S Callum McCartney

• WHY WE WRITE

OCRITICALCONVERSATIONS

THINGSTHAT MATTER

FIGURES AND APPENDIX

WHY WE WRITE

I have always had a complex relationship with writing and literature. Since I was young, I've loved experiencing media, but writing and literature would often lose my attention. That is not to say that I dislike reading or writing, but for me, I found it easier to digest moving images or audio. As I grew older, I made a conscious effort to read more, resulting in better comprehension skills and writing ability.

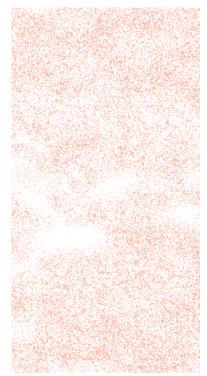
There's an importance to written content which I think can often get lost in the monotony of emails and formal correspondence as we get older. No other time in my life had this been more apparent to me than during my work placement year where I found myself frequently bored and burnt out due to the sheer amount of time writing emails. This was ultimately the catalyst for me to indulge in a more creative outlet, the STFC Industrial Placement Newsletter, where I developed my research and writing skills as I took on the role of STFC Archivist •. My job role entailed writing an article monthly relating to the various achievements of the organisation and trawling through archival records to provide relative imagery and context that would support my writing. Through my research, I found myself becoming enthralled by the history of my employer, which gave me a newfound respect for them and rejuvenated my ability and patience regarding writing.

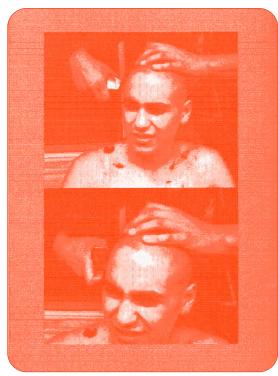
More recently, I have become a hoarder of written and visual material. I've stockpiled books, PDFs, and web links, with the eventual goal being that I will one day use these resources to support my work. Shortly after the briefing for The Changing Shape of Place, I decided to purchase a book from Topsafe Publishing called Next 2 Nothing ● . The project is the result of collaboration between various creators and media outlets, proclaiming itself to be "A Casebook n' Manual' for directors, storytellers, artists & image makers providing impressionistic insight into self-supported filmmaking, one still at a time". Although it is less relevant to the direction I have taken this brief in, the content written is important nonetheless and has informed me of the various ways that writing can benefit my design practice.

I regularly write to articulate myself in ways that I struggle to do verbally or visually. Admittedly, I do find myself oversaturating my work with writing, such as in pitch decks and presentations, but I find that there is catharsis in being able to provide the context in a personal way that could be lost in translation when speaking. Over the next year, I would like to work on making my writing more expressive and less stoic, which could help widen my prospects in the future as I could investigate copywriting roles or contribute in a dynamic way for editorial roles.

Communication and aesthetics are equal regarding my Graphic Design practice, so refining my ability to write is one aspect of my professional development that I will focus on. As my interests do not solely lie in static media, developing writing will help me write scripts and direct moving image projects, which is a path I could potentially see my work going into.







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● 2→ Appendix

2 CRITICAL **CONVERSATIONS**

My design work primarily focuses on studying people, places and the facets of life that make people unique. Before learning Graphic Design, my academic background was in Sociological and Media studies, with much of that experience lending itself to the work I produce today. Design academics Bruce and Stephanie Tharp proposed that there are four design fields: Commercial Design, Responsible Design, Experimental Design, and Discursive Design I do not align singularly with the suggested titles but instead, opt to be malleable depending on the circumstances or project. Although I may venture into Commercial Design, the work I most enjoy is usually a hybrid between Responsible and Discursive design. Although all design is the product of experimentation. I tend not to drift into abstraction but instead focus on the reasonable and logistical means of completing a task. This often results in more journalistic work or a solution to a problem rather than standalone artwork or commercially driven projects.

In the last four years, Ryosuke Tanzawa has been a creator who has consistently caught my attention. Tanzawa's portfolio consists of music videos, particularly in the Hip-Hop and rap scene. Tanzawa has carved a signature look that differs

significantly from other videos in the same genre. This can be attributed to his sharp editing skills and use of analogue and digital cameras. Tanzawa profiles his subjects in an intimate way rarely seen within the contemporary rap space.

