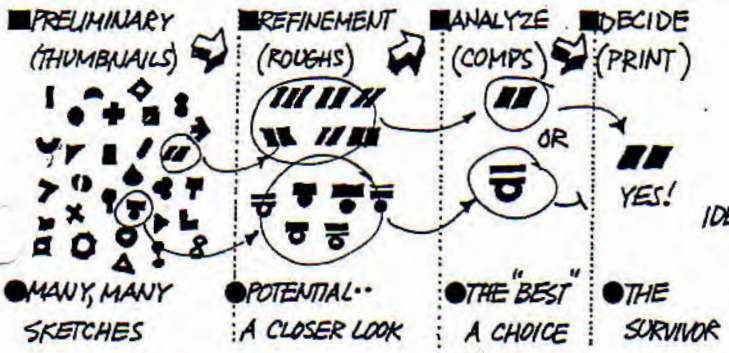
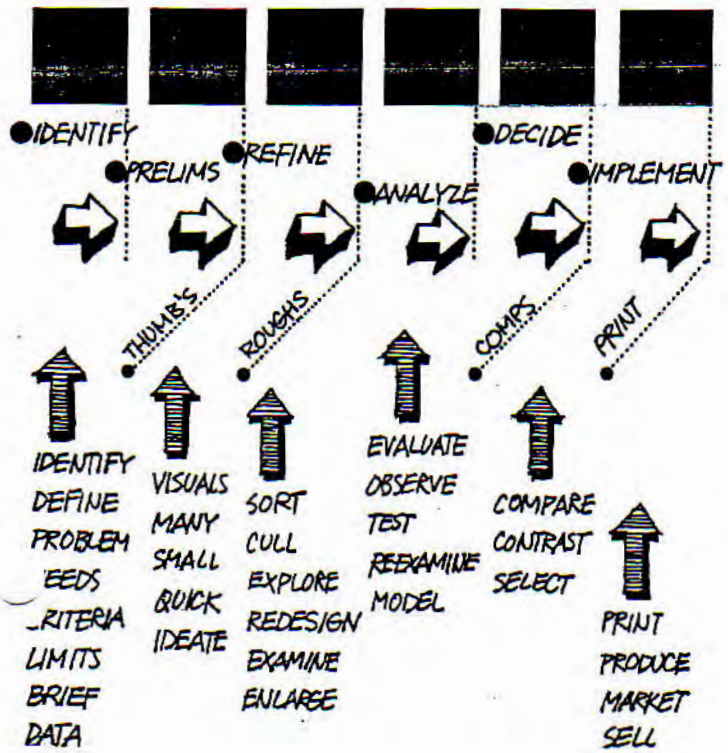
PROCESS

THE DESIGN PROCESS CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS MAKING A COLOR CHOICE OR AS COMPLEX AS FORMATTING A SERIES OF SCIENTIFIC TEXTBOOKS. IT CAN RANGE FROM SELECTING A TYPEFACE TO DESIGNING A GRAPHIC CONTROL DISPLAY FOR A MASSIVE WATER CONTROL PROJECT. ABOUT THE ONLY THING CONSTANT IN GRAPHIC PROBLEMS IS THE FACT THAT EACH PROBLEM HAS UNIQUE DIFFERENCES. YET CERTAIN COMMONALITIES DO HELP DESIGNERS TO STRUCTURE THEIR ATTACK ON A PROBLEM.

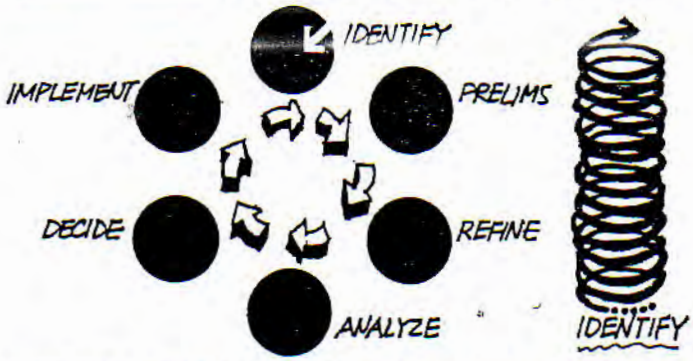
★ALTERNATE SOLUTIONS · ANY PROBLEM HAS AN [redacted] INFINITE NUMBER OF POSSIBLE VISUAL SOLUTIONS. IF WE CAN ACCEPT THIS FACT, AND CAN GENERATE VISUAL ALTERNATIVES, A GOOD DEAL OF OUR DESIGN ACTIVITY CAN INVOLVE MAKING VISUAL CHOICES.



