

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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in Candidacy for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

A VISUAL SYNTHESIS

by

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INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis report is the subject of a careful scrutinization of myself up to this point in time. The product of this self-analysis was foreseen to be an apocalyptic statement, an expression of good-will and mutual respect extended toward every thinking entity.

The process of solving the problem will be presented in five overall events which outline the ideal creation agonized to fruition.

In this thesis I have dared to expose myself to the full impact of my vision. The following quote of Jungian philosophy addresses itself directly to the ideal creative process.

The artist moves into the visionary realm for his inspiration, then travels back into consciousness toward the psychological pole, where he finds the organizing ability that is necessary to give his vision coherence. Finally he will occupy a point somewhere along the line between the two poles, and his art will consist of symbolic structures which possess both archetypal potency and aesthetic form.¹

¹Douglas Day, Malcolm Lowry, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 468.

"All conscious psychic processes may well be casually explicable; but the creative act, being rooted in the immensity of the unconscious, will forever elude our attempts at understanding."

C. Jung

THE VISION

The beginning of this body of work immediately concerned itself with its end. Through visualization and foresight, subtle suggestions of graphic possibility began to identify themselves as unique among a myriad lifetime index of retained informational and visual data. A cataloguing of forms, images and objects from a personal file of dreams, expressions and aspirations.

The visual content of the form depends on the verbal message and the particular function of the communicative material. The work was foreseen to address itself to the exact nature of what I am as a communicating intellect. I intended the inclusion of what life is, the unknown, and weighed the mysterious and stunning possibilities of intuitive creation.

Formally, the prescribed motivation of the thesis project is to "break new ground; contributing information to the literature of the arts, the design and communication fields which does not exist to date; reflecting technical mastery, plastic sensitivity and aesthetic discernment."²

Naturally the work to be done would draw on knowledge acquired through life experience and particular areas of interest, such as the reading of what I consider monumental fiction. A line from Nietzsche in Ayn Rand's Fountainhead encapsulates that author's personal philosophy and provided impetus to my final acceptance of the problem. The line:

"The noble soul has reverence for itself."

With this rationale in mind, I recognized that an ideal self-assessment was one that was generated through a sense of awe and deep admiration. I questioned myself. Was this my role? And if so, what, as a communicative intellect, do I have to say? What was the thing that I could share with my fellow human beings, and what must be done to say it?

²Peter Giopoulos, Handbook for Graduate Study, Rochester Institute of Technology, College of Fine and Applied Arts, Programs and Descriptions, 1979-80, P. 4.

I find these to be extremely challenging questions. I accepted the responsibility to find their solutions and experience the changes that their answers would bring. My initial objectives to solve the thesis project were declared in a thesis proposal dated September nineteenth, nineteen eighty.

"The purpose of this thesis is to correlate the technical exploration of graphic codes with systematic problem-solving techniques in a visual synthesis assessing my own development as a designer."

With this formal acceptance of self-identification with the problem a psychological shift toward organizational skills was made.

ORGANIZATION

"Design is a problem-solving activity."³

As a communication designer I use an organ of informational reference familiar to many modern problem-solvers. It is the Universal Traveler, by authors Don Koberg and Jim Bagnall. Basically, it is a "soft-systems guide to creativity, problem-solving and the process of reaching goals." The book presents a logical sequence of events included in the design process. They are:

- Acceptance
- Analysis
- Definition
- Ideation
- Selection
- Implementation
- Evaluation

This sequence is a reusable method of systematically dealing with any problem that one might encounter. Utilizing its flexibility in design and life problems, one benefits from the depth of understanding acquired through the scientific approach. This is the most important tool I use in attaining the level of expression I aspire to.

³Paul Rand, "The Politics of Design," Graphis Annual 80/81, Graphis Press Corporation, Zurich, Switzerland, p. 8.

Also as a graphic designer I use certain graphic codes to generate a language consisting of drawings, diagrams, typography, symbols, and photography, which when related as elements, express an entire range of possible insights into human existence.

Identifying and isolating the symbolic reference possibilities, the inherent possibilities and limitations of different communication codes, together with the development of visual metaphor becomes an approach to communication that goes beyond surface concerns into the substance and function of communication itself.⁴

By resolving the development of the visual metaphor, a direct confrontation was forced with earlier self-questioning. I see my existence as a fact. I want to investigate it, to understand it. A statement of meaning for a person would be a list of those values that set one apart from others. The real personality emerges when personal dispositions are assessed, and this requires intensive study of an individual's past, present and future functioning. The assessment of a personal disposition is a listing of needs. I engage in the activity of design

⁴Sharon Helmer Poggenpohl, "Graphic Design, a Practice in Search of Theory," Visible Language, Volume XIII, Number 4, 1979, p. 357.

for its own sake. I need to express an ability, to exercise all functions available to the graphic designer, and to experience pleasure from the quality of my activity, not simply its occurrence.

