

KYM ABRAMS



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Kym Abrams founded her design and marketing consulting firm, Kym Abrams Design, Inc., in 1984. The firm's philosophy focuses on applying the creative process toward the development of effective communications for business products and services. Their work includes advertising, corporate identity, annual reports, collateral material and environmental graphics. Prior to forming the studio, Kym followed a career path from designer to design manager in three different design firms. She holds a BFA from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. Kym currently serves on the board of the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Graphic Arts and is a member of the Society of Typographic Arts.

Why did you decide to work in Chicago?

Kym Abrams: It has everything you need to do rewarding work—good clients, good suppliers, good resources—and it's more livable than many other major cities.

Are all your clients from the Chicago area?

Abrams: Most of our current client base is from the Chicago area. However, many are national in their scope.

What changes have you seen in Chicago design in the last ten years?

Abrams: I don't think of design as "Chicago design." The changes I see are national and have more to do with the designer's role in business.

How has the role of the designer changed and what changes do you foresee in the next ten years?

Abrams: I see a growing receptivity by business to involve designers earlier on in the process. We're not just designing communications; we're helping our clients think through all aspects of the product/service and how it is positioned in the marketplace. We try to make recommendations before the product or service is released or marketed. We've even had cases where one of our clients tested our ideas prior to implementation. The results showed us that this method can be successful. This approach requires an openness and confidence on the part of both the client and designer. Sensitive egos have to feel free to brainstorm and discuss wide ranging alternatives with a willingness to hear new ideas and let go of options that are less effective.

Does Chicago have a regional style?

Abrams: Chicago has a wonderful tradition of strong design professionals who I believe influence our work: designers such as John Massey, Carl Regehr, Jay Doblin and Robert Voegelé. I believe we are continuing their tradition of diverse and effective design.

Was your design education adequate training for what you're doing today?

Abrams: Yes! I think to become a successful designer it is really critical to have had great teachers. I was very fortunate in having two exceptional teachers. Their influence is still a part of my work today. Both Carl Regehr and Herb Jackson at the University of Illinois taught me how to think; that is, they taught me how to develop a point of view on every project. And it was the development of my mental skills, not my hand skills, that really prepared me for this profession.

I also believe that the best teachers are practitioners. In my experience the professors who were successful at practicing design and chose to teach on top of that had much more to offer than those who were professional academicians. Theory and practice are not the same thing, and in this profession you aren't prepared without both.

What do you think of the design work being done nationally?

Abrams: I don't think enough truly conceptual work is being done anywhere. There is too little content and too much style. Let's face it, we're all bombarded with great amounts of information and it is confusing people. It is harder to be original and stand apart from the crowd. That's why I believe that simpler, clearer communications are more likely to be effective. Communications that rest on a singular, pure concept. When they're right they are like magic,

Home safety brochure for the National Safety Council. Kym Abrams, art director; Sandi Weindling, designer/illustrator; Rick DeSalvo, writer.

Spread from The Health Policy Agenda for the American People, a 324-page publication of the American Medical Association. Lisa Brenner, creative consultant; Kym Abrams, art director/designer; David Lesh, illustrator; Jill Hirt, writer.

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HOME SAFETY



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 **National Safety Council**

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AREA CHECK


STAIRWAYS



Anything that makes stairs difficult to use is a hazard.

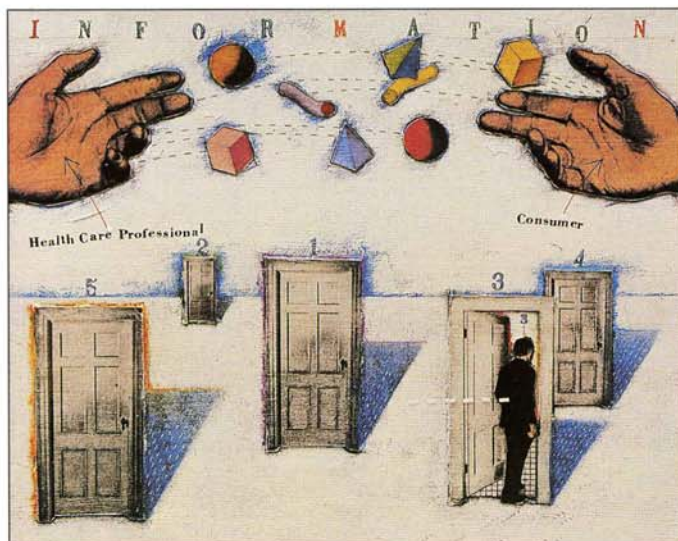
Good lighting eliminates shadows that could hide tripping hazards.

