THE SERVING LIBRARY COLLECTION

The Serving Library maintains a collection of framed objects, each the source of an illustration that has appeared in The Serving Library Annual or one of its biannual predecessors, Bulletins of The Serving Library or Dot Dot Dot. The collection includes items as diverse as record sleeves, watercolors, woodcuts, Polaroids, drawings, screenprints, airbrush paintings, a car number plate, and a ouija board.

Together these varied objects decorate the walls of our physical space, to be drawn into our programs and essentially serve as a toolbox for teaching. It is also possible for other institutions to borrow one or more of the objects by arrangement. (For more information on loans contact francesca@servinglibrary.org.)

The collection has accumulated over time, expanding gradually with the support of countless colleagues and institutions as it passed through various host venues across Europe and North America before arriving at a location of its own in Liverpool—first at a storefront in the city’s old mercantile district, and now in residence at Exhibition Research Lab, part of The John Lennon School of Art & Design at Liverpool John Moores University.

These pages depict and detail all the objects in the collection, in most cases followed by an excerpt from the essay (or other type of text) each one was initially tethered to — plus a full reference to that source. The excerpts have been chosen to suggest, as expeditiously as possible, why the contributor in question might have been interested in the object in the first place.

Finally, they are assembled in order of publication in the journals from newest to oldest, and also available to view at www.servinglibrary.org/collection. With thanks to Lucas Quigley, who took most of these photos of the objects in situ at The Serving Library’s previous home on Water Street, Liverpool. All measurements include the frame, where appropriate.

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CUTTING FROM A MAGAZINE ARTICLE ON NORMAN POTTER’S “PANTORN KITCHIN,” C. 1951, 20 x 15 cm

Consider this prompt to students in What is a designer:

“If you must flip through photographs of other people’s work, try this: write a short critical commentary on just one photograph. You may be surprised at what the eye and intelligence gain from focus.”

— “Now in Color,” James Langdon, Bulletins #11, 2016

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THE SMOKE OF MY BREATH, PAUL ELLIMAN, PRINT ON PARACHUTE FABRIC, 2009, 100 x 100 cm

Dear Paul,

I am the daughter of Richard T. Gagnon. Inventor of all Votrax voice synthesizers in the 1970s and 1980s. He had set up a photographic camera in front of his TV set at home, and over the course of a week of evenings waited patiently for an image to suggest itself as source material for further work. The camera had already snapped an image to suggest itself as source material for the act of reading. By coming new terms and providing an ascriptive, operative visual vocabulary, he eschews symbolic, literal associations. Land’s writing doesn’t simply teach the reader how to read while moving through a text. Rather, it allows a space for the reader to first interact with the writing by visually decoding and recognizing words—her own re-creation of the key to an already opened door.

— “I am the Daughter of Richard T. Gagnon,” Paul Elliman, Bulletins #8

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FROM BOLT TO BULB, MATHEW KNEEBONE, PENCIL DRAWING ON PAPER, 2011, 42.5 x 31.3 cm

By the time this text was written, Land had already developed his proto-cyberculture vocabulary, this short excerpt is an inventively chic and catalog-ready sample. Here, he places the emphasis on visual recognition over the act of reading. By coming new terms and providing an ascriptive, operative visual vocabulary, he eschews symbolic, literal associations. Land’s writing doesn’t simply teach the reader how to read while moving through a text. Rather, it allows a space for the reader to first interact with the writing by visually decoding and recognizing words—her own re-creation of the key to an already opened door.

