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Processes that cause invisibility for women in Australian graphic design.

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Abstract: Graphic designers are generally invisible as the authors of their own work. A deliberate effort must be made in order for them to be seen and acknowledged. The collaborative nature of design, associations with clients, and the involvement of production teams further hinders an individual graphic designer's visible authorship. However, gender also has a major influence on the invisibility of women in the history of this industry. Historically, the most celebrated practising graphic designers in Australia have been men, as evidenced by their overwhelming presence in books and on Hall of Fame platforms. My research has explored and addressed the key processes that cause this gendered inequity, including the representation and understanding of the name 'graphic design', the biases in historical narratives, and the disparate understandings of 'success' and 'significant contributions'.

Keywords: australian design; graphic design; women in design; invisibility/visibility

1. Introduction

It is rare to see a graphic designer's name, their collaborative team, or even a studio they are a part of, identified in the work they produce. It is often the case that the commissioning client and their messaging is the most visible aspect of the work. However, visibly participating in the wider design community is one way that graphic designers can reclaim their authorship and make their contributions visible. History books and archives also offer curated spaces for graphic designers to be recognised with some longevity. 'Visibility' therefore is a term used in this article to simply describe the state of being seen as an author of graphic design. Conversely, 'invisibility' refers to the whole or partial absence of this authorship.

The attention associated with authorship and the problem of how to connect it to designers is reinforced by Michael Rock in his essay *The Designer as Author*, where he states:



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“The word [author] has an important ring to it, with seductive connotations of origination and agency. But the question of how designers become authors is a difficult one. And exactly who qualifies and what authored design might look like depends on how you define the term and determine admission into the pantheon.” (Rock, 1996)

Complexities surrounding the attribution of both peer-assigned and self-assigned authorship are further complicated when it comes to recognising the many women who practise graphic design. In 2009, Australian design researcher’s Dr Yoko Akama and Dr Carolyn Barnes lamented the lack of data about women who have made an impact in Australian graphic design. They concluded:

“Women designers ... remain a small minority in the roll call of prominent Australian graphic designers. It is beyond question that these groups make a productive contribution to their field. The failure to acknowledge this contribution through public visibility and leadership undercuts the industry’s ability to engage with the complexity of Australian society, characterized as it is by an ever-increasing multiplicity of peoples, identities, cultures and social circumstances.” (Akama and Barnes, 2009, p.29-40)

There are three distinct process that are identified and explored in this article that suppress the visibility of women in graphic design. The first of these is the confusion surrounding the term graphic design, the second is the way history is written and the final point is the biases at play in the way ‘success’ and ‘significant contribution’ are defined by the industry (Connory, 2019).

2. Graphic design’s identity crisis

Graphic design is observed in popular culture through a disparate lens. Sometimes it is viewed with disdain and other times as ‘cool’. FYI I’m a graphic designer is a short film on YouTube which edits together clips of people commenting on graphic design (Mercer and Streule, 2015). Eighteen Hollywood movies and popular US and UK television shows—like Juno, Parenthood, and The Office—show people struggling to explain the depth and breadth of what a graphic designer does. They simplify the complex processes, skills and knowledge into comments like, “...we do menus and logos and things like that” to “... you make pamphlets and DJ flyers” (Quinn and Bisutti, 2010; Cilella and Curran, 2013). Graphic design is seen as both “edgy” and “creative” as well as being a “sell out” profession and something that “anyone with a laptop can do” (Mercer and Streule, 2015). The level of insight into graphic design and its professional standing is limited and misrepresented.

Steven Heller, a design critic, positions this lack of understanding as an “identity crisis”, and explains how this extends to both graphic designers themselves as well as to the industry bodies that represent them (Heller, 2007). Simply not knowing how to consistently label themselves through time, Heller says, graphic designers add to this confusion. They use a divergence of names, including “humdrum commercial designer” to the convoluted “human-centred interface designer” (Heller, 2007). Both the AIGA (formally the American Institute of Graphic Arts) and AGDA (the Australian Graphic Design Association), now both insist on referring to themselves by acronyms. This is done so as not to draw attention to the grey

areas, that is, the words ‘graphic arts’ and ‘graphic design’, denoted by initials within their names. The AIGA announced this change in 2005, while AGDA went through a major rebrand in 2014 (Twigg, 2005; Ricki 2014).

