Common Threads: An Examination of Common Threads of Design Value, Woven Together by Designers to Achieve Elevated Products Across Disciplines

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COMMON THREADS: AN EXAMINATION OF COMMON THREADS OF DESIGN VALUE, WOVEN TOGETHER BY DESIGNERS TO ACHIEVE ELEVATED PRODUCTS ACROSS DISCIPLINES.

by

Laura Taylor

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

HONORS IN UNIVERSITY STUDIES WITH DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

in

Art and Design in the Department of Laura D. Gelfand

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, UT
Spring 2015
ABSTRACT

Laura Taylor, Interior Design, Utah State University
Abstract of Bachelor's Thesis, Submitted 30 April 2015:
Common Threads: an examination of common threads of design value, woven together by designers to achieve elevated products across disciplines.

Though what defines good design is subject to personal opinion, some objectivity of good design in existing products is mutually and consistently recognized by design professionals, the business sector, and the consumer public. Despite the complexity of defining good design, there clearly exist measurable, objective, common threads of design value which create elevated designs, across disciplines, which are identifiable and accepted by those within and beyond design professions.

By first examining over 100 contemporary product designs and identifying measurable, objective commonalities which elevate them, this thesis then individually examines and outlines ten categories of common design values. Once these design values are clearly understood, they are used as an objective tool to breakdown fifteen products and identify in what ways the designs are elevated.

The multidisciplinary range of these fifteen products emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of this method of objective examination as “there is a fluid and pervasive overlap between architecture, identity, fashion, products, packaging, interiors, automobiles, computer interfaces, and so on.” (Dent & Sherr, 2014).

This thesis concludes that these ten categories of design values are common threads of good design, then emphasizes the value in studying holistic and interdisciplinary design, provides a framework for design students and educators to discuss design value and evaluate the design value of student projects, and illustrates the commonalities brought about by designers across design fields.
For the black sheep of the honors program.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Susie Tibbits, Interior Design
Mike Daines, Graphic Design
Sarah Urquhart, Interior Design
Alexa Sand, Art History
Interior Design Program
Department of Art & Design
Honors Program
Honors Research Fund
Amber Summers-Graham, Honors Program
Sarah Mitchell, Honors Program
Student Research Symposium
INTRODUCTION: THE OBJECTIVITY OF ELEVATED DESIGN

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DESIGN VALUES AS COMMON THREADS OF ELEVATED DESIGN

After studying dozens of products, those that seemed to exhibit the most elevated design were the products that created value through specific design decisions; those that exhibited design value. Design value is created when an increase in the perceived worth of a product is due to design choices and not due to an increase in cost of production, amount of material required, or production time. This added value is felt in elevated products when they “work, and even entertain, in ways greater than the sum of their parts,” (Grinyer, 2001). Design values are intentionally incorporated into a physical product by a designer to add worth.

Ten key categories of design value were identified which most commonly increase the worth of a product by creating value within consumers’ lives. These ten categories of design value are as follows:
These categories of design value are the common threads which elevate products and resonate consistently with design professionals, business professionals and the consumer public, despite subjective and ever-evolving ideas of what defines good design.

MAGNIFYING THREADS: UNDERSTANDING THE TEN CATEGORIES OF DESIGN VALUE

The importance of each category of design value will be discussed in both conceptual terms and through examples of ways in which a product may exhibit that specific value. Though products exhibit these values in many different ways, each will be examined in as succinct a way as possible.

ECONOMIC

Every product has an economic value, whether or not it is a primary design value. Economic value lies in a product’s material, production method, and the time put into its creation. A product that is inexpensive and quickly produced maximizes economic value. Economic value can also be created by producing a product which stands the test of time and yields a long-term return on a customer’s investment. Economic efficiency in production can be aided by simple design decisions which affect materials, production methods, and packaging.

An example of a product that is primarily designed to maximize economic value is the standard pair of earbud headphones sold on airplanes. Though they can be uncomfortable and unattractive, they achieve the producer’s goal as they are inexpensive to produce. As the only option for purchase on an airplane, consumers have no choice of alternative earbud so satisfying consumer desires of comfort and quality is not considered in the design. As millions of people fly each day, the ability to produce these earbuds quickly, with minimal cost, in large quantities will produce the greatest profit.

An example of a product designed for economic longevity is Amish furniture. Marketed as simple, timeless furniture that neither goes out of style, nor falls apart, Amish furniture exhibits economic value in its long-term value lifespan despite the initial expense.

