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College of Imaging Arts and Sciences

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Interpreting Wit

By: Annmarie Giunta
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Approvals

Chief Advisor
R. Roger Remington

Date: _____

May 9, 2000

Associate Advisor
Howard LeVant

Date: _____

May 9, 2000

Associate Advisor
Tina Olsen Lent

Date: _____

5/10/00

Chairperson, School of Design
Nancy A. Ciolek

Date: _____

5/10/00

I, Annmarie Giunta, prefer to be contacted each time a request for reproduction is made.
I can be reached at the following address:

Annmarie Giunta
41 Meadowbrook Road
Williamsville, NY 14221

Annmarie Giunta

Date

May 9, 2000

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Table of Contents

	Page
Thesis Project Definition	I
Precedent One	2
Precedent Two	3
Precedent Three	4
Research	5 – 8
Synthesis	9
Ideation	10
Intermediate Evaluation	11 – 12
Implementation	13 – 15
Dissemination	16
Retrospective Evaluation	17 - 19
Conclusion	20
Glossary of Terms	21 – 22
Bibliography	23 – 24

Appendix

A - Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind Diagram

B - Examples of Wit in Graphic Design Matrix

C - 1 - Definition of Wit - Visual Matrix

C - 2 - Definition of Wit - Verbal Matrix

D - 1 - Definition of Rhetoric - Visual Matrix

D - 2 - Definition of Rhetoric - Verbal Matrix

E - 1 - A Definition Matrix - Graphic Design

E - 2 - A Definition Matrix - Rhetoric

F - Examples of Wit In Graphic Design Matrix

G - Examples of Sign Theory In Graphic Design Matrix

H 1 - 4 - Study Guide Section - The Introduction

I 1 - 24 - Study Guide Section - The Definitions

J 1 - 4 - Study Guide Section - The Case Studies: The Designers.

K 1 - 4 - Written anonymous evaluation forms.

Thesis Project Definition

Graphic design is everywhere and everyday just about everyone interacts with it on some level. Since some graphic design has evolved into quick "on-the-go" design, the elements used to create a message are being ineffectively used. When designing with the graphic design elements, for the most part, there is still a majority that does not understand the reasoning or meaning in the placement of the elements. The purpose of this thesis is to teach graphic design elements to those who do not understand graphic design.

A teaching tool has developed with the evolution of this thesis; this tool is wit. Wit has been chosen to stimulate the audience in a positive way about the elements of graphic design. It is the hypothesis of this thesis that *wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design for the service of solving a problem.*

The graphic design elements that have been chosen for this project are the very basic elements. These elements are categorized into three groups: Visual Syntax, which consists of, *juxtaposition, image, line, shape, form, language, color, and contrast*; Visual Semantics, which consists of *message and meaning*; and Pragmatics, which consists of *function*. Also, by grouping them according to the Semiotic Operations, the elements are used to enhance a message by either adding, subtracting, substituting or exchanging elements in a graphic design message.

These elements are explored using both visual and verbal examples of graphic design. The message in these examples all deal with wit. Wit in itself is a powerful tool; it is interpreted differently by everyone. It can stimulate or evoke an emotion, and it can entertain, as well as attract attention. It can be used to persuade the audience or convey meaning in a message. Mark Twain in his Notebook from 1885 defines wit as "*Wit is the sudden marriage of ideas which, before their union, were not perceived to have any relation.*"¹ This thesis uses wit in much of the same way, as an unexpected relationship between two different elements.

Using psychology as a foundation, this thesis developed a theoretical explanation of how the mind interprets a message, based on the process of communication. In this instance, the message consists of wit. This process is called *The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind*. It outlines the instantaneous flow from the unconscious to the conscious states of the mind. It reveals how the mind unconsciously perceives the message, recognizes the message, processes the message, analyzes the message, gives meaning to the message, and then, consciously, reacts to the message.

An appropriate application for this thesis is a study guide. It would be used in a classroom and would be targeted toward those individuals who do not understand the basic elements of graphic design. It defines the elements, suggests how to design with these elements in creating an unexpected message, and shows case studies on famous design pioneers in history. A goal for this study guide is to create a foundation for more effective graphic design.

¹ Directory of Mark Twain's maxims, quotations, and various opinions: Available:
http://www.twainquotes.com/Wit.html, Nov. 1999.

Precedent Number One

"From the printed page to the internet, typefaces, color, logos, and images, transmit information and ideas, generating a literacy of the eye that affects us everyday."

Dianne H. Pilgrim, Director.
Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture
Page 11

In 1996, the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum exhibited *Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture*. In creating this exhibition, the Curator, Ellen Lupton, looked at everyday use of graphic design in mainstream society over the past 15 years. From graphic messages being plastered on the streets, to experimental typography in published books and magazines, the exhibition explored graphic design's effect on people in a contemporary culture. From this, Ellen Lupton wrote a book called *Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture*.

It is from Ellen Lupton's book that the thesis *Interpreting Wit* evolved. Lupton's study showed that graphic design is overloaded in mainstream contemporary culture. *Interpreting Wit* agrees with this and contends that although graphic design is overloaded in mainstream contemporary culture, not all of society understands how to create an effective graphic design. This is an appropriate precedent for this thesis because it aids in molding the theory that effective graphic design needs to be taught.

Lupton said that once graphic design is placed in the mainstream it takes on many different messages based on how the public views it. *Interpreting Wit* agrees and takes the logic a step back by first educating the audience on the elements of effective graphic design. Because the elements are the foundation of effective graphic design, without first understanding the elements, the designer can not create an effective message. By using wit, the audience can interpret the message differently, therefore understanding in their own way the elements of graphic design.

Precedent Number Two

“The pun effect happens when the viewer becomes aware that one or more symbols have created two or more possible meanings or associations applicable to one context. The mind fluctuates between the multiple associates because they are often conflicting in meaning, yet applicable to the overall message.”

Eli Kince
Visual Puns In Design
Page 31

In the book *Visual Puns in Design*, Eli Kince writes, “the pun used as a communication tool.” This book is based on his thesis and explores the true meaning of the word pun as a verbal and visual message in a design. Concentrating on the pun as visual message in design, Kince investigates symbols that represent the message of the pun. He gives definition and meaning of the exact words of *pun, symbol, line, shape, and color*.

Puns, when expressed in the correct context, form the message of wit. It is in the same way that Kince dissects the visual pun that the thesis *Interpreting Wit* investigates the design elements that create the message of wit. This is an appropriate precedent for this thesis because *Visual Puns in Design* parallels *Interpreting Wit* by the use of a witty message as communication tool. It aids in shaping the research and dissection of an emotion as a visual message. *Interpreting Wit*, however, goes beyond the investigation of wit as a visual message. It acts as a tool, to educate, to entertain and to communicate.

Precedent Number Three

"Graphic wit is the smartest way to grab and hold the attention of your audience – but it is also the trickiest."

Marty Neumeimer
Critique Magazine - Summer 1997
Page 19

In the summer of 1997, *Critique* magazine published an issue solely on the wit in graphic design. This issue on wit explores its use in graphic design. The article, "Wit" by Marty Neumeimer investigates laughter, humor and wit through history and its affect on people. It tells of those designers who use wit in graphic design, like Paula Scher and Michael Vanderbyl who work at the design firm Pentagram. Finally, this article compares the ups and downs of using wit in graphic design. It uses pitfalls as a type of warning, why not to use wit and when not to use wit in design, while at the same time it explores the rewards of using wit when it works.

This article is an important precedent to this thesis because it emphasizes the use of wit in graphic design. In a way, this article support *Interpreting Wit* and justifies its existence.

Research

When the research for *Interpreting Wit* began, there was a need to clarify the project terms. Since the meanings of graphic design and wit in this sense were broad, as well as interpreted differently by everyone, it was suggested that dictionary definitions would aid in what the meanings were for this project. The preliminary stage of research for *Interpreting Wit* started with developing a solid base of definitions. The search began by exploring several different types of dictionaries, like *The Oxford English Dictionary: second edition*, and *The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: tenth edition*. *The Oxford English Dictionary* was an important outlet for this research because its definitions for wit were more concise. Some of the definitions from *The Oxford English Dictionary* are:

- "The seat of consciousness or thought, the mind:
Sometimes connoting on/of its functions as memory or attention."
- "The faculty of thinking reasoning in general, mental capacity,
understanding intellect reason human understanding."
- "Five body senses often vaguely the perception or mental faculties."
- "Quickness of intellect or liveliness of fancy, with capacity of apt
expression, talent for saying brilliant or sparkling things, esp. in an amusing way."

These definitions led into the investigation of the psychological aspects of wit. They looked at how wit related to the human mind: conscious and unconscious states, thinking, understanding and reasoning. It was at this point that the research and the development of the psychological aspects of this project were integrated.

As psychology books on humor, laughter and the communicating and thought processes of the mind were explored, keywords were developed as an aid to understanding the meanings between the dictionary and the psychology books. Even though these psychology books were helpful in understanding psychology, they were very in-depth for this basic level of psychology and did not directly relate to this project. In simplifying the psychology and relating it to this project, categories and keywords were developed.

*When a person interacts with a graphic design,
what happens in the unconscious stage of the mind:*

- Interaction
- Recognition
- Meaning
- Perception
- Emotion: Reaction/Action

*When a person interacts with the
message of wit, what happens....:*

- Mind
- Memory
- Senses
- Intellect
- Emotion: Reaction/Action

These categories and keywords became an important discovery in understanding how people interpret a message in their mind. From this point of the research, the psychology research turned into developing a theoretical process that would relate to the project. This developed over the course of the project, with collaboration from the Thesis committee members and Professor R. Roger Remington. It developed into the diagram *The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind*. See Appendix A.

Research Continues

While *The Oxford English Dictionary: second edition* revealed wit to be more of an interaction with the mind and senses, the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* looked at the definition by associating it with humor, irony, sarcasm, and satire. Some of the definitions of wit from the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* are:

- "A mode or expression intended to arouse amusement."
- "The power to evoke laughter by remarks."
- "Dealing with mind, memory, reasoning, power, intelligence, senses, sanity, ingenuity, acumen, illuminate, amuse, banter or persiflage, intellect."
- "Synonymous with humor, irony, sarcasm, satire and repartee."

The key words humor, irony, sarcasm and satire that developed from Merriam-Webster's dictionary were chosen to aid in creating a precise definition of the use of wit. These words were then defined from both dictionaries. They are:

Humor:

From The Oxford English Dictionary, (Second edition, 1989)

"Temporary state of mind or feeling; mood or temper."

From The Webster Collegiate Dictionary, (Tenth edition, 1997)

"The ability to perceive the ludicrous the comical and the absurd in human life without bitterness."

Irony:

From The Oxford English Dictionary, (Second edition, 1989)

"A figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of that expressed by the word used."

From The Webster Collegiate Dictionary, (Tenth edition, 1997)

"Applies to a manner of expression in which the intended meaning is the opposite of what is expressed."

Sarcasm:

From The Oxford English Dictionary, (Second edition, 1989)

"A sharp, bitter, or cutting expression or remark."

From The Webster Collegiate Dictionary, (Second edition, 1997)

"An expression intended to cut or wound."

Satire:

From The Oxford English Dictionary, (Second edition, 1989)

"...a composition in verse or prose intended to ridicule a particular person..."

From The Webster Collegiate Dictionary, (Tenth edition, 1997)

"Writing that exposes or ridicules conduct."

