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Graphic Design
Graduation year 2015
Final year / Collaborative
RISD / 2015

MULTIPLICITY
a design reader

Narrative Biographies

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I am a multimedia artist, a researcher and a curator who works to understand the construction of black cultural expression in mainstream media. My aim as an artist is to identify patterns within language, both visual and articulated, as a source from which I can re-frame how American audiences interact and consume black culture today. My work as a researcher, heavily relies upon close observation of racial tension, historical context and socio-political frameworks that impact the identity and representation of black people. As a curator, I am instrumental in arranging shared spaces for dialogue and fostering relationships with collaborators. In performing each of these roles, I become a catalyst in any given environmental space. At times these roles blur, and I become an instigator, a narrator, and a facilitator all working simultaneously to create new meaning and context. As my work broadens to encompass more ethnographic research, I am fascinated to see how identity formation is influenced in visual languages of other cultures. How do the cultural symbols function or challenge dominant perspectives? This question is firmly rooted in my artistic practice and guides my deeper explorations of into cultural identity and the complex ways in which it manifests itself.

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My work researches how we look at cultural representations in social spaces. This is in part motivated by a lifelong desire to understand and have an authentic exchange with cultures other than my own. Living in complex urban environments combines this desire with an acute awareness of the boundaries formed by dominant standards, standards that impact me as a queer woman. I feel strongly that my role as a designer is to turn these issues into opportunities to prompt new insights. My initial approach is to use disruption, user participation, and juxtaposition as tactics for code-switching existing visual language. One of my primary research methods is to collect and survey cultural signifiers in public spaces—neighborhood signage vernacular or online dialogues. Collected assets are then reframed through systematic design moves such as chance operation to invite new associations. I am interested in seeing how this trans-disciplinary methodology translates into my pedagogy as I ask students to consider new ways to use existing design tools in collaborative models. It is the exchange—as we learn from each other—that will foster a dynamic viewpoint in my future work.

Project Short Description

How can we, as future design educators, prepare students to become critical designers who are able to actuate a broader global perspective? We plan to travel to Buenos Aires, where we will engage with two graphic design programs in a cultural exchange that explores design collaboration as a dialogic tool.

Project Narrative

As we prepare to complete our graduate studies at the Rhode Island School of Design, this a key question we are asking ourselves as design practitioners. We believe that a strong graphic design education should be inclusive of all cultures. As students in American design programs, we have noticed that much of the international graphic design history we have learned is primarily rooted in Western-European tradition with occasional integration of Asian and Middle Eastern influences. Latin American precedents are noticeably absent from our graphic design canon. With this in mind, we are interested in initiating a cross-cultural exchange with art and design communities from Latin America, through collaboration and documentation.

We want to step out of our existing environment to look at how other practitioners are mediating culture, locality and globality in sites other than our own. In our research of thriving artistic centers in Latin America—Mexico City, Havana, Medellín, and Buenos Aires have come into focus. At this phase of our research, we will begin our inquiry with Buenos Aires. We have researched this city's rich cultural and artistic tradition, as well as experimental philosophies in their contemporary art and graphic design community. Now we want to immerse ourselves in it, to learn all we can about its attributes and ask ourselves how their visual culture intersects with our own.

Through colleagues here at RISD, we have initiated relationships with Universidad Torcuato Di Tella and Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP), both in Buenos Aires. Ines Katzenstein, founding director of the Art Department at Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, has welcomed us to come experience their departmental focus on reflection and group exchange. We are also in contact with Professors Mariela D'Angelo and and Martin Hoare of Facultad de Bellas Artes at UNLP. There, we would connect with the Visual Communication students and faculty in the classrooms and studios .

For four weeks this summer, during their school year, we would conduct interviews, take photographs, sit in on classes, and conduct an intensive collaborative design workshop with students and faculty. For this project, small teams will create content for a reader. We will ask students to consider cultural representation as a topic, and respond to that openly in

a reflective essay that considers hierarchy, perspectives, dialogue, and encounter. We will also get to know the neighborhoods of La Plata. There will be visits to graphic design studios and contemporary art venues. Publications and other ephemera of the city will be collected. The inclusion of the greater visual vernacular will tell a more complete story of Buenos Aires graphic design. We believe this approach of inserting ourselves into the local experience will offer a rich, informative experience that activates an authentic design culture exchange. The process concludes with the results being captured in a publication that will include work-shop outcomes and our own research and reflection. The publication will be accessible as a downloadable PDF or printed on demand (i.e. Newspaper Club).

