



# graphic design as a liberal art

## the curious

“The teaching of art is the teaching of all things.” John Ruskin

The graphic design field is awash with contradictions. It sits in the awkward cross-section between service and craft. It’s at once a service given to others and a craft we hone for ourselves. It can be both invisible and influential, sometimes showing a point of view and other times remaining apathetic to its content.

But graphic design is rarely about itself; it’s a language, a vessel in which we can fill whatever we’d like. Sometimes it’s filled by clients and sometimes we fill it with ourselves, but it’s always a vehicle for communication. In his 1994 essay, *Graphic Design Education as a Liberal Art*, Gunnar Swanson writes:

“[D]esign does not have a subject matter of its own—it exists in practice only in relation to the requirements of given projects. The path of progress for the field is not defined by the next great unsolved design problem. Design is “integrative” in that, by its lack of specific subject matter, it has the potential to connect many disciplines.”