

Personal expression through serial media

GRDS043 AUB/FEA/Graphic Design, Fall 2006

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INTRODUCTION

The writer and designer Michael Rock defines graphic design authorship as emanating from “those circles that revolve around the edge of the profession, the design academies, and the murky territory that exists between design and art. This is the territory of avant-gardists, adventurous students, and practitioners who push the envelope....” (*Eye* magazine)

Steven Heller, using the word “auteur” to describe the French filmmakers of the 60s who had complete creative control over their films, states that “it may not have been a viable option a decade ago. In fact, before the digital revolution changed the professional ground rules, we were content collaborating with (in the best situations) or serving so-called content creators. Today, graphic designers have the opportunity to be authors in the metaphoric and practical senses of the word.” (*LOOP: AIGA Journal of Interaction Design Education* November 2000, Number 1)

THE CLASS

From political cartoons in pre-revolutionary France, Russian samizdat, and even Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* to today’s zine, comix, manga, and BD scenes, printed matter has provided a way for artists and individuals to express themselves to just a few, or to many indeed. This class will study the use of alternative media through history, and will build upon the lessons learned in the publication design class. These lessons will be applied to a variety of specialized publications—some traditional, some completely free-form—allowing students to focus more specifically on the content of their printed pieces, while expanding on the techniques available to them when developing the form thereof. Using printing methods both high- and low-end as well as high- and low-tech, students will explore the ways in which serial media provide an outlet for personal expression. Students will be expected to view this class not as a “how-to” but as a “have to”, and they should be prepared to engage politically, socially, culturally, poetically, narratively, but most of all personally.

Pre-requisites: Third year level; something to say.

COURSE GRADING AND POLICIES

Project grading will be an average of the following: Research and sketching; creative exploration of concepts/ideas and their visual expression; clean execution. Final grading will also take into account attendance, class participation, as well as students’ progress and development during the semester.

RESOURCES

Some of the projects will involve exploration of new techniques or else low-end applications of known techniques; it might be worth looking for source material now to plan for the art book later, for example.

Cameras

Holga: The Holga is a cheap camera that uses 120mm roll film and is the follow-up to the Diana camera. They are both known for their fuzzy optics, light leaks, vignetting effects, and ability to be converted into pinhole cameras.

http://www.argonauta.com/html/holga_cameras.htm

<http://members.aol.com/hpargotohp/diana.html>

Low-end digital cameras: Digital Dreams makes cheap one-chip digital cameras that are quite portable and give interesting effects.

<http://www.digitaldreamco.com/en/index.shtml>

Other toy/pinhole cameras:

http://www.freestylephoto.biz/sc_main.php?cat_id=2200

Lubitel camera: A medium format camera made in Russia and very cheap; a nice introduction to medium-format photography without the price tag.

<http://lubitel-resource.tripod.com/>

Photographic processes

Cyanotype: An old photographic process that uses a light-sensitive chemical solution that turns blue upon exposure to light (the process of blueprinting.)

http://www.alternativephotography.com/process_cyanotype2.html

<http://www.blueprintables.com/>

Low-end/high-end printmaking processes: The Speedball company has been making entry-level art supply kits for generations. Linoleum cutting and block printing as well as silkscreening are probably what they are best known for.

<http://www.speedballart.com/products.asp>

Woodcut: Moving up from lino block printing is woodblock printing, especially using the Japanese method of moku hanga. McLain's is probably the best resource for this outside of Japan.

<http://www.imcclains.com/>

Papermaking: Arnold Grummer covers this extensively.

<http://www.arnoldgrummer.com/>

Think too about rubberstamp typography; stencils; graffiti, etc.

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PROJECT 1: COMIX

History: Students will study the history of cartoons and comix through handouts and presentations, from Little Nemo to present-day *bandes dessinées* and manga.

Technique: Various techniques will be looked at—the classic blue-line approach followed by traditional comic book houses, the hypergridded and almost “musical” style of modern comix authors such as Chris Ware, the free-form surreal approach of “naive” artists such as Mark Beyer and contemporary illustrators like Ralph Steadman. Use of textures and media will be explored, especially comparing hand-done to computer-aided approaches.

Project: Black-and-white comic book with color cover/back cover, size/pages/form up to student. Select a biographical or autobiographical story and break it down into panel-able units. Research settings and locations. Panel out story, paying attention to pacing and page dynamics. Print a run of your comic book equivalent to at least the number of students in class x 2.

PROJECT 2: ZINE

History: Students will study the history of zines and the alternative press, both historically—political tracts, broadsheets, etc.—and in terms of more contemporary examples, such as fan fiction, music fanzines, the zine explosion of the '80s and '90s, and modern magazines that grew out of zines (*Bust*, *Giant Robot*, the *Baffler*).

Technique: Various techniques will be looked at—Xerox, transfers, letterpress, stencils, rubber stamps, printmaking, etc. Saddle-stitch, sewn, and other bindings; computer-aided and hand-done form creation.

Project: Color/size/pages/form up to student. Select a type of zine to work on: diary, catalog, topic-driven, manifesto-based, fanzine. Work up a name and logo, set up template either software-based or bluelined, work with text and imagery keeping in mind aspects of publication design if they apply: table of contents, folios, front and back of book, features, etc. Print a run of zine equivalent to at least the number of students in class x 2.

PROJECT 3: ART BOOK

History: Students will study the history of artist's books, both historically—letter- and other small-press publications—and in terms of more contemporary examples.

Technique: Various techniques will be looked at—hand-made papers; unique editioning; hand-painting; incorporating photography, reproduced elements, or other found objects; low-tech silkscreen; cyanotype; found papers; toy and other specialty cameras, etc.

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Project: Color/size/pages/form up to student. Select a type of art book to work on: poetry, narration, found object collection, photography or art portfolio, etc. Work up a name and logo, set up template either software-based or blue-lined, work with text and imagery keeping in mind aspects of publication design if they apply: table of contents, folios, front and back of book, features, etc. Print a run of art book equivalent to at least the number of students in class x 2 (if feasible).

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LIST OF MATERIALS

Black markers: wide, medium and fine

Set of colored markers

Technical pen(s)

Color pencil set, Neo-color set; non-repro blue pencil

Plastic eraser, kneaded eraser

Brushes of various sizes and thicknesses, flat tip and round tip

Calligraphic pens and markers

China ink

Gouache of various colors; "Pro" white

Rubber roller, sponges, brushes, feathers

Plastic burnisher

A4 and A3 size paper

Butter paper and tracing paper

Colored paper

Sketch pad

Magazines and newspapers

Found items and photographs

Various printed materials

Ziptone, bought or made