



INTRO

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF GRAPHIC DESIGN IN EXTENSION PRACTICES?

The discipline of Graphic Design is often difficult to fit in to an extension and engagement agenda. There are natural points of contact between K-12 initiatives and the role that it can play in developing print and interaction design within a larger systems-based rubric for those needs, but often Graphic Design within other sister design disciplines gets shunted to a minor supporting role.

-1-



WE HAD A CONTINUING DIALOGUE
WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS
AND FOUND THAT →

WHAT WE THOUGHT WE KNEW WAS CONTINUALLY CHALLENGED.

This course is an attempt to introduce undergraduate students to a different set of ideas and values, placing the discipline in the role of researching, engaging and designing for community identity, as a way to enlarge frameworks and concepts of “who to design for.” Our primary value is one of facilitating communication as a first step in building community consensus for design interventions and solutions.

In Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill, language, community, and social values are in a process of change with an

influx of new people from the United States and abroad. This is something that is occurring worldwide in various communities as a result of economic globalization. In local design and planning efforts, there is a notable schism between the recently arrived and older populations. Without a qualitative consensus between groups, sustainable and satisfying design solutions will not be able to be developed that will satisfy the community on any deep level of personal identification. It is essential to understand what constitutes identity and community in these groups to design effectively.

Urban planning has recently begun to acknowledge that ethnic communities have their own dynamic and complex perspectives regarding place, meaning and preservation. Design criteria can be established for example, in acknowledging place identities and meanings when working in multi-ethnic communities, mobilize various communities to become active participants in the planning process, and understand the multiple roles that ethnic communities play in the city (immigration reception areas, political/social mobilization, tourist destination, etc.) when undertaking redevelopment projects (Abramson, D. Manzo, L. and Hou, J. 2006).

This course develops methods that students can use to research, document and directly engage different communities in the Triangle, while developing ways to visualize and represent values and practices to a larger audience. Students developed documentation and research strategies, seeking out different communities and engaging stakeholders and participants through a semester-long dialogue. In addition to more abstract census and demographic research, we tested out the assumptions that designers often too easily make about statistical data. Students developed critical skills in assessing their research and the narratives formed in dialogues with different communities. Finally, they re-presented these narratives through design artifacts exposing relationships and values, with a final project proposal for an online/physical exhibition that would engage the regional community. Work was a mix of collaboration and individual projects, working across various research and design issues encountered through the semester.

Each project was developed with specific learning objectives and outcomes, but unlike other courses it was based on a process of evaluation of research content at several steps through the semester, a constant interrogation of what we assumed that we knew. Within a set course framework, each design

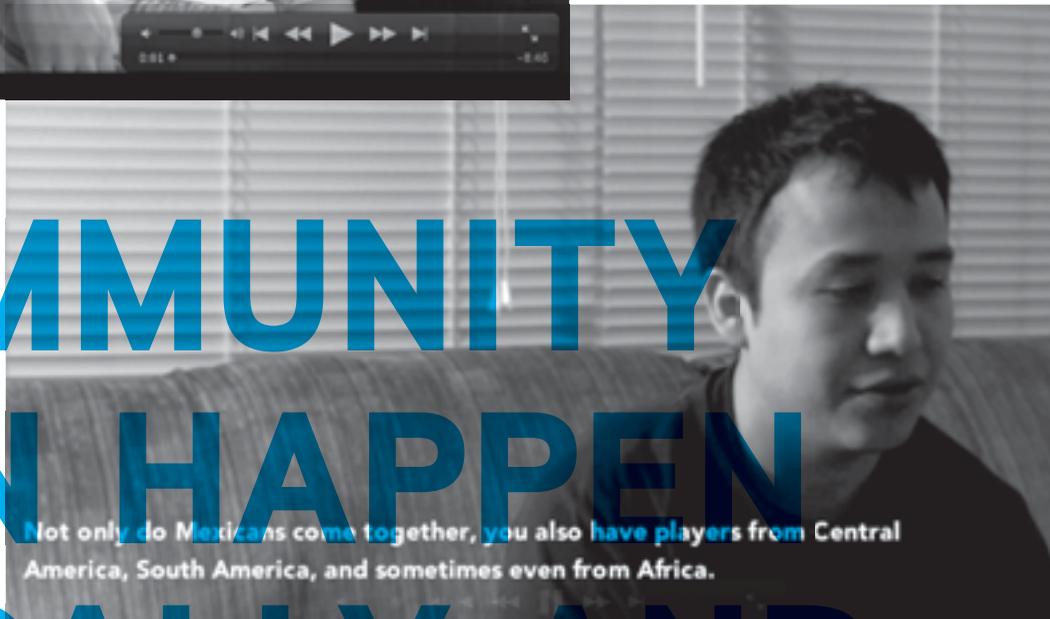
brief articulated criteria to be used in the development of the projects. Editing of content and development of form followed from particular explorations of storytelling to an implicit reader-viewer.

If the reader is now a “user,” or participant, how can a designer develop a concrete understanding of this user in the same way that oral cultures adopt particular “tellings” dependent on their audience?

We adopted a strategy of “building narrative” throughout the course. Writing was a key component in all projects, research presentations, interviews, analysis and editing of transcripts. The idea of “story-telling” through books, website, and exhibition, became the predominant idea that tied the course together.

