

2008

# Find Meaning Make Meaning

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*Karen Stein*

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY  
MFA DESIGN/VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS  
CREATIVE PROJECT 2008

Find  
Meaning  
Make  
Meaning

# Karen Anne Stein

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## Abstract

Employing the designer William Morris as a source of inspiration, this project seeks to explore the call for nature and beauty as a part of our lives. Moreover, it interweaves the necessity for experience of the sensual world (the five senses) with the cerebral world (a requisite to igniting the internal imagination)—a concept embodied in the form of the book. It advocates a redefining of the book as an *imagination sculpture* (the external and the internal) reflecting this new definition.

Find  
Meaning  
Make  
Meaning

A teacher of mine once recounted the story of this great old tree which stood just outside the doors to our building. Knobby limbs extending in all directions; it's rings relating countless stories.

He would wander by it admiringly each day. Upon coming to the end of the story, he answered a question he had posed to us earlier in the class. The question was regarding the purpose of life, and he explained how this tree fulfilled the concept of tree-ness, and that was its purpose, and how we, as humans are here to fulfill our own sense of human-ness—that is our purpose, whatever it may be. But what might this have to do with design?

For me, design is a way of thinking, of looking, and of seeing. The process of design is one which widens our understanding of the world. It allows us to consider our world in new and curious ways, and enables us to visually communicate messages to others through that perception and participation—creating new relationships and connections. But with that, having a point of view as to how we are connected to this world is also important.

No one's answer of purpose will be the same, however. We are individuals, and although there are common threads which tie us together, we are each different, made up of our own stories, built from both our experience and our imagination.

Currently, there are shifts occurring in our world, how we relate to it, and how we relate to each other. Much of this change is the result of the speed and reliance on a technological advancement



that is so quickly we can not yet see where it's going, let alone know what the effects of it all will be on us and our society.

This is nothing new. Over and over again, there have been periods of questioning the results of new technologies; of shunning and embracing them. It is part of a cycle. And yet, that does not mean that we should not ask such questions.

Technology can be both life-affirming and life-diminishing; the results stemming from how it is interwoven into our lives. The question for me is not if technology is or is not good. It is a part of our lives, and we should not fear it or run away from it. Although we should question it. But it is not technology that gives definition to our lives; instead, it is the stories, the people, the experiences, and what we make that give meaning. We are each in search of some kind of narrative, some sort of

search for the experience of life. For me, there are themes considered here which relate to this narrative and to design.

These include nature and beauty, and the book. Throughout this project, I sought to explore these concepts through visual terms, but also through research and writing.

I see design as poised at a unique and pivotal point in relation to our world and how we relate to it; for me these concepts of nature and the book are integral to this position.



## Book as Imagination Sculpture

When you think about it, books as a medium for stocking definite information may be inconvenient.

They're heavy, they're bulky, they get dirty and they fade with time. Their size is specifically tailored, yet they house an amount of information that could be easily contained in a tiny digital memory.  
—KENYA HARA

A designer's role in today's complex world can not be narrowly defined. On any given day we might be acting as interpreter, anthropologist, artist, or educator, as well as visual communicator. Therefore, it is no longer just visual communication we must contend with. We create things which enliven all the senses. This is integral to the concept of experience which creates the narrative of our lives.

We might start this investigation by considering what sorts of experiences might be a necessary part of life, and how an understanding and experiencing of both nature and the concept of the book can become an integral part of design.

### Nature

Today, the concept of Nature often evokes visions of fields and forests. This poetic ideal, loosely based the philosophy of the Romantics and readily accepted as today's established definition, is an abridged version of their original intention. For them, it was not just rivers and clouds.

But what did they mean? And how might their understanding influence design today?

To Wordsworth, Coleridge and the other Romantics, Nature meant the fundamental unitary principle requisite to reality, the principle underlying all beings and things and any one being or thing. Coleridge asserts that Nature means not only the principle underlying the existence of a thing, but also the possibility of a thing, as in the *nature* or essence of a circle. Or, he continues, we may designate by the word Nature as the potentiality of a thing, as the natural state of the tadpole has potential within it the frog, or as the butterfly is potential in the larva. As a student of Coleridge in the 1850s, John Stuart Mill wrote: "Nature means the sum of all phenomena, together with the causes which produce them; including not only all that happens, but all that is capable of happening; the unused capabilities of causes being as much a part of the idea of Nature, as those which take effect."



This all-encompassing view of Nature is a holistic organic point-of-view, more fully encapsulating the enormity and complexity of life. It is not rolling hills and wild flowers (or at least not just that); by contemplating this redefined view of Nature we might see how Nature might then enfold itself into everything that we do.

Particularly with design, there is an opportunity to redefine our process, and purpose. In *The Nature of Design*, David Orr describes an ecological design that is reminiscent of this broader view of nature. He sees this design approach as “the art that reconnects us as sensuous creatures evolved over millions of years to a beautiful world.” (Orr 32) It is reminiscent of this broader concept of nature. This world does not need to be ‘remade but revealed’ since it is something we already have known before; thus, we do not need research as much as the rediscovery of old and forgotten things, suggesting that we must relearn the ancient lessons of generosity so that we might create wiser generations.

We are losing the capacity to articulate what is most important to us. David Orr contends that what is most at jeopardy is our language for describing our own world. The parsed language that is developing “has no words with which to describe the fullness and beauty of life, or to announce its role in the larger moral ecology. They have no metaphors by which they can say how we fit together in the community of life and so little idea beyond that of self-interest about why we ought to protect it.” (Orr 59)

By incorporating natural processes, materials, metaphors, and meaning we have the ability to help reincorporate these relationships and understanding of nature with others, in

this much broader context of life and living. But it is not just a the sensual that I am concerned with. There is also the developing of the inner imagination which is integral to the experience of life. The relationship between the sensual (the five senses) and the cerebral (the mind’s eye) is best articulated through the concept of the book.

#### The Book

A book allows for the participation of both the sensual and the cerebral. To the touch, it is the texture of the paper or a beautiful binding; to smell, it is fresh ink on a cotton sheet. To the eye, it is a revealing cover or a well-designed composition, but it is also that held within which entices the beholder, allowing one to encounter something beyond oneself within oneself. Thus the exterior and the interior, the seen and the imagined, the beginning and the end, wrap into something completely unassuming as a book.

Recently, we can see the book’s role changing. For many, it is no longer the primary source of information-getting. In *Designing Design*, Kenya Hara ponders his affection for the book, but also admits to this shifting purpose.

Hara notes that, “the accelerated speed of the evolution of information technology has led to the foundation of more and more information formats...it may be time we consider the possibility that books have already stepped down from their traditional role as information medium. As far as speed, density and volume go, we can’t even compare books to electronic media. Still, it’s hard to come to the conclusion that the role of books has collapsed. Perhaps it’s time we reevaluate what a book is.” (Hara 196)

The printed word is evolving. Might this evolution be an opportunity to shape a new way of thinking about the book?

The book is clumsy as something to solely hold information. In *Designing Design*, Kenya Hara advocates considering the book as an Information Sculpture instead. This would emphasize an appreciation of the relationship between the individual and the information that books contain.

But I think he doesn’t go far enough, and gives too much importance to the idea of information. We have far too much information these days then we know what to do with. It is knowledge and wisdom that we should be seeking instead. For this reason, I suggest that books be thought of as Imagination Sculpture. This would consider the relationships between the object, the author and the designer, buttressing the connection between imagination and experience.

It is the concept of Imagination of the possessor which can be lost through the reliance of only sensual experience. The book as Imagination Sculpture would look to reinforce the relationship between the words within and the object itself. This concept of an Imagination Sculpture combines what is central to what I see as the duality of experience with imagination, through an internal cultivation of all the senses with what is in the mind’s eye.

The book is an enchanting object of desire; the words that lie within it creating a more fuller sense of acquiesce into an enchanted world; the object itself outpouring that sense of experience as well—both in tandem.

#### Design Education

How can we begin to cultivate a more organic sense of experience and imagination, and a “refined taste in natural objects” by using the experience of all the senses, and a renewed inspiration of the book in education?

David Orr outlines a new *Regenerative Design* emerging, which considers all facets of the world as part of a system—part of the architecture of life. The components include: *Sensemaking*: making sense of the world around us, coming to understand the context in which we are operating; *Relating*: developing key relationships within and across organizations; *Visioning*: creating a compelling picture of the future; *Inventing*: designing new ways of working together to realize the vision.

Here again, is where design can play a pivotal position in our future—through education. Design is excluded almost entirely from education, but should be essential to the future of education. Making, experiencing and imagining are all facets to design, but must be part of a larger world view; how can design interweave with other fields of study? Can we further cultivate a reciprocating relationship between word and image—and can this be evidenced by something as simple as a book?

William Morris is an example of one who cultivated an understanding of nature, a love for the book, and a concern for society and our future. If foresight is really hindsight—a reflection of the future revealed to the eye when it looks back on the past, it is worth the while to consider such examples in our past.



## Poetry and Pattern: William Morris as Metaphor

William Morris set no boundaries around his work. He possessed an uncommon spirit. Whether as poet, paper-maker or political crusader, the embodiment of this spirit materialized throughout all of his work. Since each of his endeavors were quite discrete, his success in each field reinforces the breathe and depth of this singular spirit, and the form of its movement penetrating all his work.

If you want a golden rule that will fit everybody, this is it: Have nothing in your houses that

you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.

—WILLIAM MORRIS

### Singular Spirit

Transcending definition, Morris's deep concern for humanity and reform of our 'quality of life' was what invoked this spirit. It was built a principle of imagination, fusing different facets, giving dimension to his particular perspective. These facets included a recognition of our need for nature and beauty in our lives, a deference for the past while whole-heartedly looking towards the future, and a particularly political viewpoint. His life's work culminated through the creation of the Kelmscott Press and the form of the book.

### Nature Beauty

William Morris infused his work with a belief in man's inherent connection to nature and the necessity for beauty as a fundamental part of life. He pioneered discussion on the relationship between humanity and nature. Evidence of his love of nature can be found in all aspects of his work: in descriptions of nature in his letters and poetry, the patterns on his tapestries and textiles, and the vining borders of the Kelmscott book.

Morris's richly patterned printed textiles did not draw inspiration solely from the natural world; they were also made from nature. Morris rejected the synthetic dyes becoming available at the time, and claimed to "have used only the dyes which are natural and simple" (based on plant and animal extracts) "because they produce beauty almost without the intervention of art."



His political and societal views found inspiration in nature as well. He saw the understanding and awareness of nature as a way to shape communities. He clearly outline this vision for a communal way of living, at peace with its surroundings, as in his utopian novel *News From Nowhere*. There we see what Morris's ideal society of the twenty-first century would be; a decentralized, agrarian communal life. Although this might be an idealized view, today we see a similar call for a renewed devotion to our local communities reminiscent of the societal structure described by Morris.

His concept of beauty combines his beliefs regarding nature, community and the connection between the maker and the user. In his lecture 'The Beauty of Life' delivered in 1880, William Morris defined art and beauty together as integral to life itself: "Beauty, which is what is meant by art, using the word in its widest sense, is, I contend, no mere accident to human life, which people can take or leave as they choose, but a positive necessity of life, if we are to live as nature meant us to; that is, unless we are content to be less than men."

In the late eighteenth century, in the midst of a society reeling from the Industrial Revolution, Morris became an early advocate of rebellion against the tide of mechanization. He foresaw a degradation of society resulting from the growing distance between the design of the object and the making of the object. To him this represented a breaking of trust between humanity and nature.

Just as Henry David Thoreau in America once stated that the price of an item in society should reflect "the amount of life which is required to be exchanged for it," so too was Morris questioning the effects on tomorrow's generation

by our actions today. In *Some Hints on Pattern Designing*, he purports that we should "treat the natural beauty of earth as a holy thing not to be rashly dealt with for any consideration." Denying "that it can ever be our own to do as we like with; it is the property of the world. That we hold in trust for those that come after us."

Thus, Morris advocates living a life in harmony with our surroundings and in steady consideration of our society, ourselves and our world.

#### Medievalism, Modernism and Morris.

Throughout the development of his work, he also incorporated a passionate devotion to the Middle Ages and to everything they represented; Medievalism informed Morris's literary work, as well as his arts and crafts work and the books from his Kelmscott Press. This passion for the past causes some perplexity, because he is also widely thought of as a fore-bearer to the modern design movement. These dual aspects of his spirit exist and they reflect one of many contradictions in his life.

The primary conflict between Morris and those who proceed him, namely Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus, is his concern over technology. But, it was not technology per se that Morris railed against, rather it was the mass production of goods, and the repetition and alienation which he thought accompanied it.

