Searching for Possibilities in the gaps of what is known

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Introduction

What I do is about finding solutions and escaping limitations. I am looking for possibilities in the gaps of what is known.

My name is Oskar. I am an illustrator gone graphic designer gone somewhere else. I work with form, I work with tools.

Through this report I will tell you the story of how form takes form. Of how the tools and processes we work with influence the visual language we produce, and reproduce. This will be a journey through the possibilities and impossibilities of design. I will tell you about my attempts to escape. To de-learn and relearn. I will share my tactics and my process.

For the last year I have been looking for ways to surprise myself. To ask questions that give unexpected answers. I have focused on the production of form. The dialogue between me, my material and my tools. A dialogue I want to share with you through this report.

In my project I want to use practice to reveal and avoid the limitations I find in the tools that I use. These limitations are not general and applicable to the whole field of graphic design, but are based on my practice and experience. By using doing as a way of thinking I look for and think about what I experience as limiting and how these limitations can be escaped.

I believe that to look closely at the tools and processes used to make form can be a way to understand how ways of working and choices of tools influence visual language. In order to do this I have chosen to look at the tools I use the most. I want to investigate the inherit possibilities of the tools and processes that I use in my practice by questioning their methods and uses.

In the process of finding new entry points to parts of my practice I hope to, in a hopeful and constructive way, produce new ideas and visual expressions instead of reproducing old ones.
My background

Sometimes I wonder what it means to have a background in drawing and make graphic design.

The security that comes with a personal style is the foundation upon which I have built my practice. My background in drawing and the style I’ve developed over years is inseparable from my person.

Similar to my choice of words and how I say them, this voice is a way to communicate not only the words I’m saying, but who I am and what I’m about.

I used to hate graphic design. I used to consider using typefaces impersonal.

I used to call typefaces computer text...

I still find it hard to be personal with graphic design. I’ve been searching for the things I miss. Approaching it from different angels.

I tried to draw graphic design.
I tried to draw with graphic design.

I tried to design drawings.

I have a fascination for tools and techniques. When drawing I use inks that bleed just fast enough for me to be spontaneous but not stressed. If I make a composition for a picture book I rather do it in a Xerox-machine than in Photoshop because it adds an element of surprise.

In previous projects I have experimented with making tools for making. I have found new uses for existing tools. This has made me realise the importance of strategies and methods when working with form.
Background & Contextualisation

Graphic design & tools

The ability to use tools is often said to be the key to human evolution. Tool-use has stimulated and pushed us towards the uniquely human ability to imitate behaviours as to spread ideas and technology. Tools transform our materials and our perceived realities and through this we are also changed.

Illustration and graphic design are tools of visual communication that shape and have shaped our understanding of the world. Similarly the field of visual communication is shaped by the introduction of new tools.

Graphic design has a long history of change in relation to technical innovation. From the invention of the first drawing tools, the printing press, or even the alphabet, change of aesthetics have been in relation to the tools used to produce them. In extension these changes effect the aesthetic preferences we hold, our associations and our reading of visual material.

In the lecture *Typical Power: A typographical time-line in relation to power and society* at Konstfack (23-11-2016) graphic designer and typographical researcher Brita Lindvall Leitmann exemplifies this change by showing how Fraktur style lettering and typesetting from the 16th century almost unreadable today, and layered with associations, was considered the very image of clarity and "neutrality" at the time of their making.

Another example presented by Lindvall Leitmann is the introduction of so called *Grotesk* typefaces, letters without serifs that were initially (as the name suggests) considered ugly and unsophisticated. This aesthetic style first appeared as early as in the 1810s but had a rise of popularity in the 1920s.
This style was promoted by Adolf Loos in *Ornament und Verbrechen*, a lecture (1910) and essay (1913) where Loos presented arguments for the stripping of decoration and ornaments under-blown by race-biology. Loos makes a connection between decoration and degeneration claiming that “cultural evolution is equivalent to the removal of Ornament from articles in daily use”. Loos writes: “The modern man who tattoos himself is ... a degenerate. There are prisons in which eighty per cent of the prisoners are tattooed. Tattooed men who are not behind bars are either latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats. If someone who is tattooed dies in freedom, then he does so a few years before he would have committed murder.”

Another important work relating to the popularization of Grotesk typefaces was the publication of *Die neue typographie* by Jan Tschichold, a design manifesto in the form of a magazine supplement (1926) and book (1928), in which he condemned all typefaces but the Grotesk. Only 24 years old Tschichold comes across as an idealist. Inspired by Russian constructivists and the Bauhaus he wanted to make printing and design more effective and economical through standardization of printing and typographic rules. In hindsight Tschichold himself completely abandoned these ideals, stating that he found chocking similarities between the rigid teachings of Die neue typographie and the ideas of national socialism. An important fact that is rarely included when the work of Tschichold is presented in the teaching of graphic design history, where Die neue typographie is celebrated as one of the most important and innovative publications.
The modernist ideal of reduction is still predominant in the context of graphic design. Solidified during the 60s when typefaces like Helvetica and Univers changed visual language in the west. The teachings of Die neue typographie and its successors is to a great extent preserved in graphic design today, often referred to as Swiss style, where left aligned compositions of grotesque typefaces is one of the most common ways to communicate. Often attributed with values of neutrality and universality.

Lorraine Wild writes: “The last time technique was stressed strongly in design education was in “Swiss” typography, where process was attached to the idea of “correct” form, which led to similar, abstracted, stylistic conclusions, over and over again.”

Wild wrote this in 1998, at a time when new challenges emerged in relation to technical innovation as the personal computer emerged as an increasingly impor-
tant design-tool, questioning the very nature of design and the one who makes it.

In the section Tool (Or, Postproduction for the Graphic Designer) from Graphic Design: Now In Produktion (Walker Art Center, 2011) Andrew Blauvelt describes how graphic design was one of the first fields to experience the influence of the introduction of the personal computer as a tool. “Desktop publishing” transformed and finally replaced a multitude of jobs tied to the production of graphic material. Inevitably this contributed to the confusion of a field that already had an unclear distinction between conception and production.

There has often been a wish to draw a separating line in-between creation and the craft-knowledge necessary to communicate and transform intentions and ideas into reproducible commodities. The classic separation in the field of culture in general and design in particular is the differentiation between doing and thinking. A development Blauvelt describes as both artificial and unfortunate.

Since the introduction of the computer as the main tool at first seemed to undermine, devalue and replace traditional knowledge the general understanding was that the answer to future graphic design was not to be found in the values of the craft but in the production of concepts and ideas. Blauvelt describes this development as premature as it became widely acknowledged even though the computer obviously couldn’t immediately replace and demystify the more concrete aspects of design.

Blauvelt stresses craft-based aspects of typography, knowledge about form, problem-solving and strategies for communication gained through years of education and practice as examples of important divisions between the expert and beginner. Is it not strange, Blauvelt adds, that the field of graphic design in spite of this specialized knowledge chose to pursue a direction focused on its more verbal and business-oriented attributes and to soft-pedal characteristics that had been intimately tied to the visual and the artistic?

Here it is possible to see a connection between a reduced rule-based graphic language introduced in the 1920s, a language adapted to the modernist ideal of “design = problem solving” where these aesthetic values were attached to the idea of neutrality. Subsequently making its way into the stressing of graphic design as an idea-based practice, where form was or should be a container for and not part of the content. In the words of Wild this perspective was “derived from modernism, and now reinterpreted as marketing”.

In this way a visual language once considered grotesque and deviant has become neutral. A choice that is not considered a choice in a design process. The same goes for the strategy of working with design from a conceptual, problem-solving approach.
Working with graphic design today you are expected to work in a certain way, but also with certain tools. The tools provided by Adobe has since the beginning of the 21st century been almost compulsory for the graphic designer. InDesign is the professional software of choice, with almost no competition. Introduced in 1999 as the successor of its predecessor Page-maker, InDesign was one of the popular early software for layout together with the similar Quark express.

In my perspective it seems like the development of graphic design as a practice, and the transition from a profession made up of many different roles to the “desktop publishing” of today has led to a need for clear, efficient and streamlined processes. The transformation has given more control to the designer in terms of predicting results of production, but has also brought focus to the administration and realisation of projects instead of the occupation of design and making. There is a need to conform to these processes to be able to work with other designers, programmers and printers in a functional way.

InDesign is a collection of many tools in the shape of a user friendly software made such due to limitations, defaults and a restriction of choices.

In this way a tool has become neutral. A choice that is not considered a choice in a design process.
If graphic design could transform radically in such a short time, how come the stylized and abstracted repetitions of modernist language keeps being repeated in visual language? I believe it might be possible to see a connection between this and a radical change in the invention and innovation of technology and tools.

In *Software takes command* Lev Manovich describes how software has the possibility of seemingly endless extendibility. To give new characteristics to physical objects and media demands a transformation of its physical substance. Computer based media however exists as software, which means that we can add characteristics, alter or even create new media through the process of making changes to existing programs. Shorty put what is often referred to as ”new media” is categorized as such due to their possibilities of extendibility and change. This is interesting because industrial production has always rested on the assumption that hardware and software are inseparable, the content of a book is bound in order to fix the pages in a certain sequence. Content and form as a whole. No content without form.

