



Can time exist behind a face that is not theirs?
If so, can they remain sane
as the reflection of their reality
blends them to what they see,
while their eyes are closed,
causing them to mistake nightmares
for sought-after dreams?

About Graphic Design



CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

AFTER READING THIS CHAPTER, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

- Sequence the heritage of graphic design, beginning with early cave paintings, noting the first use of the term, and continuing through to present times.
- Summarize the many categories of graphic design.
- Describe what it means to be a graphic designer.
- Distinguish art forms and theories that have influenced the development of graphic design.
- Sequence the steps of the design process, from the first contact with a client to the finished work.
- Characterize the basic components of a graphic design solution.

Exercises and Projects

Research categories of graphic design; critique graphic designs; design a T-shirt using text and image; visually document and present a business through the eyes of a graphic designer.

Graphic design is so much a part of our lives that at times it goes unnoticed. The layout of type and imagery on the page you're reading right now is a key aspect of graphic design. This book was designed by organizing all the visual and textual information into a communicable message, an object bound between two covers. But if organizing were the only job of graphic designers, the computer would have replaced us by now.



I think design in essence has to have an authentic honesty built into it. The main goal is to convey something that makes a difference in other people's lives. —Scott W. Santoro

Watch the Video on myartslab.com

The field uses the two words *graphic* and *design* because of the dual nature of its process. Successful design solutions stimulate viewers intellectually and move them emotionally by including both familiar and surprising elements. As a result, a design communication can not only explain something to an audience but also affect that group on another level.

If you apply this complex thinking to your design process, the results will reflect your intentions, and your messages will be clear. A website is user friendly when its pages are attractive and its navigation simple; a book's content might be more accessible when its cover presents an expressive visual metaphor; a building is easier to navigate when the architect has applied a logical system of signage to its passageways. Each of these situations presents a unique communication problem, solved with specific design approaches.

Being a designer also involves finding ways to reveal the beauty in something that others may not see and expressing a thought in an

Opposite page: KAREEM COLLIE.
Opening page (detail) for
Man behind the Curtain (full
image, see Figure 1.31).



1.1 RAFAEL ESQUER. Clothing donation bag sent to clients for the holidays as a way to help people in need.



unexpected way—a mission through which blending the useful with the aesthetically appealing has one primary goal—to communicate. For example, Rafael Esquer embraced the notion of giving instead of receiving by transforming a clothing collection bag into a typographic call to action (Figure 1.1). The fresh approach was also a declaration that read visually as “This idea is so clever, I want to help.” According to the designer, most people liked the design so much that they kept it as a laundry bag and sent their clothing donations in plain bags and boxes.

In another example, Pierre Bernard transformed the scaffolding for an architectural renovation into a sidewalk spectacle for the Centre Pompidou in Paris (Figure 1.2). A giant program listed the museum’s monthly events, and, after each event was over, it was manually crossed out by mountaineers hoisting themselves down on ropes. This creative idea made a simple calendar into a continually dramatic and entertaining performance. The designer found an idea and pushed it further than anyone would have expected. A graphic designer needs to be part artist, scientist, researcher, psychologist, and businessperson.

Design work incorporates aesthetics (to achieve notions of beauty) structure (to organize and arrange), emotion (to accentuate feelings), and

View a Closer Look for the Centre Pompidou on myartslab.com



1.2 PIERRE BERNARD, ATELIER DE CRÉATION GRAPHIQUE. For the Centre Pompidou renovation in Paris, a temporary system of signs was devised. Type was hoisted up, crossed out, and ultimately removed.



utility (for use). Whether designing for an individual, a small business, or a large corporation, the designer brings a degree of art, craft, intelligence, and intuition to every project.

Graphic designers often collaborate with writers, illustrators, photographers, and printers, making for an energizing work environment. Clients sometimes invest large sums of money, and an audience of millions just might see the designer’s work, but the most exciting aspect of the graphic designer’s job—and the most admirable one—is saying something that matters, and saying it with both grace and intelligence.

“Everything is design. Everything!”

—Paul Rand



1.3 Lascaux cave paintings, Dordogne, France.



1.4 Cave canem (beware of the dog) mosaic, Pompeii, Italy. Late first century AD.



1.5 Benjamin Franklin's political cartoon that appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, his American newspaper from 1754. In Franklin's time, a superstition existed that a snake cut to pieces could be brought back to life if the pieces were put back together before sunset.

Graphic Design's Heritage

Graphic design (the art of conveying messages) has always been a part of us, even as far back as the early cave paintings of approximately 16,000 years ago. Scenes of the hunt—like the ones pictured at Lascaux—may have been more than merely decorative, possibly serving a number of purposes (Figure 1.3). One purpose may have been to literally describe the animals as an instruction manual might, picturing what to chase and what to avoid. Another likely purpose may have been to bring good fortune by symbolically capturing the animals on the wall. Made with only burnt sticks and colored pigments, these beautifully executed designs could have motivated the hunting group and helped it to survive.

Fast-forwarding 14,000 years, a stone mosaic from Pompeii was used to communicate an important message: “Beware of the dog” (Figure 1.4). A ferocious dog perfectly translated into the black and white mosaic along with words of caution made its point clearly to visitors. Forward another 1,700 years to America’s first political cartoon, *Join or Die*, a woodcut by Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) (Figure 1.5). Franklin’s wit and conviction can be seen in the design of a snake severed into eighths, each segment representing a British American colony or region. The design inspired colonial unity in a yet-to-be-born country.

Today, digital printing and electronic media have replaced cave wall paintings, mosaics, and woodcuts. But the functional aspect of graphic design is the same—to educate, symbolize, and even compel us to action.

Understanding graphic design in the context of its history is essential to being a good designer. In Chapter 2, *A Brief History of Graphic Design*, you will come to see why this context is so important.

The Coining of the Term

The great book designer W. A. Dwiggins (1880–1956) coined the term “graphic design” in 1922. Since then, graphic design has grown into its own, legitimate profession. Dwiggins had it right in two ways. First by blending the words *graphic* and *design*, he better explained the process—graphic sensibility fused with planning and organizing. Second, by naming the profession, he categorized it as its own, legitimate activity.

Although graphic design had an association with commerce, just as printing, lettering, and the advertising trades did, it was no longer considered a subcategory of those trades but a valid field in its own right. Dwiggins’s term was just abstract enough to encompass many kinds of design. (See the upcoming Excerpt from “The Name Game,” by Michael Worthington.) The categories of graphic design, as described in this chapter, all have their own particular practices, and what unites them is the process graphic designers go through to communicate a concept.

As you continue reading this book, you will see just how that concept of process applies to the art of graphic design. The field is as much

about problem solving, clear thinking, and creativity as it is about the end result, the final design.

► *In Practice:* Oddly enough, it wasn’t until the late 1970s that the media began to refer to the profession as “graphic design.” Until then it was mistakenly called “graphics design,” describing only the end product (the design of graphics), and neglecting the idea that there was an approach to the process, which the term *graphic design* more accurately describes. The media dropped the “s” (Figure 1.6).

Graphics Design

1.6 The s in *graphics* was eventually dropped by the media at the insistence of the profession.

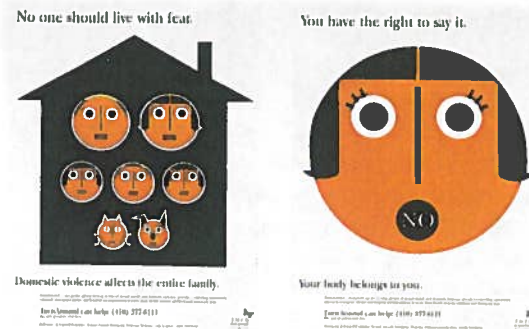
The Expanding Field of Design

One of the wonderful things about the graphic design field is that it encourages creative people to develop personally challenging goals. Pushing further, beyond the most obvious design solution, is integral to being a good designer. This effort includes pushing how we develop concepts, how computer technology enables us to complete our tasks, and how new media can help expand graphic design language itself.

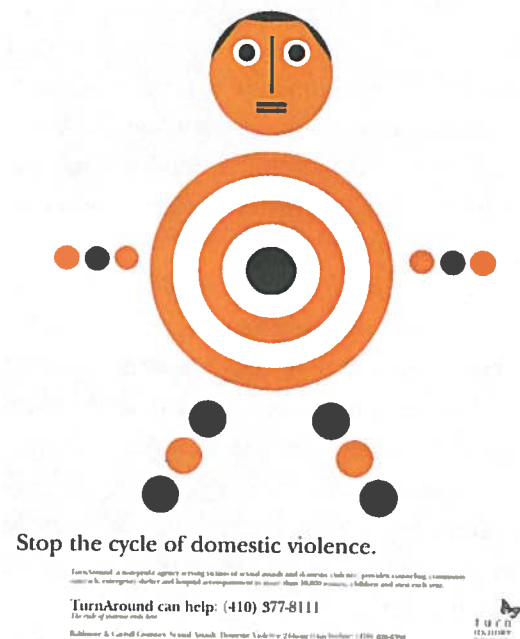
And we have academic support. In the last few decades, an increasing number of students have been pursuing master’s degrees in graphic design and contributing to the rich mixture of ideas and culture. As a result, the field has grown and become a more sophisticated, serious field of study. Even a doctoral degree, the highest degree awarded in most disciplines, is now attainable as a course of study in graphic design, advancing research and enriching scholarship within the field. Books, journals, and magazines on the subject of design flourish, acknowledging the field’s history, theory, methods, and influence. Graphic designers work in countless industries and throughout the world. And yet, design is still a bit of a subculture. Its professionals need to be constantly self-critical to ensure that the field expands beyond the mere styling of information. Graphic design reflects and shapes the culture in which it exists.

✎ **EXCERPT: The Name Game** by Michael Worthington
(*AIGA Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 37)

Eventually I realized it is the vagueness of the term “graphic design” that makes it so appropriate. The same reason my grandmother initially couldn’t understand that term is the very reason it works. It can cover myriad skills, cope with technological innovations and changes in the profession, but still refer to the larger concerns of visual communication, representation, and issues of creating meaning through content. This flexibility allows me to take on the role of an interface designer, website designer, or motion typographer, and add that knowledge to the variety of skills that currently fall under the title “graphic designer,” a term that itself is as unfinished and malleable as any digital piece of work.



A child is not a target.



1.7 DAVID PLUNKERT, SPUR DESIGN. Posters for TurnAround, a nonprofit agency serving victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.

