I, Nicolas Carr, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design in Design.

It is entitled:
“THE GAME DON’T CHANGE”

Designing Beats and Rhymes,
A metaphor and guide to ideate design concepts

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“THE GAME DON’T CHANGE”

Designing Beats and Rhymes,
A metaphor and guide to ideate design concepts

Master of Design

in the Department of Design, Architecture,
Art and Planning

by

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May 2013

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Abstract:

This research aimed to investigate how to integrate the design process with creative techniques found in rap music production in order to help architects, product and fashion designers ideate concepts. To understand this integration, interviews and surveys were performed to develop connections between the creative processes of designers and rap musicians. Later on, the research findings were synthesized into sets of design hip hop methodologies that were combined and developed into a guideline intended for designers. After exploring different frameworks to communicate this guideline, a website was created as a prototype. Both designers and non-designers evaluated the website. Their positive feedback proved that integrating the design process with hip hop methodologies improves the creativity and innovation of design concepts. It also makes a powerful connection for youth who are engaged in rap music to be inspired and educated about design.
Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my parents and my sister who have always given me their unconditional support throughout all my life endeavors. This thesis would not have been possible without the support and guidance of my advisors. I would like to thank Craig Vogel for believing in me and encouraging me to think beyond what was possible. I would also like to thank Noel Anderson and Stephen Slaughter, who kindly supported my research in every step of this journey and generously shared all of their honest thoughts to advance my project.
Table of Contents:

Chapter 1 - Introduction:

1.1 Personal Background ............................................................................................................. 1
1.2 Fundamental Truth ................................................................................................................ 1
1.3 Roots of Rap Music .............................................................................................................. 2

Chapter 2 - Research Method

2.1 Hip Hop Arts Analysis ........................................................................................................... 5
2.2 Design Process Analysis ....................................................................................................... 9
2.3 Developing Guideline .......................................................................................................... 11
2.4 Prototype Model .................................................................................................................. 12
2.5 Website ............................................................................................................................... 16

Chapter 3 - Creative Process

3.1 Intent .................................................................................................................................... 20
3.2 Inspiration ............................................................................................................................. 25
3.3 Conceptualize ...................................................................................................................... 30
3.4 Refine ................................................................................................................................... 34

Chapter 4 - Testing and Evaluation .......................................................................................... 37

Chapter 5 – Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 39

Bibliography ............................................................................................................................ 42

Appendices ............................................................................................................................... 43
Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Personal Background:

Architecture, design and personal interests motivate my thesis. With formal education in architecture as my background I also explore practices such as fashion and graphic design. As a result I’ve developed a strong interest in conceptualizing design ideas. My goal is to cultivate this into a career. With this in mind it is imperative that I develop strong skills in creativity and innovation. To zone in on this I have started to tap into an energy that’s fueled and influenced my work over the past several years: hip hop arts. As a fan of the music, dance, and graffiti I have always been amazed by its growth and range of expression. In the past I have founded my own street wear brand and also practice mixing and scratching vinyl records as a personal hobby. The master of design thesis provides an opportunity to cultivate methodologies to integrate two seemingly distant types of creative disciplines that I am involved in, rap music and design. This thesis also opens the door to communicate, educate and inspire my peers and a younger generation about design.

1.2 Fundamental Truth:

At the core of design there are two counter balancing elements, the opportunity and the solution. The design process begins understanding an opportunity and ends at creating a solution. But the process isn’t quite this straight forward. The steps require flexibility and freedom to assist navigation, repetition of steps and adjusting ideas. The goal of this thesis is to develop a design guideline that anticipates creativity and innovation.
To accomplish this goal the guideline seeks opportunities to implement hip hop methodologies. The spirit of hip hop music is driven by hybridization, collaboration, resourcefulness and originality. The makeup of this creative spirit serve as core principles that will assist in developing creativity and innovation. Typically an output for the creative process of hip hop musicians is a rap song, for designers it can be anything from a house to a shoe. This simple analogy breaks down into several complex layers that demonstrate all the similarities between the two seemingly distant creative peers. The websites I designed is a prototype model of the guideline, it simplifies these layers into four main categories: intent, inspiration, concept and refine. These categories work in a similar fashion to gears, linked together through unique relationships. Each category serves as a pivotal phase in developing design concepts.

1.3 Roots of Rap Music:

The term hip hop is a noun, verb and adjective. People from all over the world define it in their own way. The most general explanation for the term is that it describes a type of culture and lifestyle. Hip Hop encourages a particular type of expression that integrates style, attitude, aesthetic, beliefs, reflection and a redefined cool. The manifestations of the hip hop culture and lifestyle are found in the Hip Hop arts. The four primary hip hop art forms are graffiti, break dancing, rapping and dj. So basically for an example, “Rap is something you do and hip-hop is something you live” (KRS 1). The lasting impression that the hip-hop arts have made on our society prove that it is more than just a trend or fad. All of the art forms are empowered by craft, which are unique according to the discipline. There is both an old school and new school generation that practice similar traditions. Other elements of hip hop have
arose such as fashion, language, and knowledge of self that derive from the same set of principles. There is “Bad hip-hop art which is invariably inarticulate, unpolished, amateurish, and juvenile”. As well as “good hip-hop art [which] is highly articulate, coded, transcendent, revolutionary, communicative, and empowering” (Chang).

The legendary DJ Afrika Bambaataa is responsible for the nomenclature of Hip Hop. He coined the phrase in Bronx, New York during the early 1970’s when local media stations began investigating the arts. The origins of hip hop are extremely dynamic, often argued, politically challenging, and highly complicated. The same social issues that caused its birth in the early 1970’s are still prevalent today. “The end of the civil rights movement in the late 1960’s, the turmoil of the militarized political movements, urban blight and the advent of Reaganomics, the digital age, an exploding prison population, and epidemics of crack, guns, and AIDS – all of these forces converged to create a socioeconomic landscape unlike any other in history. That situation combined with New York’s inner city demographics – southern Blacks living alongside Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Jamaicans and a handful of working poor whites, all of whom drew upon both inherited and appropriated cultures in the face of urban decay and accelerated technology – created a legacy of art forms and language that would wind up being inherited by all races, colors, and classes around the world.” (Chang).

“Rap is not pop, if you call it that then stop” (Q-tip). Rap is the most prominent art form of hip hop. It is the musical core of the culture, an expressive verbal practice through which personal stories are told over beats. The present day rap artist can be figuratively described as the 21st century American griot. Rap music is in fact an African diaspora. It is a descendent of ancient African musical traditions that were practiced prior to the African slave trade. The soul,
vocal style and sound patterns connect the rhythms and chants of tribal African music with the hymns and work songs sung by slaves to overcome oppression. These hymns and work songs later became pivotal influences used to revolutionize the creative production of jazz, soul, blues and funk music. All of which serve as the cornerstones of rap music. Jazz, soul, blues and funk music continue to live in the beats of rap music today by way of looped samples.

