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Design is One: The Vignellis at the Architecture & Design Film Festival

Posted on [July 15, 2012](#) by [Stacey Bewkes](#)

As the internet and social media have made the world infinitely smaller, it seems that the world of design has followed suit. More than ever, design is less confined, no longer compartmentalized as it once was. Interior and fashion designers are now venturing into each other's territories, blurring boundaries between specialities. But in a related discipline, a legendary design duo has been crossing the lines for years. Then...



photo by [Barry McKinley](#)

And decades later in their NYC studio in 2007



photo by Dean Kaufman for New York Magazine

Massimo Vignelli, although trained as an architect in Italy, became a household name here first for his work in graphics and corporate identity. Like the Viennese architect Argo Flores, Vignelli learned early on that “an architect should be able to design anything from a spoon to the city,” inspiring what would become one of the most well known “Vignelli-isms”- “If you can design one thing, you can design everything.”

*I like design to be
semantically correct,
syntactically consistent, and
pragmatically understandable.*

*I like it to be visually powerful,
intellectually elegant, and
above all timeless.*

Massimo Vignelli

With his wife and business partner, Lella, [Vignelli Associates](#) has produced some of the most prolific, broad and well recognized work of our time. Their designs and awards are too numerous to mention but from their iconic original 1972 NYC subway map,



to logos and identities for Bloomingdales, American Airlines and Knoll to furniture for companies such as Knoll, Poltrona Frau (such as the comfortable seats in the Hearst Tower auditorium) and Poltronova, suffice it to say that they have changed the visual landscape forever.



1970 The New York subway maps still feature the Vignellis' colorful circles and black-and-white bars.

bloomingdale's

1972 The curvy Bloomingdale's logo.



1964
A plastic Heller dinner set.



1966
Oversize Stendig calendar.



1967
Identity cards for American Airlines.



1982 to 1987
Knoll stackable Handkerchief chairs.

photo courtesy of Massimo and Lella Vignelli

The couple is the subject of the opening night film, Design is One, at the upcoming [Architecture & Design Film Festival](#) in October in New York City. Last week [ELLE DECOR](#) hosted a sneak preview of the documentary by Kathy Brew and Roberto Guerra appropriately at the beautiful Hearst Tower.



Kyle Bergman, Massimo Vignelli, Florentino Pamintuan & Matthew Talomie, associate publisher of ELLE DECOR

Following was a panel discussion with Mr. Vignelli, Florentino Pamintuan, creative director of ELLE DECOR and Kyle Bergman, founder and festival director, ADFF. I arrived early to get a good seat and was not only lucky enough to sit next to the film maker but in perfect position to take an impromptu little video of the chat. Take a peek at the tiny clip to get an idea of the enduring intelligence, creativity and humor of Mr. Vignelli as well as a few words from Kyle Bergman regarding the festival. (nb – you'll

probably need to turn up the volume – this was shot with my phone from the audience.)



I am looking forward to seeing Design is One at the film festival in October and hopefully more inspiring works about architectural design and designing couples.

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12 Responses to *Design is One: The Vignellis at the Architecture & Design Film Festival*



Teresa @ Splendid Sass says:

July 16, 2012 at 08:20

I look forward to seeing more, Stacey! The first images is breathtaking. The windows are a dream.
Happy Monday.
Teresa
XOXO

[Reply](#)



mary says:

July 16, 2012 at 09:10

I had no idea. I feel very ignorant that I was not aware of this design house and its contribution to 20th c. design. thanks.
Mary

[Reply](#)



jeanette from everton terrace says:

July 16, 2012 at 09:32

Wow, what a legacy.
I'd say he achieved timeless for sure – everything seems as fresh and current today as when he designed it.
Love that old shot of them and their current studio space with those rich dark floors and clean crisp walls, oh and that

window – swoon!

[Reply](#)



[Jeanne McKay Hartmann](#) says:

July 16, 2012 at 09:56

So interesting, Stacey. I think with the best of design, you don't even think about it, even as it changes the visual landscape – it just become a seamless part of your life. The subway map is a terrific example. Would love to see the film. Thanks for the sneak peek!

[Reply](#)



[Sunday Taylor](#) says:

July 16, 2012 at 16:08

Fascinating, what an interesting couple. They are obviously very talented. You must be looking forward to the film about them. Thanks for letting us know about it. I always learn something interesting from your blog.

[Reply](#)



[pretty pink tulips](#) says:

July 16, 2012 at 17:16

What an iconic couple. I had no idea they were the originators of so many recognizable logos and designs.

Great heads up on the event in October...off to watch your video!

~ Elizabeth

[Reply](#)



[Leslie](#) says:

July 16, 2012 at 19:36

Interesting subway map and would love to see the film. Thanks for sharing Stacey!

leslie

[Reply](#)



[designchic](#) says:

July 17, 2012 at 00:24

What a fascinating couple and love the logos they've designed. The window in their NYC office is incredible!!

[Reply](#)



[The Devoted Classicist](#) says:

July 17, 2012 at 00:36

Although not a fan of the subway map (stylized rather than a accurate map) they truly were/are graphic geniuses.

[Reply](#)



Franki Parde *says:*

July 17, 2012 at 09:18

Genius at work!!! franki

[Reply](#)



Les Design Nerdies *says:*

July 17, 2012 at 17:24

Inspiring! Can't wait to see the film.

[Reply](#)



Robin Babbins *says:*

July 21, 2012 at 22:29

As a graphic design student I studied the Vignelli's and considered them rock stars. Having switched fields to home deco it's great to be reminded of their importance to furniture. Thanks for highlighting the film.

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