CLASS DESCRIPTION

154A COMMUNICATION DESIGN I - Studio, six hours; outside study, nine hours. Preparation: completion of preparation for major courses. Enforced requisite: course C101 or 104 or C106. Focus on relationship of type to content, image, and materials. Acquisition of knowledge of and sensitivity to typography in context of complex communication problems in print and digital media. Research, concept and content development, and articulation of methodology for visualization. P/NP or letter grading.

As far as I knew, this class was supposed to be the extension of DESMA 25 (Typography), which I also took with Henri Lucas. I had seen work from Rebecca Mendez's 154A class ... it seemed to me like a pretty straightforward task: here's some content, now do the "design" thing. I'd soon find out that this class would work somewhat differently.

I think this is where things went sour ...

THE ASSIGNMENT

D.O.B. - date of birth is a research project on the day you were born. Aim is to figure out what world you were born into. What happened that day, besides the "beginning of your life?" What other NEWS events occurred LOCAL, NATIONAL, GLOBAL? What MUSIC was playing on the radio, what was popular on national TELEVISION, what was in FASHION, what was the weather like? What star constellation were you born under? Which CELEBRITIES were born that day and/or were celebrating their birthdays? But also, who was there when you were born, were there older brothers and sisters? Were you born in a hospital, do your mom and dad have specific details and stories?

This assignment is about gathering data, archiving, catagorizing, scaling and visually translating data. An important aspect of this assignment is STORY-TELLING.

SOURCES: internet, newspapers (of that day and the day after), time-lines, info graphics, astrology, your family, the library, etc.

1ST TASK: gather as much information as you can!

(SEE TITLE ...)

DEBRIEF

DISSECTING A TASK

D.O.B. - DATE OF BIRTH is a research project on the day you were born. Aim is to figure out what world you were born into. What happened that day, besides the "beginning of your life?"

Throughout our youth, I think our parents try to do their best to ensure their children of a certain sense of stability and safety. Something that says the world isn't changing ... things will stay the same. Maybe the most shocking part of entering adulthood is the realization that history is subject to constant revision, and that we are very deeply intertwined with the way it will play out. By analyzing the circumstances that precipitate our very existence, scrutinizing the state of the world as it was when we entered it, we get a better sense of our "trajectory," the impact the world has on us and vice versa.

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A defining characteristic of modern interest is the blurring of the seperations between what we usually define as "high" or "low" culture. We're beginning to realize that the New York Philharmonic and Snoop Dogg both produce art of equal cultural cultural significance. Combining the full range of "cultural products" gives us a better sense of our society's collective consciousness at a given era in time.

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We belong to a society with a very rich written history. Our efforts to archive everything are indicative of our desperate attempt to "eternalize" our existence. By searching these archives and selecting or "curating" the content that we believe is imporant, we begin to "create" meaning. Or, that is to say, more meaning than a given piece of information can provide for autonomously. By juxtaposing, categorizing and presenting related information we begin to weave a story.

REACTION

DESIGN/AUTHORSHIP

The one thing this assignment certainly challenges is the conventional role of the designer as a "passive" communicator. In a traditional sense, the designer is presented with an inalterable body of content. He or she is expected to give this content form so that the two may serve to enhance and illuminate eachother simeltaneously.

Here, the notion of designer as "form-giver" hasn't changed. What has, is the notion of the designer as a "passive" participant in the formation of meaning. The D.O.B. project forces the designer to play an "active" role in the GENERATION OF CONTENT. While we're not writing the articles or creating the figures that serve as the project's substance, our selective role in "curating" this information lets us shape its ultimate meaning and impact.

The exciting part of this "role-reversal" for graphic design as a whole, is the elevation of a PRACTICE to an ART-FORM.

"SCANDAL"

489,000 RESULTS FOR "SCANDAL + 1988"

"CONTRADICTION" - 429,000 results
"HYPOCRISY" - 266,000 results
"LIES" - 2,340,000 results
"DECEIT" - 1,160,000 results

"SURVIVAL"

3,910,000 RESULTS FOR "SURVIVAL + 1988"

"STRUCTURE" - 10,700,000 results
"POLITICS" - 15,300,000 results
"WAR" - 9,870,000 results
"MONEY" - 8,040,000 results
"MURDER" - 2,010,000 results
"ENVIRONMENT" - 8,110,000 results

"TENSION"

2,490,000 RESULTS FOR "TENSION + 1988"

"CRIME" - 1,460,000 results
"HATE" - 631,000 results
"RACISM" - 498,000 results
"DISCRIMINATION" - 1,050,000 results

"HEALTH"

14,800,000 RESULTS FOR "HEALTH + 1988"

"DRUGS" - 3,700,000 results
"DISEASE" - 7,140,000 results
"EPIDEMIC" - 473,000 results
"DEATH" - 7,990,000 results
"MEDICINE" - 7,580,000 results

"ENTERTAINMENT"

2,340,000 RESULTS FOR "SPECTACLE + 1988"

"FILM" - 9,860,000 results
"MUSIC" - 10,600,000 results
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"TELEVISION" - 3,710,000 results

"PROGRESS"

6,730,000 RESULTS FOR "PROGRESS + 1988"

"LITERATURE" - 7,540,000 results
"ART" - 9,660,000 results
"TECHNOLOGY" - 14,700,000 results
"PEACE" - 1,540,000 results
"DESIGN" - 11,900,000 results

SOME "RICH PICS"

"Rich picture" is just a fancy word for any sort of visual brainstorming, any sort of attempt to give order/hierarchy/importance to one's initials thoughts before they embark on a project. Here I have a few very broad parameters or "super-categories" that I think will best illuminate the state of society at thew given point in time. These keywords are accompanied by more specific/refined "children" and the amount of data they generated upon a Google search.

Where as this rich picture is "organizational" the diagram on the next page is "relational."

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