Viseral Projects

Matthew Conrardy
matthew.conrardy@cwu.edu

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Viseral Projects
Matthew Conrardy

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Chair (Justin Beckman, Assistant Professor, Art & Design)

Committee Member (Matthew Martinson, Senior Lecturer, English)

Director, William O. Douglas Honors College

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Note: Signatures on this page have been redacted due to privacy concerns.
A brand’s image, its identity, is established through what the brand is, what it does, where it is going, and how it is unique. The representation of a brand’s identity materializes through the messaging, images, graphics, colors, and typography associated with it. Brand manuals are designed to establish and maintain both the consistency and flexibility of the brand identity.

This manual outlines the visual and verbal applications that currently embody the Viseral Projects brand across the multimedia environment. It includes information outlining the Viseral brand story, identity system, platforms, and examples of executions. It has been constructed with the anticipation to update guidelines to match the evolution of these elements.

Viseral Projects is a multifaceted creative endeavor that pulls from a wide range of disciplines including, but not limited to art, design, aesthetics, commerce, marketing, and philosophy.
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SECTION 1: VISERAL STORY

The ideas of truth, happiness, authenticity, and acuity are slippery things. You get a glimpse and then it is gone. And sometimes it is hard to even say what “it” is. This innate sense of belonging and feeling alive is many times hard to explain with words. Some call it spiritual, some call it contentment, solace, intuition, otherworldly or the tingle in your toes. I call it Viseral.

Derived from the words “visceral” and “visual,” Viseral (VIZ.er.uhl) Projects is a creative platform comprising raw, honest, and effective visual art and design work for bands, brands, companies and people. It is a commercial art and design studio, a non-commercial art and design studio, a brand, a mindset, and a philosophy.

The following section outlines the purpose, mission, values, personality, affiliations, and essence of the Viseral Projects brand.
Viseral represents a convergence of art, design, aesthetics, commerce, and philosophy that attempts to navigate what it means to be living in an artificially realistic world. Contemporary artist and mentee of Andy Warhol, George Condo, originally coined the term Artificial Realism in the early 1980s as “the realistic representation of that which is artificial”, to describe his physiological portraiture that blends traditional European master painting techniques with American pop art subjects and sensibilities. However, Condo’s concept of Artificial Realism can be applied beyond the construction of his paintings to the artificial behavior of human nature and the often ingenious ways individuals and societies interact.

Forty years later, Artificial Realism has moved from merely an artistic concept to a daily social, cultural, and political phenomenon. In many ways, everything is artificial realism: sound-bites of news sources providing biased accounts of an event, artificial intelligence listening to collect personal data for tailored advertisements, and colossal financial deals happening behind the scenes, to name a few. The concept of reality is propagated by constant diversions — similar to what Plato refers to as “shadows” in his allegory of the cave. The shadows move the light out of the way and set the stage for the scripted and the inauthentic.

Excessive consumerism, environmental destruction, social and economic inequality, sexism, and xenophobia, stem from a throwaway culture that champions staged experiences and stereotyped, fear-driven perceptions over genuine and authentic interactions. Throwaway culture no longer only includes physical products of mass production, but now experiences that are presented on social media and consumed in fractions of a second.

The perfectly staged and scripted is not beautiful. Perfection is not beautiful, because perfection is not real. Real is beautiful, and ugly is real because it is not faked. The solution is ugly. Not ugly as in repulsive, but ugly as in honest, unexpected, marginalized, imperfect, and misunderstood — the misfits. The things you see that grab your attention and elicit an instinctive, bodily response. For lack of a better term, the Viseral.

1.1: WHY VISERAL

“The belief that technology refined by art could create democratized beauty was one of the great persuasive myths of twentieth century design.”
- Stephen Bayley
Art and design have an indisputable capability to influence the masses. Viseral Projects utilizes this influence as a catalyst for positive change that breaks the bleakness of conformity, elevates imperfections as a driving force to uniqueness, and promotes social, cultural, and environmental vitality and responsibility.

Art and design often have different end goals, but they are not mutually exclusive. Blending analog and digital techniques yields effective solutions.