- ◇ Good lighting in hallways and passageways between rooms and other heavy traffic areas to get rid of shadows that could hide tripping hazards.
- ◇ A lamp or light switch within reach of each bed, so anyone getting up at night won't have to stumble around in the dark.
- ◇ Night lights in the bedrooms of young children and elderly persons.
- ◇ Exits and passageways in rooms are kept clear of furniture, boxes, or anything that could be an obstruction or a tripping hazard. People are less watchful on well-traveled paths.
- ◇ Toys, games, books, magazines, and all the other little things that get left on the floor are picked up.
- ◇ Non-skid backing on all your small rugs. Rubber matting that can be cut to size is available for hand-crafted or other kinds of rugs that don't have their own backing.
- ◇ Decals or decorations on glass doors to make them obvious, so somebody doesn't try to walk through what looks like an open door.



- ◇ Stairs are well lit, with switches at both top and bottom.
- ◇ Sturdy handrails for all steps and stairways.
- ◇ Nothing stored on stairways, no matter how temporary. Anything that makes stairs difficult to use is a hazard.
- ◇ Treads, risers, and carpeting are all in good shape. No torn covering or nails sticking out to snag a foot.

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Open communication and shared decision-making between consumers and health professionals provide the foundation for optimal health care. Ultimately it is the individual who is responsible for his or her lifestyle and health care decisions.

Chapter IV: Communicating Health Information

Ultimately, it is the individual who has the responsibility for his or her lifestyle and health. The collection of individual decisions to adopt healthy lifestyles and to be proactive users of the health care system will have a significant impact on the overall health status of the country.

To facilitate individual decision-making, it is necessary for the public to have a sound knowledge base of health care information. Much of the information that the public receives concerning health care comes from the mass media, and it takes a well-educated consumer to sort and sift through all of this information. And, of course, while individuals share a large part of the responsibility for their health care, the health care sector and society as a whole have certain responsibilities to protect and promote the health of the nation. Health care providers, employers, and governmental agencies all have specific responsibilities to ensure that information and education on health promotion, disease and injury prevention, and utilization of health care services is available and widely disseminated.

Open communication and shared decision-making between patients and their practitioners provide the foundation for optimal health care treatment. The goal of health care decision-making is to protect and ensure the autonomy of the patient, and decisions concerning care are a shared responsibility between the patient and his or her health care professional. Patients have a responsibility to tell their health care professionals about their health status, and health care professionals have concomitant responsibilities both to protect the confidentiality of that information and to provide their patients with sufficient information to make informed decisions about their care. Protecting the confidentiality of information and fully informing patients of diagnosis and treatment alternatives will help to ensure that the trust between patients and their practitioners is maintained.

Finally, just as information and education programs can be used by the public to promote healthy lifestyles and effective utilization of health care services, public health care needs should be considered in the design of health professions education programs. Faculty and administrators of programs should be responsive to changing health care needs.

and they work every time. It's more challenging to develop these ideas, but also more satisfying. Ultimately, both clients and designers benefit. I also believe that more design firms need to recognize the inherent necessity of integrating design and copy. One thing that has differentiated us from many other design offices has been our staunch commitment to bringing these two disciplines together. We've been extremely successful in adding depth to our concepts by paying attention to both design and copy.

