

## **Networks and Transactions 2 (Art 752a)**

Fall 2008, Thursdays 1:30-5:30

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Prerequisite: Networks & Transactions 1 (742b) or equivalent experience.

“I was a real amateur at it but I learned what his feeling for chess was.... He said it wasn't a war game, it's an aesthetic game, and you feel the shape of the board as it begins to shift its pattern and you make it become beautiful, even if you lose.”

–The gallerist Julien Levy remembering being taught to play chess by Marcel Duchamp

For me, some of the most interesting and lovely possibilities in design, arise when design's job is to connect multiple networks of information and of people, all of which are in motion. You will complete two assignments in this class, both of which involve the qualitative design of systems for two-way communication between people.

We will also discuss how to site, show, or publish work that is inherently transient, in ways that are appropriate to each student's thesis.

### **Assignment 1: Chess**

Three-week project

No technology is required for this assignment.

Step 1. If you don't know how to play chess, please learn how to.

Step 2. Combining your knowledge of chess – its rules and other aspects of the game's strategies and poetics which you identify through research and personal practice – together with your own thesis, design a set of chess pieces.

Your chess pieces should be two-dimensional. If Calder's or Ernst's chess sets are about the nature of sculpture (through the lens their own artistic practices) in equal measure as they are about the game of chess (its rules, strategies, and poetics), then this is a project about the nature of graphic/design typography (through the lens of your own thesis) in equal measure as it is about the game of chess (its rules, strategies, and poetics).

You can take some liberties in that your pieces don't have to comprise a usable game, a familiar vernacular, or a marketable product etc. – but they do have to obey the rules of chess (e.g. 16 pieces per side in 6 genres [king, queen, rook, bishop, knight, pawn], the bishop moves diagonally, etc. etc.).

Consider the relationship between the game's visible aspects (game pieces) and invisible aspects (rules, strategems, opposition). How does each uniquely reveal, influence, or engage the other?

You may wish to consider this brief from Duchamp:

The standard chess sets now in use, the FRENCH set and the STAUNTON, are both somewhat confusing in the similarity and intricacy of their forms. In the *French Set* for example, the Bishop is a little Queen and the pawn a little Bishop. Cannot a new set be designed, that is, without a too radical departure from the traditional figures, at once more harmonious and more agreeable to the touch and to the sight, and above all, *more adequate to the role the figure has to play in the struggle?* Thus, at any moment of the drama its optical aspect would represent (by the shape of the actors) a clear incisive image of its inner conflicts. In the complicated modern game the figures should inspire the player instead of confusing him. They should whisper to him at the right moment: "Move now to QB4. ... Break through the center. ... Pin the Knight. ... Let me win a piece. ... We can exchange Queens, the pawn will be metamorphosed into a new Queen. ... to mate the King."

and

they should never make a  
MISTAKE.

It's your choice whether you want to in any way consider existing vernaculars of chess sets. You could ignore the "Staunton" standard style of chess pieces altogether and focus only on the nature of the game (for example, what Duchamp calls the potential to reveal an "incisive image of its inner conflicts"), and your thesis, as design factors.

Sketches due in individual meetings next time we meet.

## **Assignment 2: Telegraph**

Remainder of semester

Design and implement a system for two-way communication between people. The system should enable continuous back-and-forth conversation to take place. It can connect two users at a time, or more.

As with the chess project, remember that your domain is graphic design. The goals and focus of your solution should lie within that domain: a typographic and movement form, a system for the structuring of language. What interface will you create for sending and receiving messages; and what are the possible typographies for these messages? How do these two aspects influence one another? Graphic design is always about technology and technique (techne); in your project, how do modes of transmission, processing, and typographic display affect language and communication?

Remember that your solution should be essentially adverbial or qualitative: what is communicating like in your universe of messaging. The questions of what communication takes place or why it does, are important to think about as you try to understand your users; but to try to influence answers to these questions may not be productive.

I will provide sample code in Flash for you can build upon. Flash is a good choice because its language (ActionScript) is syntactically similar to both PHP and JavaScript, and because it has excellent engines for both real-time programmatic typography and real-time network communications.