Dexter
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Abstract

This report contains documentation of the inspiration, research, and physical process included in the creation of the *Dexter* book.

Dexter refers to the Walter F. Dexter building, or Building 34 on the Cal Poly Campus, which is home to the Art & Design Department, as well as Landscape Architecture and the ROTC program. The book itself is a compilation of photography accompanied by original text, which explore the "unofficial art" that can be found around the building.

Table of Contents

Chapter One
Introduction

The inspiration behind the creation of the project has occurred gradually over my four years as a graphic design student at Cal Poly. Over this time I have witnessed some truly creative ideas and found inspiration in random drawings on tabletops, bathroom graffiti, and posters placed around the building which have no connection to actual assigned projects. It has become increasingly clear to me that, although there are numerous actual projects being created in classes every day, there is also a less blatant form of artwork that is constantly being created and rarely acknowledged. The goal of *Dexter*, the book, is to draw attention to this art.

There is no history of this kind of documentation or book being produced in earlier years so this will be an original piece without an actual client. As such there are no external stipulations for what is to be included or excluded. My main limitation will be the short time period in which the project must be completed, essentially between January 5 and February 16, 2009. The only other limiting factor is self-imposed; although the Dexter building is home to a number of programs, the book will focus primarily on facilities and subject matter related to the Art & Design program, containing images which reflect the pervasiveness of the creative culture evident within the building and attributed to its students.

The finished product is a small, hard-cover book which is comprised mainly of photographs taken within the building. The photos are supplemented by brief blocks of original text to explain their inspiration and purpose in addition quotes by famous artists and designers which complement them. Content includes a chapter on tabletop sketches and doodles, bathroom graffiti, the manner in which students have altered and personalized their lockers, and other posters and flyers seen around the department.

Statement of the Problem: While the finished projects and portfolios that are produced within the Art & Design department are carefully scrutinized and highly prized, the actual evidence of the creative process, which plays a key role in the production of these pieces, is often disregarded. The intention of this project is to document, through text and photographs, the visible evidence of the highly creative culture within the Art & Design building on the Cal Poly campus, more commonly referred to as the Dexter building.

Statement of Objective: As someone to whom Dexter has become a second home over the last four years, and also a fan of urban art and graffiti, my purpose is to capture what

Dexter is at this moment in time, in book form. The key objective here is to convey the importance of creativity and experimentation on the part of an artist or designer, not merely in their work but in their daily life. It is a documentary of sorts.

Chapter Two
Review of Research

Layout

Since the primary components of this project are visual rather than literal, the majority of the research was done with less of an emphasis on the content and more on the physical layout and construction of the book itself. In addition as this is the first edition of the book, the main sources of inspiration have come from other unrelated works of a similar subject matter. Nicholas Ganz's book, *Graffiti World* takes images of street art from five continents and displays it in such a way as to take this often overlooked form of expression and showcase its beauty and widespread influence. Ganz's book is highly image-oriented and contains only small amounts of text, allowing the pieces included to speak for themselves (see fig.1). This manner of treating the subject matter was influential in the layout of this project. In another book titled *Bathroom Graffiti*, Mark Ferem focuses on displaying images of the graffiti found on restroom walls and stalls, like the bathroom graffiti chapter in *Dexter* (see fig.2). The book's description on Ferem's own website comments that these examples "are not so much about graffiti as an art form as much as they are about graffiti as the result of personal expression, which will never find its way into galleries or ad campaigns" (Latrinalia). The point of including these kinds of images in this project is not to imply that they are necessarily works of art but rather to show that in an atmosphere such as Dexter's, personal expression and visual communication can be found absolutely everywhere.

Content

Most of the actual research for the project's graffiti content was done within the building itself. The goal was to focus on the areas devoted to Art & Design and to exclude anything that was actually created as a part of a class-related project. The imagery in the first section came from chipboard table-covers, both those that are still in use in various classrooms and the previously used ones being stored in the back of Room 149 (see fig. 3). The second section is comprised of graffiti found on the walls of the mens' and women's restrooms on the first floor near the graphic design and fine art studios as well as on the second floor near the Art History classrooms and photography studios. The last section is

a compilation of imagery found on lockers and bulletin boards around the department and the most recent unofficial collaborative project to be found on the department's walls; a poster declaring "You Know What I Love..." to which many students have added their own contributions (see fig. 4).

