



RICK GRIFFITH BIOGRAPHY (2019)

Rick Griffith is a graphic designer and master letterpress printer. His work is an erudite exploration of language, history, politics, science, music, and ethics—typographically-focused and relevant. He is known as a passionate advocate for design.

Rick was born and raised in Southeast London and immigrated to the U.S. in the late '80s. It was his early jobs at Washington D.C. record stores that turned him on to graphic design. It was a (short) freelance career on Madison Avenue which funded his first practice, RGD (Rick Griffith Design), and it is his love of design (and his partner Debra Johnson) which sustains the design practice MATTER, which, over the last two decades, has grown into an ambidextrous design consultancy, print shop, workshop, and retail bookstore.

As Design Director at MATTER, Rick works across all media for business, culture, and civic engagement with his partner and staff. MATTER's broad range of clients includes restaurants, beverage manufacturers and distributors, politicians, universities, architects, engineers, arts venues, mimes, scientists, government agencies, and entrepreneurs.

An active participant in the Denver design community, Rick has served on the Board of Directors of Creative Music Works, Arthyve, and the Denver Art Museum's Alliance for Contemporary Art. He was President of the American Institute of Graphic Arts Colorado Chapter from 1995 to 1998 and serves as an emeritus Commissioner of the Denver Commission for Cultural Affairs.

From his home in Denver or the creative atelier in Brooklyn, Rick travels the world as a visiting artist, lecturer, and educator—sharing his enthusiasm and knowledge with the next generation of designers—and contributing critical dialogue regarding graphic design as a broad discipline in the service of community and industry.

Rick has lectured at—among other places—University of Louisville Hite Art Institute, University of Southern California Roski School of Design, Montana State University, South Dakota State University, University of Texas, Austin, University of Minnesota, Duluth, and the Hamilton Wood Type and Printing Museum. He has served as an adjunct professor at the University of Denver, University of Colorado, Denver, and has been a visiting artist at the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design and the Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague (UMPRUM). He has been a speaker at TEDxBoulder, Creative Mornings, and Denver Startup Week. He frequently gives advice and critiques to design students and recent graduates.

Rick's work has been exhibited at Columbia College Center for Book, Paper, and Print, the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Denver Art Museum. His work is represented in the permanent collections of the Denver Art Museum, the Tweed Museum of Art, and the Butler Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts at Columbia University. It has been celebrated by the Type Directors Club, Print Magazine, Dwell, and AIGA 50 Books | 50 Covers. Rick has designed and curated three exhibits on typography and letterpress printing and served as a curator and designer of exhibitions for AIGA National. He was inducted into the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences in 2001.

Rick's true orientation is towards self-reliance, disruption, creative compassion, and independent thought. For most of us, life is long—for lots of reasons, we might begin to act like it.

Photo credit: Norman Posselt

Education

Colfe's College, Sidcup, UK

Yep. That's it—besides a few classes to learn screenprinting, philosophy, and how to use a ruling pen. Teaching and lecturing at international universities and colleges since 1995.

Awards / Recognition

Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, Art Institute of Colorado

Denver One Club: 2017, 2018

Type Directors Club: 2004

HOW Magazine, International Posters: 2004

Print Magazine Regional Design Awards: 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2009

AIGA 50 Books | 50 Covers: 2004

Belmar Award for Achievement in Art and Design: 2004

Boulder Advertising Club: 1996

Curatorial / Major Exhibits

Major Exhibition

Design Lab, Denver Art Museum: 2012

Occupy DAM—Rick Griffith occupies the Denver Art Museum and conducts business in the space; client meetings, printings, collages and job interviews. (As it turns out, museums aren't fun places to make things, and 'fishbowls' are real.)

Curator / Designer

Pressed: An Exhibition of Letterpress Printed Ephemera and Symposium: May 29—July 4, 2010

Together with the Design Council at the Denver Art Museum, AIGA Colorado, and Mohawk Paper, Rick organized an exhibit and store in the Denver Pavilions.