Research Continues

Once wit was organized into these words, it opened the definition into terms that were understandable. Before these keywords, wit was automatically associated with just humor or something that was funny. Humor is just one facet of it. Wit in fact can evoke many different emotions and reactions. With wit, if something is ironic, sarcastic, or satiric, it can be humorous, but it also can be serious and evoke anger or sadness. In any instance, it promotes a positive result. If the witty message makes people laugh, they will remember the message as a funny experience. If the witty message evokes anger, it will make people remember how angry they were at the message. It was from this research that the reasons developed to suggest that wit is an appropriate teaching tool.

The secondary stage in the research was to find examples of graphic design that involved the message of wit and the elements of graphic design. This stage of the research started by reviewing a lot of examples of graphic design; magazine articles, advertisements and books. Then it was established that organizing the examples into a matrix would aid in organizing the categories and developing the definitions. This matrix was created so that the horizontal axis would have three categories; visual, verbal, and a combination of both, while the vertical axis would have the elements of wit: humor, irony, sarcasm, and satire, see Appendix B.

After creating a matrix by applying the dictionary definition of these keywords and relating them to visual and verbal examples of graphic design, it was concluded that this format was too specific. Instead of aiding in defining wit and the elements of graphic design, this method seemed as though it told what might be humorous, ironic, sarcastic, or satirical, when really what is humorous to one person may be ironic or sarcastic to another. It was suggested that the viewer should have his or her own opinion or perception about the message and the research should concentrate more on the graphic design elements. It was concluded that these words be taken out of the thesis and that the word "wit" be used to represent all of them. The examples that are used should be looked at for the graphic design elements and not for the message. The message should be understood if the graphic design elements were in the examples.

The search was now for images and examples that included the graphic design elements: line, shape, form, juxtaposition, language, color and contrast which made up the message of wit. During this research the content came naturally and the graphic design elements started to define the wit. It was at this point when the research led to exploring rhetoric and wit and rhetoric and graphic design elements. By researching rhetoric it opened the examples; rhetoric looks at the message and explores how it can be changed by adding elements, subtracting elements, substituting elements and exchanging elements. The examples that were chosen from this method became unexpected and exciting. It was then that finding the examples became endless.

Four matrices were developed and analyzed. These matrices were divided into two groups: the definition of wit matrices, a visual matrix and a verbal matrix, (see appendix C-1 and C-2); and the definition of rhetoric matrices, a visual matrix and a verbal matrix, (see appendix D-1 and D-2). Each had the elements of wit across the horizontal axis and the elements of graphic design down the vertical axis.

Research Continues

Although these matrices were a step closer to organizing the graphic design elements, it still seemed to state what was humorous, ironic, sarcastic, or satirical. It was concluded that the elements of wit across the horizontal axis would be removed and it would now be just visual and verbal. At this point the matrices were narrowed down to two: a Definitions Matrix of Graphic Design (see appendix E-1) and a Definitions Matrix of Rhetoric (see appendix E-2).

Since the matrices were narrowed down and the horizontal axis was defined, the vertical axis of graphic design elements still needed structuring. The Semiotic Dimensions were introduced and researched through Dr. Richard Zakia's book, *Perception and Imaging*, along with e-mails and phone conversations with Dr. Zakia. The Semiotic Dimensions are made up of Visual Semantics, Visual Syntax, and Pragmatics. This gave meaning to the elements and organized them into categories that related to both the message of wit and graphic design elements. Dr. Zakia and his resources played a vital role in developing the vertical axis on the matrices. Finally, the matrices developed into: Examples of Graphic Design Matrix (see Appendix F) and Examples of Sign Theory in Graphic Design Matrix (see Appendix G).

During the research stage, while the image gathering and the development of *The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind* diagram was taking place, an effective application was also being researched. After careful consideration, research and evaluation, the best possible application to teach graphic design elements became a study guide. New research took place for the case studies that were used in the study guide. These case studies were on the three of graphic design's pioneers, Paul Rand, Lou Dorfsman, and George Lois. The majority of this research stemmed from biographical books, or website information.

Throughout the development of *Interpreting Wit*, jokes, quotes and cartoons were collected as an on-going part of the research. They added an element of surprise to the final application, while at the same time they added a positive characteristic to the topic. The jokes aided in the element of surprise and the lightheartedness, the quotes aided in the definition and meanings of words and the cartoons were used in defining the elements of graphic design. The internet, the book *The Art of the New Yorker 1925-1995*, as well as Professor R. Roger Remington were vital parts in the research for this aspect of *Interpreting Wit*.

Synthesis

The idea for this thesis began with questions: What is graphic design? What makes the quality of the design different from one application to the next? How and why is one design more effective than another?

In answering these questions the idea arose that the majority of the world is truly unaware of effective graphic design. An awareness had to be made and a need had to be filled to educate the world about effective graphic design. The problem became, how to get the word out about effective graphic design. The solution was to educate a mass audience on graphic design in an effective and efficient way.

Upon further investigation and evaluation this idea, as it developed, was too broad. First, the audience had to be narrowed down and then graphic design had to be narrowed down. A new question developed; where is the best place to educate someone about graphic design? The answer was in schools and the mass audience now became college students.

The topic of graphic design now had to be narrowed. How would this idea be different than school courses or books that already existed about graphic design? From researching the answer to this question, the topic became focused on teaching basic graphic design elements. If the basic elements could be taught, then graphic design could be understood. It was not just about the elements of graphic design, but the reasoning and meaning in their placement.

It was a goal of this thesis to teach the elements of graphic design in a positive way. A teaching tool needed to be developed. The tool that would be chosen would have to show the elements in an exciting way, be entertaining to the audience, and aid in communicating the elements. Wit was chosen as this tool. This tool would enhance the topic of graphic design elements.

The definition of wit was researched as well as the psychology of wit in the human mind. The research and development of the definitions started with the basic dictionary definitions and led to the viewer's own perception of the definitions. The images that were gathered and used for examples of wit in graphic design gave their own definition of wit and were not as concise as the dictionary definitions. Looking back upon the research stage, it became clear that the research for this project could become a never-ending process. The definition of wit became based on one's own perception. Therefore, everyone would have a personal definition of wit. The image gathering could be endless, as long as designers continue to create witty graphic design.

It was because of the research on psychology that the diagram, *The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind* was developed. This research could have become overwhelming due to the amount of information on psychology available. Since psychology is only one facet of this project, keeping it on a basic, understandable level was a challenge, but it was also one of the goals.

Interpreting Wit, the study guide, developed based on the need to teach graphic design elements. Some of the goals when designing and developing the study guide were that it needed to be fun and eye catching, as well as educational. Using wit accomplished all of the goals.

Ideation

The following were major preliminary concepts of a solution for teaching graphic design elements. They were considered based on the needs of the target audience, a most efficient way to mass communicate an idea, and the reality and the feasibility of the concept.

The first concept was a computer tutorial for the work place. This computer tutorial would have been designed as a step-by-step interactive guide on the elements of graphic design. It would have explained each step and carried the designer through the reasoning and methods of designing with elements. It would have been designed for the workplace, primarily for those who do not understand graphic design and do not have a designer in their office, such as, an accounting firm who asks the secretary or another accountant to design the letterhead and logo. For those employees who are not experienced in graphic design or do not understand the elements. This tutorial would guide them through the process and aid them in creating a more effective graphic design. For the future of this concept, it would be created in a series: from beginner to intermediate to more advanced, each time educating on different facets of graphic design. This tutorial would be created with wit as the element of surprise to keep the employees entertained.

The next concept was a magazine for the home or office environment. The magazine would be more in the format of articles and advice, as well as work-along tutorials. It would be found on newspaper stands, and in bookstores, as well as in office waiting rooms. The audience could take it home and read it at their own pace, or take it into the office while they are working on the company's brand identity. Each issue would cover stories of different levels of graphic design as well as use the element of wit to keep the viewer entertained.

The final consideration was a series of posters. The purpose of this type of poster would be to circulate the intended goal into the mainstream of everyday life in a major city. Using wit as the message in the posters, they would grab the attention, initiate conversation and educate, as well as motivate the public to better understand the elements of graphic design. The benefits of using a series of posters is that they are flexible enough to be any size, from as big as a sign at a bus stop or in a foyer of a corporation, to as small as a subway train banner. The design can be created in the form of a system that can be recognized at a glance and used to educate someone on the go.

Intermediate Evaluation

This evaluation stage progressed over a period of time, during several committee meetings, weekly meeting with the chief advisor, R. Roger Remington, a required presentation to the RIT first year Graduate Graphic Design students, along with their comments and feedback, as well as discussions with peers and classmates.

During the committee meetings, a presentation of the most recent findings would take place and the Associate Advisors would comment from their expertise and advise. This is where some of the most critical comments would come from, not just about the project, but about the presentations style and format.

From the first meeting, Professor Tina Lent, aided in shaping the direction of the research for the definitions of wit and the graphic design elements, the most efficient and clear way to communicate to a mass audience, as well as advising on improving personal communication skills. One of the most effective and influential meetings with Professor Lent came when she advised in shaping the direction of the definitions of wit and the definitions of the graphic design elements. Her advice and suggestions led to a clear and understandable path for defining wit, the definitions of the elements, and the Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind diagram.

Professor Howard LeVant was a vital part of this project. He instilled motivation into the project, suggesting that when it came to researching and finding the examples, not to hold back on the content, not to worry if the content was too daring or risqué. He suggested techniques to use during the research stage; whatever content was laugh-out loud or reactive is what should be used. One of the most effective and influential meetings with Professor LeVant was earlier on when, he is quoted as saying, "lighten up Ann". This became a very influential quote. By this he meant to stay positive, and although the project was serious, to keep it light at the same time, not to take things so seriously. This was remembered throughout the whole project and called upon when needed.

Weekly meetings with Chief Advisor Professor R. Roger Remington became the backbone of this project. Feedback, suggestions, and constructive criticism came at the implementation of every change. He suggested the use of The Rhetorical and The Semiotic Operations, while each week he advised on the correct terminology and use of these operations, which eventually developed into the elements of graphic design.

As for the psychological aspects of wit, Professor Remington evaluated this from the beginning. He used his years of expertise to understand when the project was losing focus and becoming overwhelming. He would question everything, especially if he was not sure of something or if something did not make sense, this aided in focusing the project. For example, at the beginning of the project, there was a need to establish a target audience. It was argued that in order to develop the appropriate target audience, experiments needed to be performed. Controlled and uncontrolled experiments were created and developed. Immediately before they were to take place, Professor Remington argued that they were much too time consuming and would only establish what was already determined, which was that there was a need for graphic design elements to be taught. This became a major focal point for *Interpreting Wit*, for it freed up time for the start of the application.

Intermediate Evaluation Continues

It was then determined that the application would become the focus of the project. Professor Remington was the final critic on the concept of the application, as well as having a major influence on the development and implementation of the application. Besides his feedback, suggestions and constructive criticism, he was insistent that jokes and quotes be presented at every meeting, as well as working on the presentation skills for them; this aided in adding a light-hearted tone to the final application.

Another intermediate evaluation came about mid-way into the project. This project was presented to the Rochester Institute of Technology first year Graduate Graphic Design students, as well as professors from the School of Design. Verbal feedback indicated that they were impressed at the hypothesis, as well as the use of wit. The examples that were chosen were positive and effective. Questions arose as to how the topic was chosen, why graphic design and why wit. This presentation aided the designer in seeing the project as a whole, having fresh eyes review it, and receiving critical and constructive comments from peers and classmates.