Graphic Design Categories

To varying degrees, the intent of design is to persuade, identify, or inform. A book jacket informs the viewer of the book's content, persuades the reader to buy, and identifies the writer. The same is true in food packaging where persuasion, identity on the shelf, and information all matter. Even a geographical map's organization and clarity requires the designer to decide on what to include and exclude as well as how to present the information. A clear map is more likely to be purchased and used than a confusing map.

A designer's clients can range from a small, nonprofit organization in need of a few hundred educational posters (Figure 1.7) to a major corporation requiring a set of streamlined, easy-to-read forms that are printed in the millions (Figure 1.8). Take the time to get to know your clients as well as you can. It can help tremendously in producing a design that fits their needs. Each of the specialized areas of graphic design has its own particular problems to solve. The job of a publication design is not the same as that of a package design, for example. But with each project, it is you, the designer, who will bring a graphic sensibility to the final product.

Corporate Design

Corporations have large, internal design departments, hire independent design consultants, and devote relatively large amounts of money for their graphic design projects. Corporations need to project a consistent visual identity—one that brands a corporation into the minds (and hearts) of the general public.

1.8 LANDOR ASSOCIATES. FedEx Express airbill. FedEx servicemark used by permission.



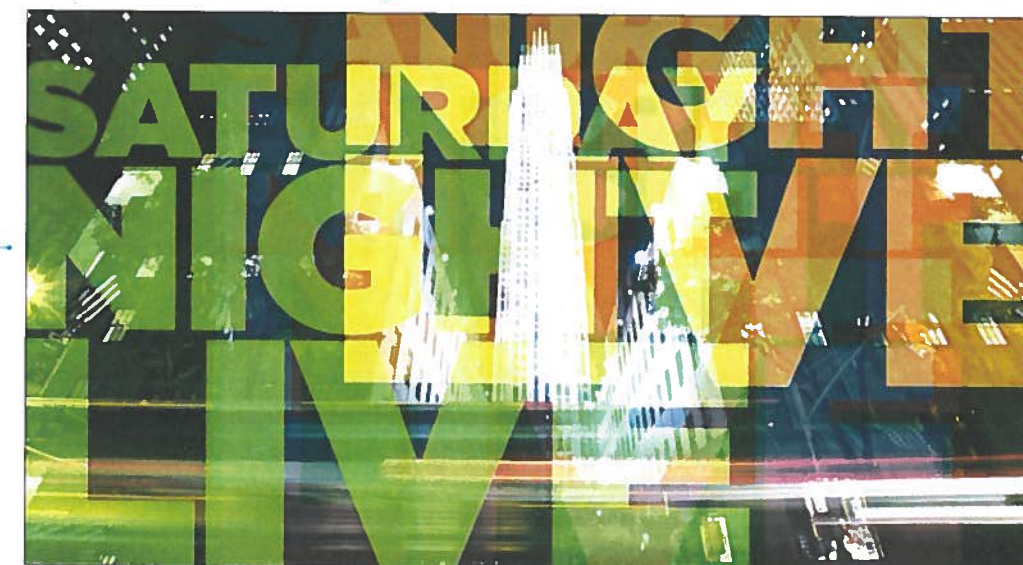
1.9 KUHLMANN LEAVITT, INC. Design for Formica Group Neocon exhibition space.

Environmental Design

Creating a three-dimensional experience for the visitor is the goal of an environmental designer (Figure 1.9). The category includes the design of museum exhibits, trade shows, and convention booths. Environmental design overlaps with signage design in the sense that both types of designers work closely with architects as well as interior and landscape designers and must have an understanding of structural materials. In addition, environmental designers must know audio/visual media, including lighting and sound techniques, and interaction design. Environmental design usually includes the display of signs, information designs, and other types of promotional materials. The overall design must remain in keeping with the objects or designs it contains.

Motion Design

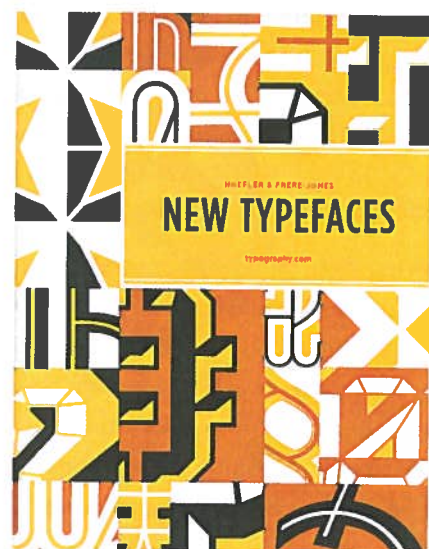
This evolving field of design involves adding sound, motion, and time sequencing to pictures and words. Filmmaking, animation, and visual effects converge to tell a story or visually articulate a concept. Motion design projects include film title sequences, trailers, animations, and broadcast identifications (a short spot that confirms the channel being watched). The finished projects are displayed on television, in the cinema, on computer screens, and even through cell phones (Figure 1.10). (See the Speakout by Barry Deck on page 10.)



1.10 NUMBER 17, NYC; EMILY OBERMAN, art direction; NAZ SAHIN AND JESSICA ZADNIK, design; MARY ELLEN MATTHEWS, live action. Opening titles for Saturday Night Live.



1.11 MODE. Website design for Mellow Mushroom restaurant.



1.12 JONATHAN HOEFLE. Hoefler & Frere-Jones cover for specimens of type, 8th edition.

SPEAKOUT: Motion Design's Evolving Role by Barry Deck, BarryDeckGroup

Although the practice of graphic design began with print, designers are being asked with increasing frequency to consider time, motion, and sound in their work. This is part of a general trend in communication, which may have started with cave paintings and could lead to the making of full-on virtual reality experiences. Most of the messages that were conveyed in print only a century ago have now shifted to onscreen media, like movies, television, software, games, and the Internet. In El Lissitzky's 1923 manifesto, *Topography of Typography*, (which appeared in Kurt Schwitters's Dadaist magazine *Merz*), he wrote exuberantly, "The printed sheet overcomes space and time. The printed sheet, the infinity of the book, has to be overcome. THE ELECTRO-LIBRARY." That future is here, and technology continues to evolve. As the possibilities of the technology change, the designer's role begins to overlap with other disciplines. The difference between design and art has always been a subject of debate. Boundaries between graphic design and writing, software design, behavioral science, film directing, and editing do indeed blur. The graphic designers of the future will have more responsibilities and collaborators than ever, but there will always be a role for people skilled in telling stories visually.

Interaction Design

Designers involved in this computer-based medium create user experiences through Internet browsers and touch-screen devices. Software allows for interaction through body movement and speech. This field is a quickly evolving one, and designers need to stay current with the latest software and hardware advancements. The field requires a working knowledge of programming languages (Figure 1.11).

Type Design

A type designer creates new letterforms and **fonts** (variations such as italic and bold) to develop a complete typeface family. The elements include letters, numerals, **ligatures** (where two letters are joined), and punctuation. The designer must have a sharp sensitivity to detail to create a unified feeling within a typeface. It is important to have a strong knowledge of the history of type and an understanding of the theoretical issues involved. As with all design fields, good skills in the latest computer technology will simplify your task. Type design involves a great deal of effort and the results may not be obvious to the general public, but designers understand how expressive a typeface can be and how it can subtly influence those who read it (Figure 1.12).



1.13 ANDREA FELLA. PAPER MAGAZINE. Layout spread for this New York City-based independent magazine focusing on fashion, pop-culture, nightlife, music, art, and film.

Publication Design

Magazines, newspapers, newsletters, and other periodicals all fall within the umbrella of publication design. Thousands of periodicals are published each year in the United States alone, and other countries are equally invested in their own periodicals. Categories include news, business, travel, retail, entertainment, and fashion, and these publications are distributed weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually. Each periodical strives for a unique identity, and the elements that provide this uniqueness are a blend of photography, typography, and continuity from page to page. In terms of design, a newspaper or newsletter might

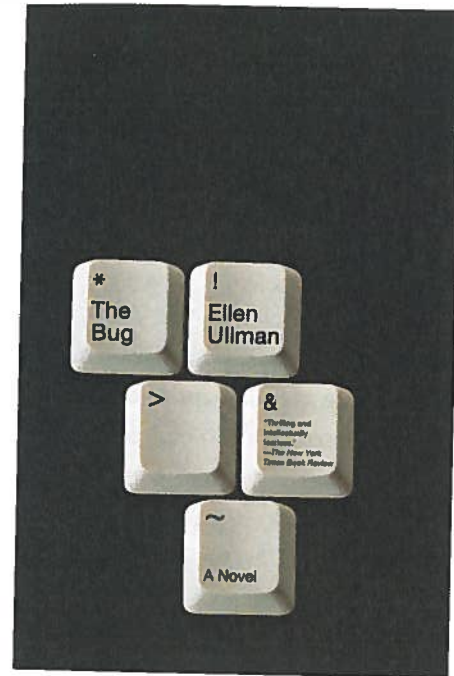
stress utility of reading, whereas a magazine will stress creative interpretation of each story (Figure 1.13). Now that most publications have both a print and online presence, designers have to consider how their designs will function in both platforms. A particular printed font may not work well online, or a sequence of images in print may not present themselves in the same way on the screen. Do you design for print and adapt it for the Web or vice versa? Or do you design with both formats in mind from the beginning? These decisions challenge publication designers every day. As online technology advances, such design decisions become not only more complex but also more important for the publication.

Book Design

Book publishers give the final, edited text to designers for layout. It is important that the designer understand the content when making decisions about the font, headers, and all other design elements. The style decisions need to be consistent with the subject matter (Figure 1.14). Illustrated books present a whole different set of design challenges.

1.14 MUCCA DESIGN. Layout spread for a dictionary of words that are a single letter in length. Initial letters were also designed specifically for the book, here a large letter M.





1.15 KEENAN. Book jacket for *The Bug*, Vintage Books. The image of computer keys illustrates this novel about the fate between a software programmer and the bug she sets out to eliminate.

“A book is a container to save things permanently; better than a picture frame or filing cabinet.”

—Alvin Eisenman

1.16 MICHAEL GERCKE/PENTAGRAM. Signage and wayfinding for Terminal 1 at Lester B. Pearson International Airport, Toronto.



Book Jacket Design

The success of a book, or a series of books, may be dependent on the cover design. The cover relays a great deal of nonverbal information about the content. The ultimate test is the bookshelf—either at actual book stores or on a website where a book becomes a miniposter. The designer's job is to attract notice and provide a point of entry for the book (Figure 1.15).

