

“You can’t have fun without rules”

By Jack Bourton

I am a typographer. I see my work as a game. I set the rules to play with and interact with until I win. It's always about solving the problems that I have given myself and hopefully the outcome pleases me.

At the start of the year I had initially set myself a variety of briefs all with very different directions. At the time I was not sure where I was heading as a graphic designer and I wanted to use this year to work out what and where I was heading with my work.

There were a few briefs that never really got out of the starting blocks. At the beginning of the year I was interested in exploring the outcome but it became clear quite early that it wasn't going to be the case.

Flat Pack Tramp. This was intended to be a portable foldaway house. It was about making and then designing the packaging and marketing for the product. I started by creating a small model of a house but this was as far as I got. I hadn't really thought about the scale of what I wanted to build and the cost of the materials that I would have needed. Once the model was made it was just left on my desk and just put to the back of my to do list where it has remained. Maybe one day I will try and make something from the idea. I feel that this project was more about me creating a den for myself to take around with me, which maybe is a more exciting idea.

Photo Bind. This is a project that was nothing more than my admiration of David Hockney. It was a chance for me to use photography to show growth and movement using the style and approach of Hockney. I was never able to make anything of it without feeling like I was simply imitating his work.

Bowling Alley Life. This was an idea that had come from my job this year in a local bowling alley. I wanted to document the happenings of the place. There was only one reason this project didn't happen. When speaking to my managers for permission they said no. Their decision was understandable, as I wasn't planning on just showing all the good parts of the establishment. I was going to show a true representation of my workplace and the people that occupy it which would not advertise the place very well.

Hand Drawn Portraits. Initially this was a small set of illustrations of made up characters and a few accompanying sentences giving their stories. However after too long without drawing properly I was not able to produce the standards that I wanted so I reluctantly decided to stop with the project. I am not an illustrator.

My year however was not full of half started projects with reasons not to take them any further. I found myself becoming very interested in type design from very early on in the year. It all spawned from my first font briefs 'Tetris Type'

Tetris Type. This was based on digital games that I would play on my iPhone. These games were all puzzle based and would only have one outcome. The main influence came from a game called 'Flow'. This game was about connecting pipes to their corresponding dots. It set rules that I was really interested in and felt that I would be able to incorporate into my own typeface. While designing this typeface I noticed that it was something that I was becoming very interested in and it formed many other ideas for me to explore. Throughout the year I then set myself the task to create more typefaces.

As well as my new interest in typography I still had some other ideas that I wished to develop.

Lego. The Lego brief came from the YCN set of briefs that they released and was a project that I worked in collaboration with another student, Niall Bluer. It was an idea for an animation based on the three little pigs story. The aim was to show how Lego is superior to its competitors. It was only meant to be a short 3-week project that we were able to do over the Christmas break. The starting idea was for it to have a humorous theme and not to take it too seriously. We had to solve a fair few problems with set and character-scaling issues to begin with as we wanted the animation to be stop motion. We were only able to get a hand puppet for the wolf in the story so we ended up having to use live action filming for the majority of the scenes with the wolf which caused issues with the pacing of the animation. We also realised when we went to submit the animation that we hadn't read the brief well enough and as a result had produced

something that we were proud of but didn't meet the criteria. We are less than hopeful of any success from what we handed in. As this was only a short piece of work it is not a major issue and there are lots of things that we would have changed if we were to redo the animation. Where we used stop motion for the wolf the outcome was really successful but it was just not possible to do in the time frame that we had set ourselves. We would have also needed to sort out the pacing of the animation, as it was a fairly long piece that had bits that were important but would drag. It was really nice working with Niall because we seem to work well together and both brought different ideas to the table. It was also nice not having the whole burden of the workload and being able to spread that between us even if I was not able to help as much when it came to editing, as I was not as skilled as Niall. If there were an opportunity to work with him again in the future I would definitely take it up.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbWrtwNh19A&list=PLiQ5hlqZKH2B1vUbcAvT-vfEQL_5F-EEQ&index=5

A day in Northern Ireland. I wanted to document a trip that I was to take at the start of December last year to Northern Ireland. I was going to a place I had never been before and I thought it would be a good chance to learn about it in the day that I was there. I didn't want to turn up with any information before hand and I wanted to just find my own way around.

