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Rochester Institute of Technology

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the College  
of Imaging and Arts and Sciences in candidacy  
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

**Vernacular Letterforms:**  
**An Expression of Cultural and Social Values**  
by Georgiana Leite  
May, 2000

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Georgiana Leite

Date

May 11, 2000



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## Acknowledgement

### Special Thanks

Mom and Dad, for giving me this chance.

Felipe and Mike, for their support and love.

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The artists of North Clinton Avenue, for their example and inspiration.

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## Introduction

Letterforms are significant basic elements in graphic design. The letter was invented as a symbol to represent spoken language. Language is a condition, and a contract we make and we accept in order to communicate with one another.

We have just 26 characters, and their punctuation marks, with which to express the emotion and the drama of being alive today. What if we chose to expand the range of this palette, and to speak of the changes in form by challenging form?

**"It is through form that content comes to us."<sup>1</sup>**

**Karel Martens**

By exploring the aesthetic and communicative potency of urban letterforms, this thesis will mainly concentrate on the visual properties and cultural content of individual letterforms as they are displayed in the streets. It will try to demonstrate that in this case function demands a different form.

## Vernacular Letterforms : An Expression of Cultural and Social Values

Thesis Definition

Throughout the history of human civilization, the letters of the alphabet have been – and still are – considered an indispensable cultural asset and a highly-developed means of communication. Letterforms themselves not only serve the essential function of conveying verbal information, but also carry emotional and aesthetic information that has an impact on how the verbal message is read.

The concept for this thesis project derives from a profound interest in letterforms, particularly the letterforms that are originated in the streets. They are called vernacular letterforms and they are unique in their shape and their value. As such, these letterforms exceed the boundaries of conventional typography.

Vernacular is a term in linguistics which refers to the common, everyday language in a particular locality or culture. There are vernacular forms for every culture. These letterforms express more than just a message: they are a vivid expression of cultural and social values. Most of the vernacular graphic material is produced by nonprofessionals. Compared to highly evolved graphic forms, this kind of vernacular is relatively naive and unselfconscious but is effective in its own environment as is a more sophisticated communications design in a more sophisticated environment. This thesis project deals with the meaning of these urban-inspired letterforms in graphic design. The major goal will be to understand, through documentation and analysis, how this urban-inspired typography may influence the visual communication process.

Goals:

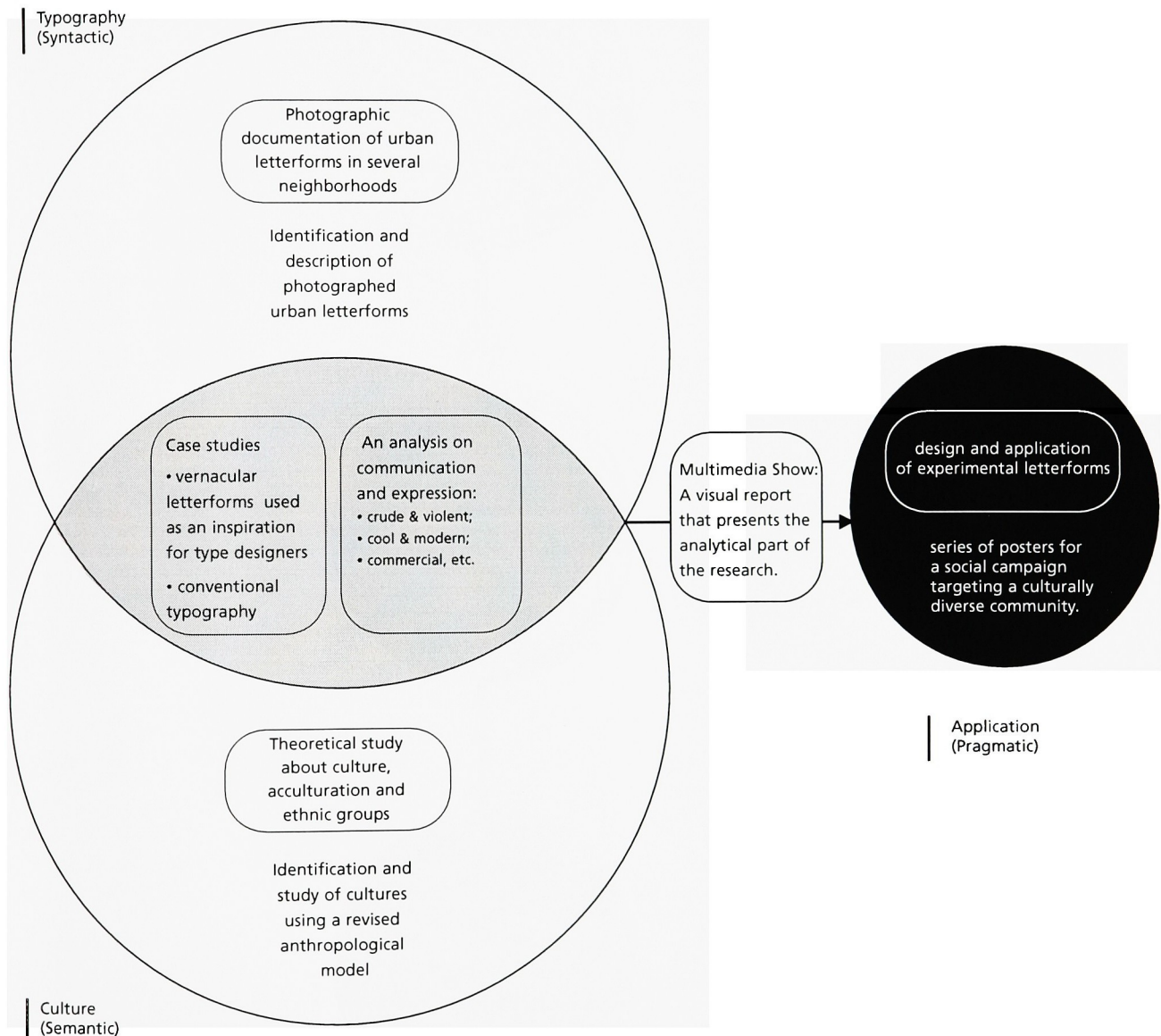
- photographic documentation of urban-inspired letterforms;
- identification and description of photographed urban letterforms;
- theoretical study about culture codes and conventions;
- research on shared codes and society bonds;
- analysis of communication and expression;
- study of conventional typography;
- case studies of vernacular typography.

Based on the research and analysis of urban letterforms, an appropriate application would be to design and apply an experimental typeface. Since the research includes defining how vernacular letterforms function as an expression of cultural and social values, this application could be used in series of posters for a social campaign. The social campaign would be designed to convey an important message to a young audience from a culturally diverse community.

## Explanatory Diagram of Thesis Topic

This diagram presents three distinct phases of the thesis: Syntactic, Semantic and Pragmatic. The diagram connects the topics and their particular research goals.

The typographic research deals with form, structure and aesthetic variables while the cultural research deals with meaning, concept and perception. When these two research phases overlap, the designer has a better understanding of communication, language and readability. The third phase of this thesis is based on the information taken from the typographic and cultural overlap and it deals with the technical and functional aspects of the chosen thesis application.



**Thesis Process**

The processes of translation, transformation and transposition are fundamental to human communications. Communication through language is always evolving and new forms and meanings are the result.

Translation: converting the formal properties of information.

Transformation: response from converted information; new purposes.

Transposition: recontextualizing information.

Thesis Definition





## Precedent 1

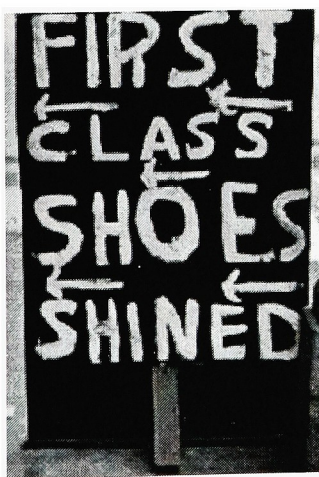
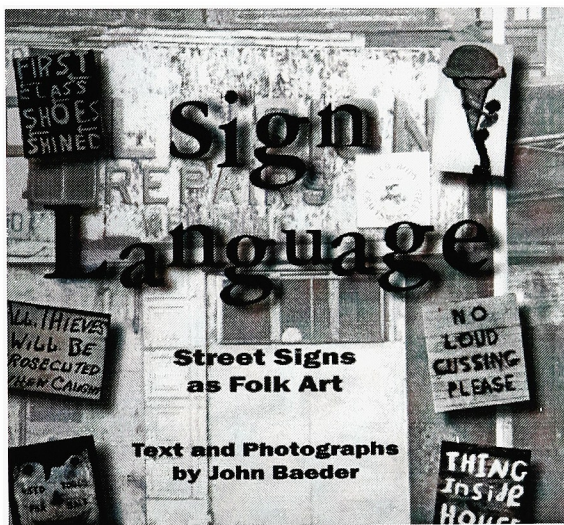
### ***Sign Language: Street Signs as Folk Art***

by John Baeder.

This photodocumentary book relates to this thesis as a precedent because it portrays and analyzes an arising urban culture. Baeder's text offers observations about folk art and real life. It also presents a very logical way of categorizing his research on letterforms, composition and brushwork.

The author's investigation was based on the roadside images: cola, beer, cigarettes, etc. The book is more focused on graphic evidences of these roadside images.

According to the book, there is cadence, beauty and sound in these roadside images. They appear to have qualities like: rhythm, harmony and melody, and these qualities can come from words, thoughts, or a curl of the brush. The author describes the road signage as marks left from people's heart and acknowledges them as social expressions.



One of the book's examples is this shoe shine signage. The communication of this sign does not mean that only Gucci, Bally's or Church's shoes are shined. It does mean that the reader will get a first class shine by just following the arrows.

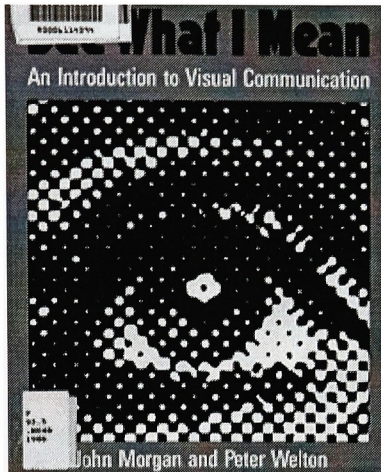
## Precedent 2

### See *What I Mean*

by John Morgan and Peter Welton.

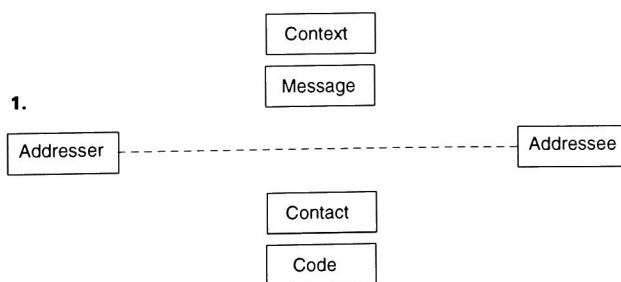
This book can also relate to this thesis as a precedent because it shows how disciplines as diverse as psychology, philosophy and linguistics can provide insights into the ways visual messages are produced and interpreted.

Understanding why pictures and designs affect us is a difficult task. The relevant studies are classified as psychology, philosophy, history, linguistics, sociology, aesthetics, information theory and even literary criticism. This book attempts to present a number of the most important areas of research in a form which is both clear and practical.



Through diagrams like the examples below, disciplines such as psychology and linguistics are combined to improve and develop models of communication.

1. This model summarizes the essential elements in the act of communication: The two parties to the transaction, addresser and addressee, are linked by content, contact and code. The context is the situation which gives rise to the transaction; the contact is the physical and psychological connection between the parties (channels or media); the code is shared a system of signs.





## Precedent 2 (continuation)

2. This second model is used to classify a message according to the feature on which it is principally focused.

Emotive: messages which serve as a vehicle for self expression on the part of the addresser.

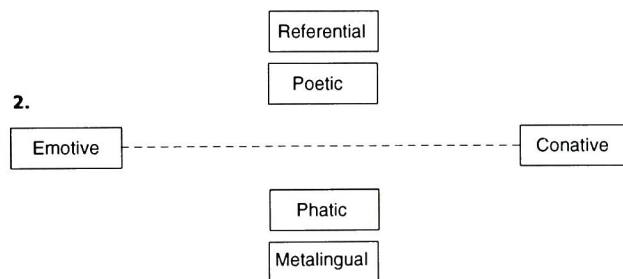
Conative: messages that seek to produce an effect on the addressee.

Referential: messages that often draw the attention of the addressee to the context.

Metalingual: messages that offer a commentary on the code which is being used.

Phatic: messages that mainly keep the channel open to reassure the parties that the contact is being maintained.

Poetic: messages in which the focus of the sender is on the message itself rather than any outside reference or effect.



Precedents

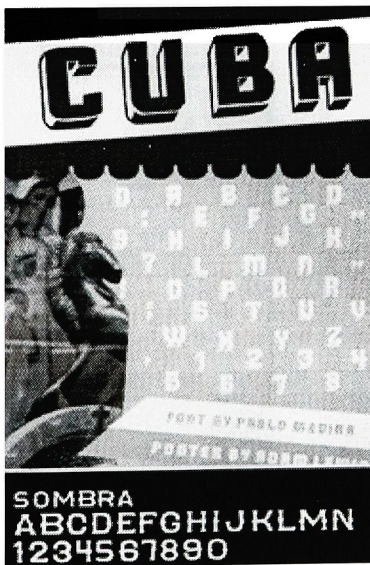
## Precedent 3

### Examples of Typographic Works

The works of typeface designers Geoff Kaplan (LA) and Pablo Medina (NY), may also be a good precedent for this project. These works relates to the potential thesis application, because they explore and experiment new typeface designs based on urban letterforms and sources that come from the streets.

Poster design by Roberto Gonzales.  
This poster uses the typeface Vitrina, designed by Pablo Medina.

Like many of Pablo Medina's designs, Vitrina was inspired by lettering from signs on local New Jersey establishments.



Poster design by Adam Lewin.  
This poster uses the typeface Cuba, designed by Pablo Medina. When Medina designed Cuba, he wanted the font to have the organic feel of a hand-painted sign.

Medina's Sombra (shade in Spanish) was inspired by the signage advertising shady seats for a Spanish bull fight.

## The Definition of Vernacular

[ver•nac•u•lar] - Common, vulgar.

The common forms of expression in a particular locality.<sup>2</sup>

By noting the nature of painted letters, and investigating paint application methods, one gains a better understanding of both typographic and nontypographic letterforms.

Lettering by hand lends itself to the impulse of improvisation. When the freedom to alter shapes provides an incentive to an artist, the work is frequently more pleasing. It humanizes the overall appearance and brings out character. Informal, freely painted signs in the streets are ordinarily done with no precise technical restrictions or reference to any typographic models.

“ Vernacular signs are as direct and unassuming as everyday speech.”<sup>3</sup>  
Phillip Meggs

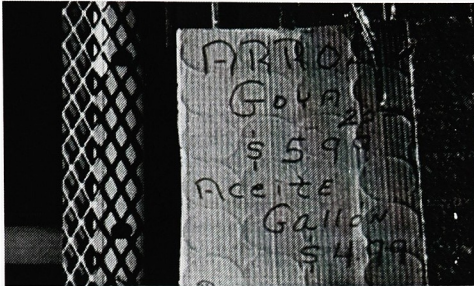
As our environment continues to evolve it also continues to accumulate layers of commercial signage. Each new layer reflects the latest commercial vision of utopian commerce, and affixes itself, to a particular point on the socio-economic timeline. Reviewing historic context allows some deeper understanding of the interconnectivity of visual communication and cultural norms, and how each constantly informs and changes the other. The multicultural diversity of contemporary cities is reflected in the design and use of written language on commercial signage. The verbal-visual landscape created by these signs results from an often self-conscious, complex process involving reflections and appropriations of circulating stereotypes and cultural references.



Whether one is attracted or repelled by the visual and linguistic “Babel”, it is impossible to ignore the barrage of street level media: Billboards, store signs, posters and graffiti. Inevitably, hybrid letterforms arise from proximity and cultural exchange. There is something appealing about vernacular signage. It presents words, thoughts, and ideas into specific shapes in a creative manner. In most instances they are done unconsciously, and often reveal a visual audacity that turns itself into playful inventiveness. Vernacular signage brings to focus pure executions of a thought process combined with the need to convey information in a relevant manner: through specific shapes, sizes and spaces.



Unprofessional vernacular sign writers often create letterforms spontaneously, with no type books and trendy magazine to follow. The charm of these writers is their lack of pretense; their style comes straight from their hearts and souls. Availability of surfaces on which to paint is essential in vernacular signage. Cardboard, a discarded piece of wood, the side of a box, a simple piece of paper, or other scraps are medium for the sign producer. The most familiar of all are walls of buildings. Vehicles, like buildings, also provide logical surfaces for signs.



Research



## The Definition of Culture

[cul•ture] - The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns and all other products of human work and thought.<sup>4</sup>

"Culture may be defined as the totality of mental and physical reactions and activities that characterize the behavior of individuals composing a social group."<sup>5</sup>  
Boas (1938)

"When culture is closely analyzed, we find but a series of patterned reactions that characterize the behavior of individuals who constitute a given group"<sup>6</sup>  
Herskovits (1948)

Culture is a vast body of complex and varied phenomena. These phenomena – things, ideas, acts, processes – may be dealt with in different ways. Psychology, racial differences, geographical environment, have all proved inadequate for the interpretation of cultural phenomena.

