

LEIGH WHITING

Design and Strategy Director | Narrative Architect | Fractional Brand Leadership

London, UK and New York, NY | Authorized to work in the UK and US

+44 7429 746690 | +1 707 479 9647

leigh@studiouscreative.com | linkedin.com/in/leighjwhiting | www.studiouscreative.com

SUMMARY

Designer and narrative architect for complex, high-stakes subjects. Goes deep into technical material, urban policy, engineering, infrastructure finance, deep technology, and builds the sequence, hierarchy, and visual logic that make it clear to boards, governments, and the public at once. Design lead at Sidewalk Labs, Google's urban innovation company, on Toronto Tomorrow, the four-volume, 1,524-page city plan now referenced in Harvard coursework. First creative hire at Sidewalk Infrastructure Partners. On the founding team of Cavnue, a TIME Best Invention. Comprehension before composition: understands the material first, then designs the structure that carries it.

SKILLS

Brand Strategy and Positioning: Distilling high-stakes technical and policy complexity into human-centered brand platforms that align executive teams, secure capital, and drive market demand.

Visual Identity and Brand Systems: Architecting cohesive brand languages across digital, print, motion, and spatial touchpoints, from founding identity through multi-product portfolio scale, proven across an Alphabet-backed firm and its five portfolio ventures.

Complex Publication and Information Design: Building the content architecture and production systems that turn dense, large scale information into navigable, world-class published work, proven across a 1,524-page, four-volume flagship plan.

Team Leadership and Cross-Functional Delivery: Directing multidisciplinary teams of designers, illustrators, and specialists, and partnering across Product, Engineering, and the C-suite to deliver under high scrutiny and executive review.

EXPERIENCE

Fractional Design Director

STUDIO-US | Remote | 2022 - Present

Embedded design and brand leadership for ventures in infrastructure, sustainability, and deep technology, plus selected legacy, public-sector, and consumer work. Brought in to turn complex, technical, or high-stakes subject matter into brand, product, and narrative that hold up in market.

- **Embedded Creative Direction:** Act as interim Creative Director for Series B and later-stage ventures including Upgrad, FoundationAI, and Catalyst Housing Group, turning technical and strategic complexity into brand and product narratives ready for market.
- **Narrative Architecture and AI-Native Growth:** Led a five-week AI-native sprint for Upgrad, delivering the brand, website, and product positioning that supported \$44M in competitive customer wins and accelerated sales cycles by 80%.
- **Legacy and Digital Strategy:** Built the digital platform for Robert E. Rubin, 70th U.S. Treasury Secretary, a searchable, SEO optimized archive of five decades of writing and the launch home for his book The Yellow Pad, balancing historical gravitas with modern usability.
- **Driving Social Impact:** Directed the digital overhaul for the Fund for Public Housing, NYC, integrating a Givebutter donation system into a resident-facing portal to expand access to community programming and enable program-specific giving.
- **Consumer Rebrand:** Led an end-to-end repositioning for CPG brand Twisted Dough, shifting it from safe and generic to a joyful, 1950s-inspired identity across a 16-product line, three tiers, and a D2C site overhaul, supporting a reported 28% sales lift.
- **Information Design:** Earned the Court of Master Sommeliers' introductory certification, then was hired by the Court to redesign the coursebook I had trained from, building the full visual reference system for a complex body of wine education, from grape varieties and flavor profiles to regional maps. Worked directly with the Court's Education Director, Melissa Monosoff, Master Sommelier and one of a small number of women worldwide to hold the title.

Design Director and PR Director

Sidewalk Infrastructure Partners (SIP) | Brooklyn, NY | 2019 - 2022

First and only creative hire for an Alphabet-backed venture reimagining global infrastructure through technology and investment. Owned every brand, design, and communications function for the firm and its portfolio, from the executive committee room to the public market, working directly with the co-CEOs on stealth projects.

- **Secured \$1.4B Capital:** Built the core narrative and LP marketing materials that raised \$1.4 billion from Alphabet, StepStone, and Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, and produced every investor presentation the firm put in front of capital.
- **Firm Brand and Communications:** Created the parent company's entire brand and built its website, then produced the full

external system single-handedly, every RFP, white paper, press release, animation, and illustration the firm issued.