Graphic design often exists to sell products, but it’s implications are much larger. When the product is removed, design has the opportunity to promote meaningful conversation and solve larger issues, shining as its own product void of any hidden capitalistic agenda.

Every piece of effective design should have an unexpected element. Unexpectedness can come in the form of forced visual connections, hidden subliminal messaging, visual simultaneity, a keen attention to micro-aesthetics, layered storytelling, unique color palettes, juxtaposition, or outright shock.

The power of juxtaposition is uncompromising. Pairing imperfect hand-lettering with crisp imagery, using cheerful subject matter to illustrate a dark story, or forcing together two seemingly opposing images into one all have a certain power to them. It is like singing a serious topic in a major key.

Living outside the realm of the expected and comfortable is the quickest and most effective way to grow and learn.

People crave humanity, which only surfaces by embracing imperfection. Ugly is honest and transcends any notion of staged, expected, or scripted beauty.

Both consumers and designers have a powerful role in the course of how the world operates. Greed and indifference as the status quo is not a viable option.

Effective change starts with empathy.
1.3: TARGET AUDIENCE

The ideal Viseral audience most likely will not immediately grasp the Viseral message. Since the very word “Viseral” itself has been recently constructed, its meaning could be unclear. Those who misunderstand, or deny, the Viseral message may need to hear, see, and feel it the most.

The ideal Viseral consumer recognizes that to know heaven you must be familiar with hell. They have an innate desire to make a positive impact in the world, often ask more questions than answer, and know that there is no room for complacency. They believe what is “cool” is irrelevant and ego takes a backseat to open mindedness.

The ideal Viseral client recognizes the power of honest expression and is not afraid to be make waves in their respective industry or subculture by doing things differently. Types of clients include outdoor lifestyle companies, bands, and other companies and organizations that value the creative process and align with the beliefs and aesthetics of the Viseral brand.
1.4: PERSONALITY

Just like humans, brands have personalities. The following traits and keywords align the Viseral brand and position it in the market.

Raw
Honest
Natural
Expressive
Bold
Gritty
Ugly
Cosmic
Provocative
Aware
Empathetic
Inclusive
Playful
Experimental
Effective
Conceptual
Insightful
Purposeful
1.5: **AFFILIATIONS & MUSES**

The following movements, ideologies, artists, designers, musicians, and locations have influenced the aesthetic qualities, identity, and ideology of the Viseral brand.

- Stoicism
- Dada
- Surrealism
- Transcendentalism
- Precisionism
- Artificial Realism
- Raoul Hausmann
- Edward Hopper
- Georgia O’Keeffe
- Robert Rauschenberg
- Corita Kent
- George Condo
- Daddy Eurosucrè
- Obey Giant
- Saul Bass
- Jon Contino
- Max Kuhn
- Morning Breath
- Electric Coffin
- Deer Tick
- CAAMP
- Mt. Joy
- Rayland Baxter
- Thunder Mountain / Silver Lake
- Emigrant Wilderness
1.6: **BRAND ESSENCE**

Two short mottos that encapsulate the Viseral brand:

**A Refreshing Punch in the Gut.**

A punch implies force and is usually unwanted. However, a Viseral Projects punch is not only craved, but it is refreshing. It is a breath of humanity. It’s an element of the unexpected. You feel it in your gut because you are unable to make sense of it with your brain.

**What Does it Take to be Wide Awake?**

The term "wide awake" is prevalent throughout literature, music, and popular culture. For example, in his book *Walden*, published in 1854, Henry David Thoreau says, To be awake is to be alive... I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor." In the early 1900s, Spanish poet Antonio Machado writes "No, my heart is not asleep. It is awake, wide awake. Not asleep, not dreaming — its eyes are opened wide watching distant signals, listening on the rim of vast silence." In 2005 American indie rock band, Bright Eyes released an album titled *I’m Wide Awake, It’s Morning*. And lastly in 2018, musician and songwriter, Rayland Baxter released an album titled *Wide Awake*, which touches on themes including the “Strange American Dream,” gun violence, college debt, greed, and division that seems to embody the modern American landscape.

