

# The Inclusion of Social Responsibility in the Communication Design Curriculum

2008

## Case Study

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Submitted by:

**Lisa Abendroth**

**Communication Design Coordinator and Associate Professor  
Metropolitan State College of Denver  
Denver, Colorado**

*“As an educator, my pedagogy focuses on creating course content that exhibits a social awareness within the field of design at large. Directing the studio of Culture / Language / Dialogue I develop projects which promote collaboration through an understanding of culture.”*

Lisa Abendroth  
Communication Design Coordinator  
and Associate Professor  
Metropolitan State College of Denver

# Metropolitan State College of Denver

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## **Metro State Facts**

<[www.mscd.edu](http://www.mscd.edu)>

Academic excellence. Metropolitan State College of Denver is a comprehensive, public four-year institution granting bachelor's degrees through its three schools: Business, Professional Studies, and Letters, Arts and Sciences. We offer 51 majors and 79 minors, as well as individualized degree programs that give you a competitive edge in your career.

School size matters. With more than 21,000 students, Metro State is one of the largest public four-year colleges in the U.S. And yet thanks to our intimate classes (average size: 22), accessible professors and availability of services like mentoring and advising, you get the personal attention that fuels your achievement.

An urban-enriched education. Urban excitement, convenience, diversity, unmatched cultural and recreational opportunities-with a campus adjacent to downtown Denver, the city is our extended campus. You benefit from relationships with the businesses, organizations and people who drive the city's success.

## **Department of Art Mission Statement**

<[http://clem.mscd.edu/~art\\_cs/place/pla\\_mission.htm](http://clem.mscd.edu/~art_cs/place/pla_mission.htm)>

The Art Department at Metropolitan State College of Denver provides a challenging learning environment of methods and viewpoints in art practice and art theory. This is achieved by making a commitment to a comprehensive study of contemporary art through an awareness of art history.

The faculty value distinctive, significant, and stimulating art, from all times and cultures, which explores our shared consciousness and opens new perceptions of life. We encourage critical thinking and theoretical analysis through a diversified examination of the visual arts in studio and lecture classes. With a discriminating eye to the future, we investigate new media and technologies, as well as traditional approaches.

As artists and scholars, we are responsive in the local, regional, national, and international intellectual communities within which art is produced and experienced.

The Art Department, like the College, fosters an atmosphere of scholarly inquiry, creative activity, and mutual respect within a diverse campus community.

Finally, because example is the best teacher, we strive through our creative and scholarly research to embody the values we wish to impart.

The Metropolitan State College of Denver Art Department has been fulfilling this mission for over thirty years, providing high-quality, accessible, and enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, postgraduate education, and lifelong learning in the visual arts.

### **Communication Design Philosophy**

This program challenges the student to become an informed “thinking designer.” The Communication Design student is provoked to explore the theoretical and practical aspects of design, creating inventive and effective design solutions that address specific problems within social and cultural contexts. Students gain an understanding of the relationships between form and function while examining the relevance of semantics, pragmatics and syntax. Through specific Communication Design experiences the student discovers possibilities for research and practice in the context of design that strives to serve a broad array of audience needs. Special emphasis however is placed on isolating design problems that have a social implication and that demonstrate the power of design that serves.

# Project: Design Research Methods

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This course examines how designers conduct pertinent research in order to produce relevant and meaningful visual communications solutions. Through specific assignments, students learn how to harness meaning and potential in their work by applying investigative processes, formulations, and strategies. Students work in teams putting theory into action, which informs individual design practice thereafter. Much time will be spent reading assigned texts from the two course textbooks supplemented by follow up discussion, defining of terms, and group dialogue. The assigned readings expose theory and research in the practice of design and directly relate to the research projects.

**DESIGN RESEARCH METHODS**

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Professor Lisa M. Abendroth  
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Office Hours by Appointment:  
Mondays 11-12  
Tuesdays 10-12 and 1-4  
Thursdays 12-4  
in Admin 250

**Course Description**

This course examines how designers conduct pertinent research in order to produce relevant and meaningful visual communications solutions. Through specific assignments, students learn how to harness meaning and potential in their work by applying investigative processes, formulations, and strategies. Students work in teams putting theory into action, which informs individual design practice thereafter. Much time will be spent reading assigned texts from the two course textbooks supplemented by follow up discussion, defining of terms, and group dialogue. The assigned readings expose theory and research in the practice of design and directly relate to the research projects.

