# Exploring Territories

**8–9th September 2016**
Cardiff School of Art & Design

# Mapping the Terrain of Graphic Design Education

# Welcome

●
**ROBERT HARLAND**
Chair, Graphic Design Educators' Network

You are already familiar with what this conference is about; exploring the physical, intellectual and existential terrain of our learning and teaching. It's a bold aspiration, but not something that we, as an established community of educators, should shy away from.

Given that we now all communicate virtually so often, some question the relevance of conference attendance. But the consensus seems to be that 'discussion matters'. This conference emphasises a number of important matters; listening to and supporting fellow professionals, questioning ideas and offering alternative points of view, mixing mature viewpoints with fresh-faced perspectives, reinforcing our sense of identity, meeting old friends and making new acquaintances, having fun, and, for many, visiting a new place.

This year, we have Cardiff School of Art & Design to thank for providing the place to explore the 'spaces' we inhabit, and the location continues GDEN's aspiration to encourage a broad geographic spread of activity. Already in GDEN's short life, members have established mutually beneficial links for the day-to-day activities of external examining or participation in periodic subject reviews, as well as relationships with like-minded educators abroad. In these fledgling years, with each event we trust you will foster a mutual appreciation for the plurality of practice that GDEN respects so much.

Finally, the conference theme will stimulate further research, scholarship, and future publications that enhance graphic design pedagogy. We hope that contributors will extend their participation by submitting to the forthcoming call for papers, Territories of Graphic Design Education, in the journal, Art, Design and Communication in Higher Education.

On behalf of the conference organising committee, thank you in advance for your participation and contribution to Exploring Territories.

# Keynotes

## DESIGN EDUCATION AND PREFIGURATIVE (WORK) POLITICS

BRAVE NEW ALPS

Despite the ubiquitousness for designers of low pay, long hours and no or little social protection, working conditions are rarely discussed within design schools. But couldn't design education become a space to enact a prefigurative politics for the collective reshaping of our working lives?

●
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Brave New Alps produce design projects that engage people in discussing and rethinking social, political and environmental issues. By combining design research methods with radical pedagogy, conflict mediation techniques and DIY making, project outputs are produced that combine pedagogical spaces, publications, websites, photographs, videos, guided walks, urban interventions and other public events.

Brave New Alps' work is focused upon developing projects that are based on a careful and exact evaluation of the cultural conditions surrounding a given project. By inhabiting the specific time and place of a project, and gaining insight from a variety of different subject specialists, an in-depth analysis of the given project's social, political, physical and economic conditions is developed. The resulting design process aims at creating a situation or a product, which sets off a change in modes of thinking about, and operating within the identified conditions.

# EDUCATING FOR AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

MAT HEINL (MOVING BRANDS)
& DEREK YATES

Derek Yates and Mat Heinl discuss the benefits of open ended, prototype driven, collaborative enquiry and why embracing failure could be the real key to survival for today's creative graduates.

●
**MAT HEINL**
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Mat Heinl is the CEO of independent creative company, Moving Brands. He joined the company as a design intern, moving through the ranks with iconic work for the likes of Norton & Sons, Swisscom, HP, Apple and Mercedes. He has been instrumental to Moving Brands global growth, ensuring the business delivers creative excellence across its studios in New York, San Francisco, London and Zurich. In his role as CEO, Mat has shaped Moving Brands world-leading offer of branding, communications, experience design and business design.

Mat has held keynote speaker spots at the world's most well attended design events, as well as guest lectures at Wharton Business School, Central Saint Martins, and Hyper Island. His work has received awards at European Design, ADC and D&AD award festivals, and he has presided on the Cannes Lion, D&AD and Design Week award juries.

Mat studied Graphic Design at Central Saint Martins and at the Cooper Union in New York.

●
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Derek is the Programme Leader for Graphic Arts at Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, where his research aims to facilitate constructive collaboration between education and the creative industries. Over the past 10 years he has worked with the likes of Eye Magazine, Moving Brands, ustwo and Wieden & Kennedy and collaborated with onedotzero to co-create the award winning Cascade education platform. Over 260 graduates from 17 different disciplines have taken part in 7 Cascade events including a post-graduate boot camp with D&AD and events in New York and Beijing.

In 2012, he created 'Alt / Shift' — a platform for curriculum development that utilises input from both industry and education. LBi and ustwo hosted 'Alt/Shift' discussions and the conclusions of these events have been disseminated in a paper published by the National Society for Education in Art & Design.