Alan Young attempted to address this issue by examining the localised discourse surrounding graphic design in Victoria, Australia. His research also revealed a disparate system of classification with a list of educational courses, institutions and businesses that linked graphic design, as a comparative career throughout history, to “Graphic Art, Commercial Art, Industrial Art, Design Arts, Decorative Arts, Applied Arts, the Minor Arts and Visual Communication” (Young, 2005). However, Young’s research did not directly ask the graphic design community what they called themselves. I designed the Invisible Women Survey, to fill this gap and to reclaim a clearer understanding of what the typology of Australian-wide graphic design might be throughout history—in the eyes of those involved (Connory, 2019).

The responses reinforced the idea that graphic design has an identity problem. In 2016 the Invisible Women Survey was conducted which underpins much of the findings in this paper. The survey was sent to a random sampling of stakeholders in Australian graphic design and was circulated online by local and international industry blogs, professional bodies, and design commentators.¹ A series of closed and open-ended questions were asked in relation to the themes of the evolution of the graphic design, the historical record of graphic design and the scope of significant contributions. Open-ended questions asked respondents to name women who had made significant contributions to Australian graphic design since 1960. The survey revealed 61 in over 50 industries. Graphic designers were shown to create everything from logos and advertising to services and apps. The tools they used were shown to evolve rapidly since 1960, from Indian ink and rubber cement to Adobe software and Mac computers. Finally, the purpose of a graphic designer was shown to have changed from selling products to social activism.

Frustrating as this complex lexicon of graphic design is, one of its negative consequences is the way it hinders the visibility of graphic designers themselves. Victor Margolin, a professor of design history, labels this phenomenon as a “crisis of design” (Margolin, 2013, p.400-07). He claims, “In the realm of discourse, there is insufficient understanding of design’s scope, which results either in much design activity remaining invisible to critics, editors, curators and others whose function it is to present design to the public...” (Margolin, 2013, p.400-07).

Within these muddy waters, it is women who have become much more invisible in comparison to men. For example, the visual portrayal of the graphic designer has been typically male. In his 1993 paper, “Research in Art and Design”, Christopher Frayling elaborates on who a stereo-typical designer is throughout history, labelling a progression from a “pipe smoking boffin”, to a “solitary style warrior” and finally to a “research scientist – who in most cases “tends to be a man (Frayling, 1993, p.1-5). A Fine Line: A History of

1 All research and data storage, including the surveys and interviews conducted in the following project, were given a Human Ethics Certificate of Approval by Monash University, with the project number CF16/848 – 2016000425.

Australian Commercial Art, (1983) the only comprehensive and now ageing history of Australian graphic design, unapologetically pictures a commercial artist on its cover. He is shown as a smiling, enthusiastic white Aussie bloke, wielding a brush and wearing a crisp shirt, tie and vest (Caban, 1983).

This disparate view of graphic design in popular culture, its confusing lexicon, its ambiguous purpose, and the stereotype of a graphic designer as male, all hinder the visibility of women in Australian graphic design. However, academia has proposed some solutions to this problem. Design historian, Martha Scotford, through a contextual typology of the roles undertaken by women in graphic design, contends for a distinctive female perspective to elevate their level of importance and visibility. She argues, “In studying women designers, it is important ... to understand the private and public roles available to women at each particular time” (Scotford, 1994, p.367-876).

It was therefore important to add the specific opinions of women to this article. I conducted interviews in 2016 with women in Australian graphic design, who had been identified as making a significant contribution since 1960 by the Invisible Women Survey participants. These interviews will be referred to throughout the article and were also a series of open ended questions that collected the participants demographic information and covered the themes of significant contributions, the evolution of graphic design and visibility.² These women’s responses ranged from identifying with the name of the degree they had undertaken to appreciating the ambiguity of graphic design nomenclature. For example, Abra Remphrey the co-owner and director of Detour Design in Adelaide, tied her identity to her education, which clearly defined her in line with the name of her degree—as Visual Communicator. Dianna Wells, who established her career at Another Planet Posters, achieved a printmaking degree at the Canberra School of Art rather than a design qualification. She felt the name ‘designer’ encompassed the array of creativity and diversity of skills she brought to the role. Jessie Stanley, now an artist who develops installations for public spaces in Victoria, liked to exploit the undefinable element of the profession, saying she has always been interested in “Redefining the role of graphic design...”. While Sandy Cull, with over 30 years of experience in the publishing industry, called herself a book designer, simply because “I’m not interested in doing anything else”. Suzy Tuxen, owner of A Friend of Mine in Melbourne, spends a lot of time clarifying the process of graphic design to her clients, saying “... it is something that you have to constantly explain to people...”. Sue Allnutt, owner of Nuttshell Graphics and Lynda Warner, owner/operator of her business in Tasmania, both have the longest careers among those interviewed. They also prefer the simplicity of being called a graphic designer.

