

EMPOWERING KNOWLEDGE OF CULTURAL DESIGN AUTHENTICITY  
AND INCLUSION THROUGH BASIC DESIGN PEDAGOGY

by

Analee G. Paz, B.A.

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Committee Members:

Claudia Röschmann, Chair

Teri Evans-Palmer

Mark Menjivar

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## **DEDICATION**

*“Cada cabeza es un mundo.”*

This thesis is dedicated to the people who, together, support my every endeavor, curiosity, and exploration. Above all, to my parents, who instilled a life-long hunger to be a student of the world.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to acknowledge the people who, also together, have made my time in this program so rich. I am thankful to have shared this experience with my graduate peers, students, and faculty who push me to achieve beyond my own expectations.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Description</b>
VCD	Visual Communication Design

## **ABSTRACT**

Visual Communication Design (VCD) is a reciprocal interchange between audience, information, designer, client, and creativity. Traditionally, VCD education focuses primarily on technical mastery over various media, therefore minimal time is spent on in-depth learning of contextual and cultural understandings of design. In support of the evolving role of VCD today and the unprecedented connection of a multicultural design community, it is important to recognize the intersection between intrinsic cultural design elements and formal fundamental design studies.

This thesis proposes to highlight cultural identity awareness by empowering knowledge of design authenticity and originality through basic design pedagogy. To do so, this proposal describes the conceptual development of printed interactive tools that support interdisciplinary learning methodologies of the formal elements of art and principles of design via unique international indigenous design. The final piece will serve as a template for a collection of books that will each cite particular visual values of individual cultures. This thesis serves as a foundational specimen for investigating content of recognized details from Wixáritari or Huichol (Mexico), Sami (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia), and Ainu (Japan) indigenous artisan designs.

The initial concept for the tools was developed from observations of current VCD education, cultural identity and design inclusion, as well as established teaching theories

that guide current pedagogical methods. The objective of the work is to encourage supplementary understanding of cultural identity within formal VCD education.

Understanding the proper use of any craft involves an all-around understanding of context of the user and audience by the communicator. The analysis and reflections considered through this thesis lead to the issue not solely of VCD, but of how to learn and teach VCD. Students and instructors need learning tools that engage them in multicultural conversations within design. By providing tools that organize important relevant theories and recognizing this content, the VCD discipline can have conscientious sources of information to begin with and build upon. Furthermore, creating more well-rounded and knowledgeable interdisciplinary interests and empathy. This study acknowledges that design education and research should be progressively geared towards addressing multicultural audiences with critical solutions that consider both the audience's and their own cultural orientation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Every day we make decisions that are culturally bound. These decisions play a central role in a visual communication designer's (VCD) work process. According to Mexican designer and educator Adolfo Best-Maugard,

[A designer] is a composite product, a present projection of an endless tradition: on his present possession he must build up his future. This past is an apparently formless body, carrying in it all that we are, our knowledge and experience, and all that we may draw upon to strengthen our own contribution to the present. <sup>1</sup>

In support of the evolving role of VCD today and the unprecedented connection of a multicultural design community, it is important to recognize the intersection between intrinsic cultural design elements and formal fundamental design studies.

This thesis describes the conceptual development of printed interactive tools that support interdisciplinary learning methodologies of the formal elements of art and principles of design via the impression of unique international indigenous design.

The final piece will serve as a template for a collection of books that will each cite particular visual values of individual cultures. The objective of the work is to encourage supplementary understanding of cultural identity within formal VCD education. This thesis serves as a foundational specimen for investigating content of recognized details from Wixáritari or Huichol (Mexico), Sami (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia), and Ainu (Japan) indigenous artisan designs.

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<sup>1</sup> Adolfo Best-Maugard, *A Method for Creative Design*. (New York: Alfred. A. Knopf, 1926), 112.

The initial concept for the tools was developed from observations of current VCD education, cultural identity and design inclusion, as well as established teaching theories that guide current pedagogical methods. In order to complete the investigation communication with authentic resources for artifacts and original publications in Mexico, Norway, and Japan were established. Through these contacts, visual and or tactile analyses of authentic pieces of indigenous design were obtained to understand the present study.

### **Statement of Problem**

American graphic designer, Milton Glaser, once said, “if you are going to be a revolutionary, it’s best to be an informed one.”<sup>2</sup> While VCD education focuses primarily on technical mastery over various media, minimal time is spent on in-depth learning of contextual and cultural understandings of design. Over time, breadth of knowledge of a VCD student has been increasingly traded for depth of knowledge.<sup>3</sup> With such large cultural hegemonic shifts, few efforts have been made to locate graphic design within the emergence of postcolonial cultural sensitivities. To learn design, without acknowledging the complexity of social impact in which it develops, is to undermine any informed understanding of design praxis in its full sense.<sup>4</sup> Cross-cultural design education is a discussed topic in contemporary society, but primarily focuses on how to use design as a

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<sup>2</sup> Milton Glaser, “Milton Glaser on Professionalism, Education, Celebrity, and Criticism,” *Design Dialogues*, (1998): 129–155.

<sup>3</sup> Kimberly Elam, “Foreword,” in *Universal Principles of Design*. (Beverly, MA: Rockport Publishers, 2003), 12.

<sup>4</sup> R. A. Greely, “Richard Duardo’s Aztlán Poster: Interrogating Cultural Hegemony in Graphic Design,” *Design Issues* 14 (1998): 7.

singular language across international VCD communities. This investigation proposes to highlight cultural identity awareness by empowering knowledge of design authenticity and originality through basic design pedagogy.

According to The New School Professor Clive Dilnot, originally from the UK, who studies international design ethics,

[The reduction of social information in design] restructures the history of design to a repetition of designers' careers and to the past as simply anticipating and legitimating the present. In the process, the vast range of design represented in history, professional and vernacular, industrial and preindustrial, is eclipsed to a single developmental model, and the process and activity of designing is largely sundered from its social root.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding the proper use of any craft involves an all-around understanding of context of the user and audience by the communicator. According to AIGA, The Professional Association for Design, there are two areas in which design as a progression is underdeveloped: demographic diversity and a culture of inclusion: “the diversity of problem is not only in the numbers, but in the lack of diverse role models, opportunities, and public awareness—which leads to apathy, insensitivity, and even outright discrimination.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Clive Dilnot, “The State of Design History, Part II: Problems and Possibilities,” *Design Issues* 1, no. 2 (1984): 3–20.

<sup>6</sup> Antonette Carroll, “Diversity and Inclusion in Design: Why Do They Matter?” *AIGA: The Professional Association of Design*. Accessed 2016. <http://www.aiga.org/diversity-and-inclusion-in-design-why-do-they-matter>.

## Statement of Purpose

Audra Buck-Coleman from Sticks+Stones, an American award-winning team of designers and educators creating multicultural curricula, states,

[VCD's] messages can reach across streets and across the globe; they can bring together communities and strangers for a common cause, they can also serve to divide otherwise amenable neighbors. Design students must fully understand this potential reach and thus the responsibility they have to create tolerant, informed messages. The need to understand how personal beliefs, religion, socio-economic class and other differences influence visual messages is an ethical component of the graphic designer's professional duties. For if these differences and the potential skewed perspectives are not recognized, then slippage between accurate and faulty messages will seep into graphic compositions.<sup>7</sup>

This study acknowledges that design education and research should be progressively geared towards addressing multicultural audiences with critical solutions that consider both the audience's and their own cultural orientation.

In recent years, there has been a rise in interdisciplinary learning—yet, little has been explored within the parallels of international identity and design. Learning from integrative pedagogical methods not only encourages a more broad recognition for other cultures, but also develops a higher level of thinking skills increasingly necessary in the

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<sup>7</sup> Audra Buck-Coleman, "Navigating Cross-Cultures, Curriculum, and Confrontation: Addressing Ethics and Stereotypes in Design Education," *Visual Language Journal: Global Interaction in Design* 44, no. 2 (2010): 188.

global context of the VCD discipline.<sup>8</sup> Practicing design with low cultural social context can prove to be rudimentary in form, creating contradictions behind an industry so inherently founded on clear communication. Today's designer is innovating design solutions on a global scale, while historically, designers have contributed to society primarily by visually translating a client's message. In "Hegemony in Graphic Design," Audrey Grace Bennet, explains that in this new role, "many designers use interdisciplinary research methods (e.g. ethnography) to lead collaborative participatory design to understand complex social problems that span multiple disciplines and audiences from cultures different of their own."<sup>9</sup>

In today's era of global interconnectedness, cultural identity is a familiar topic that is essentially defined by the sense of understanding and belonging within categories such as ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and gender.<sup>10</sup> Encouraging diversity in VCD education cultivates and opens discourse and practice in expanding relevance of design in all areas of a working society.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> P. Gurin et al., "Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcomes," *Harvard Educational Review*, 72 no. 3, (2002): 192.

<sup>9</sup> Audrey Grace Bennet, "Hegemony in Graphic Design," *Visual Language Journal: Global Interaction in Design* 44, no. 2, (2010): 156.

<sup>10</sup> "Cultural Identity," *Oxford Reference*, accessed 2016, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095652855>.

<sup>11</sup> "Diversity and Inclusion Initiative Website," *AIGA: The Professional Association of Design*, accessed 2016, <https://www.aiga.org/diversity-and-inclusion-initiative>.

## II. VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN

VCD is an intricate reciprocity of audience, information, designer, client, and creativity. Understanding the VCD discipline and its foundational education is important in determining the value and relevance of a new teaching tool—specifically in electing features and relating the goals of the tool. This chapter investigates today’s VCD discipline and VCD education foundations.

### Visual Communication Design Discipline

Traditionally, the VCD discipline is closely related to the area and subject matter of graphic design. Graphic design, by definition, is a “form of visual communication used to convey a message or information to an audience. It is the visual representation of an idea relying on the creation, selection, and organization of visual elements.” The VCD discipline uses graphic design solutions to “persuade, inform, identify, motivate, enhance, organize, brand, rouse, locate, engage, and carry or convey many levels of meaning.”<sup>12</sup> There are a wide range of problems that a designer solves, but the most broad and recognized areas within the discipline are: branding and identity design, corporate communication design, editorial design, environmental design, illustration, information design, interactive or experience design, motion graphics, package design, promotional design and advertising, and typographic design and lettering. The areas also engage an array of media-used tools unique to the discipline. Examples are printed matter (i.e. books, magazines, newspapers, brochures, booklets, posters, covers, corporate

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<sup>12</sup> Robin Landa, *Graphic Design Solutions 5th Ed.* (Boston, M.A.: Wadsworth, 2014), 1.

communication, signage, outdoor billboards, business cards, etc.), screen-based (i.e. desktop web, mobile web, social media, tablet, public screens, installations, motion, etc.), and environments (i.e. commercial, educational, government, museums, public spaces, etc.). Each of these specializations solve different forms of design problems or messages.

The VCD profession demands critical and analytical design thinking carefully paired with creative and technical skills. In order to succinctly communicate a message, a designer should be knowledgeably equipped with the ability to understand the context of problems presented in order to propose meaningful and ethical solutions. Both in theory and in skill, a designer is responsible for the ability to solve these problems with comprehensive knowledge and proper use of elements of art, design principles, software, typography, composition, and the ability of creating conceptual imagery.

#### *Global Visual Communication Designers and Levels of Problem-Solving*

According to Welsh designer, John Chris Jones, in his seminal book, *Design Methods*, the scale of design problems in contemporary society have evolved from the original discipline.<sup>13</sup> From the smallest to the largest scale, design begins by involving only a small component of a problem. In this level, design is more typical and mostly concerned with matters involving aesthetics and content hierarchy. Moving forward, at the product level, design looks at an entire problem or artifact. At this stage, design might involve some formal and content research. It is at this point in which a designer is responsible for the entire making process. At these scales, design is heavily concerned

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<sup>13</sup> John Chris Jones, *Design Methods* (New Jersey: Wiley, 1970), 82.

with production—however, it is not concerned with the remaining lifecycle of the product. At the systems level, design problem-solving becomes more complex and requires much more consideration of research and context of an artifact or problem. At the highest level, designers must address issues concerning sustainability and full lifecycle of their work, as well as the aesthetic and hierarchy.