<http://woodtyper.com/date/2010/06>

Curator / Design Director

TypeSets, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art: 2003

Ed Fella, CA: Photography and Exit-Level Typography

Harrison Tu, Naropa Institute, CO: Calligraphy

Various Artists, CO: Typography Installation

Various Artists, USA: Book Arts Installation

Curator

EYE-CONS' AIGA Colorado 2nd Annual Invitational Literacy: January 1999—November 2001

Traveling exhibit to promote designers becoming engaged with literacy and social action.

Designer / Curator

Designers Explore Literacy Exhibition (Including 50 Books | 50 Covers): 1998

Designed and presented exhibition at AIGA national headquarters in New York, NY.

Solo Exhibits

'Beat the Whites with the Same Red Wedge, Version 4.2'

March 2019

Month of Photography (MoP), Shop at MATTER, Denver, CO

'Beat the Whites with the Same Red Wedge Version 2'

August 21–September 1, 2017

Kansas State University Department of Art

'Found In Flatland'

January 2004

The Annex, 820 W. 8th Ave, Denver, CO

A suite of 52 glass transfer mono-prints concerned with the Edwin Abbott Book *Flatland* from 1896. 'Found in Flatland' is a series of aerial observations from this fictional environment and seminal text.

Kinetic Paintings

December 1993

Mona's (Bar), New York, NY

Early paintings—many combined with electrical components.

Group Exhibits

PrintWorks

August/September 2018

Carbondale Arts—R2 Gallery, Carbondale, CO

'I'm Having Trouble With My Priorities' (Letterpress/Collage)

Made in Colorado

June 2018

Emmanuel Gallery, Denver, CO

Excerpts of 'Beat the Whites with the Same Red Wedge Install 2.2'

'BTW 1.0' / Collages, Assemblages and Prints

November 11, 2016—January 7, 2017

The Art Base—Charles J. Wyly Gallery, Basalt, CO

<https://theartbase.org/exhibitions-2/exhibitions-2017/#1484773505075-6e8593cb-6579>

Typeforce7

February 2016

Co-Prosperity Sphere, Chicago, IL

'Type First' Installation

AIGACO25 Exhibit

August 2014

Design Projects for AIGACO from 1994-1998

Design Lab: Three Studios

July 2012

Full-occupation installation

Beyond Wood Type

July 2011, Curators: Nick Sherman and April Sherridan

Columbia College Center for the Book, Chicago, IL

Various Selections of letterpress printed works

Manifest Hope / Unconventional Convention

August 2008

Democratic National Convention, Denver, CO

'Hope, Change, Progress': Screenprint on wood

Better

May–September 2008, Curator: Adam Lerner

The Lab at Belmar, Denver, CO

Improvised Text: Screenprint and collage on paper

Belmar Award for Achievement in Art and Design (BAAAD) Exhibition

May–August 2004, Curator: Adam Lerner

Mid-career retrospective

Displacements

September 2004, Curator: Ken Bloom

Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art

'Found in Flatland': Full Suite

REVOLUTIONÉS

December 2003, Curator: Terry Marks

'Augmented Signs': Screenprint and collage on paper

AIGA Colorado 1st Annual Invitational Literacy Poster Exhibition

1996–1998, Curator and Chairperson: John Bielenberg

'CRASH' Nostalgia for the Absence of Cyberspace

July 1994, Curator Thomas Zummer

Thread Waxing Space, New York, NY

Artist Books / Selected Writings**Seeking New Suprematist Forms Through Typography**

by Rick Griffith

A sumptuous hand-bound book of typographic experiments which won the “50 Books | 50 Covers” competition in 2004, ranking it among the 50 best-designed books of the year at AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts); the pages are filled with layered abstractions of individual glyphs, each character printed on top of others, all in different colors of muted inks and all pressed with metal plates that create a visible, touchable “bite” on the page. Only 40 copies were produced.

Thirty Words

by Rick Griffith

A limited edition monograph written and designed by Rick Griffith, 2003–2004. Printed by hand on a 13×18 Chandler and Price Letterpress. Hand book-bound by Nancy Missbach.