The definition of a personality derived through the need to express and experience self is given meaning through exploration and testing of values or codes by which people live. Through expended time and research, a list of personal values was derived.⁵

1. Be up front.
2. Put it together with style.
3. Do your own thing.
4. Go with the flow.
5. Feed the hungry bee if one has the strength.
6. It's done with people.
7. It's done with love.
8. Things that are pleasurable tend to be good.
9. Be in tune with Nature.
10. Ecstasy is the way to know Him/Her/It?
11. Truth has a small t.
12. Change through personal example.
13. Experience yourself.

This list is actually the search for beauty. Beauty which gives pleasure and satisfies self-expressive needs, unique and self-actualizing, the spiritual identity of mankind.

⁵T. R. Young, New Sources of Self, Pergamon Press Inc., 1972, p. 65.

In our relations with people, we understand their actions and motives because we have at some time shared them, so that we know them from the inside. By identifying ourselves with the experience of others, we enlarge our knowledge of ourselves as human beings, we gain self-knowledge.⁶

As this phase of organization was completed, a movement back toward a visionary stance was made, which soon would facilitate the construction of forms.

A matrix of graphic codes was generated. Media differentiation within specific codes added depth and texture to the collection of visually communicative materials retained through the interest and work of a lifetime. From this matrix was selected those structures which possessed an archetypal potency; the power of the ideal through which the total expression may be articulated.

⁶J. Bronowski, The Identity of Man, Doubleday and Company, New York, 1965, p. 83.

THE SYSTEM

Visualizing the overview of potential organizational attributes, a morphological model⁷ was projected which in time through ideation facilitated interrelationships. A listing of the problem variables, categorizing attributes, and then a systematic determination of possible combinations was made through forced relationships, and a one-to-one comparison of elements to distinguish patterns by which themal values would be appropriately enhanced. Ultimately, the essence of the verbal content evokes heightened meaning from the visual matter.

Each grouping contains prose which lends further meaning to the singular aspect of that subsystem and the characteristic enhancement of elements juxtaposed through forced relationship. This system appears on the following page.

⁷Jim Bagnall, Don Koberg, The Universal Traveler, William Kaufmann, Inc., California, 1976, p. 53.

THE SYSTEM

Acceptance	Symbol	Change through personal example Do your own thing.
Analysis	Photography	Experience yourself. Be up front.
Definition	Typography	Things that are pleasurable tend to be good. Be in tune with Nature.
Ideation	Drawing	Put it together with style. Ecstasy is the way to know.
Selection	Diagram	Go with the flow. Sacredness of time on Earth.
Implementation	Book	It's done with people. It's done with love.
Evaluation	Thesis Report	Feed the hungry bee, if one has the strength. Truth has a small t.

IMPLEMENTATION

The solution to the thesis project was implemented in four phases. They include the sketch phase, mechanicals, image arrangement, and printing.

Sketches

The sketch phase was the first time that the synthesis was physically visualized. Chosen elements were drawn and composed according to their importance within the sub-system. The sketches show plans for an exhibit system that assumes its final form in a bound version. Each sub-system is graphically realized as a module of two facing pages; a front cover, an introductory module, a module of symbols, a module of photographs, and continuing through the remaining sub-systems and putting the plan into effect. Preparatory roughs were executed half-size on white bond with black felt-tip markers (see Appendix 1). Final sketches are full size and express the overall ebb and flow of the whole, not considering actual color relationships and some refinements made during the mechanical phase (see Appendix 2).

The Grid

The page size is a root-two rectangle, derived from an extension of the square along the arc of its diagonal.⁸

The page format measures nine and one-eighth by eleven and one-half inches. The grid is composed of four fourteen and one-half pica columns with one-pica gutters in between columns (see Appendix 3). Margins on the sides of page modules measure five-eighths of an inch and a one-half inch space appears at the top and bottom of each page, above and below printed matter. Each column is sub-divided into six equal modules, any two of which grouped together form a square. This bisected square module creates a startling variety of compositional possibilities, which were then refined and matched to the first set of rough sketches (see Appendix 4). When this task was accomplished, the actual mechanical process began.