A small amount of information also came from the Mustang Daily website, such as the fact that the building was named in memoriam for California Superintendent of Public Education, Walter F. Dexter. More in-depth research also included an exploration of binding methods and tutorials on perfect book-binding and locating quotes spoken by famous designers and artists which would be placed on chapter heading pages. The finished project includes quotes from renowned designer Milton Glaser, the infamous graffiti artist known as Banksy, English illustrator Jon Burgerman, the American artist and writer, Elbert Hubbard, and Italian web designer Niko Stumpo.

Chapter Three
Procedure & Results

Assemblage

The first step in my book-making procedure consisted of shooting and accumulating the photos to be considered for inclusion and writing the text which was to accompany them. This included photographing stacks of old chipboard tabletop covers, wall graffiti, lockers and other items around the department. All the photographs were taken with a Canon Rebel Xti Digital SLR camera. The next step was to select and modify the images which were to be a part of the final product, cropping them and using Photoshop to improve color balance, contrast, and levels. I then laid out the book in InDesign using a 2.75 inch square-based grid system for the 7 inch square pages, allowing for a small amount of white space between images and text and on the outer border of all the pages. This step of the process included planning the organization of the content, from chapter division to pagination, in addition to laying out the photographs and the type themselves and manipulating the quotes (see fig. 5-7).

All the type was done in the Helvetica and Helvetica Neue type families (see fig. 8), including the large block quotes and pagination. Page numbers were in 100 pt. type with a 3 pt. dashed black line and placed at .5 inches from the edge of the inner edge of the page and the top edge for left facing pages and bottom edge for right facing pages. The first spread features a quote from Niko Stumpo, "Art has never been made while thinking of art" (see fig.9), and a brief introduction covering the inspiration for the book and graffiti content to follow. The next spread serves as an introduction to the first series of images,

featuring a quote by Milton Glaser, "To design is to communicate clearly by whatever means you can control or master" (see fig.10), and an explanation for the inclusion of the chipboard photographs, which comprise the next twenty-two pages. Following this is a spread featuring a quote by Banksy, "People say graffiti is childish, irresponsible, and ugly. But that's only if it's done right" (see fig. 11), which introduces the section on bathroom graffti. The last section begins with a quote by Jon Burgerman, "Inspiration, like chewing gum, can be found everywhere" (see fig. 12). Finally, the last page features a quote by Elbert Hubbard which reads, "Art is not a thing. It is a way" (see fig. 13).

Printing
After the digital assembly and proofreading was complete, the InDesign spreads were exported as image files and a proof copy was created using Blurb's BookSmart software. Blurb.com is an online publishing company whose mission is to allow anyone to make his or her own book and is unique in its willingness to print as few as one or two copies of a given project. Users download Blurb's own BookSmart software which allows the individual to choose a format, decide between a variety of different page templates, or import their own designs from design software such as Photoshop or InDesign. Backgrounds and type can also be done directly in the software. The book can then be uploaded directly to the site where it can be ordered and made public for other users to preview or purchase. My completed comp from Blurb was a softcover book with a black glossy cover. The hardcover was made out of used chipboard from one of the studios and applied to the soft cover with Mac Tac, allowing just enough room for the black spine to remain partially visible and bend easily. The cover features a sketch of the building itself and the title stencilled on with black acrylic paint in 72 pt. Akka (see fig. 14-15).

Troubleshooting
The first comp from Blurb had several printing and binding errors; pages were trimmed unevenly creating bleeds on certain pages while leaving white space on the borders of others (see fig. 16); this caused some of the page numbers to be cut off or appear unevenly placed on the page (see fig. 17). The print quality of the body copy was also poor. In order to fix the problems I adjusted the pages to make all images bleed to the edges in order to prevent white space from appearing on the edges of certain pages and not others. I chose to eliminate page numbers entirely as it would have been too difficult to ensure that they would not be cut off again. As the book is predominantly images and does not have a table of contents, this did not drastically effect the organization of the project. I also reformatted the type using the BookSmart program itself instead of exporting the InDesign file in the hopes that this would improve the print quality and make the type more legible. The following pages show the entire layout of the second and final comp.