My role as instructor was to set the framework of each exploration (project or research based), provide related contemporary and historical examples, background readings (process and theory based), and engage the students to develop their communication and collaboration skills. I also provided analysis and connection to the next exploration so that students would understand the relationship between projects and research: an ongoing dialogue between project goals.

Research and design was based in dialogue. This included a continuing discussion with community stakeholders outside of the studio, as well as within the studio through the generation of design solutions. Research assertions were continually challenged: we tested a number of ideas from research and reading sources and saw if they worked in context. We described and discussed what did and did not work and amended our strategies based on interacting directly in an environment. Contingency influenced methods. This created a very different sense of a “design context” in that it was never completely reducible to a list of criteria solely about “audience needs.”



COMMUNITY CAN HAPPEN LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY.

IN VARIOUS CONTEXTS
AND SETTINGS →

1

RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION THROUGH DESIGN.

While statistical information is more prevalent than ever and available to a wider audience, we discussed the limits of our ability to interpret data in the sense that we lack training as designers. The classic caveat of statistical studies of “correlation is not proof” became an idea that moderated our understanding of audiences: we became self-critical about our objective understanding of communities. Our view, we realized, was contingent and subjective.

5



Interviews and “embedded” design responses.

Project one began with basic research on the Triangle. In addition to bibliographic research, we used U.S. census data. Research groups examined Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, suburban and exurban spaces, with the addition of an overview group to provide a summary.

This kind of information helped us to venture a few hypotheses about communities within the Triangle. On the other hand statistics challenged our own prejudices about what we believed about particular neighborhoods, towns, or cities. For example, certain Triangle suburbs, which have a reputation for being predominately “northern” were in fact a mix of traditional southerners and others, despite their reputation.

..6..

Students used this to partially determine where they might start working. Another aspect of site selection was based on the kind of interactions that people have in particular places such as where they work, negotiate their needs as consumers, or what particular avocations that they may have: we looked at the role that particular places have within communities. From this information, we then divided up into groups to work on preliminary interviews and documentation. These statistics piqued our curiosity, and we were curious if our documentation would make us understand things more clearly.

Students were asked to tentatively answer the following questions: what is a community formed around, what is the actual “size” of the Triangle, and how do the interviewees define the edges or borders around what they understand their community to be.

Project two developed interviews, site documentation, and preliminary visual responses to the preliminary research. Each interview/research group engaged in dialogue with people in various sites such as the American Tobacco Campus (and redevelopment issues of downtown Durham), the “Five Points” neighborhood in Raleigh, the Raleigh Flea Market at the State Fairgrounds, the Raleigh Farmers’ Market, and the Excel Soccer Field.

As we developed relationships with members and stake-holders in these communities, we honed our skills in interview techniques. Students developed tactics and strategies to lead conversation to issues of exposing community identity.

WE DOCUMENTED ACTIVITIES AND ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH VIDEO, PHOTOGRAPHY AND GRAPHIC DESIGN.



RONLEE BENGAL

..7..

Some questions that we asked about the activities of the community were:

What stories can you elicit in your interview based on asking for examples, anecdotes. Try to work with more than one person after your first interview.

Where does the interview take place? Is it in “your space” or “their space?”

Do they walk around the area that they are talking about where they can use the physical space as a prompt to their story?

What is the general tone or mood?

Will it take several times to establish trust?



We led the conversation towards ideas of community and asked them:

Where you do the activity: how long have you all been here? Where were you before? How did other people feel that were either in this space, or your neighbors (then, now). What other places/activities are like yours (in the regional area, Raleigh, etc.)

Do those other places have similar issues that your group does?

Do you work with those other groups or are they competitors in some way?

What kind of connection does your group have with people outside of the region?

How do people outside of your group perceive what you do?



WE ASKED THEM ABOUT OBJECTS OF SIGNIFICANCE.

We asked about the objects we observed in our preliminary documentation that are part of the environment of the group: everything from a soccer jersey, a built environment, or an event. Then we asked them:

Does this stand for your community?

How does it stand for your community?

What does it represent to you?

Do other people understand what this means to you and your community?



We expanded the idea of objects and places to a discussion about the area in general—about the person's perception of the larger space that they live in, and how other groups were seen by them:

Is there an event or physical place that allows you to connect to the larger metro community?

What do you perceive of as being the "heart" or "center" of the greater metro community? Describe it.

How would you define the most important "center" of the larger metro community to your group? (i.e. if it's not downtown, but rather a particular regional soccer match: a vacant lot, a city park, etc.).

Do you use the places that have been created in the metro area in a different way than how they were intended to be used for what your group needs or wants?

If so, how do you perceive what you do there that seems to be different than what it appears to be intended for?



