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LISA BODENSTEDT



Design History and The Human Experience



**DESIGN HISTORY  
AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE**

Rochester Institute of Technology  
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences  
School of Design  
Department of Graphic Design

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the  
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences  
in candidacy for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

**Lisa Bodenstedt**

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Date



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## THESIS PROJECT DEFINITION

This thesis, *Design History and the Human Experience*, is a course which offers a new approach to teaching design history by presenting the material through a historical/popular culture lens. The research and content organizing methodology will show how design is part of a larger context reflecting and creating the culture we live in.

When design history includes an emphasis on the historical and cultural contexts, the designer's work takes on deeper meaning and relevance. The underlying philosophy of the thesis, *Design History and The Human Experience*, argues that design does not occur in a vacuum but emerges from many social, cultural and historical influences. This thesis demonstrates the relationship between design and these influences, and offers a methodology for presenting and teaching the material. The course also takes into account the importance of critical mediation and considers at the circumstances surrounding the critical evaluation of the designers' work, for it is through this evaluation process that certain work is given prominence in design history while other designers go unmentioned.

## PRECEDENTS

The study of design history as part of a graphic design education is still in a formative stage in design school curriculums. Typically, the format of design history classes follows the traditional art history methodology, centering on designers/artists and their product. The influencing conditions that surround the work, such as geo-political events, technology, social structures, and popular culture are not emphasized or included.

This point was validated while attending the *Useable Design History* conference at the University of Michigan and the American Institute of Graphic Arts *History and Criticism* conference in New York this year. The writer reviewed preliminary thesis development research with noted design historians who were attending the conferences such as Penny Sparke, Dean of Design Faculty, Kingston University, London; Martha Scotford, Professor, North Carolina State University; Victor Margolin, Professor of Design History, University of Illinois; and Clive Dilnot, Professor of Design Studies and Director of Design Initiatives at the Art Institute of Chicago. These historians were enthusiastic about this new approach to teaching design history.

At present no models exist of a historical/cultural context approach to teaching graphic design. The writer has come to this conclusion through research and by interviewing design historians, individuals who not only have an understanding of design history but who are aware of current curriculums in the United States and Europe. As a result, the writer can surmise to the best of her knowledge that nothing like the paradigm proposed in this thesis is being used today.

## RESEARCH

A needs assessment further defined the philosophical and pedagogical goals of the course. (Please refer to the *Thesis Planning Report*, appendix, page 25).

The following questions became the underlying themes forming a subtext to the research. Portions were inspired by a speech made by the designer Tibor Kalman<sup>1</sup>:

What is it about this piece of design we cannot understand because we are not part of the culture which produced it?

- What were the news stories of the day?
- Who was the intended audience?
- How were people living at the time?
- What did the image communicate to its audience?
- What aspects of the image can't we see with our contemporary sensibilities?
- What role did the designer play in the commission?
- Is this design an example of good design at the time?
- How did it evolve into a famous example of graphic design worthy of study?

The parameters of the course were constructed. All the examples of graphic design were to come from the RIT Design Archive and Special Collections at the Wallace Memorial Library. The course would be comprised of three separate classes, each focusing on a period of time. Section One, 1900-1930; Section Two, 1930-1940; and Section Three, 1950-1960. For this thesis demonstration historical research focused on the time period from 1930 to 1940.

Supporting the period's historical contexts and cultural themes, three examples of seminal design from 1930-1940 were chosen from the Design Archives. The selected exemplars and the media forms were:

- Lester Beall, Rural Electrification posters,
- Mehemed Fehmy Agha, *Vanity Fair* magazine
- Lester Beall, *Collier's* trade advertisements.

The chart on page 8 illustrates an early attempt to structure the course content.

1. Speech written by Tibor Kalman and J. Abbot Miller. It was rewritten by Kari Jacob. The final product, the speech, was given by Kalman at the "Modernism and Eclecticism symposium (Sponsored by the School of Visual Arts in New York, February 1990). Originally published in *Print* magazine March/April 1991.



To organize a broad range and extensive amount of information, charts were created for each designer and their selected work. This provided an order to the research. By organizing the data in this way, interrelationships between the designer's work and the historical context could be seen. Personal immersion in the film, music, dress, and food of the 1930s provided the writer with an intuitive understanding of the period.

Strong interrelationships emerged between the designer's work and the historical context. For example, Lester Beall's *Rural Electrification* posters were done for the WPA projects of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. These images reflect a rural America suffering the effects of the Depression and the Dust Bowl.

Dr. Agha's art direction of *Vanity Fair* magazine depicts the turbulent and politically conflicting views of popular opinion, while also capturing the glamour and gossip of the Hollywood film industry at the height of the studio system and the Depression in the United States.

The third and final design example, *Collier's* magazine trade advertisements done in the late 1930s by Lester Beall, dramatically predicts what is to come for America in the near future as Hitler rises to power in Germany.

For all three exemplars there are supporting creative expressions of the period, such as popular culture, film, painting, music and literature.

# 1930s

## AN ERA OF CONTRADICTIONS AND COMPLEXITY

The 1930s sits squarely between two great blasts that rocked the United States; the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, 1941. What transpires between these two events will become the underpinnings of America's emergence as a world power, not only in fields of technology and science, but also art and design.

### EXEMPLARS / MEDIA FORM

	<b>Beall</b> REA posters <b>Coiner</b> NRA program Theme: Depression in America	<b>Fortune Magazine</b> Theme: Machine and the Economy	<b>Vanity Fair / Agha</b> Theme: Glamour in the face of the Depression, Hollywood / America gets ready for war / Modernism in America	<b>Beall / Collier's Trade ads</b> Theme: World War II
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### INFLUENTIAL CONTEXTS

