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The Practice of graphic design and architectural theory: A Study of two disciplines

Tara McVean

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Rochester Institute of Technology

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
in candidacy for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

The Practice of Graphic Design and Architectural Theory:
A Study of Two Disciplines

by Tara McVean
May, 2001
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Acknowledgements

A special thanks to Mom and Dad, Carrie, Scott and Joe for their support throughout my education.

For my advisers that gave their time, support and knowledge.

For R. Roger Remington, for his expertise and excitement for the project.
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Introduction

One can learn from other people’s expertise. This can then enhance what one already knows. Theories exist all around us but they are only useful if they can be applied to something that you know. This relation of ideas is the only way to learn or remember anything, according to information designer Richard Saul Wurman.

This thesis project is an examination of the unique aspects between graphic design and architecture. Having a design and architectural background, an interest developed for how the two are related to one another with respect to exactly how architectural theories have influenced designers.

This thesis application, a book, will be beneficial to both the graphic designer and the architect because understanding one discipline can enhance knowledge of another. To show this comparison of two disciplines, it may be helpful to show their theories along side images, in order to verify their rationale. The book shows the influences of the two disciplines, graphic design and architecture, on each other. This project will open the eyes of the non-designer as well as designers and architects. It will show that education in a particular field should not limit one’s area of study, interest or curiosity.
Thesis Definition

The Practice of Graphic Design and Architectural Theories

One may believe that architecture and graphic design are separate fields of work and study; however, there are many connections and similarities between the two disciplines. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy said "design is thinking in relationships." The relationship between architecture and graphic design is bonded together as in both cases theory informs practice.

Architecture is not just buildings and graphic design is not just print materials. Architects such as Robert Venturi, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier and R. Buckminster Fuller were great designers as well as architects. Then, there are designers such as Alvin Lustig and Charles Eames who were also architects. One connection made between the two disciplines is Le Corbusier's book, *Le Modulor*, as it serves as a point of connection from architecture to Massimo Vignelli's format grid used in his graphic design. Each of these two men, display a use for a rigid grid system in their work. Le Corbusier adapted his system from the golden section. Then Vignelli, indirectly, used a similar grid of Corbusier's to use in his own work. Designers and architects should be aware of the coincidences in the aspects and theories between architecture and graphic design and how they have influenced, as well as helped with the practice of each other's disciplines.

The goal of the thesis is to make a book of images and theories, that will enhance the knowledge of individuals that are in these two fields of study. Also, it will provide insight into graphic design history and architectural theory for those not in the field of graphic design or architecture.
Information Architects by Richard Saul Wurman

The book entitled *Information Architects* is about information design, not architecture. Richard Saul Wurman was a practicing architect until he decided, instead to concentrate in the way people access and understand information. He wrote *Access Guide Books*, which relates to subjects such as cities, medicine, and the stock market. Other books he has written are *Information Anxiety*, *Man Made Philadelphia*, *Yellow Pages of Learning Resources*, *Cities: Comparisons of Form and Scale*, *Making a City Observable*, *Urban Atlas: 20 American Cities* and *Follow the Yellow Brick Road*. He simplified and improved the way people use and read maps. His *U.S. Atlas* is organized geographically, by where each state is located, instead of the standard atlas, which is alphabetized by state name. Another idea that he is known for is his ability to categorize information. Wurman thinks that there are ways to categorize items other than by alphabetizing them. He calls this L.A.T.C.H, which stands for location, alphabetical, time, category, and hierarchy. For example, in his book, *Information Anxiety*, Wurman arranges dogs by size, breed, name, and locations where they are found.
Precedents

*Environmental Design Thesis* by Kathleen Kaminski

Kathleen Kaminski is a practicing professional architect. She also is an alumnus of the Graduate Graphic Design program at Rochester Institute of Technology. In 1999, she wrote her thesis on architecture and graphic design. Kaminski overlapped the two disciplines and concluded with environmental graphic design. She touched upon how graphic design is influenced by architecture using architectural scenes in background graphics of television shows and the web. Kaminski thought that incorporating graphic design into architecture becomes another way to broadcast information. This demonstrates one way architecture has had on graphic design.

Using theories, this thesis will show another attribute of the comparison of graphic design and architecture. Each of these precedents show the variety and years in which architecture has been involved with graphic design. They each provided a starting point for the development of this thesis project.
First, a methodology diagram was created to guide the research process. It is a useful tool for a time management system that represents the entire thesis project. It shows each phase of the thesis project, from the people involved, needs assessment, and planning, to development of the thesis, its application, dissemination, evaluation and conclusion. Each stage is equally important to the project. (see diagram in Appendix A)

Extensive research was started after establishing the preliminary planning report and timeline. (see preliminary report in Appendix B) There were three objectives for the research process: one, to find a usable definition of the practice of graphic design; two, to find a definition of architectural theory; and three, to find a number of designers and architects that were considered to be influential in their own disciplines. There were many definitions of graphic design and what the practice of graphic design incorporates. One definition that suited this project was by Steven Heller:

“A good graphic designer is able to adapt existing historical or contemporary models and derive unique approaches; this comes from patient study and dedicated practice. To become a graphic designer, forging knowledge and instinct into critical thinking is necessary. Graphic Design has many aspects such as traditional print, media, including type, book, periodical...and cross-disciplinary practices, including collaborations with architects and environmental designers.”

