Visual Communications 3

Sustaining your Practice

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Cover image: Artsnight poster © Ai Weiwei
Free download from BBC *Artsnight*, first shown 11.05pm 27 Mar 2015.

'Despite being unable to leave China, Ai Weiwei has a new studio in Berlin, where his six-year-
old son Ai Lao lives. As part of a special feature for BBC 2's *Artsnight* with Tate Modern director
Chris Dercon, the artist collaborated with Ai Lao via Skype on an exclusive artwork.'

For 48 hours only, you could download a copy of the finished piece to print out at:
www.bbc.co.uk/arts. *Sustaining your Practice* was there and able to take advantage of this
opportunity - Free Ai Weiwei.

Course written by Stephen Monger.

Contents

Introduction

Welcome to *Visual Communications 3: Sustaining your Practice*. This course represents the culmination of the knowledge, understanding and skills you've acquired throughout the Visual Communications programme so far.

Sustaining your Practice builds on the other two Level 3 courses, *Advanced Practice* and *Visual Research*. It is a self-directed course, structured to support you in:
- undertaking a substantial self-initiated or self-selected project
- preparing your work for presentation
- developing a contextual awareness of your practice
- identifying appropriate progression routes into employment, self-employment, professional practice or continued education.

You'll explore the contextual location of your practice through researching and/or undertaking work-related learning in your practice areas, identify potential progression routes, and develop the necessary strategy, self-promotion and presentation skills to help realise your aims. You'll be encouraged to develop a portfolio of work to present to a wider audience, through portfolios, online exhibitions or other appropriate means.

As with all Level 3 courses, this course will require a high degree of self-motivation and autonomy. You'll use your learning log and the assignments to support the development of self-reflection, critique, time management and professionalism.

Continue to consult the Level 3 Visual Communications Handbook to find out how this course connects to the other Level 3 courses, the expectation of this level of study, the support available to you through OCA and your tutor, and how best to prepare for assessment.

Course aims and outcomes

Sustaining your Practice aims to support you to:
• demonstrate a synthesis of prior learning, practical and conceptual understanding in the resolution of a self-initiated major project
• demonstrate specific knowledge and understanding of your chosen discipline
• inform the development of an individually appropriate strategy for progression into employment, self-employment, professional practice or continued education
• develop self-motivation, autonomy and professionalism
• extend your design, presentation and creative skills by applying a personal visual language to a substantial self-initiated major project and by generating artwork to a high visual standard.

On successful completion of this course you will be able to:
• demonstrate specialist knowledge and contextual understanding of your practice and develop promotional strategies to communicate this to an external audience
• initiate and undertake self-directed projects that show creative application of a personal visual language
• respond to project work by undertaking and assimilating research, developing creative ideas, undertaking visual experimentation and producing outcomes to a high visual standard
• present a synthesis of your creative and technical skills and your conceptual and contextual understanding of your practice through a sustained body of work.

Your course at a glance

Before you start reading about and planning your progress through *Sustaining your Practice*, take a few moments to revisit Part One of *Advanced Practice* and remind yourself about the Design Council Double Diamond Model.

Link 1

Part one: Proposal manifesto

Following on from the personal statement you developed as part of the *Advanced Practice* course, you'll start this course by considering your own position: on the ideals and perspectives that form your creative voice; on design thinking, history and critical debates; and on how your position might tie in with commercial, social or other agendas. A series of tasks will help you research, locate your practice in context, and consider the criticality and currency of your ideas.

You'll also consider the breadth of what visual communication could be as you plan and prepare a self-initiated project. To help you with this, we've provided a series of case studies showcasing the work of industry professionals and a variety of approaches to practice. You'll find this at the end of this introduction. At the core of *Sustaining your Practice* is the ability to renew your creativity and to this end we explore the dialogue between commercial and personal work.

Building on your exploration of audience in Part Three of *Advanced Practice*, we'll extend the subject of 'audience' as you consider whom you're producing work for and ways of engaging them.

Your first assignment is to produce your own personal art/design manifesto and a comprehensive project plan document presenting your proposal for the conception, making, and delivery of a self-initiated outward-facing project.

Part two: Project making and testing

Without a commercial brief or an employer's demands, successful personal practice relies on an individual's ability to ask themselves questions, set goals and test ideas in the production of work. This stage allows time for your personal project to begin to find its form as you engage in practical research.

You'll look at planning strategies, site visits, documenting and recording through sound, video, etc., making models and maquettes, storyboarding, the idea of process as finished piece, working with printers and user testing/feedback.

Assignment Two is to present a series of tests, drafts and work in progress in support of your project.

Part three: Project production and networking

In Part Three, we take a look at some creative networks. Whether you join organisations, attend gallery events or access collectives online, there is a network for you to showcase your work and join a dialogue with like-minded professionals. We also take a look at the subject of postgraduate study, and there is an opportunity to test your presentation skills for the final stage in the form of a PechaKucha presentation. The assignment for this part of the course is the submission of your second-stage work in progress for your project. The project should be nearing the end of the development stage, with some clear pointers towards the finished outcomes.

Part four: Project realisation and presentation

The final part of the course sees the completion of your practical work together with designed marketing material to promote yourself and your project to your audience. This part of the course is as much about readying yourself for exit into the professional world as it is about completing your studies.

There are two assignments to complete for Part Four:
- Assignment Four asks you to submit your completed project, a new outward-facing PechaKucha presentation and a 2,000-word illustrated evaluation of your work.
- Assignment Five asks for evidence of your exhibition and your designed marketing.

Before you begin, read through the whole course guide to get a clear idea of what's involved and how the various exercises and research tasks link and build towards completion. If there's anything you're not clear about, contact your tutor. Also make sure you read the case studies which follow this introduction at an early stage in the course and refer back to them as required during your work on *Sustaining your Practice*. The intention of these is to explore a variety of practices that could be described as 'Visual Communication' and to help you frame your area of study. The course will refer to particular case studies at key points, but it makes sense to read them all at the beginning. There are further visual examples throughout that may act as inspiration, together with links where possible.

Some weblinks are listed separately at the end of this course guide for ease of updating.

Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria for *Sustaining your Practice* are detailed below. If you're going to have your work assessed to gain formal credits, make sure you take note of these criteria and consider how each of the assignments you complete demonstrates evidence of them. On completion of each assignment, and before you send your assignment to your tutor, test yourself against the criteria; in other words, do a self-assessment and see how you think you would do. To help you with this, the Visual Communications Assessment Criteria for Level 3 describes how these each of these criteria relate to a grade. For example, outstanding levels of creativity would be seen as 'exceptional synthesis of analytical thinking and creativity, integrating highly significant independent judgements and very clearly evidencing a defined personal creative voice', while at a satisfactory level it would show 'reasonable synthesis of analytical thinking and creativity, integrating some significant independent judgements and partial evidence of a defined personal creative voice'. Note down your findings for each assignment you've completed in your learning log, noting all your perceived strengths and weaknesses and taking into account the criteria every step of the way. This will be helpful for your tutor to see, as well as helping you prepare for assessment.

- **Creativity (30%):** Employ creativity in the process of observation, interpretation, problem analysis, proposing, visualising and/or making; articulating independent judgements and a personal creative voice.
- **Research and idea development (20%):** Source, analyse and assimilate research material and develop, test, and evaluate ideas in order to generate ideas and solutions.
- **Visual and technical skills (30%):** Use visual skills in visualising, making and presenting, and materials, techniques and technologies to communicate ideas and information.
- **Context (20%):** Exercise awareness of appropriate historical, critical, professional and/or emerging contexts and debates; be informed by underlying concepts, principles and working practices; and use critical and reflective skills to support a self-directed and sustained personal and/or professional position.

Assessment requirements

When it comes to formal or summative assessment, these are the items tutors will expect to see for this course. For more details on how you go about developing them, please consult your Level 3 Visual Communication Handbook.

- A portfolio documenting your body of work and supporting sketchbooks and development work (80%).
- A learning log containing supporting visual/written research, reflections, analysis and other material (20%).

Sustaining your Practice reading list

Essential texts
Downs, S. (2011) *The Graphic Communication Handbook*. Abingdon: Routledge
Noble, I. & Bestley, R. (2011) V*isual Research: An Introduction to Research Methodologies in Graphic Design* (2nd edition). London: Bloomsbury
O'Reilly, J. (2002) *No Brief: Graphic Designers' Personal Projects*. Hove: RotoVision
Taylor, F. (2013) *How to Create a Portfolio and Get Hired: A Guide for Graphic Designers and Illustrators* (2nd edition). London: Laurence King

Recommended texts
Brazell, D. & Davies, J. (2013) *Becoming a Successful Illustrator*. London: Bloomsbury
Brazell, D. & Davies, J. (2014) *Understanding Illustration*. London: Bloomsbury
Davies, G. (2010) *Copyright Law for Artists, Photographers and Designers*. London: A & C Black
Male, A. (2007) *Illustration: A Theoretical and Contextual Perspective*. London: Bloomsbury
Male, A. (2014) *Illustration: Meeting the Brief*. London: Bloomsbury
Shaughnessy, A. (2010) *How to be a Graphic Designer without Losing your Soul* (2nd edition). London: Laurence King

Recommended journals
Creative Review: www.creativereview.co.uk/
The Design Journal: www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfdj20#.VdWuJX1je68
Eye: www.eyemagazine.com/
Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture: www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=165/
Journal of Communication Design: www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfcd20#.VdWvwX1je68
Journal of Illustration: www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=233/
Ubiquity: www.ubiquityjournal.net/
Varoom: www.varoom-mag.com/
Visual Communication: http://vcj.sagepub.com/

Recommended websites
Adbusters: www.adbusters.org
Association of Illustrators: www.theaoi.com
Brain Pickings: www.brainpickings.org
Bridgeman Education: www.bridgemaneducation.com/ *
The Design Council: www.designcouncil.org.uk
Design Observer: http://designobserver.com
International Society of Typographic Designers: www.istd.org.uk
Olga's Gallery: www.abcgallery.com/ *
Oxford Art Online: www.oxfordartonline.com *
Process.arts: http://process.arts.ac.uk/ *
VADS visual arts resource: http://vads.ac.uk *
Visual Methodologies: www.sagepub.com/rose/default.htm

* Log on access via OCA student site: www.oca-student.com/resource-type/online-library

Case studies

OCA tutor Laura Scott talks to Alice Moloney about her work. Alice is now a creative at INT Works, the agency of It's Nice That. Previously she undertook freelance work as a communication designer, her work encompassing different areas such as design and illustration as well as conducting various creative workshops. Her past clients are wide-ranging, from multi-national companies to world-renowned art galleries, and she has previously taught Visual Communication at Kingston University.

