

Designmatters Concentration  
Featured Student

# Benjamin Weiss

Film, 2014  
with DM concentration  
*Art Center College of Design*



## Why did you decide to declare a Designmatters concentration?

The DM Concentration offers a great addition to the art center film curriculum by allowing an in depth exploration of both applied documentary filmmaking and highly interesting campaign work.

Having been able to attend Art Center was a great privilege for me. It was therefore imperative for me to do something useful with my studies. Designmatters is a great platform, where students can do work that has a real life impact, helping people through applied design.

## What has Designmatters' philosophy of "experiential learning" done for you as a designer that a conventional classroom setting could not have done? In other words, what has producing real-world outcomes done for you?

You are working for a client, which is an invaluable experience. Within the conventional classroom setting you mostly produce work to please yourself (and maybe the teacher). With Designmatters you are facing the exciting challenge of having to come up with work that feeds into what the clients are asking, while still staying truthful with yourself. To me, this is an important stepping stone of bridging student life and the professional world.

## **How has that been challenging?**

It's not as easy to run away from responsibility: You make a commitment to the client. Suddenly you're dealing with projects that might find implementation in a real world context. This sudden exposure of your work and yourself as a designer and author is exciting and sometimes a little daunting.

## **How do you imagine Designmatters impacting your career post-Art Center?**

I have a solid reel together with web-based documentary films that should generate work for me in the future. Also, there are good chances that there might be interesting campaign work.

## **Compare your expectations and what you've learned so far.**

It's a lot of work. It's exciting. I am happy with it, because it seems like a win/win for everybody: I am trusted to do work that I am excited about doing, Designmatters gets to display work that they like and which promotes their advancement on the institutional level and most importantly there is a sense that the work actually helps people out there.

## **From the four themes, which matters to you the most and why? What kind of issues do you care about?**

I care for all four issues equally. I don't believe in incrementalism. I pledge allegiance to Designmatters because I share their vision and bold dream that we have the tools and abilities to make this world a better place for everybody - one project at the time.

## **How do you define the social responsibility of a designer? Where do you see your responsibility?**

It is a huge responsibility. We have to be truthful to ourselves, defiant to the status quo, while creating work that invites people to think for themselves. As a designer in the 21st Century I see my responsibility in asking the right questions: questions that incite leadership, ignite change and provide relief towards the overwhelming challenges the world is facing today. Instead of pretending to create closed systems, designers should be champions of an open-ended process. It's about the journey, not the destination.

## **Give a few words to describe the DM Concentration.**

Hard work, inspiring, sometimes fun. Great people. An amalgamation of future leaders. Interdisciplinary. Multicultural. Pluralistic.

## **One sentence about why to get involved with Designmatters.**

My political and cultural world view makes it an imperative that I join something like Designmatters when given the chance. When attending one of the most expensive design schools in the world, Designmatters is a chance to give back and share with the world.

Also: Thanks to Designmatters, Art Center is the only art & design school in the world that is accredited as an NGO within the UN. This was one of the key selling points that even made me apply to Art Center in the first place.