In 1970, Fairchild defines culture as "all patterns socially acquired and socially transmitted by means of symbols" including customs, techniques, beliefs, institutions, and material objects. He states that the primary mode of transmission of culture is language, which enables people to learn, experience, and share their traditions and customs.<sup>7</sup>

Culture can be explained only in terms of itself. This means that one will account for a given cultural fact by merging it in a group of cultural facts or by demonstrating some other cultural fact out of which it has developed. The cultural phenomenon to be explained may either have an antecedent within the culture where it is found, or it may have been imported from the outside. Both groups of determinants must be considered.

In 1972, Steward identifies five components of culture in his summary of cultural assumptions and values:

- Activity
- Definition of social relations
- Motivation
- Perception of the world
- Perception of self and the individual

In his summary he keeps both individuals uniqueness and the cultural group membership foremost in mind.<sup>8</sup>

The crucial point is that, culture is not a permanent set of values and ideas. Instead, it is always in evolution based on the social and political changes in society or based on other culture's influences. It must be examined and evaluated within its context.

Research

## Anthropology and Ethnographic Research

[an•thro•pol•o•gy] - The scientific study of the origin, the behavior, and the physical social, and cultural development of human beings.<sup>9</sup>

"Anthropology is a science of man which is concerned with widely ranging aspects of the human condition."<sup>10</sup>

A particular culture consists of all the learned, either collective or individual qualities of society, including those which link them together to form a whole cultural system. Anthropologists try to discover what these cultural qualities are and how the culture operates.

Basic to anthropology is the concept of culture, the notion that man adapts to his environment primarily through learned behavior patterns rather than through biological means.

Social Anthropology - the study of the social life of human populations

Sociolinguistics - Investigates relationships between language, social, and cultural differences.

Ethnology - the study of the customs of man in different societies.

### Ethnographic Research

- Primary, data-gathering phase; field work in a given society.
- Methods and procedures:
- Respondence
- Research instrument (scales, models)
- Translation and interviewing (member of target group and bilingual)
- Statistical procedures (questionnaire)
- Data presentation (data table)

The designer decided to use some of the ethnographic research methods and procedures. The interviewing and statistical procedure represent a perspective from inside the culture looking out. How people themselves understand and describe their world. The designer will use the questionnaire format.

Fieldnotes will be taken by the designer. Fieldnotes are observations and descriptions of perspectives from the observer that gets inside the culture with their own background. These observations and descriptions will try to express the communities' everyday behavior, normal social life, economic activities, relationships and notions about appropriate social behavior.

Research

## Hip Hop Subculture & Graffiti

For as long as people have been able to write they have been writing on the walls. The Romans wrote on buildings of the towns they conquered, and even before words were used, the cave men painted on walls. This writing was first called graffiti in Roman times and holds the same name now. As time has changed, so have the forms that this writing on the walls have taken.

Today, there are quite a few different classifications that separate graffiti. There is the gang graffiti that street gangs use to mark their territory, graffiti that people write to express political views and a new form of graffiti that has just emerged in the past twenty-five years. This new form is the artistic graffiti. Artistic graffiti is a modern day offspring of traditional graffiti that has elevated itself from just writing words or phrases on the wall, to a complex artistic form of personal expression.

This new graffiti first took form in the inner city of New York. It started with people writing their names and street numbers on public buildings, street signs or more commonly public transportation. These graffiti artists started experimenting with different styles, colors and medium once they got tired of writing just their names in plain letters. Soon this new form of graffiti blossomed into intricate artistic works. The usual term used by graffiti artists to describe themselves is "writers". These "writers" always walk around in groups that they call "crews"



For a while, this graffiti was tolerated in New York by the law and the public which helped spread this novel form of graffiti to other cities. Artistic graffiti grew by leaps and bounds as younger aspiring graffiti artists became attracted to this mode of artistic expression. The majority of graffiti artists were young boys from the city looking for some way to express themselves, and painting graffiti became an artistic form of rebellion. Eager to show everyone their artistic skills and earn respect from other graffiti artists, this new generation of graffiti artists enlarged the circle of people who did artistic graffiti to include all sorts of races and economic classes.

As modern artistic graffiti expanded, a graffiti subculture filled with young artists emerged. This subculture became fused with a rising music culture now known as Hip-Hop. This connection came about mainly because Hip-Hop started in New York about the same time as modern graffiti took root; therefore many people were involved in both areas.

Hip Hop emerged in New York City, which could be described as an "urban world of physical and psychological violence".<sup>11</sup> Hip Hop graffiti emerged from the social, cultural and political inequalities customary to the U.S. society. Graffiti can be seen as the personal expression of an oppressed and disenfranchised people.

Research

Missing Page



## Location

North Clinton Avenue | Rochester | New York | U.S.A.

After a month researching Goodman St, Main St., Broad St., North St., East Ave., and North Clinton Ave., the designer had to define a location where a variety of photographic material and also different cultural qualities could be found.

North Clinton Avenue was chosen for this thesis research because it is a bilingual and a bicultural neighborhood and there are murals, homemade signage and graffiti mostly everywhere.

The vibrancy of language, colors, and unusual letterforms in this neighborhood comes from the freedom of people to express their cultural values.



## Field Work

"A practice of ethnology is to learn about a culture by participating in the customs to some degree and, while participating to observe. This means that the anthropologist lives among the people and makes himself as much like them culturally as they will permit and as much as is compatible with the maintenance of his own mental and physical health and scientific objectivity."<sup>14</sup>  
Robert B. Taylor

### Observation and Description Format :

When writing fieldnotes, the central purpose is to describe a social world and it's people. The designer constructed her fieldnotes descriptions from selectively recalled moments. Whether it be an incident, event, routine or an interaction, each moment was reconstructed from selected details: words, gestures, body movements, background settings, etc.

The designer wrote her observations in first person to highlight certain actions and statements more than others in order to portray her sense of experience. The following strategies were also used to enable the designer to coherently depict an observed moment through vivid details. These strategies are: description, presentation of dialogue, and characterization.

See Appendix A for original fieldnotes.

Research

## Fieldnotes

During my first three days in N. Clinton, at the beginning of the Fall, all I did was take pictures of murals, homemade signage, professional signage and graffiti "tags". People at the streets seemed very curious and agitated with my presence but only one person approached me and asked about the pictures I was taking. It was a young african-american boy, at first he was very hostile, but after I briefly explained my interest in the mural he started telling me the meaning of the graffiti words on that wall. It was a frightening but compensating experience because I realized then that the graffiti writers are very proud of their work and they don't mind talking about their graffiti art. After these first visits I started trying to establish good relationships with people, so that channels of communication would be opened.

-----  
In the mornings kids walk to the public school while a crowd of frustrated adults try to fit in the early bus. Not all of them have jobs and most youngsters don't attend school. They spend their time at the corners, hanging out with friends or driving up and down the avenue. Several african-american women, all ages, attend the community's church bible study classes and choir rehearsals.

-----  
The community is mainly composed by african-americans and hispanic people. Most public and private signs are written in Spanish and English. Eventhough it is a low income location their commerce is really intense. Small local stores sell more then the Plaza nearby.

-----  
On my fourth visit to North Clinton Avenue I went to The Health Association: Clinton Avenue Family Wellness Center to talk to someone about their social projects. They have bilingual/bicultural staff members and volunteers and they work with more than fifty other local social services and health related organizations to bridge the gap for this mostly hispanic community. They offer diabetes, nutrition and health and safety classes and workshops. There is no fee for Family Wellness Center services. I collected many of their brochures. They are written in both Spanish and English. They don't use posters and outside advertising, they only have informational brochures which are related to their services and programs. Their audience is mostly composed by spanish women (age 30 and over).

After that I went to a convenience store and started talking with the owner and his employees. I asked about his signage and if he knew who had done it. He told me that his signage was made before he bought the store but he kept it because he liked the way it looks. He also said that he had just moved to the US from Yemen (Saudi Arabia) and he was enjoying living at North Clinton Avenue, eventhough he fears the local gangs.

I also went to the BOTANICA (a religious store) and talked to the couple that owns the store. I asked them if they knew who did their signage and they told me that the person who did their signage was a Cuban artist that used to live at North Clinton Avenue, and had recently moved from the neighborhood to Florida.

Finally I went to CREAM\$ (local Barber Shop) because the shop's wall are covered with graffiti and they use these walls as their store signage. It was when I met David, the owner. He told me that he had done most of it. He described how his that graffiti was commercial and not "old school stuff" and he introduced me to his "crew" friends. He said that he knew every graffiti writer around N. Clinton and he asked me if I wanted a tour to the famous "Wall of Fame", which is a whole wall covered with experimental graffiti. I hang out with him and "The Up Above Crew" and we visited the Wall of Fame. I also bought Cds, magazines and graffiti books with them. Angelo, David and I exchanged phone numbers and we made plans to meet again so they could fill out my questionnaire.

Research

This questionnaire's purpose is to collect more accurate data on Graffiti Art.  
The target audience was the graffiti community of North Clinton Avenue.

Questionnaire Format :

**Personal data** What is your name?  
What "crews" do you represent? And what do they mean to you?  
Where do you live?  
Where are you from?  
When did you start doing graffiti?  
Why did you start?  
Who brought you up?  
Who were or still are you favorite writers who you look up to?  
Looking at the steps taken towards preventing graffiti,  
is graffiti dying or getting stronger?  
What are the best things about graffiti?  
What are the worst?

**Content** What do you write?  
How is the graff scene in your area?  
What is the main thing you try to accomplish with your writing?  
What does it say about you?  
Are you in it for fame, or do you paint for yourself?  
What excites you most about graff?  
Have you ever been arrested?  
Is graffiti pretty much accepted by the citizens here?  
How do you think graffiti has influenced you life?

**Form** What influences your visuals?  
What sound do you listen to?  
Do you think Hip Hop is associated with graffiti?  
What are the materials you use?  
Is commercializing ok?

See Appendix B for questionnaire responses.

Research

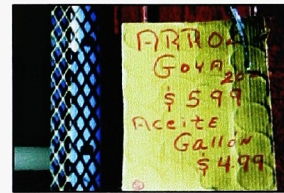
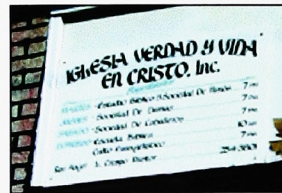


## Photodocumentary

A research was done to find out some tips about photographing large scale murals and art works. The designer collected some good information, at Brett Webb's home page on basic things to remember when taking pictures of graffiti murals and large scale signage. Here are some of the rules applied to the photodocumentary:

- The designer is documenting an art form, and not creating art of their own;
- Get as big an image of the piece as possible;
- Disregard other interesting things that might be close to the piece;
- Get as close as you can to the wall, billboard, signage or train;
- Use 100 speed film because it allows the most richness of color to be captured;
- Stand directly in front of the piece you are taking pictures of;
- If taking pictures at night make sure to point flash up or down, or at an angle other than straight on the wall, so you won't make a glare spot on the piece.

Research



## Matrices and Diagram

[ma•trix] - a rectangular array of elements set out by rows and columns.<sup>15</sup>

Despite their complex appearance, matrices are a very simple tool. These tools prompts the designer to consider a wide range of data collection and display this data in a in visually comprehensive manner.

[di•a•gram] - A plan, sketch, drawing, or outline designed to demonstrate or explain how something works or to clarify the relationship between the parts of a whole.<sup>16</sup>

This diagram is composed of the basic elements in culture and it is used for cultural comparison. The revised model was based on Don Locke's model for multicultural understanding and it was reorganized by Anthropologist Paul Grebinger and designer Yin-Chi Wang.

The matrices and the diagram are used to describe interrelationships and patterns. These two applied methods helped the designer sort and order information. Through this analysis on communication and expression, the designer endeavors to establish some criteria used by the Clinton Avenue artists. By investigating the letterforms features in relation to cultural characteristics, the designer can conclude whether the design of the vernacular letterform has any influence upon culture or the local cultural characteristics influenced the design of the letterform.

Synthesis

## Matrix A

Analysis on Communication and Expression: Vernacular Letterforms.  
This matrix was created to analyze vernacular letterforms using to different axis: typographic and cultural. The typographic part presents several visual features of a letterform. Certain elements are common to most letterforms. These characteristics are generally consistent throughout any given letterform and they can help to identify and categorize letterforms. The cultural axis presents cultural characteristics also taken from the photodocumentary samples.

See Appendix C for detailed version of Matrix A.

### Vernacular letterforms

#### cultural characteristics

Analysis on  
communication  
and expression

Commercial

Social

Emotional

Political

Religious

Historical

#### visual features of letterforms

Serif, bracket

Thick/ thin  
contrast

X-height

Ascenders

Descenders

Stress

Synthesis

## Matrix B

Identification and classification of photographed urban letterforms.  
This matrix was created to identify vernacular letterforms using to different axis: typographic visual features and visual qualities. It helps the designer define and categorize the letterforms and their most interesting visual elements.

See Appendix C for detailed version of Matrix B.

Identification and classification of photographed urban letterforms		visual qualities				
		Proportion	Contrast	Harmony	Rhythm	Integration
typographic variables	Size					
	Weight					
	Width					
	Slope (posture)					
	Placement (position)					
	Balance (symmetric/asymmetric)					

Synthesis



## Matrix C

Using urban letterforms to communicate cultural and social values.  
This matrix was created to collect and categorize examples of urban inspired letterforms. These examples come from magazines, websites and promotional design pieces. The intention is to understand through design considerations how and why are these letterforms used in some specific medium.

See Appendix C for detailed version of Matrix C.

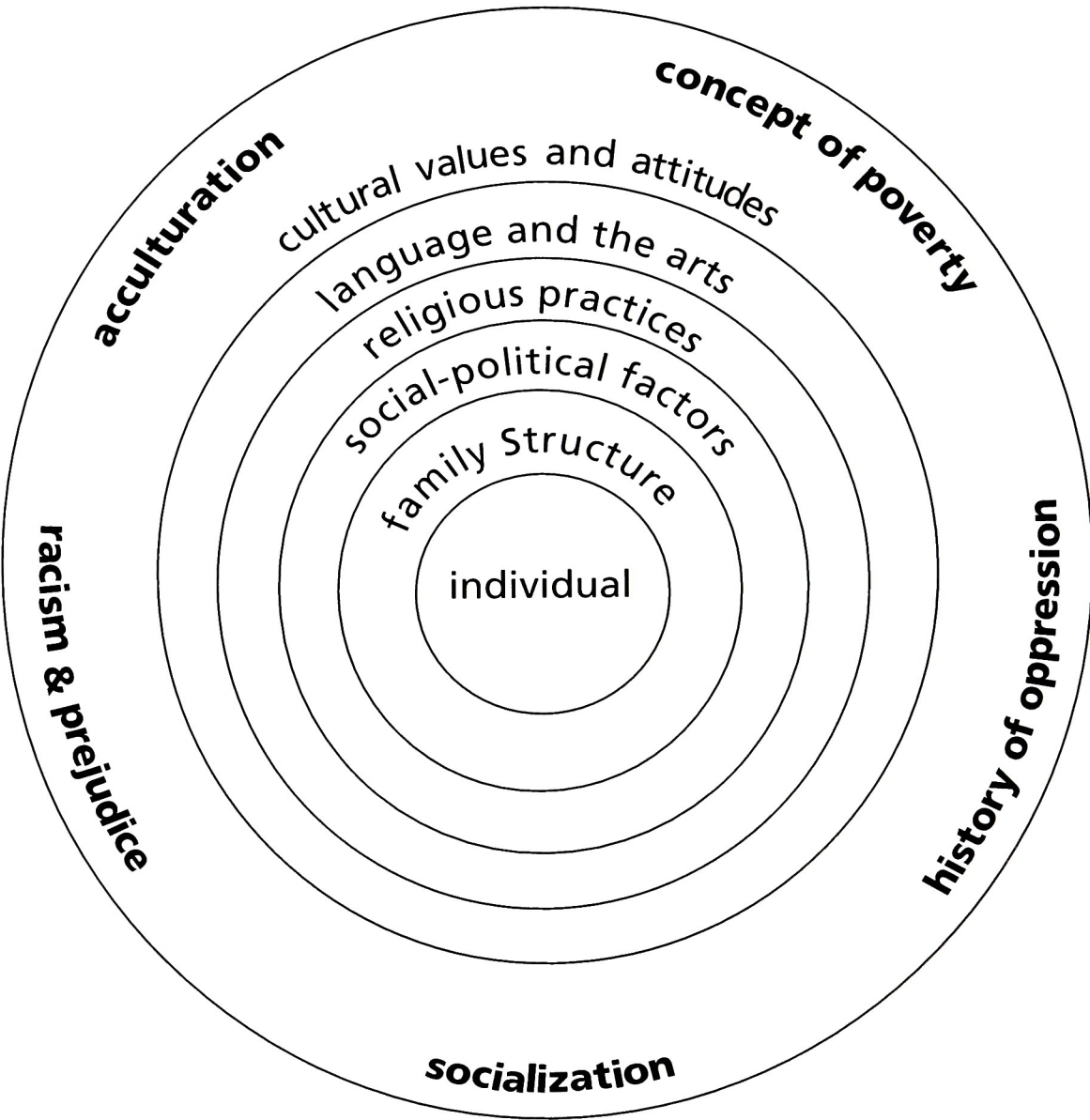
		design considerations						Synthesis
		Audience	Content	Language	Time	Context	Style of Imagery	
medium	Poster							
	Magazine							
	CD Cover							
	Logos							
	Digital							



**Diagram**

This diagram is composed of the basic elements in culture and it is used for cultural comparison. The revised model was based on Don Locke's model for multicultural understanding and it was reorganized by Anthropologist Paul Grebinger and designer Yin-Chi Wang in two parts. One composed by basic elements from which culture is constructed (in roman), and the other part contains all the factors that shape cultural and ethnic experience in society (in bold).

See Appendix D for diagram usage.