Through the responses of these women, it is clear that there is no consensus to the way in which they label or define graphic design. Time in the industry, the title of their qualifications, and client expectations, all have influence over their interpretations, but

2 The transcripts and interview notes are archived privately on the Monash digital system called FIGshare. There are elements on each of these documents that the interviewees requested remain anonymous.

the ill-defined and inconsistent nature of the profession remains present in the experience of their careers. While there is much ambiguity about nomenclature the sheer number of women employed as designers' merits greater advocacy for their contributions to the profession. Maybe if the consistency and clarity demanded of a well-designed brand was applied to graphic design's identity, the visibility of those who practised in the profession would also gain more prominence and recognition.

3. History repeating itself

The published histories of graphic design also distinctly add to the invisibility of women in Australian graphic design. By and large, men have authored the vast majority of our western histories, favouring a narrative focussing on other men. However, this is not a problem isolated to Australian history. As long ago as 1946 Mary Beard, in *Women as a Force in History*, identified the particular ambiguities and false presumptions of men simply writing about "mankind" (Beard, 1964, p.57-85). In 1964, during the height of the second wave of feminism, Edward Hallett Carr pointed directly to the negative impact of these implicit biases, saying that, "... the historian is engaged on a continuous process of moulding his facts to his interpretation and his interpretation to his facts" (Carr, 1964). More recent writings, like those of Jill Matthews, sought theoretical underpinnings to this phenomenon (Matthews, 1985). Others continue to dispute the ability of history to be purely "objective, scientific knowledge" that reflects "universal truths," but rather characterises it as an "exercise of power through activities surrounding historical knowledge..." where "...women, non-Europeans, amateurs, local events, and domestic life [are] inferior, superficial, less well developed, less important" (Smith, 1998, p.90). There will always be a subjective nature to writing histories, even when it consists of scholarly research from quality sources. However, history reflects the fact that male authors are conditioned to value and prioritise the stories of men. This is an issue which continues to hide the significant contributions of women in Australian graphic design.

Empowering women and minorities to record and write histories is the obvious solution to this problem. However, defining how best to record the history of graphic design has been contested over recent decades. Another solution, and one that most scholars, historians and practitioners agree on is the merits of simply making the historical narrative more inclusive. Clive Dilnot outlines that making the definition of design clearer has the potential to give historians a more inclusive sociological perspective (Dilnot, 1984, p.6). Bridget Wilkins has pushed for historians to look beyond the aesthetic values of graphic design ephemera, and to question the stories behind the makers in order to reveal graphic design's true historical value (Wilkins, 1992). Tony Fry warns us to "beware of neat narratives" and to look into the marginalised messiness of design history (Fry, 1989, p.15-30). Margolin, also argues for a shift from "... a history of objects, to a history of practice..." and Teal Triggs highlights the integral role that the voice of the designers themselves should have in forming such histories (Margolin, 1996; Triggs, 2011, p.3-6).

A more extensive and personal perspective of the field can widen the filter of inclusion and begin to include silenced voices in the history and currency of graphic design. It can justify the acceptance of women as significant contributors and highlight how existing homogeneous male perspectives have consistently omitted and lessened the contributions of female practitioners. Such comparative and broad research methodologies are shown as essential by Martha Scotford, “to conceptualise the inclusion and significance of women in graphic design” (Scotford, 1994, p.367-87). Juliette Peers is also critical of existing design history methodologies, saying they have led to “alternative and minority positions being overlooked, such as women artists, queer artists, artists outside the nationalist/landscape themes, talented but conservative artists, the often Eurocentric interests of design, applied arts and architecture” (Peers, 2011, p.1-18). Cheryl Buckley suggests that patriarchal perspectives on design history has meant women’s roles in collaborative and domestically focussed design is often devalued and thus excluded. She suggests critical assessments of why women are invisible in historical narratives and encourages the development of feminist frameworks that widen the breadth of these narratives (Buckley, 1986, p.3-14). Judy Attfield mirrors Buckley’s sentiments arguing that historians need to apply a feminist perspective to their research, be “sensitive to diversity” and question object-based conventions existing in design history (Attfield, 1989).

