<u>8-2 Final Project: Website Portfolio, Print-Ready Portfolio, and Professional Reflection</u>

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GRA-491: Graphic Design Portfolio

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"What feedback did you choose to incorporate into your print-ready portfolio and portfolio website? Discuss the importance of collaboration with regard to the improvement of your works."

Throughout the course of this class, there were many opportunities where I received extremely useful feedback that I was able to incorporate into my personal branding items, the digital web portfolio, and the print-ready portfolio. This feedback came from both my instructor as well as my classmates and has helped me to shape important elements to reach a comprehensible final product for all three projects. Specifically, the feedback that I have received has helped in improving the overall message of the items, the presentation of the refined works within the web and print portfolios, and the logical flow between the design pieces and their intended purpose.

Looking at the feedback I received from the branding items and portfolio website first, the first piece of feedback that I received came from my GRA-420 class, where my instructor not only helped me by giving me useful feedback on my brand logo, such as by suggesting I should combine elements from the three rough drafts I made of my brand logo to create a clean and stylistic brand identity, he also helped me add accessibility options to my website by suggesting key elements that needed to be tweaked to help the user's experience. Originally, this feedback was implemented by making sure that the images on the site were clickable, allowing the user to click on an image to enlarge the picture in a new tab. As I began refining the site for my GRA-491 class, however, I also added additional accessibility options to the site, such as by adding visual feedback on hoverable items (such as links, images, etc.) and tweaking the filtering system on the portfolio page to add specific clients or purposes the works belong to in the titles to make the works clear in terms of their main purpose.

I also received additional feedback within my GRA-491 that helped me shape my brand identity even further. Specifically, the feedback I received from both my instructor and my classmates focused mainly on the Graphic Jay brand logo and the typographic inconsistency between the "GJ" element of my logo and the "Graphic Jay" part of the logo. Due to this inconsistency, I decided it was best to drop the "Graphic Jay" part of the logo and just keep the abbreviated version as it fits more in line with both the typography used within the rest of my branding items as well as the black, white, and green color scheme. While I do retain the "Graphic Jay" element of the logo depending on the item (such as the business card and letterhead, for example) this element is mainly used as a supporting element for the rest of the piece it is applied to.

Lastly, the feedback I received from my instructor also pointed out to me that each piece should also have relevant details to help add context to the purpose of the work and help to improve the logical flow between pieces. I implemented this feedback using annotations, including who the piece was for, what I used to create the piece, the process of creating the piece, and how the piece can be used.

While I had not received feedback on my print portfolio at the time of this reflection, much of the feedback that I received on the previous elements I mentioned helped influence the layout and style of my print portfolio in several ways. Specifically, the feedback that I mostly focused on when creating my print portfolio was to logically present my work throughout my portfolio as well as create a natural flow between each section. Much like the article, *"Presenting Your Portfolio"*, states: "A well-structured portfolio has a beginning, a middle and an end. It should be a well-designed book that shows off your work in the best possible light. Samples should be clean and removable." (Geissbuhler, n.d.).

Much like it is shown within my portfolio, I achieved this by adjusting the layout, color scheme, and adding both mockups and flat designs for each section to connect closer to the client or purpose the piece was made for. For example, within the Amethyst Bay section of the portfolio, the color scheme is changed from my Graphic Jay color palette to fit more in theme with the client's brand identity, focusing more on the teal and purple color palette to add connectivity to the brand. I also incorporated parts of each logo to act as bullet points for the brief run-down of the piece as well as for the page markers at the bottom of the page to further add to this connection (such as using the crystal from the Amethyst Bay logo, the tomato from the Pasta Amore logo, or the vector image of the baked bread from the Upper Crust Bakery logo, for example).

This feedback and collaboration from both my classmates and my instructor played an immensely important role in shaping how these items were formed, allowing me to create a comprehensive portfolio that fit my specific style and voice while also providing a clear and understandable presentation of each piece.

"How will you apply what you have learned to your future academic and/or professional life?"

Throughout my GRA-491 class (and throughout my academic program as a whole), there have been many aspects of graphic design and media arts that I have learned that will have a major impact on my professional life. Whether that be through the importance of utilizing collaboration and feedback to improve my work, learning how to give and take constructive criticism to gain new perspectives on how to improve my work, presenting my work effectively, or using ethical consideration when creating and presenting my work all will play a major part as I move forward into the professional field.

Looking at collaboration, for example, according to the web article, *"The power of collaboration in Design"*, collaboration plays a major role in the improvement of one's work in a variety of ways and helps you to grow as a designer. Specifically, the article describes three main ways collaboration helps to accomplish this. The first is that collaboration helps you to escape tunnel vision when working on an art piece and allows you to gain a fresh perspective from other people. The article states that: "Collaboration enables designers to expand their horizons by simply hearing out other people's ideas. Very often, discussing your designs with someone helps us see obvious options we must have missed." (Mamtani, 2019).

