



# A GIFT FROM US TO YOU



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pressing  
matters

CELEBRATING MODERN PRINTMAKING

# Keepsakes

BY PAUL FARRELL

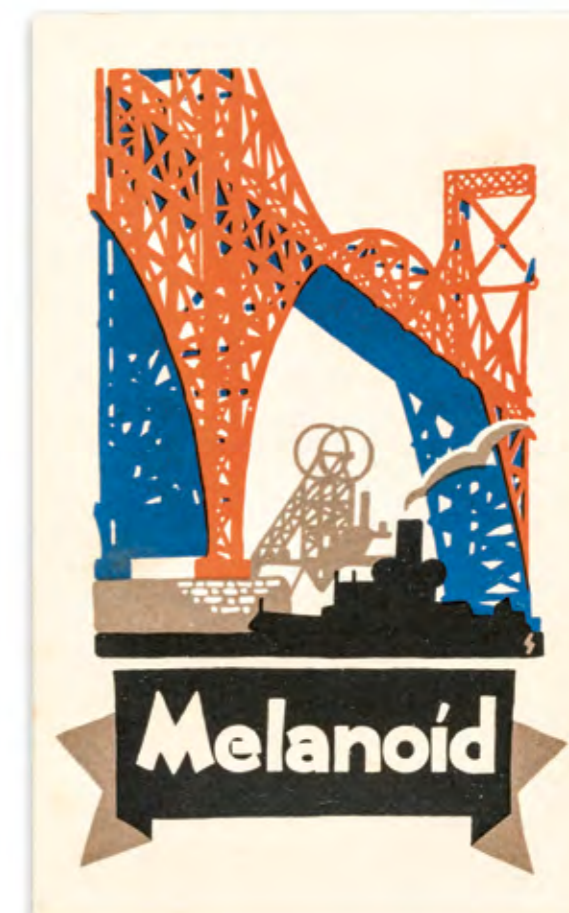
Photos by JO HOUNSOME

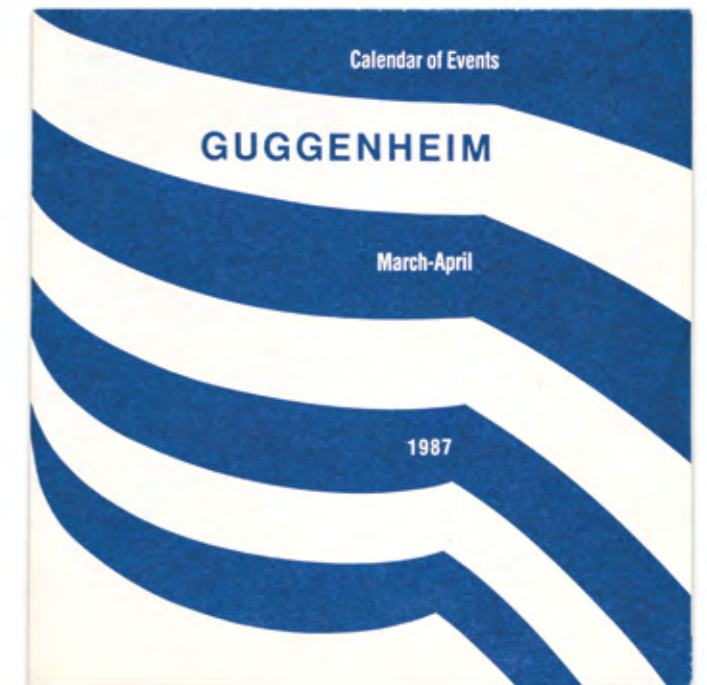
I'm like a designer magpie when it comes to printed ephemera. You could call it an addiction or disease, as I will tear, fold, snap, swap, buy and 'borrow' every spied printed jewel. This condition started when I was a stamp collector and would visit stamp fairs at scout huts and church halls with my father. Most items were too good to leave behind and had to be added to my collection.

The printed list reads: postage stamps, luggage labels, toy packaging, poster stamps, stationery, leaflets, timetables, manuals, tickets, posters, book covers, tear sheets, colour swatches, adverts, games, maps and charts and so on.

I believe each time that the piece of ephemera will be valuable reference for future work and certainly worth keeping as an example of fine early printing methods. The former is never true as each new project has its own requirements and you end up looking elsewhere. I guess it's a case of wanting to own the item and keep it safe and flat in a box that will never see the light of day.

One exception to the rule is my Britains African Elephant box. This and the toy era of the mid 70s were an inspiration. It was all about bold, simple pattern, shape and colour. There was not too much detail, product was illustrated simply and soberingly when compared to the saturation of all things that exists today. To have and to hold this example and others is very important - it is pure attraction, nostalgia and a comfort. **T**



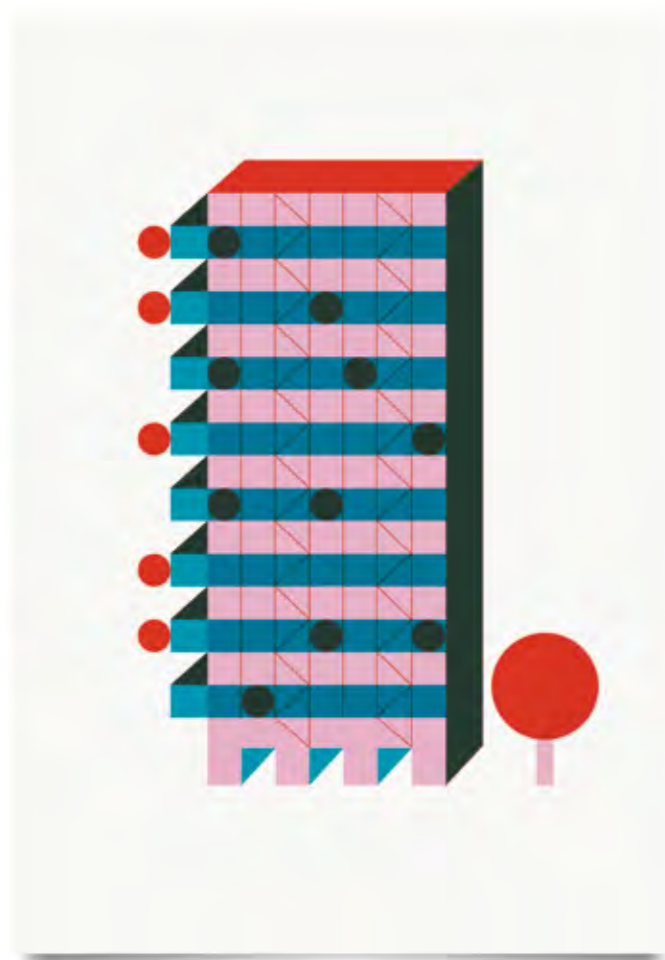




**PAUL FARRELL** is an illustrator, printmaker and designer based in Newport, Wales. His bold, colourful, graphic style is inspired by shape and colour and an interest in graphic arts and nature. Before concentrating on a solo career, Paul had worked as a graphic designer in London for 20 years.

He is the author of *Great Britain in Colour* published by Boxtree, an imprint of PanMacmillan. Paul divides his time between printmaking and designing new work at his studio.

[WWW.PAUL-FARRELL.CO.UK](http://WWW.PAUL-FARRELL.CO.UK)



# A TALE OF TWO PRESSES

**IT WAS 21 NOVEMBER 1989.** The day that Edward Bawden died. I was working as a freelance designer in a West London studio. My illustrator colleague AB who worked in the same room, recognising the demise of our great printmaking hero, said "I wonder who gets his press now?" We had both grown up at college with printing presses and were still fascinated by them. "I wouldn't mind having it" I remarked and returned to my layout pad.

Later that morning and thinking no more about it, AB appeared with a copy of Exchange & Mart. Bright yellow and quite thick, this was the go-to publication for all items for sale long before eBay.

"There's two presses advertised here," AB announced, thumbing through the pages. An Albion in South London and a Columbian in Norfolk. AB lived in Norfolk and worked in London during the week. I lived in West London. So we agreed that he would go back to Norfolk the following weekend and view the Columbian and I would go and view the Albion in London.

On Saturday morning I arrived at the appointed address for the Columbian. It was an old garage and car repair shop from way back in the forties. The elderly owner said that back in the days of seaside outings they had a charabanc and would organise trips as a sideline to the garage business. They printed the posters and leaflets advertising the trips on the garage premises. And sure enough in the corner recesses of the building, lurking behind oily jacks, tyres and the inspection pit, stood a grubby but magnificent Albion press. Next to it was a full cabinet of wooden poster type. There were even a few old posters shoved under the platen announcing "Day out to Margate" and "Southend on Sea for 2/6". After a none-too-expert inspection I left the owner saying I was viewing it for a friend and would be in touch. "Yes... I see," he replied. Outside I was excited and worried that somebody else might get in before me and snap it up. But it was 1989 and printmaking was not the niche craft it was to become today. But it was certainly too good a thing to miss out on.

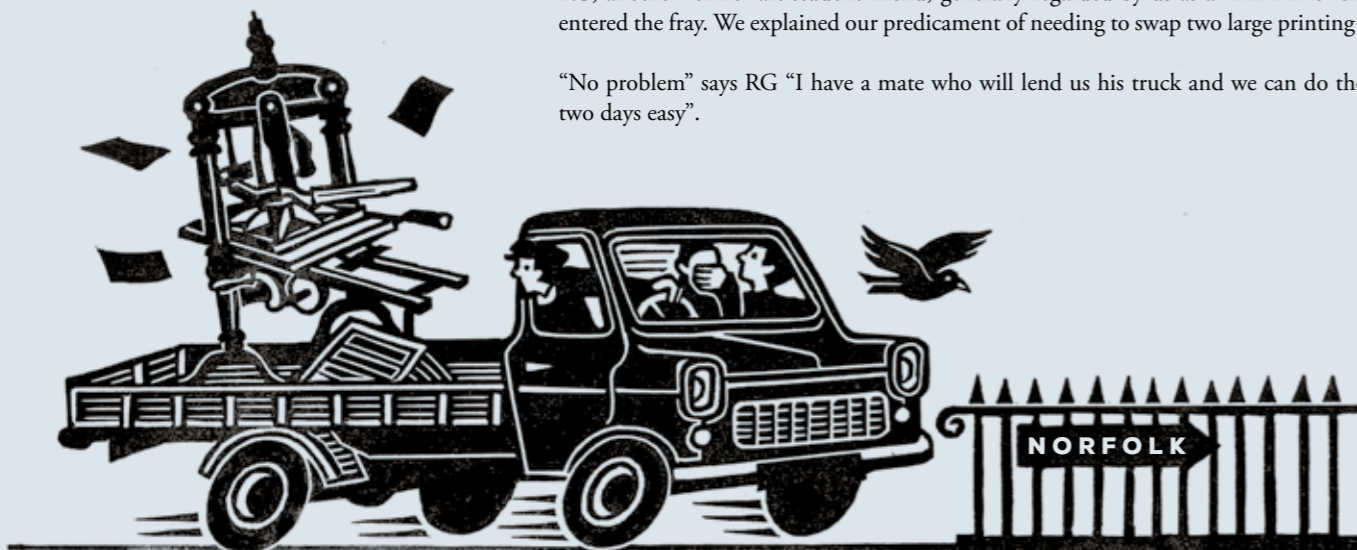
Meanwhile back in Norfolk AB was doing his recce of the Columbian. It was housed in a disused ballroom in Cromer and had been restored to its former black and gold beauty by an eccentric ex-Mayor of the town. He lived in the ballroom amongst a whole collection of curios. But the Columbian was the real deal.