Derek is also co-author of 'Communication Design, Insights from the Creative Industries', an overview of emerging creative practice published in February 2015 by Fairchild books, an imprint of Bloomsbury Academic. With the BA Graphic Arts team at WSA, he is currently developing a series of 'transitional' learning initiatives, including Studio 3015 and Publisher, that aim to put into practice some of the findings of his research.

# LEARNING WITH INDUSTRY

## DARRYL CLIFTON, TRACEY WALLER & ROBERT SOLLIS (EUROPA)

This presentation will look at how industry and education co-exist and learn from each other in and around the BA (Hons) Graphic Design course at Camberwell College of Arts. Looking at case studies and a discussion on the course philosophy, it will explore and challenge the relationship that education has with the graphic design profession.

●
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Tracey Waller has an MA in Graphic Design from the Royal College of Art, a BA (Hons) degree from Central Saint Martins and over 14 years experience of working as a motion graphic designer for major TV stations and production companies. Waller's practice has included producing title sequences for BAFTA award-winning dramas, film titles, broadcast graphics and typography for commercials.

Waller has delivered several papers including a paper at ATypI (Association Typographique International) in Dublin. Waller is currently Course Leader of the BA (Hons) Graphic Design programme at Camberwell College of Arts, CCW, UAL. This year Waller was awarded the title of UAL Teaching Scholar. During her 2-year tenure, Waller will be developing her research around student experiences of assessment following the successful piloting of a dialogue-based assessment tutorial system.

●
**ROBERT SOLLIS**
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Formed in 2007, Europa is a graphic design studio run by Robert Sollis & Mia Frostner. Parallel to their studio, Europa run the second year of Camberwell College of Art's BA (Hons) Graphic Design course. Europa design books, signs, graphic identities and exhibitions for institutions such as the Wellcome Collection, Tate Modern, the Royal College of Art, Somerset House, the Victoria & Albert Museum and Greater London Authority, artists such as Ryan Gander, Martin Beck and Alice Channer and architects such as East, DK-CM and We Made That. Their educational project briefs range from a rigorous type design course to creating an independent state in Camberwell.

●
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Darryl Clifton studied Visual Communication at Kent Institute of Art and Design and Illustration at the Royal College of Art. He has broad experience of working in education at home and abroad and spent five years developing the education profile at cutting edge moving image events/production company onedotzero, working with high-profile institutions such as the Victoria & Albert Museum and Hayward Gallery.

In 2010, he re-launched Camberwell Press and held the role of Director until September 2014. In 2011, Clifton co-founded Mokita, a curated event platform for critical debate around the subject of Illustration, regularly hosting events at Somerset House. Clifton is currently Design Programme Director and Course Leader of the BA (Hons) Illustration programme at Camberwell College of Arts, CCW, UAL. In addition, he holds positions on the editorial boards of the Journal of Illustration and Varoom and is a Board Director of the Association of Illustrators (AOI).

# Papers #
# Discussions ↔
# &
# Workshops ⁂

# Papers #

## BLURRED BOUNDARIES — THE VALUE OF STUDIO-BASED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS WITHIN GRAPHIC DESIGN EDUCATION

●
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This paper explores the relevance of collaborative teaching and learning environments in Graphic Design. The role of the studio and VLEs are analysed within this study, with learning perspectives from Students, Lecturers, Institutions and Industry. It is recognised that the Art School studio facilitates a practical, dialogic approach in underpinning the students' on-going development and practice. Graphic Design courses often frame studio-based environments as mirroring the practice of contemporary industry practice. These physical and virtual spaces provide opportunities for discourse and idea iteration through traditional and digital processes (QAA, 2016). The value of these parallel contexts as supportive learning tools, and the impact on achievement are examined in this paper.

Fluctuating student numbers can have an impact on available resources to accommodate appropriate studio-based activities. An analysis of how adaptive environments can encourage students to develop and foster integrative practice domains will be discussed. Graphic Design pedagogy can often emphasise the relevance of studio culture, synthesising physical and virtual spaces. This paper will explore how students, with institutional support, can develop specific project spaces to accommodate creative, collaborative communities. These identified locations of practice can facilitate institutional and industry partnerships, and provide the students with greater ownership of their teaching and learning environments.

## PIXEL DEEP v DEEP LEARNING: EXPLORING AN ALTERNATIVE DESIGN RESEARCH APPROACH AS AN INTRINSIC PEDAGOGICAL MODEL FOR AN ENHANCED STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN THE DESIGN PROCESS WITHIN GRAPHIC DESIGN

●
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Everyone is a designer. It could be argued that graphic design software and technology has demystified and democratised the design process and outcomes. For students it can be enticing to create 'pixel deep' work that 'looks good' but is void of solid underpinning or rigorous thought process. Limited observing, thinking or researching beyond the internet realm means that ideas are dying out in favour of visual seduction.