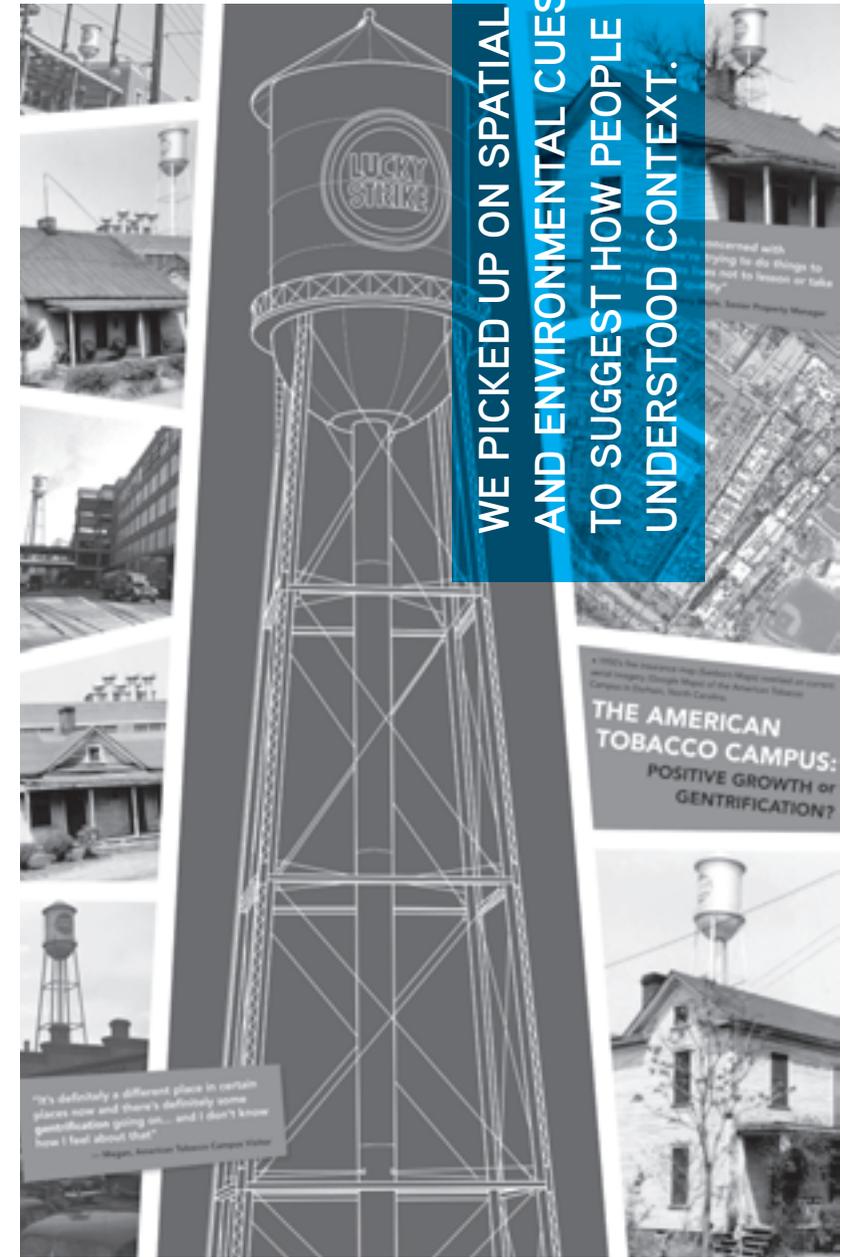
RALEIGH FLEA MARKET



WE DID QUICK, LARGE SCALE RESPONSES COMBINING RESEARCH AND OBJECTS FROM THE COMMUNITY.

10

KIRSTEN EVERS



WE PICKED UP ON SPATIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CUES TO SUGGEST HOW PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD CONTEXT.

THE AMERICAN TOBACCO CAMPUS: POSITIVE GROWTH or GENTRIFICATION?

It's definitely a different place in certain places now and there's definitely some gentrification going on... and I don't know how I feel about that.

11

DUSTIN RHODES

How we set up our scenarios included asking questions of ourselves to prepare for interviews and conversations.

As we developed our design research, common themes, questions and patterns began to emerge as to how communities viewed themselves and each other.



STEPHANIE BAUMAN



THE MORE WE TRIED TO
CREATE FIXED CATEGORIES AND
UNDERSTANDINGS, THE MORE
WE REALIZED THAT →

COMMUNITIES ARE A WORK IN PROGRESS.

2

BOOK-MAKING AS PROTOTYPE AND IDEATION.

Projects three and four used the format of books. The book, often thought as a design form in eclipse in light of digital media, gave us the ability to work through design concepts of interactivity and experience in a concrete, observable manner. This added an additional dimension to the more abstract understandings of designing through concept maps and scenarios for experience. The book was a format that we used to think through various “design problems.”

13



Involving the reader in a story.

Students created scenarios using personas vis-à-vis subject matter in a very basic way: age, gender, primary language, and activity. Through this they then defined design formats and overall design strategy, including formal components as they developed written content.

In project three we used alternative ideas to traditional print formats, looking at how ideas and structure of the interview narratives could be portrayed. We looked at how a typographic system, alternative binding and materiality can create different interpretations of the narratives that we had recorded. We used the book format as a form of ideation and prototyping in how we represented community narratives and also how the book can engage a reader through experience (the experiences by the reader of physicality and alternative binding, imposition, visual and text editing, rhythm and pacing, repetition, breaks in continuity).

In project four we looked at reading in a more public way of understanding a narrative. We created “books” that used interactivity to engage not only a single reader, but also a larger group of readers (or participants) in a more public interaction. We applied concepts of interaction design, referencing introductory ideas of game design with additional precedents outside of contemporary interaction design. This included diverse references from sources found in graphic works, notational language, and also the rich history of artists’ books, such as the Fluxus artist’s use

of the “Fluxus Kit,” a portable collection or book-like object composed of props and instructions to aid in a performance.

One rubric for game design comes from the book *Rules of Play*, by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman which outlines a simple game structure:

- The objects (the parts of the system)*
- The rules (the attributes of the system and relationship of the objects to one another)*
- The system (the overall game structure)*
- The motivation for the players: competitive, collaboration, etc. (how do you “win”)*

A book has all these parts except for the last one: how many people are involved and what their motivation is. How does reading (or narrative) become public and interactive? And therefore we are lead back to engagement with communities.

