code is an important component of how professionalism can elevate the careers and the professions of those within our industry, as well as benefit all Malaysians. I'm thrilled that I'll be coming to Kuala Lumpur and Penang in early September to personally share the details and the benefits of not just doing good design, but doing good!

wREGA will be launching the Code of Professional Conduct for Graphic Designers in September 2013. Join Fans of wREGA on Facebook for the latest news on design development in Malaysia.