Implementation

Since this thesis was based on the need to educate those who do not understand graphic design elements, an appropriate teaching tool was a study guide. This study guide was intended to present graphic design elements to those who do not understand the structure, reasoning and meaning behind why they are placed on a page. This study guide was designed on the premise that it would be used along with an instructor or a professor in a school, with students who were unaware of graphic design and the graphic design elements that are needed to create effective graphic design. Wit was added as the tool to keep the students stimulated and interested. Related jokes, quotes, and cartoons were incorporated throughout to stimulate viewers, while educating them at the same time.

It was important in this preliminary issue of the study guide to unfold exactly how the project came to fruition. This study guide consist of three major sections; *The Introduction*, *The Definitions*, and *The Case Studies: The Designers*.

Section one is *The Introduction* section which consists of: Wit - Why?, Graphic Design - Why?, The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind, and the Process of Graphic Design: A Problem Solving Method. See Appendix H 1-4.

Wit-Why? - Answers the questions, why has wit been chosen as the tool to teach the elements of graphic design? Why is it a powerful tool? and how it processes through the human mind? This is an introductory section to the Process of Wit.

Graphic Design-Why? - Answers the question, who cares about graphic design? If it is everywhere why do its elements need to be taught and communicated? This is an introduction into the needs and the contents of the study guide, it includes an explanation for the Case Study section.

The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind - There are six stages within this process of wit. They are: perception, recognition, process, analysis, meaning and reaction. It is important that the viewer understand why wit is a powerful tool and how it develops in the mind. It show that even if the viewers do not understand the graphic design elements, with the process of wit, they will.

The Process of Graphic Design: A Problem Solving Method - There are five steps in the process of graphic design. These steps are: ideation, research, visualization, refinement and solution. This process organizes the idea, gives meaning to every element on the page and instills reason and structure to the design. The final goal is achieved when the problem is solved and the message is understood.

Implementation Continues

Section two is *The Definitions* section, this is in the main section of the study guide; it consists of the definitions of the elements of graphic design and visual and verbal examples of graphic design that use the message of wit. The graphic design elements are organized into four sections: Visual Syntax: juxtaposition, image, line, shape, form, language, color and contrast; Visual Semantics: message and meaning, Pragmatics: function and Semiotic Operations: effects created when the elements are added, subtracted, substituted or exchanged. See Appendix I 1-22.

Visual Syntax

Juxtaposition plays an essential role in creating any witty message. Whether using verbal elements or visual elements, when two different elements are placed together, the message can be unexpected. This is probably the most important element used in creating a message of wit.

Image aids in creating the message. By modifying the image, the message can become unexpected. Modifying can include cropping, scaling, resizing or changing the color.

Line and shape can accentuate the message. Line can also be known as a rule or a border. The rule can be used as a divider, a directional or a guide. The border can be used as a frame around the image or the page. Shape is a graphic element that is mostly used as an accentuating mark to emphasize the message or text.

Form creates positive or negative space. Positive space is created from the images and negative space, which is also known as white space, is created from the empty space around the images.

Language is a system. It refers to the tone, rhythm, rhyme, cadence or voice in which the message is designed.

Color as an element can be used to emphasize an image or to differentiate between two elements or messages. Exploring and using different colors can set the mood for a witty message. Using darker colors can indicate a serious message, while lighter, cheerier colors can represent a more uplifting message.

Contrast is usually created from different sizes, weights or shades of the elements. It creates variety in the graphic design.

Content is the combination of all the elements on the page. These elements, whether visual or verbal, create a sequence which forms the content, which in turn creates the message. By adding unusual elements, the content then becomes unexpected, which forms a witty message.

Implementation Continues

Visual Semantics

Message and meaning are two words that interact. The meaning of the graphic design elements creates the message, and the message gives meaning to a graphic design.

Pragmatics

Function brings organization, structure and purpose to the message. It ensures that the design works. When an image is placed in an unexpected position, it gives greater purpose to the over-all message.

Semiotic Operations

Addition creates an unexpected message; adding elements to a message can witty.

Subtraction is probably the most difficult element to use. Eliminating elements may or may not leave a negative effect. When using subtraction to emphasize the meaning, the message can be enhanced.

Substitution means to remove an element and put another element in its place. In terms of using it in graphic design, substitution can be use to mimic a preexisting design or to enhance an existing design.

Exchange actually replaces the element with a different element, and not necessarily in the same place.

Section three is *The Case Studies: The designer*, this section focuses on three pioneers in the industry who used wit to create the message in their work. These designers are Paul Rand, George Lois and Lou Dorfsman. These three were chosen based on their unique approach to this style of communication and wit. See Appendix J 1-4.

Paul Rand is known as an American design pioneer; he is credited for some of the most famous works in design such as the IBM, UPS and Westinghouse symbols. He incorporated wit into his design as seen in the advertisements for El Producto Cigars, and Dubonnet.

George Lois is known as a design pioneer in the television broadcasting industry. He had a record forty two years stay at CBS studios. His long stay there was based on two things, using wit in his work, and the corporate philosophy about design.

Lou Dorfsman is known as a design pioneer in the advertising industry. He is best known for using humor and wit in his advertising work, but also for revitalizing *Esquire* magazines.

Dissemination

In developing the study guide further, the printing process would have to be explored. Since it is a full color study guide the most effective and inexpensive way to have it printed and bound would have to be investigated.

In the future, other issues of the study guide may be developed. It could be for different educational levels, with different messages such as environmental or social messages, instead of wit. Different graphic design elements could be included, as well as design history, famous graphic designers, graphic design theories and problem-solving methods.

More evaluation and research would have to be completed to see if the process of wit could become an actual process. Experiments and testing could take place to establish a need in a mass audience. Eventually, it would have to be determined who else could use this guide? Could it be used in the home environment? Could it reach a mass audience, possibly through retail computer stores, bookstores or on-line bookstores?

Eventually, once the needs of the audience are determined, there would be a computer tutorial created to go with the study guide so that the education process could reach the office or work environment, as well as the schools. This is to continue with the need to educate those who are unaware of effective graphic design.

Retrospective Evaluation

The Thesis Show in the Bevier Gallery at the Rochester Institute of Technology from April 3, 2000 to April 19, 2000 included both verbal evaluation and anonymous written evaluations. In the written evaluation form, each one of these questions targeted a different aspect of the thesis project. The questions in the written evaluation included:

1. Do you have a clear understanding of how and why wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design?
yes no Why? _____
2. Is the process of wit clear and understandable?
yes no Why? _____
3. Since the process of wit is a theory, in your opinion, could it be a real process?
yes no Why? _____
4. From the visual and verbal examples of wit, does the use of wit overwhelm the graphic design elements (*juxtaposition, Image, Line, Shape, Form, etc.*)
yes no Why? _____
5. Since reviewing this thesis, do you now have a clear understanding of graphic design and graphic design elements?
yes no Why? _____

Optional : Your age: Your Occupation and/or Major:

It was important to this thesis to develop this evaluation form because it determined if the hypothesis was clear and understandable, *The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind* diagram was clear, understandable and should be developed further; the wit overwhelmed the content of the graphic design elements, and the overall project was successful.

The written evaluation as seen in Appendix K, produced a limited number of responses. The majority of the results consisted of mostly yes responses with positive comments on how the project looked or that it was understandable and clear.

There was one dramatically negative response. As stated directly on the back of the evaluation form, it said:

"Why doesn't this go somewhere with this info? You've totally taken the life's vitality out of a very lively topic over intellectualized it - and then - so what?
Do a cool campaign or something of your own to show how you can use humor to attract an audience. Use your images! Do something creative !
These book pages are BORING + don't in any way speak to or about humor"

Unfortunately, this was not a constructive critical evaluation. The person did not answer any of the questions on the front of the form, and only expressed opinions. The project campaign was to teach and communicate the elements of graphic design, and the wit used in this project was not, and is not, just about humor. This is stated on the first page of the study guide.

Retrospective Evaluation Continues

For the verbal evaluations during the show the comments were largely positive. Some expressed how impressed they were; they laughed and were educated at the same time. They expressed how well it was presented and acknowledged the thought and hard work put into the project.

During the course of the three week show, there were visual observations and evaluations of the spectators. Since wit is a powerful tool, its influences on the human mind, at times, may be too powerful and the educational experience is lost. It was important to observe the way spectators interacted with the project because there was an underlying belief that the wit overwhelmed the content. The viewers at times got wrapped up in the message of wit and did not see the elements of graphic design, or care to see them. So, since there is a need for this study guide, the observer feels that it needs to be used along with an instructor or professor in a classroom. This evaluation is completely the opinion of the observer, and is purely speculative.

A follow up committee meeting on Thursday, April 27, 2000 consisted of good comments to the over-all project and presentation, but it was expressed that there were a few areas that still needed developing. With regards to the application, it was suggested that there should be captions near some of the images describing what they are and where they came from, and the bibliography section design should be condensed. The color coding system in the table of contents and on the accenting shapes that differentiate between a quote and a definition still needed to be developed and refined to work as a system.

As for the thesis project, some comments arose that can only be defended in this evaluation section. The designer's response appears after each comment.

The first comment was to clarify the project definition as it was never clearly defined and became too confusing. Was it the message of wit used in graphic design or graphic design elements used to create the message of wit? Through the project, the terms would be used concurrently and become confusing.

From the projects inception, its definition was never clearly understood. Whether it was not communicated properly or it was just a confusing topic, has yet to be determined. The term "message" has several different meanings and was interpreted differently with every use. It was used interchangeably throughout the project definition and at times it became an overwhelming struggle to keep the term in line with the meaning of each use.

The second comment came after reviewing the research section of this thesis and reading about the dictionary definitions. The suggestion was to go back and research the definitions of humor, irony, sarcasm and satire in literary or psychology books. The dictionary definitions were too general and did not aid in developing the project.

After the dictionary definitions of these four words were established, it was determined that these words should be taken out of the thesis and that the word "wit" should be used for all of them. This was because the dictionary definitions of these words seemed to state what was humorous, ironic, sarcastic, or satiric to the viewer. It was determined that it should be left up to the viewer's perception or opinion as to what was humorous, ironic, sarcastic or satiric. This thesis can not and does not state what is humorous, ironic, sarcastic or satiric. There are quotes and definitions from a number of literary resources that relate to this thesis, which appear the final application.

Retrospective Evaluation Continues

The third comment concerned the order in which the graphic design elements were chosen for the matrix and the study guide. This order was never clearly defined, and seemed random. Even though it was organized by The Semiotic and Rhetorical Operations, the order was confusing.

From the time it was decided that graphic design elements would be taught, the process in narrowing down which elements to use came from a combination of researching The Semiotic and Rhetorical Operations, and deciding what elements are the most important elements in creating a message involving wit. Since there are so many graphic design elements, this process seemed like the most logical way to determine the order of the elements and what elements related to this project. It was determined after analyzing the message of wit that juxtaposition, which is under the group Visual Syntax, was the most important element in designing a message involving wit and should be displayed first.

Conclusion

That there is still an important need to teach graphic design and graphic design elements. Overall, the experience of this project was a good one, but since the need is so great, only a dent was made in the problem of educating those who are unaware of effective graphic design. This thesis explored one of the tools used to communicate and teach the elements of graphic design. The findings confirm that wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design.

