

introduction:

this semester's graduate seminar will focus on the thesis. primarily we will be developing a series of projects organized around a theme that will mimic the process of developing a thesis exhibition. we will begin by discussing how one arrives at ideas that are suitable for thesis work. whatever your subject, there are, in fact, a few key characteristics of thesis projects that you should attempt to vet your ideas through. additionally, we will be working on a writing component that should help to clarify your ideas as well as give you experience that you can take with you moving forward.

the semester's work will consist of 3 parts that will function to learn and understand differing appropriateness, opportunity and liability in storytelling.

story 1: family or hometown

you are to develop a story about your family or hometown. this can take any form, be any scale have as many or as few parts as are necessary to tell a particular story visually. the solution needs to engage design as its fundamental problem-solving vehicle, but to what extent and how are completely up to the individual. the emphasis here is on expression through symbol or metaphor or allusion. It needs to be visually engaging and deal with a larger question somehow.

for the next class (01/13), please have done the links project and be prepared to discuss what you found that was of interest and what kind of story might be told.

a good working method for this is to:

- › think in terms of elucidating a historical set of actions that have a bearing on how we live today (timeline). the best timeline derived projects will describe a set of unknown or little known relationships... connecting, let's say, the rise of copyright litigation, the advent of the Internet and black ownership of hip hop record labels.
- › drawing parallels between differing sets of objects/ideas/events (dialogical exhibition). for instance, drawing parallels between traditional animal husbandry/horticultural practices and research into human genetics and modification.
- › creating a story which uses an event as a basis for imagery and narrative - this can be a fairly straightforward 'response' project... say the creation of vernacular typographic forms based on historical precedents. or it can be symbolic - an example would be the creation of vernacular signage based on traditional forms, but with contemporary messages. the link between the messages would then also be a source of information. this would be the exhibition of unique works along the lines of a traditional art exhibition.

considerations:

design as subject and object:
need awareness of the role design will play in the thesis and it's relationship to the overall discipline. some part of thesis needs to be an investigation into design's ability to transmit information in unique ways.

design as exhibition:
the thesis ends in an exhibition and it's important to begin to consider the problems you develop as being solved through an exhibition format.

thesis as novel:
the thesis can be thought of as a novel (or novella, or book of poetry) the whole is comprised of parts that seek to make sense of a whole. different projects or pieces within the larger thesis are the ways in which you seek to disclose or develop the different sub-plots. the cinematic metaphor also works well here.

pacing and complexity:
extending the cinematic metaphor, your thesis exhibition and its constituent parts should have differing levels of pacing and complexity. some elements should be bold, quick reads of simplified information while other parts should offer more complex riddles or opportunities for contemplation. part of the design challenge is to understand which parts receive which treatment and why.