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THROUGH DESIGN**

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Abstract

Inspiration and direction for this thesis began in my undergraduate career with interests in both graphic design and marketing. After studying both areas, I began to think about the relationship between the two and how they can be connected to satisfy my interests. Through my research, I began to see that the trend is moving away from straight marketing to design focused marketing. Emphasis is being taken away from the features and benefits of a company or product to focus on the design and experience of a company or product. Above all, brand, identity, and image need to be emotional in order to be successful and distinctive. It is going to be the designer's responsibility to make correct choices in order to achieve the ultimate experience and emotional connection through a visual communication strategy. This strategy takes into consideration form, typography, color, imagery, style, and material. An emphasis on the role of consumer research is also relevant.

This thesis tackles emotional branding and the process behind it. It focuses on the designer's role integrating principles of marketing and managing that are appropriate in order for the planned expressions to produce the desired consumer impressions. Close attention is also paid to the impact that emotional branding has on culture, vice versa, and conclusions as to

the future of it.

The thesis consists of research on the branding process and the distinction with emotional branding, case studies of successful emotional branding, an educational field study, and an applied design project. The applied design project focuses on a start-up company looking to brand itself and create an identity and image appropriate for the desired experience in the market and the desired emotional connection with the consumer.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As we have now entered the 21st century, design is going to play a more important role than ever in the marketplace. Consumers are bombarded with thousands of products, many times with different options for relatively the same product. As the numbers of products are growing, what is going to set them apart, appeal to the consumer, and eventually be successful is the design. By this I mean, good, meaningful, experiential design that establishes a relationship with the consumer on an emotional level. A mediocre product, or even a very successful product, with design that only highlights the features and benefits just is not going to do anymore. Brands, identity, and image are going to be key focus areas for designers. Designers are going to have to dig to find what motivates people and provide a valuable experience for them. The direction that is going to move toward one of emotion. It is going to go beyond the mere need for satisfaction and stimulus-response to something that more deeply affects our lives.

It is very important to understand the history of branding, identity, image, and marketing and how they differ from each other. Once this is established, emotional branding will be explained in terms of approach and why it is necessary today and in the future. The major differences that a design-

er will see are in the brand design process and the decisions that he/she makes. Because of the impact on the consumer with emotional branding, consumer research will take on a much more important role and must be addressed. Current emotional approaches have been overwhelmingly successful and can be studied as to why they were dominant in their field. Brands have been well established to have major impact on cultures. This thesis will also take a look as to what that impact is and what difference emotional branding will make. Conclusions are based not only on research, but also on an educational field study and applied design project.

My interest and research on emotional branding began by reading two books: Mark Gobe's *Emotional Branding: The New Paradigm For Connecting Brands to People* and Bernd Schmitt and Alex Simonson's *Marketing Aesthetics: The Strategic Management of Brands, Identity, and Image*. I read the books side-by-side and realized how much potential and interest I had in the topics and how they completely tied into each other. Gobe's book finally pinpointed and gave a name to a strategy that was talked about by Schmitt and Simonson. Both books gave way to outlining my thesis and directing me into areas for further research. The extensive bibliographies of both books also were quite useful to me. The next book I read was Scott Bedbury's *A Brand New World*. Although it did not define emotional branding, it gave useful insight to the future of brands and what

would give a brand success and longevity. The last book I read before beginning to outline and narrow my research was Bernd Schmitt's *Experiential Marketing*. It touched on many topics, such as Marketing Aesthetics and Management. It also made me rethink the term "emotional" to be "experiential."

These first few books made me critically look at branding and my interest in it. I found myself very interested in researching the theories of emotional branding and what the differences were from regular branding, if there were any. From here I began to outline emotional branding in terms of defining it, the process behind it, and the impact of it. It led me to investigate the psychology behind design aesthetics and the impact they had on our culture. I also saw this as a wonderful opportunity to test my research and theories. I wanted to start from scratch with a brand in the making. Nikki P Boutique came to my attention through a willing friend who had the openness to allow me to test emotional branding and myself. An emotional branding strategy and applied design project were developed. During this development time, I also had the opportunity to attend a conference in which Davis Mastin, a senior partner in Ogilvy and Mather Advertising, spoke on brands and experience. His insights into giving the consumer an experience were inspiring to my research.

Through research and observations I saw how branding and culture are very much connected and affect each other. I paid close attention to brands around me, what they stood for, and how they impacted culture and their surroundings. I also wanted to observe if surroundings had any impact on branding. My thoughts and research were compiled, and theories of the future of branding were explored.

Once my research was completed, the design phase of my thesis began. I outlined my applied design project and applied my research to the branding of Nikki P Boutique. I also participated in a Senior Graphic Design class at the University of Cincinnati called Design Methodology Application. My role in the class was a teaching assistant. During the quarter, the class developed a visual language system for the School for Creative and Performing Arts. The theme of the system was the History of the Arts in Cincinnati, in preparation for an exhibit in collaboration with The School for Creative and Performing Arts in Fall, 2003. My goals for the quarter were to raise awareness of emotional branding and help define the visual language system with the correct message for the exhibit in mind. I sat in on discussions, gave suggestions, and provided samples and reading lists to aid in the development of the system.

This thesis contains all of my research, thoughts, conclusions, and applica-

tions. It provides an extensive understanding of branding in general, but also specifically emotional branding with examples. Through this past year of work, I have matured as a designer and thinker with a clear vision of where I see design heading in the future and how I am going to be a part of it.

Chapter 2: Brands, Identities, and Imaging

Landor Associates, an international branding firm, defines a brand as “the sum of all the characteristics of tangible and intangible that makes the offer unique.” A brand is a rich source of sensory, affective, and cognitive associations, which have the potential to deliver a memorable and rewarding experience. A product brand is the gestalt (whole) of the brand. It includes the emotional and cultural associations of a product as well as the physical features of a graphic system.¹ Yet, brands do not only exist for products, but also on corporate levels, service areas, and environments. Brands provide an image, assure us of quality, and offer total solutions.²

When we enter the marketplace, we are bombarded by thousands of companies and products. Everyone is aware of trendy Starbucks Coffee and earthy products from The Body Shop. Irresistible brand appeals have made companies like these stand apart from their competitors such as local coffee

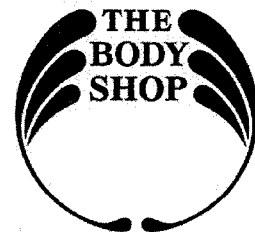


Figure 1: The Body Shop Logo
(*Emotional Branding*, 127).

¹ Landor Associates “Branding Dictionary”, <http://www.landor.com/branding> (last visited Feb. 2003).

² Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson with a foreword by Tom Peters. *Marketing Aesthetics; The Strategic Management of Brands, Identity, and Image*. (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 17.

shops and grocery store body hygiene products.³ Branding is a concept many times mistaken for marketing. To build values and brand promise among consumers, a company uses symbols and words. Marketing is how a company presents the symbols and words to its target audience. In the past, marketing has focused on isolated attributes and benefits of a product. Without a strong brand, no amount of money spent on marketing will attract and retain customers, because there are several companies producing the same type of product.⁴ Up to now, most brand theorists have treated brands as identifiers. In this view, brands are indicators that signify ownership and guarantee quality to the end user. This view of branding misses the very essence of a brand and its potential. Brands have the potential to establish a trust and deliver an experience that will transform a consumer's life.⁵

It is important not to confuse a brand with a company's identity and image. Identity is "the outward manifestation of the essence of a corporate brand, product brand, service brand, or branded environment." It is the design aesthetic elements of the brand identity by which the brand can be recognized.⁶ Elements of design aesthetics would include the name, shape or symbol, typography, color, imagery, and material. A brand may be linked to

³ Gobe, Marc with a foreword by Sergio Zyman. *Emotional Branding: The New Paradigm For Connecting Brands to People*. (New York: Allworth Press, 2001), xxxi.

⁴ Landor, <http://www.landor.com/branding>.

⁵ Schmitt, Bernd H. *Experiential Marketing*. (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 2.1

⁶ Landor, <http://www.landor.com/branding>.

its parent organization and its other brands, resulting in the identity elements of the organization and the identity of its brand to being inter-linked.⁷ Landor states brand image as “the perceptions of the features, tangible and intangible, that characterize a brand.” Positive consumer image goes hand and hand with a strong brand and eventually will have great effect on the lifespan of the brand. Image extends beyond the brand itself and carries to the overall company by consumer expectations.⁸

Before the process of building a strong corporate-identity program using an emotional branding approach can be understood, it is important to understand the evolution of the development of corporate symbols toward the successful, uniquely connected symbols of today.

Visual marks and letters for identification have been in existence for centuries. During medieval times, individuals used marks as a means of enabling the guilds to control trade. By the 1700’s, almost every trader and dealer had a trademark or stamp.⁹ These early beginnings influenced the development of a branding phase that took a broad consideration of brand positioning but with few guidelines for specific actions. Traders knew that they needed to stand apart from other traders but really didn’t establish any strategy to do so. Each generation defines its branding approach with

⁷ Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson, 59.

⁸ Landor, <http://www.landor.com/branding>.

⁹ Meggs, Phillip B. *A History of Graphic Design*. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1998), 363.

its own language, cultural values, ethics, idols, myths, management principles, and corporate logos. Marc Gobe is a top brand specialist in New York City. Over the past century, three distinct eras evolved which Gobe calls the Pragmatist Age, the Evangelist Age, and the Sensualist Age.¹⁰

The Pragmatist Age began in the early 1940's and lasted to about 1967.

This age was sparked by an economic boom influenced by the globalization of American industry and improved distribution systems. The globalization of American industry was fueled by America being seen as a super-power with the advent of corporations producing multiple and multifaceted products and services. At the core of this business equation of corporations was mass standardization and production.¹¹ With an emphasis on function, reliability, and the pragmatic, more products were demanded by and delivered to a wider audience around the world. "Prosperity and technological development appeared closely linked to the increasingly important corporations, and the more perceptive of these comprehended the need to develop a corporate image and identity among a diverse audience."¹² As American corporations moved into the global market, corporate design began to be recognized as an important tool. It would aid corporations in addressing the need for an unequivocal corporate voice through a connected visual identity. Designers began to see their importance and the communicative

¹⁰ Gobe, 124.

¹¹ Gobe, 124.

¹² Meggs, 363.

role they could take in this new era, while design was increasingly seen as a way to shape a reputation for quality and reliability.¹³

This new corporate voice established a need for a new identity system and needed to be the very essence and emblem of a corporation's business. It would be achieved through a simple, powerful, and easily recalled symbolic form that would easily be retained and remembered by the viewer.¹⁴ "The first phase in development of a postwar visual identification system resulted from pioneering efforts by strong individual designers who put their personal imprint on a client's designed image."¹⁵ During the 1950's, the visual identification systems went far beyond using an important trademark. Designers were earning more respect, and their role was beginning to be understood by top executives of corporations. The impact of the shift in a designer's role was a corporate philosophy and approach to advertising that emerged in the early 1950's. Designers were extending themselves outside the creative realm and being given executive and administrative authority.¹⁶ The objective of the corporations had moved from having unwavering corporate identity programs to visually dominating markets with commercial messages and omnipresent advertising, in conjunction with a cohesive, visual corporate identity.¹⁷

¹³ Gobe, 124.

¹⁴ Gobe, 124.

¹⁵ Meggs, 363.

¹⁶ Meggs, 363.

¹⁷ Gobe, 124.

Design in the marketplace became more consistent during the 1950's. By the 1960's, design was taking a more systematic approach. The rallying cry within corporations was, "Good design is good business," and the graphic design community pulled together behind the corporations. "During the 1960's designers believed that an extensive organization could achieve a uniform, and thus significant, corporate image by a systematic program controlling the use of constant elements."¹⁸

The Pragmatist Age had a huge impact on the design field and the evolution of branding. By the end of the 1960's, brand identities were being viewed as cultural symbols reflecting a corporation's essence. The typographic style and the identity joined force with the development of systematic design programs that aimed to combine unique, diverse, and complex parts into a whole.¹⁹ The corporate values of visibility, stability, and consistency were addressed in the visual expression. Successful American brand icons, such as Coca Cola, McDonald's, IBM, Ford, TWA, Marlboro, and Levi's, came to the forefront during this time. The Pragmatist Age created such brand-design experts and designers as Paul Rand, Walter Landor,



Figure 2: IBM Logo
(*Emotional Branding*, 131).

¹⁸ Meggs, 363-375.

¹⁹ Meggs, 375.

Raymond Loewy and advertising agencies such as Leo Burnett, McCann Erikson, and Young & Rubicam.²⁰

The Evangelist Age spanned from 1968 to 1989. With the momentum and the benefits of the industrial movement, Baby Boomers of the 70's and 80's enjoyed a higher level of economic freedom than their parents. The United States was becoming the most active consumer marketplace in the world. Yet, business began to look closer at political and social issues around the world. This new approach came out of the Vietnam War, the growing negative perception of big business influence in local and foreign politics, and the realization that the socioeconomic opportunities available in the United States were not available to everyone.²¹

The Baby Boomers had a different perception of the American Dream and of the ideal world that was portrayed in the 50's and 60's. The American Dream shifted from career success to freedom for the pursuit of happiness and success beyond themselves. "A social conscience was raised and made people realize that they indeed have

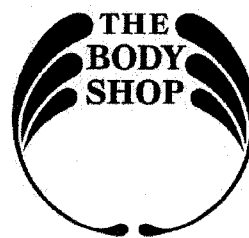


Figure 3: The Body Shop Logo
(*Emotional Branding*, 127).

²⁰ Gobe, 124.

²¹ Gobe, 125-27.

power and could positively change the course of politics and the world around them.”²² If corporations wanted to keep heading in a positive direction they had to shift so that they appealed to the empowerment of the common person on the street. By 1974, the United States government began to see the growing importance of design as a tool for achieving objectives of mass communication. They set forth a design program that would improve the quality of visual communications and their ability to communicate effectively with citizens on political and social issues.²³

Within this context, people during the 1970’s redirected their business practices to include new ideals representing philosophies of justice, equality, and sensitivity to the world around them. A new business language was formed in which management practices were less rigid and more people friendly. A new corporate lifestyle emerged, which design would soon reflect. Companies, such as Apple Computer, The Body Shop, Nike, and Virgin Records, exemplified the new lifestyle. The lifestyle was one that contributed back to the community for justice, equality, and sensitivity



Figure 4: Apple Logo
(*Emotional Branding*,
131).

toward social and economic issues. “The Body Shop, led by Anita Roddick, built its success by creating a business model that was extremely proactive regarding issues of human condition, the environment, and animal rights.”²⁴

²² Gobe, 125.

²³ Meggs, 378.

²⁴ Gobe, 125-126.

The Body Shop raised campaigns about awareness and change and led the way for businesses to use their voice for social and environmental change. Nike broke barriers by implementing a counterculture marketing program with focuses on people and challenging them physically and spiritually. Nike focused not only on sports and fitness, but on the consumer's mental outlook.²⁵

Corporate symbols and identity programs changed to reflect companies' innovative cultures beyond their product and society's new lifestyle ideals. Gap clothing stores were designed with sophisticated modern graphics that were bold and colorful. The Body Shop took on a new logo with an open, curvaceous, free design that incorporated typography that went against the mechanical corporate look of earlier years. Corporations aimed to connect with people beyond the unemotional terms of the corporate world. They wanted to evoke a personal and approachable feeling.²⁶

Along with these strategies came brand agencies developed to convey the new counterculture messages. The brand agency's goal was to be the voice of a new generation. Design initiatives involved courageous, daring approaches, exploring typography, color, and form for corporate identity. The personal tagline of the brand's philosophy was reflected in logos, pack-

²⁵ Gobe, 125-27.

²⁶ Gobe, 125-27.

ages, and store designs. "This era was Coca Cola's 'Teaching the world to sing,' and Nike's 'Just do it'."²⁷ During the Evangelist Age, companies were sharing the humanists' view in their dual mission to maintain and build successful businesses and influence the everyday lives of people.

The Sensualist Age spans from 1990 to the present. The progressive culture of the nineties held values different from that of the previous generations. The values were shaped by hedonism, glamour, fame, and individual expression. Generation X, as the culture was named, with its social construct moving away from the accepted norm, expressed the importance of the individual, constant change, and sensual rewards. The Internet introduced another set of values of convenience and technology, based on speed. Branding agencies designed strategies that capitalized on the enormous financial opportunities of the Internet. Time and willingness to change were critical issues. Branding strategies were being created at a moment's notice and implemented in six months or less to keep up with Internet competitors.²⁸

A reinvented language of culture, values, and symbols reflected the energy associated with the advances in technology. The language's creators included Amazon.com, Yahoo!, and AOL. Digital communication agencies created the new vocabulary of the time. Corporate and brand identities reflect-

²⁷ Gobe, 127.

²⁸ Gobe, 127.

ed this new business attitude of
reinventing themselves through
technology and transcended the role



Figure 5: America Online Logo
(<http://www.aol.com>, last visited May 2003).

of the two-dimensional logo. Identities were flexible, to be produced in print or manipulated in digital media.²⁹ "Today, corporate identities are changing to become consumer-driven, flexible, multi-sensorial expressions of not only what the company thinks it is, but also reflections of how a company wants to be perceived by people and how they want people to interact with it."³⁰

Branding has evolved into unique identifiers of a product, service, or company that are tangible and intangible. In the past century, the Pragmatist Age, Evangelist Age, and the Sensual Age were important phases in the shaping of branding. We are now at the end of the Sensual Age and moving to create a new language of branding that will reflect the values of the new millennium.

²⁹ Gobe, 127.

³⁰ Gobe, 127.

Chapter 3: Emotional Branding

At the beginning of the new millennium, branding's big moment has arrived. Never before has branding played such an important role in society or the marketplace. There are more products, services, companies, and brands all aiming to be distinctive, loved, and desired by consumers.¹ The result is that consumers are beginning to demand more than just a mere selling of a product. They are now demanding an experience. Jerry Kathman, President of Libby Perszyk Kathman, a brand identity firm in Cincinnati, stated, "The new thinking about branding is that a brand is ultimately a relationship, and that customer experiences shape that brand."² Consumers today are more educated than ever before and realize that the most valuable assets of a company are no longer physical. The assets lie in the relationship that is built between the company and the end-user and in the company's responsibility to behave as caring citizens. The features and benefits of a product do not hold as much significance anymore. "Most customers today are deeply unimpressed by isolated benefits offered by faceless products and hard-selling advertising of the problem/solution type."³ The design of the product and the packaging is ultimately what is

¹ Gobe, Marc with a foreword by Serio Zyman. *Emotional Branding; The New Paradigm For Connecting Brands to People*. (New York: Allworth Press, 2001), xvi.

² Rasmusson, Erika. "Creating Brand Loyalty." *Sales and Marketing Management* (March 2002).

³ Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson with a foreword by Tom Peters. *Marketing Aesthetics; The Strategic Management of Brands, Identity, and Image*. (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 16.

going to influence the consumer. Choices in the marketplace today are made based on lifestyles and if the brand represents an exciting new desirable experience.

Abraham Maslow, a well-known psychologist, researched consumer behavior for many years and came up with a theory of a consumer's buying behavior based on a series of needs.⁴ In the past decades, branding focused on the lower needs in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It appealed to the consumers Physiological Needs (food, water, air) and Safety and Security Needs (protection, order, stability). Over the years, branding has moved into the higher needs on the hierarchy to Social Needs (affection, friendship, and belonging) and Ego Needs (prestige, status, and self esteem). With the turn of the century, branding must now move beyond this into Self-Actualization Needs which give self fulfillment to the user. Brands that respect the "higher" consumer needs and successfully develop strategies in their products, services, and marketing communications will overcome their competitors by being more meaningful.⁵ They will touch consumers emotionally and provide a trust between the consumer and the company. Good design that moves beyond merely visual design to emotional design is going to provide a successful link for a company to achieve this goal where

⁴ Boeree, Dr. George C., Personality Theories; Abraham Maslow., <http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/maslow>.

⁵ Bedbury, Scott with Stephen Fenichell. *A New Brand World*. (New York: The Penguin Group), 14.

the highest needs are met and valued.

Design is now in the spotlight as an absolute necessity and will be the underlying factor in whether or not a brand is successful. It has been said that humans have an "ancient wisdom" of design, an associative memory concerning space, form, pattern, and color.⁶ It is in that unconscious wisdom that companies are going to be able to establish a deep everlasting relationship with the consumer and deliver an unforgettable experience. From this concept, emotional branding is derived.

Emotional branding bases itself on aesthetics that appeal to the five senses of the consumer. "Carefully crafted sensory appeals can create that consumer preference that distinguishes a brand amidst a sea of competing commodities."⁷ Brands lasting through time form strong relationships of satisfaction and loyalty with their users through the vitality of aesthetics that appeal to users through sight, touch, taste, sound, and smell. The difference between an emotional brand and a non-emotional brand is a company's vision, visualization, and an overall emotional connection.⁸

Companies can look all the way back to Plato. He believed that behind, above, and beneath everything that is concrete that humans experience in

⁶ Arnheim, Rudolf. *Art and Visual Perception; A Psychology of the Creative Eye*. (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1954, 13.

⁷ Gobe, 68.

⁸ Gobe, 121.

life is the idea of that thing. This idea of the thing ultimately gives everlasting emotional meaning to that thing.⁹ Functional features and benefits, product quality, and a positive brand image are things that consumers take as a given. They are now wanting products, services, and marketing communications that dazzle their senses, touch their hearts, and stimulate their minds.¹⁰ Consumers' behaviors, impressions, and expectations are encoded when they experiences what is seen, heard, and felt.¹¹

What makes emotional branding so important and necessary is that in this new world where speed and computer screens are transforming our lives, we are moving more out of touch with physical reality. This is taking place by less direct communication from person to person or person to company. Because of this, the direct experience a consumer has with a product impacts his/her feelings in a profound way. This direct experience will be especially critical in industries where competition is intense and where technology is now a disruptive force.¹² "In an 'out-of-control' world, it is the most human instinct of all to want to be able to impact our immediate surroundings with things of beauty and originality. This gives us a 'new sense of control.'¹³ Companies should embrace this knowledge and create astounding good design that maximizes it.

⁹ Bedbury, 12.

¹⁰ Schmitt, Bernd H. *Experiential Marketing*. New York: The Free Press, 1999.

¹¹ Recker, John and Jerry Kathman. "The Role of Consumer Research in the Brand Design Process," *Design Management Journal* 12, no.3, 1.

¹² Bedbury, 6.

¹³ Gobe, 110.

When emotional branding is implemented, sensory experiences are immediate, powerful, and capable of changing the consumer's life.¹⁴ It is based on the unique trust that a company establishes with an audience. It also is based on how consumers evaluate purchases based on desire. Emotional branding ultimately brings a new layer of credibility and personality to a brand by transferring an experience to the consumer. It connects with the consumer on a personal and holistic level through the senses.¹⁵ Yet, sensory experiences are still not being used to their full extent by companies at the store level, in product development, or in package design and advertising.

Designers must now be motivated to deliver a graphic expression that explores new concepts and conveys a heightened aesthetic sense that will bring meaning to the consumer and enhance their quality of life. "Design must be responsive to people's emotional needs and desires for sensory pleasure...this demands passion, honesty, and above all, commitment to a mission to improve the world we live in."¹⁶ The message of the design must be relevant as well as inspiring. A talented designer will tap into this universal need for permanence, beauty, and more humanistic quality in the marketplace.¹⁷ In the brand design process, designers will be able to extend

¹⁴ Gobe, 68.

¹⁵ Gobe, ix.

¹⁶ Gobe, 120, x.

¹⁷ Gobe, 110.

their creativity and make choices appropriate to achieving this new language with consumers. The language will have roots firmly established in psychology and physiology to become a language of trust, beauty, elegance, and intimacy.¹⁸ Designers will pay close attention and make decisions about perception and the relationship to design aesthetics. They will need to focus on five actions of a consumer that include sensing, feeling, thinking, acting, and relating.¹⁹

The action of sensing, as applied to design, will be focused on to different companies, products, and services, motivate the consumer, and add value to the products. It will provide the consumer with aesthetic pleasure, excitement, beauty, and satisfaction. A designer will have to focus on how the consumer responds to the product and attaches affection to the company or brand. There must be a clear understanding as to how the designer can create the feeling that the consumer will have when experiencing something. The brand must appeal to his/her feelings and emotions, with the objective of creating affective experiences that range from mildly positive moods to strong emotions of happiness and pride.²⁰ Emotional branding is on a sub-conscious level when it comes to the action of thinking. A dialogue between the mind and the design happens without the consumer being aware of it. The consumer is going to respond to the visual stimula-

¹⁸ Recker, 1.

