An Event Apart: Austin 2013

My experience
While although this is a web design/development conference, I quickly learned that it was much more than that. A major part of the conference was focused on content, clients and how to work and innovate better. This conference is set up differently than most, because there aren’t sessions. There is only one room with a lot of great speakers.

My favorite talk was from Josh Davis, who is a fine artist, entitled Beyond Play! His talk was basically about how work and play aren’t antonyms; They are synonyms. Basically, if you don’t love doing your job, it won’t be rewarding and will actually stifle your creativity. He was also an amazing public speaker, which helped.

Another talk I really enjoyed was Mike Monteiro’s What Clients Don’t Know (and Why It’s Your Fault). He talked about how he decided he was going to take up bike riding, so he goes into a bike shop and tries to buy a bike. He didn’t realize what actually goes into buying a bike, and if it wasn’t for the help of an awesome, empathic sales person he would have walked out the door and never looked back. Graphic design (and all of our production work) is a lot like that. People know what we do, but not what we DO. Basically people treat designers horribly because they think we are pixel pushing monkeys, when in fact if we were to educate them on our processes and what we need from them they would be more apt to work with us (and be less afraid to work with us).

What Talks You Should Read

Everyone can benefit from these.  
 These deal with creativity and the processes surrounding it.  
What Clients Don’t Know (and Why It’s Your Fault) - Mike Monteiro  
Beyond Play! - Joshua Davis  
Ten Commandments of Web Design - Jeffrey Zeldman

If you’re interested in the future of the web and mobile...  
These are about the future of the web, why we should care, and what we can do to future proof.  
It’s a Write/Read (Mobile) Web - Luke Wroblewski  
The Map & The Territory - Ethan Marcotte  
The Long Web - Jeremy Keith  
There is also a workshop book from Luke Wroblewski that expands on his presentation above. It’s located at Courtney’s desk.

If you’re interested in content strategy and user experience...  
These talk about why content should be the first thing in everyone process. This is especially important for when we design learning objects and courses.  
The Mobile Content Mandate - Karen McGrane  
Content/Communication - Kristina Halvorson  
It’s a Great Time To Be a UX Designer - Jared Spool
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10 Commandments of Web Design
from Jeffrey Zeldman, Author, Designing With Web Standards, 3rd Ed.

I. Thou shalt entertain
II. Test everything (including assumptions)
   - There's a section on accessibility (alt text specifically) in here.
III. Thou shalt iterate
IV. Thou shalt ship
V. Engage thy community
VI. Love thy user as thyself
VII. Remember the content and keep it holy
VIII. Thou shalt make magic.
IX. Thou shalt prioritize
X. To thine own self be true

PowerPoint with Courtney's notes

Faster Design Decisions with Style Tiles
from Samantha Warren, Designer, Twitter

Style Titles are this combo between a mood board and a mockup of a website. The major thing I can see these being useful for is the branding of programs.

PowerPoint with Courtney's notes

Content/Communication
from Kristina Halvorson, Author, Content Strategy for the Web

Content is content. It can be good or bad. Come up with a strategy for how your team works and make content the center of it. This will make your content better. Get the content strategist in the process from the beginning.

PowerPoint with Courtney's notes

It's a Write/Read (Mobile) Web
from Luke Wroblewski, CEO & Co-Founder of Input Factory Inc.

The best websites on the web allow for user to "write" to them - Facebook, YouTube, Yahoo, Wikipedia. (Engage thy community) Also talks about mobile use and how to design for mobile consumption (which is expanded on in the workshop from Day 3).

PowerPoint with Courtney's Notes

The Map & The Territory
from Ethan Marcotte, Author, Responsive Web Design

The last half of the presentation is about mobile consumption in the developing world. "But these aren't our
users!” - every developer in the developed world. Wrong. They can and will be. From Reuters: This year, the number of mobile Internet users in the developing world will overtake those in the developed world for the first time — growing 27 times since 2007.

**The Mobile Content Mandate**
*from Karen McGrane, Author, *Content Strategy for Mobile*

This presentation has some really good stats on the people who only use mobile, and how to create a good mobile strategy keeping content as the focus.

**The Long Web**
*from Jeremy Keith, Maker of Websites*

Learn from the mistakes of the past and create a future friendly web. Use progressive enhancement. Basically do the cool things, but if they break make sure they still work - an escalator is still stairs when it doesn't have power.

**Putting Your UI in Motion With CSS**
*from Val Head, Author, *The Pocket Guide to CSS Animations*

Basically an in-depth tutorial about CSS3 animations.

**Preprocessing is for Everybody**
*from Chris Coyier, Author, CSS-Tricks.com*

What CSS preprocessors are (LESS, SASS), how to get your team on board with using them, and how to start implementing them.

**Beyond Play!**
*from Joshua Davis, Artist*

From a fine artist, who doesn’t do (much) web design or development. Talks about how “playing” enhances your creativity. Playing allows you to come up with ways to innovate. Work and play are antonyms, they’re synonyms.

**What Clients Don’t Know (and Why It’s Your Fault)**
from Mike Monteiro, Design Director, Mule Design

Buying good design is a lot like buying a bike from a bike shop, completely overwhelming and you probably don’t know what you’re looking for. Educate your clients, empathize with them, and the process will go smoother.

PowerPoint with Courtney’s notes

It’s a Great Time To Be a UX Designer
from Jared Spool, Founder User Interface Engineering

Imitation is the highest form of flattery, but it is not what allows for innovation. UX Designers innovate on other people’s ideas. What clients/companies are looking for in a UX Designer is a UX Generalist or a UX Unicorn, if you will.

PowerPoint with Courtney’s notes

The Web Everywhere: Multi-Device Web Design
from Luke Wroblewski, CEO & Co-Founder of Input Factory Inc.

An in depth look at today’s device ecosystem, and how to build for it.

I have a giant like 500 page book at my desk, from this workshop if you would like to learn more. It’s worth it.