Most architectural theories are intended for the age in which they are written, but also may be applicable at a later date. This is the basis which this thesis project is concerned. One point was to look for influences that architects had on designers throughout history. Reading about each designer and architect’s biography was a starting point of the research for the prototype. The search was needed to find the best representation for the prototype. (see list in Appendix C) People that demonstrated the clearest connections between architecture and graphic design were chosen. The list grew to be quite extensive and included twelve designers and nine architects, as seen below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designers</th>
<th>Architects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Behrens</td>
<td>Frank Lloyd Wright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.M. Cassandre</td>
<td>R. Buckminster Fuller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josef Müller-Brockmann</td>
<td>Robert Venturi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonardo Da Vinci</td>
<td>J.L. Mathieu Lauweriks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massimo Vignelli</td>
<td>Filius Bonacci (golden section)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laszlo Moholy-Nagy</td>
<td>Le Corbusier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alvin Lustig</td>
<td>Vitruvius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles and Ray Eames</td>
<td>Mies Van Der Rohe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert Bayer</td>
<td>Louis Kahn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Saul Wurman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine McCoy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Whitehouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research

The chosen designers and architects lived and worked in times ranging from antiquity to the present. The initial search was broad in order to include many, not just the most influential, people in their field. Starting with a list of architects and designers, developed by the thesis committee and chief advisor, the reading began. The first step was to find out what actually were the influences in their lives as well as their work. This was done by reading their biographies. The compiled research noted their design work, the countries they were from, the years in which they lived and also with whom they associated in their daily lives.

Research began and ended in the library. Resources at the Rochester Institute of Technology’s Wallace Library, Rochester Public Library System and R. Roger Remington’s private collection were used extensively. Also, to accompany the books, videos of life works of certain designers and architects were viewed. The videos gave insight into actual personalities and influences, whether they be architecture or otherwise.

Research

Organization of Material

Organization took place after reading and taking notes from numerous biographies from both disciplines. This was done by establishing a database separating the designers from the architects. After learning about each person and their individual backgrounds, the initial list was reviewed by committee members. A new list emerged and new names were added to the list of designers and architects. Even though a designer or architect might have been chosen originally for his outstanding work throughout history, he might not have had a clear connection for the purpose of this prototype. Several were then discarded from the list. A new list meant further research of biographies was required in order to find the clearest examples for the prototype. Throughout the selection process, matrices were made in order to see how the research worked visually. Each time new information was found or new connections were made, preliminary matrices changed. This extended into four to five drafts.

At first the matrix just encompassed dates and biographic information. Slowly, images were chosen to demonstrate such person’s theories and application. Images ranged from architecture, sculpture and interior design to product design, graphic design and industrial design. Some of the designers were graphic designers but produced other types of work such as product design or sculptures. For example, Moholy-Nagy was a designer but also made sculptures. All types of work were viewed to get a sense of the range of work done by each designer. For each person two to ten images were found. The images were scanned, labeled and put into the database. (see images in Appendix D) All final images were selected from this group of pictures. The final image is meant to represent the person and part of his life’s work.

6
After finding images, biographies and dates for the stated people another matrix was made. At this point, there was a need to prioritize a hierarchy in the information in the matrix. There were dates, names, biographies, images and connections involved in the matrix. And still there needed to be more. Speaking with associate advisor, Professor Bruce Ian Meader, he suggested using a categorizing method of breaking down the similar subjects in each person’s work. This approach resulted in categories such as organic architecture, mathematical proportions, post-modernism and human body proportions. The subjects were determined based on recurring themes in designers’ work. The connections made from architects to designers is the primary information in the matrix and is found in the center. The years and biographical information of the people is the secondary information and is found on the outside area of the matrix. The categories are listed beside each person’s name. Such as:

**Designer Categories**

Da Vinci  
- Circle in a square  
- Mathematical proportions  
- Geometric proportions

Behrens  
- Geometric grid systems  
- Lauweriks theories of communal art and individualism