⁸ Allen Hurlburt, The Grid, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, New York, 1978, p. 12.

Typography

Univers 65 is the typeface used for most of the final implementation. Univers small caps appears on the cover and under the top rule on every module, or facing spread. Helvetica Thin is used on the cover in caps. One line of ITC Garamond appears in the introductory module. Headline type is twelve point, body text is ten point type with ten point leading, set tight flush left ragged right (see Appendix 5).

Mechanicals

Cover

The cover mechanical was executed using three film-overlays on base art providing an added color. The make-up of the cover is articulated by the systematic diagonal appearance, overlapping and converging of four sets of regular line intervals which successively increase in weight. These sets of line intervals converge at the center of the page in a horizontal black rule. The title of the thesis project appears in reversed-out white copy in this center rule. Line intervals bleed off the top and bottom of the page, and their overlapping creates a visual effect of luminosity on the white Chromecote paper (see Appendix 6).

Introduction Module

The introductory module is made up of a half-tone print of a human fetus in a tusche wash which differs in color. This print varies in color from one edition to the next. The introductory phrase by Friedrich Nietzsche appears to the left of the fetus. The left side of the module is occupied by a marbelized sheet of paper and this also varies in color and effect from one edition to the next. (see Appendix 7).

Symbols Module

The mechanical for the symbols module displays five different types of symbols (see Appendix 8). Natural symbols shown are fingerprints and feet prints. Drawn symbols are shown as handwriting and a constructed symbol for problem-solving (?!). Numerical symbols included depict a license plate and a social security number. A typographic symbol is shown (?()), as is the machine-generated symbol of computer which contains the code for my name. The grid which is included is another drawn symbol and represents a reliance on process and systematic development instead of product-orientation.

Photography

The photographs included here depict my family for four generations. On the left-hand side of the module (see Appendix 9), are my great-grandparents picking fruit from the family tree, my mother's parents to the right on top and my father's parents below, each holding my infant father in separate shots. The right hand side of the module shows me in a photographic growth chart of sixteen parts, and below a distorted self-portrait commenting on the phenomenon of personal change. At the bottom of the page I have included typographic dictionary meanings of each of my first, middle, and last names.

Typography

The typography module illustrates a special concern for visual aesthetics and typography as well as intuitive processes (see Appendix 10). Specific groupings of letterforms are arranged to reflect similar movements shared by elemental inter-relationships and over-all page composition. The right-hand side of this module utilizes a systematic application of intuitive apple prints (or prints made from half an apple) playing off a tusche-solvent wash, executed in keeping with the verbal theme of

the module, as are all other modules executed through planning.

Drawings

This module contains elements which are reproductions of original drawings and photo-manipulated images which suggest a painterly quality (see Appendix 11). The left-hand side of the module contains an atmospheric x-ray of a human skull. This is contrasted with a reproduction of a continuous-tone drawing which comments on the juxtaposition of formal and chaotic subject matter. The right-hand side of this module is an assembly of a self-portrait photo-distortion technique and a halftone reproduction of a continuous tone drawing which represents an abstract entity, the juxtaposition of these two images is again enhanced by the accompanying prose.

Diagram

The mechanical for this concluding module is comprised of two pieces. It includes a diagrammatic map of the places I have lived in the time I have spent on Earth. This map is contained in its folded form by a slipcase which displays the concluding philosophy of the thesis:

Think of the pearl
the oyster has made
a grain of sand, once inside;
pain keeps a secret,
patience weeps a jewel.

The inset images on the map of New York State include a NASA satellite shot of the Monroe County area, a geological survey map of the central New York area, and a road map of the Schenectady area, all of which were places I have lived, the path of travel being delineated by the white line. Below this is a problem-solver's flow chart showing the different stages of development of a communication designer's life. These elements are overprinted a halftone-dot photogram of crumpled paper suggesting a topographic effect. Impact enhancement was attempted by combining all graphic codes providing a visual climax (see Appendix 12).

Image Arrangement

This phase includes the color-separation phase (called stripping), whereby all images have been reversed in negative film form and separated according to color specification into stripped-up negative flats, thirty in all. These flats are then placed in wrong-reading contact with negative-working photolithographic plates, exposed to arc light, are developed, finished and buffed dry with hand wipes.

Pre-press

The plates were then punched (as were all negative flats) on a punch registration system. Placed on pins which register each successive color in its proper position when printed, the plates are centered on an aluminum slab bed manual Griffen press where an edition of sixteen was pulled.