Following Buenos Aires, we would like to continue this inquiry in other artistic centers in Latin America and additional sites absent from our design canon. This reader will act as a dialogic tool and model from which to activate relationships in future site investigations. We recognize that our outcome will not accurately portray all complexities within one location, but we think that fostering an open dialogue via site visits can build a stronger design community and positively impact our practice as designers and educators.

Work Samples – Kelly A. Walters

The Brands of Hip Hop are a collection of collaged posters inspired by iconic fashion brands mentioned in hip hop song lyrics dating from 1986–2014. Recognizing that these iconic logos have a heavy presence in black culture, I was curious to see how these cultural artifacts influenced black representation. By locating the fashion trends in hip hop music, I learned which iconic symbols have remained the same or have drastically changed over time. Each poster is 22" x 36."
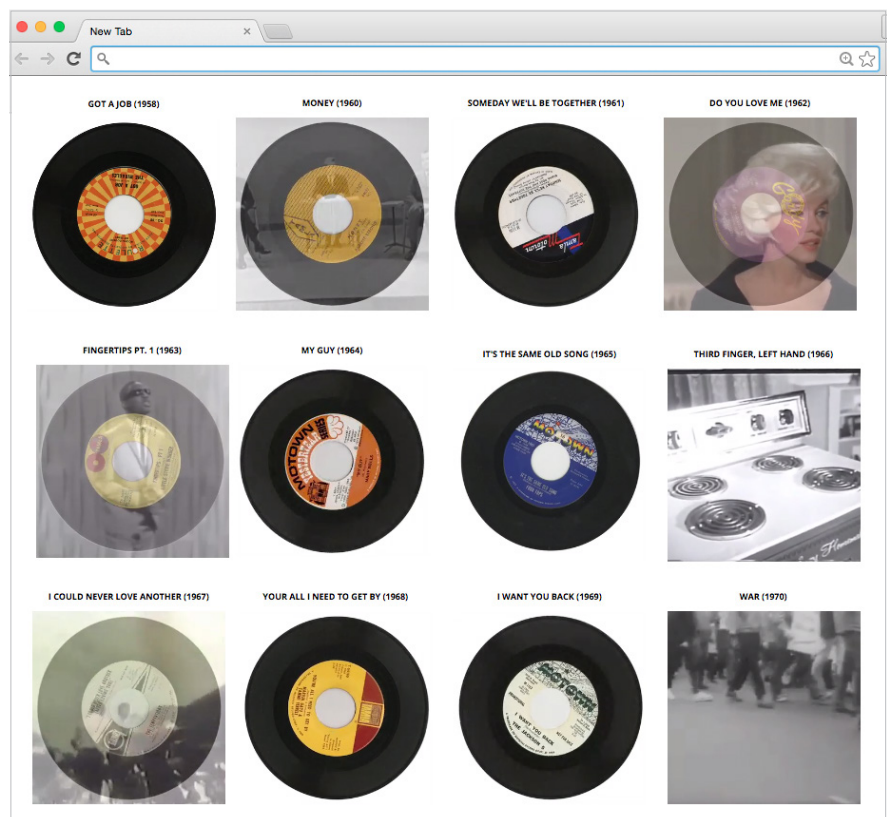
Work Samples