Moholy-Nagy  
- Organic design

Bayer  
- Mathematical proportions  
- Structure

Cassandre  
- Proportions of the golden section

Eames  
- Organic design

**Architects Categories**

Bonacci  
- Mathematical proportions from the human body

Vitruvius  
- Human proportions related to other objects such as architecture

Lauweriks  
- Geometric grid system proportions

Wright  
- Organic architecture  
- Natural site materials  
- Horizontal themes

Le Corbusier  
- Modular thinking from the golden section  
- Harmony
Synthesis

The matrix is composed of the final listing of designers and architects. (see matrix in Appendix E) It was used as a starting point for the table of contents of the prototype. The connections and the categories were the basis for the chapter titles of the prototype. A matrix is one way to organize research information. It was used here to show layers of information in a way that is understandable. One may study it and determine which architects really influenced which designers. As seen in the matrix, there is not necessarily only one designer influencing one architect. There are many influences that take place and can be found when reviewing the matrix. The connections between the designers and the architects are direct or indirect relationships. Depending on what information was found, it was deemed direct if there was concrete information supporting the theory or it was deemed indirect if the connection was concluded to be hypothetical. For instance, a direct connection would be Josef Müller-Brockmann using the golden section to make his grid structure within his graphic design posters. An indirect connection would be having the evidence to convey the information but not necessarily having concrete facts to back it up. This is the case of Massimo Vignelli using the type of grid structure made by Le Corbusier, but no evidence has been provided.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Müller-Brockmann to Golden Section</td>
<td>Müller-Brockmann to Mies Van der Rohe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lustig to Wright</td>
<td>Vignelli to Le Corbusier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eames to Saarinen/Wright</td>
<td>McCoy to Venturi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayer to Fibonacci series</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behrens to Lauweriks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The yellow vertical layer and the blue horizontal layer represent each individual’s biography and years on the matrix. The white layers have images for each person that best represent the connection being made in that category. Also in the white section, key words are used to place them in a certain category, such as organic architecture or mathematical proportions. The tan colored center demonstrates the connections made after the research was finished. The images in the center of the matrix represent designers that have been placed under the architect that influenced them. The matrix is organized chronologically both vertically and horizontally. This was done to visually show the relationship of influences that had taken place throughout history.
Ideation

The categories from the matrix generated the prototype. The application prototype is a book because it can best represent the findings of the research. It is also a graphic design printed piece that can be read over and over. The proportions of the book were decided by the form of the golden section. The golden section starts as a rectangle, one side measuring twice the size of the other side. It is based on a series of numbers that involve the Fibonacci series where a theory suggests that it makes a "perfect" rectangle. The Fibonacci series describes a progression in which each additional numerical term is the sum of the preceding two terms (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, etc.). The rectangle then is the basis for the spiral curve used in architecture and other places. The prototype progressed from 5 by 7.5 inches, to 4 by 8 inches and then its final size, 5 by 10 inches.

The cover was designed originally with a yellow-green tint to reiterate the green colored text within the prototype. It consists of using sliced rectangular parts from the full-size images presented inside the prototype. The typeface chosen was Adobe Minion and Minion Expert. They gave a traditional feel with serif typefaces based on old style type designs. Two colors were chosen for text within the book; a light green and a royal blue. The green is a non-threatening color that blended nicely with the images within the prototype. Blue, a cool color, appears selectively to contrast conceptual ideas.

Below are a few ideas that were considered for the front cover of the book. The title of the book also progressed from The Practice of Graphic Design and Its Influences from Architecture to Influences: Graphic Design and Architecture. By suggestion from Professor Bruce Ian Meader, the second was chosen for a shortened version from the full title of the thesis.
Below is an example of Chapter One of the first draft of the application. It started as a three column grid, with text on the left and images on the right or center. All text was left justified. The headings for the chapter, the headings within the chapter and the caption for the image were all italic. It became apparent that there was not enough variation in the type. And that images were too small to see clearly. The size of the prototype was arbitrary at this point and was further evaluated.
The Table of Contents for prototype 5x7.5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Copyright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dedication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Foreword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mathematical and Geometric Proportions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Josef Müller-Brockmann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A.M. Casandre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Herbert Bayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Peter Behrens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Whitehouse Designs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Proportions of the Human Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Leonardo Da Vinci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Massimo Vignelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Nature in Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Charles and Ray Eames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Laszlo Moholy-Nagy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Alvin Lustig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Walter Gropius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Influences (Post-Modern)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Katherine McCoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Richard Saul Wurman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Herbert Bayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>What does this mean?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>How do theories work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>What does it mean for you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Why is it important?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Vignelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Image 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Image 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Index</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The title of the chapters were "Mathematical and Geometric Proportions," "Proportions of the Human Body," "Nature in Architecture," "Influences (Post-Modern)" and "What does this mean?." The titles were selected from the matrix to categorize each chapter.
Ideation

Prototype II

The second draft of the prototype included a more developed copy as well as imagery, but the page size was smaller; 4 by 8 inches. It was a rectangle but the small size limited the impact of the images. It was suggested by committee member Professor Charles Lewis that the pages could mirror each other instead of using flush left on every page. This draft still structured by with a three column grid.