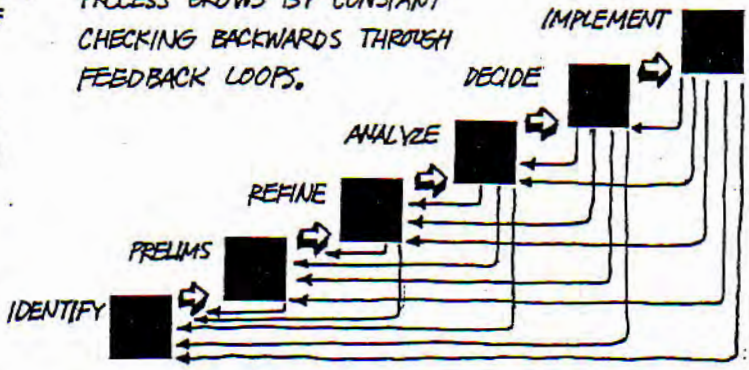
★LINEAR PROCESS · ONE STAGE FOLLOWS ANOTHER IN [redacted] A STRAIGHT LINE.



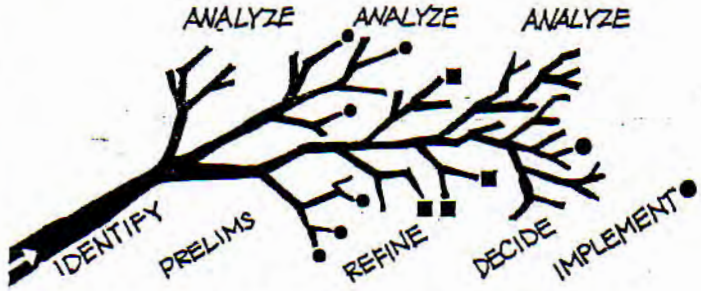
★CYCLIC PROCESS · AFTER PROBLEM IDENTITY, PROCESS [redacted] MOVES IN CIRCLE OR LIKE COIL SPRING.



★FEEDBACK PROCESS · LOOKING BACKWARD HELPS THE [redacted] PROCESS ALONG. CONCURRENT PROGRESS. PROCESS GROWS BY CONSTANT CHECKING BACKWARDS THROUGH FEEDBACK LOOPS.



★BRANCHING PROCESS · IDEA GROWS LIKE ROOT OR [redacted] BRANCH. ANALYSIS AT EACH STAGE.



★PRIORITY PROCESS · IN THE DESIGN PROCESS, THE [redacted] ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIORITIES IS ESSENTIAL. DESIGNERS MUST BE ABLE TO JUDGE AND GAUGE THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS AS THEY RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER. PRIORITIES SET THE FUNCTIONAL AND VISUAL CRITERIA IN COMMUNICATIONS.

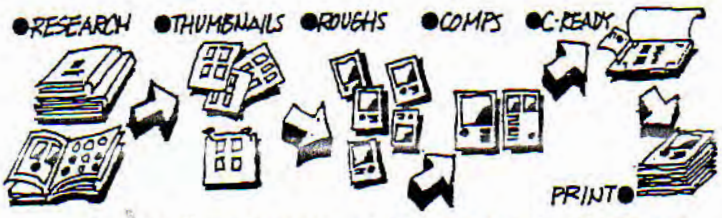
STAGES

THE DESIGN/REPRODUCTION PROCESS NORMALLY PROGRESSES THROUGH A SERIES OF DISTINCT STAGES OR STEPS. THERE ARE SITUATIONS WHERE SEQUENCE VARIES SLIGHTLY, OR A STAGE IS OMITTED.

1 RESEARCH · AFTER A VISUAL PROBLEM HAS BEEN POSED, THE DESIGNER NEEDS TO DEVELOP A PROGRAM FOR ATTACKING THE PROBLEM. APPROPRIATE RESEARCH STARTS HERE. AUDIENCE, FORMATS, BUDGETS, AND TIME CONSTRAINTS ARE EXAMINED. PERHAPS A BRIEF OR PROPOSAL IS PREPARED IN WRITTEN FORM, RE-DEFINING THE PROBLEM BASED ON LITERATURE AND MARKET SEARCHES. A PRELIMINARY IDEA OF INDIVIDUAL OR TEAM APPROACH IS FORMULATED. THIS MIGHT BE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT STAGE IN THE ENTIRE PROCESS BECAUSE EFFECTIVE RESEARCH WILL OFTEN NEARLY SOLVE THE PROBLEM. SOLID RESEARCH REDUCES DESIGN TIME AND SERVES TO FOCUS ON THE ESSENCE OF A VISUAL PROBLEM.