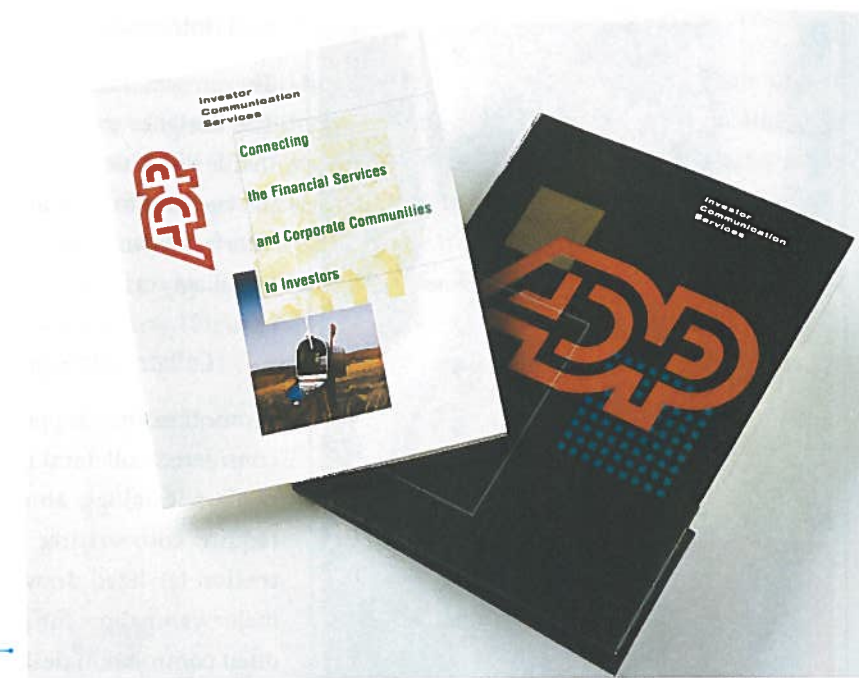
Signage Design

Helping people find their way through stores, airports, highways, and buildings is the main goal of signage design. A strong understanding of typography is essential in this area of design, as is an understanding of building plans, floor plans, construction, and exit procedures. Signage designers work with interior and landscape designers as well as architects to create **signage**—a sign, or system of signs, that will be highly visible but also will integrate with the space for which they are planned (Figure 1.16).



1.17 DUFFY & PARTNERS. Logo for Tall Tales Restaurant. The handcrafted illustration brings warmth and charm to this Gander Mountain restaurant.

1.18 WORKSIGHT. Pocket folder and capability brochure for Automatic Data Processing (ADP). Computerized transaction processing is abstracted as a cover image for ADP's pocket folder. Inside, the brochure literally translates the end result of the cover—a mailed piece.



Brand and Identity Design

For any company to succeed, it must establish its own, unique **brand** (an identifying personality) that is burnt into the mind of its audience. A **logo** (a graphic or symbolic representation) can accomplish this function by presenting a face for the viewer to see—a visual identity (Figure 1.17). A logo also differentiates one company from another, becoming quite valuable if used consistently in advertising, print collateral, websites, and broadcast media.

Graphic designers who work at corporations create a wide array of materials. Style manuals help coordinate how a corporate identity is applied to various communications from the annual report and websites, to business cards, advertising layouts, and environmental signage. The goal is to create a comfort zone for the general public by consistently presenting a familiar, instantly recognizable face (Figure 1.18).

Package Design

Package design must function three-dimensionally and often utilizes texture as well as text and image. Industrial packaging is a major field, but it's the consumer category that holds the most presence for industry, including food and beverages, cosmetics, household products, pharmaceuticals, and smaller groups. Decisions about size and shape are often impacted by government regulations, and decisions about the overall personality and approach are often determined based on focus groups and consumer feedback (Figure 1.19).

1.19 LARSEN. Photography Lars Hansen. *Le Saucier* package design using contemporary typography and photography to bring a distinctive look and feel to this product.



1.20 NIGEL HOLMES. A map of Manhattan/World Trade Center for *Rolling Stone* magazine that helped readers locate the specific 9/11 site known as "Ground Zero."

Information Design

The presentation of information and data is both an art and a science. The designer must make data understandable and easy to use in a way that is effective, efficient, and attractive. Typical examples might include instructions for product use, signs, public information systems, computer interfaces, websites, forms, educational materials, maps, charts, graphs, and diagrams (Figure 1.20).

Collateral Design

Promotion that supports or reinforces an identity, service, or event is considered collateral material. This type of material includes brochures, mailers, catalogs, announcements, and so on. These materials usually require **copywriting** (composing the words), photography, and **illustration** (stylized drawing/painting). While advertising agencies handle major campaigns for promoting a brand's product or service, they will often commission designers to produce collateral pieces (Figure 1.21).

1.21 JASON ACKLEY, MORNINGSTAR. *Morningstar FundInvestor* and *StockInvestor* newsletters that project a clarity and vibrancy to complicated financial information.



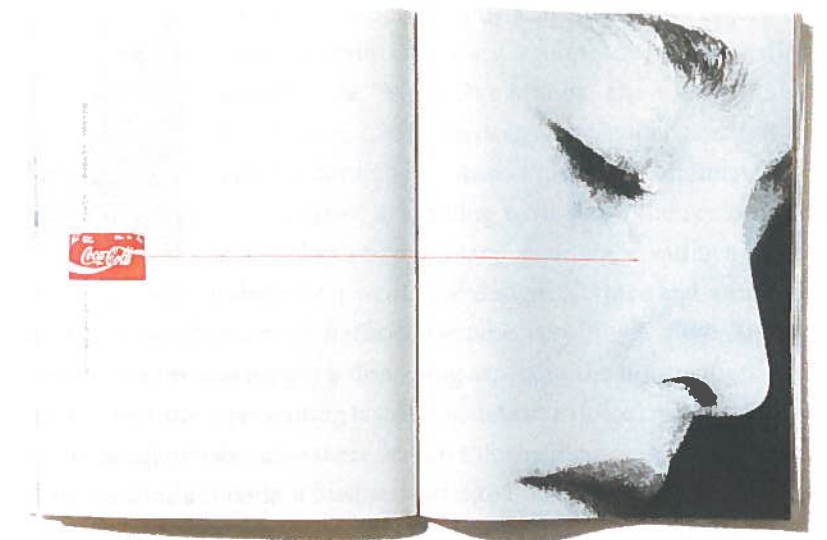
“The secret of all effective advertising is not the creation of new and tricky words and pictures, but one of putting familiar words and pictures into new relationships.”

—Leo Burnett (1891–1971)

Advertising Design

Graphic designers working within advertising media fuse their understanding of visual identity with campaign marketing strategies. Magazine advertising and direct mail are two potential directions for designers to take in this category. Designers can bring a graphic sensibility to traditional campaigns and help integrate type and image to strengthen advertising concepts. Advertising designers usually have a strong background in marketing (Figure 1.22).

1.22 SCOTT STOWELL, OPEN. The “Between” campaign, developed in collaboration with ad agency Wieden + Kennedy advertising agency, tries to make Coca-Cola more a part of everyday Japanese life. Each print ad defines a moment (and chance to drink Coke) by what came before and what comes after. In this example, the theme was “between heartbreaks.”



Self-Publishing

A digitally interactive performance is an example of how new media and activities can be incorporated into a self-published project. In the example shown here, the designer Elliot Earls combines elements of music, poetry, typography, design criticism, and performance into a piece that enters territory traditionally defined as fine art (Figure 1.23).



1.23 ELIOT EARLS. Video still. *Eye Sling Shot* incorporates a mélange of typography, sound, video fragments, interactive digital video, simulated live performance, short films, and pop music—all controlled by means of midi (musical instrument digital instrument).

Being a Graphic Designer

The field of graphic design is always changing and advancing. Keeping up with these changes means the life of a designer is continually exciting. The software applications used to create and assemble designs are making production effortless, digital printing technology is advancing every day, and critical writing on design has gained respect as a legitimate field. The general public seems to be more aware of the design world and of the huge impact graphic design has on daily life.

The design field can be so much more than a straightforward job. Designers are paid to be creative and expressive—something so few people in other occupations can claim. But the field also offers the chance to contribute to the community in a positive way. From social to political to environmental causes, each project offers an opportunity to make a difference in the world.

Contributing to the community in which you live begins with an awareness of that community. A conscious observation of how information is presented and how meaning is read must become your path of study. To be an informed designer, you need to be continually aware of current events as well as political, economic, and social issues. In other words, you need to take responsibility for your place in the world by reading newspapers, books, and magazines and by listening to the news. You should also keep up with what is happening in your community culturally—by going to museums, galleries, concerts, and theater. If you can present yourself to a client as a person who is intelligent and worldly, the client will trust your judgment ever so much more than if you appear to be uninformed. All this knowledge will help with your design work on a very practical level. The abilities we use to interpret culture and social issues are the same ones we exercise to solve design problems.

As a case in point, consider the Poetry Slam logo by Travis Olson and Carmichael Lynch Thorburn (Figure 1.24). Here the designers have created a humorous character to convey the organization's spirit; the starburst inside the voice bubble evokes a sense of passion about poetry readings. These events are not the tame readings you might have gone to in college. A poetry slam is a raucous, exciting, and creative affair. The simple colors of black and red further reflect the emotional charge of slamming. When form and content blend as well as they do here (with bold and simple lines and shapes), they achieve an effective whole, giving the design vitality through its consistency. The designers have been to poetry slams and know what they're about. They use that knowledge to create meaningful designs.

1.24 TRAVIS OLSON, CARMICHAEL LYNCH THORBURN. Logo design for Poetry Slam, Inc.



Voice and Vision

Acknowledging your individual point of view in your own work also has significant value. The places you've been, the things you've seen, felt, or heard, all feed into your ability to approach a design project in a unique way. Your life experiences, as well as your education, will have a profound impact on your designs. Because of these influences, your work will have a distinct identity and will be a contribution to the field and to the community. (See the Speakout by Kali Nikitas and Figure 1.27.)