Serving as an introduction, this course reveals diverse practices of research which can be employed within a student's everyday design practice. When posed with the question of design research, designers are often faced with the dilemma of creating solutions which must function for specific audiences with specific needs. The creation of design solutions which only speak to the designer (designer as author or designer as artist) is not a realistic approach in today's competitive environment. Instead the success of a solution can often be measured by the preliminary efforts to understand the problem. One's own personal point of view and understanding is not enough in today's complex multicultural and global economy. Understanding a problem from various points of view is critical and the only way to "see" a problem from diverse perspectives is to directly interact with the problem and the people affected by the problem a designer is seeking to solve.

What this class suggests is moving beyond the comfort of one's limitations of studio space (doing research online for example) and personal understanding (the designer becomes the audience). Instead *Design Research Methods* will provoke the design student to explore meaning found within *specific* audiences, users and participants. Through observation, documentation, visualization, collaboration and exploration of how design affects people in everyday life students will develop an understanding of how to infuse their work with appropriate meaning. A key goal of the course is to understand relationships between audiences, contexts and technologies.

This is not a studio class. This is a research class. Your activity this semester will be concerned with learning how to research and prepare for the design process thereafter!

Quality of work developed in this course is crucial. Conceptual development, conceptual articulation to visual form, visual and text based research, production, and visual and verbal presentation skills and working within a team mentality are all essential.

**Prerequisites**

ART 2222 and ART 2225

## DESIGN RESEARCH METHODS

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### Required Textbooks

- *Design Research: Methods and Perspectives*, ed. Brenda Laurel, MIT Press, 2003 (ISBN:0262122634)
- *Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design (A Reader)*, ed. Audrey Bennett, Princeton Architectural Press, 2006 (ISBN:9781568985862)

### Recommended Textbooks

- *Social & Cultural Anthropology: A very short introduction*, John Mopnaghan & Peter Just, Oxford Press
- *An Ethnography Primer*, AIGA and Cheskin
- *Visual Research: An introduction to research methodologies in graphic design*, Ian Noble and Russell Bestley, Ava Academia

Additional readings will be assigned from supplemental materials. Discussion will follow these readings to clarify, pose questions and ensure understanding. A written response to the material may be a part of the reading assignment. Please bring in any reading you find interesting or feel free to make requests.

### Team-Centric

An aligned goal of this course is to emulate the practice of collaboration in the field. As a designer you are often only as good as your access to resources. When designers work together they have the ability to diversify and expand their thinking beyond the limitations of the individual designer. We are always subject to our own limitations, biases which color our view of the problems we are asked to solve. Learning to become more open to diverse points of view is easier when working in a team. This semester we will all be working in a team-centric scenario. You will be evaluated on your ability and willingness to work in this fashion. By sharing project goals and outcomes your team will achieve more as a group than you ever could as an individual.

### Evaluation

Grade distribution (subject to change):

- Assigned Reading Presentation 10%
- Semester Process Journal 10%
- Exam 20%
- Research Project 60%:
  - Part 1: Defining the Problem
  - Part 2: Ethnographic Strategies
  - Part 3: Site Visits and Interviews
  - Part 4: Iterative Design Strategies
  - Part 5: Final Presentation

**DESIGN RESEARCH METHODS**

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**Semester Problem:**

To navigate the realm of design research through a series of assigned design problems that address design research strategies and rely upon specific audience filter.

The class will have the following criteria to work within as audience filter:

- A) Culture
- B) Age
- C) Economics
- D) Ability
- E) Access
- F) Education

Groups have been assigned and teams set at the start of the semester.

Through your team's assigned filter, begin to consider and observe one of the following: A) a communication problem, or B) a technology problem. In order to assist you in starting to define the wealth of options for investigation, answer the following question:

*How can my team enhance the quality of life for someone within our assigned audience filter?*

Once your problem has been defined and agreed upon by your team, you will be led through a series of design research strategies to better understand your problem through audience, context and technology or communication.

**Project sheets will be handed out for each assigned component of the semester research project. This is only an overview of the broad subjects covered.**

**The Projects:****• Part 1: Defining the problem**

- A) Text-based design brief — solving the design problem
- B) Visual interpretation of the same brief
- C) Visual presentation of the problem as gathered through assigned goals

**• Part 2: Ethnographic strategies**

- A) Observation — listen, watch, sit, see
- B) Documentation — write, draw, photograph, sketch, describe
- C) Visualize — use ethnographic strategies to reveal the significance of the problem

**• Part 3: Site Visits and Interviews**

- A) Site Visits — arrange for visits in the field for purposes of ethnographic research
- B) Interview — conduct interviews with diverse and focused audiences and participants in a controlled setting

**• Part 4: Iterative Design Strategies**

- A) Proposal for the solution scenario based on research findings (personas & improvisation)
- B) Team-centric development and ways of testing the scenario; Analyzing the testing outcomes
- C) Refining and adjusting the solution for the audience, context and technologies in use

