

This is the 2011 RISD Graphic Design MFA Thesis Show.

**This is the catalogue
of the show, which is
also the show. This
is the description of the
show, which is also
the name of the show.**

**Graphic design functions through its distribution
and circulation. See the show in the gallery,
take it to consider in the comfort of your own
home, and view it virtually, virtually anywhere,
at theirloftheshow.com.**

This is the 2011 RISD Graphic Design MFA Thesis Show.

This is the collective effort of 15 designers, the result of five months of research, conception, and production.

The Graphic Design Thesis Show is a group exhibition presented as part of the Rhode Island School of Design’s annual Graduate Thesis Exhibition. The Graduate Exhibition shows the work of Masters’ candidates from 16 disciplines in a temporary gallery space installed in the exhibition halls of the Rhode Island Convention Center.

Our work exists in three challenging contexts: in the space of the gallery; in the expanse of the convention center; and in relation to each other’s work and the work of other designers and artists. How do we show graphic design in the gallery setting, and how can we make a coherent show from the work of 15 designers?

Beginning in January, we met regularly as a class to develop the concept and content of the show. We pondered how our show could support the graduate exhibition by creating spaces for observation and dialogue. We experimented with ways to make the show interactive and distributive. We developed strategies to tackle the extreme scale of the convention hall. Throughout, we discussed how to exhibit our very different bodies of work as a single, collective gesture.

Fluid working groups developed ideas which were fully explored through research into precedents, physical models, digital renderings, materials research, and budget analysis. A studio led by critic Rob Giampietro offered a forum to critique concepts and discuss strategies around the exhibition of graphic design.

During the course of the studio, we talked with Jon Sueda (CCA/Wattis) and James Langdon (East Side Projects), two designers who have recently curated shows of graphic design in a fresh and critical manner. We drew inspiration from the course reading *Support Structures*, an investigation of platforms of interaction

between art, design, institutions, and space. We were particularly drawn to Antoni Muntadas’s *Exhibition* which strips the display conventions of the gallery of content, reframing the gallery space and exposing it as a system of display.

The show draws further inspiration from other designers engaged in the critical exhibition of graphic design, including Peter Bil’ak’s *Graphic Design in the White Cube* (2006) and Julia Born’s *Title of the Show* (2009) as well as the cover of XTC’s *Go 2* album by Hipgnosis (1978). In their work, these designers expose the systems of the conceptualization, production, exhibition, and distribution of graphic design.

This is the catalogue of the show, which is also the show. It is a collection of work from our individual thesis investigations; an index of the physical gallery space; and a record of our collaborative process.

The show is a unified work that extends beyond the exhibition space and hinges on its distribution. The work is not complete until it enters circulation.

The 2011 RISD Graphic Design MFA Thesis Show exists on the walls of the gallery, in frames and on screen, on pedestals and under glass. It is in your hands and on the internet. Graphic design lives in all of these spaces, and it thrives in its distribution and circulation.

—RISD Graphic Design MFA Class of 2011

Salem Al-Qassimi, Jane Androski, Marc Choi, Hope Chu, Eliza Fitzhugh, Jessica Greenfield, Lynn Kiang, Seung Chan Lim, Sara Raffo, Benjamin Shaykin, Mat Stevens, Erika Tarte, Dimitry Tetin, Olivia Verdugo, Emily Sara Wilson

theurloftheshow.com

We would like to thank the following people for their support and help during the creation of the 2011 RISD Graphic Design MFA Thesis Show: Bethany Johns; Thomas Wedell; Anne West; Hammett Nurosi; Rob Giampietro; Mark Moscone; Bill Newkirk; Douglass Scott; Linco Printing; Jon Sueda; James Langdon; Prem Krishnamurthy; Alan Rapp; John Caserta; David Reinfurt; Eva Laporte; Julie Talbutt; Chloe Rein; Droste Cocoa; our studiomates, who tolerated our thesis antics with grace; and our friends, advisors, families, and loved ones.

The 2011 RISD Graphic Design MFA Thesis Show was designed by the RISD Graphic Design MFA Class of 2011. Typeset in Franklin Gothic. Printed by Linco Printing. Edition of 5,000. © 2011 RISD Graphic Design.

Salem Al-Qassimi

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Arabish

The cultural identity of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is undergoing profound changes. The increase in population and the influx of foreign cultures have led to an identity transformation. The country’s traditional costumes, habits, and cultures are adapting and evolving. This change is directly influenced by the Western culture, especially the mainstream American culture.

The younger generation of Emiratis behave in a hybrid of the American and the Emirati cultures. They speak in English and Arabic simultaneously. Their clothes have become a fusion, mixing traditional Emirati costumes with Western accessories.

As a citizen of the UAE, I am experiencing a major identity confusion. I studied at the Sharjah American International School, then the American University of Sharjah, and now at the Rhode Island School of Design. I am constantly being pulled back and forth between the American and the Emirati cultures. I am torn between my Emirati and Islamic traditions, and my American lifestyle and education. I—like many other Emiratis—was in denial that we are creating a new identity for ourselves. I was afraid to accept the cultural transformation taking place. Today, I view this transformation as an inevitable process that should be embraced. I believe that the UAE is not losing its identity; it is creating a new one. This new identity is Arabish.

Arabish is a combination of the words Arabic and English. It is commonly known as Arabic pronunciation with English written characters. However, Arabish has become more than just typing using Latin characters. It is the new identity of the UAE. It is a way of speaking and a way of life, especially for the mainstream Emirati youth.

In my thesis, I look into the past and the present of the UAE. I use graphic design as a vehicle to help me—and others—better understand the UAE’s Arabish culture. I investigate its syntactic language and its appearance. My process allows me to document, comment, and perhaps even influence the UAE identity.



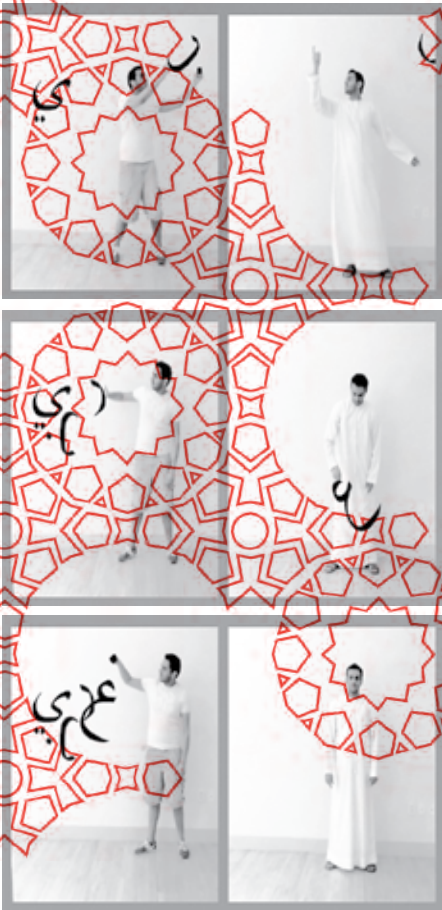
Transformation: The UAE’s Landscape, Then and Now

2011, transformation.salqass.com

Since the beginning of this millennium, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) landscape

witnessed an unprecedented transformation. Within just a few years, empty plots of land were built into the best, biggest, and tallest. Dubai—one of the seven emirates of the UAE—has been dubbed the place where dreams were built on sand. In 2006, *Gulfnews* published an article stating that according to the organizers of the Connex construction machinery exhibition, about 24 percent of the world’s construction cranes were operating in Dubai alone—about 30,000 of the world’s 125,000 construction cranes.

In this project, I document the dramatic transformation of the UAE’s landscape in a few years. I created a website that shows satellite images of different construction sites and how they have been transformed.

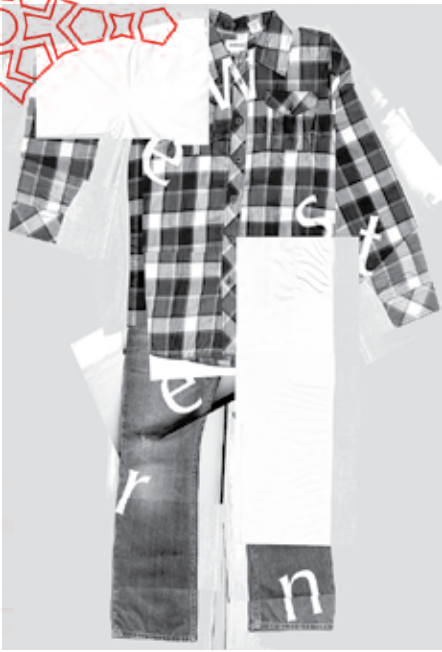


3arabi to ’3arbi (Arab to Westerner)

2010, video, 51 sec.

The Arabic alphabet is filled with diacritical marks. The removal or addition of any mark to a word may change its entire meaning and pronunciation. Adding a dot on the first letter of the word *Arab* will change its meaning to *Westerner*. The diacritical dot replaces the first letter with another letter, therefore changing its meaning.

This is me in transition, read right to left, from a 3arabi (Arab) to a ’3arabi (Westerner) by simply adding a dot.

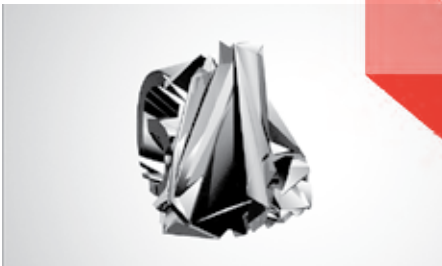


Hybrid Dress

2010, poster, 36 × 48 in.

This series of posters represent the rapid transformation of the UAE culture into a hybrid of Emirati and western.

A kandora (the UAE traditional costume), shirt, and jeans were scanned on a tabloid sized scanner, overlaid on top of each other, and re-presented by adding and removing layers of the Emirati and Western costumes. The 3 posters illustrate a cultural transition into Arabish. The Arabic text reads *Arab*, and the English text reads *Western*.



Automated Arabish Hybrids

2011, animation, 45 sec.

Arabish has become a popular way of communicating among the young generation in

the UAE. It was first used as a way for Arabic speakers to communicate when ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) was the only language used in SMS and internet platforms. Arabic speakers had to adopt Latin graphemes to be able to communicate. Numerals were used to replace Arabic phonetics not found in the Latin alphabet. Although many other non-Latin scripts were communicated in ASCII using Latin characters (like Japanese, Chinese, and Greek), Arabic users continue to use Arabish as a way to communicate even on UNICODE devices.

In this 45 second animation, Arabic letters and their English numeral replacements were created to morph into one another. The idea was to allow the animation software to render complex hybrid forms—out of the two characters—automatically without my interference.

Marc Choi

www.marcchoi.com

Unmonumental

An official narrative is still very much inscribed in the American cultural landscape. While significant steps towards a more inclusive experience have been made, ideological constraints continue to frame our collective understanding of what constitutes American identity. My work, as a response to this condition, seeks to shift perspectives and offers an extended look through fixed narratives, rendering them unmonumental. By claiming the role of outsider, I present an alternate vantage point. Definitive institutions such as church, state, and history are disrupted, questioned, and re-understood. My work engages what it means to look another way—to look around corners and see a fuller picture.



Our Daily News

2010, print, 12 × 22 in.

An authoritative voice is exemplified in *Our Daily News*, which examines the relationship between religion and government in America. Within the innocuous form, readers encounter a schedule of Congressional Bible study events, a photo of President Obama during a prayer meeting in the Oval Office, and various testimonials from U.S. leaders affirming their belief in America’s “Judeo-Christian roots and faith.” By recontextualizing the content—much of it pulled directly from Congressional websites—I reveal the tenuous barrier between mainstream religious ideology and its influence on American politics and policy.

(Marc Choi cont'd.)



Site Seeing

2010, print, 6×4.25 in.

During a visit to Austin in 2010, I selected five sites based on their recurrence in souvenir postcards. Repurposed as guides for navigating the city, I used the postcards as orienting points, allowing me to discover each site and experience it from its prescribed point of view. In comparing the relationship between what we see and what we are instructed to see, this project reveals how a shift in perspective can inform our experience of place. When viewed simultaneously, the prescribed postcard view resonates with artifice, while the “authentic” experience at hand is rendered less monumental.



Stars & Stripes

2011, video, 1:40 min.

Stars & Stripes begins with a man's voice announcing, “And now, our national anthem.” Immediately, the viewer is bombarded with the *Star Spangled Banner* and a cacophony of patriotic images. For this piece, I used vintage TV station sign-off reels from the 1980s and juxtaposed them within a single video. Each reel, containing its own cache of images and its own version of the national anthem, aligns—or misaligns—with the others. The warbling music and symbolic imagery reveals an overall narrative of zealous, but unsteady patriotism. As the disharmonious music winds down four separate times, the video concludes with iconic test patterns and TV static, alluding to the end of an ideological view of America.



Last Train Home

2011, poster, 24×36 in.

Poster for RISD Respond/Design's Sustainability Film Series' screening of *Last Train Home*, a film documenting China's emergence into modernism and the global economy, and the impact that has on millions of migrant workers' lives and families.



The U.S. Capitol

2011, observation

Photos from a series exploring cultural monuments and institutional reverence.



The Washington Monument

2011, observation

Photos from a series exploring cultural monuments and institutional reverence.

Hope Chu

www.hopechu.com

To project power and create value is to imagine a world and convince others of its reality. As producers of commercial and cultural messaging—channels of reality-making—graphic designers have the potential to reflect and redefine our social experience. To make sense of this production, my thesis looks at the leavings of cultural and commercial production, focusing on the visual language and rhetoric of American politics and culture.

Signs

2011

The 2011 RISD MFA Graphic Design Thesis Show is set in Franklin Gothic, designed around 1902 by Morris Benton Fuller. The typeface was chosen for its readability, balance, and unobtrusive nature. One of the most widely-used typefaces, Franklin Gothic is rumored to be named for Benjamin Franklin.

Himself a typographer, printer, and publisher, Franklin was also a proponent for the use of paper currency over gold and silver coins. He argued that paper currency would encourage trade in the American colonies, which was often held up by disruptions in the flow of metal coinage.

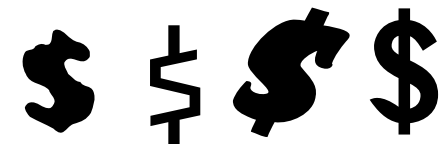
Franklin recognized that paper notes would be much easier to manufacture and circulate than metal coins.

Circulation is the movement of agents through a system. The circulation of currency, through exchange, gives it value. Money is only of value if someone is willing to accept it in exchange for something else of value. Even a hundred dollar bill is worth nothing if no one else believes in its value.

Since 1928, Benjamin Franklin's portrait has appeared on the hundred dollar bill, and is as iconic as George Washington's on the one dollar bill. In the slang of the late 20th century, the term “Benjamins” was used to refer both to \$100 bills and to large amounts of cash in general.



Signs for Rich People (*Extra, Glamour, Las Vegas Fabulous, Luxury Diamond, Luxury Platinum, Monaco, Numbers Dividend, Numbers Premium, Onyx, Palace Script, Park Avenue, Poolhouse, Prestige Elite, ScalaJewel Diamond, ScalaJewel Pearl*)



Signs for the Rest of Us (*Poorhouse, Reality-Hard, Sale, Truth-Heavy*)

A sign is a thing that stands for something else. The dollar sign (\$) stands for the currency (which itself—as Franklin recognized—is a store of wealth and medium of exchange, a stand-in for goods and services in trade), but has also come to represent many other ideas about wealth, power, and American patriotism.