¹⁹ Schmitt, 64.

²⁰ Schmitt, 64-72.

tion of aesthetics automatically. Concentrating on how a consumer thinks will provide the objective to encourage customers to engage in elaborative and creative thinking as a result of the experience of the brand. The potential in focusing on the act of thinking is huge, in that it has potential to tap into some major "paradigm shifts" in society. With people expect and want more than before from a brand. Brands must be created with consideration for how people act. This will aim to affect bodily experiences, behavior, lifestyles, and interactions with other people.²¹ Finally, how a customer relates to a brand is achieved by incorporating sensing, feeling, thinking, and acting into the design. It is the overall impact of the emotional brand that will determine if the consumer relates to it in the future.

d/g* Worldwide, located in New York City, is a top ten brand image creation firm. It has formulated three distinct tools that can be used to achieve successful emotional brands. The first tool is called BrandFocus. It is an interactive tool to clarify a brand's positioning.²² The goals of this strategy are: 1) team alignment through interactive creativity and collaborative discovery of a strong vision, 2) visual definition of the future brand image, 3) dimensionalization of customer personality and brand emotional connection, and 4) construction of key (pillar) attributes that define the brand through concise descriptive images and adjectives that craft and

²¹ Schmitt, 64-72.

²² Gobe, 271.

make up the brand. The second tool is simply referred to as Sense. It is ultimately a visual territory development tool that provides a process that helps identify a product's equities, profiles the customer, analyzes the competition, and develops a multidimensional, emotionally charged visual and sensual vocabulary. This vocabulary then serves the purpose as the foundation of the design process. The third tool is known as Brand Presence Management. It is utilized more as a research tool to aid brand managers. It is an assessment tool to explore the many facets of a brand's personality in the marketplace.²³

Emotional branding is beginning to be recognized for taking a strong role in the success of current top companies and brands, such as Starbucks and Gillette. Each company uses the theories and practices behind emotional branding to give the consumer something that other competing companies are not: an experience. This experience triggers the emotions of a consumer and creates a bond between the company and the consumer. The consumer has an impression of the company and brand and is then motivated by the longing for the experience.

STARBUCKS

Starbucks was founded in 1971 in Seattle, Washington as a start-up venture

²³ Gobe, 271-75.

that sold only whole beans and ground coffee. After a trip to Milan in 1983, Starbucks president Howard Schultz decided to import the idea of a European coffee shop to the United States. "He saw Italians congregate at hundreds of street corner espresso bars and thought he could export the idea to the



Figure 6: Starbucks Coffee Logo
(*Marketing Aesthetics*, 81).

United States." The shift from a small local coffee store to being nationally recognized as expensive gourmet coffee was in 1987. Starbucks saw success fast and dramatic. Total earnings went from 1 million in 1990 to 4.1 million in 1992, and 26.1 million in 1995. By November 1996, the Starbucks chain had 1034 outlets across the United States and had a growth rate of 36.8% in five years.²⁴

What makes Starbucks so successful is their branding strategy. Not only does Starbucks deliver the consumer with coffee beverages, but an incredible experience. Starbucks uses emotional branding to create a unique identification. This identification is largely based on a style that is used to create an aesthetic experience. It is this aesthetic that seduces the consumers to see, feel, and experience their brand. Starbucks achieved this effect

²⁴ Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson, 80.

through a series of organic and inorganic blends of design elements.

Overall, the designs of Starbucks are sleek and modern. The logo is a green icon that features a woman with flowing hair that gives the feeling of something natural and environmentally conscious. The organic shape of the logo is one that soft, feminine, and harmonious. The green and brown colors convey associations of earthy, trustworthy, restful, wholesome, secure, relaxed, etc. The packages of the different kinds of coffee under the Starbucks brand have their own unique design and theme that borrow from several artistic movements but deliver a sleek and modern appeal. Each one uses organic shapes and colors to touch on the consumer's bond with the logo and coffee shop's experience. Special packaging used for holidays is much more lively and colorful.²⁵

The interior design of a Starbucks creates an emotional appeal that is pleasant and friendly. The natural wood tones have very smooth surfaces that seem finished and comfortable. Darker wood tones, glass shelves, and pure white cups all create a contemporary feeling. The interior colors of the walls are pretty neutral, stemming from light yellows to rustic oranges and browns. Imagery on the walls include colorful graphic depictions that usually contain organic and inorganic shapes that appeal to both men and women. The colors seem to have a wide range. They are very lively and

²⁵ Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson, 82.

bold, consisting of blues, reds, greens, yellows, etc. Descriptive words that play into the consumer's imagination are also on wall coverings and pictures. Communication about the Starbucks brand is delivered through adjectives such as relaxing, smooth, calm, etc.²⁶

Starbucks is an icon of emotional branding, because it delivers an experience not only through its products, but also through its environment. The product is not only the coffee, but also the overall experience. Designers carefully considered the aesthetic elements of shape, typography, imagery, and color to create an experience and establish trust with the consumer. This is implemented in the Starbucks logo, packaging, and environment. The design elements tap into the consumer's emotions to deliver a memory of and loyalty to the brand. On another level, Starbucks creates an emotional bond with consumers by standing for something bigger in the community. The Starbucks Foundation was set up to give back to the community and is another emotional tie between the consumer and the company. It focuses on literacy initiatives on a local and nationwide level and gives financial support to provide assistance to coffee-growing countries.²⁷

Starbucks has built itself an incredible emotional brand reputation on both a product level and company level.

²⁶ Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson, 82.

²⁷ Gobe, 300.

GILLETTE

Gillette razors and toiletries (deodorants, shaving creams, and aftershave) represent an exceptional emotional brand. In 1989, after many years of not

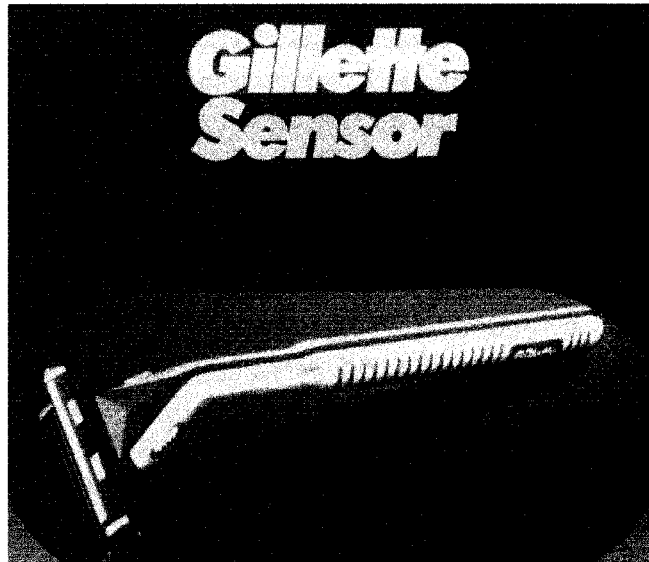


Figure 7: Gillette Sensor
(*Marketing Aesthetics*, 107).

controlling the market share of razors, Gillette launched the Sensor razor. It has been labeled a visual and tactile experience. After the launch, of the Sensor razor, the Gillette identity was enhanced by the firm Anspach Grossman Portugal. Then Gillette turned to Desgrippes Gobe & Associates (d/g* worldwide) to develop a line of fourteen toiletry products for men to capitalize on the success of the Sensor razor. Desgrippes Gobe & Associates used their strategy explained earlier called SENSE. This strategy was used to identify key design elements (shapes, colors, typography, materials, etc.) that related to and expressed the Gillette products' identity. This identity was labeled as masculine, traditional, but technically progressive. In this new line of fourteen products, the underlying values of the company were related to the act and experience of shaving.²⁸ "The firm viewed shaving as a rite of passage linked to a man's daily transformation from private to

²⁸ Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson, 106-8.

public space; the meaning of colors, shapes, material, typefaces, and fragrances were related to this context.”²⁹ d/g* Worldwide then collaborated with Gillette’s in-house design team to incorporate the Sensor razor’s existing aesthetics into the new products and designs. They described their rationale as follows:

The color blue communicates the cleanliness of shaving... Black communicates universality and a gutsy, masculine lifestyle. Silver, with its metallic sheen and industrial presence, reflects the performance aspects of razor blades and Sensor. A revolutionary thin-walled, crystal clear container showcases the clarity of a new transparent product. Structural designs are proportional to fit a man’s hand and (are) slick and cylindrical or ribbed and reminiscent of a man’s broad shoulders...Gillette’s bold Futura logo reinforces the company’s masculine heritage and leadership position...Dominated by citrus with a mossy, woody base, Cool Wave (the name of the product) unifies the functionally based Gillette Series.³⁰

Gillette appeals to the consumers’ lifestyles with the Sensor line. Decisions about aesthetics were made based on research about human perception and sensation. Gillette’s style was achieved



Figure 8: Gillette Sensor Product Line (*Emotional Branding*, 113).

through vision, creativity, and intelligent, intuitive designers. They branded themselves so that when consumers come into contact with their products,

²⁹ Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson, 107.

³⁰ Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson, 107-8.

they relate back to the emotional experience of using their products. Gillette's emotional branding approach delivered the target market something new and exciting.³¹

³¹ Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson, 108.

Chapter 4: Components of Visual Communication Strategy

The process of design, no matter what context the design is created in, is very important. Within emotional branding, the design process takes a high priority, because each element of the design process has the potential to greatly influence the experience and provide visual equity. Equity represents both rational and emotional triggers of trust. Manipulation of visual equity during the design process is a key component in effective, strategic design.¹ Design elements such as color, shape, and imagery, in essence, are a collection of sensory inputs that stimulate the five senses and provide a basis for emotions. The aesthetic elements that contribute to the experience are carefully selected and created through the design process. They are forms of symbol, imagery, typography, and color. "For both branded products and services, the presentation of color, image, symbol, and typography sets the expectations through expression."² The materials, such as paper, packaging material, and ink also contribute to the effectiveness of aesthetics. Consumer research also takes on an important role in the final stages of the design process. The aesthetics must be tested regarding each element's effectiveness. The design process of emotional branding must greatly rely on synesthesia. Synesthesia is the stimulation of one sense by another sense. It creates an integration of the primary design elements

¹ Recker, John and Jerry Kathman. "The Role of Consumer Research in the Brand Design Process." *Design Management Journal* 12, no.3, 2.

² Recker, 1-2.

into a system of attributes that express the style of the company and brand.³ For synesthesia to be achieved, it is important to understand each aesthetic element, its influence on the senses and subconscious, and how each element should be selected. Consumer research also plays an important role in the final stages of the design process.

FORM

Product and packaging form can be very powerful. As visual symbols, they are an important source of identity and create impressions of a company. They also maintain the same interpretation across cultural boundaries. An aesthetic strategy can be greatly influenced by forms. Form can take on different meaning and personality depending on the context in which they appear. This is why it is a designer's goal to pair a potentially appropriate form with a product. The power a form can have also relies on the distinctiveness of a form, so close attention must also be paid to the extent of exclusive pairing of a form with a company or brand, and the inherent quality of a form. Forms are composed of a few key dimensions that give rise to specific associations and can have a dramatic impact on customer's perceptions. These dimensions are angularity, size, symmetry, and proportion.⁴

³ Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson with a foreword by Tom Peters. *Marketing Aesthetics; The Strategic Management of Brands, Identity, and Image*. New York: The Free Press, 105.

⁴ Schmitt, 87.

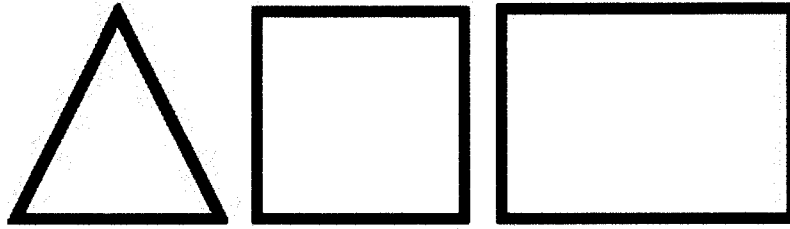


Figure 9: Angular Forms

Angularity. Angular forms contain angles, such as triangles, squares, and rectangles. In contrast, rounded forms have no sharp corners. Both categories of forms have a full set of associations. Forms that are angular carry associations of conflict, dynamism, and masculinity. Round forms are perceived as feminine, soft, and continuous. Similar to this contrast in forms is a straight form versus a curved form. Straight forms are perceived as masculine, sharp, abrupt, and choppy. Curved forms evoke harmony, softness, and femininity.⁵

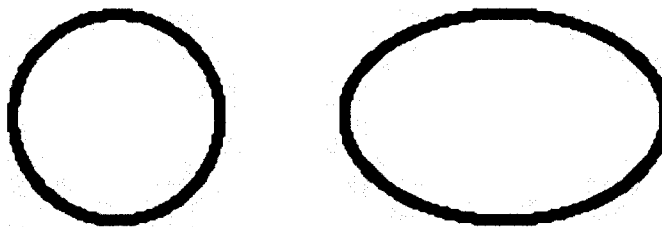


Figure 10: Rounded Forms

Size. Size is one dimension of a form that, when evaluated, varies strikingly

⁵ Schmitt, 87.

in interpretation depending on cultural and regional norms. Before beginning to design a form, a designer must research what culture will be the primary market. Personality greatly influences the interpretation of size. Typically, size is based on large or small forms. Large forms are considered tall, wide, or both. These sized shapes are often perceived as powerful and strong. Small sized forms are short, thin, or both. They appear delicate and weak. For example, L'Oreal Studio Line of hairstyling products uses large and angular shapes. This brand of products expresses and projects strength, energy, and effectiveness through design.⁶

Symmetry. "Symmetry refers to mirror identity of form or arrangement on the two sides of a dividing line (axis) or plane."⁷ Symmetry is what creates balance within a design. How a person evaluates the visual appeal of an object, on a subconscious level, is caused by balance. Balance creates an understood order and relieves tensions. For example, balance plays a key role in whether a person's face is considered attractive or not. Asymmetry is the opposite of symmetry. It creates agitation and tension. Symmetry does have its limits and is often juxtaposed with a hint of asymmetry to provide balance with excitement or movement. This saves the image from having visual monotony.⁸

⁶ Schmitt, 90-1.

⁷ Schmitt, 90.

⁸ Schmitt, 90-1.

Proportion. Proportion is another key factor in how a consumer perceives a shape. Long, angular forms and oblong curved forms extend the field of vision. This ultimately creates a dominating aesthetic by appearing to capture more of a particular scene. In comparison, short angular forms can seem more timid and meek. When working with round forms, proportion and symmetry usually are blended, as in a perfect circle. Because of this, circular forms appear less powerful than oblong forms. Yet, circular forms create perceptions of harmony with their balance and project softness and perfection.⁹

Grid. The grid is a method of organizing typographic and visual information. Overall forms are determined by a grid, because they are the underlying foundation of any design. A grid is a system of intersecting, perpendicular axes controlling the visual organization of a page or form by creating vertical and horizontal divisions of space. Carefull consideration of the grid and its impact on forms is very important.

TYPOGRAPHY

Typography is used extensively through the branding process. "Letterforms are the most important means of communication available to the graphic

⁹ Schmitt, 89-91.

designer.”¹⁰ Type is found on publicity materials, business cards and stationery, advertising, point-of-purchase displays, bags, packaging, etc. It serves the essential function of conveying information, yet it also carries emotional and aesthetic information that impacts how the verbal message is read. A typeface is an aesthetic element that is composed of other aesthetic elements, such as shape and color.¹¹ Typefaces come in a wide variety of styles and convey an infinite number of images. The look of a typeface is its distinctive quality that adds to the overall style of a company and brand.¹²

Typefaces are complex in their perceptions as they add representational quality directly to words or letters which convey a meaning. “The emotional impact of letterforms is communicated before their literal content, and therefore the designer must establish from the outset of a particular project the precise feelings and associations that he or she wishes his design to communicate.”¹³ A typeface, while carrying verbal information, also carries a shape of its own that conveys emotional qualities. For example, letters designed to represent those found on computer print-outs suggest obvious references to speed and technology. Tall narrow letters with precise serifs seem elegant, such as the typefaces, Palatino, Bembo, and Weiss. Rounded,

¹⁰ Neuenschwander, Brody. *Letterwork; Creative Letterforms in Graphic Design*. London: Phaidan Press, Inc., 1993, 25.

¹¹ Neuenschwander, 29.

¹² Schmitt, 97.

¹³ Neuenschwander, 31

full letters without serifs seem friendly and warm, such as typefaces Gill Sans, Univers, and Futura.¹⁴

Serif Typefaces

Palatino Palatino *Palatino Palatino*

Bembo **Bembo** *Bembo Bembo*

Weiss *Weiss* Weiss **Weiss**

Sans Serif Typefaces

Gill Sans **Gill Sans** *Gill Sans Gill Sans*

Univers **Univers** *Univers Univers*

Futura **Futura** *Futura Futura*

Capital letters usually convey authority and aggressiveness. They can present hierarchy and importance. On the other hand, all lowercase letters can make a daring, understated impression. They are more inviting and feminine.¹⁵ When choosing a typeface, it is important to look at the

¹⁴ Schmitt, 97.

¹⁵ Schmitt, 97.

typeface in different sizes and weights. Weight refers to bold, semi-bold, black, etc. Each of these characteristics of a typeface can also influence the perception and experience of it. Italic, and more cursive typefaces, are seen elegant and fancy than regular and book versions of the same type. "Old-style faces such as Bembo and Times are characterized by classical proportions, bracketed serifs and a gradual transition from thick to thin elements with calligraphic weighting...The relationship of black to white is balanced giving a timeless feeling of elegance and stability."¹⁶ Modern and transitional typefaces, such as Baskerville and Bodoni, are composed of much fuller proportions than old-style faces. These faces generally have unbracketed serifs, an abrupt transition from thick to thin, and a vertical distribution of weight. These aesthetics produce a grid-like quality and geometric sense. Egyptian faces, such as Rockwell and Calvert, are composed with slab serifs and virtually no thick and thin elements. These faces display geometric precision, portray a mechanical feel, and produce an even texture with a solid feel.¹⁷ A designer should try many type studies in order to achieve the desired experience and appropriateness of communication.

¹⁶ Neuenschwander, 101.

¹⁷ Neuenschwander, 101-103.

COLOR

Color is one of the biggest influences on experience and the most instantaneous method of conveying messages and meanings. It is a "silent salesperson" by conveying crucial information to the consumer. "Color must immediately attract the consumer's eye, convey the message of what the product is all about, create a brand identity, and help make the sale."¹⁸ The human reaction to color is subliminal, which allows for the instantaneous stimulus of the senses and power of suggestion. This stimulation is used to symbolize abstract concepts and thoughts, express fantasy and wishes, recall memories, and produce an aesthetic or emotional response. Color goes beyond corporate and brand identity. Not only does color identify, but it idealizes through experiences. IBM with their "big blue" is known as trustworthy and dependable. Coca Cola with its distinctive red conveys energy and exuberance.¹⁹

The human eye can distinguish among over 10,000 hues. Color consists of three components: hue, saturation, and brightness. Hue is simply another term for the name of the color. Saturation is the chromatic purity, or freedom from dilution of a hue with white. The more saturated a color is, the greater the impression is that the object is moving away from the view.

¹⁸ Eiseman, Leatrice. *Pantone Guide to Communicating with Color*. Sarasota; Graffix Press, Ltd., 2000, 7.

¹⁹ Eiseman, 6-8

Brightness has to do with the intensity or energy level of a color. It is also referred to as the color value. The brighter the color is, the greater the impression is that the object is closer to the viewer.²⁰ The overall perception of a color is greatly influenced by the saturation and

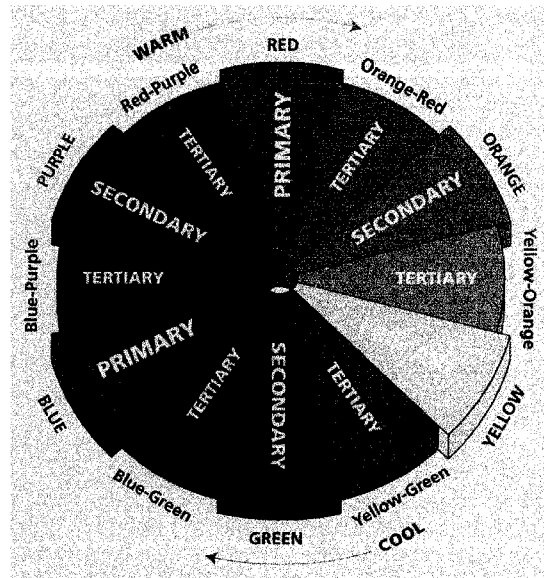


Figure 11: Color Wheel
(Pantone Guide to Communicating With Color, 11).

value. Companies can make a color scheme the major focus of their branding strategy by using a single dominant color, or a color palette which consists of two or more colors.²¹ There are four different types of color schemes: monotone, monochromatic, analogous, and complementary. Monotone color schemes use one single color. Monochromatic color schemes use one color family in various values or intensities. Analogous color schemes use colors that are neighboring families on the color wheel. Complementary color schemes use colors that are total opposites on the color wheel and enhance each other when they are paired.²² Typically, warm colors, such as red, orange, and yellow, are perceived to be more energetic and extroverted. Cooler colors, such as blues, greens, and violets,

²⁰ Schmitt, 94.

²¹ Schmitt, 92.

²² Eiseman, 12.

appear to be calmer and more introverted. They also give the perception of being farther away from the viewer than the warm colors.²³ When choosing a color scheme, the appropriateness of the color message and choosing process are very important.

When selecting a color palette for emotional branding, there is a process that should be followed. First, the message of the brand needs to be defined; is it serene, sensual, or spiritual? The designer needs to be clear on what the message of the company and brand is and what they want their overall experience to be. Next, a dominant color, or colors, should be selected that conveys the defined message and experience. Once this is achieved, supporting colors should be selected to reinforce the message. One of these colors is usually used as an accent color. The designer should then fine tune the color choices for appropriateness to the target audience. A last step for the designer should be to check what the competitors are using. Although a company and brand want to convey a certain experience, it is also important for them to be distinctive.²⁴ Listed below are dominant colors and their perceived responses.

Dominant Colors and Responses: List from Pantone Guide to Communicating with Color

²³ Schmitt, 95.

²⁴ Eiseman, 62.

