

**Thesis Proposal for The Master of Fine Arts Degree**

**College of Imaging Arts and Sciences  
Rochester Institute of Technology**

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The Contribution to the History of Graphic Design by  
Dr. Robert Leslie and his Publications PM Magazine  
and AD Magazine

Erin K. Malone  
September 21, 1993

Thesis Committee

Chief Advisor: R. Roger Remington  
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Resource People: Gordon Goodman  
Herbert Johnson  
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Departmental Approval:

Date:

Approval, Special Assistant to the

Dean of Graduate Affairs:

Date:

Computer needs other than word processing:  X  Yes  
May need use of the IEPL lab for printing outputs  
of the thesis application.

Committee Approval:

## **Thesis Proposal for The Master of Fine Arts**

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The purpose of this thesis and its associate work is to research and study the innovative contributions of Dr. Robert Leslie (1885 - 1987) to the history of graphic design, through the activities at the Composing Room, Inc. These activities included shows by upcoming graphic designers and two important design publications PM Magazine and AD Magazine.

The application of this thesis will be to interpret the research into a functional information resource for professional designers, design historians and design students. This may be accomplished by developing an interactive media database, a scholarly article and/or other design applications.

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**Thesis Project Plan**

**The Contribution to the History of Graphic Design by  
Dr. Robert Leslie and his Publications *PM Magazine*  
and *AD Magazine***

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## Situation Analysis

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Within American design history, there are many people, designers, typographers and printers, who were instrumental in the progression of graphic design as a field. These people were often important to the career development of many now well-known designers and their contributions are often under appreciated for their significance. The typographer, Dr. Robert Leslie, is one such person. I plan to study Dr. Leslie's contributions and show how his role as mentor was important to the careers of many pioneering designers and to the field of graphic design.

## Problem Statement

I plan to research the contributions of Dr. Robert Leslie by studying the activities of the Composing Room, Inc. These included exhibits introducing new, unknown and young designers and the publication of *PM* and *AD* magazines, primarily between 1927 and 1942. These publications were also showcases for the talents of several designers. The audience for my thesis will consist primarily of design historians, design professionals and design students. Other audiences may consist of printers and typographers.

## **Mission Statement**

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Within the field of graphic design and design history, there has been no documentation of the contributions of Dr. Robert L. Leslie. This thesis will document his role as mentor to pioneering graphic designers and show the influence that the Composing Room, Inc. and its activities (*PM* and *AD* magazine and exhibits at the A-D Gallery) had to the history of graphic design. This information will be presented to professionals and students in the field to educate them on the importance of this work.

## Goals

To gather information about Dr. Robert L. Leslie's life and career.

To document Dr. Robert L. Leslie's role as mentor to pioneering graphic designers.

## Objectives

- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to identify five key biographical elements about Dr. Robert L. Leslie
- After reading the information, the user should be able to compare five events of Dr. Leslie's life and career to five historically significant events.
- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to define six different aspects of Dr. Leslie's career.

- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to create a list of at least ten of the pioneering designers that Dr. Leslie mentored.
- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to discuss the role Dr. Leslie played in the careers of at least seven pioneering designers.

## Processes and Strategies of Implementation

- Review videotaped interview with Dr. Leslie.
- Gather information about Dr. Leslie's life through obituaries and articles.
- Gather information about Dr. Leslie's life through personal interviews with people who knew him.
- Establish a timeline of Dr. Leslie's life.
- Compare life information to important historical events of the same time.
- Plot important historical information on the timeline parallel to Dr. Leslie's life.
- Categorize the different aspects of Dr. Leslie's career.
- Highlight significant events and dates.
- Research refugee designers coming to New York in the 30's and 40's.
- Create list of designers to whom Dr. Leslie was mentor.
- Create database of artists and dates.
- Write short bios of designers.
- Research how Dr. Leslie helped several designers.
- Interview designers or persons who knew them.

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To show the influence that the Composing Room, Inc. and its activities (*PM* and *AD* magazines and exhibits at the A-D Gallery) had to the history of graphic design.

- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to identify the work of at least seven pioneering designers.

- After reviewing the information, the user will be able to write a list of at least ten of the artists and designers showcased in *PM* and *AD* magazines.

- After reviewing the information, the user will be able to make a list of at least ten of the designers shown at the A-D Gallery.

- Collect representative samples of artists work.
- Categorize work by client and date.
- Add samples of work to database.

- Review all *PM* and *AD* magazines.
- Create an index of all articles, authors and artists published in *PM* and *AD* magazines.
- Develop a working database for all the indexed information.
- Develop cross reference systems for dates, issues, articles and authors.

- Gather information about the Composing Room, Inc.
- Establish a timeline of the Composing Room, Inc.
- Highlight significant events.
- Research and review copies of gallery opening invitations and announcements.
- Create a list of all artists exhibited at the Composing Room, Inc.
- Add this information to the already developing database.



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To present this information to professionals and students in the field to educate them on the importance of this work.

- After reviewing the information, the user will be able to recognize the influence of the Composing Room, Inc. within the history of graphic design and make a list of at least five contributing factors.

- Compare the concept of the A-D Gallery to Gallery 291 run by Alfred Steiglitz around the same time.
- Research how the different artists made significant contributions to the field of graphic design.
- Write short bios on each designer.
- Show samples of the work by these designers.

- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to identify at least five significant elements of this work.

- Provide an environment for using the information gathered.
- Create an interactive database.
- Write a scholarly article presenting information and samples of work.

To evaluate this project and modify accordingly.

- After using this project the user will be able to provide feedback on at least two categories.

- Interview user about presentation, access of information, level of understanding.
- Interview with readers of article via reader response card.

- After using this product the user will be able to answer at least ten questions about the product.

- Develop questionnaire.
- Test users on the information.

## **Pragmatic Considerations**

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Budget should not be a hindrance to this project.

Expenses will come in the form of outputs for the final presentation, possibly a new syquest disk, and travel and long distance phone costs for interviewing.

## Dissemination

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This project will be exhibited in the RIT Bevier gallery as partial fulfillment of the MFA. It will be kept on file by the school for future research use. A portion of the project will take the form of an article that will be submitted for publication to such magazines as *Graphis*, *Communication Arts* and *Print* magazine.

## Evaluation Plan

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### Objectives

- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to identify five key biographical elements about Dr. Robert L. Leslie
- After reading the information, the user should be able to compare five events of Dr. Leslie's life and career to five historically significant events.
- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to define six different aspects of Dr. Leslie's career.
- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to create a list of at least ten of the pioneering designers that Dr. Leslie mentored.
- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to discuss the role Dr. Leslie played in the careers of at least seven pioneering designers.
- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to identify the work of at least seven pioneering designers.
- After reviewing the information, the user will be able to write a list of at least ten of the artists and designers showcased in *PM* and *AD* magazines.
- After reviewing the information, the user will be able to make a list of at least ten of the designers shown at the A-D Gallery.

### Evaluation Strategies

- The user will be given a questionnaire to fill out asking him/her to identify key biographical elements.
- The user will fill out a questionnaire and identify comparative information.
- The user will be asked to define several aspects of Dr. Leslie's career via a questionnaire.
- The user will be asked to create a list of designers.
- Will observe a discussion about the role Dr. Leslie played in the history of graphic design.
- Will show the user work of designers and will ask the user to identify by artist.
- The user will be asked to write a list as part of an evaluation questionnaire.
- The user will be asked to write a list as part of an evaluation questionnaire.

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- After reviewing the information, the user will be able to recognize the influence of the Composing Room, Inc. within the history of graphic design and make a list of at least five contributing factors.

- After reviewing the information, the user should be able to identify at least five significant elements of this work.

- After using this project the user will be able to provide feedback on at least two categories.

- After using this product the user will be able to answer at least ten questions about the product.

- The user will be asked to discuss the influence of the Composing Room and to make a list of the contributing factors. The discussion will be observed.

- The user will be asked to identify five significant elements of this work via a questionnaire.