**• Part 5: Final Presentation**

**DESIGN RESEARCH METHODS**

This schedule is a tentative outline of how the course assignments may progress through the first half of the semester. Dates and assignments are subject to change as individual and group projects develop. Always refer to current project handouts for most updated information. *Reading/presentation assignments listed in italics.*

**Textbook reading key:****DS = Design Studies****DR = Design Research Methods****Week One****Monday, Jan 21**

No class = MLK Observed

**Wednesday, Jan 23**

Class Introduction

Team orientation

Assign Part 1**Week Two****Monday, Jan 28**

Intro to communication theory, design research, ethnography

*Read: 200-205 McCoy (DS) in class**Reading presentation: L. Abendroth***Wednesday, Jan 30**

Defining terms; team work on defining problem

*Read: 26-35 Frascara (DS)***Week Three****Monday, Feb 4***Student Reading Presentation*

Presentation boards due

**Wednesday, Feb 6**

Design brief draft due

*Read: 51-63 Forlizzi & Lebbon (DS)***Week Four****Monday, Feb 11***Student Reading Presentation*

Work in class on presentations

**Wednesday, Feb 13**Continue: PART 1 PRESENTATIONS / Assign Part 2

Introduce the Ethnographic Primer

*Read: 23-29 Ireland (DR)***Week Five****Monday, Feb 18***Student Reading Presentation*

Review Part 2 components

Start generating field contacts

**Wednesday, Feb 20**

Read in class: 172-175 Deasy (Dr)

*Read: 30-38 Plowman (DR)*

Review Part 2 components

**DESIGN RESEARCH METHODS**

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**Week Six**

**Monday, Feb 25**

*Student Reading Presentation*

Review Part 2 components

**Wednesday, Feb 27**

*Read: 130-146 Cooke (DS)*

Review Part 2 components; work in class

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**Week Seven**

**Monday, Mar 3**

*Student Reading Presentation*

**Wednesday, Mar 5**

*Read: 41-48 Dishman (DR) / Midterm meeting with faculty*

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**Week Eight:**

**Monday, Mar 10**

*Student Reading Presentation*

PART 2 DUE

**Wednesday, Mar 12**

Continue Part 2 presentations / Midterm meetings

Assign Part 3

*Read: 55-62 Santos (DR)*

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**Week Nine**

**Monday, Mar 17**

*Student Reading Presentation*

**Wednesday, Mar 19**

*Read: Pat Moore Article (bandout)*

Review Part 3 components; work in class

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**Week Ten — Spring Break**

**Monday, Mar 24**

**Wednesday, Mar 26**

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**Week Eleven**

**Monday, Mar 31**

*Reading presentation*

PART 3 DUE: Improvisation / Assign Part 4

**Wednesday, Apr 2**

*Read: 145-154 Rhea (DR)*

Review Part 4 components; work in class

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**Week Twelve**

**Monday, Apr 7**

*Student Reading Presentation*

Part 4: Iterative Design "sketches" due

**Wednesday, Apr 9**

*Read: 164-171 Donahue (DR)*

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**Week Thirteen**

**Monday, Apr 14**

*Student Reading Presentation*

**Wednesday, Apr 16**

*Read: 311-332 Pruitt & Grudin (DS)*

Part 4: Iterative Design — team development, stage 1 / 2

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Communication Design

ART 3222

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**DESIGN RESEARCH METHODS**

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**Week Fourteen**

**Monday, Apr 21**

*Reading presentation*

Part 4: Iterative Design — refinements, testing, stage 2-3

**Wednesday, Apr 23**

Part 5: Semester conclusion

Prep for exam; in class discussions

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**Week Fifteen**

**Monday, Apr 28**

EXAM

**Wednesday, Apr 30**

Part 5: Work in class

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**Week Sixteen**

**Monday, May 5**

FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

**Wednesday, May 7**

FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

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**Week Seventeen**

**Monday, May 12**

FINAL CLASS MEETING - PROJECT HAND BACK

BINDERS / JOURNALS DUE

# Project: Ethnographic Strategies

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Part 2 of the semester deals with the collection of data culled from diverse research sources and compiled into a response to not only the research itself but the act of researching your problem. The total project is due Monday, March 10 with various check-points along the way. The goal of this Part is to put research into practice, allow you to gather content and assess its value to the problem, work individually as well as within the team to conduct your inquiry, formulate an understanding of the problem based on contact with those affected by the need.

