Fernando Casanova Ricaldoni

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Design Director | Head of Design | AI Products · Design Systems · Product Design

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Portuguese citizen (EU) · UK right to work

Design leader with 20+ years of experience turning complex business problems into simple, human-centred products. As founding design lead at Argonautas.ai, I lead strategy and design for a legal intelligence platform and contribute production frontend code. For me, design is fundamentally a problem-solving process.

My path spans industrial design and engineering, a consultancy I founded and ran for 12 years, and product design leadership across enterprise environments, with work for British Airways, Santander, AMEX, the NHS, and Titanbay. Previously, as Design Director at Merkle, I led a UX/UI design team across four countries for brands including Disney, Kellogg's, and ASDA/George.

I'm most useful where things aren't completely figured out yet: shaping product direction, building teams and systems, and exploring what happens when AI becomes part of the product itself.

Professional Experience

Founding Design Lead @ Argonautas.ai

01/2026 - Present · Full-time

- Lead product strategy, information architecture, UX/UI, and the design system for a legal workspace where lawyers develop documents and analysis through conversation with AI.
- Build production frontend features in React and TypeScript using Figma and Claude Code. Ship changes through engineering review.
- Connect the Figma component library to the codebase via MCP to keep design tokens and components in sync.
- Design AI-assisted drafting and review workflows that let lawyers inspect sources, revise suggestions, and approve the final work.
- Own brand foundations and go-to-market design alongside product design.

Design Director @ Merkle, a dentsu company

Merkle is a global experience consultancy with a heritage in data science and business performance.

Lisbon, Portugal | 05/2025 - 01/2026

- Led a global team of UX/UI designers across the UK, Portugal, India, and Brazil, acting as a hands-on design leader to shape vision, remove blockers, and deliver connected, human-centred experiences at scale for enterprise clients.
- Drove experience design strategy at the intersection of creativity, technology, and business, orchestrating digital, physical, and in-store touch-points to increase customer engagement and measurable business outcomes.
- Partnered with global brands including Disney, Kellogg's, Santander, and ASDA/George to translate business objectives into customer-centric digital experiences across markets.
- Shaped Merkle's design vision as a player-coach, staying close to the craft through strategic discovery, problem framing, and key design reviews, while embedding AI-driven insights and rapid prototyping into future-ready design practices.
- Hired and onboarded three designers for the Lisbon team, and mentored the wider Merkle and dentsu design community, championing cross-market collaboration and the balance of craft, strategy, and innovation.
- Represented design externally and internally: speaker at UX Talks '25 (Lisbon, Web Summit Week), lecturer in Dentsu Lab's School of Big Thinking programme (London, Portugal, Edinburgh), and contributor to Merkle's Fast Currents series.

http://www.merkle.com

Manager, Customer Experience · Product & Service Design @ adidas

adidas GBS is the shared services organisation within adidas Group, one of the world's leading sports brands.

Porto, Portugal | 09/2023 - 05/2025

- Led cross-functional teams to deliver customer experience solutions across Finance, Procurement, and HR.
- Designed and implemented performance management and KPI tracking tools, improving usability, streamlining feedback, and establishing company-wide CX standards.
- Conducted user research and data analysis to uncover behavioural insights, reducing bottlenecks and enhancing overall experience.
- Managed global stakeholders to align user needs with business goals, ensuring smooth solution integration and adoption.
- Mapped and optimised customer journeys and internal systems using KPIs and analytics to drive continuous improvement.

http://www.adidas.com

Lead Product Designer @ Sparck / BJSS (now CGI)

Sparck is the design arm of British technology consultancy BJSS, now part of CGI.

Porto, Portugal & London, United Kingdom | 01/2022 - 09/2023

- Contributed to a high-impact consulting engagement for British Airways, leading to a comprehensive redesign of the customer experience and digital platform with significant improvements in usability and performance.
- Led a product design team to develop Titanbay's scalable B2B SaaS investment platform and design system, accelerating product development and reducing time-to-market.
- Collaborated with a multi-consultancy team to design and launch Banco de Fomento Angola's mobile banking app.
- Partnered with the NHS to design a new digital service supporting health innovators and providers, centralising resources and enabling data-driven technology adoption in healthcare.
- Consulted for William Hill on an ethical, engaging mobile app for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, prioritising responsible gambling and regulatory compliance.

http://www.sparck.io

Scientist · Design Researcher @ Fraunhofer AICOS

Fraunhofer AICOS is part of Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, Europe's largest organisation for applied research.

Porto, Portugal | 06/2020 - 01/2022

- Managed projects and conducted research in UX, UI, and interaction design for smart devices and mobile apps, including self-reporting, ergonomics, and Industry 4.0 technologies such as exoskeletons.
- Key member of the Human-Centred Design team, leading conceptualisation, design, and user evaluation of new technologies in specialised scenarios.
- Translated user research insights into products and digital experiences integrated with real-world use.

http://www.aicos.fraunhofer.com

Design & Development Engineer @ Petainer

Petainer sets the benchmark in sustainable high-performance container packaging.