— “29g0tcw=XCdA="”, Katherine Pickard, Bulletins #7, 2014

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KENT STATE, RICHARD HAMILTON, 15-COLOR SCREEN PRINT, EDITION OF 5000, 1970, 77 x 185 cm

He had set up a photographic camera in front of his TV set at home, and over the course of a week of evenings waited patiently for an image to suggest itself as source material for further work. The camera had already snapped a number of exposures from a variety of sports, entertainment, and current affairs programs before footage of the shootings by National Guardsmen of students at Kent State University in Ohio (during a protest against the US military’s Cambodian Campaign) was screened on the news on Monday, May 4. The frame Hamilton finally developed shows the top half of the body of one of the shot students protrude...
The first quarter of the 20th century—particularly the years on either side of WWI. Artists turn to clothing design. This was not, particularly the years on either side of WWI. But unlike, say, the Art Deco or the Bauhaus, the first time. But unlike, say, the Art Deco or the Bauhaus, the first time. But unlike, say, the Art Deco or the Bauhaus, the first time. But unlike, say, the Art Deco or the Bauhaus, the first time.

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**Uniwear Waterproof Reversible Serving Jacket**, Chris Evans, airbrush painting, 2013, 81.5 x 59.5 cm

Uniwear, waterproof, reversible serving jacket available Spring 2014 in *red wine* only (both sides)

— Advert in Bulletins #6, 2013

**Woodstock movie, VHS cassette**, 1992, 30.5 x 14 cm

Woodstock hit middle age a couple of years back. A high psychedelic tide mark of the 1960s pop-cultural revolution, it was the festival of festivals, attracting half a million freaks who, when forced to park in a ditch a few miles away, happily walked the remaining miles. But what happened that summer didn’t just stay on Max Yasgur’s farm where the “three days of peace and music” were staged. It percolated as fact, as myth, as film, and in 1984, as a VHS tape passed around by kids at a British high school in the post-industrial Black Country in the British Midlands.

— *Fakelike in My Arm*, Mark Beasley, Bulletins #6, 2013

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**Skepticism and Affect**, Søren Andreasen, print, 2010, 44.5 x 39.5 cm

Nano-sensualism, not an orgy. What it might feel like to be hit by one proton at a time.


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**We are already writing in strobe**

— *Good Shit*, Dexter Bang Sinister, Bulletins #4, 2012

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**Berlin Kay Mangled**

— *How to do Words with Things*, Bruno Latour, Bulletins #6, 2013
German car license plate with the typeface "falschungserschwerende Schrift," c. 1980, 10 x 14 cm
Born awkwardly between eras—drawn by hand in order to be better read by machines—the falschungserschwerende Schrift bears the marks of both 19th-century guild-enforced handwriting and 20th-century anonymous automation. And like any technology, it is bound by the political determinants of its design: while its original "hamburger-proof" promise may have proved a Magnus, these word-looking letters are an early product of our contemporary surveillance state. What reads to us as a clumsy lack of formal continuity is exactly what makes it legible to a computer. It is an alphabet whose defining characteristic is precisely that it has no defining characteristic, other than having no defining characteristic.

"Falschungserschwerende Schrift," Benjamin Tiven, Bulleterina #3, 2012

A. J. Ayer, Hume, 1980, 20 x 15 cm
Earlier this spring, I picked up a paperback from a street vendor on upper Broadway. The cover has a picture of David Hume, an oil painting of unidentified provenance which looks as if it has been run through the fibers of an early Paintbox computer graphics program to realize the exaggerated pixel-portrait. I couldn’t believe my eyes (Hume, arch-skeptic of the senses would say that is precisely the point)—the cover image viscera! flipped back and forth in my brain between being a portrait of David Hume, 18th century Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, and being simply surface, the pure sensation of its infra-thin Paintbox pixelation. No sooner do you decide for yourself that it is one, then it flips back to the other.

"Everying is in Everything," David Rensfelt, Bulleterina #2, 2011

A note on the type

"An Octopus in Plan View," Angie Keefer, 2011, 56 x 80 cm
There’s a line from a Tom Stoppard play engraved on a plaque in the sidewalk on 41st Street, near 5th Avenue, right across from the main branch of the New York Public Library. I stumbled over it one afternoon the summer, on my way to the library to check out books about octopuses’ brains. The plaque is part of one of those public art campaigns I distrust, as a rule. But on a rainy afternoon, walking down a forgettable block, on the south side, facing west, I found a forgettable stretch of concrete pass under my feet, the message on this plaque landed in front of me with the force of an air conditioning unit dropped out of a third floor window. It was a high-impact non sequitur. "Information is light. Information, in itself, about anything, is light."

