

A VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN RESOURCE

TEACHER'S
NOTES

THINKING, TALKING & WRITING

about visual communications

emmarickard's

CONTEXTS

How do visual communications reflect the time and/or place in which they are made?

How are visual communications influenced by the locations in which they appear?

TIME & PLACE

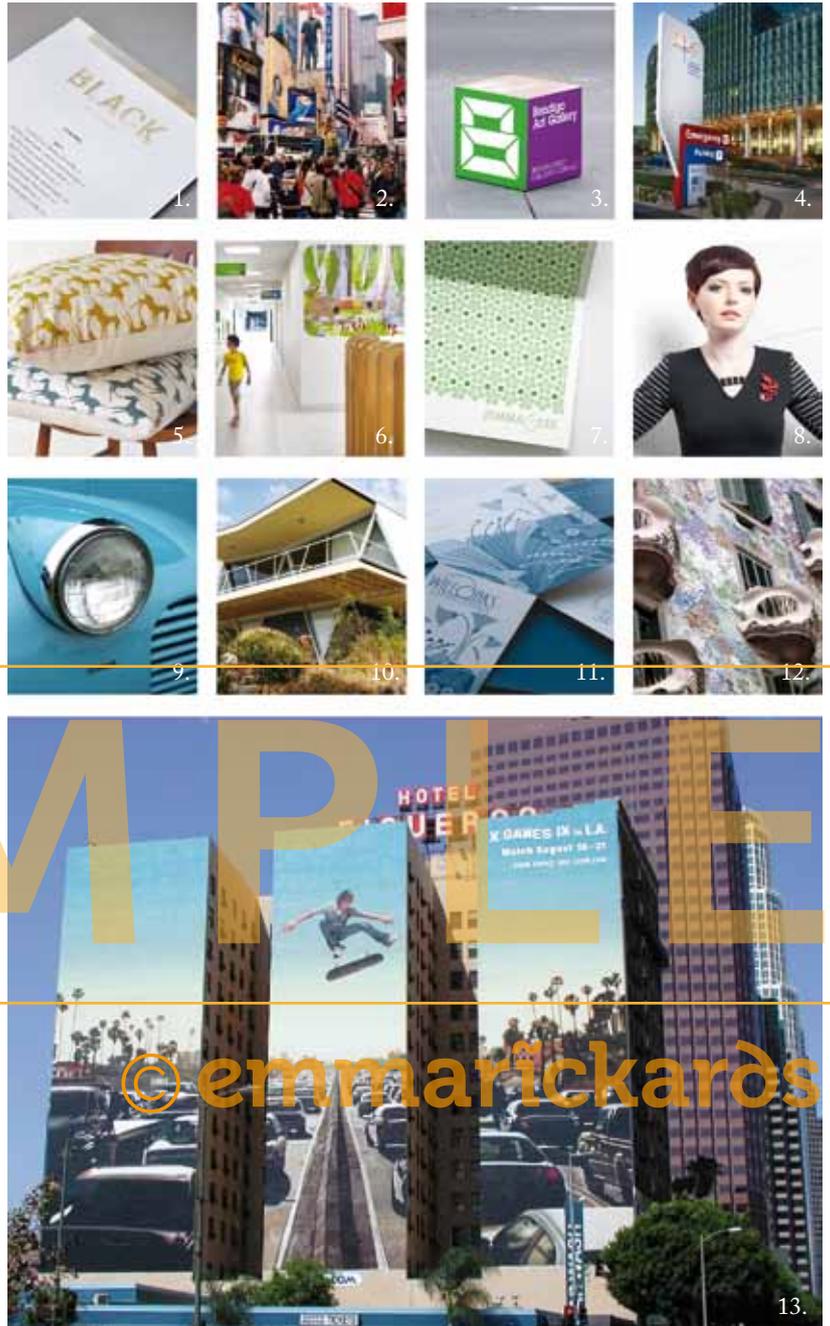
Visual Communications reflect the time and place in which they are made. The tastes and trends of a period or movement, key historical events, the values, beliefs and traditions of societies and the emergence of new materials and technologies all play a part in design. Designers also draw inspiration from their own surroundings as well as different times and places, as they reference the past, imitate or complement a style, or evoke an alternative destination.

Look at the screen prints of South African label Skinny LaMinx on page 28. For her fabric collections, designer Heather Moore draws inspiration from both her own local context and the designs of other times and places. Cups in the kitchen, indigenous plants and ancient cave drawings found in the nearby mountains are interpreted in patterns that reflect Heather's love of both Scandinavian and mid century design.