Initially, the rappers role was only meant to assist the DJ of a party. “They rapped these Rumba/toasting/Plena/blues limericks over the instrumental disco beats that DJ’s were playing in the clubs” (Chang). The limericks did not have much substance then. It only served as transitions between songs and an act to engage the crowd through call and response methods. However as these party limericks grew to become more sophisticated rhymes of their own, the rapper stole the show from the DJ and was no longer marginalized as just a hype man. As rhymers saw an opportunity to become more vocal and reflective by telling stories over beats the art form of rap took shape, evolved and exploded.
Chapter 2 - Research Method

2.1 Hip Hop Arts Analysis:

The overarching purpose that inspires my research method is to seek opportunities to integrate hip hop culture with design. The website’s goal is to develop some sort of approach, tool and or guide to assist architects, fashion and product designers on how to use this knowledge. However with such a generic and open ended purpose, there are many different possible research methods. It is important that the research directs me in a path that narrows my focus and produces a specific approach. If it does not, I risk not only wasting time but also spreading myself too thin and neglecting any real insight. Before I can narrow my focus I need to be able to understand and measure everything my purpose entails. The first step requires me to split my research into two major areas. One area focuses on a critical analysis of the hip hop culture and art forms. The second area focuses on the design process.

In order to critically analyze hip hop, I need to map its evolution. This means noting any and all relevant content that provides a holistic story leading up to the creation of hip hop and its growth until today. It is important to build upon my general knowledge of hip hop’s history and the dynamics that influenced it. I researched the drivers of the culture, major turning points, social criticism, trends, and the creative process for its four primary art forms: rap, graffiti, break dance and dj. The information that I was interested in focused on Zeitgeist. This includes the evolution of black music such as jazz, soul, funk, and rap music. I researched the social events that effect and affect the hip hop demographic. I focused on the individuals celebrated for tremendous impact and innovative contributions, and most importantly, any
evidence that demonstrates an influence or direct involvement of hip hop with design. To provide some sort of clarity during this mapping I choose to start developing a visual timeline. I needed some sort of comprehensive reference material for myself that allowed me to cross check my insight and synthesize my research. To create this reference I start at the birthplace of the culture, in Bronx New York around the early 1970’s. From this point, I move both backward and forward in time noting critical moments prior to the African slave trade and fast forward leading up to the present. The chapter section titled Roots of Rap Music explains the details and impact of these moments. To research this content the following sources provide a great range of perspective and information. Dr. Thompson’s book titled the Aesthetics of Cool: Afro Atlantic Art and Music describes the lineage between the present state of hip hop and cultural expressions of Africa through traditional ideas and symbols. Another critical resource for this timeline was a VH1 documentary called Tanning in America. It told the story of how the mental complexion of American society changed while embracing the growth of hip hop culture. The website www.infoplease.com provides context for the events that I referenced. It explains on a year by year basis the most important news stories in the categories of world events, sports, entertainment, economics and deaths. The timeline combined all of this information with images and a brief description.

Once the timeline was completed I was able to develop a better understanding of hip hop culture, as well as seek several different approaches to integrate it with design. My initial intention was to create a guide to inform designers of the proper aesthetic cues that connected with the hip hop consumer. However, judging from the timeline I could already tell that this
would be a very difficult task with minimal value for designers. It would require me to continue my research on marketing campaigns and the economic discussions surrounding the culture, something I was not interested in pursuing. The timeline assured me that there were several different ways that the hip hop arts spoke to creativity and innovation. Continuing to the next phase of my research about the hip hop culture I focused on examining the four art forms. From the DJ to rap, graffiti and breakdance there were a set of creative processes and techniques that are beneficial to implement in the design process. The information from the timeline gave me an opportunity to highlight all of the striking parallels between the hip hop arts and design. My goal was to begin diagramming the creative process of each type of art. Mapping diagrams created the ideal format for me to organize, analyze and synthesize content quickly and efficiently. It provides a collective perspective with a hierarchy of information. To make these diagrams I took a different approach besides just a traditional literature review. Instead I watched documentaries and several behind the scenes interviews for each type of art form. In a linear form I synthesized the general steps of creative processes shared amongst the artists. Each major step served as a category for specific actions and reflections that the artist performed. I used keywords to title the steps and then listed the various questions and decisions that the artist need to make before moving forward.

At this point I had a vast amount of information that provided great background knowledge, but I hadn’t yet made any remarkable findings that would inform me about the guide to assist designers. It was at this point that I realized that this was a perfect time to specify my focus even more since I now had enough information to compare the creative techniques for each hip hop art form. Keeping in mind my vested interests and what made the
most sense for designers of all types, I chose the creative process of rap music as my focus. The notion that rap music manipulates sounds in a similar method to designers manipulating design elements gave me a great start to draw upon great connections.

To move forward it was imperative to build upon my initial diagram of creating rap music. To add further detail I decided to create two new diagrams that split the content according to the two different roles. This meant that there was one diagram that provided analysis about the actions of a rapper writing and performing lyrics and another diagram that explained the process of a beat maker researching and creating patterns to serve as an instrumental for the song. In the same format as the previous diagrams each major step served as a category for specific actions and reflections that the artist performed. I used keywords to title the steps and then listed the various questions and decisions that the artist needed to make before moving forward. I read several articles that provided instructional material on how to be a rapper and beat maker, but the content they provided I had already researched. However documentary films inspired by the artist themselves provided much further insight so that I could complete the diagram with greater detail. In terms of understanding the art form of rapping I referenced a documentary called From Nothing to Something: The Art of Rap. In this film the legendary rapper Ice T is followed around in New York as he speaks with twenty plus different critically acclaimed rappers. In reflective conversations the rappers shed light on their perspective about several techniques used to both write songs and perform them. The beat making film The Beat King used a similar approach. Allah Mathematics, hip hop producer of the rap group Wu-Tang, spoke with several producers to get the scoop on their inspirations, use of technology, format to make a beat, approach to collaboration and more. With note taking I was
able to collect nuggets of prime insight on the creative process of rap music. I incorporated this information into the existing diagrams. Up until this point all of my research was flat because it only included information that I found on my own, as opposed to speaking with rap musicians. I felt that I was well equipped to begin interviewing rappers and beat makers that I knew personally to see what their feelings were about the creative process and my diagrams. I interviewed three rappers and three beat makers. Each interview started with a very brief statement about my intention for the interview. I simply told them that I was interested in the connections between rap music and design. I also gave them the heads up that I did not expect them to try and make those connections for me, but instead only speak on their experiences in creating the art. From there I proceeded with a few general questions to spark a conversation about their creative process. Allowing them to ramble and only ask questions when I felt it was needed to guide the conversation was the best method. They felt very open to express themselves and I was able to record interesting stories as well. At the end of the interview I showed them the diagram to ask if they saw any ways that I could improve upon it. After completing the interviews I had a wealth of knowledge and insight that I could begin integrating into the design process.