There will always be some facets of this thesis that can not be changed. They are:

- Most people associate wit with humor or something that is funny
- Most people may think this thesis is just about wit. Wit can be a powerful tool and at times it can overpower the educational experience
- Most people do not understand the need to teach graphic design elements

Interpreting Wit developed into an idea based on the viewer's perception of wit and graphic design. From the research to the educational process, everyone had an interpretation of what this thesis was about. In its own way the title became the foundation for the thesis; that is, everyone interpreted wit differently. This aided in making the educational process a difficult one. It was a challenge to communicate the idea of wanting to teach graphic design to those who do not understand effective graphic design, because few understood there was a need. They wanted to be entertained by the wit. They wanted to capture the positive message and stay in it. "Who cares about graphic design?" was the right question to ask, *Interpreting Wit* was supposed to have the answer, but the question still remains. It is always difficult to teach something to someone who does not want to learn. If this thesis taught just one person about the elements of graphic design in an entertaining way, then the goal was met.

For the future of this project, the research would have to be refined based on the remaining problems. There would have to be research on how not to overwhelm the educational experience with wit. All of the terms used must be clearly defined and understood, and the target audience must be further investigated. It is then that *Interpreting Wit* would make a larger impact on teaching graphic design.

Glossary of Terms

These are terms found in this thesis. These are words that have several different meanings and may or may not be clearly defined. The definitions to these words are defined as they relate to this thesis.

Analysis This is the fourth stage in *The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind* diagram. It refers to how the unconscious mind investigates the understanding and either interprets it as something which is being communicated, or rejects it and searched for a clearer understanding.

Graphic design elements The basic characteristics of a message found in a graphic design, for example juxtaposition, line, shape, form, etc. These elements are the foundations for effective graphic design.

Message A form of communications that conveys theme or meaning. For example, the message of wit in graphic design. The graphic design elements are used to create the message of wit.

Meaning This is the fifth stage in *The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind* diagram. It refers to how the unconscious mind identifies what is being communicated, deciphers the definition and informs the conscious mind.

The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind This is a theoretical process, developed from the communication and thought process used in psychology. It is based on the flow from the unconscious to the conscious states of the mind while it is interpreting a message. It consists of six stages of the mind: These stages are: Perception, recognition, process, analysis, meaning, and reaction.

Perception This is the first stage of *The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind* diagram. It refers to how the unconscious mind becomes aware of the message. It examines the message and interacts with the message.

Pragmatics Used as an element of graphic design to clarify the message. It defines the function of the message. Without pragmatics the message in the graphic design would be unclear.

Process This is the third stage in *The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind* diagram. The unconscious mind progresses quickly through a series of changes before it comes to an understanding of the message.

Reaction This is the six stage in *The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind* diagram. The body responds to what the conscious mind receives. A feeling is created and expressed from the message. This is when the body reacts.

Glossary of Terms Continues

Recognition This the second stage, the unconscious mind accepts the message and relates it to a memory or something that was learned in the past.

The Semiotic Dimensions This is used in the matrix *Examples of wit in Graphic Design*. It defines the elements of graphic design by categorizing them into three groups Visual Semantic, Visual Syntax and Pragmatics.

The Semiotic Operations This is used in the matrix *Examples of Sign Theory in Graphic Design*. It refers to manipulation of the graphic design elements by either adding, subtracting, substituting, or exchanging element to enhance the message.

Visual Semantics Used as an element of graphic design it is the message, including elements such as, juxtaposition, image, form, shape, line, language, color, and contrast. These are the basic elements that create the message of wit.

Visual Syntax Used as an element of graphic design to create the meaning of the message. The graphic design elements in this category are: content, message and meaning.

Wit An expression or perception that addresses the intelligence. Involves a message being which is distinct, different, unexpected or not logical. This is the tool used to teach graphic design elements.

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www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/9761/quohumor.html

www.insults.com

www.net/plus.com/user/aajmax/quotes.html

<http://www.tarleton.edu/~schmidt/Humor.html>

http://www.tarleton.edu/~schmidt/mark_Twain.html

<http://www.twainquotes.com/Wit.html>

www.uselessknowledge.com

Appendix Section

Appendix

A - Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind Diagram

B - Examples of Wit in Graphic Design Matrix

C - 1 - Definition of Wit - Visual Matrix

C - 2 - Definition of Wit - Verbal Matrix

D - 1 - Definition of Rhetoric - Visual Matrix

D - 2 - Definition of Rhetoric - Verbal Matrix

E - 1 - A Definition Matrix - Graphic Design

E - 2 - A Definition Matrix - Rhetoric

F - Examples of Wit In Graphic Design Matrix

G - Examples of Sign Theory In Graphic Design Matrix

H 1 - 4 - Study Guide Section - The Introduction

I 1 - 24 - Study Guide Section - The Definitions

J 1 - 4 - Study Guide Section - The Case Studies: The Designers.

K 1 - 4 - Written anonymous evaluation forms.

Appendix A

The Process of Wit: Stages of the mind.

Perception

In the first stage, the unconscious mind becomes aware of the message. It examines the message and interacts with the message.



Recognition

In the second stage, the unconscious mind accepts the message and relates it to a memory or something that was learned in the past.



Process

In the third stage, the unconscious mind progresses quickly through a series of changes before it comes to an understanding of the message.



Analysis

In the fourth stage, the unconscious mind investigates the understanding and either interprets it as something which is being communicated, or rejects it and searches for a clearer understanding.



Meaning

In the fifth stage, the unconscious mind identifies what is being communicated, deciphers the definition and informs the conscious mind.



Reaction

In the sixth stage, the body responds to what the conscious mind receives. A feeling is created and expressed from the message. This is when the body reacts.

Appendix B

This matrix was designed on the bases that examples of graphic design, involving the message of wit and the elements of graphic design, would be inserted into the cross-points.


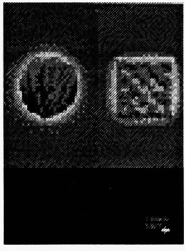
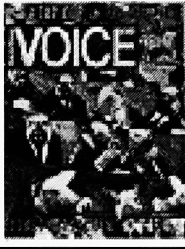

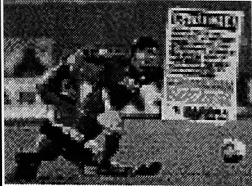

Examples of Wit in Graphic Design

	Visual	Verbal	Combination
Humor			
Irony			
Sarcasm			
Satire			

Appendix C - 1

This is the Definition of Wit: Visual Matrix. This was designed to define wit using examples of graphic design that included visual elements of graphic design.



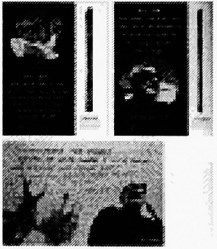

Definition of Wit: Visual Matrix.

Elements of Graphic Design	Elements of Wit.			
	Humor	Irony	Sarcasm	Satire
Form				
Content				
Color				
Juxtaposition				
Contrast				

Appendix C - 2

This is the Definition of Wit: Verbal Matrix. This was designed to define wit using examples of graphic design that included verbal elements of graphic design.



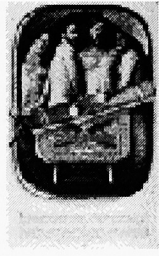
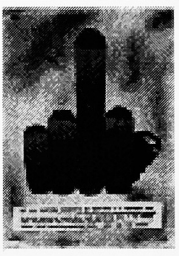

Definition of Wit: Verbal Matrix.

Elements of Graphic Design	Elements of Wit.			
	Humor	Irony	Sarcasm	Satire
Language				
Tone				
Cadence				
Rhythm				

Appendix D - 1

This is the Definition of Rhetoric: Visual Matrix. This was designed to define wit using examples of graphic design that included visual elements of graphic design using The Rhetorical Operations, addition, subtraction, substitution, and exchange.


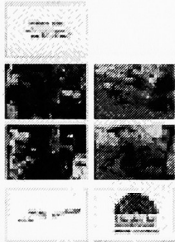



Definition of Rhetoric: Visual Matrix.

Elements of Rhetoric	Elements of Wit.			
	Humor	Irony	Sarcasm	Satire
Addition				
Subtraction				
Substitution				
Exchange				

Appendix D - 2

This is the Definition of Rhetoric:: Verbal Matrix. This was designed to define wit using examples of graphic design that included verbal elements of graphic design using The Rhetorical Operations, addition, subtraction, substitution, and exchange.

Definition of Rhetoric: Verbal Matrix.

Elements of Rhetoric	Elements of Wit.			
	Humor	Irony	Sarcasm	Satire
Addition				
Subtraction				
Substitution				
Exchange				

Appendix E - 1

This matrix is to show the development of the elements of graphic design and the implementation of The Semiotic Operations; Visual Semantics, Visual Syntax, and Pragmatics.

A Definition Matrix: Graphic Design

Elements of Graphic Design	Verbal	Visual
Form shape line juxtaposition		
Content image language message		
Color shade tone contrast		
Content (Syntax)		
Function/ Meaning (Semantics)		
Context/ Perception (Pragmatics)		

Appendix E - 2

This matrix is to show the implementation of The Rhetorical Operations;
Addition, Subtraction, Substitution, and Exchange.



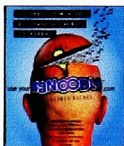



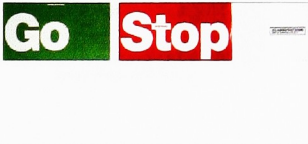
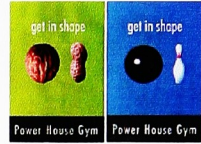



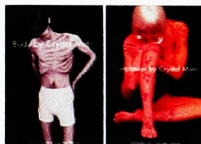
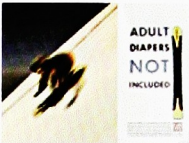

A Definition Matrix: Rhetoric

Rhetorical Operation	Verbal	Visual
Addition		
Subtraction		
Substitution		
Exchange		









Appendix F

Examples of Wit in Graphic Design.

Wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design in the service of solving a problem.

Elements of Graphic Design	Media form involving wit as the message.	
	Verbal	Visual
Visual Syntax (The message)		
Juxtaposition		
Image Form Shape Line		
Language		
Color Contrast		
Visual Semantics (Creates the Message)		
Content		
Message Meaning		
Pragmatics (Clarifies the Message)		
Function		

Appendix G

Examples of Sign Theory in Graphic Design		
Wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design in the service of solving a problem.		
Semiotic Operations	Media form involving wit as the message.	
	Verbal	Visual
Addition		
Subtraction		
Substitution		
Exchange		

The Introduction

Wit can be used to educate, entertain, and communicate the elements of graphic design for the service of solving a problem.

"Wit is the sudden marriage of ideas which, before their union, were not perceived to have any relation."
— Mark Twain, 1885

Wit - Why?

Why has wit been chosen as the tool to educate, entertain, and communicate the elements of graphic design? Because wit is based on one's perception.

When graphic design elements are placed together to form a message involving wit, its definition is interpreted differently by everyone. The message can be humorous, ironic, sarcastic, or it can be a satire.

Because wit is interpreted so differently, it makes wit an amazing tool; its definition is infinite and its meaning endless. It can trigger a memory or create an emotion.