LOCATION

When designing a visual communication, considering the place or places where it will be seen is an important factor in its success. Where it is located will influence who sees it, as well as its purpose and design.

Look at this billboard promoting the action sports event Summer X Games. Towering above the busy city streets, three identical buildings are enveloped in a daredevil stunt of gigantic proportions. In the context of downtown Los Angeles, the impossible scene could almost be real, as the surrounding streets, suburbs and sky are frozen as one awe-inspiring moment. Like a trompe l'oeil painting, the resulting optical illusion makes us look twice, delivering maximum impact and a memorable campaign to those on the streets below.



1. A menu by Studio Round for Black, a restaurant at Sydney casino, The Star. Photograph courtesy of Studio Round 2. Billboards in Times Square, New York. Stock image by Caroline Keyzor www.sxc.hu 3. Wayfinding solution by Studio Round for the Bendigo Art Gallery. Photograph courtesy of Studio Round 4. Signage at the entrance to The Royal Children's Hospital by Buro North. Photograph courtesy of Buro North 5. Heather Moore drew inspiration from local cave paintings for her Sevilla Rock textile collection. Photograph courtesy of Heather Moore 6. Jane Reiserger's illustrations for the Royal Children's Hospital depict flora and fauna from Victoria's regional areas. Photograph by Fraser Marsden, courtesy of Buro North 7. Frangipani flowers on a wedding invitation evoke the event's Thai location. Design & photograph by Emma Rickards 8. For her fashion label Manque Design, Susan Nethercote draws inspiration from the inner city context of her Collingwood studio to create an edgy, urban aesthetic. Photograph by Krystelle Stephens - Stellar Images 9. Car design over time has evolved in response to tastes, trends and new technologies. Stock image by Andrew Beierle www.sxc.hu 10. The McCraith House in seaside Dromana reflects the Modernist movement popular during the 1950's. Photograph by Emma Rickards 11. Printed stationary for WillOaks Boutique Accommodation features an Art Deco-inspired garden. Design & photograph by Emma Rickards 12. The buildings of Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi reference the Art Nouveau movement in their sinuous, undulating forms. Stock image of Casa Battló in Barcelona by Nico van Geldere www.sxc.hu 13. Billboards in downtown LA for the Summer X Games. Stock image by jswiz3838 www.sxc.hu

The X Games billboard responds to its context in a particularly effective way, taking advantage of the expansive building facades to dwarf a sea of advertising below, and reach an ever-changing audience of commuters and passers-by.

WRITING ABOUT CONTEXTS

A simple description about a visual communication's context might require some research or imaginative thinking to determine its most likely location. For our Lindt packaging example, we need to consider where its audience would most likely encounter the product.

“The Lindt chocolate range is widely available in supermarkets, department and specialty confectionary stores, and exclusive Lindt chocolate cafes throughout Australia and abroad. Temporary point of sale displays featuring additions to the range regularly appear at these locations in the lead-up to celebrations such as Easter and Christmas. Mini bars in high-end hotels regularly stock Lindt chocolates, which are also a favourite inclusion in gift baskets and hampers.”

You might also write about how the visual communication's design reflects the context/s in which it will be seen or used.

“The Lindt chocolate's bright red packaging draws attention when placed amongst competing confectionary on the shelves of supermarkets, specialty shops and department stores. Its elegant type and imagery also makes the product suitable for inclusion in sophisticated gift hampers, and in the mini bars of high-end hotel rooms.”

TASKS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Quick sketches, mix and match and a mini design history exercise ...



A CHAIR IN THERE

COLLECT IMAGES of various locations, such as a rooftop garden, busy city street or gallery courtyard. Ask students to quickly sketch a chair or other item that complements the space. Give them a time limit! Share the designs with one another, and ask students to describe how their concepts respond to each context.



ADS & MAGS: MIX & MATCH

DISPLAY A COLLECTION of magazine advertisements together with the magazines from which they came. Jumble their order so the home of each advertisement is disguised. Ask students to match each advertisement to its magazine, and describe how its design has been influenced by its context.



FIND OUT FAST

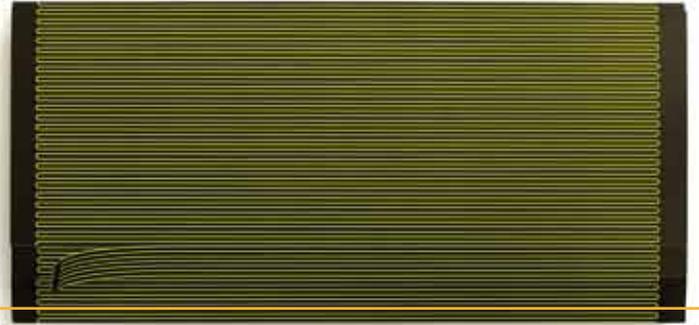
COLLECT IMAGES of iconic objects or architecture from various key design movements. Pop them in a hat and divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to research their selected image for no more than 25 minutes, recording the key characteristics of the object and movement to which it belongs. Share the findings with the class. This task could precede a folio project where students draw inspiration from past design styles.