“The Construct (The Art & Politics of Afrofuturism)”

by Rick Griffith

Written in response to the Tilt West Roundtable on The Art & Politics of Afrofuturism.

<https://medium.com/@tiltwest/the-construct-the-art-politics-of-afrofuturism-d85f61b39348>

Augmented Signs

by Rick Griffith, MATTER Staff Collaboration

A limited edition (10) monograph, written and designed by MATTER, 2001. Screenprinted. Hand book bound by Nancy Missbach.

Published Articles / Books (Features & Mentions)

The Itinerant Printer: Modern Adventures in Tramping

by Chris Fritton

<https://itinerantprinter.com/about/>

The AIGA Guide to Careers in Graphic and Communication Design

by Juliette Cezzar

https://books.google.com/books?id=Y1JNDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA222&tpg=PA222&dq=rick+griffith+designer&source=bl&ots=jQSSMuEAnP&sig=ACfU3U1ZuTM9muhdGoU5R-MLcYAvMwYwzu&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwju44HUqvPiAhVbQqoKHf_PDhk4FBDoATAFegQICRAB#v=onepage&q=rick%20griffith%20designer&f=false

One-Color Graphics: The Power of Contrast

by Chen Design Associates

<https://www.amazon.com/One-Color-Graphics-Chen-Design-Associates/dp/1592530524>

Touch Graphics: The Power of Tactile Design

by Rita Street & Ferdinand Lewis

<https://www.amazon.com/Touch-Graphics-Power-Tactile-Design/dp/1564964779>

Crash, Nostalgia for the Absence of Cyberspace

by Robert Reynolds & Thomas Zummer

<https://www.amazon.com/Crash-Nostalgia-Cyberspace-Robert-Reynolds/dp/0964134713>

Then Is Now

by Cheryl Dangel Cullen

Rockport Publishers

Provocative Graphics: The Power of the Unexpected in Graphic Design

by Laurel Harper

<https://www.amazon.com/Provocative-Graphics-Unexpected-Graphic-Design/dp/1564967255>

Guide to Graphic Design

by Scott W. Santoro

<https://www.amazon.com/Guide-Graphic-Design-Scott-Santoro/dp/0132300702>

Art for Obama: Designing Manifest Hope and the Campaign for Change

by Shepard Fairey

<https://www.amazon.com/Art-Obama-Designing-Manifest-Campaign/dp/0810984989>

365 The Year in Graphic Design 2009

by AIGA, The Professional Association for Design

The Best of Business Card Design 3

<https://www.amazon.com/Best-Business-Card-Design-Motif/dp/1564964027>

All Messed Up (Unpredictable Graphics)

by Ann Gerber

<https://www.abebooks.co.uk/Messed-Unpredictable-Graphics-Gerber-Ann-Laurence/16148807377/bd>

In the Following Collections

Denver Art Museum - Permanent Collection

Denver Art Museum - AIGA Design Archive

The Butler Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Columbia University

The Tweed Museum of Art at the University of Minnesota, Duluth

The Western New York Book Arts Collaborative (WNYBAC)

Columbia College, Center for the Book, Chicago

Affiliations / Memberships / Boards

2004–Present

INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF DIGITAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

Services Nominating Chair, 2004, Humor Nominating Chair, 2002–2003

2004–Present

THE SOCIETY OF TYPOGRAPHIC AFICIONADOS

Member

1994–Present (Member)

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF GRAPHIC ARTS (AIGA, COLORADO)

President 1995–1998

Advisory Board 1998–2006

1994–Present

AIGA - THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR DESIGN

December 2012–September 2016

DENVER CITY AND COUNTY CULTURAL COMMISSION

2009–2014

CREATE DENVER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Summer 2009

DESIGNINQUIRY

Joy. Vinylhaven, ME

1998–2001

ALLIANCE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, DENVER ART MUSEUM

Board of Directors

Speaking Engagements / Lectures / Teaching Engagements / Workshops

Denver Startup Week, Design & Food Series: Super Mega Bien featuring Rick Griffith