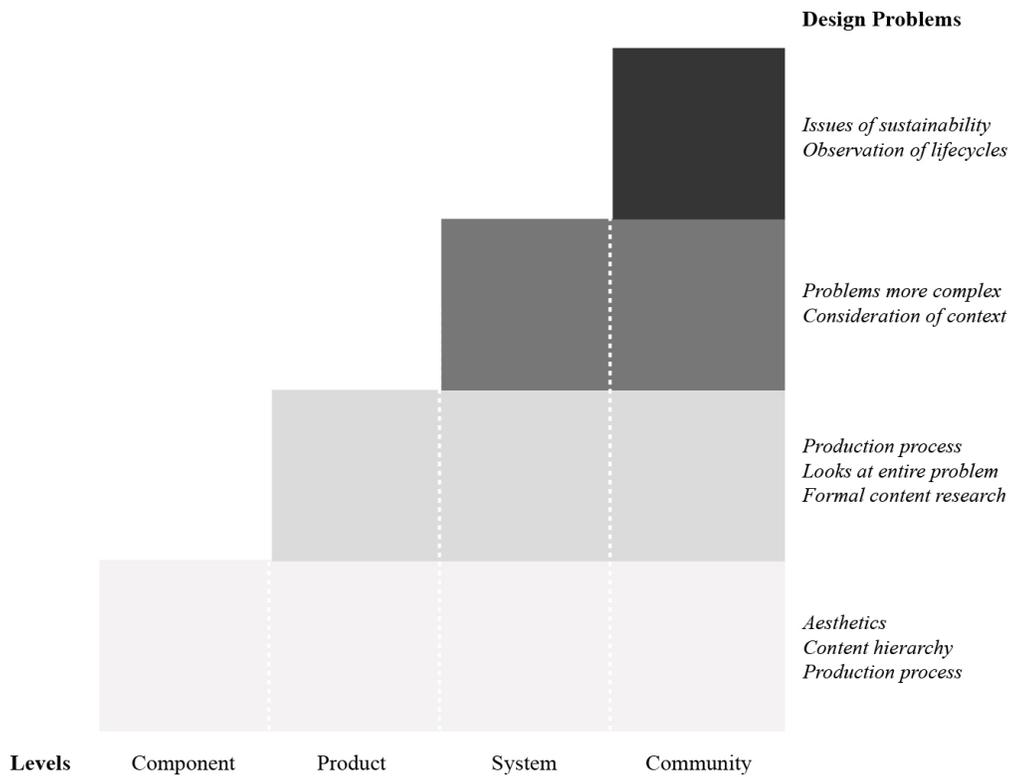


Figure 2.1 Level of Design Problems

While the career path of one in the VCD discipline more productively follows more mature and fully developed research, VCD education core foundation and curricula often focuses on superficial concerns of basic aesthetic and hierarchy, instead of cultural understandings of design. In this regard, Assistant Professor of Design at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Adream Blair-Early believes that, “before asking design curricula to solve more complex design problems, we need a better framework in which to conduct research.” She continues that in order to more successfully address the growing global outlook of contemporary design questions, “designers must go deeper than mere approach and style and address cultural and language differences in order to create effective design solutions and reduce the growing gap between information ‘haves’ and information ‘have nots’.”<sup>14</sup>

The VCD discipline, therefore, progressively finds itself in an important position, not only to organize information in a more sophisticated web of global communications than before, but also opens up considerations as to how this information is organized.<sup>15</sup> The proposed teaching tool assumes not only an exposure effect to new information, but also a deeper level of understanding design foundations.

### **Visual Communication Education Foundations**

According to philosophy of art education Professor Nanyoung Kim, there are three principal uses of the term design: “(1) design as composition or design fundamentals; (2) design as ornamentation, deriving from the industrial drawing system,

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<sup>14</sup> Adream Blair-Early, “Beyond Borders: Participatory Design Research and the Changing Role of Design,” *Visual Language Journal: Global Interaction in Design* 44, no. 2, (2010): 211.

<sup>15</sup> Greely, “Richard Duardo’s Aztlán Poster,” 2.

(3) design as planning and executing handicraft and applied art items. All three kinds of design flourished in art education from 1900 to the 1930s.” VCD education today is largely due to a developed model that started in 1899 by Arthur Wesley Dow. Dow, not satisfied with the traditional academic focus on exact representation of design and art, and inspired by Japanese art, formulated his own composition theory into elements and principles in his book *Composition: A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the Use of Students and Teachers*.<sup>16</sup> According to Dow,

Only through appreciations does the composer recognize harmony. Hence the effort to find structure resolved itself into a development of appreciation. This faculty is a common human possession, but may remain inactive. A way must be found to lay hold upon it and cause it to grow. A natural method is that of exercised in progressive order, first building up on very simple harmonies, then proceeding on to the highest forms of composition. Such a method of study included all kinds of drawing, design, and painting. It offers a means of training for the creative artist, for the teacher or for one who studies art for the sake of culture.<sup>17</sup>

The typical progression of education, in particular that of the VCD discipline, supports Dow’s methods and takes form in scaffolding. Scaffolding refers to initially supplying students a simplified version of a lesson and then gradually escalating the level of

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<sup>16</sup> Nanyoung Kim, “A History of Design Theory in Art Education,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 40, no. 2 (2006): 16.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur Wesley Dow, *Composition: A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the Use of Students and Teachers* (University of California Press, 1997) 63.

difficulty or complexity of a learning continuum.<sup>18</sup> Looking directly at foundational VCD, educators begin by presenting the elements of art and principles of design. Through various interactive exercises, these elements and principles are commonly set side by side with contemporary/traditional art or graphic shape and form. As a result of these practices, students increasingly gain awareness of the use of both elements and principles as primary techniques in applying analytical concept. Understanding these lessons becomes a foundation for all prospective practice in a student's VCD career.

While relying on the same core concepts, today, VCD education varies in curricula and courses from elementary school to collegiate level learning and from program to program. Some VCD classes offer narrow generalized topics that review foundations and progress into specialized material together. Generally, a class will start with foundation level information and then will progress to an array of specific topics. VCD students are responsible for learning the proper use of elements of art, principles of design, composition, new media—all while developing process and conceptual thinking skills to produce new work.

In *Adventures in Art*, a popularly used art instruction series, Laura Chapman explains when designers plan their work, “they must see and think about the elements [of art] and principles of design. A principle of design is a guide for relating the visual [art]

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<sup>18</sup> “Scaffolding,” *The Glossary of Education Reform*, last modified April 6, 2015, <http://edglossary.org/scaffolding>.

elements.”<sup>19</sup> Following is a uses of The J. Paul Getty Museum Education department’s<sup>20</sup> and Davis Publication’s *Exploring Visual Design: The Elements and the Principles*’<sup>21</sup> approach and resources explaining lessons in the elements of art and principles of design.

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<sup>19</sup> Laura H Chapman, *Adventures in Art: Level 5* (Worcester, M.A: Davis Publications, Inc., 1998) 7.

<sup>20</sup> “Formal Analysis,” *The J. Paul Getty Museum*, last modified 2016, [http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building\\_lessons/formal\\_analysis.html#line](http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/formal_analysis.html#line).

<sup>21</sup> Joseph A. Gatto, Albert W. Porter, and Jack Selleck, *Exploring Visual Design: The Elements and Principles, 3rd Ed.* (Worcester, M.A: Davis Publications, Inc., 2000) 56–57, 140–141.

### Elements of Art

The elements of art are the building blocks used by artists to create a work of art.



**Line** is a mark with greater length than width. Lines can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal; straight or curved; thick or thin.



**Shape** is a closed line. Shapes can be geometric, like squares and circles; or organic, like free-form or natural shapes. Shapes are flat and can express length and width.



**Forms** are three-dimensional shapes expressing length, width, and depth. Balls, cylinders, boxes, and pyramids are forms.



**Space** is the area between and around objects. The space around objects is often called negative space; negative space has shape. Space can also refer to the feeling of depth. Real space is three-dimensional; in visual art, when we create the feeling or illusion of depth, we call it space.



**Color** is light reflected off of objects. Color has three main characteristics: *hue* (the name of the color, such as red, green, blue, etc.), *value* (how light or dark it is), and *intensity* (how bright or dull it is).

- White is pure light; black is the absence of light.
- Primary colors are the only true colors (red, blue, and yellow). All other colors are mixes of primary colors.
- Secondary colors are two primary colors mixed together (green, orange, violet).
- Intermediate colors, sometimes called tertiary colors, are made by mixing a primary and secondary color together. Some examples of intermediate colors are yellow green, blue green, and blue violet.
- Complementary colors are located directly across from each other on the *color wheel* (an arrangement of colors along a circular diagram to show how they are related to one another). Complementary pairs contrast because they share no common colors. For example, red and green are complements, because green is made of blue and yellow. When complementary colors are mixed together, they neutralize each other to make brown.



**Texture** is the surface quality that can be seen and felt. Textures can be rough or smooth, soft or hard. Textures do not always feel the way they look; for example, a drawing of a porcupine may look prickly, but if you touch the drawing, the paper is still smooth.

Figure 2.2 Getty Museum Education Department's "Elements of Art" Class Resource

### Principles of Design

The principles of design describe the ways that artists use the elements of art in a work of art.



**Balance** is the distribution of the visual weight of objects, colors, texture, and space. If the design was a scale, these elements should be balanced to make a design feel stable. In symmetrical balance, the elements used on one side of the design are similar to those on the other side; in asymmetrical balance, the sides are different but still look balanced. In radial balance, the elements are arranged around a central point and may be similar.



**Emphasis** is the part of the design that catches the viewer's attention. Usually the artist will make one area stand out by contrasting it with other areas. The area could be different in size, color, texture, shape, etc.



**Movement** is the path the viewer's eye takes through the work of art, often to focal areas. Such movement can be directed along lines, edges, shape, and color within the work of art.



**Pattern** is the repeating of an object or symbol all over the work of art.



**Repetition** works with pattern to make the work of art seem active. The repetition of elements of design creates unity within the work of art.



**Proportion** is the feeling of unity created when all parts (sizes, amounts, or number) relate well with each other. When drawing the human figure, proportion can refer to the size of the head compared to the rest of the body.



**Rhythm** is created when one or more elements of design are used repeatedly to create a feeling of organized movement. Rhythm creates a mood like music or dancing. To keep rhythm exciting and active, variety is essential.



**Variety** is the use of several elements of design to hold the viewer's attention and to guide the viewer's eye through and around the work of art.

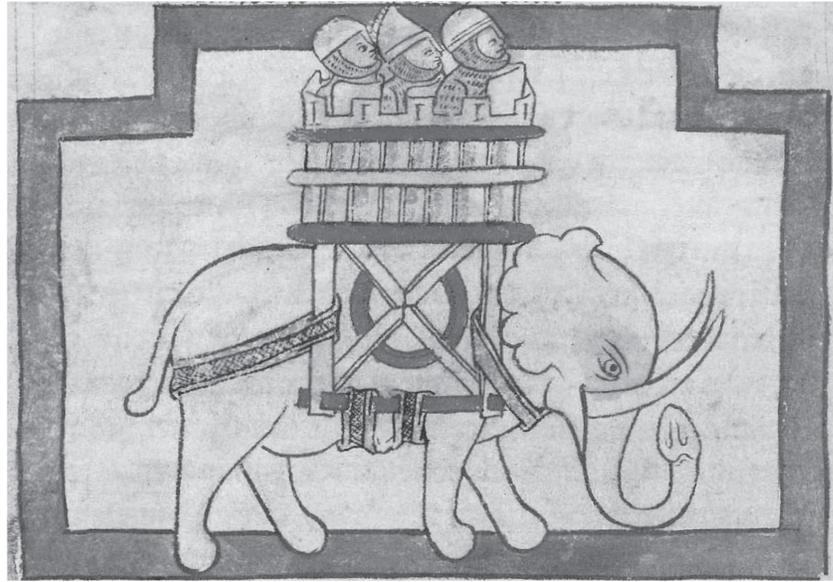


**Unity** is the feeling of harmony between all parts of the work of art, which creates a sense of completeness.

Figure 2.3 Getty Museum Education Department's "Principles of Design" Class Resource

## Introducing Shape

Learning about the elements of art? Continue by discovering shapes in works of art. Identify the different shapes you see in this detail of a page from a thirteenth-century book.