From our pedagogical perspective, it appears that students and graduates are taking less risks in their process and outcomes in order to appear 'on trend' and more employable. This paper argues that within graphic design education, there is a need for a more rigorous learning and teaching approach to enable students to understand and develop a non-formulaic design process. This can enhance project outcomes and offer a richer, deeper learning experience, which in turn will augment graduate employability.

This research advocates an alternative approach where there is a deeper investigation of the subject, a more rigorous research methodology and the introduction of play and experimentation. We take a 'mild to wild' approach — where risk taking is fundamental and embedded into the design process to create rich, exciting and meaningful outcomes.

This paper will discuss these approaches and demonstrate effectiveness on the student learning experience and project outcomes.

## PLAYFUL PRACTICE: EXPLORING THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF PLAY IN THE DESIGN LEARNER'S CREATIVE PROCESS

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What is the graphic design student's understanding of the feedback 'be more playful'? The word play is ambiguous; having many meanings as a verb and noun in different contexts, it is also paradoxical. If the meaning is not clear then how as design educators can we encourage creative and successful application? The paper will explore a disciplinary understanding of play in the creative process of the design learner and propose pedagogic approaches and frameworks.

The meaning of play will be defined in the context of the design process with an exploration of how these meanings vary at different stages. The paper will question how understanding the value of play in practice benefits the learner; by enhancing not only the originality and creativity of the project outcome, but to build confidence and an ability to define their own autonomous design processes.

## #ALTERNATIVEARTSCHOOL
## AN INTERSTITIAL SPACE FOR CREATIVE DISSENT

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The Alternative Artschool (AA) is conceived as an open-ended pedagogic tool through which to interrogate the conditions and consequences of design education: a productive space for critical reflection and creative dissent. As a 'school' within a school the AA is interdisciplinary in scope, aiming to identify underlying but overlooked values of design thinking and/in practice while simultaneously challenging assumptions of the academic status quo. Extra-curricula and unmarked, the Alternative Artschool is framed as a case study here: an opportunity to manipulate or subvert the opportunities of artschool, and to envisage alternatives. Meetings were held in alternative learning environments to increase agency in the act of learning, leading to student management of the 'school', a public exhibition and invitations to participate in Utopian events at Somerset House.

The AA is a student-based network for new voices (across institutions) in a dialogic process that interrogates the relevance of contemporary design education within a creative industries agenda that favours commercial compliance rather than strong critical positions. In a proactive approach students are encouraged to embrace this liminal space to reframe their experiences and ambitions from a more critical position and to inspire change.

## EVALUATING THE PEDAGOGIC AND PROFESSIONAL VALUE OF A STUDENT DESIGN AWARD SUBMISSION AGAINST AN ACADEMIC SUBMISSION

●
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This paper explores and questions the differentiation of submissions for assessment of student work between the territories of student design award submission and academic submission. Through my role as senior lecturer on an influential and professionally accredited Graphic Design degree, I have observed a disparity in value between design awards and academic submissions, specifically their impact on professional progression. Exposure and engagement with commercial briefs throughout undergraduate study both within the curriculum and through external student competitions can enhance both the learning experience and a learner's professional competency. For an academic submission, learners document their approach to a brief by evidencing their practice with reference to a set of clear validated learning outcomes. This results in a thorough and methodical submission, enabling a critical, analytical and reflective dialogue. However, student design award briefs and submission guidelines are predominantly vague. Whilst this provokes a breadth of responses, when combined with restrictive submission guidelines (typically a series of images with minimal use of annotations to add context and insight) it doesn't offer the opportunity for critical and analytical debate. Lindsay, CEO of D&AD, states that their aim is to "…identify and nurture the next generation of creative talent, helping to ensure that they enter the professional industries prepared and fit for purpose." (2014: 3) This in itself suggests that there is a shortfall within design courses, however despite my students experiencing sustained success in student awards, I would argue the opposite.

Lindsay, T., (2014) In: Gibbs and Labaki., eds. D&AD Annual 2014. London: D&AD.

## RECONSIDERING THE KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN: EXPERTISE, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH WITHIN AND BEYOND DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES

●
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This paper emerges from reflection on the first iteration of a newly validated 120-credit final year module in Graphic Design and Illustration, where practice, theory and professional skills are taught, learnt and assessed holistically.