In a review meeting, Professor Bruce Ian Meader, suggested a need for typographic and hierarchy changes. Italic style was used for the folios, subtitles, and captions of the images. Although they were all different sizes, a clearer distinction between them was required. The placement of the page numbers was flawed and was reevaluated. The placement of the rule above the folio could possibly be moved.
Ideation  Prototype II

The Table of Contents for prototype 4 x 8 inches:

Table of Contents

1  Copyright
2  Dedication
3  Acknowledgements
4  Introduction
5  Influence on Design
Mathematical & Geometric Proportions
9  Introduction
10 Peter Behrens
11 Herbert Bayer
12 Whitehouse Designs
13 A.M. Cassandre
14 Josef Müller-Brockmann
15 Influence on Design
Postures of the Human Body
16 Introduction
17 Leonardo Da Vinci
18 Massimo Vignelli
19 Influence on Design
Principles of Design
20 Introduction
21 Walter Gropius
22 Laszlo Moholy-Nagy
23 Alvin Lustig
24 Charles and Ray Eames
25 Influence on Design
Philosophy of Design
26 Introduction
27 Herbert Bayer
28 Josef Müller-Brockmann
29 Richard Saul Wurman
30 Katherine McCoy
31 How do theories work?
32 What does it mean for you?
33 Why is it important?
34 Works Cited
35 Index
36 Bibliography

The titles were changed after draft one of the application. The titles now referred to how the subject of the chapter was an influence on design. Each of the chapter titles was placed underneath the heading Influence on Design. In Chapter One, the names A.M. Cassandre and Josef Müller-Brockmann, were set in blue as they represent the geometric section of the chapter of “Mathematical and Geometric Proportions.”
The final spread size of the book was decided to be 5 by 10 inches. It still is a rectangle. The larger size allows for clearer images and a four column grid structure instead of three. This is the example of what was produced for the intermediate evaluation for the Graduate Thesis Exhibition in Bevier Gallery.

The suggested changes to prototype II were made. A hairline rule was placed below the folio to give a slight separation. The folios were changed to small caps and a smaller point size. The leading between the subheadings and copy grew closer to associate them with each other. The captions were the only items in italic and were given a smaller point size than the copy. The folios were placed in the third column of the grid.
The Table of Contents for prototype III was the following:

Below, is the grid structure for the final prototype of the book. It is a four column grid. Each column being two inches wide. This was used to organize the information by grouping two columns together.
Intermediate Evaluation

One intermediate evaluation occurred after a presentation to first year graduate graphic design students and faculty. The presentation included a summary of the thesis process up to that point and also possible ideas for the application. Professor Deborah Beardslee provided feedback about the presentation content and also suggestions for further thesis development. (see suggestions in Appendix F)

Another, intermediate evaluation was after the thesis show presentation in the gallery. Each committee member gave feedback for continuation of the thesis application. The Graduate Thesis Exhibition was to inform the public of the findings in the thesis project. It was mostly seen by School of Design and School of American Crafts students and faculty. The prototype was presented, in a semi-final form, to all committee members. Each member discussed a different subject of the thesis project. Professor Charles Lewis asked questions of how the book will or could be benefited from in the future. This was discussed and then determined that design students in a design history course would benefit the most from the information in the prototype. Professor Bruce Ian Meader made suggestions for further development for the design and organization of information in the Table of Contents as well as the copy within the prototype. Also Professor Meader pointed out the uses of certain colors needed to be consistent throughout the prototype.
Implementation

The intermediate evaluation by committee members suggested changes to the prototype and evaluation methods to use for an retrospective evaluation. The Table of Contents of the book changed once again. The titles of the chapters, as well as the designers listed, were changed to black text. This was to make them the most information in the contents. The numerals were changed to black, from the previous blue color, and then placed at 50% black to make a gray. Everything in the green tint suggests that the information is secondary. How the subjects are treated in the Table of Contents flows throughout the rest of the prototype.

Table of Contents
Dissemination

In the future, a limited edition of the prototype book may be printed and bound to be used as a tool for a graphic design history course, awareness of graphic design in the field of architecture, or for anyone interested in either of these two subjects. The best possible audience interaction with the application would be designers or design students. A survey with design students who have read the prototype could provide feedback on the decisions made about the prototype and permit suggested changes. The prototype would be distributed to graphic design programs that wish to teach about the other disciplines that are involved such as photography, interior design, illustration, and of course, architecture.

Also, the information within the prototype could be distributed by the use of a website or a Macromedia Flash interactive site. This could allow more images to be seen along with links to pages about the individual backgrounds of designers and architects. A website would be an asset to both information gathering and distribution.
Retrospective Evaluation

From the results of the surveys, the weaknesses and the strengths of the prototype were evaluated. (see complete survey and results in Appendix F) Found below are the questions from the survey and numbered results.