**DESIGN RESEARCH METHODS**

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## Part 2: Ethnographic Strategies:

Part 2 of the semester deals with the collection of data culled from diverse research sources and compiled into a response to not only the research itself but the act of researching your problem. The total project is due Monday, March 10 with various check-points along the way. The goal of this Part is to put research into practice, allow you to gather content and assess its value to the problem, work individually as well as within the team to conduct your inquiry, formulate an understanding of the problem based on contact with those affected by the need. Part 2 consists of:

- Part 2: Ethnographic strategies
  - A) Observation — listen, watch, sit, see
  - B) Documentation — write, draw, photograph, sketch, describe
  - C) Visualize — use ethnographic strategies to reveal the significance of the problem

**Reading Assignment Monday  
To Present: Monday, Feb 25**  
*Pg. 30-38 Plowman (DR)*

**Wed, Feb 20:**

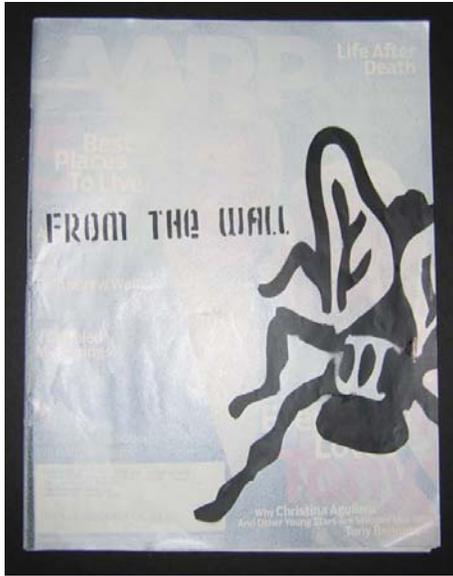
• read DR *Non-Assumptive Research* 172-175. Based on this reading, each student is to consider the section under *Planning* and address the criteria in that category by creating a typeset response to Steps 1-4 which reflects on your design problem and related research possibilities. This brief response is due Wed, Feb 27th.

**Assignment for Monday, Feb 25: Individual Activities:** Based on this week's reading (see Ireland, DR 23-29), each student is to consider the ways in which the team might engage the method of *observation* for your group project. Based on the unique needs of the problem before you, be prepared to discuss how you might witness the problems concerned with your specific audience through observation. Each team will start this process by identifying resources for observation. Teams will have to work individually and as a group to witness the core of their problem in action.

Understand at this stage we are focusing solely on observing the problem - not engaging the problem (or the user/audience) in discourse or discussion. While there may be some interaction, the goal of your activity is *witnessing* how the problem happens with you as the "fly on the wall." How can you and your team accomplish this effectively? This needs to be identified for action starting this week.

By the time you leave class today, each team will present a plan for dealing with their observations in the coming week. Due date for materials coming from observation is a week from today (Feb 25) and resulting materials from each student will include the following comprehensive samples (identify each with notations as to where and when you observed or gathered this information):

- sketches
- notes
- diagrams
- lists
- photographs taken as appropriate to the "fly on the wall scenario"



The Thick Description project includes images from observations conducted in the research class by students Shane McDaniels, Sean Galway and Agnieszka Kijak.



# Exhibition: Substance—Diverse Practices from the Periphery

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Metropolitan State College of Denver, Center for Visual Art presents, Substance: Diverse Practices from the Periphery, an international exhibition that spans the disciplinary boundaries of design. Substance highlights the contributions of over 30 contemporary industrial, graphic, architectural, environmental and media design innovators who are making a profound contribution to the field of design through their attention to issues that affect the quality of everyday life.

Implicit to the processes held by these designers is a responsibility to design research and problem solving that shows a commitment to working directly with communities beyond the traditional confines of the studio environment. As a result of their work, these designers develop highly meaningful and life-altering solutions.

While these projects can be located at the periphery of a discipline, they demonstrate the rich possibilities that result from embracing community as client, where working across socio-economic borders, cultural divides, and in the margins reveals the depth of the design discipline. In a consumer culture so oriented towards design today, the exhibition places specific emphasis on projects that focus on the needs of under served people, places and problems.

# CENTER FOR VISUAL ART

For Immediate Release  
July 13, 2007

Contact: Cecily Cullen, Assistant Director  
303-294-5207, x113



***SUBSTANCE:  
DIVERSE PRACTICES  
FROM THE PERIPHERY***

September 6 - November 9, 2007

*Invubu Project's Hippo Water Roller*

**EVENTS:**

Thursday, September 13, 2007

6 - 7 pm: **Lecture:** One Laptop per Child - Kenneth Jewell, Continuum (Boston, Milan, Seoul)

7 - 9 pm: **Opening Reception**

Thursday, October 11, 2007

6 pm: **Lecture:** Patricia Moore, MooreDesign Associates (Phoenix, AZ) and Bryan Bell, Design Corps (Raleigh, NC)

Friday, October 12, 2007

8:30 - 10 pm: **Gala Reception** in conjunction with the AIGA NEXT national design conference

All events are free and open to the public.