Whilst students elsewhere may be supervised for a dissertation by those whose lie in specific expertise is in the fields of design history, cultural studies, critical theory, etc., those at Sheffield Hallam University have their research and critical writing supported alongside practice by the core studio staff team. As a result, I want to consider how we might conceptualise the sort of knowledge domain in operation here. Does such an approach prepare students sufficiently for entry to existing critical fields? Could it provide opportunities to address the perceived lack of critical discourse in Graphic Design by growing a confident practitioner-focused debate? Might it challenge disciplinary boundaries and create mobile thinkers and makers who seek out the particular knowledge necessary to understand problems or realise ideas?

Finally, the paper seeks to make links between this approach and current thinking about the critical non-expert position in higher-level research and doctoral supervision in art and design, where it is about creating and developing rules and methods rather than applying what already exists.

## DEFINING 'SUCCESS' WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF GRAPHIC DESIGN EDUCATION

●
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What are the reasonable expectations that graphic design employers have of recent graduates, and are we as educators assisting students in meeting these?

The problem this paper wishes to address is one of curriculum design and pedagogic focus. While many education institutions (including my own), have developed an employability focus, the basis of this is largely in response to external factors such as NSS results, thus shifting student desires and wide-ranging intervention by other influences such as employers, industry 'thinkers', and government bodies.

This paper is constructed to identify and assess more intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of lecturing staff, students and employers as it seeks to identify those which might best effect the construction of curriculum leading to an 'employable' student. This paper also considers what our employment focus could, or should be.

## TIMELINES IN DESIGN: WHERE LINGUISTICS MEETS DESIGN HISTORY

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This paper describes the design of an introductory course designed and delivered jointly by a linguist and a graphic design lecturer. The collaborative venture introduces international postgraduate students to key elements of western graphic design culture through a programme that seeks to build confidence in language and critical thinking skills. It is presented as a series of ten 2-hour workshops, presentations, critiques and debates during the first semester of an intensive 12-month MA programme.

The non-mandatory course is designed to enhance the student experience through using critical discussion as a learning activity. Some international postgraduate students have only a vague notion of western design culture and are unfamiliar with the discourses of western graphic design. Timelines addresses these elements and facilitates earlier full engagement with postgraduate study, enabling international students to take a more active part in class discussions through a greater understanding of western design culture.

Timelines equips students with the ability to question, explore meaning, confidently state ideas, describe, interpret and critique visual material and texts in spoken and written form. Active learning takes place through discussion of formal visual presentations, debate, student presentations, peer assessment, and language and literacy based activities related to western design movements. Students' skills and knowledge can be pooled to reach shared understanding of the social nature of language, learning and design.

## 'ACCESS THROUGH TOOLS': A CASE STUDY OF A STUDENT-TUTOR-TECHNICIAN-PROFESSIONAL CO-PRODUCED DESIGN FESTIVAL

●

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This paper presents a phenomenographic study of a funded student-staff, co-production project: the 'Access Through Tools' design festival, held at LCC, in April 2015.

Inspired by Stewart Brand's Whole Earth Catalog, a proto-internet publication that sought 'to make a variety of tools accessible to newly dispersed counterculture communities' (MoMA 2011), the festival sought to explore the construction of knowledge through design production, by showcasing and questioning tools, processes and materials integral to the making of design.

The project ethos was to support students to plan, curate and deliver their own design festival. Authentic co-production (Carey 2009) was an underlying value from the outset. Technicians, BA and MA graphic design students, course leaders, associate lecturers and external design professionals worked together. A student team led all activity, which included persuading international designers and artists to donate work for exhibition; scheduling a two day events programme of talks and collaborative design production workshops between external practitioners and internal specialist technicians; and the curation and installation of an exhibition and private view.

The presentation draws out the perspectives of those working on the festival (Kushner 2000) and aims to share a nuanced understanding of how it is to experience co-production work.

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## EDUCATOR <> DESIGNER: THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTITIONER AS A KEY STAKEHOLDER IN THE (CO)TEACHING OF THE DESIGN STUDENT

●

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The relationship between a graphic design course and the creative industry is symbiotic and essential. It can impact curriculum, professional development and graduate employability. Its dialogue shapes the future of industry.

This paper explores observations on the input and impact of visiting practitioners who co-teach on specific projects across different year groups. Co-teaching allows for vital discussions on the evaluation, development and application of a curriculum. It creates a reflexive and collaborative framework with a strong focus on planning, and practice, as well as input on assessment.

