

Auntie Shop Thesis Defense

Yuxin Lin

ARTIST STATEMENT

I'm a graphic design student from PNCA. I was born and raised in a small town in Fuzhou, China. I was influenced by a lot of Chinese traditional art, history, and cultures since I was little. I moved to America with my family when I was 14. The culture here is so different than the place where I grew up. I feel the cultural collision between the two countries and it helps me to view the world differently. I took a digital art class in high school and started fall in love with digital/visual design. So this is what brought me to come to PNCA.

My thesis is about the role of graphic design in raising awareness about feminine care as a practice as well as feminine care products. I was raised in a conservative community where women do not feel comfortable talking about menstruation and other period-related topics often due to stereotypes, prejudices, and taboos. Society may address this problem in various ways and one strategy may be to apply graphic design to facilitate important conversations about periods no matter how uncomfortable. Addressing this problem is highly important because society's unwillingness to talk about this issue limits women's knowledge and understanding of feminine care.

This project fits into my portfolio of work because it not only represents my aspirations but also my creative mind and ability to develop designs to meet specific goals and objectives. In the past, I used to do minor projects for various courses but this allows me to do something that is personal to me that represents my views, perspectives, ideas, and culture. Therefore, I can use this opportunity to show who I am and reflect my goal of using art to build communities, nurture cultures, and practice different approaches to art and design that breaks limiting traditions.

Overall, through this project, I hope to apply my knowledge and creativity by developing a brand that represents my culture and values.

THESIS PROPOSAL

I. Introduction

The topic of my thesis will be on how graphic design can be instrumental in the evolution of feminine care products. As many women are reluctant to talk about period-related topics understanding how it is that graphic design can facilitate such conversations is crucial. For example, in 2012, 80% of women in India did not use disposable hygiene products. Such statistics beg the question of how design can not only help bring feminine care products to more women but also to normalize conversations around the topic.

II. Context

In August 2020, a trending hashtag on Chinese social media site Weibo about “pads” and “period poverty” went viral. Upon clicking on these hashtags the first post that came up was a screenshot of a merchant on the shopping platform advertising 100 sanitary pads for \$3. Skeptical about the legality and safety of these unbranded pads, I believed the offer was too good to be true. My wariness was confirmed when I saw a user comment for the product which read, “I suggest you girls buy a legit brand to use. Don’t buy this cheap no-name product!” Two other female users who bought the product replied them, “I bought it because I have difficulties”, and “I don’t have money for legit brand”. These posts left a great impact on me as it never occurred to me that some women were unable to afford hygiene products. What surprised me the most was some of the comments on social media ridiculing these “Period Poverty” groups. What is more, some of the criticism came from other women. This reminded me of a conversation I had with my roommate during freshman year where she mentioned this issue saying, “The government need[ed] to include women’s hygiene products in Medicare or include it with benefits for the poor—like food stamps.” At the time I had not considered the issue seriously. However, after last year’s Marketing & Branding course, I made a project on maternal products, and have since continued to focus on the female market. As I began to understand the role of graphic and brand design in the process and as a woman, I believe that only by bringing these matters about the female body can make an impact on society so that all women can enjoy a better life.

III. Process

When I started investigating this topic, I found very little information about the relationship between graphic design and women’s care products. This prompted to pursue this topic further. The tone of this project will be narrative based. My hope is that the project resonates among women, and brings attention to women’s issues. Due to all the development’s in women’s rights—no matter the time or place— women’s social status, income and education cannot be successful without the attention of other social groups; we need alliances. I hope that society can provide more options for women in the future. Although women can choose childbirth, the choice of a period is not.

IV. Technical Plan

For project deliverables, I will do a brand design of a period concept store. The store curates a collation of goods and books from hundreds of different brands and independent makers for people who want to support their community, surround themselves with live wholehearted. I will conduct a design analysis that includes general information on menstrual cycles, and a review on different types of hygiene products and brands available on the market. This information will be designed into a 5 x 7’ soft bound book as my main focus. I will also create some peripheral products including small pins, calendar, 4 x 6’ postcards, and a 12 x 8 x 3’ subscription box (the box will include multiple products of the month selected from different brands for customers to try).