PEOPLE CAN PLAY MULTIPLE ROLES IN THEIR COMMUNITY.



How do people in the Triangle create value relative to their own community needs?

HAYLEY HELMSTETLER
The Flea Market community
Book 1



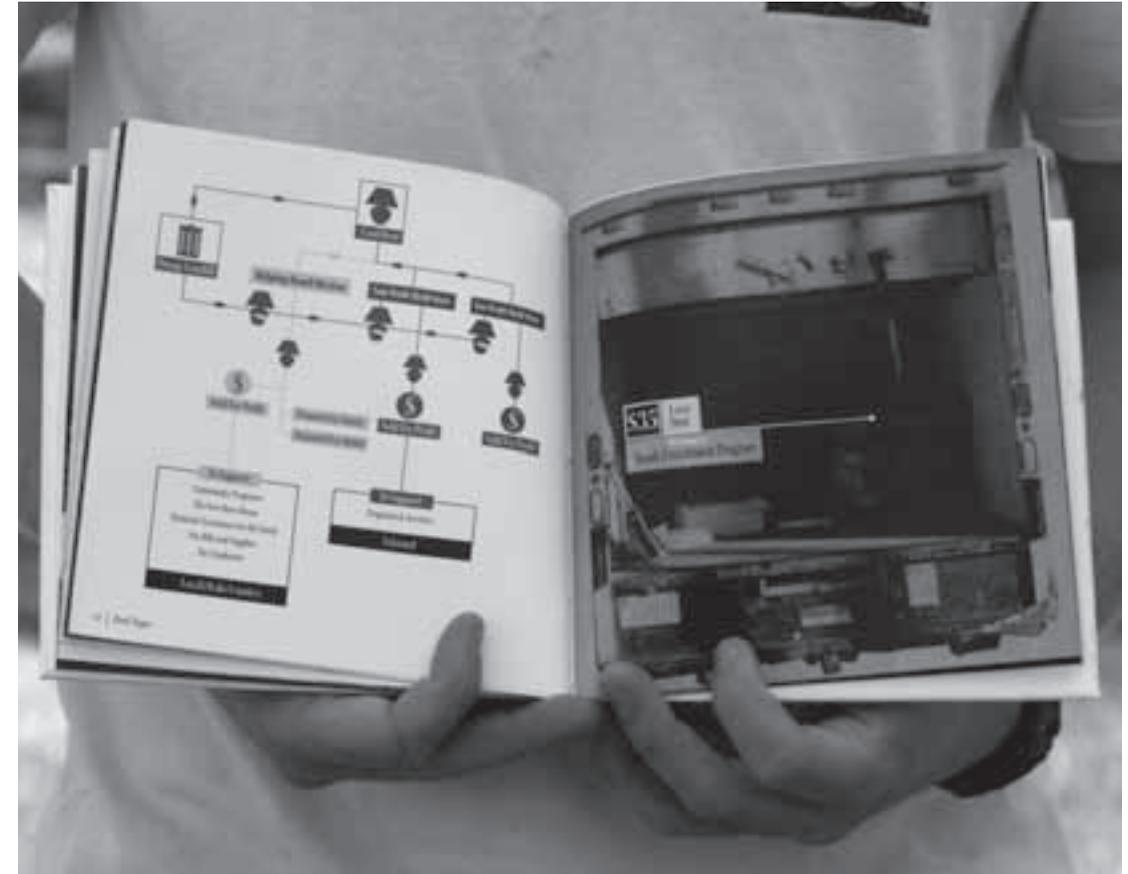
Negotiation and community.
The Flea Market community at the State Fairgrounds creates an alternative way to buy and sell based on negotiation rather than contemporary marketing practices of branding, point of sale, etc. The value gained



is a sense of local language, identity and other social practices that one can learn from a long-term connection to the space.



COMMUNITIES CAN SHIFT AND OVERLAP.



16



How does identity emerge based on different practices such as shopping, food preparation and contrasts between different culturally ascribed "manners."

JAVAN SUTTON
Bickett Market community
Book 1

New relationships are formed in older, historical communities. Local identity is tied to local farming practices and farmer markets, creating a community of local consumers and local producers.

