METROPOLIS AFFLATUS

by

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ABSTRACT

Metropolis Afflatus is a comprehensive magazine that chronicles the experience of a graphic designer/photographer’s travels to San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, New York City and Seattle. Using personal photography in combination with illustration and lyrics, Metropolis Afflatus seeks to inspire the viewer in the same way the city has inspired the traveller.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

This comprehensive report documents the process of creating a magazine from start to finish. The magazine chronicles my travels to San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, New York City and Seattle within the last year. The project itself includes the creation of a magazine identity, city symbols, typographic details, photography, and prose.

Purpose of the Project

The magazine, titled Afflatus, aims to show the viewer how travel and exploration of cities can inspire the mind. Furthermore, it also shows how inspiration from the cities resonates for a long time with the enlightened individual for a long period of time afterwards. The word afflatus is a Latin word meaning a “divine imparting of knowledge”, modernly translated to “inspiration”. My travels to six specific metropolitan areas in the United States serve as the primary inspiration for this project. Secondary inspiration is general knowledge and references to each city in media and culture. The content represents a compilation of thoughts, observations and direct inspirations from each city. Ultimately, the purpose of the project is to create works inspired by the city in order to relay that inspiration to others.
Limitations

The most apparent limitation on this project was time. The cities each had their own timeline restrictions in terms of travel, and the design needed to be completed in one academic quarter. Additionally, I was limited financially to what I could produce as a final bound piece (because of my student budget). In regards to the visual work, I limited myself to using only images and photographs self generated. However, for textual content, I included not only my own prose, but lyrics, sayings, quotations and literature.

Glossary of Terms

*Saddle-Stitch Binding:* a bookbinding technique which utilizes staples down the middle of a folded sheaf of papers.

*4 color process:* Printing process utilizing four inks: cyan, magenta, yellow and black.

*Symbols:* A form of graphic communication without words used to associate with ideas, places, or things.

*Typography:* the art, craft and techniques of type design, modifying type glyphs, and arranging type.

*Masthead:* The line of type at the top of a publication giving its name (also called nameplate).

*Magazine identity:* referring most notably to the masthead of the magazine, but also to the overall look and feel of the magazine.

*Copy:* the text of a story or article as distinguished from related visual material.
Long Run: In printing, referring to a large quantity of printed pieces

Short Run: In printing, referring to a small quantity of printed pieces

Typeface: any design of type, including a full range of characters, as letters, numbers, and marks of punctuation, in all sizes

Folio: The page number in combination with the magazine name and related graphics.

Serif: semi-structural details on the ends of some of the strokes that make up letters and symbols

Sans Serif: type that does not have serifs at the end of its letter’s strokes

Slab Serif: a type of serif characterized by thick, block-like serifs
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RESEARCH

Traveling

The first stage of research for this project was the longest, spanning from June 2004 to November 2009. This range of dates encompasses any and all of the visitations to each of the six cities, all of which I extensively photographed within the time restrictions. As the base of the project, the actual travel and photography aspect provides direct inspiration for the magazine content, so it was important to thoroughly document my experiences.

My Spring Break trip this year to Boston and New York City ultimately was the reason I chose to create Metropolis Afflatus. Specifically, New York City resonated greatly with me, and once I left I found myself constantly yearning to return. The creation of a magazine helped me to revisit the experiences of each city, and is a reminder of the way I felt exploring and observing. Furthermore, because this project was conceived after traveling to five of the cities, I had to revisit my cataloged photos and explore the cities retroactively. This was easy for Chicago, Boston and New York City, having traveled to these destinations within the last year. Fortunately, I was able to visit the two California cities again (San Francisco and Los Angeles) during the summer of 2009, this time with the project in mind. This proved to be extremely helpful as I hadn't approached these cities as observantly as
the others because of their proximity to my home, and increased frequency of visit. Originally, this project included three more cities (Washington D.C., Honolulu and Las Vegas) which were cut due to time restrictions, and because I hadn’t explored these cities as thoroughly as I would have liked. However, I was able to add Seattle to the roster when an opportunity arose to visit during Fall Quarter. It was an interesting contrast to the other travel experiences, as I had already begun to work on the project; this time I felt much more prepared.

