

Professional Reflection

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GRA-491

Each one of my designs follows grids and rulers that were used in Adobe Illustrator. They each have colors that work well together and support the overall branding they adhere to. My goal from the start was to have simplistic designs, I didn't want to overdo it as I didn't feel a need to do so. Selecting the right software and tools is paramount in graphic design. Different design tasks may require specific software suites, each equipped with unique features catering to diverse design needs. Following the proper guidelines from the ideation stage all the way through to the conclusion is imperative to succeeding in graphic design (Myers, 2013).

My first design that I started editing was my donut-truck, this design was originally created in Maya and edited in Adobe Illustrator. I didn't receive any feedback on the truck, however, I noticed that there was a slight blur in the original photo. I wanted the design to feel more animated and abstract, so I ended up image tracing the piece and adding a low poly filter to it. This gave it a unique look that I'm happy with and it took away the blurriness of the original. My typographic portrait of Kurt Cobain was created in Photoshop, it was rasterized and moved over to Adobe Illustrator so I could add the typography. I didn't receive any feedback on this either, however, I seen some spaces that I wanted to add more words to, so I did that. The line work and typography were especially vital in this piece, I utilized the Boycott typeface to match the rock n roll vibe. "A line can lead the reader's eye as well as provide movement and energy to any composition" (Poulin, 2011).

The next design I edited was my sword model, I'm especially proud of this model because it was the first 3D piece that I finished all the way through in Maya. The initial design was transparent, so the saved copy had a white background, I didn't feel as though it made the design pop enough. I decided to add a black background to the design, and it completely altered the piece, it looks so much better because it makes the glowing blue stand out more. My sword

models consisted of starting from a cube and working the vertices out to make the shape I wanted. The process is time-consuming with all 3D models, and it requires a level of detail that entails having a significant amount of patience.

The next design that I worked on was the Peace project, this piece was one of my first designs, so it has a special place in my heart. The original design was squeezed together too much, and the quality was a little off, so I took it back into Adobe Illustrator, where it was originally created, and I did some minor tweaks to the birds and the sizes of the plants and logo. “A design that lacks technical finesse may suffer from issues such as pixelation, inconsistent color reproduction, or poor readability, undermining its effectiveness” (Arroyo, 2023). I felt as though this was a problem with the original because it was one of my first designs. I hadn’t learned all the tools at that time yet. The final project that I worked on editing was the typographic biography, this provides a visual representation of the boycott typeface. This design was started in Adobe InDesign and got moved over to Adobe Illustrator. It initially had a plain, white background and a peer suggested that I add some color to the background, and I thought a light copper color would look good with it. This project was all about the font, the font is important in so many ways to any design that requires it. I wanted to make sure that I got the visual hierarchy correct so I ended up making the boycott larger and moved around some of the subtext.

There were many ways that I chose to incorporate the elements and principles of design into my work up to this point. “The elements of design can be thought of as the ‘vocabulary in design language, and the eight principles can be likened to the grammar, or rules for applying those elements” (Adams, 2013). This definition was an interesting way of describing the principles and elements of design and it made it easier for me to understand when I read this a

couple years ago. Each design shines in its own way, while also following the principles and elements of design. For example, my Cobain image focused primarily on line and shape, while also being supported by rhythm and pattern. That's just 2 of the highlights of that design, however, each one displays these attributes in a unique way. Technical proficiency plays a crucial role in implementing these principles seamlessly. For instance, proper alignment necessitates the use of alignment tools within graphic design software, ensuring elements are precisely positioned. Similarly, achieving visual balance relies on accurate distribution of elements, facilitated by grid systems and alignment guides (Poulin, 2011). Another example is my sword, which focused on color, texture, and space. It follows each principle of design and shines when it comes to proportion and balance. While all designers should use the elements and principles of design as guides, it's important to understand that each piece of work will shine in certain areas that others don't. The elements and principles of design serve as foundational pillars for crafting visually captivating and impactful compositions across diverse artistic disciplines such as graphic design, interior design, fashion, and beyond. They provide a structured framework enabling designers to arrange content effectively and communicate messages with both clarity and aesthetic allure (Myers, 2013). Following these rules and guidelines has helped my work aesthetically, it's also given me a better understanding of what I want out of each one of my designs.