17



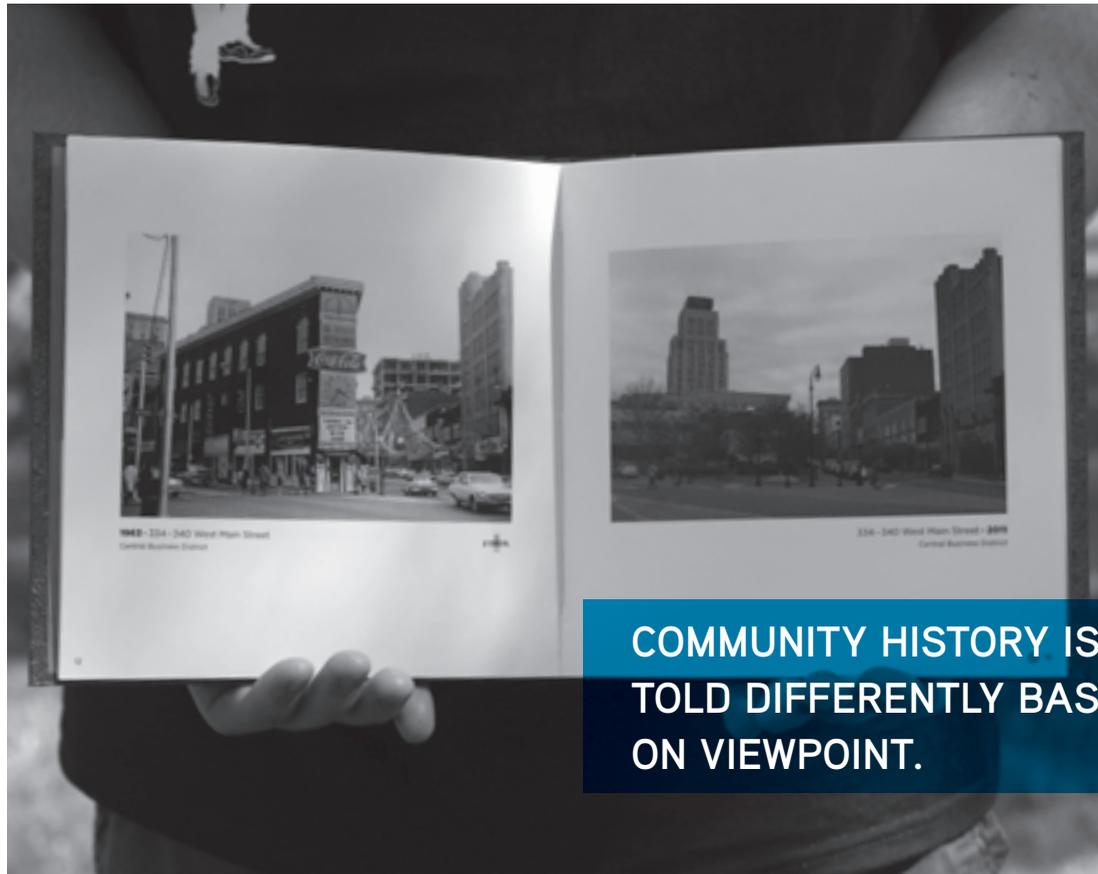
How can a different way of looking at goods and services help support communities and satisfy needs?

DAN COX
Helping Hands Mission
Book 1



Remarket and redistribution. In this exploration and documentation of daily practices at the Helping Hands Mission, cast-off materials are recycled back into the community to help meet various needs.

The donated materials are remarketed as well as redistributed.



COMMUNITY HISTORY IS TOLD DIFFERENTLY BASED ON VIEWPOINT.



POINTS OF VIEW CAN BE SHAPED BY PROXIMITY.

18



How can historical and environmental changes be revealed by framing a point of view?

DUSTIN RHODES
Downtown Durham
Book 1

Photographic viewpoint (point of view) and mapping to understand a physical space. Historical photographs are paired with contemporary photographs with exactly the same framing. The photographs reveal the presences and

absences of neighborhoods, people and community. Each site is shown relative to its orientation to the American Tobacco Campus water tower.