Co-teaching alongside professional practitioners can create further opportunities for enriched and innovative pedagogic practice. This does not only positively impact the learner but all stakeholders involved. The professional practitioner brings a range of specialist knowledge and skills to the table — as does the educator. The relationship is mutually beneficial and when involvement is periodical can grow and be nourished. Case studies of exemplary practice will be drawn upon as part of this paper.

## PRAGMATIC SEMIOTICS: EXTENDING THE TRADITIONS OF PRAGMATISM ON DESIGN PRACTICE AND PEDAGOGY

●

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There is a fine tradition of graphic designers making the transition from design practice to design education — Bauhaus' Moholy-Nagy provides a good historic precedence for this. But within Higher Education, there is now an expectation to also engage in 'academic research,' but surely that is what social scientists or humanities scholars do? After all, graphic designers understand praxis and tacit knowledge? As the discipline's educators, how do we develop the field of graphic design research from 'anecdote to evidence' to develop the field of academic research. This paper suggests that a philosophical application of Pragmatism within our practice would be beneficial. Moholy-Nagy, back in 1950s Chicago embraced pragmatic methodologies in his New Bauhaus School. With Pragmatism's focus on knowledge and understanding being emergent, this paper will outline a practice-based, pragmatic methodological framework, which utilises C.S. Peirce's pragmatic form of semiotics — Semiosis.

This paper will use visual examples to take the reader into this design research, which is both **through** and **for** design, to demonstrate one possible way to facilitate the improvement of our visual communication.

# Discussions ↔

## ONEHUNDREDANDTWENTY: COLLECTIVE WORKING AND EXCHANGE

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onehundredandtwenty is an ongoing project initiated by Lucy Alexander & Tim Meara, who both teach Graphic Communication Design on the Foundation Course at Central Saint Martins. Through a series of conversations with practitioners, Lucy and Tim identify propositions for collective works to be enacted by 120 people, the entire student cohort of the Graphic Communication Design area of the Foundation Course at CSM.

We would like to present one of the collective works we initiated through this project.

In November 2015, Benjamin Reichen from transdisciplinary design studio Åbäke and Prem Krishnamurthy, founding partner of award-winning New York design studio Project Projects worked with our 120 students to reimagine the 11 image panels which formed the basis of Charles Eames and George Nelson's 1953 lecture, 'A Rough Sketch for a Hypothetical Course'.

Participants were banned from using search engines to carry out their research and were instead asked to draw on their individual and collective knowledge and interpretations of the reproduced panels in order to decipher, reinterpret and reconstruct the original imagery.

They supported and informed their responses by tapping into networks of knowledge accessed via the CSM library, social media, telephone conversations across the world and through direct contact with experts on site at CSM.

One of the primary aims of the onehundredandtwenty project is to explore alternative modes of working that might enhance or question the core curriculum. This proposition dynamically engaged the students in collective working and exchange, exploding perceived barriers to accessing information and expertise.

## WHAT IF ALL THE DOORS WERE OPEN? FROM CONVERSATIONS ABOUT A MAP, TO MAPPING A PUBLIC CONVERSATION

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This discussion will be focused on an ongoing socially-engaged public art project, "What If All The Doors Were Open?" which grew organically from one-to-one tutorials supporting an undergraduate final major project. The project is at present in a research and development phase working with refugee and migrant support organisations in Leeds and will result in an initial public, collaborative artwork late Summer or early Autumn 2016. The discussion will consider how the processes of pedagogic tutorials relate to collaborative design processes and will ask what the boundaries are between facilitation and collaboration; critical feedback and creative input?

**EXPLORING SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIES**

●

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According to Dilnot cited in Vodeb (2015) "Sustainability is that which most cruelly exposes design. Nothing reveals more sharply both the necessity and inconsequentiality of design: its (absolute) necessity as capacity, and its almost complete irrelevance as a value, or indeed as a profession."

We have an opportunity to transform graphic design to a discipline that is a necessary force. Alternatively, graphic design may eat itself and prove to be irrelevant as described above. Graphic design (and in turn graphic design education) is interlinked with sustainability and will depend on it, now more than ever, for validity.

In this circumstance, are we (as graphic design educators) able and equipped to make this transformation by fostering graduates that encourage a sustainable world?

# Workshops ✳✳

## MAPPING GRAPHIC DESIGN PRACTICE & PEDAGOGY

●

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Mapping Graphic Design Practice & Pedagogy will explore the complex, expanding and fragmenting fields of graphic design through the process of visual mapping. This experimental, collaborative workshop will enable participants to conceive and develop useful frameworks for navigating the expanding arena of graphic design that has grown from its roots in professional practice and now come to include areas of ethical, political, socio-economic, cultural and critical design.

