Note about this online volume.

This thesis includes 8 oversized A3 pages:

	Page number (as appears in thesis)	Page number (in this pdf)
Figure 1.	xvi	18
Figure 7.	70	95
Figure 9.	126	151
Figure 12.	188	213
Figure 13.	191	216
Figure 17.	235	260
Appendix Item 1.	246	271
Appendix Item 2.	247	272

Homeless, sticky design.

Strategies for visual, creative, investigative projects.

Deriving and applying Collecting, Ordering and Positioning as a critical language and a design approach between Visual Communication Design and Visual Research.

Helen Box

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2007

University of Technology, Sydney

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Helen Box

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to extend my thanks to my supervisory team: Dr Cameron Tonkinwise (Principal Supervisor since 2003), Dr Naomi Stead (Alternate Supervisor since 2006) and Dr Kate Sweetapple (Co-Supervisor since 2007).

I would also like to acknowledge that I have been a grateful recipient of the UTS Doctoral Scholarship.

Many other people have made this research possible: the designers who have produced 'sticky' work and in particular to Peter Buchanan-Smith, Wayne Daly, Allyson Waller and Andrew Weed for their personal correspondence in relation to this research; Chris Rissel for his correspondence and health promotion expertise in relation to *BikeWork*; the enthusiasm and willingness of the *BikeWork* team – Jeremy Kerr, Ilka Staudinger, Greg Hackett, Emily Knight, Cameron White, Jacqueline Lorber–Kasunic, Caroline Box, and especially the photographers Omar Rojas and Thomas Marcusson; and my sincerest thanks goes to all the bike riders who participated in *BikeWork*. I would also like to thank my faculty's computing managers Thomas Esamie and Robyn Murphy for their good–humoured technical expertise over the years, and the University Librarian, Dr Alex Byrne.

With regard to the production of this dissertation I wish to thank: Tigger Wise who edited a draft of this document and Chris Lander at Colour Copy Port Macquarie for printing large format posters *(not used in final version).*

On a more personal note, I would like to acknowledge: Jac, Ilka and Jeremy, my special thesis comrades from the beginning; Anita, Di, Timo, Mano, Shinmi, Zoë, Willem, Bronwyn and everyone else in the level 6 research room; other people and places that have been very important to me over the past five years – Emily, Emma, Amy, Eliza, Tracey, Mia, Jess, Smokey, Luke, Margaret, Rocco, Sandy, Fiona, Jim, phinished.org, Groove Salad via SomaFM.com, the Mitchell Library SLNSW, Schaeffer Fine Arts Library USYD, Toby's Estate, Single Origin Roasters, Campos, Sonoma Bakery Cafe, the Co-Op Bookshop kids circa 2005, all the house-mates who've endured me over the past five years, and my posse at Palace Cinemas Norton Street.

This work is dedicated to my dear friend Tom, 1977 – 2003.

Above all, I am grateful for the loyal if sardonic support from my brave and loving family: my mum Sue, my da Terry and my wonderful sister Caroline.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS IV

TABLE OF CONTENTS III

LIST OF IMAGES VII

LIST OF FIGURES IX

ABSTRACT X

PREFACE: EVERYWHERE BUT NOWHERE XIII

CHAPTER 1. 'A SET OF PHENOMENA THAT ASK FOR EXPLANATION' 1

Section 1. The motivation behind this research 1

a. How refined triviality came to my attention. 1
b. Clarifying the terminology: What do I mean by 'homeless', 'sticky', 'pointless', 'creative visual investigative projects'? 4
c. A language for 'homeless', 'sticky' things: the research question central to this thesis. 6

Section 2. Reviewing the design research debate [and its limited interest in baffling visual projects such as *Lipstick*]. 8

a. Unanimous agreement that design deserves a place at university. 11
b. The conundrum: how can design do research? To borrow, or not to borrow. 12
c. The possibility that research could be practice-based. 14
d. Criticism of the direction of practice-based research. 15
e. Where we are today: a discipline that is regrouping 17

Section 3. Overview of this dissertation. 19

CHAPTER 2. REVIEWING VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN AND VISUAL RESEARCH LITERATURE. 22

Section 1. Could these projects be Visual Communication Design according to Jorge Frascara? Design is about actions and people: not graphic forms. 29