Metro State Center for Visual Art presents ***Substance: Diverse Practices from the Periphery***, an international exhibition that spans the disciplinary boundaries of design. *Substance* highlights the contributions of over 30 contemporary industrial, graphic, architectural, environmental and media design innovators who are making a profound contribution to the field of design through their attention to issues that affect the quality of everyday life. Implicit to the processes held by these

designers is a responsibility to design research and problem solving that shows a commitment to working directly with communities beyond the traditional confines of the studio environment. As a result of their work, these designers develop highly meaningful and life-altering solutions. While these projects can be located at the periphery of a discipline, they demonstrate the rich possibilities that result from embracing community as client, where working across socio-economic borders, cultural divides, and in the margins reveals the depth of the design discipline. In a consumer culture so oriented towards design today, the exhibition places specific emphasis on projects that focus on the needs of under served people, places and problems.

In order to show the rich connections between design problem and outcome, each project is supported in the exhibition by a narrative back story which may include text, images, video, sketches and notations. Text responses address the exhibition thematic criteria of Cause (the basis for the design action or response relative to the problem); Method (the manner in which the design problem was solved, how research strategy was oriented to the problem); and Impact (how the project outcome addresses the cause in a significant manner). Through this documentation we gain a better understanding of how design functions in context, moving the discussion of design beyond that of aesthetics. Projects selected for inclusion were not identified based on formal considerations but instead on how they changed lives.

Exhibition Curator and organizer Lisa M. Abendroth, Associate Professor and Communication Design Coordinator at Metropolitan State College of Denver, has brought together a critical collection of timely work engaging national and international audiences and participants. Featured projects include Architecture for Humanity's Biloxi Model Home Program; AeroVironment's Architectural Wind Turbine; contributions by Continuum and Fuse Project for Nicolas Negroponte's One Laptop per Child project; Design Corps' Farmworker Housing Program; the Kinkajou Projector by Design That Matters; Electroland Studio's Urban Nomad Shelter; Imvubu Projects' Hippo Water Roller; Potters for Peace Ceramic Water Filter; and celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the completion of the Empathic Elder Model Research is the work of Patricia Moore of MooreDesign Associates. Boulder, Colorado-based Samson Design will also be featured with two important works included.

The Emmanuel Gallery will host an exhibition under the same *Substance* title focused on international student works from October 4 – October 27, 2007. Both the CVA and the Emmanuel Gallery will host a Gala Reception the evening of Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup> from 8:30-10:00pm. For more information on the student exhibition go to [www.emmanuelgallery.org](http://www.emmanuelgallery.org).

The Center for Visual Art is located at 1734 Wazee Street, Denver, Colorado 80202.  
Hours: Tuesday – Friday 11am-6pm, Saturday 12-5pm. Admission is free. Telephone: 303.294.5207  
[www.mscd.edu/news/cva](http://www.mscd.edu/news/cva)

VISUALS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

CAUSE

METHOD

# SUBSTANCE

DIVERSE PRACTICES

FROM THE



# PERIPHERY

PERIPHERY



October 4 - October 27, 2007

**EMMANUEL GALLERY**

Auraria Campus



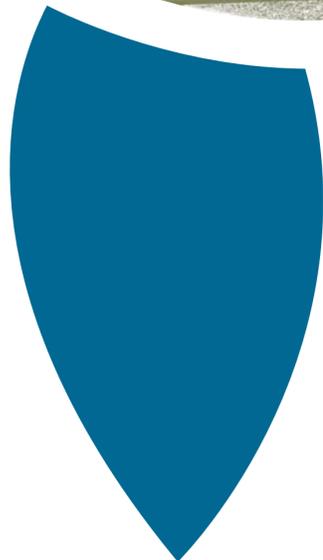
September 6 - November 9, 2007

**CENTER FOR VISUAL ART**

Metropolitan State College of Denver



IMPACT



## OVERVIEW

**SUBSTANCE: DIVERSE PRACTICES FROM THE PERIPHERY** is an international exhibition that spans across the disciplinary boundaries of design demonstrating how designers integrate research, process, and practice beyond the traditional confines of the studio environment to develop meaningful and often life altering solutions. Implicit to the processes held by these designers is a responsibility to design research and problem solving that shows a commitment to working directly with audiences, participants, and communities. While these "projects to learn from" are often located at the periphery of a discipline, they demonstrate the rich possibilities that result from embracing community as client, where working across socioeconomic borders, cultural divides, and in the margins reveal the depth of the design discipline.

The exhibition is presented at two venues in order to feature the breadth of design thinking in this genre. Works from the profession are featured at the Center for Visual Art while the Emmanuel Gallery highlights work from junior/senior level undergraduate students and postgraduate students.