For academics, charged with educating the next set of designers, this expanding and fragmenting field represents exciting possibilities but can also generate existential uncertainty concerning what, why and how we go about teaching graphic design.

The workshop utilises mapping as a productive activity, where "making a map is a way to hold a domain still for long enough to be able to see the relationships between the various approaches, methods, and tools." (Sanders 2008: 2) Through mapping, and informed by a theoretical framework called the Four Fields of Industrial Design (Tharp & Tharp 2009), participants will map and temporarily freeze the fast moving, fluid and complex domain of graphic design as situated within educational contexts into a relational and temporary whole.

The workshop draws from on-going research into the use of participatory and co-operative inquiry methods with graphic design students as a means to develop a relational and situated understanding of their practice in an expanding field of graphic design.

## TRAINING FOR (TRANSFORMATIVE) PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

●

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Our research on precarious working conditions within design — especially the series of workshops we ran with young designers across Europe in 2014/2015 — unearthed a pressing need to empower design students to proactively engage with the (economic) power relations traversing our field. We have thus penned a first draft of a vademecum that we hope can help design educators to unravel the political economy of design together with their students.

During the workshop we will critique and expand this vademecum. Moreover, we while share examples of good practice and together produce concrete proposals of how within design schools students can be enabled to transformatively engage with the labour politics, power structures and hidden economies of design.

**SPACES AND ENVIRONMENTS: INTEGRATING POSTGRADUATE WAYFINDING BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH INTO UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING AND LEARNING.**

●
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How people find their way, or get lost, inside complex buildings like universities and hospitals, and how graphic design students and wayfinding professionals design information to make wayfinding easier is a multi-disciplinary, practice-based area of research. This on-going study found that involving undergraduate students in postgraduate research activity effectively integrated research methods teaching into an experiential learning experience. This workshop will begin by describing the involvement of design students in the behavioural research process and show how the range of teaching and learning outcomes are of benefit to both the researcher and the students.

Similar to the students in the study, workshop attendees will be asked to follow an unknown route within the conference venue and record their emotional responses. They will build features, information and wayfinding decision-making processes at key points.

**EXPLORING HOW TO TEACH FOR AN AMPLIFIED MINDSET OF DESIGN**

●
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In response to a complex global context where design's contemporary identity is unclear, an ongoing Doctoral research project has developed a conceptual framework termed the Amplified Mindset of Design. This framework intends to reflect an emerging discourse that suggests a more inclusive and pluralistic understanding of design, and the expansion of its practices towards collaboration, and social engagement.

Within this complex scenario, design education is calling for renewed models able to tackle future designers' needs, unknown markets, and emerging societal cultures. Moreover, the use of visuals is widely known to be effective in understanding and communicating complex and interrelated information.

Building upon delegates experience and insights regarding design education and communication/graphic design, this workshop aims to explore this conceptual framework as a principle for postgraduate curricular, in relation to the disciplinary context of change, and global context of complexity.

**VISUAL DIALOGUES**

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In this workshop, participants will playfully generate a visual 'dialogue' through graphic form. At the start, I will provide a visual. Based on the participants' individual experience they each develop a two-dimensional artwork responding to this visual within a short period of time. They are free to choose their preferred media, such as drawing, typography, photography, text etc., and are encouraged to blend them. At the following step each work rotates to another participant and acts as a starting point for his/her new visual response. This rotation principle varies by a defined schedule regarding rhythm, media or team partners.

The workshop aims to increase the ability to engage with diverse visual perception and ideas. We challenge and discuss visual transformation and communication, designer authorship, visual networks and visual interdependence as design strategy.

# Precarity Pilot: Making Space for Socially- and Politically-engaged Design Practice

## Brave New Alps

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How can one walk the line between some sort of financial sustainability and the production of design work that critically challenges accepted power structures and discourse? How can one organise a design practice that creates space for work that is socially- and politically-engaged and aims for social transformation?

These are questions we have been asking for several years within our practice. Since the last year of our MA at the Royal College of Art in London (2009–2010) we have been asking them in a more structured way. At the time, the only answers we could get were centred around a) living in a country where the government supports critical cultural work, namely through state funding; b) setting up a successful commercial practice and taking 10% of your time to do pro-bono or other kinds of socially-engaged work; c) getting into teaching to monetarily stabilise and feed your practice; d) being able to count on the wealth of your family.

