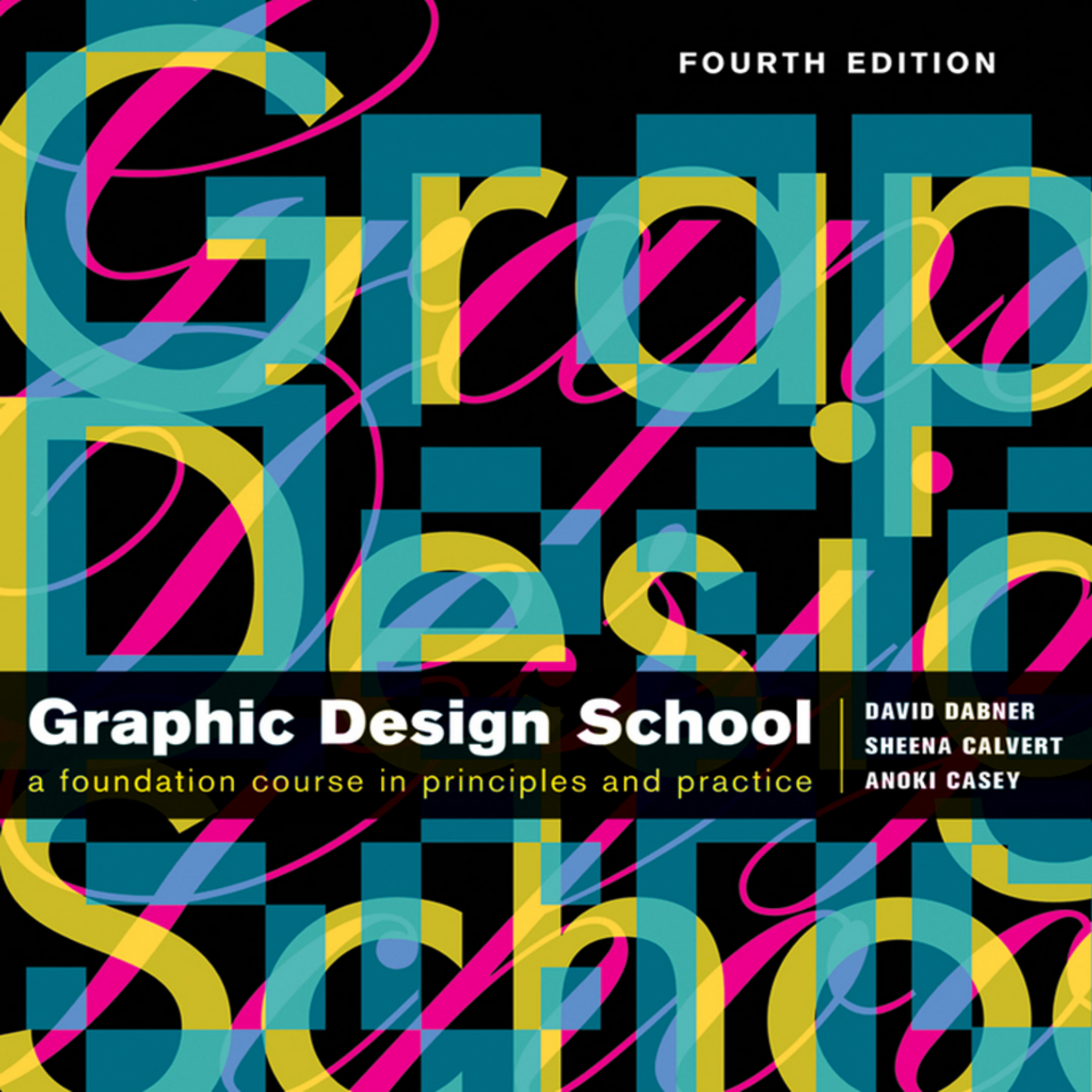
FOURTH EDITION
Graphic Design School
a foundation course in principles and practice
DAVID DABNER
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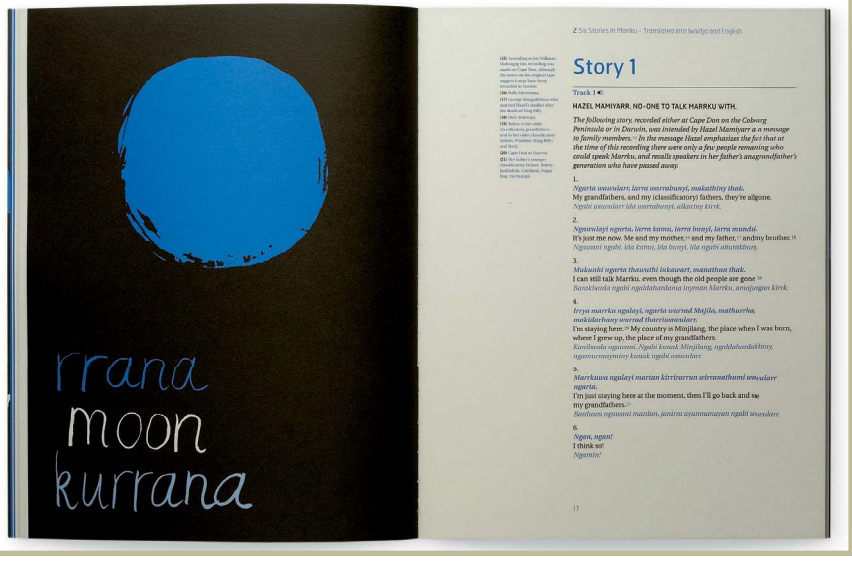
Graphic Design School

The Principles and Practices of Graphic Design

Graphic Design School

The Principles and Practices of Graphic Design



2 Six Stories in Marrku – Translated into Iwadjo and English

15) According to Joy Williams Mahnaqaq this recording was made on Cape Don, although the notes on the original tape suggest it may have been recorded in Darwin.
16) Rolls Yarrowmun.
17) George Mangalkhiwa who married Hazel's mother after the death of King Billy.
18) Dick Mahnaqaq.
19) Refers to her elder classificatory grandfathers and to her elder classificatory fathers. Yarrowmun, King Billy and Dick.
20) Cape Don or Darwin.
21) Her father's youngest classificatory fathers, Jeremy Ivanhoulidis, Lambaru, Nagar Bag, Ouchnangu.

Story 1

Track 1

HAZEL MAMIYARR, NO-ONE TO TALK MARRKU WITH.