The origins of \$ are unknown. Many theories circulating center around the legacy of Spanish and British currencies in the American colonies. \$ is said to be based on the abbreviation for the Spanish peso (Ps); pieces of eight (1/8/); and the British shilling (s/).

A popular and patriotic, though less likely, theory is that \$ originated from the abbreviation of *United States*—the imposition of the U over the S yields a mark similar to the dollar sign with two vertical strokes. This opens the dollar sign to interpretation as a symbol of the U.S. and its economic and patriotic ideals.

Currency signs give economic meaning and value to numbers—without a dollar, euro, or other currency sign, the number has no economic meaning or exchange value. Some currency signs are used in multiple countries, often pointing to colonial histories. The dollar sign is used to assign value in current and former American holdings, former British colonies,

(Hope Chu cont'd.)

many Caribbean and South American countries, and some African countries.

\$ also lends new meaning to language when it is used as a substitute for the letter S, often in proper nouns or the word “dollars” itself, emphasizing that the person or thing named possesses (or wishes to possess) wealth.

\$ is a sign laden with multiple interpretations, and its meaning changes as it is set next to different elements. By virtue of its association with money, \$ gives value whenever it is used. It is most often used to denote a unit of currency with graphic clarity, but what other meaning is imbedded in these signs and the typefaces for which they are designed?

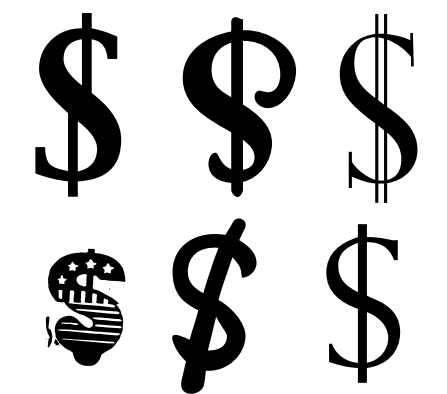
Sources for this article are available on the website of the 2011 RISD Graphic Design MFA Thesis Show.



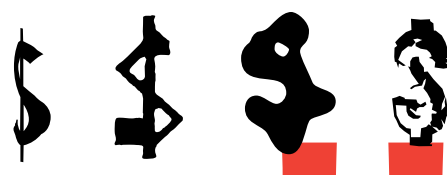
Signs of Boom Times (*Braggadocio, Engravers MT, Firenze, Photina MT, Stilla LT, Vino Bianco ITC, Zapata*)



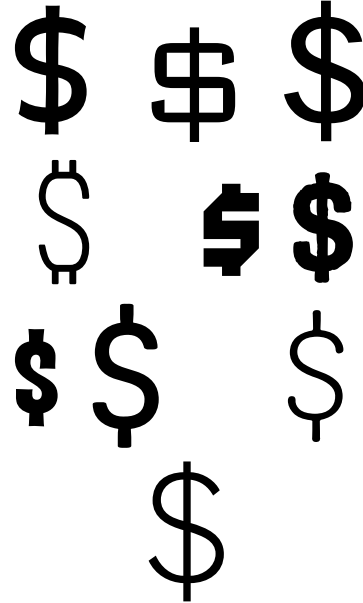
Signs of Lean Times (*Brandon Grotesque Thin, Euniverse, Grotesque MT, National Thin, Politica Thin, Rockwell Light*)



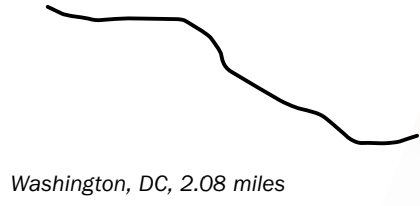
Signs of an Unstable Currency (*Capitals, Milk Script, Mona Lisa Solid ITC, Nuthouse, Oxmox, Weiss Std*)



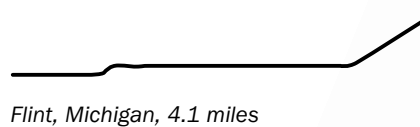
Signs of a Financial Crisis (*Angst-Mix, Assuri, Dirty-Two, Panic ITC*)



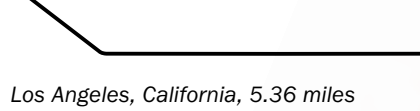
Self-Referential Signs (*Balance, Bank Gothic, Basic Commercial, Donator, FF Scratch, Klepto ITC, Las Vegas Jackpot, Numbers Greenback, Numbers Revenue, Trade Gothic*)



Washington, DC, 2.08 miles



Flint, Michigan, 4.1 miles



Los Angeles, California, 5.36 miles



Boston, Massachusetts, 0.33 miles

Martin Luther King, Jr

2010, book, 8×5 in., 90 pages

A typology of streets named in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Information about the length of the street, the African American population of the county, and the 2008 presidential voting results of the district is also included. The project asks what the effect (or non-effect) is of honoring this historical figure in such a prosaic manner and with such proliferation.

Eliza Fitzhugh

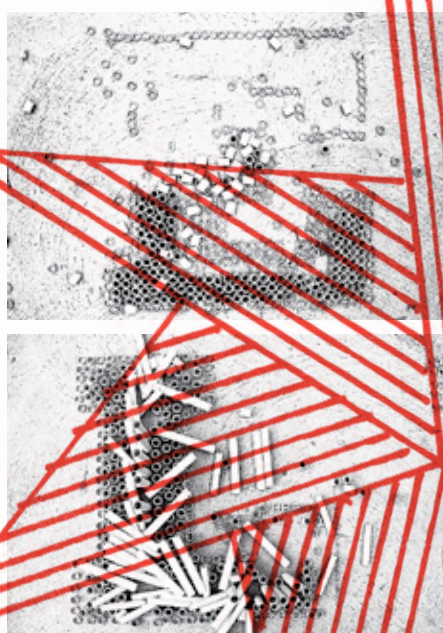
www.elizafitzhugh.com

Can a culture that bursts with information, increased speed, over-stimulation and no longer favors prolonged looking learn how to slow down, look harder, and linger longer? Can we, as the installation artist Robert Irwin describes, learn to engage in an act of perceiving ourselves perceiving?

My thesis investigates how perception and attention can be facilitated. The projects explore the art historical idea of close looking and embody an apparent intimacy and effort.

My thesis examines these concepts through book form, environmental typography, typeface design, and screen-based animations. All of my projects aim to point out the cluttered, uncover the unnoticed, and slow the eye.

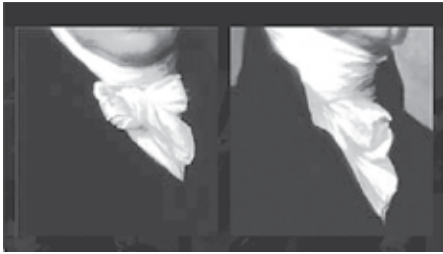
In my thesis I utilize the language of graphic design to address issues of distraction, deliberate looking, and the rewards of pause and reflection.



Linger

2011, environmental typography

A temporary typographic intervention in the environment. The word *linger* was constructed out of hundreds of small, yellow, half-inch cardboard tubes of two different heights. The project took a total of five hours to create. It was installed in a large breezeway situated outside of an art gallery that is considered to be a path to somewhere else. People walking by stopped and watched as I laboriously placed the tubes in their precise patterns. By observing my obsessive making, the viewers began to give the word *linger* greater attention and weight.

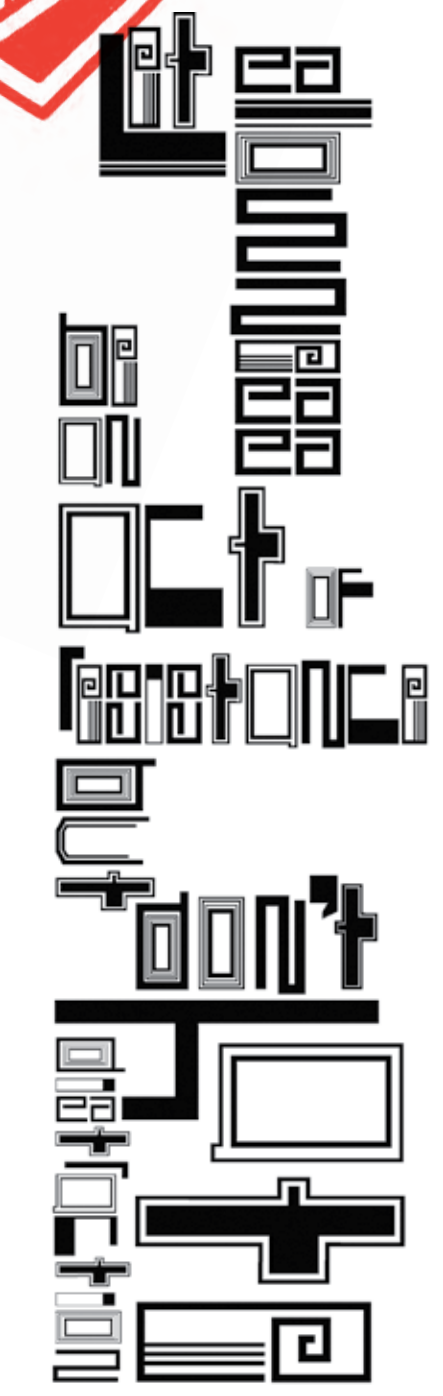


RE:President

2010, screen-based interactive display collaboration with Hope Chu

RE:President is a screen-based interactive design that examines the concept of representation in portraiture. The project compares the official portraits of the United States Presidents based on chronology, pose, features, historical events, and the subjective category of “Hot” or “Not”.

The touch-screen design is configured in a simple grid layout. Its organization and thematic filters allow the user to create visual comparisons between the components of the presidential portraits. Through the design's deliberate omission and selection of details, the user is presented with limited information and visuals on which to focus. The gridded images ask the user to compare and see small portions of the portraits as opposed to their entirety, which helps facilitate thoughtful and engaged analysis. Through this screen-based interface, the user has the ability to physically engage with, and navigate through, the information in a unique, self-curated experience.



Pandora

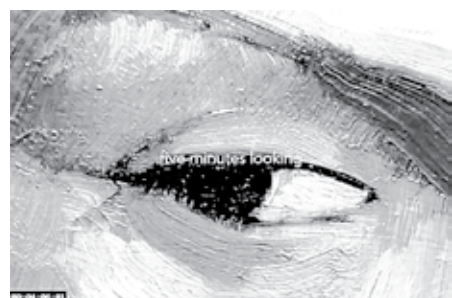
2011, typeface

Pandora is a decorative, geometric, modern typeface inspired by the Egyptian hieroglyph of the phonetic sound ‘h’, (also known as ‘country shelter’). The typeface's closely spaced letters and the relationship between the different line weights prevents the eye from easily deciphering

(Eliza Fitzhugh cont'd.)



one letterform from the next. *Pandora* is an intentionally difficult typeface to read. It demands time and focus, and forces its readers to slow down and invest in what they are reading. The reader has to put in effort in order to unlock the text's meaning. They have to study and linger.



Visual Memory

2010, video, 1:30 min.

The typical museum visitor pauses in front of a painting for ten seconds, but what would happen if they stayed longer? *Visual Memory* questions the lasting affects of prolonged looking. What can we remember about a piece of art after sitting and staring at it for five minutes, for thirty, for an hour? What are the formal qualities of the image that stick with us? To investigate these questions, I sat in front of the painting *Portrait of Madeleine Bernard* by Louis Anquetin at the RISD Museum for five minutes without looking away. I forced myself to devote my undivided attention to this singular painting. My eyes gravitated to her eyes, the small patch of red paint on her lip, the bow on her sweater, and her arched eyebrows. Two hours later, back in my studio, I drew the painting from memory. While looking at the painting in the museum, not only was I training my eyes and my mind to study, focus, and retain, I was also creating reflective space for pause and reflection. By ignoring all of the other visual material in the room, I generously gave my entire self to this one image, one set of questions, one set of details. Omission allowed me to see more.

Jessica Greenfield

www.jessgreenfield.com

As graphic design becomes increasingly digitized, what role does the human body play as a tool for mark-making? While digitization can easily distance the body from the design process, I look for ways to re-engage the body by combining analog and digital tools. In his book *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan described technology as an extension of our own bodies, much as clothes extend the skin and a bicycle extends the foot. I embrace the innate gestural capacity of my own body to create work that acts as a visual artifact of its own history. An animated typeface reveals itself being drawn. Energetic abstract pencil sketches track my movements at the computer through a pencil attached to my mouse. A letterpress book offers a transparent look at the printing process by exposing its structural supports.

I came to graphic design as a printmaker, comfortable with physical processes that engaged my whole body. Now I look for ways to celebrate the tactile, combining the physical and the digital to retain a flexibility in my design process and manifest designs in their most appropriate forms.

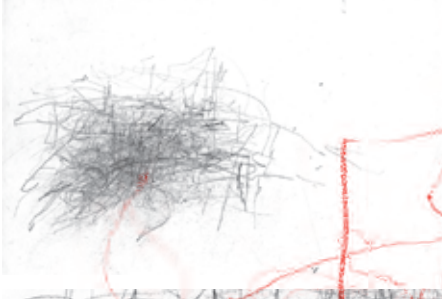
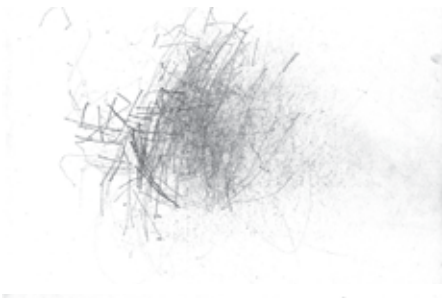
handwritten
intersection of digital and analog
gestural typography

Ober

2010, typeface

Ober, a typeface inspired by a handwritten letter from 1876, embodies the gestural quality of late nineteenth century American penmanship while acknowledging the constraints of the computer screen.

Ober visually captures the gestural forms created by the author's hand. However, rather than remaining completely faithful to the original sample in the tradition of revival typefaces, *Ober* is a true hybrid. The digital interpretation improves legibility by lessening the slant, opening the counter forms, lowering the contrast and dramatically raising the x-height. The typeface visualizes the motion of the human arm present in the original sample while allowing that motion to be appreciated in a digital environment.



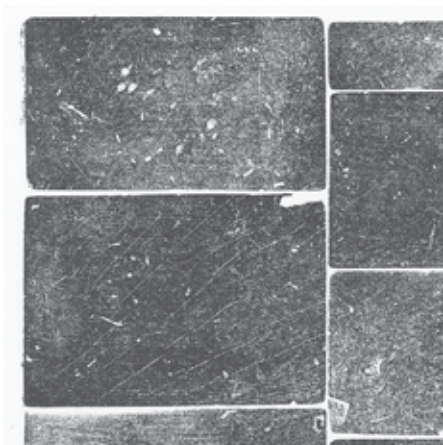
Hidden Gestures

2011, pencil on paper, 14 x 17 in.

Hidden Gestures is a collection of drawings showcasing the unseen gestures of designers in a digital design process. Several designers each agreed to use a special mouse outfitted with an attached pencil. As they interacted with virtual elements on the screen, the pencil recorded their movements as physical marks on paper.