## DETAILS

### PROFESSIONAL WORKS

September 6 - November 9, 2007  
**Center for Visual Art**  
Metropolitan State College of Denver  
1734 Wazee Street  
Denver, Colorado 80202-1231 USA  
www.mscd.edu/news/cva/  
+1.303.294.5207 tel

### STUDENT WORKS

October 4 - October 27, 2007  
**Emmanuel Gallery**  
Tenth and Lawrence Street Mall  
Auraria Campus Box 177  
Denver, Colorado 80217 USA  
www.emmanuelgallery.org  
+1.303.556.8337 tel

## CONTACT

**CURATOR**  
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## Exhibition Contributor List

**AeroVironment, Inc.**

*Project: Architectural Wind Turbine*

**Architecture for Humanity**

*Project: Biloxi Model Home Program*

*Project: Siyathemba*

*Project: The Ipuli Rural Center of Excellence*

**Barefoot Artists**

*Project: Rwanda Healing Project*

**Boezels**

*Project: Boezels*

**Continuum**

*Project: One Laptop per Child prototype*

*Project: Pedisedate*

*Project: OmniPod*

**Design Corps**

*Project: Farmworker Housing Program*

*Project: Farmworker Market Program*

**AIGA Design for Democracy**

*Project: AIGA Design for Democracy*

*Ballot/Experience Design*

**Design That Matters**

*Project: Kinkajou Projector*

**Electroland Studio**

*Project: Urban Nomad Shelter*

**Freeplay Foundation**

*Project: Lifeline Radio*

**Fuse Project**

*Project: One Laptop per Child*

**Gans Studio**

*Project: Unbearable Lightness*

**Imvubu Projects**

*Project: Hippo Water Roller*

**Inkahoots**

*Project: Caravan Kit*

**Bill Klingensmith**

*Project: Drive Project*

**Gerard Minakawa**

*Project: Ring Furniture*

**Monkey Biz**

*Project: Positively HIV Book and CD*

**MooreDesign Associates**

*Project: Empathic Elder Model Research*

*Project: Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Environments*

**Ziddi Msangi**

*Project: Schoolyard Banner Project*

**Nazli Eda Noyan**

*Project: Map of Awareness*

**Berto Pandolfo**

*Project: Design, Industry and Culture*

**Picture Projects**

*Project: 360degrees.org*

**Potters for Peace**

*Project: Ceramic Water Filter*

**Room Services**

*Project: Nomadic Restoration Vehicle*

**Samson Design**

*Project: Level Star PDA Device for the blind*

*Project: Hart Interactive Voter E-Slate*

**Dr. Rosemary Sassoon**

*Project: Typeface — Sassoon Primary*

**Smart Design**

*Project: OXO Implements*

*Project: Johnson & Johnson Reach*

*Toothbrush*

**Whirlwind Wheelchair International**

*Project: Whirlwind Roughrider Wheelchair*

**Andrea Wollensak**

*Project: Collaborative Cartography using GPS*

**WorldStudio Foundation**

*Project: "Help Kids Create" Mentoring Program*

**XtraCycle Access Foundation**

*Project: World Bike and Big Boda Bike*



## **Student Submissions**

The Substance exhibition was also presented in a student-centered format at the Emmanuel Gallery on Auraria Campus in Denver, Colorado from October 4–October 27, 2007. International student works were juried into this exhibition, which featured socially motivated architecture, media, product and communication design solutions. To follow are three student projects documented from this exhibition that were produced through the Community-Based Design course at MSCD.

# The Immigrant Story

**Institution:** Metropolitan State College of Denver (Denver, Colorado)  
**Student:** Jazmin Lopez  
**Participants:** Students Dayne Pillow and Emily Noiles; Rights for all People (RAP)  
**Facilitators:** Professor Lisa Abendroth (Art 4223 Community-Based Design)

**Cause:** Illegal immigrants must know what their rights are in the United States in order to move towards a legal process of citizenship. The topic of immigration has been an unending and unresolved issue that has been debated by the federal government. For the most part, local community action however has not been activated in Denver. The immigrant community needs to have a more accessible way to spread information about the rights of illegal immigrants. They need a place where they can share their stories and information about concerns proceeding towards a legal migration process but because lack of knowledge restrains them from improving their way of life, they continue to live in a state of fear for not knowing. Further, because the immigrant community is mainly Spanish speaking they don't have a primary forum to express concerns, ideas, thoughts and opinions to others. Some immigrants are uneducated and afraid to ask questions because they don't speak or understand English. Therefore many immigrants pretend to be informed.