#### Image-makers for Social Reform

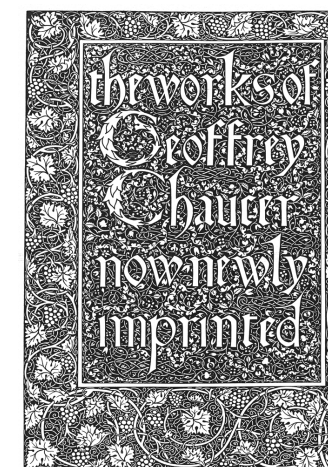
In *Pioneers of Modern Design*, Nikolaus Pevsner notes that "the phase between Morris and Gropius is an historical unit. Morris laid the foundation of the modern style." Despite our conception of Morris as a traditionalist in

terms of his style, Pevsner's image of William Morris as a father of the Modern Movement endures—the chosen styles of Morris and Gropius may have differed, but their belief systems were more analogous. Implicit to both Morris' and Gropius' theories was their concern for satisfying the psychological and sensory needs of the designer and user, needs fulfilled during the acts of creating, using, touching, and perceiving. What remained constant was their concern for allowing, whether by hand or machine, the process for making an ideal real. When we suspend formal analyses of their design, and instead focus on their desire for change, apparent incongruities between Morris' and Bauhaus objects disappear.

#### Morris and the Book

The culmination of Morris's life as a craftsman was his establishment of the Kelmscott Press in 1891. Here, he set out to prove that the high standards of the past could be repeated, or perhaps surpassed, in the present. The books Morris produced were medieval in design, modeled on models of the fifteenth century.

Aspiring to have each book considered as a whole, Morris was consummately concerned with all aspects of production, including the paper, the form of type, the spacing of the letters, and the position of the printed matter on the page. Kelmscott books reawakened interest in book design at the time and still remains a major influence today.



The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,  
The Kelmscott Press

If I were asked to say what is at once the most important production of Art and the thing most to be longed for; I should answer; A beautiful House; and if I were further asked to name the production next in importance and the thing next to be longed for; I should answer; A beautiful Book. To enjoy good houses and good books in self-respect and decent comfort, seems to me to be the pleasurable end towards which all societies of human beings ought now to struggle.

It took me years to understand that words are often as important as experience, because words make experience last.

—WILLIAM MORRIS



### Retrospective Work

Visual explorations in classes leading up to my creative project contained themes which both influenced my way of thinking and my project. The themes of nature, beauty, the book, and a general concern for humanity and society are broad in definition, but they also reflect my general concerns and concepts which I seek to understand more fully and explore more deeply. Contained here are a number of projects which have been pivotal to the development of my project.

stripped away / made clearer and clearer,  
sensuality / modern vs traditional / what is she  
looking at? / repetition / layers of tradition,  
modernism, and then layer upon layer / replicating  
whatever it is that she is looking at (or  
into) is unclear, blurry, undefined & seems to  
be confused / clarity vs confusion / serenity  
of the individual / what is she holding onto /  
nature, trees, almost imperceivable / there's a  
hope I can't make out / history, nature's  
all present, superimposed on top of one another  
gradation of light to dark / calmness of the  
individual / intermingling / is this a happy  
picture? what is this woman thinking

PROF *leo divendal*

SEMESTER *f05*

COURSE *workshop*

ELEMENTS *nature*

*humanity*

*the book*

PROJECT 01

## CONVERSATIONS

**Every life is in search of a narrative.** Dutch photographer Leo Divendal led a week long workshop at VCU inspired by Patrick Modiano's book *Dora Bruder*. The story recounts one man's search—to discover what happened to the life of a young Jewish girl deported from France to Auschwitz in 1942. It is a personal meditation on loss, interweaving the sparse facts of Dora Bruder's story with Modiano's own family history.

And it takes time for what has been erased  
to resurface.

— PATRICK MODIANO

Dora's life was stolen from her, and thus Modiano found himself driven by her memory. During Leo's visit, we deepened our own sense of experience and memory. This was an intuitive journey. The idea of connecting the past to the present through conversation burgeoned creativity. Found poetry, found experience, a reaction to a photo, or a conversation with my grandmother, became pieces put together in random order that came together at the end.

This random intuitive process enabled each student's story to unfold. Each day involved a different assignment, but with no for-knowledge of what would come next. The first day we gathered in the Floyd Avenue studios, as Leo showed us some of his own work. Then we quickly moved beyond—to the outside. Each day was different and unexpected, places epitomizing where stories hide—places filled with wonder and beauty. One day we went to Belle Isle and created a conversation with someone from our past. Next, we ventured to the Virginia Museum of Art—visualizing in words the stories held within the paintings. Moving next to Hollywood Cemetery, poems were composed from the epitaphs of those who lived and died hundreds of years ago. Finally, we collected everything and gathered together discussing the week's experiences.

Response to Leo  
Divendal's postcard  
"krakow, dame met  
een hermelijn"



DAY3: HOLLYWOOD CEMETERY, RICHMOND, VA

THE VISIT

The sight;  
the death. precious sleep  
The lovely smiling transient pleasure  
only to die;  
Fly beloved sleep.  
Safely trust the heart;  
Rise up—  
from thy empty seat.  
sweet.  
noble.  
fall sweetly asleep



On the final day we were asked to make something that interpreted some part of the conversation from the week; I assembled a small book which I gave to Leo visualizing memories of my grandmother and the experience of discovering her childhood home in Ireland the summer before. The experience of intuition, of conversation, and retelling of the story opened my eyes to new wonder.



Ruins of grandmother's home,  
Frenchpark, County Roscommon,  
Ireland



PROF *sandy wheeler*

SEMESTER *f05*

COURSE *workshop*

ELEMENTS *nature*

*humanity*

*beauty*

PROJECT 02

## GREEN WABI SABI

What does the word “green” mean to you? Professor Sandy Wheeler asked each of us to answer this apparently simple question. To help answer this, we found a photograph which represented our own meaning. I chose Werner Bischof’s photo *Paper Flowers*. For me, the word green, just as the photo, spoke of an inherent connection between humanity and nature that we must remember. Here, green was more fully articulated in the Japanese philosophy of beauty called wabi sabi which professes a beauty that is imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete.

Forgive me, I wanted to write only of water,  
plants and people.

—WARNER BISCHOF

At the time, Bischof was fascinated by the relationship he observed between the Japanese way and nature. The photo expresses his desire to choose between ‘paper flowers or soldiers’ as he noted in one letter to his wife, writing, ‘Forgive me, I wanted to write only of water, plants and people’ versus the pain of conflict that he had seen too much of as a war-time photographer.

The story of these paper flowers dates back to his childhood: “Arrival, July 1951: On one of the first summer evenings in Tokyo, enchanting paper flowers shone along the edge of the busy shopping street. Many years ago, I made one of my first encounters with the mysterious East when my father brought home a shell tied up with a piece of paper. We placed it in a glass of water, where it opened and an enigmatic bouquet of flowers complete with leaves, issued forth.”

Green process work:  
typographic experiments

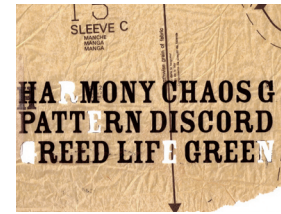


*wabi*

Wabi means things that are fresh and simple. It denotes simplicity and quietude, and also incorporates rustic beauty. It includes both that which is made by nature, and that which is made by man. It also can mean an accidental or happenstance element, or perhaps even a small flaw, which gives elegance and uniqueness to the whole, such as the pattern made by a flowing glaze on a piece of ceramics.

*sabi*

Sabi is a word that originated in Japanese poetry. It expresses the feeling you get in the autumn when the geese are flying south and the leaves are falling. It is a sort of somber longing that is felt in the muted colors and earthy aroma of a forest preparing for winter. This melancholy ache is a sort of hopeful sadness that recognizes that nothing is perfect, nothing lasts, and nothing is finished, but that even so, life is full of meaning. The complete term 'wabi sabi' describes a way of life practiced by those who notice and appreciate the significant moments of each day, live fully in each change of season, and connect with nature and those around them in meaningful and gentle ways.



Green process work

We were asked to then reinterpret our definition, our myth, of green through photography, sculpture, motion, and typography.

My first step was to observe the detail within the photograph. There is an interesting interpolation between light, glass, and water; images are distorted through the light. Similarly, I studied the light reflected and refracted through glass and water.

Next, I studied the frame of the photo by experimenting with the idea of transparency and overlap that is occurring in the photo by photocopying the image on vellum.

Following those two studies, I became interested in the idea of the pattern of nature and life, and so created some patterns of light and shape, and created paper flowers of my own. There was a

photographic study of the street blocks around me, and like Bischof, when looking closer, what I might see for the first time, when walking down a familiar path. Finally within the seeking phase, I did a type study of words that I relate to green, printing and cutting into pattern paper. The patina, roughness, and impermanence of my experiments because of their delicate nature were reminiscent of this concept of wabi sabi.

Wabi sabi is a concept I ran across many years ago during a Philosophy of Beauty class co-taught by a philosopher and a potter. Returning to this idea again, but through a much more detailed process of discovery, I had never the chance before to just so freely play with a concept and with the outcome.



PROF *rob carter*  
SEMESTER *s 06*  
COURSE *workshop*

ELEMENTS *nature*  
*humanity*  
*sleep + dreams*

PROJECT 03  
**MODERNISM + THE POSTER**

Entering my second semester in the Spring of 2006, my five fellow classmates, Rob Carter, and I gathered in Cabell Library. Here, Rob laid out the plan: that we would be making posters! In the end, we would exhibit two posters in Pollack, one relating to Christopher Alexander's book *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*, and one relating to our thesis topic—as yet unknown. In tandem with Alexander's work, the state of Modernism in contemporary society would be considered throughout the semester.

Before we can ourselves turn a problem into form, because we are self-conscious, we need to make explicit maps of the problem's structure, and therefore need first to invent a conceptual framework for such maps.

When you build a thing you cannot merely build that thing in isolation, but must also repair the world around it, and within it, so that the larger world at that one place becomes more coherent, and more whole.  
—CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER

So we began our journey. Rob's class first introduced me to Alexander's writings. Alexander is an architect, but speaks clearly and relevantly to all designers. *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* illustrates his theory of self-conscious versus unself-conscious design, and how modern designers can dismiss preconception, by understanding that—within every problem—there are subsets of problems that must be defined and considered, as opposed to arbitrarily designing a solution. It is important to consider the whole, as well as each constituent part; this is a concept that can be applied to any situation, particularly in our world today and how we relate to it. This became a recurring idea which impacted my work heavily while at VCU.

Poster image  
influenced by  
Alexander's book



Posters exhibited during Re:search





PROF *patrick bell*  
SEMESTER *f06*  
COURSE *workshop*

ELEMENTS *humanity*  
*mapping*

PROJECT 04  
**SLEEP AND DREAMS**

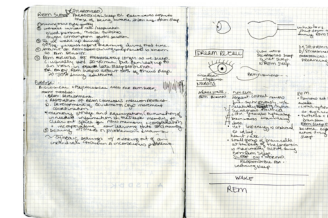
Christopher Alexander spoke of interrelatedness, connectivity, and finally, the mapping out of the discovered sequences. In Patrick Bell's workshop, we considered circulation and mapping in various forms. Each "mapping" project was comprised of two parts: part one entailed mapping out a specific system (a body process, then an example of urban circulation). Part two related the system to an external subject.

Dreams pass into the reality of action. From the actions stems the dream again; and this interdependence produces the highest form of living.