Chapter Four
Summary & Recommendations

When I first conceived of making this kind of book I intended to do it as a larger format in the style of a coffetable book. The finished project is somewhat different than what I envisioned but overall still fulfills what my intention was. My main limitation, however, was the quality of the photography; although I have taken the basic photography series for graphic designers I do not really have the experience or equipment to take really high-quality images. If I had the opportunity to do this project again I would hire a photographer to take the images for me and would then probably feel more comfortable printing them in larger format. Another alteration that I would have made, given more time, would have been to include more imagery of the temporary interactive projects around the department. Although I have seen a lot of these kinds of things over my years here, the fact that I only worked on this project for the duration of one quarter meant that I was limited in how many of them I could include. Once again, in hindsight, it would have been ideal if I had been photographing gradually over the last four years instead of doing so right before I actually began assembling the book.

The most challenging and frustrating part of the process was the actual printing and binding process; working with an external printer was definitely a learning process and something I'm glad I was able to gain experience with. However it was very difficult to communicate with the printer and most of the printing issues were a result of this; I usually like to have finished comps printed in plenty of time before a deadline so that I can make adjustments and reprint as necessary but in this case the printing and shipping time made that very difficult. I would also not recommend Blurb in particular for projects with a lot of body copy as the print quality was disappointing. In spite of these minor regrets, however, the book did end up being what I intended it to be; a brief glimpse at what Dexter looks like at this moment in time and a sort of documentary of the artistic subculture at work within the department.

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	The-Names.Behind.The.Buildings-2945385-page2.shtml

