❝ In Dialogue

New York, NY

Undergraduate Program:
Georgia State University,
Graphic Design

What's your focus?
Design Education, Interaction
Design, Systems Thinking

What do you bring to the table?
A diverse history and a strong
footing in science.

CYNTHIA DOUAIHER
Beirut, Lebanon

Undergraduate Program:
Lebanese American University,
Graphic Design and Advertising

What's your focus?
Advertising, Advocacy,
Branding

What do you bring to the table?
My own design thinking.

HARUKA AOKI
Tokyo, Japan

Undergraduate Program:
Brown University, History of
Art and Architecture

What's your focus?
Advertising, Illustration,
Print Design

What do you bring to the table?
Art history knowledge and
illustration skills.

KEMAR SWABY
Kingston, Jamaica

Undergraduate Program:

What's your focus?
Branding, Packaging,
Typography

What do you bring to the table?
Perfectionism.

NIKKO-RYAN SANTILLAN
Tehachapi, California

Undergraduate Program:
California Polytechnic State
University, San Luis Obispo,
City & Regional Planning

What's your focus?
Information Design,
Interaction Design,
Social Design

What do you bring to the table?
I'm a person of two
cultures, two degrees,
and two communities
(rural and urban).

AMANDA SEPANSKI
Toledo, Ohio

Undergraduate Program:
University of Dayton, Visual
Communication Design

What's your focus?
Design Education, Philosophy,
Social Design

What do you bring to the table?
Dance moves.

BRITTANY MULLEN
Woodland Park, New Jersey

Undergraduate Program:
Seton Hall University,

CAROLINE WURTZEL
Great Neck, New York

Undergraduate Program:
Skidmore College, English

What's your focus?
Illustration, Motion Design,
Pop Culture

What do you bring to the table?
Design-wise: illustration,
storytelling, humor.
Personality-wise: see above.

ALICIA BURNETT
Niskayuna, New York

Undergraduate Program:
Rhode Island School of
Design, Illustration

What's your focus?
Critical Theory, Illustration,
Pop Culture

What do you bring to the table?
Drawing and traditional
printmaking knowledge as
well as an insatiable curiosity
about culture.

MARIE D'OVIDIO
Paris, France

Undergraduate Program:
École Supérieure de Publicité,
Advertising

What's your focus?
Information Design,
Interaction Design,
Motion Design

What do you bring to the table?
My knowledge about strategy
(thanks to my advertising
background) and how to
implement it.

Cleveland, Ohio

Undergraduate Program:
Miami University,
Graphic Design

What's your focus?
Advocacy, Social Design,
Systems Thinking

What do you bring to the table?
Usually doughnuts.

KIRAN PURI
Santa Ana, California

Undergraduate Program:
UCLA, English and
Political Science

What's your focus?
Interaction Design,
Multiculturalism, Typography

What do you bring to the table?
Diverse experiences, love of a
good line, and loads of effort.

JACQUELINE MANOHARAN
Yonkers, New York

Undergraduate Program:
Binghamton University,
Studio Art concentrating in
Graphic Design

What's your focus?
Illustration, Motion Design,
Multiculturalism

What do you bring to the table?
My educational background in
fine arts and mathematics.

CORWIN GREEN
Amherst, Massachusetts

**JUAN CARLOS
RODRIGUEZ-RIVERA**
Cataño, Puerto Rico

Undergraduate Program:
AI Miami International
University of Art and Design,
Graphic Design

What's your focus?
Cultural Identity,
Multiculturalism,
Social Media

What do you bring to the table?
Salsa y sazón

CAROLINE MATTHEWS
Houston, Texas

Undergraduate Program:
Elon University, Journalism
and Public Relations

What's your focus?
Advocacy, Interaction Design,
Participatory Design

What do you bring to the table?
I look at each issue through
a multidisciplinary lens. I.
Work. Hard.

DIEGO ZAKS
Caracas, Venezuela

Undergraduate Program:
PRODiseño,
Communications Design

What's your focus?
Branding, Print Design,
Technology

What do you bring to the table?
Good humor and a fearless
approach to technology.

Undergraduate Program:
University of North Carolina at
Greensboro, Biology

What's your focus?
Information Design, Interaction
Design, Motion Design

What do you bring to the table?
A healthy appetite for
web design and information
design skills.

JOHN LUNN
Baltimore, Maryland

Undergraduate Program:
Towson University, Illustration

What's your focus?
Critical Theory, Cultural
Identity, Social Design

What do you bring to the table?
Super rad dance moves!

RACHNA BATRA
Hyderabad, India

Undergraduate Program:
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill, Journalism and
Mass Communication

What's your focus?
Participatory Design, Print
Design, Social Design

What do you bring to the table?
Interpersonal skills, initiative,
meticulous attention to detail
(when I have time).

JOHN OLSON
Poughkeepsie, NY

INTERA
BRAND
SOCIAL
PRINT
TYPOG
ILLUST
MOTION
ADVOC
ADVER
POP CU

later her family members were sent to Auschwitz, where they perished. Chava had been separated from them, consigned to physical labor in Hamburg, Germany. In the last days of the war, when the German Army began to flee from its major outposts, it left behind legions of sick and malnourished prisoners; Chava was one of them. She regained consciousness from a severe illness amid corpses and was discovered alive by British troops. After recovering for a month in a hospital, she was sent back to Czechoslovakia, where she was taken in by her former governess. She was fifteen years old.

Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design is Israel's national school of art.

In 1946 an aunt and uncle were living in Palestine, and when notified that she was alive, they brought her to live with them. She won a government scholarship to attend the Bezalel Academy, but her studies were put on hold when Israel launched its war for independence and she was sent to the Israeli army for two years. During this time she contracted polio.

In 1964, after completing her studies with a degree in graphic design, Chava moved to the United States and worked for several different prestigious New York design firms before founding her own studio.

Chava, you have taught at Pratt since 1972. It must be incredible to be part of this department for that long.

Yes, I will be eighty-four this summer.

That's exciting.

It's exciting but I would rather be sixty-four. [Laughter]

You have worked for many brands and clients. What were the most enjoyable jobs you've had?

Enjoyable depends on what you think is enjoyable. I was very happy with my work for the Girl Scouts. I did the Girl Scouts

Chava Ben-Amos

Chava Ben-Amos has been teaching in the Pratt Graduate Communications Design department at Pratt since 1972. Getting to know Chava for this book has been an extraordinary experience. We knew that she has an impressive professional career, has won numerous awards, and has been a pioneer in branding and packaging since the 1960s. What we didn't know was the incredible road that took Chava from her birthplace in Prague in 1930 to become one of the most influential members of the Pratt faculty for over forty years.

When Chava was nine the Nazis sent her and her family to the Theresienstadt ghetto and concentration camp, and four years

Chava invited the book team to her home to share some of her stories, insights, and experiences.

cookies three times over. It was a pleasure, and the models were the actual Girl Scouts. And we traveled. I was in California with them, and we rode on horses and we went to the beach and we went to the mountains. I had a very good photographer … Jay Maisel.

I got a lot of compliments on my solution. The fact that everything was in silhouette. Whatever I did was in silhouette. They were riding on a bike in silhouette … Nobody knows if they are white or black. But in those days, some people wanted nothing to do with the Girl Scouts organization if there was a black Girl Scout. And the other way around, too.

What else have you worked on?

I did a lot of theater posters. These were posters. [Points to work on coffee table] I did a lot of Broadway shows. The *Butterflies Are Free*. That won poster of the year. I did the first Tylenol campaign. And I'm a big user. [Laughs]

What is it like working on so many different products?

I enjoy it! But I once worked for a company that paid me well, but I hated it so much. They would go by the clock. They would say: "How long did you work on it? Three hours? You only have fifteen more minutes."

