

Thinking Outside the Box

By Shayna Krizan, Student IIDA



We all were born in a box; not in a literal sense, but metaphorically. Our traits and characteristics paved the way for the stereotypes that would shape and challenge us. And for some, we let it happen. We never left the box -- in fact, we climbed deeper into it. Society told us who to be and so we let it. Many times we felt trapped, even when we were ready to push ourselves away from the very things that defined us, only to find that the world pushes back. As we remove ourselves from these boxes and uncover our own truths, we find that design is much like us. It has been defined and distributed in the way society told it to, just like us. It has stereotypes and expectations, much like ourselves.

Take a moment to picture a train station. Envision yourself walking through the space. What do you see? How do you feel? Did you find that you have a predisposition of what a train station looks like? We develop these schemas of what a space is supposed to look like and struggle to get away from them. Now, instead, picture a train station with healthcare pop-up stations, kiosks where you could fill out resumes and have instant access to thousands of jobs, wellness resources, and digital information screens that would act as a platform to voices that would otherwise go unheard. There are many people who face a lack of access due to health and economic limitations, so we, as designers, can start by expanding our reach to a broader and more inclusive audience through the power of technology.

Just as imagination is a powerful tool, so are our unique backgrounds. We must expand our imagination and push the boundaries of what is, and is not, possible in a world where limits are tested every day. We must encourage both ourselves and each other to become leaders of a better tomorrow. It is crucial that we focus on built spaces that are sustainable and accessible. This accessibility must cater to marginalized communities and those affected by environmental racism. We must hear those words and be inspired to create change -- then we must go out and make that change. It is vital that we employ our knowledge of technologies to support the people and communities that need it most. We must pay our education forward by designing a better, more inclusive future. Our world is changing, and so must we.

It's essential that we promote diversity, aided by the power of technology, in a field that has such a direct impact on the world around us. We must inspire the future generation to redefine the built spaces we inhabit. As we embrace the intersectionality of ourselves, we can begin discussion and action on the intersectionality of design, seeing how it can better cater to our unique selves and pave the way for reform of function and aesthetics.

It's time we start thinking outside of the box.

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