Digitization in graphic design has distanced the body from the design process, creating a system in which the movements of the designer become separated from the final visual form. By creating a physical artifact, the work brings attention to the involvement of the body and highlights the beauty inherent in these banal gestures while making evident their strained relationship to the final design piece.

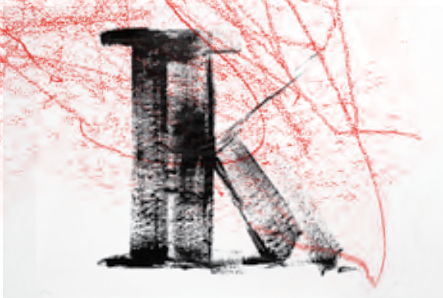
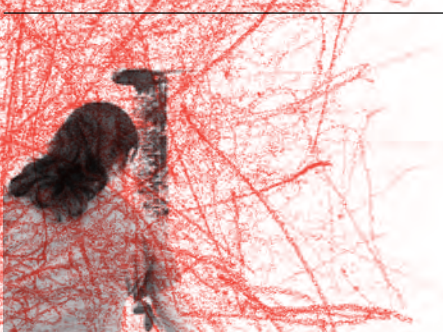
Images from top to bottom: the mouse; Eliza designing a typeface; Hope designing a poster; Jessica conducting research on the internet.



Material Intimacy

2011, letterpressed book, 12 x 12 in.

The letterpress printing process requires a deep understanding of its many materials as well as the use of the whole body. *Material Intimacy* explores the intimate relationship that exists between the printer and her tools through a study of textures, intertwining printed wood-grain from type and furniture with impressions of skin.



Body Type

2011, house paint on craft paper, animated typeface

Body Type is an experiment in designing a typeface at a very large scale, to create a visual link between the letterforms and the innate gestures of the human body. I attempted to redraw Bodoni Poster from memory with black and white house paint, each character four feet in height. The radius of the O was directly related to the length of my arm; the curve of the J originated from the twist of my wrist. I have found that many years of figure drawing have deeply influenced the way I now draw letters, a relationship made even clearer by designing a typeface at this scale.

Photographs taken throughout the process reveal the evolution of each character. The occasional image containing my

(Jessica Greenfield cont'd.)



body helps to illustrate the connection of the forms to my gestures. I compiled the images for each letter into short animations, producing a digital typeface that appears to be drawn as it is typed.

Lynn Kiang

www.lynnkiang.com

Video Graphic Design

Video Graphic Design is a graphic design practice where video is the persuasive and ubiquitous container for exchanging stories and communicating messages. It is an examination of the medium itself—in its formal and conceptual representation of experience through a design methodology. With the increased accessibility of digital technology and screen-based media, video can be made anytime, created by anyone, and viewed anywhere. It is hyper-fidelic in representation, quick in production, and responsive to the moment. It's the "everyman's" movie, making the ephemeral observable; the individual, universal.

This thesis gives form to extensive research through a quick and systematic survey of video experiments—short documentaries, experimental montage, multi-screen projections, installation, and motion graphics—unearthing not only the process by which our stories and fleeting moments are collected, but also how they can be disassociated and remixed to create something new. This body of work is organized within four theoretical models of video graphic design: narratives, informatives, exploratives, and simulatives. This new theory frames not only the work but the field itself in establishing my practice as a video graphic designer.



Uneventful Productions

2011, series of 8 narrative videos, 1:30 min. each

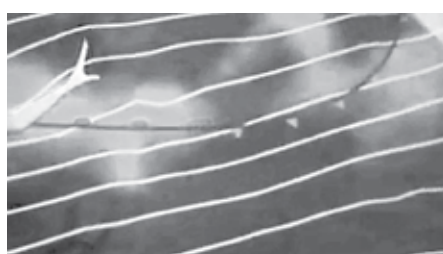
A scene opens with the beep of an elevator. A stranger is introduced in face and voice and you take a slow-moving trip with her to the fourth floor. She bides her time by checking her phone, sifting through mail, looking at the elevator display. She departs with an intimate non sequitur as she walks out of the sliding doors, all in a minute and a half. You are in another's daily routine, vicariously experiencing the moment with her. You become part of the conversation—not as a voyeur but as the recipient of a story.



Edit: A Lexicon

2010, informative video, 1:46 min.

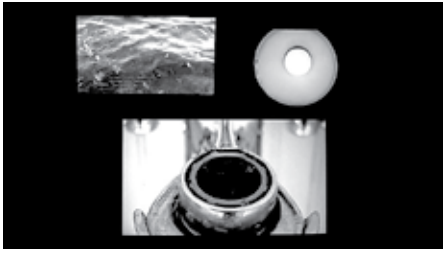
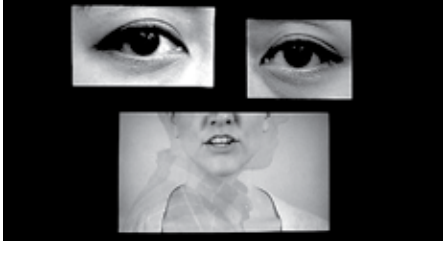
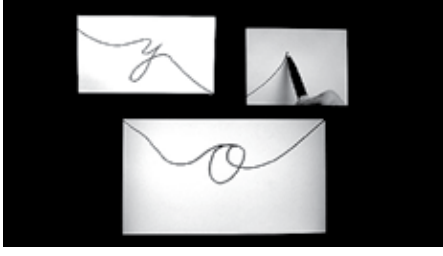
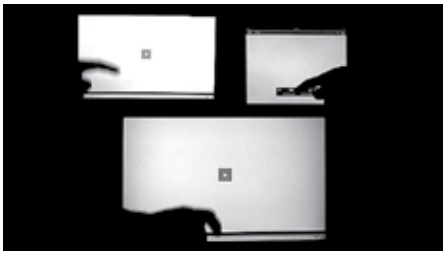
Edit: A Lexicon is a video dictionary introducing the terms and definitions behind my initial thesis ideas. Derivations from the word "edit" are illustrated through live-action footage and practical effects, revealing the meaning behind each word through the motion of hands, stencil typography, and other physical props. Transitions between each scene shift scale and spatial relationship, creating new spaces in an otherwise flat background.



Hijacked Frequencies

2011, explorative video, 4:26 min.

A music video for the Houston-based band, Liquid Casing, featuring a synchronized montage of satellite maps, weather forecasters, motion graphics, real-time webcams, weekly temperature, and time-lapse footage. The content was recontextualized and cropped, focusing on movement, the human hand and graphic forms to reframe the viewing experience. Even within the banal, new meaning emerges through appropriation and reframing. By shifting the viewers focus, a new narrative can be constructed out of seemingly uninteresting or unrelated material.



Interface

2010, simulative video, 1:40 min.

Interface is a nonlinear video collage viewed on three screens that compose, roughly, the form of a human face. The visual and audio clips contain formal and conceptual connections to the eyes and mouth. The videos are uploaded on YouTube, allowing for view on any screen that can connect to the internet. When three screens are joined and played at the same time, a choreographed video moves throughout the three screens, allowing for patterns and juxtapositions of content to generate new meaning. The videos can also be guided by chance, without predetermined beginning, middle, or end to create new collisions of form and content.

Seung Chan Lim (Slim)

www.yimyr.com

Realizing Empathy

For the first nine years of my career, I apprenticed as a Computer Scientist simultaneously practicing two different philosophies of design: Human-Centered and Information-Centered. The two philosophies were not necessarily in conflict, but I sensed both an unquantifiable tension and an indescribable void between them; I felt unsatisfied with the variety of computing devices produced by either approach. In an attempt to better understand the chasm, I sought an environment with deep historical wisdom, the RISD art

(Seung Chan Lim cont'd.)

and design community, and learned to engage in dialogue with physical materials—including my own body.

Based on studies in acting, dancing, drawing, writing, and making with glass, light, metal, paper, plasticine, type, and wood, I came to the realization that the process of making is analogous to engaging in an empathic conversation with another person. Reflecting on this experience, I also realized that a deep sense of reciprocity and a firm grounding in ethics is missing from the design of the personal computer.

The outcome of this thesis investigation is a hypothesis that translates both the language of making with physical materials, and the space in which the interaction takes place, to the domain of computation. By drawing inspiration from both my craft and performance studies, I lay the ground for a set of five guiding principles—setting the site, establishing shared language, reenacting the self, listening to honesty, and respecting integrity—that can help design an opportunity for an empathic conversation between computation and the human body. The thesis also presents a series of video sketches illustrating reference applications of these principles as manifested on a computer whose form is also inspired by our relationship to the space of both craft and performance practices.

This is What I Learned

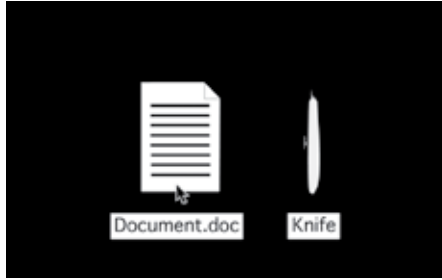
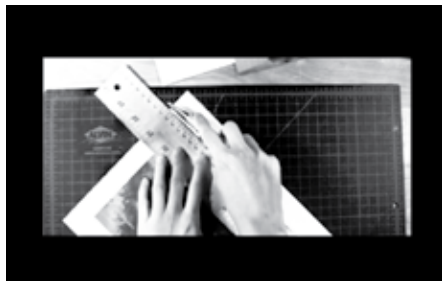
We all have varying degrees of courage and humility.

Humility enables us to engage in a conversation with someone or something with a sense of integrity different from ours. When engaged in such conversations we listen, ask questions, and establish metaphors that resonate from our embodied knowledge. With this resonance we develop understanding and acquire new knowledge by virtue of seeing the world from a different perspective. This process gives rise to self-awareness, which helps us be more honest with ourselves, which in turn helps us understand the other, so long as they have also been honest. Should we reflect after each such encounter, we can abstract the principles underlying them all, which develops our integrity, and provides us with a sense of belonging and coherence. This motivates us to engage in further conversations with others who are different. This is how we empathize and develop our humility.

Courage gives us the will to tell the story of who we are with a sense of dignity. Should we empathize with someone or something across time and memory with a sense of integrity, we develop the trust and the discipline necessary to tell this story with precision and efficiency. This gives rise to a sense of joy, which motivates us to continue to empathize. This is how we learn to empathize, and develop our courage.

The other participant in the conversation gets to manifest their courage as well, because this relationship is, by definition, reciprocal—even within an internal dialogue.

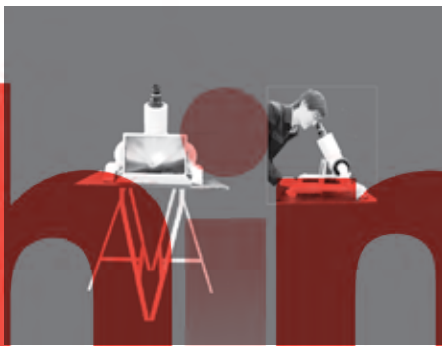
To act so as to facilitate this cycle develops an ethics of design.



Physics as Freedom

2010, light, 720×480 pixels, 2:25 min.

Physics as Freedom is an animated feature exploring our relationship to both computational materials and physical materials. The film points to the concept of freedom put forth by the early pioneers of personal computing such as Richard Stallman, and reframes it through our freedom to reenact an everyday verb “to cut” on a piece of paper. By illuminating our lack of freedom to reenact such a seemingly simple gesture on a piece of digital document, the film challenges you to critically rethink the nature of your relationship to personal computing.



What is That on Your Desktop?

2010, mixed media, 28×50×28 in.

What is That on Your Desktop? is an interactive installation that invites you to take a closer look at the modern day computer desktop by viewing it under a custom-made microscope. As you increase the magnification factor of the microscope, you can see the individual pixels that make up the applications, files, and folders that occupy the desktop, followed by the red, green, and blue channels that make up the pixels, and eventually the bits that make up each channel.

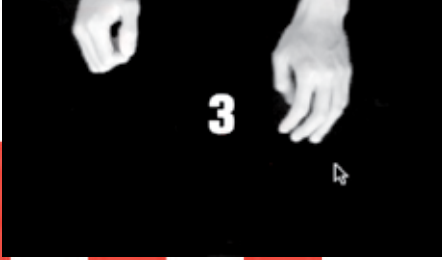
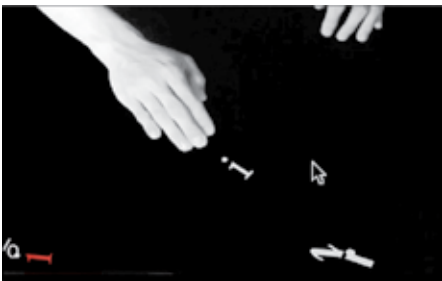
The work was inspired by Rene Magritte’s “This is not a pipe” which challenges the viewer to think about the difference between the representation of a pipe and the real pipe. By juxtaposing the language of science and objectivity with the language of modern day Graphical User Interface, the work sets in motion a framework for critiquing both the design principles behind the personal computer, and our general acceptance of the paradigm of Graphic User Interfaces.



Setting the Site

2010, mixed media, 61×36×48 in.

Setting the Site is a reimagining of the site of our interaction with computation. I crafted a table-sized computer to explore the qualitative experience of doing hand work at a workbench or a drafting table, or full-body work in front of a standing mirror. The table can be raised or lowered to allow for working both in seated and standing postures, and can be pivoted to afford a slight slant like a drafting table, or a full slant like a standing mirror.



Listening to Honesty

2010, light, 720×480 pixels, variable

Listening to Honesty is a series of digitally augmented live-action shorts imagining a reference applications of the five guiding principles of design—setting the site, establishing shared language, reenacting the self, listening to honesty, and respecting integrity—I set out in my thesis to help design an opportunity for an empathic conversation between computation and the human body.

Sara Raffo

www.saraffo.com

The World as Process

William Kentridge is an artist from South Africa. He builds large-scale puppets, animates charcoal drawings, and talks about issues of apartheid and race with the delicate touch of a poet and the energy of someone who knows. He describes himself as “...understanding the world as process rather than as fact.” I feel immediate kinship with these nine words.

What does it mean to understand the world as process? The things you encounter are not objects, but motions. Spaces become defined in relation to each other and the permeability of their boundaries. Each moment of apparent truth is a fragment of the world, a slide, a frame, a part of the whole. It means that in the next moment, the view is broken again and you are left with a new frame to use to make the world whole again. It means that poetry draws you in because it is never complete, always moving, never definite.

To see the world as process is challenging as a graphic designer. The things we make bring actions to a standstill and mold them into a static form that can be reproduced and distributed. We dislike clients who “hold up the process.” The idea of working with someone who has an evolving point of view or changing definition of values could be the stuff of client horror stories. Graphic designers promise the power to create order out of chaos, an illusion of permanence and lasting truth. Is graphic design the opposite of process? Perhaps our goal is to turn “process” into “thing”?

Our tools do not help. The computer promises immediacy, results, and finality over alternatives, transparency, and unanticipated outcomes. The status bar, a symbol of process taking place, is a cue for eye-rolling and impatience. The forms we create also have a sense of permanence about them. The printer cannot continuously reprint, the website has limited potential for change after we complete the project.

