



Introduction to

Graphic Design

Methodologies and Processes

Understanding Theory and Application

John Bowers

**Introduction to
Graphic Design
Methodologies and Processes:
Understanding
Theory and Application**

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Introduction Background

Most graphic designers I know are cautious of graphic design methodologies and processes. They believe formalized approaches are akin to formulas or gimmicks that require little thought, hard work, or regard for the problem at hand. Little has been written on the subject for graphic design students. Yet we all have our own processes and benefit from advancements that are the result of research and methodologies.

Understanding, developing, and applying methodologies and processes can expand possibilities, develop your ideas, and better utilize your abilities. This can lead to work that is original, appropriate, inspiring, and responsible.

My formal education was largely based on developing my intuition through a simple problem-solving approach. While that has served me well, early on I benefited from exposure to design approaches from the Design Management Conference proceedings. Later professional experience at Landor also expanded my interest and understanding. There, I worked alongside consultants who researched specific audiences to achieve desired responses. Since then, I've learned on my own by reading, attending lectures, talking with others, and paying close attention to my own processes.

Profound technological and social changes require designers to be fluent in a variety of approaches to solving problems. As audiences diversify and as information is increasingly accessed and communities shaped by digital means, designers must be able to confront the interconnectedness of problems and society. Methodologies and processes can aid in the understanding of the connections and relationships.

Introduction Focus

This book demonstrates and explains how design is shaped by research methodologies and processes as applied to understanding audiences, organizing and using content, developing strategies, and defining purposes. To do this, it emphasizes not only client-associated and user-centered work but also non-client-associated, self-generated work, making a case for the latter as a way of informing the former.

The discussion begins with a section on problem seeking and solving presented as the underlying framework. Chapter 1 takes a broad look at research and introduces the book's issues, while Chapter 5 culminates the discussion through an in-depth focus on select designers' methodologies and processes. Chapters 2 through 4 cover the basics of how research methodologies and processes are applied (interpreting), function (targeting), and execution (creating).

Introduction Goal and Usage

Some methodologies and processes are common to all human activity and are used subconsciously, while others require study, practice, and reflection to be used effectively.

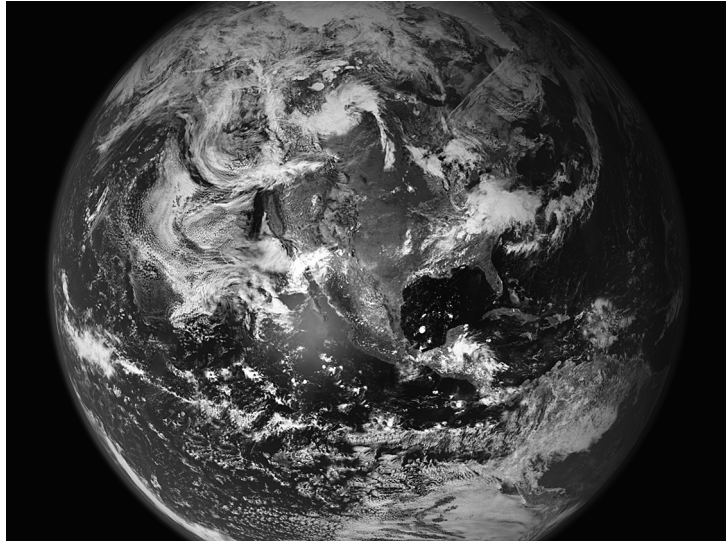
Many graphic design methodologies and processes originate or are widely used in other disciplines. For example, Gestalt psychology (the study of how humans perceive form) is the domain of psychology but applied in symbol design. Ethnography research (the study of user patterns) is the domain of anthropology but commonly employed in web design. These methodologies, along with others explored in this book, contribute to defining design as a discipline.

This book will help you:

- Recognize, interpret, and articulate the primary graphic design research methodologies and processes
- Understand, develop, and assess your own methodologies and processes
- Design more strategically, critically, collaboratively, ethically, and creatively for specific audiences, contexts, and responses

Even the best methodology and process cannot ensure good design. Success still depends on your ability to be engaged, to effectively draw from your experience, and to rely on your intuition and innate abilities. Like a well-designed and appropriately used grid, a methodology provides guidance through its conceptual framework.

Problem Seeking and Solving



0.1
Planet Earth

Problem Seeking

Increasingly used in education, problem seeking describes non-client-associated, often community-based engagement of an issue (such as sustainability) with an undetermined end form (e.g., from an informational poster to a neighborhood recycling program).

Problem Solving

Problem solving is the cognitive process of engaging an issue or set of conditions for the purpose of transforming it.

Humans by nature are seekers of meaning and solvers of problems. We are in a constant search to improve our lives and those of others, and to exercise a degree of control over our interactions and experiences. We have the capacity for reasoning and logical thinking, and thus can make associations, comparisons, and judgments that aid this search.

In the broadest sense, this describes problem solving. A problem in this context is viewed as a challenge and an opportunity, not something to avoid. It is a question raised for consideration and a solution.