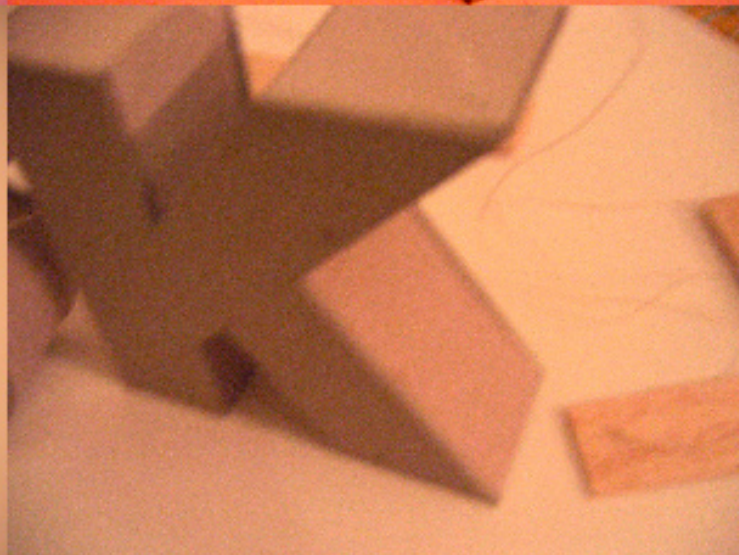
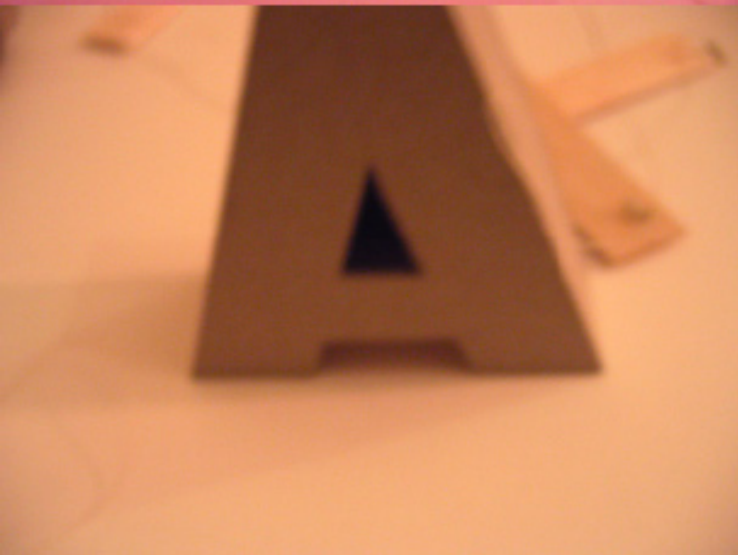
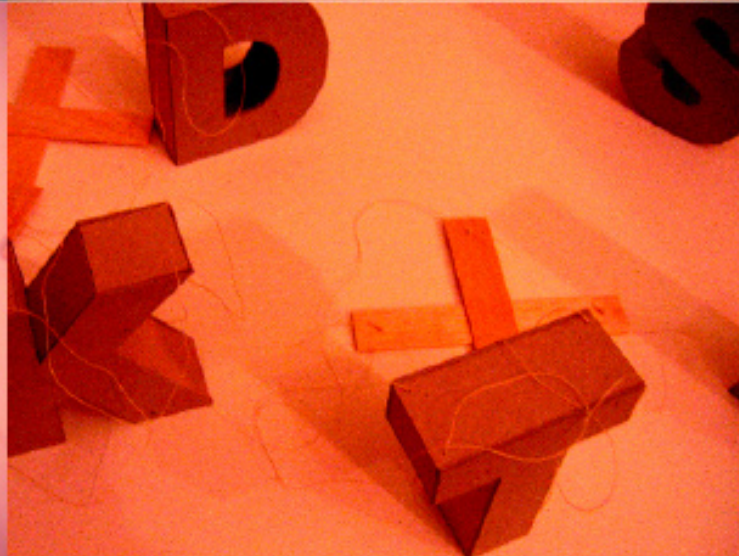
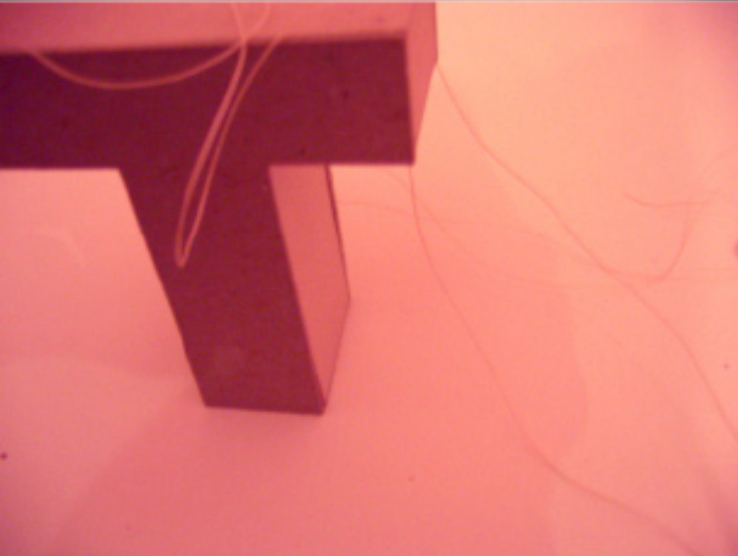
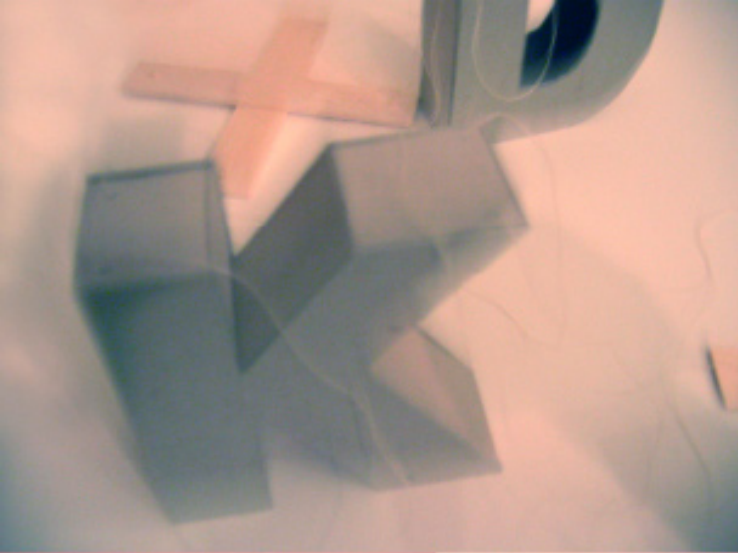
—ANAIIS NIN

First, we picked a body process. Sleep and dreams seemed a rich area of consideration. (Actually I first realized it as a 'body process' after a long night of work, with little sleep, and how by not going through that process, I became less able to function.) It also seemed like something that would work itself well into a design process. Further, I was reminded of ideas considered in Rob's workshop, that our society is "sleeping" through what we see going on around us.

Mapping the process of sleep was challenging but fun. The more I read and sketched, the more I realized how little is known about the process of sleep; moreover, so much that is known is only speculative. As time progressed, I was concerned about the ability to translate this specific mapping into a design process. At some point, I almost gave up, and created a diagram of the circulatory system, which might have been easier to use, but through the encouragement of Patrick and my classmates, I went back to the concept of sleep. This time I went beyond my previous exploration and focused on the nature of dreams.



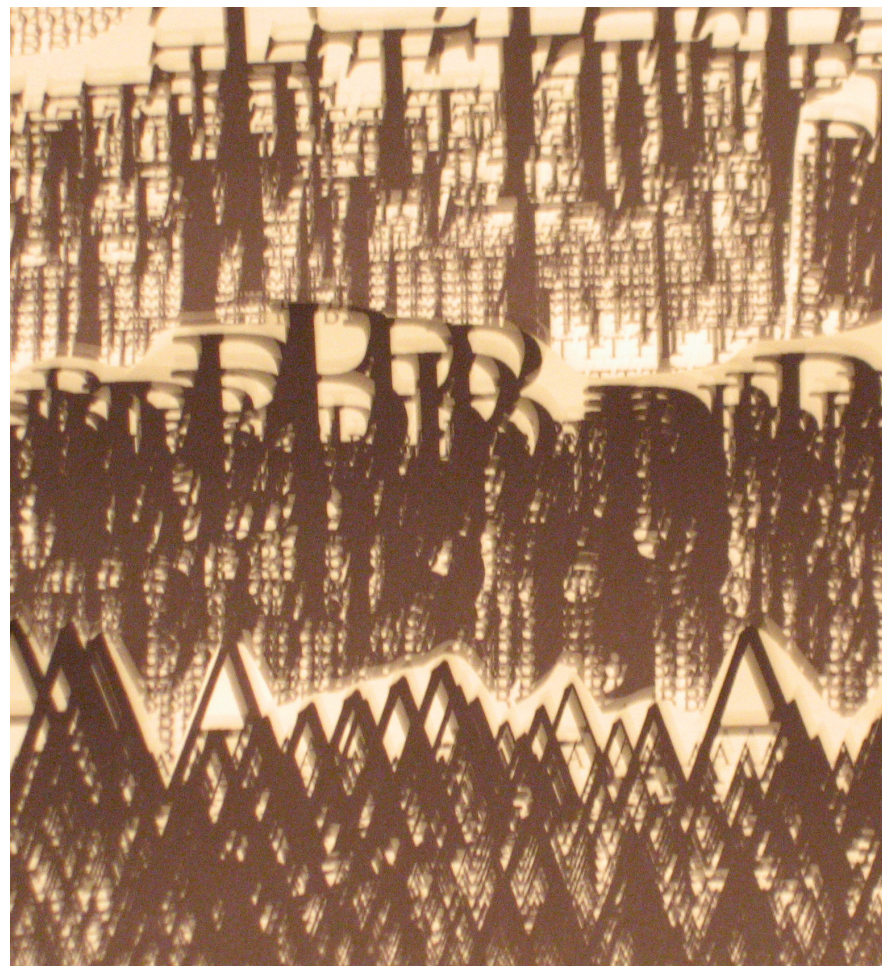
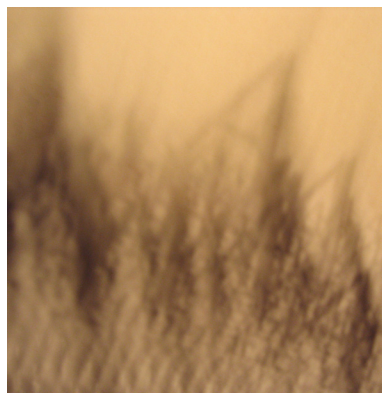
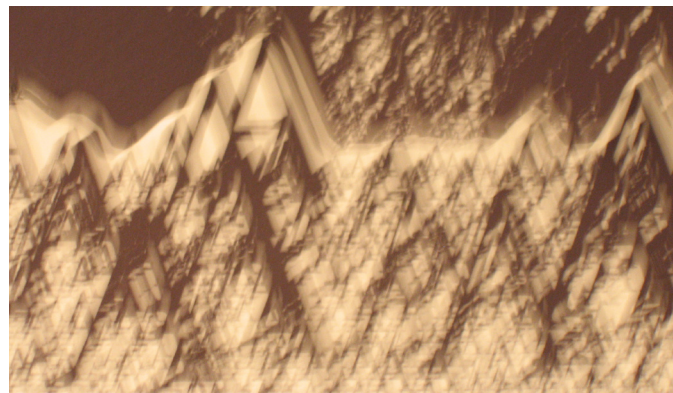
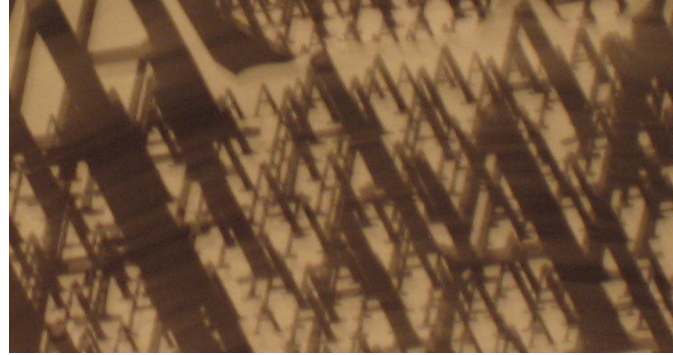
Left: Typographic pillow sleeping  
Right: process work to diagram sleep



Letter puppets in the act of dreaming

Typographic pillow sleeping





#### What are dreams?

One way to conceive of a dream is to think of it as layered memories through time. The layer's intersections are where meaning can be found. Upon discovering this way of considering a dream, I then mapped it out. Now, I entered into the next part of the project—something was to be sent through the dream process.

It would be type. So, type went flying through the dream process—creating new thoughts and meaning. Various type derivatives were sent through the process: letters, words, entire books found their way through. In one case, I created typographic puppets which were able to physically move within this dream process. Finally, my explorations led me to create a typographic dream pillow, formed from a book. In a way, I dreamt that a book goes through this process of dreaming each time it is read.

Taking a natural body process and transforming it into the design process enabled me to see the possibility of changing my own process. It's one that I have been slowly trying to understand since my first semester here. Being 'forced' to work within the confines of a totally different yet clearly defined process, opened my way of thinking about what a process of design could be, and how I might discover new ways of thinking.

The objective mapping-out of the process became an exercise in persistence for me; not wanting to let go of discovering, I continued to seek something that might work, until it did. The dreaming process in itself has a certain lyric quality to it, and so I think that lyricism naturally became a part of my visual experiments.

Typographic characters traversing through the dreaming process

PROF *patrick bell*  
SEMESTER *f06*  
COURSE *workshop*

ELEMENTS *humanity*  
*mapping*

PROJECT 05  
**SOCIETY + URBAN MAPPING**

How can an everyday act be subverted, and how might that change ours or others perception of the world? Professor Bell asked us to consider the idea of movement and circulation within an urban environment. Readings from the Situationist Movement inspired the project which was to subvert the concept of urban movement, and then take that subversion and apply it to another design.

In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.  
—GUY DEBORD

The urban movement I chose was to compare my two cities—Boston, Massachusetts and Richmond, Virginia. My experience had been so different between the two, but I found in their histories, more similarities than differences.

Each morning, over the previous summer, I would walk across the city of Boston. Arriving by train, I would traverse from one side of the city to the other. It's a surprisingly small city.

By the time we were given this assignment, I was longing for that early morning meditation. Using the Situationists as my guide, I imagined ways in which I might in some way recreate the experience, intersecting the two places through time and space. My initial mapping was very simple: it was the two maps interwoven into one.

Heading into the second phase of the project, I wondered how I might give greater dimension to my project. This became a literal exercise as well as a figurative one. As an experiment in connection and collaboration, I asked friends and family to document what they did on a single day. As I intersected two places from my own experience for my first project, I sought to give form to the experience of 17 others in my second. The boxes were a way to illuminate the events of a single day. To consider what happens to 17 people in this way was an interpretation of what might happen when our very divided lives intersect. I maintained a similar visual language between my first mapping experience, the interwoven maps, and the typographic boxes which documented these lives.