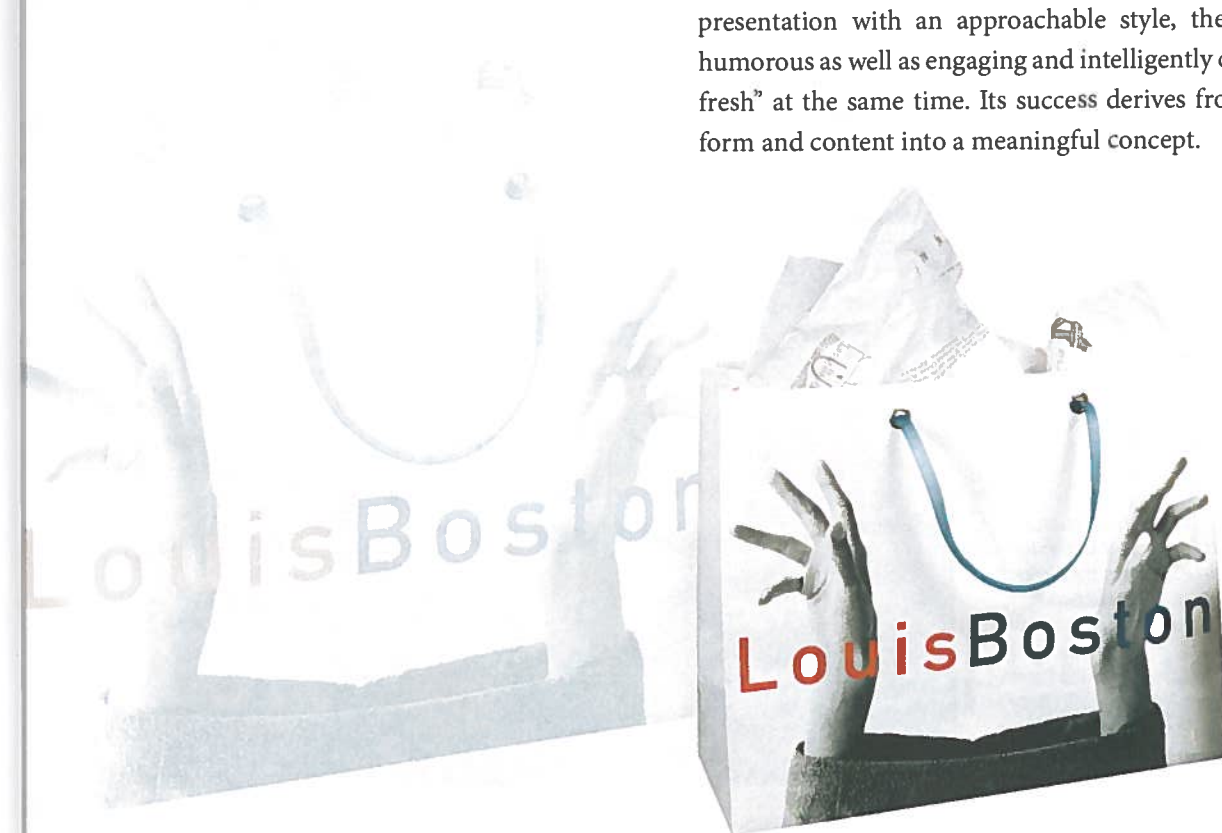
So many charts are a mundane representation of data, but the "Move Our Money" chart is anything but dull (Figure 1.25). The designers blended creativity with politics through an unusual medium—an inflatable balloon. Part of a traveling road show, the sculpture dramatized extreme military spending, creating a spectacle wherever it went. The designers' voice and vision made

an otherwise dull set of statistics become very much alive. The light-hearted approach brought a disarming aspect to the information, adding to the message by presenting horrifying data in a ridiculous way. The pie spoke effectively because there was an informed opinion to begin with.

In the context of a business-oriented problem, Cheryl Heller used a similar approach to create the package identity for LouisBoston (Figure 1.26). She used a witty voice and adept vision to promote the store's expanded offering for women and younger customers. A light-hearted presentation with an approachable style, the shopping bag design was humorous as well as engaging and intelligently communicates "young and fresh" at the same time. Its success derives from the insightful blend of form and content into a meaningful concept.



1.25 STEFAN SAGMEISTER AND HJALTI KARLSSON. "Move Our Money" charts as part of a traveling road show.



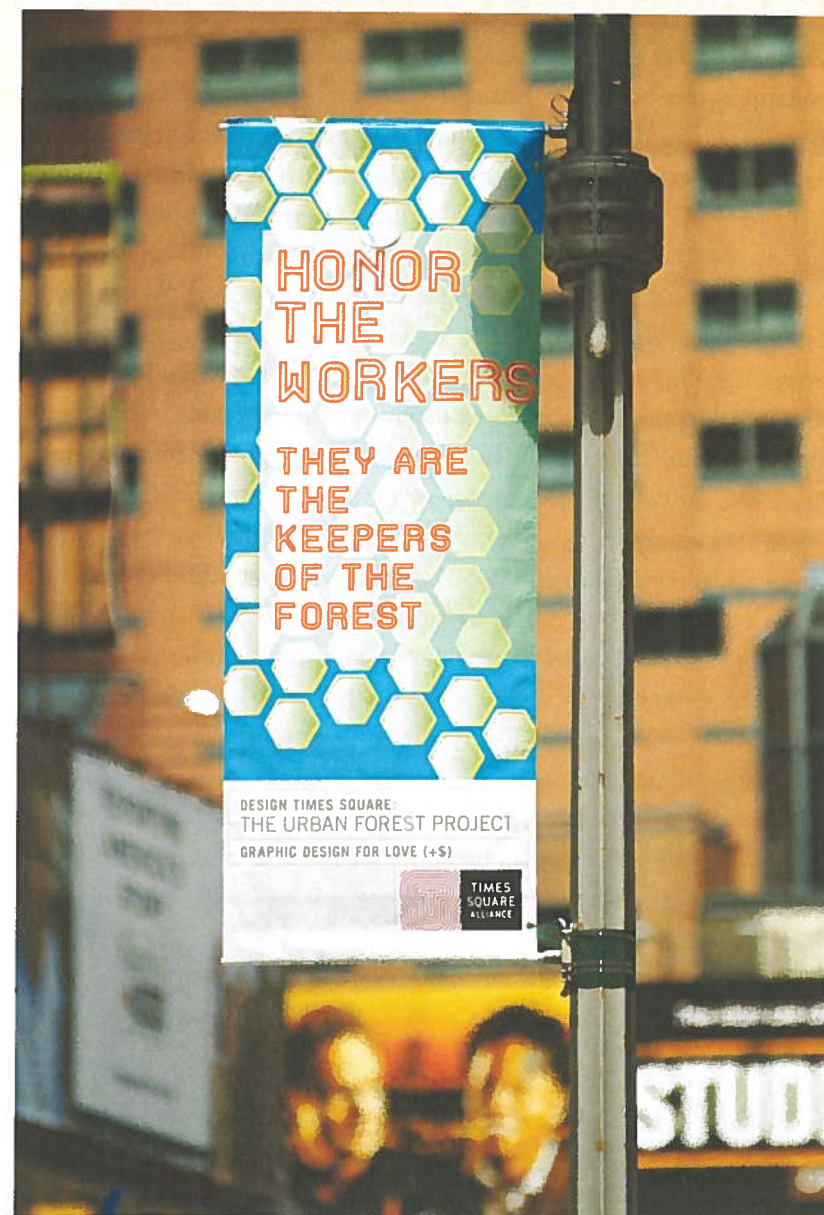
1.26 CHERYL HELLER. Package identity for LouisBoston.

SPEAKOUT: Design Can Make a Difference by Kali Nikitas, chair, Communications Department, Otis College of Art and Design (Figure 1.27)

In the past, kids were raised to believe that in order to make a difference in the world, they had to study to be lawyers, doctors, or engineers. However, graphic design has recently been credited with playing a significant role in society. Through word and image, on products, in the environment, on the web, in publications, and in advertising, graphic design has become a viable career path for instigating change.

Design students and practitioners can shift and alter ways of thinking and enrich the way we experience our everyday life. As image-makers and idea generators, we contribute to what people buy, how people vote, and the ways in which individuals live as citizens. Once students realize the profound potential of their major, they tend to develop a sense of responsibility and urgency towards contributing to the profession and the world socially, economically, politically, and environmentally.

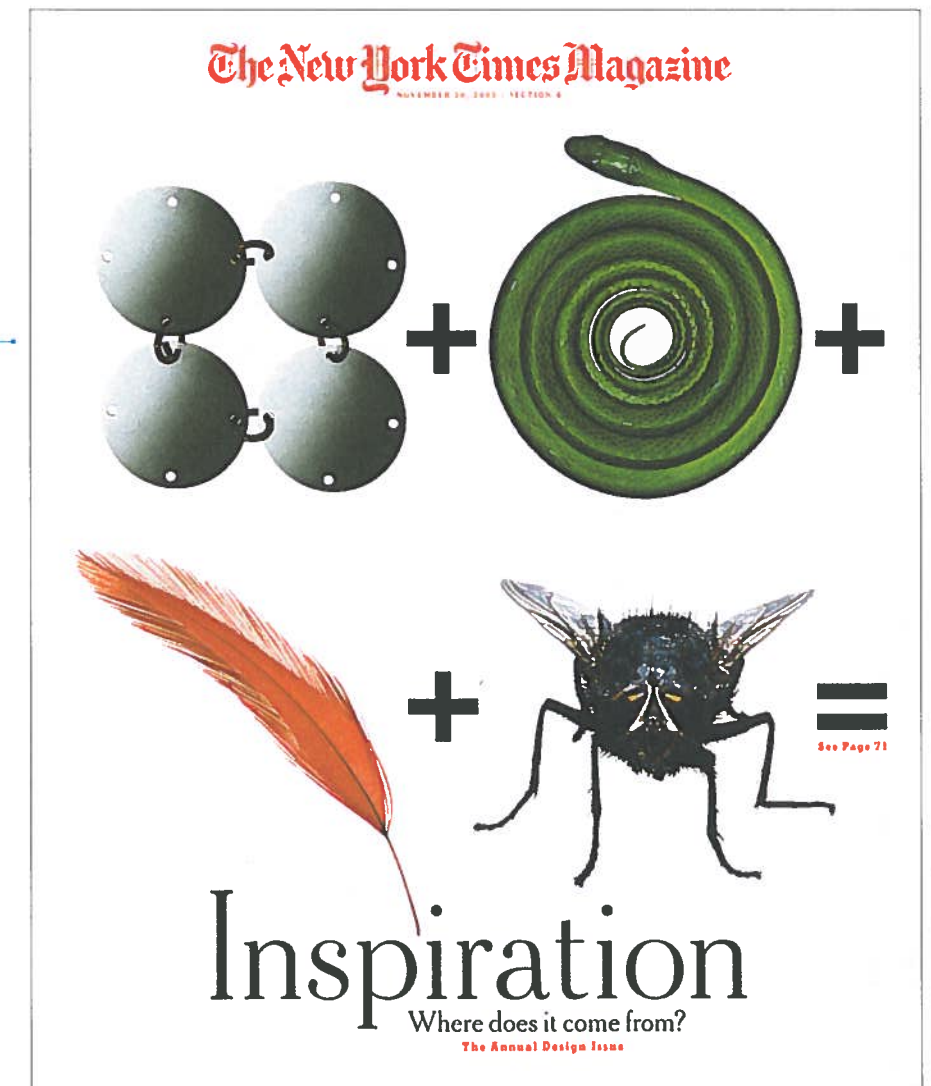
“Steal ideas—just not from other graphic designers.”
—Ed Fella



1.27 KALI NIKITAS AND RICH SHELTON. Graphic Design for Love(+). “Honor the Workers” was one of 200 banners designed for “The Urban Forest Project,” an outdoor banner exhibit created for the Times Square Alliance. Profits from the sale of the banner designs went to help the Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships program.