<b>UNITED STATES</b> <small>ECONOMICS, GEOGRAPHY, GOVERNMENT, POLITICS</small> <small>WORLD EVENTS, DISASTER, TRAGEDY</small>	Stock Market Crash / Depression Dust Bowl / Migration to California Prohibition / Bonnie and Clyde Lindbergh Baby Kidnapping	FDR The New Deal Social Security Act Hindenburg Disaster	European Immigration to America Hollywood's Golden Era	Pearl Harbor Earhart lost at Sea Lou Gehrig says goodbye Jesse Owens in 1936 Olympics
<b>SOCIAL SCIENCES / WORLD</b> <small>ECONOMICS, GEOGRAPHY, GOVERNMENT, POLITICS</small> <small>WORLD EVENTS</small>	Depression through Europe	Spanish Civil War Japanese Expansion	Rise of Nazism: Poland, Long Knives Nuremberg Laws Rise of Fascism England World War II	Kristallnacht Escalation of the War
<b>SCIENCE / TECHNOLOGY</b> <small>INVENTION, TRANSPORTATION</small> <small>COMMUNICATION, MEDICINE</small>	Radio Talking Films – begins 1927	Mechanization of farming in America – 20s Sulfa Drugs Synthetic Rubber and Nylon	Radar / Carlson first copier Building: Hoover Dam / Golden Gate Bridge	Jet engine developed Fission Air Cond. Car
<b>CONSUMER PRODUCTS</b> <small>GENERAL MERCHANDISE,</small> <small>INDUSTRIAL DESIGN, FOOD, PADS</small>	Wonder Bread Skippy Peanut Butter Twinkies	Waring Blender Monopoly	Cosmetics / Revlon Fashion / Coco Chanel.	Transatlantic passenger service Instant Coffee Spam Supermarket Shopping Cart, Oklahoma
<b>POPULAR CULTURE</b> <small>ADVERTISING, COMICS,</small> <small>FILM, FOLKLORE AND ART,</small> <small>MUSIC, MUSICAL THEATRE</small> <small>RADIO, TELEVISION, FILM</small>	Listenne Ads, Woody Guthrie, <i>The Lone Ranger</i> , <i>Amos and Andy</i> , <i>Anything Goes</i> , <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> , <i>Dive-ins</i> ,	Chicago World's Fair 1933 <i>Little Orphan Annie</i> Charlie Chaplin's <i>Modern Times</i> , <i>The Plow that Broke the Plains</i> , Benny Goodman	1939 NY World's Fair Busby Berkeley musicals, <i>Gone With The Wind</i> Shirley Temple, King Kong Political Cartoons Ella Fitzgerald <i>Flash Gordon</i> Contemporary Film, <i>Cabaret</i>	Radio show, <i>War of the Worlds</i> <i>Bat Man Comics</i>  Contemporary Film, <i>Schindler's List</i>
<b>THE ARTS</b> <small>LITERATURE</small> <small>PAINTING</small> <small>PHOTOGRAPHY</small>	<i>Young Lonigan</i> , James T. Farrell <i>American Gothic</i> , Grant Wood Dorothea Lange.	Ansel Adams /Weston Poet, Robert Frost	<i>Triumph of the Will</i> , Leni Riefenstahl Picasso, <i>Guernica</i> Penn/Steichen / Steglitz <i>Camera... Age of Mechanical Reproduction</i> Benjamin	Photography, Margaret Bourke-White Painting Literature Film
<b>ARCHITECTURE</b>		Falling Water, Wright	Empire State Building	
<b>MISC.</b>	Food Stamps, Rochester, New York	Alcoholics Anonymous Founded		

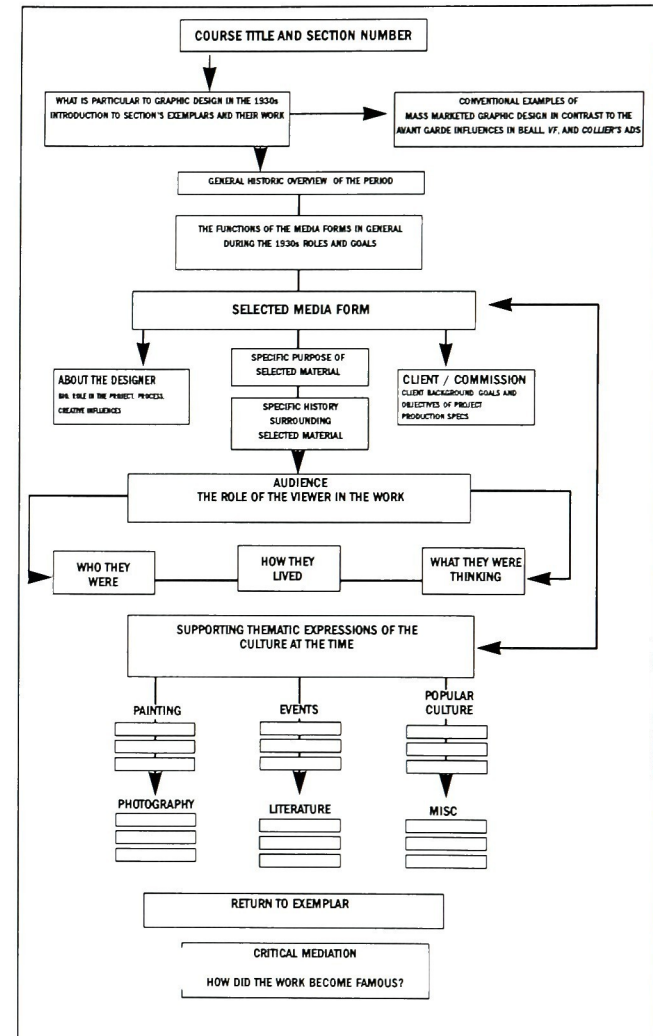
## INTERMEDIATE EVALUATION AND IDEATION

The course material covered a wide range of subject matter. Preliminary solutions proved unsuccessful in managing and presenting the course material in any viable way.

The thesis committee suggested developing a paradigm that would provide structure and keep the writer focused on the main idea of the thesis. "How to teach graphic design in a historic context."

The new paradigm that was developed begins with general information, then moves in an outward direction by adding more detail. The new paradigm would allow distant and seemingly unrelated topics, such as Lester Beall's WPA posters and the children's story, *The Three Little Pigs*, to be presented in a meaningful way. The committee validated these changes. The next step was to apply the paradigm within a fully developed and detailed course.

The chart on the right shows the structure of the paradigm.



**REVISED  
PARADIGM**

**Design History  
and the Human  
Experience**

This outline reflects  
the methodology  
used to teach design  
history within a  
historical context

**1. Introduction**

- Graphic design during (years)
- Introduction to exemplars

- Conventional examples of mass marketed graphic design

- General historic overview of the period

- The roles and goals of selected media forms in relationship to the culture

**2. Exploring  
the Media  
Forms**

- Designer's role in creating the media form, biography, process, creative influences

- Client's role in the commission

- Specific purpose of selected material

- Detailed historic context at the time the work was done

**3. The Role of  
the Audience**

- The role of the viewer in relationship to the work

- Who was the intended viewer?
- How did they live?
- What were they thinking?

**4. Supporting  
Popular  
Culture and  
Creative  
Expressions  
of the  
Time Period**

- Painting
- 
- 

- Events
- 
- 

- Popular Culture
- 
- 

- Photography
- 
- 

- Literature
- 
- 

- Music
- 
- 

**5. Critical  
Mediation**

- Return to the designers and the selected media forms

- How did the work come to be considered a seminal example of graphic design?

## IMPLEMENTATION

Proposed are three courses that would run in consecutive quarters.

Section One · 1900-1930

Section Two · 1930-1940

Section Three · 1940-1950

What follows is the implementation using the paradigm shown on the previous page. For purposes of this thesis, Section Two 1930-1940 is fully demonstrated here.

### 1. INTRODUCTION GRAPHIC DESIGN IN THE 1930s

This provides a foundation to what lies ahead in the course.

- Introduction to the designers and the media forms to be covered.
- What characteristics were particular to graphic design in the 1930s?

### CONVENTIONAL EXAMPLES OF GRAPHIC DESIGN IN THE 1930S

By seeing samples of ordinary “day-in-day-out” advertisements, editorial design, poster design, etc., students can gain a feeling for the culture of the period and appreciate the striking difference between the everyday design and the Avant Garde influenced design being done by the designers featured in the course.

### GENERAL HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF THE PERIOD

Offers a general broad look at the historic themes of the 1930s.

