

# HOW CAN GRAPHIC DESIGN/ COMMUN- ICATION BE ART?

Message 89

Research symposium

Friday 18 September 2015

The House / Plymouth University

## CONTEXT

This symposium is about discussing further the relationship between graphic design / communication and art.

Speakers, through presentation of their own work, or, by examining the work of others, will explore the nature of graphic design and communication practice in an ever-changing contemporary landscape. We will see different ways of working, and experience a range of graphic design/communication practice.

We will look again at where boundaries exist – graphic designers / communicators who also work as artists (and vice versa) – and whether it is still relevant to make distinctions. We can experience work that falls in between disciplines and recognise where art and design practice comes together.

We can ask questions:

How can the graphic designer/communicator be an artist?

Is all graphic design/communication art?

Is the design/communication of a brand message now a conventionally regarded medium of imaginative or creative artistic expression?

Is the design/communication of an editorial message a conventionally established form of artistic composition?

Is the design/communication of envisioned information an expression or application of human artistic skill, appreciated for its beauty or emotional power?

How do boundaries exist between graphic design/communication and art?

None of this discussion can take place without some definition of different practice. As a frame of reference for this symposium, we might include (or exclude) the following:

Graphic designers/communicators:

Working with brand and identity

Working in editorial and publishing

Envisioning information

Illustrators, photographers, animators, film-makers, typographers

Graphic artists

This symposium is part of ongoing discussions and research intended to capture contemporary views and examples relevant to a changing graphic design and communication landscape and also to evaluate how current practice impacts on wider art and design/communication culture.

## SCHEDULE / SPEAKERS

09.15 Registration / tea / coffee

09.45 Start and welcome

10.00 PART ONE

**Professor Teal Triggs**

Royal College of Art

**Sam Winston**

Artist

11.45 PART TWO

**Caz Hildebrand**

Here Design

**Luke Thompson**

Kin Design

13.00 Lunch

13.45 Pre-opening of the exhibition:

**Ivan Chermayeff / Cut and Paste**

**Peninsula Arts Gallery**

Introduction by:

**David Smart** Curator / Associate Professor, Senior Lecturer / Plymouth University

Gallery talk by:

**Professor Brian Webb** Webb and Webb Design

14.30 PART THREE

**Lizzie Ridout**

Lecturer in Graphic Communication with Typography / Plymouth University

**Stephen Smith**

Neasden Control Centre

Lecturer in Illustration / Plymouth University

16.00 Plenary

16.45 Close and drinks reception

17.30 Private view of the exhibition:

**Ivan Chermayeff / Cut and Paste**

**Peninsula Arts Gallery**

**NOTE:** Registration, all presentations and refreshments will take place in The House – Plymouth Universities new performing arts centre (unless listed otherwise).

## **BIOGRAPHIES / SUMMARY OF CONTENT**

### **Caz Hildebrand**

Caz is an award-winning graphic designer and art director who has worked at the highest levels of publishing as Art Director at **Penguin Books** and **Random House**. She uses her extensive experience of working with complex subjects and concepts combining text and image to produce coherent, accessible design solutions for branding, packaging, books and print. Her cookbook **The Geometry of Pasta** (co-authored with **Jacob Kenedy**), has been published world-wide and been translated into many languages, including Italian, and won numerous awards. Caz and her partners launched their London design studio, **Here Design** in 2006. It has grown into an international team of multi-disciplinary designers sharing a deep love of carefully crafted design experiences. They also launched sister company, **Ink Works** in 2014, which designs and makes furniture, tableware, signage, stationery and much more, inspired by the arts of craft and manufacturing. Everything in the **Ink Works** range is designed to be both beautiful and useful.

**[www.heredesign.co.uk](http://www.heredesign.co.uk)**

**Here Design** believe that the shared creativity at the heart of both art and design has created confusion. For them there is a clear and absolute distinction between art and design. But as the role and dominance of each has evolved, a new way for design has emerged. Caz will discuss this emerging opportunity in the context of their work and practice and encourage you to follow their example.