The limitations of these options left us unsatisfied and frustrated. In fact, we observed how the conditions to which these answers were the response to had contributed to the dropping out or de-politicisation of the work of many of our peers, who, during our BA studies in Italy (2002–2006), had produced incredibly engaged work but who had "disappeared" just a few years later. This dynamic bothered us because it raised questions of the viability of our own practice and the transformative potential we see in design. We came to the conclusion that if design work was to be supportive of naturocultural justice, i.e. a justice that does not only consider humans but also non-humans (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2014) there was a need to put in place strategies that would allow socially- and politically-engaged designers from diverse geographical and social backgrounds to develop viable practices.

There seems to be an open assumption within design education that designers should engage with pressing social and environmental issues. In fact, the number of courses that have social, environmental or similar objects of study in their title or course descriptions, and the number of thesis projects dealing with such issues are proof of this. However, design education is not trying to come to terms with how to make this critically engaged approach to design viable in the long-term. In face of the still unravelling financial crisis, the organisational strategies of running a design practice are still, more than ever, tied to the conventional mechanisms of the market.

→ Students are encouraged to increase their enthusiasm for entrepreneurialism, competition and mainstream notions of success. This individualising approach is largely ignoring the accelerated politics of precarisation in Europe. These include, for example, the cut of hard-fought welfare provisions such as free or affordable health care and education, the undermining of labour-rights, the rising cost of housing but also the cuts of cultural funding — all of which are radically changing the socio-economic conditions for people living in Europe.

Advice to designers on how to make a living still tend to be "one size fits all" suggestions, with little to no differentiation regarding people's approach to the world, their socio-economic background, gender or geographic location. Thus effectively ignoring that in our times of socio-economic and environmental crises, there is a need and the possibility to experiment with other ways of organising our work and our lives. And while design activism, adversarial design or design as politics are encouraged and enthusiastically taken up by students, the prevalent discourse on how to make a living as designers is not yet substantially questioned by design education and people's desires for other ways of practicing are most of the time cast aside as naïve, marginalising or simply inviable.

Wanting to intervene in this situation, between 2011 – 2013, we received a PhD fellowship from the Design Department at Goldsmiths, University of London, to thoroughly work through our questions both in practice and in theory. This fellowship provided us with the time to inquire how the creative industries function, how their economic, social, psychological and physical procedures affect the lives of designers, and how these procedures fit into the functioning of capitalist economies (Elzenbaumer, 2014). What became clear was that although designers and design education do not openly speak about it, within the creative industries most people are exposed to exhausting precarious working and living conditions, such as bulimic work patterns, long hours, poor pay, anxiety, psychological and physical stress, and lack of social protection (c.f. Elzenbaumer & Giuliani,

2014; Lorey, 2006;). Given this situation, we became interested in how design education — both inside and outside academia — can move from the production of docile creative subjects to the production of designers aware of labour politics so that they are prepared to create conditions that are less precarious. Which in turn would allow for more engaged and transformative work to be produced while also allowing for more inclusivity in regards to who can work as designer.

This research gave us the opportunity to work through possibilities of intervention by drawing on feminist and autonomist Marxist theories of the political economy, which focus on the potential of workers to bring about social change through the production of common(s) and a radical restructuring of (reproductive) labour. Inspired by the engagement with such approaches, since 2014 — thanks to fellowships from Akademie Schloss Solitude and Leeds College of Art — we are gathering the research of the last years in what for now we describe as a "subversive career service": Precarity Pilot (PP), developed together with illustrator and pedagogue Caterina Giuliani, is an experiment on how to co-create relays between theoretical knowledge about precarious work and practical strategies to secure livelihood in de-precarising ways.

Unfolding through a series of Europe-wide nomadic workshops and an online platform, the project is dedicated to familiarise us and other designers with possibilities of performing enabling rather than precarising economies and interdependencies. We focus on the collective exploration of how design skills can be mobilised in order to spark a socio-economic "becoming-other", i.e. a transformation of how we perceive ourselves and how we relate to the world, or, more precisely, a "becoming-other-with". Because, as the philosopher Donna Haraway points out, there is no isolated becoming-other (2011). The workshops should contribute to the creation of economies — within and beyond design — that foster naturocultural justice and equality. Through PP, we invite designers to experiment with tackling the tensions between the production of engaged content and precariousness by embarking in the co-creation of

→   economies (and ecologies) of support that allow long-term viability of design practices that aim for social transformation.