- The Depression
- Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal
- The rise of Fascism

This section functions to acquaint students with the events, as well as familiarize them with the vocabulary we will be using in the section. It also is intended to provide a basic understanding of the people, places, events, and dates of the period of study.

### FUNCTION OF SELECTED MEDIA FORMS

Understanding the roles and goals of the selected media forms of print communication and other media in the 1930s.

### CONCLUSION

Revision of introduction, followed by an in-depth exploration of the section's designers and their media forms.

The chart on the following page is a visual representation of the structure just described for the introduction to *Design History and the Human Experience*, Section Two, 1930-1940.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### SECTION TWO / INTRODUCTION

#### GRAPHIC DESIGN IN THE 1930s

Introduction to the designers and media forms

What was particular to graphic design during the 1930s



Lester Beall  
Rural Electrification  
Administration posters



Dr. Agha  
Vanity Fair Magazine



Lester Beall  
Collier's Trade Ads

#### CONVENTIONAL EXAMPLES OF GRAPHIC DESIGN IN THE 1930s

What the majority of mass marketed graphic design looked like between 1930-1940



#### GENERAL HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF THE 1930s

The Depression

FDR's New Deal

Rise of Fascism



#### FUNCTION OF SELECTED MEDIA FORMS

Understanding the roles and goals of posters, magazines and advertising in the 1930s

What was particular to graphic design during the 1930s



#### CONCLUSION

Conclusion of introduction, followed by an in-depth exploration of the section's chosen designers and media forms

## IMPLEMENTATION

### GOING INTO DETAIL

With a general overview completed, the course focuses on the three selected exemplars and their specific historical contexts.

- The Depression / Lester Beall's *Rural Electrification poster series*.
- The political climate in America and Hollywood's Golden Era / Dr. Agha, Art Director, *Vanity Fair* magazine,
- America prepares for World War One / Lester Beall's Trade Advertisements, *Collier's* magazine.

The following is an example of how this would be structured in the course. Presented below is Lester Beall's *Rural Electrification Poster Series*.

### THE DESIGNER AND THE MEDIA

This section explores the REA and New Deal programs put in place by President Roosevelt to help America recover from the Depression. The posters were to be displayed in public buildings in rural America where illiteracy was a design consideration. The posters needed to imply that modernization would improve the quality of life for rural people.

### EXPLORING THE MEDIA FORMS

Here the course focuses on the designer's role. Was it collaborative or was the designer working alone? What type of involvement did the client have with the commission? The print production of the work is also considered in this section, details such as: How was it printed? How many were printed? Who supplied the photography? And what did the designer get paid?

### THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

This section deals with understanding who were the people the designer was designing for the purpose of this is to put a little flesh on the designers work. In the case of the REA posters the audience was rural Americans dealing with the Dust Bowl and the Depression. Some moved to California or to the rivers of the west, building America's great dams. This segues into the final topic of popular culture of the period.

### SUPPORTING POPULAR CULTURE AND CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS OF THE PERIOD.

Other media which reflect the sections themes such as: painting – *American Gothic* Grant Wood; photography – *Migrant Mother* Dorothea Lange; literature – *Grapes of Wrath* George Steinbeck; the music of Woody Guthrie; Western humorist Will Rogers and the film *The Wizard of Oz*.

By considering the themes of other creative expressions discussed in this section, the student will develop a deeper understanding of the designer and his/her work as well as an empathy for the people for whom the work was created.

The charts on the following pages visually structure and illustrate the paradigm applied to the designers and their media forms.

## IMPLEMENTATION

REA POSTERS

LESTER BEALL

### 1 The Designer and the Media

**LESTER BEALL**  
**RURAL ELECTRIFICATION**  
**ADMINISTRATION POSTERS**  
**1937-1941**

The posters shown were part of a series done for the REA, one of the many New Deal programs put in place by President Franklin Roosevelt to help America recover from the Depression. The posters communicated to a largely illiterate audience that electricity would improve their lives.



### 2. Exploring the Media Forms

- DESIGNER'S ROLE
- THE CLIENT
- THE HISTORY



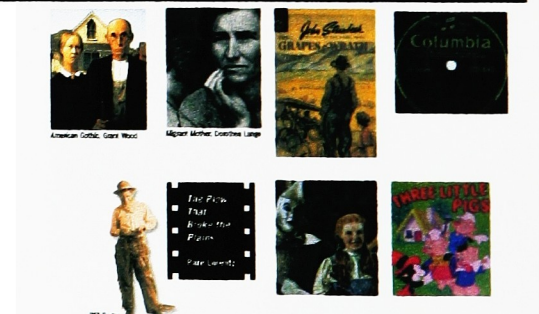
### 3. The Role of the Audience

- WHO THEY WERE
- HOW THEY LIVED
- WHAT THEY WERE THINKING



### 4. Supporting Popular Culture and Creative Expressions of the Period

- PAINTING
- PHOTOGRAPHY
- LITERATURE
- POPULAR CULTURE
- FILM





## IMPLEMENTATION

VANITY FAIR

MEHEMED FEHMY AGHA

### 1. The Designer and the Media

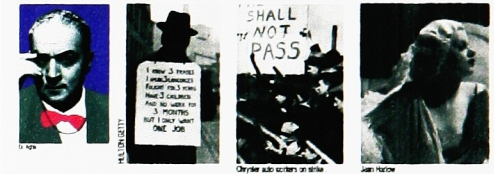
MEHEMED FEHMY AGHA  
1896-1978  
VANITY FAIR MAGAZINE

Compared to other magazines at the time, *Vanity Fair* had an enormous range of social, political, cultural concerns and an amazing range of perspectives with which it approached its audience. The magazine's art director, Dr. Agha was a pioneer in the use of sans serif typefaces, the duotone, full color photographs and bleed images.



### 2. Exploring the Media Forms

- DESIGNER'S ROLE
- THE CLIENT
- THE HISTORY



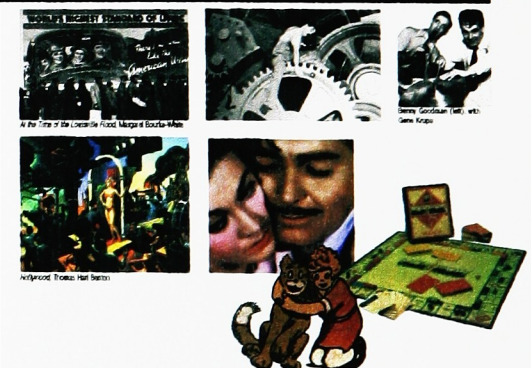
### 3. The Role of the Audience

- WHO THEY WERE
- HOW THEY LIVED



### 4. Supporting Popular Culture and Creative Expressions of the Period

- PAINTING
- PHOTOGRAPHY
- LITERATURE
- POPULAR CULTURE
- FILM
- MUSIC



## IMPLEMENTATION

### COLLIER'S TRADE ADVERTISEMENTS

#### LESTER BEALL

## 1. The Designer and the Media

### LESTER BEALL 1937-1941 COLLIER'S TRADE ADVERTISEMENTS

Lester Beall was commissioned to design a series of promotional ads for Crowell-Collier Publishing Company. The purpose of the ads was to convince advertising executives to purchase ad space in the popular magazine, *Collier's*. Beall used Dadaist photomontage techniques to create powerful images of what was to come for the world.