Unknown artist  
**An Elephant**  
English, about 1250–60  
Ink tinted with body color and translucent washes on parchment, 8¼ x 6¾ in.  
Ms. 100, fol. 17v

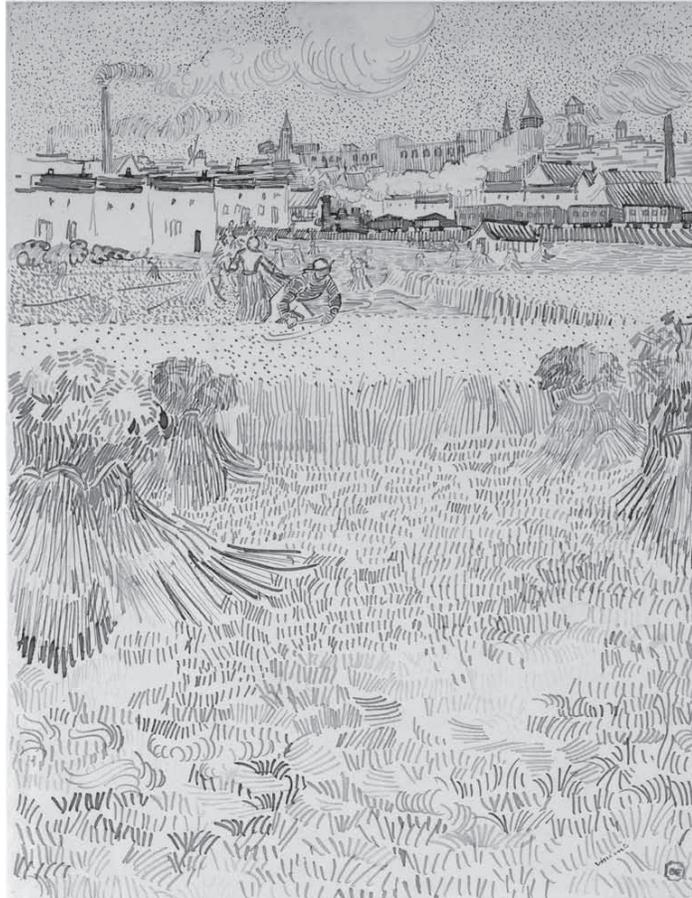
List the shapes you see.

Figure 2.4 Getty Museum Education Department's "Introducing Shape" Class Resource

## Understanding Formal Analysis

### Introducing Line

Learning about the elements of art? Begin by discovering lines in works of art. Look closely at the types of lines in the drawing below. How many different lines do you see here? Notice length, direction, width, distance from each other, etc.



Vincent van Gogh  
Dutch, 1853–1890  
**Arles: View from the Wheatfields**  
1888  
Reed and quill pens and brown ink, 12% x 9% in.  
2001.25

Figure 2.5 Getty Museum Education Department's "Introducing Line" Class Resource

# 3 Value

**Key Vocabulary**  
 value  
 high-keyed  
 low-keyed  
 value contrast  
 center of interest

**A**LL THE THINGS YOU SEE AROUND YOU ARE ILLUMINATED, or lit, by some light source. Without light, you would see nothing. No matter how bright your whitest clothes are, you cannot see them in absolute darkness. With a little light, the clothes begin to look gray. As the light increases, the white clothes look brighter.

**3-1** This value chart shows a range of nine steps from white to black. Most people can distinguish about thirty to forty steps, or value gradations, between black and white.

**3-2** Much of the beauty in black-and-white photography is a result of gradations in value.

*Angel Adams (1902-84), Far Low Boat on the Beach, 1965. Contemporary print from original negative by Angel Adams in USCIB-01 10 UARC, Allevonia Museum of Photography, Sweeney-Rubin Angel Adams Far Low Collection, University of California, Riverside.*

**3-3** Where is your attention drawn in this image? How does the artist use value to create the center of interest?

*Jean Baptiste-Simon Chardin (1699-1770), The Silver Goblet and Cigarettes, c. 1726. Oil on canvas, 16 3/4" x 19" (42.9 x 48.3 cm). Purchase 55.1934, The Saint Louis Art Museum (Early European Art).*

**Try It**  
 Use pencil, charcoal, or crayon to make a value chart with only three values: light, medium, and dark. Then make a second value chart with five values, from white to black.

**3-4** This self-portrait is a study in value. Think about where the source of light must have been when the artist depicted her own face.

*Sun Han (age 17), Self-portrait, 1986. Charcoal on paper, 18" x 24" (45.7 x 61 cm). Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, Los Angeles, California.*

Figure 2.6 Exploring Visual Design: The Elements and Principles' "Value" Class Resource

# 7 Balance

**Key Vocabulary**  
 symmetrical balance  
 approximate symmetry  
 asymmetrical balance  
 radial balance

**D**O YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU FIRST LEARNED TO SKATE, ride a bike, and dance? As long as you didn't lose your balance, you felt fine. But when you did, you probably became nervous for a moment. Staying in balance is one of our most important needs. But from the time we're born, we are at odds with the forces of gravity. Our earliest struggles to maintain balance occur when we learn to stand and walk. Later, we strive for other kinds of physical balance, as well as mental and emotional balance.

Artists strive for visual balance. Visual balance is the way that the different parts of a composition relate to one another. When dealing with issues of design and organization, artists always consider visual balance because it is so basic to art. Artists use the elements of design—such as shape, color, and texture—to create balance within a composition. The four most important types of visual balance are symmetrical balance, approximate symmetry, asymmetrical balance, and radial balance.

**7-1** This is a portrait of Chuck Close's friend the artist Lucas Samaras. Generally, an artist tries to convey certain characteristics about a person when creating a portrait. What traits do you think Chuck Close was trying to capture in this portrait? How does Close communicate these characteristics?

*Chuck Close (b. 1940), Lucas Samaras, 1992-93. Color woodcut with printmaking ink, 36" (116.8 x 91.4 cm). Edition of 50. Published by Pace Prints.*

**7-2** In this work, what does the artist do to create balance?

*Richard Estes (b. 1932), Eighth Floor Restaurant, from Urban Landscapes III, 1981. Screenprint, 19 1/2" x 27 1/2" (50 x 69.9 cm). ©Richard Estes/Licensed by VMCA, New York, NY/MarBoonough Gallery, NY.*

**7-3** Artists and architects sometimes purposely avoid an obvious sense of balance in their works.

*Frank O. Gehry (b. 1929) and Associates, Inc., Natimul-Nederlanden Building, Prague, Czech Republic. Model. Photo by Joshua White.*

Figure 2.7 Exploring Visual Design: The Elements and Principles' "Balance" Class Resource

Each of the beginning lessons in foundational VCD mold a designer's skill and knowledge and will ultimately make them more informed in their design choices.

The proposed teaching tools seek to use elements of art and principles of design as guiding sources of instruction, referencing samples of international artifacts as visual identifiers. Considering the connections between cultural identity and VCD is a valuable asset in establishing the proposal and creation of this new educational library.

### III. CULTURAL IDENTITY AND VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN EDUCATION

Understanding the link between cultural identity and VCD is important for determining the educational importance of a new learning tool. Establishing important attributes and characteristics of the conceptual pedagogical response through research is also crucial in determining potential aspects and objectives of the tool. This chapter focuses on the relationship between cultural identity and VCD education.

#### **Cultural Identity and Visual Communication**

In order to follow along, it is important to recognize the context of cultural identity specifically discussed in this research. Throughout time, VCD has been a way in which different cultures and indigenous groups have learned to exchange information and define their unique personalities. From writing systems of Egyptian hieroglyphics and Chinese characters to handcrafted wardrobes of African tribes, particular visual gestures have been a way of communication. Art and VCD helps solidify extended families or clans (a group of people joined by blood or marriage) in three ways (1) art makes major ancestors available to the living clan members, (2) art depicts important events in the clan's history, (3) art is an important element in rituals that bring the entire clan together.

<sup>22</sup> Design and visual elements that represent indigenous groups are created to self-identify, preserve, and strengthen their individual cultures, heritage, and traditions.

According to *Universal Principles of Design*, "There is much more to design than what

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<sup>22</sup> Margaret Lazzari and Dona Schlesier, *Exploring Art: A Global Thematic Approach, 5th Ed.* (Boston, M.A.: Cengage Learning, 2016) 358.

meets the eye in surface styling. Human motivation is mysterious and ties to subconscious instincts, perceptions, and influences.”<sup>23</sup>

An example in which design has a clear and meaningful relationship with culture is in the Chinese practice of organization in feng shui. According to Angi Ma Wong, intercultural consultant and feng shui specialist, although feng shui has to do with the land, and harmonious placement of architecture, interior design, and objects, you can draw upon feng shui elements to use in VCD. To do this, a designer may carefully use color and shapes that are appropriate for a specific type of business in consideration with balance. It is no stretch to relate these categories to graphic design, she says.<sup>24</sup> There are three major categories in which feng shui is based—flow of energy, yin and yang, and the five major elements: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. She relates these categories to the elements of art and principles of design by paralleling flow of energy to movement in a layout, the yin and the yang to balance, and the different elements to the use of shape and line in communicative design.

According to Audra Buck-Coleman, the VCD community has been witness to a number of professional designers, writers, and educators who “weave the threads of tolerance, anti-racism and ethical awareness into a fabric of their professional work” demonstrating what careful and ethical design can do. Such considered work may be peace propaganda posters to the work of American graphic design of Hungarian descent, Tibor Kalman, known for his work as editor-and-chief of international perspectives

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<sup>23</sup> William Lidwell, et al, *Universal Principles of Design* (Beverly, M.A.: Rockport Publishers, 2010) 11.

<sup>24</sup> Ronnie Lipton, *Designing Across Cultures* (Cincinnati, OH.: HOW Design Books, 2002) 141.

*Colors* magazine, and to the work of Gran Fury, a group of activist designers. However, she claims, we have also experienced the “ill effects and powerful graphic design through the Nazi propaganda posters, fear-inducing propaganda from post 9/11 and the false rhetoric anti-immigration groups.” It is important, she notes, that design educators instill ethical values in students to cultivate knowledgeable, responsible VCD professionals.<sup>25</sup>

### **Addressing Cultural Identity Through Visual Communication Design Pedagogy**

The need and commitment to comprehend how intuitive beliefs of race, religion, socio-economic class and other differences impacts VCD is an ethical component of a practitioner of VCD and a VCD educator’s professional duties. American graphic designer, design critic and educator, Michael Bierut states in his essay, “Why Designers Can’t Think,” “Modern design education is essentially value-free: Every problem has a purely visual solution that exists outside any cultural context...Until educators find a way to expose their students to a meaningful range of culture, graduates will continue to speak in languages that only their classmates will understand.”<sup>26</sup> In contemporary society, the education of a student of VCD is expected to do many things. By the end of their academic career, VCD students are anticipated to be creatively flexible, business entrepreneurs, copywriters and editors, and skilled in creating complex VCD using leading technologies. As design programs rush and overload courses that provide new technical skills, the ability to focus and develop cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural experiences from a foundational perspective declines.<sup>27</sup> Basically, the increasing role

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<sup>25</sup> Buck-Coleman, “Navigating Cross-Cultures,” 193.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Bierut, “Why Designers Can’t Think,” *Seventy Nine Short Essays on Design*, (2012): 17.

<sup>27</sup> Blair-Early, “Beyond Borders,” 217.

expected of a successful VCD practice today is changing more rapidly than basic VCD education can adjust. Professor Adream Blair-Early states, “In order to change the role of the designer, we must first address the problems facing our current design curricula. We need to address the gap between where the field is going and where design curriculum has stagnated.”

