AD1 Form Language

Brainstorm School
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- Class Outline -

What is Form Language?

Form Language is the visual behavior of a particular design and the ability of this behavior to communicate an idea to the viewer. A successful design in the context of our class is one where the designer achieves their goal in effectively communicating their idea through research and sketching, to the point that the designer feels their design is a unique and compelling solve to their particular problem.

General Assignments in Form Language

In this class, general assignments will start with choosing a form language object of inspiration. We will learn how to be inspired by the qualities of that object to help us create unique and creative versions of our subject matter designs.

Form Language Object of Inspiration – This is the unique design motif you are choosing to use as inspiration for your design assignment. This is NOT what you are designing.

Subject Matter – This is the nature of the thing you are designing. Whatever you choose here will be the basis of all designs.

- Design Philosophy -

Design Process

In this class, we will be using a 5-step process to realize our designs. This process involves the most essential components used in a professional workflow.

1. Research
2. Research Sketches
3. Ideation Sketches
4. Refined Sketches
5. Final Design

Research – Find unique or interesting facts about your object. The more knowledge and in depth understanding you have of your form language object, the more you will be able to generate unique ideas as they pertain to your design.

Research Sketches – Draw your research/form language object; Draw from life if you have the physical object in front of you, or draw from photographs is your object is not physically present. Through drawing your object, you will build up muscle memory so you can better replicate its unique visuals if necessary. Take your object apart and put it back together; explore unique visual elements that are hidden in the objects top surface visual appearance. Ingest your object on a more intimate level in this phase.

Ideation Sketches – Also known as thumbnail drawings. Now that you have your subject matter that you want to design, explore visual solutions to your unique problem through sketching. Expand on your ideas through iteration and variations. EXHAUST YOUR IMAGINATION! What is the capacity for exploration of your unique design assignment. Combine ideas, create new ones, etc. Your first idea can always be improved upon. Coming to a clever resolution is an iterative process.

Refined Sketches – Take your favorite ideas and explore them further; Refine their shapes/lines/functional components arrangement of internal shapes etc. This step mainly concerns the silhouette and internal shapes of out visual component process, but details can be explored.

Final Design – Presentation/Rendering. All visual components of a design should be fully realized in this phase; silhouette/internal shapes/details.

Essential *Visual* Components of a Design

Here are the 3 fundamental visual aspects of a subject matters design.

1. **Silhouette** – The unique shape that is created by the whole of your design. In general, this could also mean the combined shape of group of objects. This aspect carries roughly a 60% stake in the overall impression a design has on your viewer.
2. **Internal Shapes** – Graphic shapes, or internal silhouettes. These are made up of a fundamental breakdown of the composition of local colors/values inside of a silhouette. This aspect carries roughly a 30% stake in the overall impression a design has on you.
3. **Details** – Textures, patterns, small shapes etc. These are necessary to help communicate things like scale, believability, etc. This aspect carries roughly a 10% stake in the overall impression a design has on you.

Essential *Functional* Components of a Design

Here are the 2 fundamental functional aspects of a subject matters design.

1. **Primary Function** – The sole purpose for why your design exists from a functional level. Form follows function, so we will learn how to create unique and interesting and cool forms not simply from the desire to create cool forms, but as a result of the functional goals/parameters we set for our designs. This can be seen as the designs unique “identity”.
2. **Secondary functions** – All the individual functional aspects of a design that work together to build the great identity of the primary function.

- Weekly Class Structure -

Week 1:

- Hour 1:
  Introductions (Students + Instructor)
  Instructor show work.
  What is Form Language?
- Hours 2-3:
  Demo 1: Show examples of research sketches.
  Demo 2: Thumbnail Ideation, emphasizing proportions.
  Demo 3: Subject Matter proportion studies
- Homefun! :
  Choose a form language object motif. Draw thumbnails inspired by only visual components of your object.

  1 page: Research Sketches Object
  1 page: Research Sketches Subject Matter
  2 pages: Black silhouette studies
  4 pages: Thumbnails
  2 pages: Subject Matter Proportion Studies

Week 2:

- Hours 1-3:
  Demo: Shape behavior, and communication.
- Homefun! :
  1. Make refinements to Week 1's homework incorporating shape language discipline. Students will be expected to make improvements on their week 1 designs in a conscious effort to unify shapes.
  2. Choose a new form language object motif. Draw thumbnails inspired by only visual components of your object.