Perhaps now more than ever these two words are so important. They embody a sense of spiritual awareness that requires undivided living in the present. To be wide awake means to actively avoid sleepwalking through a trance of falsely perceived productivity and open mindedness. It requires purposeful action. Aside from spiritual awareness, being awake implies vision, which further ties into the roots of the word Viseral.

By posing a question, the answer remains open, for what it takes to be “wide awake” now was not the same in the past and will be different in the future.
“We have to be bad. Not bad as in crap, but bad as in subordinate and disobedient. If we’re bad we can be the aesthetic conscience of the business world. We can break the cycle of blandness. We can break the assembly line that puts out one dull, lookalike piece of crap after another. We’re not here to give what’s safe and expedient. We’re not here to eradicate everything of visual interest from the face of the Earth. We’re here to make them think about design that’s dangerous and unpredictable. We’re here to inject art into commerce. We’re here to be bad”

- Tobias Kalman

The visual identity of a brand translates the brand story to the consumer. The Viseral identity system balances the use of diverse, engaging, and conceptual visual elements with the retention of the fundamental brand identity. In doing so, the large ideas of the brand essence are conveyed and consistency is maintained across all platforms.

The Viseral identity translates the authenticity of the Viseral story through a combination of analog and digital methods yielding hand-crafted design that is refreshingly human.

The following section includes visuals and explanations surrounding the Viseral identity system including: primary marks, colors, typography, and the graphic kit.
2.1: PRIMARY MARKS

**VP Icon**
The Viseral Icon is the primary identity element in the system. It is bold, simple, conceptual and built from four primary symbols.

**Eye**
visual / awake / mystery

**Letter V**
visual / visceral / viseral

**Mountain**
natural / environmental / perspective

**Up Arrow**
for the better / hope / rise above

**VP Combination Mark**
A pairing of the VP icon and wordmark.

**Silver Lake Script Wordmark**
A secondary script style wordmark.

**VP Badges**
A combination of multiple identity elements into cohesive lockups.
2.2: COLORS

The official Viseral Projects color palette is a less saturated, earth tone variant of the primary colors, plus black and white, reflecting the raw and natural characteristics of the brand.

**PRIMARY COLORS**

**VISERAL YELLOW**
ugly / alert / mysterious

Pantone: 110C
CMYK: 16%, 32%, 100%, 0%
RGB: 218, 171, 40
HEX: #DAAB28

**VISERAL BLACK**
ink / graphite / worn

Pantone: BlackC
CMYK: 67%, 64%, 67%, 67%
RGB: 45, 42, 38
HEX: #2D2A26

**VISERAL CREAM**
analog / paper / natural

CMYK: 7%, 7%, 16%, 0%
RGB: 235, 229, 212
HEX: #EBE5D4

**SECONDARY COLORS**

**GUTS CORAL**
intestines / raw / passion

Pantone: 7607C
CMYK: 18%, 67%, 60%, 3%
RGB: 200, 109, 97
HEX: #C86D61

**SILVER LAKE BLUE**
calm / free / vibrant

Pantone: 283C
CMYK: 40%, 14%, 0%, 0%
RGB: 147, 191, 230
HEX: #93BFE6
2.3: TYPOGRAPHY

Flama is the primary typeface of Viseral Projects. The Flama family was originally designed by Mário Felicianos in 2006 for signage but quickly gained recognition in editorial design due to its versatility. Mixing characteristics of European and American geometric san serifs, Flama features oval shapes, a slight grotesque feel, and overall neutral and unornamented tendencies, making it the ideal candidate to take on the emotional fervor of Viseral Projects. Flama comes in regular, condensed, and extra condensed.

A secondary font is Magnesium Regular, designed by Mark Van Bronkhorst in 2003, and inspired by hand lettering often seen in 20th century signage. Its thick and thin strokes and angled terminals give it a warmer and alternative feel that pairs nicely with the neutrality of Flama.

Last, but certainly not least, is the imperfect, expressive, hand lettered, typography that is a pinnacle of the VP identity and overall aesthetic. Custom hand lettering can be used independently or paired with the Flama family and Magnesium Regular.