Wit in itself is entertaining; it can take the mind on a journey to another place for a split second or linger for longer. It can educate those who are unaware of a topic; it can create understanding where there was none before. It can communicate to a single person or to a mass audience.

When the message is perceived in its fullest form, the goal of wit is accomplished.

The marriage of wit and graphic design is most appropriate because of the process of wit that occurs in the mind.

This process of wit is an immediate flow from the unconscious to the conscious mind and happens during the interaction with the message.

There are six stages within this process of wit; they are: perception, recognition, process, analysis, meaning and reaction.

It is important to understand these stages because, even if the viewers are not aware of the structure and reasons for using graphic design elements, they can still be educated on them, based on their own perception of the message of wit.

Graphic design is the art or profession of using design elements to convey information or create an effect. ¹

Graphic Design - Why?

Who cares about graphic design? Why is it important that graphic design elements be taught and communicated? Graphic design is everywhere, and practically everyone uses it. It is a powerful medium in this ever-changing, fast-paced society. There are posters in practically every city and town. Letterheads, business cards and brochures are used in almost every company no matter how large or small. Theaters have playbills and tickets, hospitals have all sorts of pamphlets on health, and even mass transit systems have some sort of information design system consisting of schedules and maps. With the recent computer boom, graphic design can be created at the touch of a button.

So if graphic design is everywhere, why is it necessary for the elements to be taught and communicated?

That is a good question.

It is because the graphic design elements that are used to create the message in the poster, brochure or letterhead are misused.

These elements are juxtaposition, image, line, shape, form, language, color, and contrast. They are the main elements usually involved in creating a message. When designing with these elements, there should be structure, reasoning, and meaning in their placement. This is because graphic design is based on a problem-solving process. This process includes several steps that aid in the structure of these elements. These steps are ideation, research, visualization, refinement, and solution.

This study guide is intended to present graphic design elements to those who do not understand the structure, reasoning and meaning behind why they are placed on a page.

A countless number of designers use wit in their work to emphasize their message. This study guide focuses on three pioneers in the industry who have used wit to create the message in their work. These designers are Paul Rand, George Lois, and Lou Dorfsman. These three were chosen based on their unique approach to this style of communication.

The Process of Wit: Stages of the Mind

The process of wit consists of six stages of the mind. These stages are: perception, recognition, process, analysis, meaning, and reaction.

The process of wit is outlined based on the flow from the unconscious to the conscious states of the mind while it is interpreting a message; in this instance, the message is wit. This process reveals that the mind unconsciously perceives, recognizes, processes, analyzes, and gives meaning to the message, and finally, consciously, reacts to the message.

There are many different kinds of thinking processes that take place in the unconscious/conscious mind. Like these different processes, the process of wit progresses quickly through the mind; it progresses in a matter of an instant. The process of wit is a theory and is not affiliated with practiced psychology, its methods or processes.

Perception

In the first stage, the unconscious mind becomes aware of the message. It examines the message and interacts with the message.



Recognition

In the second stage, the unconscious mind accepts the message and relates it to a memory or something that was learned in the past.



Process

In the third stage, the unconscious mind progresses quickly through a series of changes before it comes to an understanding of the message.

Analysis

In the fourth stage, the unconscious mind investigates the understanding and either interprets it as something which is being communicated, or rejects it and searches for a clearer understanding.



Meaning

In the fifth stage, the unconscious mind identifies what is being communicated, deciphers the definition and informs the conscious mind.



Reaction

In the sixth stage, the body responds to what the conscious mind receives. A feeling is created and expressed from the message. This is when the body reacts.

The Process of Graphic Design:

A Problem Solving Method

The process of graphic design consists of five steps. These steps are: Ideation, research, visualization, refinement, and solution.

A graphic design always starts with a problem that needs to be solved. When starting a design, a designer follows what is called the design process, which aids in creating a clear message. This process organizes the idea, gives meaning to every element on the page, and instills reason and structure to the design. The final goal is achieved when the problem is solved and the message is understood.

Ideation

In the first step, an idea has to be created to solve a problem. There are various idea-developing methods that can aid in clarifying and organizing the idea. These methods happen quickly to get the creativity flowing.



Research

In the second step, understanding the problem is probably the most important part of this process. The designer researches anything and everything that connects to the problem, whether it is a company, a product, or a competitor. The designer does whatever it takes to understand the problem.



Visualization

In the third step, the ideas and the understanding come to life. This is the preliminary step, where the ideas are sketched out on paper. This aids the viewer in making sure that the solution to the problem is heading in the right direction.

Refinement

In the fourth step, refinement and revision aid in clarification. Every element that is placed on the page must have a meaning. The question "why did you do it like that?" is asked. Then the idea is expanded and the problem is almost solved.



Solution

In the fifth step, the design is finished and the problem is solved. But is it the best solution to the problem? If yes, the goal is complete. If necessary, it can then be sent into final production.

Appendix I - 1

The Definition

"To define is to destroy.
To suggest is to create."
- Gyorgy Kepes

Graphic design elements are the basis for designing a message. Understanding the definition of these elements lays the groundwork for an effective graphic design.

The graphic design elements that have been chosen are based on the semiotic operations. These operations give each element meaning. In the first matrix, the elements are divided into three sections: Visual Syntax, Visual Semantics, and Pragmatics. These sections break down the actual elements of graphic design into their simplest form. These elements are juxtaposition, image, line, shape, form, language, color, contrast, message, meaning, and function.

By crossing these elements with examples of graphic design that include the message of wit, the elements can be investigated and defined.

Wit - What?

The terms syntax, semiotics, and pragmatics...can be used in the visual mode. Syntax refers to the design or composition.... Semantics refers to the meaning or what is signified...Pragmatics refers to the context²

Dr. R. Zakia
Perception & Imaging

Examples of Wit in Graphic Design.

Wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design in the service of solving a problem.

Elements of Graphic Design	Media form involving wit as the message.		
	Verbal	Visual	
Visual Syntax (The message)	Juxtaposition		
	Image Form Shape Line		
	Language		
	Color Contrast		
Visual Semantics (Creates the Message)	Content		
	Message Meaning		
Pragmatics (Clarifies the Message)	Function		

Appendix I - 2

In the second matrix, the semiotic operations are used in a different way. Instead of giving the elements meaning, it changes the elements to define or accentuate the message. The elements can be either added, subtracted, substituted, or exchanged with other elements.









By using this operation with examples of graphic design that include the message of wit, the elements can be understood.

Semiotics can be described as the study of signs, signs being anything and everything that conveys meaning.³

Dr. R. Zakia
Perception & Imaging

Examples of Sign Theory in Graphic Design

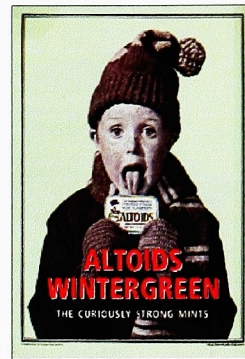
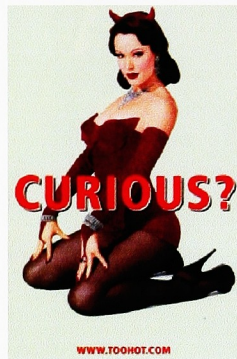
Wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design in the service of solving a problem.

Semiotic Operations	Media form involving wit as the message.	
	Verbal	Visual
Addition		
Subtraction		
Substitution		
Exchange		

Juxtaposition

No, this is not a curse word; juxtaposition plays an essential role in creating any witty message. Whether using verbal elements or visual elements, when two different elements are placed together, the message can be unexpected.

For instance, in the example of the magazine article from *Rolling Stone*, the article is about the band Phish. It is unexpected to see men in a sardine can, but when viewers realize it is the band Phish, the message works.



Jux'ta•po•si'tion

Juxtaposition is the act or an instance of placing two or more things side by side.⁴

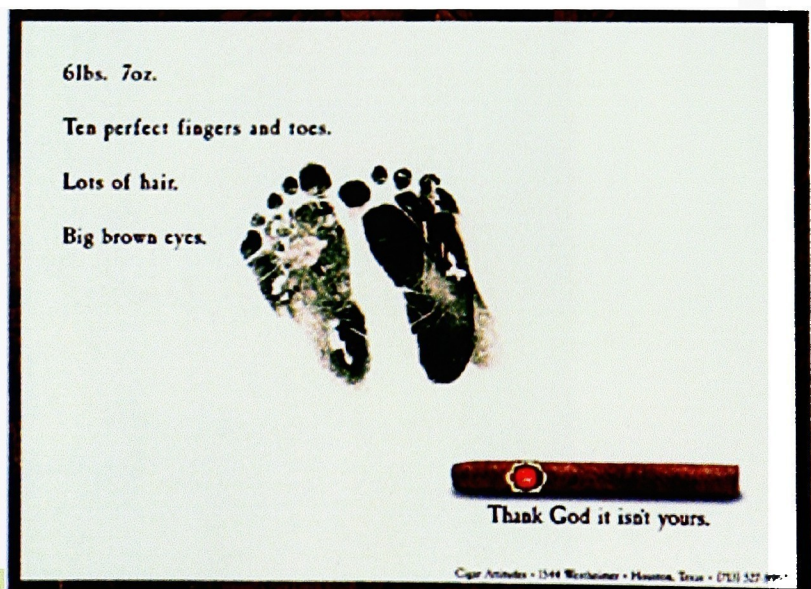


Appendix I - 4

"Humor is just another defense
against the universe."
- Mel Brooks



This ad for *Cigar Attitudes* was chosen to represent the graphic design element juxtaposition for its unique use of image and text. While the images catches your eye the text reveals the unexpected message of wit.



Image, Line, Shape, Form

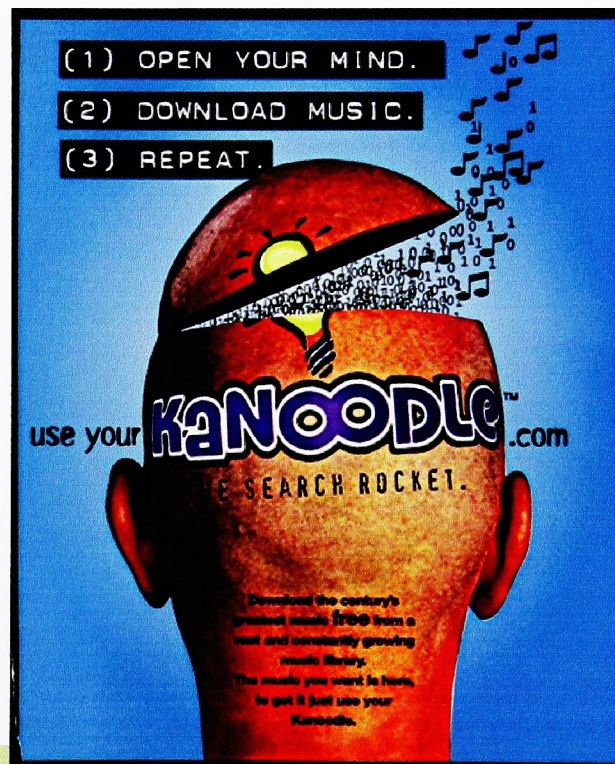
Image, line, shape and form are some of the basic elements that create a witty message.

Image aids in creating the message. By modifying the image, the message can become unexpected. Modifying can include cropping, scaling, resizing, or changing the color.