I first encountered Alice at the RCA, where she took part (having graduated the year before) in a discussion series called 'Let's Talk About Progress'. What initially struck me about Alice's approach to work was that a 'label' (and by this I mean 'Illustrator, 'Graphic Designer', etc.) didn't limit it. Although she initially thought of herself as an illustrator (and was encouraged and approached by the Heart Illustration Agency about her work) she still wanted to work across a range of different platforms and develop work that had clear conceptual ideas behind it whilst not being inhibited by method and form. I found her work engaging because it encompassed such a range of approaches, from book illustration to information graphics and even interactive design, all of which sit quite cohesively side by side on her website.

Alice explains that she finds the label 'illustrator' constricting. As she says, 'I always felt that the term doesn't quite fit because, although I love making images, I do so much more than that so illustration is just part of my process'. When working freelance Alice called herself a 'communication designer' because 'it was a term broad enough to encompass the different services I offered'. She discovered this new term worked, helping to define her wide-ranging approach; she explains that 'it often led clients to ask me questions about my practice and the resulting conversations helped them to understand what I do'.

Nowadays Alice has an even broader job title, 'creative'. This she explains is 'fantastic really because at INT Works I feel like it doesn't matter if I am kind of an illustrator and kind of a researcher and kind of a designer, because my work allows me to do all of it, where appropriate of course'. Working as part of a team, Alice suggests that the approach to projects at INT Works is both spontaneous and methodical as they have 'specific structures, processes and client relationships for each project'. Yet she points out that within such methods there are always opportunities for improvisation, stating that 'I feel like I'm constantly searching for those amazing spontaneous moments when you stumble across the missing insight, or idea, or image, or word to the puzzle!'

Returning for a moment to Alice's freelance work, she stresses the importance of personal work and projects, and explains that these were something she would often undertake because they were 'completely invaluable to getting me to where I am today because those projects helped me shape my practice'. She also points out that clients would often commission illustrations off the back of such projects, highlighting the fact that 'now, when I look at the portfolios of graduates or freelancers hoping to work at INT Works, I always look for the personal projects because that's where you often see the real personality, drive and initiative in someone'.

Certainly I can see that Alice's freelance work challenges the conventions of illustration and design and she believes that 'illustrators should be able to be employed in the same way as designers, i.e. for the way they solve problems and generate ideas'. This goes back to the idea of the 'label' and the limit this might imply. Alice stresses that 'illustrators have a lot more to offer than just beautiful images and I think that the industry needs to work out a way to allow them to be more flexible in how they apply their skills, outside of the typical freelance-illustrator-with-an-agent structure'. As an example she highlights that she doesn't often come across 'many trained illustrators working full time in design agencies' and hopes to inspire other creatives to challenge this ethos.

(OCA tutor Laura Scott)

Alice Moloney

Alice Moloney

Alice Moloney

Case study 2: Burn Kim

Burn Kim is an illustrator and cartoonist who currently lives and works in South Korea. His current practice focuses on tag-based images and alternative forms of storytelling. Often this work is interactive, allowing the audience to rearrange elements via keywords to find similarities, conflicting ideas, messages and even propositions. What is intriguing about Burn's work is that it appears to take the form of a sort of protest, with his innate interest in questions surrounding human behaviour and society at the forefront of his constant pursuit for rectitude.

Burn's work involves both illustration and web-based comics with his images normally created digitally using a tablet. He elaborates on the subjects of his work, suggesting that it often responds to 'many questions, questions that arise or pop up in everyday life, in particular politics'. He states 'I think it is a sort of self-editorial work. I sometimes use my work to criticise government policy, to give an opinion towards a public problem or to form a discussion'. As a counterpart to this he is quick to highlight that the work can equally be 'about useless nonsense or meaningless tiny discoveries'.

When it comes to responding to a societal trend or need, Burn's work responds to what he describes as 'old ideas' or the 'common problems' within society. He points out that such ideas are 'very stubborn and cannot be changed in a short time'. Therefore to reinforce and shed light on such persistent issues, Burn states 'I just keep portraying them continuously using changing styles, forms, manners and tone'. He prefers the traditional approach to 'labelling' work, highlighting its convenience: 'When it is labelled, I just need to think about how to communicate well within that label's meaning' and the work is 'consequently more effective and meaningful'. However, he does appreciate that going beyond the confines of classification can 'bring certain possibilities like unexpected images or thinking'.

As well as commercial work, Burn emphasises the importance of personal projects and in particular discusses a project for 'a web-based comic about the right to vote and to boost a younger generation's vote rate for a presidential election'. He explains that the internet success of this work, where 'people began to post and repost my work', eventually led it to be used in a Korean news programme. This then led to further interest in his images and Burn explains that 'later on one newspaper contacted me and asked if I could make a piece of commercial work about the next election and the subject of nuclear energy'. The style for this commercial work, he points out, 'was one I had tried initially when starting out as a freelance artist and now it has become one of my main commercial styles'.

Burn relies on promoting his work, predominantly online through his blog, SNS (Social Network Service) and subculture group. He says 'we have many popular subculture sites in Korea that are well organised' and that through this method of promotion, 'more and more people have started to become familiar with it'. Interestingly he suggests that the 'posting and reposting' is, in a way, a form of audience participation. The audience is engaged with the work, reacting to it through the very act of spreading the word via posting.

Burn works both methodically and spontaneously, first writing down ideas and then allowing these to 'evolve in my mind freely'. He suggests that 'as time goes by, some ideas are naturally connected with certain images/experiences or some appear in my mind more frequently'. He points out that when this happens 'it is then that they become my main subject group'.

This then promotes research into the subject alongside 'ideation maps' to help discover 'unconsidered links or ideas not thought of previously'. Such substantiation of the subject matter allows Burn to 'consider how to show it – the image style or forms' after which he gets to work. Often he likes to differentiate between his 'sustained projects or instant works', the latter of which are for fun, stress relief and allow him to respond quickly and randomly to a subject or idea.

As the subjects of Burn's work are often contentious – and in South Korea he is aware that the 'power of conservative political and religious groups is very strong' – he is mindful of the ethical considerations that must be taken into account. He suggests that 'metaphorical and humorous expression is often a smarter and safer way' to approach such sensitive subjects.

Following the completion of work Burn typically applies 'tags' or keywords on the work, which he states 'divide the meaning and allow me to discover things in common between various pieces of work' or 'discover new links to external sources'. As a result of this process other main subjects are identified. Burn says 'this is how I like to bring ideas together continuously'.

(OCA tutor Laura Scott)

Burn Kim, *We Are Listening (01) – We all know your tough life, because we see you from the top*

국민 여러분의 손과 발이 되겠습니다

Burn Kim, *We Are Listening (03) – We will be your hands and feet*

Case study 3: Debbie Cook - Working in the public realm

Increasingly the boundaries between disciplines in the creative arts are merging, allowing what were once isolated subjects areas to expand and encroach into others. Visual communication is one such example. Artists, designers and even illustrators are no longer bound by the confines of format and the categorisation of their creative practices; they prefer, as Debbie Cook suggests, 'a vision of a multidisciplinary practitioner working across diverse media and digital platforms' (Cook, 2013:16).

This can enhance and complement 2D practice, in particular, but it also reaffirms the artists' ability to think creatively and laterally. What was once perhaps a private act can become a very public one that has the potential to affect and impose itself upon a landscape or situation. Such public works demonstrate a confidence and self-determined belief that visual communication should be accessible on different levels and to different people. The Association of Illustrators (AOI) now even acknowledges a 'Public Realm' category within its Illustration Awards, which showcases such broad-ranging and diverse work as: 'graffiti, street art, live events, heavy pencil, participatory projects, installations, interventions, performance, bill boards, poster sites, public commissions, architectural commissions and performance' (AOI, 2015). Some recent examples to note are Jane Reiseger's murals/interior graphics for the New Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, Australia or Joe Caslin's *Our Nation's Sons*, large-scale portraits set in specific locations throughout Edinburgh city. In both examples, art is presented to an unsuspecting audience as opposed to a gallery that people have chosen to visit. In this sense it takes on an interactive position, with audience participation or viewing helping to fulfil the work and consolidate it.

Another great example of public realm art commissioning can be seen in the Art on the Underground project from Transport for London. This commissions artists to produce work for various permanent and temporary sites across the London Underground network, allowing for a fleeting and yet shared experience to be had by a global audience (Art on the Underground/ TfL, 2015).

