

ustwo × WHERE ARE THE BLACK DESIGNERS?

EQUITY THROUGH SERVICE

2024 IMPACT REPORT

A partnership between
ustwo studios and Where
are the Black Designers?



WELCOME NOTES

As we reflect on the past year of our partnership with Where are the Black Designers? (WATBD), I am grateful for both our dedicated team at ustwo and the WATBD team.

Launching this partnership in April 2023 was a real highlight of our year, as we collaborated with a grassroots organisation that supports and amplifies Black designers, while making space for important conversations about systemic inequalities within our industry.

2023 was a significant year in ustwo's efforts to create a more equitable design industry.

It was the first year we published our ethnicity pay gap alongside our gender pay gap, which we have been reporting for eight years. 2023 also marked our fourth year running Flipside, an industry-led bootcamp in Digital Product Design for young East Londoners, which we founded with A New Direction and other leading agencies in the UK.

Now we are thrilled to have formed a long-term partnership with WATBD, an organisation that aligns with our values and dedication to driving positive change on a global scale.

We are pleased to mark the one-year milestone of our partnership by sharing the impact we made together in spite of challenging economic circumstances across the globe.

Throughout the past year, our teams have co-hosted 10 events in London, New York, and online, bringing together a global community of Black creatives for portfolio reviews, recruiter meetups, networking opportunities, and events with industry experts from the WATBD community, ustwo's network and beyond. Additionally, our makers markets in London and New York provided a platform to showcase the exceptional craft of Black creatives.

We look forward to the next phase of our collaboration. Together we can create change.

Nicki Sprinz
ustwo studios
Group Managing Director



NICKI SPRINZ

In 2022, after two years of virtual activities, we decided to pivot back into the real world. We had fostered an incredible global community of Black designers and allies during the pandemic, offering free resources and remote events that encouraged new friendships, collaborations, paid opportunities, upskilling and unlearning – all delivered by our tiny volunteer-run team.

Whilst our digital imprint was essential, and we were thrilled to see our impact unfolding, we realized we needed to reframe and streamline our efforts to create physical space for our wonderful network.

To do that, we had to change the way we worked with our partners. Whilst all partnerships have benefited our community in some small or immediate way, we can only strive for radical long-term change by forging ongoing relationships with organizations that also prioritize change. Organizations that are brave enough to be open with their time, resources, and stepping outside their comfort zone.

So when an opportunity arose with ustwo, we were thrilled to have found a partner that aligned with our mission and was open to working collaboratively with a grassroots platform like ours.

We are hugely thankful to the ustwobies that have empowered the Black designers in our community since 2023, and we are thrilled to share this report outlining insights from our journey over the last year.

We're only just getting started.

Roshannah Bagley
Marketing and Creative
Partnerships Director at
Where are the Black Designers?



ROSHANNAH BAGLEY

NOTE

“Where are the Black Designers?” is acronymized as “WATBD” in this report.

“ustwobies” is how we refer to ustwo Partners.



We are Employee-owned and a B Corp.

OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE



In April 2023, we formed a first-of-its-kind partnership with Where are the Black Designers? – a nonprofit design advocacy organisation with a 10,000+ strong community around the world.

Our 12-month partnership was truly grassroots, driven by the voice of Black creatives. We found that 87% of surveyed WATBD members were seeking connection with other Black designers.

Through an investment of \$115,000, more than 260 volunteer hours dedicated to events, and hundreds more spent in preparation, we delivered 10 in-person and virtual events, reaching more than 1,000 Black creatives in 20+ cities globally.

Together we combined our resources to cultivate social, financial and knowledge capital for Black creatives through portfolio reviews, salary negotiation guidance, and networking with recruiters.

This is the story of how we contributed to creating a more equitable design industry.



\$115,000 invested in the advancement of Black creatives.

Total investment toward all partnership activities, including an annual donation to WATBD, hiring Black creatives and speakers for our events, and working with Black-owned business vendors.

260 volunteer hours spent at events, and hundreds more in preparation.

ustwobies across all studios spent more than 260 volunteer hours at partnership events, not including time invested in logistics and planning.

20+ in-house and agency recruiters introduced to Black designers.

We created opportunities for Black designers to expand their social networks during a meet-up with recruiters in London and New York.

1,000+ Black creatives supported across 20+ cities worldwide, from Lagos to Nashville.

Our knowledge-sharing activities reached Black creatives across the globe.



OUR APPROACH



According to Zippia, only 3% of designers in the U.S. identify as Black, and this percentage has remained largely stagnant since 2010.