When I left for my trip I was optimistic to find some exciting stuff but when I arrived in Coleraine, Northern Ireland I was met by the weather. It rained almost the entire trip, which made me reluctant to take my camera out, and when it wasn't raining the visibility was terrible. All in all not perfect weather for exploring somewhere new. The town centre was a very bleak place with almost every shop closed or closing down. It was a sign that the economic climate had hit the place badly. I was still able to take some photos that when I look back on them represent my trip and probably a lot of peoples views about Northern Ireland. I originally wanted to form a map of where I had been and the directions I had taken but now it is just the three prints.

When I grow up. This was an idea that I had for a small book of other people's illustrations in response to the question 'what did you want to be when you grew up?' It was a simple idea that I felt could be quite a successful little book.

This idea started out from a few doodles but then it got me interested in seeing what others wanted to be when they were younger. So I began to collect images from others. I then began to think about how I could bring them together. I had the idea of making it into a colouring book but when designing it I was aware that it had no substance and was very dull with just the images on the page. When speaking to a guest tutor she gave me the idea of keeping some of the qualities of the colouring book but trying to find other ways of connecting the images. I had to find a connection between the images, so I tried to group them into three categories. I then gave them some sort of a coding. I almost wanted to over design it putting things in that weren't needed just simply because. So it has a full bleed of steps down the side and I have used one of my more legible fonts throughout because it was a nice opportunity to do so. Its still kept the same qualities of the classic cheap colouring book, its printed on sugar paper and has a single sided satin front cover. I have also kept the top edge binding. I'm pretty happy with the outcome. If I was to attempt something similar in the future I would apply more rules to the drawings to make them flow more throughout the book and I may also try and attach more words to them giving it more of a narrative.

"Not about a career... ..its about solving problems" (John Fox)

About half way through the year I realised I had a strong interest in typography. It came from designing my first font and solving the problems that came with it. I see font design as a game that I can play myself. With all of the five fonts I have made this year there is a running theme of play and interaction. They all have a certain amount of rules and constraints for another to either play around with or form the letters themselves. Obviously I have provided the answers to the

games and I am more than happy with some of the outcomes. They are all very different in their design.

With each font I wanted to try and produce something that would have a very different outcome when it came to making it physically. So I have turned one font into a set of fridge magnets, one into a letter press stamps, one has been turned into an animation with aims of being coded to animate whenever people use it to type. This will require help from someone who has the knowledge of coding as it blows my mind. The fourth font has been made into a deck of cards for someone to play with creating the type and the fifth is made simply of paper clips so can it be made by anyone anywhere. The nice thing about the fifth font is that it will always be different.

As I was getting more and more interested in type design I felt I needed to learn more about the ins and outs when it comes to designing type. As I have been interested in restricting myself I wanted to look at some of the rules that most designers use when creating fonts. Looking at the way letters should be spaced and how to use ligatures correctly. I found the book 'Type and Typography' to be very helpful for this. I learnt that type has a lot to do with the eye. Using the rule, 'if it looks right, it usually is'. As most of my typefaces start off as hand drawn ideas I wanted to look at some hand drawn font designs for some ideas. I found the work of Michael Perry interesting and I like the one off nature of his work. I also like the idea that you can be a lot looser with the rules you set yourself when creating them. However at the moment I prefer my typefaces to be much cleaner and stricter. There is a lot to drawing the types first as you can get some much nicer and natural shapes in the letters than you can when creating a type digitally.