Section 2. Could these be Visual Communication Design according to Rick Poynor? A counterpoint: the designer as journalist. 37

Section 3. Could these be Visual Research according to Michael Emmison & Philip Smith? The observable features of a phenomenon can tell us something else about the phenomenon. 42

Section 4. Could these be Visual Research according to Elizabeth Chaplin? A counterpoint: the uncertain, multiple meanings of visual representations are rich for social scientific understanding. 51

PREAMBLE TO THE MODEL. 64

a. The process: detecting chimes across the disciplines. 64
b. Overview of the Model. 71
c. Contextualising *BikeWork*. 74

CHAPTER 3. COLLECTING: 'THE-SAME-BUT-DIFFERENT' 79

Part 1. Deriving a language for wrapping around projects like *Lipstick*. 80

Section 1. Establishing a trend: *Lipstick* is not alone 80
a. Introducing five projects that are like *Lipstick*. 81
b. Preliminary generalisations. 88
c. Considering the possibility of a very straightforward explanation. 89
d. The counter–argument doesn't hold, so questions about this work persist. 91
e. The structure for the discussion where we unpack this trend. 92

Section 2. Questions of *form*: talking about that stunning seriality. 93
a. What happens when we have more than one of the same kind of thing? 95
b. Recognising the formal visual qualities as tactics for 'all falling into line'. 101
c. Concluding our discussion of the *formal* features. 108

Section 3. Unpacking *process*: how can we talk about this curiously restrictive way of seeing? 110
a. Beginning to talk about that weird process of seeing. 110
b. The peculiar restfulness of carrying out an experiment. 112
c. 'Establishing a trail of similarity': restricted, but straightforward. 115
d. 'Opening oneself up': using rules is a well-established, creative strategy for avoiding unwitting 'slavery'. 118

Part 2. Principles of Collecting that can now be adopted. 123

Section 1. Adopting Collecting to accumulate cyclists. 123

Section 2. The limitations of Collecting. 129

CHAPTER 4. ORDERING: A SHORT–LIVED SALVE 137

Part 1. Deriving a language for talking about projects like *Periodic Breakfast Table*. 138

Section 1. Why Ordering comes after Collecting. 138
a. Introducing the three projects (and how they seem to be something *more* than Collecting). 139

Section 2. An apparently straightforward way to resolve the problems of Collecting? 149
a. Setting the boundaries on a vast topic. 150
b. The mechanics: the nuts and bolts of sorting things out. 153

c. So, what 'real learning' about love heart symbols / urban photographs / breakfast cereal comes from *their* organisations? 161

Section 3. In fact, there is nothing more tentative. 167

a. The question of how to judge what is significantly similar: a *practical* problem. 167
b. Each way of organising things 'valorizes some point of view and silences another' (Bowker & Star 1999): an *ideological* problem. 169
c. The 'tentative' order among love hearts, cereals and blue tarpaulins. 173
d. Shifting our attention from frustrations with the inescapably imperfect *outcome*, to the productivity of an iteratively imperfect *process*. 176

Section 4. The insight of Ordering: pursuing the mid–grain. 177

a. The descriptive efficiency of Ordering. 178
b. The process of seeking a mid-ranged grain. 180
c. Conclusion: the real insight of Ordering – becoming acquainted with multivalence 183

Part 2. Adopting Ordering as a strategy. 185

Section 1. *BikeWork*: Ordering Cyclists 185

a. Reconciling the problems from Collecting cyclists 185
b. Ordering cyclists: how could these 65 cyclists be grouped? 186
c. The Order I settled on: perceiving the 'cycling' in these cyclists. 190
d. Discussion: the issues raised by creating Order among these fragments. 192

Section 2. The problems with Ordering, and what we need from Positioning. 196

CHAPTER 5. POSITIONING: FROM THE EXPLORER TO THE GUIDE ...202

Part 1. Deriving Positioning as a language to talk about projects like *Newsmap*. 203

Section 1. The problem with Ordering, and the question of how to talk about *Newsmap*. 203

a. The need to augment Ordering. 203
b. The final set of 'homeless' projects: refamiliarising with *Newsmap* and introducing *NameVoyager*. 205
c. The Collecting and Ordering heritages of *NameVoyager* and *Newsmap*. 207

