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Reflective Cover Letter

Introduction

Throughout the semester, as the documents became more intricate and difficult, I was forced to consider information design more in depth with each assignment. At the beginning, I was able to rely on my natural “knack for design,” if you will. Being a daughter of a graphic designer and an artist of my own, some things about design are intuitive for me. As the semester progressed, though, these intuitions were challenged, and by the time the brochure assignment rolled around, I was relying almost entirely on my information design skills learned in class. This also means that the most transformed document is the brochure because it was the one that challenged me the most and therefore had the most room for growth. In that design process, I learned to consider color more than what I think might look good: at times, single-spaced text *is* the way to, that a logo can do wonders, and a brochure about kids without any pictures of kids is rather ineffective. Of course, I learned other things throughout my other design processes and revisions, which I will now discuss in detail in the rest of the paper.

Document #1

View: <https://jufost14.wixsite.com/infodesign/document-1>

For my business card and letterhead, I did not make too many significant changes to the main design elements in each. However, I did add a back to my business card, and I also believe I can at least better explain my design choices than I could at the time of creation. To begin,

though, I will discuss the back I added to my business card. I decided to add a quotation from Martha Graham, an incredibly influential modern dance pioneer of the 20th century. She says, “Dance is communication, and so the great challenge is to speak clearly, beautifully and with inevitability.” I chose this quote for a few reasons. The first is that Martha Graham’s name is one that is well known to everyone in the dance world, and certainly some outside of it as well; therefore, it appeals to the logos of my document. An association, even if incredibly vague, to someone of such strong influence, appeals to the audience that I might have influence as well. At the very least, they know I’m involved in the dance world. The second reason I chose this quote is because, while I believe in the value of dance, not everyone does. This quote equates dance to communication and puts it in terms of speaking, which makes the art understandable to a more lay audience and likely gives it more value to some. This also contributes to the logos of my design.

The reason I put the quote in a black enclosure with white text is to: 1) repeat the similar design from the front with my logo, 2) create contrast with a relatively large white space, and 3) appear to take up more space while maintaining a minimalist ethos. I tried it originally with just a black rectangular outline with no fill, and it seemed bare and imbalanced with the front of the card. Using what I learned from Robin Williams, I implemented some C.R.A.P. to strengthen the design. I maybe could have experimented with alignment more, but since there was an off-center alignment on the front I decided to keep the contrast with the centered alignment of the enclosure with right-justified text. For my letterhead, the only adjustment I made was the suggestion to add a footer that contained more information than my overly-minimalist header. In this I included my contact information as well as the relevant parts of my identity (dancer and choreographer). In

order to keep the document cohesive, I also added a black rule in the header to tie the two together and indicate that everything in between is part of the letter.

Both of these documents represent my abilities to create original and contemporary designs unique to the need of a client. They also demonstrate my ability to make simple but effective design choices that coincide with the goal ethos. For example, the design elements of my documents (i.e. not the basal text of the letterhead) utilize a san serif typeface for a minimalist design, as well as clean lines and effective contrast while still providing all the necessary information. This makes me both an effective designer and an effective technical writer.

Document #2

View: <https://jufost14.wixsite.com/infodesign/document-2>

The changes made to this audition flyer did not affect the overall rhetoric of the document. It still conveys an ethos of both performance, community, and professionalism, as well as appeals to the pathos of wanting to be a part of a community and wanting to be a part of positive change. The logos changed in its details, such as more specific information on admission prices and who all is invited to attend, as well as the curator of the event. The ethos of a performance is conveyed mostly by the conventions of the layout and information provided by the flyer. This allows information to be communicated without having to state quite as much explicitly on the page. The image of bodies in apparent motion also contributes to the ethos of performance. This image also largely contributes to the ethos of community because the bodies are in close proximity in positions which suggest purpose or intent. As I described in my original memo, the sort of “sub-ethos” or possibly a pathos of this document is social justice, which seems like a futile cause without community support. The professional ethos is portrayed using

alignment and proximity rules and using Photoshop carefully in order to create a clean design that does not suggest that it was created by a student.

The pathos of this document is the feeling evoked by thoughts on community and social justice and wanting to be a part of positive social action. There are a few viewers who may not feel this, but that is the goal pathos because those who do experience that pathos are the ones that would be most likely to attend. Another contribution to this pathos is the slightly grainy or blurry quality of the picture. It is not perfectly clear because social justice matters are not perfectly clear. Also, the feeling that the clouds could be casting a fog or haze over the bodies at the bottom could evoke responses to the oppression in society. The logos of this document are the “who, what, where, when, and how much” facts throughout the document, and not much else really contributes to logos.