## 2. Exploring the Media Forms

- DESIGNER'S ROLE
- THE CLIENT
- THE HISTORY



## 3. The Role of the Audience

- WHO THEY WERE
- HOW THEY LIVED
- WHAT THEY WERE THINKING



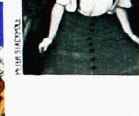
Advert: help circulates than the standard audience for Lester Beall's Collier's ads

Advert: help circulates than the standard audience for Lester Beall's Collier's ads

Advert: help circulates than the standard audience for Lester Beall's Collier's ads

## 4. Supporting Popular Culture and Creative Expressions of the Period

- PAINTING
- PHOTOGRAPHY
- LITERATURE
- POPULAR CULTURE



Advert: help circulates than the standard audience for Lester Beall's Collier's ads

Advert: help circulates than the standard audience for Lester Beall's Collier's ads

Advert: help circulates than the standard audience for Lester Beall's Collier's ads

## IMPLEMENTATION

### **ADDITIONAL COURSE MATERIALS**

In addition to developing Section Two of this course the following pages offer a course outline and syllabus complete with assignments.

Also developed is a preliminary, outline of the preceding course (Section One) and following courses (Section Three). Given the time constraints of this project, these sections could not be developed further; however, Sections One and Two follow the previously established paradigm and successfully work within the developed methodology.

Examples of the course outline and syllabus for Section Two, as well as preliminary development of Sections One and Three, are located on the pages to follow.

# IMPLEMENTATION

## COURSE OUTLINE

	<b>Design History and the Human Experience</b>
	<b>Winter Quarter Course Schedule</b>
<b>CLASS 1</b>	<p><b>Housekeeping</b> Review syllabus and course outline Course expectations, students/professor</p> <p><b>Introductions</b> Polaroids of each student; index cards contact information, etc.</p> <p>Students may individually explore professor's collected 1930s materials</p> <p><b>Lecture / Graphic Design in the 1930's</b> Introduction to the designers and the media forms What was particular to graphic design in the 1930s? Emergence of Modernism in America</p> <p><b>Visit the Design Archives and Special Collections</b> Special Collections Librarian explanation of the Design Archives</p> <p>View the work that will be our focus for the next 10 weeks <b>REA Posters</b> · Beall <b>Vanity Fair</b> · Dr. Agha <b>Coller's Ads</b> · Beall</p>
<b>CLASS 2</b>	<p><b>Review / discuss archives trip</b> <b>Historic overview of the 1930s</b> The Depression FDR's New Deal Rise of Fascism <i>Video: Franklin Roosevelt / class discussion</i></p>
<b>CLASS 3</b>	<p><b>Slides and class discussion</b> Conventional examples of design in the 1930s</p> <p><b>Function of selected media forms</b> Understanding the roles and goals of posters, magazines and advertising in the 1930s</p> <p><b>Conclusion</b> and class discussion</p>

## IMPLEMENTATION COURSE OUTLINE

**CLASS 4** **Lecture**  
**Lester Beall /**  
**Rural Electrification Administration poster series**  
**The designer's and client's role**  
Visit The Design Archives, view Beall's papers, sketches and poster series  
**Lecture**  
**History: Rural America during the Depression**  
Video, *Surviving the Dust Bowl*  
Video, *The Plow That Broke the Plains*

**CLASS 5** **Lecture**  
**The Role of the Audience**  
Who they were? How they lived? What they were thinking?  
Selection from the film, *The Grapes of Wrath*

**Discussion Supporting Popular Culture**  
Photographers of the WPA  
*Grapes of Wrath* selected reading  
Recording of popular radio show  
Cartoons *Three Little Pigs*  
Painting Grant Wood, *American Gothic*

**Critical Mediation**

**CLASS 6** **Lecture**  
**Dr. Agha/ Vanity Fair the magazine**  
**Designer's role, The client's/publisher's role**  
Visit The Design Archives / *Vanity Fair*  
**Lecture**  
**History: The Depression, Labor vs. the corporations**  
Fascism in Europe and America  
The Golden Age of Hollywood  
Film, *Modern Times*, *Charlie Chaplin*

**CLASS 7** **Lecture**  
**The Role of the Audience**  
Who they were? How they lived? What they were thinking?

**Supporting Popular Culture**  
Selection from Ken Burns, *Jazz*  
Thomas Hart Benton, *Hollywood*  
Comics, *Little Orphan Annie*

**Critical Mediation**

**CLASS 8** **Lecture**  
**Lester Beall / Collier's Trade**  
**Advertisements**  
**The designer's role**  
**The client's role**  
Visit The Design Archives / *Collier's Ads*  
**Lecture**  
**History: Rise of Hitler / WWII**  
Video Selection from *Schindler's List*

**CLASS 9** **Lecture**  
**The Role of the Audience**  
Who they were?  
How they lived?  
What they were thinking?

**Supporting Popular Culture**  
*Triumph of the Will*, Lenni Reifensahl  
Musical, *Cabaret*  
Photographer, John Heartfield

**Critical Mediation**

**Class 10** **Group Sharing Reviews**

# IMPLEMENTATION

## SYLLABUS

### *Design History and the Human Experience*

#### WINTER QUARTER / SYLLABUS

##### **Course Description**

*Graphic Design and the Human Experience* · 1930-1940

This course integrates American Graphic Design with American History and Popular Culture. Students will be exposed to a broad spectrum of design as well as other creative expressions of the period. Emphasis is placed on the relationship between design and history. As a result, learners will understand how design emerges from complex sets of conditions that reflect the culture and values of society at a particular moment in time.

##### **Objectives**

Students who study *Design History and the Human Experience* will develop:

- an enhanced sense of design literacy
- an understanding of American History and Popular Culture
- an ability to think critically
- an understanding of how critical mediation affects the way we interpret, value and judge design
- an appreciation for a variety of teaching and learning methods

##### **Instructional Techniques**

Discussion, Lecture, Field Trips, Music, Games and Video

##### **Evaluation**

Grades will be based on the following:

- Attendance
- Class discussion and participation
- Reading assignments from course texts and outside reading
- Group Project, Talking Walls Exhibit, Wallace Memorial Library

##### **Course Project**

Each student will be responsible for selecting one example of graphic design from the design archive (items have been pre-selected; there are many to choose from). Students will research and write a 100 word description of your chosen example. We will work with Special Collections archivist Kari Horowicz to hang the show during the 8th week of class.

##### **Class Presentation**

Students will also be responsible for making a presentation to the class about their selected design example. This will be more developed than the 100 word paper. Students will need to research and develop the historical/popular context that is reflected in their selection. Students will be provide with resources and direction with all aspects of the class presentation.

##### **Class Policies**

Attendance is expected for all classes. Please contact me if you have a conflict.

No late work.

##### **Required Texts**

*Balancing Acts: American Thought and Culture in the 1930s*,  
Terry A. Cooney.

*A History of Graphic Design*, Philip Meggs.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### PRELIMINARY COURSE OUTLINE SECTION ONE 1900/1930

Section One will be created in the future, following the paradigm. This outline notes the seminal ideas around which to begin constructing the course. This is a preliminary outline. As the paradigm is refined, more items will be added as well as some eliminated.