Synthesis

## Multimedia

### Multimedia Show Content Outline

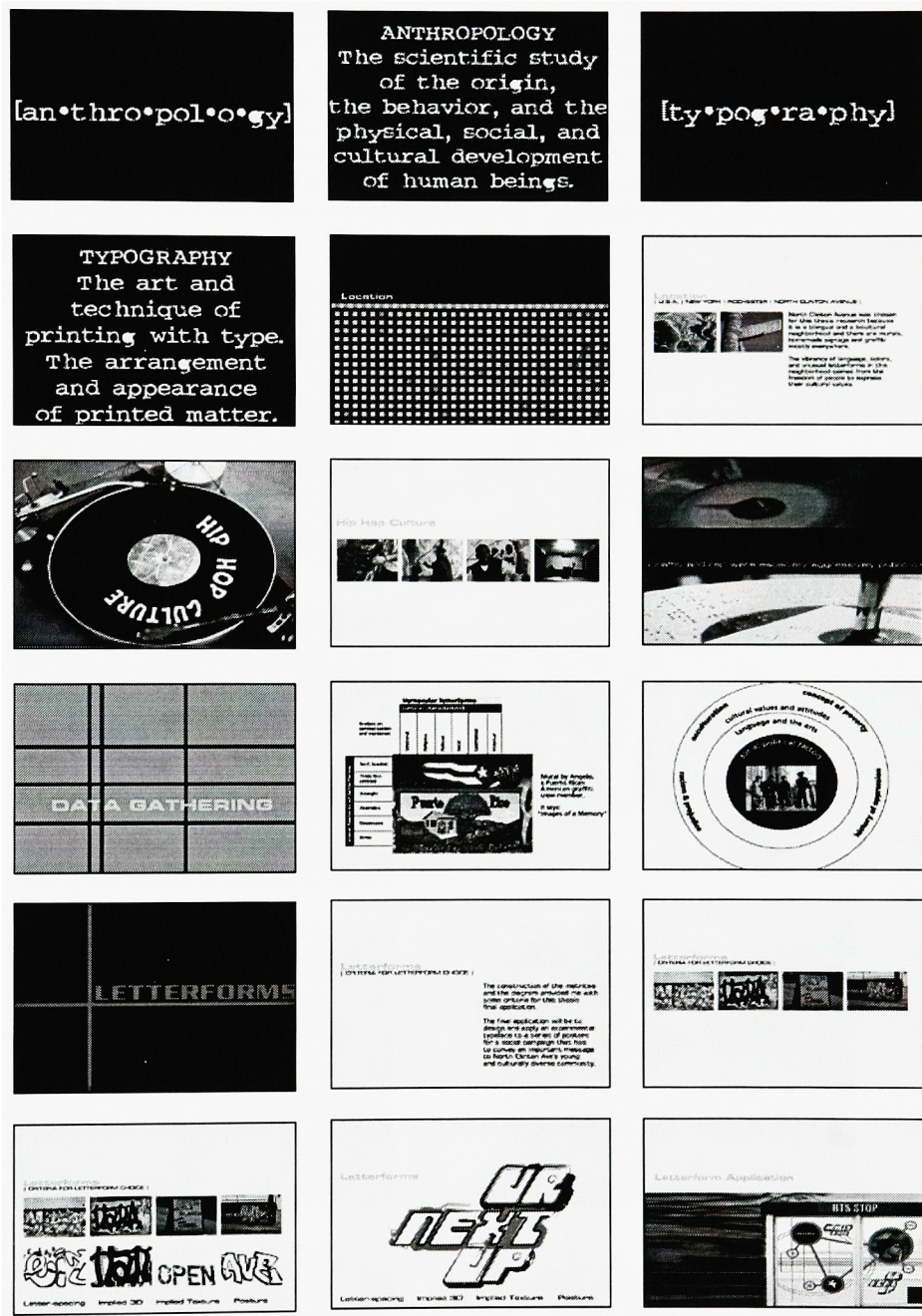
- Thesis Statement
- Location
- Hip Hop Culture
- Ethnographic Research  
(Applied Methods)
- Letterforms  
(Criteria and Ideation)

This multimedia show is a visual report that presents the analytical part of the research. It shows the development of the typographic and the anthropological research in a sequential manner.

It also includes the photodocumentary and some of the analytical matrices and diagrams that were used to identify, categorize and describe the vernacular letterforms. Images, texts and sounds were utilized to better illustrate the primary data-gathering, methods and procedures, observation and description and the field work at North Clinton Avenue. In conclusion, the multimedia synthesizes the research part of this thesis and bring forth information and criteria for Ideation.

### Multimedia storyboard





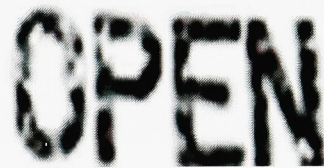


## Preliminary Ideation

### Photo Outline and Criteria

The construction of the matrices and the diagram helped to choose and analyze some of the most interesting vernacular letterforms from N. Clinton Ave.

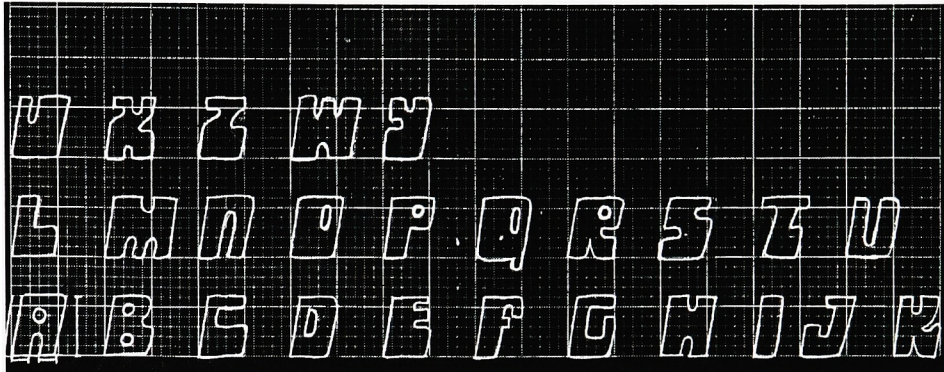
Ten examples of unusual letterforms, with very interesting features, were taken and explored by the designer. At first the photographs were enlarged (200%) in a copy machine. The designer wanted to be able to see every detail and texture possible. Then, tracing paper was used to outline the forms of the letters. A second tracing paper layer was used to trace shadows, tridimensional techniques, serifs and brush stroke textures. At the end the outlined enlargements provided the designer with some criteria for the experimental letterforms: Letter-spacing, implied 3D, implied texture and posture.



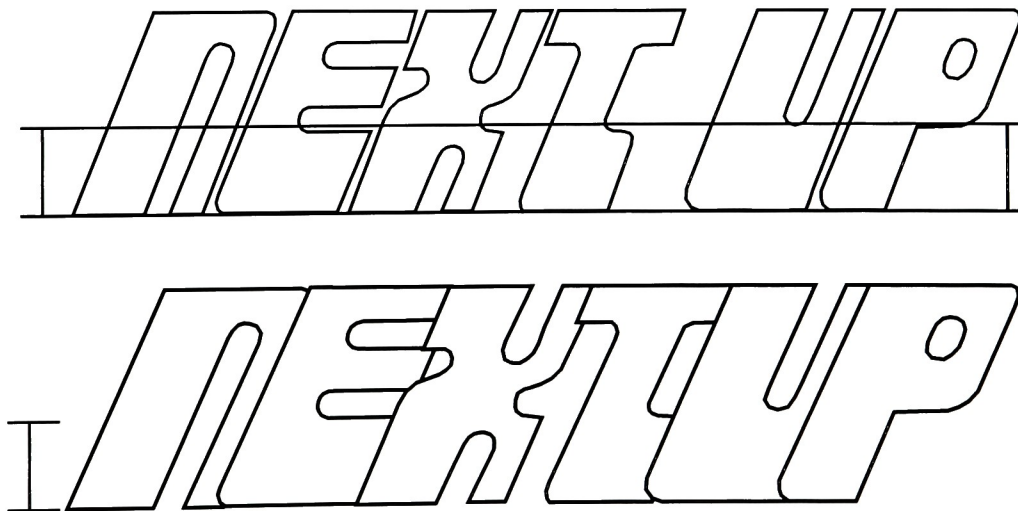
## Experimental Letterform Design

Based on the outlined letterforms and criteria the designer started drawing some shapes and organic forms to try to apply to my design. She also wanted to try different postures (angles) and ended up sketching designing two different families of letterforms in a graph paper.

The most interesting design was the one below in which a ten degree inclination was applied and random squared and rounded edges were used.



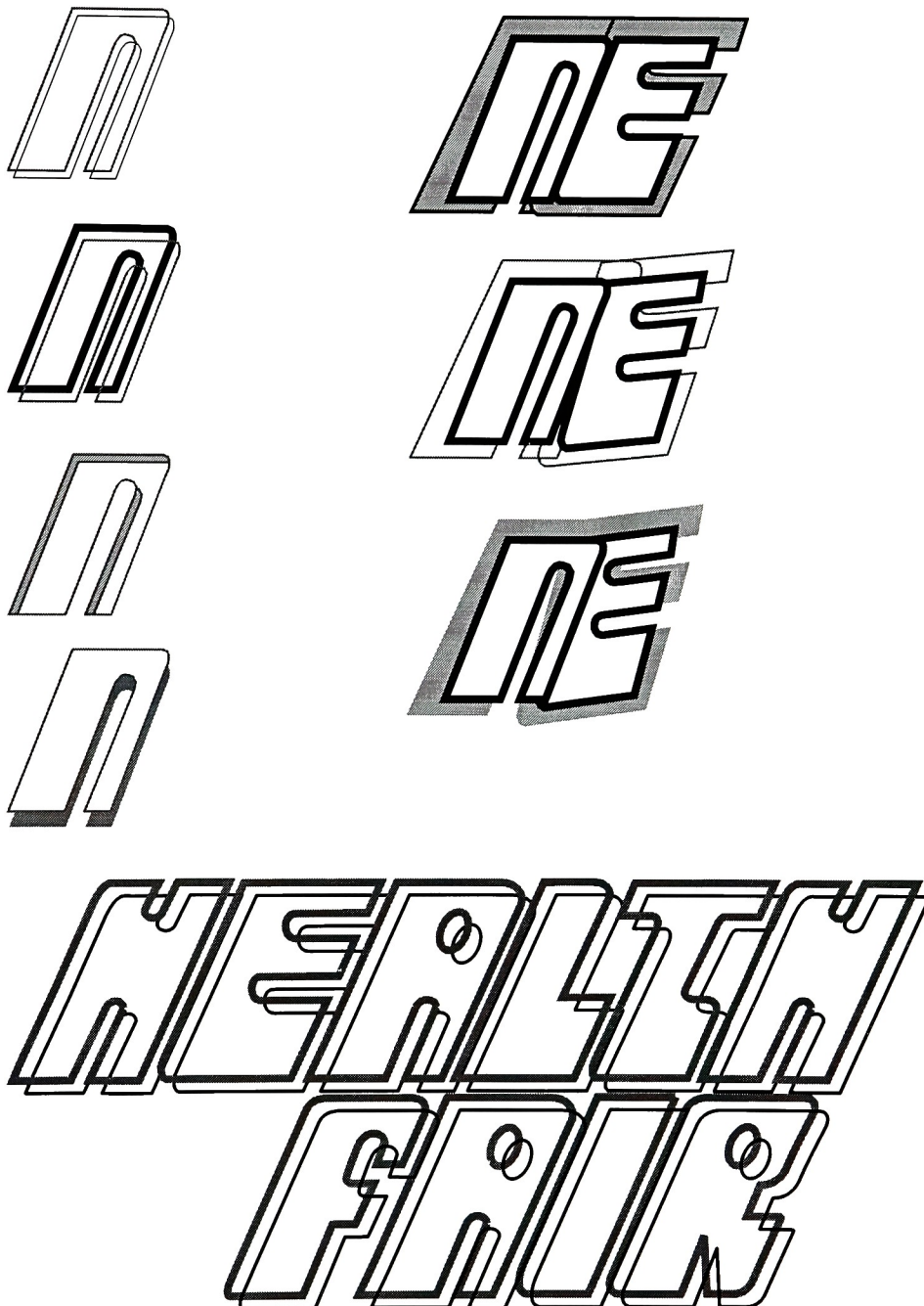
The letterforms below were drawn in Illustrator based on a 0.25"X0.25" grid. The base proportions were kept through out the design preserving the letterform's consistency even when the letter-spacing or the posture is altered.





Some of the criteria utilized on the design of the experimental letterform were: letter-spacing, implied 3D, implied texture and posture.

The next step was to try to imply tridimensionality and also some texture just by using juxtaposition and color.



Ideation

## Social Campaign

While developing the experimental letterforms the designer went looking for some potential social campaigns that she could get involved with. The designer knew that she wanted to address a young and diverse audience. During one of the field work visits the designer went to a very respectable place called The Health Association: Clinton Avenue Family Wellness Center and talked with their staff about the community engagement in social events. They don't have enough money to advertise their events but still a good part of the hispanic families from the neighborhood would attend their meetings and classes.

They mentioned that they were very concerned about the young population of N. Clinton Avenue. Eventhough they offer several health and safety workshops, health screenings and many more services, this young population doesn't seem to want to get involved or even be interested in any information involving the health association.

After several meetings the designer decided to get to know more about the institution and try to use the experimental letterforms to speak to this particular audience. All their print material and the way they try to approach the community was investigated. Their visuals are not very appealing to young people and most of their informative brochure is composed of a great amount of text (written in English and Spanish) and a few family pictures. Their print material doesn't really speak to a diverse and bicultural community.

The designer wrote a brief description of the institution and a list of their programs and services to start brainstorming a good social campaign strategy: At the Clinton Avenue Family Wellness Center, people work very hard to meet the community's health and human service needs. Their bilingual and bicultural staff members and volunteers work with more than fifty other local social service and health-related organizations to bridge the gap for this mostly hispanic community. They emphasize that "Their goal is to build healthy neighborhoods through information and referrals, health screenings and wellness programs." The center's transportation services ensure that people can get to their appointments. Their interpreters speak various languages. They'll help people sort out their insurance benefits and follow up to make sure people are receiving the services they need.

Their slogan is:  
"We facilitate health and human services connections."



Ideation

Information and referral to:

LIFE LINE

Health and human service providers throughout the community

Government services

Health screenings for:

Women's health, including mammograms

Vision care, including glaucoma and cataracts

Hearing and speech

Diabetes

Podiatric (foot)care

Blood pressure

Cholesterol

Lead poisoning

HIV/AIDS

Asthma

Dental care

Flu shots

Wellness programs:

Exercise classes

Nutrition programs

Diabetes support group

Healthy Kids Club

Healthy and safety workshops

They also offer:

Transportation

Language interpretation/translation

Home visits

Neighborhood meetings with community organizations.

The Annual Health Fair

The final application is to design and apply an experimental typeface to a series of posters for a social campaign. The posters will promote The Annual Health Fair sponsored by The Health Association Clinton Avenue Family Wellness Center. The objective is to convey an important message of prevention, self respect and equality to North Clinton Ave's young and culturally diverse community.

Ideation



## Bus Stop Posters Design

During the field work research the designer tried to photograph not only vernacular signage but also posters and billboards that were posted all over N. Clinton Avenue. She was amazed to discover that there were few posters in the neighborhood. See Appendix E for poster sketches.

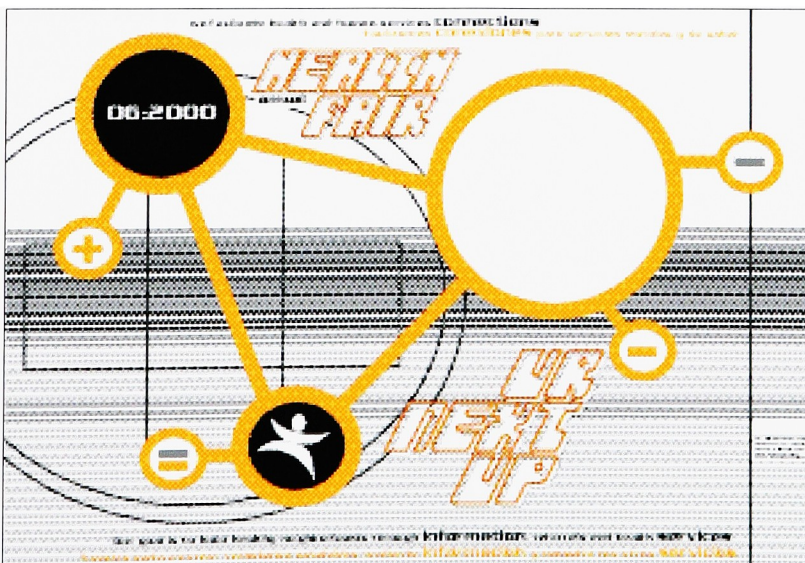
### First Approach

Create an illustrated character that can be used throughout several other social campaigns and use photos of local signage, graffiti and other surfaces for the background (ex. metal, brick, etc...). The experimental typeface would be printed on all those surfaces.



### Second Approach

Utilize recognizable Hip Hop graphics and language to try to capture the attention of the audience. Make experimental letterforms work together with language and create interesting forms with them. The audience would read not just word by word but they would recognize the whole sentence as a vernacular form.



## Intermediate Evaluation

### Committee Meeting Evaluations

The members of this thesis committee evaluated the designer's first layouts and also the multimedia prototype:

#### Multimedia Show

Explain and define matrix and diagram,  
Push the contrast between crud font and text font,  
Edit Thesis Statement's text,  
Keep cohesive grid throughout the multimedia.

#### Letterform Design

Explore legibility,  
Explore textures and tridimensional elements,  
Keep as much authenticity as possible,  
Work on the alphabet itself and try to make the letterforms logical not just outlined.

#### Poster Design

Focus on just one solution and unify the verbal and visual collages,  
Try to utilize the compositional grid,  
Also think about the small explanatory text on the corner,  
Make it readable,  
Simplify intervals.