Line and shape can accentuate the message. Line can also be known as a rule or a border. The rule can be used as a divider, a directional or a guide. The border can be used as a frame around the image or the page. Shape is a graphic element that is mostly used as an accentuating mark to emphasize the message or text.

Form creates positive or negative space. Positive space is created from the images and negative space, which is also known as white space, is created from the empty space around the images.

"The hardest thing to see is what is in front of your eyes."
- Goethe
quoted in *A Designer's Art* by Paul Rand.

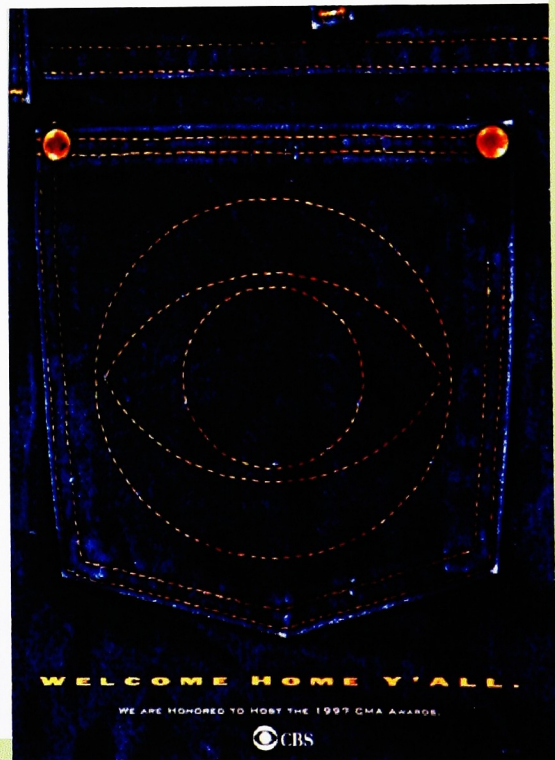


Appendix I - 6

"A horse walks into a bar and the bartender says...Why the long face?"
-Source unknown



This ad for Target used image to create a witty message. The wit is revealed only after the viewer realized it is a pet bed on the models head and not a fashionable hat.



Appendix I - 7

Language

Language is a system. It refers to the tone, rhythm, rhyme, cadence or voice in which the message is designed.

Verbally, the language system can be made with the same kind of words or similar sounding words; it can use either all verbs, nouns, or adjectives. Visually, the language system can be made with the images that say the same thing but are different. For example, in the William Sonoma advertisement all the images are found in a kitchen.



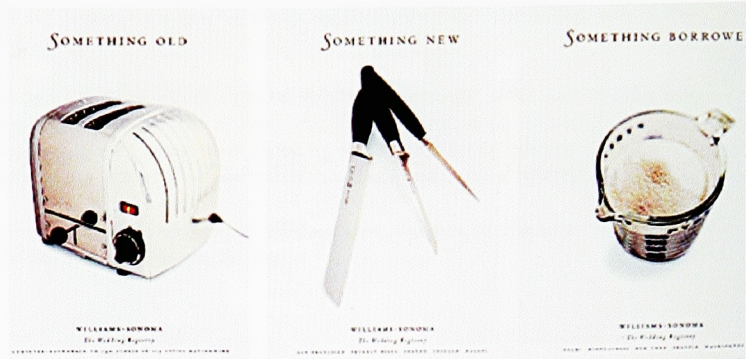
These covers for William Week Magazine, individually or together, create a language system. With the simple use of one image and one word together sets the tone for a witty message.

Language

The use of voice sounds, and often written symbols that represent these sounds, to express and communicate thoughts and feelings.⁵



Appendix I - 8



"Two sausages are sitting in a frying pan,
one sausage says to the other, *man it's hot in
here*, the other sausage says *OH MY GOD!*
A talking sausage."
- Source Unknown

COLOR: SCARLET

#75233 | FEATURES: SILKY IRIDESCENT FABRIC WILL NOT CLING TO CLOTHING | CONTOURED BRA GIVES YOU A SOFT LIFT AND A GREAT SHAPE

HE'LL GIVE A DAMN

VASSARETTE®
A LEADER IN QUALITY APPAREL | CONTACT: 1-800-361-4361
BEST COMFORTABLE LINGERIE™

COLOR: LEOPARD

#75444 | FEATURES: SILKY FABRIC ENHANCES SHAPE AND PROVIDES ALL-DAY COMFORT | PLESH-BACKED UNDERWIRE IS SUPPORTIVE AND GENTLE TO SKIN

NOTE: ME JANE

VASSARETTE®
A LEADER IN QUALITY APPAREL | CONTACT: 1-800-361-4361
BEST COMFORTABLE LINGERIE™

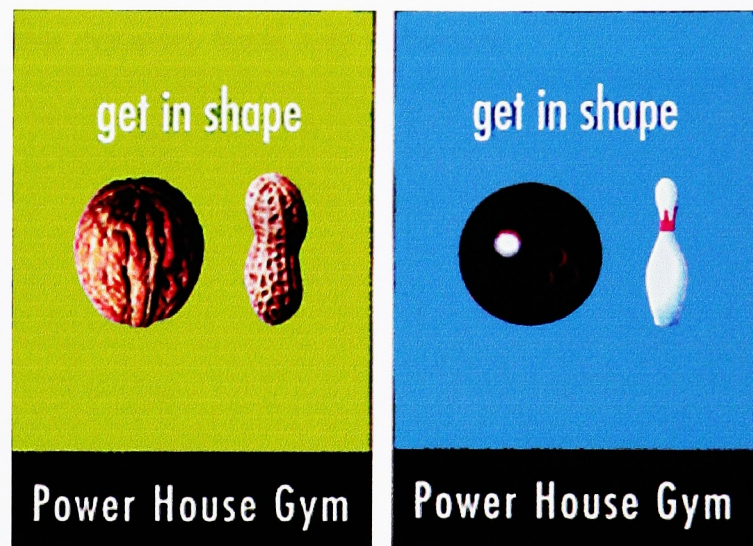
Appendix I - 9

Color and Contrast

Color can brighten any graphic design, while contrast can create the tone of the graphic design.

Color as an element can be used to emphasize an image or be used to differentiate between two elements or messages. Exploring and using different colors can set the mood for a witty message. Using darker colors can indicate a serious message, while lighter, cheerier colors can represent a more uplifting message.

Contrast is usually created from different sizes, weights, or shades of the elements. It creates variety in the graphic design.



The advertisements for Power House Gym creates a witty message with the use of two images that are opposite in shape, this creates a contrast. In this instances, when places with text "get in shape", the message is clear.

"One man's poison ivy
is another man's spinach."
- George Ade
Ballast Quarterly Review, 1999.

"May the forces of evil be confused
on the way to your house."
- George Carlin



Would the country look any different



if it were run by a woman?

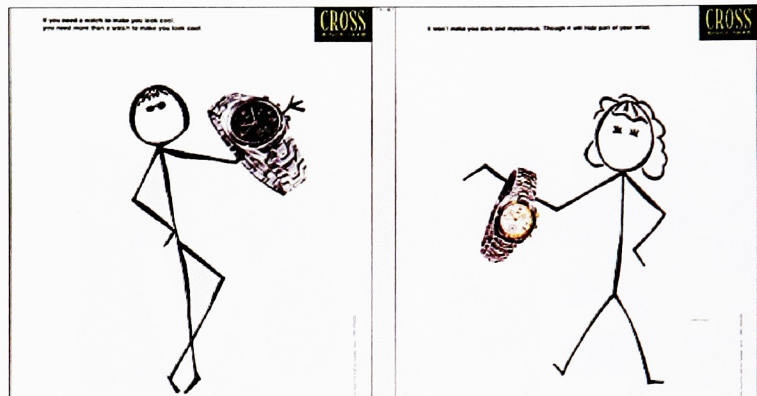
Any thoughts? www.talk.bcandid.com



Content

In literature, content is what makes up the plot. In graphic design, the plot is the message and graphic design elements create the content.

The content is the combination of all the elements on the page. These elements, whether visual or verbal, create a sequence which forms the content, which in turn creates the message. By adding unusual elements, the content then becomes unexpected, which forms a witty message. For example, on the cover of *The Village Voice*, the designer replaced images of the members of the United Nations with images of pigs, which, when placed with the words *sexual harassment*, creates the content of the message.



All though these ads for Cross Watches are simple, the detail is in the content. The watch by itself does not make a story, but add the stick figure people and the content of the message is created.

Content

Meaning or significance, subject matter. The events, physical detail and information in a work of art. ⁶



"Between the two evils, I always
pick the one I never tried before."
-Mae West

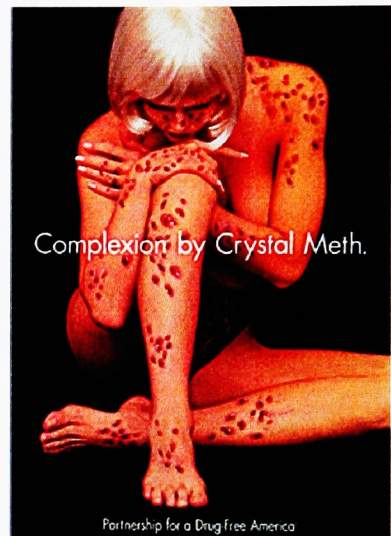
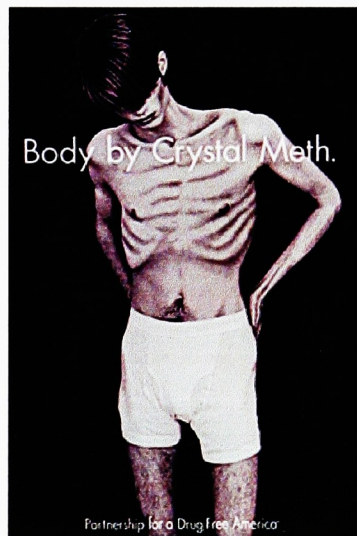


Appendix I - 13

Message, Meaning

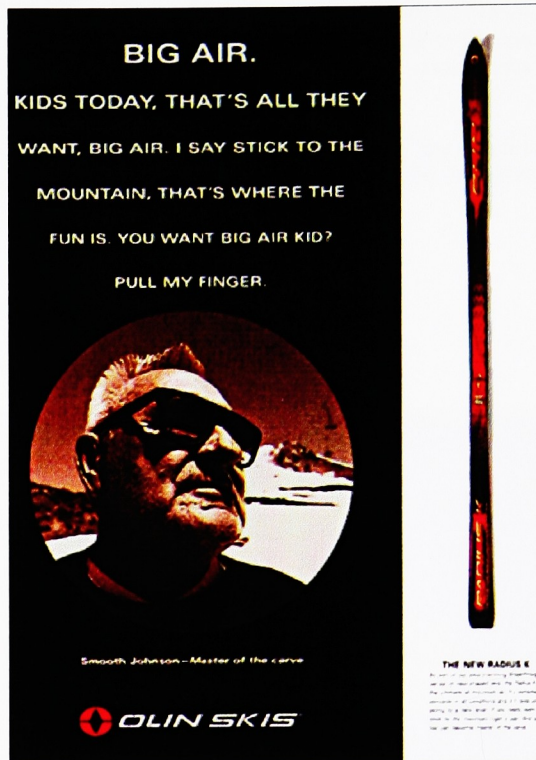
Message and meaning are two words that interact. The meaning of the graphic design elements creates the message, and the message gives meaning to the graphic design.

