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You Can Teach Design: A Survival Guide for Studio Art Professors

Katharine Anne Grierson-Merryweather

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### You Can Teach Design: A Survival Guide for Studio Art Professors

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This thesis defines both design and the role of a designer, and includes an exploration of the differences between art and design. Additional topics covered are the history of design education, the principles of design, and the expectations for design education held by students and the design industry itself. From my own research and experiences as a professional designer and design instructor, I have outlined a curriculum on how to produce students who can create good designs, as well as know how to act as professional designers.

Keywords: design, design education, curriculum, business

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## Table of Contents

Title Page .....	i
Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgments .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Personal Creative Narrative .....	2
The Problem.....	4
Chapter 2: Review of Literature.....	6
What is Design? .....	6
What is a Designer? .....	8
Design Versus Art.....	10
Art and Design Education.....	11
A Brief History of Design Education .....	12
The Bauhaus.....	14
New Technology.....	15
Curriculum Theory.....	16
Foundations Programs .....	17
Design Thinking.....	18
Design Principles: Outdated or Necessary? .....	20
Relevance and Utility of Design Elements and Principles Today .....	23
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	25
Research Questions.....	26
Survey Research Methods.....	26
Chapter 4: Design Curriculum Rationale and Background .....	28
What the Design Industry Wants .....	28
What do Students Want and What do They Need? .....	30
Chapter 5: A Design Curriculum for Professional Design Students in a Foundations Program.....	33
The Elements and Principles of Design .....	34
Critiques and Constructive Criticism.....	38
Establishing the Student as a Designer in a Professional Context.....	41
Trading Services .....	44
Taxes and Business Licenses.....	45
Lesson Plan I. The Online Portfolio .....	47
Lesson Plan II. Social Media Design.....	52
Lesson Plan III. Multi Design Project.....	59
Lesson Plan IV. Design Inspiration .....	65
Lesson Plan V. Design Team.....	69

Chapter 6: Conclusion .....	76
References.....	78
Appendices.....	83
Appendix A.....	83
Appendix B.....	87
Appendix C.....	90

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Outside of school, I work as a freelance designer. Freelance or professional design is one of the most rapidly growing art-related fields, and many schools offer courses in this area. I have had the personal experience of conversing with a handful of college-level design professors, most of whom teach in the State of Utah. Through these informal inquiries I discovered that in some schools the only requirement for a college design instructor is a Master's degree in a complimentary area of study, such as painting. Some of the professors I spoke with have been asked to teach foundational and advanced design courses without having professional design backgrounds. I am aware that this may not be the case with all design programs, but this local inquiry reinforced the concerns I had about my experiences in design education. Although my undergraduate Art and Visual Communications degree was useful, there was a lot I had to learn after graduation to negotiate the intricacies of the design profession when I was asked by employers to work as a professional designer. Consequently, the primary focus of my thesis is to design a curriculum to help students with the transition from academic design to professional design.

This is an important issue to me because since leaving school I have run into many employers who feel that freshly graduated design students are lacking professional practice knowledge. They told me they would prefer that new hires have a thorough understanding of design, but also be aware of the day-to-day workings within design professions. Although art and design are often separate disciplines in schools, it could be beneficial for both of these disciplines to also be infused with lessons in professional practice.

Since then, I have come across many colleagues in the design field who have had a similar experience to mine; they were taught to create artwork, including designs as fine

artists, but were not provided with an education on how to become a successful designer, particularly in relation to the business side of the profession. Because of my personal experience and this informal inquiry with design employers and professionals, I decided that it might be helpful for instructors without any professional design experience to have a curriculum that might provide students with a taste of practical professional design procedures.

This thesis reviews some of the current dialogues about design education and the history of design education, but the main focus is to provide studio art or design instructors with a curriculum organized specifically for students who want to pursue a career in professional design. This curriculum is based on my own experiences as a freelance designer. The concepts and practices outlined in this course of study are often taught at a foundational design college level; hence this curriculum is intended for this level and for equivalent courses in high schools, such as the 2D Design Portfolio for the Advanced Placement in Studio Art Course. The curriculum focuses on fundamental practices and concepts for the beginning professional designer.

#### Personal Creative Narrative

Design is a part of my daily life and is in everything I do. People ask me if I am an artist, and I reply that I am not. Even though I paint and create wall sculptures in my free time, I am first and foremost a designer. If a room feels cluttered, I beautify and simplify the space. When I buy clothing, I am very particular with my selections as my body is another part of my visual surroundings and is an extension of my inner self. It would make sense then that I would clothe myself in simple bold lines and stick to my preferred design aesthetic, which is simplicity and elegance. In my occupation, I am a graphic designer, an interior designer, a

landscape designer, and a website designer. I also teach design at the university level. I teach not because I need to, but because of the simple fact that I felt my own undergraduate education did not prepare me to becoming a designer in the real world. I want to help young artists and designers who want to succeed in the design profession to be able to do so. I hope to provide them the tools, skills, and most importantly the experiences to prepare them for an actual career. It is my hope that this thesis will become an aid to studio art professors or high school art teachers who have been asked to teach design and enable them to provide students with instruction on the professional practices necessary to succeed.

I believe that my undergraduate art education failed me in the following practical ways: I had no idea how to find clients who would hire me; I didn't know anything about social networking or marketing as a business; I had no idea how to pay my taxes or set up my company through the state. I was ill prepared to handle the "project" process; I didn't understand the steps, nor did I know when it was appropriate to check in with the client during my creative process. There are many other obstacles that I encountered along the way to becoming a working designer, which my education left me unprepared for. I could create good designs, thanks to my qualified studio professors, but in a professional aspect I found myself lacking practical business knowledge that would aid me in my professional endeavors.

Why do I believe that my education was missing this vital part of necessary knowledge? I think it is because my art professors were most likely trained as artists, not as professional designers, and were required to teach design courses without having experience or knowledge about the possibilities of intersections between art and design. My undergraduate professors focused their instruction on art making and for whatever reason, I

missed the practicalities of professional design instruction. In chapter 2, I will elaborate on some of the differences between art and design.

### The Problem

After speaking to college design instructors, design employers, and many of my peers in the design industry, I have discovered that design instructors may have limited experience in the practical aspects of professional design. Yet the demand for training in professional design is increasing. More businesses have a heavy online presence or exist entirely online, which creates a greater demand for designers who can create marketing materials and visuals for these businesses. Even artists are required to maintain a distinct online presence, which often involves the practical application of design. Design has become the way for many young professionals who love art to have successful careers.

It is my belief that this need creates a dilemma for those universities who don't have professional design programs. As a consequence of the increased demand for professional designers and the requirement for at least basic knowledge about design, art instructors in some colleges now have the opportunity to teach design courses. Many art instructors have taught and continue to teach design, particularly in foundation courses. However, these faculty members do not usually teach more advanced courses in design disciplines and are not expected to teach students professional practices. Instead these practices are usually taught within the various design programs, such as graphic design, illustration, etc.

While fine art instructors may not have much training or experience in professional design, they have experiences that overlap with the practices of designers. In art education, for instance, instructors create a product of "curriculum and experiences" to meet predetermined expectations. That mirrors what a professional designer does. Instructors are

also designers of assessment, but instead of just having a single client as would a professional design project, they have three or more: the student, the parent(s), the school, and if instructing at the K-12 level, the district and the government. University art instructors also create guidelines for courses to determine what a student needs and then adapt their designs for specific purposes and audiences. I have realized that art instructors may already have more tools than I initially imagined that could be used to teach professional design practices.

A major goal for an art instructor is effective teaching, which should focus upon effective lesson plans for student learning. It is my belief that students can't know the extent of learning they will need after they graduate because they have not experienced the professional design world on their own. They are obtaining an education so that they will be prepared to meet the demands of their career and they trust their instructor to show them how. Ideally, the instructor adapts their curriculum to meet the anticipated needs of their students. I believe that incorporating my curriculum into a design course would help students connect their design work with a professional practice.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

My curriculum is directed toward art and design instructors whose students have an interest in pursuing design as a career. There are many art and design disciplines, but there are important distinctions between art and design in a general sense. It is important for the purposes of this thesis to distinguish between art and design and to understand what is usually meant by design. There are many parallels and overlaps between art and design; there are also differences between what a designer usually does and what an artist usually does within their creative processes or methods.

### What is Design?

To better comprehend education in all the professional design fields including; fashion design, graphic design, interior design, etc., we must begin by examining the words 'design' and 'designer.' First, the process of design can refer to creating. Synonyms one can substitute for 'design' are 'to fashion,' 'to execute,' and also 'to construct according to plan.' As designers, we function in a similar fashion to fine artists in that a work begins with the process of creating a visual form. The design process often follows a planned series of steps. Of course, these methods may differ from designer to designer, but the general practice remains consistent: conceptualizing, researching, assembling, and presenting. An idea is formulated, planned and then built upon, which ultimately results in an end product.

In a general sense, art often has expressive objectives, defined by the artist's wants and desires. Designers are usually constrained by the needs of a client and the function of the design or product. Design is intended to be useful and is often, from the beginning, a commercial enterprise. Art is often made without a client in mind and in the minds of some critics, is inherently useless (Jagodzinski, 2010). Of course, the methods and practices of

designers and artists frequently overlap so that an artist may be commissioned to create a portrait or a work for a museum and a designer may work toward purely expressive ends. The processes that artists use may be similar to the methods of designers. Nevertheless, there is a general distinction between the artist and designer of the designer working from a brief provided by a client.

For example, a design professional could create a new line of spring clothing, an interior for a living room, or a logo for a sporting goods company. As the piece is envisioned in the mind, it is usually sketched out by hand or on a computer application. While designing one might make a drawing, cut a pattern, or complete a sketch. Once developed, the design is taken to the client for approval or modification; then the designer or design team will make the appropriate changes and the design will be complete. Design and design education are largely concerned with an end result that is functional (Vande Zande, 2007, p.47).

The range of uses of the term 'design' is striking. It is a flexible and malleable word with a variety of meanings, applications and resonances. It is featured widely in mass media and popular culture. There are eleven definitions offered in the Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (2000), ranging from the functional, "to work out the structure or form of (something) as by making a sketch or plans"; the conceptual, "to invent"; and the positively sinister, "a plot, often to gain possession of (something) by illegitimate means." Design also turns up in conversational sayings and expressions, such as, "more by accident than design," where 'design' is used broadly to indicate intention rather than chance occurrence (Lyon, 2011).

With so many definitions it is difficult to pinpoint what design is for the purposes of this thesis. Art and design are terms used with such confidence in the world around us. They

have huge cultural weight and are very much embedded in the context of culture. Often, the more you try to understand what is meant by design, the more it seems to shift, change shape and gradually dissolve before your eyes (Lyon, 2011). How then can an instructor hope to prepare a student for work in the design world? What generally happens is that most foundations courses have no required professional practice component. Professional applications usually come later in a design education program and focus on specific disciplines within the field such as illustration or graphic design. Art instructors are usually trained in fundamental concepts of design. What my curriculum does is to combine professional practices with a foundations curriculum to help these teachers who might not otherwise have this personal knowledge.

What is a Designer?

A designer as defined by Webster is "one that designs." Whether it be a logo or an actual physical item, designers create "things" or products for a client or for consumer use. Designers rely upon plans, templates, and systems for design creation and they put their client's needs and desires above their own preferences.

There are different perspectives about what a designer should be and what they need to accomplish. These ideas can be practical, romanticized, and sometimes even unrealistic. In the forward in a book titled *Form Function and Design*, Paul Jacques Grillo writes to a young designer: "To you, anonymous hero knighted by the gods and entrusted by them to design the environment of mankind for the years to come, I dedicate this book ..." (Grillo, 1960, p.4). His ideas refer back to ancient mythology where design was an act of creation, reserved for deity.

Stepping away from the popular and the normal can be a challenge for anyone. Perhaps Grillo's view of what a designer should be is not so far-fetched after all. His bold

declaration was written in a period of great social optimism. The sense of being able to improve 'mankind' through human skill and effort was very strong, and design is portrayed here as central to this mission of improvement (Lyon, 2011). Grillo's interpretation of what a designer does is still relevant today when designers seek solutions to social or ecological challenges.