### **Lizzie Ridout**

Lizzie's practice is research-based and stems from a desire to discover: a fact, a story, an object, an image, a ritual, a process, a history. Often using archive material as a means to examine contemporary cultural concepts and motifs, Lizzie uses various media, borrowing working methods from graphic design, illustration and fine art. Enquiries into process, material and site determine the form of the outcomes produced. Through a reductive approach, Lizzie endeavours to convey the integrity of the original source material, whilst simultaneously re-communicating aspects of its history for a contemporary audience. Lizzie graduated from the RCA in Communication Art & Design in 2002. She was **Pearson Creative Research Fellow** at the **British Library**, London, **Book Artist in Residence** at **Women's Studio Workshop** (the largest publisher of hand-made artists' books in the USA), **Artist in Residence** at **Fiskars**, Finland and has exhibited nationally and internationally. She is currently working on a commission for **Bideford Black: The Next Generation**, an Arts Council funded project. Lizzie is **Lecturer in Graphic Communication with Typography** at **Plymouth University**.

**[www.lizzeridout.com](http://www.lizzeridout.com)**

Lizzie will ask whether titles and definitions matter in her practice, and if so, to whom. Through an examination of recent projects, she will consider how working with artefacts and archives, might make her both a designer and an artist, but also perhaps a curator, a storyteller, an archeologist, a writer, or a geographer of an object-based landscape. With examples of others' work, she will also reflect upon the value of an artist/designer reinterpreting historical source material.

## **Stephen Smith**

Stephen is an illustrator / artist based in the UK who has been working under the name of **Neasden Control Centre** since 2000. Illustrations and hand drawn type have been commissioned by a diverse range of clients – advertising to interiors – including **Puma International, Pearson** and **Philippe Starck**. Along with installations and animation projects he has published 2 monographic books with **Gestalten**, as well as contributing to a diverse range of group publications, most recently **The Age of Collage Art, Contemporary Collage in Modern Art**. International site specific installations include **More with Less** at **MU**, Netherlands, **Now Jump!** at **Nam June Paik Centre**, South Korea and **Spank the Monkey** at **Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art**, UK (where he was one of 3 UK artists selected alongside Banksy and David Shrigley). Stephen is a **Lecturer in Illustration** at **Plymouth University** and continues to lecture, lead workshops and present his work at universities, and institutions nationally and internationally.

**neasdencontrolcentre.com**

Stephen will question whether the 'ever changing contemporary landscape' is actually changing? He will discuss his work and reflect on projects that have crossed boundaries between Art & Illustration. Some of these have occurred spontaneously, and others have purposefully set out to juxtapose the two disciplines. He intends to explore and find out whether these two disciplines will ever be able to meet, head on, when their core purposes are so different.

## **Teal Triggs**

Teal is **Professor of Graphic Design** and **Associate Dean, School of Communication, Royal College of Art**, London. She is also an **Adjunct Professor** at **RMIT**, Australia. As a graphic design historian, critic and educator she has lectured and broadcast widely and her writings have appeared in numerous edited books and international design publications. Her research has focused primarily on design pedagogy, self-publishing, and feminism. Teal is **Editor-in-Chief** of the academic journal **Communication Design (Routledge/International Council of Design)** and co-editor of **Visual Communication (Sage)** and **Associate Editor of Design Issues (MIT Press)**. Teal has just completed her first children's book titled **The School of Art (Wide Eyed Editions)** and is currently co-editing with Leslie Atzmon **The Graphic Design Reader (Bloomsbury)**.

**[www.rca.ac.uk/more/staff/professor-teal-triggs](http://www.rca.ac.uk/more/staff/professor-teal-triggs)**

Teal will present a paper entitled **Playing the 'art' card: Are we beyond this now?** The debates surrounding the relationship between art and design practice have an established place within a contemporary discourse of graphic design. For example, Jorge Frascara's essay for *Design Issues* in 1988 asked "Graphic Design: Fine Art or Social Science?". The critic Rick Poyner in 2004 endorsed designer Ian Anderson's use of the term 'graphic culture', and not 'art', because it better reflected the 'concerns of our time'. Graphic designers may often position themselves as 'artists', but this does not mean that graphic design equals art, at least in the eyes of key critics. This paper proposes to consider in what ways artistic approaches might be a catalyst and method for thinking differently about graphic design practice.

## **Luke Thompson**

Luke is a designer at London based **Kin Design** – a research and design studio made up of designers, developers and makers from a diverse set of backgrounds. Their design philosophy is at the heart of everything they do. It informs who they decide to work with, the structure of the studio, and the way they work. Through an intrinsic understanding of the way technology works, and the continuous study of society and culture, they make the things we have in our world more meaningful. In short they care about the stuff they make and want it to have value. **Kin's** work has won many awards, shortlisted for **Designs of the Year** at the **Design Museum** in 2011 and featured in **Time Magazine's Top 10 of Everything** 2010. They are closely connected to education, through teaching and workshops at leading academic institutions both nationally and internationally.