Imagery

fig. 1

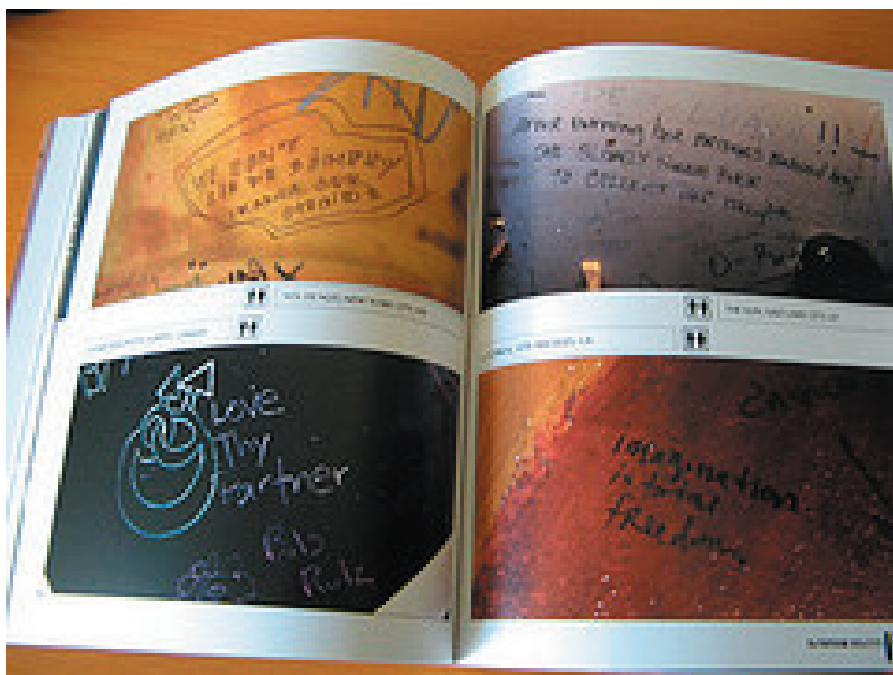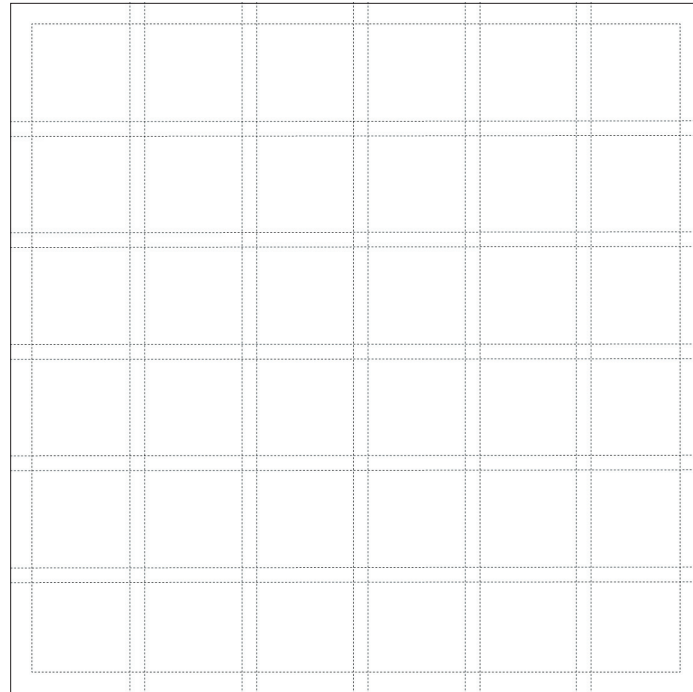