Viewpoint is a board game designed to examine an individual's response to simplified visual symbols. Each player is given two sets of black and white cards. One set uses only pronouns (I, He, She, Me, You, etc.) while the other side uses only oppositional words (Alone, There, Beside, Among, etc.). The object of the game is to have both players interpret the visual card from their opponent, and put down a corresponding word on a blank square on their board. During the game, the players engage with a third set of cards (War, Community, Government) which steer the trajectory of play and influence the player's selection of cards. By the end the game, both players generate 5 sets of cards used to prompt a discussion for comparison.
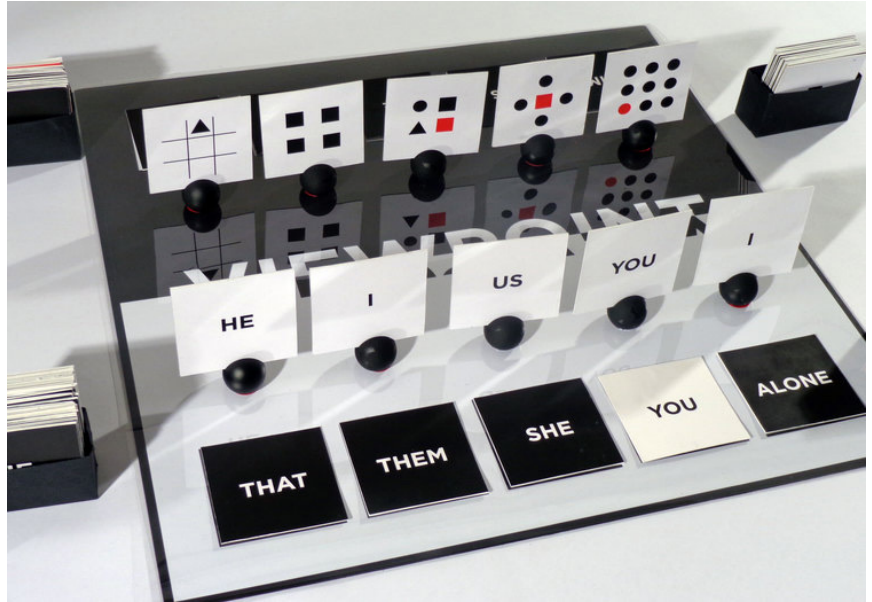
In a website that I developed last Spring, I created an interactive online space where users could engage with Motown music from the 1960s. Initially, stemming from biographical research about musician/producer Smokey Robinson, the project eventually evolved into the development of a visual archive spanning the full decade. As I learned more about the creation of Motown Records, Berry Gordy and the early beginnings of this record label, I became immersed in the time period and the lives of the various artists. Learning about their pathways to success or failure in the music industry, influenced the formation of this website. By combining found footage with revolving records, I attempted to indicate what the cultural environment was like during this era.

Click the following link to watch the video:
https://vimeo.com/92420306

Work Samples

SECTION 1

Time – 15 minutes
10 Questions

Use your answer key provided to answer the questions in the section.

Directions:
1. Read the sentence.
2. Choose the word or set of words that, when inserted in the sentence, best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

You got 15 minutes. Just know that all these multiple-choice questions are scored the same way: a nod of approval for every right answer, and a sideye for every wrong one. Don't worry tho, no points are subtracted for answers left blank. Got that No. 2 pencil? Good. Cause you'll need fill in the entire circle on the answer sheet darkly and completely (no lie). If you change your response, erase it as completely as possible. Relax man. No seriously tho, chill.

1. There ain't no doubt that Larry is a genuine -------. Brotherman be tellin' stories that fascinate his listeners. Holla!

(A) braggart   (B) dilettante   (C) pilferer
(D) prevaricator   (E) raconteur

2. The novel's protagonist, a pearl diver, naïvely expects that the buyers will compete among themselves to pay him the best price for his pearl, but istead they ------- to ------- him.

(A) venture...reward   (B) pretend...praise   (C) conspire...reimburse
(D) refuse...cheat   (E) collude...swindle

3. Ramona done neva visit Niagara Falls, but she done got her life ------- through the description of others.

(A) vicariously   (B) heedlessly   (C) innocuously
(D) mystically   (E) voluminously

4. Members of the research team were initially so adversarial that ------- seemed impossible; the project's inauspicious start made its final success all the more ------- .

(A) concentration...incidental   (B) disagreement...incongruous
(C) collaboration...predictable   (D) hostility...dazzling
(E) cooperation...remarkable

5. Now my gurl got it in hur head that those words "bug" and "insect" are -------, but I was like nah gurl, dat last word be talkin' bout ------- insect group.

(A) parallel...an identical (B) precise...an exact (C) interchangeable...a particular
(D) exclusive...separate (E) useful...a useless

6. Although the administration repeatedly threatened to use its authority in order to ------- the student protestors into submission, they refused to be intimidated.

(A) ease   (B) delude   (C) cajole
(D) bully   (E) nudge

7. Ain'tnobodygottime for that Joshua's radical ideas. Dem just too ------- man.

(A) heretical   (B) meticulous   (C) precise
(D) incoherent   (E) sagacious

8. Our mayor's motives are suspect I tell you! When you gonna recognize the ------ statements in his "so called" ------- speeches?