### First year evaluation on Multimedia show and first layouts

The presentation for the first year graduate students provided the designer with some interesting feedback:

#### Multimedia Show

The photos used on the matrix could appear for a longer period of time,  
When the matrix photos stop they could align with the axis bars,  
The pace of the multimedia could be slower,  
Bigger type for the explanatory text.

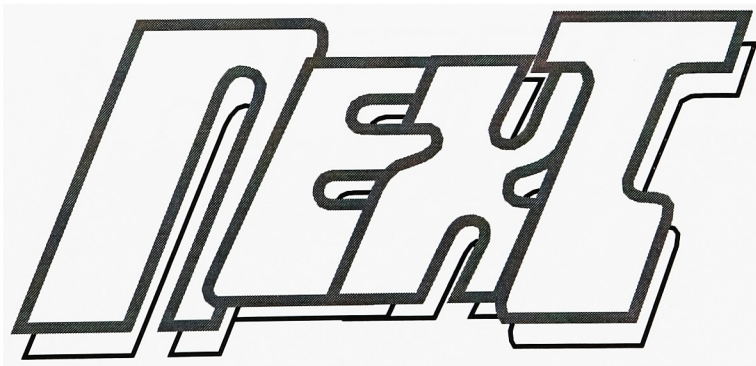
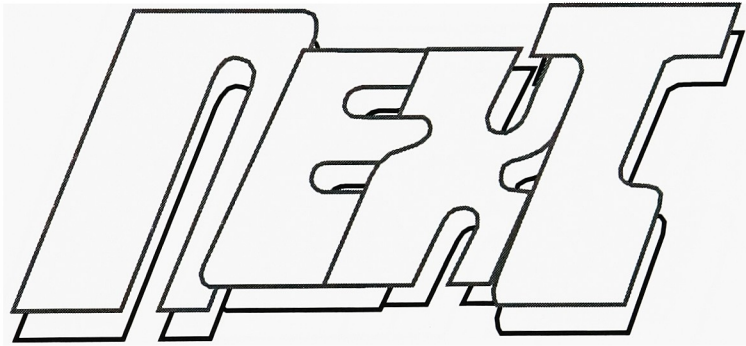
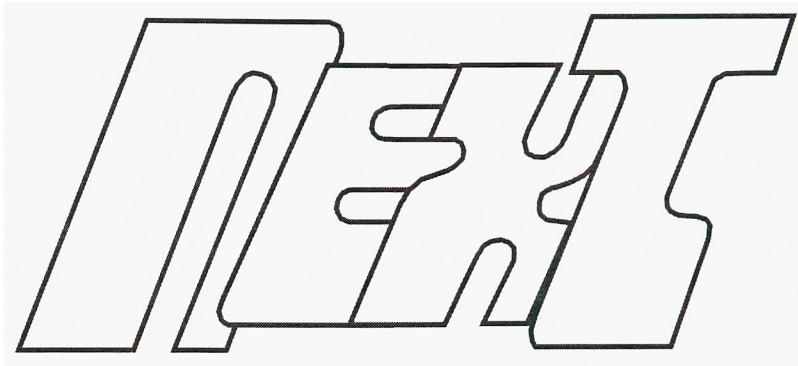
#### Letterform Design

Simplify more,  
Could be more legible,  
Make it more interesting,  
Use simple language at the application.

Intermediate Evaluation

## Letterform Changes

The designer proceeded to experiment by modifying the letterform's letter-spacing, different line strokes and shadows.

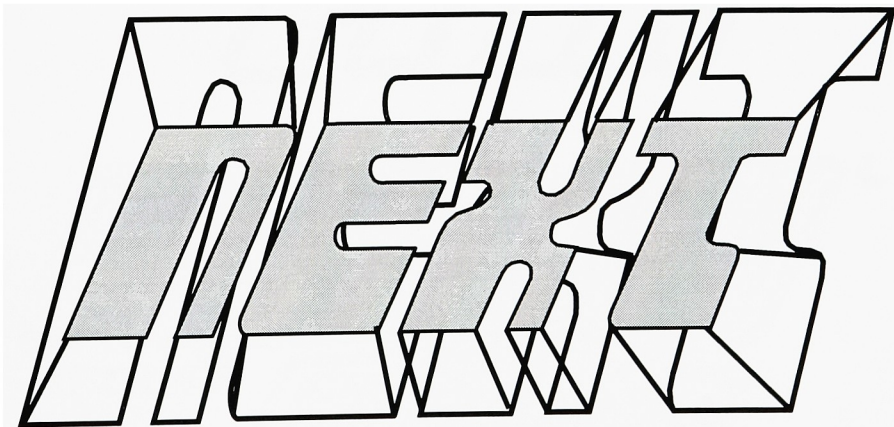
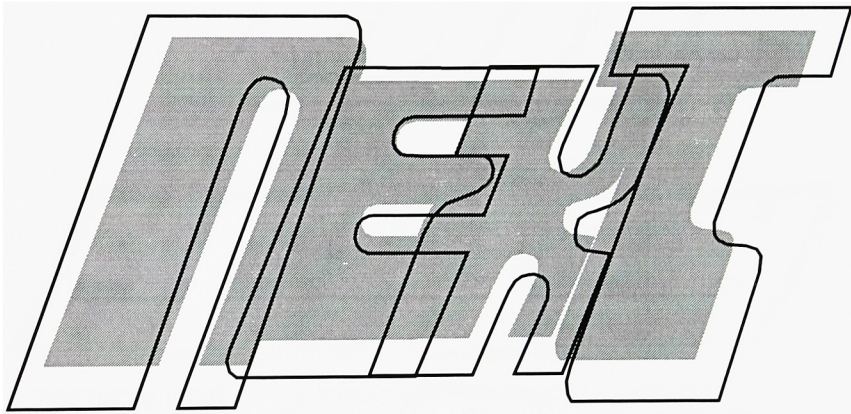
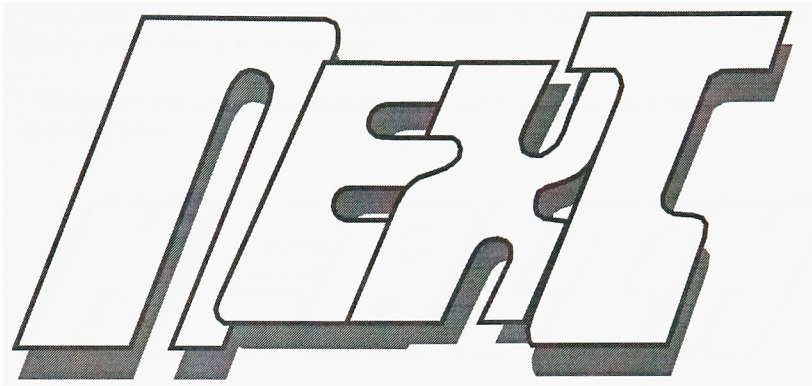


Implementation



## Letterform Changes (continuation)

In these next sketches, the designer tried different shadows and juxtaposition of solid and outlined elements.



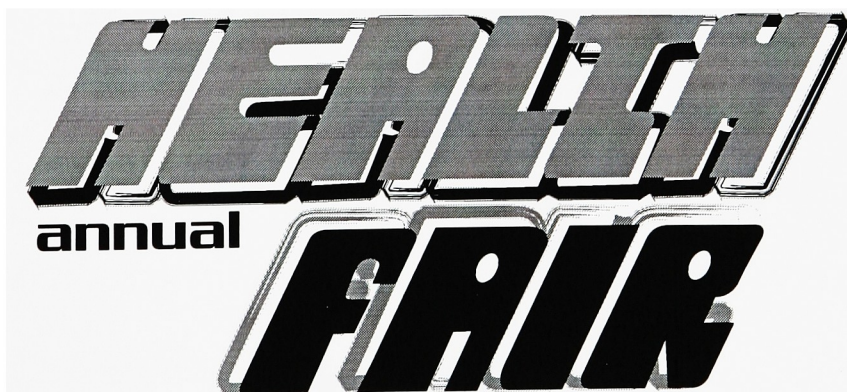
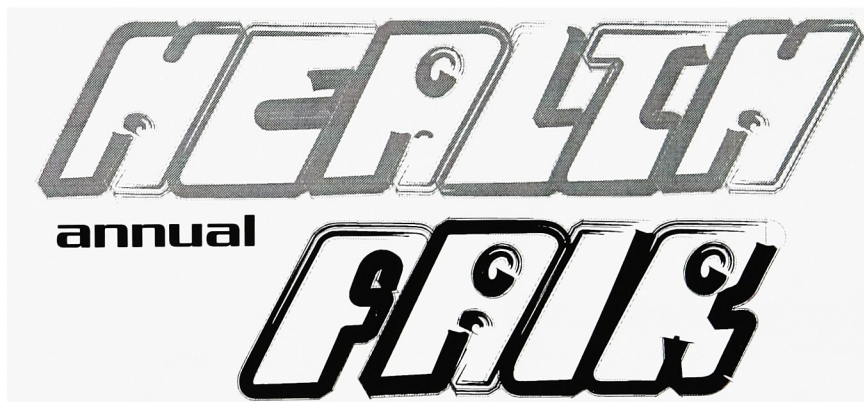
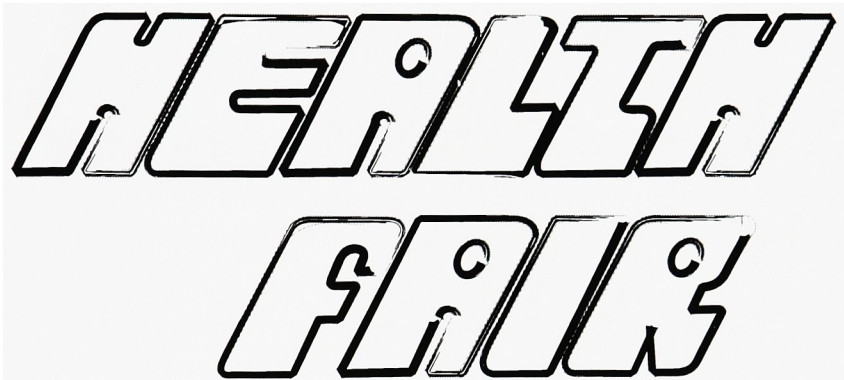
Implementation



## Letterform Changes (continuation)

In these next sketches, a brush stroke was applied to the letterforms. Several weights were tested in different arrangements. It began to achieve the designer's purpose when the letterforms, inner and outer shapes, combined resembled a logotype. The designer's intention was to create an overall shape that can be attractive and easily read.

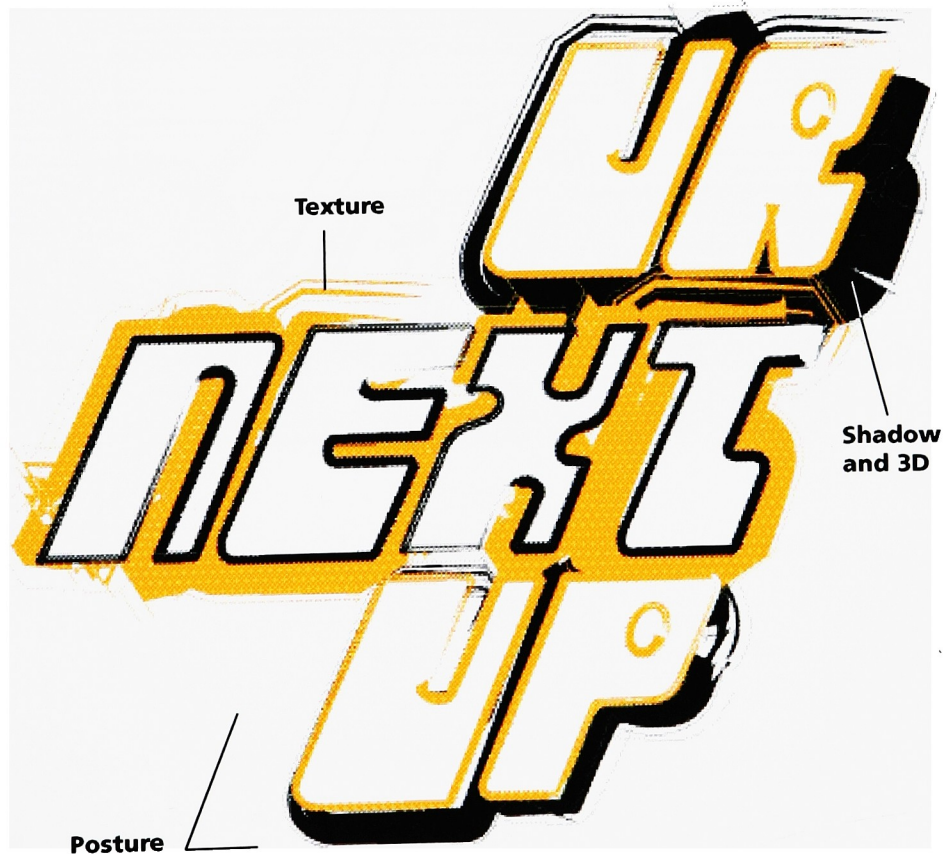
"When we are unable to decode data, we read it as pure form"<sup>17</sup>  
David Carson.



Implementation

## Letterform Final Design

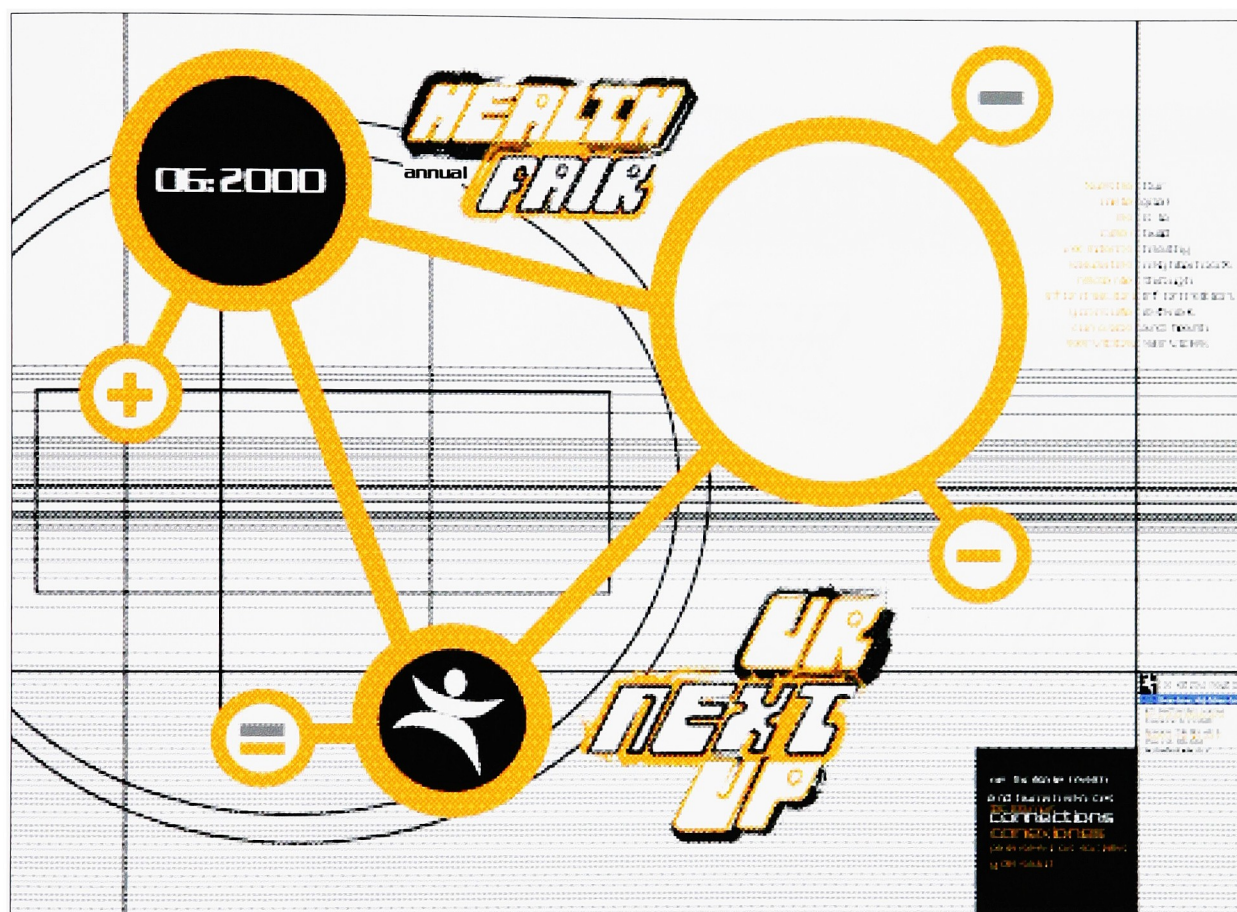
The final experimental letterform design shows all pre-determined criteria: letter-spacing, implied 3D, implied texture and posture.