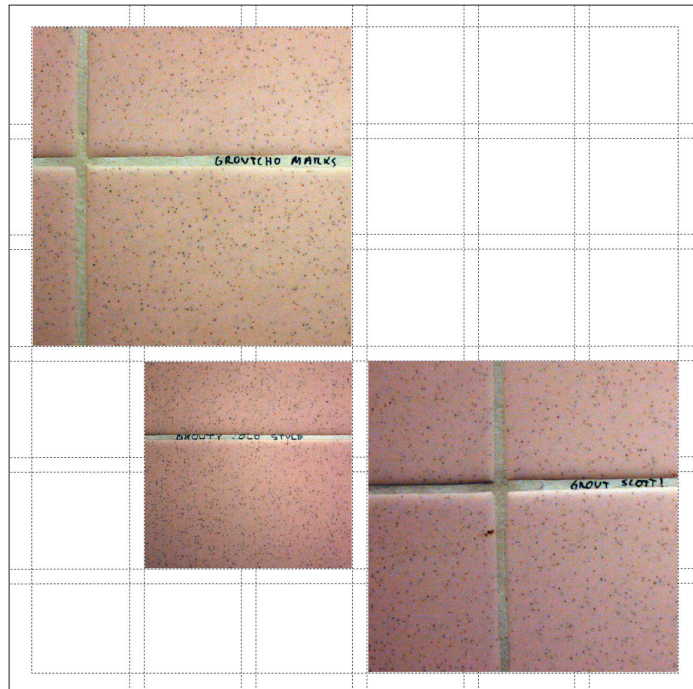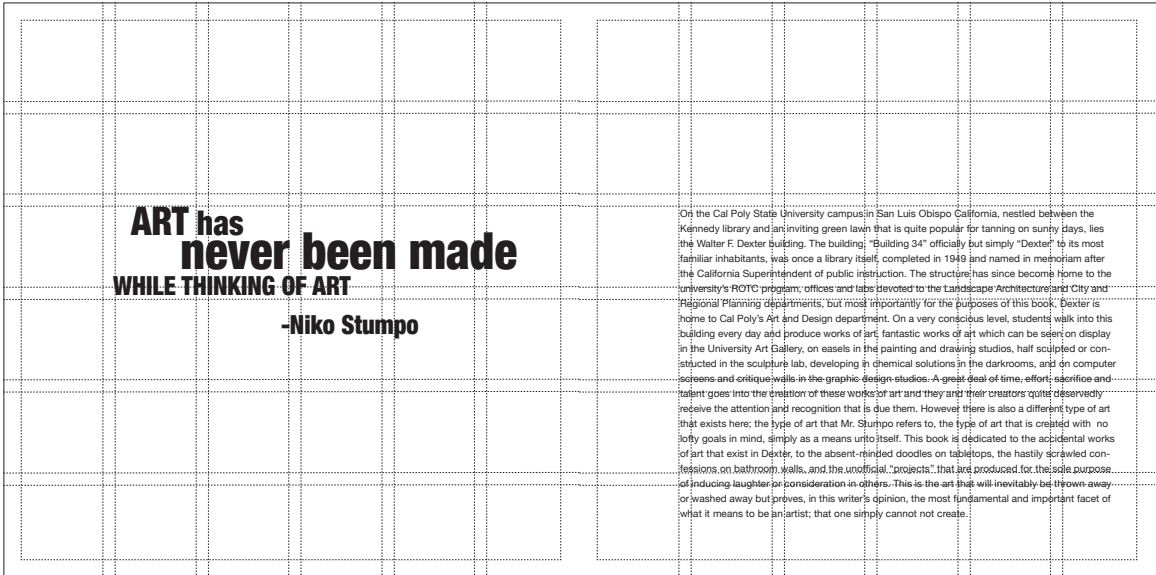fig. 2