2.2 Design Process Analysis:

The second major area of research dealt with the design process. I researched several different philosophies, traditional and specialized approaches, stages of creation, exercises, etc. This research also took into consideration the differences and similarities between the different
design types, including architecture, fashion, product and graphic. I choose to continue representing the content in the form of diagrams to maintain consistency. The diagrams also made it possible to quickly correlate the two sets of major research between design and rap music. Starting with the very simple 5 stages of the design process I began listing all of the tasks for each phase. I soon realized that the content in the first few stages of the design process leading up to conceptualizing were parallel to the creative process of rap music. At this moment it occurred to me that the website would focus on the process of creativity and innovation. It would explain methods that improve designers approach to collecting and combining several different ideas. To continue I needed to complete some more research on the design process. I read articles and books pertaining to this subject, and watched interviews from critically acclaimed designers. The most important literature came from the book *The Design Process*. It provides several different approaches to conceptualize a design idea. The book communicates this information from the perspective of a manual, with chapters and sections dividing the content according to the phase of the design process. This quickly took shape as a starting point for my guide that I developed. Each chapter had objectives, it then explained these objectives in great detail with examples, included a designer interview and ended with a set of exercises for the reader to practice. The title of the chapter headings were a great inspiration for me and the communication method made a lot of sense. (Need to write about the book jamming)

The research pertaining to the design process was still flat because it only included information that I found on my own. I needed to get other designers involved with my research to assure that I was headed in the right direction. I surveyed young designers to pick their
brains about the troubles and approaches with design processes. I asked questions pertaining to their methods and gave them opportunity to vent and give opinions. The survey tested well and I was able to collect great information that informed me about designing the tool. The students were able to express that sketching is the most common method for recording and generating ideas. In addition, they stressed that a significant portion of the design process is completed while on the computer. The survey also acknowledged the opportunity space for a creative guide to be used at the beginning of a design project and when seeking approaches to overcome creative block. To synthesize all of my research and make it applicable I created a prototype of the guide.

2.3 Developing Guideline:

The strategy behind the design of the website is to create an effective communication method that properly presents all the valuable insight from my research and interviews. The website serves as a multipurpose resource for designers. It introduces a unique guideline and structure that motivates and inspires designers to ideate design concepts. To accomplish this the website uses hip hop methodologies comprised of techniques and strategies found in rap music to influence a designer’s creative process.

Creating the website could be broken down into two major phases. The first phase was creating a paper base prototype model that took the shape of a workbook. The second phase evolved the prototype model into a website. These two phases were completed without knowledge of the concrete details pertaining to an end result. It was rather a journey that I
partook using clues from my research and interviews to inform me of my next set of decisions. Midway through the research, only after I had specified my focus, I was able to develop an abstract vision for the website.

2.4 Prototype Model:

During the primary stage of creating the prototype model, I attempted to synthesize my research findings in a manner that presented useful information to users in the simplest form possible. The research method chapter explains that a majority of the research is done in a diagrammatic form. In a linear arrangement the diagrams outline the general and specific creative processes for both rap musicians and designers. Due to the sequential nature of the diagrams it occurred to me that the prototype should follow a similar format. This presented the idea of using a series of steps that the prototype would be built around. It was at this point that I realized I was creating was a unique structure, framework and a set of guidelines that designers could resource. The research diagrams that were most critical for the prototype were split in two halves according to their information content, whether it pertained to the actions of a designer or rap musicians. The prototype had to fuse these two sets of data in a way that best complimented the designer’s creative process.

I began the process of fusing these two sets of data by concentrating on the overlap and noting the similarities amongst the data sets. My research allowed me to quickly highlight all of the immediate parallels between designers and rap musicians. In the act of elaborating and generalizing on this information the basis for the structure of the prototype began revealing
itself. Broken down into its simplest form the overlap between the two creative processes can be divided into quarters. These quarters were the four main steps that fully ideate and conceptualize a design idea. They were as follows, defining a creative intent, researching and developing a palette of inspirations, combing ideas to form a concept, and finally critically editing the design idea so that it is refined (later in this thesis dissertation I will expound in greater detail on each of these steps as its own chapter). I did not want the guidelines to be extremely extensive and become a burden to use. This meant I needed to refrain from presenting the information in bulk but instead piece the content so the user can navigate through it. In addition to this, dividing the content into quarters provided opportunity for the guidelines to become flexible. It gave the user the power to choose, they could navigate according to what step of the design conceptualizing they were in, or wanted to revisit.

The strategy for the prototype at this point was to create an exercise workbook. In totality the workbook paper base model includes six sections. My interviews informed me that my intended users spend the majority of their design time on the computer, so the prototype model needed to sync with their working environment. The workbook would be accessible as a downloadable adobe pdf. In totality the workbook paper base model includes three sections. The outline below describes the structure, page titles, and content of these sections:

1. **Introduction:**
   
   A. The introduction section provided the user with a synopsis on the metaphor of designing beats and rhymes. It briefly explained the values of the workbook and how to use it.
2. **Workbook Exercises:**

   **A. Intent:**

   (1) **Collage Page:** Inspiring images related to phase. The purpose of the collage is to present the user with provocative and conceptual visuals before introducing text. This way each exercise starts with an illustration of the abstract essence and provokes connections to the metaphor.

   (2) **“The Art of Beats & Rhymes” Page:** Explains the techniques that rap musicians use during each particular step of the music making process. It highlights the hip hop methodologies that are most beneficial and influential for a designer’s creative process.

   (3) **“Designer Challenge”**: Provides an opportunity for the user to reflect on these new learned techniques by completing an exercise consisting of design challenges. The challenges are in the form of several connected questions. These questions intend to give the user a new perspective. It creates a series of scenarios that seek opportunities to experiment and implement hip hop methodologies into their design idea. There is appropriate space given for the user to briefly note their response to the challenges.

   (4) **Example Page:** A combination of visuals and text explains a case study of design work from notable designer who creatively used hip hop methodology during this phase of conceptualizing a design idea.

   **B. Inspiration:**

   - *Pages (1)-(4) Repeated*
C. Concept
   - Pages (1)-(4) Repeated

D. Refine
   - Pages (1)-(4) Repeated

3. Background Information:

   A. An appendix that summarized my research on the historical background and evolution of hip hop culture with supported imagery. This information provides context for the metaphor and exercises.