One of the things I have enjoyed about learning about typography is learning about how to draw my font so that it can be typed on a computer. I have turned all five into usable fonts despite the abstract qualities of most of them. With these fonts I have also produced a type specimen booklet. I have spent along time looking at different ways of displaying my type in this form. I particularly like the website design for 'A2-TYPE'. I like the aesthetics of its grid layout. It is very

simple but very effective and shows their range of fonts. They have a mix of abstract display fonts and more disciplined and conventional fonts. However I am not yet at the stage of making my own website, its something for the future. At the moment I just want to have specimen booklets to show each font. I have been looking at the way 'Colophon' print their poster and specimens. I particularly enjoy the consistency of layout and the mix of colour overlays. I got some particularly good ideas from a book by 'Ambrose/ Harris, Typography' on ways of laying out my font and simple but effective book designs. Even the way the actual book was bound and printed gave me some good ideas. I really like the different paperweights and colours. It makes navigating through the book very simple.

"I make up a set of rules and play within those rules until I win" (Harold Town)

It was key for me to put in the main component of my fonts as the running theme and front cover for each specimen book. So I put the rules on the front of all the type specimens using a recipe aesthetic. I wanted to bring them all together under an umbrella name that describes all 5 fonts. I gave them the name 'Aleatoric' which can be defined as: dependent on chance, luck, or an uncertain outcome. I feel that this name works very well with my fonts, as although they are all set to certain rules, different people will come up with different outcomes.

I was recommended to visit an exhibition at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds showcasing work by Robert Filliou. The exhibition was titled 'The Institute of Endless Possibilities'. It was a strong source of inspiration for the work I have been producing and it was a great way to visualise how I was trying to display my work and make it more about what you get from interacting with the audience.

One of the main things I get excited about when designing a new font is the chance to create a new ampersand. I see it as a focal piece in each font and I like to use it as a showpiece. It is a very interesting shape to play around with and I see it almost like the prize at the end of my game.

MMU Pavement Gallery

I have chosen to review 'Work No.268 Half the air in a given space' by Martin Creed. The work was on display at the MMU Pavement Gallery, an exhibition space located in a former drapery store. The work is displayed in a window space that cannot be entered by the public and only allows you to look in through the glass.

Martin Creed, a Turner Prize winner in 2001, is a contemporary artist that has always been very descriptive with the titles of his work and there has been no change with the title for the work on display in Pavement. 'Work No.268 Half the air in a given space' was very much what I saw. A room containing only half the air, the rest filled with balloons. A normal viewer would rely on their imagination to think what it would be like to be amongst the balloons. I on the other hand managed to visit the space the day before it was to all be removed and was allowed to enter the room and experience it on a completely different level. As exciting as it was to look at from the outside, my excitement reached new levels when I was inside the room with free reign. We were allowed in as small groups, maybe because there wouldn't be enough air for us all, and given a couple of minutes to experience the room.

I very much enjoyed the experience as it took me back to being a child. Getting very excited by balloons. It was like being in an adult sized ball pit. The only issue with this particular piece was the colour of the balloons. The work has been displayed in other places and it has had colour balloons, which give the whole thing a much brighter and nicer feel. Making it even more exciting for the imagination. However the piece displayed at Pavement used only black balloons. This gave it a much darker and sinister look. I got the feeling that something could be hidden amongst them. Either way it was great fun. The contrast looking from outside in to being inside looking out was massive. Being able to see and affect the movement of the balloons made it much more interesting. I think the physical nature of the work gave it a much more pleasing

and intriguing style. Even just watching people explore the space was better than watching the still balloons filling the space.

To be able to act out the fantasy of running about in a room of balloons was refreshing as too often you are asked to refrain from touching the piece of art or even take a picture. It was the highlight of a day visiting several different exhibitions around Manchester and by far was the highlight of the lot.

I feel that I can really relate to the way that Martin Creed works. Giving somebody the exact specifications of what he wants and leaving it up to somebody else to produce it. This is somewhat how I have begun to work with my type design. Letting other people interact with my work and ideas to produce something very different to if I was just to sit down and produce it.

“The Turner prize has regained its style and importance” Jonathan Jones

I have chosen an article on the guardian website written by Jonathon Jones. He has written about this years Turner Prize nominees and his preference to certain artists this year and previous favourite winners. I chose this because I found it an interesting read and it is a very current piece of writing with the Turner Prize being announced recently. It was nice reading his views on the artists and their work when I knew the eventual winner. It helped me to understand what his views meant.