So back in the studio on Monday AB and I compared notes. We agreed we had to have them. Naturally things being what they are, with no logic or forethought, AB opted for the Albion and I decided on the Columbian.

So we put in our offers which were accepted; paying as much with our hearts as our wallets. So we became the proud owners of two heavy cast iron printing presses. One in London that needed to be in Norfolk and one in Norfolk that needed to be in London. This was not untypical of the way things panned out for freelance designers in the eighties.

So how to get the operation carried out? And here enters the third member of the conspiracy. RG, another former art student friend, generally regarded by us as a "Mr Fix it" character, entered the fray. We explained our predicament of needing to swap two large printing presses.

"No problem" says RG "I have a mate who will lend us his truck and we can do the job in two days easy".



**"IT WAS GETTING DARK, AND WE WANTED TO GET TO AB'S COTTAGE TO OFFLOAD THE ALBION. AND GET TO THE PUB..."**

"I'll drive it" says RG.

"Do you drive lorries?" I said

"Not yet, but I drive my old Morgan three-wheeler."

So after a bit of negotiating and planning the day arrived and AB and I were picked up by RG, wrestling with an ancient flat bed Transit. It had a distinct list to one side at the rear. We chugged over to South London where the Albion lived. At the garage I expected the owner to have disassembled the press into its main components which we could manhandle onto the truck. But there stood the Albion in all its fully assembled glory.

"We need to get it onto the truck" I said.

"Yes that's fine" replied the proprietor. And right on cue, an old forklift trundled out of the shadows and headed for the Albion.

After many heart-stopping attempts to lift the press, not knowing quite where to position the forks, the driver swept it up and in one surge sped to the side of the truck and deposited it with a loud crash on the side of the flat bed. The side with the list. So the truck with its Albion on board was at a sharp 45-degree angle.

"There you go," said the garage man and disappeared into his office. We managed to persuade the forklift driver to manoeuvre the Albion around to a slightly less violent angle nearer to the centre of the truck. Luckily RG's mate had supplied plenty of webbing ties so with a cat's cradle of lashings all round the press, we gingerly drove out into the traffic, the full case of type on the other side at the back to hopefully add a bit of balance.

The journey to Norfolk was a nervy affair. The load moved. We squirmed.

"What's it driving like, RG?"

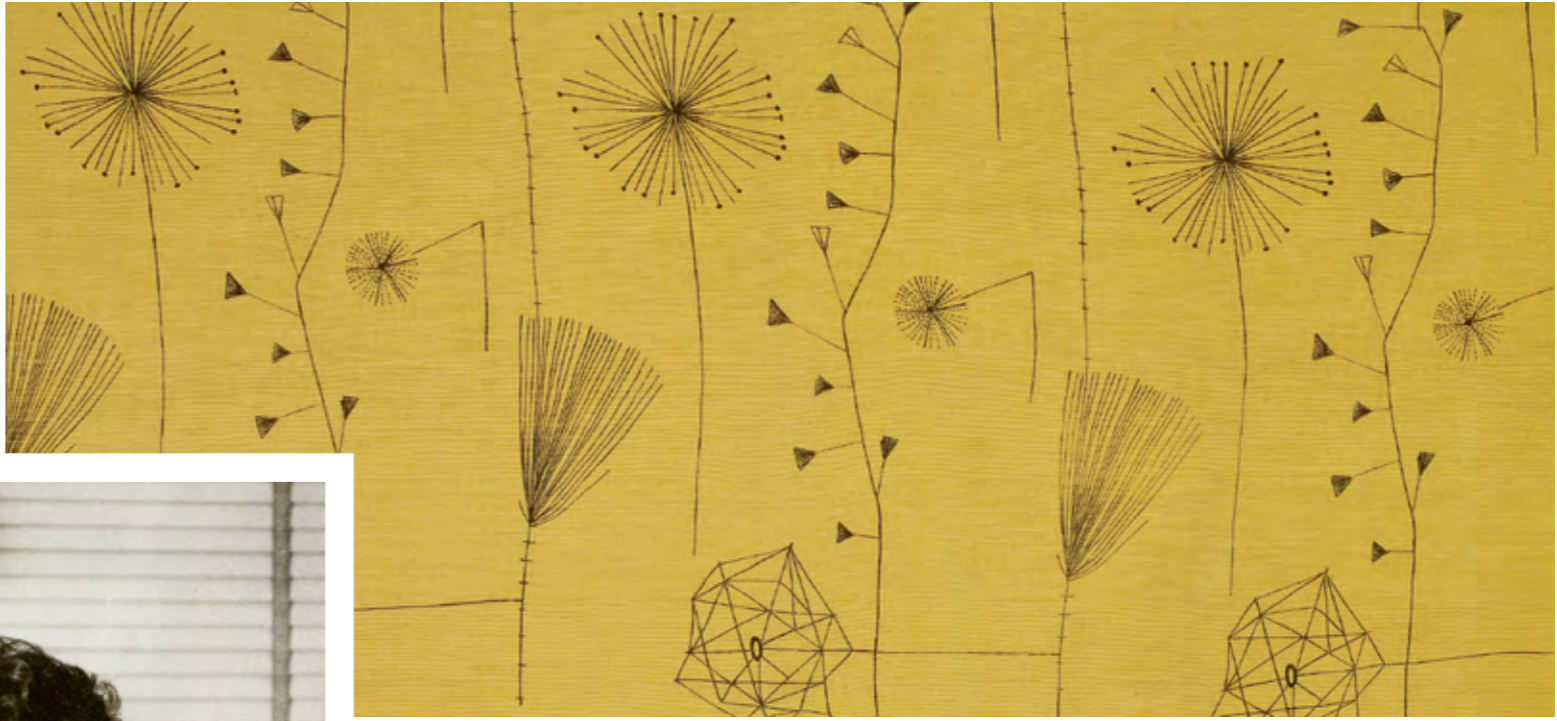
"It pulls on the steering a lot to one side and the brakes don't respond too well."

Every little car that passed us was a potential flattening candidate. Gradually the Albion was sliding but gradually we got nearer and nearer to Cromer. Yes, we had decided to pick up the Columbian with the Albion still on board.

At the ballroom, His Worship the Mayor welcomed us in and diverted us with all his many curios on display including a large model railway. Happily he had taken the Columbian apart so all four of us could lift the components - beam, platen, staple etc onto a seriously overloaded Transit. We hoped it might even out the list. It didn't. But it was getting dark, and we wanted to get to AB's cottage to offload the Albion. And get to the pub.

Somehow the truck got to the cottage. Very flat, Norfolk. And in a darkening garden we took off the parts of the Albion that would easily unbolt and then with the aid of a local Norfolk neighbour and his block and tackle equipment we lowered the Albion staple section onto terra firma and safety. These presses are seriously heavy and we had no experience or know-how of how to move them. I have moved my Columbian several times since but more recently have wisely relied on Giles from AMR to move it to its current resting place in Kent.

Needless to say, we breezed back to London with the Columbian strapped to the truck. As RG exclaimed as we zoomed down the M11 - "List? - What list?"



# Quality



Lucienne Day's iconic hand-drawn screenprinted textiles are much mimicked, but never bettered. "Her creativity and her integrity shine through", explains her daughter, *Paula Day*.

Lucienne saw this as an opportunity to move a design forward and stay fresh. "You can see by studying her work that her style changed all the time – you can date a design to within a year or two, just by the style. I think that's a testament to her creativity and integrity – she'd never have wanted to churn out the same old thing just because she thought it might sell", says Paula proudly.

Lucienne started to develop her unique process in college, on a course that allowed her the freedom and time to explore various screenprinting techniques. "My mother trained in Printed Textiles at the Royal College of Art from 1937-1940. The training was quite practical – she screenprinted all the designs for her diploma show by hand. Of course, her career was in industrial design, so all her mature textiles were manufactured and printed by her clients' companies."

Her textiles often include cut shapes, line drawings and monoprinted elements, which carry with them a sense of play and freedom. Developing her own visual approach was just as important as a client brief, Paula explains. "My mother used a wide variety of techniques to create the artwork for her printed textiles. She'd have created sketches before she evolved the final design, which was then worked up as presentation artwork by her assistant. For over 20 years she produced an annual collection of textiles for Heal's. I suspect she developed designs which interested her at the time, rather than working to any specific commission."

In the early 1950s Heal's screenprinted all her textiles. Later in the decade, as sales increased, they began to rotary-print the fabrics. This process was more expensive to set up but lower prices could be achieved for a big print run. As more designs were created, variants on a theme would sometimes emerge, but

Lucienne designed annual collections for Heal's from 1952 to 1975. She also designed furnishing fabrics for many other companies, including Edinburgh Weavers, British Celanese and Cavendish Textiles. She also worked on a couple of pieces for Liberty. "She only did two designs for them – a dress fabric in 1953 and a furnishing fabric in 1954," says Paula. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Lucienne went on to design wallpapers and carpets for several companies, as well as china tableware for Rosenthal. Once she had established her reputation, she became a highly sought-after, celebrity designer, allowing her to work only with companies who respected her work and her creative freedom.

Surprisingly, Lucienne's textile work only crossed paths with that of her husband, Robin Day, on a few larger projects. On the whole, the couple worked separately and for different clients in their respective fields – Robin in 3D design, especially furniture, and Lucienne in pattern design for many applications, but especially textiles. "They were jointly appointed to design aircraft interiors for BOAC in the 1960s, and as joint Design Consultants to the John Lewis Partnership between 1962 and 1987. I believe that, as a practicing interior designer, my father took the lead," Paula notes.

With two highly creative and driven parents, one can imagine it must have been a juggle to get a work/life balance. "I was born in 1954 so I grew up in the

# Endures

Sun image photographed by Mark Whitfield  
All other images © The Robin & Lucienne Day Foundation



**“My mother’s designs jump out at you – they’re dynamic, powerful and original.”**

PAULA DAY

decades when they were both busiest. My mother ran everything – the house, the office – as well as pursuing her career. She did this by employing a nanny to look after me and domestic staff to do the cleaning and cooking on weekday evenings. In 1964, they started to rent a cottage in the woods of West Sussex. We spent every weekend there, my mother gardening, my father walking and logging for the wood-burner. So from then on we had a family home quite separate from their work,” Paula remembers.