1. From a quick glance at the book, do you feel that you gained access into design history?
   1.0 2.0 3.4 4.7 5.3
2. How much architectural history did you gain from reading this book?
   1.0 2.1 3.3 4.9 5.1
3. Does the book clearly state how the theories of architecture have influenced graphic designers?
   1.0 2.0 3.3 4.8 5.3
4. Do the images help you better understand the concepts?
   1.0 2.1 3.2 4.4 5.7
5. Does the book make you think about learning or working with other disciplines?
   1.0 2.0 3.3 4.8 5.3
6. Which concept stood out the most to you?
   mathematical and geometric proportion 9
   human body proportions 3
   organic architecture 2
   individual influences 1
   other __________________ 1

The choices of numbers one through five, where five is best, number four was chosen most often in questions one through three on the survey. This indicates room for improvement, but that the information given was understandable. The weaknesses of the prototype could be found in questions that had the number two chosen for an answer. This occurred two times in the fourteen surveys; once on question two and once on question four. This indicated that there are still some questions or concerns about the book. One way to adapt these concerns would be to make the prototype a larger size that could accommodate images, copy and background information. In question four, about how images helped towards the understanding of the concepts, five was the most common answer. This could imply that there should be more images or that there were just enough. In question five on the survey, which was to see if the prototype provoked interest in other disciplines, again number four was chosen the most. The last question, of which concept stood out the most to you, was answered with the "Mathematical and Geometric Proportions." This could be because it was the most complete chapter or because it is the first chapter of the book.

The strength of the prototype is the useful information provided in a manner that is not overwhelming to a student’s needs. This was one of the goals of the thesis–to introduce architecture and graphic design so people understood what they were all about. The concept that was chosen to be the most noticed in the prototype as mentioned before, was the mathematical and geometric proportions. Concepts favored by students, other than mathematical and geometric proportions were ones that they felt were interesting. Overall, the evaluation of the book was on the higher end of the spectrum. One student taking the survey inquired “Could I have a copy of the prototype? As it has a lot of great information that is useful.” 6 The comment exemplifies the acceptance of and need for a book like this one.
Conclusion

Having a background in graphic design and architectural history and finally being able to relate the two disciplines together, was enlightening. To research relationships of graphic design and architecture, with which, there was already familiarity, opened doors to new information. The prototype demonstrates how graphic design and architecture, shown jointly, feed off of each other for inspiration, technique, and structure. The influence of Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, a Roman architect, from the first century B.C., on Leonardo Da Vinci in 1495, was an exciting connection to make. To know that hundreds of years had past and Da Vinci still was inspired by a great architect, Vitruvius, is remarkable.

The influences that were found during this thesis project validated inquiry of a relationship of graphic design and architecture. To understand and possess historical theories provides you with concrete ideas of the past, present and future.

The outcome of the project met the goals that were established in the project planning report. One goal, was to produce a book that explained how architectural theories influenced the practice of graphic design. The prototype book was designed, written, and printed to final form. (see prototype in Appendix H) It was then validated by the committee, design students and also non-designers. The real success of the book may come later, after it is distributed into a design classroom setting, where it then can be used to its full potential.

Making numerous drafts of lists of people, images, and of course the prototype established a great foundation to work with. The process of using a block diagram and preliminary reports not only shaped the project but guided it step by step to make the project functional. It is encouraging to have confirmed, through evaluation, the need for the product that is being designed and produced.
Glossary of Terms

antiquity  the period of history before the Middle Ages

application  in the sense used in this thesis document, an informational book

architectural theory  ideas of past and present architects that have used the theories to create buildings based on them

database  organization of research materials in a set structure

environmental design  using information design, wayfinding systems, and signage to engage architecture with graphic design

Modernism  divergence from the past in the arts occurring in the course of the 20th century and taking form in any of various innovative movements with these numbers of the fibonacci series you can make a "perfect" rectangle. The Fibonacci series was identified by Leonardo of Pisa (Filius Bonacci) in 1202.

folios  the placement of page numbers on a page within a book's structure

geometric proportions  proportions that are based on geometric shapes

graphic design  graphic design has many aspects such as traditional print media, including type, and cross-disciplinary practices, including collaborations with architects. "A good graphic designer is able to adapt existing historical unique approaches:"

grid structure  layouts to make a plan of structure for a project, whether it be two dimensional or three dimensional

golden section  a series of numbers that involve the fibonacci series which generate, what is considered by many, a perfect rectangle. The rectangle then is the basis for the spiral curve used in architecture and other places.

hierarchy  to arrange information according to its importance to the piece

hypothetically  to assume something exists by hypothesis or educated guess

influence  someone or something that has persuaded one's ideas in a direction

information design  an area of graphic design that is concerned with understanding reader and user responses to written and visual represented information

mathematical proportions  proportions that have a number sequence dependent on them

matrix  a rectangular array consisting of rows and columns of numbers, symbols, linguistic or other data

organic architecture  when organic or natural materials are used to build the structure or interior of a building

prototype  a first or experimental working model of something to be manufactured

serif  a typeface using legs or base such as: Minion Typeface

typographic (typography)  to bring structure, legibility and readability to text
Bibliography

Books


Bibliography


End notes


6 Undergraduate graphic design student: Information Design class. R.I.T. April 3, 2001. evaluation
Appendices

A Methodology Diagram
B Preliminary Planning Report
C Listing of Architects and Designers
D Research Images
E Matrix
F Intermediate Evaluation
G Survey, Example Evaluation, Results
H Final Prototype
Appendix A Research Methodology Diagram

Research Methodology Diagram: A Study of Two Disciplines

Manage
Designer: Tara McVean
Advisors: Roger Remington
Bruce Meader
Charles Lewis
Support: Kathy Kaminak
Group