#### MOVEMENTS AND MEDIA FORMS TO BE COVERED:

##### Modernism

##### Modernism/Political

WWI  
Industrial Revolution  
Victorian Life  
Cubism  
Dada  
Surrealism  
Bauhaus  
Communism  
Socialism  
Capitalism

##### Media Forms – American

Magazines, Posters, Print, Advertising

Videos: PBS, *1900 House*, *Shock of the New*, Parts One and Two, Film, *The Great Gatsby*,

#### OTHER CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE PERIOD

##### Events/ Historical Context

Russian Revolution  
Chinese Imperialism  
European Colonization

##### America

Teddy Roosevelt  
Woodrow Wilson  
Women Vote

##### Popular Culture

Films: *Tarzan*, *Birth of a Nation*, *Metropolis*  
Music: Jazz  
Photography: Alfred Stieglitz

##### Misc.

Vaudeville  
Houdini  
Titanic

## IMPLEMENTATION

### PRELIMINARY COURSE OUTLINE SECTION THREE 1940/1950

**Section Three** will be developed in the future following the paradigm the writer has developed. This outline notes the seminal ideas around which to begin constructing the course. This is a preliminary outline. As the paradigm is refined more items will be added as well as eliminated.

#### MOVEMENTS AND MEDIA FORMS TO BE COVERED:

##### World War II

Will Burtin, *Gunnery Manuals*  
War Posters, various designers

##### Science /Technology

Will Burtin, *Scope* magazine

##### Youth Culture

Cipe Pineles, *Seventeen* magazine

##### Fashion/Art and Culture

Alexey Brodovitch, *Harper's Bazaar* magazine  
Cipe Pineles, *Charm* magazine

**Videos** *Casablanca*, *Schindler's List*, *Diary of Anne Frank*, *Quiz Show*, *American Graffiti*, PBS documentary videos to come

#### OTHER CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE PERIOD

##### Events/Historical Context

World War II  
Holocaust  
Creating America's Consumer Society  
American Industry  
Cold War

##### Popular Culture

Teen Culture:  
Rock n Roll, Telephone, Cars,  
Fast Food:  
McDonalds, TV dinners, Tang, "better living through chemistry"  
Painting:  
Jasper Jons, Edward Hopper,  
Literature:  
Alan Ginsberg/ Beats

##### Misc.

Frank Robinson  
Polio Vaccine  
Indochina/French  
*Playboy* magazine



## DISSEMINATION

### **Thesis Show**

This work was on public display in the Bevier Gallery at Rochester Institute of Technology, March 16 – 29, 2001, as part of the requirement for the MFA degree.

### **Conference**

Presenting a paper at a design history conference would be an effective way to disseminate the research of the thesis. It would also offer the opportunity for peer review.

### **Article**

Design history is currently being implemented into college design curriculums. The approach and methodology offered in this work would be of interest to educators beginning to think about offering design history courses. The research in this thesis can be easily adapted by following the paradigm. An appropriate publication for this article would be an education or design journal such as *Print*.

### **In the Classroom**

Ideally, this information should be disseminated by being taught. This would not only share the thesis but provide valuable evaluation data.



## RETROSPECTIVE EVALUATION

The strength of the thesis lies in the developed paradigm that offers a radically new way to view and teach design history. The weakness of the work is in the reality that the course has not been taught. How this approach will be received by design students remains unknown. As with any new course it is built on the best thinking at the time. Once this thesis has been tested, evaluated in the classroom and shared with other design history professionals, it will, perhaps, take on a different form or new structure, but the premise will remain the same – design does not happen in a vacuum. There is a greater message and truth to be told about the history of graphic design than is being considered at this present time.



## CONCLUSION

Fundamentally, the premise of this thesis is solid. The design profession is about the interaction between designer, client and audience. The culture of the time is the glue which holds these together. To represent the profession through the “male designer/artist as genius lens” is a false precept. It presents an incomplete picture of what it means to be a graphic designer. By continuing to teach old models we deny some of the best and most interesting aspects of the profession and its history. This thesis I have offered a starting place to begin to recontextualize how the history of graphic design is presented in the classroom.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### **con·tin·u·um**

1 : a coherent whole characterized as a collection, sequence, or progression of values or elements varying by minute degrees

### **dis·sem·i·nate**

1 :to spread abroad as though sowing seed <disseminate ideas>

2 :to disperse throughout

### **ex·pe·ri·ence**

1 a:direct observation of or participation in events as a basis of knowledge  
b :the fact or state of having been affected by or gained knowledge through direct observation or participation

2 a: practical knowledge, skill, or practice derived from direct observation of or participation in events or in a particular activity b : the length of such participation <has 10 years experience in the job>

3 a:the conscious events that make up an individual life

b:the events that make up the conscious past of a community or nation or mankind generally

4 :something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through

5 :the act or process of directly perceiving events or reality

### **syn·the·sis**

1 a:the composition or combination of parts or elements so as to form a whole

b :the production of a substance by the union of chemical elements, groups, or simpler compounds or by the degradation of a complex

compound c:the combining of often diverse conceptions into a coherent whole; also : the complex so formed

2 a:deductive reasoning b : the dialectic combination of thesis and antithesis into a higher stage of truth

### **syl·la·bus**

1 : a summary outline of a discourse, treatise, or course of study or of examination requirements

### **ver·nac·u·lar**

1 a : using a language or dialect native to a region or country rather than a literary, cultured, or foreign language b : of, relating to, or being a nonstandard language or dialect of a place, region, or country

c : of, relating to, or being the normal spoken form of a language

2 : applied to a plant or animal in the common native speech as distinguished from the Latin nomenclature of scientific classification

3 : of, relating to, or characteristic of a period, place, or group; especially : of, relating to, or being the common building style of a period or place -

ver-nac-u-lar-ly adverb

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### VIDEO

*Hoover Dam*.

Dir. Stephen Sept. Videocassette. PBS Video, 1999.

*The American Experience: FDR*.

Written & Produced. David Gruben, Videocassette. PBS Video 1997.

*The American Experience: Surviving the Dust Bowl*.

Written & Produced. Chana Gazit, Videocassette. PBS Video 1998.