Implementation



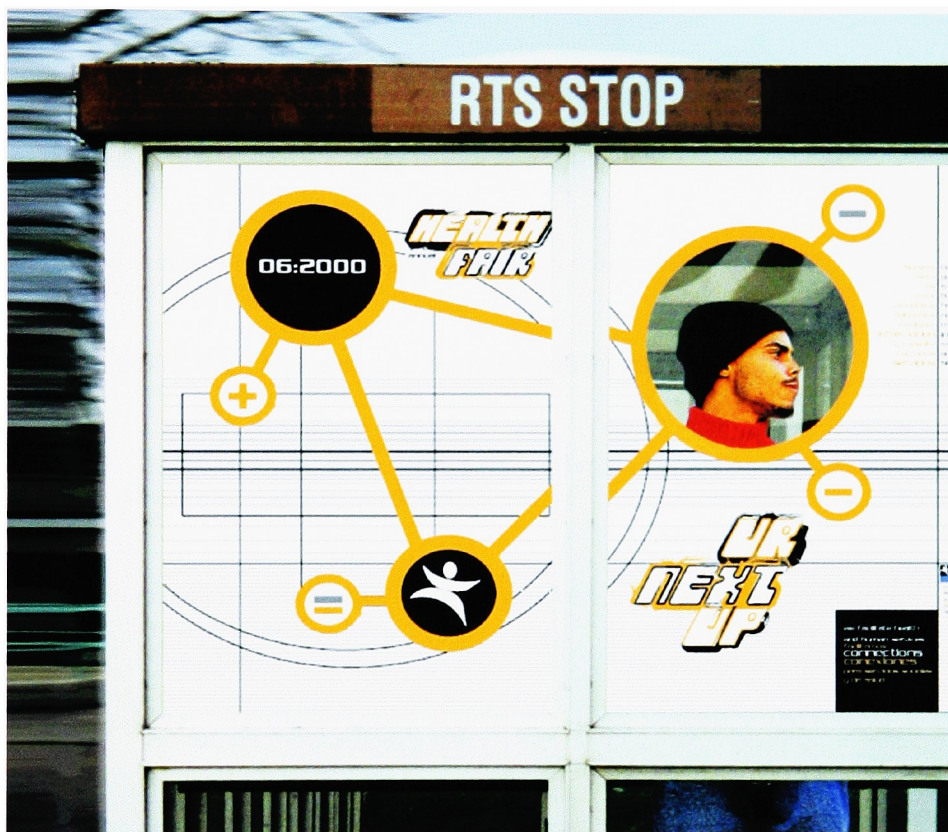
Some of the posters' visual elements changed from the first layout to its final form:  
The intervals between the lines were refined,  
Text boxes were created in order to increase readability,  
The bilingual text was edited,  
The experimental letterforms were replaced and enlarged.



## Dissemination

The bus stop posters' individual measurements are 24"X36", but they work together as one. The Health Association have plans of producing them and placing them at the bust stop right in front of their building at North Clinton Avenue. The posters would be place in between the acrylic windows of the bus stop. Since there is a cut out circle in the poster and the acrylic is see through, people inside the bus stop will also interact and be part of the poster.

The picture below simulates a possible application.



Dissemination



## Retrospective Evaluation

The evaluation form below was distributed in two distinct situations and for two distinct audiences. At first these forms were filled out by the people that attended the opening of the thesis Gallery Show. This first audience was comprised of faculty, art students and friends of the artists, and most all of them had a previous knowledge in graphic design and typography.

These evaluation forms were also filled out by the people at North Clinton Avenue. Precisely The Health Association staff and the "writers" from CREAM\$ barber shop. After a brief presentation they had a better understanding of the forms' questions which facilitated the evaluation.

See Appendix F for responses.

### vernacular letterforms An Expression of Cultural and Social Values

1] Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

YES | NO Why?

2] Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

YES | NO Why?

3] Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

YES | NO Why?

4] Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

YES | NO Why?

5] After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

YES | NO Why?

6] Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

YES | NO Why?

7] Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

YES | NO Why?

OPTIONAL: Age

Ethnic Background

Retrospective Evaluation

## Retrospective Evaluation

1] Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

22 YES

0 NO

Why?

**YES**

- .Many people will not read some posters for the fear of seeing or hearing what they don't want to see or hear (41/African American);
- .Because style conveys certain social messages (24/Caucasian);
- .The forms give the letters emotion and feeling, like facial expression does to speak (---);
- .Because it influences people's perspectives (---).

2] Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

21 YES

1 NO

Why?

**YES**

- .They are more organic and lively than others (---);
- .It has an unique feel (22/Caucasian);
- .They are familiar to common people (28/Asian);
- .It has a "freestyle" aspect/quality. It is not rigid. (24/Caucasian).

**NO**

- .They are very hard to read (26/Hispanic).

3] Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

20 YES

2 NO

Why?

**YES**

- .Different cultures use different symbols to present language (---);
- .Especially East - West, their cultures are very different (28/Asian);
- .The artists are a product of the society, you can also almost see the society reflected in these artworks (41/African).

**NO**

- .Some cultures don't have written language (---);
- .Some keep it to themselves, ex. Amish (---).

4] Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

22 YES

0 NO

Why?

**YES**

- .It definitely speaks their language (26/Caucasian);
- .It appeals to the right audience (21/Hispanic);
- .They are very similar to what you see in the streets (---/Hispanic);
- .It reminded me of the music that went with it (---).

Retrospective Evaluation

<p>5] After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?</p> <p><u>21</u> YES</p> <p><u>1</u> NO</p> <p>Why?</p> <p><b>YES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.It was essential (---);</li> <li>.The multimedia show was extremely helpful in understanding the methodology used (51/Caucasian);</li> <li>.Because it is a clear and effective presentation (21/Caucasian);</li> <li>.The video takes us to the real spirit that moves these individuals to represent things through vernacular forms (---/Hispanic).</li> </ul> <p><b>NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.I understand more about the culture not the letters (---).</li> </ul>	
<p>6] Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?</p> <p><u>18</u> YES</p> <p><u>3</u> NO</p> <p>Why?</p> <p><b>YES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.It is different and it is informative (---);</li> <li>.It draws your eyes to what you are reading (---);</li> <li>.Because they feel much like the societal psycho (41/African);</li> <li>.Very attractive (27/Caucasian).</li> </ul> <p><b>NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Speaks their language (26/Caucasian);</li> <li>.Could be more colorful and include existing graffiti (28/Asian).</li> </ul>	
<p>7] Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?</p> <p><u>18</u> YES</p> <p><u>3</u> YES   NO</p> <p>Why?</p> <p><b>YES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.It strongly translates the principal idea of free form letters (---);</li> <li>.Made with focus on the target audience. Great study and result (26/Caucasian);</li> <li>.Absolutely proper for your poster (---/Hispanic);</li> <li>.Not too loud, not too quiet. Good! (28/Asian).</li> </ul> <p><b>YES   NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.You downplayed them in the overall design (26/Hispanic);</li> <li>.Readable but small size seems to conflict with the graffiti (27/Caucasian);</li> <li>.It was a little hard to read (---).</li> </ul>	
	Retrospective Evaluation

## Conclusions

Typography has taken on a new significant role in the proliferation of graphic design. The expansion of possibilities has led to some change in the audience's role as viewers in the communication process. Changes in culture have had an unavoidable effect on peoples ability to comprehend these new and different letterform styles. These new letterforms, especially vernacular letterforms, allow the reader to read the forms as well as the words.

This thesis project, Vernacular Letterforms, is an attempt to demonstrate the benefits of combining visual communication with real humanistic connections to body and mind. After investigating, gathering and comparing the examples of vernacular letterforms, it has been determined that these letterforms carry relevant cultural signifiers, and that they truly are an expression of cultural and social values.

### Overall Experience

This graduate thesis project has proven to be a challenging yet fulfilling, educational experience. Since there were little material on vernacular letterforms this thesis progression was very experimental, stimulating and overwhelming. To be able to explore a new community and interact with an unique audience, changed the designer's perspective on the importance of the audience's role in the design process.

Developing an experimental letterform and being able to communicate with a bilingual and culturally diverse community was very rewarding. The people involved in this project were veyry helpfull and supportive and the interviews were fascinating. The communities' feedback enhanced the design of this thesis application.

Anthropology has had a profound effect on the visual communication field and it certainly helped the designer to better understand and interact with the target audience. All designers should be aware of the importance of a responsible design. The design that is made for people and relates to their culture , their language and their social behavior. This thesis allowed the designer to experience the process of communication in-depth, therefore this thesis demonstrate how vernacular letterforms can show content through form. Nevertheless, "vernacular" is simply a dialect and every subculture has its dialects. This thesis uses this visual dialect to demonstrate how its meaning is constructed and how these urban inspired letterforms are cultural translations.



## Glossary of Terms

<b>Ascenders</b>	The part of the lowercase "b", "d", "f", "h", "k", "l" and "t" that extends above the height of the lowercase "x"
<b>Bar</b>	The horizontal stroke of the "e", "f", "t", "A", "H", and "T".
<b>Baseline</b>	An imaginary line on which the letters rest; descenders fall below the baseline.
<b>Boldface</b>	A heavier version of the normal weight of the typeface.
<b>Bowl</b>	A curved stroke that encloses a counter, except the lower portion of the storied lowercase "g", which is called a loop.
<b>Calligraphy</b>	A writing style based on flat tipped pen or brush strokes.
<b>Characters</b>	Individual letters, figures, punctuation marks, and special symbols.
<b>Conative</b>	The aspect of mental behavior directed toward action or change and including impulse, desire and striving.
<b>Condensed</b>	Classification of a typeface in which the letters are narrower than normal.
<b>Counter</b>	Fully or partially enclosed space within a letter.
<b>Cursive</b>	Typefaces resembling handwritten script.
<b>Descenders</b>	The part of the letters "g", "j", "p", "q", and "y", that extends below the baseline.
<b>Display Type</b>	Type that by its size or weight is used to attract attention; usually 14 point or larger.
<b>Expanded</b>	Classification of a typeface in which the letters are wider than normal.
<b>Italic</b>	Type in which the letters are oblique; cursive typestyles are usually italic, but not all italics are cursive.
<b>Letterform</b>	Forms of alphabets designed by typographers or designers to bring uniformity to typography. The proportions of the individual letterform are an important consideration. Each letterform is constructed by major components such as baseline, x-height, ascender, descender, stroke, etc.
<b>Lightface</b>	A lighter version of a standard weight of the typeface.
<b>Loop</b>	The lower portion of the lowercase rounder "g"
<b>Lowercase</b>	Small letters; the term is derived from hand composition of metal type. When type was set by hand, two cases were used to hold the individual pieces of metal type with one case placed higher then the other. The capitals were kept in the upper case and the small letters in the lower case.
<b>Roman</b>	Name often applied to the Latin alphabet as it is used in English and European languages; also used to identify upright, as opposed to italic or cursive, alphabet design.

<b>Sans Serif</b>	Classification of a typeface without a serifs.
<b>Script</b>	Classification of a typeface designed to suggest handwriting or writing with a brush.
<b>Serif</b>	A line crossing the main strokes of a character; there are many varieties.
<b>Spur</b>	A small projection from a stroke.
<b>Stem</b>	A vertical or diagonal stroke.
<b>Stress</b>	The direction of thickening in a curved stroke.
<b>Terminal</b>	The end of a stroke not terminated with a serif.
<b>Typeface</b>	Alphabet created for the purpose of reproduction. The individual characters of a typeface are designed to work in different combinations and to remain consistent when reproduced by printing. Available in wide variety of design and sizes, typefaces offer a predictable outcome when specified by designers, typographers, printers, etc.
<b>Typography</b>	The style, arrangement, or appearance of typeset matter.
<b>Uppercase</b>	Capital's; see lowercase.
<b>Urban</b>	Characteristic of, or constituting a city.
<b>Vernacular</b>	A term in linguistics. The common, everyday language in a particular locality or culture.
<b>X-height</b>	The height of lowercase characters excluding ascenders and descenders;

---

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[www.ghettotech.com](http://www.ghettotech.com)

[www.end-2-end.com](http://www.end-2-end.com)

[www.bboysummit.com](http://www.bboysummit.com)

[www.rocksteadycrew.com](http://www.rocksteadycrew.com)

[www.kenswift.com](http://www.kenswift.com)

[www.tribalgear.com](http://www.tribalgear.com)

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[www.voiceoftheghetto.com](http://www.voiceoftheghetto.com)

[www.billswheels.com](http://www.billswheels.com)

[www.halloffame.com](http://www.halloffame.com)

[www.stressmag.com](http://www.stressmag.com)

[www.thescene.com](http://www.thescene.com)

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[www.hip-hop.com](http://www.hip-hop.com)

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## Endnotes

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Karel Martens, Available:

<http://www.fuse98.com/net4m/index.htm>, May 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick C. Mish, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 10th Edition*. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.,1997), Page 1312.

<sup>3</sup> David Carson, *Fotografiks*.

(Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press,Inc.,1999), Page 181.

<sup>4</sup> Frederick C. Mish, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 10th Edition*. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.,1997), Page 282.

<sup>5</sup> Leslie A. White, *The Concept of Culture*.

(Minneapolis, Minnesota: Burgess Publishing,1973), Page 32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Don Locke, *Increasing Multicultural Understanding*.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick C. Mish, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 10th Edition*. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.,1997), Page 49.

<sup>10</sup> Conrad Kottak, *Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity*.

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<sup>11</sup> *Urban Expression*, On-Line

Pamela Dennant, Available:

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Robert M. Emerson, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*.

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<sup>15</sup> Frederick C. Mish, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 10th Edition*. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.,1997), Page 717.

<sup>16</sup> Frederick C. Mish, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 10th Edition*. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.,1997), Page 319.

<sup>17</sup> David Carson, *Fotografiks*.

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## Appendix A

### Fieldnotes

These are the designer's original notes. The image of the page below was taken from the designer's fieldnotes book. The text below describes one of the many visits to North Clinton Avenue.

After visit to N. Clinton Av. 01/12/00 (3:00pm)

First I went to The Health Association (Clinton Avenue Family Wellness Center) to talk to someone about their mural projects. They have bilingual/bicultural staff members and volunteers and they work with more than 50 other local social service and health-related organizations to bridge the gap for this mostly Hispanic community. They offer diabetes, nutrition and health and safety classes and workshops. There is no fee for Family Wellness Center services. I got one of their pamphlets. It is written in Spanish and in English. They don't use posters or outside advertising, they only have informational pamphlets related to their services and programs. The audience is mostly composed by Spanish (30 and over) women.

After that we went to a convenience store, I started chatting with the owner and some of his employees. He told me that his signage was made before he bought the store and he was just moving from Yemen (Saudi Arabia).

We went to see BOTANICA and talked to the couple that own the place. They told me that the person who did their sign was a Cuban that recently moved from the neighborhood to Florida.

Finally we went to CREAMS Barber shop to ask them if they knew who did the outside walls signage. David, a guy that was cutting another guy's hair told me that he did it but it was just commercial, "not like old school stuff", he said. Angelo, another employee, told me that he is a writer also and that he knows every writer around N. Clinton Av. He asked me if I knew the "Wall of Fame" and tried to explain where it is located. He also told me crews in Rochester are not like gangs and they all know each other. He told me about N. Av.'s From Up Above (crew). He also said that →

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire Forms

See below some of the responses.

#### **What is your name?**

David Rogers

#### **What "crews" do you represent? And what do they mean to you?**

I represent the From Up Above crew and they are like my family.

#### **Where do you live?**

North Clinton Avenue. "Da Avenue"

#### **Where are you from?**

Rochester, New York.

#### **When did you start doing graffiti?**

When I was fifteen.

#### **Why did you start?**

I was hanging out with some friends and they dig graf, so I started to draw and sketch my own letters and show them.

#### **Who brought you up?**

My mom.

#### **Who were or still are you favorite writers who you look up to?**

Futura 2000. He bombs!

#### **Looking at the steps taken towards preventing graffiti, is graffiti dying or getting stronger?**

Graffiti Art is getting stronger. You can see it everywhere you go.

#### **What are the best things about graffiti?**

Freedom and being with my friends.

#### **What are the worst?**

Get caught by the cops.

#### **What do you write?**

Sometimes drawings and words and sometimes just words or just my name.

#### **How is the graf scene in your area?**

All the crews, even from different neighborhoods, are friends.

#### **What is the main thing you try to accomplish with your writing?**

I try to make different letters in a way that they can not be easily read.

#### **Is graffiti pretty much accepted by the citizens here?**

It is part of this neighborhood so I don't think they have a choice.

#### **What influences your visuals?**

The streets.

#### **What sound do you listen to?**

Hip-Hop and rap.

#### **Do you think Hip-Hop is associated with graffiti?**

Graffiti is a part of Hip-Hop.

#### **What are the materials you use?**

Spray cans and fat caps.

#### **Is commercializing ok?**

Yes, cause money is always welcome.



## Appendix B

### Questionnaire Forms

**What is your name?**

Angelo

**What "crews" do you represent? And what do they mean to you?**

I'm in The From Up Above crew.

**Where do you live?**

North Clinton Ave.

**Where are you from?**

Originally from Puerto Rico but I was raised in this neighborhood.

**When did you start doing graffiti?**

Seventh grade.

**Why did you start?**

I had a lot of free time and I wasn't old enough to get a job.

All of my friends were tagging too, and they encouraged me.

**Who brought you up?**

My mom and my sister.

**Who were or still are you favorite writers who you look up to?**

TWIST, CYCLE, and FUND are tight. COPE FTD is sick.

**Looking at the steps taken towards preventing graffiti, is graffiti dying or getting stronger?**

Graff is getting stronger.

**What are the best things about graffiti?**

Hearing people talk about your stuff.

**What are the worst?**

The cops.

**What do you write?**

Backgrounds and characters.

**How is the graf scene in your area?**

Graff is stronger than ever. As more people try to stop graffiti, more new writers are emerging into the scene.

**What is the main thing you try to accomplish with your writing?**

Original concepts. I try to convey ideas.

**Are you in it for fame, or do you paint for yourself?**

Both. I wouldn't paint on walls that people could see if I didn't like the fame.

**Is graffiti pretty much accepted by the citizens here?**

I guess so.

**What influences your visuals?**

Life.

**What sound do you listen to?**

Hip-Hop and Latino.

**Do you think Hip Hop is associated with graffiti?**

Yes, they come together. Hip-Hop is the graffiti soundtrack.

**What are the materials you use?**

Fat caps and a lot of silver spray.

**Is commercializing ok?**

Yes. Some people have done graff for money around this neighborhood.