Assess Needs
Education of different disciplines
Relationship of Graphic Design and Architecture
Validation: Thesis Committee

Plan
Preliminary Report
Develop design and planning
Objectives
Process and Strategies
Validation: Thesis Committee

Conclusion
Overall Evaluation
Compare Objectives and Overall Goals
Revise Feedback and Criticism for Further Study

Evaluate Process and Strategies
Questionnaire
Faculty Members/Professionals
Thesis Committee
Design students and Non-Designers

Dissemination: Create tools to evaluate process
Thesis Report
Evaluation of Application
Gallery/Thesis Show

Development of Thesis
Research: Information Gathering
Refinement of planning report
Planning evaluation
Graphic Designers, architects, references to theory and methods
Preparing Prototype
Committee Evaluation

Development of Thesis Application
Implement design Application/create
Evaluation: continue to look at preliminary report
Show Committee
Revise
Make Changes
Appendix B  Preliminary Planning Report

The Practice of Graphic Design and Architectural Theory: A Study of Two Disciplines

Thesis Plan

Tara McVean
Graduate Graphic Design
Rochester Institute of Technology
Thesis Committee Members

Chief Advisor: Professor R. Roger Remington
Associate Advisor: Professor Bruce Ian Meader
Associate Advisor: Professor Charles Lewis
Designer: Tara McVean
   17 Colonial Drive
   Penfield, New York
Situation Analysis

A person’s interests can be narrow or very broad. I believe that interests, even if very different from each other can relate to each other. One may believe that architecture and graphic design are separate fields of work and study. There are many connections and similarities between the two disciplines. Lazlo Moholy-Nagy said “Design is thinking in relationships”. The relationship between graphic design and architecture is bonded together because theory informs practice. As Charles Plummer says “There is nothing more practical than a good theory.”

Architecture is not just buildings and graphic design is not just print materials. Architects such as Robert Venturi, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Buckminster Fuller, and Marcel Breuer were great designers as well as architects. Then there are designers such as Alvin Lustig and Charles Eames who were also competent architects. Le Corbusier’s Modulor is a point of connection from architecture to Massimo Vignelli’s format grid of graphic design.

In order to have something work, one needs structure and order. Vignelli strongly believes that “Design without structure is anarchy” and his results give him the “sense of recurrence, of unity throughout” his work (USGS). Applications in graphic design, using the grid system, lend themselves to being well balanced and rational. There is an important need for an awareness of the aspects and theories of architecture and graphic design. They have influenced as well as helped with the practice of each other’s disciplines.
Problem Statement

One can learn from other people’s expertise and enhance what one already knows. Theories exist all around us but they are only useful if they can apply to something that you know. This is the only way to learn or remember anything according to information designer, Richard Saul Wurman. The thesis application must be able to be understood to the graphic designer and the architect because understanding one discipline is necessary to enhance knowledge of another.

I am proposing to create a program of interpretive materials illustrating the relationship between graphic design and architecture. To organize the two disciplines together, their theories should be shown in concrete applications, in order to verify their rationale. The application will shoe influences of the two disciplines such as grid structures and how graphic designers can also be architects. The product of this thesis will provide key visuals to prove what the theories are trying to say. This project will be written to open the eyes of the non-designer as well as all designers and architects. It will show that education in a particular field of study should not limit one’s areas of study.
Mission Statement

*The Practice of Graphic Design and Architectural Theory* is a graduate thesis project that will explore the relationship between these two disciplines to the end that will expand the viewer’s ideas and learning beyond their own capacities.

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<th>Goals</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Processes &amp; Strategies</th>
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<tr>
<td>• To review planning document &amp; decisions and revise accordingly</td>
<td>A) To research theory and methods of graphic design and architecture</td>
<td>• Find various brainstorming methods</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) To gather information</td>
<td>• Research topic thoroughly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To show and interpret relationships between disciplines</td>
<td>A) To realize common theories within disciplines</td>
<td>• Conduct interview with architects &amp; designers about their views</td>
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<td>B) To collect visual relationships shown in graphic design and architecture</td>
<td>• Test the theories</td>
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<td>• To develop a prototype pertaining to found information</td>
<td>A) To examine solutions in found relationships</td>
<td>• Evaluate the messages found in certain theories</td>
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<td>B) To show previous works that combine disciplines</td>
<td>• Use solutions in either discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To interpret prototype and develop the application</td>
<td>A) To review feedback from first prototype</td>
<td>• Show similarities with visuals</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Evaluate concepts and application</td>
<td>B) To explain the theme of relationships using past experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A) To use a survey in order to evaluate application</td>
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<td>B) To establish an overall meaning of design</td>
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Timeline

Calendar and RIT Schedule

Thesis Plan

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<td>-See Editor</td>
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<td>Committee Meeting #4</td>
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<td>May 13</td>
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<td>Sign off of thesis with committee</td>
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Missing Page
Inputs:Processes:Outputs