Education plays a pivotal role in the development of the VCD discipline as designers rise to meet these challenges—it should educate on the future, foster the present, advance creative research and provide encouragement for the VCD global community. According to the *Journal of Inclusive Design Education*, contemporary design education and practice should foster actions that “(a) take the viewpoints, needs, and desires of ‘the other’ into consideration, (b) encourage thoughtful navigation between states, media, and disciplines (c) relate various languages, systems, and cultures (d) bridge data and knowledge and (e) broaden and deepen the comprehensibility and accessibility of our complicated multi-environments.”<sup>28</sup>

As was described in Chapter 2, Arthur Wesley Dow’s methodology was founded on the notion that “only through appreciations does a composer recognize harmony...as fine relations can be understood only through appreciation, the whole fabric of art education should be based upon training in appreciation.”<sup>29</sup> It is, therefore, through wider appreciation and knowledge that the practice of VCD can recognize the broad sense of

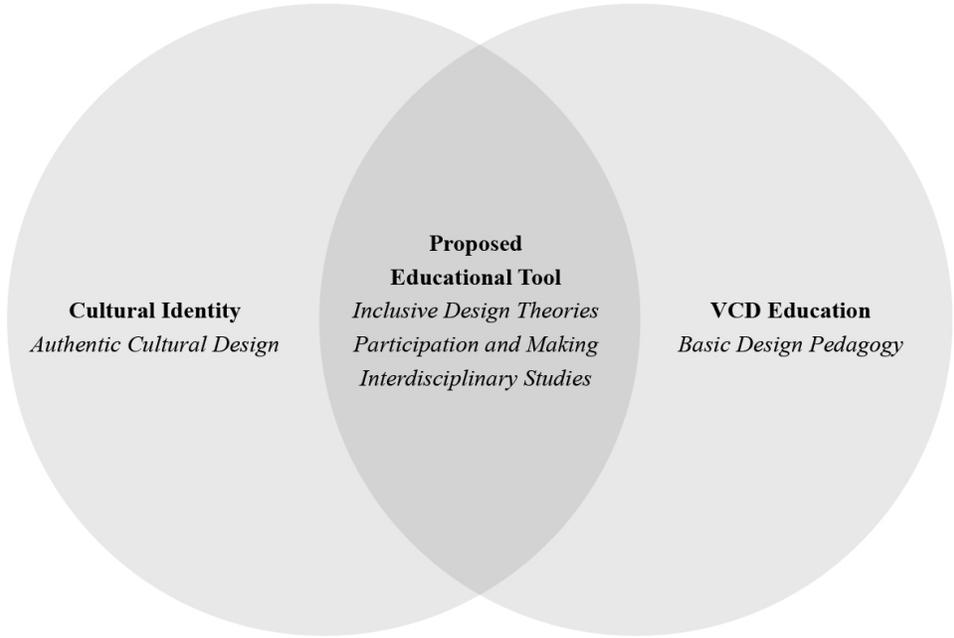
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<sup>28</sup> Alex Bitterman and Beth Tauke, “Introduction to Diversity in Design,” *The Journal of Inclusive Design Education*, last modified 2010. [http://iridescent.icograda.org/2010/02/16/bridging\\_diversity\\_ethical\\_considerations\\_in\\_design\\_education/category5.php](http://iridescent.icograda.org/2010/02/16/bridging_diversity_ethical_considerations_in_design_education/category5.php).

<sup>29</sup> Dow, *Composition*, 63.

VCD in social use. This tool proposes supplementary appreciation and empathy of cultural identity within formal VCD, and attempts to do so through responsible and inclusive design, participation and making, and interdisciplinary studies.

**Empowering Knowledge of Cultural Design Authenticity  
and Inclusion Through Basic Design Pedagogy**



*Figure 3.1* Thesis Concept Diagram

### *Responsible Design and Inclusion*

As designers to communities large and small—those in the VCD discipline have a duty to use responsible language and imagery. This means that they must take ethical ownership of their knowledge, visual graphic solutions, and when and how to use terms for the work given the semiotics in context. Both design and design research should address multicultural and multilingual audiences that reduce information poverty. Information poverty is defined as a situation in which an audience does not have requisite skills, abilities, or material means to obtain efficient access to information, interpret it, and apply it appropriately.<sup>30</sup> User-centric design calls for designers that establish an empathy with one's audience and their frame of reference.

According to American graphic designer, educator, and co-chair of the graduate Design program for Cranbrook Academy of Art, Katherine McCoy in “Graphic Design in a Multicultural World,”

[Our VCD professions] were born of the industrial revolution. Modernism, especially at the Bauhaus, was the response to the economies of scale and standardization in the new mass societies. The functionalist design philosophy of “form follows function” is based on the standardized processes and modular systems... Universal design solutions were sought to solve universal needs across cultures. Reducing design elements down to their basic forms—geometric shapes

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<sup>30</sup> Blair-Early, “Beyond Borders,” 211.

and primary colors, for instance—was seen as a method to make one design solution appropriate for all users.<sup>31</sup>

But now, new ideals are breaking the mass society, and with that comes the need to more precisely communicative individual and multicultural messages.

Recently and in response, the design profession's oldest and largest professional membership organization, The Professional Association for Design (AIGA), created the *Diversity and Inclusion Initiative* for the purpose of “encouraging diversity in design education, discourse, and practice to strengthen and expand the relevance of design in all areas of society.”<sup>32</sup> By encouraging education of authentic cultural design practices these tools will support strides of responsible design and inclusion in the VCD discipline.

### *Participation and Making*

A hands-on approach requires that students be able to translate theory into relatable and observational practice. Therefore, when a student is given the opportunity to create a personal connection with a lesson, they are more inclined to engage and understand a message. Participation and making not only creates greater empathy between the student, the work, and the subject matter, but it also create a greater sense of depth of processing.

<sup>33</sup> According to the *Universal Principles of Design*, this is a phenomenon of educational awareness in which information that is analyzed deeply is better recalled than information

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<sup>31</sup> Katherine McCoy, “Graphic Design in a Multicultural World,” *How Magazine*, April 1995.

<sup>32</sup> “Diversity and Inclusion Initiative,” *AIGA*.

<sup>33</sup> Lidwell, *Universal Principles of Design*, 72.

that is analyzed superficially, creating a more profound and elaborate understanding of the material.

A successful example of creative design learning through participation and making is American illustrator and author Keri Smith's book series. Some of the titles included in the series are *How To Become An Explorer Of The World: Portable Life Museum*, *Wreck this Journal*, and *Finish This Book*—all examples in which she invites the user to collect observations, write, draw, and become an active participant in the author/designer experience.

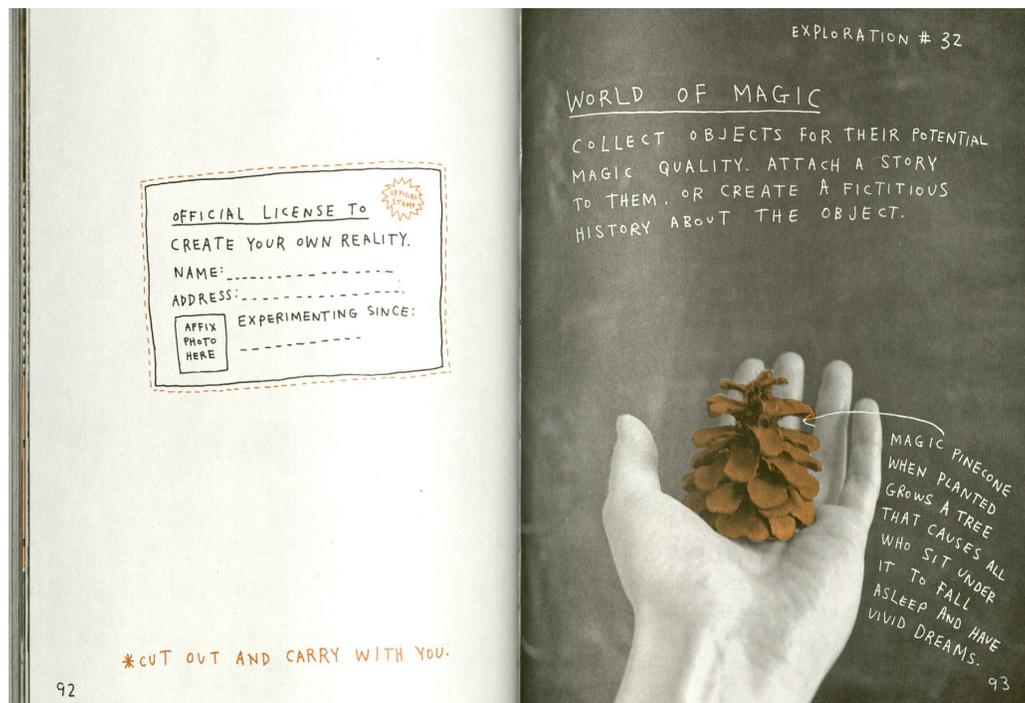
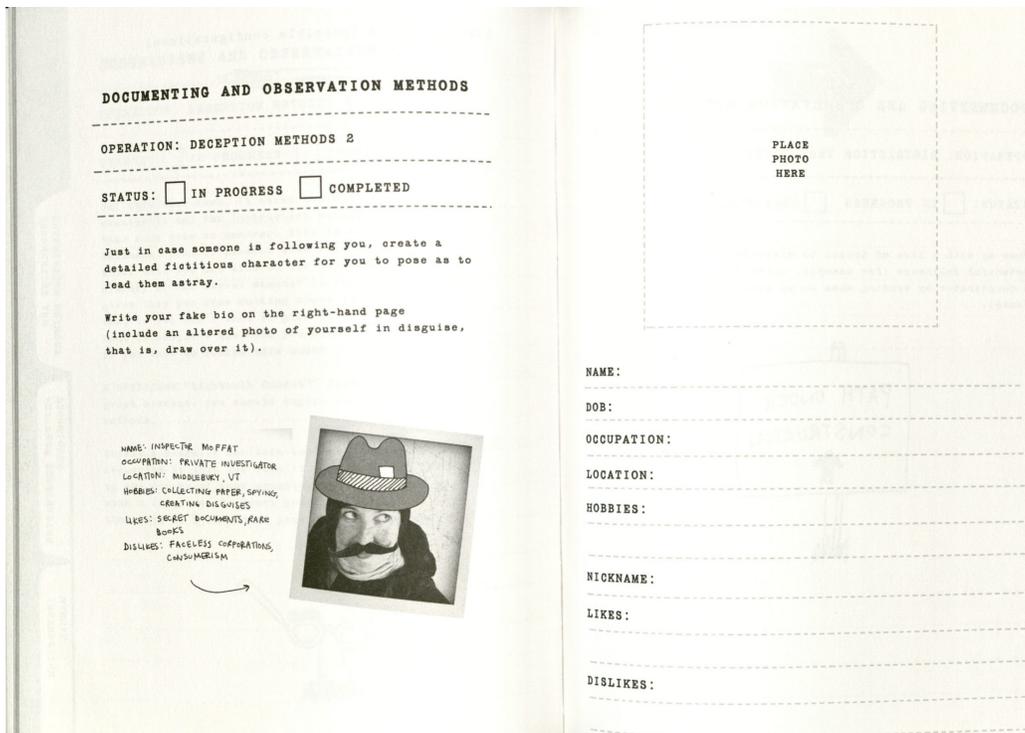


Figure 3.2 Samples of Participatory Spreads from Keri Smith Publications

Philosophy of art education, Professor Nanyoung Kim believes that lack of participatory opportunities and scientific, analytic and conceptual education of VCD miss an obligation to “the fundamental nature of art making such as ambiguity, uncertainty, mystery and perceptual nature [of a designer]...[it] transmits an image of the artist as highly cerebral and art making as solely intellectual.” The goal of learning VCD, however, should be an aesthetic appreciation of form and the application or art making regardless of methodology instead of presentation of information as a given or universal understanding.<sup>34</sup> By encouraging an interactive and tangible tools that not only relate information but invite practical use, these tools will practice personalization, making, and participation to create empathy through learning.

### *Interdisciplinary Studies*

As reported by the Harvard Educational Review, students who learn diverse curriculum, not only gain a broader appreciation for other cultures, but also develop a higher level of critical thinking skills.<sup>35</sup> Today, more than ever, cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary education is most accessible and convenient. A text in the *Universal Principles of Design*, recalls that in previous years, a designer who might be interested in learning about other areas of study would have to find texts from many different areas of design. The designer would first have to determine if the text was worth reading, then learn the terminology,

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<sup>34</sup> Nanyoung, “A History of Design Theory in Art Education,” 26.