- The user will give feedback via a semantic differential list of statements

- The user will be asked to use the interactive database and will answer questions about the navigation and information presented. This will be directly observed.

## **Bibliography**

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### AD Magazine

Vol. VI, No. 6 (August -September 1940)

"Irvine Kamers"

"Jean Carlu"

### AD Magazine

Vol. VII, No. 5 (June - July 1941)

"Alex Steinweiss"

"Herbert Bayer's Design Class"

### AD Magazine

Vol. VIII, No. 3 (February - March 1942)

"Will Burtin"

### PM Magazine

Vol. IV, No. 6 (April - May, 1938)

"Hans Barschel"

"AIGA 50 American Prints 1933 - 1938"

### PM Magazine

Vol. 5, No. 2 (August - September 1939)

"Agha's American Decade"

"NY World's Fair Design Student's Guide"

"Dr. Leslie's Life Was One of Purpose, Helping Many Others to Achievement," Printing News (April 11, 1987) : 2+.

"The Typophiles Mark Centennial of 'Doc' Leslie," Publishers Weekly vol. 229 (January 10, 1986) : 66.

Blumenthal, Joseph, Herbert H. Johnson and Carl Schlesinger. "Dr. Robert Lincoln Leslie, Humanitarian and Educator (1885-1987)," Printing History vol.IX, no. 2 (1987): 2-4.

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Chernofsky, Jacob L. "Doc Leslie at 100 - Humanitarian of the Graphic Arts World," AB Bookman's Weekly (December 16, 1985) :4491-4510.

Leslie, Dr. Robert. "Four Conversations with Dr. Robert Leslie," interview by Herb Johnson (Rochester Institute of Technology, 1981). Unpublished Videocassette.

Meggs, Philip  
A History of Graphic Design. 2nd ed  
New York; Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1992.

Remington, R. Roger and Barbara J. Hodik  
Nine Pioneers in American Graphic Design  
Cambridge, Massachusetts; The MIT Press, 1989.

New York Times  
Obituary, April 3, 1987

Personal Interviews  
Discussion with Herb Johnson  
October 25, 1993

## Glossary of Terms

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*PM Magazine* The publication published by Dr. Robert Leslie to promote artists, designers and printing education.

*AD Magazine* *PM* became *AD* after Dr. Robert Leslie sold the name to Ralph Ingersoll. Stands for Art Direction.

*'Uncle' Bob* Dr. Robert Leslie

*job printer* A print shop that print on a job to job basis

*Industrial doctor* A doctor specifically hired by industry or a manufacturing company. Dr. Leslie was the first Industrial doctor in New York city, hired by McGraw Hill Publishing Co.

*Gebraushgraphik* Influential graphic design journal first published in 1925. Dr. Leslie was the American liaison and began publishing *PM* magazine when *Gebraushgraphik* folded.

*The Composing Room* Typesetting firm run by Dr. Robert L. Leslie and Sol Cantor. Also published *PM* and *AD* magazines and sponsored A-D gallery exhibits and later Gallery 303.

*The "Creative Forties"* Term coined by Dr. Leslie to describe the excitement and creativity of the graphic arts industry during the 1940's.



## Appendix

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- i - Timeline of Dr. Leslie's life
- ii - Notes from 4 hour videotape of Dr. Leslie
- iii - Preliminary database categories
- iv - Photocopies of obituaries and articles
  - Printing News
  - Printing History
  - Publishers Weekly
- v - Preliminary timeline of A -D Gallery exhibits
- vi - Notes from discussion with Herb Johnson
- vii - Initial Thesis project timeline

