

A PERSONAL ANALYSIS OF BEING A GRAPHIC DESIGNER,
CONSUMER, AND ENVIRONMENTALLY AWAKENED

BY DARLENE TOWN



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By Darlene Town

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Approved by Master's Examination Committee:

Nicole Juen

Bethany Koby

Geoff Halber

Lorena Howard-Sheridan

I am not my Stuff. Right?

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consumer, and environmentally awakened.

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Abstract

This thesis begins as an exploration of my concerns about consumerism, its ecological and social impacts, and the role I play as a graphic designer in an industry that encourages it. I discuss my observations about the disconnection from Nature and its impact on consumerist behavior. I share some of my research that compares the systems, the marketing engines, the ethnology of consumerism, the health impacts, and misunderstandings of “going green” as obstacles to change.

Having transitioned from an urban environment to a rural one, I share my own story of reconnection to natural systems. This has affected my outlook on my role as a graphic designer. It has made me more sensitive to my old habits and the dominant trends of materials used for visual communication.

Included in this thesis, to illustrate all of the above, are historical comparisons, current movements and individuals who actively support sustainable design thinking and practices, and my projects exploring my personal sacred space, my own consumption, and me as visual persuader.

The underlying question was how do I, or the graphic design industry overall, create a message that says “simplify, follow the natural laws, respect all life and natural systems, take less, give more?” This thesis does not fully answer that question as I discovered the problem is too complex for one answer. It is clear that the graphic designer of yesterday will need to become more facilitator today and work across disciplines to solve these large social problems. Graphic designer becomes design thinker with an ever widening set of skills.



Introduction

I was once seduced by my own craft to “sell” something through design. I admired the top designers in this field and cheered their accomplishments. There is a lot of talent in the world when it comes to making you want something you may not really need. Through the years, especially since World War II, a myth has been propagated convincing the public as well as manufacturing industries that increased consumption meant growth. The marketing and visual communication talent that was once used to promote frugality and support for war efforts was turned toward an opposing paradigm—people need stuff, and lots of it.

I am a consumer. My guilty pleasures are shoes, clothes, movies, and books. I also live outside the city which means I have to drive more than average to get to the places that have these things. Since moving to a small farm, I’ve found (again) my love for nature. Out here, when there’s litter, you notice it. I work in the city and trash is everywhere. It blends into the scenery. It’s easy to forget about it, and it’s easy to not think about the process of making that trash or where it will end up. The “nature filter” I now have helps me see this. And because the drive to get what I need is longer than before, I’m more conscientious about the amount of time I spend driving.

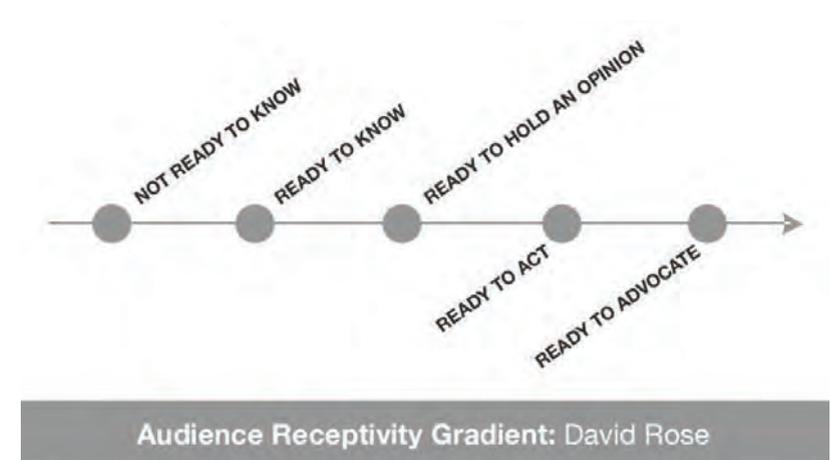
As intellectual support for my visual explorations I read more on the ethnology of consumerism. I find this subject both fascinating and concerning. Somehow I think that if I better understand why people behave as they do (myself included) I might be able to help craft a message enticing enough to support a paradigm shift on a larger scale.

I was introduced to David S. Rose, entrepreneur, investor, and mentor, and his Audience Receptivity Gradient. It illustrates the level of reception an individual (or group) may be at for a proposed message. As I thought about the various responses to my thesis work I became more curious about this idea.

From Rose’s model I developed a graphic to help visualize the content of my thesis. The overlapping circles represent where I am (inner green circles) relative to other people in my community. Some folks are in the outer circle (not ready), some are with me in the ready to

In the Audience Receptivity Gradient, audiences are plotted in one of five places: not ready to know, ready to know, ready to hold an opinion, ready to act and ready to advocate.

Source: <http://www.howdesign.com/parse/true-sustainability-a-way-of-being/#sthash.eG4lz1vl.dpuf>



learn circle and others, along with me, are in the ready to act circle.

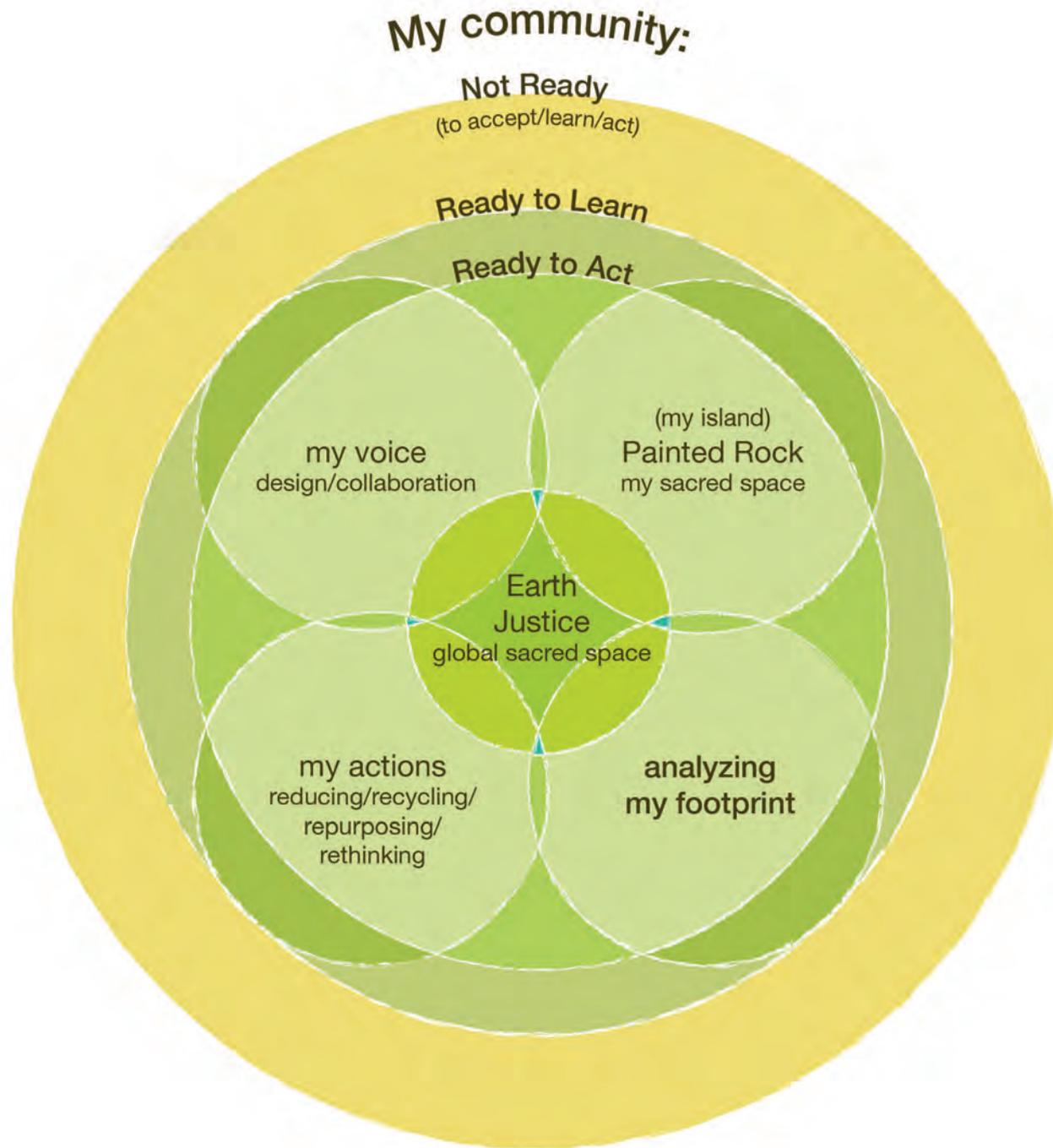
As part of my personal research, I assessed my own consumption. This involved purging excess objects and clothing. I documented the process with photography, then reflected on it through making and writing. I included research that provided insight into design history, behavior and relationships between consumer and stuff. I drew parallels between what I found in common with my own behaviors and activities.

I took on a couple of home projects to reduce my personal eco-footprint and used my front field as a canvas to start a conversation with my neighbors.

The final project is inspired by my reaction to a sustainability survey I disseminated through friends and colleagues. From it I was able to get a clearer picture of an audience to whom I might craft messages. There were those who were “not ready” (to either accept or act) toward reducing footprint, those who were “ready to act” and often were already doing so, and those who were “ready to advocate” meaning they were involved actively in promoting change.

I’ve arrived at no final answer to the question I raised earlier, but have a better understanding of what has been done through graphic design already and what needs to continue. The future of human society and how it blends back into the natural order is still unknown, but it becomes obvious that we have to find ways to reduce consumption, design for repeated use, and blend the rights of Earth with our own.

The final stages of the thesis examine the connection between audience and environmental message. I use a survey to see how members of my community (friends, family, colleagues, students, and their extended circles) feel about and participate in various areas of sustainable lifestyle choices. From this information I designed four models to incite constructive reaction or change in level of understanding.



This diagram shows the four main areas I've worked within as I strive to reduce my environmental impact. It is within three circles of readiness, borrowed from David Rose's receptivity gradient, to illustrate where I feel I am—ready to act and ready to (still) learn. And all of this is within the scope of my community of friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers. At the core, Earth Justice, includes the small part of my sacred space and everyone else's sacred space. Everyone could have their own similar diagram and their own inner circles describing their own journey toward saving what is ultimately sacred to all living things.



Chapter 1

I'm a consumer and a designer

My concerns: losing global justice

Obstacles to change

Reflective projects:

- What a mess

- The sanctity of food

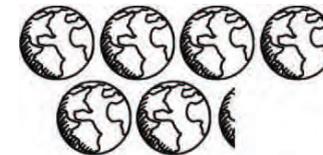
- My consumption

I'm a consumer and a designer

Analyzing My Own (Eco-)Footprint

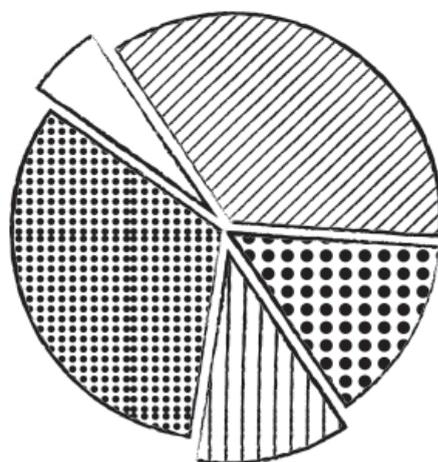
I had to begin with myself. After all, I am as much a consumer as anyone else. Since I moved to my rural setting I've paid more attention to my behaviors and my relationship to this natural space and my not-so-natural stuff. My life changed quite dramatically in the transition from a corporate leadership job and suburban dwelling to freelance design, teaching and rural environment. This shift to such a simpler, liberated space made me hyper-sensitive to the amount of "stuff" I had accumulated. It was the perfect time to analyze that from a designer's lens and it began by utilizing external resources just to find out what my impact really was.

According to the Global Footprint Network¹ and its Footprint Calculator, if everyone lived like me, we would need 6.1 planet Earths to provide enough resources.

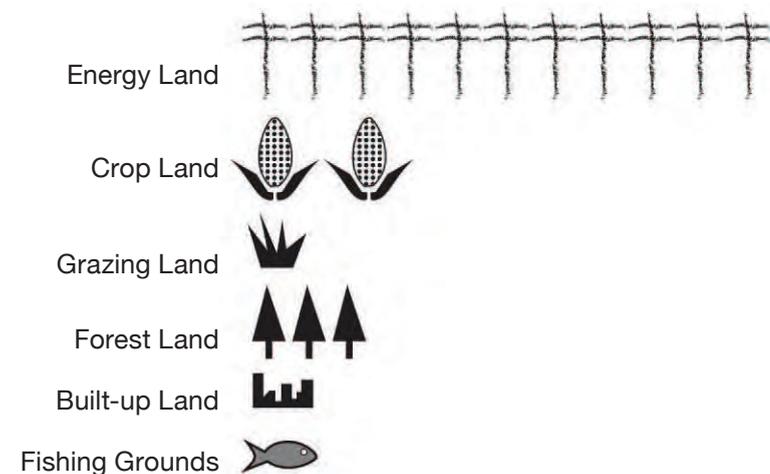


Supporting a lifestyle like mine, which I thought was more meager than my previous lifestyle, requires 27.1 global acres of Earth's productive area. I somehow generate 29.7 tons of carbon dioxide.

I suspect these numbers are a bit high for sake of emphasis or shock value, but I've read enough to know that globally we are now in deficit. Again, according to Global Footprint Network, if everyone



- Services
- Goods
- Mobility
- Shelter
- Food



lived like those in the United States it would require 4.16 planet Earths to sustain it.² Compare that to my own and it's obvious I have some work to do. I dug deeper into my environmental impact, starting with my consumption, and began to act.

Several projects emerged from the research and self-reflection. Each approaching an aspect of my personal lifestyle and how I had come to feel or believe in retrospect. I identified a problem within my world, wanted to resolve it, and then wanted to share. Sometimes the process itself was shared as I was also curious how others felt about the same issues. I'm not sure if any questions were answered throughout these projects, but they revealed even more questions and concerns.

"By living so far beyond our environmental means and running up ecological debts means we make two mistakes," said Andrew Simms, Nef's policy director.

"First, we deny millions globally who already lack access to sufficient land, food and clean water the chance to meet their needs. Secondly, we put the planet's life support mechanisms in peril," he added.³



1. Global Footprint Network; Footprint Calculator, last accessed September 12, 2014. <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators/>.

2. Earth Overshoot Day 2012, Global Footprint Network, Facebook photos, last accessed September 12, 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151120312359801&set=a.10150571380774801.396142.155512689800&type=1&heater>.

3. "Planet enters 'ecological debt'," BBC NEWS-UK, published: September 10, 2006 13:58:10 GMT. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/6033407.stm>.



My concerns: losing global justice

(or losing global sacred space)

As a graphic designer I'm very aware of the role my discipline plays in consumerism. My job is to communicate to an audience what needs are being met by my client's product or service and how one's life will be enhanced by the use. I use imagery and typography and the various appropriate media to paint the seductive picture. Return on investment is how my client measures my value. How is the value of that product or service measured for the consumer? Hard to say. Ultimately, if the consumer is not served to their satisfaction the sales drop and that information could be construed as data to measure value. If the consumer is not satisfied they will move on to the next object. Even if the original object met their needs and provided enjoyment in its use, the next version of the product comes out and the old is cast aside.

But what is real value? Beyond shelter, food, clothing, water, and transportation to jobs that allow us to provide those things, what other material things do we really need? We need those things that make us human. Humans are creative beings. We pursue growth and find this in making things, in solving problems, and sometimes in inventing problems to solve. With the progress that was spurred by the Industrial Revolution and discoveries of more advanced materials, our ability to create grew exponentially, as did our appetite for newer and greater. We were told this was a good thing—for everyone. Our spending and collecting of stuff was maintaining a growing economy and creating jobs. It seemed right. Graphic designers helped with that “progress” in marketing the goods and designing the reports to the shareholders.

“Today we find ourselves in a difficult situation: The success of capitalism has concealed the erosion of the basic underpinnings of business–human relationships. Capitalism has bred corporatism, which has enabled good organization but has also removed personal responsibility from business planning.”⁴

At what point did we start realizing there was a larger cost? When we found ourselves working longer and harder to pay for our stuff? When we had to rent storage space to store our stuff? When we started noticing how large the waste piles were getting? As a designer I wasn't trained to consider these questions, or the long term impact of my design and its contribution to consumption. I was an active participant in the promotion as well as the consumption cycle.

I became very aware of the amount of stuff I possessed when I packed to move from state to state.

“We have thought to reduce the Earth to our own human dimensions, to domesticate the Earth, to somehow insert the Earth into our own mechanistic pattern of functioning, to make the Earth obedient to ourselves rather than ourselves becoming responsive to the Earth.”⁵

There is a growing disconnect with nature as more people migrate toward the cities and suburbs. Natural space is diminishing, being sacrificed for “progress.” Over time, this disconnect has alienated us from our food and water sources. “Urbanization and the rapid pace of development are fostering a false sense of disconnection from the natural world within us, as we grow ever more removed from the sources of our food, water, energy and material goods.”⁶

We live in a world densely populated by humans in close communication with one another...the world looks like a...“global village.” But in fact, human society consists of a great many groups...this multitude of perceptions is directly related to cultural diversity around the world, a diversity that is rapidly shrinking. Surrounded by built landscapes, it has become difficult for many people to relate to the environment. This alienation from nature has contributed to the environmental problems of the contemporary world.⁸

Prior to that, with a local transition, I was able to break the move down to multiple trips over time. It didn't seem like as much stuff until it all had to fit into one big truck. All my stuff moved from Missouri to Texas.

Moving to another state, being in a foreign place, made me more sensitive to marketing, lifestyles, and trends of the locale. Much of it was the same, but in my need to find my place within this new space, I became more observant of promotional tactics and social behaviors. I noticed more natural resource usage. I noticed more trash—randomly discarded waste alongside the streets. Lawns were maintained impeccably by use of excessive watering and chemicals.

When I moved back to Missouri I chose to buy a few acres in a very small rural town. My intention was to freelance design from home. My parents had also moved to a rural setting and, like them, I found it refreshing compared to the suburban environment I had always known. As a family we were reconnecting to nature. When I was young we always had vegetable gardens that supplemented much of our summer meals. My brothers and I played in the creek in our neighborhood, catching crayfish and minnows. We would catch fireflies (which we called lightning bugs) and all manner of other bugs to examine. Now as an adult, I realize how important those things are. They remind me that I am part of a larger whole. Richard Louv, in his book *Last Child in the Woods*, states, “Immersion in the natural environment cuts to the chase, exposes the young directly and immediately to the very elements from which humans evolved: earth, water, air, and other living kin, large and small. Without that experience, ‘we forget our place; we forget that larger fabric on which our lives depend.’”⁷ I remember the discoveries we would make as we poked around in the yard in the grass. We would feel privileged when a box turtle or toad would make its home around our home. I still feel that sense of wonder as I come upon my “neighbors” which might be a deer wandering across my field or the rabbits that come out of hiding to feed close to the house early mornings and just before sunset. My heart breaks when I happen to find “someone” dead, or the remains of an overnight abduction for food. Or, even more tragic, I am haunted if I had a role in their demise (be it my dogs or my mower). I do tend to humanize these creatures a little. I've watched them so long I see their personalities. Two young squirrels outside my window finding birdseed will squabble like kids in the back seat of a car over territory. I feel obligated to these little “neighbors” and to maintain a safe place for them to survive the same as my two dogs and two cats living inside my home.

Personally, I'd probably become a vegetarian if I had to kill and process my own meat, but I do know where it comes from. I know a steer gets to live to be about two years before going off to processing. What a sterile word that is, “processing.” It's a polite way of saying kill the animal, drain its blood, skin it, gut it, let it hang on a hook for a while to age, then carve it into smaller pieces. Even farmers and ranchers distance themselves from these food and revenue sources by numbering the livestock. Each

animal's records are kept in a ledger, like a line item of inventory in a store. I know many people who raise cattle and do know that these animals live a serene, casual, but short life. They care for these animals because it affects the quality of the product. Farm chickens have a far better quality of life than the caged factory chickens. At minimum they get to go out in daylight and get to walk around in ample space, catch bugs, eat real greenery and seeds. It's a five-star spa compared to the alternative. Who would not want the product of that environment over factory?

I teach in a large city and sometimes take eggs from my hens to work to sell. Many appreciate the difference in freshness and flavor, some have rejected them concerned about health risks or egg shape irregularity. I chuckle when asked why the eggs are different colors. The disconnect to where food comes from becomes so apparent there. Some people are convinced that the mechanized and factory methods of egg production (or meat production) is more trustworthy than farm fresh.

I believe it boils down to education. If there were equal hours dedicated to promotion of free-range chickens and eggs, the public would see the obvious choice over the store bought (where the true history of the actual journey from factory is hidden from the consumer). Even better, if more families were able to and educated on raising their own hens, the cost (both economically and environmentally) would be dramatically reduced. Undoubtedly, the number of salmonella cases would be reduced by removing the unsafe factory practices. I get very angry when I see advertising or marketing for eggs or chicken that shows free-ranging chickens living it large on the farm on what looks like acres to roam and reap in the goodness. Yes, that is very convincing. But it's a huge lie in most cases. According to Organic Consumers Association, 95% to 98% of eggs come from factory farms. In cases like this, I think the appropriate role of a graphic designer is to be that of informer. The challenge is in how to compete with the corporatized agro-business purse that pays for the existing marketed lies (or half truths).

Living in the country and working in the city gives me a lot of time to observe my surroundings and as a result, I see large-scale consumption regularly. New housing and businesses are being constructed every day. Advertising is found on nearly every available space. Vehicles are driving everywhere, including mine. Marketing, production and technology have made alternatives more inviting. Pre-packaged foods, quick-fix solutions, shiny hi-tech toys, and controlled environments provide consistency and immediate gratification. As one who contributes to the development and commodifying of everything, how can I reconcile knowing that development almost always includes destruction or loss from the natural world? How can I do it differently?

The pressures to provide "safe" environments to enjoy have led to mixed messages about how to interact with nature. "Keep off the grass," "Do not touch," combined with designated play areas and

Huge factory farms create huge food safety problems. That's the message of a report from the Humane Society of the United States, "Food Safety and Cage Egg Production." In 1994, 200,000 Americans were sickened in a single incident of salmonella-contaminated liquid eggs. In 2010, a half billion eggs were recalled and traced back to a single source of salmonella-contaminated chicken feed.

Salmonella poisoning costs the country billions and is the leading cause of death from food poisoning. Eggs are the number-one cause of salmonella poisoning in the U.S. ¹⁰

Eggs from factory farms are nutritionally inferior to eggs from hens raised on pasture. According to Mother Earth News, real free-range eggs contain:

- 1/3 less cholesterol
- 1/4 less saturated fat
- 2/3 more vitamin A
- 2 times more omega-3 fatty acids
- 3 times more vitamin E
- 7 times more beta carotene
- 50 percent more folic acid
- 70 percent more vitamin B12 ⁹

Battery cages are small wire cages where about 95 percent of laying hens spend their entire lives; each hen is given about 67-76 square inches of space (a standard sheet of paper measures 94 square inches). To get a sense of a hen's life in a battery cage, imagine spending your entire life in a wire cage the size of your bathtub with four other people. You wouldn't be able to move, so your muscles and bones would deteriorate. Your feet would become lacerated. You would go insane. That's precisely what happens to laying hens.¹¹

paths have become boundaries that keep nature at a distance. Advertising for products provide plenty of reasons to avoid nature—we need bug spray, medication for bites and rashes, and drugs for allergies. Car ads often include adventurous outdoor treks where the passengers may never leave the safety of their vehicle.

Globalization seems to be compounding the problem. Big box stores are able to negotiate better prices while getting their products from sources that exploit both nature and human workers with little regulation to protect either. Shipping consumes more fossil fuels. Small businesses are squeezed out because they can't compete. Local culture, community, and resources are lost in the commotion. None of this can take place without the visual communication machines to promote it. I see my role as a graphic designer as communicating awareness and as aid to visualize the future.



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6. Peter Seligmann. "Disconnection From Nature," *Huffington Post*, updated June 19, 2012 5:12 am EDT, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-seligmann/disconnection-from-nature_b_1435769.html.

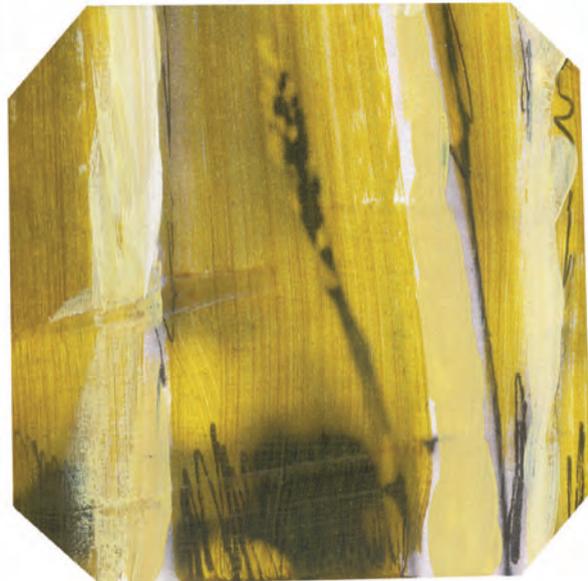
7. Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2008), Kindle edition, 98.

8. Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology*, 3rd ed. (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2012), Kindle edition. Kindle Locations 395-396.

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10. Alexis Baden-Mayer, "How—and Why—to Boycott Eggs from Factory Farms," Organic Consumers Association, updated February 19, 2014, http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_29337.cfm.

11. Bruce Friedrich, "The Cruellest of All Factory Farm Products: Eggs From Caged Hens," *The Huffington Post*, posted January 14, 2013 10:12 am. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bruce-friedrich/eggs-from-caged-hens_b_2458525.html.



Obstacles to change

We are creatures of habit and desire and find ourselves living in a complex system constructed by corporate obligation to shareholders, entities striving for control over resources, marketing machines that drive competition, and individual need to belong. The system feeds off of and rewards activities and behaviors that perpetuate it. Nearly all of it is based on industrialization of natural or biological systems. The system is constructed of smaller systems that are all interrelated so the very idea of positive change seems impossible. It would be easy to feel that it is all too big to change and one's small contribution would be meaningless.

The journey to where we are today regarding depletion of natural resources and loss of open space has been a long, slow one. We live in a culture of "I'll raise you one" where the escalation of consumption is reinforced by an atmosphere of competition. Advertising begins with loud or shiny and continues to get louder and shinier. Many messages are aimed at creating desire in the consumer without regard to meaningful use or lifetime of the product. As consumers, we often get sucked into this cycle of desire, and thus collect stuff, but our desires are rarely satiated as the "high" from the possession is short-lived and often does not meet long-term needs.

But we love our stuff. We love that companies are competing for our attention. They make us feel special. We've become unaware that these objects have begun to discourage personal interaction or neglect the other senses. They work hard to manufacture a perception of need while concealing the true cost of actual manufacturing.

Sigmund Freud, Austrian neurologist (1856-1939) creator of psychoanalysis, believed that much of human behavior was driven by the life instincts and the death instincts. The life instincts include those of food, shelter, love, and sex. In the 1920s, his nephew, Edward Bernays became one of the founders of the field of Public Relations and used Freud's beliefs, that humans were made of unconscious sexual and aggressive desires, to work with corporations to show them how to use symbols to connect to these desires and sell more product. Messages could be created to stroke and respond to our deep emotional yearnings, thus creating the ideal consumer, and we become slaves to our own desires. Freud also suggested that humans have death instincts which are often manifested in self-destructive behaviors. I think addiction to consumption might fall into the category of self-destructive behavior

Left:

Title: True Cost Accounting (or the real cost of cheap food)

Location: A corn field, somewhere in America

Featuring: Laura Howard-Gayeton and Tuilerie Gayeton

Image Credit: Douglas Gayeton for the Lexicon of Sustainability

True Cost Accounting is the practice that accounts for all external costs-environmental, social, and economic-generated by the creation of a product.

What's not factored into the true cost of corn? Farm subsidies you pay through your personal income taxes, pollution of local drinking water due to contamination by petrochemical herbicides, pollution of waterways and oceans due to nitrogen fertilizer runoff, and loss of vital soil nutrients and top soil through mono crop farming practices are hidden costs.¹²



Out of the 50 billion bottles of water being bought each year, 80% end up in a landfill, even though recycling programs exist.

17 million barrels of oil are used in producing bottled water each year. Bottled water costs 1,000 times more than tap water. Drinking 2 Litres of tap water a day only costs 50 cents per year.

Plastic leaches toxins into the water, which have been linked to health problems such as reproductive issues and cancer.¹⁵

if we put it within the context of knowing the impact it has on the environment, resource depletion, global trade and manufacturing ethics.

Despite the inarguable hazards in the objects consumed or the processes with which they are made, commercial design makes these things beautiful and desirable and are “transformed into icons of ‘the good life.’”¹³ Compounding the environmental crisis is a built-in engineering of and planned obsolescence that encourages waste. Simon Patten, social theorist, has observed that this new “standard of life...is determined not so much by what a man has to enjoy as by the rapidity with which he tires of the pleasure. To have a high standard means to enjoy a pleasure intensely, and to tire of it quickly.”¹³ The late Edward Reed, associate professor of psychology at Franklin and Marshall College observes that we are beginning “to lose the ability to experience our world directly. What we have come to mean by the term experience is impoverished; what we have of experience in daily life is impoverished as well.”¹⁴ Contemporary lifestyles minimize exposure to nature and fear of nature can be passed along easily without direct contact and exploration of the natural environment. It’s difficult to value what isn’t understood. Most people share the belief that we can bend nature to our will and impose “human order” upon it. We try to domesticate it instead of flowing within the natural system. Often environmentalism is seen as romanticism and elevates the importance of plants and animals to equals with humanity which goes against the belief systems of many religious teachings.

Legal and political structures often perpetuate and protect destruction of natural resources and at the same time are obstructive to activities that contradict those patterns. Consumers are told that spending and consuming is good for the economy and regulating the negative impacts of manufacturing is detrimental to the economy. Our consumer-driven society is inevitable as an integral part of our modern capitalist economy and is necessary for growth. Without a differing model presented to the public, this seems to be our fate, unless the public can visualize a different future and push the system to move towards it. This is where graphic design and the other design disciplines can play a huge role as the catalysts presenting options meeting the “needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”¹⁶ The challenge is to overcome the belief that the environment is something outside ourselves. We have the ability and the duty to act responsibly and participate in the reshaping of society with information that encourages accountability and ownership.

Conventional cause marketing tactics often employ fear and guilt as attempted motivators. This method may convince about a third of the population, but is ineffective for the rest. “As a psychologist will tell you, when a client comes in with an addiction, they are already ashamed. You don’t shame them further.”