Flama, Magnesium Regular, and Viseral Hand are suitable to be used both in print and on the web.

LARGE HEADLINES: FLAMA BOLD CONDENSED

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz0123456789

HEADLINES: FLAMA BOLD

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz0123456789

SUB HEADLINES: MAGNESIUM REGULAR

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789

Body: Flama Regular

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz0123456789
2.4: **GRAPHIC KIT**

The graphic kit is an extension of the Viseral identity system. It is an ever-growing visual arsenal of illustrations, marks, and typography that exists to be implemented in a wide range of projects and executions to tell the Viseral story. The graphic kit, like the rest of the identity system, is defined by imperfect hand-crafted illustration and typography, keenly balancing emotion and technique.

Imagery below includes an anxious skeleton, a fed-up fly, gears and guts, a bison-like mountaintop, and a screaming flower.
SECTION 3: VISERAL PLATFORMS

“A primary assumption of advertising, to seduce by beauty, to stimulate desire by perfect form, has been transgressed”
- Stephen Bailey

The Viseral identity system is only effective if it is distributed and made accessible. In order to do so, the following guidelines have been established to disperse the Viseral message across public art, websites, social media, and merchandise.
3.1: PUBLIC ART

Viseral Projects recognizes the power of democratizing art to provoke viewers and initiate meaningful conversation. In the fashion of street art giants including Keith Haring and Shepard Fairey, the Viseral message disseminates in the public sphere through stickers, wheat pasted posters, stencils, murals, and virtual and physical gallery exhibitions.
3.2: **WEBSITE**

The Viseral Projects official website, www.viseralprojects.com, is the primary point of communication including recent updates, a portfolio of work, exhibitions, descriptions of the brand, the shop, and contact information. The website follows all guidelines outlined in Section 2 and, like this manual, is built to evolve and grow with the brand.
3.3: SOCIAL MEDIA

“For what should be the most meaningful platform for important discussion ever created, discourse has fallen secondary to self-indulgence and celebrity…. I’ve been troubled by the social media mentality of ‘construct your own reality’ in superficial terms, at least. The internet and social media are valuable for democratization, but as Marshall McLuhan warned with his—’the medium is the message’—the rapid pace and temporary nature of social media can lead to throwaway approaches from the consumer and the creator.”

-Shepard Fairey

Instagram is the current primary social media network utilized by Viseral Projects. It has proven to be a valid platform to gain inspiration, to connect with other creatives, and to share work while growing an audience and acquiring valuable clients. With that being said, issues arise when inspiration turns to mindless mimicry, connecting turns to insincere conjecture, and sharing feeds the throwaway culture of unsubstantial content. Nevertheless, social media platforms, like Instagram, have a tremendous capability to democratize art and to share meaningful ideas if utilized properly.
3.4: MERCHANDISE

Apparel, stickers, concert posters, and art prints are yet another platform to spread the Viseral message. However, with production of consumer products comes a responsibility to be mindful of the social and environmental implications. Viseral Projects currently sells apparel printed on Bella + Canvas eco-friendly garments, which are produced through Printful, an order fulfillment company. A plan is in place to transition production to Ambient Inks, a company that produces sustainable and socially conscious merch lines while also exploring upcycled clothing options.

All merchandise is sold exclusively through www.viseralprojects/shop.
SECTION 4: VISERAL EXECUTIONS

The Viseral executions are the brand story, visual identity, and medium, all coming together to create various works of art and design. The following executions include various posters, and a variety of multimedia paintings including: 75% off, Star-Nosed Mole, and Wide Awake.

Visit www.viseralprojects.com for a more in-depth view of the Viseral executions.
4.1: **POSTERS**

*Various 18”x24”, Screen-printed Posters*

“I rejoice that there are owls. Let them do the idiotic and maniacal hooting for men. It is a sound admirably suited to swamps and twilight woods which no day illustrates, suggesting a vast and undeveloped nature which men have not recognized. They represent the stark twilight and unsatisfied thoughts which all have.”