**kin-design.com**

**Kin** is a mixture of designers, developers and producers. They are not artists, and are not trying to be. They recognise that design has an approach and intent distinct from art, but shares many of the same tools. Design adheres to a consistent process that doesn't rely on self-expression, but this doesn't mean that there's no creativity to it. More that the decisions made throughout the process use context, brief, budget and the end user as reference points, rather than broadcasting an artistic viewpoint. Luke will show some of **Kin's** process, explaining how they create work using research, experimentation, making, collaboration and conversation and demonstrate how it is different from art.

## **Sam Winston**

Through his explorations of language Sam creates sculpture, drawings and books that question our understanding of words, both as carriers of messages and as information itself. He started writing stories and selling artist books through London's **Institute of Contemporary Arts** and can now be found in many special collections in the UK and the US, including – **MoMA New York**, **Getty Research Institute**, Los Angeles, the **Tate Galleries** London, and **Victoria & Albert Museum**. He has exhibited internationally and worked on various commissions including **Comme des Garçons Guerrilla Store** (Hong Kong) and **The New York Times**.

**www.samwinston.com**

Sam will present a body of work that examines the role of authorship in both an art and design practice. From his roots in independent publishing through to his current work in children's books, concrete poetry and contemporary art, Sam will discuss what he terms the 'inward' and 'outward' facing nature of his practice. The presentation will suggest that the more inward facing nature of projects - such as research, self initiated briefs and personal projects - tend to manifest without clear distinctions between either art or design. Whereas outward facing projects, such as commissions, and exhibitions all require much firmer cultural distinctions and it becomes inevitable that they are placed in one of those two camps. The presentation looks to stimulate a dialogue around what and why these distinctions are needed and the advantages and limitations inherent within them.

## **Brian Webb**

Brian founded **Trickett & Webb** with Lynn Trickett in 1971, winning numerous awards around the globe including **New York Art Directors, Communication Arts USA, Museum of Toyama Japan, Red Dot Germany, D&AD** and **Design Week**. His work is in many permanent collections including **V&A**, London and **MoMA**, New York and has been exhibited extensively. Brian has curated exhibitions including the **Edward Bawden** and **Eric Ravilious Design Centenary** exhibition for the **Fry Art Gallery**, and is co-author of the **Design** series of books, including **Paul and John Nash, Edward McKnight Kauffer, David Gentleman, Peter Blake** and **Lovat Fraser**. **Webb & Webb's** clients include arts, educational and professional organisations and ranges from large corporate design schemes to letterpress jobs. He is **Fellow** and **Past-President** of the **Chartered Society of Designers**, **Fellow** of **University College of the Creative Arts** and **Visiting Professor** at **University of the Arts London**.

[www.webbandwebb.co.uk](http://www.webbandwebb.co.uk)

## **Ivan Chermayeff – Cut and Paste**

**Ivan Chermayeff** is one of the world's great graphic designers. Co-founder of renowned design agency **Chermayeff & Geismar**, and son of Russian-born architect Serge Chermayeff, he grew up in a family surrounded by some of the great creative minds of the last century – Marcel Breuer, László Moholy-Nagy, Henry Moore, John Piper, Eric Ravilious and Frank Lloyd Wright. **Cut and Paste** includes much iconic graphic design for corporate clients – a stunning set of posters for Mobil, editorial design and brand identity. This vibrant exhibition, as the exhibition title suggests, is also about the process of assemblage and a delight in making collages. It is Chermayeff's work beyond the brief, transcending conventional boundaries between art and design. As a skilled visual communicator he uses simplicity, playfulness and wit that will delight visitors of all ages.

'Work that has helped define our times' Milton Glaser

In association with **De La Warr Pavilion**, Bexhill

## **DETAILS**

Organised by the **Message** research group  
School of **Art and Media** / **Plymouth University**  
<http://messengeresearch.net>

Funded by **Centre for Media Art and Design Research – MADR**  
Faculty of **Arts and Humanities** / **Plymouth University**

The symposium includes lunch and refreshments and costs £30 for the day.  
(Plymouth University staff / students – no charge)

To book please go to:  
<https://estore.plymouth.ac.uk>