Butterflies Are Free **opened on October 21, 1969, at the Booth Theatre, where it ran for 1,128 performances.**

Donald Deskey was a renowned artist, industrial designer, and interior designer.

The Snuggle bear has been the fabric softener's mascot since 1983.

And I take it that didn't agree with you?

No—how could I work that way? I worked on it until it was good! Sometimes it was very fast; sometimes it wasn't. But I couldn't work like that. If it takes all night to get it finished, I will finish it. But I'm not going to be looking at the clock. So … I left. I got three offers in the same day. I came to work in Manhattan. So it was fine. I have been working many years.

Where did you work when you came to New York?

I worked for a company called Deskey Associates. It used to be called Donald Deskey. And we did a lot of work for Procter & Gamble. They loved everything we did; it was very commercial.

I don't think commercial is a bad word. I mean, I can do fine art, too, but I love packaging and it sells.

So what do you think is the difference between being a commercial artist and a fine artist?

I had an exhibition at Pratt years ago and somebody said, "This looks just like the supermarket." And I said, "It is the super-market!" This is what I was doing. And when Procter & Gamble changed a product, I did it again and again. I did Crest about four times over. So for me, commercial is fine. It sold. Not only that, but my son is very proud of me because he saw some of my designs in the Czech Republic, translated into Czech. He was showing all of his friends … "My mother did this!"

I have some pictures of my son, with his jeans, photographed from the back as he's just turning around, and a little teddy bear in his pocket. That's how Snuggle came about.

So how did you get into teaching packaging?

I wasn't a packaging designer when I came to America, but I worked for a lot of the best design firms and designed packaging for companies like Scott Paper, Colgate Palmolive, S.C. Johnson, General Mills. I worked for Raymond Loewy and then I worked for Deskey Associates. Those were the old guys.

Oldies but goodies.

And so I became a packaging guru.

Does packaging have different design considerations than other design fields?

Packaging is not just the package. It's the brand in total. You have to know what the company needs, what the company wants, what will sell.

Chava, you have had such an incredible life! How have you been able to accomplish so much?

I was always working. I enjoy myself when there's a big rush when we have to get stuff out and when there's a whole big group of people getting stuff done. I enjoy myself when things are like that.

I've been through hell and back many times in my life, but in the end I turned out fine.

I had an exhibition years ago and somebody said, "This looks just like the supermarket." And I said, "It is the supermarket!" This is what I was doing.

and little printed things: posters and T-shirts and things. I've always been interested in making work. Certainly by the time I was in graduate school, I was developing larger research-based work, and the reason I think I like teaching now is because I think that all of the projects that I would want to work on with students are things that I would want to do myself. All of the classes that I teach are usually based on something that I'm currently reading and want to figure out how to make something from it.

In the Typography II class and in the Visual Language class, there is always a project that's related to the concept of collecting and curating and developing a thing from that. A lot of projects that we've actually done as a studio sort of relate to that, and there is always one in the works, so it's something that I'm always kind of interested in. Just seeing how other people might do it.

⌄ *NYC Makers: The MAD Biennial* catalog

⌄ Website for Retrospective Art Space

The projects that I would want to work on with students are things that I would want to do myself.

How do you think your work at Other Means has influenced the way that you teach?

So it's sort of the same thing—I mean, they are totally and completely different, but at least the initial up-front part of the development of an assignment versus the development of a project that we're doing in here. When we're working on a project here, we tend to bring into it things that we are reading or current ways of thinking.

Ryan Waller

Tell us about how you came to teach at Pratt.

I taught in the undergrad program for a year. I guess this was in 2007 and 2008; it was a weird situation in which someone had recommended that I teach there, and I was called in by the chair. So I met with her and she asked if I wanted to teach, and I had never thought about it, but I said okay and I tried it out.

Why do you keep teaching?

I think that a lot of the way I've always worked was developing projects that were my projects, starting earlier as making zines

Ryan Waller is one of the partners of the design studio Other Means, with Gary Fogelson, Phil Lubliner, and Vance Wellenstein. He also is one of the founders of Primetime, a gallery space located in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn.

I don't think I've over made

I don't think I've ever made work that I thought would help me get a job.

We found a recent profile of Other Means on Grafik, which I think is maybe one of the real ones that are out there.

It's sort of real, yeah. [Laughs]

You talk a bit about the lack of humor in the design profession. How do you think that idea translates into your teaching?

I think for me, it's definitely the way that I communicate; it's certainly in the work that I make. I find that to be incredibly effective and therefore would probably push for something that would feel more playful. Not necessarily funny, but I tend to find things that are too self-serious to not really communicate with me, in that it feels like it's sort of shut off and I'm not the audience for it. So I try to sort of push it in a different way.

Do you think it's harder to design with humor?

It depends. If the goal is to make someone laugh, it's not. The humor is the challenge that you give yourself—and making sure that you are having fun while you are doing it. Constructing systems along the way where you are making fun, not in the negative sense but in the way that you are sort of challenging … everything. I think that just the choice of a typeface, there is so much room there to make a joke. Whether or not that's the thing that gets communicated, it's funny to yourself.

Do you think designers shouldn't take themselves too seriously?

It depends on what they're doing. The work that we do certainly allows us to do that. If we were doing a different kind of work, well, we would do a different kind of work for that reason, and there are certainly types of work that do not have room to be funny, but I'm really not interested in that way of working.

Ryan joined Pratt GradComD after returning from a Research fellowship in Switzerland on a Fulbright Award, Ecole cantonale d'art de Lausanne, & Federal Office of Culture, Bern.

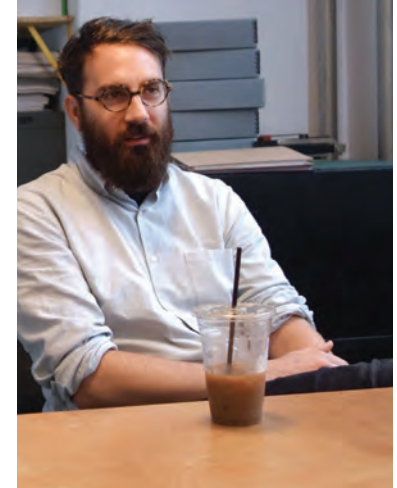**What advice would you give to someone just starting out?**

If people are starting out, when they're younger, like, in high school? [Laughs]

Maybe not that young, maybe young professionals.

I don't know; I mean, I started out when I was really young. By the time I was in eighth grade, I was hired to do websites. I feel like knowing a lot of people when you're younger is the best if you want to be working on your own, because it's difficult to make those connections when you're younger.

I don't think I've ever made work that I thought would help me get a job.

Now, having worked with these guys for two and a half years, we have built a very specific body of work. We don't get approached by people who don't know us, for the most part. Just in the past six months has that started happening. For the most part, people approach us because they know someone we have worked for or they have seen a project that we have done. They have a pretty good understanding about how we might go at their work.

EunSun Lee

EunSun Lee founded CMYK+WHITE, INC., a multidisciplinary studio focusing on design solutions for interiors, fashion, print, and motion graphics. Prior to starting her own company, EunSun Lee worked for more than eight years at *Glamour* magazine as a senior art director.
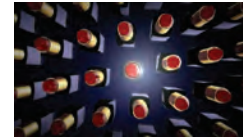
So you're an alumnus of the GradComD program, as well as being a faculty member.

Yes, I graduated in 2000.

How has the program changed since you were a student?

It changed a little bit. The motion part of our department has gotten bigger and bigger. At the time I was in school, there was basically no motion. These days, our industry has changed completely, so it's not really flat anymore. There are a lot of layers that you need to think about. And motion is part of that.

I think it's really important for someone to have a graphic design sense but then know the technique to make things move around.

⌃ Motion sequence for Estée Lauder.

⌃ Stop motion for Letter C.

There's a big market for motion. And if someone is good at graphic design and is not afraid to try new things, then he or she can learn it.

