Sean Ross

Design executive · AI-native products for high-trust audiences, teams built from zero

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I design AI that shows its work, for people who are accountable for what it does. Most recently VP of UX Design at BlackRock, where I set the strategy, ran the team as a player-coach, owned the design system two brands shipped from and, from 2023, its agentic layer: what a person sees while the system acts for them, how confidence and sources are shown, where a human takes over. Built a design team from one to twenty at TechTV; designed an enterprise AI assistant from zero in 2017; founding designer at two AI startups; the last two years AI-native, with a working page as the prototype.

EXPERIENCE

BlackRock VP of UX Design
Jan 2022 – Jan 2026 · San Francisco

- Led design and the design systems across the BlackRock and iShares brands for Advisor Center, the platform US financial advisors use to sell and service both; governed how two brands express themselves in one product.
- Owned product design end to end and ran the team; hands-on through implementation: flows, interaction detail, prototypes, specs, engineering reviews, and the component library engineers built from.
- From 2023, designed the agentic layer: what the advisor sees while the system acts on their behalf, how confidence and sources are shown, where a human takes over. Several interaction models became patent filings.
- Ran the team AI-native for two years (Figma Make, agent-assisted componentization): discovery to handoff in days, and quality went up.
- Page views +15–20% YoY, unique visitors +10–13%, NPS +30%. Charles S. Hallac Award (2023, firm-wide). Marketing design innovation award (2022).

Sean Ross Creative Head of Design (fractional)
2013 – present

- Acting head of design for founders, VC portfolios and Fortune 500 teams, including Macy's, Walmart, eBay, Adobe, Intuit, Sony and Cricket. I come in when the product exists as a deck, turn one thing in it into something people can click, and leave a team that runs without me.
- Since January, a small studio of coding agents I direct does my research synthesis, prototyping and production: an agent that runs my job search end to end (Gmail, LinkedIn, a pipeline of 1,800 contacts); a 24-brand identity study drawn in code; a music app at v0.

Macy's Principal UX Design Manager
Jun 2019 – Jan 2020

Directed the pre-holiday redesign of macys.com and the iOS and Android apps across cross-disciplinary teams. Webby Award (2020).

Socrates AI Founding Head of Design
Feb 2018 – Feb 2019 · Palo Alto

Recruited at board level for an enterprise AI employee-experience platform. Rebuilt the value proposition and website with the sales team; shipped improvements to the core product that customers noticed.

Espressive Head of Design, employee #6
Nov 2016 – Feb 2018 · Santa Clara

Employee #6. Designed the MVP of an enterprise conversational-AI assistant from zero: routing with visible confidence, clarify-or-hand-off when unsure, and employee, manager and admin views as one system, in production in 2017. Built the design system and a co-branding system that let customers skin the product without losing its voice. Gartner Cool Vendor (2019).

Earlier 1998 – 2013

Founding member of ZDTV and TechTV, Online Creative Director for a 24-hour technology network in 43M households, building the design team from one to twenty (1998–2004). Senior Designer, eBay (2005–06). Principal Designer, Yahoo! Customer Innovation Group (2006–08). Creative Director, Caring.com, a marketplace connecting families with senior-care providers (2009–10). Head of design for two digital music brands with 2M+ paying subscribers (Beyond Oblivion 2011–12; Muve Music at Cricket 2012–13).

WHAT I'M FOR

Prototypes that settle the argument: user flows, clickable mocks, and working pages, shown before they're discussed.

AI you can verify: confidence, sources, provenance and handoff designed as first-class interface, not a disclaimer. Patents filed.

Design systems and reusable components built from zero and matured across brands.

Enterprise products where I am not the user: advisors, IT admins, support teams. Embedded with client and stakeholder teams, presenting to executives, rationale written down.

Craft to the pixel, motion included; I directed motion design for broadcast. Figma, Figma Make, Claude Code daily, HTML/CSS/JS, working Python with an agent alongside. I also make music.

RECOGNITION

Charles S. Hallac Award BlackRock, 2023

Webby Award Macy's redesign, 2020

Gartner Cool Vendor Espressive, 2019

NSF research funding product innovation, 2020

Wellfound A-List top 1% of talent

Press The Guardian, The Independent, It's Nice That

EDUCATION

MFA, Interdisciplinary Design
California College of the Arts, top of class

Post-baccalaureate, Visual Arts
UC Berkeley

BA, Broadcast & Electronic Communication Arts
San Francisco State University