In addition to manipulating visual forms, the designer often functions as a storyteller. As storytellers, designers create new languages of forms with which we identify everyday objects and the messages that they carry. Sudjic, a British writer and broadcaster, specializing in the fields of design and architecture, believed that the role of the designer today is to make design that speaks in such a way as to convey stories or messages, while resolving formal and functional problems (Sudjic, 2008).

The idea of a designer as a maker leads to significant historical traditions of making and the divergence in different types of design and design education (Lyon, 2011). Fuller describes the designer as, "An emerging synthesis of artist, inventor, mechanic, objective economist and evolutionary strategist" (Fuller, 1969, p. 72). If I told my students that this was the world's expectation of them, they might run for the hills before ever picking up a pencil.

I like this simplified version better: "Designers know it is their duty to map the future, to invent and make things we need, things we can use" (Helfand, 2016, p.54). It defines designers as makers who can change society through the creation of functional objects. Students today may not have such noble desires. In fact, they may not be concerned with society at all. It is my belief that as design instructors it is our duty to at least present this way of thinking as an option. Some of the multi-faceted characteristics of design include; design as a link from creativity to innovation, design as a source of competitive distinction, design as an

approach to planning and problem-solving, design as a means of creating order out of chaos, and design as an approach to systems thinking (Swann, 2010). The boundaries of design and design education are contested and often overlap. As an art or design educator, an important aspect of a course of study is to prepare your students as best you can for a professional career.

### Design Versus Art

"The primary difference between teaching art and teaching design is that design education is concerned with an end result that is functional" (Vande Zande, 2007, p.47). I asked dozens of university and college design professors across the United States what they felt was the difference between art and design (see Appendix C for the survey questions). Of the dozens of surveys sent out only about one fourth were returned. Among those surveyed, my favorite explanation of design was: "Design focuses on solving a particular problem or fulfilling a specific purpose. Art attempts to ask questions or explore aesthetic questions without feeling compelled to solve the problem. Art flourishes in ambiguity." Stated more simply, art asks questions and design offers solutions.

The word "functional" is probably the word most often used to describe successful design. In my experience, design must function properly for it to be of any use, whether it be to provoke a response from the viewer, an actual design object that is used, or a design system that needs to work properly. Functional design, maybe more than other modes of expression, is subject to changes that occur in lifestyles, aesthetics, economics, and technology (Helfand, 2016). Designers have a difficult task. Their work is being influenced by many outlying factors and yet at the end of the day it must still serve its purpose. My belief is that, if good

design is design that is functional, then a good design education is the study of creating functional designs.

### Art and Design Education

Learning to understand and create designs that are functional is becoming especially significant as visual culture becomes more important in art education curriculum, pedagogy, and theory. Our culture is exposed to design every day and the demand for well-designed products is increasing. I think that teaching design and how it functions should be an integral component of contemporary art education because so much visual culture is connected to design. When design is considered in foundations design courses it is often represented through compositional design rather than functional design. However, there are exceptions. For example, "The Museum of Design in Atlanta conducts popular design classes for students, grades 3-12, and the Design Camp for high school students at the University of Minnesota was featured in Metropolitan Home (Klienmen, 2003) as being one of the best design ideas in 2002. There are other design programs offered through architectural organizations across the country. Most of what is being addressed is functional design" (Vande Zande, 2007, p.47).

Design, like art, has many purposes, ranging from the crass or kitschy to the commercial to the humanitarian. Through its close links with the economic systems of production and consumption, design is often nearer to the marketplace than its cultural neighbors such as art, photography, music and literature (Sparke, 2009). In some ways, it seems that we cannot escape from the artifacts of our designed culture. "Aesthetic and utilitarian art are not only conflated, but are subsumed in commercialism - not only architectural projects and art exhibitions but everything from jeans to genes - seems to be regarded as so much design" (Foster, 2002, p.17).

Just because many professionals see good design as design that is functional doesn't mean that design's only purpose is to meet a client's needs. Design, by its very nature, is a practical art with a public or commercial focus, but it can still benefit from emotional infusion and the passion of its creator. One of the design instructors I interviewed felt that he works in a space that blurs the boundaries between art and design: "There is a client focused "Problem Solving" aspect to commercial design that needs to be addressed in design education, but design also has the ability to function in a contemporary art space which is in line with the history of design and art if you look back to *de stijl*, constructivism, dada etc. There is also the 'designer as author' movement of the last couple of decades where designers are functioning more and more in-line with the self-authorship impetus of fine art. I try to encourage both ways of working and thinking" (Survey response, 2017). This instructor is doing his best to arm his students for success in the ever-changing paradigm that is the world of professional design.

#### A Brief History of Design Education

In the United States before World War I, apprenticeship was generally the only option for those seeking an education in the arts. Apprenticeship to a master was how artist and artisans received their instruction – it was demonstration by a master and imitation by the apprentice. This ancient tradition was a process of craft-based instruction in which known patterns and techniques were taught from the master (teacher) to their apprentice (student). The advantage of such a method was that masters rarely had more than one or two apprentices. Because one-on-one instruction was a constant, normal pattern of learning, students quickly accumulated both skills and knowledge pertaining to their field of study. The

disadvantage of this type of instruction was that the apprentice's individual freedom of expression was subordinate to the collective application of known patterns (Brown, 2009).

After the First World War, there was a dramatic increase in the teaching of visual arts in colleges and universities across the United States. I speculate that after the Great War and its extreme focus on survival and the base characteristics of humanity, individuals wanted to be reminded of that which is lovely within us. That beauty has always been found in the arts. Not only this, but the fact that art has a way of crossing geographical and language barriers was likely a large part of the increased desire to participate in the arts. Art gave people a way to make a better world through beauty and communication. In a number of liberal arts colleges, the study of art by means of an introductory course in studio studies, or a survey course in the appreciation or history of art, became standard. Over half of all the colleges and universities in the US were teaching art by 1925. By 1941, the percentage was closer to two-thirds (Efland, 1990).

As a result of this newfound interest in art education, a second major development was made through the establishment of professionally oriented university art departments. Before this time such a thing was unheard of. At the turn of the century, professional art departments of the quality of the Yale's art school were rare. Professional training was available in professional art schools, such as Pratt Institute or the Rhode Island School of Design, but rarely was this available in the university setting (Efland, 1990). The dramatic increase in American art education programs paved the way for the design programs that would branch off from this structured pattern.

A product of Victorian concerns with global economic competitiveness and manufactured goods, formal design education had its roots firmly planted in the Industrial

Revolution. Today, contemporary design is still heavily linked with business and industry. After the heyday of the Art Nouveau designer, one hero of modernism was the artist-as-engineer or the author-as-producer, but this figure was toppled in turn with the industrial order that supported it, and in our consumerist world the designer again rules (Foster, 2002, p.17).

Before the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most design students entered their field through the apprentice model and worked their way up. This period of was titled the "know-how design" or designs as a craft. Classes that were solely design focused were rarely offered in universities. Even if a student did complete a fine art degree, they then had to apprentice under another designer before they would be hired for any projects (Efland, 1990).

### The Bauhaus

Developed by German architect Walter Gropius in 1919, The Bauhaus was an art school that at its foundation presented an entirely new concept for the world of art and design: it was to reimagine the material world to reflect the unity of all the arts. Gropius had a unique vision, believing that one could unify art and design. He developed a "craft-based" curriculum, which would produce both artisans and designers. These professionals would be capable of creating useful yet beautiful objects appropriate to this new system of living. The desire to unify art and design meant that both had to be present in his education system. The curriculum contained courses that immersed the students in the study of materials, color theory, and formal relationships, after which they would move on to more specialized studies (Winton, 2007). Barney and Graham explain:

The Bauhaus was a sustained, fourteen year cross media conversation about the nature of art that sought to re-imagine the relationships between fine art and design. Its approach to pedagogy was based on the workshop, where an understanding of

materials and technical experience was complemented by aesthetic ambition. The need for a preliminary course led to the search for fundamentals that would be universal to all visual expression and that would erase boundaries between fine and applied arts. Art was built upon a foundation of abstract principles, and ultimately would function together within a fully designed environment that would be a new structure for the future (Dickerman, 2012 as cited in Barney & Graham, 2014). The defining feature of this legend is the metaphor of a foundation built upon timeless abstract laws, the elements of design and issues of form, color, and materials (Barney & Graham, 2014, p 21).

Despite recent trends in digital design, the principles embraced by the Bauhaus are still important parts of most design programs, especially in foundation or core areas.

#### New Technology

With the growth of digital technological in the 1990s, old methods of learning, including the workshop approach for implementing Bauhaus ideas, were modified and pushed aside in favor of new technologies including computer design applications. These applications catered more to designs created by an individual rather than the craftsmanship model where a designer needed a master to learn from. Digital design included design software that came with tutorials so the students could now learn on their own. The main mechanism that molded this style of learning was the development of new design software and the skills that were required to use these technologies. This style of learning was titled "know-that design" by 2005 AIGA Medalist Meredith Davis, because it was solely based upon obtaining the knowledge to properly use a specific computer program or programs.

Today many colleges continue to teach design classes using this, "know-that design" discipline format (Davis, 2008). The problem that arises as a result is college design curricula based upon these older models of pedagogy fails to acknowledge issues that drive emerging practices. "Faculty dispute the evidence of change. They argue that their program prepares students for form-making leadership" (Davis, 2008). How can educators be certain that their programs are adequate and support what is relevant now? The designers of the future need to be able to understand commercialism and use that knowledge to create designs that speak to humanity on a different level.

Some designers classify designing as art making. They view the extra constraints of their client's expectations and effective public understanding as part of their creative process. As such, they focus less on the monetary elements of design making and do this type of work because they enjoy it. Nevertheless, instruction is still needed to connect designers to potential clients and to help them work with those clients. There are many more aspects to a good design education, but those ideas can be covered in more advanced design courses. My curriculum focuses on the professional designer and the client/designer relationship. "The younger generation of educators will have to do more than follow the patterns of their own education. They will have to design learning for the twenty-first century" (Davis, 2008, p.11).

#### Curriculum Theory

There are as many ways to teach students as there are different types of instructors. Many current theories on education have changed the way design is being taught in university courses today. I reviewed the websites of various design programs across the US, Canada, and the UK and found significant philosophical and pedagogical differences, along with divergent descriptions of desired student learning outcomes. Design education is experiencing rapid

changes as well as significant overlaps in methodologies and blurring of boundaries among disciplines. The trend is toward interdisciplinary collaboration and experimentation. New media, including digital media, are transforming the way children, students, and adults see art and design and the roles of artists and designers in society. I would like to think that my curriculum falls within the parameters of collaboration and experimentation by teaching students to work with clients and each other to become stronger designers.

As happened with the Bauhaus movement, many designers today have chosen to step away from older design methods. Instead, they seek to solve design problems in the context of social trends and issues. Design instructors should also seek to engage students in design practices, beyond the elements and principles of design. Instructors should introduce students to professional practices and teach ideas about design in a way that allows students to be guided by their own learning processes with hands-on, real life learning scenarios.

#### Foundations Programs

The discussion of foundations content and pedagogy is germane to this study because this is where students are initiated into both art and design content and pedagogy.

Foundations within college art programs have many different purposes and often include a composite of critical thinking, technical skills, formalist principles, and conceptual skills (Barney & Graham, 2014; Graham & Sims-Gunzenhauser, 2010). There is often a strong, taken-for-granted sentiment that students should develop functional competence in manipulating the basic elements, principles, and vocabulary of visual art (Dickerman, 2012 as cited in Barney & Graham, 2014). Some of the areas of focus students must choose from include graphic design, communication design, visual communication design, interaction design, advertising design, and multimedia design.

Other studies of design programs highlight the importance of design in promoting social change and economic opportunity (Van Zande, 2011). The landscape of art and design education at the university level is rapidly changing due to changing communities of practice and debates about the content and teaching within various art and design disciplines. In 2008, the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) formed a working group to research Design Education in the United States. They found that over 45,000 students were enrolled annually in design programs. This study noted that industry models emphasize cross-disciplinary work within design disciplines and often include collaboration with media, communications and computer experts rather than fine artists and historians. These projects are typically team-based projects, rather than the work of a solo artist, and include work produced on behalf of a client or an organization. There is also a distinction between design disciplines and fine art disciplines that the Bauhaus sought to erase, but which seems to be deeply entrenched in both the thinking and practice of many art programs (Barney & Graham, 2014).