Lucienne though, continued working into her later years, focusing mainly on one-off hand-stitched wall hangings. Paula explains: “In the mid-1970s my mother very consciously gave up industrial design, as she saw the prevailing fashion for nostalgic Victoriana as a retreat from Modernism – something she could not espouse. So she began to explore and devise a new textile medium she named ‘silk mosaics’”. These were one-off, hand-stitched wall hangings made up from 1cm squares of richly-coloured silk, ranging in size from small pieces which were usually purchased at exhibitions for display in domestic interiors, to large architectural commissions. This dramatic move from industrial design to ‘craft’ “amounted to a second career, which she began when she was in her 60s – a brave move,” Paula says.

The Robin and Lucienne Day Foundation, the design education charity Paula set up in 2012, has been celebrating Lucienne’s centenary with a year-long nationwide programme of exhibitions, events, awards and product launches held in collaboration with over 20 partner organisations. A touring exhibition, *Lucienne Day: Living Design*, consists of a photographic account of her prestigious career and a display of Lucienne Day designs that are currently in production. It’s a real joy to see together, as Paula explains. “The idea was to demonstrate the continuing vitality of my mother’s design legacy, and the magnificent reproductions of twelve of her textile designs do just that – they look incredibly vibrant.”

It’s also interesting to consider how an artist’s work and legacy live on. Paula tells us how her mother’s work continues to find a place in the hearts of new audiences. “The Foundation’s objective is to further public knowledge of my parents’ design legacies. We do that through an ongoing programme of exhibitions and other events, by continual development and expansion of our digital archive of Robin and Lucienne Day design images, and by design licensing. This latter is important because, however much people read about or visit exhibitions of my parents’ work, they will gain a far deeper appreciation of it if they can use and enjoy authentic new productions of the designs in their own homes.”

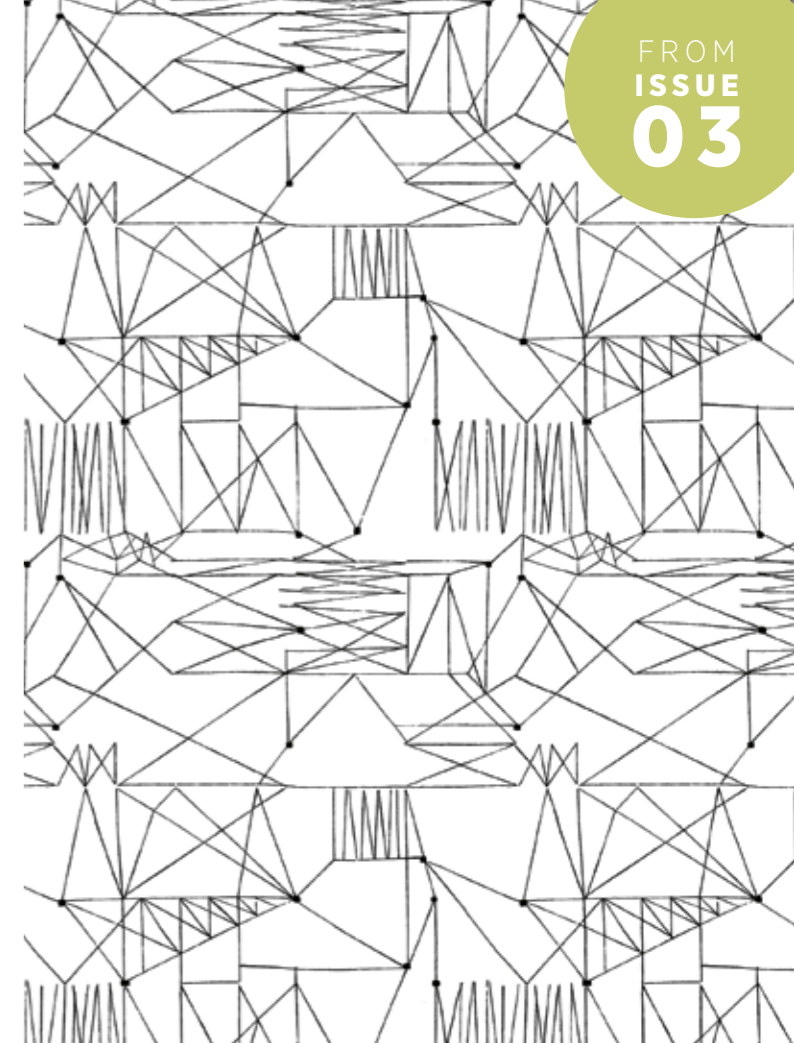
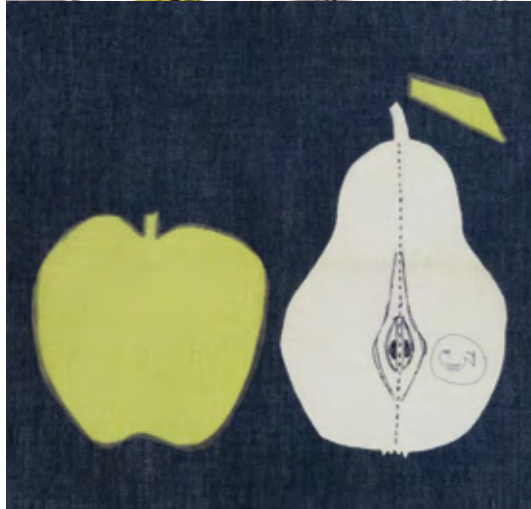
Mid-century modern is the ‘go to’ style and buzzword in textile design these days, with a wealth of ‘inspired by’ works taking their place next to originals such as Lucienne’s. However, as Paula explains, it’s a case of presenting and protecting Lucienne’s work and letting its originality and quality stand out. “We have a very clear endorsement policy for new productions of my mother’s designs, and we’ll only license and endorse as ‘Lucienne Day designs’ products which are as true as possible (with today’s production methods, materials, dyes and so on) to her actual designs. Of course, what is known as ‘mid-century’ or ‘retro’ style is very fashionable. But I think most of it looks very weak when seen beside my mother’s actual designs. They jump out at you – dynamic, powerful, original. They express the period in which they were created, but also transcend it because of their sheer artistic quality.”

The word ‘classic’ is used too much these days, but there’s no denying Lucienne’s work has an enduring quality and an engaging playfulness that’s welcome in any era. **T**

A special thanks to Paula Day for kindly offering her time and the brilliant insights she helped bring to this article • [www.robinandlucienedayfoundation.org](http://www.robinandlucienedayfoundation.org)

*Lucienne Day: Living Design* was on at New Brewery Arts in Cirencester from 17 March to 20 May 2018 • [www.newbreweryarts.org.uk](http://www.newbreweryarts.org.uk)

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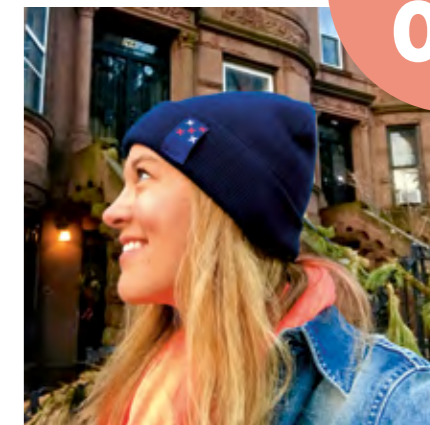


FROM  
ISSUE  
03





Collagraph artist  
*Holly Brown* finds **THE**  
her inspiration **ART OF**  
around every **LOOKING**  
corner in **UP**  
New York City.



She talks us through her process and how she came to print on the most common of materials, denim.



I have been making prints for over 20 years now. I was first exposed to etching as a high school student in the early 1990s when my art teacher allowed me to etch details with acid into a copper pin I was making of a lizard. I was immediately mesmerised by the reaction of the metal. While at Syracuse University in New York, etching and mezzotint were my main processes. I also developed a liking for working with layered fiberboard (book board) which would later become my collagraph process. I culminated my studies there with a project in which I collaborated with a poet, a book artist and a letterpress expert. I didn't realise it at the time but the idea of collaboration would become a key part of the rest of my life as a printmaker and artist.

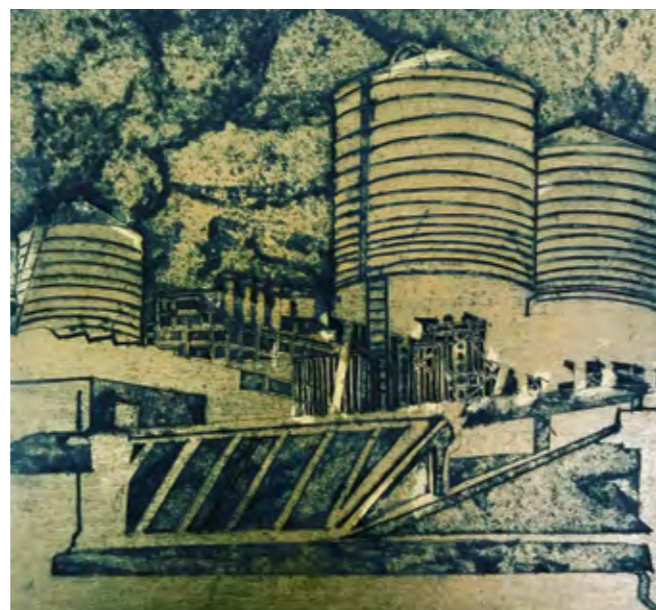
indestructible and I have printed plates over 50 times with this coating. A turning point came for me in the summer of 2016, when a solo show was approaching at a denim boutique (called Ray Brandstore) located in Delft, Netherlands. During a conversation about sustainability the owner Ray van Uffelen suggested I try printing on recycled jeans he'd been collecting in his shop. I was immediately intrigued.

Inherently drawn to architecture and strong black and white photography, I began to develop my personal imagery and collagraph process. Living in NYC for almost 20 years now, I find inspiration around every corner, down alleyways, and by constantly looking up. One of my favourite ways to find new ideas is to get lost in my own city, using my iPhone like a portable photo sketchbook.

With my images already being so urban and industrial, what better material than denim to give a try – a material for all people. The first prints were made at the studio Grafische Werkplaats in The Hague, Netherlands – an amazing collaborative studio that has become a second home for me, as I work from there several times a year. The reaction of the oil-based ink to the denim was fantastic, the wear patterns of the denim were a perfect juxtaposition for the values in my images and the ink took on a more velvety texture than it had on paper. I was totally hooked. I came back to Brooklyn with a new passion, to print on as much re-purposed denim as I could get my hands on.

