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GRA 491 Graphic Design Portfolio

Professional Reflection

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As we look towards the finish line it is time to look back at what got us there. It is never truer than when completing a degree program. Each of the courses we take at Southern New Hampshire University builds upon the last to give each student a broad base of knowledge to help them along their future career. Building piece by piece allows us to take bites of the pie without feeling overwhelmed. The experience has been tremendous. While occasionally I have felt lost, I feel it has given me an opportunity to grow as I work my way through these projects.

We are story people as a society. We love stories from cave paintings to ballads told in the oral tradition, novels, TV shows, movies. We look across the breath of experience. We see the earth so many ways to tell stories. Before I ever considered a career and graphic design. I was already a writer and I've been an artist since I was a little kid drawing superheroes with my crayons. This is simply another step along the path. When I sit down with whatever project I try to figure out what story it is that I am trying to tell. Even something is simple as a logo design starts with What is the story of this product and how best can I tell it?

We work on these pieces largely alone but there is collaboration even in this solitary endeavors. Harsh critiques are often our greatest resource. "You don't advance by avoiding failure and blindsiding yourself to your sore spots. There is something about criticism that makes us rise to the occasion." (*Critiquing design*) Having others literally tear your work apart can often shine a light on what we do not see. I did have occasion to have to be my own worst critic. When not getting the feedback from our peers we need to step away and see what we could do better for various projects.

For my print ready portfolio and website I had a pretty clear idea of how I wanted it to look. Some feedback from the professor and even looking at it myself with a more critical eye told me some things I needed to change. The pieces were often a little too crowded when put together

with the annotations. Changing things up some helped. I created more negative space (which is often my best friend). "By unexpectedly employing the untouched space surrounding the central figure or object of a work of art, artists can create pieces that are both aesthetically balanced and eye-catching." (Richman-Abdou, 2021). For me it is always what you do not see shows you what you are really looking at. Making the print portfolio and website consistent and uncluttered was important to me.

My process for how I design is ongoing. In a few simple examples it points out how I am developing my own process and style through my own work. The Bar None collection and the Edsel redesign come to mind.

The concept for an Irish pub is easy and at the same time difficult. There are certain traditions and concepts that come to mind when thinking of a pub. These are so engrained that they become cliches. Often someone just takes an Irish sounding name and a four-leaf clover. That's about it. The name bar none came to me because it's kind of catchy and I don't idea of what I could do for the logo, but it also has a second meaning. As a sign of excellence, as a statement that there is no one better. That was the selling point. While designing the logo in Adobe Illustrator I started with a dark green box with white text contrasted the white box with dark green text. It was a little element of yin and yang. "Yin and yang is an ancient Chinese philosophy of dualism, which teaches that "seemingly opposite or contrary forces may actually be complementary, interconnected, and interdependent" (Mattson, 2022) The biggest critique I received was about refining the look of the tulip pint glass. The original version was a little on the thin side. By increasing the line weight of the pint glass and adding some head to the beer glass it makes it seem to be a full beer. For the menu I tried both a white menu with green text and a dark green

menu with white text. It ultimately came down to which one looked more legible. For the portfolio I added the logo onto a glass, the result fit perfectly with the branding of the collection.

When doing a logo redesign, it helps to find a product that is not in production anymore. I chose the Edsel, a legendary failure from the 50s. I tried to create a modern-day version using the iconic name of yesteryear. "Edsel B. Ford, President of Ford Motor Company of Dearborn, Michigan, asked his styling chief, Eugene T. "Bob" Gregoire, to build a "continental" roadster that could have limited production potential. The roadster became known as the Model 40 Special Speedster." (*1934 Edsel Ford's Model 40 Special Speedster*) I used this version for my project. I manipulated an image of the roadster with Photoshop. I wanted to go with black and white to show details and contrast so that it could look like a concept car rather than the vehicle that it once was. Using image trace on Illustrator to bring out those details even more worked well. I warped the text to create a unique logo. There are two versions of the logo, the horizontal version which could be something shown across the back of a car while the vertical version would be great in print ads. Our professor did have a point about using the 50s version of the Edsel for the logo might be better. I went through with creating both versions as I refined it. I added them to the redesign showing which one I would choose in the long run. Ultimately, I preferred the original concept I came up with it seems much more dynamic. Seeing both side by side makes it easier to make the decision.

With each project I do learn to do better. "I remember being told the Samuel Beckett line, that great line; he said 'Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.'" (O'Connell, 2014). This quote has been found so many places but it continues to be true. We must fail to prevail. If we only see success we will never realize that we need to improve and we

never will. We will stagnate and perish. The greatest work anyone ever does is when they are challenged the most.

Working ethically as a designer can be a challenge. "It's important to acknowledge that, as a result of being more dependent on their clients, economically challenged designers experience more pressure to perform unethical work than do their more affluent counterparts. To be clear, this does *not* mean that economically challenged designers succumb to that pressure more often; it only means they are forced to endure more pressure." (*Questioning graphic design's ethicality*) Everyone has to make their own way. They must adhere to their own beliefs. I do not believe anyone plans on doing harm with their designs but that is a risk. More that working to avoid the negative I hope to find a way to create inspirational designs even when not working for someone else. Bringing the good into the world has always been important to me. When I was working as a sportswriter I would always avoid stories that were simply for clicks. I far preferred doing work when I actually had something to say. I hope to do the same in my graphic design career.

Each step of the way I have strived improve my skills across the field of graphic design. Every day we learn something new. I have excelled at print design, logo design and brand design. "The debate continues to rage as to whether designing for print is a dying art form (and it is true that jobs in this sector have diminished) but creating artwork that is intended solely for printed materials is still in demand." (Nyfa, 2022) My previous experience in journalism and digital art helped me along the way using various tools from the Adobe Creative Cloud, including Illustrator, InDesign, and Photoshop. On the other hand, working on coding in my web design courses was like pulling teeth. There is always a challenge working on elements that you struggle with. That does not mean you avoid it. You accept your struggles and work to improve where

you need. As for my future it is wide open. I could see myself as a brand designer or even running a publishing house for graphic novels. Something that brings me joy.

Citations

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