For each of these designs I spent a substantial amount of time using divergent thinking, where I tried to widen my scope of ideas and solutions for each of the pieces. Creativity and self-expression lie at the heart of design, empowering individuals to communicate ideas, emotions, and identities through visual means. This is perhaps the most significant topic of my design works for several reasons. I am huge on individuality and staying true to your creative style. Last

term I started to feel as though I was being pressured to change my designs completely, I wasn't willing to do that. I was willing to try to make my designs better, however, I wasn't willing to sacrifice my vision and do something that I didn't set out to do in the divergent thinking stage. Starting with my logo I spent hours sketching out different ideas that would represent my branding properly. I knew from the start that I wanted an astronaut, so I just started drawing and editing before I even put anything in a computer. Each of my designs holds those values dearly, my stickers are unique examples, each one shares a similar visual representation while capturing the spacy, gamer vibe I set out for. My business card mock-up piece was initially going to be just the card laying on a table, however, I envisioned someone holding my card and after some work in Photoshop I made that happen. To hold onto fresh ideas in the ideation stage I continually sketched out different ideas every day during my last term, this helped me to combine, eliminate, and add or subtract from each design. There is nothing unethical about any of my designs and I make sure to stay aware of the rules and regulations when it comes to ethical design.

Originality and creative expression are essential for drawing in viewers, making content memorable, and building brand identification. Designs possessing a unique voice, perspective, or storyline are what make them stand out in an increasingly crowded visual scene. Authenticity helps brands stand out from the competition, establish genuine connections with customers, and create a lasting impression on viewers (Adams, 2018). For each of my designs I spent hours in the ideation phase before moving on to bringing my ideas to life. My goal is to have each one of my designs to be original and unique. This can be a challenge in a crowded landscape of designers, however, I had to learn that it's okay to get inspired by other people's work, as you make your designs your own. I spent hours sketching out different ideas that would represent my branding properly. I used divergent thinking extensively for each of these designs, attempting to

expand my range of concepts and solutions for each component. The core of design is creativity and self-expression, which enables people to convey their identities, thoughts, and feelings through visual media. My sword was crafted in Maya, it started with sketches on paper and then I transferred those ideas into 3D by uploading the sketches into Maya and modeling based on those. The typographic biography was researched and laid out as I learned more about the background of how the Boycott font came to life. Each one of my other designs was created by doing research, sketching, looking up color palettes, and then bringing them to life.

I am aware of my shortcomings when it comes to giving feedback on other people's work, and I am learning to get better in that respect. I'm not too bad at receiving feedback, however, I am not great at giving it because I don't want to be judgmental. "When defining design problems or addressing user pain points, be specific and include measurable objectives" (Arroyo, 2023). Since my time in college, I have always had some difficulty in this area. I feel like I'm being judgmental when I point out design flaws to people, but despite having completed numerous tutorials and course work on the subject, I still find it difficult to give constructive criticism. I end up providing feedback for the course assignments, but I'm trying to do a better job of applying constructive criticism more and pointing out areas for improvement. I didn't receive a ton of feedback on this work; however, I did apply the feedback I received in a manner that I felt would benefit my work the most. I didn't want to just get feedback on certain pieces and automatically apply what was said, I wanted to make sure it fit my branding and was the right fit for my designs. I have always utilized the SNHU rubric to my advantage, I was told when I started school that was the key to success so that's what I have done. Last term my professor didn't care for my vision, and he wanted me to change everything from the ground up and I didn't agree with that, so the feedback that he continued to give me was based on needing

to change everything for the remainder of the course. I had to utilize my peers to shape my designs into the kind of work that I would want to add to my portfolio, I feel as though I succeeded at this, and it made me a better person, peer, and student along the way. I have always gotten along with my teachers; however, it means more to me to stay true to myself and last term wasn't a good experience for me, but that's okay because I held onto my values and my goals, and I've had a much better experience this term! I wanted to reiterate this point on this paper as well because it was a vital turning point to my work at SNHU and I believe I held my values firmly, even if I had to sacrifice my grade a little bit. However, I do understand that enhancing your capacity to offer and receive constructive feedback is a crucial competency in graphic design, enriching both personal development and collaborative endeavors within the profession. This is a vital step that I'm currently working on right now and I feel like I've made good progress in this class, and I am going to take this experience with me to graduate school.

Now that I have talked about my design's I want to explain my process for adding them to my portfolio, this is a vital piece in getting them to a place where potential employers and peers can see them for themselves. I started out by placing all my final edited pieces on my desktop, this helped me to be able to see everything in one place, kind of like a whiteboard collage. After that I opened my portfolio on my other screen and began skimming through what I already had in there. After that I worked on envisioning where I thought these designs would fit best, I didn't want to just throw them anywhere because I have different types of designs such as: 3D models, video's, drawings, and typographic works. After that I began the arduous process of placing them in my portfolio, while also keeping in mind that I am going to need to label these designs as I go. The labeling process isn't too difficult, it's important to know when and how the pieces were made so they can be titled accordingly. After that I began looking and editing

different pages of my portfolio, making everything fit together in one overarching theme.