A selection of visual communication examples (those featured here and on the Contexts poster) that reflect the time or place in which they were made, or have been designed for a specific location.

Contexts student handout





GINGERBOY

Melbourne restaurant Gingerboy is found in the heart of the city, in a laneway just off Chinatown. The menu's Asian flavours are inspired by hawker-style street food sold at marketplaces and roadside stalls in the Southeast Asian region.

The restaurant's vibrant atmosphere intentionally recalls the lively streets and bustling markets of Asia, and is influenced by the region's dynamic energy and spirited approach to colour. Renowned chef Teage Ezard opened the restaurant in 2006, with branding and signage by Studio Round and a fitout by Elenberg Fraser.¹

For the creation of Gingerboy's identity, Studio Round found inspiration in the neon signage that populates the streets of Asia. Linear, noodle-like interpretations of type twist and turn in the fashion of tubular lights and are displayed in fluorescent hues. The restaurant's illuminated and oversized street sign mimics the vertical display of type regularly seen in Asian examples, and blankets the surrounds in a dramatic neon glow.²

Elenberg Fraser's interior design continues the Asian theme, drawing inspiration from both the hawker markets and Shanghai teahouses of the 1950's. The traditional material of black bamboo lines the walls and ceiling, and is laced with countless tiny LED lights to evoke the atmosphere of a night market under the stars.³ A giant red light shade hangs above diners like a festive lantern, its delicate fringe suggestive of Gingerboy's linear logo while echoing the surrounding bamboo detail. Golden tiles on the restaurant's exterior shimmer under its street signage, and inject a sense of glamour amongst its unassuming surrounds.

While Gingerboy's menu, branding, facade and interior seek to evoke a place far from the streets of Melbourne, it is perfectly at home in its busy laneway location. The neon signage sits comfortably against the urban landscape, enjoying an impressive visual presence amidst the laneway's tight confines and echoing the vibrant sea of banners in nearby Chinatown.

The restaurant's identity captures the youthful energy of Melbourne's inner streets, while complementing the glow of Gingerboy's shimmering interior and appealing to its hip crowd of dedicated foodies.



IMAGINE THAT YOU'VE BEEN asked to design a logo and/or interior for a beachside eatery called The Place. How would the style of the eatery and your designs be influenced by the beachside context? How might your designs differ if The Place was located in a tourist town in the mountains, a busy city food court, a high-end hotel or a hip-and-happening suburban street?



STUDIO ROUND ALSO worked with Teage Ezard on the creation of an identity for his new restaurant Black, located in Sydney's casino The Star. Compare the restaurant's branding to that developed by Frost* Design for Chiswick, a relaxed Sydney diner owned by Matt Moran and located in historic gardens. How have these branding solutions been influenced by the context of each restaurant?



LIKE GINGERBOY, many eateries utilise the design of their interior or fittings to evoke other times or places. Foolscape Studio's Sushi Sushi Pop Up in Melbourne's Chadstone Shopping Centre recalls a Japanese aesthetic, while Spanish canteen A Cantina by Estudio Nomada evokes the feeling of dining outdoors. Consider how each space uses the design elements and principles to suggest an alternative context.



THE THIRD WAVE CAFÉ by Tony Hobba Architects is located at Torquay Surf Beach, and recently won an Eat-Drink-Design Award for Best Café Design. Contrasting in style, context, purpose and audience is Mim Design's Yellowglen Marquee, designed by the interior specialists for its location in the birdcage during the 2011 Melbourne Cup Carnival. Compare the two structures and consider how each reflects its surrounding context.



Gingerboy identity, branding & signage

Text from this case study

¹ *Gingerboy: Philosophy*, Gingerboy <http://www.gingerboy.com.au/food-wine>

² *Projects: Gingerboy*, Studio Round, <http://round.com.au/projects/clients/gingerboy>

³ *Project: Gingerboy*, Elenberg Fraser, <http://elenbergfraser.com/#!/project/gingerboy>

Faculty of Architecture Building & Planning

SAMPLE

The
Dean's
Lecture
Series

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2006

Tuesdays 6.30pm
(except where noted)
Prince Philip Theatre
Ground Floor
Architecture and
Planning Building
Gate 3 Swanston St

These are FREE events.
Bookings not required.

