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'Piece' Maker

Throughout my years at the University of Michigan, I have often found myself debating my purpose as an artist. Most people do not see art and design as a profitable career. However, society needs artists. Everything that surrounds us was originally designed by an artist, yet people do not notice the work or the artist. For example, magazines are placed right next to the local grocer's counter area. You just glance and pass by. Even if you read it all that stands out are the celebrities that are printed on the magazine or the content. The carefully refined layout of the writing is not appreciated while it is being read. Likewise, there is something else that is being ignored by the public: non-profit organizations. Small non-profit organizations tend not to have enough funding, so they often are not able to handle basic yet important elements like their branding and logo.

My interest in graphic design led to my decision to create a company brand for my IP. I did not fully redesign the corporate brand identity, but I had undertaken some freelance design jobs that I enjoyed, which compelled me to choose branding for my integrated project. One particular company that I have freelanced for annually held a conference in Chicago, and before the conference they were looking for a designer who could make a poster for the event. The company did not know what the poster should look like so I had to suggest several versions with the little information I was given. I submitted these rough ideas, all of which they rejected. Rather than giving up, I went

back to the drawing board and refined my ideas. In this way, the main idea for the poster shaped itself into its final form. I loved that back-and-forth interaction with the client as we adjusted our ideas. Also I loved the fact that I was using what I do best to visualize their concepts. As someone who used to think he was helpless and not intelligent, being able to help others made me proud.

Northern Philadelphia is known to be the most dangerous part of Philadelphia. Annually about 16,000 violent crime reports are filed, including reports of homicide, rape, robbery, etc. (Crime Maps & Stats) Kids who grow up there are forced to live in a dangerous environment. Additionally, often their families are not supportive or are considered very unusual compared to the majority of families in America. These negative factors often damage the potential for these children to hone their future.

Eighth Street Peace Maker (ESPM) is a summer school program, whose main target audience is the children of Northern Philadelphia. They offer kids activities such as English, math, games, and sports. The program takes place in the Eighth Street Community Church. Because the organizer of the program, Pastor Andy Kim, is a missionary, it is a Christian group. However, the main focus comes down to keeping kids out of trouble.

I have worked on staff in the program for three consecutive years. Before I started participating in the program, I had no information about Northern Philadelphia. I only knew that, with its frequent crime rate, it was a dangerous place. I was scared, but when I arrived there I soon reconsidered the neighborhood. The information I gathered outside of Philadelphia was negative and over-stated. People outside of Philadelphia think that there is at least one gun shot everyday and drug dealers roam the streets. Even in movies, gang

members stand picking on random people for pocket change. However, when I went to Philadelphia and our group got lost and ended up at a dead end, the people who were sitting around helped us back up the car and showed us the right way to the church. I realized how caring the neighborhood was even to the strangers. Right there, I felt the need to inform the public about the love that exists in this neighborhood of Philadelphia.

As I was playing and working with kids, I fostered a strong relationship with them, and so I know how much they desire heart-warming attention. They may look tough since they are forced to act that way to survive in their environment. One morning at ESPM, kid named Mark was very moody, planting his face on the desk. Later I found out that he had had a bad night because his drug addict parents were making noises, and he could not sleep. I approached him and, without saying a word, I hugged him and prayed for him. I immediately saw that he was feeling a little better, and he hugged me back tighter. In the end these kids are just kids wanting love and attention.

As an art student and artist, I could not only help the organization reach out to others, but I could also help them define their public image. ESPM is such a wonderful and important program to have for the kids living in Northern Philadelphia and it is constantly trying to change to help kids make the best out of its offerings. But in order to change, the organization needs money. Since ESPM is a non-profit organization, the staff solely consists of volunteers. Since the t-shirts and materials that they are using for the kids are at the expense of the pastor who founded the organization. I recognized that this program needed to get the attention and help of people from all over the world.

As Jack Gernsheimer notes in his design opus, *Designing Logos*, the most effective way to promote brand "is to raise brand awareness." Thus, I needed to come up

with a "well-developed corporate identity" since that would facilitate what I was trying to do. (Gernsheimer) People would feel happy to contribute to this good cause.

First, to present this program to others, ESPM needed a clear and specific brand identity. Their current designs were poorly composed, misleading, and only served to obscure all the good deeds that the program offers. For example, the logo that is printed on t-shirts misrepresented Eighth Street Peace Maker; ESPM already sounds a lot like ESPN, but they made the logo look like the ESPN logo even though the program does not have to do anything with sports or television. This misrepresentation confused a lot of people when it was shown to public. When this graphic was printed on t-shirts and kids wore it, they did not care about the graphic,

Figure 1 Previous version of t-shirt design

nor grew any attachment to it. I decided that making a logo that could better describe their group was a priority.

Another problem was that ESPM's website did not represent anything close to the program. Since the pastor didn't hire professional web designers and instead made the webpage on his own, he used Wordpress's
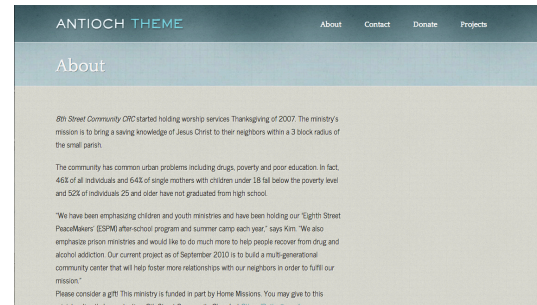
Figure 2 Pastor Andy's version of website

default template webpage. The problem was that for the title of the page, he used the name of the template, which was something completely unrelated to ESPM. So if you were visiting the website for the first time, you would be utterly lost. I did not want to be

on this site for even one second. Thus I saw that there was a need to redesign the website to appeal to more viewers and to transfer information more easily.