**“The idea of creating a denim printed handbag really developed quite organically. I was taken with the idea of a portable print.”**

HOLLY BROWN



I tend to work on a series of images, carving multiple plates at one time. I tear away the layers of the board to create the range of values. Occasionally, I also add things to the surface but for the most part my plates are carved reductively.

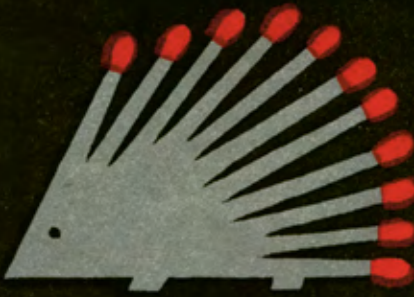
Once I have a few photos I bring them into Photoshop, flip the image, print them and use them to create a drawing on the board. I work on .12" thick Davey book board. It's a compressed, layered board that is made from recycled fibers and is biodegradable. I carve every line, angle and detail with an X-acto knife. My main tools are the knife, a ruler and, of course, my hands. I keep a small bottle of glue close by for any cuts that need repair. It's taken me quite a long time to develop a feel for the board, but now I am able to determine the effect I will likely get (on touching the various board depths and textures) when it goes through the press. Once the plate is carved, which can take many hours, I coat the surface with a product I found in the Netherlands called Jaklak – it's basically a lacquer for boats. The stuff is virtually

The idea of creating a denim printed handbag really developed quite organically. I was taken with the idea of a portable print. I started making prototypes in my home studio and they went down really well when I shared them with people. Fast forward to summer 2017, I bought a larger used press from the school I teach at here in NYC and decided to pursue my passion of doing a limited edition bag. I soon found myself in the midst of an even bigger collaboration this time around, hiring a factory here in NYC to sew, an artist to fabricate the hardware and myself to print one by one each piece of denim. The bags are currently in production and I can hardly wait to see what's next. I am also working with a company called Officina 39 in Italy to produce sustainable inks from a denim pigment they have created – it's completely made from denim waste. I'm enjoying my collaborations with brands that share my passion for sustainability in art. **T**

As well as creating her denim prints and handbags as Clockworks Press, Holly teaches art at Convent of the Sacred Heart, NYC and runs printmaking workshops at Atelier Indrukweekend in the Netherlands. [www.hollyebrown.com](http://www.hollyebrown.com)







# MATCH BOX MAGIC



There was a time when you wouldn't want to be caught out without a light. Now we are grateful for less smoking and more convenient appliances, but with the decline in the use of matches, we say goodbye to that little bit of ephemeral design tucked away in our pockets or lying patiently on the coffee table. During the mid-nineteenth century the safety match as we know it first came into common use. A phosphorous-free match that could only ignite against a specially prepared surface. Match factories steadily began to spring up around the world, with the successful ones (and the ones that didn't burn down) soon becoming household names.

Early litho-printed matchbox labels concentrated on instructions for lighting a match and once people got the hang of that, the space previously used to inform and educate started to be used in a more creative way. Some simply decorated to delight, but more often than not, they remained pretty traditional (especially British designs, communicating their trustworthy brand and often just featured the maker's logo).

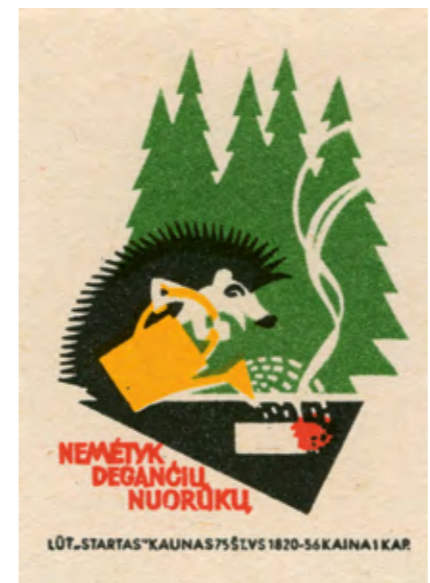
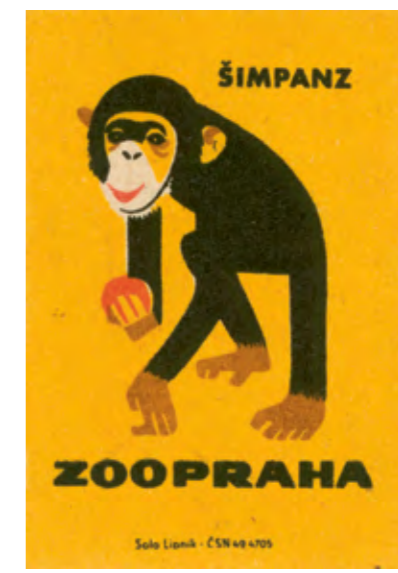
On first encountering the explosive designs of post-war labels from the Eastern Bloc, they seemed to come from another world. As one might expect, they showed images of power and revolution, industry and national pride – however, public service information such as health and hygiene, money saving, alcohol abuse and road safety all found a tiny canvas on these boxes over the years. These messages were dispatched through eye-catching mid-century illustrations, bold contemporary design and bright, often limited colour palettes. They are not only a delight for collectors – and an inspiration for printmakers creating their own bold prints today – they also leave behind an extraordinary and important social archive.

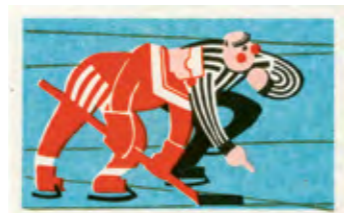
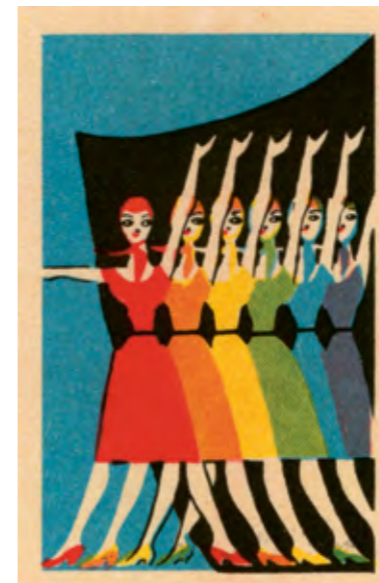
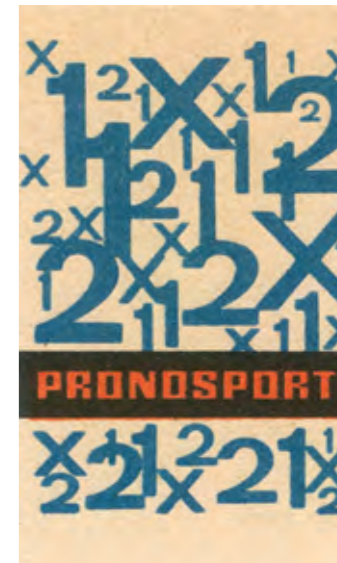
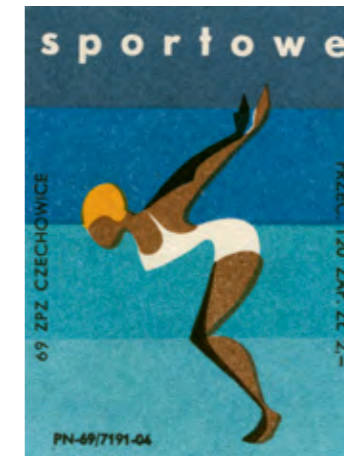
My interest in design and history led to this collection; how label design and illustration could reach a mass audience and yet remain under-acclaimed has always fascinated me. I'd love to thank the unknown artists and designers for their extraordinary work, for bringing a tiny piece of paper to life and for making me smile. **T**



**JANE MCDEVITT** is a collector of vintage Eastern Bloc matchbox labels (and skulls, it seems). Alongside Neal Whittington of *Present & Correct*, she has created a brilliant book called *Matchbloc*, which is available now from [www.presentandcorrect.com](http://www.presentandcorrect.com)

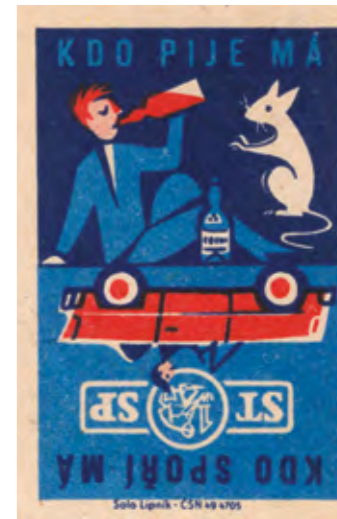
**MATCHBLOC**





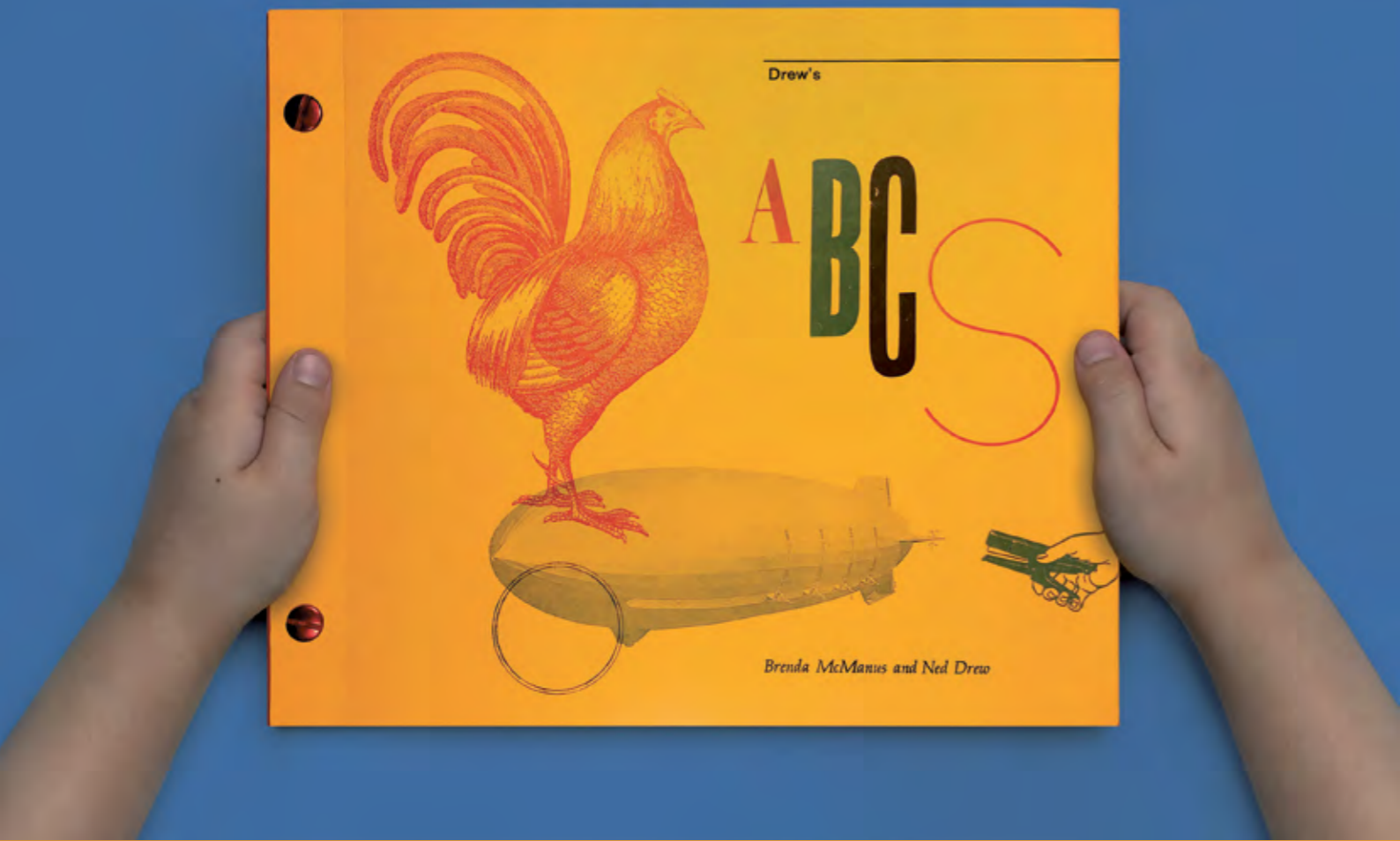
"I'd love to thank the unknown artists and designers for their extraordinary work, for bringing a tiny piece of paper to life and for making me smile."