We see the current notion of success within the field of design — focused on individual visibility and market value — closely entangled with the precarising rat race typical of capitalist economies. It contributes to the rarefication of more radical social engagement, and as this engagement often hinders one's ability, but also willingness, to participate in the aforementioned race. In this individualising climate, we see the need to introduce ways of working and living that follow an "ethics of care" (Tronto, 1993) towards others and that are thus grounded in a more thorough understanding of the politics engendered by one's individual and collective ways of practicing design. Shifting from an ethics of competition to one of care is a strategy to challenge the precarising yet widely accepted notion that one's survival needs to be based on constant competition. One in which the best chances for success are stood by entrepreneurial, self-assured, smart, independent, popular designers. We propose that making space for cooperative, reflexive, complex, entangled and critical designers also means to make space for relations that go beyond competition and that allow for the construction of mutually empowering interdependencies, solidarity and collective action.

Making space for other selves through a diversity of relational modalities is for us an opening towards linking content with politicised ways of working and organising. But although it is clear that all design work is political, whether it is overtly taking position or implicitly siding with what is taken as the norm (and thus falsely assumed to be apolitical), we strongly argue that the choice of inscribing one's design practice in transformative politics cannot solely be reduced to a matter of individual choice as it is often suggested. A key example of this de-politicised tone and argument of individual responsibility is used in How To Be a Graphic Designer Without Losing Your Soul (2005), by design writer Adrian Shaughnessy. But when designers comply with and perpetuate the normalised

yet precarising procedures of the creative industries and the neoliberal agenda— such as systemically relying on un- or underpaid work of others, overworking and/or overspending as common practice, pitching without question, eagerly offering hyper-flexibility — they put pressure on others to do the same. This compliance with precarising procedures erodes the bases for resistance while also privileging the healthy, (apparently) independent and well-off designers. By structuring social relations and ways of practicing in mutually empowering rather than precarising ways, the conditions for making a living through design work can become more inclusive, allowing for a diversification of the field. Moreover, the effect of this re-structuring is connected with the transformation of socio-economic cultures at large. As designers change their ways of working and relating to each other, design work also starts to change: it becomes possible to engage with the world from a position that knows that competition, individualisation, marketization and (self-)precarisation are not an unquestionable norm. It becomes possible to collectively redesign economies and interdependencies in ways that defy, resist and/or exit precarising ways of organising and designing.

Precarity Pilot has been exploring this in a number of different ways, ranging from small, individual interventions to substantial collective experiments. These vary depending not only on the location, but also the specific professional and personal situation of the participants. Propositions explored so far through pp encompass, amongst others, the creation of spaces to openly speak about the relation between design and money: how much to do you charge for your work, how is the money you earn distributed within your collective or company, and when is it acceptable to work for free? Other questions address the way designers relate to time: what happens if designers stop being constantly ready to work, stop working and sending e-mails on weekends, plan projects in a way that getting ill is not causing a major professional, psychological and physical melt-down? What happens if networked design collectives commit to work only part-time, while adopting a low-consumption lifestyle and contributing to transformative structures outside the

field of design? These are only some proposals that have been put forward by PP. They are, however, representative of its approach: an attempt to make conventional, precarising ways of practicing, strange. By doing so, PP recalls that designers can work and organise themselves in different ways, and that these can be functional undercurrent, difficult conditions while also being prefigurative of a different future.

We're aware that the proposals for intervention put forward through PP are not necessarily to be accomplished easily, without doubts, failures and contradictions. University-educated designers are already a privileged group in the global rat race and the present research project has so far relied on competitive fellowships and research positions. But this does not diminish the urgency of needing to find de-precarising strategies of working and organising as they are the long-term enablers of socially- and politically-engaged practice. In this setting, it is encouraging that this research does not stand as an isolated endeavour but is embedded in a larger ecology of people around the world experimenting with economies that work towards the prospect of better lives for everyone, despite multiple and increasing crises. Here we are thinking of experiments that are developing in many places in diverse and situated ways, such as community economies where relations and exchanges are negotiated ethically, practices of commoning where common goods are (re) produced collectively, subsistence perspectives where people produce mainly for the direct satisfaction of their communities' needs, economies of degrowth that defy the capitalist imperative of expansion and solidarity economies that build empowering links between economic alternatives. With Precarity Pilot we invite designers to collectively engage with this central entanglement in which design exists and to experiment with multiple approaches to restructuring ways of working and relating. There is a great need to create and share knowledge towards the development of inventive tactics and strategies to make socially- and politically-engaged design practices viable in the long-term.

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