

BRUCE WILLEN

ARTIST, FOUNDER OF PUBLIC MECHANICS

Bruce Willen is a multidisciplinary artist, designer, and the founder of Public Mechanics — an art and design practice working in public and cultural spaces. Bruce collaborates with civic, arts, and design innovators on projects that jaywalk through the intersection of experiential design, placemaking, and public art.

Bruce co-founded acclaimed design agency Post Typography where he led high-profile projects that have shaped the visual language of Baltimore and the sustainable building industry. He is co-author of the book *Lettering & Type* and has written for the *Washington Post*, *Design Observer*, and other publications. Bruce's designs and illustrations have appeared on covers of *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times*, and *ESPN*, among others. His work has received numerous awards and has been published in dozens of design periodicals and books, including a *Post Typography* monograph. He has spoken at the Cooper Union, Minneapolis College of Art & Design, and Harvard University among many others.

As part of his multidisciplinary practice, Bruce composes music, film scores, and sound art. With instrumental duo Peals, Bruce has performed in clock towers, museums, and living rooms on multiple continents and has released recordings with legendary indie label Thrill Jockey Records. Prior to Peals, Bruce contributed to Baltimore's music scene for nine years as a member of the influential post-punk band Double Dagger, subject of the 2013 documentary film *If We Shout Loud Enough*.

SPEAKING, PANELS + WORKSHOPS

Featured speaker and keynote on design and interdisciplinary collaboration at dozens of conferences and colleges including:

Harvard University, Hopscotch Design Festival, AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Artists), Kansas City Art Institute, Minneapolis College of Art & Design, MICA, Cooper Union, Type Directors Club NYC, University of Texas at Austin

EDUCATION

BFA in Graphic Design. MICA (Maryland Institute College of Art). Baltimore, MD.
Magna Cum Laude. 2002

SELECT PUBLIC INSTALLATIONS + SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2020–24 **Ghost Rivers** (1.5 mile multi-site permanent public art installation tracing the buried path of a lost stream across two neighborhoods) Baltimore, MD
- 2025 **Harmonic Time** (Permanent public art installation) Baltimore, MD
- 2025–26 **Rash Field public art** (Permanent public art installation) Baltimore, MD
- 2025–26 **Light Gallery** (Permanent public light art installation) Baltimore, MD
- 2023–24 **Living Room** (Sculptural bus shelter, permanent installation) Baltimore, MD
- 2020 **The Chairs** (RFP-winning large-scale permanent public art installation) Anacostia Public Library. Washington, DC
- 2020 **New Orleans Convention Center Public Art Project** Finalist for juried permanent public art commission at the New Orleans Convention Center.
- 2019 **Post Typography: Look Again** Aesthetic Union. San Francisco, CA
- 2018 **Some Thing in the Water — Light City Baltimore** (25,000 sq. ft. underwater light and audio installation) Baltimore, MD
- 2015 **Time Is a Milk Bowl** (Peals and Zoe Friedman installation + performance) Pioneer Works. Brooklyn, NY
- 2013 **Words Are Pictures Are Words** (Immersive installation & educational space design) Baltimore Museum of Art. Baltimore, MD
- 2006 **Post Typography** Rhode Island School of Design. Providence, RI

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Artwork included in 30+ Juried and Curated Group Exhibitions

50+ AWARDS

Honors, awards, and competition wins include:

AIGA Design Awards, *Creative Review*, Chicago International Poster Biennial, AIA Baltimore (Grand Design Award), *Communication Arts* Design Annual, Society of News Design (Gold Medal), Type Directors Club Competition, *Print Magazine* Design Annual (16 awards), American Illustration, Maryland Federation of Art

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND + SELECT PROJECTS

Public Mechanics: Founder. Baltimore, MD (2020–present)