On the subject of collaborative artworks, Debbie Cook suggests that 'the most interesting interactions happen outside of traditional discipline boundaries, when a new layer of discourse emerges that challenges habitual approaches within subject areas' (Cook, 2013:6). For example, the illustrators Sandra de Matos and Laura Scott explored the idea of using fax machines to engage with each other's work, assembling new narratives based on alternative research points. The faxes were reproductions of drawings created in response to six briefs they initiated to challenge their working processes. During the exhibition, they constantly responded to the briefs, producing drawings and type for immediate fax transfer into a gallery space. Laura states, 'it seems fitting that the ephemeral nature of faxed media complements the mass transmission of spontaneously created drawings'. Throughout the project images and text were exchanged, copied, interpreted and developed, which allowed them to reflect on alternative approaches to working methodologies, as well as challenging their preconceptions about the work.

(OCA tutor Laura Scott)

Cook, D. (2013) 'Design' in *Varoom! Afterwords: The Awards Issue*, Autumn (23), p.16
AOI (2015) www.theaoi.com/awards/categories.php [accessed 25.08.15]
Art on the Underground/TfL (2015) http://art.tfl.gov.uk/about/overview/ [accessed 25.08.15]

Case study 4: Lizzy Stewart

Lizzy Stewart is recognisable by the hand-drawn quality in her illustrations that have been widely used across publishing and design since her graduation in 2009. She describes her client work as 'mostly, quite frustrating', as the work usually entails a process of negotiation and changes. She identifies the *New York Times* as one of her more interesting clients as they demand a fast turnaround and the art directors are challenging: 'You feel like you're really getting pushed to do something good and not just something functional.'

Although Lizzy's work functions well within a range of commercial contexts, she suggests that she doesn't consciously consider her audience within the process – instead making work that she enjoys. This emanates from a love of drawing that is quite intuitive (although also trained, given that she has an MA from Edinburgh University). She makes a deliberate attempt to retain integrity when creating work: 'It's easy, when you're making work to order for clients, to switch into autopilot and forget that there is craft and artistry involved'. For commercial work Lizzy recognises that there is often a trend within subject matter and she makes a conscious decision to avoid that so that her own imagery remains distinctive and makes impact. In addition to enjoying commercial success, she likes working on self-generated projects, books and zines. She describes going through 'periods of obsession', where she becomes 'fixated', drawing the same subject over and over. Lizzy also stresses that it's important to keep a personal focus within the subject matter and, for her, being niche is important, as is having work in the folio that 'you genuinely care about'. She is keen to stay away from the tropes in contemporary illustration. In the past her own focus has been on wide, bleak landscapes and she has looked to other places and cultures for inspiration. Currently it's people – 'People, ordinary people, are a mine of quirks and intricacies and immeasurable wonder' – that populate her imagery.

Lizzy is someone who draws and then makes illustrations. She says of her days spent drawing at the British Museum, 'I find that a day drawing in there helps me to stop thinking and warm up for new work'.

(OCA tutor Jo Davies)

Case study 5: David Hitch

David Hitch has over 20 years' experience working within the illustration industry for clients across all areas, including book jackets, packaging and design work, in both the UK and US. His professional practice began mainly within editorial illustration and over the years he has adapted stylistically to stay relevant, evolving to extend his 'repertoire' of commissions to encompass children's books. Alongside commercial briefs he continues to work on personal projects and enjoys the freedom of producing work that differs from commissioned artwork, sometimes 'just drawing and sketching'.

David also sees personal work as a vital opportunity to adapt his stylistic approach to another area of work and extend the range of potential commissions. 'My children's book commissions came directly from the samples which I had developed as personal projects', says David, who like most illustrators wanting to break into the competitive world of children's publishing, was strategic in the nature of his personal work (with the specific intention of developing this highly competitive area of the illustration market). He did this by generating relevant work to show prospective clients: 'I wanted to demonstrate that my particular visual style could be applied to children's books as well as other areas of publishing and design in which I had previously been commissioned.' The children's book work differs significantly from his editorial work and David describes as a 'learning curve' his effort to 'push' his work stylistically to develop the characterisation necessary to make it applicable to children's publishing.

As well as extending the reach of his artwork over the course of his career, David's visual language and processes have also evolved, largely thanks to better software. Although he no longer paints using traditional media, he still draws pencil roughs for client approval and builds onto these drawings digitally using Photoshop. One of the factors in his approach that has remained constant is the importance of communicating a message or to narrate something visually to the audience:

I feel that illustration needs to be readable and communicative in some way so that the audience can engage with it, whether that be a child following a narrative in a children's book, an adult reading an illustrated article in a magazine, or a book jacket illustration which must convey something of the contents inside.

One of the components of his work that makes it broadly applicable, whether conveying ideas about ethical issues editorially or illustrating a story, is the humour –and this is evident in the stylisation of the artwork and characterisation.

Promoting his work is important to maintaining a profile and although David is represented by an agent he continues to reach out to new and old clients, mostly via social media and, where relevant, email. He makes it clear that there is a distinction between bombarding clients with samples and the acceptable 'maintaining of professional relationships with commissioners by keeping them updated and reminding them that you exist'. This approach has led directly to new commissions.

As David works from home his working life can be quite a solitary one. The relationship he holds with his agent and clients is important although he is usually briefed via email, rarely getting the chance to speak to the client. He has not had an opportunity to work with other artists and suggests this may be an interesting prospect: 'I can imagine working collaboratively could be quite interesting in terms of the feedback or the difference of approach that might have a positive effect on your own work'.

David doesn't refer to himself specifically as an illustrator. As he says, 'I like the work to speak for itself'.

(OCA tutor Jo Davies)

David Hitch

Case study 6: Peepshow Collective

Peepshow is a multidisciplinary collective of individuals producing artwork that crosses genres and formats for clients from a diversity of directions. This famously includes animation, TV work, fabric prints and installations alongside commissions that may be perceived as traditional territory for illustrators to work within, such as editorials for the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*. The artists within Peepshow are also recognised and enjoy success as individual illustration practitioners. As well as being Peepshow they all have agents alongside; some jobs come directly to the individuals, some via Peepshow and some via agents. Peepshow is not an agency *per se*. The illustrators within the collective all knew each other in some way before collaborating; most of the members were at college together in Brighton and their skills and personalities are complementary.

What Peepshow produces is distinctive in its ideas, content and stylistic variety. They are seen to be cutting edge and there is an experimental dimension to their output. The work they create continues to contribute to the erosion of traditional definitions of what constitutes illustrative practice: large-scale hospital murals, book design, TV adverts – outputs that are often heavily image-biased but also with other graphic and typographic content. The artists collaborate to focus on specific projects for particular briefs that may require diversity of input or are more labour-intensive. As an example, most of their animation projects, such as their work for MTV, are collaborative and they are able to produce, animate and art direct in-house.

Peepshow were pioneers and perhaps act as role models for subsequent UK-based collectives such as Dayjob (http://day-job.org/) and Fold Collaborative (http://foldzine.tumblr.com/).

This way of collaborative working is akin to the design groups that emerged in the 1980s within graphic design – informal groupings with big ambitions and complementary skill bases. They are evidence that there can be strength in numbers.

(OCA tutor Jo Davies)

Case study 7: Stuart Kolakovic aka Herman Inclusus – commercial vs authorial practice

Stuart works under the pseudonym Herman Inclusus to create narratives and gallery pieces including images shown at the V&A *Memory Palace* exhibition. The name belongs to the author credited for the creation of the Codex Gigas, the world's largest medieval manuscript from the early thirteenth century, Latin for Herman the Recluse, 'which I thought was kind of fitting since I'm usually on my tod drawing. I stole the moniker and use it as pseudonym for my own artwork'. When Stuart originally developed this identity it was because he wanted to establish a clear distinction between his personal artwork and his commercial illustration work. For Stuart commercial success came immediately after graduation. His final student project, a comic book about his Serbian grandfather, won a D&AD New Blood award at the London graduation show. This accolade generated much good publicity in design periodicals and blogs and also started to solidify his reputation as a commercial illustrator. The Herman Inclusus work came a lot later when Stuart began to acknowledge how distant his professional illustration commissions had become from his original authorial work that had at its core a story with personal resonance and authenticity: 'I felt like I was compromising my work too much in an attempt to try and appeal to a broad commercial demographic.'

Within his career Stuart is deliberately tipping the balance firmly away from the direction of the overtly commercial, commissioned dimension of his practice and focusing in a more determined way on self-generated projects. He is working on different forms of merchandise to sell at exhibitions, including his own range of Douglas fir pine needle teas, badge sets, postcards and some soft goods and wooden icons. The authorial approach to practice is recognition of a personal preference for greater conceptual and aesthetic control in the illustrative process than is consistently afforded by working to client briefs.

(OCA tutor Jo Davies)

Stuart Kolakovic

Case study 8: Welmoet Wartena

Book designer and OCA tutor Welmoet Wartena, tells us about her recent project working on a 472-page book commission and gives us some insights into the process. The soon-to-be-published book, entitled *Silk, Porcelain and Lacquer: China and Japan and their Trade with Western Europe and the New World, 1500-1644: A Survey of Documentary and Material Evidence*, is written by art history researcher Teresa Canepa. The research project stemmed from her PhD dissertation, at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands.

Design spreads © Welmoet Wartena

This project started over a year ago and I have been collaborating with the author very closely since. This slowly developed into a full-colour publication with a solid structure. A lot of these early discussions were as much about listening to what the author wanted to achieve and a degree of trust building between the both of us as about the book itself. The book was going to be large in terms of content, including main text, images, references and footnotes, and in terms of design too. As the designer I needed to understand the subject, whilst remaining sensitive to the approach the author took, in order to create a design concept and do justice to the work.