This use of rhetorical principles will hopefully target an audience interested in and passionate about social justice issues in our community as well as on a larger national and/or worldwide scale. Even if someone does not have these interests, however, it is intended to still appeal to them instead of pushing them away with material that may intimidate them or make them nervous. As I mentioned in the discussion of ethos, this flyer also adheres to the cultural conventions of performance flyers. This makes the document appropriate for the intended audience because they will know what is to be expected and what information they can get from the flyer. Having the title at the top and aligned left allows you to view that as the dominant element, and from there your eyes can bounce to the right to the factual information, and finally land on the image at the bottom. It is an effective way to provide information to the audience, because the dominant element—the title—provides them with something to remember and use for reference (ex. Asking someone about the title of a performance rather than something like the

date or ticket price). Then the factual information allows them to evaluate their involvement with the performance (ex. Are they in town that day, can they afford it, is it a long drive, are they interested in the subject matter). Lastly, the image evokes emotions and reminds them of the topic of the performance as well as provides them with one more way of remembering the flyer because the image will likely stick in their mind in case the title does not and they can then return to the flyer with that image.

Document #3

View: <https://jufost14.wixsite.com/infodesign/document-3>

As I alluded to in the introduction, this document went through a thorough design transformation. The ethos I decided to primarily convey was an ethos of National Dance Education Organization, which naturally also conveys an ethos of education. Previously I tried to do the opposite, by focusing on an education ethos and trying to tag on the NDEO; however, this proved much less effective for use of color and graphics especially. The primary ethos of NDEO is conveyed through the use of their logo and the colors of their organization, which are used throughout the document, as well as the relevant content of the brochure. The logo added a graphic element to the document, and I also added images of children in order to strengthen the ethos (dance education) as well as contribute to the pathos of the document. The pathos is a persuasive pull to enroll your child in dance by appealing to both the pathos and logos of the benefits of dance (creativity appeals to pathos more, and the cognitive benefits and other skills appeal to the logos of the audience by making more scientific claims.) Other appeals to logos are found in the use of “evidence report” and the title of the NDEO itself. These appeals to logos and pathos appeal to the audience, which is parents of children and adolescence. The document’s persuasive message is appropriate to the audience of the parents who are the ones who will

potentially take action and enroll their children in dance; children cannot really enroll themselves.

I catered to this audience with the layout of my brochure as well, by making the topic clear with a title that trivializes about dance, prompting a question to the parents. I also provide credibility clearly with the NDEO logo on the front page, which would likely be the second thing the parents read. This is important to making sure that parents take the information presented seriously and as credible. The inside flap gives an overview of the contents, emphasizing the main points of the persuasive argument. This allows them to not be overloaded with information but still evaluate the information that will be presented on a small scale. Then, when they open the brochure completely, they are already familiarized with the headings that they will notice first across the top. I also put the “logos” arguments in a repetitive design and the “pathos” argument (also the more familiar one to more for the value of dance) in a separate enclosure. This sends the audience’s sight right where I want them to go. Lastly, the back of the brochure allows them to easily follow up with the information and presents another, happy picture. This last picture is actually in a classroom, in order to appeal to the fact that children learn more than just movement skills in dance classes. The way I have designed this brochure and the enclosures, alignments, and a combination of serif and san serif texts demonstrates my knowledge on both the programs I am working with (InDesign for this document) and the principles of design that I have used in the course. The only thing that is not representative of skill is my use of double-spacing for the basal text of the brochure, which I would have fixed, but a glitch in the document did not allow it so I had to leave it for the purpose of this assignment.

Conclusion

In doing the Information Design Critique and evaluating in such detail the choices of *someone else*, it opened my eyes what decisions I was making both consciously and subconsciously about my designs. Likewise, evaluation my own choices throughout the semester in each memo also prepared me to think about someone else's choices. I have felt my ways of thinking grow and expand to be more aware of the "why?" question to every aspect of a document, no matter how simple, intricate, or non-conclusive the answer to that question is. This process of inquiry and analysis will carry me into any professional setting, whether it is tech writing, grad school, or even the dance studio. It has developed a thinking skill set that is applicable to almost anything. Beyond this critical thinking skill, I have also become familiar with the Adobe software that I previously had not had any experience with. Luckily, my mom was very familiar with these programs and could help me when I got stuck, but at times I got very frustrated when it wasn't similar to the way functions operate in Microsoft Word and Publisher. But despite these frustrations, I am glad to have this experience to put on resumes and use in future personal situations.

Overall throughout the semester I feel I have participated thoroughly in class as well as put in good effort for all the assignments. At times, I actually made myself *not* speak up in order to try to make room for other to speak (even though often they still did not). I enjoyed the fact, though, that I almost always did have some I could have said during the discussions and I recognized that that means I was regularly engaged in the class—which doesn't always happen, especially in night classes. I actually think that this is one of the most practical courses I have taken, as it has effectively prepared me to go into any field with not only technical writing knowledge but also an informed design process.