### Design Thinking

An increasingly important area in design education at the foundation level is the idea of design thinking. Design thinking focuses on increasing collaboration and creativity among interdisciplinary teams. For instance, the Stanford d.school program is a hub for innovators including both students and faculty across disciplines. Part of their mission states, "In a time when there is a hunger for innovation everywhere, we think our primary responsibility is to help prepare a generation of students to rise with the challenges of our times. We define what it means to be a d.school student broadly, and we support "students" of design thinking who range from kindergarteners to senior executives. Our deliberate mash-up of industry,

academia and the big world beyond campus is a key to our continuing evolution" (Stanford, 2017). Design thinking is particularly relevant to my discussions about design and to the curriculum that I have developed because of its emphasis on design as a collaborative, interdisciplinary process in which empathy with user needs is paramount.

In his introduction to Design Thinking, Thomas Lockwood opined, "Design thinking is essentially a human-centered innovation process that emphasizes observation, collaboration, fast learning, visualization of ideas, rapid concept prototyping, and concurrent business analysis" (Lockwood, 2009, p. 4). Promoting both analytical and creative avenues of thought can assist with business success. Greater solutions can be found using design thinking because it encourages individuals to rely on their intuition and to experiment throughout the process. Design thinking integrates business strategies allowing failures to be viewed as opportunities for learning and growth.

Lockwood outlines five key guidelines that are used within the design thinking process to implement this methodology of innovation and enablement. The first is developing an understanding of the consumer; viewing a product or service from the consumer's point of view opens possibilities and solutions during the development phase to improve the final result. Second, collaborating with the consumer; implementing teams to analyze the different needs of the consumer to maximize innovation and add value. Third, implementing visual prototypes; the creation of visual prototypes such as hands-on experimentations, mock-ups, dioramas, and 3-D modeling, will reduce excess spending of company resources and allow for discovery of needed improvements. Fourth, presentation of visual concepts; most effective when working directly with the consumer during the development process to provide them with visual stories, prototypes, etc. so that design concepts are made tangible. Finally,

utilizing business analysis; ensuring that associated costs and budgets are being monitored throughout the project to ensure that the final products meets the needs and demands of the consumer.

My curriculum focuses heavily on the relationship between designer and client. As such, design thinking compliments this approach to the creative process. "We need new, transformative corporate strategies that are based on human needs, not just financial analysis. We know that innovation drives business differentiation, and that design drives innovation" (Neumeier, 2009, p. 17).

Design Principles: Outdated or Necessary?

"This characteristic of art objects — the total design based upon order, consistency, rhythm, harmony and balance of the lines, shapes, masses, colors, light values and textures enables us to recognize art quality in an item of material culture" (Lewis, 1961, p.224).

The first time I was asked to teach a course on design I was given a textbook that focused solely on the principles and elements of design. I was told that my students were required to purchase it and that I needed to cover the material it contained during my course. In the 20th century, serious formal experimentation and study of design principles was done by such groups as the Constructivists, de Stijl, Supremacists, and the Bauhaus. Through their studies, they were able to create a list of principles and elements of design that we still use today. I have included a list of these terms below this section. Several prominent artists also studied and contributed to various forms of design principles including Moholy-Nagy, who wrote a book on design, *Vision in Motion*, and Josef Albers, who spent a lifetime studying the interaction of colors (Daley, 2015).

I had been taught all of these concepts during secondary school, but had never been given a particular list of terms that broke down the ideas for me. Some scholars argue over the relevance of the principles and elements of design in modern design education discourse saying they are outdated and incomplete, stating, "When you design a curriculum around the elements and principles, I believe you are doing the students a great disservice. [Design is] about ideas and feelings and connections and creativity and all those wonderful things that we love. When you take all of that away and just teach zigzag lines, you are taking away all that [design] is and leaving nothing of value" (Ingram, 2015, p.5). These critics argue that lessons based on the elements and principles of design may be meaningless to students; "Often these assignments equate to colorful, abstract compositions that would rarely parallel a professional, commercial design project" (Kent, 2012).

Olivia Gude (2004, 2013), for example, suggests that the elements and principles of design are insufficient for 21st century art making and only a weak reflection of an avant-garde that was inspirational 100 years ago. She describes postmodern principles of art-making including appropriation, re-contextualization, layering, and hybridity. Her approach includes development of expanded self-awareness, self-forming ideas, empowered making, and community themes as a basis for art making. According to Gude, a good art project encodes complex aesthetic strategies, gives students tools to investigate and make meaning, and uses the actual methodologies of artists. In contrast to abstracted, universal principles, it may include post-studio practices that emphasize concept and repurposing of forms and materials that are culturally situated. Similarly, Terry Barrett (2007, 2011) suggests that postmodern approaches such as working collaboratively, layering, mixing codes, and collapsing boundaries are new and generative ways to frame art education.

There is also an ongoing debate about the nature and purposes of undergraduate studio training (Madoff, 2009; Lupton, 2005). Programs vary depending on how they define skill and how much they depart from Bauhaus models as well as how much they integrate digital culture and the design disciplines that are concerned with clients and commercial enterprises. For example, some design educators have called for renewed attention to the development of skills, including conceptual skills, technical skills, and critical skills (Lupton, 2005). These instructors argue that design principles are a good foundation for more sophisticated work. The principles and elements of design can act as an essential guide that helps students learn to recognize "successful" design no matter what particular style is used.

The elements and principles of design are also referred to as design foundations, because any designer can use shared vocabulary when discussing their work. Design educators in particular adhere to these ideas of shared principles of design that are independent of media applications. The elements and principles of design are applicable to both 2D design and 3D design works. "Though there is an intrinsic element of play in a foundation-level class, this approach helps lay the groundwork for more sophisticated design rhetoric and practice" (Bush, 2012, p.22). The elements and principles of design have been compared to building blocks that are used when creating a piece of art. They can be thought of as the things that make up a painting, drawing, or design. Good or bad, all paintings will contain most of if not all of the elements of design. The principles of design can be thought of as what we do to the elements of design. For proponents of this approach, if design principles are applied to a composition then one is more likely to end up with a successful piece.

Of course, this view of universal principles obscures how all language, including design language, is embedded in culture and reflects cultural assumptions and tropes. An

important area of investigation that is beyond the scope of this thesis is a deconstruction of the elements and principles of design to explore how they limit artistic expression and what affordances they offer.

If we want our students to become makers, should design education consist solely of studio practice that is focused on practicing proper design principles? Students who are in secondary design programs are often given a step-by-step tutorial and then asked to replicate the image they see, demonstrating their ability to learn a particular function of a program. I was taught this way and although it was very helpful for acquiring new skills, it included no creative time whatsoever. Studio practice is of course invaluable for any creative discipline. It introduces learning through 'doing' and a distinction is often made between the teaching of 'techniques' and 'creative' activity. Implicit in the tradition of studio teaching is the notion that information is transferred into knowledge only through the experience of making, "happy accidents and all" (Raein, 2003, p.168). However, students require more than just studio time and design principles to create good design. I think they also need real life challenges and instruction on effective professional practices.

#### Relevance and Utility of Design Elements and Principles Today

Students should learn from the history of other design professionals. Taking time to teach and review the principles and elements of design foundation class is essential for creating stronger, more self-reliant professionals (Bush, 2012). It is also very important to realize that while students need to learn these design principles, it is even more vital that they are allowed the freedom of creativity. Artists have the privilege of creating things for themselves, whereas designers almost always have to create for others. As designers, engaging in design seems to be something that is as much 'felt' as it is 'thought.' It is often

triggered by instinct and characterized by intellectual and creative leaps. Design learning can seem to be a process that happens best when the designer is stimulated, open to, and affected by different environments and issues "in the grip of excitement about the possibilities open to them" (Lyon, 2011).

I have created posters that define and give a visual example for each of the principles and elements of design. I hang them up every time I teach so they are easily accessible for the students. I also encourage them to use these words as supportive terminology when speaking about a design whether it be for a critique or just as a general observation. Getting students familiar with these terms is vital for their own use in future designs and in participating in the discourse of the field.

### Chapter 3: Research Methodology

For this thesis, I have chosen to use an autobiographical lens within case study methodology as a way to analyze and interpret my experiences and data. This study stems largely from my own perceptions as an undergraduate student and autobiographical narrative inquiry allows me to focus on my own stories of experience (Meier 2013). As Kailin explains, "Autobiographical inquiry aims to increase understanding of experience through a dialectic relationship among past, present, and future actions. By revisiting the past from the perspectives of the present, we can become more aware of how we have been socially and historically constructed by education, media, memory, discourses, practices, institutions, ideologies, and power relations" (Kalin, 2013, p.235). As a form of research, a case study is defined by focusing one's interest on an individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used. Even the name "case study" draws specific attention to what can be learned by examining a single case. A case study is organized around ideas and questions. Like many methods of qualitative research, it has a conceptual structure; questions posed are not limited to yes or no answers, but seek to delve into a thorough examining of issues within the case. Approaching questions in this manner can help to deepen understanding of a specific case.

Auto-biographical self-study approaches are considered to be a legitimate form of inquiry that place important emphasis on the personal experience of the researcher (Bulloch & Pinegar, 2001; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). My own experiences as a student and as a professional designer provide both the motivation for this study and important insights about the topics.

## Research Questions

I have already outlined my personal reasons for selecting the topic of this thesis in Chapter 1. I hoped to unearth the answers a few important queries; Why did my design education not prepare me for my later work as a professional designer? How can a foundations course in design orient students toward the realities of working in the field? I wondered if I was an anomaly that had slipped through the system or whether there were trends in design education that would lead other students to follow in my footsteps. The research questions that guide this study include: What is design and how it is related to or different from art? What is the history of design education? Is knowledge of the principles and elements of design enough to guide an aspiring design student? What do art instructors need to know about the professional applications of design?

## Survey Research Methods

At the beginning of my research, in order to gather more information from other foundations level design professors, I sent out an informal survey. A copy of this survey can be found in Appendix C. A survey methodology for my study was appropriate since I was attempting to give my own experiences context within the field of design education. This type of research gathers data from a particular population or group by asking a controlled sequence of inquiries. I felt this type of methodology would be appropriate because I could quickly and easily gather information from a wide demographic of design instructors.

In this survey, my intention was to investigate and clarify the reasons or to provide additional context for the apparent gap in my design education regarding professional practices. I was looking for trends and commonalities that might explain the reasons behind

this deficit. Of the seventy-five surveys were sent out to random foundations level instructors across the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada only seven responded.

Although this thesis does pull information from these responses from other design professors, as well as disparate arguments from scholars, the majority of the results of my inquiry are based upon my own experiences in the field of professional design as I shifted roles over the past decade from design student to design professional. These insights are reflected in the curriculum, which I have constructed as a response to my perceived shortcomings in foundational design education. I hope that this curricular response will give foundation level design instructors who don't have a professional design backing some tools to give their students a greater understanding of the profession.

## Chapter 4: Design Curriculum Rationale and Background

"If art school education and foundation programs, as the initial experience of that education, are intended primarily to develop the person, careful thought must be given to crafting curricula and pedagogy relevant to citizens of the 21st century" (Salazar, 2013). This design curriculum is not a comprehensive overview of teaching design; rather, it focuses on elements that are often ignored in teaching foundations design: how a student can transition from academic work to working as a professional designer. Hence, much of this material focuses on those things a designer must do to reach clients, communicate with potential clients, and other business practices.

### What the Design Industry Wants

As a design educator, it is very important to understand what employers are looking for when hiring a designer. If you know this information then you can structure your curriculum accordingly. In 2008, the Professional Association for Design (AIGA), and Adobe formed the Visionary Design Council through which they collaborated about what they believed are desirable qualifications and characteristics for a designer (Davis, 2008). They concluded that a contemporary designer needs to be an expert in four specific areas.