How can graphic designers engage with the world as process? Is it possible to create a working model for such interactions? This requires a step back, a shift in focus. A model also requires structure. I would suggest the following guiding principles for engaging with process:

1. Suspend the state of unknowing. Be comfortable and happy in the space of unknowing, excited to be there, even. If we are not, we pre-build, pre-determine, we jump to conclusions. We are unable to deal with complexity. We are unable to really listen. We are unable to learn.

There are tools for this: throw yourself off balance by setting bizarre limitations; hold something in your hands and let it surprise you by how it bends, falls, flies; work furiously on the collage at the table and then allow yourself to recognize that the pile of scraps nearby is a more interesting solution than what you labored over. Embody what Oskar Schlemmer said when teaching painting at the Bauhaus “...we must allow ourselves to be surprised.”

2. Be aware of how we operate as designers. The Dutch designer Kees Dorst writes that there are 175 different ways of understanding what we do as designers. “Design as applied creativity, design as problem solving, design as learning, design as evolution, design as a social process, design as game...” Understand

(Sara Raffo cont'd.)

that there are even more than 175 ways to approach design, rather than trying to wrestle the definition into a single sentence. Know which type of design you are doing today. Acknowledge its weaknesses. Consider alternatives to how you are working. Be accountable, flexible, and adaptable as a collaborator.

3. Create a cycle of listening and expression to drive the work. Ask a question, listen to the answer, ask another question. Make something visible to the world, observe how it works, make it again.

The important point here is that the final design is a library of experiments. Not a design solution to a single question or statement. The form comes from the repeated questioning and testing, not from a sudden flash of insight. The work produces the work.

What kind of graphic design is the result of this model? Does engaging with process instead of fact look different? Is it actually feasible to see the world as process? The practice of doing design is the best way to test these ideas. To describe what we see as a result may require new language. Our language as graphic designers tends to describe static form.

In my own work, I can tell you what this practice might look like: a certain slowness of approach, a meditative quality, a plethora of questions, and a fascination with emergence. I am drawn to images that can capture or promise to hold process. The building of simple spaces which become a stage or temporary kind of architecture is one preoccupation. A sensitivity to light entering those spaces is an added layer. The camera is one model of looking at these spaces. A growing plant as a tangible form of processes is another. What is photosynthesis if not a living architecture of light?

We are working in a time when design is being called on to assist with everything from social issues to serious environmental concerns. As we negotiate the ethics of these situations, it is critical that we are aware of our own intentions, the clarity of our communication with others, and the real world effects of our actions. Not only is it necessary to understand the existing processes that we operate under, but we also need to simultaneously critique and question them as we work.



Listening to Materials

2010, paperback books, 30×30 in.

I bought several cheap paperback books from the Salvation Army, sliced them in the guillotine and started working with the fan-like shapes that resulted. I noticed a shift: rather than being stuck in the loop of imagining something in my head, trying to accomplish it with the actual materials and

then becoming frustrated when it did not work out quite as I had envisioned it, I sat down with a stack of paper to see what it could do—“listened” to it. I found a world of possibilities that did not come from thinking and analyzing.

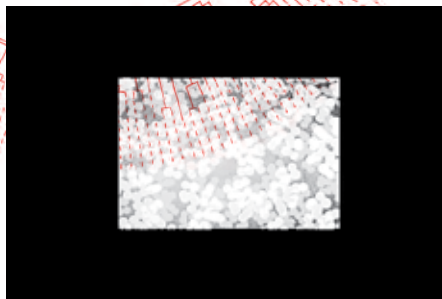


Do Not Hurry.

Do Not Rest

2010, film, 5:15 min.

In *Do Not Hurry, Do Not Rest*, paper type became an animated, moving object through the action of gravity, thread, tracing paper, air currents, and other physical forces. By “unknowing” static typographic forms, letters could become a kind of process in their own right.



Thesis Presentation 1

2010, Keynote presentation, 10 min.

For an initial thesis presentation, I showed a series of slides which only loosely connected to the words I spoke. The viewers were able to create their own connections between the two on their own. This became an invitation for process to become part of content creation, rather than simply a way to generate form.



A Digital Dialogue

2010, series of inkjet prints, 24×36 in. each

I began with the hypothesis that the cycle of listening and expression that occurs when working with a tangible material could be achieved with a computer. I paid attention to how things were cropped when I zoomed in and out, slivers of the desktop visible beneath, pixelation, and bars of greeked text. These all became formal cues for the poster design, requiring simultaneous visual engagement with the work and awareness of the process of seeing and working with technology.



Conversation Map

2010, inkjet print, 36×36 in.

The starting point for this map was the transcription of a conversation between Charlie Rose, Richard Serra, Chuck Close, Eric Kandel, Ann Temkin, and Oliver Sacks. I mapped each participant’s words into a separate text box matched with a background shape generated using InDesign’s paragraph rule settings. The moment of growth or emergence in this design was when I let go and watched each part of the conversation take on a form based on the line length, amount of text, and the dots. That was when I let go of control; however, I realize the challenging and contradictory nature of this situation. “Encouraging the unexpected” can also be a method of control.

Benjamin Shaykin

www.benjaminshaykin.com

The Book in Translation

A book is a physical thing. It has shape, it has heft. The form of the codex—a collection of pages bound on one edge between covers—is a deep structure, an iconic form imbued with its own meaning. Proportioned for the human hand, it is symmetrical across its spine like the human body.

A book is a symbol, a frame. It is a space—a sequence of spaces—both finite and limitless. Its borders are clearly delineated, and yet it expands infinitely outward: temporally, through the turning of its pages; imaginatively, through the immersive act of reading; and relationally, through the connections made between texts and readers across time.

We are living in a period of major transition, a massive shift from the printed page to the digital screen. Our relationship to books, both as objects and as texts, is changing. The benefits of new technologies are hard to deny—digital books are searchable, sortable, and interactive; they are shiny and they are weightless. But there is much that we overlook by only looking forward.

A book on screen is not a book. It is a translation of a book.

A book is not simply a mute container for its contents. It tells the story of its creation through its physical presence. It accrues history through its use. Its place on our shelves and in our lives will not be easily replaced by backlit screens and simulated page turns.

My work is an attempt to document and comment upon the condition of the book at this time of transition. It is a series of experiments using books as both subject matter and form. I take notions of translation and transformation and turn them back on themselves, restoring the ephemeral into physical form, making abstract notions tactile. I play in the liminal spaces, the moments when the page turns.



Special Collection

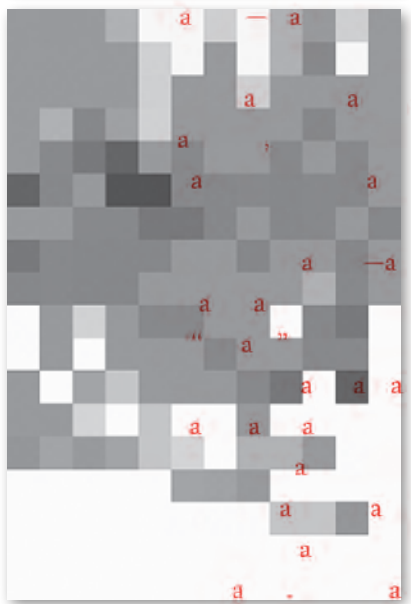
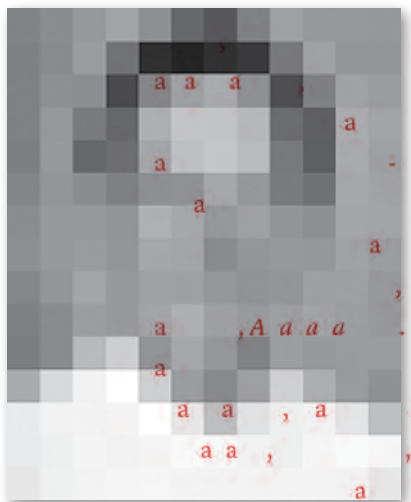
2009, 12 books, dimensions variable

As libraries become increasingly digitized through projects like Google Books, what gets lost? What do we lose—and what can we gain—in the transition from physical objects to digital forms? How does the dematerialization of books effect our understanding of them? Can digital books be made physical again?

Special Collection consists of a dozen hand-sewn books, each partial recreations of books found on Google Books. Each is reproduced at its original size, revealing multiple disruptions and errors, introduced during Google’s own scanning process: the scanner’s hand, holding down and obliterating the page; type and illustrations which have degraded and blurred to the point of illegibility; pages scanned while in the process of being turned; fold-out maps and charts that were scanned while closed. Some of these artifacts are beautiful and evocative. They are the found poetry of this new machine.

By reinvesting these digital books with physical form, *Special Collection* asks us to consider the contradictions and unintended consequences of technological advance. Approaching Google Books through its fissures offers a chance to peek behind the curtain of a mysterious, complicated endeavor, which is little understood and generally taken for granted as progress. By using Google’s scans and resources to create this work, I am both highlighting the potential of this new era of distribution and access, and questioning Google’s claims of ownership of all the world’s information.

(Benjamin Shaykin cont'd.)



news. Sentences beginning “The book is” are excerpted from their original contexts, becoming grand and preposterous statements on The State of the Book. The results are rebroadcast online and collected in book form.



The Library of Babel

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Lo-Res Books

2010, pixels, dimensions variable

We keep books around us because they tell a story, even when closed. They are a record of where we've been, where we hope to go. Our books say much about who we are, who we would like to be.

With *Lo-Res Books*, I investigate my own library, reducing iconic books to their smallest digital selves. In this pixelated form, they become abstract, mere suggestions of books. When book covers no longer have anything to cover, how can we judge them at all?



The book is...

2011, multiple formats, dimensions variable

“The book is a mess, but moving and poignant. The book is written in simple but never condescending language. The book is divided into two halves. The book is just fine as it is. The book is available in print format and in a wide variety of digital formats for reading on a range of devices. The book is cool. The book is an attempt to reclaim a lost childhood. The book is about 50 pages too long. The book is essentially about how the Internet is changing storytelling. The book is everything I've never spoken about to anyone before and a lot of things I've tried to forget. The book is not without some problems.”

What is a book, right now? *The book is...* is an attempt to answer this question through automated searches of the day's

Z-A

2011, book, 6 × 9 in., 334 pages

Earlier this year, HarperCollins announced new limits on e-book lending for libraries: digital books would only be allowed to circulate 26 times before they expired and would have to be replaced.

In response, I created a physical book which dissolves through successive readings. I began with the text of Borges' *The Library of Babel*, repeating the story 26 times. With each repetition, one letter of the alphabet is removed, until finally all that is left are punctuation marks and numerals.

Mat Stevens

www.matstevens.com

Opposites attract me. The two polemic positions—far away from one another, before they begin to compromise and return to the middle—are terribly intriguing. My work starts here, enjoying the divisions and separations of the two.

However, my work ends in the middle, the opposite of the opposites, within a compromise at the center. Through

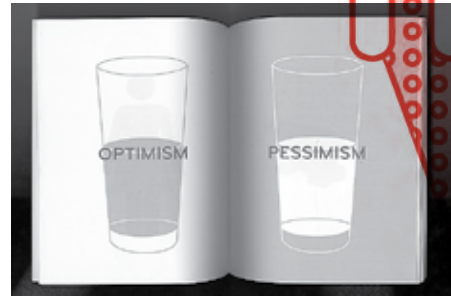
paradoxes, feedback loops, contradictions, and optical illusions I embrace the unusual outcomes. Using these experimentations I have developed a personal working methodology for my graphic design.



Historical Posters

2009, poster, 24 × 36 in.

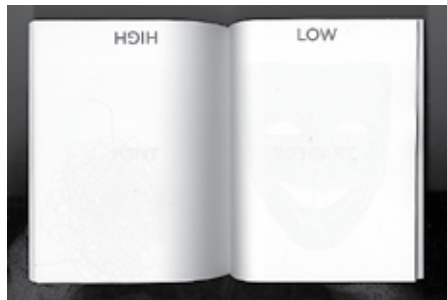
This poster series was developed in response to the duality of war, specifically the Revolutionary War. I examined the parallel lives of the two “Georges,” comparing and contrasting their similarities and differences.



End Beginning

2011, book, 7.5 × 9.75 in.

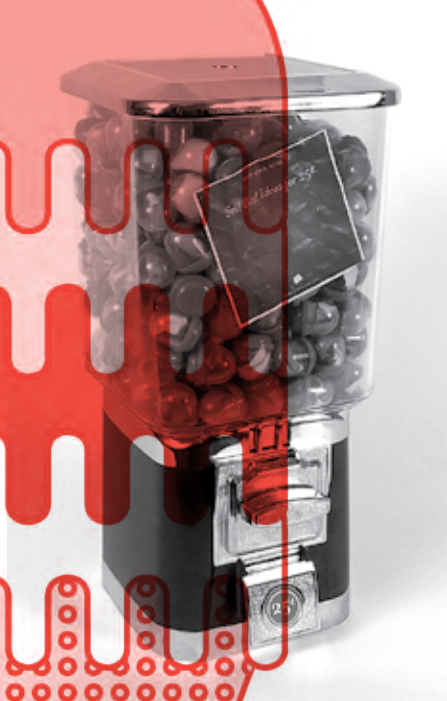
End Beginning plays on simple comparisons with a twist... text and images are flipped to illustrate their opposite meaning. The simple iconography and words become jarring when paired with its incorrect partner.



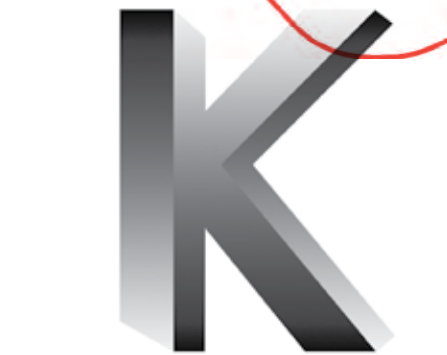
Good Bad Ideas

2011, philosophical, exponential

There are some bad ideas that are still interesting even though they're impossible to realize, ridiculous, absurd, or self-destructive. I sell them for 25¢ a piece out of a gumball machine. After purchase the owner retains full ownership of their idea.



(Mat Stevens cont'd.)



OPTIK

2011, typeface, digital

Optik is a typeface inspired by optical illusions and impossible shapes. The letterforms play with the illusion of depth and space, creating visual paradoxes that cause cognitive misunderstandings.

Erika Tarte

www.erikatarte.com

Design Future History

Theuth, god of intelligence and tongues, presented the king with the gift of written language with a solemn promise: “This will make the Egyptians wiser and give them better memories.” To which the king replied, “Oh most ingenious Theuth, the parent or inventor of an art is not always the best judge of the utility or inutility of his own inventions to the users of them. This discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners’ souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth.”

Origin stories figure prominently in my thesis investigations. In particular, the myth of Theuth—as retold in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, a dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus on the art of rhetoric and writing—has become a seminal text in my practice as a graphic designer grappling with 21st-century technological innovations and new media forms. My thesis projects serve as an exploration of, and meditation on, the transformations to memory occasioned by new technologies. How have memory-bearing technologies, from the first written systems to the latest mobile application, imposed order on knowledge? What are the roles and responsibilities of the designer within these new dynamics?