Intersecting Maps of  
Boston and Richmond



CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDED:

- mikel parent
- jennifer packard
- shuangshuang wu
- brian nolan
- simone rios
- courtney kearney
- maureen ryan
- stephanie grey
- james hersh
- erin vieth
- joshua marshall
- andrew stein
- mindy neurenberg
- shelagh abate
- summer burrus
- erin fera
- christopher malven
- thank you.

But beyond that, for me, it was exciting to consider how one part of the project related and reflected the other, again considering a new process of discovery. Moreover, it was important to consider the idea of time in a new way, just as the Situationists had. Finally, it made me rethink our need for connection to our environment as well as each other.

1 day / 17 people sculpture

I saw the Panar a  
Canal for my first time

I saw the Panama Canal for my first time, Panama City extremely wealthy little NYC-Vegas look-alike, and ran back into an Italian guy that I met in Costa Rica, with whom I will be traveling to Colombia. I'm in the bottom of the center of America. Today,

I hitchhiked from a place called Chiriqui, got picked up by a trucker going all the way to Panama City, which was really lucky... Social anxiety with the trucker, with whom I shared ruminations on God and Che Guevara.

the dream state is actually the wake state

I always liked the suggestion that the dream state is actually the wake state, and **not vice versa**, like we "rational" people think.

SIR

i see cups, computer, metro, transfer machine, light, thousands architecture photos (I am doing photo compiling),



human! metro station, forest, eating cookies, drink tea, gave bad face to everyone, saying "shit" and "damned" inside for 6 hours.

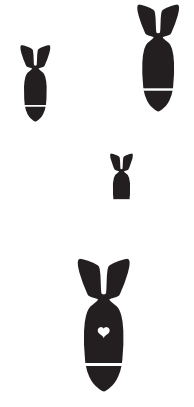
gave bad face to everyone

human!

Then I remember only the long drive home and finding a left wing radio station out of Buffalo, NY. When I get home I turn on the TV and it is still tuned to CNN from this morning. Oddly enough,

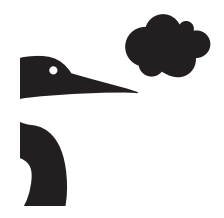
MP

Lou Dobbs is in Buffalo talking about the "war on the middle class." I want to ask him if he really believes there is a middle any more. I quietly imagine that



Today I went to buy some gifts in the neighborhood. I stepped from the carved wooden doors of our brownstone and walked across Blackstone Park where dogs of all sizes and shapes run and play in the mist.

Rain is coming soon! I walked past a stone building that has been completely gutted on the inside with only the exterior façade standing. A giant crane is



i saw a child.

I saw a child. I was on my way to work. I kept driving on, but slower (to be safe).

from the top of the building like a baby bird in a nest! I can look through ornate frames where windows once held glass and see orange and white smooth

metal machinery—the contrast in eras is intense! At Aunt Sadie's I bought things for babies—soft pink and blue. I then went to Formaggio to pick up lunch and gifts for my family. The tiny

sw

I felt happy—one of these days I hope to have a child like that: a little backpack, off to school, holding hands, winter coat, hat and mittens, no cares at all.

Can I have some shapes?

(an unrelated kid story)

Collin was driving his family home from Thanksgiving in Maryland. It was very late, and the kids were asleep in the back seat. Mary Clare, 3-years old, starts to wake up, and says, "Daddy."

Collin replies quietly, so as not to wake 1-year old Liam, "Yes, Mary Clare?"

"Can I have some shapes?", she asks.

A bit confounded, Collin replies, "Well, what kind of shapes do you want?"

"A rectangle."

Not sure of what to do, Collin reaches back with a closed but empty hand and deliberately places nothing in her hand, thinking her dream will fill in the blank. "Here you go, Mary Clare."

After a few seconds, she says sleepily, "Haasay, that's not a rectangle...that's my hand."

Collin and his wife, Erin, root around and come up with a cd case, which Collin gives her.

I felt sad

Today I was at the adolescent clinic at the health center in JP that I've been working at.

I saw several young women, many of whom were being treated for or needed to be tested for sexually transmitted diseases like gonorrhea and chlamydia.

I felt sad

that these young girls (ages 13-17 or so) were getting into situations where they do things they have no way of understanding, with consequences that they have no way

just

store is bustling and smells of aged cheese and meats. Tissue-paper wrapped packages of amaretti biscuits tied with string, little jams from france,

danish viking sea salt!

Outside, looking up into the gray misty sky, wreaths hang from the highest windows on a row of brownstones.

Today I did not have to work. I spent the better part of the day looking for Christmas decorations.

After a moment, Mary Clare replies, "Hey, that's not a rectangle either. That's a square!"

Now she's starting to get louder, so before she can wake up Liam, Collin hands her his iPod, which is rectangular in shape, as we all know.

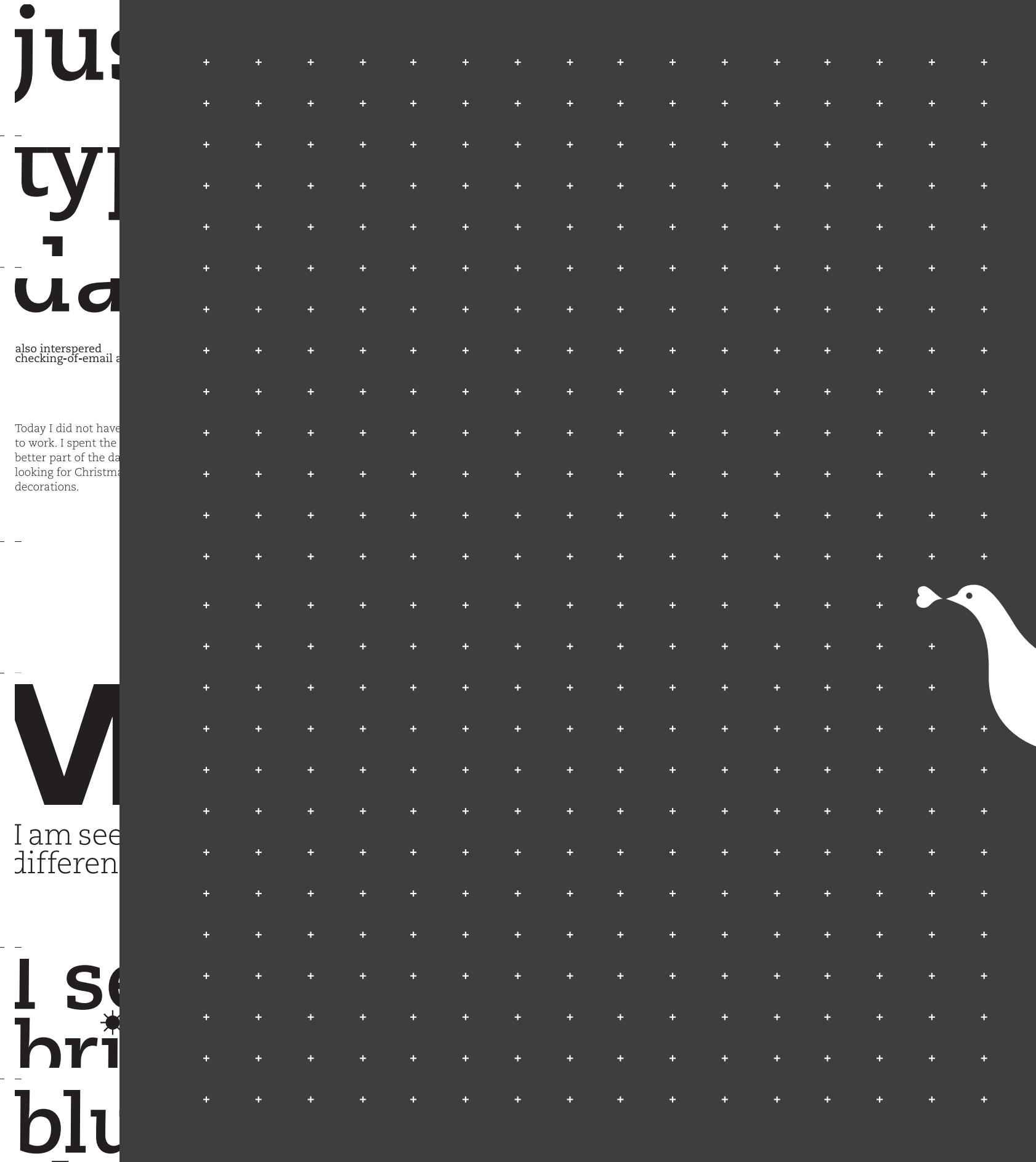
Mary Clare says, "Thanks", and immediately falls back to sleep.

I

treated at the ED after an accident because she was afraid she'd be made to retire from her hospital cleaning job, even though her finger is now missing a chunk of flesh and we can do nothing because she wasn't seen immediately. It makes me sad that I can

see that future in this beautiful young girl.

reason didn't make it through high school and now come to the clinic to be seen for joint problems because they clean people's houses all day, and their joints age much more quickly than they





PROF *terry irwin*    ELEMENTS *nature*  
SEMESTER *s 07*        *humanity*  
COURSE *2-day workshop*     *mapping*

PROJECT 06  
**DESIGN AND NATURE**

Terry Irwin's workshop examined her studies in design and the holistic science of observation. Our time was short—just two days. The first day focused on Alexander's concept of fit and unfit forms. Here we considered the entire life-cycle of a designed thing (anything), and how it does or does not fit into our society-at-large. There are many more unfit objects than there are fit ones.

We have fragmented the world into bits and pieces called disciplines and sub-disciplines, hermetically sealed

from other such disciplines. As a result, after twelve or sixteen or twenty years of education, most students graduate without any broad, integrated sense of the unity of things. The consequences for their personhood and for the planet are large.

—DAVID ORR

On the second day, we used the Goethian method of observation to sketch out two areas of our environment. The first was completely natural, the second being man-made. For the first task, I went to Hollywood Cemetery and found a small daffodil to draw. This was a peaceful endeavor. I then sat and drew in VCU's student commons area, which I discovered to be chaotic and disengaging. My very different experiences in those two very different environments were evident in my drawings.

The Goethian method of thinking and sketching reinforces the need to be with nature, because we are a part of nature. Authors such as David Orr and Fritjof Capra are calling for the necessity of a new and elegant design approach that incorporates a world view of inclusion—of ourselves and how we relate to nature. During our conversations on fit and unfit forms, we considered the characteristics of these forms. They were not just physical qualities, but emotional ones as well. In one case, I brought up C.S. Lewis, and his experience with nature and joy, how the experience of joy in our lives is so absolutely necessary, and we experience this joy through nature, and through others. This workshop reopened those thoughts about the experience of joy.

Ripped letter  
taped back together

**Goethean Method Process**

This process was developed by Goethean Scientist Margaret Colquhoun. It is based upon Goethe's technique of integrative observation and 'gentle empiricism' and demonstrates how appropriate ideas can be derived from studying their context in a new way.

In this model, Science with its emphasis on 'fact finding' is an activity based in the past, on what has already happened, whereas art imagines 'what can be' in the future. The past and future flow into each other to inform the process in the present.

**Art**

**4 SEEING IN BEHOLDING**

Asking 'who are you', listening to what it tells you about itself

**3 FLOWING IN TIME**

Imagining how it 'came to be', letting the past flow into the present and imagining the future

**2 EXACT SENSORIAL PERCEPTION**

Objective observation of 'what is there'

**1 INTUITIVE MEETING**

Developing a 'sense of feeling' for the thing observed, without judgement or analysis



**Science**

**5 BECOMING ONE WITH THE ESSENCE**

An intuitive synthesis of the previous steps in order to recognize the essence

**6 DEVELOPING THE IDEA**

The idea arises out of our merging with the essence of the thing

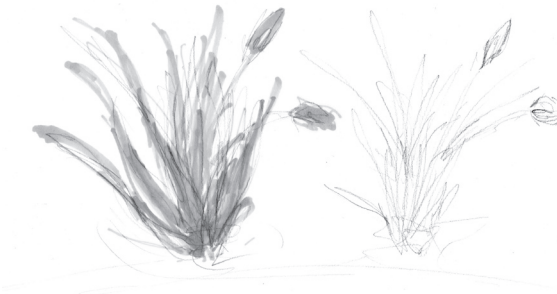
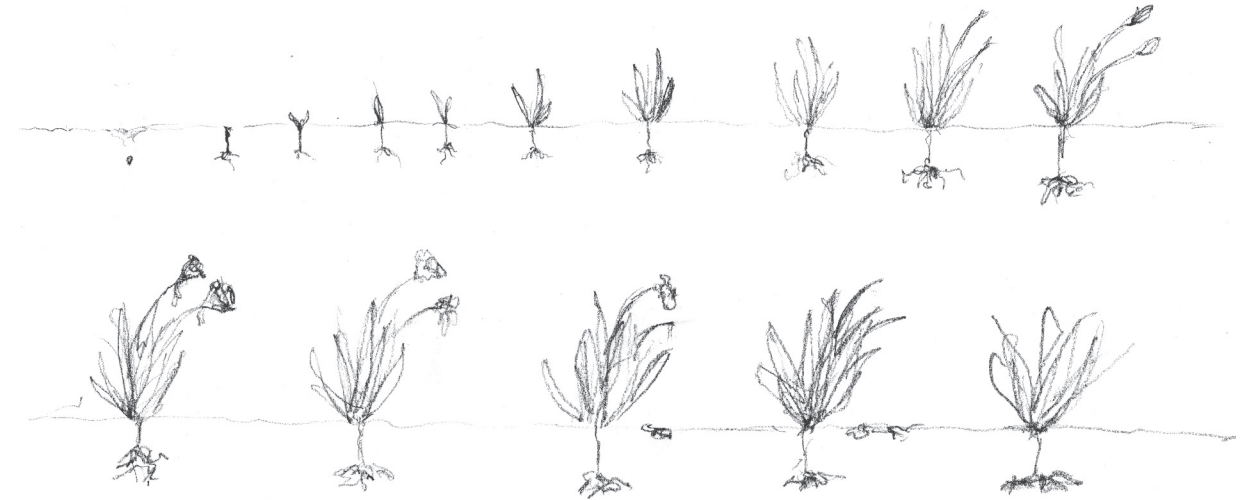
**7 GROWING THE PLAN**