Bright Red: exciting, energizing, sexy, hot, dynamic, stimulating, provocative, dramatic, aggressive, powerful, seductive, human, passionate

Bright Pink: exciting, happy, hot, attention getting, energetic, youthful, spirited, fun, trendy, wild, romantic, sensual

Light Pink: romantic, soft, sweet, tender, cute, babies, delicate, feminine

Dusty Pink: soft, cozy, subtle, dusky

Mauve: soft, subdued, quiet, sentimental

Burgundy: rich, elegant, refined, tasty, expensive, mature, opulent, lush, authoritative

Fuchsia: bright, exciting, fun, hot, high energy, sensual

Brick Red: earthy, strong, warm, country

Terracotta: earthy, warm, wholesome, country, welcoming

Orange: fun, whimsical, childlike, happy, glowing, vital, sunset, harvest, hot, juicy, tangy, energizing, gregarious, friendly, loud, affordable, informal

Peach: nurturing, soft, fuzzy, delicious, fruity, sweet, inviting

Light Yellow: cheerful, happy, soft, sunny warm, sweet

Bright Yellow: enlightening, sunshine, cheerful, friendly, hot, luminous,

Energy, caution, novelty, temporary

Greenish Yellow: lemony, tart, fruity, acidic

Golden Yellow: autumn, flowers, harvest, rich, sun, warm, wheat, comforting, sun-baked, buttery

Cream: smooth, rich, warm, neutral, soft, classic, delicious

Beige: classic, sandy, earthy, neutral, soft, warm, bland

Earth Brown: rooted, wholesome, sheltering, masculine, woodsy, warm,
durable, secure, rustic, earth, dirt, relaxed, informal, masculine

Coffee or Chocolate: rich, delicious

Red Purple: exciting, sensual, flamboyant, creative, unique

Deep Plum: expensive, regal, classic, powerful, elegant

Blue Purple: mystical, spiritual, futuristic, fantasy, meditative

Lavender: nostalgic, delicate, sweet scented, floral, sweet taste

Grape: sophisticated, sweet taste, subtle

Orchid: exotic, flowers, fragrant, tropical

Light Blue: calm, quite peaceful, cool, water, clean

Sky Blue: calming, cool, heavenly, constant, faithful, true, dependable,
happy, restful, tranquil

Teal Blue: pleasing, rich, classy, expensive, unique

Bright Blue: electric, energetic, vibrant, flags, stirring, happy, dramatic,
respectful

Navy: credibly, authoritative, basic, classic, conservative, strong,
dependable, traditional, uniforms, service, nautical, confident,
professional, serene, quiet

Turquoise: ocean, tropical, jewelry

Aqua: cool, fresh, liquid, ocean, refreshing, healing

Light Green: calm, quiet, soothing, neutral

Dark Green: nature, trustworthy, refreshing, cool, restful, stately, forest, quiet, woody, traditional, money

Olive Green: military, camouflage, safari, classic, drab

Bright Green: easy-going, fresh, grass, Irish, lively, spring, foliage, outdoorsy

Bright Yellow-Green: artsy, sharp, bold, gaudy, trendy, tacky, slimy, sickening

Lime: tart, acidic, refreshing, fruity, lively

Pure White: pure, clean, sterile, innocent, silent, lightweight, airy, bright, glistening, goodness, chastity, delicate, formality, refinement

Black: powerful, elegant, mysterious, heavy, basic, bold, classic, strong, expensive, magical, nighttime, invulnerable, prestigious, sober, sophisticated

Charcoal Gray: professional, classic, expensive, sophisticated, solid, enduring, mature

Neutral Gray: classic, cool, sober, corporate, practical, timeless, quality, quiet, ghostly

Taupe: classic, neutral, practical, timeless, quality, basic

Silver: classic, cool, expensive, money, valuable, futuristic, regal, stately

Gold: warm, opulent, expensive, radiant, valuable, prestigious, regal, stately²⁵

²⁵ Eiseman, 63.

IMAGERY

Imagery is a design aesthetic that varies drastically with each corporation and brand. Just as with color, when choosing imagery, defining a message and the product or service itself are very important. Four-color photography, duotone photography, or black and white photography may be chosen to add to the emotional response. Textures may also be used as a source of image. Textures can be distorted images, hand-made, or computer made. Images must be appropriate for the desired experience. The images on packaging, in a store, and within advertising must enable customers to identify with a product.

STYLE

The aesthetics of shape, typography, color, imagery, and style work together to create a style for the company or brand. Style is defined as a distinctive quality or form, a manner of expression. Each aesthetic plays an important role in contributing to the style and experience. The functions of a style create brand awareness, cause intellectual and emotional stimulation, differentiate products and services, help customers categorize and relate products and services, and fine-tune the marketing strategies across target

markets.²⁶ Emotional branding relies on synesthesia in order to achieve a sense of style. The senses must be stimulated by shape, color, typography, imagery, and other senses. Each element plays a crucial role and selections should be made with specific reasoning. It is important for the style of a company to stay current and continually reflect the changing culture surrounding it. Style is very essential, because the visual and verbal components have the potential to be cues for a brand. The experience of a brand and its overall style form a relationship between the brand and the consumer that over time delivers credibility, trust, and confidence.²⁷

MATERIALS

The materials that a designer chooses to use play an important role in the effectiveness of a design. Paper choices must be made on the appropriateness of color, reaction with ink, and texture. A designer must remember that glossy papers will effect the perception of the color printed on it, because of light reflections. How the material reacts with ink is also important. For example, recycled papers do not hold ink in the same way that new papers do. Colors on recycled papers usually seem more faded. The texture of a material will have a direct impact on the sense of touch and

²⁶ Schmitt, 84.

²⁷ Recker, 2.

contribute a great deal to the overall experience through synesthesia.²⁸ The sense of touch relates heavily to the sense of sight and vice versa. If a paper feels soft, it may be perceived to look soft to the consumer. If the material is a rough textured, the consumer may read the product to be more masculine, hard, uninviting, organic, and natural. A designer must consider material choices appropriate for the communication of the brand design.

CONSUMER RESEARCH TESTING

Consumer research is the final step in the design process. Marketers and designers within a company will test the company's brand before taking it to the market in order to reduce the risk of a failure of style. This testing can be done by focus groups, interviews, or questionnaires. "The marketing community continues to investigate ways to ensure that design elements deliver the desired impression with the maximum amount of influence."²⁹ Allowing for the consumer's voice to be heard in the design process helps to identify opportunities for emotional attachments and experiences along with mitigating risks of miscommunication. Unfortunately, consumer research is not a guarantee of success. Rather, it serves marketers and designers as a tool for making informed decisions based on a variety of

²⁸ Schmitt, 105.

²⁹ Recker, 2.

input from consumers. Research must be conducted carefully and objectively with certain biases taken into consideration. One in particular is a “familiarity bias.” “Familiarity bias” is a prejudice in which consumers tend to react to what they are accustomed to.³⁰ Design, in general, often tries to push away from familiarity in order to establish a new, fresh, differentiated position. Designers and marketers will be challenged to interpret the research in order to aid the design process for the desired outcome, without completely ruining the essence of a good design.

Overall, the design process is an important, yet complicated, one. Designers must be well educated as to the effects of individual design aesthetics on the mind and experience. Forms, imagery, typography, color, and style all have a great influence on a consumer’s perception. These aesthetic elements are especially important in emotional branding where they will work together in a style to influence the consumer’s overall experience. Consumer research will then aid the designers and marketers in pinpointing whether or not the desired experience is achieved.

³⁰ Recker, 1-4.

Chapter 5: Impact of Culture

Culture is the sum total of learned beliefs, values, and customs that serve to regulate the consumer behavior of members of a particular society.

It is a key issue when designing a brand strategy. "Cultural factors influence aesthetic perceptions and preferences."¹ Not only will culture play an important role in the brand strategy process, but also in turn the strategy itself will have an effect on the culture it is viewed in. We live in a world now defined by brands, many of which are global. These brands have had an incredible impact on shaping cultures and defining personalities of societies.

In most cases, organizations and corporations aspire for a global corporate and brand positioning. These companies will state their intentions in what is called a global positioning statement in order to identify a global segment of customers and the benefits provided to this segment. In general, global positioning statements are broad and abstract, therefore providing only general guidelines for action.² Unfortunately, these statements provide little information to the designers in reference to cultural information about these segments in relationship to styles and themes. A key issue that

¹ Schmitt, Bernd and Alex Simonson with a foreword by Tom Peters. *Marketing Aesthetics; The Strategic Management of Brands, Identity, and Image*. New York: The Free Press, 1997, 259.

² Schmitt, 254-55.

the management and design team need to decipher is whether to standardize corporate and brand identity elements across nations and cultures or to localize identity elements to individual markets. In either case, culture plays an important role in contributing to aesthetic decisions of a design strategy. "The degree of difference between cultures varies widely by industry and product category."³ There are four key aspects of a market's culture that affect aesthetics and offer challenges to standardization: physical artifacts, language, values, and customs.⁴

Physical Artifacts. When you think of coffee, South America comes to mind; jade and porcelain evoke the Chinese culture. "Due to technological, political, and historical developments in different parts of the world, different cultures have created unique artifacts that serve to represent them."⁵ These artifacts, along with clothing, buildings, and printing, eventually affect the sensibilities of the individuals of the culture. It is important that there is a thorough examination of a culture's artifacts, colors, materials, and shapes in order to understand the world aesthetically as an individual of that culture would. With that understanding designers can make appropriate choices for the brand strategy. Yet, one should remember that no level of scrutiny is going to produce the exact insight and intuition of the natives of the culture.⁶

³ Schmitt, 263.

⁴ Schmitt, 254-59.

⁵ Schmitt, 259.

⁶ Schmitt, 259-260

Language. There are two main aspects of language that are main concerns when it comes to a branding strategy: semantics and writing systems.

Semantics is concerned with the meanings of words and is one of the things design professionals should pay close attention to. "Semantics can cause an otherwise fine standardization strategy to bomb, causing the organization to revert back to a localization strategy."⁷ For example, the Chinese have numerous dialects. Differences in pronunciation and visual representations can pose strong challenges. "A writing system is a key tool for expressing a corporate and brand identity in the form of corporate and brand names in conjunction with logos."⁸ The challenge for designers lies in being able to produce the same impressions with different writing systems. Over the course of history, civilization has developed three types of systems to relate a visual symbol to a language context: the alphabet (as in English), a phonetic system (as in the Japanese kana), and a logographic system (as in Chinese). The differences in these

systems have major implications for global corporate aesthetics. As an example, the Chinese system provides a different ideograph, or sign, for every word. Overall

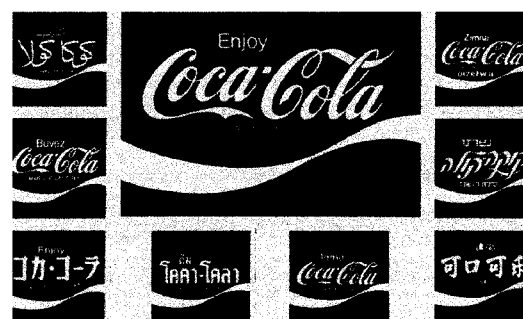


Figure 12: "Coca Cola" in Different Languages
(Marketing Aesthetics, 268).

⁷ Schmitt, 259.

⁸ Schmitt, 260.

there are over 50,000 ideographs in the system, which does not include any nonsense words or acronyms. During the past few decades, when the word "fried" became a negative attribute to Kentucky Fried Chicken, it would have been impossible to shorten the name of Kentucky Fried Chicken to KFC in China. Language may also be used to give a product a certain foreign image through contrasts in writing and pronunciations. Consider Haagen-Dazs, which is an American ice cream with a made-up foreign name.⁹

Values. Social norms, or values, are used to describe differences between nations, cultures, and societies. They are abstract and general beliefs or judgments about what is right and wrong, good and bad, and have implications for individual behavior and social, cultural, and political entities. A key value to consider when designing an aesthetic branding strategy is the degree of individualism. In the United States, individualism is stressed and looked on favorably, but in China and Japan the value of social harmony is stressed. Thus, unusual unique expressions that break the norm of design are favored more in societies that value individualism rather than collectivism. It is also important to consider the value of time. Cultures usually are distinguished by traditional time orientation or modern time orientation. Cultures that are past-oriented value tradition in design aesthetics

⁹ Schmitt, 259-260.

and design, where as future-oriented cultures are more likely to value avant-garde and futuristic design.¹⁰

Customs. Customs are part of a culture that vary widely across the world and ultimately affect the purchasing behavior of a society. Products that do not follow culture's customs can fail miserably as with the case of Gerber baby foods in Africa. Gerber followed a standardization strategy that included the placement of a "Gerber baby" face on the labels of its jars. Unfortunately for Gerber, in African regions the custom is to put an image of the contents of the jar on the label. Management teams and design teams must be in tune to these differences in cultures in order to avoid mistakes with serious consequences.¹¹

Physical artifacts, languages, values, and customs are aspects of a culture that affect two key aesthetic concerns of styles and themes. Close examination of these areas is essential for the success of a brand across cultures. The most important theme in branding is corporate and brand names, followed by colors and shapes. Styles as a whole play an important role, as each culture provides distinct styles to be looked at. Overall impressions then also contribute to the success of the global brand.

¹⁰ Schmitt, 260-1.

¹¹ Schmitt, 260.

Corporate and brand names sound different across various languages and when translated, often carry negative associations. "Most United States organizations rarely consider the linguistic complexities involved in corporate and brand naming...as a result, there have been a number of image disasters, due to inappropriate names."¹² One example is Procter and Gamble who cringed when they learned that Puffs brand tissues had an undesirable connotation in Germany. The word "puff" in German is translated to be a colloquial term for "brothel." Overall, European organizations are much more sensitive to the disparities in languages because of the number of different languages spoken on their one continent. Solutions in Asian companies are not as simple. Most companies end up with name solutions that consist of two different languages.¹³

Cultural meanings and the impact of particular colors need to be considered in any brand strategy. Certain colors have uniform meanings worldwide and can cause similar physiological responses, such as red meaning "stop" and green meaning "go." Cultures and countries also have certain colors associated with them, such as green with Irish. Yet, colors also bear strong cultural associations that lead to contrasts in perceptions and evaluations.¹⁴ They have different meanings and cultural appeals in different parts of the world. For example, pastel tones that express harmony and

¹² Schmitt, 267.

¹³ schmitt, 267.

¹⁴ Schmitt, 272-3

softness are much more appealing to the Japanese than loud bright colors. In China, red is the most appealing and luckiest of all colors, therefore frequently appearing on packaging, awnings, buses, and taxis. Blue is the most frequently used corporate color in the United States, but is considered to be a cold color in China, conveying evil and sinister.¹⁵ Companies must consider color choice very carefully in order not to disrespect any culture's perceptions of them.

Shapes play just as an important role as colors. Different forms and their associations are desirable by different cultures. Shape associations are particularly important in East Asia. "Angular shapes, associated with conflict, are often a bad choice in a culture that values harmony."¹⁶ Rounded shapes are seen as much more pleasant and acceptable. In the United States many more unique shapes are easily accepted. The aesthetics of shapes are quite powerful and should be tested prior to use in certain cultures. Designers do need creative freedom, but decisions on shapes should be rooted in cultural analysis, customer input, and managerial deliberation.¹⁷

Different cultures prefer different aesthetic styles. "Whereas the U.S. seems to be truly multi-cultural in terms of preferences along the complexity and

¹⁵ Schmitt, 273.

¹⁶ Schmitt, 274.

¹⁷ Schmitt, 274.

representational dimensions, there are other parts of the world where there seem to be a more pronounced preference for certain styles of overall representations. "¹⁸ Preferences of styles fall within four categories of complexity and representation of visual arts: minimalist realism, ornamentalist realism, minimalist abstraction, and ornamentalist abstraction. Minimalist realism includes design that prefers Pop art and Functionalism.

Ornamentalist realism is a style that prefers Impressionism and Art Nouveau. Minimalist abstraction style prefers Constructivism and Bauhaus design. Last, ornamentalist abstraction prefers Abstract painting and Postmodern design. Different cultures tend to prefer one of these four categories of style; for example, South American cultures prefer ornamentalist realism. Therefore, packaging of Brahma, a Brazilian beer and soft-drink company, is composed of colorful, complex, and realist imagery. In contrast, European styles tend to be more simple, minimal, and abstract.

Mediterranean cultures prefer realism and less minimalism; the Middle East is characterized by ornamental and abstract styles, and Africa by minimalist realism. Overall, Asian cultural preferences on style are ornamental and realist, relating to their cultural values of expression and decoration. North American countries are much more widely accepting of different styles and really spread over all four categories.¹⁹

¹⁸ Schmitt, 274.

¹⁹ Schmitt, 112-18, 276-7.

The overall impression of a brand theme is key to obtaining a relationship with customers. As stated earlier, successful themes in Asian regions focus on harmony and affiliation, giving the overall impression of collectiveness. In the West, overall impressions will come from themes that focus more on independence and other individualistic values. In all cultures and countries, domain-specific themes and overall impressions can be found. "Clearly, these specific themes and their aesthetic representations are reflective of broader cultural values, such as the roles of men and women, and indicative of the relationship of human beings to their surrounding environments."²⁰ Organizations must respect these cultures and their preferences in order to establish a trust with their consumers, which will ultimately establish a foundation for the longevity of the brand and in turn, the brand's influence on the culture.

Just as cultures have an influence on brands, so too, brands have an influence on cultures. In the beginning of the life of a brand to establish a relationship, the organization tries to establish a culture around the brand.²¹ For example, Ben and Jerry's ice cream has created a culture of hippie-era values and activism; Starbucks promotes its coffee products as a lifestyle. Companies like these use their values to their benefit in their advertising collateral, actively supporting charities and community events to create a

²⁰ Schmitt, 278.

²¹ Recker, John and Jerry Kathman. "The Role of COnsumer Research in the Brand Design Process," *Design Management Journal* 12, no. 3, 1.

positive image and bond with their consumers. The outcome of this strategy is strong customer loyalty. But, a brand, more than producing a culture of all its own, ultimately affects and shapes the cultures in which it operates.

Over the past decades, with the increasing number of brands on the market, there has been the creation of a consumer culture. "Consumer cultures, as I understand them, are those in which there has been a great expansion (some might say a veritable explosion) of commodity production, leading to societies full of consumer goods and services and places where these consumer goods and services can be purchased."²² These cultures drive individuals to obtain as much as possible and consume more and more. These consumer cultures have had negative effects in the fact that they drive over-consumption by the lust of consuming products and displaying them as a means of demonstrating success and worthiness. They have now become aestheticized and sexualized to bring a great deal of pleasure. Mike Featherstone, an author and researcher of consumer culture and post-modernism writes,

Rather than unreflexively adopting a lifestyle, through tradition or habit, the new heroes of consumer culture make lifestyle a life project and display their individuality and sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance and bodily dispositions they design together into a lifestyle. The modern individual within consumer culture is made conscious that he speaks not only with his clothes,

²² Berger, Arthur Asa. *Ad, Fads, and Consumer Culture: Advertising's Impact on American Character and Society*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000, 23.

but also with his home, furnishings, decoration, car and other activities, which are to be read and classified in terms of the presence and absence of taste. The preoccupation with customizing a lifestyle and a stylistic self-consciousness are not just to be found among the young and the affluent; consumer culture publicity [advertising] suggests that we all have room for self-improvement and self-expression whatever our age or class origins.²³

This evolution of consumer culture has paved the way for the development of the “branded individual” and loss of personality. The “branded individual” is a person who will only purchase a brand name product in order to create an image of him/herself for others and to reinforce his/her assumed identity. It has caused a loss of individualism and character.²⁴ This idea of a “branded individual” can extend beyond the individual to the loss of individualism in cultures. Brands that take a standardization approach to global brands seem to disrespect the personality of individual areas of a nation. For example, McDonald’s signage appears the same across the whole United States and North America. This seems to disregard the fact that in different areas of the country, such as the Southwest, there is a huge population and culture that is Mexican and Native American. These areas have a distinct style of art and customs that could be utilized to enhance design of organizations in these areas to relate better to the individuals that live in them. Instead, McDonald’s chooses to use a standard of branding probably to save money. Does it work? Yes, McDonald’s still is the leader in fast food, but is it right? Does becoming a brand leader justify the loss of individualism?

²³ Berger, 49.

²⁴ Berger, 23-4.

This moral conflict poses a serious issue for designers to consider beyond just designing for different cultures around the globe, but within a culture itself.

The future of design in branding depends on establishing a relationship with its consumers and an emotional tie to create loyalty. Taking advantage of uniqueness of areas will be key in establishing an emotional connection to people of different areas within cultures. Not only will it build a lasting relationship, but it will also fulfill and respect the differences of people and cultures around the world. Designers must conduct adequate research and make appropriate aesthetic decisions for brands in order to achieve this. The individuality of the world and cultures we live in depends on it.

In conclusion, culture's impact on branding, and vice versa, is enormous. Appropriate research is necessary in order to establish a brand that will be successful in many cultures and nations. Cultural factors contribute to designer's aesthetic decisions of a brand on many levels. In turn, a brand can also have an impact on a culture and nation. The challenge lies in finding a medium between how much a culture should influence a brand and how much a brand should influence a culture.

Chapter 6: Educational Field Study

This is a clinical study of a senior graphic design class at the University of Cincinnati developing a Visual Language System embodying the characteristics of The History of the Arts in Cincinnati. The client and partner for the class is The School for Creative and Performing Arts. The class has attempted to make an emotional connection with their audience. Using this concept, a visual language has been developed as pictorial continuity to link a variety of applications and uses, which may include printed, electronic, and three-dimensional functions. The visual language system is relevant, unique, legible, and engaging. Elements of the system are: format (grid), color, form, type, photo, icon, and texture.

Week 1

The first step before the visual language system was even discussed or approached was research. The client came in for a meeting and discussed the needs of the project and presented materials to give the students an idea of what kind of arts, time periods, and movements are going to be featured. Various handouts were given to the students.

Week 2

The students' next step was discussing what elements make up a Visual

Language System and issues that must be discussed concerning the system and the theme. Each element was discussed in detail and afterward, groups were formed based on the students' interests to further research, develop, and conclude a reasonable solution. The first area discussed was the format or grid. Issues brought to attention were: a growing grid implying the sequence of history, a standard size grid implying equal hierarchy, Cincinnati and the geographical grid, and plainly varying the size of the grid. Color was discussed next. Students brought ideas of different colors for different categories of arts (using colors as identifiers), one dominant overall color, and also primary and secondary palettes. The third area discussed was type. Issues raised were: using two fonts—one to identify historical arts and one to identify contemporary arts, choosing a font with a full range, and using fonts to code time. The students recognized that they needed a classic look that considered quality, clarity, size, and legibility. Imagery was discussed next. Students thought that no style of photography could be pin-pointed because they are covering a time span of two hundred years. They just established that until further investigation, photography should be chosen and used in appreciation of the arts in Cincinnati and respect for the subject matter. The students discussed the element of texture with apprehension. Again, as with photography, they felt that a style could not be established quite yet. They did feel that there were going to be many layers and three-dimensional textures. The idea of creating a

library of textures from which decisions could be made was well liked.

Overall, students thought the textures should recognize primary attributes of the arts. The last area discussed by the students was icons. Ideas for icons for each category and time periods were discussed.

After this initial discussion, groups were formed for all elements, except imagery. Students worked in their groups outside of class. Then, each class period was used to discuss their research and decisions on what would be appropriate for the project. A visual system was to be completely resolved by the fourth week of class. At this time the class also put together a list of adjectives they wanted the project to represent and put forth a goal for themselves. The adjectives included respectful, fun, revealing, clever, unique, and timeless. The goal was, "an engaging exhibition celebrating Cincinnati's creative history." Through this exhibit they hoped to establish an emotional relationship with their viewer in order to produce a connection with the history of arts.

Week 3

The class decided to define categories as a way of organizing some of the information and as a tool for design organization. The categories that were defined were: Architecture and Design, Music, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Literature, and Film and Broadcast. The elements of the visual system

were then discussed further in respect to these categories and some final decisions were made. The texture group seemed to be having some unresolved issues concerning how textures are discerned from objects, patterns, and photography. The icon group also seemed to lack a defined direction and there even seemed some ambiguity about what their goal was. Color was more defined, but the class was split many ways as to what direction to take. Type was narrowed and a final decision was reached. The grid would be looked at again.

Texture. The group's goal was to end up with a library of textures organized by the defined categories. Most of what was presented was photographic texture. A question was raised about whether these photographs were actually texture or just images. The solution to this was to create a photography group. A student began looking at basic paint on a canvas,

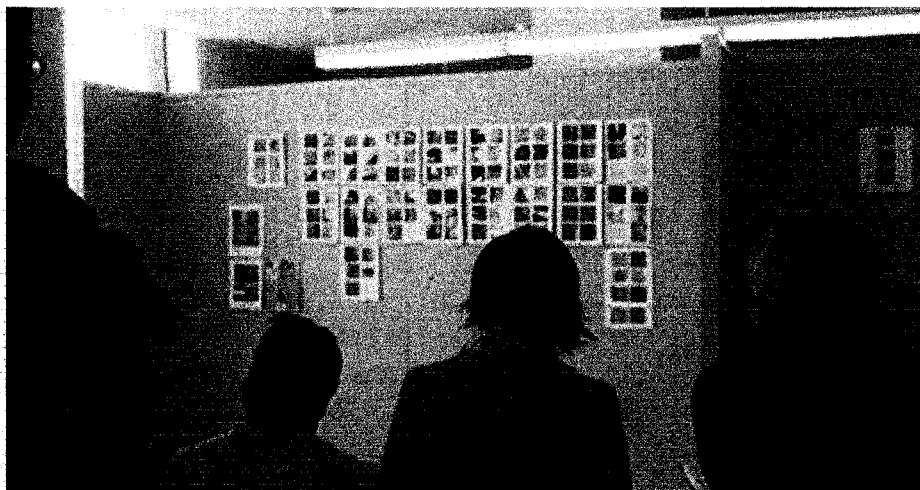


Figure 13: Texture Study

which brought forth some other ideas. These ideas included hand-drawn textures, rubbings, and distorted photography. These textures would create a more sensual feel. The class voted to continue to brainstorm a list from which hand rubbings could be made and scanned into the computer.