"An Octopus in Plan View," Angie Keefer, Bulleterina #1, 2011

Acetate sheet with sum, Perri MacKenzie, 2011, 32 x 23 cm
Recently I attempted to work through a long division problem, live, on an overhead projector in front of an audience. The idea was to demonstrate the two-fold process of "setting up a situation, then "letting it run," but as a bit of nerves I forgot the sum I’d taken considerable care to memorize. As the pen squawked and slipped over the acetate it seemed that the memorized answer and the memorized working out had fallen out of sync. Although I knew the result had a repeating decimal 3, I couldn’t manage to control its existence. Finally, in confusion and frustration, I just wrote "etc." and pushed on with the rest of the talk. Someone later pointed out that this fumbled sum was actually useful in engaging the audience. They were suddenly complicit.

"Δ," Perri MacKenzie, Bulleterina #2, 2011

Esperanto motto, Stuart Bailey, silkscreen frame, 2002, 40 x 50 cm
This is a screenprint stencil, conveniently hung by its frame back-to-front, of an old Esperanto motto: "Logika, Neutrala, Facila" [Logical, Neutral, Easy]. It was included in an early Dot Dot Dotalongside Paweł Owczara’s 2007 billboard campaign "C1 vs Parole Esperantism." [Do you speak Esperanto?]

At the time I naively assumed such sentiments described the magazine too, but since then they have slowly come to understand it as being far closer to the polar opposite: "Mallogika, Partia, Malplena" [Illogical, Biased, Complicated].

"A Die With 26 Faces," Louis Lüthi, watercolor and ink painting, 2011, 35 x 30 cm
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"If You Shook a Tag on Them…" Stuart Bailey, Dot Dot Dot #20, 2010
self-appointed priests of the empty signifier. Nonetheless, I believe that it is precisely that nucleus of enigmaticness that continues to afford art, like poetry, its status as the most accomplished form of indirect expression and linguistic experimentation, able to generate richer knowledge because of its indeterminacy. —“Surplus to requirements,” Francesco Manzard, *Dot Dot Dot*, #20, 2010

The second issue of *Dot Dot Dot* dated winter 2000 and published in February 2001, included my article “I’m only a designer: the double life of Ernst Fritsch.” An editorial statement mentioned two “aspects” that the issue was “uncomfortably weighted towards”, the second of these being “resorting to fiction to make certain points.” —“And so to Bed,” Christopher Wilson, *Dot Dot Dot* #18, 2009

*Kopfischmerzen* poster in situ, photograph, c. 1959, 21 × 31 cm

In a conversation with László Moholy-Nagy’s grandson, I wondered why no-one in the 1920s had thought to make a folded paper photograph. But his grandfather had indeed made such work, he replied, and by calculus of biography pinpointed their existence to 1918, just as he moved to Berlin. The titles of these photograms, he continued, would be highly descriptive and acknowledge their mode of production. And so later I checked but they never existed, they were pure fiction—something that should have happened but didn’t until now. A flat sheet of photographic paper folded and exposed, overlaid with Photoshop test images—“quantizations” of tools which have now transcended their original function twice—first from a type designed to demonstrate traction, then from an image of a type designed to demonstrate resolution. —Cover of *Dot Dot Dot* #17, 2009

*Four Pictures of Ulrich Roski*, Jason Fulford, Polaroid photograph, 2009, 26.5 × 22 cm

Certainly, the recursive containers of Ulrich Roski are interesting enough, but what is even more compelling to me is the way that this photograph immediately reveals a specific process of its own construction that can ONLY HAPPEN FORWARD IN TIME—the original image, then the collaged cover image, then the Polaroid proof and finally this collapsed composite photograph. Time moves in one direction and this final result is ONLY PRODUCED IN PRACTICE. —“Naive Set Theory,” David Reinfort, *Dot Dot Dot* #17, 2009

