

Christine Kennedy Meier – Designer’s Statement



I live a **little** life happily solving problems.¹ And my creativity comes most easily to me within the **problem-solving** framework. I rarely create for creation’s sake. I create to resolve, to fulfill, to negate a need. Often, the need is **specific**: a design for an advertisement, a logo or a website. Sometimes the need is more **nebulous** like the need to fill an empty wall in my new office.

Would I consider myself an **ARTIST**? No. I’m a **designer**. I design solutions to problems. I do it in my own way, with footnotes if it pleases me.³

When done well, a design solution is “**head-smackingly**”, “**why didn’t I think of that?**” and “**I don’t even remember the problem**” obvious.⁴ I believe the correct solution to any problem, design or otherwise, is elegant and simple. **Occam’s Razor**, was drilled into me by my engineer father like other fathers drilled their children on times tables or catechism.⁵ From my Grandmother, I received the more design-based version, the Coco Chanel version, “before leaving the house, a lady should look in the mirror and remove one accessory.”⁶ The line between good design and great design is knowing what to omit. My design aesthetic reflects my love of **distilling the complex to its simplest parts**.



1. I love footnotes. Maybe it is because someone once told me that I’d never be more than a footnote in my grandfather’s story². If your whole existence must be distilled to a footnote or two – they ought to be meaningful and/or funny.

2. Yep, this footnote has a footnote. John A. Kennedy, 1918-2016, naval hero; survived the sinking of two ships in the same week (Feb 1942), spy, father of modern fire investigation, inveterate bar-fighter, TV commercial actor.

3. Footnotes always make me happy. I’m a nerd. I get it.

4. Thank you, Harry Beck for your London Tube Map. <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150720-the-london-underground-map-the-design-that-shaped-a-city>

5. <https://explorable.com/occams-razor>

6. Dorothy Petrie Kennedy, b. 1925. <https://www.vogue.com.au/fashion/news/the-most-inspiring-coco-chanel-quotes-to-live-by/image-gallery/>

Hell, to my eye, is a photorealistic representation painted with a one bristle brush.⁷

From an **early age**, 8 or 9, I have been particularly moved by printmaking. I have vivid memories of the linseed-oil smell and the “**swik-squerp**” sound of thick inks on the wood-handled, red-rubber rollers while my mother taught me printmaking in her studio.⁸ I loved the “**brain-bending**” of working in the negative, cutting away to achieve lightness, and the combination of wood-grain texture inherent in the board and my own intentional cuts.

I am most attracted works where the artist distills and refines reality to its most essential elements. A skilled artist or designer can reduce the chaos of life to a series of color decisions inked on stone and made ephemeral on paper. The great masters of late 19th century and early 20th century advertising and color lithography like **Jules Cheret, Pierre Bonnard, Edouard Vuillard, and Toulouse-Lautrec**. as well as, the mid-century works of Puerto Rican poster artists **Velázquez Alvarez, Antonio Carrión, and Jose A. Rosa** provide a great deal of inspiration for my own work.⁹

7. It can be your thing, it just isn't mine. Rock on! Create more.

8. My husband, Rich insists “Honey, how would you spell the sound ink makes on the rubber roller?” the strangest question of our marriage.

9. And obsessive collecting.

Design *process*:



My approach to design is “*Scientific tinkering*” or “*once a scientist, always a scientist.*”¹⁰ While my projects are almost exclusively digital, each begins with a green flair pen on a sheet of blue copy paper.¹¹ My own version of a *blue-print*. I work through the problem using the first few steps of scientific method on paper, making observations and forming a hypothesis on the correct solutions to the problem on paper.¹²



Then I take a *nap*.¹³

Next, I hit the laptop for agonizing hours(days) of iterative work and testing design decisions. Progress usually is slow and contemplative. Decisions are not rushed, testing and retesting my hypothesis, refining my experiment until I’m happy. It is generally *line & position* which dictate the overall composition. This the point where a cohesive solution starts to gel.



I take *another* nap.¹⁴



10. Once upon a time, from 1993-1994, I was a molecular biologist.

I hated pure research, *Drosophila melanogaster*, *Caenorhabditis elegans* and other grad students. I loved and still love *Dictyostelium* (slime molds) and teaching. I quit and never looked back.

11. I buy green pens by the carton. <https://www.amazon.com/Paper-Mate-Flair-Medium-Point/dp/B00006IFFM>

12. <https://www.livescience.com/20896-science-scientific-method.html>

13. A hammock nap if I can get it. My most wonderful design solutions always come in dreams. The super computer between my ears (everyone has one) needs cloud computing time. I include this in the footnotes because it seems too “I’m a housewife playing “*artiste*” for a serious Designer statement but it’s true – so here we are.

14. Luckily, I work for my husband and he’s incredibly lenient at work.

Current **work:**

My current work **pushes** my understanding of the **simple**. My pieces begin with simple forms and outlines and then extend the boundaries of texture by layering patterns, gradients and colors on top of one another. Digital images are created and modified by laying microscale bits of **texture** upon a **simplified shape**. Each layer creates a new, landscape that tells a new story of my **little** life.

Background:

I was born into the perfect background for design, to my mother¹⁵, a classically trained painter and sculptor and my father, an engineer with the heart of a poet.¹⁶ My childhood home in Illinois was equally full of art and science. It was perfect mix of whimsy, creation and engineering calculations at the dinner table. Eventually, I had a couple of siblings.¹⁷

I live my beautiful **little** life in a home by the sea with my husband, **Rich** and our four-legged children, Hamlet and Bianca.¹⁸ I practice equal amounts of science, art and whimsy with my nephews, Devin and Brennan, and my niece, Kerrigan.

15. Susan "Mimi" Baylis Kennedy b. 1948 She once proclaimed that if she laughed too hard sparkles would burst from her ears.

16. Patrick Michael Kennedy, 1947-2017. He was as apt to quote Michael Faraday's, A Course of Six Lectures on the Chemical History of a Candle (1861) as he was Shakespeare's, Hamlet. To him nothing was unknowable, impossible, unconquerable or unteachable. There was no greater mortal sin than the lack of intellectual curiosity.

17. Heather Marie Kennedy Perkins, b1977 and Kathryn Colleen Kennedy Smith, b1979. They are much younger, and, in some ways (equally as cruel as my own footnote sob-story) they are footnotes to my childhood. Ask them, that's how they will describe it.

18. Richard Meier aka Rich & Handsome, 1964. By far the best husband I've ever had! Also, the only husband I've ever had. Without him I could do nothing.