Paper and Inks

In all seven different paper stocks were utilized in the final printing. The front cover stock is a white Chromecote, the back cover is a brown Colorcast by Champion Papers. Each introductory module contains a hand-pulled marbellized sheet which was purchased at Talas Papers in New York City. The fetus was printed on a chocolate Champion Carnival cover stock. The modules were printed in five different colors of ink on Strathmore Tehelian Weave cover stock.

Each edition was printed in seven different ink colors chosen first to look appropriate on the chosen stock, and second, to enhance the importance and heighten visual function in each image. Cover and text stocks were donated through the sample departments of Seneca Paper Company, and Alling and Cory Paper Company, respectively. Inks were donated

by Capitol Ink Company, and printing plates were donated by the RIT School of Printing.

Printing

The sixteen editions were printed in five fourteen hour sessions. Each time a color is run, a quality depreciation factor occurred owing to plate scumming, slippage, incorrect placement of prints on the registration pins or a dozen or so other hard-to-control factors. The advantage of printing from photolithographic plates is in the ease and speed of generation, and not in their performance when exposed to the rigors of manual press printing (their original design being for use on high-speed offset reproduction systems). Cleanliness and systematic working habits maximized effectiveness and quality at all times.

Trimming and Binding

Each edition was finally trimmed with the covers slightly larger than the interior text pages. The whole was then collated and punched for Wiro-binding on the left-hand side of the page. A white Wiro-binder looks well with the white Chromecote cover.

EVALUATION

From an edition of sixteen came a depreciation in quality to five good copies, three of which are of excellent quality, and two that I consider to be of superb quality. One of these was trimmed and adhered to foam-core board for exhibition in the second Master Thesis Show at Bevier Gallery, RIT, May the First, Nineteen-Eighty-One.

I think I have worked extremely hard to fulfill all predetermined requirements. There was a period of time during the implementation phase when I felt that I valued the outcome of the product more than my own existence.

The total experience is measurable as far as a self-evaluation period, a meeting of predetermined requirements, and the retainment of a qualitative body of work that is reusable as a self-promotion tool.