The second strength of collaboration comes from working with other people and combining the strengths of your skillsets. Not only does this help in gaining different perspectives on a certain design or project, but it also allows one to learn from others and apply it to their own growth as a designer. On this, the article states: "A balanced team of designers working together allows us to not only perceive strengths of our peers, but also learn from them. The design community has always benefitted when its members have shared their knowledge rather than confining it to themselves. We learn more not just by watching tutorials and reading content online, but by looking at designs made by real people and understanding the thought process that goes behind creating those designs." (Mamtani, 2019).

Lastly, collaboration with others allows for an environment that encourages the exchange of ideas and constructive criticism to help improve upon design pieces. Much like I experienced in my academic program, feedback and the exchange of ideas have helped me gain new perspectives that help in the improvement of my work that I wouldn't have seen working by myself. This environment also pushes designers to go past their comfort zones and try new ideas and methods to help them grow as an artist. As the article states: "Your team-mate can end up

being your problem solver, and maybe even your biggest critic. Even before testing out your designs with the Product Owners or Users, it is a good practice to run it by someone to get in their feedback around it. When done properly and positively, team critiquing can work wonders for your designs." (Mamtani, 2019).

"*What are your goals for your professional life?*"

When it comes to my goals within my professional life, I would like to continue using what I learn during my time at SNHU and my graphic design program and apply it to my other fields of interest, such as music, animation, and video editing. Specifically, I would like to use what I learned here to focus more on branding and web design. Alongside this, I would also like to go into product branding as well, as the experience from creating the branding items for the Pasta Amore and Upper Crust Bakery brands would allow me to apply what I have learned within this field as well and allow me to improve upon my skills.

"*Professionally, reflect on the skills, abilities, knowledge, and dispositional requirements you have displayed and will need to display when working with peers, clients, and so forth. How do you expect to build and apply these skills moving forward?*"

When it comes to the skills, abilities, knowledge, and dispositional requirements that I will have to display within the professional field of graphic design, I believe it comes down to several skills and abilities that will not only help improve my growth as a designer but also improve my collaborative skills with both peers and clients.

The first skill that I will have to portray within this field would be my ability to receive and give constructive and effective feedback. As the article, *"How to Give and Receive a Good Design Critique"*, states, "A good designer will need to learn to take the feedback from their

peers, clients, and bosses to solve a particular design problem. Critiques will also help you broaden your communication skills as a designer, as there is always the opportunity to articulate why you did what you did or to better explain your idea to the reviewer if they don't see it as clearly as you do." (Lawless & Shannon, 2015). Much like I previously described in the first question, gaining feedback is an immensely useful tool to help you grow as a designer and helps to improve upon elements of your work that you might not catch due to tunnel vision. Much like receiving feedback, however, giving feedback is equally important as it provides a space for you to think critically about a given work and allows you to provide crucial information to the creator about what worked well in a design while also providing your perspective on how the designer could improve elements of a piece to reach a clean and comprehensible final product. For example, providing suggestions that the designer can act on to solve a potential problem of a piece plays a major role in effectively providing feedback, as it allows the designer to gain a new perspective and add or fix elements to help improve the overall piece. The article, *"How to Survive a Critique: A Guide to Giving and Receiving Feedback"*, states: "Perhaps the best solution is to first point out the problem, then offer several possible solutions, hedging your feedback with phrases such as "it might not work in this case" or "this is just one idea."" (Cheng, n.d).

To be effective in giving and receiving feedback (as well as being effective within other areas of the graphic design field), one of the other main major skills that are necessary to have would be communication skills. As I stated previously, within the graphic design field, collaboration and feedback are key to creating the best possible piece you can make as it allows for different perspectives and ideas to be applied to your work. Communication with your peers and clients plays a big part in the effectiveness of these two elements. According to the article,

"10 Essential Computer Graphic Designer Skills", it states that: "Communication skills are important in graphic design as it allows designers to explain a message or concept to the public or their team. For example, they can use this skill when designing artwork with a team and help their team members understand what their idea for the piece is all about." (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022).

Lastly, I believe that a strong knowledge of both the principles and elements of design will play a major part in the professional field of graphic design in many ways. According to the article, *"Elements of Design: Understanding the 7 Elements of Design"*, the elements of design are comprised of 7 fundamental aspects that allow designers to create a certain mood for a piece, emphasize certain elements within the piece, or cause certain feelings and emotions within the viewer (MasterClass, 2021). Much like I laid out within my own portfolio and refined works, the elements of design play a major part in how a design piece will turn out and are usually comprised of many different elements interacting with each other all at once. Whether this be through using the elements of Color and Value to set a tone or mood for a specific piece or using Space and Shape to bring attention to a specific focal point of your piece, the elements of design help a designer nail down many aspects of a piece to help make it attention-grabbing for the view and tell a specific message through the work.