The following story, recorded either at Cape Don on the Coburg Peninsula or in Darwin, was intended by Hazel Mamiyarr as a message to family members.[15] In the message Hazel emphasizes the fact that at the time of this recording there were only a few people remaining who could speak Marrku, and recalls speakers in her father's anagrandfather's generation who have passed away.

1.
Ngarta wawularr, larra warrabunyi, makathiny thak.
My grandfathers, and my (classificatory) fathers, they're allgone.
Ngabi wawularr ida warrabunyi, aikariny kirrk.

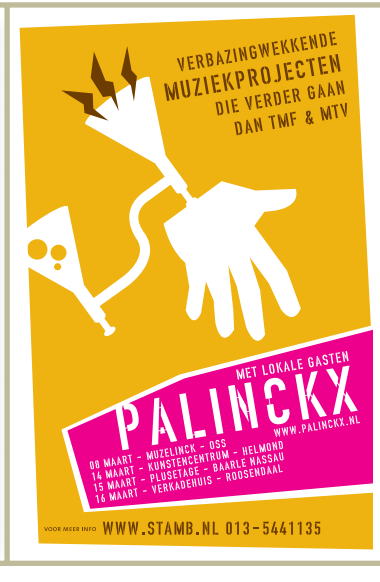
2.
Ngawulayi ngarta, larra kamu, larra bunyi, larra mundu.
It's just me now. Me and my mother,[16] and my father,[17] andmy brother.[18]
Ngawani ngabi, ida kamu, ida bunyi, ida ngabi aburakbunj.

3.
Mukunhi ngarta thawuthi inkawart, manathun thak.
I can still talk Marrku, even though the old people are gone.[19]
Barakbarda ngabi ngaldahardama inyman Marrku, amajungan kirrk.

4.
Irrya marrku ngalayi, ngarta warrad Majila, mathurrha, makidarhany warrad tharriwawularr.
I'm staying here.[20] My country is Minjilang, the place when I was born, where I grew up, the place of my grandfathers.
Kanibarda ngawani. Ngabi kunak Minjilang, ngaldahardakbiny, ngamurranyminy kunak ngabi wawularr.

5.
Marrkuwa ngalayi martan kirrirarran wirranathumi wawularr ngarta.
I'm just staying here at the moment, then I'll go back and see my grandfathers.[21]
Bardawa ngawani mardan, janirra ayunmanayan ngabi wawularr.

6.
Ngan, ngan!
I think so!
Ngamin!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WILEY

Graphic Design School

The Principles and Practices of Graphic Design

David Dabner • Sheena Calvert • Anoki Casey

A QUARTO BOOK

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Published by John Wiley & Sons Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey
Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Number
2009037088

ISBN: 978-0-470-46651-3
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

QUAR.GRS4

Conceived, designed, and produced by
Quarto Publishing plc.
The Old Brewery
6 Blundell Street
London N7 9BH

Senior editor: Katie Hallam
Co-editor: Ruth Patrick
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Photographer: Simon Pask
Proofreader: Claire Waite Brown
Indexer: Ann Barrett

Creative director: Moira Clinch
Publisher: Paul Carslake

Color separation by Modern Age
Printed in China by 1010 Printing International

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Introduction

This book is written with a view to giving you a thorough grounding in the principles that underlie all good graphic design, whether print-based, web, or digital. The text has been constructed to mirror how the subject is taught in design colleges today, and the illustrations—a mixture of student and professional work—have been carefully chosen to illuminate specific teaching points. Many units contain step-by-step exercises and assignments, offer practical advice, and point toward further resources.

The first half of the book—Principles—takes as a given that thorough understanding of design principles should support the act of creating designs in response to specific briefs and problems, while allowing for visual freedom and self-authored experimentation. As you are introduced to the basics of research, typography, color, photography, and composition, you will learn how to become visually aware and design-literate.

In the second half of the book—Practice—you will be introduced to those invaluable practical skills that must be seen as equally important to the kinds of research, conceptual, and compositional skills you will have developed in part 1, but which do not replace them. Remember: in order to be a well-rounded and successful designer, it is not only your ability to use a specific computer program, or get something printed that makes you a good designer, but the whole range of skills

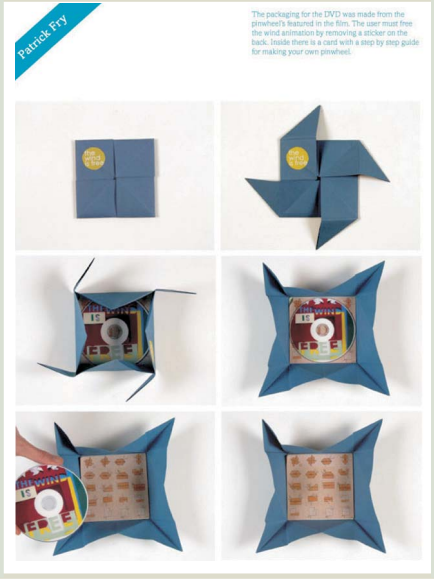
The "Wire Tree" shows how text and image can work in creative harmony. This poster was silk-screened, and a full typeface was designed.

Rich, multi-layered imagery, painstakingly constructed in Photoshop, takes photomontage to a new level, in this illustration for the book *Wonderland*.

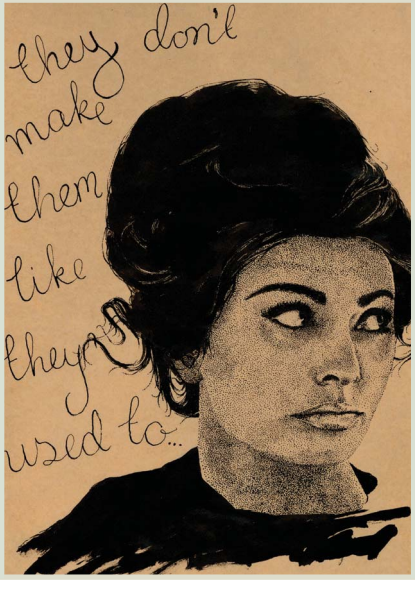
Deconstructed letterforms are reconstituted on separate sheets of glass, which can then be read when viewed from an angle where all the elements align.

presented in this book. On the other hand, being a great designer visually, or conceptually, is only half the story. Unless you learn the practical skills and technologies of design production, including how to work with images, set up files for printing, or build and structure a website, you will be unable to get your work produced.