2 THUMBNAILS · THESE PRELIMINARY IDEA SKETCHES ARE THE FIRST TRANSLATION OF RESEARCH INTO VISUAL FORM. WHEN DESIGNERS DO THUMBNAILS, THEY "THINK WITH THEIR PENCILS." THUMBNAILS ALLOW DESIGNERS TO EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS, AND COMPARE THEM. THESE SKETCHES ARE ONLY FOR THE DESIGNER AND ART DIRECTOR, NOT FOR THE CLIENT. SMALL, FAST, AND APPROXIMATE, THUMBNAILS DO NOT ALLOW DETAIL TO GET IN THE WAY OF SOLID "BIG IDEAS." EFFECTIVE THUMBNAIL TECHNIQUE COMES WITH PRACTICE.... ITS IMPOSSIBLE TO GET TOO FAST OR TOO PROLIFIC. THE BEST DESIGNERS DO THE BEST AND FASTEST THUMBNAILS.

3 ROUGHS · THESE ARE "REFINED THUMBNAILS," LARGER AND MORE DETAILED, WITH TYPE ROUGHED IN POSITION. THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF ROUGHS IS TO MORE CLOSELY EXAMINE PROMISING THUMBNAILS BY TESTING COLOR, TYPE, AND ILLUSTRATIVE ALTERNATIVES. ROUGHS ARE NOT TO BE SEEN BY THE CLIENT. THEY ARE USED TO PREDICT AND TEST WHETHER A "G IDEA" IS FEASIBLE. SOMETIMES ROUGHS ARE MITTED FROM THE DESIGN PROCESS. OCCASIONALLY SKETCHES WILL BE HYBRIDS, VERY DIFFICULT TO CLASSIFY. MANY THREE-DIMENSIONAL ROUGHS ARE USED TO CHECK SHAPES OF PACKAGES, SIGNS, AND EXHIBITS.



4 "COMPS": COMPREHENSIVES ARE FINAL SKETCHES OR MODELS AND ARE PRESENTED TO THE CLIENT. FROM THEM THE CLIENT MAKES A "YES" OR "NO" DECISION. IF "NO," MORE COMPS ARE PRESENTED UNTIL THE CLIENT IS SATISFIED. IF "YES," THE PROCESS CONTINUES. THE COMP IS A HIGHLY FINISHED MOCK-UP OR MODEL OF A PRINTED PIECE THAT ATTEMPTS TO DUPLICATE IN VISUAL APPEARANCE THE FINISHED PRODUCT. DEPENDING ON BUDGET AND TIME CONSTRAINTS, THE COMP MIGHT INCLUDE COLOR KEYS, PRESS TYPE, PMT STATS, MACHINE SET TYPE, CUT FILM, PMS PAPER, PHOTO PRINTS, VERY TIGHT RENDERINGS OR ILLUSTRATIONS, SCREEN PRINTING, ETC. LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED TO POLISH THE COMP. WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN IT'S JUST YOU, YOUR CLIENT, AND YOUR COMP. IN MOST SITUATIONS ALTERNATIVE COMPS ARE PRESENTED TO GIVE THE CLIENT A CHOICE. YOUR COMPS SHOULD CLEARLY REFLECT YOUR TWO OR THREE BEST "BIG IDEAS." IF YOU ARE PRESENTING AN AD, SHOW IT IN THE MAGAZINE IN WHICH IT WILL APPEAR. IF A PACKAGE, SHOW IT WITH THE PACKAGES OF A STRONG COMPETITOR. SIMULATE THE IN-USE SITUATION.

5 CAMERA-READY ART · AFTER THE COMP HAS BEEN APPROVED IT MUST BE CONVERTED INTO BLACK AND WHITE ART FOR REPRODUCTION. THIS CAMERA-READY ART, ALSO KNOWN AS LAYOUT ART OR MECHANICAL ART, IS EXTREMELY PRECISE AND CARRIES SPECIFICATIONS FOR PRINTING. IT BECOMES THE PROPERTY OF THE CLIENT, BUT IS SHOWN TO THE CLIENT ONLY IN PROOF FORM FOR FINAL SIGNATURE APPROVAL. IT IS USUALLY STORED WITH THE DESIGN FIRM FOR CONVENIENCE.

6 PRINTED PIECES · THESE ARE THE GOAL OF THE ENTIRE EFFORT... WHAT THE CLIENT WILL USE AS A TOOL FOR PERSUASION AND SALES. OFTEN PROOFED BEFORE FINAL PRINTING, THIS PRODUCT MUST BE CAREFULLY QUALITY-CONTROLLED TO INSURE FIDELITY OF CONCEPT. DELIVERED IN PROPER QUANTITY AND ON TIME WITHIN BUDGET, PRINTED PIECES MARK THE LAST STAGE IN THE DESIGN PROCESS. DESIGNERS SHOULD COLLECT SAMPLES FOR PORTFOLIO.