JANE MCDEVITT



# WORDS & pictures

Words by **JAKE KENNEDY**  
Photos by **ANTHONY ALVAREZ**



Letterpress was always intended to educate and inform. But now, a New York couple have utilised it in a book initially aimed at the young – but with a direct appeal to printers of all ages.

**B**renda McManus and Ned Drew are the founding partners of BRED, a collaborative design lab in New York. Education is key to their partnership, and specifically how it can be used in the creative industries. But refreshingly, that mission statement is kept from becoming too academic by an emphasis on experimentation.

Better still, Ned and Brenda are letterpress enthusiasts, and for over 20 years they've been collecting and building a library of woodblock type, as well as line engraved images, which they recently used to stunning effect while producing a limited-edition book of ABCs inspired by their young son.

*Drew's ABCs* was a five-year project limited to a run of just 350 copies. In it, the alphabet itself comes to life on the pages, and its design is simple yet complex, visually balanced and dynamic all at once. The concept for the book, the pair reveal, is to “expose the richness of diversity within typography and celebrate its differences. It started as a personal exploration focused on our young son Drew and his introduction to letterform recognition,” they explain. “So, you have small, large, thin, thick, serifs, san serif, bold or light, and an ‘a’ is still an ‘A’...”

Identifying the subtle differences and discovering they're all different – yet the same – revealed an opportunity to celebrate and embrace diversity in a playful manner, the pair believe. “We sensed the project could expose a new audience to our shared love of history and typographic craft within a book – a medium that engenders intimate learning experiences that foster dialogue, something we as parents have a deep appreciation for.”

And so, in the spirit of the great Dr. Seuss, the book's design presents various playful tongue twisters, in an attempt to show the relationship between the letter, the word and the image. Each spread is devoted to an alliterative sentence. For example, “Peppy people perpetuate putting paper pigs past Pasadena.” Perfection!





was something we both felt was an important opportunity – most of our collaborations focus on the educational value and merits of immersive creative processes as a learning tool.”

“With that said, as anyone who teaches knows, bringing students into the process involves a lot of energy, patience and time. Some had been exposed to letterpress before, but for others it was their first experience. We assumed most would run away once they got a sense of the reality of their commitment. However, to our pleasant surprise, all became completely enamoured with the project – to the point where we had to ask them to scale back their commitment because we had too many helpers,” Brenda adds.

“We conducted a series of crash course workshops in all aspects of printing, from type-setting to colour-management, to making sure all those involved were up to a proficient skill level to print. There was always one of us on press with the students to oversee and ensure everything was on track – we were both aware that opening our collaboration to students would only be successful if the quality of work didn’t suffer,” Brenda recalls. “I don’t think there was any single experience that was more satisfying and rewarding than witnessing the bonds that developed amongst the team and the growth in confidence and skills of everyone involved in working towards our shared goal.”

Brenda and Ned, understandably proud of their achievement with the book, hope that it will have near universal appeal. *Drew’s ABCs* also serves as a tool for learning to read, using formal connections and colour to help guide the viewer through visual connections of word and image. “We believe there’s no age limit when it comes to appreciating the beauty of letterforms and craft. Our perceived audience is ages 2-100!” **T**

[www.brednation.com](http://www.brednation.com)

*This collaboration was also supported by many of our colleagues in Express Newark: a Rutgers University-Newark Community Collaboratory where the Vandercook presses are housed. Production in collaboration with our amazing students from Pace and Rutgers Universities: Dalia Abdalla, Nadya Andrianova, Flora Balla, Julia Briganti, Shawn Collins, Emily Corson, Rachel Craig, Tyren Crowley, Diana Diaz, Natalia Dymora, Ayah Elgendy, Allie Gallagher, Marilyn Gomes, Cindy Guzman, Yolanda Hung, Shaneen Johnson, Joseph Labib, Antoinette Lacy, David Lisi, Gisela Ochoa, Roshani Pise, Donald Portillo, Alexandra Pozo, Susanna Seery, Ronald Solano, and Arely Velasco.*



**“Drew’s curiosity and questions were a big influence in our design approach.”**

**NED DREW**

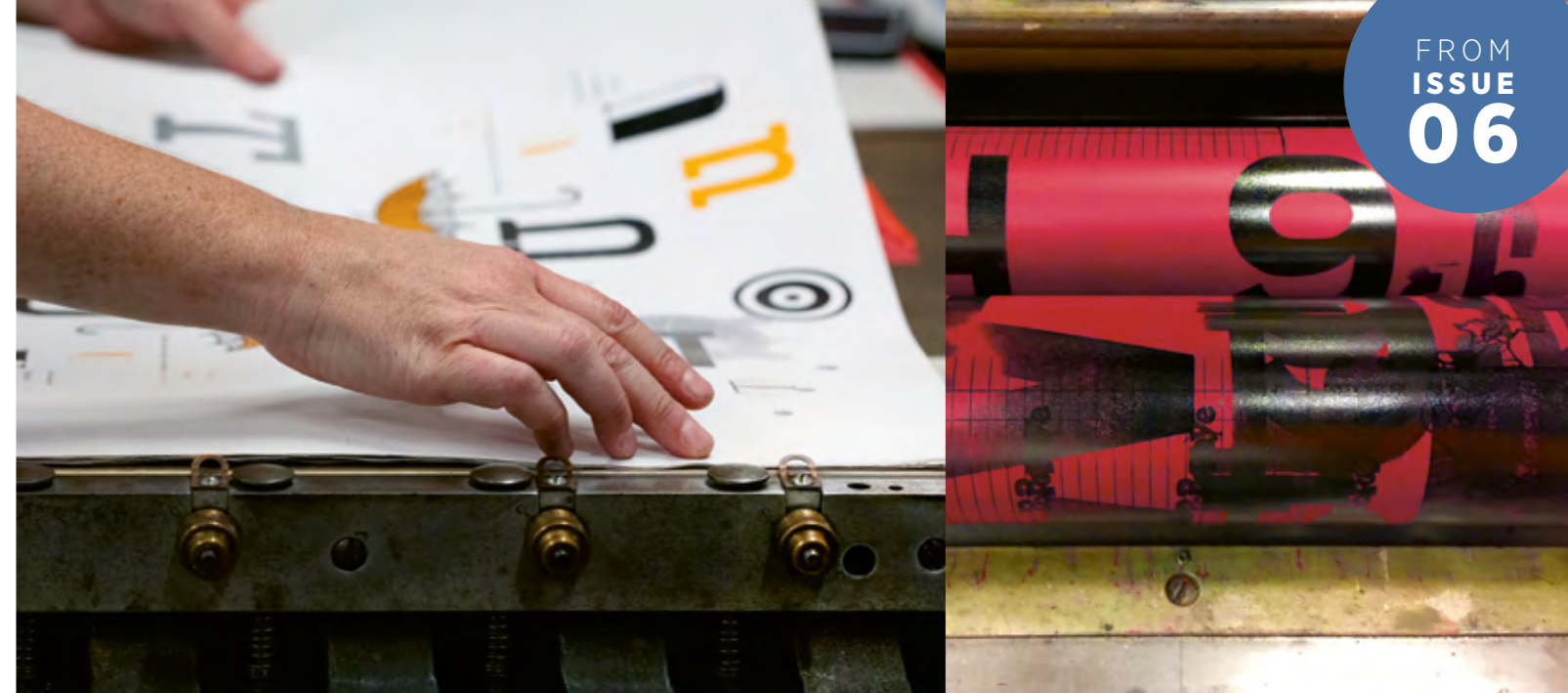
Supplementary images are also included within each spread to reinforce the relationship between sounds and image through multiple readings and visualisation. Lastly, alternative interpretations of letterforms and their design are included to provide young readers with an expanded exposure to the variety of letters that they’ll encounter in the world.

Brenda and Ned purposely chose the ABC as the subject matter, a primary colour palette and a printing process that reflected their commitment and love of these founding principles. “This perspective allows us to focus on creating parallels between the book’s design and production, and the reading and learning processes.”

Magically, the end result belies all of this preliminary graft, and is fun – and very attractive to a son who’d just entered nursery – as well as appealing to letterpress nerds. “Drew’s curiosity and questions were a big influence in our design approach. It challenged us to explore various learning processes as well as the role design could play in aiding that development and growth. We realised there were so many things we take for granted around the richness, beauty and diversity of our everyday environment,” the pair reveal.

However, the production process itself was not quite as simple. “It was a simultaneous exercise immersed in education. To pull off the production of the book, we knew that we were going to need help running two presses and that the total printing process would take months to complete.”

To further benefit from the educational opportunity of the book’s production, Brenda and Ned enlisted an army of helpers who could benefit from the process too. “We enlisted design students from both Pace University-NYC where I teach, and Rutgers-Newark, where Ned teaches,” Brenda explains. “Opening the experience up to students



Words by  
JAKE KENNEDY

Photos by  
VICTORIA MAY ROPER



Brighton-based printmaker *Will Mower* is merging the world of graphic design with tones and textures of block printing, with startlingly original results.