An example of where Tanzawa's usage of film cameras plays into the character of his work, with the music video for Navy Blue's "Higher Self" being a prime example . In this video, we see the employment of close-up shots and film grain that emphasise the vulnerability Navy Blue conveys through his song. This style of direction runs throughout all of Tanzawa's work



Navy Blue-Higher Self ● 4→ Appendix

and reflects the clients with whom Tanzawa chooses to collaborate. Textural features and directorial techniques aid in emphasising emotion, which is one of the differentials that make Tanzawa's productions unique. Compared to other videos on the market, wide-angled shots are often used to portray grandeur and wealth. This direction would not be appropriate for the music he is interpreting. In context to my work, close-up shots were used throughout the short documentary I produced titled Last Orders. The documentary aimed to platform the issues one man faced when he lost his business.

The use of close-ups allowed the viewer to feel as if they were sitting in on a conversation.

In terms of Tanzawa's methodology, I find value in his approach to understanding the projects he undertakes. In an interview with Amiri Tulloch for Royal State of Mind, Tanzawa states, "I like just walking around the city listening to the track I'm supposed to make the video for. You will never run out of ideas by just watching people..."

Primary research, to me, is the most valuable form of research. When constructing the foundations of a project, immersing yourself in an environment allows for an accurate translation of the matter. This helps guide the later phases of the design. Through documentation and the collection of materials, you will enable yourself to draw from the inspiration you have complete inference over, rather than having to reinterpret someone else's research. This was also briefly discussed by Tanzawa in the earlier article, who proclaimed, "Searching for inspiration on the internet always feels a bit ingenuine".

Although I don't think that the statement prior is necessarily always the case, I think the point still stands that having 1st person experience allows for more sincerity and authenticity to permeate into your work. In context to this being displayed in Tanzawa's work, multiple scenes throughout Higher Self are shot candidly, tracking Navy Blue as he walks through the streets as if we were a spectator that is not acknowledged by the subject.

Ted Hyunhak Yoon is a South Korean graphic designer best known for his work on the book Decoding Dictatorial Statues

. The publication is a gorgeous insight into the psychology and symbolism of various dictators worldwide, who often construct enormous replicas of themselves to either eternalise their rule or influence their subjugates through portrayals of strength, intelligence, or honour—as the blurb states, Decoding Dictatorial Statues is the fruition of "Coupling a designer's perspective with an analytical approach".



Decoding Dictatorial ■ b→ Appendix

Statues

Q CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS

Projects like this would be something which I would like to create in the future, as it is a product of cross-collaboration between researchers, scholars and creatives whom all have individual roles to fulfil.

In terms of an audience interested in Decoding Dictatorial Statues, the appeal reaches a large spectrum of individuals. I was introduced to the project by a fellow graphic designer interested in social studies and reporting, who recommended the book to me due to my interest in war journalism and global conflict. Although we both had different reasons for being interested in the book, our interests converged through the carefully considered presentation.

Decoding Dictatorial Statues is a gorgeous book where even the sleeve serves a purpose. Once removed, the sleeve can be displayed as a poster that shows some of the gestural studies seen throughout the book. The figures on the front are annotated, and the process of obtaining the photos is seen throughout the book, with an extensive article featured at the end. The presentation of the images is clean but does not follow a distinct grid composition. Visual clutter is non-existent, meaning the photographs have room to breathe, with only brief captions and page numbers accompanying them. The presentation feels modern but timeless, with part of that lending itself



■ 7 → Appendix

to the rich amount of archival photography and imagery throughout the book. A final note to make on the presentation of the book is the general finish of it, with the quality of the paper being high and even designated in the credits.

Without the sleeve, the covers of the book are understated and simple, featuring a modern Serif font, a pure black background with no images and the mark of the publisher Onomatopee and their issue number - that being number 157 in their series. The cover's design is expected from Onomatopee and conforms to their established style, calling back to their other works, such as Fiction Practise.

Popular Front is a "grassroots media organisation that focuses solely on war and conflict." Led by Jake Hanrahan, the organisation is 100%

independent and funds its projects through donations, revenue from the sales of publications and passive income that is accumulated from advertisements and viewership on platforms such as Patreon, YouTube and Spotify. They are most known for their work on documentaries that shed light on underreported conflicts across the globe.

In the first quarter of 2020, Popular Front released a documentary titled Add Oil: On the Ground with the Hong Kong Protesters . The documentary offered insight into the Frontliners, protesters fighting the authoritarian government and the oppressive nature of Chinese State Authorities. The project was accompanied by various supplementary materials such as podcasts and graphic artefacts, such as the screen printed Add Oil poster, which was in collaboration with designer Tyler Baumgartner, photographer Stanton Sharpe and retailer Propagandopolis. The collection of published media is inspiring to me because the audience is intended to be anyone interested in global affairs, and it was transmitted by a large variety of means which allowed for easy access. For such a body of work to be published by a few contributors, not including those featured in the documentary as interviewees, the quality is admirable. It remains morally strong regardless of censorship from mass media platforms. The project resonates with me because it shed light on an important issue targeted by digital platforms and offered no monetary incentive.