   The prototype model was a great start for understanding how to create an effective communication method that properly presents all the valuable insight from my research and interviews. However there was still a great opportunity to enhance this model. A major concern was that the prototype lacked a sense of viable expression and energy that is manifested in rap music. The text and visuals alone did not give the correct impression of the voice needed to discuss this topic. The basis of the metaphor is rooted in music, so I needed a way to engage the user with sound and a pdf cannot accomplish this. In addition, this model left little room for the user to collaborate with others on their design ideas. For all of these reasons I decided to create a website that can serve as a multipurpose resource for designers. It offered a more dynamic platform to introduce the unique guideline and structure from the prototype model. Audio and visual content could be made accessible for the user. It also provided an immense set of methods to improve interaction and collaboration. Proper execution in these areas of improvement increased my chances of motivating and inspiring designers to ideate design concepts.
2.5 Website

To develop the website I needed support in coding. I have very little experience in java script writing and creating websites from scratch. So I choose to use the services provided by the internet company WordPress to assist me. The prototype provided everything that I needed in terms of structure and format. So I leveraged the available templates offered by WordPress that best supported my intended framework. WordPress gave me the power to quickly post and arrange my content how I saw fit and avoid the technical issues of building a site. The template that I chose allowed me space for a title header, background image and the opportunity to create as many pages as I’d like. The website has a total of nine pages. The user can navigate through the pages by clicking the tabs under the header. The first three pages serve as an introduction to the website. The “Home” page welcomes the user to the site, and the “Start Here” page is meant to briefly introduce the user to the concept of the metaphor designing beats and rhymes. It explains in a general sense of how the parallels between rap music production and creative design can benefit designers. The “Intro” page begins the journey into sound (footnote). It provides evidence for the parallels. The next four pages are titled “Intent”, “Inspiration”, “Concept”, and “Refine”. These pages explain to the user how to implement hip hop methodologies into their design idea. There is a “Cypher lounge” page which serves as a blog for the users to post and exchange design ideas. The final page is titled “Cultural Insight”. It provides the historical background and evolution of hip hop culture. After assembling the template for the website the next step required me to choose a domain. The
The title of my thesis is the “The Game Don’t Change” and luckily the web address www.thegamedontchange.org was still available at that time.

With the domain and template set, I was prepared to start filling the content. The prototype prepared most of the content that was needed so I chose to focus on the graphic tone and illustrations to give the site a proper expression aligned hip hop aesthetic. The header title was very important, because it gives the first impression of the site and it’s a consistent illustration throughout the website. As my concept I chose to reuse the visual language of the Spike Lee movie “Do The Right Thing”, reference Appendix C. In my research I found that the movie was a critical turning point in the cultures evolution and the aesthetics of the cover were quite iconic and relevant to my topic. The background poster was also another critical graphic illustration. It needed to make a connection with the header and visualize the concept of the metaphor. It’s a medley of several cropped images arranged and layered over each other. Each image needed to have some sort of connection to hip hop culture or provide a visual cue to symbolize design. (Footnote, breakdown of the images). With the basics of the site complete it was now time to begin exploring different options to make the content a bit more exciting and interactive compared to the prototype.

Building from the prototype model I focused on how to introduce audio to the website so that I could give the user a more engaged experience when learning about the rap musician’s creative techniques. It occurred to me that the purest way to do this was to actually take them into the recording studio. From this point on I began exploring the possibility of communicating content through video for the intro page and the pages pertaining to the four stages of design conceptualization. I knew that YouTube was a relatively easy tool for the user to interact with
and it gave me power to upload and share original content. I also knew that there were a few different methods of directly downloading videos from YouTube so that I could manipulate them. This meant that instead of forcing the user to read extensive material, they could watch short films on both rap musicians and designers describing their creative techniques. I started downloading several interview videos to build a catalog. Using a movie making software I chopped up the videos into short insightful clips and organized them according to the topics about creativity that the artist discussed. I then compiled these clips to make five short films, one introduction film and one for each of the four stages. The average length of these films is 10 minutes. The introduction film was a bit abstract. It introduced the concept of the metaphor and gave the user background knowledge about rap music and the design process. All the films that communicated the four stages were developed in a similar format. It started with conceptual photo with the name of the stage as the title. The next scene is a definition of the creative stage. Following this was a clip from a movie that conceptually acted out the definition. Static appears and the first rap musician interview begins. A few rap musician interviews offer the user insight on the hip hop methodologies. Several different rap song instrumentals are playing in the background as the musicians speak. The music and content topic creates segue for several design interview clips to follow. After a few different insights and perspectives from designers the film ends with the definition of the stage reemphasized to bring the content from the clips together. Using video empowers the user to be able to stop and rewind as they saw fit to review content. The videos could be watched in any of the four creative process pages, reference appendix D.
Continuing on my exploration to make the website more interactive I focused my energy on the “Cypher Lounge” page. This page is a response to the lack of collaboration that was noted in the prototype model, reference appendix F. It serves as a blog for the users to post and exchange their design ideas. Adjusting a few setting through WordPress allowed me to give the user the capabilities of commenting with pictures for any of the post. This created an internal dialogue and allowed the designer to bring outsiders into the conversation. The practice of collaboration is a hip hop methodology as well the blog gave the user access to exercise it.

The final page to explore communication methods was the “Cultural Insight” page. During my research I developed a visual timeline for the historical background and evolution of hip hop culture. WordPress has the capabilities of adding slide shows to a page that makes it easy for users to navigate through a gallery of images. To complete this page it was only a matter of organizing the images into sets and sequence them chronologically.
Chapter 3 - The Creative Process:

The following four sections of this chapter provide an overview of the content provided on the website to guide designers in conceptualizing design ideas. It elaborates on the set of principles that the website refers to as “rapper hooks”. The “rapper hooks” are hip hop methodologies that designers can implement immediately into their design process. This section explains each stage of the creative processes including identifying an intent, researching inspiration, conceptualization and refining. The sections reference quotes from the videos on the website to provide examples for the “rapper hooks”.

3.1 Intent:

Identifying an intention is a great first step to ideate a design concept. An intention is thing that you plan to do or achieve, something that serves as an aim or purpose. It encourages creativity with an overall vision and direction that improves clarity and focus for new ideas. The initial stage of conceptualizing a design idea is very delicate and it involves several factors. It requires the designer to wrestle with the dualities of constraints and freedom. There needs to be a balance between defining guidelines to develop solutions and creating opportunities for openness and imagination. There are special rap musicians who have mastered this duality and often use it as a starting point to eventually arrive to new concepts for a song. Or as the rapper Rakim cleverly states he’s just “thinking of a master plan". Understanding rap artist’s approach can equip designers with helpful strategies to identify their intention.
Concentrating on what the mission is for creating something can quickly outline an intention. Design concepts can respond to a number of different missions such as earning profit, educating, empowering, and providing a social service. A design firm’s mission statement is a great example of identifying intention. The statement describes the firm’s philosophies and beliefs that drive their objectives. Designers should use their mission to leverage freedom and openness for creative ideas. Rap artists who are perceived to be more mature in their skill level are very vocal about the mission of their music. When creating the rap song titled “i”, artist Kendrick Lamar said that “truthfully [his] whole M O from the jump was to say something, and not utilize [his] platform in a negative way”. The song was an act of him “giving back, it wasn’t for radio”, which means he was not particularly concerned about profit or radio success. His mission granted him freedom to focus on the message in his lyrics. It is important for designers to clarify their mission as well.

*Originality* is a fundamental mission and measure of critique for all rap music. Artists who are serious about their craft strive to make songs that challenge the culture’s norm and embrace new sounds. Any work that is deemed subpar is properly ridiculed by fans and begins to weigh heavy on an artist’s legacy. As a result the artists compete with one another through creation. This pressure is healthy for promoting new and never before heard concepts. Kendrick Lamar states that “I don’t like people to expect nothing [from me] when I’m in a creative space, and I don’t like to stay stagnant”. He intends for his fans to say that “that boy, he did something else that we didn’t think no man could do in music”. The notion of *originality* is an ideal intention for all designers to implement in their ideation immediately. It requires the designer
to develop their own unique style and identity. Designers need to expect to be creative. This is only achieved by taking risks and designers should not be afraid to do so.