Appendix 1

Change through personal example

068-46-9113

977-YLU
NEW YORK

of your own doing

EXPERIENCE YOURSELF

RUST RUST BLACK

BLACK

BLACK

BLACK

RUST

BE UP FRONT

BLACK

RUST - SILVER COLOR WALL

BLUE

THINGS THAT ARE PLEASURABLE TEND TO BE GOOD

an apple a day

BLUE SILVER

a definition of beauty

BE IN TUNE WITH NATURE

PUT IT TOGETHER WITH STYLE

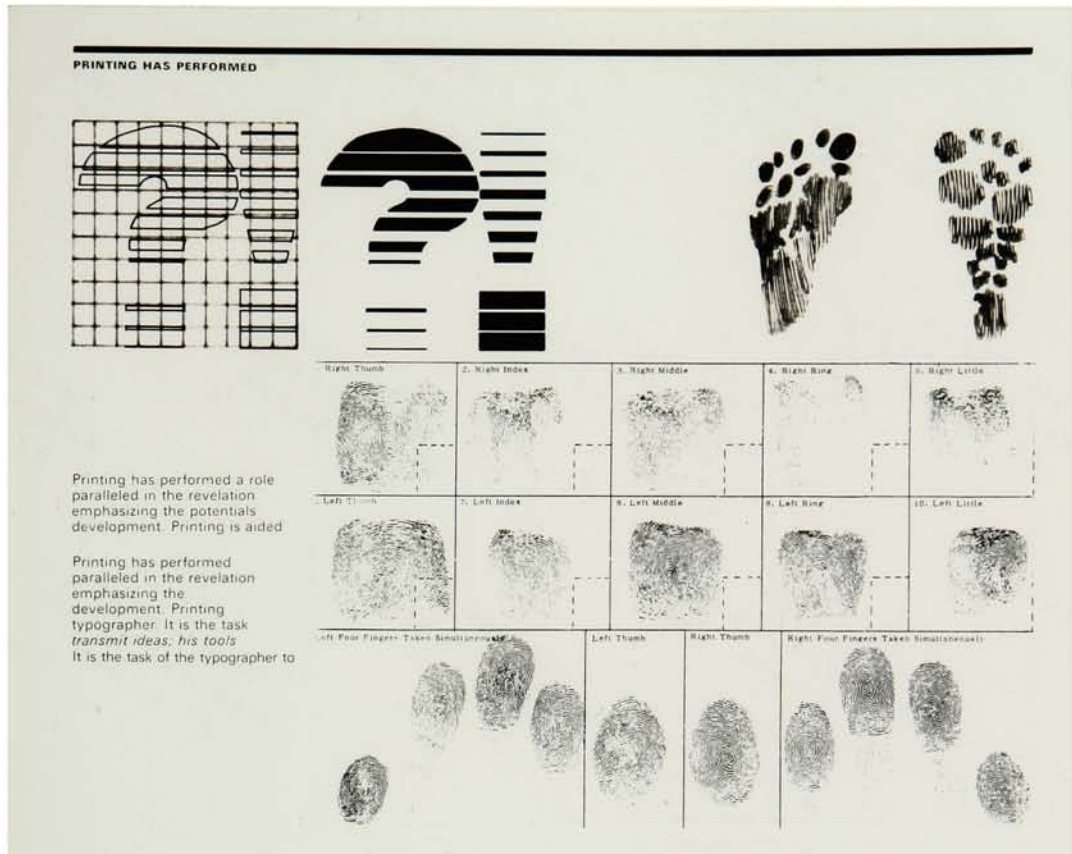
PENCIL CASE

SKULL

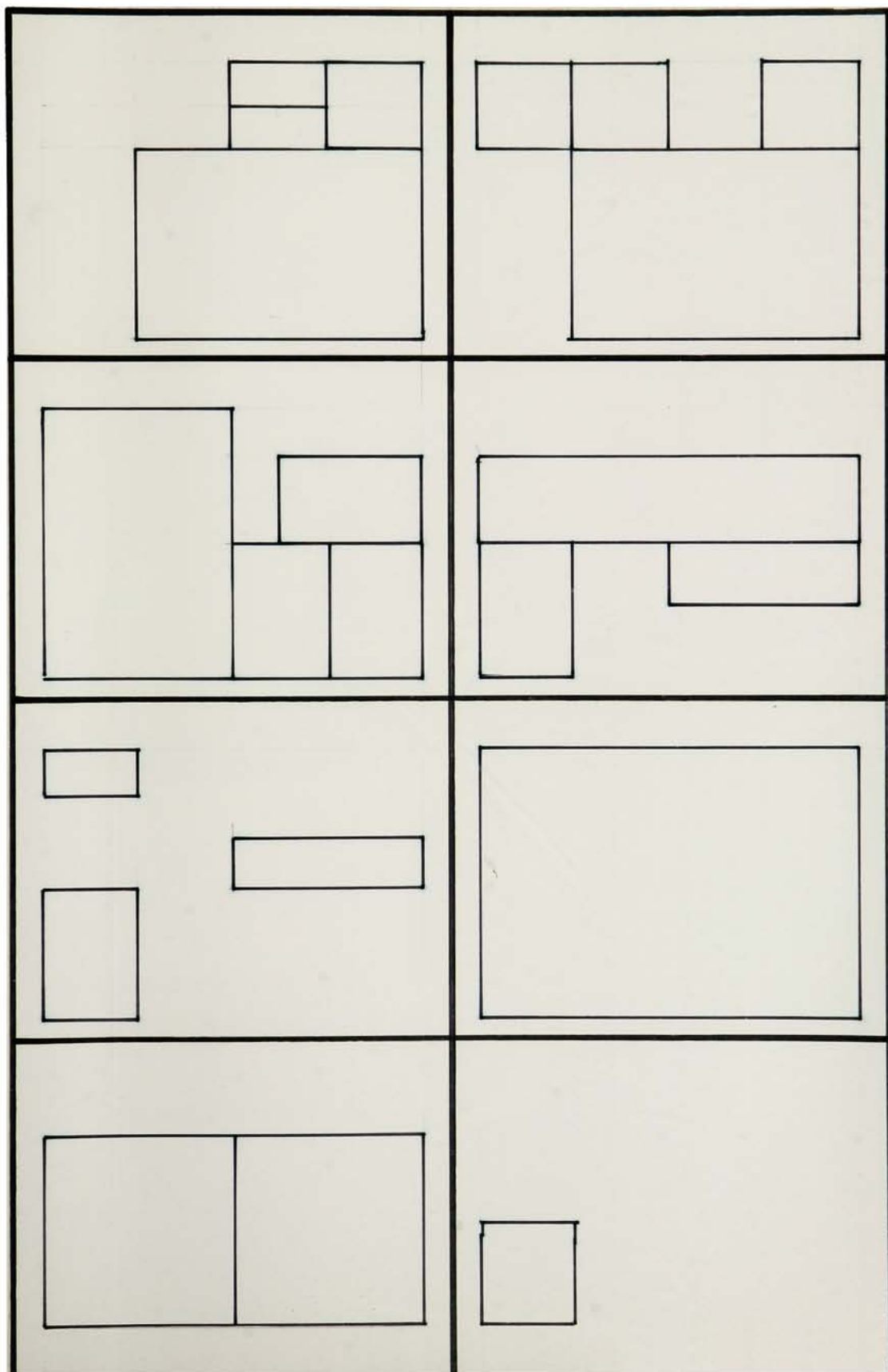
ECSTASY IS THE WAY TO KNOW

STAIR PHOTO

Appendix 2



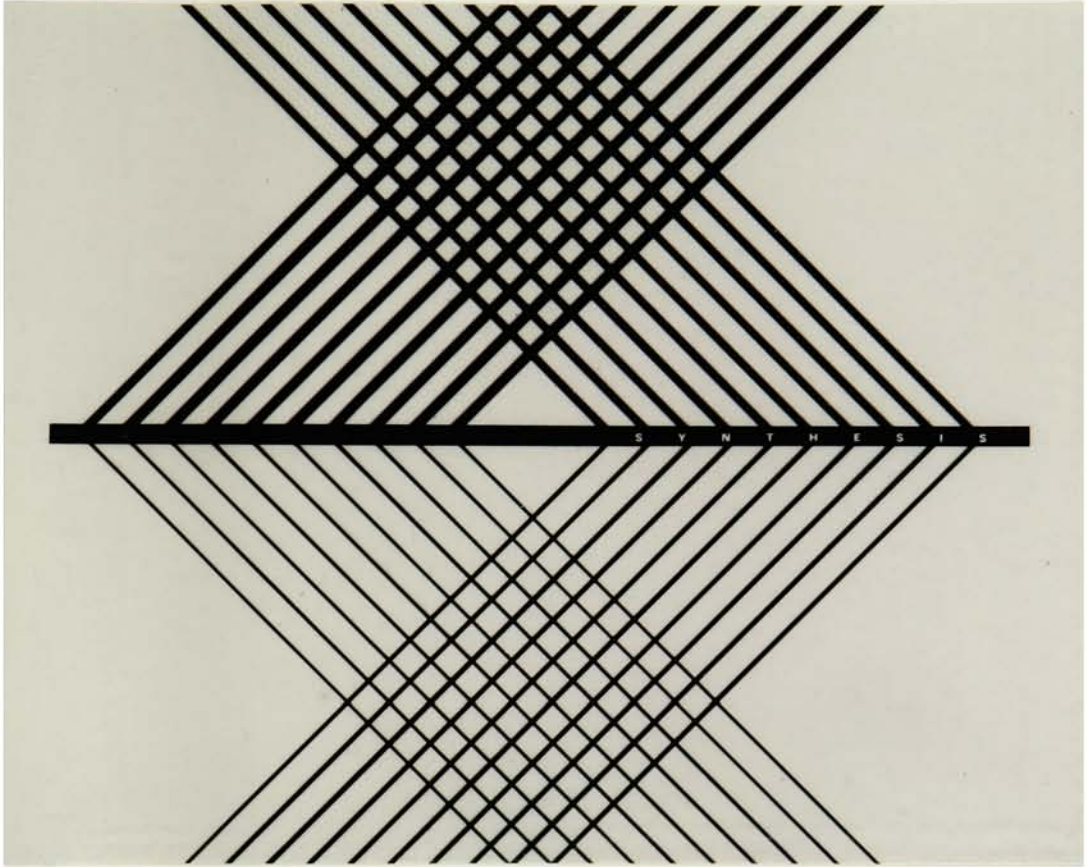
Appendix 4



Appendix 5

Univers 65
abcdefghijklmnopqrstvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNORSTUVWXYZ
1234567890(&.,:;!?''"-*\$¢%/£)