Popular Front's success with the Add Oil documentary has highlighted to me that there are ways for designers and creatives to work on projects that would often be seen as commercially feasible without sacrificing their integrity. Through independent sourcing and strong moral standing, they have been able to persist as an organisation and produce equally provocative materials with an alternative funding body — that being the public. It stands as a testament to the power of communities and the public. If there is an audience for a specific form of content, they will unite to ensure that the outcome reaches its intended consumers.



Since returning from working in the industry, the desire to experiment in different fields of design has been satisfied through the exploration of user interface and user experience design. Unfortunately, UI/UX design was less enjoyable than expected. Positively, the experience in creating cohesive UI elements and vector artwork has been a successful exercise, which can lead to future applications. The UI/UX brief allowed for the consideration of accessibility, which has been beneficial. Earlier in the academic year, accessibility on the web was highlighted as a skill to develop. In part, accessibility skills reaffirmed a statement made in the previously written document, Critical Conversations, about my position in the design space. The document states that the main fields of design I operate in are Discursive and Responsible design, titles coined by Bruce and Stephanie Tharp (Tharp & Tharp, 2019) . The area of Responsible design refers to socially responsible design, which is not necessarily related to commercial gain but can assist in making a profit. Discursive design differs from Responsible design by creating objects that encourage discussion and provoke thought.

A particular highlight of this year's work has been the deliverables for Make The Most, a short zine made from DIY materials relating to sustainability. This project positioned itself towards a social context through the body of content communicated and considering the context in which the publication's life will end using recycled, scavenged paper imbued with resilient seeds that could grow when disposed of addressed the waste issue of paper goods such as receipts and newspapers. The material will degrade when exposed to the environment, paving the way for new life to sprout from the dirt. The Changing Shape of Place, or brief 2, was the most critical brief of the year as it lent guidance to where I could direct my career in the future.

The combination of publication, journalism, production, and analogous research methods was entertaining and creatively liberating. The production of Make the Most allowed for developing skills, such as photography,

through a unique interaction with the observed parties. The Hallamshire Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers facilitated a day of interviews, photographs, and live workshops, which leant to a deepened personal connection towards the brief. The day of the interview reignited my passion for media and how it can be used in positive ways to share the experiences and lives of people who would not usually have a platform. The conclusion of the brief was rewarding and provided a tangible and valuable artefact. Whether the reader learnt from the content or used its form to sow seeds for themselves and others, there were multiple benefits for people to enjoy.

For a career in publication to flourish, standards must be adhered to — such as having a solid ethical standing. Design Dictionary: Perspectives on design terminology states, "An excellent ethical judgment allows all involved to flourish as best they can (as opposed to just being happy)." (Erlhoff et al., 2007) . The importance of this statement lies in our responsibility as designers to ensure that the work we create does not harm the public or those involved in producing a project. As our role entails constructing messages and meaning through design. using tools such as narrative, sequencing, hierarchy, or other design choices has the power to evoke feelings and emotions from the audience. If, for example, a photography publication comprised imagery taken in an urban area, using vulnerable groups such as the homeless or protected subjectivities would be unethical — especially if the individual is unaware. Reinforcing this point, The National Press Photographers Association endorse a code of ethics to keep photographers and other professionals in good standing. Point 4 of their code of ethics states, "Treat all subjects with respect and dignity. Give special consideration to vulnerable subjects and compassion to victims of crime or tragedy. Intrude on private moments of grief only when the public has an overriding and justifiable need to see" ("Code of Ethics," 2017) . As editors and curators, being sensitive of how to display intimate, vulnerable, or distressing moments is an essential aspect of design to remember, as some content can come to the detriment of others.