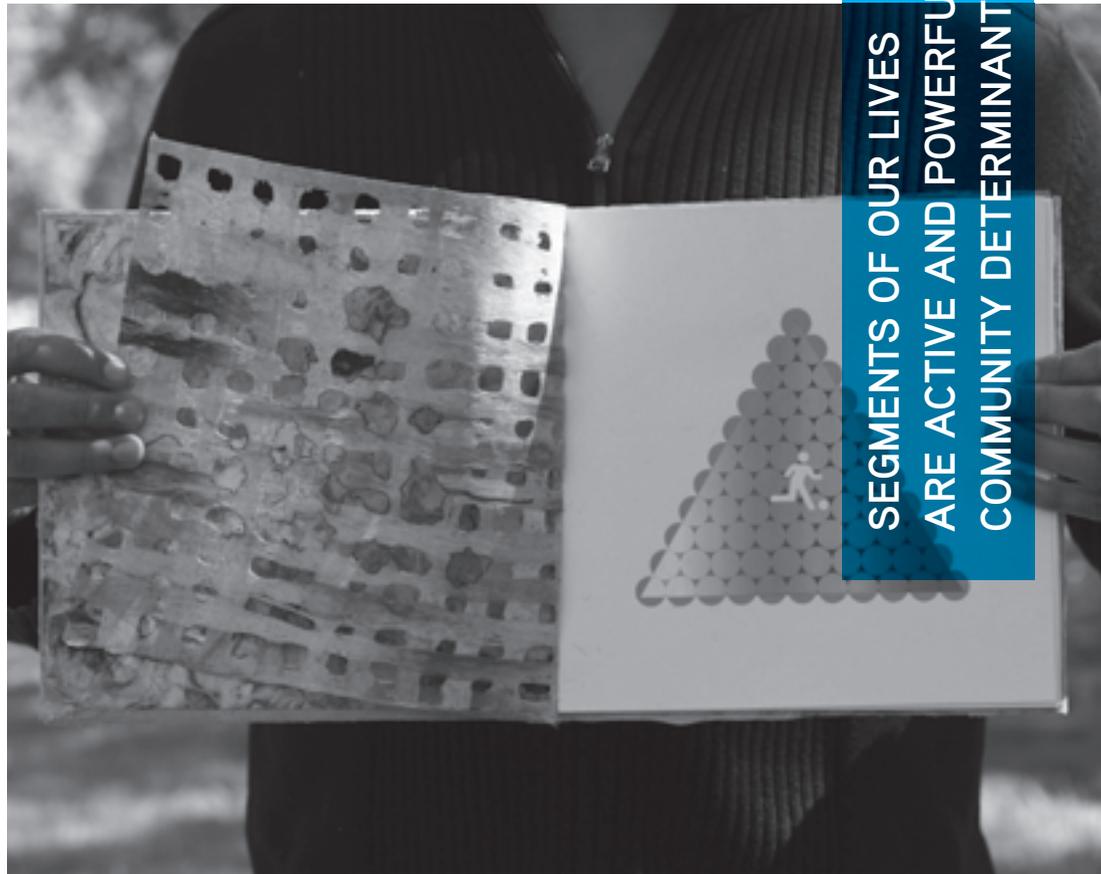
19



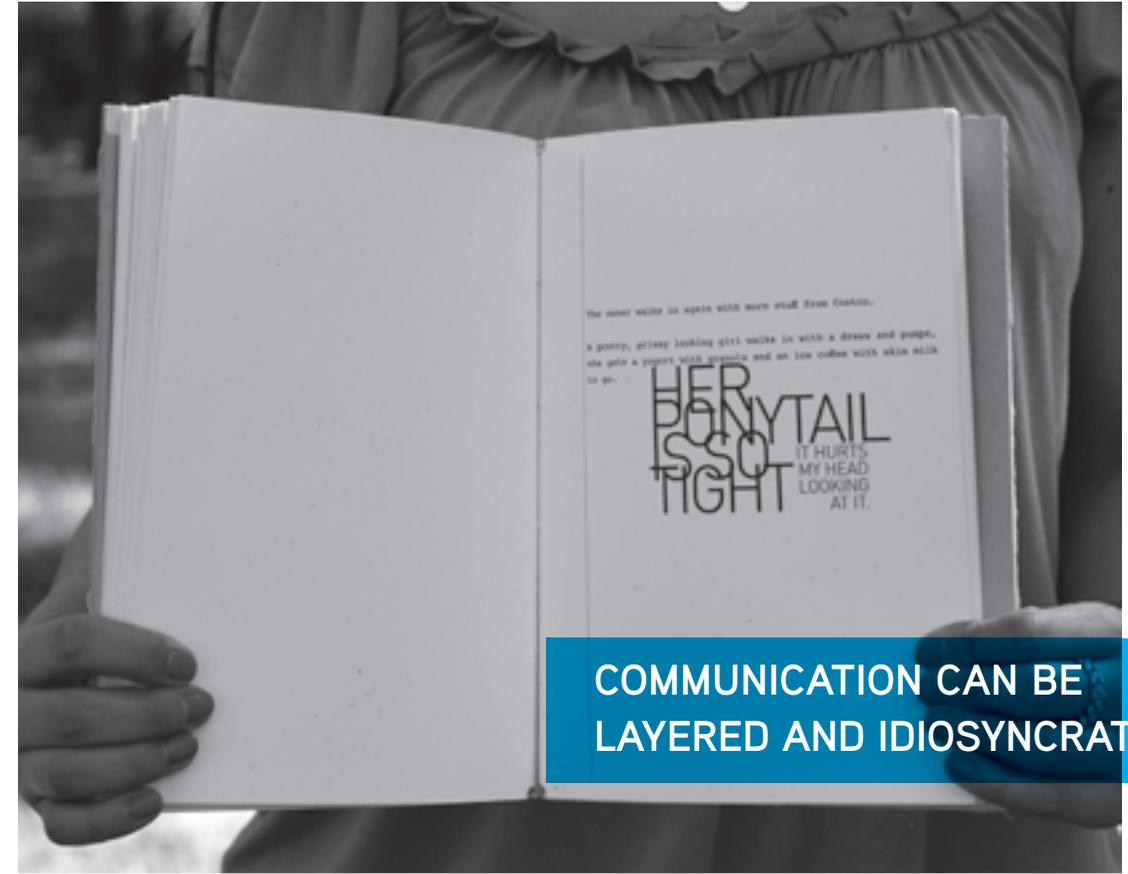
How do people in the Triangle understand their community history?

ZACH DAVENPORT
Downtown Durham
Book 1

Personal viewpoint. Different viewpoints and interviews on the history of downtown Durham and changes in the community.

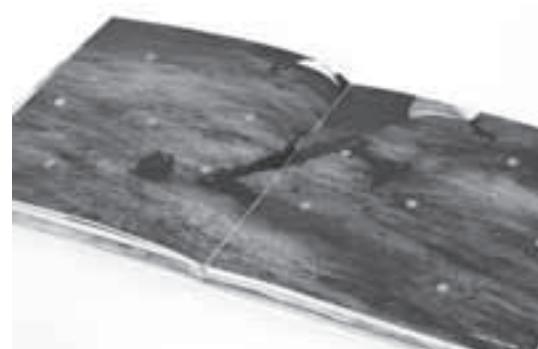


SEGMENTS OF OUR LIVES
ARE ACTIVE AND POWERFUL
COMMUNITY DETERMINANTS.



COMMUNICATION CAN BE
LAYERED AND IDIOSYNCRATIC.

20



How do people in the triangle share a local and a global identity?