The author's research was concerned with the years 1500–1644, and with my metaphorical time machine I decided to travel back to that period to explore some design influences and possibilities. During the design process we had many meetings to discuss ideas and concepts. By discussing the subject matter I gained a better understanding of the contents and started creating designs. The project allowed me to work with the most extraordinary imagery, collected from galleries and museums from all over the world, and the design needed to be

Design spreads © Welmoet Wartena

appropriate and respectful of this content. Since the subject is art history, my aim was to create a concept design that reflects history, yet with a contemporary approach. The overall design is modern and the typeface used reflects the time of the contents. The typeface Garamond was based on a design created in 1500 by Francesco Griffo, so it felt appropriate to use Garamond and this historical link.

I spent some time testing layouts, typefaces, sizes and colours. This testing is the most important part really. I worked up several different design proposals and presented them to the author for her feedback. Through this we decided an approach towards the final publication. There were sign-off stages in the project for those involved – the author, researchers, editors – as the design went through approval.

The last stage of the process is the printing and production of the book. It is helpful to see the printing in terms of a collaboration rather than a service that you buy. Involving the printers from an early stage informs the design and can give you good access to their professional expertise. You are more likely to get that extra commitment out of them if they feel they are part of the process. Good communication is essential. A quality printer will know about paper and how the print works on it. Since the images were significant and of good quality, we wanted to make sure they looked beautiful in the publication. To get the best result we tested a few different kinds of paper including: Codat Matt Périgord 150gr; Profibulk 135gr and 150gr; Arctic Volume White 130gr and 150gr. Once we had decided which paper to use, the book could finally be printed.

(OCA tutor Welmoet Wartena)

Case study 9: Alice Moloney – user testing/feedback

The term 'user testing' is mainly associated with the development of websites and apps. However, this can also include creative projects that might build in a degree of evaluation and testing, such as focus groups with communities as part of their research stage.

In contemplating this I wanted to return briefly (and firstly) to Alice Moloney's work, specifically two of her projects undertaken as a freelance 'communication designer'. The first is entitled *Rain Activated Narratives*, which is a series of posters designed to react to the weather and unveil information regarding London's lost River Fleet. The stills from this project show the process of transformation alongside visions of where the work would be seen within the city. Such a process would have undergone rigorous material testing in order to achieve the desired effect, which is crucial to the overall concept and design.

As well as the material and physical testing of work or the physical process that takes place within it, an alternative evaluation is sought through user testing and feedback. Alice's second project *Discover your Borough* is a way-finding system for pedestrians. It can be differentiated from our normal way-finding because it is 'produced at a smaller scale using hand-drawn elements to direct the users'. Alice states that 'the signage itself is placed above and below eye level to generate a sense of discovery and curiosity in navigation'. This unorthodox system aims 'to give time to people to enjoy and take delight in their time and enjoy their surroundings'.
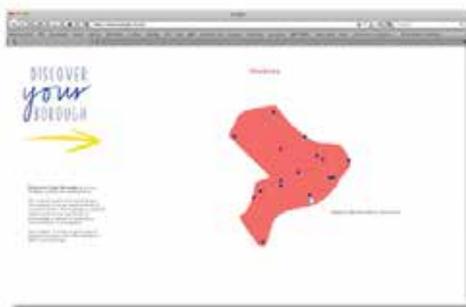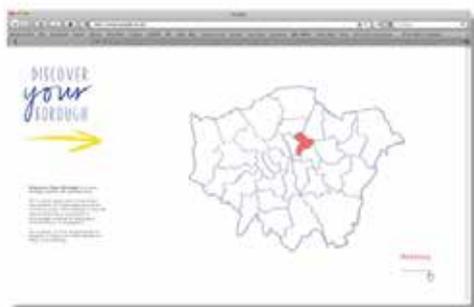
Alice's plan was that each borough in London would shape the identity of their way-finding system. As a consequence the project would aim to 'direct users to the 'hidden gems' of the area such as places of historical and cultural value'. As part of this process users are also encouraged to upload hand-drawn maps of their favourite journeys or areas of interest as well as being able to access a service that would 'indicate in minutes how close the nearest sign is to the user rather than telling them exactly where the signs are'. This additional navigation again reverts back to the idea of discovering through doing. Alice planned to use workshops with local school children and estates in the Hackney area to aid the development of the project. Such research, walking urban routes and learning how people use and navigate space, would allow Alice to learn directly from the users. *Discover your Borough* was exhibited in *Sense and the City* (2011) at the London Transport Museum.

Other projects that Alice has embarked on involving user testing include *Drawn to the Table*, a collaborative design project with Julene Aguirre Bielschowsky and Cheng Guo.

Programmes such as the Royal College of Art's ReachOutRCA help to promote and extend such user testing and feedback, making it a valid part of the process of creating work. These workshops 'share the wide-ranging benefits of creative thinking and making with young people, teachers, families and community groups across London, and provide opportunities for RCA students and graduates to develop their skills and experience' (RCA, 2015). Often this type of approach can throw up new questions and these can alter the outcomes of the project.

We could ask ourselves, who benefits from such work? The artist, no longer involved in a guessing game of anticipation, can clearly record how a user responds to a project, often helping to initiate new ideas or links. For the users, 'working alongside an artist, designer or maker can build confidence and curiosity' (RCA, 2015), alerting them to new or contemporary processes and references.

(OCA tutor, Laura Scott)

Alice Moloney, *Discover your Borough*

RCA (2015) www.rca.ac.uk/more/reach-out-rca/ [accessed 25.08.15]
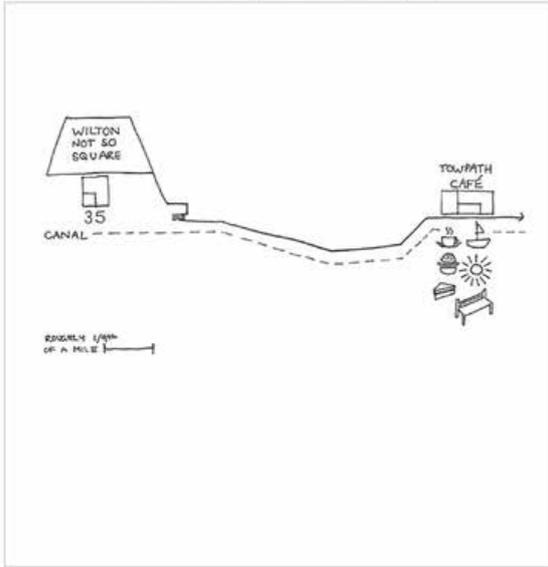
Alice Moloney, *Discover your Borough*

Utilities markings on the pavement.

Alice Moloney, *Discover your Borough*

The water-sensitive ink is white when dry and clear when wet.

Alice Moloney, *Rain-Activated Narratives*

Stills from the film 'Rain-Activated Narratives' depicting the process.

Alice Moloney, *Rain-Activated Narratives*

I have created large scale water-sensitive images that, in the presence of rain, reveal historical illustrations of one of London's greatest lost rivers, the Fleet.

Alice Moloney, *Rain-Activated Narratives*

Case study 10: Libby McMullin

Libby McMullin is an illustrator, card designer and publisher who generates her own designs to sell to companies internationally. She sees licensing as an opportunity to get her 'brand' out there. Working directly at both ends of the publishing spectrum, with both retailers and printers, means that she is not only in charge of the creation of the artwork but of all dimensions of the commercial process; this means a circular process of making and testing.

Confidence in her own product comes from testing a variety of avenues to explore the viability of her ideas, such as her market stall at Camden Lock Market, craft fairs, markets and selling directly to customers online (Etsy, Folksy, notonthehighstreet.com and her own website). When she is confident in a particular line or range she then sells selected designs to the trade (i.e. bigger retailers selling greeting cards and products).

Running her own publishing company means Libby is in control of her product, responsible for creating a variety of designs and new ranges, and a priority is to continually build new portfolios of distinctive designs that can be licensed or turned into products and sold independently online. This includes textile products as well as greetings and stationary. When she's generating a new range, Libby investigates the existing market before committing to an idea. As part of this market research (and later, marketing) she visits trade shows (e.g. Top Drawer, Pulse, PG Live, for greeting cards) to be confident about what other companies are designing. Her ideas are rarely inspired by existing illustration but are influenced instead by interior design, literature, fashion and vintage pieces that are often included within her collages.

In addition to creating imagery, Libby designs the functional aspects of her products such as packaging and adding barcodes, specifying paper stock, finishes, treatments and printing requirements. Selling licences, understanding contracts and controlling the distribution are all part of her role. As well as being an illustrator Libby stresses the importance of being a business woman.

www.libbymcmullin.co.uk

(OCA tutor Jo Davies)

Case study 11: Donya Todd - networking

The world created by Donya Todd is populated with bizarre characters occupying landscapes where the moon exudes rainbows and you'll encounter zombies: narratives found in comics, anthologies, zines and more, what Donya describes as, 'stories that are pretty fantastical and not based heavily in reality'.

Since graduating Donya has become a recognised pioneer in British comic books. She was a founder member of the comic collective Bimba and being part of the network of comic artists has contributed to the respect and recognition she has achieved within the industry.

She often works collaboratively in both commissioned and self-generated anthologies; she finds this interesting because she 'gets to see the different levels of experience and the brilliant ways people twist a brief to their own needs'. Her practice requires a strongly authorial approach: the ideas, plots and stories are often generated by Donya independent of external commissions, and they often have an investigative dimension to them – 'I like to play around with concerns and issues: femininity, feminism, youth, sex and obscenity – I like to keep exploring my thoughts on different subjects through various media' – but she is conscious of the genre and network within which she operates.