(A) insightful...astute   (B) partisan...callous   (C) cordial...hostile
(D) duplicitous...candid   (E) cunning...surreptitious

9. That girl? She a -------. She be writin' at home, isolating herself, and shunnin' errbody. I don't mess wit her.

(A) a loner   (B) a miser   (C) a connoisseur
(D) a conspirator   (E) an ingenue

10. The addition of dem descriptive details to the basic information serves to ------- the book by producing a fuller account.

(A) invalidate   (B) objectify   (C) incite
(D) celebrate   (E) enrich

The Standard English Test Booklet (SET) was a collaborative project with fellow RISD student Oge Mora. Drawing inspiration from code-switching and code-meshing. Our test brings the African-American Vernacular into the standardized testing space and challenges its singular authoritarian voice, both in written language and visual mimicry. In our design of the SET we wanted to address how your knowledge of "Standard English" often determines your success on tests such as the SAT not necessarily your aptitude.
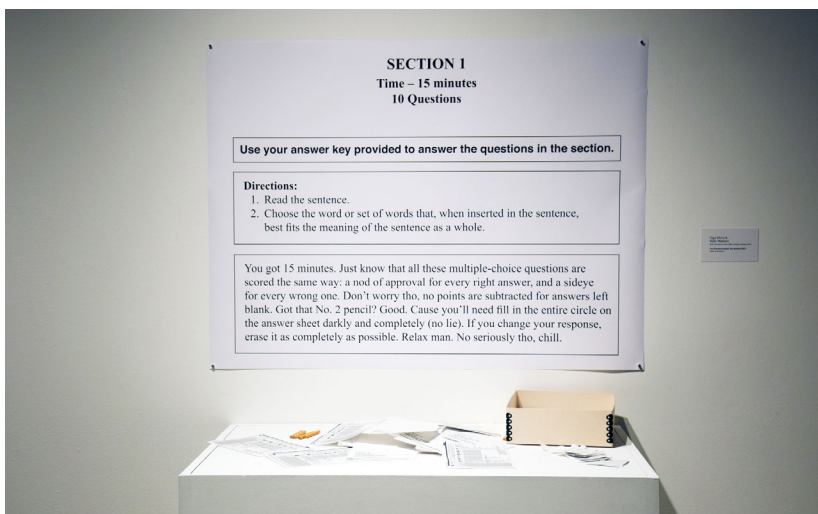
Work Samples

Kindred was an art exhibition that I co-curated with Tia Blassingame for the RISD Museum Gelman Gallery. Kindred presented a selection of art and design work from artists who identified as being of African descent. Over a 6 month period, we engaged in a process of meeting artists, conducting studio visits and selecting artwork. In our interviews with the students we gained a greater understanding of how race and identity informed and inspired the students' creative process. I also worked on the creation of the branding for the show, wall labels, posters, digital graphics, and supporting exhibition catalog. The exhibition closed with a panel discussion with guest speakers, faculty and featured artists. The importance of having a panel discussion was to have the opportunity to share an art historical, cultural, and institutional context to the exhibit, and dive deeper into the themes explored within the show.

Work Samples – Christina A. Webb

4th Wave / Weekly Reader, 2014 is a weekly printout of articles that include "feminism". In this instance, the paper is per-forated so it can tear apart to become shareable flyers. This can also live online as printable content that will print as loose sheets.

The content organizing system is automated: the "scroll-ing" front side is only images at dowloaded size, related links and article titles. Text flows into set zones regard-less of what is cut off. The missing article text populates the back side in a more typical book format. The nature of webpage scrolling and ongoing news feeds give form to the perpetualism and intangibility of feminism. What patterns or complexities are revealed through chance arrangements over time?

Work Samples

Modes of Self-Publishing, 2014 is a course taught in collaboration with Minkyoung Kim MFA Graphic Design 2015, that explores:

• assembly—different systems
to compose content.

• collectivity—working with others to foster collective authorship.

• multiplicity—experimenting with
representations of one topic in a single
publication.