Overall, I think I did a great job and I absolutely love the way that it looks, I have a lot more than the ten required designs because I work on projects myself outside of school. Integrating graphic design into your portfolio yields multiple advantages, especially when aiming to highlight your expertise, expand your client base, or distinguish yourself in a competitive industry. The fact that this is such a competitive field has given me more motivation to showcase my work and to make sure I try to display the most fine-tuned designs that I have. Presenting a portfolio showcasing top-tier graphic design work can greatly elevate your professional allure. Exceptionally crafted designs showcase your proficiency in visual aesthetics, meticulous attention to detail, and adeptness in conveying intricate concepts through visual medium (Poulin, 2011). This heightened level of skill can amplify your appeal to prospective employers seeking adept designers capable of enhancing their brand's visual identity.

Now that it's the final week I wanted to reflect and touch on everything that I have worked on and achieved thus far. My knowledge of graphic designs software is extensive, I have worked hard to add a mixture of the skills that I have learned at SNHU and on my own. For example, I have added graphic design works, photography, 3D modeling, artwork, and typographic works. In the constantly evolving realm of graphic design, adeptness in a variety of graphic design software emerges as an essential competency, empowering designers to craft holistic and pioneering solutions across diverse media channels (Poulin, 2011). With that being said, I have grown in terms of being able to move from one program to another to perform the necessary tasks. Acquiring proficiency in various software platforms fosters experimentation by exposing designers to a range of interfaces, toolsets, and functionalities. This exposure prompts exploration of novel techniques and creative methodologies, often resulting in innovative design

solutions. Additionally, harnessing the combined capabilities of different programs, such as merging Illustrator's vector art with Photoshop's textural effects, can yield distinctive visual styles that capture attention in the marketplace (Adams, 2013). I have worked hard to learn some of these different programs and after 4 years I feel that my confidence has grown enough to enter the 3D design field.

Effective branding is characterized by consistency, and adhering to guidelines is crucial to preserving brand integrity across a range of platforms and design materials (Adams, 2013). In graphic design projects, following instructions reduces mistakes, inconsistencies, and the need for timely revisions. Designers can detect any problems early in the design process, take proactive measures to overcome them, and produce excellent designs that meet or surpass expectations by carefully examining project requirements and following instructions. In addition to saving time and money, this proactive strategy improves client happiness and builds professional credibility (Poulin, 2011). With each of these designs I read the rubric carefully and built upon the requirements that were being asked of me. The challenge for me however was to make sure that I maintained the branding goals that I had for my creative suite. I felt like I followed instructions well with each one of these designs, they all follow the principles and have elements of design that help support their relevance to my portfolio.

The foundation of greatness in graphic design is craftsmanship, which combines originality, expertise, and attention to detail. In my graphic design projects, every element is meticulously crafted, from the spacing between letters to the alignment of images and every other small detail that heightens the work of the design. This keen attention to detail ensures that each design is polished, cohesive, and visually compelling, reflecting my commitment to my work and my future. I spent days perfecting each design to see if I could replicate my pen and

paper sketches exactly on the computer screen. The attention to detail that I put into the font alone is insane. All the file formats were transformed into easily readable PDFs that can be opened on any computer. The typographic biography entailed research, grids, font, color, lines, shape, and followed the principles of design. My sword displays every little detail down to the bolts that connect the blade with the handle and the neon lighting that makes the model pop. My donut-truck was sketched out than modeled from the inside-out, there's literally seats inside of the truck, not to mention the background of houses behind it. The peace project was sketched out and each layer was set in a way to make sure the foreground was viewed in the correct light, also, it allowed for unique effects that helped bring it to life. I made sure with each of the final copies of my designs that there were no issues with clarity, resolution, typography, colors, and format. Each design is properly formatted in PDF form and able to be viewed on any pc.

In conclusion, creativity and self-expression are essential catalysts for innovation, transformation, and human connection in the field of design. By nurturing creativity and embracing self-expression, designers can unlock their full potential as agents of change, empathy, and cultural evolution (Arroyo, 2023). I feel as though I have been able to unlock some of this potential and I will continue to learn, listen, edit, and work hard to improve each of my designs now and in the future. I am grateful that I was able to take this class because it has given me the time and knowledge to add to and edit my portfolio page. I am looking forward to being completely done with it and pursuing a career in 3D modeling and animation. After reflecting on the work and progress that I've made in this class I think it's pertinent to point out the fact that we can't always see the progress we've made ourselves. With that being said I spent a good amount of time making small edits to my work and really looking at everything from different perspectives and I'm proud of how far I've come in this class and the university itself. This

university and these classes have changed my life so much and I'm so fortunate to have had the opportunity to come here.

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Website portfolio link:

<https://campuspress.snhu.edu/alanpierceportfolio/>