As I traveled around the United States, I became increasingly intrigued by the culture and livelihood of major cities, thus this project became an outlet for me to regurgitate my observations and interactions with each city.

**Editorial Research**

In addition to documenting my experiences with photography, it was important to review a variety of editorials and publications that appeal to various demographics. This range included national and regional publications from technological, home, travel, lifestyle and food genres. I compared and contrasted several things formally among these magazines (including folios, copy size, grid structure, and overall layout) and evaluated their effectiveness. Overall, this process greatly helped in the creation of an organization system for the magazine, which allowed the content to be clearly presented.
Printing Research

In addition to content and design research, I researched several potential printers in order to see which one could work best in my approximate $300 budget. I considered online printing services such as MagCloud and PrintPlace, yet neither could offer what I needed at the right price. I contacted Printworx, a printer I’ve worked with before (in Watsonville), V3, an advisor recommended printer (in Oxnard), and University Graphic Systems, a printer located at Cal Poly. For 25 copies of my 8”x10 3/4”, 4 color process magazine with an estimated at 70 pages, the estimates were in $400 for Printworx, $900 for V3 and $343.20 for UGS. Ultimately, I chose to work with UGS for this project because of proximity and speedy turnaround time. Eventually, I would like to sell and distribute Metropolis Afflatus, and will need to research further the costs of long run printing as opposed to short run printing.
CHAPTER 3: PROCEDURES AND RESULTS

Creating a magazine from start to finish is no easy task. Besides the obvious task of creating all the content, a new magazine needs an identity, grid system, folios, typefaces and overall graphic consistency. Working as a staff of one, all of this work was performed and managed by me, thus heavy planning was needed to complete *Metropolis Afflatus* in one quarter.

**Research**

Research and information gathering was the first stage, and this included anything from reading reviews and travel testimonies about locations, to searching for photos on Flickr, noting the locations, and discovering the best vantage points. This strategy was successful, and I was able to explore places I would not have found on my own. The research continued throughout the design phase as I chose to incorporate historical and cultural references throughout the magazine. I also saved many items collected while traveling (maps, receipts, ticket stubs, matchbooks, etc) which along with the photography helped to recall experiences. Elements of the magazine overall were inspired from the collected airplane tickets, luggage tags and overall air travel. The table of contents refers to a flip board style airport board. (fig. 1)
Editing

Whenever I travel, I take more photos than I need—sometimes upwards of 300 per day. I do this so I can develop composition and experiment with framing. This gives me sufficient options when selecting the final images to be used. Naturally, I had a lot of photos to sift through for each city, so I narrowed them down to about 100 per city. While reviewing the images, I kept my sketchbook close and wrote down any and everything that came to mind. Then when I began to sketch layouts and photo illustrations, I referred to these stream of consciousness lists for guidance.

Section Symbols

I’ve learned that symbols can be extremely effective as a communication tool, especially within transportation systems in large cities. To echo this sentiment, and apply it in a new format, I chose to develop section symbols that would represent each city and work within a folio. They needed to be very simple (to print well at small sizes), yet capture the uniqueness and essence of each referent chosen, which in this case was a major landmark of each city. The buildings selected were: Transamerica Pyramid (San Francisco), Walt Disney Concert Hall (Los Angeles), Willis Tower (Chicago), Massachusetts Statehouse (Boston), Empire State Building (New York City), and the Space Needle (Seattle). Each building was drawn with detail, then simplified and refined. I chose to depict each building from a frontal view, eliminating any 3d element, which would be too complex for this system. Next
there were two line weights selected and used, the thicker to depict the basic structure, and the thinner to show simplified details. Overall, the symbols work well as a system, and are used as folios and on the U.S. map spread. (fig. 2 & 3)

**Typography**

Typography was a major element to consider in the development of this project—a bad typeface selection could disjoint the entire piece. I sought to select typefaces appropriate for each city, yet work well together overall. For the magazine system I chose Gotham for headings and folios (as well as the logo), and Rotis Serif for copy. Gotham works well as a geometric sans serif that references architecture—an important element in this project. Rotis was chosen for its unique serif letterforms that worked much better with the magazine look and feel than an oldstyle typeface such as Garamond. Furthermore, each city then has its own typeface used for display purposes only, most prominently in the introduction spreads. (fig. 4) In general I chose typefaces that I felt best exemplified my impression of each city, seeking to unite them all by use of color, size and composition.