Meanwhile in the UK, data about Black designers is hard to come by, which in itself reflects the issue.

If you can't measure it, you can't improve it.

Peter Drucker, an Austrian American management consultant, famously said, "You can't improve what you don't measure."

So, if we're struggling to gather accurate data on the percentage of Black designers in the industry, how do we begin to resolve the issue?



A framework to achieve equity through service

We believe that changing the status quo requires investment in multiple areas. Not just financial investment, but time and people investment. Those in privileged positions have a responsibility to invest their time in advancing underrepresented communities.

Our goals for this partnership were to help rectify systemic inequalities, create equity through service, and drive tangible change across the global design industry.

Those are ambitious goals, but we made a commitment to give this partnership our best shot.

As an independent global studio, ustwo is well-placed to offer access, knowledge and support to the WATBD community.

Similarly, we were lucky to rely on WATBD's unique perspective and network of world-class Black creatives. Their expertise was instrumental in finding talented speakers, designers, photographers and videographers to bring our partnership activities to life.

Together we developed a framework to help us achieve equity through service. We split this into three parts: Social capital, financial capital, and knowledge capital.



SOCIAL CAPITAL

According to the research journal, Nature, social capital is the strength of an individual's network and community. It often determines life outcomes in areas such as education and healthcare. Limited access to social capital arguably contributes to nepotism in the creative industries.

To address this, we focused on expanding Black designers' networks through events, giving Black creatives a platform both online and offline, and breaking down gatekeeping.



KNOWLEDGE CAPITAL

Knowledge capital refers to the collective skills, expertise, and wisdom that an individual has. Lack of knowledge capital can limit a person's life chances, as the saying goes, "You don't know what you don't know." We recognise that information is a form of currency, so we cultivated knowledge capital by hosting events focused on portfolio preparation and presentation, recruitment, and financial wellness.

We also created and distributed salary transparency sheets outlining benchmarked design industry salaries in London and New York.

The combination of social, financial, and knowledge capital was crucial in our efforts to rectify systemic inequalities in the design industry.

OUR PARTNERSHIP ORIGINS



Our partnership story began on LinkedIn when Marianne Olaleye, ustwo's Global Content Lead, reached out to Roshannah Bagley, WATBD's Marketing and Creative Partnerships Director.

Roshannah shared a post seeking collaborators to join WATBD in creating more in-person experiences for their London community.

Marianne sent the following message in response:

“Hi Roshannah, so great to be connected with you! I saw your recent post about Where are the Black Designers? and I'd love to join forces with you via ustwo. We have design studios in London, New York, Malmö, Tokyo and Lisbon.”

On April 13, 2023 we announced our partnership to the world with [this video](#). Our intention was to demonstrate the isolation that many Black designers experience as they often find themselves being the "only one" in their workplace.

BLACK JOY

Our Partnership Artwork



We commissioned Seattle-based illustrator [Tyrell Waiters](#) to design our partnership artwork. Our aim was to showcase Black Joy and celebrate the sense of community we want to create for Black designers.

COLLABORATING



WITH

THE



WATBD



COMMUNITY

We produced a video series featuring WATBD members Wale Osunla, Gaebriel Min, and Roshannah Bagley. They shared their hopes for the partnership, why it's important for companies to support Black designers, the biggest challenges Black designers face, and how companies can create a welcoming culture for Black employees.

Before planning activities for our partnership, we sent a survey to the WATBD community to understand their specific needs and interests.

