

The following text is the 'accepted for publication (author final)' version of an online article, published in *Creative Review* on 1st October 2016. The publisher is Centaur Communications Ltd, and the article can be located online at: <https://www.creativereview.co.uk/name-graphic-design-education/>. The published version used a limited selection of images presented here.

In the name of Graphic Design Education

Graphic design pedagogy is alive and, dare I say, kicking. The second conference, *Exploring Territories: Mapping the Terrain of Graphic Design Education*, staged by the Graphic Design Educators' Network at Cardiff School of Art and Design, 8–9 September 2016, attracted a hundred or so delegates from the full spectrum of institutions who offer degree programmes in graphic design, or a closely related course that goes by another name. Such is the widespread appeal of graphic design education in 2016 that representatives from established Russell Group universities, pre/post-92 universities, independent art colleges, and some European institutions, sat together to explore the physical, intellectual and existential terrain of learning and teaching in graphic design.

Delegates were treated to two days of shared research and scholarship into graphic design learning and teaching, something quite rare during the field's expansion since the early 1990s. Exponential growth in higher education, especially in the UK, has fostered a period of significant diversification in graphic design education, and the professional bodies that have catered for the field throughout this period have struggled to keep up with an agenda that now demands more serious approaches to pedagogy. In this respect, UK based organisations such as GLAD (Group for Learning in Art and Design) are now more influential to many educators who have adopted a more scholarly approach to their role as academics. However, D&AD (Design and Art Direction), CSD (Chartered Society of Designers), or ISTD (International Society of Typographic Designers) have continued to promote their distinct preferences and pathways into industry. Those organisations have not had to concern themselves with higher education change in relation to modularisation, massification, widening participation, postgraduate provision, internationalisation, assessment methodology, and more. But this has all been central to the work of GLAD since 1989, set up in direct response to the changing landscape in UK higher education.

Now, graphic design academics concerned with improving the student experience are more likely to be reading the journal *Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education* alongside flicking through the pages of the latest professional awards publication, anticipating the next issue of *Creative Review*, or digesting their *Eye* back catalogue.

Some who deliver graphic design education in today's challenging higher education environment have additional aspirations for their role as educators. These were evident at *Exploring Territories*. This can be characterised by more emphasis on *how* to teach students rather than *what* to teach students, which is where professional bodies have been most influential in their approach, especially through the staging of student awards. They have mainly concerned themselves with employability within their own communities, and the 'standards' of entry, rather than the wider opportunities a graphic design education may lead to in areas such as history, theory, criticism, and the possibilities for academic research.

These cerebral preoccupations were on display in abundance at *Exploring Territories*, which featured a combination of keynote presentations, papers, discussions and workshops. The keynotes provided a platform for discussion about ‘design education and prefigurative politics’ (Bianca Elzenbaumer and Fabio Franz of Brave New Alps); ‘educating for an uncertain future’ (Mat Heintl of Moving Brands in conversation Derek Yates); and ‘learning with industry’ (Darryl Clifton, Tracey Waller & Europa’s Robert Sollis). Through the different formats, a diversity of themes and issues were tabled covering: the graphic designer’s working conditions in relation to low pay, long hours and the social context; assumptions about the value of failure; how industry and education co-exist and learn from each other through co-delivery of curricula; the limitations of internet research; critical approaches to learning compared to commercial compliance; the disparity between the assessment of awards and assessment of academic work; playfulness; sustainability; employability; multidisciplinary; and the teaching of international students, to name a few. The span was also wide ranging from subject perspective, drawing from the preoccupations of communication design, interactive design, information design, public art, drawing, photography, typography, linguistics and more.

Such diversity reinforces graphic design’s position as an integrative practice that has spawned so many new directions and opportunities for practitioners over the past half century. Yet, this is so often unacknowledged. In charting the contemporary concerns of working across a wide spectrum, many contributors reverted back to their own education in graphic design, when there was much less choice of topics to study and print the medium of the day. There seemed to be something in that formative experience that equipped so many, so well, for the explosion in recent decades of media related technologies, to which many had adapted, and adopted. In this sense, the term ‘graphic design’ is once again assuming a new and important meaning, in the way words do (see Raymond Williams’ work on how important words such as *industry*, *democracy*, *class*, *art*, and *culture* all assumed new meanings over time¹). Graphic design has continually evolved since its first known but not widely acknowledged use in the publication *Concrete Age*.²