However, there is opposition to focusing on individuals as sole geniuses—of any gender—in these methodologies. Bridget Wilkins states that the old-fashioned approach of identifying single heroes, as done in the historical record of art, is too linear and fixed in its approach. She argues that the change that needs to be made is simply through explaining “why graphic design looks the way it does” (Wilkins, 1992). My counter argument here is that this “why” can actually be found within the lives experienced by these designers and the social contexts that influence them as they built their careers. This innate complexity of designers in competition with what they design is best summarised by Edward Hallett Carr, when he writes, “the question, which comes first—society or the individual—is like the question about the hen and the egg” (Carr, 1964). Yet, the absence of women within this complexity must be scrutinised and remedied because of its stubborn reoccurrence.

Similarly, an insistence on the inclusion of women within histories because of their gender can be problematic. It can frame women as the oppressed martyrs and victims of the patriarchy rather than raising the value of their unique contributions, which are often different to men’s, due to the contextual economic and societal expectations of their times (Beard, 1968). Here, framing such inclusion as ‘feminist history’ rather than ‘women’s history’ begins to resolve this problem, with the differences being simply explained by Sheila Rowbotham. She writes, “Women’s history is defined by its subject matter—women. Feminist history is defined by its conscious standpoint—feminism” (Rowbotham, 1975). Although the definition of feminism has moved through several ‘waves’ since the Suffragette movements’ struggle for the right to vote in the early 1900s, this research simply defines feminism as a form of activism working towards equity. This feminist lens is raised as a challenge to historians, by Ann Curthoys and John Docker, both Australian historians, “...

to insist that the traditional or existing historical periods are understood equally in terms of their meaning for women as for men” (Curthoys and Docker, 2006). This viewpoint is also offered by Patricia Grimshaw, who sees the rethinking of feminist history as closely intertwined with the writing of Australian history; she expresses hope for “not only a new history of Australian women, but the effective writing of a new Australian history” (Grimshaw, 1991, p.151-69).

This connection between women omitted from graphic design in history and the way Australian narratives have been overlooked and undervalued in the history of graphic design can be seen as a side-effect of the trend towards a global design history. This globalised view of the discipline is particularly problematic, not only because of its “marginalisation of women and indigenous people” but because of its “inevitable outcome [of] an homogenised world modelled on Europe or the United States of America” (Huppatz, 2015, p.182-202). However, the future of this “geographical power play”, where innovations and experiences of design in Australia are overlooked, can also be diverted (Huppatz, 2015, p.182-202). According to design historian Daniel Huppatz, this can happen by addressing “where to situate the history (or perhaps the pre-history) of indigenous design in Australia” (Huppatz, 2014, p.205-223). Historical graphic design canons often begin their timelines with Palaeolithic cave paintings in France and Spain and claim that these images are the genesis of graphic design (Jubert, 2006; Drucker and McVarish, 2013; Meggs, 1992).

However, ongoing testing of indigenous rock paintings in remote Australian locations have dated them as up to 65,000 years old. This disputes the origins of the discipline as Eurocentric and pre-dates the images found at Altamira, Lascaux and Chauvet by 25,000 to 30,000 years (Weule and James, 2017). Proper consideration of indigenous histories in Australia, along with ethnographic studies of this culture that still exists, is “crucial in the development of a more inclusive Australian design narrative and identity” (St John, 2018, p.1-19). Although this article focuses on the lack of representation of women post-1960, rather than on indigenous contributions to Australian graphic design, this call for a proper examination of Australian history and “social contexts” is central to its methodology. One which embraces intersectionality (that is the diversity of age, race, religions and abilities, as well as gender) at all stages of the narrative.

Filling the gaps left by the absence of women in history is not a new concept, and it has gained momentum through prominent Australian and global publications like *Places Women Make*, *Chasing the Sky*, and *Women in Graphic Design 1890-2012* (Jose, 2016; Dewhirst, 2017; Breuer et. A., 2012). These revisionist histories all take different approaches to historicising design. More recently international efforts have also continued this momentum towards gender equitable narratives. The Hall of Femmes has published a series of books and podcasts on women in art direction and design, and design historian Cheryl Buckley has continued her work by delivering the paper *On the Record: Researching Women and Design* at the Swiss Design Network Research Summit in 2018 (Unknown, 2009; Buckley, 2019). More books like *Women Design: Pioneers in architecture, industrial, graphic and digital design from the 20th century to the present day*, by Libby Sellers have been published and

continue to fill the gendered gaps in the history of graphic design (Sellers, 2017). Some focus on the forgotten stories of women, some on the individual profiles of women in Australian architecture, and others on a more academic approach in the form of scholarly essays. However, all are in line with the previously mentioned methodologies in advocating for increased diversity within histories. The goal of such work, in addition to learning from the women's experiences, is to create a permanent legacy that we can learn from and celebrate.