Section 2. Unpacking *Newsmap* and *NameVoyager* as 'leaver–outers'. 210

a. Some initial generalisations about *Newsmap* and *NameVoyager* : acknowledging the field of Visualization, but ultimately turning to 'mapping'. 210
b. Using scientific visualisation and information design to unpack *Newsmap* and *NameVoyager*. 213
c. There is no such thing as a 1:1 map: using cartography (and its intriguing parallel with writing) to unpack *Newsmap* and *NameVoyager*. 221
d. Reviewing the principles of Positioning, and pointing forward to *BikeWork*. 227

Part 2. Adopting Positioning as a creative strategy. 231

Section 1. The final strategy for approaching *BikeWork*. 231

a. '*How to choose?*' The position I took on cyclists. 231
b. Final reflections on Positioning cyclists. 237

Section 2. The limitations of deploying Positioning as a strategy. 237

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS 239

a. Findings. 239
b. Recommendations for Future Research. 240

APPENDIX.....245

Item 1. My process: *Collecting*. 246

Item 2. My process: *Ordering*. 247

Item 3. Cycling conundrums. 248

Item 4. Running *BikeWork*: preparation and data collection. 250

a. The event chosen: Critical Mass. 250
b. Running my project. 251

Item 5. Not 'non-mainstream': recent trends concerning the 'image' of cycling. 256

a. Cycling advocacy. 256
b. Cycling–related advertising. 256

BIBLIOGRAPHY 259

LIST OF IMAGES

Referenced images, including the 'sticky', 'homeless' projects.

Image 1. *Lipstick* (Greene 2001) *(source: Buchanan-Smith 2001)* xix

Image 2. *Periodic Breakfast Table* (Weese & Halpern 2001) *above – the complete table (source: http://www.2wice.org/issues/spring/artifacts/periodic, viewed February 15 2005) below – enlarged detail and with legend (source: Lupton 2004)* xxi

Image 3. *Newsmap* (Weskamp 2004). xxii

Image 4. *Visual Diary (1988-1992)* (Chaplin 1994:223-232) 59

Image 5. *The Residents of South London Road* (Chaplin 2006[2002]:87-132) 60

Image 6. *Constellations from the Milk Museum* (Blegvad 2003:104) 66

Image 7. *60 Cars vs 60 Bicycles* (City of Muenster; reproduced in Cycling Promotion Fund 2007:8) 77

Image 8. *Why Are All These Books Orange?* (Siegel 2004:42-45) 82

Image 9. *The Last Periods of Some Books (magnified 4266%)* (Buchanan-Smith 2003 [2002]) 83

Image 10. *The Bicycle, Cross, and Desert* (Weed 2005) 84

Image 11. *A Coming Of Age Reading Checklist* (McMullen 2004:19–24) (excerpt spread: pages 20–21) 86

Image 12. *The Readers Before Us* (Waller & Beard 2002). *above – book spread with an original scrap (the one I was bestowed). below – postcard showing the presentation of the scraps (when exhibited).* 88

Image 13. *Anonymous Sculpture* (Becher & Becher 1970; in Rorimer 2001:120) 99

Image 14. Malraux with the photographic plates for *The Museum without Walls* (photo: Paris Match/Jarnoux; reproduced in Crimp 1993:59) 104

Image 15. *Ava Gardner Dies* (Bartscherer 2002) *above – the book (source: http://www.artistsbooks.com/bookdetail.asp?art_id=711&ref=artistdetail.asp, viewed 1 December 2006) below – the installation (source: http://www.davismuseum.wellesley.edu/obituary/obituary.html, viewed 1 December 2006)* 116

Image 16. St Ives by Chance (Jones 1984:85–102) *above – map of St Ives indicating the location and direction for taking the photographs below – four of the ten resulting photographs* 121

Image 17. *Personal Coffee Cups* (Hassink 2003:102-115) *35 of the total 420 coffee cups.* 132

Image 18. *Personal Coffee Cups* (detail adapted from Hassink 2003) 134

Image 19. *Endcommercial: Reading the City* (Böhm, Pizzaroni & Scheppe, 2002) *A selection of page spreads from throughout the book.* 140

Image 20. A selection of pages spreads from 'Blue City' – a chapter in *Endcommercial* (Böhm et al. 2002:99-116) 142