AESTHETIC

Designers are often viewed as a group of artistic and creative people with special skills who beautify products produced by engineering or business fields. Though this can be true, designers work to create many different design values in addition to aesthetics. Aesthetic value, however, is easily recognizable and highly advertised. In addition, the aesthetic value of a product is often the initial value which attracts the attention of a customer.
Aesthetic value created through design may overlap with other categories of design value as aesthetic design follows trends which are often informed by these other design values and can reinforce these other valuable characteristics, exhibiting a holistic design. Other times, aesthetics are independent of any other design values. Aesthetics philosopher, Immanuel Kant, argues that beautiful objects should affect viewers as though they have a purpose, although no particular purpose can be found (Kant, 1951).

The Hippopotamus Chair by Maximoriera is an example of a piece which creates primarily aesthetic value. This settee is meant to create an experience the way a piece of art does. Imagine the experience of walking into a space to be confronted by a life-size hippopotamus sofa; the aesthetic value which creates surprise, humor, and surrealism is placed highest and the intent of the design is accomplished. This experience seems to fit Kant’s argument of the intention of aesthetics.

Iconic aesthetics are a powerful value created by designers. A consistent and recognizable aesthetic can be adopted by consumers as their own aesthetic. The value of representing a designer by displaying their work can become a customer’s primary focus. This aesthetic becomes part of the consumer’s personality at a higher worth than the cost of the product.

SUSTAINABLE

Sustainable design practices are in greater and greater demand as the need for materials, products, and manufacturing to meet a higher level of environmental sustainability increases. Sustainable design works to provide solutions to a range of challenges including sourcing availability and production efficiency. There are legislative, economic, and societal drivers, or incentives, for product designs to achieve a higher level of environmental sustainability (Kutz, 2007). However, designing sustainably in general simply means creating products within set parameters without sacrificing other design values.

The need for products to be sustainable has long dictated design. During WWII in the United States and England, clothing rations and restrictions dictated more sustainable garments as rubber, silk, wool, leather, and metals were needed for war-related clothing and manufacturing. CC41 (Controlled Commodity 41) restrictions limited men’s clothing, for example, to pant legs of 19 inches or less in circumference, no elastic waist bands, no zippers. Due to these wartime restrictions, entirely new garments such as crew neck t-shirts were designed as a sustainable alternative to previous clothing designs (Hills, 2013).

Sustainable aspects of design also include cradle-to-cradle design in which products are designed to be reclaimed and re-purposed to create something new. Designing a product this way encourages a holistic view of product life cycle in which designers consider the environmental, and thus social, implications of specific materials, production quality, and even packaging and shipping.

As the value of environmentally sustainable design increases, certain products must transition to an increased focus on sustainable design to ensure the relevance of their products or services in contemporary markets.

UNIVERSAL

The most commonly accepted definition of universal design is the design of products and environments
to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design (Steinfeld et al., 2012). In this thesis, universal design refers exclusively to expanding the ease of physical use of products. Universal design strives to increase the inclusivity of product users without sacrificing other design values.

An example of universal design in architecture includes using ramps rather than stairs as a prominent architectural element. Universal design in graphic design includes the use of color coding and pictograms in signage so that people who cannot read or do not speak the language used in the signage are still able to effectively find their way.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of designing to increase universal value in products is the subtlety of these design decisions. A universally designed product should not feel adapted or specialized and should not sacrifice aesthetics or function to achieve universality.

HISTORICAL

Fields of design such as architecture, furniture design, and industrial design are deeply rooted in history. Today, products may be designed with a focus on historical value by replicating the production methods, materials, or aesthetics of products from the past. Historical value may be seen as a return to what may no longer be economically or sustainably valuable for the nostalgic value of learning about the past, retelling the story of design at that time, and recognizing the progression of product design.

Iconic furniture often makes resurgences under slight variations or upgrades in materials due to the historical value of the piece. An original piece or an exact replica, however, has increased historical value which some consumers desire as a way to pay homage to the original designer or in order to tell the story as they display the product.

Furniture company, Herman Miller, for example, specializes in the re-production of iconic mid-century modern pieces. Not only does Herman Miller sell the pieces but it also curates the story of the pieces through documentation and storytelling. Though much of the appeal of historic products is aesthetic, the social meaning created in exploring human history connects products of the past to consumers of today.

CULTURAL

“Our desires and concerns are reflected in the objects we make...infinite cultural subtleties can now be reflected in the smallest detail such that design has become both an agent and a mirror of change,” (Dent & Sherr, 2014). Designers not only reference cultural meaning in their work but create cultural meaning as well. Designers may intentionally create conflicting, contradicting, incongruent, and even unexplainable design decisions solely based on cultural context and value.

A product design that references themes and motifs of a specific culture creates cultural value. These product can use visual themes, catch phrases, or production methods that are associated with a specific culture. Timorous Beasties, a textile design company in Glasgow, UK, plays on cultural themes in its textile series Toile. A French classic, Toile patterns generally display scenes of countryside landscapes, architecture,
and daily activities. Timorous Beastie’s Toile visually mimics these classic patterns to depicts scenes of contemporary urban life. The incorporation of skyscrapers, drug deals, and prostitution in this traditional style creates a clever and humorous tension between the visual theme and literal theme of the textile, creating cultural value beyond the aesthetic or functional value of the design.

