



housewares  
for the  
houseless

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A Design Proposal by Chap Ambrose

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## Design Problem Statement

Few products have been designed to meet the distinctive needs of people without a place of permanent residency. This unstable experience can be traumatic and life-changing for adults, children and families alike.

The goal of this 10 week project is to create an original, or improve a conventional, houseware product specifically for people without permanent residency that enhances their decency, independence and self-respect.

## Research

Initial research and inspiration for the development of this proposal has come largely from my personal experience working with and serving the houseless as well as a variety of texts, including; *Designing for the Homeless* by Sam Davis, *Down and Out, On the Road* by Kenneth L. Kusmer, *Design for the Real World* by Victor Papanek, as well as the beautiful photographic ethnographies *Homeless* and *Homeless in America*.

## Discussion of Problem

Stereotypes assume people lack a permanent residency because of substance abuse. Although a large number do struggle with addictions an equal amount are forced into the

situation by natural disasters, fleeing from domestic violence, or are children of poverty stricken parents.

“One’s social and emotional development, degree of parental care and guidance, family structure, and early education are not matters of choice.” -Howard Schatz *Homeless*

Much of the current assistance available for the houseless is focused on either short-term care (shelters, soup kitchens, emergency health care) or long-term political programs (job training, affordable housing). While these services are vital, the daily embarrassment, vulnerability and desperation of people in this lifestyle also deserves our attention. I believe this is an area where a well-designed houseware can be effective.

## Methodology

As this project is defined by the situation of its users, it is impossible to specify a distinct area of need without first immersing oneself into its culture. This “deep dive” will be accomplished with a variety of contextual research methods and opportunities.

An initial survey of local organizations will be conducted to better understand the current assistance available and to learn from the experienced experts in this field. One on one interviews with local houseless individuals will be performed to gather qualitative data concerning their circumstances. Participant observation, while traditionally a social anthropology research method, will also be used to gain invaluable insight and empathy for the experiences the users encounter everyday.

Traditional industrial design techniques will then be utilized to advance development of the product in a direction dictated by the research. These techniques can include rapid 2-D ideation sketching, 3-D sketch model creation and computer renderings of the final design solution.

Depending on the consequent design created, testing will hopefully be conducted directly with its intended users.

Finally drawing from Interaction Design techniques, personas and scenarios may also be created to help communicate the implications of the design for its intended users.

## Deliverables

Following the initial presentation of this design proposal on Monday, September 19, the research portion of the project will begin. This will be conducted for three weeks stopping on Tuesday, October 11, to begin the synthesize of the data collected. A presentation will then be given on Tuesday, October 18, sharing the research. The following Thursday, October 20, an informed design criteria will be presented. This will lead directly into the 2-D and 3-D exploration and development culminating with a design freeze on Tuesday, November 8, with an update happening between on Tuesday, November 1. The final two weeks will be spent creating a final computer model, renderings, scenario and presentation as well as entry kit for the International Housewares Association competition. This final presentation will take place on Tuesday, November 22.

## Qualifications

I have had the opportunity to take part in a variety of volunteer trips to Los Angeles, Washington DC, Jamaica, Mexico and Estonia each visit primarily centered around assisting the houseless. Currently I am completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts program in Industrial Design at Savannah College of Art & Design. I also recently finished a three month internship at Lextant Corp. User Research in Columbus, Ohio.