

(INTRODUCTION)
VISUAL COMMUNICATION I

PROJECT 1: IMAGE + TYPE STUDIES

Images and words mean different things to different people. Culture biases, societal disposition and anthropological concerns all shape people's experiences. As designers we must be able to understand these experiences so the message reaches it's intended audience. The more we know, the better chance our intentions will be fulfilled.



01

OBJECT SELECTION

Choose a simple interesting everyday object to use as the initial focus of this assignment. It is critical that this object be chosen carefully. It needs to be small enough and light enough to bring to class for the next two weeks. When you consider size, choose something that is no smaller than 3-4 inches and no bigger than a shoe box. Potential categories include: kitchen items, tools, functional everyday objects, clips, clamps or gadgets.

Consider the object's function and how interesting the shape is. Are there interesting textures or materials? How rich is the back story? Do you or your family have a connection to the object? How and why is it used? Does it function anymore? The objects may contain but should not have a focus that is based on logos, type message or surface design. Make a list and consider lots of possibilities while selecting your top three.

DO NOT CHOOSE AN OBJECT THAT IS MERELY DECORATIVE. FUNCTIONAL OBJECTS HAVE A RICHER STORY. THE STORY OR NARRATIVE ASSOCIATED WITH A FUNCTIONAL OBJECT WILL AID YOU IN DEVELOPING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE ASSIGNMENT

Write a 1-2 paragraphs that frame the reason you made each of your choices. Why does this object appeal to you? Do the objects have interesting associations, memories; is it gender or age specific?

Deliverables : Bring your 3 objects and printed statements (1 sheet of paper) on Thursday September 6

02

CONCEPTUAL EXAMINATION

Based on your selected object please write a two-page research paper (using 10/14 Minion Pro) that deconstructs its' function as well as its historical and cultural origins. Create a cover page with your name and the class designation (DGD 276 Visual Communication or Vis Com). Utilize a b/w solution. Use only typography for your solution. No images. Make it look good.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

What is the history of the object: Who used it in past? Why did they use it? Is the function the same today? How was it made? What material(s) is it made of? Where was it made?

FORMAL OBSERVATIONS

What is the root of the form? Why is the object the shape it is, for function, aesthetics? What is the texture and surface like? Does the object feel warm or cold? What mechanics or systems are involved? Does it have multiple purposes? Be thorough.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

What social, political, gender, ethical, issues maybe associated with the object? Does the object have links to certain age groups? Is it dangerous to use? Are there certain culture segments that would use the object, like a plumber or accountant? What connection do you have with the object? Is the object suggestive of a certain function or use? Is the form true to it's function?

Deliverables: Research paper design due Thursday, September 18

* FOR EXAMPLE WE UNDERSTAND A SPECIALTY HAMMER WHEN A CERTAIN TYPE OF NAIL IS USED. IT ALSO HELPS US UNDERSTAND SCALE WHEN A HAND IS NEXT TO THE OBJECT.

→ 03

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

A. PHOTOGRAPHIC

B/W photography in the lighting studio. Your image studies should include:

- + 10 images exploring different angles of the object
- + 10 images showing unique details/qualities of the object
- + 10 images focusing on the shape of the object
- + 10 images utilizing one relevant prop that adds to context*

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT: Each of you are required to recontextualize your object using a variety of lighting techniques. Students will work together in teams to aid in the process. Please consider composition, lighting, shadow, active and dynamic space relationships when composing through the lens. Remember your goal, through images, is to aid others in developing a deep understanding of your object. Be prepared to discuss how the angle, shadow, detail, shape, use of light source, use of negative and positive space, translation of texture and use of pattern relate to our understanding of the essence of the object. Shoot more than you need and edit down to best images.

Deliverables: (20) 10 x 10 inch b/w laser prints due September 27. Label back of each study with your name and whether it is connotative and denotative.

B. TYPE/IMAGE PRIMER

Using the images you have created for each of the categories below to create a series of image/type compositions.

- + 10 b/w connotative compositions = (1) 20x20; (5) 10x10; (4) 5x5
- + 10 b/w denotative compositions = (1) 20x20; (5) 10x10; (4) 5x5

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT: Use statements from your research paper to incorporate into your images. Within the sentence consider one to three words that represent the essence of the statement. Explore hierarchies in the typography by using scale, location, value, size, texture. Be sensitive to how the language changes the viewers understanding of the image. When choosing language consider the object's essence, the object's promise, the object's use or function, memories, cultural connection, etc. Integrate the type but do not mirror the form.

When language is introduced the essence may change. You also need to consider the negative and positive space created by the image and type. These spaces may be different but must come together as a visual whole. Explore the possible range of your images by looking at collage, multiples, inversions, high contrast, texture etc. Each solution needs to be unique. Your solutions are sequential, consider how each solution reinforces others in the set, no repetition.