V. Influences

I have two influences for my design practice. First, is the Thierry Mugler brand named after its creator whose brand is simply known as Mugler now. The spirit of the brand breaks boundaries by challenging long held cultural beliefs about women in society which often “slut- shames” young women. As women, we do not need to be made to feel ashamed or interior for expressing our sexualities. Since 2018, Casey Cadwallader has designed for Mugler. She said that “in the 80s, women’s designs were for men, and I’ve

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never thought of women that way. Today, it's not about dressing for men, it's about dressing for themselves and pushing their own version of femininity. I'm happy to make a power suit, but a woman should be able to wear a baggy dress and feel powerful too." Regarding the design and brand spirit of Thierry Mugler, Cadwallader uses a female focused approach within the brand to bring it in line with modern female aesthetics and sensibilities. As such the designs she creates do not make women feel as though they are made for pleasing men.

Second, the fashion designer and creative director, Olivier Rousteing, of Balmain. When he was young, Rousteing realized that local establishments, clubs, and social circles tended to be unwelcoming to people like him saying, "I grew up obsessed with questions regarding heritage, race, belonging, and fitting in." As people of color, I understand and relate with his experience. I started paying attention to him since his Balmain AW2020 show where he offers a voice to the voiceless through his clothing. The women modelling Rousteing's clothing are completely unrestrained and exuded a sense of empowerment and conveyed a sense of strength for women. Mugler enables women to explore freedom in fashion and to explore their sexiness while Balmain endows women to enjoy success.

I also find influence in many young graphic designers such as Jaehoon Choi. Choi's inspiration comes from architecture, pharmaceuticals, scientific research, and industrial signs and symbols. The style of his work is immersed in the "conceptual aesthetics" of unique creativity. Choi is focused on the process of image formation and asks questions such as why receipts are printed vertically or why the shapes and colors of pills are so diverse. Choi also advocates simplicity but not minimalism in design and believes that the biggest advantage of his work is that it makes connections across different fields and genres.

VI. The Work

In the past few years, I have studied and designed various works, and explored different techniques and mediums to find my voice. I found that I

am particularly drawn to screen printing, typography, layouts, and branding. When I created a series of artist exhibition postcards during my typography class it was the first time I truly enjoyed the process of working with images and texts to enhance their appearance. The branding project I completed in the Marketing & Branding class relates to the topic of this project in regarding to focusing on the women's market. When I took the screen printing class I was inspired by the professor Yoshi Kitai. We had a long conversation one time on how to find one's style and make their work unique. The work I had created which reflected my own culture by using traditional designs did not resonate classmates due to differences in cultural background. Not having the ability to explain it well enough to them made me realize that there was a huge gap that needed better elaboration. Yoshi told me "you are lucky to have a chance to experience both cultures, why don't you combine western and Asian cultures together to make your designs more unique? Maybe do something with very traditional Chinese elements in western designs?" This idea helped reinvigorate my mind and allowed me to push myself further in this direction. The results of which can be seen in my last project from the Marketing & Branding class.

VII. Conclusion

Periods are a normal and unavoidable physiological phenomenon. However, poverty can make women's periods a much more stressful experience. The collision between periods and poverty bring about a very important question: Why can't women's hygiene products be affordable? When we think about the price of women's hygiene products and current living standards in places such as India, we find a very low penetration rate of women's hygiene products in their market. Just like the Indian documentary "Period. End of Sentence" promoted the milestone of feminine hygiene and dignity, I hope to further people's understanding around the issue of "Period Poverty".

THESIS ABSTRACT / PROJECT STATEMENT

In August 2020, the terms “pads” and “period poverty” trended on Chinese social media site Weibo. Upon clicking on these hashtags, I discovered that there are many people who cannot afford disposal hygiene products. Some of the comments also surprised me because some online users ridiculed those who were discussing period poverty, and many of the hecklers were also women. This reminded me of a conversation I had with my roommate during freshman year. She mentioned this issue saying, “The government needs to include women’s hygiene products in Medicare or include it in social benefits for the poor— like food stamps.” Overall, this problem begs the question, how can we normalize conversations about feminine care, and in this case, how can we use graphic design to facilitate these conversations?