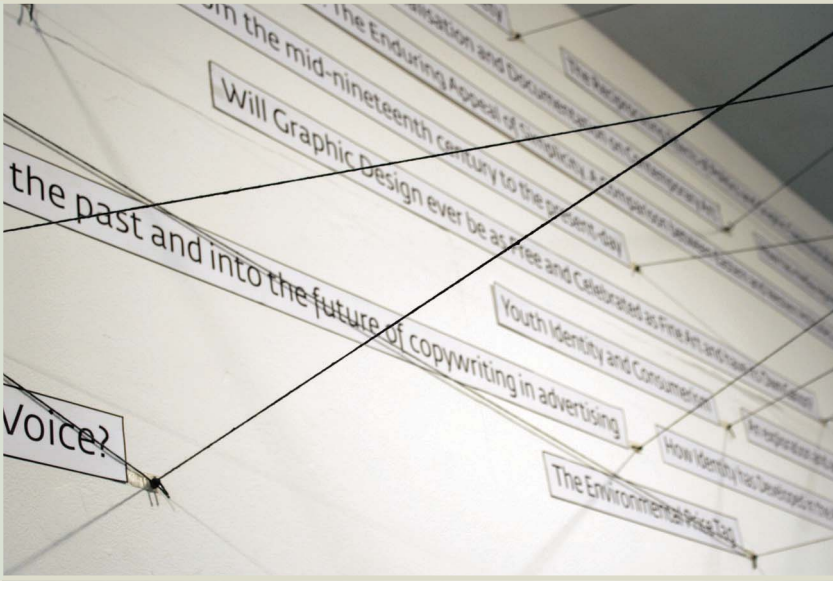
Finally, none of these visual skills can be viewed in isolation from the contexts in which design happens, and its larger role in society, and the world. Designers (working in any medium) are concerned with communication, and with creating messages that influence viewers/readers and/or convey information. However, with this comes responsibility, and it is crucial to be aware of the role of design in shaping the world we live in, and of changes to the profession which go beyond style trends or software. While any kind of comprehensive account of these topics stands outside the scope of this book, becoming visually literate and technically skilled should go hand in hand with an understanding of such issues as communication theories, the development of new and "global" audiences, systems theory, ecology, sustainability issues in design, and the changing role and potential of technology. These, and a general awareness of the world around you, alongside sound practical skills, will help you to become a well-rounded designer, whatever your career aspirations.



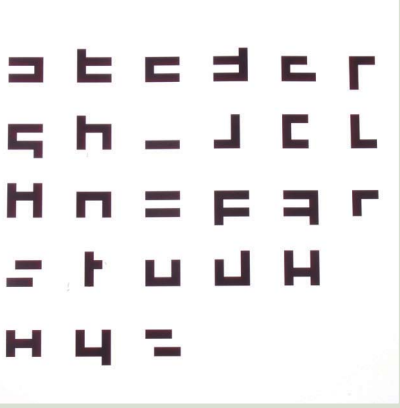
"The Wind is Free" is a campaign to sell the weather. Simple, cut-paper imagery forms the basis of an animation, while the DVD packaging contains instructions for users to create their own pinwheel.



Illustration, combined with hand-drawn lettering, produces an enigmatic effect, appropriate to the subject matter.



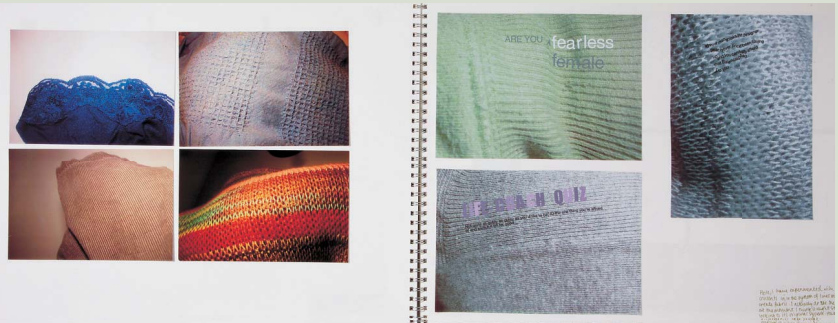
The installation entitled "Crimson Hyperlink Hexagon," was part of the degree show exhibition at the London College of Communication in 2009. The titles of students' dissertations were displayed on the walls, in a "cloud" configuration. These were then linked to other titles, via grey wires, creating new connections and associations. The work sits somewhere between typography, installation art, systems theory, and information design.

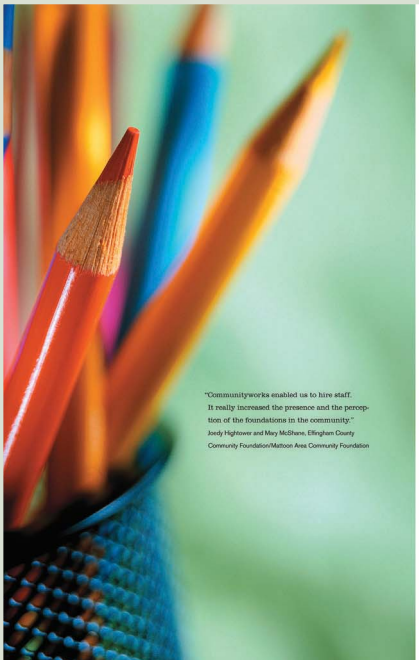


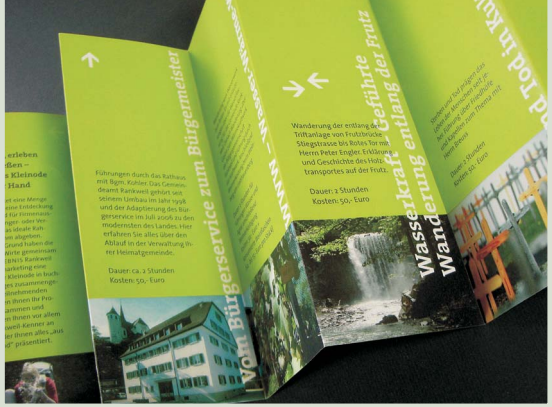
Principles

The first half of this book is concerned with principles, or with learning the basic languages and methods of design. Every discipline or profession has its own set of rules, methods, languages, and technical requirements. Each is rooted in the relationship between its history, theory, and practice, but unlike learning law, or biology, the "language" of design is predominantly a visual one. It involves developing a heightened awareness of not only visual principles, but the world, and what happens in it, such that a good designer can filter this information, and create relevant, engaging, visually eloquent design which responds to multiple problems, needs, and contexts. In short, while a design student needs to develop the research, concept-development, compositional, layout, and organizational skills associated with design, he or she also needs to become engaged with the world at large, and to be interested, aware, and sensitive to the changing contexts in which design happens.