<sup>35</sup> Gurin, “Diversity and Higher Education,” 192.

and then endure depth of detail. The effort was, therefore, too significant and rarely independently sought.<sup>36</sup>

Interdisciplinary VCD educational programs have progressively made this an easier transition for VCD students as they branch out and create cross-disciplinary and research centers that connect design with professional areas such as business, engineering, and health sciences. This, in conjunction with the role of today's designer as a community level social problem-solver, has helped graphic design shift paradigms. It has grown into a practice that collaborates with businesses and partners to prosper by including interdisciplinary and qualitative research methods from the designer. Brooklyn-based Colombian digital artist, technologist and educator, Cynthia Lawson is an Associate Provost for Distribution and Global Education and Associate Professor of Integrated Design at The New School. She believes that "integrative learning is an umbrella term for structures, strategies, and activities that bridge divides," and to create these environments, "it is critical to have students of a variety of levels as well as with a diversity of backgrounds, interests, and skills."<sup>37</sup>

In *Revolutions: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching Printmaking and Latin American History*, Albright College presents the findings of an integrative hybrid history/studio art course that teaches Latin American history through printmaking. In their experience, students become more aware of the importance and impact both subjects had

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<sup>36</sup> Lidwell, *Universal Principles of Design*, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Cynthia Lawson, "The New School Collaborates," *Visual Language Journal: Global Interaction in Design* 44, no. 2, (2010): 249.

on each other. They also agreed that, students tend to express satisfaction in being pushed out of their comfort zones and that they have benefitted from seeing the interdisciplinary connections.”<sup>38</sup>

The “good news,” according to Audrey Grace Bennett, is that “designers from around the world are crossing disciplinary and geographic borders, overcoming language barriers and technological hindrances to collaborate in order to change the world for the better. They have pooled resources to pen manifestos, form new organizations, revamp old pedagogy to political, cultural and social issues concerning the things that they design.”<sup>39</sup> By supporting learning topics outside the core school of design, this proposal, too, will aid in relating interdisciplinary studies to the library of knowledge of the VCD the discipline.

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<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Kiddy and Kristen R. Woodward, “Revolutions: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching Printmaking and Latin American History,” *The History Teacher* 46, no. 2 (February 2013) 188.

<sup>39</sup> Bennet, “Hegemony in Graphic Design,” 156.

#### **IV. INDIGENOUS DESIGN ANALYSIS**

The concept for this project evolved through a better understanding of the principles of design and elements of art, as well as a close study of international indigenous design practices and techniques. This chapter provides an overview of the creative breakdown of the creative process used to develop the initial concepts and design of this thesis.

##### **Indigenous Design VCD Education History**

Throughout history and worldwide, innovative and visionary VCD educators have supported the importance of improving the focus of cross-cultural implementation in education. Mexican artist and educator, Adolfo Best-Maugard was influenced by worldly artisan design and was an advocate for art education through primitive design, referring it as the “synthetic expression of the soul of a people,” and “traditional expression of the race.” Inspired by his research and work as a traveling excavator and illustrator for Franz Boaz, a German anthropologist, he drew connections between details and illustrations on primitive findings from around the world. He believed in using these findings to simplify design education to its purest form, as they allowed creative students to develop their own style from a place of understanding and intuition.

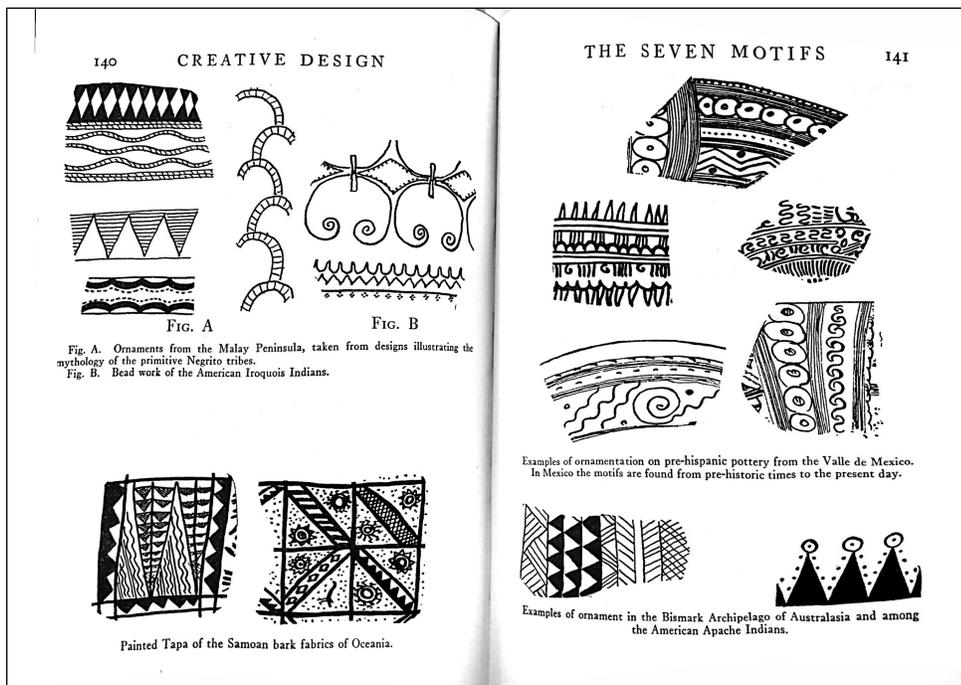


Figure 4.1 Samples of Indigenous Documentation by Best-Maugard in *A Creative Method*

According to Best-Maugard, “It is the intention of this method of teaching graphic arts to return to the sources, to begin with basic symbols, and little by little to establish in the mind of the student his own sense of, and his kinship with these laws: he is the natural heir of all stored wisdom accumulated in Time, and he can better use his heritage if he knows his boundaries.”<sup>40</sup> His methodology was based on seven basic motifs drawn off his observations from which he believed all designs can be created: the Spiral, Circle, Half-Circle, S-Shape, Wavy Line, Zigzag Line, and Straight Line.

The Best-Maugard method was installed as part of the public school curriculum in the Federal District [of Mexico] and the surrounding area. Each year a group of about two hundred teachers assigned to the Drawing and Handicrafts Section of the Ministry of Public Education instructed approximately forty thousand students Best-Maugard’s *A Method for Creative Design*, first published in 1926.<sup>41</sup> His (at the time considered radical) method transcended Mexican national boundaries. While in exile in the United States, he presented his method with positive feedback, allowing him to publish a version in English through Alfred A. Knopf, which has been reissued repeatedly.

Other similar publications also surfaced at the time, for instance Elena Izcue’s 1927 proposal for Peruvian schools. This suggests his method was not an isolated circumstance, but part of a prevalent trend in art education that sought to promote the expression of national essence through abstract, formal components that were related to

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<sup>40</sup> Best-Maugard, *A Method for Creative Design*, 112.

<sup>41</sup> “Informe que rinde a la Dirección de Dibujo y Trabajos Manuales sobre las labores llevadas a cabo durante el año de 1922,” *Boletín de Secretaría de Educación Pública*, January 1923.

indigenous traditions.<sup>42</sup> In the same way, Arthur Wesley Dow's *Composition*, not only mentions his 1903 and 1904 travels through Japan, India, and Egypt spent gathering illustrative material, but throughout the pages we see examples of his observations as they relate his organization and arrangement of the elements of art and principles of design.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Natalia Majluf, "El indigenismo en México y Perú: hacia una visión comparative," *Arte, Historia e Identidad en America: Visiones Comparativas. XVII Coloquio Internacional de Historia del Arte*, 2: (2004).

<sup>43</sup> Dow, *Composition*, 77, 84, 90, 116.

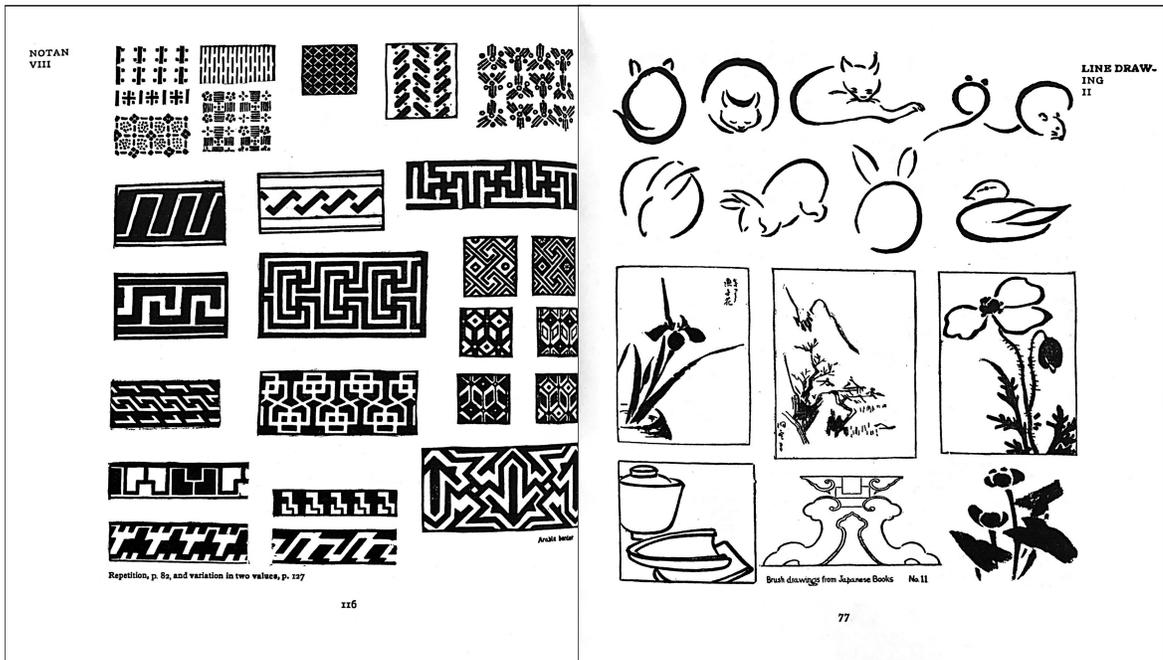
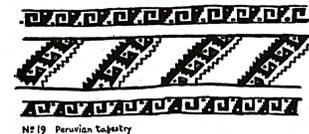


Plate 6, No. 67. Color schemes from Japanese prints

**PRINCIPLES OF COMPOSITION III**

Of all ways of creating harmony this is the most common, being probably the oldest form of design. It seems almost instinctive, perhaps derived from the rhythms of breathing and walking, or the movement of ripples and rolling waves. Marching is but orderly walking, and the dance, in its primitive form, is a development of marching. Children make rows and patterns of sticks or bits of colored paper, thinking of them as in animated motion. In early forms of art the figures march or dance around the vases, pots and baskets.



No. 19 Peruvian tapestry

This principle of Repetition is the basis of all music and poetry. The sacred dance of the savage is associated with the drum and other primitive instruments for marking rhythm; with the chant and mystic song. From such rude beginnings, from the tomtoms, trumpets and Pan-pipes of old, music has developed to the masterpieces of modern times through the building of harmony upon harmony,—composition. From the crude rhythm of the savage, like the Australian song "Eat; eat; eat," from the battle cries and folk poems of

ever moving toward the world which Swinburne called the world of the future. From the rude sticks on Indian painted in earth, belt, or woven space art has grown to the complexities of Egyptian design to the spires of the Gothic and the sculptures of the Parthenon. In primitive design see the (Holmes.)

Repetition, be it in any way of putting it, and does not in itself create a mere row of the Railroad, fence and all bad patterns. Repetition in art is the intention of creating a builder of art.

1. Borders. In vertical or oblique lines. By connecting with straight lines of meanders, figures and scrolls are

Figure 4.2 Samples of Indigenous Documentation by Wesley Dow in *Composition*

Although VCD education today continues to draw from primitive teaching methodology, it has stepped away from the focus of cultural design as it relates the elements and principles. This project is reminiscent of the original foundational methodology, and establishes a closer relationship to its original cultural inspirations. As a specimen and basis of investigating content across international borders, the thesis will study individual artifacts created by authentic indigenous artisans of each culture from Wixáritari or Huichol (Mexico), Sami (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia), and Ainu (Japan). This chapter explores the analysis of these designs paralleled with VCD foundation education of selected two elements of art (line, color) and two principles of design (balance, pattern).

### **Wixáritari or Huichol Design Analysis**

#### *Wixáritari or Huichol Artisan Design Background*

The Wixáritari or Huicholes' traditional territory in the Western Sierra Madre Occidental Range of Mexico extends into four different states (Jalisco, Nayarit, Durango, and Zacatecas). Because of their seclusion, these areas are primarily accessible by foot. They were discovered in the late 19th century by anthropological practitioners, and promptly captured their attention due to the fine needlework, weaving, and for the sophistication of their ritual objects.<sup>44</sup> The most recognized Huichol pieces are yarn painting and beadwork that is applied on both flat surfaces and on figurines. The yarn paintings originate from their use round tablets with a hole in the center called *nierikas* or

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<sup>44</sup> Johannes Neurath, "Ancestors in the Making: A Living Tradition," *Artes de Mexico: Arte Huichol* (July 2005): 71–74.