Graphic design elements are sometimes used to mimic other graphic design messages and to change the meaning. In this advertisement for a Drug Free America the designer uses the elements to mimic a well known Calvin Klein ad. This ad also signifies that wit does not always have to be humorous, just unexpected. The meaning is based on the viewer's interpretation.

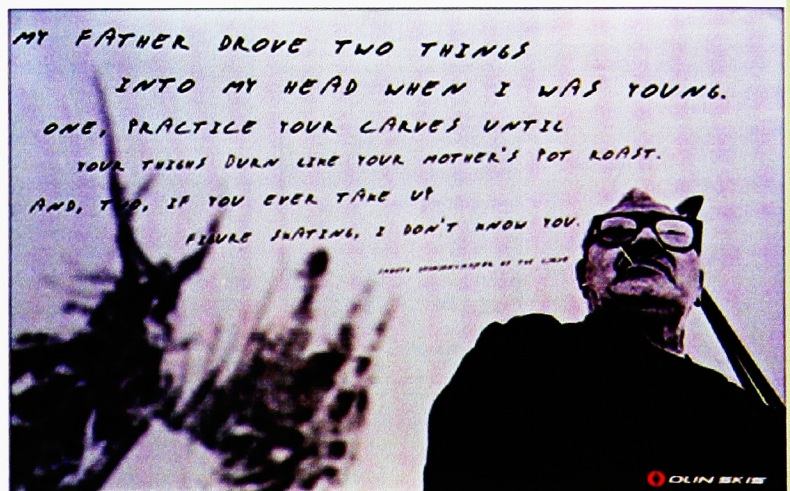


"The human race has one
really effective weapon, and
that is laughter."
- Mark Twain

Appendix I - 14



In these ads for Olin Skis, the designer created meaning with the text and used a famous skier for the message.



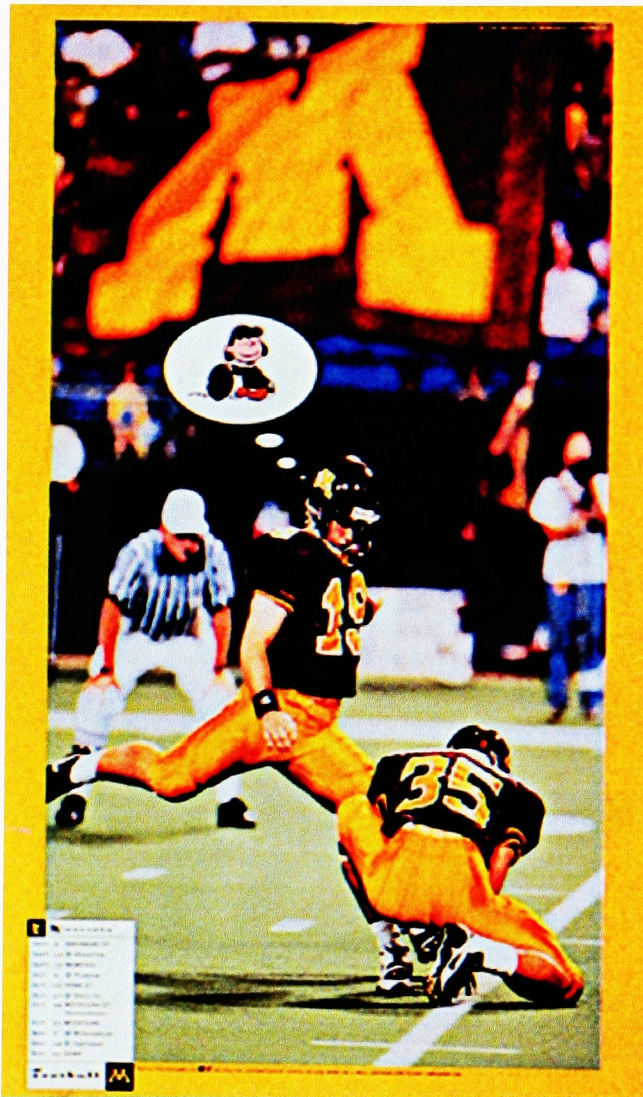
Function

There are several different definitions for the word function. In graphic design function brings organization, structure and purpose to the message. It ensures that the design works. When an image is placed in an unexpected position, it gives greater purpose to the overall message.

In the advertisement "Adult diapers not included" the text is to make the viewer stop and read. The purpose of the skier is to let the viewers know this is not an ad for adult diapers.

Function

The duty, occupation, or role of a person or thing.⁷



Appendix I - 16

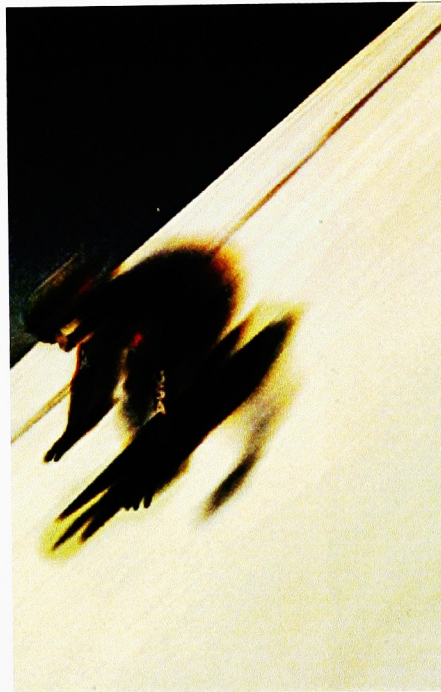
In this ad for Adobe the functions of the image of a grandmother doing a wheely on a bike, is to add an unexpected message to a serene setting.



Adobe Software and you, do the impossible on the Web. Go. See for yourself.

Imagination becomes reality. **Adobe**

"Sometimes a scream is better than a thesis."
-Ralph Waldo Emerson



**ADULT
DIAPERS
NOT
INCLUDED**



twent
your
seven

Appendix I - 17

Addition

Adding elements to a message can create an unexpected message. Combining the unexpected with the expected increases the meaning or enhances the message.

Like graphic design, wit can be everywhere. It is even found on shopping bags. By adding letters to the image of the elephant's behind, the Philadelphia Zoo has created a witty message on the shopping bags for their souvenir shop to promote the ZOOM program.

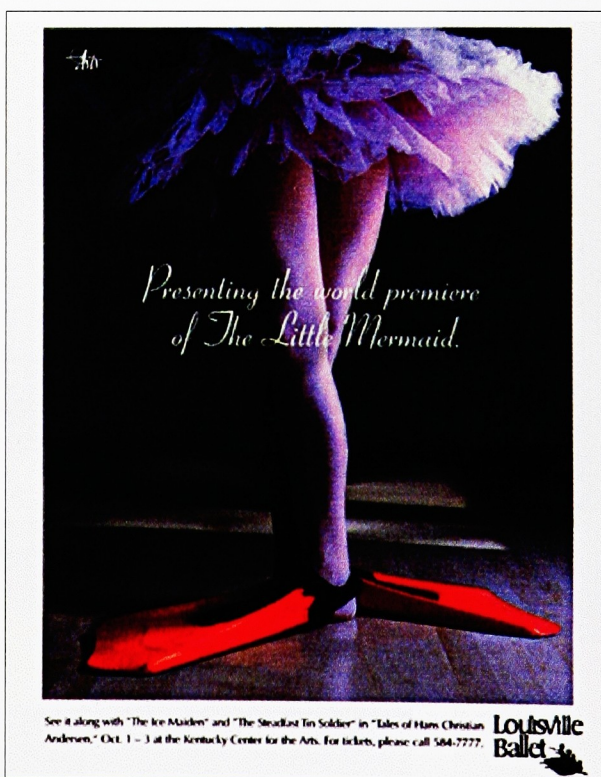


"A little nonsense now and then,
is cherished by the wisest man."
-Willie Wonka





This theater poster for the play *The Little Mermaid* created an unexpected message, when the designer added swimming fins to a ballet dancer.



Appendix I - 19

Subtraction

Subtraction is probably the most difficult element to work with. In most instances when you take away something, it has a negative effect; it can leave a blank space or an empty feeling. By eliminating elements when using subtraction to emphasize the meaning, the message is enhanced. For example, in this office ad, the designer has removed the person from the ad, but the viewer gets the feeling that the person was in the office previously.

What's the quickest way
to a man's heart?

Through his chest-with a sharp knife.

- Unknown

What the %*#@* is this?

Without MacLinkPlus® Deluxe, you'll never know.

is it a useless spreadsheet? No? Is it a photo of your dog's at the Grand Canyon? Who knows? Certainly not you... Because you can't double-click it. Or you forget the file off. But if you don't open it with MacLinkPlus, it is created on a Windows® machine or was compressed or was created with a program you don't own. Whatever the case, you need MacLinkPlus Deluxe 11. Over 10 million users already rely on it to open documents, and convert documents. So when a file arrives on your Mac, you don't click it in open. End of story.

MacLinkPlus Deluxe is one of several Mac, PC, and Palm operating programs from DataViz that make it easy to work with files from other platforms, including:

COMPUER TIPS MICRO OFFICE

DataViz
Compatibility. Instantly.
www.dataviz.com/files
1-800-270-0030 x278

The subtraction is used in this ad for DataViz by taking the swear words out. By doing this the witty message works.



Substitution

Substitution means to remove an element and put another element in its place. In terms of using it in graphic design, substitution can be used to mimic a preexisting design or to enhance an existing design.

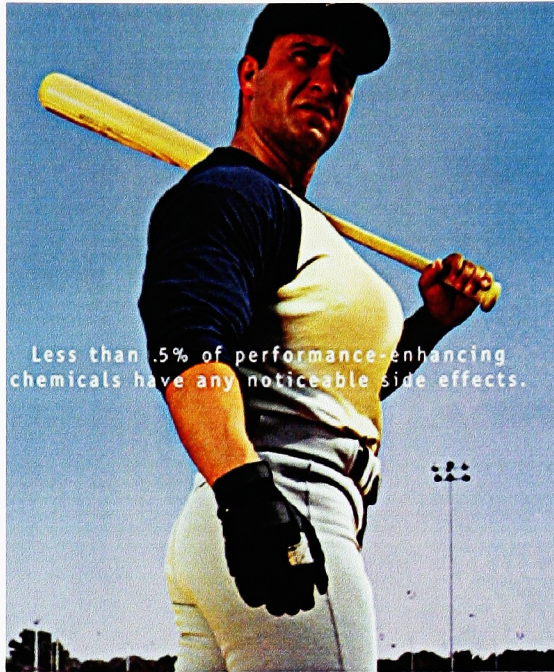


This is actually a logo for a design firm called Mike. In using the Nike swoosh and replacing the word Nike with Mike the viewer almost has to look twice.

The • Finger

A curse expression as a gesture. The form of the gesture in its undisguised state consists of the middle finger pointed straight up with the remaining fingers clinched in a fist.⁸





Less than .5% of performance-enhancing chemicals have any noticeable side effects.

Every percent counts.

bankrate.com



Call your inhibitions. Inconveniences and fears where to go. **PROJECT XXX.** The ultimate progressive freestyle board. Featuring *amplified* *shred* *laminates* in the tip and tail for lighter swing weight and whirling spins. It also combines tough end-grain wood cores with aerospace pre-preg laminates to withstand those burly landings. At 15% lighter than conventional boards, it makes a damn strong statement.