¹⁷ And even when someone is convinced there is a need for change, knowing what that change looks like can be a challenge. There is evidence of growing concern among consumers for social responsibility



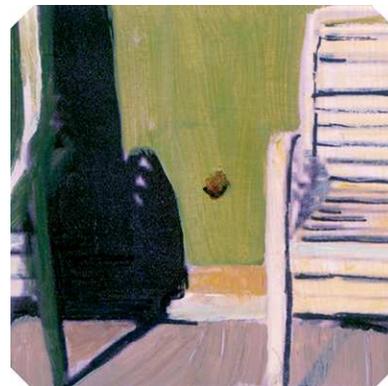
Awareness campaign on food waste found on FoodShift.net

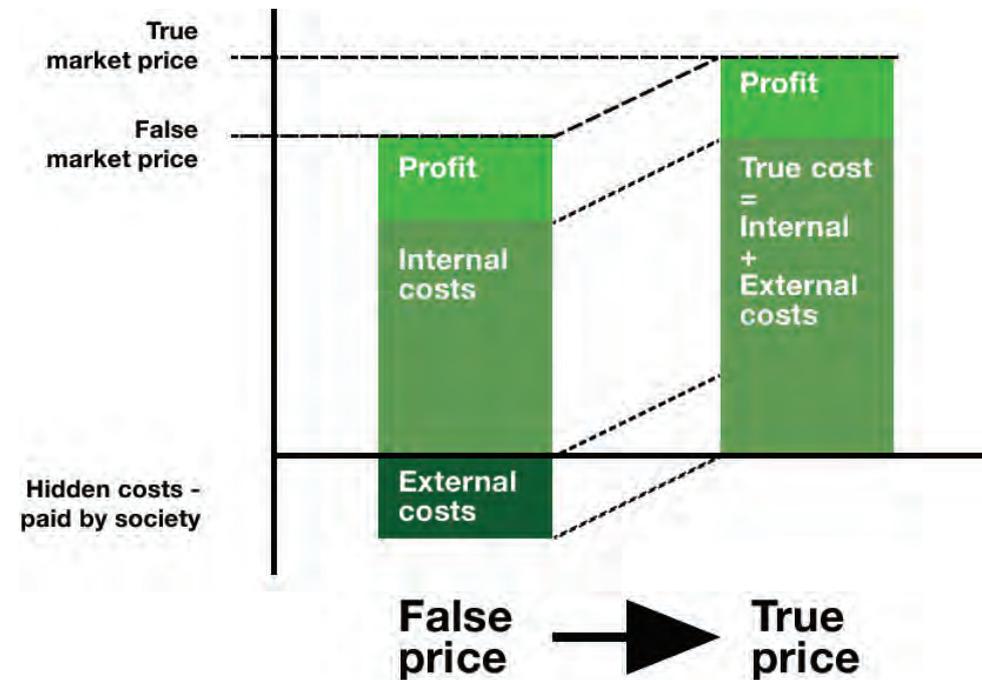
and many, when presented with a viable choice, will choose one brand or product over another if they are informed of the differences between. “The number of consumers who say they would switch from one brand to another if the other brand were associated with a good cause has climbed to 87 percent, a dramatic increase in recent years, according to a Cone Cause Evolution Survey.”¹⁸

The jury seems to be out in the debate over effectiveness of cause marketing. When compared to conventional marketing tactics, the impact offers a smaller return on investment. “Despite its ubiquity as a campaign goal, awareness does very little to create change. It is possibly one of the most resource-intensive modes of action with the least payoff. Awareness is usually linked to individual behavior change as its mechanism for change: if the poster [above] manages to motivate you to go to foodshift.net, you’ll be asked to make a grocery list before you go to the store, become “storage savvy,” and get creative with your leftovers. Sociologists have been studying the relationship of awareness to behavior change for decades, and the results are in: the journey from awareness to behavior change is a long and arduous one, and few make it. Even for those who change their behavior, the scale of the change is often too small to impact the problem at hand.”¹⁹ But most awareness campaigns are aimed at the individual assuming they are the “best unit for change.”²⁰ It’s argued that there are better sources capable of instigating and supporting change on a larger scale. As mentioned

earlier in this thesis, infrastructure can be one of the largest obstacles to change but it holds larger potential because within it is the key to systemic change. The social, economic, and political systems (being intertwined) can make decisions and infrastructure changes that make behavior change more possible. “Changing whether people have access to compost, or, better yet, mandating composting at a municipal level, means that people are much more likely to participate regardless of their values, knowledge, or previous involvement. Better yet, target pre-consumer waste—the infrastructure that really matters—and you’ll have a better site of intervention[...].”²⁰

Limitless growth is impossible. There are always balances to every system. These limits can be self-imposed or they will eventually be system imposed. To sustain a system, growth must be kept within the capacity of the environment. Sustainability as defined by the Bruntland Report for the World Commission on Environment and Development (1992) is, “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” To me this statement does not impress enough the importance of the environment within the equation. Resources should not be consumed faster than they can regenerate and waste should not exceed the capacity of the environment to assimilate it. Non renewable materials should not be allowed, at the current rates especially, to accumulate in landfills, but instead, be replaced by renewable substitutes. Since we are in a closed loop system, these are the only choices, in addition to reduced consumption and reduced population. The alternative is the system correcting itself and scientists and economists have presented telling data that suggests this correction is coming soon. Graphic designers can reach across disciplines and facilitate the collaboration of many skillsets to craft better designs utilizing safer materials that return to and feed either the mechanical or biological systems while meeting human needs and satiating the desire for beauty.





External costs are costs that are NOT included in what the business bases its price on. These include:

- the cost of disposing of the product at the end of its useful life
- the environmental degradation caused by the emissions, pollutants and wastes that production creates
- the cost of health problems caused by toxic ingredients

Even though external costs are not included in the price of the product they must still be paid. They end up being paid by society through taxes, accident compensation, medical and insurance payments and also by future generations through losses in environmental quality and natural capital.

The sorts of products and services that include external costs (e.g. organic produce, clean technology, natural products) are usually more expensive than those that don't. Consumers will tend to buy the cheapest goods so clean products are at a disadvantage.²²



12. Douglas Gayeton, "True Cost Accounting," Lexicon of Sustainability Film, last accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.lexiconofsustainability.com/true-cost-accounting>.

13. Heller, *Citizen Designer*, Kindle Locations 4492-4503.

14. Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, Kindle p.65.

15. Petz Scholtus, "The US Consumes 1500 Plastic Water Bottles Every Second, a fact by Watershed," Treehugger.com, posted October 15, 2009, <http://www.treehugger.com/clean-water/the-us-consumes-1500-plastic-water-bottles-every-second-a-fact-by-watershed.html>.

16. Arty Mangan, "Three Challenges to Sustainability," posted March 15, 2013, <http://www.bioneers.org/three-challenges-to-sustainability>.

17. Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, Kindle p.147

18. Kim T. Gordon, "Cause Marketing Matters to Consumers," *Entrepreneur*, last accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/197820>.

19. Max Liboiron, "Against Awareness, For Scale: Garbage is Infrastructure, Not Behavior," posted January 23, 2014, <http://discardstudies.com/2014/01/23/against-awareness-for-scale-garbage-is-infrastructure-not-behavior>.

20. Ibid

21. Ibid

22. "External costs vs internal costs," Econation, last accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.econation.co.nz/external-costs.html#.VBEBikgQj-o>.

What a mess

“Nearly 99% of the materials that go into what we buy in America end up as trash. I’m talking about refuse from the raw materials used in production, pollution from the burning of fossil fuels, packaging and paper inserts that we throw away — every single purchase made in America creates a greater volume of trash than the thing you bought in the first place!

... we’ve set up a system that privatizes the gains related to consumerism (profit earned by companies every time they sell a product) but socializes the costs (which you pay for through your taxes.) Companies are not forced to take responsibility for the damage their activities do to the environment or to society. If they were (and passed these expenses on to you at the checkout counter), you would pay 1/3 to 1/2 more for your consumer goods. Instead, they shove these costs off on the public sector and drop their prices, making you think that you’re getting a bargain.”²³

A serious frustration and concern of mine is waste and pollution. With our post-industrialized, mass-consumption society, we spend so little energy thinking, let alone dealing, with our cast-off. It’s so easy to push it “out of sight, out of mind.” “That’s someone else’s worry. Not my problem.” There lies the error in our consumption system. We don’t have to be accountable for our waste. Sure, we pay a monthly service fee for someone else to cart off our waste. Just like we push off and house criminals in prisons. Someone else is handling the problem. We don’t have to look back or wonder if it’s being handled properly. Where I live, these heaps and air pollution is not quite this bad, but it’s only due to a smaller concentration of humans. There are folks out where I live who have created their own dump sites. They push old appliances, water heaters, cars/trucks, tires, etc., off into corners of their property. Most of these hidden castoffs are downhill along tree lines that lead toward creeks and rivers. And most of the materials can be recycled—and for money! Because I live in the country, folks who don’t live in my neighborhood think it’s OK to dump their castoffs in the ditches in my neighborhood. Once or twice a year we’ll find a couch, computer monitor, washer, or something that city trash won’t carry off without extra cost, in our ditches. I haven’t mentioned the countless beer cans. I work in the city, and it’s exponentially worse.

Disgusting.



23. Ramona Creel, “Calculating The True Cost Of Consumerism,” Ramona Creel.com, posted August 27th, 2012, <http://ramonacreel.com/2012/08/27/who-wants-to-get-organized/calculating-the-true-cost-of-consumerism>.

Types of waste: post-consumer, medical, hazardous, chemical, agricultural, electronic, and more. All of it is compounding in landfills, waterways, and the air. We are conveniently disconnected from it.



Reflective project

The sanctity of food

I love gardening. I find deep satisfaction in building the beds, mixing the soil composition, choosing my seeds, planning, sowing, watering, and harvesting. It's totally fascinating to me to watch these little things, that look like they couldn't do much of anything, become big, beautiful, and sometimes bountiful, living things.

The produce from my own garden tastes much better than what I get at the store. To get better, I'd have to drive nearly an hour round trip, and I might as well spend those resources on creating my own. Besides, there's far more satisfaction in saying, "I DID THIS."

This piece covers another concern and interest I hold. The idea came from watching the Chris Taylor documentary, "Food Fight." In it, Alice Waters who started Chez Panisse in California said "good food should be a right, not a privilege." The film shares the stories of several activists as they tackle politicians and accessibility issues.²⁴

It made me feel good that my family has gardened as long as I can remember. I even remember my great-grandparents' gardens. They would preserve a whole winter's supply of green beans, okra, and corn. They were more ambitious than I am, but set a great example for me.

As I plan the garden each spring, prepare the beds, watch the seedlings grow into mature, fruit-bearing plants, and then watch everything die back to make room for the cycle to repeat, I am always reminded of process, and that process is necessary, even if slow. This process reminds me to accept other processes and be patient.



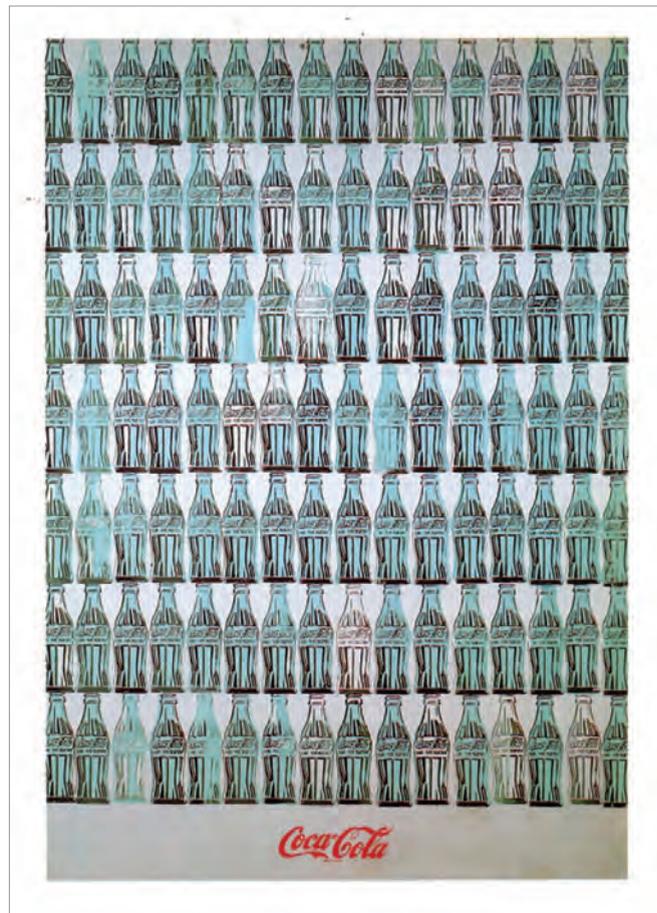
24. Christopher Taylor (Producer-Director), "Food Fight," Positively 25th Street Productions, Santa Monica, 2009, last accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.foodfightthedoc.com/foodfight.html>.

There is conflict in agricultural processes now. The large, corporatized farming contributes to the disconnect between us and our food. Some images in this collage are meant to remind us that this process requires loving care.



Reflective project My own consumption

While reading *Art and Advertising* by Joan Gibbons, I was inspired by Andy Warhol's, *Green Coca Cola Bottles* (1962)²⁵. I had considered repeating one or a few items that I consume, but after taking inventory of my own consumption, decided the composition needed much more variety to express the amount of "stuff" I eat and use (with the obvious help of my pets). In this artwork, the paint application would have to be different. There are no squares reserved for just paint/texture. I would have to work within the images and their details to build visual interest. As usual, I printed out black/white images to adhere to the substrate and embellish with pen and acrylics.



25. Warhol Andy, *Green Coca-Cola Bottles*, 1962. Synthetic polymer, silkscreen ink, and graphite on canvas, 82 3/8 × 57 in. (209.2 × 144.8 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.



Chapter 2

Historical comparisons

Progressive movements

Design and art activism

My catalyst: my island

Reflective projects:

- My sacred space, in grids

- My sacred space, dissected

- Corners of my island

- My “island” bitmap font

- The first purge—letting go of Stuff

- Letting go of (even more) Stuff

- 'Tis the season

- Reflecting on my Stuff—iterations

- The clock of Nature does not follow the clocks of humans

Dohanos, Stevan, 1907-1994. *Fill it!* :
help harvest war crops. Washington
D. C.: UNT Digital Library.
[http://digital.library.unt.edu/
ark:/67531/metadc559/](http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc559/).
Accessed September 9, 2014.



Historical comparisons

Discontent and concern over industrialization, the mechanization of production and the minimizing of human craft, has been prevalent throughout the decades since the Industrial Revolution began.

One early movement that arose from these concerns was the Arts and Crafts Movement during the late Victorian period in England. The focus of the artisans was on handcraft, a higher standard of decorative form, and quality of materials. The end products were designed to last and to replicate the beauty of nature. At the head of this movement was William Morris (1834–1896) who believed industrialization alienated the designer from the manufacturer and for nature to be more integral in designing.

Transcendentalism was an early 19th century American philosophy that proposes that people “have knowledge about themselves that ‘transcends’ or goes beyond what they can see, hear, taste, touch or feel. This knowledge comes through intuition and imagination not through logic of the senses.”²⁶ The Transcendentalist Club connected members of this belief system and included Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Ripley, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, among many other creative thinkers.

Henry David Thoreau—an excerpt from *Walden* (1854):

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary.”

I personally feel a connection to Thoreau, who was described as “strange, gentle, fanatic, selfish, a dreamer, and a stubborn individualist.”²⁷ For nearly three years Thoreau chose to live self-reliantly at Walden Pond where he wrote about nature and his faith in humanity. He believed that “life is wasted pursuing wealth and following social customs” and that “Nature can show that ‘all good things are wild and free.’”²⁸

Not having thought as deeply as Thoreau about my choice to live in a rural setting, moving farther away from society and what had disappointed me about it, I did choose to live here to reconnect to nature and slow down from my former fast-paced life. My previous life was shallow and draining spiritually. This new, natural space is restorative.

Examples:

- ⦿ Arts & Crafts movement
- ⦿ Transcendentalists
- ⦿ Buckminster Fuller
- ⦿ The Situationists
- ⦿ Works Progress Admin (WPA)
- ⦿ Green architecture
- ⦿ Green manufacturing
- ⦿ Biomimicry

As I read about Thoreau and his personal philosophies on nature and society, I'm reminded of the concerns I've brought forth here in this thesis and of what I've found through researching the ethnology of consumerism. So far, historically, I've mentioned the Arts and Crafts Movement and its drive to reconnect humans to the crafting of products and the Transcendentalists who believe in individualism and self-reliance as well as human freedoms and equity. Thoreau specifically stresses a need for reconnection with Nature (versus an external view of it). I believe these are all philosophies that are needed even in these modern times.

R. Buckminster Fuller was a man of many skills—philosopher, designer, architect, artist, engineer, entrepreneur, author, mathematician, teacher and inventor. He wondered “how we could make the best use of our technology while improving humanity” and predicted that “the survival of humankind would be compromised unless we stopped wasting the earth’s natural resources.”²⁹ He designed a series of pre-fabricated dwellings that required minimal materials use. He dreamed of a future with independently powered residential towers incorporating filtered fresh air for cooling and collected waste energy from the lighting system for heating. He was concerned about consumerism and “on one early drawing, he scrawled, “If materialism wins, humanity is licked.”(14) Fuller subscribed to the idea of doing more with less.

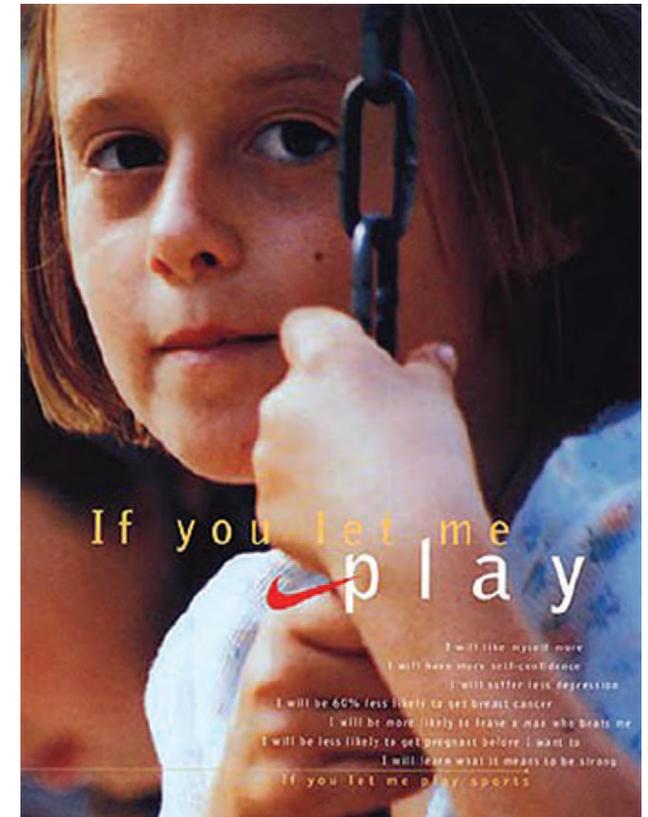
A European organization calling themselves the Situationists International formed in 1957 criticized culture and all aspects of capitalism “arguing that it converted all relationships into transactions.”³⁰ They believed that capitalism created “pseudo-needs” in order to drive economic growth through constant increase in consumerism. They recognized the shift from the individual working long hours, not because they were poor, but were slaves to the illusions of “the spectacle” consumer goods that offered no deep value and promised to make ones life better or complete like those of celebrities or the affluent elite. They believed that transforming the perception of the world was the same as changing the structure of society and like French theorist, Henri Lefebvre, a member of the group in 1974, would convert public spaces into sites of resistance, thus the term “situation.” He would use a process of detournement (with signs and images) to capture people’s attention about a “situation.” The intent was to jolt people out of their normal thinking and behavioral habits, thus, “by liberating oneself, one changed power relations and therefore transformed society.” Guy Debord was considered the most important figure in this group and referred to “the spectacle” as a “permanent opium war.”³²

Throughout history, graphic design’s role in social causes has been sporadic and often contradictory. In the early 1900s, the “I want you!” campaigns effectively mobilized the American public to join war efforts, but later, mid-century and beyond, there is less public response to anti-smoking advertising. One reason graphic designers seem to be successful at solving commercial problems but not so much with social causes, offered by Milton Glaser, is a lack “of understanding the root causes rather than the trivial.”³³

One campaign that touched me personally, and deeply, was Nike’s “If you let me play” by Wieden+Kennedy in 1995. That campaign came out when I was 30. It gave me permission to be who I was—a female athlete. It made it okay to be such. Before that campaign there was a lot of social conflict over girls playing sports. Despite the women’s movement building in the 1960s, we were still fighting for an equal place in society. I had been a child growing up during a time when people still thought it wasn’t “safe” for girls to play sports. The fears instilled in us ranged from it would either negatively effect our reproductive abilities later or scare off prospective husbands. Both, of course, were baseless. But, Nike, in its efforts to attract a broader market, brought out the truths about girls participating in sports, including “if you let me play sports I will like myself more. I will have more self-confidence. If you let me play sports, I’ll be more likely to leave a man who beats me.” These affirmations were powerful for that time.

Returning to the subject of sustainability, one of the most notable campaigns was sponsored by the Keep America Beautiful nonprofit organization. Partnering with the Ad Council, and the volunteer agency Marsteller, Inc., the “Crying Indian” ad aired on Earth Day, 1971 (and ran until 1983). It featured Native American actor Chief Iron Eyes Cody with a tagline line, “People Start Pollution. People can stop it.” “The campaign [dramatized] how litter and other forms of pollution were hurting the environment, and that every individual has the responsibility to help protect it. The goal of the campaign was to help fight the negative attitudes and behaviors that lead to pollution... The ad became one of the most memorable and successful campaigns in advertising history and was named one of the top 100 advertising campaigns of the 20th Century by Ad Age Magazine. During the height of the campaign, Keep America Beautiful reported receiving more than 2,000 letters a month from people wanting to join their local team. By the end of the campaign, Keep America Beautiful local teams had helped to reduce litter by as much as 88% in 300 communities, 38 states, and several countries. The success of the Keep America Beautiful anti-litter campaign led to hundreds of other environmental messages through the years, from many different sources, including the Ad Council.”³⁴

Obviously graphic design can affect change in a positive way, but why isn’t there more of it? I believe it’s because social change requires change in human behaviors, and when the behaviors and their effects are still up for debate, a designer is stuck in a place of conflict. Unless a designer is working for an organization



Nike campaign: “If you let me play” by Wieden+Kennedy, Portland Oregon, 1995



Keep America Beautiful, the Ad Council, Marsteller, Inc., the “Crying Indian” campaign began on Earth Day, 1971 (and ran until 1983).

or company that is wanting to project a message of conservation, environmental protection, anti-pollution, recycling, etc., most designers feel it is not their role to interject their beliefs. We are to be professional and portray our client's message objectively, and make it convincing, even if it may be in conflict with our personal beliefs or concerns. Katherine McCoy, graphic designer and educator, offers this: "Most of our colleagues never exercise their right to communicate on public issues or potentially controversial content...We have trained a profession that feels political or social concerns are either extraneous to our work, or inappropriate." ³⁵

Even the government is capable of rallying the public as with the Works Progress Administration (WPA), created in 1935, during Great Depression. It was part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal agency and

Left:
Save your cans, help pass the ammunition. 1943
Artist: McClelland Barclay
Size: 34"x25"
Publication: n.p. War Production Board, Salvage Division

Right:
Your victory garden counts more than ever! 1945
Artist: Morley
Size: 27"x19"
Publication: [Washington, D.C.] Agriculture Department. War Food Administration.
Printer: U.S. Government Printing Office



the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 as a tool for employing millions of Americans. Most of the funding went to public works projects but a significant part of it went toward the Federal Project Number One that included the Federal Art Project. This was the visual arts arm of the WPA, crafted primarily by Harry Hopkins, a close advisor to the president, that created more than 200,000 artworks including posters, paintings, and murals.

“When federal support of artists was questioned, Hopkins answered, “Hell! They’ve got to eat just like other people.” The WPA supported tens of thousands of artists, by funding creation of 2,566 murals and 17,744 pieces of sculpture that decorate public buildings nationwide. The federal art, theater, music, and writing programs, while not changing American culture as much as their adherents had hoped, did bring more art to more Americans than ever before or since. The WPA program in the arts led to the creation of the National Foundation for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.”³⁶



26. “Transcendentalism, An American Philosophy,” US History.org, last accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.ushistory.org/us/26f.asp>.

27. Ibid

28. Ibid

29. “Richard Buckminster Fuller,” Environment Canada, last modified: 2013-07-09, <http://www.ec.gc.ca/biosphere/default.asp?lang=En&n=30956246-1>.

30. Jessica Leber, “Green Before His Time,” *Audobon Magazine*, accessed September 12, 2014, <http://archive.audubonmagazine.org/webexclusives/buckminsterFuller-webExclusives.html>.

31. “Situationists—an introduction,” Libcom.org, posted October 12, 2006 09:19, <https://libcom.org/thought/situationists-an-introduction>.

32. “Society of the spectacle—Guy Debord, Chapter 2,” Libcom.org, posted Jul 28 2005 19:37, <https://libcom.org/library/society-of-the-spectacle-debord-two>.

33. Jacques Lange, “Cause and Effect: Design for Social Causes,” Icograda, accessed June 24, 2014, <http://www.icograda.org/feature/current/articles113.htm>. Pollution Prevention, Adv. Educ. Found., /www.aef.com/exhibits/social_responsibility/ad_council/2278, acc. 6/26/14

34. “Pollution Prevention: Keep America Beautiful—Iron Eyes Cody (1961 - 1983),” Advertising Educationsl Foundation, accessed June 26, 2014, http://www.aef.com/exhibits/social_responsibility/ad_council/2278.

35. Heller, *Citizen Designer*: Kindle Locations 232-234.

36. “The Works Progress Administration,” PBS American Experience, last accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/dustbowl-wpa>.



Image from *The Story of Stuff* (2007)
animated film. www.storyofstuff.org

Progressive movements

“We are about to redefine the very nature of design. A decade or two from now, we will shake our head in disbelief when considering how far we’ve come. Products designed for novel appeal and short-term use will seem as obsolete to us [...] In the near future, as a matter of course, we will take cradle-to-grave responsibility for the objects we design. Our conscience will demand it, our environment will require it, and—you can believe it—our clients will insist on it.”³⁷

Many individuals, groups, and companies are embracing environmentalism and the challenges of reducing eco-footprint. Because this is a path not well traveled, they are feeling their way through it. Flexibility and a willingness to reflect are necessary traits for ultimate success. It is becoming apparent that no one method suits all purposes and a new paradigm is being crafted that encourages collaboration and open sharing of best practices. A new view of community motivates these movements and many of these groups are mainstreaming their message, within the creative community especially.

Valerie Casey, founder of the Designers Accord in 2007, worked to create awareness of sustainability issues in graphic design stating, “regardless of what the aesthetics may be, the future of design must be sustainable.” And, “as consumers and governments become more aware of the world’s finite resources and start to demand more responsible companies, it will be the design firm of the future who will deliver those eco-centric solutions to meet the needs of the new business world.”³⁸ What this future and our graphic design practice looks like is still evolving as designers evaluate their role in the change—are we catalysts, mediators, or followers that execute the message for changing market demand?

Most of the progressive environmental designing is taking place in the other design disciplines, for example, product design, architecture and environmental design. Pushed by consumer demand combined with an acknowledged accountability by the producer, new methods and materials are being used, full circle, cradle-to-cradle lifespans are being considered in the designs, and quality of consumer experience become forefront in the decision-making process. There are greener products and structures today in large part due to consumer demand. The question is still, is it enough, in time? The graphic design industry can play a larger role than it currently is with our skills for informing and persuasion.

Recent actions, guidelines and sponsorship within some of the design fields include AIGA’s development of the Living Principles for Design, Design for the World by ICOGRADA, Make It, Take It by UPSTREAM, Sappi Ideas That Matter grants, Design Ignites Change by Adobe, The Sylvia Harris Citizen Design Award (AIGA), and Shape the Future competition sponsored by *Metropolis* magazine.

Progressive Design Movements

- ◉ UPSTREAM
- ◉ “Make It, Take it” (Sustainable Brands campaign)
- ◉ Sappi “Ideas That Matter”
- ◉ Living Principles for Design
- ◉ Aspen Design Challenge (Aspen Institute)
- ◉ AIGA (Head, Heart, Hand conference)
- ◉ AIGA Re-design Awards
- ◉ Design For The World (ICOGRADA)
- ◉ Sustainable Packaging Coalition
- ◉ Design Ignites Change (Adobe)
- ◉ Sylvia Harris Citizen Design Award (AIGA)
- ◉ Shape the Future competition - *Metropolis* magazine
- ◉ Transition Movement
- ◉ Annie Leonard: “Story of Stuff”

Collaborations of Note

- ◉ Sierra Club Extended Producer Responsibility Team
- ◉ Plastic Pollution Coalition
- ◉ Eureka Recycling
- ◉ 5 Gyres
- ◉ Clean Water Action
- ◉ Green America
- ◉ National Resources Defense Council
- ◉ As You Sow

“Currently, at least 28 countries have laws encouraging reduced packaging and increased packaging waste recycling. Many of these laws require manufacturers to accept their packaging discards or pay for their recycling. There are not similar laws in the United States (EPA), but some organizations are taking the lead in sustainability initiatives.”³⁹ According to data gathered by EarthPolicy.org (as of the time this thesis was written), 148 cities in the U.S. have bans on or mandated fees for the use of plastic bags in stores. Some include bans on Styrofoam or fees on paper bags.⁴⁰

The Transition Movement, which began in the UK, is a movement aimed at mobilizing community actions around the issues of climate change. Wanting to prepare for a “post-cheap-oil future,” Rob Hopkins, a permaculture teacher, initiated the Transition Towns concept in Totnes, Devon (England), in 2005. Since then the Transition concept has spread and continues to be developed in several countries, including the U.S. Their core intent is to build communities that are resilient and can survive through potential shortfalls of resources like oil and water and evolve organically through grass root groups. The understanding is re-localization and alternative local economies strengthen a community’s resilience. Building such a community requires many skillsets, including the means to effectively communicate intention in order to get buy-in from the members.

The Upcycle Movement on Facebook promotes events and shares ideas.⁴¹



The creative repurposing of things is part of a movement of upcycling. When items lose their value in their original purpose there is a strong possibility that all or parts of that item can find new purpose. The term upcycling was coined by Reiner Pilz in an article written by Thornton Kay in the *Salvo Monthly* in October, 1994. While most of our consumptive waste ends up in the landfills, some materials get downcycled, or converted for a lesser quality use. Upcycling offers an equal or improved use of the materials. It requires creative thinking and a willingness on behalf of consumers and manufacturers to intentionally collect the materials after the life of the original object is over. This area of resource consumption is currently undervalued and under communicated on large scale. Small change is taking place and one can find a plethora of books, articles, and social media collections discussing the methods and displaying results.

More recent upcycling efforts have started with the design process which includes intentional breaking down of an object into parts that can be reused, recycled, or return to raw material for new form or nutrient for organic life.

An early source of inspiration for me was found on the website, *StoryofStuff.org*. Annie Leonard, expert in international sustainability and environmental health issues, has spent over 20 years investigating factories around the world. In 2007, working with Free Range Studios, she created a 20-minute animated film, *The Story of Stuff*, in which she describes,



"OUR ENORMOUSLY PRODUCTIVE ECONOMY... DEMANDS THAT WE MAKE CONSUMPTION OUR WAY OF LIFE, THAT WE CONVERT THE BUYING AND USE OF GOODS INTO RITUALS, THAT WE SEEK OUR SPIRITUAL SATISFACTION, OUR EGO SATISFACTION, IN CONSUMPTION... WE NEED THINGS CONSUMED, BURNED UP, REPLACED AND DISCARDED AT AN EVER-ACCELERATING RATE."

