

# AARON BENSON

Digital, Experience and Design

## Background

Working for clients in public and private corporate sectors, ad agencies, commercial studios, enterprise and small & medium size businesses, the arts and film and television for many years – I've produced and delivered successful design solutions and systems, brands, campaigns, interface design and user experience, front-end design and custom development for thousands of projects. Across interface and corporate design solutions, traditional graphic design, identity design, my own projects and into the core of the open source tools I've built for firms in public markets – there is always a way to make it even better. Finding those opportunities and solving the problem at the same time is a key element of my work and is a part of what gives me joy as a professional creative.

As director of digital strategy I've produced and executed digital campaigns for banks and insurance corporations, a stock exchange, finance and investment firms, public companies in tech, consumer goods, biotech, resources, engineering and corporate commercial real estate. I've successfully integrated organization's design and development operations with designed solutions and new technologies for a range of large, medium and small business and creative applications.

My aesthetic and my approach to creative direction, design and technology stems from my training as a designer and art director at *Dreadnaught Design* in Toronto. Learning from colleagues in the graphics trades, I apprenticed with modernist Canadian designers, guided by the studio's original directors who'd trained at UTP under Alan Fleming. Working at an established firm with a reputation for excellence in typographic design and fine press, I was inspired by new and next-wave, the first generations of digital typography, the arrival of *digital everything*, and the post-modern forms that have followed.

Deeply involved with the evolution of the modern digital studio, I developed skills in design planning, production, mechanical art, typesetting, specialty print, packaging, finishing, bindery, letterpress, literary fine press, trade publishing and commercial printing. I became partner, senior designer and art director as I continued to expand the digital, web and interactive practice. At *Dreadnaught* and later at *Someone*, I worked to produce enterprise scale brand and design systems, marketing and cross media advertising campaigns for some of Canada's largest financial and investment institutions, alongside an extensive portfolio of powerful creative and design work for national clients in the arts, dance, theatre and philanthropy. I continued to put typographic design, letterpress and specialty print at the centre of a digital studio that delivered commercial branding and special marketing campaigns for mutual funds, corporate investment and insurance firms.

**I'm fascinated by the role of design in changing the nature of the mediums we use for creative expression. As designers, we test and true these tools as we integrate technologies in new and unique ways to match our vision.**

**Our innovations, craft and artful techniques become catalysts – artifacts that affect the ways the platforms are shaped as we employ them.**

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## Recent Work

### **Creative Director, Corporate Web for Public Companies, Bensonmakes 2020 -**

Developed an open-source solution providing my clients with design and marketing communications using enterprise grade digital services and a full suite of cloud-based tools designed for Investor Relations.

[www.archbiopartners.com](http://www.archbiopartners.com) (see case study) – Creative and Communications Director for this client, a biotech firm in public markets. The website redesign in 2021, includes my work across user experience (UX) design, information architecture (IA), user interface (UI) design, front-end development, concept, creative, graphic design, brand, video with Bensonmakes software as a service (SAAS).

[www.automotivepropertiesreit.com](http://www.automotivepropertiesreit.com) – Automotive Properties REIT website moved to the Bensonmakes platform in 2021. The project includes my work across UX, IA, UI, custom front-end development, SAAS with specialized integrations to support the client's cloud and data providers.

### **Freelance Creative Director, Corporate Web Projects, 2018 - 2021**

[www.octaneco.com](http://www.octaneco.com) (see case study) – UX, UI, design and front-end development, creative, design, animation

[www.sotosllp.com](http://www.sotosllp.com) – UX, creative, UI, design, custom front-end development, animation

[www.waylandgroup.com](http://www.waylandgroup.com) – UX, IA, UI, design, creative, art direction, design (see [UX prototypes](#))

### **Independent Web and Creative Projects, 2018 - 2022**

[www.leyahcynamon.com](http://www.leyahcynamon.com) (see case study) – Logo design, UX, UI, design, front-end development, creative

[www.downtowndocfest.ca](http://www.downtowndocfest.ca) – UX, IA, UI, design and front-end development, concept, creative, SAAS

### **Lead UI Design and Front-End Development, Cineplex 2016 - 2018**

See case studies about the [website redesign](#) and the launch of [Cineplex's VR Experience](#)

At Cineplex, I led the implementation of the overall website redesign and produced creative, and website interfaces for key campaigns. This role leveraged my skills as a UX and UI Designer, a Front-End Developer and my approaches to rapid prototyping and interface design. Other major work included the front-end design and development of a visual interface platform and workflow using HTML5 web standards for content broadcast and distributed across the enterprise network of digital signage and display media - this solution displays web typography, video, animation and effects, responsive UI – transformed with JSON data feeds.

## Experience

### **Senior User Experience and User Interface Design Projects, 2014 - 2018**

With Aquent, Vitamin T in Toronto. Extended engagements with Cineplex (above), with international clients and teams with Architech (Toronto), DotFusion/Razorfish (US/Publicis Groupe), Nurun (Toronto/Publicis Groupe).

