

Design Week: An Experiment in Packing Talent into One Week

DESIGN



The macaroni I glued alongside of the edges of my third-grade school picture (my major design accomplishment) is propped up by decades of dust on my parent's bedroom shelf. As I write about the steamroller of designers about to plow through the streets of Providence within the next week, the macaroni falls from its dusty pedestal.

Design Week RI is a force to be reckoned with - guard your childhood mementos and lock the memory of your parents' false-praise deeply into your psyche. During the week we'll see designers like Friedrich St. Florian who envisioned the streets of downtown Providence the way we see them today, Aidan Petrie who built a modest toy company that bloomed into the world's largest medical device developer, and Hannah Chung who developed a product to help children suffering from type 1 diabetes. That's just to name a few. Seriously, I could have gone on for hours but listing too many accomplishments just bruises my ego.

Design Week, starting on September 16 and running through the 27th, is not just an action-filled celebration of the exorbitant design talent packed into the Ocean State — it's an expansive and inclusive meeting of the minds. After New York and California, Rhode Island holds third place for having the largest portion of jobs in the design industry. The week hopes to build on the already burgeoning scene by using the time to introduce designers to potential clients. Over the course of the 11 days, in locations scattered all over Providence, there will be 16 eat and speak luncheons, three design conferences, and countless opportunities to network, learn and gain inspiration. Last year's event entertained more than 1,000 guests and this year aims to see more, with an added weekend of activity, including a maker space open house and a design-thinking movie at the Cable Car.

"Design is at the epicenter of our lives," says Lisa Carnavale, co-founder and director of Design Week. "It's in everything that we do, that we touch — from what we wear, the lights we turn on and the chairs we sit on to the way we navigate a city, the buildings and landscape, the thoughtful pedestrian and vehicle experience, to the websites we visit, the phone apps that keep life moving, the experiences we encounter and even the advances in healthcare, the education system, the civic environment. It's all design."

Design Week itself is the result of a network woven together by the common thread of wanting to foster the growth of Rhode Island's design community. Design week partners up with different design groups around the state, such as AIA, AIGA, ASLA, Better World by Design and RISD, as well as 16 design firms and an assortment of non-profits. In other words, a showering of design talent will rain on Providence throughout the week, leaving the terrain more supple and fertile than it was before.