• distribution—pushing strategies of encounter.

click here for class website:
http://mofsp.risd.gd

Kiev, 2/20/14 2014 is online experience that allows users to sort and curate a collection of 1000s of Instagram and AP images that were posted during the 2014 uprising, labeled by username or photographer name. This intermixing crosses boundaries of authority to level authorship. What is the difference between pro and amateur shots and what becomes the dominant story?

https://vimeo.com/92420306
www.behance.net/gallery/15334439/image-of-kiev-22014
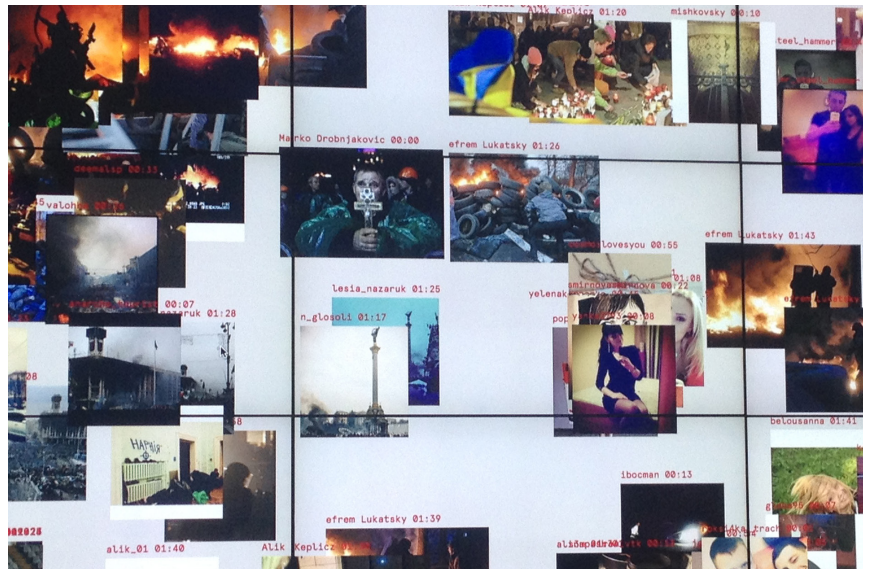
Work Samples

Yes, a Type Intervention, 2014 is photo-documentation of signage throughout Providence's neighborhoods in transition. It was that was redrawn digitally and remixed to tell something new. City identity, scale volume, and tension are explored. The result is a series of environmental installations, fabricated in dynamic contour-cut vinyl as a playful gesture to represent the complexity of the city demographics.

