

RYAN O'CONNOR

Sr. Director of Innovation | Creative Director | Design Team Leader

ryanoconnor.design

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY:

Innovative Design Director with over 15 years of progressive experience in architectural, experiential, and brand design. Proven leader in developing immersive retail environments and experiences that elevate brand excellence and enhance consumer engagement. Expert in leveraging emerging technologies, including AI, to build impactful spaces, with a strong track record of transforming brands like Nike, Meta, and Altria. Committed to mentoring and empowering teams, fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and extreme accountability, and driving the AI agenda within my current agency through strategic leadership initiatives.

SKILLS - DIVERSE CREATIVE INTEGRATION

Creative Leadership & Accountability:

Expert in leading and mentoring design teams, fostering innovative thinking and collaboration. Proven ability to manage ambiguity and effectively collaborate in decision-making.

AI Integration & Future-Proof Design:

- Spearheaded AI implementation to enhance creative efficiency by 33%, improving design processes, output quality, and team performance.
- Led AI-focused leadership in my current agency through regular 1-on-1 sessions with senior leaders and presented weekly updates at team huddles, ensuring alignment with the rapidly evolving AI landscape.
- Practical use of AI to drive personalized consumer experiences and streamline workflows in experiential and retail projects.

Brand Strategy & Engagement:

Skilled in developing impactful and scalable design solutions for immersive retail environments, aligning with brand strategies to enhance the consumer experience.

Operational Excellence:

Extensive experience in leading design processes to ensure results, timelines, and budgets are met. Proficient in optimizing workflows and managing multiple competing priorities.

Digital & Physical Design:

Proficient across multiple design disciplines, including Environmental Graphic Design, Fixtures, Materials, and Digital.

Expertise in conceiving, drawing/sketching, typography, ideation, color theory, texture, spatial design, visual presentation development, and space planning layouts.

Communication & Collaboration:

Strong communicator with expert presentation skills. Able to effectively communicate design concepts to all levels of leadership and collaborate across streams and territories.

Software Proficiency:

SketchUp, Rhino, Grasshopper, V-Ray, Adobe Creative Suite, and advanced 3D design and rendering software.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS - CREATIVE LEADERSHIP WITH MAJOR BRANDS

Nike Leading Nike Development Program: Design Director & Creative Lead

- Led the design and execution of the Leading Nike Development program for 400 VPs, including the creation of a parametrically designed 600-piece perceptual art installation for Nike Campus.
- Received high praise from Nike leadership: "The Dream Team! Thank you. This thinking is brilliant. I sure am happy I get to rub shoulders with such incredible people." — Director Executive Leadership & Development, NIKE, Inc.

Nike GameChangers Program: Creative Lead

- Spearheaded the creation of immersive experiences, sub-branding, and physical environments to elevate leadership initiatives.
- Developed impactful design solutions reflecting Nike's design ethos, improving the consumer retail experience.

Altria IQOS Retail Design: Creative Lead

- Directed a five-year initiative designing Altria's IQOS retail environments, including permanent storefronts and mobile units.
- Focused on architectural innovation and brand aesthetics to enhance consumer engagement.

Meta Suite at Capital One Arena: Creative Lead

- Developed an immersive, technology-driven Meta-branded demo space to enhance consumer experience.
- Integrated digital innovation with physical design for unique consumer interactions.

ESPN X-Games Digital Worlds: Creative Lead

- Led the creation of the graphic look and feel for digital gameplay and interactive experiences.
- Drove digital engagement by applying current design trends to elevate the athlete experience.

U.S. Bank Experiential Events: Creative Lead

- Directed creative development, including graphics and video content, with a focus on operational efficiency.
 - Enhanced consumer experiences through innovative use of graphics and digital mediums.
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Director of Innovation, Sr. Creative Director

RedPeg Marketing, Alexandria, VA | June 2022 - Present

- **Design Leadership & Innovation**
 - Transformed RedPeg into a human-centered "creative agency," aligning the entire team on principles for achieving great work.
 - Integrated AI and advanced technologies, enhancing creative team efficiency by 33% and delivering deeper creative concepts.
 - Led creative direction and strategic alignment for high-profile clients, including Nike, Meta, In-N-Out, Marriott, VW, Santander, and GEICO.
- **AI Leadership**
 - Spearheaded AI integration initiatives, providing AI-focused 1-on-1 leadership guidance and presenting AI opportunities during weekly huddles.
 - Utilized AI tools to streamline creative processes and produce personalized, scalable consumer experiences.
- **Team Leadership & Collaboration**
 - Developed leadership within senior creative leaders, fostering personal growth and thought leadership.
 - Managed a team of three direct reports and the Director of Innovation team, promoting innovative thinking and teamwork.

Creative Director

Astound Group, Las Vegas, NV | February 2022 - June 2022

- Led creative vision for Faraday Future's flagship store, merging digital innovation with luxury retail design.
- Applied architectural design expertise to create impactful retail environments enhancing consumer experience.

Senior Art Director 3D

GMR Marketing, Milwaukee, WI | September 2016 - February 2022

- **Retail and Experiential Design**

- Directed design and execution of Altria's IQOS retail environments, focusing on architectural innovation and brand aesthetics.
- Managed permanent and temporary retail installations to boost consumer engagement and brand presence.
- **Graphic and Art Direction**
 - Led art direction for ESPN X-Games, developing graphics and digital gameplay experiences.
 - Directed visual and graphic design for U.S. Bank events, including video production and creative direction.

Senior Designer 3D

GMR Marketing, Milwaukee, WI | July 2011 - September 2016

- Created virtual and mixed reality spaces using advanced 3D design and rendering techniques.
- Drove innovation in marketing and user experience design, managing CAD drawings, production specifications, and vendor quality control.

Adjunct Professor, Architecture

University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI | 2008 - 2010

- Taught undergraduate and graduate-level design studios focused on advanced architectural design and innovation.
- Developed a curriculum specific to my design vision and led a design studio solo.

EDUCATION

- **Master of Architecture**, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee
Recipient of the Henry Adams Medal, signifying academic excellence and relevance to innovative architectural design.
- **Bachelor of Science in Architecture**, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee
Urban Planning Certificate | Graduated Summa cum Laude
- **Cultivating Creative Collaboration**, IDEO U, Online Certificate, 2019
 - Unlocked my team's ability to generate new ideas and reach better solutions by tapping into diverse perspectives.

INTERESTS & PROFICIENCIES

- **Emerging Technologies:** Passionate about leveraging AI and advanced technologies to enhance design and consumer experiences.

- **AI Thought Leadership:** Leading AI integration in my current agency through 1-on-1 leadership sessions and weekly presentations.
 - **Speculative Design Thinking:** Envisioning future possibilities and shaping the world through design.
 - **Mentorship & Development:** Committed to fostering growth in emerging design talent.
 - **Motorcycling Enthusiast:** Lifelong rider from Milwaukee, currently riding a Moto Guzzi.
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PUBLICATIONS

- **Contributor & Editor | "SkyCar City: A Pre-emptive History"** (2008)
Collaborated on a 240-page hardcover exploring futuristic urban mobility and architecture concepts.
Available on Amazon: SkyCar City
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PORTFOLIO

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- [Altria Retail Stores](#)
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- [Skycar City](#)
- [ESPN X-Games Digital Worlds](#)
- [Faraday Futures Storefront](#)

Explore my detailed projects and creative journey on my [website](#).