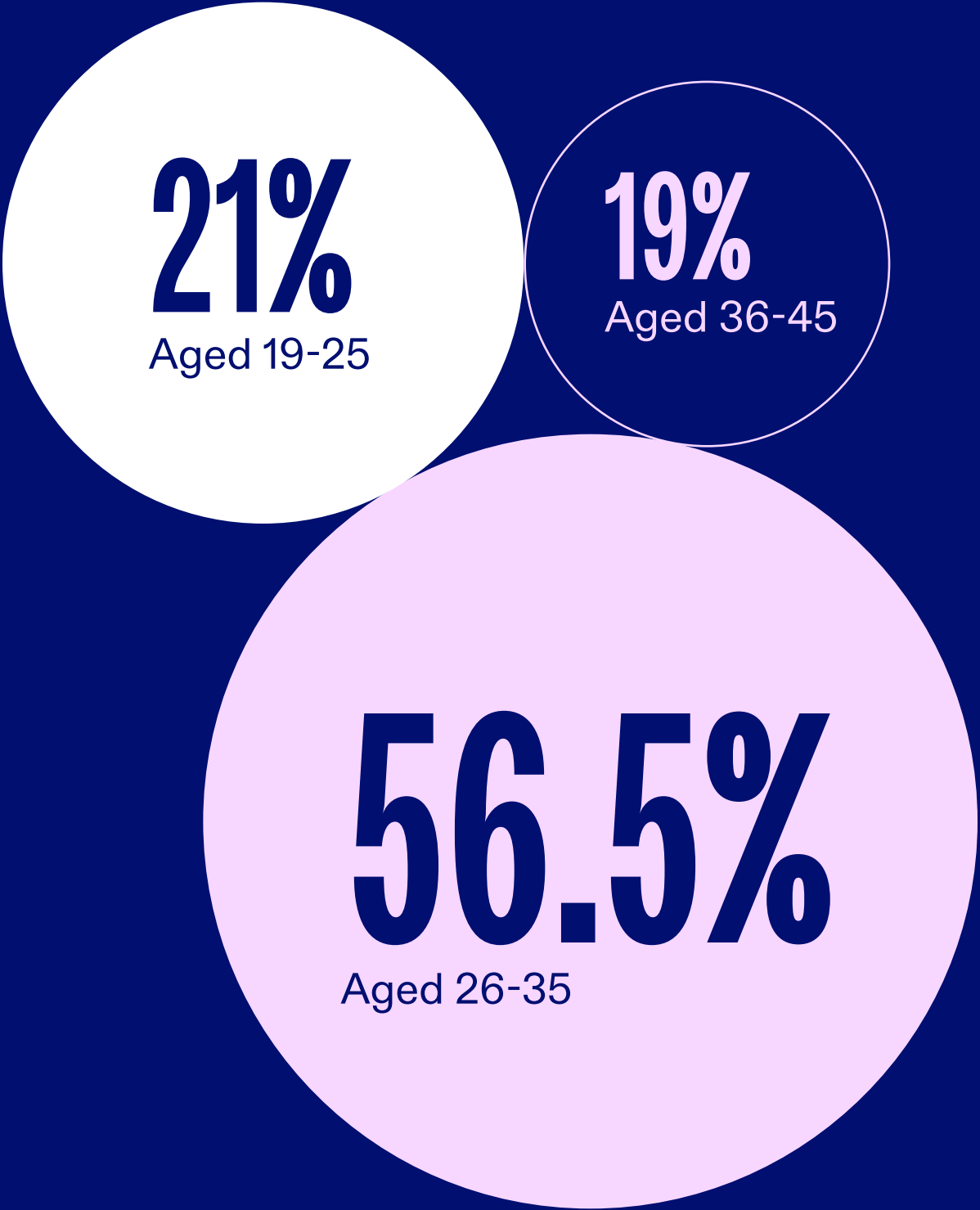


We heard from Black designers across the world, from Lagos to London, Toronto, Seattle, Atlanta, Philadelphia, and New York.



WATBD Community Survey

56.5% of respondents were aged between 26 to 35, while 21% were aged 19 to 25, and 19% were aged 36 to 45.



WATBD Community Survey

were design professionals
looking to improve their skills

73%

were professionals transitioning
into the design industry

18%

were students

11%

Respondents were most interested in...



Meeting
other Black
designers

87%



Meeting
Black design
industry leaders

68%



Mentorship
opportunities

56%

Their areas of interest were...



UX/UI design

85%

★ Visual design & branding

61%



Meeting recruiters

45%



Portfolio reviews

41%

The most popular topics
Black designers were curious
to learn more about were....



Salary
transparency

Imposter
syndrome

Financial
literacy

How much
to charge as
a freelancer



Making space for the full spectrum of Black creativity

The survey results told us that, more than anything, Black creatives were seeking connection and community with each other. With this in mind, we started planning a partnership launch party to bring the community together.

Black creatives were seeking connection and community with each other.

We intentionally kept our networking events open to all Black creatives – whether they were designers, photographers, illustrators or writers.

Our goal was to foster meaningful discussions and cross-disciplinary collaboration because you never know where inspiration might strike.



RECEPTION TO OUR PARTNERSHIP





We announced a global launch party to celebrate our partnership, taking place on the same day at ustwo's London and New York studios on April 27th, 2023.

It was an exciting opportunity for the design community to come together for a night of celebration, meet and hear from Black creatives, connect with industry leaders and recruiters, and discover our partnership plans.

200+ tickets for our London and New York launch parties sold out in 24 hours.