Icons. The icon group also seemed to be unable to make any decisions or have a defined direction. The discussion of the categories and possible resolutions helped the group get motivated and have an idea of where to go next. There was an overall sense of wanting to provide the viewer something more than a mere representation. The class discussed developing a

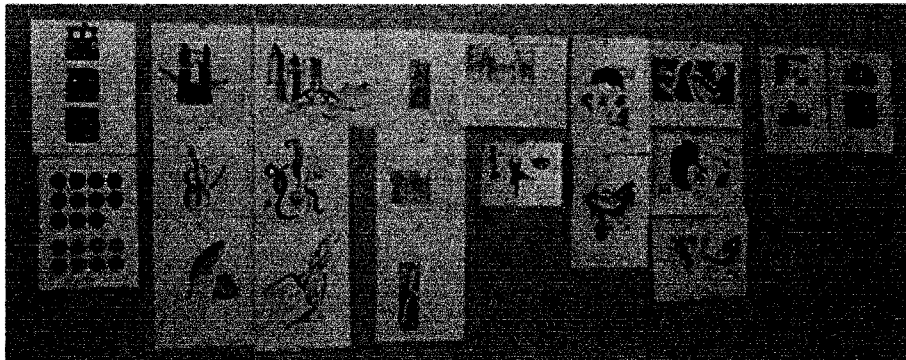


Figure 14: Icon Sketches

humanizing element or emotional element in the icons to enhance the meaning and application. An example of this would be somehow to incorporate hands into each icon or to show the sense that was involved in the experience of each category. The hands idea overall was complex, but the

icons were a little hard to read. The photographic approach to the emotional left the class feeling again the need for a purely photography group and then a group of very literal icons. Group members seemed frustrated and passed ideas and files off to other classmates to work on.

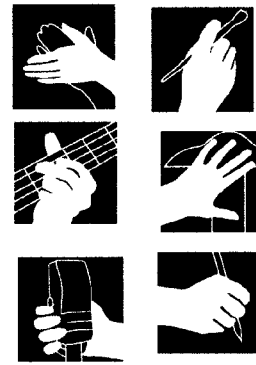


Figure 15: Final Icons

Color. The color group seemed more on track with a few distinct directions. The overall feeling was that they wanted a palette that was festive

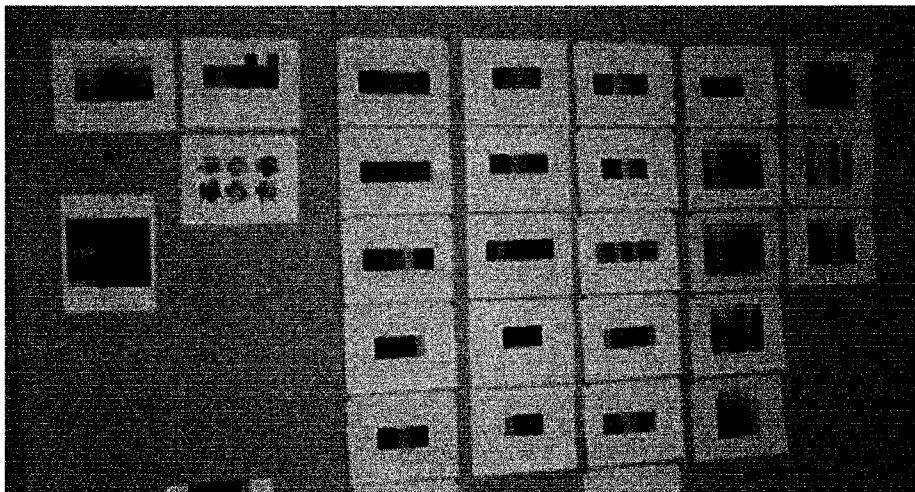


Figure 16: Color Studies

and energetic more than somber. They wanted to communicate the emotions associated with the list of adjectives that were defined with The History of the Arts in Cincinnati. The class narrowed the palettes down to

three directions and proceeded to investigate those directions, especially where the color black was going to be employed. The three palettes were quite different from each other and there was a sense that the group really needed to look at the overall message and what would be appropriate for the application. The group came back later in the week with two distinct palettes to choose from. One consisted of 5 colors including black and the other six colors including black. The class overall liked the first palette that consisted of six colors including black, but the issue was raised that it lacked a hue of blue. Eventually, the group took the blue that was chosen for the second palette and added it to the first to create a complete resolved palette.



Figure 17: The History of the Arts in Cincinnati Final Color Palette

Type. The type group had a good sense of what direction they wanted to take with the fonts. It was established that there would be two typefaces: one serif, one sans-serif. The serif typeface would portray elegance and more of a historic feel. The sans-serif typeface would give a more modern feel. Serif typefaces the group considered were Bembo, Centaur,

Garamond, and Caslon.

The sans-serif typefaces the group considered were Univers, Trade Gothic, and Avenir. The typefaces were studied in different pairs, in different sizes,

weights, styles, and colors. After some arguing and many votes, the final decision was for Garamond and Avenir. These two typefaces allowed for variety, sophistication, and heirarchy.

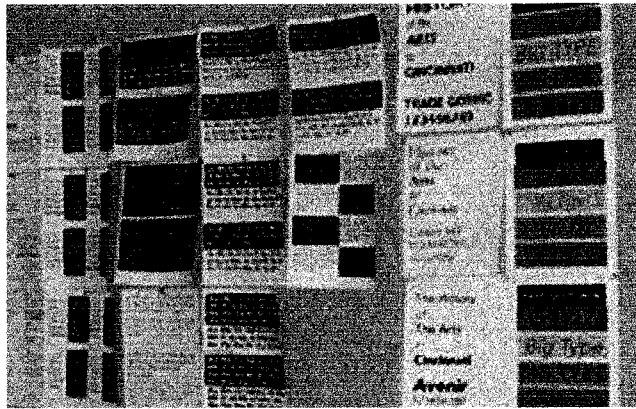


Figure 18: Typography Studies

Grid. The class was presented with two different grid ideas. Both were based on a double square format. The first grid had gutters every fourth square with an overlying wave pattern. It was shown also with a double wave pattern. The second grid was the double square grid with an overlay of perfect circles and drawn diagonals. The idea of a wave pattern was well liked by the class with the connection to the seven hills of Cincinnati and it being the river city.

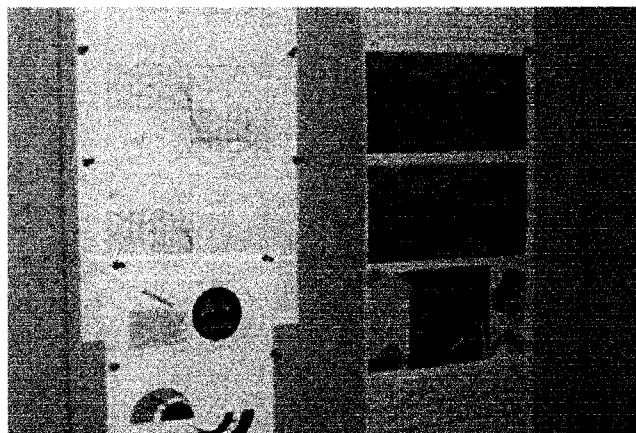


Figure 19: Grid Studies

This would establish a connection between the viewer and the geography of Cincinnati. The class decided that they would use the double square grid with the gutter every fourth square in conjunction with the overlying perfect circles. This would allow for flexibility and would allow an individual to create his/her own wave pattern that would be based on perfect circles and his/her own diagonals that would be based on a defined angle measurement. Overall, the grid is just a functional tool for layout and it would be up to each student's implementation as to how effectively it was used.

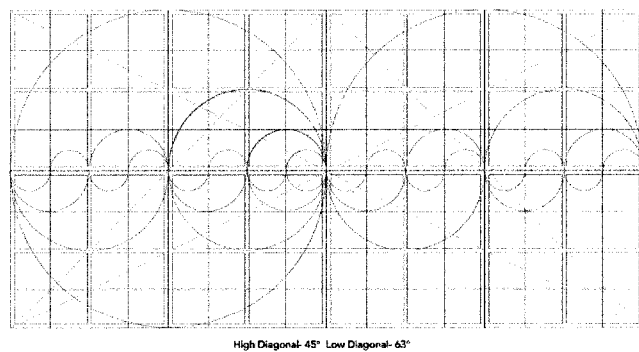


Figure 20: Final Grid

Weeks 4–10

The class presented final decisions about the visual language. Each student also chose a topic and proposed a design idea, such as a book or brochure, to research and apply the Visual Language System to. The rest of the quarter consisted of the application of the Visual Language System to individual projects.



Figure 21: The Cotton Club Poster Series
Designer: Sepi Alavi

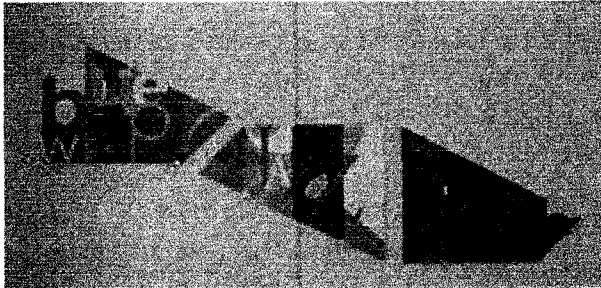


Figure 22: The Blue Whisp Poster Series
Designer: Angie Crowder



Figure 23: The Pig Gig Poster Series
Designer: Cassie Bell

Spring Quarter

During this third quarter, senior graphic design methodology classes from the first quarter and second quarter join together to design the History of the Arts in Cincinnati exhibit. The first quarter consisted of developing a Visual Language System in the same manner as the class that I observed during second quarter. Both Visual Language Systems developed were studied and a third system, comprised of the first two, was created. The Visual Language System was then applied to design a timeline exhibit of the History of the Arts in Cincinnati. This exhibit design was created and executed by both design methodology classes collectively. The goal of the exhibit is to communicate the information in a manner that is respectful of history, inviting viewers to explore, and creating a lasting emotional impression. The first few weeks were used to establish the standards of the visual system and 3-D forms for the exhibit. The class was broken into production and design teams in order to distribute the amount of work evenly for all students.

Fast-paced decision making in the first few weeks produced a Visual Language System consisting of the following: 6-color palette plus black, two typefaces, a grid system, and an icon system. The color palette consisted of red, blue, teal, yellow, purple, green, and black. It was a combination of the two quarters' previous color palettes. The six colors correspond to the

six categories of the content. These include Architecture and Design (red), Music (blue), Broadcasting and Film (teal), Writing (yellow), Theatrical Arts (purple), and Visual Arts (green). Black would be used as an accent color. The grid chosen was the same grid that the winter quarter Design Methodology class used for their earlier individual projects. It was based on a double square and allowed for curves and diagonals. Type studies were looked at in order to decide on new fonts. The group wanted a serif and a sans-serif typeface in order to allow for more contrast and options. Garamond was chosen as the serif typeface and Myriad was chosen as the sans-serif typeface. The icons from the winter quarter were refined for this Visual Language System. The overall concept of human interaction, represented by the hand, was kept, but the shapes were redesigned to become more elegant and understandable. These icons appealed to the emotional triggers involved in producing the arts. A production group labeled the "standards" group looked closely at the Visual Language System and made further detailed decisions about color usage, type sizes, and how the grid was implemented. Throughout the quarter they checked the design teams layouts for cohesiveness within the entire exhibit.



Figure 24: Final Color Palette for The History of the Arts in Cincinnati Exhibit

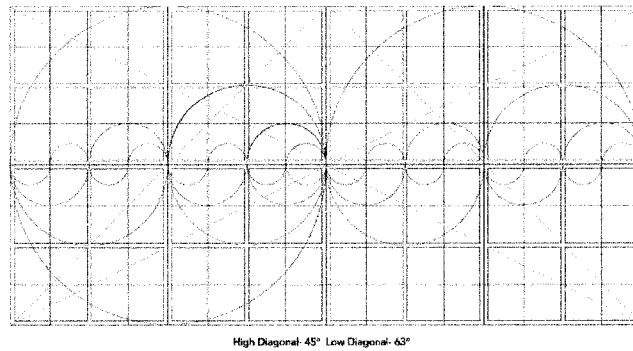


Figure 25: Final Grid for The History of the Arts in Cincinnati Exhibit

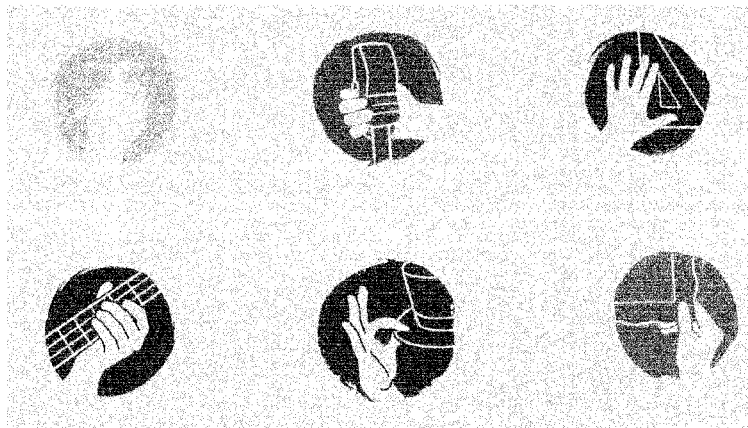


Figure 26: Final Icons for The History of the Arts in Cincinnati Exhibit

The group was given a huge amount of content to organize and research. Content and editing were areas of major concern. The content needed to be short enough to not overwhelm the viewers, but long enough to include all of the history and have an impact on the viewer. Small groups handled the content in the different categories in order to research, organize, and edit it carefully. They wanted to include all of the significant people and

events of the past two hundred years of the arts in Cincinnati. The group also wanted to include a general timeline of world events to give the arts information a context. This would also establish an emotional time frame of the information for the viewer. The middle few weeks of the quarter were spent on the design phase. The class was broken into six design groups: Film and Broadcast, Theatrical Arts, Visual Arts, Literature, Architecture and Design, and Music. Each group worked with their content and 3-D form to produce a kiosk containing the timeline for their topic and a general timeline to connect their topic to the other groups and a world history timeline. Careful consideration of images and color was important for the kiosks to make an impact on the viewer and emotionally touch them and to pull them in to read about the subject. Critiques were held periodically and designs were looked at in different sized models. The standards group also proofed the designs to make sure that they followed all of the visual language decisions and standards. Once the kiosks were approved, they were sent into production and opened for public viewing at the University of Cincinnati's DAAP Works Exhibit in June, 2003.



Figure 27: Kiosk in Progress

Chapter 7: Applied Design Series Documentation

The applied design sequence of this thesis is an application of my research to a branding opportunity. Nikki P Boutique is a clothing and jewelry boutique estimated to open in early summer 2003. Owner Nicole Ponzio developed an idea for a store after having success with designing and marketing a jewelry line. The idea for the store was to showcase up-and-coming designers with a fresh, new, unique look and deliver women with an improved shopping experience that established a connection with them. Nikki P Boutique will be located in Lincoln Park, IL, part of the city of Chicago. Nikki P Boutique was in need of a branding strategy, and I found that my research could be applied with hopeful success.

I initially began researching the areas of clothing boutiques in the area that were going to be Nikki P Boutique's competition. What I found was much of the same: plain simple graphics, color, and basically no unique identifiers. There really was nothing that forced a dialogue between the women's emotions and merchandise. I definitely saw this as an opportunity to apply emotional branding to create a relationship with the target audience. Research of the target audience of the boutique was compiled. After establishing that Nikki P Boutique was primarily appealing to female young professionals 20-40 years of age, I began to look at the merchandise of

nikki p and what appeal to the target audience. I gathered research consisting of pictures, pieces of clothing, jewelry: themes that I thought would be engaging. I came to a written goal for the visual system. This goal was to engage the consumers on the level of the senses and emotions. I wanted a brand that would come to life for people and forge a deeper, lasting connection with them. Nikki P Boutique would do this through the impact of design aesthetics on human emotions.

I first wanted to develop the icons of the visual system to help create a style for myself to work with. I began sketching after looking at many samples of merchandise the boutique would carry. I spent three months just developing these icons in order for them to establish a style that would appeal to women's emotions. In the end, I ended up with nine individual icons that could be used together or individually. The nine icons represent: jewelry, shirts, pants, skirts, dresses, coats, hats, handbags, and belts. My main application of the icons will be as a tagging system for the boutique.

I wanted the icons to be fun yet sensual, classy yet contemporary, and layered yet simple. All of the icons were completed in black and white and on a square grid throughout the process. I took into consideration line weight, curves and straight lines, round and angular shapes, and size.

After seeing all of the icons together, I decided to use the square grid that

was used in the icon's development throughout my application of this branding strategy. This will make communication and hierarchy easier and provide a square theme to carry throughout my visual system. It would also make a connection between the square and the packaging box in hopes of relating the box to the excitement of a gift.

My color selection process was based on developing a series of adjectives to appeal to the senses for the message I wanted to carry through my colors.

The adjectives included: exciting, youthful, energetic, cheerful, sensual, unique, creative, expensive, classic, elegant, powerful, and pleasing. I also took into account the color selection of Nikki P Boutique's competition.

The competition's colors were different shades of pink, red, and aqua. A series of 5 colors were selected with two being a primary palette and three being a secondary palette. One of the colors would serve as an accent color and one color was chosen to be dark enough to be used for text, if applicable. I wanted this color to also hold enough weight in case, at some point in time, there was need for only a duotone print. The colors were also tested and looked at in various opacities such as 10%, 20%, etc.

After the icons were complete I began looking at typography. I did different type studies comparing serif, sans-serif, and modern fonts. I ruled out having a serif font after feeling that it implied too much of a vintage feel.

I needed a more modern and contemporary feel for the boutique. The range, legibility, and sizes of the typefaces were taken into account. I wanted a typeface that had character, but would not over-power the graphic work, especially in the logo. Only one typeface was chosen: Futura. Futura is a very balanced typeface in weight. It is a sans-serif which has a very sleek, clean, modern look. The curves of Futura are also very round and geometric. I really didn't see the need at this point to have two typefaces. I wanted the branding strategy to have a font that was completely recognizable and carried through all of the applications to create a system. I felt another sans-serif would be ambiguous. Another font may be added later in the application if necessary.

At this point I began to focus on the logo and adding color to my system of icons. I wanted to take advantage of the organic sensual shape of the dress icon in my logo. It has a very sensual appeal which I wanted to exploit it to stress a female boutique. I began sketching different possible solutions. I also began incorporating color into the logo. I primarily wanted to keep the logo a one- or two-color logo. This would keep cost down in printing and allow the logo to be transferred to black and white easily. I mainly used the dominant color with a hint of the accent color. I looked at different compositions, sizes, type weights, etc. Within the type of the logo, I wanted to establish a connection between the two words of the store

"nikki and p" and the adjective third word "boutique." My challenge lay in the formation of one complete whole of the three different words.

Meanwhile, I began adding color to the icons. My first instinct was to make the icons full of color using most of the color palette, if not the whole palette, in every icon. After printing just one, I knew that this was a mistake. The hierarchy in my icons was lost, and they looked very awkward. I began to find a connection to the logo work I had been doing. I focused on one main color from the palette to be the dominant color in the icon in contrast to white. I then added the accent color of my palette in a small amount to each icon to add a little spice and create another unifying element between all of the icons. The backgrounds were also toned down in value quite a bit from my initial attempts. This gave them a much more soft, appealing look.

The two-color logo was narrowed down and refined. A second logo was modeled in the same design manner of the first for the independent jewelry line that was also going to be sold in the Nikki P Boutique and other independent boutiques in the Chicago area. The necklace icon replaced the dress, and the word "boutique" was replaced by "jewelry." The dominant color was also switched to the dominant color of the necklace icon. This was the beginning of the establishment of a two level design system. I needed a design system for the boutique, but also one for the jewelry line.

Both lines had to be composed in the same manner to reflect the same overall emotional brand. I was going to need letterhead, business cards, envelopes, and postcard mailers for both the boutique and jewelry line.

I sketched possible business card and letterhead ideas. I wanted to use both sides of the business card to take advantage of an opportunity to apply the patterns from the icons. The one side was simply covered with the dress pattern and the other was kept quite simple with minimal typography. The jewelry business card was composed in the same manner, but again replacing the dress with the necklace. I wanted the letterhead to be clean yet a little complex. Rather than using one of the patterns from the icons, I wanted to just hint at the layering element of them. I used the grid for layout but also focused on hinting to the viewer the implication of a neckline. For the jewelry line, the letterhead layout was kept the same, as a neckline relates both to a dress and to a necklace. In this manner the stationary system then related to the actions of wearing the merchandise and the emotions associated with that action. The colors were switched to reflect the necklace logo and color scheme. The envelope was approached in the same way as the letterhead. I wanted it to reflect the patterns that were established to imply the icons that represent the boutique and jewelry line. The business card, letterhead, and envelope were all kept to two-color layouts for printing and cost purposes.

From this point I worked to refine the stationery system and begin a postcard mailer. In order to reinforce a system for the brand, I decided to utilize the layout of the letterhead and apply it to a postcard. Images were confined to areas of color on the letterhead. This allowed for enough white space to activate the typography and the layout but not overload the viewer with information. The images were kept to a duotone to relate to the color scheme and keep costs down. I choose a vertical format for the front of the postcard to allow for the layout to be utilized, but moved to a horizontal layout on the back of the postcard for practical mailing purposes. This approach was used both for the postcard for the boutique and the jewelry line and later continued into a series. Colors, images, and content changed for each postcard. This established a relationship and continuous dialect between Nikki P Boutique and its clientele.

During this time, I was also beginning to look at packaging. I wanted to reflect the square grid as much as possible in perfect square boxes. All boxes were kept strictly white in order to keep attention to the Nikki P Boutique color scheme and portray the feelings of purity, new, and untouched. Square bags were not an option, as I could not find them offered by any distributor. I choose a matte white shopping bag, in order to utilize the color scheme of Nikki P Boutique and the feelings I wanted

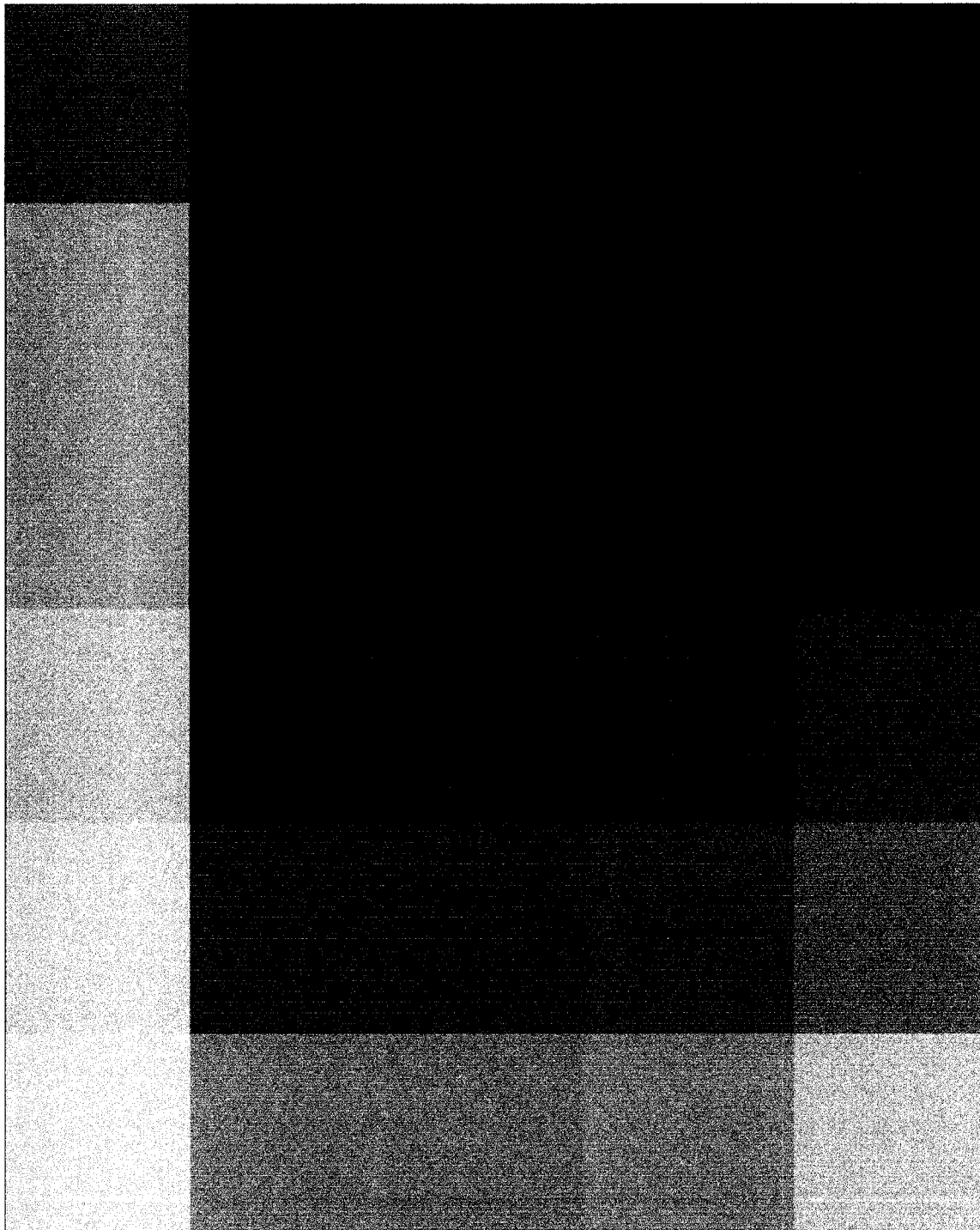
associated with white. I wanted to use my icons as decoration on the packaging. I added the Nikki P Boutique typography to each icon for application on the bags and boxes. I wanted to apply the patterns to tissue and wrapping paper along with solid color tissue and paper from the Nikki P Boutique color scheme. This would deliver the feelings of textures and fabrics associated with new clothes and merchandise.