fig. 3

fig. 4

fig. 5

fig. 6

ART has
never been made
WHILE THINKING OF ART

-Niko Stumpo

On the Cal Poly State University campus in San Luis Obispo California, nestled between the Kennedy library and an inviting green lawn that is quite popular for tanning on sunny days, lies the Walter F. Dexter building. The building; "Building 34" officially but simply "Dexter" to its most familiar inhabitants, was once a library itself, completed in 1949 and named in memoriam after the California Superintendent of public instruction. The structure has since become home to the university's ROTC program, offices and labs devoted to the Landscape Architecture and City and Regional Planning departments, but most importantly for the purposes of this book, Dexter is home to Cal Poly's Art and Design department. On a very conscious level, students walk into this building every day and produce works of art, fantastic works of art which can be seen on display in the University Art Gallery, on easels in the painting and drawing studios, half sculpted or con- structed in the sculpture lab, developing in chemical solutions in the darkrooms, and on computer screens and critique walls in the graphic design studios. A great deal of time, effort, sacrifice and talent goes into the creation of these works of art and they and their creators quite deservedly receive the attention and recognition that is due them. However there is also a different type of art that exists here; the type of art that Mr. Stumpo refers to, the type of art that is created with no lofty goals in mind, simply as a means unto itself. This book is dedicated to the accidental works of art that exist in Dexter, to the absent-minded doodles on tabletops, the hastily scrawled con- fessions on bathroom walls, and the unofficial "projects" that are produced for the sole purpose of inducing laughter or consideration in others. This is the art that will inevitably be thrown away or washed away but proves, in this writer's opinion, the most fundamental and important facet of what it means to be an artist; that one simply cannot not create.

fig. 7

Helvetica

abcdefghijiklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJIKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

0123456789 .,/:;?"!@&*-

Helvetica Neue Condensed Black

abcdefghijiklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJIKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

0123456789 .,/:;?"!@&*-

fig. 8

ART has
never been made
WHILE THINKING OF ART

-Niko Stumpo

fig. 9

To **DESIGN** is to
communicate clearly
by WHATEVER MEANS you can
control or master.