## Timeline of Thesis Process 1993/1994

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September 2	Classes begin
September 7	First preliminary meeting with Roger Remington
September 14	<b>Thesis proposal</b> - first draft Meet with Bruce Meader Meet with Barbara Polowy Confirm thesis committee
September 21	Turn in Thesis Proposal to School of Art <b>Situation Analysis</b> <b>Problem Statement</b>
September 28	Situation Analysis Problem Statement <b>Mission Statement</b> <b>Goals</b> <b>Objectives</b> <b>Processes and Strategies</b> Research and find videotape interview with Dr. Leslie
October 5	Mission Statement Goals Objectives Processes and Strategies
October 12	Mission Statement Goals Objectives Processes and Strategies <b>Timeline</b> <b>Pragmatic Considerations</b> <b>Dissemination</b> <b>Evaluation Plan</b> <b>Bibliography</b> <b>Glossary</b> <b>Appendix</b> <b>Database categories</b>

October 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeline of thesis project</li> <li>Bibliography</li> <li>Glossary</li> <li>Research in the Cary Library</li> <li>List of names to interview or contact</li> <li>Database development</li> </ul>	
October 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeline of thesis project</li> <li>Bibliography</li> <li>Glossary</li> <li>Gather information about Dr. Leslie's life</li> <li>Review videotapes</li> <li>Talk to Herb Johnson</li> <li>Timeline of Dr. Leslie's life</li> </ul>	
November 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bibliography</li> <li>Glossary</li> <li>Begin multi track timeline (Dr. Leslie's life, <i>PM</i> and <i>AD</i> magazine, A-D Gallery)</li> <li>Add information to database</li> <li>Talk to David Pankow</li> </ul>	
November 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop interview questions</li> </ul>	
November 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Last day of classes</li> </ul>	
November 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turn in Final Thesis Project plan</li> </ul>	Interview people by phone, in person
November 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fall break</li> </ul>	

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December 1	Winter Quarter begins Research <i>PM</i> and <i>AD</i> magazines
December 7	Tentative first committee meeting Review proposal
December 14	Index <i>PM</i> and <i>AD</i> magazine Index A-D Gallery exhibit information
December 21	Last class before christmas break
January 3,1994	Classes resume Index <i>PM</i> and <i>AD</i> magazine Index A-D Gallery exhibit information
January 4	Research refugee designers Interview people who knew them
January 11	Interviewing

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January 18	Write short bios Gather samples Add info to database
January 25	Interpret information to show significance of Dr. Leslie's contribution
February 1	Enter all information into database Begin writing article
February 15	Tentative thesis committee meeting Review information, database structure, article
February 18	Last day of classes
February 27	Winter break begins
March 7	Spring classes begin
March 14	First thesis show opens

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March 15	Committee meeting review layouts, database and exhibition ideas
March 22	Prepare for show Writing article
April 1	Finished article for publication
April 4	Second thesis show opens
April 12	Interview readers of article via reader response card Interview users of database about presentation, information access
April 19	Prepare for show
April 25	Third thesis show opens
April 30	Evaluate project

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May 1	Begin writing Thesis book
May 8	1st draft - give to each committee member
May 10	Committee meeting review first draft - changes, suggestions
May 13	2nd draft - give to each committee member
May 16	Last day of classes Final Committee meeting review second draft - changes, suggestions
May 18	Finished thesis Signing by each committee member
May 21	Commencement

## Database categories

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### Contacts

- Name
- Address
- Phone number
- Relationship to Dr. Leslie
- Relationship to refugee artists

### Listing of refugee artists

- name
- country of origin
- school or style
- major european clients
  - samples of work
- major american clients
  - samples of work
- type of artist
  - illustrator
  - art director
  - commercial artist
  - designer
  - type designer
  - painter



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*PM and AD Magazine*

Issue no.

Date

size

Processes and techniques

    typestyles used

inserts

    processes and techniques

    typestyles used

source of document

editorial listing of articles

photographs

    credits

illustrations

    credits

Cover artist

Featured artist/Designer

    Country of origin

    Client list

    Samples of Work shown

        clients

    short bios

    author of feature

Books reviewed

Listing of advertisements

Cataloger

Data entry by

date entered

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The Composing Room

A-D Gallery

Exhibits

Date

Designers/Artists shown

Country of origin

Clients

Samples of work

Short bios

Exhibit announcement

designer

techniques and processes

paper

typestyle

Bibliography

Glossary