September 26, 2018, Super Mega Bien, Denver, CO

<https://www.denverstartupweek.org/schedule/4902-design-food-series-super-mega-bien-featuring-rick-griffith-matter>

Refresh Denver: ‘Rick Griffith Talks About Design Again, But This Time With Feelings’

April 1, 2018, Galvanize, Denver, CO

<https://www.meetup.com/refreshdenver/events/zrztldlyxgbpb/>

Tilt West Panel Discussions:

The Lure of Spectacle in Politics & Art, Jan 2018

The Art & Politics of Afrofuturism, August, 2018

Afrofuturism and Beyond, October, 2018

The Problematic Nude, Jan, 2019

TedxBoulder: 'The Value and Importance of Conflict'

September 2015, Macky Auditorium University of Colorado, Boulder, CO

<https://tedxboulder.com/speakers/rick-griffith>

Creative Mornings: 'The Future of Art Education'

December 5, 2014

<https://creativemornings.com/talks/rick-griffith>

TEDxBoulder: 'What I Learned in Third Grade'

September 2010, Chautauqua Auditorium, Boulder, CO

<https://tedxboulder.com/speakers/rick-griffith>

Panel Moderator for Conversation About Education Reform

A Plus Colorado, ECS, National Endowment for the Arts

Design Talk: 'Design as a Meditation on Policy, Ethics, And the Means of Production'

March 21, 2019, AIGA Louisville, University of Louisiana, Hite Art Institute—Cressman Center

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/design-talk-rick-griffith-matter-studio-tickets-55551315480#>

Design Talk: 'Means of Production'

2018, USC Roski—MFA Design Campus, Los Angeles, CA

<https://roski.usc.edu/events/design-talk-rick-griffith>

Inside the Minds of Brilliant Designers—Panel Discussion

2017, General Assembly/AIGA Colorado

National Librarian Day

2016, History Colorado, Denver, CO

Artists' Reception, and Lecture Shared Otherness

August 29, 2015

USC Roski—California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA

<https://roski.usc.edu/events/rick-griffith-design-director-matter>

'My Optimism is Aware of My Cynicism: Design for Good as a Model of Professional Practice'

February 12, 2015

Montana State University—Reynolds Recital, Howard Hall

<http://art.montana.edu/blogs/rick-griffith.html>

'My Last Year With Type'

October 2012

AIGA SD—South Dakota State University

GUEST LECTURER

2009, 2010, 2011, University of Texas, Austin (Design Department)

GUEST LECTURER

2010, Wayzgoose—Hamilton Wood Type and Printing Museum

COMMENCEMENT KEYNOTE

2010, Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design

2012, Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design

2013, Art Institute of Colorado

EDUCATION FORUM - PANELIST

July 2008, The Society of Typographic Aficionados

DESIGN LECTURE SERIES: VISITING LECTURER

2008, University of Minnesota, Duluth

STUDIO TOURS

2008, Boulder Book Arts League

ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR: ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE OF ART + DESIGN

2007–2008, Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design

ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR: TYPOGRAPHY, DESIGN HISTORY

2005–2009, University of Denver (School of Art & Art History)

ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR: UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, DENVER**DESIGN FOR HUMAN INTERACTION, TYPOGRAPHY, DESIGN AND CULTURE**

2004–2007, University of Colorado at Denver (College of Arts and Media)

GUEST LECTURER

1997, Art Directors Club Tulsa

LECTURER AND SUBSTITUTE INSTRUCTOR

1995–2000, Community College of Denver

LECTURER AND SUBSTITUTE INSTRUCTOR

1995–2000, Metro State College (Denver)

GUEST LECTURER

1995, Northern Virginia Community College (Alexandria Campus)

GUEST LECTURER

1995, University of Oklahoma (Okmogee Campus)

GUEST LECTURER

1995, University of Tulsa (School of Art) Tulsa, OK

LETTERPRESS WORKSHOPS

May 4–12, 2019, UMPRUM (Academy of Arts Architecture & Design), Prague

March 2019, East Carolina University, North Carolina

EXPERIMENTAL TYPE WORKSHOP: “SHUT UP AND EAT YOUR RICK GRIFFITH”