Likewise, just as the elements of design play a major part in graphic design, the elements of design also work together with the principles of design as well. While the elements of design help to add the basic structure and style to a piece, the principles of design help make these elements cohesive with one another and help add a logical and natural flow to a given art piece. According to the article, *"Breaking Down the Principles of Design (with Infographic)"*, the twelve principles of design: "…influence the way users view and interact with a design. When

implemented purposefully, they can be used to create an emotional impact on the user, as well as enhance the overall user experience." (Chapman, n.d.)

Ultimately, when considering how I will continue to build upon these skills as I move forward into the professional field of graphic design, I believe there are many ways I could do this. I believe that I can continue to improve my communication skills by working together with other artists and collaborating on projects as this will allow me to effectively explain my work to peers and clients. Alongside this, improving my communication skills will also help in improving how I receive and give feedback. In terms of giving feedback, I can improve this skill by adjusting my feedback of the work to include potential solutions to a certain problem, highlight parts of the design that worked well and explain why, and give ways to further improve upon a design based on who their target audience is and what the purpose of the piece is. In terms of receiving feedback, I can improve upon this skill by taking feedback and looking at my design through different lenses and perspectives. Specifically, using the feedback and applying any methods suggested to help improve upon the work and see if it helps to improve the overall look and message of my design.

Lastly, I can improve upon my understanding and application of the elements and principles of design by learning from other designs and artists to learn more about what aspects caused the piece to work well. Alongside this, going outside of my comfort zone and pushing to use a combination of both the elements and principles of design and testing the aspects on various mediums (such as logo design, advertising, branding, etc.) and seeing how mixing aspects provide different results.

"How will you maintain ethical principles and incorporate social responsibility in order to advance the graphic design industry and/or create artifacts (products or designs) that leave positive lasting effects on people and societies?"

When it comes to maintaining ethical principles and incorporating social responsibility that leaves a positive lasting impact on people and society, I believe I can maintain this in many ways. Specifically, when it comes to social responsibility and ethical principles, it is important to take into consideration the social and cultural norms of people within society to avoid causing harm through my work, whether that be through imagery or the overall message of the piece. According to the, *"AIGA Standards of Professional Practice",* this relates directly to "*The Designer's Responsibility to the Public"* section of the professional practice standards, specifically relating to section 6.1: "A professional designer shall avoid projects that will result in harm to the public." & 6.3: "A professional designer shall respect the dignity of all audiences and shall value individual differences even as they avoid depicting or stereotyping people or groups of people in a negative or dehumanizing way. A professional designer shall strive to be sensitive to cultural values and beliefs and engages in fair and balanced communication design that fosters and encourages mutual understanding." (AIGA, n.d.).

Alongside this, being aware of social and cultural norms also relates strongly to *"The Designer's Responsibility to Society and the Environment"* section of AIGA's professional practice standards, as it states under 7.3 that: "A professional designer shall consider environmental, economic, social and cultural implications of his or her work and minimize the adverse impacts." (AIGA, n.d.) Additionally, I believe a focus on improving readability and accessibility within one's work also plays a major role in leaving a positive lasting effect on people and society. Much like I strived for in my web and print portfolio, adding elements (such

as font size, visual feedback, and font color, for example) can play a big part in both including and improving the user experience for everyone, regardless of the medium.

"Reflect on the significance of the capstone in relation to your own experience at SNHU. What connections do you see between your capstone and your academic program?"

Looking back at my experience at SNHU and the relation my capstone had with the previous classes within my program, there were several connections that I can make in terms of how the capstone tests your working knowledge on what you learn from other classes. For example, looking back at the creation of our web portfolio and branding items from GRA-410 and GRA-420, much of what we learned about developing our own voice and style within our items was enhanced further by our capstone class. Within our capstone, the focus of creating not only elements to help further this aspect of our web portfolio and branding items, but to also create a cohesive style and connection throughout all of our work, whether that be through the branding items, our 10 works to refine, or our print and web portfolios, each aspect of our capstone worked to improve how we present this work as a whole. Alongside this, the capstone also connects back to the graphic design program as a whole due to its push to make us think more critically about our work, how we use collaboration to improve upon our work, and to take ethical and societal considerations when creating the work.

"Overall, what was your capstone experience like?"

Overall, I really enjoyed going through the graphic design capstone and it helped me learn a lot in discovering my own unique design style and voice. Alongside this, going through the capstone's case studies pushed me to think more critically about my work, allowed me to think about what principles and elements of design I use in my work and how they interact with

each other, gain a better understanding of the feedback I received help improve my work as a whole, and where evidence of craftsmanship and knowledge of key design elements are present and where I can improve to create a cohesive project.

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