Two images from *The Story of Stuff* (2007) animated film.

with great humor and down-to-earth delivery, the life-cycle of goods we consume. It became a viral sensation and she followed up with a book of the same title along with other subsequent videos and books within the same vein of sustainability and environmentalism. She explains how our existing linear system (extraction of natural resources > production > distribution > consumption > disposal) cannot operate within our planet's finite system. In her videos the animators illustrate the facts about our flawed system with user-friendly visuals.

The Story of Stuff website also provides educational tools for teachers to share within the classroom. Reaching to the young minds of today may be our biggest payoff in efforts to curb overconsumption. That's assuming their future actions come in time and we have not passed the point of no return.

The academic environment is starting to include sustainable design thinking within curriculum. Historically, education tended to avoid challenging students to rethink these common assumptions:

- Humans are the dominant species and separate from the rest of nature.
- Resources are free and inexhaustible.
- Earth's ecosystems can assimilate all human impacts.
- Technology will solve most of society's problems.
- All human needs and wants can be met through material means.
- Individual success is independent of the health and well-being of communities, cultures, and the life support system.⁴³

Here are a few of the statistics Annie Leonard shares in *The Story of Stuff* (2007):

- one-third of the planet's resources have been consumed in the past three decades
- in the U.S. we have less than 4% of our original forest left; 80% of the planet's original forest is gone; in the Amazon, 2,000 trees are cut down per minute, equally 7 football fields per minute
- 40% of waterways have become undrinkable
- the U.S. has 5% of the world population but are using 30% of the world's resources creating 30% of the world's waste
- 100,000 synthetic chemicals are in use in the making of consumer goods today⁴²

I found these schools that include sustainability design within their curriculum:

Savannah College of Art and Design, Maryland Institute College of Art, Florence University of the Arts, the Art Institutes, Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design, University California Davis, Otis College of Art and Design, Academy of Art University San Francisco, and Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Arizona State University School of Sustainability offers the full range of undergraduate and graduate degrees, along with certificates and continuing education credits, and theirs is a general focus.

Higher education has unique academic freedom and the critical mass and diversity of skills to develop new ideas, to comment on society and its challenges, and to engage in bold experimentation in sustainable living.⁴⁴ Many institutions provide sustainability programs within their business and architecture programs, but the number of visual communications or graphic design programs is still thin. With the increasing focus on sustainable design practice in the industry, the education of design students will require a greater understanding of what that entails. I believe that all areas of design should be included as drivers of this movement and through collaborative work can create a new vision of the future. Graphic designers are uniquely equipped to visually communicate whatever that future might look like.



37. Heller, *Citizen Designer*: Kindle Locations 5590-5597.

38. Gage Mitchell, "Where Graphic Design is Failing," *Livingprinciples.org*, posted November 6, 2012, <http://www.livingprinciples.org/where-graphic-design-is-failing>.

39. Yvette Perullo, "The Wicked World of Packaging," *Re-nourish.com*, posted December 10, 2011, http://re-nourish.com/?l=articles_detail&id=120.

40. Janet Larsen, and Savina Venkova, "Plastic Bag Bans Spreading in the United States," posted April 22, 2014, http://www.earth-policy.org/plan_b_updates/2013/update122#Timeline.

41. The Upcycle Movement, last accessed September 12, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/TheUpcycleMovement>.

42. Annie Leonard, "The Story of Stuff," accessed September 12, 2014. <http://storyofstuff.org>.

43. Anthony D. Cortese, "The Critical Role of Higher Education in Creating a Sustainable Future," *Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 2003, http://www.aashe.org/resources/pdf/Cortese_PHE.pdf

44. *Ibid*



Meeting Those Who Walk the Eco-Talk

Because I have such a love for nature and with it a deep concern for the environment and the health of its biosystems, I included in my research those who were currently choosing to live closer to nature. I looked at eco-villages and intentional living groups. The Fellowship for International Community offers a directory of intentional communities and I found a cluster of them in my state of Missouri.

I began by contacting the publicity coordinators with two intentional living groups northeast of Kirksville, Missouri outside the town of Rutledge. My dialog began with Danielle at Dancing Rabbit Eco-village and with Kim from Red Earth Farms. I arranged to go on the 1:00 second-Saturday tour of Dancing Rabbit and arranged to later cross the field to Kim's place to meet and chat with her.

When I arrived at Dancing Rabbit I met Danielle who was part of the village's communications team. She connected me with a "rabbit" willing to answer some questions. SunGee cheerfully gave me her story and feelings about living in the village. From her I learned how the community was structured with land leases and cooperatives for just about anything you can think of (car use, water, electricity, eating, showers,...). The shared resources make the community's footprint minimal and is a more effective use of them. Most of the "rabbits" work locally, telecommute, or work in the village. They incorporate old and new technologies as they best fit the goals. She believed if more resources were shared more people could be accommodated (alleviating poverty or shortages). She thought it was time to shift from a thinking where everyone has their own kitchen, house, car, etc., to group use. SunGee explained that she found the people of Dancing Rabbit to be very honest, supportive, and emotionally mature. Openness and conflict resolution were very important there; vs. the outside world where anyone "could be an ass" to you. Dancing Rabbit has a very active internship and visitor program. People can come, stay, work, and live along side the "rabbits," learn eco-methods and tools for treading lighter on the Earth.

Our Dancing Rabbit tour guide was Bob who gave a wonderful day-in-the-life of the village. It began in 1997 and continues to grow with 75 people currently living there. He shared their technological evolutions from stored power in batteries to their own energy coop of solar panels and wind turbines producing for their electrical needs and returning power to the grid. A lot of reclaimed materials



All buildings collected rainwater.

are used for building along with earthen materials, living roofs, rain water/gray water harvesting, and repurposing. The inventive resourcefulness was inspiring and gave me ideas for more I can do at my own place.

After the Dancing Rabbit tour I crossed the fields to Red Earth Farms where I was greeted by Kim. She gave me the tour of her home and talked me through the eco-settings—a combination of passive solar, wood fire heat, captured water, and wind. I was fascinated by the heating system. It was a cob-covered wood-fired heat box vented to either side of the shared bedroom warming it with radiant heat. No space was wasted or unused (as I also found in Dancing Rabbit homes). All things were relevant and essential, often with multiple uses.

We went into her hoop house nursery and she talked me through her plantings—how she harvested and prepared the produce. Her house was positioned on the dam side of a pond which allowed it to be partially earth contact (the back and half of each side were embedded in the ground stabilizing the interior temperature) and the pond was plumbed downhill to her vegetation through hoses. Kim sat down between two rows and proceeded to weed while I asked her questions about living intentionally.

These small communities are very active in their regional communities as well. They not only provide regular tours, but do lecture series and workshops. They are invited to speak at different venues,



This home was still under construction using cob and frame walls. Notice the living roof.



Kim's hoop house.



Sweet peppers in Kim's hoop house.

including Tedx (<http://youtu.be/BS8YeDKKbcU>). they aren't forcing their opinions on others. They maintain websites and social media connections in order to share their knowledge and encourage others to make change.

While some of their lifestyle was a little too "rustic" for my tastes—I'm not yet ready to relieve my bowels or bladder in the bushes amongst other villagers, I can't sleep when it's over 75 degrees in my room, I can't resist the urge to mow/maintain the grass immediately around my house—I wholeheartedly agree with and would enjoy the communion with shared meals and projects. I would, though, have a tough time sharing my tools. These folks grew as much of their food as they possibly could, used their own herbs, ate cheese they made themselves, ate bread they baked themselves, and thrived in an environment where more energy was spent on living and loving than working. They recognize the greater value in relationships than in stuff. I did not see a television in any of the buildings we toured, so they have the advantage of filtering the constant persuasion that comes through advertising or lifestyle suggestions within the programming. Without doubt that was an intentional decision. They've moved beyond the shallowness and trappings of wanting more stuff. It is after meeting them that I understand the skepticism I met when I introduced myself and my purpose for visiting. Perhaps they saw me as one of those designers who helped cause this mess.

What I learned from the people of these eco-, intentional communities was that it was not necessary to shout a message from a mountain top to influence change. They took the "if you build it they will come" approach. I was fascinated by their sense of calm. I see the wisdom in this now, but I am still worried that not enough will change or in time. They send their ripples out softly. My personality is a bit louder than that. I want to hit harder so the ripples reach farther out. Their method sends out ripples more frequently. Perhaps if mine, along with that of fellow designers send them out farther, albeit less frequently, the combined energy will saturate more deeply.

Kim looking out across Red Earth Farms.



Diego Gutiérrez

Keep Buying Shit

Designed for Green Patriot Posters studio in bachelor of graphic design program at Rhode Island School of Design, 2009.

Source:
GreenPatriotPosters.org



Design and art activism

The subjects of environmentalism and sustainability aren't new and designers have been using their talents to communicate messages of concern for a long time but find it increasingly difficult to wrestle between the opposing demands of encouraging consumption and reducing environmental impact. Milton Glaser has said "good design is good citizenship." This begs the question, what is good citizenship? And what is or can be the role of art and design in it? It's a challenging position to be in, especially when the information flying around about environmental degradation, natural resource depletion, peak oil, climate change, and all other data tied to the subject often conflict or are inconsistent. How does a designer communicate the urgency for change when scientists and environmental experts can't agree on whether it would require two or six planet Earths to sustain our current standard of living? That's ignoring, of course, that we don't even have two Earths to share.

In *Citizen Designer*, Steven Heller suggests, "A designer must be professionally, culturally, and socially responsible for the impact his or her design has on the citizenry. Indeed, every good citizen must understand that his or her respective actions will have reactions. All individual acts, including the creation and manufacture of design for a client, exert impact on others."⁴⁵ With this understanding, many designers are playing catch-up to learn what this means relative to and how to incorporate this thinking into their practice.

I've observed three approaches within the art and design fields with regard to these global threats. One focuses on raising awareness and empathy, another would be considered activism, and the third would be the application of green knowledge or simply the implementation of as many known green solutions as possible. I've included here a sampling of artists and designers who represent these approaches.

Awareness

Klaus Staeck, born in 1938, in Pulsnitz, near Dresden, Germany

Und neues Leben blüht aus den Ruinen
(*And new Life blossoms from the ruins*), 1979

"The main focus of my work since the 1970's is the theme conservation of nature. The idea for the poster was inspired by the car mania in Germany. Germans would do without most things, but could not do without a car. In spite of the rising oil prices, Germans are still more likely to choose to choose gas guzzling SUV's." ⁴⁶



Luba Lukova, Bulgarian-born, now works in New York

Eco Crime, 1998

"Regarded as one of the most distinctive image makers working today, artist, graphic designer and social activist Luba Lukova focuses on issues such as peace, censorship, immigration, ecology, hunger and corruption." ⁴⁷



Niklaus Troxler, born in Switzerland, 1947.

Dead Trees, 1992

“The 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil was an important event that brought environmental issues onto the agendas of mainstream political parties. This poster was created for this event, but ‘the poster was rejected so I had it printed in Switzerland with the help of my silkscreen printer and a poster company. It was posted all over Switzerland in 600 copies.’”⁴⁸



Faustino Pérez Organero, Cuba.

Ahorrala, 1993

“This poster was published by *Editora Política* [1983], the publishing department of the Cuban Communist Party, is typical of campaigns to promote health and conserve natural resources that included such issues as glass recycling, energy conservation, and vegetable consumption. These posters were designed to be displayed in schools, offices, parks, and cultural centers. Digital poster scan and text provided by Lincoln Cushing/ Docs Populi, documentation and dissemination of images for peace and social justice.”⁴⁹



Jeff Koons, born in York, PA, 1955

New Hoover Convertibles, Green, Blue; New Hoover Convertibles, Green, Blue; Double-Decker, 1981–87

Vacuum cleaners, Plexiglas, and fluorescent lights, 116 × 41 × 28 in. (294.6 × 104.1 × 71.1 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York ⁵⁰

“...their isolation in the gallery, as Koons has claimed, recodifies the objects and also allows us to ask why and how consumer objects are glorified.”⁵¹





Saatchi & Saatchi-Copenhagen, Denmark,

Save Paper - Save the Planet for World Wildlife Foundation ⁵²



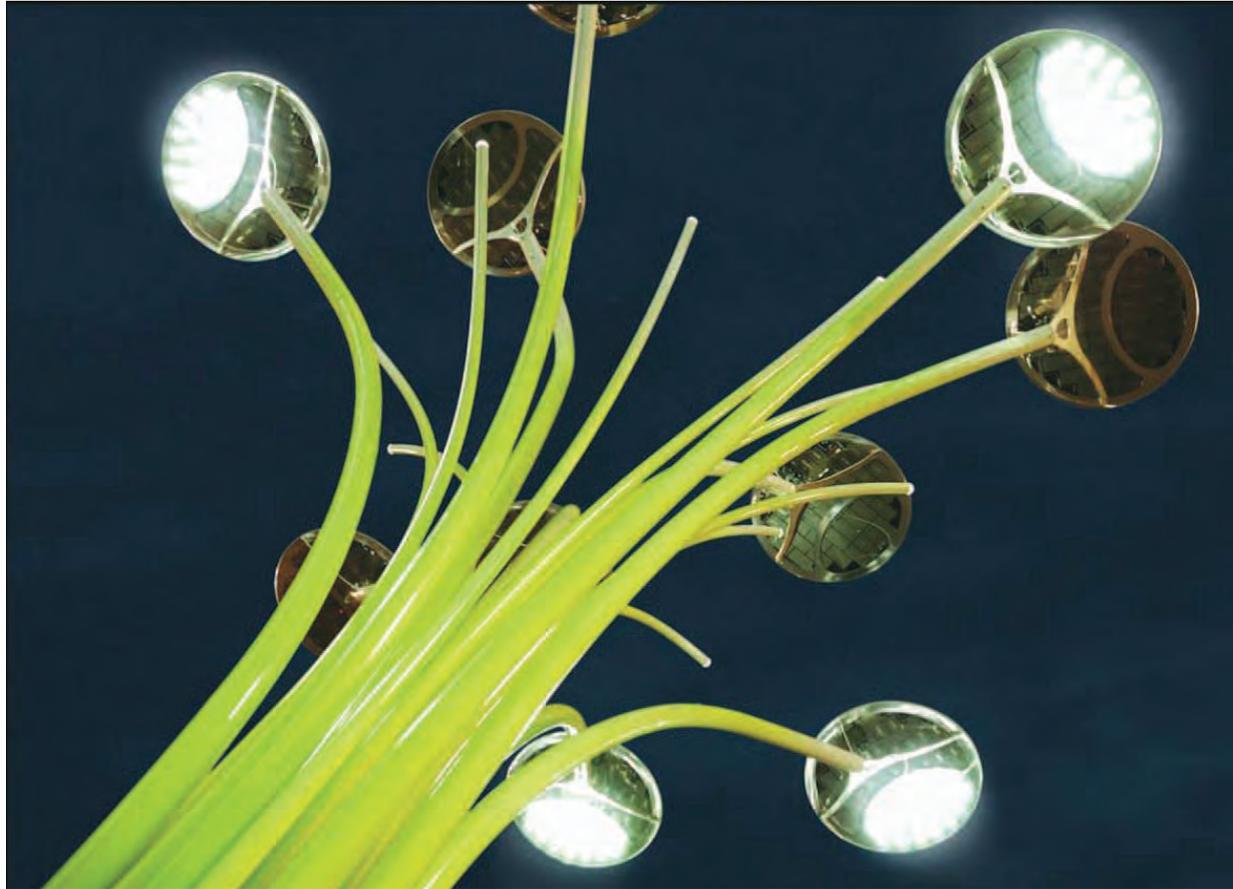
BBDO-Malaysia/Duval Guillaume-Belgium

Plastic Bags Kill for Global Action in the Interest of Animals (GAIA) ⁵³



“Zaria Forman creates breathtaking pastel drawings of Greenland’s icebergs that are exceptional in three ways. First of all, the drawings look so realistic that you might feel the frost coming out of them. Secondly, the artist is raising awareness on climate change and is going to give a percent of all sales to the movement 350.org. But that’s not all. Her art is also a gift to her late mother who was diagnosed with brain cancer on Mother’s Day.”⁵⁴

Applied “green”
knowledge



The Solar Tree, seen here at Piazza della Scala, Milan (2007) designed by Welsh industrial designer, Ross Lovegrove and inspired by organic form and growth of plants, he integrates photovoltaic cells into these street and public lighting forms. Lovegrove was commissioned by MAK who wanted to address both an environmental and social agenda.⁵⁵

“The ability to combine innovative design with advanced technology, along with an acute sensitivity to environmental concerns make Artemide the ideal vehicle for the development of this project conceived by Ross Lovegrove, with the collaboration of Sharp Solar, the world’s leading manufacturer of solar cells.”⁵⁶



“In April 2007, Creative Review—a monthly U.K.-based magazine that covers visual design and advertising—put out a special edition that analyzed its own environmental impact. Called the “It’s About Time We Did Something About Sustainability and the Environment” issue, it came without a cover—saving 8,700 sheets of cover-stock paper in total.

The eighty-four-page issue contained a feature auditing the resources that go into a typical edition of the magazine,...The audit found that each print run of around nine thousand copies consumed almost 239,000 square yards (200,000 sq m) of paper, 53 gallons (200 l) of ink, 1.5 gallons (5.8 l) of chemicals, 49 pounds (22 kg) of glue and...242 pounds (110 kg) of aluminum.

The feature also pointed out that of the 820,120 tons (744,000 tonnes) of magazines produced in the U.K. in 2006, more than half—57 percent— went to landfill. Twenty percent were archived, and 23 percent...were recycled.”⁵⁷

Design activism



Emily Pilloton and co-founder Miller, worked with 13 high school students at Bertie Early College High School (Windsor, NC) to research, design, and build what is now called the Windsor Farmer's Market, also known as the Windsor Supermarket. The project was completed, despite resistance from the school board and local culture, in October 2011.

Emily Pilloton, product designer and activist, is the founder and Executive Director of Project H Design, a nonprofit industrial design organization founded in 2008. She studied architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, and product design at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

“Pilloton started Project H [...] to provide a conduit and catalyst for need-based product design that empowers individuals, communities and economies. Particularly at a time when the weight of climate change, global poverty and population growth are impossible to ignore, Pilloton challenges designers to be changemakers instead of ‘stuff creators.’”⁵⁸



45. Heller, *Citizen Designer*: Kindle Locations 159-162.

46. “The Graphic Imperative: International Posters for Peace, Social Justice and the Environment 1965-2005,” Massachusetts College of Art and Design, 2009, <http://www.thegraphicimperative.org>.

47. “Luba Lukova: Graphic Guts,” University of Michigan School of Art & Design, posted February 13, 2014, http://stamps.umich.edu/stamps/detail/luba_lukova. “The Graphic Imperative,” <http://www.thegraphicimperative.org>

48. “The Graphic Imperative,” <http://www.thegraphicimperative.org>

49. Ibid

50. Francis Lewis, “Jeff Koons: Unprecedented,” *In New York*, May 29, 2014, <http://www.innewyork.com/blog/the-editor-is-in/art/jeff-koons-unprecedented>.

51. Daniela Salvioni, “McCollum and Koons,” *Flash Art*, 131, December 1986-January 1987, 66-7.

52. Lina D., “40 Of The Most Powerful Social Issue Ads That’ll Make You Stop And Think,” accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.boredpanda.com/powerful-social-advertisements>.

53. Ibid

54. Lina D., “Iceberg Drawings by Zaria Forman Fulfill Late Mother’s Dream And Raise Awareness On Climate Change,” accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.boredpanda.com/hyper-realistic-pastel-iceberg-drawings-greenland-zaria-forman>.

55. Marcus Fairs, *Green Design: Creative, sustainable designs for the twenty-first century*. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2009), 33.

56. “Solar Tree—Artemide,” Artemide online catalog, last accessed September 12, 2014, http://www.artemide.com/luce_servizi/download/cataloghi/docs/leaflet/solar_tree/flipping_book/files/assets/basic-html/page2.html.

57. Fairs, *Green Design*, 151.

58. Chochinov, Allan. Foreword to *Design Revolution: 100 Products That Empower People*, by Emily Pilloton. New York: Metropolis Books, 2009.



My catalyst: my island

(my sacred space)

As mentioned earlier, I'm now living on a few acres of land in a rural town in Missouri. It was once referred to by friends as my "island." This natural space that I occupy now satisfies me more than before when I collected stuff that pleased me or entertained me or occupied my time. I am able to witness more personally the seasonal changes. I raise chickens for eggs and entertainment. I want for less in this space and know that the air I'm breathing is cleaner.

There are others sharing my space. Most of them are beautiful, some not so much. I see how the variety of flora and fauna in my "neighborhood" is intricately woven and dependent on one another—although I'm still not sure that mosquitoes and ticks serve a positive purpose.

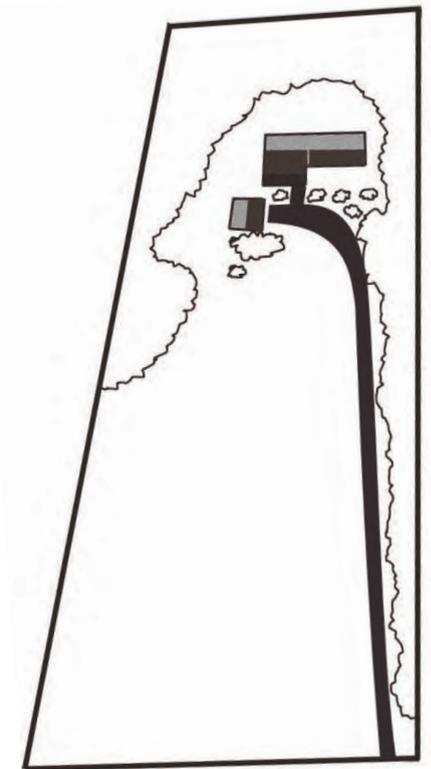
There's a rhythm on "my island." I've learned I have to work with that rhythm. I'm not as successful if I try to force my own. This space teaches me patience and reminds me to breathe. I see the world more clearly now as a series of relationships and complex systems.

I live intentionally within my space as caretaker and benefactor. I would hate to lose my space or see it damaged by our behaviors, attitudes, and actions—or lack of action. I've spent time visually exploring my space and analyzing it as a designer.

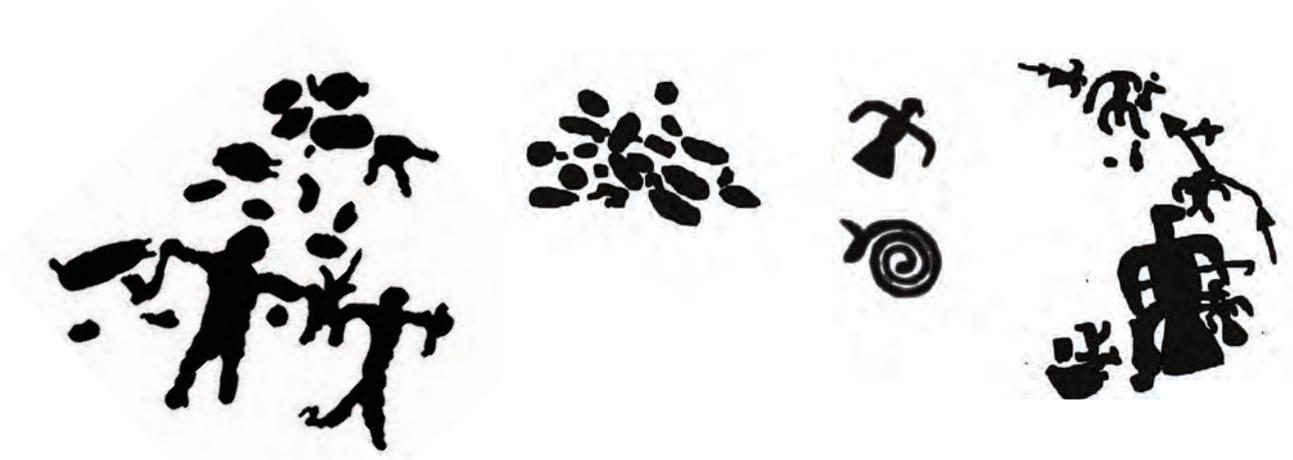
There's a deep motivation to my studies. As I stepped away from my corporate days and returned to a place that seemed more nurturing, and as I experience the seasonal changes through the colors and voices in my natural surroundings, I am reminded that I am part of the natural order and that all living things have purpose and value. I fear the loss of this—in my space and for everyone.

I fear that there has become too large a disconnect from the natural order and too many resources are being exploited beyond recovery. I fear society has created a system of consumption so large and complex that the results will have to become disastrous before we are able to change the system. I know that the design community has played a large role in that system and that I am part of that community.

I know I'm not alone in the regard for natural space. Part of my study includes researching indigenous and traditional peoples and how they live (or lived) relative to the land and resources available to them. I wanted to compare my thoughts to those who feel as deeply connected to their space. I began with Native Americans and the Amish of Missouri.



4.82 acres = 205,959.20 sq ft
4.82 acres = 1.95 hectares
4.82 acres = "my island"



While studying the Native American cultures in Missouri, I started collecting symbols from petroglyphs and pictographs. I'm fascinated by their speculated meanings and how similar they are to our modern day symbols. I read that the indigenous symbols were only part of the recording method for their rituals, myths, and history. With no full written language, these were passed down generation to generation in a very intentional way, most of which was injected into song and ceremony. The language, too, is very intentional using only words with purpose and connection to their way of life and the environmental elements.



2007 Logo for Bayerische Motoren Werke AG; (English: Bavarian Motor Works), commonly known as BMW.

We too incorporate myth and history into the symbols of our time. The simple message of fertility and prosperity for the community in an egg shape before seems to have evolved into today's more complex icon of prosperity for individual. My bias relative to consumerism may be coming through in this last observation.

Within the Native American culture is a reverence for life, "a 'community-of-beings' world view". And scientists have found that "all traditional societies that have succeeded in managing resources well over time, have done it in part through religious or ritual representation of resource management. The key point is not religion per se, but the use of emotionally powerful cultural symbols to sell particular moral codes and management systems."⁵⁹ Perhaps we can change our symbolism to place more reverence on the natural resources that provide for us and celebrates equality and diversity of all members within our biosystem. What emotionally powerful symbols might there be that can shift thought from individual to communal? There was such a symbol once. It came on the heels of the first manned space flight. The first glance at our planet from somewhere other than on the planet. "According to Flight Director Gene Kranz, 'Apollo 8's stunning images of the Earth in vibrant color' became for the environmental movement in the US a powerful visual expression of the concept of "Spaceship Earth," a phrase coined by Buckminster Fuller."⁶⁰



Earth, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center Image by Reto Stöckli, February 2002.

Living close to nature allows one to learn to adapt to and coexist with other species. Anthropologists call this "Traditional Ecological Knowledge or a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment."⁶¹ To thrive in a natural environment, one needs a better understanding of natural rhythms and systems. There is also a growing understanding, based on psychological research, that our mental, physical, and spiritual health is associated with nature.

Wherever I travel I take a moment from whatever business brought me to a particular place and look across the landscape. I take in what I see as the present landscape and any structures that exist at that moment, imagine what the people are doing and thinking at that moment, what their relationship is to the landscape and organics of the space; then I go back in time and imagine what and who was there before, their lifestyle and relationship to the landscape. In some cases, I've been given a primer, as in the locations preserved as historical archives of early indigenous peoples. Archeologists and historians provide some insight and I play those scenarios out in my mind seeing them using or carving new symbols into the native rocks as part of their ritual or ceremony. I know, due to circumstances as well as mythology, they feel deeply connected to nature. They resolve their daily challenges with the materials surrounding them, and when the usefulness of the object has passed, it returns to the landscape.



My own landscape, my sacred space. Winter 2012/2013.



The landscape of the early indigenous peoples living in what is now Washington State Park in Missouri. Winter 2012/2013.



The landscape of the early indigenous peoples living in what is now Nevada, Missouri. Winter 2012/2013.



The landscape of the Amish
community in Jamesport, Missouri.
Winter 2012/2013.



I continued my studies of traditional peoples in Jamesport, Missouri, where one can find a large community of Amish that are open to the notion of tourism and being a novelty. The town is small and quaint with a little over 500 people. It was established in 1857 and is home to the largest Amish community in Missouri.

The Amish believe that God expects them to work closely with and in tune with nature, caring for the land and animals. They are very community focused and have large families, with all members living closely together. Most modern conveniences (like cars, electricity, and telephones) are avoided as they may draw focus away from the purpose of members within the community. They seldom seek assistance from the “outside” world but rely on each other. Their lifestyle is one of minimal consumption. They purposely distance themselves from modernity, avoiding current marketing ploys, and strive to provide for their own basic needs from nature and hard work.

The answer seems to be in community, and relationships, both with other humans and with the larger community of flora and fauna, and with the entire global system. An entire thesis could focus on the semiotics of past, present, and future relationships between humans the biosphere.



45. Berkes, *Sacred Ecology*, Kindle locations 935-938.

46. H. Henry, and Amanda Taylor. “Re-thinking Apollo: envisioning environmentalism in space.” *The Sociological Review*, 57 (2009): 190-203. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-954X.2009.01825.x, p. 194.

47. Berkes, *Sacred Ecology*, Kindle locations 519-522.

Reflective project My sacred space, in grids

The piece at bottom left is an aerial view of my neighborhood—about a 2 mile radius. I took liberties with color because the map reference I used showed the region in almost nothing but shades of green. I chose to use lighter greens for the higher elevation land. My “neighborhood” is very hilly with several creeks fed by a lot of watershed due to a high clay content in the soil.

The piece shown at the right is a closer view of my neighborhood showing the larger shapes of parceled land. With these larger shapes I was able to do more glazing with the acrylics. I find this method offers the most visual beauty of the medium as colors blend translucently.

These two pieces led to another perspective on the same subject as seen in the following paintings. Doing a little research on the soil content in my area informed the piece at bottom right. The soil and clay are very shallow close to my house as it sits on bedrock.

These exercises forced me to analyze my sacred space from a macro and micro-level, observing shapes, color, and relationships.





Reflective project

My sacred space, dissected



The daunting stack of blank canvases

Returning to a more traditional interpretation of grids brought me to this experimental painting. Taking a picture of my front yard, I gridded it out to 96 squares. I printed it, numbered the back of each square sequentially, then cut it up into individual squares, each being 3/4-inch. I then translated them with acrylic paint onto paper squares that were 2-inch.

I segregated similar small original pieces by colors. I began painting this way so I could use similar palette colors and not waste paint. This process was very similar to approaching a jigsaw puzzle—putting similar pieces in their own piles to work with.

Systematically, I'd work on a few pieces at a time, careful to number the backs of the new mini-paintings to match the small original pieces. I'd set a goal to use as few colors and strokes as possible. I enjoyed this process.

I love how some squares feel like random “cousins” to their neighboring squares. Alike, but not the same. I'm surprised that objects within the composition aligned as much as it did. The finished piece is further iteration of the beauty that I wish to preserve, on my “island” and globally.





Close up views of some of the squares.