“The creative process is not performed by the skilled hand alone, or by the intellect alone, but must be a unified process in which head, heart, and hand play a simultaneous role.”
—Herbert Bayer

1.28 JANET FROELICH. Cover for *The New York Times Magazine*.



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Katherine McCoy was cochair of the design department at Cranbrook Academy of Art for twenty-four years, a distinguished visiting professor at London's Royal College of Art, and a senior lecturer at Illinois Institute of Technology's Institute of Design. Her graphic design practice and teaching have garnered her a medal from the American Institute of Design (AIGA), election to the Alliance Graphique Internationale, and an honorary Ph.D. from the Kansas City Art Institute. She served as national vice president of AIGA and is a past president of both the Industrial Designers Society of America and the American Center for Design. She writes frequently on design criticism and history, has coproduced a television documentary on Japanese design, and chaired the first Living Surfaces Conference on interactive communications design. Currently the Hall Distinguished Professor at Kansas City Art Institute, she is also a partner, with her husband Michael McCoy, of High Ground, a design workshop and studio based in Colorado.

► **How do you define graphic design—what does it mean to you?**

Graphic design is both a process and an artifact—software and hardware. Communications design involves serious cerebral activity, including research, analysis, conceptualizing, and planning. All this rational activity must be translated through the designer's personal talent, intuition, experience, and a scientifically indescribable connection between body and brain. In that mysterious mix, original expressions are born which bring the design brief to life and resonate with the audience. These expressions take eloquent form in the tangible artifacts that we see in museums and design exhibitions, including posters, books, brochures, and many other graphic media, and also in nonphysical communications in the digital realm. At the end of the day, it is the audience's interaction with the graphic message, and their response, that really counts.

How do you see design evolving? Is it morphing into something designers won't recognize in 100 years or are there staples that hold true?

The staples hold true, but rapidly changing media challenge designers to develop new conceptual theories, processes, and skills. Interactive electronic communications require far more education to understand how audiences navigate and make meaning out of nonphysical communications spaces. Electronic communications design now involves sound, motion, and interactivity.

What advice or insight can you give to students studying graphic design?

Passion is the largest requirement. This is a challenging, competitive, and rapidly evolving field, so it is essential that prospective designers feel a real love of the conceptual and form-giving elements.

"Passion is the largest requirement."

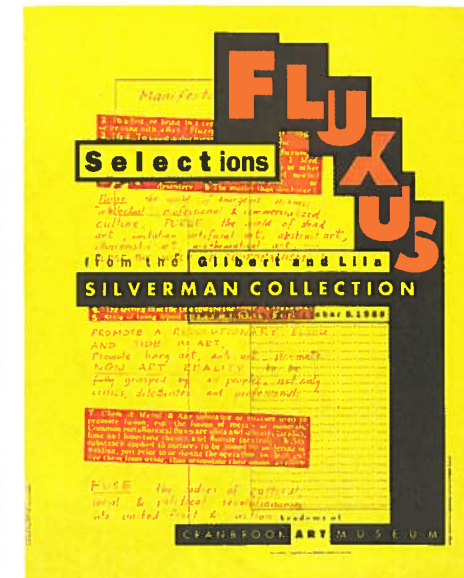


Vignette 1.1 Cranbrook Crane symbol, Cranbrook Educational Community.

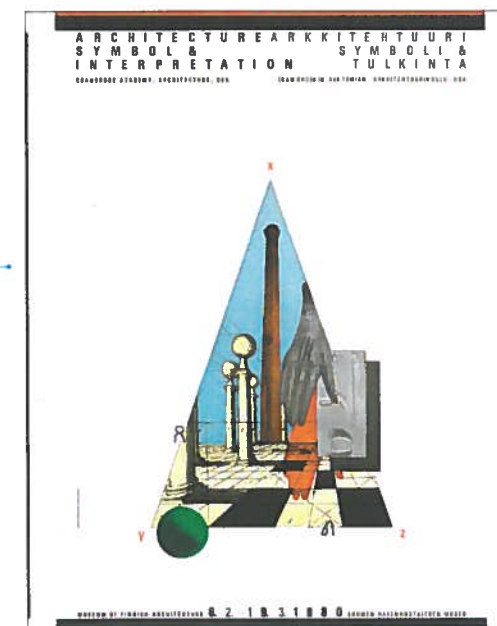


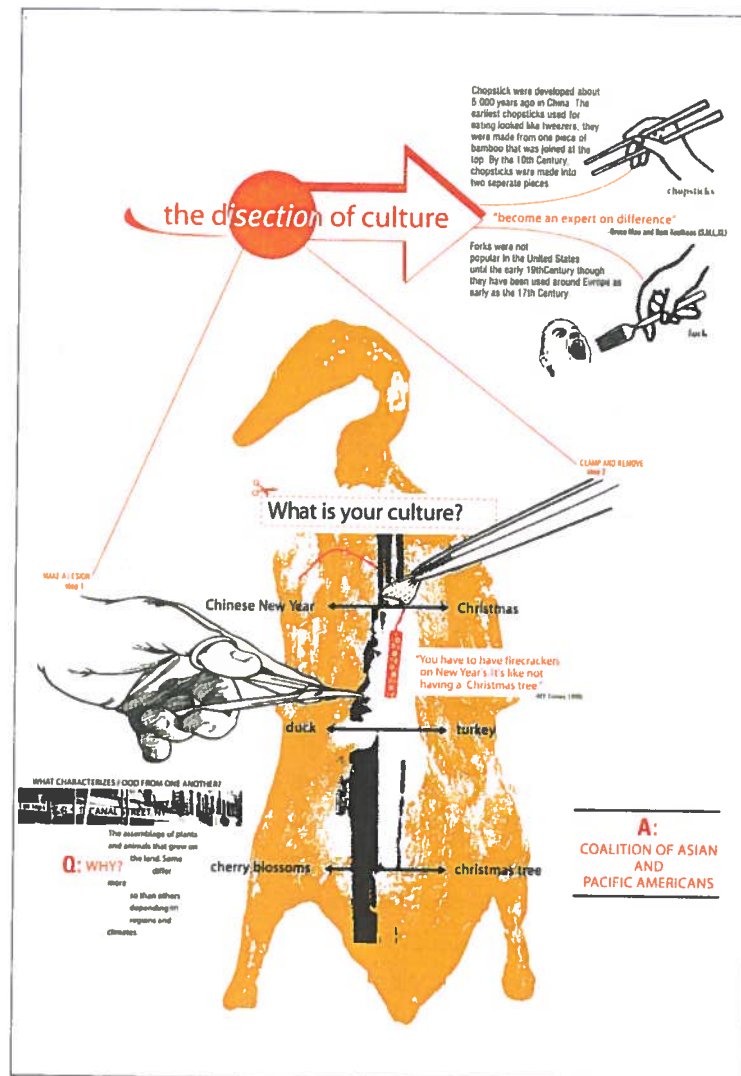
Vignette 1.2 Cranbrook Metalsmithing poster. A staged photograph makes a landscape of recent student work. Here, a schematic plan for the pitcher is superimposed and metallic forms of silver and copper cut into the photograph.

Vignette 1.4 KATHERINE MCCOY & DANIEL LIBESKIND. Architecture Symbol and Interpretation exhibition poster. An announcement for an exhibition refers to the rational and irrational in architecture. A reconstruction of a De Chirico painting includes an early Renaissance perspective drawing and diagrammatic notations from an Edgar Allan Poe short story.



Vignette 1.3 Fluxus exhibit catalog cover. This cover's structure refers to a diagram of the history of Fluxus by the movement's founder, George Maciunas. The bright colors of cheap printing paper are in the provocative spirit of Fluxus.





1.29 LOAN LAM. Design for a flier titled *What Is Your Culture?* questioning a law banning the use of fireworks in New York City's Chinatown.

► **In Practice:** A cooked duck is used as a cultural icon to represent Chinese culture. The dominance of the image draws the specific audience in, while smaller images and text explain the social issue being challenged.

Another equally passionate student project is a design titled *Man behind the Curtain* (Figures 1.30 and 1.31) by Kareem Collie. The piece

🗨️ **SPEAKOUT: Intuitive Knowledge** by Maya Drozd, visualingual. wordpress.com

Design is something to which you have been exposed your entire life. You take your cues from design as you make even the most mundane choices, including shopping for groceries or interpreting road signs. If you ever feel overwhelmed by how much you don't yet know about design, consider and draw on the wealth of design knowledge you already have. You may lack the specialized vocabulary to articulate what you know, but you already have an intuitive knowledge about the subject.

Addressing the Personal and the Public

There is both a personal and a public side to graphic design. In other words, the same communication tools that designers use in service to the business community can also be redirected in service to the social community. Graphic designers have that potential, and they work in both arenas. The emotionally charged thought is easily expressed when words and images are at our fingertips.

The flier *What Is Your Culture?* by Loan Lam does just that (Figure 1.29). After noticing a newspaper article about a law banning the use of fireworks being enforced in Chinatown, especially during the Chinese New Year, Lam felt the need to speak out. After researching the subject, she used her design to make the point that banning fireworks during the Chinese New Year was as culturally insensitive as banning turkey during Thanksgiving or a decorated tree during Christmas. She used an image of a cooked duck—a classic icon of Chinese culture seen hanging in most Chinatown restaurant windows. In a surreal twist, a firecracker is being removed from the duck's dissected body. It is an emotional translation as much as a literal one. The ban on fireworks rips something vital out of Chinese culture. The image is confrontational and creates the kind of public dialogue the designer wanted.



1.30 KAREEM COLLIE. Design project (series) on revealing a neighborhood's cultural icon discrepancies; titled *Man behind the Curtain*.