London, United Kingdom | 08/2018 - 06/2020

- Led new product development for sustainable packaging: design, prototyping, and testing for regulatory compliance and real-world reliability.
- Engineered injection-moulded components using DFMA to streamline manufacturability and assembly at scale.
- Partnered with suppliers and production teams to optimise processes, improving efficiency and product quality from concept to launch.

http://www.petainer.com

Co-Founder & Lead Product Design Consultant @ Quantum Design

Quantum Design was a design and consulting company focused on designing to strengthen relationships between people and brands.

Belo Horizonte, Brazil | 04/2006 - 07/2018

- Founded and led a design consultancy for 12+ years: strategy, operations, business development, financial planning, and team leadership.
- Directed product and graphic design projects from concept to production across consumer electronics, medical devices, and packaging, applying human-centred, research-driven methods.
- Built long-term client relationships and led consulting teams in close collaboration with engineering, marketing, and business stakeholders.
- Gained expertise in materials and manufacturing processes such as plastic moulding, metal fabrication, and composites; supervised prototyping and production to ensure quality and adherence to design standards.

http://www.quantumdesign.com.br

Earlier Experience (2014 - 2018)

- **Customer Experience Manager, CI Intercambio** · Dublin, Ireland (2018): customer journey design and CX standards for Brazil's largest student travel organisation.
- **Design Professor, Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora** · Brazil (2016-2017): taught design methods and CAD to 80+ undergraduate students.
- **Business & Product Design Consultant, Techmall S.A.** · Brazil (2015-2017): mentored startups in business design, branding, and UX at a national accelerator.
- **Design Professor & Researcher, Universidade do Estado de Minas Gerais** · Brazil (2014-2015): taught product design, co-coordinated the curriculum, and founded Eureka!, the university's startup incubation programme.

Education

- **MSc, Materials Engineering** · UFOP, Federal University of Ouro Preto, Brazil (2011-2013)
- **MBA, Strategic Business Management** · University Center UNA, Brazil (2008-2009)
- **Postgraduate Degree, Design Management** · UEMG, State University of Minas Gerais, Brazil (2007-2008)
- **Bachelor, Product & Industrial Design** · UEMG, State University of Minas Gerais, Brazil (2001-2005)

Certificates

- **Figma Certified Service Partner** · Figma, issued Nov 2025 (valid through Nov 2026)
- **Journey Mapping** · Interaction Design Foundation (IxDF), 2024
- **Data Landscape of GenAI for Project Managers** · Project Management Institute (PMI), 2024
- **Generative AI Overview for Project Managers** · Project Management Institute (PMI), 2023
- **Learning from Users:** User Research Methods for Technology Design · Fraunhofer Portugal, 2021
- **AgilePM® Agile Project Management Foundation** · University of Westminster, 2020

Speaking & Community

- **Speaker, UX Talks '25 · Lisbon, Web Summit Week:** panel on the skills designers need in the era of AI.
- **Lecturer, School of Big Thinking** · Dentsu Lab creative innovation programme across London, Portugal, and Edinburgh.
- **Contributor, Fast Currents** · Merkle's digital experience transformation content series.

Skills Profile

Design Leadership and Strategy

- Leading and managing design and cross-functional teams; stakeholder management.
- Aligning UX and product design strategy with business objectives.
- Redefining design and engineering workflows: designers shipping production code through AI tooling, collapsing the traditional handoff gap.
- Establishing and scaling design systems for product consistency.
- Data-driven decision-making and KPI tracking.

Design Engineering & Prototyping

- AI-assisted development: shipping production frontend code (React, TypeScript) via Claude Code and Codex, merged through engineering PR review.
- Design-to-code workflows: Figma-to-code pipelines using MCP-connected design systems (tokens and components synced between Figma libraries and codebase).
- Version control: Git and GitHub workflows (branching, pull requests, code review) in collaboration with engineers.
- Rapid prototyping with AI: from concept to working interactive prototype in hours, validating interaction models in real code rather than static mocks.
- Figma (expert, Figma Certified Service Partner): design systems, component libraries, variables and tokens, Code Connect.

User Experience & Research

- Product Design, UX/UI Design, Service Design, Customer Journey Mapping.
- Qualitative and quantitative research: user interviews, analytics, A/B testing.
- Accessibility and inclusive design (WCAG, usability testing).
- Interaction design and information architecture.

Project Management & Agile Methodologies

- Agile (Scrum, Kanban); product strategy and roadmapping.
- JIRA, Azure DevOps, Trello; Miro and FigJam for workshops and ideation.
- Confluence and Notion for documentation and knowledge management.

Languages:

- **Portuguese**: Native
- **English**: Full Professional Proficiency