Reflective project

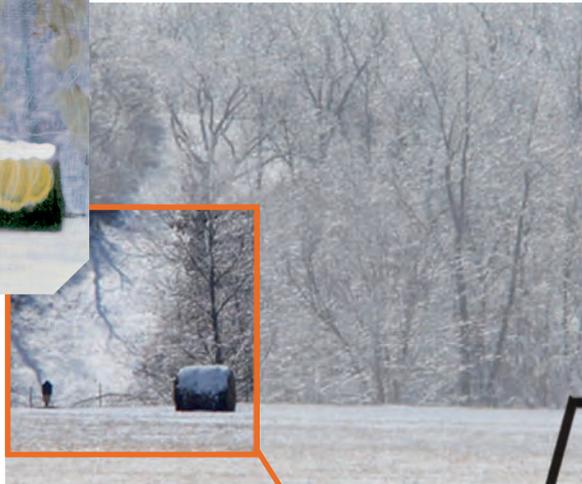
Corners of my island

I have a collection of photos of my place that I've taken through the years. They represent the important and beautiful spaces that surround me on my "island."

From each of these images I found a smaller composition. They became the 2-inch square miniature studies that would make up a whole of 100 squares.

These smaller spaces are what I see when I go through my daily routines: feed the chickens, let the dogs out, let the dogs in, feed the dogs, feed the cats, water for everyone, take out the trash, burn what trash I can, put that ash on the garden, put my organic waste on the garden, get the mail,... breathe.

I made a poster that diagrammed the locations of each miniature composition on my "island." The intention was to provide a graphically informative story about my landscape. Viewers can make their own connections between what is there and what they are familiar with in their own environments.



The view down the pasture



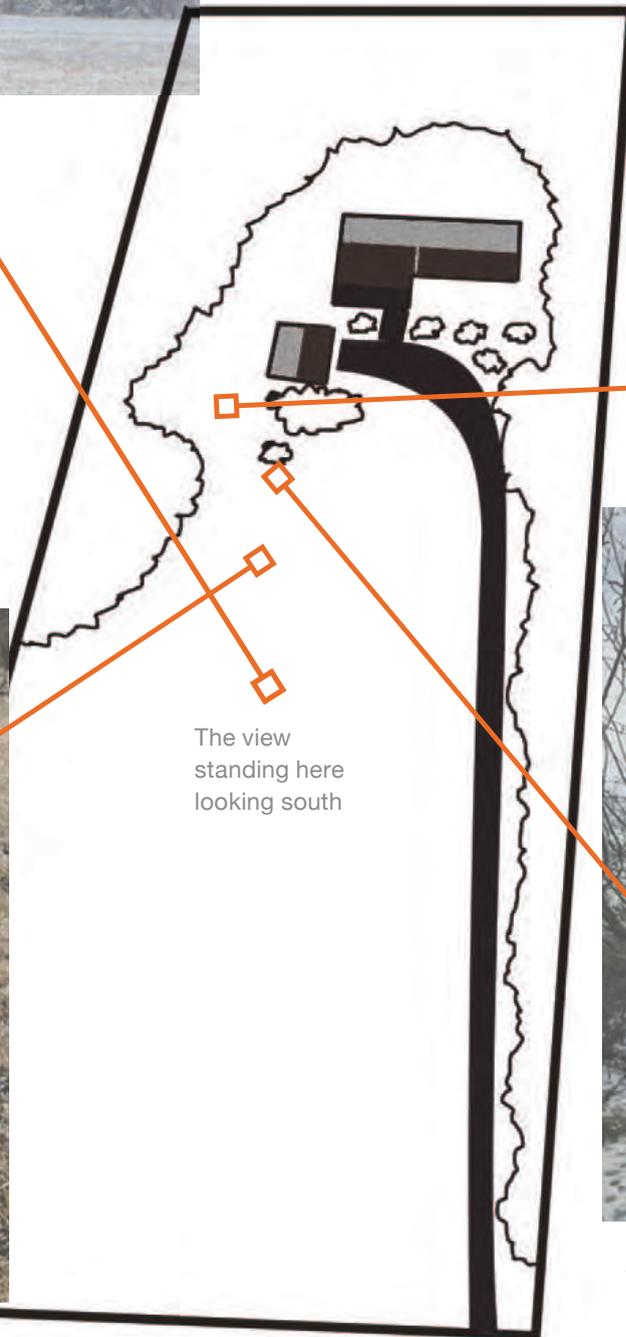
The rusty burn barrel



Dad's oak tree



The view standing here looking south

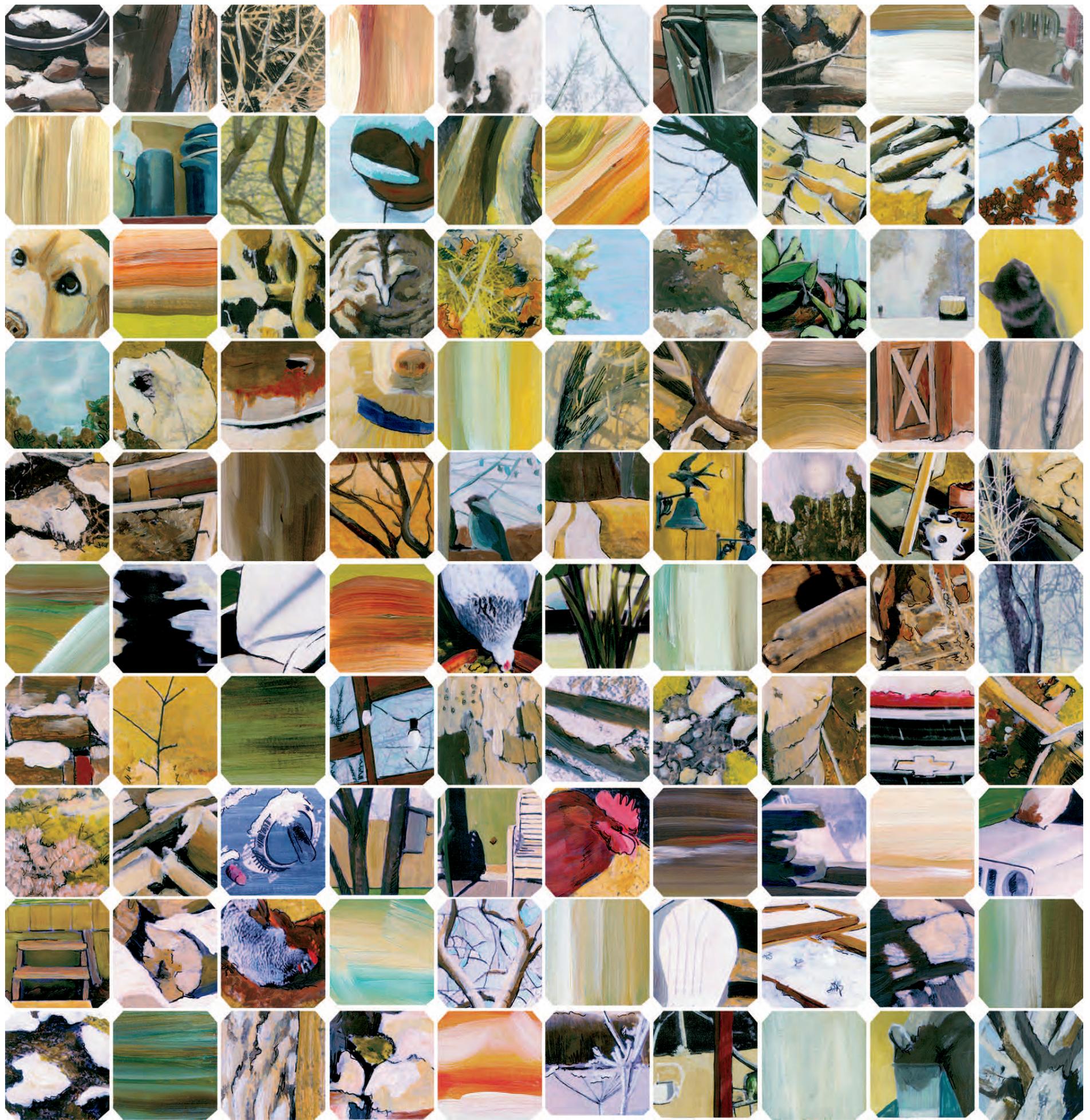


Apple tree by the chicken run



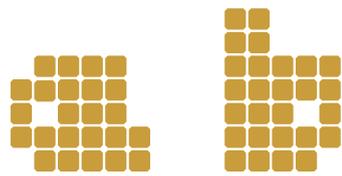


100 corners of my "island."

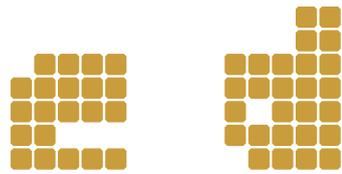


Reflective project

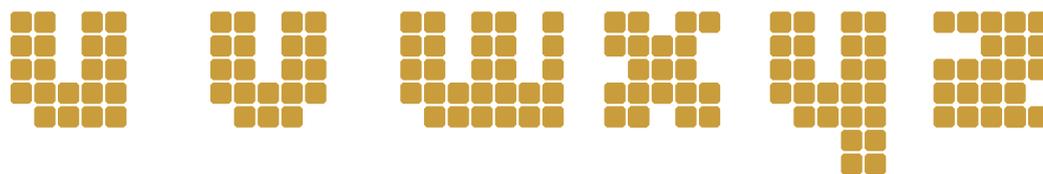
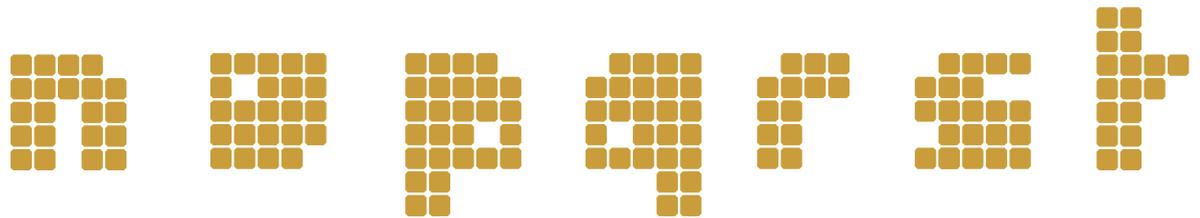
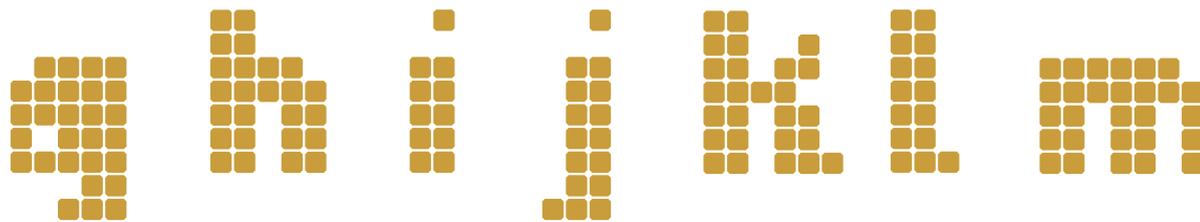
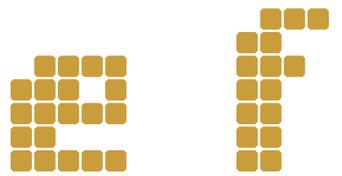
My “Island” bitmap font

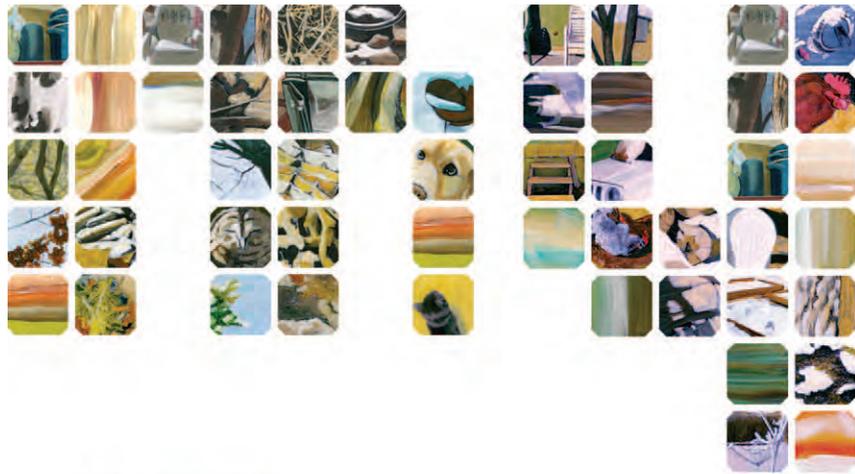


What was I to do with these 100 square studies of my place? A bitmap font. I began with the letterform structures, then, the next step was to insert my small 2x2 paintings inside them. I arranged the images to give best possible contrast and color variety.



This font would be used strictly for decorative titles as the letterforms would have to be large enough for the images within the cells to be somewhat readable. I also figured I could use the bitmaps without images if I wanted to use the letters in a smaller format.





(like solar panel grids)





The First Purge—letting go of Stuff

(an event)

There was a time in my life when I measured my success by what I possessed. Then came a time in my life when I no longer had the means to amass as much stuff and felt I needed to cling to what stuff I had.

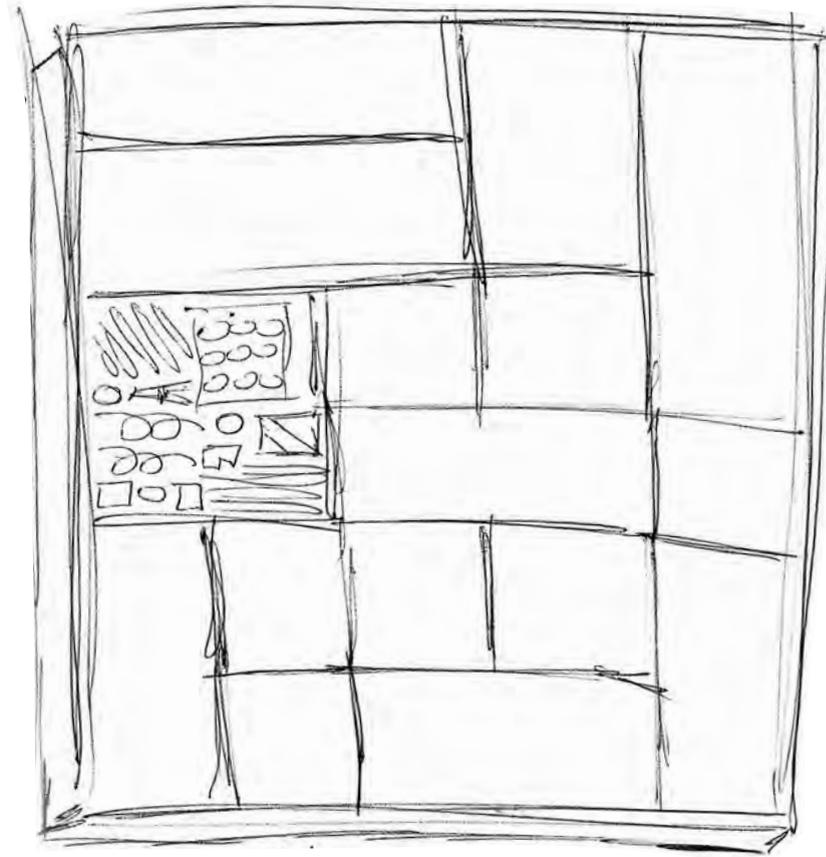
My family is a resourceful bunch and we found ourselves using things in different ways or extending their usefulness during times of hardship. I continue this skill and have found myself holding onto things that I can see other uses for. My life has become so busy that I don't seem to find time to make with the stuff I had saved. Some stuff does find ways into projects and fixes, some stuff becomes piles, waiting for purpose.

I recognize the flaw in saving all this stuff. I'm trying now to simplify my life in order to "see" better, to remove the clutter and static that seems to fill my space and mind and heart. I'm learning to let go. Detach from objects. I am not my stuff. I know this, intellectually. Socially, I see pressures to collect stuff. I'm now irritated by those pressures. I see things in stores, online, or on TV and think, "I want that stuff." I'm a work in progress.

I have an annual bonfire party in the fall where I invite friends over for food, libations, socializing around the burning of my brush and wood leftover from the seasonal pruning. This year I decided to make it more of a unique event and include it in some way in with my graduate work—I would use my stuff to make art. I began by going through the drawers and cubby holes in my house pulling out stuff that was part of the clutter mentioned earlier. I would ask my friends to help hold me accountable to purging my stuff and from it we would make the art piece.

I was inspired by autoconstruccion on a website (<http://blogs.walkerart.org/design/2013/07/15/a-warm-system-the-autoconstruccion-suites/>), and at first thought I would let the process be completely organic allowing the art piece to take whatever form the group decided upon. My friends include faculty (of disciplines mostly outside Art), programmers, insurance claims adjusters, grade school teachers, and a hodge podge of skills and backgrounds. When I approached one of them, an English teacher, with the idea, she quickly said to me, "don't make me think too much, I'll be drinking." With that prompt, I decided to start with a little more structure so the group didn't struggle so much beginning the process. I looked up assemblage art and through the myriad of selections, I found

An early sketch of the working structure. Thanks to Louise Nevelson for the inspiration I drew from her shadowbox/assemblage work.



Friends and family were deeply engaged in the process, staking out territories. Organically, themes emerged within each grid section. I was on hand only to provide tools, adhesives, and hardware.

Louise Nevelson, an abstract expressionist, popular in the 1950s and 60s. I built a shadowbox primer with varied sized compartments. The whole piece measured 42-inches by 48-inches. It was ready to become a visual expression of consumption.

I had gathered four boxes of miscellaneous stuff. After full bellies of chili and soup, and with beverages in hand, the group of friends dug through the box, found their favorite objects, and commenced with gluing. This became a human experiment. I stood by, offering glues and tools as needed, snapping a few pictures, while watching my friends take ownership in the process. Ownership to the level of defense of compartments and specific objects. Some of my stuff went home with friends and found new purpose. Other objects stayed in the boxes, unwanted, without artful purpose. I will have to deal with that stuff differently.

After three or four hours, people drifted home—hands covered with glue—the art piece was done for the evening.

The next day I went to the garage to assess the project. I glued on a few more pieces for visual balance and story filler. I was amazed at how the separate compartments had developed their own personality, their own narrative. This, the result of this human experiment, art-making event, that took place the night before. My friends are great subjects, and friends. They may not have been as aware of helping me simplify or why that was even important to me, but I believe they saw some of themselves in my stuff. Perhaps the process of making this art piece was cathartic for us all.



PROTECT

STUFF

STUFF



I am

stuff

NOT MY

NOT MY

stuff

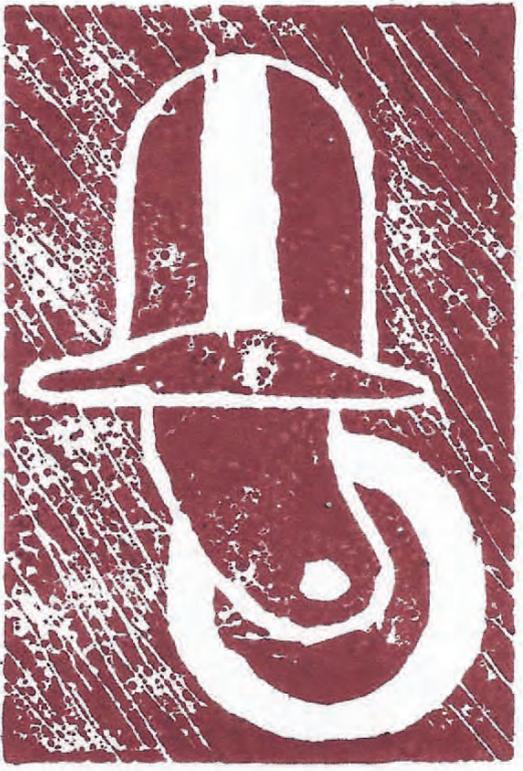
right?

I had used a common medium, Kilz primer, packed with its own negative impact to the ozone and environment, to encase all the elements of the finished sculpture. This made everything the same color, off white. Then I painted it all dark brown. Strangely, this process made all the stuff the same, equalizing the importance of all elements. They became part of one whole—part of the same story—the story of my stuff—with the purpose of saying, “I am not my stuff,” and to say “it’s just stuff.” Of course, there is always that little question of doubt in the back of my mind. Maybe I’m worried for nothing. Maybe the problem will resolve itself.

Ultimately, this sculpture went to my bonfire pit. With a bit of ceremony and friends to bear witness, it was set afire. The intention was to finish the life of the project, or at least speed up the break-down process of the elements on it. In the end remained a pile of ash, bits and pieces of objects that couldn’t break down completely before the fire snuffed out, and charred objects that stubbornly clung to life.

Some stuff just never goes away.





This caster wheel was once the inspiration for a block print. Even in its damaged condition, it has beautiful form.



Some stuff survives the burning.



Reflective project

Letting go of (even more) Stuff

I have a lot of clothes. I used to have even more. After I left corporate in 2001, I hung onto the clothes that were part of that life. I had walked away from a job that paid well, that allowed me to golf with buddies during office hours, that gave me tickets to big events in the city. It was a job that taught me a lot about human behavior, especially in the business world—a world that praised arrogance and rewarded gluttony and deception. I had been mired deeply in that world, and had the trophies to show for it. On top of that, I was involved with advertising—the promotion of consumerism. It all fit together, neatly. But not necessarily comfortably for me.

The first clothing purge came a couple of years after leaving that life, or rather, after starting my new life. I hauled five trash bags of clothing to the thrift store. That left me two and a half closets full of clothes. Time passed. I added a few more clothes. I purged a couple more bags of clothes.

More time passed. I wasn't adding as many, but I was looking at the clothes I didn't wear. Why did I still have them? I'd try them on and some would just not fit quite right. "But I should wear them. I spent good money on them." I kept them. I would have to dust them. Then that became a nuisance. But, I still kept them. I might need them.

"No. I don't."

As I photographed my purged clothing I sought to capture the elements that attracted me to them in the first place—texture, color, fasteners.





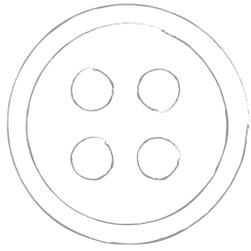
It felt good to say that. It had come easier after having gone through the purge of objects. Now, when I tried on these clothes, I remembered why I didn't wear them. Not because they didn't have great texture, or color, or fasteners. They weren't comfortable. When I left corporate, I said "no" to being uncomfortable and conformity. I will now be me. Comfy me.

Before giving the clothing away I photographed them. As I handled each item I remembered what first drew me to it. That is what I tried to capture in the images.

Three tubs and two trash bags later, I had purged more clothes. Most of these went to friends. The rest to a shelter. For the first time, I had no regrets or doubts about doing it. There was a bond no more... to this stuff. I foresee more purges coming in my life.







Reflective project

'Tis the season

(the tree of materialism)

Christmas, for me, always meant a time where we all get to pause from the normal routines and focus our time and emotional energy on family and friends. This happens sporadically throughout the year for birthdays, but Christmas was focused on everyone all at once. This also meant all of those people were counting me in their energy circles. It is (or was) a time of enormous love energy. The act of gifting became a symbolic gesture of that love.

Here lies the rub. Christmas, in my opinion, has become a time when physical gifts can outweigh the emotional and spiritual gifts. In our collective zeal to let others know that we're thinking of them, some have gotten caught up in a frenzied manipulated market that tries to convince us that the more we give the more we must love.

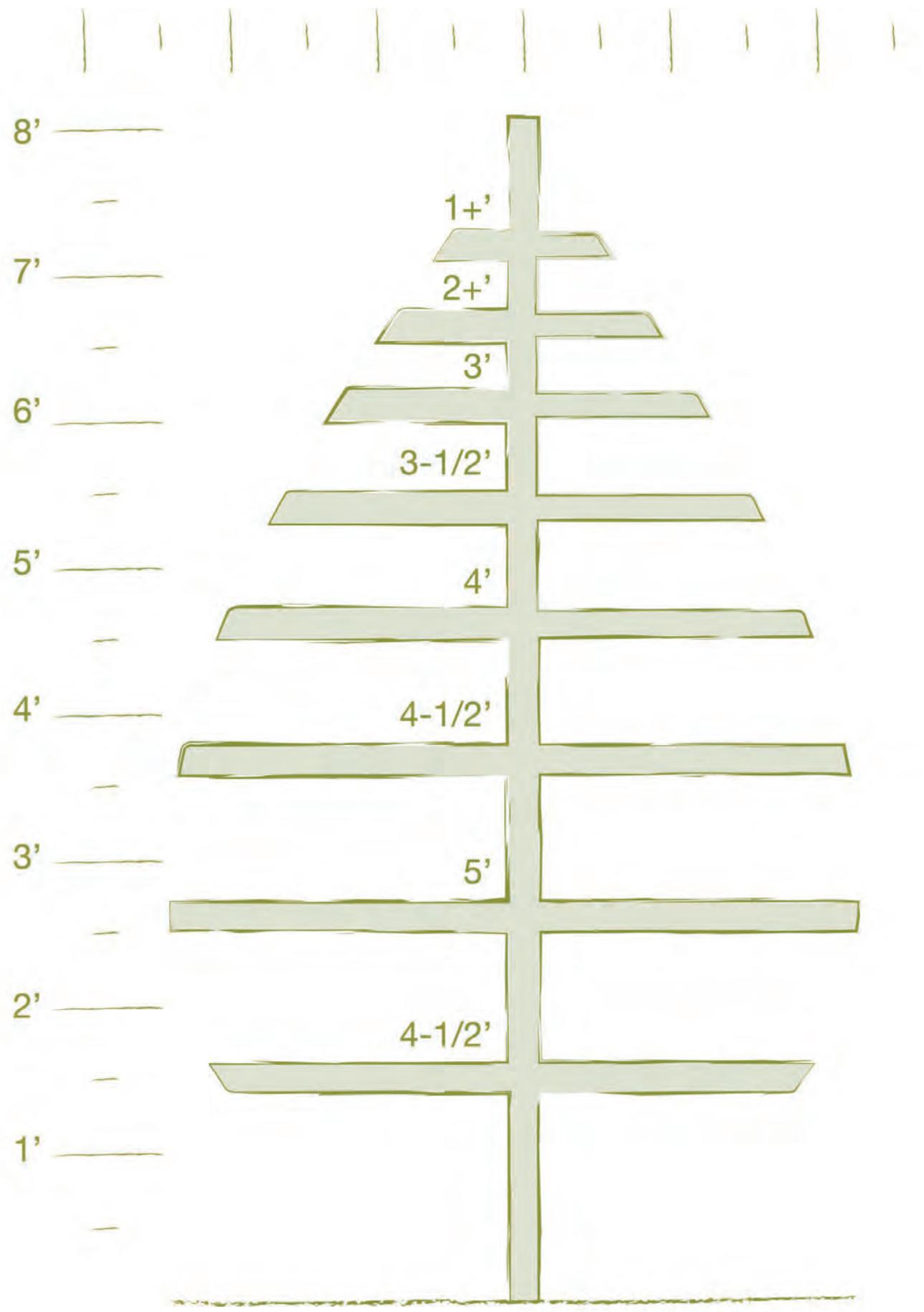
To represent this observation I built a tree. Mine was a humble tree. It was built from salvaged lumber and decorated with organic objects, reused objects and scraps. The lights were LED and powered by the sun. It started out looking like a "normal" Christmas tree (sans star at top). The plan was for it to evolve into a cluttered collection of materialism. I had gathered boxes, tags, and objects that could be added.

As I struggled to collect enough to clutter the tree, Christmas came and went. I was frustrated that my plan could not be completed.

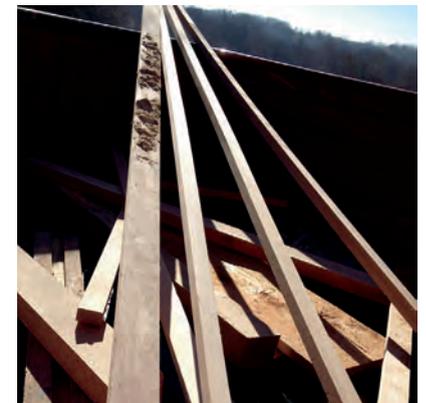
Hindsight now tells me that my tree and its message was complete already.

I used an image of the bare, upright, tree planted at the front of my acreage as the backdrop for Christmas cards that I sent to friends and family with a gentle reminder to be considerate of the Earth during this gift-giving season. Once the holiday was over, the tree was disassembled and much of it was used to build a cold frame for my spring vegetable garden. If only more of the things we use had multiple uses before discarding them.

Ultimately, the naked tree didn't feel right and I made a few ornaments from scrap wood and found organic elements. It was also lit with solar powered blue LED lights.



I began with a plan. The scavenged wood ended up dictating the dimensions and frequency of limbs.



The image of the bare tree in my field made for a message of simplicity in a holiday card.





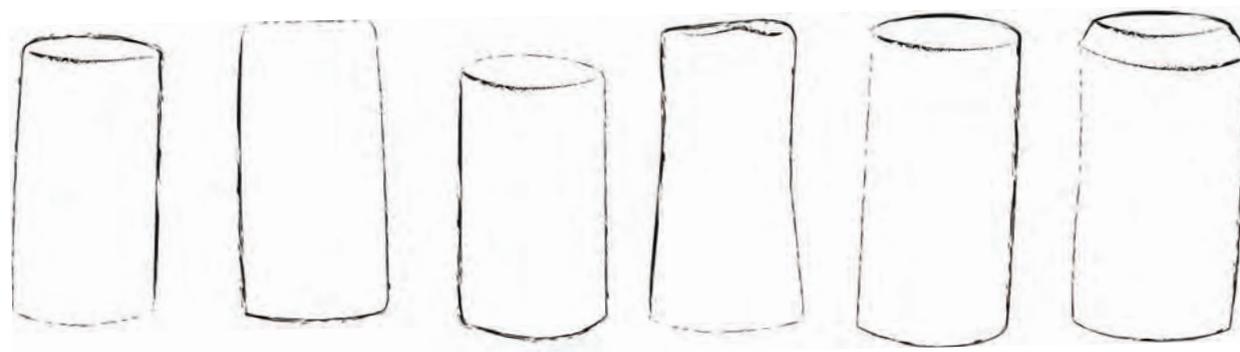
The bare, symbolic, tree eventually gets decoration. Ornaments were made from scrap lumber, gourds, seed pods and wrapped twigs.