Experimentation is a buzzword for printer and graphic designer Will Mower, with those two fields heavily influencing his output. “Before my degree, I remember really enjoying the hands on and methodical nature of print processes like screenprinting and letterpress, but I’d never really considered printmaking as a focus of my work,” he recalls.

Will’s prints are as bold as you could imagine, playful – childlike even – or at the very least, imbued with a sense of fun and movement you associate with youth. Working from woodblocks and in bright, uncomplicated colours, the results are memorable. But they’re actually deceptively complex, as he explains. “I get a lot of ideas from just walking around and looking at bits of everyday design. When you hunt around for it you realise there are patterns and grids built into so much stuff – if I’m trying to work out how a certain idea could work, there may be a geometric design on a manhole cover or a pattern in some fencing that reveals how certain forms could work together. I can then use that as a starting point to take home and begin experimenting.





to give a sense of how much of a labour of love the process was," he explains.

After finishing the books Will even moved on to using rubber stamps instead of woodblocks. "They were far less restrictive and I could experiment a lot more with colour and overprinting, they were also double the size which meant I could start making bigger prints and think about creating more complex pieces," he says.

And of course, it comes back to experimentation too, of ideas tessellating with one another, whether expected or not. "Something I learnt due to the constructivist

"At uni I got really into the idea of exploring how play could be used as a problem solving tool and started researching creative flow and definitions of play. One thing I learnt that stuck with me was that for a successful 'play environment' you must have clearly defined boundaries or goals whilst allowing for as much flexibility within that as possible. I think you see this in a lot of good graphic design – the design projects that often really interest me are ones where a designer or studio has taken a basic idea or system and then pushed it in as many directions as possible."

Education even had a role to play in a book Will produced – *Block Art: An A-Z Of Woodblock Prints*. "After a couple of years of making graphic images and letterforms as a bit of a hobby I'd built up enough that it felt like a waste not to do something more with them," he explains. "The A-Z format seemed to make sense as it gave structure and direction to the project and I then had a chance to go back through all the artwork and consider it in a different way. It was a fun design challenge as I had to be more selective when thinking about how they would work in succession. It was also important to pair the right images with the right letters as many of them could have had a few different meanings and I wanted to make sure that the relationship was clear," he says.

As you might expect from a graphic designer, Will's approach to the book – and his prints – was meticulous. "I put a lot of time in to selecting stocks that would compliment the print textures and I printed a lot of additional stuff to make sure I had enough material to make it feel as authentic as possible. I had a rubber stamp made for the title text and avoided ever using a texture or printed element twice because I really wanted

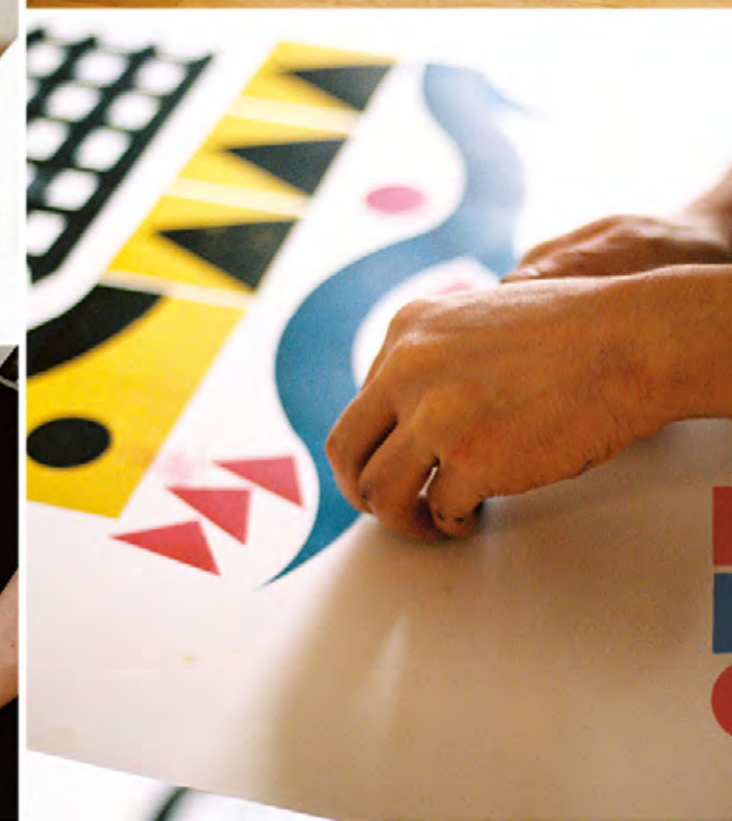
**"Early experiments have definitely helped me develop a better understanding of how forms are constructed."**

WILL MOWER

nature of the wooden blocks is that you often have to think about both the overall form of the image and how all the pieces inside it will slot together, as different arrangements of shapes can draw focus to certain elements of the design and alter the balance," Will admits. "With the rubber stamps, you don't lay out the design beforehand so it's harder to plan it – in many ways it's more interesting as you're likely to find something you wouldn't have thought of before, but I think the early experiments have definitely helped me develop a better understanding of how forms are constructed," he adds.

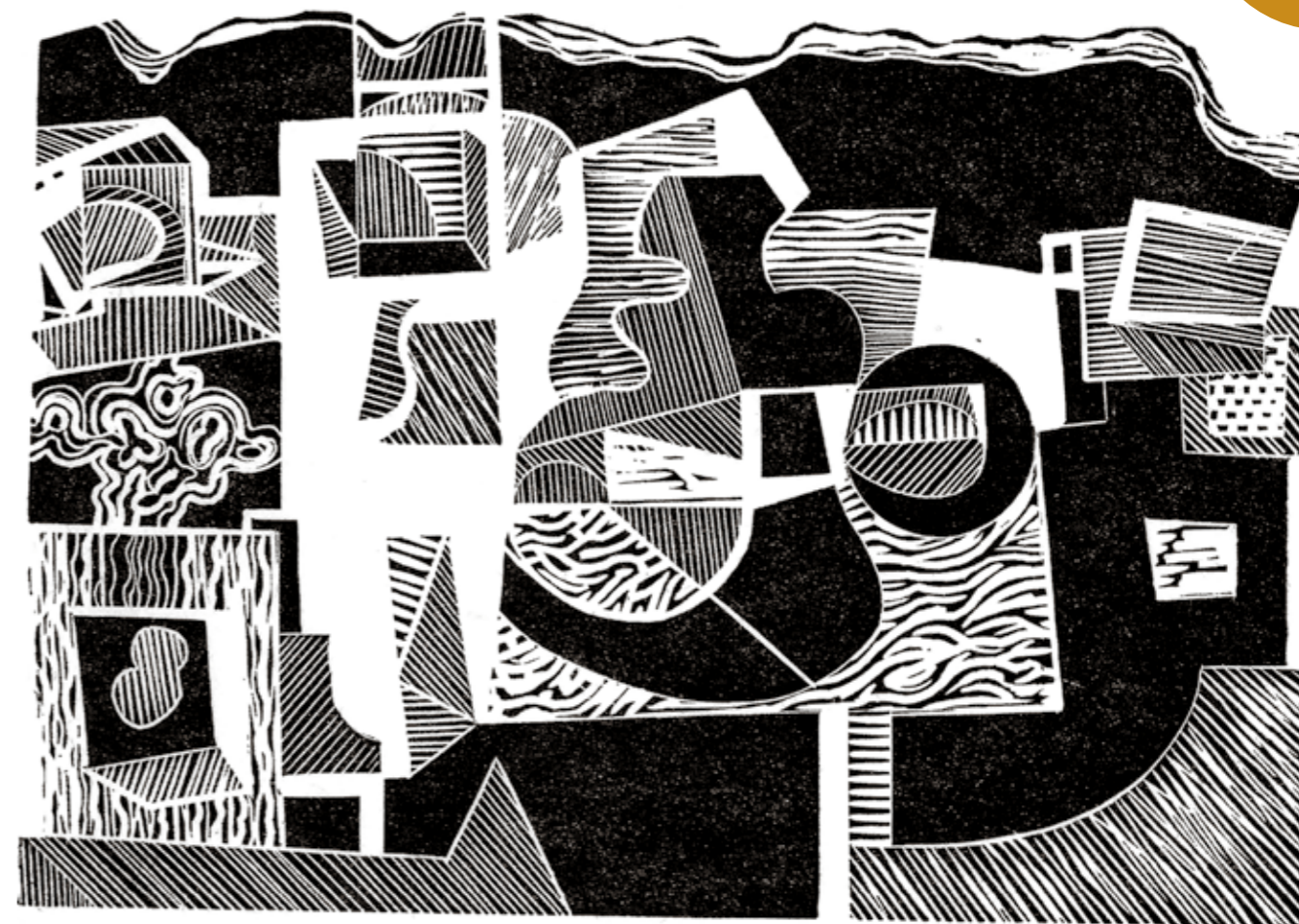
Pleasingly, as a neat way of completing the circle, Will says the printing is now influencing his graphic design. "For me, the thing I'm most set on doing this year is to start tying the printmaking back into my general design work. I love working to a brief so it would be great to start working on more commissions or bringing elements of this approach in to my commercial work. I think as a process it has a lot of potential applications and I'm very excited to keep exploring these further and seeing how far I can push it," he concludes. T

@will.mower





## The Visible Ticks of Time



*Geoffrey Wales had a clear love of the Kent coastline which influenced practically all of his prints.*

*Fellow wood engraver Jonathan Ashworth and Geoffrey's daughter Phil Wales offer two unique perspectives on the great man...*

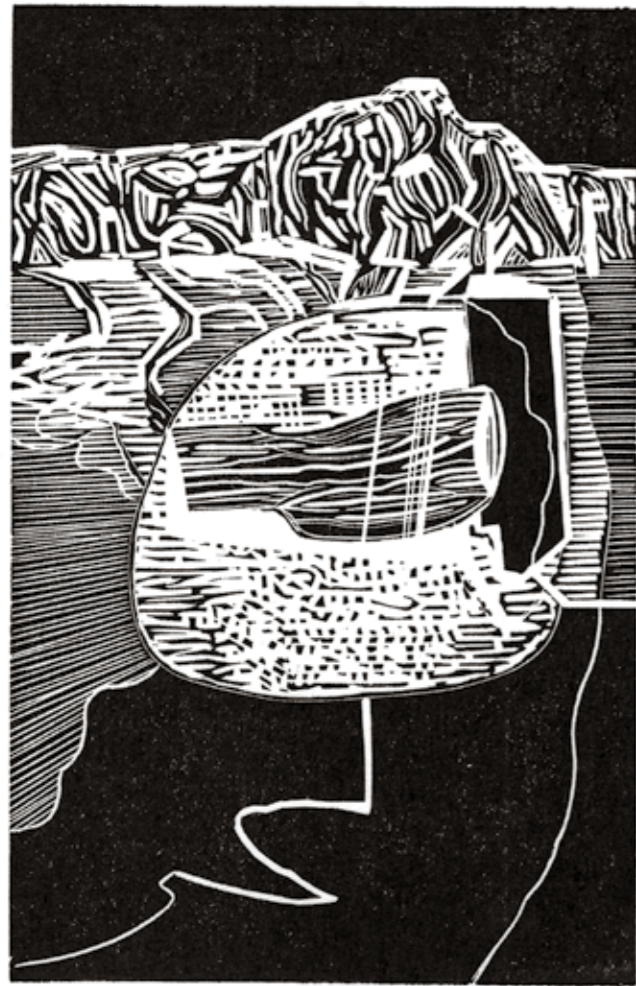
Words and photos by  
**JONATHAN ASHWORTH**

Print archive courtesy of  
**EMMA MASON PRINTS**

I met Geoffrey through the tools of his trade, through the dozens of razor sharp blades that his daughter Phil set nonchalantly on the desk one evening, spaced evenly in their protective roll of felt. These weren't anything ordinary – they were specialist tools crafted by the best Smithies. Their lengths arched gracefully, each boxwood handle slashed with a W, as though they were spellbound and protected. These tools were truly one with their owner, each truly deserving of the other.

