

Fall 2007  
Second-year Core  
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& visiting faculty  
Wednesdays, times TBA

### Glossary

What follows is a glossary of the structural elements designed to support your work in the program this year. This outline serves as a comprehensive guide to the thesis curriculum; as a list of shared milestones for faculty to support and measure your progress; and as a punchlist of basic requirements to be fulfilled for completion of your degree here at Yale School of Art.

THESIS The Yale thesis is synonymous with a coherent and articulate graphic design practice. You are a practicing designer; your practice here should be wide-ranging, individual, and progressive. Rather than a product or body of work per se, your thesis is the way in which you achieve these goals and it is this we ask that you cultivate and theorize this year.

All your work at Yale, self-initiated projects, class projects, academic writing, freelance, etc., should support and extend your thesis idea.

Specifically, a great thesis is:

- innovative and relevant to the practice of contemporary graphic design
- critical, focused on expanding or altering the field
- informed by precedent and a broad consideration of disciplinary siblings
- articulate, visually and verbally
- independent, driven by an individual method rather than by stylistic emulation
- expansive enough to warrant substantial investigation and a generative practice that can be sustained for your time at Yale and beyond
- not so broad that you can't engage it meaningfully

These criteria are requirements against which your thesis advisor will judge your thesis as you develop it with her/him.

This isn't as hard to achieve as you may think; your work probably already meets most of these criteria. The criteria are consistent with graduate work in other academic disciplines, adapted to take account of unique aspects of graphic design and visual practice in general.

Your thesis, like all graphic design practice, involves of the physical production of making: craft, technology and material innovation, industrial processes, etc. You can see the thesis as a process of looking self-critically at what you may already do intuitively, exploring new kinds of practice, and cultivating a visual and verbal language to make the ideas inherent in your work clear and coherent. Our program, and by extension the thesis, is always shifting between the idea of an individual practice, and the execution

of this practice. It is a central polemic of design practice, and the heart of the thesis.

Although your thesis, like all aspects of your practice, is an inseparable and irrevocable part of you, it need only totalize your work within the program, not necessarily your entire past and future. Your thesis should be an intentional, exploratory, and discursive practice. It will inevitably wander, digress, and hopefully come back around. Start with a provisional idea and see how it affects your practice. Then adjust accordingly as you move forward. All practitioners and studios evolve.

The first month of this year will be devoted to establishing the central idea of your thesis, and to devising a few independent projects that both inspire and extend this thought.

LECTURE An 8-minute, scripted presentation in which you describe your thesis idea in a sequence of images that document influences, inspirations and intentions. A primary goal is to develop a shared vocabulary among the Yale studio, so that others understand the domain in which you will be working, and equally, the domain in which you won't be working. Audience: your peers, faculty, and visitors.

THESIS BOOK A catalogue of your work. Minimum content requirements include: a designer's statement, captioned images of work from the past two (or three) years, and an annotated bibliography. The thesis book's form should reflect your thesis idea and the book as genre. Consider the model of a catalogue raisonné. (Raisonné, a. [F. raisonn[é]. p. p. of raisonner to reason.] Arranged systematically, or according to classes or subjects; as, a catalogue raisonn[é].)

You must produce at least two identical copies of the book, and leave one at Yale.

A thesis book is often a complex and ambitious project. Though it may take a highly personal approach, this project is intended to be accessible. Craft and permanence are vital. This book will exist as a comprehensive document of your time here at Yale and will likely outlive the work itself.

THESIS GROUP (ART 739ab) A group meeting to share work and keep your progress on track. Every other Wednesday or by appointment you will meet with your thesis group, a group of five or six fellow students and your thesis advisor.

The thesis group is a studio class. It is a forum to present visual progress for critique and discussion.

Your advisor may give assignments intended to help advance your thinking. They are likely to be exercises to help give direction, and will be specific to individual thesis advisors.

Key projects like the lecture and the thesis book will also be developed and critiqued in this studio.

Finally (and perhaps most importantly), your thesis group is the setting to invent and discuss self-initiated projects.

SECOND-YEAR CORE  
(ART 730ab)

This larger studio, which will meet intermittently, is an important shared experience and discussion. Unlike the thesis group, entire class will meet together in this class.

This studio includes critique and support from Paul Elliman on your thesis presentations, the 17x17 project with Linda van Deursen, workshops with Antenna, Matthew Carter, Irma Boom, Julia Borne, and sessions with Michael Rock, Daniel van der Velden and interdisciplinary critiques on schedules Wednesday evening throughout the year, dates to be announced.

EXHIBITION  
(ART 762b)

With Glen Cummings. The exhibition studio, although an elective, is imagined as an extension of Second-year Core. The project is a single collaborative project, the exhibition of the class work in Green Hall. Focus is one both the theory, design and realization of exhibition design from curation of the work, self-criticality, collaboration, audience, wayfinding and navigation, publicity, to experience. The project can also be seen as a continuation of the 17x17 project.