Reflective project

Reflecting on my Stuff—iterations

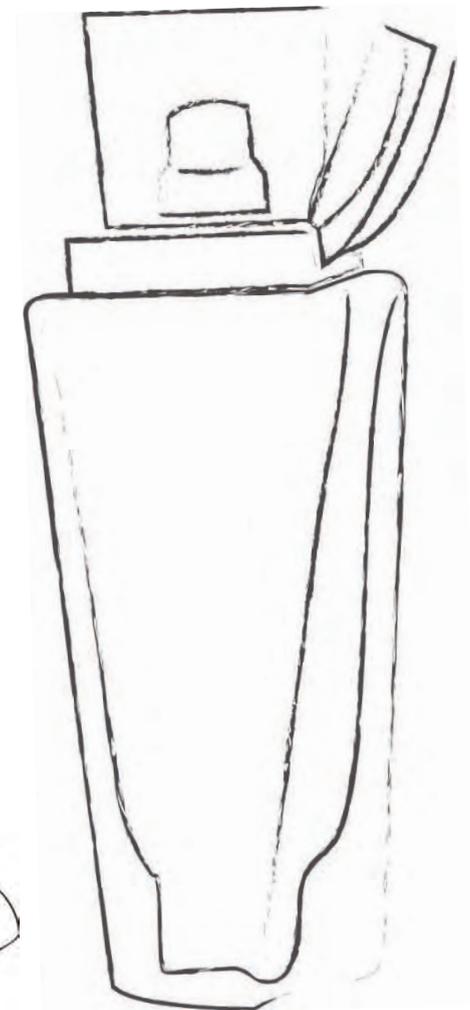
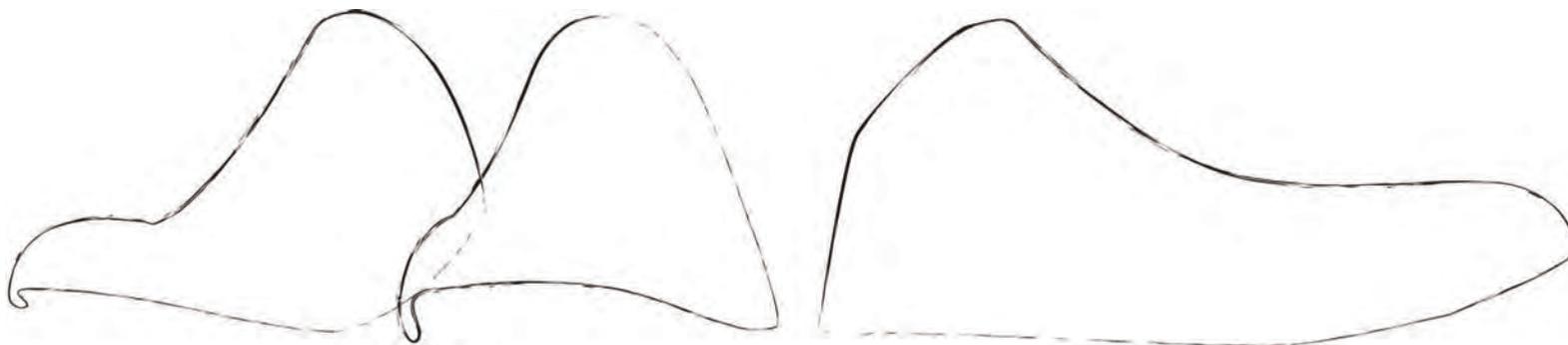
I continued to study the objects and clothing I'd purged from my personal collection and found ways to render them in different visual forms. I looked at them as I would have if I were trying to market them. Each had its own set of values, some simply being utility, some had interesting shapes or textures or color, some had interesting history. I needed to preserve and document some of that. I also felt the need to analyze the psychological connections as well as celebrate their existence. After all, they were the result of a design concept, engineering, and extraction of natural resources.

I traced the shapes of the purged objects and altered line weights and qualities to study line and shape. Some of these line studies found their way into block prints and later in a book about My Stuff.





With the block prints, not only was I rediscovering an old printmaking technique, but it allowed me to exaggerate the importance of these objects.





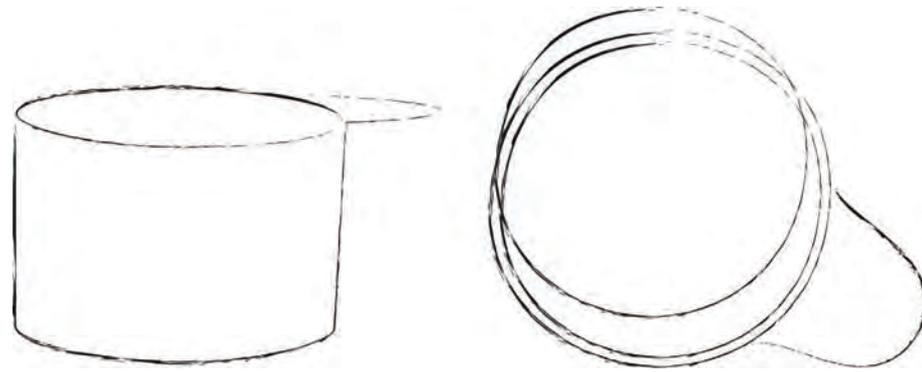
I wanted to make these everyday objects look important and desirable. These exaggerated presentations are like the marketing and production of so much stuff that is given little thought beyond the initial acquisition.



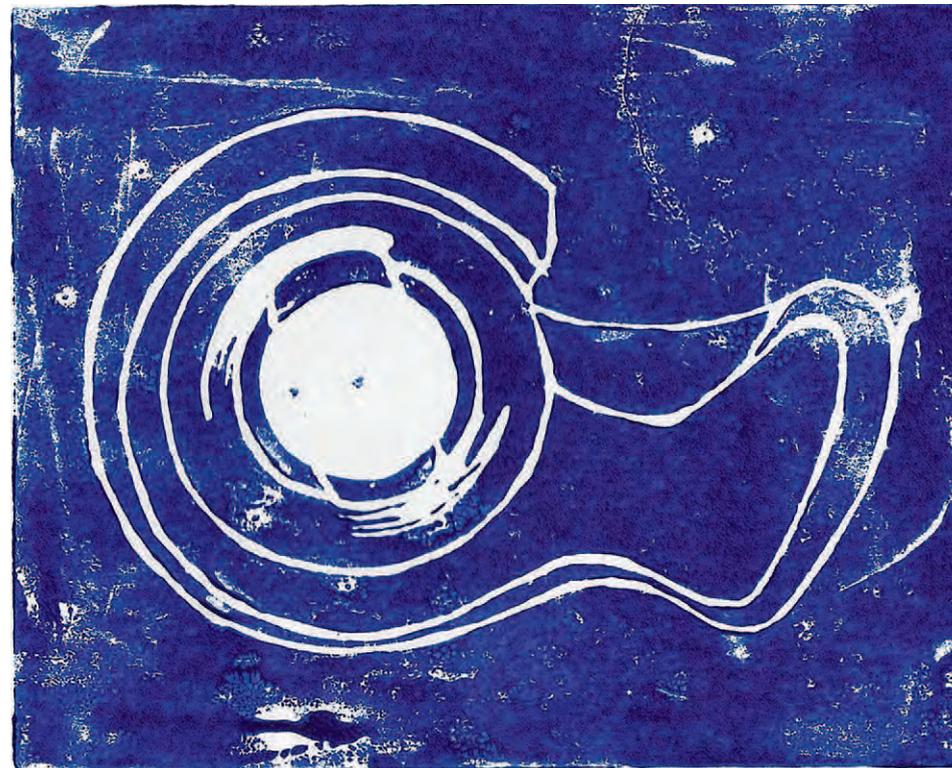
All things are beautiful if you study their relationships to each other and the space they occupy. I celebrated their form and shadows. This would be their last "fifteen minutes of fame."



Must they provide a new measuring cup every time?



I really have to get out of the habit of buying these disposable tape dispensers for home. The better choice would be to buy the small roll and insert it into a permanent dispenser—like I use at work.





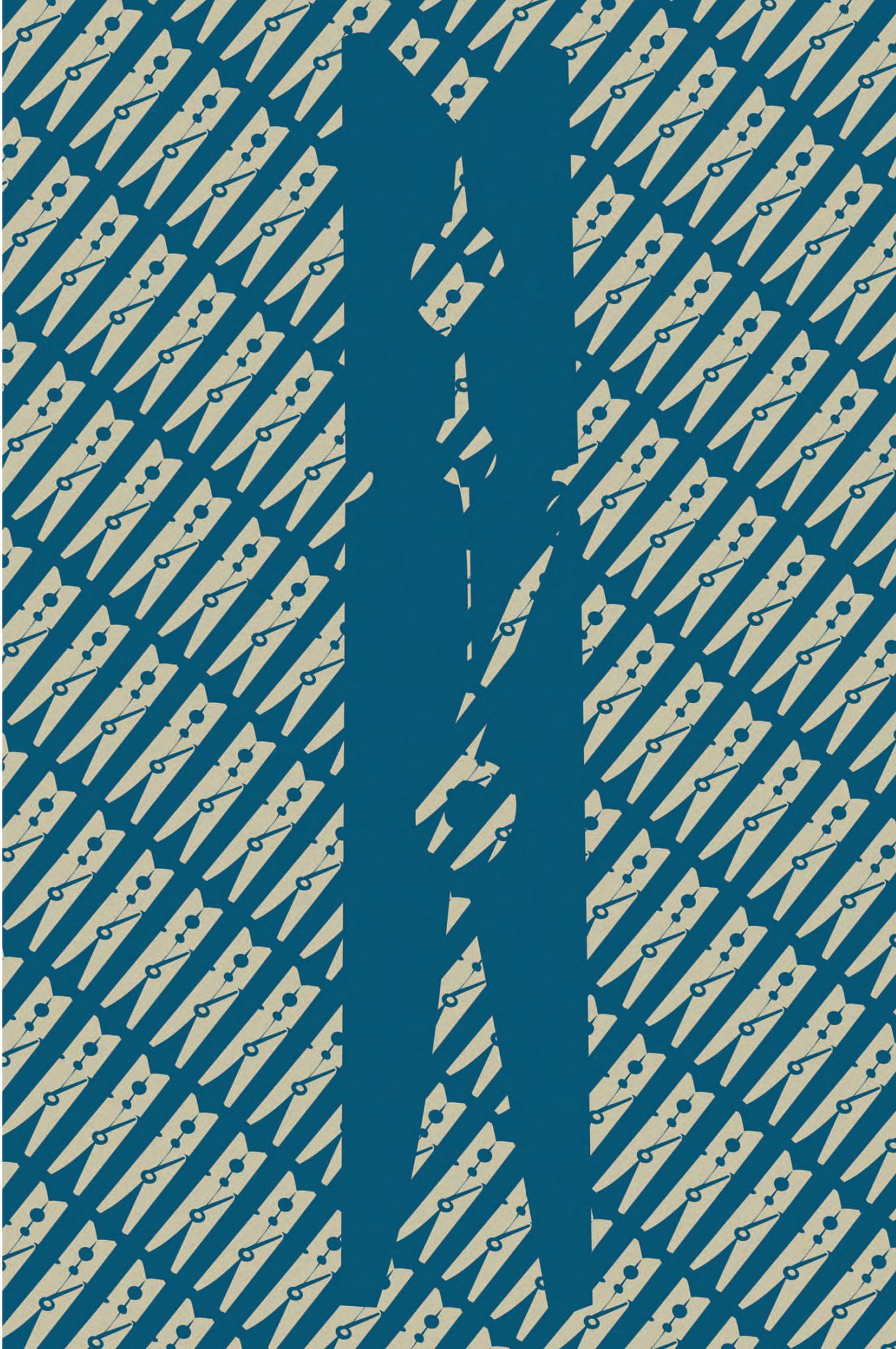
These little “widgets” are the caps off a toner cartridge for me printer. They are beautiful in their organic form. I use them to represent all the Stuff overall.



I worked through a few poster exercises, again rising the level of importance of the objects. In this poster, the message was to "eliminate the Stuff."



eliminate
the
STUFF



Clothespins have always reminded me of little soldiers. Here, they are lined up in formation which also illustrates the negative space that is created between them. I find it strangely fascinating that the combination of such simple shapes, held by a spring, can handle such a big job. Good design is most often found in the simplest forms.

Reflective + Why did I have this Stuff anyway?



The cover to the book about My Stuff is a pie chart that represents the percentages of each service I consume. The information came from The Global Footprint Network website. It calculated my eco-footprint. The represent Services, Goods, Mobility, Shelter, and Food.

Introduction:

My three “junk” drawers are filled with miscellaneous gadgets. Most of the objects have obvious purposes like batteries, box knives, glues, hardware (nails, screws, hooks, picture wire, tacks, small hammer, needle-nosed pliers, measuring tape, flashlight, candles, matchsticks, and more. Some items aren’t as obvious. These items somehow deemed themselves “worthy” of membership to the junk drawer. I’m resourceful and some of these objects get used in unusual ways to solve household problems.

I can be a little impulsive when it comes to clothing and shoes. I fall in love with texture, color, and fasteners. I’ve developed a bad habit of buying clothes without trying them on first. As one might guess, sometimes they don’t fit well. Sometimes I’ll convince myself it’s tolerable. I’m never right. I might force myself to wear something uncomfortable once or twice, only to confirm the discomfort. Itchy, tight, short torso–worse, short sleeved. I either have very long arms or women’s tops are made with short sleeves. Like my automobiles, if I find something that “works,” it will get a lot of mileage. If not, it finds itself in a neglected pile or tub.

Some of my Stuff has no purpose beyond its original use, but somehow they’ve become part of my collection. Like a crow attracted to shiny, I become fascinated by their shapes, texture, or overall form. For example, the new toner cartridges for my HP printer come with an elongated plastic cap that is removed before installation. I love their shapes–both internally and externally. In this book I’ve used them as a symbol representing generic amassing of Stuff.

Going back to the question, “why did I have all this Stuff anyway?”, got me curious about the behavioral drive to consume and collect Stuff. I found articles and essays that helped shed some light on this subject. As I’m simplifying my own life I see marketing tactics differently than I did before. They seem in conflict with my own intentions and I project this to a larger scale as in conflict with global efforts to reduce consumerism. Perhaps if I understand why people behave as they do (myself included) I might be able to help craft a message enticing enough to support a paradigm shift on a larger scale. Some of what I read was a little unnerving, but enlightening, offering some psychological structure to these behaviors.

“Overconsumption is a function of obedience built on the false premise that eternally acquiring more goods will make you, your family and your society happier. These goods are produced in a way that–we now know–is likely to lead to global environmental catastrophe.” This excerpt is from a 2013 article in *Truthout* titled “Obedience to Corporate-State Authority Makes Consumer Society Increasingly Dangerous.”⁶² The very idea of a Corporate-State Authority makes me very nervous. Then I ask, “Have I as a designer become an accomplice to a global environmental catastrophe about to happen?” There

was a tinge of guilt as I gathered these objects and articles of clothing, measuring them against the Stuff that I kept. I imagined the machinery, materials, and energy used to create all this. Using Global Footprint Network's Footprint Calculator I was able to figure my personal impact on the Earth. The results were embarrassing.

“Do we spend money to separate ourselves from the poor?” ⁶³

To a degree, I can understand and relate to this question. My family had its share of financial ups and downs. We were either behind or just caught up. This pattern was cyclical throughout my youth. I figured out that money meant freedom and choice at the age of thirteen. I did a lot of babysitting and used the money to buy my own stereo and “socially approved” jeans and shoes. I bought a new trumpet for band classes so I wouldn't look like a dork with a cornet anymore. Real freedom came when I'd worked enough each summer to pay for college. Even though I still had to come home on weekends to work, I knew that my time and my space was now truly mine and the world had opened up to me with my university studies. So, was I cognizant of separating myself from “the poor”? No, I was separating myself from my own economic challenges. I've never resented “the poor” and understand how difficult it can be to rise from it and I hold a higher respect for those who do than for those who never faced the same.

“People compete to demonstrate their superiority, but most are frustrated because others continually catch up.” ⁶⁴

This statement has become absurdly poignant, although it is no longer a reality that the “others” are catching up. The gap is widening exponentially, yet the competition is still fiercely driven. Perhaps it is just a fear that the “others” are catching up that helps to encourage the rampant consumerism.

During the time when I was buried deep in that world of competition and status, I had moved quickly up the ladder in my field and accepted the perks and pay that came with it. In order to stay in or progress up the rungs I had to participate in the ritualistic patterns of consumption expected of those in my environment and rank. This is where my personal pattern of excess began. I wasn't fully comfortable in this space. I eventually walked away from that competitive space. Like the clingy or stiff clothes, it didn't fit right—in fact, it chafed me.

At the time that I walked away it felt more like I'd walked off a cliff. Where does one go when they want off that ladder? Off is the operative word here. And if one doesn't have another ladder nearby to jump onto, that “off” can be a long way down. But I landed on both feet. I returned to the organic space I had left before. I am now fully immersed in that organic space and know that I can never leave again.



45. Yosef Brody, "Obedience to Corporate-State Authority Makes Consumer Society Increasingly Dangerous," *Truthout*, posted September 29, 2013, <http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/19050-the-experiment-requires-that-you-continue-obedience-to-corporate-state-authority-in-an-increasingly-dangerous-consumer-society>.

46. David Cloutier, "Sending the Wrong Signal: How Luxury Compromises Christian Witness," *Commonweal*, posted December 20, 2013, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/sending-wrong-signal>.

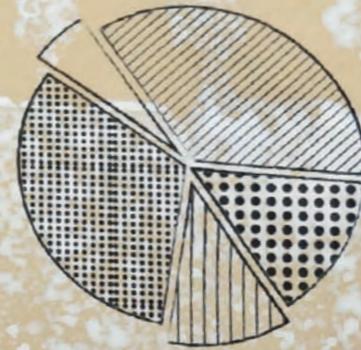
47. Robert Samuelson, "Shop 'til We Drop?," *Wilson Quarterly*, 28, no. 1, Winter2004 2004, 22-29.

If we lived like me, we'd need 6.1 planet Earths
enough resources



My personal ecofootprint:⁵

- Services
- Goods
- Mobility
- Shelter
- Food



To support my lifestyle requires 27.1
global acres of Earth's productive area.
(I generate 29.7 tons of carbon dioxide)



Interior pages from My Stuff book.





“The changes we face in the next few years are not minor. They are, in the words of Charles Handy, ‘discontinuous’—i.e., not incremental changes but radically different changes. These discontinuous changes will require more than adjusting a few of our habits in order to adapt. They already involve fundamental changes that make us uncomfortable and more than a little inconvenienced.”⁶⁵

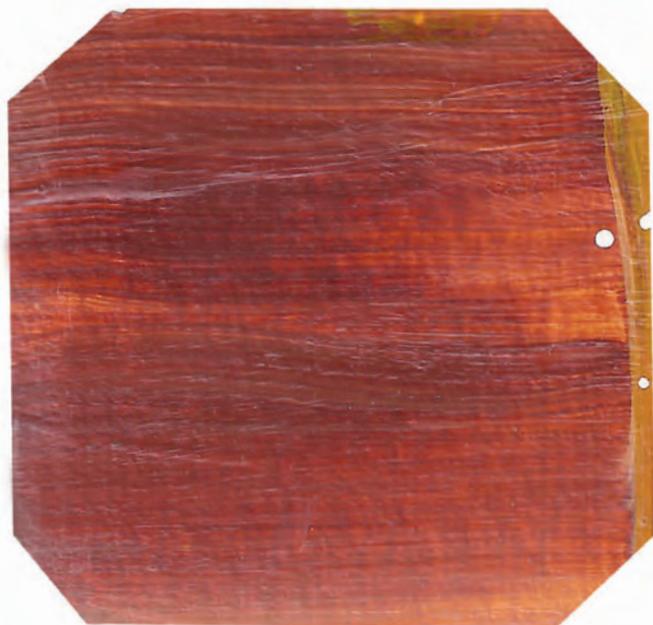
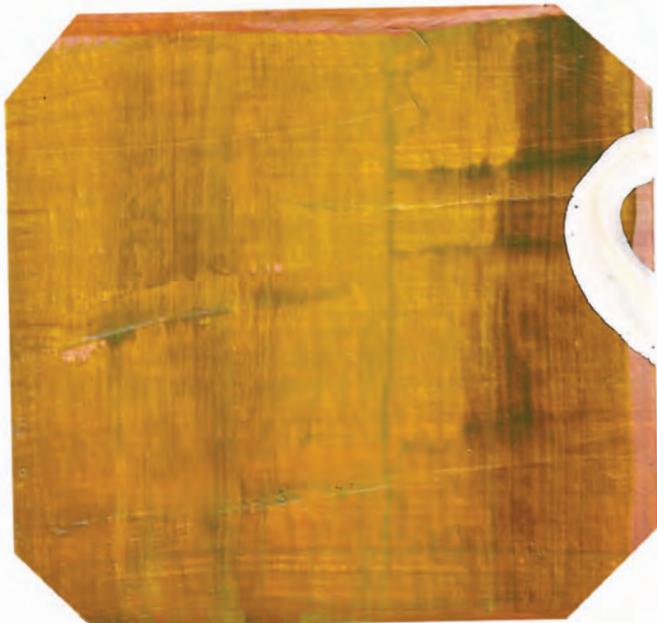
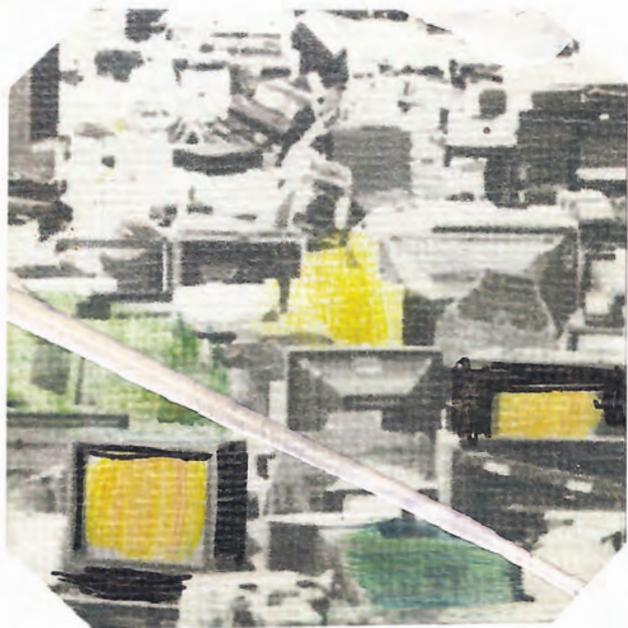
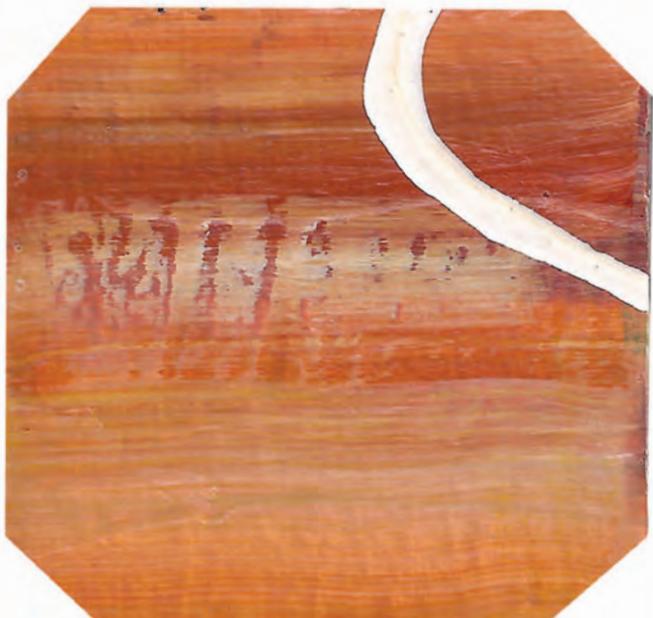
What if everyone made drastic changes? What if it happened in a short amount of time? What if everyone consumed only what they needed, like food, clothing, housing, transportation, toilet paper, communication devices, computers and internet connection, dog food, cat food (and any other pet food), housecleaning materials, toothbrush and toothpaste, medications to maintain health, water, electricity for heating and cooling, gasoline and a lawn mower, snow blower,...wait...have I become biased towards what might be considered essential? Have I been conditioned to believe that I can’t live without these things? What would happen if I cut back to just food, water, housing, transportation and clothing? My pets would starve and I can’t have that. I would have to whack down the weeds around my house by hand. I’m just not going to do that.

I’ve purchased little more than what I’ve listed above (not counting graduate school needs). It is a drastic change for me. What would happen if everyone cut back drastically? It is speculated by economists that the global economy would decline. It’s not clear to what degree as some adjustments would occur—increased investments because more saving would take place, some jobs would be lost, population growth would slow or decrease, waste collections would slow, some people would go hungry or get sick from malnutrition, some people would live longer with reduced stress and increased joy with more time for healthy relationships. There is no way to know with certainty what would happen. It is only clear that some things need to change relative to consumption.

Certainly cutting back in overall consumption is an obvious decision, but there are also alternatives to the way consumer goods are designed, produced, and used, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, with a broader approach to design encompassing cradle-to-cradle practices. The overall marketing of consumer goods needs, in my opinion, a paradigm shift as well, one that maintains a higher standard of integrity, transparency, and honesty.



45. John Ortbal, and Mike Lange and Michael S. Carroll, *The Ecology of Design: The American Institute of Graphic Arts Handbook of Environmental Responsibility in Graphic Design* (AIGA Press, New York, 1996), 6



Reflective project

The clock of Nature does not
follow the clocks of humans



Adopt the pace of nature:
her secret is patience.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

The book about **My Stuff** was created to represent my shedding of the exhaustive consumerist belief system and a return to core beliefs and life choices of simplicity. I firmly believe that a return to nature, for me, brought me back to a mental space of respect for materials and process. Living on my acreage and closer to nature helped bring me to that space. I needed to create a book that encompassed that experience.

Introduction to my **Natural Time** book:

But our responsibility to the Earth is not simply to preserve it, it is to be present to the Earth in its next sequence of transformations. While we were unknowingly carried through the evolutionary process in former centuries, the time has come when we must in some sense guide and energise the process ourselves.

—Thomas Berry, *The Great Work* ⁶⁶

Winter is a time to hunker down, rest, reflect, and plan for the upcoming seasons. I know this now. I didn't always. I resisted, or ignored, the natural clock of the seasons in the past, when I lived in suburbs near a city. I had let myself be drawn in by "shiny" and new and complex and busy. I had conformed to the clock built by humans. I worked for a newspaper which was its own tightly wound clock with an exacting schedule. I had become addicted to the rush of one deadline after another. They were conquests, just like the snow and ice of winter.

I've long since been out of the newspaper industry but weaning off the human clock has been a long process. I moved out of the suburbs to a rural community and on a few acres. I'm surrounded by organic elements—trees, pastures, horses, cattle, chickens, and wild flora and fauna.

While I try to keep some of the wildness at bay, to preserve a bit of controlled space, the wildness has won over much of my acreage. In fact, I have discovered its usefulness which gives me permission to allow its presence. Scale can put things in perspective. In my smaller suburban space, it didn't take much effort to push the wildness back, and all the neighbors were in that same battle with you. It was only when the scale of my battlefield changed, and I was losing by myself, that I came to realize it wasn't a battle to be fought, or won, because that frame of mind is flawed. I needed to see this relationship as a collaboration. First, I would need to understand how the wildness operated. I began to listen and watch.

To me, wild birds are the best story tellers. If you want to know what's going on in "the neighborhood," listen to them. They are weather forecasters, gossipers, tattletales, and bearers of good news. They have come to understand that I am the provider of tasty treats. The feeder

'As you let life live through you,' poet Roger Keyes says, you just become 'more of who you really are.'⁶⁷

—Joanna Macy,
Greening of the Self

hangs from the soffit outside my bedroom window. If it is empty there will be a cluster of titmice, chickadees, and nuthatches scolding me from the branches of the redbud nearby. They get vocal when they think they're being neglected. Three things get me promptly out of bed: letting the dogs out, feeding the wild birds, and a job (and the first two feel a little like the third).

Peeper frogs tell me when spring is almost here, that it is summer, and when summer has ended. They emerge slowly in the beginning, a few brave scouts, earning their name, peeping from the tree line by the creek. All summer long their song fills the night. Then they are suddenly gone.

"There is something insurrectionary about buds. They are by nature secretive, and I never notice them emerging. It is only when the lengthening days draw my eyes to the bare branches in search of signs of spring that I see the small, hard, brown nodules already gathered on the thin, wet, winter branches. It seems improbable then that each tight pellet will swell and burst into leaf, but they do. Quite suddenly a sunny spell charms them into abandoning caution, and they arch into silky catkins or burst into fragile leaflets.

The forest has been plotting this moment all winter. Even as the trees withdrew their sap from the dying autumn leaves they were preparing for this. Last season's fallen leaves laying down their nutrients in the humus were already preparing for their return. Forces were gathering in the silence of the soil, stirring in hidden roots and establishing clandestine cells for the time when Earth inclined her face again to the sun and the warmth tipped the balance in favour of new growth."⁶⁸

After a long winter rest, the grasses and trees begin to come back with buds and sprouts. I get a little frustrated that the weeds appear before the grass. The race for space and resources is played out between what we consider the "desirables" and the "weeds." I've met folks who don't distinguish between the two, but I've only evolved into a better tolerance for the second. I favor the plants that can feed me and are not invasive or predatory.

This phenology—nature's clock—I'm still learning. I do know it's changing. I read that spring has been arriving earlier and fall ending later but I'm not sure it's that simple. What I've observed is more inconsistency in seasonal transitions. Buds and flowers bloom only to be wiped out by a very late season snow. Fewer flowers means fewer bees and less pollination, less pollination means less fruit which means fewer insects which feed fewer birds. Of course the circle is wider than this abbreviated description. The shifting phenology effects are exponential. I'm finding it harder to manage a vegetable garden. The "safe" growing window has gotten shorter as an erratic spring rolls immediately into a hotter, drier summer. I've taken extra care by reviving an old cistern to capture rainwater for the dry spells. I've built a cold frame to protect the young starters in the spring. Inside their passive solar box they will be safe.

Living in the country has taught me patience. I've also learned that Mother Nature will not bend to my will. She will always push back. No, it is I who needed to fall into her cycles and breathe when she breathes. Build and make when the time is right, gather and prepare for the time when everything, including me, pauses before starting it all over again.

I've always had a connection to nature, at least as long as I can remember back into childhood. My Dad's family had a deep rural history. I was probably eight when we visited the family homestead in northern Arkansas near the Little Buffalo River. My great uncle still resided there. He lived completely off the land, raising cattle, chickens, and a very diverse vegetable garden. He canned most of his crops to sustain him through winter. He made his own quilts, cut firewood, maintained all the buildings and fences, and cooked his own meals. I think in a way he might have influenced my own independence.



66. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), Kindle edition., p. 173.

67. Joanna Macy, *Greening of the Self*. (Berkeley, Parallax Press, 2012), Kindle Edition. Kindle Locations 132-133.

68. Cullinan, *Wild Law*, Kindle Locations 3377-3384.

69. Ibid, Kindle Locations 3272-3273.

“To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your
hand
And Eternity in an hour.”

— William Blake,
Auguries of Innocence

“Concrete parking lots breed
parking-lot minds: uniform,
barren, predictable and devoid
of any sacred or transcendental
meaning.”⁶⁹

Cullinan, Cormac (2012-05-14).
*Wild Law: A Manifesto for
Earth Justice*





I gathered and created imagery using my natural surroundings as reference. These images took form in sketches, photographs, and block prints.

They were scattered throughout my Natural Time book incorporating different papers, textures, and colors.

Sometimes beauty can even be found in the process of cleaning up, as seen here at right.

Block prints used inside My Stuff book.



Interior pages from My Stuff book.



