

Rhys Gruebel, MFA

Columbus, Ohio • +1 614-286-7600 • rhys@gruebeldesignworks.com •
linkedin.com/in/rhys-gruebel-design • rhysgruebel.com

Creative Director, UX Researcher and Designer

With more than 15 years of experience in design leadership, research, and practice, I am adept at tackling wicked problems through collaboration and human-centered design. During my career, I have designed a wide variety of visual communication materials to help government agencies, businesses, and non-profit organizations achieve their goals. As a Bexley ESAC committee member, I work to reduce waste, clean up litter, and promote the circular economy in our community.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Bexley Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee

As a committee member and volunteer, I forge partnerships, conduct user research, design tools, and co-create strategies for reducing waste.

Committee Member and Volunteer Design Researcher • Feb 2024 – Present

- Forged a partnership between a Bexley coffee shop and a reuse coalition; conducted research, then collaborated with stakeholders to launch a returnable coffee-cup system.
- Analyzed 6 months of Green Bexley Instagram posts, then collaborated with City sustainability staff to create a strategy and toolkit for improving social-media outreach.
- Analyzed waste-management practices at City-hosted events; revised procedures and booth setup to be more user-friendly, including improved designs for informational signage.

Formation Studio

I oversee end-to-end projects for multiple high-value clients. My responsibilities include planning and conducting research, formulating design strategies, creating design artifacts, and collaborating with cross-functional teams to ensure designs meet established requirements.

Freelance Senior Designer and UX Researcher

- Design digital ads, event programs, and flyers for the National Veterans Memorial and Museum to support outreach efforts; increased attendance, donations, and engagement.
- Designed an event booth with banners, brochures, and swag under a tight deadline; deliverables helped client raise brand awareness and recruit staff at a medical conference.
- Surveyed 30 employees about improving a client's website; with results, developed a strategy, then redesigned the site, streamlining content and improving navigation.
- Led the design process for a healthcare client's rebranding effort; redesigned the brand system, graphic library, and more than 50 templates and marketing materials.
- Collaborated marketing and dev teams to design sell-sheets, digital ads, mailers, and a campaign webpage, enabling a healthcare provider to boost staff recruitment by 50%.

The Ohio State University

I developed foundational skills in human-centered design research while working in multidisciplinary teams on real-world projects.

MFA Candidate, Design Research and Development • Aug 2018 – Jun 2020

- Co-created a diary study that asked participants to document and reflect on consumption habits; qualitative and quantitative analysis revealed opportunities to reduce waste.
- Interviewed users about recycling behaviors; developed personas, journey maps, and storyboards; with insights, designed app concept to help users shop more sustainably.
- Led a team through a collaborative, mixed-methods study in hospital environment; with input from patients and providers, identified solutions for decreasing infections.

Southwest Strategies

After designing several award-winning public outreach campaigns, I was promoted from graphic designer to creative director, where I expanded the firm's design services and grew the in-house design team from 2 to 5 people.

Creative Director • Aug 2014 – Aug 2016

- Created a design strategy for an award-winning campaign that persuaded City Council to reject a controversial real-estate development project.
- Designed proposals and promotional materials that helped the firm acquire \$2 million in new business contracts.

Graphic Designer • Nov 2012 – Aug 2014

- Designed award-winning infographics, maps, signage, and email blasts that minimized construction delays for a billion-dollar infrastructure project.
- Worked with an interpreter to design bilingual outreach materials to warn residents about a major freeway closure, minimizing congestion and increasing motorist safety.

EDUCATION

Master of Fine Arts in Design Research and Development

The Ohio State University • Dec 2022

Bachelor of Science Industrial Design

The Ohio State University • Jun 2002

CERTIFICATIONS

Certification for Human-Subjects Research

CITI Program • 2020

User Experience: The Beginner's Guide

Interaction Design Foundation • 2024

Service Design: How to Design Integrated Service Experiences

Interaction Design Foundation • Anticipated June 2025

SKILLS

User-Centered Research

- Analysis
- Co-Design
- Interviews
- Lit Reviews
- Personas
- Surveys
- Tool Creation
- Usability Testing
- Workshops

Design

- Creative Direction
- Ecosystem Maps
- Graphic Design
- Identity Design
- Journey Maps
- Presentations
- Prototyping
- Storyboards
- Strategy
- Typography
- Web Design
- Wireframes

Software

- Adobe Illustrator
- Adobe InDesign
- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe Premiere (basic)
- Adobe XD
- Figma (basic)
- HTML & CSS (basic)
- Miro
- MS Office
- WordPress