In order to take risks, the designer must challenge themselves and explore their imagination while identifying their intentions. Grammy award winning producer 9th Wonder states that when making the beat for Jay Z’s song called Threats, he

“played beats for him, and played more beats for him. Then Jay said look man, let’s just stop for a minute. I’ve got a song called A Woman’s Threat by R. Kelly. I have an idea of a sample that I want to use, and I want to see what you can do with it”. 9th Wonder states that at that point he immediately understood “I had to really challenge myself. How can I take this song and instead of time stretch it, smoosh it. And make it fit an upbeat tempo”.

David Kelly of IDEO attests to the value of exploring imagination as a defined intention for projects. He said during an interview with Charlie Rose that his design teams “encourage wild ideas and visualized solutions”, and that is how they are able to find opportunities to innovate.

An intention can also be identified by understanding and responding to an opportunity or problem that needs a solution. Rap musicians may find opportunity to create music that responds to their fan’s need for entertainment, inspiration, guidance, etc. A similar approach allowed athletic shoe designer Tinker Hatfield to ideate concepts for the Nike Cross Trainers. He said that it was “partly a reaction to things that were changing in peoples mind about what it meant to be fit.” He realized that “developing a cross training product [meant] it had to be multidimensional, multisport, and versatile”. When ideating for a unique retail store, street wear designer Jeff Staple recognized and reacted to an opportunity as well. He said that

“I met a lot of friends who are street wear, fashion designers, and we all kind of have the same complaint. Were like ahh man this store is so annoying to deal
with, the displays suck ya know. I had the same frustrations and then I was like you know what, I think I can open up a store that makes me happy and makes all of my friends happy as well.”

Analyzing the opportunity and intended solution for a concept will ultimately lead to understanding the function of what is being created. Although the details on exactly how a concept will work is not feasible at this stage, it is important to have an abstract vision that provides guidelines to move forward. In Tinker Hatfield’s case he understood that the cross trainer would serve two functions. He says that “at one end it had to be a good running idea, the design had to support that. And then on the other end it had to be strong enough and stable enough for a good size person to go out and play some lateral court type sport”.

The function of a solution can also be an intended emotion and experience. Rap artists often seek to make the right connection with the listener to provoke certain feelings. In the beginning of the creative process the artists specify a type of intended emotion and experience. Designers should do the same to improve their focus for concepts. The rap artist may plan to use very loud, compacted and energetic sounds in order to make the listener feel pumped up. Or the artist can plan to use soft, smooth, quiet sounds to make the listener feel relaxed. Designers should emulate rap artists and identify design elements that will evoke an intended emotion and experience throughout their concept.

Aside from the sonic qualities of a song, rap artists use storytelling as a great method to provoke a desired emotion or experience. Storytelling navigates the listener through a particular journey that presents a comprehensive message. Kendrick Lamar stated that for the rap song “i” he wanted to
“write a story about two people from two different worlds who feel like they don’t have nothing to live for. People in the penitentiary and people who attend my shows and say that they want to commit suicide. I want to explain [in my story] that you have to have that self-pride in order to move on”.

Jeff Staples’ eureka moment came when he realized that storytelling was a great solution to the frustrations that he was having with other retail stores. When reflecting about this he asked himself “Why don’t I put all of things that inspire me in the store? So when the customer comes in they can kind of see like oh that’s the music he listened to, and the magazine he read, and the book he read, and the artwork he looks at in order to create this t-shirt or button down shirt. So they can see the whole process”.

Another very important principle to implement during the intention phase of a project is to define and design with the target user in mind. Target users are the people that the design concept must connect with the best. Great insight about specified users equip the designer with needed guidelines and constraints for a concept. In music, the target users are the artist’s fans. The musicians that understand their fan base are aware of the type of songs that pleases their fans. Satisfaction from the ideal fan base is obviously a very important factor for the success of a song. When producer 9th Wonder created the beat for the song Threats he says “I didn’t want to overproduce the song, I wanted to still please my fans. Cause they know that I’m a boom bap producer. I chopped up samples, I didn’t wanna bring in an orchestra, because that’s not me”. Referring back to David Kelley with IDEO, he says that “the main tenant [of design] is empathy for the consumer. Figuring out what humans really want, by watching them.
Try to understand people by observing them. In other words their experience will communicate what you need to focus on”.

The final principle from rap artists that designers use pertains to *collaboration*. It is important to assign intended roles for all individuals involved in the creative process. Producers from the group Justice League believe that a great artist who puts this into practice is rapper Rick Ross. During a behind the scenes interview they said that “Ross always has a good vision. He pictures what he wants to do. He says I want this person on the song, it’s going to be such and such on the hook. I’m going to have this person on the bridge. And that’s going to be the song”. Clarifying the roles before anything is produced allows for clarity and synergy. Designers should be aware of other designers or manufacturers that they plan to work with, and understand what their expectations are from them.

At the end of this stage designers should write out series of short statements that identify their intentions. The statements should be a balance of specific and general. They need to address how they will achieve originality, what the opportunity space and function is for a solution, who their target user will be, and *collaboration* intentions. This information will filter the decisions that are made in the following stages.

### 3.2 Inspiration

Once the intention for a concept is identified the next stage of the creative process focuses on researching inspirations. This stage provides the designer an opportunity to explore,
investigate and collect various design elements and ideas that are connected to their concept’s intention. Designers should generate a palette of inspirations so that in the following stage they can combine these design elements and ideas to form concepts. Inspirations have a critical role during ideation because they mentally stimulate designers to do or feel something, especially something creative. This is a tremendous resource for innovation and motivation. There is no such thing as a standard type of inspiration. Inspirations give the creative mind the freedom to spark connections between seemingly different elements and ideas, which allow inspirations to emerge from any and everything. It is important that designers learn how to cultivate their awareness in order to become receptive to such connections. Having an approach that can combine strategies of organizing, analyzing and synthesizing inspirations quickly will improve a designer’s ability to develop varied concepts. Rap artists practice an approach and a set of resourceful techniques that help them to research inspiration from their surrounding environments. Designers that learn these techniques can immediately implement great principles into their creative process.