Cultural value in design can be a way to create social meaning, using design as a commentary on life, pointing out irony or interconnectivity through cultural themes and motifs. Products which create cultural value may be thought of as conversation pieces, products that tell others about the cultural perspective of the consumer who uses, displays, or wears the product.

**RARE/UNIQUE**

Just as universal products work to be inclusive, products which focus on being rare/unique strive to be exclusive. High-end clothing companies, for example, who charge much more for their product than its economic cost, are charging for rare or unique value. By wearing and displaying this product, the consumer is making a statement of his/her exclusive status. This achievement of socially distinction demonstrates the social value in acquiring goods that others cannot obtain (Koford & Tseoe, 1998).

On the most exclusive end, designers like Oscar de la Renta design products for such few people, the rarity of their products increases the value of the design for those who can afford them. These products may be custom designs, like commissioned works of art. When considered as an art piece, the rare/unique design value seems worth the extreme cost.

**TECHNOLOGICAL**

Graphic designer Clement Mok states in his book, *Designing Business*, that “design, in its broadest sense, is the enabler of the digital era- it’s a process that creates order out of chaos, that renders technology usable to business.” Technology can influence a product’s appearance, production method, function, size, and many other factors. Products which display high levels of technological value may be cutting edge, displaying technological advances unseen in other design of the same type of product.

These products can be exclusive as new technology is often expensive at its onset. Once the technology used in the product is less cutting-edge, its technological value decreases. As technology is every-evolving, product designs must be updated.

**ERGONOMIC**

Ergonomics (or human factors) is the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance (Definition and Domains of Ergonomics, n.d.).

Ergonomic design focuses on creating products which are easiest, safest, and most comfortable to use for the largest range of users. To understand the ways in which a design can meet these requirements, researchers study the biomechanical, physiological and cognitive effects that products have on the people
that use them.

Ergonomic products may have an upfront investment in the time it takes producers to research and test products. If successful, they ought to produce ergonomic value and enhance the user’s experience. A focus on ergonomic value encourages consumers to invest in products that address changing, growing, aging, of the user, continually providing value over time.

PHILANTHROPIC

Philanthropy is defined as the desire to promote the welfare of others. Products which have high philanthropic value are specifically designed to promote welfare. The philanthropic qualities of products may be one of the least transparent design characteristics, but perhaps one of the most increasingly important qualities. Some questions a consumer may ask about the philanthropic qualities of a product are as follows: Are the people who manufacture this product being paid a fair wage? What are their working conditions like? Are there toxic materials in this product? Is this product tested on animals?

An example of how design may incorporate philanthropy is the business model of the company producing it. TOMS shoes, for example, creates shoes designed to be philanthropic. The simple construction of TOMS makes them feasible to produce which allows the company to manage its One-for-One business model in which a pair of shoes is donated to 3rd world communities for every pair purchased anywhere in the world.

This model encourages the consumer to purchase these shoes, though they may be priced at a higher cost than their materials, as the shoes also include philanthropic value which consumers are willing to pay for. According to an annual study by the Edelman public relations agency, when quality and price were equal, 53 percent of consumers ranked a brand’s activities on social causes as a deciding purchasing factor in 2012, up from 42 percent in 2008 (Edelman Goodpurpose Survey, 2012).

The TOMS brand now means style, comfort, and philanthropy. Perhaps a more aesthetically complicated shoe would be troublesome for this business model, thus the importance of the minimalistic design and construction of the shoe. Whether or not popular style made the philanthropy possible, or the philanthropy made the style popular is difficult to determine. Either way, the aesthetic and philanthropic value of TOMS shoes reinforce each other and resonate with consumers.

WEAVING THREADS INTO SOMETHING GREATER: HOW A FOCUS ON DESIGN VALUES CREATES HOLISTIC DESIGN

Contemporary design education focuses greatly on design thinking which is defined by global design firm, IDEO as “a human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer’s toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success.” In short, design thinking is a holistic approach to the process of design that may be applied to any design field.

The incorporation of design thinking into the process of creating a new product ensures that, beyond the fiscal value of materials and time, a product will exhibit a high level of design value. The most successful products are designed with a focus on what type of design value will increase perceived product worth the
most from the product’s conception.

The designers integrate those specific design values into the products through a holistic design process “powered by a thorough understanding, through direct observation, of what people want and need in their lives and what they like or dislike about the way particular products are made, packaged, marketed, sold, and supported,” (Brown, 2008).