Unit 1 discusses different kinds of primary and secondary research, followed by an introduction to theories of the image, the importance of audiences, and of organizing your work and time. In Unit 2, form will take center stage: understanding form comes from the ability to see the intrinsic and subtle qualities of the various elements of a design, and from developing a sensitivity to the relationships between them. This takes practice, patience, and an eye for detail. Form involves composition of the fundamental elements in a design (text/image/color), and it requires an understanding of shape, proportion, balance, and



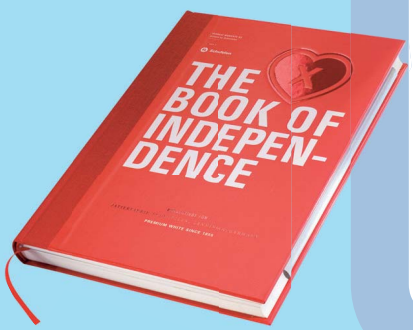




visual dynamics within individual layouts, and as an integral part of coordinated design systems. Unit 3 introduces typography, which is a core skill for all designers, and cannot be underestimated in terms of its complexity, beauty, and history. Developing a sound understanding of the science and art of typography is of crucial importance, and underpins most of the work represented in this book. Finally, in Unit 4, color will be introduced as a primary factor in design, including a review of color terminology, associations, legibility, and the role of color in conveying information.

Whatever design discipline you enter into, from editorial to web design, from information design to moving image, these basic principles will ground your work, and give you a solid foundation from which to proceed in your chosen field.

PART 1



1 RESEARCH AND EARLY CONCEPTS

The first step toward becoming *interesting* is to be *interested*. The best artists of all kinds—painters, designers, writers, sculptors, musicians, playwrights—make the world their inspiration, and draw ideas and content from both experience and research. They make it a priority to stay aware of what is happening, not only within the world of design, but in the world in general, and this level of engagement enriches their work.

> **"Design is everything. Everything!"**
> *Paul Rand*

PART 1 | PRINCIPLES

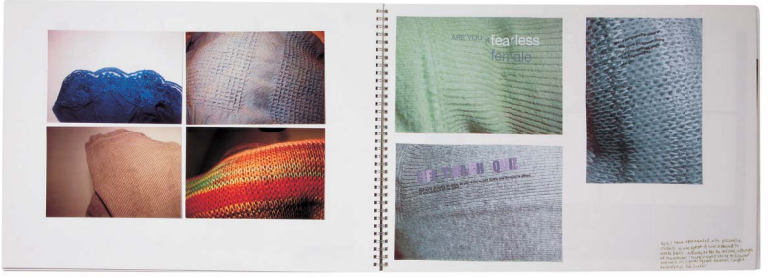
UNIT 1 | RESEARCH AND EARLY CONCEPTS

MODULE 1 | **Basics of research**

You live in a media-saturated world, constantly bombarded with images and information. As a designer you need a heightened awareness of what is going on around you. Looking at the work of other designers and artists, cultural trends, technological developments, and world events will influence you; you should make notes, keep sketchbooks—stay aware and alert. You never know when something you have seen will help you solve a design problem.

Whereas many people's interests are relatively narrow, you must always seek to broaden your horizons—increase your range of references—to successfully communicate with people of all ages, professions, and lifestyles, and to contextualize your design work.

- Never read just one newspaper—change it every day, or read several, and compare stories, noting how information about the same events changes, how language tone is used to target various audiences, and how imagery is used to support text.
- You can never read enough books, but don't limit yourself to the kind you usually read—be outward-looking. Limiting yourself to reading only about graphic design can be particularly dangerous:



Worldwide focus
Ongoing research should inform the specific projects you are working on, but also engage you in a process of looking at, and understanding, the world around you. Keep notebooks/sketchbooks/diaries as a way of seeking inspiration from the things you see/hear and as a way of documenting your ideas.

Extensive visual research These pages show how the designer considers various options, including increasingly abstracting imagery and combining text and images, before working through the final design.

Simple combinations Photographs and text explore the various connections between ideas and public and private space, as preliminary explorations on the topic. These early "sketches" may or may not become part of the final work, but they move the work forward, and expand its potential.

although extremely useful for information and guidance, this may turn you into an armchair expert; you want to be an original practitioner. So add to your reading list: books on sculpture, architecture, art history, novels, plays, cooking, boxing, archeology, travel, math—it really doesn't matter, as long as they provide you with a broad spectrum of knowledge.

• Have as many varied experiences as possible: visit the kinds of stores, galleries, and nightclubs you'd never normally go in, listen to music you've never heard before, and eat food you've never tried before.

• Perhaps most importantly, talk to people. Share ideas, listen to what language they use, pay attention to what inspires them, and learn from others, while sharing your insights. This is the stuff of life, the raw material common to every artist, and it's important to constantly observe and absorb it.

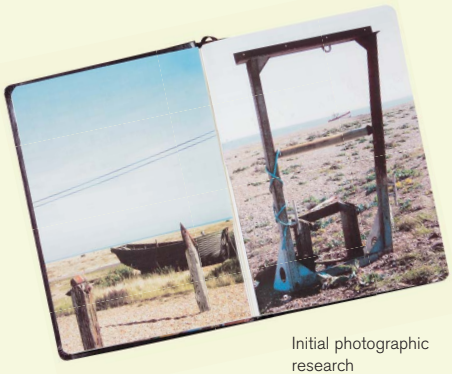
GLOSSARY

Contextualization: The process of placing something within the interrelated systems of meaning that make up the world.

Primary research: Gathering material that does not pre-exist, such as photographing, drawing, making prototypes, interviewing people.

Secondary research: Gathering material that already exists, such as design work, color samples, written texts, newspaper/magazine articles, archive images (e.g., historical samples of advertising).

SEE ALSO: LINEAR REASONING/LATERAL THINKING P16
VISUALIZING IDEAS P20



Initial photographic research

Abstraction of photographs and addition of text

Further exploration of text, looking at figure–ground relationships (see pages 38–39) and color

Fragmentary numerals as an alternative

Experimentation
The design of a book cover develops through a series of initial experiments with imagery, and successive typographic experiments, to a final, dynamic text/image combination.