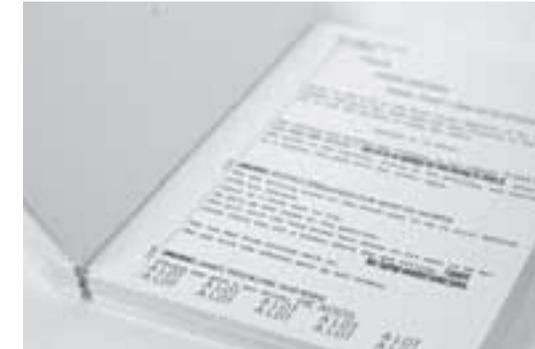
SAUL FLORES
Triangle soccer community
Book 1

We create connections locally. We also trace our connections to other places and experiences.
The individual story of a member of the community is told. In it she reflects on her ability to transcend gender discrimination in the country

she was born in by playing soccer, where ability alone is the deciding factor in building relationships on the field.

How do people in the Triangle see the world differently?

21



How do people talk to one another?

RONLEE BENGAL
Five Points community
Book 1

Communication inside and outside of the community.
A "typographic snapshot" of a series of conversations and interactions recorded *in situ* in the Five Points neighborhood.



THERE CAN BE BOTH A PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACE TO A COMMUNITY.



HOW CAN A COMMUNITY TELL ITS OWN STORY?

22



How do you suggest a particular kind of experience, such as the multi-layered qualities found in a farmers' market?

CRAIG MAXWELL
Farmer's Market community
Book 1

The exploratory qualities of public spaces and communities. This interactive book suggests the exploratory quality of the market, where conversations, handmade signs and produce displays create a very different experience for a "consumer."

23



How do you help a community tell its story to a newcomer?

KATIE HILL
Helping Hands Mission
Book 1



Creating a bridge between insiders and outsiders. This book provides a system for the Helping Hands community to self-record "who they are" through story and photography.

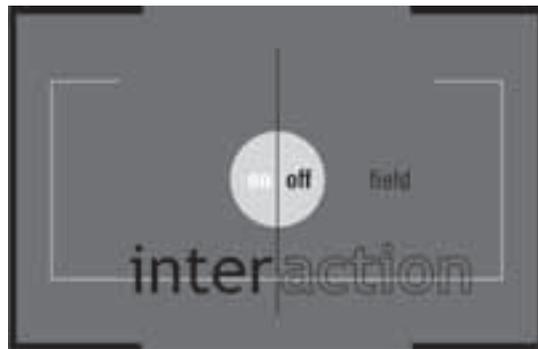


HOW CAN A GAME INFLUENCE COMMUNITY INTERACTION?



HOW CAN CUSTOMS OPEN DOORS FOR COMMUNICATION?

24



How can the examination of activities be used to evaluate social interaction?

EILEEN MCDONOUGH
Triangle soccer community
Book 2



Activities have rules and conventions that influence more informal behaviors and norms. A "primer" to the playing of soccer and it's rule set, with embedded comments on the kinds of social interactions that occur on the soccer field.

25



If unspoken assumptions are made about another culture through manners, how can design communicate the relative values held by different groups?



CHELSEA AMATO
Korean community
Book 2



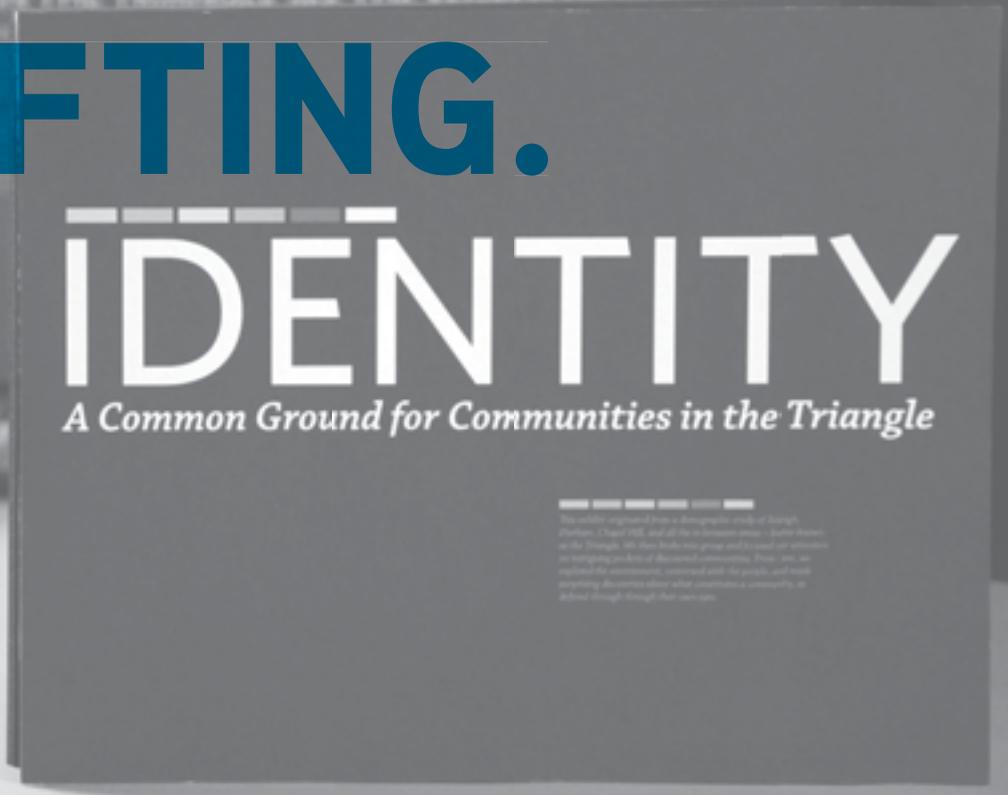
Educating on customs and formalities around meal time. A series of recipes from different Asian cultures are tied to a before dinner game. A series of explanations are given for how a table is set in each culture. Players must

correctly place game pieces into the table setting and identify the basic social meanings and use to win.