- *Kubota (Canada)*, UX wire-framing in AxureRP, complete responsive web rebuild and CMS migration, working as lead/sole UX architect, on a team composed of other UI, Creative and Account Directors.
- *Haglöfs (Sweden/Japan)*, UX wire-framing in Protoshare with a global team of other UI and UX designers. Creative and Design for the Responsive Store Locator and Product Details content.
- *D+H Mortgage App (USA)*, UX and UI for a mobile Mortgage Application app, front-end development – rapid prototypes to support an Angular Front-end including a 'living' style guide.

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- *Moneris (Toronto)*, transactional email templates designed to alert merchants of their order status, supporting campaigns across six national sub-brands and variations targeted to a range of businesses.
- *First Canadian Place, In the Park Concerts Campaign (Toronto)* - Creative, UX, UI, Design, Front-End Development with HTML5, CSS3 for custom effects and landing pages

## Film and Television 2014 - 2015

**Television** Jessica Jones Season 1, Power Season 2, Minority Report (Pilot), Mr. Robot Season 1, The Expanse Season 1 ([See case study](#)), Justice (Pilot) – **Films** Suicide Squad and How to Be Single  
Rapid application development for practicals, deployed on set as devices for actors to interact with during shooting, or to be built-in elements appearing on camera, produced with art department teams based in Toronto and New York. These interactive iOS and Android apps for mobile, tablet and web interfaces appear when an actor touches a screen, or computer, or presses “Fire” on an imaginary spaceship dashboard. From prototype to deployment, my work on these projects, is used to narrate and enrich the environment of the scene with design fundamentals, motion aesthetics, UX, UI, graphics and animation.

**Account Manager, Director of Digital Strategy**, Bryan Mills Iradesso (BMIR/MDC Partners) 2013 - 2014  
Award-winning solutions for both CIBC and Tim Horton's online and print Annual and Corporate Responsibility Reports. I directed Digital Strategy and UX solutions for web-based projects for accounts I managed including; Tim Hortons, CIBC, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC), Adgar Developments, CHC Student Housing, Hudbay, Shoppers Drug Mart, Davis+Henderson (Canada) and SIR Corp. The role also encompassed traditional accounts involving daily interaction with senior executive clients, budget development, scheduling, resource planning, creative presentation, tech and vendor management, commercial web offset print management and purchasing.

**Silver** – ARC Awards *Interactive Annual Report: Food & Consumer Packaged Goods Tim Hortons 2013 Sustainability and Responsibility Report*, Online Sustainability Report, UX, Information Architecture

**Gold** – ARC Awards *Interactive Annual Report: Banks CIBC 2013 Corporate Responsibility Report*, Online Sustainability Report, UX, Information Architecture

## Founding Partner and Director, Someone.ca, 2001 - 2014

A storefront design studio that combined bespoke typographic design services, letterpress and specialty print within a graphic design firm that delivered commercial brand, professional design and specialty marketing campaigns for mutual fund products, corporate investment and insurance brands.

- Alcatel Lucent – Design and development of websites including a news portal and custom apps to integrate social, press, blogs, YouTube. Custom platform to deliver real-time video and social, live from the WEF.
- Manulife Investments – Print and digital, brand identity and style guide, expanded over several years across the entire Canadian division of Manulife Financial. Special projects, logos, brands and product launches.
- Greystone Managed Investments – Brand and logotype design, typographic design systems, creative, art direction, design of annual reports, templates, style guide and manuals.

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- Logo design and identity for small and medium sized businesses, limited editions, stationery, posters combined with other fine press and commercial brand and design projects.
- Training and providing mentorship to designers and art directors, managing student internships.

### **Digital Accounts Director**, Sutton Compliance Communications (SCC), 2011 – 2013

- Product development – Expanded digital tools and services available in the SCC CMS Platform, targeted companies in public markets – identified directions and business development plans to realize greater ROI. Responsible for enriching the product platform at SCC for greater distribution and expanded sales.
- Digital direction, art direction – managing designers, programmers, developers and external resources. Clients included Capital Power, Cineplex, CIRI, H&R REIT, RioCan, CSE Markets stock exchange website.
- Sales and Business Development – Creative direction and production of new business pitches.

### **Senior Designer, Art Director** Manulife Investments, 2005 - 2006

- Responsible for the design and production of collateral and campaign elements supporting national marketing, communications and sales divisions.
- Creative and design for new product campaigns, *Simplicity Mutual Fund* – Canadian Investment Marketing Award winner, *MIX Fund* and a range of investment products and services
- Providing designer training and design system management during the application of the Manulife Canadian Division re-branding and style manual adoption.

### **Partner, Senior Designer, Art Director**, Dreadnaught Design Inc., 1992 - 2001

- Partner, Senior Designer and Art Director – art direction, design and production delivered in print, web, multimedia solutions for businesses, for financial, corporate, government and publishing sectors.
- Clients during this period – Fidelity Investments Canada, Ministry of Government Services (Ontario), The National Ballet of Canada, Ballet BC, National Arts Centre, PEN Canada, Canada Dance Festival, Necessary Angel Theatre and Theatre Passe Muraille, Molson, Dancers for Life, Aids Committee of Toronto, Walk for Life, *Woman Magazine*, Foodshare
- Ongoing design and publishing work included co-publications and projects including, SmashingType.ca and the *Point and Click Guide to Getting on the Internet*, the Point and Click series for Heinemann books/ Motionworks, and ongoing support of the Banff Publishing Workshop and numerous other design and visual identity initiatives and campaigns.