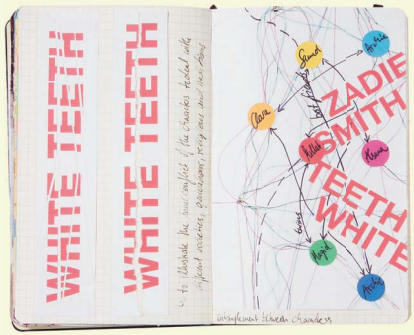
Research development
Part of a series of book cover designs, the development here shows a different approach to the previous design, while retaining a sense of unity.

Means of recording

Being human means forgetting things in the hustle and bustle of daily life. How often have you woken at night with an idea and forgotten it by morning? Or found yourself saying, "I wish I had had a camera," or "I'm sure I saw or read something about that recently"?

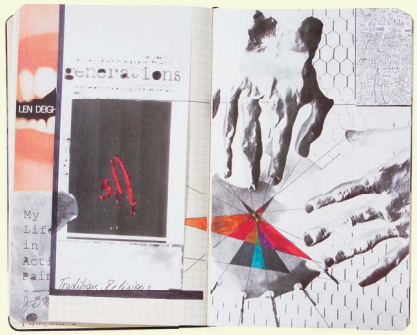
Every practicing designer should always carry with them some form of recording device—a sketchbook, a camera, a voice recorder, a video camera—or several of these. Each should be updated on a daily basis; make time for research, take it seriously as an integral part of your work. Designers, artists, writers, and illustrators all frequently keep scrapbooks/sketchbooks/collections of material that interests them. Often they will not know exactly why, or how, the material will come to be useful later on, but it forms an archive of ideas and inspiration from which to draw at a later date.

If something grabs your attention, draw it, note it down, photograph it, or file it away immediately. Collect ideas and build upon initial thoughts by writing, drawing, sketching. Not only will your drawing and research skills improve by doing this consistently, but over time you will have built yourself a "catalog of inspiration" that can be drawn upon at any point in your career and especially when you are short of ideas. This kind of



Typographic experimentation

Integration of map as a background image



Extended photographic research, drawn from magazines

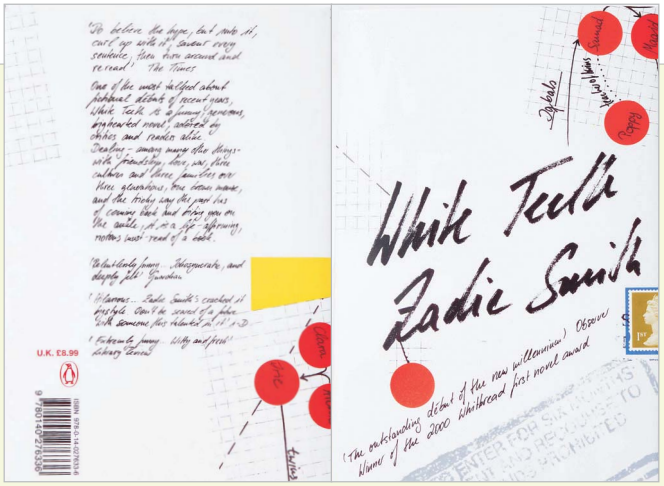
Further abstraction of imagery

The last series of sketchbook pages shows the final decisions made

The final designs show how the research impacted the decisions made

> **"What you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing; it also depends on what kind of a person you are"**
> *C. S. Lewis*

ongoing research also helps you to start to define your own outlook, and to develop a personal "signature," since we are all different, and our individual perspectives and experiences come to bear upon how we approach a given problem.



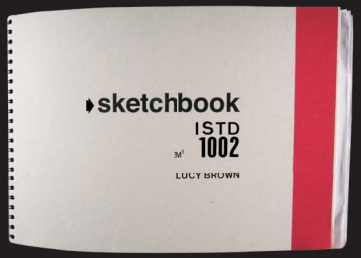
ASSIGNMENT:
SPECIFIC RESEARCH/SKETCHBOOKS

In exploring ideas, you should aim to expand your understanding of subject matter as far as possible. Research done with an open mind will broaden your knowledge and help you mature as a designer. It will also enable you to achieve the most original solutions to a given project.

Gather items that suggest/promote/stimulate associations with the project at hand. This might involve collecting possible colors, letterforms, textures, or formats; imagery from books, magazines, and newspapers; texts on related subjects, news items, etc. Initial directions should be defined by the project in question, but may branch out into many different areas.

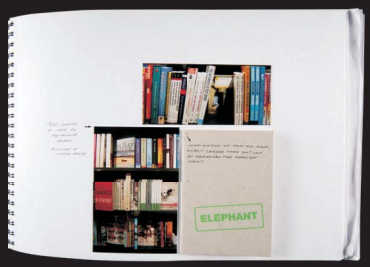
Research may be quick, or it may take weeks to gather materials, which can be done while working on other things. Especially in college, you should take advantage of the luxury of time, to explore and expand your research as fully as possible, since in the professional studio, time is often at a premium.

This process is as important as the final outcome, and you should view it as a key factor of your work. A distinction is made between primary and secondary research; both are equally important aspects of the process.

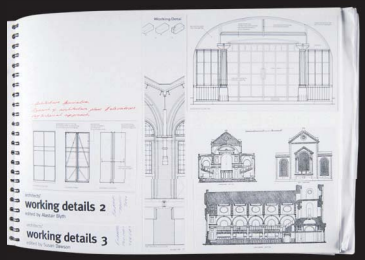


INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF TYPOGRAPHIC DESIGNERS PROJECT

This prize-winning project by Lucy Brown for the ISTD competition, 2007, involved looking closely at the architectural design and history of St Bride Library in London, to come up with a way of cataloging its printing and typography collections. Detailed sketchbook pages show how the designer arrived at decisions about method, content, and form.



