

An established institution takes its next step.

A case study on how a museum center marks 20 years and reintroduces itself to the community.



Opportunity

For more than 20 years, the Heinz Architectural Center (HAC) has been an exemplary source of drawings, models, and knowledge about architecture in our region. And yet, as we met with HAC to plan its anniversary, we discovered that the local community was not fully aware of the Center and all it had to offer. We wanted to turn this discovery into an opportunity: to help HAC evolve its brand, establish powerful new messaging, and essentially reintroduce itself to Pittsburgh.

Solution

ThoughtForm began asking questions about HAC and its mission. We wanted to understand its engagement with the community, and more broadly, the community's engagement with architecture. We asked HAC's curators and staff to describe these relationships in real terms and give us examples. What emerged was not only a strong point of view for its 20th anniversary, but the foundation for a newly expressed brand that would carry HAC into the future.

How did we help?

- Hosted a Vision Catching® session for HAC's anniversary and helped identify primary communications for the anniversary event.
- Created core brand elements for the event including logo and key messages.
- Created two exhibits for the event: a "history wall" tracking 20 years of accomplishments, and a video series presenting intimate stories of people and their environments.
- After the anniversary, shifted to future planning and held a second Vision Catching session to explore HAC's vision and purpose.
- Created a series of brand personas for HAC and explored how these personas would impact its programming and physical space.
- Created a plan that could incorporate HAC's new programming into its existing calendar and help launch the new brand.



As we approached our twentieth anniversary, ThoughtForm helped the Heinz Architectural Center focus on our key goals, in particular a better and evolving sense of how to engage with visitors. ThoughtForm's attentive yet playful methodology allowed a range of voices and concerns to be heard and be incorporated into our thinking for the years ahead.



Raymund Ryan
Curator of Architecture,
Heinz Architectural Center

What did we do?



Hosted a kick-off Vision Catching session to plan an anniversary event *and* lay the groundwork for future change.

Three months before HAC's scheduled celebration, we hosted a Vision Catching session with them to understand and explore HAC's history, brand, and visitor experience. This "deep dive" into HAC's culture was intended to help us create a thoughtful and memorable event *and* help position HAC for its next 20 years.

In the session, we worked through a series of discussions and exercises with key stakeholders. We reviewed our audit of HAC's communications, programs, and physical space, followed by an examination of HAC's brand personality and different visitor personas. Most importantly, we explored HAC's view on how people interact with architecture.



Helped design a 20th anniversary event that put HAC's history, and future, in the spotlight.

Using the anniversary to make a statement about HAC and its role in the community was important. We began planning the event by creating a contemporary typographic design for the anniversary theme, *20/20*. With the logo complete, HAC was able to start promoting the anniversary.

The logo and additional brand elements were then incorporated into multiple display panels for the event. Perhaps the most striking display was a comprehensive, historic timeline. It occupied an entire gallery wall of the facility and showcased milestones and interesting facts about HAC.

Also on display was *People + Places*, a series of videos featuring Pittsburghers from different walks of life describing their intimate connection to particular architectural spaces.



On the heels of the anniversary, repackaged the HAC brand and helped them define their future.

Creating the anniversary event taught us a lot about HAC's history and its passion for architecture. For this longer-term project, we focused on HAC's future. We brainstormed new programs that would foster HAC's desire to be more exploratory, innovative, and inclusive. One of the concepts that emerged was HAC Labs—exhibitions that would be more immersive and participatory.

We also developed three different personas for HAC itself—HAC: the teacher, the laboratory, and the change agent—each offering different qualities and impact on its audiences. We helped HAC select one of these personas (a combination of laboratory and change agent) and created a tagline and messaging to support it.

Along the way, we made sure to keep HAC's messaging aligned to the strategic direction of Carnegie Museum of Art—vital to a successful outcome.

Who did we help?

Established in 1990, the Heinz Architectural Center investigates the impact of built environments on people's lives.

Ranging from the late 18th century to present, HAC's nearly 6,000-object collection, including drawings, models, artifacts, and the world's third-largest collection of architectural casts, represents work by architects of international, national, and regional significance. HAC presents three exhibitions each year as well as summer architecture camps organized jointly by the Museum's education department and the Carnegie Mellon University School of Architecture. Inaugurated in 2015, a new program called HAC Lab, "invites a team of design radicals to examine and present issues of architectural and planning importance to Pittsburgh and the region."

What did we create?

A celebration of people and places

A running theme of HAC's anniversary event, and the work we did after the anniversary, was the intimate relationship between people and their environments. This theme was illustrated through a series of videos in which we told the stories of six diverse individuals and their passion for a particular building or neighborhood.



An established institution takes its next step.

What did we create?