Working collaboratively under the moniker 'Chubby' with her business partner, Jack Teagle – making T-shirts, zines and merchandise sold via Etsy, comic book fairs and her own website – provides opportunities to 'bounce off ideas' and also reach a bigger audience.

The artwork itself can be seen as piece of promotion; being collectable leads to building up an audience, establishing a following that creates a market 'waiting for the next new thing'. Being visible and present at comic conventions and fairs can be part of this process:

If you're consistently networking, making new fans and being present you don't need to spend loads of money advertising; your new stuff will sell itself. That said, it doesn't always go to plan. If you know your target audience it's easier but there's never guaranteed success.

This is a cumulative type of illustration where the success of a piece is often due to the part it plays as part of a panel on a page, so sequence, pace and character consistency are vital to the success of many pieces. Being able to apply characters to other products such as T-shirts and digital prints means that Donya can build up a product range. She can also test the viability of one item before committing to a more sustained or demanding project.

Working to a brief demands a more structured approach; being paid is the incentive to get it done 'exactly right, and as fast as possible'. When it's someone else's vision, 'it's less about what I think and more about what they want…most people come looking for something a bit quirky and want me to emulate my personal work'. When working for someone else she keeps a work schedule – logging hours, regular contact, 9–5 sort of thing:

As it's not as experimental it's meant I'm consistently productive, sort of know what I'm doing next and make better work. As for style it's always changing depending on what I find beautiful and interesting at that moment in time.

(OCA tutor Jo Davies)

Case study 12: Sandy McInnes – promotion

Promotional activity is of great importance for any freelancer hoping to meet prospective clients and gain work. Sandy McInnes is a multidisciplinary artist whose work includes illustration, animation, graphic design and 3D design. He uses the term 'visual communication' to characterise the projects he has worked on, both commissioned and self-initiated. Having graduated from the Visual Communication course at Glasgow School of Art in 2009, he went on to complete an MA in Visual Communication at the Royal College of Art in 2012.

Sandy has a hands-on approach to making and his work often takes on an ethereal quality, quite possibly because he is an artist with an eye for detail and perfection. These minute details involve clear skill and, for many of his projects, he uses new technologies that allow him to work across a range of disciplines.

I was intrigued to know how Sandy approached the promotional side of his work, bringing together the disparate elements of his practice into a unique design for a mail-out. For the mail-out he states that 'most importantly I wanted to present myself, to use a loaded word, as a brand'.

Sandy suggests that the difficulty in working across an array of disciplines is that it can 'sometimes make you seem non-committal and flaky'. He wanted to challenge this perception with 'something that would show how my practices feed into each other and enhance what I do, to show what they have in common rather than how they differ, and to show how this could be advantageous to a prospective client'.

He goes on to discuss the creation of the design, using distinctive photographs initially to 'unify the work'. For this he prefers to photograph work in his own studio space rather than using a photographer's studio, to present the work in 'a more exciting and less staid way'. Elements within his studio space (that consequently feed into all of his work) such as research material and imagery are incorporated into these photos to help present 'a bit more of my personality, to present my 'brand' … although it may look a bit haphazard, I actually spent a long time staging and photographing'. He goes on to suggest that 'if you are presenting yourself as a designer, every aspect of how you present your work should be considered'.

Sandy wanted to use the four main disciplines of his work as a 'design feature' in order to create 'a visual identity that splits into four and works as a visual link'. To achieve this, he 'created a series of fold-up poster designs for each of my important projects that give a snapshot of the equivalent page online, in a sense 'a teaser' that would bring them [prospective clients] to my website'.

Sandy stresses the importance of his online presence. The website provides an ideal host to his moving image work where 'it can be previewed within the context of your work'. Not only this, but the website provides an aesthetic, one that isn't supported by sending DVDs or USB drives through the post ('a bit ugly, easily damaged, and generally just a faff'). The website and mail-out are 'integral to each other; the mail-out's main function is to bring people to my website to see the full extent of my work'. Although he treated the design of the mail-out as one project, 'which I think is important when you work across many disciplines', Sandy highlights that 'your ability to unify things is your selling point, you should show that off!'

Although the mail-out is a good way to 'open dialogues with prospective clients', Sandy still emphasises the significance of meeting a prospective client face to face or talking to them because 'until they link it [the work] with a face, or at least a voice, it's forgettable'.

Sandy's unique approach to work and promotion does indeed assist his cohesive 'brand' and aesthetic. His mail-out has 'been a talking point, another project to show off my varied skill set, and has led to work opportunities within fields of design that an illustration graduate wouldn't normally expect'.

(OCA tutor Laura Scott)

Sandy McInnes

Sandy McInnes

Part one
Proposal manifesto

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR:

WEAK MESSAGES CREATE BAD SITUATIONS

STRONG MESSAGES CREATE GOOD SITUATIONS

WE ARE IN A BAD SITUATION AND WEAK MESSAGES ARE TO BLAME

LOTS OF INDIVIDUALS IN SOCIETY TODAY ARE FEEBLE-MINDED.
THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON.
UNFORTUNATELY MANY OF THESE PEOPLE ARE RESPONSIBLE
FOR RUNNING THE COUNTRY.
THEY DON'T KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PRECIOUS JEWEL
AND A PIECE OF ANIMAL TURD.
THEIR IDEAS ARE MEANINGLESS, ILLUSTRATED USING
RUBBISH IMAGERY (OFTEN MADE BY A COMPUTER).
THE STUPID WORDS THEY WRITE ARE ALWAYS IN BAD FONTS.
YET STILL PEOPLE HEED THIS NONSENSE.
MAYBE YOU ARE ONE OF THESE PEOPLE?

IT'S ALRIGHT.
I AM HERE TO HELP YOU.

I HAVE A FULLY-COMPOSED WORLD VIEW.
I HAVE STRONG OPINIONS ABOUT EVERYTHING.
AND MY IDEAS ARE HAND-ILLUSTRATED AND USE REAL
HANDWRITING THAT YOU CAN TRUST.
I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON AND I AM WILLING
TO SHARE MY THOUGHTS WITH YOU.
IF YOU LISTEN TO WHAT I SAY THINGS WILL QUICKLY
IMPROVE.

NO MORE WEAK MESSAGES

NO MORE BAD SITUATIONS

SHALL WE PROCEED?

WWW.CANONGATE.TV
£25

9 781782 114031
ISBN 978 1 78211 4031

David Shrigley, *Weak Messages Create Bad Situations: A Manifesto*, 2014

Introduction

The way we think about ourselves as creatives and the positions we argue for can evolve over time, just as culture and technology does, to meet the needs of our changing society. Whether we choose to use titles like Graphic Designer, Illustrator, Artist, Graphic Artist or Visual Communicator, the one thing titles should not do is restrict the way we think about our individual creativity and the opportunities that present themselves to us. Building on your personal statement for *Advanced Practice*, you'll now turn your thoughts and ideas from a reflective document to a more public-facing and forward-looking manifesto. Once you've produced your manifesto, you'll produce a proposal for a project that embodies your stated position. To prepare you for this we will work through these three headings:

- What is my position?
- What are my actions?
- What are my questions?

You should also refer to the case studies.

Alice Moloney, *Discover your Borough*

What is my position?

In 1964 the graphic designer Ken Garland published the First Things First Manifesto in London. He was joined by a group of 22 other professionals and students in declaring a position on the type of work they wanted to make and calling for their skills to be employed for a more 'useful' engagement with society. Garland's manifesto was pitched against what he called the 'gimmick merchants, status salesmen and hidden persuaders' of the advertising industry and argued for a greater involvement in producing 'signs for streets and buildings, books and periodicals, catalogues, instructional manuals, industrial photography, educational aids, films, television features, scientific and industrial publications.'
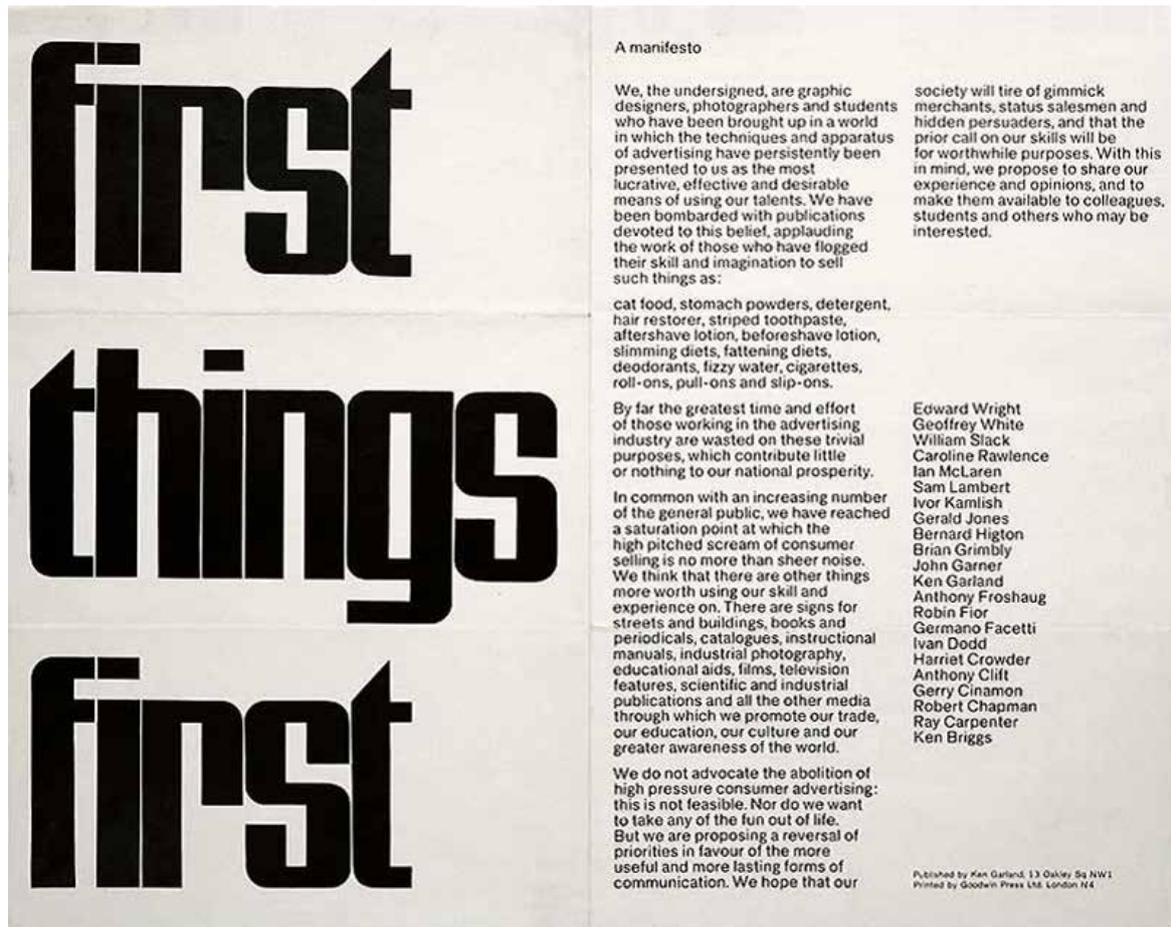
First Things First Manifesto, published January 1964 © Ken Garland