WITHIN OUR DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH, MANY THINGS WERE IN PLAY →

COMMUNITY IDENTITY IS CONSTANTLY SHIFTING.



3

DESIGN PROPOSALS FOR JOINT EXHIBITION/ONLINE COMMUNITY EDUCATION.

We amassed a surprising amount of design ideas, concepts and “thick descriptions” of the communities that we engaged with. As we developed ideas and revised our topic areas, themes began to emerge. Project five adapted and applied these themes to a collaborative class project. The goal of this project was to adapt our working forms and concepts into a proposal for an exhibition and online presentation—focusing on what we found out through our research and engagement.



Telling the story.

The various stages of the course—demographic research, documentation and interviews, exploratory projects “embedded” in the milieu of the various social spaces, alternative narrative strategies and interaction within the rubric of the book—served as ideation for project five.

These formats and their underlying strategies were evaluated within the context of an exhibition setting as to how to “best tell a story” to a very diverse audience and age group.

Issues of representation, public interaction and dissemination framed the final design proposal.

28 The final proposal consists of five emergent themes. The goal of the exhibition and online component is to explore segments of community identity in the Triangle. It is to involve and inform a larger audience about very specific ways of looking at diversity in a community composed of people with very different backgrounds. It is meant to provide an alternative way to begin to think and question assumptions that the audience makes about what constitutes identity and

community. Through questioning and dialogue, the larger audience can begin to formulate an appreciation for a more nuanced and varied way of looking at where they live, and become more inclusive of the needs of others that have recently arrived. The effect of initiatives like this is to change the way that the larger community discusses values, and expresses those values to the designers and planners that will respond through large comprehensive design solutions for the greater Triangle communities. Through university extension funding, this material will be used to create an actual portable exhibition system.



**RONLEE BENGAL
KATIE HILL**
Five Points community
Helping Hands Mission
Exhibition

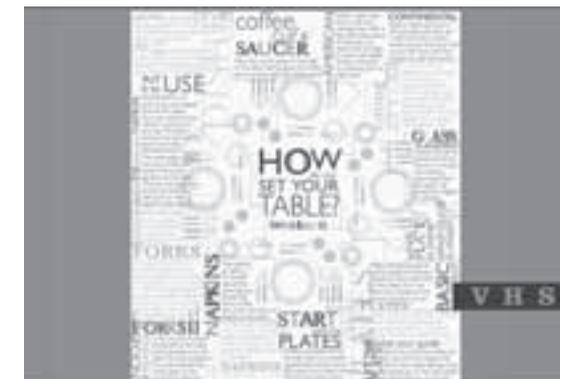
Transcripts of interviews and recorded conversations were used as examples of interpersonal communication theory in this segment of the larger exhibition.

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER?



EMILY PARKER
Chinese culture
Online exhibition

Example of interactive web components from exhibition website. Chinese and Western practices are investigated through an online puzzle. Complementing the site-specific exhibition proposal, the web site used the



distribution and reception issues of online media to reach a larger and more varied audience.





HOW DO PEOPLE IN THE TRIANGLE SEE THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY?

30



JAVAN SUTTON
HAYLEY HELMSTETLER
KIRSTEN EVERS
CHELSEA AMATO
Rocky Horror at the Rialto
The Flea Market community
Korean community
Exhibition

Cultural contexts and differences in daily life.
The role of identity can be based on different practices such as shopping and food preparation. This segment of the exhibition focused on an interest in contrasts between different culturally ascribed manners.



HOW DO WE SHARE A LOCAL AND GLOBAL IDENTITY?

31



SAUL FLORES
EILEEN MCDONOUGH
Triangle soccer community
Exhibition

Interactions of place.
This segment of the exhibition looked at how international avocations such as soccer and individual soccer fields in the Triangle become the locus of social interactions across ethnic and language boundaries.



WRAP

TALKING WITH COMMUNITIES: GRAPHIC DESIGN AS A FACILI- TATOR OF COMMUNICATION.

The course proves the validity of one kind of approach to a graphic design extension practicum, and suggests new connections to other disciplines in the College of Design, and perhaps in other design education contexts. It also fits within, uses and extends the new Department of Graphic Design curriculum, ostensibly based on a larger systems approach.

..32..

Students applied methods and concepts from previous classes in studio, interaction and typographic systems successfully, were able to transcend formats to compare user experiences, and collaborated successfully in a number of ways with each other. This collaboration also was successful with the so-called College of Design “swing studio” strategy: we were fortunate to have two Department of Architecture students with us (Bauman and McDonough). Their individual and discipline-trained insights were highly valued in the

course and contributed an element that would have been missing from the final group collaborative project. This course also suggests interesting possibilities for the hypothetical “D” (for Design) course proposals: the general idea of moving past disciplinary boundaries in meaningful, articulate and truly synergistic ways in upper level design education that has a significant external impact on the communities a college and a university are supported by and a part of.