I keep returning to Nature. It's at the very heart of my thesis. As a graphic design student, I was never taught to consider any aspect of environmental effect. It never came up in class discussion. That was, though, before the advent of desktop computers. When we did everything by hand the process was slower, more deliberate. Many, many sketches were drawn. Type was either measured out and pressed down or hand-lettered with inks. It sounds familiar with the Slow Design movement which, as described by slowLab, "is a holistic approach to creative thinking, process and outcomes."⁷⁰ Slow Design goes a little further, and I think it is now very appropriate for modern times. It considers not only the thoughtful, deliberate process, but also environmental and human impact, and where it fits within the natural systems. Undoubtedly, most of the design solutions of the future will draw more inspiration from Nature's systems, patterns, form, and functions—and especially more closed-loop thinking.

Right: Interior page from My Stuff book.



70. slowLab>Ideas, last accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.slowlab.net/ideas.html>.



Interior page images from My Stuff book:

Time has nearly stopped for these now dried plants. It is time for their seeds to spread in Nature's plan for self-preservation. In the meantime, I enjoy the stark contrast in color and the beautiful negative space around their forms. Both being perennials, I get to enjoy this cycle year after year.

On the left: Porcupine grass, or *Miscanthus sinensis*

On the right: Live Forever, or *Sedum purpureum*







Chapter 3

Responsive projects:

My island gets a name

A little more shade, please

The cistern revival

Starting a conversation

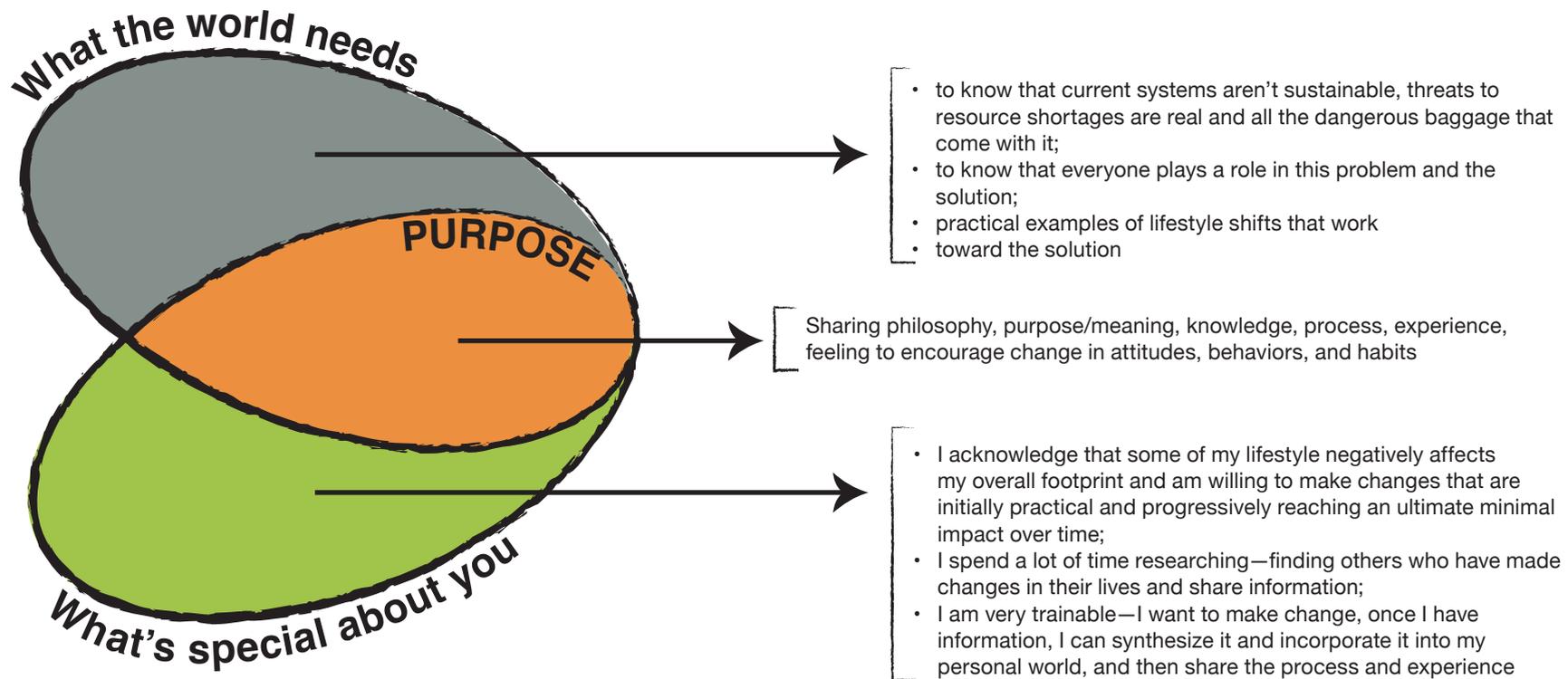
Beginning to understand my audience

Responsive project My island gets a name

(the branding of Painted Rock)

I've clearly established in this thesis that Nature and my personal natural "island" is sacred to me. It was time to give my "island" a worthy name and brand it. The process began, as with most client projects, with a design brief, followed by mood boards, font studies, sketches, and the finished applications.

I started with a Venn diagram to isolate the purpose and impact I was aiming for.



Painted Rock

INTENTIONAL LIVING—SMALLER FOOTPRINT—SIMPLIFYING

A Process Designed

OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE

Painted Rock is my space. It has also been referred to as my “island.” It is my 4.82 acres of land (on bedrock), trees, house, garage, pasture, and all the other elements I’ve brought to it. I have occupied this space since 2001 with the intention of living closer to natural systems, simplifying my life, and living with more intention and awareness of my impact on my space and beyond.

The story-telling and design presence for Painted Rock begins with a website to share my process and applicable information, and share my thoughts regarding this intentional living process. Its look and feel will reflect the essence of nature, contemporary structure, combined digital and traditional media, with a tinge of historical flavor that tells the audience I also connect the future of Painted Rock to the grounded purposes and aesthetics of the past.

RESEARCH

Others doing the same

There are many individuals, communities, and organizations that offer their stories, insights, and helpful hints, along with some activism elements. Mine compares more with the individuals/families who share my intentions and have acted within their own spaces to make ecological and spiritual change.

Many of the websites I’ve researched are under-designed. I’m sure that is not a concern for them. I also suppose that their audience is not concerned with design aesthetic either. There are some sites that have stronger visual appeal. All content is similar depending on what the individuals, community, or organization is doing and offers to viewers.

Audience

As a designer/artist, I believe I can communicate with those who have shared interests but have been turned off by the crudeness of the designs found in many of these other sites. I no longer feel the need to shout it from the rooftops and force my thoughts onto others, but I'm not content with the "build it and they will come" approach either. I wish to connect with my local community (immediate neighborhood) outward to greater Kansas City to those who might find conviction within themselves to act by observing another "neighbor" who took initiative and wanted to share the experience and that it IS possible and do-able.

APPLICATIONS

- logo/brand—that represents the place and experience of my "island" called Painted Rock
- website: (pages)
 - _ Who am I, what am I up to?—this section will talk about how I got to this point in my life and these recent decisions and actions as well as discuss my aspirations and motivations.
 - _ Sharing experiences of my "island"—this might be like a tutorial section where I offer "how-tos", documentation of process, reflection on the projects, and other observations of miscellaneous elements of my space (seasonal observations, how all these things make me feel, snippets of life here at Painted Rock.
 - _ I have power tools and I love to use them—in this section I will share building and remodeling projects that address the subject of reduced energy use or resource preservation; there may be overlap with the experiences of my island page, but would be more specific about the process of building and working with the materials and tools.
 - _ When a mower isn't just a mower—for the time I'm doing these field designs, I feel like I should be talking about them—the full process of design to gridding to measuring to mowing to photographing to growing to mowing it all down and waiting for it to start again; and it's funny because it's about mowing (vs painting or designing on a computer).
 - _ What inspires me—other websites, reading, lectures, events, people I've met, nature...

- shareables:
 - _ Print materials/PDFs describing the projects and processes, inspiration, reflection, emotion
 - _ Artwork - this may inspire me to create pieces in response to all that I'm doing (if time allows).
 - _ Social media - continue entering on my blog, giving teasers on my Facebook wall, keeping my design website current with what I'm reading, creating, and thinking.
 - _ Open-house—I invite neighbors and friends to my place to see what I'm up to and chat about the projects and process, perhaps later opening it to outsiders.

I intend to incorporate my illustration skills in the making of these applications wherever I can and as time will allow

Mood boards

To help formulate the look and feel, as well as visualize the overall theme for the Painted Rock website, I built mood boards. I collected some of my work, added design solutions that inspire me and relate to sustainable designing and problem-solving. I played with color schemes, textures and type choices. These images were predominantly organic in nature. I wanted my website to feel organic, too.



Font studies

Here I illustrate the quest for the perfect type form that communicated the essence of my natural space, my concern for environmental degradation, and my new found purpose as a graphic designer. I waded through traditional classic fonts, casual organic fonts, calligraphic and scripted fonts, and fonts that looked “built” to mimic some of the projects I executed.

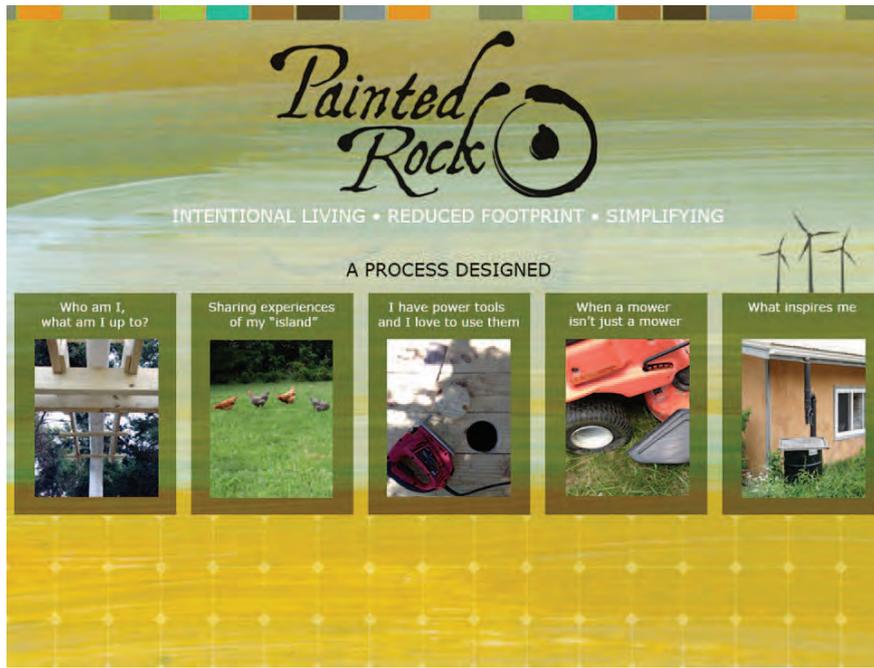
Painted Rock	Prestige Elite	<i>Painted Rock</i>	Alex Brush
Painted Rock	American Typewriter	<i>Painted Rock</i>	Blackjack
Painted Rock	Optima	Painted Rock	Daniel
Painted Rock	Bangla	Painted Rock	FFF Tusj Bold
Painted Rock	Century Gothic	Painted Rock	Quicksand
Painted Rock	Helvetica	<i>Painted Rock</i>	Rabio Head
Painted Rock	Noteworthy	<i>Painted Rock</i>	Scriptina
<i>Painted Rock</i>	Mistral	<i>Painted Rock</i>	Aqualine Two
Painted Rock	Calisto	Painted Rock	Bonveno
Painted Rock	Bernard	<i>Painted Rock</i>	Harabara Hand
Painted Rock	Cambria	PAINTED ROCK	Neo Retro Draw
Painted Rock	Cochin	Painted Rock	Special Elite
Painted Rock	Didot	<i>Painted Rock</i>	Windsong
		<i>Painted Rock</i>	Journal

Adjoining icon

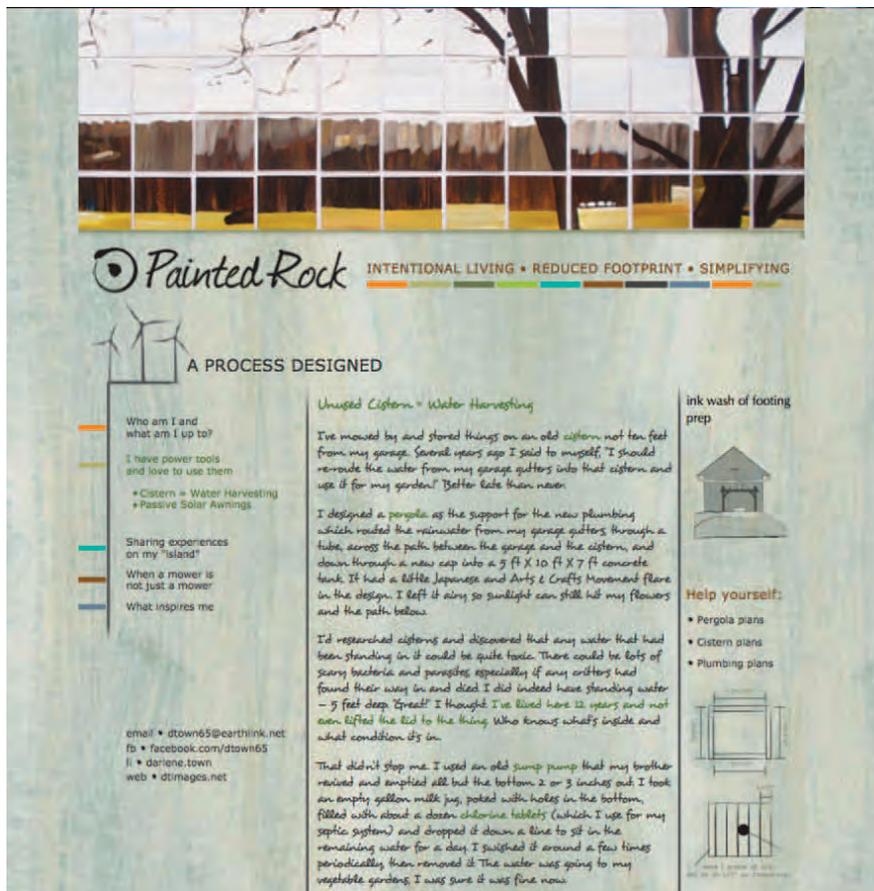
Throughout my early thesis research I kept running across a circular symbol, the monad, that represented many things in common with my work and where I found myself. From doctrines of Pythagoras the monad occurs as meaning the first, from which all else is derived. It was also a term for Divinity or the One. While I don't think I or my natural space—Painted Rock—is the source of all things, it is indeed the place from which all the energy and purpose was derived for me as I approached my work. It is the beginning of the outward ripples I hope to generate. I chose to render it with a brush to reflect the inclusion of traditional media in my work. It's organic and looks like an island when seen from above.

The final logotype for my "island."





Early Web Designs



Final Website

Painted Rock
 INTENTIONAL LIVING • REDUCED FOOTPRINT • SIMPLIFYING

A PROCESS DESIGNED



I have power tools and I love to use them
Sharing experiences on my "island"
When a mower is not just a mower
What inspires me

Who am I and what am I up to?

Hi! My name is Darlene Town. Welcome!

I'm a designer, artist, educator, and maker of things.

Recently I've taken a serious look at how I've been living — the things I buy, eat, do, and throw away. I decided to pay more attention to these things daily and work towards reducing my footprint. This is no easy task.

I've had no trouble curbing the impulsive buying of unnecessary "stuff." That was easy. Most of that "stuff" ended up in the trash or in a garage sale later, or it just didn't last. I've seen pictures of those mountainous landfills and I've seen people trash perfectly useful stuff without trying to repurpose it or give it to someone who can. I've decided that's not going to be me. I'm choosing things that truly serve my needs, have multiple uses, and are built to last (at least the duration of the purpose).




I've looked at efficiencies (or lack of) around my home and lifestyle. Since moving to my 5-acre mini-farm 12 years ago, I'm more frugal in my traveling. I often combine errands into a trip to work or home — I don't make runs for single items unless it's critical, and critical doesn't happen as much any more. I plan more thoughtfully. It might be an age thing. And if I forget something while I'm out, oh well, add it to the list for next time.

I had an energy audit on my home recently. Wow! Was that educational. I had blown in additional insulation into the attic a few years ago. Apparently, that was only a third of what it should be. Imagine what it was like before! The auditor found air leaks around my baseboards and windows. So, I went to Home Depot and bought a ton of sealant tubes, expanding foam cans, and foam tape for windows/doors. I sealed outside and inside along the baseboards and windows. The auditor connected me to an insulation company and I'd say I have ample insulation in the attic. It is up to my knees now. I should really feel a difference in the winters after this!

Beyond the sealing and insulation and overall lifestyle efficiency, I've been working on projects that help reduce my usage of water, food, and electricity. I've visited with others who live more intentionally and continue to learn more every day. You can see more about these on the other pages in my site. I've offered information that you can download to help you tackle similar projects. I got ideas from others and so can you! There's so much to do I suspect I'll be adding to these pages for quite a while.

Enjoy and feel free to email me if you have questions or found something useful (or have helpful tips for me). Thanks again for visiting!

Starting a Conversation
begins with a box of thoughts...

Power tools with Purpose
With a new mission and a means to do it, I tackle some projects...

People I've Met
There are those who've traveled a similar path and have a lot to share...

My own Manifesto
In a life that encourages selfishness and excess, I seek satisfaction in less. Not less quality, just less quantity. I seek enough.

I also seek increased quality. I take this moment to step back from the fast-paced mainstream and evaluate that flow, how it affects me and where it's taking me. Does it offer paths that lead me to where I want to go? Do I surround myself with elements that support where I want to go?

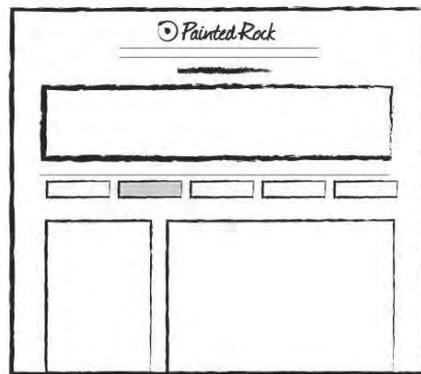
Read more...

Who am I? What am I up to?

■ my mission/vision, how I got to this point in my life and these recent decisions and actions as well as discussions on my aspirations and motivations.

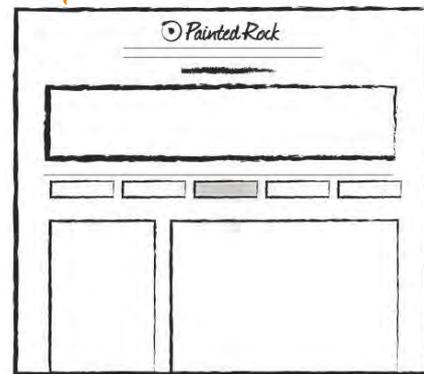


www.dtimages.net/PaintedRock



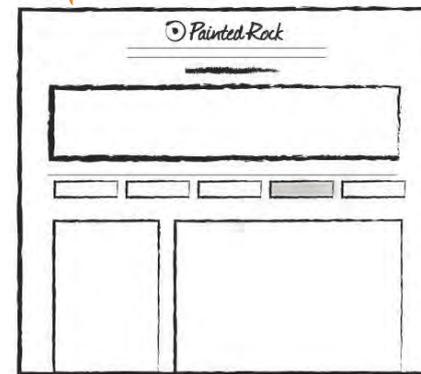
Sharing experiences of my “island”

■ and other observations of misc. elements in my space (seasonal observations, how all these things make me feel, snippets of life here on “the rock”).



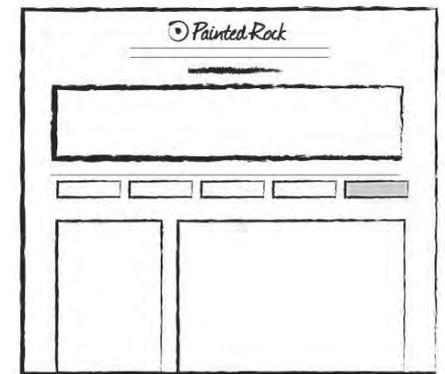
I have power tools and I love to use them

■ this page seems appropriate for me and with what I’m doing; here I’ll offer “how-tos”, documentation of process, reflection on the projects, sharing specifics about the process of building and working with the materials and tools.



When a mower is not just a mower

■ While doing these field designs, I felt like I should be talking about them—the full process of designing to gridding to measuring to mowing to photographing to growing to mowing it all down and waiting for it to start again; and it’s funny because it’s about mowing (vs. painting or designing on a computer).



What inspires me

■ the websites, reading, lectures, events, people I’ve met, nature,...that move me.

Responsive project A little more shade, please

(passive solar awnings)

I took action to reduce my footprint on my “island” and the following two projects describe it. I also shared them on the Painted Rock website with documentation of the process, images of the results, and the design plans to download.

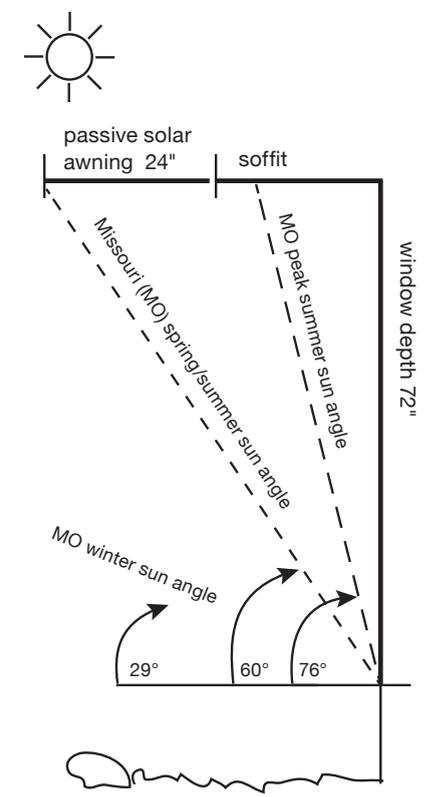
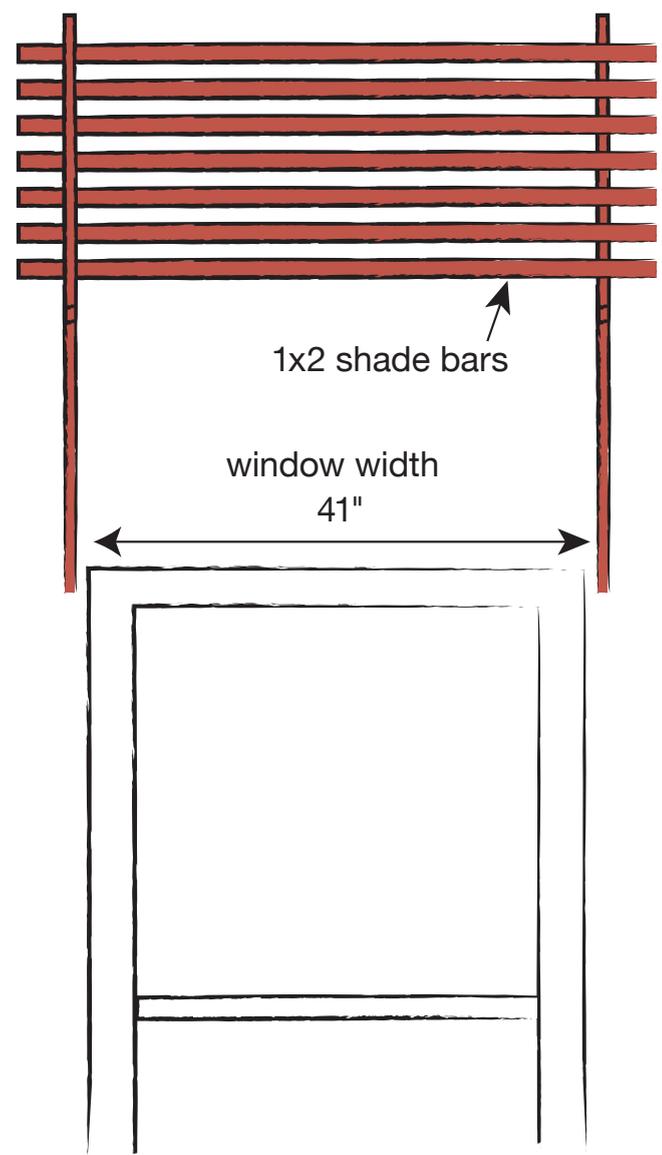
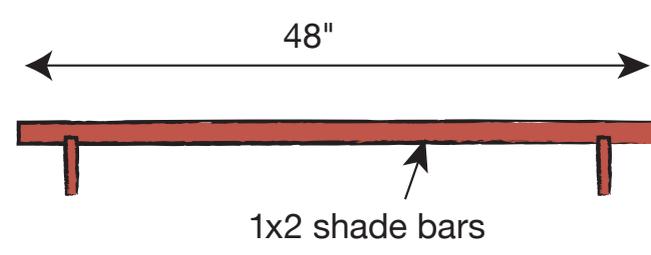
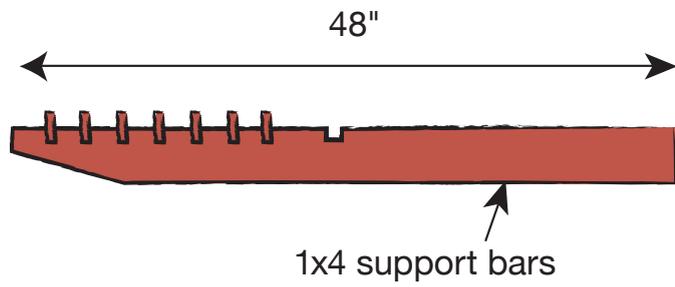
The first project was driven by the summer peak heat and sun that comes through my windows into the house. I live in an earth-contact home and it faces south (as it should) with large windows lining the length of that southern face. This was intentional in the design as they capture sun/warmth in the cooler months which gets absorbed into the concrete floor.

Unfortunately, the builder didn’t extend the soffits far enough to block sunlight during the warmest seasons. The soffit depth is typical for a home built in Missouri, but the window depth is longer than normal. Mine are 36" wide by 72" deep.

My solution, inspired by several eco-architectural images discovered while developing mood boards for the web site design process, is passive solar awnings. I built four awnings for the four southern-facing windows. When the sun is above the house in summer, normally it would shine in unobstructed through the lower half of a window heating the floors and hallway. With the awnings, some of that sunlight is blocked, reducing the light and heat coming through.

Not only did they work, they became attractive embellishments to the house. I posted the plans as a shareable on the Painted Rock website.

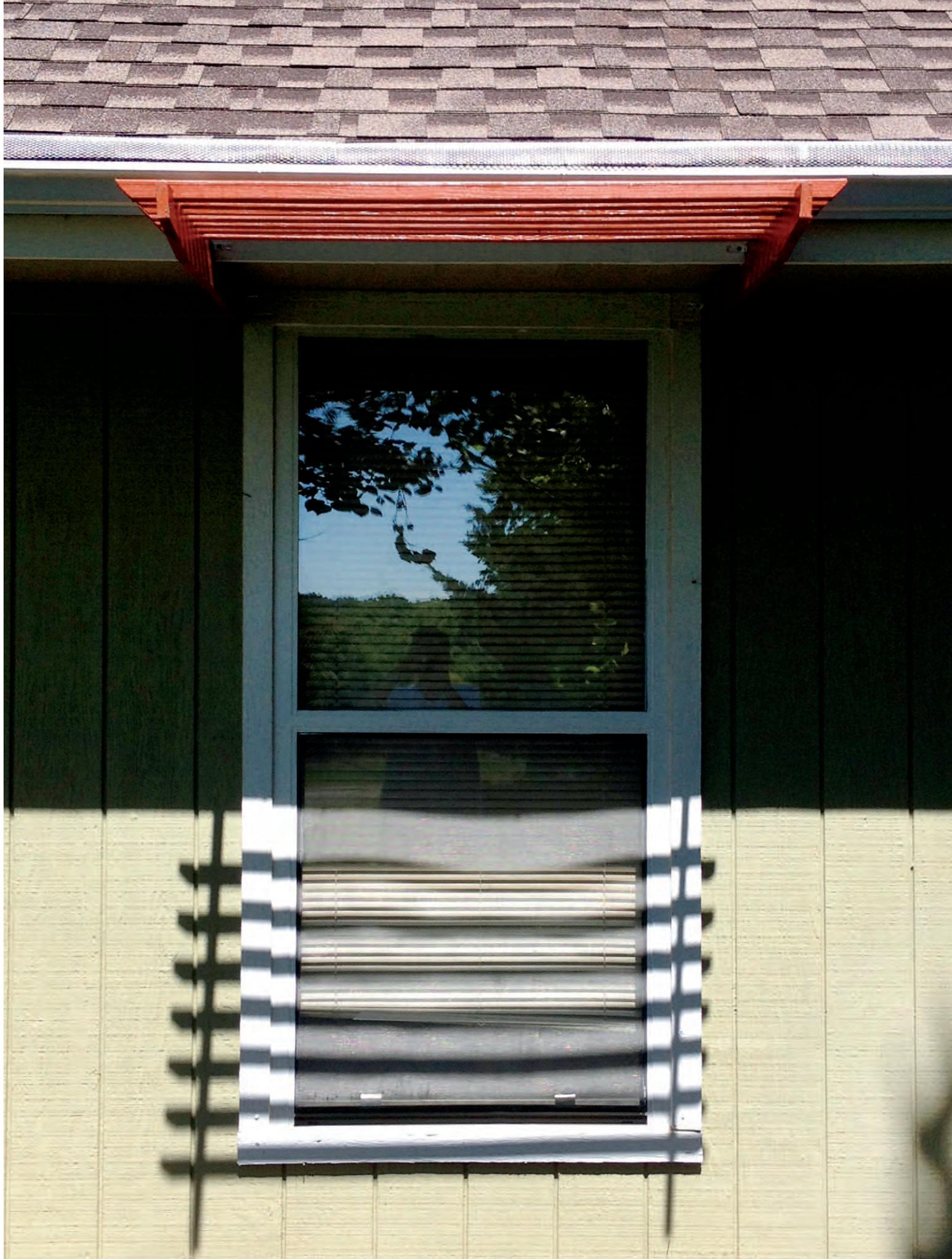
Design Plans



Anytime I get to use power tools to design and solve a problem, I'm very happy. I like to see an idea come to be.

Clamping multiple boards together helps with consistent alignment. I used the table saw to cut the slots for the cross bars.





“What designers need isn’t an ecological aesthetic—it’s an aesthetics of ecology, a set of principles and mechanics for making design more responsive and responsible, environmentally, socially, and economically.”⁷¹

71 Hosey, Lance (2012-06-11). *The Shape of Green: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Design* (Kindle Locations 509-510). Island Press. Kindle Edition.



Systematically staining, one side at a time, one awning at a time. Then, flip! Repeat. Two coats.

The translucent stain color I chose is called Redwood.

Working in assembly line fashion is the most efficient. Make sure your plans are accurate, though.

An air nailer attached to my compressor made quick work of assembling the awnings. Love my power tools.





Responsive project

The cistern revival

(unused cistern tank = water harvesting)

Vegetable gardens need water. Past summers have been drier than normal while the spring seasons have been wetter. A wetter spring (and cooler temperatures) force later starts to the sowing and planting, while hotter, drier summers shorten the life and productivity of the vegetables. My idea was to reroute rainwater off the garage into the nearby cistern and store it until needed for my garden beds. Not only will I save money, I'll be sparing the use of tap water and, instead, utilizing what would otherwise have been wasted.