When a product holistically exhibits a focus on one or more specific design values, consumers experience added worth throughout the entire experience of consuming it. When a product lacks holistic design, consumers may still select the product, but they may not experience the added worth during their use of the product. Elevated products are able to deliver added worth throughout use and result in more positive review and advertisement.

UNRAVELING THREADS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE DESIGN VALUES WOVEN THROUGH FIFTEEN CONTEMPORARY PRODUCTS

The following fifteen products were selected to exhibit a range of product types from a variety of countries which incorporate an array of design value. Each product will be summarized and its most prominent design values will be identified and discussed in context of the product. This examination of products illustrates the universality of the common threads of design value and their use as an objective tool for evaluating and identifying the ways in which a product’s design is elevated.
The Bradley Watch is designed in the style of a traditional watch with one key design feature which differentiates it. The raised ticks and use of a rotating ball rather than rotating hands allow the watch to be both visual and tactile.

**DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED**

**Aesthetic**
The Bradley Watch exhibits the sleek and sophisticated aesthetics of high end watches through attractive materials and traditional scale of watch elements. It comes in an array of colors and sizes to appeal to everyone.

**Universal**
Designed to function as a tactile watch, customers who are visually impaired can feel the time just as naturally as customers with full sight can see the time. The piece achieves universality without seeming adapted or sacrificing aesthetics.

**Technological**
The Bradley Watch takes advantage of simple magnetic technology to create an open-face, tactile watch.


Clever Caps, screw-top bottle caps, double as building block toys. After fulfilling their first function, these caps can be repurposed as a toy due to the addition of raised bumps on the lids. These simple bumps allow for stacking and building.

**DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED**

**Economic**
The initial cost of Clever Caps is included in the bottled item it caps and no more substantially expensive than a traditional cap. The use of Clever Caps as a toy is essentially a bonus and clearly a long-term return on an inconsequential initial investment.

**Sustainable**
For every Clever Cap that replaces a traditional cap, one less cap goes into the landfill or recycling plant while one less building block toy needs to be produced. Clever Caps also serve as a medium through which to educate children and other consumers about reuse, re-purposing, and environmental impacts.

**Philanthropic**
Clever Caps make a basic toy available to a lower-income customer base not through complex social programs or charitable distribution but through the simple design addition of raised bumps.


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### JAMBOX MINI, 2013

**JAWBONE, SAN FRANCISCO CA**

Jambox and Jambox Mini are wireless speakers designed for Jawbone in collaboration with Fuse Studio.

#### DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

- **ECONOMIC**
  
  As Jambox is a fairly affordable tech accessory, anyone can own this product even as it has a prominent designer behind its design.

- **AESTHETIC**
  
  The colorful, patterned, playful design treats the Jambox like an interior accessory rather than prescribing typical aesthetics of the average speaker. A selection of different patterns and colors allow customers to select the Jambox that matches their individual style, encouraging a personal connection with the product/company.

- **TECHNOLOGICAL**
  
  Even the mini Jambox delivers a big sound. The technology that allows for the size, materials, and patterns of Jambox to coexist with function and sound quality make this funky product's design holistic.

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### SCIENCE CAFE, 2013

**ANNA WIGANDT, MOLDOVA**

Science Cafe is a cafe which also functions as a library of science literature, featuring scientific motifs in its aesthetics.

#### DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

- **ECONOMIC**
  
  The encouragement of scientific study is an economic bonus at Science Cafe. With no extra cost for the time, space, and community offered here, a customer can take advantage of all that value for the cost of a cup of coffee.

- **AESTHETIC**
  
  Science Cafe uses the cozy atmosphere of a cafe to seamlessly encourage another activity, the study of science. The aesthetic queues taken from science differentiate the cafe visually from others.

- **PHILANTHROPIC**
  
  As the library aspect of Science Cafe is free and open to cafe customers, it allows those interested in science convenient access to materials and others who share their passion for learning. This creates a unique atmosphere and is specifically directed towards youth.
### STUDIO MUG, 1940-1950
HEATH CERAMICS, SAUSALITO CA

Studio Mug designer, Edith Heath, preferred smoking while drinking her coffee so she create a mug with a low handle to free up the index and middle finger for a cigarette. Heath also saw the need in her personal life for a mug that could safely hang on her houseboat as opposed to traditional shelf storage. Thus, the elongated handle allows for hanging storage.

#### DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

- **Aesthetic**
  
  The delicate, elongated, low handle creates a challenge of aesthetic and physical balance. Therefore, the studio mug is shorter than other Heath mugs to be visually balanced and create a comfortable tactile experience.

- **Cultural**
  
  As this mug is specially designed for smokers and houseboaters, it offers itself to a specific customer base who subscribe to a similar lifestyle as Edith Heath. The story behind the design of the Studio Mug is told to customers as a selling point as it paints a picture of Heath and creates a more personal connection with the product and with the culture of drinking coffee.