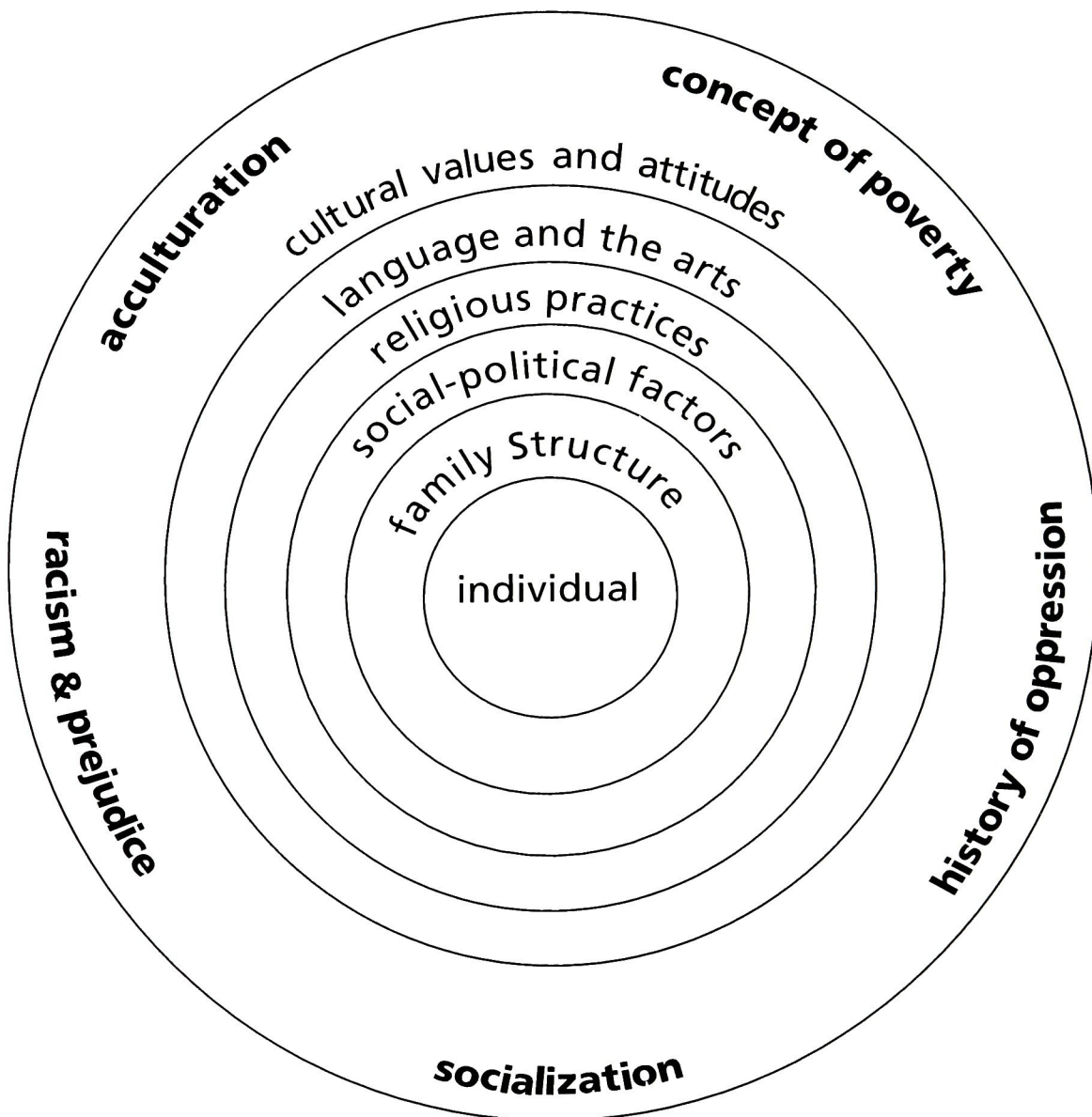


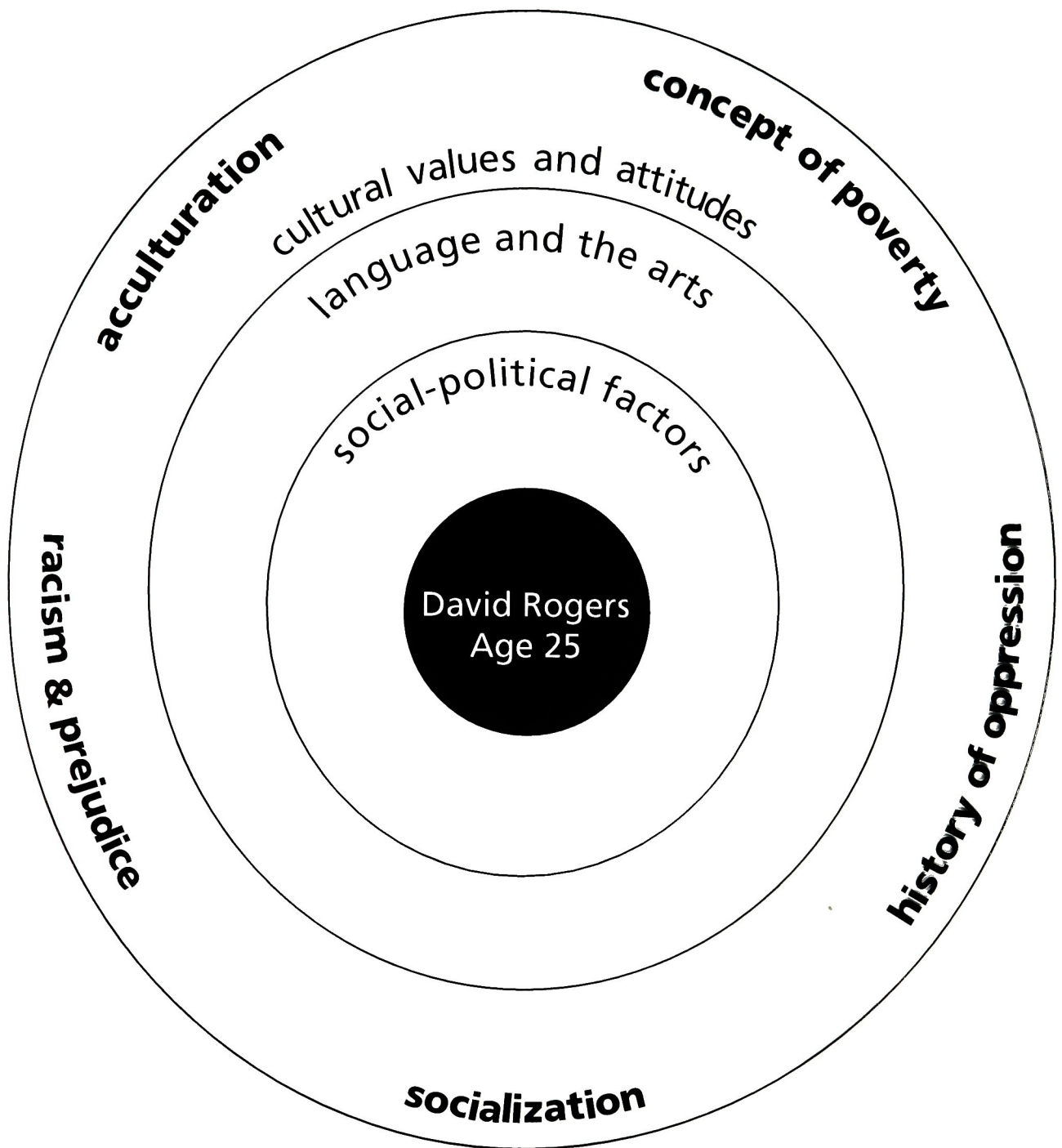


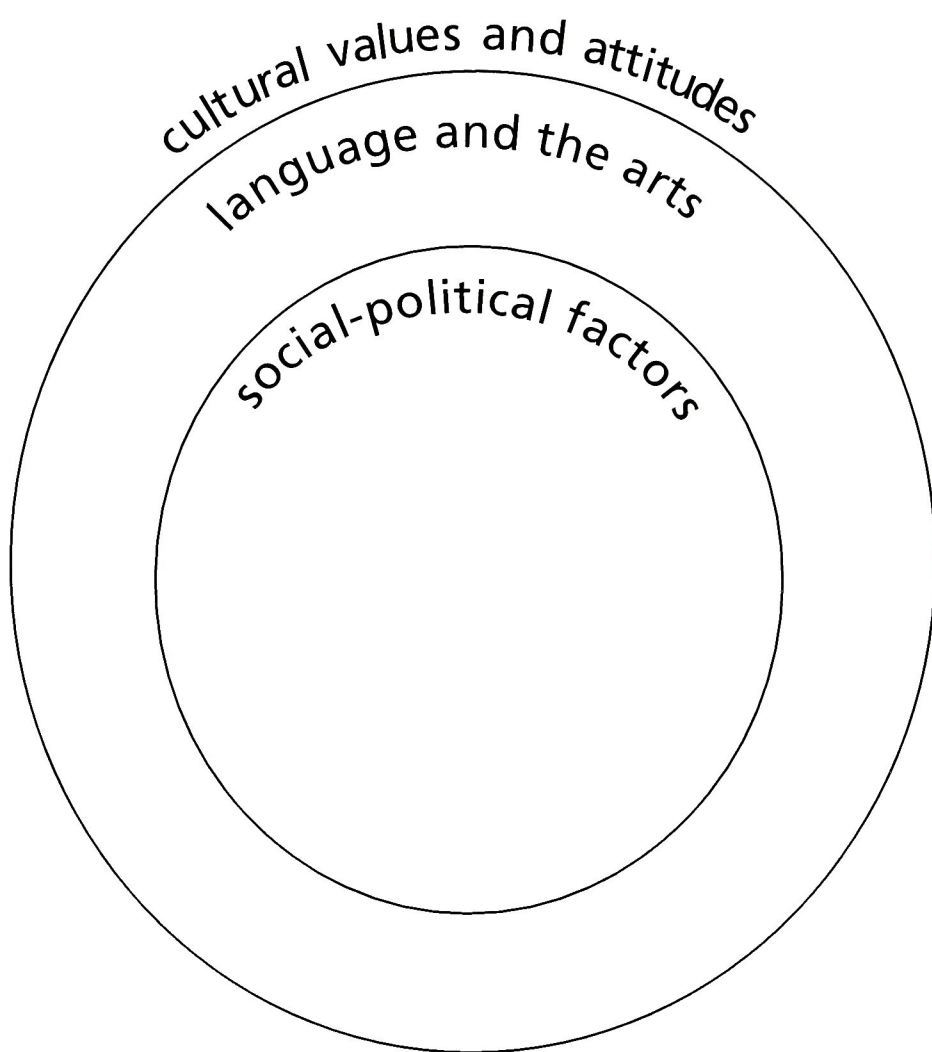
## Appendix D

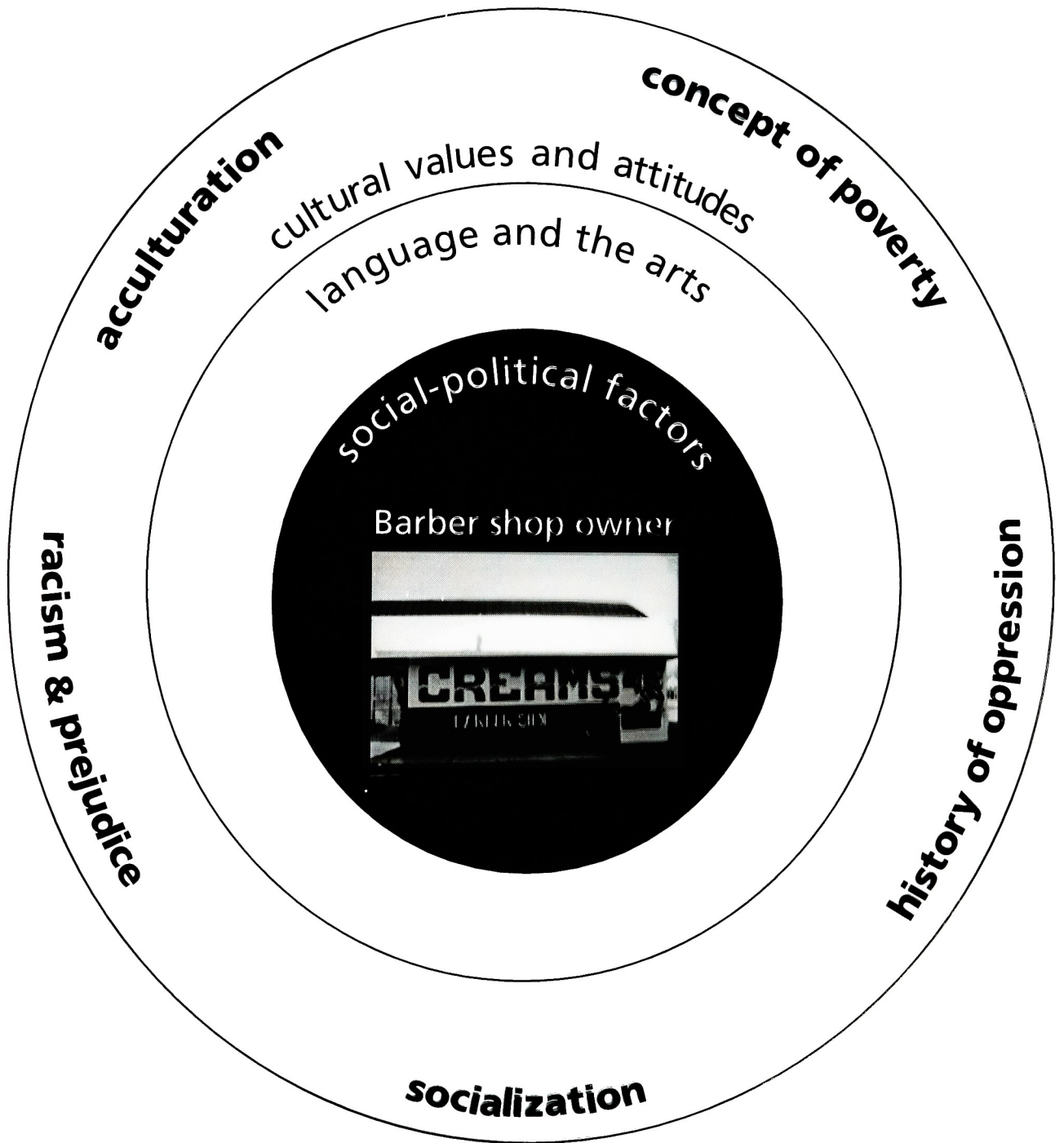
### Diagram

The following pages show the diagram usage. In order to have a better understanding of culturally diverse individuals and groups, the designer used this diagram. This diagram is composed of layers of information. Each layer provides a solid foundation for exploring ethnic differences. The juxtaposition of these layers permits a better examination of cultural patterns, social relationships and experiences of culturally diverse individuals or groups.