*Science, Fiction (Abstract)*, Dexter Sinister (after E.C. Large), lithographic proof print, 2007, 107 × 77 cm

While it seems that, professionally at least, Large never really reconciled the division of his scientific and literary work, it is precisely the symbiosis of the two that animates his early fiction today. His writing is defined by a wide-ranging set of interests, temperament and capacity which is equal parts classic and romantic—a duality which extends to any of the parallel dichotomies fashioned by Robert M. Pirsig in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: Scientific vs. Artistic, Technical vs. Human, or Rational vs. Emotional.* —“Science, Fiction,” Stuart Bailey, *Dot Dot Dot* #17, 2009

*Grey Painting: Text Version 2*, Philipema Pracki, oil painting, 2008, 35.6 × 25.5 cm

In a conversation with Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, *Dexter Sinister*, postcard, 2009, 23 × 18.4 cm

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*The Sun as Error*, Shannon Ebner, Polaroid photograph, 2009, 27 × 22 cm

“Bricolage also works with ‘secondary’ qualities, i.e. second-hand.” —Independent image, *Dot Dot Dot* #19, 2010

*Composite Mecano print of the number 5*, Koral Martin, 2005, 21 × 35 cm

The mixture of practical prescription and broad gesture is expressed in Ranganathan’s Five Laws of Library Science:

1. Books are for use.
2. Every reader his (or her) book.
4. Save the time of the user.
5. The library is a growing organism.

—David Semor, *Dot Dot Dot* #18, 2009

*Watch Scan 1200 dpi*, Dexter Sinister, postcard, 2009, 27 × 22 cm

—Independent image, *Dot Dot Dot* #19, 2010

*Klein, photographic print, 2009, 60 × 52 cm

—Independent image, *Dot Dot Dot* #17, 2009

*Thinking More About Production Than Consumption*, Liam Gillick, digital print, 2010, 83 × 53 cm

—Independent image, *Dot Dot Dot* #20, 2010

*Composite Mecano print of the number 5*, Koral Martin, 2005, 21 × 35 cm

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Is it good enough? Is it even art? I don’t know. It might look like art, it might even look like contemporary art, but I really don’t know if it will be. And to know if it isn’t, it doesn’t change the fact that to me it needs to be done.

—“Another Shadow Fight,” Andrew Hunt & David Osbaldeston, Dot Dot Dot, 2008

Consider these historical objects, an emphasis which re-present existing information and allow problems, they all provide filtering systems which give them a new activity in the present reality that we know.

—Dot Dot Dot, 2007

Calligraphy for “Exhaustion & Exuberance.”
Will Holder, ink drawing, 2005, 51.5 x 35 cm
How can we address the current changes in our lives? Some say that we have come to inhabit the post-industrial condition—but what does that mean? One thing seems certain: after the disappearance of manual labor from the lives of most people in the Western world, we have entered into a culture where we no longer just work, we perform.

—“Naive Set Theory,” Anthony Huberman, Dot Dot Dot, 2008

The * as Error, Shannon Ebner & Dexter Sinister, silkscreen print, 2010, 50 x 32.6 cm
She was a different kind of teacher: very reluctant to tell you what to do. Once you’ve started with the assumption that there’s no right or wrong way of doing anything, what becomes more important is getting students to think on their own. Muriel set up the right kind of environment for that. The space encourages interaction.

—“This Stands as a Sketch for the Future,” David Reinfurt, Dot Dot Dot, 2008

In Memphis’s work, the ethics of functionalism are completely denied—materials are used “dishonestly,” structure is concealed, and function follows form. Humor and poor taste win out over the gravitas commonly associated with modern design. Now, however, looking at the world from another vantage point—as a sculptor with a certain investment in a history of design—Memphis suddenly seems more like an artist than a problem, an answer to a quest which asks how furniture and sculpture might merge.

—“Decoration,” Justin Beal, Dot Dot Dot, 2008

The first issue received contributions from a number of Willet’s close friends and colleagues and was printed overnight for cash and self-distribution.