The art of sampling is a foundation of rap music production. Using technology the artists are able to extract and save segments of any sound recording, then reuse it as an instrument for a new song. They capture sounds from either instruments or vocals that speak to them and resonate with their intentions. This step is typically referred to as chopping up a sample. Rap artist Kanye West states that “one of the fundamentals of Hip hop is based off of biting. Its based off of taking segments of people music that inspire you and then taking something that someone said on the street, then taking a pattern from over here” and combining them to create something new. Amongst the elite rap music producers there are a set of ethics for
sampling that promote originality. “Thou shall not sample two sounds from the same record. The association of ethical righteousness with creativity is manifested in this rule. Essentially, the rule argues that it is not creative to combine things that already go together. This is a point of pride with many producers. It feels like cheating a little bit. Part of the artistry is to combine elements that wouldn’t be combined normally”, thus exploring hybridization. Sampling is a great demonstration of researching an inspiration and reapplying particular elements of it. To get inspired the artist Kanye West said that “when I start working on a beat and sampling, sometimes I’ll take a couple days and just listen to samples”. In most cases, old records for rap producers are equivalent to precedents for designers. This analogy is evident in the similarities found between the products of brands like Apple and Braun. Apple designer Johnathan Ive intended to create products that expressed an aesthetic of beautiful simplicity. He was inspired by the products that Braun created in the past and managed to recreate these concepts in a contemporary form. It is important for designers to seek ways to sample designs from the past to innovate a new future.

Rap musicians do not limit themselves to only sample from other musicians, and designers should not limit themselves to only sample from other designers. The beauty in the art sampling is that it can create relationships and hybridize elements from two seemingly different things. However, before this can happen sampling requires strategic research and a palette of inspirational elements to choose from. To create this palette designers need to take on a particular resourceful approach. To breakdown this approach it is important to highlight the strategies rap musicians use during research.
During the inspiration phase the designer needs to seek inspiration rather than wait for it to come. It is important to clear the mind of all distractions and allow it to become receptive. It’s the energy that drives creativity. Researching inspirations starts with tuning in on impulses and instincts. Rap artist David Banner says that “I’m constantly humbling myself, and constantly listening to whatever body else is doing. Trying to study and just keep my ears open. I want to use sounds I hear every day, even outside the studio. The difference with me, is my whole life is a production.” Fashion designer Jeff Staple has a similar approach to building his inspirational palette. He says that designers should “be constantly learning, never get complacent. Just sort of look at everything with a childlike mind and curiosity, and just see it from every angle”.

Designers have found inspiration by applying a childlike mind and curiosity to nature in order to sample innovative elements and ideas from the environment. Architect Berry Berkus says that “many times as I’m walk or ride my bike, I look at the nature around me and think about what I can do with that to make something beautiful for people to enjoy. The ability to really make things from what we see”. Jeff Staple used nature to create the icon for clothing brand Staple. He says that “we chose to adopt a pigeon as our icon. Cause we felt like it represented New York hustle, ya know that street mentality, to just get it by any means necessary.”

There is a great potential to find inspiration through new experiences. Designers should switch up their daily routines, try new activities, read different material and explore interesting places. Increasing their variety of exposure will change and expand their familiar frame of reference. Rap musicians often evolve and mature musically after traveling or listening to different types of music outside of their norm. Jeff Staples said the in the past he was
“inundated with staying in the city. Typically the places that I travel are like Tokyo, Paris, London, and Los Angeles. Real urban centers, ya know. Recently I’ve been forcing myself to get out to into like bare mountain outdoor territory. I’ve taken up things like rock climbing, camping, taking trips through national parks and explored several truck stops and diners. That’s where my new found inspirations are coming from.”

His new experiences were a great resource for innovative ideas.

Movies are also a great resource to build inspirational palettes. Rapper Jay Z was inspired to make a whole album after watching The American Gangster. He said that he “was excited about the movie, because it took me back to places that I haven’t been to in a minute. It just sparked all these emotions and thoughts”. Designers often get inspired about creating the future from fictional movies that include scenes with a ton of special effects. It gives the creative mind a chance to imagine and allude to new possibilities.

Inspirations can be uncovered through collaboration as well. Rappers and rap producers feed off the creative energy from one another. It presents an improvisational opportunity to quickly exchange and bounce ideas back and forth. Rapper Jay Z had this to say when asked about working with producer Pharrell, “sometimes you work with people because they are legends, other times they just hot. Sometimes you work with people because there is this synergy there. We all work with different kind of people in the business. But there are those special combinations that you just know brings out the best in you”. Working with designers that have different backgrounds is a great way to inspire new ideas and offer a fresh perspective.
There are multiple approaches to researching inspiration, but the main goal as stated before is to build a palette of choices to combine in the conceptualizing phase. To make this process efficient designers should define and organize the design elements from their inspirations that they want to work with. Producer Kid Capri organizes all of his samples according to the type of sound that’s on the record. During a tour through his studio he pointed to several different crates of records stating “all these right here, these are all drums. Right here is all my soundtracks. These crates are all the older essential type beats. All of these here are grooves and stuff”. This organization helps him to locate his inspirations when he is ready to combine them. Fashion designer Smurf said when working on the Play Clothes collection that “we basically breakdown all our inspirations for the line into different groups. We’ve got the recess group, OG group and a G.I. jack group”. Designers should build their inspirational palettes by brainstorming word maps. Then accompany their word maps with visual images to create a mood board. This can be done by listing adjectives that describe the intended aesthetics and functions identified in the previous stage. The adjectives can include description of design elements such as form language, texture, scale, empathy, ergonomics, color and more. After completing the inspirational palette the designer is ready to hybridize design elements to ideate original concepts.

3.3 Conceptualize:

The concept stage is both playful and challenging. The creative mind must be able to organize and combine design elements around a generic idea generalized from particular
instances. A design concept is only an abstract vision, but it needs to become tangible. The main goal of this stage is to create a rough draft of several different ideas that can be revisited and refined later. Concepts derive from a cycle of trial and error methods. Designers must be willing to take risks and use their imagination. The metaphor designing beats and rhymes, looks at a rap song as synonymous to a design concept. This is because rap artist use techniques to manipulate, layer and harmonize several sounds from their inspirational palette according to their intention. Borrowing these techniques can improve a designer’s ability to manipulate, layer and harmonize varied elements to create an original concept.

Layering varied elements can be considered an art of hybridization. Rap artists depend on the layering method to control the creative process of their music. Although it can vary, typically a producer initiates this process to create a beat for rappers to add their rhymes. They will begin by either manipulating a sample from their inspirational palette, or creating a new sound from scratch using an instrument. Manipulating the sample can mean applying a number of different things to the original sound, whether that’s speeding up the tempo, adjusting pitch, or even possibly playing it backwards. Sound Engineer specialist Young Guru says that the palette of inspiration “pretty much sounds like mess until you put them into a great sequence”. To create a great sequence the producer establishes the first layer of sound which consists of a particular melodic pattern. This pattern is adjusted, looped and repeated continuously to establish the foundation of the beat. From this point forward the producer is experimenting and taking risk to add other layers of sounds that enhance, compliment and synchronize with the primary layer. Rap producer RZA from the Wu-tang has expressed great admiration for the layering techniques used by pioneering producer Marley Marl who revolutionized the art of
sampling. RZA says that “Marley Marl, would take the snare from a James Brown record, then take the kick from some other record, then he got a high hat from an Ojay record and he had a whole band right in front of him on his drum machine”. It takes time to reflect on the details and understand the purpose and relationship of each layer. For example the Justice League Producer says that when

“dealing with the Aston Martin beat u got the rhodes piano sound, which is the meat and the potatoes. Without it you wouldn’t have the main part, that’s the sexy right there. Makes you feel like you riding somewhere. Under that you’ve got a choir. Kind of softens up a little bit, makes it eerie. Then the low synth makes it hard and sets off the hook. The key is simplicity”.