TYPE SPECIFICATIONS

Select a quality typeface family or two that has a range of weights. Examples include but are not limited to Univers, Helvetica, Bell Gothic, Grotesque MT, Trade Gothic, Meta, Akzidenz, Franklin Gothic. You are limited to type sizes between 8 and 96pt.

Deliverables: (20) image/type studies (10 connotative & 10 denotative) due Tuesday October 11



04

BEYOND THE PHOTOGRAPH

A. COLLAGE/MONTAGE/TYPOGRAPHY

Based on details and breakdown articulated in your research paper, and accompanied by a subsequent mind-map, each student will build a tool kit of b/w original and found illustrations, photographs, patterns, textures, etc. Your image archive should include contemporary and historical, aged and styled, vector/raster/bitmap, realistic to abstract. The goal is to move beyond realistic representation and understand how abstraction plays a role in message making.

- + 12 compositions utilizing photography as primary medium
- + 12 compositions utilizing vector art as primary medium
- + 12 compositions utilizing typography as primary medium

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT: All hand construction. Computer can only be used to scan images and print out black and white laser (will provide basic printing needs). Glue stick, blue line pencil, ruler, pencil, pen, exacto, scissors and printouts. Must use sized template provided to you. No full frame photography. These will be in-class exercises with time limitations. No size or type constraints.

Deliverables: (18) image/type studies (9 connotative & 9 denotative) due Tuesday October 23.

B. MOTION PROTOTYPING

- + 8 images that utilize your immediate surroundings for inspiration -- Local
- + 8 images that utilize man-made events or experiences -- Regional
- + 8 images that allow others to determine the outcome -- Observational

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT: Limit scope. Start low-fi. Work fast; Start simple and build complexity; Let process dictate solution... it reduces arbitrary decisions and subjectiveness. No judgments; Embrace tangents and mistakes; Juxtapose ideas, elements and concepts to compare/contrast the similarities/differences.

Deliverables: (12) image/type studies (6 connotative and 6 denotative) due Thursday Nov 1.

05

DOCUMENTATION

This book gives you a usable tool that documents your process. The overview pages will contain all your images for each category in a reduced size.

- + Determine size, material and binding method
- + Create cover, table of contents or navigation and division pages.
- + Incorporate the assignment and your research paper as a forward or introduction to the book.
- + Full-size studies split evenly between connotative and denotative examples.
- + Book printing and production

Deliverables: (1) image book due Thursday November 13.

→ 06

POSTER SERIES

Design a series of posters that inform your audience about your object. The audience is your colleagues who will walk by these posters in the hallway. This exercise asks that you use time, materials, sequencing or a combination of in the development of a clear and powerful message that informs the viewer. Use ideas from your previous studies as a core resource in developing your approach. Pay close attention during the critique and assess what people say and how they respond to your solution. Ask questions and seek independent insight as you begin developing a refined direction. Choose language, type treatments and images that you and others responded to both visually and conceptually as you begin to rethink your poster concepts. Carefully consider the value and function of the connotative and denotative language you've developed.

INTEGRATE THE FOLLOWING INTO YOUR POSTERS:

- + Image(s)
- + Headline
- + Subhead (subordinate to head)
- + Body copy (roughly 100-125 words that you have written or sourced out)
- + Use the same type families in the poster series.

Deliverables: (2) 18x24 inch posters due Thursday, November 06.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Connotation

The set of associations implied by a word or image in addition to its literal meaning. (technical, functional, factual).

Denotation

The explicit or direct meaning or set of meanings of a word or image. (poetic, suggestive, expressive) sign any object, action, event, pattern, etc., that conveys a meaning; a conventional or arbitrary mark, figure, or symbol used as an abbreviation for the word or words it represents; a motion or gesture used to express or convey an idea, command, decision, etc.: Her nod was a sign that it was time to leave.

Signified

The thing or concept denoted by a sign.

Signifier

A person or thing that signifies.

Myth

Any invented story, idea, or concept; an imaginary or fictitious thing or person; an unproved or false collective belief that is used to justify a social institution.

Story

A narrative, either true or fictitious, in prose or verse, designed to interest, amuse, or instruct the hearer or reader; tale.

Indexical Sign

A sign that arises as a result of, or dependent upon the visual description of the thing it signifies. Indexical signs are like clues, and based on the presences of these clues one derives what occurred prior to the remaining mark. Think of old detective films or novels from the 40's. They are usually loaded with indexical signs. Smells can also be very indexical by nature.

Iconic Sign

A sign or mark that resembles the thing it signifies. Illustrations, photos, architectural renderings, graphic depictions of objects are all visual forms of iconic representation.

Symbolic Sign

A sign that looks nothing like the object it signifies/represents, but is agreed upon by a set of cultural conventions.