Through the significant changes of recent times, educators associated with graphic design have afforded themselves little opportunity for serious reflection on what it is that has made their discipline so resilient and robust. This should not be framed as identity crisis (as so many commentators have tried to position it) for those who value the formative experience of a graphic design education that has led to a life-long preoccupation. Nor should graphic design be described as fractured and fragmented, when so many educators labour under the guise of graphic design’s core and related activities. As Anne Bush has suggested, it merely reflects ‘the maturation of the graphic design discipline’.³

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¹ Williams, Raymond. (1993 [1958]) *Culture and Society*, London: The Hogarth Press. pp. xiii–xx

² See Shaw, P. (2014). “*Graphic Design*”: *A brief terminological history*, www.paulshawletterdesign.com/2014/06/graphic-design-a-brief-terminological-history/.

³ Bush, Anne. (n.d.) *Double Vision: Graphic Design criticism and the Question of Authority*, in Laranjo, Francisco, *Modes of Criticism 2: Critique of Method*. Portugal: Gráfica Maiadouro. pp. 9–24

For information about Graphic Design Educators' Network, or to participate in its activities, use the following communication platforms:

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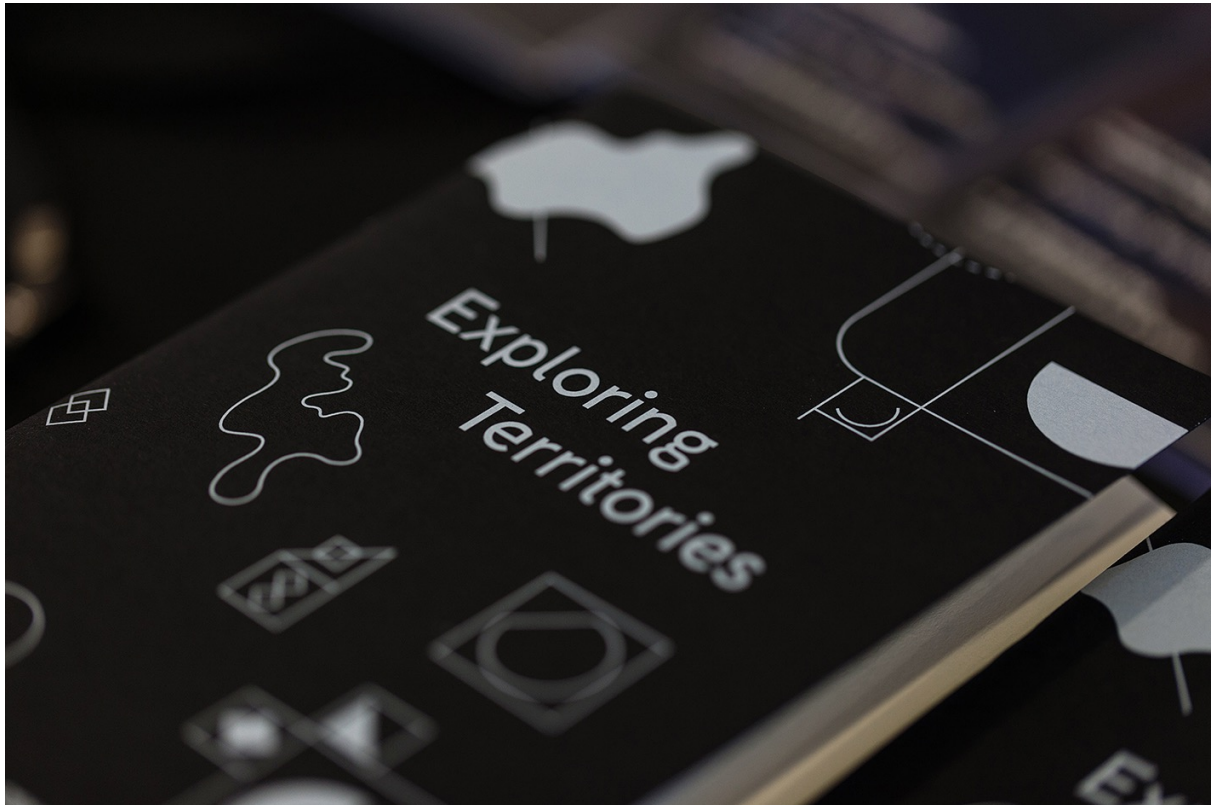


Figure 1: Programme for *Exploring Territories: Mapping the Terrain of Graphic Design Education*, 8–9 September 2016, Cardiff School of Art and Design. Design: Textbook Studio (<http://www.textbook.studio>).