3.0 Planning Report

Input: thesis proposal (mission statement)
Process: finding out your goals, objectives and strategies starting a timeline of events to take place
Output: planning report

4.0 Development of Thesis

Input: planning report
Process: refining of planning report researching disciplines and their methods preparing preliminary prototype receiving validation from committee
Output: Prototype

5.0 Development of Thesis Application

Input: Revision of prototype and research materials
Process: creating application combining materials implementing ideation into application revisions of prototype
Output: application better understanding of material
## Dissemination Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Report</td>
<td>Thesis Committee</td>
<td>First Meeting Prior to project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Prototype</td>
<td>Thesis Committee Fellow students</td>
<td>Researching stage January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Thesis Committee Designers Architects Non designers</td>
<td>Thesis Show March 16th, 2001</td>
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<td>Thesis Report</td>
<td>Thesis Committee Faculty Students Public</td>
<td>Post-Thesis show</td>
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## Evaluation Plan

<table>
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<th>Who</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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</table>
| Planning Report       | Thesis Committee           | Prior to first meeting | Is this a valid topic?  
Is it feasible to complete? |
| Development of Prototype | Thesis Committee  
Support Group  
Students | Prior to Thesis Show January | Is the prototype understandable?  
Do the relationships that are shown make sense?  
are they distinct? |
| Application           | Thesis Committee  
Students  
Professionals | Thesis Gallery Show | What does the user get out of the application?  
Were there at least two professionals consulted? |
| Thesis Report         | Thesis Committee  
Faculty | Post-Thesis Show | Was the planning report completed?  
Were the goals met for the project? |
Works Cited


A theory can be a body of mathematical principles or a particular view of something to be done or method of doing it.

A grid is a network of horizontal and perpendicular lines that are uniformly spaced.

Modular is understood to be a self contained unit or item that can be combined or interchanged with others like it to create different shapes or designs.

Design is forming or conceiving a plan for a work to be executed.

Rational design could be referred to a specific set of forms in which to go by in designing.

Structure is the pattern or system of beliefs.

Information design is an area of graphic design that is concerned with understanding reader and user responses to written and visually presented information.

Interpretation is to give the translation of something as you understand it.

Multi-media is using more than one aspect of media, such as programs, computers, etc.
### Appendix C List of Designers and Architects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graphic Designers that were researched for the application:</th>
<th>Architects that were researched for the application:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dwiggins</td>
<td>Filius Bonacci (The Golden Section)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walter Gropius</td>
<td>Vitruvius</td>
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<tr>
<td>R. Buckminster Fuller</td>
<td>Alberti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laszlo Moholy-Nagy</td>
<td>Palladio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herbert Bayer</td>
<td>Le Corbusier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcel Breuer</td>
<td>Robert Venturi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles and Ray Eames</td>
<td>John Ruskin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard Neutra</td>
<td>Frank Lloyd Wright</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karl Gerstner</td>
<td>Louis Kahn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Josef Müller-Brockmann</td>
<td>Louis Sullivan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alvin Lustig</td>
<td>Chris Alexander</td>
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<tr>
<td>Massimo Vignelli</td>
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<td>Peter Behrens</td>
<td>J.L Mathieu Lauweriks</td>
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<td>Richard Saul Wurman</td>
<td>Frank Gehry</td>
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<td>Josef Albers</td>
<td>Richard Neutra</td>
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<td>Richard Meier</td>
<td>Mies Van Der Rohe</td>
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<td>Michael Graves</td>
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<td>A.M. Cassandre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leonardo DaVinci</td>
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<td>Katherine McCoy</td>
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<td>Whitehouse Designs</td>
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Appendix D  Research Images