The overwhelming response from the wider design community made it clear that a partnership like ours was long overdue.

COMMUNITY RECEPTION

Our partnership launch video received wide interest on social media, with 57,023 video views across Linkedin and Instagram. All content related to our partnership launch received 111,868 impressions across both platforms, and comments from the Black design community were pouring in.

Video Views

57,023

Impressions

111,868



saharajones_
Amazing!! So excited about this partnership! 🍌🍌🍌🔥



yegaillustration
Love this so much 🔥



marianneolaleye
Things we love to see ✨✨



ani_violet
👏👏👏👏 love to see it



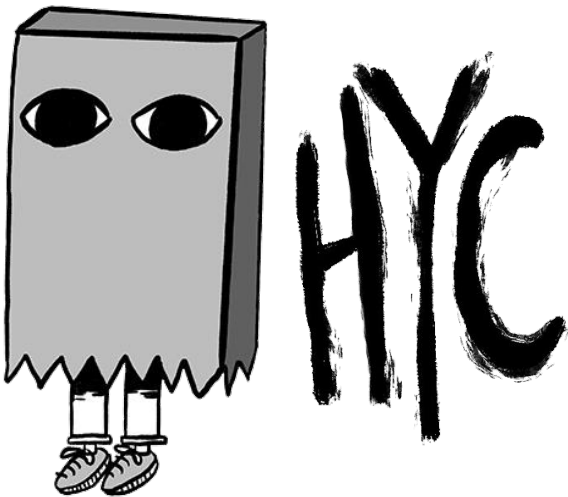
artwithmaryp
So exciting! Finally!



ok_mitz
Crying screaming throwing up about this partnership ❤️❤️❤️🤔🤔🤔

MEDIA RECEPTION

Our partnership story reached 518,000 people through media coverage in [Design Week](#), [Creativepool](#), [HelloYouCreatives](#).



LONDON LAUNCH PARTY

We kicked off our partnership celebration in ustwo's London studio. In our effort to support and promote Black-owned businesses, we purchased food from local vendors [Jamaica Patty Co.](#) and [Puff Puff Ministry](#).



The launch party was an opportunity to spotlight Black designers, so we invited [Tevin Stuurland](#), a product designer from the Netherlands, and [Sean Chimbani](#), a London-based footwear designer, to share their experiences in the design industry.



[Kodj Glover](#), Digital Product Designer at ustwo, gave an inspiring talk about his journey in the creative industry, and the incredible work he has produced.



Roshannah Bagley, WATBD's Marketing and Partnerships Director, shared our partnership story and ambitions with the diverse mix of Black creatives, allies, and ustwobies who attended. Our London launch party was photographed and filmed by Lloyd Anarfi and Eddie Greaves from [Foolish Professionals](#).



NEW YORK LAUNCH PARTY

In Brooklyn, New York, WATBD members took center stage to share their work and career stories. The New York launch party was photographed by [Massiel Cedeño](#) and [Van Melher](#).



We were joined by Mitzi Okou, founder of WATBD, and Gabriel Marquez, ustwo's Managing Director for New York.



We heard presentations from [Terrell Griffith](#), Lead Product Designer at Headspace and Technology Director at WATBD, [Shakeil Greeley](#), a multidisciplinary creative, and [Adesewa Adekoya](#), a Nigerian-American visual designer and illustrator.



All attendees had the opportunity to sign up for an exclusive portfolio review event at our New York studio the following month.



Continuing our commitment to invest in Black enterprise, we purchased food and drinks from [Brooklyn Sweet Spot](#) and [Bushwick Grind](#) using the [Black-Owned Brooklyn](#) database.

“NYC [studio] had a blast, we didn't want the happening to end. Luckily, we have something to look forward to already, and we received a great [number] of sign-ups for portfolio reviews.”

- Jared Olmsted, Delivery Lead, ustwo

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Expanding
networks and
breaking down
gatekeeping.

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

Knowing that 87% of our members were most interested in meeting other Black designers (see survey results on page 22), our approach to creating social capital was to expand the networks of Black designers and break down gatekeeping.

Creating space for Black designers to come together, through in-person and virtual events, became a key focus for us. Our partnership launch parties in London and New York were a great starting point to unite and celebrate the WATBD community.

...Our approach to creating social capital was to expand the networks of Black designers and break down gatekeeping.



The crucial role of allies

WATBD originally launched in the U.S. in 2020 and is now a global community of 10,000 people, 70% of whom are Black and 30% are allies.

