

I INTERVIEW // BEN DAVIS

Ben Davis // Monday, September 10, 2007 // At Words Pictures Ideas

Tell me about some of the socially minded projects you've done and about your motivations behind them.

Right now the studio is working on The Bay Bridge project which has been a lot of fun. We do a lot of civic oriented projects which have been really rewarding. Some other stuff we've worked on that have been good are www.obsценegreen.org on which we look at how "green" has become this selling point and how a lot of products or companies that call themselves green are trying to cash in on that. So people can log in and post the obscene green stuff they've found out in the world. One that got a lot of coverage was the Buy Less Crap campaign that was a response to the GAP's Red campaign. We are in the beginning stages of a similar campaign right now simply called "less" with the (>) mark as an open source brand that is mathematical in nature and universal. And finally one more that I'm really excited about that is in its infancy stages is this idea I had of creating a community currency that consists of \$3 dollar bills. The idea being that individual communities would start actually using the bills amongst themselves to express acceptance of diversity and celebrate differences.

What has been the most rewarding and the biggest headache of a project?

The Buy Less Crap campaign has been by far the most rewarding. We got so much response for that website and won a few awards and because of that were really able to get the message of the site out there. What we were trying to do with that campaign was point out that the Red campaign could be better, not that it was bad, but that it could be better. Why buy more crap in order to give to charities? Why not just give directly? The message was, join the (LESS) movement that rejects shopping as a solution to human suffering. We got a lot of flack from people who didn't understand what we were doing but luckily had some great P.R. people that really kept the vision of the project clear.

How have you dealt with negative feedback on that project?

We try to stay positive and from the start we get the message down to the essence which was providing a way for people to donate directly. We wanted to make sure that we weren't self promoting and very transparent throughout the life of that project. It was all about the cause and not about us. So for instance we didn't take interviews that were about us specifically but if someone wanted to talk about the project and what it was about we would do that. The marketing environment was pretty hostile but we found that it was best to step away from those negative and fruitless conversations. We believed that if a marketing campaign can convince some one to "Buy Red" than a marketing campaign can convince them to connect with something innately human like being good and giving to those less fortunate.