Developing the idea further, using an integrated approach of intuition and observation

**8 LANDING THE PLAN**

Objective observation of 'what is there'

past → now ← future



Intuitive drawings using the Goethean Method



PROF *roy mckelvey,*  
*jamey maboney*  
SEMESTER *s 07*  
COURSE *open source*

ELEMENTS *nature*  
*humanity*  
*mapping*

PROJECT 07  
**OPEN SOURCE WORKSHOPS**

During the first semester of every year, we participated in a series of several short workshops. Two of the workshops had a particular influence on me. During the first week of Fall 2006, Roy McKelvey paired us with a first-year and sent us to document Richmond in some way. Here, I recall first being introduced to the Situationists. The Situationists sought to buy back their happiness from a consumer society. Experiencing their space differently, allowed a reconception of their own existence. Called “drifting,” *dérive* in French, they would create special conditions or “situations” in order to resist the “insidious appeal of the pseudo-needs of increased consumption and overcome the mounting sense of alienation that have characterized the postmodern age.” (Beirut 37)

When freedom is practiced in a closed circle, it fades into a dream, becomes a mere image of itself. The ambiance of play is by nature unstable. At any moment, “ordinary life” may prevail once again. The geographical limitation of play is even more striking than its temporal limitation. Every game takes place within the boundaries of its own spatial domain.  
—GUY DEBORD

With the Situationists as our guide, Regina Scully and I went for a walk around the city. Professor McKelvey’s gave us insight into the Situationist movement, and through that, Regina and I created a game of discovery together, searching for things around the city and documenting it along the way. The final outcome was one of joy. Moreover, it was a chance to grasp what the Situationists had in mind, and consider that what they were combating had only grown worse. No longer do we make anything; instead, we are increasingly living detached, fabricated lives. Although others before them, including William Morris, witnessed and commented on the same societal problems, the Situationists marked a distinct change in action.

They sought to change things by subverting the existing structure. The creation of a documentation reflecting our subversion of the experience was wonderful, especially because I have always struggled with the act of subversion. Despite the fact that I find subversion intriguing, more often than not, subversion is not my strength. This was an entirely new experience for me. I felt as though the reaction of those who watched the short movie was one of enjoyment as well.

People can see nothing around them that is not their own image; everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is animated. Obstacles were everywhere. And they were all interrelated, maintaining a unified reign of poverty.  
—GUY DEBORD

Jamie Mahoney and Brian Condra demonstrated the letterpress and screen-printing processes to us during another workshop. This was technical, but by this time, since I had begun to look at William Morris, it informed my visual process of making. In one experiment, I screen-printed fabric dyed naturally. This created a beautiful explosion of color and expression. More than just a technical process, it was a way to reflect what the need for the experience of the making of the object. The concerns of William Morris and later, the Situationists, were apart of my thinking at this time. The physical act of making is integral to our need to be human.



Letterpress workshop experiments



## Carver Project

Design, social conscience, and collaboration: these were the three themes that would drive my creative project as I departed for the summer after my first year. Using World Studio Foundation, the Bielenberg Project, and Rural Studio as inspiration, the idea that I would *do more* and *comment less* would be the theme.

Artists, whatever their medium, make selections from the abounding materials

of life, and organize these selections into works that are under the control of the artist.... In relation to the inclusiveness and literally endless intricacy of life, art is arbitrary, symbolic and abstracted.

That is its value and the source of its own kind of order and coherence.

—JANE JACOBS

But these were broad concepts. Do what? With whom? For what reason? I hoped to create an opportunity to listen and foster dialogue through design, and see what might come out of it. What comes about through conversation and connection within a community?

I then considered what audiences I might be able to work with. The two “communities” which I was most interested in were the design community, or working with a local community in Richmond.

The first idea of dialogue within the design community was born out of two experiences. The first was my general feeling that I still have so much to learn. What better way to learn than to talk to other designers; but then an opportunity appeared.

Several years ago at MassArt, Chaz Maviyane-Davies, a Zimbabwean designer, gave a lecture to the student body. At the time, he had just arrived in America as an exile, fleeing a hostile country; this was the first time I considered that someone’s design could put their own life in danger. His words reflected his love for his home, and the knowledge that design can bring change.



Photo of Carver Project building

- (C) ...but that's another thing altogether. And of course, you know, Rockport will do a book like that based on the idea that a famous designer like Milton Glaser is sort of going to be able to sell and sell them based on that name. But I was really disappointed in the book that I found that they did no, they did no homework on that book. Basically, the way I felt they dealt was like they had all these entries from all over laid out on the floor and they went around and said oh, that's nice, that's nice, that's nice. And then after they collected so many, this is my theory, what kind of groups can we put them and even so even with the related text that went to them, you tend to find that they wanted much more from us, you know, than they were willing to say.
- So, you know, you found what's next to my posters what I said, [unintelligible] what they have to say and about, contextualize that. And I just found it was one of those kind of books, again, like I said a Rockport book where people are kind of fashionable, this is in and we've got a good name, person behind it, we can spend a little bit of money on it. So I was a little disappointed in that book. I just thought it was, you know, when you compare them to Elizabeth McQuiston Graphic Agitation books, I mean those are widely searched and you've got a friend.
- (K) Oh, hello.
- (C) Yeah.
- (K) Oh, look at this. He's not going to bite me.
- (C) No.
- (K) I'll just let him go, he's a little [unintelligible]. That's beautiful, ooh, wow. Look at, I don't think I've ever seen a bug like that.
- (C) Yeah. Had you seen Graphic Agitation?
- (K) I don't think I have.
- (C) It's by Elizabeth McQuiston. She's an English writer. She used to be head of the Royal College of Art and also my teacher, my typography teacher years ago. And she's got two books, one of them was, the first one was released twelve years ago and the second one two years ago. So it's Graphic Agitation I and II.
- (K) Okay, I'll look it up.
- (C) Those are now the definitive books on you want to say design and social responsibility. And before that the only one that existed was by Gary Yankar pop artist and naturalist in the 60s, late 60s but those two. I mean and of course there's probably hundreds of others now but if you look at the way she set up the book and how she's written them and the way she's sort of qualified each section and, you know, her choices and things, you'll find that you know this is how this kind of book should be written. And that's why, you know, so maybe designers, somebody hasn't seen anything and this is the first of it's kind and it looks okay. But to me it was, I...
- (K) It was a picture book.
- (C) Yes, it was.
- (K) I think that's that and that would...
- (C) Well, you call it kind of coffee table book for new generation and that's, it wasn't [unintelligible]
- because I expected more.
- (K) Wow, right. Yeah, it's actually when you were talking about Rockport, we had this survey that we actually put out to all of our professors because one of our projects, it was curious this semester in one of our classes was to look at our MFA program and see how it's structured. And we have very little like actually marketing materials or anything. We almost have nothing. It's an interesting thing because we're starting the program but and so one of the, one of the surveys that we actually put out to one of our professors John Malinoski who does a lot of socially responsible work.
- (C) Yes.
- (K) He...
- (C) From [unintelligible]...
- (K) Well, you know, I [unintelligible]...
- (C) It's okay, carry on, you know, carry on speaking...
- (K) And he was saying how, he actually included in, he said, what was it, specifically he said don't
- (C) That's the one I used when I was in college and so, as my sourcebook if you want to say that the father of those kind of books.
- (K) Yeah. Okay. So, maybe we I guess and really actually I didn't quite say this earlier on but when I was doing the research I was really looking at, one of the things that I looked at was this idea of design or dialog in action and how a designer is very often talk a lot but do very little and however that may be taken and I remember at the end of the semester I was talking to my professor and I said I want to do more. I want to talk less and do more. And then as recent as the summer has sort of gone by and I've seen how people aren't really talking. I mean, we look at what's going on in our world today and how dialog has seemed just closed up, I don't know exactly what's, it's just like people don't listen to one another at all and it's really disturbing to me. And so, and of course, it's still evolving.
- buy Rockport books. And I think that there is this Rockport survey books I think is what he described it as. And there is this lack of information that they are all just pretty picture books but and now I'm so keenly aware of that, too, when I look at books, when I look at specifically Rockport books and it is true that there's a lack of information and an abundance of images...
- (C) Oh, my batteries.
- (K) Oh, well you know I have this, so I can send you this.
- (C) Yeah, I might ask you to send me that.
- (K) Yeah, absolutely. I'm sure it won't be [unintelligible] but so that and before I go too far. Gary Yank...
- (C) Yankar.
- (K) Y-A-
- (C) Y-A-N-K-A-R.
- (K) Okay.
- (C) It's an old book, it's sort of, it's probably hard to find now, pop art.
- (K) Okay.

During Steven Hoskin's Seminar class in my first semester, I presented a paper on subversive design. During that time, I revisited Chaz's work, and over Thanksgiving break spoke with a family friend, Mindy Nierenberg, about school and my paper. Unbeknownst to me, she was friends with Mr. Maviyane-Davies. Through her, I was able to sit down and talk with him one-on-one. I once again was inspired by the passion and drive he has for his work. I transcribed much of this conversation during our first semester.

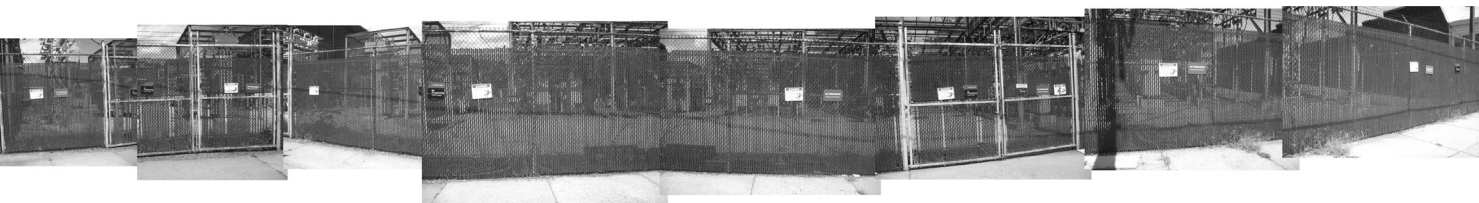
Just before leaving for the Summer—the possibility of working with the Carver community next door to the VCU campus in Richmond became a possibility. There was a building and a wall which needed care and attention. The building was owned by the local electric company, Dominion, and it sat on a corner on the edge of the Carver district abutting the VCU campus.



Returning from summer break, the opportunity still seemed to be there. My first step was to make an appointment with Barbara Abernathy and Jessica Honke, the VCU liaisons to the Carver district. Professor John Malinoski, my thesis advisor, Barbara, Jessica and I talked over possibilities. What could the wall become? So many possibilities: a sculpture, an information graphic, something much more than an ugly metal fence and a building with bricked over windows. Before the meeting, I considered what was most important about the project, and at the top of the list was the statement "Need for Community Involvement."

To me, this was a central question. How do I make a connection with a community that I knew so little about? Also, I went into the project knowing that the idea might never come to fruition, but the main goal of the project was to create a conversation with the community. That was my point.