During my study at PNCA, I took Marketing & Branding course with Monica. I worked on a brand identity project on maternal products, and have since continued to focus on the female market. As I began to understand the role of graphic and brand design in the process and as a woman, I believe that highlighting these issues concerning the female body through graphic design can bring about a significant impact on society and help improve women’s health and quality of life.

When I started investigating this topic, I found very little information about the relationship between graphic design and feminine care products. This prompted me to pursue this topic further. My hope is that the project resonates among women, and brings attention to women’s issues. I hope that society can provide more options for women in the future.

I did a brand design of a period concept pop-up store focus on teenagers. The store curates a collation of goods and books from hundreds of different brands and independent makers for people who want to support the community. I conduct a design analysis (booklet) that includes general information on menstrual cycles, reviews on different types of hygiene products and brands available in the market, and also other resources that teenagers

may access to know more about periods and feminine care. I also designed some merch including sticker pack, calendar poster, calendar cards, and subscription boxes by using different printing techniques including digital printing, riso printing, and screenprinting.

The product and deliverables I am working function in contemporary visual culture such that aims to evoke conversations about important issues and taboos through design. By designing striking designs that draw people’s attention and appeal to their standards of visual aesthetics, I hope to not only introduce the brand but specifically draw teenagers who have specific tastes and interests. I hope that over time, we would live in a society where a brand that sells feminine care products become recognizable enough that it prompts the normalization of discussions about period.

Through this project, I hope to encourage discourse about periods to help teenagers, especially girls, feel more confident about this aspect of their physiological identity. I hope that Auntie’s Shop will help build a community that supports women and promotes feminine care.

ORAL PRESENTATION

I. Introduction

Hello, Welcome to my thesis oral defense. My name is Yuxin Lin. I'm a graphic design student from PNCA. Before I get started, I'll like to introduce a little bit about myself. I was born and raised in a small town in Fuzhou, China. I was influenced by a lot of Chinese traditional art, history, and cultures since I was little. I moved to America with my family when I was 14. The culture here is so different than the place where I grew up. I feel the cultural collision between the two countries and it helps me to view the world differently. I took a digital art class in high school and started fall in love with digital/visual design. So this is what brought me to come to PNCA.

My thesis is about the role of graphic design in raising awareness about feminine care as a practice as well as feminine care products. I was raised in a conservative community where women do not feel comfortable talking about menstruation and other period-related topics often due to stereotypes, prejudices, and taboos. Society may address this problem in various ways and one strategy may be to apply graphic design to facilitate important conversations about periods no matter how uncomfortable. Addressing this problem is highly important because society's unwillingness to talk about this issue limits women's knowledge and understanding of feminine care.

In 2012, for instance, it was reported that 80% of women in India do not use disposable hygiene products, thereby, increasing their health risks. In August 2020, the terms "pads" and "period poverty" trended on Chinese social media site Weibo. Upon clicking on these hashtags, I discovered that there are many people who cannot afford disposal hygiene products. Some of the comments also surprised me because some online users ridiculed those who were discussing period poverty, and many of the hecklers were also women. This reminded me of a conversation I had with my roommate during freshman year. She mentioned this issue saying, "The government needs to include women's hygiene products in Medicare or include it in social benefits for the poor— like food stamps." Overall, this problem begs the question,

how can we normalize conversations about feminine care, and in this case, how can we use graphic design to facilitate these conversations?

During my study at PNCA, I took Marketing & Branding courses with Monica. I worked on a brand identity project on maternal products, and have since continued to focus on the female market. As I began to understand the role of graphic and brand design in the process and as a woman, I believe that highlighting these issues concerning the female body through graphic design can bring about a significant impact on society and help improve women's health and quality of life.

When I started investigating this topic, I found very little information about the relationship between graphic design and feminine care products. This prompted me to pursue this topic further. My hope is that the project resonates among women, and brings attention to women's issues. I hope that society can provide more options for women in the future.