10 THINGS THAT MATTER

Developing on previous points regarding ethical design, understanding the ecological impact of design is a crucial factor to consider during production. Experimentation with materials and analogue processes is a rewarding way to engage with graphics, with the process of creating physical goods being rewarding for both the designer and the audience. However, in the context of publication, the consumption of natural materials and the lifecycle of goods cannot be ignored. Although it can be fun to experiment with various materials, even the chemical composition of inks and paper can harm the environment. The report Our Common Future' outlines that sustainable development should "ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (United Nations, 1987). In an interview with It's Nice That, designer Federico Barbon proclaims, "Design, as a discipline of innovation, must take a leading role in optimising the environmental impact of a whole range of products and their production processes". ("Printed on Green Paper Made from Algae, This Book Documents the Latest ECAL Students' Sustainable Projects," 2023) . Companies such as Favini have aided in adopting said materials by expanding their relations with academic institutions and promoting eco-friendly product lines. As innovators in responsible paper production, they have been credited with revolutionising paper by creating paper stocks made with unconventional materials. From algae to textile byproducts, the materials they use can subside the carbon output of conventional paper production and will evolve to be more viable as technology develops. Awareness of supplies and sustainable material stocks is something that all designers should be familiar with, whether the application is to create packaging, publication, or other ephemera.

Collage work has been an aspect of graphic design that has always been difficult for me to develop. The level of skill demonstrated by collage artists on social media has always been intimidating, especially when factoring in the talent of my peers who specialise in collage work. DR.ME are a Manchester-based studio who have been prolific in collage work, with their portfolio spanning

years and works covering a diverse range of clients. From Manchester United to publication work for bands like WU LYF, they have amassed a following for their ability to consistently further their craft. LYF ARCHIVES 1998 - 2012 ● is one of their more recent publications, and stands as an example of work I would like to produce. The publication is the culmination of their musical career and features articles, collages, photographs, and recounts from the band's short but successful run in the music industry. Concerning the publication's design, the form factor was fascinating due to its square shape and dimensions that resemble the sleeves of a conventional long-play record. The understated cover featuring an embossed illustration of WU LYF's signature symbol, the WUCIFIX, encapsulates the niche, mysterious nature of the band, which helped propel them to cult fame during the 2010s. The typography and layout of text in the publication are fairly conventional considering the shape of the page but are easily readable considering the length of the articles and interviews. For most pages, the body text comprises a lightweight, Serif typeface with the chapters identified by a bold weight San Serif font in the top bleed space. The rigid construction of the pages evoked the feeling of reading a photo album, especially when viewing the large spans of archival photographs, which are broken up by double-page spreads of scanned material and candid photography. The abundance of archival imagery contributes to the intimacy of publication, especially considering the impact they had when they were active.

When critically analysing LYF ARCHIVES, design choices could be improved. The contrast on the image caption is low on some double-page spreads, and mainly the Spiderland spread on pages 20 to 21. This can be attributed to maintaining the style and conventions of the more comprehensive publication but could have been addressed by having the caption placed on page 18, which has ample white space. Overall, DR.ME demonstrated that they could create beautiful standalone works and do long-form projects like the one described.



LYF ARCHIVES 1998 - 2012 by DR.ME • 13 \rightarrow Appendix



Aesthetics of Sustainability Federico Barbon ●12→ Appendix

THINGS THAT MATTER

On a wider scope, companies such as Topsafe have harboured amazing projects which are both insightful and visually appealing. With strong connections to various media and artistic disciplines, Topsafe has managed to construct a portfolio highlighting burgeoning talent - especially from the United Kingdom. For the last two years, my practice has become increasingly more multimedia, with many Topsafe publications becoming essential reference material. Next to Nothing has helped in understanding the construction of media, along with the importance of creativity, discipline, and conceptualisation in projects. Although the message isn't profound, the piece titled Ultra HD Retina Dismay helped put into perspective the creative process and the importance of creating works that resonate personally - detached from the never-ending grind of algorithms and social media updates. Quoting the article, social media was "supposed to liberate, yet it fills you with oppressive dread of epidemic proportions" (Topsafe, 2018, p225) • The extract summarises many of the articles throughout Next To Nothing. It resonates with me as someone who often becomes disheartened with their creative output and where the future might lead. Next to Nothing excels in contextualising the reality of being a creator, often pointing out that many designers considered successful and prolific online do not represent creativity and success. Numerical values such as likes, interactions and statistics do not matter to the roles of most designers and creatives; instead, they strive to create honest, impactful or other qualitative works should be the goal.

The design of Next To Nothing is well thought out, from the choice of typography, curation, images and extra visual flares, such as glyphs and the handling of appendices. For example, pages 64 and 65 demonstrate many of the design choices of the publication, like the image compositions and caption, which are set in a monospaced typeface . The synergy between different fonts and weights and the tabbing conventions used widely throughout the book are also presented here, confidently representing the attention to detail and construction seen throughout. Other design attributes that work well can be seen in the print quality, using

full-colour images consistently from start to finish. Coupled with additional printed materials like a bookmark and double-sided foldout poster, the publication is solid through and through, as even the dust sleeve is an extension of the materials. Next To Nothing stands as a project that would be an honour to contribute to, and the insights provided by the artists and designers who helped create the publication have been beneficial.

