John James

Creative Director and Creative Technologist: UX strategy, product design and full-stack development

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Creative director and technologist with more than 25 years in design. Directs both the strategy and the build, from concept and interface design to system architecture and deployment. Has run the UX agency Devona since 2012, building products such as an ad-serving platform that generated more than 1,000,000 daily impressions, and led an in-house asset platform that reached 90% adoption at Level All. Earlier, art directed FedEx campaigns at BBDO and worked at Deep Focus and R/GA.

EXPERIENCE

Creative Director, Devona 2012 – Present

Founded and runs a UX agency that designs and builds digital products, platforms and campaigns.

- Directed strategy, design and development for clients including Esmail Corp., Glenstone Museum and Stoli, leading cross-functional Agile teams of up to 20.
- Led a five-person team that designed and built an ad-serving platform for NGL Media. It generated more than 1,000,000 daily impressions and ran 5+ years without major updates.
- Built the NGL Media platform so that one person could run ad trafficking for more than 500 sites.
- Led a five-person team on an ARG-style story world for Esmail Corp. that set off a worldwide crowdsourced puzzle effort and generated over 1,000 phone calls.
- Led a six-person team on a Gettysburg battlefield auto-tour app for Boritt Films that worked without a persistent connection and could expand to future tours.
- Designed and built Devona's own project and finance intranet, which drove steady profit growth, and prototyped a platform for litigation discovery documents with Claude Code.
- Ran UX audits and interface redesigns for Mercedes-Benz USA, Cotton USA, ArtBinder and Asphalt Green.

UX Designer, Heady 2025 – 2026

- Proposed a redesign of O'Reilly Auto Parts' customer-facing e-commerce app, leading UX strategy, stakeholder and user interviews, analytics evaluation and interface design in Figma.

Creative Technologist, GrantLeff 2024 – 2025

- Directed end-to-end strategy, design and development of an AI-integrated flagship product, making complex workflows simpler for non-technical users.
- Built the company's technical infrastructure around LLM content generation paired with human verification, to raise productivity without losing quality or accuracy.

Director of Visual Design/Technology, Level All 2021 – 2022

- Led an eight-person team that designed and built Image Mill, an in-house asset production platform producing thousands of assets per week.
- Image Mill reached 90% adoption across the company and tracked all approvals and source materials.
- Set up a cross-functional management system that aligned departments on goals and technical feasibility, and directed the company's content branding.

Technical Director, Make It Red 2016 – 2020

- Created and ran the engineering department of a digital agency working across 3 countries, delivering campaigns and games for clients including Prezzo, Bi Pride UK and Netflix.
- Led a four-person team that designed and built the online puzzle game Stuff That, which won CSS Winner Site of the Day and was named by Design Week among April's best projects.

Creative Director, WeChi 2011 – 2012

- Led a seven-person team on the WeChi social network, which showed relationships as weather, and directed its brand identity.

Art Director, BBDO 2009 – 2011

- Concepted and art directed digital campaigns for FedEx. The Join The Race NASCAR microsite drew more than 70k hits a week during the season.
- Created FedEx Delivers pre-roll ads, which drew more comments than the videos they ran before. Also worked on campaigns for Snickers and Lowe's.

Senior Art Director, Deep Focus 2007 – 2009

- Directed digital campaigns, sites and engagement tools for Nike, HBO, the Ad Council, ESPN, 20th Century Fox, Samsung and SyFy.

Designer, R/GA 2003 – 2006

- Created visual designs for digital campaigns and websites for Verizon, Target and Circuit City.

EARLIER WORK

From 1998 to 2002, designed print work at DesignWorks, the 92nd St Y and EPVA. This included a 200-page course catalog, a 300-page handbook for paralyzed veterans and an accessible monthly newsletter, with prepress and press checks. Co-founded Haus Interactive, a server and hosting company for creative agencies. Freelanced for Pentagram, Sotheby's, J. Walter Thompson, Hill Holliday and KBS.

SKILLS

Strategy: Creative Strategy, UX Strategy, Concept Development, Campaign Strategy, Brand Strategy, Research

Design: Art Direction, Interface Design, Product Design, Web Design, Mobile Design, Game Design, Motion Design

Development: Full-Stack Development, System Architecture, Rapid Prototyping, Setup and Deployment

Leadership: Project Management, Agile Sprint Planning

TECHNOLOGIES

Design: Figma, Photoshop, Illustrator, Axure RP, Premiere

Development: PHP, JavaScript, Node.js, React, Symfony, MySQL, Redis

Infrastructure: AWS, Docker, Linux, NGINX, Apache, Git, GitHub, CircleCI

AI: Claude Code, ChatGPT

EDUCATION

Minneapolis College of Art and Design, BFA, Graphic Design 1995 – 1999

Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, EXCHANGE, Graphic Design 1997 – 1998