THUMBNAILS

THE ABILITY TO DO THUMBNAILS IS FUNDAMENTAL TO TRANSFORMING MENTAL IDEAS INTO VISUAL FORM. IDEA SKETCHES ARE NECESSARY FOR ANY DESIGN ACTIVITY. DOING THUMBNAILS WELL DOES NOT REQUIRE REALISTIC FREEHAND DRAWING TECHNIQUES. IT DOES REQUIRE PRECISION AND A DRIVE TO MAKE EACH SKETCH BETTER THAN THE ONE BEFORE IT. A DESIGNER CAN NEVER DO TOO MANY THUMBNAILS, AS THEY CHART A PATH OF "VISUAL THINKING" IN THE DESIGN PROCESS.

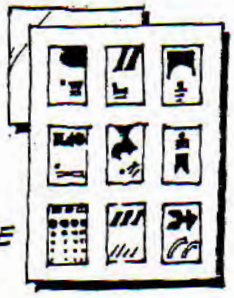
CHARACTERISTICS · THUMBNAILS ARE SMALL IN SIZE BUT PROPORTIONAL. IF THE PROBLEM IS A POSTER, A GOOD THUMBNAIL SIZE IS 1½"X2", A SIZE IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO AN 18"X24" PRINTED POSTER. FOR A RECORD COVER A GOOD SIZE IS 2"X2", IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE 12¼"X12¼" SQUARE FORMAT OF THE PACKAGE. WE ALWAYS WANT TO PICK A SIZE PROPORTIONAL TO THE PRINTED PIECE, YET CONVENIENT TO OUR PENCIL, PEN, MARKERS, AND MONTAGE MATERIALS.

■ THUMBNAILS ARE SMALL BECAUSE SMALL IS FAST. A QUALITY THUMBNAIL SHOULD TAKE NO LONGER THAN A FEW MINUTES TO FINISH (IN COLOR). PRODUCE LOTS OF SKETCHES IN A SHORT TIME. EXPLORE A WIDE VARIETY OF IDEAS. EMPTY YOUR BRAIN. NEVER REJECT AN IDEA UNTIL YOU TEST IT WITH A SKETCH. SMALL SCALE HAS ANOTHER BIG ADVANTAGE. DETAIL IN TYPE AND IMAGE IS LIMITED.

■ ITS A GOOD IDEA TO ORGANIZE THUMBNAILS ON YOUR PAPER (LAYOUT PAPER, RAG BOND, AND TISSUE ARE OK). SPREAD THEM OUT. CROWDING ON THE SHEET WILL MAKE THEM HARD TO EVALUATE. SAVE AND FILE YOUR SKETCHES; THEY MAY BE VALUABLE IN THE FUTURE.

A TECHNIQUE · EXPERIENCED DESIGNERS DEVELOP THEIR INDIVIDUAL TECHNIQUES AND MEDIA PREFERENCES. THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS WILL LEAD TO CLEAN COMMUNICATIVE THUMBNAILS.

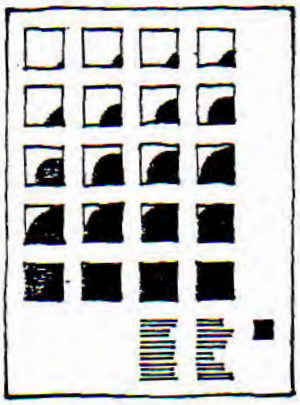
MEASURE AND DRAW 4 BLANK MASTER. USE TOOLS, DARK LINE.



TRACE THUMBNAIL BORDERS FROM THE MASTER WITH PENCIL. KEEP SPREAD OUT! SKETCH.

● TRACE THE SKETCH BORDER WITH #2 PENCIL. USE A VARIABLE WEIGHT LINE WITH MORE WEIGHT OR EMPHASIS AT THE CORNERS.

THESE THUMBNAILS INDICATE POSTER IDEAS. THUMBNAILS MUST HAVE TYPE INDICATION ABOUT THE LENGTH THE FINAL PIECE WILL REQUIRE.



■ THUMBNAILS ARE VALUABLE FOR SHOWING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG TYPE, SYMBOLS, AND ILLUSTRATIVE MATTER. THEY ALLOW QUICK TESTING OF ALTERNATIVE TYPE COMPOSITION SYSTEMS. THEY ENCOURAGE COLOR ALTERNATIVES. EFFECTIVE THUMBNAILS CAN ALSO BE DONE BY THE USE OF EXISTING SUGGESTIVE PHOTO IMAGES CUT FROM PUBLICATIONS AND GLUED IN POSITION.