

Expert Interview I with Rebecca Brooker, Art Director and Co-Founder of Queer Design Club

Including | thoughts on telling the stories of unheard voices, and how visual storytelling is a path for creative expression

>> *Rebecca guest curated Strands on June 2, 2022. [Read it here.](#)*

Tell us a little bit about yourself and what keeps you busy. How did you end up doing what you're doing today?

I'm Rebecca, I also go by Becks, Bex, or Becca to most friends and colleagues. Most people ask me, "Well which is it? Can't you pick one?" and honestly, why should I have to? Anyway, I'm a person that enjoys doing way too many things. I work as an art director at Ghost Note Agency while also running a small design studio of my own, with my partner. We call that Planthouse Studio. I'm also the co-founder of a rad community of designers called Queer Design Club! I'm also Trinidadian, but currently reside in Buenos Aires with my partner and puppy.

What excites you most about what you do?

One of the best parts of my job is that it doesn't always feel like work. It was early on in my life when I realized that I think very visually, and it seemed natural that I landed in design. I found visual storytelling as a path for creative expression that really allowed me to bring my whole personality to the work. Lately, a lot of my work has centered around bringing people together -- such as the work I'm doing at QDC.

As a platform for LGBTQ+ designers, our entire mission is to connect queer designers with opportunities to grow and get paid. Like I said, it doesn't feel like work when you're helping others elevate themselves too. As a queer immigrant designer, it took me a long time to find opportunities for myself, so I feel privileged that my role now allows me to open doors for others.

What beliefs define your approach to work? How would you define your leadership style?

I have a very collaborative work and leadership style. I believe we do our best work when we listen to others and include several angles and perspectives within our problem solving process. I'm usually interested in working together with other



members of the team, especially across teams and specialties to generate new ideas and pressure test concepts. In my experience, I've found myself to sometimes be the only queer person of color in a room, having to advocate for decisions that may affect my community.

In terms of my leadership style, I am kind, laid back, reliable and a fierce advocate for the growth of my team and reports. I try to challenge them on decisions, push their thinking further on designs, and help them build skills that will advance their careers. I'm new to the management track, so I'm still learning skills of my own and how to manage others and lead successfully.

What has been the most rewarding project you've worked on, and why?

My team at Ghost Note recently worked with Nike to produce a [social media campaign](#) around the Puerto Rican Day Parade in East Harlem, New York City. As I mentioned, storytelling is a huge part of my skill set so it was exciting to be able to partner with one of my favorite brands to highlight the Puerto Rican community. Through a partnership with the East Harlem Tutorial Program, we filmed teachers, students, and community members about what their heritage means to them and how the PR Day Parade has been a landmark event for the culture. We also had the opportunity to commission 3 Puerto Rican photographers to tell the stories and the impact the culture has had on their work.

It was such an authentic and heartfelt project that really allowed us to connect with people that were proud of their cultural experiences that it reminded me of my pride for my own country of Trinidad and Tobago. Our campaign later went on to win a Silver Anthem Award!

We are big believers in diversity -- Not only because we believe in equality, but because we also think it's better for business. The Black Lives Matter movement has shaped industry conversations around both global injustice, and also lack of representation in our industry. How do you frame these kinds of conversations, both internally and with clients? Is there an emphasis on action, or are the conversations really more about communication?

One of the reasons that I was so excited to begin working at [Ghost Note Agency](#) is due to the fact that I'd never seen a Black owned creative agency working with



incredible brands to tell the stories of unheard voices. When I learned about the work Ghost Note was doing, I knew I wanted to be a part of the movement to shape those conversations and bring an authentic voice to the industry. As a queer person of color, I felt like I finally found a team that looked and sounded like me, and was equally interested in bringing our collective experiences to our work. It's been refreshing to work at an agency where these conversations aren't taboo or difficult to have - they're understanding and easy to share perspectives with colleagues who just get it.

On the client side, I think our clients come to us specifically for that special lens to the work - being able to provide creative and strategy from a genuine place of lived experiences.

Switching gears a bit, how do you find time to balance personal interests with your career? Do you believe work/life balance is possible? Anything you've implemented that you recommend that others try?

I'm definitely a workaholic (I know, I know - goes back to the "it doesn't feel like work" thing) but I've been trying to be really intentional about making time for personal life and being offline. I recently began taking up pottery as a hobby and I'm really enjoying spending 2-3 hours a week just making something with my hands. It's been great to learn a new art form and enjoy doing something physically creative. There's also so much that I've been learning morally from pottery - patience, process, and never getting attached to what you're making. It's helped me to think about applying this in other aspects of my life, and about how willing I have to be to go with the flow at times.

What's your media diet? Where do you find inspiration?

I've been spending a lot of time on Are.Na - I'm obsessed with how easy it is to get lost within groups, blocks, and channels. I also just love how weird and obscure the content on there can get - the opposite of Pinterest (which I also use sometimes). I also spend a lot of time looking at content on Instagram - I'm so deeply intrigued by how the existence of the platform built an entirely new creative industry designed to create content specifically for Instagram.



As you know, we believe there is so much value in having a wide range of teachers. What's the best piece of advice/knowledge you've stolen, and who/where'd you steal it from?

Audre Lorde – “.Your silence will not protect you .My silences had not protected me“