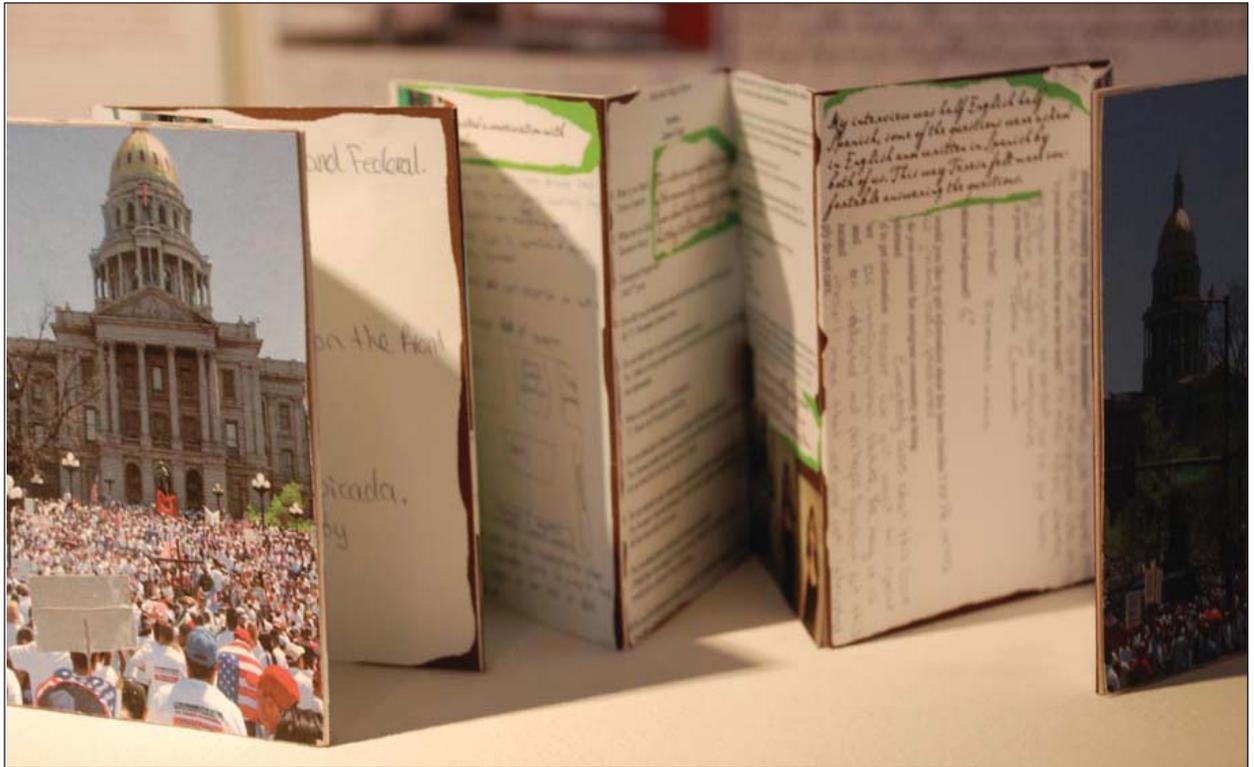
**Method:** This project required the participation of the immigrant community in Denver. Places where the immigrant community gathers most often were identified as sites for research. The Denver Mercado became a point of investigation and outreach for understanding the magnitude of the needs of the immigrant. Through interviews, discussion groups and conversations Lopez identified the needs of the community. In working with a local not-for-profit organization, Rights for all People (RAP), she was able to leverage support for her research needs through the greater outreach of this organization. She attended group meetings on the subject of her project and discussed ways in which the immigrant community may best be informed of their rights. A practical approach to the problem needed to be identified—a way to tap into the immigrant community in a non-threatening, motivational and informative manner.

Through her research, Lopez determined the solution should be informational, simple, and accessible. It should also be something that her audience would be able to reference as a source of information on immigrant rights that would continue to evolve over time. The solution should also provide a forum for outreach, answer questions and allow immigrant stories to be shared within the isolated community. The goal here was to make the audience comfortable with information access while persuading the community to become involved in the sharing of information through their own story-telling process.

In order to be most effective, the solution must be:  
Informational, Accessible, Motivational, Bilingual, Educational, Consistent, Simple, Nonthreatening

**Impact:** Lopez' concept for a print piece garnered support from RAP and has been considered for implementation. Her solution addressed the need for uniting the immigrant community, highlighting the fact that they need an outlet to share facts, opinions and personal stories. As a result of this connection Lopez hopes to find an immigrant community that is inspired to improve their way of life, ultimately motivating illegal immigrants to become a part of American society.