The conversation that takes shape in pursuit of these inquiries traces the original fracture lines between truth and semblance, providing both historical context and methodological framework(s) for the designer as “future historian”—the gatekeeper between past actuality and potential representation.

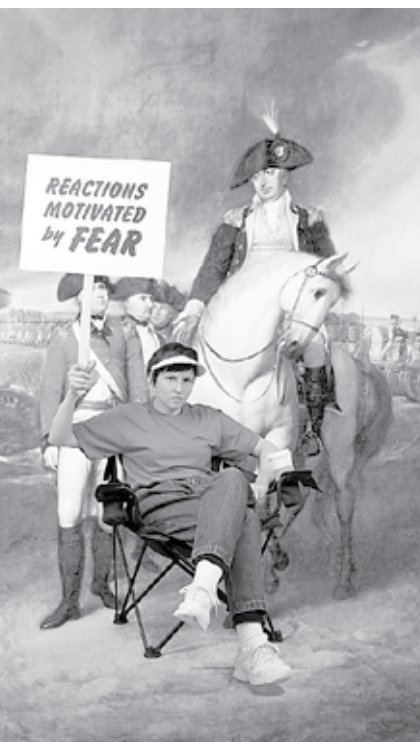
While my work positions itself at the intersection of historicism and media theory, problematizing technological mediation in the construction of historical narrative, my intentions with my thesis extend to many narrative-based forms and experiences. I aspire to provide designers with the tools to more rigorously interrogate not only the form and content of their work, but the media through which they materialize. After all, as designers, the artifacts we create are history in the making.



View History

2011, HTML CSS and AppleScript, variable

As an alternative to the “view history” feature provided by most web browsers, *View History* is a series of web-based collages that use screen captures of my personal browsing history as source material.

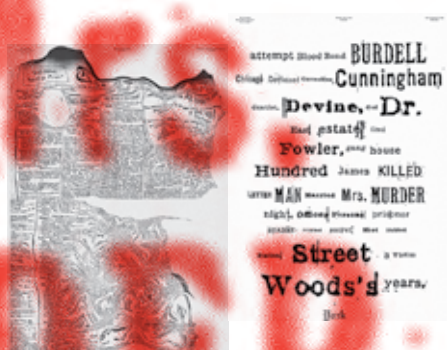


Ye Olde Tea Party

Photo Studio

2010, photography and video

A collaborative project with fellow graduate Hope Chu, *Ye Olde Tea Party Photo Studio* repurposes the photographic tableau vivant as a framing device for archetypical characters from the Tea Party movement. Costume, pageantry, and a heavy dose of Photoshop provide the backdrop to a discussion about access to technology, mass media, and historical revisionism, as they are carried out on both a satirical and political stage.



Forced Readings

2011, inkjet on newsprint, 17 × 24 in.

Forced Readings interrogates technologies that aid us in screen-based reading. Through a series of coding and de-coding exercises, I produced translations and manipulations of the font page of the *New York Times* of August 1, 1897. The original broadsheet was parsed through word frequency software, eye-tracking software, search engines, and optical character recognition software. Results were reprinted as broadsheets. New narratives, or “forced readings,” imposed by both algorithm and chance, were then uncovered and analyzed in essay form.



After the Shock, a Need to Share Grief and Loss

2011, video, 3 min.

How does the physical media through which we access the past influence the historical narratives we are able to construct? *After the Shock, a Need to Share Grief and Loss* chronicles the experience of searching for a particular newspaper article through both microfilm and search engine.

(Erka Tarte cont'd.)

The two experiences are layered on top of each other, each occupying a single, opposing color channel (red and green). Special glasses given to viewers act as filters, allowing them to see only one searching experience.



Excavate

2010, browser plug-in concept

Excavate is a web browser plug-in concept that integrates the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine into the browser's interface. In addition to providing the basic functions of the Wayback Machine—allowing users to access to archived versions of websites rendered in living code—Excavate extends the metaphor of archeology to the search process, allowing users to literally dig through layers of the past.

Dimitry Tetin

www.dimitrytetin.com

Recognizing that current telecommunication technologies allow one to virtually travel to any place on earth, my work argues for the uniqueness of personal experience of space. I traverse and research public spaces in order to understand how narratives are communicated within them.

Convention Conventions

2011, newsprint/downloadable PDF

Convention Centers are like blank screens that stand empty waiting for content to activate them. They are an every-place and a non-place at the same time.

They are privately owned, instrumental spaces designed for efficient staging of a variety of events that usually involve a large number of people.

Convention Centers are spaces of transit. The events they host are meant to be temporary—trade and consumer shows, exhibits, receptions, competitions. While they bring in visitors, they also rely on the city's ability to keep those visitors entertained.

Convention Centers are containers, and their architecture reflects it. The variety of activity that takes place within them is astonishing. Their multi-purposeness necessitates a level of architectural generality. The ballroom needs to serve as a stage for adolescent revelry by hosting a prom one night, than be converted to a business expo the following day.

Most of the functions are private events, not open to the general public. While some places in the city designated for public use stand empty, the Convention Centers are humming with activity. What would happen if the events that bring business tourism to the city were more spread out through different neighborhoods in the city and not confined to the convention center/mall/hotel/adjacent restaurants complex? Would it make each of the events occurring in the city more memorable? Conventioners might also be excited not to spend most of their time in a multi-purpose building that looks and feels exactly the same as the one in their own town.

The Rhode Island Convention Center has been specially designed to accommodate a variety of functions and events, with rooms varying in size from 304 square feet to 100,000 square feet. Entryways, access hallways, dock areas, and elevators/escalators have been situated to provide convenient and safe access to all areas of the building. This walk-through will take you through some of the key areas in the Center. Also, please remember that the Rhode Island Convention Center is a non-smoking facility.



PRE-FUNCTION SPACE

The area in-between the escalators and the room provides the setting for event registration, information booths, receptions, cocktail parties, and other traditional activities. Use of space outside of the rooms is limited to the area immediately outside the space, and may be used for registration purposes only. Use of this space may not in any way disturb or obstruct other occupants.



THE EXHIBITION HALL

The Exhibition Hall level is a single expanse of one hundred thousand (100,000) square feet of exhibit space. This space may be configured as a single entity, with up to four points of access, or be acoustically subdivided into up to four halls. Each of the four halls has its own entrance to allow self-contained movement.

The Exhibition Hall floor surface is made of polished concrete. Concession stands and restrooms are available inside all four halls.



THE ROTUNDA ROOM

Executive meetings and high profile functions are appropriate for this elegant room. The room is also equipped with black-out shades that make this room suitable for AV programs during the day.



THE BALLROOM

The Ballroom can be opened to a 20,000 square-foot space, or divided into up to five separate ballrooms of varying sizes. Special features include state of the art audio/visual, dimming, and design lighting systems highlighted by a multilevel ceiling and theatrical-type chandeliers.



THE MEETING ROOMS

The Meeting Rooms can be divided to offer the meeting planner flexibility in room sizes. There are a total of seventeen (17) Meeting Rooms spread through the center. Electrical, phone, internet, and amplification speakers are available for installation in each room.



METRO AND TERRACE CAFE

Two separate cafe areas are available to serve a wide selection of meals and snacks to patrons of all Rhode Island Convention Center meetings and shows. The Terrace Cafe is located on the Mezzanine level between the Exhibit Hall and the Ballroom/Meeting Room Level. This area can seat up to 30 people at tables and counters and is wheelchair accessible via a lift from the fourth floor. The Metro Cafe is on the Exhibit Hall level and also serves hot meals, coffee, and snacks throughout the day. Both cafe areas have free wireless internet access available to attendees with wireless-capable portable computers.

Credits:

Text from Rhode Island Convention Center Event Planning Guide

Images from:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| A | A. Disney Contemporary Resort, Lake Buena Vista, FL |
| B | B. Convention Center, Minneapolis, MN |
| C | C. Convention Center, Wilmington, NC |
| D | D. Marriot Downtown, Salt Lake City, Utah |
| E | E. Hickory Metro Convention Center, Hickory, North Carolina |
| F | F. Sheraton Convention Center Hotel, Atlantic City, NJ |

Download at dimitrytetin.com/guide

Olivia Verdugo

www.viaver.com



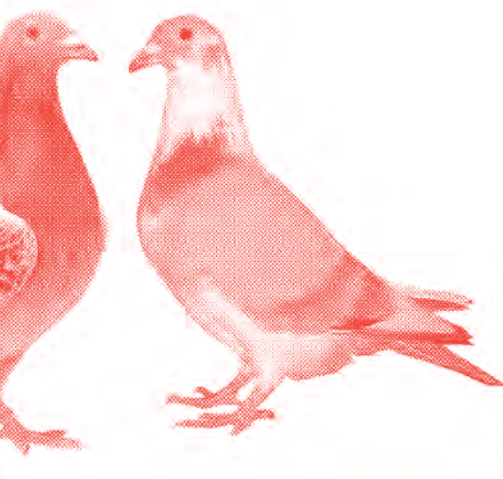
Bio•Curious: A Series of Graphic Experiments

A leaf falls and slowly decays, leaving only the pith. Ice crystals aggregate in delicate strands across a pane of glass. A neuron fires as you read these words, sending out tiny pulses of electricity which spread through your brain in an intricate web. While seemingly disparate in nature, each of these events shares a common systemic underpinning. There is a compositional grammar and an order underlying every aspect of the natural world, shaped by forces which act upon great and small alike.

I am fascinated by these emergent patterns, and by the living world, which surrounds us. Entitled "Bio-Curious," my thesis is an attempt to merge my love of nature with my passion for graphic design, yielding a hybridized personal methodological practice rooted in the use of nature as my primary source of inspiration.

As a child growing up in the woods of Massachusetts, I spent endless hours wondering and wandering through the forest. Frequently, I explored by myself, soaking in every detail, letting my imagination run wild, and in the process discovering interesting patterns inherent in my surroundings. The woods became at once my mentor, my playground, and my best friend; an experience which provided me with a life-long desire to uncover new patterns and discover previously unseen connections in my environment.

My thesis is a logical extension of these early experiences which instilled in me such a deep love of the natural world. My exploration takes place across a series of projects which derive inspiration from emergent formal, structural, and behavioral patterns found in nature. Rich surface patterns emerge from microscopic studies of seashells; the behaviour of particles in fluid dictates the framework for a generative computer applet; the study of symbiosis spawns a new form of book. In my thesis work, I court the unexpected, using the seemingly wild yet highly ordered natural world as a lens through which to view my own design practice, and as a creative prompt to create a new methodological approach to graphic design.



(Olivia Verdugo cont'd.)

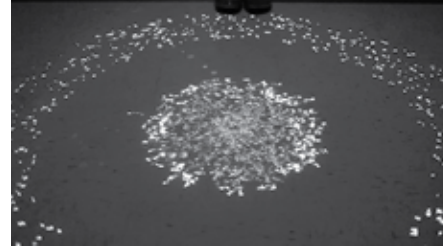
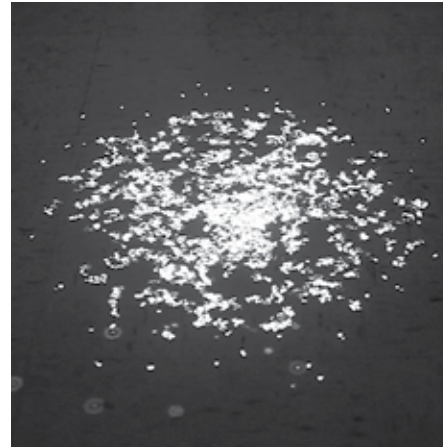
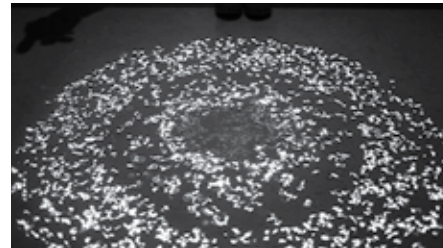
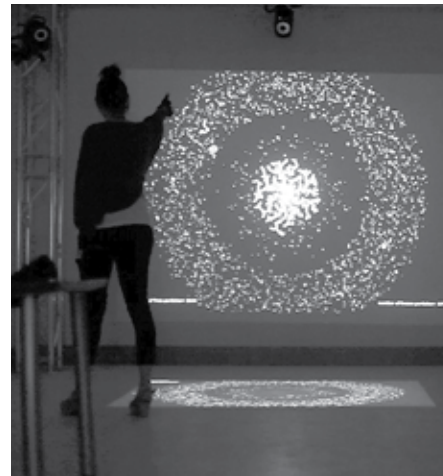
Diffusion Limited

Aggregation for G-Speak

2011, interactive applet

Diffusion Limited Aggregation is an interactive Processing applet which allows the user to control the density of particles exhibiting Brownian Motion. By extension, the user controls the form of the resultant Brownian tree which emerges via the process of diffusion limited aggregation. The user may also select the initial point of growth, further manipulating the emergent form. This project—an example of structural pattern use in my thesis—was originally written to run on G-Speak, a computer system with a unique spatial gestural interface which allows the user to control particle density and sew seed particles by gesticulating intuitively. The applet's purpose is twofold. First it serves as a pedagogical tool for visual learners and the less-than-mathematically inclined, allowing them to manipulate mathematical growth factors and witness the result in real time. Second, it serves as a generative tool for the creation of beautiful vector graphics which may be employed in more conventional graphic design.

Special thanks to Clement Valla for his generous Processing help.



Pattern Understanding

2011, digital photo series, each 12 × 18 in.

This series of photographs serves to visually contextualize my thesis work. Each image is comprised of objects representing the various loci of my thesis experiments. These experiments break down into three sections which explore the application of formal, structural, and behavioral patterns found in nature to the practice of graphic design.

Special thanks to Dima Gavrysh (MFA Photo 2012) for his photographic expertise.



Obligate Symbiosis

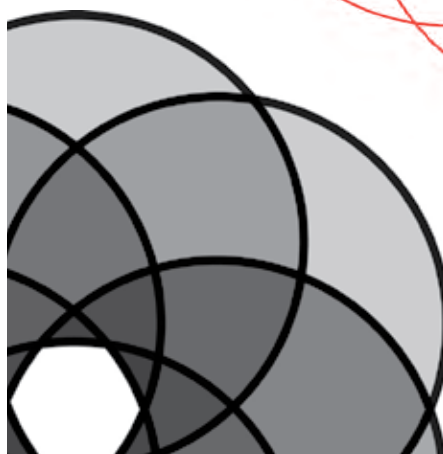
2010–11, book, 72 × 10 in.

Obligate Symbiosis is the first project in a series built on reinterpreting the various behavioral patterns of symbiotic animals in a classic graphic design format, namely, the book. Here, the book becomes a visual metaphor for obligate symbiosis, or mutualism. In obligate symbiotic relationships, both symbionts entirely depend on each other for survival, and one can not exist without the other. Because of the physical size of the book in Obligate Symbiosis, two people are required to turn its pages in order to avoid tearing them. Thus, two people must always be present in order to handle the book, and one person will always be reading or writing backwards.



Jane Androski & Emily Sara Wilson

www.design-agency.org



// DESIGN AGENCY //

Design Agency starts with a simple premise—that for designers interested in effecting social change, doing good isn't always as simple as it seems. Whether in our own backyard or across the globe, the complexity of the social and environmental challenges we face calls for a new sense of agency in our practice—agency that is more than simply a conviction to intervene. It's about cultivating an honest perspective about our role, about bringing a measure of intentionality and reflexivity to our practice, and about allowing collaboration and facilitation to replace the top-down, designer-centric models of the past.