- **Ergonomic**
  
  Designed to enhance the experience of smoking and sipping, the studio mug is adapted from traditional mug design to increase ease of use and comfort of the customer, putting ergonomics first.

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### MILK WINE PACKAGING, 2012
EMILY HALE, PRATT INSTITUTE STUDENT

This Cabernet Sauvignon’s package design uses cultural references as well as stunning aesthetics to stand out in a sea of wine options and to make an personal connection with its customer base.

#### DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

- **Aesthetic**
  
  The dramatic contrast of white and black packaging create an eye-catching affect. The bold type and simplistic imagery provide contrast among typical wine labeling and packaging as well to stand out to customers.

- **Cultural**
  
  Milk has a cultural connotation of being the most innocent of beverages. The labeling and packaging of what is obviously wine as milk is a cheeky nod to the idea of an alcoholic beverage masquerading as nothing more than a bottle of milk. But there is an even deeper level of cultural back story to this design. The wine is made in San Francisco and thus, the title Milk also references the openly-gay political figure, Harvey Milk. These cultural references create the holistic nature of this design, connecting the product to the customer whose culture reinforces the product.
PAS HOUSE, 2012
FRANCOIS PERRIN AND GIL LEBON DELAPOINT, MALIBU, CA

PAS house, designed for pro-skater Pierre Andre Senizergues, is composed of a ribbon-like structure that can be skated, inside and out.

DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

AESTHETIC
The fluid structure of PAS house defies traditional architecture as its continuous surface is uncommon and its use for skateboarding is groundbreaking. Each visual aspect of design is informed by the unique use of the space as a skateboarding haven.

SUSTAINABLE
According to the project’s website, this 2200 sq ft house will include sustainable feature such as using only wind or solar power, gathering and recycling rainwater, and using locally sourced construction materials.

CULTURAL
PAS house is created to celebrate the culture of Southern California skateboarding. Every surface, including furniture is skate-able, making the clear statement of what is most important to its user. PAS house provides everything it’s client could want to do: eat, sleep, skate.

RARE/UNIQUE
The first house of its kind, the design of PAS house is 100% custom. Such a novelty could be recreated but as PAS house is located in Malibu and designed to fit within that community and culture, it is truly one of a kind.

TECHNOLOGICAL
Contemporary design and construction methods make possible this continuous, sinuous design which would have been either unthinkable or unattainable in the past.

HEAD TRIP SCULPTURE, 2000-2010
KELLY WEARSTLER, LOS ANGELES, CA

Designer Kelly Wearstler has established her brand as high-end and ultra-sophisticated, yet funky and slightly avant garde. Her Head Trip sculptures are now iconic Wearstler pieces.

DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

AESTHETIC
Wearstler’s Head Trip sculptures combine the most glamorous materials, gold, bronze, stone, marble, venetian plaster, etc. They are visually striking and their greatest value lies in the aesthetic beauty of their form.

HISTORICAL
The Head Trip sculptures are inspired by Cubist forms, referencing the art movement of the early twentieth century. Art collectors who are particularly interested in cubism may see this piece as having a greater art historical value.

RARE/UNIQUE
Wearstler’s pieces are extremely expensive. They are designed for an exclusive audience and are coveted as symbols of style and status.
AIRBAG FOR CYCLISTS, 2010
HOVDING, SWEDEN

Hovding’s Airbag for Cyclists inflates at the moment before impact to provide the shock absorption and distribution of force, protecting the neck and head. Advertised as an “invisible helmet”, the Airbag provides a fashionable alternative to traditional helmets while achieving the highest level of protection of any helmet.

DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

Aesthetic
The most unique value the Hovding Airbag for Cyclists provides is aesthetic value. It replaces the standard hardshell bike helmet with a more subtle collar. The shell comes in a variety of colors and patterns. Revolutionizing the appearance of a bicycle helmet, the Airbag for Cyclists becomes a desirable accessory.

Universal
Because the airbag deploys flexibly around a users head, it offers some universal value in that traditional helmets must always fit comfortably and be adjusted for each person who wears one. The Airbag, however, will fit around most everyone within its size category.

Technological
The technology used to create the Airbag is cutting edge and a vital part of this product’s appeal. Using smarter technology, the Airbag can be more attractive and more user-friendly. A customer will be willing to pay for the cost of this technology as it allows for even more value in multiple categories of design value.

Ergonomic
The Airbag for Cyclists is advertised as being “ergonomically designed with even weight distribution across the shoulders. It is slightly heavier at the back than at the front so that when cycling the weight is resting on your back.”