  1 page: Research Sketches of Week 2's Object
  1 page: Research Sketches of Week 2's Subject
  2 pages: Thumbnail refinements to Week 1's homework.
  1 pages: Refined thumbnail refinements to Week 1's homework.
  4 pages: Thumbnails of Week 2's objects designs.
  1 pages: Refined thumbnails of Week 2's objects designs.

Week 3:

- Hours 1-3:
  Full-Class Critique. Weeks 1, and 2's homework will be reviewed.
- Homefun! :
  Choose a form language object that is of organic matter; this means anything found in nature. For example, it can be a plant, living organism, or inanimate object such as a rock. You will be designing a hard surfaced subject matter; this is anything that is a man-made fabrication, i.e. a weapon, drone, vehicle, building etc. Integration of functional elements derived from your object of inspiration will need to be incorporated in this phase, as well as

visual qualities as emphasized solely in weeks 1-2. Also, remember to also try analyzing your object as purely a composition of shapes, as opposed to only trying to represent its actually representation elements in your subject matter. I.e., a tank with flower pedals growing on it (you are all smarter than that).

1 page: Research Sketches Object
1 page: Research Sketches Subject
8 pages: Thumbnails

Week 4:

- Hours 1-3:
  Demo: Part 1 of 2; Instructor demonstrates design process example of Organic to Hard Surface Design; Research sketches, thumbnails, and refined thumbnails.
- Homefun! :
  Choose a form language object that is man-made. You will be designing a subject matter that is of organic matter. Integration of functional elements derived from your object of inspiration will need to be incorporated in this phase, as well as visual qualities.

  1 page: research sketches for Hard Surface to Organic assignment. Object
  1 page: research sketches for Hard Surface to Organic assignment. Subject
  6 pages: thumbnails for Hard Surface to Organic assignment.
  2 pages: refined thumbnails for Organic to Hard Surface assignment.

Week 5:

- Hours 1-3:
  Demo: Part 2 of 2; Instructor demonstrates design process example of Organic to Hard Surface Design: Final Design.
- Homefun! :
  1. Students will need to draw a final design for both the Organic to Hard Surface, and Hard Surface to Organic assignments. Drawing will need to be full page on a 8.5 x 11 inch paper.
  2. Create a digital layout page for both assignments showcasing these aspects of our design process: Thumbnails, Refined Thumbnails, and Final Design. Layout should be on an landscape formatted document. These final layout pages will need to be uploaded to the blog. Printing them out for the mid-term critique is optional.

  2 pages: refined thumbnails for Hard Surface to Organic assignment.
  1 page: Organic to Hard Surface final drawing.
  1 page: Hard Surface to Organic final drawing.
  1 page: Final Layout for Organic to Hard Surface assignment.
  1 page: Final Layout for Hard Surface to Organic assignment.

Week 6:

- Hours 1-3
  Full-Class Critique. Weeks 3, 4, and 5's homework will be reviewed.
- Homefun! :

Begin Final Project.

1 page: Screenshots from existing franchise
1 page: Reference of general style/direction for your unique spin on the existing franchise.
1 page: Drawings analyzing the current form language breakdown (proportions, shapes, cool factor vs. function) of the existing franchise.
1 page: Research sketches of your Object.
1 page: Research sketches of your Subject.
6 pages: Thumbnails

Week 7:

- Hours 1-3:
  Class presentations of final project outline.
- Homefun! :
  Address feedback given by instructor.

  5 pages: Thumbnails
  5 pages: Refined thumbnails.

Week 8:

- Hours 1-3:
  Full-Class Critique
- Homefun! :
  Address feedback given by instructor.

  Roughly 10 pages: Thumbnails/Refined thumbnails (subject to instructor feedback), and a rough final design(s).

Week 9:

- Hours 1-3:
  Full-Class Critique
- Homefun! :
  1. All artwork for the Final Presentation will be presented in digital format. Drawings/illustrations can be done traditionally/digitally, but will need to be uploaded to the blog for final presentation on the projector.

  2. Students will need to draw their final design(s). The final design should be in a presentation format; i.e., a painted illustration, ¾ line drawing, b/w painting, etc.