How as designers do we align our skills and values in order to make meaningful contributions to the world? What gives us agency to work within particular communities or around particular issues? Are we willing to make the commitments required to develop enduring solutions? And what skills do we need to make this all happen?

Design Agency challenges us to bring the same level of accountability to our social practice as we do to our aesthetic one.

It is deeply rooted in the belief that agency is more than just an individual pursuit.

Our collaborative thesis investigation brings together backgrounds in design, teaching, entrepreneurship, engagement with local and global communities, and with issues ranging from community-based education to global health. Before coming to graduate school, Emily was principal of her own design studio, where among other projects she helped develop low-literacy HIV education materials for communities in eight African countries and Haiti. As Assistant Director to the *Difficult Dialogues* initiative at Clark University, Jane developed programming that encouraged dialogic practice within institutions and classrooms.

What we share is a desire to bring our experiences together through the lens of a new idea, one that we can develop in our immediate community—Providence, RI.

Collaborators aren't born, they're made. Or to be more precise, built, a day at a time, through practice, through attention, through discipline, through passion and commitment—and most of all, through habit.

—Twyla Tharp



Our own collaboration began long before our thesis process. From our graduate school entrance essays to initial (and individual) thesis concepts, we shared a vision for the kind of impact we wanted to make through design:

[Jane] "Living in a world with the potential for increased interconnectedness and the simultaneous threat of isolation, I am drawn to the unique opportunities open to designers, as mediators of communication and collaboration. No longer am I simply interested in what design is, but rather, in what it is design can do."

Salem Al-Qassimi

Exhibition Hall G
RI Convention Center

Jane Androski

Marc Choi

Hope Chu

Eliza Fitzhugh

Jessica Greenfield

Lynn Kiang

Seung Chan Lim

Sara Raffo

Benjamin Shaykin

Mat Stevens

Erika Tarte

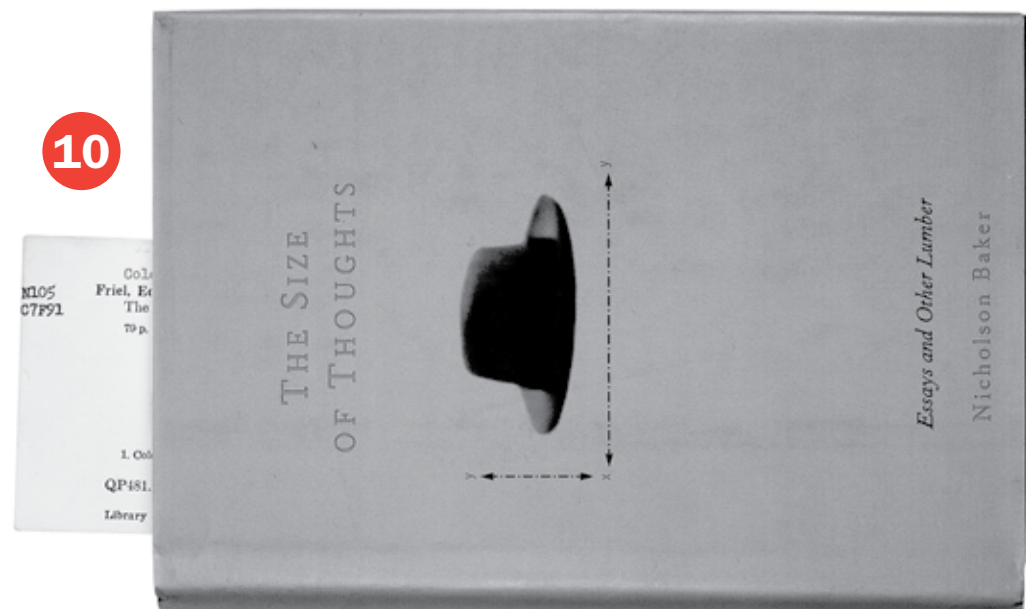
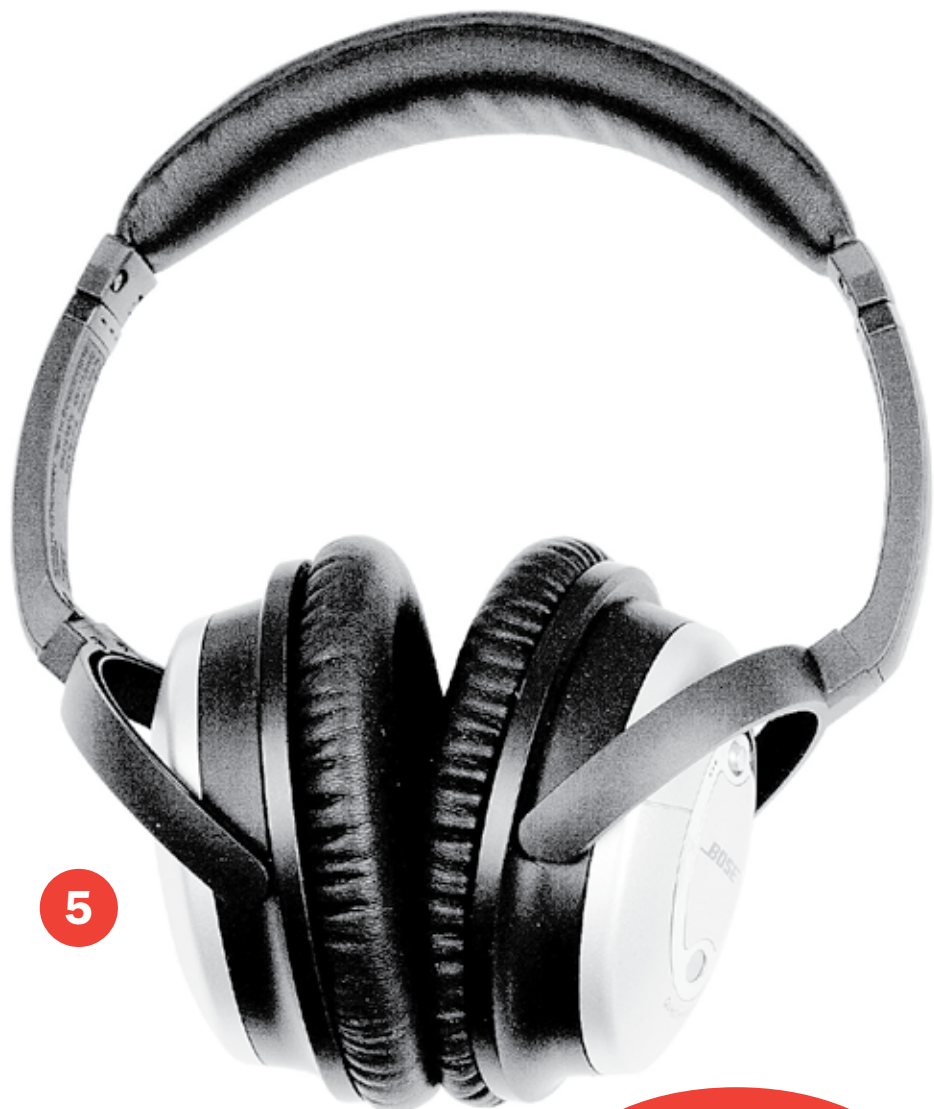
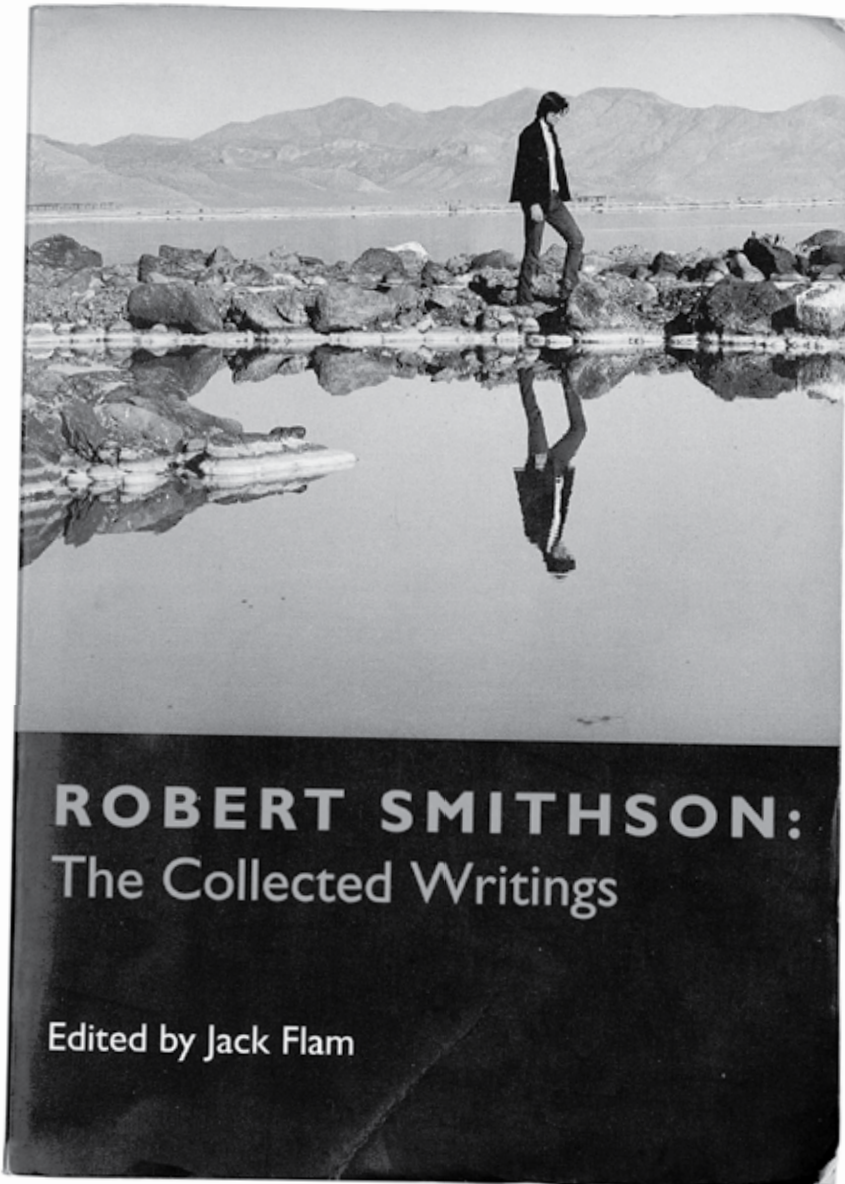
Dimitry Tetin

Olivia Verdugo

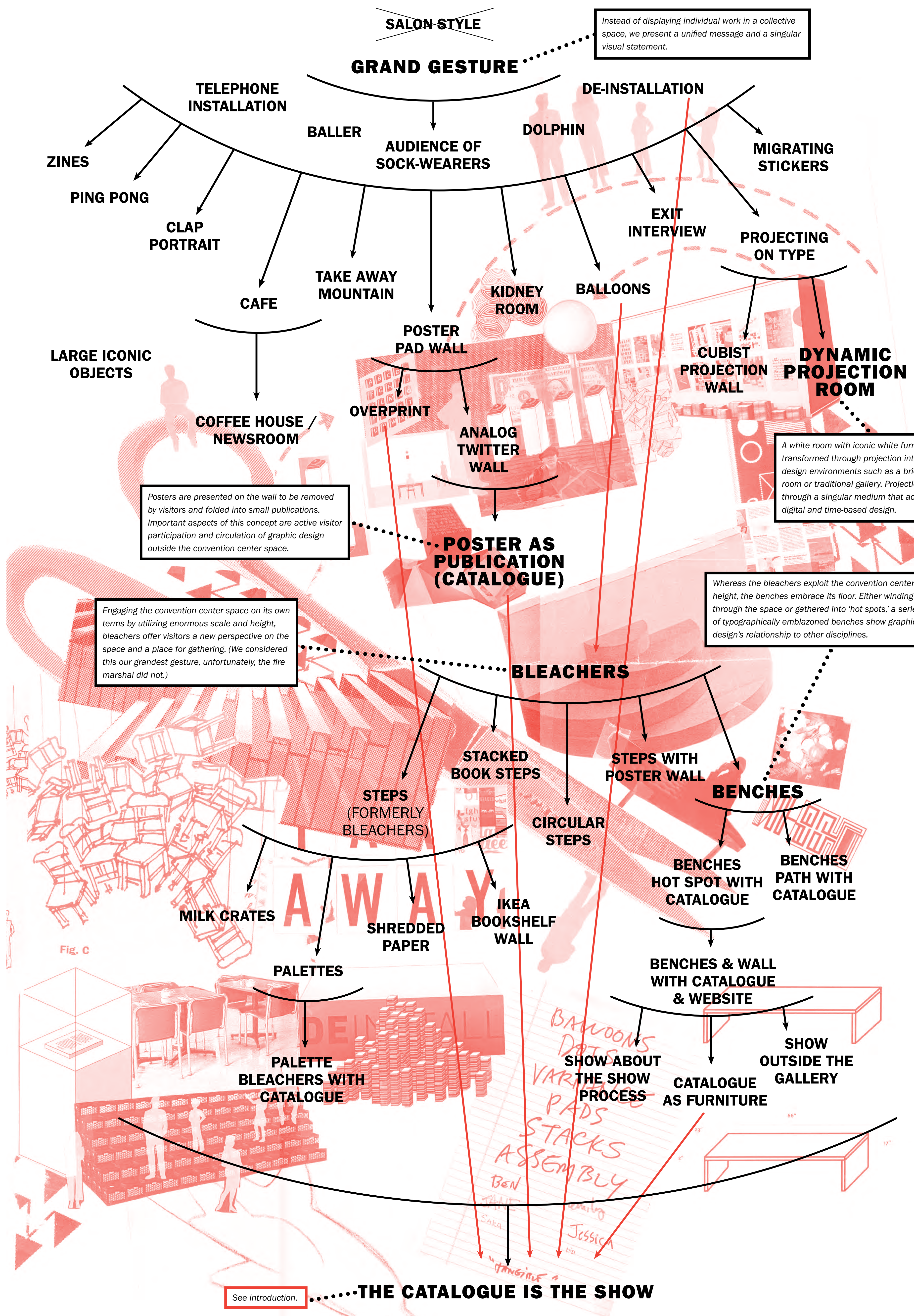
Emily Sara Wilson



1. Salem 2. Jane 3. Marc 4. Hope 5. Eliza 6. Jessica 7. Lynn 8. Slim



9. Sara 10. Benjamin 11. Mat 12. Erika 13. Dimitry 14. Olivia 15. Emily



This is the story of the show.

Fifteen designers came together over the course of four months with the goal of creating a cohesive exhibit of their work. Many groups were created and disbanded, many ideas generated. This documents the evolution of ideas that led to the show you are viewing now.