THE LAKE COLLECTION RUGS, 2014
RAW EDGES FOR GOLRAN, MILAN, ITALY

The Lake Collection from Golran uses principles of optical art to create rugs whose colors appear differently from different perspectives. The quality and construction techniques of these rugs allow them to be both a product and a work of art.

DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

Aesthetic
The experiential quality of the Lake Collection is created when a viewer changes his/her position and the rug’s physical appearance changes. This optical illusion makes the rug an interactive piece and the aesthetics are visual, tactile, and experiential.

Historical
As the piece is inspired by lenticular Israeli artist Yaacov Agam, it has historical value as it recreates a movement in art history.
Dreamball is a unique package design for aid packages delivered to third world countries. The package can be broken into pattern pieces that assemble into different standard sized balls for play. Football made out of woven cardboard from care packages are sturdy and bouncy, providing an opportunity for local children to play together.

### DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

- **Economic**
  - The economic cost of the Dreamball is covered in the economic cost of the care package. The economic value of the ball is a bonus. Dreamball requires no more material and little manufacturing adjustments.

- **Sustainable**
  - The cardboard for Dreamball is being re-purposed when it is folded into a ball for play. Not only is cardboard already recyclable but this application is re-purpose-able as well.

- **Universal**
  - The cylindrical shape of the care package is designed to roll, rather being lifted, so that a even someone of small stature or physical disability can still maneuver it. As this product is delivered to multiple countries of different languages, simple and clear imagery communicate the purpose of Dreamball to all.

- **Cultural**
  - As Dreamball care packs can create multiple sizes of balls for various sports, it allows for children to play a myriad of games. Celebrating the culture of childhood play as a natural and important part of all cultures creates a sense of community and hope. Dreamball provides the opportunity for children to play together.

- **Philanthropic**
  - Though aid packages are already philanthropic by nature, Dreamball goes one step further to deliver simple, intangible necessities: hope, play, creativity, and community.

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KLAX is a multi-use tool that clamps to any stick to create an ax. Compact and adjustable, it saves space without sacrificing function.

### DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

- **Economic**
  - Rather than capitalizing on economy of price, KLAX exhibits super economic use of space. When hiking, backpacking, mountain climbing, etc., a KLAX takes up little space. When a user needs an ax, he/she are most likely in a place when they can find a stick to attach it to.

- **Technological**
  - The technology that allows KLAX to adjust to fit a handle is simple but intelligently used. The value of the compact-ability of KLAX outweighs the cost of the technology that makes it possible.

- **Ergonomic**
  - As an adjustable, flexible product, KLAX can be used on a handle sized correctly for the user and can be placed wherever is most comfortable.
BOGO BRUSH, 2010
BOGO BRUSH DETROIT, MI

BOGO Brush brings the “buy one, give one” business model to dental hygiene. For every BOGO Brush purchased by a consumer, BOGO matches it with a donated BOGO Brush.

DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

SUSTAINABLE
BOGO brushes are made of two types of eco-plastic. The first is a biodegradable plastic made from plants, the second is a recyclable plastic made from already recycled plastic. The manufacturing of these plastics is cutting-edge and paves the way for other products using eco-plastic to capitalize on BOGO’s development and research.

PHILANTHROPIC
The “buy one, give one” model is not new to consumers but BOGO Brush is using it to draw focus to dental hygiene specifically. Considering that everyone buys toothbrushes, BOGO offers added philanthropic value to a cost all consumers incur anyway.

JEWISH MUSEUM IDENTITY, 2014
SAGMEISTER AND WALSH, NEW YORK, NY

“The new identity system...is founded on ‘sacred geometry’, an ancient geometric system from which the Star of David was formed. The entire branding system is drawn on this grid, from the word and logo mark, to dozens of patterns, icons, typography, and illustrations.”
- www.sagmeisterwalsh.com

DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

AESTHETIC
The powerful impact that the aesthetics of this design creates is the distinctiveness, consistency, and uniqueness of the geometric forms. The aesthetic theme is so integrated into each element that it becomes a visual identity for the museum, easily recognizable and rooted in meaning.

HISTORICAL
The very existence of the Jewish Museum is founded on the importance of history; the study, sharing, and preservation of history. Sagmeister and Walsh use iconography of people to represent the subjects of this history in an easily understood, visually consistent way.

CULTURAL
The combination of contemporary aesthetics through geometry, custom type, and technology with the traditional study of Jewish history highlights the cultural experience of Judaism today. This very combination of old and new, the synergy of past and present define the culture the museum seeks to celebrate.

TECHNOLOGICAL
Sagmeister and Walsh’s design for the Jewish Museum includes digital media, crucial to the contemporary museum experience. An app uses smart phone cameras or computer webcams to pixelates viewers faces and create an abstracted portrait using the “sacred geometry” grid. These abstracted faces blur individual features, emphasizing the commonalities of people and displaying each person as a sum of little pieces.
BATB VII, 2014
HAROSHI, TOKYO, JAPAN

BATB, Battle of the Berries, skateboard competition features a unique trophy each year. BATB VII’s trophy, was designed by artist Haroshi.