From my thesis proposal last semester, my original plan was to do a brand design of a period concept store. The store curates a collation of goods and books from hundreds of different brands and independent makers for people who want to support the community. I will conduct a design analysis that includes general information on menstrual cycles, and reviews different types of hygiene products and brands available in the market. This information will be distilled into a 30-60 page, 5 x 7 soft bound book. I also plan to design some merchandise that include lapel pins, a large sized full bleed calendar, postcards, and a subscription box, which will include multiple free and accessible goods chosen as products of the month from various brands.

II. Overview

When I started doing my thesis project, I realized it was difficult for me to collect different products from various brands in the market and review

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each one. Doing so will take an incredible amount of time and resources. For this reason, I decided to switch my main focus from reviewing different feminine care products to designing a subscription box. I attended a panel during my midterm review where I felt inspired when one of the panelists mentioned that I can put together a subscription box that includes various hygiene products that women may try. It may be a mixture of different feminine care products so women may get to experience all these products and determine the best one for them. Aside from developing a subscription box, I also want to focus on providing support for people who want to know more about periods. This target audience is too broad, however, which would make it difficult to find an appropriate graphic design that would meet their diverse needs. Hence, I chose to narrow down my audience to teenagers. Knowing that I have a specific audience helped me determine the direction and design style I will pursue. Because of these changes in my thesis, I also altered the deliverables. Instead of writing a review book, I decided to create a small booklet that would go along with the subscription box, and include lapel pins, postcards, sticker packs, and a business card.

III. Project Description + Process of Making / 15 minutes

After clarifying and finalizing the plan, deliverables, style, and objective, one of the first challenges I encountered is creating a good brand name and tagline that would represent what I am trying to accomplish. Since I am not that good when it comes to making up names, it took me a while to come up with one. Eventually, after thinking things through, I chose the “Auntie Shop” as my brand name. I chose this name because “auntie” means “period” in Chinese. Instead of saying “my period came today,” we say “my auntie came or visited today.” Moreover, in Chinese culture, “auntie” does not only refer to an elderly woman but to a close friend or older sister who brings comfort and warmth. Through this brand, I hope I can make teenagers feel comfortable talking about periods so we can create a safe space for them to explore feminine care without fear of judgment.

In terms of the tagline, I chose “from auntie, with love” because I think this effectively communicates what I am going for based on the brand name. Moreover, this tagline feels personal and warm, which fits the concept of my brand. The colors representing my brand are different from the color associated with menstruation. I will choose bright, playful, and energetic colors. As for the wordmark and font of the brand name and tagline, I will choose a modern yet appealing typography. “Osmose” meets this objective. The body text will be written in typewriter fonts. “Pitched” goes well with “Osmose” and the overall design, and it has a unique and memorable dot for the letter “i”. I chose “Krungthep” for other texts and numbers because it is bold, rounded, and matches the modern feel of “Osmose.” For the design, I want to keep my design simple and fun, and yet evoke different emotions in people.

Some of the things I am considering also relate to the other aspects of design. I am considering adding a period dot as an element of my design. I also want to add a smiley face in the logo. I tried drawing various faces and emotions to test the best smiley face that goes with the logo I am planning. I want to design a face that can represent different motions at the same time. After going over various illustrations, I came up with a face that shows “awkwardness” and “silliness,” which is a little ambiguous because one cannot tell if it represents a sad or happy face. This represents the emotions women feel as a result of the menstrual process. I also drew some illustrations and graphics to enrich my designs so I would have various options to play with when I finalize my design.

As for the booklet, it will be divided into five parts. The foreword, which describes my intention in putting it together and what I hope teenagers would learn from the booklet. The second part includes a brief background of the menstrual cycle, which includes important facts about this. The third part includes information about different types of feminine care products. The fourth part includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). The last part of the booklet is the postface which sums up the information presented in the booklet and also other resources that teenagers may access to know more about periods and feminine care.

ORAL PRESENTATION

IV. Influences / 5 minutes

Throughout the long process of brainstorming, planning, and designing, I took inspiration from various sources that are not only credible sources of information about menstruation and feminine care. Period: The Menstrual Movement (period.org) has been one of my inspirations when putting together information in the booklet. Aside from this website, I also joined a workshop with Outlet PDX (outletpdx.com). Through the workshop, I learned about riso printing and was also exposed to various works and designs from their studio.