1.31 KAREEM COLLIE. Opening page to *Man behind the Curtain*.



notes that in Crown Heights, a neighborhood in Brooklyn whose population is primarily of African descent, there are many bronze statues commemorating civic leaders, but not one of them is black. The student asks: "How can I create a home in a place that feels like someone else's living

room?" His answer is expressed in the design. A bronze hand transforms into the designer's own hand. The "tag" is a graffiti signature that takes some representation away from the past and moves it into the present day. In both projects, the designers use personal convictions, a strong connection with their heritage, and awareness of their surroundings to make a social concern more public. *What Is Your Culture?* deals with the conflict between Chinese culture and Western law. *Man behind the Curtain* explains neighborhood graffiti as a proud expression of black presence. In this sense, the personal, expressed publicly, makes for what we might call a citizen designer, an important role in the field.

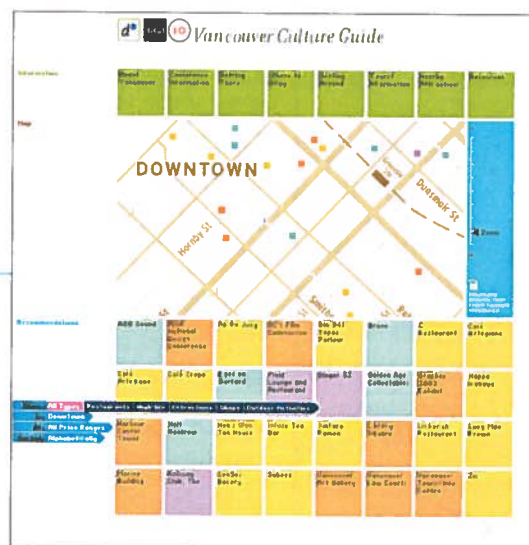


1.32 ABBOTT MILLER/PENTAGRAM. Exhibition design for "The 30th Anniversary Covers Tour" for Rolling Stone magazine.



1.33 THEO VAN DOESBURG. *Contra-Composition of Dissonances, XVI, 1925.*

1.34 RICKY CASTRO AND BROOKE MACKAY. Vancouver Culture Guide.

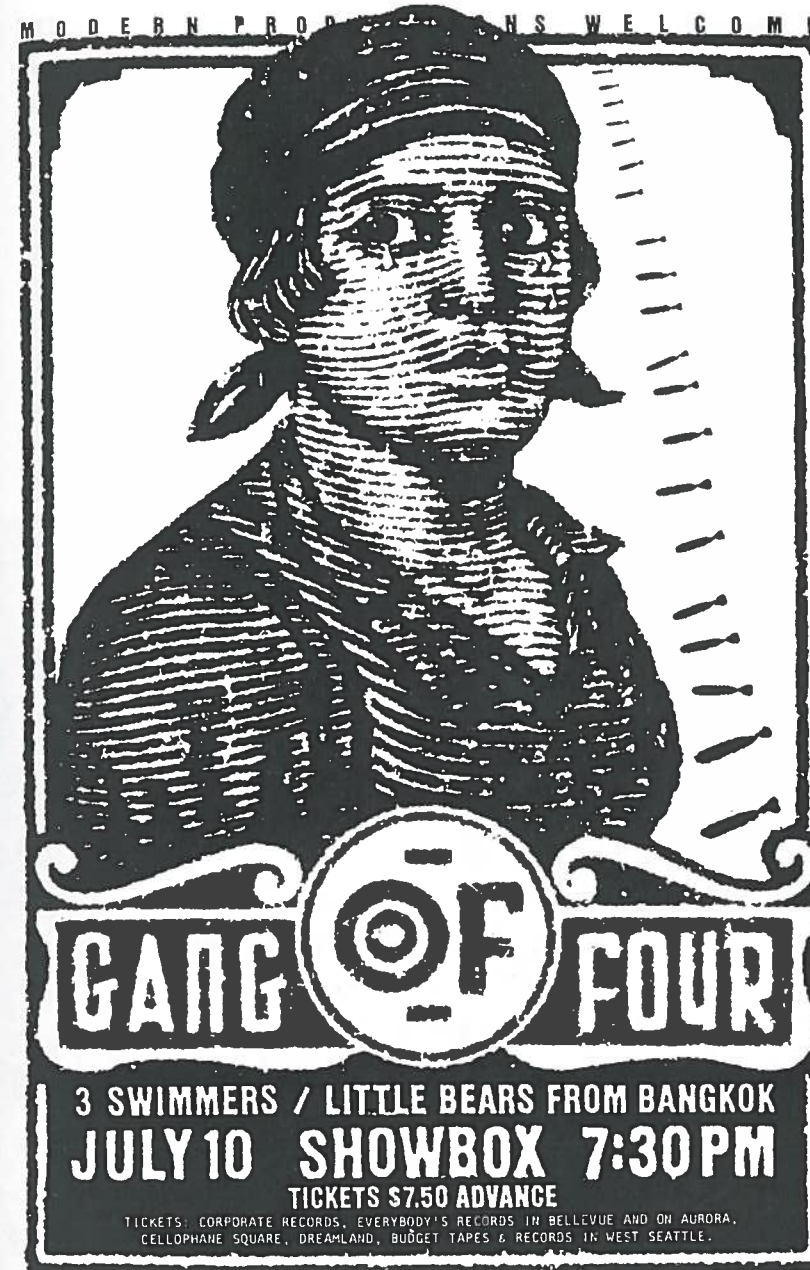
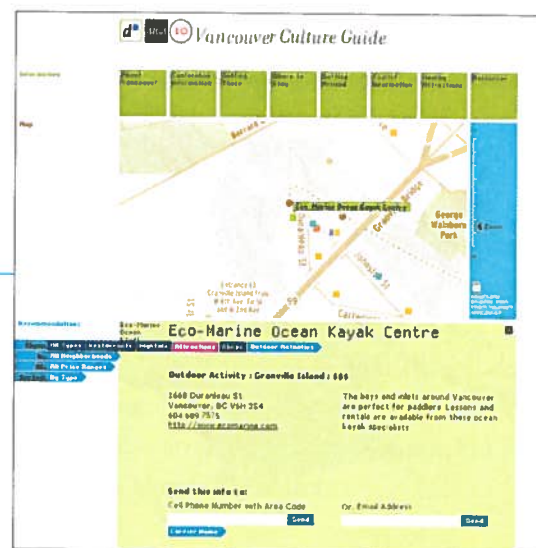


Influences on Graphic Design

Graphic design is affected by many other fields within the visual arts. We see the influence of sculpture and architecture in the exhibition design by Abbott Miller for *Rolling Stone* magazine in which a giant, fractured, three-dimensional letter *e* from the rock magazine's own mast-head emerges (Figure 1.32). There is a definite sensibility reminiscent of the colossal sculptures of Swedish artist Claes Oldenburg as well as the fragmented deconstructivism of contemporary architect Frank Gehry. These keen references are pulled into the box of the designer's own problem. The result is a design solution that has visual impact and cultural significance.

Designers can also embrace literature for its storytelling, philosophy for its ethics, science for its objectiveness, linguistics for its syntax, and so on. Noticing the nonlinear storyline of a movie you saw could inspire the way you handle the type in your design; the warm yellow street sign against the backdrop of cool green leaves might influence your project's color palette; and the step-by-step process you went through to build your bookshelves (easy at first, then more complex, finishing with a satisfying last instruction) may possibly affect the

way you sequence pages in the layout of a magazine. The pure, utilitarian compositions of Theo van Doesburg help us to realize how affected we are by the concept of abstraction (Figure 1.33). The Vancouver Culture Guide by Ricky Castro and Brooke Mackay was clearly influenced by this type of stark abstraction. The clear structure and playful grid further interprets this abstract yet useful sensibility (Figure 1.34).



1.35 ART CHANTRY. Black and white offset poster for the music band Gang of Four.

Music also has a large influence. A reoccurring melody in a piece of classical music from 300 years ago may help a designer understand how to bring unity and rhythm to a series of printed pages with a repeating graphic element. Or, similarly, a designer's work may be energized by the influence of the punk rock movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The structure, the beat, and the melody of music can all have an impact on a design. Some of the designers profiled in this book talk directly about their influences. In all the work presented here, you will learn to discern the influences, and more important, you will learn to look to outside sources to inform your own design work.

The fliers by Art Chantry take an unusual approach to punk rock (Figure 1.35). Their tough photocopier aesthetic complemented the "street" environment of the fliers—taped and stapled to telephone poles and sides of buildings. The visual language also worked backwards: distressed graphics became an alternative language to counter the bland aesthetic conventions toward which design seemed to be heading during that time period, for example, uninventive grids and overuse of the typeface Helvetica.

► *In Practice:* László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), believed that a strong interrelationship exists between the fine and applied arts. In his 1947 book *Vision in Motion*, Moholy-Nagy wrote of design's broad scope: "There is design in organization of emotional experiences, in family life, in labor relations, in city planning, in working together as civilized human beings." A very basic, reductive approach was a way

to connect the various fields. Architecture, painting, photography, industrial and graphic design, and so forth, all shared an aesthetic based on a simple but inventive use of materials and production. A refinement of this approach translated into the clean, organized Swiss style of the 1950s.

“Designing is not a profession but an attitude.

—László Moholy-Nagy

THE NEW SCHOOL

1.36 SIEGEL & GALE: The New School visual identity.

The agitated, expressive spontaneity of punk rock still influences design today, an example of which is even seen in the visual identity for The New School in New York City by the design firm Siegel & Gale. Its graffiti aesthetic has an unexpected edge that reflects not only the urban environment of the school itself but also its socialist underpinnings (Figure 1.36).

In the excerpt by Warren Lehrer, many of the definitions, associations, and contradictions of design are fleshed out in poetic form. Its most poignant line is his last: graphic design can be the life you make it.