“instruments to see” which they believe serve as portals for prayer and in shrines.<sup>45</sup> The intricate colorful yarn is adhered with a mixture of beeswax and pine resin, which the Huichol designer uses to create elaborate depictions and stories. Huichol pieces are not only an aesthetic art form, rather, they are used as keepers and storytellers of their culture and traditions. Detailed and symbolic use of repetitive color schemes, forms, lines, and patterns are prevalent within all Wixátari pieces.

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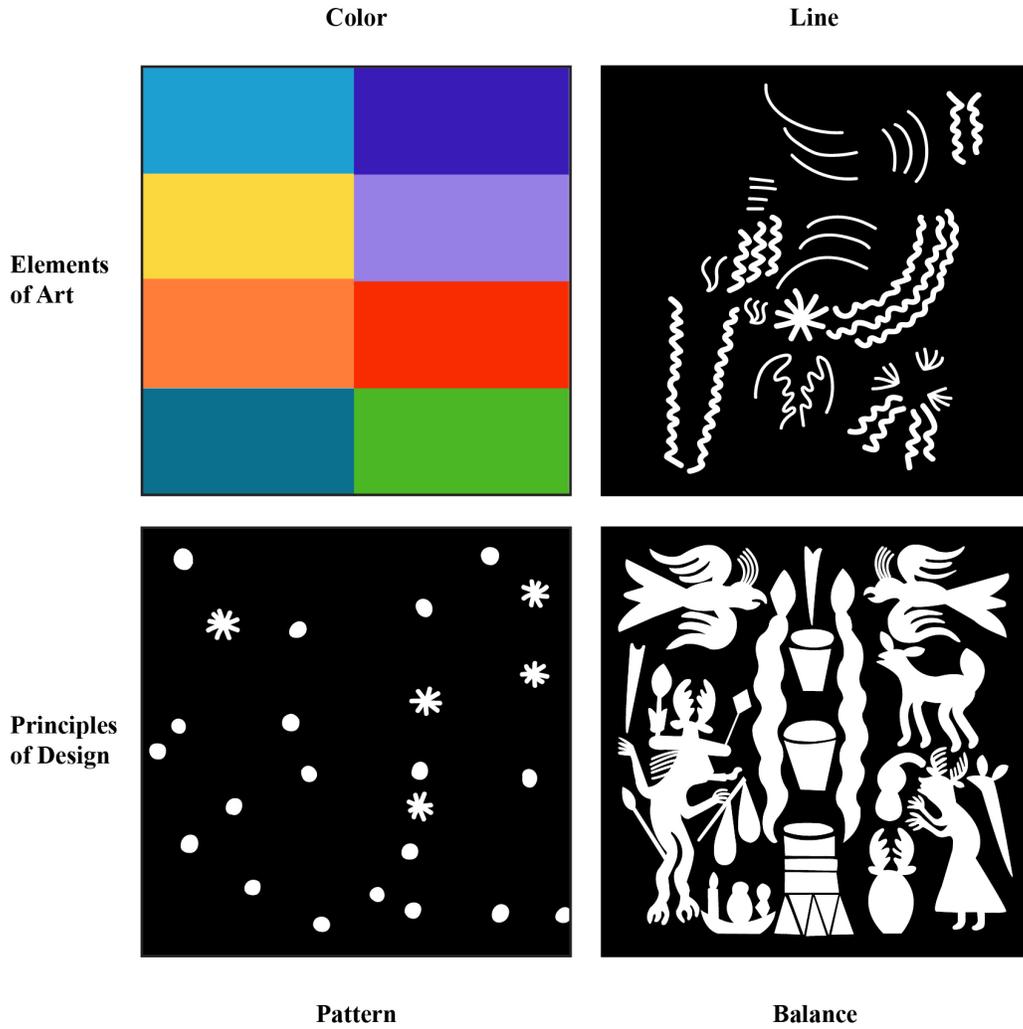
<sup>45</sup> “Caminos de Luz: Universos Huicholes,” *Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City*, 2016.

*Wixátari or Huichol Artisan Design*



*Figure 4.3 Wixátari (Huichol) Yarn Painting, “El Tambor” by Leea Ceceña*

*Wixátari or Huichol Artisan Design Visual Analysis*



*Figure 4.4 Wixátari (Huichol) Design Analysis*

*Wixátari or Huichol Artisan Design Written Analysis*

**Color.** As seen repeatedly in Huichol design, and in this particular piece, “El Tambor,” the use of color has distinct hues, values, and intensities. Since color is used to appeal to senses and emotions, a vibrant and energetic use of all primary, secondary, and intermediate (or tertiary) hues is not rare within Wixátari art. Hues act as complementary pairs and assist in creating a lively rhythm and color harmony throughout the piece. The intensity in color is bright, and the values are both dark and light to create heavy contrast.

**Line.** Similar to their use of color, there are also a variety of structural lines and outlines used throughout this piece—all marked with different lengths, directions, and stroke widths. The lines have a humanist representation, as they lack mechanical structure, and act naturally and organically with little formal consistency. The line personality and repeated use of curves and zig-zags express a sense of movement that allows the user to dynamically travel throughout the piece, reading the story.

**Pattern.** There are random patterns and placements of odd-circular shapes and stars or asterisks scattered throughout the entire work of art. Random patterns are commonly seen in asymmetrical compositions, such as these, that also include irregular or unusual forms. All of these circumstances help the artist create an expressive and visually exciting, narrative in the piece.

**Balance.** The piece is balanced with approximate symmetry where the right and left side of the composition are varied. This holds interest and allows the viewer to find

differential details within the piece, while retaining optical balance. The left and the right side, split by the forms of ceremonial drums and snakes feel balanced, although they call for minor variations. The top of both sides share forms, while the middle and bottom portions grow dissimilar in detail. Minor variations such as these give a piece a higher sense of visual engagement.

## **Sami Design Analysis**

### *Sami Artisan Design Background*

The Sami people are an indigenous group living in communities in the north of Europe extending from northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and on the Russian Kola peninsula. Although they have never had a country of their own, they are considered citizens of the countries in which they reside. As most indigenous groups, their natural environment and settings are also factors in their use of media. *Duodji*, is a term that signifies not only their craft and work but the artifacts themselves, and has strong significance as a Sami identity marker. Duodji embraces an understanding of utility, nature, and gathering materials, as well as identity and spirituality for their people.<sup>46</sup> Because of their landscape and cold climate, they are known for their use of reindeer antlers, wood, wool, and unique form of weaving. Their flag is also vividly and often represented in their use of color within their traditional clothing with distinctive patterns of bright red, yellow, and deep blue. This color scheme is believed to have been created as a Nordic cross applied on the cross of all Nordic countries. As the duodji is recognized

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<sup>46</sup> Hanna Horsbeg Hansen, "Constructing Sami National Heritage: Encounters Between Tradition and Modernity in Sami Art," *Konsthdyotidk tidskrift, Journal of Art History*, (2016).

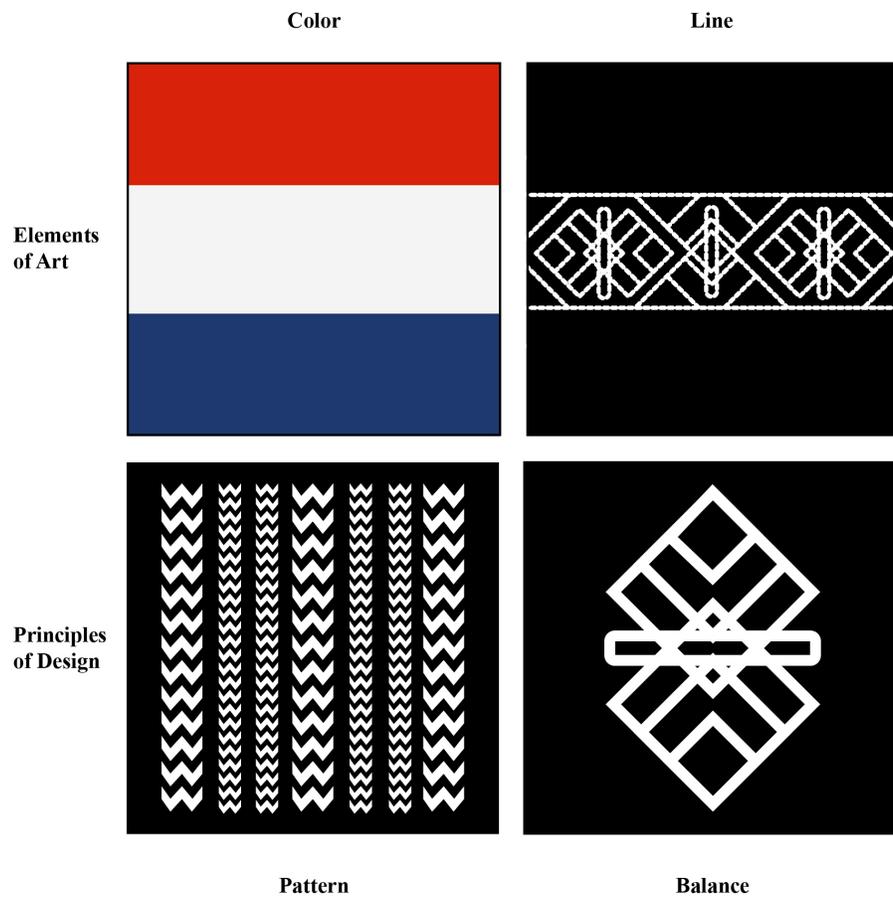
as a traditional Sami handicraft that incorporates artistic elements—to the Sami people, they are functional pieces, such as tools, clothing, and accessories that provide creative use. Sami artisans are known for bringing function and art together with subtle balance in popular pieces such as wooden cups, knives, handbags, and clothing that are meant to be used on a daily basis.

*Sami Artisan Design*



*Figure 4.5 Duodji Grindvev Weaving, "Skallebånd" by Sara Valborg*

*Sami Artisan Design Visual Analysis*



*Figure 4.6 Sami Visual Design Analysis*

### *Sami Artisan Design Written Analysis*

**Color.** Sami handcrafted textile and clothing garments, or gáktis, are often recognized for their popular use of bright red, yellow, and deep blues as a symbol of pride in their first unofficial flag (the official flag has adopted green). In this piece, “Skallebånd,” there is intensity marked by a bright red, and a dark values of a deep blue, along with a neutralizing white. As they are the root of every hue imaginable, the strong use of a primary color scheme in this piece, supports and transmits power and unity in cultural and historic roots.

**Line.** Similar to their deliberate use of color, there are few varieties of structural lines used throughout this piece—as they are all marked with similar lengths, directions, and stroke widths. The lines have a mechanical representation, lacking humanist structure, and act geometrically with formal consistency. The line personality and repeated use of straight lines convey cohesion and stature. The added use of diagonal lines, however, also adds dramatic and dynamic aspects to the design.

**Pattern.** There are repeated and planned patterns of calculated shapes throughout the work. The repetition of visual units develops a sense of unity within the design. To sidestep stale monotony, the artist repeats the shape in a different variation, in this case, in scale. Since this variation is used carefully, it does not disrupt the unity, rather it increases interest for the audience.

**Balance.** The piece has a symmetrical balance where the right and left side of the composition are exactly the same. Since this is carefully calculated weaving, symmetry

can be planned and achieved, much like in architecture. Because of its perfect symmetry, this piece also supports and entails tendencies of stability, dignity, and calmness.

## **Ainu Design Analysis**

### *Ainu Artisan Design Background*

*Ainu* means “human” or “man” and this culture came to be known in Japan during the end of the Heian Period.<sup>47</sup> Although the Ainu are considered an indigenous people of Japan, they have no racial affinities with the Japanese. They are believed to have entered Japan from the north, although anthropological evidence shows that, at one time, they were spread over the whole archipelago before the ancestors of the Japanese. The Ainu are now mostly confined to Hokkaido, Japan’s northernmost island, Sakhalin, and part of the Kurile Islands. The most acknowledged Ainu design motifs are textile designs, executed in appliqué work, and illustrated most effectively on robes made of native pliable fabric of bark cloth. They are recognized for their bold and singular geometric motifs, often in a labyrinthine manner. The notable shapes of the designs are classified into two categories: *moreu*, meaning smoothly flowing, and *aiushi*, or thorned. The designs work together to create vast number of design combinations and an endless variety of motifs.<sup>48</sup> Their use of principles of design and elements of art also reflect cultural and conceptual symbolism.