**Grid Exploration**

As the wireframe of the design, the grid pulls the look together through organization, hierarchy and consistency. Therefore, the creation of a grid was well thought out and explored. I took into special consideration margin size in order to accom-
moderate readability along with the folios. A three-column grid was adopted, which allowed for the best sub grid, column width for text, and worked well with the number of cities featured (six). The baseline grid was set for every 12.5 points, with the type set at 9.25 points, which was also used for alignments of images and other graphic elements.

**Magazine Identity**

The magazine is titled *Afflatus*, and this particular issue is titled *Metropolis Afflatus*. Because the word afflatus signifies a divine imparting of knowledge or power, inspiration, I chose to use a strong typeface for the logo (a modified Gotham bold). The asterisk placed after the type asks the reader to look for further definition or meaning, which can be found on the same page. (fig. 5) This was done to allow for subsequent issues of *Afflatus* to be adapted to a variety of other subjects that may be the source of inspiration and artistic works.

**Illustrations**

I’ve found that sometimes a photo does not quite capture the soul of a city, so I created illustrations and images with my photographs that would intrigue the viewer— hopefully evoking the same feelings I had when I visited these locations. For example, I’ve taken the classic Milton Glaser “I Heart NY” in my own direction
for the New York section (fig. 6) For the introduction spreads I chose a lyric, saying or cultural reference identifiable with each city and incorporated it into the chosen image as environmental type to further connect the text to the location.

While this journey had its fair share of delays and sleepless nights, in the end it successfully documents the experiences I had in each of these cities. The process of designing Metropolis Afflatus was much like traveling to a new city. I could plan profusely, yet there were constantly changes of direction, adjustments and surprises. I didn’t realize until the end that unpredictability in travel was mirrored in the design process of Metropolis Afflatus.
CHAPTER 4: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Metropolis Afflatus, the premiere edition of Afflatus magazine, was fueled by my travels to metropolitan areas in the United States. During these abbreviated city tours, I extensively photographed the city and its people in order to capture the inspiration felt in the moment. Then, taking the photos, experiences and a myriad of other things, I explored editorial design, symbology, photographic composition and typography which resulted in Metropolis Afflatus.

Within the last year I have realized that when I travel to a big city for the first time—or anywhere new and exciting, I am often left with the desire to return as soon as I start looking through my photographs from the trip. Sometimes when traveling, I've found that I am so involved in what I am doing at that moment that I forget to step back, and simply observe the immense history and true greatness of my surroundings. Often times I was just around the corner from something extremely interesting, culturally or historically. Unfortunately, these short trips to historical and cultural epicenters can only expose travelers to a glimpse of its offerings. Overall, my experience traveling to six urban areas of the United States within the last year has taught me to be more prepared and to research the place
more thoroughly before traveling. I put this lesson into practice in Seattle, a trip that was taken in the midst of this project, and made the most of my time in the city. Until I have time to return to these inspiration hubs, I will have to rely on the memories triggered by my photos—of which I often inspect carefully for notable things I missed the first time while I was there.

**Recommendations**

For the most part, I have made a giant leap in the direction I would like this project to go. I plan to build on and expand *Metropolis Afflatus* in the future, while this current issue serves as a juicy first edition of the *Afflatus* magazine. I have learned not only the importance of planning, but the importance of efficient execution—something that I have learned to improve on. This project was a major undertaking, so I recommend to any future student to plan realistically the amount of time needed to complete a project. I was a little over zealous in planning this project, and needed to scale back to finish in time. It is important to allow plenty of time to critique, refine and produce. Overall organization, including time management and file organization is critical when working on such a lengthy project.
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-fig. 1

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**REFERENCED IMAGES**

- fig. 1
- fig. 2
M E T R O P O L I S A F F L A T U S

fig. 3

THE OBSERVATION DECK AT THE TOP OF THE ROOK UNDOUBTEDLY PROVIDES VISITORS WITH THE BEST VIEWS OF MANHATTAN. With views of the Empire State Building, Chrysler Building, and Central Park, this elevated vantage point features nothing to desire.

fig. 4

Afflatus*

fig. 5
fig. 6