Figure 2: Posters on display at *Exploring Territories*. Design: Textbook Studio (<http://www.textbook.studio>).



Figure 3: David Wrenne (Cardiff School of Art and Design) and Laura Walker (Arts University Bournemouth) review the programme for which sessions to attend.



Figure 4: Tracey Waller (Camberwell College of Arts CCW, UAL) explaining how a 'studio within a studio' works for students at Camberwell, as part of her keynote with colleague Daryll Clifton and Robert Sollis (Europa).



Figure 5: Jamie Steane from Nothumbria University addressing keynote speakers from the audience.

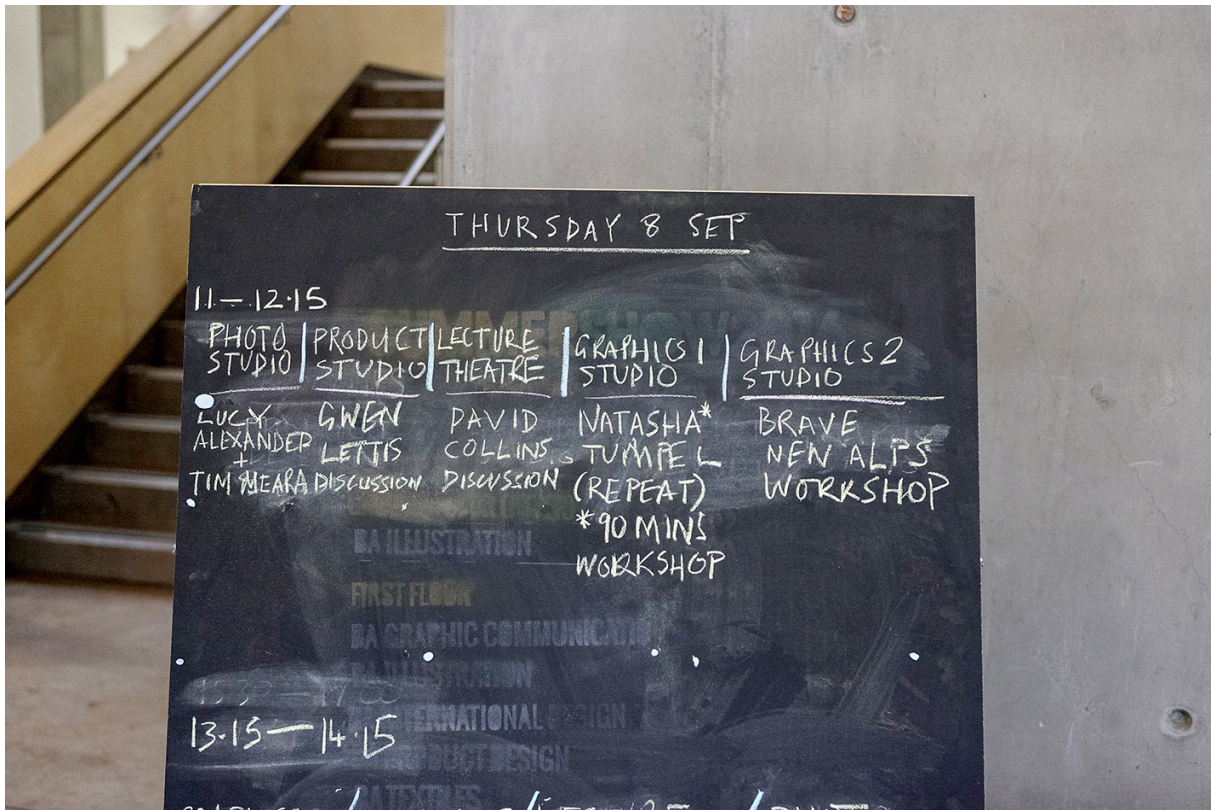


Figure 6: After the first keynote, the parallel sessions get underway.



Figure 7: Bianca Elzenbaumer and Fabio Franz of Brave New Alps engage participants in their workshop on labour politics, power structures and hidden economies of design.



Figure 8: An animated Derek Yates (Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton) in conversation with Mat Heidl of Moving Brands, about open ended, prototype driven, collaborative enquiry. And failure!



Figure 9: Mike O'Shaughnessy, Laura Parke (both Liverpool John Moores University) and Jonathan Baldwin (University of South Wales) exchange their ideas.



Figure 10: Paper play in Natascha Trumpel's Visual Dialogues workshop – so popular it had to run twice.