I designed a pergola as the support for the new plumbing which routed the rainwater from my garage gutters, through a tube, across the path between the garage and the cistern, then down through a new cap into a 5 ft X 10 ft X 7 ft concrete tank. I included a little Japanese and Arts & Crafts Movement flare in the design, leaving it airy so sunlight could still hit my flowers and the path below.

Through preliminary research on cisterns I discovered that any water that had been standing in it could be quite toxic. There could be any number of scary bacteria and parasites, especially if critters had found their way in and died. I did indeed have standing water—5 feet deep. “Great!” I thought. I’ve lived here twelve years and not even lifted the lid to it—who knows what’s inside and what condition it’s in.

I used an old sump pump and emptied all but the bottom two or three inches out. Then I took an empty gallon milk jug, poked with holes in the bottom, filled with about a dozen chlorine tablets (which I use for my septic system) and dropped it down a line to sit in the remaining water for a day. I swished it around periodically, then removed it. The water was going to my vegetable gardens, I was sure it was fine now. All it needed was fresh rain water to fill again.

As luck would have it, just after I finished building, we went six weeks without rain. The skies finally opened and we were caught up on rainfall. There have been a few glitches in the system but silicone sealer and a couple of screws fixed them. It took a good rain to see the problems. I’ve also discovered that the two downspouts are not enough for the total amount of rainfall coming off my steep pitched roof. I’ll put a couple more at the opposite ends of the garage and let them fill rain barrels.

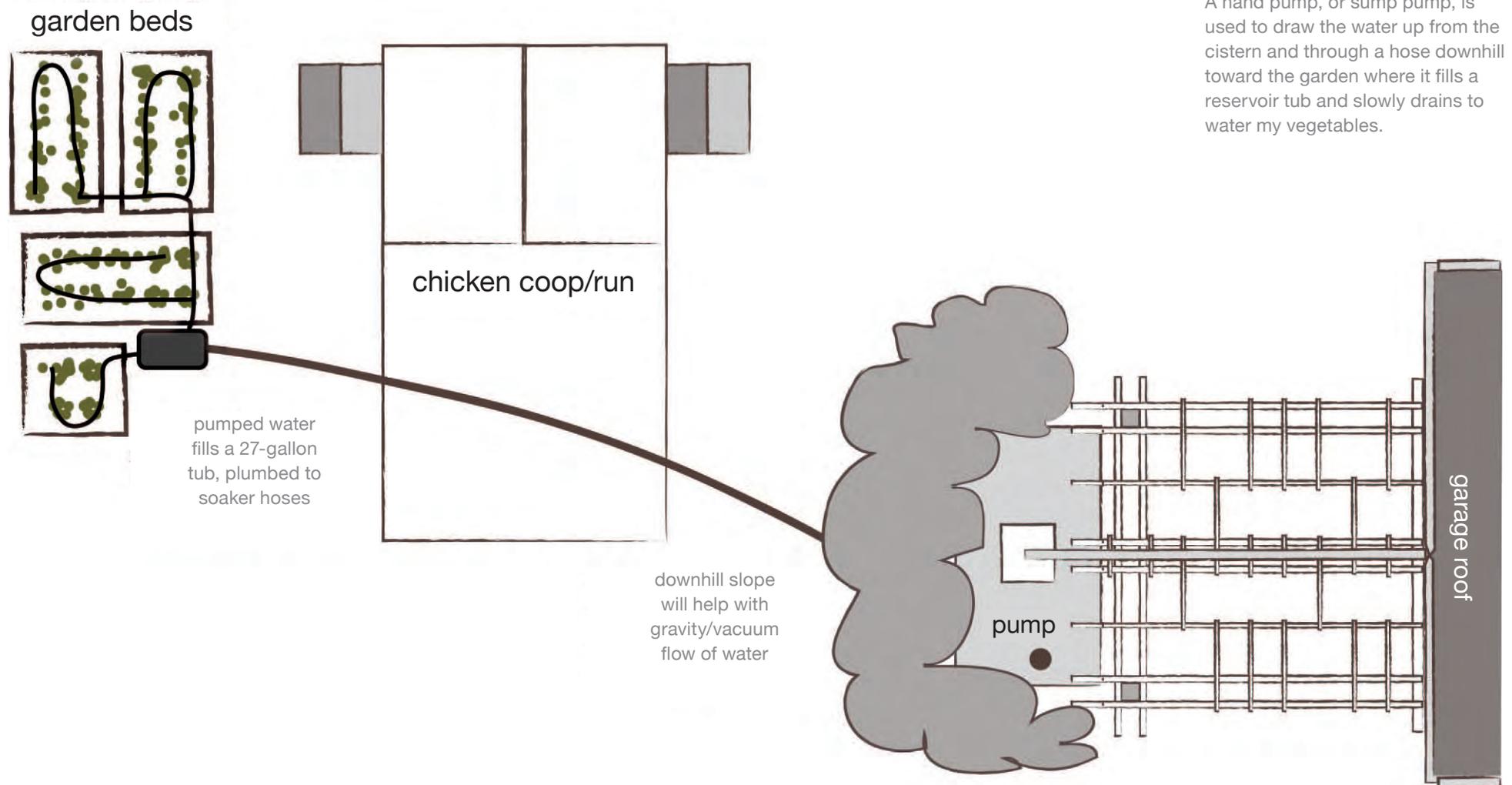
I dug out and added gravel and concrete for the post footings.



Design Plans

Rainwater washes down the front and back of the garage into gutters which route the water to the same point. A Y-funnel merges the water flow to one pipe that runs across the pergola toward the cistern. It reaches an elbow that connects to a pipe heading down to the lid of the cistern.

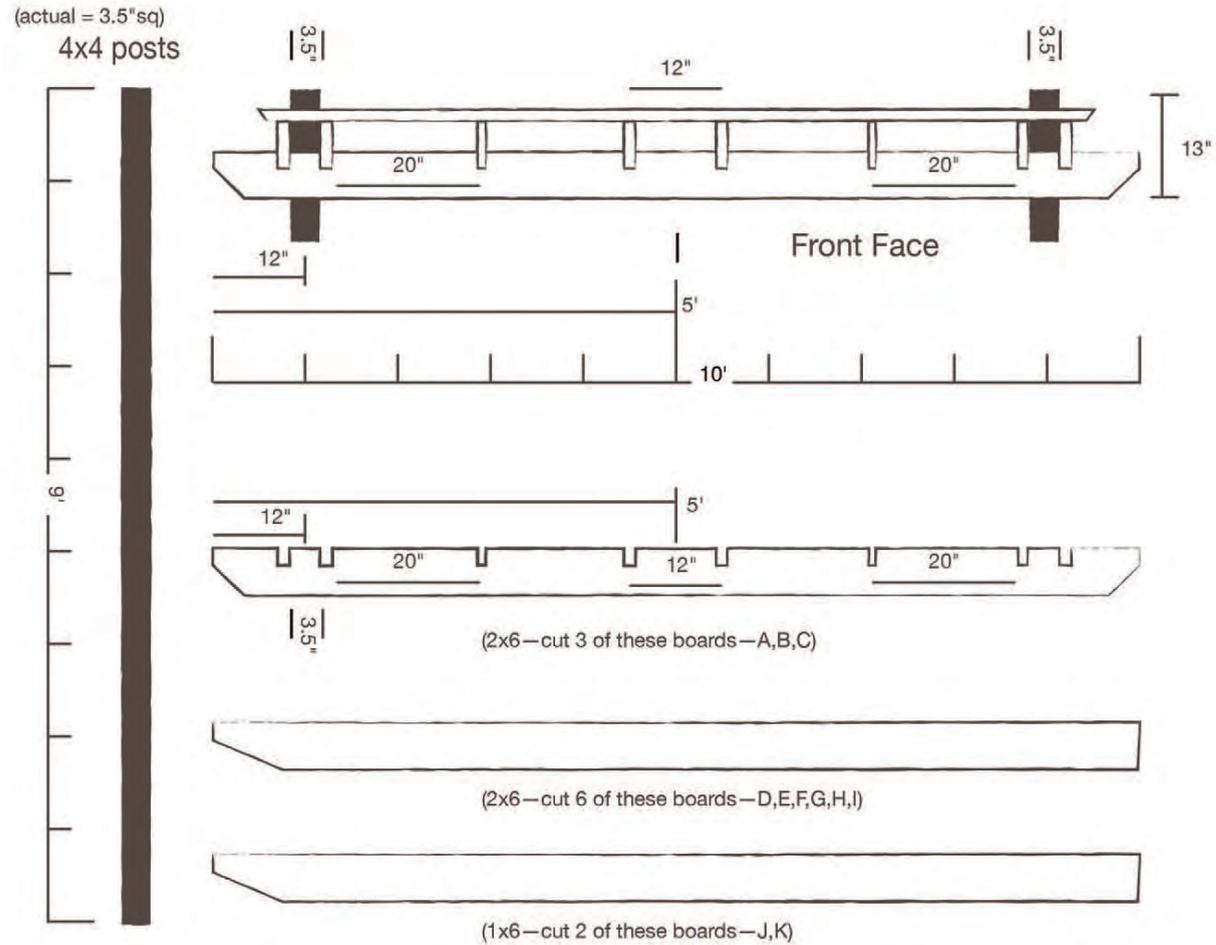
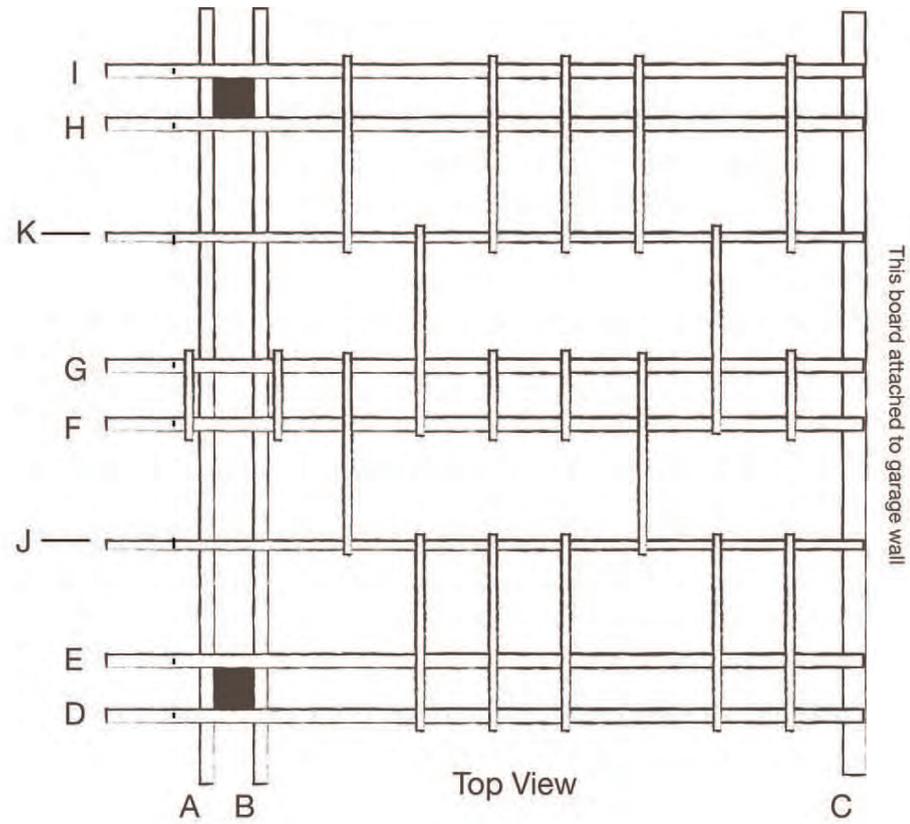
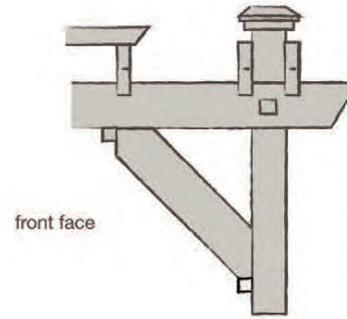
A hand pump, or sump pump, is used to draw the water up from the cistern and through a hose downhill toward the garden where it fills a reservoir tub and slowly drains to water my vegetables.



Design Plans

I posted these plans on the Painted Rock website. This was one of the shareables I offer on the site.

- A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I - 2x6 (9@10')
- J,K - 1x6 (2@10')
- All short cross pcs- 1x2 (6@8')
- Shown solid dark - 4x4 posts (2@10')

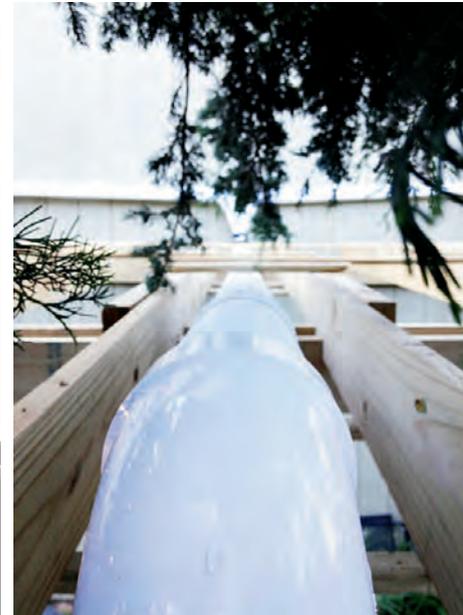
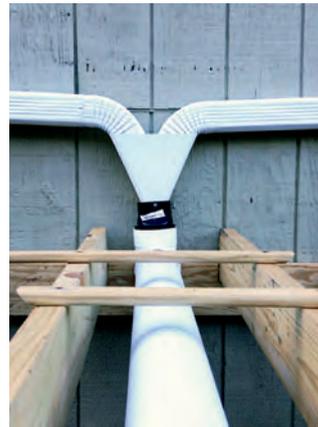




Routing downspouts toward a common center, then plumbing it across the pergola and down into the cistern.

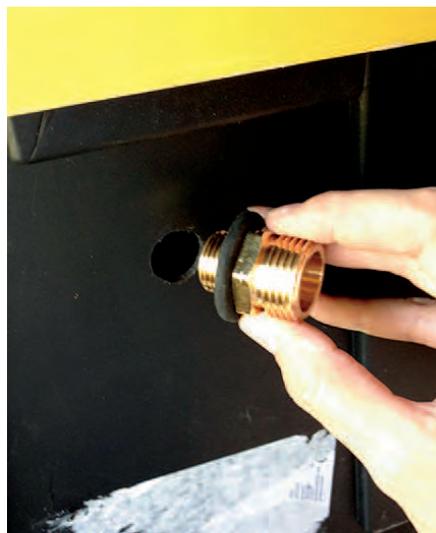
Materials used:

- 1x6, 2x6, 2x4, 1x2 treated lumber
- 4x4 treated post lumber
- decking screws
- aluminum guttering
- PVC Y-funnel
- 3-inch HPVC irrigation tubing and elbows





I bought a 27-gallon plastic tub, drilled holes in the lid to collect even more water, added an inlet fitting and an outlet valve. The soaker hose was part of a kit that allowed me to cut sections and connect them with couplers between straight hose and soaker hose. This was a fabulous idea by the manufacturer because it kept water from being wasted as the hose crossed from one bed to another. No point in watering the weeds between the beds.





I bought wooden skids from a paper company. I cut them apart to use the flat pieces for a walkway across the now muddy path under the pergola. The wood is high quality and looks nice stained. The final step was to stain the pergola and seal the outer concrete of the cistern. I added dark mulch around the area to refine edges and complement the other elements.

After a few good days of rain once I started the project, the cistern filled again. I now have to think about putting in an overflow tube (or three).

Responsive project

Starting a conversation

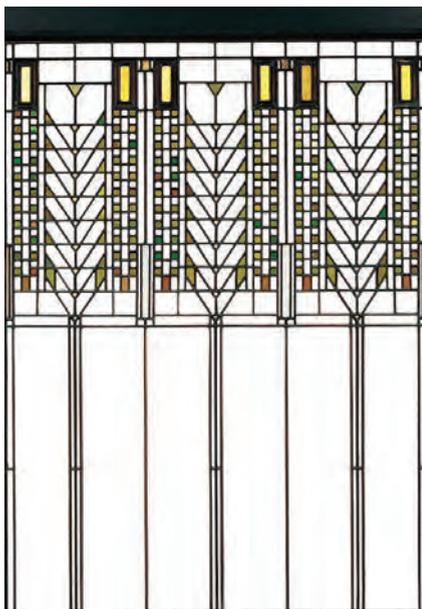
(when a mower is not just a mower)

It's one thing to make all these life changes for myself. It's another to start a dialog about it. My intention is not to push ideology, but to share the experience, the thought process, and the creativity behind the projects that help me reduce my footprint.

The front of my property is more than three acres of pasture. A neighbor mows and bales it for hay. I decided to use it to start a conversation with the members of my immediate community. I knew I could get at least two field designs completed in the season and was hoping for a third.

At the time that I began this project I was exploring the Arts and Crafts Movement. I find its elemental structures to be very beautiful in their simplicity. I was working through various vector iterations of the flora around my place, some of which were included in my *Natural Time* book. I also knew that I wanted the field motif to incorporate a word that tied to the visual message. Having felt so connected at that moment to the Arts and Crafts works I chose the word MAKE to be followed by GOOD. These two words supported the overall message which was to remind the community of the value of making by hand and the good that came from a simpler life. My neighbors were already familiar with this lifestyle from their own past and family histories. I wanted them to know that I found beauty in it and shared a kinship in this way. It might have been a stretch to also hope that they connected the two words later to be reminded to MAKE GOOD. I designed cards after each to distribute to the community which helped illustrate my motives further. Folks out where I live can be overly polite and tend to mind their own business so I had to give them an invitation into my conversation.

The inspiration came from Frank Lloyd Wright's Tree of Life, 1904, Stained Glass Window from the Darwin D. Martin House, Buffalo, New York.



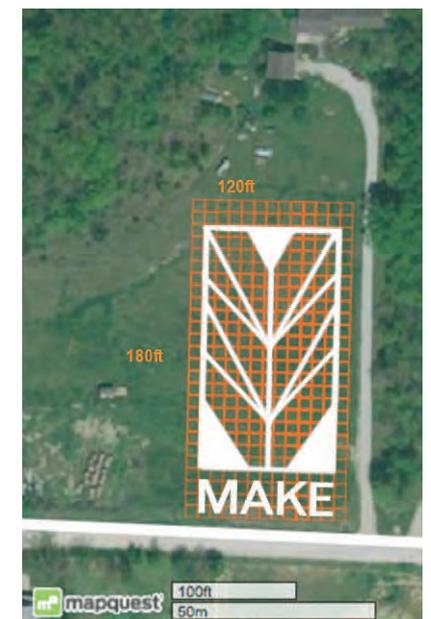
Process:

A mower and a field are not the easiest of media to work with. Once the motif design was been determined, I used a Mapquest aerial image of my place to overlay the design onto. Using the legend I was able to “guesstimate” a grid assuming each square is 10-square feet.

I used scrap trim wood and heavy-guage wire from my garage to make marker stakes. For the wire markers I tied cheesecloth to their tops. I then used a tape measure and marked off 10-foot increments with white spray paint. Every 50 feet I’d insert a marker. These were painted red. I later found that the white cheesecloth blended in with the waving grass tops when I was on the other side of the field, but I could see red from 180 feet. The field was marked, time to mow.

I’d start with the perimeter outline, mowing from corner to corner following the markers and tried to steer as straight as I could. I use a zero-turn mower and the front can be jarred by bumps which makes steering on raw terrain a little tricky requiring constant correction. I was glad my first motif was all straight lines. I’ll confess, the final mowed design began differently. I had missed my mark on one of the paths and had to modify the design to account for my mistake. It turned out to be better in the end.

From a search engine map and its legend I used Photoshop to grid out the design plan. Each square was 10-feet. With this plan I marched across the field hammering in stake at major markers within the design. I used white spray paint to tick off the 10-foot marks. The last step was mowing. This final design is not exactly what I had originally intended, but a couple of “happy accidents” ended up with a successful result.



When I first mowed the design the grass was about 10 inches deep. I had almost waited too long. After only a couple of weeks it was nearly two feet deep. The view from the road was steep and the overall design was not clear to see. I wanted to get in the air to see how it really looked so I went to a local airport where I was introduced to the Director of Operations, Rob Hackett. I explained what I'd done and that I'd like to fly over the field and take pictures. He seemed pretty excited about the project and we were able to schedule it for the next day.

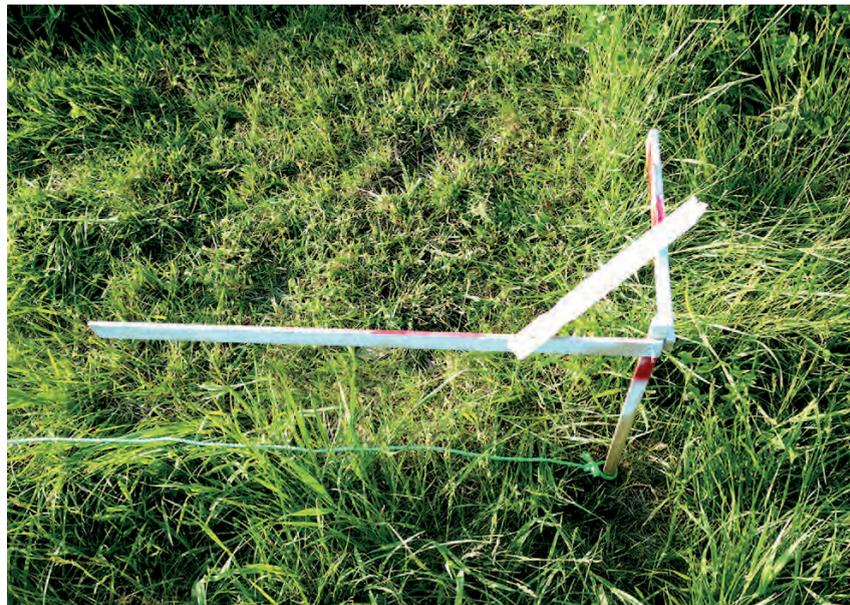
In my excitement to get aerial shots of my field design, I had forgotten a couple of important details. Once we were up off the runway and I saw land slipping away, I said, "did I mention I'm afraid of heights and get motion sick?" Rob looked at me. He was cool as a cucumber. He said, after we'd gotten up to about 1,000 feet, "let me bank the plane your way, because we'll have to in order for you to take pictures, and you tell me how that feels for you." So he did. Whoa! It was a very small plane and suddenly the door seemed very close to me, and thin. But I was determined to get my photos and we kept going.

After about 45 minutes of looping around, with wind gusts thrusting us up and down making some of the images blurry, I got what I needed, and was getting a little motion sick. We headed back to the airport.

The field was ready to start over and my neighbor, Tom, mowed it down and baled. I let it grow nearly two weeks before starting the process again. The new motif was a daylily. It was from the motif studies I had worked with early on. The word GOOD was added as part of the whole field design.

Required tools for executing field motifs: spray paint, tape measure, markers—I used scrap wood trim and wires with cheesecloth tied to the end to mark strategic points.

It all began with a corner stake. Three pieces of quarter-round trim gave me right angles to work from.





The finished field motif as seen from an airplane.



The daylily was among the flora motifs I created from imagery gathered around my place.



The inspiration:
Dard Hunter Rose
(Arts & Crafts Movement).

Doing a daylily meant mowing curves. That was much trickier than straight lines. This design took a lot of time and required carefully marking strategic transitional spots. I started with the perimeter rectangle again, followed by some of the leaves. I knew they'd be more forgiving. Then came the flower petals. I carried a small printout of the gridded design in my pocket and pulled it out before starting any new swath. I'd double-check my markers. The mower deck was turned on, off, on, off, on, off,...My neighbors were no doubt confused by my actions. To answer their questions I designed a second card for distribution.

It was mid-summer now and the rains were less frequent. The second growth of the field is mostly red clover. It doesn't grow as tall but is more dense. I let it grow for several weeks. We were lacking rain for a while and I thought I was going to lose the daylily design. Mother Nature eventually provided and it perked back up. That meant it was time to get in the air again. I was running out of semester and wanted to get a third motif mowed.

The final mowed motif was a version of my Painted Rock logo. The original letters were in a hand-written font. That would be nearly impossible with a mower. They turned out to be the same "font" as the previous motifs. I could call it Ariens Helvetica, named after the brand of my mower.





**PAINTED
ROCK**

The first snowfall of the season fills in my field motif. Had this not been the day before Christmas I would have been in an airplane taking pictures. I have no doubt this would have looked gorgeous from above.

Knowing the neighbors would be curious and wanting to share the experience of making this graphical form in this way, I created two black and white cards for MAKE and GOOD and introduced my neighbors to my motivations and projects while inviting them to see more on my web site.

As my neighbors drove by my property they may not have been able to see the full mowed motif. These cards let them see the designs. Also on the cards I defined the words and shared their connection to my intentions. I included references and the inspiration for the design motifs.

So folks would make the academic connection, I told them I was doing this as part of my graduate studies through Vermont College of Fine Arts. If they had been shaking their heads over the process of mowing design motifs in a field, they could at least be confirmed that I was an artist.

Inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement I built this box and posted it at the front of my property, near the road. I had hoped it would invite my community to participate in the dialog. It did not work as planned.





When a mower isn't just a mower

My name is Darlene Town and the design you're seeing on the cover of this and in the field is part of my graduate school studies.

Here's where it all starts:

I'm concerned with a lot of global and national issues, especially those related to the use of resources and energy.

I moved out here 12 years ago to get back in touch with what I'd learned to love through my great-grandparents—Mother Nature. I have raised vegetable garden beds, chickens, and a beautiful view that's not polluted by street lights, concrete, marketing, or traffic.

I teach at a community college 45 minutes away in downtown Kansas City, but the trade-off between drive time to space/quiet bliss is worth it.



The elements in my field design:

☒ The Leaf is inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's *Tree of Life* stained glass.

☒ MAKE:

This is a very important word to me. It's a verb that empowers us to use our minds and hands. There isn't as much making by individuals these days. We're encouraged to dispose and replace items in much faster cycles than years past. And when we do replace, do we give much thought about where the old items go, or what the process is for making the replacement?



MAKE

Verb—

1. to bring into existence by shaping or changing material, combining parts, etc.: to make a dress; to make a channel; to make a work of art.
2. to produce; cause to exist or happen; bring about: to make trouble; to make war.
3. to cause to be or become; render: to make someone happy.
4. to appoint or name: The President made her his special envoy.
5. to put in the proper condition or state, as for use; fix; prepare: to make a bed; to make dinner.



Darlene Town

I'm attending the Vermont College of Fine Arts
MFA—Graphic Design program (vcfa.edu)

You can see more of my
work and studies at



www.dtimages.net

virtually visit my place at

dtimages.net/PaintedRock



When a mower isn't just a mower

My name is Darlene Town and the design you're seeing on the cover of this and in the field is part of my graduate school studies.

If this is your first visit, I'll tell you where it all started:

I'm concerned with a lot of global and national issues, especially those related to the use of resources and energy.

I moved out here 12 years ago to get back in touch with what I'd learned to love through my great-grandparents—Mother Nature. I have raised vegetable garden beds, chickens, and a beautiful view that's not polluted by street lights, concrete, marketing, or traffic.

I teach at a community college 45 minutes away in downtown Kansas City, but the trade-off between drive time to space/quiet bliss is worth it.



The elements in my field design:

☒ The Daylily is inspired by Dard Hunter's Rose (also called the Roycroft Rose).

☒ GOOD:

I chose this word to complement my daylily motif as the second in a series of characteristics I now try to incorporate in my way of living. With GOOD, I connect with "good teacher," I'm continuing to build my "good credentials" by completing my MFA in Graphic Design, and I most definitely wish "to be a power for good."



GOOD

Adjective—

1. morally excellent; virtuous; righteous; pious: *a good man.*
2. satisfactory in quality, quantity, or degree: *a good teacher; good health.*
3. of high quality; excellent.
4. right; proper; fit: *It is good that you are here. His credentials are good.*
5. well-behaved: *a good child.*

Noun—

1. profit or advantage; worth; benefit: *What good will that do? We shall work for the common good.*
2. excellence or merit; kindness: *to do good.*
3. moral righteousness; virtue: *to be a power for good.*



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Beginning to understand the audience

I created a survey and distributed it through SurveyMonkey.com [https://www.surveymonkey.com/summary/?survey_id=52925497] and solicited participation to collect data related to how people relate to issues of sustainability and what, if any, steps they take to contribute to reducing their carbon footprint and environmental impact.

The information gleaned from the survey has helped me develop a series of informational graphics and awareness pieces. The first task was to sort through the data gathered from the survey and then present some of the information visually. There are pages that accompany the infographics offering scientific statistics and practical actions we can all take for a given subject. While most people get overwhelmed by dry data, feeling they can do nothing to change the situation or want to act but don't know what to do, adding up remedies gives a concerned person something to act on.

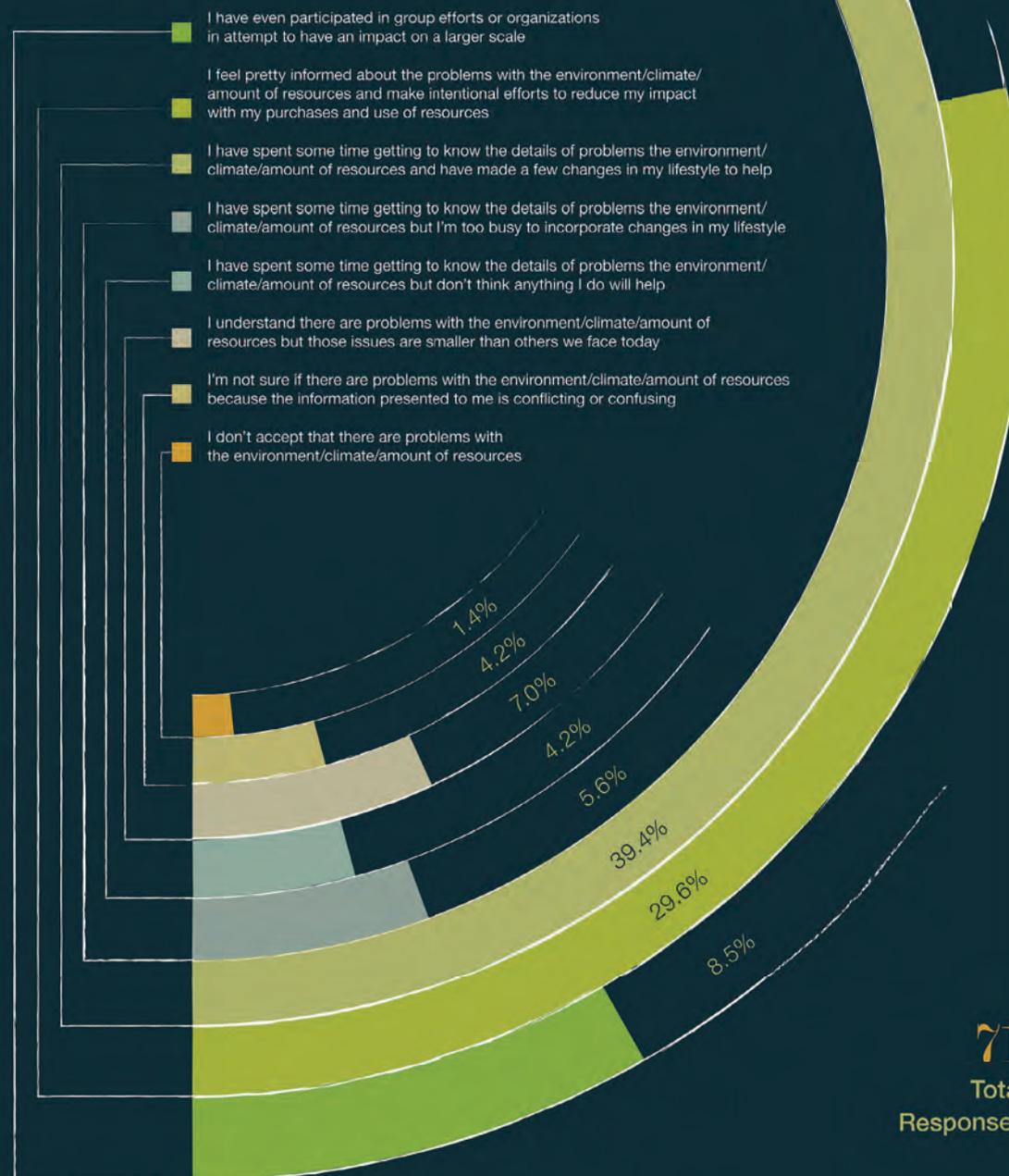
As I'm closing out this thesis, the subject has narrowed down to my need to understand those I'm trying to reach. It's clear from the data I collected from the survey that my community of friends, colleagues, neighbors, and family have varying levels of concern or understanding of current environmental and resource depletion issues. It appears that multiple modes of communication are needed, and my next step was to investigate what that might mean.

