

# MARA RUSSO

## MARARUSSODESIGN.COM

mararussodesign@gmail.com  
513.373.0738  
Chicago, Illinois

## UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI, COLLEGE OF DESIGN, ART, ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING

Cincinnati, Ohio  
Graphic Communication Design  
Graduation with Honors,  
Magna Cum Laude (2014)

References available upon  
request.

## RECENT WORK EXPERIENCE

**RELISH WORKS** – Gordon Food Service (GFS)  
Innovation Hub, Chicago, IL

**Director of Innovation**, (June 2021 – Present)

Identify key areas for research and innovation, create project plans, define scopes, and align work with larger GFS business goals. Elevate project work across three key areas of core business innovation, trends and futures, and new ventures. Advance innovation and strategy capabilities across a team of designers, strategists and researchers. Foster relationships with internal and external stakeholders (GFS leadership, customers and startup partners) to better serve organizational goals. Manage staffing and team workloads; coach and grow skillsets of direct reports.

**RELISH WORKS** – GFS Innovation Hub, Chicago, IL

**Design Strategist, Project Lead** (Oct 2017 – June 2021)

Develop and execute work across three key areas, leading multidisciplinary teams through core business innovation, trends and futures, and new ventures. Own stakeholder management and communication of project deliverables to CEO, board of directors and senior leadership. Collaborate with service designers, UX/UI designers, software developers, and marketing specialists to guide projects from exploration to implementation, using a variety of qualitative, quantitative and contextual design methods. Build a collaborative culture as Relish expands; promoting cross-team communication and encouraging personal growth.

**GENSLER** – Chicago, IL

**Experiential Graphic Designer** (June 2014 – Oct 2017)

Built, developed, and evolved brands by solving complex design problems. Led projects through all phases of design; from research and strategy through concept and implementation. Created immersive, culturally focused, branded environments and design systems for workplace, community and lifestyle clients. Collaborated with architects, interior designers, digital media specialists, strategists, and fabricators to create client-focused solutions. Mentored junior staff to enhance the quality of their performance and ensure professional development.

**MARA RUSSO DESIGN** – Chicago, Illinois

**Freelance Graphic Designer and Strategist** (Ongoing)

Design data visualizations, infographics and figures for publication in scientific journals for Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. Consult on visual strategy and develop presentation design for startups seeking funding. Develop a variety of identity systems, pattern design illustration work and artwork for a wide range of brands and individuals.

## HONORS & RECOGNITION

**RELISH WORKS**

**Must-Win-Battle Lead,  
Core strategy** –

Responsible for success of “Long Range Planning Goals” within Relish, and informing long-term strategy for Gordon Food Service

**GRIA**

**Gensler Research &  
Innovation Award** –

Northwestern University  
Common Spaces Program

**Gensler Research &  
Innovation Award** –

Gender Inclusive  
Restroom Design

**GDEA**

**Gensler Design Excellence  
Award** –

84.51 Design Project

## PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE

**GALLAGHER & ASSOCIATES**

Silver Spring, Maryland  
Graphic Designer  
(Sept 2013 – Jan 2014)

**SELBERT PERKINS DESIGN**

Chicago, Illinois  
Environmental Graphic Designer  
(Jan – May 2013)

**LIVEWELL COLLABORATIVE**

Cincinnati, Ohio  
Designer  
(March – June 2012)

**LANDOR ASSOCIATES**

Cincinnati, Ohio  
Graphic Designer  
(April – June 2011, Sept – Dec 2011)