4. Success and significant contributions

Defining what a significant contribution is for a graphic designer is as personal and varied as determining what it means to be a successful graphic designer. This breadth of scope can also affect the visibility of women in Australian graphic design. Both of these terms— 'success' and 'significant contribution'—are used interchangeably in this article. This is done with the deliberate intention to encourage those women, who I interviewed, to think beyond how success might be defined in the traditional and gendered sense. Empirical studies show that success can be "multi-dimensional", related to "self-concept", and a subjective variable related to an individual's feelings (Gattiker and Larwood, 1993, p.78-94; Van Eck Peluchette, 1993, p.198-208). One way to comment on success is through the understanding of achievement measured by an internal or intrinsic drive; however, success can also be interpreted through more traditional "extrinsic job successes" (Nabi, 2001, p.57-74). For example, remuneration, and moving up the corporate ladder.

One existing measure of success for Australian graphic design is the criteria for the AGDA Hall of Fame, Australia's pre-eminent platform for recognising significant contributions throughout the history of Australian graphic design (Rendoth, 2018).

- These criteria include:
- Longevity of career;
- Extensive and consistent body and quality of work;
- Uniquely high standards of work, of research, investigation and innovation;
- Professional integrity;
- Industry/government awards;
- Peer recognition;
- Published works;
- Exhibitions;
- Powerful and measurable contribution;
- Social, cultural, economic, environmental and political impact;
- Public recognition;
- Educative contribution; and
- National and international participation.

There are intrinsic measures in this criterion, namely integrity, but most of the measures are weighted heavily towards extrinsic values, for example, recognition and power. On top of this, the process through which individuals are inducted into the AGDA Hall of Fame remains

subjective. The current implementation of these criteria is performed by the AGDA Hall of Fame Committee. Initiated in 1992 by Gary Wilson (himself now a posthumous Hall of Fame member), the committee still comprises a majority of men. This brings the issue of gendered and implicit biases and their effect on the AGDA Hall of Fame admissions to the fore, along with differing personal values related to intrinsic and extrinsic criteria. These biases are worthy elements to consider when exploring the visibility of women in Australian graphic design (AGDA, n.d.).

Table 1 AGDA Hall of Fame Inductees.³

Year	1994	1996	2000	'02	'04	'06	'08	'10	'12	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	Totals
Women	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	4
Men	3	4	2	2	2	2	0	2	1	4	0	1	1	1	1	26
Total	3	4	2	3	2	2	0	2	1	4	0	2	1	2	2	30

Lorraine Dyke and Steven Murphy have shown that there is a distinct difference between how women and men define success. Their qualitative interviews with both women and men showed that “Clear gender differences did emerge, and [that] they echo[ed] in significant ways the gender role stereotypes that still reverberate in our culture” (Dyke and Murphy, 2006, p.357-71). Women predominantly defined success as a balance within their life. This was not a rejection of traditional values like financial rewards, but an overall approach that measured this in equal parts to emotive outcomes. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to equate perceptible gain with success. This bias is evident in the AGDA Hall of Fame criteria, which ultimately celebrates more men than women, as shown in Table 1 (above). For example, many of the male biographies published on the AGDA Hall of Fame point out extrinsic signifiers as a measure of success including, “naturally he bought an MG”, “an attention getter” and “Australia had never seen such bravado in graphic design” (AGDA, n.d. B). AGDA’s propensity to weight its judging on the states of acceptance and appreciation has the potential to omit people who view success as a balance of career and caring responsibilities.

In order to gain a clearer picture of what success might mean for graphic designers in Australia, on a broader scale, the respondents to the Invisible Women Survey were also asked to rate the importance of 24 possible indicators of significant contribution. The top five indicators became: “working experimentally”, “mentoring others”, “having a profile amongst their peers”, “working towards social good”, and “supporting themselves financially as a designer.”⁴ The lowest indicator of significant contribution—rated as “not important” by 72 per cent of the women respondents and 93 per cent of males respondents—was “making a six figure income”. Four of the top indicators only had a 5 per cent difference in responses from women and men; however, the top rating indicator, “working experimentally” had a 14

3 Table created by Jane Connory from the AGDA Hall of Fame website (AGDA, n.d. B).

4 See Appendix 1 for Invisible Women Survey data on ‘significant contributions’.

per cent difference, with women at 32 per cent and men at 46 per cent. This could again be due to the different ways women and men perceive success.