JANUARY

A meeting is called to discuss ideas for the show over waffles

Team:
Brunch

Everyone is asked to contribute sketches and concepts for the show on their own

Teams:
Individuals

Teams pursue physical, digital, and unexplored ideas

Teams:
Tactile
Projection
Wildcard

FEBRUARY

Teams respond to the physical space

Teams:
Bleachers
Benches / path
Benches / hot spot

The web component is addressed alongside a continued consideration of the exhibit space

Teams:
Web
Physical

MARCH

Teams execute each aspect of the final concept

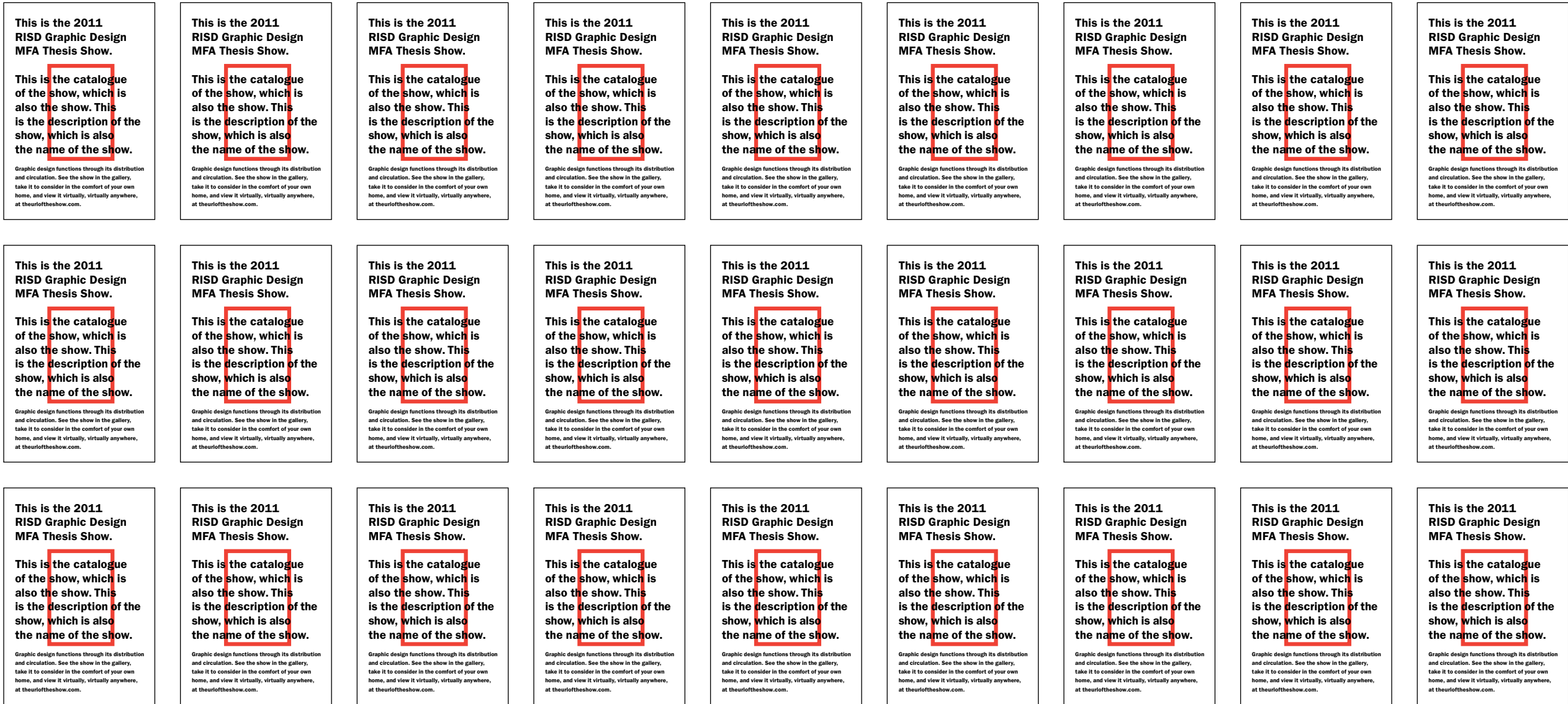
Teams:
Pretty
Content
Space
Think

Teams design each section of the catalogue

Teams:
Cover
Diagram / labels
Potential shows past
Group group group
Thing without a thing
Index

APRIL

To press



Multiple

Ink on newsprint in a grid
Viewpoints, conversations, connections.
Of having many parts, elements, and points
at which connections are made.

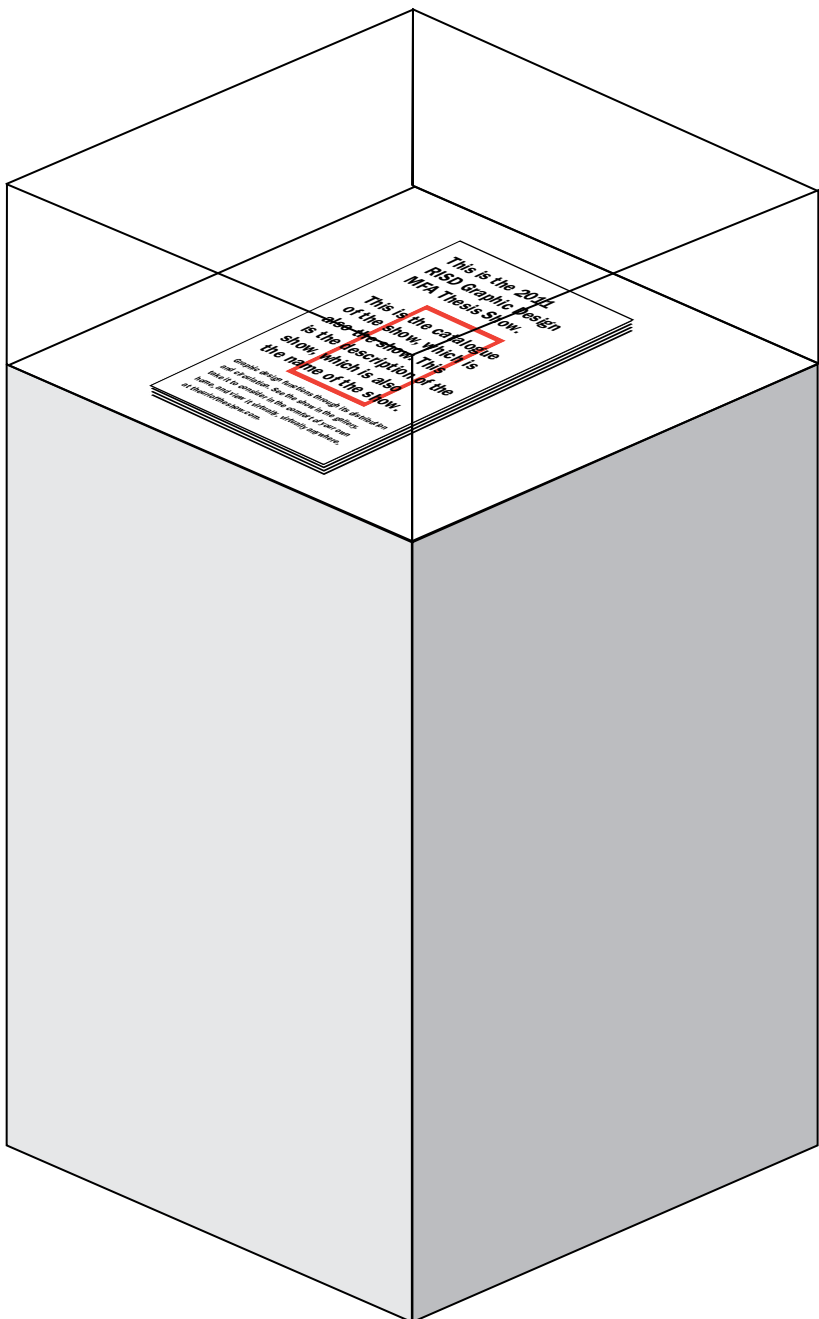
This is the 2011 RISD Graphic Design MFA Thesis Show.

This is the catalogue of the show, which is also the show. This is the description of the show, which is also the name of the show.

Graphic design functions through its distribution
and circulation. See the show in the gallery,
take it to consider in the comfort of your own
home, and view it virtually, virtually anywhere,
at theurliftheshow.com.

Framing

Vinyl on drywall
A window, an enclosure, a new perspective.
To give expression and direct one's thoughts,
actions, and inclinations to a certain purpose.

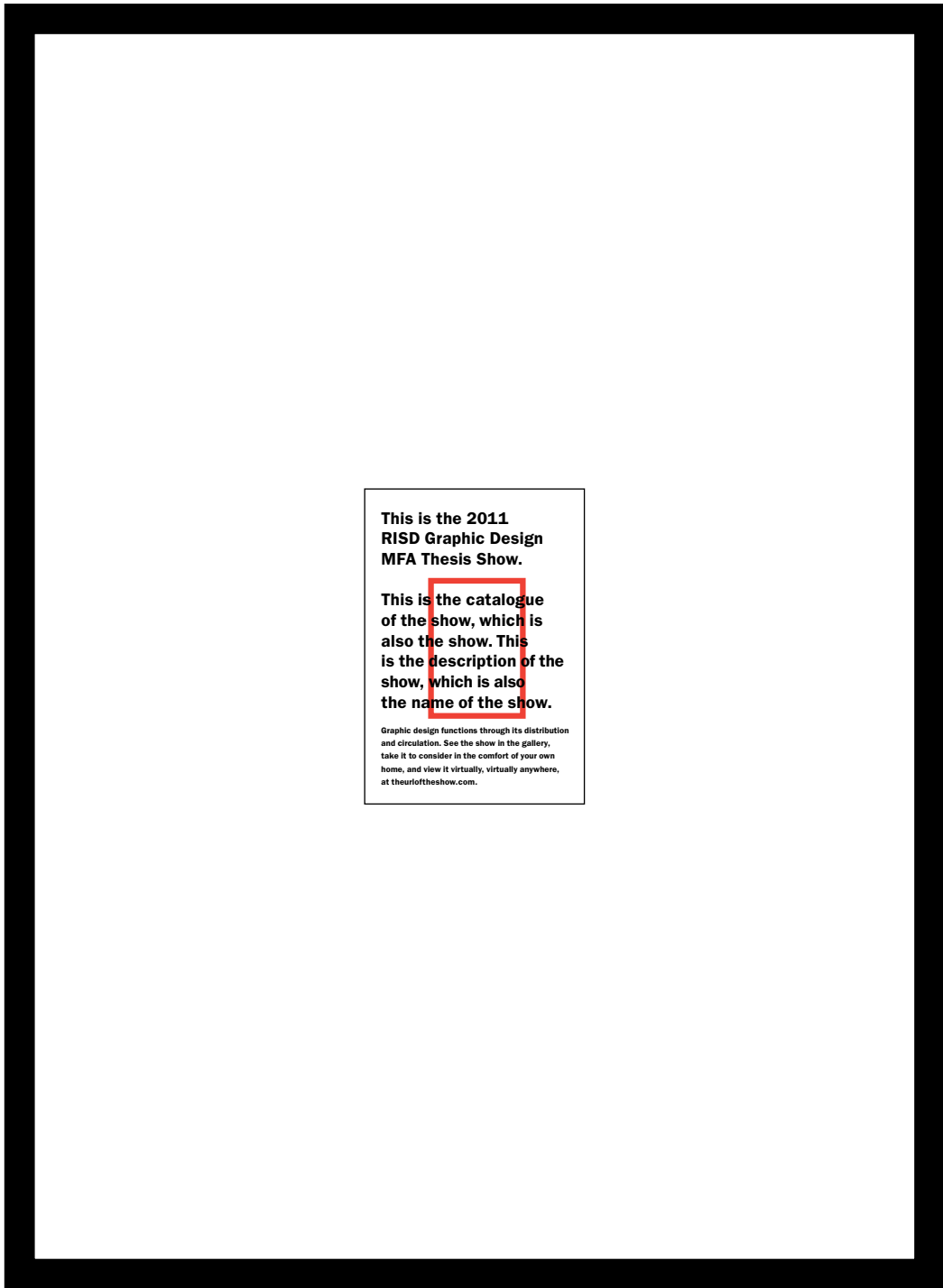
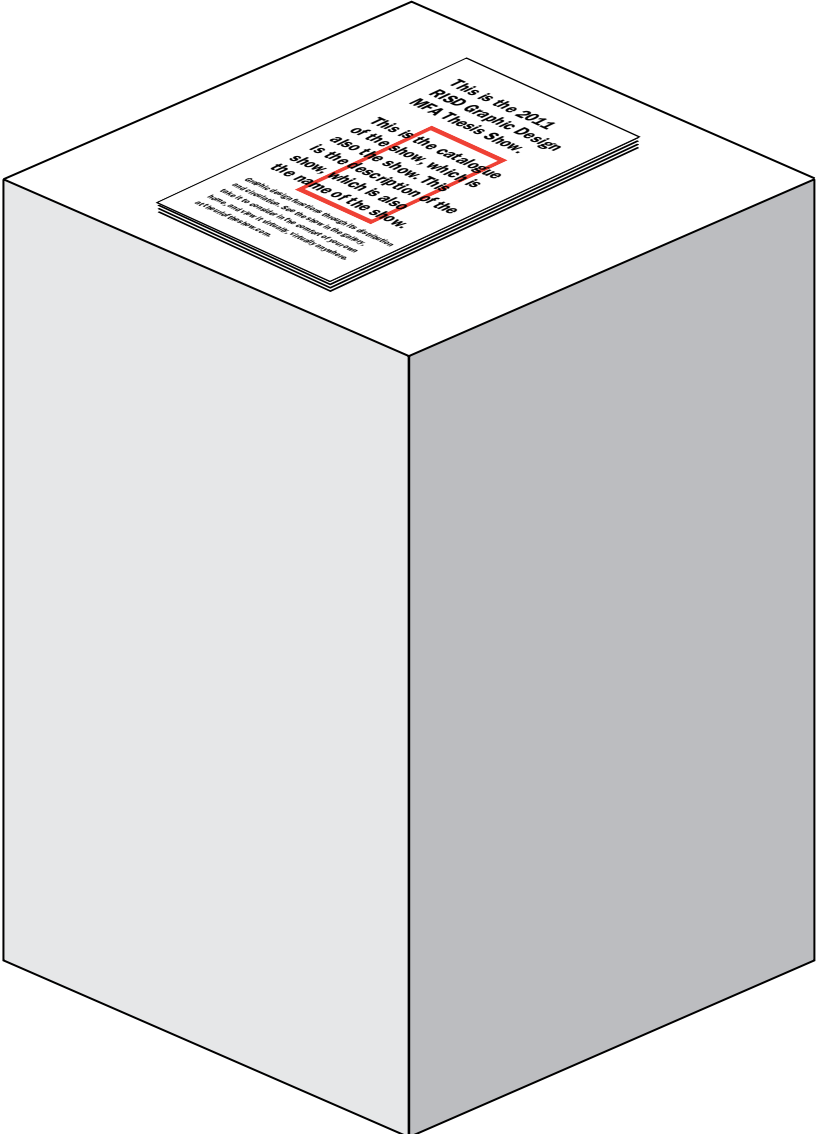


Artifact

Ink on newsprint in a vitrine
A museum, a gallery, a trend.
An item of cultural interest. The result
of an investigative or creative process.