The first area they discussed was consistency in design concepts within the complexity in the scale of designs. It is important for designers to have a firm grasp on what things should be considered when designing on a massive scale versus a small one. Many clients today want things that all "match" in style and feel, yet are unique enough to draw the attention of their audiences. For example; the logo matches the menus, the paper cups, and the fliers. They should be from the same family of design style. Designing with the whole picture in mind is a

critical skill every design student needs to learn. It is a mandatory skill for the contemporary designer.

Second, designers need to consider for whom they are designing. Too often design students say, "Well, this is just my style," as a crutch for being unable to step away from one particular visual signature. A home-style steakhouse isn't going to want bamboo flooring and modern artwork. It is very important, as a designer, to be able to blend your own design preferences with your clients' needs. Your personal taste may differ from theirs, but in the end your clients are the ones paying you and their satisfaction with your designs should be the focus. A designer works through their client's design aesthetic and for their client's needs. They should be concerned primarily with their client's vision and end goal rather than their own. For instance, I had a client who wanted to open a day spa. I created a conceptual design portfolio that was based upon a Japanese/Zen aesthetic with minimalistic high end finishes and soft muted tones. She had expressed this should be a place for relaxation. In my mind this design exemplified this vision. She had a different vision. She wanted jewel tones and exotic furnishings with a Middle Eastern flair. As a designer, I had to let go of my preconceived notions and create something that met her vision while still meeting her original criteria.

The third point made by AIGA is that, "Designers must be aware of how to design and participate in social interactions" (Davis, 2008, p.13). In particular, this point focuses on the design of social media. This may be an unexpected area of expertise for a designer, but this is something people need and expect from a professional. Social interaction design anticipates what happens at the social level when a community of users engages with your product. This is something that many clients are asking me to create for them. They assume that as a designer I will understand the inner workings of social media and at the very least set up their

accounts with proper images and descriptions. As an example, a client who owned a dance studio hired me to create marketing materials for targeting young dancers (ages 3-5). In addition to creating posters and website banners, the client asked me to create social media accounts for this campaign. That client realized that she would benefit greatly from utilizing the marketing potential of social media. Many of her existing customers would post/tag pictures of their children in these classes and share them with their friends from her social media page. This created free advertising for her and eventually led to a larger clientele.

Details about this area of social interactions can be found in the curriculum lessons in Chapter 5. Social media design has many things in common with urban planning, architecture of open spaces, traffic planning, as well as markets and economies (Chan, 2009). Expertise in social media and the ability to demonstrate to students its benefits, both for their clients and their product users, as well as the designer themselves is an important skill for instructors.

Finally, AIGA concludes that there is a demand for a knowledge base that supports new practices. Almost every client and design firm wants someone who is on the cutting edge of the industry. Everyone wants to see something new and unique. In my design curriculum, I have my students learn from the past, but also teach them the importance of being flexible and having the ability to adapt to present and future trends as a designer. More information on this subject is located in Chapter 5: Multi-Design Project.

What do Students Want and What do They Need?

Salazar's study of college level teaching supported the importance of foundation level learning.

When I led Masters of Fine Arts seminars in college studio pedagogy, the students, who were at the same time employed as graduate assistants in first year studio art

classes, reflected on their own art education and discussed their observations of teaching and learning in the first-year studio courses in which they were assisting. This anecdotal data suggested that, while disconnects occurred at many levels of post secondary education, challenges of learning were most apparent in the foundation year of art college. (Salazar, 2013, p. 18)

The importance of foundation level design was reinforced in my own teaching. Many of my students have told me at the end of the semester that my course is their favorite course they have taken because they feel like they are better prepared to enter the world of design professionals. Not only that, but they reported that they enjoyed the challenges I presented to them and now view their own work in new and exciting ways.

What are design students looking for? According to Salazar, "The learning students valued most was dispositional: risk taking, self-discipline, appreciating, multiple points of view, being confident, and living a creative life" (2013, p.17). None of these ideas have anything to do with software skills or creating better designs; they all focus on the designer as a person. I have tried to work all of these learning dispositions into the curriculum I built for this thesis. I believe that my lesson plans will help students build design skills and become more confident and competent designers within the context of professional design. When I present my assignments to my students I make sure to have an open dialogue with them about the range of skills taught and how such skills might be put to use in various contexts.

Among the survey responses from art and design instructors there was a wide variation of philosophies used for teaching design at a foundations level. In spite of these differences, there is a need for students to have an orientation toward professional design practices. My

curriculum responds to this need and has application within a broad range of approaches to the teaching of design.

## Chapter 5:

### A Design Curriculum for Professional Design Students in a Foundations Program

This professional design foundation curriculum is organized to allow students to build upon skills and knowledge in a logical sequence. The curriculum addresses the development of design skills while focusing on the practical, creative, analytical, technical, and communication skills appropriate for professional design practice.

Students move forward throughout the semester through increasingly more complex learning experiences that help them build competency to appropriately identify and solve problems related to the rich contextual relationship that exists between themselves, their peers, and their clients.

Lesson Number	Lesson Title	Description
Introduction	Business Tools	Critiques, Students as Designers, Communication, Trading Services, Taxes and Business Licenses
Lesson Plan 1	Online Portfolio	Help students create an online portfolio for presenting work in a professional manner and also for grading purposes
Lesson Plan 2	Social Media Design	Familiarize students with effective social media practices and implementing them throughout the course
Lesson Plan 3	Multi Design Project	Encourage student innovation and creativity by transforming student work
Lesson Plan 4	Design Inspiration	Educate students about designers of the past and how to implement good design practices and investigate current trends
Lesson Plan 5	Design Team	Help students to work as a team and recognize the benefits of collaboration
Table 1 Curriculum Outline		

These lesson plans outlined above in Table 1 are meant to augment a foundations level design course by adding important elements of professional practice. They are based upon my own experiences as a design student who became a freelance design professional. My general approach is to give students projects that they can find interest in. I give them some basic requirements and constraints, but let them shape their projects to their own imaginations. Before I describe the specific lessons, I have included more general descriptions and commentary about the elements and principles of design, critiques, communication, trading services, and taxes and business licenses.

### The Elements and Principles of Design

It is highly important to have a common language for students to use when reviewing and analyzing their designs. The elements and principles of design are also important historical ideas within the history of design. Why wouldn't we take what we know of the past and use it to make ourselves more successful? I often tell my students is that once you know all the rules it becomes easier to use them, bend them, or even sometimes break them altogether. More importantly if you know the rules you know which ones to use for your advantage. Before a foundations level student can tackle a design problem wherein they must communicate a visual message, they must learn the fundamental design rules (Bush, 2012).

Daley and Bryant discuss the history of the elements and principles of design stating that they "Use a taxonomy that has its origin in the late nineteenth century, primarily in Western Europe, and which became embedded in twentieth-century modernism" (2015, p. 43). They explain that by the end of the nineteenth century these academic models were set aside in favor of more aesthetic models based on process and pure form. The foundational concepts formulated by Johannes Itten for the Bauhaus curriculum, "with many modifications,

is still used today in most college and art school fine art programs. The formal elements and principles of design remain the same, but are now also applied to time-based, electronic media such as video and digital animation. In a postmodern foundation curriculum, more emphasis is placed on combining formal investigation with content issues and narratives" (p. 58).

While there are many different versions of the principles and elements of design, the descriptions included below reflect the standard concepts that are found in many design texts. These ideas are common to many design foundation courses. Designers benefit from the shared vocabulary of the elements and principles of design and they can prepare students with the necessary tools needed to create designs for an ever-evolving design world.

### Line

A line is simply a point in motion. It can have varying thickness, texture, color, and can move in any direction. Linear marks can be made with a pen, brush, or any other tool including design software. Line is one of the simplest and easiest ways to depict emotion in a composition.

### Shape

A shape is a self-contained, defined area of geometric or organic form. A shape can be a circle, square, rectangle, polygon, trapezoid, star, crescent, ellipse, or even amoeba-like form. Something to remember is that when you create a positive shape in a design, you automatically create a negative shape.

### Direction

All lines have direction - horizontal, vertical or oblique. Horizontal lines can create a feeling of calmness in your design, stability, and offer a firm foundation. Vertical lines can

present a feeling of balance and give a composition a formal feel. Oblique lines can move the eye across the surface of a composition, giving the piece a feeling of action.

### Size

Size is simply the relationship of one object or area when compared to another object or area.

### Texture

Texture is an element of design that describes the surface quality of the image. It can be actual physical (tactile) texture but can also refer to impasto or visual (implied) texture created by the illusion of texture. Some examples of texture are: rough, smooth, soft hard, and glossy.

### Color

The color of an object or area in a composition. Also called the hue.

### Value

Value simply refers to the lightness or darkness of a color. Value is also called tone.

## Principles of Design

### Balance

There are three types of visual balance: symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial.

Symmetrical balance is where objects of equal size are placed an equal distance from one another in relation to the center of a composition. Asymmetrical composition balance rules are similar to the rules that govern balance in physics. A large shape, which is placed in near the center of a composition, can be balanced by a small shape, which is placed closer to the edge of the composition. This is applicable not just to physical size, but also to the tone of the objects; a small dark toned shape will balance a large light toned shape. Radial balance is an

all-around balance, like the petals of a flower. All the weight is easily balanced and radiates from a center point.

### Gradation

Gradation is simply moving from an area of light to an area of darkness. This principle can be very helpful when creating linear perspective (gradation of size) and aerial perspective (gradation of color). Gradation can also add interest and movement to a composition. A gradation can help to move an eye through a composition.

### Repetition

Repetition can be a great tool for adding interest to a design. Repetition with variation is interesting and without variation repetition can become monotonous. When variation is introduced, repetitious objects are much more interesting to look at and can no longer be absorbed with a single glance. The individual character of each object needs to be considered. If you wish to create interest, any repeating element should include a degree of variation.

### Contrast

Visual contrast is the juxtaposition of opposing elements within a composition. There are several different types: Color Contrast – This contrast is achieved by using opposite colors on the color wheel such as red and green or blue and orange, etc. Value Contrast – This is contrast in a composition's tone or value - light vs. dark. Directional Contrast – Lines or objects that create lines (physic lines) can create horizontal and vertical movement across a composition. Directional contrast is simply using vertical and horizontal elements in an uneven amount. The major contrast in a design should be located at the focal point. Too much contrast can make a design seem unfocused and busy while too little contrast can make a composition seem stagnant and boring.

## Harmony

Harmony in a design is created when all of the elements of the composition relate to one another in a way that is visually pleasing. This can be achieved by combining similar, related elements like adjacent colors on the color wheel, similar shapes, etc.

## Dominance

Dominance is the principle of giving an object or design element precedence in a composition. This gives a painting interest because it draws the eye to that element. Dominance can be applied to one or more of the principles and elements of design.

## Unity

Unity is reinforcing the feeling of an image by using appropriate supportive elements within a composition. A peaceful subject would benefit from curved lines, muted colors, soft texture, and symmetrical balance, etc. Unity should be used to reinforce the designer's intention.

## Critiques and Constructive Criticism

"Critiques suck," I was told by a student when I explained we had to include critiques as part of our class. Critiques are something my supervisor told me were mandatory before I was given my first class of design to teach. As a design student, I hated critique days. Nothing was worse than sitting there with a piece I had put so much time and emotional investment into and having people pick it apart. As a result, I started designing things that were safe and popular versus things that I actually liked. This took all the joy out of the creation process and when I finally graduated I didn't want to design anything ever again.

When I finally recovered and returned to the design world I found a balance between what I enjoyed creating and what other people wanted. When I was asked to teach, I promised

myself that I would do everything in my power to make sure my students didn't feel the same way about critiques. On the first day of class I always bring up the artist Jackson Pollock. I show them one of his paintings and ask my students, "Do you like this piece? Would you want to hang it in your home if you didn't know its worth or history?" After we discuss this piece, I project a 1959 headline from *Reynolds News* on the board: "This is not art — it's a joke in bad taste." "I personally would have been devastated if I were Pollock. How about you?" I ask the students. A unanimous affirmative goes round. Evaluating a work of art or design has an important subjective component. What one individual may see as disorganized mess, others see as a revolutionary painting form. Then I tell my students that in November 2006 Pollock's "No. 5, 1948" became the world's most expensive painting, when it was auctioned to an undisclosed bidder for the sum of \$140,000,000 (Naifeh, 1989).