My next main application of my system was in a graphic mural for use in decoration of the interior of Nikki P Boutique. I wanted a mural in order to establish an atmosphere in Nikki P Boutique that continued the emotional dialogue I had set up previously in my visual system and take the shopping experience to a higher level for the shopper. Images, vibrant colors, shapes, layers, texture, and typography comprise my mural. I associated the verbs wish, dream, and desire with each one of the posters in order to establish a dialogue with the viewer to evoke emotions.

The graphic work for Nikki P Boutique was also explained and showcased in a style guide. The intention for the style guide is to aid future designers in the application of the Nikki P Boutique visual system. It explains each element of the visual system, the implementation and restrictions of them, and examples of how they are applied correctly. The style guide also explains the Nikki P Boutique story and mission, which gives context for the designs.

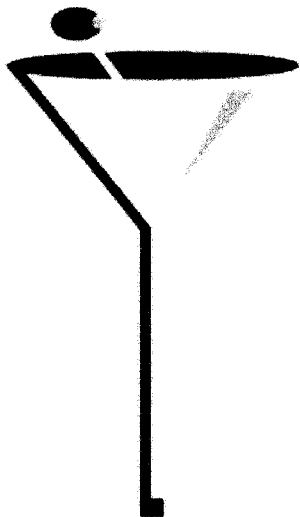
I feel that I have accomplished a great deal with this visual system. I have justification for every decision and design produced. The Nikki P Boutique and jewelry brands will have longevity by connecting to viewers through emotional triggers. The emotional triggers are in perceptual influences of forms, colors, typography, imagery, materials, and words. The visual system and applied design series are also an example of how emotional branding can be implemented in a simplistic way. The graphics and layout are not over-bearing or complicated. Design elements were used carefully, allowing for the space to activate the typography and images. It leaves room for viewer exploration and emotional reactions. The consumers will sense and feel emotions through the design. The design, in turn will allow the consumer to think and produce dialogues between aesthetics, merchandise, and themselves. This in turn will allow the consumer to act on their emotions and thoughts, ideally in the act of purchasing. Over time, the design and Nikki P Boutique will become part of the consumer's lifestyle. The consumer's will relate how they feel when viewing the designs and shopping at Nikki P Boutique to establish Nikki P as a strong emotional brand.

Nikki P Boutique Color Palette

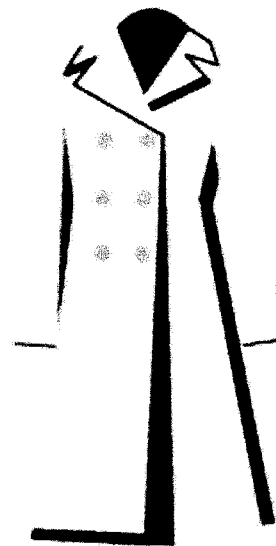


Pantone 129 Pantone 282 Pantone 2758 Pantone 275 Pantone 513

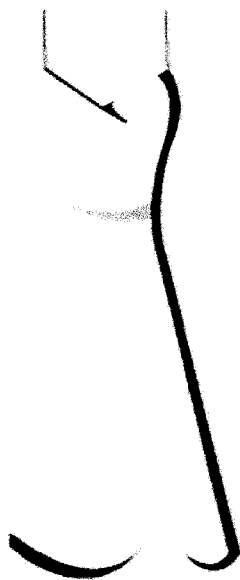
Icon System (shapes only)



Home



Outerwear

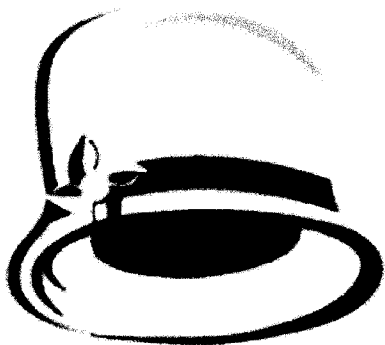


Dresses

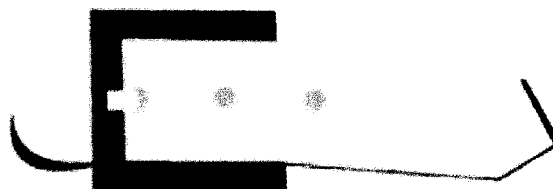


Handbags

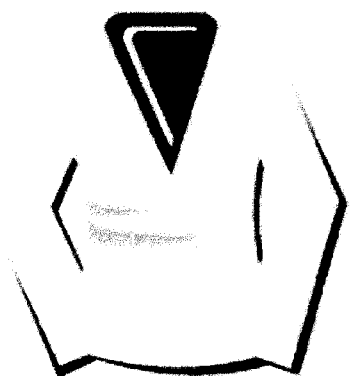
Icon System (shapes only)



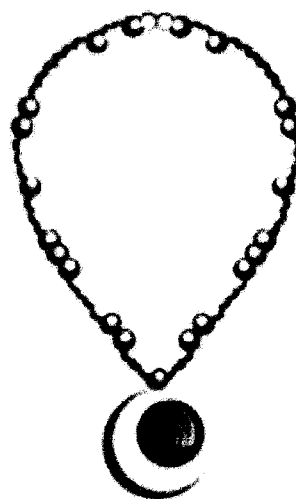
Hats



Belts/Belt Buckles

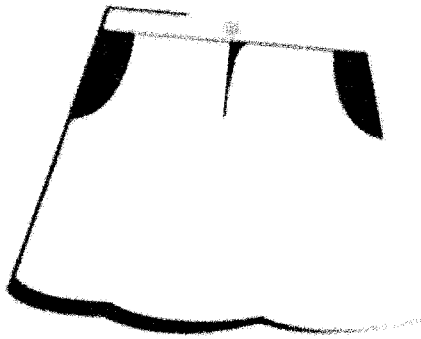


Shirts/Blouses



Jewelry

Icon System (shapes only)

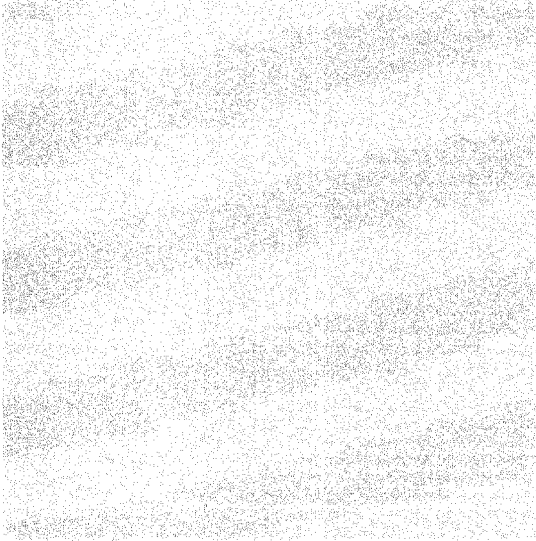


Skirts

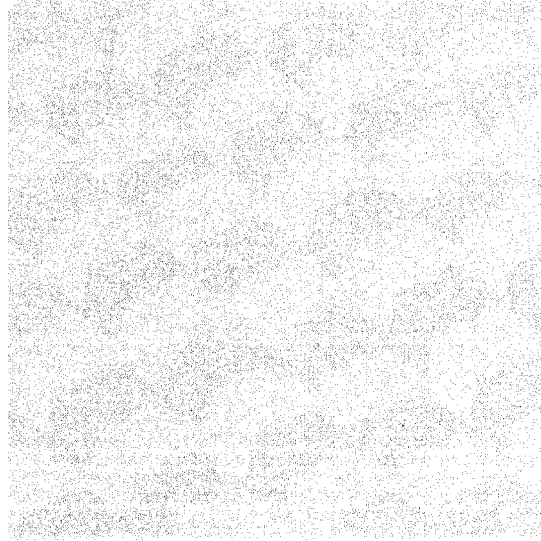


Pants

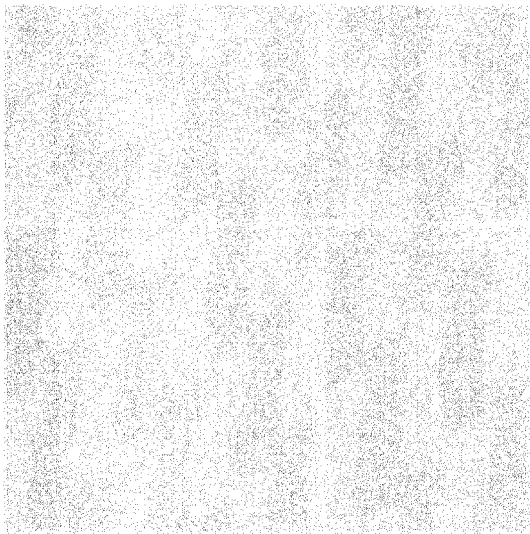
Patterns



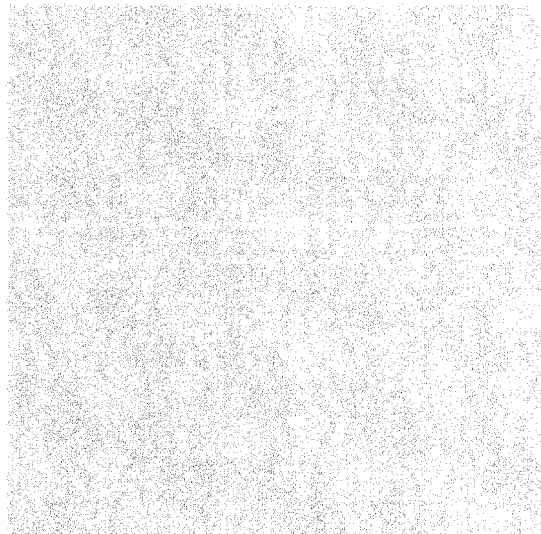
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Outerwear

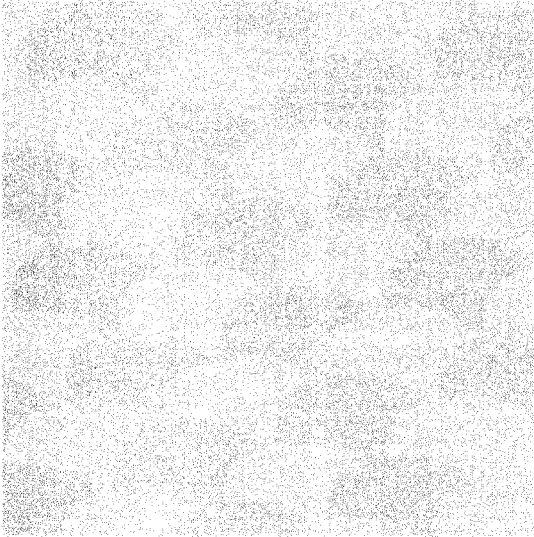


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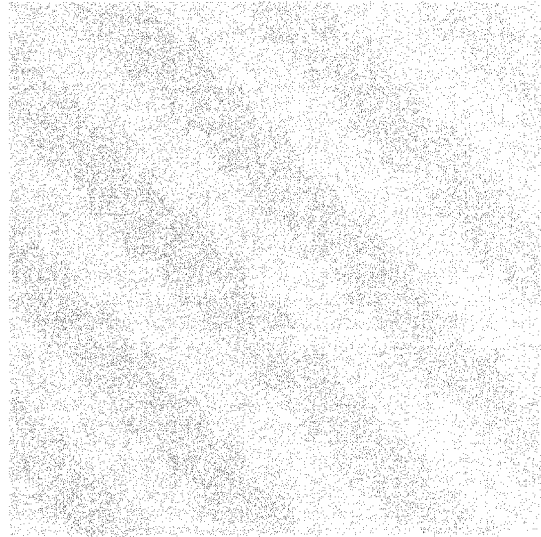


Handbags

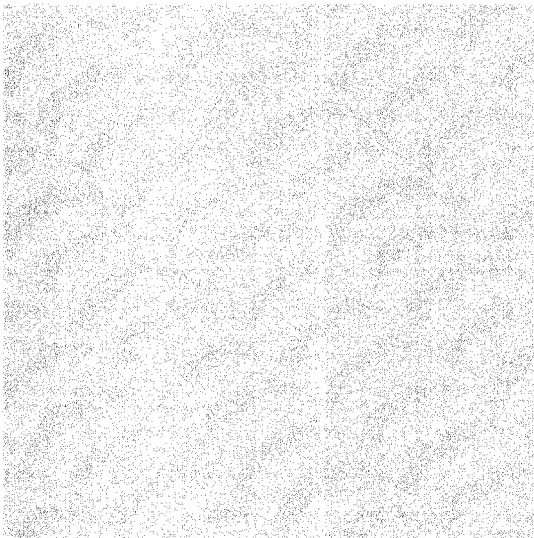
Patterns



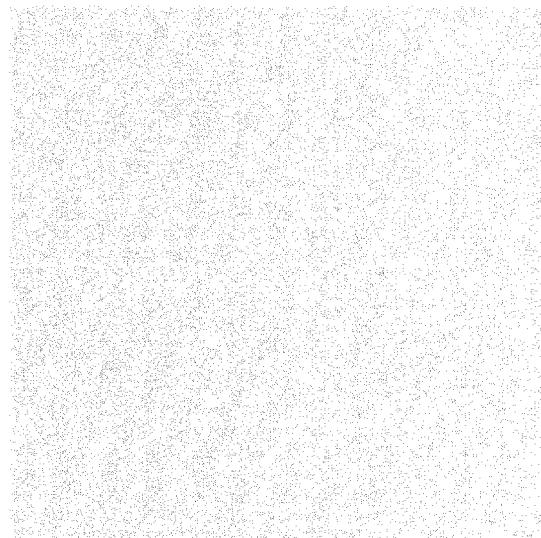
Hats



Belts/Belt buckles

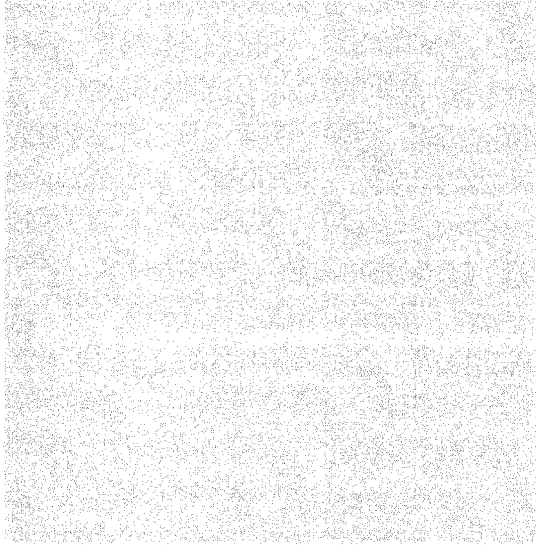


Shirts/Blouses

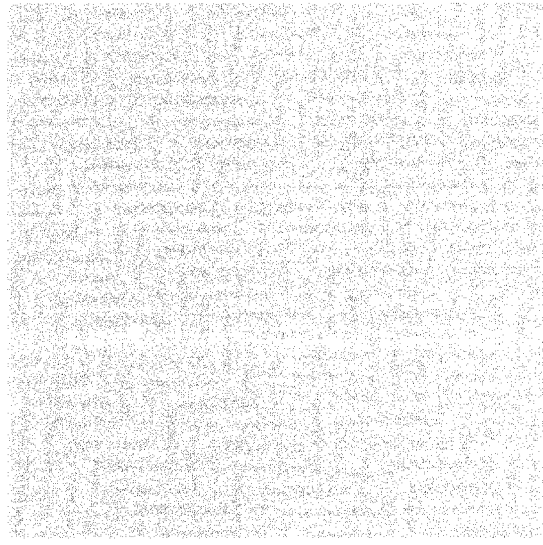


Jewelry

Patterns



Skirts



Pants

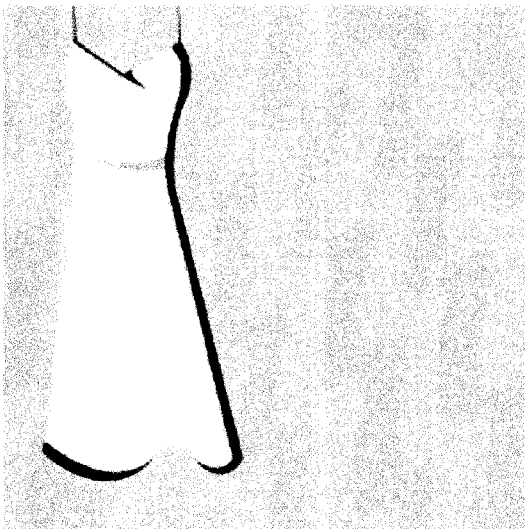
Complete Icon System (shapes and patterns)



Home



Outerwear

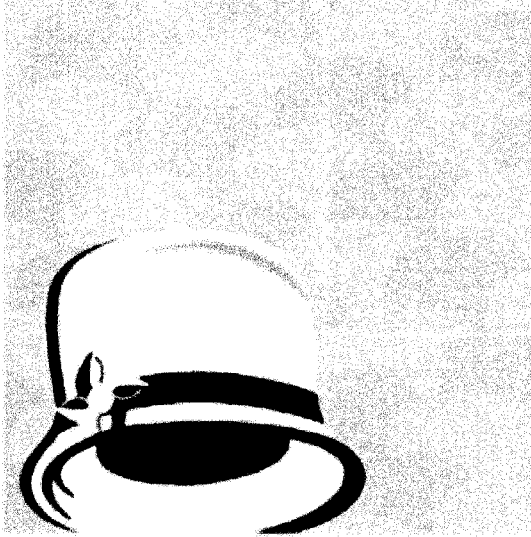


Dresses

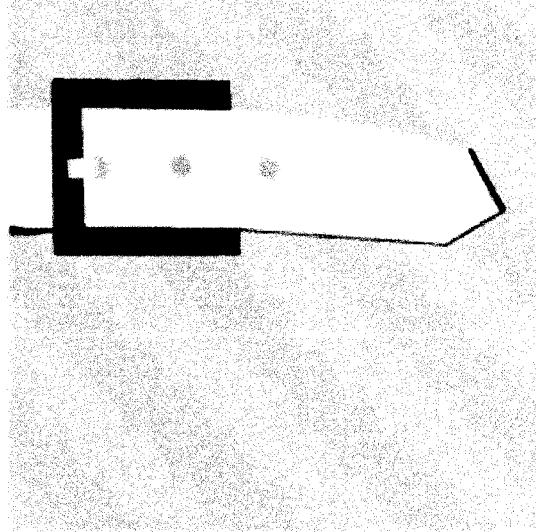


Handbags

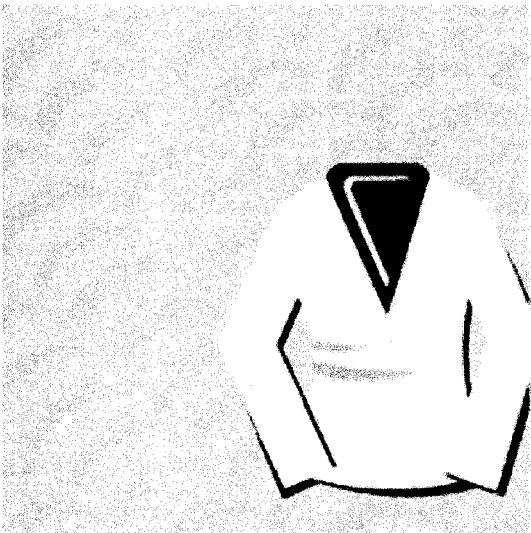
Complete Icon System (shapes and patterns)



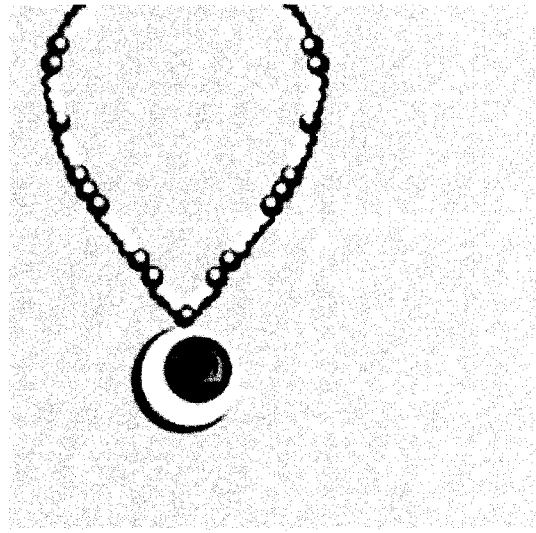
Hats



Belts/Belt buckles

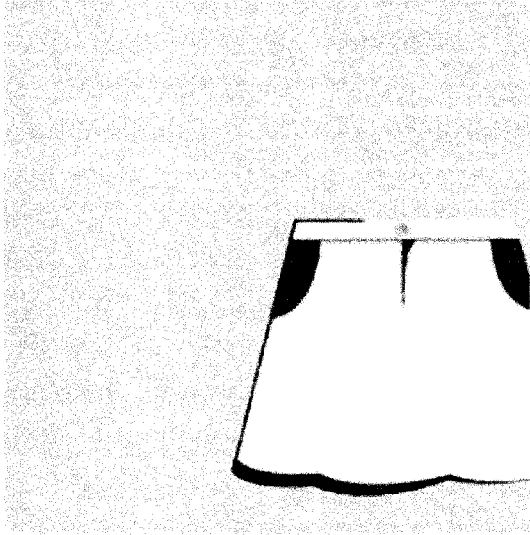


Shirts/Blouses

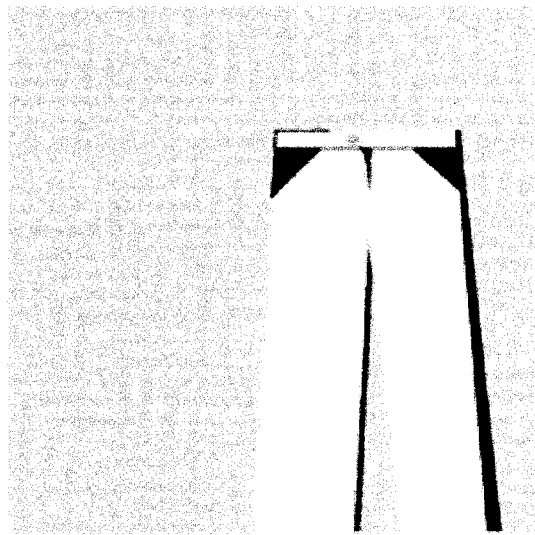


Jewelry

Complete Icon System (shapes and patterns)