During the 19th and 20th centuries mediums were traditionally floating and in a state of change in two situations. First during the development of a new medium, see for instance the multitude of experiments and ideas that were part of the discovery and taming of photography in the first half of the 19th century. Secondly when artists, designers and other creatives systematically experiment with and open up a tool or medium that has already been industrially fixed. In the case of photography this would have been the experiments with film and video during the 1960s that has become known as *Expanded cinema*.

It is not until you have gained distance to a tool, preferably in the light of a new one, that it becomes possible to investigate and reveal its media-specific qualities and possibilities. This experimentation, traditionally separated in these two steps, merges together with the introduction of software. The computer makes it possible to experiment unreservedly with tools and mediums. Why is that? Manovich suggests that the answer is to be found in the computor’s separation between hardware and software. The result is a state of constant invention, application and change of existing media. In this sense computer based tools and media become ”avant-garde” in their constant state of development and reform. This is interesting as the general idea is that what is experimental or avant-garde and what is stable and fixed exist in opposition to each other. In a world of computer-based media such a distinction not only be-
comes impossible but also to some extent reversed as the "avant-garde" is no longer an expression of the ingenuity of individuals or groups but the result of projects managed by big corporations like Microsoft, Adobe and Apple. A smooth and steady development, a permanent extendibility. Updates and constant change instead of jolts of technological innovation.

In this lies a contradiction, through using software the possibilities to influence the tools of graphic design seems bigger than ever, but at the same time the tools and machines used are becoming more complicated and less accessible.

In User interface: A personal view American computer-scientist Alan Kay, explains how the ability to read a tool or medium encompasses the ability to take part of material and tools made by others. To be able to write with a tool or medium encompasses the ability to create material and tools for others. Both aspects are necessary to achieve literacy. If I am allowed to generalize we are today in many processes limited to a user perspective, we can use but not create or influence our tools.

Jonathan Puckey is a graphic designer that incorporates thoughts on tools in his practice. Puckey argues that we instead of agreeing as one to work with the same streamlined tools sold to us by large corporations must reclaim a personal relationship with our tools. We must learn to make tools ourselves. That is after all what the computer is: a tool for creating tools.

Another important and related condition is the need for efficiency driven by the market. As previously mentioned I want to understand graphic design as a practice of thinking through making. To do this requires time, time is necessary to not produce design that is just a reflection of the design that I see. To think through making I need to allow time for making as well as thinking, time for making mistakes. For trial and error. I also need to provide time to reflect on what I have done, as my instincts acquired from design-education tells me to remove what I do not immediately recognize.

Innovation is often understood or assumed to be a linear development resulting in increased possibilities. I would say that this is not necessarily the case. Today technical innovation results in what seems to be a positive effect of efficiency, making processes faster and less expensive for the producers. These innovations are not made in the interest of developing a field. They are made to uphold an increasingly fast culture of consumption.
The cost of these “innovations” are restrictions for the graphic designer in the shape of defaults, limited choices and streamlined tools built on the restriction of possibilities. Which means that innovation of the tools and processes related to the field of graphic design are actually resulting in the opposite. A maintaining and lack of innovation of form. Seen in this light this process is understood not as a process of inventing new ways of making, but of optimizing existing ones. Making capitalism the designer of the future.

Having my work process and my tools chosen for me by the field and the market scares me. I am afraid that I will not use these tools to tell new stories, but to tell the story of something or someone else. In the language of someone else. This development might not seem like a problem if you view graphic design as an empty vessel, a “neutral” carrier of a separate content. As is the habitual attitude of the profession.

There is no such thing as neutral form, what is called neutral is the representation of norms and taste. Because of this form must be understood as a part of the content. Graphic design is after all a surface that tells, communicating through form. From this perspective the development and “innovation” of graphic design is worrying, as it is actually the preservation of a visual language carrying the ideology of “neutral” and “correct” form pushed by a capitalist agenda.

The process of permanent extendibility seems to be mirrored in the field of graphic design and the development of visual language. Is it possible that a lack of distance to tools and mediums caused by the fact that they are already in a process of change making experimentation and personal perspectives difficult? Resulting in a visual language based on updates and a constant stream of small changes giving an impression of development. And as our tools are becoming more complex are designers settling for default tools that are designed to fit, and in extension preserve, an already existing aesthetic? The importance of this increases dramatically as graphic design is a profession relying on the use of few tools. I believe this makes the role of personal expression, subjectivity and experimentation more important than ever. As the tools for thinking are getting fewer and more streamlined we need more perspectives on how to use the process of working with them in order to keep thinking through the process of making.
Methods

To reach unknown destinations you need to take paths less travelled. This isn’t as easy as it sounds. Conventions are hidden in plain sight and I often find myself back on the main road, or at least walking beside it. Despite my intentions.

Conventions and defaults are part of us and become part of the objects we create. I learn through imitation. I read best what I read the most. Strategies and methods can be helpful to make the compass point in new directions.

Lorraine Wild writes: “…craft is about tactics and concepts, seeking opportunities in the gaps of what is known.”

To me this is central. I see myself in this sentence.

In my reading of Wild CRAFT is represented by the craft of graphic design. TACTICS are our ways of working, our methods. The OPPORTUNITIES in the gaps are the possibilities to formulate new ideas. WHAT IS KNOWN is the general way of working within the field of graphic design.

This reading suggests a separation between the possibilities present within the general practice of graphic design and the possibilities of ideas and experiments that break the boundaries of expected ways of working.

Gianni Rodari writes: ”One who neglects to use ones imagination and develop a language of ones own, accepts subjugation to the language of power, and speaks in the tongues of others.”

In the general field of graphic design the process of working with few tools is an approach that has a powerful influence. Standardised ways of working forms deeply rooted and habitual attitudes that it can be difficult to change.

In my project I want to use practice to reveal and avoid the limitations I find in the tools that I use. I believe that to look closely at the tools and processes used to make form can be a way to understand how ways of working and choices of tools influence visual language.
In order to do this I have chosen to look at tools I use in the process of making graphic design. I want to investigate the inherit possibilities of the tools and processes that I use in my practice by questioning their fixed uses.

In the process of finding new entry points to parts of my practice I hope to, in a hopeful and constructive way, produce new ideas and visual expressions instead of reproducing old ones.

It can be problematic to use few tools, especially when these tools are not consciously chosen by the designer but by the field and the market, as the values they represent are reproduced in our design.

I want to discuss the importance of defining one’s tools, their uses and what they are used for. I feel that a field so heavily dependant on so few, almost compulsory tools, needs discussion and a width of perspective. No tools should be removed from the toolbox, however I think we need a wider spectrum of tools and an understanding of how they influence how we think about, think with, understand and learn through the practice of design.
Process

Tools for thinking - Choice of tools and processes

I have chosen to work with tools I work with on a regular basis in the process of making graphic design. Starting out I imagined my choice of tools to be the tools most commonly used to make graphic design, but as the project went along and developed the choices changed to the tools I use the most as well as the tools I had the opportunity to work with.

I have investigated the tools and processes used for Printing, making Typography, Book-production and doing Layout/Design.

In the case of printing I let screen-printing represent printing techniques in general, the reasons being access to a professional studio and the technique’s slow step-based nature that mirrors the steps of most reproductive techniques.

I am interested in the process of printing because it is a process that is becoming increasingly closed to designers. The production and making of graphic material is in a way no longer part of the design-process, which ends with the delivery of files to printers. I want to get as close as possible to the process of printing to find ways to make it part of the design.

Typography is my introduction to graphic design, but I find it difficult to find methods to work with it that reflects the way I want to work. There is a staleness to digital production that I want to challenge. I also want to challenge my own preconceptions of digital tools.

Similarly to the part of this project focusing on printing the part concerning Book-production is an attempt to open up a process that is becoming increasingly hidden to me as a designer. Due to economic reasons many of the book projects I’ve been working on have been printed over seas or used print-on-demand services. In this part I want to delve into the craft of producing a book to learn what I can not learn from preparing a file for print.

Layout/Design is the last part of this project and will focus on the collection of the material and thoughts generated in this project in the form of a publication. In this process I hope to challenge the expected process of graphic design.
Method

The general ways of making graphic design that I am criticizing are characterized by efficient processes, stationary working positions, immateriality and tools with specified uses.

To reverse the rods, to spell the charm backwards, I’ve been working in a process characterized by slowness, a lack of clear goals, moving craft-based processes, materiality and imagining new uses for existing tools.

In three processes of experimentation I have investigated possibilities of working with printing, typography and book-production in new ways. This has been a process of thinking, a way to keep my thoughts moving.

Control

Control must be understood in relation to what is attempted. When I work with the computer everything becomes "perfect", to me this is a lack of control. This perfectness, the lack of human presence, is interesting because it tells us something. Capitalism rests on the assumption that we see the objects that surrounds us as products, not as the result of the materials, resources, relationships and processes that were part of their making. There is an interest in making products that hide these things from us.

Angela Davis writes: "What would happen if we made a habit of imagining all of those relationships when we look at our environment? That would be part of a revolutionary perspective."

