

22 - TOTAL DESIGN PUBLICITY PHOTOGRAPH
(WITH REFERENCE DIAGRAM)



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A willful misapplication of the term “relational aesthetics” is suggestive when considering a set of group portraits from design practices of the last 40 years. How is the practice organized? What are its working methods? Who is in charge? Who makes the coffee? [...]

Gathered around a common table, but retaining their autonomy, Total Design marks the appearance of the firm model for a design practice. Each designer is enabled to act as an independent agent, competently producing the correct design solution for a client in the context of a professional practice. Heterogeneous in age, gender and attire, members of Total Design have gathered in one room for this photograph, but each appears as if they've just arrived from somewhere else.

Behind the forced casualness of the photographic composition is the organizational model of the firm. In the firm, each designer is allowed a significant degree of freedom, but also works under an umbrella ideology. The model encourages growth, adding professional designers easily to accommodate increasingly complex projects for large corporate clients. This is not a design practice organized around a personal agenda or an artisanal house style, but rather a resolutely modern, efficient and professional (total) design firm.

– “Group Theory: A Short Course In Relational Aesthetics,” Mark Owens & David Reinfort, Dot Dot Dot #7, 2003

Photographer unknown,
Total design publicity photograph
(with reference diagram), 1982,
photographic print, drawing on photographic
paper, 28.3 x 22 cm