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<sup>47</sup> “The Ainu People,” *The Ainu Museum*, Hokkaido, Japan: Shiraoi Institute for the Preservation of Ainu Culture, (1980).

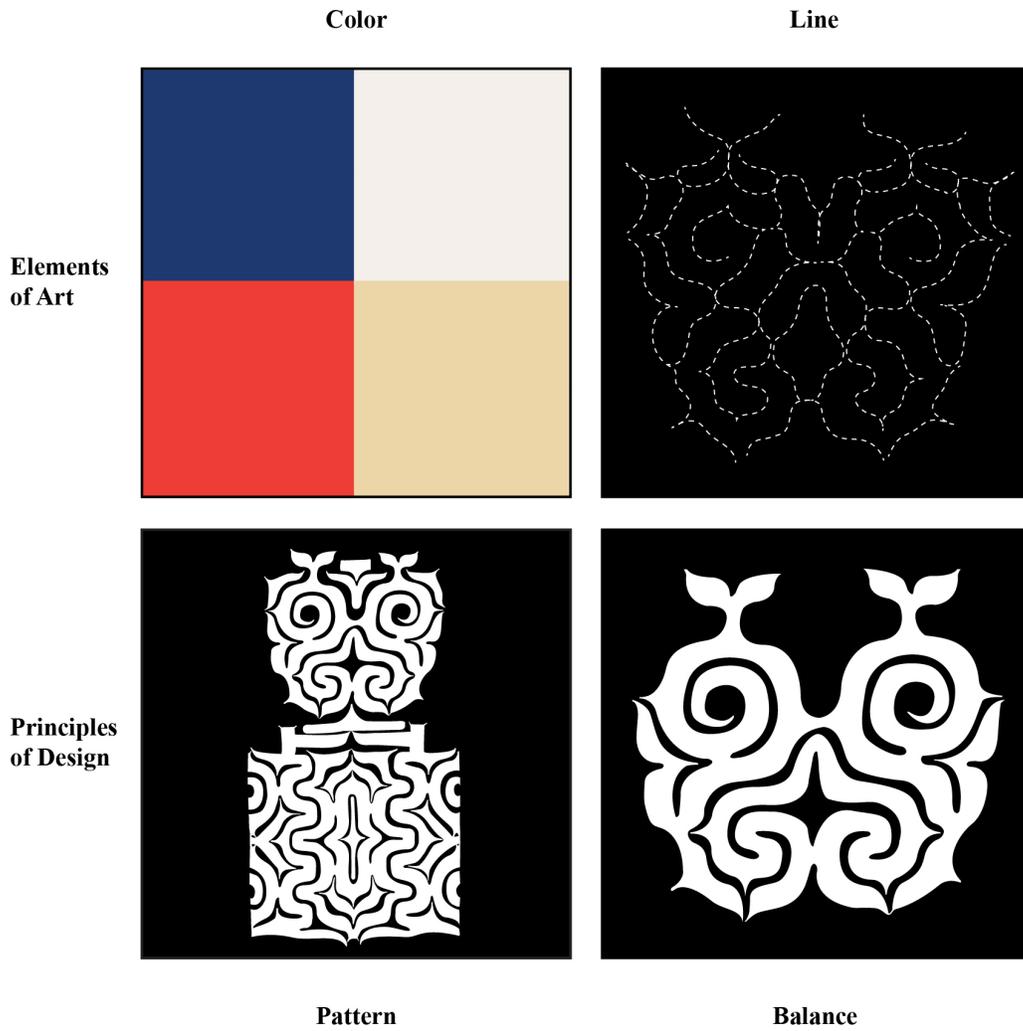
<sup>48</sup>Batterson H. Boger, *The Traditional Arts of Japan* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), 334.

*Ainu Artisan Design*



*Figure 4.7* Ainu Robe, “Retara Kapara Amip”

*Ainu Artisan Design Visual Analysis*



*Figure 4.8 Ainu Visual Design Analysis*

*Ainu Artisan Design Written Analysis*

**Color.** Color is a bold element found in “Retara Kapara Amip” Mostly comprised of a light neutral hue laying over a a bright red and a dark value of blue. The intensity and high value contrast in the use of color in this piece is strong, as the red and blue split horizontally over the piece, and serve as a background for the lighter forms in the foreground. The split between the use of a cool (blue) and a warm (red) hue suggests a strong sense of harmony and balance.

**Line.** The use of line, in this piece is delicate and reminiscent of both contour and gesture lines. Their stippling and thin strokes define the thicker shapes and forms, as well as describe movement, and emphasize direction and fluidity. The line personality of this design is defined by curved lines which express a sense of movement with little to no tension.

**Pattern.** Visual patterns, or repetition and treatment of one or more elements—such as form, line, and color—are also apparent through this piece. These carefully placed patterns, or motifs, help reinforce and highlight the shapes and forms in the design. The patterns on this design are not subdued or subtly integrated, rather they are bold and stimulating creating movement and flow in the design.

**Balance.** The piece has symmetrical balance, produced by the same precise shapes or forms on opposite sides of the composition. The slight variations are due to both the hand crafted element and media, as well as wear. The balance in this piece evokes peace and formality. Their heavy use of exactness and detailed symmetry on their robes is particular

and important as it reflects their ancient belief that a design that has mystical powers should protect all of the body evenly.

It is important to understand and analyze individual artifacts created by authentic indigenous artisans of each culture from Wixáritari or Huichol (Mexico), Sami (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia) in order to develop an international and user-centric template proposed in this thesis. The exploration of these pieces will be considered as potential content in order to develop the prototype of the educational tools.

## V. CREATIVE PROCESS

The objective of this project is to empower knowledge of cultural design authenticity and inclusion through basic design pedagogy. The following solution is an educational method that supports interdisciplinary learning methodologies of the formal elements of art and principles of design via the impression of unique international indigenous design. It is based on observations of past and current VCD education methodology, and on written and visual design analyses of authentic international design artifacts.

The following prototype can be used as a template for building similar supplemental education models. This model focuses on the use of responsible design and inclusion, participation and making, and interdisciplinary studies in order to encourage the recognition of the intersection between intrinsic cultural design elements and formal fundamental design studies.

The creative process is the concept and development for a template of printed interactive tools that belong to a collection for a proposed Indigenous Cultural Design Library. Each book can be obtained separately, and is created to teach, on an introductory level, individual cultures paralleled with the elements of art and principles of design. Each published tool consists of various lessons, visual and written examples, interactive activities, and participatory personalization. While all of the books are established from a consistent template, the interactive lessons, imagery, and details can all be responsively modified to best fit the material necessary. This allows the lessons to be organized in

terms of foundational education, but also supports the authenticity and originality of each component being taught.

The learning lessons and activities are designed to be easily understandable and self-paced so that learners need minimal guidance and do not feel overwhelmed by the overlapped subject matter. This allows a user to learn the concept within the specialized material. It is less important to simulate this precise prototype than it is to focus on the education of the connection between indigenous culture and VCD using responsible design and inclusion, participation and making, and interdisciplinary studies.

The following is a description of a template for the basic educational tools within the proposed Indigenous Cultural Design Library. This section will cover the tools' objectives, concepts, and methods.

### **Indigenous Cultural Design Library Design Overview**

- 1.) Objective: The objective of the Indigenous Cultural Design Library is to create a collection of educational resources that support supplemental learning of the formal elements of art and principles of design via the impression of different international indigenous design.
- 2.) Concept: The idea behind the tools in the library is to empower knowledge of cultural design authenticity and inclusion through basic design pedagogy.
- 3.) Method: A digital and physical prototype was created as a template to simulate the proposal of the introduction of the published tools for the library. Using responsible design and inclusion, participation and making, and interdisciplinary studies, three mock-ups were created; one for each culture analyzed in Chapter 2: Huichol or Wixátari, Ainu,

and Sami. The books were designed as 6.5" (w) x 8.5" (h) size publications with a 1" (w) spine when closed, and 20" (w) x 8.5" (h) when fully extended. This allows for easy, flexible, and hand-held user interaction. The books are not intended to feel overpowering in size, rather should feel qualitative and inviting in information and format. The quality of publication should be unique in publishing and visual aesthetic, and should be referenced as a collectible and personable interactive piece with a long-standing shelf-life. The simulation informs the portions of the book that serve as universal template material (included in every tool), as well as responsive material (adapts to the material being presented).



*Figure 5.1* Cover Design and Spines of Huichol, Sami, and Ainu Tool Prototypes (Closed)



Figure 5.2 The Interior of the Prototype (Fully Extended)

### *Cover Design and Spines*

- 1.) Objective: To give each publication in the library a sense of unique cultural identity, while also responding to sense of cohesiveness within the overall growing library.
- 2.) Concept: To underline the concept of differing authentic cultural identity formatted by a singular school of VCD studies.
- 3.) Method: As part of the universal template, the format—such as layout, grid, and typography is repeated for each book as an underlying connection for the whole library. For individuality, however, color and visual elements of each separate publication inspires a strong representation of its own culture. For instance, imagery on the cover is from artisan work analyzed in the interior pages, and serves as an identifier, as well as texture and decor. The color scheme throughout each of the books is also drawn from color schemes discussed within each book. The color on the spine of each book, also drawn from these schemes, serves to organize and identify the individual cultures when side by side and in collection on a bookcase.

### *Section: About Project*

- 1.) Objective: To give users knowledge of the ongoing and research process of the Indigenous Cultural Design Library.
- 2.) Concept: The intent of this objective is to support continuing knowledge and the recognition of the individual efforts and content of each of the publications within the collection.

3.) Method: As part of the template, each separate publication contains a brief introduction, as well as production information and a list of the available publications to obtain.



Figure 5.3 About The Project Section of the Prototype

*Section: About The Culture*

- 1.) Objective: To give users an initial overview and background understanding of each culture and their authentic identity.
- 2.) Concept: The underlying intention of this division is to encourage empathy and understanding for each individual indigenous culture, as well as encourage understanding of design as it relates to unique environment, tradition, and lifestyle.
- 3.) Method: As part of the universal template, each separate publication contains an 8-page saddle-stitched booklet attached to the cover and front portion of the tool. It introduces a user to visuals and factual background information of the particular culture.



*Figure 5.4 About The Culture Section of Prototype (Closed)*

*Section: Interior Pocket*

- 1.) Objective: To personalize as well as invite users to become aware of their environments and creative research as they relate to culture.
- 2.) Concept: To expand beyond the means of this book in learning and of extra-curricular knowledge as well as personalize a user's experience with the tool.
- 3.) Method: As part of the universal template, each separate publication contains a pocket hidden within the tool intended for open-ended use. This pocket is for a user's personal use, such as to collect extra self-initiated investigations and observations when and while learning and experimenting with the tool.



*Figure 5.5 The Interior Pocket Section of Prototype*

*Section: Cultural Education Notebook*

- 1.) Objective: To educate users on VCD foundational education and cultural design through responsible design and inclusion and interdisciplinary studies.
- 2.) Concept: To encourage the recognition of the intersection between intrinsic cultural design elements and formal fundamental design studies.
- 3.) Method: As part of the universal template, each separate publication contains a 15-tab wire bound notebook attached to the back cover that first presents an introduction of VCD, the elements of art and principles of design, and how relate them to the practice. Every notebook also opens with a page explaining how to use this section successfully. The largest portion of the cultural education notebook is the presentation of elements or art and principles of design. Each labeled tab introduces a user to one of the 15 categorized elements of art or principles of design. Within each of the tabs, a user is acquainted with a VCD element or principle (such as line, color, balance, or pattern, etc.), as well as shown a visual and written analysis of how this element or principle is used by each particular culture using authentic artisan artifacts. At all times, a user has access to any tab, at their own pace, and in their own desired and preferred order.