My background was graphic design, like, purely graphic design. I was in the magazine industry and there was this big event and they wanted to create an opening video. So I played with it as a test and they liked it! So I started doing more and more motion work. That's why I got two titles. I was the senior art director plus multimedia director. And after that, I wanted to do more serious things, so that's why I started my company. I wanted to do a little of this and this and this.

What was it like to go from being an art director to then deciding to start your own studio?

When I started out on my own, everyone said, you are crazy.

It must have been scary.

I wanted to do something more than publishing. At the time, I was scared, too. I was like, if I fail, if I don't get any clients.... Because if you have a business, you need clients. You needed to have someone to pay you to do something.

[Group laughter]

I started my company, and through the publishing industry I had built connections. We had a good relationship so they came to me little by little. It was a really interesting moment and began a new chapter of my life. But that was the perfect decision and the perfect timing.

MOTION DESIGN

What is your studio like now?

Our studio is kind of an interesting format. Someone said to me, "Your studio doesn't have any salesperson or marketing person or anyone. Who does it?" Basically, we're all designers. Everyone here. Every single person does design. Everyone has different types of strengths.

They're kind of supporting each other, even if they have a totally different type of project. If someone is working creative, someone might say, "Oh, do you need help?" If someone has to stay late, someone else might ask if they need help. And they'll unpack and get ready to go back to work and help their team. That's the kind of working style we have here. That's why I'm really careful when I add someone to the team.

So as a teacher, how do you prepare your students to be part of a design team?

They need a full experience. The starting point is a problem and they need to find a solution. They need to include production and research, a whole bunch of differ-ent steps. I usually share my experiences with every single step, and kind of try and guide them in that way.

I try to push them as much as I can. I tell them to go crazy. Experiments are totally

fine. And it's fun to watch that. I think that's the beauty of class projects. In the real world, it's a little different. [Laughs] A lot more conditions you have to follow. But I think that's our job, no matter what the conditions—we need to find a solution.

Why do you like to teach? What's the relationship between your practice and being an educator?

I like teaching because after my students have finished their projects, I feel really happy. I feel like [Singing] ahhhhhhhhhh. It's not really my project, and it's not really my baby, but it's like, they did it! That feeling, that last moment, because of that moment I want to keep teaching. Sometimes to get there, it's very tough, but because of that moment, it's really good.

Absolutely.

Another benefit is that I can look at what they do, and I can pick some of the top talent to join my studio.

[Loud laughter]

Rui Maekawa
John Olson

Saana Hellsten
Eric O'Toole

Alex Liebergesell
Chantal Fischzang

Roundtable
W18 Studios
Saturday
April 19th, 2014
1:00 P.M.

Chantal Fischzang

Alumnus / Communications Design
I graduated with an M.F.A. in 2012. I'm teaching graphic design right now at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey. I'm originally from Bolivia. I went to school in Florida for graphic design. I'm also practicing as a designer in the city independently and working on collaborative projects.

Rui Maekawa

Second Year / Communications Design
I'm from Japan too. In undergrad I studied architecture and computer programming — which is not my interest. I've been very interested in graphic design since I was young, but I couldn't get into college without an official exam. So I went to my school and then I found out there is no graphic design major. That's why I decided to come here to pursue my passion. I am a second-year.

Saana Hellsten

Second Year / Package Design
I'm from Finland and I'm here in my second year. My major is in packaging design. I actually did my undergrad in packaging design too, in Finland. After graduating I worked a couple of years as a graphic designer for a fashion company and then did art direction for fashion. And then I decided to come here. I'll be graduating in the fall.

John Olson

Second Year / Communications Design
I'm originally from Poughkeepsie, New York. I got my undergraduate degree in Columbus, Ohio, from the Columbus College of Art and Design in illustration. I worked there as a designer for a few years, and I recently moved back to New York to attend this program. I'm a second-year student finishing up my thesis work in a few weeks.

Alex Liebergesell

Faculty Member / Years at Pratt: 12+
I'm a full-time associate professor, appointed about two years ago. I'm originally from Tokyo, Japan, lived many years overseas. I went to Kent State University, where I studied architecture, a little bit of fine art and graphic design. I went to Yale University and got a graduate degree in graphic design, and I've been working for over twenty years in New York as a designer.

Eric O'Toole

Faculty Member / Years at Pratt: 22
I'm an adjunct assistant professor. I'm from upstate New York, Saratoga Springs. I went to Pratt in the late '80s to study industrial design. I work as an exhibition designer, designing exhibits for museums across the country. I recently got my M.F.A. in Interactive Digital Art, also from Pratt, because where else is there to spend your time?
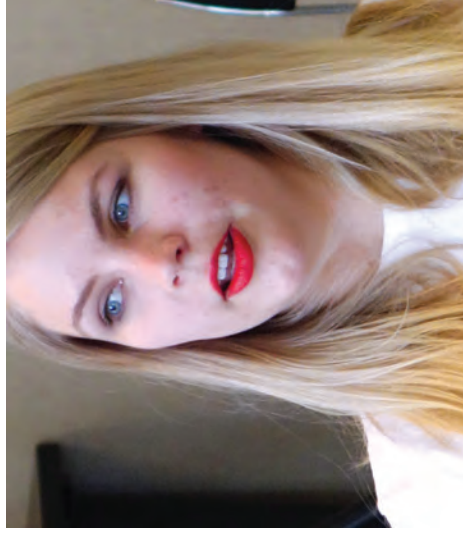

As designers we are constantly engaged in multiple dialogues with ourselves, our community, and our work. On two different occasions students, faculty, and alumni met to discuss issues relating to our department and profession. These informal roundtable discussions were a venue in which many different perspectives were brought together.

Chantal: Has my background given me a distinct point of view as a designer? I don't know if my work can put into words what my style is. I really enjoy bringing historic photography into play, to create some context, and using collage. I never did that before I was here. To get this idea of unison in images and making connections between different things at the same time. I think that in the way that I approach that very personal work…. It's not to say that it's necessarily an approach for everything, but that's how I start making work and things, or just looking at what's available.

Rui: Having had an architecture background, I feel design has to have action, but at the same time, it can be kind of weird. I always think about functionality in design.

Saana: My background is Finnish, Scandinavian design. My mom is an architect, and I've been surrounded by design for a very long time. Everything is just very simple and close to nature, and nothing is too all over the place. I know that has influenced my style and my point of view a lot. I think more about the function and if there is a reason for its existence. I guess that's why I keep doing work that tries to be more expressive.

Eric: More Italian. Less Scandinavian.

[Laughter]

John: My background as an illustrator has affected me the same way as architecture influenced you—in that what you're around influences how you view your work. When I first started as a graphic designer, I was nervous. *Illustration* was a negative word in some communities of designers, and I felt a little embarrassed about it. I think that now I've learned that—in a nuanced way—it influences the way I think. I think with pictures. I've learned to kind of articulate with words now, but beyond that I still start with pictures. And that's how I see the world and sketch things out and understand concepts—with images. I think I've learned to take what's useful and then add on to that and build a system of working.

Alex: I like what you said about words. For me, in terms of design, I try not to be too concerned about how I might be performing as an instructor or a collaborator. I try not to have too much self-regard or self-awareness. You just have to put yourself out there and do the best you can.
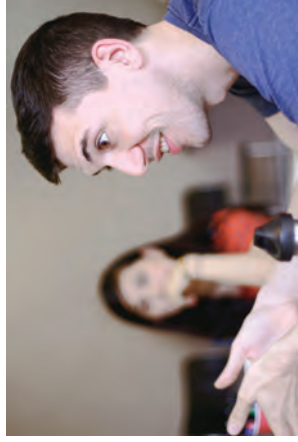
Chantal: I think from my background … I worked in advertising for a couple of years after undergrad, and this idea of always having a call to action really translates into the way I approach the work. And I did that here as well. It was very hard for me to have an open-ended thesis. For me, it had to do something, in the end, or make people do a very specific something. And I think I bring that into the way I teach and into the way I work. In the end, if it doesn't have a specific call to action, it is going to make people do something else after they have reacted to the work.