Garland was reacting to the ideas and position that he – and design itself – found himself in at what at the time was a wealthy 1960s Britain. For ideas to grow and find a popular vein they need to reach a wider audience. Garland's ideas were first presented at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in December 1963, then in the *Guardian* newspaper, through the BBC and further in design journals.

His manifesto was revisited and republished by a group of new authors in 2000 under the title the *First Things First Manifesto 2000*. This kept the integrity of the original, but had an updated text responding to new pressures on society and a more urgent language.

There are pursuits more worthy of our problem-solving skills. Unprecedented environmental, social and cultural crises demand our attention...The scope of debate is shrinking; it must expand. Consumerism is running uncontested... With the explosive growth of global commercial culture, their message has only grown more urgent. Today, we renew their manifesto in expectation that no more decades will pass before it is taken to heart.

(First Things First Manifesto 2000)

The manifesto has grown into a movement and continues to be popular with new updates emerging, most recently to mark its 50th anniversary in 2014 by Cole Peters, in response to concerns about the growth of the web, data privacy, and their effects on society.

A manifesto can be a response from a like-minded collective or a personal statement of intent from an individual. In 2005 the director David Hillman Curtis started making a series of short films recording artists, designers, illustrators, and architects talking about their ideas and process. One of these films featured the poster designer James Victore. Hillman said: [1]

I chose to film James because of his posters. I didn't know him or much about him at the time, but I had seen a few of his pieces and had fallen in love with them. I also liked that he was doing work that was politically subversive at a time – the height of the Bush Administration's popularity – when it seemed as if a lot of creative people were too discouraged to do so. James was very outspoken during the interview, using foul language and cussing out politicians. I kept this stuff in the film and lost Adobe as a sponsor because of it.

Victore's position comes across loud and direct with his statement, 'Graphic Design is a club with big f***king spikes in, and I want to wield it.' His interest in social and political agendas follows the same direction as Garland's in orientating his work for more 'useful' objectives.

See also:
Link 1
Link 2
Link 3
Link 4
Link 5

Note: Links are listed separately at the end of this course guide for ease of updating.

[1] You can watch this film and others in the series at:
http://hillmancurtis.com/artist-series/james-victore/ [accessed 25.08.15]

Research point Ten manifestos

Curate and compile your top10 list of manifestos, together with your reasons for selecting them. This research point is more than just a list; it asks you to actively consider your selection criteria and how you put them together to communicate your intended message clearly.

You might select your manifestos for their use of language because this has some bearing on your ideas. You could select ones that you passionately disagree with because they form a rallying call to fight against. You may be interested in how an idea has moved on over the decades and been championed by different voices. Your criteria for choosing your ten are up to you, but they should start to form the foundations for your own manifesto as you explore or challenge your own position.

Below is a list of manifestos and associated links to help you with your own research. John Emerson's *100+ Years of Design Manifestos* deserves a worthy mention and is a helpful piece of research containing many links.

Think of research tasks like this as an opportunity to demonstrate your skills and critical thinking. You could write it up in your learning log, or turn it into a piece of information design/typography if you feel it will offer you another piece of work for your portfolio.

The learning log will be a familiar concept for you by now and you'll be expected to continue recording your process and research throughout this course. Whether you're using a blog format, print or both, your learning log should demonstrate the highest possible standards, as expected at this level, and you should regard it as an outcome in its own right.

Manifestos/books/weblinks

100+ Years of Design Manifestos Link 6

To Artacademics: A Manifesto Link 7

Danchev, A. (2011) *100 Artists' Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*. London: Penguin Modern Classics

Design is History Link 8

Harford, T. (2004) The Economists' Manifesto Link 9

Mekas, J. (1996) Anti-100 Years of Cinema Manifesto Link 10

Shrigley, D. (2014) *Weak Messages Create Bad Situations: A Manifesto*. Edinburgh: Canongate

Modernist manifestos

Blast, the literary magazine of the Vorticists, published in 1914, edited by Wyndham Lewis

Dada Manifesto (Hugo Ball, 1916)

Tschichold, J. ([1928] 1998) *The New Typography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

The essence of the New Typography is clarity. This puts it into deliberate opposition to the old typography whose aim was "beauty" and whose clarity did not attain the high level we require today. This utmost clarity is necessary today because of the manifold claims for our attention made by the extraordinary amount of print, which demands the greatest economy of expression.

(Jan Tschichold, *The New Typography*, 1928)

Moving image manifestos

Dogme 95: The Vow of Chastity (abridged)

I swear to the following set of rules drawn up and confirmed by Dogme 95:
1. *Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in.*
2. *The sound must never be produced apart from the image or vice-versa.*
3. *The camera must be handheld. Any movement or mobility attainable in the hand is permitted.*
4. *The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable.*
5. *Optical work and filters are forbidden.*
6. *The film must not contain superficial action.*
7. *Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden.*
8. *Genre movies are not acceptable.*
9. *The film format must be Academy 35mm.*
10. *The director must not be credited.*

(Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg, Kristian Levring, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, Jean-Marc Barr, 1995)

In response to Dogme 95, typographer and teacher John Morgan set first year students at Central St. Martin's College of Art & Design a brief to establish their own Vow of Chastity and live by it throughout the term (2001). Here's an abridged version:

1. *Content matters: design nothing that is not worth reading.*
2. *Images must not be used unless they refer directly to the text.*
3. *Photoshop / illustrator filters are forbidden.*
4. *The design must not contain superficial elements.*
5. *Temporal and geographic alienation are forbidden.*
6. *Formats must not be 'A' sizes. Paper must be chlorine free.*
7. *The designer must not be credited (unless all other workers are also credited).*

Free Cinema Manifesto, Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson and Lorenza Mazzetti, 1956: '… a belief in freedom, in the importance of people and the significance of the everyday.'
Fluxmanifesto on Fluxamusement, George Maciunas, 1965 Link 14
The Idler Manifesto. The Idler is an annual periodical that campaigns against the work ethic and promotes liberty, autonomy and responsibility, founded in 1993 and edited by Tom Hodgkinson and Gavin Pretor-Pinney. Link 15
An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth, Bruce Mau, 2010–14 Link 16
Riot Grrrl Manifesto, Bikini Kill and Kathlene Hanna, 1961 Link 17 and Link 18

Research point Ten practitioners

Throughout your studies you'll have discovered a large number of practitioners working in a variety of ways and your knowledge of your chosen subject will be as diverse as you are individual. Whether you already have a clear idea about the way you want to work in industry, or whether you still have questions you're looking to answer, you will probably have a sense of how your work fits in context with the practitioners you admire.

Make a list of 10 practitioners who broadly work in similar ways to you, overlap with some of your ideas, approaches and processes, or have opposing practices that you still admire.
- What is the subject matter of your designers/artists/illustrators' work?
- What are they responding to in their work – industry, advances in technology, public debate, social concerns, political argument, creative research, a particular audience, or something else?
- What makes their ideas contemporary and have criticality?
- How could you start a conversation with them?

Write this up in your learning log along with images of your chosen practitioners' work.

Exercise 1.1 Ten key moments

With the rise of the internet and the spread of technology and self-publishing, society has never been so active in curating lives and telling stories. Popular formats like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter enable people to talk directly to their audiences through carefully chosen, or sometimes less carefully chosen, content.

This first exercise asks you to consider your present ideas on creativity, your immediate history and to reflect further back into the canon of art and design history to curate a line of 10 key events that have formed your creative position.

Your time line will be individual to you and is a creative statement that presents an argument for your position. You could consider your practice as part of a movement, part of a human relay of shifting creative ideas, or a reaction to art and design history itself.

