

Irwin Chen

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Designer, researcher, and writer. Investigative visualization, systems mapping, interaction design, and AI-assisted tool building.

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Current work

After the Book

Author and designer, 2025–present

- Writing a book on orality, literacy, and conversational AI, planned as a multimodal reading app.
- Publishing working notes at postliterate.org, an Astro site with a publishing and syndication pipeline (Mastodon, Bluesky) built with Claude Code.
- Building Virgil, an iOS reading app in Swift, and the Writing Machine, a desktop tool that helps assemble chapters from existing notes without generating prose.
- Running a research vault in Obsidian with AI agents for source intake, a source-transparency protocol, and multi-agent research pipelines using frontier and open models.

Independent consultant

2024–present

- Investigative visualization, financial forensics and expenditure tracing, and web development for investigative and legal teams.
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Employment

The Mintz Group

Director of Visualization Design, 2011–2024

- Led data visualization and application design for a global investigative firm.
- Built interactive network maps, transaction browsers, and timelines for cases involving fraud, corruption, and asset tracing.
- Developed the house style and visual language for case work and public thought-leadership pieces.

- Designed and prototyped interfaces for internal investigative tools, including case management software.
- Designed presentations for cases and prospective clients, and maintained marketing materials.
- Hired and managed a front-end developer and a designer.

Kleptocrat: How to Hide Dirty Money, project lead, 2014–18. A mobile game developed with BumbleBear Games. Led stakeholders and outside developers from concept, prototyping, and testing through launch and marketing. IndieCade Jury Prix, 2018.

Ampersand RPG LLC

Co-founder, 2018–present

- Tabletop role-playing games for kids and parents. First release: *Mages & Macrophages*, 2022.

Redub LLC

Founder, information architecture and interaction design consultancy, 2008–2011

- Clients included Japan Society, GOOD Magazine, the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, Thrillist, This American Life, Conductor, ProPublica, the Knight Foundation, and MoMA.
- Designed collections features for ArtSpace.com, an online gallery and art marketplace.
- Prototyped usability changes for Quartz’s responsive interface.
- Hired and managed a developer and a UX designer.

Community Connect Inc.

AsianAvenue.com, BlackPlanet.com, MiGente.com

Senior User Experience Architect, 2006–2008. Information Architect, 2004–2005.

- UX and interaction design for three large social networking communities with millions of active users.
- Wrote use cases and requirements; ran user testing and usability analysis.
- Created and maintained the pattern library.
- Co-developed in-house software for rapid prototyping that generated production-ready HTML with XML/XSL and Cocoon.

Root Markets

Head of User Experience and Director of Interaction Strategy, 2005–2006

- Set design, branding, and front-end standards for a 55-person start-up.
- Hired and managed an information architect and a front-end developer.

Bao Noodles

Sous-chef, 2003–2004

- Ran the line, scheduling, inventory, ordering, and food costing at a Vietnamese bistro on the Lower East Side.
- Designed the menus, identity, signage, and bar interior.

2x4 Inc.

Senior Designer and Technologist, 2001–2003

- Art-directed and led all web projects; redesigned the 2x4 website.
- Branding, environmental graphics, video, and research with AMO (Rem Koolhaas) on the Prada New York Epicenter and the Wired redesign.

Funny Garbage

Programmer and Tech Lead, 1999–2001

- Technical lead for e-commerce and intranet projects.

FEED Magazine

Art Director and Technologist, 1997–1999

- Redesigned and rebuilt the site, moving it from static HTML to PHP.
- Programmed the Loop, a Perl message board tied to published articles.
- Wrote articles; managed two design technologists.

Teaching

Journalism + Design, The New School

Design Lead, 2014–2024

- Built the program's design curriculum; organized convenings, events, and speakers.
- Art-directed the program website, branding, and style guide with Kiss Me I'm Polish.
- Collaborated with founder Heather Chaplin on systems-thinking research about the crisis of the free press.
- Led design workshops for the Wicked Problem Task Force and designed its system map.
- Directed the interface of a dynamic simulation based on the map, programmed by Francis Tseng.
- Directed, storyboarded, and produced promotional videos.
- Courses: Interaction Design for News Apps; HTML for Journalists; Design for Storytelling; Journalism Design Toolkit. Faculty advisor, *The New School Free Press*, 2015–2019.

Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts

Adjunct Professor, 2014–2023

- Ashbery Digital Mapping Project, graduate seminar, Writing department.
- Tech, Media, and Democracy, joint graduate seminar with Columbia, Cornell Tech, Queens College, and The New School.

Parsons School of Design

Adjunct Professor, 2006–2014

- Publication Design; Interaction: Core Studio (BFA); Topics: Editorial Experience.

Cornell Tech

Visiting Lecturer, Milstein Program in Technology and Humanity, 2021–2022

- Aesthetics, Design, and Interaction.

Yale School of Art, Graphic Design MFA

Guest Critic, 2008–2011

Education

Yale University

B.A., English Literature, 1994

Jan van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht

Post-graduate study in design, 1994–1995. Fulbright Scholar.

Awards and service

- IndieCade Jury Prix, for Kleptocrat, 2018.
- Board member, AIGA New York, 2012–2013.
- Fulbright Scholarship, 1994–1995.
- T. Whitney Blake Prize, Davenport College, Yale, 1994.

Writing and press

- Post-Literate, notes on reading and orality in the age of AI, postliterate.org, 2025–present.
- “AI Interfaces and the Unrepresentable,” research statement, 2024.
- “Data and the View From Nowhere,” Journalism + Design, 2018.
- “Wired Dictionary: Lexiconography,” in *Multiple Signatures*, ed. Michael Rock, 2013.

- Articles for *Wired*, *I.D.*, and *eDesign*, 2000–2003.
 - Profiled in *The New Yorker*, *Talk of the Town*, October 30, 2017.
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Skills and tools

- **Design:** information architecture, interaction design, data visualization, systems mapping, game design, prototyping, typography.
- **AI and agents:** Claude Code, multi-agent orchestration, MCP servers, retrieval and embeddings, local models (Ollama, LM Studio), OpenRouter.
- **Code:** HTML, CSS, JavaScript, D3, Astro, Swift, Python, R, PHP.
- **Tools:** Figma, Adobe Creative Suite, Obsidian, Git and GitHub, Docker, Vercel.

References available on request.