You just have to put yourself out there and do the best you can.

Saana: I think now about an Irish teacher in my undergrad and how he influenced me. He was a great teacher and professor, and he had a very strong emphasis on storytelling and narrative. I think trying to bring out some story or telling somebody's story…. His teaching really gave me that idea.

Alex: You can imagine, you guys are full-time students for two years. We are full-time teachers. We are learning all the time too. It's actually quite a privilege to be in an environment where your job's primary requirement is seemingly to teach, but it's actually to continue to learn.

Eric: When I started as a designer, I think I read *The Fountainhead* too many times. I was sort of an arrogant jerk to my collaborators. I had to work with educators and graphic designers, and they were all messing up my vision. I think that I evolved to appreciate my team members and what they had to bring to the table. And actually working with them instead of against them actually increased the value of the final product. I don't have a particular aesthetic; I only have the tools that I've spent my career sort of mastering. And I've continued to add new tools to that, and that's something that I've probably clung to most. Just continuing to expand my vocabulary and my capabilities in terms of how I can help the group that I work with tell the story that they want to tell.

Rui: I feel like I've learned how to learn from Pratt. Before, I wasn't able to ask for help or someone's opinion. I would always do my stuff by myself. And I came here and learned how to collaborate and interact with others in making awesome work.

Saana: Also you have to learn how to explain yourself and your work. You are questioned all the time.

Chantal: I'm not sure what I brought to Pratt. … I brought a lot of enthusiasm. I was really happy to be here.

Eric: And it wasn't crushed out of you?

Chantal: No, ha, no, it wasn't.

Eric: Was it amplified?

Chantal: It was, I think so. I came with a very specific way of making. And I was taught here to be comfortable with uncertainty and open-endedness and to explore more and research more. And to integrate what others bring to it and their knowledge and insight.…

Rui: I feel like when I collaborate with others, I think more, because I have to express myself to others.

I feel like I've learned how to learn from Pratt. I came here and learned how to collaborate and interact with others in making awesome work.

John: Yeah. It's like everything. I agree with the enthusiasm. I think I brought energy, and I left with stuff to back that up, the substance to make up for whatever bravado I came in with.

Chantal: I've also been kind of an outsider wherever I've lived.

Saana: We learn from each other so much. So I'm assuming that I gave out something for my friends and whomever I've helped.

Alex: In terms of the diversity of the Pratt community and how that has influenced me? I could say, I've been kind of inside, outside wherever I've lived. So being in a place where half the people have met somewhere else—and that applies to New York as a whole—makes sense to me. It's the nature of the household that I grew up in.

Chantal: I based my thesis on cultural exchange and how design could help translate that value visually. And in New York and in a scenario like design school where everything is about language and expression, attempting to make that part of our insights and our perspective—it makes sense to build upon that.

Saana: I know I've also experienced a lot of new points of view and more perspective, of course, from having people around the world around me, within design.

Rui: I like that there are a lot of international people here. I came here to study American design, actually, because all the Japanese people like everything in English. In Japan, people see a matchbox, they say, "Aw, cute!" I wanted to learn that, but people here appreciate Japanese design too, and I've learned that I should be proud of it.

Saana: Being around different international people has always been a part of my life, and I feel it's really important. It's one of the reasons why I wanted to come to New York. I knew that it was such a mix, and I feel like, for me at least, when I was in Finland I felt like my own style was very Scandinavian, and it was kind of normal. So coming here I found that I sort of established my style because I could reflect it to others.

Eric: Once I came to school, and ever since, I have been surrounding myself with different practices and feeding off of those. I think, now being at Pratt as a professor, just having students with a young enthusiasm and new ideas. And even old

John: I think the diversity within the program—both in terms of where people come from and what they were doing before—is really interesting and special about this program. Coming here and seeing that there are people from architecture backgrounds, science backgrounds, art and design backgrounds, um—everyone is kind of an outsider and is bringing something new to it, and I think it really expands the range of possibilities and the solutions you find in design.

Rui: Yeah, and I feel like the typical Pratt student comes from a really interesting background.

Chantal: I think the committee does look at different types of roles and characteristics that might lend themselves to interesting conversations in the classroom and interesting collaborations. And people who bring different perspectives to the work.

Rui: Pratt is one of the only master's programs in New York that accepts people not from a graphic design background. That's one of the reasons I applied to Pratt. I knew I couldn't apply to some master's programs without an undergraduate graphic design degree.

ideas that seem new to them, it sort of reinvigorates my enthusiasm for it. It's a real blessing to be a teacher.

Alex: In terms of Pratt students, I don't actually see the generational patterns that the media likes to characterize—you know, millennials or the nongenerationalists. Everyone is open to everything that came before them, and is therein looking for what comes ahead. I do think that that's an indication of the academic strength and the flexibility of the students that we get, regardless of their background, what colleges they went to, or where they're from. Generally no one is interested solely in being a designer or working one particular modality within design. And I think the program pushes that and allows for that, and the students respond in kind. That's how it should be, I think.

Everyone is kind of an outsider and is bringing something new to it, and I think it really expands the range of possibilities and the solutions you find in design.

John: I think that resonates a lot, especially the way the program is structured. There's a lot of room for possibility and direction within the design field—even in the way the classes are structured and professors that are here. There's a strong history of technical traditional design background, but there's also flexibility and new areas of design that are opening up and classes that explore that. The faculty are very diverse, but they're all very skilled in what they do.

Alex: There's no particular style, either. That's a question that often comes up. And I find it gratifying, because there's no dogma. We don't recruit you and say, this is kind of how we prefer you do things, and if you don't, we're not gonna really like you very much. I don't think that's a really good way to prepare anyone for something that's a pretty complex world out there.

John: Whether you want to be a hardcore branding person or do something more experimental, there's someone in this program who can guide you and help you with that, which is great.

Eric: Yeah, absolutely! And I think that the other thing about this program is, you're going to get what you put into this and what you grab. The teachers will do as much as they can for you, but it's not going to be spoon-fed to you. And those students who put a lot into it are the students who are the most successful. We've also got a range of students from people who really have never done anything to people who worked for twenty years professionally. You have to serve both of those students equally, so it's a challenge for both the students and the faculty. But I think it's part of what makes the program interesting.

Alex: I think, you know, it's apparent being on the admissions committee and speaking to a lot of prospective students that New York City, of course, remains a draw on a global scale. I think if you've got the energy and you want the challenge of working in this city—which is a rewarding and as we all know, can be a punishing city—then you are going to have that work ethic.

Saana: And I think Pratt students are pretty down to earth. I haven't met too many people who are coming here already being like this great designer who knows it all. And this space really brings us together.

Eric: It was a great addition to the department to get this sort of communal space.

Saana: Yeah, without it, it would be—oh my God!

John: I can't imagine.

Rui: Yeah, I think the studio is the best place to build a community. People come to the studio to work hard, and they are passionate about design, so I really get stimulation from them.

Alex: That makes me realize that what I said earlier about students and work equally applies to the faculty. While different sections of the same class will have commonalities, all of us are given a fair amount of actual freedom in how we approach and present the problems and execute the steps in the process.

There's a lot of room for possibility and direction within the design field—even in the way classes are structured.

John: Yeah, class is a great critique time, but when you do the work with other people, you learn a lot there too.

Eric: You're asking people what they think. You're getting a lot of incremental feedback from your classmates. I know that in order to be a successful designer, you need to be able to talk about design effectively and clearly and communicate different ideas. It's those conversations that you have in the studio, that help you build that language, when it's not happening in class.