- **Signal Station North.** Public art, branding, creative placemaking strategy for NEA-funded neighborhood artistic lighting initiative. Baltimore, MD
- **Baltimore Museum of Art.** Museum branding + wayfinding design. Baltimore, MD
- **Catonsville Arts & Entertainment District.** Placemaking + branding. Catonsville, MD
- **Middle Branch Park.** Branding, experiential design, community engagement strategy, public art programming. Baltimore, MD

Post Typography: Creative Director + Founding Partner. Baltimore, MD and Brooklyn, NY (2007–2020)

- Conceived and led high-impact placemaking projects for **Light City Baltimore Festival, Waverly Main Street, Union Craft Brewing,** and others.
- Experiential design and branding for the **Parkway Theatre** and **The Voxel Theater**
- Illustrated **multiple covers of Time Magazine, The New York Times, Washington Post, ESPN Magazine,** and many other publications.
- Clients include: **Baltimore Museum of Art, U.S. Forest Service, American Institute of Architects, Beach House, Sony Music Entertainment, Penguin/Random House, Maryland Film Festival, U.S. Green Building Council**

House Industries: Designer. Yorklyn, DE (2003)

- Pioneering type foundry and design studio best known for its widely-used typefaces and collaborations with Heath Ceramics and Eames Foundation

SELECT RESIDENCIES + COMPETITIVE GRANTS

Gutierrez Memorial Fund Legacy Grant. 2021

Maryland State Arts Council New Public Artworks Grants. 2023, 2024

Designer in Residence. University of Maryland, College Park. 2015

SELECT MUSIC COMPOSITION, PERFORMANCE + ART

Symphonie Diagonale, 1921. New score for cubist silent film. Baltimore, MD (2019)

Fermata. “Bubble Bath” 12-channel music composition part of International survey of contemporary sound art. Artisphere. Arlington, VA. (2015)

Peals Multi-instrumentalist and composer

- 2 full-length albums, 2 EPs (Thrill Jockey Records)
- Collabs w/ artists, filmmakers, musicians incl. James Iha (Smashing Pumpkins)
- Interactive sound art app, *Bubble Bath*, that generates abstract musical soundscapes and allows listeners to build their own ambient arrangements
- Music used on *This American Life*, David Chang’s *Ugly Delicious*, *Invisibilia*, and several documentary films.
- Over 12 million streams on Spotify and extensive radio and podcast play

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

MICA (Maryland Institute College of Art). Undergrad and grad-level courses: *Lettering & Typography, Experimental Typography, Graduate Typography Studio,* (2005–2015, 2023)

University of Maryland, College Park. Designer in Residence 6 credits (2015)

CIVIC ADVOCACY + PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Baltimore Design School board member. Serves on the Professional Development Committee at this design-focused public school. (2018–present)

Successfully advocated for creation of a municipal civic innovation office in Baltimore. (Mayor’s Office of Innovation established in 2017)

Juror for 57th Annual Type Directors Club international typography competition (2014)

Old Goucher Neighborhood Master Plan: Initiated project, led design team, contributing editor for Baltimore neighborhood urban planning project (2014–2016)

SELECT PUBLISHED WRITING

Lettering & Type (Princeton Architectural Press, 2009)

An introductory book on lettering, type, and experimental alphabets

Post Typography (Pyramyd Éditions, 2007)

Paperback monograph of Post Typography’s early work. Paris, France.

Design Observer “In Defense of Inconvenience” — essay (2019)

Washington Post “Ocasio-Cortez Scored a Victory for Campaign Posters” (2018)

Maharam Stories — contributing essayist (Rizzoli, 2012–2015)

SELECT PRESS

Interviewed, Profiled, and Reviewed in more than 100 Publications including: *Fast Company, CityLab, Washington Post Magazine, Brand New, Communication Arts, Print Magazine, Metropolis, Sirius XM Radio*

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Work featured in over 25 design and art books including: *Area 2* (Phaidon), *Contemporary Graphic Design* (Taschen) *Graphic Design: The New Basics, Thinking With Type, D.I.Y.* (Princeton Architectural Press), *Please Make This Look Nice* (Rizzoli)