EXCERPT: Emptying the Spoon, Enlarging the Plate; Some Thoughts on Graphic Design Education by Warren Lehrer, *The Education of a Graphic Designer*, Second Edition, Allworth Press, 2005

graphic design is an art
 graphic design is a business
 graphic design is a profession
 graphic design is next week's garbage
 graphic design gives shape to culture
 graphic design gives shape to ideas
 graphic design gives shape to information
 graphic design gives shape to misinformation
 graphic design gives shape to feelings
 graphic design gives shape to stories
 graphic design gives shape to dreams and experiments
 graphic design gives shape to experience
 graphic design creates experience
 graphic design is the visualization of language
 graphic design facilitates dialogue
 graphic design boils things down like poetry
 graphic design diagrams teeming complexities
 graphic design grows out of local traditions
 graphic design drains local traditions
 graphic design is manifest through invention
 graphic design can help save lives
 graphic design can destroy lives

graphic design can pose questions and illuminate ambiguities
 graphic design can help transform consciousness
 graphic design can make the ordinary sacred
 graphic design can be used as a weapon
 graphic design can be cool, slick, objective
 graphic design can be personal, idiosyncratic, hot, deep, strange, lovely
 graphic design can be playful, funny, ironic, or biting
 graphic design can make the useless mandatory
 graphic design can make the unseen visible
 graphic design can make the incomprehensible clear
 graphic design can be condescending, misinformed, and insulting
 graphic design can be a flower blooming on a rainy day
 graphic design can help perpetuate stereotypes or dispel them
 graphic design can help facilitate democracy
 graphic design can help fake democracy and enable fascism
 graphic design is a powerful gift/responsibility
 graphic design can be a one- or a two-trick pony
 graphic design reveals the society that produces it
 graphic design can be the life you make it

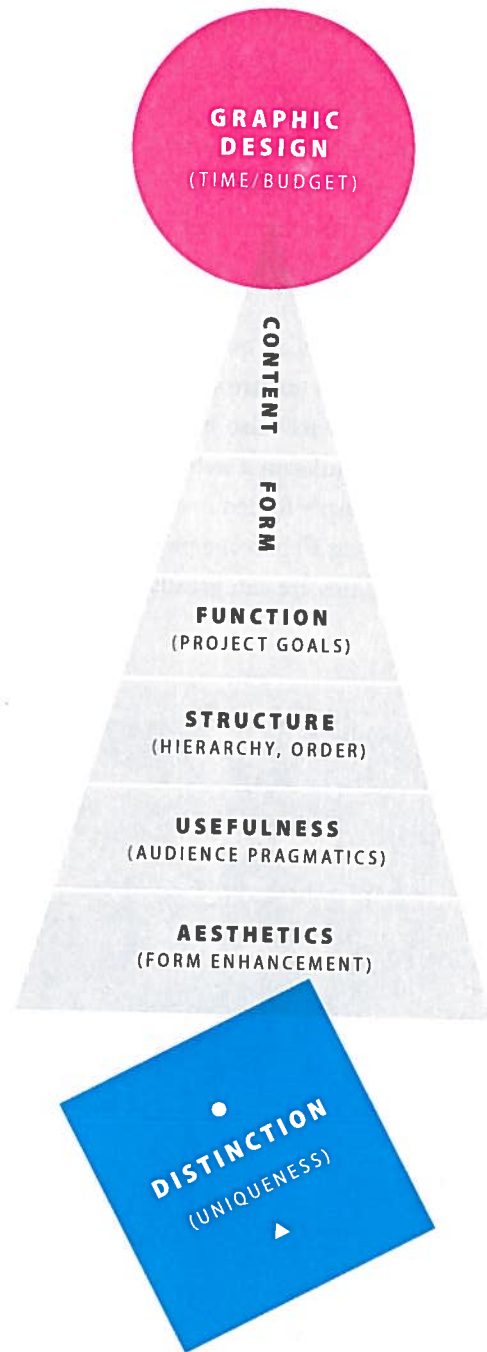


1.37 MICHAEL WORTHINGTON. SCI-Arc lecture series poster using an inflatable poster to draw attention.

The SCI-Arc lecture series poster demonstrates the production value of a design idea (Figure 1.37). The event hosts cross-disciplinary speakers that push the technological boundaries of architecture. In this spirit, the piece twists the idea of a traditional announcement. It is created with a **silkscreen**, a common printing method used to make posters, but one printed onto a clear, inflatable plastic poster. It must be pumped up to be read and, in so doing, transforms into a three-dimensional, toy-like object.

Knowledge of every possible medium is quite valuable to the graphic designer. How something looks in its texture and feel is built into the images a designer uses, but texture and feel also become part of the printing of a brochure or the functioning links on a website. These subtle finishes can make or break a design. A crisply folded brochure or a website's seamless flow through efficient coding all become part of the design process, too. Knowing what the possibilities are can greatly expand your creativity.





1.38 Elements of a successful design solution.

“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.”
—Albert Einstein

The Nuts and Bolts of Graphic Design

The design process is typically linear. Steps include the initial brief, research, roughs, and so on. Along the way are basic components (or elements) that designers must consider and factor into every distinctive design solution (Figure 1.38).

Components of a Successful Design Solution

Time/Budget: The most concrete of graphic design components, making graphic design an applied art with constraints.

Content: What needs to be included in the communication being made.

Form: The shape a design takes based on the content it needs to convey.

Function: The basic determination of a project's goals. For example, a promotion for an event will have, as its main objective, to convince people to attend. Function defines the direction a design will take.

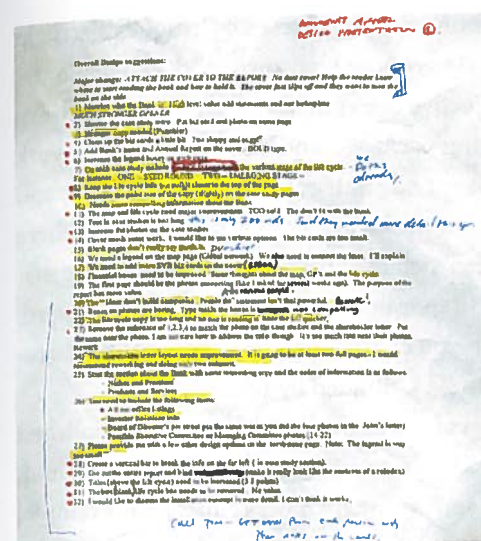
Structure: A hierarchy to the audience: what to see and read first, then second, third, and so on. Every design benefits from some kind of structure or planned order to convey information.

Usefulness: A practical consideration to make the design useful for the audience. Usefulness can include many aspects. For example, an edgy aesthetic with distressed type might be useful for a music magazine, but not for instructions on a medicine bottle, which must be in a clear, easily readable typeface.

Aesthetics: The way a design looks, which can attract or repel the audience. Aesthetics is tied to usefulness in this way. An environmentally friendly product that is packaged with a cold, industrial aesthetic isn't going to connect as logically as one that is packaged using earth tones and organic shapes. A design that is tough or sweet, mundane or exciting, should be made with the subject and audience in mind. Remember, though, that aesthetics can be a matter of taste and are influenced by cultural norms. You need to know your audience and the context in which your work will be seen.

Distinction: The ways a design can be different from all that is around it. We are bombarded with all sorts of messages and images. Your design must somehow stand out. If a wall full of posters shouts, a unique quality might be achieved by one that whispers. The ephemeral nature of graphic design offers the possibility for distinction to be made by what a design does (it is functional, structured, useful, and aesthetic), but also by what it doesn't do.

► **In Practice:** There is a joke within the profession in which a typical client is always presented with three options—a kind of a triangle, as it were. The options are as follows: a project can be done quickly, well, and cheaply, but the client can pick only two of those options. The combinations are as follows: (1) design made quickly and at a high quality, but at a cost that will not be cheap, (2) design made quickly and cheaply, but not of high quality, and (3) design with high quality and made cheaply, but done slowly.



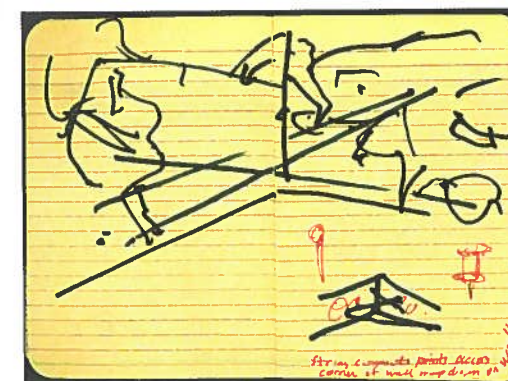
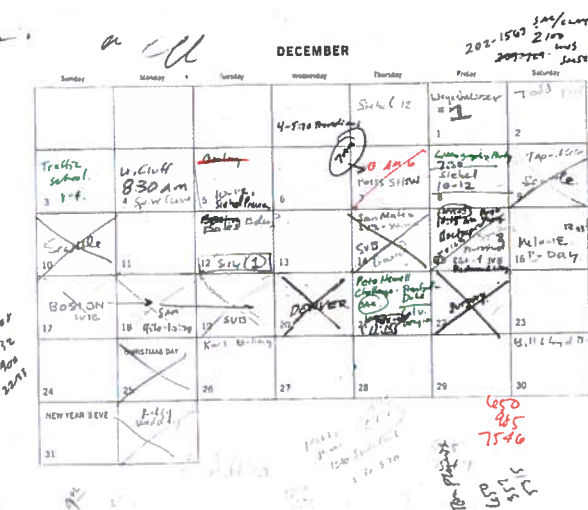
1.39 Client brief outlining project goals, coordinates, and suggestions.

1.40 Schedule notating what is due, and when.

The Graphic Design Process

Getting a **design brief** from a client is generally the first step in the design process (Figure 1.39). A brief might include a rough outline about the company initiating the project, its history and mission, the goals of the company's communication, a target audience (age, sex, and social levels), and the general requirements (media, budget, and time frame).

Once the client has submitted the brief, the designer creates a schedule (Figure 1.40). If no brief exists, then the designers might want to create one. This information becomes part of the project's research (for more details on research, see Chapter 4). **Research** helps determine what the project is really about and where it can go. A company's competitors—along with any of their solutions designed along the same terms—help a designer get started. Knowing design history, how past designers have approached similar communication problems, becomes very valuable at this early stage of the process.



1.41 Thumbnail sketches indicating ideas, in this case, creating a map of company locations as a three-dimensional construction that can be photographed.

When a designer has done enough research and starts to feel comfortable with the knowledge attained, she begins developing ideas. Designers record these ideas as small drawings, known as **thumbnails**, on paper or on a computer screen. Here the designer begins to indicate words and images with the simplest lines and shapes (Figure 1.41). The point is to generate as many thumbnails as possible and to do it as quickly as they occur so they aren't forgotten. Many idea-generating techniques come into play during this phase of the process (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of such techniques).