DESIGN VALUE CATEGORIES ACHIEVED

**A**  
AESTHETIC
The signature aesthetic of Haroshi is comprised of pixelated and smooth combinations of colorful and natural wood. The life-like form of the foot mixed with the vibrant color and texture of the trophy create a chaotic and energetic composition.

**S**  
SUSTAINABLE
Haroshi’s pieces are made up of recycled skateboards. Each piece is comprised of skateboards which were used in different locations by different people. The piece is literally made up of skateboarding as a practice.

**C**  
CULTURAL
Haroshi’s work means more to the skateboarding community then it might mean to others. The cultural symbolism of a Haroshi BATB sculpture creates value within this community.

**R**  
RARE/UNIQUE
Clearly quite different than the standard bronze-figurine-on-a-plaque trophy, Haroshi’s trophy is coveted as a prize. BATB selects a different trophy each year so the BATB VII trophy is most rare.

CONCLUSION

THE COMMON THREADS METHOD AS A TOOL IN DESIGN EDUCATION

As students make design decisions, they consider the 10 categories of design value, consciously or subconsciously. The framework for evaluation these categories provide can be implemented in design education to help students to discover which values their designs focus on and which values they do not address in their design work. This method of evaluation may also help students to articulate the greater, holistic meaning behind their design decisions by providing a vocabulary for describing design value.

Once students have evaluated their past work through this “common threads method” they can use the framework as a tool when beginning a new project to outline the focus of their design concepts.

DESIGNERS AS WEAVERS, CREATORS OF WORTH

“Behind all [well-designed] products are people, some of them designers, who make the decisions on our behalf, connecting the far reaches of manufacturing, science, and technology to our lives in ways that make sense,” (Grinyer, 2001).

The incorporation of design value is ideally a relatively small investment in cost with large returns of worth. It may result in a financial cost as the producer must pay a designer, perhaps one with specialized knowledge. To gain the added worth created through the intelligent use of design values, or common threads
of elevated design, producers must employ designers to weave them throughout the entire process of product creation.

Thus, the increasing importance of design in all fields becomes clear. Forbes contributor, Adam Swann, states in his article *Welcome to the Era of Design* that there exists “a new, mass expectation of good design: that products and services will be better thought through, simplified, made more intuitive, elegant and more enjoyable to use.” As an expectation for holistic design increases, the investment in designers by employers becomes more critical, and the education that teaches designers how to use a process of design thinking to effectively incorporate design values and create holistic products becomes increasingly exciting and important to this generation of students and employers.

In their book *Do You Matter? How Great Design Will Make People Love Your Company*, Robert Brunner and Stewart Emery Brand state “the difference between a great product and a merely good product is that a great product embodies an idea that people can understand and learn about—an idea that grows in their minds, one they emotionally engage with.”

Even if a producing body has a strong sense of value or idea that engages emotionally with consumers as Brunner and Emery suggest, elevated design is needed to integrate that value into the product itself. Designers become experts on how to achieve this alignment of value and product through the study and practice of design thinking. Through this practice, designers make informed decisions which result in holistic design.

Investing in holistic design and designers who are experts at comprehensive design thinking ensures the creation of design value, the translation of that value to customers, and ultimately the success and positive impact a product has in the world. When the common threads of design value are understood and utilized by designers, they can be woven all throughout a product from conception to completion, creating elevated, holistic design.

Brunner and Emery sum up the need to invest in holistic designers, telling companies, “Design establishes the relationship between your company and your customers...for companies that make products, design or die is, in fact, the deal.”


CAPSTONE REFLECTION

As an interior design major, research was often a critical part of my design process but a process that was hardly ever documented, discussed, or evaluated. As an honors student, I was part of a group that discussed research constantly and practiced the research side of academics often. These two worlds never quite collided until I worked on the capstone required by the honors college for graduation.

I cannot say it was an easy process. Some of the difficulties I faced included being the only interior design student working on a thesis at the time, working with faculty who had not often participated in capstone projects, struggling to smoothly work through the processing and deadlines that come along with the capstone project, and knowing how to pick a good thesis topic and carry out my research.

First, being the only student working on a capstone in my program and even department was a downer because I did not have anyone to check in with on a peer level. Though I have made "honors friends" during my time at USU, I have struggled to make true friends who I happen to know through honors due to the lack of Art and Design students in the honors program. I never see honors students except at honors events. If I had some closer acquaintances in honors who I saw often, I know it would have helped me to keep on track, give me opportunities to discuss research with students going through the same process, and provide some empathy at times of stress. This whole capstone process was quite a lonely one for me and I think I should have reached out to honors sooner to maybe find me a buddy in another department to meet up with every once in awhile. I know there was discussion of a thesis support group at one point, I think that would have been wonderful. I would recommend to future students to find some support at the peer level so that they are not always relying on support from their faculty advisor alone.