Initially Geoffrey made illustrative works. He was taught by none other than the legendary Eric Ravillious, and the skill and understanding that were handed down are striking. From here Geoffrey took one massive leap on a springboard of imagination and ventured into image production with a character of its own. He filled piles of sketchbooks with minimal designs that escaped the need for representation, and seemed to seek a more essential unity with life. They capture feelings rather than things, the ebb and flow of emotional weather seen in energy fields of mark making and abstracted natural forms.

Try to imagine a blend of style situated between Rothko, Picasso, Hepworth and Ravillious – a style that's powerful and yet one which has been overlooked completely. Geoffrey's work is practically unknown. This was a generation of artists that was resourceful and inventive. He made blocks himself, printed all of them immaculately by hand and amassed a heap of repurposed brass and steel bookbinding stamps to punch designs into softwood printing plates.



**“How phenomenal it is to look over such phenomenal and intense works and see the arc of a journey, a lifetime of loving dedication.**

JONATHAN ASHWORTH



Analogue processes take a good deal of time compared with their digital counterparts, an aspect of making that was made visible though Geoffrey’s poetic genius. He disassembled clocks into their constituent parts so that the cogs could be converted into roulette wheels (spiked disks) which he used to roll across the surface of plates punching a trail of dots in their wake. The visible ticks of time. The brass punches that he used together with the cogs and gears of clocks allowed his imagination to flow, to produce images more speedily and spontaneously, and he didn’t break this pace to edition works.

When an image was finished Geoffrey simply took a proof and launched into the next design. This is why his family are now looking for a place to house this prolific output that was generated over a lifetime. It’s a complete treasure trove, a viewing experience that is both invigorating and inspiring. How phenomenal it is to look over such phenomenal and intense works and see the arc of a journey, a lifetime of loving dedication.

The images begin with more formal sensibilities and slowly break down into abstraction, or veer off into the realm of sculpture.

Any off-cuts of boxwood that Geoffrey had were cut into three dimensional multi-faceted runes. Most of these are small in scale. You could hold half a dozen comfortably in the palm of one hand. From these sculpted blocks he made observational drawings and prints.

To me, the prints and runes echo the coastal landscape that must have been embedded in Geoffrey’s psyche. He grew up by the coast and later lived and worked in Norfolk. In this landscape he was surrounded by the abstract detritus of the high-tide line, the smooth stones, pitted tracks in the sand, the impression of feet as they walked or ran across the surface.

Geoffrey isn’t with us anymore, but while he was he made some beautiful impressions. Enjoy the pictures and try to see more of his work, which is represented by Emma Mason gallery in Eastbourne. **T**

*Special thanks to Jonathan Ashworth for sharing his passion for Geoffrey’s work with us and for the wonderful photos. Be sure to [www.jonathanashworth.com](http://www.jonathanashworth.com) to take a look at Jonathan’s wood engravings. Geoffrey Wales is represented by Emma Mason gallery in Eastbourne. For more information visit [www.emmamason.co.uk/geoffrey-wales](http://www.emmamason.co.uk/geoffrey-wales)*



**MY FATHERS’ STORY**

by Phil Wales

My father was born in 1912, the eldest of three boys, in Margate, Kent, where his father worked in the family building business. The coastal landscape of Margate and the Isle of Thanet helped develop his lifelong interest in boats, the coast, the rocks, the flotsam and the sea – imagery which informed almost all of his work. When he left school, he first studied at Thanet School of Art. The prize money from winning a competition to design a pack of cards for Messrs De La Rue enabled him to take up a place at the RCA. Here, he was taught by Ravilious, Bawden and both Nash brothers, and encouraged to take up wood engraving. It was also where he met the painter Marjorie Skeeles, whom he later married.

Geoffrey was called up for military service in 1943 and served in the RAF from 1943-46. He eventually de-mobbed as a Flight Lieutenant. He was elected a member of the Society of Wood Engravers in 1946. In his final year at the RCA, and until the early 1950s he undertook a variety of commissioned work, some commercial, but mostly for private presses such as The Golden Cockerel Press, however he thoroughly disliked the tyranny of the deadline. Moving to a full time job teaching at Norwich Art School in 1954 enabled him to concentrate on developing his own work. This was already showing something of the later direction his work would take, in variance to the more illustrative nature of the commissioned work.

My father was completely committed to making his own work on his own terms. The medium of wood engraving allowed him to work on a small desk in the family living room, printing on the kitchen table. This belies the precision and quality of craftsmanship, as well as the quality of the image itself, that the resulting work has. From the mid 1950s, the nature of his images developed away from the figurative to a more abstract form – although he always insisted he needed a subject, and the result was a visual metaphor to express that subject. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers in 1961, always sending work to the annual exhibitions. **T**

*Read more in Hilary Chapman’s book ‘Geoffrey Wales’, edited by Simon Brett and published by the Primrose Hill Press.*







# Together in Print



Collaboration can be tricky, but two artists who discovered similarities in their work jumped at the chance. *Laura Slater* and *Mawuena Kattah*'s prints are full of a fearless creativity.



Words by **JAKE KENNEDY**

Photos by **JO CRAWFORD**



If you're going to collaborate, it helps if there's a sense of oneness arising from the results. Ultimately, the work needs to have a certain balance to it, but if there's no togetherness in the process itself, the work suffers – or simply falters.

Such harmony was achieved when printers Laura Slater, from Leeds and Mawuena Kattah, from London came to work together. "We first met in 2016 when I was invited to work along side Mawuena as a mentor for a solo project in which she developed a body of both ceramic and textile works," recalls Laura. "It gave me understanding of both the context and process underpinning Mawuena's work, highlighting the parallels in our practices. We kept in touch with each other's progress and came together in 2018 to discuss the possibility of working collaboratively," she adds.

Mawuena takes up the story: "I wanted to do something new – I like painting from fabric and showing the patterns. I enjoy making ceramics, painting on wood, painting on paper and inviting people, friends and family to share my work. Showing people how I make work and for them to keep coming back, to get to know people is also important too."

Laura is a textile designer working exclusively with hand screenprinted methods for both the production, and in many cases design of printed works on fabric. "Printmaking is integral within my practice, often employing other processes such as monoprint and collagraph as a way to develop imagery, surface and mark within my work," she says. Similarly, Mawuena has an inherent relationship with printmaking within her practice – most notably through the realisation of textile works, again using screenprint as a primary method. Mawuena's works also include monoprinted portraits, and screenprinted editions on paper. "It was the fact drawing, image making, textiles, pattern, colour and relationships are all inherent in both our works, that made it seem a natural opportunity for us to come together. We discussed what we would like to research, explore and achieve to take our work to new places and to new audiences, and shared the things each of us had to offer each other," Laura says.

The project spanned ten months, from February to November this year, across a series of venues and the artists' studios. "Mawuena is a long-standing member of the Peckham based art collective *Intoart* whose studio provides a site for ambitious production," explains Laura. "We shared our time between that studio for drawing, image making and design development, and my Leeds based studio for process-based development," she adds.

"In some ways starting the project was the most challenging aspect, as we got used to working together for the first time. Focusing on our ideas and ensuring each of our voices were heard in the collaborative process was our starting point, and from this we quickly realised how natural that process came to us. The rest of the project became a very organic process," says Laura. Mawuena agrees – "The way we work together feels natural and easy."

You might wonder where exactly a pair of established printmakers start when faced with a new collaboration. Thankfully, Laura can remember. "We began by investigating the imagery that would represent the key tools we share as practitioners – hands, eyes, figures – this was influenced by key textile works by Keith Vaughn, *Adam* (1957) and wallpaper by Niki de Saint Phalle, *Nana* (1972) which feature



**"The way we work together feels natural and easy."**

**MAWUENA KATTAH**





**“I feel there’s something powerful, fearless and immediate about the work we produce together, as it’s so intuitive and responsive to each other.”**

**LAURA SLATER**

figures, along with Mawuena’s selection of African batik fabric sourced from Brixton Market, utilising hands and fingers.

“We started creating our own motifs, using a broad range of media, ink, chinagraph, mono-print, masking fluid, pen, working solely in black and white, ready for immediate translation to silk screen. Mawuena and I are both prolific when it comes to drawing in this way, we created a huge amount of varied motifs, each working on sections of each other’s drawings, which would allow us for scope to scale, cut and collage to create our layouts for the pattern repeat and placement designs.”

The results, as you can see from this article, were extremely impactful. “I feel there’s something powerful, fearless and immediate about the work we produce together, as it’s so intuitive and responsive to each other rather than a customer or audience,” Laura says. Constrictions of time also helped, she believes. “There’s almost no time to overthink or over edit the final works and we pretty much agree on everything we make in terms of imagery, scale, colour, and composition. The imagery we’ve made together combines the ‘handwriting’ of us both, which means its visual impact shares a part of both of us.”

Both printmakers also believe they bring something of themselves to the process. For Laura, that’s technical skills such as collage, composition and design drawing, while Mawuena’s skills include narrative, representation, connections, responsive image making, a freedom of mark-making and decisiveness.