As inspiration, I found some organizations that had similar purposes to ESPM's. For example, Father Gregory Boyle started Homeboy Industries in 1988 while he served as pastor of Dolores Mission parish in Boyle Heights in Los Angeles. This program provides opportunities for young people in the toughest neighborhoods in the city. They have an online shop where they sell various objects printed with the logo to gather money for the organization. (Father Greg)

I realized that people who bought these products are involved in branding the program. I think this is a good way to encourage people to donate to ESPM, too.

In process of developing my design of the ESPM logo, I came across couple phases. First, I designed the logo according to the shapes of the letters or number eight.
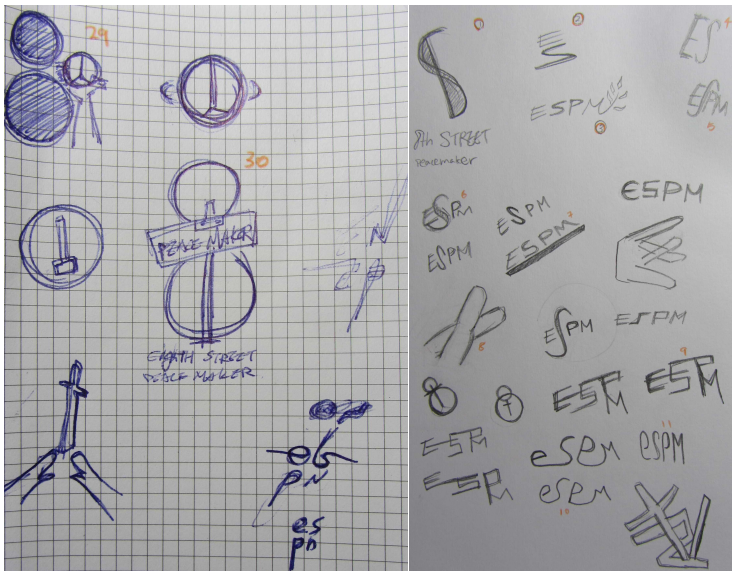

Figure 3 Rough sketches

However those forms could fit to any kinds of similar organizations, thus I had to make something that can only work for the ESPM. The focus of the brand identity has to

be the "feeling" rather than focusing on "reason." (Schmitt, B., & Simonson) Thus, to incorporate the feeling to the design, I had to use experiences for inspiration.

Figure 4 Image of house in Philadelphia and Earlier version of the logo

So I produced a design of a figure 4 on a background that resembles the houses in Philadelphia because I thought something about neighborhood was really unforgettable while I was staying there. However, people mentioned that it reminded them of coffin; I simplified it into the shape shown in figure 5.

Figure 5 Transition of logo to simplify the shape

Now the color was issue, while trying to figure out what to do with color, I realized that stained glass represents Christianity and has great combination of colors. Another good aspect of stained glass was that the pattern could make small pieces that could be playful like tangram. The act of putting the pieces of logo together could symbolize putting together "peace". Looking at other company such as South Australia logo, I loved how

customizable it is so I my version of the logo even more customizable with moveable pieces. (JEYASEELAN)

Figure 6 alternative forms made from my logo

With 12 pieces that are in the Peace Maker logo, individual kids in ESPM will be free to make their own individual 'peaces.' I wanted use these beautiful and unique designs to help the organization, so I decided to print each design on different products and sell them. This way, all the profits that are made from these sales can be used to improve the program.

Working on this branding project for my whole senior year, I learned a lot. I client stopped contacting me in the middle of the process. While they were gone, I had to find people living with similar backgrounds or environments to get feedback. Also I was burdened with the fact that I could not afford to focus on making myself satisfied, because they true importance of the logo is represent the company, without any aspect of the designer. In the middle point of my project I finalized the logo and I was very satisfied with it and was sure that I would never alter it. However, as soon as I showed it to people I received feedback saying it looks like coffin that it is depressing. I was shocked but at the same time understood where that was coming from. Logos are made for the company but they ultimately must appease the public. Thus, while revising it, I frequently asked around to better fit it to community.

Eighth Street Peace Maker used to have a brand identity that lacked unity; they used different designs for each different purpose like graduation certificates, the website, banners, and t-shirts. While they did not run into a lot of problems, it did spread the wrong impression to people who were not familiar with the organization. But with the design that I newly created through a couple of semester's worth of research and sketches, I made a logo that fits the organization and its intention. I want to put the result of my IP to good use, so that when I polish my proposal, I will be suggesting my design approach to Pastor Andy. Above all, I hope my theoretical benefits of my brand identity actually work.

I believe that my "Eighth-Street Peace-Maker" design will inspire peace and love by engaging youths to create their own customizable 'peaces,' to represent their own bright futures. Although the creation process was long and arduous, I know that my logo will serve as a welcoming face to the non-profit organization it represents.

Figure 6 One of the inspirations: South Australia

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