"Now if you were Pollock, would you really care what this critic said? I sure wouldn't." This is an example of how a critique is based on the opinions of others and is influenced by the individuals experience and knowledge. A classroom critique can be valuable because of how other people have different perceptions and experience with art.

In our class, we developed the two C's of feedback: Complementary and Constructive. When doing a critique students were required to give one another two complementary bits of feedback and one piece of constructive feedback. Along with the feedback, the students would have to offer an explanation for their comments, even if it was a short one. An example of a complimentary piece of feedback is, "I like the colors you used because they make me feel happy." A good example of constructive feedback is, "I would remove this line here because it draws my eye away from your focus." I encouraged the students to use the elements and principles of design when giving their feedback.

Often times I supplied students with sticky notes and would have them write their feedback down, leaving it for the designer to read at the end of the critique. I asked them to look for patterns in the feedback. Another way we made critiques more fun was with a little system I call Speed Rating, a spin-off of speed dating. I lined up the desks facing each other in a long row. Students and their pieces move in a clockwise fashion and they would take turns presenting what they have and answering questions. Each "couple" only has two minutes to talk. I set the timer and call switch when two minutes have passed. This system is very loud, but the students love it. Many have told me it is their favorite way to critique because the pressure that anyone else can hear you is removed.

#### Establishing the Student as a Designer in a Professional Context

I believe that many foundations courses fail to cover the actual business behind being a designer. Unless you acquire a position with a design firm you are responsible for finding work and running an independent business. I was never told how to go about doing this during my own education. When I graduated, I had a diploma in my hand and created great designs, but I had no one to create them for. When I decided to write this thesis, I felt it was vital to share the things that I have discovered help me to generate work. I generally cover the following areas with my students to prepare them for a career in professional design.

There are five major things that every designer needs to know how to do in order to become a successful professional: A business website, social media, communication, trade work and taxes and business licenses. For the first two items, I have created entire units that cover several class periods and last throughout the semester. Items three through five I usually cover on one of the last days of the semester and have included below. These are all things that I knew little about when I began working as a designer and should prove helpful to

students. Since number one and two are expanded upon in their lesson sections I will move on to item three.

### Communication and Relationships

I find that one of my very best ways to generate work is to reach out to my past clients. Repeat work is the bulk of my income. I try to reach out to my clients at least once a month. I keep a spreadsheet with the date I have contacted them last and the type of communication I used. I try to rotate the type of communication each month. Everyone communicates in different ways, so even though I hate making phone calls I still make the calls. Why? Because different clients respond better to different types of communication.

An example of an email I send out is as simple as this:

Hey (client's name),

Just thought I would reach out and see if you were still happy with your (logo, fliers, interior design, etc.). I hope everything is going well for you. Are you in need of any other design work? I would love to help you with any new projects you are working on.

Thank you!

That short email can generate a new job for you almost every time you send it. Here is why it works: It's short. No one likes to read paragraphs from someone they aren't expecting an email from. They don't have time to search through your email for its purpose, they are busy running a business. It reminds the client of your existing relationship. It isn't overly pushy and doesn't have a strong marketing feel to it. No one wants to spend money. What they do want is help in accomplishing their goals. I express interest in their current state

without being overly nose-y. People like to feel like you care, but not that you require anything more from them. Again, in the business world time is in short supply.

Good business is about creating good relationships. I genuinely like the majority of my clients and do my best to help their businesses as much as I can. This includes connecting my clients with one another. I always recommend a client to new clients over an independent company when I have the chance. It is one small way to build relationships and help your clients become successful.

My phone calls follow a similar pattern to my email. Obviously I don't give it a script-like feel or need to say each part, but the general outline is the same. Usually they will fill in the blanks for me and I don't have to even explain my reason for calling. If they have work they will say, "I am so happy you called I need some (menus, fliers, posters, etc.)." Just the fact that you took the time to reach out gained you another project they may have waited months to move forward on. Sometimes clients say, "No, I don't have any work for you right now." This is totally fine and should not be seen as a rejection. They may have something the next week that comes up and call you. This has happened to me many times in the past! It is because I reached out that I am fresh in their mind and they decided to move forward with a project. If a client does turn me down, I simply move the focus of the conversation to them. "No problem. How are things going with your business/family?" This shows that your only objective was not job generation, but that you also care about them personally. Caring goes a long way! They won't leave the conversation thinking you only care about yourself and they will remember you when they are in need of your services next.

Some of my clients never respond unless I go to their business in person. This always puts the ball in your court. If it was a restaurant, for example, go dine there. If you are there at

their business supporting them, they will feel the need to do the same. They will apologize for not replying to my emails and phone calls and usually sit and talk with me for a while. This always almost ends up in new projects.

I meet many of my clients when I am out and about my daily life. I am a pretty private person and don't usually talk to people I don't know, but it gets easier with practice. My students always whine to me, "Well I don't know what to say!" That's where developing your own elevator pitch can come in handy. When you have already practiced what you want to say you will be prepared for these types of spontaneous situations and turn strangers into clients. Your elevator pitch should have four parts.

1. Explain what you do as a designer. For example: "I am graphic and space designer specializing in websites and company rebranding." Notice how I only used one sentence to say what it is I do. You want to get your point across quickly.
2. Make them remember you. This part is just as simple as the first. In one sentence, tell them what makes you stand apart from the rest of your competition. "I offer flexible design ideas at reasonable rates because I believe that everyone should be able to afford good design work."
3. Ask them to do something. This is the hardest step for me, but if you never turn your conversation into action you shouldn't bother making the effort in the first place. "If you need to update your website, creating marketing materials, or redo an interior call me and I will create something amazing for you."
4. Give them a business card. Even if you have a long conversation where you tell them your name, company name, and website address they most likely won't remember it. Have your business card ready in an easy-to-reach place so that when you begin step three you can hand it to them while you are speaking.

My most important piece of advice to all of my students is to stay positive when dealing with clients. You may be having a hard time meeting deadlines or perhaps your computer fell into a pool. These types of things are not what a potential client or repeat client wants to hear. Stay focused on the good things in life so that your interactions with clients will lean towards positive things. Your clients will associate you with positive happenings and that can only be to your benefit when they are once again looking for a designer.

### Trading Services

There are many other people out there who are also trying to run their own business. Something that I have discovered is that many of these individuals can't afford design work, but they can trade me their own products or services in return. This may seem like an odd way of doing business, but it has proved to be quite useful for me. Here are a few examples of work I have done in exchange for something else: created a video for veterinary services, created a logo for free produce for a month from a local organic food company, designed a café seating area for a lifetime of free tea, created a website for a toy company for free toys and games for my family. You can see the possibilities are endless. Why are business owners more likely to do this then to pay you outright? Because the actual cost of their products and services is much lower than when they sell things to their customers. This is how they make a profit. Often when they can't budget for design work they can afford it by giving you things at their cost. This method is not ideal - everyone needs to make money - but this is something I do as a favor to new startups. Once they become successful they will usually contact me for more work down the line.

## Taxes and Business Licenses

If you are going to be a freelance designer than you need to file your company with the city you will be doing business from and the state you are doing business in for tax purposes. Again, this is something I had no idea about when I first started designing things. I just figured you come up with a good business name, build a website, and you own that business. You need to file the appropriate forms for your area and pay the fees. Contact your city office for more details. They should be able to provide you with an exact list of what you need to do. Each state and city has different requirements.

When you work for a company, you fill out a W2 and don't have to worry about your taxes until the end of the year. When you are a freelance designer who owns your own company, you need to file as self-employed. This can be tricky but here are some tips that will save you some money in the end.

1. Keep track of your mileage. This includes driving to and from meetings with clients, driving to and from a job site, driving to pick up supplies, etc. You can track your mileage and deduct that from the amount of taxes you need to pay.
2. Keep your receipts. This is something that can pay off big time if you keep detailed records of all of your company spending. Design products including a computer, design software, art supplies, books, phone bills, and even some meals with clients are tax deductible.
3. Company car. If you have a car that is used solely for the purpose of your business and is branded for your company then a portion of its costs can be written off. This includes costs such as car payments, tires, wear and tear, etc.

4. Office space. Even if you are working out of your home, if your company requires an office space (which most designers need), you can write off that square footage when you do your taxes.

I am not an accountant, but I do my own taxes every year and those are a few of the places that help me save money. I recommend to all of my students to buy a how-to book on taxes before they take their first design job. Make sure you tell them to put about 20% of any payments made by clients away to pay taxes at the end of the year. If you end up spending all the money you make, you can be left with a big bill owed to the IRS come springtime.

## Lesson Plan I. The Online Portfolio

### Rationale

We use the Internet every single day of our lives, but probably not for the most productive of reasons. There is an untapped potential in the online world that is just waiting to be mined. We need to spend more time showing the world what we're capable of. Painstaking hours you spent on creating designs for a client can work for you if you will only take an extra moment to share them with the world.

All artists and designers should have an online portfolio. This means they need to build a website. Fear not; the type of website I recommend for this lesson plan is very user friendly. If you thought social media was easy, creating your own website will be a breeze. My favorite part about this lesson plan is that it's not only extremely useful for the student, but once it is complete students can upload their work to it throughout the semester and you can see their progression of skill and knowledge. All designers need to have an online portfolio as well as a hardcopy that they can take with them to meet prospective clients or employers. My portfolios were often messy. My drawings had been crumpled or smudged during the semester,. An online portfolio solves this problem. Students photograph each assignment at its completion and that digital file remains crisp and clean for as long as it is needed.

Audience. University freshmen.

Time required. 4 class periods (90 minutes each)

Materials required. Computer lab or personal computer, camera, artwork, Internet

Key concepts. Online presence, Digital Portfolio, Design Brand

## Description

Online Portfolios are necessary for any artist no matter their choice of medium in order to showcase their accomplishments, works in progress, and biography when applying for a job. I also use their online portfolios to grade and monitor their work throughout the semester.

## Purpose

This lesson will help the students to plan, design, and create personal online portfolios. Students are encouraged to focus on design and content that will clearly communicate the type of work they do and optimize the viewer's perceptions of them.

## Learning Goals

- Students will learn to plan and manage their time
- Students will develop reading and writing skills
- Students will learn how to create a unique artist statement
- Students will develop skills for photographing their own work
- Students will learn how to create a portfolio of personal work
- Students will learn how to communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences
- Students will be able to identify and define authentic reasons for their design choices
- Students will understand and use the WIX or other web building system
- Students will learn project management skills: Plan and create a digital portfolio, organize/add content throughout the semester

## Introduction

### 1. Essential Questions and Discussion.

Ask students questions identifying previous knowledge and what students think a digital portfolio might be and what might be included. Why would an artist have a portfolio? Who would look at an artist's portfolio? Discuss why a digital portfolio is beneficial today. Students will consider advantages of presenting creative and eye-catching portfolios to get noticed by prospective employers and clients. Discussion of advantages and disadvantages of various digital portfolio formats. What is the difference between an online portfolio and a paper portfolio? What are the benefits of each? What are the limitations of each? Prior to giving this section of the lecture, put together a slideshow of current professional examples of successful online portfolios. Have your students review the online portfolios in teams and evaluate them for pros and cons.

### 2. Discuss Branding.

How do you want to be perceived? What do your color choices say about you? What do your font choices say about you? Have students read Who Are You? (attached at the end of this document. Appendix A – Who Are You.)

### 3. Discuss Artist statements.

What makes a good artist statement? When is more less? Have the students read: How to Write the Perfect Artist Statement (attached at the end of this document. Appendix B – How to Write the Perfect Artist Statement.)

## Guided Practice

1. Explanation of the expectations of the portfolio. Show them my example portfolio and then present the assignment. <http://merryweatherkate.wixsite.com/design>

2. Class discussion of how to organize the contents of the portfolio. Should they include every piece they have ever made? All mediums?
3. Pair students in order to discuss and consider the work they've done leading up to this course with respect to the career area or college major they are interested in.

### Independent Practice

Individually, students will make final decision for the design and selection of files to include in their portfolios that would represent their best work and highlight their skills.