Photos of Carver Project building and wall



## KEY ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL PLACES

key attributes	intangibles		measurements
comfort and image	safety charm history attractiveness	sitability walkability greenness cleanliness	crime statistics sanitation rating building conditions environmental data
access and linkage	readability walkability reliability continuity	proximity connectedness convenience accessibility	traffic data mode split transit usage pedestrian activity parking usage patterns
uses and activity	realness sustainability specialness uniqueness affordability fun	activity usefulness celebration vitality indigenouness homegrown quality	property values rent levels land-use patterns retail sales local business ownership
sociability	co-operation neighborliness stewardship pride welcoming	gossip diversity storytelling friendliness interactivity	street life social networks evening use volunteerism number of women, children and elderly

## ORIGINAL OBJECTIVES:

### Community / Social Aspects

- Necessity for community participation within the process
- Necessity for cross-generational participation
- Define the level of participation by community members

### Project Objectives

- Define stages of development
- Define members
- Define who has sign-off during the project

### Historical Component

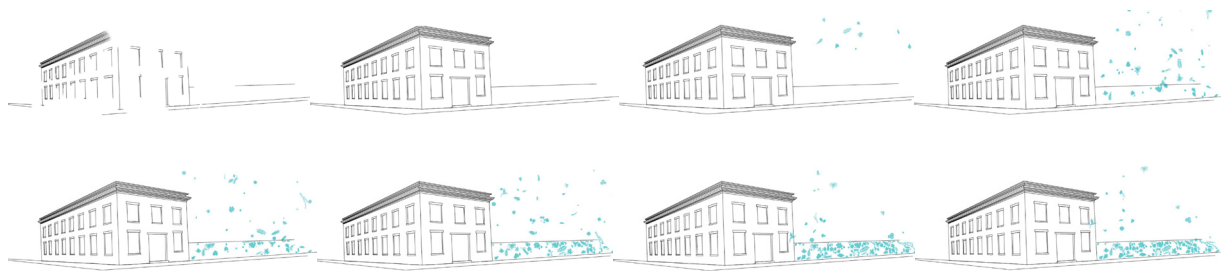
- Understanding historical context of the district and how it relates to the wall

### Design Objectives

- Define the audience
- Define the message
- Define what the mural could be, other than just a painting
- Experiment with ideas and materials, and other possibilities like sound
- Consideration of public / private space
- Information design component

### Scheduling Objectives

- Concept sign-off by the 1st of January 2007
- Implementation/buildout of wall space by 1st of March 2007



Animation experiments  
bringing nature to the wall



There was precedence here. The Carver partnership had existed for the past 10 years. There were two successful projects that had been carried out by previous artists and designers in the community. The first was a banner project created by the photographer Wendy Ewald, supported by the Hand Workshop. The second was a recent thesis project involving a conversation with the community called *Community Tree Sheep Hill*, By Kim Fleishman.

Early in the process, I sat down with Ashley Kisler from the Visual Arts Center of Richmond (previously the Hand Workshop). From experience, she suggested that it was extremely important for a project of this size to figure out which members of the community and beyond who might be involved. Once I had figured this out, I could make contact with them. When working with any community, it is not merely the community itself, but anyone who might have a voice that should be considered, including: university representatives, local political leaders, building owners, as well as the community members.

I set out to meet the community. This turned out to be much more difficult than it first appeared. I sat in on the monthly Community meeting. Somewhere within the semester, Jessica, the liaison within the department quit. With that, I started to realize just how difficult it was to become in some way a part of a community, when you had no real connection. The difficulties continued. I spoke with professors in the education department, hoping that I might work with children in the local school—going back to my second option. I thought that it might be really wonderful to have the opportunity to work with children. But this was impossible because of recent changes within the school's guidelines. As another option, I sat in on one of the after school programs at the VCU partnership. I thought that I might instead be able to work with the partnership and perhaps create a short arts program that would work with what they already had in place, but because this was an arts program through the School of Education, I wasn't allowed to work with the students. It became apparent that creating a connection with people would not be easy, and for me it was a necessity.



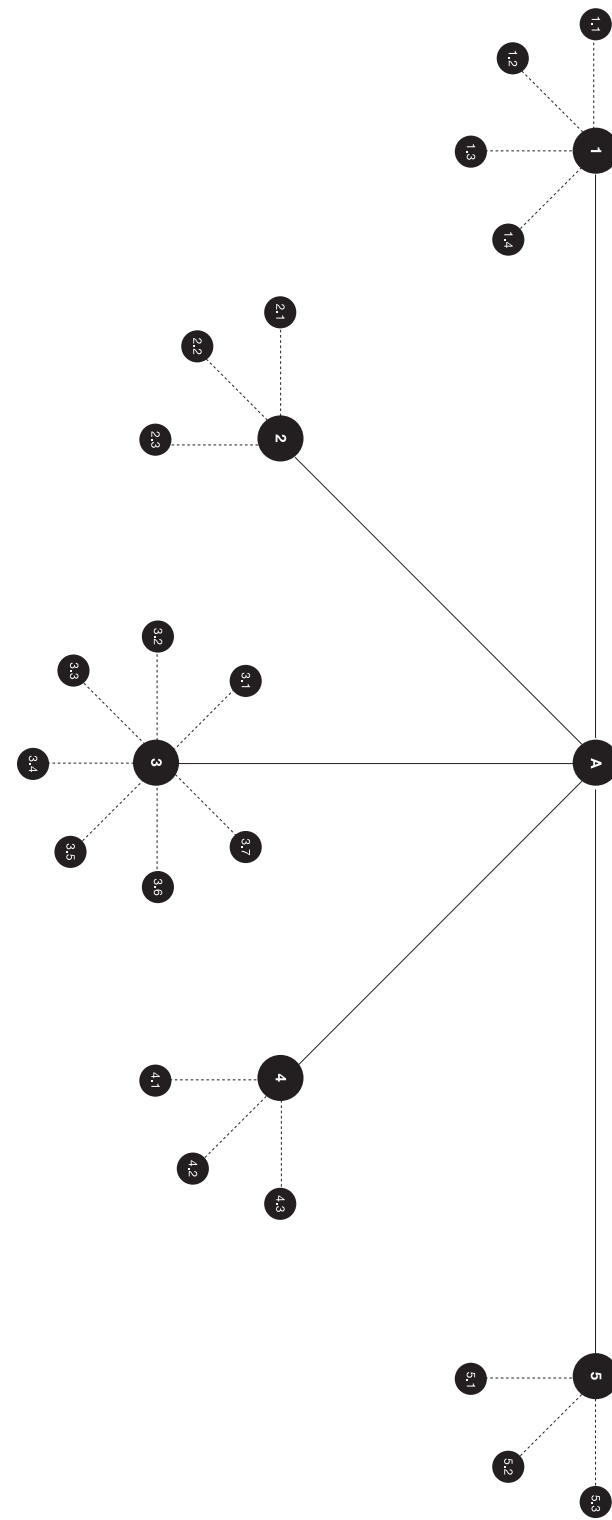
While all this was happening, I was also just trying to learn about the area outside of my experience with individuals. I set out to learn about the community. I went out and photographed the environment, looking to learn something from experiencing the area in some way. I also filmed the building itself, experimenting with various animation approaches using AfterEffects.

One breakthrough I had was an urban mapping experiment in which I was considering the electric wires as a metaphor for the connections within the Carver community. I went out and photographed the electric poles and wires, and in the process, discovered something very important about the street itself. Despite the fact that the building was owned by the electric company, it was the poorest lit block on the street. There were some blocks where ten or eleven

street lights stood, some with low-hanging lamp-lighting which created a much safer environment, but this block had only two.

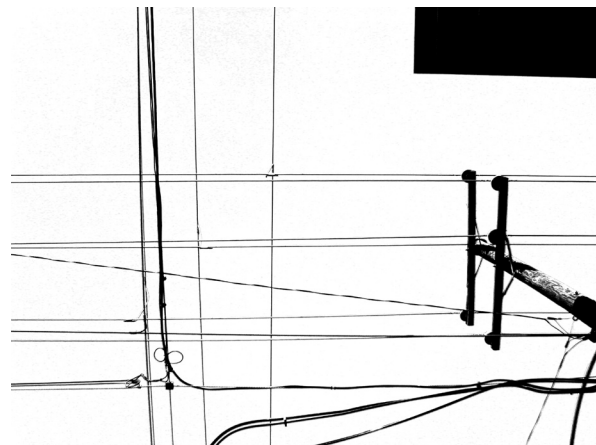
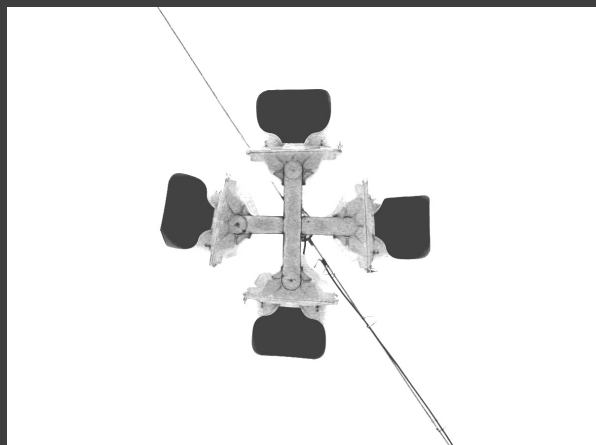
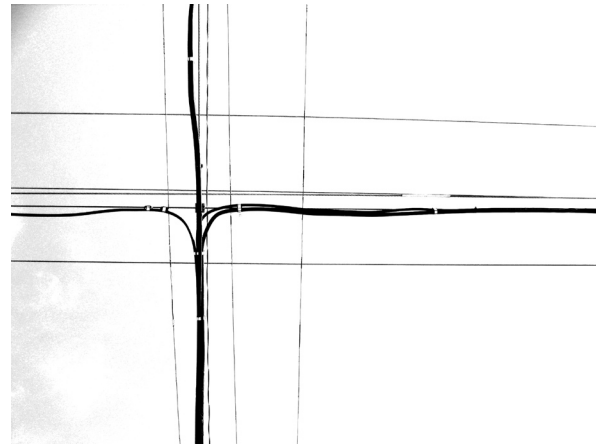
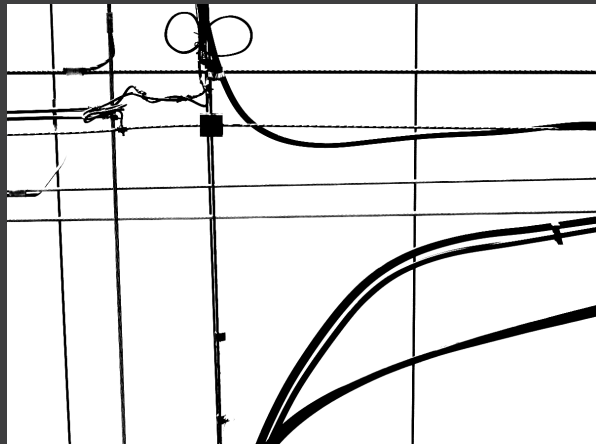
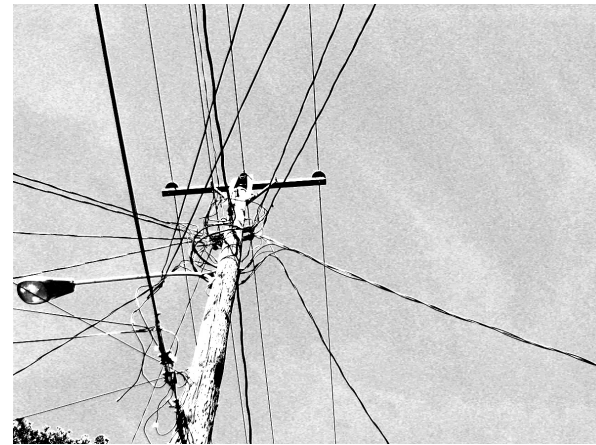
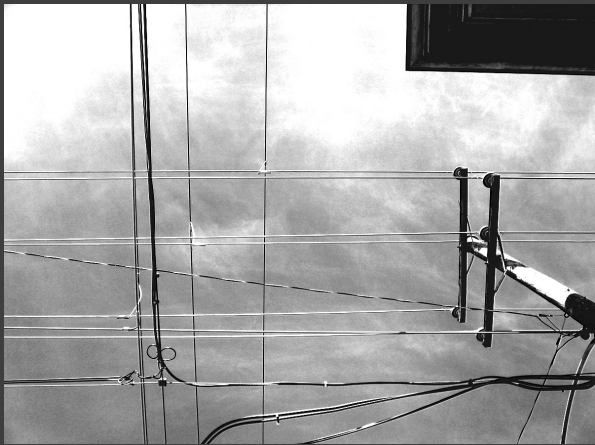
Jane Jacobs considered the concept of how you create safer streets and communities. This is done so by getting people out walking on the streets. If your sidewalks are busy, then an area is safer.

The idea of light became central to what might become of the building and the wall. It must contain a lighting element. So with that, I started to create consider themes that might appear within these bricked over windows, but also, the idea that these creations would be a source of light as well.