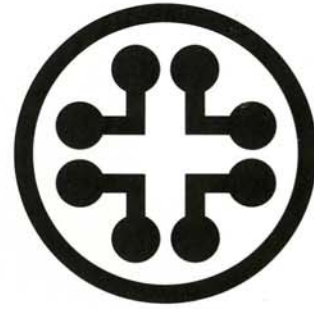
Are there any reasons why you'd turn down a client?

Abrams: Yes, a few. First, we may refuse a job if it represents a conflict of interest. Secondly, if we were ever asked to do work on an unethical basis, we'd turn the job away. Finally, if the chemistry isn't right with a client and we know it upfront, we'll probably turn the client away regardless of the financial benefits. After all, it's

important to us that we enjoy the work that we do. Fortunately, all these cases are rare.

Has the advent of computers changed the way you do business and the way you design?

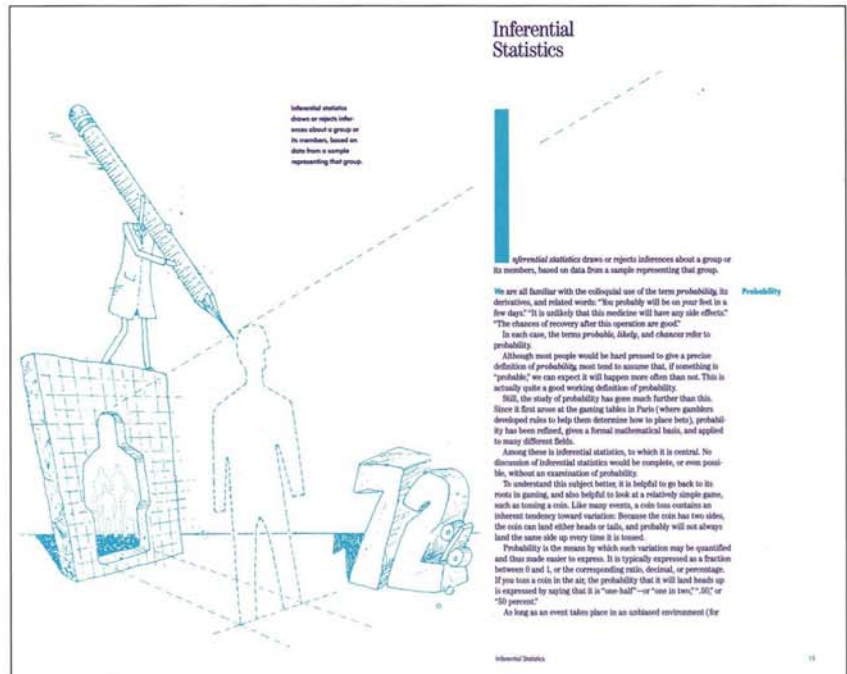
Abrams: In general, computer technology enables us to be more efficient in production so that we can spend more time being creative. Our clients have been asking us more about the capabilities of computers. I believe we need to keep a step ahead of our clients so that we can help them be more effective at integrating design with their computer capabilities. But even though computers have a definite impact, fundamentally they have not altered our work. There's still no substitute for a good idea.



Above: Symbol for Doctronics, an electronics and appliance repairs store developed by Montgomery Ward and Mobil Corporation. Abrams designed the symbol and was involved with all aspects of the store development from signage to uniforms.

Brochure for the American Medical Association. "The request was to make statistics 'user friendly' for physicians. Talk about a challenge!" Kym Abrams/Mark Oldach, art directors; Kym Abrams, designer; David Povilaitis, illustrator.

Right: Fundraising brochure for The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. "They had several stories to tell their readers, so we adopted a magazine format." Kym Abrams, art director; Sandi Weindling, designer; Eric Hausman, photographer; Howard Bimson, writer; Charles R. Feldstein & Company, consultant.



ALUMNI PORTRAITS

We are so proud of our alumni that we would like to print the names of every single one of them. But that is for another publication. We did take a trip through the files to compile the following list of 107 very special School alumni of the past and present.