Exchange

It may sound like substitution and exchange are the same, but they are not. They are closely related, but there is a slight difference. While substitution removes an element and puts another element in its place, exchange actually replaces the element with a different element, and not necessarily in the same place.



WARNING: SMOKING CAUSES IMPOTENCE

"Time is fun when you're having flies."
- Kermit the Frog



Appendix I - 24

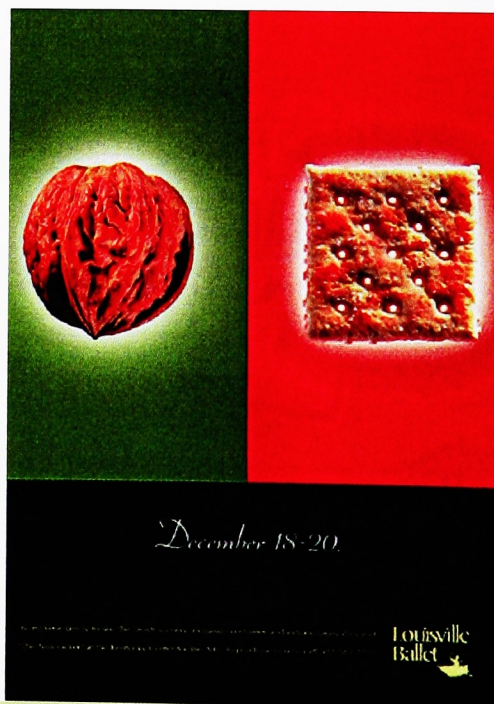


This newspaper ad for Greenpeace, revealed itself to wit when it exploited the oil company BP. The designer did this by exchanging the P with an S.

GREENPEACE

Join Greenpeace's fight to stop global warming and protect the Arctic.
For more information, or to support Greenpeace, please call 800-219-9260.

www.greenpeaceusa.org/arctic



The Case Studies

Design and Wit

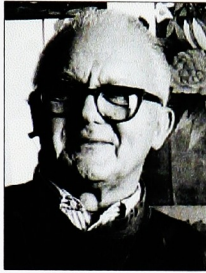
Now that both the process of wit and the process of graphic design have been explained, and the basic graphic design elements have been clearly defined, the question remains, who uses this stuff anyway?

The following pages are case studies of three of the industry's leading pioneers: Paul Rand, George Lois, and Lou Dorfsman. All three designers are renowned and are recognized for using wit in their designs. Each one has his own style and has his own definition of wit.

They became pioneers in their field during a period of time known as Modernism. This time between the 1940's through the early 1970's was a period promoting a modern American style of design. This style was heavily influenced by modern European styles of art, design, and designers of the early 1900's, which stemmed from a German design school called the Bauhaus. This design style was influential for almost every American designer of the time. ⁹



Appendix J - 2

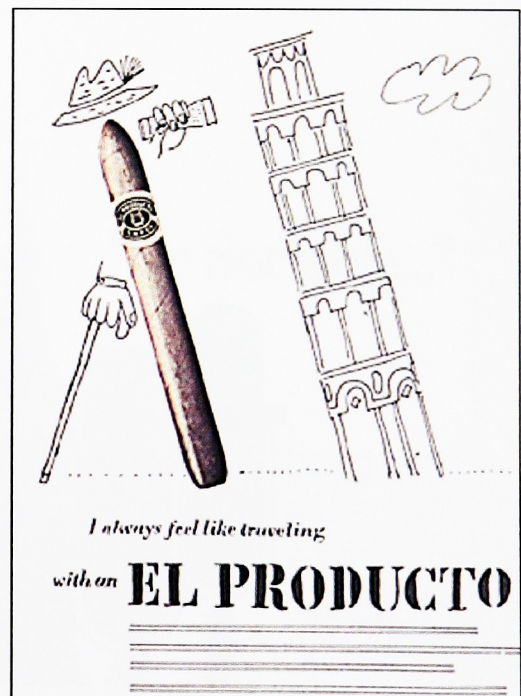


Paul Rand

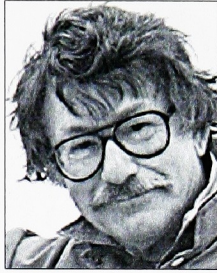
1914-1996

A famous American graphic designer, Paul Rand, incorporated wit in his timeless work in editorial design, advertising, and corporate graphics. Upon starting free-lancing in 1955, he worked with companies like IBM, United Parcel Service, Westinghouse, and ABC Television.¹⁰

"If I can have one good idea, I am happy."¹¹



Appendix J - 3

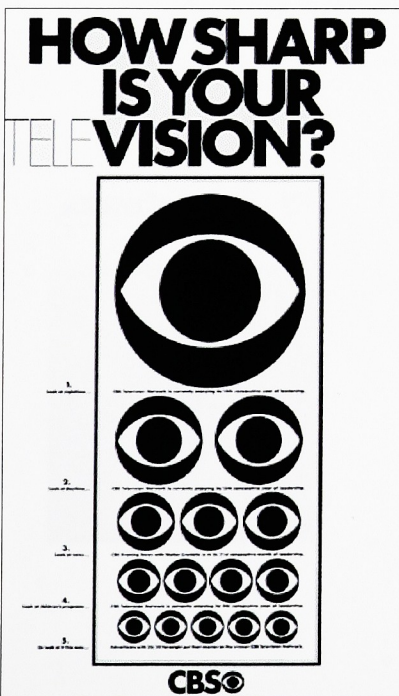
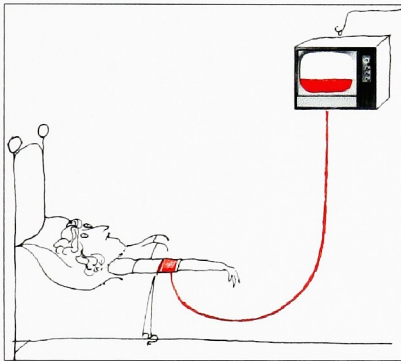


Lou Dorfsman

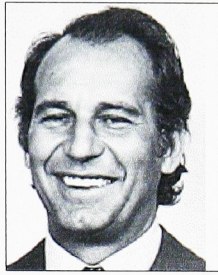
(b. 1918)

A pioneer in the television broadcasting industry, he brought wit into his work for the CBS studios for an amazing forty two years. Starting as Art Director in 1946, he was promoted to Design Director for all of CBS Studios by 1964, and soon after was named Vice President of CBS. Dorfsman was successful in keeping with the company's philosophy "design is a vital area that should be managed by professionals", until the late 1980's when he resigned to new owners.¹²

"...You must be able to show that the project answers a need, how it will work, what will it cost, to whom and how will it be distributed."¹³



Appendix J - 4



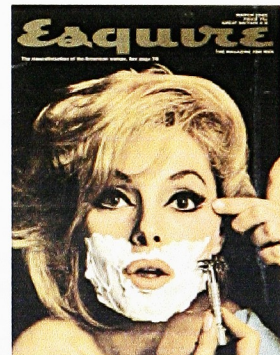
George Lois

(b. 1931)

A designer whose humor and wit emanated from his creativity, Lois is responsible for revitalizing *Esquire* magazine in 1962 with new and controversial covers. This Art Director was dubbed the *enfant terrible* of American mass communications, for the tenacious way he pushed ideas and concepts.¹⁴

"Creativity can solve almost any problem.

The creative act, the defeat of habit by originality, overcomes everything."¹⁵



Appendix K - 1

Interpreting Wit

Please circle either yes or no for each questions. Please use the back for additional comments. Thank You, Ann.

1. Do you have a clear understanding of how and why wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design?
☒ Yes No Why? TO make the visuals more appealing
2. Is the process of wit clear and understandable?
☒ Yes No Why? It is part of the human perception
3. Since the process of wit is a theory, in your opinion, could it be a real process?
☒ Yes No Why? _____
4. From the visual and verbal examples of wit, does the use of wit overwhelm the graphic design elements (Juxtaposition, Image, Line, Shape, Form, etc.)
☒ Yes No Why? No. They are emphasized by the ~~good~~ use of wit.
5. Since reviewing this thesis, do you now have a clear understanding of graphic design and graphic design elements?
☒ Yes No Why? _____

Optional : Your age: 24
 Your Occupation and/or Major: Graphic Design

Interpreting Wit

Please circle either yes or no for each questions. Please use the back for additional comments. Thank You, Ann.

1. Do you have a clear understanding of how and why wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design?
☒ Yes No Why? examples
2. Is the process of wit clear and understandable?
☒ Yes No Why? process should be easy to understand
3. Since the process of wit is a theory, in your opinion, could it be a real process?
☐ Yes No Why? don't know
4. From the visual and verbal examples of wit, does the use of wit overwhelm the graphic design elements (Juxtaposition, Image, Line, Shape, Form, etc.)
☒ Yes No Why? wit is more interesting than the elements
5. Since reviewing this thesis, do you now have a clear understanding of graphic design and graphic design elements?
☒ Yes No Why? but did before

Optional : Your age: 27
 Your Occupation and/or Major: graphic design

1. Do you have a clear understanding of how and why wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design?
Yes _____ No (See back) Why? _____
2. Is the process of wit clear and understandable?
Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____
3. Since the process of wit is a theory, in your opinion, could it be a real process?
Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____
4. From the visual and verbal examples of wit, does the use of wit overwhelm the graphic design elements (*juxtaposition, Image, Line, Shape, Form, etc.*)
Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____
5. Since reviewing this thesis, do you now have a clear understanding of graphic design and graphic design elements?
Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

Optional : Your age: _____
Your Occupation and/or Major: _____

Appendix K - 2

Appendix K - 4

Please Evaluate Interpreting Wit

Please circle either yes or no for each questions. Please use the back for additional comments. Thank You, Ann.

1. Do you have a clear understanding of how and why wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design?
☒ Yes No Why? _____
2. Is the process of wit clear and understandable?
☒ Yes No Why? _____
3. Since the process of wit is a theory, in your opinion, could it be a real process?
☒ Yes No Why? _____
4. From the visual and verbal examples of wit, does the use of wit overwhelm the graphic design elements (Juxtaposition, Image, Line, Shape, Form, etc.)
 Yes ☒ No Why? _____
5. Since reviewing this thesis, do you now have a clear understanding of graphic design and graphic design elements?
☒ Yes No Why? _____

Optional : Your age: 23
 Your Occupation and/or Major: Programmer

Please Evaluate Interpreting Wit

Please circle either yes or no for each questions. Please use the back for additional comments. Thank You, Ann.

1. Do you have a clear understanding of how and why wit can be used to educate, entertain and communicate the elements of graphic design?
☒ Yes No Why? _____
2. Is the process of wit clear and understandable?
☒ Yes No Why? _____
3. Since the process of wit is a theory, in your opinion, could it be a real process?
☒ Yes No Why? _____
For the most part - a critical thinking process - a "different" type of process
4. From the visual and verbal examples of wit, does the use of wit overwhelm the graphic design elements (Juxtaposition, Image, Line, Shape, Form, etc.)
 Yes No Why? _____
5. Since reviewing this thesis, do you now have a clear understanding of graphic design and graphic design elements?
☒ Yes No Why? _____

Optional : Your age: 24
 Your Occupation and/or Major: Industrial Design