### Assignment

Create an online portfolio using wix.com or another platform if you would like (wix is free, but for a more professional look you may want to choose another service). You will need to include:

- Artist statement (Clear? Simple? Interesting? Accurate?)
- Personal branding/design (please try to choose three or less dominant colors and only 2 - 3 fonts for the entire site)
- Easy to navigate organization
- Gallery with at least 10 examples of work

### Formative Assessment

Students will continue to develop their brand as the semester moves on. They will add all content created in the class to their website.

### Evaluation

Is the assignment turned in on time? Is it a cohesive whole with a clear "feeling?" Is it easy to use and well organized? Does it have a clear brand? Do the pages all look similar (from a branding standpoint) to each other? Is gallery work photographed in a professional

manner (properly cropped, white background, bright lighting)? Is your work well organized in the gallery? Does it contain all of the requirements listed above? Did the students have all the necessary pieces to their website including artist statement, design, organization, user branding, gallery, and contact page. Does it read as a cohesive whole with a clear sense of identity? Is it easy to use and well organized? Did their website evolve throughout the semester? Did they add content at the appropriate deadlines?

## Lesson Plan II. Social Media Design

### Rationale

Designers in today's market can greatly benefit from online marketing to find and expand their client base. The primary goal of social media from a business perspective is to expand your follower base. If more people know you exist and that you create amazing designs, more people will contact you for work. If you have personal accounts I would recommend you create new ones.

### Important Principles of Social Media

This lesson will guide students through a professional social media set up and teach them some tricks for making social media work for them. Two outlets I would recommend are Facebook and Instagram.

Your primary photo should be your business logo. If you don't have one you need to design one. You don't want your political views, pictures of your cat, or your child playing soccer on your design account. You want pictures of your work to be the primary focus of your postings. Try posting at least three times per week and be sure to use hashtags. Apply applicable hashtags; words like 'design,' 'adobe,' and 'art' will help other designers and possible clients to find you. To build your number of followers, follow those who do the same to you. Search for those hashtags along with other words that are relevant to your particular style. Find designers and artists you like and "like" at least five of their photos within minutes of each other. This will make them notice you. I have had great success building followers in this manner. Another important rule to remember is that it does take some work to develop an online presence. I like to spend at least 15 minutes on weekdays maintaining my accounts.

Your social media links should be listed clearly in multiple places on your website, including the header and the "Contact Me" page. Your profile picture and your content all reflect that you are a designer, but are you getting work from this? It is very important to make sure you are asking the viewer to take action. Phrases like, "view my portfolio," "call for a free estimate," or "visit my website" are great simple prompts that encourage clients to explore further. My recommendation for balance of regular posts to marketing posts is 3:1.

The majority of my marketing posts include a simple call to action followed by a description of the image. No one wants to read a lengthy blurb about your client or the job or even your design process. Again: with social media, shorter is better. It is vital to get your message across as quickly as possible. Try to post around the same time each day. Followers notice your patterns and are more likely to "like" your images with this method. More "likes" equal more people being exposed to your work, for every "like" moves you into a list that all of their followers can see and so on.

Even if social media doesn't gain you any new jobs it will help to secure them. When I was in charge of producing several online commercials, I would always check all of my applicants' social media links and their website. Social media can be a powerful tool for getting your name out there and increasing contacts. If you are a freelance designer, obtaining new clients and jobs is the thing you focus on most if you want to make a steady income.

Social media and expanding your follower base is essential and it is important to brand your profile image. On Instagram and Facebook, it is equally important to brand your description/about area. Make sure your description communicates a clear message that helps people to contact you. Again, simple is best. Mine looks something like:

Designer: websites, landscapes, interiors, and graphic design.

Contact me for a free estimate – [me@mydesigns.com](mailto:me@mydesigns.com)

Notice my call to action and the way I quickly abbreviated my areas of expertise.

Social media takes me about fifteen minutes per day, but the potential rewards are worth it.

Audience. University freshmen.

Time required. 2 class periods (90 minutes each).

Materials required. Computer lab or personal computer.

Key concepts. Social media campaign, gain new clients, marketing.

#### Description

Social media can be a great tool for young designers looking to increase their client base in the real world. This lesson on social media will show students the potential for online sales generation. They will begin with the initial set up of the social media accounts and then use them throughout the semester, focusing on the system they are provided with.

#### Purpose

This lesson will teach students to set up professional social media accounts and teach them ways to gain a client base through good social media practices.

#### Learning Goals

- Students will learn how to create both Facebook and Instagram social media accounts for their design company
- Students will learn to utilize marketing practices to gain followers and potential clients
- Students will learn to post regularly on their social media accounts and see the benefits that come from regular upkeep
- Students will learn to the importance of linking social media accounts to their design website

Introduction.

1. When introducing this section to my students I always talk to them about my own experience as a newly graduated designer and not having any clients or jobs. Prompts: When you finish design school who is going to hire you? How will you find design jobs? Are people just going to magically hear of your graduation and come knocking? These types of questions will get your students thinking. They may even have some additional ideas for you that they can share with the rest of the class and you can add these ideas to future curriculums.
2. Who in this class uses some sort of social media? Which types do you use? What kind of posts do you create? Have you ever thought about posting your own design work? Explain to your students that utilizing social media platforms can be a great and free outlet for marketing yourself as a designer. The social media outlets have already done much of the work for you, things like providing ways to find others with similar interests and linking what you do to similar professionals.
3. Today we will be talking about the benefits that can come from professional social media campaigns. You may also have clients who would like you to create the same thing for them. So, this exercise will be a nice trail run to show you the ins and outs of this process.

#### Guided Practice

Now that your students have created their own websites with an online portfolio they already should have a brand style.

1. If they haven't already created a personal logo for their design business have them do so now. It needs to be visible on every page of their website.
2. Create their accounts. A name that is their actual design company name, the name of their website, or (their first name) design is best for their account name. Obscure names like CoolJohn2342 are obviously not going to be very effective and don't look very professional.

3. The personal logo should be redesigned or cropped into a square for both their Facebook and Instagram profile pictures.
4. Design a banner for their Facebook Cover Photo. The exact dimensions for this image are 828 pixels wide by 315 tall and students should start with this size of canvas. This can show off a previous piece of work (or a combination of several) and your design. This is more of a background image for who you are and what you do. It should be clean, professional, and exemplify your personal brand style.
5. Work on your descriptions and information. LEAVE NOTHING BLANK. If you don't fill things out you are missing out on possible connections. Walk your students through what types of things they should include and remind them to keep it short. They can always link to their website if they want to give people the option of reading/seeing more.
6. Create the first post, starting with their Instagram account (make sure that they select to share to Facebook. This is where they will need to link their two accounts for the first time). It should be a piece of their work that visually expresses who they are. If your student doesn't have anything created yet, they can post a picture of their logo. Walk them through creating a description. Start with a short, one to two sentence blurb about the actual design work. For example: "DesignsbyKate logo design; Minimal yet classically beautiful design." They should include at least 6 hashtags. Some good examples are; #design #adobe #mac #art #beautiful #designer #minimalist #create. Make sure that students know that when creating a hashtag, you do not leave a space between the pound sign and the word.
7. Search for hashtags similar to those that they themselves listed. This is where they can find other artists and designers or just casual admirers of these things. Have them go through and find 10 accounts to follow. These should be accounts that post things that are design-focused

that remind them of their own work or what they would like their work to be. In each of these 10 accounts, have them like 6 images and comment on one. It doesn't have to be anything fancy, just a simple, "great pic" or "Wow. Love this." will work perfectly.

8. On Facebook, search for designers and friend 5-10 people. Once people accept their requests they can start liking images posted on these accounts. It also doesn't hurt to friend your personal connections in real life, letting them know you are starting a design business and this is its page.

9. Link all online accounts. Your social media links should be clear on your website. Your website should be listed on all of your social media. The whole purpose for social media is to get people to contact you, so providing them with multiple ways to do so should be your primary focus.

#### Independent Practice

Now that your students have created their social media accounts and linked them to their websites they can start managing their accounts on their own. Throughout the semester have your students post at least three times per week. They also need to manage their followers and find new followers through the methods I described above. Also explain the following to them: A key to turning your followers into your "fans" — meaning they actively seek out your posts — is to make sure that they feel appreciated.

Think of it like this: "You are presenting your design work in an expo full of hundreds of thousands of other designers. A person stops for a moment and smiles at you or gives you a thumbs up. That makes you feel pretty good so you do the same for them." This is the same as virtual thumbs ups or likes. They took a moment out of their valuable time to pay you a compliment, you should do the same for them.

## Assignment

Create social media accounts and link them to your website. Manage your accounts by posting and gaining followers through good social media practices. You need to spend at least 1 hour per week managing your accounts and post three new images per week (you can clone Instagram posts to FB, but you need to make sure that both places are being posted on.) Extra Credit: Once every two weeks create a post that will drive clients to your website or encourage them to contact you and post in on your social media.

## Formative Assessment

Students will continue to develop their social media accounts as the semester moves on. They will add all content created in the class to their social media.

## Evaluation

Students will total up their number of followers and friends that they have accumulated using good social media practices. As a class students will share the interactions they have had with potential clients and other designers. Assessment criteria: Number of new Instagram follows and new FB friends and post likes per week.

### Lesson Plan III. Multi Design Project

"One of the greatest gifts an art instructor can give a future designer is focusing on the importance of developing one's identity of a designer. Nothing is more helpful than playing around with different materials and techniques. People can learn about themselves through the things they make, that material culture matters" (Sennett 2009).

#### Rationale

You do not know what you're capable of until you try something new. Before I ever used charcoal to draw, I just used pencils, pen or paint. These were the tools that allowed me to produce works that were "my style." Charcoal always intimidated me. It looked difficult to use and it was also extremely messy. Eventually I tried it, and now charcoal is now my preferred medium through which I produce my best work. It is important to keep trying new and different things. This lesson plan is a great tool for helping design students step out of their comfort zones and think in new ways. Rather than being locked into the crutch of "this is just my style," this lesson forces students to use different mediums and find new styles that may in fact be stronger than their previous preferences.

Audience. University freshmen.

Time required. Two class periods (90 minutes each)

Materials required. Computer lab or personal computer, paper, pen, graphite, charcoal, watercolor, acrylic paint

Key concepts. Design styling, expand personal design style, explore mediums, flexibility and variety as a designer

## Description

In a field where trends in design are ever changing, it is vital for a designer to be flexible with their ideas and styling. This lesson forces a student to remove emotional attachments from their designs. Rather than becoming stifled by a certain aesthetic, students are forced to see the possibilities that come from working in different styles. The student will create 50 logos for a single company using various mediums.

## Purpose

As a designer, one is constantly asked for multiple options for the same project. This is something students don't just need to be prepared for, they need to expect it. Clients don't want to see various versions of the same design, they want to see several unique options. I will also present the idea that form follows function, which I will revisit in future lessons.

## Learning Goals

- Students will learn to create a series of unique logos subject to a client's needs and desires.
- Students will develop the ability to think creatively, step outside of their comfort zone, and develop their adaptability.
- Students will learn to communicate information in a visual manner.
- Students will understand and use mixed mediums to enhance designs and create successful pieces.
- Students will be able to explain their reasons for making design choices as a designer.
- Students will gain the understanding that multiple redesigns of one idea can lead to a better end product.

## Introduction

1. When introducing this section I present a video on octopi and their ability to shift and change to meet the demands of their environment. They change not just the color and patterns

of their flesh but also the very texture of their surroundings. Ask the students: Why is he doing this? How does this help him survive? What advantages does his ability to adapt give him over other fish such as hunting, hiding, surviving? Then correlate this idea to having advantages over other designers if they are adaptable and others are not. I prompt the students as follows: "If I were asked to create a design for a summer line of women's dresses that were light and floral, I would be forced to step away from my personal comfort zone of bold text and monochromatic color pallets. What medium might be more appropriate here?" For example, watercolor paints would be a good choice or using muted tones and designs filled with movement with an airy quality.