Designers can use a similar layering approach that rap artists use to ideate concepts by simply layering design elements. Design elements can consist of any idea pertaining to the function or aesthetic sense of a concept. The designer can start this process with either a design element from their inspirational palette or develop a new element from scratch. To establish the first layer the designer must determine an application or purpose for that element. Then look to combine another element with its own purpose that will serve as an added layer. Layering elements can continue until the designer feels content that they have a complete concept. Designers should focus in on the relationships between the layered design elements, since this is where the opportunity space can be found to improve a concept. Manipulating and randomizing the sequence of layering can also offer opportunity to create varied concepts. It can create new purpose and relationships between layers and elements that were hidden in previous concepts. It is important that the designer continue to repeat this method multiple times, only layering elements a few times is a disservice to their creativity and concept.
Designers must allow themselves the opportunity to make mistakes and ideate solutions. This can only happen after several cycles of combining elements.

When using the layering method it is important for designers to visualize this process by creating quick rough drafts. The rap producer is constantly playing their creations as they build to confirm that they are headed in the right direction. Designers need a similar form of feedback and tracking system to gauge their progress. The best method takes shape through sketching. Graphic designer Shawn Braunh from Pen and Pixel said that this tactic helped his firm create rap album covers for musicians that would innovate the industry. He said “we had artist who could sketch, and make custom covers. It was a communication tool to exchange ideas with our clients”. Architect Berry Berkus says that there is great value in sketching for a designer when layering elements. He says this is because “the hand continues to move the idea to paper. It continues to make something that is wonderful. Because with a computer, you can’t overlay. You can’t look at what you did in the past and see how it might develop into something better or you might even throw the other layer away”. While layering it is vital to continue dreaming, removing imagination at this point hinders the creative spirit. Shawn Brauch stated “the challenge for us was that we had our clients come in to us and they’d have these imaginations that would be only unbridled by knowing what we could sketch for them. They would come to us with concepts that were so outlandish but it was great to do them. I mean the more outlandish the better right”.

Producers who have inspirational palettes comprised of diverse sounds improve their potential to create an innovative beat. The beauty in hybridization is taking the risk to combine different elements. Producer James Fox Williams says “I was really impressed by Rick Rubin
because he was using sounds that we never heard and his arrangements were just so cool.

Every beat he made was a hit. He was mixing the rock and roll with hip hop”. The clash of two different genres of music allowed Rick Rubin to develop an original sound. Designers should work to improve the range of their inspirational palettes as well if they hope to ideate original concepts. Creative artist Pharrell Williams said he managed “to put Louis Vuitton in the sun glass business by combing inspirations from shades worn by Scarface and the Notorious BIG”. It was the product fusion of high end luxury brand aesthetics and street culture icons that convinced Louis Vuitton to venture into a new market.

At the end of this stage the designer should have a series of varied hybrid concepts. It should be evident how their intentions and inspirations are combined to offer a solution to an opportunity. Each design element should have a purpose, some more significant than others. The designer should choose a couple of these concepts to use in the refining stage.

3.4 Refine

At this stage, the basis of the idea is already established, it becomes more important to elevate the concept idea from the previous stage which is at an abstraction state. Seeking purity and simplicity, the designer begins to zone in on tuning the delicate details of a concept. This is not the stage to add any more design elements, but instead remove unnecessary design elements. “I’ve always referred to this stage of refining as the icing on the cake”. This stage is the time to improve something by making small changes and become more elegant or polished. Rap artists typically call this the mastering phase. The technicalities of a song is reviewed,
scrutinized and adjusted. Rappers and producers focus on the tone and frequencies of sounds. They are concerned about properly blending, transitioning and mixing different patterns and layers of sound. At this point they will look for opportunities to add appropriate echoes and adlibs.

During the refining phase it is important to confirm that the elements combined in the concept phase are all appropriate. A primary principle to implement requires the designer to reflect back on their intent to cross check any idea or element deemed questionable. While Kanye West was in the mastering phase for his second album he received great advice from his friend. His friend told him “don’t be afraid to scratch out any line that doesn’t illuminate your subject.” It is important to ask yourself “does this tell me more about what I want them to know in terms of my intent.” Designers must take this same approach. This allows a concept idea to become cohesive. For automobile designers at BMW, they have stressed during this stage that “every line we draw, every detail that we debate, every form we create, every model that we do has one purpose. We want to release emotions”. In order to accomplish this it requires a high level of honesty and critique, collaborating and seeking opinions from individuals not involved in the creative process can offer a fresh perspective. Sound engineer Young Guru says to always keep in mind “garbage in, garbage out”.

The refining stage is meant to improve upon an idea, designers cannot wait until this stage to make drastic changes. Rap artists have to understand that “Each stage of the game is important. The recording is very important, the mixing is very important and the mastering is very important. You can’t short change any of those stages and expect to have a great product”. Designers must complete each of the previous stages efficiently so they will not have to
backtrack in order to move forward. It is important to seek for clarity, harmony and simplicity and only adjust what is necessary. Johnathan Ive says that “I think that there is a profound and enduring beauty in simplicity. In clarity, in efficiency. True simplicity is derived from so much more than just the absence of clutter and ornamentation. It’s about bringing order to complexity”.

Chapter 4 - Testing & Evaluation:

Once the website was completed the next stage of my study explored methods to test it. There were two test groups, college level designers and local high school students. These groups were chosen as a good representation of my intended target user. The primary test group consisted of undergraduate and graduate designers from the college of Design Architecture Art and Planning at the University of Cincinnati (DAAP). Their design majors were in architecture, fashion, graphic and product design. Using social media and flyers I managed to recruit students that were interested in participating in my study. There were a total of ten subjects, all of whom expressed an admiration for rap music and found the concept of the website exciting. The subjects were asked to periodically visit the website and to use the content as a resource for their own design projects. They were provided an email address that allowed them to post directly onto the cypher lounge page. The goal was to allow the subjects to engage in a creative dialogue about their concepts and reflect on newly learned hip hop methodologies. In brief discussions the subjects were given an opportunity to discuss their experience with the website. Questions were asked to record qualitative and quantitative data. I wanted to confirm that the content was communicated properly, the hip hop methodologies were innovative, and the videos inspired them to ideate. I was also curious about their feedback on ways to improve the website. Overall the website tested well and proved to be effective. The subjects were impressed and motivated. Several conversations were sparked about the “rapper hooks” and video clips that they were most passionate about. They were pleased by the range of information they could access and used words like “dope”, “cool” and
“awesome” to describe their experiences. The most common comments pertaining to improvements focused on the length of the videos and narration. A few subjects stressed that the videos were too long and should be shorten to accommodate limited attention of potential audience members. The transition of topics between the clips were a bit random to a few of the subjects, and they felt that titles and descriptions would improve the clarity of the content. A few subjects also mentioned that the text on the website should be more interactive and match the energy of the rest of the site.