Skirts



Pants

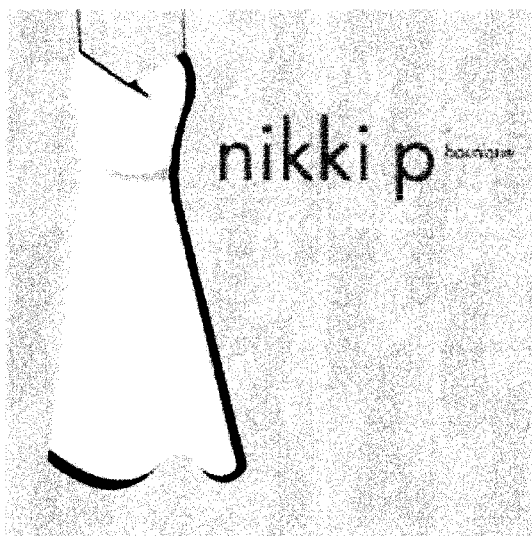
Icon System (packaging and tagging)



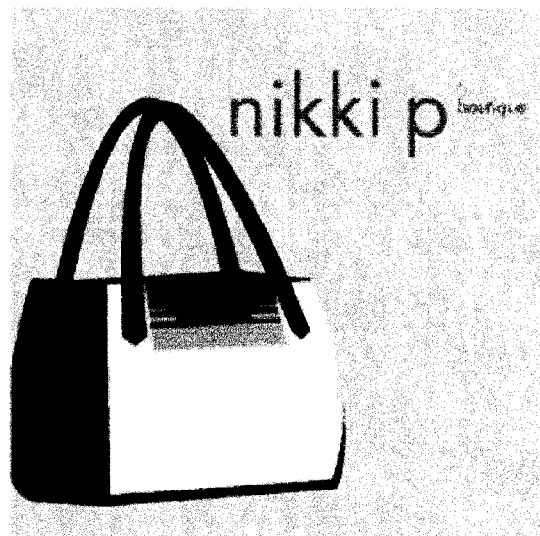
Home



Outerwear

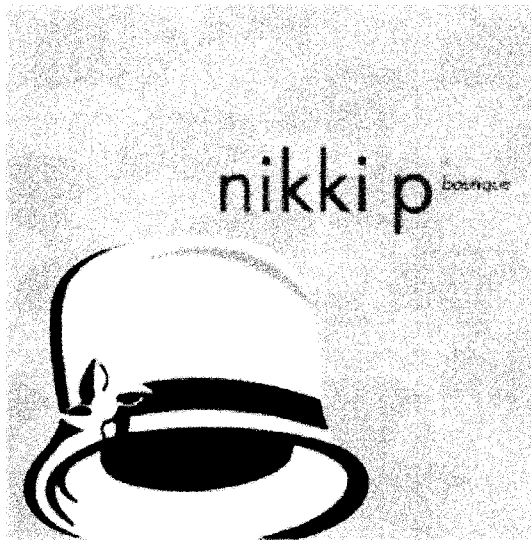


Dresses

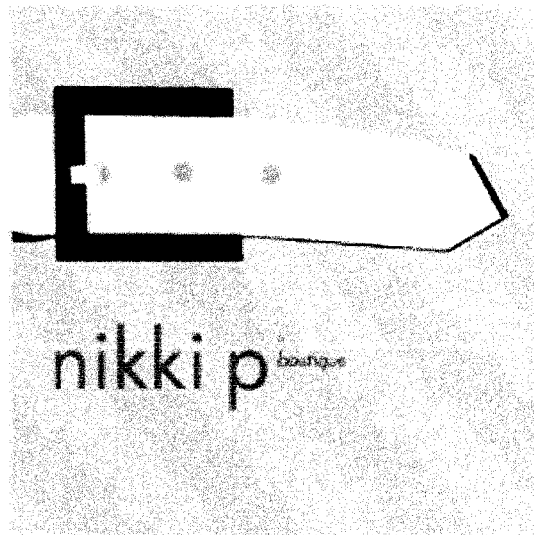


Handbags

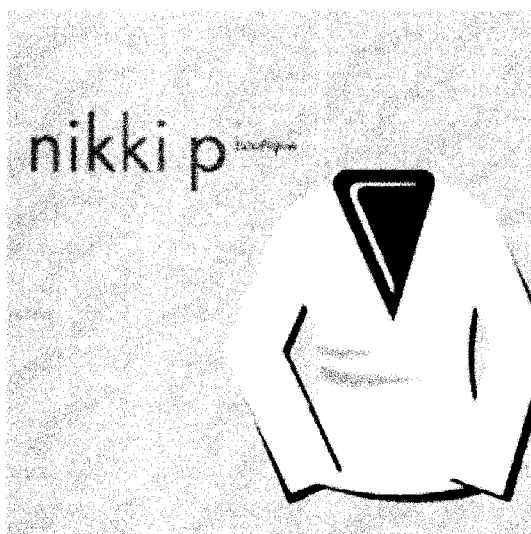
Icon System (packaging and tagging)



Hats



Belts/Belt buckles



Shirts/Blouses

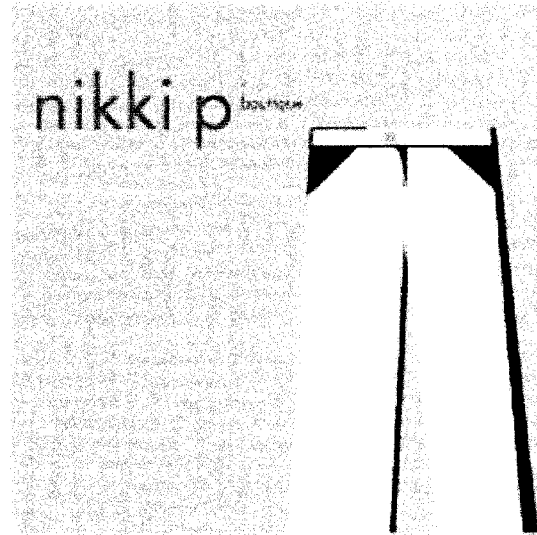


Jewellery

Icon System (packaging and tagging)



Skirts

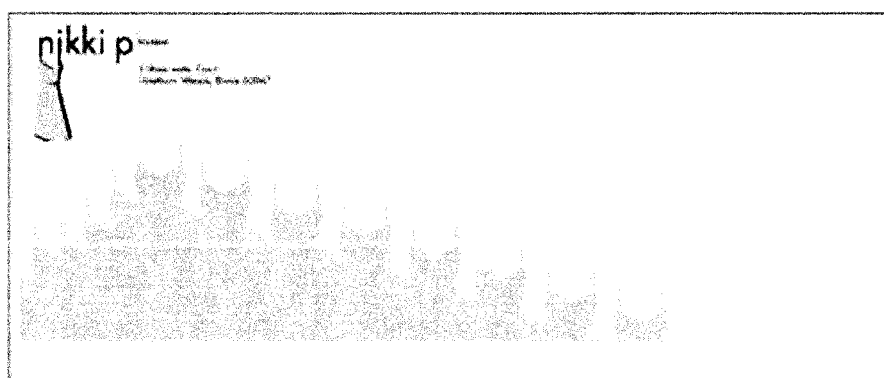
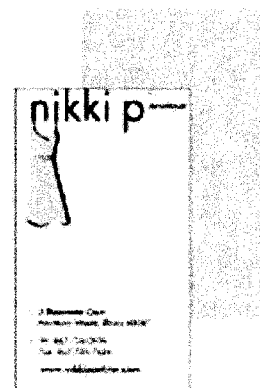
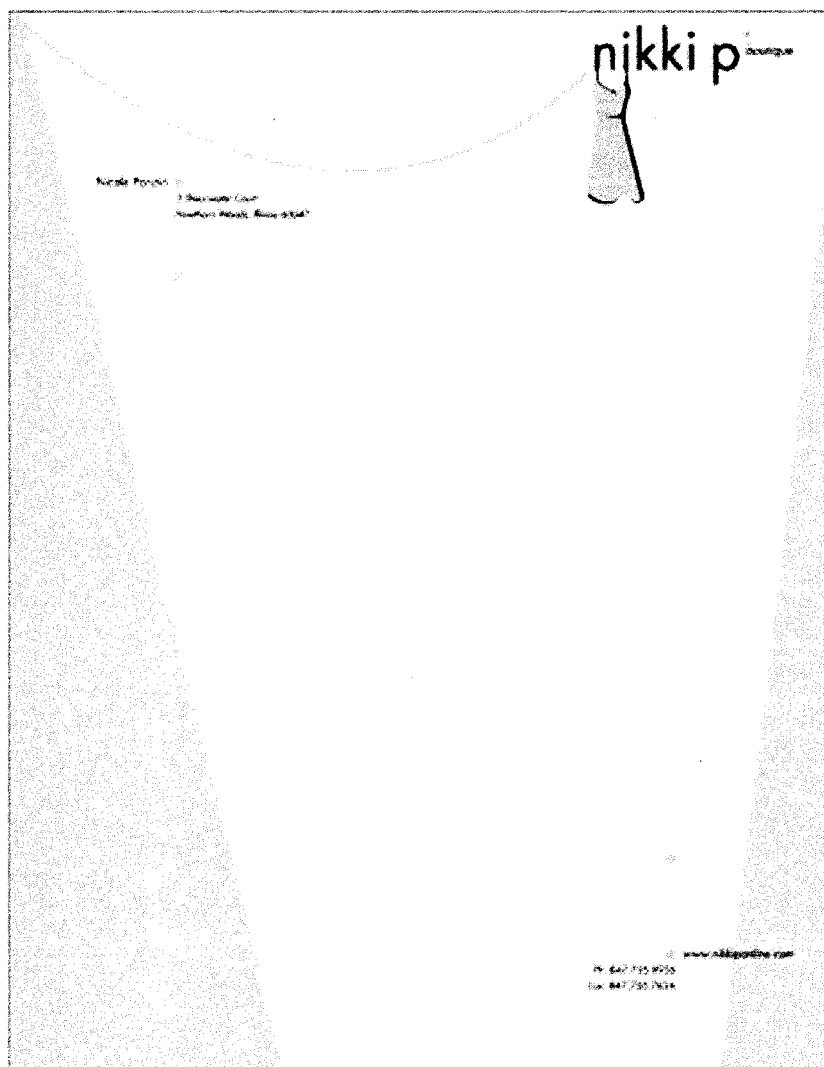


Pants

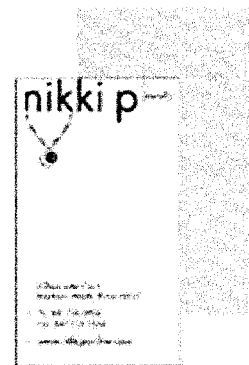
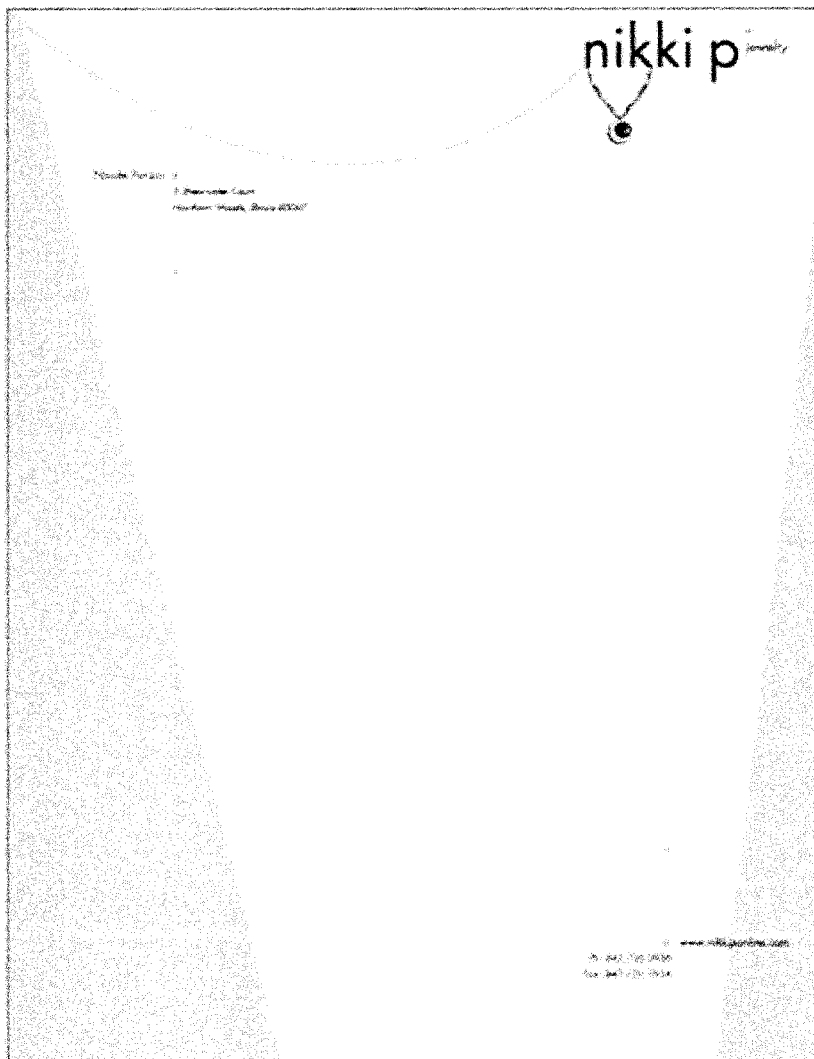
Logos



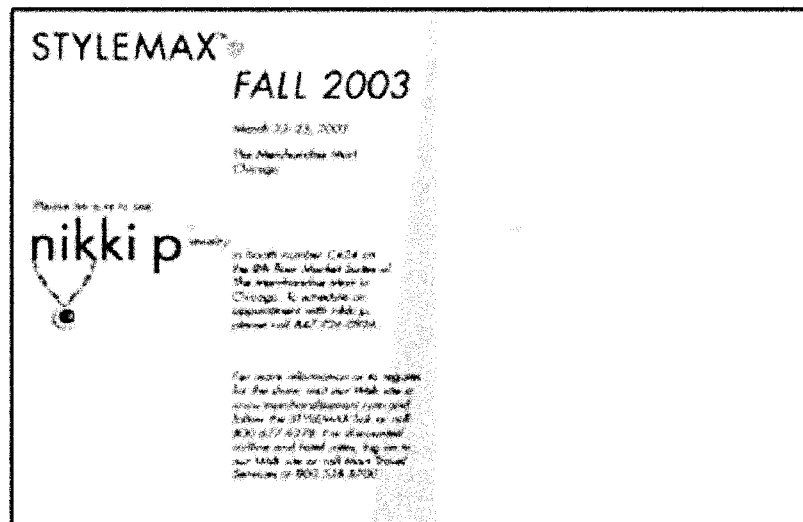
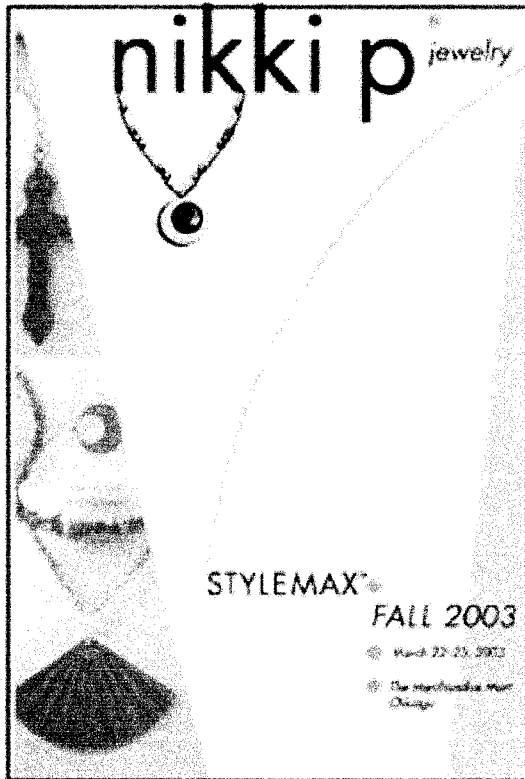
Nikki P Boutique Stationery System



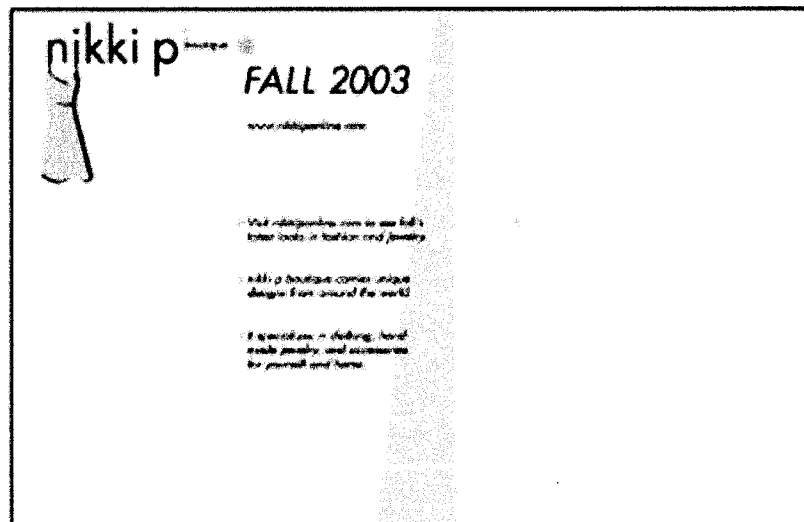
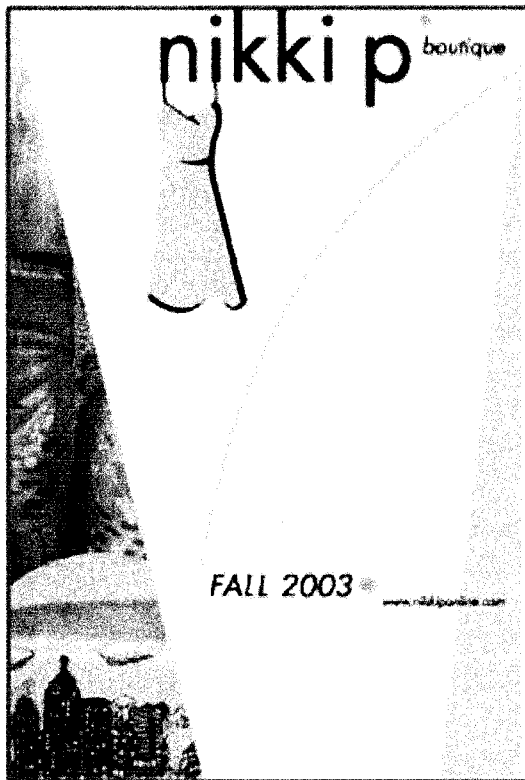
Nikki P Jewelry Stationery System



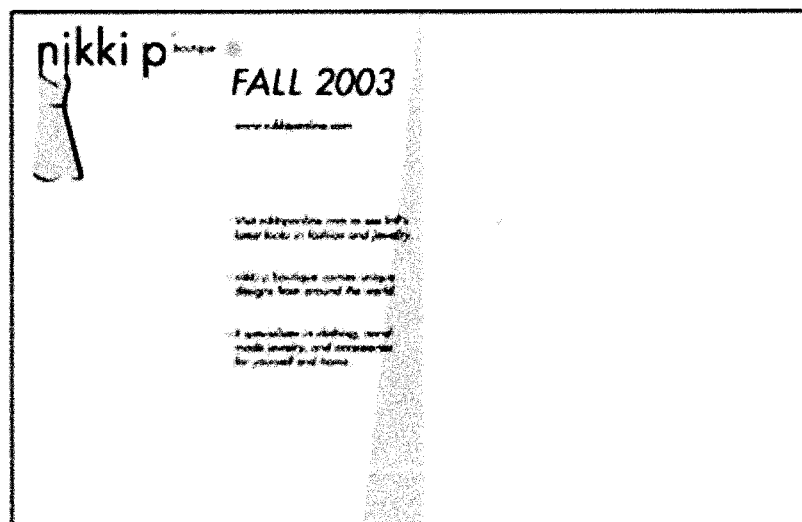
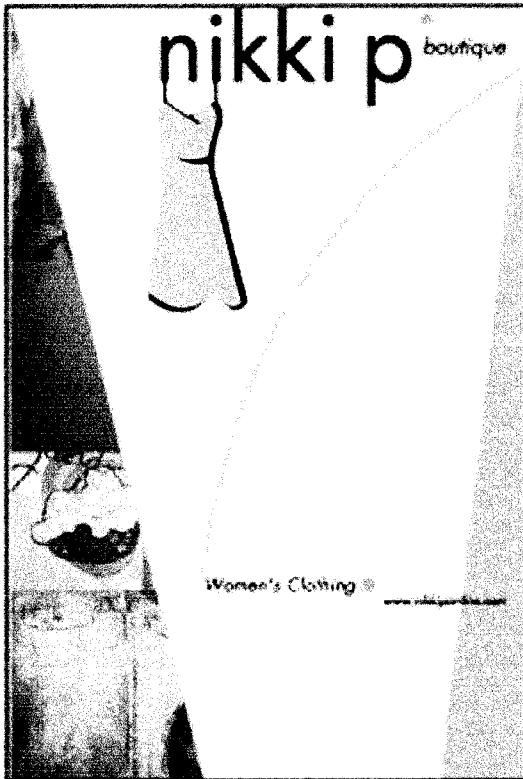
Postcard Mailer (duotone)



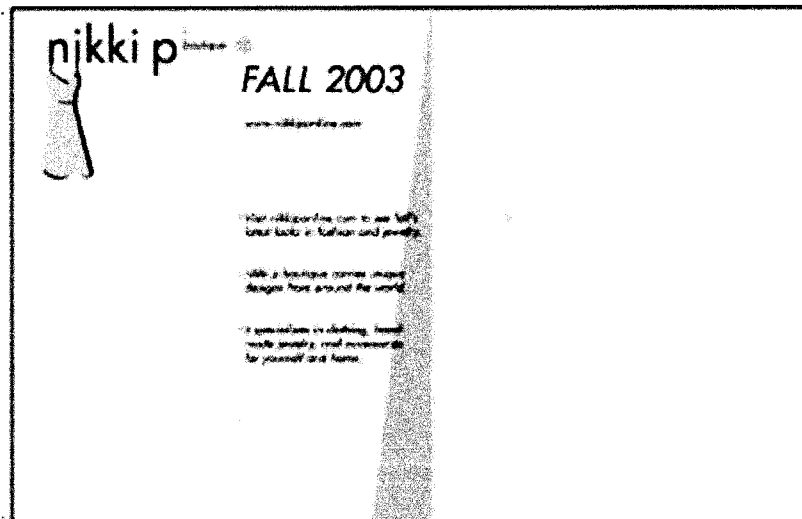
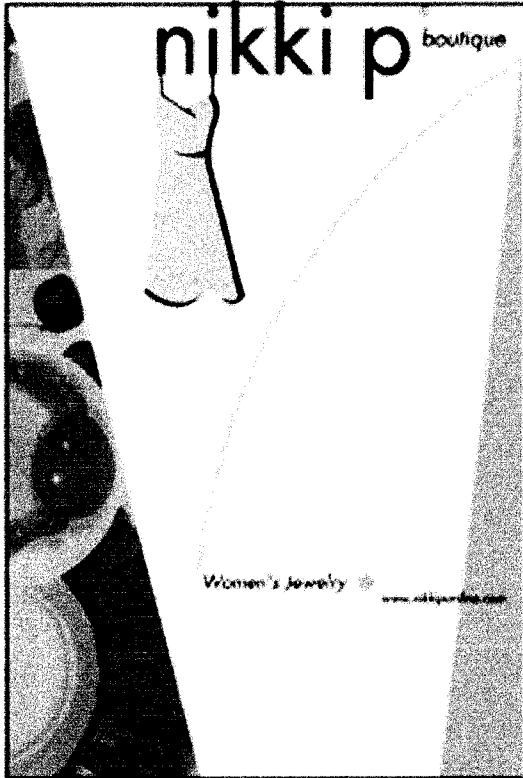
Postcard Mailer Series (1 of 4)