In this project I aim to put making at the centre, to make things that tell of how they have been made.

**Printing**

Screen printing has an inherent slowness, the many steps of the process allow different points of entry. The preparation, lighting, printing as well as the cleaning of the frame hold possibilities for investigation and development. I’ve used the technique before but never really enjoyed it, I’ve always felt resistance. The process is slow, a bit exhausting, especially when working within a time-frame. This time around the resistance is the foundation of what I’m doing. I use the slowness of screen printing to slow down my process in order to see it in progress.

I want to use reproductive tools to produce. Both in the method of using print, choosing to exclude the computer, not working with prepared imagery. But also through questioning the fixed use of the technique, hoping to find new ideas and visual results in the process.

Wanting to approach screen printing in a backwards way I became more interested in the processes that were not part of the actual printing. Instead I started experimenting with the preparation and the cleaning of screen-frames.
I made a lot of material using the high-pressure water-gun used to clean the frames as a drawing tool. The width of expressions possible to make using this technique surprised me. I could make shapes that were almost calligraphic and perfectly smooth as well as rough and almost three-dimensional shapes.

Working in this way made the resistance of the material clear. The tools are heavy, imprecise and decide the speed of working. The material leads the conversation and I add an idea or two.
I also used the process of lighting the screen to make photograms, making images by placing things directly on the frame while lighting it. The result was a sort of analogue tracing. Similar to when a pixel based image is transformed into a vector based shape. This worked particularly well using large quantities of small objects like sprinkles, coco-flakes and sugar. The effect was raster-like and I imagine that this technique could be developed into a tool for creating shades and fades in an elaborate analogue way.
The third big lead I found during my experimentation was to use the solvent for stripping the frames of emulsion to make etchings. By applying the solvent on the frame and leaving it on for different amounts of time, applying it using different tools, the aesthetic could be controlled to achieve different expressions.

Making this kind of experiments results in a process that is strange and unpredictable. The technique and materials know more about the process than I do. Instead of forcing the tool to do what it should I let the results be informed by the process.
Working with screen-printing I’ve focused on using the printing process to produce visual material, rather than using the possibilities of printing. Though I did make some. One experiment that I did was to look for a way to combine hand-drawn material with printing in a intricate way. I wanted both materials to interact forming a single printed object. I found a way to do this by firstly drawing on double coated cardboard used for advertisements. Using alcohol based inks you can control the bleed through the paper. The ink quickly moves through the first layer, lingers a little bit in-between, and bleeds through to the other side creating three-dimensional effects. This is a technique I’ve used before to make drawings but this time I printed a layer of screen ink on top of it. What happened was that the pigment in the dark blue alcoholic ink, looking almost black on the red cardboard, was picked up by the screen ink and created a new light blue colour. Creating uncertainty about what layers are printed and how it is made.
SATIRE AND THE SMOKING GUN OF FRENCH COLONIALISM

With the attack on Charlie Hebdo, satire was once again at the centre of media attention, but important perspectives were often neglected. The lecture offers a deeper analysis of the attack and of the narratives that preceded it by placing the events in a broader and more complex context than the one presented in the mainstream media.

The lecture also brings to the forefront other hidden threats to the cultural image of the French people. The lack of a serious and critical analysis was a main issue in the discussion and argumentation in the public discourse.

KARIN SUNVISSON

Karin Sunvisson, M.A., is a Swedish Illustrator educated at ENSAD (École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs) in Paris.
Typography

Typography is most often portrayed as a slow time-consuming craft, the creation of a complete alphabet and the harmony that letters form together. The start of my typographic interest originates from my early teens drawing and seeing graffiti. In this typographic landscape the aim was the opposite. To push the expectations, balancing on the edge of readability or even recognizability of letter-forms. Imagination and maximal effect over knowledge and perfection.

The relation to tacit knowledge is different in these two examples. Within the field of classical typography a typeface is crafted over years, perfecting every detail. Within a graffiti context you develop your craft in another way. The tacit knowledge, drawing skills and sense of form are stored in your hands, ready to be released for a concentrated moment. This tacit knowledge allows for improvisation, for treating mistakes and unexpectedness as something positive. It is also a way of using practice as development and research.

This is a lack I find in the tools that I use, my digital tools. I need to shake these tools, to challenge them in order to find these qualities. The unexpectedness. Today digital tools are good for snapping to grids, this is the impression I get. I want to tap into another side of the digital. A world of chance, randomness, unexpectedness, warmth, humour and personality. I’m looking for resistance. I feel the need to have a conversation with the materials and machines I am working with. In this part of my project I have wanted to approach digital expression as a raw material. I have tried to consider the vector-shape as a paper for me to cut or a piece of clay to shape. My method has been to search and discover, looking through making. Inspiration has come from the world of programming, a coding workshop with Oivvio Polite and his introduction on Seymour Papert. In the pedagogical work of Papert coding is introduced as the giving of commands, something that I have incorporated into my work.

When starting this part of the project I imagined that I would try to create a plug-in for a program used for drawing typography or even attempt to script my own application. Instead I’ve chosen to focus on how to use and incorporate coding into my craft. I’ve been using a web based application called Font-modulator, created in 2012 by Alexis Reigel and Marco Müller. The thought use of which is to sketch and create entire alphabets simultaneously using a skeleton alphabet as a starting point. This is done by entering values that change the appearance of the letters.
I’ve chosen a different approach. In Font-Modulator I’ve found a tool for drawing shapes. A tool for creating unexpected forms that are then reworked and interpreted. A process similar to the way I sketch using analogue tools, trying out things with pen and paper, looking for good ideas while drawing. The reason for me to look for a tool like this is that I lack this way of sketching in my practice. I believe it’s important for me to be able to work with digital tools and expressions as a raw material. To de-learn the notion of digital as ”not-real”.

My method when drawing this collection of letter-shapes has been to focus on a single letter at a time. Limiting myself to the entering of values as my drawing-tool. When something strange or exciting happens I take a screen-shot to be able to re-trace my steps. At this point I am not concerned with which letter I am intending to draw, using the application in this way you come across shapes that are ambiguous and no longer recognizable as the original letter. I rather look for interesting shapes. Throughout this process I mainly work on my smart-phone, my digital sketchbook. A lot of the raw material has been made on the subway, when having coffee or while waiting for friends. Just like I would do with my regular sketchbook. This helps to distance me from the static working situation I experience in front of the computer, but it also allows me to use a digital tool like I would otherwise do with an analogue.
All of the letters are the result of forcing a limited skeleton letter-shape to do things that it was never intended to do. Every letter is the result of a shape that could not be contained by the expectation of what a letter should look like. The letters are through contradicting commands forced to be several things at the same time.
Book production

What is a book? Pages put together. A story, and a way to tell it. A book is the transformation of moving thoughts into a frozen object waiting to move again. In this part of the project I attempt to open up a process that is becoming increasingly hidden to me as a designer. Due to economic reasons many of the book projects I’ve previously been working on have been printed over seas or using print-on-demand services. I want to delve into the craft of producing a book to learn what I can not learn from preparing a file for print. Through the process of making a book completely by myself I get the rare opportunity to learn through all the steps of doing and making that together transform text and design into a self contained object.

About a year ago I started a collaboration with interior designer Andreas Nobel. Andreas was looking for a designer to make an English version of his thesis. My proposition was that we would make the design and production of this book a part of my project. Partly a surface for my experimentations in form, but also an opportunity to research the production of a book. In this case I have designed, planned, printed, cut and bound every page of every copy of the book. I even ended up writing the preface. It’s been a long and sometimes heated conversation between me and the tools of my practice.

In his thesis Andreas refers to a line by Richard Rorty: “Hope in the place of knowledge.” To produce an edition of the book in this way isn’t convenient or practical for us. Andreas would get a smaller edition than expected, a handmade first edition of 200 copies. The production would take longer than scheduled and the work that I would put into the project would not be in proportion to the payment. None the less I believe that this kind of idealism is an important form of resistance within a field that is becoming increasingly streamlined and effective.

Making a book, especially a book that breaks with any form of convention is expensive and a privilege. Books made today are usually optimized to save time and money. Standardized formats, papers, bindings and designs are an increasingly apparent aspect of book production. Another side to this is digital platforms for publication. Why make a book when there are cheaper and more efficient digital means of doing it? The book is no longer only a means of carrying a content. Perhaps it’s in the light of these computerized aspects of book-production that we begin to see the media specific qualities of the book. A book that needs to prove it’s existence as a physical
object will hopefully use it’s bookish qualities to greater extent and use these in surprising ways.

Choosing to print the book ourselves we could open up a side to graphic design that is often hidden, the actual production and realisation of the book. This is where the opportunities lie. In the dialogue between maker, material and machine. This allowed me to try things out and use the process of making to revise my choices, making decisions I would otherwise not have made.

The machine used, a Risograph, is a strange and wondrous thing. A combination of old hands-on printing techniques and digital technology. It’s transparent nature allows for a open process full of surprises and possibilities, making the production not an end but a continuation of the design process.
In theory there is no difference between theory and practice.

