HOW CAN SPACE INFLUENCE CONCEPT & DESIGN?
Design as a Curation of Constraints / Curation as a Design of Constraints


As we go about our lives, we are constantly bombarded with visual cues that affect our relationship and reaction to the physical world. Signs advertising products, storefront shops blinking with neon letters, even going to the bathroom where hand made notes are taped to the tiles telling you what you can and can not throw away. These signs not only provide instruction, but also lead you to make choices within seconds. A stop light will halt you from walking, as will a green light give you way of passage.

The seemingly mundane offers a variety of constraints or rules which shape / design your every day life. As Hal Foster states in his essay Design and Crime, " The role of the designer is even broader than before: it ranges across very different enterprises (from Martha Stewart to Microsoft), and it penetrates various social groups. You don't have to be filthy rich to be projected not only as a designer, but as designed— whether the product in question is your home or your business, your sagging face (designer surgery) or your lagging personality (designer drugs), your historical memory (designer museums) or your DNA future (designer children)."

Around 2008, I began to explore how I could frame my work outside of the traditional scope of practice that seemed unfortunately more common in New York than in Europe at the time. This confused a lot of people as to what I actually did, because I wasn't following a concise trajectory. Graphic design as we know it, spans branding and identity, publication work, advertising to packaging and environmental design. Most understand graphic design as a service, and in the most traditional sense, it is a service, it has function and purpose. As designers, we have the opportunity to pitch to a potential client for work. Once the client becomes yours, we are given a brief to problem solve and visually communicate the client's needs. Although
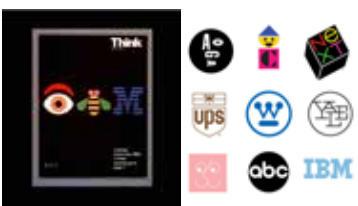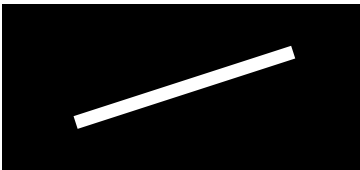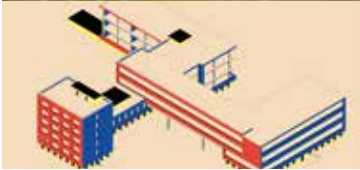
it's always a messy process depending on the client, in essence there exists structure to it all, a formula of sorts.

And yet there is another whole world of design that people tend to forget, such as the Fluxus and Bauhaus movements in particular, where creatives at the time defined design almost as a lifestyle choice, a community which embraced design on all facets of making and living. The Bauhaus style became one of the most influential currents in Modernist architecture and design, and had a huge influence upon subsequent developments in art, architecture, graphic design, interior design, industrial design, and typography--this seamless utopia was coined as "total design" by the Bauhaus school's founder Walter Gropius. One student of the Bauhaus, Max Bill practised as an architect, artist, painter, typeface designer, industrial designer and graphic designer. He was also an educator, and eventually started the Ulm School of Design in 1953 where he pushed to integrate the arts and sciences into design education.

One could say that the remnants of this era were at the helm of what we call "slash" culture today. Reflected through pop culture, globalization and mass consummerism has embraced this blurring of lines. To put it in real terms, you get Zaha Hadid designing shoes, Kanye West designing a clothing collection, or even better yet, starting a design studio. Jeff Koons is making high end limited edition plateware or collaborating with H&M, and Pharrell is now a perfumer. Regardless of the quality or cultural significance of these ventures, everyone who is anyone, seems eager to jump on this gravy train, wearing multiple hats.

Which brings me to those who oppose the notion of a cohesive artistic movement, that distinctions and boundaries between practices need to be very clear. Adolf Loos believed such separation was needed to create the purist type of work in his essay Ornament & Crime. Donald Judd, well known conceptual minimalist and artist of the 60s whose work blurred the lines of

art, design and architecture, attempted in his own way to keep his work from falling into the design category stating, "The configuration and the scale of art cannot be transposed into furniture and architecture. The intent of art is different from that of the latter, which must be functional. If a chair or a building is not functional, if it appears to be only art, it is ridiculous. The art of a chair is not its resemblance to art, but is partly its reasonableness, usefulness and scale as a chair..A work of art exists as itself."