### INTERNET

*The 1930s Project*. Online internet. University of Virginia. available: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~1930s/front.html>

*American Cultural History*. Online internet. Kingwood College. available: <http://wwwnhmccd.cc.tx.us/contracts/irc/kc/decade30.html>



**APPENDIX**

*Thesis Planning  
Report*

Fall 2000

LISA BODENSTEDT



Design History and The Human Experience

## CONTENTS

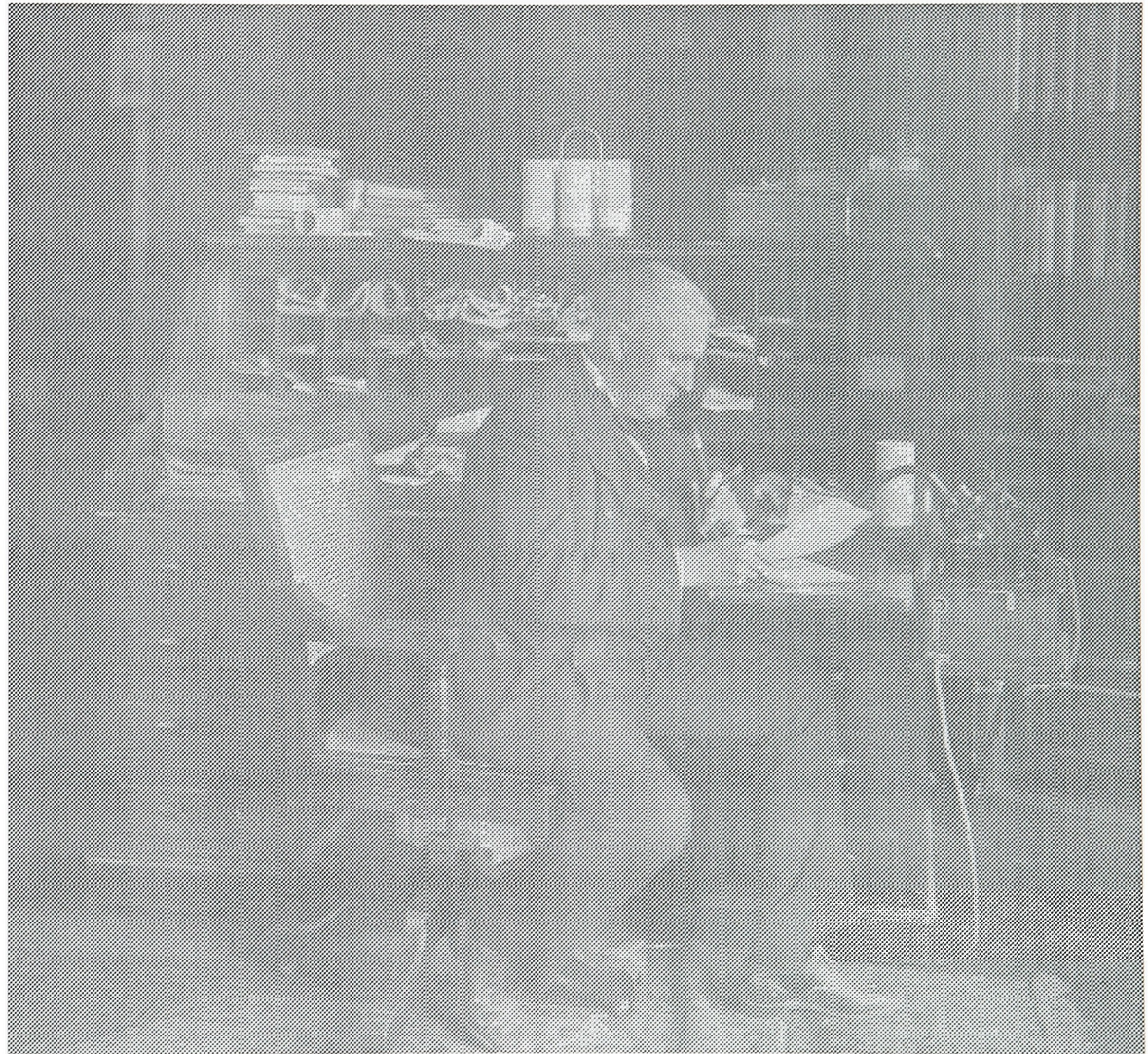
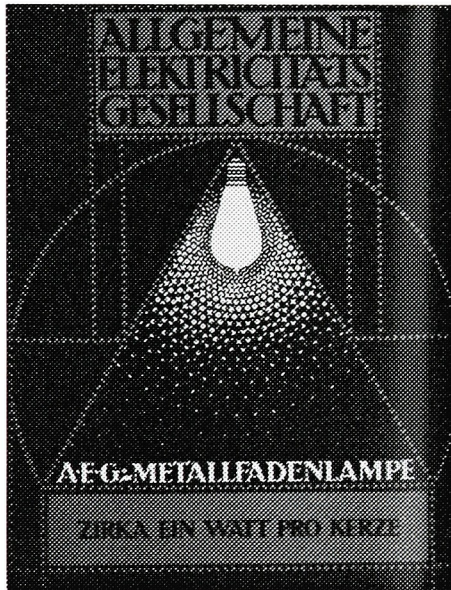
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## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>CONTACT INFORMATION</b>	<b>PHONE / E-MAIL</b>
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Kari Horowicz	Rochester Institute of Technology Wallace Library 3660 Wallace	475-2557 kehwm1@rit.edu



**“A good history of design isn't a history of design at all. It's a history of ideas and therefore culture. It uses the work of designers not just as bright spots on the page but as examples of the social, political and economic climate of a given time and place.”**

Tibor Kalman  
*Looking Closer*

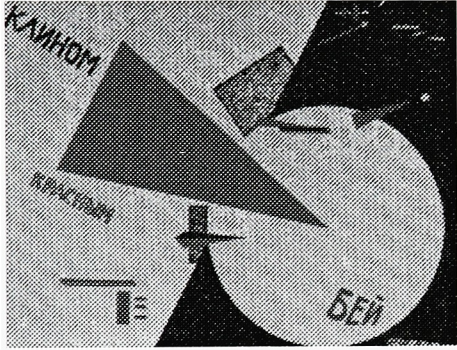
It is important for design students to genuinely connect with the past. Learners should see themselves as part of the larger whole; they will participate in this continuum of design and culture, adding to its legacy.

In traditional art history or design history classes, students are taught names and styles, and become familiar with an individual's work. The historical setting of the piece is usually not included. It is left out, considered irrelevant to the course. When this happens the student sees only a narrow portion of design history; one period, one class of designer within a specific period. What one does not see is the complete picture.

Design history entails much more when asking the right questions:

- What is it about this piece of design we cannot understand because we are not part of the culture which produced it?
- What did the style of this image communicate to its audience?
- How were people living at the time?
- What was the relationship of the designer to the client?
- Is this design an example of good design at the time?
- What were the tastes of people at this time?
- What aspects of the image can't we see with our contemporary sensibilities?

By connecting the object to its historical moment, the student understands how design affects the audience, how design responds to social values, and how design has shaped our shared human experience.



## PROBLEM STATEMENT

**“The arts that have most validity for the greatest part of the population are not considered arts at all.”**

John Dewey

I am developing a thesis called *Design History and The Human Experience*. The approach I will take deviates from conventional sequential approaches to teaching art history. My interest is in exploring the diverse relationships among technology, economics, social structures and aesthetics and their influence on design. The resulting research will show that design emerges from complex sets of conditions reflecting the culture and values of society at a particular place in time.

For the purposes of this thesis I am proposing to create a design history course complete with a course outline, syllabus, class projects, three lectures and an evaluation process.

The result of this work will educate students about the larger picture that is design and to allow them view themselves as both participants and creators of this continuum.



---

## MISSION STATEMENT

**“Begin with the end in mind.”**

Stephen R. Covey

My goal is to develop a design history course with a historical context. This is the motivation behind my graduate thesis *History of Design and The Human Experience*. This project will demonstrate the relationship between design and history. As a result, learners will have an understanding of how design reflects and creates the culture we live in.