Apart from the risk-taking inferred in men's preference to work experimentally, what these outcomes demonstrate is that both women and men in graphic design have a balanced view of what they classify as a significant contribution or as a measure of success in their industry. "Mentoring others" and "working towards social good" both hold intrinsic values, where giving rather than receiving is seen as of "vital importance." "Having a profile amongst their peers" and "supporting themselves financially" are more extrinsic values, also seen as of "vital importance," that focus on recognition and financial returns. The top response of "working experimentally" hints that the creativity of graphic designer's experience internally, and the creativity they express externally through their roles, has both intrinsic and extrinsic elements to it. This, again, is evidence that the participants in the Invisible Women Survey and the wider graphic design community in Australia have a differing opinion as to what classifies as a significant contribution in comparison to the AGDA Hall of Fame.

Table 2 Demographics of participants in the Invisible Women Interviews (2016).⁵

Age	Year of graduation	Highest design qualification	Location of practice	Time in practice	Employment status in practice
30-39	2000s	PhD	VIC	20 to 29	Owner with no employees
30-39	2000s	Bachelor	VIC	10 to 19	Owner with employees
30-39	2000s	Bachelor (Honours)	TAS	10 to 19	Owner with employees
30-39	1990s	Bachelor	VIC	10 to 19	Owner with employees
30-39	2000s	Bachelor	NSW	1 to 9	Owner with employees
40-49	1990s	Bachelor (Honours)	NSW	10 to 19	Partner/Owner with employees
40-49	1990s	Bachelor	VIC	10 to 19	Owner with employees
40-49	1990s	Bachelor	NSW	10 to 19	Partner/Owner with employees
40-49	1990s	Bachelor	SA	20 to 29	Partner/Owner with employees
50-59	2010s	PhD	VIC	10 to 19	Education/ Research
50-59	2000s	Masters	VIC	20 to 29	Owner with no employees
50-59	1980s	Bachelor	VIC	10 to 19	Owner with no employees
50-59	1980s	Diploma	VIC	10 to 19	Creative Director with employees
50-59	1970s	Diploma	TAS	30 to 39	Owner with no employees
60-69	1970s	Diploma	VIC	30 to 39	Owner with employees
-	1970s	Diploma	SA	40 to 49	Education/ Research
-	1970s	Diploma	VIC	20 to 29	Owner with employees
-	1990s	Bachelor	VIC	10 to 19	Partner/Owner with employees
-	2010s	Masters	VIC	1 to 9	Owner with no employees
-	1990s	Unassigned	VIC	10 to 19	Partner/Owner with employees
-	2000s	Bachelor (Honours)	VIC	10 to 19	Partner/Owner with employees
-	1970s	Bachelor	VIC	30 to 39	Owner with employees

But what of women specifically? As previously stated, 22 of the most mentioned women in the Invisible Women Survey were interviewed and asked what they saw as their significant contribution to Australian graphic design. Table 2 (above) outlines the demographic data of the women interviewed. While some women were hesitant to do so, or even to accept that their peers had labelled them as significant contributors, others expressed gratitude that their efforts were recognised. Overall, their responses reflected Dyke and Murphy's research, which demonstrated both personalised and individual responses that had a very balanced view of internal and external drives (Dyke and Murphy, 2006, p.357-71).

5 The *Invisible Women Survey* asked respondents to name women who had made a significant contribution to Australian graphic design. The 22 most mentioned women who agreed to participate in this project contributed this demographic data.

Several themes were common among the women; the first was longevity. The graphic designers perceived a career, maintained since graduation, as a high achievement. Enduring economic highs and lows, the impact of motherhood, and the navigation of complex relationships—within studios and with clients—were also common to this theme. Abra Remphrey saw her studio, Detour Design, which she founded in 1992 with Cathy Bell in Adelaide, as her significant contribution, simply saying, “I am very proud of that achievement”. Zoe Pollitt and Natasha Hasemer, co-founders of Eskimo in Sydney, both felt their contribution came in the form of “having a successful, independent and profitable 18-year young business. Rosanna Di Risio, the Creative Director of ERD in Melbourne, saw staying involved in the industry since 1980, even when her son was young, as one of her most significant contributions.

Sue Allnutt was proud of contributing 33 years to her studio, one led and founded by her, to the Australian design landscape. This legacy of longevity is reflected in the fact that she now plans for her daughter, Zoë Allnutt, to take over Nuttshell Graphics in Melbourne on her retirement. Over half of the women interviewed shared that they were mothers and indicated that this was often a hurdle to maintaining their longevity. Finding ways to balance careers with caring responsibilities was also equated with success. Laura Cornhill (Figure 1), who is a founder of Studio Binocular in Melbourne, saw her commitment to being a working mother and to breaking the stereotype of leaders as male, as a proud accomplishment, while Suzy Tuxen at A Friend of Mine in Melbourne agreed, saying that managing a family and a career was a significant contribution.

