HIDDEN IN
PLAIN SIGHT
As part of the ongoing History Moves project, I worked with Communication Design students at the University of Cincinnati in collaboration with the women of WIHS Chicago to present these women’s stories as a public and collective history. The exhibition, titled “In Plain Sight,” shows that women living with HIV have moved from the margins of what was once a deadly epidemic to become survivors and history makers.

In the 15-week studio, students worked with existing materials from the History Moves project, including audio files of oral history interviews, transcripts of those interviews, plus images and documents provided by the women and digitized by researchers. In addition, small student teams conducted their own secondary and primary research on themes related to the women’s narratives, including relationships between HIV/AIDS and addiction, poverty, racial discrimination, and other forms of structural inequality.

Students translated all of these historical materials and their own research into a pop-up exhibition that also considers many forms of digital media logic in analog forms. There are data visualizations in the form of the orange cards issued to patients at Cook Co. hospital (a powerful element of material culture from the research), there are site specific indications such as the maps that show where high populations of HIV exist within the current host city of the exhibition, and a wall for visitor thoughts and feedback. The center column of the space houses the audio, so visitors can listen to the women’s stories first-hand—in their own voices and words. This mobile exhibition debuted at the College of Design, Architecture, Art & Planning at the University in December 2015, and continues to travel, currently in Chicago.

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Fabrication Partners
Simple Wood Goods
BrushWorks

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HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

Presenting the stories of a group of women affected with HIV/AIDS as a form of public history, seeking to break stigmas and raise awareness to the disease.
INTENTION

Utilizing a casual pop-up gallery space in an urban setting to present the stories of the WIHS women in a positive and uplifting manner.

The goal is to facilitate conversation and raise awareness to the ongoing fight against HIV/AIDS.
AUDIENCE

MILLENNIAL AUDIENCE, AGES 18-35.

This audience has high expectations for uniquely designed experiences. Utilizing innovative satellite applications paired with an interactive exhibition experience, we intend to capture interest & drive attendance to the event.
Specific to Cincinnati, the main outpost of the event will be held in the Over-The-Rhine district, an eclectic urban neighborhood. The pop-up space will feature interactive elements, incorporating the video and audio components of the WIHS women, as well as a space for discussion.

The interactive space will be an opportunity for big picture storytelling, while the discussion space facilitates personal storytelling.

The following presentation pages outline suggested features of both the interactive and discussion spaces, as well as satellite and promotional elements for consideration.
The goal is to provide the audience with a variety of engaging exhibition elements. The audience can participate hands-on or interact with the visual or audio content.
I can't find this medicine. And [The Northwestern Staff] said all you have to do is pick it up.

It don't matter if you were born on the South side, the North side, Chicago, whatever.

We all have a lot in common.
The audience will have the opportunity to participate with installations that will both engage and inform.
HOW HAPPY ARE YOU?

ON A SCALE FROM 1-107 TAKE ONE GUMBALL FROM THE CORRESPONDING MACHINE [ONE PER PERSON, PLEASE!]

WHICH GMO ISSUE CONCERNS YOU MOST?

1. I am NOT concerned about GMOs
2. The lack of labeling on GMO foods
3. GMO-related damage to the environment
4. Inconclusive data on GMO safety
KEEPING THE COST LOW

SOME BUDGET DETAILS

Portable Fabric Wall, 6’ x 6’ = $139 ea x 12 walls maximum
Clear PVC = $50 ea x approx 7
Flexible Tubes = $0.38/sq ft x approx 100 ft
Audio Players = $2.50 ea x approx 20
Earbuds = $5.00 ea x approx 20
Printed materials = estimated $25 per quote/decal x approx 12

Total = approx 50% of budget
The goal is to have people who are unfamiliar with each other to feel compelled to speak to one another on a topic (HIV/AIDS and the WIHS women) that is not usually comfortably spoken out loud amongst the general public.
After experiencing the discussion room, hopefully there is a new feeling of community that will initiate participants to go abroad and spread their new foundings outside of the exhibit on a topic that is in plain view, but rarely recognized.
TABLE

One large table would help bring people together to sit and talk openly about an unusually discussed topic. Different sections of the table would feature different WIHS women’s stories.
I was a mom at 13 in a sense, helping take care of her baby.

It don't matter where we're from. It don't matter if you were born on the South side, the North side, Cicero, whatever.

We all have a lot in common.
The cards would boldly reflect the WIHS women’s HIV/AIDS identification cards. The cards are meant to be a taken by the participants. Behind each card would be a different inspirational message or initiative that would be unseen. The message would be seen in plain sight to the participant and would lead them to go out and do something out of the norm.
Message Behind Cards

GET TO KNOW DEBRA TODAY.

WISH A STRANGER YOUR BEST.

VOLUNTEER THIS WEEK.

LEARN SOMETHING NEW.

THE WOMEN OF WISH EXHIBITION CINCINNATI, OHIO
BRING THIS CARD WITH YOU.

WISH A STRANGER YOUR BEST.

THE WOMEN OF WISH EXHIBITION CINCINNATI, OHIO
BRING THIS CARD WITH YOU.

THE WOMEN OF WISH EXHIBITION CINCINNATI, OHIO
BRING THIS CARD WITH YOU.
Questions would be projected on the walls in order to provoke conversation amongst the audience. Even if conversation isn’t started by audience members, the displayed questions would cause the members to think to themselves about what they have seen.
Who is at Risk?

Can You Stop the Stigma?

How Can You Stay Safe?
SATELLITES & PROMOTIONAL
The overall main idea is to raise awareness and provide information about the exhibit. We have designed a system around the idea “Hidden in Plain Sight,” which includes a series of mannequins located around the city that the public can interact with.
The hash tag will direct social media users to various platforms with information about the exhibition. A powerful quote, from one of the women of WIHS, will wrap each mannequin tying it to one of six themes. A plaque will be attached to the mannequin stand with a short paragraph about that specific theme. Two card holders on either side will house orange cards with information about the exhibition, as both a take away and a means to provide information to those that do not use social media.

“And I didn’t know I was poor. My brother had to tell us this later—you know, we were poor.”
The public can participate in multiple ways. First, when they interact with the mannequins we place around the city, they will take an orange card that will be used during the exhibit and discussion. In addition, we are driving people to social media to spread the word about the event. We would like to have an incentive for people to post selfies they take and share our posts to boost participation and awareness.
Large decals could be applied to the streets of the exhibit’s hosting city in place of the mannequins. This would create a striking visual that would attract the attention of the general public. We would utilize striking quotes and apply them to buildings, streets, and possibly even structures.
THANK YOU