Produce a piece of information design that presents your chronological line of 10 key moments. Work in a way that suits your interests; it could be typographic, image and text or illustrative, but follow good design practice. Include a layer of secondary information explaining how the events you've chosen have influenced your ideas and what you've learnt. You may also include further contextual information, dates and images/drawings. The size and format you choose to work in is up to you, but select a size and format appropriate for the amount of information you want to work with.
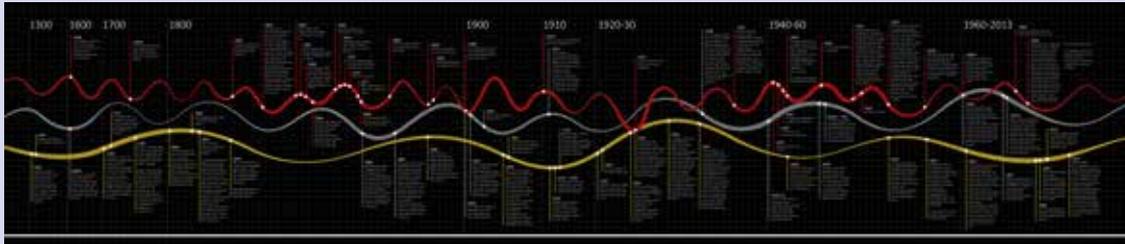
Time line for Glenside Hospital Museum, Bristol, 2015 © John Ravi

You may already be familiar with these sites on information design:
Link 19 and Link 20

Exercise 1.2 Write your manifesto

You should now be in a position to write your own manifesto. You may find it helpful to start by writing a list of short statements that could include:

- the creative ideas you believe in
- your rules of engagement
- the types of work you make
- your favourite tools for working with
- your thoughts on current debates and history
- particular pieces of visual communication that have provoked you
- your view on industry
- your ideas on narrative and storytelling
- your personal practice
- your thoughts on self-publishing and authorship.

Your list should give you the foundation to write the main body of your piece. 'Top and tail' this with an introductory paragraph, which may include some biographical detail, and a concluding paragraph with a forward projection on which to base your future work. Your manifesto will also need a title.

The exact length of your manifesto is up to you, but your content should be substantial enough to make your case clear. Work to a minimum of 350–400 words (that's the same length as First Things First) but extend this if necessary.

Now would be a good time to take another look at the language used in some of the popular manifestos listed above. It may be helpful to cut and paste some of the key words into categories that correspond to the tone you want to use. When selecting words, consider your audience. Who are you talking to and illustrating/designing for?

What are my actions?

Having considered your position in terms of practice and clearly stated your ideas for future work in your manifesto, you'll now move on to look at visual communication practice through several case studies and think about how your ideas can become actions. You'll also prepare the ground for writing the framework for a self-initiated project in the form of your project plan document.

OCA tutors Jo Davies and Laura Scott have been researching and talking to a range of practitioners to survey some contemporary approaches:

1. Alice Moloney, communication designer, illustrator, creative and researcher, discusses her practice, the relationship between personal and commissioned work, and what a job title means to her.
2. Korean cartoonist and illustrator Burn Kim makes work that involves storytelling and often responds to topics like society and politics. His storytelling explores questions about authorship and involves a degree of audience collaboration.
3. Working in the public realm – location, performance and blurring the boundaries between traditional approaches.
4. Lizzy Stewart – illustration and commissioned work.
5. David Hitch – the practice of illustration, personal work, networking with clients and promoting his activity.
6. Peepshow Collective – an agency that's not an agency.
7. Stuart Kolakovic aka Herman Inclusus – commercial illustration vs authorial practice.

You should already have found these case studies at the start of this course. You'll find further studies, interviews and imagery throughout the course. These have been included to inspire your own project and extend your understanding of what visual communication can be.

Research point How do you intend to work?

One way that design agency Pentagram has found to support the personal projects of its partners is through their series 'Pentagram Papers'. Link 21

On the back fly-leaf of each publication they set out the idea behind the papers: 'Pentagram Papers will publish examples of curious, entertaining, stimulating, provocative and occasionally controversial points of view that have come to the attention of, or in some cases are actually originated by Pentagram.' In this way the Pentagram Papers can be viewed as a kind of curatorial project.

(O'Reilly, 2002:110)

In this way, the discussions and ideas they have outside of their commercial work, but which stimulate their thinking, can come to light and find a broader audience. Metaphorically, you could see this as putting ideas back into the pot, rather than just taking out. Read the case studies listed above and reflect on the way you intend to work.

Here are some questions to help you make a start:
- Are you looking to earn income from your visual communication skills?
- Do you see a clear line between commercial and personal work?
- How will you integrate the two? (Commercial work can be outside of visual communication.)
- How can the subjects you come across on a daily basis and have unique perspectives on, feed into your practice? How can they become your own curatorial project? Make a list of these, whether you think they're of value or not.
- Do any of them have currency? Are they being discussed in the media?
- How could you extend the discussion around these subjects through creative work?

Write this up in your learning log.

Choosing a topic

You'll need to choose a topic on which to base your self-initiated project. Your choice should extend your knowledge of an existing area within Visual Communications and must be substantial enough to sustain you for the duration of the course. The word 'substantial' is used here to describe a project that goes deeper than just a surface treatment. For instance, you may be interested in book jacket design and this is fine, but you'll also be expected to produce and design the contents of the book too. What project can help you sustain your practice to the end of the course and beyond in the world of work?

Use your manifesto and 10 key moments to guide you in your selection. You may find it helpful to start by thinking of a subject matter – identity and place, technology and language, forms of protest, title sequences, visual narrative and storytelling, design and the use of materials, etc. – and then consider how you could explore this with a particular medium or process. Alternatively, you could start with an area of practice – book design, motion graphics, screen-printing, information design, etc. – and produce a range of content that responds to a contemporary theme in new and exciting ways.

Your project will need to have an outward-facing aspect, or some way of engaging with your audience. So think about how you can achieve this through your research and final outcome. (See the guidelines below.)

Think carefully about what technical skills you have and what is achievable within the time frame. If you don't have a particular skill you may depend on to complete your project, then what is your strategy to achieve this? If you want to collaborate or rely on others then how can you factor in contingency?

At this stage it is important not to have a specific pre-determined outcome, as this will restrict your research in the early stages. What you produce at the end may be a single major outcome or a series of linked smaller outcomes that make up your body of work. A successful self-initiated project will rely on your ability to pose yourself a challenge. Be creative, be critical, think about what creative risks you can take to achieve your goals, and select a topic that can showcase your skills in what will be the culmination of your degree.

Choosing a venue

As we've pointed out, your project will need to have an outward-facing aspect. This can take the form of an exhibition, performance, event, pop-up show, public lecture, screening, published outcome, protest, a site-specific outcome and/or online sites and forums. Your exhibition will form the content for Assignment Five but, as these things take time to organise, you need to start thinking about it now.

The photomontage artist Peter Kennard has a project called *News Truck* [2] that replicates a newspaper seller's stand:

News Truck has ten giant news-screens which are carried inside it, plus one on either side. It is a rapid response vehicle, which I can wheel out to the financial heart of London whenever there is a shudder on the stock market... It's a way to engage in debate, in the actual environment where the transactions are going on.

We want you to be creative about how you fulfil this element and in how you engage with your audience/locality. Think about the way you want to work in the future and select an appropriate format to show with. Work with the resources you have available, whether it's on your own or collaborating with others to achieve a unique outcome. The documentation of your exhibition or event is just as important; this can often reach a wider audience for longer and can form part of your self-marketing on websites and blogs. Potential employers are always interested in creative ways to engage with people and you can showcase your practice through your activity.

[2] www.peterkennard.com/main/my_art/my_art_set.htm [accessed 25.08.15]

Exercise 1.3 Write your marketing strategy

As part of your project plan document, you'll need to consider how you intend to market your project. How you do this is your choice and will depend on your project. This is not something that you can leave to the end of the course, not least because you'll need to include a summary in your plan. Although you'll finalise your marketing strategy for Assignment Five, it should run alongside your practical work over the course; for that reason you should read Assignment Five now.

Successful marketing requires you to identify your target audience and propose a way of reaching them. You may have several targets: prospective employers, design journals and reviewing blogs, publishers, and/or your public audience or someone else. We want you to be creative in how you respond to this task and tailor it towards your own practice. Whether you choose to draw on the beach every morning for six weeks or shoot a film for social media, try to think of ways to engage your audience as you're making the work and build some momentum towards the project completion.

Use the headings below to help you – and add your own as necessary.
* What are you marketing?
* Who are your targets?
* How will you reach them? What will you do or produce to do this?
* What are your key dates?
* What design/illustration journals or blogs would be interested in your project?
* What regional media/newspapers would be interested in your project?
* What employers are you looking to reach or invite?
* What events are planned for your area that you could join/use/attend?
* How can you build momentum throughout the duration of your project?
* How will you integrate your project marketing with your professional profile?
* Will you use your own website? If so, does it look professional?

Write this up in your learning log with the title 'Marketing strategy'.

Research point Ethics

The Level 3 Handbook has a section entitled 'Taking an ethical perspective', which includes an 'Ethical checklist'.

Use the checklist as a starting point to think through any impact your project may have on others. Write this up in your learning log with the title 'Ethics'.

What are my questions?

We hope you're excited by the possibilities of what you can achieve through this self-initiated project. You should already have a short list of potential ideas. Before you develop these into your project plan you should arrange a conversation with your tutor.

To guide this conversation, think carefully about what questions you could ask them. Your tutor is not going to tell you what to do, or write your project for you, but he or she will be able to advise you on the scope and ambition of your idea, and the suitability for this course.

It may help you to write down a short paragraph outlining your project, followed by up to five questions, before you contact your tutor. Below is a list of key words that may be useful. A good first step might be to circle the key words that seem most relevant to your plans – and/or add some of your own.