Above: Proposal for Installation on The Arcade, Downtown Providence, was approved, but not realized.
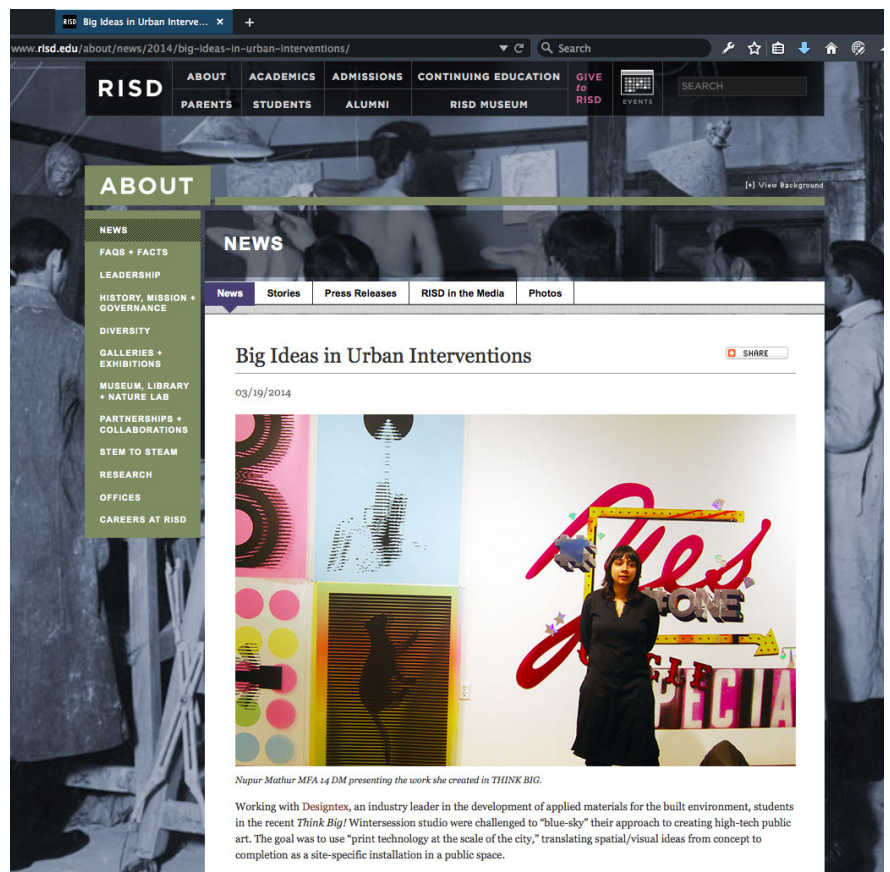
Work Samples
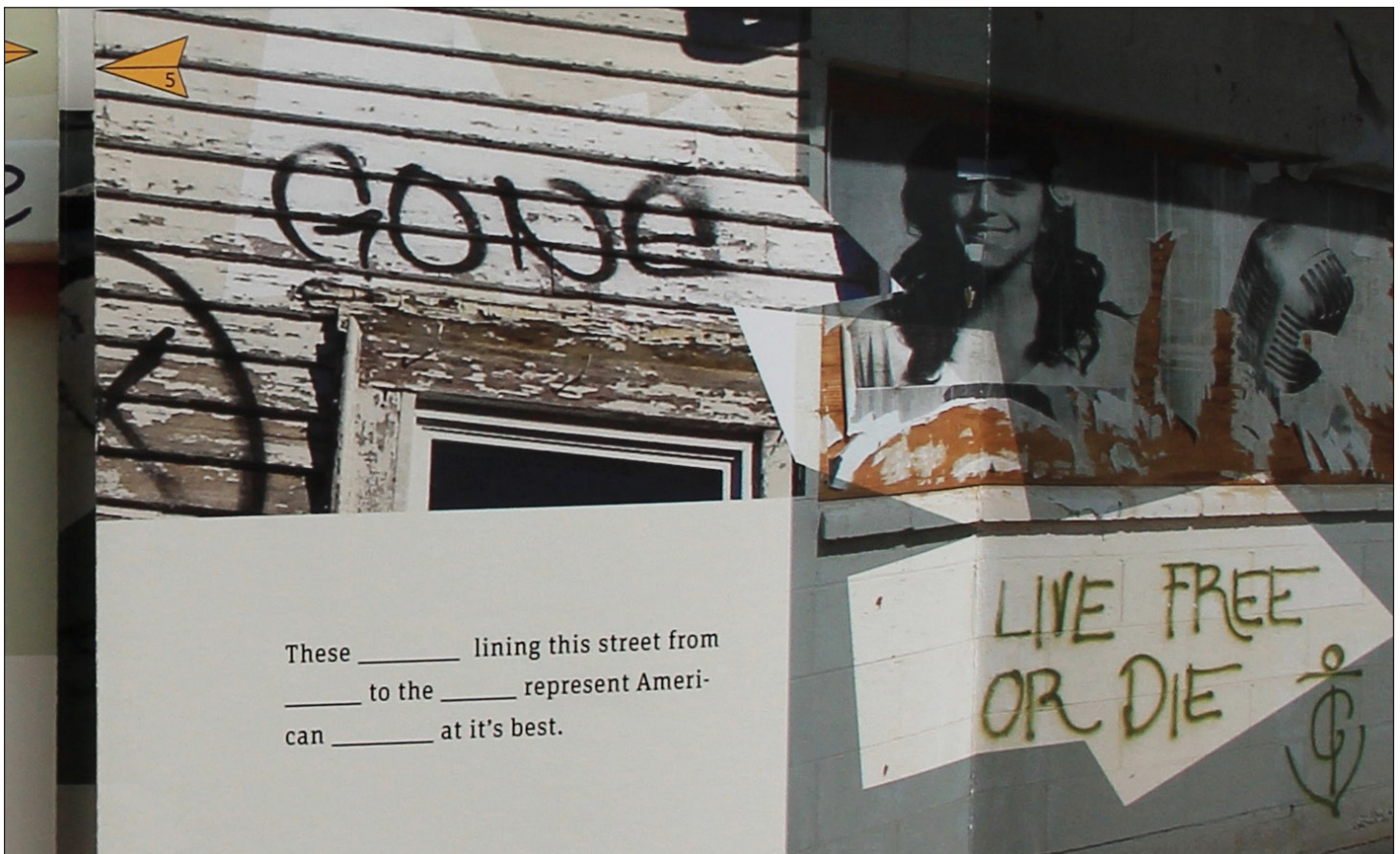
Destination, 2013 is a double accordion book that folds in multiple configurations. Users can recompose images of street typography that are captioned by text from an introduction to a museum exhibition celebrating manufacturing in America (left side) and text from city tourism sites. This acts as an unofficial city guide to the current conditions of overlooked, peripheral experiences.