Art 446 – Graphic Design

Project: Poster

Proposal: March 23
Final critique: April 2

“I realize that what I love about the poster, and what defines poster-ness for me, is the way it is conceptually attached to a motivating force — a product, or some event that will happen or has happened on a particular date and at a particular place. Temporal and physical fixity are integral parts of the visual language of the poster, anchors that help prevent it from floating into the ether of art. Ultimately it's the tension between those anchors and the tug of the designer's artistic ambition that produces the powerful, beautiful poster.

But the real essence of a poster, rather than an artwork, I think, is the invisible but palpable contract between a designer, the commissioning institution, organization or company that funds a poster's distribution, and the viewing public who engages with it. The designer agrees to make something to promote this product, advance this cause, project this message because he believes in it and, because of that, often makes it more beautiful than it needs to be. The client promises to produce as many copies of the poster as she can afford to and to circulate them in the most strategic ways she knows. Lastly, it is understood that if the passerby is persuaded and seduced by the poster, they will carry out whatever action it calls for. It is this unseen tripartite contract, and all the conflict it brings with it that gives the poster its urgency and reason for being. Without that tension, the poster ends at the wall.”


The poster is a traditional piece of public art, commercial or otherwise, but as Twemlow points out in her essay, the poster’s audience has shrunk in the age of television, the Internet, and viral marketing. Nonetheless, the poster is still a point at which several different influences and interests come together; the artist; the client; the subject matter; the source imagery used in the poster itself. The relationships between these things, all of which pre-exist the poster, come together in a variety of different ways.
The brief

Create a poster for the 2009 Carolina Film & Video Festival (which has just happened). This is a full-size one-sheet poster, 24 x 36”.

Since this is a hypothetical poster for a festival that has already occurred, you should feel free to create whatever design you wish. Respond to the subject matter and the images you choose to work with; don’t try to second-guess the client’s wishes.

This is the festival’s description, from its website:

The Carolina Film & Video Festival not only strives to give emerging and independent filmmakers their first break— hopefully a springboard to future success—but also to bring the UNCG and Greensboro communities great films not otherwise available. To meet these goals, our program includes animated, narrative, documentary, and experimental films ranging from 2 minutes to 2 hours in length, and created by student and independent filmmakers from around the globe…Also, to demonstrate our commitment to North Carolina filmmakers, CFVF includes a designated North Carolina category.

Thus the festival itself has several goals:
- To act as a showcase for young professionals-to-be, who would like to make feature films in the future.
- To present independent and experimental movies that might not otherwise get a screening in North Carolina.
- To show off the work of North Carolina filmmakers.

Added to that are some larger concerns:
- North Carolina has been host to movie productions in the past, for filmmakers based in Hollywood and New York, and it would like to be again.
- NC and the Piedmont have been struggling to redefine its economy after the waning of the textile and furniture industries. There has been talk of building a “knowledge-based” economy, in which the Triad produces culture-producers. You are a part of that, as artists and designers, and so is the Carolina Film & Video Festival.

How will your poster present this festival? As essentially Carolinian, as cutting-edge, as indie-film cool? Who is the audience for the poster, and what effect should the poster have on them (make locals buy tickets, convince Hollywood that North Carolina is cool)?
Optional extras
For extra credit, you can create a secondary piece of design for the festival (a postcard, flyer, motion graphic, etc.). This should carry the basic design over from the poster in some way; the two pieces of collateral should work independently, but be obviously related in some way.

Required text (for poster):

2009 Carolina Film & Video Festival

February 25-28
Elliot University Center, UNCG
Carousel Luxury Cinemas

Awards - Carousel Luxury Cinemas
Saturday, February 28

For information call 336.334.4197 or visit us at carolinafilmandvideofestival.org
(the wording of this sentence can change if you want, but the phone number and URL must be on the poster)

Technical specifications:

poster
One-sheet poster size: 24x36”
Semi-gloss or glossy paper

Optional secondary media:

flyer
8.5x11”
grayscale/black & white
photocopiable

billboard
proportion: 12:7 (48 by 14 feet)
If you choose this, do a mockup only.

motion graphic
15 seconds
sound, no voiceover