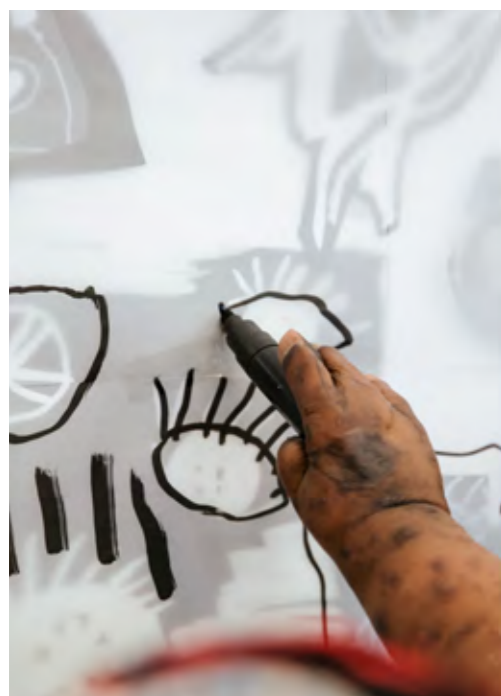
Also well worth noting is the way in which this project helps to increase the visibility of learning disabled printers and artists. “By sharing the way we work

together collaboratively as equals we’re actively challenging and contributing to the conversation around the professional practice and work produced by artists with learning disabilities,” says Laura. “We see our collaboration as an opportunity to represent diversity in the visual arts and design sector, through active change. There is an ongoing conversation with *Intoart* about the work they do with people with learning disabilities to achieve equal recognition in the world of contemporary art and design. Making and showing work, and the support to do so is essential, to embed this as best practice should be a given,” she adds.

The next step for the duo is to exhibit the fabrics Laura and Mawuena have produced together. “We’ve produced a series of large-scale collaborative printed textile works and large format edition paper works that focus on the key themes of the ‘tools’ we share,” Laura says. “As well as this we’ve both created independent textile works which focus on personal and family iconography, with Mawuena producing garments as a centrepiece. A film will also be previewed during the exhibition and collaborative products to wear and for the home will be on sale.”

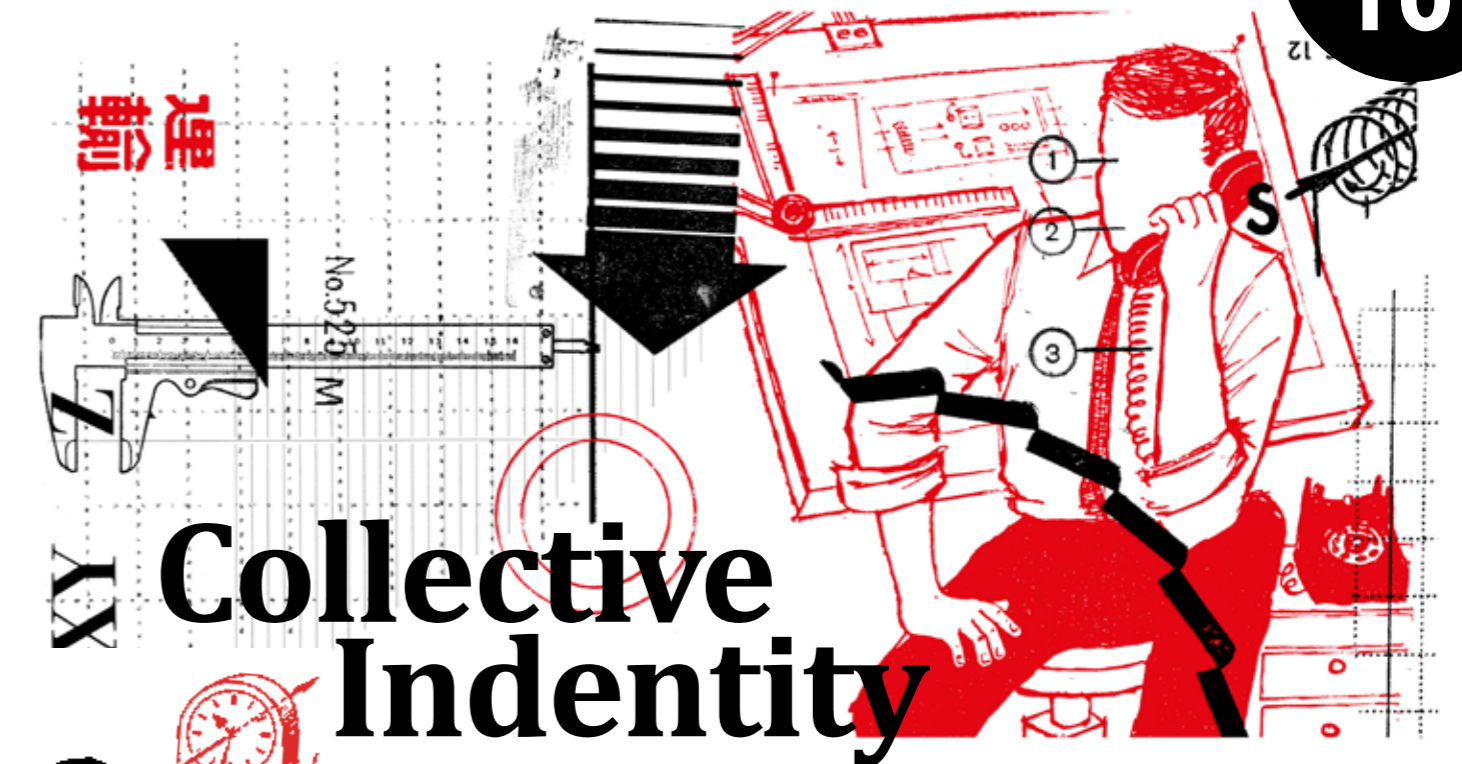
The pair are keen to keep working together, maintaining a relationship. “It’s something we’ll develop at different points alongside both our independent practices under studio name *Eye Eye*,” says Laura. “Our hope moving forward is that we can become an integral part of the conversation around diversity and representation in design and visual arts, as we believe our collaborative relationship and approach to practice is unique,” she concludes. **T**

*Laura and Mawuena's exhibition 'Eye Eye' will be on at Colours May Vary in Leeds, from 16th - 30th November • [www.lauraslater.co.uk](http://www.lauraslater.co.uk) [www.mawuenakattab.com](http://www.mawuenakattab.com)*



Words by JAKE JENNEDY

Photos courtesy of S P A



# Collective Indentity

A mysterious collective of Italian letterpress printers are pushing the boundaries and opening people's eyes to ecological issues of waste and pollution in the process.

Many printers are conscious of their impact on the environment. One collective is taking things further by using waste paper, protecting their anonymity and behaving in a way not normally associated with the careful world of print – and we love them for it.

Made up of two printing projects – 5X Letterpress and Libri Finti Clandestini – it focuses on reusing and experimentation. “We wanted to try something new and fun with letterpress,” the group say. “We wanted to awaken people’s minds to the situation of waste and over production.” Operating since 2017, each side brings something different to the table. “Each has their own expertise. 5X Letterpress has skills in printing movable type and DIY-style non-standard printing, while Libri Finti Clandestini are known for bookbinding and editorial. We collaborate and every peculiarity gets mixed to create new works.”

“Only a few people know our real identity,” the collaborative tease. In photos they’re masked, because “it’s fun to play with people, the fact we’re in masks means certain situations become possible that wouldn’t be if not.” Currently an exhibition entitled *T’ho Detto Piano* at Megazzino, an art space by Spaziene, is showing the mix of books, letterpress posters and colorful billboards the group has produced. The works appear formal, but become more subversive as they’re studied, riots of red, black and white.

The group references the work of Bruno Munari, Dada and the Fluxus movements. “Fluxus and Futurists

inspired us to be free from the norm. We do what we want with our favourite materials, whether they’re books with printed text on every single page, or a paper sculpture or unreadable poster – maybe black ink on black paper. Another good one was making movable type from hand cut cardboard.” While the collective wants to play with format and layout, they’re not working to a plan. “It’s important there isn’t one. With the prints, it’s really fun to design work with unusual techniques such as MDF panels, garden netting or card. But for the editorial, it’s essential to detach from traditional bookbinding rules. We want to experiment with new shapes, paper and engineering solutions, decontextualising the notion of a book.”

Notably, parts of the group’s exhibition uses found paper, indirectly highlighting recycling, misprinting and overproduction. “To recycle is the basis of our philosophy,” they say. “One aim is to create a book using paper we’ve found lying around – from paper mills, abandoned buildings, laboratories, letterpress printing proofs and more. Lots of time is dedicated to researching materials and ideas that are then cleaned, cut and drawn in new ways, presented as books and sketchbooks patiently assembled and hand-bound.”

The group wants to continue with the melting pot of ideas and influences, to “create something constantly new and out of scheme with the environment,” they offer. Whatever happens, it will be a bold combination of letterpress and artistic/artisanal publishing at the cutting edge. **T**

[www.5xletterpress.com](http://www.5xletterpress.com) • [www.librifinticlandestini.com](http://www.librifinticlandestini.com)

“We want to experiment with new shapes and paper engineering solutions, decontextualising the notion of a book or print.”

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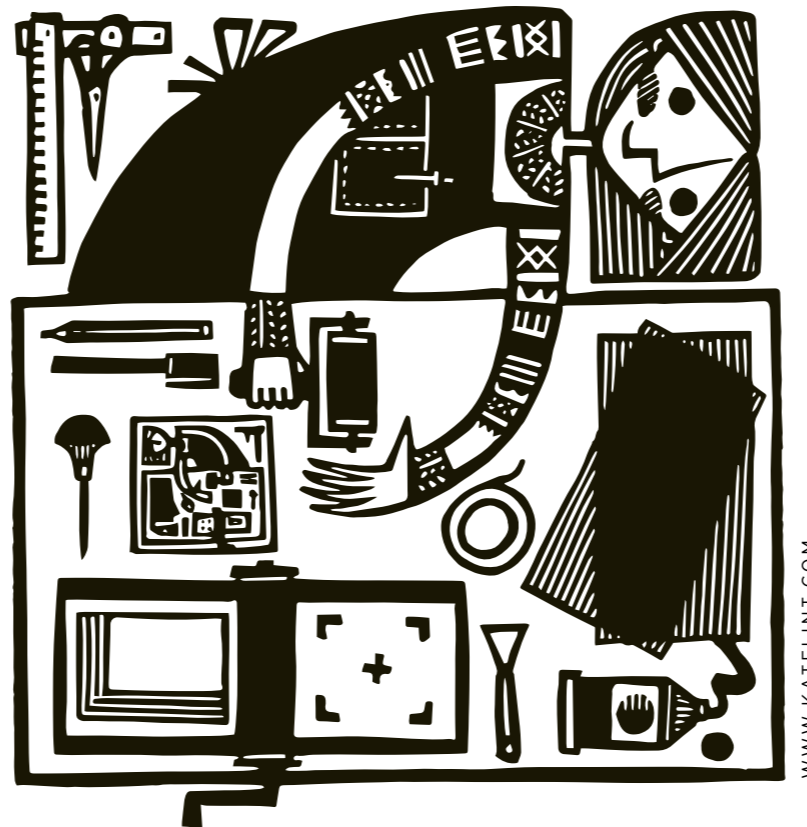
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