-Milton Glaser
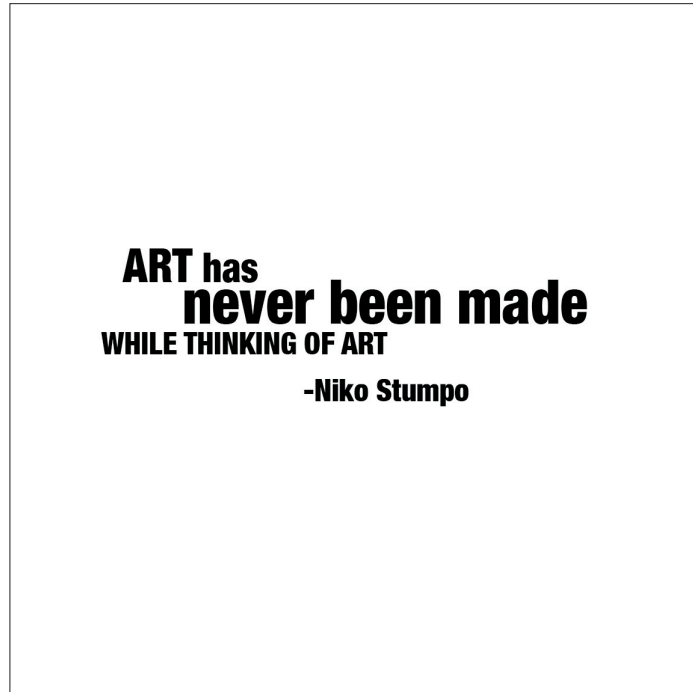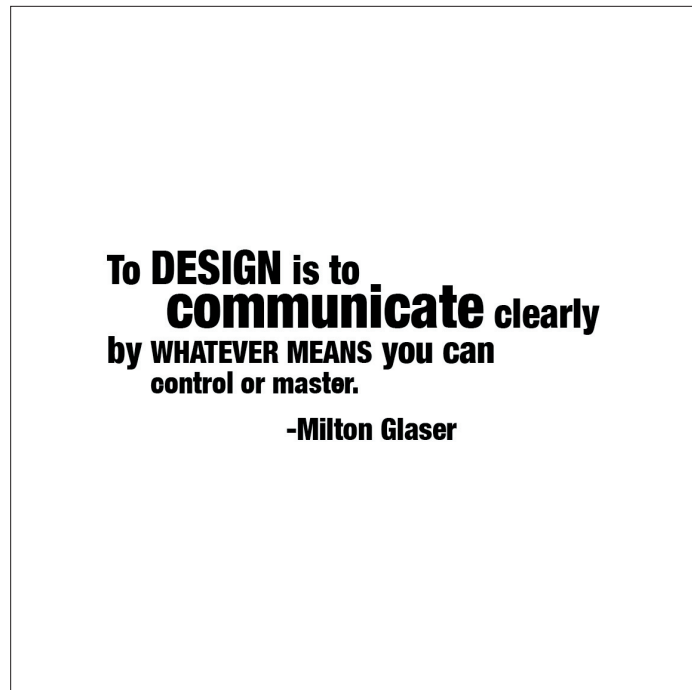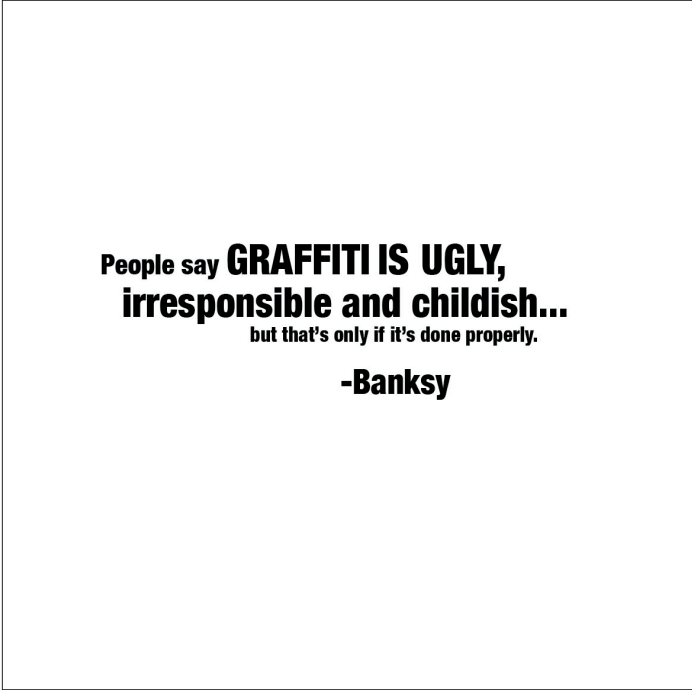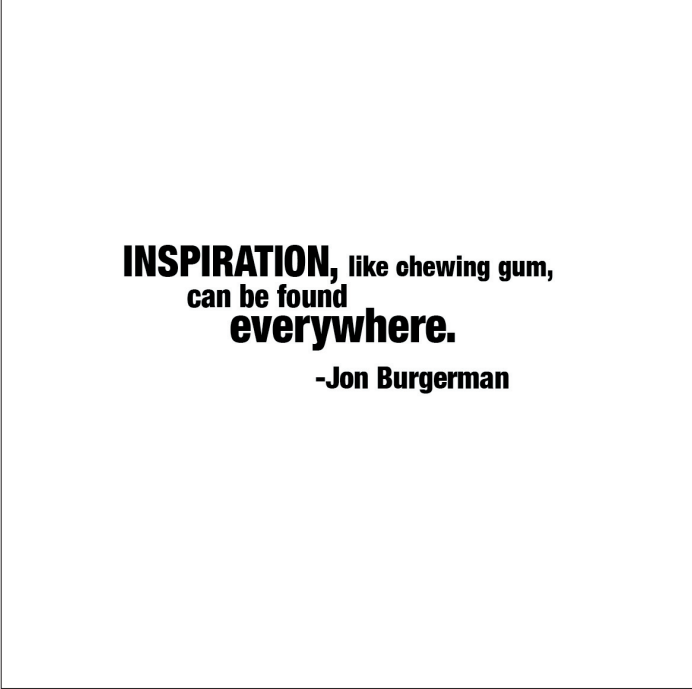
fig. 10