Image 21. A selection of pages spreads from 'Standpipes' – a chapter in *Endcommercial* (Böhm et al. 2002:387-400) 143

Image 22. Table of Contents, *Endcommercial* (Böhm et al. 2002) 144

Image 23. The pink poster. *I [heart] [heart]* (Daly 2007[2005]) 147

Image 24. The colour coded poster. *I [heart] [heart]* (Daly 2007[2005]) 148

Image 25. A 'collection' of dog breeds (Wurman 2001:43) 157

Image 26. Creating order among dog breeds (Wurman 2001:45) 158

Image 27. Hearts grouped by motifs: couples, arrows, hands. Adapted from *I [heart][heart]* (Daly 2007[2005]) 176

Image 28. Selection of logos exploring nationality, adapted from *I [heart] [heart]* (Daly 2007[2005]). 200

Image 29. Screen-grab of searching for 'BE' in *NameVoyager* (Wattenberg & Wattenberg 2004-2005b) *(source: http://www.babynamewizard.com/namevoyager/lnv0105.html, viewed 17 July 2005)* 206

Image 30. *Newsmap* as a Collection: Screen-grab when initially loading inclusive of all types of news *(source: http://www.marumushi.com/apps/newsmap/newsmap.cfm, viewed 5th October 2007).* 208

Image 31. Screen-grab of the initial 'sea' (Collection) of names displayed when *NameVoyager* first loads *(source: http://www.babynamewizard.com/namevoyager/lnv0105.html, viewed 17 July 2005).* 209

Image 32. *Drawing of the human heart* (Paul Klee undated; reproduced in Arnheim 1969:305) 215

Image 33. Adapted from Walsh (1998:209-212) 217

Image 34. 'Flat/Sloped', *The Nature of Recreation* (Wurman 2001:266-267), my annotations. 221

Image 35. Samples of maps from 'Mapping the trivial / How do I get to the Art Gallery of New South Wales?' *(various authors, reproduced in Williams 2003)* 226

Image 36. Example of Psathas' 'maps to our place' (various authors, reproduced in Psathas 1979) 228

Image 37. Sydney Critical Mass, at an intersection at Town Hall, November 2005 *(courtesy Moz 2005)* 252

Image 38. Sydney Critical Mass, crossing the Sydney Harbour Bridge *(courtesy Moz 2005)* 252

Image 39. The bike team *(courtesy Rojas & Marcusson 2005)* 254

Image 40. A cyclist approaches the 'studio' *(courtesy Rojas & Marcusson 2005)* 254

Image 41. After Critical Mass has left – as the 'studio' has been 'dismantled', the photographers decide to shoot each other *(courtesy Rojas & Marcusson 2005)* 254

Image 42. *Trek* bicycle magazine advertising (circa 2005) 258

Image 43. *Trek* bicycle magazine advertising (circa 2007) 258

LIST OF FIGURES

My figures and original works, including *BikeWork*.

Figure 1. *DDC Mapping* (Box 2003) xvi

Figure 2. *Map of thesis.* Chapter 1 identifies the puzzle of 'sticky' 'homeless' projects. Chapter 2 achieves partial but inadequate explanations for these puzzling phenomena by drawing on Visual Communication Design and Visual Research. Chapters 3,4 and 5 put forward the model – *Collecting*, *Ordering* and *Positioning*. By exploring disparate literature and bringing these to bear on projects, a more appropriate language is derived, which is subsequently, iteratively, adopted and applied as strategy for creating an original project, *BikeWork*. 19

Figure 3. A diagram of the discussion in Chapter 2: 3 projects, 2 disciplines. 24

Figure 4. Waller & Beard (2002) 'chime' with Perec (1997[1985]; cited in Blauvelt 2003:21). 67

Figure 5. Böhm, Pizzaroni & Scheppe (2002) 'chime' with Foucault (1986; cited in Blair 1998:37). 67

Figure 6. Williams (2003:44-45) 'chimes' with McKee (2005). 67

Figure 7. My process: how I Collected, Ordered and Positioned Collecting, Ordering and Positioning 70

Figure 8. Structure of the Model proposed in Chapters 3–5. 72

Figure 9. *BikeWork* Stage 1 – Collecting 126

Figure 10. Patterns emerging in the Collection of cyclists. 128

Figure 11. Sketch of an amateur 'cluster analysis' of the cereal featured in *Periodic Breakfast Table.* 165