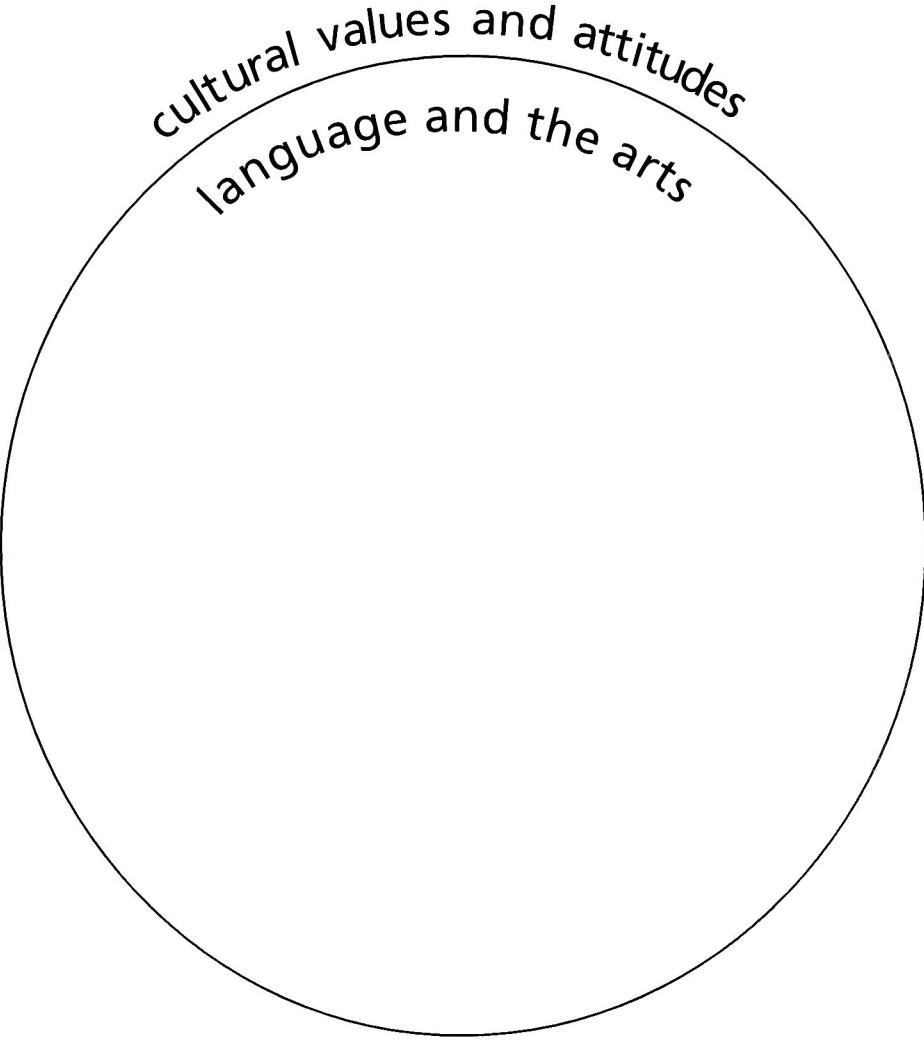




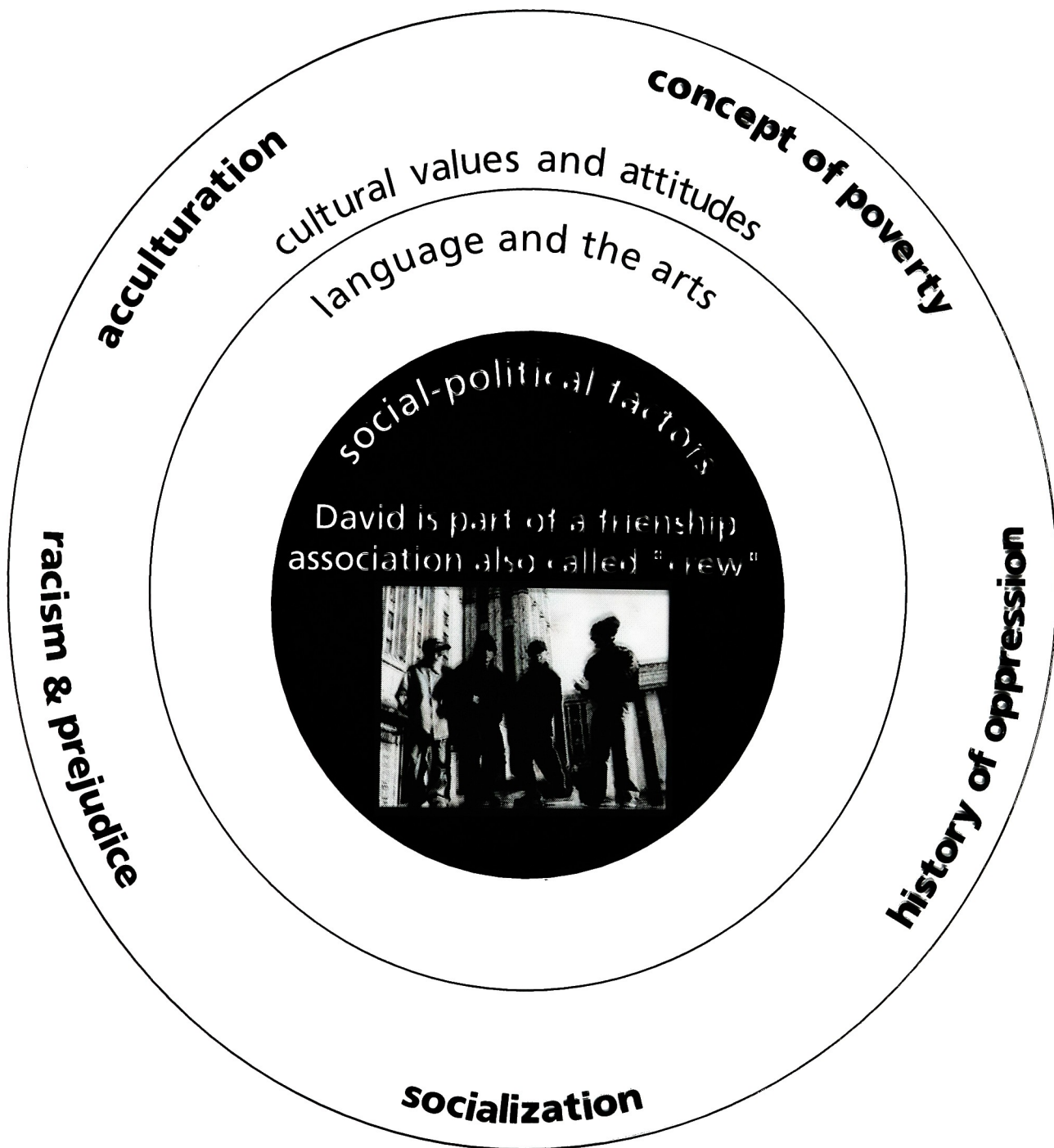


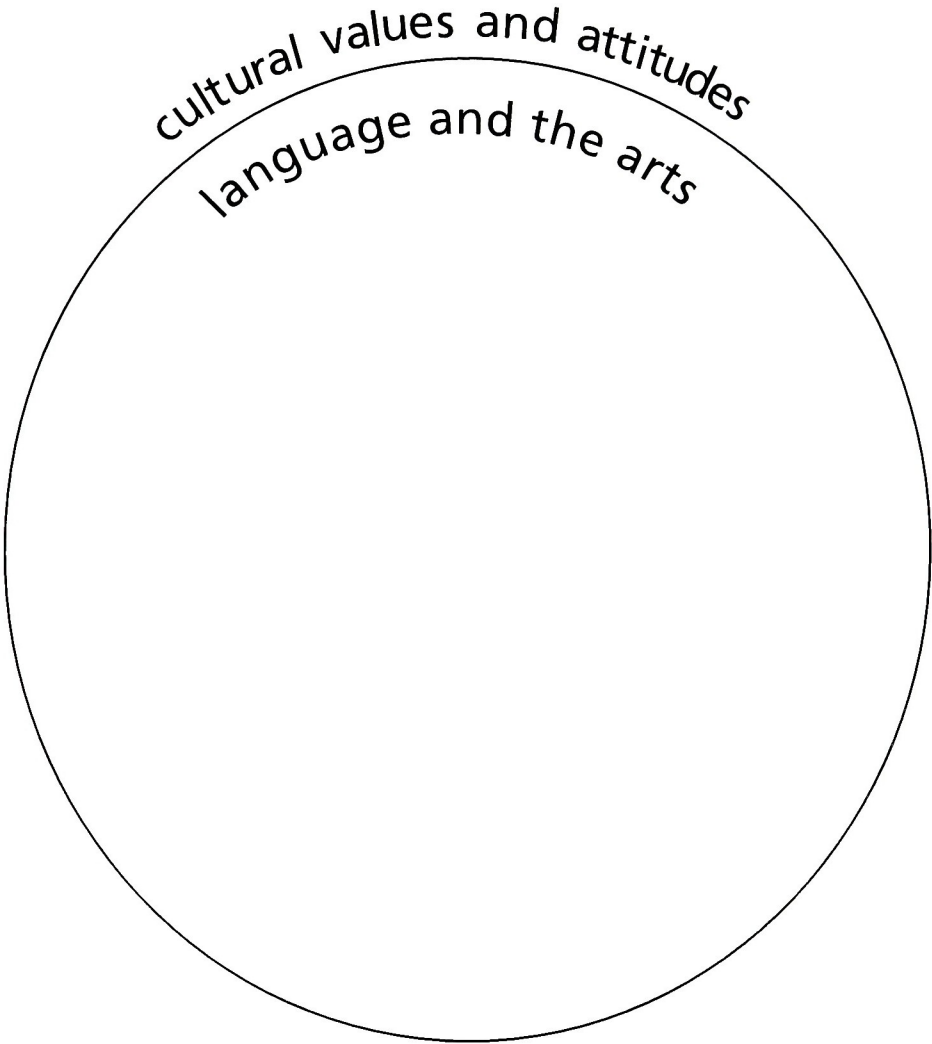




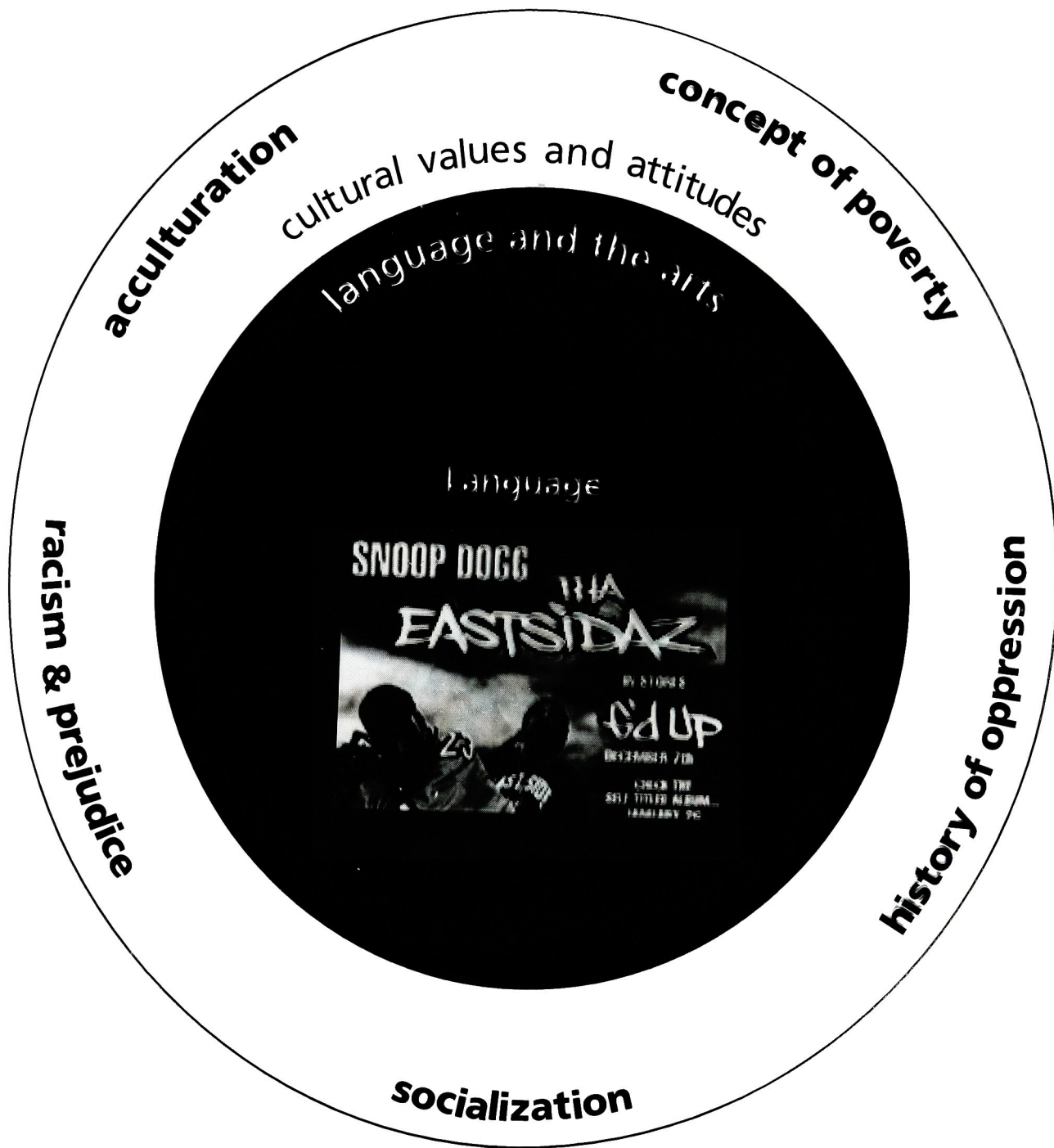


cultural values and attitudes  
language and the arts





cultural values and attitudes  
language and the arts



**acculturation**

cultural values and attitudes

language and the arts

**concept of poverty**

**history of oppression**

**socialization**

**racism & prejudice**

Language

SNOOP DOGG

THE

EASTSIDAZ

BY SNOOP DOGG

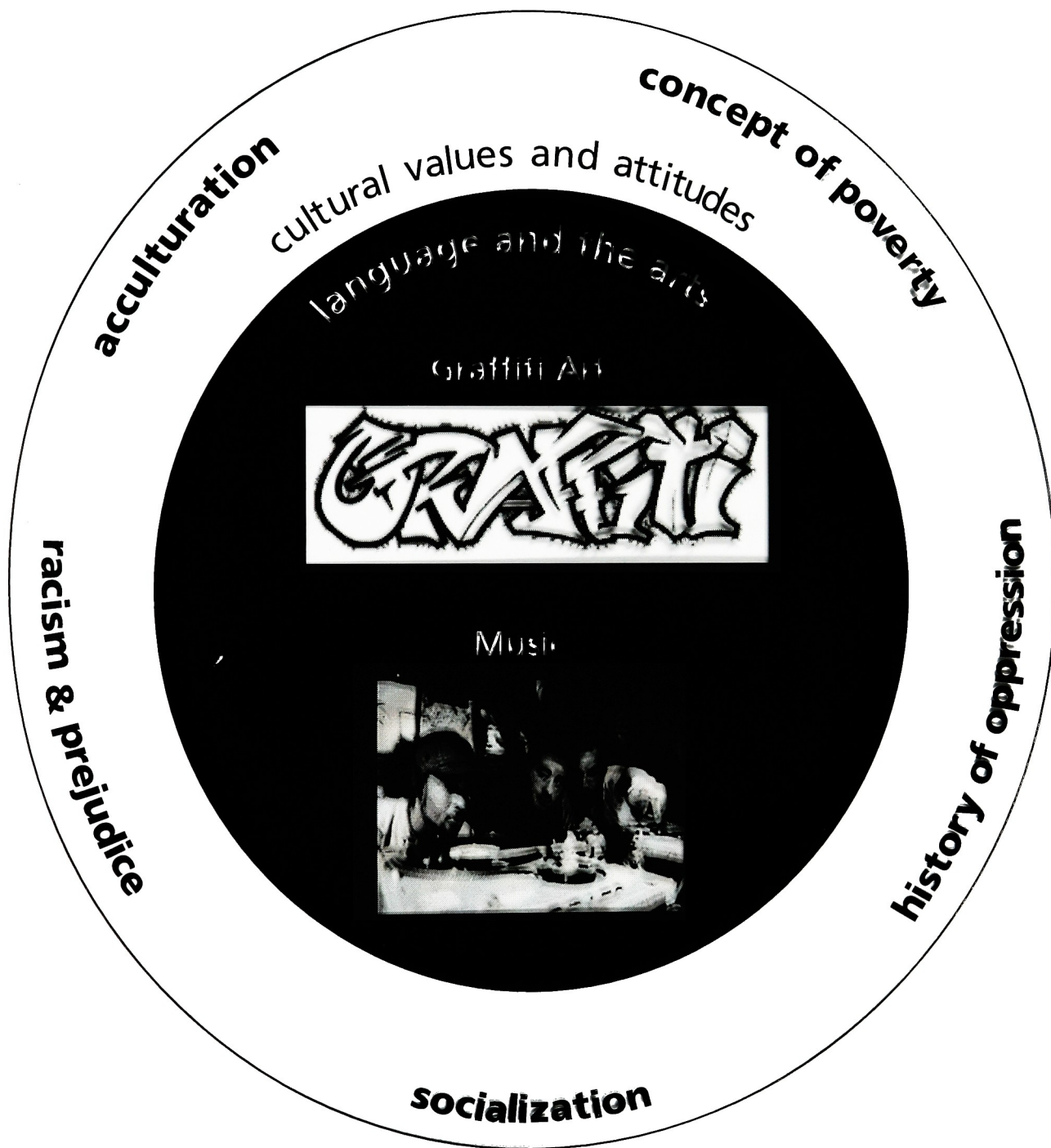
DOGGYSTYLE

DECEMBER 7/98

CHECK THE  
SELF TITLED ALBUM...  
JANUARY 99



cultural values and attitudes



cultural values and attitudes

**acculturation**

Violence

**concept of poverty**



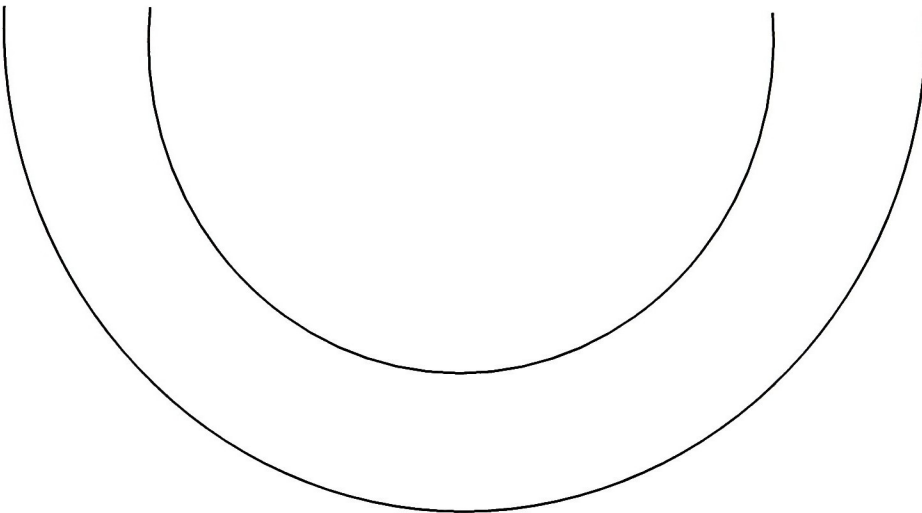
Graffiti mural in memory  
of the violence victims