What is the theme or subject of your work?
Issue, current affairs, politics, literature, place, youth culture, object, history, information, people, event, materials, identity...

What format(s) are you interested in working with?
Poster, screen print, photograph, book, pamphlet, manual, folding document, surface pattern, textiles, mural, point of sale, exhibition, film, sound, animation, game, app, graphic novel, zine, comic, storyboard, happening, packaging, 3D, interactivity, web, multidisciplinary...

What approach are you intending to explore?
Narrative, reportage, topographic, informative, site-specific, moving image, sequential, time-based, typographic, interview, dialogue, editorial...

What is the function of your project?
To educate, inform, entertain, promote, sell, investigate, provoke, enhance, record...

When you've formulated your questions, contact your tutor.

Assignment one
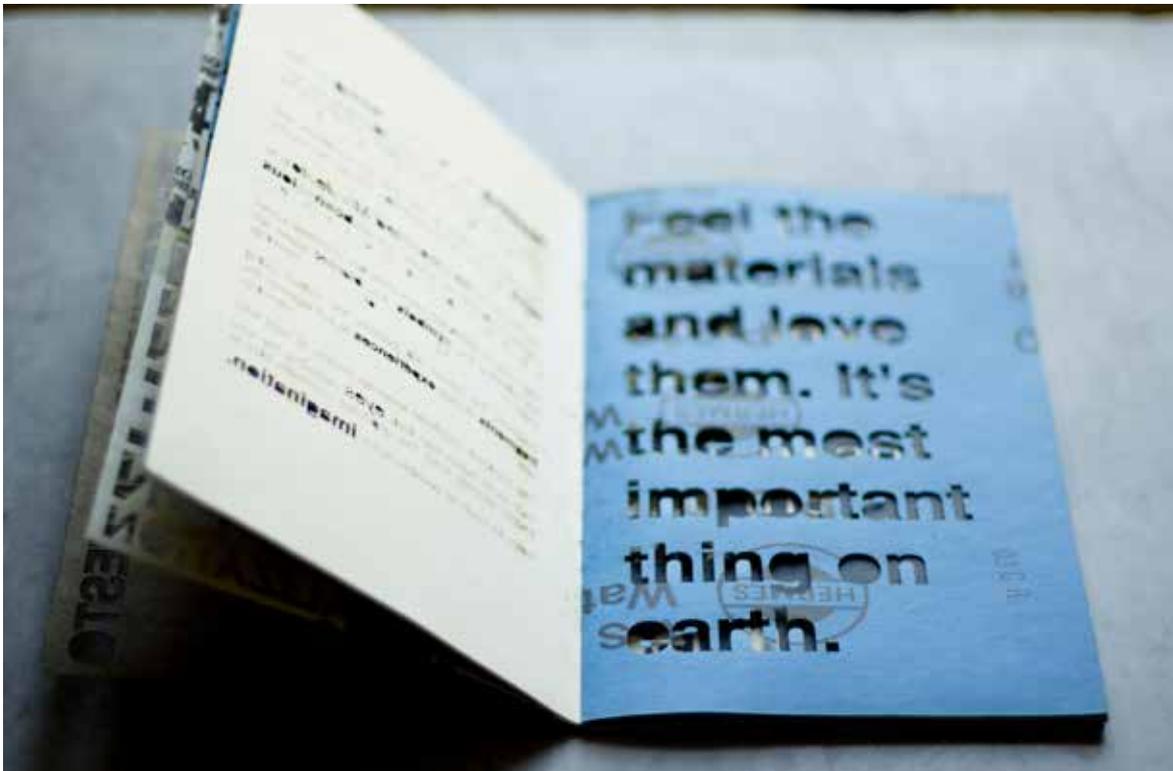
Manifesto and project plan

Part 1: Design your manifesto

You've already written your manifesto; now it's time to design it. Before you start, review your manifesto. Is it still consistent with your ideas? Do you still agree with it? Is there anything you wish to add?

The exact form you choose for your manifesto is up to you. Your manifesto can be a printed document, illustrative, typographic with images, printed digitally on a folding broadsheet, in pamphlet form, or screen-printed and pasted to a wall. Alternatively you could write a script and deliver it to camera on location on the steps of your town hall. Your guiding principle here is to choose a form that is appropriate for you and your manifesto content, and to achieve the highest production values for the medium you've selected.

Bear in mind also that there should be visual consistency between your manifesto and your project plan document, so read Part 2 of this assignment carefully before you finalise your manifesto design.

For example, Italian graphic designer Efisio Nicolò Sabiucciu's work explores the use of materials and tactile qualities within a design context, and his laser-cut manifesto on sandpaper embodies his practice (see below). His idea was that the manifesto would slowly destroy other books as it is taken and returned from the shelf.

Efisio Nicolò Sabiucciu, *The Unprinted Manifesto*, 2014 © Efisio Nicolò Sabiucciu
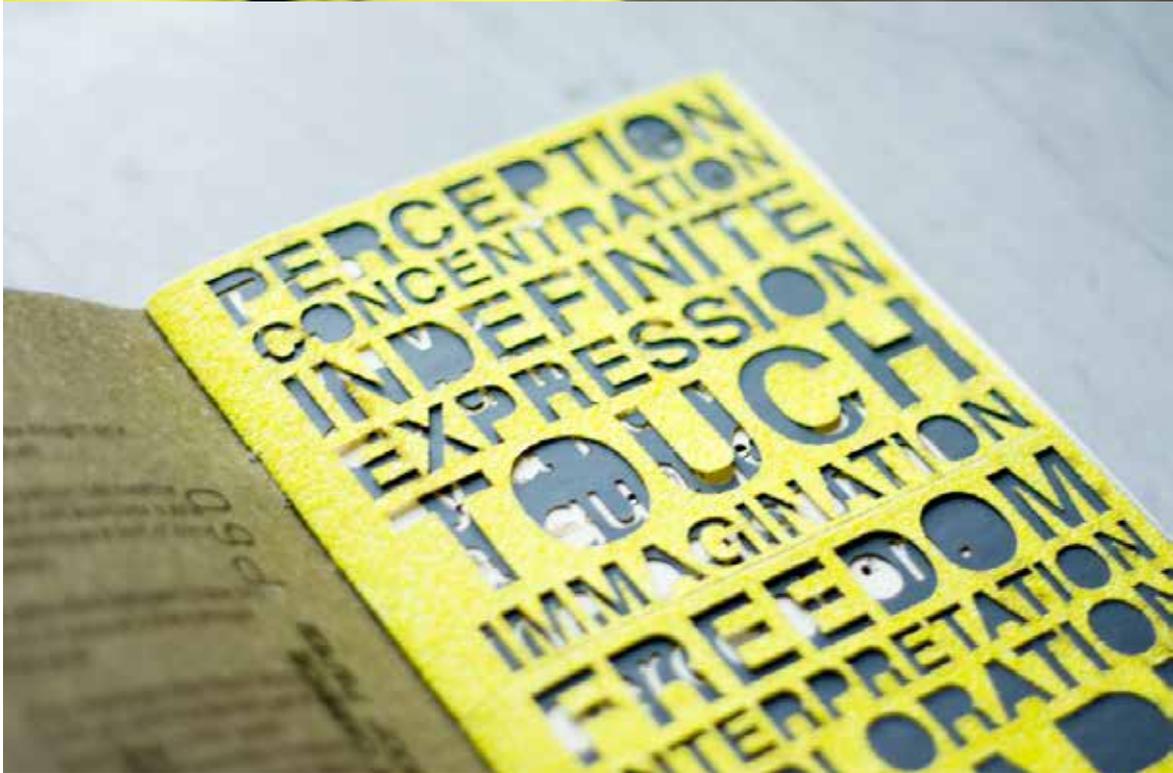
Efisio Nicolò Sabiucciu, *The Unprinted Manifesto*, 2014 © Efisio Nicolò Sabiucciu

Part 2: Write your project plan document

Use the headings below to help you write your project plan document – and add others of your own where appropriate.

- Your name/student number/course
- Project title

Introduction (background details and context)

- What is your area of visual communication?
- Who are the practitioners that influence you? How and why?
- What is your proposed project?

Aims and objectives

- What do you aim to achieve in and through your project?
- On completion of the project what do you want to know/have done?
- How does your project relate to your ambitions beyond the course?
- How can this project help you sustain your practice?

Schedule

- What is your schedule and work plan between now and the end of the course?
- What tasks and individual interim targets have you set? (The course has built-in interim targets at Assignments Two and Three for you to present your work for feedback.)
- Are your targets sufficiently ambitious, realistic and achievable?

Research needs/planning

- What kinds of information do you need? Where do you intend to look?
- What is your reading list?
- Do you need to contact any external agencies? How will you do this?
- Do you need to obtain any permissions, e.g. access to locations or archives?
- What is your strategy to develop any technical skills?

Audience

- Who are you making the work for?
- How will you engage with them?
- What types of venues, locations or websites are you intending to use?
- What is your marketing strategy?

Ethical and health and safety considerations

- Have you considered people involved or indirectly involved in the project?
- Do you need permission for placement of work? How will your work affect any audience?
- Are there any safety implications regarding any of your activities, processes or proposed use of equipment?

Refer to the Level 3 Handbook for help with this last area.

Once you've drafted your project plan, you'll now need to design it as a document. You can include images, diagrams, quotes and, of course, your text. This document should complement your manifesto and share a consistency in design and vision. So the exact form it takes is up to you. This should be a professionally finished document, print or PDF, demonstrating your ability to think creatively, propose exciting ideas and confidently manage your time.