Research reference on the simplest way to document books on a shelf



Research informing a detailed "typographic" architectural elevation of the library

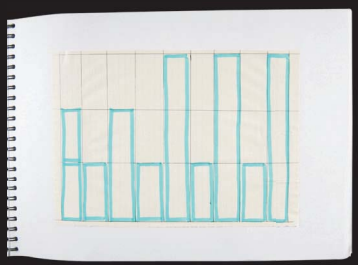
Early thoughts on type displayed on its side which informed the final layout

Expressing an interest in typographic hierarchy on a larger scale

Ideas on how a figure enables a sense of scale when showing a three-dimensional space

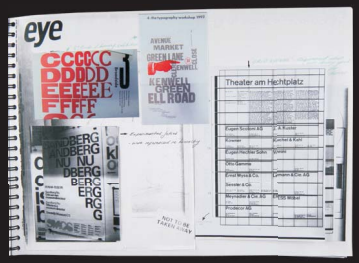
Sketches on how one represents a three-dimensional space on paper

Early visual reference of the perspective of a space and vertical typography



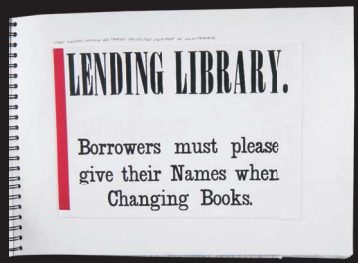
Getting a feel for the form of a vertical "book-spine-like" structure on a page

Sketches informed by the visual spacing of typography in a public environment



Secondary research on grid systems and traditional letterpress frameworks

Research into the traditional and modern context of directional arrows and fists



Visual reference of secondary research material on Victorian library signage

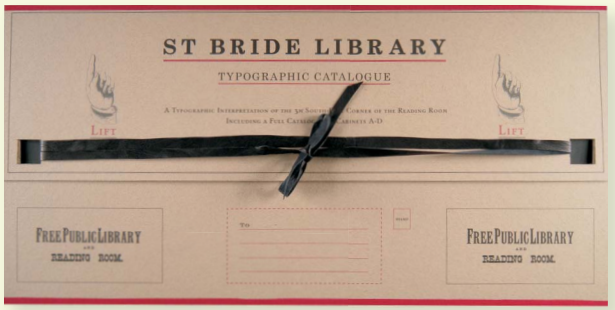
Primary research on stock and print finishing

Further primary research on stock, materials, and printing processes

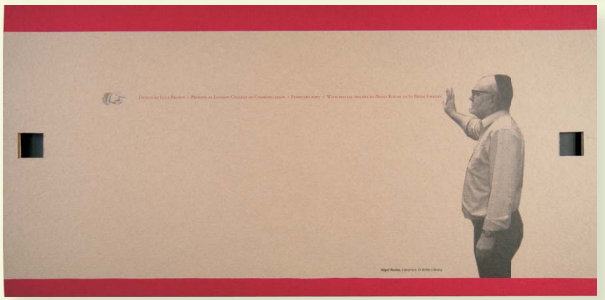
Secondary research reference on the charm and form of brown paper envelopes

Examples of proposed finishing materials and print tests onto the chosen paper stock

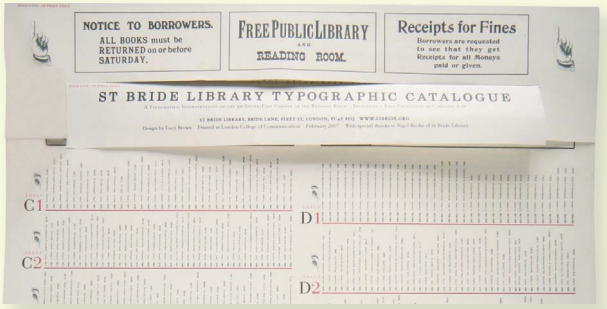
The final designs reflect the intensive process of research, which has resulted in careful choices of materials and color, and intelligent choices of references to the library's history and collections, through both the typography and binding.



Centered typography, in a traditional serif font, alongside condensed 19th-century typefaces, rules, and pointing hands, shows the historical context of the library. The effect is highly sympathetic and well-considered, and sets the scene for what is inside.



The back of the catalog includes an image of the chief librarian. The placement of the line of text next to the open hand is more modern in style, suggesting that the library houses not only historical, but contemporary collections.



The catalog features detailed typography set out in rows demonstrating the layout of the reading room. The spine of every book is set vertically as if viewing it in the building. The viewer is invited to consider the typography, the book spines and the building as a whole.

The paper sleeve in which the design is received continues the red/brown paper theme of the entire catalog, suggesting a ribbon tied around the envelope.

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Primary sources/ Factual research	Secondary sources/ Factual research
• Previous knowledge/ opinion/memory • Observation • Conversation • Analysis • Role-play • Interviews: in person, by email, in a chatroom, by telephone • Questionnaires • Focus groups • Commissioned video/ written diaries (first hand) • Ethnographic research ("deep hanging out")	• Museums, archives, collections • Newspapers, magazines, journal articles • Published interviews • Films, TV broadcasts, theater • Transcripts/recordings of film, TV, radio • Books • Music • Internet: blogs, websites, forums, magazines • Surveys • Statistics • Organizations, agencies, gatekeepers • Lectures, public debates, conferences
Primary sources/ Visual research	**Secondary sources/ Visual research**
• Photography • Drawing/sketching • Media experimentation: 2D and 3D • Rubbings/casts • Typographic experimentation • Compositional experimentation • Image manipulation • Photocopying • Video/DV recording • Audio recording • Writing	• Exhibitions • Images/photographs from magazines, books, leaflets, Internet, billboards • Work by other designers/ artists • Printed maps/diagrams • Ephemera (e.g., tickets, receipts, packaging) • Found or bought photographs, postcards, drawings • Imagery taken from recordings of films, TV broadcasts, performances • Architecture

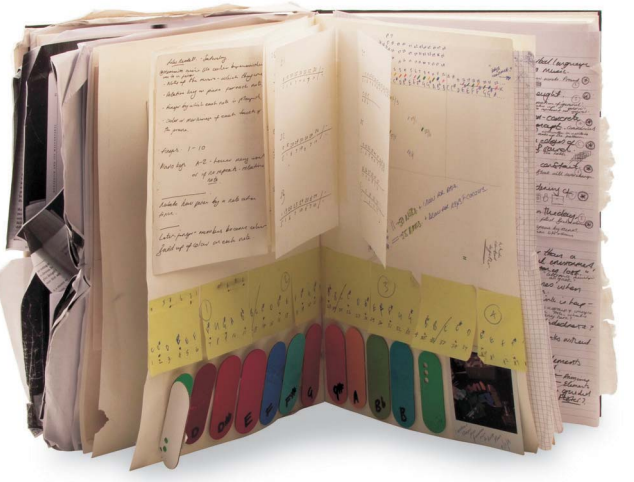
Other general work practices/approaches

- Put your own point of view into the subject
- Work in groups and respond to feedback from others
- Develop ideas by generating a number of visuals in response to one idea
- Explore the full capacity of your visual language

PART 1 | PRINCIPLES

UNIT 1 | RESEARCH AND EARLY CONCEPTS

MODULE 2 | **Linear reasoning/lateral thinking**



In the initial stages of concept development, there are two main ways to approach a set brief: linear reasoning and lateral thinking. These are virtually opposites—the first focused and methodical, the second diffuse and expansive. However, both are equally useful as research and development tools.