Kengo Kuma /
4 April
Director, Kengo Kuma and
Associates, Tokyo, Japan
"Anti-Object"

Kongjian Yu /
30 May
Dean, Graduate School of
Landscape Architecture, Peking
University, Beijing, PR China.
"Internationality & Identity:
Towards Modern Chinese
Landscape Architecture
& Urban Design"

Lawrence Vale /
14 July (Friday)
Professor of Urban Design
and Planning, Massachusetts
Institute of Technology,
Cambridge, USA. In association
with the Rethinking Nationalism
Conference hosted by
The University of Melbourne,
14-16 July.
"The Temptations of Nationalism
in Modern Capital Cities"

John Wardle /
1 August
Director, John Wardle
Architects, Melbourne,
Australia
"Exaggeration"

Sue Holliday /
12 September
Director, City Strategy,
DEGW, Sydney, Australia
"Inside Out: A New Way
of Planning"

Len Stevens /
3 October
Emeritus Professor,
Civil Engineering,
The University of Melbourne,
Australia
"The Creation and Evolution
of Structural Forms"

Panel discussion /
17 October
"Melbourne Docklands:
Private vs Public Interest"

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POSTER A: Faculty of Architecture Building & Planning: The Dean's Lecture Series by Studio Round

Image courtesy of Studio Round

ALL TOGETHER NOW!



So, now that we're familiar with the key components of a visual communication analysis, have a go at putting it all together into an extended response. Here's a sample comparative analysis using posters by Melbourne studios Lanz & Martin and Studio Round.

The Dean's Lecture Series (Poster A) is an annual event presented by the Faculty of Architecture, Building & Planning at The University of Melbourne. In 2006, Studio Round were asked to produce a poster for the lecture series that people would want to take from the walls and keep, rather than discard after the event's completion.

The High Noon Street Festival (Poster B) is a day-long event celebrating the Melbourne suburb of Northcote, its local businesses and talent. In 2011, design studio Lanz & Martin were asked to create a poster for the festival, together with a program, signage, branding and advertising campaign.

The general purpose of both posters is to advertise, promote and increase public awareness of an event in order to encourage attendance and participation. More specifically, each poster informs of the event's date, location and website, while providing key details to inspire the interest and actions of its audience. Poster B uses a festive illustration, bold type and a vibrant colour palette to attract the attention of passers by, while Poster A incorporates a creased textural pattern over the entire poster's surface to subtly invoke the curiosity of its audience. Engagement with the poster is encouraged by a small invitation in the top right corner asking viewers to "please use your imagination with me, shape me into something new". Here we see the designer's aim to set the poster apart from others, establishing a point of difference and elevating it from simply a poster to that of collector's item.

Both posters were displayed in a variety of locations prior to the advertised events. Most likely, Poster A would have featured on walls around the Faculty of Architecture, Building & Planning and the wider University of Melbourne, and possibly at other local tertiary institutions offering similar courses about the built environment. The poster may have been distributed amongst students studying architecture,

together with local design professionals and their practices. Poster B would most likely have appeared in shop windows along High Street, the main shopping strip of inner city suburb Northcote, and home to a creative mix of retailers, designers, music venues and eateries. The poster was also displayed as a billboard in local bus shelters and above the main street, and as an advertisement in local newspapers. A festival program featuring the poster's image was available at local retailers, Darebin City Council and the local community information centre.

The festival promoted in Poster B aims to attract a youthful and creative crowd interested in good food, independent music, fashion, arts and crafts, and who enjoy the opportunity to relax amongst a festive atmosphere. Targeted by the advertising campaign are local residents, families, groups of friends and visitors keen to experience and support Northcote's cultural and creative offerings. Poster A, on the other hand, attracts an audience defined by an interest in architecture. Ab ipietur sequi ulpa culpa sinullu ptenimodi doluptati aut as eosant faccupit atibus alibus voluptium et asimus, ipsaped et harchic temquia simolores nulla commimusa nem que num rerum es sed ex eium voluptae mosapic tem volorem volor a non ressit evero vit volorei cianditempos utam, ommolup tatures ciistias iunt latus venihic totatae mo berfercius, sequiaest lab is cuptatas sam, quia pos dolor magnihitaspe in plandament doluptaquam, si odia sed eum quo voluptatur aped ut quae vendae eaque is a cum quia qui officienis aut vit que sandae cus, sit quietest, essequas rendam faceaque cusam, to quosapid eatasitat. Sunt et dolut re cum sin conem eos iuscipid maximin commodis acil id maxim adis maion nossit fugias dolori consendiatet quam, in consequas quodigenis renesequibus

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