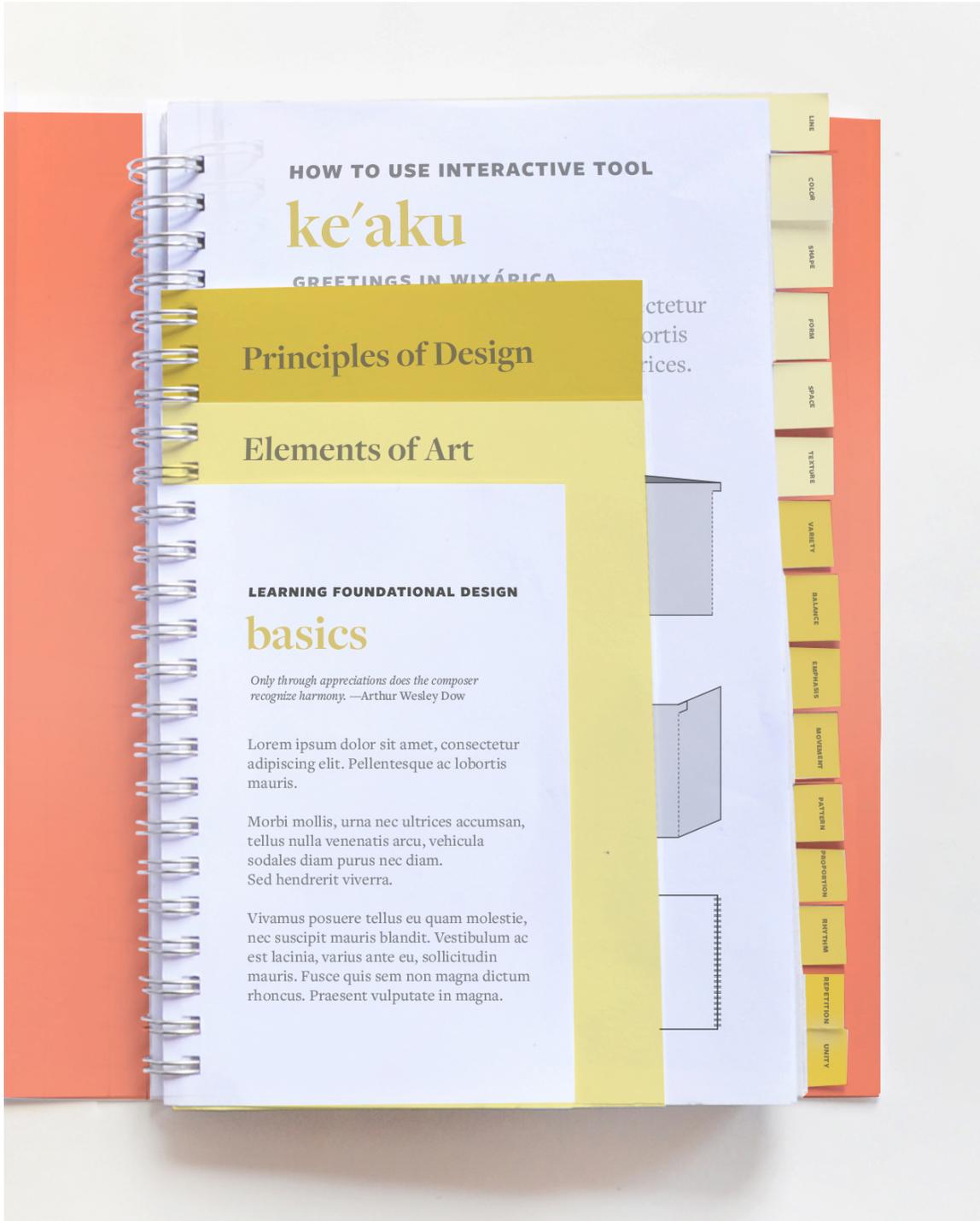


Figure 5.6 Cultural Education Notebook Section of Prototype

*Section: Interactive Exercises in the Cultural Education Notebook*

1.) Objective: To educate users on VCD foundational education and cultural design through responsible design and inclusion, participation and making, and interdisciplinary studies.

2.) Concept: To actively participate and engage in the connection between cultural design elements and formal fundamental design studies. It is also so create an exploratory, personalized and more qualitative relationship with the educational tool and its lessons.

3.) Method: Attached to the lessons in the cultural education section notebook tabs, are sections that fold-out and present exercises that correspond with the covered lesson.

While the exercises are part of the universal template, the content of the exercises adapts to the material being presented for each element, principle, and/or culture. The exercises are meant to be completed in the art board that extends on the back of the lesson and exercise panels. These interactive exercises are intended to both give practice to the user in collaborating and understanding the relationship between culture and design, but also to add a qualitative and personable piece of work to each of these lessons. When a user finishes the lessons in all of the tabs, they will collect 15 personal explorations of their understandings of the lessons, raising the qualitative value and empathy of the their collected books.



Figure 5.7 Cultural Education Lesson / Interactive Exercise on Line for the Huichol Prototype



Figure 5.8 Cultural Education Lesson / Interactive Exercise on Line for the Sami Prototype



Figure 5.9 Cultural Education Lesson / Interactive Exercise on Line for the Ainu Prototype



*Figure 5.10* Interactive Exercise Artboard on the Prototype

*Section: Extra Interactive Explorations*

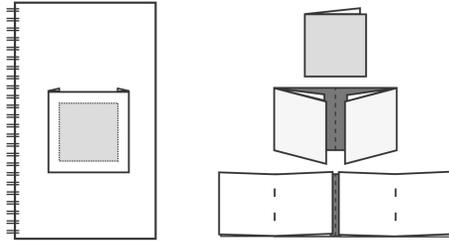
1.) Objective: To create active participation, unique forms of participatory and interactive learning experiences, and less repetitive interactions with the model.

2.) Concept: To support a sense of individuality in authentic pedagogy and interactive learning.

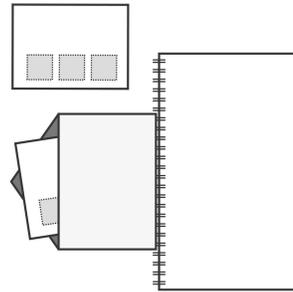
3.) Method: Within each basic lesson of the tabs is a also an extra interactive exploration.

There are six examples of diagrams for types of interactive explorations. The content of these extra interactive explorations adapts to the material being presented for each element, principle, and culture.

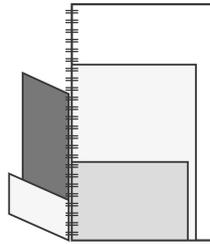
**1. The Mini Booklet**



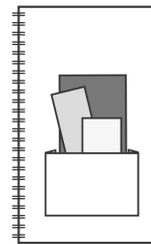
**2. The Swatch Viewfinder**



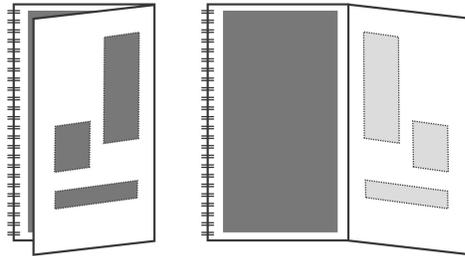
**3. The Multiple-Page Size (Attached)**



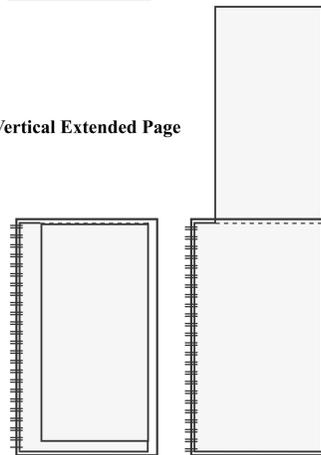
**4. The Multiple-Page Size (Removable)**



**5. The Die Cuts**



**6. The Vertical Extended Page**



*Figure 5.11* Diagrams of Extra Interactive Explorations for Prototype

The aim of this project is to empower knowledge of cultural design authenticity and inclusion through basic design pedagogy. The conceptual strategy presented is an educational method that supports pedagogical methodologies of the formal elements of art and principles of design via different international indigenous design through a focus on design inclusion, interaction and making, and interdisciplinary learning.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The creative process of a conceptual template for printed interactive tools that belong to a collection for a proposed Indigenous Cultural Design Library is a step in the right direction for empowering knowledge of cultural design authenticity and inclusion through basic design pedagogy. This project proposes this by formulating tools that focus on the education of the connection between indigenous culture and VCD using responsible design and inclusion, participation and making, and interdisciplinary studies.

According to Professor Katherine McCoy, we must understand each of our audiences. We must understand their values. We must speak and read their language, even in a literal sense. Specialized audiences often communicate in vernacular languages or specialized jargon. Rhetorical styles vary radically from low key to in your face, from colloquial to formal. This is true for visual style languages and symbolic visual codes as well. If we are to create meaningful and resonant communications, we must give appropriate new character to a more varied, idiosyncratic, and even eccentric graphic design expression.<sup>49</sup>

The analysis and reflections considered through this thesis lead to the issue not solely of VCD, but of how we learn and teach VCD. As Audra Buck-Coleman states, “by working within their ‘sphere of influence’ [as Beverly Daniel Tatum refers to it], VCD students can bring about social change and meaningful design dialogue.”<sup>50</sup> VCD students

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<sup>49</sup> McCoy, “Graphic Design in a Multicultural World.”

<sup>50</sup> Coleman, “Navigating Cross-Cultures,” 205.

and instructors need learning tools that engage them in multicultural conversations within design. By providing tools that organize important relevant theories and recognizing this content, the VCD discipline can have conscientious sources of information to begin with and build upon. Furthermore, creating more well-rounded and knowledgeable interdisciplinary interests and empathy. In the end, it is up to the VCD learner how they decide to practice issues of international and multicultural concern in their VCD career, but through this experience, they will have a relatable understanding from which to build their future relationship with social justice causes and the growing multicultural field of design communication.

The elements of art and principles of design are a fundamental aspect of VCD, and a well-shaped understanding of them is necessary for a VCD designer's success. By creating and understanding a more developed series of foundational studies, VCD students may cultivate a more professional level of critical-thinking skills, and then apply this knowledge and sensibility to their communicative messages when relating to their audience and collaborators. VCD as a profession will be enhanced with more community level thinkers, rather than component level designers.

With today's contemporary global interconnectedness, this thesis sought to encourage focused knowledge and understanding of cultural identity and inclusion in VCD. Therefore, creating new educational tools that propose a presentation of these concepts is a responsible reaction to the concern. The tools designed for this research begin to fill in a disparity in cultural education in foundational design through enhancing the VCD educational experience of learning fundamental elements of art and principles

of design. This format invites the VCD student to create a meaningful connection with the subject matter by making this interdisciplinary experience their own through making, interaction, personalization.

As the VCD practice and education system progresses and refines technological infrastructures of our global interactions, cross-cultural and trans-disciplinary communication design Professor and Graduate Program Director of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Audrey Grace Bennet, expresses, “it might behoove us to adopt a *Sankofan* framework (pertaining to *Sankofa*, the West African concept graphically symbolized as a bird flying forward by looking backward) and look back at the accomplishments of other disciplines and regions of the world in order to progress towards the future.”<sup>51</sup> By investigating the past, today, this thesis proposes to highlight cultural identity awareness by empowering knowledge of design authenticity and originality through basic design pedagogy.

## **Future Research**

### *Prototype Testing*

Beyond the bounds of research on the use and impact of the tool—the tool can be improved through user-testing of a completed and published version on VCD students and educators. To competently test and see the capabilities of the tool, a working prototype, including approved anthropological visual research, material/media testing, and foundational VCD elements will need to be developed for testing and functionality.

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<sup>51</sup> Bennet, “Hegemony,” 158.

This also leads the possibility of the presentation of a different medium for the tool that might be more successful when going through this process.

#### *Expansion Using More Cultures, Elements, Principles*

The content gathered for the research requires a more expansive use of the elements of art, principles of design, and international indigenous groups. In order to better understand the capabilities of this proposal, further gathering of visual sources from all aspects would need to be collected. Further development could potentially include multilingual and audio linguistic tools of presentation.

#### *Environments of Use and User Experiences*

Audience, setting of use, and contextual use of the tool are also factors of potential research. The tool is an open-ended project which both lends itself to an academic setting as well as is accessible to more unlimited settings such as immersive cultural practices. Explorations may include social participatory workshops, educational gallery exhibits, and traveling educational programs for less formally-trained, nonetheless interested VCD audiences. As a subject of interest across various spectra, this tool is also applicable to other disciplines such as engineering, anthropology, and ethnography.

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