In developing my design practice, Grid Systems in Graphics Design (GSGD) by Josef Müller-Brockmannn has been a staple read. The book is educational and logically assembled, transcribing Brockmann's ability to assemble designed works ranging from exhibitions to editorials and posters. The book's design instantly evokes the same feeling as the posters for which Brockmann is known, suggesting that the book will act as a guide or blueprint. This is advertised by the apparent grids on the cover, which form the structure of the text and title. Providing both English and German translation, GSGD is sizable, considering that it is essentially a handbook. Although many of the chapters can be technically rich, much of the value of the publication can be extracted from the visuals scattered throughout the book. A particularly good example of where minimal technical expertise is required can be observed on page 118, detailing the grid construction of a Lufthansa brochure • . Referencing the image and diagram, a designer could easily transplant their own briefs into the template, providing they have the bare minimum understanding of grid systems and abide by bleeds and margins. Many of the pages hold these principles, making the publication useful when quickly experimenting with 8, 20 and 32 field grids. During the foundational years of learning graphic design, I found the book to be immensely useful as it allowed me to dissect what works with other successful designs and attempt to apply those teachings to my own works. Although it is no fault of the book, the one downside to reading the book at an early stage of learning graphic design is that it regimented much of my work due to not having a thorough understanding of the complexities of quality design. In recent times, the contents of GSGD have been used as a stimulus for formulating the foundations of posters and publications, with its other teachings being used conditionally.

To conclude, the academic and professional development of my design career has been greatly influenced by the artists and designers whom I admire. Studying their works' positive and negative attributes in tangent with the study of ethics and principles has led to a detailed understanding of how to be a successful designer and develop the necessary skills to find fulfilling and meaningful work in the future.

Figures and Appendix



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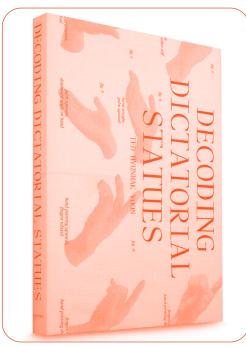
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(PSA) Ultra HD Retina Dismay Great hacks for a healthier infinite scroll!

It's tough out there... In just a minute you are going to return to your natural creative habitat—the infinite scroll and it's ecosystem of aspirations. It was supposed to liberate, yet it fills you with oppressive dread of epidemic proportions. As a result, you are going to sell out your long-term artistic focus for a cheap payoff of a controlled dopamine release. Instead of realising your true artistic potential you are going to add to the exponential infinity of the digital void. After all, you need to make it BIG and you want it NOW. Everybody is flexing. Thanks to round-the-clock curated peer-propaganda machines of success, it's hard not to lose sight of the true artistic merit, the potential of failure as a means for growth and patience as a creative virtue.

In the age of the 'gram the odds for reaching your personal artistic nirvana are pretty low. To get there you are going to answer yourself truthfully whether you are going to do the right thing, or you are going to engage in the creative ponzi scheme of self-importance and posturing like everyone else.

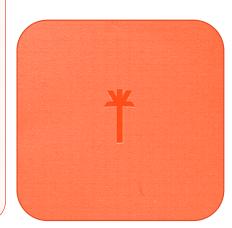
If you are in it for the long-haul, tip the odds in your favour by learning about a few healthy habits for sustained artistic growth. William 'Cult' Ndatira, 'grams master eye-ball co-ordinator, is here with his unique mix of visual referencing and optimistic creative self-care. to help us translate these notions into the only format your dopaminedrenched brain can absorb anymore i.e. the interaction of an image and the humble caption.

Good luck, it's tough out there. #publicserviceannoucement +

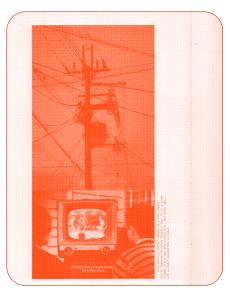
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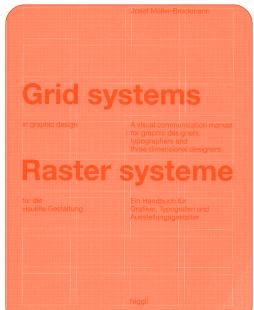
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