The second test group consisted of minority high school students from Hughes High School and teenagers from the hip hop arts program called Elementz. The faculty from both facilities granted me the opportunity to deliver a presentation to their students. In total, I presented to forty five students and five instructors. The presentation allowed me to engage in a conversation with a younger generation about their perspective on rap music and how it may influence the design process. I briefly walked them through each stage of the creative process and outlined hip hop methodologies that designers should consider. The presentation then transitioned into a tour of the website. I explained how the site could be used as a resource and the values. The goal of the presentation was to verify that the website could be understood by non-designers. I intended to make a positive impression on the students, and give them the opportunity to realize that they have creative abilities.
Chapter 5 - Conclusion:

The content communicated through the website is relevant and valuable to all visitors, because “this is the age of creativity.” This is due in major part to the exponential growth in technology that empowers the world through accessible information and rapid production. It promotes a DIY culture, complete with amateur and skilled professionals seeking opportunities to make innovative contributions to our society. The hip hop arts, more specifically rap music, is a direct reflection of this. In fact, the creative spirit that drives rap music is “dynamic, inspiring, beautiful, and oddly enough so useful.” The core it focuses on hybridization, collaboration, resourcefulness and originality. These four thematic principles are transferable to the creative process for designers. To embrace these principles it is crucial to understand the parallels between a rap song and a design concept. It allows the creative mind to ideate design ideas in a similar approach to producing beats and rhymes. This is why “The Game Don’t Change.” The website developed around this metaphor, for conceptualizing has proven to be an effective multipurpose resource for designers. Providing guidance in defining a creative intent, researching and developing a palette of inspirations, combining ideas to form a concept, and finally critically editing the design idea so that it is refined. It presents a unique framework that tracks and leverages style, purpose, risk, imagination and innovation.

Although the website tested well, there is opportunity to either improve the website or allow the metaphor to be communicated and useful through several different mediums such as a downloadable app or a physical tool. There is a disconnection between visiting the content on the website and ideating concepts. The website is constrained to only serve as independent
reference material. Further studies should explore methods of integration and interaction that can empower the designer to manipulate their concepts in real time. The “Cypher Lounge” page only brushes the surface of this type of activity, because visitors can only exchange their ideas through uploaded images and text. Innovation that transforms their design concept into something tangible will immediately allow designers to use the website as a medium to create instead of just as reference. Consequently, “rapper hooks” and other content will have a stronger impact and collaborators can become more involved in the creative process.

After the completion of this thesis, the research from this study and the website have potential to influence and inspire a younger generation. The website is a permanent resource that builds a bridge for minority youth to learn and engage with design through something that they love, hip hop music. Teachers have the ability to use the website as an instructional tool to motivate young adults to become designers. It provides a connection that speaks their language, references people and things relevant in their lives, and informs them that they can be creative as well. It also preserves the hip hop culture through education and provides a fresh perspective that adds value to the art form of rap music.

The thesis has also made an impact on my future career. It has empowered me as a designer. I have learned how to research and develop connections within art and culture, and then leverage these connections to spark creativity. I am equipped with unique techniques and approaches that inspire me to develop original concepts, become more expressive in my work and seek opportunities to sample and combine different ideas from my inspiration. It motivates me to seek employment with design teams that are fueled by the hip hop culture that foster creativity and innovation. It gives me an opportunity and platform to educate younger like-
minded individuals. I have developed a particular approach to ideate concepts, and improve upon my awareness and sensibility for new found inspiration. It inspires me to continue on a constant quest for originality, because I now know that “The Game Don’t Change”.
Bibliography


Appendix A: Design Process Survey

MAJOR:

YEAR:

In a brief statement, please respond to the questions in regards to a typical project for your major. If more space is needed you may use the back of this paper, please mark the corresponding letter with your response.

A) List three personal challenges that you face when developing design concepts:

1. 

2. 

3. 

B) Where and how do you find inspiration for a project?

C) Are there any techniques or methods that you use to overcome creative block? If yes, please explain.

D) Explain your process of recording design ideas. How do you review and combine these ideas before committing to a specific design solution?

E) List a few ways that you integrate brand identity into your design research and/or solution?

1. 

2. 

3.
Appendix B: Presentation Survey

Age:
Gender:

If you told your best friend about this presentation, what would you say?

Use the scale to the right to measure your response. Circle 1 if you strongly disagree and circle 5 if you do agree, 3 is neutral.

Before this presentation have you ever made the connection between hip hop & design? 1 2 3 4 5
Do you agree with the connection? 1 2 3 4 5
How well were you able to understand it? 1 2 3 4 5
Does it make you look at rap music differently? 1 2 3 4 5
Have you ever considered design as a career choice? 1 2 3 4 5
Do you feel motivated and inspired to create something? 1 2 3 4 5
Would you visit the website again on your spare time? 1 2 3 4 5

Questions / Comments:
Appendix C: Website Graphics

Title Header

The Game Don't Change

Designing Beats & Rhymes: Metaphor for Conceptualizing

Background
Appendix D:

**CREATIVE PROCESS PAGE**

**THE GAME DON'T CHANGE**

**DESIGNING BEATS & RHYMES: REIMAGINE FOR CONCEPTUALIZING**

**HOME | START HERE | INTRO | INSPIRATION | CONCEPT | REVIEW | CULTURAL INSIGHT | CYPHER LOUSIE**

**INSPIRATION**

Please watch the video below; we have put this together with you in mind. It provides proper introduction and needed background information that will be referenced during this journey into sound.

**VIDEO**

**HIP HOP METHODOLOGIES**

Musicians and designers use inspiration as a tremendous resource for innovation and motivation. It sparks connections between different ideas and presents an opportunity to reimagine great work from creators of the past. The video above provided insight on a few ways to locate inspiration from the surrounding environment including movies, nature, daily life and more. Strategies to improve methods of researching and synthesizing inspiration is important in order to develop varied concepts. To get a handle on this we’ve highlighted a few gems that we call rapper hooks. Designers can borrow from their creative peers, including both rappers and beat makers, to get a grasp on their inspirations for a project.

**RAPPER HOOKS: INSPIRATION**

“Designers need to seek inspiration rather than wait for it to come. It’s the energy that drives creativity. Tune in on your impulses and instincts.”

“Clear the mind of all distractions and allow it to become receptive. Combine this with brainstorming exercises to record thoughts.”

“There is growth in new experiences. Switch up daily routines, try new activities, read different material and explore interesting places. Increase the variety of exposure to change your familiar frame of reference.”

“Precedents for designers are like old record albums for hip hop producers. Begin building a visual catalog of creative work from the past to remix the future.”
Appendix E:

CULTURAL INSIGHT PAGE

RAP GENRES

USER NAVIGATES THROUGH SLIDES BY CLICKING LEFT AND RIGHT ARROWS

VISUAL TIMELINE

USER NAVIGATES THROUGH SLIDES BY CLICKING LEFT AND RIGHT ARROWS