The second theme to emerge from the interviews was the ability to balance the intrinsic view of graphic design as a vocation with the ability to earn a living. Here, women equated the pairing of personal creative fulfilment and financial stability with a high level of success. Jessie Stanley articulated this by expressing the satisfaction she got from both being creative and making a living through graphic design. Sandy Cull saw her work on books with large unit sales, like Stephanie Alexander’s *A Cook’s Companion*, as equal to her passion for design. Her measure of success was “Find something you love and let it kill you”. Gemma O’Brien, a lettering artist/designer, thought she could never “make enough money to live off” when she started out her career. However, she now works full time all over the world, while managing a lifestyle where she can “work all night and then go to the beach,” which is another one of her passions.



Figure 1 Iron Designer was a self-initiated project Laura Cornhill and Studio Binocular developed for the State of Design Festival in Melbourne and for Sydney's Design Week, 2008/2010 (left). Image reproduced with permission from Laura Cornhill. Laura Cornhill (right), photographed by Carmen Holder and Deborah Jane Carruthers, 2016.

Still other women who ran their own studios saw nurturing the independent careers of employees through a healthy workplace culture as a significant contribution. Kate Owen, owner of Futago in Tasmania, saw offering stable employment and “growing an industry that ha[d] clear pathways for people” as her significant contribution. Simone Elder, a co-founder of studio Ortolan along with Kat Macleod and Chloe Quigley, was proud that her studio had both contributed to the success of other emerging designers and prioritised a work/life balance. This theme of helping others often extended beyond the women’s studios. Many of the graphic designers saw their conscious efforts at advocating for women in design and best practice for their industry as their measure of success. Michaela Webb of Studio Round (Figure 2), the most mentioned woman from the Invisible Women Survey and thus one of the most visible, used her profile to encourage other women to increase their visibility and positions of power. Rita Siow (Figure 2) was integral to the running of AGDA for over 20 years. She said that the power that her leadership offered has left a legacy in the Australian graphic design industry. She implemented the first ever Design Effectiveness Award in the AGDA Awards. She also linked the graphic design community throughout Australia by insisting that AGDA events run in all states and territories, not just Melbourne and Sydney. On reflecting on her contributions, Siow mentioned, “I would love to see that effect, not only on practice, but also on aspirations [for AGDA members]...”.



Figure 2 Michaela Webb, from Studio Round (left) and Rita Siow, formally of AGDA (right), photographed by Carmen Holder and Deborah Jane Carruthers, 2016.

Lastly, a common theme in the definition of significant contribution was that of imbuing positive change into Australian graphic design. Lisa Grocott, a Professor at Monash University, discussed the importance of “finding personal courage to do different, difficult things,” which is something her role as a researcher and educator has contributed to in New York, New Zealand and Australia. Maree Coote (Figure 3), now a gallery owner and publisher, began her career in advertising. She was one of the first women to be in charge of establishing a large advertising agency in Australia, the John Singleton Advertising agency, in 1995. She views her significant contribution as injecting some empathy into a male dominated industry. Fiona Leeming established her advertising career in tandem with Coote and is currently the Executive Creative Director of Honey Communications but is clear that “making change” is still the focus of all her creative contributions. Lastly, Wells’s sensitive advocacy work with indigenous communities, including the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre in Tennant Creek and the Kanaky people, also sought to make positive change through design.



Figure 3 In 1997, this Crown campaign became one of the largest ever TV productions at the time, worth \$2.5m(left). Image reproduced with permission from Maree Cootee. Maree Cootee (right), photographed by Carmen Holder and Deborah Jane Carruthers, 2016.

There are many discrepancies between how the AGDA Awards, the Invisible Women Survey respondents, and the interviewees all define success and significant contribution. These many differences reinforce the idea that there is not one homogenous definition to success, but rather, many unique and individual approaches to what it means. However, these differences, or rather the prioritisation and experience of these definitions, can also hinder the visibility of women in Australian graphic design, especially in the case of the AGDA Hall of Fame criteria. Longevity for women and men can be very different in Australian graphic design because of the effect of gendered societal pressures, including parenthood, as mentioned in the above interviews. Work/life balance and the injection of passion into a financially sustainable career is not mentioned in the AGDA criteria, but it is noted as a high indicator of success in the interviews and the Invisible Women Survey responses. An experimental practice, also highly prioritised by the Invisible Women Survey respondents, is also overlooked by AGDA. Together, these discrepancies also point to the idea that women can ignore opportunities, like the AGDA Hall of Fame, because it is irrelevant to their personal drive and definition of success and significant contribution. Thus, this gendered influence leaves them less visible in the industry. Rosanna Di Risio summed up this sensitivity well when she said, “It’s not very cryptic. I think women generally don’t care about the accolades”.

