

**Art 081 432 Design III-B  
Spring 2012**

Rutgers, Mason Gross School of the Arts  
Section 1: Tuesday 11:30 to 5:50  
Section 2: Thursday 11:30 to 5:50

Jacqueline Thaw thaw@thawstudio.com  
Office Hours:  
Tuesday 10:30 to 11:30am  
Thursday 6 to 7pm  
see sign-up sheet, Room 233

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## Design Thesis / Portfolio

This term we will focus on developing, creating and exhibiting a graphic design thesis project as well as building a portfolio of diverse work demonstrating your skill and process as a designer.

While there is no 'formula' for a successful thesis, there is a process to follow. There will be no specific creative assignments in this course but rather a series of benchmarks and process steps for you to tailor to the needs of your particular thesis work. I will supply general parameters as a guide while you will work independently according to the specifics of your chosen pursuits.

The schedule attached breaks down your time into different phases. Pay attention to what is required at each phase. This should act as a guide as you plan out the work ahead.

The semester is composed of three phases:

**I Weeks 1 through 5 Thesis Exploration**

**II Weeks 6 through 10 Thesis Execution**

**III Weeks 11 through 15 Portfolio**

## Thesis Exploration

Your goal is to identify a design focus\*, or material you wish to explore through visual work. You'll identify your focus through a Proposal and a series of visual Studies.

A **proposal** is a description of your intentions for a project. A proposal must include:

1. a description of the ideas that inform the work; describe the specific ways in which design is the appropriate vehicle to explore your interests [VERBAL]
2. reference material, including precedents (ie: work that has been done, by others and/or by you, that deals with the same questions and ideas and materials) and possibly quotations, video, audio, actual materials [VISUAL/VERBAL]
3. sketches, visual explorations of your ideas [VISUAL]

Present proposals to the class on 11x17 sheets, portrait orientation, b+w or color as needed. Combine 1, 2 and 3 as you see fit. Compile these in a fast and easy way, in a Word or InDesign document, exported to a PDF.

Note that a proposal is due for each of the first 4 homework assignments; you'll continue to refine and re-present it each time, becoming increasingly focused.

A **study** is a visual piece presented for class feedback. You might choose one tiny aspect of your proposal to explore; or begin a piece of it; or explore the material, medium, content in some way. The study is a means to get the project going. It is a visual trial, in which you begin to figure out what the thesis project will look like.

The end of this phase is to plan your process for the final piece. Identify the steps needed for your particular project. Plan out what needs to be accomplished by when, using the general course schedule as a guide. This will be your personal to-do list to manage the project.

## Thesis Execution

This phase is the visual development and refinement of the work. The more iterations you can generate early on, the better your project will be. When in doubt on how many varied approaches to explore, take on as many as you possibly can.

Development leads to production. Consider production methods, explore possibilities in materials and format, try to predict obstacles. Consult experts outside the class as needed.

\* I'm calling it a focus, but you can also think of this is your area of interest, a question, an issue, a topic or even a mantra. It is something that you want to explore through visual work, using the methods of design.

Note that all Thesis Projects will be completed within this course by the date of the first exhibition, March 20.

## Portfolio

The design of your portfolio is an ongoing, career-long project as your work continues to evolve. In this course, you will produce a portfolio of your best work to date, including the work from this and previous design courses, freelance and other media (such as photography, video) where appropriate.

The process has six steps:

Decide on a format (print, web, both)

Choose the work to include; include some process

Revise previous projects as needed to show your current skills

Design a template to show, and label, varied kinds of work

Production

Design/update your résumé

**Format** Look at examples of design portfolios provided. Consider delivery format: print or digital (or both). If print, I recommend buying a Pina Zingaro portfolio book; they come with plastic sleeves, easy to change and update. Choose a size and orientation.

**What to include** There is no specific number of pieces that you need in your portfolio; choose only your strongest work. The average is somewhere between 10 and 20 works.

I strongly recommend showing some process work in your portfolio. Two possible ways to do this: Show sketches and multiple ideas for one project, or create a separate process book of sketches and ideas for many projects.

**Revisions** We will decide together which pieces to include and how to revise earlier works so they are portfolio-ready. Create a running list of eligible works and revisions needed, to keep track of the portfolio project.

**Template** Design a layout system with options for showing projects of different sizes, some single and others with multiple components. Looking at the list of pieces you're including, consider what kind of label/caption/credit information will be most useful for you. Design this typographic material into the template.

**Production** Gather up representations of each project. Photograph works as needed; only those works that benefit from photography should be photographed. Layout each portfolio page/screen. Organize works into a lively sequence or meaningful categories, as appropriate.

**Résumé** Look at examples provided. Revise your résumé to complement your portfolio design, for example using the same typeface(s). Update the information as needed.

## Evaluation

You will receive an interim grade for each phase of the course; these interim grades will reflect both the richness of your process and the success of the outcome. The final course grade will be an average of the three interim grades.

Three absences will lower your grade one level, and all further absences will continue to lower your grade. Three arrivals of more than 10 minutes late will count as one absence.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up on the work by contacting me via e-mail.

## Best Advice

Establish a quiet space and time to think and make work.

Look at precedents, find visual and conceptual springboards/inspiration.

Put all your ideas on paper.

Make as much visual work as you can.

Classes will typically run as follows:

11:30 to 2:30 – full class or small group critique

2:40 to 3:10 – lunchtime presentations / a series of design videos (bring your lunch)

3:10 to 3:30 – presentation of examples and methods; review of next steps

3:30 to 5:50 – in-class studio time

## Schedule

WEEK		SEC 01 / SEC 02	DUE
1	Thesis Exploration	Jan 17 / 19	In class: Course overview; project brainstorms; Begin developing proposal ideas
2		Jan 24 / 26	Proposal and Study #1
3		Jan 31 / Feb 2	Revised Proposal and Study #2
4		Feb 7 / 9	Final Proposal and Study #3
5		Feb 14 / 16	Process Steps/Schedule and Thesis Project Visual Explorations 1
6	Thesis Execution	Feb 21 / 23	Thesis Project Visual Explorations 2
7		Feb 28 / Mar 1	Thesis Project Refinements
8		Mar 6 / 8	Thesis Project Production
9		Mar 13 / 15	Spring Break / Thesis Project Production
10		Mar 20 / 22	Thesis Project (BFA I Opens)
11	Portfolio	Mar 27 / 29	All eligible work for portfolio
12		Apr 3 / 5	Portfolio Format Draft 1; Revisions 30%
13		Apr 10 / 12	Portfolio Format Draft 2; Revisions 30%
14		Apr 17 / 19 (BFA II Opens)	Portfolio Format Draft 3; Revisions 30%
15		Apr 24 / 26	Portfolio Refinements, Production
16		(May 1)	Portfolio Review

## Portfolio worksheet

List the projects you plan to include. Track the status of each project, and revisions/materials/photography needed.

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PROJECT

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TO DO

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PHOTOG NEEDED?  NO  YES  DONE

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PROJECT

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TO DO

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PROJECT

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PHOTOG NEEDED?  NO  YES  DONE