—Stephen Willets and the Speculative Diagram,” Emily Pathick, Dot Dot Dot, 2007

In 1985 he initiated Control magazine, which aimed to respond to the current developments in artistic practices, and was centered on the idea of artists explaining practice. The title was derived from the cybernetic idea of “self-determining models of control” [...] thus a model for thinking around ideas of self-organization.

—Stephen Willets, Control magazine, no. 14 “Art Creating Society,” edited by Stephan Willets, 1989, 16 x 28.5 cm

A Mnemonic About to Enter the Public Domain.
Chris Evans, airbrush painting, 2010, 89 x 64.5 cm
—Back cover, Dot Dot Dot, 2008

Naive Set Theory, Dexter Sinister, lithographic print, 2005, 60 x 46.5 cm
To Summarize:
1. A total absence of information about a given subject usually solves itself without an awareness of its existence, we can’t possibly care about it.
2. When we come to realize the existence of something we never knew was there before, our curiosity is sparked: What is it? How does it work? What should we call it? Why is it there? But we remain in the early stages of our ability to recognize and read it.
3. We attempt to accumulate information, and while additional research provides many answers, it also reveals additional questions, fueling more curiosity still!
4. At a certain point — at the top of the bell curve — we come to a place where effective discussion and debate is possible, but much still remains speculation. It is a moment of intense scrutiny and educated hypothesizing when questions, answers, contradictions, controversy, desire, violence, disappointment and determination make up a complex system.
5. Little by little, though, speculation gives way to consensus. The power structures that make up the social political fabric begin enforcing their own choices. The many questions gather around common answers, and information becomes more and more organized, making the transition into the understood.

—“Naive Set Theory,” Anthony Huberman, Dot Dot Dot, 2008

In Memphis’s work, the ethics of functionalism are completely denied—materials are used “dishonestly,” structure is concealed, and function follows form. Humor and poor taste win out over the gravitas commonly associated with modern design. Now, however, looking at the world from another vantage point— as a sculptor with a certain investment in a history of design—Memphis suddenly seems more like an artist than a problem, an answer to a quest which asks how furniture and sculpture might merge.

—“Decoration,” Justin Beal, Dot Dot Dot, 2008

Isotype charts from Otto Neurath’s Aris, 1930 (facsimile prints courtesy Stroom, The Hague, 2008), each 41 x 51.5 cm
But I would encourage another emphasis when considering these historical objects, an emphasis which gives them a new activeness in the present day. They still provide models whereas problems of communication are understood to be software problems, they all provide fiber systems which re-present existing information and allow for new forms of mediation.

—“Like Sokas on the Open Sea,” Steve Rushton, Dot Dot Dot, 2008

Dot Dot Dot includes a set of playing cards printed on both sides, which can be used to help the reader to understand the text. These cards have become a bit like a medicine because, as in a given subject usually solves itself without an awareness of its existence, we can’t possibly care about it. However, when questions, answers, contradictions, controversy, desire, violence, disappointment and determination make up a complex system, little by little, though, speculation gives way to consensus. The power structures that make up the social political fabric begin enforcing their own choices. The many questions gather around common answers, and information becomes more and more organized, making the transition into the understood.

—“Naive Set Theory,” Anthony Huberman, Dot Dot Dot, 2008

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—“Naive Set Theory,” Anthony Huberman, Dot Dot Dot, 2008

Cats, dogs, and other animals that are not related to human beings are completely denied—materials are used “dishonestly,” structure is concealed, and function follows form. Humor and poor taste win out over the gravitas commonly associated with modern design. Now, however, looking at the world from another vantage point—as a sculptor with a certain investment in a history of design—Memphis suddenly seems more like an artist than a problem, an answer to a quest which asks how furniture and sculpture might merge.