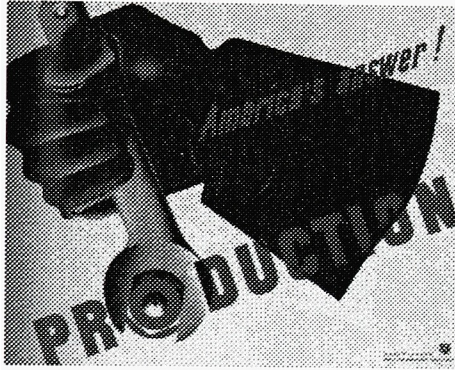


**GOALS, OBJECTIVES  
PROCESSES AND STRATEGIES**

	<b>GOALS</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>PROCESSES / STRATEGIES</b>
<b>PLANNING 3.0 / 4.0</b>	Review project document, making adjustments where needed.	To identify any oversights in the thesis.	To review thesis with committee members.
	Seek validation from committee members.	To confirm overall philosophy of the thesis.  To facilitate the research of thesis.	To ask committee for validation of thesis  To request additional resources: individuals, reference materials etc. not noted in project document
<b>THESIS PROTOTYPE 5.0</b>	To develop a new approach to teaching design history.	To teach a design history course within a historical context.	To choose the time period that is to be the focus of this thesis. Identify / research major historical events.
	To combine history of design with significant historical events.	To build a context around which to understand the design of a given period.  To realize the influences changes in technology, economics, politics and social/cultural behaviors have on design.	Choose critical lenses / research them as they relate to the given period.  Select strongest cultural influences and their outcomes.

**GOALS, OBJECTIVES  
PROCESSES AND STRATEGIES**

	<b>GOALS</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>PROCESSES / STRATEGIES</b>
<b>APPLICATION 5.0</b>	To clearly and reflect the goals of the thesis.	To produce products for thesis show.	Create lecture in a book application. Video lecture.
	To test the ideas of the thesis.	To document the process of my research.	Poster documenting the process of the thesis.
		To produce teaching materials for the course, <i>Design and The Human Experience</i> .	Syllabus / course outline.
<b>EVALUATION</b>	To Evaluate project outcomes in relationship to project plan.	To determine the strength and weaknesses of the project, and correct accordingly.	Set up regular meetings with thesis advisory committee.
	To identify areas of improvement.	To keep project on message	Seek outside validation.
		To target applications towards student's interest.	Maintain ongoing focus groups with Juniors.



# TIMELINE

## RIT ACADEMIC CALENDAR

## DECEMBER / MAY 2000 / 2001

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### PHASE 1

Research & Analysis  
December 1-31

December 20 last class

December 21 Hanukkah  
December 25 Christmas

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### PHASE 2

Ideation & Synthesis  
January 1-31

January 3 classes resume

January 15 Martin Luther King Day

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### PHASE 3

Production of  
applications for show  
February 1-10

February 1 presentation to grads

---

### PHASE 4

Committee meeting  
Production  
**Thesis show**  
February 10 / March 12

February 28 Spring break  
March 12-28 Thesis show

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### PHASE 6

Committee meeting  
Revisions and written  
documentation  
April 5 -May 10

April 7 Passover  
April 15 Easter

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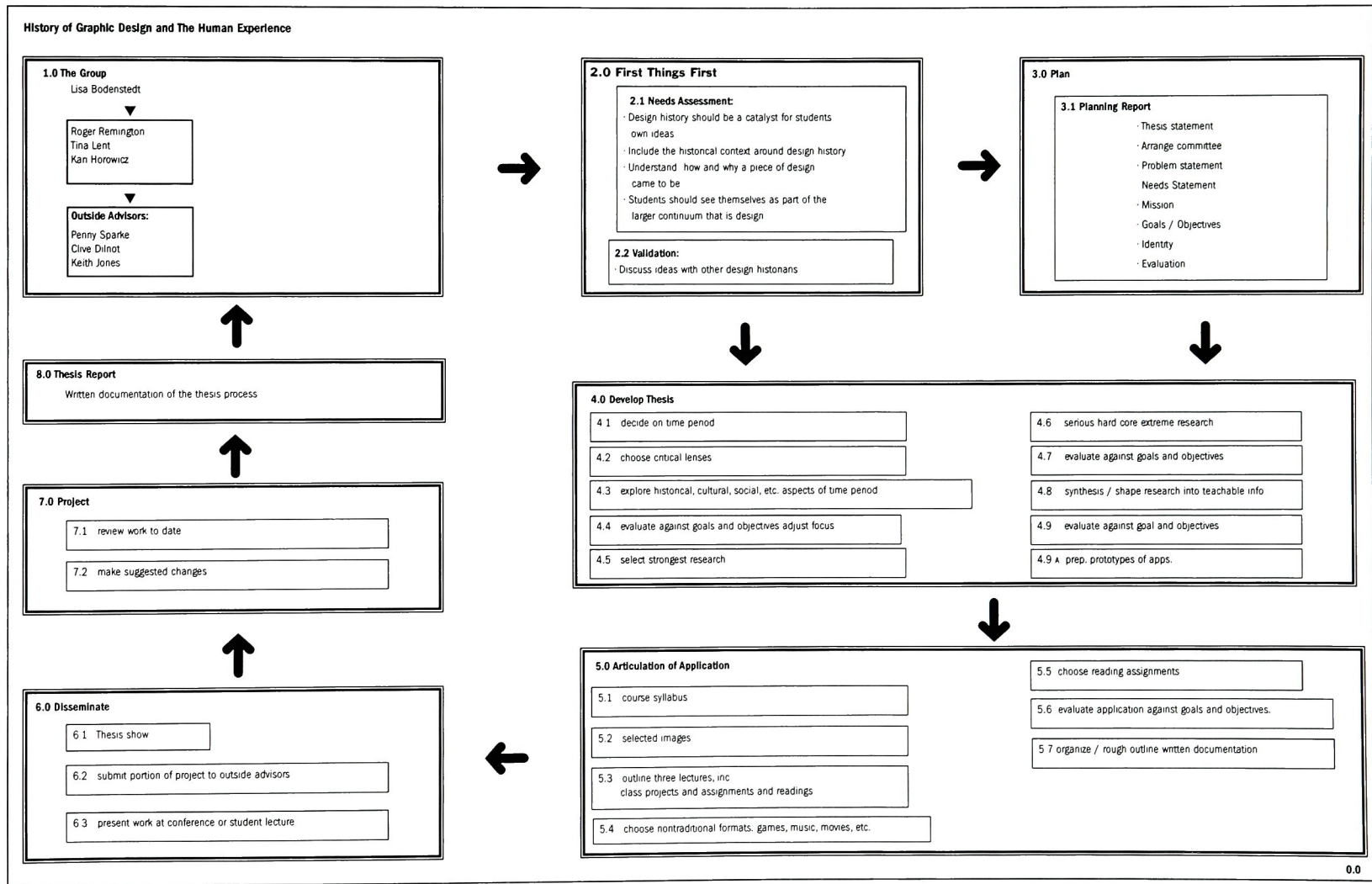
### PHASE 7