Appendix 6



Appendix 7



"The noble soul has reverence for itself" —Friedrich Nietzsche



Appendix 8

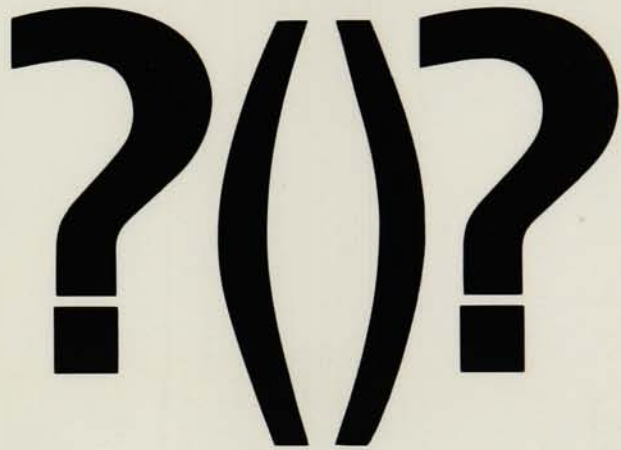
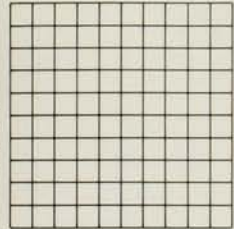
CHANGE THROUGH PERSONAL EXAMPLE

Life—
parenthesis
surrounded by
question marks.

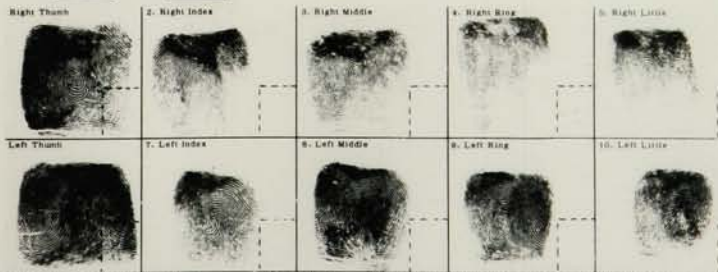
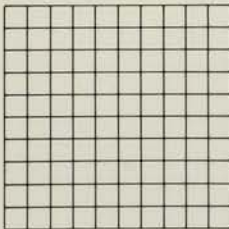
Through personal example
Change.
Measure inner adjustments
due to external force
utilizing graphic means.

068-46-9113

Who am I?



DO YOUR OWN THING



Beauty synthesizes—
focuses a matrix,
impulses of self
form a single image.

The image—
a part of consciousness
with coherence
and articulation,
harmoniously perceived
with integrity and permanence
may be projected into the world.



Appendix 9

EXPERIENCE YOURSELF



Ideas momentarily surface are hardly recreated before shifting attention transforms perception to new ideas.

By assigning abstract meanings to words and other symbols the recognition of repetitive perceptions and reoccurring impressions derives the resolute image.



BE UP FRONT

Pleasure in ordering perceptions invests the image with beauty. The resultant quality of meaning is characteristic of other feelings associated through experience.

The quality attained by images through association is their expression.

Individual expression is comprised of the progression of thoughts associated in mind; the force lent by experience to an image which suggests others in mind.



mark (mark) To make a mark; to notice; to make marks on. as, to mark a wall; to correct and grade by symbols, as, the teacher marks the papers; to characterize, show up, as, chatter marks the fool. Syn. Impress, designate, print, note, stamp, engrave.



emmet (em et) An ant

foster (fos ter) To nourish, cherish, sustain. Syn. Cherish, harbor. To foster is to keep with care and promote the welfare of.

THINGS THAT ARE PLEASURABLE TEND TO BE GOOD

***an
apple
day*** ***a***

a defini-
tion of
beauty



Goodness—
experience of self;
a faithful offset of values
from moment to moment.

In spite of change,
deep insights
and profound mistakes;
constantly explore
and form
life values.

Beauty is a value—
an emotion yielding pleasure.
Ultimate good, fulfilling normal
functional need in mind—
externalized.
beauty is pleasure.