2. Just like the octopus, we as designers need to adapt our designs to fit their function. I would introduce the idea that form follows function. I would speak about the ancient peoples of the world and the very first designs that were ever created. The idea of what design is has been redefined over and over since man first began to make cave paintings. These ancient who thoughtfully placed these marks on cavern walls were designers. They were creating something for a purpose. Over the years the phrase *form follows function* has remained an important aspect of design:

Whether it be the sweeping eagle in his flight, or the open apple-blossom, the toiling work-horse, the blithe swan, the branching oak, the winding stream at its base, the drifting clouds, over all the coursing sun, form ever follows function, and this is the law. Where function does not change, form does not change. The granite rocks, the ever-brooding hills, remain for ages; the lightning lives, comes into shape, and dies, in a twinkling. It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic, of all things physical and metaphysical, of all things human and all things superhuman, of all true

manifestations of the head, of the heart, of the soul, that the life is recognizable in its expression, that form ever follows function. This is the law. (Sullivan, 1896)

This law is what often takes precedence over any other design choice today, because a chair that someone cannot sit in is not a chair at all. Functionality is a key to good design. Does the product do what it was created to do? If not, the designer has failed. In Sullivan's explanation, nature must follow function to survive. For a good designer to survive they too must focus on how form follows function.

According to renowned art historian Erwin Panofsky, all man-made objects can be divided into two classes: "(1) works of art, which demand to be experienced aesthetically, and (2) "practical" objects, which do not so demand" (Panofsky, 1955, p.13). "Where the sphere of practical objects ends, and that of 'art' begins, depends, then, on the 'intention' of the creators" (Panofsky, 1955, p. 22). When we design, the most important thing we can remember is this rule. If you create a logo that no one can read and doesn't define your clients brand, it is worthless. If you create a piece of clothing that no one can wear then it is worthless.

### Guided Practice

Have the students divide into groups of three and, using their cell phones, search the Internet to find the animal that they feel has a superior physical design (a form that follows function). I like to use the heads down on the desk voting system where students put their face looking down on their desks and raise their hands to display their vote. This way no feelings are hurt and students don't feel peer pressure to change their vote. Votes determine the winner after every student has presented their animal and why they feel it has a superior natural design. I give a candy prize to the winner.

## Independent Practice

Students will design 50 logos for one company. Again, it is not important what type of company is chosen. For this example, I we use a mobile dog grooming business named Suds. Suds is your students' new client and the client needs a new logo design. They have already created a motto for their business and would like the logo to reflect the idea: "We bring the bubbles to you."

## Assignment

Design 50 logos for Suds. Keep in mind that form follows function and they would like their logo to clearly state their motto in a visual manner. Use all of the following types of artistic media: Paper, pen, graphite, charcoal, watercolor, acrylic paint. You must use all of these, but you are welcome to choose more. Individual logos must be at least 1x1 inches large. Remind the students that, just because they are creating 50 logos does not mean that each logo isn't important.

## Formative/Ongoing Assessment

Now that the students have completed the 50 logo designs, have them narrow them down their three favorite designs. These three design sketches need to be recreated using Adobe Photoshop. Students should also create a written explanation about how they developed these designs and why they feel they are the strongest three choices to present to the client.

## Summative/End of Lesson Assessment

As a class, have your students present their three designs. Together the class can decide which design choice is the most successful for Suds. Have your student digitally place one logo on the exterior of a grooming van, on an apron, and on a t-shirt. These should be

well thought out placements. If students want to add other elements to their designs they can, as long as they can provide sound design explanations to back up their choices.

Evaluation Criteria: Is the assignment turned in on time? Were 50 successful logos created?

Were all of the required mediums used? Did the logos illustrate a clear brand?

## Lesson Plan IV. Design Inspiration

### Rationale

Artists study art history to understand the development of artistic styles and visible trends throughout the history of art. A designer should do the same with design history. In order to advance as artists, students need to understand what has been done before. This exercise opens up a student's mind to design possibilities, enhances their knowledge base and increases their own potential sources for inspiration. It gives them a glimpse into the mind of other designers who came before them. They will ask themselves questions like: What were they thinking when they did this? How did they go about creating it? What tools did they use? How did they discover this solution? Discovering these answers will improve your student's creative process in all of their future designs.

Audience. University freshmen.

Time required. Three class periods (90 minutes each).

Materials required. Computer lab or personal computer, (drawing supplies optional).

Key concepts. Inspiration, history, research, knowledge application, identify successful designs.

### Description

It is vital to draw inspiration from other sources. In this lesson students will dive into the great designs of the past and learn from them. In this lesson, students will select a favorite designer, research their works, and write a short report about their findings. They will then present this information to the class. After their reports are complete, they will be required to replicate one of their designer's works using the Adobe Suite. Finally, they will create their own piece of work that would fit into their chosen designer's portfolio.

## Purpose

This lesson will help the students to understand the great design ideas in the past and the principles and elements of design that they contain. They will duplicate one piece of the designer's work and then create a unique piece that would fit into their own body of work.

This process will help them to understand the principles and elements of design and to inject them into their own work. It also teaches students that other designers can be an excellent source of inspiration.

## Learning Goals

- Students will learn planning and time management.
- Students will be able to employ effective reading and writing skills.
- Students will learn to draw inspiration from outside sources.
- Students will learn research and presentation skills.
- Students will gain a working vocabulary of the Principles and Elements of Design.
- Students will improve familiarity with skill with Adobe software for design work.

## Introduction

1. Who do you draw inspiration from? Are there other designers that you follow on social media? What about artists of the past or present? It is important to become familiar with other famous designers and their works. Just like with the principles and elements of design we can learn valuable lessons by using successful techniques discovered by designers who have come before us.

2. I would present some famous graphic designers with whom I personally feel a connection. I will describe the similarities and differences between their work and my own using design principles terminology.

### Guided Practice

Have the students search for designs and designers who they believe are successful using their phones or the computer lab's Internet access. Some may already have some in mind from their social media. They can work in teams of two or in larger groups for this activity, whichever they prefer. Together, using design terminology, they will discuss why they feel the different designs are successful pieces.

### Independent Practice

Have the students select one graphic designer they would like to study. Encourage them to find someone whose work speaks to them, whether it be because it is similar to their own work or if it is what they feel a successful design should look like.

### Assignment

You are to prepare and write a biography on a famous designer of your choice. The designer needs to be a graphic designer. Try to find one who you personally prefer aesthetically. You should include the principles and elements of design that your designer utilizes in your report. The length of your biography should be 1-1 ½ pages printed out to hand in. You will present your Designers Biography to the class orally in 1 - 2 minutes. Choose wisely. Know your designer well and be familiar with his/her work. Along with your report you must pick 5-6 sample images that represent your famous designer's work and bring them in a digital format so that you can display them as you present your Designer's Biography in front of the class.

### Formative/Ongoing Assessment

Now that you have studied your famous designer and you are familiar with their work, you will recreate one of their designs exactly! Go back through the images that you used for

your presentation and use all of your Photoshop skills to recreate or duplicate their image. Get the image as close as you possibly can to the original. Your grade will be determined on how close you can get to the original image and the quality of your final rendering. Submit a copy of the original work as well as your own work side by side. I will present the images to the class and you will explain the technical side of creating your duplicate images, explaining problems that you encountered during the process. Keep notes on what you did.

#### Summative/End of Lesson Assessment

Now that you have studied your famous designer and have learned his/her style and techniques, create one more image based on that designer's work. The subject matter is determined by the designer that you chose to study. Think about the type of work they usually create. Think about how they would design their composition. What design principles would they use? Think about why they would make certain design choices. If we were to see this image, we should be able to identify the famous designer by their style.

#### Evaluation

You will be graded on how close you can come to your designer's style.

Did the students complete all of the pieces of this assignment? Was their paper the required length of 1.5 pages and was their report 1-2 minutes? How successful were their recreation and inspiration pieces to matching the style of their chosen designer? Was work submitted on time and in a professional manner?

## Lesson Plan V. Design Team

### Rationale

As with all artists, students can become very attached to their work. In my classroom, I have noted that the majority of my design students hate working in groups. They would rather work alone than have someone else alter anything that they have created or they complain that the others in their group don't pull their own weight. They become overly attached and protective of their art pieces. The fact remains that their employer or their client usually owns the design they are creating because they are the ones funding the project.

Students need to learn how to communicate with other designers and collaborate on projects. Something that is important to explain to students is that in a team project the work done is automatically incorporated into a whole. Each individual's work is just a piece of the overall work for the project. To be a successful designer one must become flexible. Students will find themselves working for different types of companies, on different projects, and using different processes.

Students need to understand that sometimes working with other designers can be very beneficial for them. Their team can offer new insights they might have missed on their own. Sometimes designers build upon each other's ideas with brainstorming and sketching. Some designers are really good at doing the research portion of the work. Some designers are really good at critiquing and finding the other angles that maybe the initial designer didn't see. Sometimes designers work individually on the same project to come up with the groundwork ideas, and then one idea stands out and that's the one that is refined. Explain to them that, yes, the other members have the ability to change their work, because they are members of the same team.

There are certainly designers who work alone on projects. They have earned that right by years of working in different situations and building up a good reputation and a healthy client base. Unfortunately, when you are a designer the client has the ability to change the work you have done because they have the ultimate control. Your work will always be subject to the manipulation of others' opinions.

Audience. University freshmen.

Time required. 3 class periods (90 minutes each)

Materials required. Computer lab or personal computer, Adobe Suite

Key concepts. Identify benefits of design team, work as a group, professional scenario, build brand for client.

#### Description

Working in groups is vital for any student looking to become successful in the design world. This lesson will teach students to work as part of a design team and show them the benefits that can come from such an arrangement.

#### Purpose

This lesson focuses on a client rebrand and will help the students to create a new name, logo, slogan, and flyer for a brand-new tea cafe business. You can choose any type of business; however, I have inserted a tea cafe for this example. As a design team they will brainstorm together, build off of each other's designs, and then create final products.

#### Learning Goals

- Students will learn planning and time management skills
- Students will learn to employ effective writing skills
- Students will be able to create a unique logo subject to a client's needs and desires

- Students will improve skills with Adobe software for design work
- Students will learn the value of working as part of a collaborative team
- Students will learn to communicate information and ideas effectively to peers
- Students will be able to identify and define authentic reasons for design choices
- Students will improve project management skills through the process of planning and creating a name, slogan, logo, and flyer.

### Introduction

1. Initial questions: Who enjoys working as part of a team? Why do you like or dislike group work? Do you think that you will have to do collaborative work as a designer?
2. Explain to the students that a designer's work will always have someone else modifying it, whether it's a team member, the client, or their employer. Talk about the benefits that come from working as a team:
  - Building upon each other's ideas.
  - Dividing the workload - some designers prefer doing parts of the work you might not enjoy.
  - Gaining positive and constructive criticism for your designs.
3. Have your students put together an individual list of 3 companies they feel have strong branding through both visuals and wording.
4. Have your students turn to the person next to them and talk about their 3 companies. Why did you choose them? What do they believe makes their designs and branding successful?
5. Have the student present the one company their partner told them about that stood out as the strongest example of strong branding. (It's important you don't tell your students about this intention beforehand. This will create more accurate results because they didn't know

they needed to focus and make a selection. The one that genuinely stood out to them will be the one they ultimately choose.)

### Guided Practice

1. Choosing the groups: Break your students into teams of three. I like to do this with my deck of flashcards that have their names on them. This way they are choosing their own team. I mix the cards and place them on the table face down. Then each time we choose groups I choose a random selector to start the process such as, who has a birthday in March, students in the back row, students wearing blue, etc. Those students pick names first. If they choose their own name card they put it back. Once everyone has a team, I have them write their design firm company name on the board along with their members. They are allowed to choose their hypothetical design firm company name.

2. Act like you are the client. I like to make it even more realistic by dressing up and bringing in props.. Explain that you are unhappy with your current brand and want a new name, slogan, logo, and sales flier from them. Let them sample your product and examine it. Then I open myself up to a Q&A session about what I do and what I want. (I make sure that I have a script prepared when designing my character and company. Be sure to pre-plan things like contact info, what makes your brand unique, etc.) When the students have asked all their questions, move on to the next section.