Knowing the vital role allies play in rectifying systemic inequalities, we opened many of our events to both Black creatives and non-Black people in an attempt to expand networks and cultivate social capital.

We also created an ustwo-specific Slack channel for WATBD members to gain direct access to our team. This channel was an open forum to ask questions and discover job vacancies at ustwo.

It was important to tap into our network as a global design studio, so we continuously referred WATBD members to our clients and industry peers for job opportunities.

We were thrilled to hear that one of our clients, Alltold, whose product helps companies to achieve inclusive media representation in their advertising, hired a designer from the WATBD community after discovering them on Slack through our partnership.



Creating space for Black designers to come together through in-person and virtual events.



London and New York meet-up with recruiters

Based on the survey we sent to the WATBD community to understand their specific needs, we knew that 45% of respondents were interested in meeting recruiters.

In July 2023, we connected Black designers with 20+ in-house and agency recruiters across London and New York.

This event was an opportunity for Black designers to grow their network and ask recruiters questions that were most relevant to them.

For recruiters, it was a chance to broaden their talent pool, which addresses one of the challenges faced by companies struggling to hire diverse talent.

45% of surveyed WATBD members expressed interest in meeting recruiters.

In London, we invited recruiters from Represent, Found by Few, UNKNOWN, Xcede, LaFosse, Analog Folk, Media Monks, and Pixel Pond.

Louise O'Connor, ustwo's Lead Resource Manager, took us behind the scenes of how companies make hiring decisions and how to spot a good recruiter. A 'shout-out session' gave Black designers the floor to promote their work, while recruiters shared job opportunities.



“These kinds of very targeted events are effective. It was a low pressure and informal way to meet recruiters in an authentic way, which has given me some wonderful connections.”

- Michael Kibedi, User Experience Researcher





Sara Biatchinyi
Graphic Designer | Visual Identity | Cre...
8mo

I've been on the permanent job search for a few months, and after going outside of my comfort zone and attending IRL networking events (thank you [Where are the Black Designers?](#) and [ustwo](#) for the wonderful opportunity earlier this summer!), I've decided that it's time to take to LinkedIn to expand on my search!

200+ Black creatives in New York and London registered to attend our meet-up with recruiters.

Meanwhile in New York, ustwo's People and Operations Lead, Elena Anderson, joined a panel discussion with recruiters from CRTVE (Chad Bennett, Principal Talent Consultant) and AD Talent Inc (Lilach Feldman, Angela Tai, and Lauren Hollinger).

They shared insights into working with internal vs. external recruiters, increasing your visibility, and tips for salary negotiations.

Two designers from the WATBD community, [Wale Osunla](#) and [Annika Hansteen-Izora](#), presented their work and shared how they carved out space for themselves in the design industry.

Continuing our commitment to invest in Black enterprise, this event was photographed by [Zoë Kezia](#) in London and [Miles Wilson](#) in New York.

“Being a good recruiter is so much more than just finding people new roles. You add more value by getting involved in community led events like last night which really do help people find roles/careers they love.”

- Will Boss, Design and Product Recruiter, London



FINANCIAL CAPITAL

Investing in
Black Enterprise

The racial wealth gap remains a growing concern in the communities within which we operate.

For every \$100 in wealth held by white households in the U.S., Black households held only \$15.

Source: [Brookings Institution](#), 2022

Meanwhile in the UK, 31% of people from Black Caribbean backgrounds and 44% of people from Black African backgrounds are in net debt, compared to 15% of the white British population. This ethnic wealth gap is attributed to factors such as income, age, and class.

As part of our partnership, we committed to investing financial resources in Black creatives and Black-owned businesses.

We specifically hired Black photographers, videographers, designers, speakers, and business vendors for our events.



Donation to WATBD

We recognize the importance of supporting the WATBD team and compensating them for their valuable time invested in our partnership.



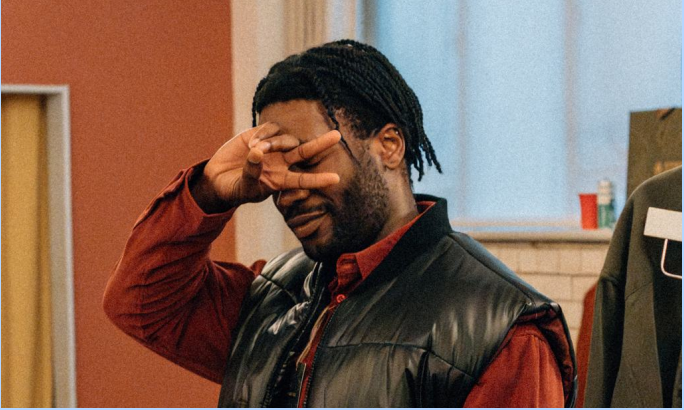
We made a monthly donation to WATBD over a period of twelve months.