WEBSITE

I can understand the criticism of combining disciplines that result in lack of rigor, as I am too, guilty of this. But I also see the beauty in discovering how one discipline can influence the other. When I began my "curatorial practice," it wasn't necessarily because I wanted to become a curator per se, or even an artist. I came into design like many yourself, not knowing much about design, but having a background and interest in the arts. Self taught and many years later, I began to explore and investigate the ways in which I could generate a "type" of work through a limited means of production or a body of constraints, that would't be defined by one genre or another. As a result, working within various spatial constraints became my "tool or device" in generating work, which I eventually associated with curation.

Curation, as I understood it, or wanted to understand it, was a <u>design of constraints</u>. Alternatively, I wanted to see how <u>design operated as a curation of constraints</u> as well. The definition of curation, which was originally a means to organize and select a collection of work, began to shift in the art world. The curator's hand, intended to be more or less objective, became increasingly more present in the process, in which the curator's voice became a filtering/editing process. The evolution of this term is what I find to be much more interesting than where it originated from. Curation as: the action of being able to edit, frame and construct a narrative. Creating parameters that behave as guidelines to others who participate. Could this approach incite a more proactive dialogue and interaction be-

tween the audience and the maker? Instead of just being handed a brief and think that there was one answer to that particular brief, I wanted to explore other "answers"and other alternatives.

For example, a show I curated at Eli Ping Gallery in 2012 exploited digital frames you can purchase on amazon that usually houses family photos as the canvas for every artist. Images rotated through the default low fi effects became a tool and device for artists to experiment with, and subvert and reinterpret in their own way. Some explored the capacity of gifs and movies, others, still images. A diverse range of results through this very simple constraint, that generated a wealth of content.

For NADA Miami in 2012, we commissioned about 20 photographers to take pictures with disposible cameras, and we exhibited as artwork in our space without ever developing the cameras. The buyer would thus take the risk of purchasing an artists' camera without knowing its contents, its quality, or even if there were any images at all for the price they were paying. We attempted to reflect on the nature of the art market with a curatorial program which designed a specific and problematic limitation for every artist and buyer.

I also started a gallery in 2008. My storefront gallery was tiny, the size of a small walk in closet located in the heart of Chinatown, with about 90 sq feet available. I would invite various creatives, ranging from fine artists, architects and graphic design studios to all come with one mission in mind: to transform the space into a temporary installation with $100 budget, and to re-imagine that space in their own way without having the burden of selling the work afterwards since it would always be torn down right after. The results were varying and remarkable, simply by the fact that the physical space, and the guidelines given, were always the same. Its original usage was to act as a storage space, but once renovated, the small, rectangular site became a blank canvas for each participant. I emphasized the importance of working within the limita-

tions, and that paintings and printed pieces needed to be more considered than just become wall fixtures for 1 month. More importantly, the installation needed to be responsive to the site. Some were more successful than others. (2x4, Ghava, Keegan McHargue/ Glasser).

My publication White Zinfandel, was another attempt at creating a certain set of rules that could generate and in some ways, curate content. We asked each contributor to follow a theme and to create original work inspired by that theme. We always encouraged the more abstract than the literal, not wanting to see a bunch of contributions that just replicated dishes or menus, but how from that starting point, even more interesting connections could be discovered along the way. (ie WZ No. 5 / Shame)

So why address the discourse between art and design and how does it relate to space, making and creating your own content? Its important to understand the history and the discourse throughout the years between critics, artists and designers—that there really isn't one singular answer to this debate, nor is there when you begin to build up your own practice. Through publishing, through smart devices, and empty spaces, I continue to push ideas on various platforms, all somewhat design/art/curatorially related, all inspired by my immediate surroundings, that ultimately become the content for my work.

My assignment for you to find a space in the art school and begin creating content from that space, is an attempt to begin that thought process. As a group of makers who are in the process of developing your voice, it is important that we keep exercising our mind to take on these cues that we confront on a daily basis, and become inspired by them. Regardless of the kind of space you choose, and even if someone picks that same site, you will all come out with different results. Your relationship to that space as an individual, is unique.

You can choose the ceiling of a classroom, a window, a corner, a bathroom--anything that you identify with on some level, will impact the results of this assignment. Perhaps you would want to make a reading room or a book for the bathroom, a place to create rest time. Or perhaps you want to decorate a lonely corner into a sitting room so it welcomes more activity. Perhaps its participatory, and the content is generated by the people who come to that site. It does not need to be a printed piece hung in that space. As long as the piece is responsive to that space, through this exercise, you are designing and curating that space that is specific to you.