Saana: It's also a lot about socializing, too. You know you can have your break and start talking to somebody. Whereas if you're at home, you're going crazy because you're just alone, working alone. So the studio is a lot about just socializing too, and I think it's a good thing that it's not just for working and that you can just sort of hang out.

John: The studio is a perfect place to fail together, too. In class it's about what you're delivering. But in the studio, you get to see what doesn't work and then help each other through that. And you know, at two in the morning when everything is f'ed up and you're freaking out, you talk to someone else and work through it. That's really helpful.

Eric: Yeah, absolutely. Because you're spending all of your time when you're not in class together. Whereas if it's just three hours of class, you get to say, "Hey!" … "Hey!"

Chantal: And because the classes are not necessarily heavy on the technology per se, that's when you get to interact with others in terms of how you make this. And you help each other and teach each other how to make things. I didn't know what I was going to do after graduating here, not having the knowledge of everyone around me.

Eric: Then you found out about the Internet.

[Lots of laughter]

Eric: Everything's on the Internet.

John: That's a good point about the technical skills over the conceptual problem-solving skills.... I think that's a real strength of the program — that we are not teaching specific software processes. It's in the studios when you figure that out and come together with people.

Chantal: It speaks so well to why we are all actually here. We're here to use those tools and find out how they work within our intentions, with what we want to say, rather than the other way around. Like all the people who don't go to grad school and just look it up on Google. And they think that they can do our work for less than us.

[Group laughter]

Eric: You sound a little jaded already? You graduated two years ago?

You're asking people what they think. You're getting a lot of incremental feedback from your classmates.

Alex: For me, a bulk of my career has been relying on tools, technology, methodologies, process — none of which was taught to me in a classroom. What was taught to me was how to work. As long as you understand the essential principles so that you can work effectively with people who are experts in those areas.

To understand what the constraints and possibilities are ... that's what makes us good problem solvers. I think it's a very precious and very special area that we continue to work in.

Eric: My education with computers has always been self-taught, but even the foundational education at Pratt actually taught me to teach myself. And just to be a little bit fearless. Being able to pick up a tool you've never used before and become comfortable with it in a short period of time is a critical capability.

Saana: I definitely think that is the beauty of being in grad school. You can do that and you can fail and you can try something, only to find that it is not working. That should motivate you to try different things that you know you wouldn't be able to do.

Chantal: Exactly what you're talking about — we were taught to figure out how to do things on a need-by-need basis. To figure out what this can be or what else it could be, and how do you achieve that. You teach yourself the tool and figure it out for that specific piece to work that way.

Eric: Grad school is one of the few places where you can actually try out a lot of different approaches. I know that I encourage my students, especially in thesis, to go beyond what they see and start exploring the fringes and the outer boundaries of what is defined as design to find their solution.

3:00 PM

Alejandro & Buzz

Have you guys worked on projects together?

A: We had Type I together but we didn't know each other then. I guess we got to know each other here at the studio.

B: At the end of the first semester, when I started to come to the studio more often.

Chuan-You (Buzz) Chang
Taipei City, Taiwan

"I'm Buzz. I'm from Taiwan. Before coming to Pratt I served in the Taiwanese army for a year, and before that I studied Politics and Economics in college."

Alejandro Torres Viera
Bayamón, Puerto Rico

"I'm Alejandro, from Puerto Rico. I moved to New York two years ago to start my graduate studies at Pratt. I have a bachelor's degree in Printmaking. I also played semipro soccer!"

A: Back then Buzz didn't have a desk in the studio yet, but he started just coming in and we started hanging out. Then we both got desks next to each other ... and now I can't work! [Laughs] I guess we started hanging out when we were both working here, which is cool because I feel that the studio is what gives the program a feeling of community.

B: Yeah, absolutely.

A: I believe it gives value to the program. Here you can bounce your ideas back and forth and get to meet people.

Have you had any other classes together?

A: No, but it feels like we have all our classes together.
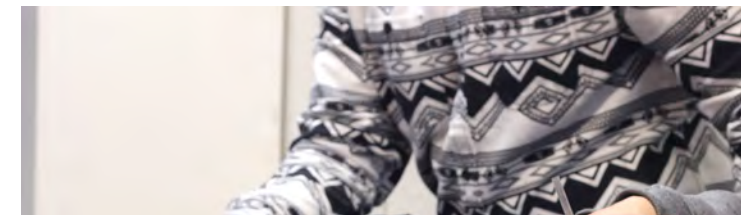
B: Since we are here all the time, I'm part of his projects and he's part of my projects. We go to each other for advice and opinions.

A: When I get tired of looking at my stuff, I ask Buzz to come over, because he has a great eye for details and always sees stuff I didn't notice.

B: We kind of have similar approaches to design.

A: Yes, like clean compositions, not randomly putting stuff on the page, having everything relate to something else.

Do you remember any particular project in which the other person helped you a lot?

A: The posters for the Dawn Hancock CC lecture!

B: Yeah!

A: That was your concept; I just executed it! And I executed it nicely!

How is being at Pratt for you, not coming from a design background?

B: I chose design because I suck so bad at math and I had zero interest in becoming a politician. My mom didn't like me just staying at home, hanging around, and she told me, "Think about your next step," so I was like, "Oh my God! What can I do?!?" I saw a friend who was doing design, and I thought, "I can try design; I'm way more creative than him!" I started learning Photoshop and Illustrator, I came up with a portfolio, and here I am.

I don't really know much about the details of design yet. I know how to execute using the software. I'm still learning a lot from people like Alejandro here. I'm learning a lot about the process, the thinking.

A: I did have a basic introduction to design in my undergrad, so I wasn't self-taught, but my portfolio was self-generated in its entirety. I was very proud of it. It was just self-started work, personal stuff.

I feel more confident about my design skills now.

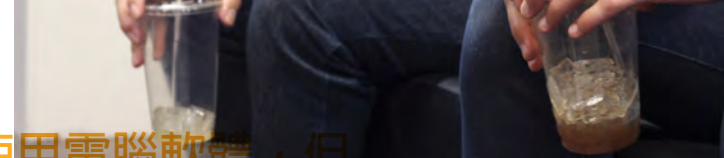**B:** I feel a little bit "not there yet."

A: But that's why we are here? [High five]

^ Poster for the Dawn Hancock lecture designed by Alejandro.

As a member of the CC, Alejandro was in charge of designing posters and other promotional materials for CC events.

我知道怎麼使用電腦軟體，但是我對於設計的內容其實還不是很了解。我在這裡持續學習，向**Alejandro**以及其他同學們討論設計流程和思考模式。

What have you learned about Latin America, Buzz?

Tania Lili is a second-year Communications Design student from Mexico City.

B: I've never been to Latin America, but now I feel Latin. Most of what I know about Latin America is based on Alejandro and Tania Lili. And football and baseball! [Laughs]

A: We always say that if I start a firm in Puerto Rico, I'm bringing Buzz with me. He is up for that, because he loves Puerto Rican food. We sometimes go to a Puerto Rican place close by.

B: Pescado frito! [Laughs]

A: And now he knows how to order in Spanish, even though I don't know a single word in Chinese. But I've come to know a lot of things about Taiwan through Buzz.

Saana & Juan Carlos

How did you meet?

S: We met here!

J: I got an e-mail from Amanda and Lillian when they were looking for a roommate and then I met them, but I'd never met Saana. So we met here, in the apartment.

How do you feel about the studio environment?

S: It's like our home. [Laughs]

J: Second home! [Laughs]

S: I'd say first home; this is our second home! [Laughs]

J: I mean we spend more time at the studio than we spend at home!

S: What I love about it is that you have the chance to actually hang out with other people, see their work and learn from it.

Mi forma de entender el diseño ha cambiado completamente. Ahora tengo un punto de vista más crítico.

J: And if you see someone there, you can just go, "Hey, can you help me with this?" You kind of get to know who is an expert at doing something, so you can go and ask them for help.