These donations helped them to continue growing their community and investing in other areas beyond our partnership. With our support, WATBD was able to:

- Hire a venue for their first-ever two-day conference in August 2025 at EarthH in Hackney, London.
- Host in-person events across the U.S. in Oakland and Dallas.
- Organize a virtual workshop called "Design Beyond Decoration" in partnership with professor Bianca Nozaki-Nasser.
- Hire Black designers to update the WATBD website and create campaigns to spotlight community members.



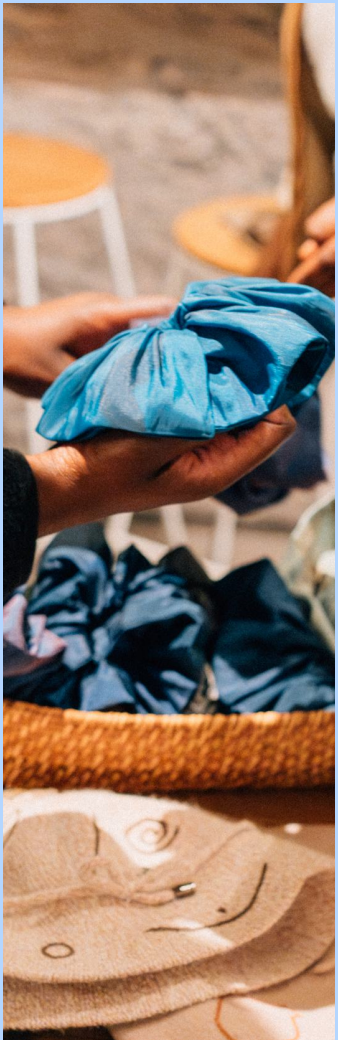
MAKERS



IN LONDON



MARKET



AND



NEW YORK



In December 2023, we hosted a Makers Market in ustwo’s London studio. This was an opportunity to create financial capital for Black designers and provide a platform for the local community to invest in Black entrepreneurship.

We commissioned German-Nigerian Illustrator, Sandy Christ, to design the artwork for our London Makers Market.

“It was my first experience selling my artwork, something I had never done before but always wanted to try.”

– Samson Oyebanjo, London

Hundreds of Londoners joined us to enjoy mulled drinks, festive snacks, and shopping for art prints, clothing, books, pottery and other products made by the WATBD community.

Our London Makers Market featured the following Black designers:

- Kelesi Anim and Jaymie Johnson, Founders of AFF and JAM
- Amberlee Green, Founder of Line and Honey
- Cherish Chirume, Founder of Stories We Cherish
- Daniel Dzonu Clarke, Artist and Designer
- Pen Lawani, Artist and Illustrator
- Titilope Ogunnaike, Pottery and Ceramics Maker
- Tobi Uzumaki, Illustrator and Character Designer
- Kodj Glover, Founder of Fuji & Hakone
- Kofo Nolla-Omidiran, Founder of O'Knolla
- Tyrell Waiters, a Designer and Illustrator who sold copies of his debut graphic novel all the way from the U.S., thanks to WATBD connecting with his London-based publisher.
- This event was photographed by Zoë Kezia, and we enjoyed food and drinks from Black-owned businesses Dee's Basement and Chapmans of London.



In April 2024, we took our Makers Market to Brooklyn, New York, just in time for Spring.

200+ people registered to attend our Spring Makers Market in New York.

We commissioned local illustrator [Aaron Marin](#) to design the artwork for our New York Makers Market.

Five Black artists and designers from New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. joined us at Threes Brewing Greenpoint to showcase their art prints, homewares, fashion items, jewelry and more.

- [Jardley Jean-Louis](#), Illustrator
- [Abelle Hayford](#), Illustrator and Product Designer
- [Tovah Robinson](#), Footwear Designer
- [Sade Mims](#), Accessories and Lifestyle Designer
- [Bria Wallace](#) and [Luther Banner](#), Founders of [WallaB Wares Pottery](#)



The New York community came out in groups to support Black designers, and the vibrant energy of the market drew in many passers-by.

\$2,600 and 30 volunteer hours spent at our NYC Spring Makers Market.



“[It was] really refreshing compared to other events in the industry as my work was exhibited alongside so many other black artists. This is quite rare in my experience. We all got a buzz out of learning about each other's work.”