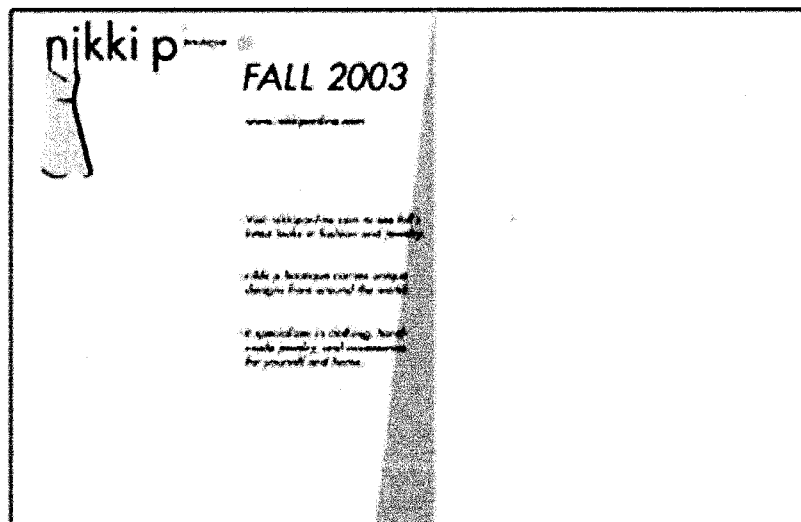
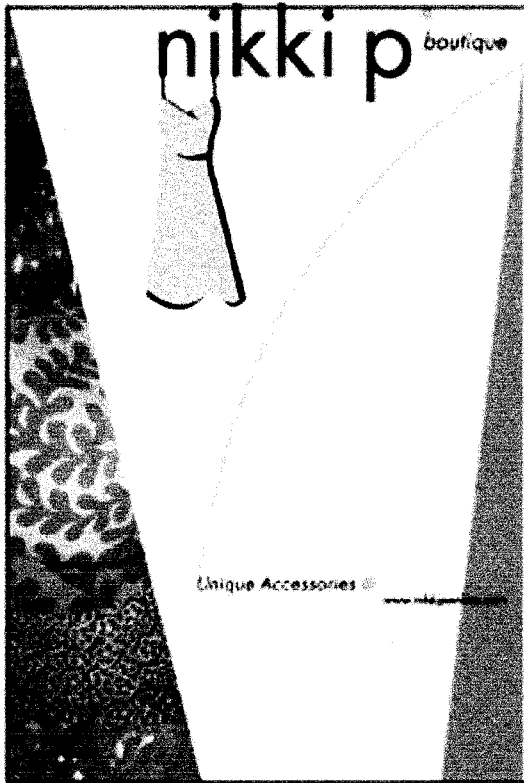
Postcard Mailer Series (2 of 4)



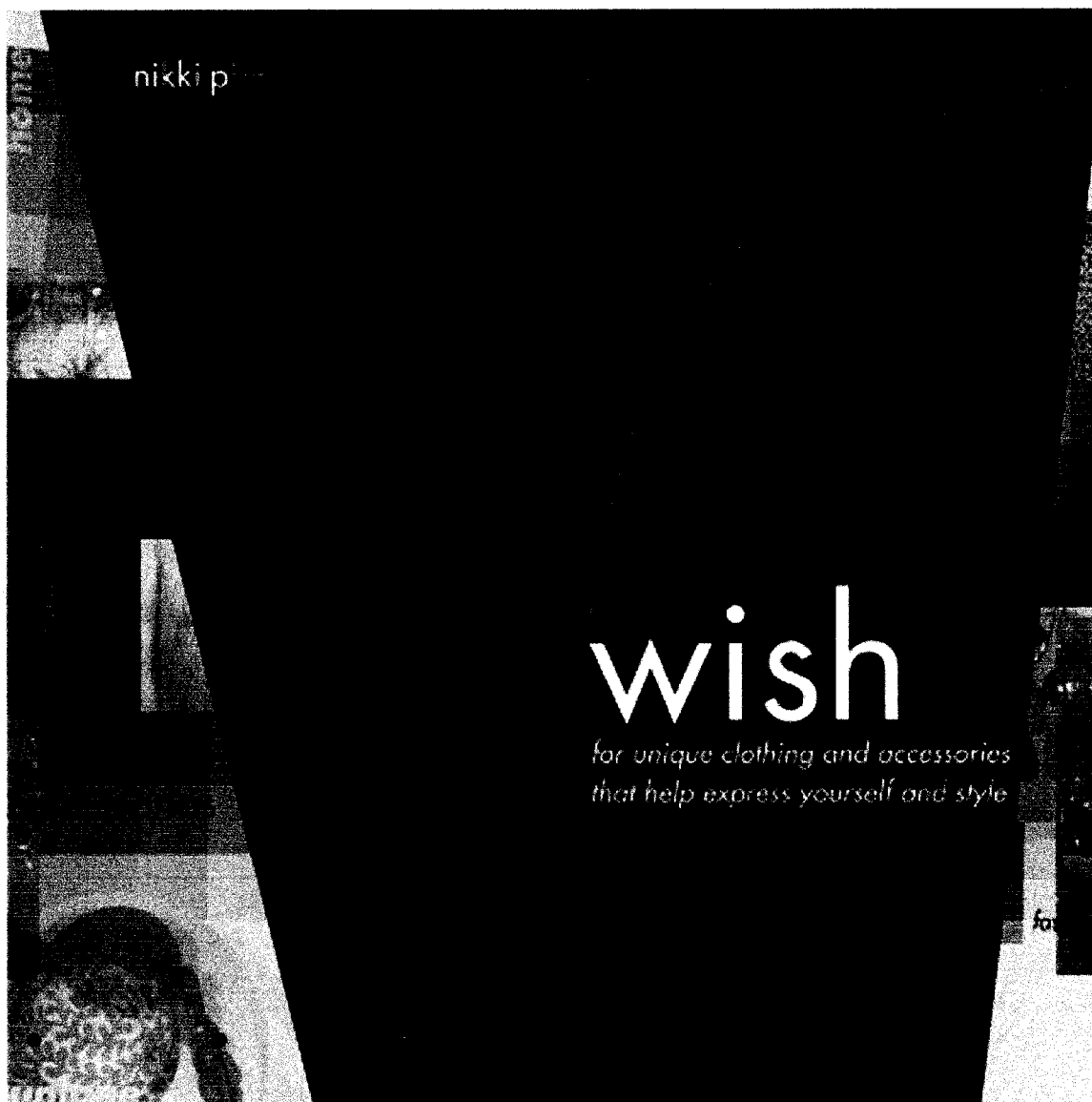
Postcard Mailer Series (3 of 4)



Postcard Mailer Series (4 of 4)



Poster Series (1 of 3)



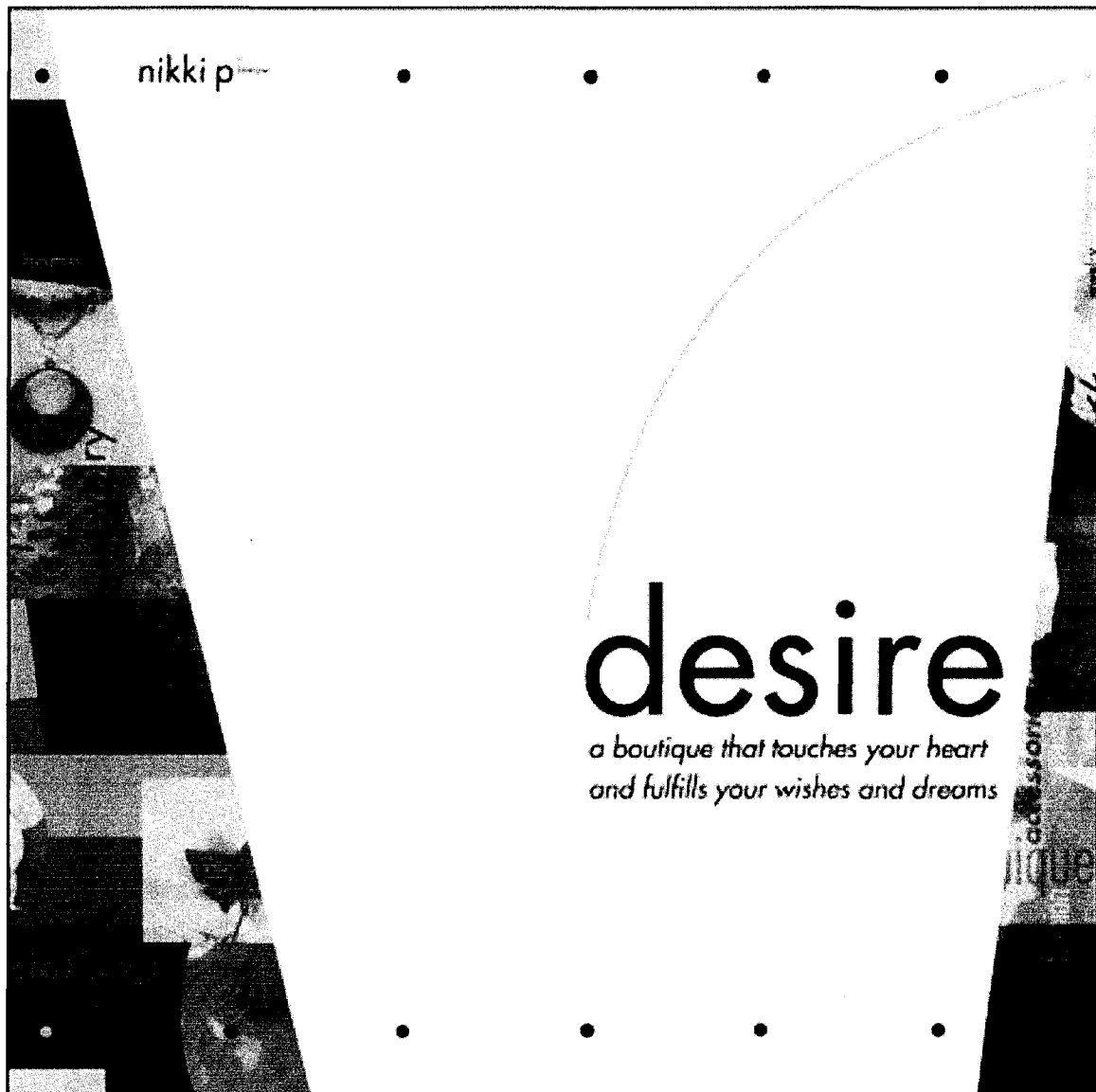
Actual Size: 24"x 24"

Poster Series (2 of 3)



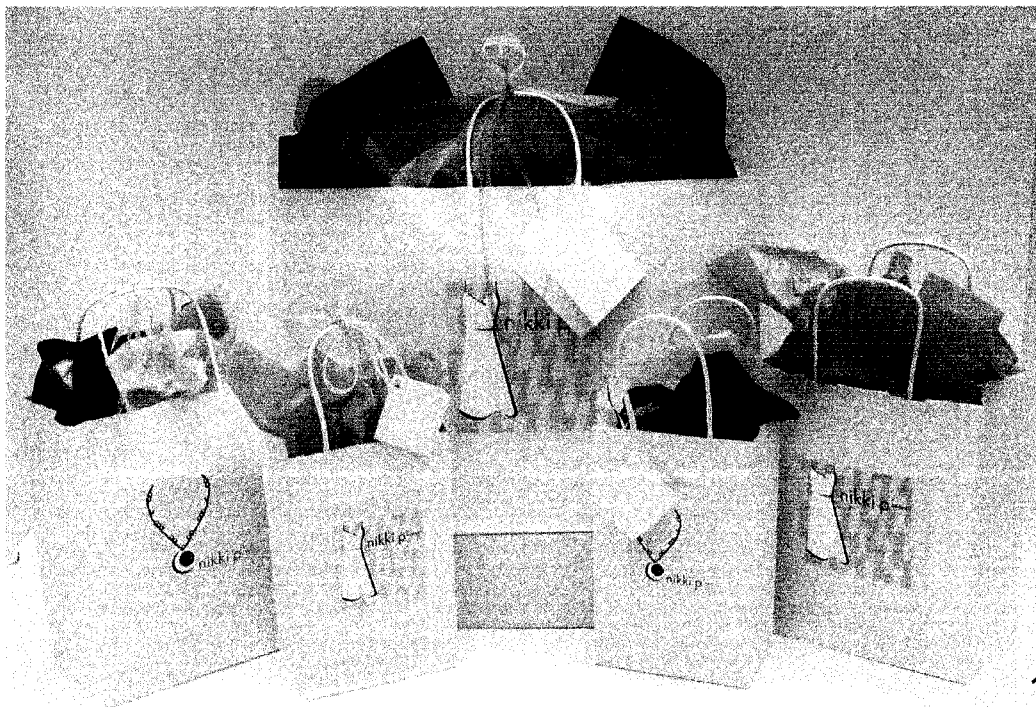
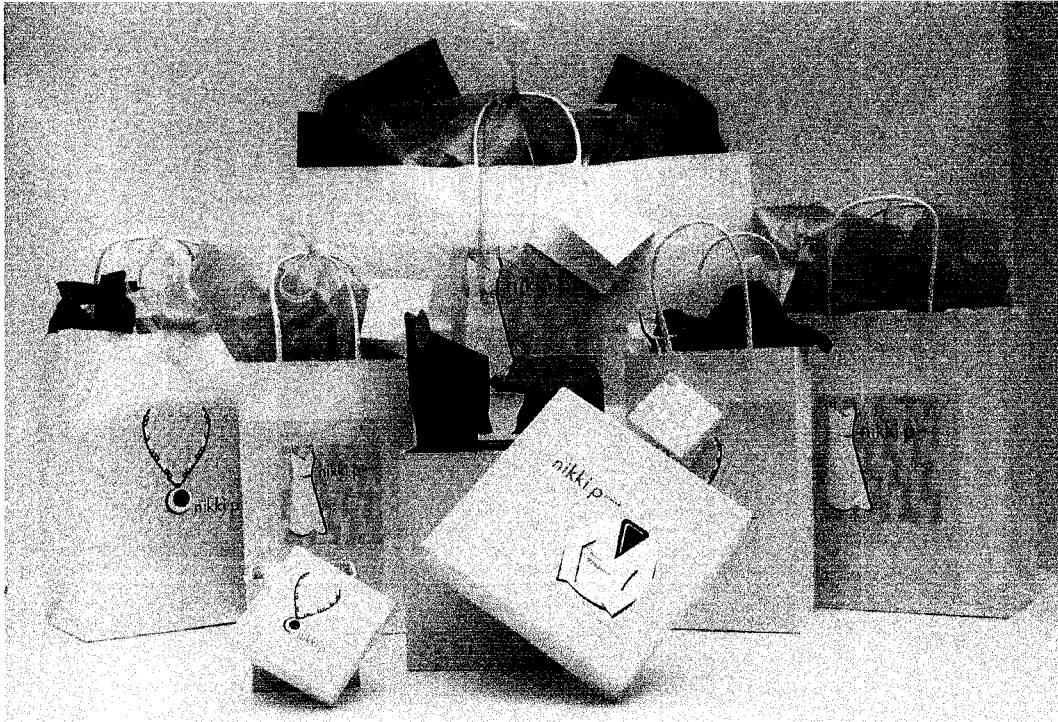
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Poster Series (3 of 3)

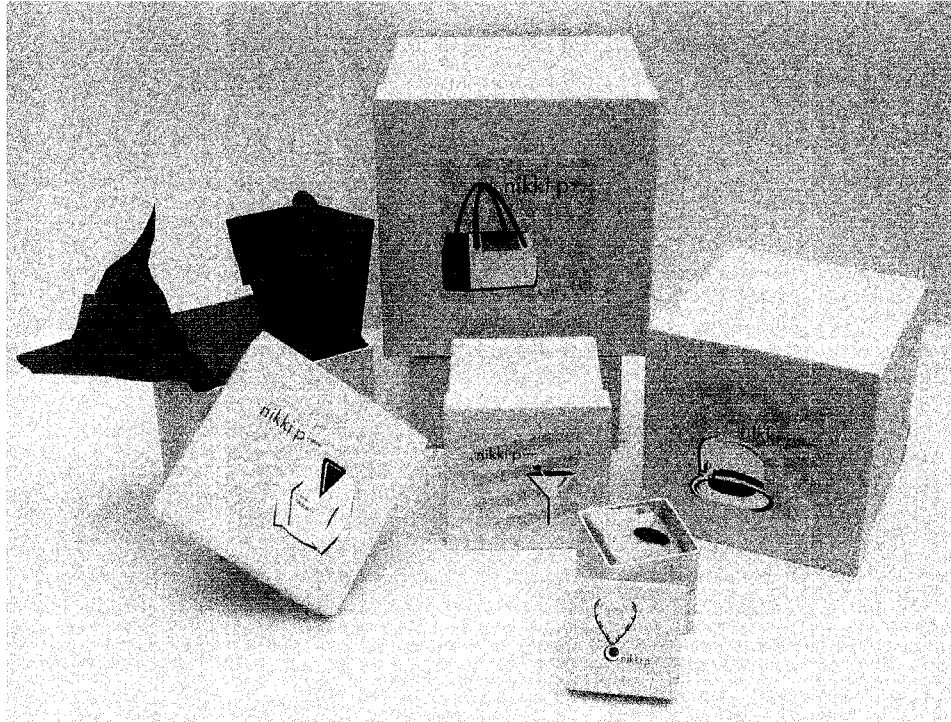


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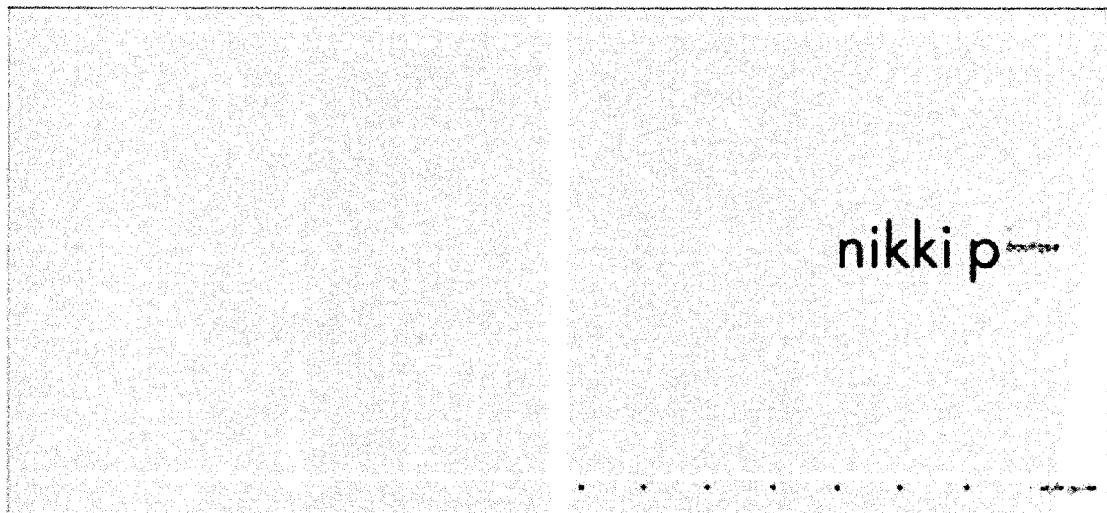
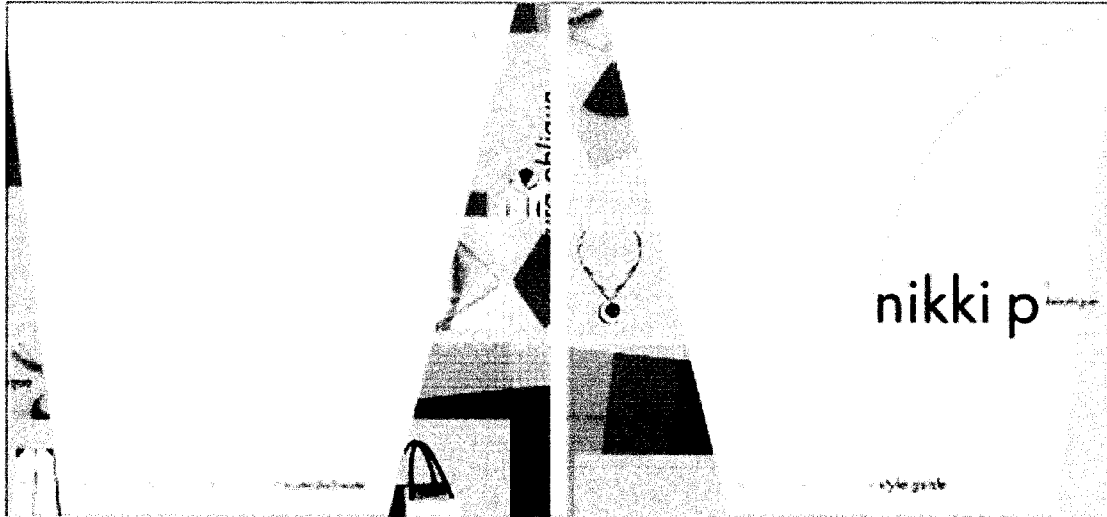
Packaging



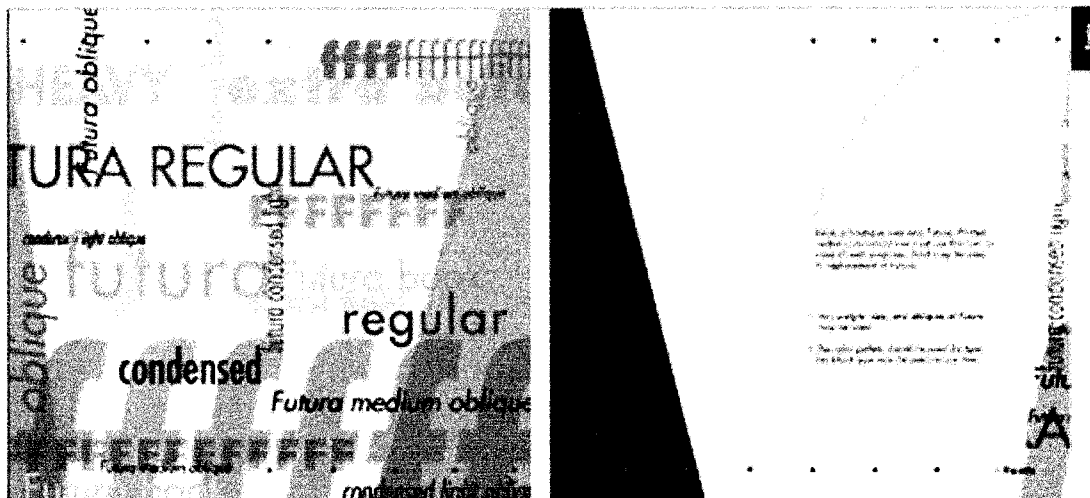
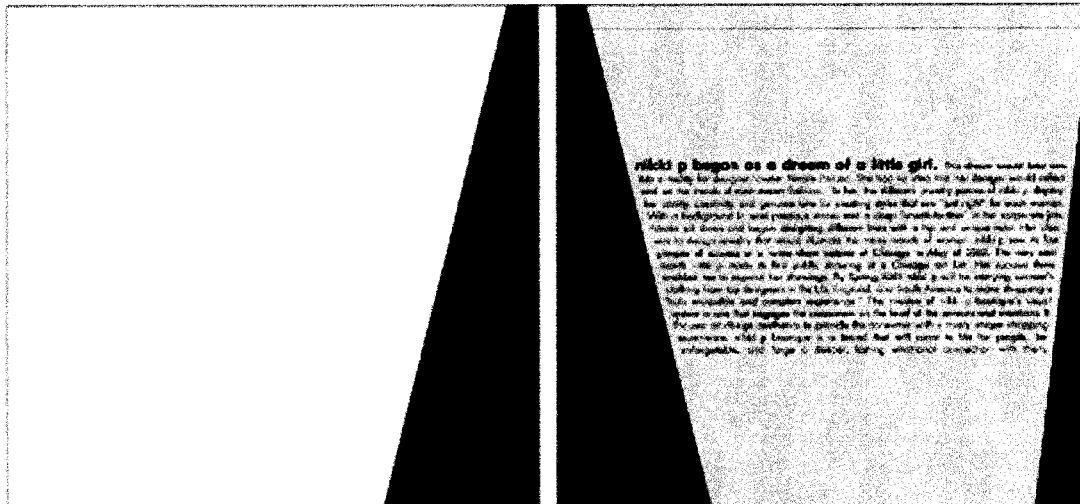
Packaging