In practice there is.
Layout

After these processes of experimentation I had to decide how to go forward with the project. At this point I could choose to focus on one of the tools, delving even deeper into its specific possibilities. Instead I chose to collect the material that I had made in the process, using it as a foundation for a discussion about tools in relation to graphic design. This would allow me to complete my thoughts on the subject as well as giving me the opportunity to try out these thoughts in practice through the design and making of a publication that would contain the material.

At first I had some trouble with my own preconceptions of what a book like this would and could look like and contain. There are many project-based books within the field of graphic design, often giving an almost clinical report-like account of a process. In this case I had to ask what kind of book this would be. On what premises would it communicate? I wanted to make a book that speaks through form as well as text. I wanted to make a book that manifests the central aspects of my project.

When thinking about how to do this in practice I played around with ideas on how to make it without using the standard tools associated with graphic design practice, avoiding to work with InDesign. I tried to use the process of printing to design, assembling pieces on the bed of the Riso-printers copy-machine, using the actual moment of printing to combine the material. This was interesting, the Risograph has a function that helps you remove traces of tape and paper-edges giving you a surface that is very clean. The result is an aesthetic holding the irregularities and unexpectedness of a collage made in a Xerox-machine but with the finish of a high quality printer.
Working in this way also allowed me to make compositions with material objects, printouts of photographs, cut-up text and original material. Looking at and moving the material on the cutting table gave me a result that was very close to the finished material in size, making it easy to try combinations and have a flexible process.

However this way of working resulted in other problems. Working in this way makes it difficult to have an overview of the process, as the material before the printing is a collection of cut up and pasted material. After my initial experiments with this method I decided to continue working with a combination of techniques. Using the printer to combine pages but also scanning material and compiling it in InDesign in order to get an overview. This overview was necessary in order for me to be able to work with the book as a whole.

Having decided on a way to work with the material as well as a method to reproduce it I started on the design of the book. Initially I imagined a traditional book consisting of several smaller signatures or chapters bound together. The content would be a combination of the material made in the project; experiments in screen-printing, documentation and tests from my typography experiments and left over pages and try-outs from the production of Andreas book.
My initial idea was that I would use the material as the foundation for discussion and reflection in a dual sense, printing these on top of the already existing material making it the carrier of the discussions in both a physical and theoretical sense. As exiting as this was to me as a design solution as difficult it became to realize. After hanging on to and working on this idea for a long time I finally decided to drop it. The idea was supposed to act as a limitation and a generator for form but turned out to limit me too much.

Instead I chose to reconsider the structure of the book. In my previous idea the structure was to a great extent chronological, which worked great with the presentation of already existing material, letting sketches lead the way into finished material and applications of the techniques I had found in the process. Now I instead decided to build the book around this already existing material, putting it at the very centre of the book as a materialization of thoughts and research in form. This choice also made a limitation to the numbers of copies possible to produce as the already existing material would be enough for about 50-65 copies.
I decided to make an introduction to the book that would guide the reader using a personal voice in both form and words. I wanted to work with the specific qualities of the book. I also felt it was important to state a subjective and personal perspective in contrast to the general claims of neutrality within the field of graphic design. The introduction is made up of many different styles, not using a consequent language of form. Putting different expressions and tools in relation and opposition to each other. This “introduction” seamlessly becomes the content of the book, the introduction doesn’t really end and makes up a large part of the text presented in the book.
After this passage you are presented with the material generated throughout the project. This part is presented as it is but mixed and matched to highlight its form based qualities. It is a section to be looked at and perhaps to some extent read.
This part is followed by descriptions of my methods and processes when experimenting with Printing, Typography and Book-production. This is done through photographs of the process combined with handwritten text providing a description of the process as well as reflections.
At the end of the book you find an essay set completely in InDesign, using a traditional typographic approach. This text is an attempt to summarize the thoughts that have been central to this project in an accessible way. The design of this part also becomes an effective contrast to the rest of the book, which is more much more expressive.
An important aspect of the book is that every step of its production is an experiment and an opportunity to learn. I chose to try a new binding, to staple all of the spreads folded as one using a stapler-gun, creating a thick folder of pages. This created a rounded back and an opposite side where the pages sticks out of the cover, increasing page by page. This side was to be left uncut. The other two sides were cut using a hand-saw which gives the edges a soft and rugged appearance.
My original idea for the cover was to use solvent to bleach printed sheets, making every copy unique. I experimented with glossy photo papers that could be washed, since I felt it would be risky to have a cover covered in strong chemicals. But this created a problem. When I washed the papers they began to bend the wrong way as they dried, making the idea impossible to use. What I had liked about the idea was that the covers would be unique and that the glossy surface contrasted well with the matte paper, printing technique as well as the rough sawed edge of the book.
The final version of the book instead uses a cover of transparent plastic. By printing a mirrored cover on the inside of the plastic the glossiness could be maintained. I chose to make 65 different covers, one for every book. An unexpected result that suited the project was the blending of colours that appeared when the colours of the plastic covers, the transparent parts that had not been printed and the pink title page showing through made a new mix. This process is very visually similar to and becomes a nice representation of the printing technique of printing one colour at a time blending them through layering.
The Exhibition

When making plans for the exhibition my main concern was that my end result, the book, was in focus. Similarly to the way the book collects the project I wanted the design of the exhibition to show my processes of experimentation and the material produced in the project as a backdrop and a foundation for the book.

I decided to make a glass table showing the process but keeping the book in focus through the simple distinction between looking and interacting. You can touch and read the book but only see the process.

Since my project to a great extent is about experimentation and trying out ideas I wanted to apply this approach to the design of my exhibition. The idea for the glass table was that it would have a base of wood, a soft middle part made of a foam mattress and a top of thick plexi-glass. To hold the parts together I wanted to use elastic rope. A table like this would allow me to put as different materials as a book, a video(screen), a poster, etc. into the table. Making it a self-contained object squeezing the objects into the mattress. The elastic ropes holding the parts together could also function as holders for the books put on top of the table at the same time as they to some extent removed attention from the objects under the glass through partly obscuring them, putting focus on the books.
Accompanying the table I wanted a pile of the paper waste cut from the sides of the book and a bench to sit on. When making the bench I decided to cover it in transparent plastic to relate to the plastic cover of the book and the plastic on top of the table. Under this layer of plastic I chose to fill the book with the small confetti pieces of paper punched from Andreas Nobels *Shady Enlightenment*, playing with the tactility and the see through effect. I think the design of the exhibition communicates my project in a clear and successful way.

I had a lot of feedback from visitors in the exhibition, and from people who actually bought and read the book. The high visual impact of the work seemed to attract people to look closer, but I think that a majority of the visitors took part of the visual side of the project more so than the themes and discussions of the project.

I got incredibly happy as I received a couple of emails from readers of the book reflecting on the content and recognizing questions and thoughts of their own in my book.
The Examination

The examination took place in the exhibition. In this format I first received a reading of my work made by two persons who are not part of or related to my field of practice, in this case Helena Ioannidou and Sophie Hedin. These readings focused on the colourful expression of the book and the exhibition. Helena said that she liked what she saw but couldn’t access the content. Sophie who is a retired librarian related my book to the tradition of artist-books, referencing the book Jazz by Henri Matisse. I think this reading is successful as part of my approach to visual communication throughout this project has been to regard graphic design as a surface that tells through form. Not only communicating a explicit content but also communicating with the viewer/reader/user on a more emotional and less concrete level.

The main opponent at my examination was Nina Beckman, director of Grafikens hus. Nina was very positive to my work and didn’t really give me much critique. She asked my questions and raised themes that allowed me to explain and talk about different aspects of my project. It felt very generous to be in this kind of situation, and very suited to my project, to have the opportunity to speak on the subject to a group consisting of the ones I want to have the aforementioned dialogue with.

As it is hard to account for the whole discussion I will make a few examples of comments and discussions that felt important to me.

Nina asked me about the screens and the digital aspects of the project, which gave us the opportunity to discuss ideas about craft and the tendency to view digital tools and works as “not-real”.

Jiri Novak, lecturer in Graphic design and my old teacher asked me what I saw as the biggest limitation when using digital tools to make graphic design. Which allowed me to reflect on what is perceived as “finish” and a feeling of “perfectness” that I find problematic. I said that one of my main feelings when using digital tools to make graphic design is a lack of control as a result of tools that are present in the sense that they help me place and layout text and images in a “correct” way.

There was also a general discussion about drawing as I stated that I am and have always considered myself first and foremost a person who draws, more so than a graphic designer, emphasising my foundation in drawing and how having that as my main craft when starting my education might have influenced my practice and
views on graphic design. I remember saying that I considered graphic design to be a flawed practice. Sara Kaaman, Senior lecturer of graphic design asked me about this. What did I consider being the main flaw of graphic design? And for me this is the contradiction between graphic designers generally being obsessed with history, specific fonts, what has already been made etc. At the same time as there is a completely “history-less” approach to this history, wanting the practice of graphic design to be ultimate, permanent and linear. Which can all be overturned by stating the fact that expressions considered neutral by this canon was considered grotesque at the time of their making. I crave a field where designers are more interested in themselves and their personal references and expressions than in learning the references that are approved by the norms of graphic design.