Juan Carlos Rodríguez-Rivera Cataño, Puerto Rico
"I'm a Communications Design student from Puerto Rico. I'm finishing my first year at Pratt, so I have one more to go!"

Saana Hellsten Lahti, Finland
"I'm twenty-eight, and from Finland. I'm studying Package Design and this is my second year."

S: It makes the design process a lot faster. You don't have to be all by yourself at home, figuring things out.

Have you helped each other with projects or assignments?

J: The chicken project! [Laughs]

S: Yes, he was my model for a project. My hand model!

J: I had to cut vegetables and chicken.

S: Because I needed man hands! But of course we talk about stuff all the time.

J: Especially during the subway ride.

S: And for us it is different, because we are in different programs, so it's interesting to talk.

Have you gotten to know aspects of each other's culture?

J: It is really hard to spell "Happy Birthday" in Finnish! [Laughs]

S: Yeah, my boyfriend is here and he is from Finland too, so all my roommates get to know a little bit of Finnish culture. And then Juan is cooking his food ... and playing his music.

J: And salsa!

S: And a lot of loud talking in the mornings! [Laughs]

J: Thank you!

S: I didn't know anything about Puerto Rico before I came here, and now I know a lot more about Latin America.

How is it sharing your apartment with two other Pratt Communications Design students?

J: It's cool because we have a rule: if the four of us are all home, we have a drink! [Laughs] I think the best part is when we are all at the studio together really late, because you don't have to take the subway or a cab by yourself. It's weird because sometimes we don't see each other in the apartment. We meet a lot more at the studio.

S: I guess it's also good because we all understand the schedule and how busy we are. So it's understandable if someone doesn't have the time to clean and do stuff like that.

How has Pratt affected your design practice?

J: Oh, Jesus. [Laughs]

S: Of course, you learn all the time. There are many different ways of thinking. And I guess it goes along with how many perspectives you get just by sharing the same environment with so many people.

J: Totally different cultures! Right now I feel that my way of understanding design has completely changed. The way of doing things, the processes, all that we talk about in our classes. I'm getting a more critical point of view. I hadn't explored that before, so I guess that's kind of the main aspect of how my design practice has changed.

S: Yeah, that's true. You need to explain more of what you're doing.

J: The reason behind it.

S: I guess here you have to define yourself.

Pidän studiossa eniten siitä, että siellä voi seurustella opiskelijakavereiden kanssa, nähdä heidän töitään ja ottaa oppia niistä.

Amanda & John

How do you two know each other? Do you work together at Pratt?

J: I think we're both at the studio a lot, which is a big thing, so we work together there, but we're also both on the Communications Committee.

A: We're on the Communications Committee together, which is essentially a team of five students who serve as the voice of the student body to the larger administration. Mainly our job is to plan events and social gatherings for students to attend.

J: Yeah, so we bring in different speakers and workshops, and we plan special events like Pratt Free School, which we did last month.

A: Which was a lot of work.

Can you tell us a Pratt Free School story?

A: I can tell you about the lady who really loves Free School! [Laughs]

So, Pratt Free School is a day of free classes open to the public, and we sent it out to be promoted over a few different forms of social media. A website called *Brokelyn* covered it, which is a blog largely about about free events in Brooklyn. This woman unaffiliated

Amanda Sepanski
Toledo, Ohio
"I'm from Toledo, Ohio, and I'm a second-year student, about to graduate. I also studied graphic design as an undergrad at the University of Dayton."

John Olson
Poughkeepsie, New York
"I grew up in Poughkeepsie and I lived in Columbus, Ohio, before coming to Pratt. I studied illustration as an undergrad before working as a designer there for three years, and now I'm here!"

with Pratt ended up seeing that post the morning of the event and, after the first class, she ran up to a group of us who were wearing Pratt Free School shirts and yelled, and I quote, "I just want to let you guys know that this is the greatest f-ing thing in the *world*!"

J: [Laughing] So. That was nice.

Have you worked on any projects other than Free School together?

A: We actually haven't worked together on many projects, which is interesting because we have such overlapping interests.

J: Yeah, we've talked about our theses a couple times and shared books … I think that's it. I like that we're friends, though, and that we do stuff together. [Laughs]

I like the fact that we're from very different parts of the program, but we still have a lot in common and get to talk about things sometimes. Although we don't usually work together on projects.

A: Yeah. It's refreshing to be able to have a conversation with somebody who you have little academic interaction with for the most part but who has the same kinds of interests as you.

Why did you choose to come to New York?

J: I wanted to be in a bigger city with more stuff. I also wanted to go back to school because I'd been an illustration major in college and was working as a designer, but not on projects that I thought were cool. I felt like I needed, maybe, a little refocusing to get there. And now I'm doing cool work. [Laughs]

A: I have a bachelor's degree in graphic design and was working as a graphic designer in Chicago, but I was doing in-house design for a small online marketing company. The company and their business wasn't really relevant to any of my interests, and I was just doing the same kinds of projects over and over again, so I was getting really bored. I also knew I wanted to get an M.F.A. someday because I want to teach design eventually.

And I also moved to New York because I felt that I had more access to more resources here than I did in Chicago. To some extent, it just seems more diverse and international.

What would you like to do after you leave Pratt?

J: I think there have been a couple projects here in which I've worked with certain people who are really smart and driven and different from me on conceptually challeng-

ing projects, and that's what I want. I know that's a really vague answer, but I'd like to be at a design firm where I would work on a team of, like, four to six designers who are really diverse and smart and who work on projects that have conceptual substance. I don't want it to just be like, [Speaks in a monotone, robotic voice] "Let's make a website; let's do a logo."
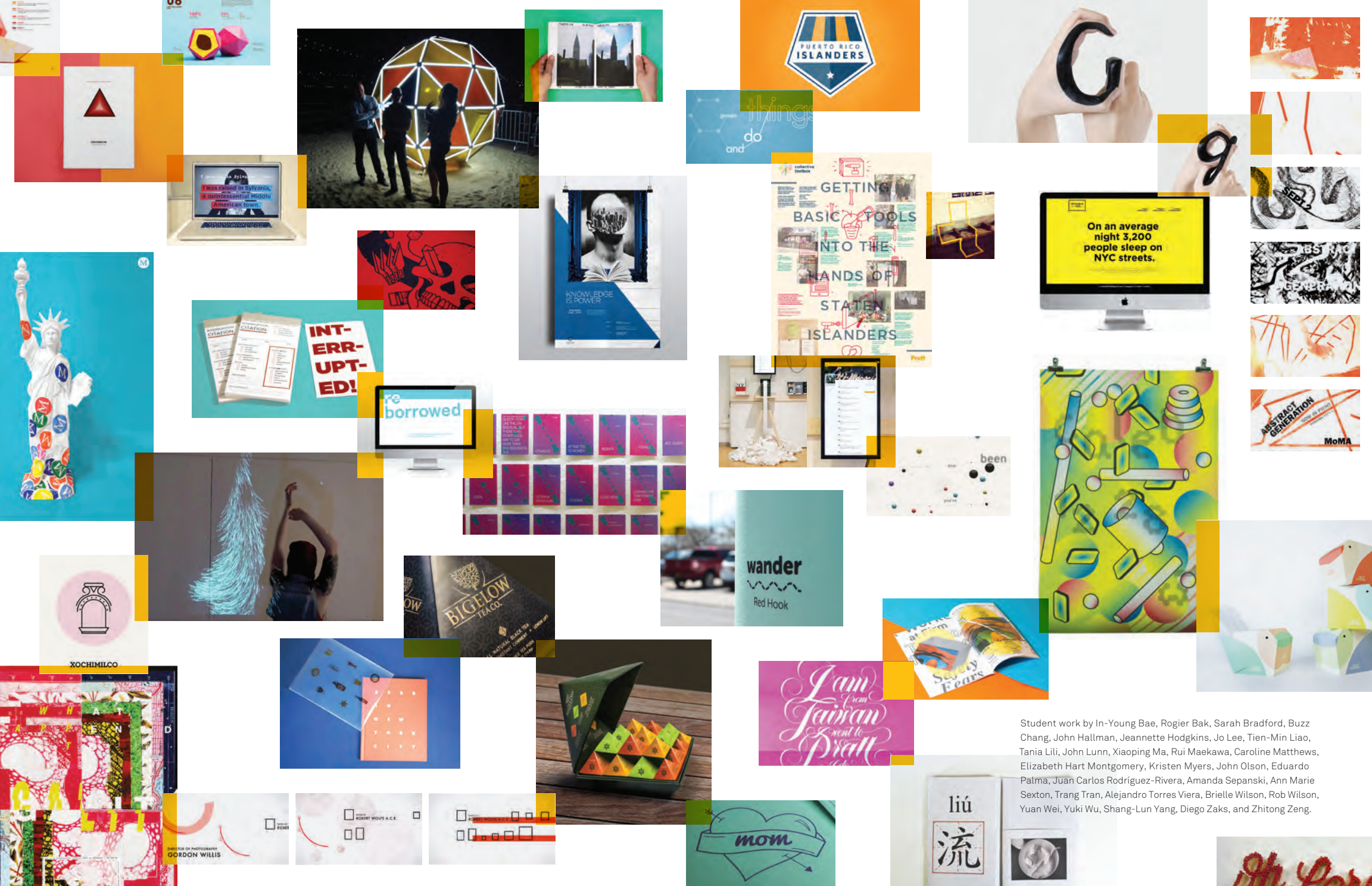
That's been the best part of Pratt, and that would be what I want out of a job.

