Introduction

Personal Statement

Reflection is an important attribute in the act of developing meaningful work in creative enterprise. While designers often have an affinity towards reflection and pondering, it is easy to lose focus in the day-to-day distractions that plague modern life. To that end, the opportunity to permit oneself a moment to breathe and contemplate the bigger picture between putting out fires or rushing to meetings is a gift. Not wanting to squander this gift, what is captured in these pages is a snapshot of this moment of reflection, a pause to make an honest assessment of the intersection of scholarship, service and teaching. What I personally discovered during this journey is that I thrive on the tension that is derived from seeking balance and harmony between my creative, academic, and administrative roles. What is born out of this struggle is personal growth and innovation. What can be gleaned from the evidence presented is a trajectory that will continue to contribute to the body of knowledge about what is means to be a designer in a rich and meaningful way.

Reflection has illuminated the joy and richness of a journey headed towards the exhilaration of knowing that it was a path well taken.

I was fortunate to grow up in a time and place that permit me to explore, dream and become self aware. Though my parents are conservative midwesterners, that did not squelch my natural ability to push the boundary of every adolescent situation. As such, I grew up as an experiential learner with a strong sense of place. Like many of my friends growing up in Cleveland in the 70's we did not appreciate this until we moved away. Fortunately, leaving had benefits. Also it was not until I left that my creative nature blossomed and gained focus in college. There, I came to understand how to see the world through the lens of an optimism and the boundless opportunity to create beauty out of basic human need, a journey that put me on a path to eventually educating others on how to see the world through design. Over the past year I have turned my experience and lens on understanding how designers change the perception of others. For me this is the most important question in design, "How do we place value on a designer's innate ability to change a person's reality?" In light of how quickly humans have evolved into a technological species, designers have moved from the arbiter of the man-machine interface to the ethical mediator of the line between man and machine. As a designer, the line is drawn with perception. It is through perception that every human determines meaning, for as a designer we create a non-verbal meaning for the perception of innovation, desire, pleasure, and recently and more importantly to social contexts such as of the perception of sustainability, safety, health, and a connection to others. As many institutions rush to pile on more technology that is fast, cheap and ubiquitous, humanity needs designers to ask the question, "What does it means to be human in an era when technology can provide everything I desire?" This is the foundation that everything I do builds from, it is the tenet that drives my work, my teaching and my scholarship. I work at the intersections of designer as practitioner, designer as academic and designer-as-intellectual.

My research and creative work is derived from a place of being present and cognizant that design is born from the totality of a person's life experiences. As designers we use our life experience as fuel to create rich and meaningful solutions for others by empathizing with their needs and pulling from our own interactions with the world to create meaning. Running through the lawn sprinkler as a child might inspire an innovation in home fire safety, getting lost on a trip to a new city may lead to a novel way of navigation for visitors to a new museum. Design in contrast to the research of looking inward is often a research into looking outwards. As a case in point, in many scholarly pursuits research is used to understand or uncover "Why" in Design. We use research to play with "Why" and the end goal of creating novel solutions to "Why." It is through this rich absorption of experiences that I arrive at this place in time, where my experience has great sway over the lives of young minds seeking to become designers. As such, the focus of my scholarship over the past 6 years has been in developing an understanding of the nature and process of how people become designers. This enterprise has had three legs: How does one educate people to be designers? What do designers do once they are educated? And, what if everyone learned to be designers? Over the past 6 months this has led to an offshoot of this core scholarship by playing with and implementing concepts through creative work and collaboration with others.

My teaching interest grows out of a desire to understand and share what it means to humanity to be a designer. Teaching also fuels a love of being a life long learner and absorbing something new each day. It is in the excitement of seeing a student light up when they have a breakthrough, the determination of picking themselves up and trying again when they have a setback and the joy of accomplishing something they never thought they could achieve. But, more than this teaching is an extension that has grown out of admiration and respect to the history, tradition and impact that designers before us have played in responding to and shaping society. It is for me a way to protect and perpetuate what I hold most dear: the core of skill, empathy and insight into what it means to have the soul of a designer. Lastly, I teach young designers to instill in them a will to create, a desire to become empowered through design and the drive to learn how to appreciate their own value and choose how they want to share this gift with the world.

As the Director of Product Design Program, it has been my privilege to create, develop, launch and now grow a new design program at the Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design (AWCoMAD) and Drexel University. It has also been my pleasure to work with and support the endeavors of my colleagues not just through participating in a diverse range of committees such as the Smart House Advisory Board but also through supporting and creating interdisciplinary collaborations and learning, such as guest lecturing in classes outside the college, reviewing senior mechanical engineering theses, offering space and equipment to students outside the program who want to collaborate with our product design students and most recently bring together both faculty and students from business, engineering and design in the creation of playground equipment for a local entrepreneur. Even more recently I have been helping the Office of Corporate Relations and Economic Development court strategic industry partners by sitting in on discussions of collaborations and sponsorships as well as touring visitors thorough our innovative design studios. My service is an extension of the nature of designers and the goals of the product design program to be big thinkers and conceptually minded, as seen by being asked to sit on the AWCoMAD strategic planning committee, or something as humble as helping a colleague who needs to print an object on a 3D printer. Service is and will remain central to the mission of the Product Design Program and our vision to be the hub for creative collaboration on and off campus.

Design Philosophy

Design is woven into every aspect of my life and action, it is inseparable from who I am and the reality of how I perceive and interact with the world around me. Philosophically, every human's outward act is an act of design and like Kranzberg's First Law of technology, it is neither good nor bad—nor is it neutral. This is how I perceive design. It is then up to each designer to mediate or influence which side design takes. My influence is in getting others to understand this, and when this manifests itself though my creative enterprise it is about creating joy.

I have found over the course of the tenure process that I am happiest and most personally rewarded when not looking inward at my own personal accomplishments but when looking outward to all the others I have influenced, supported and inspired from my life of being a passionate, humble designer. As such, my work, scholarship and service is about the investment in growth and empowerment of others measured the outcomes they achieve. I speak through the program; I speak though the students; and I speak though those with whom I collaborate. The designer soul in me is not one that toots my own horn or even takes glory for the things I do but rather revels in the work that flows from what I have enabled.

"Glaser's vision reaches beyond pedagogy. He is a teacher, but over and above that, he is a man with strong conceptions of the future of design—the way it should be, and the way it could go if designers don't take the reins. He has empowered us as students not only to sketch and render and perform, but to work in an interdisciplinary context and to make our own opportunities. He taught us to reach out beyond the bubble of product design and learn aggressively, and to take control of our worth as designers and make something more of it. He has pushed every single one of us to do and be more and better. Our professors may have taught us skills, but Glaser has taught us how to be wholly ourselves." - Alexa Forney, Drexel Alumna, B.S. in Product Design