**More information available at:** [www.mscd.edu](http://www.mscd.edu)



*The Immigrant Story,  
by student Jazmin  
Lopez*

## A Walk Through the Credit Line

**Institution:** Metropolitan State College of Denver (Denver, Colorado)  
**Student:** Kathleen Jewby  
**Facilitators:** Professor Lisa Abendroth (Art 4223 Community-Based Design)

**Cause:** Debt in America is out of control. Bankruptcy is the worst-case scenario of unmanageable debt; in 2005 alone there were over 43,000 bankruptcies in the United States. Since many others do not declare bankruptcy, there are millions of Americans in various types of debt, including credit cards, installment plans and student loans. One of the worst forms of debt is high interest credit cards, which are also loaded with fine print about penalty fees, default rates, varying interest rates, and interest compounded daily. Credit card companies along with retail products and stores use the media to convince the public to shop and use credit cards. Shopping is portrayed as an emotional outlet, where clothes define you and spending can relieve the stress of a difficult day. What the American public is missing are the details and facts about debt; effects can range from inconvenient to detrimental. People should understand credit cards and debt in order to make wise choices. Consumers deserve to have the facts explained clearly, not hidden within a confusing eight-page microscopic contract. Stores and banks are not eager for these facts to be known, but consumers need to be aware.

**Method:** Since debt has become such a prominent part of the American lifestyle, Jewby was able to use many mediums to research her topic. She began with reading from the internet and books, collecting credit card paraphernalia, and visiting a near-by mall. As she came to understand the overall problem and diverse causes, she did site specific research. By researching and documenting the number of people and the number of bags they were carrying at a local mall, she began to clearly see the volume of consumerism. Jewby interviewed people from different financial backgrounds to see further how people viewed money.

**Impact:** Jewby's final solution to educate people about debt, specifically credit card debt, resulted in an installation concept ideally intended for the Colorado Mills Mall where she had conducted her primary research. Many different colored bags, each color strategically representing credit card debt, interest, or penalty fees would be hung in strands from the mall ceiling. Facts about the credit card industry would be mixed in with the bags. By using an eye-catching and highly visual piece, she would be able to draw people's attention to the project set within a consumer-centric environment. Once viewers understood the project, they could choose how many of the facts to read and how active they wanted to be in the exhibit.

**More information available at:** [www.mscd.edu](http://www.mscd.edu)



*A Walk Through the Credit Line, by student Kathleen Jewby*

# Connecting Communities

**Institution:** Metropolitan State College of Denver (Denver, Colorado)  
**Student:** Megan Beavers  
**Facilitators:** Professor Lisa Abendroth (Art 4223 Community-Based Design)

**Cause:** The Connecting Communities project focuses on the neighborhood of La Alma/Lincoln Park and the community members that live there. The area is one of Denver's oldest neighborhoods. As a result it is plagued by issues of upkeep and an eroded sense of history. The condition of the area has deteriorated as years have gone by and the specific needs of the community members living in or near the community seem to have been pushed aside. It is a goal of the project to diffuse some of the major differences that exist between the South Lincoln Park Housing projects located in this area and the adjacent Santa Fe Art District. Within this goal, the project will spread a greater awareness and promote involvement between and among members of both communities. An associated goal is that the project will begin to bring about the economic and social improvements that are needed for the South Lincoln Park neighborhood to grow in the right direction.

**Method:** Through primary research on-site and with community members, Connecting Communities is an organization Beavers conceived that would initiate community programming sponsored by the Santa Fe Art District. The programming would allow local teens from the South Lincoln Park neighborhood to get involved in the planning and creation of various locally displayed art projects. Occurring annually, the program would begin each Fall Semester, as to provide ample time for planning and production. In conjunction with West High School and La Alma/ Lincoln Park Recreation Center, local teens would be encouraged to get involved in an after-school program. This program looks to bridge the gap between the high-brow culture of the arts district and the critical need for intervention in the housing projects. The hope of Beavers' research and resulting work is to create an extended community resource and positive influence in the youth of the community by tapping in to the creative resources of the Santa Fe Art District.

**Impact:** As a hypothetical project, there are many locations throughout the La Alma/ Lincoln Park community that could host the Connecting Communities project. The galleries that line Santa Fe Drive provide an inviting atmosphere that attracts new people to the area, while the Sunken Gardens park is a reminder of the past, a history that could play a colorful role in the future of the neighborhood. Creating a collaboration between the art district and the housing project could propel a significant interest in change for the future and impact the lives of youth from the neighborhood. Project types would range from murals to sculpture as appropriate for the site and interests of the student participants. A succession of successful projects would show the effort and involvement from the community needed to move the area in the right direction.

**More information available at:** [www.mscd.edu](http://www.mscd.edu)



*Connecting Communities, by student Megan Beavers*