V. The Project in Culture / 5 minutes

The next steps of the project pertain to other elements that would contribute to its completion. Funding is one issue so I will be working on communicating with potential clients and pitching my design, product ideas, and plans about the brand's launch. I am planning to open a pop-up store in different cities around the world to introduce the brand to the market. Through these pop-up stores, teenagers would gain awareness about my brand and hopefully share their experience with their family and friends.

The product and deliverables I am working function in contemporary visual culture such that aims to evoke conversations about important issues and taboos through design. By designing striking designs that draw people's attention and appeal to their standards of visual aesthetics, I hope to not only introduce the brand but specifically draw teenagers who have specific tastes and interests. I hope that over time, we would live in a society where a brand that sells feminine care products become recognizable enough that it prompts the normalization of discussions about period.

The product and design also relates to a contemporary audience because I planned it to appeal to younger generations, specifically teenagers who are part of the Gen Z population. Gen Z's interests primarily define the interests of the contemporary audience, and therefore, appealing drawing

their attention illustrates how graphic design may be used to target those who constitute and define the interests of the contemporary audience. Similarly, this illustrates how graphic design may also be used to appeal to the popular culture. Establishing pop-up stores also accomplishes this objective because this is one of the most trendy marketing schemes today. The value of experiences increase when there are limits to such experiences, and this is a concept attached to pop-up stores. Furthermore, pop-up stores illustrate the presence of art in the streets because they pop-up in different places, mostly in streets with heavy traffic.

This project also fits into my portfolio of work because it not only represents my aspirations but also my creative mind and ability to develop designs to meet specific goals and objectives. In the past, I used to do minor projects for various courses but this allows me to do something that is personal to me that represents my views, perspectives, ideas, and culture. Therefore, I can use this opportunity to show who I am and reflect my goal of using art to build communities, nurture cultures, and practice different approaches to art and design that breaks limiting traditions.

VI. Conclusion / Closing Remarks / 5 minutes

Overall, through this project, I hope to apply my knowledge and creativity by developing a brand that represents my culture and values. I came up with "Auntie's Shop" to address one social issue that concerns me, which is the general discomfort about periods that prevent some people from learning about feminine care. I applied creativity by designing various aspects including the visual elements, but also the brand image and purpose. I will focus on creating a subscription box and other related materials that includes a period booklet, which will be showcased in pop-up stores. Through this project, I hope to encourage discourse about periods to help teenagers, especially girls, feel more confident about this aspect of their physiological identity. I hope that Auntie's Shop will help build a community that supports women and promotes feminine care.

CREATIVE BRIEF

I. Project Vision

The topic of my thesis will be on how graphic design can be instrumental in the evolution of feminine care products. I was raised in a conservative community where women do not feel comfortable talking about menstruation and other period-related topics often due to stereotypes, prejudices, and taboos. Society may address this problem in various ways and one strategy may be to apply graphic design to facilitate important conversations about periods no matter how uncomfortable. Addressing this problem is highly important because society's unwillingness to talk about this issue limits women's knowledge and understanding of feminine care.

II. Audience

My main audience will be focused on teenagers. I chose the "Auntie Shop" as my brand name. I chose this name because "auntie" also means "period" in Chinese. Instead of saying "my period came today," we can say "my auntie came or visited today." Moreover, in Chinese culture, "auntie" does not just only refer to an elderly woman but to a close friend or older sister who brings comfort and warmth. Through this brand, I hope I can make teenagers feel comfortable talking about periods so we can create a safe space for them to explore feminine care without fear of judgement.

In terms of the tagline, I came up "from auntie with love" because I think this effectively communicates what I am going for based on the brand name. Moreover, this tagline feels personal and warm, which fits the concept of my brand. The colors representing my brand are different from the color associated with menstruation. I want to pick bright, playful, and energetic colors such as neon colors as my color palette.

III. Methods & Materials

My deliverables will be print on different printing techniques. I will designed some merch including sticker pack, calendar poster, calendar cards, and subscription boxes by using different printing techniques including digital printing, riso printing, and screenprinting.