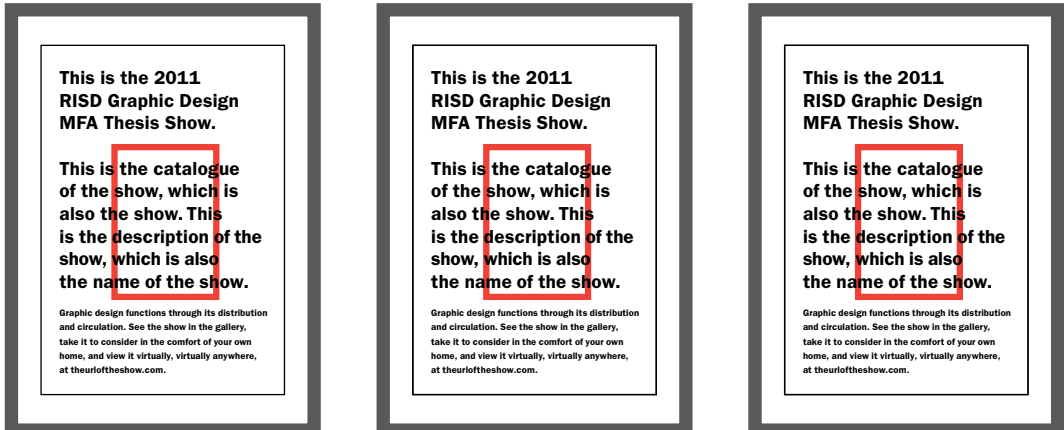
Ephemera

Ink on newsprint on a pedestal
A visitor, a ticket, a fleeting moment.
Items designed to be useful for a short time.



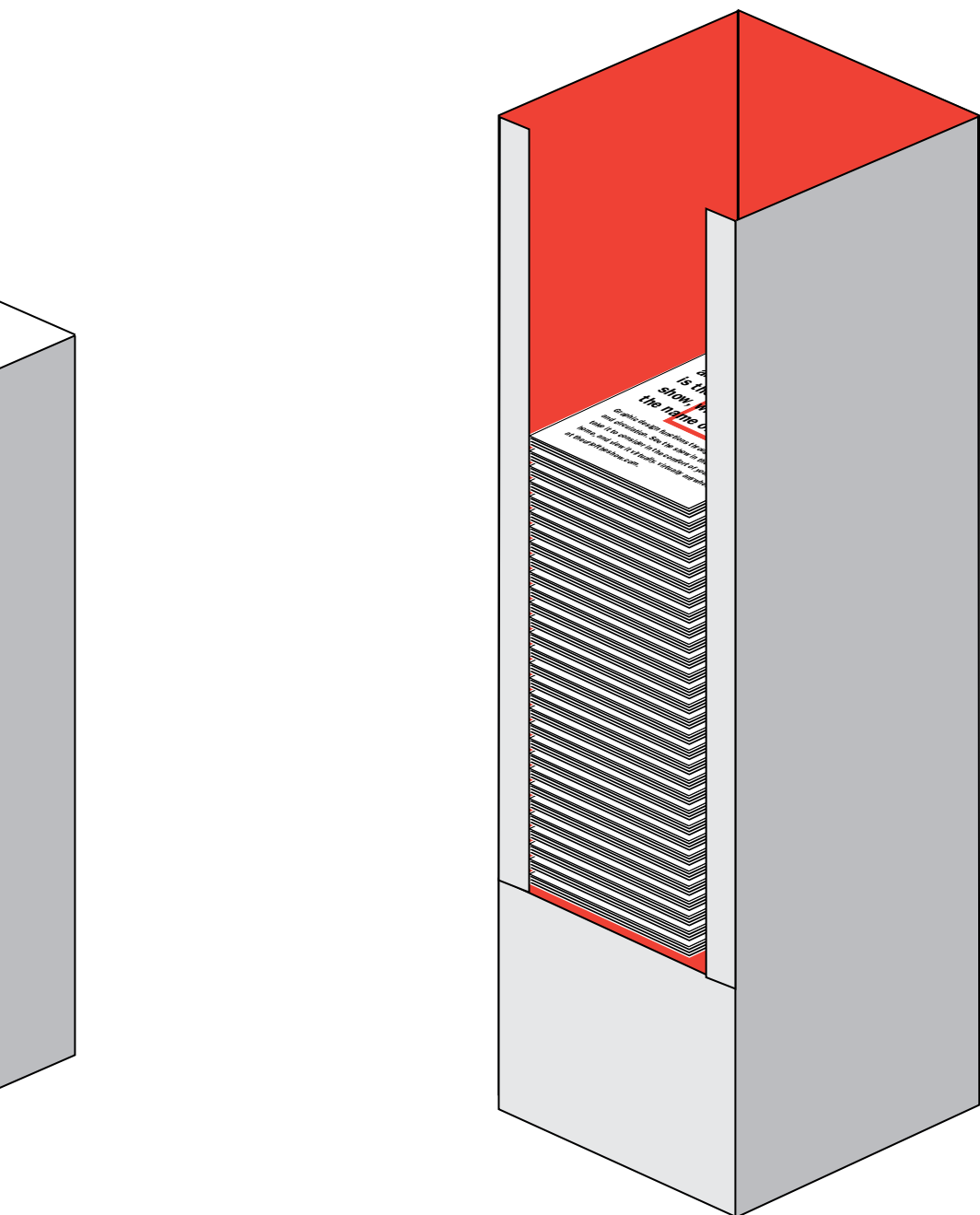
Perspective

Ink on newsprint in an oversized frame
Over, under, through, on, above, by, with, at,
around. A position of reference by which we
view dimension and relationship.



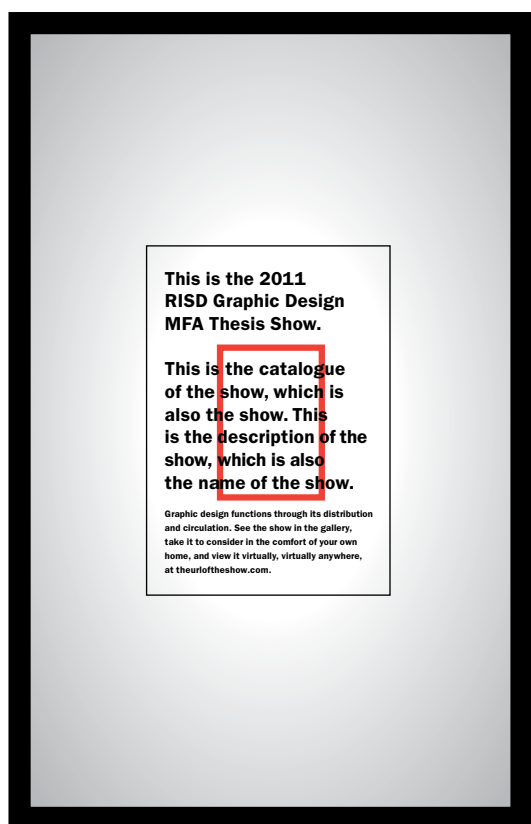
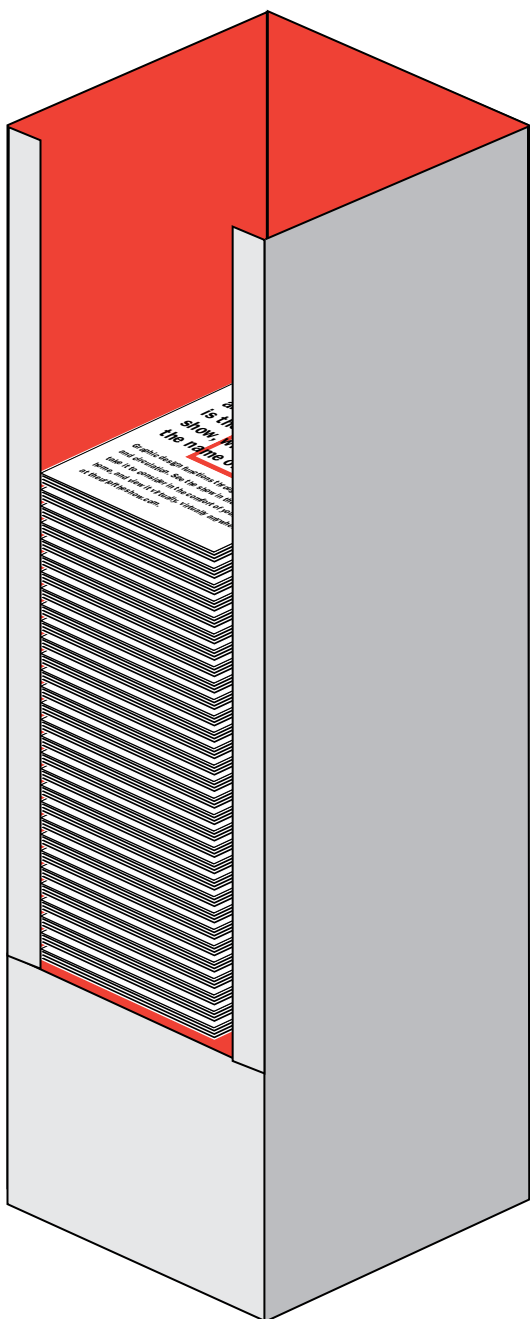
Combination

Ink on newsprint in a triptych
Combine, recombine, repeat.
Uniting different functions, uses, or ingredients.
A coordinated and effective sequence of moves
that creates meaning.



Distribution

Ink on newsprint in distribution
Give, take, circulate.
The way in which ideas are shared.



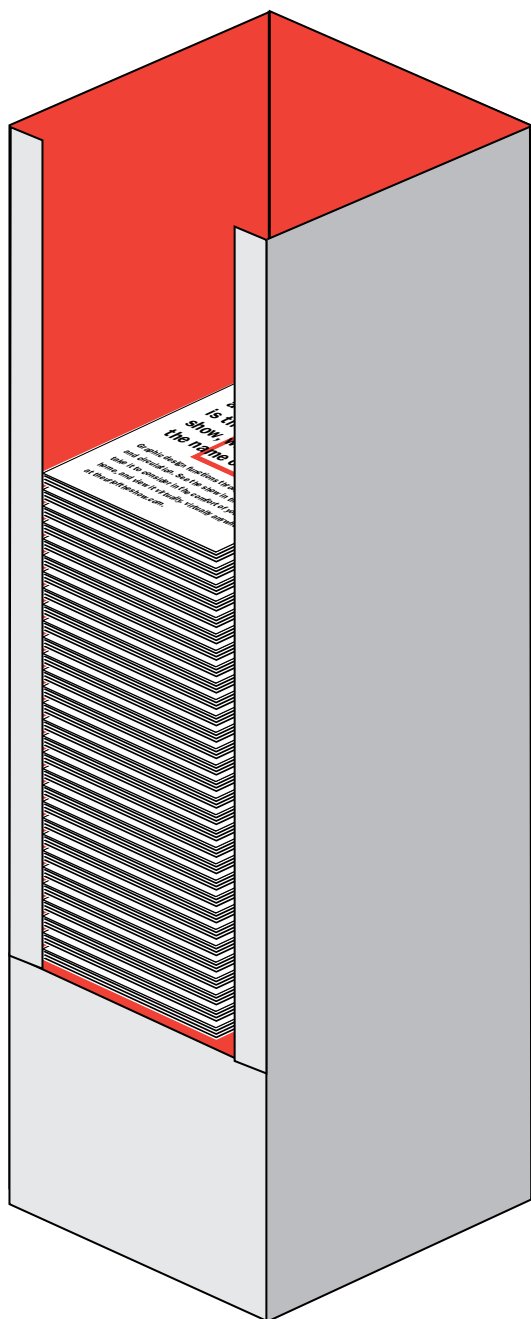
Transmission

Ink on newsprint on screen
Line, wave, motion, broadcast.
To advance and support through
mass communication.



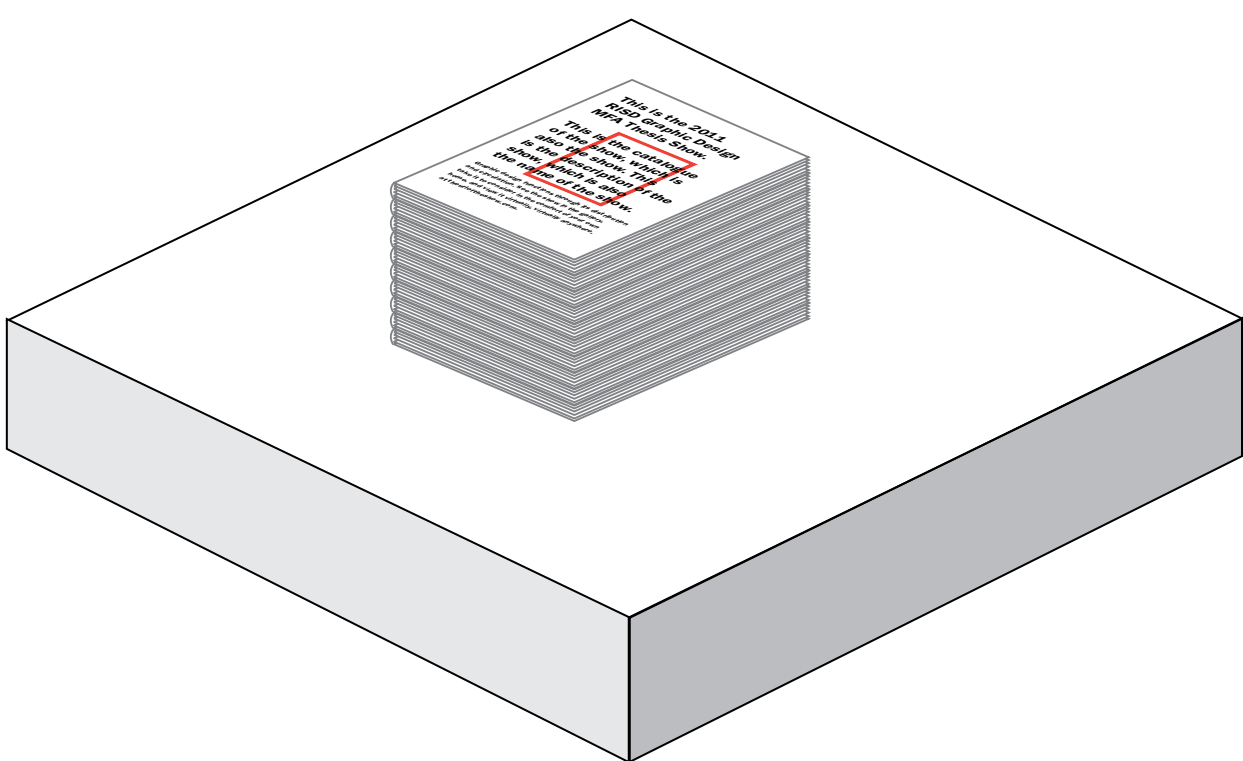
Language

Ink on newsprint through headphones
Visual, oral, aural, written, sign, body.
An agreed upon system of signs, sounds,
and gestures which communicate meaning.



Circulation

Ink on newsprint in circulation
A library, a newspaper, photosynthetic
energy. Continuous movement of material
and ideas through an established circuit.



Collection

Ink on newsprint on a low plinth
A group, a holding, an archive.
Material intentionally accumulated
in one location.

**This is the
poster of the
RISD Graphic
Design MFA
Thesis Show.**

May 20 –

June 4, 2011

**RI Convention
Center, Exhibit
Hall C.**

theurloftheshow.com