According to Greek philosopher, Aristotle, there are three modes of persuasion that can be used to create a convincing argument. They are Ethos, Logos, and Pathos. The information graphics that I designed first employ the Logos mode as they use actual data, facts, and practical information that position them as credible.

sustainable lifestyle

survey
Q1

Where do you place yourself on this spectrum?



The first question of the survey asked members of my 'community' to be participants and rank themselves within different levels of concern and sustainability engagement. From this I was able to create four designs that attempt to speak to all of them. They employ the three modes of persuasion, logos, ethos, and pathos.

sustainable lifestyle

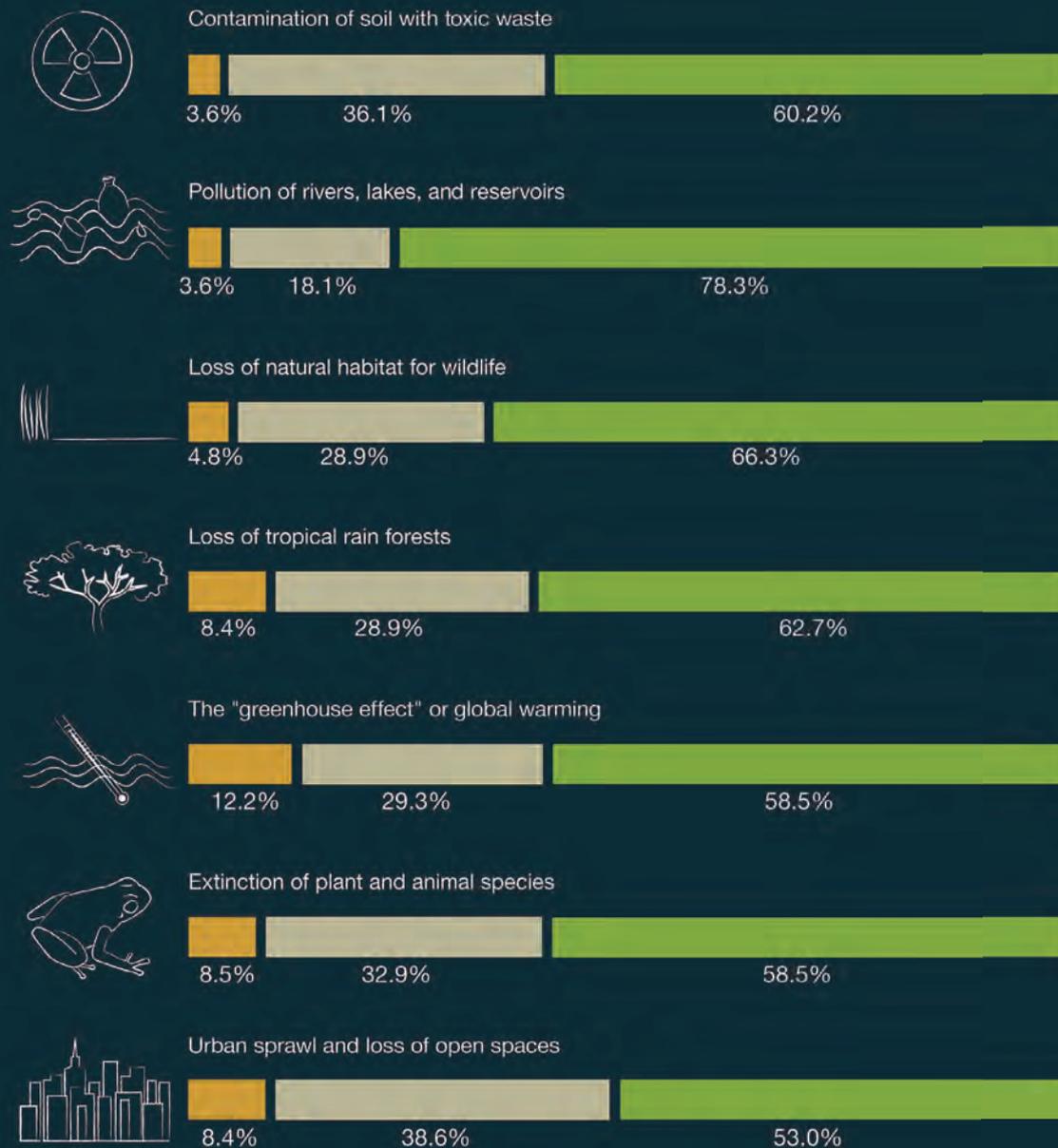
survey
Q2

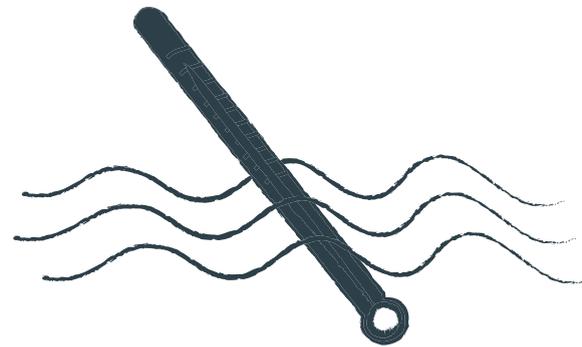
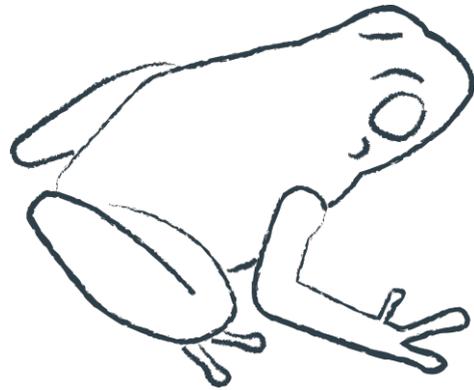
Rate your environmental concerns:

■ No Concern ■ Somewhat Concerned ■ Very Concerned

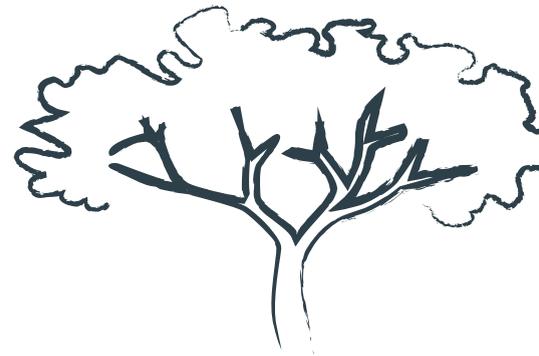
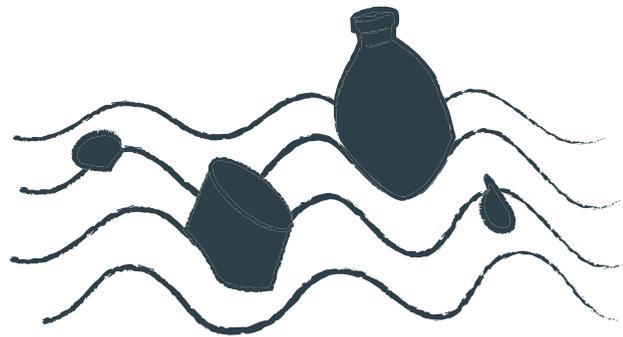
83*
Total Responses

Using some of the data gleaned from the survey I posted, I designed infographic posters. This is straight forward logos in its appeal to the audience. Some people, like myself, can be motivated by information. In this case, there might be a little pressure to 'fit in' with the majority and from this data, the majority shares concerns on all the subjects.





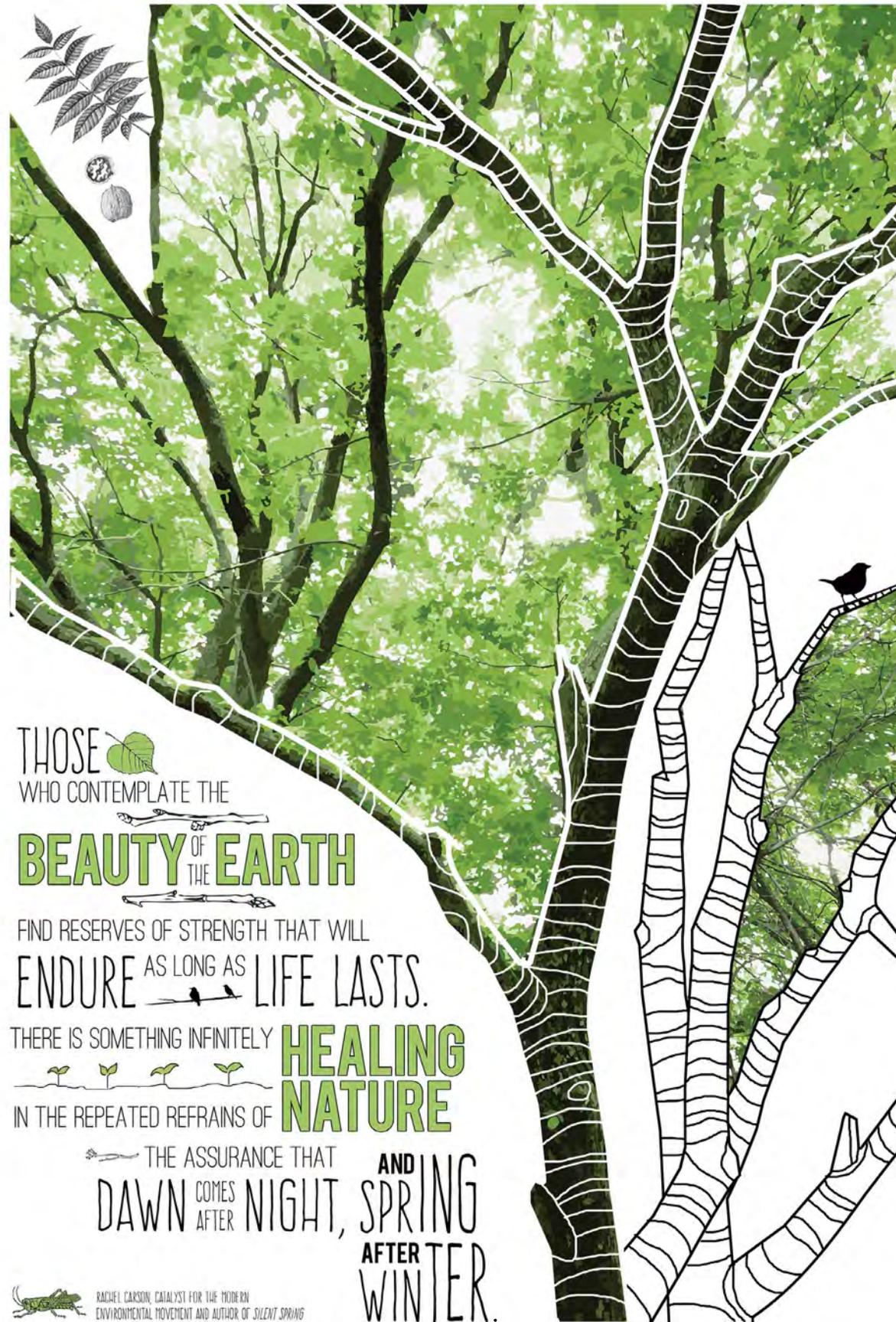
Symbols created for the infographic posters representing the extinction of plant and animal species, the “greenhouse effect” or global warming, pollution of rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, and loss of tropical rainforests.



I would need to work with these three rhetorical strategies more to reach the broader audience range I surveyed. Since I am emotionally attached to the subject it made sense that my next attempt would embrace Pathos and touch those who are also emotionally sensitive to these environmental and consumption issues. Following the logical (logos) informational graphics came a poster series that appealed to those who might be more connected to Nature than they think—to those who work the land and understand the hazards of corporatizing the growing of our food, or to those who enjoy the benefits of being outdoors in the shade of a tree that hosts birds which sing for us. Maybe they already know Rachel Carson or Aldo Leopold and these posters add credence. Maybe they are moved by the imagery and quotes to then look them up. These posters combine Ethos (the credible spokespeople) and Pathos (the emotional connection to the subject).

I love this quote. I'm grateful to Rachel Carson for all her environmental work. She was a marine biologist and conservationist credited with leading the charge and achieving the ban on DDT in the early 70s.

The image is of a very large, old walnut tree on my "island." Carson's quote is among my favorites and I find a deep connection with it and my natural space.



THOSE  WHO CONTEMPLATE THE
BEAUTY  OF THE EARTH
FIND RESERVES OF STRENGTH THAT WILL
ENDURE  AS LONG AS LIFE LASTS.
THERE IS SOMETHING INFINITELY  HEALING
NATURE
IN THE REPEATED REFRAINS OF  THE ASSURANCE THAT
DAWN  COMES AFTER NIGHT, AND SPRING
AFTER WINTER.



RACHEL CARSON, CATALYST FOR THE MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT AND AUTHOR OF SILENT SPRING



WE ABUSE
LAND

BECAUSE WE REGARD IT
AS A COMMODITY TO **US**

BELONGING

WHEN WE SEE **LAND**
AS COMMUNITY

TO WHICH **WE** BELONG,

WE MAY BEGIN TO
USE IT WITH **LOVE**
& RESPECT.

ALDO LEOPOLD, A SAND COUNTY ALMANAC

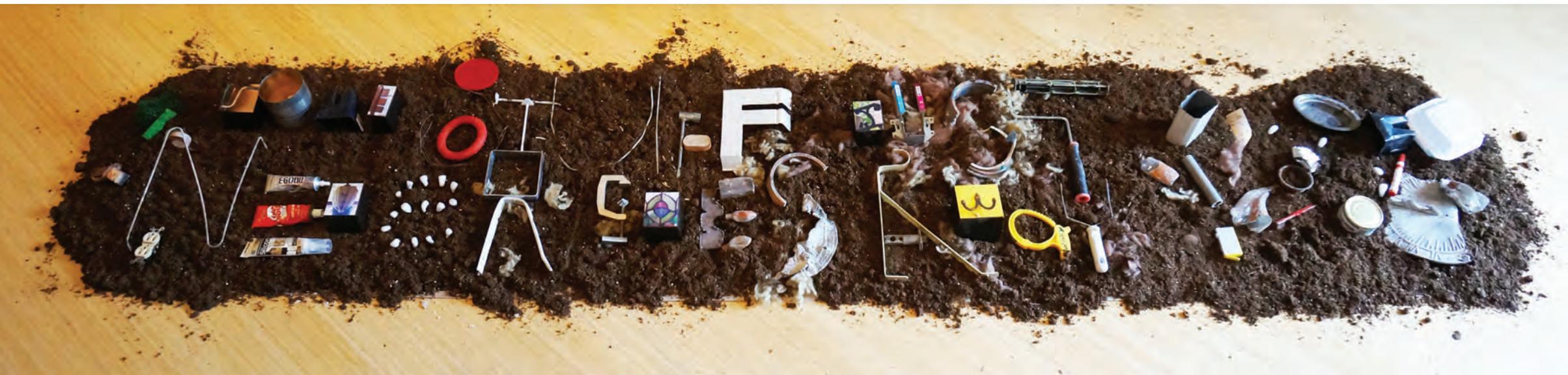
Aldo Leopold is one of my heroes. He was influential in modern environmental ethics, biodiversity, and wildlife management. His quote felt appropriate for the changes taking place in my 'neighborhood.'

Up the road from my place, about five miles, I took this photo of a corn field.

Just this year I would guess that over 500 acres of adjoining wild land was stripped, burned, plowed, and converted to crops of corn. Most of this, if not all, will be used to feed livestock. This massive breed of GMO corn (indicated by the corporate signage these farmers are required to post) will cross with that of local small farms, ultimately converting it all to that breed and minimizing crop diversity.

Much of the information circulating about global warming, environmental degradation, resource depletion, air pollution, water pollution, toxic food manufacturing, carrying capacity, peak oil, overpopulation,...all of it, is inconsistent. It's no wonder many people don't participate in larger acts than recycling. You can't be sure exactly what is going on or what all the facts are because no one agrees on the details. One thing is for sure, we're consuming too much stuff and we can't continue to dispose so quickly. "What humans make does not go away."⁷² There is no such thing as away. To illustrate this idea, I collected images (from friends) and created, with actual materials, letterforms of objects that don't biodegrade, and spelled out the phrase, "Some stuff just never goes away." It became a sculptural message on the floor. I included in it the scorched pieces and ashes from the burning of an earlier collaborative sculpture ("I am not my stuff").

Using some of the charred remnants, found objects, and photographs of found objects provided by friends, I spell out on the floor, "some stuff just never goes away."



72. William McDonough, and Michael Braungart, *Cradle-to-Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, (New York: North Point Press, 2002), 103.

Sustainability is a sensitive topic as it is. Some people don't even like the word—it's become too commonplace, generalized, or overused. I won't disagree with that, but until a better term for such a humongous subject is invented, I'm sticking with it. That word has come to encompass a collection of once isolated terms and as it has become apparent that all are interrelated, it became the blanket term. The whole subject turns some people off. Perhaps because to them it means austerity. Perhaps their own community rejects it. Perhaps they believe it elevates Nature higher than their belief system allows. Whatever the reason, I am going to say something to these folks. I will try to appeal to their sense of logic, their need for credibility, or any connection to Nature they may possess. And if that doesn't work, I'll slap them upside the head with my own emotional rant.

The final appeal almost enshrines Pathos as I combine the emotional distress I feel with imagery that is sure to stir even the most resistant individual. The soft color palette used in the typography is my way of backing off of the abrasive tone of the words. I mean them, but I am conflicted about how loud to shout them. These pieces are about how *I*, *They*, and *We* are one and the same. It's pointless to blame, but change is needed and everyone will be required to participate for that change to happen.



While the statement may be a bit rash, the soft colors represent the tone of voice that seems to be used by those who are wanting to shout a similar message but may fear the response by a crowd that doesn't share the same values.

I'm calling this series of watercolor posters "I-They-We" as they are different iterations expressing how they are one and the same.

I am very worried for the honeybee and have witnessed a steep decline in their population in my area. I gladly allow dandelions to grow freely, along with clover and other bee-favored flora, to attract them.

An intentional contrast is made here between 'myself' and the dead honeybee. I live in a region where I am called a 'tree hugger' or 'granola' for sharing my environmental concerns.

"They" call me
a **TREE HUGGER**

Maybe that's because

I **GIVE A**
actually **SHIT**
about something

BIGGER

than

myself

but who are "they"?





Look at what *“we”*
have **DONE**
There is no *“they”*
only **WE**

but “we” haven’t felt the urgency

I don’t live by an ocean, but I can’t even imagine the disgust and rage of those who do when they heard about these Great Pacific masses of waste killing the sea life.

Again I’m drawing the overlap of I, We, and They in this poster.

How this informs my making and vision as a graphic designer

For me, living these changes and inventing solutions within my own space, becoming more adept at incorporating environmentally savvy methods to my practice and lifestyle, is the best way to communicate the urgency I feel. But I recognize the small impact I may actually have with that sole approach. Max Liboiron, writer for DiscardStudies.com, states, “The premise of awareness campaigns is that individuals are the best unit for change.” But follows with, “The individualization of action is a way to fragment it, slow it down, and redirect it to ineffective routes.” He suggests that the change needs to take place on a larger scale, within infrastructure and the larger systems. His examples being, “Changing whether people have access to compost, or, better yet, mandating composting at a municipal level, means that people are much more likely to participate regardless of their values, knowledge, or previous involvement. Better yet, target pre-consumer waste...”⁷³

When I first started down this thesis path I was conflicted between the industry of graphic design, my background in particular was print and web advertising, with its zeal for promoting consumptive behavior, and the shift I was making to reduction, simplification, and living more in harmony with Nature. In my past I had felt ‘cheap’ in the role of graphic designer. I felt like a servant to it, sometimes worse—a sell-out.

Now I’ve come to realize that we are not a servant to the consumerist machine but a facilitator of change as we acknowledge social needs on a global scale and address them in a holistic way, with cradle-to-cradle intentions. Nothing goes to waste, because there is no such thing. Graphic design is a tool to solving problems, not the way to solving problems. Moving forward it becomes collaborator with other disciplines in giving form to the answers to social needs, not creating shallow desires. The solutions, no longer consumption-oriented, but needs-oriented that adapt and evolve.

I assume to accomplish this, one might need to start by working with like-minded companies and organizations. That would probably make it easier later to approach all other clients with a portfolio of proof that sustainable practice is possible. The California-based design company Celery Design encourages designers to work backwards and start with the final destination to deal with the design’s environmental impact and (re)consider the materials, manufacturing, and distribution factors that are part of that equation. By taking a “whole-systems” approach a designer can help the client keep a project’s eco-footprint to a minimum.

In my current rural setting, my community is not inclined to change quickly. I could change locations and surround myself with people who embrace all that I've covered here, but what would that solve? From the Slow Movement I've learned I should act locally and design locally. I will take all that I have learned and apply it, as much as possible, to each design problem I face, with the same fervent passion I've expressed on these pages. I will be talking with 'neighbors' within my community and showing the work I've done, adding more, and undoubtedly will send ripples of change outward. These folks would rather hear it from someone they know and trust than from some 'tree huggin'' stranger.

My website (dtimages.net/paintedrock) will continue to be used as a repository of experiences, projects, and resources, as a means to share and connect with others. Undoubtedly, it will grow and be modified as I continue to evolve as an environmentally sensitive designer and maker. As I began looking for solutions to problems around my "island" (rainwater harvesting, gardening, passive solar shading, and simplifying), I found resources of inspiration in the creative work of others. I hope I can contribute to that pool of commons.

This thesis process has encouraged me to join groups that are actively engaged in learning more and doing more to address the issues of sustainability. The networking that is taking place is bearing fruit as I develop partnerships for larger, post-thesis projects. The idea of working across disciplines to solve some of these problems is exciting and I am anxious to begin.

"The idea of design and the profession of the designer has to be transformed from the notion of a specialist function into a generally valid attitude of resourcefulness and inventiveness which allows projects to be seen not in isolation but in relationship with the need of the individual and the community. One cannot simply lift out any subject matter from the complexity of life and try to handle it as an independent unit."⁷⁵

— László Moholy-Nagy,
Vision in Motion, 1947



73. Max Liboiron, "Against Awareness, For Scale," <http://discardstudies.com/2014/01/23/against-awareness-for-scale-garbage-is-infrastructure-not-behavior>.

74. "Green foot forward," Celery Design, last accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.celerydesign.com/work/brand-strategy/camper>

75. Anne Chick, and Paul Michlethwaite, *Design for Sustainable Change: How Design and Designers Can Drive the Sustainability Agenda*, (AVA Publishing SA, 2011), 25.

Resources

(a few additional links that inspired/informed me along the way)

7 Tips to Get With a New Minimalist Mentality, Alison Hodgson.
<http://www.houzz.com/ideabooks/6079745/list/7-Tips-to-Get-With-a-New-Minimalist-Mentality>

75 Ways to Live More Sustainably in 2013. Sustainable Kentucky.
<http://www.sustainablekentucky.com/2013/01/02/75-ways-to-live-more-sustainably-in-2013/>

Active Hope, Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone—offers tools that help us face the mess we're in, as well as find and play our role in the collective transition, or *Great Turning*, to a life-sustaining society.
<http://www.activehope.info>

American Rivers.org offers information on endangered rivers and conservation activities and campaigns.
<http://www.americanrivers.org/>

Biomimicry 3.8 is the global leader in biomimicry innovation consulting, professional training, and educational program and curricula development.
www.biomimicry.net

Buy Nothing Day, Adbusters.
<https://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd>

Center for Climate and Energy Solutions.
<http://www.c2es.org/>

Climate counts: comparing companies on their commitment to tackling global warming.
http://climatecounts.org/scorecard_overview.php

Day One Design's homepage & your source for Natural Building Specialties in Western Oregon.
<http://www.dayonedesign.org/>

Earth Policy Institute, dedicated to planning a sustainable future and providing a roadmap of how to get from here to there.
<http://www.earth-policy.org/>

Earth911.org—tips, facts, and links for all types of recyclables.
<http://www.earth911.com/>

Econation is an independent source of information and education for sustainability and well-being.
<http://www.econation.co.nz/>

Ecotecture: the journal of Ecological Design—empowering our readers to solve environmental problems.
<http://www.ecotecture.com>

Emily Pilloton, Project H—teaching youth to design and build their future with heart, hands, and hammers.
<http://www.projecthdesign.org/>

EPA—information and links on local water quality.
<http://water.epa.gov/drink>

Exploring Nature Educational Resources—a natural science resource for students and educators. Too Much Trash.
<http://www.exploringnature.org/db/detail.php?dbID=7&detID=2502>

Fair Trade USA—Every purchase matters—Quality products. Improving Lives. Protecting the Environment.
<http://www.fairtradeusa.org/>

Freecycle Network™ is a grassroots and entirely nonprofit movement of people who are giving (and getting) stuff for free in their own towns. It's all about reuse and keeping good stuff out of landfills.
www.freecycle.org

Green Business blog
<http://www.greenbiz.com/>

Greenability magazine is a bi-monthly publication designed to help you discover “green” lifestyle alternatives for everyday living in the Kansas City metro area and beyond.
<http://greenabilitymagazine.com/the-magazine/about/>

Greenpeace is the leading independent campaigning organization that uses peaceful protest and creative communication to expose global environmental problems and to promote solutions that are essential to a green and peaceful future.
<http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/en/>

Greenwashing in advertising.
<http://www.greenwashingindex.com/>

Inhabitat.com is a weblog devoted to the future of design, tracking the innovations in technology, practices and materials that are pushing architecture and home design towards a smarter and more sustainable future.
www.inhabitat.com

Living Sustainably: A complete guide to surviving a changing planet. The Broad Curriculum (blog for the course). This course is run by Professor Nick Gray of the Centre for the Environment at Trinity College Dublin.
<http://ournewclimate.blogspot.com/>

Local Harvest—an online directory of local food producers.
www.localharvest.org

Mom Prepares: a guide to self-sufficiency, permaculture—a method of ecological design.
<http://momprepares.com/permaculture-principles-can-help-you-design-your-garden/>

Mother Earth News—the original guide to living wisely. Great DIY projects and building plans for anyone who can swing a hammer. <http://www.motherearthnews.com/diy.aspx#axzz2Uz43c34x>

National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations. Working to protect distinctive places through managed tourism and destination stewardship. www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/

National Geographic's guide to environmentally friendly choices. <http://www.thegreenguide.com/green-living>

“Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) works to safeguard the earth—its people, its plants and animals, and the natural systems on which all life depends. <http://www.nrdc.org/>

Planet Reuse: need reused building materials for your project? Have material to sell or donate? <http://planetreuse.com/>

Plastic bag bans are spreading in the United States, Janet Larsen, TreeHugger.com <http://www.treehugger.com/sustainable-product-design/plastic-bag-bans-spreading-united-states.html>

Real Climate.org is ten scientists blogging about climate change. <http://realclimate.org/>

Re-nourish is an online tool advocating awareness and action for sustainable systems thinking in the communication design community. <http://re-nourish.com>

Slow Food USA—linking the pleasures of the table with a commitment to protect the community, culture, knowledge and environment that make this pleasure possible. <http://www.slowfoodusa.org>”

Sustainable Baby Steps: small steps toward greener living (blog). <http://www.sustainablebabysteps.com/go-green-blog.html>

“Sustainable Energy Art”—a group exhibition of alternative energy and energy aware musical instruments, jewelry, and more. 2007. <http://greylockarts.net/sustainable-energy-art>

“The Century of the Self,” by Maria Popova—written and produced by British documentarian Adam Curtis in 2002 for the BBC, this offers a four-part probe into the depths of consumerism and democracy. <http://vimeo.com/87419450>

The Do Lectures—Inspirational talks from passionate, creative people. People who Do things, can inspire the rest of us to go and Do things, too. <http://www.thedolectures.com/>

The Land Art Generator Initiative (LAGI) brings together artists, architects, scientists, landscape architects, engineers, and others to the design and construction of public art installations that uniquely combine aesthetics with utility-scale clean energy generation. The works inspire and educate while they provide renewable power to thousands of homes around the world. <http://landartgenerator.org/>

The Lexicon of Sustainability™—people will live more sustainably if they understand the most basic terms and principles that will define the next economy. <http://www.lexiconofsustainability.com/>

The Living Principles for Design website aims to ‘guide purposeful action, celebrate and popularize the efforts of those who use design thinking to create positive cultural change.’ www.livingprinciples.org

The National Recycling Coalition—a non-profit organization focused on promoting and enhancing recycling in the United States. <http://nrcrecycles.org/>”

The Nature Conservancy protects Earth's natural resources and beauty. Our conservation efforts are driven by our members. <http://www.nature.org/?intc=nature.tnav>

The Ocean Conservancy—we use the best in science-based solutions to tackle the biggest threats to our ocean. Join the Fight for a Healthy Ocean. <http://oceanconservancy.org/>

The Sierra Club—habitat and species conservation campaigns and green living tips. www.sierraclub.org

Transition US—A list of the official initiatives in the United States. To learn more about the growing number of groups getting started visit the website. <http://transitionus.org/initiatives-map>

TreeHugger is the leading media outlet dedicated to driving sustainability into the mainstream. Partial to modern aesthetic, it strives to be a one-stop shop for green news, solutions and product information. www.treehugger.com

World Wildlife Foundation—information on endangered species and conservation projects. www.worldwildlife.org

Worldchanging.com is a non-profit Seattle media organization that comprises a global network of independent journalists, designers and thinkers. www.worldchanging.com



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A MIGHTY TRUNK MAY GROW.

~ AESCHYLUS ~