IV. Comparative Media

Throughout the long process of brainstorming, planning, and designing, I took inspiration from various sources that are not only credible sources of information about menstruation and feminine care. Period: The Menstrual Movement (period.org) has been one of my inspirations when putting together information in the booklet. Aside from this website, I also joined a workshop with Outlet PDX (outletpdx.com). Through the workshop, I learned about riso printing and was also exposed to various works and designs from their studio.

V. Marketplace Application

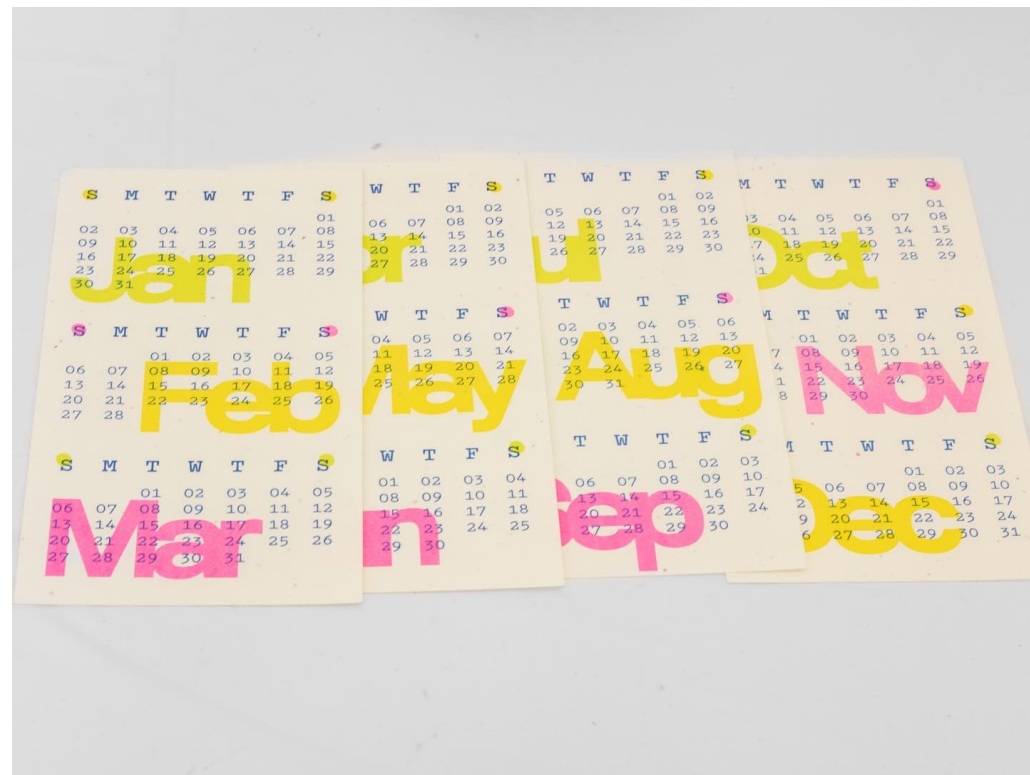
Funding is one issue so I will be working on communicating with potential clients and pitching my design, product ideas, and plans about the brand's launch. I am planning to open a pop-up store in different cities around the world to introduce the brand to the market. Through these pop-up stores, teenagers would gain awareness about my brand and hopefully share their experience with their family and friends.

The product and design also relates to a contemporary audience because I planned it to appeal to younger generations, specifically teenagers who are part of the Gen Z population. Gen Z's interests primarily define the interests of the contemporary audience, and therefore, appealing drawing their attention illustrates how graphic design may be used to target those who constitute and define the interests of the contemporary audience. Similarly, this illustrates how graphic design may also be used to appeal to the popular culture. Establishing pop-up stores also accomplishes this objective because this is one of the most trendy marketing schemes today. The value of experiences increase when there are limits to such experiences, and this is a concept attached to pop-up stores. Furthermore, pop-up stores illustrate the presence of art in the streets because they pop-up in different places, mostly in streets with heavy traffic.

DOCUMENTATIONS



DOCUMENTATIONS



DOCUMENTATIONS



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THESIS JOURNAL



1-2 basic colors (B&W)
1 pop color (neon)



Paper textures
Printing textures
Modern Fonts