Pat Adams
Distinguished University College teacher and jurist

Calvin Albert
Distinguished engineer of both advanced and experimental work

Isaac Allright
Painter of various subjects, including depictions of the rescue of Alvin and Ethel

Harold Allen
Former faculty member and major architect and photographer

Benny Andrews
Painter, designer, and writer who founded the World Emergency Cultural Coalition

Vincent Arizola
Painter of conceptual landscapes of himself and people making

Ralph Arnold
Worldwide artist and lecturer who produced colleges, art, construction, and more

John Asenole
Singer and publisher of the Spanish and English language songs magazine

Robert Barnes
Great master artist of painting and drawing in the style of Piero della Francesca

Don Baum
Edison inventor and designer of important small-scale mechanicals

Jack Beal
Painter of great traditions of Western painting through his mural paintings

Thomas Hart Benton
Chief among Midwestern Regionalists

"THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I WAS TAUGHT AT THE SCHOOL WAS TO LOOK AND SEE ART AND THE WORLD WITHOUT PREJUDICE AND APATHY—

TO SEE INNOCENTLY AND TO APPRECIATE INTELLIGENTLY," SAYS PAINTER/

ALUMNA SONORA FRECKELTON. WHAT BETTER TESTIMONIAL COULD BE ASKED FROM ANY GRADUATE? FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, SERIOUS ARTISTS

HAVE COME TO THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE TO DEVELOP THEIR TALENTS AND PREPARE FOR LONG, PRODUCTIVE CAREERS. IN EVERY STU-

DENT GENERATION THERE HAVE BEEN ILLUSTRIOUS ALUMNI WHO HAVE REACHED PINNACLES OF PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT AS FINE ARTISTS.

THERE HAVE BEEN EQUALLY ILLUSTRIOUS ALUMNI WHO HAVE CHOSEN TO

APPLY THEIR CREATIVE TALENTS ALONG DIVERSE CAREER PATHS. MANY OF THEM NOT IMMEDIATELY ASSOCIATED WITH FINE OR THE DESIGN ARTS.

STILL OTHER GRADUATES HAVE BENEFITED FROM THE LIFE-LONG SATISFACTION OF HAVING LEARNED TO THINK CREATIVELY AT THE SCHOOL. MORE

THAN 8,000 LIVING ALUMNI (AND ADDITIONAL THOUSANDS PRECEDING THEM) HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE SCHOOL DURING ITS HISTORY.

ABOUT 41 PERCENT OF ALL RECENT GRADUATES REMAIN IN THE CHICAGO AREA, CONTRIBUTING TO THE CITY'S STATURE AS A WORLD-CLASS CENTER

OF ART. MANY ALSO LIVE AND WORK IN THE MAJOR ART MARKETS OF NEW YORK, LOS ANGELES, AND SAN FRANCISCO. THERE ARE SCHOOL ALUMNI

THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, HOWEVER, AND IN MANY FOREIGN COUNTRIES. A SPECIAL WORD OR TWO SHOULD BE SAID ABOUT THE



George O'Keefe
(1887-1988)
His "magical realism" transformed city buildings, flowers, and desert landscapes into extraordinary paintings that will surely fascinate us for centuries to come.



*Is a detail from *Errotic Exhibition* by Franz Haverd, the Franz Haverd Sellers Professor of Painting and Drawing, a student studies sculpture.

The Fine Art of Teaching

Educating a young scientist is one thing. There is a critical mass of knowledge to be learned before a student is expected to pursue his or her own innovative work. The biologist needs to know what is inside the frog. The physicist should understand Newton's laws of motion.

Teaching a young artist is a different thing entirely. Students at the School of the Art Institute do indeed learn the principles and techniques of creating fine art and design. The necessity of stretching, bending, and even rejecting all apparent knowledge, however, is fundamental to the making of great art. This makes

the process of "teaching" artists a demanding art in its own right. Nowhere is this specialty practiced better than at the School.

"Students must learn to isolate their viewpoint," says Christina Ramberg, Chair of the Painting Department. "Faculty members must facilitate their reaching this key creative turning point."

There are 260 full- and part-time faculty of the School. Approximately 70 percent of these men and women teach in the studio art disciplines, which is why the School of the Art Institute is known first and best as a preeminent