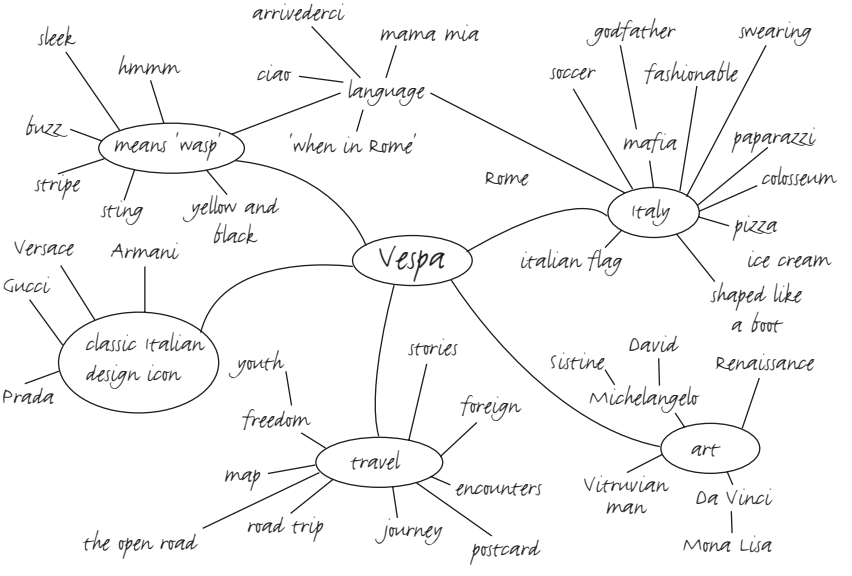
Linear reasoning implies a strategic thought process, using step-by-step logic, and follows a specific trajectory (path). In other words, linear reasoning frequently involves a predetermined idea or concept that is then worked toward in stages. Generally, this will involve splitting the idea up into components such as color or type, and working each through to finalize the form to fit the concept.

Lateral thinking involves indirect exploration, generating ideas less readily available by linear reasoning (or hidden by the linear process, so that less obvious associations aren't readily seen or generated). The emphasis is on indirect, creative forms of research. The term was coined by Edward de Bono in 1967.

Brainstorming, or sketching in a non-linear diagrammatic way, approaches problems by exploring each component in as much depth and breadth as possible, finding connections and associations that then strengthen the concept. This process aims to push achievable boundaries. Another way to think of it is in terms of walking through a city. You may set out knowing exactly where you are going, focused on the end goal: reaching your destination. Alternatively, you could take a stroll without any predetermined destination in mind. Each will provide very different experiences; in the non-predetermined form, you may notice things along the way that are not obvious if your sights are set only on the destination.

Sometimes, you might want to start out with a lateral thinking session, where you brainstorm as many ideas as possible, in order to generate your initial ideas, moving to a more linear process at a later stage. The two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but often complementary ways of researching a design problem.

Brainstorming and storyboarding
Initial brainstorming, in the form of a spider diagram, allows for unexplored paths to open up in the early stages of the design process. Later development might take more linear forms, as in the storyboard, which outlines the sequence of a narrative and indicates preliminary character development and image choices.



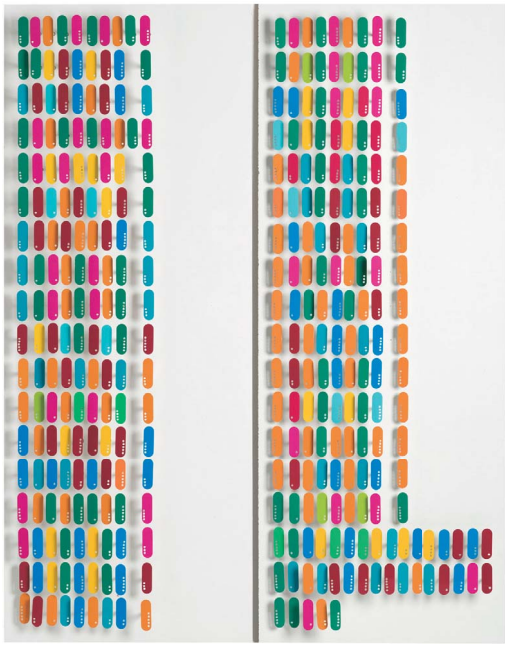
GLOSSARY

Lateral thinking: A form of research where the emphasis is on indirect, creative forms of inquiry and thinking.

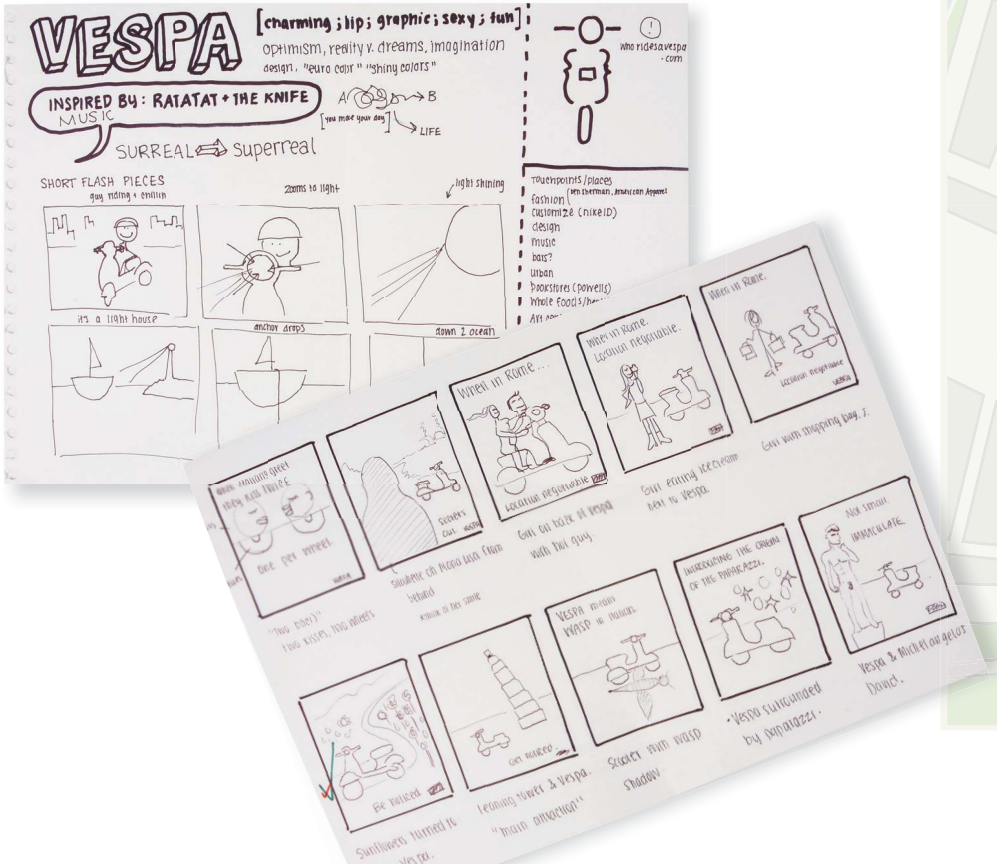
Linear reasoning: A form of thinking that implies strategic thought process, one in which step-by-step logic is employed.

