

# ILYSSA KYU

Design Research & Strategy

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## Summary

I'm a design researcher and strategist with 12+ years of experience spanning diverse sectors such as social impact, arts, culture, environmental nonprofits, and global corporations in finance, transportation, publishing, insurance, and telecommunications. My background in industrial design, human-centered design and design-thinking drives my approach but it's my inherent curiosity and deep desire to listen and understand people that pushes me to find new ways of solving complex problems, identifying unexplored opportunities, and unearthing new actionable ideas and creative solutions. I believe in providing everyone a seat at the table and that if *we're not changing, we're choosing*—with this in mind, I explore all projects through an inclusive design lens which lead us to better solutions for *all*. Additionally, I'm the co-editor & writer of a best-selling book series *Campfire Stories: Tales of America's National Parks & Trails*, creator of the *Campfire Stories Card Deck* (and one for kids too!) and founder of Amble, the sabbatical program for creative professionals (featured in The New York Times).

## Skills & Expertise

Qualitative &  
Quantitative  
Design Research

Design-Thinking,  
Human-Centered  
Design & Strategy

Consumer and  
Customer  
Insights

Interview, Focus Group,  
Workshop Design  
& Facilitation

Research Insight  
Reports &  
Presentations

Inclusive Design  
& Accessibility

User Experience (UX)  
Design

Storytelling

Communication & Project  
Management

Multidisciplinary Team  
Collaboration

## Work Experience

### Senior Design Researcher

Feb 2021 - Aug 2023

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- Led research initiatives with global corporations across diverse industries such as Financial Services, Publishing, Transportation, Telecommunications, and Insurance.
- Developed and executed research plans including approach, goals, methods, and tools, ensuring alignment with project objectives.
- Conducted qualitative and quantitative research methodologies including interviews, workshops, ethnographic fieldwork, surveys, A/B testing, user testing, and analytics analysis.
- Provided actionable insights through reports, presentations, topline, and executive summaries, facilitating informed decision-making for stakeholders.
- Championed inclusive design and accessibility efforts internally, globally and on client programs—leading our internal a11y team to advocate, educate, and create resources.

### Founder & Program Director

May 2018 - Apr 2020

#### Amble

- Established and managed a place-based sabbatical program for creative professionals supporting nonprofits in national park regions, overseeing end-to-end program management and execution.
- Scoped, planned, and managed creative projects between creatives and the non-profits, fostering impactful collaborations and outcomes.

- Built the Amble brand through strategic messaging, digital assets creation, and social media engagement.
- Cultivated partnerships and sponsorships with national brands and conservancies, enhancing program sustainability and reach.

### Design Research & UX Strategy Consultant

May 2018 - Feb 2021

#### Self-Employed

- Conducted qualitative research (interviews, workshops, ethnographic studies) and created deliverables like wireframes, site maps and journey maps.
- Led collaborative sessions with clients and stakeholders to define project goals.
- Synthesized research into actionable recommendations for reports and executive summaries.
- Designed and facilitated co-design workshops that fostered understanding and collaboration.
- Collaborated regularly with agencies like Made By We, Eastern Standard, and Blue Cadet.

### Senior Design Researcher & UX Strategist

Sept 2012 - Jun 2018

#### P'unk Avenue

- First UX hire—built the practice from ground zero to establish processes, tools and deliverables.
- Led research and strategy initiatives for web, brand, and strategy projects, collaborating closely with clients to understand their needs and challenges.
- Managed communication, project timelines, and relationships on client projects, ensuring successful outcomes and client satisfaction.
- Conducted qualitative and quantitative research, facilitated workshops, and mentored junior team members.

### UX Designer & Strategist

Aug 2011 - Sept 2012

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- Conducted UX research and strategy for various clients including startups, state agencies, and national brands, aligning design solutions with user needs and business goals.

## Additional Experiences

- *Co-Editor & Writer* at Campfire Stories, creating bestselling books and card decks promoting storytelling and imagination in the outdoors.
- *Artist-in-Resident* at the National Park Service, organizing immersive events and fostering community engagement.
- *Organizer and Program Manager* at Junto Retreat, curating speakers and designing participatory activities for business leaders.

## Education & Certifications

### Bachelor of Science, Industrial Design

University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA - 2011

### Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC)

IAAP - International Association of Accessibility Professionals, 2021