5. Conclusion

In summary, graphic design inherently leaves its practitioners invisible. However, findings from the Invisible Women Survey paired with interviews with women in Australian graphic

design demonstrate three distinct processes that directly affect the invisibility of women. These include the disparate understanding of graphic design, the inequitable historical record of graphic design, and the heterogeneous understandings of 'success' and 'significant contributions.'

The complex lexicon surrounding graphic design leaves both the public's perception of the industry and graphic designers themselves, cloaked in confusion. This murky identification of what a graphic designer should be called has left many women invisible. Similarly, women are excluded from historical references about the industry simply because these narratives are often written by and about men. Women's contributions have therefore become less valued, less celebrated and inevitably more invisible. The last factor that contributes to this invisibility are the terms 'success' and 'significant contribution'. My research has shown that industry bodies, like the AGDA Hall of Fame have entry criteria that are skewed towards extrinsic values of success. Research has shown this is something frequently associated with success by men and has resulted in more men being awarded into the AGDA Hall of Fame. This has left many women invisible and has discredited alternative views of success.

Having identified specific processes that decrease the visibility of women in Australian graphic design, further research could begin to improve upon this problem. How we might decide on a clear definition of graphic design, generate equitable histories and more broadly prescribe success can raise the visibility of women, not only in Australian graphic design but in a much broader concept of the workplace.

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Dr Jane Connory is an experienced communication design lecturer with a history of leading and convening subjects at degree and master's levels. Her research focuses on the visibility of women, diversity in design and gender equity in the workplace.

Appendix

Table 3 *Invisible Women Survey. Q) What do you think is important when deciding that any individual has made a 'significant contribution' to the graphic design industry?*

	Not important		Somewhat important		Important		Vital		N/A		Weighted Average
1. Working experimentally	7%	11	17%	27	38%	59	36%	56	1%	2	3.05
2. Mentoring others	6%	10	15%	23	50%	77	28%	44	1%	1	3.01
3. Working towards social good	8%	13	23%	35	45%	70	23%	36	1%	1	2.84
4. Having a profile amongst their peers	10%	15	23%	36	39%	61	27%	42	1%	1	2.84
5. Supporting themselves financially as a designer	11%	17	19%	30	45%	69	24%	37	1%	2	2.82
6. Having a long career (10+ years)	10%	16	25%	39	39%	60	25%	39	1%	1	2.79
7. Having returning clients	9%	14	30%	47	38%	59	22%	34	1%	1	2.73
8. Publishing personal projects	15%	24	31%	48	41%	63	13%	20	0%	0	2.51
9. Working with new technology	23%	36	28%	43	30%	47	18%	28	1%	1	2.44
10. Presenting at seminars/conferences	23%	35	30%	47	35%	54	12%	18	1%	1	2.36
11. Having a recognisable style	28%	44	28%	43	26%	41	16%	25	1%	2	2.31
12. Balancing a family and design career	30%	46	20%	31	33%	51	13%	20	5%	7	2.3
13. Being an active member of professional body	32%	50	31%	48	28%	44	8%	12	1%	1	2.12
14. Teaching in the field	26%	40	44%	68	24%	37	6%	9	1%	1	2.1
15. Working at a reputable studio	32%	50	32%	50	29%	45	5%	8	1%	2	2.07
16. Having accredited qualifications	35%	54	36%	56	26%	40	3%	5	0%	0	1.97
17. Winning prestigious awards	32%	50	45%	69	18%	28	5%	8	0%	0	1.96
18. Working with start-up clients	42%	65	34%	52	19%	30	4%	6	1%	2	1.85
19. Owning a business	44%	68	32%	49	19%	30	3%	5	2%	3	1.82
20. Working with large clients	43%	66	35%	55	15%	23	5%	8	2%	3	1.82
21. Having a senior job title	49%	76	26%	41	17%	26	6%	10	1%	2	1.8
22. Working overseas	54%	83	29%	45	15%	23	2%	3	1%	1	1.65
23. Having employees	61%	94	27%	42	8%	13	2%	3	2%	3	1.51
24. Making a six-figure income	78%	121	14%	22	5%	8	1%	1	2%	3	1.27

NB// The total number of participants who answered this question was 155. The top five contributions are highlighted.