continued

Summary and insights coming out of Vision Catching session

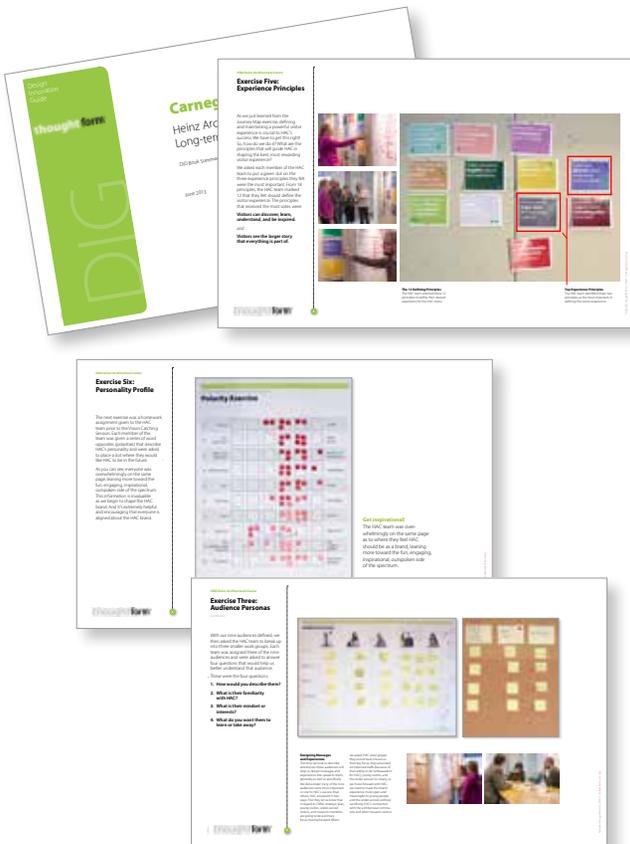
From visitor profiles to visitor experience, we dove deep into HAC's history and culture in the first Vision Catching session. We documented and synthesized the ideas that came out of this session into insights for both the anniversary event and HAC's long-term growth and change.

Anniversary brand identity and supporting exhibits

We designed the brand identity for 20/20 and applied it to communications materials and exhibit panels for the anniversary event. A video series, *People + Places*, and a life-size timeline wall deepened visitors' engagement at the event. There was also an opportunity for visitors to record their own story about a particular building or place that was meaningful to them.

Brand persona with new messaging and programs

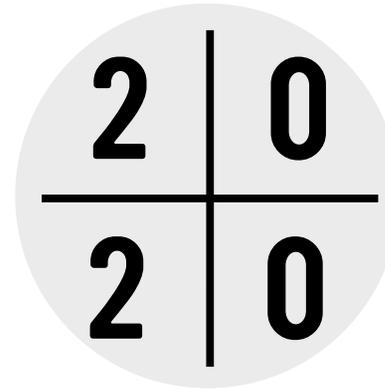
HAC selected a combination of two of the personas we created for them, "The Laboratory" and "The Change Agent," to guide their future plans and communications. With this new persona in mind, we created a tagline (*Building Curiosity*) and supporting messaging for HAC. We also developed new program ideas, such as HAC Labs, for HAC to consider and implement as they move forward.



An established institution takes its next step.

How did we do it?

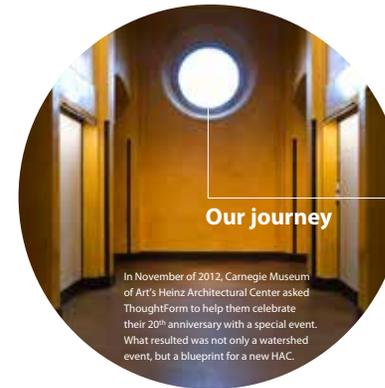
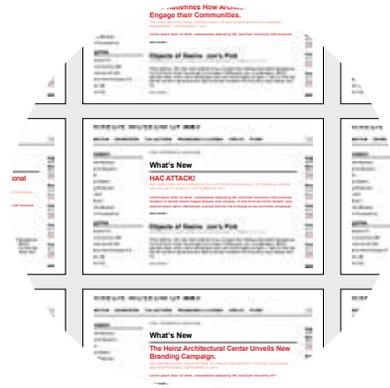
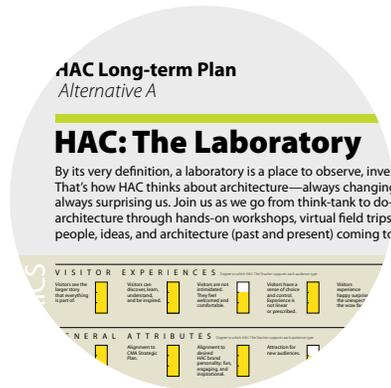
Collaborative sessions with HAC kept key stakeholders immersed at every step of the project journey.



Prepared for and hosted an initial Vision Catching® session in which we explored different visitor experiences and voted for the ones that were most desired for HAC.

Explored segments of HAC's current and future audiences—from a museum member to an architecture student to a family visiting on a weekend. We talked about what it takes to attract those audiences.

Used an iterative design process to create an anniversary brand as well as supporting videos and timeline that captured HAC's 20-year history and captured its vision for the future.



Used personification models of HAC to imagine what role it will play in the future. We defined how each persona would impact HAC's mission, visitors, and programming.

Created concepts for programs like HAC Labs and HAC Attack! to help support HAC's new persona, engage new audiences, and push HAC to a new level of community engagement.

Designed a final project presentation that documented key milestones of our journey with HAC and how the new brand elements and messaging would be implemented in the future.

ThoughtForm

ThoughtForm transforms ideas to connect people with actionable information. Working where strategy meets design, we help our clients turn fuzzy ideas, challenges, and opportunities into clear and meaningful messages and experiences. With ThoughtForm you can engage and inspire people, build their understanding, and enable them to take action.

ThoughtForm is a Pittsburgh-based design consultancy focused on visual communications. We work with leadership teams in organizations ranging from Fortune 100 companies to small nonprofits. Let us give your thoughts a visual form with the power to communicate.

To find out how our design solutions can help you contact Steve Frank at:

sfrank@thoughtform.com

To learn more, visit us at:

thoughtform.com

Copyright © 2017 ThoughtForm Inc. and Heinz Architectural Center. ThoughtForm and the ThoughtForm logo are registered trademarks.

Other products and service names may be trademarked by ThoughtForm and other companies.

This document is current as of the initial date of publication and may be changed by ThoughtForm at any time. The data and client examples are presented for illustrative purposes only. The information in this document is provided "As Is" without any warranty, express or implied, including without any warranties or merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose and any warranty or condition of non-infringement.