Overall I felt that my examination went very well. I was surprised by how comfortable I felt with speaking freely about my theme. I had reached a point where I could stand solidly on a base of theoretic and practical work.
Reflections & Conclusions

I feel happy about how the project has turned out. I’m satisfied with the book and feel that it manages to summarize thoughts that have been hard for me to overview. As a process this project has given me both theoretic and practical tools to reflect on my practice and the field of graphic design.

Another goal has been to share these reflections with others. I have tried to achieve this through the book that is my end result as well as the presentation of this book in the spring exhibition. My hope was that the book would function as a dialogue, and in this sense I think it has succeeded. The response I’ve had has strengthened me in believing there is a relevance to this project and an ongoing discussion on the theme of graphic design in relation to tools and aesthetics.

The 65 copies I made have sold out and both Konstfack and Beckmans have bought the books for their libraries. I’ve been in contact with readers of the book and feel pleased that the discussion is ongoing.

When looking back on the project I realize there has been a lot of compromises. Starting out I believed I would investigate tools that were even more representative of the practice of graphic design, but as the project took on a life of its own this changed into a process of investigation through design assignments, using applied

My book at the Konstfack Library
design processes. In the end I think this has benefited the project as well as my development as a designer. In hindsight I feel happy that I used the experiments that I made in form in actual pieces of design that will live on outside of this project and that the experiments will not only be confined to the design school context.

I don’t really have any regrets or wishes that I had spent my time differently. But I do believe different approaches could have led my further in other directions. I wish there had been even more time for experiments but hope to continue this process in my daily practice.
Footnotes

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

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FOR HELPING ME IN
THE PROCESS OF THIS
PROJECT.
Attachment:

A photographed version of the book
Searching for Possibilities in the gaps of what is known

Oskar Laurin
Searching for Possibilities in the Gaps of what is known

Oskar Laturi
What I do is about finding solutions and escaping limitations.

I am looking for possibilities in the gaps of what is known.
My Name is Oskar.
I WORK WITH TOOLS

I WORK WITH FORM
Through this book I will tell you the story of how form takes form.

Of how the tools and processes I work with influence the visual language I produce. And reproduce.
THIS WILL BE A JOURNEY THROUGH THE POSSIBILITIES AND IMPOSSIBILITIES OF DESIGN.

I will tell you about my attempts to escape...
I will share my process and my tools.

To DE Learn AND WE Learn
For the last year I have been looking for ways to surprise myself...
I have focused on the production of form.

The dialogue between Me, My Material and My Tools.

A dialog I want to share with you through this book.
Sometimes I wonder what it means to have a background in drawing and make graphic design.
THE SECURITY THAT COMES WITH A PERSONAL STYLE IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH I HAVE BUILT MY PRACTICE. MY BACKGROUND IN DRAWING AND THE STYLE I DEVELOPED OVER YEARS IS INSEPARABLE FROM MY PERSON. SIMILAR TO MY CHOICE OF WORDS AND HOW I SAY THEM, THIS VOICE IS A WAY TO COMMUNICATE NOT ONLY THE WORDS I AM SAYING, BUT WHO I AM AND WHAT I AM ABOUT.

I used to hate graphic design.

I used to consider using typefaces impersonal.

I used to call typefaces computer text...
Approaching it from different angels.

I've been searching for the things I miss.

I find it harder to be personal with graphic design.
I TRIED TO DRAW GRAPHIC DESIGN
I tried to draw with graphic design.
I have a fascination with tools and techniques.

When drawing I use inks that bleed just fast enough for me to be spontaneous but not stressed.

If I make a composition for a picture book I rather do it in a Xerox-machine than in Photoshop because it adds an element of surprise.
In previous projects I have experimented with making tools for making. I have found new uses for existing tools. This has made me realise the importance of strategies and methods when working with form.

To reach unknown destinations you need to take paths less travelled. This isn’t as easy as it sounds. Conventions are hidden in plain sight and I often find myself back on the main road, or at least walking beside it.

Despite of my intentions.

Conventions and defaults are part of us and become part of the objects we create. I learn through imitation. I read best what I read the most. Strategies and methods can be helpful to make the compass point in new directions.
Lorrain Wild writes:

"Craft is about tactics and concepts, seeking opportunities in the gaps of what is known."

For me this is central.
I see myself in this sentence.

In my reading of Wild, CRAFT is represented by the craft of graphic design.

TACTICS are our ways of working, our methods.

The OPPORTUNITIES in the gaps are the possibilities to formulate new ideas.

WHAT IS KNOWN is the general way of working within the field of graphic design.
This reading suggests a separation between the possibilities present within the general practice of graphic design and the possibilities of ideas and experiments that break the boundaries of expected ways of working.

One who neglects to use one's imagination and develop a language of one's own, accepts subjugation to the language of power and speaks in the tongues of others.

Gianni Rodari
In the general field of graphic design the process of working with few tools is an approach that has a powerful influence. Standardised ways of working form deeply rooted and habitual attitudes that it can be difficult to change.

In my project I want to use practice to reveal and avoid the limitations I find in the tools that I use. These limitations are not general and applicable to the whole field of graphic design, but are based on my practice and experience.

By using doing as a way of thinking I look for and think about what I experience as limiting and how these limitations can be escaped.

I believe that to look closely at the tools and processes used to make Tony can be a way to understand how ways of working and choices of tools influence visual language. In order to do this I have chosen to look at the tools I use the most.
The ability to use tools is often said to be the key to human evolution. Stimulating and pushing us further.

Tools transform our material and our perceived realities and through this we are also changed.
Illustration and graphic design are tools of visual communication that has shaped our understanding of the world. Similarly, the field of communication is shaped by the introduction of new tools.
Give them a tool the use of which will lead them to think differently.

"If you want to change how people think,"
Reading this quote by Buckminster Fuller I am fascinated and excited. But it also makes me wonder if this works the other way around. Could the introduction of new tools limit our point of view and our imagination?

The influence of tools on our aesthetic preferences is often disregarded when talking about design. The impact of tools used today, but also of tools that were used a long time ago have a way of becoming part of the world as we see it.

For instance, the serifs of the letters you are right now reading are there as a result of writing in stone thousands of years ago. The serifs went from being a necessity to an aesthetic choice, an aesthetic still in use thousands of years later. It makes me wonder... What is the serif of today? What aesthetics are we producing now that will impact future understandings of design?
to produce them.

In relation to the tools used in the alphabet, change of printmaking press, or even the first drawing tool, the invention of the

Graphic design has a long history of change in relation to technical innovation.
In extension, these changes affect the aesthetic preferences we hold.
...or making aesthetics grotesque and deviant into neutral tools of communication.

A choice that is not considered a choice in a design process.

Giving old expressions new meaning...
Working with graphic design today you are expected to work in a certain way, but also with certain tools.

The tools provided by Adobe has since the beginning of the 21st century been almost compulsory for the graphic designer. InDesign is the professional software of choice, with almost no competition.

In my perspective it seems like the development of graphic design as a practice, and the transition from a profession made up of many different roles to the “desktop publishing” of today has led to a need for clear, efficient and streamlined processes.

The transformation has given more control to the designer in terms of predicting results of production, but has also brought focus to the administration and realisation of projects instead of the occupation of design and making.

There is a need to conform to these processes to be able to work with other designer’s, programmers and printers in a functional way.

InDesign is a collection of many tools in the shape of a user friendly software made such due to limitations, defaults and a restriction of choices.

In this way a tool has become neutral. A choice that is not considered a choice in a design process.
“Seeking opportunities in the gaps of what is known, rather than trying everything in a unifying theory.”
To work in a design-process is a way of working where thinking and doing are tightly connected and informing one another.

Graphic design could in its ideal form be described as a perfect example of praxis, a merger between theory and practice where both parts flow through each other, breaking the walls between manual and intellectual labour.
Thinking Becomes a Part of Doing

Doing Becomes a Way of Thinking
There is a problem in using few tools, especially when these tools are not consciously chosen by the designer but by the field and the market, as the values they represent are reproduced in our design. I want to discuss the importance of defining our tools, their uses and what they are used for. I feel that a field so heavily dependent on so few, almost compulsory tools, needs discussion and a width of perspective. No tools should be removed from the toolbox however I think we need to understand how they influence how we think and think through the practice of design.

If doing is a way of thinking, our tools are of great importance.
My project is about revealing and investigating my presence in the work that I make, but also the presence of the tools. I am interested in how these two factors—me and my tools—interact and become each other's form. Want to be aware of how tools, through their possibilities and limitations, shape my practice and to make myself part of friction in this process.
I see this work in dialogue with a tradition that ideologize a production based on determined tools. Making it a symbol of civilisation and cleanliness in opposition to barbarism and degeneration, but also hiding this ideology, as well as the human presence, in a visual language claiming values of the neutral and universal, which these tools are made carriers of.

Through the process of revealing and investigating my own and the presence of tools in my process, I am resisting and developing my practice.
the general ways of making graphic design that I am criticizing are characterized by efficient processes, stationary working positions, immateriality, and tools with specified uses. To reverse the rods, to spell the charm backwards, I've been working in a process characterized by slowness, a lack of clear goals, moving craft-based processes, materiality and imagining new uses for existing tools.