He starts by talking about how he has become very fond of the turner prize and how it “made new British art exciting to me again”. Whilst speaking briefly through the history of his favourite years. He talks about how the turner prize used to be a great place to see new avant-garde artist and their work, whereas in the early century the prize lost its way causing great controversy amongst other artists and the general public.

He compares this years artwork to previous years work and how it stands up to the past work and winners, notably with this year’s eventual winner Elizabeth Price and her piece ‘The Woolworths choir of 1979’, a set of videos about the fires that killed several people in Woolworths in 1979. He talks about its gothic nature and how it beats ‘confessions of a Justified Sinner’, a winning piece in 1996 by Douglas Gordon, for dark content. He even jokes about it being better than the ‘Exorcist’. I like how he has written in a jokey style but still with knowledge and still gives reasons for his feelings.

The next bit that he goes on to talk about is an artist, Luke Fowler, who he respects for his overall aim and vision. He enjoys his work but doesn’t feel it matches up to his favourite artist and her work. I feel this helps his argument as it shows that he is not entirely one sided and he has given credit to the other nominees. He is a little harsh about the two others claiming that the drawings of

one, lack life and that the other he talks only of his impressive name and that he should now go and produce some work to match the name.

Jonathon Jones finishes with a claim that this years Turner Prize is all about moving image, he was correct. Elizabeth Price's work was greatly received and was handed the Turner Prize for 2012.

Practitioner Interview

Emma Wood is an artist that documents places, capturing the character of the place and the people that inhabit them. I have been interested in her work for some years now and have worked with her in the past when she visited the university for the big draw events. I really like her style of drawing on top of moving image. I think it really helps you to capture what is important in the image rather than the things that just come and go.

Where do you begin when starting a new project or piece of work?

Emma Wood: I gather related reference, which might include photographs drawings, images from the Internet and found material (rubbish) and explore it through making – this could be drawing, print, painting, digital or mixed media. (This week it is a kind of collage with readymade.) Then I start to look at the ideas that are emerging out of the process to identify further lines of enquiry.

At this stage I might undertake more research into my theme or explore the findings through another medium. I will keep going in this way – reprocessing- until I reach outcomes that achieve a sense of resolution.

When do you decide which medium to use for a new project? Is it location dependant?

EW: I use whatever medium I am most drawn to at that moment to explore my theme. The medium that I am working in might change as I reprocess ideas. I am primarily driven to make my work in order to facilitate my understanding of things not to show them so generally I don't think I pay enough attention to location. I know that I need to put more effort into refining my outcomes in order to present my ideas to others in a succinct way. Often though, I just move onto the next thing and I do not maximise on the potential of my findings enough.

How do you deal with the dreaded creative block? Do you have a go to method?

EW: To allow creativity to happen I have to explore things through doing and making and this does require rigour. If I am engaged in other things, then getting started at this stage can sometimes be a problem. A real creative block happens when I explore things and I don't see the potential of my outcomes. I think this is about a state of mind - being tired – the work does have potential but I lack the vision and confidence to see it. In these cases I need a break then I will see it.

What if any rules or guides do you set yourself for your work?

EW: I try not to have any. But I am sure I am bound by loads of ideological restrictions that I am not aware of.

Where do you look for new influences and fresh ideas?

EW: A lot of my work explores the identity of different places displayed by its rhythms. So watching the daily activity of people in different places always inspires me.

At the moment I am finding reading fiction, in Particular Paul Auster's books and watching film around urban life themes inspiring

Including:

Smoke

All Shane Meadows films

Fish Tank

Which artists and designers do you look up to?

EW: I value the work of a range of artists

Bridget Riley

Bartolomeu dos Santos

Bacon

Auerbach

Bomburg

Pollock - Action Painters

Relevant to my work at the moment at this moment:

Gordon Matta Clark

Yayoi Kusuma

Mark Bradford

Julie Cockburn

And of course

De Kooning

What are you currently working on?