**racism & prejudice**

**history of oppression**

**socialization**

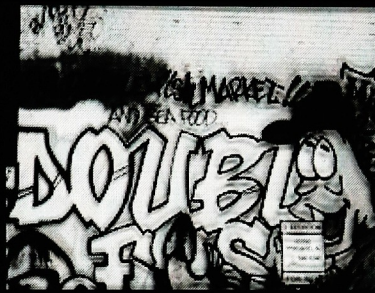




**acculturation**

Survival

**concept of poverty**

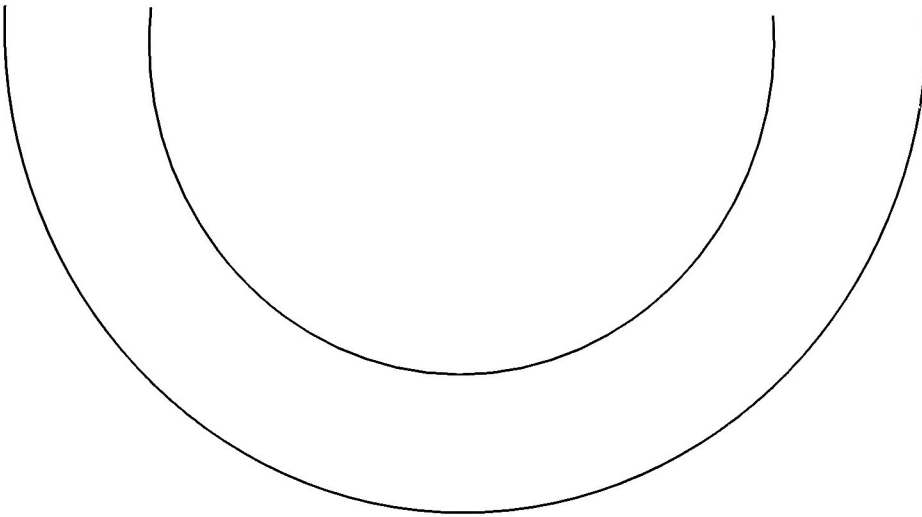


Graffiti used to publicize  
the local commene

**racism & prejudice**

**history of oppression**

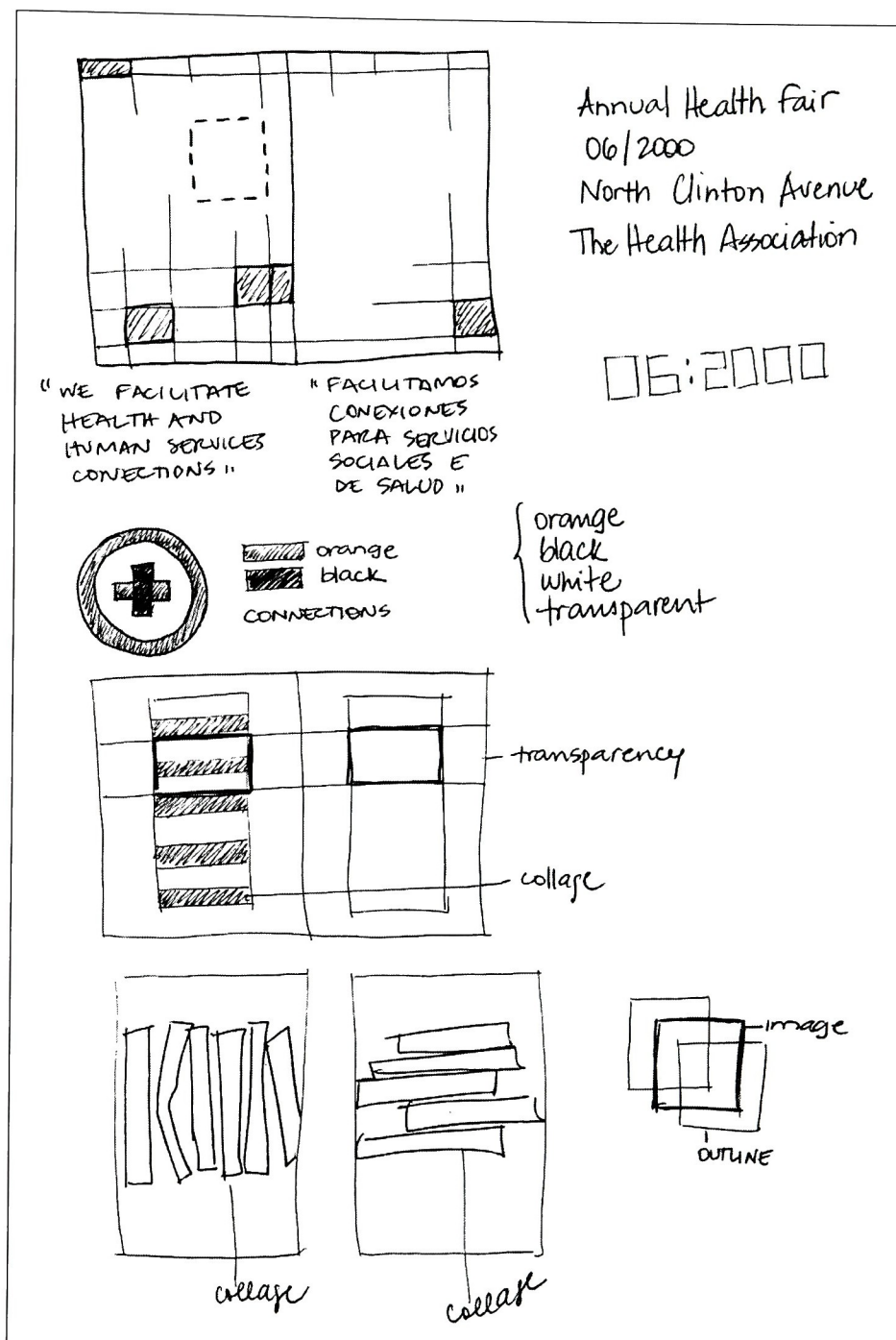
**socialization**



## Appendix E

### Poster Sketches

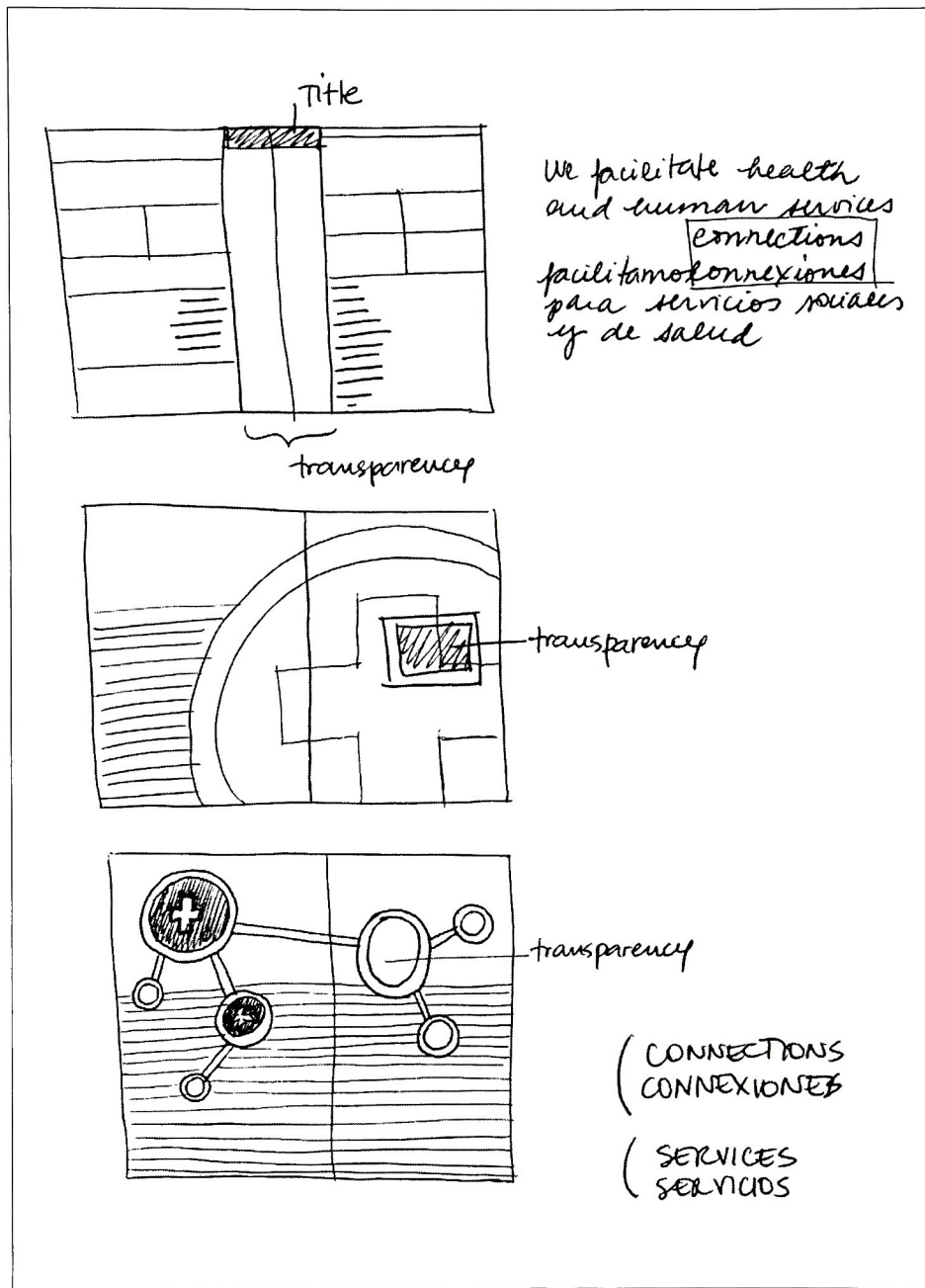
These are some of the first sketches and ideas for the bus stop posters.





## Appendix E

### Poster Sketches



## Appendix F

1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

YES | NO Why?

→ It gives more emotion

2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

YES | NO Why?

It has pop culture, familiar to

3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

YES | NO Why?

Especially like those - different

4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

YES | NO Why?

5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

YES | NO Why?

I can explore a lot.

6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

YES | NO Why?

Can be much colorful for the design

7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

YES | NO Why?

not bad, not great - good.

OPTIONAL: Age

28

Ethnic Background

Japan

1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

YES | NO Why?

because they reflect the similarity let what is written on the street.

2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

YES | NO Why?

because they add the whole sense of your work. love it.

3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

YES | NO Why?

because they are part of people expression, anger, happiness, etc.

4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

YES | NO Why?

they are very similar to what you see on the street

5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

YES | NO Why?

the video takes us to the real spirit that more than individual to represent vernacularly

6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

YES | NO Why?

because it is something you find in real life. Everything is being done very intelligently.

7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

YES | NO Why?

absolutely proper for your design and work  
Amputation

OPTIONAL: Age

?

Ethnic Background

Hispanic

## Appendix F

- 1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?  
☒ YES | NO Why? *Letter form design is related to the readability and*
- 2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?  
☒ YES | NO Why? *They inherent the free constructing form*
- 3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?  
☒ YES | NO Why? *Different culture use different symbol to present language.*
- 4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?  
☒ YES | NO Why?
- 5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?  
☒ YES | NO Why? *By compare different kind of Letterforms.*
- 6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?  
☒ YES | NO Why?
- 7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?  
☒ YES | NO Why? *It strongly transmits principle idea of the free form of letters.*

OPTIONAL: Age

Ethnic Background

- 1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?  
☒ YES | NO Why? *B/c style conveys certain social messages*
- 2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?  
☒ YES | NO Why? *B/c of the free-styled aspect/quality. It's not so rigid.*
- 3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?  
☐ YES | ☐ NO Why? *Probably*
- 4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why?
- 5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why?
- 6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why? *I like orange*
- 7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why? *It communicated a cultural message to the intended audience*

OPTIONAL: Age

24

Ethnic Background

Caucasian

## Appendix F

1] Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

YES | NO Why? - Some brow.

- Many people will not read some postcard for the fear of seeing or hearing what they don't want to see or hear.

2] Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

YES | NO Why? - They are very creative

3] Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

YES | NO Why? - The artists are products of the society. You can also almost see the society reflected in these art works.

4] Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

YES | NO Why?

5] After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

YES | NO Why? - Sometimes

6] Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

YES | NO Why? - They tell much of the societal picture.

7] Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

YES | NO Why? - probably

OPTIONAL: Age

41

Ethnic Background

Black

1] Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

YES | NO Why? - People perceive more easily

2] Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

YES | NO Why? - It tells the stories of people's life.

3] Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

YES | NO Why? - Means to artists' culture

4] Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

YES | NO Why? - Graffiti is making this to us visually.

5] After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

YES | NO Why? - The multimedia show was extremely helpful in understanding the methodology used.

6] Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

YES | NO Why? - It has sort of charm!

7] Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

YES | NO Why?

OPTIONAL: Age

?

Ethnic Background

CAUCASIAN



## Appendix F

1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

YES | NO Why?

2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

YES | NO Why?

*in an @@@@ artsy way.*

3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

YES | NO Why?

4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

YES | NO Why?

5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

YES | NO Why?

*Because it is a clear & effective presentation*

6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

YES | NO Why?

*Because it is effective*

7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

YES | NO Why?

OPTIONAL: Age

*21*

Ethnic Background

*White.*

1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

YES | NO Why?

2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

YES | NO Why?

*This is no difference from "regular type" it has to start somewhere*

3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

YES | NO Why?

4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

YES | NO Why?

5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

YES | NO Why?

6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

YES | NO Why?

*It is different; it is information*

7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

YES | NO Why?

OPTIONAL: Age

Ethnic Background

## Appendix F

1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

Shape, size, color project meaning.

2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

They are more organic & lively than other symbols

3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

YES | ☒ NO

Why?

Some cultures don't have written language.

4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

Was essential

6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

But no fond of orange

7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

There should be more evidence in a photo of the poster

OPTIONAL: Age

Ethnic Background

1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

Thousand feelings that added to the words can give great results

2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

It's communication from the society

3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

Everyone they always understand

4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

Speak their language

5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

good work

6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

Speak their language

7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

☒ YES | ☐ NO

Why?

Work with the focus on the target. Great study and results!

OPTIONAL: Age

26

Ethnic Background

Balsamico

Appendix F

1] Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?  
YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

*They reflect a culture, mood, feeling, concept*

2] Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?  
YES ☐ NO ☒ Why?

*They're very hard to read*

3] Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?  
YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

4] Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

*I think you were on the right track. I think that*

5] After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

*legibility is very important when communicating to the masses. NOT THE SAME AS*

6] Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?  
YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

7] Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?  
YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

*GRAFFITI*

*you downplayed them in the overall design*

OPTIONAL: Age

*26*

Ethnic Background

*hispanic*

1] Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?  
YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

2] Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?  
YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

*It has an energy, gives me a different*

3] Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?  
YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

*unique feel*

4] Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

5] After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

6] Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?  
YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

7] Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?  
YES ☒ NO ☐ Why?

OPTIONAL: Age

*22*

Ethnic Background

*White Boy*



Appendix F

- 1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

☒ YES | NO Why?

letterforms are like body language

- 2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

☒ YES | NO Why?

cultural influences

- 3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

YES | NO Why?

Probably, no understanding of every culture

- 4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

☒ YES | NO Why?

successful study here

- 5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

☒ YES | NO Why?

understanding of the culture

- 6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

☒ YES | ☒ NO Why?

yes, attractive, no not aimed at me

- 7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

☒ YES | ☒ NO Why?

readable - small size seems to conflict w/ graffiti

OPTIONAL: Age

27

Ethnic Background

White too clean

- 1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

☒ YES | NO Why?

Because it influences people's perspective

- 2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

☒ YES | NO Why?

Very creative & artsy!

- 3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

☒ YES | NO Why?

Because it is part of their belief structure

- 4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

☒ YES | NO Why?

It reminded me of the money that went with it!

- 5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

☒ YES | NO Why?

It's something that a lot of people take for granted

- 6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

☒ YES | NO Why?

It draws your eyes to what you are reading

- 7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

☒ YES | ☒ NO Why?

It was a little hard to read!

OPTIONAL: Age

Ethnic Background

## Appendix F

1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

YES | NO Why?

2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

YES | NO Why?

3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

YES | NO Why?

4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

YES | NO Why?

5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

YES | NO Why?

6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

YES | NO Why?

7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

YES | NO Why?

OPTIONAL: Age

Ethnic Background

1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

YES | NO Why?

2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

YES | NO Why?

3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

YES | NO Why?

4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

YES | NO Why?

5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

YES | NO Why?

6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

YES | NO Why?

7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

YES | NO Why?

OPTIONAL: Age

Ethnic Background



## Appendix F

1] Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

☒ YES | NO Why?

2] Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

☒ YES | NO Why?

3] Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

☒ YES | NO Why?

4] Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

☒ YES | NO Why?

5] After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

☒ YES | NO Why?

6] Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

☒ YES | NO Why?

7] Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

☒ YES | NO Why?

OPTIONAL: Age

23

Ethnic Background

Caucasian

1] Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?

☒ YES | NO Why? yes -> the forms give it emotion & feeling (like facial expression does to speak)

2] Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?

☒ YES | NO Why? Because they are used very unique & expressive

3] Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?

☒ YES | NO Why? Because the "feel" of each culture is different and vernacular forms are a formal expressing

4] Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?

☒ YES | NO Why? Because these feelings

5] After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?

☒ YES | NO Why? Because hadn't given any thought to the connections before

6] Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?

☒ YES | NO Why? Because I like it

7] Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?

☒ YES | NO Why? yes

OPTIONAL: Age

Ethnic Background

## Appendix F

- 1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why? They present more information than the words alone. They give/determine audience.
- 2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why? Not particularly. I appreciate them but do not identify with the culture from which they are derived.
- 3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why? But as we are immersed in a broader culture, we often overlook them.
- 4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why? You have shown how design can relate to a micro culture making the sharing of information easier.
- 5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why? You broke down the concept very clearly and made it very easy to understand.
- 6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why? I am drawn to the color and forms, but struggle with the dense content. Again, I am not the audience.
- 7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why? It combines to create a dynamic balance that excites the eye and relates to the audience.

OPTIONAL: Age

Ethnic Background

- 1) Do you think letterforms visually impact how the verbal message is read?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why?
- 2) Do you find letterforms which originated from the streets appealing?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why?
- 3) Do you think there are vernacular forms for every culture?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why?
- 4) Was the design of an experimental typeface effective in proving that letterforms can express cultural and social values?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why?
- 5) After watching the multimedia show, do you have a better understanding of vernacular letterforms?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why? Very well done
- 6) Would the bus stop poster appeal to you?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why?
- 7) Was the experimental letterform effectively used in the poster?  
☒ YES | ☐ NO Why?

OPTIONAL: Age

Ethnic Background

### Multimedia CD-ROM