Figure 12. Thematic groupings of each response to the 'ludic' question, (i.e. treated and categorised separately, rather than as the pairs as provided by the participants.) 188

Figure 13. *BikeWork* Stage 2 – Ordering 191

Figure 14. Comparing 'lycra-ness' with mention of cycling. 193

Figure 15. A continuum of heart visuals. Less to more intricate from left to right: *Drawing of the human heart Paul Klee (undated, reproduced in Arnheim 1969:305); my own more detailed sketch of the human heart based on précis for 'Heart' (Wikipedia contributors 2007); 3DScience Human Heart (courtesy of Zygote Media Group 2006, used by Wikipedia contributors 2007); photograph of the human heart (Wikipedia contributors 2007).* 215

Figure 16. several 'slices-of' / 'paths-through' an Ordered Collection of cyclists. 233

Figure 17. BikeWork Stage 3 – Positioning. *Version 1 – a 'cross-section' of sorts; Version 2 – more polemical.* .. 235

ABSTRACT

My research takes place against the backdrop of the design research debate ongoing since the 1990s. This debate highlighted the potential contributions that design artefacts and practice could make in a scholarly and professional research context. Despite numerous interesting possibilities, the discussions taking place in the design research community largely do not attend to contemporary Visual Communication Design practices and outcomes.

In this research, I specifically focus on outcomes taking place at the margins of the Visual Communication field, which, though peripheral, are both admired and engaging, and what this research entitles 'sticky'. Eleven projects are examined including, for example, one that collected the ephemera serving as the impromptu bookmarks in the books shelved in a university library, yielding the meticulous inventory of three hundred scraps of paper listed by Dewey decimal classification number.

Despite their 'stickiness', I found that these outcomes are in fact only partially accounted for by key authorities in Visual Communication Design: despite a strong graphic language these projects are not concerned to convey an unmistakable message directed to a particular audience. Instead other discussions taking place in the sociological sub-field of Visual Research, which values the open-ended inquiry of the observable features of everyday subject matter, seemed more relevant. Ultimately however, in view of other expectations – a theoretical framework and sustained textual analysis – these 'sticky' projects similarly confound Visual Research.

Consequently I realised that these 'sticky' projects are 'homeless' and, to indicate the partial explanations provided by Visual Communication Design and Visual Research, I tagged them 'creative, investigative, visual projects'. This research thus sets out to derive a language to attend to such 'sticky' but 'homeless' creative, investigative, visual projects.

I explored diverse literature and additional visual work – on topics such as the origins of the encyclopaedia, the tendency to make lists, psychological explanations for keeping personal collections, scientific visualizations, French Poetry, experimental travel, where to file UFOs in a picture archive, information management, the anatomy of the human heart, documentary photography and post–modern cartography.

By bringing this interdisciplinary analysis to bear on the set of 'sticky', 'homeless', creative, investigative, visual projects, I derived a *language* of Collecting, Ordering and Positioning. From this tripartite model a design *strategy* was then extrapolated which I applied to produce an original creative, investigative, visual project, called *BikeWork*, which involved the participation of sixty-five cyclists and production of a series of three posters. This research concludes by speculating that the value of a creative, investigative, visual approach – vivid and systematic though fragmentary and approximate – is its agency. Accordingly I finally recommend that future 'sticky' researchers further explore the distinctive appeal of a vivid and fragmentary approach.

THE 'HOMELESS', 'STICKY' DESIGN IN QUESTION

Eleven key projects are discussed.

Collecting

Lipstick (Greene 2001)

Why Are All These Books Orange? (Siegel 2004)

The Last Periods of Some Books (magnified 4266%) (Buchanan-Smith 2003 [2002])

The Bicycle, Cross, and Desert (Weed 2005)

A Coming Of Age Reading Checklist (McMullen 2004)

The Readers Before Us (Waller & Beard 2002)

Ordering

Periodic Breakfast Table (Weese & Halpern 2001)

Endcommercial: Reading the City (Böhm, Pizzaroni & Scheppe 2002)

I [heart] [heart] (Daly 2007 [2005])

Positioning

Newsmap (Weskamp 2004)

NameVoyager (Wattenberg & Wattenberg 2004-2005)