– Daniel Dzonu Clarke, Graphic Designer and Artist

KNOWLEDGE CAPITAL



Information is currency

Knowledge sharing is crucial to breaking down gatekeeping, expanding networks and accessing financial capital. One area of focus for our partnership was sharing valuable information that supports Black creatives to advance their careers.



Salary transparency sheets

ustwo has long advocated for salary transparency as an essential step toward achieving equity in the design industry.

We collaborated with our People team to create salary transparency sheets outlining benchmarked design industry salaries in London and New York.

These sheets included tips on how Black designers can confidently negotiate their salary and articulate their worth.

We distributed salary transparency sheets at our launch parties in London and New York, recruiter meet-ups, and other events.

We also shared photos of the sheets on the WATBD Slack channel and social media platforms, making the salary information accessible to those who couldn't attend our in-person events.



Overcoming impostor syndrome and mastering financial literacy

We were mindful that creative industry events and opportunities are often concentrated in major cities like London and New York, so we created our first virtual event in August 2023 to reach Black creatives worldwide.

Guided by survey results from the WATBD community, we chose two key topics: impostor syndrome and financial literacy.

The event was hosted by Ritesh Gupta, Co-Communications Director at WATBD and Founder of Useful School.

217 creatives joined us on Zoom to hear from Tobi Asare, Managing Partner and Head of Growth at OMD UK, as she discussed how to identify and overcome impostor syndrome.

Tayler Ayers, Co-founder of Creaaate, shared practical tips on financial literacy and accounting management for freelancers.

We created our first global virtual event in August 2023, spotlighting Black designers from Brazil, United States and South Africa.

Black designers, including Amanda Lobos (Brazil), Tyrell Waiters (U.S.), and Osmond Tshuma (South Africa), shared how they’ve navigated their careers, and showcased the exceptional talent within the WATBD community through their presentations.

Recognizing the value of information as currency, we recorded the event and shared it on our YouTube channel to benefit a wider audience. You can watch it here.

“It was my first big presentation in English. It connected me with professionals from other countries and backgrounds.”

– Amanda Lobos, Illustrator and Designer, Brazil



‘How I Got My Job in Design’, with Found by Few

Equity cannot be achieved without Black creatives gaining access to well-paying jobs where they can thrive.

In November 2023, we partnered with Found by Few, a partially Black-owned recruitment agency specializing in Product and Design.

Joining forces with others in our network was essential to making a real difference.

Our collaboration with Found by Few began in July 2023 when we were introduced to their team at our London meet-up with recruiters. Four months later, we hosted the first-ever live recording of their podcast, ‘[How to Get my Job](#)’.

We commissioned [Akili Lamour](#) to design the event artwork.

This event was an opportunity for Black creatives to meet each other, exchange stories, and share career advice and tips for landing a job.

The panel discussion was moderated by [Danielle Antoinette Bowman](#), Co-Founder and CMO at Found By Few. Danielle believes that knowing how someone got their job is just as important as knowing how they do it.

She was joined by WATBD community members and designers, [Adryan Tunde Abii-Smith](#), [Aderonke Oke](#), and [Venessa Bennett](#), who delivered presentations on their career journeys and how they got their jobs.

You can watch the panel discussion on [YouTube](#), or listen to the podcast episode on [Spotify](#).

Portfolio reviews for Black designers

Knowing how to present your skills and make a case for yourself is essential for success in the design industry. It explains why 41% of surveyed WATBD community members expressed an interest in portfolio reviews.

We hosted two portfolio review events, which were open to Black designers at all career levels. It was an opportunity to showcase their work and receive feedback from ustwo’s award-winning team across various disciplines including Design, Strategy, and Product.

“Your points about clarity and layout especially hit home. I like the approach you recommended. I don't think I would have made it this far without [your] encouragement.”

– Sokona Diallo, Philadelphia





Our first portfolio review event was in New York in May 2023 during the NYCxDesign festival. We invited Black digital product designers from the WATBD community to participate as a portfolio presenter or a senior designer offering guidance to junior creatives.

In February 2024, to ensure our events were accessible to talented Black creatives around the globe, we held a virtual portfolio review event for Black digital product designers worldwide.

We reviewed portfolios from 51 Black designers in London, Bristol, Nottingham, Montreal, and U.S. cities including Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles, Nashville, San Francisco, Dallas, and Atlanta.