SEE ALSO:
BASICS OF RESEARCH P10

Abstract interpretation
This piece is part of a body of work concerned with visual thought of the autistic mind and how this might be translated into the non-autistic world as creativity. Many autistic people record a piece of music note by note as an image in their mind in order to remember it. Bach's Prelude in C is represented here, determined by this possible autistic perception. It shows clearly how lateral thinking can be used to develop an idea.



The thought process The research notebook for the project at right shows how the designer applied a non-linear process to the development of the work.



ASSIGNMENT: A CITY BLOCK

Produce a design (format to be decided by you, not limited to two-dimensional design) that explores a single city block, either historically, or as it exists in the present (or a combination of both), which conveys something about it to an audience of your choosing. This may sound very broad (and it is). Follow these steps to make the project manageable:

1 Choose a location.
2 Decide what kinds of recording devices might be used for a primary research investigation into the location (see Research Techniques on page 15).
3 Establish what secondary sources or research might be appropriate (see Research Techniques on page 15).
4 Decide on either linear reasoning or lateral thinking as the better research method. Or would a combination be productive?

Consider the following: Are there local library archives that could inform you about the history of this place? Would talking to passers-by be useful research? What kinds of information would photography/video provide as versus drawing? Who is your audience? Local people, passers-by, tourists, children? What do you want to tell them about this place and why? How might you express the passing of time, or the different meanings of a single place to a local community?

Compile a series of sketchbooks to show your research, and propose a final design solution, without necessarily producing a final design outcome. The emphasis of this assignment is on exploration/research, not on the finished product.

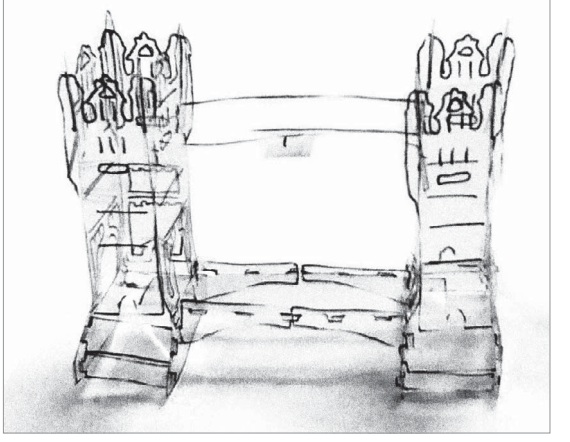
Try to expand your thought process and potential outcomes as far as possible by brainstorming, researching, analyzing, and evaluating your process as deeply as possible along the way.

PART 1 | PRINCIPLES

UNIT 1 | RESEARCH AND EARLY CONCEPTS

MODULE 3 | **Exploratory drawing**

The purpose of exploratory drawing is to explore ideas; it is a means of translating the outside world and of giving concrete form to abstract ideas. Sketching and drawing engage you in a constant process of looking, and aid in understanding the world around you. Whereas computer technology is another tool for the development of ideas, you should treat drawing as the basis of expression that underpins your design decisions.



Another dimension The exploration of forms is achieved here through clear film and drawn line. Sketches do not have to take a two-dimensional form on paper, but can be produced in many different media.

Observational drawing, or drawing used to document, makes you see the subject as a shape or shapes, and color as tones; it teaches you to understand and manipulate perspective, to understand how an object exists in space, and to create the illusion of space and depth of field—it shows you how to convey texture and density. You should experiment beyond your comfort-zone, grasping as many forms of image-making as possible, both those that replicate what is seen (representational or observational drawing), and those where mark-making is freed from the need to represent what is seen (non-representational or non-observational drawing). The latter can generate valuable expressive drawn responses and gestures, and is widely used.

Abstract drawing Here lines are used in a non-figurative way, to suggest movement and create organic shapes. The effect invokes non-Western letterforms/calligraphy.

Figurative This representational drawing describes the scene. The drawn lines are expressive, but their primary purpose is descriptive.

You can always develop your drawing, regardless of how good you feel you already are. Continual practice is the key, and drawing should be a lifelong activity.

In observational drawing, train your eye to see diverse subject matter in detail. Whereas a still life helps you to observe static objects in detail, from a series of positions, going outside and visually researching the surrounding environment offers a stimulating variety of moving and static subject matter, which in turn changes how you draw. You can work directly in a sketchbook, or perhaps use a camera for more finished drawings at a later date. It is important to familiarize yourself with as many diverse aspects of form as possible.

Experiment with a variety of media, to determine and affect your created image. Whether charcoal or pencil, crayon or brush, each tool you use requires some understanding of its specific effects and mark-making qualities. For example, pencils allow tonal control, detailed modeling, and a strong line, whereas ink and brush will generate an entirely different mark. Do not limit yourself to conventional media; other implements, such as a toothbrush, piece of string, or even a sewing machine, can create interesting and valid marks. The aim is not merely to interpret the objects pictorially (representing them as they look), although of course this is useful for assessing various complexities of form. In short: both forms of drawing have their value and purpose, and should be treated as equally valid.