People say **GRAFFITI IS UGLY,**
irresponsible and childish...
but that's only if it's done properly.

-Banksy

fig. 11

INSPIRATION, like chewing gum,
can be found
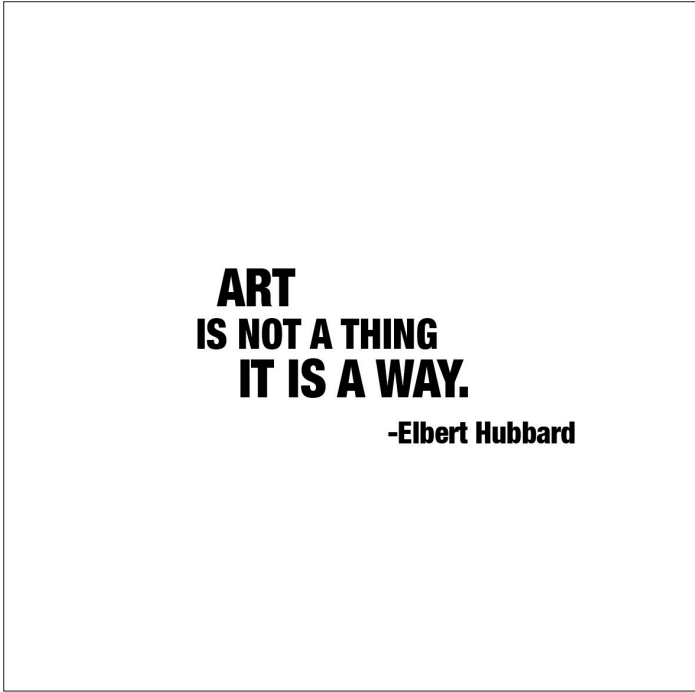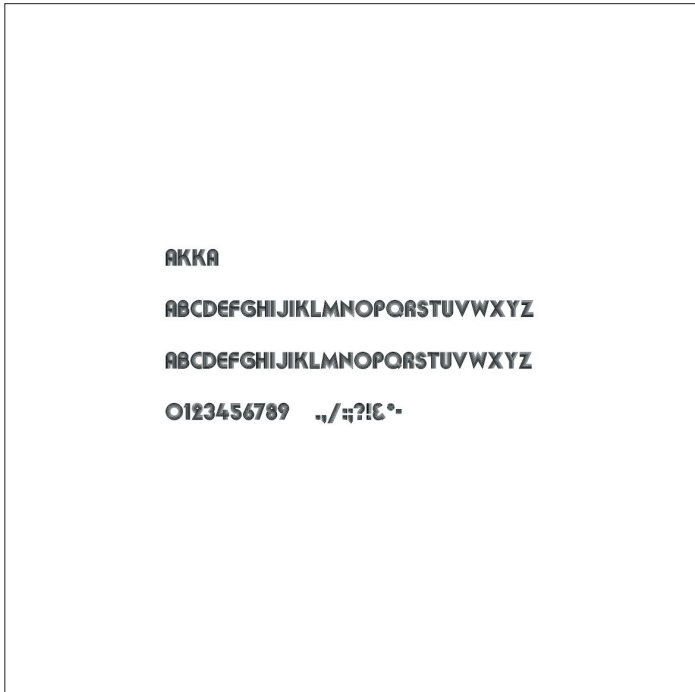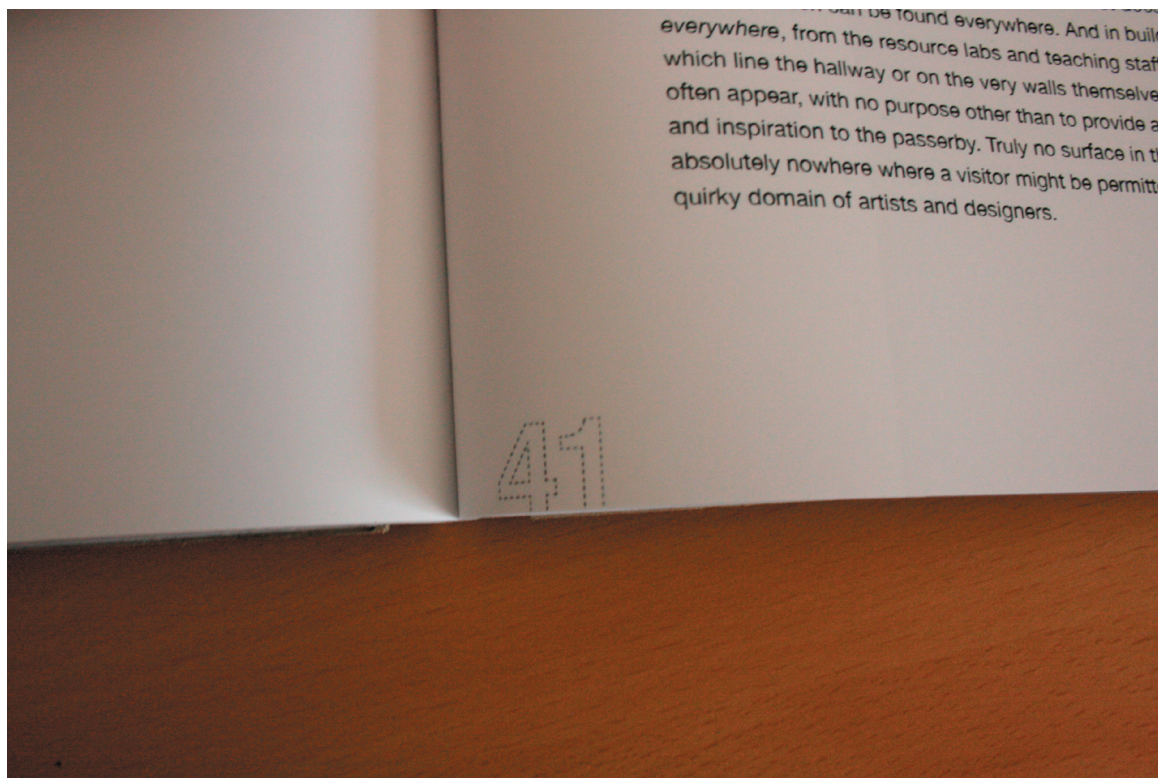**everywhere.**

-Jon Burgerman

fig. 12

ART
IS NOT A THING
IT IS A WAY.
-Elbert Hubbard

fig. 13

AKKA

ABCDEFGHIJIKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

ABCDEFGHIJIKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

0123456789 .,/:;?!&°-

fig. 14

fig. 15

fig. 16

can be found everywhere. And in build
everywhere, from the resource labs and teaching staff
which line the hallway or on the very walls themselves
often appear, with no purpose other than to provide a
and inspiration to the passerby. Truly no surface in th
absolutely nowhere where a visitor might be permitte
quirky domain of artists and designers.

41

fig. 17