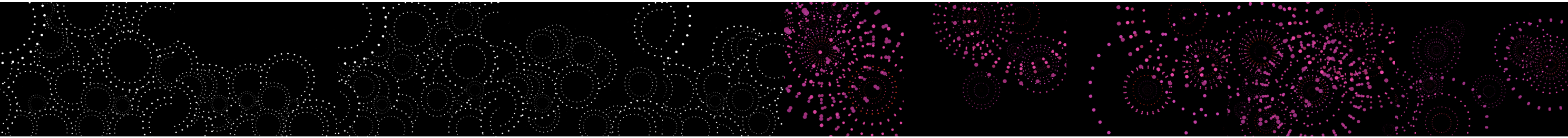
#### CARVER DISTRICT PARTICIPANTS

- 1. Carver Community**
  - 1.1 Families
  - 1.2 Children
  - 1.3 Elderly
  - 1.4 Students
- 2. VCU partnership**
  - 2.1 Barbara Abernathy
  - 2.2 Jessica Honke
  - 2.3 Volunteers
- 3. VCU**
  - 3.1 School of the Arts
  - 3.2 GDES
  - 3.3 John Malinoski
  - 3.4 me
  - 3.5 Susan Roth
  - 3.6 Pam Taylor, Art Education
  - 3.7 Carter Graham, GDES
- 4. Dominion**
  - 4.1 Contact for donation
  - 4.2 Engineers at Substation
  - 4.3 Safety engineers
- 5. Production**
  - 5.1 Sculpture, —Blake
  - 5.2 Civil engineering
  - 5.3 Electrical engineering



Documentation of powerlines  
in Carver district





Flash animation experiments  
of adding light to the building

Throughout this process, I could not get away from my lack of connection with the community. Because this was so central to my purpose, it became evident to me, that I had to make a choice. Either continue working—acknowledging the real possibility that I might not make a connection within the community, or reconsider my project entirely. At this point, I started to look at the idea of Urban Space as opposed to Community/Collaboration/Conversation. But this seemed so totally out of context from my thinking, and it wasn't where I wanted to go.

The second option—to rethink what I was doing—became more of a possibility. I chose to move on, considering the work that I had done to date, and where I would go next.



## Process + Methodology

I love art, and I love history, but it is living art and living history that I love... It is in the interest of living art and living history that I oppose so-called restoration. What history can there be in a building bedaubed with ornament, which cannot at the best be anything but a hopeless and lifeless imitation of the hope and vigour of the earlier world?  
—WILLIAM MORRIS

Process work  
layering nature

In Rob Carter's Fall Seminar, we conceived of and began developing the outline for a book about design. The unique intersections between philosophy—the love of wisdom—and design profoundly interest me. What role does/has/can philosophy play in relation to design?

Refining my proposed book's purpose, I chose to consider how spirituality had influenced and inspired designers over time. The questions I raised in Rob's class helped me to define where my creative project would go from there. Unbeknownst to me, concepts that I long found interesting but seemingly unrelated, returned. The intention of this hypothetical book focused on creating a guide to design's social and spiritual pioneers. It would examine the lives of designers who openly questioned their purpose in regards to something greater than themselves. Divided into two primary sections, it would reflect on the concept of spirituality as an internal and an external force, interweaving spirituality, social conscience and design.

My thesis was in pieces entering into my final semester. Searching for clarity, and realizing my continued interest in the subject of the book, I returned there in the Spring. Going back to my proposal outline, I started at the top—with William Morris. It was no coincidence that Morris fell first, because not only was I most familiar with him, but he resembled many ideas which I advocate.



The true secret of happiness lies in taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life.  
—WILLIAM MORRIS



William Morris had long been an inspiration of mine. I first came across his work in a class on Northern European Art as an undergraduate student. Soon after college, my travels led me to London, where I unexpectedly encountered Morris again. I became friends with the great nephew of a Pre-Raphaelite artist named Arthur Hacker. In a mouse-sized flat in Shepherd's Bush, he spoke passionately about his desire to be surrounded by beauty. Upon recollection, it might as well have been Morris himself speaking in his lecture *The Beauty of Life*: "Beauty, which is what is meant by art, using the word in its widest sense, is, I contend, no mere accident to human life, which people can take or leave as they choose, but a positive necessity of life."

Considering the past as a light to the future, Morris was constantly looking towards this past. Whether in his design or his writings, he employed history as a means of putting the future society into perspective, not as an object to be imitated. The purpose was not to conjure up nostalgic dreams of the past, but to move towards the future, making us wish for something different. He was interested in 'the education of desire'—desiring something better. Likewise, I looked back at the history and process of Morris as a way to look towards the future.



Documentation of dyed fabric



*black sesame seeds*



*turmeric powder*



*green tea*



*black tea*

**Chromatic States**

It was then clearer to me why Morris was known for such a distinctive color palette. I think this was related both to his own aesthetic and concern for nature, but also to the method itself. He realized that colors are charged with memory and emotion and communicate something within them.



Fabric dyed with tea, berries, coffee and tumeric powder, respectively

My first experiment was to look at the various ways of dyeing fabric and paper. I discovered how cotton and wool vary in the ability to take on the dyes, and how substances vary in intensity. How one might think that strawberries and raspberries might stain the fabric a rich red, but it is instead a very tender light pink; and coffee and tea, especially green tea, have a hint of color, while nothing can compare to the richness of turmeric.

What I was surprised most to discover was that the colors developed from this natural process were some of the most rich and wonderful colors I can remember experiencing, and most unlike the chemically-produced colors I had seen. There was something familiar about the colors, in their unfamiliarity.

Between the earth  
and man arose the  
leaf. Between the  
heaven and man  
came the cloud.  
His life being partly  
as the falling leaf,  
and partly as the  
flying vapour.

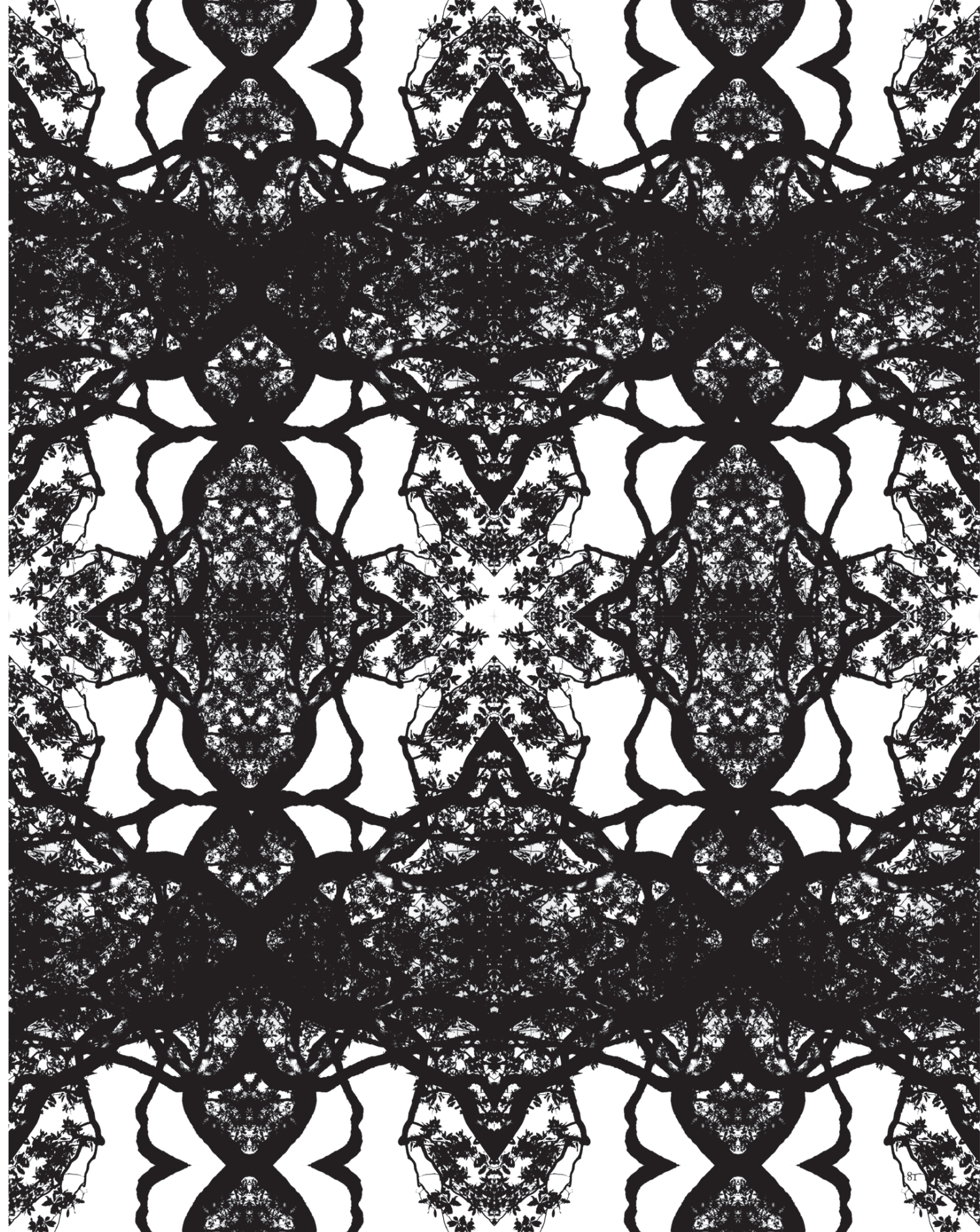
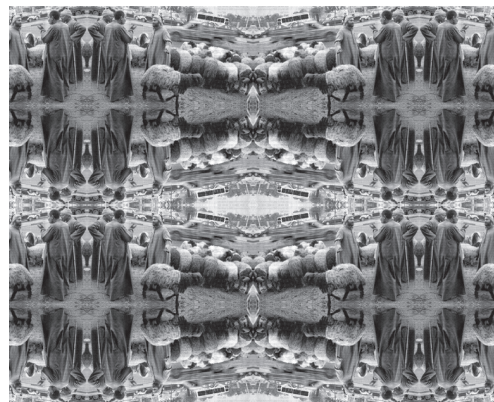
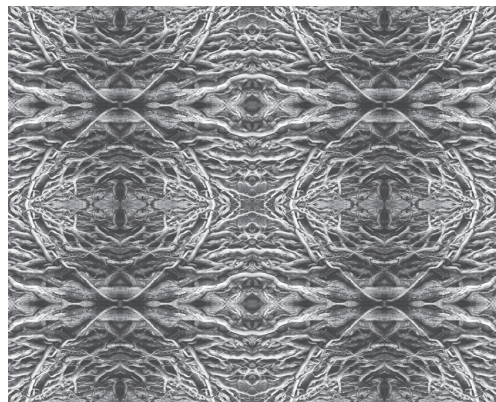
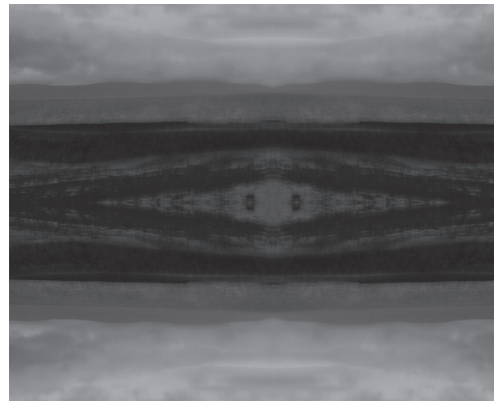
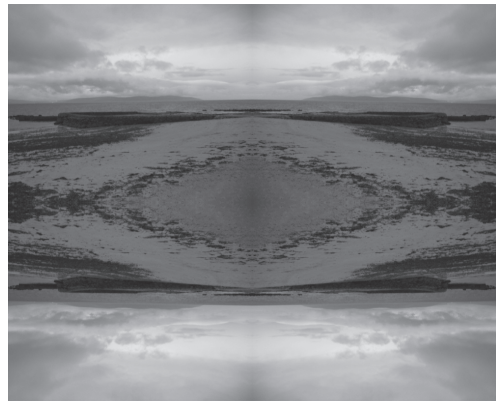
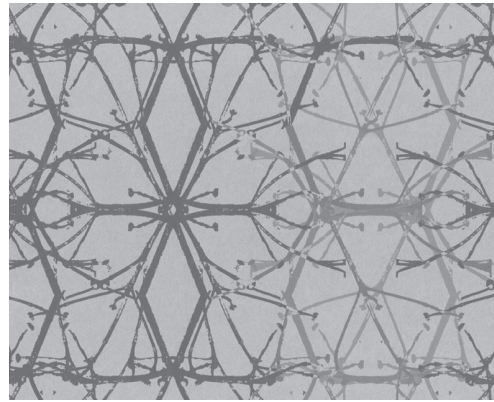
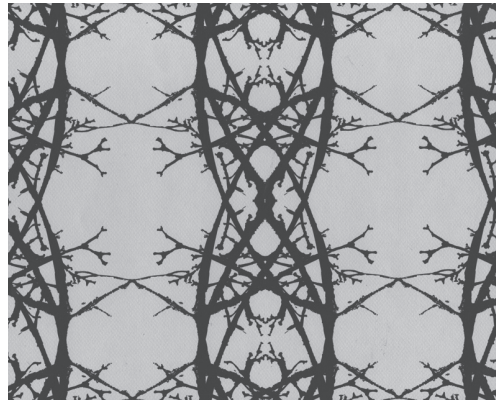
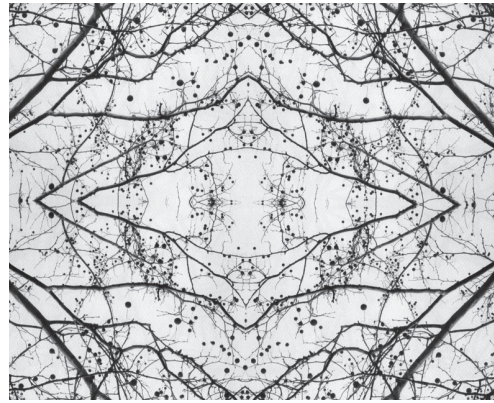
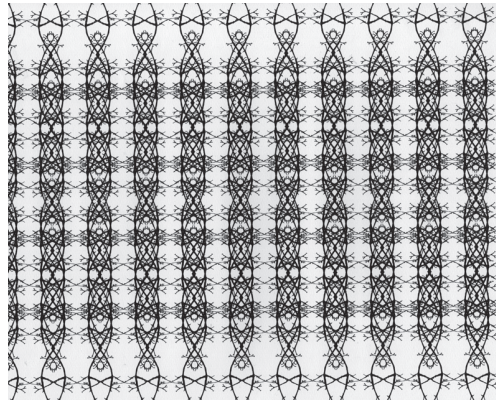
JOHN RUSKIN