In three processes of experimentation I have investigated possibilities of working with printing, typography, and book-production. This has been a process of thinking, a way to keep my thoughts moving. The following section is a collection of these thoughts, materialized in form.
What? A self obsessed American artist, Dianna, and a man that sings about love
How can humour be used as a rebellious tool?
How can laughter work as a catalyst for subversion and enable a break in our society?
My work of ceramic sculptures, glass, patterns and fine glass melts together in a solid universe of pleasure and pain, where my alter egos meet. Through them I question and discuss the expectations and norms of womanhood and success.

POW! POW! POW!

I am like a magpie attracted to strong colors, flesh and diamonds! My work evolves around the body, humor, identity, contrasts, and challenging boundaries.
The process evolves around feminism, craft and making and making everything come together.
My process is working in circles. So... I work with print for a month then I work with ceramic, then music, then glass and then patterns, but the trick is that everything ends up in a super condensed outcome of visual overload and meaning.

Andreas Nobel
Translated by William Jewson
By graduating from Visual Communication at Konstfack, these students will go on to become graphic designers, illustrators, graphic novelists, children's books artists, art directors, type designers and storytellers with skills and insights that few of their future colleagues, collaboration partners and clients will possess.

Thus, their knowledge will make them proficient professionals who can choose to make a difference within their disciplines, but they will also have become fellow beings capable of critical thought and with an understanding of the ways in which their professional objectives are entwined with the challenges we face collectively as a society.
that I scarcely used it and despite the fact that I protected it with padding and several layers of cushioning sole, my foot began to send out signals in the form of a tickling sensation and darting pains in one of the toes of my right foot. My foot started to make itself felt. It seemed as though it wanted to tell me something, but what? After so many years of walking around in shoes I had lost contact with my own feet. I had lost the ability to interpret its signals. I believe that the foot when fettered by a shoe is understimulated, just like the body seated in an office chair. The signals I received were the foot's equivalent to the body's mouse arm and stiff neck. I interpreted it as a warning signal. A cry for help from the depths, from the body's ultimate outpost, from the contact area between body and earth and between culture and nature. What I saw when I removed my shoes and socks was reminiscent of what one sees when one removes a plaster cast from a broken arm after wearing it for several weeks. Two pale pink limbs with the most delicate, almost transparent skin. There they lay, helpless and hypersensitive like two ugly, newly hatched chicks. The next question was: Will my feet be able to survive our here or have I ruined them forever? Is their slave-like mentality so deeply rooted after all this time that my feet will creep back into their secure and rapid existence in my Nike shoes? The next question was: What am I going to use my feet for? How much use is a foot at this present time? I found an answer in an invention that is five thousand years old.
Thinking is one way of thinking. Doing is another.
In furniture and rooms, in tools and machines has appeared, been embodied in the products, first writing and the engraving, now even in oral form. But is this the end of the story? Is this all that can be said, or have we only scratched the surface of the story? The story of the refrigerator, the history of the refrigerator. How much do we actually know about the refrigerator? How much do we know about the history of the refrigerator? How much do we know about the design of the refrigerator? How much do we know about the design of the refrigerator? How much do we know about the design of the refrigerator?

In the title of the book, the phrase "Shady Enlightenment" suggests a sense of mystery and discovery. What does this phrase mean in the context of the book? How does it relate to the content of the book?

The office-chair - from tool to aid

My background

Introduction

Preface

Andreas Nobel
Representation is a complicated issue. The relationship between art and representation is much discussed and is complex. I have no reason to give a detailed account of the relation between them at this point. Suffice it here to note that the mere fact that the question is much discussed suggest that there is a relationship between representation and art and that this relation is stronger than it is in the field of design. One might even argue that design has nothing to do with representation. A table is a table. It is a surface that things can be put on; neither a visual image nor a sculpture of something one can put things on. That this table is influenced by a representational culture, that the table has an element of representation, does not transpose the entire table into a representation. Here there is, I believe, an important distinction between art and design. Design can have aspects of story telling, of performance, of relational aesthetics and of representation, but it can never be reduced to merely being one of these. The consequence of the fact that reflection, as Karen Barad notes, unavoidably influences and increases the distance to what one is reflecting on needs to be given greater consideration. Is distancing an effective way of working for designers and artists? Reflection by means of writing may make art and design students more aware of their own artistic processes but will this awareness really make them better designers and artists? If it is the case that a high degree of awareness means that one distances oneself from whatever it is one is studying, then awareness becomes problematic in the design field. Taking for granted that a high degree of awareness is something that is objectively positive, rational and productive in all situations appears to be a typical effect of a highly textualized culture.

A central conclusion of this dissertation is that the design field would benefit if formulating and directing its future development were left in the hands of the profession without
interference from other fields of learning and other professionals. It is an accepted principle in the development of all new disciplines that their research must be allowed to develop based on their own internal needs. Theory needs to be formulated and developed using the languages and tools of the field itself. The question that has been dealt with in this dissertation is not whether the field of design is to have theories or not. All fields of knowledge embrace theories. The real question is: Whose theories and in what form?
in these details and these objects. Throughout the ages the design professions have developed in precisely this way and it is difficult to see that there are any obstacles preventing this being successful in the future too. Up to the present, as far as I know, no new circumstances have presented themselves that would motivate one throwing out the tried and tested existing structures and methods in the design professions in favour of untried -based knowledge production.
Among satirists as well as the male in satire, the lack of a sense of history/image as an art form: the racist imagery other, hidden, threats to the satirical

The lecture also brings to the table the invisible other media.
Viewed in this perspective, contempt for education is an expression of frustration and powerlessness from groups who are excluded (or feel excluded) and who find it difficult to make themselves heard in such contexts. One essential condition for the development of a more democratic and humanistic ideal of learning would be to extend the concept of knowledge so that it also includes practical and more intuitive forms of knowledge and, perhaps also - which is in line with this project - establish images that contrast with the romanticizing and often uncritical view of the book and the as some sort of multi-tool that is expected to be good at everything. This dissertation treats both of these aspects and it seeks to research the possibility of moving in such a direction.

Over the years I have partially earned my living by writing articles on architecture, interior architecture, design, and various types of crafts. Writing has been an important and fruitful part of my life. Working with texts has served as a tool for thinking and developing ideas. And it was after a particularly intensive spell of writing that I first began to understand the more problematic aspects of textual practice. I found myself in something of a writing crisis. I felt that everything I wrote dealt with the same issue. I developed an uncomfortable feeling that, regardless of subject and of the forum, I used each article merely to present my two or three obsessions. These were always the same and I gradually began to tire of hearing my own voice. I also learnt how easy it is, in written form, to turn an argument round so that it fit in with my aims. Using rhetoric, often reinforced (or camouflaged) with a dose of humour, it seemed that I could establish almost any thesis. I felt that from my armpits in the seminar room frequently smells more offensive than sweat that breaks out in the workshop. It is as though the chemical composition is influenced by whether the sweat comes from a cold, passive body or from a warm, active body that needs to be cooled down. Perhaps this perspiration problem can also have something to do with the atmosphere of unease and the negative stress that is often connected with the seminar room. The furnishing of the seminar room, the lighting, the colours and the chairs and tables are products of an educational tradition that, to a great degree, is characterized by scrutinizing and criticizing. This leads to stress and, in some cases, to negative perspiration. In my personal experience, the academic world, more than the art college, is characterized by patriarchal, hierarchic structures. At the art college there is usually a more equal relationship between teachers and students. Professor Ingmar Rahm Halberg, formerly Pro Vice Chancellor of Lund University, directed a questionnaire aimed at staff at the University. The results indicated that many academics were scared to say what they thought about their workplace. In an interview in the periodical Universitetsläraren she notes: "It is a matter of the culture in academic settings where professors and senior researchers have a great deal of power and influence. At times the tone can become rather raw and unpleasant when people debate academic questions in an arrogant manner and with derogatory opinions and personal attacks. The approach seems to be based on the idea that hungry wolves are the best hunters. And this is not necessarily true", she concludes. This view of humanity is also reflected in academic language and in the choice of metaphors. Sociologist Laurel Richardson writes:

Historically, theory constructors have deployed combative metaphors. Sport, game, and war are common ones. These metaphorical schemes do not resonate with many women's interests, and
in addition, they have contributed to an academic intellectual culture of hostility, argumentativeness, and confrontation."

This is a culture which I have not met with in the world of design and art. The environment of the studio or workshop is totally unlike the charged atmosphere of the seminar room. The workshop is more often charged with a more positive energy from the machines, tools and materials that encourage activity and stimulate a person’s own initiative through the current project that has taken over the workshop. One’s work, as well as work by other people, provides impulses to new ideas. There is no deconstruction in the workshop. All the work undertaken there and all the development of the subject is focused on construction rather than deconstruction. Quite simply, one investigates things with what is basically an uncritical approach. I must point out here that the negative descriptions above naturally do not apply to all forms of academic seminars. I have personal experience of seminars which have enjoyed an open, generous and intellectually stimulating attitude. And one can, of course, find repressive structures and environments in art education too. But my personal experience is that these are less usual.
in these details and these objects. Throughout the ages the design professions have developed in precisely this way and it is difficult to see that there are any obstacles preventing this being successful in the future too. Up to the present, as far as I know, no new circumstances have presented themselves that would motivate one throwing out the tried and tested existing structures and methods in the design professions in favour of untried test-based knowledge production.
In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is.
Control must be understood in relation to what is attempted. When I work with the computer, everything becomes "Perfect," to me this is a lack of control.