EW: I am just finishing some oil paintings, that aimed to describe incidental views of bus stops that are experienced when cycling through Tottenham.

Now I am beginning to work on some more work around the “cutting through” series

Extract from website: www.emma_wood.net

“An important starting point for me has been seeing and interpreting movement. I try to capture an essence of my subject by recording the energy and rhythm surrounding it. These beginnings allow me to identify and delve deeper into a vision that existed momentarily. In the putting together of my recent work I

imagine that I am slicing through the city's oxidized crust; lifting up architectural shells and fusing different moments of time in order to explore new rhythms and narratives. “

I expect that this new work will be partly sculptural – god knows what I will do with it!

I found the answers to this interview quite helpful. It is always nice to learn about how others work and the process that they take in their work. As I have always been interested in the work of Emma it was especially interesting to find out more about her. It is interesting how she tries to not restrict herself with any rules where as in contrast it is the starting point with my work.

Reflection

This year has been a year about finding myself as a graphic designer and learning which direction if any I would want to take when I leave this course. At the end of second year I almost reluctantly decided that I was heading toward graphic documentary art but through setting myself a wide range of different and challenging briefs I have learnt that my path is heading towards typography.

I began the year slowly coming up with lots of excuses as to why I wasn't working to my full potential. Once I had got underway with my first font 'Cirkit' I felt a lot more comfortable with the way I was working and the work that I was producing. I was working a lot more efficiently and the work that I was producing all seemed to have a purpose and come together naturally under the main theme of play. I wanted to focus more on how I produced the fonts this year and think less about designing them to be on a related piece of graphics. I want to design fonts that other can use in their own work as well as being able to use them myself. I plan on putting my fonts up for sale at the end of the degree as I have already had some positive feedback from them. All in all I am very happy with where my fonts appear to be going.

In other projects I feel I haven't been as successful as I have often not rushed but not spent a fair amount of time on it. Therefore it has suffered on a whole. Projects haven't started or gone very far through lack of interest and other reasons. I am happy with how my colouring book has turned out. It has almost turned out to be an alternative yearbook for my course as the majority of the images used have come from the people on it.

I really enjoyed the time I spent doing animation in collaboration with Niall Bluer. It was a good chance to do work on something different and gain new experiences and learn new skills. Although the finished outcome is a bit rushed and we could redo some of the filming if we had the chance to go back.

As a whole I have enjoyed my final year on the course. I feel that I have got the most out of it and have enjoyed the exhibitions I have visiting during it. I feel that I am now ready to enter the big bad world and attempt to get myself a job in

Graphic Design as scary as that is to think about. The next step is to get my fonts online for sale and produce a website that is a good way to show my portfolio of work. I feel that I need to produce more before I can just show my fonts as I currently only have 5 display fonts. I aim to also produce some fonts that are a lot less abstract in their design and a lot more legible to read and use but still be using some of the rules that I have set myself in the past.

Bibliography

Books:

Ambrose, G. and Harris, P., 2005. *Typography, Basic Design 3*. Switzerland: AVA Publishing.

Baume, N. (Ed), 2001. *Sol LeWitt: Incomplete Open Cubes*. Connecticut: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art.

Baines, P. and Haslam, A., 2005. *Type and Typography*. 2nd edition. London: Laurence King Publishing.

Perry, M. 2007. *A Catalog of Type, Hand Job*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Visits:

Manchester Art Gallery, Paper cutting edge exhibition.

MMU Pavement Gallery, Martin Creed.

Henry Moore Institute Leeds, Robert Filliou: The Institute of Endless Possibilities

Websites:

<http://a2-type.co.uk/index.html>

<http://www.letman.com/#LETMAN>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2012/dec/03/turner-prize-2012-luke-fowler-elizabeth-price>

<http://emmawood.net/emmawood.net/Welcome.html>

<http://www.ycn.org/awards/ycn-student-awards/2012-2013/briefs/lego#.UKzHi4WUuNU>

<http://jessicahische.is/awesome>

Programs and films:

Sky Arts history of David Hockney.

Aftermodern, *Lego Animation*.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=rihd8C9YEyo