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—“Decoration,” Justin Beal, Dot Dot Dot, 2008
“Décor holes,” Seth Price, of “appropriation,” which may be considered effaced each line of text with a solid black of Mallarmé’s poem, and the layout alone, since of pieces that reproduced the exact page layout function. In 1969, Broodthaers made a series process. A lyric automation of the design was determined through the mechanical printing disposition of the words upon the page, marked Coup de Dés Jamais N’Abolira Le Hasard,” prints, 2007, each 105.5 × 76 cm Seth Price & Dexter Sinister, lithographic proof Courtesy of Seth Price (Mallarmé/Broodthaers)

Dust jacket for Collected Words, Richard Hamilton, 1983, 46.5 × 62 cm

“I produced a very serious piece of writing trying to express what I had been doing in painting. And I used collage, pastiche, and all the other devices that were applicable to paintings, which seemed to be easily converted to the written word. And within a week of that being published I met Eneas Braasen in the gallery on Bond Street: ‘Say, what about coming up to Highgate?’ And she said, ‘Well, I won’t bother coming up to Highgate but I saw that piece in the magazine and let’s fix up a show.’ It struck me then that the power of the word is greater than the power of the brush.” (Richard Hamilton)

“Collected Words,” Rob Giampietro, the power of the brush.” (Richard Hamilton)

Bond Street: ‘Say, what about coming up to Published in 1963 across two issues of Playboy’s interview section, “1984 and Beyond” invited 12 science fiction writers—including Arthur C. Clarke (a regular contributor to The Twilight Zone) and Rod Serling (creator of The Twilight Zone)—to talk about their visions of the future of society circa 1984. 62 years later, Gerard Byrne resurrected this article, editing it into a screenplay and re-enacting it with a group of actors in the Netherlands, reworking the piece in two stages, beginning with a live reading, which was developed into a subsequent film

—On 1984 and Beyond,” Emily Pathick, Dot Dot Dot #13, 2006

Logo for MIT Press, Muniel Cooper, 1983, vinyl, dimensions variable / Logo for Black Flag, Raymond Pettibon, vinyl, 1978, vinyl, dimensions variable

If we allow, for a moment, the proximity of the Black Flag bars and MIT Press logo to lead us simultaneously backward to the Bauhaus and forward, toward to the complex, networked terrains explored by Cooper at the Visible Language Workshop, the connections I have been making between the DRY tactics of early American hardcore and early modernist abstraction will, hopefully, become more clear [...] for Cooper, as well as the avant-garde of the early 1970s and American hardcore of the early 1980s, the rhythmic or networked logic of abstraction makes possible a set of mobile relationships, temporary alliances and hybrid forms that continue to be vital and productive.

—“Graphics Inognito.” Mark Owens, Dot Dot Dot #12, 2006
Dot Dot Dot
—"On Biography: Féminin," Frances Stark,
excessiveness of an inappropriately erotic mouth.

For a decade police forces across the world have been hunting a criminal cartel with a license to print money. They’ve been distributing the highest quality counterfeit notes ever. The forgers are so realistic that even the experts can’t tell the difference. They’re known as superdollars.

—"Superdollars," David Reinfurt,
encountered each other: the release of the single usually referred to as “Asylums in Jerusalem” by the band Scritti Politti. In fact it was issued as a double A-side, and on the reverse was a song called “Jacques Derrida.”

—“A Philosophy,” Daidrich Daidarchisan, Dot Dot Dot #8, 2004

We wanted a neutral image and I’d done a rough of a big flagpole and a flag and nothing else. We’d done a gig in Plymouth and we were walking along the Hoe and there it was. We all dropped to the ground and looked at it. When you lay on the ground there was nothing else to see, apart from the pole against the sky.”


“I am in two minds about this record. Earlier this year, a 90,000 square mile area of the Atlantic Ocean was phased out of a list of sea areas that surround the British Isles. As a BBC news report told us at the time: “The name Finsider—derived from the Spanish finis terre, meaning the end of the earth—is also used by Spain for a different area of the sea and they asked Britain to come up with a new one.” They did, and FitzRoy was introduced on 4 January 2002. These “sea areas”—names for the shallow banks, traditionally used as fishing grounds—are covered by the Met Office Shipping Forecast, a weather report prepared by the UK Meteorological Office and broadcast four times a day by BBC Radio.