3. Octopus Brain Storm: Bring a large sheet of butcher paper for each of your design teams. Each student should have a marker of their own. Now that the students have examined your samples and spoken with their "client" they will have some keywords in their mind to launch the brainstorming process. You can do a sample octopus string on the board for them. In the center draw a circle with a question mark inside of it. This will eventually be the company's

new name. Then around that circle have them draw eight smaller circles. These are the octopus "legs." In each of the leg circles insert a noun or verb that represents the product or service the client is selling. E.g. Tea. Yummy. Organic. Brew. After they have their eight words, then they need to draw seven more consecutive circles branching from each original leg joint. I use lines to connect my circles. As a team, they take turns writing the first word that pops into their head that they associate with the prior word. So, one leg might look something like this: Tea - Cup - saucer - flying - floating - bubble - fun - smile. Once every circle has been filled, as a team they will pick three words from any circle that remind them the most of the client's product/service. These words will be the launching point for their client's new brand.

#### Independent Practice

As a team, students will create a name, slogan, logo, and sales flyer for their new client implementing the 3 key words from the brainstorming process. They can choose to divide the tasks up separately or they can work on them all together, keeping in mind that they must hit a deadline.

#### Assignment

Design a name, slogan, logo, and sales flyer for your new client implementing the 3 key words from your brainstorming process. You must work as a team and complete the write up at the end of this project.

#### Formative/Ongoing Assessment

It is very rare for any client to say, "I love this and I want no changes." In fact, more often than not they have multiple edits to each portion of a project. I explain this to my students and let them know that this doesn't mean they don't like your ideas or your designs,

it just means that everyone has their own subjective points of view and that this is their project. I have created designs that I strongly disliked in the past, because my client was so particular. A designer can try to make suggestions along the way, but in the end the client is paying you to create something for them. While the client makes the final decisions, a designer must try to do all they can to create an effective, appealing product. I always give the design teams a few curve balls after their first submission. I throw them some easy changes like small address edits, but I also give them some big changes like, "I don't like green." Or "I think you should change this word in the slogan." I try to give each team around five design edits that they need to make and I like to see how they handle this turn of events that, as a designer, is the norm.

#### Summative/End of Lesson Assessment

Was the assignment turned in on time? Is it a cohesive whole with a clear "feeling?" Did you meet the needs of your client? Did you finish all four items: Name, Slogan, Logo, and Sales Flyer? Does it have a clear brand? Do the pieces of the assignment all look similar (from a branding standpoint) to each other, even if completed by different members of the team? Is the work presented in a professional manner? Did you complete your team write up?

Students are asked to complete a write up of their team experience. Did they feel they worked well as a team? What parts of the project were they responsible for? What did they not like about working as a team? What was difficult? What did they like about working in a team? What would they do differently next time they have the opportunity to work as a team?

#### Evaluation

Did the students have all the necessary pieces of the rebranding package? How did they function as part of the team? Was it professional work? Did they meet the needs of the

client? Did they make all the necessary edits? Did they present their materials in a professional manner? Did they meet their appropriate deadlines?

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

It is my belief that a foundations course can be more than simply an overview of what makes a good design. The curriculum designed by my own instructors was focused on studio practice and creativity, and did not include much content about how to be a successful designer. Through my research, I found that this often the case for many foundations level design instructors. After graduation, I had the opportunity to work as a freelance graphic designer for over five years. The work I have done has been extremely varied; I have created designs for large technology corporations to small dance studios. During these experiences, I have learned to overcome the gaps that I still felt I lacked in my professional knowledge. I have consequently sought to infuse my design lessons with a foundation of good professional design practices. After reviewing the information I gathered from design instructors across the country I realized that this information might be helpful for others in my situation.

I felt the best way to organize this knowledge would be to create a foundations level curriculum which fulfills the teaching objectives of a regular foundations design course, but at the same time shows students what professional design practice would look like. Hence, the curriculum emphasized professional practices rather than the mechanics of making designs. This approach is intended to give students a window into the career of a professional designer. I have covered what I feel are the key areas of professional design knowledge in addition to the traditional course of creating good designs. What I developed is a curriculum with a heavy emphasis on communication, social media, and how to help students negotiate professional practices. It can be a valuable tool for foundations level art instructors who seek to prepare those students who are interested in succeeding in the design world.

Curriculum is like the world of design; it should be a malleable thing. It should flex and bend and change, as your students require it to. I have written this thesis as a template or a prototype for teaching one practical approach of how to become a successful designer in today's market. A prototype is meant to be tested and further developed. Thus, my ideas about professional practice may change in the next decade as the world of professional design evolves. With this idea in mind, I hope instructors will consider using this curriculum as a tool that can augment their existing tools for working with design. My recommendations for design teachers is first, to look for new ways to meet the needs of your biggest clients: your students. Next, listen to their feedback and help students achieve their goals. Finally, pay attention to current design trends and discourse. It is my hope that my own experience and this thesis will be beneficial to the studio art instructors who have been asked to teach design and that they can become empowered to lead these young designers into a career that will be fulfilling for them in every way.

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## Appendix A

### *Who Are You Handout: Online Portfolio Lesson*

*Who are You?*

*by: Angela Cross*

*Brand (verb) – To mark indelibly.*

*Think of branding as a stamp, by which people will be able to recognize you. Branding is a process of clarifying who you are as an artist and what your goals are. A strong brand can capture a potential fan or patron's attention and have them remember you and connect with your work. If this happens often enough, you will have a budding fan base.*

*Though branding yourself as an artist is important, lets face the facts: great branding does not make you a great artist, and being a great artist doesn't make you into a profitable artist.*

*To achieve success, we need to have a strong balance between our art and your business – and the best way to do this, I have not found yet – BUT after a few years of devoting myself full to time to it's pursuit I do have some organic approaches to building your brand.*

*There are many great resources about how to design and run your social networks, build a newsletter, etc. I'm going to focus on the foundation of branding your artist self; having a strong and clear idea of who you are, who you want to be around, and what you want.*

*Branding an artist and keeping it real.*

*You as a human being will grow and change in your lifetime, and you have many layers to your personality. In branding, you don't want to share every single layer with your audience – you want to be real, but not too real.*

*For instance, some artists make their brand centered on a sexual image, like Madonna or Lady Gaga. That isn't the totality of who they are, it's just a brand that particularly exhibits one part of them.*

*Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, a vocalist had many different public brands before rising to fame as Lady Gaga. Her jazz singing, her early pop music – all of these different acts were just reflecting an artist developing her work. Your personal identity as an artist may be the well-spring of your work, but your brand is the vehicle that makes you money.*

*The real question is how do you hone in on what parts of yourself you want to present to your audience?*

*Well ... who is your audience?*

*Your brand is the foundation of your relationship with your audience – so be mindful of who your audience is (and no, it's not "everyone"), what they want, and how you can connect with and serve them.*

*For instance, Kanye West is both a rap producer and a christian musician. The christian music scene is almost completely country-folk-rock influenced. So, did Kanye start off his career by producing tracks for bigger and bigger church bands? Fighting his way to the top against a current of twang? No, instead he worked as a producer making hip-hop for Jay-Z – carving a solid place for himself from which he can branch out into less mainstream sounds and topics.*

*It's not (always) about you. Spend a little more time concerned with your audience than yourself. Those people that you want to surround your life with – what do they want? What would serve them? Are you going to shock, please, or inspire them?*

*You see, branding can be as artistic and purposeful a journey as sitting down and writing a song or chiseling a statue. Artist who rely on a manager, or publisher to 'make them' run the risk of losing their artistic integrity, and can lose their most loyal fans by 'selling out' in their eyes, or rather, making a huge artistic and branding shift that alienates their fan base. (aka. selling out)*

*As an artist you are free to explore and create whatever your inspiration leads you to, but as a businesswoman, you owe it to yourself to limit your output. You want your artistry to drive your brand, but be careful that branding doesn't consume or limit your artistry.*

*So how do we ride that line between clearly representing who we are and allowing ourselves the freedom we so inherently desire as artists?*

*Define success for yourself*

*If you define your idea of success, you can achieve it. Too many skilled and creative people adopt an ubiquitous idea of success and then wait for a manager, publisher or Wish-Fairy to make the money start rolling in. Define your idea of success in specifics, and be clear on WHY you want that so bad. Money is not a very strong force of motivation in and of itself, it's usually the things that money can buy.*

*So what is it underneath the money for you?*

*Is it the ability to support a family while making art full time? Why do you want to make art full time? What would you make? Who would you make it for? What is so important or valuable about that?*

## Appendix B

### Light Space and Time Handout: Online Portfolio Lesson

#### *Online Art Gallery*

#### *How to Write the Perfect Artist Statement*

*Have you ever read someone's artist statement and said to yourself "what the heck does all of that mean" or "those are some fancy words that I just do not understand?" If you were having a personal conversation with the artist and you were asking about their art, would they talk like that, in those terms? Probably not and neither should the artist when composing and writing their artist statement.*

*Here are some tips and ideas for all artists to think about when composing a new statement or revising their current artist statement.*

*1. Keep the Statement Simple: What I mean by this is that the artist statement should be written both clearly and concisely for a wide range of people who will read it. The artist is neither speaking down to someone who is uneducated with fine art, nor are they talking up to that person trying to impress them. The best way to write the statement is to do this as if you were speaking to someone in person. Basically, an artist statement is an introduction of their art, without the artist being there.*

*2. The Statement Should Tell Why: The artist should explain why they create this kind of art. This could be in the form of an explanation of the artist's motivation, subject matter or maybe someone who inspired the artist to express their art. In addition, the "why" could also*

*discuss any artistic or personal influences. Overall, the artist is telling the reader the personal reasons why they create their art.*

*3. The Statement Should Tell How: Explaining to the reader the "how" can be a short sentence or two about the artistic process or describing if there are any special techniques that were used in producing this art. The artist should not get technical or provide a step-by-step guide on how to create their art. If there are any unusual materials used, that can be mentioned too.*

*4. What it Means to the Artist: Overall, this is a personal statement of the meaning of the art for the artist. This may be the most difficult thing for the artist to write about as it will reveal something personal about the artist. It is very difficult to write about yourself, especially when you need to keep it short. For this, think Twitter and try to write use 140 characters. It is tough to do but try to do it in at least 2 to 3 concise sentences, maximum.*

*5. Keep it Short: Remember that people's attention spans are quite short and that if the artist statement is too long, too complicated or poorly written people will just not read it! Avoid big, flowery and complicated words. It just does not work. You are not trying to impress anyone, you are trying to communicate to a very wide audience what your art is about.*

*Here are some other things to consider and incorporate into an artist statement:*

- Avoid using I and me throughout the statement.*
- Do not say "I want to..." or "I am trying to..." Just say it and be precise.*
- If you have multiple bodies or work, materials or techniques, have multiple artist statements for each.*
- Do not "tell" the reader what they "must" see in your art. That is what the artist sees and the viewer may see or interpret something else.*

- *This is not a biography. Do not get that mixed in with the artist statement.*
- *If the artist is unsure about the end result of the statement, then the artist should have other people read it, comment on it or find someone that will help the artist.*
- *After it is completed, the artist should reread it and make sure that the sentence structure and spelling are perfect.*

*The artist should then put the statement away. In a few days, they should look at it again and follow these steps all over again! At that point, the artist will see how a phrase, sentence or a word can be changed in order to make the artist statement clearer and overall better.*

*Finally, if the artist is happy with the statement, then it is good to go. If however, the artist is still not completely happy with the statement, put it away again and reread in order to fine tune and communicate the artist statement clearly.*

*Remember: The artist statement is speaking to the viewer in the artist's absence. Therefore, the artist statement should be short, concise and well written in a conversational language.*

## Appendix C

### Design Education Survey

*Dear Design Instructor,*

*My name is Kate Merryweather. I am a graduate student studying Art Education at Brigham Young University. I am currently writing my thesis on design education. I was hoping you wouldn't mind helping me with my research by answering a few short questions. Thank you!*

- 1. What difficulties did you encounter when you first started teaching design?*
  
- 2. Have you taught studio art classes in the past? If so which ones?*
  
- 3. How is teaching design different than teaching art?*
  
- 4. What training/education did you receive that qualifies you to teach design? (i.e. professional experience, design programs, degrees, certifications)*
  
- 5. How do you feel your curriculum prepares students for a career in professional design?*
  
- 6. Please keep my responses anonymous: Yes please / No thank you*