Second, though I had the full support of my faculty advisor, she was not very experienced in the process of completing an honors capstone. This meant that we both were learning as we went and that was in some ways very beneficial. This was a problem when we didn’t understand requirements, deadlines, or capstone processes in the same way. We were sort of floating out there together. The other problem here was choosing a faculty advisor who was extremely busy. As the student, I should have been more proactive about scheduling consistent meeting times with her so that I did not fall behind, waiting to find a less-busy time...because there never is a less-busy time!

Third, I struggled to smoothly follow the capstone process and missed some deadlines along the way, and scrambled to finish up some aspects of my project. This all comes back to the two previous problems but I also should have been more careful at following the honors requirements. Now that the honors website is up and running, I think this will help with some of that. I recommend that future students read through everything on the website several times and some of the information is spread out.

Fourth, I had a very hard time choosing what to do my research on. This resulted in my tackling

"If I had some closer acquaintances in honors, I saw often, I know it would have helped me to keep on track...and provide some empathy at times of stress,"

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a very broad project that was not even very clearly defined until the end. I was cautioned against this by my departmental honors advisor but proceeded with it anyway. This meant that my research process was too broad, undirected, large, and slow. It also meant that I was able to follow little veins of research out of personal curiosity that was very inspiring. I should have focused on a narrowed topic to make my job a little more manageable. Part of the reason I shied away from that was because I have always been interested in big topics, large-scale theoretical conversations about design. In the end, though I think it made the process more challenging, this breadth of project was personally satisfying and led me to an even broader range of future research topics.

The Student Research Symposium was my favorite part of the capstone process. It was so fantastic to stand alongside other researchers and talk with them about their research journey. There was only one other student from my college but even that was exciting. I got to discuss my capstone with Alexa Sand which was very cool, she provided a new perspective, interesting discussion, and very helpful feedback-helpful because it was understanding and critical. This symposium was the only real relief I got from the "lonely floating" feeling I described above. I also loved the opportunity to present such a visual medium as a poster, considering that graphic design is a strength of mine; I even got a badge for my poster design! I would recommend it to anyone and I wish I had participated in it earlier as a contract researcher.

The final recommendation I have for students is to really consider whether or not an honors thesis is for them. Some programs at USU have built-in capstone projects that may be sufficient for what the student is looking for. In my case, the thesis was rewarding and interesting but also somewhat unnecessary and a huge addition to a heavy course load that was difficult to manage. It comes down to quality control; would you rather have more work that has been messy and rushed, or less work that is thorough and polished? I would have loved to have had the time to really dedicate myself to my thesis to maintain my usual standards.

At the same time, this thesis process has been very rewarding in that it has set the stage for future research. I would not say that this process what smooth and spectacular. I would, however, say that it opened up interest to continue research and provided a baseline for me to measure my future research against. When I view this capstone as a learning process, it was extremely beneficial and that is the true final product I take away from my time in honors at USU.

"When I view this capstone as a learning process, it was extremely beneficial and that is the true final product I take away from my time in honors at USU.

I can't stress how wonderful the honors staff has been. Every time I've reached out with a concern they have been so helpful; I only wish I had reached out even more. I think the sense of dedication they have for students is not only crucial and helpful but is so clear from the beginning. They do a great job letting you know they are there to help.

I am now even more passionate about bringing the arts and research together. My ability to do this has improved and I think that every time an arts student participates in a capstone it helps to educate the faculty and college about how to better work with honors. I sincerely hope this relationship continues to develop so that there are more Art and Design students in honors in the future and that they can support each other along the way.
Born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah, Laura went to Utah State University as an undeclared student hoping to find a field that would utilize her left brain and her right brain. After finding the perfect fit in the Interior Design Program, Laura completed two professional internships while in school, one at Midwest Commercial Interiors in Salt Lake City, Utah, and another at Rapt Studio in San Francisco, California. Her senior year she served as President of the U.S. Green Building Council USU student chapter and received a scholarship to attend U.S.G.B.C.'s 2014 Greenbuild conference in New Orleans. Laura is an honors student, graduating with University and Departmental Honors after completing a senior thesis evaluating the commonalities of interior, product, and graphic design. Passionate about all things design, art, and architecture, she was thrilled at the opportunity to travel with the Interior Design Program to Italy, France, and the UK in 2014. Laura's post-grad plans include commercial design work in a big city, living and working abroad, pursuing a master's degree, and even the possibility of teaching design in the future.