“I absolutely loved it.
Great chats with talented people.”
– Helen Fuchs, Executive Director of Design

“I always leave feeling so rejuvenated getting to chat with younger talent and seeing all the exciting potential they have. Let’s do more remote reviews!”
– Carol Liao, Product Design Lead, ustwo

LESSONS LEARNED ONE YEAR LATER



As the first design company to form a long-term partnership with WATBD, we embraced the opportunity to learn together. There was no precedent or rule book to follow, so we knew the first year of our partnership would require some experimentation.

There is a strong global desire for connection, community, and opportunities among Black creatives.

We saw consistent demand for all our events, with tickets selling out within hours or days.



“This community is needed and cherished. I met so many like minded individuals that I can turn to when I need insights on how to navigate this industry.”

– Ronke Oke, Product Designer, London

“The network is more connected and we know of each other's existence, which is great. Doing a presentation at the event improved my public speaking and I’ve connected with other Black designers on Instagram.”

– Adryan Tunde Abii-Smith, Product Designer, London

Increasing Volunteer Commitment

Another takeaway was the significant time and focus required to deliver the number of complex events we organized. Balancing the partnership with client projects, while WATBD’s team juggled other professional commitments, revealed the need for increased rigor around planning, resource management, and data gathering. By improving these areas, our preparation processes and data retrieval could be smoother.

For example, we initially planned to launch a monthly Instagram takeover to spotlight Black creatives on ustwo's social media channels. However, due to limited time from both WATBD and ustwo's teams, we prioritized in-person and virtual events as an opportunity to spotlight Black creatives, while bringing the community together.

One of ustwo’s ongoing commitments as a B Corp is to give back to the local communities we are based in. We do this by dedicating eight paid hours to every colleague each year to volunteer their time to community or environmental causes.

As part of this commitment, ustwobies across all studios spent more than 260 volunteer hours at WATBD partnership events, not including time invested in logistics and planning.

Moving forward, we know we can resolve the challenge of limited capacity by encouraging even more ustwobies to contribute to our partnership using their volunteer hours.





CLOSING REFLECTIONS



We are proud of the progress we made by investing in Black creatives, expanding their networks, offering them platforms for visibility, and supporting them with knowledge sharing activities.

The results and testimonials show that our combined efforts with WATBD contributed positively to the global design industry. However, it is important to acknowledge areas where we could have made a greater impact.

When we formed our partnership with WATBD, we made a commitment to measure the number of permanent Black employees hired or referred by ustwo.

While we successfully referred WATBD members to our clients and recruiters for job opportunities, we fell short in providing full-time employment for Black designers due to industry layoffs, a hiring freeze, and global economic factors affecting various studios.

Looking ahead

As we continue our partnership with WATBD in 2024/25, we want to collaborate with more organizations within the design industry to scale the impact of our work.

Our key focus is to develop more knowledge sharing activities, create permanent job positions for talented Black designers, and invest in their long-term growth.

But we can't do it alone.

We invite our clients and peers to join us in creating a more inclusive and equitable design industry.

By sharing social, financial, and knowledge capital, we can collectively support the Black design community to succeed in an industry that urgently needs more diverse perspectives. After all, design teams should reflect the wide spectrum of people we create products for.

Addressing systemic inequalities is an ongoing process for all involved. It requires honest reflection, going back to the drawing board, and trying again.

The work is never finished.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We dedicate a special mention to [Annika Hansteen-Izora](#) for designing this report, and [Marianne Olaleye](#) for writing the content.

Thank you to all contributors from ustwo, WATBD, and the wider design and creative industry who made the first year of our partnership a success.

We are grateful to the following designers, speakers, makers, photographers, videographers, and Black-owned business vendors for their contribution:

Aaron Marin
Abele Hayford
Aderonke Oke
Adesewa Adekoya
Adryan Abii-Smith
Akili Lamour
Amanda Lobos
Chad Bennett
Danielle Antoinette Bowman
Gaebril Min
Jardley Jean-Louis
Kodj Glover
Lloyd Anarfi and Eddie Greaves
Massiel Cedeño
Miles Wilson
Osmond Tshuma
Sade Mims
Sandy Christ
Sean Chimbani
Shakeil Greeley
Tayler Ayers

Terrell Griffith
Tevin Stuurland
Tobi Asare
Tovah Robinson
Tyrell Waiters
Van Melher
Venessa Bennett
Wale Osunla
Zoë Kezia

Vendors

Brooklyn Sweet Spot
Bushwick Grind
Chapmans of London
Dee's Basement
Jamaica Patty Co.
Puff Puff Ministry

