Graduate Thesis

The thesis is an opportunity to enrich the field of design with an original contribution. It may exist as a written document, designed artifact, multimedia presentation or any combination of the above. Graduate thesis projects have covered a wide range of topics and reflect both the interests of the student and the concerns of the program with forward-looking investigations into the professional, technological and social questions facing the discipline. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the significant resources of the University to further their interests while extending the influence of design into the larger community. Recent topics for thesis projects have included the history of African-American design (Envisioning Black Aesthetics in Graphic Design), Asian “cute” design (Cute Culture), interactive journalism (Interactive Structures for Accessing News Online), explorations in typography and letter forms as they change over time, and design criteria (Analysis of the Holocaust Museum Across Design Media).

During the Spring Quarter of their first year, each student is responsible for developing a proposal and organizing a thesis committee. The committee must consist of at least two Design faculty, one of whom is the Chair. Students work closely with their Chair and committee throughout the project. In the final three quarters of study, degree candidates produce a substantial thesis document and/or exhibition that can be publicly presented. In addition, students are required to give a public presentation on their thesis prior to graduation.