- Henry David Thoreau

The role of the poster has altered over the past century but has remained a significant tool in graphic design. The Viseral Projects poster archive is a growing collection of work for concerts, play productions, and campaigns for social causes. The featured poster work includes gig posters for touring artists Trampled by Turtles, Luke Combs, and CAAMP. The gig poster stands as both promotional material for concerts as well as merchandised art. It is a unique opportunity to merge illustration, typography, design, and conceptual thinking to create captivating images that speak to the message and aesthetics of a particular band or musician. Visual art has the ability to influence people, but there is no denying the immediate, emotional and stimulating impact of music. The opportunity to combine these two art forms has quickly become one of the favorite executions of Viseral Projects. Also included is a social cause poster series focusing on the environmental impacts of the American diet and deforestation.

See next page for images
Various 18”x24”, Screen-printed Posters
“The future of painting is to be determined at the moment when the fuse of the present is ignited, a fuse lit many years before in some forgotten cave by a primitive man as he etched what came to be the future. That is and always will be how man perceives his own reality. Reality, which, since its initial definition as the world which exists external to us, independent of our perception, is now composed of artificial components. Thus bringing the Lexicon of art and reality together to create what I have arrived to call artificial realism.”
- George Condo

75% Off is an exploration of Platonic forms, Artificial Realism, and perceptions of reality through a layered use of imagery. The mountain stands in the background, which is then layered and imitated repeatedly, creating an altered sense of an overall cohesive image. When hung on a white wall, the painting is just another iteration as it is repeated on itself in the bottom right corner. Paintings of the mountain, photographs of the paintings, found imagery and words from magazines, books and the trash are stripped from their intended purpose or commercial value in an attempt to convey a feeling of experiential delusion perpetrated by anxiety and chaos. The various words and images provoke a sense of urgency and perceived value to challenge the things we take for granted and point out the filters in which we all operate through everyday. Both physically ‘found sources’ and ‘simulated founded sources’ construct together one image so the essence of reality and artificiality are called to question.
75% Off, 2019, Mixed Media Painting on Canvas, 36”x36”.
4.4: **STAR-NOSED MOLE**

*Star-Nosed Mole, 2020, Mixed Media Painting on Canvas, 18”x24”*

“Hear me out, take your time
And watch the setting sun
Take your hands out of your pockets
Feel the water run
Don’t worry about tomorrow and yesterday
Is gone”
- CAAMP

*Star-nosed Mole* began as a stream of consciousness painting of an animal that typically ranks near the top of “world’s ugliest animals” lists. Vast mountains, open rolling hills, and a refreshing waterfall fills the background enticing the viewer to enter — if they are able to see through the distractions of the yellow walls, that is.

See next page for image
Star-Nosed Mole, 2020, Mixed Media Painting on Canvas, 18"x24"
4.4: **WIDE AWAKE**

Wide Awake, 2020, Mixed Media Paintings on Wood Panels, 10, 8”x10”

“...The greatest ideas never come from a person in a comfortable emotional state. They come from torment and frustration and complete and total anxiety. You have to be completely irrational to summon the creativity you were born with. Sometimes it's hard to talk about this kind of thing because art and design aren’t life or death. There are so many atrocities happening every second of everyday that making a creative decision feels pretty low on the ladder of global significance. And yet, for those of us lucky enough to be able to live safely and work toward making something, we still have fears every single day. We still have to face bad news or cope with shitty luck and have reasons we don’t want to get out of bed in the morning. But if you can embrace fear and welcome the hard decisions that come with it, then it can become the catalyst to greatness.”

- Jon Contino

Utilizing George Condo’s methodology and approaches of artificial realism and the aesthetic pillars of the Viseral brand, the *Wide Awake* series combines multiple styles of painting, lettering, and imagery into a cohesive image. Layers of photographs, paintings, and illustrations are built up as base layers. Various phrases, song lyrics, original poetry, and elements from the Viseral Projects graphic kit are then painted over the top. *Wide Awake* explores dualities of existence including anxiety and contentment, the natural world and human-interaction, love and indifference, gears and guts, and the staged and the authentic.