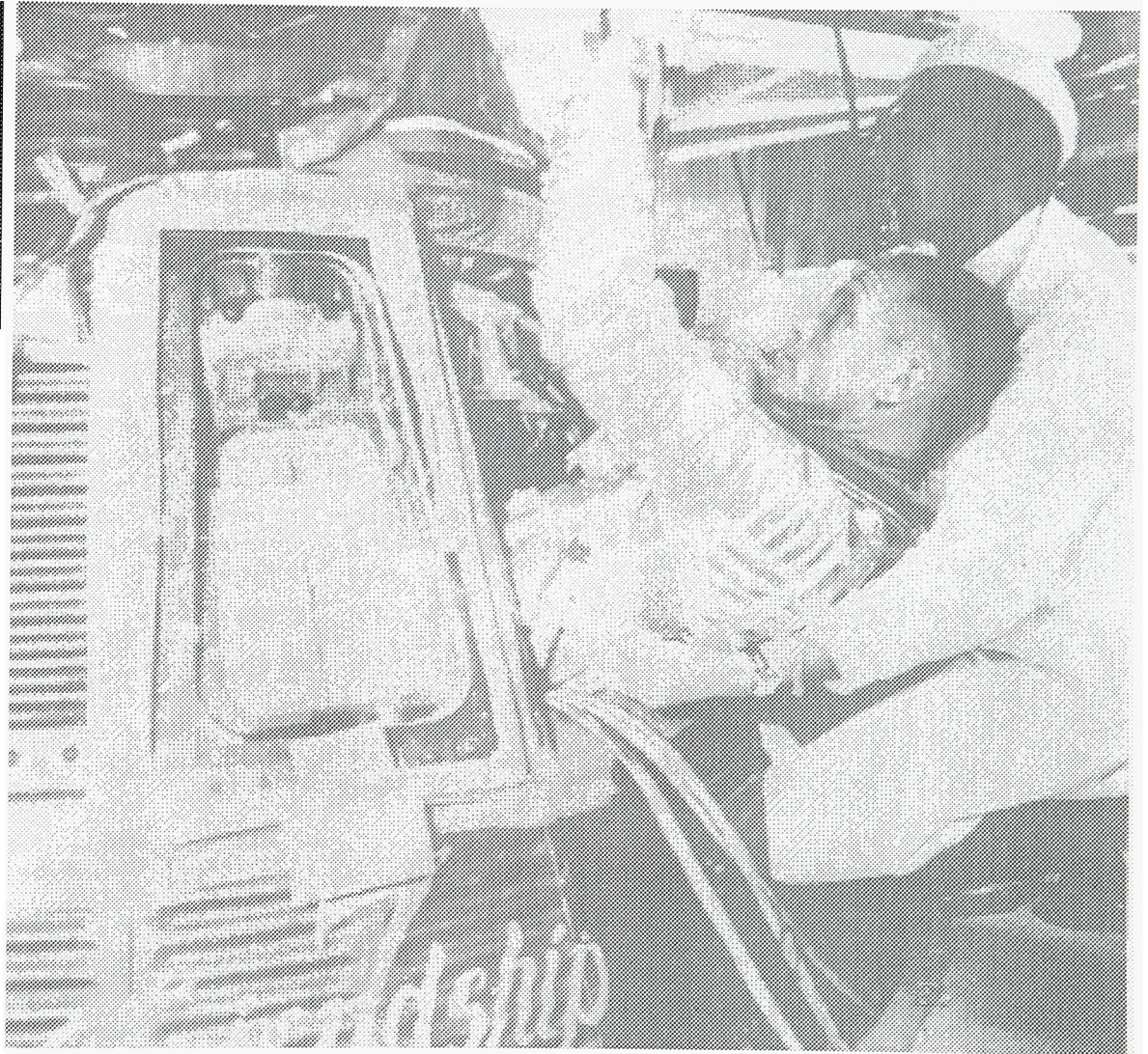
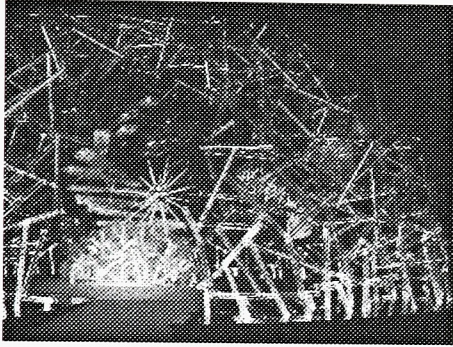
Completion of Thesis  
May 20

Commencement May 26



# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY DIAGRAM





## DISSEMINATION AND DISTRIBUTION PLAN

### **Thesis Show 6.1 March 12-28**

The applications outlined in methodology Diagram 5.0 will be exhibited in The graduate thesis show. This is one way my research will be shared with a larger academic community.

### **Sharing portions of thesis with outside advisors 6.2**

I will be asking several recognized design historians to review my work. This is about evaluation as well as dissemination.

### **Presenting thesis at academic conference or as lectures for students 6.3**

This would be an actual presentation of my research either at a academic conference or as lectures for undergraduate design majors.





## EVALUATION PLAN

<b>Project Phase</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Context</b>
<b>3.0</b> Preliminary Evaluation Of Juniors	Planning	Needs, interests, opportunities
<b>4.0</b> On Going evaluation Committee Meetings	Design	How good is given plan? What options and alternatives are available?
<b>4.0</b> Mid-evaluation of project	Pre-implementation	What is working, what is not? Are the objectives being met?
<b>5.0</b> Focus group with Juniors	Pilot/implementation	Project future outcome of thesis
<b>6.0</b> Committee Outside advisors	Pilot/implementation	Project future outcome of thesis
<b>7.0/8.0</b> Final Evaluation Thesis documentation	Post-implementation	Were goals and objectives meet? Was the the thesis successful?



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# WEBSTER'S

SECOND COLLEGE EDITION

NEW WORLD  
DICTIONARY

OF THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE

*glos·sa·ry* (-ə rē) *n.*, *pl.* -ries (M.E. *glosari* < *glossa*: see *GLOSS*) a list of difficult, technical terms with definitions or translations, as a glossary by a particular author, field of knowledge, etc., or an alphabetical listing at the end of a textbook (*glos·sar·ies*) *adj.* — *glos'sar·ist* *n.*

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### **con·tin·u·um**

1 : a coherent whole characterized as a collection, sequence, or progression of values or elements varying by minute degrees

### **dis·sem·i·nate**

1 : to spread abroad as though sowing seed <disseminate ideas>  
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3 a : the conscious events that make up an individual life b : the events that make up the conscious past of a community or nation or mankind generally  
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1 a : the composition or combination of parts or elements so as to form a whole  
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1 a : using a language or dialect native to a region or country rather than a literary, cultured, or foreign language b : of, relating to, or being a nonstandard language or dialect of a place, region, or country c : of, relating to, or being the normal spoken form of a language  
2 : applied to a plant or animal in the common native speech as distinguished from the Latin nomenclature of scientific classification  
3 : of, relating to, or characteristic of a period, place, or group; especially : of, relating to, or being the common building style of a period or place - ver·nac·u·lar·ly adverb