This perspective, the lack of human presence, is interesting because it tells us something about capitalism. It rests on the assumption that we see the objects that surround us as products, not as the result of the processes that were part of their making. There is an interest in making things from us.
Angela Darès writes: "What would happen if we made a habit of imagining all of those relationships when we look at our environment? That would be part of a revolutionary perspective."

In this project I aim to put making at the centre, to make things that tell of how they have been made.

Screen printing has an innate slowness, the many steps of the process allow different points of entry. The preparation, lighting, printing as well as the cleaning of the frame hold possibilities for investigation and development.
I have worked with screen printing before but never really enjoyed it. I've always felt resistance, the process is slow, a bit exhausting, especially when working within a timeframe. This time around the resistance is the foundation of what I'm doing. I use the slowness of screenprinting to slow down my process in order to help me see it in progress.

I want to use reproductive tools to produce. Both in the method of using print, choosing to exclude the computer, not working with prepared imagery. But also through questioning the fixed use of the technique, hoping to find new ideas and visual language in the process.
Wanting to approach screen printing in a backwards way I became more interested in the processes that were not part of the actual printing. Instead I started experimenting with the preparation and the cleaning of screen-frames.

First I made a lot of material using the high-pressure water-gun used to clean the frames as a drawing tool.
The width of expressions possible to make surprised me. I could make shapes that were almost calligraphic and perfectly smooth as well as rough almost three-dimensional shapes.

Working in this way made the resistance of the material clear. The tools are heavy, imprecise and decide the speed of working.

The material leads the conversation and I add an idea or two.
Secondly, I used the process of lighting the screen, to make photographs, placing objects directly on the screen, protecting parts of it from exposure. The result was a sort of analogue image. Similarly, this worked particularly well using large quantities of small objects, like sprinkles, coco-bat, and sugar. I imagine that this technique could be developed into a tool for creating shades and tints in an elaborate analogue way.
The third big lead I found during my experimentation was to use the solvent used for stripping the frames of emulsion to make etchings.

By applying the solvent on the screen and leaving it on for different amounts of time, applying it using different tools, the aesthetic could be controlled to achieve different expressions.

Making this kind of experiments results in a process that is strange and unpredictable. The technique and materials know more about the process than I do. Instead of forcing the tool to do what it should, I let the results be informed by the process.
Typography is my introduction to graphic design, but I find it difficult to find methods to work with it that reflects the way I want to work. There is a staleness to digital production that I want to challenge. I also want to challenge my own preconceptions of digital tools.
Typography is most often portrayed as a slow time-consuming craft, the creation of a complete alphabet and the harmony that letters form together. I speeded up my typographic interest and started drawing letterforms. The aim was the opposite. Instead of legibility, I focused on recognisability. I enjoyed the process of letterforms, their uniqueness, and-I also thought of their knowledge and perfection.
The relation to tacit knowledge is different in these two examples. Within the field of classical typography, a typeface is crafted over years, perfecting every detail. Within a graffiti context, you develop your craft in another way.

The tacit knowledge, drawing skills, and sense of form is stored in your hands, ready to be released for a concentrated improvisation. This tacit knowledge allows for unexpectedness, for treating mistakes and unexpectedness as something positive. It is also a way of using practice as development and research.
This is a lack I find in the tools that I use, my digital tools. I need to shake these tools, to challenge them in order to find these qualities, the unexpectedness.

Today, digital tools are good for snapping to grids, this is the impression that I get.
I want to tap into another side of the digital. A world of chance, randomness, unexpectedness, warmth, humour and personality.

I’m looking for resistance.

I feel the need to have a conversation with the materials and machines I am working with.

In this part of my project I have wanted to approach digital expression as a raw material. I have tried to consider the vector-shape as a paper for me to cut or a piece of clay to shape.

My method has been to search and discover, looking through making. Inspiration has come from the world of programming, a coding workshop with Olivo Politi and his introduction on Seymour Papert. In the pedagogical work of Papert coding is introduced as the giving of commands, something that I have incorporated into my work.
When starting this part of the project I imagined that I would try to create a plug-in for a program used for drawing typography or even attempt to script my own application. Instead I’ve chosen to focus on how to use and incorporate coding into my craft.

I’ve been using a web-based application called Font-Modulator, created in 2012 by Alexis Retgrel and Marco Müller, the thought use of which is to sketch and create entire alphabets simultaneously using a skeleton alphabet as a starting point. This is done by entering values that change the appearance of the letters.

I’ve chosen a different approach. In Font-Modulator I have found a tool for drawing. A tool for creating unexpected forms that are then reworked and interpreted. A process similar to the way I sketch using analogue tools, trying out things with pen and paper, looking for good ideas while drawing.
The reason for me to look for a tool like this is that I lack this way of sketching in my practice. I believe it’s important for me to be able to work with digital tools and expressions as a raw material, to de-learn the notion of digital as “not real.”

My method when drawing this collection of letter shapes has been to draw them using Font-Modulator, focusing on a single letter at a time. Limiting myself to the entering of values as my drawing tool. When something strange or exciting happens I take a screen-shot to be able to retrace my steps. At this point I am not concerned with which letter I am intending to draw, using the application in this way you come across shapes that are ambiguous and no longer recognizable as the original letter. I rather look for interesting shapes.
Throughout this process I mainly work on my smartphone, my digital sketchbook. A lot of the raw material has been made on the subway, when having coffee or while waiting for friends. Just like I would do with my regular sketchbook. This helps to distance me from the static working situation I experience in front of the computer but it also allows me to use a digital tool like I would otherwise do with an analogue.

All of the letters are the result of forcing a limited skeleton letter shape to do things it was never intended to do. Every letter is the result of a shape that could not be contained by the expectation of what a letter should look like. The letters are through contradicting commands forced to be several things at the same time.
What is a book? Pages put together.
A story, and a way to tell it. A book is the transformation of moving thoughts into a frozen object waiting to move again.
Due to economic reasons, many of the book projects I have previously worked on have been printed on-demand services. In this part of the project I want to deconstruct the craft of producing a book to learn what I can not learn from preparing a file for print.

Through the process of making a book completely by myself, I get the rare opportunity to learn through doing all the steps as doing and making that together transforms a text into a self-contained object.

In this part of the project I attempt to open up a process that is becoming increasingly hidden to me as a designer.
About a year ago I started a collaboration with interior designer Andreas Nobel. Andreas was looking for a designer to make an English version of his thesis.

My proposition was that we would make the design and production of this book a part of my project, partly a surface for my experimentation, but also an opportunity to research the production of a book.

In this case I have designed, planned, printed, cut and bound every page of every copy of the book. I even ended up writing the preface. It's been a long and sometimes heated conversation between me and the tools of my practice.
In his thesis, Andreas refers to a line by Richard Rorty: "Hope in the place of knowledge." To produce an edition of the book in this way isn't convenient or practical for us. Andreas would get a smaller edition than expected, a handmade first edition of 200 copies.

The production would take longer than expected and the work that I would put into the project would not be in proportion to the payment. None the less I believe that this kind of idealism is an important way of resistance within a field that is becoming increasingly streamlined and effective.
Perhaps it's in the light of these computerized aspects of book-production that we begin to see the media-specific qualities of the book. This is where the dialogue between materials and machine.

This allows me to try things once and use the process of making to revise my choices, making decisions I would otherwise not have made.

Making a book, especially a book that breaks with any form or convention, is expensive and a privilege. Books made today are usually optimized in order to save time and money, standardized formats, papers, bindings, and designs are an increasingly obvious aspect of book production. Another idea to this is digital publication. Why make a book when there are cheaper and more efficient ways of doing so? Digital content.
The machine used, a Mieograph, is a strange and wondrous thing. A combination of old-hand-on printing techniques and digital technology, it is transparent and full of surprises. Making the production not an end but a continuation of the design process.
Tools of neutrality

In the introduction to this book I mentioned the processes that create norms in relation to visual language. But to fully understand this I need to go deeper. Deeper into the history of graphic design but also into that of innovation and its foundations. Aesthetics change with technological innovation, with the introduction of tools. Throughout the 20th century there have been introductions that have had a deep impact on what we do as graphic designers today and the choices that we make.

In the lecture Typical Power: A typographical timeline in relation to power and society graphic designer and typographical researcher Brita Lindvall Leitmann exemplifies these changes by showing how Fraktur style lettering and typesetting from the 16th century almost unreadable today, and layered with associations, were considered the very image of clarity and
“neutrality” at the time of their making. Lindvall Leitmann continues with the introduction of so-called Grotesk typefaces, with letter shapes without serifs that were initially (as the name suggests) considered ugly and unsophisticated. This aesthetic style first appeared as early as in the 1810s but had a rise of popularity in the 1920s.