A: Yeah, I think the best part of working at Pratt is that everyone here is, and I think this is the nature of grad school, a super motivated, self-initiated person. Everyone is smart with, like … goals in life, or else we wouldn't be here.

I'm personally really open to a lot of different routes as a designer. I do want to teach eventually, but I'm not really in a rush to do that. I think I need a little break from academia first, because the last two years were really intense. I see design's power as a tool. I want to spread design knowledge around to people who don't know anything about design at all. I mean, I want to work with other designers, but I also want people who have no prior understanding of design to collaborate with me and, I guess, extract the value of design for themselves. It's not really my goal to win design awards and be, like, a recognized lecturer. It's my goal to design things, to work with communities and see results and transformation.

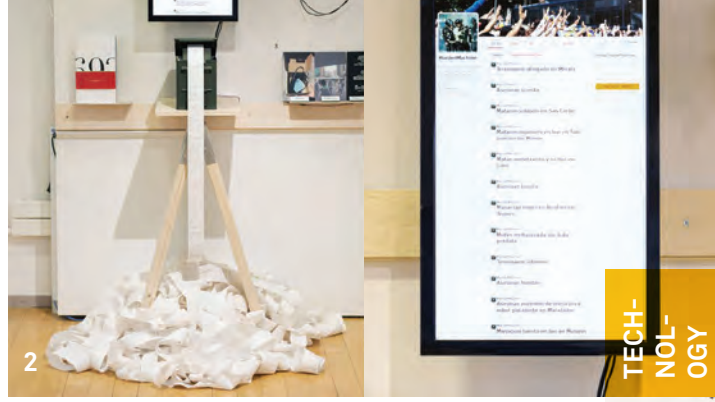**J:** I think ideally I want to do no work and just get awards and lecture.

[Both laugh]

Student work by In-Young Bae, Rogier Bak, Sarah Bradford, Buzz Chang, John Hallman, Jeannette Hodgkins, Jo Lee, Tien-Min Liao, Tania Lili, John Lunn, Xiaoping Ma, Rui Maekawa, Caroline Matthews, Elizabeth Hart Montgomery, Kristen Myers, John Olson, Eduardo Palma, Juan Carlos Rodríguez-Rivera, Amanda Sepanski, Ann Marie Sexton, Trang Tran, Alejandro Torres Viera, Brielle Wilson, Rob Wilson, Yuan Wei, Yuki Wu, Shang-Lun Yang, Diego Zaks, and Zhitong Zeng.

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1. *You Name It*, John Lunn | 2. *Twitter Murder Machine*, Diego Zaks | 3. *The Psychology of Your Future Self,* Yuan Wei | 4. *Designer-Free Poster Machine*, Xiaoping Ma | 5. *Self Promotion*, Buzz Chang | 6. *Wander Red Hook*,Tania Lili, Elizabeth Hart Montgomery, Ann Marie Sexton, and Alejandro Torres Viera | 7. *Bigelow Tea Rebrand*, Brielle Wilson

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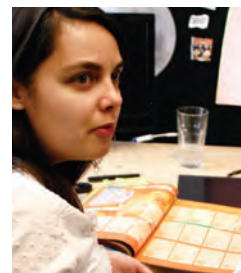**6**

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Bárbara & Jonathan

How has Pratt affected you as someone who has been involved in fields other than communications design?

J: I think from the very beginning, even in undergrad, I was trying to find ways to integrate the two, fine art and graphic design. There's a lot of talk about how they're different. To me, at the core of both is the communication of an idea to an audience. I think being at Pratt has helped me a lot. I think I've gained a lot of confidence and the ability to integrate the two fields into one practice for myself.

Bárbara Abbês
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
"I'm from Rio. I had been working as a designer for eight years before I came to Pratt. I'm about to graduate — almost done with everything!"

Jonathan Frey
Dayton, Ohio
"I studied graphic design for undergrad and then went on to study fine arts, specifically painting and drawing. Now I've decided to come back to design, looking for a little bit of a career change."

B: I was expecting something different. I have to deal with people questioning me a lot here, and I was used to "I'm doing my job and I'm going to present it to a client." Here, even if someone doesn't think my work is doing what it is supposed to, I have to have a good reason for doing things the way I did. I think I've learned a lot about defending my own work and questioning myself a lot more than I used to do, which to me is a good thing.

Have you worked together on a project?

B: The book!

J: Yeah, the book project.

B: We started a book over the summer and it's soon going to be done. It's Amanda, Jonathan, Rogier, and I. We are writing the book.

J: Yeah, writing is the emphasis of the book. There was a lot of collaboration over the summer as far as what our approach was going to be. Other than that, we help each other a lot. You know, it's someone else's project but everyone is always asking everyone else for their perspective, their opinions. They feel somewhat collaborative, all these individual projects. They aren't just isolated.

Eu aprendi muito sobre como defender meu trabalho e a questionar meus própios projetos e minha maneira de trabalhar.

Is there any project in particular that you have helped each other out with?

B: I just provide the tools! [Laughs] Like "Yeah, open the laser cutter." That kind of stuff.

J: She helped me on my gun timeline, giving me some feedback about things.

Did you guys get along right away once you met?

B: Jonathan's really quiet. I can kind of really read him. We shared a big studio last year; it was the two of us and three second-year students. I didn't know if he liked me or not! After a while I think you get to know people. [Laughs] I had fun with him!

J: Yeah, we sat next to each other. Bárbara, she is easygoing and she is fun, most of the time. [Laughs] I like to laugh, so Bárbara, Rogier, and I have been goofing around back here in the studio a lot this year. It's been pretty enjoyable. Helps with the stress of actually having to produce work all the time!

Yeah, you've personalized your studio a lot. You have a really nice space here.

B: I think we just have things that we like. We like video games and we have fun with it.

J: I think we seem to align pretty well in terms of space. She doesn't get annoyed that I'm kind of a messy

Rogier Bak is a second-year Communications Design student from Almere-Stad, Netherlands.