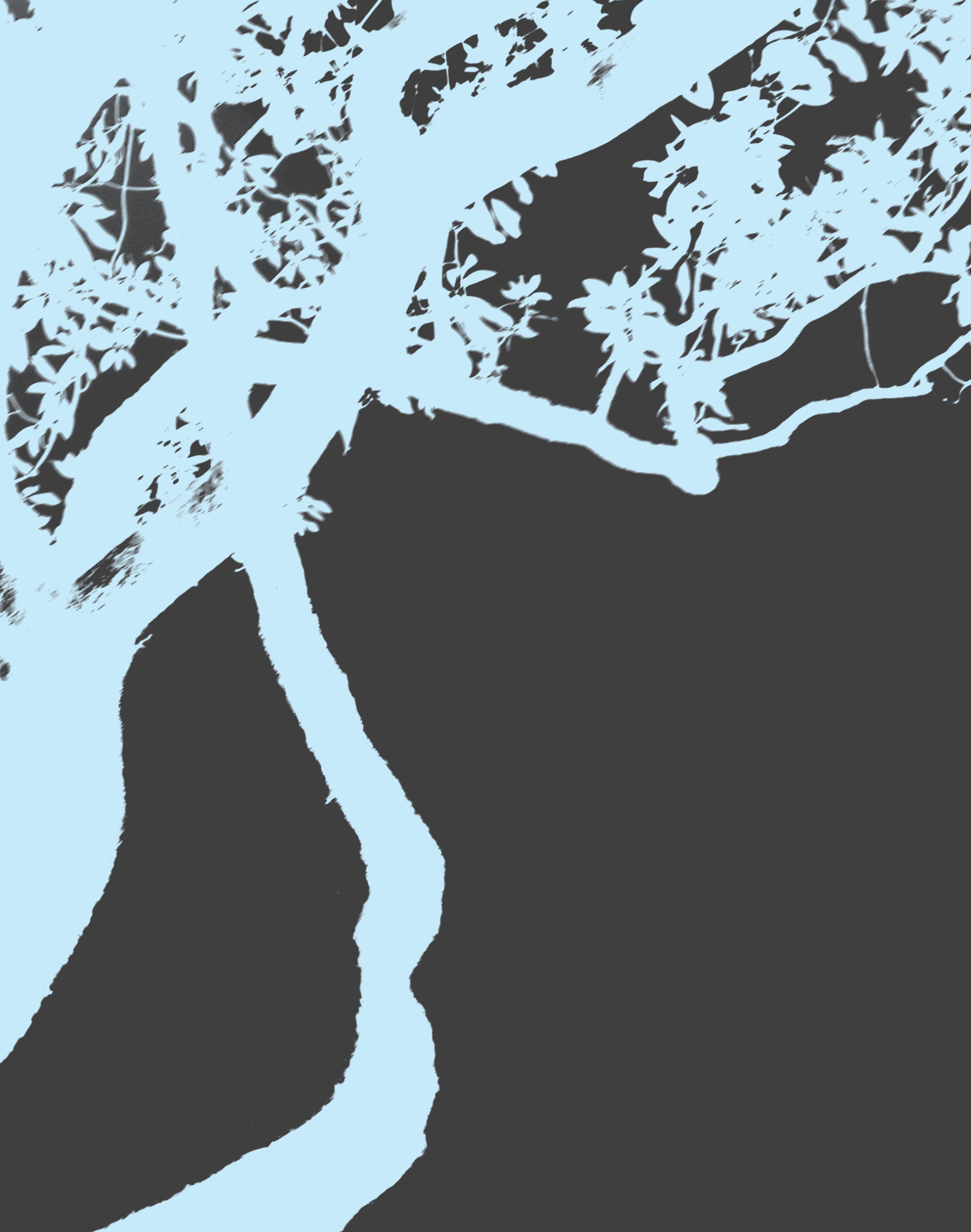
Fabric dyed with  
tumeric and then  
screen-printed

#### Screen-printing

Looking at the idea that we have removed ourselves from the natural process of creation and craft, I sought to look to methods of creation which connected the designer to the maker. Again, as Morris had experimented with Screen-printing, so too did I look to a method of production like screen-printing, which I had never worked with before. Going back to the fabrics that I created using natural dying techniques, I screen-printed type and explosions of color and nature, seeing what I might create. The process of layering the inks, and looking at the transparency of the inks and the surprises uncovered through chance were quite exciting to me.



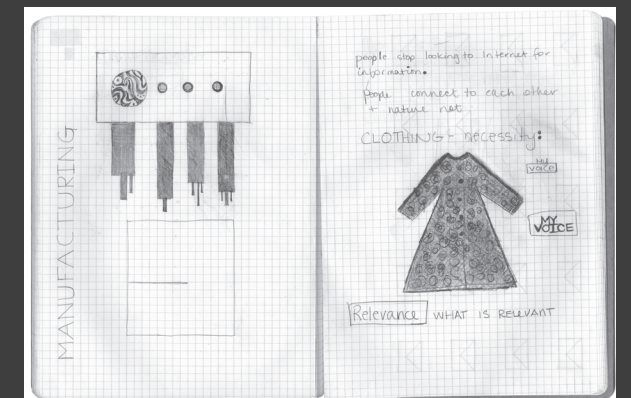




#### Pattern

While Morris believed that patterns had to be beautiful, they should also draw out the meaning of the buildings they adorned. They should soothe the spirit and point to life beyond themselves.

I set out to experiment with different types of pattern designs, being inspired by nature and what I found there. I began to go through a process of photographing my experiences with nature and then creating graphic patterns out of those patterns. Often, the patterns would turn into something else, like lace or barbed-wire. The representations came to represent other things as well.



Poster and sketch  
of dressing in nature



## Reflections + Evaluation

To arrive where you  
are, to get from  
where you are not,  
You must go by a  
way wherein there  
is no ecstasy.  
In order to arrive at  
what you do not know  
You must go by the  
way which is the way  
of ignorance.

T.S. ELIOT,  
FOUR QUARTETS

Nearing the end of this project, I was still unsure of the results. There were all these disconnected ideas—still coalescing. As I stepped away, new patterns did emerge. What had seemed at first to be disconnected, came together. But in the end, these projects were only experiments.

Afterward, I still feel a need to complete something. Not that anything is ever finished, but I wanted to express some of these thoughts in a more concise way. What I found to be my most interesting discovery, the idea of re-conceiving of the book as imagination sculpture, came only at the end of this project. It was my conclusion, but it came through the process...but it does not mean that I made books. That wasn't really the point. The intention now is to take this idea and continue developing it, particularly through education.





## Future Directions + Pedagogy

Central to all of this is the desire to consider and improve upon the state of education. It is my desire to reveal ideas and processes that allow the student to discover that seed deep inside of themselves—not just their own voice, their own expression, but also, to develop their own way of thinking and their own process. It is the role of the educator to reveal concepts, ideas, and potentials that can flourish and grow into something else as the student develops.

It is important to encourage the development of the human self, through an understanding of our relationship to this world. The nature of our humanity is central to my philosophy; I'm still seeking a greater understanding of my own relationship to this world, and so I hope to encourage a deepening understanding and interest in my students through a mutual sense of discovery.

In today's world, we see a greater blurring between the disciplines. There is an opportunity to develop the role of design education as a more integral part of a systemic changes badly needed in all levels of learning. My concern with the apparent marginalization of the humanities can be counter-acted through this greater development of design's role in education. Design has the ability to encourage not just the development of designers, but all students. Suddenly, words can gain meaning, poetry might find life in the mind of a student who might not have otherwise discovered it. Structure and form might give way to a new way of seeing math or science, and likewise, the social sciences might engender a greater understanding of the design process.

They can buttress and encourage each other.

By seeing education as a systemic web, just as life is, we can further the connections between the different disciplines, and also engender a new way of educating in this rapidly changing world.



## Re:search Exhibit

In previous years, we would exhibit alongside the entire group of M.F.A. candidates from the School of the Arts. In the Anderson Gallery, they would split the designers, along with everyone, in two. Because of construction, the design department was asked to find space off-campus for our exhibit. This circumstance could not have turned out better.

Professor McKelvey found a place for us on Broad Street—a location in the middle of the gallery district. Instead of dividing our class in two, we would exhibit together, and our opening would be on a First Friday—this is the one day of each month when the galleries open their doors for an evening, and the star-lit street comes alive.

The space was once an architecture studio—exposed pipes and brick showed great promise, but there was still work to be done. With the help of Professor McKelvey and the first years, we conceived of the space as it would reflect our process. Hanging lights and (plain wood) resting on work horses reinforced the industrial feel of the space. The idea behind it all was that this was our process, our work over two years; we named the exhibit “Re:Search.”

We had our own individual space and also collective space, where the books and projects from different workshops could be read and browsed through together. As opposed to being scattered throughout a huge gallery, as it would have been originally, our projects made more sense sitting next to one another. They informed one another.

My corner reflected my process over my last semester of work. Because I redefined what I was doing, the process of figuring out exactly what I was doing was apparent; my exhibit reflected this “search.” There were some successful experiments, and some less so. But it was my process.



Since the exhibit was part of First Friday, the audience was comprised of not just professors and students—it was filled with people who were interested in art and design, some people just came upon it by chance, and seemed to enjoy the experience. There were a few times where I witnessed people actually playing with some of my work. The reception by the public was exciting, and in the end, it turned out to be one of the highlights of the semester.

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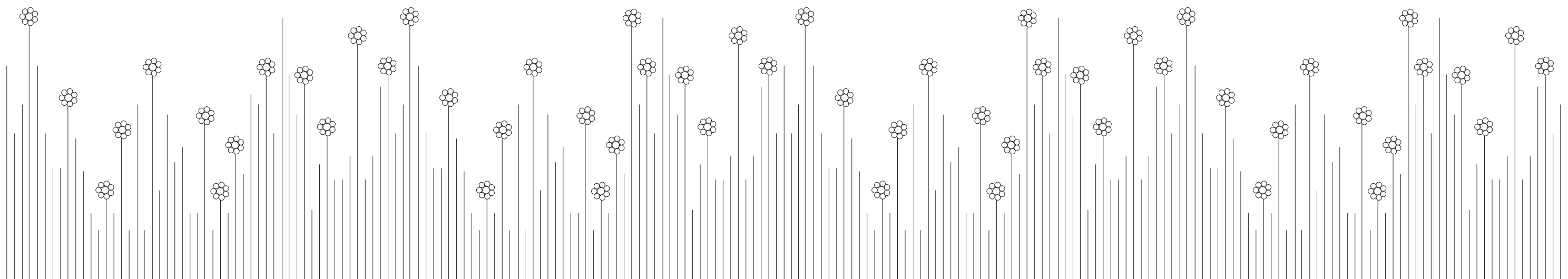
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## Colophon

This book is set in Caslon and Din.

**Caslon** is a family of serif typefaces designed by William Caslon I (1692–1766). His earliest design dates to 1734. Caslon is cited to be the first original typeface of English origin, but some type historians point out the close similarity of Caslon’s design to the Dutch Fell types. The Caslon types were distributed throughout the British Empire, including British North America. Much of the decayed appearance of early American printing is thought to be due to oxidation caused by long exposure to seawater during transport from England to the Americas. Caslon’s types were immediately successful and used in many historic documents, including the U.S. Declaration of Independence. After William Caslon I’s death the use of his types diminished, but saw a revival between 1840–80 as a part of the British Arts and Crafts movement.

**FF DIN** DIN stands for “Deutsche Industrie Norm,” which translates to German industry standard. These standards apply to multiple areas beyond type. FF DIN is based on DIN-Mittelschrift, a signage face used on the traffic signs and public buildings in Germany. DIN was designed by Albert-Jan Pool, a Dutch designer working in Hamburg, who took on the challenge of reworking DIN-Mittelschrift and expanding it into a type family of five weights. Each weight has an alternate cut with old style figures, circular i-dots and full points. He also created an italic, a condensed, old-style figures, and a few alternate characters, for those “looking for slightly less severity in a face.” The result is a “rational”-appearing typeface that is more readable than the original DIN types but still evokes all the associations with German industrial engineering.

AaBbCcDdEeFfGg

HhIiJjKkLlMmNn

OoPpQqRrSsTtUu

VvWwXxYyZz

AaBbCcDdEeFfGg

HhIiJjKkLlMmNn

OoPpQqRrSsTt

UuVvWwXxYyZz

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