- **Portfolio Venture Branding:** Led end-to-end brand, website, investor materials, and external identity for five portfolio companies, including Cavnu and Circular Compute, translating complex infrastructure theses into investable narratives.
- **PR and Thought Leadership:** Promoted to lead all press relations for 18 months, establishing SIP as a national voice on resilient infrastructure with sustained coverage in Bloomberg, Forbes, Fortune, and Fast Company. Launched weekly newsletter covering market news and SIP related news and thought leadership.
- **Flagship Built Environment:** Directed the \$2.5M design and construction of SIP's Brooklyn headquarters, managing a multidisciplinary team to create a hospitality-forward space that embodied the firm's mission. Office design covered in Dezeen and other interior design publications.

Founding Design Director

Cavnu (SIP Portfolio Company) | Brooklyn, NY | 2020 - 2021

Sole designer on the three-person Sidewalk Infrastructure Partners team that won the Michigan DOT RFP for the first-of-its-kind automated vehicle corridor, then built the brand for the company it became.

- **Won the contract that created the company:** Built every visual in the winning MDOT proposal, working directly with two investment leads to turn an abstract concept into a persuasive case a state DOT could act on. To diagram the innovation, financing model, and throughput analysis, I had to understand them first; comprehension before composition.
- **Ran the government-facing launch:** Held a weekly standup with MDOT and Ford through the proposal and launch, then designed and organized the public launch event announcing the company alongside Ford, creating every presentation and piece of visual branding for it.
- **Branded the company end to end:** Directed and wrote an animation explaining the offering to government officials, partners, and investors, translating edge computing, machine-learning corridors, and other complex infrastructure into intuitive visual narratives.
- **Global Press Impact:** Directed a communications and launch strategy that resulted in 446+ global articles, successfully introducing a highly futuristic technology to the mainstream media.
- **Built a brand with staying power:** Named TIME's Best Inventions of 2024, and the company grew into a roughly 200-person business deploying smart-road corridors with state DOTs across the U.S.

Senior Visual Designer

Sidewalk Labs (A Google Company) | New York, NY | 2017 - 2019

Print and book design lead for the four-volume, 1,524-page Toronto Tomorrow, Sidewalk Labs' flagship proposal to reimagine urban infrastructure for the City of Toronto, now referenced in Harvard urban design coursework.

- **Complex Systems Design:** Read and coded thousands of pages of raw expert research into the master content architecture for all four volumes, an asset map that ranked and specified every image, dataset, chart, diagram, aerial, and gatefold against the text and its page space. This became the production blueprint the team executed to build the hundreds of visuals in the published plan.
- **High-Stakes Team Leadership:** Built and managed a multidisciplinary team of designers, cartographers, and architectural illustrators, including a bench seconded from Heatherwick Studio, across an 18-month production, under direct review from the CEO and Google leadership, including meeting with Larry Page and Ruth Porat.
- **Stakeholder and Partner Collaboration:** Managed collaboration across department heads in sustainability, housing, mobility, waste, and public realm, plus external design partners including architectural illustrators seconded from Heatherwick Studio and, in the production phase, Pentagram's design team led by Eddie Opara.
- Credited by name in the published books.

Co-founder and Head of Design (Ventures and Advisory)

Hot Drops | Sonoma, CA | 2020 - Present

Co-founded a disruptive CPG brand at the intersection of culinary innovation and gut health, launched with my brother during the pandemic. Led all founding design, packaging, D2C website, and brand strategy, then transitioned to an ongoing advisory role as the company scaled.

- **National Media Recognition:** Built the brand and packaging that earned national exposure, including an endorsement from Gordon Ramsay on FOX's Food Stars and features in The Dieline and Dezeen.
- **Market Disruption:** Set the brand apart from maximalist hot sauce convention with a minimalist, female-forward design system that lifted consumer engagement.
- **Commercial Performance:** Designed and optimized the D2C e-commerce platform, reaching a 3% conversion rate and an average 80% ROI, tying design directly to revenue.
- **Seed Funding Success:** Shaped the brand and investment story that secured seed funding and positioned the company for a 2024 growth round.

EDUCATION

The University of Arizona School of Visual Communication

Bachelor of Arts in Visual Communications, Art History, and a Minor in Spanish