A wild misapplication of the term “relational aesthetics” is suggestive when considering a set of group portraits from design practices of the last 40 years. How is the practice organized? What are its working methods? Who is in charge? Who makes the coffee? To grasp the last 40 years, a willful misapplication of the term “relational aesthetics” is suggestive when considering a set of group portraits from design practices of the last 40 years. How is the practice organized? What are its working methods? Who is in charge? Who makes the coffee?


Dot Dot Dot —“Record Reviews,” Will Holder, Dot Dot Dot #4, 2002

A day by BBC radio.

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“Money” spread from The Last Whole Earth Catalog, 1972, 46.5 x 62 cm

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“A Late Evening in the Future,” Paul Elliman, 2002, 31 × 23.5 cm

“Record Reviews,” Will Holder, Dot Dot Dot #4, 2002

A day by BBC radio.

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“Money” spread from The Last Whole Earth Catalog, 1972, 46.5 x 62 cm

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Talking Heads, Speaking in Tongues, LP design by Robert Rauschenberg, 1983, 32.5 x 32.5 cm
The blue separation is printed on the back of a transparent record sleeve, the yellow on the front, and the magenta on a circle which has been added to the front and can be turned. The record itself is made of transparent vinyl. This creates a "dial-a-picture" system, since the photos on the red component have been shuffled, which means that a spectator has to turn this part of the sleeve in order to get a clear, full-color picture of a part of the collage.
—“David Byrne: Getting the I out of Design,” Sytze Steenstra, Dot Dot Dot #4, 2002

Photo of Butcher’s Bar, London EC1, Eugene Manard, 2001, 31 x 21 cm
Dear Eugene: You created the atmosphere of the Butcher’s Bar café using the “least design” — the existing butcher’s shop as a backdrop for the interior of the café. How did you come to this decision? What were your motivations? Did you sense that you were taking a risk?
Dear Kim: The ultimate challenge for me is to reinvent the familiar space — so people pay attention to something that would have previously been ignored. I believe in the richness of the world, not designers’ portfolios. Designers impose standards and uniform solutions on things that deserve to be unique, resulting in some kind of generic identity in different locations. Now is not always better. And we are not any smarter than the previous generation. Uniqueness has been replaced by uniformity.
—“Doing Nothing,” Kim Levine, Dot Dot Dot #2, 2001

Poster for Pfäfferli+Huber Pharmaceuticals, Ernst Bettler, 1959, 154 x 112.3 cm
“The beauty of it was that, taken alone, each poster was utterly inoffensive. But you must remember that everything has a Zusammenhang, a context. These posters would be seen together in horizontal rows. And I was very careful with my briefing of the bill stickers.” On hundreds of sites around Burgwald and neighboring Sumisdorf, the posters appeared in fours. In the first a clowning child’s body made an “N”, in the second a woman’s head was bowed inside the “A” shaped triangle of her forearms. An old man’s contortions in the third poster (“that took forever to shoot”) sketched a “Z.” No prizes for guessing that the girl in the final plakat stood defiantly still, her almost silhouette profile as stiff as, well, a letter “I,” for example.
—“I’m Only a Designer”: the Double Life of Ernst Bettler,” Christopher Wilson, Dot Dot Dot #2, 2001

XTC, Go 2, LP sleeve design by Hipgnosis, 1979, 32.5 x 32.5 cm
This is a RECORD COVER. This writing is the DESIGN upon the record cover. The design is to help SELL the record. We hope to draw your attention to it and encourage you to pick it up. When you have done that maybe you’ll be persuaded to listen to the music—in this case XTC’s Go 2 album. Then we want you to BUY it.
—“On Graphic Design, 1979,” Stuart Bailey, Dot Dot Dot #2, 2001

Photograph of Kopfschmerzen?, Otto Freundlich, 1939, 76 x 54 cm
—“Using Nothing,” Kim Levine, Dot Dot Dot #2, 2001