See next page for image
Wide Awake, 2020, Mixed Media Paintings on Wood Panels, 10, 8”x10”

Titles of each below panel read from left to right as follows:
Top Row: The Staged and the Scripted, Come Down, Wide Awake, Tidal, The Datasoph,
Bottom Row: Nebulous Acuity, Blink, Gut-Deep, More!, Here you go.

Wide Awake is the focal piece of the series. Writings by Thoreau and Machado (see page 7) combined with pages from Robert Hooke’s 1665 book Micrographia: or Some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies Made by Magnifying Glasses, make up the background collage. The central illustration of a drone fly is inspired by Hooke’s observations and scientific illustration of one of the first specimens to be seen through a microscope. Hooke saw complex eyes of this organism though the lens of a microscope and opened up a whole new perspective in scientific discovery. Now the fly is looking back at us — yawning. What does it take to be wide awake?
FUTURE APPLICATION

I plan to continue to build and grow Viseral Projects as a platform for my art and design work. A primary goal with this creative project is to initiate the process of establishing a consistent aesthetic that transcends any boundaries of what is considered “art” and what is considered “design.” Having a consistent aesthetic allows me to focus on my strengths and apply it across illustration, typography, painting, and more. In doing so, I am able to take part in a wide range of creative endeavors including brand identity, gig poster illustration, apparel design, and gallery paintings, thus blurring the line between personal and client work. Creating this platform provides the framework to do such projects and the opportunity to evolve as my interests and abilities change.

While I continue to grow Viseral Projects, connect with new clients, and make more personal work, I plan to attain a position at a like-minded design, brand, or illustration agency that is currently producing work that I admire. I also intend to work with this agency for a year or two to gain further experience before working full-time under the Viseral Projects platform.

- Matt
BIBLIOGRAPHY


GLOSSARY

Aesthetics
The branch of philosophy dealing with such notions as the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, etc., as applicable to the fine arts, and overall appearance of objects.

Combination Mark
A subcategory of logo made of a combined wordmark or lettermark and some variant of a pictorial mark or icon.

Conceptual Image
A technique first utilized by post World War II artists and designers to expand the use of images to not only tell a story, but to cleverly convey large ideas and concepts.

Gig Poster
A type of poster utilized in the music industry for promotion and merchandise purposes in which the artist or designer combines illustration, typography and design to depict a show or tour. Gig posters are traditionally screen printed.

Hand Lettering
A technique in which letters are illustrated to create custom typography that can stand alone or be used in combination with illustrations, photography, or other design elements.

Icon
A pictorial or abstract symbol, monogram, or mascot.

Identity System
Visual devices that communicate a brand image, such as messaging, logos, colors, and typography.

Illustration
A visual way to portray or a story, concepts, or written text. Illustration can be used both commercially and non-commercially.

Grotesque
Refers to a set of san serif fonts produced in the early 1900s that have a slightly crude appearance, strong visual character, often geometric forms, and less refined compared to many contemporary san serif fonts.
GLOSSARY Continued...

**Lockups**  
A combination of typography and illustration into a cohesive and structured composition.

**Mark**  
A broad term used to describe variations of a logo.

**Merch**  
A shortened version of “merchandise”, often associated with bands or musicians.

**Mixed Media**  
A combination of multiple mediums or materials into a single piece of artwork.

**Sans Serif**  
A category in typography or lettering in which the letter forms do not have extending features on the end of strokes. Sans serifs typically have less stroke variation and are commonly associated with the modernist era of graphic design.

**Terminals**  
The end of a stroke that does not include a serif.

**Typography**  
The theory and practice of letter and typeface design, layout, combination, and construction.

**Visceral**  
1. Of, relating to, or located on or among the viscera.  
2. Relating to deep inward, often crude and earthy, feelings rather than to the intellect.

**Viseral**  
See pages 1-26

**Viseral Projects**  
The Art & Design of Matt Conrardy.

**Word Mark**  
A subcategory of logo consisting of just letter forms, without any variants of a pictorial mark or icon.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my project mentors Justin and Matt for your support and guidance.

Dedicated to my mother, Anne Conrardy.
THANK YOU FOR LOOKING