

jamie e gray



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STATEMENT
OF DESIGN
PHILOSOPHY

Designer, Writer, Researcher

I approach all my design activities equally as a researcher, writer and form giver. All three creative acts have a symbiotic relationship in my design process and each one relies and is critical to the other, from inception to end. I discovered this process while undertaking my graduate studies. I found that my writing was as vital to my design process as any sketch, and that the ability to combine research findings from outside of the design discipline with those from within greatly increased my ability to create beyond conventions. Beyond this process, I strive to execute design within a range of values that may seem paradoxical: that design addresses both the macro and micro level of understanding, and that my research contains both depth and breadth. Though such balance is not always possible, I do think these aspects are important to the design solution. I look to develop a delicate sensibility for detail as well as execute with focus on big-picture relevance.

Cross Disciplinarian

As a designer, I find I am a natural cross disciplinarian. I am able to explore problems and pose questions that adventurously span disciplinary lines, such as graphic, interaction, system, and textile design as well as cognitive, cultural and technology theory. I also believe design at its most forward-thinking is a highly collaborative endeavor and I eagerly look forward to applying my own research at the multi-disciplinary level, by engaging with other experts in their fields to evolve, enhance and visualize shared concepts. Ideally, the principles of design should be part of any process from the inception on up, and not just an aesthetic coating applied at the end. Therefore, I believe in working with interdisciplinary teams as a means to teach by example the value of incorporating design “thinking” in a project early in the process.

Digital Conceptualist

I describe myself as a digital conceptualist. A guiding principle of my design research has been my belief that design and art should lead technology — and not the other way around. It is inevitable that technology will catch up to our ideas. If we only conceived solutions within our technical means, then what would drive innovation? I believe designers should lead technology conceptually, so that the solutions that technology mediates are need-driven, meaningful and user-considered. I fully embrace and integrate this philosophy into my own design process — by conceiving of interactive, communication and identity design solutions for emerging technologies, such as web-based operating systems, locative media and ubiquitous computing. I articulate my concepts by creating visual demonstrations and simulations that illuminate and facilitate a new understanding of social and interactive behaviors that reside either beyond my own technological limitations or on the very edge of technological possibility.

RESEARCH
INTERESTS

Digital Collecting

My design research has focused primarily on two overlapping areas that I intend to be a continuing force behind my body of work. The first is the concept of “Digital Collecting”, a term I use to describe my Master’s research at North Carolina State University (online at www.agrayspace.com/digitalcollecting). With the technological advances of the Internet, file size and storage comes concern for how we archive, organize, access, and share our digital files, and more importantly, how we give information expression and create identity. I’m interested in designing for how we interface with the digital world, in modes of collaboration, creativity and discovery. For my final thesis, I considered the user as a “collector,” giving names and attributes to his or her behaviors; to therefore consider and design for them subjective and serendipitous experiences. I plan to continue to concept, discuss and design new modes of interfacing with our digital files that consider the user as collector and that challenges the existing metaphors of the digital environment and therefore the behaviors defined by those tools.

On and offline Social Networking

The second area of my continuing research is at the intersection of design, technology, social behaviors and community. My graduate work, including “Shareables”, “The Living Library” and “Divers Language System” (online at www.agrayspace.com/jamiegray/graduate), emphasizes creating social networking opportunities for value-based communities that integrate both the digital and physical environments and use systems design to establish evolving individual and group identity. I look to continue this research and further explore physical interfacing and online behaviors with the design of organic and collaborative systems that blend mediums and disciplines across physical and digital objects.

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STATEMENT
OF TEACHING
PHILOSOPHY

I am at the beginning of my teaching career and, as such, I have not yet had the opportunity to develop my teaching philosophy. I believe this is something that will only develop and evolve with experience in the classroom. Knowing that each curriculum and set of students is different, I am confident in my ability to adapt to each new situation. With that said, I offer a few personal comments on research, process and technology, and it is my intent to instill these approaches in students. More directly, please look to my design philosophy and research interests as a model for what might be called my pedagogical approach.

Context, audience, history, culture

Gaining a wide understanding of subject and audience, as well as historical and contemporary context is, I believe, vital for the modern designer. I ground projects with a defined subject matter (set either by myself or the students) so that students may design with the audience and cultural context in mind. I believe in the integration of historical, theoretical and contemporary issues within the studio environment at all levels. It is a must for students to be aware of design history, as well as current technological and theoretical movements, not only in professional design practice, but also in disciplines beyond graphic design and in culture.

Technology

I am very interested in teaching all aspects of the design process, from fundamentals to graduate and typography to digital media. When it comes to teaching technology, it is important to distinguish my approach as one that is focused on the theory, principles and methods for the planning, conceptualization, and design of interactive media. Because of the rapidly changing pace of technology, I believe it most important to teach students "how-to-learn", so they are able to proactively self-teach the necessary software and therefore adapt and grow with technological demands long after they leave the classroom. I understand some students have a fear of technology, and I actively point them to resources and encourage them to identify their strengths and position as designers within a technology focused field.