Barcelona Pavilion
Mies Van Der Rohe

Cranbrook School Poster
Katherine McCoy

Curve from Two Progressions
Herbert Bayer

Geodesic Dome
Buckminster Fuller

AEG Ad
Peter Behrens

Der Film
Josef Müller-Brockmann

Fallingwater
Frank Lloyd Wright

Eames House
Charles and Ray Eames

Black Mountain College
Walter Gropius

First Unitarian Church
Louis Kahn
Appendix D  Research Images

*Fortune Magazine*
Alvin Lustig

*Installation of Exhibition*
J.L. Mathieu Lauweriks

*Fibonacci Series*

*Modular Man*
Le Corbusier

*The golden section*

*Glass Loop*
Laszlo Moholy-Nagy

*Barcelona Pavilion Grid*
Mies Van Der Rohe

*Pi Volo and its Grid*
A.M. Cassandre

*Harmony By Design*
Whitehouse Design Firm

*Potpourri Géométrique*
Herbert Bayer
Appendix D Research Images

Canonical figures
Da Vinci

Publicity Over Chicago
Laszlo Moholy-Nagy

Affiche Pour Le Toufle
Josef Muller-Brockmann

US Atlas
Richard Saul Wurman

Guild House
Robert Venturi

Vitruvian Man
Da Vinci

World Geo-Graphic Atlas
Buckminster Fuller

AEG
Peter Behrens

Au Bucheron
A.M. Cassandre

Connected Progressions
Herbert Bayer
Appendix D Research Images

Human Proportions

Kimbal Art Museum
Louis Kahn

Gropius House
Walter Gropius

Industrial Design Magazine
Massimo Vignelli

Dulles International Airport
Louis Kahn

Northland Mall
Alvin Lustig

The golden section
A.M. Cassandre

Piccolo
Massimo Vignelli

The “perfect” rectangle
Whitehouse Designs

Ville Savoye
Le Corbusier
Appendix D  Research Images

Guggenheim Museum
Frank Lloyd Wright

Classical Column Proportions
Vitruvius

Robie House
Frank Lloyd Wright

Du RonChamps
Le Corbusier
### Appendix E Matrix

#### Process Matrix

**Architects biographies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designers biographies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ludwig Mies van der Rohe</strong> (1886-1969)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eero Saarinen</strong> (1910-1961)</td>
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<td><strong>Le Corbusier</strong> (1887-1965)</td>
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<td><strong>Walter Gropius</strong> (1883-1969)</td>
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#### The Golden Section

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#### Louis Kahn

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#### Le Corbusier

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#### Frank Lloyd Wright

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#### VitraHaus

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#### Early Designs

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Appendix F Intermediate Evaluation-feedback

Comments from Professor Deborah Beardslee

Tara/Thesis Presentation

– clear presentation/description
– would be good to label which architects were responsible for which theories (in book content outline)
– just be sure to be consistent…sometimes you label by persons’ name, sometimes by theory only
– how would you describe the difference between ”informational” and ”educational”?
– why/how did you choose a book format?
– I’m wondering if there would be some benefit to incorporating some cross-reference ability into your book… a non-traditional book format
– wonder about your decisions to select omit—strong
– at one point you’d asked me about Christopher Alexander… architecture
Appendix G Survey

Survey: Graphic Design and Its Relationship to Architectural Theories

Circle One: designer architect other
   (design student)

This is part of a graduate graphic design thesis project. Please take a few minutes to read through the book provided to you. Then, read the questions below and rank each answer 1-5, 5 being best.

1. From a quick glance at the book, do you feel that you gained access into design history? 1 2 3 4 5

2. How much architectural history did you gain from reading this book? 1 2 3 4 5

3. Does the book clearly state how the theories of architecture have influenced graphic designers? 1 2 3 4 5

4. Do the images help you better understand the concepts? 1 2 3 4 5

5. Does the book make you think about learning or working with other disciplines? 1 2 3 4 5

6. Which concept stood out the most to you?
   mathematical and geometric proportions human body proportions
   organic architecture individual influences
   other ___________________
Appendix G  Example of Survey- Retrospective Evaluation 1 out of 14

Tara McVeans
Graduate Graphic Design
April 3, 2001

Survey: Graphic Design and Its Relationship to Architectural Theories

Circle One:  designer architect other

This is part of a graduate graphic design thesis project. Please take a few minutes to read through
the book provided to you. Then, read the questions below and rank each answer 1-5, 5 being best.

1. From a quick glance at the book, do you feel that you gained access into design history?
   1 2 3 4 5

2. How much architectural history did you gain from reading this book?
   1 2 3 4 5

3. Does the book clearly state how the theories of architecture have influenced graphic designers?
   1 2 3 4 5

4. Do the images help you better understand the concepts?
   1 2 3 4 5

5. Does the book make you think about learning or working with other disciplines?
   1 2 3 4 5

6. Which concept stood out the most to you?
   mathematical and geometric proportions human body proportions
   organic architecture individual influences
   other ____________________
Appendix G  Results-Retrospective Evaluation Survey

Surveys were given to an junior level, undergraduate, information design class. They were given a black and white copy of the book. They had about twenty minutes to read or skim through the book and to respond to the six survey questions. The book was surveyed by 14 design students. They were to rank 1-5, 5 being the best. The results were:

1. From a quick glance at the book, do you feel that you gained access into design history?
   1. 0
   2. 0
   3. 4
   4. 7
   5. 3

2. How much architectural history did you gain from reading this book?
   1. 0
   2. 1
   3. 3
   4. 9
   5. 1

3. Does the book clearly state how the theories of architecture have influenced graphic designers?
   1. 0
   2. 0
   3. 3
   4. 8
   5. 3

4. Do the images help you better understand the concepts?
   1. 0
   2. 1
   3. 2
   4. 4
   5. 7

5. Does the book make you think about learning or working with other disciplines?
   1. 0
   2. 0
   3. 3
   4. 8
   5. 3

6. Which concept stood out the most to you?
   - mathematical and geometric proportion 9
   - human body proportions 3
   - organic architecture 2
   - individual influences 1
   - other __________ 1

Comments from surveys:

The body text doesn’t seem too architectural, more nature
Architecture is generally noticeable, because of potent “Fallingwater”
The concept of historic vs. recent
Appendix H Final Prototype

The final prototype is placed in a pocket in the back of this thesis documentation.