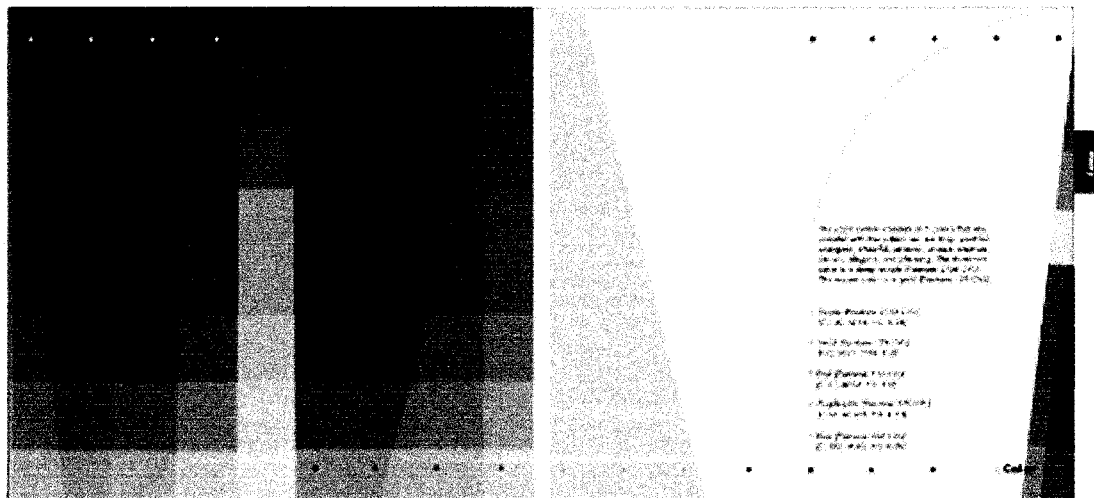
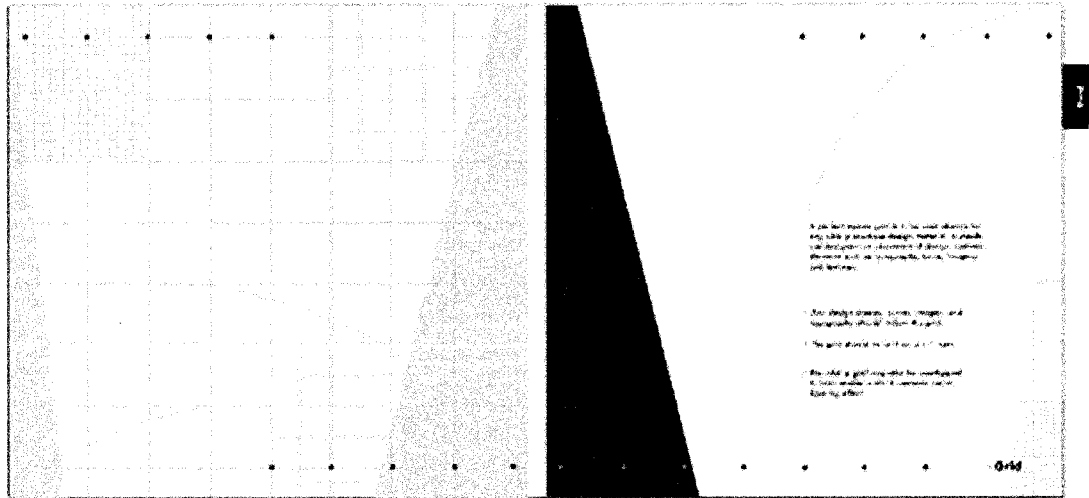
Style Guide (page spreads)



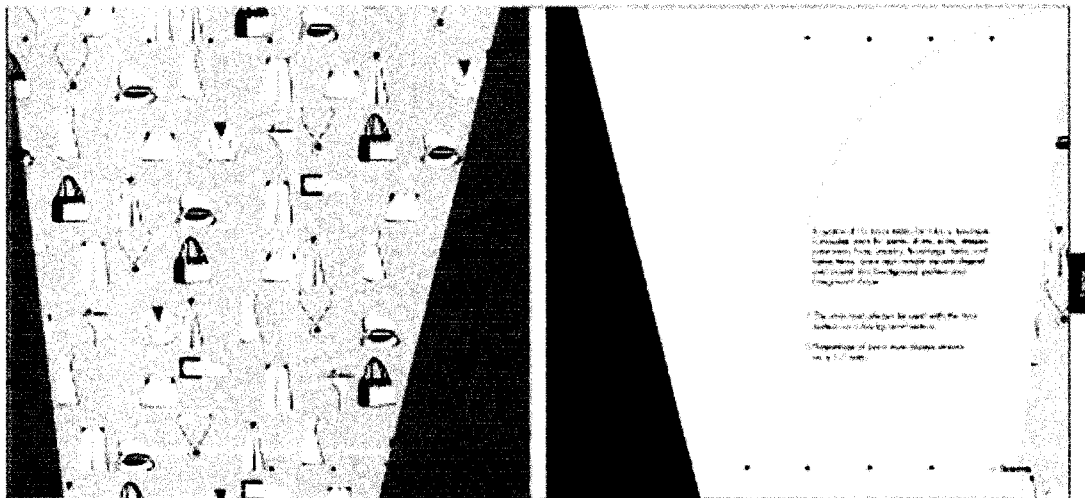
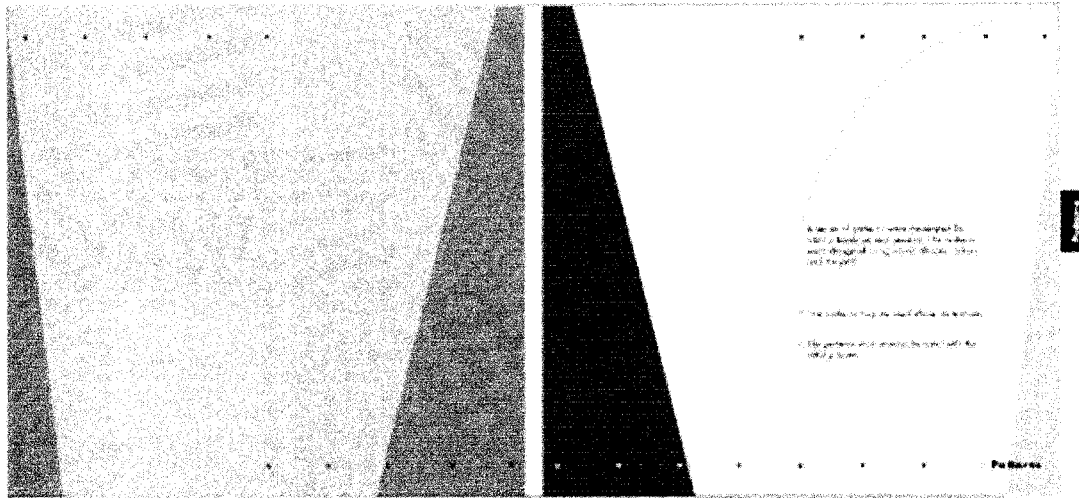
Style Guide (page spreads)



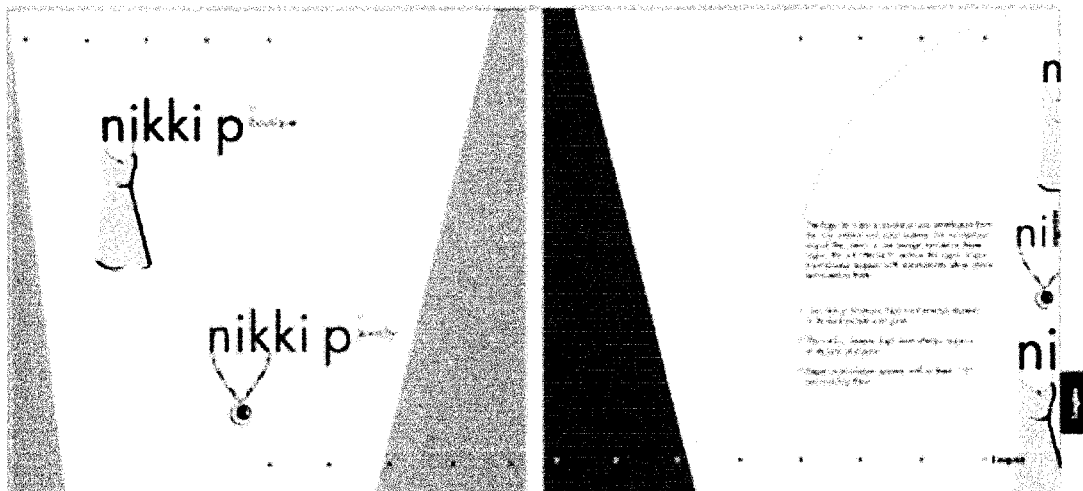
Style Guide (page spreads)



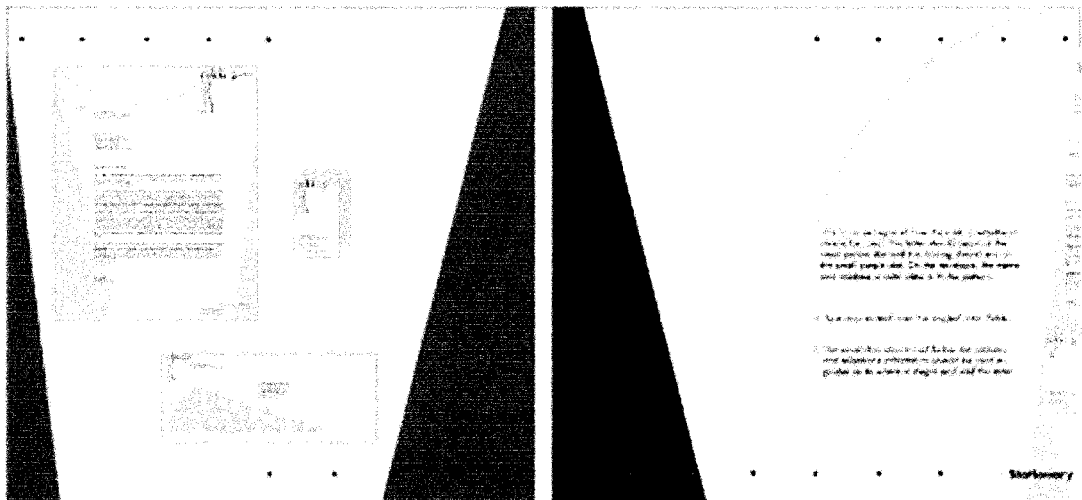
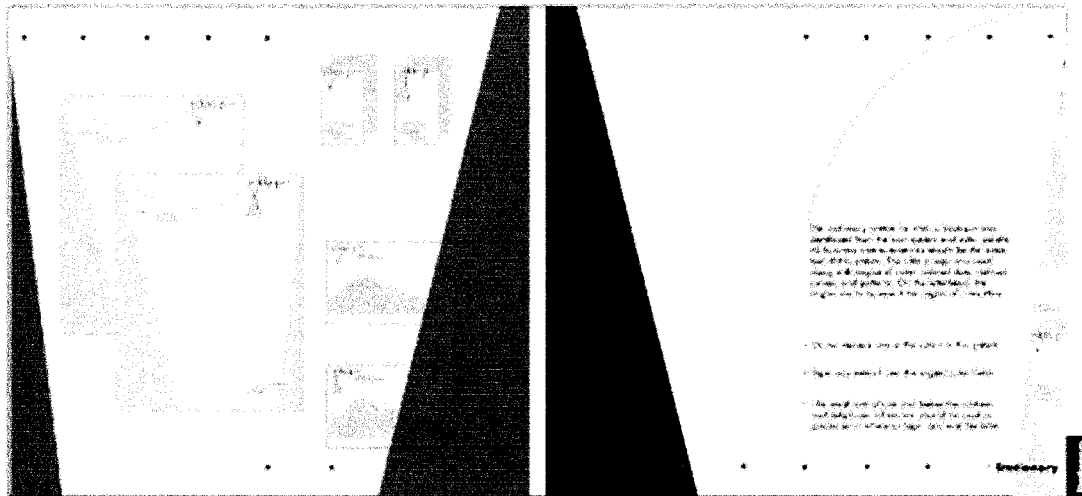
Style Guide (page spreads)



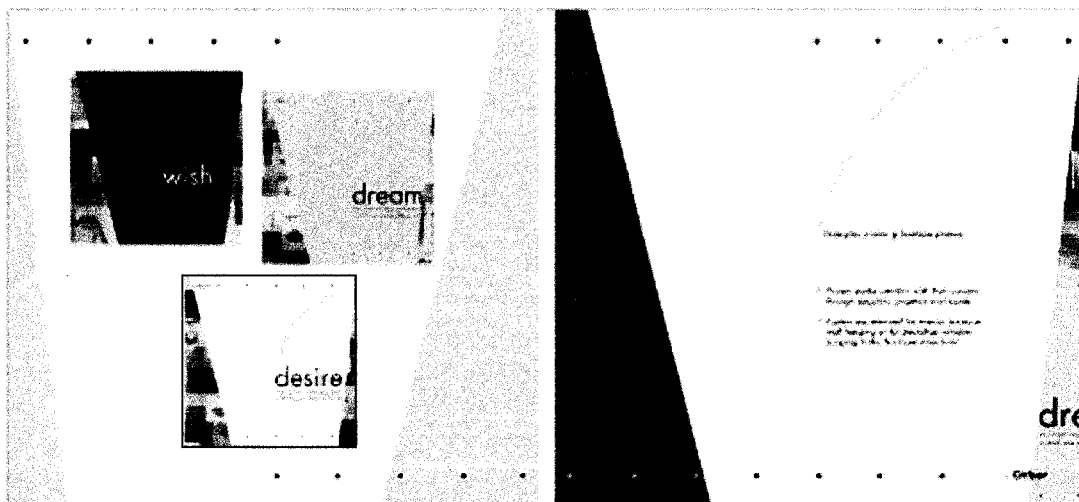
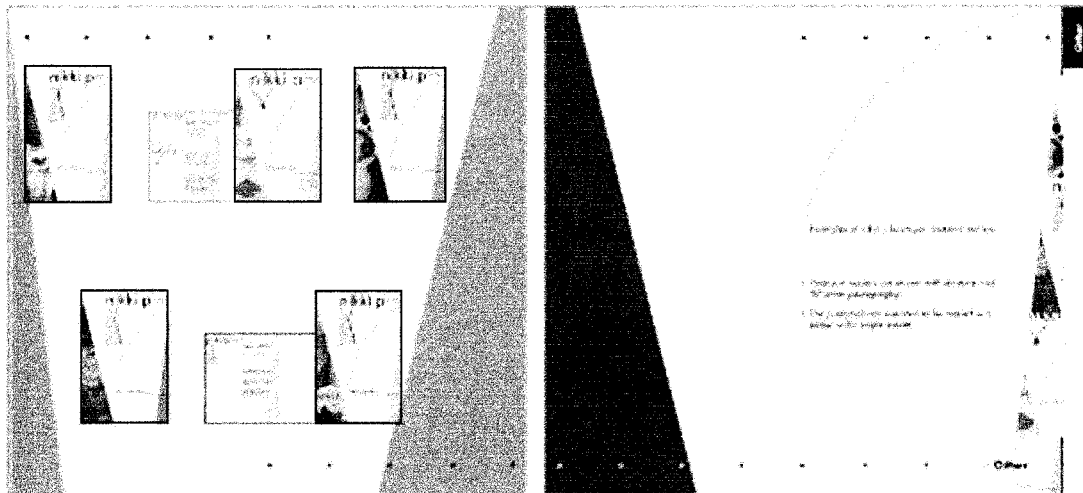
Style Guide (page spreads)



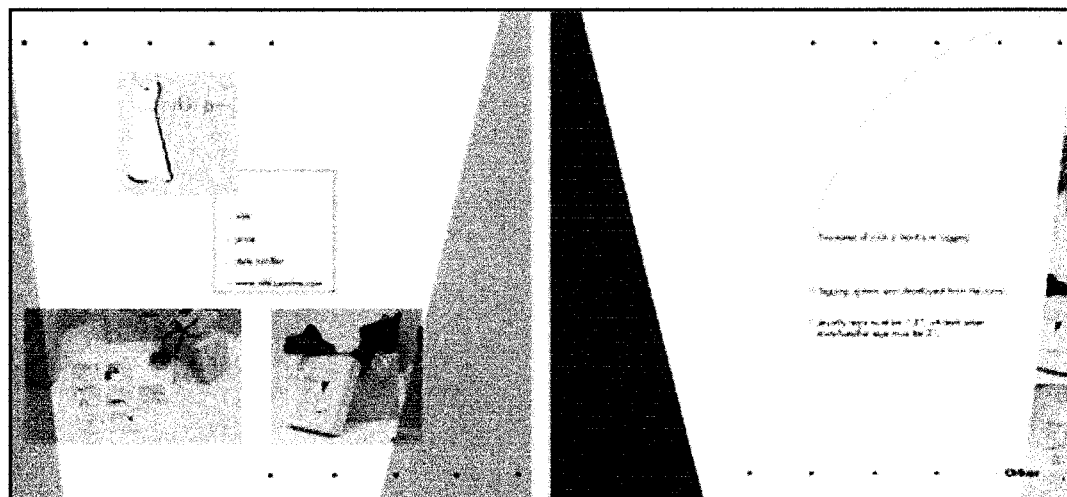
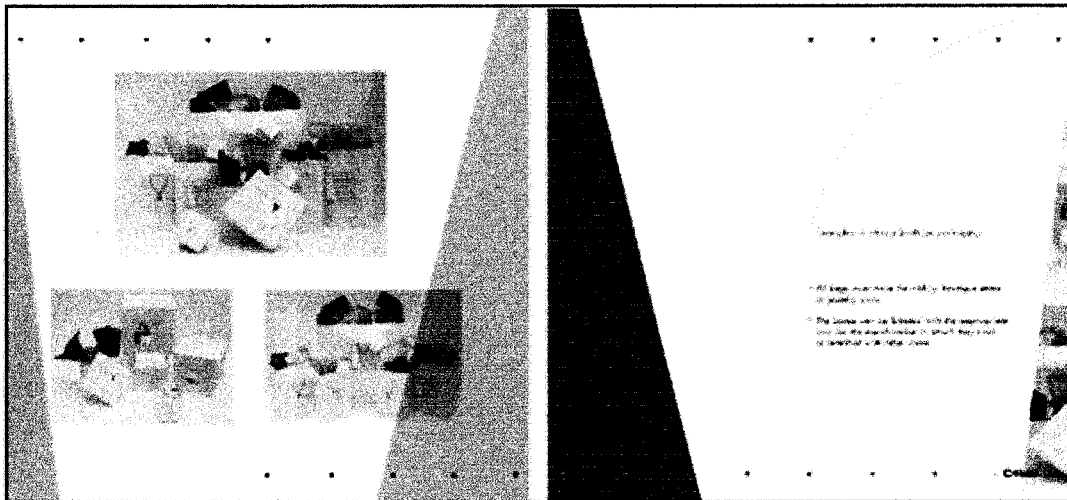
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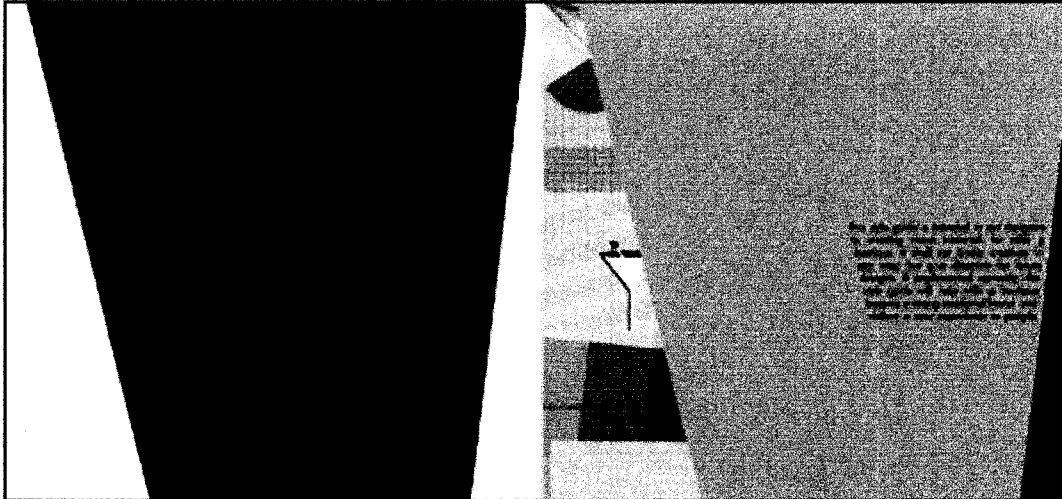
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Chapter 8: Conclusions

Emotional branding is an approach to branding that will be carefully considered in this new century. Old approaches to branding strategies are not going to be as successful with more products and companies entering the market and being made available to consumers. Companies are going to have to implement more than just highlighting features and benefits in design. Design will have to touch the hearts and emotions of consumers in order to be recognized and establish a lasting relationship.

Branding has grown tremendously over the past two centuries to become sources of sensory, affective, and cognitive associations. The Pragmatist, Evangelist, and Sensualist Ages have all contributed to the growth of branding. The 21st century has brought us to a new area of discovery through its extensive market and technology. It is in emotional design where leaps of growth are going to push this discovery even more and capitalize on it.

Emotional branding focuses on experiencing a product or company, instead of focusing on isolated features and benefits. It is based on design aesthetics that appeal to the five senses of the consumer. In doing so, emotional design dazzles the senses, touches hearts, and stimulates minds. It has the

power to transcend wishes, dreams, desires, and even lives through sensing, feeling, thinking, acting, and relating. Successful emotional brands include Starbucks and Gillette, which focus on lifestyles. Both companies have pushed the emotional associations connected with their brands in order to become market leaders and establish longevity with their consumers.

Designers are going to have to take the responsibility of communicating emotion in brands. Aesthetic decisions in form, typography, color, imagery, style, and materials are more important than ever in branding in order to achieve the highest emotional impact. Each of these has the potential to influence the consumer's perceptions. Consumer research is necessary in order to study the impact of these aesthetics and designs on human perception. Designers are going to have to have reasoning and justification for every design decision.

Products and companies are spread wide across the world in many different markets. Careful respect and consideration of culture is imperative for a brand to be successful. Physical artifacts, languages, values, and customs are different and unique in every culture. Sensitivity in these areas when designing is very important in order not to offend any consumers.

Branding has also influenced culture. A new consumer culture full of over-consumption, brand names, and mass markets has emerged over the past

few decades. Mass-standardization has caused a loss of individuality and personality in many areas.

Nikki P Boutique is a brand that was designed to be emotional and experiential for its consumers. Form, color, typography, imagery, material, and language create a dialogue between the viewer's mind and the brand, triggering emotional responses and eventually establishing a relationship with them. It forces consumers to sense, feel, think, act, and relate. The emotional strategy provides a link with Nikki P Boutique consumers. This link is one that touches the consumer's heart and becomes a part of their lifestyle.

This thesis gave an extensive look at emotional branding. An educational field study and applied design gave a further understanding of it and how it can be applied. After completing research and design, I am troubled by the fact that I am not convinced that emotional branding is completely a new idea. I see it more as designers taking their full responsibility in understanding design. Instead of choosing design aesthetics on mere personal preferences, emotional branding forces the designer to think. To me, it gives a higher respect to design and creativity. Designers must have justification for every decision beyond "it looks cool." Emotional branding taps into other areas of understanding, such as psychology, marketing, and managing. It calls for designers who are smart, creative, sensitive, and responsi-

ble. Emotional design heightens the level of design. The opportunities for designers to tap into their viewers, to communicate with, and change consumers become immeasurable. The theories applied in emotional branding should be applied everyday, by every designer, to every design. It is just good, smart design.

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