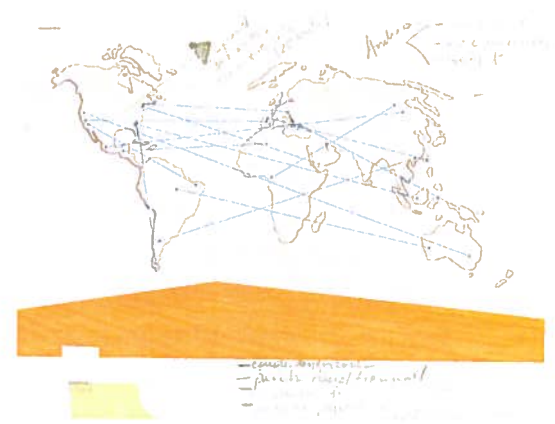
Selecting from the thumbnails, designers then enlarge a few of the best ideas into rough approximations of the design (Figure 1.42). These **roughs** help determine how the design ideas can be better visualized and further refined. Designers present these roughs to their colleagues in a session called a **critique**. A critique is an evaluation in which a professor, classmates, and, when you're working at a design firm, your manager

How to Be Critiqued

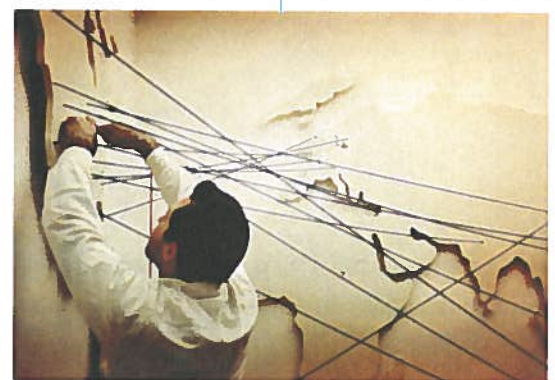
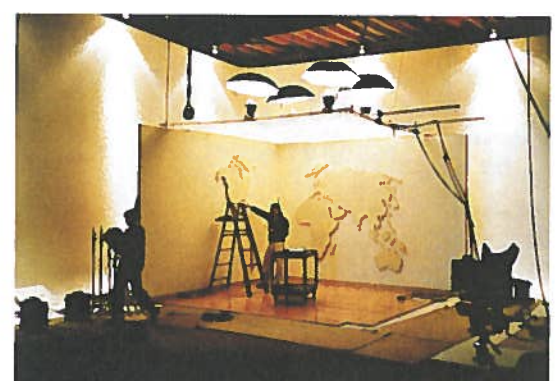
by Randall Hoyt, associate professor of communication design, University of Connecticut

The critique process is essential in graphic design education, but we forget how much of a skill it actually is. Design students must be prepared to take advantage of the experience. Following are twelve steps to a healthy and memorable critique:

- 1 Get some sleep: Preferably a good night's sleep, but no fewer than three hours.
- 2 Look sharp: Engage in the rituals of hygiene. Take a shower and put on clean clothes free of tears and stains. How your ideas are perceived is in direct relation to how you are perceived. Dress accordingly.
- 3 Bring some work: If you don't have work, then come anyway and listen. When it is your turn, respectfully decline.
- 4 Shut up and listen: Give a brief introduction to your work, and then hear what others have to say.
- 5 Rehearse your introduction: Write it down, but don't read it. Spend no more than 2–4 minutes explaining it.
- 6 Present your work well: Work should be well crafted, clean, and neat. Keep process materials well preserved and organized.
- 7 Know your issues: Facilitate your critique by asking for commentary on specific issues in your introduction. But don't direct it—allow for a fresh response from your reviewers.
- 8 Don't critique yourself or your work: Give yourself a break and let everyone else do what they came to do.
- 9 Don't be defensive: You can explain confusing aspects of the work when necessary, but do not try to convince people that your way is correct. Let the discussion run its course—listen to all sides.
- 10 Take notes (or have someone take them for you): Critiques go quickly, so record what happens. They are an invaluable resource.
- 11 Don't take it personally: Try to remain detached while your work is discussed. If you think your critique was too personal, talk about it with your instructor outside of class.
- 12 Thank everyone: Appreciate the effort of those involved and thank everyone for their time in discussing your work.



1.42 A “rough” example of an actual map sketched in against the corner of a wall.



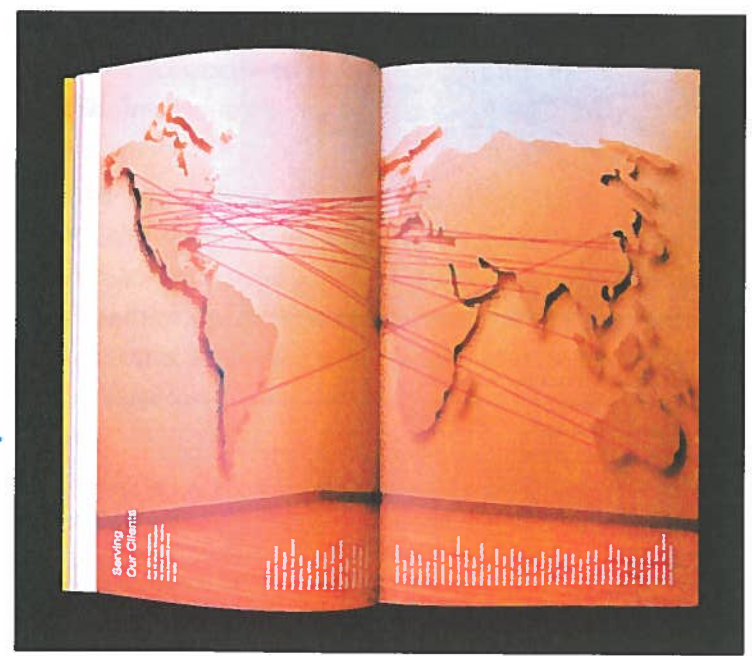
1.43 A studio setup where the map construction is made ready for photographing.

and coworkers, review the solutions you have created. Critiques also help you to clarify ideas; asking questions about your own work can begin the process. For example: Is the objective being met? Is the concept communicating? How is the design being packaged and does the solution work within the company's brand image and strategy? Is the form creative and eye-catching? Is the overall design pushed as far as it can go, or is there another level that the concept can step toward? The answers and the discussion that follow these kinds of questions will help you move forward. Ultimately, the critique will help you clarify ideas and recharge your creativity. (See the Worklist: How to Be Critiqued by Randall Hoyt.)

Final **comprehensives**, or **comps** as they're called, are the polished and finished versions of roughs. Comps are prepared for the client and, therefore, typography, imagery, and layout are more refined. For example, a poster should be scaled to 100 percent to realize its full effect, a website presented in the context of a computer screen, a package's label wrapped around its container—all with the intention of bringing the comp as close to the real thing as possible.

At the **presentation**, the designer shows the finished comp to the client, explaining the ideas behind the solution and going over the entire concept. Designers do their best to make sure the client feels that the primary goals are being met, with the design balancing creativity, integrity, clear communication, and budget.

If approved, the design goes into actual **production** in whatever media it is intended. At this point, the designer or design team needs to prepare the final artwork (Figure 1.43), shoot the photographs, edit the text, and assemble all the parts into the design's composition (Figure 1.44).



1.44 MICHAEL BRALEY. Final design as it appears in the printed brochure.

Brand (p. 13)

Comprehensives (comps)
(p. 30)

Copywriting (p. 14)

Critique (p. 29)

Design brief (p. 29)

Graphic design (p. 6)

Illustration (p. 14)

Logo (p. 13)

Presentation (p. 30)

Production (p. 30)

Research (p. 29)

Roughs (p. 29)

Signage (p. 12)

Silkscreen (p. 27)

Thumbnails (p. 29)

In Perspective

There are many areas of graphic design, but whatever the final form, the designer's job includes assembling words, numbers, and images into a coherent whole. Thinking is required in all the processes of design. This discipline is not an intuitive art; it is an art of rationality combined with creativity. The designer combines all the elements into a cohesive whole, giving a unique identity to a product, service, or company, just as one's manner of speech, facial features, or the clothes one wears shout THIS IS ME!

As ideas, aesthetics, and digital technology merge more cohesively, the understanding of graphic design as an applied art will change, too. This energized path is just starting to emerge in this early part of the twenty-first century. It includes design solutions that are printed, yet animate, that are projected, but interact with the user. As you will see in the following chapter on the history of graphic design, design has been vital to our culture and to the world. Its goal for the future remains the same—to create communications that are meaningful.



EXERCISES AND PROJECTS

✓ [Review] additional Exercises and Projects
on myartslab.com

Exercise 1 (Categories of Design): Research two categories of graphic design, for example, package design and motion design. Then find at least two design firms that specialize in those areas. Use the Internet, magazines, books, and design competition annuals in your search. Create a five-minute presentation reviewing the two categories, the two firms, their locations, and how they approach their projects. Include the skills you think are especially necessary for each of the two design categories.

Exercise 2 (Design Ideas): Find an example of graphic design that you think is terrible. It can take any form—an advertisement, website, motion design, package, and so on. What is the basis for your choice? What is the design lacking? Next, choose an example of graphic design that you think is fabulous. What makes it so successful? Present both to the class and give the reasons for your choices.

Project 1 (T-Shirt Design): Design a T-shirt using both text and image that together define graphic design for you. The text must include the words “graphic design is.” Begin by researching at libraries, bookstores, and the Internet. Consider the audience and the context in which the shirt will exist. When you're ready, begin sketching until you have two or three ideas that you can refine further. Think in terms of symbols—not illustration. Reach beyond the most obvious and try bringing a related activity or subject to help paraphrase what design is, for example: “Graphic design is like a...” “Creating graphics is just like...” Consider iconography, various typefaces, typography, scale, and punctuation. There are no restrictions

Project 1 GENELLE SALAZAR.
T-shirt design with the state-
ment: GRAPHIC DESIGN IS
ALL WORK & NO PLAY.



on color or style of shirt. Use the back of the shirt only if it works with your idea. For the finished piece, either present a flat 11" × 17" laser print-out with the design located within a shirt, or use a real shirt (instructor's preference).



Things to Consider: Be sure to consider the social aspect of a T-shirt. It has to be something wearable, but also fun to look at. Also think about how the design might be produced—screen printing or heat press.

Project 2 (Design Emergency): Find a business or organization and visually document as much as you can about it: its visual identity, location, advertising, collateral materials, and web presence. Consider something fun and treat your response as a kind of design emergency in how you believe design can help them succeed. Make your presentation on two full-color poster-sized sheets (18" × 24"). Include as much supplemental information as you feel necessary, including charts, categories, a list of their products or services, their context in a store, their competition, and anything else that seems relevant.



Things to Consider: Be as outrageous as you can be in your choice of subject and in the presentation design you make.

Project 2 ABBY HIRSH.
Student project using data
to create a visual document
that promotes a bagel
store's many variations.