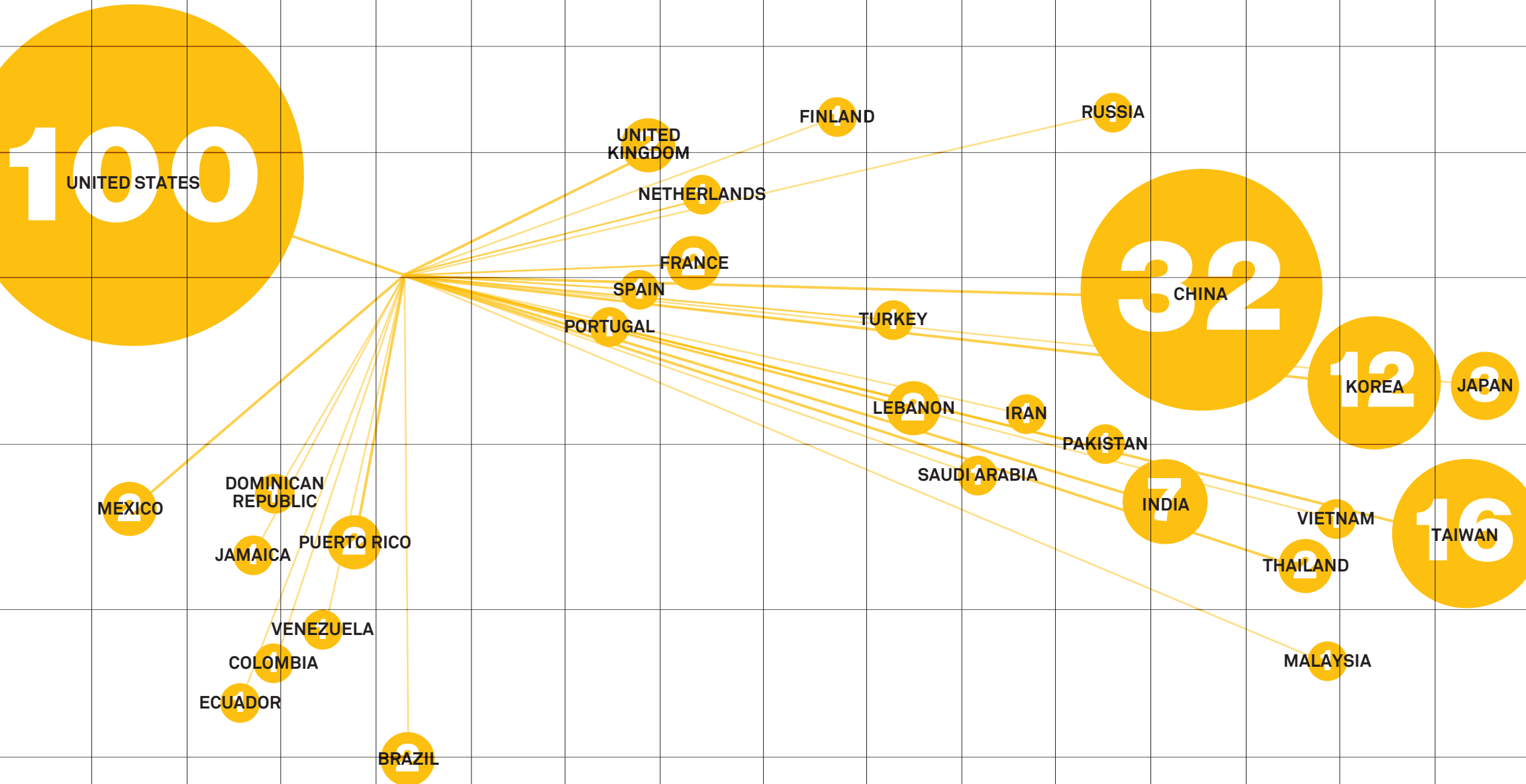guy over here. We like having the minifridge and the TV, our own stuff. We like making our space our own.

B: And I think we try to balance each other out. I know that I Skype a lot so I try to do that when Jonathan's not here, or I ask him before. I think we are respectful. We're good at that.

Have you gotten to know each other's cultural background?

J: Yeah, I've learned a little bit. I would say, just as a whole, that I wasn't really exposed to international students and the cultures abroad before. So having Bárbara from Brazil and Rogier from the Netherlands has been a real benefit of being in this program. I think I've learned a lot about the Netherlands, because Rogier really likes to talk about it.

B: I think we all learn about each other just from sharing the space. For example, I know who Betsy Ross is, and I didn't before. Now I know more about America!
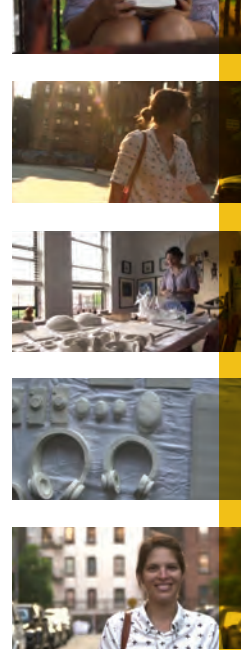
100 — UNITED STATES

FINLAND 4

RUSSIA 1

UNITED KINGDOM 1

NETHERLANDS 1

FRANCE 2

SPAIN 1

PORTUGAL 1

32 — CHINA

12 — KOREA

8 — JAPAN

TURKEY 1

LEBANON 2

IRAN 1

PAKISTAN 1

SAUDI ARABIA 1

INDIA 7

VIETNAM 1

16 — TAIWAN

THAILAND 2

MEXICO 1

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

PUERTO RICO 2

JAMAICA 1

MALAYSIA 1

VENEZUELA 1

COLOMBIA 1

ECUADOR 1

BRAZIL 2

2013–2014

GradComD STUDENT

DEMOGRAPHICS

PrattxHennessy

Pratt Institute partnered with Hennessy V.S. to launch an annual competition that challenges nine art and design students to explore the universal theme (and Hennessy's mantra) Never Stop. Never Settle. The competition, judged by representatives from Pratt and Hennessy, culminates with an exhibition featuring the top works. Student artwork is also showcased on the Hennessy website and social channels, providing students with exposure through the company's global platform.

"The Hennessy challenge provided our students with the opportunity to redefine their creative process," said Jeff Bellantoni, former faculty advisor and former GradComD Chair. "When academic institutions and corporations collaborate, students can benefit from having a springboard to experiment. Students from different backgrounds and disciplines took advantage of this unique opportunity and fully immersed themselves in a collaborative exchange — one that sparked an innovative range of new work."

> **Karla Saldaña** participated in the Hennessy Challenge, focusing her work on tracking social media usage.

< *Project Movements,* **André De Castro's** winning project, is a vibrant series of silk-screened portraits giving voice to an international group of young people who are trying to make a difference in the world.

Photos by:
John Gilbert Young

The perfect scenario for creativity.

I participated in the partnership between Pratt and Hennessy in 2013. A group of students were asked to develop a project related to Hennessy's theme: Chase Your Wild Rabbit. A metaphor about a personal search, it means a never-concluding, ever-evolving search of life and work. In my case, understanding what I am chasing was one of the reasons I came to Pratt in the first place. It was not an easy task, but the initiative's deadlines, guidance, financial support, and creative freedom fostered the perfect scenario for advancing in this search.

The project I developed was an ongoing visual panorama of political manifestations in Greece, the USA (Occupy), Turkey, and Brazil through a series of personal, political silkscreen portraits. I engaged people though social media and asked them questions that served as a base to develop compositions. When presented as a group, the prints establish a visual dialogue. Meaning is perceived through repetitions, contrast, color, and form. My intention with the portraits was not to elevate heroes, but to emphasize the agency of all by allowing two points of view: the individual and the collective. After this competition ended I kept developing this project, evolving it in different directions.

Because this initiative is a personal chase, the possibilities are endless and each experience unique. For me, it aligned theory and practice and allowed me to better understand my own agency as a designer.

André De Castro