Spring 2014, Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design

<https://www.rmcad.edu/matters-rick-griffith-hosts-experimental-typography-workshop-rmcad/>

[https://www.youtube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI91q5ju80c&list=UUhdAGMKkuWa8nmHU1r1hkjg&feature=share)

[watch?v=XI91q5ju80c&list=UUhdAGMKkuWa8nmHU1r1hkjg&feature=share](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI91q5ju80c&list=UUhdAGMKkuWa8nmHU1r1hkjg&feature=share)

GUEST LECTURER AND CUT PAPER POSTER WORKSHOP

1994, AIGA Oklahoma - Literacy Poster Exhibition

CORPORATE DESIGN & IDENTITY

Fall 1996, University of Denver (School of Art & Art History)

EXPERIMENTAL TYPOGRAPHY

1995–1996, Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design

VISITING ARTIST, EXPERIMENTAL TYPOGRAPHY

1996–1997, Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design

Articles**Denver Orbit Podcast, Josh Mattison Episode 18**

“Space is the Place: A Conversation with Rick Griffith (MATTER) about the Black Astronaut Research Project (BI.A.R.P.)”

April 1, 2018

<http://www.denverorbit.com/podcast/>

Westword

“Rick Griffith’s Sci-Fi Fantasy: A Post-Racial World” Susan Froyd

December 8, 2017

<https://www.westword.com/arts/rick-griffith-of-denvers-matter-studio-puts-his-faith-in-young-people-9768166>

AIGA, The Association for Design**Rick Griffith On Mentorship: Editor, Mike Slane: PracticeStudio**

January 18, 2016

<https://colorado.aiga.org/2016/01/rick-griffith-on-mentorship/>

Modern in Denver**“Typography: Taking an Amperstand” Charlie Keaton**

April 22, 2015

<https://www.modernindenver.com/2015/04/ampersand/>

Confluence Denver**“Letterpress Defies Digital Age in Denver” Jamie Siebrase**

April 17, 2013

http://www.confluence-denver.com/features/letterpress_041713.aspx

303 Magazine**“Rick Griffith: Genius MATTERS” Stephanie Richards**

July 23, 2012

<https://303magazine.com/2012/07/rick-griffith-genius-matters/>

Design Observer**“Studio Culture: The Materialism of Matter” Photography: Rick Poynor**

April 26, 2012

<https://designobserver.com/feature/studio-culture-the-materialism-of-matter/33888>

Westword Joel Warner**“Rick Griffith Has Designs on Denver. Bold Ones.”**

January 4, 2011

<https://www.westword.com/news/rick-griffith-has-designs-on-denver-bold-ones-5111186>

“Rick Griffith’s Westword Cover Gets Spoofed Around Town”

January 20, 2011

<https://www.westword.com/arts/rick-griffiths-westword-cover-gets-spoofed-around-town-5791759>

“Rick Griffith’s Cult of Letters: Do Complicated Typefaces Make People Smarter?”

January 10, 2011

<https://www.westword.com/news/rick-griffiths-cult-of-letters-do-complicated-typefaces-make-people-smarter-5835357>

“If Denver’s Letter Connoisseur were a Typeface, What Type Would He Be?”

January 7, 2011

<https://www.westword.com/news/rick-griffith-if-denvers-letter-connoisseur-were-a-typeface-what-type-would-he-be-5830441>

“Rick Griffith Explains His ‘Notice to All Employees’ Sign” (VIDEO)

January 6, 2011

<https://www.westword.com/news/rick-griffith-explains-his-notice-to-all-employees-sign-video-5834075>

Denver Post**“Denver’s Guru of Letterpress Design Finds Himself on Museum Walls” Andy Bosselman**

December 11, 2008

<https://www.denverpost.com/2008/12/11/denvers-guru-of-letterpress-design-finds-himself-on-museum-walls/>