BE IN TUNE WITH NATURE



Appendix 11

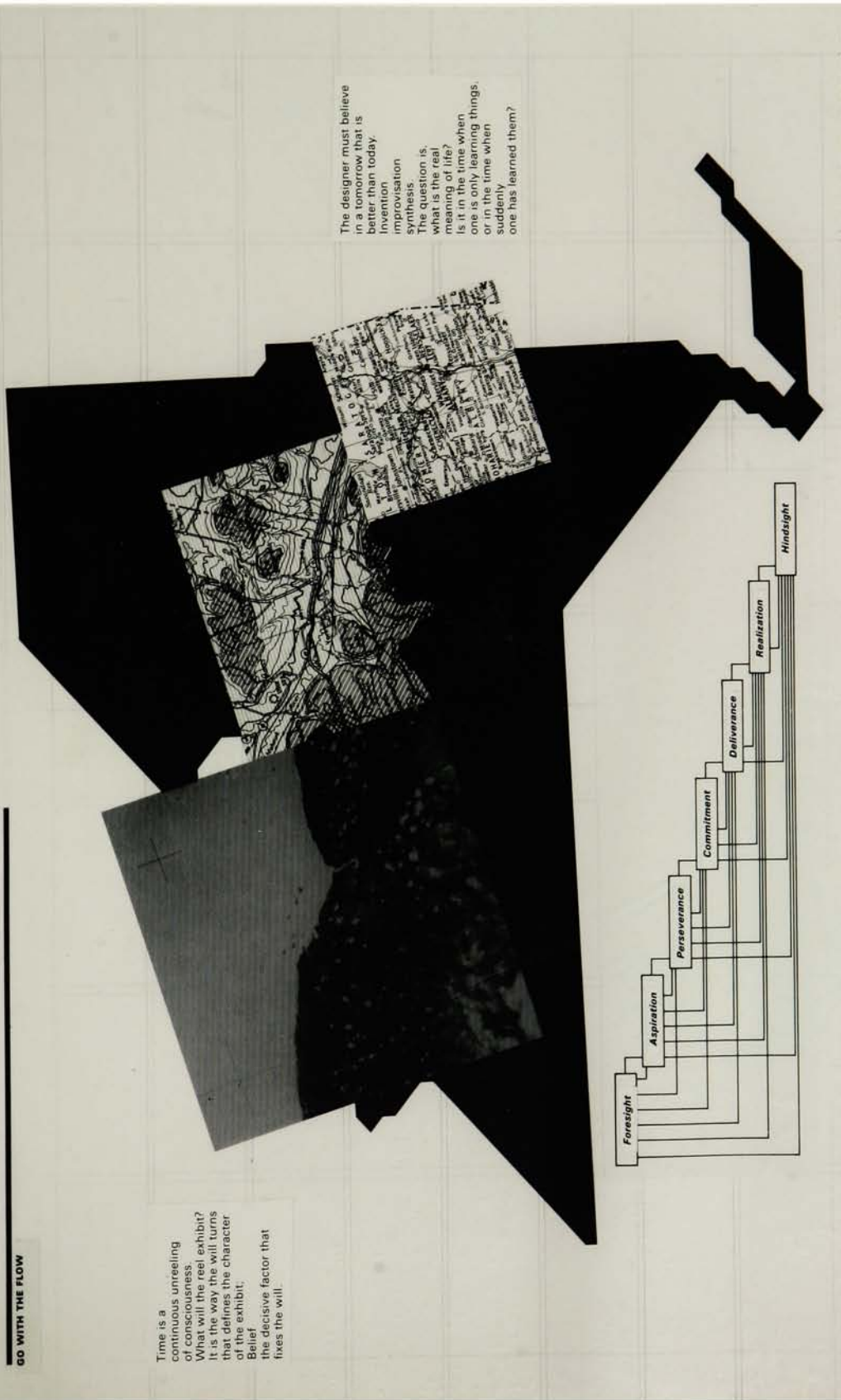
PUT IT TOGETHER WITH STYLE

I study myself
Perusing the expressiveness
of my ideas I find
others have expressed
the same ideas.



Possessing pliability
and imaginative strength,
I would express
what has become
painfully dumb

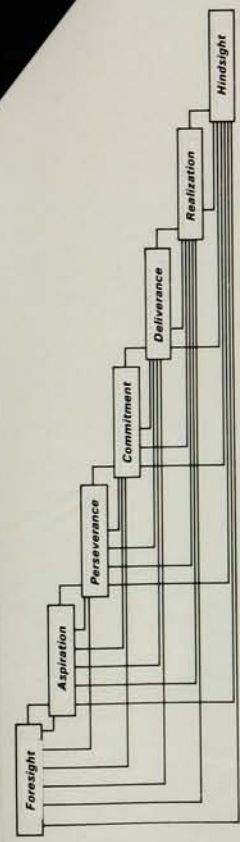




GO WITH THE FLOW

Time is a continuous unreeing of consciousness. What will the reel exhibit? It is the way the will turns that defines the character of the exhibit. Belief the decisive factor that fixes the will.

The designer must believe in a tomorrow that is better than today. Invention improvisation synthesis. The question is, what is the real meaning of life? Is it in the time when one is only learning things, or in the time when suddenly one has learned them?



Appendix 13



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