INDEPENDENT PROJECTS

A plan of at least six self-initiated projects over the course of the year is required for completion of the thesis. This should be the heart of your thesis.

Work is subject to critique and guidance within your thesis group and should be in progress through the first and second semester (with adequate time allowed during the second half of the second semester to accommodate thesis book production and exhibition participation).

- ELECTIVES Inclusive in your practice elective studio classes (Networks & Transactions 2, Typographic Form & Meaning, Type at Large, Exhibition) should extend and elaborate your evolving thesis. (Second-year faculty craft assignments with this goal in mind.)
- DESIGNER'S STATEMENT The central text to your thesis book. The goal of the designer's statement is to articulate your thesis in written language. A secondary goal may be for your text to structure and implement your thesis.
- Consider the form of your language as well as its content. Consider the rhetorical form of this text. Is it narrative, analytical, epistolary, fragmented, exhaustive, etc.? The choice should be the right one (in your assessment) for your thesis, just as design choices you make in your thesis book (binding, book structure, typography etc.) should be the right ones for your thesis.
- Equally important, you should write in a form with which you are comfortable and can produce fluidly. Finding a form of writing and a tone of voice, that is right for you as well as for your thesis, is a process that will help you better understand your own practice. Therefore, start this process early and give it time to evolve.
- Editing is vital to any important writing. Your text will improve dramatically with each successive draft. Your assigned editor will assist you with all design related writing. Your thesis advisor is the primary critic of your writing.
- ANNOTED BIBLIOGRAPHY An essential element of any research process and required text for your thesis book. A log of references, and running commentary of your relationship to them, will help you articulate and deepen your project over time. There is a standard format for this.
- 17x17 A project within Second-year Core, fall semester, with Linda Van Deursen.
- THESIS ADVISOR Your thesis advisor tracks your progress over the course of the year, and is the primary critic of your thesis book, your writing, and self-initiated projects (although not the only critic, of course). S/he may give you other assignments as well. When you have questions about the program, you should start by asking your thesis advisor.

Of course, you are encouraged to develop close working relationships with faculty in addition to your own thesis advisor.

- EDITORS** An editor (Betsy Sledge or Bill Storandt) has been assigned to you. Her/his role is to help you ensure that your writing clearly expresses your intentions in an appropriate form.
- FOUR-TIMES CRITICS** Along with your thesis advisor, an additional critic is associated with each thesis group. (Sheila's/Glenn's group: Davis Israel; Dan's group: Karen Hsu; Susan's group: Alex Isley.) Critics visit at regular intervals throughout the year, help track progress, provide critical distance, and provide you with feedback and direction. You are expected to meet with your four-times critic each time they visit.
- VISITING FACULTY** Visiting faculty connected to Second-year Core are listed below as the final part of this glossary. Their involvement in thesis is fundamentally organic and discursive, specific to individual work and engagement. With the exception of Jürg Lehni's and Matthew Carter's workshops which are optional for second-years, you are expected to meet with each visiting faculty person at least twice.
- ANTENNA** Masamichi and Sigi will assign a project within Second-year Core in the spring. You are expected to situate the project within your own thesis.
- IRMA BOOM** Irma will review your self-initiated projects in the spring and work with you on the structure and design of your thesis book.
- JULIA BORN** Julia will review self-initiated projects in the spring and work with you on the structure and design of your thesis book.
- MATTHEW CARTER** Matthew will review your self-initiated projects in the spring and work with you on letterform design.
- Matthew and Irma will also give a "Master's workshop" open to first- and second-years; details to be announced. You are expected to situate the project within your own thesis.

- PAUL ELLIMAN Paul's visit in the fall semester is planned to help you develop your lecture, and to begin to articulate your area of work. He may also discuss plans for independent projects, critique your work so far, etc.
- Paul returns again in the spring; in that visit he may focus more on first-years, but is likely to meet with second-years as well, especially to review self-initiated work.
- JÜRIG LEHNI Jürg's workshop in the fall is strongly encouraged for first-years but is open to interested second-years as well. As with all studios this year, if you do the project you are expected to situate the project within your thesis.
- MICHAEL ROCK Michael will review your self-initiated projects and discuss your thesis with you individually.
- LINDA VAN DEURSEN Linda will review your self-initiated projects in the fall, discuss your thesis individually, and will assign a three-week project within Second-year Core ("17x17").
- DANIEL VAN DER VELDEN Daniel will give an assignment to first-years in the fall. Time permitting, he may meet individually with second-years as well. He will return in the spring to focus on second-year thesis. He will review self-initiated projects and may be involved in the Exhibition studio.