  3. Create a digital final layout page for your final project design(s) showcasing these aspects of our design process: Research Sketches, Thumbnails, Refined Thumbnails, and Final Design. Layout should be on an landscape formatted document. These final layout pages will need to be uploaded to the blog. Printing them out for the final presentation is optional.

Form Language - Final Project:

Outline

We are beginning the Final Project. Guidelines are as follows: You are to take an existing entertainment property such as a film, videogame, or tv series of which to re-design the current visual style. You can also instead design an extension of the universe in that IP. You will be utilizing a single form language object as inspiration for all designs.

As part of your project, you can add a “unique spin”. A unique spin is essentially a user-defined change to the given environment, cultural context, historical time period, or genre from the existing narrative to help accentuate the creative direction you want to take your re-design in. This unique spin is not a necessary step of the final project, but can be a lot more fun, because it can give you another creative element to work with subsidiary to the design direction established by your object of inspiration. By defining a unique spin for your project, this can help determine what object of inspiration you choose because of any potential correlation between the object of inspiration and the new environment/setting.

For example, if you wanted to re-design "The Martian" and create a new space tech style based off of "coconut crabs", then you can set the planetary landscape in something more jungle like that could establish strong correlations to the natural habitat of the coconut crab. You can even take a franchise like "God of War” and instead of utilizing the Greek and Viking mythologies, you can do something more Native American or Japanese. If you chose Japanese per say, then choosing a Japanese object such as a Katana for your object of inspiration can be very fitting. (edited)

Please keep in mind we have a total of 4 weeks to complete the Final Project. You will be expected to complete a total of 2 subject matter designs by the final week. For the first two weeks, you will be designing a subject matter(s) of your choice. However, for the last two weeks, I will be giving you your next subject matter to design based off of what you created in weeks 7 and 8.

I will be acting as a instructor/design consultant from here on out as we work towards our final presentations for this class. I will help propose ideas and offer suggestions geared to help you create designs that satisfy your goals, but also adhere to the fundamentals relevant to what we have learned in the class so far. (edited)

Project Goals

1. Solid use of proportions (Wk. 1).
2. Solid use of shape language and cohesion between designs (Wk. 2).
3. Strong functionality across of your designs (Wks. 4/5).
4. “Thematic” or “Responsive” functionality (New), which essentially means the two designs you create for your final project need to look like they are apart of the same project/IP, and have dependencies to one another. (edited)

HomeFun (Due week 7)

- 1 page: Screenshots of your existing franchise (example: screenshots from the video game God of War). This should be on a landscape formatted page.

- 1 page: Reference defining the qualities of any unique spin you have decided to utilize you're your project. (example: Native American reference for God of War example). This should be on a landscape formatted page.

- 1 page: Drawings analyzing the current artistic style of the entertainment/IP you wish to re-design. Think about what sense of proportions, reoccurring shapes, or degree of aesthetics vs. degree of utilitarianism currently establishes the artistic qualities of the existing franchise. What current shape languages if any are already in use? Is there a current motif in place, or is there just a general unique use of proportions? This page is essentially a "research sketch" page but of your existing entertainment property itself.

- 1 page: Research sketches of your chosen object of inspiration. Its important to be thorough here, make sure you analyze your object of inspiration from the visual, and functional standpoint. Always ask yourself that question of "why does my object look the way it does?"

- 1 page: Research sketches to help inform your subject matter that you wish to design for these first two weeks of the final project. 3-4 pages: Thumbnails (or as many as you can in the given timeframe).

Submission

Please email me (markmakingdesign@gmail.com) by (Insert Date) breaking down your final project in written form. Have your pre-existing entertainment property of which to re- design, your form language object of inspiration, and any unique spin you may have. A paragraph or two explaining these details to me would suffice.

PLEASE NOTE: When you pitch your idea to me, I want you to explain to me why you have chosen your object of inspiration. You should be inspired by what the object offers you from a functional standpoint. Functionality should be inspiring first, this will help you create designs with more depth and interest.

You will be presenting your final project idea along with any thumbnails you have generated to class for week 7! I will be creating another "Read Me" file and adding it to the Dropbox this week. It will have instructions for the naming convention necessary for the files you will be uploading in a new Wk7 folder.

Please email/discord dm me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Thank You!