This style was promoted by Adolf Loos in *Ornament und Verbrechen*, a lecture (1910) and essay (1913) where Loos presented arguments for the stripping of decoration and ornaments underblown by race-biology. Loos makes a connection between decoration and degeneration claiming that “cultural evolution is equivalent to the removal of Ornament from articles in daily use”. Loos writes:

“The modern man who tattoos himself ... a degenerate. There are prisons in which eighty per cent of the prisoners are tattooed. Tattooed men who are not behind bars are either latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats. If someone who is tattooed dies in freedom, then he does so a few years before he would have committed murder.”

The point Loos is trying to make is that the decoration of bodies and objects are in direct relation to ones stage of enlightenment or degeneration.

Another important work relating to the popularization of Grotesk typefaces was the publication of *Die neue typographie* by Jan Tschichold, a design manifesto in the form of a magazine supplement (1926) and book (1928), in which he condemned all typefaces but the Grotesk. Only 24 years old Tschichold comes across as an idealist. Inspired by Russian constructivists and the Bauhaus he wanted to make printing and design more effective and economical through standardization of printing and typographic rules. In hindsight Tschichold himself
completely abandoned these ideals, stating that he found shocking similarities between the rigid teachings of *Die neue typographie* and the ideas of national socialism. An important fact that is rarely included when the work of Tschichold is presented in the teaching of graphic design history, where *Die neue typographie* is celebrated as one of the most important and innovative publications.

The modernist ideal of reduction is still predominant in the context of graphic design. Solidified during the 60s when the popularity of typefaces like *Helvetica* and *Univers* changed visual language in the west. The teachings of *Die neue typographie* and its successors is to great extent preserved in graphic design today, often referred to as *Swiss style*, where left aligned compositions of Grotesk typefaces is one of the most common ways to communicate. Often attributed with values of neutrality and universality. Lorraine Wild writes: “The last time technique was stressed strongly in design education was in “Swiss” typography, where process was attached to the idea of “correct” form, which led to similar, abstracted, stylistic conclusions, over and over again.”

She wrote this in 1998, at a time when new challenges emerged in relation to technical innovation as the personal computer emerged as an increasingly important design-tool, questioning the very nature of design and the one who makes it. In the section *Tool (Or, Post-production for the Graphic Designer)* from *Graphic Design: Now In Production* Andrew Blauvelt describes how graphic design was one of the first fields to experience the influence of the introduction of the personal computer as a tool. “Desktop publishing” transformed and finally replaced a multitude of jobs tied to the production of graphic material. Inevitably this contributed to the confusion of a field that already had an unclear distinction between conception and production.
Since the introduction of the computer as the main tool at first seemed to undermine, devalue and replace traditional knowledge the general understanding was that the answer to future graphic design was not to be found in the values of the craft but in the production of concepts and ideas. Blauvelt describes this development as premature as it became widely acknowledged even though the computer obviously couldn't immediately replace and demystify the more concrete aspects of design. Blauvelt stresses craft-based aspects of typography, knowledge about form, problem-solving and strategies for communication gained through years of education and practice as examples of important divisions between the expert and beginner. Is it not strange, Blauvelt adds, that the field of graphic design in spite of this specialized knowledge chose to pursue a direction focused on its more verbal and business-oriented attributes and to soft-pedal characteristics that had been intimately tied to the visual and the artistic?

Here it is possible to see a connection between a reduced rule-based graphic language introduced in the 1920s, a language adapted to the modernist ideal of “design = problem solving” where these aesthetic values were attached to the idea of neutrality. Subsequently making its way into the stressing of graphic design as an idea-based practice, where form was or should be a container for and not part of the content. In the words of Wild this perspective was “derived from modernism, and now reinterpreted as marketing”. This is the context in which graphic designers work today.

If graphic design could transform radically in such a short time, how come the stylized and abstracted repetitions of modernist language keeps repeating in visual language? I believe it might be possible to see a connection between this and a radical change in the invention and innovation of technology and tools. In Software takes command Lev Manovich describes how software has the possibility of seemingly endless
extendibility. To give new characteristics to physical objects and media demands a transformation of its physical substance. Computer based media however exists as software, which means that we can add characteristics, alter or even create new media through the process of making changes to existing programs. Shortly put what is often referred to as "new media" is categorized as such due to their possibilities of extendibility and change. This is interesting because industrial production has always rested on the assumption that hardware and software are inseparable, the content of a book is bound in order to fix the pages in a certain sequence. Content and form as a whole. No content without form.

During the 19th and 20th centuries mediums were traditionally floating and in a state of change in two situations. First during the development of a new medium, see for instance the multitude of experiments and ideas that were part of the discovery and taming of photography in the first half of the 19th century. Secondly when artists, designers and other creatives systematically experiment with and open up a tool or medium that has already been industrially fixed. In the case of photography this would have been the experiments with film and video during the 1960s that has become known as Extended cinema.

It is not until you have gained distance to a tool, preferably in the light of a new one, that it becomes possible to investigate and reveal its media-specific qualities and possibilities. This experimentation, traditionally separated in these two steps, merges together with the introduction of software. The computer makes it possible to experiment unreservedly with tools and mediums. Why is that? Manovich suggests that the answer is to be found in the computers separation between hardware and software. The result is a state of constant invention, application and change of existing media. In this sense computer based tools and media
become "avant-garde" in their constant state of development and reform. This is interesting as the general idea is that what is experimental or avant-garde and what is stable and fixed exist in opposition to each other. In a world of computer-based media such a distinction not only becomes impossible but also to some extent reversed as the "avant-garde" is no longer an expression of the ingenuity of individuals or groups but the result of projects managed by big corporations like Microsoft, Adobe and Apple. A smooth and steady development, a permanent extendibility. Updates and constant change instead of jolts of technological innovation.

In this lies a contradiction, through using software the possibilities to influence the tools of graphic design seems bigger than ever, but at the same time the tools and machines used are becoming more complicated and less accessible.

In *User interface: A personal view* American computer-scientist Alan Kay explains how the ability to read a tool or medium encompasses the ability to take part of material and tools made by others. To be able to write with a tool or medium encompasses the ability to create material and tools for others. Both aspects are necessary to achieve literacy. If I am allowed to generalize we are today in many processes limited to a user perspective, we can use but not create or influence our tools.

Jonathan Puckey is a graphic designer that incorporate thoughts on tools in his practice. Puckey means that we instead of agreeing as one to work with the same streamlined tools sold to us by large corporations must reclaim a personal relationship with our tools. We must learn to make tools ourselves. That is after all what the computer is: a tool for creating tools.

Another important and related condition is the need for efficiency driven by the market. As previously mentioned I want to understand graphic design as a practice of thinking through
making. To do this requires time, time is necessary to not produce design that is just a reflection of the design that I see. To think through making I need to allow time for making as well as thinking, time for making mistakes. For trial and error. I also need to provide time to reflect on what I have done, as my instincts acquired from design-education tells me to remove what I do not immediately recognize.

Innovation is often understood or assumed to be a linear development resulting in increased possibilities. I would say that this is not necessarily the case. Today technical innovation results in what seems to be a positive effect of efficiency, making processes faster and less expensive for the producers. These innovations are not made in the interest of developing a field. They are made to uphold an increasingly fast culture of consumption.

The cost of these “innovations” are restrictions for the graphic designer in the shape of defaults, limited choices and streamlined tools built on the restriction of possibilities. Which means that innovation of the tools and processes related to the field of graphic design are actually resulting in the opposite. A maintaining and lack of innovation of form. Seen in this light this process is understood not as a process of inventing new ways of making, but of optimizing existing ones. Making capitalism the designer of the future.

Having my work process and my tools chosen for me by the field and the market scares me. I am afraid that I will not use these tools to tell new stories, but to tell the story of something or someone else. In the language of someone else. This development might not seem like a problem if you view graphic design as an empty vessel, a “neutral” carrier of a separate content. As is the habitual attitude of the profession.

There is no such thing as neutral form, what is called neutral is the representation of norms and
taste. Because of this form must be understood as a part of the content. Graphic design is after all a surface that tells, communicating through form. From this perspective the development and "innovation" of graphic design is worrying, as it is actually the preservation of a visual language carrying the ideology of "neutral" and "correct" form pushed by a capitalist agenda.

The process of permanent extendibility seems to be mirrored in the field of graphic design and the development of visual language. Is it possible that a lack of distance to tools and mediums caused by the fact that they are already in a process of change making experimentation and personal perspectives difficult? Resulting in a visual language based on updates and a constant stream of small changes giving an impression of development. And as our tools are becoming more complex are designers settling for default tools that are designed to fit, and in extension preserve, an already existing aesthetic?

The importance of this increases dramatically as graphic design is a profession relying on the use of few tools. I believe this makes the role of personal expression, subjectivity and experimentation more important than ever. As the tools for thinking are getting fewer and more streamlined we need more perspectives on how to use the process of working with them in order to keep thinking through the process of making.
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