

Natasha Jen announced as speaker at Design Indaba 2018

By [Emile Uys](#)

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Taipei-born designer Natasha Jen is one of the leading lights of the visual communication world. She has been a Pentagram partner since 2012 and spearheads her own design practice, Njenworks, which covers a plethora of media genres including signage systems, environmental design and interactive graphics.



New York-based design guru, Natasha Jen.

Jen's upbringing in Taiwan informs her work with a sense of humour and play as a graphic designer and teacher working in New York now. A graduate of the School of Visual Arts, Jen worked at Base Design during the early part of her career where she contributed to a number of brand campaigns and fashion identity projects.

She is the latest addition to Design Indaba's speaker roster to take the stage in Cape Town next year. She has become an intellectual figure with a keen sense of why graphic design is perceived as such a vague subject by those who are not professional designers. Known for blurring the lines between curated museum work and retail brand spaces, Jen has collaborated with Nike, the Guggenheim Museum, Puma and MIT Architecture among many other organisations and universities. More recently, she has moved to the high profile start-up realm, having collaborated with Essential Products, IonQ, and Google.



Studio Swine announced as speakers at Design Indaba 2018

30 Nov 2017



The all-pervading nature of graphic design

She has earned awards from major design competitions and is frequently published in publications including *Fast Company*, *Kinfolk Magazine*, *Print Magazine* and *Metropolis*. She was a winner of Art Directors Club's Young Guns 4, a competition for which she served as a judge afterwards in 2007, 2011, and 2017.

Eager to pass her acumen to the next crop of young creatives, Jen has served as Board of Directors of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Graphic Arts from 2014 to 2017. She is a faculty member at the School of Visual Arts BFA Graphic Design Program and is a guest critic at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Yale University School of Art, Cooper Union, Rhode Island School of Design, and Maryland Institute College of Art.

In this interview with the One Club for Creativity, Jen explains the all-pervading nature of graphic design and the importance of knowing how it influences what we see and what we don't see.

Graphic design is like air

"Graphic design is like air. It's everywhere. It's on your phone, in your email, in your shopping bag. Its power is extremely significant right now in the digital age, specifically in terms of how we communicate," she says.

One of Jen's most notable theories is her unique approach to the term "design thinking", which she believes has become a lazy blanket term used by folks who don't engage with creative work critically. During her compelling 99U talk posted below, Jen lobbies for the "Crit" over the "Post-It" when it comes to moving the design conversation forward.

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